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Author(s): Elton T. E. Barker and Joel P. Christensen
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Flight Club: The New Archilochus Fragment and its Resonance with Homeric Epic

1. Introducing a Homeric Archilochus

Although many ancient authors aligned Archilochus with Homer, their pairing can seem odd to the modern reader of Plato’s Ion. The difficulty lies in the distinction Socrates makes between «speaking about the same things» (περὶ γε τῶν σὺντόν λέγειν) «but not in the same way» (ἄλλ’ οὐχ ὄμοιως). Some two decades ago Ewen Bowie read Socrates’ words as evidence that elegiac poets, such as Archilochus, drew on the same material (i.e., settings, events, characters) as epic but in a different way (i.e., metre, tone, length). The suggestion that early elegy presented epic material in an extended form has not won wide currency, the major constraint being the scanty nature of the surviving evidence. The recent publication of a new elegiac fragment may be about to change the picture, however, and lead to a re-assessment of early elegy and its relationship to hexameter epic.

1 For their helpful observations and sharp criticism we would like to thank Malcolm Heath and the anonymous reviewers of «md».
2 All translations are our own.
3 For ancient testimony pairing Archilochus with the epic singers, see Tarditi 1968, pp. 3-55. For remnants of ancient scholarly comparisons of Archilochus and Homer, see Slings 1989. On Aristotle’s assessment (Rhet. 2.33.1398a11-17), see Clay 2004, p. 6.
5 West 1974, p. 13 concedes the possibility that some elegy «may be narrative», but restricts it to «historical» situations. For examples of ‘historical’ elegy, see Boedeker, Sider 2001. Bowie 2001 argues that there was narrative elegy, which drew on local history or recent pan-Hellenic events.
The text in question is P.Oxy. LXXIX.4708. Recently identified as Archilochean, it tells the story of Telephos’ rout of the Achaians.¹ Before setting out our analysis, let us first present the text we are using since its unfamiliarity and fragmentary nature requires considerable caution. We use the most recent text and emendations with the kind permission of Dirk Obbink:²

One shouldn’t have to call it weakness and cowardice, having to retreat, if it’s under the compulsion of a god: no, we turned our backs to flee quickly: there exists a proper time for flight. Even once Telephos from Arcadia all by himself put the great army of Argives to flight, and they fled – so greatly was the fate of the gods routing them – powerful spear-men though they were. Fair-flowing Kaikos and the plain of Mysia were

¹ See Obbink 2005. We are grateful to Dr Obbink for a preview of this fragment and his reasons for assigning it to Archilochus in a lecture given to the International Seminar on Literature and Culture in the Ancient Near East and Mediterranean at Venice International University on 9 May 2005 entitled, Last Tangle on Paros: A New Image of Archilochus.

² For the most recent text (which we use), see the on-line version of Obbink 2006b.
stuffed with corpses as they fell. And being slain at the hands of this relentless man, the well-greaved Achaeans turned off with headlong speed to the shore of the much-resounding sea. Gladly did the sons of the immortals and brothers, whom Agamemnon was leading to holy Ilium to wage war, embark on their swift ships. On that occasion, because they had lost their way, they arrived at that shore. And they set upon the lovely city of Teuthras, and there, snorting fury along with their horses, came in distress of spirit. For they thought they were attacking the high-gated city of Troy, but in fact they had their feet on [one word?] Mysia. And Heracles encountered them [the Argives], as he shouted to his brave-hearted son, Telephos, fierce and pitiless in cruel battle, who, inciting evil flight in the Danaans, on that occasion strove as leader in battle to gratify his father.

It is clear from the evidence cited above that the text is far from complete or certain, even given the Herculean efforts of Obbink’s team. The frame gives particular cause for concern: the fragment simply peters out after the second mention of Telephos while the opening statement is the most heavily reconstructed section of all. In fact, a more conservative reading of the first five lines would translate «under the strong compulsion of a god ... call[s] [it] cowardice ... to flee ... flees ... Arcadian] Telephos routed the great army of the Argives...» – which is not much to go on, admittedly. The text we are using, then, relies on careful emendation and represents only one version of the possible reconstructions proposed thus far;1 each choice, of course, influences interpretation.2 Nevertheless, at the time of writing we believe that Obbink’s most recent proposed text, which we quote above, represents the best reconstruction available. Moreover, it will be sufficient for our argument to accept that the fragment discusses flight in two parts: an opening justification for flight gives way to a mythological exemplum drawn from the world of epic, the Telephos myth. Even at its barest outline, a narrative of legitimate flight from battle suggests possible tension with Homer’s tale of the fighting at Troy.

1 Scholars interested in the (re)construction of the text are directed to Obbink 2005. See also Obbink 2006a, Luppe 2006, and West 2006.
2 To take one example, we follow Obbink 2005, p 33 in reading ἀθάνατα as part of the first person plural ending ἄθανατα, which suggests a first person voice introducing the narrative; in the Hesiodic Catalogue, where the Achaeans are similarly sent running to the sea, the verb ἀτρίποντο (Hes. Cat. fr. 169. 14 M.-W.) provides a nice parallel for ἀτρίποντο (4). in the text of Obbink 2006b that we use. Even if a first-person can be identified, whether that voice belongs to the poet ‘Archilochus’ or to one of his characters is debatable, see Nagy 1976. Irwin 1998 assesses the debate over the extent of Archilochian fiction or reality.
As the above example of Plato suggests, writers since antiquity have been quick to talk about Archilochus in relation to Homer, though there has been little agreement as to the nature of the relationship. Archilochus’ language is «traditional from beginning to end»,¹ but his spirit and ethos is «a conscious rejection of the Homeric ideal».² «The language may indeed be largely traditional, but it is the pointed and playful use of the traditional medium which reveals the originality of Archilochus as a poet».³ The similarity in language derives from both poets working within a common tradition⁴ – audiences would have expected traditional motifs and diction.⁵

While not wishing to rehearse these and other arguments further, we believe that the new fragment may shed new light on the question of the relationship between Homer and Archilochus. Much of the language of this fragment is undoubtedly Homeric, which is to say, it is familiar to us from Homer. In his editio princeps, Dirk Obbink exhaustively lists the linguistic and thematic parallels between this fragment and Homeric epic. The catalogue is impressive and suggests a close encounter of some kind – but of what nature? As Don Fowler notes:

Classicists have always been concerned with ‘parallels’ – with what goes after the magic word ‘cf.’... What has not been clear with the traditional citation of parallel passages is what the point of the activity is, how the parallels affect the interpretation of the text.⁶

Fowler himself objects to the idea of ‘allusion’ to describe that process since it seems to him to limit the reader’s role to identifying authorial intention:⁷ in the case of Archilochus, that often entails making arbitrary judgements on which words or phrases were ‘Homeric’ or not depending on whether the critic thinks that Archilochus is alluding to Homer or not.⁸ Yet, Fowler’s proposed

² Dover 1964, p. 196. For Archilochus as embodying archaic poetry’s new wave, see: Jaeger 1965; Fränkel 1975; Snell 1980; and Russo 1974.
³ Seidensticker 1978, p. 10.
⁴ Adkins 1985, p. 122 argues that early elegiac poets employ a vocabulary that is «almost exclusively Homeric». See also Page 1964, Campbell 1976. Rankin 1977, p. 43 proposes that Archilochus uses language that was «integral to poetry at the time» only to turn it to «a new direction».
⁷ Page 1964, pp. 34-41 argues that claims of allusion should be limited to shared phrases. Renehan 1983, however, posits cases where single words may be equally
alternative method – ‘intertextuality’ – is equally problematic in the context of Archilochus. It not just the fact that, as Fowler puts it, «We can’t have intertextuality because we don’t really have ‘texts’»;¹ rather it is the kind of interpretive model that this theory implies, which is tied to the idea of close reading and searching for quotation. Our central question, when approaching the new fragment, is whether this is the best way of describing the process of interpreting Archilochus.

The new fragment neatly demonstrates the pitfalls of either of these text-based approaches. In lines 8-9 of the Archilochus fragment, the narrative describes how «fair-flowing Kaikos and the plain of Mysia were stuffed with corpses as they fell» (ἐφηρείτης δὲ Καίκος ἐπὶ τῶν νεκών στείνετο καὶ [πεδίον] / Μυσίων 8-9). The image recalls the beginning of Iliad 21, where Achilles’ mass slaughter of the Trojans stuffs the «fair-flowing» (ἐφηρείος) Xanthos with groaning corpses (τῶν δὲ στόνος ὄρνιτ’ ἀεικής / ἄφι θεινομένων ἐρυθάνετο δ’ αἵματι ὕδωρ, II. 21.21). But, as far as an actual ‘quotation’ is concerned, the language of falling corpses (with the same unusual present tense of πίτω) points rather to Iliad 10.199-200, where the ground of the falling corpses (νεκών διεφάνετο χώρας / πιπτόντων). We do not wish to deny the possibility that the Archilochian text alludes to the specific passage of Iliad 10 here; but we find that reading unnecessarily may reductive for two reasons. First, allusion or intertextuality may deprive the Archilochean image of the lone warrior of several levels of reference, even though the figure who puts a whole army to flight and whose slaughter chokes waters of a fair-flowing river with corpses clearly evokes the action of Achilles in the climactic scenes of battle in the Iliad. Second, it assumes a one-to-one correspondence between texts, one, moreover, that has Archilochus referencing Homer; it is equally possible, however, that the passage in the Iliad describing the ground amid the «falling corpses» is itself presenting a provocative variation on the theme of the choked river.

