

Generational Strife in the Iliad

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Generational Strife in the *Iliad*

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Book one of the *Iliad* offers rich and complex background in regard to succession myth. When Achilles asks Thetis to go to Olympus to persuade Zeus, he suggests her to mention her rescue of Zeus from his shackles (1 399-406). This story has puzzled readers since Zenodotus, who athetised 396-406. Modern scholars are also disposed to regard this story as the invention of the poet of the *Iliad*.¹ However, even if, to some extent, the poet invented or modified from imagination, I suggest that there was a core story which told of the battle of the gods, and that it is possible to trace the logic of the story.²

The importance of Thetis was first signaled by Slatkin.³ It is necessary to cover some of the same ground—to take the reader over familiar material in order to lay the basis for Sections 2 and 3, and to indicate points on which my interpretation goes further.

In spite of Achilles' suggestion that she should recount the story, Thetis does not actually do so when she makes her supplication to Zeus (1 503-10, 514-6). Although various explanations for this omission have been offered, some new ideas could be added. Thetis' strategy is to truncate the story of Zeus' crisis in order to place more emphasis on Achilles' mortality, moreover, some hidden relationship between Zeus and Thetis seems to be implied by her speech—and a dynamic picture of the succession myth is subtly intruded into the narrative.

The underlying image in her speech, which functions as a threat to Zeus, is the victory of son over father, or the threat posed by the son who is mightier than his father. This notion, which is especially important in early Greek poetry (for instance in *Theogony*), is reflected not only in book one of the *Iliad*, but also in other parts of the epic. It is the aim of this paper to discuss how the mythological theme of the threat of the son works in the scene between Zeus and Thetis (*Il* 1 493-530), and how the relationship between Achilles and Peleus can be interpreted in terms of succession-myth.

¹ For example, Willcock (1964) 141-54, (1977) 41-53, and (1978) ad loc., Griffin (1980) 185, Kirk (1985) ad loc.

² I agree with Lang (1983) 163, who points out that 'whether an *Iliad* theme attracted old tales as exempla or an old tale inspired an *Iliad* episode for which the old tale was used as support, each would be liable over time to infiltration of details from the other.'

³ *The Power of Thetis: Allusion and Interpretation in the Iliad*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1991.

1. The supplication of Thetis

Thetis' supplication is extremely significant because the acceptance of her supplication is the first step in the whole plot of the *Iliad*. The decision by Zeus is essential for the structure of the poem, which focuses on Achilles' destiny. It is because of the persuasiveness of Thetis' speech that Zeus' resolution becomes acceptable to the audience: the episode of Zeus and Thetis is fundamental for the structure of the *Iliad*. Thetis' supplication is truly a drastic intervention in the war,⁴ and because of its significance her speech is carefully worked out. As Kuch rightly notes, the structure of the scene is perfectly composed: and henceforward the whole poem is built up step by step.⁵ Thetis' intimate but allusive words recall her past, which ought to be a real threat to Zeus. Accordingly, the narrative strategy in this supplication is the key to understanding the power-relations between these two characters.

The groundwork for Thetis' address is laid with deliberation. The first preparation appears at the beginning of the scene when Achilles calls on Thetis for help. He begins with a remarkable definition of himself:

μητὲρ, ἐπεὶ μ' ἔτεκές γε μινυιθάδιόν περ ἔοντα
τιμὴν πέρ μοι ὄφελλεν Ὀλύμπιος ἐγγυαλίσσαι
Ζεὺς ὑψιβρεμέτης νῦν δ' οὐδέ με τυτθὸν ἔτεισεν (Il. I. 352–4)

“Mother, since it was you that bore me, if only to a life doomed to shortness, surely honour should have been granted to me by Olympian Zeus, the high-thunderer! But now he has shown me not even the slightest honour.

(Tr. M. Hammond)

Achilles' destiny—a short life—is the explicit and legitimate rationale behind his appeal for fame,⁶ since it originated with Zeus: if Thetis had not been compelled by Zeus to marry Peleus, her son would not have been ‘short-lived’;⁷ if Zeus had been his father, Achilles would have been

⁴ Slatkin (1991) 53.

⁵ Kuch (1993) 204.

⁶ Later it becomes clear that Thetis told Achilles of his fate: a choice of either a short but glorious life or a long life without glory (9.410–16). He also mentions his idea of leaving Troy—which means a long but inglorious life (1.169–71). Here, however, his words suggest that his short life is definitely destined, and it is not a matter of his choice.

⁷ The marriage of Peleus and Thetis is mentioned by Pindar (*I.* 8.29–38, *P.* 3.87–92, *N.* 3.32–36, 4.49–67, 5.25–37) and Aeschylus (*Pr.* 167ff., 515ff., 755ff., 907ff.) in Homer it is mentioned only once, and not in detail (18.434).

immortal and, moreover, by virtue of Thetis' potentiality, he would have been mightier than Zeus. The opening words of Achilles thus evoke the theme of generational strife and the myth of succession.

After listening to Achilles' request, Thetis replies, surprisingly, in the same way she begins by mentioning his destiny. This echoes the first line of Achilles' speech and gains effect from being so placed, with the *linguistic* parallel reflecting the *thematic* parallel between the two speeches and giving heavy emphasis to Achilles' short life.

ὦ μοι τέκνον ἐμόν, τί νύ σ' ἔτρεφον αἰνὰ τεκοῦσα,
αἶθ' ὄφελες παρὰ νηυσὶν ἀδάκρυτος καὶ ἀπῆμων
ῆσθαι, ἐπεὶ νύ τοι αἶσα μίνυθά περ, οὗ τι μάλα δὴν
νῦν δ' ἅμα τ' ὠκύμορος καὶ οἰζυρὸς περὶ πάντων
ἔπλεο· (Il. 1.414–17)

“Oh my child, what did I rear you for, after the pain of your birth? If only you could sit by your ships without tears or sorrow—because your fate is of short span, not at all long. But now you are both short-lived and miserable as well beyond all others.” (Tr. M. Hammond)

Thetis laments Achilles' destiny. αἰνὰ τεκοῦσα again alludes to her marriage with a human, begetting a child who is a mortal. She puts emphasis on his short life, wishing he could sit by the ships, unharmed and without grief (415–6). Although it might look as if she expresses two contradictory ideas,⁸ she apparently wishes that Achilles could be safe, free from the danger of battle, and living happily for the unharmed, griefless life which Thetis wishes him now is exactly the life of the gods. Her lament again concerns Achilles' mortality, alluding to the fact that her son could have been immortal if she had not been forced into marriage with a human. The complaints and laments of Thetis and Achilles are thus repeated and interrelated, as Kuch notes: the method of “going back” (*das Mittel der Ruckblende*)⁹ and the repetition cause dangerous tension. Some secret and close connection between the two of them and Zeus is implied, dimly at first, but this gradually becomes clearer as the succession-myth is so sharply evoked.

I agree with Griffin (1977) 101–2, who writes that, ‘the poet of the *Iliad* is familiar with the story but has suppressed it, preferring unexplained mystery to the monstrousness of metamorphosis and ascription to Thetis of an un-human pixie character’.

⁸ Kirk (1985) ad loc. notes that ‘Achilles could hardly be free from grief in such circumstance, had he been griefless, he would have been out there fighting’.

⁹ Kuch (1993) 205 also points out that the scene between Thetis and Achilles foreshadows the scene between Thetis and Zeus, and between these two scenes a deliberate use of ‘Ruckblende’ is noticeable.

When Achilles tells the story of how Thetis once saved Zeus from his shackles (I 396-406), the conspicuous point is his remark about Briareos or Aigaion¹⁰ Achilles chooses to relate this episode in order to offer a reason for a reciprocal benefaction: this is why he mentions that Briareos/Aigaion is mightier than his father:

Αἰγαίων· – ὁ γὰρ αὖτε βίην οὐδὲ πατρὸς ἀμείνων – (II 1 404)¹¹

Aigaion, he is mightier than his father (My translation)

By mentioning this, Achilles reminds Thetis of the possibility that he himself could have been mightier than Zeus. This is a threat to Zeus: just as Zeus was mightier than his own father Cronus, so too is Zeus always threatened with the possibility of having a son mightier than himself. In his speech here, Achilles claims that he is associated with the ongoing genealogy of Olympus. Briareos is a typical supporter of Zeus, and is also particularly associated with binding—sufficiently, again, to evoke the succession-myth.¹² In Hesiod's account, he and his brothers Cottus and Gyges were once bound and cast beneath the earth by Uranus, and later saved by Zeus and the other gods (*Theog.* 617-27). Zeus learns from Gaia that the side which persuades Briareos and his brothers to join them and obtain their help will be victorious (*Theog.* 627-8). Briareos and his brothers then bind Cronus and the other Titans in order to help Zeus and cast them under the earth (*Theog.* 713-18). Thus, Achilles' mention of Briareos is suggestive: just as Briareos is mightier than his father, so too could Achilles have been mightier than Zeus; just as Briareos helped Zeus to bind Cronus, so too could Briareos help Achilles, and just as Briareos saved Zeus at Thetis' request, so too could Briareos help Achilles at Thetis' request. That is, just as Briareos and his brothers were the guarantors in the previous struggle for sovereignty, so too they might have a decisive role to play again in another struggle.

In spite of Achilles' suggestion, Thetis does not repeat this story,¹ but simply remarks

¹⁰ Regarding the narrative function of Briareos, Slatkin (1991) 69 suggests that he functions as a reminder multiplying the succession-myth motif.

