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TIME GAMES: HELEN, ODYSSEUS, AND INTERTEXTUALITY*

Introduction

Genetic approaches to Homeric poetry, whether analytical, unitarian, neoanalytical or adopting the viewpoint of historical positivism have used repetition in different but equally misleading ways.[1] Analysts tended to view repetition as a symptom of inferior poetic quality, a clear sign indicating multiple authorship. Unitarians tried to explain such repetitions by drawing analogous examples from other writers in whose case single authorship was uncontested, thus showing that repetition must not be necessarily linked to poetic inferiority nor should it be considered as a hint for suspecting the authenticity of a given passage. Neoanalysis attempted to trace the origins of such repetitions in earlier, pre-Homeric epics whose reflections can be still seen in the Homeric poems.[2] As such epics do not survive nor is there any information that they antedated the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, Neoanalysis had to reconstruct them on the basis of information found in the Homeric epics, in artistic representations of epic themes, in other poems of the Epic Cycle and, at times, in later sources. Historical positivism adopted a different stance which can be partly explained by the storming predominance of oral-tradi-tional studies. As oral theory was gaining support, some scholars fostered its principal tenets but not the necessary consequences stemming from such be-

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* The text used for the *Iliad* is that of West 1998-2000. For the *Odyssey* I have consulted van Thiel's 1991 edition. All translations of the *Iliad* are taken from Lattimore (1951). For the *Odyssey* I have used Rieu (2003).

1. I will selectively cite only certain key-works which have had a profound influence on the course of Homeric studies in the 20th century.

2. On Neoanalysis, see Kakridis 1949 & 1971; Kullmann 1960 & 1992; Pestalozzi 1945, Schadewaldt, 1965 & 1966. Willcock (1996, 174-189) is the most recent account of the impact of the neoanalytical school on Homeric studies.

liefs. Notwithstanding the serious implications of the Parry-Lord theory for studying epic songs in an oral culture, historical positivists explained certain oral features either as the result of a primitive form of style or as the proof for the existence of a master composer. Historical determinism had thus equated the old, analytical notion of *poetic quality* with the dogma of a sin- gle authorship. The vicious circle of philological obsession with a historical Homer is now complete as the phantom of an alleged monumental composer has returned by the back door. All these approaches have virtually adopted a linear, genetic approach to Homer. In doing so, they have, in spite of their undeniable contribution to Homeric studies, failed to treat the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* as *songs recomposed in performance* and, consequently, Homer not as a historical author but as an invented symbol of the tradition, "culture hero of all Hellenism, a most cherished teacher of all Hellenes, who will come back to life with every new performance of his *Iliad* and *Odyssey*".[3]

Hard-core oral theory had also to face the protests of literary critics who complained that once the Parry-Lord theory is accepted, large chunks of Homeric text have to be deprived of meaning since formulas and type- scenes are bare means employed by the bard in order to sing or recite epic poetry. A careful study of the Homeric poems shows that oral poetry can be as technically complex and sophisticated as written poetry. Some scholars in order to explain this prima facie paradox employed the special term *oralcy* which refers to the co-existence of oral and written cultures.[4] To that extent, it is fair to say that the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are oral-traditional composi- tions displaying features which are also known from written poetry but do not pertain solely to it.[5]

In the light of these observations, we need to rethink the meaning and function of repetition, the *lydian stone* of all intratextual[6] and intertextual references. Iliadic and Odyssean quoting can take different forms (formulaic repetition ranging from noun-epithet formulas to single- and multiple-verse repetitions, homologous similes, type-scenes etc.) that represent sophisti- cated mechanisms of incorporation, appropriation, absorption and trans- formation. A modern reader may be on the horns of the dilemma between a

3. Nagy 1996, 112.

4. See Robb 1994, 191, 218, 232 ff.

5. The bibliography on oral poetry is immense. The best account of previous re- search is Foley 1985. Edwards (1986, 171-230 & 1988, 11-60) is excellent on metrical is- sues such as the origins of the dactylic hexameter, the formula and its localization within the verse as well as certain peculiarities of Homeric diction.

