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Hearts, Bellies, and the Hunger of Heroes: Intertraditional Agonistic Discourse between the Iliad and Odyssey

Israel McMullin

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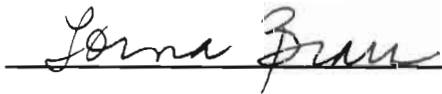
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**HEARTS, BELLIES, AND THE HUNGER OF HEROES:
INTERTRADITIONAL AGONISTIC DISCOURSE BETWEEN
THE ILIAD AND ODYSSEY**

BY

ISRAEL F. MCMULLIN

B.A., CLASSICS, UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO, 2008

THESIS

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

**Master of Arts
Comparative Literatures and Cultural Studies**

The University of New Mexico
Albuquerque, New Mexico

May 2011

DEDICATION

In memory of Thomas Sizgorich, may he live on in the hearts of all those whose lives he touched, as he does in mine.

I would also like to dedicate this thesis to my parents who taught me the two most important lessons of my life: never give up, and trust my creative instincts. I don't always heed their advice, but I always know that I should.

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I would especially like to thank all the members of my committee, whose patience and willingness to go above and beyond for me during this project enabled me to produce the best work that I could. To Professor Lorie Brau, whose knowledge of theory helped me move beyond the boundaries of my own field. To Professor Monica Cyrino, whose scholarly wisdom served as an inspiration and keen critical eye saved me from several potentially embarrassing mistakes. And to my indomitable Advisor, Professor Lorenzo F. Garcia, Jr., whose mentorship taught me all that I know about Homeric scholarship and whose friendship taught me the value and pleasure to be found in this endeavor. Thank you all: you had a hand in everything that is worthwhile in this thesis. If there are any mistakes left within, they are wholly mine.

To my classics graduate student cohort at the University of New Mexico, thank you. Without our conversations and arguments this project might not have come to be.

And finally to my family, I could never thank you enough. Sebastian and Atticus, you are constant inspirations to do the best that I can. Marta, your support is what allows me to endure any hardship; you are my Penelope, my *thumarês*.

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ABSTRACT

Within this thesis I argue that the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, as representatives of sub-genres within the larger archaic Greek epic tradition, engage in a shared agonistic discourse with one another in order to demonstrate that the hero of each epic is superior to that of its competitor. In order to trace this agonistic discourse, I examine the manner in which each epic employs the terms *thumos*, “heart,” and *gaster*, “belly,” to define itself in opposition to its competing epic sub-genre. Traditionally scholars have considered the *Odyssey* the more recent of the two epics and, thus, relying upon the *Iliad*. However, I contend that both epics are the products of competing performance traditions, such that we may find not only that the *Odyssey* is in agonistic competition with the *Iliad*, but that the *Iliad* is itself competing with the *Odyssey*.

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Introduction

Now the music divides us into tribes,
you choose your side, I'll choose my side.
- "Suburban War," by Arcade Fire

Kleos and Nostos Sub-Genres, the Relationship Between the Iliad and Odyssey

Within the tradition of archaic Greek epic poetry—represented by the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* as the only two complete epic poems that come down to us—one already finds a division into two distinct sub-genres: which I will refer to as the *kleos*, “fame,” poetry of the *Iliad* and the *nostos*, “return,” poetry of the *Odyssey*. In a moment in which the *Iliad* defines its own poetic project of praising its hero Achilles, it expresses the dimensions that define Achilles’ heroism: he chooses fame (*kleos*) over the possibility of returning home (*nostos*). In book IX of the *Iliad*, Achilles refuses Agamemnon’s offer of gifts to return to the fighting, explaining that he has a choice whether to stay and fight or to return home:

μήτηρ γάρ τέ μέ φησι θεὰ Θέτις ἀργυρόπεζα
διχθαδίας κῆρας φερέμεν θανάτοιο τέλος δέ.
εἰ μὲν κ' αὖθι μένων Τρώων πόλιν ἀμφιμάχωμαι,
ὤλετο μὲν μοι νόστος, ἀτὰρ κλέος ἄφθιτον ἔσται·
εἰ δέ κεν οἴκαδ' ἵκωμι φίλην ἐς πατρίδα γαῖαν,
ὤλετό μοι κλέος ἐσθλόν, ἐπὶ δηρὸν δέ μοι αἰὼν
ἔσσεται, οὐδέ κέ μ' ὤκα τέλος θανάτοιο κιχείη. (*Iliad* IX.410-416)¹

For my mother, the silver-footed goddess Thetis, says that
double dooms bear me to the fulfillment of my death.
If, on the one hand, I, remaining here, besiege the city of Troy,
then indeed the return for me will be lost, but my fame will be un-withering.
If, on the other hand, I go homewards to my beloved fatherland,
then noble fame for me will be lost, but there will be a long life for me,
and the fulfillment of death would not reach me quickly.

¹ This and all subsequent citations of the *Iliad* are taken from Allen’s 1931 edition. All translations from Greek are mine.

Achilles explains that *kleos*, “fame,” and *nostos*, “return home,” are mutually exclusive possibilities within the *Iliad*: if Achilles stays, he will have *kleos aphthiton* “unwithering fame” but his return home will be lost (ὤλετο μὲν μοι νόστος); if, on the other hand, he returns home, he will achieve his *nostos* and live a long life, but his fame will be lost (ὤλετό μοι κλέος ἐσθλόν). Though Achilles flirts with choosing *nostos* in this scene, his ultimate choice to return to the fighting is well known and forms the plot of the *Iliad* as a whole. From the perspective of Achilles’ choice of *kleos* over *nostos*, then, the *Iliad* represents *kleos* poetry as superior to *nostos* poetry: the hero chooses to return home instead of fighting and dying while achieving great deeds is an inferior hero. From the perspective of the *Odyssey*, however, in which the hero Odysseus is praised precisely because of his ability to secure his *nostos*, “return home,” *nostos* and *kleos* are not mutually exclusive. In the *Odyssey*, it is Odysseus’ ability to make it home safely and reestablish his various roles as father, husband, son, and king that earn him *kleos* “fame” within the tradition.

In this thesis, it is my contention that as competing sub-genres of the same archaic epic tradition, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* engage in an entrenched agonistic discourse with one another. These two sub-genres of the heroic epic tradition strive in an *agon*, “contest,” with one another through a series of literary polemics, largely represented by the manner in which each tradition contrasts the characteristics of its own hero versus those of the hero of its competing sub-genre. This agonistic discourse operates throughout both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* and can be traced within the divergent usage of specific shared terminology within the two poems. Many scholars

view the *Odyssey* as a later work than the *Iliad*, and as such, envision the *Odyssey* as relying upon the *Iliad*—i.e., that the poet of the *Odyssey* was intimately familiar with the *Iliad*.² In this thesis, however, I follow Gregory Nagy’s vision that the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are the products of competing performance traditions, such that we may find not only that the *Odyssey* is in agonistic competition with the *Iliad*, but that the *Iliad* is itself competing with the *Odyssey*.

In *The Best of The Achaeans* (2nd ed., 1999) Gregory Nagy argues that the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are connected to one another in subject matter and, thus, form a “totality with the complementary distribution of their narratives.”³ His work focuses mainly on the creation of the two epics from a larger, and older, body of traditional stories through the context of oral performance. Nagy’s argument that these two different epics form the whole of the larger Homeric epic genre laid the foundation for further scholars more concerned with the poems as we have received them and the manner in which one interacts with the other.

Pietro Pucci’s picks up on Nagy’s research in *Odysseus Polytropos* (1987), but is more concerned with the way in which the *Odyssey* interacts and defines itself, as well as its hero, against the *Iliad* than with the mode of their composition. Much of his argument—to which this thesis is greatly indebted—centers on the tension that is generated between how the drives of the heroes of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* represent a

² See Janko 1982 for a study that dates the composition of the *Odyssey* later than the *Iliad* based on specific features of the language in each poem. See Rutherford 2001 for an analysis of the *Odyssey* as a sequel or “riposte” to the *Iliad*.

³ Nagy 1999: 22. See also his second chapter in the same work, entitled “The Best of the Achaeans” (26-41), for further examination of the manner in which the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* engage one another.

tension which, according to Pucci, produces “two opposite economies of life, two exemplary extremes in conceiving our relationship with life and death.”⁴ It is precisely through these opposing economies that Pucci attempts to outline the various ways in which the *Odyssey* reinterprets, or even engages in an agonistic discourse with the major themes of the *Iliad*. Yet, by focusing on only the *thumos*, “heart,” in the *Iliad* and the *gaster*, “belly,” in the *Odyssey*, Pucci has hit upon only a portion of the intertraditional dialogue between the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad*, and has missed out on the overarching agonistic discourse that occurs as a reciprocal exchange between the two epic sub-genres.

The goal of my thesis is to continue where Nagy and Pucci have left off and, in doing so, demonstrate the reciprocal agonistic discourse that occurs between the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* in order to expand our understanding of the relationship between these two epic sub-genres. I accomplish this by examining the manner in which both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* employ the terms *thumos* and *gaster*. This permits me to demonstrate that while the two epics, as members of the Greek epic genre, participate in a shared set of terms and themes, they do so in a manner that allows each epic, as a distinct sub-genre, to define itself against the other. In this attempt to set themselves apart from their competing sub-genre, the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* participate in the traditions of the competitive performance context in which they were composed and engage one another by means of an agonistic discourse.

⁴ Pucci 1987: 173. For his full treatment of the manner in which the *Odyssey* seeks to contend with the *Iliad*, see also his section titled “Synonymy” (157-190) and his chapter “Odysseus, Reader of the *Iliad*” (214-227) in the same book.

Agonistic Discourse in the Competition Between Epic Sub-Genres

In developing a theoretical schema of agonistic discourse I draw upon modern works of theory that deal with the genre of parody. Indeed, while agonistic discourse differs from parody in a few key aspects, it functions in a similar manner and, thus, the study of parody is an important place to begin. Linda Hutcheon argues that parody is the manner in which a text, an author, or even the audience participates in the ongoing creation of their culture.⁵ Hutcheon claims that in order to accomplish this, a work of parody must mirror that which it seeks to parody while maintaining a “critical distance” through the subtle and often ironic differences between the parody and its target. It is the “critical distance” that a work of parody maintains which allows for a discourse with, as well as manipulation of one’s culture. The major shortcomings of Hutcheon’s work are her unwillingness to extend her critical model outside the scope of twentieth-century arts and the broadness of her definition of parody. Simon Dentith attempts to remedy Hutcheon’s over-generalizations as well as extend the use of parody to pre-modern authors. For Dentith, “parody includes any cultural practice which provides a relatively polemical allusive imitation of another cultural production or practice.”⁶ Yet, even for Dentith parody depends upon the relationship between an “A” and “B” text in which the “B” text uses, or misuses, the language of the “A” text in order to subvert its claim of cultural authority. This means that parody is essentially a

⁵ Hutcheon 2000: 36-37. For the extreme opposite of Hutcheon’s overly general definition of parody, see Rose 1993: 54-91, wherein she attempts to draw a very fine distinction between parody and its related discursive modes.

⁶ Dentith 2000: 9.

one sided intertextual dialogue, but, as I shall argue, the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* engage each other as equals in a reciprocal polemic discourse.

The polemic contest in which the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* engage not only prefigures the creation of parody as a genre of ancient Greek literature, but it also occurs between two sub-genres of equal authority within the overarching genre that they compete.⁷ The literary polemics used within the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* qualify as agonistic discourse and differ from parody, I argue, because of their employment between contesting, yet equal, sub-genres of a shared overarching Greek epic tradition. Thus, although they partake in a shared epic language and mythology, each sub-genre puts that shared language and mythology to mutually exclusive ends, and herein lies the *agon* between them.⁸ The *Iliad*, as the *kleos* poem, sings of Achilles and presents through his character an “economy of life”⁹ in which the hero willingly sacrifices his homecoming and very life in exchange for the *kleos aphthiton*, “un-withering fame,” granted to his memory. The *Odyssey*, as the *nostos* poem, sings of Odysseus and presents an “economy of life” in which the very tenacity with which the hero clings to his life and homecoming becomes the source of his *kleos*, which is granted to him while he is still alive. The tension generated by the contest between these two mutually exclusive sub-genres and the worldviews that they espouse creates a critical distance through which the two

⁷ For discussions of parody as it appears in ancient literature, see Householder 1944, Lelièvre 1954, and the introduction to Olson and Sens’ edition of Matro of Pitane’s parodies of Homer (Olson and Sens 2000).

⁸ As a point of interest, see Derek Collins 2004: 186, who argues that the ancient parodic poets, such as Matro of Pitane, would have had to have also been rhapsodes in order to know the epic diction well enough to have composed successful parodies of it. On Matro of Pitane, see Olson and Sens 2000.

⁹ Pucci 1987: 157-190. Pucci coins this phrase in regards to the poetic creation of a worldview.

engage in an agonistic discourse in an attempt to demonstrate one's superiority over its opposing sub-genre. Indeed, the use of literary polemics was a common aspect of archaic Greek poetry fostered by the competitive nature of archaic performance and this polemic tendency gives rise to the ancient Greek use of agonistic discourse.

The use of agonistic discourse is at the very root of the competitive performance context in which archaic Greek poetry was composed. There are many excellent examples of agonistic discourse within Greek poetry to draw from, including *The Certamin of Homer and Hesiod*, but many of the best examples relating directly to Homeric performance come from the *Homeric Hymns*. The reason for this is, as Martin West claims in the introduction to his edition of the *Homeric Hymns*, “when a rhapsode gave a performance of epic poetry in a formal setting—a complete short epic, or an episode from a longer one—it was the custom to begin with a hymnic address to a god or goddess.”¹⁰ Thus, the *Hymns* give internal evidence to their being preformed in the very context in which Homeric poetry would have been performed. Much of the language that points to a competitive performance context is as simple as the poet asking the god or goddess to grant him victory or even monetary success for his performance:

Χαῖρ' ἑλικοβλέφαρε γλυκυμείλιχε, δὸς δ' ἐν ἀγῶνι
νίκην τῷδε φέρεσθαι, ἐμήν δ' ἔντυνον ἀοιδήν.
 αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ καὶ σεῖο καὶ ἄλλης μνήσομ' ἀοιδῆς. (*Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*, 19-21)

¹⁰ West 2003: 3. Thucydides (3.104) cites a passage from the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* and calls it a *prooimion*, “prelude,” to a typical performance of epic poetry. Indeed, the opening “hymn to the Muses” of Hesiod’s *Theogony* (verses 1-115) may provide an example of an integrated hymnic prelude and its subsequent performance of epic poetry. For discussion of the hymn as *prooimion* of epic performance—a claim dating as early as Wolff’s *Prolegomenon to the Study of Homer* (1795)—see Clay 1997: 495 and Dowden 2004: 194-195.

Farewell glancing-eyed sweetly-pleasing one, grant that I carry off victory in this here contest, and make ready my song. Then I will recall both you and another song.¹¹

At the moment when the rhapsode completes his performance of the hymn and prepares to begin a second piece—perhaps a performance unit of the *Iliad* or *Odyssey* or other epic poetry—he requests victory (νίκην ... φέρεσθαι) “in this contest” (ἐν ἀγῶνι ... τῷδε), thereby indicating that the context for performing epic poetry was indeed agonistic.

Other language likewise demonstrates a more directly agonistic engagement with the poet’s competitors. One such example comes in the very first lines of the fragmentary *Hymn to Dionysus*, where the rhapsode uses a common archaic rhetorical device to offer his own criticism of the rhapsodes who have treated the topic before him.

οἱ μὲν γὰρ Δρακάνω σ', οἱ δ' Ἰκάρῳ ἠνεμοέσση
φάσ', οἱ δ' ἐν Νάξῳ, δῖον γένος εἰραφιῶτα,
οἱ δέ σ' ἐπ' Ἀλφειῷ ποταμῷ βαθυδινήεντι
κυσσάμενην Σεμέλην τεκέειν Διὶ τερπικεράνῳ,
ἄλλοι δ' ἐν Θήβησιν ἄναξ σε λέγουσι γενέσθαι
ψευδόμενοι· σὲ δ' ἔτικτε πατὴρ ἀνδρῶν τε θεῶν τε
πολλὸν ἀπ' ἀνθρώπων κρύπτων λευκώλενον Ἥρην.

(*Homeric Hymn to Dionysus*, 1-7)¹²

¹¹ See also the endings of *Homeric Hymns* 10, 11, 15, 19, 20, 21, 26, 25, 29, and 31 for similar requests for victory in competition (numbers according to West’s edition).

¹² Greek from the edition of Allen, Halliday, and Sikes 1936.

For some men say that you at Drakanos,¹³ others say that on windy Ikaros,
even others say that on Naxos, offspring sewn in a divine being,
still others say that by the deep-eddying river Alpheios,
 pregnant Semele bore you to Zeus who delights in thunder,
still others say that you, lord, were born at Thebes,
They are lying. The father of both men and gods gave birth to you
 far from mankind, hiding you from white-armed Hera.¹⁴

Within this selection from the fragmentary first *Homeric Hymn to Dionysus* we see the poet use the archaic trope of the priamel to refer to a long list of men who have sung stories of Dionysus' origins before him as *pseudomenoi*, "men who are lying." The priamel is a literary device by which the poet emphasizes his own claims by listing of a series of alternative statements—some say X, others say Y, but I say Z.¹⁵ This long list of "some men" and "others" and "still others" who have made assertions about the god sets up the implied opposition "but I say" by which the performer establishes his own statements as "true." Thus, in his attempt to undercut the reliability of his competitors, this rhapsode attempts to define his own poem as true in opposition the falsehoods that came earlier in the received tradition. The need to engage his precursors during their competition could arise from what Nagy argues is a perceived advantage of the poet who has come before.¹⁶ However, far more important for my thesis than the reason *why* the rhapsode engages his competitors in an agonistic discourse is the fact

¹³ Although Allen, Halliday, and Sikes 1936: 101, in their discussion of this verse, identify the site as "Drakanon," a cape on the island of Cos, citing Strabo 657, West 2003: 7 identifies the location as "Drakanos," also calling it a promontory on Cos. Since modern maps of Cos provide the name "Drakanos" for the promontory, I have also done so in my translation.

