

A Poet on the Achaean Wall

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In his last-century B.C. survey of the Troad, Strabo is concerned with the nearness of what was called, in his time, the ναύσταθμον—“the naval base”—to the traditional site of Troy. By ναύσταθμον, Strabo means that stretch of coastline on which the Achaeans hauled up their ships and in front of which the *Iliad* tells us that the Achaeans built a wall in the ninth year of the war. Because of the dangerous proximity of “the naval base” to what was thought to be the site of the city (about 20 stadia or approximately two and one-half miles), Strabo believes that either the Greeks were foolish in not fortifying their camp sooner, or that the Trojans were cowardly in not overwhelming it before it was fortified (13.1.36).¹

Thucydides expresses a similar interest in the wall in Book I of the *History*, but it appears that either he is working from a version of the Troy tale that varies greatly from that presented in our *Iliad* in this respect or that his personal military experience has caused him to read less thoroughly than he might. He simply asserts that the wall must have been there from the beginning. For it to have been there, his reasoning continues, the Achaeans had clearly won an initial beachhead victory, since how else might they have been able to have fortified their camp in the face of strong Trojan opposition (1.11)?²

¹ There is another place in the area, called Ἀγαίῳ λιμένα—“the Harbor of the Achaeans”—and Strabo (13.1.36) believes that, had *it* been the Achaean camp, the behavior of both sides would have been even more puzzling, as it is only about twelve stadia (a little under 1.5 miles) from the site of Troy.

² This passage of Thucydides has been the subject of learned discussion for many years. For a sense of the possible problem and its solutions, see, for example, Page (1959:315-24), and two replies (Davison 1965:5-28 and West 1969:255-60). In all of these studies, the given is that there was a standardized text of the *Iliad* in Thucydides' time and that we are dealing here with possible variants of that text. I myself would argue that

As Nestor says in his original proposal in *Iliad* 7, the wall's purpose is to act as a protection both for the Achaeans and for their ships (7.338).³ The poem tells us that these ships are in such abundance that they are drawn up in several rows (14.30-35), but that, even arranged in ranks, they fill up the space between those two promontories that later classical people referred to as Cape Sigeium and Cape Rhoeteium (14.35-36).⁴

For invaders from far across the Aegean, the loss of such ships would mean complete disaster. As Ajax mockingly calls out to the Achaeans in 15.504-5:

ἦ ἔλπεσθ', ἦν νῆας ἔλη κορυθαίολος Ἑκτωρ,
ἐμβαδὸν ἴξεσθαι ἦν πατρίδα γαῖαν ἕκαστος;

Or do you each hope that, if Hector with the glittering helmet should take the ships, you can walk to your own homeland?⁵

So obviously vulnerable are the Achaeans, then, that we can well understand the impatience of Strabo or the assumptions of Thucydides about the wall. With the only way home so easily threatened, the ships *must* have been walled in earlier—or should have been.

Thus, while these two ancient writers appear to disagree upon the timing of the construction, they certainly concur, even though four hundred years apart in time, that, at some point in the Troy story, tradition told of how the Achaeans perceived that their ships were threatened and therefore protected them with a fortification. There is then the problem of just where

the available evidence, both literary and pictorial, suggests that multiple versions of many Troy stories were in circulation, at least from the sixth century B.C., and that no one version was privileged in Thucydides' time and even through the fourth and possibly later centuries. Thucydides himself, for instance, although he mentions "Homer" several times, attaching his name to various bits of information, never specifically refers to the *Iliad* or *Odyssey* by title. The only Homeric work actually given a title is what Thucydides calls (3.104.4) Homer's "Prooimia of Apollo."

³ One might also add that it served to protect the Achaeans' loot; see *Il.* 12.7-8.

⁴ In Strabo's time, these two capes were strongly identified with figures from the Trojan War era; see Strabo 13.1.31-32.

⁵ This and all other translations throughout the text are mine. All *Iliad* citations are from Monro and Allen's Oxford Classical Text.

that wall might have been located. Strabo, drawing on Homer, later classical sources, and local information and tradition, feels reasonably confident in his knowledge of just where Troy and its walls had been.⁶ Except for mentioning the local name “naval base,” however, he never provides any evidence for the placement of the Achaean wall, leading us to the conclusion that the traditional site of the wall of the Achaeans was uncertain even in Strabo’s time. Any more detailed evidence for its existence than a name must come from the poem itself, which supplies us, as it seems to have supplied Strabo, with information about the wall, its placement, and composition. These details are scattered throughout our text from books 7 to 24, but, brought together, they present a fairly complete picture of the wall as our present *Iliad* describes it.⁷ From the landward side, one approached a deep ditch whose wide bottom was either palisaded or at least sown with stakes to prevent easy access by chariot (7.440-41).⁸ Although they are not clearly mentioned, one must presume that causeways at least a chariot wide were imagined as leading to the several gates (7.438-39), one of which is vividly described when Hector smashes it in the closing lines of Book 12 (453-62). The wall itself is understood to consist of stones revetted with timbers (12.28-29) and surmounted by a series of strong-points or towers (7.436-37), with a catwalk along the top (12.265-66). Even if such a wall never existed in fact, such detailed visualizing makes it easy to see why writers in the far past might take it for granted that such a wall had been erected at *some* time during the war with Troy.

Since the publication of Parry’s work on the oral nature of South Slavic and Homeric heroic poetry and Lord’s continuation and enlargement of it, the *Iliad* has been seen by many as, if not an actual oral poem itself, certainly oral-derived.⁹ The criteria for this view are the use of formulae,

⁶ Strabo believed that there were no remains of Homer’s Troy, but had much to say about its stones and about the Trojan plain (13.1.34-44).

⁷ For all examples given in the notes, it should be understood that there are many similar examples within the text not cited here.

⁸ The success of this trench and its palisade is attested at 12.49-59.