6. On intratextuality, see Sharrock 2000, 1-39. For an exemplary application in Homer, see Martin 2000, 43-65.

Barthian[7] and a more critical approach to intertextuality[8] that strives to map out the limits of intertextual references. In this light, Pucci's use of the term *allusion* reflects exactly the effort to determine limits on the relational activity between texts in order to avoid the interpretive impasse originating from a utopian research of authorial intentionality and endless referentiality. Ad infinitum redistribution of textual material in a new text would necessarily lead to an endless spectrum of references. Likewise, a hopeless search for brother-texts would make equally plausible all interpretive readings of specific expressions, which would then lead to evoked contexts coloring the use of a formula. A subtle but critically restrained use of repetition would then help us see how a text grows through its *reading* of other texts. In the case of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* which belong to equivalent song traditions, formulaic repetition acquires an even more profound significance. Apart from its inevitability, stemming from the very nature of Homeric diction, formulaic repetition enhances a labyrinthine *reading* of the two poems, a *reading* that challenges progressive linearity and questions Iliadic or Odyssean autonomy. Conversely, it allows for an interactive link between the two epics which unconditionally engulf the audience in a complex game of references. When comparing two passages belonging to different texts, the problem of fragmentation comes to the foreground. Why is it that these two passages allude to one another? Reading thematic relevance into its details may seem a matter of choice, but, in fact, it is not. Heath has convincingly shown how ancients tended to read texts centrifugally, that is to say they judged details of every sort not in relation to the work's center (which anyway is a contestable idea), but on their own basis.[9] Extending his idea further, we will see how the *Iliad* uses, in a specific case, formulaic repetition not simply to allude to an Odyssean passage where the same expression is more at home but also to define itself through a relational process: by challenging the Odyssean perspective

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7. See Barthes 1975 who attempted to break Balzac's text into elementary units which show no traces of a structural organisation. I owe this reference to Sharrock 2000, 15.

8. On intertextuality in Homer, see Pucci 1987, 18-19, 28-30, 51-52, 236-238.

9. Heath (1989, 59-70) has argued that ancient readers and audiences judged centrifugally (without paying special attention to details diverging from the alleged unity and cohesion of a thematic nucleus), whereas modern readers (and scholars) tend to 'read' centripetally (focusing on the connections between the parts and the whole, as if everything should be in orbit around a thematic center). Heath's observation is right but one should not confuse the way ancient audiences 'read' and the way(s) a poetic composition flows.

of a rival tradition, the *Iliad* incorporates a seemingly trivial detail and ac-
commodates it to its polemical gesture against that other tradition.

In conclusion, a rather necessary *caveat*: Both the Aristotelian[10] χρὴ
οὖν, καθάπερ καὶ ἐν ταῖς ἄλλαις μιμητικαῖς ἡ μία μίμησις ἑνός ἐστιν, οὕτω καὶ
τὸν μῦθον, ἐπεὶ πράξεως μίμησίς ἐστι, μιᾶς τε εἶναι καὶ ταύτης ὅλης and the
Horatian[11] *simplex dumtaxat et unum* refer to a final totality which does
not deny aesthetic value to the parts of any artifact, but describes "how the
poet produces a work (and the reader reads a work) in which intratextual
activity of the parts makes it a text-makes it readable".[12] Totality is cultur-
ally determined. In fact, we-as modern readers- often interpret totality as a
form of compacted wholeness where the parts are subordinated to the *totum*.
It is our Aristotelian and post-Aristotelian concept of totality that makes
us complain when details do not fit to the whole the way we want them to
fit to the whole. Homeric epic aims otherwise. Being both centripetal and
centrifugal at the same time, the *Iliad* exploits the embarrassingly annoying
non-sequitur of Helen's idiosyncratic autobiographical trivia not by simply
determining poetic debt but by reshuffling the cards and indulging in a
metapoetic comment. It thus aims for a different kind of totality, one that
encompasses other rival traditions and defines its own voice by retrieving
fragmented connotations from the Odyssean intertext, only to distort and,
subsequently, reconstruct it.

State of the Problem

Helen's time reference in *Il.* 24.765 does not correspond to the tradi-
tional mythological pattern of the duration of the Trojan war. The death of
Hector took place in the tenth and last year of the war and so the reference
to the lapse of twenty years since Helen's arrival at Troy seems awkward. It
also seemed strange to the ancients themselves as they tried to explain this
temporal inconsistency. Ancient and modern explanations[13] can be classified
into categories which are worth considering since they are, I will argue, part
of the interpretive problem:

(a) *The addition theory*: I have grouped under the heading *addition theory*
    all efforts to interpret literally Helen's reference to the twenty years she

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10. *Poetics* 1451ᵃ. I have used the OUP edition of Kassel 1965.
11. *Ars Poetica* 23. I have used the Teubner edition of Borzsák 1984.
12. Sharrock 2000, 18.
13. A good survey of the problem is offered by Richardson 1993, 358 ad loc.

has been away from home. In the light of such an a priori belief, schol-
ars, ancient and modern alike, have departed on the discovery of the *ten
missing years*. The scholia vetera (V 639-640 Erbse)[14] and Eustathius (ad
Ω 765)[15] argued that the preparation for the war had lasted ten years,[16]
whereas certain present-day Homerists of the neoanalytical school
thought that in this Iliadic time-reckoning the ten years of the so-called
Teuthranian expedition against the Mysian king Telephus (which took
place before the Achaeans reached Troy) is implicitly taken for granted.[17]
Waiting in Aulis or fighting against the Mysians, the Achaeans spent
ten years to reach Troy.