¹¹ I take γὰρ as emphatic, not explanatory, since 'mightier than his father' does not explain the alternative name of Aigaion, as is generally recognised. Cf. Kirk (1985) ad loc., Slatkin (1991) 70 n. 17. Leal (1900) ad loc. comments on αὖτε that 'Poseidon in union with the other gods was stronger than Zeus, so his son again was stronger than he.' Against Willcock (1964) 147 who claims that this phrase is illogical in the context. I think rather that it is a key phrase in the story.

¹² Slatkin (1991) 69.

¹ Slatkin (1991) 59 observes that Thetis is one figure who does not refer to her own power, since the rescue of Dionysus (6 130-37) and that of Hephaestus (18 394-98) are narrated by those whom she saved.

"Ζεῦ πάτερ, εἴ ποτε δὴ σε μετ' ἀθανάτοισιν ὄνησα
 ἦ ἔπει ἦ ἔργῳ, τόδε μοι κρήνην ἐέλωρ
 τίμησόν μοι υἱόν, ὅς ὠκυμορώτατος ἄλλων
 ἔπλετ' (Il 1 503–506)

“Father Zeus, if ever I have done you service among the immortals in word or in action,
 grant this my desire Show honour to my son, who is short-lived beyond all other men
 (Tr M Hammond)

Thetis says surprisingly little This is very significant she truncates Achilles’ story not because ‘the audience still has Achilles’ speech in mind’, as Braswell holds,¹⁴ but because she tries to place a strong emphasis on the word ὠκυμορώτατος (505)¹⁵ By employing this word, she alludes to what she has done for Zeus her greatest favour to Zeus is that she did not activate her fatal power—begetting a child mightier than Zeus Thetis secured Zeus’ survival by giving birth to a mortal child As Slatkin rightly argues, Zeus’ sovereignty is guaranteed at the cost of Achilles’ mortality¹⁶ Therefore, it is much more effective for Thetis to mention the mortality of Achilles than the story of the binding of Zeus, especially since her request concerns Achilles’ fame If the matter had been only between Zeus and Thetis, then Zeus’ rescue would have provided a reason for the return of a favour As it is, however, the favour is for the sake of Achilles’ glory By remaining a hidden subtext, the story of the marriage of Thetis and Peleus becomes all the more a powerful—or even threatening—justification for her appeal

Achilles does not appeal directly to Zeus because, naturally, only Thetis can make *this* particular appeal¹⁷ Thetis, with a decisive card to play, is far more influential than Achilles Achil-

¹⁴ Braswell (1971) 19, n 2, his explanation is unlikely, because there is a well-known example of repetition when Achilles repeats the story of Agamemnon and Chryses (1 366-92) to Thetis, even though the audience should definitely remember what had been narrated just before (1 8-244) Cf Kirk (1985) 91-3

¹⁵ Willcock (1964) 143 suggests that Thetis does not think it worth repeating the story because the whole story may be sheer invention, a point with which I do not agree

¹⁶ Slatkin (1991) 101-3 points out that ‘the price of Zeus’ hegemony is Achilles’ death’

¹⁷ On the question of why Achilles does not appeal directly to Zeus, Leaf (1960), Willcock (1978) and Kirk (1985) offer no comment Slatkin (1991) 59-61 raises the question, without answering it My view is that it is not an Iliadic way of thinking that gods will accept the prayers of human beings entirely, it is stated that νεμεσσητὸν δέ κεν εἶη ἀθάνατον θεὸν ὧδε βροτοῦς ἀγαπαζέμεν ἄντην (24 463-4), ‘it would cause anger in heaven for an immortal god to show affection openly towards mortals’ Accordingly, heroes’ prayers are in most cases partly or wholly rejected in the *Iliad* the prayer of Agamemnon to Zeus (2 419) is wholly rejected, as is that of Hector to Athena (6 311) Indeed when Achilles directly prays to Zeus for Patroclus (16 233-48), his prayer is partly accepted, but not entirely Here, however, the acceptance of Achilles’ appeal is indispensable for the whole plot of the epic In order to avoid the prayer of a human being (Achilles) being wholly accepted, Thetis, instead of Achilles, makes the appeal In addition, the importance of supplication must be noted The supplication of Chryses, the priest of Apollo, was successful (1 37-52) As a direct supplication to Zeus would not be allowed in Achilles’ case, since he is not a priest of Zeus, for this reason, then, he might have asked Thetis to make the supplication

les' request for his mother's intervention might at first seem unheroic—but we see that her intervention is indispensable only she can so forcibly relate the request to the uncertainty of succession—the ultimate threat to Zeus

After these preparations which emphasise the message of Achilles' mortality, Thetis' supplication begins. The construction of her supplication appears to be simple — invocation, reciprocal appeal, then precise request — but it is deliberately orchestrated. We notice that exactly the same pattern is seen shortly before, in the prayer of Chryses (I 37-42) invocation (37-9), reciprocal appeal (39-40), request (40-2). The parallel structure is pointed just as Chryses' prayer is accepted by Apollo, so too should that of Thetis be accepted by Zeus. So, Chryses' prayer, as well as having its own significance, also functions as preparatory intertext underscoring Thetis' supplication: it offers a background suggestive of a successful conclusion to her appeal.

Zeus does not answer Thetis at once, it is, as Kirk describes, 'a long and dramatic silence'¹⁸. His silence is meaningful: it eloquently expresses his unwillingness either, paradoxically, to accept or to reject her supplication. Then, Thetis offers her second speech which is truly threatening.

"ἡμερτὲς μὲν δὴ μοι ὑπόσχεο καὶ κατάνευσον,
ἢ ἀπολείπ', ἐπεὶ οὐ τοι ἔπι δέος, ὄφρ' ἐὺ εἰδέω
ὅσσον ἐγὼ μετα πᾶσιν ἀτιμοτάτη θεός εἰμι " (II 1 514–16)

"Promise me now without fail and nod your assent or else refuse me—you have no cause for fear—so that I can be sure how far I am the lowest in honour among all the gods."

(Tr. M. Hammond)

Again the address is brief: she does not cite any deeds beneficial to Zeus, nor give explanation for her demand, but clings to Zeus' knees (ἐμπεφυῖα,¹⁹ 513). However, these brief words are enough to persuade Zeus. First, ἐπεὶ οὐ τοι ἔπι δέος (515) is particularly significant. Kirk paraphrases the verse as 'since you can do as you like and need have no fear of anyone,' giving no further comment.²⁰ Yet this passage is extremely persuasive because of its underlying, paradoxical implications. Zeus knows that Thetis unbound him by summoning Briareos, and Thetis

¹⁸ Kirk (1985) ad loc.

¹⁹ O'Brien (1993) 89 comments that this word expresses Thetis' intimate reliance on Zeus.

²⁰ Kirk (1985) ad loc.

alone is credited with having had such power in the divine realm²¹ The connotation of her words is, 'surely you are almighty, having no fear *but is it true?*' The subtext—'what if I summon Briareos again?'—is, again, extremely threatening²² It does not matter whether Briareos actually has the power to bind Zeus for her purpose it is enough simply to supply the possibility

Secondly, by saying ἀτιμοτάτη, Thetis alludes not only to the dishonour that will befall her if she is rejected, but also to her past dishonour Zeus' refusal of marriage with her We can thus imbue this single word with a fuller significance 'Who am I? I am the one who was dishonoured by you *before*, the one who was deprived of my power to have a son mightier than you, and also the one who is *now* to be dishonoured by you again' There is a further pertinent significance ἀτιμοτάτη(516) also evokes the τιμή of Achilles, for which Thetis now pleads On these levels she requests Achilles' honour as compensation for her own *dishonour*— her own lost τιμή

Zeus' answer confirms the underlying import of her threat, for, surprisingly, Zeus replies to Thetis by mentioning Hera, who might *seem* to be irrelevant to Achilles' case

" ἦ δὴ λoίγια ἔργ' ὃ τέ μ' ἐχθοδοπῆσαι ἐφήσεις
"Ἡρη, ὅτ' ἂν μ' ἐρέθῃσιν ὀνειδείους ἐπέεσσιν
ἦ δὲ καὶ αὐτως μ' αἰεὶ ἐν ἀθανάτοισι θεοῖσι
νυικεῖ, καὶ τέ μέ φησι μάχη Τρώεσσιν ἀρήγειν,
ἀλλὰ σὺ μὲν νῦν αὖτις ἀπόστιχε, μή τι νοήσῃ
"Ἡρη· (Il 1 518–23)

"This is a grievous business—you will set me at ills with Hera, when she stings me to anger with her taunts Even without this she is always carping at me among the immortal gods, and saying that I help the Trojans in battle Well, you must go back now, so that Hera does not see anything (Tr M Hammond)

Why, at this point, does Zeus mention that he is so afraid of her? Hera would surely oppose the plan to help the Trojans, since she wishes for a Greek victory However, this cannot be the only reason for Zeus' especial concern about her, because there are other gods as well who would op-

²¹ Slatkin (1991) 66

²² Thetis' diction here could be compared with the similar speech of Hera to Zeus (4 53), where she paradoxically speaks of her beloved three cities, Argos, Sparta and Mycenae, 'Sack these, whenever your heart feels strong hatred for them' (τὰς διαπέρσαι, ὅτ' ἂν τοι ἀπέχθωνται περὶ κῆρι)

pose Zeus' plan. In fact, Zeus' fear of Hera arises from another threat because, again, Thetis' supplication relates to her abortive marriage to Zeus. Hera's irritated words (540-3) confirm that this is not a question of which side the gods should help, but is rather a domestic problem. The relationship between Zeus, Hera and Thetis underlies their conversation, and the reactions of Zeus and Hera respectively illustrate that behind Thetis' supplication exists the threat that, if she had married Zeus, she would have had a son mightier than his father. Simultaneously, as I suggested above, Thetis implies that, on her demand, Briareos could help (again).

