

The Theomachy in the *Iliad*

Noriko Yasumura

In the *Iliad*, hostility between the gods is characteristically expressed through the motif of protection: in the Achaean and Trojan armies, their various favourites act as their surrogates as they vie with each other on behalf of their benefactors.¹ It is sometimes held that the myths of the battles between the gods serve as background to the human battle. Certainly the divine battles function as exemplars -- cautionary or rallying -- for their human counterparts;² while these battles are individually contained, and recounted for their own sake, the partisanship and characterisation of the gods are consistent enough to suggest that the poet of the *Iliad* refers to a particular rebellion such as the Gigantomachia.

Following the narration of the attempt to bind Zeus (1.396ff.), tension between him and the other gods becomes conspicuous, although it is sometimes set forth comically. In this paper, I delineate the vestiges of an earlier epic of the gods' battle. Among the divine oppositions to Zeus, the alliance of Hera and Poseidon is the most often addressed (as I discussed in Chapter II). As Poseidon is the only male deity who explicitly challenges the power of Zeus in the *Iliad*, I will focus on him as (a) the ring-leader in attempted coups against Zeus and (b) as the last obstacle to Zeus' reordering of the universe.

1. The 'tug of war' between Zeus and Poseidon (*Iliad* 13.1-360)

In book 13 of the *Iliad*, Zeus and Poseidon stretch the 'rope of war' and pull alternately:

τοὶ δ' ἔριδος κρατερῆς καὶ ὁμοίου πτολέμοιο
πείραρ ἐπαλλάξαντες ἐπ' ἀμφοτέροισι τάνυσσαν,
ἄρρηκτόν τ' ἄλυτόν τε, τὸ πολλῶν γούνατ' ἔλυσεν. (*Il.* 13.358-60)

¹ The *Odyssey* is quite different: harmony prevails in the council of the gods. Procedure in the council is quiet and orderly; however, they decide on Odysseus' return in the absence of Poseidon (*Od.* 1.22).

² For example, Nilsson (1925) 175-6 notes that the contests are consistently presented as deterrent examples.

So those gods crossed and tied the ropes of hard conflict and levelling war over both armies, and stretched them taut, not to be slipped or broken – but they broke the strength of many men. (Tr. M. Hammond)

This rope metaphor symbolises that the human battle, as well as that of the two gods, is locked in stalemate.³ Behind this episode, I wish to propose that there were other stories in which Zeus and Poseidon tested each other's physical strength in single combat. Since binding represents the ultimate defeat for a god, this 'crossing and tying the ropes' carries great significance. I contend that this tug-of-war summons up a (serious) previous battle between these gods, and is not necessarily to be read merely as an entertainment for the human audience. An examination of the structure of the first half of book 13 of the *Iliad* will demonstrate the plausibility of this hypothesis.

The commencement of Book 13 emphasises the increasing tension between Zeus and Poseidon: the two gods sit on opposite mountain-tops, their mutual, exclusive loftiness suggesting a mounting and dangerous pressure. Zeus looks away from the battlefield (3-4), but Poseidon maintains an intense interest in the battle (*οὐδ' ἀλαοσκοπιῆν*, 10), which is emphasised by the double negative in this phrase; we read, too, that he is motivated by fierce anger toward Zeus (*Διὶ δὲ κρατερῶς ἐνεμέσσα*, 16). The narrative suggests that Poseidon will surely – stealthily and behind Zeus' back – join the war, which would provoke a direct clash. Although Zeus looks far over the land of the Thracians and Mysians, never suspecting that any of the gods would intervene in the human battle (3-9), attention is twice drawn to his shining eyes (*ὄσσε φαεινῶ*, 3 and 7). The repeated reference to his 'shining eyes' within a short interval implies that Zeus, too, feels the danger and anticipates a clash.⁴ These signifiers of antagonism cast ominous shadows over the beginning of book 13.

The following passages describe Poseidon's prodigious journey (17-22) and his majestic armour and horse (23-31).⁵ When he pities the Achaeans, Poseidon departs from his mountain-top on Samothrace to arm at Aegae *at once* (*αὐτίκα*, 17): *αὐτίκα δ' ἔξ ὄρεος κατεβήσεται παιπαλόεντος* (13.17). The expression reminds us of the speed with which he races to encourage the Achaeans while Hera seduces Zeus: *αὐτίκα δ' ἐν*

³ Janko (1992) ad loc.

⁴ Janko (1992) ad 13.1-3 points out that *ὄσσε φαεινῶ* recurs five times, only in books 13-21. This proves that the dangerous tension among the gods is increasing towards the theomachy in books 20-21. Cf. Section 2 and 3 of this paper.

⁵ I agree with Janko (1992) ad 13.10-38 that the description emphasises Poseidon's purpose and the importance of his arrival, and expresses his three main attributes: earth-shaker, horse-god and sea-god.

πρώτοισι μέγα προθορῶν ἐκέλευσεν (14.363). The use of *αὐτίκα* effectively expresses Poseidon's haste: whenever he desires to carry out his own plans, his time is short and limited. He can work only while Zeus looks away from the battlefield, because he knows that he is no match for Zeus, whose superior strength is repeatedly emphasised by Poseidon's own words (8.210) and by the narrative (13.355). What is significant is that, in spite of this recognition, Poseidon -- like Hera -- does not yield but persists in his attempts to challenge Zeus.

Poseidon's arming is described with care: the horse (23-4), armour (25) and whip (25-6). The same arming combination is repeated, later, in Achilles' preparation for joining the war: armour (19.369-86), horse (19.392-5), whip (19.395-6).⁶ The elaborate description of Achilles' arming precisely fits the context: his rejoining the war is the point on which the whole plot of the *Iliad* turns. On the other hand, the overt grandiloquence which describes Poseidon's overly impressive arming appears ironic, since Poseidon does not actually fight in the war, but only encourages the Achaeans with words (at 47-58, to the two Aiantes; and, at 95-128, to Teucer and others). We might suspect that Poseidon's elaborate equipment would be more suitable for an individual battle against Zeus than for encouraging the human battle. In this we find another parallel with Achilles, who sets out for single combat with Hector. Reinhardt is correct to suggest that Poseidon arms like a hero for his *aristeia*.⁷

Poseidon's speeches to the Achaeans are constructed in such a way that, while they are aware of their own inferiority, they are nevertheless encouraged to fight and overthrow their enemy who has the advantage. His message is, of course, appropriate to their desperate situation, but it is also analogous to Poseidon's own circumstances:⁸ that is, while he admits his inferiority to Zeus, he still does not give up his challenge. Let us examine Poseidon's words to Teucer and others:

αἰδώς, Ἀργεῖοι, κούροι νέοι· ὑμῖν ἔγωγε
μαρναμένοισι πέποιθα σωσέμεναι νέας ἀμάς·

⁶ Compare the description of Athena's preparations at *Il.* 5.733-42 and 8.384-391. In both passages, armour, car (horses), and spear are mentioned. As these examples demonstrate, these description of arming can be regarded, on the one hand, as formulaic; but on the other hand, each episode has, in itself, a coherent artistic function. Janko (1992) ad 13.21-2 comments that here Poseidon's preparation stresses the idea of imperishability; it also makes the scene glitter.

