

## Nestor Among the Sirens

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χρὴ ξείνον παρεόντα φιλεῖν, ἐθέλοντα δὲ πέμπειν.  
(*Od.* 16.74)

### I\*

At first glance, two traits uniquely characterize Nestor in the Homeric poems: longevity and the command of persuasive speech.<sup>1</sup> That these features are in no way peculiar to him, but instead common to the type of figure Nestor represents within the narrative tradition, will be clear from a brief reflection on the values that determine both the moral horizons of the epics and the typology of characters that inhabit and are controlled by those horizons. Especially within the society of warrior elite in the *Iliad*, in which the highest premium is put on physical strength, the weak either die ingloriously—the stuff of which others' κλέος [fame] is made—or else

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The text of Homer used in this study is that of the standard Oxford edition. English translations (meant more as an aid to the Greekless than as definitive renderings) are those of Lattimore 1961 (with some revision) for the *Iliad* and my own for the *Odyssey*.

<sup>1</sup> On the figure of Nestor, see especially Vester 1956, and also the more restricted studies of e.g. Cantieni 1942, Davies 1986, Lang 1983, Pedrick 1983, and Segal 1971, along with remarks in Frame 1978:espec. 81-115 and Whitman 1958. On Nestor's rhetorical prowess, see especially Vester 1956:14-17.

they learn how to talk.<sup>2</sup> What conventionally distinguishes old men from young ones, in fact, is precisely the contrast between rhetorical skill and martial prowess. The type of the Counselor is virtually isomorphic with that of the Elder: Nestor himself, Priam, Phoinix, Aigyptios, Halitherses, Mentor, Ekheneos, Euryklea, Eurynome—all are elderly, all affect things almost exclusively through their words. The traditional link between old age and rhetoric is indeed clearest of all in those cases in which command of speech appears precociously in young men like Diomedes (*Il.* 9.53-59), Poulydamas (*Il.* 18.249-53), and Thoas (*Il.* 15.281-85), the Aitolian fighter—in whom the gift always calls for explicit comment.<sup>3</sup> Further, this helps account for why elderly figures in Homer are assigned their places in the narrative through reference to a relatively narrow constellation of roles—Counselor, Herald, Prophet, Nurse—around which an equally well-defined cluster of traits—memory, sorrow, rhetoric, circumspection, sagacity, goodwill—tends to gravitate. In a world in which a harsh but lucid economics of κλέος prevails, enjoining the violent exchange of life here and now for quick death with everliving fame in the speech of the community, old men and women either remain peripheral to the main events or else influence them in a detached way, as intercessory figures more in the service of the (abstract) story than the concrete narrative itself.<sup>4</sup>

If the attribution of advanced age and command of speech is not an especially unique one, it remains true that Nestor is the most conspicuous embodiment of these traits in the poems. Both in fact are represented in his person in almost exaggerated form, and to complementary degrees of

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<sup>2</sup> For a general introduction to the moral world of the *Iliad*, see most recently Schein 1984:espec. 67-88; Nagy 1979.

<sup>3</sup> Cf., e.g., *Il.* 3.108-10; *Od.* 3.124-25, 4.204-5; Vester 1956:14-16; Dickson 1990. Note also the formula . . . ἐπεὶ πρότερος γενόμεην, καὶ πλείονα οἶδα# [since I am older, and know more] (*Il.* 19.219, 21.440) used in association with elderly figures; on which see also below and note 44.

<sup>4</sup> On the distinction between these terms, see Genette 1980:25-29, who defines *story* as “the signified or narrative content . . . [of which] an example would be the adventures experienced by Ulysses from the fall of Troy to his arrival on Calypso’s island,” and *narrative* as “the signifier, statement, discourse or narrative text itself,” for example, “the speech given by the hero to the Phaeacians in Books IX-XII of the *Odyssey*.” See also Bal 1985 and Rimmon-Kenan 1983 for clear presentations of the narratological framework from which these terms are borrowed. On the nature and function of intercessory figures in Homer within the matrix of this framework, see Dickson 1990 and references therein.

exaggeration. To his extraordinary longevity—well more than twice that of any of his associates at Troy (*Il.* 1.250-53; cf. *Od.* 3.245-46)—corresponds his no less remarkable tendency to logorrhea. As a member of a group in which exceptional action in war wins undying glory in what others say, Nestor has clearly outlived his occasion. All his strength has left him (*Il.* 8.103); never again will he fight with fists or wrestle, compete in spear-throwing or in swiftness of feet (*Il.* 23.621-23), since his limbs are unsteady and his arms “no longer swing light” from his shoulders (626-28); and his sole *aristeia* on the battlefield would have cost him his life but for the timely intervention of Diomedes (*Il.* 8.78-112). To Nestor alone in the *Iliad* is the hemistich *χαλεπὸν δέ σε γῆρας ὀπάζει*# [hard old age attends you] (*Il.* 8.103) applied, along with its allomorph *χαλεπὸν κατὰ γῆρας ἐπείγει*# [hard old age presses you down] (*Il.* 23.623); an alternate version of the formula—*χαλεπὸν δ’ ἐπὶ γῆρας ἰκάνει*# [hard old age has come upon him]—appears once in the *Odyssey* (*Od.* 11.196), where it is used of the aged Laertes. The related colon *χαλεπὸν δέ ἐ δεσμὸς ἔδαμνα*# [hard bondage was breaking him] is found with reference to Ares subdued by no stronger a necessity, bound to his death in the chains of the giants Ephialtes and Otis (*Il.* 5.391). The image of binding figures also in Akhilleus’ description (*Od.* 11.497) of the waning rule of his old father Peleus, *οὐνεκά μιν κατὰ γῆρας ἔχει χεῖράς τε πόδας τε* [since old age fetters him hand and foot].

Since he cannot fight, Nestor has learned (only too well) how to talk. Mastery of speech—even if combined with the inability to keep its length under control—is in fact the feature with which his longevity is most often associated. For these are indeed closely interrelated traits. His description in *Iliad* 1 expressly links his great age with his skill as a speaker (*Il.* 1.247-52):

§1

τοῖσι δὲ Νέστωρ  
 ἡδυεπῆς ἀνόρουσε, λιγύς Πυλίων ἀγορητής,  
 τοῦ καὶ ἀπὸ γλώσσης μέλιτος γλυκίων ῥέεν αὐδή·  
 τῷ δ’ ἤδη δύο μὲν γενεαὶ μερόπων ἀνθρώπων  
 ἐφθίαθ’, οἳ οἱ πρόσθεν ἅμα τράφεν ἠδ’ ἐγένοντο  
 ἐν Πύλῳ ἡγαθέη, μετὰ δὲ τριτάτοισιν ἄνασσαν

. . . and between them Nestor  
 the sweet-spoken rose up, lucid speaker of Pylos,  
 from whose lips the voice flowed sweeter than honey.  
 In his time two generations of mortals had perished—  
 those who grew up with him, and the ones born to them

in sacred Pylos—and he ruled among the third generation.

The individual elements of this characterization merit some close analysis, even if this initially involves a digression from the main point at hand, namely the issue of longevity and logorrhea. The aim of such an analysis is to identify a cluster of shared qualities, an associative set that represents the connotative range of traits and attributes predicated of Nestor along with other characters (and even certain things) in the narrative tradition out of which the Homeric poems arise.

The adjective ἡδυεπής [sweet-spoken] is a *hapax legomenon* in Homer, though it is picked up and repeated in the *Hymns* with reference to the Muses (*Hym.* 33.2) and the poet himself (*Hym.* 21.4); we will return to this shortly, as well as to other associations with sweetness. The hemistich λιγύς Πυλίων ἀγορητής# [lucid speaker of Pylos] is virtually reserved for Nestor; in this form it figures once elsewhere (*Il.* 4.293), when the old man musters his troops for battle. An allomorphic colon, λιγύς περ ἐὼν ἀγορητής# [although a lucid speaker], appears on three occasions (*Il.* 2.246, 19.82; *Od.* 20.274), always with concessive (and often sarcastic) force, to characterize speakers—Thersites, Agamemnon, Telemakhos—who are regarded as anything but lucid. Nestor alone enjoys the epithet without any irony.<sup>5</sup> Finally, the “natural” connection between diminished physical prowess and heightened rhetorical skill is made explicit in the description of the Trojan Elders in the *Teikhoskopia* (*Il.* 3.150f.), of whom it is said γήραϊ δὴ πολέμοιο πεπαυμένοι, ἀλλ’ ἀγορηταὶ ἰέσθλοί [Through old age they fought no longer, but were excellent speakers still]. Their speech is sweet, Homer says, like the sound of cicadas (#τεττίγεσσιν ἐοικότες).<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Pace Pucci 1977:40, note 34, who comments: “The ironic portrait of Nestor in *Il.* 1.247ff. even suggests a mild devaluation of this rhetoric [i.e. the traditional association of speech with honey].” Drawing attention to the “accumulated series of ‘sweet’ epithets” used of Nestor in this passage, Pucci concludes that this “hyperbole seems to make fun of the simile in its positive form.” It is unclear on what basis this judgment is made.