It is the narrative strategy of the *Iliad* to bring this problem into the field of genealogical strife: the parallel, successful alliances of mother with son against father. The point of Thetis' claim is that Zeus could have been the father of Achilles: just as Gaia claimed her right to take revenge on the basis of Uranus' outrageous behaviour towards her children, so too does Thetis here claim her right on the basis of Zeus' outrageous decision about her marriage. Thetis offers a reminder to Zeus of Achilles' anticipated potentiality which was totally diminished by Zeus' desire to retain cosmic power. In sum, Achilles and Thetis ask Zeus for compensation for their shared, dishonourable fates.

2. Generational strife

There are some other examples of this theme of 'generational strife'. For example, it is subtly represented also on the Trojan side, between Hector and Astyanax. Hector's farewell to Andromache is undoubtedly one of the most impressive and moving scenes in the *Iliad* — the narrative of the young father and mother around their baby son is superb. As Kirk remarks, 'the description of the baby's fright as his father reaches out to him deserves all its fame, giving a sparkling impression of these intimate events and reactions in simple, traditional language'.² Yet, in such a beautiful picture of the young family, generational strife seems, again, foreshadowed in Hector's prayer:

"Ζεῦ ἄλλοι τε θεοί, δότε δὴ καὶ τόνδε γένεσθαι
παῖδ' ἐμόν, ὥς καὶ ἐγὼ περ, ἀριπρεπέα Τρώεσιν,
ᾧδε βίην τ' ἀγαθόν, καὶ Ἰλίου ἱφί ἀνάσσειν
καὶ ποτέ τις εἴποι 'πατρός γ' ὅδε πολλὸν ἀμείνων'.

² Kirk (1990) ad 6.460-70.

ἐκ πολέμου ἀνιόντα φέροι δ' ἕναρα βροτόεντα
κτείνας δῆλον ἄνδρα, χαρείη δὲ φρένα μήτηρ " (Il 6 476–81)

“Zeus and you other gods, grant that this my son may become, as I have been, preeminent among the Trojans, as strong and brave as I, and may he rule in strength over Ilios And let people say, as he returns from the fighting ‘this man is better by far than his father’ May he carry home the bloody spoils of the enemy he has killed, and bring joy to his mother’s heart ” (Tr M Hammond)

His prayer is ambivalent he wishes for his son to be preeminent in strength and bravery among the Trojans, like himself—but his son is also to be famed for being mightier than his father There appears to be a contradiction Taking the optative of εἴποι (479) as a wish,²⁴ Hector thinks of it as no more than reputation That is, Hector wishes that others would *say* that his son is much better than himself, but in reality he wishes for his son to be equal to himself Hector, one could say, does not want to be overwhelmed by his son and, even in this critical and climactic moment in his and their inevitable destiny, does not wish openly that his own son be mightier than himself

Ambivalence prevails in the scene Before his prayer for his son (above), Hector laments Andromache’s destiny

ὥς ποτέ τις ἑρέει σοὶ δ' αὖ νέον ἔσσεται ἄλγος
χῆται τοιοῦδ' ἀνδρὸς ἀμύνειν δούλιον ἦμαρ
ἀλλὰ με τεθνηῶτα χυτὴ κατὰ γαῖα καλύπτει,
πρίν γέ τι σῆς τε βοῆς σοῦ θ' ἔλκηθμοῖο πυθέσθαι (Il 6 462-65)

This is what they will say and for you there will be renewed misery, that you have lost such a husband to protect you from the day of slavery But may I be dead and the heaped earth cover me, before I hear your screams and the sound of you being dragged away

(Tr M Hammond)

²⁴ Chantraine (1963) 213 cites this verse (6 479) as the example of wish (*l'optatif de souhait*)

Hector will not be the man who wards off the day of enslavement', nor, evidently, will he hear her cries.²⁵ Such ambivalent words are, in this case quite effective for conveying Hector's deep grief and affection. However, the ambivalent nuance in his prayer for his son differs slightly: in his prayer, the intrinsic 'fear of one's son' seems to emerge, perhaps echoing a traditional pattern of thought.

Consider the curious prayer of Ajax in Sophocles' *Ajax*. It echoes Hector's wish in the *Iliad*,²⁶ although Ajax's prayer is not as ambivalent as that of Hector:

ὦ παῖ, γένοιτο πατρός εὐτυχέστερος,
τὰ δ' ἄλλ' ὅμοιος (Ajax, 550-1)

My son, may you be happier than your father
but like him in all else (My translation)

Ajax's case is as tragic as Hector's, and it is natural for him to wish his son to be happier than himself,²⁷ because his situation is now that 'there is no place for any work that may cause him to be reconciled to his fate'.²⁸ However, τὰ δ' ἄλλ' ὅμοιος sounds strange, and it would be nobler, as Jebb comments,²⁹ if he had prayed that his son might be mightier than his father.

The phrase τὰ δ' ἄλλ' could infer some qualities other than happiness which Ajax sought and attained—for example physical strength, heroic spirit, virtue and so on. Even if Ajax was superior to many other Greek warriors in those respects and was so proud of these qualities, as a father he could nevertheless have prayed for his son to be mightier than himself.³⁰ It appears that the fear of the son overcoming the father subtly influenced the Greek mind—so that a father could scarcely wish to have a mightier son.

The story told by Phoenix (*Il.* 9.447-461) is another significant example of the motif of 'generational strife' in the *Iliad*. A peculiar aspect of this story is the mother's role—because

²⁵ Kirk (1990) ad loc.

²⁶ Also Aeneas to Ascanius in Verg. *Aen.* 12.435.

²⁷ Smyth (1956) 406 cites here S. *Aj.* 550 to explain a wish referring to the future.

²⁸ Kamerbeek (1963) ad loc.

²⁹ Jebb (1896) ad loc.

³⁰ Blundell (1989) 68 and 79 suggests that Ajax is portrayed throughout the play as a man who pursues personal gratification and that this speech to Eurysaces (545-77) contains no word of affection and remains self-centred in his treatment of the son as an extension of the father. I agree with Blundell's suggestion but still submit that the idea of Ajax's prayer comes not only from his characterisation in this particular play but also from the deeper sense intrinsically rooted in the ancient Greek spirit.

Phoenix enters into conflict with his father for the sake of his mother

οἷον ὅτε πρῶτον λίπον Ἑλλάδα καλλιγύναικα,
φεύγων νείκεα πατὴρ Ἀμύντορος Ὀρμενίδαο,
ὅς μοι παλλακίδος περιχώσατο καλλικόμοιο,
τὴν αὐτὸς φιλέεσκεν, ἀτιμάζεσκε δ' ἄκοιτιν,
μητέρ' ἐμήν ἢ δ' αἰὲν ἐμὲ λισσέσκετο γούνων
παλλακίδι προμιγῆναι, ἵν' ἐχθήρειε γέροντα
τῇ πιθόμην καὶ ἔρεξα πατὴρ δ' ἐμὸς αὐτίκ' οἰσθεῖς
πολλὰ κατηρᾶτο, στυγεράς δ' ἐπεκέκλετ' Ἑρινῦς,
μή ποτε γούνασιν οἷσιν ἐφέσσεσθαι φίλον υἱὸν
ἔξ ἐμέθεν γεγαῶτα θεοὶ δ' ἐτέλειον ἐπαράς,
Ζεὺς τε καταχθόνιος καὶ ἐπαινὴ Περσεφόνη
τὸν μὲν ἐγὼ βούλευσα κατακτάμεν ὅξει χαλκῷ 458
ἀλλὰ τις ἀθανάτων παῦσεν χόλον,³¹ ὅς ῥ' ἐνὶ θυμῷ
δήμου θῆκε φάτιν καὶ ὀνείδεα πόλλ' ἀνθρώπων,
ὥς μὴ πατροφόνος μετ' Ἀχαιοῖσιν καλεοίμην (II 9 447-61)

when I first left Hellas where the women are handsome, running from the anger of my father Amyntor, son of Ormenos. He was enraged at me over his lovely-haired concubine. He was giving his love to her and scorning his wife, my mother, and my mother constantly took me by the knees and entreated me to lie with the concubine first, to make her hate the old man. I agreed and did it. And my father realised at once and heaped curses on me, calling up the hateful Erinyes, that he should never sit on his knees a dear son born to me, and his curses were given fulfilment by the gods, Zeus of the underworld and terrible Persephone. My thought was to kill him with the sharp bronze. But one of the immortals stopped my fury, putting in my mind the talk of my people and all the shaming things that men would say, so that I would not have the name of parricide among the Achaeans. (Tr M Hammond)

The narrative of this story is rather inconsequential, probably because of the omission of explanatory details.³² The main line of the story is: Phoenix's father, Amyntor, brings home a concubine,

³¹ West (1998), in his new Teubner edition, reads *τρέψεν φρένας* in 459 (Plut. *Coriol.* 32.5) instead of *παῦσεν χόλον* (id. *Mor.* 26f).