(b) An extreme 'solution' was put forward by Welcker[18] who proposed the
omission of lines 24.765-766 since they could not fit any rationalized
time-reckoning. The false 'solution' of a would-be interpolation was,
needless to say, typical of the time of Welcker but is rather incompat-
ible with our present stance towards the Homeric text. Even West, who
regards "references to Cyclic material that is otherwise unknown or ig-
nored in the *Iliad*"[19] as a special category of minor interpolations, does
not adopt Welcker's omission in his recent Teubner edition of the *Iliad*.

(c) A crucial argument concerning the problematic number 'twenty' in
Il. 24.765 has been thoroughly presented by Reinhardt,[20] although the

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14. See scholia vetera (V 639-640 Erbse) ad Ω 765a.¹: <τόδε> εἰκοστὸν ἔτος ἐστί: δέκα
γὰρ ἔτη ἐστρατολόγουν and ad Ω 765b : ἄλλως· εἰκοστὸν ἔτος: ψευδές· οὐ γὰρ εἰκοστὸν ἔτος
δύναται εἶναι, ἐξ οὗ εἰς τὸ Ἴλιον ἦλθεν Ἑλένη, εἴγε δεκαετὴς μὲν †ἡ τοῦ πολέμου παρασκευὴ†
ὁμολογεῖται γεγονέναι, εἰκοστῷ δὲ Ὀδυσσεὺς ἐνιαυτῷ εἰς τὴν Ἰθάκην ἐπανελήλυθε, A
b(BCE⁴) T πολὺν ἐν τῇ πλάνῃ ἐνδιατρίψας χρόνον. AT ῥητέον δὲ ὅτι δέκα ἔτη ἐστρατολόγουν
χειμάζοντες ἐν ταῖς ἰδίαις καὶ θέρους εἰς Αὐλίδα ἀφικνούμενοι, νῦν δὲ εἰκοστὸν ἔτος ἐστὶν
ἀπὸ τῆς ἁρπαγῆς Ἑλένης A b(BCE⁴) T ἐπὶ δὲ Ὀδυσσέως τὰ δέκα ἔτη τῆς στρατολογίας οὐκ
ἀριθμητέον. A b(BE⁴) T.

15. See van der Valk 1987 (IV), 984, 6-15: ἐεικοστὸν δὲ τετρασυλλάβως νοητέον ἔτος
ἀπὸ τῆς ἁρπαγῆς, ὡς δεκαετίας μὲν παρελθούσης τῇ στρατολογίᾳ διὰ τὸ ἐν Ἑλλάδι ὄντας
τοὺς Ἀχαιοὺς ἀθροίζεσθαί τε καὶ μανθάνειν ὅσον πλοῦτον οἱ Τρῶες καὶ ἰσχὺν περιεβέβληντο,
ἄλλων δὲ δέκα ἐτῶν συντελεσμένων τῇ τῆς Τροίας πολιορκίᾳ. τῇ μέντοι εἰκοσαετεῖ ἐπανόδῳ
τοῦ Ὀδυσσέως οὐ προσλογιστέον τὰ ῥηθέντα τῆς στρατολογίας δέκα ἔτη, ἐν ᾗ /, φασί, τοὺς
Ἀχαιοὺς χειμάζειν μὲν ἐν ταῖς ἰδίαις, θέρους δὲ ἐν Αὐλίδι διάγειν, ἀλλὰ τὰ δέκα τοῦ πολέμου
καὶ τὰ ἴσα τῆς πλάνης, παρασημείωσις δὲ Ὁμηρικὴ τὸ ῥηθέν, ὡς ἂν εἰδείη ὁ τῆς Ἰλιάδος
ἀκροατής, περὶ τίνων ἡ τοῦ βιβλίου πραγματεία τῷ ποιητῇ.

16. This was also the opinion of Severyns 1948, 433 ff. (I owe this reference to
Kullmann 1960, 192, ft. 1. The original article was inaccessible to me).

17. See Kullmann 1960, 189-200; 1992, 191-192 = 1965, 30-31.

18. Welcker ¹1849, 265.

19. West 2001, 12.

20. Reinhardt 1961, 485-490.

scholarly *invenit* belongs to Weber.[21] Reinhardt argued that the similarities with *Od.* 19.222-223 cannot be the key to our problem, since in the *Odyssey* these words are said "von einem Zeitpunkt" and not, as in the *Iliad*, "von einer Zeitdauer". There is a clear difference between the two situations especially since Helen's νῦν μοι τόδε in *Il.* 24.765 underscores her personal account of time. Reinhardt drew attention to the change between first and third person in the Iliadic and Odyssean passages respectively but he used it, I think, in the wrong direction. The "Zeit-punkt"- "Zeitdauer" distinction is not deprived of problems. The syntax of the Greek is identical and there is no reason to believe that both expressions do not verbalize the same basic idea, namely that "this is the twentieth year since I / he came from that place and I / he left behind my homeland".