We believe that the above example from Archilochus is sufficiently ambiguous to challenge the usual approach of describing his relationship to Homer in purely literary terms as the debt between two authors or, for that matter, the interplay between texts.

¹ Fowler 2000, pp. 131-132.
A more promising alternative, we suggest, is provided by the oral traditional theory recently articulated by John Miles Foley. Building on Milman Parry’s proposal that the Iliad and Odyssey derived from a generations-old technique of verse-making, Foley explores the dynamics of an oral context, in which, he explains, it is better to think of a ‘word’, not as something visually defined by white space on a page, but as a unit of utterance. If one extended this way of thinking about a ‘word’ to broader notions such as ‘theme’ or even ‘narrative’, then it would be possible to conceive of poems moulded out of entirely traditional words, phrases or even story-patterns, which could be put to use in any number of different ways according to the demands or aims of each individual composition or bard. Furthermore, each sound-byte invites recognition of other examples beyond the specific instance – a process Foley labels ‘traditional referentiality’ – with the result that the collective tradition as a whole resonates through each and every particular example of a unit of utterance, whether that is conceived of as a word, phrase, motif or story-pattern.

There are several advantages of such an approach to reading Archilochus. First, it turns attention away from attempts to uncover Archilochus’ intention in using Homeric language to exploring how a particular Homeric word or theme may be heard in the different context of an Archilochean poem. Second, it stresses the rivalry between alternative narrative traditions, each competing in a crowded market place to be heard. Both points may be demonstrated by considering arguably the most striking ‘Homerism’ in our fragment, the phrase «much resounding sea» (πολυφωνοῦ τοῦ θαλάσσης). Occurring elsewhere in the Archilochian corpus (fragment 13W), it has been described as «the most unmistakable Homeric phrase in the poem» or as coming «ready-made» from epic. Indeed, the phrase is memorable from Homer for good reason: it occurs right at the start of the Iliad, when Chryses silently retreats to the shoreline (ll. 1.34); the movement of a figure to the shoreline prefigures Achilles’ own withdrawal from the fighting.

1 Foley 1997, pp. 151-153. With the use of the term «resonance» below, we draw especially on the discussions found in Grazier, Haubold 2005.
3 As Scodel 2002, p. 32 puts it: «Traditionality does not depend entirely on objective tradition. It is a cultural construct, the social memory of the past».
4 See, especially, Foley 1990, pp. 13-34.
5 τοῖος γὰρ κατὰ κύμα πολυφωνοῦ θαλάσσης, fr. 13.3 W.
an association that develops through the recurrence of the formula as Achilles sits apart from everyone else before the arrival of the embassy (II. 9.182) or as he mourns the death of Patroclus (II. 23.59); the particular charge of this formula is felt by its two occurrences in the Odyssey, where it is employed to brand its hero’s Achilles-like isolation, even as Odysseus succeeds in the first steps of achieving nostas.1 Therefore, though it comes as no surprise that Archilochean critics label this phrase ‘Homerian’, it is important to note that it resonates through all of these examples with the idea of the epic hero’s marginalisation from his society.2 As we shall see, this unit of utterance in our Archilochus fragment combines with other phrases and motifs to construct a resonant pattern on the theme of marginalisation or, in this case more pointedly, of retreat from battle.

A third advantage of resonance involves rival texts or traditions. A generation ago Bernd Seidensticker provocatively suggested that Odysseus was a kind of «poetic ancestor of and possible model for Archilochus».3 While we find his suggestion stimulating, we believe that it is predicated on a hierarchical model that sees an Archilochus as solely derivative from a Homer. Instead, using the concept of resonance we posit competing poetic traditions, which deploy a common store of words, phrases and motifs in different registers.4 That is to say, we leave open the idea that the Homeric epics themselves are playing off other poetic traditions, including that represented by this Archilochus fragment.

Our proposal is that the new fragment constructs a ‘personal voice’ distinct from the perspective of the Homeric narrator and

1 As the Phaeacian ship approaches Ithaca (Od. 13.85) Odysseus laments, ignorant of the fact that he has reached his homeland (Od. 13.320).
2 Two other examples of this formula occur in similes describing the chaos of marshalling for the assembly or for battle (at II. 2.209 and 13.798), where Achilles’ absence is a felt presence in the narrative. The last example more directly evokes the idea of marginalisation, as Helen wishes she had died rather than having come to Troy (II. 6.347). Of other examples in epic, Hesiod’s Works and Days is particularly pointed. The narrator tells his brother Perses, «I’ll show you the measures of the much-resounding sea (δείξω δή τοι μέτρα πολυφλοίσβοι θαλάσσης, Hes. Op 648), after which, having provocatively admitted to having no skill in sea-faring, he nevertheless implies that he knows more about the sea than the Achaeans of the epic tradition (Op. 650-653). Graziosi 2002, pp. 168-171 reads this passage as «Hesiod’s competitive stance towards heroic epic» (170). For Hesiod at least, the phrase πολυφλοίσβοι θαλάσσης is one key measure of the Homeric epic tradition. Cf. h.Merc. 341; h.Ven. 4.
3 Seidensticker 1978, p. 15.
a narrative that glories in flight and the indefinitely delayed destruction of Troy.¹ But this narrative not only engages with the Homeric presentation of the flight at Troy by projecting what may be regarded as a consistent anti-Iliadic strategy; it is also markedly Odyssean in register; in addition, the Odyssey itself engages in the debate.² In our first section, then, we explore scenes from the Iliad in which the spectre of flight is set against the backdrop of the sack of Troy. We examine speeches by various Achaean heroes on the issue of flight, concentrating in particular on the leader of the coalition forces, Agamemnon, and the hero of the rival tradition, Odysseus. Our aim is to show that this fragment reflects one version of a discussion about flight or flight that is present and on-going in the Iliad. In our second section, we analyse comparable scenes from the Odyssey as evidence that this exploration extends far beyond the bounds of any one representation. Rather, we suggest that our fragment appropriates the motif of deliberation on flight or flight as an entry point into an interpoetic ‘play’ or competition that projects an Odyssean voice consistent with other fragments of Archilochus. Such an analysis, we suggest, is mutually elucidative insofar as it sheds light on our understanding both of the new Archilochus and of the production of meaning in the Homeric epics.

¹ While we concentrate on Homeric resonances, the fragment’s relationship to Hesiod could also be significant. The Catalogue of Women (Hes. fr. 165 M.-W.) presents a link between a Hesiodic theogonic world and a Homeric hero-scape, as a world of gods gives way to the world of men, and shares many similarities with the new Archilochus fragment: see [n. 2 on p. 11, n. 2 on p. 19 and n. 1 on p. 33].

² In the following discussion we endeavour to use a consistent set of terms that, to our mind, best explains the new fragment’s relationship with the wider epic tradition: Iliadic to denote the narrative tradition and the values promoted by the kind of tale of the war at Troy that the Iliad presents (e.g. the focus on Achilles’ wrath and kleos); unifyiadic an idea or strategy not championed by our Iliad (or its tradition as defined above); anti-Iliadic an idea or strategy antagonistic to our Iliad (and its tradition); finally, Odyssean the narrative tradition and the values promoted by the kind of tale of the return from Troy that the Odyssey presents (e.g. the focus on Odysseus’ return and kleos). While we have been benefited from the comments of other scholars (Kirkwood 1974 calls Archilochus’ attitude anti-Homeric, Seidensticker 1978, p. 10 «un-Iliadic»), we believe these terms to be more thorough in their approach and more nuanced. Certainly, the term ‘heroic’ is too imprecise, given Odysseus’ (and the Odyssey’s) very different version of normative behaviour.
2. READING THE NEW ARCHILOCUS AS AN ‘ANTTI-ILIADIC’ 
FLIGHT TO THE SHIPS

2.1. «LET’S GIVE UP ON TROY»: AGAMEMNON’S FLIGHTS TO THE SHIPS

In the Iliad flight from battle appears risky to the individual warrior and is usually represented as a shameful act. Arguably, the clearest articulation of this relationship is made by the leader of the coalition force, Agamemnon (Il. 5.528-532):

«... δί κάθε καλλίς, κομματιάνοικο»

Friends, be men and choose a brave heart—shame one another through the strong battles: when men have shame, more men are safe than killed, no kleos arises for men who flee nor is there valour.

In this rallying call Agamemnon sets receiving «fame» (κλέος) and having «courage» (άληχή) as antithetical to flight: a man who flees not only brings shame upon himself but also fails to receive kleos. In other speeches a man who flees is a «coward» (κακός) and flight is «weak» (άναλκτος φύλαξ).