⁷ Reinhardt (1961) 279: 'der Gebieter rüstet sich zu seinem Unternehmen wie ein Held zu seinen Aristie'.

⁸ Leaf (1902) ad loc. denounces this speech as too long, tautological and ill-suited to its position. I consider that this speech becomes significant when viewed from the perspective of Poseidon's antagonism toward Zeus, and is appropriate to the sub-textual context (the war of the gods).

εἰ δ' ὑμεῖς πολέμοιο μεθήσετε λευγαλέοιο,
 νῦν δὴ εἶδεται ἡμᾶρ ὑπὸ Τρώεσσι δαμῆναι.
 ὦ πόποι, ἦ μέγα θαῦμα τόδ' ὀφθαλμοῖσι ὀρώμαι,
 δεινόν, ὃ οὐ ποτ' ἔγωγε τελευτήσεσθαι ἔφασκον (Il. 13.95-100)

Shame, you Argives, mere boys! You are the ones I trust in to save our ships, if you will fight. But if you men hang back from the misery of battle, then the day of our crushing by the Trojans is now here to be seen. Oh, this is a great astonishment for my eyes, a fearful thing that I never thought would come about. (Tr. M. Hammond)

For Poseidon, the phrase *κοῦροι νέοι* (95) is particularly appropriate: he is considered an elderly deity among the Olympians; for example, he is older than Apollo, as he states in book 21:

ἄρχε· σὺ [Apollo] γὰρ γενεῆφι νεώτερος· οὐ γὰρ ἔμοιγε [Poseidon]
 καλόν, ἐπεὶ πρότερος γενόμενῃ καὶ πλείονα οἶδα. (Il. 21.439-40)

Begin, then, since you are the younger – it would not be fair for me to start, as I was born older than you and have greater knowledge. (Tr. M. Hammond)

Although Poseidon addresses himself to the younger Achaeans in book 13, such encouragement would be similarly appropriate for Poseidon to use in addressing the younger gods in the divine war: since Zeus is far mightier than Poseidon, we would expect, in a parallel to the Achaean situation, that the divine faction of Poseidon would also have contended in a desperate fight.

Poseidon's next exhortation is likewise noteworthy: *ἀλλ' ἀκεώμεθα θάσσον· ἀκεσταί τοι φρένες ἐσθλῶν* (13.115). The word *ἀκεώμεθα* can be understood as 'let us correct our slackness'⁹ or, by implication, 'let us forget our dissatisfaction with Agamemnon and fight hard for the common cause.'¹⁰ 'Correction' or 'change' is especially appropriate to Poseidon's character, since he is the deity who challenges the stability of

⁹ Janko (1992) ad loc. comments that this verb is used for 'thirst' in 22. 2; 'ship' in 14. 383; and 'error' in Hdt. 1. 167. Leaf (1902) ad loc., following the suggestion of Schol. bT ad loc., suggests that 'the obvious reference of this line is to Achilles'. Leaf's interpretation ignores an essential logic: Poseidon encourages the Achaeans to fight bravely even if Achilles is absent.

¹⁰ Willcock (1984) ad loc.

Zeus' sovereignty. So, the latter half of verse 115 – 'the minds of good men can be curable' – could be understood not only as a palliative addressed to the distressed Achaeans, but also to himself. That is, although Poseidon may have been defeated once by his mightier brother Zeus, he nevertheless tries to soothe his own mind and to set out for another duel with Zeus.

A comparable reference to Poseidon's vacillation occurs in 15.203, where he is asked by Iris to retreat: ἦ τι μεταστρέψεις ; στρεπταὶ μὲν τε φρένες ἔσθλων (15.203). This time, his change of mind is negative: he must retreat and yield to Zeus. Poseidon's 'changing mind' is, thus, a notable part of his characterisation in the *Iliad*, and can be seen as a signifier of his tragic destiny – to be second best among the gods.

Poseidon's next speech to Idomeneus (231-8) is also curious, but can be explained if we view Poseidon as always being relegated to 'second best':

συμφερτὴ δ' ἀρετὴ πέλει ἀνδρῶν καὶ μάλα λυγρῶν·
 νῶϊ δὲ καὶ ἀγαθοῖσιν ἐπισταίμεσθα μάχεσθαι. (Il. 13.237-8)

Combination brings courage even in the poorest of fighters, and we two are men who could fight with the best. (Tr. M. Hammond)

Poseidon says that 'even if we are poor fighters, together we too can fight the brave.' This might be a pre-fabricated maxim,¹¹ but it is significant that it is ascribed to Poseidon. Certainly it is appropriate to Thoas, whose guise Poseidon has assumed, but it is also appropriate to Poseidon himself, who must rely on an alliance with the other gods in order to overcome Zeus.

The speech of Idomeneus concludes the discourse between Poseidon and the Achaeans, and occurs just before the 'rope of war' image. It is significant that Idomeneus compares Ajax with Achilles:

οὐδ' ἂν Ἀχιλλῆϊ ῥηξήνορι χωρήσειεν
 ἔν γ' αὐτοσταδίῃ· ποσὶ δ' οὐ πῶς ἔστιν ἐρίζειν.
 νῶϊν δ' ᾧδ' ἐπ' ἀριστέρ' ἔχε στρατοῦ, ὄφρα τάχιστα
 εἶδομεν ἢ τῷ εὐχος ὀρέξομεν, ἢ τίς ἡμῖν. (Il. 13.324-7)

He [Ajax] would not even give way to Achilleus, breaker of men, in a standing fight – but at the run there is no competing with Achilleus. So keep on as we are

¹¹ Cf. a similar phrase in 10. 224, σύν τε δύ' ἐρχομένω. See further Janko (1992) ad 13. 237-8.

for the left of the army, so we can know soon whether we shall give his triumph to another man, or he to us. (Tr. M. Hammond)

αὐτοσταδίη (325), used only once in the *Iliad*, means 'standing in the same place'; that is, in close combat.¹² When the Achaeans are reluctant to respond to Hector's challenges in book 7, it is Ajax who is recognised as the second best of the Achaeans (after Achilles) when he fights with Hector (7.181-90). Given that the chief point of Idomeneus' speech is the anticipation of Ajax's victory, it is pertinent to note the mention of Ajax's *disadvantage* in open fighting. Ajax – second best – is appropriately analogous to Poseidon: although Ajax is not mightier than Achilles, there is at least some hope of victory in close combat. Consequently, this passage could be interpreted as underscoring the 'rope-of-war' "metaphor" which we take to represent a duel of sorts between Zeus and Poseidon. It is apt that, immediately after Idomeneus' speech, Poseidon attempts a tug-of-war with Zeus (345-60) – an *αὐτοσταδίη*, in fact, with none of the thunderbolts or lightning which typify divine open air combat.