(d) Reinhardt's argumentation was rejected by Hooker[22] who argued that the number twenty "is used according to the familiar Greek idiom whereby the speaker would rather say 'in the Xth year' than 'for a period of X years'".[23] According to Hooker, "the epic employed 'twenty', as it employed 'twelve', to express the concept 'more than a few'".[24] By adopting this approach, Hooker expresses his disagreement towards Macleod who supports the old *addition theory* as he points to two Iliadic passages (4.28 and 11.270) which allude to the ten-year lapse for gathering the Achaean army before the beginning of the war.[25] Hooker argued that "by solving one problem Macleod has created another: namely, why *in this one passage* is Helen made to speak of a duration of twenty years?" What Hooker failed to see was that Macleod explicitly emphasized the importance of number twenty for the *Iliad*. 'Twenty' is for the poem '10 + '.[26]

(e) Although Macleod adopts an interpretation based on the *additive theory*, he is able to bypass the problems created by using strict chronological criteria in order to explain the number 'twenty' in *Il.* 24.765. 'Twenty' is for him a typical time-reckoning device which the *Iliad* prefers in order to express the idea of any large number.[27]

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21. Weber 1925, 341-343.

22. Hooker 1986, 111-113.

23. Hooker 1986, 111.

24. Hooker 1986, 112.

25. Macleod 1982, 154-155.

26. Macleod 1982, 154.

27. Macleod (1982, 154) offers a list of epic uses of the number 'twenty' which can be also employed as "an intensification of ten" (154). See *Il.* 9.379.

(f) According to another line of interpretation, *Il.* 24.765 is echoing *Od.* 19.222-223 where the same expression is used of Odysseus. The reference to the twenty years of absence seems to be at home in the Odyssean passage as Odysseus has been wandering for ten years after the sack of Troy. Kakridis thought that this may be an ad hoc invention which is restricted to Helen's speech but facilitated through the use of a 'typical' number like 'twenty' (10+10).[28] Willcock has argued along the same lines maintaining that this explanation "is in line with the modern view that the pressure of formulaic composition leads to carelessness about details, although if this is an example, it is an extremely violent one".[29]

Textual Games

In *Iliad* 24.765-766 while uttering her γόος for Hector, Helen turns the focus on herself who has been absent from her fatherland for a long time:

ἤδη γὰρ νῦν μοι τόδ' ἐεικοστὸν ἔτος ἐστίν
ἐξ οὗ κεῖθεν ἔβην καὶ ἐμῆς ἀπελήλυθα πάτρης

[A]nd here now is the twentieth year upon me since I came
from the place where I was, forsaking the land of my fathers.

In *Od.* 19.222-223 Odysseus disguised as a beggar tells Penelope a false story about his meeting with "the real Odysseus", who is, of course, the fictive creation of Odysseus the storyteller:

εἰπεῖν· ἤδη γὰρ οἱ ἐεικοστὸν ἔτος ἐστίν,
ἐξ οὗ κεῖθεν ἔβη καὶ ἐμῆς ἀπελήλυθε πάτρης

222 τόδ' Ῥ 99/ P.S.I. 979: οἱ sive μοι sive τοι sive μιν Ω

The textual tradition shows some interesting variants. A single papyrus offers the reading τόδ' which has been adopted by von der Mühll.[30] Van Thiel prints οἱ.[31] This reading seems to be supported by *Il.* 24.765 (see above) and *Od.* 24.309:

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28. Kakridis 1960, 407.
29. Willcock 1984, 321.
30. Von der Mühll 1946 ad 19.222.
31. See van Thiel 1991 ad loc.

αὐτὰρ Ὀδυσσῆϊ τόδε δὴ πέμπτον ἔτος ἐστίν,
ἐξ οὗ κεῖθεν ἔβη καὶ ἐμῆς ἀπελήλυθε πάτρης

As for Odysseus, it is five years since he bade me farewell and left my country.

The manuscript family Ω (omnes codices) offers three dative readings (οἱ, μοι, τοι) and the accusative μιν. It seems that we are dealing here with two separate strands in the textual tradition: (a) the one offering the dative singular and accusative readings and (b) the P 99/ P.S.I. 979 reading τόδ' which is consonant with the textually "safer" passages in *Il.* 24.765 and *Od.* 24.309.

The variant reading τόδ' that is offered by the 'eccentric' papyrus 99[32] does not contain "the ethic dative [which] is desirable and idiomatic here".[33] Both *Il.* 24.765 and *Od.* 24.309 offer interesting parallels. However, they cannot be used as supporting evidence for the reading τόδ' for in both cases there is already the 'ethical dative' which is indispensable (μοι, Ὀδυσσῆϊ). Del Corno thought that the reading τόδ' had originated from a scribe's effort to eliminate the hiatus before ἐεικοστόν.[34] There is no evidence which can either guarantee Del Corno's explanation or support von der Mühll's adoption of τόδ' in his *Odyssey* edition.[35]

Notwithstanding all these textual issues, there is another explanation for this variant reading, an explanation which is of interest to our inquiry. The expression **dative** + τόδ' + **numeral** + ἔτος ἐστίν is typical and recurrent in epic poetry. It is therefore plausible that the scribe was influenced first by *Il.* 24.765 (which seems –textually- the default mode)[36] and secondly by *Od.* 24.309 where τόδε was also used with the same expression.