<sup>6</sup> Note also the associations, implicit in Homer but evident from the later tradition, among shrill tone, lucid speech, poetry, and the cicada (τέττιξ). With the description of the Trojan Elders in the *Teikhoskopia*—τεττίγεσσιν ἐοικότες, οἳ τε καθ’ ὕλην ἢ δενδρέω ἐφεζόμενοι ὅπα λειριόεσσαν ἰεῖσι [clear as cicadas who through the forest ἢ settle in a tree, to issue their delicate voice of singing] (*Il.* 3.151f.)—compare Hesiod (*Erga* 582f.): καὶ ἡχέτα τέττιξ ἢ δενδρέω ἐφεζόμενος λιγυρὴν καταχεύετ’

In turn, the connotative range for the adjective *λιγύς* [lucid] (alone or in its various compounds) is a fairly extensive and at first glance even a heterogeneous one, comprising reference to birdsong (2X), the sound of whip (1X) and wind (6X), shrill weeping or keening (5X), the song of Sirens (1X) or Muses (1X), the lyre's piercing tone (7X) and the clear voice of heralds (6X). The underlying basis for these uses seems to be a specific quality of sound, its high pitch and amplitude, which lends it a special transparency: *λιγύς* is the noise that pierces, the voice that carries far to penetrate and command attention. Moreover, in the case of birds, Sirens—themselves birdlike creatures<sup>7</sup>—Muses, weepers, heralds, and lyres, the adjective also designates a shrillness experienced as aesthetically pleasing and even seductive.<sup>8</sup> The association of pleasure with weeping and the dirge may seem anomalous in this group, until it is remembered how much less tentative Homeric culture is than ours in acknowledging the genuine satisfaction that comes from expressing sorrow. Grief is no less sustenance than food or drink, and thus no less fully enjoyed, as the responson between dining and lamentation clearly shows. With a line such as *αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ τάρπημεν ἐδητύος ἡδὲ ποτῆτος* [Now when we had taken our pleasure of eating and drinking] (*Il.* 11.779; *Od.* 5.201) compare, for example, *αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ ῥα γόοιο τετάρπετο διὸς Ἀχιλλεύς | καὶ οἱ ἀπὸ πραπίδων ἦλθ' ἕμερος ἡδ' ἀπὸ γυίων* [When brilliant Akhilleus had taken his pleasure of sorrow | and the passion for it had left his mind and body] (*Il.* 24.513), and *ἡ δ' ἐπεὶ οὖν τάρφθη πολυδακρύτοιο γόοιο* [But when she had taken her pleasure of tear-filled sorrow] (*Od.*

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*ἄοιδῆν* [and the chirping cicada | settles in a tree and pours down its lucid song]; cf. also *Scut.* 393f. In Plato (*Phaedr.* 262D), cicadas are οἱ τῶν Μουσῶν προφήται [prophets of the Muses], although the Homeric critic Aristophanes of Byzantium (*Epit.* 10.7) also draws attention to their proverbial longwindedness. Aristophanes (*Nu.* 984, *Eq.* 1331) and Thucydides (1.6.3) mention the afterlife of the once popular fashion of tying hair in a knot fastened by a gold brooch in the shape of a cicada—the height of style for men at the turn of the sixth century, but clearly outmoded and somewhat ridiculous two generations later.

<sup>7</sup> See e.g. Pollard 1965:137-45.

<sup>8</sup> See Stanford 1958-59:2.407 (on *Od.* 12.44): “*λιγυρός* and *λιγύς* describe the kind of sound that the Greeks liked best: it is identified by Aristotle [*De audibilibus* 804a25ff.] as consisting of sharpness (ὀξύτης), fineness (λεπτότης) and precision (ἀκριβεία).”

19.213;251, 21.57).<sup>9</sup> A similar need is apparently fulfilled in both cases.

The specifically aesthetic pleasure produced by things qualified as *λιγύς* deserves further comment; the term's reference to (human or divine) voice and music in fact amounts to well over three-quarters (31 of 40X = 77%) of its uses. Speakers such as Nestor (2X), Menelaos (*Il.* 3.214), and heralds in general—often in the colon *κηρύκεσσι λιγυφθόγγοισι* (5X), filling the space after the A1 caesura—account for twelve of its occurrences; twice it modifies the song of Sirens (*Od.* 12.44) and Muses (*Od.* 24.62), respectively; and seven instances describe the lyre. Its use with the *φόρμιγξ* or lyre shows the highest degree of regularity, appearing always in the endline formula *φόρμιγγι λιγείη*# (*Il.* 9.186, 18.569; *Od.* 4.254) or, with change of case, *φόρμιγγα λίγειαν*# (*Od.* 8.261;537, 22.332, 23.133). The reference to the Muse in *Odyssey* 24 combines keening with poetic song, since the passage recounts the weird, divine voice heard by the Akhaians at the funeral of Akhilleus, and so serves once again to advert to the pleasure derived from the transmutation of grief into ritualized utterance. The attribution of *λιγυρή ἀοιδή* [lucid song] to the deadly Sirens in Book 12 of the same poem is an interesting one; as others have pointed out, the terms in which they are described are precisely those elsewhere reserved for the Muses themselves.<sup>10</sup>

As representative of the type of Elder and Counselor, whose command of persuasive speech is central to his *ethos*, Nestor plays a prominent role within this group. It will be remembered that the epithet *ἡδυεπής*, applied uniquely to him in the Homeric poems, also bears affinities with Muses and music, even if these first appear explicitly only in the *Hymns*—where they are hardly to be taken for innovations. The connection is strengthened by the traditional resonance of the statement (*Il.*

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<sup>9</sup> Compare also the A2 hemistich *ὄλοοιο τεταρπώμεσθα γόοιο*# [when we have taken our pleasure of the sorrowful dirge] (*Il.* 23.10;98; cf. *κρουροιο τεταρπώμεσθα γόοιο*# at *Od.* 11.212), and *τοῖσι δὲ πᾶσιν ὑφ' ἕμερον ὤρσε γόοιο*# [he stirred in all of them the passion for mourning] (*Il.* 23.108;153; *Od.* 4.183; cf. *Od.* 4.113, 16.215, 19.249 = 23.231); with which compare the extensive (7X, 14X) formula *αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ πόσιος καὶ ἐδητύος ἐξ ἔρον ἔντο* [But when they had put aside desire for drink and food]. On lamentation and epic poetry, see Nagy 1979:94-117.

<sup>10</sup> See e.g. Buschor 1944; Pucci 1979 and espec. 1987:209-13.

1.249) that serves to “introduce” him in the *Iliad* narrative:<sup>11</sup> τοῦ καὶ ἀπὸ γλώσσης μέλιτος γλυκίων ῥέεν ἀυδὴ [from whose lips the voice flowed sweeter than honey]. The line as such is unique in Homer, though it is echoed in the *Hymns* in the reference (*Hym.* 25.5) to whomever the Muses love, “from whose mouth the voice runs sweet” (γλυκερὴ οἱ ἀπὸ στόματος ῥέεν ἀυδὴ#). Within Homer himself, it bears the closest formulaic resemblance—even if its content seems at first unrelated—to a pair of lines that both advert to the incomparable sweetness of certain passions, along with the forgetfulness their pleasure entails. In *Iliad* 2, in lines that are repeated nine books later (2.452-54 = 11.12-14), Athene moves swiftly among the Akhaian host, putting strength into each man’s heart to fight without respite. As a result of her activity (453-54):

§2                    τοῖσι δ’ ἄφαρ πόλεμος γλυκίων γένετ’ ἢ νέεσθαι  
                          ἐν νηυσὶ γλαφυρῆσι φίλην ἐς πατρίδα γαῖαν.

Now battle became sweeter to them than to sail  
 in hollow ships to the dear land of their fathers.

A certain irony rounds this passage off, for it precedes the famous *Catalogue* of men who left that land in ships to wage sweet war at Troy, and directly follows the nearly disastrous *Peira* of Agamemnon, whose immediate effect was to send the troops running back to their ships to set sail again, this time in pursuit of a “homecoming beyond fate” (ὑπέρμωρα νόστος, 155). The second line—with μέλιτος in the same metrical position (B1-C1), though its order in relation to γλυκίων is inverted— occurs in the course of Akhilleus’ bitter rejection of the anger (χόλος) that precipitated the death of his friend. May strife vanish from among gods and men, he says (*Il.* 18.106-08), and especially anger (109-10):<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> The argument that the “unprecedented and elaborate” (Lang 1983:140-41) description of Nestor at *Il.* 1.247-53 is evidence that he does not originally belong “to the Trojan War story, or even . . . the *Iliad* itself,” and thus serves as a means of introducing him to an unfamiliar audience, is not especially convincing. It rests on an assumption of (implicitly textual) uniqueness and integrity, of “first appearances” and fixed versions, that may well be inappropriate to oral literature. See also Cantieni 1942, Vester 1956:2-7.

<sup>12</sup> Plato (*Phil.* 47E) quotes these lines as evidence of the pleasure that often attends even the most painful human passions, which in turn serves as an indication of the soul’s variance with the body.

§3 ὅς τε πολὺ γλυκίων μέλιτος καταλειβομένοιο  
ἀνδρῶν ἐν στήθεσσι ἀέξεται ἤύτε καπνός.

. . . which far sweeter than honey dripping down  
swells like smoke in the hearts of men.

These passages indeed appear to have little bearing at all on the voice that “sweeter than honey” flows from Nestor’s mouth; and in fact, closer parallels than these do exist. The sweet passion that causes a deferral of return home, however, and—more directly—the liquid flow of honey dripping down, raise issues that will later call for our attention.

The cola out of which the line τοῦ καὶ ἀπὸ γλώσσης μέλιτος γλυκίων ῥέεν αὐδῆ is constructed show a number of allomorphs within the text of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* that help specify the associations Nestor’s voice enjoys, especially with other fluid things.<sup>13</sup> The B1 hemistich μέλιτος γλυκίων ῥέεν αὐδῆ#, for instance, responds first with a variety of formulas of varying length—from simple C2 cola (adonean clausulae) to hemistichs that back into the beginning of the third foot—all descriptive of the natural flow of liquids:

§4	. . . ἔρρεεν αἶμα#	( <i>Il.</i> 23.34)
	. . . ἔρρεε δ’ ἰδρώς#	( <i>Il.</i> 23.688)
	. . . προῖει καλλίροον ὕδωρ#	( <i>Il.</i> 2.752)
	. . . ὄθεν ῥέεν ἀγλαὸν ὕδωρ#	( <i>Il.</i> 2.307)
	. . . λιμενὸς ῥέει ἀγλαὸν ὕδωρ#	( <i>Od.</i> 9.140)
	. . . κατὰ δὲ ψυχρὸν ῥέεν ὕδωρ#	( <i>Od.</i> 17.209)
	. . . κατὰ δὲ νότιος ῥέεν ἰδρώς#	( <i>Il.</i> 11.810, 23.715)
	. . . πρόσθεν ἔεν καλλίροον ὕδωρ#	( <i>Il.</i> 12.33)

Just like blood, water, and sweat—to which should also be added the wine (*Il.* 6.266, 10.579, 16.231, 24.306) and tears (*Il.* 13.88;658, 18.32; *Od.* 5.84;158, 8.86;93 = 532, 16.214) that drip (λείβειν) along with honey or gall—the voice too has a kind of substance, a smooth material body simultaneously fluid and consistent, causing an almost tactile pleasure in the

<sup>13</sup> Formulas for αὐδῆν / αὐδῆς# in line-final position most often (7 of 12X) occur as a hemistich stretching back to the B1 or B2 caesura and filled with a noun (usually a proper name) in the genitive case (expressing source) plus ἔκλυεν αὐδ-# (*Il.* 13.757, 15.270; *Od.* 2.297, 4.831, 10.311;481, 14.89). They are not of special relevance for an appreciation of *Il.* 1.249.