Nevertheless, Agamemnon appears as a voice advocating flight three times. The most infamous occasion occurs at the beginning of book two when, in response to Zeus’ false dream, Agamemnon ‘tests’ his men: he invites them to abandon the war and return home. The response is immediate and conclusive: to a man they rush to the ships! The speech is repeated at the beginning of book nine, this time in all earnestness as Agamemnon desairs of taking Troy.

1 With the exception of the first line this speech is repeated by Telamonian Ajax (Il. 15.561-564).
2 Janko 1992, p. 200 relates this passage to Tyrt. fr. 11.11-14.
3 Il. 8.91-96 and 15.62 respectively. In the introductory lines to one of the most important books of the epic, «flight» (φύλαξ) is characterised as «divine» (θεσπεσίη) with a painful grip on the Achaean (Il. 9.1-3).
4 Nestor accepts Agamemnon’s dream with qualification («If any other Achaean had reported this dream, we would call him a liar», Il. 2.79-83). Agamemnon’s plan to test the Achaean (πρύτα δ’ ἐγών ἐπέσαν πειράσεσαι, δ’ ἑστίν ἑστίν. / καὶ φύλαται σὺν νησί), volkzeugv. Καλεό, Il. 2.75-84) goes unmentioned.
5 Il. 2.110-41. On Agamemnon’s loss of control and the importance of the laos in Homer, and Agamemnon’s problematic relationship with it, see Haubold 2000, pp. 55-9. Morrison 1992, pp. 39-43 reads the scenes of potential leave-taking as the narrator «exploring the ways in which the story line could be upset» (60).
6 Il. 9.16-49. See Lynn-George 1988, pp. 81 ff.
Both speeches share remarkable similarities with the new Archilochus fragment. First, the Achaeans’ failure to take Troy – or rather the present unreality of a destroyed Troy – which surfaces in line 20 of the fragment (Ἀγαμέμνων ἀπὸ ὑπερτοῦρον Ἰαμάκαριον αἰολίταρον) motivates Agamemnon’s call to retreat. Second, just as the fragment presents Telephos routing a «great army» (Ἀργείων ἐφόδησε πολὴν στρατιῶν), 6, so Agamemnon laments that he will return home ill-famed because he destroyed a «great host» (ἐπεὶ πολὺν ἠλέσα λαὸν). Third, Agamemnon’s proposed flights either mention the shame of retreat or else provoke mention of it from an interlocutor. In book two Agamemnon laments that their retreat in the face of a smaller force would be a shameful thing for men to speak of (II. 2.119-120). When he actually intends that they retreat in book nine, Diomedes sternly upbraids him for being «without sense» (ἄφραδής) and for not exhibiting «courage» (ἄλκη), especially given the fact that – as Diomedes pointedly remarks – he had previously rebuked others for being «unwarlike and weak» (ἀπτόλεμος καὶ ἀναλικές). 3 The new Archilochus fragment begins with similar language of cowardice. 4 Lastly, an analogue to the fragment’s divine compulsion (θεοῦ κρατηρῆς ὑπ’ ἀνάγκης) 2; ἥ τόσα δὴ μοίρα θεῶν ἐφόδης (7) appears in the preface to each of Agamemnon’s speeches. 5

The association of divine will with flight recurs in the Iliad, when the narrator explains why Patroclus failed to follow Achilles’ advice and not pursue the Trojans (II. 16.688-691):

1 οὐ γὰρ ἠτίνιν ἀκρίβειον εὑρώτατον, II. 2.141 = 9.28.
2 II. 2.115 = 9.22. Another interesting parallel relating the new fragment to Agamemnon’s speech (II. 2.110-141) is the unfavourable comparison between the numerical superiority of the speaker’s army and the smaller size of his victorious adversary. In fact, this is the very root of Agamemnon’s strategy, which emphasises that it would be a subject of shame were such an army to flee (ἀιγυπτών γὰρ τόδε γ’ ἔστι καὶ δυσμένους πυθέσθαι) / μάχες τοιούτες τοσόνδε τε λαὸν Ἀχιλλῶν, II. 2.119-120).
3 Diomedes reworks Agamemnon’s earlier diction when he had attempted to rally Idomeneus (II. 4.257-264), Odysseus (338-348), and Diomedes himself (370-400).
4 Our fragment evokes the language of cowardice from its very beginning: [οὐ χρῆ] ἄγαθος καὶ κακόθεντα λέγειν v. 3. In his reconstruction of line 19, Obbink 2005, p. 37 proposes [ἀ]ἐρπ[αί[θ]ς: «without thought», which recalls Diomedes’ language when standing up to Agamemnon (ὅτα πρῶτα μαχησόμεθα ἀφραδεῖσθαι). II. 9.32. In fact, Nestor has already told Agamemnon that if he does not take Troy, it would be because of «cowardice or thoughtlessness in war» (ἢ ἀνδρῶν κακότητι καὶ ἀφραδείᾳ πολάμου, II. 2.368): our fragment appears to make both points in its defence of flight.
5 II. 2.111-113 = 9.18-20:

Ζείμι με μέγαν Κρονίδης ἀτη ἐνέδωγε τραυμα, σχέδιον, δις πρὸν μέν μοι ύπόερχετο καὶ κατένεισιν Ἡλιον ἐκπέρασαν εὐτείχους ἀπονέεσθαι.
But always is the mind of Zeus stronger than men; even the brave man he sends in flight and deprives him of victory easily, but whenever he urges him on to fight then he also puts heart in his chest.  

At this highly charged moment, the narrator sums up the situation for mortals in the Iliad: the tides of battle are changeable; Zeus can make the brave man flee and whomever he wishes victorious. Seen from this perspective we may better understand the fragment’s problematic juxtaposition «and brave men fled» (οἳ δὲ φέξοντο) / ἔλκυομεν 6-7) as a similar expression of divine influence on the battlefield.  

The narrator apostrophises Patroclus as a fool (νήπιος, 16.686) because he has not heeded Achilles’ advice to turn back; but he also expresses a notion suppressed throughout the Iliad – sometimes flight is necessary. Therefore, while we ought to distinguish between voluntary flight and flight under compulsion in the Iliadic world, an important part of the rhetoric of arguing for flight is the elision between these two states. Agamemnon argues for compulsion even when he makes the choice to leave, in order to create the illusion of necessity and so distance himself from the shame of cowardice. Hence, while being routed would seem to be different from deliberate retreat or a tactical withdrawal, the discourse of flight tends to elide the distinction.

Agamemnon’s last call for flight occurs at the beginning of book fourteen, when the Achaeans are at their most desperate: many of the leading figures have been wounded; their walls have been breached; Hector is threatening to set fire to the ships. Agamemnon calls his privy council and proposes that they escape immediately with the ships they have, wait until dusk, and then return to salvage what they can for their return home (II. 14.65-81).

1 These words are repeated, with the exception of the final line, by Hector (II. 17.176-179).

2 Only the Trojans are called ἔλκυομεν in the Iliad (II. 11.483, 21.586); otherwise it describes a heart that belongs to a man who fights and does not flee, i.e., a «brave heart» (II. 5.529, 16.209, 16.264, 17.111, 20.169, 21.572), which appears in elegy: Callin. fr. 1.1.10; Tyrt. 10.17.24; Anacreon fr. 81.1. In the Hesiodic Catalogue the Achaeans are described as being routed by Telephus with a form of the same verb φέξοντο (με-φαοτόνην), Hes. Cat. fr. 165.20 M.-W.)
The way Agamemnon frames his plan here draws on and reuses the language of flight. He begins by asserting that their «bad luck» is divinely caused or sanctioned: their wall has been to little avail (II. 14.69-66). Agamemnon names Zeus as the god at fault, repeating his earlier claim that it was «dear to over-awing Zeus, I suppose».¹ Now, however, his advocacy of flight receives new emphasis in connection with the Achaeans’ continued suffering.² He caps his speech with a gnomic statement (II. 14.80-81):

οὐ γὰρ τις νέμεις φυγεῖν κακόν, οὐδὲ ἀνὰ νῦντα.
βέλτερον δὲ φεύγων προφύγῃ κακόν ἕξ ἀλώη

«For there is no shame in fleeing evil, not at night. It is better that someone escapes evil by fleeing than be caught.»