This line of interpretation shows how easily the two distantly located passages in *Il.* 24.765-766 and *Od.* 19. 222-223 could be linked through diction and theme.

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32. See West 1967, 272. This is a third century B.C. papyrus of unknown provenance, now in the Biblioteca Laurenziana in Florence. It was first edited by Vitelli and Norsa 1927, 189 f. No. 979. See also Del Corno 1961, 43 f. I owe these references to West 1967, 270.

33. West 1967, 272. See aslo Chantraine 1953, 74 and Schwyzer 1950, 152 f.

34. See West 1967, 272 ad loc. I owe the reference to Del Corno.

35. Von der Mühll 1946 ad 19.222.

36. I consider *Il.* 24.765 to be the default mode as it is a whole-line expression containing the numeral ἐεικοστόν that is also used in *Od.* 19.222.

The 'twenty-year' absent hero

In *Od.* 24.309-310, when Laertes eagerly asks a stranger standing in front of him about his son, Odysseus-the stranger pretends to be Eperitus, son of Apheidantus who has met Laertes' son in the past:

> αὐτὰρ Ὀδυσσῆϊ τόδε δὴ πέμπτον ἔτος ἐστίν,
> ἐξ οὗ κεῖθεν ἔβη καὶ ἐμῆς ἀπελήλυθε πάτρης

As for Odysseus, it is five years since he bade me farewell and left my country.

Why is this the fifth year? The situation resembles that of Odysseus' false tale to Penelope in *Od.* 19.107-307 where Odysseus disguised as a beg-gar set his meeting with the supposedly 'real' Odysseus 'twenty' years ago. Are there any specific reasons for this different time-reckoning? Metrical criteria have to be excluded, for the text could very well stand even if the number 'twenty' was used, e.g. αὐτὰρ Ὀδυσσῆϊ τόδ᾽ ἐεικοστὸν ἔτος ἐστίν. The context is again that of lament, as Laertes performs acts pertaining to the ritual mourning for the dead (he pours dust over his head, he wails deeply and bitterly).[37] The answer lies in Odysseus' quick response to his father's tears (*Od.* 24.321-323):

> κεῖνος μὲν δὴ ὅδ᾽ αὐτὸς ἐγώ, πάτερ, ὃν σὺ μεταλλᾷς,
> ἤλυθον εἰκοστῷ ἔτεϊ ἐς πατρίδα γαῖαν.
> ἀλλ᾽ ἴσχευ κλαυθμοῖο γόοιό τε δακρυόεντος.

'Father,' [he cried,] 'here I am, the very man you asked about, in my own home and after twenty years. But no more tears and lamentation.'

The new, true time-reckoning is consonant with the disclosure of Odys-seus' real identity. The initial false reckoning is employed in order to be nul-lified by the unveilment of Laertes' son. In *Od.* 19.222-223, Odysseus will refrain from disclosing his identity to Penelope whereas here this revelation will happen right away. The *Odyssey* lets itself play with the idea of a five-

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37. See *Od.* 24.316-317: ἀμφοτέρῃσι δὲ χερσὶν ἑλὼν κόνιν αἰθαλόεσσαν | χεύατο κὰκ κεφαλῆς πολιῆς, ἁδινὰ στεναχίζων. Even the whole-line formula used by the external nar-rator (24.315: ὡς φάτο, τὸν δ᾽ ἄχεος νεφέλη κάλυψε μέλαινα) describes a situation of deep pain.

year absence, only to allow its hero Odysseus make a majestic revelation of
his identity, one that does not include his name (as it is the case with other
recognition scenes throughout the poem) but lets the hero define himself in
terms of his 'twenty' years of absence, which have become an Odyssean alias
of his persona, the symbolical trademark of his figure. A hero who is defined
in terms of his absence is a hero using time in a centripetal manner, with a
clear-cut self-referential focus. By guilefully entertaining the five-year ab-
sence scenario only to refute and correct it, the *Odyssey* rightly earns a stand-
ing ovation for its technical sophistication in manipulating time.