The opening of the 'rope-of-war' passage focuses attention back on the two gods:

τῷ δ' ἀμφὶς φρονέοντε δὺν Κρόνου υἱε κραταιῷ
ἀνδράσιν ἠρώεσσιν ἐτεύχετον ἄλγεα λυγρά. (*Il.* 13. 345-6)

And the two powerful sons of Kronos, their purposes opposed, caused grim suffering for the human warriors. (Tr. M. Hammond)

The tension operates on two levels: on the surface, the passage alludes to the human battle and the sides to which the two gods lend their support; the sub-text, however, is the serious conflict between Zeus and Poseidon, as the sentence construction clearly denotes: *Ζεὺς μὲν ῥα Τρῶεσσι* (347), *Ἀργείους δὲ Ποσειδάων* (351). The narrative then offers an intensely focused account of Poseidon's subordination:

[Poseidon] ἤχθετο γάρ ῥα
Τρῶσιν δαμναμένους, Διὶ δὲ κρατερῶς ἐνεμέσσα.
ἦ μὰν ἀμφοτέροισιν ὁμὸν γένος ἦδ' ἴα πάτρη,

¹² Willcock (1984) ad loc. explains the two Homeric methods of fighting: close combat, in which the necessary qualities were physical strength, mental endurance and good weapon skill; and, more open fighting, with some fleeing and others pursuing, in which foot-speed was the foremost requirement.

ἀλλὰ Ζεὺς πρότερος γέγονει καὶ πλείονα ἤδη.
 τῷ ῥα καὶ ἀμφαδίην μὲν ἀλεξέμεναι ἀλέεινε,
 λάθρη δ' αἰὲν ἔγειρε κατὰ στρατὸν, ἀνδρὶ εἰκώς.
 τοὶ δ' ἔριδος κρατερῆς καὶ ὁμοίου πτολέμοιο
 πείραρ ἐπαλλάξαντες ἐπ' ἀμφοτέροισι τάνυσσαν,
 ἄρρηκτόν τ' ἄλυτόν τε, τὸ πολλῶν γούνατ' ἔλυσεν. (Il. 13.352-60)

...he [Poseidon] felt pain to see them broken by the Trojans, and furious anger at Zeus. Both these were indeed of the same descent and parentage, but Zeus was the older born and had wider knowledge. So Poseidon avoided giving open help, but went covertly up and down the army in man's shape, constantly rousing them to fight. So those gods crossed and tied the ropes of hard conflict and levelling war over both armies, and stretched them taut, not to be slipped or broken – but they broke the strength of many men. (Tr. M. Hammond)

The repetition of the two gods' mutual antagonism (*ἐνεμέσσα*, 353; *ἔριδος*, 358) reveals that there is more at stake here than merely a playful allusion to the humans' war; rather, the passage raises the spectre of cosmic war. Consequently, we should consider that the poet is drawing the motif from an older epic of the battle between the gods. Just as Ajax is subordinate to Achilles, so is Poseidon to Zeus (355): Poseidon is younger in age and inferior in knowledge. The scholiast condemns Poseidon's tactics as lacking in dignity (Schol. bT) – but what alternative does he have if he is to persist in challenging the mightier Zeus?

As the *Iliad* narrates it, the result of the human battle depends on the outcome of this combat between the two gods. While we cannot know for certain the outcome of the *Ur*-battle between the gods, we can postulate that their combat might have settled the cosmic war. In terms of military strategy, the duel would occur early in the cosmic conflict:¹³ a duel being preferable to a clash of entire armies. For instance, when Paris agrees to fight a duel with Menelaos, both armies are delighted (3.111); after this duel is unsuccessful – inconclusive in settling the war – another is suggested, this time between Hector and Ajax (7.67-302). Likewise, in the divine sphere, we might expect that the gods would rejoice at the opportunity for a timely duel between Zeus and Poseidon, thus putting an end to their conflict.

¹³ Edwards (1991) 31-74 and 67-74 discusses the usual structure of battle. Although he believes that no 'proper' duel occurs in the battle of gods, I propose that this rope-of-war/tug-of-war between Zeus and Poseidon functions as a duel in the first stage of the war between the gods.

The rope-of-war image in 13.358-60 is appropriate for such a duel. The apparently too grand arming of Poseidon (13.23-8) is best viewed from this perspective, for now this scene becomes neither superfluous nor grandiose, but appropriate to the preparation for a duel of such magnitude and significance. Poseidon, we might suggest, represents, as the mightiest among his followers, his entire faction. In *Iliad* 13.1-360, I suggest that we can trace an earlier stage in the battle of the gods which begins with the increasing tension between Poseidon and Zeus, and culminates in a duel between the two leaders.

The result of the tug-of-war contest remains ambiguous: it appears to be a tie. However, if we link this episode with the tug-of-war in 8.19-27,¹⁴ Zeus must emerge victorious. In book 8, Zeus boasts that all of the gods and goddesses could not pull him down (8.18-27); this suggests that Poseidon would lose such a confrontation. Zeus' boastful proclamation – *τόσσον ἐγὼ περί τ' εἰμὶ θεῶν περί τ' εἶμ' ἀνθρώπων* (8.27) – could thus be interpreted as a triumphant declaration of his comprehensive victory over all his opponents.

2. The wrath of Zeus and Poseidon (*Iliad* 15. 47-235)

The disastrous wrath of Achilles is the theme of the *Iliad*, evinced by the poet's commencement of the epic with the word *μῆνις*.¹⁵ The narrative technique of book 15 correlates Achilles' wrath with that between Zeus and Poseidon. Poseidon's wrath in particular receives sympathetic treatment, and appears most analogous with that of Achilles.

While Poseidon is the focus of book 13, book 15 commences with a description of Zeus' supporters. Following Hera's deception in book 14, Zeus' fury is emphasised in book 15. He scowls terrifyingly at Hera (*δεινὰ δ' ὑπόδρα ἰδὼν Ἥρην*, 15.13),¹⁶ and his wrath, *χόλος*, is mentioned in 15.72 and 15.122 in significant contexts. First, in 15.72, his wrath is associated with that of Achilles; that is, Zeus' wrath will subside when Achilles renounces his own:

¹⁴ The cord / rope receives different descriptions: in the tug-of-war in book 8, the rope is *σειρή* (8. 19 and 25); in book 13, *πεῖραρ* (13. 359).

¹⁵ In the variants of the proem of the *Iliad*, Apellicon's version does not mention the wrath of Achilles (*Μοῦσας ἀείδω καὶ Ἀπόλλωνα κλυτότοξον*). Aristoxenus' version offers the *μῆνις* and *χόλος* of Achilles, but more emphasis is given to Apollo than to Zeus. Cf. Kirk (1985) ad 1.1, who comments that a proem could easily be varied from occasion to occasion to suit the audience or in accord with the length of the version to be presented.

¹⁶ Holoka (1983) 16 analyses the phrase *ὑπόδρα ἰδὼν* at 15. 13, suggesting that it reasserts Zeus' superiority and his entitlement to deference from Hera.

τοῦ δὲ χολωσάμενος κτενεῖ Ἔκτορα δῖος Ἀχιλλεύς.
 ἐκ τοῦ δ' ἄν τοι ἔπειτα παλίωξιν παρὰ νηῶν
 αἶεν ἐγὼ [Zeus] τεύχοιμι διαμπερές, εἰς ὃ κ' Ἀχαιοὶ
 Ἴλιον αἰπὺ ἔλωσιν Ἀθηναίης διὰ βουλὰς.
 τὸ πρὶν δ' οὔτ' ἄρ' ἐγὼ παύω χόλον οὔτε τιν' ἄλλον
 ἀθανάτων Δαναοῖσιν ἀμυνέμεν ἐνθάδ' ἐάσω. (Il. 15.68-73)

In anger for his friend godlike Achilleus will kill Hektor. And from that time on I [Zeus] shall make a turn in the battle, driving it constantly back from the ships, until the Achaians capture steep Ilios through the designs of Athene. But I shall not cease my anger or allow any other of the immortals to give help here to the Danaans, until the son of Peleus' desire has been fulfilled. (Tr. M. Hammond)

Achilles' wrath against Agamemnon, and then Hector, is paralleled with that of Zeus against Hera, Poseidon and other gods.¹⁷ The wrath of the two mightiest of the gods and the heroes is amalgamated into one, and functions as the major motivation for the plot.