¹⁴ This translation is my own.

¹⁵ On the function of the priamel in Homer and other classical poetry, see Race 1982.

¹⁶ Nagy 2002: 68-69.

that he does so. This use of agonistic discourse, one example out of many possible, points to the ability and utility of employing language that defines one's own poetry against that of others. The fact that hymns with their competitive context and agonistic stance likely opened a performance of an epic tale, such as the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*,¹⁷ illustrates how polemic language could enter into the common vocabulary of the epics themselves, and over time, via the creative process of oral performance, could become an entrenched agonistic discourse. However, the use of agonistic discourse between the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* is not so obvious as the poet of the *Iliad* calling the *Odyssey* a lie or vice versa; rather it centers around the manner in which each poem employs shared terminology to different ends.

Defining the Thumos and the Gaster

In order to demonstrate the agonistic discourse at work between the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, I will focus on two specific terms and their use within each of these sub-genres of Homeric epic. The manner in which the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* employ the terms *thumos* and *gaster* illustrates the agonistic relationship that exists between their respective epic sub-genres; it allows us to see the way in which that agonistic relationship plays itself out in the poems as they actively seek to define what constitutes the essential traits of their hero against those of the competing sub-genre's hero. However, before I begin to examine these two terms and the way that they work

¹⁷ See the works cited in note 10 above for discussion.

within the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* it is essential to give an overview of their semantic range, or breadth of meaning.

The *thumos*, in the archaic Greek language of epic, has a broad semantic range incorporating both the psychological and physiological that has long vexed translators. Liddell and Scott's *Greek-English Lexicon* gives the basic definition of *thumos* as the "soul, spirit, the principal of life, feeling and thought, esp. of strong feeling and passion."¹⁸ The lexical entry then breaks down the uses of *thumos* along psychological and physiological lines giving such specific definitions as "heart," "mind," or even "desire" and "hunger." Such specific definitions as these fit some contexts but are wholly inappropriate in others. As Caroline Caswell explains in her book, *A Study of Thumos in Early Greek Epic*: "The uses of [*thumos*] are so varied... that it seems possible only to translate each occurrence as is fitting to that passage without attempting consistency."¹⁹ This broad semantic range, however, is not universal in all works in which the term *thumos* occurs, and the *Iliad*, because of its uniquely broad use of *thumos*, proves to be the most important source for Caswell's research. Indeed, in her introduction Caswell feels obliged to explain why the majority of her citations of *thumos* come from the *Iliad*. She explains "it became apparent during this stage of my research that passages from the *Iliad* are of greater interest because they include a greater variety of expressions."²⁰ However, by moving beyond a strict lexical definition, I will provide a more accurate translation of *thumos* within the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. It is

¹⁸ Liddell et al. 1996: 810.

¹⁹ Caswell 1990: 1. In this quotation Caswell uses the actual Greek form θυμός, which I have transliterated to *thumos* for the sake of consistency.

²⁰ Caswell 1990: 2.

by examining the etymological roots of *thumos* in concert with analyzing its use in key passages from Homeric epic that I will reach the meaning of *thumos*. I will demonstrate that, as far as the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are concerned, *thumos* is the very engine of heroic action. In other words, the *thumos* is the appetitive drive that propels the hero beyond the limits of mortal existence and enables him accomplish great and memorable deeds, though ultimately at the cost of his own life.

The term *gaster* has traditionally been understood to have a more narrow semantic range than the *thumos*. The *Greek-English Lexicon* offers the basic definition of the *gaster* as “paunch, belly.”²¹ After this basic meaning the lexicon divides the term into un-gendered and gendered meanings. The un-gendered meanings are “the hollow of a shield,” “the wide part of a bottle,” “the belly craving food,” and even a “paunch stuffed with mincemeat, or haggis.” The gendered definition of *gaster* is “womb” and an extended meaning of *ek gasteros* is listed as “from the womb, or from infancy.” The specificity of this lexical entry, however, accounts neither for the way in which the *Iliad* collapses the gendered and un-gendered meanings into one, as we shall see, nor the way in which, as Pucci has argued, *gaster* and *thumos* become synonymous with one another in certain passages of the *Odyssey*.²² A better manner in which to arrive at the meaning of *gaster* is along the same lines as my approach to *thumos*; namely by examining the etymological roots of the term and engaging in a close reading of key passages from the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Thus, I will show that, at least within the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, *gaster* is the term for the ever-gnawing hunger that both maintains life and

²¹ Liddell et al. 1996: 339.

²² Pucci 1987: 161-162.

produces it. In other words, the *gaster* is the marker of the mortal condition and the thing that distinguishes mortal life from the immortal.

The goal of this introduction, however, is not to provide an English equivalent for every instance of *thumos* and *gaster*; in fact, this thesis is not an attempt at a universal translation of either of these terms. Rather, the goal is to demonstrate that the shifting semantic ranges of these two terms are indicative of the agonistic discourse being employed between the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. It is my contention that the expanded semantic range of *thumos* in the *Iliad*, which Caswell noted in her study, is a creative innovation that demonstrates its singular importance within that epic sub-genre. Furthermore, I will argue that the reason the *Odyssey* shows less variety of expression in its use of *thumos* is precisely because *gaster* has taken over some of *thumos*' extended meanings as argued by Pucci, namely as a force of necessity. Each of the epic sub-genres expands and contracts the semantic ranges of their shared epic terminology, here *thumos* and *gaster*, in order to define its hero against that of its competitor other.

It is my contention that in the *Iliad* Achilles is defined by *thumos*, and, consequently, in the *kleos* sub-genre of which he is the consummate hero, *thumos* becomes the engine of heroic action and the force that compels the Iliadic hero towards greatness.²³ Within that same *kleos* sub-genre, *gaster* is presented as the polar opposite of *thumos* and is limited in the scope of its meaning to a great extent as a gendered marker of weakness and frailty. It is in the context of this gendered weakness that, in book XIX of the *Iliad*, Odysseus uses the term *gaster* in an appeal for seeing to the

²³ Caswell 1990: 47-49. According to Caswell's findings, the use of *thumos* as the source of motivation is vastly more frequent in the *Iliad* than in the *Odyssey*.

necessities of life before continuing to fight, and, in doing so, is presented as the very antithesis of the Iliadic hero. His speech marks him as a man bound by the very limitations of human capability beyond which the Iliadic *thumos* attempts to compel heroes.

In the *nostos* sub-genre, however, the *gaster* takes on a much more pivotal role in the actions of Odysseus and is depicted as the essential force that drives him to live and achieve his homecoming. With the expansion of the role of the *gaster* in the *nostos* sub-genre, the *thumos* becomes the engine of ruin, and, for this reason, it must be controlled in order for the hero to successfully achieve his homecoming. Indeed, what makes Odysseus the “best of the Achaeans” within the Odyssean sub-genre is that while he, as a human being, has a strong *gaster*, “appetite,” as a hero he is ultimately able to direct its incessant urgings into constructive channels while incorporating and containing his *thumos*. Thus the integration of the *gaster* and the *thumos* is what marks him as the essential Odyssean hero; those who are driven only by the *gaster* are characterized as common, or even base men, while those who are compelled by the *thumos* beyond the human condition are characterized as monsters.

The Mortal Economy of Expenditure and Wear

Throughout the following chapters dealing with the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* I will make use of the phrase “mortal economy of expenditure and wear” to signify the processes that mark beings as mortal. My understanding of these mortal processes is based upon the work of Jean-Pierre Vernant, who argues that men are marked as mortal because they have within their body a “hunger that is endlessly renewed,” whereas the gods are

not subject to the necessity of intake, since “whatever positive forces, such as vitality, energy, power, and luster, the human body may harbor, the gods possess these forces in a pure and unlimited state.”²⁴ Indeed, the theme of the “mortal economy of expenditure and wear” will be further explored throughout this thesis as I examine *gaster* and *thumos* in relation to secondary terms concerned with repletion and depletion, such as the verb *teiro*, “to wear down.”

The “mortal economy of expenditure and wear” is precisely what Odysseus is describing in book XIX of the *Iliad* where he argues with Achilles that, since they are mortal men, they must be mindful of the limitations imposed upon them by their *gastres* in order to refresh themselves and return to the fighting (XIX.225-233). According to Odysseus, human energy is marked by an unavoidable and continuous flux, as it is expended and shrinks; human vitality becomes worn down and therefore must be replenished with food, sleep, or sex. Odysseus’ position is an argument for restraint, and would be, as I will argue later in this thesis, lauded in the *Odyssey*, but not in the *Iliad* where this speech occurs. Instead, the *Iliad* uses this speech to set up Odysseus as a foil to demonstrate the super-human nature of Achilles, who is propelled via his *thumos* beyond the “mortal economy of expenditure and wear.”

The *Odyssey* treats this same concept, but, as I will argue, to divergent ends. In book xi of the *Odyssey*, the shade of Achilles refutes the claims of the Iliadic tradition where he says to Odysseus that he would rather be the lowliest living man on the earth than the greatest of those dead men “having wasted away” (xi.488-491). Achilles’ shade

²⁴ Vernant 1991: 34-35. For a further exploration on the gods and their relationship with eating and food, see also Sissa and Detienne 2000: 68-89.

argues that the exchange of one's life for the "un-withering *kleos*" that the *thumos* drives heroes toward in the *Iliad* is, in fact, a fool's bargain. The claim that "un-withering *kleos*" is less valuable than life, especially the life of a serf, would be anathema to the Achilles of the *Iliad*. However, Achilles' shade has no desire for the promises of the *kleos* tradition. The *Odyssey* employs his speech to show the cost of the unrestrained *thumos* and the importance of maintaining the hero's life via his accepting the limitations of the "mortal economy of expenditure and wear." In this way, the concept of the "mortal economy of expenditure and wear" is essential to my argument as it forms the boundary of mortal experience that the *Iliad* attempts to reject and the *Odyssey* attempts to maintain, and is, thus, the very battle ground over which the polemic contest between these two epic sub-genres is fought.

Chapter 1: Achilles' Heroism, the Hunger for Un-withering Fame

“I am convinced that the only people worthy of consideration
in this world are the unusual ones. For the common folks
are like the leaves of a tree, and live and die unnoticed.”
– The Scarecrow from *The Land of Oz*, by L. Frank Baum

The manner in which the *Iliad* deploys the terms *thumos* and *gaster* in opposition to one another elucidates the fundamental preoccupation of its epic sub-genre, namely the achievement of *kleos*, fame, through the accomplishment of superhuman deeds and the acceptance of death. In order to demonstrate this fundamental preoccupation, I will offer close readings of selections from the *Iliad* that contain what I consider to be the key terms of this text. First, by examining the *Iliad*'s use of *thumos* I will argue that, though it is often translated as heart, passion, anger, or many other such individual terms, it is in every instance the heroic engine of superhuman action.²⁵ The concept of the *thumos* as the heroic engine appears to be derived from the root verbs *thuo* (1), “to rage, or storm,” and *thuo* (2), “to smoke” (as apparent from its Latin cognate *fumus*, “smoke”), and, as we shall see, within the *Iliad* comes to mean at the same time the fire in the belly and the rising smoke produced by that fire.²⁶ Indeed, as the driving force for the actions of heroes the *thumos* is not only the principal means by which a hero achieves his *kleos*, but is also that which is snuffed out when a hero is killed. Thus, the

²⁵ Caswell 1990 provides a fulsome examination of the use of *thumos* and notes many tantalizing peculiarities of its use. However, her work is ultimately limited in its analysis of the term by her unwillingness to attempt a synthesis of the context specific meanings of *thumos* that she examines. As Caswell states in her introduction, “the complexity of the problem of translation could perhaps be better dealt with in another study” (pg. 2).

²⁶ For the most recent study of the etymology of *thumos* see Beekes 2010: 564, 567-568. Beekes, however, notes the difficulty in linking *thuo* (1) and *thuo* (2), but, as I conceive of *thumos* in this chapter, the two roots seem to be closely intertwined within the term via its relation to the Iliadic hero.

thumos is the very engine that propels the heroes of the *Iliad* beyond their mortal limitations and weaknesses toward the attainment of *kleos* within the Iliadic sub-genre of archaic epic poetry.

Next, through a parallel examination of the *Iliad*'s use of *gaster* I will assert that, although it is typically translated as the "belly" or even the more gendered term "womb" depending on its context, it is always indicative of the weakness and mortal limitations that the Iliadic hero is driven to overcome. The etymology of *gaster* is more difficult to ascertain, though it could be related to a potential verbal root *grao*, which would mean something like "to devour, or eclipse."²⁷ Even if the root meaning of the term is somewhat difficult to tease out, its implications in the *Iliad* are more obvious when its uses are examined. The majority of the uses of *gaster* refer to the site of mortal injuries that often result in an anonymous or even ignoble death. Beyond its use as a locus of injury, however, there are several instances that clearly demonstrate the *gaster* as a limitation upon the activities of humans and, thus, serves as a foil for the *thumos* to demonstrate its ability to drive heroes beyond the boundary of those mortal limits. The juxtaposition of these two mutually exclusive terms in the *Iliad* helps further to demonstrate the relationships between the *thumos*, *gaster*, and the epic sub-genres that employ them. Indeed, no two terms are at greater odds with one another in the *Iliad* than those of *gaster* and *thumos*, with the exception of the terms that define each epic sub-genre, namely *kleos*, "fame," and "*nostos*," return.

²⁷ Beekes 2010: 262.

The Mutually Exclusive Nature of Kleos and Nostos in the Iliad

As the very paragon of the *kleos* sub-genre, Achilles must repeatedly reject the possibility of his own *nostos* in order to achieve an “un-withering fame” via the poetic tradition in which he is situated. Achilles articulates this position in book IX of the *Iliad*, when Odysseus attempts to convince Achilles to join the battle and abandon his feud with Agamemnon, by refusing his promises of gifts and war spoils:

μήτηρ γάρ τέ μέ φησι θεὰ Θέτις ἀργυρόπεζα
 διχθαδίας κῆρας φερέμεν θανάτοιο τέλος δέ.
 εἰ μὲν κ' αὖθι μένων Τρώων πόλιν ἀμφιμάχωμαι,
 ὤλετο μὲν μοι νόστος, ἀτὰρ κλέος ἄφθιτον ἔσται·
 εἰ δέ κεν οἴκαδ' ἵκωμι φίλην ἐς πατρίδα γαίαν,
 ὤλετό μοι κλέος ἐσθλόν, ἐπὶ δηρὸν δέ μοι αἰὼν
 ἔσσεται, οὐδέ κέ μ' ὤκα τέλος θανάτοιο κιχεῖη. (IX.410-416)

For my mother, the silver-footed goddess Thetis, says that double dooms bear me to the fulfillment of my death.
 If, on the one hand, I, remaining here, besiege the city of Troy,
 then indeed the return for me will be lost, but my fame will be un-withering.
 If, on the other hand, I go homewards to my beloved fatherland,
 then noble fame for me will be lost, but there will be a long life for me,
 and the fulfillment of death would not reach me quickly.

Achilles claims that his mother, whom he explicitly states is a goddess so that no one can doubt her proclamations, says that he has “double dooms,” often translated as a “two-fold fate.” Doom seems a more appropriate translation for *kêr* here than fate, since both of his “double dooms” bear him toward the “fulfillment of his death.” Note the present tense of the verb *phemi*, “to say.” Achilles uses the present tense here to demonstrate the ongoing nature of his mothers’ warning: she has told, still tells, and will tell Achilles of the only two possible terminal points of his life. Thus, Achilles makes explicit that death is what awaits everyone and that no mortal can escape it, a

point he makes again to his mother when he has chosen which of these “double dooms” he will follow (XVIII.88-92). Achilles then explains in full the “double dooms” that his mother says to him. The first—beginning here with the *men* of an adversative *men...de...* clause that helps to illustrate the mutual exclusivity of these “double dooms”—explains what two things will come to pass if Achilles decides to stay and fight at Troy. Here *nostos* is the subject of the verb *ollumi*, “to perish.” Thus, Achilles’ return (*nostos*) is lost and with it implicitly is his life; however, in return for losing his *nostos* the *kleos*, “the fame,” or even “renown,” of Achilles “will be un-withering.” This “un-withering fame” is, at least according to the *Iliad*, the closest to immortality that any mortal man can achieve: as Achilles has already explained above, death is certain. And yet, a sort of immortality is precisely what the *kleos* sub-genre of epic poetry claims to provide its hero. In exchange for Achilles’ short, yet exceptional life his *kleos* continues to thrive beyond him. The second—the *de* of an adversative *men...de...* clause—explains what two things will happen if Achilles achieves his *nostos* and returns home “to his beloved fatherland.” Now it is the “noble” *kleos* of Achilles that is the subject of *ollumi* in the middle voice and, thus, is lost. In the exchange of his “noble” *kleos* for his *nostos*, Achilles receives “a long life.” However, as the certainty of death still awaits Achilles at the end of this extended life, according to his own speech, he has gained very little in exchange for his “un-withering fame.” Any extra amount of mortal life is cold comfort indeed in comparison to the anonymity implicit in this outcome. And yet, while Achilles claims afterwards that going home is what he would advise all the Achaeans to do, he remains at Troy delaying his decision until it is made for him by the death of Patroclus.