listener.<sup>14</sup>

Nestor's liquid speech also exhibits honeyed sweetness: it is μέλιτος γλυκίων. Sweet in Homer are chiefly the things that soothe and lull and sate, or else that move one towards such fulfillment. Nearly half (7 of 15X) of the occurrences of the adjective γλυκερός in its various inflections in the poems are predicated of sleep, with the remainder distributed among music (*Il.* 13.637; *Od.* 23.145), food (*Il.* 11.89), water (*Od.* 12.306), homecoming (*Od.* 22.323), and milk (*Od.* 4.88). Here again in most cases the image of liquid softness prevails. This is especially true of sleep (ὕπνος), which additionally accounts for nearly two-thirds (12 of 21X) of the instances of γλυκός and its forms. Sweet sleep not only comes upon one (ἐπέλθοι: *Od.* 5.472; ἰκάνοι: *Il.* 1.610; *Od.* 9.333, 19.49), wells up (ῥουσειν: *Il.* 23.232), holds (ἔχε: *Il.* 10.4; ἔλοι: *Od.* 19.511), and releases (ἀνήκεν: *Il.* 2.71; *Od.* 7.289, 18.199), but it is also something poured out over sleepers—cf. ἐπὶ {κατὰ} ὕπνον ἔχευεν# [poured sleep upon {down over}] (*Od.* 2.395, 18.188; cf. 12.338) and [ὕπνος] #νήδυμος ἀμφιχυθείς [painless {sleep} poured all around] (*Il.* 14.253, 23.63)—like thick fluid, like the lovely but sinister mist (ἀχλύς) that covers the eyes of the dying (*Il.* 5.696, 16.344, 20.321;421; *Od.* 22.88). Its smooth touch, no less than water slaking thirst or song that fills the ear, gives delight; mortals rest “taking pleasure of sweet sleep”—#ὕπνω ὑπὸ γλυκερῷ ταρπώμεθα {ταρπήμεναι} (2X, 3X)—just as of food and lamentation.

Sweet too is desire (ἔμερος), which amounts to one-fifth (4 of 21X) of the uses of the adjective γλυκός. Here again we find forthright acknowledgment of the pleasure of giving expression to sorrow, for the largest share (11 of 28X = 39%) of all instances of ἔμερος and its forms in Homer are limited by the noun γόος [lamentation] in the genitive case, usually (6X) in the A1 formula τοῖσι δὲ πᾶσιν ὑφ' ἔμερον ὄρσε γόοιο# [stirred in all of them desire for mourning] (*Il.* 23.108;153; *Od.* 4.183, 16.215, 19.249, 23.231), with substitution twice of τῷ δ' ἄρα πατρὸς [for his father] (*Il.* 24.507; *Od.* 4.113) in the space between the A1 and B2 caesuras. Sexual passion (*Il.* 3.139;446 = 14.328 = *Od.* 22.500,

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<sup>14</sup> On the metaphorical association of honey with “the divine essence of poetry” in Hesiod, see Pucci 1977:27-29. He comments (28) that “the viscosity of honey represents the thick body of words, the materiality of sound in rhythmic lines, the pleasantness of song and music,” and in a footnote (40, note 33) calls attention to the frequency, especially in later poetry, of the metaphor of poetic speech as a flowing of honey. See in general Tornow 1893 for a history of the metaphor.

*Il.* 5.429, 14.198) and music (*Il.* 18.570;603; *Od.* 1.421 = 18.304, 18.194) account for six and five occurrences, respectively, with the rest given over to food (*Il.* 11.89) and the exquisite skin of gods (*Il.* 3.397, 14.170).

The sweetness expressed by the first element in the compound ἡδύ—επιής shows much the same distribution as γλυκύς and its forms, though it incorporates additional reference to the human voice. Of thirty-seven cases of the adjective ἡδύς, including the compound ἡδύποτος (1X), the majority (16X = 43%) refer to wine. Sleep accounts for five instances, and nearly one-quarter (9X) are given over to description of the sound of laughter—most often (6X) in the C2 formula ἡδὺ γέλασσα—# [sweetly laughing], twice with the adverb in line-initial position. It is unclear whether the reference to its savor denotes the experience of the agent or its sound in the ear of the listener, but this distinction is probably not an important one in either case; both may well be intended simultaneously.

Finally, Nestor's voice is honeyed or surpasses even honey's sweetness. Many of the connotations honey traditionally enjoys have already been touched on: its taste, the pleasure it gives, the flow of its dense liquid body. Once more, the distribution of the noun μέλι and its adjective μελιηδής follows what should by now be a familiar pattern of associations. Fully half of the time (22 of 43X), wine is the referent; food—fruit, cheese, grass, honey itself—amounts to more than a quarter of the uses, with the remainder given over to life (3X), sleep (2X), and twice again to the voice. The first of these two instances (*Il.* 1.249) is the one that has served as our point of departure, namely the “voice sweeter than honey” that flows from Nestor's mouth. The second comes full circle to return us to the issue of poetry and the Sirens, since it appears in a passage (*Od.* 12.187) in which they call their own sweet-toned (μελιγῆρους) voices “honeyed.”

Before exploring this last connection, a brief synopsis of our survey so far is in order. The individual elements in the lines (*Il.* 1.248-49) λιγύς Πυλίων ἀγορητής | τοῦ καὶ ἀπὸ γλώσσης μέλιτος γλυκίων ῥέειν αὐδῆ descriptive of Nestor open out on a broad but fairly well defined network of conventional associations in the poems. Among the most prominent are images of clarity of tone, sweetness, fluidity, and seductive allure. The old man's voice is a clear, honeyed stuff poured out, and in this resembles the flow of sleep no less than poured water or wine. In its clarity and liquid sweetness lies the pleasure it brings—again like sleep, food, and drink, but also with affinities to music, laughter, lamentation, and erotic desire. One last association, still to be fully explored, links Nestor's

voice—through the “sweeter than X (honey/homecoming)” pattern mentioned above (see §§2-3)—to lines that suggest a kind of forgetfulness or deferral of true aim. The connection already mentioned between the honeyed speech of Nestor and that of Muses and Sirens only makes this suggestion that much more intriguing.

The main point of comparison here is the degree to which the terms of the description of Nestor’s command of speech assimilate it to poetic utterance.<sup>15</sup> We have already seen that it shares with poetry its lucid (λιγύς) quality, its sweetness (γλυκύς, γλυκερός, ἡδύ-επής), and—through the image of honey (μέλι, μελίγηρος)—the fluidity that characterizes the songs of Muse, Poet, and Siren in the broader tradition (cf. *Hym.* 21.4, 25.5, 33.2).<sup>16</sup> That the types of Bard and Elder overlap in some respects should not be very surprising, of course. To begin with, as I hope to have shown elsewhere,<sup>17</sup> the boundaries between characters or character-types in the oral narrative tradition of the poems are themselves quite fluid and thus easily traversed, since they are determined more by the exigencies of context and story than by allegiance to *ethos*—more familiar to us, but not free from suspicion—as a fixed essence qualitatively distinct from the events out of which it arises. In this sense, character is just a functional element, a locus of narrative potentials, much like any other event or description in the course of the story.

This isomorphism of Poet and Elder is further strengthened by the moral horizon of the epics, to which we referred at the beginning of this essay. Deprived of the usual and sanctioned means for inclusion in the

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<sup>15</sup> In this context, the reference to the myth of the Thracian bard Thamyris in the course of the description of Nestor’s fleet in the *Catalogue of Ships* (*Il.* 2.594-600) is perhaps worth noting. On his way from (Thessalian or Messenian?) Oikahia, Thamyris encountered the Muses and Dorion in the Western Peloponnese and, in response to his boast that he surpassed even them in singing, was deprived of his gifts: αἰ δὲ χολωσάμεναι πηρὸν θέσαν, αὐτὰρ ἀοιδὴν ἰθεσπεσίην ἀφέλοντο καὶ ἐκλέλαθον κιθαριστῶν [And in their anger they maimed him, and took away divine | song, and made him forget how to play the lyre]. The location of the event in the territory under the rule of Pylos at least suggests ancient connections between this region and the Muses. For explication of the myth, see the scholia *ad loc.* and the article by Höfer in Roscher 1924-37, s.v. “Thamyris.”

<sup>16</sup> See above, note 14.

<sup>17</sup> See Dickson 1990. On the related issue of “character doublets” in Homer, see Fenik 1974:172-207.

κλέα ἀνδρῶν [sung glory of men] by the infirmities of age—since his strength is feeble and his arms “no longer swing light” from his shoulders (*Il.* 8.103, 23.621-28)—Nestor is compelled to be the bard of his own tale. He cannot rely on others within his community to perpetuate his fame, for he has outlived every contemporary witness to his glory as a fighter,<sup>18</sup> as much as two generations prior to this splendid war at Troy. As a result of this, he has become an *autaoidos* or “self-singer,” self-constituted, a lone figure strung between the contrafactual mode of “If-only-I-were-now-as-I-was-when . . .” on the one hand,<sup>19</sup> and seemingly endless runs of autocitation on the other.<sup>20</sup> He occupies a place somewhere midway between a present in which only his words command attention any longer and a past that stretches back into some vanishing-point in otherwise unsung heroics, namely into the vast and unrecorded realm of the tradition itself—with which, in the dynamics of the poems, he often verges on identification. From this place pours a voice like honey, both lucid and sweet, consistent but nonetheless fluid, touched by implicit sorrow for the irretrievability of youth, and at one and the same time alluring and also interminable.

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<sup>18</sup> On the dependence of κλέος on the presence of a witness, see, e.g., Detienne 1967:9-27. For a discussion of the problematic assumptions that underlie this contingency of the truth of what is heard on what has once been seen directly, see the terms of Homer’s invocation of the Muses in *Il.* 2.484-86, and Pucci 1980.

<sup>19</sup> Note the formulaic εἶθ’ ὡς ἠβώοιμι βίη δέ μοι ἔμπεδος εἶη [If I were young now, and the strength were still steady within me . . .], reserved for Nestor three times in the *Iliad* (*Il.* 7.157 = 11.670 = 23.629) and used twice (*Od.* 14.468;503), deceptively, by the Old Beggar in the *Odyssey*. Cf. also the lines αἶ γάρ, Ζεῦ τε πάτερ καὶ Ἀθηναίη καὶ Ἀπολλων, ἠΐβῶμι’ ὡς ἔτ’ . . . [Father Zeus, Athene and Apollo, would that I were young, as when . . .] (*Il.* 7.132-33), introducing Nestor’s recollection of the Battle of the Pylians and Arkadians, which closes with the reassertion #εἶθ’ ὡς ἠβώοιμι . . . .