Second, Zeus' *χόλος*, already roused by Hera's deception in book 14 and amplified in the tense aftermath, is renewed in 15.122 by Ares' challenge to Zeus' will through his desire to avenge the death of his son Askalaphos (115-8). This time, Athena checks Ares' recklessness:

ἔνθα κ' ἔτι μείζων τε καὶ ἀργαλεώτερος ἄλλος
 παρ Διὸς ἀθανάτοισι χόλος καὶ μῆνις ἐτύχθη,
 εἰ μὴ Ἀθήνη πᾶσι περιδδείσασα θεοῖσιν
 ὦρτο διέκ προθύρου, λίπε δὲ θρόνον ἔνθα θάασσε,
 τοῦ δ' ἀπὸ μὲν κεφαλῆς κόρυθ' εἴλετο καὶ σάκος ὤμων,
 ἔγχος δ' ἔστησε στιβαρῆς ἀπὸ χειρὸς ἐλοῦσα
 χάλκεον· (Il. 15.121-7)

And now there would have been caused yet greater and more dangerous anger and fury in Zeus against the immortals, if Athene, in fear for all the gods, had not left the seat where she was sitting and gone out after him through the gate way, and

¹⁷ Janko (1992) ad 15. 72-3: 'the hero's wrath and the god's are brought back into parallel.' For close discussion of the passages attributed by Aristophanes and Aristarchus (56-77) and Zenodotus (64-77), see Janko (1992) ad 15. 56-77.

taken the helmet from his head and the shield from his shoulders, and seized the bronze spear out of his massive hand and put it away. (Tr. M. Hammond)

The ponderous phrase *χόλος καὶ μῆνις* (122: wrath and fury) is further emphasised by the unreal conditional sentence.¹⁸ What is also notable is that Zeus' wrath is directed not only toward Ares but also toward the other gods (*ἀθανάτοισι*, 122). In addition, in this book, this antagonism between Zeus and a divine alliance is heightened by Zeus' position of emphatic aloofness. Zeus is now on top of Mount Ida (15.5), whereas Hera goes back to Olympus where the gods gather together (*ὀμηγερέεσσι δ' ἐπήλθεν, ἀθανάτοισι θεοῖσι Διὸς δόμῳ*, 84-5). She speaks with the gods, making clear her objectionable mood (*ὡς εἰπούσα καθέζετο πότνια Ἥρη, / ὄχθησαν δ' ἀνὰ δῶμα Διὸς θεοί*, 100-1), whereas Zeus remains alone (*ὁ δ' ἀφήμενος*, 106). Zeus' isolation from the other gods is also implied in the conversation between Hera and Poseidon in book 8.207-11. Hera urges Poseidon to help the Achaeans, wishing that 'Zeus would be annoyed, all alone on Ida' (*αὐτοῦ κ' ἔνθ' ἀκάχοιτο καθήμενος οἶος ἐν Ἴδη*, 207). However, Poseidon is not persuaded:

*τὴν δὲ μέγ' ὄχθήσας προσέφη κρείων ἐνοσίχθων·
 " Ἥρη ἀπτοεπέες, ποῖον τὸν μῦθον ἔειπες.
 οὐκ ἂν ἔγωγ' ἐθέλοιμι Διὶ Κρονίωνι μάχεσθαι
 ἡμέας τοὺς ἄλλους, ἐπεὶ ἧ πολὺ φέρτερός ἐστιν." (Il. 8. 208-11)*

The Earth shaker, powerful lord, answered her in vexation: "Hera, what is this you are saying? This is reckless talk. I would not want the rest of us to fight against Zeus son of Kronos, since his power is far greater than ours."

(Tr. M. Hammond)

Poseidon's answer redirects the focus of Hera's question: although her request is directed to him, he understands it as a problem for all the gods, himself included (*ἡμέας τοὺς ἄλλους*, 211); perhaps he knows that if he protests against Zeus it will involve the other

¹⁸ Janko (1992) ad loc.: 'the contrafactual conditional emphasises the gravity of the crisis.' He also notes the excitement that is so effectively expressed by *hysteron proteron* in 124.

gods. The stress placed on the unique word *ἀπποεπές* (209)¹⁹ anticipates the grave situation that would arise if the gods really went to war against Zeus.

In book 15, the narrative reveals an increased tension between Zeus and the other gods. Zeus asserts that he is pre-eminently the best of the immortal gods in power and strength:

[Zeus] φησὶν γὰρ ἐν ἀθανάτοισι θεοῖσι
κάρτεϊ τε σθένει τε διακριδὸν εἶναι ἄριστον. (Il. 15. 107-8)

...[Zeus] saying that he is preeminently the best of the immortal gods in power and strength. (Tr. M. Hammond)

Athena predicts that challenging such a powerful figure will bring catastrophe:

αὐτίκα γὰρ Τρῶας μὲν ὑπερθύμους καὶ Ἀχαιοὺς
λείψει, ὁ δ' ἡμέας εἴσι κυδοιμήσων ἐς Ὀλυμπον,
μάρψει δ' ἐξείησ ὅς τ' αἴτιος ὅς τε καὶ οὐκί. (Il. 15. 135-7)

Because Zeus will immediately leave the proud Trojans and the Achaians, and come back to Olympos to beat us about, and he will lay hands on each of us in turn, guilty and innocent alike. (Tr. M. Hammond)

Ares and Poseidon are the only gods who venture to protest against Zeus, and once Ares is persuaded to renounce his fight to the death (he acknowledges that he will be destroyed by Zeus' thunderbolt, 117-8), Poseidon remains the final contender to challenge the lordship of Zeus.

A direct clash is ingeniously avoided by Zeus' employment of the messenger Iris. Her function mirrors that of Athena when the latter intervenes in the quarrel between Agamemnon and Achilles (1.194-214). When Iris speaks to Poseidon, she repeats Zeus' words, but adds a further threat of her own devising:

εἰ δέ οἱ οὐκ ἐπέεσσ' ἐπιπέισσαι, ἀλλ' ἀλογήσεις,
ἠπείλει καὶ κείνος ἐναντίβιον πτολεμίξων ²⁰

¹⁹ Kirk (1990) ad loc. gives the etymology of this word: *ἀ- *ἔππο*- *ἔπης*, 'speaking a word that should not be spoken'.

ἐνθάδ' ἐλεύσεσθαι· (Il. 15. 178-80)

And if you will not obey his orders but intend to ignore them, he threatens to come here himself to fight you face to face. (Tr. M. Hammond)

Zeus did not mention that he would 'fight face to face' (ἐναντίβιον πολεμίξων, 179) in his speech to Iris (158-67). The implication of a duel is extremely effective because, as discussed above, Zeus' superiority in strength has already been emphasised, and Poseidon himself admits that 'Zeus is far mightier than I' (8. 211; 15.195).