When Achilles finally makes the choice between his “double dooms” he chooses to reject his *nostos* and, thus, accepts his death and with it his “un-withering fame.” It is for this very reason that Achilles, mourning the loss of Patroclus, explains the rejection of his *nostos* to his mother:

νῦν δ' ἵνα καὶ σοὶ πένθος ἐνὶ φρεσὶ μυρίον εἴη
 παίδος ἀποφθιμένοιο, τὸν οὐχ ὑποδέξεται αὐτίς
 οἴκαδε νοστήσαντ', ἐπεὶ οὐδ' ἐμὲ θυμὸς ἄνωγε
 ζῶειν οὐδ' ἄνδρεςσι μετέμμεναι, αἶ κε μὴ Ἔκτωρ
 πρῶτος ἐμῶ ὑπὸ δουρὶ τυπεῖς ἀπὸ θυμὸν ὀλέσση. (XVIII.88-92)

And now there must be countless suffering in your mind since your son has perished utterly, the one whom you will not welcome back having returned home, since my thumos drives me neither to continue living nor to continue being among men, unless Hector is utterly destroyed as to his thumos having been beaten down first by my spear.

In his statement Achilles tells his mother that there will be “countless suffering” because he is not returning home—here with *nosteo*, “to go/return home,” and followed by parallel causal clauses with the indicative denoting fact—because his “*thumos* drives” him “neither (οὐδ') to continue living nor (οὐδ') to continue being among men.” Here Achilles explicitly equates one’s *nostos* with both the continuation of one’s life and engagement in community. His *thumos*, however, does not drive him homeward toward life and community. Instead, Achilles articulates the *kleos* sub-genre’s view that the *thumos* is the very engine that drives the Iliadic hero, namely himself, toward great risks in combat and, ultimately, death. The cost of his great deeds are set forth when Achilles’ mother tells him that Hector’s death will cause his own, but he still decides to kill Hector and forgo his *nostos* (XVIII.95-96). Indeed, he makes this choice knowing full well that a short life is the price of his “un-withering fame,” as Achilles himself reports

to Odysseus and the other members of the embassy in the previous selection. Achilles must follow the urgings of his *thumos* in order to achieve his *kleos*, “since *thumos* is the powerhouse that pushes heroes to their glorious death, and so to the immortalization of their lives in the *Iliad*.”²⁸

Achilles’ strict rejection of the possibility of his own *nostos* continues even to the end of the *Iliad*. In book XXIV, after Achilles has avenged Patroclus by killing Hector, Priam comes to Achilles to beg for the return of Hector’s corpse. Achilles, so surprised to see the old man show up at his door, allows him to enter his shelter and offers Priam a drink saying: “Grieving as we are let us nonetheless allow our pains to lie in our *thumos*” (XXIV.522-523). Priam, however, cannot accept the offers of Achilles until he has taken the corpse of his son into his custody and after offering Achilles a fitting ransom, he says:

σὺ δὲ τῶνδ’ ἀπόναιο, καὶ ἔλθοις
σὴν ἐς πατρίδα γαῖαν, ἐπεὶ με πρῶτον ἔασας
αὐτόν τε ζῶειν καὶ ὄρᾶν φάος ἡελίοιο. (XXIV.556-558)

But you ought enjoy these things, and go
to your home land, since you first permitted me
myself both to live and see the light of the sun.

While Priam does not use the term *nostos* explicitly, he does invoke a return home for Achilles as a blessing. Priam ends his call for Achilles homeward journey with the parallel construction “both (τε) to live and (καὶ) see the light of the sun;” this statement is the reversal of Achilles’ own parallel rejection (οὐδ’... οὐδ’...) of his *nostos*. Achilles interprets the statement of Priam as an insult since the implication of a *nostos* is “a

²⁸ Pucci 1987: 175.

detail offensive to Achilles' sense of the epic tradition he is destined to enter."²⁹ In his response Achilles warns Priam not to provoke his "*thumos*" with such talk lest he kill him and "go against the edicts of Zeus" (XXIV.568-570). A similar sentiment to this one is echoed in the *Odyssey*—as we shall see later—by the monstrous Cyclops, Polyphemus. Such an intense response frightens Priam, and he does as Achilles asks and no longer refuses to participate in the guest/host formalities. The potential violence of this otherwise intimate and touching scene permits Achilles to demonstrate openly his continual rejection of *nostos* and acceptance of the *thumos* as that which has propelled him toward his great *kleos*. Indeed, the meeting of Achilles and Priam in book XXIV marks the end to Achilles' trajectory of *kleos* and allows him to re-enter human society as he ends his mourning by eating, making love, and sleeping.³⁰ Yet, the potential that Achilles' *thumos* be roused and drive him again to inhuman deeds is always there.

The Thumos as the Engine of Heroic Action and the Achievement of Kleos

Achilles, while he is without a doubt the greatest of the heroes in the *Iliad*, is hardly the only one for whom the *thumos* is the engine that drives him to superhuman deeds. In Book Seven of the *Iliad*, Hector comes forth from the Trojan ranks at the urging of his *thumos* and delivers a heartfelt challenge to whichever one of the "best of the Achaeans" whose "*thumos* compels him to fight" with him (VII.74). His challenge shames the assembled Achaean heroes who know that Hector would defeat any one of

²⁹ Martin 1989: 145.

³⁰ Muellner 2005: 171-172.

them in a face-to-face duel. It begins to look like the challenge will go unmet until Nestor upbraids their unwillingness to face battle and the possibility of their death. He dramatically calls upon the gods to restore him to his youth so that he could fight Hector, just like when he fought the great hero, Eruthalion, whom no one else was willing to fight. In narrating his glorious past Nestor educates the other men as to what made him a great hero by contrasting his actions to those of his companions when called out to duel:

οἱ δὲ μάλ' ἔτρόμεον καὶ ἐδείδισαν, οὐδέ τις ἔτλη·
 ἀλλ' ἐμὲ θυμὸς ἀνήκε πολυτλήμων πολεμίζειν
 θάρσει ᾧ· γενεῇ δὲ νεώτατος ἔσκειν ἀπάντων·
 καὶ μαχόμεν οἱ ἐγώ, δῶκεν δέ μοι εὖχος Ἀθήνη.
 τὸν δὴ μήκιστον καὶ κάρτιστον κτάνον ἄνδρα. (VII.151-155)

But they were shaking terribly and had been frightened, nor did anyone dare; but my much daring *thumos* compelled me to fight against him with its boldness. And I was the youngest one of them all in age. And I fought against him, and Athena granted the glory to me. Indeed, the man I killed was the tallest and strongest.

Here Nestor tells us that the ideal hero is compelled by the boldness of his “much daring *thumos*” to do battle when no one else will. Indeed, the *thumos* is the very seat of daring and the “boldness” that it imparts upon the Iliadic hero drives him to attempt deeds that he ought not be able to accomplish as a mere mortal. Not only does Nestor dare to fight when no one else will, but he fights against a mighty foe, one taller and stronger than any others, and in doing so is granted *euchos*, here translated as “glory.” The basic meaning of the term *euchos*, however, is “a thing prayed for,” or “a boast” and

it comes from the verbal form *euchomai*.³¹ The reason that it is of interest here is that heroes use the verbal form, *euchomai*, when they claim themselves to be *aristos*, or best.³² Thus, the hero driven by *thumos* to accomplish great deeds earns an *euchos*, or the right to boast of their own greatness.

The *Iliad*'s use of the *thumos* as the force that drives the hero to great deeds is best demonstrated when it is used in scenes where a hero is performing his greatest deeds. In these scenes the hero is often compared via simile to a raging lion;³³ such scenes are considered part of the *aristeia* of a hero as they mark the excellence of the one that they describe. In one of the most notable of all these *aristeia* scenes, the hero Sarpedon, a Lycian king and the son of Zeus, leads his soldiers against the encampment of the Greeks. The poet describes him:

βῆ ῥ' ἴμεν ὡς τε λέων ὀρεσίτροφος, ὅς τ' ἐπιδευῆς
 δηρὸν ἔη κρειῶν, κέλεται δέ ἐ θυμὸς ἀγῆνωρ
 μῆλων πειρήσοντα καὶ ἐς πυκινὸν δόμον ἐλθεῖν·
 εἶ περ γάρ χ' εὖρησι παρ' αὐτόφι βώτορας ἄνδρας
 σὺν κυσὶ καὶ δούρεσσι φυλάσσοντας περὶ μῆλα,
 οὐ ῥά τ' ἀπείρητος μέμονε σταθμοῖο δῖεσθαι. (XII.299-304)

So he went just as a mountain reared lion, which was without flesh for a long time, and the excessively manly thumos urges him to go into the well constructed home of the herds and make an attempt upon them.

Even if he discovers herdsmen in that very place standing guard around the flocks with dogs and spears, even then he does not intend to be driven from the pen without trying.

³¹ Liddell et al. 1996: 739. For an in-depth treatment of *euchomai* in Homer, see also Muellner 1976.

³² See *Iliad* I.91, II.82, and XXIII.669.

³³ For some additional examples in the *Iliad* of a lion simile marking the beginning of a hero's *aristeia*, see: III.23, V.136, XI.113, XI.548, XII.41, XV.271, XVI.487, XX.164, and XXIV.41. For the correlation of the Homeric lion simile to the lion attack in archaic Greek art as a symbol of heroic victory, see Markoe 1989.

Here, marked as being great by his likeness to a lion, Sarpedon acts out through his simile the essential nature of the *Iliadic* hero. Indeed, this simile, as well as others that externalize vivid emotional experience, provides an opportunity for the poet to explicate “the interior, spiritual or psychological experience ‘under’ or ‘within’ the exterior action of the hero.”³⁴ He goes forth as a lion hungry because it has gone “without flesh for a long time,” driven by his heroic *thumos* to attack the walled camp of the Achaeans, here likened to sheep, dogs, and herdsmen with spears. The lion-likened Sarpedon dares at the insistence of his *thumos* “to make an attempt” and not to give up “without trying.” The hero, while at his most heroic, is at his least human; he has become like a rampaging wild animal. While the hero is at his most ferocious, the *thumos* is described as *agênor*. This adjective has been argued to be a compound of the root of the verb *agaomai*, “to wonder” or “to feel awe,” and the noun *aner*, “man,” and means “very manly,” or even “excessively manly.”³⁵ Thus, the *thumos* as it drives Sarpedon to such ferocity is described as being both superhuman and inhuman. Sarpedon attacks the Achaeans knowing that he faces certain danger, but his “excessively manly *thumos*” drives him toward that danger in hopes of the grisly feast that he has gone so long without; the *Iliadic* hero is, indeed, a hungry hero. However, unlike the lion to which the hero is compared, he is not driven in search of actual food

³⁴ Bergren 2008: 59. For additional readings on the variety of use for Homeric similes, see Edwards 1987: 102-110; Moulton 1977; and Scott 2009.

³⁵ For discussion, see Beekes 2010: 11, although Beekes himself disagrees with this interpretation, arguing that the first component is the verbal root *age-* from *ago* “to lead, drive.” Should this etymology prove to be correct, it in fact would strengthen my argument, not vitiate it.

by the bodily needs of his *gaster*, but rather in search of the rewards of *kleos* by the needs of his “excessively manly *thumos*.” Sarpedon is not unique in his hunger for *kleos* as opposed to actual food. Indeed, Achilles is described by his mother as “being mindful not at all of food” (XXIV.129) and, thus, he is characterized as unmoved by the limitations of base human necessity that the *gaster* forces upon normal men.

Achilles’ indifference to the *gaster* is an important theme that the *Iliad* develops elsewhere in the simile of the Myrmidons where they are compared to wolves. This simile comes in book XVI when Achilles has arrayed his men around him and is preparing to give them a speech before they go to fight among the Achaeans at the side of Patroclus.

καί τ' ἀγεληδὸν ἴασιν ἀπὸ κρήνης μελανύδρου
 λάψοντες γλώσσησιν ἀραιῆσιν μέλαν ὕδωρ
 ἄκρον ἐρευγόμενοι φόνον αἵματος· ἐν δέ τε θυμός
 στήθεσιν ἄτρομός ἐστι, περιστένεται δέ τε γαστήρ. (XVI.160-163)

And also they go in a pack to lap up dark water
 from a dark watered spring with slender tongues
 belching forth the gore of slaughter upon the edge; and the *thumos* in
 their breasts is without a tremor, but their *gaster* groans in its fullness.

This simile is, perhaps, one of the most gruesome in the *Iliad*. The comparison of the Myrmidons to wolves is fitting considering that they are later described as fighting in swarms and groups (XVI.259-265), or packs (XVI.276-277), but what is unique is the direct comparison of the *thumos* to the *gaster* in their description. They are wolves that are “belching forth the gore of slaughter.” Indeed, so much flesh have they eaten that while “the *thumos* in their breast is without a tremor,” their “*gaster* groans in its fullness.” Much like Sarpedon is within his lion simile, the Myrmidons, here likened to

wolves, are dependant upon their *thumos* for the drive to fight and their hunger for slaughter. They explicitly reject the “groans” of their *gaster* that urge them to cease their gory feast; although they are depicted with a full *gaster* they are able to ignore the calls of their *gaster* because of their sure *thumos*. This simile illustrates the essential difference between the *thumos* and the *gaster* within the *Iliad*. Namely, the *gaster* is representative of the base weakness and limitation of humanity, while the *thumos* is the heroic engine that drives the Iliadic hero ever onward toward superhuman feats and the *kleos* that such deeds bring. Thus, the Myrmidons by their close association with Achilles and their own un-tremulous *thumos* are spared from the base limitations of that which the *Iliad* goes to great lengths to demonstrate is the symbol of human weakness, the *gaster*.

The Iliad's Rejection of the Gaster as the Rejection of Mortal Limitation

The *Iliad* uses the word *gaster* a total of thirteen times and of those all but three are in reference to the location of a fatal wound.³⁶ The belly wound seems to be a stock phrase for injury in the *Iliad* and is used fairly frequently as such. While the *gaster* is one among many of stock phrases that the poet of the *Iliad* may draw upon to describe injury, when it is chosen it is a comment on the relative unimportance or weakness of the person pierced. All of the heroes killed in such a manner are second-rate heroes, or even henchmen; these are the men who are remembered not as victors, but rather as

³⁶ For the *gaster* as the site of a fatal injury within the *Iliad* see: IV.531, V.539, V.616, XIII.372, XIII.398, XIII.506, XVI.465, XVII.313, XVII.519, and XXI.180. For the *gaster* in other contexts see: vi.58, xvi.163, and xix.225.

the victims of greater men. This is best illustrated by the first appearance of *gaster* in the *Iliad*:

Τὸν δὲ Θόας Αἰτωλὸς ἀπεσούμενον βάλε δουρὶ
 στέρνον ὑπὲρ μαζοῖο, πάγη δ' ἐν πνεύμονι χαλκός·
 ἀγχίμολον δέ οἱ ἦλθε Θόας, ἐκ δ' ὄβριμον ἔγχος
 ἐσπάσατο στέρνοιο, ἐρύσσατο δὲ ξίφος ὄξύ,
 τῷ ὃ γε γαστέρα τύψε μέσην, ἐκ δ' αἶνυτο θυμόν. (IV.527-531)

And Aitolian Thoas struck him as he was running away with a spear in his chest under the nipple, and the bronze stuck fast in his lung: and Thoas came near to him, and pulled from his chest the mighty spear, and drew his sharp sword, with it he smote the middle of his *gaster*, and took the *thumos* from him.

Here, the relatively minor hero killed, here named Peiros, is struck by the spear of Thoas, another minor hero. In the very first line, the middle participial form of the verb *aposeuo*, which in this form means “to run away,” characterizes Peiros as a coward. This characterization is completed when Peiros is dispatched while lying prone with a sword thrust into the middle of his *gaster*, which injury allows the attacker to take “the *thumos* from him” (IV.531). Here the injury to his *gaster* results in the loss of his *thumos*. Not only does this injury take the “life” of Peiros—a common translation of *thumos* as the direct object of the verb *ainumai*, “to take”—it also takes the very thing that makes the Iliadic man a hero, namely his *thumos*. The loss of one’s *thumos* is a devastating injury that robs one both of his life and his potential for *kleos*; here the implied loss of potential *kleos* for Peiros is made more tangible by the fact that he is the last person mentioned by name in a general melee that concludes book IV of the *Iliad* with a nod to the nameless dead surrounding his body. Thus, although the *Iliad* names him in this passage, Peiros joins the unnamed around him in his death, and his earlier heroic deeds

are undercut by his wound to the *gaster*, a wound received while fleeing battle, and the anonymity it earns him. The ignoble death of Peiros, however, is not unique in the catalogue of men struck down by blows to their *gasteres*.

Perhaps the most wretched of all men who perish from a *gaster* wound comes after an episode in which Idomedes kills the Trojan hero, Asios (XIII.383-393). The subsequent scene is a mockery of the heroic battle in the lines that precede it, and its victim dies a pathetic death. Where before there was a contest between two heroes, this brief battle is between Nestor's son, Antilochos, and Asios' charioteer, who proves to be no match for the son of Nestor.