⁹ See Foley 1990. Foley, who created this useful term, defines “oral-derived texts” as “the manuscript or tablet works of finally uncertain provenance that nonetheless show oral traditional characteristics” (5).

the employment of type-scenes to build the larger blocks of the story, and extensive metrical and syntactic patterning.¹⁰

The mark of the Homeric poet, then, like the South Slavic, is in the employment of these features to shape his traditional materials into a narrative pattern of great technical complexity. For the so-called “hard Parryists,” this also means that most, if not all, of what goes on in the narrative is governed in turn by what governs the techniques. Because such a belief in the paramount nature of the technical would seem to negate the artistic and human qualities that so abound in Homer, there has long been a negative reaction to this extreme position. The danger in this reaction, however, is that it can cause a swing to the other extreme, in which Homer becomes a sort of proto-Milton, with complete control over every aspect of the text, and the work of Parry, Lord, and others, which has been so helpful to our understanding of the *Iliad* as a work within a greater tradition, is misused or discarded completely. In Lord’s seminal volume, *The Singer of Tales* (1960), he expresses great admiration for the *guslar* Avdo Medjedović, who, while retaining all of the technical features of his oral tradition, can add to his story a certain tell-tale shape of his own, as for instance, Lord sees Avdo doing in his reworking of Mumin Vlahovljak’s rendition of the song *Bećiragić Meho*. As Lord describes Avdo at work:

The song was a long one of several thousand lines. Avdo began and as he sang, the song lengthened, the ornamentation and richness accumulated, and the human touches of character, touches that distinguished Avdo from other singers, imparted a depth of feeling that had been missing in Mumin’s version.¹¹

If a singer in the South Slavic tradition, from which we have learned so much applicable to Homer, can so rework and embellish a song he has received from another singer within his tradition, I would wonder if and how we might perceive the same possibility for some trace of individuality within the limits of tradition in our text of the *Iliad*.

¹⁰ For a bibliographical survey of material on formulae and type-scenes, see Edwards 1986, 1988, and 1992.

¹¹ 1960:78. Lord very helpfully includes a comparative analysis of the first major theme of the poem as stated by Mumin and embellished by Avdo; see his Appendix I: 223-34.

If we begin, as I believe we must, by understanding the *Iliad* as we have it to be only one of numerous tellings of the same story, we must first ask ourselves what in our *Iliad* might be a constant throughout various other versions of the poem as sung by other singers. Unfortunately, unlike Lord, Homerists do not have the luxury of a wealth of comparative diachronic and synchronic material from the same tradition.¹² When he admires Avdo's reworking of Mumin's performance, Lord is not only setting Avdo's performance against Mumin's, and then against all of Avdo's other performances, but against many other performances that he himself has heard in the same tradition as well. Lacking the kind of evidence that would allow us to set our *Iliad* into the larger Troy tale tradition that once existed, we can never know for certain how our present *Iliad* would match against the rest of the tradition or even against other tellings of the same story, so that we might be able to see our poem's teller/creator in the same sort of exterior perspective in which Lord could see Avdo.

Our constant must be so broad as to suggest that, without it, the *Iliad* simply could not exist as the poem that we know. To insure this, that constant must interpenetrate the text at as many levels as possible, from the human to the divine, from Troy to the Achaean camp. To judge by its pervasiveness in the poem as we now have it, and by the number of *Iliad* manuscripts that begin with a statement of it, we might then tentatively put forth Achilles' $\mu\eta\gamma\nu\iota\varsigma$ (wrath) and its effects as a strong possibility for that constant.¹³

If Achilles' anger *is* a constant, it might be so because of the many advantages that it would provide for a poet. With Achilles as the active central figure of the poem, his great power would confine the frightened Trojans within the walls, as he boasts in 9.352-55:

¹² In contrast to the paucity of Homeric materials, see the 25-page "A Digest of Serbocroatian Epic songs in the Milman Parry Collection of Southslavic Texts" (Lord 1954:21-45). For another view, see Griffin 1977:39-53. As we have nothing but the rags of verse, scattered references, late prose authors like "Dares" and "Dictys," and Photius' ninth-century A.D. version of Proclus' fifth-century A.D. prose epitome to testify to the existence of the so-called "epic cycle" (in itself a problematic concept that requires further investigation), I believe it unwise at present to attempt such detailed comparisons.

¹³ Even another possible proem, such as that cited by G.S. Kirk, and given in the apparatus to 1.1 in the Oxford Classical Text, still mentions the $\mu\eta\gamma\nu\iota\varsigma$, even perhaps strengthening it by adding $\chi\acute{o}\lambda\omicron\varsigma$ to it. See Kirk 1985:52.

ὄφρα δ' ἐγὼ μετ' Ἀχαιοῖσιν πολέμιζον
 οὐκ ἐθέλεσκε μάχην ἀπὸ τείχεος ὀρνύμεν Ἐκτωρ,
 ἀλλ' ὅσον ἐς Σκαϊάς τε πύλας καὶ φηγὸν ἴκανεν.
 ἔνθα ποτ' οἶον ἔμιμνε, μόγις δέ μευ ἔκφυγεν ὄρμήν.

So long as I fought alongside the Achaeans,
 Hector was not inclined to bring on a fight outside the wall,
 but he only came up to the Skaian Gates and the Oak Tree.
 There once he stood up to me alone, but he barely escaped my attack.

Such behavior on both sides would make for a very short poem, one imagines.¹⁴ With Achilles removed from the action, but expected back at an unspecified time, however, a poet has greater scope. If he uses the actions around the withdrawal of Achilles as the opening of his poem, he can then work in as many heroes and their deeds as he wants for as long as he wants, the only time limit and length limit being the self-imposed one of bringing about Achilles' eventual return, which will automatically indicate the beginning of the poem's closure. The hope (or dread) of that return will also provide a natural power source for the story as a whole. So long as the Achaeans, the Trojans, and the listeners feel Achilles' looming presence, no incident will be the final one, but, instead, one happening will demand another in logical succession as the narrative moves under the poet's verse-making. As well, the return itself is full of possibilities: Will Agamemnon placate Achilles? Will the appeal of his friends touch his heart? Will the words of Patroclus? Will the mandate of the gods? Or will it be something completely unexpected, which does not involve his wounded honor at all?

If we take Achilles' wrath as our traditional constant in the *Iliad*, we must then ask ourselves in what elements of the poem we might see any marks of individuality within that constant. How might our poet be seen to add to or rework the material of the tradition to show off his own distinct skill? Avdo displays his great craft, as Lord says, by developing material already within the song as Mumin gives it, his demonstration of his ability

¹⁴ Might this be the reason why Apollonius removes Heracles so quickly from the Argo? Tradition may have obliged him to bring Heracles on board, but so much power invested in one hero could have rendered unnecessary the other heroes on the expedition, as well as sapped the role of Jason and perhaps even obviated the need for Medea (at least in her role as sorceress) entirely.

causing the song to grow from 2294 to 6313 lines (Lord 1960:103). Comparison of passages in the two versions shows that Avdo expands and develops descriptions of places, people, and things, increases the amount of dialogue, and provides biographical and autobiographical information for characters, among other embellishments.¹⁵ Where could our poet make his mark?