In this strikingly 'unheroic' statement Agamemnon appears directly to answer the accusation of cowardice and threat of shame articulated by Diomedes:³ playing on the semantics of κακός, Agamemnon argues that, while it may be cowardly to flee, their suffering and possible capture is evil.⁴ Moreover, the collocation of three forms of φεύγω in two lines parallels the unreconstructed φυγεῖν φεύγ(ειν) of our fragment’s line four. As a justification for flight by the leader of the Achaeans, this passage is almost unique in the Iliad, but it rhetorically depends on the belief that, under certain conditions, flight is necessary.⁵

Clearly trying to forestall the response he suffered in book nine, Agamemnon claims that there can be no rebuke for this proposal. Nevertheless, he is answered, this time by Odysseus, who criticises

² Whereas in his previous versions he claimed that Zeus «bound him with heavy blindness» (Ζεὺς μὲ μέγα Κρονίδης δέτι ἐνέθεσε βαιρέθη, II. 2.111 = 9.18), here he depicts Zeus as binding the group as a whole: «He has bound our fury and hands» (ἡμέτερον δὲ μένος καὶ γείτρας ἔθησαν, II. 14.73).
⁴ As a parallel for this gnomic expression, Janko 1992, p. 159 cites a fragment of Menander: ἄναρ ἡ φεύγων καὶ πάλιν μαχοῦται (Μ., 56).
⁵ One may also point to the example of Nestor who, stranded by the death of his charioteer, commands Diomedes to help him flee (II. 8.137-158). Diomedes responds that Nestor has spoken κατὰ μοίραν, but fears that Hector will boast that he routed Tydeus’ son (Τυδείδης ὑπ’ ἐμέοι φοβεύμενος ἐκείνον νῆς 8.149). Nestor disabuses Diomedes of his fears: Hector may say he is a coward and weakening (κακόν καὶ ἄνάλληλον 8.153) but the wives of the men Diomedes killed will not believe (οὐ πείσονται 8.154) him. Here Nestor appropriates the language of shame to deny its validity.
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Agamemnon for making such a proposal when he is their leader,¹ questions his account of their suffering,² and bluntly tells him to «shut up» (σίγα). Taken together, Agamemnon’s series of speeches and the responses by Diomedes and Odysseus – not to mention the troops en masse – weigh the merits of flight under compulsion with the consequent attraction of shame and ill-repute. This dialogic encounter raises the possibility of ‘unheroic’ behaviour, only for the norms of the Iliadic world to be reasserted.

The new Archilochus fragment resonates with these ideas. It begins with the rejection of cowardice: to retreat when under divine compulsion does not amount to cowardly behaviour but belongs to some other category – the stance taken by Agamemnon in his last speech on the subject in book fourteen. In support of this proposition, the fragment presents an account that draws on Homeric or, to be more precise, Iliadic diction and themes. In particular, the sacking of Troy stands as an unreal condition in the Iliad’s narrative: the fall of Troy is not the story that the Iliad will tell, however much Agamemnon wills it;³ in the elegy we are told that the Achaeans suffer while attacking the wrong city. Agamemnon appears as a central figure in both.⁴

A telling absence – so far as we may judge from a fragment – however, is any mention of fame. In his speeches from books two and nine Agamemnon announces that he will return «ill-famed» (δυσκλέα) because of his failure;⁵ in book fourteen he complains that Zeus has decided that the Achaeans will perish «nameless» (νωμόμενος) at Troy.⁶ The discourse of kleos, at home in the Iliadic struggle before Troy, is ill-fit to this apologetics of retreat: Agamemnon mentions it because he must: he is, even if poorly, an Iliadic man. In what is currently known of Archilochan poetry, however, epic fame is a concept distant from the vicissitudes of bat-

¹ Since it is ruinous (οὐλόμεν', II. 14.84) – the same participle used to describe Achilles’ rage at the beginning of the epic (II. 1.2) – and fit for some other, «unseemly» army (ἀπεκέλιον στρατοῦ ἄλλου).
² «Do you really mean to abandon the wide-wayed city of the Trojans, on whose account we have suffered many things?» (οὔτε δὴ μέμνονας Τραβῶν πόλιν εὑρέσκειν / ναῦλείσθαιν, ἧς σήμεε' διώσκομεν κακὰ πολλὰ, II. 14.88-89).
⁴ That is, according to the text of Obbink 2004, p. 36; Obbink 2006a, p. 2; and Obbink 2006b.
⁵ δυσκλέα Ἀργος, ἐπεὶ πολὺν ἔλεγα λαὸν, II. 2.115 = 0.22.
⁶ νωμόμενος ἀπολάσθαι ἃπτ’ Ἄργαν εὐθαδ’ Ἀχαιοῖς, II. 14.70. When Menelaus is injured in book four, Agamemnon also blames Zeus and worries about negative fame as he imagines departing without having conquered Troy (II. 4.155-182).
tle. In the exemplum presented by our fragment it is all right for the poetic voice to advocate flight, just as it was all right for the Achaeans to flee when they suffered while attacking the wrong city.¹

These parallels, operating on the levels of diction, theme and narrative, may be viewed as traditional elements of a discourse on flight that is shared by various ‘genres’ or performance contexts.² For example, similar diction and argument can be found in the martial poetry of Tyrtaeus and Callinus.³ The Iliad’s prolonged and nuanced presentation of the problem may, in fact, imply that the poem as we have it is itself drawing on, engaging with and reworking material from competing poems and traditions. To investigate this last claim more fully we turn to consider its representation of the hero from the rival tradition, Odysseus.

2. 2. «Should I stay or should I go?»: Odysseus addresses his heart

While Agamemnon represents the character in the Iliad who most often worries about flight before Troy has fallen, we would be remiss to imply that the Iliadic response to the question of ‘fight or flight’ is univocal. Significantly, the one Achaeān character to enter the debate on flight in the Iliad more than once besides Agamemnon is Odysseus.⁴

His presence and purpose in the Iliad is notable for his many appearances as a restorer of order or as a proxy for Agamemnon – he must halt the Achaeans’ disastrous flight to the ships after

¹ In two elegiac fragments (11 W. and 13 W.) Archilochus appears to criticise mourning, not because it is intrinsically bad, but because it detracts from pleasure. Part of his lyric voice, then, is opposed to epic evaluations of death and fame. That is not to say, however, that kleos lacks importance in elegy in general: see Stehle 2001 for elegiac variations on kleos.

² We use the term ‘genre’ for ease of expression. We accept, however, the critique of ‘genre’ by Nagy 1990 who posits that «the very concept of genre becomes necessary only when the occasion for a given speech-act, that is for a poem or song, is lost» (362 n. 127, his italics). See also Most 2000.

³ Callin. fr. 1; Tyrr. fr. 10, 11, 12 and 19. Shame appears to be an important concept throughout elegiac poetry that shifts in expression and significance according to the strategies of each poem: Minn. fr. 1; Sol. fr 3, 32; Thgn. 1.29-30, 85-86.

⁴ Flight for the Trojans is different. For example, when faced by Achilles Agenor contemplates flight in two directions (either to the city or along the shoreline) but decides that he will not be able to escape Achilles’ supreme speed (Il. 21.333-370). Instead, surmising that Achilles is mortal, and, at least conceptually, defeatable Agenor decides to face him. Agenor’s deliberation brings to light the contrastive circumstances of the Trojans in this debate, they have no where to run. For another scene of Trojan self-deliberation, see Il. 22.98-130 where Hector considers options other than fighting (namely, making a truce with Achilles).
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Agamemnon's failed test. Yet Odysseus, the wily hero who stars in a rival epic, can appear somewhat out of place in the Iliadic world of martial prowess and anger. A later episode, for example, reveals Odysseus in a rather different light. Prior to being advised by Nestor to retreat, Diomedes appeals to Odysseus for help and calls upon him to stop running away. But, Homer relates, «the long-suffering divine-like Odysseus didn’t heed him, but rushed to the hollow ships of the Achaeans» (οὐδ’ ἔσκουσε πολύτλας Ὀδυσσέας, ἀλλὰ παρῆλθεν κοίλας ἐπὶ νῆας Ἀχαιῶν, II. 8.97-98). The substitute-Achilles at this point in the Iliad tries to remind Odysseus of his duty and keep him in line with the ethics of this epic – but fails: Odysseus carries on regardless in his own personal flight to the ships.

After the wounding and retreat of Agamemnon, Odysseus himself takes up the issue of flight (II. 11.404-410):

οὐ μην ἐγὼ, τί πάθω; μέγα μὲν κακίνως αὐτες φέρωμαι
πληθὺς ταρβήσας, τὸ δὲ βίτον αὐτὲν ἄλλως
μοῦνος· τοὺς δ’ ἄλλους Δαναόων ἐφόβησεν Κρόνιων,
ἀλλὰ τὴν μου ταύτα φίλος διελέξατο θυμός;
οὐδ’ γὰρ ὧτι κακοὶ μὲν ἀποίχονται πολέμου,
δὲ δὲ ἄρσετεύσῃ μάχη ἐνι, τὸν δὲ μάλα χρεώ
ἐστάμεναι κρατερῶς, ἢ τ’ ἔβιλητ’ ἢ τ’ ἐβαλ’ ἄλλον.

O my, what is to happen to me? It will be a great evil if I flee fearing the multitude, but it would be worse if I am captured alone. Kronion has routed the rest of the Danaans. Yet why does my dear heart debate these things? For I know that cowards depart from war, and there is especially a need for whoever is best in battle to stand strongly, and either strike or be struck.  