The common intertext

Let us now look at the context within which the two passages are
placed:

(a) *Il.* 24.761-776:

τῇσι δ' ἔπειθ' Ἑλένη τριτάτη ἐξῆρχε γόοιο·
"Ἕκτορ, ἐμῷ θυμῷ δαέρων πολὺ φίλτατε πάντων·
{ἦ μέν μοι πόσις ἐστὶν Ἀλέξανδρος θεοειδής,
ὅς μ' ἄγαγε Τροίηνδ'· ὡς πρὶν ὤφελλον ὀλέσθαι·}
ἤδη γὰρ νῦν μοι τόδ' ἐεικοστὸν ἔτος ἐστίν
ἐξ οὗ κεῖθεν ἔβην καὶ ἐμῆς ἀπελήλυθα πάτρης,
ἀλλ' οὔ πω σέ' ἄκουσα κακὸν ἔπος οὐδ' ἀσύφηλον,
ἀλλ' εἴ τίς με καὶ ἄλλος ἐνὶ μεγάροισιν ἐνίπτοι
δαέρων ἢ γαλόων ἢ' εἰνατέρων εὐπέπλων
ἢ ἑκυρή — ἑκυρὸς δὲ πατὴρ ὡς ἤπιος αἰεί —
ἀλλὰ σὺ τόν γ' ἐπέεσσι παραιφάμενος κατέρυκες
σῇ τ' ἀγανοφροσύνῃ καὶ σοῖς ἀγανοῖς ἐπέεσσιν.
τὼ σέ θ' ἅμα κλαίω καὶ ἔμ' ἄμμορον ἀχνυμένη κῆρ·
οὐ γάρ τίς μοι ἔτ' ἄλλος ἐνὶ Τροίῃ εὐρείῃ
ἤπιος οὐδὲ φίλος, πάντες δέ με πεφρίκασιν."
ὡς ἔφατο κλαίουσ', ἐπὶ δ' ἔστενε δῆμος ἀπείρων.

Third and last Helen led the song of sorrow among them:
"Hektor, of all my lord's brothers dearest by far to my spirit:
my husband is Alexandros, like an immortal', who brought me
here to Troy; and I should have died before I came with him;
and here now is the twentieth year upon me since I came
from the place where I was, forsaking the land of my fathers. In this time

I have never heard a harsh saying from you, nor an insult.
No, but when another, one of my lord's brothers or sisters, a fair-robed
wife of some brother, would say a harsh word to me in the palace,
or my lord's mother — but his father was gentle always, a father
indeed — then you would speak and put them off and restrain them
by your own gentleness of heart and your gentle words. Therefore
I mourn for you in sorrow of heart and mourn myself also
and my ill luck. There was no other in all the wide Troad
who was kind to me, and my friend; all others shrank when they saw me."
So she spoke in tears, and the vast populace grieved with her.

>   (b) *Od.* 19.203-223:
>   τῆς δ' ἄρ' ἀκουούσης ῥέε δάκρυα, τήκετο δὲ χρώς.
>   ὡς δὲ χιὼν κατατήκετ' ἐν ἀκροπόλοισιν ὄρεσσιν,
>   ἥν τ' Εὖρος κατέτηξεν, ἐπὴν Ζέφυρος καταχεύῃ·
>   τηκομένης δ' ἄρα τῆς ποταμοὶ πλήθουσι ῥέοντες·
>   ὡς τῆς τήκετο καλὰ παρήια δάκρυ χεούσης,
>   κλαιούσης ἑὸν ἄνδρα παρήμενον. αὐτὰρ Ὀδυσσεὺς
>   θυμῷ μὲν γοόωσαν ἑὴν ἐλέαιρε γυναῖκα,
>   ὀφθαλμοὶ δ' ὡς εἰ κέρα ἕστασαν ἠὲ σίδηρος
>   ἀτρέμας ἐν βλεφάροισι· δόλῳ δ' ὅ γε δάκρυα κεῦθεν.
>   ἡ δ' ἐπεὶ οὖν τάρφθη πολυδακρύτοιο γόοιο,
>   ἐξαῦτίς μιν ἔπεσσιν ἀμειβομένη προσέειπε·
>   "νῦν μὲν δή σευ, ξεῖνέ, γ' ὀίω πειρήσεσθαι,
>   εἰ ἐτεὸν δὴ κεῖθι σὺν ἀντιθέοις ἑτάροισι
>   ξείνισας ἐν μεγάροισιν ἐμὸν πόσιν, ὡς ἀγορεύεις.
>   εἰπέ μοι ὁπποῖ' ἄσσα περὶ χροῒ εἵματα ἕστο
>   αὐτὸς θ' οἷος ἔην, καὶ ἑταίρους, οἵ οἱ ἕποντο."
>   τὴν δ' ἀπαμειβόμενος προσέφη πολύμητις Ὀδυσσεύς·
>   "ὦ γύναι, ἀργαλέον τόσσον χρόνον ἀμφὶς ἐόντα
>   εἰπέμεν· ἤδη γάρ οἱ ἐεικοστὸν ἔτος ἐστίν,
>   ἐξ οὗ κεῖθεν ἔβη καὶ ἐμῆς ἀπελήλυθε πάτρης·"

[...] the tears poured from Penelope's eyes and drenched her cheeks. As the
snow that the West Wind has brought melts on the mountain-tops when
the East Wind thaws it, and, melting, makes the rivers run in spate, so did
the tears she shed drench her fair cheeks as she wept for the husband who
was sitting at her side. But though Odysseus' heart was wrung by his wife's
distress, his eyes, as if made of horn or iron, remained steady between their
lids, so guilefully did he repress his tears. When Penelope had wept to her

heart's content she said in answer, 'Now, stranger, I mean to test you and find out whether you really entertained my husband and his godlike company in your palace as you say. Tell me what sort of clothes he was wearing and what he looked like; and describe the men who were with him.' 'My lady,' replied the resourceful Odysseus, 'it is difficult for me to speak after parting so long ago; and it is twenty years since he left my country.'