ἐκ δέ οἱ ἠνίοχος πλήγη φρένας ἄς πάρος εἶχεν,
οὐδ' ὄ γ' ἐτόλμησεν δηΐων ὑπὸ χειρας ἀλύξας
ἄψ ἵππους στρέψαι, τὸν δ' Ἀντίλοχος μενεχάρμης
δουρὶ μέσον περόνησε τυχών· οὐδ' ἤρκεσε θώρηξ
χάλκεος ὃν φορέεσκε, μέση δ' ἐν γαστέρι πῆξεν. (XIII.394-398)

And the charioteer, struck out of his wits, which he used to have, did not have the courage after fleeing from the hands of his enemies to turn back the horses, but Antilochos, steadfast in battle, struck him dead center with a spear and impaled him, nor did the bronze corselet which he was wearing ward it off, but it stuck fast in the middle of his *gaster*.

This passage is interesting for two reasons. First, the character here that is impaled in the dead center of his *gaster* is not symbolically nameless; he is literally unnamed in his death scene except for the reference to him as a *hēneochos*, “a chariot driver/henchman” (XIII.394). Thus this person's potential immortality is un-claimable; the anonymous man receives no *kleos* since there is no name to which his deeds may be

attributed and no one to even sing about.³⁷ Unlike Peiros in the previous example, who at least is made known to the audience, this wretched man will be forever known as the “henchman” of Asios and nothing more. Adding to the insult of this character’s state of utter anonymity, however, is the manner in which the actions of this henchman are depicted. When threatened with battle, instead of attempting to strike out at his enemy, as the *thumos* would drive any hero to do, he is “struck out of his wits, which he used to have” (XIII.394). Scared witless, Asios’ henchman is cut down in a pale imitation of his lord: not struck in his throat as he dares to enter battle, but rather penetrated straight through his *gaster* while paralyzed with an inability to act.

The rest of the men that receive fatal wounds in their *gasteres* also share another intriguing trait, namely that they are all members of the Trojan allied forces.³⁸ There are many possible interpretations of why this particular type scene is used only for Trojans and their allies. Indeed, such a type scene describing the *gaster* injury as indicative of the weakness of its recipients fits into the general characterization of the Trojans as effeminate.³⁹ I argue that by a further examination of scenes in which the *gaster* as a locus of injury and the feminine body in childbirth are collapsed upon one another, we will see the extreme force of the *Iliad*’s attempt to characterize those associated with the *gaster* as base and less than heroic.

³⁷ See Nagy 1999: 95-98, who considers the epic use of *kleos* as the means by which the epic tradition refers to itself.

³⁸ I am including both actual Trojan soldiers and their allies in my reference to the Trojan forces, namely because they are often both characterized in a similar manner within the *Iliad*.

³⁹ The majority of book III is concerned with the characterization of the Trojans: this begins with the crane simile, in lines 1-7, and continued by the puffed up and explicitly soft description of Paris throughout. Hector and a few other Trojan heroes are notable exceptions, although, as such, they seem to prove the rule rather than refute it.

The *gaster* itself, as noted in the introduction, can mean both “belly” and the more markedly gendered term “womb,” as both are related to the most basic meaning of the word, a cavity in the body. The manner in which the *Iliad* collapses these two meanings of *gaster* is most obvious in one of the three uses of *gaster* where it does not explicitly mean a fatal injury, though it certainly refers to an implicit act of violence. In book VI, when Meneleus captures Adrestus, a Trojan ally, and considers sparing him, Agamemnon rebukes Meneleus:

ὦ πέπον ὦ Μενέλαε, τί ἦ δὲ σὺ κήδεαι οὕτως
 ἀνδρῶν; ἦ σοὶ ἄριστα πεποίηται κατὰ οἶκον
 πρὸς Τρώων; τῶν μή τις ὑπεκφύγοι αἰπὺν ὄλεθρον
 χεῖράς θ' ἡμετέρας, μηδ' ὄν τινα γαστέρι μήτηρ
 κοῦρον ἔόντα φέροι, μηδ' ὄς φύγοι, ἀλλ' ἅμα πάντες
 Ἴλίου ἐξαπολοίατ' ἀκήδεστοι καὶ ἄφαντοι. (VI.55-60)

“O gentle Meneleus, why indeed are you concerned for these men?
 Or were most excellent things done to you by the Trojans
 throughout your house? Would that not anyone of them escape sheer doom
 and our hands, not even any one whom, being young, a mother carries
 in her *gaster*, would that not even he escape, but rather that all
 of Ilium together perish utterly unburied and blotted-out.”

Within the admonishment of Agamemnon we see the *gaster* used as both the “belly” and the “womb.” Agamemnon’s wish that all the Trojans be destroyed and by “our hands” (VI.58) is carried so far as to include all the unborn Trojan children still in their mother’s *gaster*. It is clear that Agamemnon refers to the *gaster* of the mother as the “womb” that carries her unborn child. The force of the prepositional prefix *ek-*, “out,” on the verb *apollumi*, “to destroy,” is especially forceful in this passage and calls to mind the violent extirpation of the fetus from the mother’s womb. What is implicit in this statement, however, is that the *gaster* will become the location of a wound yet to be

inflicted not only upon the unborn child, but also upon the mother carrying it. In other words, the *gaster* becomes a site of penetration for both mother and child: the sexually penetrated *gaster* “womb” produces the child, and the violently penetrated *gaster* “belly” destroys both mother and unborn child. Here the two-fold meaning of the *gaster* is collapsed in on itself to signify both womb and belly at once, in so much as both signify the weakness and limitations of human life. The *gaster*, whether it belongs to the child or his mother, becomes a weakness that will destroy the child destined to become another Trojan soldier; this soldier, since he is unborn and thus un-named, will be the most anonymous of all the dead. This utter anonymity is made explicit when Agamemnon ends his wish, saying that all the people of Troy will be *akêdestos*, “unburied,” and *aphantos*, “blotted-out/made invisible” (VI.60).⁴⁰ The imagery of the injured *gaster* as the pierced womb, as the locus of an eventual injury and source of human frailty, that produces death in addition to life carries over its association of feminized weakness to the many scenes where a Trojan is wounded in his *gaster*.

The final instance of *gaster* in the *Iliad* further highlights the feminizing association of the *gaster* introduced in the example above through the death of a Trojan ally at the hands of Achilles. After Achilles has rejoined the war effort in order to satiate the desire of his *thumos* to avenge the death of Patroclus, and while he is slaughtering Trojans on the banks of the Skamander, Achilles engages Asteropaius. Achilles hurls his spear at him, but misses. Asteropaius misses Achilles with one of his spear throws, but, being ambidextrous, nicks Achilles with his other spear cast. While

⁴⁰ For the relationship of burial and fame within epic see Nagy 1999: 181-184, Lynn-George 1996: 10-11, and Currie 2005: 49-52. For the relationship of visibility and fame see Detienne 1996: 44-48.

Achilles closes the distance between them, Asteropaius is described straining to free Achilles' spear from the riverbank.

τρὶς μὲν μιν πελέμιξεν ἐρύσασθαι μενεαίνων,
 τρὶς δὲ μεθῆκε βίης· τὸ δὲ τέτρατον ἤθελε θυμῶ
 ἄξει ἐπιγνάμψας δόρυ μείλινον Αἰακίδαο,
 ἀλλὰ πρὶν Ἀχιλεὺς σχεδὸν ἄορι θυμὸν ἀπηύρα.
 γαστέρα γάρ μιν τύψε παρ' ὀμφαλόν, ἐκ δ' ἄρα πᾶσαι
 χύντο χαμαὶ χολάδες· τὸν δὲ σκότος ὅσσε κάλυψεν
 ἀσθμαίνοντ'. (XXI.176-182)

For his part three times he strained desiring to draw it,
 but three times he relaxed his strength: but the fourth time bending over the
 ash spear of Aiakides he wanted in his *thumos* to shatter it,
 but before this Achilles took his *life* with his sword up close.
 For he smote Asteropaius' *gaster* beside the belly button, and then all his
 intestines
 poured forth upon the ground, and darkness enshrouded his eyes
 as he gasped for breath.

Asteropaius strains to release the spear of Achilles in a vain attempt to save his own life, but before he can do so Achilles pierces his *gaster*. Here, the *gaster*, “belly,” of Asteropaius calls to mind the *gaster*, “womb,” of the Trojan woman previously examined as he produces his own death when “all his intestines” pour from his *gaster* “upon the ground” (XXI.181). Thus, this scene and, to a lesser extent, all the injury scenes involving the *gaster* characterize it as a gendered symbol of human frailty, where the normally differentiated semantic ranges of the *gaster*, namely the “womb” and “belly,” are collapsed upon one another. Indeed, the *Iliad*'s paralleling of the death of a soldier with the death of a woman giving birth might seem a strange comparison, but both situations were accepted as a means of glorious death for their respective genders:

for men death on the battle field and for women death during labor.⁴¹ In fact, the *Iliad* employs a direct child-bearing simile in book XI where Agamemnon is injured in the hand and retreats from battle suffering pains that are likened to the “sharp birth pangs that hold a woman giving birth” (XI.270-271), not a particularly heroic comparison to say the least. The feminizing effect of this parallel representation is more subtle as it depends upon its conflation of the *gaster*’s meanings; to make the death of a soldier a reversal of childbirth in which his life ends instead of producing another is to suggest a less than heroic death for anyone pierced in his *gaster*.⁴² Achilles, however, in this scene has pushed beyond the limits of normal men to heroic extremes, as he not only overcomes his feminized and pierced opponent, but he proceeds to leave his dead enemy in the river in order to continue feeding his *thumos*’ hunger for vengeance. All the while, Achilles denies his own *gaster* the feast that he provides for the various animals that feed upon the dead men he leaves in his wake.

The Kleos Tradition’s Promise in Contrast to the Limitations of the Nostos Tradition

The *Iliad* goes to great lengths to demonstrate that Achilles, as the consummate hero of the *kleos* sub-genre, is a man for whom food—and thus his *gaster*—is of little concern. This is not to say, however, that the *gaster* is not represented within the *Iliad*, but rather that it is used in specific ways that maintain its distance from the

⁴¹ Keuls 1993: 138. See also Vernant 1980: 23-25, who argues: “marriage is for the girl what war is for the boy” and later, pp. 47-55, argues that the legitimacy of a marriage was dependent upon the production of children.

⁴² See Holmes 2007: 73-75, who also links the pain of childbirth to the pain of injury in battle as equivalent liminal states associated with humans entering into or exiting the world.

characterization of *thumos* as the engine of heroic deeds and highlight the *gaster* as a gendered symbol of frailty and weakness. In fact, there is only one occurrence of *gaster* within the *Iliad* where it is even considered something that must be addressed by the Achaean heroes. This comes in a speech given by Odysseus to Achilles in a pivotal moment of the *Iliad* when Achilles rejoins the war effort to avenge Patroclus. After Achilles has begged Agamemnon to take to the field although the men are starving and tired, Odysseus answers with his own speech:

γαστέρι δ' οὐ πως ἔστι νέκυν πενθήσαι Ἀχαιοῦς·
 λίην γάρ πολλοὶ καὶ ἐπήτριμοι ἤματα πάντα
 πίπτουσιν· πότε κέν τις ἀναπνεύσειε πόνοιο;
 ἀλλὰ χρὴ τὸν μὲν καταθάπτειν ὅς κε θάνησι
νηλέα θυμὸν ἔχοντας ἐπ' ἤματι δακρύσαντας·
 ὅσοι δ' ἂν πολέμοιο περὶ στυγεροῖο λίπωνται
μεμνήσθαι πόσιος καὶ ἐδητύος, ὅφρ' ἔτι μᾶλλον
 ἀνδράσι δυσμενέεσσι μαχώμεθα νωλεμές αἰεὶ
 ἐσσάμενοι χροῖ χαλκὸν ἀτειρέα. (XIX.225-233)

But it is impossible for the Achaeans to mourn the dead with the *gaster*. For too many men one after another fall throughout each day; and when could some one find reprieve from this labor? Instead it is necessary that, on the one hand, we having a *pitiless thumos* bury that man, whoever has died, weeping for only one day. On the other hand, however many men are left over from hateful battle, it is necessary that they be mindful of drink and food; so that still more we might fight with the hostile men always without pause having put un-wearying bronze upon our skin.

The speech of Odysseus in this selection is more consistent with the treatment of the *gaster* within the *Odyssey*: indeed, this speech opens as an invasion of the *kleos* sub-genre by the Odyssean Odysseus.⁴³ Notice that the very first word, after Odysseus acknowledges the superiority of Achilles in the lines that come before these, is *gaster*. In

⁴³ See Pucci 1987: 169.

his speech, Odysseus argues that the Achaeans, as mortal men, must heed the limitations imposed upon them by their *gaster* for two reasons, here set up in a consecutive *men... de...* clause. Namely, they must first look to their base bodily needs by heeding their mortal limitations instead of mourning continually over their lost comrades. Odysseus even goes so far as to set the limitation on the amount of time available for mourning a comrade at “only one day” (XIX.229). This truncated mourning time is prefaced with a generalizing relative clause that implies it doesn’t matter who has died, everyone receives the same amount of mourning time. The idea that no matter who you are you will be mourned for only one day, or that in a poem celebrating *kleos* the heroic dead could be described in such general terms, is a radical departure from the end game of the *Iliad*, the achievement of an “un-withering fame.” But Odysseus is not done yet; he continues by telling Achilles that in order to do all that he argues one must have a “pitiless *thumos*” (XIX.228). It might be possible to read Odysseus’ reference to the *thumos* as a return to a more typical *kleos* genre discourse. However, within the context of Odysseus’ speech the *thumos* is pitiless, not for one’s enemies, but more shockingly for one’s dead companions.

Secondly, Odysseus argues that the survivors after finishing their one day of mourning must remember to eat and drink in order to replenish their ability to continue fighting and wrap themselves in “un-wearying bronze” (XIX.233). He points out that, while the *gaster* is the limiting factor for mortal men, it is only through the replenishment of the *gaster* by means of “mindfulness to food and drink” (XIX.231) that men are able to fight. In fact, not only are men able to continue fighting, but the replenishment of the *gaster* permits them to fight “always without pause” (XIX.232).

Thus, for the living mortal man, Odysseus argues, the *gaster* is that which always sustains him during battle. Moreover, while the *gaster* itself wears down and must be refilled with food and drink, it also permits those living men engaged in its economy of expenditure and wear to don armor that is “un-wearying” and engage “always without pause” in battle (XIX.323-233). Odysseus’ words here are at odds with Achilles and the very essence of the Iliadic hero, namely “their greater capacity for self propelled vigor, which is the essence of excellence in both physical and mental life.”⁴⁴ However, Odysseus’ pro-*gaster* argument is not employed here by the poet of *Iliad* in order to belittle Odysseus and the Odyssean sub-genre of epic poetry that he represents; he is no mean straw man to be knocked down by Achilles.

Odysseus and his argument serve to set the normal human boundaries that Achilles is driven beyond by his *thumos* and to demonstrate the super-humanity, or in-humanity, of Achilles. The words of Odysseus are the common-sense wisdom of the soldier that intends to receive his *nostos*, a sort of ‘live to fight another day’ statement. As such, they have little to do with the experiences of Achilles; one who we already know as “being mindful not at all of food” and having accepted the loss of his *nostos* (XXIV.129). After Odysseus makes his speech and all the other Greek soldiers agree, Achilles leaves and goes to his tent still mourning his friend’s death and refusing to eat. The commanders of Achilles’ men even come to him and beg him to dine, but he refuses, saying “bid me to take my dear hearts fill neither of food nor drink, since a terrible pain is upon me” (XIX.306-307). This is the essential contrast between the human hunger of Odysseus’ *gaster* and the superhuman hunger of Achilles’ *thumos*,

⁴⁴ Clarke 2006: 80.

which feeds not on meat, but rather upon mourning, and the continual remembrance of his friend. In order to sustain Achilles, the goddess Athena places *ambrosia*, a substance literally “not mortal,”⁴⁵ “in his chest” ensuring his ability to continue fighting and, at least for a little while, setting Achilles beyond the mortal economy of expenditure and wear as expounded in the speech of Odysseus (XIX.352-354). Thus, the speech of Odysseus is used by the *Iliad* to demonstrate the ability of the *thumos* as the heroic engine to drive one beyond their normal mortal limitations in the achievement of *kleos*.

⁴⁵ On the etymology of *ambrosia*, see Beekes 2010: 242-246.