Strabo, in his survey of Trojan geography, remarks that Homer “says that the [Achaean] wall was newly-built or did not exist, but the poet himself made it, then tore it down, as Aristotle says.”¹⁶ The first half of this statement fits in with the *Iliad* as we presently have it, the wall only being erected there in 7. The second half, however, is rather curious. Because we no longer possess Aristotle’s context outside Strabo’s quotation, we cannot tell if this is a criticism or simply a factual remark. As well, we cannot tell whether Aristotle is basing this remark upon literary evidence no longer available to us, as has been argued for Thucydides’ comments on the wall,¹⁷ or is deducing it from the lack of physical evidence of the wall itself. We also have little or no testimony for this part of the whole Troy tale except the *Iliad* text we currently possess, so it is possible that what we read in our *Iliad* is simply received tradition, even if that tradition was unknown to Aristotle: at this point in the tale, the wall was said to have been built, and so the poet builds it, as the first part of Strabo’s quotation suggests. There is, however, the possibility that Aristotle is actually saying that, in his time, the Troy tale tradition as a whole had no wall, and that its existence was limited to one version of this part of the story, the creation of an especially imaginative poet.

Surviving later classical literary evidence certainly does not depict the wall as a major feature of the Troy tale. The *Aeneid* mentions the Achaean camp under the military term *castra*¹⁸ in 1.472, 2.27, and 2.462, but no

¹⁵ See Lord 1960:223-34 for a valuable and illuminating comparison of the two texts.

¹⁶ νεωστὶ γὰρ γεγονέναι φησὶ τὸ τεῖχος ἢ οὐδ’ ἐγένετο, ὁ δὲ πλάσας ποιητῆς ἠφάνισεν, ὡς Ἀριστοτέλης φησὶν (Strabo 13.1.36).

¹⁷ For bibliography on the controversy over this point, see note 2 above.

¹⁸ This usage would seem to imply that Vergil thought of it as having both wall and ditch—*vallum* and *fossa*—like a Roman legionary encampment.

fighting is described as happening at its wall. Neptune prophesies a number of the events of Troy to Thetis in Statius' fragmentary *Achilleid* (1.84-94) with no word of the wall. Dictys Cretensis, the fourth-century A.D. translator of an early imperial Greek version of the Troy story, mentions the wall several times, but only very briefly, as if tradition in his time obliged him to acknowledge its existence, but nothing more (2.43, 3.1, and 3.13).¹⁹ Proclus' very late summaries of the other poems in the Troy cycle take no notice of the Achaean wall at all.

Judging from this later evidence, then, it may be that Aristotle is saying that the wall is unique to one version of the story, that preserved in our *Iliad*, and not to the tradition as a whole, which seems to have known of other possibilities. It should be stressed, of course, that what may be hints for other versions of the combat at the ships are tightly interwoven with the story as our *Iliad* tells it, making it difficult to discuss them without constantly conceding that they may be contradicted by other details in the text, but I believe that we might deduce from these hints at least two choices for narratives other than our current one. For the sake of reconstruction, I will make them more distinct and independent than they really appear in our text.

In the first choice, there is neither wall nor ditch, a possibility recognized by Leaf in his text and commentary.²⁰ In this version of the story, the Achaeans, perhaps on foot, fight Trojans in chariots on the plain below Troy. At least this is the situation throughout 11, at the beginning of which (11.47-52) the Achaeans dismount, cross the ditch, and move into battle as infantry. Thereafter, in incident after incident, dismounted Achaeans kill mounted Trojans, from the death of the Trojan Bienor and his charioteer, Oileus (11.91-100), to Odysseus' killing of Chersidamas as he jumps from his chariot (11.423-25). When all of the main Achaean leaders have been wounded and have withdrawn one by one,²¹ except for Ajax, the

¹⁹ In each case the word used is *vallum*, thus linking it to the concept of *castra*.

²⁰ Leaf 1900-2/1971:13.384. Although Leaf indicates something of the narrative overlappings in our version of the *teichomachia*, he attributes this to the work of editors, rather than to the confluence of tale versions sometimes found in oral traditional material (1-2).

²¹ Their withdrawal is by chariot, used in this case as a sort of field ambulance—see 11.273-74 (Agamemnon), 11.399-400 (Diomedes—an echo of 11.273-74), 11.487-88 (Odysseus), and 11.511-13 (where Idomeneus directs Nestor to carry away

Achaean retreat,²² closely pursued by the Trojans. With no wall or ditch between them and the ships, the Trojans, still in their chariots,²³ then sweep into the Achaean camp to begin the burning. It is perhaps at this time in this version of the tale that the prophecy uttered by Zeus at 8.473-77 (and not fulfilled in our *Iliad*) takes place:

οὐ γὰρ πρὶν πολέμου ἀποπαύσεται ὄβριμος Ἑκτωρ.
 πρὶν ὄρθαι παρὰ ναῦφι ποδώκεα Πηλείωνα,
 ἧματι τῷ ὅτ' ἂν οἱ μὲν ἐπὶ πρύμνησι μάχωνται
 στείνει ἐν αἰνοτάτῳ περὶ Πατρόκλοιο θανόντος
 ὡς γὰρ θέσφατόν ἐστι·

For powerful Hector will not cease from fighting
 before swift-footed Achilles rouses himself by the ships,
 on the day in which they fight each other by the prows
 in the very tight place around dead Patroclus,
 for so it has been ordained.

Our evidence for a version in which the wall and ditch are absent is circumstantial here, relying upon what is *not* mentioned, but that absence has a certain consistency. For instance, when Agamemnon and Diomedes suggest their various plans to the beaten Achaeans at the beginning of 9, neither takes into consideration the defensive potential of the wall and ditch, nor does Nestor, the man who originally proposed its construction. When Agamemnon looks mournfully from the ships to the Trojans on the plain

the wounded Machaon). It is puzzling why the Achaeans would surrender the use of chariots as fighting platforms only to use them as conveyances for the wounded, especially when they are battling on an open plain and fighting an enemy who regularly employs them. Perhaps, once upon a time, the Achaeans had come to Troy without wheeled transport and later generations of poets had included chariots on the analogy of the methods of warfare of the Trojans and their allies.

²² Perhaps at the suggestion of Thoas? See 15.295-99.

²³ In our text of the *Iliad*, Hector has followed Poulydamas' counsel that the Trojans dismount at the ditch (12.81). If other possibilities for the battle around the Achaean camp still exist within our text, including one or more in which the Trojans made a chariot charge over open ground right into the ships, this might then explain the seeming inconsistency of Hector's dismounting at 13.749 from a chariot from which he had already dismounted in 12.81.

(10.11-14), the poet appears to ignore the fortifications raised with such great labor between them, as does Zeus, when he sits upon Ida and looks out over Troy and the ships (11.82). And even Achilles, in his reply to Ajax, leaves the wall and ditch out of his conditions when he declares that he will not rejoin the fighting (9.651-53):

πρίν γ' υἷὸν Πριάμοιο δαίφρονος Ἑκτορα δῖον,
Μυρμιδόνων ἐπὶ τε κλισίας νῆας ἰκέσθαι
κτείνοντ' Ἀργείους, κατὰ τε σμῦξαι πυρὶ νῆας.

until godlike Hector, the son of skillful Priam,
comes to the lean-tos and ships of the Myrmidons,
killing Achaeans and burning down the ships with fire.