The two passages share a common intertext which is of prime impor-tance for understanding the deeper intertextual play that they orchestrate. Unlocking the function of these two couplets, the Iliadic and the Odyssean, we should avoid the obstacle of determining the priority and antiquity of one of them at the expense of the other. Ramersdorfer[38] has studied the *singuläre iterata* of the first ten Books of the *Iliad* in comparison to the equivalent expressions found in the *Odyssey*, Hesiod, and the *Homeric Hymns*. His ap-proach has been a linear one trying to locate the 'first' passage upon which the 'second' one has been modeled. The approach undertaken here is rather different as the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are seen as open traditions, not as writ-ten texts crystallized and standardized during such an early period. The mat-ter of priority is, therefore, nullified by the very nature of oral composition and recomposition in performance. In the light of these observations, I pro-pose a different reading of the two passages in question, with a keen eye for locating the common intertext they share and, then, determining the impact of this intertext in the process of creating a different kind of meaning, one based not just on contextual parameters but also on larger intertextual refer-ences. For the full meaning of this *reformulated repetition* can be grasped and appreciated once it is set anew within the true *whole* it belongs to: that of epic poetry at large.

Before discussing the serious implications these references have, let us glance at the extended simile the *Odyssey* employs to describe Penelope's lamentation. In the first part of Odysseus' false tale to Penelope, Odysseus-the beggar presents a fictive visit by the 'real' Odysseus to Crete which takes place only ten or eleven days following their departure from Troy (19.192-193). After receiving the king's hospitality and gifts, Odysseus and his com-rades are ready to sail out to Ithaca. Unfortunately, they are prevented by the north wind which makes them wait in Crete for twelve days, only to depart on the thirteenth day. At this point, the external narrator takes the floor and turns the narrative lens on Penelope. Odysseus' words make her tears fall, drench her cheeks and make her body melt. The simile of the snow melting

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38. See Ramersdorfer 1981.

on the high mountaintops because of the west wind and becoming water that fills the rivers is indeed a powerful one. The downward motion of the falling tears and the melted snow is captivating, but one should not fail to connect the simile with the reference to the wind preventing the fictive Odysseus to sail away from Crete as well as the text's preoccupation, one could even speak of obsession, with time. The external narrator thus makes a welcoming gesture to Odysseus' fictive narrative by using the winds as a device that links Odysseus' false tale with the description of his wife's feelings. Time is also emphasized in Odysseus' narrative, especially since Odysseus-the narrator presents his fictive Odysseus arriving at Crete soon after his departure from Troy. Therefore, the meeting between the Cretan king and the fictive Odysseus takes place when our hero is still within the realm of the *Iliad*.

I would like therefore to suggest that the aforementioned Odyssean lament context can help us locate similar resonances in its equivalent Iliadic lament context, namely that of Helen's lament for Hector. The tears of Penelope constitute her response to Odysseus' fictive narrative (19.204: τῆς δ' ἄρ' ἀκουούσης ῥέε δάκρυα, τήκετο δὲ χρώς). Likewise, Iliadic Helen laments Hector whose kind words always protected her amidst the unfriendly Trojans (*Il.* 24.767-772: ἀλλ' οὔ πω σέ' ἄκουσα κακὸν ἔπος οὐδ' ἀσύφηλον. | ἀλλ' εἴ τίς με καὶ ἄλλος ἐνὶ μεγάροισιν ἐνίπτοι | δαέρων ἢ γαλόων ἠ' εἰνατέρων εὐπέπλων | ἢ ἑκυρή – ἑκυρὸς δὲ πατὴρ ὣς ἤπιος αἰεί – | ἀλλὰ σὺ τὸν γ' ἐπέεσσι παραιφάμενος κατέρυκες | σῇ τ' ἀγανοφροσύνῃ καὶ σοῖς ἀγανοῖς ἐπέεσσιν). One can see that from our initial point of departure, namely the reformulated two-verse repetition that originated from the 'problematic' use of number 'twenty' in *Il.* 24.765, we have been able to locate an entire nexus of resonances between the corresponding Iliadic and Odyssean contexts. These textual echoes constitute the framework where this special time-reckoning belongs.

