

PARADIGM INTRODUCTIONS AND MYTHO-HISTORICAL AUTHORITY IN THE *ILIAD*

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Throughout the *Iliad*, the poem's characters reach for the past as a way of explaining the situations in which they find themselves. But of course these *exempla* are not neutral, nor are they used neutrally by their narrators, and so the authority invested in these narrators becomes crucial, as they seek to convince their audience that they are reliable, and that their account of the past is correct. Narrators use a range of strategies to achieve this, but I will here focus on representative examples of three distinct types of authoritative appeal: Nestor's successful use of memory in Book 1, Phoinix's mixture of memory and traditional authority in Book 9, and Agamemnon's dramatically unsuccessful appeal to tradition in Book 4. Agamemnon's story is challenged by his audience, and his invocation of traditional authority is shown to be unfounded. The speeches of Nestor and Phoinix, meanwhile, are not without ambiguities, but their denial of mere tradition and reliance on more personal reminiscences is far more effective, and they remain unchallenged by their respective audiences. They are thus able to present themselves successfully as authorities on the stories they narrate.

The *Iliad* imbues the character of Nestor with tremendous personal authority, so much so that his first appearance in the poem draws what Maureen Alden terms 'a highly unusual introduction'.¹

τοῖσι δὲ Νέστωρ
ἠδευεπῆς ἀνόρουσε, λιγύς Πυλίων ἀγορητής,
τοῦ καὶ ἀπὸ γλώσσης μέλιτος γλυκίων ῥέεν αὐδή.
τῷ δ' ἤδη δύο μὲν γενεαὶ μερόπων ἀνθρώπων
ἐν Πύλῳ ἠγαθέη, μετὰ δὲ τριτάτοισιν ἄνασσεν.

And among them rose up sweet-speaking Nestor, the clear orator of the Pylians, from whose tongue flowed a voice sweeter even than honey. In his time already had perished two generations of mortal men, who had been previously born and reared at the same time as him in sacred Pylos, and he ruled over the third.² [(Hom. *Il.* 1.247-52)]

The passage immediately establishes Nestor as marked in particular by two characteristics: his speaking ability (1.248-49), and his great age (1.250-52).³ This of course raises the expectation that he will use his own personal experience in his speech, drawing on the wisdom accrued through living through 'two generations of mortal men' (*duo ... geneai meropôn anthrôpôn*, 1.250), and persuading using the authority of his 'sweet-speaking' (*hêduepês*, 1.248) status.⁴ And indeed his advice is

¹ Alden (2001) 74. The introduction is unusual primarily because the Iliadic narrator more commonly presents new characters obliquely, using only their name or an epithet (see most notably the introduction to Agamemnon at 1.7). On forms of introduction in the epics, see Richardson (1990) 36-50.

² Citations from the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are taken from van Thiel (2010) and van Thiel (1991), respectively. Translations are my own.

³ Minchin (2005) 55-72 provides an insightful analysis of Nestor's association with, and use of memory in light of contemporary theories of autobiographical memory, stressing its realism, and concluding that the portrayal of Nestor is 'an observant and affectionate portrait of one of society's elders' (Minchin [2005] 66).

⁴ On the referentiality of *hêduepês*, *ligus ... agorêtês* ('clear orator') in the same line, and *melitos glukiôn ... audê* ('a voice sweeter than honey') in the next, see Dickson (1995) 25-38. Dickson identifies both positive and negative aspects to these phrases, arguing both that they 'draw on traits that

marked strongly by his own experience, so much so that his first action in the poem is to claim special status as an advisor using an example from his own past (1.254-74).