³² Hainsworth (1993) ad loc.

Phoenix is persuaded by his mother to seduce the concubine, when his father finds out he curses his son with childlessness,⁵ as a result Phoenix plans to kill him. The last part of this passage (458-61), missing from the manuscripts and scholia, is cited only by Plutarch, who states that Aristarchus removed these verses from fear.³⁴ It is widely assumed that the verses are genuine, and that Aristarchus (or an early transmitter of the Homeric text) omitted them for ethical reasons.³⁵

Even if it might seem, to later editors, to be an immoral action for Achilles' preceptor, it was hardly surprising that Phoenix plans to kill his father. Various interpretations of this story have been offered,³⁶ among which I will pursue two valuable points suggested by Alden. First, the story makes Achilles identify with Phoenix, for both have quarrelled with a superior about a woman. Secondly, it also hints at unpleasant consequences if Achilles persists in his quarrel.³⁷ However, the story of Phoenix has two further functions which Alden does not note: first, it shows, on a broader scale, the story-pattern of generational strife in which mother and son co-operate in protest at their husband/father; secondly, it gives a new presentation of Peleus, which will be discussed in the next section of this paper. Phoenix contrived to help his mother and, at the same time, to overcome his father. Just as Gaia plays the decisive role in the succession-myth, here, too, another mother catalyses this generational reaction: she knew what to do, she persuaded her son, and Phoenix followed her instructions. Slater points out that mature and maternal women are particularly feared by the ancient Greeks, and sometimes they are regarded as the most dangerous.³⁸ The mother of Phoenix is surely a woman of this type.

Mothers are regarded as dangerous because they establish a close relationship with their sons,³⁹ who, being young and vigorous, are capable of overcoming their fathers. As the phrase

³ Devereux (1973) 43-4 argues that castration and blinding are regular alternative punishment for sexual transgression in Greek mythology.

⁴ *Moi* 26f ὁ μὲν οὖν Ἀρίσταρχος ἐξεῖλε ταῦτα τὰ ἔπη φοβηθείς

⁵ Janko (1992) 28, followed by Hainsworth (1993) ad loc. comments that 'the lines are Homeric in style and language'. Griffin (1995) ad loc. also follows Janko but adds that v. 460 does not look *Iladic* and that they are not original but derive from a marginal note by some learned reader.

³⁶ Since the precise description in the following passage (462-77) seems to reflect ancient custom, I do not agree with van der Valk (1963) 484 who suggests that Homer invents a quarrel between Phoenix and his father in order to give a reason for his taking refuge with Peleus. For the history of the discussion see Scodel (1982a) 128 nn. 1 and 3. I do not agree with Scodel (1982a) 133-6 who argues that this is a negative paradigm in order to persuade Achilles not to depart. Phoenix at first suggests that his own departure was an appropriate event, and then he gradually shifts the direction. This seems too unfittingly sophisticated and complicated an explanation.

³⁷ Alden (2000) 21 gives this story as an example of 'para-narratives' which make some internal reference to the events of the main narrative.

³⁸ Slater (1968) 12 writes that in tragedy it is young women and virgin goddesses who are helpful and benign and that most often the household is 'mother-dominant and father-avoidant'.

³⁹ Slater (1968) 132 notes the fear of the procreative power of the mother in the myth of revolt. Caldwell (1989) 161 offers a remarkable comment on the relationship between the mother and the son in generational myth: 'the lesson Kronos has learned from the fate of Ouranos is basically misogynistic: he sees that it is the woman as much as the son who is his enemy. His children must be kept separate from their mother.'

ἵν' ἐχθήρειε γέροντα (452) shows, the point of Phoenix's mother's appeal is to demonstrate Phoenix's youth and superior vigour. In spite of the fact that the problem was originally between husband and wife, once the son intervenes, it shifts to a conflict between father and son, and there is no further mention of the mother after she successfully persuades Phoenix. The mother is certainly dangerous, but the real threat to the father comes from his own son.

The *Odyssey*, too, presents us with an example of the potentially dangerous relationship between father and son. Let us examine the problematic speech of Telemachus in the scene of the bow-contest in the *Odyssey*.

καὶ δέ κεν αὐτὸς ἐγὼ τοῦ τόξου πειρησαίμην
 εἰ δέ κεν ἐντανύσω διοιστεύσω τε σιδήρου,
 οὗ κέ μοι ἀχυνμένῳ τάδε δώματα πότνια μήτηρ
 λείποι ἄμ' ἄλλω ἰοῦσ', ὅτ' ἐγὼ κατόπισθε λιποίμην
 οἶός τ' ἤδη πατὴρ ἀέθλια κάλ' ἀνελέσθαι (Od. 21. 113-7)

And I myself should be glad to make trial of the bow. Perhaps I may string it and shoot clean through the iron, then I should not grieve to see my mother forsake this house in another's company, if I myself remained behind with prowess enough to take upon me such feats of mastery as my father's (Tr. W. Shewring)

When Telemachus offers the contest to the suitors, he suddenly announces that he will try the bow first. The phrase καὶ δέ ('besides, I too', 113) suggests that he speaks as if a sudden thought had struck him.⁴⁰ The timing of the idea is strange, occurring as it does in a situation which is too critical to allow the bow to be tried for fun. The repeated mention of weeping and lament emphasises the moment's impact: when Penelope draws out the bow, she weeps aloud (κλαῖε μέγα λιγέως, 56), she laments with many tears (πολυδακρύτοιο γόνοιό, 57), Eumaeus breaks down in tears (δακρύσας δ' Εὐμαῖος, 82), and the cowherd too begins to weep (κλαῖε δὲ βουκόλος, 83). All these phrases indicate that the time has finally come for Penelope to leave the house. In such a desperate situation, how could Telemachus dare to try the bow? *It appears as if Telemachus becomes one of the suitors in the contest for Penelope*.

Much discussion has centred on the interpretation of the following, difficult verses (115-7). Telemachus uses two optatives, λείποι and λιποίμην, at the beginning and end of the same verse

⁴⁰ Hayman (1882) ad loc.

(116) This surprising use of the verb is perhaps an indication of a desire to keep his intention ambiguous. Interpretations of these verses are twofold, depending on whether one takes οὐ (115) with μοι ἀχνυμένῳ in the same verse or with λείποι in 116: that is, (1) ‘I would not be sorry if my mother were to leave, so long as I should remain here’ (or, taking ὅτε temporally, ‘while I were left behind’, that is, if once Telemachus can prove he is as good as his father by using the bow, then he will not care if Penelope departs),⁴¹ or, (2) ‘she will not have to leave to my sorrow as long as I remain’, that is, by winning the contest he will retain his mother as the prize.⁴² The point of these two interpretations rests on one’s rendering of ἀέθλια (117). Those who prefer the former interpretation take the word as ‘the contests’ (Monro) or ‘the weapons’ (Hayman), Stanford, Russo *et al.* offer no comment on ἀέθλια, consciously ignoring the (true) meaning of the word in their desire to reinforce Telemachus’ decent character. Thus, Stanford comments that he ‘diffidently’ prefers the former.⁴³ However, the word ἀέθλια designates Penelope without any doubt, since it is clearly announced by Penelope that the prize in this contest is *herself*.

ἀλλ’ ἐμὲ ἰέμενοι γῆμαι θέσθαι τε γυναῖκα
 ἀλλ’ ἄγετε, μνηστῆρες, ἐπεὶ τόδε φαίνεται ἄεθλον
 θήσω γὰρ μέγα τόξον Ὀδυσσῆος θεῖοιο (Od. 21. 72–4)

the desire to have me as wedded wife. Well, my suitors, the prize at stake is now displayed for you. I will put before you the great bow of King Odysseus. (Tr. W. Shewring)

She describes herself as ἄεθλον, ‘Come, suitors, now that the prize is here to be seen’ (73, tr. R. D. Dawe). From the beginning the purpose of the contest was for the prize of Penelope, and nothing else. Thus verse 117 should be interpreted, ‘I would be able to take up my father’s glorious prize, Penelope. In a scene in which his excitement is conspicuous—and his initiative in the preparation for the contest especially surprising to the suitors (118–23)—Telemachus declares that he will try the bow in order to remain in the house, to take Penelope and the kingship of Ithaca.’⁴⁴

However, Telemachus fails even to string the bow. The narrative is again ambiguous.

⁴¹ Hayman (1882) ad loc. Monro (1901) ad loc. Ameis, Hentze and Cauer (1925) ad loc., Stanford (1948) ad loc. Russo, Fernandez-Galiano and Heubeck (1992) ad loc.

⁴² Van Leeuwen (1917) ad loc. Dawe (1993) ad loc.

⁴³ Stanford (1948) ad loc.

⁴⁴ Finkelberg (1991) 306 and 315 argues that kingship in heroic Greece is characteristically transmitted by marriage to the royal heiress, and that this is the reason why Telemachus not only cannot assume the position of his missing and presumably dead father, but cannot even entertain the contest.