In our second choice, there would be a ditch filled with palisading, but no wall behind it. If the Achaeans are conceived as being on foot and are forced to face Trojan chariots, this would seem a very logical defense behind which to retreat. For the sake of greater maneuverability, the poet appears to imagine that there were some crossing points, however, as the Achaean leaders make their way through it (10.198-99), Odysseus drives the horses of Rhesos across it (10.564-65), and the Trojan Asios must cross it somehow to assault a gate (12.110-15).²⁴ As in the first version, the Achaeans, perhaps on foot, move out to attack the Trojans. Although they are described as crossing the ditch, however, the Achaeans are never described as crossing the wall, and this is true not only for their setting out, but for their return. After Eris stirs them up (11.3-14) and Agamemnon arms himself (11.15-46), the Achaeans, who have been by their ships,²⁵ move to the ditch without ever going through any of the gates that are described as forming part of the wall's structure (7.438-39). When they come to the edge of the ditch, they dismount and cross and form up on the

²⁴ Could the *πτολέμοιο γεφύρας* ("causeway of battle") spoken of by Athena at 8.378 and by the poet in describing where the Trojans camp in 8.553 have been a causeway? Apollo is described as forming one (*γεφύρωσεν*) at 15.357-58. Certainly later Greek usage sees *γέφυρα* as indicating a bridge. See *LSJ* (9th ed.), s.v. *γέφυρα*.

²⁵ Eris stands on Odysseus' ship in the middle of the beached fleet so that she can be heard in both directions, 11.5-6.

other side, their chariots following them.²⁶ They are beaten back and some perhaps get caught in the ditch, as we see in 15.343-45,²⁷ but are never shown as recrossing the wall before they appear as its defenders in 12 to 14. For the Trojans, the ditch proves no obstacle, since Apollo, as he has promised Hector (15.258-61), knocks it down (15.355-59). The Trojans then sweep in as in the previous version, mounted on their chariots, and perhaps Zeus' prophecy of the combat of Hector and Achilles is fulfilled here or Patroclus or someone drives the Trojans back, because two Trojan retreats are depicted in 15 and 16. In both, the ditch is specifically mentioned as being crossed (15.1-3 and 16.367-71),²⁸ but the wall is not.

If we set up Achilles' wrath as our traditional constant, and choose to interpret Aristotle as saying that the Achaean wall is unique to one version of the story, that found in our *Iliad*, and not to the Troy tale tradition as a whole, I believe that we can then scale down the problem of individual versus tradition to the level of our single available text. This is not to say that we will then expect to discover here comprehensive proof that we are looking at the proto-Milton mentioned above. Rather, we are simply exploring, at Aristotle's prompting, the possibility that our *Iliad* provides evidence of a middle position between a poet who is almost a mechanical slave to tradition and one so completely free of tradition that his work is only a backward-looking imitation at best. This middle position would posit a poet who, while working with traditional material about Troy and the Trojan war and employing verse and narrative techniques from his poetic tradition, could, like Avdo, add something for his own poetic purposes, thus displaying a definite degree of individuality within that tradition. To trace how that individuality might be introduced and employed, we must return to the beginning of the tale.

At our *Iliad*'s opening, it is clear that the Achaeans have not been

²⁶ See 11.47-52 for the dismounting and forward movement. We never see the Achaeans form up again, but they are described as fighting the Trojans on the far side in 11.70-73.

²⁷ Here I read τεῖχος as meaning "palisade," as the verbs used around it include ἐνπλήξαντες, "to be tangled in" and δύνοντο, which in both active and middle voices bears among its meanings the idea of "to penetrate."

²⁸ In 16.367-71, some Trojans are trapped there, as the Achaeans had been before them.

successful in their attempt to take Troy, although they have sat below it for nine years. Thucydides states confidently that their delay derived from a lack of available funds, and the resultant need to divide their forces for crop-cultivation and raiding for supplies, which never allowed them to concentrate their superior forces for one bold assault, or at least a proper siege (1.11). Such pragmatism shows us a practical military mind at work, one that sees expeditions and sieges as the almost mathematical outcome of military logistics. With the proper forces for the job and the cash to supply them, soldiers should be able to get on with their work. The *Iliad*, however, is not the historical account of a campaign, as Thucydides appears to assume. While Thucydides perceives the world as constrained by military logistics, the traditional poet lives in a world of poetic logistics.

Thucydides' mention of raids introduces a basic contrast between his ideas of warfare and the warfare actually visible in the *Iliad*. For Thucydides, if the Achaeans had been properly supplied at the outset, they would have performed the classical siege: invested the city and thus blockaded food and reinforcements from entering or sorties from coming out, surrounded it with entrenchments, looked for or created a weak spot, called on the city to surrender, and, if it refused, stormed it and taken no prisoners—or sold the survivors as slaves.²⁹ Although there is a hint, in Nestor's account of what appears to be the siege of Thryoessa in 11, that these tactics were known to the tradition,³⁰ the Achaeans have, instead, landed and raided up and down the coast ever since their arrival.³¹ Such behavior might lead us to conclude that the Trojan War, if such had ever been, or perhaps just as it was imagined in poetic tradition, was actually never conceived as a Thucydidean campaign at all, but rather as a large retaliatory raid, in which Troy was to be quickly sacked, Helen seized, all portable valuables lifted, and then a quick sail made for home.³² Thus do

²⁹ See Thucydides 2.74-78, 3.20-24, 3.52-68, e.g., for his account of the siege of Plataea.

³⁰ See espec. 11.711-13—and the verb ἀμφεστρατόωντο in 713.

³¹ We hear mention of raids on Thebe, 1.366-67; Lyrnessos, 2.691; Tenedos, 11.624-25; Lesbos 9.664; Skyros, 9.667-68; Pedasos, 20.92. Achilles claims to have sacked twelve cities by sea and eleven by land since arriving, 9.328-29.