1 For a discussion of Odysseus’ role within the Iliad see: Nagy 1979 and Haft 1990.
2 At II. 19.217-219 Odysseus admits that he is not as deft with the spear as Achilles, but claims for himself intelligence and planning; on the other hand, Achilles admits that he is not as good as others in debate (II. 18.106). Odysseus arguably plays his greatest role in the fighting in book ten – the so-called ‘Doloneia’ – which from antiquity has been suspected as an interpolation: see Hainsworth 1993, pp. 151-155. Though we do not agree, that judgement presumably has something to do with what we would perceive as its Odyssean spirit.
3 II. 8.91-96. There is some dispute as to whether Odysseus fails to hear or fails to heed Diomedes’ words: see Kirk 1990, p. 306. On Diomedes as a second Achilles, see, for example, Lohmann 1970, p. 221, and Griffin 1983, pp. 74-75.
4 An admission of the equal possibility of triumph or defeat seems to be an essential trope of the ‘heroic’ ethic as expressed by Sarpedon (ἑομεν, ἢ τῷ εὐχός δρέξομεν, ἢ τῷ ἡμῖν, II. 12.328) or Heius (ἐχθομεν ὑπυτερφον κεν Ὄλυμποις εὐχός δρέξη, II. 22.130).
The option of fleeing or being caught looks forward to Agamemnon’s crisis in book 14: Odysseus actually admits that it would be worse («more horrible», βίγγον) if he were caught. But then he checks himself: he knows that those who hold back from war are cowards. Eventually, his commitment to the Iliadic warrior ethic wins out. Odysseus, hesitating between fight or flight, discerns the ‘correct’ choice for the Iliad and acts accordingly.

In this passage, then, Odysseus conforms to an Iliadic standard of behaviour: he raises the prospect of retreat only to dismiss it.¹ It is important, nevertheless, to observe a difference between the ways in which this issue is explored in our examples: whereas Agamemnon very publicly raises the question of flight, Odysseus addresses himself and himself alone.² As if he were rehearsing arguments he has heard before he uses the verb for debate (διελέξατο); then he continues with the argument that is ‘correct’ in the current context. Odysseus’ explicit articulation of the disfavoured alternative, usually suppressed in the Iliad, suggests his potential dissent from that narrative’s normative agenda. Here one gets a glimpse of the protagonist from the other epic, the wily hero who says one thing while keeping another hidden in his heart.³ Equally important for our study is the language Odysseus appropriates. He contemplates the terrible fate of being left ‘alone’ on the battlefield, which he expresses by the enjambment of μοῦνος and by positioning it next to the object of comparison τοὺς δ’ ἀλλους; these «others» a god – he assumes (correctly) – has put to flight. Both elements – being alone in battle and the adverse activity of a god – recur in the new

¹ On the ‘heroic code’, including Odysseus’ vacillation here, Morrison 1992, p. 146 n. 5 writes: ‘The hero, considering other modes of behaviour, provides a model for Homer, a traditional poet in many ways, who contemplates alternatives to the traditional story line.’ By ‘heroic’ we take Morrison to mean the normative agenda which characters within the Iliad project. ‘Iliadic’ may be a more fruitful term, since ‘heroism’ looks rather different from the perspective of the Odyssey.

² On four occasions heroes address themselves with the same line (ἄλλα τίν μοι ταύτα φίλος διελέξατο θυμός;): Menelaus (II. 17.97), Agamemnon (21.582), Hector (22.122) and Achilles (22.385); cf. Zeus (II. 17.201-208, 443-455); all question a potential course of action that is either impossible or ruinous. Odysseus’ example is exceptional because he is questioning not the personal danger of his option (he is actually considering running from danger) but the social import of his behaviour.

³ To paraphrase Achilles (ἐγκρόα γὰρ μοι κείνος ὅμως Ἀλκε πύλησεν ἐκέραν, ἄλλο δὲ εἴπη, ἰ. 9.312-313). His words are a direct response to Agamemnon’s offer; but given that Odysseus had been the one to present that offer, the judgement does seem pointedly aimed at the hero of the rival tradition.
Archilochus fragment, with a twist: the man «alone» is the sole cause of our narrator’s flight.1 The contrast, certainly, is telling. With a god at your side, you can, all by yourself, rout entire armies; without one (or with one working against you), you should consider running away.

Further light may be shed on Odysseus’ example if we consider the close parallel of Menelaus’ self-deliberation over the corpse of Patroclus (II. 17.91-105):

ω μοι ἐγὼν εἰ μέν κε λίπω κάτα τεύχεα καλά
Πάτρουκλών 9’, ὡς κεῖται ἐμῆς ἕκκ’ ἐνθάδε τιμῆς,
μὴ τίς μοι Δαναῶν νεμοσήσεται ὃς κεῖν ἰδηταί.
εἰ δέ κεν Ἐκτορι μοῦνος ἐν ναί. Τρωοῖ μάχομαι
ἀδέσφείς, μὴ πάς με περιστήμων ἕνα πολλοῖ.
Τρώας 8’ ἐνθάδε πάντας ἀγνει κορυδαιόλος Ὀκτωρ.
ἀλλὰ τι ἢ μοι ταύτα φίλος διελέξατο θυμός;
ὅπποτ’ ἀνήρ ἡθέλη πρὸς δαίμονα φωτί μάχεσθαι
ὁν κε θεός τιμᾷ. τάχα οἱ μέγα πῆμα κυλίσθη,
τῶ μ’ ὡς τίς Δαναῶν νεμοσήσεται ὃς κεῖν ἰδηταί
’ Ἐκτορι χωρίσοντοι, ἐπεὶ ἐκ θεόφνον πολεμίζει.

Alas, if I leave behind the shining arms and Patroclus, who lies there for the sake of my honour, won’t any Danaan who sees this chide me? But if, as I am alone, I fight Hector and the Trojans because I am ashamed, won’t so many surround just one? And bright-helmed Hector is driving all the Trojans here. But really, why does my dear heart discuss these things? Whenever a man wants to fight against a divine mortal whom the god honours, great grief is soon his. Thus, no Danaan who sees me retreating from Hector will reproach me, since he fights because of the gods.

Menelaus’ solitary deliberation resonates with Odysseus’ crisis and the new Archilochus fragment in several important ways. He constructs a scenario in which he is the sole combatant (μοῦνος ἐνων 94) against a god-inspired assailant (πρὸς δαίμονα 98, ὃν κε θεός τιμᾷ 99 and ἐκ θεόφνον 101) in contrast to Odysseus’ reflections, Menelaus faces a situation closest to that sketched out in the fragment’s

1 The reconstruction in Obbink 2006a, p. 2, and Obbink 2006b, besides invoking the magnitude of the Achaean forces, denotes their adversary Telephos as «being alone» (ὑμοῦνος ἐνων 5), a reading ascribed in Obbink 2005, p. 34 to M. 1. West. One can find parallels for the reconstruction not only in hexameter epic (Agamemnon describes Tydeus as «being alone» among the Cadmeids (II. 4.388); Menelaus imagines himself «alone» facing Hector (II. 17.94); cf. Od. 2.36; 3.217; 20.30, 40; 23.38), but also in early elegy: see the references to Callinus in [n. 2 on p. 19 and n. 3 on p. 22]. In his paper Homeric Idealism, presented at the July 2005 Triennial Conference in Cambridge, S. D. Goldhill argued that the occurrences of «μοῦνος» in the Odyssey were highly charged.
reconstruction: an opponent, spurred by divine favour, makes him consider retreat. He even begins his speech with a motif familiar to readers of Archilochian elegy, the abandonment of arms (λίπω κάτα τεύχεα καλά 91).

Yet, there are a series of notable divergences from the Archilochus fragment too. Menelaus avoids mentioning flight or any related word of being routed, instead reasoning that no Danaan would criticise him if they witnessed him «retreating» (χωρήσαντ’ τοι) from Hector, as if distinguishing withdrawal from flight. He frames his speech with the shame of the Danaans’ gaze (αἰδεσθεῖς 95) and the ill-repute inherent in the act of reproach (νεμεσήσαται 93, 100), which reveals a pre-occupation with shame and negative kleus absent from Archilochus and from Odysseus’ speech, but paralleled in other, more Iliadic evaluations of flight discussed above. Furthermore, Menelaus appears to be motivated by a feeling of personal responsibility for Patroclus’ death. Indeed, all of these elements combine in what amounts to a transitional deliberation. After reaching the conclusion that no one would criticise flight in this situation, he goes on to assert that he is in fact not contemplating retreat anyway; he will return with Ajax to rescue Patroclus’ body (Il. 17.102-105). Menelaus ‘talks through’ the possibility of flight – we, the audience, get to eavesdrop on his thoughts as he rejects it.

Thus, in the deliberations of Odysseus and Menelaus, we see how the spectre of flight is raised only to be dismissed as incompatible with the current circumstances. We suggest that what is at stake is as much a conflict with the Iliad’s ethos as the impossibility of flight in specific situations. Odysseus, however, departs further than his counterpart. While Menelaus is concerned with shame and negative fame (both of which, admittedly, may be related to his sense of personal responsibility as the ‘cause’ of the war), Odysseus expresses no concern about either. Instead, he rehearses an argument and, in the end, plays the role he is supposed to perform in this epic. To apprehend better what flight means to Odysseus, we turn now in our second section to the other Homeric epic, the Odyssey.