Poseidon's appeal for the equal division of the universe (187-95)²¹ is quite logical. Of the two aspects of superiority which Zeus claims – strength and greater age – Poseidon only challenges Zeus on the issue of birth; he already admits Zeus' superior power. Consider Zeus' words:

ἐπεὶ ἐο φημὶ βίη πολὺ φέρτερος εἶναι
καὶ γενεῇ πρότερος· (Il. 15. 165-6)

since I say that I am far his superior in strength and his senior by birth.
(Tr. M. Hammond)

In 8.211, Poseidon says, [Zeus] ἐπεὶ ἦ πολὺ φέρτερός ἐστιν (Il. 8. 211). Poseidon's equal portion is assured by his birthright as one of the three children of Cronus. On this basis he attempts to protest against the authority of Zeus' rule.

The division of the universe involved the sharing of τιμή (ἕκαστος δ' ἔμμορε τιμῆς, 15.189). τιμή is closely connected with the strife surrounding cosmic sovereignty: in the *Theogony*, Zeus deprived Cronus of his βασιληίην τιμῆν (*Theog.* 462). Poseidon's bid for the equal division of portion or honour directly confronts the notion of a

²⁰ There are several variants (-ίζων Zenodotus; -ίξων Aristarchus). I follow West's new edition (2000) and Janko (1992) ad loc., who comments that the future is more minatory.

²¹ Burkert (1992) 90-1 discusses Babylonian influence (*Atrahasis* 43) on the Iliadic division of the cosmos. The obvious similarities between the *Iliad* and *Atrahasis* lie in (1) the division into heaven, sea and underworld (whereas in other old epics, the division is between heaven, earth and underworld, or heaven, sea and earth); and (2) the division is made by drawing lots.

hierarchical order.²² Since possessions are inseparable from honour, Poseidon could duly demand equal honour with Zeus – and deny the supreme domination of Zeus.

The dangers of this dual system are echoed in the quarrel between Agamemnon and Achilles. In a much-cited passage, Achilles, robbed of a prize and dishonoured by Agamemnon, appeals to Thetis:

*μη̄τερ, ἐπεὶ μ' ἔτεκές γε μινυθάδιόν περ ἑόντα,
τιμὴν πέρ μοι ὄφελλεν Ὀλύμπιος ἐγγυαλίξαι
Ζεὺς ὑψιβρεμέτης· νῦν δ' οὐδέ με τυτθὸν ἔτεισεν· (Il. 1.352-4)*

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)

The claim for *τιμή* encapsulated in Achilles' appeal is also thematically central to the poem as a whole. Achilles asserts that honour is due to him on the basis of his birth as a man destined to be short-lived (*μινυθάδιόν περ ἑόντα*, 1. 352). Poseidon, too, being 'sorely angered' (*ὀχθήσας*, 15. 184), claims *τιμή* on the basis of his birth. An extraordinarily similar logic (insult → wrath → claim of *τιμή* on the basis of birth) is used in both cases.

Poseidon asserts in 209 that he and Zeus hold equal shares and were granted the same lot (*ἰσόμορον καὶ ὁμῆ πεπρωμένον αἴση*, 209). The problematical words *μόρος* and *αἴσα* are usually understood in the original sense of 'portion', without any connotation of death or fate.²³ Achilles uses the word *μοῖρα* similarly, meaning portion, and links it with *τιμή*.²⁴

*ἴση μοῖρα μένοντι, καὶ εἰ μάλα τις πολεμίζοι·
ἐν δε ἰῆ τιμῆ ἡμὲν κακὸς ἠδὲ καὶ ἐσθλός· (Il. 9. 318-9)*

Stay at home or fight your hardest – your share will be the same. Coward and hero are honoured alike. (Tr. M. Hammond)

²² Clay (1989) 12. For the idea of man's will and his lot, see Nilsson (1925) 169-70; Janko (1992) 4-7.

²³ Leaf (1902) ad loc.; Janko (1992) ad loc.

²⁴ Dietrich (1965) 209 suggests that *Moirai* in 9. 318 is equivalent to 'honour'.

Achilles complains that men who fight under Agamemnon receive an equal share, regardless of whether they remain in their tents or fight on the field of battle. Poseidon and Achilles express the same idea, but from different perspectives: Poseidon demands an equal portion by reason of his birth, whereas Achilles demands an equal portion in accordance with his work. They each claim a proper portion of honour, and, as the Homeric concept of sharing already inculcates the idea of limit and justice,²⁵ they are angry at the unjust treatment they receive from their respective rulers, Agamemnon and Zeus, and, similarly, protest against the legitimacy of their rulers' sovereign rights.

On the basis of these similarities, it is significant that Poseidon levels a reproach at Agamemnon for his behaviour toward Achilles:

*ἀλλ' εἰ δὴ καὶ πάνπαν ἐτήτυμον αἴτιός ἐστιν
ἦρως Ἀτρείδης, εὐρὺ κρείων Ἀγαμέμνων,
οὐνεκ' ἀπητίμησε ποδώκεα Πηλεΐωνα,
ἡμέας γ' οὐ πως ἔστι μεθιέμεναι πολέμοιο. (Il. 13. 111-4)*

But even if all the blame truly belongs to the hero son of Atreus, wide-ruling Agamemnon, for his slighting of the swift-footed son of Peleus, yet we cannot possibly hold back from fighting. (Tr. M. Hammond)

Although Poseidon supports the Achaeans, this reproach is severe: he even speaks of the fault of the leader (*ἡγεμόνος κακότητι*, 108). Such a vehement accusation is appropriately expressed by Poseidon, because he and Achilles are counterparts in sharing a common wrath against their leaders.

Poseidon and Achilles share another trait: both must yield to the lash. Through Iris' persuasion, Poseidon finally decides to yield to Zeus:

*" Ἴρι θεά, μάλα τοῦτο ἔπος κατὰ μοῖραν ἔειπες·
ἔσθλόν καὶ τὸ τέτυκται, ὅτ' ἄγγελος αἴσιμα εἶδῃ.
ἀλλὰ τόδ' αἰνὸν ἄχος κραδίην καὶ θυμὸν ἰκάνει,
ὀππότε' ἂν ἰσόμορον καὶ ὀμῆ πεπρωμένον αἴση
νικεῖν ἐθέλησι χολωτοῖσιν ἐπέεσσιν.
ἀλλ' ἦτοι νῦν μὲν γε²⁶ νεμεσσηθεὶς ὑποείξω·*

²⁵ Dietrich (1965) 208.

²⁶ I follow the reading of West (2000): γε Ar D; κε vulg.