³² For Herodotus' version of this, see 1.1-5.

we observe cities like Lyrnessos sacked by the Achaeans during that nine-year period.³³

But Troy has not proved so easy, for military *and* poetic reasons, it appears. First, as would appeal to the practical Thucydides, the city is very solidly built—after all, its wall was originally constructed by Poseidon, perhaps with Apollo’s assistance.³⁴ Second, as Zeus and Apollo at various times indicate, Troy is fated to live out its life within an allotted time that transcends human (and perhaps even divine) actions.³⁵ Achilles may threaten the city, but the gods appear bound to maintain that time limit.³⁶

Thus, the Achaeans, faced with human and divine resistance, are caught between two stark possibilities, as enumerated by their chief enemy, Hector: they will either take fortified Troy or be overcome alongside their ships by the Trojans (7.71-72). There is, of course, the third possibility: immediate withdrawal. This is a possibility weighed on several occasions—as a disastrous test, by Agamemnon, in 2.139-41, and later, when things look their bleakest, as his serious suggestion in 14.74-81. What may ultimately stop the Achaeans are the consequences as laid out in Agamemnon’s bitter and lamenting words to the wounded Menelaus in 4.173-75:

κάδ δέ κεν εὐχολήν Πριάμῳ καὶ Τρωσὶ λίποιμεν
 Ἄργείην Ἑλένην· σέο δ’ ὅστέα πύσει ἄρουρα
 κειμένου ἐν Τροίῃ ἀτελευτήτῳ ἐπὶ ἔργῳ.

and so we would leave Achaean Helen to Priam and the Trojans
 to boast over, and the plowland will rot your bones at Troy,

³³ See Briseis’ description, 19.291-97.

³⁴ There are several different versions of the story of this construction, two in the *Iliad* alone. In 7.451-53, Poseidon says that he and Apollo built the wall. In 21.446-47, he claims to have built the wall himself, while Apollo herded Laomedon’s cattle. Apollodorus (2.5.9) states that the wall was built by both the gods. See Poulydamas’ description of the wall’s protection and his confidence in it in 18.274-83.

³⁵ Zeus lays out in some detail the latter part of the struggle for Troy in 15.58-71.

³⁶ See Apollo’s warning to Patroclus (16.707-9), and Zeus’ speech to the other gods (20.26-30).

on an unfinished task.³⁷

To leave Troy without completing what they had set out to do is to lose face at a terrible cost, something almost impossible to imagine in a warrior culture like that of the Troy tale.

But if we employ this reconstruction to attempt to explain the logic behind Achaean behavior as we are shown it, why, as Strabo wondered, have the Trojans been so slow to overwhelm them? Although the native Trojans are heavily outnumbered, as Agamemnon claims, we are told that their many allies augment them powerfully (2.123-33).³⁸ Why not come out of the city, slaughter the Achaeans, and destroy their way home? The answer appears to lie in the passage cited earlier, in which Achilles boasts to the embassy sent to bring him back into the fold. Odysseus has admitted that Achilles is desperately needed and that the ships will be lost without him (9.230-31), and Achilles replies that, when *he* was fighting for the Achaeans, Hector had not dared to go far from the shelter of Troy's wall (9.352-54), a statement that echoes Hera's reproach to the Achaeans in 5.³⁹ Achilles is clearly almost an army in himself, as he is quick to point out. And so, as far as our *Iliad* is concerned, there might be two reasons that have kept the Achaean camp unfortified. On the one hand, there seems to have been the possibility that the whole venture was never meant to be a formal siege, but was conceived only as a raid. The raid, however, went on longer than expected, but could not be abandoned without serious loss of face. On the other hand, it may never have occurred to the Achaeans to build a wall not because they were foolish, as Strabo thought them, but because Achilles himself has acted as their wall.

To test the workability of this idea, we have only to observe what happens when Achilles, in his anger at Agamemnon, removes his protection

³⁷ See also Agamemnon's speech to the Achaeans (2.119-22).

³⁸ Although this passage occurs in a speech in which Agamemnon is attempting to test his troops by telling them the worst, considering both that the war has lasted for nine years and that many Trojan allies are mentioned, not only in the *Iliad* but in the Troy tradition in general, I believe we might perceive some truth in this so far as the tradition goes.

³⁹ Hera here, disguised as Stentor, mocks the Achaeans by reminding them that, when Achilles was in the field, the Trojans as a whole remained by the Dardanian Gates (5.787-91).

from the Achaean camp. In earlier times, if the Achaeans were unable to break into Troy, neither did the Trojans assault the Achaean ships. But now the fortunes of the Achaeans and the Trojans seesaw, with neither side gaining the advantage. The Trojans begin to pursue a much more aggressive policy than formerly, heartened at first, we might suppose, because there is no sight of Achilles on the field of battle, and then because his absence is confirmed by Apollo as he cheers the Trojans on (4.509-13).

For the Achaeans to continue their occupation of the Trojan shoreline, Achilles must be either placated or replaced. If we are correct in believing that his absence allows the poet space in which to move his narrative in different ways, then the first choice, placation, must not be tried, or at least not be allowed to succeed too soon. The second choice, replacement, is also a difficult one. If another Achaean hero successfully takes Achilles' place, then there will be no reason to care if Achilles *does* return and the overall structure and potential long-range expectations of the narrative will be rendered completely useless. This is not to say that certain heroes—Diomedes in 5, Ajax in 14 and 15—cannot have great local success, but their victories are just that, local successes. Even Patroclus, as Achilles' stand-in, can only shine briefly, before being cut down, for the wrath to remain as the overarching theme of the narrative.

If animate heroes are not possible replacements, then perhaps something inanimate could be chosen. Since a wall has been successful all of these years in keeping the Achaeans out of Troy, and Achilles has been successful in keeping the Trojans out of the ships, what might seem more logical to a poet than to replace Achilles with a real wall, now that the Achaean equivalent has retired to his ships? After all, the simile of a fighting man as a kind of fortification is a common one in the *Iliad*. Ajax, in particular, is often seen as either bearing a shield like a tower (7.219, 17.128), or being a wall for the Achaeans (3.229, 6.5).

Such a barrier, once erected, can serve more than one purpose for the poet. Much of the combat before Troy consists of great clouds of warriors milling and slashing and stabbing at each other. Out of these clouds step individual fighters who challenge, fight duels, fire arrows, ride in their chariots, and then, if not killed or wounded, blend back into the clouds once more. When greater struggles develop, in which several warriors are named as they battle, they are often over the body or spoils of a fighter just fallen. The focus, however, is always on individual achievement in the plain. If this emphasis on duels and small struggles suggests that Homeric military

custom does not allow anything more grand, it would be difficult for the poet, should he want to vary his battle scenes, to change the focus from such duels to something larger. This could be especially true if he feels bound not to violate what may have been a traditional boundary in the story of the wrath, that the Achaeans must not make mass assaults upon or break into Troy.⁴⁰ The only attack we actually see in the *Iliad* upon the Trojan wall is, characteristically, that of a single warrior, Patroclus, in 16.702-4.⁴¹ If the poet is bound by convention not to portray concerted attacks on Troy, but is ambitious to show such attacks, a wall erected in front of the Achaean camp could free him from that convention and, at the same time, allow the assault he describes to stand in the minds of his listeners for what *might* happen to Troy.