This creates the impression of a character who has, in Keith Dickson's words, the 'tendency to indulge in seemingly interminable talk, namely in an almost chronic logorrhea',⁵ and one who is heavily reliant on reminiscence for his authority. And Nestor has generally been viewed in this light by commentators, whether positively, as a wise counsellor, or negatively, as a garrulous windbag.⁶ In particular, his association with traditional memory is well attested. For example, Richard Martin describes him as 'the master' of poetic memory,⁷ while Dickson goes so far as to give his book on Nestor the subtitle *Poetic Memory in Greek Epic*, and states of him: 'more than any other figure in the *Iliad*, Nestor embodies the activity of recollection, the ambiguous sweet grief of *mnêmosynê* [memory] so central to oral traditions'.⁸

Mnêmosynê and its cognate verb *mimnêskô* have indeed been generally considered to be, as William Moran puts it, 'directly associated with singing epic tales'.⁹ In Hesiodic poetry, the Muses are thought to be daughters of Mnemosyne and Zeus (Hes. *Theog.* 53-55), and indeed Egbert Bakker has shown the close linguistic connection between *Mousai* (the Muses) and the Greek vocabulary of memory.¹⁰ But regardless of the epic provenance of the term, it certainly commands strong authority when claimed by a storyteller in the epic, be it the narrator or one of his characters. As the main embodiment of memory in the *Iliad*, then, Nestor seems ideally placed to take advantage of this latent authority.

Yet what is not noted by those who judge Nestor as the arbiter and main conduit of memory in the *Iliad* is that he never explicitly talks about his own memory at any point in the epic. He uses the verb *mimnêskô* only three times in the entire poem, and in each case he refers to the memory of his audience, rather than to his own.¹¹ In Book 15 he does use the verb in a manner Martin describes as typical, to urge the army to battle.¹² He says to the Achaians:

ὦ φίλοι, ἀνέρες ἔστε καὶ αἰδῶ θέσθ' ἐνὶ θυμῷ
 ἄλλων ἀνθρώπων, ἐπὶ δὲ μνήσασθε ἕκαστος
 παίδων ἢδ' ἀλλόχων καὶ κτήσιος ἠδὲ τοκῆων

identify him as an *aoidos* [singer] in his own right', linking him 'to the clarity of birdsong, cicada and lyre; to the rich taste of honey and other sweet things; and to the supple flow of water, blood and wine' (Dickson [1995] 37), but also that this 'embodies a certain danger. For ... it might also have the power to cause pleasure that verges on forgetfulness' (Dickson [1995] 37-38).

⁵ Dickson (1995) 15.

⁶ On this mixed reception of Nestor, see in particular Finley (1962) 133-34, and Roisman (2005) 18-21 (with bibliography).

⁷ Martin (1989) 80.

⁸ Dickson (1995) 71.

⁹ Moran (1975) 196. On this association, see also, e.g., Detienne (1996) 35-52, Martin (1989) 77-78, Notopoulos (1938) 465-73, and Vernant (1983) 75-80.

¹⁰ Bakker (2008) 67-76.

¹¹ He does, however, use forms of the verb *lanthanô* ('to forget') in a more explicit fashion in five instances in the *Iliad*. Two of these come during Nestor's description of the racing track and tactics for the chariot race to his son Antilochos (these come at 23.323 and 23.326), and are accordingly less interesting for our purposes. The other two uses, at 11.790 and 23.648, occur during speeches that contain reminiscences. In Book 11, he completes a reminiscing speech by reminding Patroklos of his father Menoitios' advice to him when he left for Troy, a reminder which closes with the phrase: ὦς ἐπέτελλ' ὁ γέρων, σὺ δὲ λήθηαι ('thus the old man commanded, but you have forgotten', 11.790), while his use of the first person form *lêthô* at 23.648 will be discussed below.

¹² Martin (1989) 79-80, although he does not use this specific example.

‘Friends, be men and put shame for other people in your hearts, and each remember your children and wives, possessions and parents.’ [Hom. *Il.* 15.661-63, emphases added]

Earlier in Book 15, however, he uses memory in a less explicitly chastising context: he appeals to Zeus, in recognition of the Argives’ previous generosity to him, to ‘remember, and ward off ... the pitiless day’ (μνησσαι καὶ ἄμυνον ... νηλεὲς ἡμᾶρ, 15.375, emphases added). Finally, in Book 23 he responds to Achilles’ gift by thanking him, and saying: ‘my heart is glad that you have remembered me as being friendly, and that I do not escape your notice’ (χαίρει δέ μοι ἦτορ, ὡς μευ ἀεὶ μὲμνησσαι ἐνηέος, οὐδέ σε λήθω, 23.647-48, emphases added).