<sup>20</sup> See Vivante’s description (1970:24) of Nestor as “a pathetic witness of past and present, an old man for whom heroic prowess is but a memory or a dream.” He remarks later (190), with reference to Nestor’s account in *Iliad* 11 of the rout of the Moliones, that the old man “speaks about himself as about another person seen and admired long ago. There is no link between his youth and old age. Might we detect a touch of irony in his ostentation?”

## II

The next (and second) step in assessing the validity of some link between the speech of Nestor and the song of Muses or Sirens requires a shift of perspective from isolated words, cola, and lines—by which we have been guided so far—to the level of generic scenes. This shift is an important one methodologically, for a number of reasons. First, the sweetness, the fluidity, and the allure of honey, wine, sleep, desire, music, mourning, voice, Nestor, Muse, and Siren in themselves merely establish a paradigmatic set of attributes frequently predicated of all these nouns in Homer. They form a connotative network of associations that are suggestive and rich but at the same time at best perhaps only virtual. A truly functional homology among them can be shown, by definition, only in terms of how they actually operate in the course of the poems, namely in terms of the actions they promote and the common effects these actions have. If nothing else, to demonstrate their similar or identical narrative function will help corroborate the parallels that we have already isolated at the level of the traits they all share. That is to say, and to select just one instance from many, if wine is not only fluid and sweet like sleep but also, within the narrative, works like sleep to induce (say) forgetfulness or a relaxing of vigilance, then the features they both share are not simply metaphorical, but instead have the status of functional elements—one might even say, of agents—that can retard, advance, or deflect the story along one path or another. This clearly occurs (again, to pick one among several instances) in the case of Polyphemos drunk and vulnerable in his cave in *Odyssey* 9 and Zeus lulled by sleep on the hill above the plain in the course of the *Dios apatê* in *Iliad* 14. Here wine and sleep are functional homologues of each other. Moreover, an analysis in terms of the function and common effects of nouns whose metaphorical range is isomorphic may adduce further evidence in support of the claim, already made, that oral narrative—and possibly narrative in general—is above all else characterized by the priority of story over *ethos* and description, namely by the degree to which the story is the determining factor in the construction of narratives, and thus the primary and final motivation for whatever occurs within them. In this sense, even simple adjectival modifiers (λεγύς, γλυκύς, ἥδυσπής) could enjoy the same functional status in the text as do characters and actual

events, namely as loci of narrative potential.<sup>21</sup>

The type-scene for Visitation—describing the arrival, recognition, greeting, and entertainment of a guest—is among the clearest of the scenes in Homer whose regular contours formulaic analysis has helped to map. As Edwards has shown, building on the work done by Arend in his influential *Die Typischen Szenen bei Homer* (1933), the pattern of Visitation amounts to an elaboration on elements within a more generic type of scene, to which Arend gives the name Arrival (*Ankunft*).<sup>22</sup> It encompasses in turn a well-defined set of discrete narrative units that allow for a certain amount of variation within a fixed syntagmatic order. The complete pattern is as follows:<sup>23</sup>

- §5
- (1) a visitor stands at the entrance
  - (2) someone (generally the host) sees him
  - (3) the host gets up from his seat
  - (4) the host takes his hand and greets him
  - (5) the host conducts him inside
  - (6) the host offers him a seat (usually in a place of honor)
  - (7) food and drink are served
  - (8) conversation ensues

Each of these elements, with the exception of §5(7) and (8), generally fills

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<sup>21</sup> This would seem to follow from the argument (see Foley 1991) that even minimal formulaic elements in orally composed literature bear the considerable weight of “inherent meaning” thanks to their evocation of familiar ethical types and story patterns that belong to the larger and implicit whole from which particular narratives derive. On the distinction between “inherent” and “conferred” meaning, and its implications for a poetics of oral traditional literature, see Foley 1991:2-37.

<sup>22</sup> See Edwards 1975:61-62, Arend 1933:28-63. Arend analyzes the Arrival Scene into (1) *Einfache Ankunft* (28-34), (2) *Besuch* (34-53), and (3) *Botschaft* (54-63). The syntax of *Einfache Ankunft*, the basic type, essentially comprises the description of a character’s (I) setting out, (II) arrival, (III) encounter with the person sought, (IV) taking a position beside him, and (V) speech. In the *Besuch* Scene, element IV is elaborated by the description of the character’s reception. Arend (34f.) contrasts *Einfache Ankunft* with *Besuch* as follows: “in den Ankunftsszenen tritt der Ankommende sogleich näher (T[eil]. IV) und bringt sein Anliegen vor (T[eil]. V), in den Besuchsszenen aber werden vorher ausführlich Aufnahme und Bewirtung geschildert, vor T[eil]. V treten also verschiedene neue Erzählungsteile” (quoted also by Edwards [1975:62]).

<sup>23</sup> This list is adapted from Edwards (1975:62), who in turn freely translates Arend’s analysis (1933:35).

no more than a single verse; and the same is true of the entire sequence (4)-(6), which often appears as the formula (*Il.* 11.46;778; *Od.* 3.35) ἐς δ' ἄγε χειρὸς ἐλών, κατὰ δ' ἐδριάσθαι ἄνωγε [and took him by the hand, led him in and told him to sit down]. The offer of food in §5(7) generally allows for the greatest expansion, and may range from an almost cursory mention—e.g., ξείνιά τ' εὖ παρέθηκεν, ἅ τε ξείνοις θέμις ἐστίν [and properly set out hospitality, as is the guest's right] (*Il.* 11.779), in which the final gnomic hemistich (cf. *Od.* 9.268) explicitly marks what precedes it as the “zero degree” of hospitality, so to speak—to elaborate descriptions of the utensils and their setting, the preparation and serving of the meal.

In his 1975 study, Edwards deftly charts the wide range of variations—in the form of omission, juxtaposition, condensation, and expansion—admissible in this specific pattern and in those of Arend's more comprehensive types, with a view towards resolving apparent “inconsistencies” in the text of Homer. Insufficient attention has been paid, however, to a less common but significant divergence from the pattern of Visitation. The arrival of a visitor at another's home follows the fixed and predictable syntax outlined above in §5 only when (as in most cases) the host's offer of entertainment is welcomed and accepted. When it is not—in a narrative pattern that can be called Hospitality Declined—the regular sequence is interrupted and issues are raised that are represented as more compelling than the social (and religious) obligations that bind guest and host together. This allomorphic type-scene has special bearing on the figure of Nestor and his functional relation to Siren and Muse.

The simplest instance of the pattern of Hospitality Declined in the poems, and the one that most closely conforms to the sequence in §5, occurs in *Iliad* 11. Patroklos has been sent by Akhilleus to discover the identity of the wounded soldier whom Akhilleus saw rush by in a chariot (607-15). In the course of his errand, Patroklos arrives at Nestor's tent (644-48):

- §6
- |         |  |
|---------|--|
| (1)     | Πάτροκλος δὲ θύρησιν ἐφίστατο, ἰσόθεος φώς.              |
| (2)-(3) | τὸν δὲ ἰδὼν ὁ γεραιὸς ἀπὸ θρόνου ᾤρτο φαινοῦ,            |
| (4)-(6) | ἐς δ' ἄγε χειρὸς ἐλών, κατὰ δ' ἐδριάσθαι ἄνωγε.          |
| (*)     | Πάτροκλος δ' ἐτέρωθεν ἀναίνετο εἶπέ τε μῦθον·            |
| (*)     | “οὐχ ἔδος ἐστί, γεραῖε διοτρεφές, οὐδέ με πείσεις . . .” |

. . . and Patroklos stood, godlike man, in the doorway.  
 Seeing him, the old man rose from his shining chair,  
 took him by the hand, led him in and told him to sit down,  
 but Patroklos from the other side declined, and said:



Hektor's refusal here is in fact preceded some one hundred lines earlier by a similar scene (*Il.* 6.258-68) in which he firmly turns down Hekabe's offer of wine—ἀλλὰ μὲν', ὄφρα κέ τοι μελιηδέα οἶνον ἐνείκω [But stay while I bring you honey-sweet wine] (258)—on the ground that to drink it would make him “forget strength and courage” (cf. *Il.* 22.282) and thus deflect him from his present aim (264-65):<sup>24</sup>

§9            μῆ μοι οἶνον ἄειρε μελίφρονα, πότνια μήτηρ,  
                 μῆ μ' ἀπογυιώσης μένεος ἀλκῆς τε λάθωμαι.

Lift me no honeylike wine, honored mother,  
lest you unnerve me, and I forget strength and courage.

Finally, the same overall pattern informs Priam's initial refusal to sit with Akhilleus in *Iliad* 24. Here Akhilleus' offer echoes Helen's in §8—#ἀλλ' ἄγε δὴ κατ' ἄρ' ἔζευ ἐπὶ θρόνου [But come, sit down upon this chair] (522 = §5:6)—and the old man's response is cast in much the same language used then by Hektor (553-54):

§10            μῆ πῶ μ' ἐς θρόνον ἕζε, διοτρεφές, ὄφρα κεν Ἐκτωρ  
                 κείται ἐνὶ κλισίησιν ἀκηδῆς . . .

Don't make me sit on a chair, Zeus-nurtured one, while Hektor  
lies abandoned among the shelters . . .

On the matter of formulaic responson, it should be noted that the #οὐχ ἔδος ἐστί {εἶμι} colon is unique to the two passages (*Il.* 11.648, 23.205) quoted above (§§6-7), and that the cola #μῆ με κάθιζε (*Il.* 6.360 = §8), #μῆ μοι οἶνον ἄειρε μελίφρονα (*Il.* 6.264 = §9) and #μῆ πῶ μ' εἰς θρόνον ἕζε (*Il.* 24.553 = §10) appear nowhere else in either poem. The closing hemistich οὐδέ με πείσεις# (*Il.* 11.648, 6.360 = §§8-9) is of course fairly ubiquitous (6X, 1X), and therefore not of much significance here. Beyond responson at this level, however, these passages also share a number of narrative features in common.