Chapter 2: Odysseus' Heroism, the Hunger for Home

Orpheus, my heart is yours, always was and will be,
 It's my gut I can't ignore. Orpheus, I'm hungry.
 Oh, my heart, it aches to stay, but the flesh will have its way.
 - Eurydice, "Gone, I'm Gone," from Anias Mitchell's *Hadestown*

The method by which the *Odyssey* integrates the terms *gaster* and *thumos* through their use in reference to Odysseus explicates the essential preoccupation of the epic sub-genre of *nostos*, "return home," via the mediated restraint of the heroic drive and the acceptance of the mortal economy of expenditure and wear. By way of demonstrating this essential preoccupation, I will engage in a careful reading of selections from the *Odyssey* that demonstrate what I consider to be the essential terms for this text. First, by examining the *Odyssey's* use of the term *gaster* I will argue that, while it can be translated as either the "belly" or "womb," it comes to stand for the basic appetites and drives that sustain human life: food, sleep, and sex.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, through the examination of the uses of *gaster in situ*, its implications within the *Odyssey* will become more evident. Within the *Odyssey*, *gaster* serves as the drive for the base necessities that sustain life, as well as the driving force for life itself. The expansion of the term *gaster* from simply the belly, or seat of physical hunger, to the seat of hunger for life itself is an innovation particular to the Odyssean sub-genre of archaic epic poetry. Thus, the *gaster* becomes the engine of survival that drives the heroes of the *Odyssey* ever onward through their travels and ultimately to the attainment of their

⁴⁶ Beekes 2010: 262. The appetitive nature of the *gaster* seems to be derived from a potential verbal root *grao*, "to devour," although this etymology poses some difficulty. Beekes' main issue with this etymology is the particularly astute observation that the belly does not actually do any devouring. However, for a thorough discussion on the belly's importance within the field of "ingestive rhetoric" throughout ancient Greek writing—along with words describing biting, chewing, and eating—see Worman 2008.

nostos, “for the belly is the powerhouse of endless adventure.”⁴⁷ The *gaster* is not, however, without its dangers. Indeed, we shall see that the *Odyssey* goes to great lengths to demonstrate the danger posed by an unmitigated *gaster* through the various depictions of beggars, the suitors, and Odysseus’ own crewmen, as men whose excessive hunger metaphorically devours the life of others instead of sustaining their own. Finally, through a parallel examination of the *Odyssey*’s use of *thumos* I will argue that, while the *thumos* remains the heroic engine of superhuman action, it is no longer the essential driving force for the hero. Indeed, the ubiquitous semantic range of *thumos* that is evident within the *Iliad* is greatly truncated within the *Odyssey*.⁴⁸ I contend that the truncation of the *thumos* emerges as a direct result of the expansion of the *gaster*’s role as an overlapping and often superseding engine for the action of the hero.

As we shall see, the *thumos* continues to play an important role as a driving force in the *Odyssey*, but only in specific moments that demand extreme action. In the rest of the scenes in which the *thumos* is employed, it drives the hero to actions that work against the achievement of his *nostos* and therefore must be temporarily restrained for his *nostos* to be achieved. Indeed, the dangers of an unchecked *thumos* are presented by the *Odyssey* in the character of Polyphemus whose excessive hunger drives him literally to devour the lives of other men in what I will argue is a reminder of the gory feast

⁴⁷ Pucci 1987: 175. My reading of the relationship between the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* owes much to the work of Pucci and his examination of the term *gaster* in Homeric poetry.

⁴⁸ Caswell 1990: 2 notes in reference to the *thumos*, “passages from the *Iliad* are of greater interest because they include a greater variety of expression. Passages from the *Odyssey*, Hesiod, and the *Homeric Hymns* tend to greater predictability or repetition and therefore offer less insight.”

desired by Achilles in the *Iliad*. Thus, it is only through the integration, meaning a controlled and combined use, of these two seemingly incompatible drives that Odysseus is able to achieve his *nostos* in the Odyssean epic sub-genre.

The Gaster as the Drive for Self-preservation

The *Odyssey* uses the term *gaster* a total of seventeen times, and of that number, thirteen employ *gaster* to indicate a drive toward the base necessities of life for mortal men.⁴⁹ These necessities are the concern of all common men, yet they take a special place for beggars. Indeed, not only are beggars subject to the mortal economy of expenditure and wear that heroes must contend with, they are also figured as less able to refill their expended energies and must consume what belongs to others in order to maintain their lives. It is for this very reason that while Meneleus recounts his own *nostos* to Telemachos, he describes what he experienced while being stranded:

καί νύ κεν ἥϊα πάντα κατέφθιτο καὶ μένε' ἀνδρῶν,
 εἰ μή τίς με θεῶν ὀλοφύρατο καὶ μ' ἐλέησε,
 Πρωτέος ἰφθίμου θυγάτηρ ἄλίοιο γέροντος,
 Εἰδοθέη· τῇ γάρ ῥα μάλιστά γε θυμὸν ὄρινα·
 ἢ μ' οἴω ἔρροντι συνήντετο νόσφιν ἐταίρων·
 αἰεὶ γὰρ περὶ νῆσον ἀλώμενοι ἰχθυάσσκον
 γναμπτοῖσ' ἀγκίστροισιν, ἔτειρε δὲ γαστέρα λιμός. (iv.363-369)⁵⁰

And now all the provisions and the lives of men would have wasted away,
 if none of the gods had pitied me and shown me mercy,
 a daughter of the strong old man of the sea, Proteus,
 Eidothea: for then I especially stirred her *thumos*.

⁴⁹ For *gaster* used in the *Odyssey* as the drive for the necessities of life see: iv.369, vi.133, vii.216, xii.332, xv.344, xvii.228, xvii.286, xvii.473, xvii.559, xviii.2, xviii.53, xviii.364, xviii.380. For other uses of *gaster* see: ix.433, xviii.44, xviii.118, xx.25.

⁵⁰ This and all subsequent selections of the *Odyssey* are taken from the edition of von der Mühl 1984. All translations are my own.

She who met with me alone wandering apart from my companions:
for they were always roaming about the island fishing
with curved fish-hooks, and hunger was wearing out our gastera.

Here, Menelaos begins with the apodosis of a past contra-factual construction demonstrating the potentially dire consequences of the situation in which he found himself while attempting to sail home, were it not for the intercession of a goddess. He uses the verb *kataphthio*, “to waste away,” in conjunction with *êia*, “provisions for a journey/food,” to refer to the normal expenditure of provisions as the men await a wind to take them from the island upon which they are stranded.⁵¹ However, the most interesting part of this statement is his use of a connective *kai* to link the term *menos*, “the vital principal/life,” directly with the provisions that they are consuming (iv.363). Thus, as the provisions of the men are “wasted away,” so too is their very life. Indeed, Meneleus’ explicit connection of the life and foodstuffs is restated at the end of this passage. While the *thumos* of the goddess Eidothea is “especially stirred” by the plight of Menelaos and his men, it is “the wearing out” (*teiro*, ix.369) of their *gaster* that affects them as mortal men (iv.369). The term *teiro* is especially telling here as it refers to the experience of wear or exhaustion that is indicative of the mortal condition. The contrasting use of *thumos* and *gaster* in this passage demonstrates the divide between the immortal and mortal experience and the necessity for all mortals to address the needs of the *gaster*. This is not the only time that the *gaster* will appear to describe the base necessities that sustain human life, and often it is not described in a positive light. The importance of this passage, however, is that Meneleus—another late achiever of his

⁵¹ See West 1988 commenting at *Odyssey* ii.289 for a discussion on the apparent semantic range of *êia* in Homeric epic and the uses of this term in both the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.

nostos—is the first person in the *Odyssey* to speak of the unavoidable nature of the *gaster*'s economy of expenditure and wear, a theme that Odysseus is to soon pick up and run with for the rest of the poem.

The second use of the term *gaster* within the *Odyssey* occurs in the first lion simile that describes Odysseus in either the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey* and serves to develop further the *gaster* as an essential motivating force for the Odyssean hero. As we have seen in the chapter dealing with the use of *thumos* and *gaster* in the *Iliad*, lion similes often serve to mark a hero's *aresteia*, or moment of greatness, within the narrative of archaic Greek epic, and they present an otherwise alien moment to the audience via a vivid emotional description. Namely, a simile grants the poet a means by which he can present an experience that would have been outside the normal course of events for his audience. Thus, the poet communicates both Odysseus' status as a hero and the motivations for his actions by means of the following simile. Odysseus, naked and alone, comes crashing out from the bushes to confront the sounds of young women singing that he hears about him, and as he does so, he is likened to a lion.

βῆ δ' ἴμεν ὡς τε λέων ὄρεσίτροφος, ἀλκί πεποιθώς,
 ὅς τ' εἶσ' ὑόμενος καὶ ἀήμενος, ἐν δέ οἱ ὄσσε
 δαίεται· αὐτὰρ ὁ βοῦσι μετέρχεται ἢ οἴεσσι
 ἢ ἐ μετ' ἀγροτέρας ἐλάφους· κέλεται δέ ἐ γαστήρ
 μήλων πειρήσοντα καὶ ἐς πυκινὸν δόμον ἐλθεῖν·
 ὡς Ὀδυσσεὺς κούρησιν ἐϋπλοκάμοισιν ἔμελλε
μείξεσθαι, γυμνός περ ἐών· χρειῶ γὰρ ἴκανε. (vi.130-136)

And he went to go just as a mountain-reared lion, relying upon his strength, who goes, although wet with rain and beaten by wind, and in whom both eyes blaze. Then he goes among the cattle, or sheep, or among the wild deer, and the *gaster* compels him to go even into a well made pen in order to make an attempt upon the flocks. Just so, Odysseus was about to mingle with the well plaited girls, although he was entirely naked: for necessity was coming upon him.

In this passage we see Odysseus represented as a lion buffeted by wind and rain, an apt description as he has so recently escaped a storm at sea. Indeed, the emphasis of the first few lines seems to highlight the strength of this harried lion. However, it is not his strength that drives him ever on, but rather it is his *gaster* that compels him to go among his prey and enter their pens “in order to make an attempt” (vi.134) upon them. This simile is a clear echo of the lion similes common throughout the *Iliad*; the key difference is that for lion in the *Iliad* “it is his bold *thumos* that compels him to attack the flock ... the lion of the *Odyssey* is driven solely by his *gaster*’s urging.”⁵² This simile, therefore, marks the inescapable urging of the *gaster* as the driving force for Odysseus’ survival and the very thing that facilitates the beginning of his *nostos*. Thus, the *gaster* drives the lion as it represents his hunger for the base necessities of life that sustain him. This hunger of the lion and his *gaster* as a driving force are equated explicitly in this simile to the *chreio*, “necessity,” which has “come upon” Odysseus (vi.136). The term *chreio* implies not only necessity, but has at its verbal root the idea of necessity resulting from a state of lack or want;⁵³ it precisely this state of lack or want that Odysseus finds himself in as he wakes up on the shore of the Phaiakians. With the passage above the *Odyssey* continues to show that all mortals, even the greatest heroes, are driven by the urgings of the *gaster*; yet it also demonstrates the potential destruction caused by the unchecked *gaster*. The destructive potential is implied by the image of the lion attacking the animals either wild or in their pens, but here Odysseus

⁵² Pucci 1987: 158-159.

⁵³ On the etymology of *chreio*, see Beekes 2010: 1648-1649.

diverges from his heroic leonine self. Indeed, instead of ravaging the girls as they scatter from his onslaught—as the lion would most certainly do to the “wild deer” it pursues—Odysseus holds himself back and checks his hunger, at least temporarily.⁵⁴ Thus, what could end in rape—implied by the use of the verb *mignumi* “to mingle with” (vi.136), which carries the extended meaning of “to have sexual intercourse with”⁵⁵—doesn’t. Instead, by the temporary restraint of his *gaster*, Odysseus is able to speak to Nausikaa and negotiate a meeting with her parents, thereby facilitating further opportunities to bring about his *nostos*.

Although Odysseus is able to restrain his *gaster* in the most advantageous situations, he is never completely able to overcome its urgings, because within the *Odyssey* the *gaster* is marked as the essential driving force for mortals. When Odysseus meets and dines with Alkinoos and Arete, king and queen of the Phaiakians, he is asked if he is a god since they say that they themselves often dine with the gods; he tells them that he is not a god, but rather a mortal man:

ἀλλ’ ἐμὲ μὲν δορπῆσαι ἐάσατε κηδόμενον περ
οὐ γάρ τι στυγερῆ ἐπὶ γαστέρι κύντερον ἄλλο
ἔπλετο, ἢ τ’ ἐκέλευσεν ἔο μνήσασθαι ἀνάγκη
καὶ μάλα τειρόμενον καὶ ἐνὶ φρεσὶ πένθος ἔχοντα,
ὡς καὶ ἐγὼ πένθος μὲν ἔχω φρεσίν, ἢ δὲ μάλ’ αἰεὶ
ἐσθέμεναι κέλεται καὶ πινέμεν, ἐκ δέ με πάντων
ληθάνει, ὅσσ’ ἔπαθον, καὶ ἐνιπλησθῆναι ἀνώγει. (vii.215-221)

But let me, although I am very much distressed, take supper:
for there is nothing else more dog-like beyond the wretched
gaster, which by necessity even drives me to be mindful of it

⁵⁴ See Podlecki 1971: 83 for further discussion of this simile.

⁵⁵ For examples of *mignumi* used in reference to sexual intercourse within the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* see: II.232, III.445, VI.25, VI.161, XIV.295; i.433, viii.268, x.334, xi.268, xv.430, xix.266, xxii.445, xxiii.219, etc.

especially when I am greatly worn down and holding grief in my mind. In the same way I even have grief in my mind now, but it always greatly drives me to eat and drink, and makes me utterly forget all things, however many things I endured, and it urges that it be filled.

In his speech to the Phaiakians Odysseus bemoans what the economy of expenditure and wear entails for the mortal men who are subject to it, as he also explicates how the *gaster* is the underlying engine that drives him. He begins with the request that he be permitted to eat before he offers a further explanation of his sad state, which Odysseus qualifies with an explanatory *gar* clause explaining both why he must eat and proving his humanity. Indeed, the fact that he has a *gaster* marks him as subject to the mortal economy of expenditure and wear and, thus, he is not an immortal. Here he argues that the *gaster*, as the most *kunteron*, “dog-like/greedy” (vi.216) thing, must be tended to before anything else. Indeed, the *gaster* drives (*ekeleusen*, vii.217) Odysseus by necessity—a clear echo of the lion in the previously examined simile, though here Odysseus states it in direct reference to himself—to pay attention to it above anything else whenever he is worn down and grieved. Thus, whenever Odysseus has expended himself, as he has now, that is precisely the time when the *gaster* “drives” (*keletai*) him to eat, drink, and set aside everything else (vii.220). In fact, the *gaster* doesn’t just drive Odysseus to pay attention to his bodily needs, but rather it urges (*anoga*) him to fill it (*emiplêmi*) before he can even tell the story that resulted in his starved condition (vii.221). The pervasive use of driving and urging language attributed to the *gaster* has disturbed ancient scholiasts as well as more modern Homeric scholars, who have found

this to be less than an ideal motivator for heroic action.⁵⁶ However, this is not a divergence from the heroic nature of Odysseus, but rather the elucidation of the *gaster* as the drive for the hero of the *nostos* sub-genre to live and ultimately achieve his homecoming. Thus, the economy of expenditure and wear demands that the exhausted mortal *gaster* be recharged with those appetites that sustain life—food, sleep, and sexual intercourse—before any other activity can be performed. This is why Odysseus must first completely fill his *gaster* in order to recount his tale, because the “ingestive body is also a talking body, the exchange of food and conversation... constitutes a tactile communication with, or absorption of, the world around one,”⁵⁷ which is a far more profitable use of ingestion than the other famous feasters of the *Odyssey*. Indeed, it is through this meeting that occurs over a meal that Odysseus is able to both retell his wanderings thus far and secure the means for his return to Ithaka. However, the *gaster* not only drives men to absorb and communicate with the world around them, but also forms the impetus for the travel to and exploration of the unknown as the essential drive for mortal men.

The *Odyssey*'s use of the *gaster* as the essential driving force for all human beings overlaps and at times supersedes the *thumos* as an alternate driving force. In this capacity the *gaster* intrudes on what is, at least in the *Iliad*, the exclusive realm of the *thumos*. Namely, the *gaster* is the drive for not only survival, but also the hunger that drives men to sail out and conduct raids on distant peoples. Odysseus articulates this very position, while eating with Eumaios in Book Seventeen of the *Odyssey*, that the

⁵⁶ Compare Hainsworth 1988 commenting at *Odyssey* vii.215-221.

⁵⁷ Worman 2008: 83.

gaster overcomes even the steadfast *thumos* and makes men seek out what they would otherwise not.

τολμήεις μοι θυμός, ἐπεὶ κακὰ πολλὰ πέπονθα
 κύμασι καὶ πολέμῳ· μετὰ καὶ τόδε τοῖσι γενέσθω.
γαστέρα δ' οὐ πως ἔστιν ἀποκρύψαι μεμαυῖαν,
οὐλομένην, ἢ πολλὰ κάκ' ἀνθρώποισι δίδωσι·
 τῆς ἔνεκεν καὶ νῆες εὐζυγοὶ ὀπλίζονται
 πόντον ἐπ' ἀτρύγετον κακὰ δυσμενέεσσι φέρουσαι. (xvii.284-289)

My *thumos* is steadfast, since I have experienced many bad things upon sea swells and in war: even afterwards let this come to pass in whatever way.

But there is no way to hide away the ravenous *gaster*, the destructive thing, it gives many bad things to men: on account of it even the well-fitted ships are equipped to bear bad things to enemies upon the fruitless sea.