Years of careful and intelligent Homeric study have shown that our *Iliad* is full of material that is used again and again to form lines and scenes and thus the *Iliad* as a whole, a method of composition that can often give the poem the effect of a series of echoes. Throughout the *Iliad*, the Achaean wall might then be seen as an echo of the Trojan, and the echo is important if we are to believe that the Achaean wall is anything more than a clumsy interpolation. If the Achaean wall has no real strength (as the Trojan clearly has), then it is neither a worthy replacement in the least for Achilles nor will it hold our attention long in the story. But this is not the case. The poet takes time to show us that the Achaean wall is a fairly careful mirroring of its Trojan counterpart. The Achaeans begin by piling up a tower on a mound, mimicking the great tower from which Helen identifies the Achaean leaders. Troy's gates, mentioned so often, are matched by gates in the Achaean wall. As there is a weak spot in the Trojan wall (6.433-34), so there is one in the Achaean (13.682-84). With such parallels, it is easy to see how the lines

πᾶσαι δ' ὀίγνυντο πύλαι, ἐκ δ' ἔσσυτο λαός.
πεζοί θ' ἰππῆές τε.

⁴⁰ Achilles might be echoing this boundary proscription when he tells Patroclus that he must not overreach himself while wearing Achilles' armor (16.83-85).

⁴¹ One other assault appears to have come close to the wall, but this is described at second-hand by Andromache, 6.435-39.

and all the gates were thrown open, and the people rushed out,
the infantry and the horsemen

can be first applied to Troy and the Trojans in 2.809-10, but to Trojans and Achaeans alike in 8.58-59, just after the wall's construction.

This mirror must be well constructed or it will not be convincing, yet, at the same time, it must have flaws or the poet will not be able to justify a successful assault. Thus Troy's mirror is seemingly less well-built,⁴² and it is set up impiously, without a prior appeal for the gods' blessing, as Poseidon complains (7.448-50). This provides the poet with the perfect opportunity to move the fighting into a new channel, in which he can use descriptions of the difficulty of the palisaded ditch, the assembling of assault teams, and offensive and defensive operations against walls, towers, and gates.

He also can avail himself of a new area of tension in which to play out his story. If we cannot experience the excitement of an Achaean attack on Troy, the poet can catch us up in the building fury of the Trojan assault on the Achaean camp—the rush across the plain, the scramble at the ditch, the doubt and turmoil on both sides, the initial break-in and repulse, Apollo's rally of Hector and the Trojans for a second attempt, the second Trojan repulse and the terrible retreat through the ditch—all with the Achaean wall as a focus. Having so much new narrative territory in which to work can give the poet the chance to display his *copia* to the fullest, while never exceeding what may have been traditional bounds.

When we set the Achaean wall in the context of Achilles' anger, we can also perceive its potential employment as a narrative-delaying tactic. If Zeus, at Thetis' pleading, is going to glorify the Trojans to discomfit the Achaeans, the poet could simply have allowed the battle to have raged in the plain, as it does up to the building of the wall in the latter half of 7. If there is a wall and not simply a battle-line to halt the Trojans, then the struggle before the re-entry of Achilles can be just that much longer, and he can appear at an even more dramatic moment.⁴³ That the erection of the

⁴² It is rough-hewn enough that the Trojans can attempt to pry it apart with crowbars (12.257-60), and Sarpedon can even pull part of it down (12.268-69).

⁴³ This building of tension is echoed in the elaborate parable of the reluctant Meleager and the defense of Calydon (9.529-99), which Phoenix uses to try to persuade Achilles to resume his role as the defender of the Achaeans.

wall is not a casual choice might also be seen in the very careful narrative of the wall's construction itself. The action begins in 7, when Nestor counsels the Greeks to pause in the fighting, collect their dead onto a pyre, burn them, sort out the remains for eventual burial at home, then erect a fortification on top of the site of the pyre (7.327-43).

There has been a certain amount of discussion at this point in the text about Nestor's suggestion. Page asserts that common Greek practice was to bury the dead on the battlefield and that bringing home the ashes was a specifically fifth-century Athenian custom, indicating that this passage is a late (and probably Athenian) addition.⁴⁴ Certainly it appears that the poet believed that the Trojans buried their dead *in situ*. We hear about the mounds of Aisyetes (2.793) and of the eponymous Ilos (10.415, 11.166), and Hector discusses at some length the possibility of the honorable burial of a defeated enemy in a mound on the Trojan shore (7.81-90). The behavior of the Achaeans throughout the rest of the *Iliad* agrees with that of the Trojans, from Andromache's description of Achilles' cremation and burial of her father, Eetion (6.416-20), to the elaborate description of the cremation of Patroclus (23.163-77, 236-57).

Scholarly opinion has traditionally wanted to see Nestor's proposal as if it were actually two, almost discrete, stages: first, to collect, cremate, and sort out the dead; second, to build the wall upon the mounded remains of the funeral pyre. If we read Nestor's plan as a unity, however, in which the actions in the first part are essential to the success of the second, I believe that we have a more coherent and intelligible picture, one that allows the text to explain itself without recourse to external information and that also allows us to understand just how carefully the poet has conceived of his wall.

Consider the Achaean position. Nestor has convinced them that they are in danger of losing their only means of retreat. The Achaeans agree with Nestor's assessment and decide that they must build a wall quickly. From our various details of the Achaean wall, we know that its basic materials are stone and wood over an earthen foundation. The Achaean (and the poet's) difficulty, then, lies in dealing with the very pre-wall vulnerability that informs both Thucydides' and Strabo's assumptions about the wall's construction: how to acquire these materials and set to work without betraying to the Trojans what they are about?

⁴⁴ Page 1959:323, citing Jacoby 1944.

Late in the *Iliad*, we see Achilles bid Agamemnon to order his people to prepare for Patroclus' funeral. His main directive is that they should bring timber for the pyre (23.49-50), which they do (23.110-26). Some of this wood is clearly meant as fuel for the fire. Some of it, however, is used to form a framework, *θεμείλια* (23.255), for the burial mound, to hold in the piled earth and perhaps stones.⁴⁵ It is significant for Nestor's proposal that the word *θεμείλια* has been used only once before in the *Iliad*, where it applies to the supports of timber (*φιτρῶν*) and stone (*λάων*) that form the lower course of the Achaean wall (12.28-29).