ἄλλο δέ τοι ἔρέω, καὶ ἀπειλήσω τό γε θυμῶ·
 αἴ κεν ἄνευ ἐμέθεν καὶ Ἀθηναίης ἀγελείης,
 Ἥρης Ἑρμείω τε καὶ Ἥφαιστοιο ἀνακτος,
 Ἰλίου αἰπεινῆς πεφιδήσεται, οὐδ' ἐθελήσει
 ἐκπέρσαι, δοῦναι δὲ μέγα κράτος Ἀργείοισιν,
 ἴστω τοῦθ', ὅτι νῶϊν ἀνήκεστος χόλος ἔσται." (Il. 15.206-17)

"Divine Iris, what you have said is quite right and true: and it is an excellent thing when a messenger is possessed of good sense. But this is a grievous thing that touches my heart and spirit with pain, when he is ready to abuse with angry words one who has an equal share with him and is destined with the same endowment. Well, for this time I shall hold myself back and give in to him. But I tell you something else, a threat I make in my heart. If in spite of me and Athene, goddess of spoil, and Hera and Hermes and Lord Hephaistos, Zeus spares steep Ilios, and will not sack it and grant a great victory to the Argives, let him be sure of this, that there will be anger without healing between us." (Tr. M. Hammond)

Janko notes the similarity between this speech of Poseidon and that of Achilles in 16. 49-63.²⁷ that is, (1) acknowledgement of what was said (15. 206-7 / 16. 49-51); (2) restating the grievance (15. 208-10 / 16. 52-9); and (3) yielding with a threat (15. 211-7 / 16. 60-3). Although the sorrow of Poseidon overshadows that of Achilles, the two speeches are similar in diction. Verses 15. 208 and 16. 52 are exactly the same, and the following verses (15. 209 and 16. 53) express similar wrath against the ruler. Both Poseidon and Achilles share 'bitter sorrow' (*αἰνὸν ἄχος*, 15. 208 and 16. 52),²⁸ and both think that they should be treated on equal terms with their rulers (*ἰσόμορον καὶ ὁμῆ πεπρωμένον αἴση*, 15.209 *ὁμοῖον ἀνῆρ*, 16.53). Both Poseidon and Achilles must yield: as Achilles recognises Agamemnon's greater power (16.54), so, too, must Poseidon admit Zeus' power and seniority in age (15. 165-6).²⁹

²⁷ Janko (1992) ad 15. 206-8 and ad 16. 49-63, following Lohmann (1970) 274, comments that Achilles' speech to Aias (9. 644-55) follows the same pattern.

²⁸ Aphrodite also feels *αἰνὸν ἄχος* (*Hy. Aphr.* 198-9). It is worth noting that both Poseidon and Aphrodite surrender to Zeus' power, and both express the same emotion.

²⁹ Zeus is the eldest in the *Iliad*, but the youngest in the *Theogony* (478). This shows the different usage of motifs between the two poems: for the poet of the *Iliad*, Zeus' seniority is an indispensable justification for Poseidon's surrender to him; for Hesiod, Zeus must be the youngest to fit with the Hesiodic logic of succession in which the youngest son overthrows his father.

If Poseidon had not yielded, a great war might have erupted; note Zeus' words:

οἴχεται εἰς ἄλα δῖαν, ἀλευάμενος χόλον αἰπὺν
 ἡμέτερον· μάλα γάρ τε³⁰ μάχης ἐπύθοντο καὶ ἄλλοι,
 οἳ περ ἐνέρτεροί εἰσι θεοί, Κρόνου ἀμφὶς ἑόντες. (*Il.* 15. 223-5)

[Poseidon] has left now and gone into the holy sea, to avoid the stark fury I would have shown – for even the gods below with Kronos have experienced battle (with me). (Tr. M. Hammond, adapted)

Zeus knows that a divine conflict would involve *all* the gods, even the Titans ('lower gods'), and that his lordship is secured by undermining Poseidon. The moment when Poseidon decides to retreat, therefore, is pivotal to Zeus' sovereignty. The critical significance of this moment is akin to that in which Athena caught Achilles by his yellow hair (1. 197): Achilles then goes to his own huts (1. 306) and retreats from the war. Similarly, we see that, after his withdrawal from the burgeoning conflict, Poseidon also retreats physically, going down into the sea (*Il.* 15. 223).

Poseidon's final threat as he yields (*Il.* 15. 211-7) is a reflection of his self-respect or pride and desire for honour. Iliadic heroes are also motivated to risk their lives to defend their pride. For instance, Sarpedon, facing his inevitable death, says, 'if we were to live forever, ageless and immortal, I would not be fighting in the front ranks' (*Il.* 12.322-4). Unlike Sarpedon, Poseidon is immortal, but his pride remains of great significance, and he cannot tolerate humiliation. As Nilsson notes, the anthropomorphism of the Iliadic gods shows their human traits; and gods, too, must be measured by the same moral standards as mankind.³¹ Just as the heroes in the *Iliad* are not morally unfettered princes or supermen, so too the gods, especially Poseidon, are constrained; Poseidon's life is not easy: he yields and suffers.³²

Gods are said to be 'blessed' and to 'live at ease'. Achilles tells Priam that humans live in misery but 'gods are free from care' (*Il.* 24. 525). Indeed, the delightful circumstances of the gods are often emphasised.³³ However, Homeric gods are not

³⁰ Allen (1902) and West (2000) read κε, meaning 'would have heard'. I follow Janko (1992) ad loc., with Sch. D and most early codices, in reading τε, 'have experienced'.

³¹ Nilsson (1925) 159.

³² I agree with Nilsson (1925) 177, who writes that the legacy bequeathed by Homer to tragedy is the humanisation of the gods and the increasing relevance of myth to men.

³³ For example, Griffin (1980) 167, 189.

uncomplicated; they are not infallible, and even the heroes recognise that there are limits on divine power. For example, Nature goes her own way (*Il.* 6. 146-8), and the gods cannot protect their favourites against death.³⁴ As Odysseus says, even Poseidon cannot restore the Cyclops' eye (*Od.* 9. 525).

One's portion is one's due and regular share, and the final inevitable portion for humans is death. If death for humans signifies the change from the brightness of life to the dark and meaningless existence of death,³⁵ exactly the same picture is offered to those gods hurled into Tartaros. According to D tienne and Vernant,³⁶ to strike a god with Zeus' thunderbolt is to deprive him of the vital force that previously animated him, and to relegate him, forever paralysed, to the limits of the world, far from the dwelling of the gods where he formerly exercised power. The thunderbolt is the ultimate source of Zeus' authority, as we see from the fates of the Titans and Typhoeus – defeated, banished to a meaningless existence, never to emerge. Even gods abhor the dark place beneath (20. 65).

By definition, there is no death for gods. However, Zeus' threat of a duel with Poseidon (15. 179) implies that, in defeat, Poseidon too would suffer the fate of descending into this dark and meaningless existence. Before he yields, Poseidon faces a crisis equal to that of human death. When he yields, however, he still clings to the shreds of his pride and self-respect.

We have noted that the characterisation of Poseidon is remarkably analogous to that of Achilles. In the light of my suggestion that the poet of the *Iliad* drew inspiration from an earlier story of the battle of the gods, we might propose that his focus on Achilles' heroic wrath and striving for honour derives from this stratum of material, or, at the very least, was a deliberately developed doublet to make the wrath of Achilles run parallel to that of Poseidon. The poem is built around attitudes which reflect fundamental questions of heroic wrath, heroic shame, and the acceptance of death.³⁷ Both human characters and Poseidon are delineated through their responses to these questions. As the fate of Achilles is tragic, so, in a sense, is that of Poseidon. By using the motif of Poseidon's wrath as the basis for his poem, the poet makes the dispute surrounding Achilles' wrath clearer and more profound. Thus the motifs of wrath -- of Zeus and Achilles, Poseidon and Achilles - - work together to develop a more coherent artistic product.