καί νύ κε δὴ ῥ' ἐτάνυσσε βίη τὸ τέταρτον ἀνέλκων,
ἀλλ' Ὀδυσσεὺς ἀνένευε καὶ ἔσχεθεν ἰέμενόν περ (Od 21 128-9)

Then a fourth time he strained at it, and this time he would indeed have strung it, but Odysseus gave him a warning nod and stopped him short in his eagerness (Tr W Shewring)

Telemachus ‘would have strung’, that is to say, would have succeeded in stringing the bow, if Odysseus had not intervened by giving a nod of warning⁴⁵ It is significant that Odysseus does not stop Telemachus initially (for him, Telemachus must be the one among all the other suitors who is *least* expected to win the contest?), but only intervenes when he is nearly successful And, strikingly, it is Odysseus who stops Telemachus It could have been the suitors who stopped him, which would be more natural in a context where the contest is offered for the suitors—for Odysseus is only beggar and spectator The suitors have proper reasons for stopping him What we see, however, is that the tension between father and son becomes very dangerous now—indeed, possibly more dangerous than that between the suitors and Odysseus⁴⁶

According to the *Telegony*, Odysseus was unwittingly killed by his own son Telegonus, just as Laius was by Oedipus In addition—a very interesting and allusive point—is the detail that Telegonus marries Penelope, and Telemachus marries Circe This is a curious double relation two sons of Odysseus marry two partners of Odysseus The same pattern seen in cosmic succession myth appears here twice over by eliminating the father, the mothers and sons survive Generational strife, thus, underlies the story of Odysseus

It appears—as the myth of Oedipus also demonstrates—that generational strife (son overcoming father) is a conspicuous theme in Greek myth, characterised by the fear of having a mightier son This constitutes a basic element in many Greek stories

3. Peleus and Achilles

When Hera mentions the marriage of Peleus and Thetis in book 24 of the *Iliad*, she says that she herself raised Thetis

⁴⁵ Hayman (1882) ad loc. takes the optative τανύσειε, instead of ἐτάνυσσε (KMS), reading as ‘would be likely to string’

⁴⁶ If Odysseus had not stopped Telemachus, the arrow might have shot Odysseus, even if unwittingly It would also be a breathtaking and dramatic moment when he stopped Telemachus

αὐταρ Ἀχιλλεύς ἐστι θεᾶς γόνος, ἣν ἐγὼ αὐτὴ
θρέψα τε καὶ ἀτίτηλα καὶ ἀνδρὶ πόρον παράκουτιν (Il 24 59-60)

But Achilles is a child of a goddess, whom I myself brought up and reared and gave as wife
to a man (Tr M Hammond)

Thinking of Hera's suspicious attitude to Thetis in Book 1, Braswell suggested that the story of Heia's upbringing of Thetis is an invention for this occasion⁴⁷ Braswell's interpretation is supported by Macleod, Willcock, Kirk and Richardson,⁴⁸ however, from the perspective of *succession-myth*, the upbringing of Thetis is of great significance

As various episodes in the *Iliad* demonstrate, Hera is the goddess who always opposes the power of Zeus Hera's favour towards Thetis definitely implies her interest in Thetis' potentiality, since she hoped that Thetis' son might overthrow the power of Zeus The story of the upbringing of Thetis, accordingly, seems not to be an invention but, more significantly, to belong to the traditional theme of succession-myth on which I have elaborated above⁴⁹

The phrase θρέψα τε καὶ ἀτίτηλα (24 60) is important Following the scholia, Willcock notes that these words signify that Hera nursed Thetis as a small child⁵⁰

ἐξ ἀταλῆς ἐπεμελησάμην (Schol T)

I took care of her from when she was a tender child (My translation)

ἔτι ἀταλὴν ἦτοι νέαν καὶ ἀπαλὴν οὔσαν ἀνεθρεψάμην (Schol b)

I brought her up who was still a tender and softchild (My translation)

As both scholia explain, the connotation of ἀτίτηλα is not only to *bring up* but also to *cherish gently* the baby This implies the special care and strong interest lavished by Hera on Thetis Moreover, this phrase is of particular relevance to the theme of succession-myth, since the same two verbs recur in two important passages, viz, *Iliad* 14 303 (Hera's nurture by Oceanos and

⁴⁷ Braswell (1971) 23

⁴⁸ Macleod (1982) ad loc Willcock (1984) ad loc comments that there is no background concerning Thetis upbringing, Richardson (1993) ad loc only refers to Braswell with no comment

⁴⁹ O'Brien (1993) 93 offers a unique interpretation of Hera's upbringing of Thetis the *χόλος* of Hera was physically transmitted through Thetis to her infant son Achilles If *χόλος* could be transmitted by upbringing, as O'Brien suggests, the *χόλος* of Oceanos and Tethys (14 306) would also have been transmitted to Hera Cf Janko (1992) ad 14 306

⁵⁰ Willcock (1984) ad loc

Tethys) and *Theogony* 480 (Gaia nourishes and raises Zeus)

Ὠκεανόν τε, θεῶν γένεσιν, καὶ μητέρα Τηθύν,
οἳ με σφοῖσι δόμοισιν ἐὺ τρέφον ἥδ' ἀτίταλλον (Il 14 302-3)

Ocean, the source of the gods' creating, and mother Tethys, who brought me up and reared me in kindness in their house (Tr M Hammond)

Ζῆνα μέγαν τὸν μὲν οἱ ἐδέξατο Γαῖα πελώρη
Κρήτη ἐν εὐρείῃ τρεφόμεν ἀτιταλλέμεναί τε (*Theog* 479-80)

great Zeus Mighty Earth accepted him from her to rear and nurture in broad Crete
(Tr M L West)

In the *Theogony*, Gaia received Zeus from Rhea and nursed him for the purpose of enabling him to usurp the throne of Cronus (468-74) I suggest that these two verbs strongly connote the nurture of a possible challenger of paternal sovereignty Therefore, in the context of *Iliad* 24, the introduction of the subtext of Hera's raising of Thetis is another marker of Hera's hidden intention

A fragment of the *Cypria*, paralleled in Hesiod (*Kyp* fr 2 PEG and Hes fr 210 M-W), offers a very truncated version of the story of the marriage of Thetis and Zeus

ὁ δὲ τ]ὰ Κύπ[ρια ποιήσας "Η]ραι χαρ[ιζομένη]ν φεύγειν αὐ[τοῦ]
τὸ]ν γάμον, Δ[ί]α δὲ ὁμ]όσαι χολω[θέντ]α διότι θνη[τῶ]ι συ]νικίσει·
κα[ὶ] παρ' Ἡ]σιόδῳ δὲ κε[ῖ]ται τ]ὸ παραπλήσ[ιον]

(*Kyp* fr 2 PEG and Hes fr 210 M-W)

The author of the *Cypria* says that Thetis, as a favour to Hera, refused marriage with Zeus, he was angry and swore that she would marry a mortal A similar story is found in Hesiod
(My translation)

It is significant that this account makes no mention of Themis or Prometheus, but gives "Η]ραι χαρ[ιζομένη]ν as the *sole* reason why Zeus' marriage with Thetis did not go ahead The "favour to Hera", I suggest, definitely implies the story of the upbringing of Thetis by Hera

However, this account *is* strange First, *why* should the unwillingness of Thetis (because she

wished to do Hera a favour) be the real reason why the marriage was prevented? If Zeus truly had desired to marry Thetis, her willingness or unwillingness could never have been significant enough for her to reject almighty Zeus. Indeed, as the story of how Peleus married Thetis demonstrates, it is unthinkable that her rejection of the marriage could be the reason why it was stopped.⁵¹ Secondly, one might expect that it would be Hera who raised an objection to their marriage — for Hera's primary role in Greek myth is that of 'jealous wife', harassing the unwilling lovers of Zeus.⁵² On the contrary, Hera keeps silent, raising no objections.

Admittedly, this is a very truncated version of the story, with no details to answer our questions, let us turn to the version in Apollonius Rhodius (4790-804), which supplies further necessary information.

ἀλλά σε [Thetis] γὰρ δὴ
 ἐξέτι νηπυτίης αὐτῇ [Hera] τρέφον, ἥδ' ἀγάπησα
 ἔξοχον ἀλλῶν αἵ τ' εἶν' ἀλλ' ναιετάουσιν,
 οὐνεκεν οὐκ ἔτλης εὐνῇ Διὸς ἱεμένοιο
 λέξασθαι (κείνῳ γὰρ αἰεὶ τάδε ἔργα μέμνηεν,
 ἥ ἐ σὺν ἀθανάταις ἥ ἐ θνητῆσιν ἰαύειν),
 ἀλλ' ἐμέ γ' αἰδομένη καὶ ἐνὶ φρεσὶ δειμαίνουσα
 ἠλεύω. ὁ δ' ἔπειτα πελώριον ὄρκον ὅμοσσε,
 μή ποτέ σ' ἀθανάτοιο θεοῦ καλέεσθαι ἄκοιτιν
 ἔμπης δ' οὐ μεθίεσκεν ὀπιπτεύων ἀέκουσαν,
 εἰσότε οἱ πρέσβεια θέμις κατέλεξεν ἅπαντα,
 ὥς δὴ τοι πέπρωται ἀμείνονα πατρός ἑοιο
 παῖδα τεκεῖν. τῷ καὶ σε λιλαιόμενος μεθέηκεν
 δείματι, μή τις ἐοῦ ἀντάξιος ἄλλος ἀνάσσοι
 ἀθανάτων, ἀλλ' αἰὲν ἔδον κράτος εἰρύοιτο

(*Argonautica*, 4790-804)

Come — ever since you [Thetis] were a baby I [Hera] have brought you up and cherished you beyond all other goddesses who dwell in the sea, because you were not wanton enough to lie in Zeus' bed though he desired you — his mind is always on such things, whether it be immortals or mortals he wants to sleep with!¹ — but out of respect for me and because your heart was afraid you rejected him. He then swore a mighty oath that no immortal god would ever call you his wife. Despite this, and though you were unwilling, he kept his eyes

⁵¹ The story of Nemesis (Athen. 334 B and *Kyp* fr. 9 PEG) may support my argument. Nemesis transforms herself to avoid marriage with Zeus. The motif of unwilling marriage and transformation is quite similar to Thetis' story and in both cases they mated under compulsion.