With this speech Odysseus outlines the larger role of the *gaster* in mortal affairs and recasts the actions of the *Iliad* in a manner that has disturbed many Homeric scholars. The formulaic similarity between the characterization of Odysseus' *gaster* here at xvii.287 and Achilles' *mēnis* in *Iliad* I.2 (οὐλομένην, ἢ ...) leads Russo to wonder whether the similarities appear because of the constraints of epic formulae, or because a “gentle parody” is intended between the heroic world and the common concerns of hunger.⁵⁸ Pace Russo, I argue that the claim that the *Odyssey* does not invoke the *gaster* in a serious manner ignores the pervasive use of this term as a driving force for the actions of Odysseus and other characters. Odysseus begins by proclaiming the steadfastness of his *thumos* as evidence for his own heroic nature and argues that this certainty of character comes from his many experiences earned while fighting and sailing. He ends this

⁵⁸ Russo 1992 commenting at *Odyssey* xvii.287.

preface by demonstrating his fearlessness and claims that it doesn't matter what comes to pass (xvii.285). However, Odysseus moves on from the consideration of his stout *thumos* to an exposition of why he has had to experience so many bad things, which ultimately offers an alternative interpretation for the action of the *Iliad*. Here, he claims again that it is impossible to escape from the urgings of the ravenous *gaster*. Odysseus' use of *gaster* marked by a participial form of the verb *memona*—here meaning “to be ravenous for,” but cognate with the noun *menos*, “the vital principal/life”—marks it as the essential driving force that compels one despite a steadfast *thumos* since it is “on account of” (*tês heneken*, xvii.288) the *gaster* that heroes experience “many bad things.”⁵⁹ Precisely what constitutes these “many bad things” is stated in the last lines of this passage where Odysseus claims that they are building and outfitting ships in order to wage war on their enemies. This statement recasts the action of the *Iliad* itself into the Odyssean sub-genre's worldview, one dominated by the *gaster* as the driving force for mortal men. Thus, through the elevation of the *gaster* from mere base desire to the essential motivation for travel, the *Odyssey* argues an “all-encompassing power of the *gaster*” with respect to mortal men.⁶⁰ However, the power of the unmediated *gaster* is also, as we shall see, depicted as a destructive force that can drive a man to his own destruction instead of his *nostos*.

⁵⁹ Beekes 2010: 930-931.

⁶⁰ Pucci 1987: 181.

The Dangers of an Unrestrained Gaster

The first of many scenes within the *Odyssey* that demonstrates the dangers of the unmediated *gaster* links the death of Odysseus' companions to their inability to restrain their hunger, though they had been explicitly warned in this regard by Teiresias. When the ship of Odysseus due to bad winds becomes stuck on the island containing the cattle of the Sun, he and his crew are forced to use the provisions from their boat as they wait for more favorable sailing conditions. However, they remain beached upon the shore for an entire month and the provisions are finally exhausted, as Odysseus describes it:

ἀλλ' ὅτε δὴ νηὸς ἐξέφθιτο ἦϊα πάντα,
καὶ δὴ ἄγρην ἐφέπεσκον ἀλητεύοντες ἀνάγκη,
ἰχθῦς ὄρνιθάς τε, φίλας ὅ τι χεῖρας ἴκοιτο,
γναμπτοῖσ' ἀγκίστροισιν· ἔτειρε δὲ γαστέρα λιμός. (xii.329-332)

But indeed when all the provisions from the ship had been wasted away, indeed then they roaming by necessity were continually harassing game, fish and birds, anything which might come to their hands, with curved fish-hooks: for hunger was wearing out our gastera.

This description of Odysseus and his men as stranded seafarers echoes that of the previously discussed example of Menelaus and his men in *Odyssey* iv.368-369. Again the verb *kataphthio*, to waste away, in conjunction with *êia*, provisions for a journey or food, is used here to describe the expenditure of the crew's stores and implicitly points to the threat of starvation. The implicit connection with foodstuffs here and the lives of the men results from the explicitly stated connection between men's lives and their supplies within Menelaus' tale. However, where in the stranding of Menelaus' crew there is a goddess that comes to their aid, here there is no such savior. The men are

driven by *anagkê*, “necessity,” to hunt down any animal they can lay their hands upon. This use of the term *anagkê* in conjunction with the *limos*, “hunger,” that is wearing out their *gastera* demonstrates the unavoidable nature of the *gaster*’s drive for mortal men. However, Odysseus’ men are driven only by the urgings of the *gaster* and this leads to their rejection of their *thumos* and with it their lives. Odysseus leaves his men hunting and attempts to pray for the aid of the gods. Instead of granting the request of Odysseus, the gods put him to sleep; as he says the gods “sprinkled sweet sleep upon my eyelids” (xii.338). This “sweet sleep” grants Odysseus a temporary respite from his own hunger, but leaves his men to their own devices. It is during the sleep of Odysseus that his men become increasingly desperate as they continue hunting for game, while the immortal cattle of the Sun god graze around them in abundance. Without Odysseus to stop them, his crew listens to the advice of Eurylochos who argues that they should eat the cattle of the Sun for a variety of reasons, but most of all:

βούλομ' ἅπαξ πρὸς κύμα χανῶν ἀπὸ θυμὸν ὀλέσσαι
ἢ δηθὰ στρεύγεσθαι ἕων ἐν νήσῳ ἐρήμη. (xii.350-351)

I would rather lose my *thumos*, my mouth gaping within a swell, at once than, being on this deserted island, be exhausted bit by bit for a long time.

The main thrust of this statement is Eurylochos’ preference for a swift death at sea to the extended exhaustion undergone while starving to death; what is worth noting is his utter rejection of the *thumos*. Eurylochos argues that he would prefer to lose his *thumos*, the heroic drive and life force, so as to avoid enduring the prolonged exhaustion of starvation expressed by the verb *streugomai*. The verb *streugomai* is a key term in this passage, as elsewhere in the *Odyssey* it highlights exhaustion or wear caused by a

variety of strictly mortal ailments, namely: battle fatigue, sickness, old age, and, in this case, hunger.⁶¹ The crew knows that to eat the cattle of the Sun will result in their death at sea, yet their *thumos*, unlike that of Odysseus, is not enduring and thus unable to temper the hunger of the *gaster* for even a little while. Indeed, the island is not without fish and birds as they have been hunting and fishing already, yet the ease of sating their worn out *gastera* by devouring the sacred cattle wandering about them proves too tempting for the crew of Odysseus. Thus, driven by their unmitigated *gaster* they commit an extreme act of *hubris* by sacrificing and attempting to devour the cattle of the Sun. These cattle are, however, immortal and set beyond the bounds of the mortal economy of expenditure and wear by the injunction against eating them, and thus are unfit for either sacrifice to the gods or mortal consumption.⁶² Odysseus expresses to the Phaiakians just how sacrilegious the crime of his crewmen was by describing the sacrifice of the cattle where the flesh, both raw and cooked, began to “moo” (xii.395-396). They ultimately pay for their *hubris* with their lives as Zeus sends a storm that drowns all of Odysseus’ men and nearly kills him as well. This is not the only place within the *Odyssey* that demonstrates the inherent danger that an unmitigated *gaster* poses to those subject to it.

The ability of Odysseus to draw upon both the *gaster* and the *thumos* sets him apart from those ruled by only one of these two divergent passions and enables him to accomplish his *nostos*. The dual passions of Odysseus is best illustrated by his encounter with a beggar in which the motivating drives of the two men are played out in the form

⁶¹ Compare to *Iliad* XV.512 for the use of *streugomai* in reference to battle fatigue.

⁶² Vidal-Naquet 1986: 23-24.

of a boxing match with a *gaster*, in this case a sausage-like gastronomic delicacy, as prize. This encounter begins when Odysseus finally reaches Ithaka, and he goes in disguise among the suitors devouring his household stock. There he is introduced to the beggar, Iros, who is epitomized by the reputation of his *gaster* and his never-ending hunger. Iros is representative of all the beggars in the *Odyssey* as he is a person so entirely driven by his *gaster* that he does not merely reject his *thumos*, but rather is depicted as being entirely devoid of one. Iros in the very beginning of book xviii is described as:

ἦλθε δ' ἐπὶ πτωχὸς πανδήμιος, ὃς κατὰ ἄστν
 πτωχεύεσκ' Ἰθάκης, μετὰ δ' ἔπρεπε γαστέρι μάργη
 ἀζηχῆς φαγέμεν καὶ πιέμεν· οὐδέ οἱ ἦν ἰς
 οὐδὲ βίη, εἶδος δὲ μάλα μέγας ἦν ὀράασθαι. (xviii.1-4)

And the city-roving beggar arrived, who went begging again and again throughout the town of Ithaka, and he was outstanding with his great *gaster* for his unceasing eating and drinking. But there was no strength nor force to him, but his appearance was really big to look at.

Here we are introduced to the beggar, Iros, who is immediately described by the adjective *pandêmios*, “city-roving” or “going through the entire town.” Commentators have noted the striking similarity of this epithet to the well known epithets of Odysseus, *polutropos*, “many-turned,” or *polumetis*, “very-clever;” Russo has even suggested that while the typical epithets of Odysseus are focused on his mental acumen, the epithet *pandêmios* would suit Odysseus especially well, since the proem of the *Odyssey* describes him as a man who “saw the cities of many men and came to know their mind” (i.3).⁶³ Indeed, the description of Iros begins in such a manner as to liken

⁶³ Russo 1992 commenting at *Odyssey* xvii.1.

him to Odysseus, but quickly changes to show him as a man driven only by his *gaster* and, much as Odysseus' crew, lacking the alternate drive of the *thumos* that makes a man heroic. The next statement that he is indeed a local vagabond accustomed to begging (*ptocheuo*, xviii.2) up and down the entire town confirms his status as a wanderer and begins to distinguish his character from that of Odysseus. Where Iros travels only through Ithaca as a wandering beggar, Odysseus has traveled to distant lands and only in his most dire straits at his arrival among the Phaiakians did Odysseus come close to approximating a beggar, though he is doing just that in this scene. Iros is even made outstanding among men by his "great *gaster*" and for his unending gluttonous consumption of food and drink, a fitting source of fame for a beggar. Indeed, the adjective *meGas*, meaning great, is often associated with the heroic *thumos*, but here alone is used in reference to the *gaster* of a character.⁶⁴ The description of Iros is fitting for a beggar who goes through the town unendingly devouring the food of others and producing nothing in return for his consumption. Even more than serving to cast him personally in a bad light, his characterization serves to demonstrate the destructive nature of one beholden only to the base necessities of life. Indeed, even though he eats and drinks unceasingly, Iros derives no real benefit from his "great *gaster*" (xviii.2). While he might be large in appearance (*eidōs*), yet he has no strength or physical force, and is without the alternate drive of the *thumos* to match his *gaster*; as such, Iros is the shown to be the basest of men. The danger of becoming an entirely base man by association with only the *gaster* does not belong to Iros alone, for as we have seen, there

⁶⁴ The only other place in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* where the adjective *meGas* is attributed to the *gaster* is xviii.118 and refers to a dish made of a large stuffed belly and presented to Odysseus by Antinoos.

is some overlap in the characterization of both Iros and Odysseus. Thus Odysseus finds himself in a similar situation when he makes his way home in the disguise of a beggar.

The beggar disguise that Athena places over Odysseus enabling him to spy on the suitors and gain entrance to his own home is so effective that Odysseus is in danger of becoming known as a man without *thumos* and guided only by his *gaster*. This becomes apparent when the suitors notice Odysseus and Iros arguing at the doorstep and decide to pit them against one another for entertainment. The suitors offer a blood sausage, a *gaster*, to the winner of a wrestling match between the two beggars. Iros tells Odysseus that he intends to knock his teeth out and Odysseus, fighting for food made from the *gaster* of one of his own animals, is in effect fighting another beggar for the ability to define his own relation to the drives of the *gaster*.⁶⁵ The suitors and other members of the household see Odysseus as a beggar. For this reason he begins to define his actions on their terms, but to be only a beggar would make him a “nobody” for a second time, only now in his own home.⁶⁶ When he is finally forced to fight Iros, he speaks to the suitors in a language that they, as greedy men, will understand and is appropriate for Odysseus’ disguise as a beggar.

ὦ φίλοι, οὐ πως ἔστι νεωτέρῳ ἀνδρὶ μάχεσθαι
 ἄνδρα γέροντα δύη ἀρημένον· ἀλλὰ με γαστήρ
 ὀτρύνει κακοεργός, ἵνα πληγῆσι δαμείω. (xviii.52-57)

“O friends, it is not possible that an old man having been broken down by misery to fight with a younger man. But my wicked working gaster urges me on, so that I might be overcome by his blows.”

⁶⁵ Pucci 1987: 179.

⁶⁶ Podlecki 1961: 130.

In this passage, Odysseus paints a bleak picture of what life entails for men driven solely by their *gaster*. He is an old man broken down—from a verbal form of the noun *arê*,⁶⁷ which means a “bane” or “harm” and in Homeric epic refers specifically to those worn down through their old age—by *duê*, “misery.”⁶⁸ He tells them that in his sorry state there is no way he can win a fight with a *neoteros*, “younger,” man. The adjective *kakoergos*, “wicked working,” is fittingly applied to the *gaster* of the base man, who is willing to do anything no matter how wicked or shameful; for men ruled only by their *kakoergos gaster* are driven to attempt whatever it takes in order to satisfy its base desires. Nevertheless, the *gaster* does not enable men to overcome their human nature and an old man cannot defeat a younger man in a fight, so it drives Odysseus to make an attempt that he claims will earn him defeat under the hands of his rival beggar. This claim is, to a certain extent, a ruse—like the beggar disguise itself—to fool the suitors into thinking him the weakling that he appears to be. However, the wretched description of his life as a travelling beggar might accurately describe the effect of the twenty years of war and travel that he has endured to come home. Beyond this, we have seen how the *gaster* has driven Odysseus through many of his travels and Odysseus himself has argued its essential nature as the driving force in human affairs. The crucial difference between Iros, as well as the beggar disguise of Odysseus, and Odysseus himself is that he is driven not only by his acceptance of the mortal economy of expenditure and wear, via the *gaster*, but also by the heroic drive of the *thumos*. This

⁶⁷ Beekes 2010: 128.

⁶⁸ For other examples of the verbal form *aremenos* used in reference to the infirmity of old age in Homeric epic, see *Iliad* XVIII.434-435; *Odyssey* vi.2, xi.136.

difference is elucidated by the response of Odysseus' son, Telemachos, to Odysseus' statement above.

Odysseus uses his brawl to claim that his “wicked working *gaster*” compels him to fight in what appears to be an uneven match with a younger man, yet in reality it is more than just the *gaster* that drives Odysseus. His statement, however deceptive, rings true to the suitors who are unable to see through his disguise. Nevertheless, Telemachos knows his father for who he really is and cannot stand to see his father's motives for combat debased, even when he fights another beggar over his own *gaster*, in this case a blood sausage. Therefore, Telemachos postulates a different reason why he must fight, one more in line with the heroic ideal that he expects to see in his father, saying:

ξείν', εἴ σ' ὀτρύνει κραδίη καὶ θυμὸς ἀγήνωρ
 τοῦτον ἀλέξασθαι, τῶν δ' ἄλλων μὴ τιν' Ἀχαιῶν
 δείδιθ', ἐπεὶ πλεόνεσσι μαχήσεται ὅς κέ σε θείνη. (xviii.61-63)

Stranger, if your heart and excessively manly *thumos* urges you on to defend yourself against this man, then do not fear anyone among the other Achaeans, since whoever should strike you would fight against many men.

The son recasts the reason for Odysseus' need to fight into the traditional terms of the Iliadic hero. There is no mention of the *gaster* as the force that “urges” him on as it does in the previously examined selection. Notice instead the repeated use of the singular present verb *otruno*, “to urge on,” with the terms *thumos* and *kradiê*, “heart,” linked as equivalent motivating forces by the conjunction *kai*. Indeed, the *thumos* here is the *agênor*, “excessively manly,” *thumos* of the Iliadic hero that drives them beyond the mortal economy of expenditure and wear. A somewhat ironic way to frame the battle of

two beggars, men ostensibly dominated by their *gaster*, who are also fighting over a *gaster*, a prize presented here as a “blood sausage.” But the important factor here is Telemachos’ use of these two terms as a substitute for the *gaster*. By exchanging one engine of action for another, Telemachos attempts to make his father, even in the guise of a beggar, a “somebody” and thus save him from the anonymity that his disguise both intends to accomplish and threatens to do so.⁶⁹ Yet, even Telemachos misunderstands the motivations of his father as strictly related to the *thumos*. What we have is a very real battle between appetites, as the men urged on by their *gaster/thumos*, over the very thing they seek to sate, namely the *gaster*. This is the internal battle of Odysseus to contain and integrate his two seemingly incompatible drives played out before us all.

The Destructive Appetite of the Uncontrolled Thumos

The comparison between the two previous passages shows both the overlap of *gaster* and *thumos*, as well as the difference in the men who are ruled by either one in the extreme. The real issue with both of them is that Odysseus is ruled by neither drive alone, but rather—precisely because he is the representative hero of the *nostos* sub-genre in the epic tradition—he must integrate his *thumos* and *gaster* to achieve his successful *nostos*, “return home,” which is his true desire and the basis for his fame in the epic tradition. As we have seen, to achieve this end Odysseus accepts the limitations imposed by the mortal economy of expenditure and wear; namely, he eats, drinks, sleeps, and makes love as all these things enable him to replenish his energy and thus

⁶⁹ Pucci 1987: 184.

continue his journey. Yet, it seems odd for a hero to rely upon the *gaster* when, at least as it is presented in the *Iliad*, the un-tempered *thumos* enables one to push beyond those same mortal limitations in the achievement of *kleos*, “fame.” The reason why Odysseus must restrain his *thumos* and then rely upon his *gaster* becomes more apparent as we examine the manner in which the *thumos* is presented throughout the *Odyssey*.