³⁴ Zeus cannot alter the *αἶσα* of Sarpedon (16. 441), nor can Hera change the *αἶσα* of Achilles (20. 127-8). The day of one's death is determined at the day of birth (*Il.* 23. 79), regardless of the gods' will. For the metaphor of 'spinning the destiny', see Dietrich (1965) 290.

³⁵ Griffin (1980) 143.

³⁶ D tienne and Vernant (1978) 75.

³⁷ Griffin (1980) 80.

3. The Reordering of the Universe (*Iliad* 20. 54-74; 21. 385-520)

In the opening scene of book 20, the gods make preparations for the fight, suggesting a conflict on a cosmic scale (20. 54-74). The combat pairing of the gods is listed (20. 67-74) and the actual fighting is described (21. 385-520). Overall, the gods are divided into two camps, and those who favour the Greeks stand on the Greek side with Poseidon. This sub-plot is so well integrated that it seems a natural consequence for the gods to join the human war. But why, as Apollo complains at 21. 462-3, do the gods fight with each other on behalf of the humans? I suggest that reading an earlier cosmic battle underlying this text makes possible a fuller appreciation of the poet's subtle intertextualities. On such an interpretation, in some pre-Iliadic stories, the gods could have been antagonistic to each other; and in this text they may retain their original spirit of partisanship, which operates aside from the human battle.³⁸ That is, the human battle does not motivate the gods to fight in partisan formation; rather, they fight in the human battle *because* of their original, partisan nature. This might explain their apparent preoccupation at fighting and shouting at each other (21. 385-6).

Some scholars criticise the imbalance of the two accounts of the Theomachy: the solemn proclamation (20. 54-74), then the 'anticlimax' of this major divine battle (21. 385-520) in which some gods are reluctant to fight.³⁹ I will focus on the passages concerning Poseidon and Zeus to determine the interrelation of these two apparently imbalanced accounts, and to consider why some change of mood occurs.

When Zeus calls the gods to assembly at the beginning of book 20 (1-12), talk is sustained only between Poseidon and Zeus (13-30). Poseidon sits in the middle of the gods (ἴζε δ' ἄρ' ἐν μέσσοισι, 15), and speaks first to Zeus, asking the reason for the assembly (16-8). This should remind us of how Achilles opens the debate in book 1. 59-67. Zeus answers, 'you know, Earth-shaker, the decision in my mind' (20). The tension between the two is overt *and* double-edged, for this discourse seems to function as a declaration of war.

In terms of the structure of battle, we have already recognised the preliminary stage, namely the duel between the mightiest of the two sides – as we interpreted the rope-

³⁸ I agree with Nilsson (1925) 155, who suggests that the spirit of partisanship affects all the gods, and that they pursue their ends by every means, including cunning and deceit.

³⁹ Leaf (1902) 382 comments that the Theomachy passage in book 21 is 'the anticlimax' and 'poetically bad'. Edwards (1991) ad 20. 67-74 suspects that the passage [20. 67-74] was 'added to the monumental poem at a later date', on the grounds of structure (there is no parallel to the listing of combatants in Homeric battle) and language (rare forms including Ἐρμῆς in 72). However, I agree with Richardson (1993) ad 21. 383-513, who suggests that the account in 20. 54-74 provides a frame for the battle in 21. 383-513.

of-war incident between Zeus and Poseidon (13. 358-60). Now, we see the meeting of the leaders of both sides, and anticipate that the war will soon be fought. The description of the shaking, from above and below, of the valleys and mountains (20. 54-74) sets the scene for a huge conflict, and is highly appropriate to a war on the cosmic scale. At this stage, Zeus is present:

*ὥς τοὺς ἀμφοτέρους μάκαρες θεοὶ ὀτρύνοντες
σύμβalon, ἐν δ' αὐτοῖς ἔριδα ῥήγνυτο βαρεῖαν·
δεινὸν δὲ βρόντησε πατὴρ ἀνδρῶν τε θεῶν τε
ὑψόθεν· αὐτὰρ νέρθε Ποσειδάων ἐτίναξε
γαῖαν ἀπειρεσίην ὀρέων τ' αἰπεινὰ κάρηνα. (Il. 20. 54-8)*

So the blessed gods drove on both sides and brought them to the clash: and they broke out bitter conflict among themselves. The father of men and gods thundered fearfully from on high, and beneath them Poseidon shook the limitless earth and the high peaks of the mountains. (Tr. M. Hammond)

The tension which was foreshadowed in book 13. 1-16 is now reaching its climax. As is proper procedure, the leaders of both sides are honoured with introductions. It appears that a fierce clash will now begin. However, Zeus does not participate in the war; this is mentioned twice, both in book 20 and book 21:

*ἀλλ' ἦτοι μὲν ἐγὼ μενέω πτυχὶ Οὐλύμπιο
ἦμενος, ἔνθ' ὀρόων φρένα τέρψομαι. (Il. 20. 22-3)*

But now I shall stay here, sitting in a fold of Olympos where I can look on and delight my heart (Tr. M. Hammond)

*ἄϊε δὲ Ζεὺς
ἦμενος Οὐλύμπῳ· ἐγέλασσε δέ οἱ φίλον ἦτορ
γηθοσύνη, ὅθ' ὀράτο θεοὺς ἔριδι ξυιόντας. (Il. 21. 388-90)*

Zeus heard it where he sat on Olympos: and his heart within him laughed for joy, when he saw the gods joining in conflict. (Tr. M. Hammond)

These passages – Zeus' prediction and Zeus' action – make it clear that the Theomachy is put on for Zeus' amusement. Perhaps the earlier myth of the battle of the gods to some extent conditions the way the story is told here. What we are now given is essentially mock fighting, and Zeus is a superior bystander and (no longer) a participant. This change of direction away from the anticipated, serious theomachy is a sharp deviation by the poet which completes -- and demonstrates the completion of -- the reordering of the universe by Zeus.

The laughter of Zeus (21. 389) can be compared with that of Agamemnon (*Od.* 8.78), who rejoices at a quarrel between Odysseus and Achilles.⁴⁰ But I would also suggest that Zeus' laughter here is analogous to that in the *Hymn to Hermes* (389) which decisively – and mysteriously – settles the dispute between Apollo and Hermes.⁴¹ In the Theomachy, Zeus is not the leader of a combatant side, but the judge who respects the claims of all parties.

As the result of this change, his attitude to the battle of the gods becomes similar to his attitude to the human battle. In contrast to book 13, Zeus now watches the battles of gods as well as humans. Like Achilles at the funeral games for Patroclus (*Il.* 23.262-897), Zeus is superintendent and no longer a participant. Although he stirs up the battle (*πόλεμον δ' ἀλίσστον ἔγειρε*, 20. 31), he will not be involved in the fighting between the gods. This might cause cosmic disorder, but his supremacy will remain secure.