In the *Iliad*, Helen invents the detail of the twenty years in order to alleviate her position and ameliorate her place within a hostile Trojan community. Now that Hector is dead she has to evoke even more the sympathy of the audience, both external and internal. Helen as an internal narrator manipulates biographical details and invents her own autobiography, not one consonant with mathematically proved chronology but one based on hers and the poem's perception of time. The *Iliad* here allows for a different kind of deception by allowing Helen to construct her own fictive and idiosyncratic chronology. In the Odyssean passage, Odysseus the beggar dupes Penelope with his false story, not with chronological trivia. In the Iliadic passage, Helen attempts to deceive the Trojan internal audience at a moment of deep pathos, during the lamentation for Hector. She therefore constructs a fictive internal narrative in a manner resembling the way Odysseus-the beggar in-

vents his own fictive self. There is no *Trugrede* here but a sophisticated use of chronemics which Helen employs, thus inviting the audience to flirt with the idea that she also may evoke sympathy, just like Penelope in the correspond-ing Odyssean passage.[39]

As the death of Hector symbolizes the fall of Troy, Helen adopts a post-war focalization, which is in fact that of the par excellence post-war epic, the *Odyssey*. The *Iliad* refrains from using its own, Iliadic time-reckoning and adopts an Odyssean stance which is facilitated by the context of the la-ment. Temporal reshuffling through a mixture of past, present and future events mediated by anachronies, proleptic and analeptic alike, is common to lament narrative. By citing Odyssean time, the *Iliad* makes a gesture to the Odyssean text as it insinuates that such a temporal input *usurps* the extended time-span of its rival epic. The essential question, however, lies ahead: How is this *usurpation* effectuated?

By using the number 'twenty' when referring to Odysseus' absence, the *Odyssey* implies that its own perspective includes that of the *Iliad*. The ten years of the Iliadic war (which is in Odyssean terms phase A of Odysseus' absence) are taken for granted and are regarded as an indisputable time-span guaranteed by the authority of the *Iliad*. They are consequently added to the other ten years of Odysseus' Odyssean adventures, his Odyssean absence with which the *Odyssey* systematically deals. Thus, the epic of return successfully incorporates Iliadic time in its own time, *in terms of Odysseus' absence from his fatherland*. This is a polemical gesture against the *Iliad*, intending to subordinate it to the extended time-frame of the *Odyssey*.

In the light of these observations, we can now see how the *Iliad* in 24.765-766 employs an Odyssean expression to make an even more pro-vocative statement, to utter, so to speak, its own polemical cry versus the *Odyssey*: to the Odyssean usurpation of Iliadic time, the *Iliad* suggests its own usurpation of the *Odyssey's panhellenic diffusion and authority*, of the *Odyssey's* undisputed (for any ancient audience) time-span of 'twenty' years. Helen, as the speaker of the lament, situates herself in the overarching post-war epic intertext which is at hand after Hector's death. Such an intertext encompasses both the war-epics (such as the *Cypria*, the *Iliad*, the *Aethiopis*, the *Little Iliad*, and the *Iliou Persis*) and the post-war epics (the *Nostoi*, the *Odyssey*, and the *Telegonia*). Both Odysseus in the *Odyssey* and Helen in

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39. See Clarke (1987) who in chapter 4 of his thesis explores the relation of the com-plementary figures of Penelope and Helen, different yet linked, to language and poetry: i.e. Penelope and the bard Phemius, Helen recounting the fall of Troy, Penelope's loving lies before Odysseus.

the *Iliad* are the *transitional links* between the war-epics and the post-war ones, as her departure from Sparta initiated the former, whereas his return to Ithaca concluded the latter.[40]

If there is something that the scholia vetera can teach us on this issue, it is that there was indeed an effort to explain the weird number 'twenty'. The awkwardness of this number in respect to the *Iliad*'s time-frame presupposes the *Odyssey*'s panhellenic impact and diffusion which had established the duration of the Trojan War as a ten-year period and Odysseus' adventures before his return to Ithaca as another ten-year period. Screening out the relative chronology of the two Homeric epics, one can see that one song tradition with a panhellenic viewpoint attempts to match another one with a panhellenic prominence. The *Iliad* thus adopts the panhellenic viewpoint, namely that Helen has been away for as many years as the hero of the other panhellenic epos, the *Odyssey*.[41]

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40. Iliadic Helen and Odyssean Odysseus share at least two common features: an exceptional ability for disguise, verbal and literal alike, and a special beauty that is recognised as such by others. See Maronitis 1999, 216-217; Worman 2001, 34; Tsagalis 2003, 185-187.

41. The scholia and Eustathius missed this point while Kullmann's (1960, 189-203) neoanalytical efforts aimed at explaining the number 'twenty' by using the argument about the Teuthranian expedition. All of them did not consider the possibility that the mention of this expedition was probably reflecting and promoting local interests, probably of that part of the Troad where the Mysian king Telephos comes from. For a similar argument concerning the cities of Lyrnessos and Pedasos, see Dué 1999, 21-36 (in particular 22-23).

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