3. Reading the new Archilochus as an Odyssean tale

So far we have been exploring the new Archilochus fragment’s relationship to the Iliad and that poetic tradition’s representation of normative behaviour in war. Although it is by no means univocal, the Iliad presents movements in the discourse of flight appropriate to and realised in the context of war and martial exhortation.
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Within the epic tradition as a whole, however, this is not the only story: the *Odyssey* presents an alternative, anti-Iliadic approach to flight that sheds further light on our fragment’s narrative dynamics. In the first part of the following section we examine scenes where the issue of flight is raised in the *Odyssey*. We will show that on three separate occasions Odysseus relates tales of flight that in some way prepare for his return home. This Odyssean strategy, in taking a stance towards flight disallowed in the *Iliad*’s martial context, evinces telling thematic parallels with the new Archilochus fragment. Our second part takes up the story by considering the venue of Odysseus’ songs: each tale takes place in a sympotic context. This association is suggestive for the context of Archilochus’ poetry; but it also indicates poetic rivalry, not only between the stories of flight and the *Iliad*, but also between the *Odyssey* and elegy. In our third part we return to our fragment to consider some possible ways its narrative differs from epic, in the light of our study of the *Odyssey*’s tales of flight and our proposed dynamic of resonant rivalry.

3.1 «Let me tell you a story»: Odysseus’ songs of flight

We have already discussed the interplay between our fragment and Odysseus’ somewhat problematic relationship to flight in the *Iliad*. Now we turn to the treatment of flight in his epic, the *Odyssey*. In contrast to the martial ethics of the *Iliad*, the hero of the *Odyssey* on three occasions admits to having fled from battle. In the first of his ‘Cretan tales’ Odysseus tells Eumaios of a disastrous expedition in Egypt where «Zeus forced evil flight upon his companions»; the same line later introduces another story that Odysseus weaves for the suitors. 1 In the third instance Odysseus narrates his post-Iliadic adventures to the Phaeacians, which, as Seidensticker notes, closely echoes his account to Eumaios. 2 The language, motifs and strategy of all three episodes closely resemble the new Archilochus fragment.

Let us first consider Odysseus’ narration to the Phaeacians, where Odysseus recounts his raid on the land of the Kikonians (*Od*. 9.39-46):


2 «[T]he Egyptian adventure of the pseudo-Odysseus is clearly modelled after the real Odysseus’ unpropitious encounter with the Kikones»: Seidensticker 1978, p. 21.
From Ilion the wind carried me and drove me ashore by the Kikonians, at Ismarus. There I sacked their city and killed their people. From the city we took their wives and many possessions and shared them out, so that no one might lack their share. There I ordered that we should retreat light-footedly, but they were really stupid and would not listen. There they drank a lot of wine, and slaughtered many sheep and lumbering horn-curved cattle on the beach.

Odysseus and his men sack the city of the Kikonians and kill all their men with ease. Yet, soon after they find themselves involved in an epic fight to the death, as they come under assault from other Kikonians. As various commentators have noted, the language of the ensuing battle (Od. 9.52-61) notably reworks vocabulary and imagery from the Iliad, as if we were still in an Iliadic world. More important for our purposes are the resonances with our fragment. After an Iliadic period of intense fighting, the Kikonians «turned the Achaeans back» (Kìkonovès κλίναν δαμάσαντες Ἀχαιούς 59), killing out of each ship six of Odysseus’ «strong-greaved companions» (ἔυκνήμοδες ἐταίροι 60): «the rest of us», Odysseus relates, «fled from death and destruction» (οἱ δ’ ἄλλοι φύγομεν θάνατον τε μόρον τε 61). Flight, so inimical to the narrative of the Iliad, is the one thing that preserves Odysseus’ nostos. In fact, had his men listened to Odysseus from the beginning, they would have escaped the Iliadic battle and continued on their way home unscathed. But they ignore his command to leave and party instead; as a result, many of them lose their nostos and the rest are forced to flee. This is a narrative that, like the Archilochus fragment, prizes flight.

The pattern established here – of Odysseus giving advice that
is subsequently ignored by his men, leading to their own destruction – structures his narrative to the Phaeacians. His men die – so Odysseus relates – because they are unable to keep focussed on how to get home; in the present case, they did not know when to retreat. That lesson is reprised even once Odysseus has returned to Ithaca: in two further stories he narrates the necessity of flight when assessing the loyalty or threat of an interlocutor. First, he tests the loyalty of the goatherd Eumaios by narrating a story of an expedition against the Egyptians. Though he frames this account by citing his heroic credentials, his subsequent narrative offers another story of flight in language that again resonates with the new Archilochus fragment: they had to resort to «evil flight», because Zeus had preordained everything (Od. 14.235-236) and they were pressed by «necessity» (ἀνάγκη 14.172). Lastly, he ‘tests’ the suitors with a similar story and tries to elicit gifts from Antinoos (17.415-444). In this speech Odysseus does not defend his own bravery but repeats the tale of retreat; not surprisingly, Antinoos reacts with scorn and bounces a stool off his back.

In all three stories, then, Odysseus defends the value of retreat against the normative heroic action best represented for us by the Iliad. A comparison to Archilochus naturally presents itself; in fact, based on the previous extant poems of Archilochus Seidensticker presents a poet who consciously draws on the Odyssean Odysseus to construct an apologetics of retreat. While agreeing with this analysis up to a point, we believe that it only tells half the story. In the next section we show the ways in which Odysseus narrates his tales sheds light on their relation to Archilochean elegy and their function with the Odyssey itself, before returning, in our final section, to reassess Archilochus’ difference from the Odyssey.

1. He claims that both Ares and Athena have, in the past, given him «boldness» (θάρσος) and man killing power (ῥηξνορία) in war (Od. 14.216-217).
3. Seidensticker 1998. I. Irwin 2005, pp. 113-133 explores Solon’s Odyssean stance, based on a similar understanding of the Odyssey’s critical response to martial epic in order to «privilege its own values» (p. 121). Her view is that Solon adopts such a programme as a means of reiterating «the intertextual dynamic between elegy and epic apparent between the martial poetry of both genres, while simultaneously providing a critique of martial elegy’s particular form of participating in it» (p. 121). Especially important for our study is her suggestion that Solon imitates and appropriates Odysseus’ manipulation of the sympotic context (pp. 127-128).
3. 2. «There they drank a lot»: epic battles vs sympotic play

One factor often overlooked in discussions about these episodes of Odysseus’ story-telling is their common sympotic context. In book seventeen, as throughout the Odyssey, the suitors are intent on feasting, drinking and making merry as if they were enjoying a symposium and not eating Telemachus out of house and home. Although a goatherd and a beggar appear to make a sorry company for a symposium, a sympotic context nevertheless is suggested by the flowing wine,1 the competitive performance of songs, and the giving of gifts. On the other hand, Odysseus’ narration to the Phaeacians provides the classic example as the hero of the epic takes over the after-dinner singing from the bard Demodokos before an appreciative and enraptured audience.2

In addition, tale-telling performs an important task in each example: Odysseus literally sings for his nostos. That is most explicit in the case of Odysseus’ tale to the Phaeacians, which is aimed at obtaining a safe passage home and replacing all the possessions he has lost; but it is evident too in his tales to the goatherd Eumaios, by means of which Odysseus tests the loyalty of his servant,3 and to the suitors. Although the beggar’s tale may simply be regarded as part of the entertainment – as it is by the suitors – it amounts to a key strategy in Odysseus’ retaking of his home. Thus, in his tales of flight we see Odysseus drawing on the Iliadic theme of courage in war but spinning it to tell of – and to construct – the world of return that the Iliad does not narrate. Furthermore, he does this in the context of the symposium, which promotes the enjoyment of a life outside war. In this venue, Odysseus weaves narratives that recall an Iliad but in a way that is fundamentally un-Iliadic, as he manipulates the performance context to achieve his homecoming. In other words, in attempting to fulfil his narrative, Odysseus reworks Iliadic language and ideas to present an

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2 See the reaction to Odysseus’ narrative at Od. 11.333-376 and 13.1-16.

alternative strategy more appropriate to homecoming than war in a performance context, moreover, that itself emphasises the material and emotional enjoyment of life at home.

Odysseus’ speeches, then, provide an important point of comparison with the new Archilochus fragment: Odysseus exploits sympotic occasions to sing of flight and articulate his overwhelming concern for nostos; in so doing he weaves a story that draws on heroic themes in a manner that speaks «of the same things» but in a «different way» from Agamemnon’s desperate pleas in the Iliad. We believe that the new Archilochus fragment is part of the same playful sympotic world, in which narrating myth self-consciously draws on and re-invents the ‘hit’ version of the epic tradition’s war at Troy cycle, the Iliad.¹

But, before returning to the new Archilochus to examine how it presents its elegiac version of epic material, it remains for us to consider just what is at stake in the Odyssey’s exploration of flight. Earlier we suggested that the first episode of Odysseus’ odyssey explicitly positions that story in the direct aftermath of the Iliad – they had just come from Ilion (Τηλώτεν, Od. 9.39) – and pointedly so: having spent ten years and one epic trying to take Troy, he and his men sack the city of the Kikonians immediately in half a hexameter line (ἐνθα δ’ ἐγώ πόλιν ἐπραθον, Od. 9.40). His subsequent tale of flight aims at setting out an alternative view of the world from the Iliadic vision: in this Odyssean version the leader is right to flee, in fact, it is only by doing so that he is able to achieve that distant goal which warriors in the Iliad merely speculate on wistfully – he gets home. Furthermore, he achieves nostos not only by his willingness to flee; the way he tells the tale is also significant: it is by spinning the narrative of flight in such a manner that Odysseus obtains his homecoming. Contesting the Iliadic martial ethic is his first step towards becoming an Odyssean man.