With many bodies lying exposed on the field near the end of Book 7, it would appear natural for the Achaeans to be seen gathering the traditional materials for burial—earth, stone, timbers—the very same materials that can be used for building a defensive wall. Following the customary sequence as we know it from the funerals of Patroclus and Hector, the dead would then be burned and a mound raised above them.⁴⁶ The Achaeans perform all of these actions, although with an ulterior motive, and the Trojans themselves even unknowingly help Nestor's plan by proposing a truce for the collecting and burying of the dead (7.394-96). Although the Trojans thus contribute to the illusion, there are still several problems left for the Achaeans. First, if contemporary practice, like later Greek practice, was not to bury the dead within the space of the living (certainly it seems that the Trojan dead are buried outside the walls), then something had to be done with the remains of the warriors burned on the pyre before construction could begin. Second, the work had to be done in such a way that the Trojans would not get wind of it too soon. These two problems are solved simultaneously when, to screen their movements, the Achaeans arrive at the pyre before dawn, remove the human remains, then set to work constructing their wall on the very “funeral mound” itself, employing building materials already in place (7.433-41).⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Although the details of Patroclus' mound do not include this, Hector's mound is covered with heavy stones (24.797-98).

⁴⁶ Patroclus, as we know from 23.252-54, is not buried immediately. A mound is raised, however, in 23.255-57.

⁴⁷ For a more modern example of this sort of construction chicanery, see the story of Themistocles and the rebuilding of the walls of Athens in Thucydides 1.90-93. For more discussion and bibliography on Nestor's suggestion and on the building of the wall,

For all the care the poet lavishes on this wall, however, Achilles dismisses it, describing it accurately with its ditch and stakes, but saying that it will fail to keep Hector out and that only he could keep Hector in check (9.348-55). But even if Achilles mocks the wall, the poet links him strongly with his stone and timber substitute (12.10-12):

ὄφρα μὲν Ἑκτωρ ζῶς ἔην καὶ μῆνι' Ἀχιλλεύς
καὶ Πριάμοιο ἄνακτος ἀπόρθητος πόλις ἔπλεν,
τόφρα δὲ καὶ μέγα τείχος Ἀχαιῶν ἔμπεδον ἦεν.

So long as Hector lived, and Achilles was angry,
and the city of Lord Priam remained unsacked,
for so long the great wall of the Achaeans stood firm.

In these lines, the destiny of Achilles, his anger, and the wall are fatally intermingled: while Hector lives, so does Achilles; before Hector can die, Achilles must lose his anger at Agamemnon; when Hector dies, Achilles will die soon after; after Achilles dies, Troy will fall and, when Troy falls, so will the Achaean wall. If we remember that the Achaean wall is begun on a funeral pyre and constructed of the same materials as that pyre and tomb that are designed to burn the bodies and hold the bones both of Patroclus and Achilles, we see yet another possible—and melancholy—parallel.

Unfortunately for the Achaeans, Achilles' sneer that the wall will not hold back Hector has already begun to come true, and all too quickly. Even before Achilles had mocked the Achaean effort, Hector had called the fortifications ἀβλήχρ' οὐδενόσωρα "feeble things not worth a thought" (8.177-79), as he exhorted the Trojans to join him in assaulting them. Yet the wall is not so easily dismissed, and the combat sways back and forth before it and across it before the Trojans finally sweep over it like waves over the bulwarks of a ship (15.381-84). This image of rushing water that carries all before it is not an uncommon one in the *Iliad*. The Achaeans are likened to incoming surf (4.422-28), for instance, and Diomedes (5.87-92) and Ajax (11.492-95) are compared with rivers in spate. If we return to Book 7, however, we might see that the poet is employing the familiar simile in a design.

When the Achaeans are first constructing the wall, we are told that

Poseidon complains to Zeus about their work, saying that not only have the Achaeans neglected to make the proper sacrifices (7.450), as mentioned above, but that their wall will be more famous than the one that Poseidon and Apollo had built around Troy for Priam's father, Laomedon (7.451-53). We have seen how the poet can produce echoes of the Trojan wall in his Achaean wall. He can also employ it to evoke echoes of other elements of the *Iliad*, linking them with the present narrative in new and telling ways, and even bring back echoes of prior stories, such as that of Poseidon, Apollo, and Laomedon. By doing so, the poet can extend his narrative into the past, setting his current tale into a larger tradition, as well as displaying his knowledge of that larger tradition. The poet can also use the wall to tell us of the future, both directly and indirectly.

In Poseidon's complaint, we see all of these possible uses brought together in a few lines. First, there is another mirroring of the Achaean wall and the Trojan, this time in the matter of potential reputation. Second, when Poseidon mentions Laomedon's wall, we know from another part of the tradition that the wall that Laomedon had persuaded the two gods to construct was never paid for and, in return, Apollo put a plague upon Troy and Poseidon sent a tidal wave with a sea monster in it to destroy the people along the coast.⁴⁸ The plague that Apollo sends has its clear parallel in the later plague he visits upon the Achaeans in the opening of the *Iliad* (1.50-54). The monster sent by Poseidon was killed by Heracles, but Laomedon cheated him as he had the gods and, in revenge, Heracles returned to Troy with a small expedition and sacked the city,⁴⁹ a story that so prefigures what will happen to Troy in the future that it, along with the sack of Thebes, is mentioned several times in the *Iliad*.⁵⁰ The tidal wave that Poseidon sends appears again when Zeus consoles Poseidon by telling him that, when the Achaeans have departed, Poseidon is to demolish the wall, sweep it all into the sea, and cover the wide beach again with the sands (7.461-62). Thus, when the Trojans are described as if they are great waves

⁴⁸ See Apollodorus 2.5.9.

⁴⁹ Apollodorus 2.6.4. Poseidon reminds Apollo of Laomedon's behavior in 21.436-57, and Tlepolemus and Sarpedon discuss Heracles' sack of the city in 5.640-42, 648-51.

⁵⁰ See 5.640-42, 648-51, 14.249-61, 15.24-30, and 20.144-48 for various elements of the story of Heracles and Troy.

that sweep over the bulwark (τοῖχος) of a ship, the poet may be echoing the actions of Poseidon when he sent the tidal wave against Laomedon's people as well as when Poseidon will overwhelm the wall (τεῖχος) of the Achaeans.

But the poet's design is larger yet. When Hector urges his men on, it is because Apollo is moving before him, waving the aegis and, in a striking simile, overthrowing the Achaean wall like a child knocking over sandcastles on a beach (15.360-64). It is no wonder, in the midst of this wild Trojan current, that Ajax takes to the decks of the dry-docked Achaean ships like a man fleeing a flood (15.674-88). His call to the Achaeans to defend themselves reveals his understanding that their Achilles-substitute is now completely useless, as he ironically asks the Achaeans if they have some stronger wall to ward off destruction or some city nearby, fitted with towers (15.736-37).