⁵² Gantz (1993) 61.

on you, until the revered Themis told him in detail how you were fated to bear a son greater than his father, though he was still keen, he left you alone out of fear that some rival would rule over the immortals and so that he could preserve his power for ever (Tr R Hunter)

Apollonius, too, narrates that Hera raised Thetis from a baby, and loved her (791) Two reasons are offered as to why the marriage between Zeus and Thetis was not fulfilled (a) Thetis first refused the marriage, as a favour to Hera (796), (b) Zeus subsequently refused it, as a result of Themis' prophecy, fearing lest Thetis should bear a son mightier than himself (800-2) These two reasons are interrelated and convey one message—that of Thetis' potentiality Thetis was favourably disposed towards Hera who had raised her, Hera, in the knowledge that she would bear a son mightier than his father, reared Thetis willingly For this reason Zeus refused the marriage We discover that Hera's strategy, since she herself was incapable of bearing a son mightier than Zeus, was to create a god—even one born from another goddess—who could usurp Zeus

In her speech in Apollonius, Hera's rhetoric is crafty and ambivalent, as Hunter points out ⁵³ According to Hera, although Thetis refused marriage with Zeus, he did not stop attempting to seduce her against her will, until Themis told him of the prophecy (799-800) Hera's speech implies that Themis' prophecy was the true reason for the marriage's prevention—Thetis' private emotions meant nothing when Zeus had work for her to do ⁵⁴

Apollodorus (3 13 5) gives three explanations for the abortive marriage (a) Zeus (and Poseidon) withdrew as a result of Themis' prophecy, (b) Prometheus declared that the son born to Zeus by Thetis would be lord of heaven, (c) Thetis would not marry Zeus because she had been brought up by Hera We see that Apollodorus differs from Apollonius Rhodius only in adding Prometheus' prophecy ⁵⁵

ἔνιοι δέ φασι, Διὸς ὀρμῶντος ἐπὶ τὴν ταύτης συνουσίαν, εἰρηκέναι
Προμηθεῖα τὸν ἐκ ταύτης αὐτῷ γεννηθέντα οὐρανοῦ δυναστεύσειν

(*Biblio* 3 13 5)

But some say that when Zeus was bent on gratifying his passion for her, Prometheus declared that the son borne to him by her would be lord of heaven (Tr J G Frazer)

⁵³ Hunter (1993) 97

⁵⁴ Green (1997) 327, also Hunter (1993) 100 remarks that this scene is a powerful manifestation of the gulf between frightened anger [of Zeus and of Hera] and silent suffering [of Thetis]

⁵⁵ Apollodorus probably took the story from Aeschylean Prometheus plays

These examples demonstrate that the story of Thetis' upbringing is *always* associated with her potential marriage to Zeus, both accounts are closely related to each other, and their connection is Hera's scheme to usurp Zeus' sovereignty. Hera raised Thetis in order to make her marry Zeus. Although later writers offer Thetis' feelings as the reason why the marriage did not take place, the more plausible reason must be the prophecy of Themis or Prometheus.⁵⁶ Hera's plan for the marriage was finally unsuccessful, since Zeus was informed of the prophecy. If he had not been informed, Thetis could have helped Hera by marrying Zeus. We conclude, therefore, that, although later writers suggest that Thetis *refused* to marry Zeus *as a favour to Hera*, on the contrary, Thetis might have *wanted* to marry Zeus *as a favour to Hera*. This interpretation also explains why Thetis tried to refuse Peleus' hand.

In the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* (321), Hera mentions Thetis in a striking way. After telling of Hephaestus, whom she threw from heaven down to the ocean because he was unexpectedly lame, she abruptly speaks of Thetis:

ἀλλὰ ἐ Νηρῆος θυγάτηρ Θέτις ἀργυρόπεζα
 δέξατο καὶ μετὰ ἦρι κασιγνήτησι κόμισσεν
 ὥς ὄφελ' ἄλλο θεοῖσι χαρίσασθαι μακάρεσσι (Hy Apol. 319-21)

But Thetis, the silver-footed daughter of Nereus,
 received him and with her sisters took him in her care
 I wish she had done the blessed gods some other favour!
 (Tr. A. Athanassakis)

Hera does not specify what she *really* wishes Thetis could have done, leaving the meaning of ἄλλο open. But after these words she suddenly changes topic to Zeus and her fear of his new contrivance. Thetis' act, saving Hephaestus in the ocean, was not what Hera wanted. From the manner of her expression, it would appear that Hera is conscious of Thetis' (misdirected) potentiality, which *could* have been helpful not only for Hera herself but also for the other gods.

Hera's words imply that her intention is cosmic in scale. Zeus begot Athena alone, and she is most excellent by far among "all the blessed gods" (314-5), whereas Hephaestus was born lame among "all the gods" (316). Then, Hera wishes that Thetis had done something else "to

⁵⁶ The identification of Themis and Prometheus could be traditional. Gantz (1993) 52 suggests that the prophecy was originally by Themis, and that Aeschylus (*PD* 209-10) invented the story to give Prometheus some leverage over Zeus.

benefit the blessed gods” (θεοῖσι χαρίσασθαι μακάρεσσι , 321) If Thetis had married Zeus and her son had overthrown Zeus, it would have been beneficial for the blessed gods who are subdued by Zeus. This is surely what Hera means by ἄλλο ⁵⁷

Hera is always conscious of the other gods and regards this situation not as a personal problem between divine husband and wife, but as a problem for the whole divine world ⁵⁸ Note, for instance, the clear antagonism in *Iliad* 15 between Zeus, on the one side, and Hera and the rest of the gods, on the other. After quarrelling with Zeus (15.14-46), Hera returns to Olympus to join the gathering of the gods (ὀμηγερέεσσι δ’ ἐπῆλθεν ἀθανάτοισι θεοῖσι , 84-5). In order to facilitate the involvement of the other gods in the quarrel, she emphasises her own inclusion among the other gods (92-148), this is why she speaks of the quarrel with the plural pronoun ‘we’ (not the singular ‘I’), although the quarrel was, in fact, between her and Zeus. “how foolish we are, thoughtless to storm against Zeus.” (104) The word νήπιος is also significant. She looks as if she regrets having resisted Zeus, but actually she is irritated by their failure, and is still seeking a way to contrive against him. As Janko rightly remarks, ⁵⁹ ‘Hera overtly advises submission, but covertly stirs up revolt’. If Hera intervenes in the succession of the supreme god, the cosmic order will change—and all the gods will inevitably be involved. This is what Hera intends, and, for this purpose, we see, again, that Hera has a special interest in the upbringing of Thetis.

To confirm Hera’s purpose, her other remarks in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* are worth examining. Before the passage in which she mentions Thetis, Hera speaks about Hephaestus in comparison with Athena.

καὶ νῦν νόσφιν ἐμείο τέκε γλαυκῶπιν Ἀθήνην,
ἥ πᾶσιν μακάρεσσι μεταπρέπει ἀθανάτοισιν·
αὐτὰρ ὃ γ’ ἠπεδανὸς γέγονεν μετὰ πᾶσι θεοῖσι
παῖς ἐμὸς Ἥφαιστος ῥικνὸς πόδας ὃν τέκον αὐτὴ
ρίψ’ ἀνὰ χερσὶν ἐλοῦσα καὶ ἔμβαλον εὐρέι πόντῳ
ἀλλὰ ἐ Νηρῆος θυγάτηρ Θέτις ἀργυρόπεζα
δέξατο καὶ μετὰ ἦσι κασιγνήτησι κόμισσεν
ὥς ὄφελ’ ἄλλο θεοῖσι χαρίσασθαι μακάρεσσι.
σχέτλιε ποικιλομήτα, τί νῦν μητίσσαι ἄλλο, (*Hy Apol* 314-322)

⁵⁷ For the discussion of ἄλλο, cf. my paper on the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* “Digression in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*”, *Classical Studies* XV (1998), pp. 1-23.

⁵⁸ Nilsson (1932) 221ff., followed by Griffin (1980) 186, suggests that the conception of a unified divine society is a creation of the epic, which is influenced by the religious ideas current in the second millennium B.C.

⁵⁹ Janko (1992) ad 15.104-12.

and now apart from me gave birth to gray-eyed Athena,
 who excels among all the blessed immortals
 But my son, Hephaestus, whom I myself bore
 has grown to be weak-legged and lame among the blessed gods
 I took him with my own hands and cast him into the broad sea
 But Thetis, the silver-footed daughter of Nereus,
 received him and with her sisters took him in her care
 I wish she had done the blessed gods some other favour!
 O stubborn and wily one! What else will you now devise?
 (Tr A Athanassakis)

Hera is disappointed because Hephaestus is not as excellent as Athena. indeed, he is disabled. She must have previously desired a powerful child, and it is on this occasion that she speaks about Thetis' rescue of Hephaestus. The contrast between Athena and Hephaestus is also that between Zeus' capability and Hera's incapability. It is not surprising, therefore, that Hera is prompted to think of the prophecy about Thetis, as her revenge on Zeus.