Just as the *gaster* is what moves mortal men in the *Odyssey*, it is the *thumos* that provides the appetites that drive monsters to accomplish their inhuman deeds. Indeed, the Cyclops, Polyphemus, is an outstanding example of the unrestrained *thumos* within the *Odyssey*. In reply to Odysseus’ thinly veiled threats concerning the treatment of guests, Polyphemus explicitly states what motivates him and drives him to do what he does. While interrogating Odysseus concerning the whereabouts of his ship, Polyphemus says:

οὐ γὰρ Κύκλωπες Διὸς αἰγιόχου ἀλέγουσιν
οὐδὲ θεῶν μακάρων, ἐπεὶ ἦ πολὺν φέρτεροί εἰμεν·
οὐδ’ ἂν ἐγὼ Διὸς ἔχθος ἀλευάμενος πεφιδοίμην
οὔτε σεῦ οὔθ’ ἐτάρων, εἰ μὴ θυμός με κελεύοι. (ix.275-278)

For the Cyclopes do not care about aegis-bearing Zeus
nor the blessed gods, since indeed we are stronger by far.
Nor, avoiding the hatred of Zeus, would I spare
either you or your companions, unless my *thumos* should command me.

Although this passage is short, it is quite crucial in its implication for the *Odyssey*.

Polyphemus begins his reply with a general statement about the superior nature of the Cyclopes, namely that they are far *pherteros*, “stronger,” than all the gods. The term *pherteros* can mean “better” in the sense that the “stronger” are superior to the weaker, and this is the position that Polyphemus is clearly evincing. Indeed, they are not just

stronger than men; Polyphemus claims that they are stronger than all the gods. For this reason, Polyphemus argues that he has no impetus to obey the commands of the gods, while they have no way to force him. Yet, Polyphemus does obey the commands of something. Polyphemus claims that it is the *thumos* that “commands” him, here indicated by the verb *keleuo*, to eat Odysseus and his companions raw (ix.278). The use of *keleuo* in this passage is worth noting because it, while its most basic meaning is “to command,” “order,” or “bid,” in the *Odyssey* frequently refers to the urgings of one’s appetites.⁷⁰ Thus, the use of *keleuo* here functions both to inform Odysseus that the *thumos* alone commands Polyphemus and offers a subtle hint as to what it commands him to do, indulge his appetite for the flesh of men. One might expect to see the *gaster* used in reference to, or even in a simile describing, the thing that drives the Cyclops’ hunger for human flesh. However, the *gaster* is significantly not employed here. Indeed, the one time that the belly of the Polyphemus is described a few lines later, the word *gaster* is not used; instead, the term *nêdus* is employed (ix.296). The definition of the term is nearly identical to that of *gaster*, but it has one important difference in its application. The term *nêdus* is used only once in the entire *Odyssey*, namely to describe the full belly of the Cyclops. The rarity of *nêdus* in the text could be related to metrical use. However, I contend that a more compelling explanation is that as the *Odyssey* has gone to great lengths to demonstrate the essential humanity of the *gaster*, it must refuse to apply it to one so very inhuman. Yet even *nêdus* is not used in reference to the unholy appetite of Polyphemus for raw human flesh. Thus, it is not the *gaster*, nor even

⁷⁰ For examples of this use see: *Odyssey* iv.140, vi.133, vii.220, and xvii.555.

the *nêdus*, that urges Polyphemus to his gory feast, rather it is his uncontrolled *thumos* that makes him monstrous.

The *thumos* that drives the Cyclops to eat men raw draws a close parallel to the depiction of Achilles in the *Iliad*, most obviously when Achilles stands over the corpse of Hector and wishes that his *thumos* would drive him “to eat Hector’s meat raw” (XXII.346-347) and again when “Hector’s mother reviles Achilles as an eater of raw meat” (XXIV.207).⁷¹ Polyphemus’ own inhuman hunger for cannibalism, as the destructive urging of his unbound *thumos*, serves to draw a parallel between the Iliadic Achilles and the Odyssean Polyphemus. Through this parallel, the *Odyssey* demonstrates the inherent dangers of the unmitigated *thumos* that serves as the heroic engine for *kleos*. Indeed, the second lion simile in the *Odyssey*—the very marker of a hero being propelled by his *thumos* to exceed his mortal bounds within the *Iliad*—belongs not to Odysseus, but rather to Polyphemus when he devours the first pair of Odysseus’ men (ix.292-293). The difference between the two is that, where the Cyclops gets to enjoy his meal, Achilles, “instead of using his empty mouth for eating... in a kind of emotional cannibalism... feeds his grieving heart (*thumos*) on their [the Trojan’s] slaughter.”⁷² Yet this difference no doubt bears little comfort for Achilles’ victims. Indeed, the very language of Polyphemus’ warning to Odysseus (ix.275-278) bears a marked resemblance to Achilles’ threat against the life of Priam (XXIII.568-570) that was examined in my previous chapter. With this disturbing parallel to the *Iliad*’s vision of the *thumos*, Buchan has argued that the *Odyssey* “provides an answer to the most puzzling question of the

⁷¹ See Nagy 1999: 136-137 for further discussion of Achilles’ inhuman hunger.

⁷² Worman 2002: 107.

Iliad: What does Achilles want?”⁷³ In other words, Achilles wants what Polyphemus has, namely the ability to enjoy his cannibalistic feast. The *Odyssey*’s horrific suggestion that the Cyclops may be compared to the Iliadic Achilles and his motivations demonstrates the inhumanity of Achilles, as one who is ruled entirely by an unmitigated *thumos* and has nothing to do with his *gaster*; he is something both more and less than human. The *thumos* of others is not the only threat to Odysseus’ *nostos*; the hunger of his own *thumos* for fame and recognition proves to be at least equally as threatening toward his achieving the *nostos* he desires.

The *Odyssey* goes to great lengths to demonstrate that whenever Odysseus is most like the Cyclops—that is, most like the hero of the Iliadic *kleos* sub-genre, namely Achilles—and driven by the unrestrained great appetites of his *thumos*, he is most in danger of losing his *nostos*. The danger posed by the unbound *thumos* of Odysseus is illustrated when Odysseus, under the compulsion of his *thumos*’ urge for the *kleos* garnered from his name being attached to great deeds, ignores the warnings of his crew and calls out to the blinded Cyclops.

ὥς φάσαν, ἀλλ' οὐ πείθον ἐμὸν μεγαλήτορα θυμόν,
 ἀλλὰ μιν ἄψορρον προσέφην κεκοτηότι θυμῷ
 Ἰκύκλωψ, αἴ κέν τις σε καταθνητῶν ἀνθρώπων
 ὀφθαλμοῦ εἴρηται ἀεικελίην ἀλαωτύν,
 φάσθαι Ὀδυσσῆα πτολιπόρθιον ἐξαλαῶσαι,
 υἱὸν Λαέρτεω, Ἰθάκῃ ἔνι οἰκί' ἔχοντα.' (ix.500-505)

Thus they spoke, but they were not persuading my greathearted *thumos*,
 but back again I began speaking to him with my *thumos* cherishing wrath:
 “Cyclops, if ever anyone of mortal men
 should ask you about the shameful blinding of your eye,
 tell him that Odysseus, sacker of cities, utterly blinded you,
 son of Laertes, who has his home in Ithaka.”

⁷³ Buchan 2001: 21.

The crew, having already seen the Cyclops tear the top of a mountain and nearly strike their ship with it, begs Odysseus to stop taunting him, but he will not. Odysseus claims that they were unable to “persuade” (*peitho*) his “greathearted *thumos*” (ix.500). Note that it is not Odysseus here that is *megalêtor*, “greathearted,” nor is it he that his men are attempting to persuade. Rather, his men attempt to talk down his *thumos*, the very thing that in the *kleos* epic sub-genre drives the hero to daring and rash deeds. The term *megalêtor*, a common heroic epithet, can be applied to either heroes or their *thumoi* within Homeric diction, but in the *Odyssey* it is used with respect to the *thumos* half as many times as it is in the *Iliad*.⁷⁴ The majority of its uses within the *Odyssey* occur in book v and all of those take the form of a repeated Homeric formula,⁷⁵ which serves to demonstrate the precarious situation that Odysseus finds himself in as he leaves the hidden safety of Calypso’s island. The use of *megalêtor*, however, in the passage above marks Odysseus’ motivations for taunting the Cyclops as Iliadic in tenor, as well as introducing a moment of extreme danger. Yet, Odysseus’ *thumos* is not only *megalêtor*, it is also *kekoteoti*, “cherishing wrath” (ix.501). The use of the (participial form of the) verb *koteo* serves to underscore to what extent Odysseus’ *thumos* is uncontrolled, much in the same way that Agamemnon characterizes the anger of Achilles in book I of the *Iliad* where he

⁷⁴ For examples of *megalêtor* in conjunction with *thumos* in the *Iliad* see: IX.109, IX.255, IX.629, IX.675, XI.403, XV.674, XVII.90, XVIII.5, XX.343, XXI.53, XXI.552, XXII.98; for examples in the *Odyssey* see: v.298, v.355, v.407, v.464, ix.299, ix.500.

⁷⁵ The formula reads: ὀχθήσας δ' ἄρα εἶπε πρὸς ὃν μεγαλήτορα θυμόν, or “then greatly vexed he said to his greathearted *thumos*....” For citations of this formula, see note 28.

claims that he has “no concern for [Achilles] cherishing wrath” (οὐδ’ ὄθομαι κοτέοντος, I.181). Under the sway of his uncontrolled *thumos*, Odysseus attempts to obtain the *kleos*, “renown,” for having vanquished so great an opponent as Polyphemus by announcing his identity. Odysseus begins by calling out to Polyphemus and tells him to inform every person that he meets that Odysseus *ptoliporthios*, “sacker of cities,” was the one that blinded him (ix.504). This is an especially relevant epithet as *ptoliporthios* is only used twice within all of Homeric epic and both instances refer to Odysseus in book ix of the *Odyssey*. By using this epithet to identify himself, Odysseus attempts to recall the Iliadic *kleos* of sacking Troy and to increase his *kleos* with the defeat of the Cyclops, and Friedrich reads this attempted return to the *kleos* epic sub-genre as the “eventual restoration of Odysseus’ heroic self.”⁷⁶ Yet in doing so Odysseus is driven by the *thumos*, which when uncontrolled drives the hero to his destruction. Indeed, not only does Odysseus tell his vanquished foe his name, but he also tells the Cyclops the name of his father and the land from which he hails. This gives the Cyclops the means to exact the vengeance upon Odysseus that he would otherwise have been unable to achieve despite his great strength. After Odysseus’ ship is beyond the range of Polyphemus’ hurled boulders, Polyphemus prays to his father Poseidon, the god of the sea, and uses the information that Odysseus provided him to do exactly what Odysseus had asked him to do, that is, to tell someone the name of the man who blinded him. By calling upon his father and telling him the deeds and name of Odysseus,

⁷⁶ Friedrich 1991: 22.

Polyphemus lays the curse that makes Odysseus' *nostos* so very difficult.⁷⁷ Thus, the urgings of Odysseus' "greathearted *thumos*" and his attempt to remain a hero of the *kleos* sub-genre, like an Achilles or Polyphemus, nearly costs him his *nostos*, "homecoming," which is the very *telos* of the *Odyssey*.

The Controlled Thumos as the Means for Completing One's Nostos

Within the *Odyssey* the *thumos* becomes a drive that, while it remains the engine of heroic action, urges Odysseus in a manner that threatens to deprive him of his *nostos* unless he can learn to restrain it. The threat posed to Odysseus by the urging of his uncontained *thumos* is a current that runs throughout the *Odyssey*, but it is most explicitly stated by Tiresias' prophecy to Odysseus at the gates of the underworld. Sent by Circe to the very edge of the living world, Odysseus performs rituals to call the dead to him and to find Tiresias so that he may ask him how he can accomplish his *nostos*. After he meets with Tiresias, Odysseus asks him his question, to which Tiresias responds:

νόστον δίζηαι μελιιδέα, φαίδιμ' Ὀδυσσεῦ·
 τὸν δέ τοι ἀργαλέον θήσει θεός. οὐ γὰρ οἴω
 λήσειν ἐννοσίγαιον, ὃ τοι κότον ἐνθετο θυμῶ,
 χωόμενος ὅτι οἱ υἱὸν φίλον ἐξαλάωσας.
 ἀλλ' ἔτι μὲν κε καὶ ὦς, κακά περ πάσχοντες, ἴκοισθε,
 αἴ κ' ἐθέλης σὸν θυμὸν ἐρυκακέειν καὶ ἐταίρων,
 ὀππότε κεν πρῶτον πελάσης εὐεργέα νῆα
 θρινακίη νήσω, προφυγῶν ἰοειδέα πόντον,
 βοσκομένας δ' εὔρητε βόας καὶ ἴφια μῆλα
 Ἥελίου, ὃς πάντ' ἐφορᾷ καὶ πάντ' ἐπακούει. (xi.100-109)

⁷⁷ For the importance of the name in curse formulae, see Brown 1966.

You are seeking a honeysweet *nostos*, famous Odysseus:
 but a god will make it difficult for you. For I do not expect that
 you will escape Earthshaker's notice, who stored in his *thumos* a *wrath* against
 you,
 being enraged that you utterly blinded his dear son.
 But still even as things are, although suffering many bad things, you all might
 make it,
 if you are *willing to restrain your thumos* and that of your companions,
 when first you have sailed your well made ship
 to the island Thrinakia, having shunned the purple sea,
 and you all discover the feeding cattle and fat sheep
 of Helios, who oversees all things and overhears all things.

Tiresias begins his prophecy with the emphatic statement of what Odysseus is searching for, namely a “honeysweet *nostos*” and, in doing so, calls Odysseus *phaidimos*, “illustrious/famous.” The term *phaidimos* is a frequent epithet for heroes in the *Iliad*, especially Hector and Achilles.⁷⁸ Thus, Tiresias’ use of the epithet *phaidimos* draws upon Odysseus’ fame for his heroic deeds and calls Odysseus out as a hero of the *kleos* sub-genre. However, Tiresias’ reference to this fame here is less than positive in the fame’s implications for Odysseus, since this renown is the very reason for Odysseus’ difficulty in achieving the “honeysweet *nostos*” he so desires. This is elucidated in the following lines where the anger of Poseidon is referred to as an impediment of Odysseus’ return home. The wrath of Poseidon could have been avoided except that Odysseus’ desire to receive recognition for his blinding of Polyphemus leads to his naming himself. Thus, his fame for blinding Polyphemus results in Poseidon holding a *kotos*, “wrath/grudge,” in his *thumos*. This description of Poseidon’s wrath-holding *thumos* begins Tiresias’ explication of how Odysseus can make it home. Tiresias claims that they all may make

⁷⁸ For the uses of *phaidimos* in the *Iliad*, see IV.505, VI.144, IX.434, XVI.288, and XXI.97.

it home. However, Tiresias says that their ability to return home is predicated upon the “willingness” of Odysseus to “contain/restrain” (*eruko*) his own *thumos*, as well as “that of his companions,” when they end up on the island Thranakia where the Sun god pastures his immortal cattle.

The verb *eruko* is essential to understanding the manner in which Odysseus must deal with his *thumos* and what sort of thing the *thumos* is. If one examines the many uses of the verb *eruko* it becomes apparent that it is used largely in the “restraint” of four specific things: horses, women, the sea, and mobs of men.⁷⁹ All of these groups, in archaic Greek thought, share the common trait of being irrational bodies that must be directed by the will of an individual in order to constructively harness their energies; here in the *nostos* tradition, the same is true of the *thumos*. Thus, in order to integrate the *thumos* and keep it from driving him to the loss of his *nostos*, Odysseus must contain (*eruko*) the *thumos*. It is through this containment that Odysseus can remain a hero and still achieve his *nostos*. Tiresias then tells Odysseus more specifically what he must focus on in order to make it home to Ithaka and what will befall him and his men should he lose sight of his ultimate goal:

τὰς εἰ μὲν κ' ἄσινέας ἑάας νόστου τε μέδῃαι,
καὶ κεν ἔτ' εἰς Ἰθάκην, κακά περ πάσχοντες, ἴκοισθε·
εἰ δέ κε σίνῃαι, τότε τοι τεκμαίρομ' ὄλεθρον
νηΐ τε καὶ ἐτάροισ'. αὐτὸς δ' εἴ περ κεν ἀλύξις,
ὄψ' ἐ κακῶς νεῖαι, ὀλέσας ἅπο πάντας ἐταίρους,
νηὸς ἐπ' ἀλλοτρίης· δῆεις δ' ἐν πῆματα οἴκῳ,
ἄνδρας ὑπερφιάλους, οἳ τοι βίοντον κατέδουσι
μνώμενοι ἀντιθέην ἄλοχον καὶ ἔδνα διδόντες. (xi.110-117)

⁷⁹ For some examples of *eruko* in reference to irrational groups, i.e. horses, the sea, women, and groups of men, see: *Iliad* III.113, VII.80, X.527, XI.48, XXII.156, XXIV.156; *Odyssey* iii.144, vi.29, xix.16, xxii.138.

If you should let them [Helios' cattle] be unharmed and be mindful of your *nostos*, then even yet to Ithaka, though suffering bad things, you all might make it. But if you should harm them, then I foretell to you ruin for both your ship and your companions. But even if you yourself should escape, after a long time you will have a bad return, having lost all you companions, upon a ship belonging to another, and you will find pains in your home, arrogant men, who are completely devouring your livelihood courting your godlike wife and offering bride price.