Although the original wall, Achilles, is still out of the fighting, and his metaphysical counterpart cannot hold back the Trojan waves, Achilles' image is still a powerful weapon in itself. As he comments to Patroclus, the only reason that the Trojans are so close is that they have not seen the face of Achilles' helmet and that otherwise, appropriately enough for a tide forced to recede, they would be filling the gullies with their dead in their retreat (16.70-72). The success of Patroclus' ruse of wearing Achilles' armor proves Achilles' jeering only too true and the action moves from the Achaean wall to its mirroring Trojan one, then washes back again after the death of Patroclus. But Achilles, the original wall, has only to appear and stand, like his substitute, at the far side of the ditch, crying out, to bring the Trojans once more to a standstill (18.215-16). His attack the next day underscores even further his scorn of the Trojans as he drives large numbers of them into the river Scamander/Xanthus, choking its stream to the point at which the river begins to fight back, calling upon its brother river, Simoeis, and asking him to join floodwaters (21.313-23):

ἴστη δὲ μέγα κῦμα, πολὺν δ' ὄρουμαγδὸν ὄρινε
 φιτρῶν καὶ λάων, ἵνα παύσομεν ἄγριον ἄνδρα,
 ὃς δὴ νῦν κρατέει, μέμονεν δ' ὃ γε ἴσα θεοῖσι.
 φημί γὰρ οὔτε βίην χραισμησέμεν οὔτε τι εἶδος,
 οὔτε τὰ τεύχεα καλὰ, τὰ που μάλα νειόθι λίμνης
 κείσεθ' ὑπ' ἰλύος κεκαλυμμένα· κὰδ δέ μιν αὐτὸν
 εἰλύσω ψαμάθοισιν ἄλις χέραδος περιχεύας
 μυρίον, οὐδέ οἱ ὅστε' ἐπιστήσονται Ἀχαιοὶ
 ἀλλέξαι· τόσσην οἱ ἄσιν καθύπερθε καλύψω.

αὐτοῦ οἱ καὶ σῆμα τετεύξεται, οὐδέ τί μιν χρεὼ
ἔσται τυμβοχόης, ὅτε μιν θάπτωσιν Ἀχαιοί.

and make a great wave, stir up a huge tumult
of timbers and stones, so that we stop this savage man,
who now is holding power, as strongly intent as the gods.
For I say that neither his strength nor any beauty will protect him
nor his fine armor, which will lie somewhere at the bottom of a pool,
hidden under the mud. I will cover him over
with sea sands, spreading over a thousand stones from the shingle,
nor shall the Achaeans be able to gather up his bones. Such shingle
shall I hide him with, from above.
And his grave-marker will be erected there, nor will he need
there to be any grave-mound, when the Achaeans hold his funeral.

When we compare these lines with those that open Book 12, in which we see a more developed description of the future destruction of the Achaean wall, we understand just how closely the poet has identified the wall with Achilles. In this passage, Poseidon and Apollo, as if seen from the distant future, have loosed all the waters of the local rivers, including Scamander and Simoeis, ὅθι πολλὰ βοάγρια καὶ τρυφάλεια / κάππεσον ἐν κονίησι—“where many oxhide shields and helmets have fallen in the mud” (12.22-23), and where (12.24-32)

τῶν πάντων ὁμόσε στόματ' ἔτραπε Φοῖβος Ἀπόλλων,
ἐννήμαρ δ' ἐς τείχος ἔει ῥόον· ὕε δ' ἄρα Ζεὺς
συνεχές ὄφρα κε θᾶσσον ἀλίπλοα τείχεα θείη.
αὐτὸς δ' ἐννοσίγαιος ἔχων χεῖρεςσι τρίαιναν
ἤγειτ' ἐκ δ' ἄρα πάντα θεμείλια κύμασι πέμπε
φιτρῶν καὶ λάων, τὰ θέσαν μογέοντες Ἀχαιοί,
λεῖα δ' ἐποίησεν παρ' ἀγάρροον Ἑλλήσποντον,
αὐτίς δ' ἠίονα μεγάλην ψαμάθοισι κάλυψε,
τείχος ἀμαλδύνας· ποταμούςς δ' ἔτρεψε νέεσθαι
κὰρ ῥόον, ἧ̂ περ πρόσθεν ἔεν καλλίρρον ὕδωρ.

Phoebus Apollo diverted the mouths of all to the same spot;
and he directed the current against the wall for nine days. Without
let-up, Zeus rained then, so as to turn the wall to seawrack more quickly.
The Earthshaker, holding the trident in his hands, guided things,
and so sent all the framework of timbers and stones into the waves
which the toiling Achaeans had set up,
and made smooth places by the swift-flowing Hellespont,
and covered the wide beach again with sand,

having destroyed the wall and turned the rivers to move
down the channel where the smooth-flowing water had run before.

The parallels abound, from the confluence of rivers, which includes the image of armor in mud, to the timbers and stones of which funeral mounds and walls are made, to the concealment of what stood there before, man or wall, to the total absence of any evidence, either to outshine Laomedon's wall or to stand as a memorial to the drowned Achilles.⁵¹

From the entry of Achilles into battle again in 19 to the conclusion of our *Iliad* with the raising of Hector's burial-mound, there is no more fighting at the Achaean wall, a fact that should not be surprising. It has fulfilled its function as the poet's temporary replacement for Achilles.⁵² Now the poet moves towards closure and the final fulfillment of the wrath, allowing Achilles to drive the Trojans back into their walls before finally killing the man whom he had only made wary before.

When Priam, in a mist provided by Hermes, leaves the Achaean encampment with his son's body, there is no mention of his departure through the wall, leaving us to believe that what Zeus had promised to Poseidon was already happening, caused not by floods, however, but by what Aristotle may have been suggesting: that when the wall is no longer useful for his telling of the anger of Achilles, the poet of our *Iliad* abandons it. As the poet had earlier informed us (12.10-12):

ὄφρα μὲν Ἑκτωρ ζῶδες ἔην καὶ μῆνι' Ἀχιλλεύς
καὶ Πριάμοιο ἄνακτος ἀπόρθητος πόλις ἔπλεν,
τόφρα δὲ καὶ μέγα τείχος Ἀχαιῶν ἔμπεδον ἦεν.

⁵¹ We might even add to this the detail that, as the *Iliad* takes place in the ninth year of the war and Calchas' vision of the serpent, the mother bird, and her eight young is interpreted to portend that Troy will be taken at the end of the ninth year (2.301-30), so Apollo and Poseidon destroy Troy's mural echo in nine days and Achilles will die in the last year of the war.

⁵² It is interesting to see that, in Quintus of Smyrna's fourth-century A.D. *Fall of Troy*, the wall becomes a feature of the story only when Troy's ally, Eurypylus, grandson of Heracles, drives the Achaeans behind it in 7.132ff and Achilles' son, Neoptolemus, lands to aid the Achaeans and pushes the Trojans back from the wall in the fighting described in the first half of 8.

So long as Hector lived, and Achilles' anger,
and the city of Lord Priam remained unsacked,
for so long the great wall of the Achaeans stood firm.

With Hector dead and Achilles' wrath appeased, how long will the walls of Troy stand firm?⁵³

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