It is also significant that Hera thinks of Zeus just after mentioning Thetis (322). The two epithets in this verse, *σχέτλιε* and *ποικιλομήτα*, seem to be the most proper expression in this context for Hera to describe Zeus.⁶⁰ Hera is anxious that Zeus might contrive 'something else' (*ἄλλο*, 322), in order to compete with Zeus, Hera wants to contrive 'something else' (*ἄλλο*, 321), which is, as was suggested above, to have a god mightier than Zeus born from Thetis. There is a strong case for suggesting that Hera's hostility to Zeus is concealed behind the passage describing Hera's upbringing of Thetis (*Iliad* 24. 61). This is validated by the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* and later sources.

After she had given birth to her disappointing child Hephaestus, and rejected him, Hera's hopes for her next contrivance focus on Thetis. The marriage of Peleus and Thetis is mentioned twice by Achilles in the *Iliad* at 18. 79-93 and 24. 534-7. These two accounts offer a clear contrast. Achilles narrates the former after Patroclus' death, groaning deeply, *βαρὺ στενάχων* (18. 78), in the latter passage, after his reconciliation with Priam, he presents a much milder attitude toward Peleus. In the former passage, 18. 79-93 especially at 84-7, Achilles explicitly says that it was a marriage with an unfortunate outcome.

⁶⁰ Janko (1993) ad *Il.* 14. 295-6 remarks that Hera alludes to Metis with the words *ποικιλομήτα* and *μητίσσαι* (322). Hera's anxiety, therefore, is evidently about the sovereignty of the universe because swallowing Metis and begetting Athena were contrived by Zeus exactly for that purpose.

"μήτηρ ἐμή, τὰ μὲν ἄρ μοι Ὀλύμπιος ἐξετέλεσεν
ἀλλὰ τί μοι τῶν ἥδος, ἐπεὶ φίλος ὤλεθ' ἐταῖρος,
Πάτροκλος, τὸν ἐγὼ περὶ πάντων τῶν ἐταίρων,
ἴσον ἐμῇ κεφαλῇ· τὸν ἀπώλεσα, τεύχεα δ' Ἔκτωρ
δηώσας ἀπέδυσε πελώρια, θαῦμα ἰδέσθαι,
καλὰ τὰ μὲν Πηλῆι θεοὶ δόσαν ἀγλαὰ δῶρα
ἥματι τῷ ὅτε σε βροτοῦ ἀνέρος ἔμβαλον εἴνῃ.
αἴθ' ὄφελος σὺ μὲν αἴθι μετ' ἀθανάτης ἀλίῃσι
ναίειν, Πηλεὺς δὲ θνητὴν ἀγαγέσθαι ἄκοιτιν
νῦν δ' ἵνα καὶ σοὶ πένθος ἐνὶ φρεσὶ μυρίον εἴη

παιδὸς ἀποφθιμένοιο, τὸν οὐχ ὑποδέξαι αἴτις
οἴκαδε νοστήσαντ', ἐπεὶ οὐδ' ἐμὲ θυμὸς ἄνωγε
ζῶειν οὐδ' ἄνδρεςσι μετέμμεναι, αἳ κε μὴ Ἔκτωρ
πρῶτος ἐμῷ ὑπὸ δουρὶ τυπείς ἀπὸ θυμὸν ὀλέσσει,
Πατρόκλοιο δ' ἔλωρα Μενoitιάδεω ἀποτείσει" (Il 18 79-93)

"Mother, yes, the Olympian has done all this for me But what pleasure can I take in it, when my dear friend is killed, Patroklos, a man I honoured above all my companions, as much as my own life I have lost him, and Hektor who killed him has stripped the huge armour from him, that lovely armour, wonderful to see, which the gods gave as a splendid gift to Peleus on the day when they brought you to a mortal man's bed If only you had stayed in your home with the immortal goddesses of the sea, and Peleus had married a mortal wife! But as it is there must now be countless sorrow for your heart too, for the death of a son you will never welcome back to his home—since my heart has no wish for me to live or continue among men, unless first Hektor is struck down by my spear and loses his life, and pays me the price for taking Patroklos son of Menoitios " (Tr M Hammond)

Looking at his account, it seems surprising that Achilles' answer was intended to respond, about the death of Patroclus, to Thetis, who had come out of the sea in order to ask why he was crying (18 65-77) He replies to her quite simply about Patroclus' death (18 80-3), in spite of its profoundly traumatic effect on him Rather, his interest shifts from the death of Patroclus to the marriage of his parents, with the divine armour functioning as the linking element between the two

topics at the news of Patroclus' death, Achilles immediately recognises his own identity and mortality. So, he contemplates his parents' marriage⁶¹

When Achilles says to Thetis that 'the gods brought (ἔμβαλον) you to the bed of a mortal man' (85), he suggests that Thetis was made to marry Peleus against her will⁶². He bewails the fact that Thetis did not stay in her home with the immortal goddesses of the sea, leaving Peleus to marry a mortal wife (86-7). Strongly objecting against his parents' marriage, he protests against the will of Zeus who had arranged the marriage in order to deprive Thetis of her potentiality. Achilles' lament therefore, is not only for the death of Patroclus, but also for himself, since the death of Patroclus reminds him of his parents' undesired marriage, and also of his own undesired birth⁶³. Achilles wishes, 'would that I had never been born' (86-7). His deep sigh (βαρὺ στενάχων, 78) is his double lament for the death of Patroclus and for his own birth, both of which are at the last, closely linked.

Although Achilles appears indifferent to his father in this passage, he is very sympathetic to Peleus in other places. For example, at the beginning of book 16, Achilles asks Patroclus if there is any news from Phthia to indicate whether Peleus is alive (16.15), Achilles laments his father, who cannot welcome his son home (18.331), and who may no longer be alive or may be suffering the pain of old age (19.334-7). Peleus, too, is affectionate toward his son. His thoughtful farewell messages for Achilles on his departure to Troy are reported by Odysseus (9.252-8), Phoenix (9.438-43), and Achilles himself (23.144-9). Achilles even wishes to live 'in enjoyment of the wealth that old Peleus has won' (9.400). All these passages depict an ideal relationship between father and son.

As well as this ideal relationship between father and son, the personality of Peleus is carefully depicted as an exemplar of hospitality in the *Iliad*. He welcomes as many as four people to his palace: Nestor (11.772-9), Phoenix (9.480-4), Epeigeus (16.571-4), and Patroclus (23.87-90). It is particularly significant that the last three all come to his house as suppliants, expelled from their own lands because of a homicide or some domestic trouble. There seems to be a very careful attempt to introduce Peleus, not as the rude husband of Thetis (assumed from his myth), but quite differently—as a respectful host towards the suppliants who seek refuge in his house.

Note especially the story of Phoenix. Peleus welcomes him gladly, and loves him like a

⁶¹ Rutherford (1982) 146 suggests that Achilles' speeches here are pervaded by rationality, and this clear-sightedness makes him a heroic figure.

⁶² Edwards (1991) *ad loc.* offers that ἔμβαλον does not imply violence. However the connotation of this word—and also that of the *Hymn to Aphrodite* 199, βροτοῦ ἀνέρος ἔμπεσον εὐνή which Edwards himself cites—seems to be of an unwilling marriage.

⁶³ I agree with the neoanalytic interpretation of Patroclus' death as the double of that of Achilles, for example Whitman (1958) 199, Nagy (1979) 292-3 and Edwards (1991) 15.

son⁶⁴

ἐς Πηλῆα ἀναχθ'· ὁ δέ με πρόφρων ὑπέδεκτο,
καί μ' ἐφίλησ' ὥς εἴ τε πατήρ ὄν παῖδα φιλήσῃ
μοῦνον τηλύγετον πολλοῖσιν ἐπὶ κτεάτεσσι. (Il 9 480-3)

to king Peleus' house He welcomed me gladly, and loved me as a father loves his son
who is an only child, late-born, the heir to many possessions
(Tr M Hammond)

Phoenix is cherished and protected by this substitute-father, Peleus. This emphasises Peleus' character as a good father. Moreover, this same characterisation foreshadows the reconciliation of Achilles and Priam. Looking at Priam, Achilles thinks of Peleus in this sense, Priam is a substitute for Achilles' father. Just as Peleus accepted Phoenix as a substitute father, so Achilles accepts Priam as his substitute father. It seems that the stories of Peleus' welcome to suppliants are narrated in preparation for the final scene of the epic—the presentation of a new father-son relationship.

These pictures of Peleus imply a parallel with Thetis, who rescued Dionysus (6 132-7) and Hephaestus (18 395-405). It is remarkable that both are sons of Zeus: indeed, these episodes are apparently related to a succession-myth. Just as Thetis helped Zeus when he was fighting against his father Cronus, so too does she help two sons of Zeus: nursing them, it seems, until they can become mighty enough to fight with Zeus. This aspect of her motivation remains latent, however, since the *Iliad* rather emphasises Thetis' attribute as a nurturing mother⁶⁵. Thus, Thetis rescued the two gods not so as to nurture a threat to Zeus, but from motives of kindly protection, and, similarly, Peleus rescued his suppliants, which emphasises his decent character as a mediator in domestic problems—and glosses over his marriage to Thetis against her will.