In the final portion of Tiresias' prophecy for Odysseus, he begins again by stressing the *nostos* of Odysseus. However, this time he qualifies the conditions for Odysseus' *nostos* by stating that he must "be mindful/protective of" (*medomai*) his *nostos* as well as, here with the connective *te*, the cattle must be left *asinêas*, "unharm"ed." The adjective *asinêas* is an alpha privative formed from the verb *sinomai*, "to harm/despoil," and is used for the theft of women, crops, and cattle; all actions that indicate the arrogant and hubristic treatment of another.⁸⁰ This is a near exact repeat of line 104 from the first selection of Tiresias' speech, which again highlights the difficulties that exist for an even a more successful trip of Odysseus, though we see that Odysseus is unlikely to be mindful of his *nostos* and thus will not be so lucky as to only experience "many bad things." Indeed, the alternative to this circumstance comes immediately after, where Tiresias informs Odysseus what is about to come. It seems that Odysseus and his crew will indeed "harm" (*sinomai*, xi.112) the cattle of the Sun. Tiresias then predicts that only *opse*, "after a long time," will Odysseus achieve his *nostos* and that it will be a difficult homecoming at that. This course of action Tiresias sees as the most likely, since up to this point in the tale Odysseus has been unable to contain the urging of his

⁸⁰ For further examples of *sinomai* in Homer, see: *Iliad* XXIV.45; *Odyssey* vii.6, xii.114, xii.139.

thumos. In fact, he will come home to find “arrogant men” eating him out of house and home, in other words acting the same way that his own men will act in respect to Helios’ cattle. Interestingly the admonition of Tiresias that Odysseus must restrain his *thumos* comes midway in the tale and serves as much as a device for the interpretation of Odysseus’ actions thus far as it serves as a warning against actions that Odysseus has yet to take.

Odysseus does eventually heed the words of Tiresias, and, although he is unable to stop his companions from devouring the cattle of the Sun, he is ultimately able to achieve his *nostos* through the restraint of his *thumos*. This restraint comes in the final books of the *Odyssey* while Odysseus is undergoing some of the most personally abusive treatment in the entire work. One such example comes when Odysseus is walking with Eumaios and the goat herder, Melanthios, harasses them. While at a fountain on the way into town Melanthios sees the raggedly disguised Odysseus and verbally abuses him so fiercely that he “roused the heart of Odysseus” (*orine kêr*, xvii.216). Not content with verbal abuse alone, on his way past Odysseus, Melanthios kicks Odysseus in the hip with the intention of knocking him over.

ἀλλ' ἔμεν' ἀσφαλέως. ὁ δὲ μερμήριξεν Ὀδυσσεύς,
 ἢ ἔμεταίξας ῥοπάλω ἐκ θυμὸν ἔλοιτο
 ἢ πρὸς γῆν ἐλάσειε κάρη ἀμφοῦδις αἰείρας·
 ἀλλ' ἐπετόλμησε, φρεσὶ δ' ἔσχετο. (xvii.235-238)

But he [Odysseus] remained unshaken. And Odysseus debated whether rushing upon him with his staff he would take the *thumos* from him, or lifting him by the middle he would drive his head to the ground. But he endured, and held it in his will.

This passage describes Odysseus' reaction to Melanthios' rough treatment and begins with his physical description. Odysseus, despite having been struck, is said to stand on the spot and he remains *asphaleos*, "unshaken." The term *asphaleos* is an alpha privative adverb formed from the verb *sphallo*, "to cause to reel/fall" (xvii.235).⁸¹ The importance of this term is not just to show the weakness of Melanthios' kick, but also to demonstrate Odysseus' ability to endure the suffering that he undergoes. Indeed, this endurance carries through to his mental state and is indicative of an Odysseus that has contained his *thumos*. This is precisely what the rest of this selection elucidates. After being struck, Odysseus "debated," *mermêrixen*, what to do next. The verb *mermêrizo* is frequently used in Homeric diction to describe the internal dialogue of a hero choosing between two courses of actions. The options that the hero debates follow the main clause and come as potential optative clauses—as we see in lines xvii.236 and xvii.237 of the selection above—begun with the conjunction *ê*, "either... or." Thus we see that Odysseus wonders to himself which of the two he will do. Should he act in the manner befitting an Iliadic hero at war by "rushing upon him" and "take the *thumos* from him" (xvii.236)—here with a verb often used of charging an enemy in battle, *metaisso*, followed by a phrase commonly used in the *Iliad* for the taking of a warrior's life, *ek thumon haireo*—or should he kill Melanthios for his insolence by seizing him and slamming his head upon the ground (xvi.237).⁸² The internal debate of Odysseus has an important parallel in the *Iliad* when Achilles decides whether he should kill

⁸¹ Beekes 2010: 1428.

⁸² For examples of *metaisso* in reference to charging an enemy in battle, see: *Iliad* XVI.398, XXI.564; *Odyssey* xxiii.11. For further examples of the phrase "*thumon haireo*" in reference to the taking of a life, see: *Iliad* V.317, V.346, X.506.

Agamemnon outright for his insolence or restrain his great anger (I.188-192). The essential difference between these two crucial moments is that where Achilles decides the later only because Athena stays his hand (I.206-222), Odysseus opts for neither of his two options and restrains his anger himself. Indeed this is the only time in all of Homer that a hero considering two options in a *mermêrizo* scene chooses neither option, but the most “unusual feature is that the new alternative chosen is not action but the suppression of action.”⁸³ Odysseus’ ability to choose this third choice of restraint demonstrates his successful control of the *thumos*’ urgings and the language that describes his restraint is the language of containment that ends this selection. Indeed, Odysseus “endured” (*epitolmao*) the insult despite his strong desire to retaliate (xvii.238). The verb *epitolmao* is derived from the verb *tolmao*, “to bear up under suffering,” plus the intensifying prepositional prefix *epi*, and this language of endurance is the defining trait of Odysseus, especially in the last half of the *Odyssey* where he must wait for the right time to exact his revenge upon the suitors, all the while enduring their insults and hubristic actions in his household. Throughout his trials of endurance—just as in the one examined above—it is only Odysseus’ ability to “hold,” *exo*, the urgings for vengeance of his *thumos* “within his will,” here with a locative dative of *phrenes* (xvii.238), that permits Odysseus to accomplish his sought after *nostos* and become the best of the Achaeans within the *nostos* sub-genre of epic.

⁸³ Russo 1992 commenting at *Odyssey* xvii.235-238.

The Nostos Tradition's Answer to the Promise of the Kleos Tradition

A warning against the dangers of the drive of the unmitigated *thumos* comes not only from Tiresias but also from the one person that had been the most driven of all humans by the *thumos* during his life, namely the shade of Achilles. The speech of Achilles, or at least what remains of him after his death, serves to reinforce the *Odyssey's* view of the *thumos* as the drive that pushes heroes to the rejection of their *nostos*, and in doing so it functions as a rebuttal to the claims of the entire *kleos* tradition. It is no accident that after the prophecies of Tiresias in which Odysseus receives an injunction against the heroic drive of the *thumos* for recognition and *kleos*, he should meet with Achilles, the very pinnacle of the *kleos* tradition known for his extreme *thumos* and “un-withering *kleos*.” Odysseus meets the shade of Achilles after his heart-rending encounter with his mother, the parade of famous women, and a commiseration with the shade of Agamemnon. When he first meets Achilles, Odysseus hails him and offers his shade the comfort of the *kleos* tradition by recalling his previous glory and his present station:

... σεῖο δ', Ἀχιλλεῦ,
οὔ τις ἀνήρ προπάροιθε μακάριτερος οὔτ' ἄρ' ὀπίσσω·
 πρὶν μὲν γάρ σε ζῶν ἐτίομεν ἴσα θεοῖσιν
 Ἀργεῖοι, νῦν αὖτε μέγα κρατέεις νεκύεσσιν
ἐνθάδ' ἑών· τῶ μή τι θανῶν ἀκαχίζεω, Ἀχιλλεῦ. (xi.482-486)

... But Achilles,
Not any man is more blessed than you either before or in the future.
 For previously we Argives used to honor you while you were alive equal to the
 gods,
 now in turn you rule the corpses greatly, while you are
in this place. Therefore do not grieve at all over this your having died, Achilles.

Odysseus begins his address to Achilles by telling him that *ou tis*, “not anyone,” is *makarteros*, “more blessed” than he. This could certainly be a high compliment to call his dead companion, in effect, the best man. However, Odysseus himself has gone by the name *outis*, “no one,” in order to trick the Cyclops, who, as we have seen, mirrors the Achilles of the *Iliad* in his appetites. Thus, Odysseus’ greeting begins with a somewhat ambiguously worded address. He then attempts to console Achilles for his “being in this place,” that is Hades, by telling him how he epitomizes the most blessed of men. First, Odysseus claims that while Achilles was “alive” (*zoos*, xi.484), in contrast to his present state, the Achaeans “used to honor” him, here with the verb *tio*, “to respect/honor” (xi.284). Indeed, the honor appropriate to Achilles was a major concern of the *Iliad* and this statement seems to be granting Achilles his due. Yet, the use of the imperfect tense of the verb *tio* in this selection implies that the honoring was in the past and no longer continues into the present. Odysseus’ final evidence of how blessed Achilles is comes in the praise of Achilles’ station in the underworld, namely that he “rules over the corpses” (*krateeis nekuessin*, xi.485). This praise speech, while ambiguous to the degree that it actually praises its addressee, is neatly in line with the dim view of life and the afterlife presented in the *Iliad*. Indeed, Odysseus’ speech is representative of the *kleos* tradition and its attempt not just to offer comfort for the exchange of one’s life for *kleos* in song, but also its encouragement of that ideal. Thus, Odysseus ends his address with a call that Achilles not “grieve” (*akachizeu*, xi.486) merely because he finds himself “having died” (*thanon*, xi.486).

In reply to the words of cold comfort that Odysseus offers the shade of his once great friend, Achilles responds:

ἴμῃ δὴ μοι θάνατόν γε παραύδα, φρίδιμ' Ὀδυσσεῦ.
βουλοίμην κ' ἐπάρουρος ἐὼν θητευέμεν ἄλλω,
 ἀνδρὶ παρ' ἀκλήρῳ, ὃ μὴ βίωτος πολὺς εἴη,
ἢ πᾶσιν νεκύεσσι καταφθιμένοισιν ἀνάσσειν. (xi.488-491)

Do not speak consolingly about death to me, famous Odysseus.
I would rather be a serf attached to the land for another,
 along side a man without portion, for whom there would not be much
livelihood,
than rule over all those corpses having wasted away.

In this short reply to Odysseus' greeting, Achilles manages to dispute the whole of the Iliadic *kleos* tradition and argue that the exchange of his life for an “un-withering *kleos*”—the drive for which, as we have seen in the previous chapter, was his great *thumos*—was a poor trade. He begins by bidding Odysseus, addressed again as *phaidimos*, “famous,” not to try to convince him that death was glorious—Achilles uses the verb *paraudo*, “to speak consolingly” (xi.488). The use of *phaidimos* to refer to Odysseus in this passage marks him as speaking with the voice of the *kleos* tradition. Achilles' use of the verb *paraudo* here implies that he thinks Odysseus is attempting to convince him that his death was desirable or at least to console him falsely. The Iliadic concept that death could be something worth striving for, or that the “un-withering *kleos*” earned from that death is fair reimbursement for the loss of one's life, rings false to the Achilles of the underworld. Achilles then continues his anti-*kleos* tradition diatribe by informing Odysseus just how much he prefers life to death. He claims in parallel indirect statements dependent upon the verb *boulomai*, “to prefer one thing/action to another” (xi.489), that he would rather be the least important living person to the most important dead person. Achilles highlights his position with his use of the verb *kataphthino*, “to waste away completely” (xi.491). Achilles' use of this verb to describe

the realities of death is seemingly ironic since his role as the hero of the *kleos* tradition within the *Iliad* was entirely predicated upon his acceptance of death in order to receive the promise of that tradition, namely a *kleos aphthiton*, “an un-withering *kleos*.” The language that Achilles uses to describe the life that he “would prefer” (*bouloimen*, xi.489) to his position as one that “rules over” (*anassein*, xi.491) the corpses “having wasted away” is more in line with the harsh realities of Hesiod than either the *kleos* or *nostos* sub-genres. Achilles claims that being an *eparouros*, “serf/man attached to the land,” who is *thêteuo*, “serving as a hired laborer,” to another destitute man is better than what any *kleos* has earned him. Indeed, there is no man with less *kleos* than the pitiful farm hand to the man with no *biotos*, “life/livelihood,” that he describes. Thus, in his cameo appearance in the *Odyssey*, as Heubeck astutely notes, Achilles’ “spirit yearns for life with the same vehemence with which it had once yearned for death.”⁸⁴

However, this desire for life that Achilles espouses to Odysseus is not an ironic reversal. Rather, Achilles’ speech is a continuation of the essential theme within the *nostos* tradition to which the *Odyssey* belongs, and suggests that “Achilles’ fate takes on an entirely different character in the *Odyssey* than it does in the *Iliad*: it is a misfortune, not a necessity.”⁸⁵ Thus, this encounter with Achilles moves beyond the admonitions of Tiresias, which merely inform Odysseus how to achieve his *nostos*. It is through this speech that the *nostos* tradition articulates why it is superior to the *kleos* tradition; namely, the promise of an “un-withering *kleos*” that lives beyond the short mortal span of years is a lie, for one’s *kleos* offers no respite from the realities of death. Instead, the

⁸⁴ Heubeck 1988 commenting at *Odyssey* xi.488-503.

⁸⁵ Edwards 1985: 226.

return to one's life and family, the promise of the *nostos* tradition, offers the best profit to its heroes; namely, one achieves a fame based upon his reintegration into home life, which he also gets to enjoy.

Through an extensive examination of the manner in which the *Odyssey* attempts to integrate the terms *gaster* and *thumos* within the figure of Odysseus, we have established the essential preoccupation of the Odyssean epic is the hero's *nostos*, "return home," via the mediated restraint of the heroic drive and the acceptance of the mortal economy of expenditure and wear. We have seen that the *gaster* is representative of the human appetites that maintain life at any cost, but can also threaten to reduce one to a base sustenance-only existence if not integrated with another drive. In opposition, we have seen that the *thumos* is the inhuman appetite to do what mortal men cannot normally accomplish; yet it too has its dangers as the unmitigated *thumos* threatens to deprive Odysseus of the *nostos* he so desperately seeks. The integration of these two disparate appetitive drives, in my estimation, offers us a better understanding of the *nostos* epic sub-genre and the manner in which it engages its competing archaic epic sub-genre, the *kleos* tradition.

Conclusion

But who would listen to another?
Homer is enough for all men.
- Theocritus, XVI.20.1

The relationship between the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, as representatives of competing sub-genres in a larger archaic Greek epic tradition, is one of reciprocal agonistic discourse. These sub-genres—the *kleos* sub-genre in the case of the *Iliad* and the *nostos* sub-genre in the case of the *Odyssey*—engage one another in an agonistic discourse as a means of defining the motivation for their hero and arguing his superiority over that of its competing sub-genre. The manner in which each sub-genre, in defining how its hero is “the best of the Achaeans,” invites the application of its definition against its rival sub-genre: this is the essence of the *agon* between the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.

In the *Iliad*, Achilles is presented as the “best of the Achaeans,” precisely because he exchanges his *nostos* for an “un-withering *kleos*” via his *thumos*’ ability to push him beyond the “mortal economy of expenditure and wear.” Whereas, Odysseus is shown to be unremarkable in his humanity and, thus, not the “best of the Achaeans,” since he keeps his *nostos* via his *gaster*’s keeping him within the bounds of the “mortal economy of expenditure and wear.” At least, this is the case made by the *kleos* sub-genre, but in the *nostos* sub-genre the conditions that mark greatness are reversed. Thus, in the *Odyssey*, Odysseus is presented as the “best of the Achaeans,” because he achieves his *nostos* via his *gaster*’s compelling him to accept the limitations of the “mortal economy of expenditure and wear” and because he contains his *thumos*’ urgings. Achilles, however, is characterized as the best among the dead alone and has removed himself from the possibility of being the “best of the Achaeans,” since at his *thumos*’ urging he

has rejected his *nostos* in favor of *kleos*. Thus, the fundamental preoccupation of each of these two sub-genres of the archaic epic tradition is to establish a different concept of what makes its hero the best hero, and this process elucidates the intertraditional agonistic discourse between them.

In order to trace the entrenched agonistic discourse between the *kleos* and *nostos* sub-genres in the previous chapters, I examined the manner in which the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* employ specific terms, namely *thumos* and *gaster*, to characterize their heroes. These terms are essential for this agonistic discourse because they form contrasting drives, or hungers, for the heroes of both sub-genres. The *thumos*, as far as the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are concerned, is the heroic hunger for great deeds that earn one's fame (*kleos*). The *gaster*, however, is the human hunger for that which sustains mortal life and one's homecoming (*nostos*). Through the careful reading of these terms, as well as a series of secondary terms dealing with "increase" and "decrease," I have traced a mutual use of agonistic discourse between the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.

In demonstrating that the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* engage in a reciprocal agonistic discourse, I contend that these two traditions are equally in contest with each other. This is in opposition to the view that the *Odyssey* is the more recent of the two epics, and thus relies upon the *Iliad*. Instead, it is my argument that, as products of the same competitive performance tradition, the *Odyssey* is not alone in its agonistic competition with the *Iliad*, but rather the *Iliad* is also engaged in an agonistic competition with the *Odyssey*.

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