Thus, while Nestor is clearly associated with the authority that memory brings, he refuses to acknowledge it overtly. But this allows him to pursue an even more effective strategy in seeking authorisation for his memories: he simply assumes the incontrovertible fact of their truthfulness, and takes it for granted that his story has authoritative weight, and that his account of the past is the correct one. Therefore, rather than openly stressing the provenance of his knowledge, Nestor introduces his authoritative statements allusively, and leaves it to his audience to draw (admittedly logical) conclusions. So at 1.259-61 he begins his account by simply stating to Achilles and Agamemnon:

ἀλλὰ πίθεσθ’ ἄμφω δὲ νεωτέρω ἐστὸν ἐμεῖο.
ἦδη γάρ ποτ’ ἐγὼ καὶ ἀρείοσιν ἠέ περ ὑμῖν
ἀνδράσιν ὠμίλησα, καὶ οὐ ποτέ μ’ οἶ ἠ’ ἀθέριζον

‘Come, be persuaded; you are both younger than I. For I associated once with men even better than you, and not once did they disregard me’).¹³

Here Nestor’s personal authority is made clear, without his ever needing to state it explicitly. The juxtaposition between the *neoterō* of 1.259 and the distance created by the repeated *pot’ ... pote* of 1.260 and 1.261 clearly removes Nestor’s audience from immediate access to the truth, while the repeated first person pronouns (*emeio ... egō ... m’*) leave no doubts as to his own eyewitness status, a status that is immediately reinforced by his use of two first person verbs of seeing, *idon* and *idōmai*, at 1.262. In this passage, in his first speech, in the first book of the poem, Nestor allusively but nevertheless perfectly clearly aligns himself with memory, and skilfully creates the authority he requires without ever needing to claim it explicitly.

By contrast, Phoinix’s appeal to the authority of memory in Book 9 is much more overt, but perhaps slightly less solidly based. Before amassing the final argument in his attempt to persuade Achilles to rejoin the fighting, he pauses to give the story a five-line introduction, which ostensibly tells of its paradigmatic function, and of how he came to know it:

οὕτω καὶ τῶν πρόσθεν ἐπευθόμεθα κλέα ἀνδρῶν
ἠρώων, ὅτε κέν τιν’ ἐπιζάφελος χόλος ἴκοι
δωρητοί τε πέλοντο παραρρητοί τ’ ἐπέεσσι.
μέμνεμαι τόδε ἔργον ἐφ’ ἡ πάλαι, οὐ τι νέον γε,
ὡς ἦν· ἐν δ’ ὑμῖν ἐρέω πάντεσσι φίλοισι.

Thus we have also learned of the renown of men from long ago, heroes, when raging anger would come on them; they would be open to gifts and to persuasion with words. I remember how this matter happened from long ago, it is not a new thing; and, friends, I will tell you all.

[Hom. *Il.* 9.524-28]

¹³ This type of mediation is fairly common in the poem. Indeed, Edwards (1980) 15, regards Nestor’s entire speech as ‘a type-scene – almost an inevitable one in any kind of dispute’. On this, see further, e.g., Dickson (1995) 101-56, Hammer (1997) 1-24, and Schofield (1986) 22-31.

This introduction, however, does little if anything to clarify the situation. Phoinix seems to be describing two separate provenances for his narrative, or at the very least attempting to create confusion about his level of involvement in it. He begins with what seems to be an indication that his story will be reliant, not on individual memory, but rather on traditional authority (9.524-25), in which the only divergence from the norm is the inclusive first person plural verb *epeuthometha*,¹⁴ while the phrase *klea andrôn hêrôôn* must refer, if not necessarily to heroic epic, at least to heroic narrative.¹⁵

Almost immediately, however, this is undermined by lines 527-28. Although Phoinix continues to describe his tale as ‘from long ago, it is not a new thing’ (*palai, ou ti neon ge*), his use of *memnemai* to begin the line creates the impression that the authority he will be relying on is more Nestorian than traditional. In fact, this impression is strengthened since it comes after a lengthy autobiographical narrative from the same speech, describing how Phoinix had come in exile to Phthia and become a tutor to Achilles.¹⁶