We see that Poseidon is especially respected among the gods; for example, Apollo refuses to fight with Poseidon (21. 472-3). Artemis' accusation about Apollo's refusal (21. 474-7) implies that there had been antagonism between Poseidon and Apollo even before this incident:⁴²

νηπύτιε, τί νυ τόξον ἔχεις ἀνεμώλιον αὐτῶς ;
μή σευ νῦν ἔτι πατρὸς ἐνὶ μεγάροισιν ἀκούσω
εὐχομένου, ὡς τὸ πρὶν ἐν ἀθανάτοισι θεοῖσιν,

⁴⁰ Schol. BE ad *Od.* 8.77 comments that the quarrel is about the tactics to be used in sacking Troy: Achilles demands brave fighting (*ἀνδρεία*), and Odysseus supports contrivance (*μηχανή*). See Griffin (1980) 183-4, who writes that Zeus is like one who enjoys the spectacle of others struggling and being humiliated for his own pleasure.

⁴¹ When Apollo accuses Hermes of the theft of his cattle, it is Zeus' laughter, not the scales of justice, which resolves the quarrel (*Hy. Herm.* 324).

⁴² Aristarchus athetised 475-7 as being inconsistent with the character of Apollo at 468-9. Willcock (1977) 49-50 regards this passage as '*ad hoc* invention', asserting that, 'nothing at all makes it probable that Apollo should have made a practice of boasting in this way.' However, in view of the partisanship of the gods, it is highly probable that Apollo might have spoken thus.

ἄντα Ποσειδάωνος ἐναντίβιον πολεμίξειν. (Il. 21. 474-7)

You poor fool, why then do you carry a bow which is nothing more than wind?
May I never now hear you boasting in our father's house among the immortal gods,
as you have before, that you could fight face to face with Poseidon.

(Tr. M. Hammond)

Artemis' specific mention of previous occasions when Apollo declared his boastful decision to defeat Poseidon is significant: these occurred in their father's megaron, among the immortal gods (475-6). That is, Apollo made his boastful claim in front of Zeus, in assemblies of the gods. Were these assemblies similar to the one to which Zeus called the gods in 20. 4-5 (that is, preceding the outbreak of war)? On such an occasion the young Apollo might have uttered, perhaps with Zeus' favour,⁴³ such an appropriately threatening proclamation against the leader of the 'enemy'.

Hera's response to Artemis' reproach calls for attention. Hera perceives Artemis' condemnation as hostile toward herself:

*πῶς δὲ σὺ [Artemis] νῦν μέμονας, κύον ἀδδεές, ἀντί' ἐμείο [Hera]
στήσεσθαι; (Il. 21. 481-2)*

And how do you now dare, you shameless bitch, to stand against me?

(Tr. M. Hammond)

For Hera, an insult to Poseidon is an insult to herself; the alliance between Hera and Poseidon is thus consistent throughout the epic.

The story of Apollo's ceding victory to Poseidon without a fight finds a parallel in the episode of the spear-throwing contest in which Achilles awards Agamemnon the prize without a contest (23. 884-97). The nobility of Achilles is particularly marked in the funeral games in book 23, because it differs so greatly from his cruel treatment of Hector's body in the preceding account. Achilles' behaviour is now perfectly under control in the games, and he renders fair judgement to all. His decision with regard to Agamemnon –

⁴³ In the *Iliad*, too, Zeus and Apollo collaborate several times: for example, in 15. 220-62, Apollo is sent by Zeus to rouse Hector's strength (232); and Hector is revived by Zeus' will (242); in 17. 582-96, Apollo encourages Hector (582), and Zeus shakes the *aegis* to threaten the Achaeans (593-6). Significantly, Apollo shares the *aegis* with Zeus (15. 229-30, 318-22; 24. 20).

admitting that Agamemnon is 'supreme in power' (891) – marks their final reconciliation. Likewise, Poseidon's victory without a battle implies a peaceful close to the battle of the gods.

Just as Achilles watches and presides over the funeral games, so too does Zeus preside at the battle of the gods. The centripetal progress of Zeus in this scene is conspicuous in several ways. First, it is out of respect for Zeus that Apollo and Hermes refuse to fight: Apollo avoids the fight with his uncle out of respect (21. 468); Hermes says it is dangerous to fight with the wives of Zeus (498-9). Second, all of the gods gather round Zeus after their fight: Artemis comes to Olympus and sits in tears on Zeus' lap (505-6), and the other gods also take their seats beside him (520).⁴⁴

Verses 518-20 function as the closing section of the Theomachy, symbolising that all disputes and conflicts are settled, and Zeus has achieved his supremacy over the Olympian cosmos:

*οἱ δ' ἄλλοι πρὸς Ὀλυμπον ἴσαν θεοὶ αἰὲν ἑόντες,
οἱ μὲν χωόμενοι, οἱ δὲ μέγα κυδιώοντες·
καὶ δ' ἴζον παρὰ πατρὶ κελαινεφεΐ· (Il. 21. 518-20)*

But the rest of the ever-living gods went back to Olympos, some angry and others exulting, and they took their seats beside the Father, the lord of the dark clouds. (Tr. M. Hammond)

Even those who are angry (*οἱ μὲν χωόμενοι*, 519) come to sit beside Zeus. A problematic aspect of the Olympians' interrelationship has been settled and they seem to become systematised into an ordered divine community. The prominent deities are described, emphatically, as 'brother of Zeus' (Poseidon, 468) or 'the wife of Zeus' (Hera, 499).⁴⁵ This is a quite different picture from the stories of Uranus and Cronus, where the father seems to be 'a stranger who is nothing to do with the mother and the children'.⁴⁶ In Zeus' cosmos, the family now enjoy a relationship with him. The existence of challengers implied disorder, but with their defeat the Olympian regime has been set on a new footing.

⁴⁴ Hades goes back to Zeus' house after his fight with Heracles (5. 398); Ares sits beside Zeus after he is hurt by Diomedes (5. 869).

⁴⁵ Notoriously, Zeus is twice described as 'husband of Hera' (*πόσις Ἥρης*, 7. 411; 16. 88).

⁴⁶ Otto (1955) 31; see also Caldwell (1989) 161.

The plan of Zeus is, at the last, a mystery.⁴⁷ We do not know exactly how Zeus finally subdued Poseidon and his alliance. But, in the poet's hands, under the plan of Zeus, not only humans but also gods suffer or rejoice. As Poseidon says (*Od.* 1. 338), both gods and men accomplish mighty deeds that will become epic song. Griffin's words about the humans – 'from suffering comes song, and song gives pleasure'⁴⁸ – are applicable even to the gods. The function of the Homeric gods is sometimes relegated to that of mere background to human deeds, but the stories of the gods have their own internal logic and consistency.

It is generally admitted that, even if Homer created an original poem, he drew upon a rich earlier epic tradition. I believe that the poet of the *Iliad* composed his poem by exploiting and repeatedly referring to an earlier epic of the battle of the gods, probably the Gigantomachia. The consistency in the portrayal of the characters of the *Iliadic* gods reflects the *aristeia* of the gods of the distant past. When Achilles says 'even the mighty Heracles could not escape death' (18. 17), it might echo the suffering of Poseidon, as 'even Poseidon could not escape suffering'.

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⁴⁷ Griffin (1980) 169-70 remarks that the complex plan of Zeus, which involves helping Troy but not actually routing the Achaeans, leads to ambiguity.

⁴⁸ Griffin (1980) 102.

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