To begin with, in two scenes (§§6-7) the arrival of the visitor comes during the course of a meal already in progress. The appearance of Patroklos at Nestor's tent is preceded by a fairly long description (*Il.* 11.618-43) of the return there of Nestor and Makhaon just shortly

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<sup>24</sup> On the similarity between these two scenes as indices of Hektor's *ethos*, though not in terms of their formulaic responson, see Redfield 1975:121-22.

beforehand, along with their ensuing entertainment and conversation. It could be argued here that his refusal of hospitality is partly motivated by narrative constraints, since the repetition of two meal scenes back to back within such a short space of verse would be tedious or awkward. This claim is not without some merit but in itself is not particularly convincing, for reasons to be taken up presently. Iris likewise visits the house of Zephyros while the Winds are engaged in feasting, a fact indicated by a single line (*Il.* 23.200-01)—again, an instance of the type-scene in its “zero degree.” This is not true of Hektor’s brief visit (§8) with his brother, since his arrival merely interrupts routine domestic chores: Helen supervising the weaving, Paris toying idly with his bow (*Il.* 6.321-24). The scene between Priam and Akhilleus in *Iliad* 24 is remarkable in a number of respects that have been studied closely elsewhere.<sup>25</sup> For our purposes here it is enough to note that his arrival coincides with the end of a meal (whose preparation is not described) enjoyed by Automedon and Alkimos (471-76), but in which the hero himself has not partaken.

Far more pertinent than any alleged desire on Homer’s part to avoid repetition of meal scenes in too close proximity to each other—for after all, he was presumably under no constraint to start them eating dinner before the guest arrives—is the narrative function of that guest in each of these passages, along with the contrast of priorities revealed by the guest’s refusal to be entertained. The visitor in all cases thus far examined in fact appears in the role of Messenger. With respect to Patroklos (§6), Iris (§7), and Priam (§10), each has been explicitly dispatched by someone else on an official mission (cf. *Il.* 11.608-15, 23.192-99, 24.143-59;173). Hektor (§8) himself is under no special injunction to visit Paris, though his response to Helen’s offer (*Il.* 6.360-62) makes his own sense of mission quite clear. This suggests that the passages in question represent “mixed” types such as those studied by Edwards, namely the condensation of Arrival (*Ankunft*) + Visitation (*Besuch*) with Messenger (*Botschaft*) scenes. The initial sequence for Simple Arrival (Setting Out - Arrival - Encounter) + Visitation (§5:1-5) proceeds as far as the offering of hospitality, at which point the scene modulates instead into the standard pattern for *Botschaft*,<sup>26</sup> in which the appearance of the Messenger is followed immediately by (1) standing beside the addressee (*not* “at the threshold”), and (2) the delivery of the message, after which—with or (rarely) without the response of the addressee—(3) the

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<sup>25</sup> On the scene between Priam and Akhilleus in *Iliad* 24, see Foley 1991:174-89.

<sup>26</sup> See Arend 1933:54-63, and above, note 22.

Messenger departs.

This modulation—or better, juxtaposition, given the abruptness of the shift between types—serves in each instance to focus attention on a conflict of priorities. Hospitality Declined is in every case motivated by an equally formulaic expression of Haste to Depart. The offer to sit is refused in the interest of values deemed higher than the social pleasure of allowing oneself to be entertained, and so *a fortiori* more urgent than the values that structure the relation between host and guest. Hektor's loyalty (§8) to the defense of Troy, outlined more sharply by contrast with his brother's idleness, and no less explicit in his refusal of wine from Hekabe (§9); Patroklos' mission (§6) to report the identity of the wounded soldier to Akhilleus, whose curiosity in this matter implicitly undercuts the firmness of his resolve to remain indifferent to the plight of the Greeks; the appeal of Iris to the Winds (§7) in response to Akhilleus' prayer, when the pyre of Patroklos will not burn and release him to death; the desperate dignity of Priam (§10), who will not sit with his son's killer while Hektor's corpse lies unattended and unburied, though he has only just (*Il.* 24.477-79) kissed those murderous hands—all these scenes throw critical values into high relief, revealing commitments and obligations from whose fulfillment nothing can deter or deflect the Messenger.

In three of the five cases now under review, these commitments—and the narrative pattern that embodies them—are immediately honored. Hektor turns from Helen with no less resolve than he left his mother moments earlier, and goes on his way, while Hekabe hastens to offer prayer to Athene (*Il.* 6.286-310) and Paris shakes off his erotic sloth and returns to the field (503-19). Iris speaks briefly and departs, and the Winds leap up from their seats to do her bidding (*Il.* 23.212-16). In Priam's case, the higher values of reconciliation and forgiveness—more urgent than hatred, much harder to learn—require that he finally yield to Akhilleus' offer, and sit with him. Despite his initial refusal, the demands of hospitality prevail.<sup>27</sup>

With Patroklos, however, the situation is different. On the one hand, his refusal to accept hospitality—specifically, his decline of the offer to sit—is ostensibly honored by Nestor. In the absence of indications to the contrary, we must imagine that he remains standing throughout the conversation that ensues. On the other hand, the alleged urgency of his need to be on his way (*Il.* 11.649-52) is ignored. Rather than being allowed to turn quickly and leave—as are Hektor (§§8-9) and Iris (§7)—Patroklos is

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<sup>27</sup> See above, note 25.

detained an inordinate length of time from returning to Akhilleus by what amounts to Nestor's most extensive monologue (655-803) in the poems, namely his tale of the cattle-raid against the Eleians, and his visit (along with Odysseus) to the house of Peleus, followed by his famous advice to Patroklos concerning Akhilleus' armor. The specific content of that speech<sup>28</sup> is less important here than its crucial role in advancing the story of the *Iliad*. As a result of his staying to hear Nestor's lengthy reminiscence and the advice that follows it—which at the level of type-scenes amounts to a breach of the pattern Hospitality Declined + Haste to Depart—Patroklos is deflected from his original aim and set on a narrative path that leads ineluctably to his own demise. It is worth noting that when Patroklos finally does return to Akhilleus (after a “hiatus” of four books), it is not to report the information he was initially sent out to discover—namely, the identity of the wounded soldier glimpsed by Akhilleus—but instead to entreat him to lend his armor and allow Patroklos to fight in his stead.<sup>29</sup> Apart from the change of pronouns and the variation of a single line (11.799/16.40), this entreaty precisely echoes Nestor's earlier counsel (11.799-803 = 16.36-45). Of course, this deflection of aim signals the priority of the story of the *Iliad* over the events at the surface of the narrative. However plausibly Akhilleus' request for information is motivated in the text—for example, as a sign that he is not at all indifferent to the suffering of the Greeks—from the viewpoint of the story, Patroklos' mission is a bogus one.<sup>30</sup> Its true function is to supply the pretext for his encounter with Nestor. Like all intercessory figures, as I have argued

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<sup>28</sup> For an analysis of the content of this speech, see Cantieni 1942, Vester 1956:54-74, Pedrick 1983.

<sup>29</sup> *En route* back to Akhilleus' tent, Patroklos allows himself to be deflected from his course once again, this time to minister to the wounded Eurypylos (*Il.* 11.806-48, 15.390-404). This scene—essentially single, though dispersed over two widely separated places in the narrative—is interesting in light of the pattern of Hospitality Declined + Haste to Depart examined above, and in fact suggests that this pattern might itself be a species of a more generic pattern structuring responses to invitations of any type.

<sup>30</sup> In this it resembles, for example, the encounter of Odysseus with the shade of Elpenor in *Odyssey* 11 and his request for proper burial, whose actual function in the logic of the story is to motivate Odysseus' return to Aiaia for specific instructions on how to get home. For a discussion of Elpenor, along with cogent presentation of the distinction between the “function” and the “motivation” of narratives, and full bibliographical references, see Peradotto 1980.

elsewhere,<sup>31</sup> the old man is ultimately in the employ of the (abstract) story; his role here, at this critical juncture in the tale, is to motivate the Sacrifice of Patroklos and the consequent Return of Akhilleus.

Despite its greater preoccupation with comings and goings, comprising frequent Arrival, Messenger, and Visitation scenes and scenes structured by a character's eagerness to leave, the *Odyssey* shows no instances of the precise combination of the patterns Hospitality Declined + Haste to Depart that we have examined so far. Where Haste to Depart does occur, it is always after Hospitality has already been accepted and enjoyed, and the visitor (sooner or later) expresses a desire to be on his way again. This is clearly often the case with Odysseus, in his dealings with Aiolos (*Od.* 10.17-18)—where his request for permission to depart represents the motif in the “zero degree”—Kirke (10.467-89), Kalypso (5.81-84;160- 224), and the Phaiakians (7.146-52;331-33, 8.465-66, 13.28-35).<sup>32</sup> It also features prominently in the visits of Telemakhos to Sparta (4.594-99, 15.64-74) and Pylos (15.195-214), where the pattern raises issues that have direct bearing on the present argument.

After his arrival, entertainment, and conversation with Menelaos, Telemakhos responds to his host's insistence—ἀλλ' ἄγε νῦν ἐπίμεινον ἐνὶ μεγάροισιν ἐμοῖσιν [But come now, stay in my house]—that he remain in Sparta “eleven or twelve more days” (*Od.* 4.587-92) by elegantly declining that offer (594-99):

§11 Ἄτρεΐδῃ, μή δὴ με πολὺν χρόνον ἐνθάδ' ἔρourke.  
καὶ γὰρ κ' εἰς ἐνιαυτὸν ἐγὼ παρὰ σοί γ' ἀνεχόμενῃ  
ἤμενος, οὐδέ με οἴκου ἔλοι πόθος οὐδὲ τοκῆων·  
αἰνῶς γὰρ μύθοισιν ἔπεσσί τε σοῖσιν ἀκούων  
τέρπομαι. ἀλλ' ἤδη μοι ἀνιάζουσιν ἑταῖροι  
ἐν Πύλῳ ἠγαθέῃ· σὺ δέ με χρόνον ἐνθάδ' ἐρύκεις.

Son of Atreus, don't keep me here any longer.  
Indeed I'd stay sitting beside you all year,

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<sup>31</sup> See Dickson 1990. With reference to the central role played by Nestor in advancing the story of the *Iliad*, Vester 1956:55 remarks: “Alle diese Szenen [in which Nestor figures] . . . stellen die Kardinalstellen der Ilias dar; an diesen wird die Handlung auf weite Strecken festgelegt und auch in neue Bahnen gelenkt. Sie sind der Nerv der Handlung. An diesem Nerv sitzt aber der alte Nestor als der Faktor, der durch sein Wort die Handlung biz zur Transposition des Zorns in den Rachezorn vorantreibt.”