Furthermore, this example demonstrates the underlying import of the sympotic contexts in the Odyssey. Odysseus and his men are routed because his men insisted on enjoying the fruits of their initial victory (ἐνθα δε πολλόν μὲν μέθν πίνετο, πολλά δε μήλα / ἐσφαξον παρὰ θύνα και εἰλίποδας ἐλικας βούς, Od. 9.45-46); they

¹ Indeed, recently scholars have argued that we can detect in Homer a consciousness of the archaic sympotic practice. See, especially, Węcowski 2002; Irwin 2005, pp. 45-48. Bowie 1986, pp. 13-15 posits that one context for ancient elegy was sympotic. In a later article, however, Bowie 2001 proposes a wider role for narrative elegy in public festivals. For a recent evaluation of the performance context of ancient elegy, including public competition and mourning, see Aloni 2001, Collins 2004.
enjoy a strange banquet in the midst of battle when they ought to have in mind going home. At another level, Odysseus exploits the Phaeacians’ love for a good story in order to obtain passage to Ithaca – with devastating consequences for his hosts. Similarly, the suitors seem to regard the beggar’s story as little more than entertainment; consequently, they fail to recognise that the hall, in which they indulge in drink and sex with the servants, will soon turn into a bloody Iliadic battleground.

Thus, Odysseus’ tales of flight contest the assumptions and ideals not only of the Iliadic tradition but also of the symposium. Odysseus carefully and pointedly exploits different sympotic contexts: he bewitches, pilfers from and even murders his audience. When all is said and done, the Odyssey is epic; it is not a tale told to entertain friends amid the drinking and sex.

3. 3. «Telephos all by himself routed the Argives»: Archilochus’ anti-epic narrative

We have just suggested that the Odyssey’s use of the motif of flight positions itself in and against not only an Iliadic tradition on the war at Troy but also, more broadly, sympotic traditions, such as Archilochean elegy. Returning to the new Archilochus fragment, we propose that it participates in a similar rivalry through its resonance with, and appropriation of, the theme of flight. Most obviously, as we have already shown, the new Archilochus glories in an anti-Iliadic ethos of flight. In this last section we would like to suggest that it sets out a different form of narrative from Homeric epic tout court.

The fragment starts off with the idea that Telephos routed the entire Achaean army led by Agamemnon. The point of comparison is clearly marked as one between the narrator and the Argive army: why should we worry about fleeing when the whole Argive army fled before one man, Telephos? Yet, when Telephos returns at the end of our fragment, it appears that the example has changed perspective: the focus is now on Telephos himself and the presence of his father Herakles in support. We know from other sources that Telephos’ repulsion of the Achaeans is not ultimately successful for he runs into Achilles; in trying to escape he trips over Dionysus’ vine shoot and is wounded in the thigh by Achilles’

1 They divert the anger of Poseidon onto themselves: the ship that had speeded Odysseus’ home-coming is turned into a rock and their city is hidden from the world forever after (Od. 13.125-187).
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spear. As a result, it seems likely that the point of the comparison has also shifted in meaning with Telephos’ return: now Telephos himself is regarded as the subject of flight, as if the lesson was new, «look, even Telephos, who routed the Argives, he fled...». One consequence of such a paradigm shift is that it marks an interesting departure from the sequential world of Homeric narrative.

The tale-within-a-tale is a common enough strategy within epic as speakers turn to the mythic past to justify, explain or influence the contemporary situation; but the subtlety of this narrative, in which the narrator springs the surprise that Telephos is the true forerunner of his flight, reads more like an allusive sympotic ruse than epic narrative. Just as Telephos – according to the tradition that may be alluded to here – trips up on Dionysus’ vine, so it is possible that Archilochus ambushes his reader of epic and trips them up by his retelling of the Trojan War saga.

The possible introduction of Herakles at the end of our fragment may be read as a further challenge to epic narrative as represented by the Iliad and Odyssey. Whereas Herakles is almost universally heralded as divine by our ancient sources, in Homeric epic he gets relegated to the status of a mortal: indeed, in the Iliadic Achilles denies Herakles’ divinity, just as the Iliad denies this kind of immortality to all of its heroes. Even given the fragmentary ending of the new elegy, Herakles’ presence suggests some kind of divine epiphany. It is important to consider the point of this ‘resonant’

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1 Proc. Chr. arg. 36-38 (on the Cypria) Bernabé 1987; Cypria fr. 20 Bernabé (schol. ll. 1-39); I. ec. Cat. fr. 105.12-21 M.-W.; Fr. i. 598-9, 49-52. Though the papyrus fragment is particularly poor at this point, Obbink suggests to us that the new Archilochus fragment is alluding to that story as it breaks off.

2 Commenting on Sappho fr. 16, Pfeiffer 2000 contends that the «retrospective reassessment» of the relevance of the mythical exemplum (Helen) does not replace the earlier interpretation but produces an additional layer of relevance» (p. 5). He coins the term «sequential polyinterpretability» for this kind of shifting paradigm, noting that it is a technique «not uncommon in Homeric similes» (p. 5 n. 22).


4 ll. 11.17-20. In the Odyssey apparently his suffering was no greater than Odysseus’ – according to Odysseus (Od. 11.601-627). Galinsky 1972, pp. 9-10 suggests that Herakles did not fit into the Homeric world because of his excessive violence and antisocial individualism. That may be true, but in its subordination of Herakles Homeric epic is competing with other narrative traditions, in which Herakles was a popular subject for satire: e.g., Cicephylus’ The Capture of Oikhalia, Pindar’s Heraklea, Pausias’ Heraklea in West 2003, pp. 21-23. For competition between Achilles and Herakles see Nagy 1970; Martin 1989, pp. 228-230. For an Archilochan elegy on Herakles and Deianeira, see Bowie 2001.

5 According to the reconstructed text of Obbink 2006a, p. 4, Herakles’ epiphany is vocal (Ἡρακλῆς δεῖ γίνεται), ὡς τὰ ἀνέφθεινον (κέλαικα) 22): see also Obbink 2005,
rivalry. What makes the denial of immortality so highly charged in the Iliad is the fact that it is the poem itself that will confer immor-
tality through the idea of kleos. If the Archilochus fragment is re-
presenting Herakles as divine, that motif could be seen to challenge
the Homeric concept of kleos, since the hero would be immortal
by his own means and not via the mechanism of epic narrative.

A further point to be made relates to using the Telephos ex-
emplum in the first place. As we mentioned above, the Telephos
story, so far as we can tell, was told in the so-called 'Cyclic Epic',
the 'Cypria': the Achaeans attacked Mysia in the mistaken belief
that they had arrived at the Troad and were attacking Troy. Our
fragment clearly evokes that scene here, pointing out that «they
thought they were attacking the high-gated city of Troy, but in
fact they had their feet on wheat-bearing Mysia» ((φ)έντο γάρ
ὑπόπτυλοι Τρωῶν πόλεις εἰς[ναζάειν]/[...] j. ην δ' ἐπάτευν Μυ-
σίδα πυροφόρῳ[v] 20 21). The myth is an appropriate one for
the narrator to draw on because it tells the tale not only of Achaian
flight, but also of their initial failure even to get to Troy. This is
going to be anything but an Iliad.

On this point we may be tempted to view the Iliad itself as
participating in the rivalry between different narrative traditions
and forms. With his very first words in the epic that purportedly
narrates the fall of Troy, Achilles remarks (Il. 1.59-60):

pp. 38-39; Obbink 2006b. A memorable auditory epiphany opens Sophocles' Ajax,
where Odysseus only hears the 'voice of Athena' (ὦ φήγη, 'Ἀθήνας, S. Aj. 14), which,
according to Pucci 1994, p. 27 stresses the tragic vision of man. Similarly, our frag-
ment again appears to assert an important distinction from the epic world, where
gods frequently appear before men.

1 As alluded to by Achilles who sings of the ιλέα ανδρῶν (Il. 9.189) at the moment
when — being out of the fighting and contemplating nostos — he is putting his own
kleos at stake.

2 Our contention that such a stance towards mortality is conditioned by genre
and, more importantly, signals appropriation or rejection of martial, Illiac values
garners support from a fragment of Callinus (fr. 1.12-14) that marks immortality
impossible for the gods' offspring in a martial exhortation. For a discussion of the
possible meanings this passage may evoke, depending on its target audience, see
Irwin 2005, pp. 53-57.