Given these examples of Peleus' humanity, Achilles appears particularly unsympathetic to Peleus in the passage cited above (18 84-7), where he displays an indifferent attitude toward his father. As I have suggested, this is caused by Achilles' recognition of his mortality, brought on by Patroclus' death. Achilles now contemplates his own destiny (that of a mortal hero)—a consequence of the marriage of Peleus and Thetis.

It is significant that the *Iliad* ends its great story with the reconciliation of Achilles and

⁶⁴ Phoenix became ὀπάων of Peleus. For the relationship of ὀπάων, see Hainsworth (1993) ad loc.

⁶⁵ Slatkin (1991) 7.

Priam, to whom Achilles compares his own father. This scene is so familiar that a few specific comments will suffice in order to show the importance of Peleus. When Achilles first sees Priam, who has come to supplicate him with an enormous ransom, he is amazed. In this ‘most dramatic moment in the whole of the *Iliad*,’⁶⁶ a significant simile is deployed—that of the homicide who goes into exile and seeks refuge in the home of a rich man.

ὥς δ' ὅτ' ἄν' ἄνδρ' ἄτη πυκινὴ λάβῃ, ὅς τ' ἐνὶ πάτρῃ
 φῶτα κατακτείνας ἄλλων ἐξίκετο δῆμον,
 ἀνδρὸς ἐς ἀφνειοῦ, θάμβος δ' ἔχεν εἰσορόωντας,
 ὥς Ἀχιλεὺς θάμβησεν ἰδὼν Πρίαμον θεοειδέα (Il. 24.480-3)

As when a man is held fast by blind folly—he kills a man in his own country, and then comes to another land, to a rich man's house, and amazement takes those who see his entry. So Achilles was amazed when he saw godlike Priam (Tr. M. Hammond)

This simile is variously interpreted as showing simple amazement at the unexpectedness of Priam's arrival,⁶⁷ or reflecting the idea of pollution for bloodshed.⁶⁸ These interpretations are valid, but Richardson is surely correct to point out that the way of introducing the simile suggests that there is more at stake here than a mere expression of surprise or curiosity.⁶⁹ Richardson does not specify what this is, yet it seems to me that this simile subtly evokes Peleus, *since it is Peleus who typically plays the role of accepting suppliants in the Iliad*. It is certainly significant that the amazement of Achilles on seeing Priam is spelled out with a simile which strongly reminds us of Peleus, and the simile, I suggest, not only foreshadows Achilles' acceptance of Priam's supplication, but also hints that his remembering Peleus is essential for his acceptance of the supplication.

Priam's speech inducing the reconciliation, begins and ends—a typical ring-composition—with mention of Peleus.⁷⁰

"μνησai πατρὸς σοῖο, θεοῖς ἐπιείκελ' Ἀχιλλεῦ,
 τηλίκου ὥς περ ἐγών, ὅλοῳ ἐπὶ γήραος οὐδῶ (Il. 24.486-7)

⁶⁶ Richardson (1993) ad loc.

⁶⁷ Macleod (1982) ad loc.

⁶⁸ Gould (1973) 96 n.111.

⁶⁹ Richardson (1993) ad loc. also notes the reversal of roles—in the narrative it is the supplicated man who is the killer, and the suppliant who is the rich man.

⁷⁰ Richardson (1993) ad loc.

“Think of your father, godlike Achilles, an old man like I am, at the cruel edge of old age
(Tr M Hammond)

ἀλλ' αἰδέϊο θεούς, Ἀχιλεῦ, αὐτόν τ' ἐλέησον,
μνησάμενος σοῦ πατρός ἐγὼ δ' ἐλεεινότερός περ, (Il 24 503-6)

Respect the gods, then, Achilles, and have pity on me, remembering your own father
But I am yet more pitiable than he (Tr M Hammond)

This construction further emphasises that the mention of Peleus is of vital importance to the appeal—it enables Priam and Achilles to establish a common bond of sympathy.⁷¹ But why was this possible? Why does Peleus play such a decisive role in the grand finale of the epic?⁷² On the level of narrative structure we note a long sequence of father-and-son relationships, for example, Zeus' loss of his son Sarpedon and Patroclus' killing of Priam's sons, Lykaon and Polydoros, as Edwards rightly notes.⁷³ In addition, we have the characterisation of Peleus as a respectable host, and also the effect of the simile of the rich man (24 480-2). However, there is more to be discovered beneath the narrative—picking up on my earlier remarks, I suggest that 'generational myth' operates again here as background to the successful supplication—and there is a remarkable development.

Because of Thetis' potentiality, Achilles is mightier than his father. Achilles, however, could not fully develop his ability to intervene in the succession-myth.⁷⁴ This frustrated passion makes him lament his parents' marriage and his own genealogy. We remember that, at the very beginning of the poem, when Achilles asks Thetis to supplicate to Zeus, his idea was that Zeus *could have been his father*,⁷⁵ and this was also the point of Thetis' claim. Upon Patroclus' death, he still expresses his objection to the marriage of his parents, protesting against the will of Zeus, but now, faced with Priam, Achilles realises that the generational strife should be peacefully ended.

⁷¹ Lynn-George (1988) 242 notes the language of Priam's powerful statement, pointing out that 'Priam's discourse is constructed as the choice of a word, from among the possibilities recommended by the god, Priam selects one, this word, "father"'

⁷² Kim (2000) 23-63, esp. p. 33, tries to answer this question by establishing Achilles' pity for Priam as a *φίλος*. I agree, but my concern is rather what induces Achilles' pity for Priam, which seems to be still unsolved.

⁷³ Edwards (1991) 10.

⁷⁴ Rutherford (1982) 146 also points out Achilles' inability as the archetypal tragic figure: for all his power and greatness, Achilles is unable to dictate or influence the course of future events.

⁷⁵ O'Brien (1993) 79 explains that Achilles reconciled with Priam in response to Zeus' new ethic of pity, retreating from Hera's hatred. I would put more stress on Achilles' reintegration of himself.

An acceptance of his own old aged father, Peleus, comes with a new acceptance of his mortal destiny, and at the same time a new understanding of this age-old generational strife the younger and mightier son does not overcome but accepts his aged father

In one scene Achilles is reconciled not only with the father of his most hated enemy, but also with his own father, his own genealogy, and his own mortality While repeated *rejection* of supplication or prayer is so conspicuous throughout the *Iliad*,⁷⁶ it is significant that the poem is encircled by two *acceptances* of supplication that of Thetis to Zeus, and Priam to Achilles

Slatkin observes that ‘cosmic equilibrium is bought at the cost of human mortality’, ‘the alternative would mean perpetual evolution, perpetual violent succession, perpetual disorder’, she concludes that ‘the wrath of Thetis becomes absorbed in the actual wrath of her son’⁷⁷ I would support this penetrating interpretation by further emphasising the characterisation of Peleus as the key for resolving various problems on the cosmic level, his marriage with Thetis secures Zeus’ sovereignty, and on the human level, recollection of him puts an end to Achilles’ anger The suffering of Achilles and the sympathy which he feels for Priam can be more fully understood by recognising the significance of Peleus in the succession myth⁷⁸

The myth of generational strife resounds in the background of the *Iliad* and it has a profound effect on the poem We might even assume that there was an early, lost myth in which Zeus had to fight not only giants and monsters but also his own son⁷⁹ This son might have been a son of Thetis From the very beginning of the *Iliad*, the motif of “the son mightier than his father” is clearly recognisable through Achilles’ own words, and the poem ends not with the defeat of Hector or the death of Achilles, but, in the most ingenious way, with the perfect peace of the reconciliation of Achilles and Priam, which accomplishes a completely new understanding of this generational strife This is the beautiful end of the wrath of Achilles his wrath is about heroic τιμή at first, against Agamemnon and Hector, but then it is about himself, about his own mortality Thus the Διὸς βουλή will be fulfilled Zeus has now successfully escaped the danger of Thetis’ potentiality,⁸⁰ although his plan is still in the process of being accomplished—as Lynn-George persuasively notes,⁸¹ the imperfect verb (Διὸς δ’ ἐτελείετο βουλή , 1.5) intimates that Zeus’

⁷⁶ Alden (2000) 290 emphasises the rejection of λυταί giving references such as Chryses to Agamemnon in book 1, the embassy in book 9 Priam and Hecuba to Hector in book 22, and Hector and Achilles in book 22

⁷⁷ Slatkin (1991) 103

⁷⁸ I agree with Rutherford (1982) 160 who comments that it is part of human nature to seek to understand the course of events even when they are beyond human understanding The characterisation of Peleus here seems to be a good example of ‘the course of events’ which Rutherford points out

⁷⁹ Caldwell (1989) 179

⁸⁰ Griffin (1977) 48 notes that the Διὸς βουλή applies both to the events of the poem as a whole, and also in particular to the plan which Zeus devises with Thetis I would emphasise his latter interpretation but from a different angle

⁸¹ Lynn-George (1988) 38-9

plan is a process without end and, at the same time, without beginning, certainly, we are not informed when the plan was conceived and when it was achieved. Among the various possible interpretations of the plan, the reduction of the population of the earth is but one, and in this paper I have suggested that, in addition, the theme of 'overcoming the threat of a mightier son' must surely be recognised as a deep and subtle undercurrent through the *Iliad*.

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