<sup>32</sup> On the significance of the motif of departure vs. detainment and unwillingness to leave in the *Odyssey*, see Taylor 1960-61 and Athorp 1980.

nor would longing for home or parents ever seize me:  
for listening to your tales and words remarkably  
delights me. But my men already grow restless for me  
in sacred Pylos, and you keep me here too long.

The implicit connection between fascination with speech and deferral or forgetfulness of aim has already been touched on several times above, and will receive more attention in what follows. For the moment, it is important to note the parallels between this and several other passages in the poems. The initial hemistich of Menelaos' request—#ἀλλ' ἄγε νῦν ἐπίμεινον [But come now, stay] (*Od.* 4.587)—is repeated twice elsewhere. On one occasion (*Il.* 6.340), it is addressed to Hektor by Paris in lines that immediately precede Hektor's refusal of hospitality in the scene that has already been examined (above, §8). Its other appearance is in the departure scene in *Odyssey* 1, where the phrasing of Telemakhos' invitation —ἀλλ' ἄγε νῦν ἐπίμεινον, ἐπειγόμενός περ ὁδοῖο [But come now, stay, though you are eager to travel] (309)—is echoed in the disguised Athene's refusal: μή μ' ἔτι νῦν κατέρυκε, λιλαιόμενόν περ ὁδοῖο [Do not hold me back any longer now, while I yearn to travel] (315). Significant resonances—clustering around forms of the verbs {κατ}έρυκειν [hold back] and {ἀπο}πέμπειν [send away] in similar cola—also link the situation of Telemakhos in Menelaos' court with that of his father on the islands of Kirke and Kalypso.<sup>33</sup>

The narrative of Telemakhos' departure from Sparta in *Odyssey* 4 is suspended by an abrupt shift (624-25) of scene back to Ithaka, and only resumes eleven books later. As Apthorp has argued, it is in all likelihood not merely the account of his leaving that is interrupted but also the departure itself.<sup>34</sup> Despite his protestation of Haste to Depart, Telemakhos apparently succumbs to the allures of Menelaos' court—prominent among which is the pleasure he takes in his host's "tales and words" (594-98)—and remains in Sparta for roughly one month. Like Odysseus on Aiaia in *Odyssey* 10, he must in fact be eventually reminded of the homecoming he

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<sup>33</sup> For a citation of passages, see Delebecque 1958:26, Apthorp 1980:19-20, and Rose 1971:511-13.

<sup>34</sup> See Heubeck-West-Hainsworth 1988:51-66, 229 (on 594ff.) and 231-32 (on 621-24) on the problems associated with this shift. Apthorp 1980—relying principally on Delebecque 1958 and Taylor 1960-61—argues that narrative chronology "keeps moving" despite this "suspension," i.e., that the actual departure of Telemakhos from Sparta in Book 15 occurs roughly one month after the scene in Book 4.

seems to have forgotten (cf. *Od.* 10.472-74 and 15.3; 10-42).<sup>35</sup>

In the final exchange with Menelaos in *Odyssey* 15, some of the issues raised by his earlier leave-taking receive fuller treatment. The young man's request for permission to return home (64-66) now wins assent—in language that repeats the colon πολλὸν χρόνον ἐνθάδ' ἔρυκ—# (cf. *Od.* 4.594;599)—and also prompts from Menelaos a reflection on the obligations of the host (68-74):

§12 Τηλέμαχ', οὐ τί σ' ἐγώ γε πολλὸν χρόνον ἐνθάδ' ἐρύξω  
 ἰέμενον νόστοιο· νεμεσσῶμαι δὲ καὶ ἄλλω  
 ἀνδρὶ ξεινοδόκῳ, ὅς κ' ἔξοχα μὲν φιλήησιν,  
 ἔξοχα δ' ἐχθαίρησιν· ἀμείνω δ' αἴσιμα πάντα.  
 ἴσόν τοι κακὸν ἐσθ', ὅς τ' οὐκ ἐθέλοντα νέεσθαι  
 ξείνον ἐποτρύνει καὶ ὃς ἐσσύμενον κατερύκει.  
 χρῆ ξείνον παρεόντα φιλεῖν, ἐθέλοντα δὲ πέμπειν.

Telemakhos, I surely won't keep you here any longer  
 if you yearn for home. I'd feel shame for myself and any  
 other host as much for being overly friendly  
 as overly unsociable. Propriety is best in everything.  
 It's just as wrong for someone to urge an unwilling guest  
 to leave, as to detain him if he's eager to depart.  
 Entertain a guest at hand but speed him when he wants to go.

If this lecture amounts to an implicitly ironic commentary on the ease with which Telemakhos himself had forgotten his home—cf. οὐδέ με οἴκου ἔλοι πόθος οὐδὲ τοκῆων# [nor would longing for home or parents ever seize me] (*Od.* 4.596)—it is also proleptic of an irony touching the scene (*Od.* 15.193-214) that immediately follows his departure from Sparta. As they draw within sight of Pylos, Telemakhos abruptly asks his companion Peisistratos to avoid Nestor's palace altogether and to drop him off at the ship instead (200-1), “lest the old man hold me back against my will in his house | desiring to entertain” (μή μ' ὁ γέρων ἀέκοντα κατὰσχη ᾧ ἐνὶ οἴκῳ | ἰέμενος φιλέειν).<sup>36</sup> This is despite the fact that

<sup>35</sup> See Apthorp 1980:5-6, 12-13.

<sup>36</sup> Apthorp (1980:20) remarks: “After his difficulty in escaping from Menelaos' hospitality it is hardly surprising that Telemachus should appear almost paranoid in his fear lest Nestor should hold him back (κατέσχη) against his will.” See also Rose 1971:511- 13, who draws attention to the parallels between Telemakhos in Sparta and Pylos and Odys-

his decision to steer clear of Nestor makes him break his earlier promise (155-56) to convey Menelaos' regards to the old man. Telemakhos' Haste to Depart and fear of detention are so great that he acts to forestall the anticipated offer of hospitality. The line expressing his fear is unique in the poems, though κατέσχετο is used once elsewhere to describe Menelaos held back by the storm off Point Sunion ἐπειγόμενός περ ὁδοῖο# [though eager to travel] (*Od.* 3.284; cf. 1.309;315). The disguised Athene speculates (*Od.* 1.196-99) that Odysseus in all probability is detained (κατερύκεται; cf. 1.14) somewhere on the wide sea, where savages hold him captive (ἔχουσιν) and detain him against his will (ἐρυκανώσ' ἀέκοντα#). Further, both Alkinoos—ἀέκοντα δέ σ' οὐ τις ἐρύξει [no one will hold you back against your will] (*Od.* 7.315) and Kirke—μηκέτι νῦν ἀέκοντες ἐμῶ ἐνὶ μίμνετε οἴκῳ [do not stay in my house any longer if it goes against your will] (*Od.* 10.489)—insist they will not keep Odysseus longer than he desires to stay.

The response of Peisistratos confirms Telemakhos' worst fear that it would be nearly impossible for him to escape should he once fall into Nestor's clutches (211-14):

§13            εὖ γὰρ ἐγὼ τόδε οἶδε κατὰ φρένα καὶ κατὰ θυμόν·  
οἶος κείνου θυμὸς ὑπέρβιος, οὐ σε μεθήσει  
ἀλλ' αὐτὸς καλέων δεῦρ' εἴσεται, οὐδέ ἔφημι  
ἄψ ἰέναι κενεόν· μάλα γὰρ κεχολώσεται ἔμπης.

For I know this for certain, deep down in my heart:  
He has an overbearing spirit, and he won't let you go,  
but he'll come here himself to summon you, and I don't think  
he'll return without you; as it is, he'll be terribly angry.

Strong words from a dutiful son. The line describing Nestor's character as violent or “overbearing” (ὑπέρβιος) in fact appears elsewhere only once, closely echoing Poulydamas' description of berserk Akhilleus in *Iliad* 18—οἶος κείνου θυμὸς ὑπέρβιος, οὐκ ἐθελήσει | μίμνειν ἐν πεδίῳ [He has an overbearing spirit, and he will not be willing | to stay here on the plain] (262-63)—from whom he wisely counsels a swift retreat behind the safety of Troy's walls. The adjective on all other occasions is reserved for the fury of Dardanian Euphorbos (*Il.* 17.19)—surpassing leopard, lion, and boar in savagery (20-23)—the outrageous behavior of the suitors (*Od.* 1.368 = 4.321, 14.92 = 16.315, 14.95), and the rashness of Odysseus' crew

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seus among the Phaiakians. Clarke 1967:39 refers to “Nestor's oppressive hospitality.”

(*Od.* 12.379). Baneful anger (χόλος) is of course the Akhilleian attribute *par excellence*. The closing hemistich (*Od.* 15.214) μάλα γὰρ κεχολώσεται ἔμπης# appears once elsewhere (*Od.* 19.324), in the allomorph μάλα περ κεχολωμένος αἰνῶς# [even though he is dreadfully angry], to describe the violent frustration of a suitor spurned and forever denied permission to court Penelope.

Except as parody—not only of Akhilleus descending amok on hapless Trojans, but possibly even also of Odysseus' escape by ship from the clutches of the Kyklops—this characterization is at first sight hard to reconcile with the image of the honeyed, fluent speaker of *Iliad* 1. These two pictures are not unrelated, however. The old man's imperious obstinacy, which leads him to violate the precepts Menelaos has only just pronounced (§12), is in a sense a natural reflex of his speech. Its sweetness and allure combine here with its tenacity to pose the genuine threat of detaining Telemakhos, deflecting him from his destination and thus depriving him of νόστος [homecoming]. This danger of detention and loss of aim also figures implicitly in other passages in which Nestor is involved. In *Odyssey* 3, the old man's logorrhea protracts the sacrifice to Poseidon that is underway when Telemakhos and Mentor-Athene land at Pylos. The sun sets and dusk comes on as he recounts his homecoming from Troy—"Ὠς ἔφατ', ἠέλιος δ' ἄρ' ἔδου καὶ ἐπὶ κνέφας ἦλθε [As he spoke, the sun sank and gloom came on the land] (*Od.* 3.329)—though his guests first arrived on the beach at dawn (1-5).<sup>37</sup> Athene must gently remind him that it is getting dark (335-36) and the rites begun have yet to be finished: ὦ γέρον, ἦ τοι ταῦτα κατὰ μοῖραν κατέλεξας· ἄλλ' ἄγε . . . [Old man, these things you have said are indeed right and fitting. | But come now, . . .] (330-31). And in view of the narrative motif of Hospitality Declined, the pattern of the ensuing scene is perhaps worth noting. As the sacrificial fire is extinguished and the visitors turn away to go back to their ship (342-44), Nestor restrains (κατέρυκε) them—Νέστωρ δ' αὖ κατέρυκε καθαπτόμενος ἐπέεσσι [But Nestor in turn put his hand out and held them back, with the words . . .] (345)—to insist that both sleep in the palace. Athene politely but firmly declines (356-70)

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<sup>37</sup> The line appears elsewhere only at *Od.* 5.225, on the evening before the building of the raft on which Odysseus leaves Ogygia. It coincides with the end of Odysseus' speech rejecting Kalypso's offer of immortality and reasserting his desire to return to Penelope, and thus reinforces the closure of his statement. In the case of Nestor in *Odyssey* 3, the line on the contrary draws attention to a lack of closure, namely to the business Nestor's monologue has suspended.

on the ground that she has business to attend to among the Kaukonians, leaving Telemakhos to experience (and endure) the old man's hospitality.