3 ἐπάτευν (21) is picked up in the prologue to Euripides' Telephos: 'Ἄρχαιας μαλάκος
could indicate a direct allusion to the Archilochus fragment or else to the missing
epic intertext, the 'Cypria'. The verb πατέοι is, however, popular in Attic tragedy;
E. g. A. Ag. 373, 957, 1193, 1357; Ch. 644; Eu. 110; S. Aj. 1156. The only use of the word
in the Iliad (κατά δ' ὄρκος πιστά πάτησαν 4.137) conveys a sense of transgression: its
deployment in Archilochus could have a similar meaning.
Son of Atreus, now I think that having been forced back we must make our way home, if we can even escape death.

As an opening gambit, these words are remarkable for raising the spectre that haunts the poem and the characters within it, notably Agamemnon: that Troy will not be taken, that the epic world will end in a failed expedition with an entire myth-scape aborted at its most critical moment. It is notable that the figure who articulates this concern is Achilles, and not just here but twice more in his argument with Agamemnon.¹ The hero of the Iliad presents the anti-Iliadic possibility of going home and of refusing fame² – the very choice that Archilochus embraces in his famous shield poem and that is presented as a possibility by the new fragment. What is more, a scholion glossing these lines from the Iliad draws a connection to the Telephos myth: the neotreoi, or ‘later poets’, it explains, infer the events about Mysia on the basis of this passage.³ In this way the scholion assigns knowledge of the Telephos myth to sources later than this passage from the Iliad; but, as Jonathon Burgess has argued, it is quite typical of the scholia to characterise the ‘Cyclic Epics’ of the neotreoi as being derivative on, and extrapolated from, Homer, whom they – the scholia – regarded as the original poet.⁴ On this basis, we might prefer to see the above passage from the Iliad, by virtue of its resonant language

¹ Achilles’ first proposed departure comes in response to Agamemnon’s threat to take his woman (Il. 1.169-170); Agamemnon dismissively, and provocatively, replies: ‘flee then’ (φευγε μελ’), Il. 1.171. In answer to the embassy Achilles complains that it no longer makes a difference if one is a coward or a brave man (Il. 9.316-320), so they should all just go home (9.417-420) – a radical thought that questions the whole war and the epic itself. Nevertheless, his argument shares significant similarities with the other proposals of flight we have been discussing: they should leave because they are dying (τεθαρρύσσοι δὲ λαοὶ 9.420); Zeus has decided that they will not take Troy (9.418-420).

² As Achilles puts it, he can either have his nostos or his kleos (Il. 9.410-416). The choice to depart – a choice he has already retracted by the end of the embassy – is the choice to deny the Iliadic world of kleos. Odysseus, on the other hand, can have his nostos and sing it (kleos).

³ Sch. D II. 1.59; van Thiel’s edition of the D-scholia is available in preliminary form at http://www.uni-koeln.de/phil-fak/ifa/vanthiel/index.html); cf. Eust. ad II. p. 46. 36). The scholion draws attention to two important features retold in our fragment: first, the Greeks land in Mysia, mistaking it for Troy; second, Telephos, son of Heracles, drives them back to their ships.

and ideas, as participating in a dialogue with rival epic traditions, such as the one represented by the Archilochus fragment, in which the Achaeans do not even get to Troy at the first attempt. But, whereas this story remains an uncomfortable trace underlying the epic fixation of the war at Troy, the Archilochean narrator makes it the paradigm to celebrate. His reworking of that mythical tale, then, is more than a departure from the Iliad’s Troy story; its short, shifting narrative is radically anti-epic in inception, construction and fulfilment.1

The flight from Troy is the story that the Iliad cannot tell, but that – consequently – constantly threatens to break in and disrupt its epic narration.2 The Odyssey spins the story in quite a different way: it has its hero talk about the necessity of flight as soon as he picks up the narration of his epic. The new Archilochus fragment participates in a broader discourse on flight, not only by deconstructing epic narrative but even by the choice of myth itself: his exemplum documents a flight to the ships that occurs even before we get to Troy. Telling the tale of not even getting to Troy is precisely the tale to tell in contesting Homeric epic, particularly, one might think, in a sympotic context: this is not going to be an Iliad or, for that matter, an Odyssey. This text, resonating throughout with Homeric language and motifs, pointedly positions itself as anti-epic.

4. « A shield no worse »: new Archilochus and old

Heraclitus famously would have expelled both Homer and Archilochus «alike» (ἀμφότερος) from poetic contests.3 As it happens, the exigencies of time and a discontinuous textual tradition have partly fulfilled that wish, leaving behind only brief glimpses of an Archilochean alternative to epic. What remains has, for many

1 Rankin 1977, p. 44 suggests that Archilochus chooses elegiac metre as a form that both apes dactylic hexameter and subverts it to establish a poet’s individual identity. Although this may be a precarious argument for the development and significance of the elegiac couplet, it does convey a sense of the potentially subversive impact of appropriating an earlier form and changing it just enough to be unsettling. See also Stehle 2001, p. 116.

2 Not only in Achilles' first words, but most particularly after Agamemnon's 'test', when the Homeric narrator dryly remarks: «then the Achaeans would have enjoyed a nostos beyond fate» (ἐν οἷς κεῖν Ἀγαμήμονος ὑπέμμενο δότος ἐτύλη, II 2.155). It is telling that the figure who restores order after the rush to the ships is Odysseus, the figure enshrined in the tradition as the one who goes home.

3 Heraclitus 24 B 42 Diels.
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critics, appeared to represent a new spirit, an assertion of the poet’s individuality over and above the third person heroic narratives of a Homer.\(^1\) The new fragment, however, not only significantly increases our inventory of Archilochean elegy; it has the potential of prompting a re-assessment of the relationship between Archilochus and Homeric poetry.\(^2\) Far from being a unique voice that heralds the end of epic influence, the new fragment demonstrates a prolonged engagement with Homeric epic, in language, motif and story-pattern, that operates both ways: we have suggested that the Odyssean – and possibly the Iliadic – narrative traditions respond to the sympotic context of Archilochean elegy just as Archilochus’ voice presents a subversive, Odyssean-like twist on the normative heroic agenda, as represented for us by the *Iliad*.\(^3\)

We aim to have shown the profit of reconfiguring early archaic poetry as engaging in a dialogue with Homeric narrative through a lively redeployment of mythical themes and epic diction using the concept of resonance. We have argued that the new Archilochus fragment exhibits ‘Homeric’ language and motifs in ways that *resonate* with extant archaic poetry through articulation of the ‘flight or flight’ motif, represented otherwise by speeches from the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Archilochus’ anti-Iliadic, pseudo-Odyssean, stance helps us to envision variations within the discourse on flight that transcends context or ‘genre’. Rather, Homeric and Archilochus poetic traditions respond to and participate in a contest far more nuanced than the portrait of an artist speaking for the first time in his own voice as a direct, unilateral response to Homer, and in a way much closer to Socrates’ teasing proposal that they explore the same themes in a different register.

As we have seen, both Homeric epics engage in the deliberation

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1 See [nn. 1-5 on p. 12].
2 In particular we have in mind Archilochus’ famous shield poem, in which he boasts about having left behind his shield in his eagerness to flee battle. On the centrality of this poem (fragment 5 W) to understanding Archilochus ssc, for example: Will 1969, p. 47; Russo 1974, p. 139; Seidensticker 1978, pp. 5-6; Cannatà 1988, pp. 71-75. On its antagonistic relationship to the Homeric tradition, see Adkins 1985, p. 51.
3 Because of the new fragment’s length, complex narrative and developed style, it may revolutionise our understanding of arcaic Greek poetry in a way complementary to that recently achieved by the new Simonides, on which see, for example, Boekeker, Sider 2001. Each poet offers an alternative engagement with epic: while the new Simonides elegy ‘heroises’ its subject matter and was probably performed in a public context of communal praise, we suggest that Archilochus’ new fragment hails from a private sympotic context of playful irony and one-upmanship. For the ‘heroisation’ of Simonides’ subjects, see Boekeker 2001.
over flight in ways that underline their own poetic strategies: the Iliad casts retreat as inappropriate to the aims of heroic narrative, at least as it is represented among the Achaeans; the Odyssey employs the motif of flight in the context of sympotic tale-telling, but subordinates it to the epic’s drive towards the hero’s return. The new Archilochus fragment resonates with the language, motifs and story-pattern of an epic tradition only to construct a very different world view that rejects both the Iliadic martial anxiety about the shame of flight and the Odyssean appropriation of flight for the achievement of nostos. Instead, it celebrates flight for its own sake not once, in Telephos’ rout of the Achaeans, but twice, as Telephos himself apparently is made to flee. In this way, the fragment leaves us with a tantalizing glimpse of a ‘flight club’, where singers compete in plying their versions of a wider poetic inheritance, and where the values inherent to that tradition and its performance contexts are set out, contested and enacted.

Christ Church, Oxford (Barker) · New York University (Christensen)

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