As in the case of Patroklos in *Iliad* 11, it can be argued with some justification that Telemakhos' hasty departure in *Odyssey* 15 is motivated by Homer's desire to avoid what would be an awkward and otiose repetition of a Hospitality scene. It is of course true that Telemakhos has already been entertained by Nestor—though some twelve books earlier (*Od.* 3.386-94)—and has gleaned from him what little information the old man has about the whereabouts of Odysseus. By the same token, however, it should be noted that the guest-host relation between them has not been cemented by the customary (almost obligatory) presentation of a gift.<sup>38</sup> This by itself could support a claim that Homer “had every reason” to bring Telemakhos and Nestor together one last time. Once again, however, the narrative function of the pattern of Hospitality Declined carries far greater weight than merely intentionalist arguments. The convention of the γέρας [gift-exchange] is superseded (and the promise to Menelaos broken) by the more urgent motif of Haste to Depart in the face of the risk of detention and loss of homecoming—especially since Telemakhos has already once before succumbed to the attraction of tantalizing speech, in his protracted stay at Sparta. More important than the fact that he leaves Pylos empty-handed is that he escapes falling into Nestor's hands a second time and so manages to leave at all.

### III

Speech like song, like that of the Muse or Bard, but also like that of the Sirens; sweet interminable words born of memory but causing forgetfulness; a lucid voice flowing smoothly like honey, wine, lamentation, sleep, and the mists of death to draw and deflect its listener from his journey home—the connotative range of traits assigned to Nestor intersects at the point of this motif with the issues raised by the type-scene of Hospitality Denied + Haste to Depart in which he is involved. The motif is of course much larger than the figure of Nestor himself. Deeper than the level of the surface narrative, it belongs to the dynamics of the story that

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<sup>38</sup> By way of contrast, note the prominence with which the issue of gifts figures in his dealings with Menelaos (*Od.* 4.589-619, 15.75-132). On the convention of gift-exchange, see, e.g., Coldstream 1983 and Finley 1979:73ff.

controls the presentation of his *ethos*; and deeper still, it ultimately derives from an implicit psychology of pleasure.<sup>39</sup> Telemakhos' admission to Menelaos (§11) that the delight (αὐνῶς . . . τέρπομαι) of listening to his host's tales could easily keep him there yearlong only underscores the connection between sweetness and oblivion already noted above (§§2-3) in the form of the "sweeter than X (honey/homecoming)" pattern that responds with the description of Nestor's honeyed voice (§1). Sweet is whatever allures and soothes, but what allures also poses the threat of loss of and deflection from true aim; and chief among the sweet things that detain and defer—in fact, "sweeter even than honey" (*Il.* 1.249)—is the exquisite pleasure of narrative.<sup>40</sup>

The temptation represented by the sweet speech of Nestor embodies a danger that for Telemakhos in Book 15 (as for Patroklos in the *Iliad*) is perhaps as great—always allowing for parody—as the threat posed to Odysseus by the Sirens. We have already noted the associations between Nestorian and poetic speech in general, in terms of such attributes as sweetness, clarity, and allure. The Sirens too enjoy these traits. Kirke (*Od.* 12.38-54) warns Odysseus of the threat they pose to his homecoming in words that give special emphasis to the quality of the sound (φθογγή) of their voice—four of eleven instances of this noun in the poems refer to the Sirens (*Od.* 12.41;159;198, 23.326)—and their seductive song (ἀοιδή). The other term (ὄψ) frequently used for their voice shows a similar distribution, with fully half (14 of 24X) of its occurrences reserved for the Sirens (4X) and divine voice in general (10X), and the remainder given over to human voices in marked and emotionally charged situations—in expressions of grief (*Od.* 11.421, 20.92) and pitiless rage (*Il.* 11.137, 18.222, 21.98)—and in situations that advert to its exceptional beauty, as in the case of the Trojan Elders, who speak as cicadas drone (*Il.* 3.152), and of Odysseus himself (*Il.* 3.221), whose words fall like flurries of snow. In all these instances, the immediate effect of the voice is to command its listener's awe and full attention, to turn him aside from his course, to stun

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<sup>39</sup> For an introduction to views of poetry and pleasure represented in Homer, see, e.g., Walsh 1984:3-21 and Pucci 1987:193-96, 201-4.

<sup>40</sup> The pleasure of narrative is an abiding motif in the poems, and especially in the *Odyssey*. In addition to the passages discussed above, see e.g. *Od.* 4.239, 8.367-69; 487-91, 9.3-4, 13.1-2, 17.513-21; and Apthorp 1980:16-19, who notes the power of narrative to charm (θέλγειν) in the case of Muses and storytellers no less than of the Sirens themselves.

and absorb or even paralyze him;<sup>41</sup> and the Sirens clearly represent this effect in the highest (and most lethal) degree. Whoever gives them ear will never come home to see wife and children (*Od.* 12.41-43), since he will be bewitched by their “lucid song”—Σειρῆνες λιγυρῆ θέλγουσιν ἀοιδῆ [the Sirens charm with their clear singing] (44; and cf. 40)—into remaining with them until the flesh rots from his bones (45-46).<sup>42</sup>

The parallels between Nestor and the Sirens at the level of the narrative motif of detention are worth considering more closely. As Odysseus’ ship draws near their grassy island, the wind suddenly drops and their honeyed voices call out to him (*Od.* 12.184-91):

§14 Δεῦρ’ ἄγ’ ἰών, πολύαιν’ Ὀδυσσεῦ, μέγα κῦδος Ἀχαιῶν,  
 νῆα κατὰστησον, ἵνα νωϊτέρην ὄπ’ ἀκούσῃς.  
 οὐ γάρ πώ τις τῆδε παρήλασε νηῖ μελαίνῃ,  
 πρὶν γ’ ἡμέων μελίγηρυν ἀπὸ στόματος ὄπ’ ἀκοῦσαι,  
 ἀλλ’ ὅ γε τερψάμενος νεῖται καὶ πλείονα εἰδώς.  
 ἴδμεν γάρ τοι πάνθ’ ὅσ’ ἐνὶ Τροίῃ εὐρείῃ  
 Ἄργεῖοι Τρῶές τε θεῶν ἰότητι μόγησαν·  
 ἴδμεν δ’ ὅσσα γένηται ἐπὶ χθονὶ πολυβοτείρῃ.

Come closer, famed Odysseus, great glory of Akhaians,  
 stay your ship, so you can listen to our voice.  
 For no one ever sails by this place in his black ship  
 until he hears the honeyed voice from our mouths,  
 takes his pleasure and sails off knowing even more.  
 For we indeed know everything that in wide Troy  
 the Argives and Trojans suffered by the will of the gods,  
 and we know everything that happens on the fertile earth.

The degree to which this passage adverts to the intimately related issues of

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<sup>41</sup> Sirens: *Od.* 12.160;185;187;192; Muses: *Il.* 1.604, *Od.* 24.60; Kalypso: *Od.* 5.61; Kirke: *Od.* 10.221; various gods: *Il.* 7.53, 2.182, 10.512, 14.150, 20.380; *Od.* 24.535. The loud cry of Poseidon (*Il.* 14.150) turns the Akhaians from thoughts of retreat and inspires them with courage, while Akhilleus’ voice (*Il.* 18.222) strikes paralyzing fear into the Trojans; and fear is also the immediate response of Hektor to Apollo’s voice (*Il.* 20.380). On the role of the voice in inducing the fascination associated with binding-spells, see Marsh 1979:ch. 1. On the Hesiodic view that poetry acts as a remedy for present anxieties by deflecting the listener’s attention from immediate (particular) cares to monuments of universal order—hence through an evocation of memory that simultaneously induces forgetfulness—see Walsh 1984:22-36 and Pucci 1977:espec. 22-27.

<sup>42</sup> On the relation between magic, rhetoric, and sexual seduction in Greek thought, see Marsh 1979:ch. 3.

poetic utterance (189-91), sweetness of voice (187), pleasure from song (188)—through which the Sirens are assimilated to the Muses themselves—and the risk of detention (185) is obvious, and has been dealt with extensively elsewhere.<sup>43</sup> What deserves further treatment here, especially in relation to the figure of Nestor, is how the Sirens characterize themselves and, specifically, the content of the song they promise to the wayfarer.

To begin with, it has often been noted that the Sirens' claim to knowledge equals what is attributed to the Muses by Homer in the celebrated invocation at the beginning of the *Catalogue of Ships*—with the anaphora of #ἴδμεν . . . (189, 191) compare ἴστε τε πάντα# [you know everything] (*Il.* 2.485). Its range corresponds, though of course (given their divine status) disproportionately, to the broader temporal scope of the knowledge traditionally assigned in the poems to the type of the Elder. The aged Halitherses (*Od.* 2.188), Ekheneos (*Od.* 7.157), and Nestor himself (*Od.* 24.51) are in fact all qualified by the closing B1 hemistich παλαιά τε πολλά τε εἰδώς# [knowing many ancient things]. Despite the fact that this formula is modelled on the ubiquitous adonean colon /- u u εἰδώς#/ , its attribution is unique to these three figures. The same association of greater knowledge with greater age is expressed by the endline formula ἐπεὶ πρότερος γενόμην καὶ πλείονα οἶδα# [since I am older than you and know more] (*Il.* 19.291, 21.440)—a fact that Nestor makes much of in his lecture to Agamemnon and Akhilleus in the opening of the *Iliad* (1.259), as well as in his qualified praise of Diomedes several books later (*Il.* 9.56- 59).<sup>44</sup>

The kind of knowledge to which advanced age gives special access is that of the past. Without discounting the fact that Elders may also command a strictly practical wisdom that is oriented to the range of possibilities in the present—Nestor himself is after all one of the outstanding proponents of μῆτις [practical intelligence] in the *Iliad* (cf. *Il.*

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<sup>43</sup> For discussion and bibliography, see Pucci 1979, 1980, 1987:209-13.

<sup>44</sup> To this list could be added the A2 formula for circumspection—ὁ γὰρ οἶος ἔρα πρόσσω καὶ ὀπίσσω# [who alone looked both ahead and behind] (*Il.* 18.250, *Od.* 24.452; cf. *Il.* 1.343, 3.108-10; *Od.* 2.158-59)—commonly predicated of old men, or else of young ones (such as Poulydamas) known for wisdom beyond their years. See Dickson 1990 for a discussion of the range of this and related formulas; and Vester 1956:14-15.

7.323-24 = 9.92-93, 10.18-19, 14.106-8, 23.313-18)<sup>45</sup>—their minds turn chiefly towards the past, from which they “know many ancient things” (παλαιά τε πολλά τε εἰδώς#). This is of course what grants them their role of keepers of tradition, whether at the level of specific moral conventions—issuing in their greater sense of propriety and of what is “right and fitting” (κατὰ μοῖραν, κατὰ κόσμον, κατ’ αἴσαν) in any given situation<sup>46</sup>—or else, more generally, at the level of the ethnic and cultural memory of the group to which they belong. Nestor himself in fact once figures quite literally as the encyclopedic memory of his race, the custodian of the genealogical inventory of *all* the Greeks at Troy, which he enumerates for Peleus prior to the marshalling of the troops for the expedition (*Il.* 7.128): πάντων Ἀργείων ἑρέων γενεήν τε τόκον τε [recounting the generation and birth of all the Argives]. Elders thus typically embody the link between their present community and the ancient narrative blood-lines that define it and shape its moral horizons.

The character of these narratives is the second and final point worth noting. It has often been remarked that what the Sirens offer to tell Odysseus is precisely the tale of the *Iliad* itself:<sup>47</sup> πάνθ’ ὅσ’ ἐνὶ Τροίῃ εὐρείῃ Ἀργεῖοι Τρῶές τε θεῶν ἰότητι μόγησαν [everything that in wide Troy the Argives and Trojans suffered by the will of the gods] (*Il.* 12.189-90). This is of course the same song that the Muses inspire Homer to tell—unless what these creatures promise to sing is in fact even more comprehensive, since the *Iliad* itself is clearly just one fragment of a far

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<sup>45</sup> See Vester 1956:18-23, and more recently Detienne-Vernant 1974:11-26.

<sup>46</sup> For a preliminary survey of the associative range of the phrases κατὰ μοῖραν, κατὰ κόσμον, and κατ’ αἴσαν in Homer, see Dickson 1990. Of note in the present context is the fact that over 60% of the uses of the colon κατὰ μοῖραν εἶπ-# [spoke right and fittingly] in the poems occur in situations in which the generational gap between speakers is explicitly an issue. Propriety is more often than not the special province of the aged.

<sup>47</sup> See Pucci 1987:209-13. With a reference to Buschor 1944, he remarks (212): “The Sirens, Muses of Hades, have the same power of *thelgein* [enchantment] as the Iliadic, epic Muses. . . . Even their poetic themes become contiguous: because the Sirens are Muses of Hades, their promise to sing of all that happens in Troy sounds like a polemic intimation by the *Odyssey* that the epic cycle of the Trojan War is obsessively involved with what today we would call the ‘beautiful death’ of the heroes.” The latter part of this statement of course goes beyond the range of the present essay, and engages (though from a different perspective) the issues of narrative pleasure and grief raised earlier. The “strictly Iliadic diction” of the Sirens’ song is the subject of Pucci 1979.

broader narrative tradition.<sup>48</sup> Nestor's speeches likewise have a similar range and resonance. His tales of war against the hill-beasts (*Il.* 1.262-72), of battle between Pylians and Arkadians beside "swirling Keladon" (*Il.* 7.132-156), of cattle-raids on Elis (*Il.* 11.670-762), of the funeral games of Epeian Amaryngkeus (*Il.* 23.629-43)—are identical at least in tenor and substance with the Homeric narratives in which they are embedded. They open out on the extensive antiquity of pre-Iliadic κλέα ἀνδρῶν [sung glories of men], such as Akhilleus himself is singing as the Greek embassy approaches his compound (*Il.* 9.189). In this respect, his tales in fact serve as metonyms of that vast and unrecorded narrative tradition from which poems like the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* themselves emerge, and from which they derive their support and orientation. Nestorian speech is thus virtually the same as the speech of Siren, Muse, and Poet himself, and in some sense—given its implicit invocation of the lost narrative whole—is the paradigm of their speech.<sup>49</sup> This is certainly true of the role it plays within the Akhaian society depicted in the poems. Like Homer, who mediates the Mycenaean past for an Archaic audience, Nestor provides the link between the community of Greeks at Troy and the prior narratives that embody its heritage. This analogy confirms the metaphorical associations examined earlier, which linked his speech to poetic utterance and in some respects assimilated Nestor to the figure of the Bard. What chiefly distinguishes his speech from that of Homer, of course, is the fact that the old man always speaks in the first person.<sup>50</sup> We saw that this is what makes him an

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<sup>48</sup> Pucci (1987:211) also implicitly recognizes this possibility, though with reference chiefly to the second claim made by the Sirens, on which he notes that "the nature of the Sirens' promised song contributes to the sublimity of the scene. It is infinite in scope: the Sirens tell Odysseus that he will learn not only all that happened in Troy but also all that happens in the world." Despite his acknowledgment (17-18) that the process of evolution of both poems follows the dynamics of oral composition, much of his language ("text," "writing," "reader") at times seems to imply—perhaps even despite his best intentions—the status of the *Iliad* as a relatively fixed *text* against which the text of the *Odyssey* launches its "polemic." This language is of course encouraged by his claim (26-27) that written and oral semiosis are identical. See also Dickson 1992.

<sup>49</sup> See Foley 1991:39-60.

<sup>50</sup> Formally, and to borrow Plato's distinction (*Rep.* 392C-395), Nestor's recollections amount to *mimesis* that is also *diegetic*, namely to an *oratio recta* with narrative content. Plato himself does not consider the possibility of this kind of mirroring, namely the combination of direct speech and narrative, and no convenient term seems to exist for

*autaoidos* or “self-singer,” bound through his peculiar grief to interminable autocitation, rather than a singer whose identity (except in invocation of the Muses and occasional apostrophes) always remains concealed. As we suggested above, Nestor’s role as “self-singer” is in turn a reflex of the special sorrow born of his remarkable longevity, and which echoes sadly in the words (*Il.* 11.763; cf. 23.643) with which his reminiscences sometimes close: #ὥς ἔον, εἴ ποτ’ ἔον γε, μετ’ ἀνδράσιν . . . [Such was I among men, if ever this was . . .].

Muse, Poet, Siren, and Elder thus all sing epic narrative—a song of the irretrievable past, a song of the glory of men in war—in much the same honeyed, flowing voice, and with much the same irresistible allure. Their virtual identity in terms of the substance of what they sing raises the question whether what they each sing serves a similar or even an identical function. This is not the place to address this question with reference to the Muses and thus to Homeric narrative itself.<sup>51</sup> However, on the basis not only of the metaphorical associations examined in the first section of this paper, but also of the narrative pattern of Hospitality Declined + Haste to Depart considered more recently, it would seem that a functional analogy indeed obtains in the case of Nestor and the Sirens. What differences in function lie between them are possibly just ones of degree. Much like the Sirens, Nestor often exhibits the features of a sweet (and potentially deadly) detainer. His narrative of adventures two or three generations prior to Troy at one and the same time pleases and teaches—and also threatens to trap his listeners, to deflect them from their aim and deprive them of νόστος.<sup>52</sup> In the course of an apparently innocent errand—in quest of the name of a

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the trope. In a pinch, something like “secondary” or “mimetic” *diegesis* might do. Whatever name it is given, the important point is that Nestor most characteristically does precisely what Homer himself does, namely narrates the κλέα ἀνδρῶν. For a modern discussion of Plato’s distinction between *diegesis* and *mimesis*, see Genette 1980:162-66.

<sup>51</sup> See Pucci 1987 for the most extensive work to date on this question. He remarks (231) that “for the *Odyssey*, the Muses—like the Sirens—are personifications of literary practices, of the epic tradition, rather than divine objective inspirers.”

<sup>52</sup> Frame 1978:81-115 relies heavily on Indo-European linguistics and comparative mythology to argue that the figure of Nestor in the Homeric poems is the literary avatar of a god “Who-Brings-Home” (\**nes-tôr*). Whatever the status of his linguistic evidence and his implicit view of the nature of myths—in which Max Müller (unacknowledged) looms large—a typology of the scenes from the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* in which Nestor plays a part often seems to suggest that he serves precisely the opposite function.

wounded man—Patroklos stops to listen to him; and though he does leave Nestor’s tent eventually, it is along a path that leads anywhere but home again. Telemakhos, perhaps wiser for having once succumbed to the charm of stories in the court of Menelaos, avoids meeting him altogether—and gets home as a result.

Would that the same could be said of this study. It has perhaps already tarried at the old man’s side too long, without ever reaching the end of his story. As always in the analysis of oral traditions, we are left with a sense of the interminability of the task. The relation between the extant texts and the totality of the unrecorded narratives out of which they arise and from which they derive their orientation is always a metonymic one,<sup>53</sup> the relation of part to implicit and unrecoverable whole. Issues raised but insufficiently addressed in the course of the present essay—the complete metaphorical range of “sweetness” and “fluidity,” the psychology of narrative reception, the unsettling dynamics of memory and forgetfulness, the ritual transmutation of grief into narratives—must remain for the time being mere prolepses, rough directions for analysis that is better postponed for now. After all, a sense of timeliness is best in everything.

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<sup>53</sup> See Foley 1991. My thanks once again to John Foley for patient and thoughtful advice, and for supplying me with advance copies of sections of his work.

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