This seems to establish Phoinix as a conduit of traditional memory, a kind of ‘Nestor of the scene’, and this impression may even be strengthened by some ambiguity regarding what exactly comprises the *ergon* of line 528. As it stands, while the ‘thing’ that Phoinix remembers clearly refers to the story he tells, it is unclear whether what he in fact remembers is the story itself, or the events that inspired the story. In other words, does he remember in the same manner as Nestor, and therefore intend us to believe that his account is first hand, or is he simply claiming to remember one from the many *klea andrôn herôôn* that he has heard, one particularly relevant to the occasion? And indeed, commentators are divided on this point. On the one hand Ruth Scodel states simply: ‘[h]is knowledge depends not on poetry but on personal memory’,¹⁷ while on the other side William Moran claims just as unequivocally: ‘Phoenix ... says that men knew similar stories of wrath He himself has kept one in his memory’.¹⁸

My own opinion is that *ergon* refers to the story, rather than the actual deeds, but more important than the correct referent is the ambiguity that Phoinix is able to create through his introduction, and the authority that this ambiguity affords him. His strategy is thus very much like that of Nestor, although it could perhaps be judged to be not quite as artful, since Phoinix draws attention to the artifice he uses, subtle though it is, in a more overt manner than Nestor ever does. Still, his artistry is far superior to that those, like Agamemnon, who appeal bluntly to traditional authority, with little success.

Agamemnon’s appeal comes in Book 4, in which he rebukes Diomedes for hanging back from the battlefield:

ὦ μοι, Τυδέος υἱὲ δαΐφρονος ἵπποδάμοιο,
τί πτώσσεις, τί δ’ ὀπιπεύεις πολέμοιο γεφύρας;
οὐ μὲν Τυδέϊ γ’ ὦδε φίλον πτωσκαζέμεν ἦεν,
ἀλλὰ πολὺ πρὸ φίλων ἐτάρων δηίοισι μάχεσθαι,

¹⁴ Which need not refer to learning by hearing (see for example *Odyssey* 10.152, in which Odysseus clearly contemplates finding out, *puthesthai*, by going and seeing, *elthein*), but seems likely to in this context, when it governs *kleôn*. On the association between *epeuthometha* and hearing, see further Ford (1992), 62 n. 11.

¹⁵ On this phrase, see in particular Nagy (1999).

¹⁶ On this parallel, see Minchin (2005) 63-64, and Scodel (1982) 130 n.6.

¹⁷ Scodel (2002) 71.

¹⁸ Moran (1975) 204.

ὡς φάσαν οἳ μιν ἴδοντο πονεύμενον· οὐ γὰρ ἔγωγε
ἦντεσ' οὐδὲ ἴδων· περὶ δ' ἄλλων φασὶ γενέσθαι.

Ah me, son of battle-minded horse-taming Tydeus. Why are you hiding? Why are you watching the limits of battle? Surely it was never dear to Tydeus to cower thus, but to fight far ahead of his dear companions, so they say who saw him at work; for I never met or saw him; but they say that he surpassed the others. [Hom. *Il.* 4.370-75 (emphases added)]

Here Agamemnon makes explicit his reliance on anonymous authority. He notes what others say about Tydeus at line 374 (although he does not talk of generalised stories common to all, but the statements of those who saw him), and admits that he does not have any personal recollection of Tydeus or his deeds (374-75).¹⁹ Instead, he relies on tradition, and in particular tradition as it is represented by what is spoken, here exemplified by the verb form *phasi* ('they say'), as well as the imperfect form *phasan*.

Phasi (along with its variants *phasin* and *phas'*) is used twenty separate times in *Iliad*, and twenty-two in the *Odyssey*, in a number of different situations.²⁰ In her brief study of the word's force in the epic, Irene de Jong identifies two categories of use, as well as three sub-categories (see Table 1 below for a modified version of de Jong's schema).²¹ Briefly, the categories are *phasi* with a definite subject (Category A) and *phasi* without a definite subject (Category B), while the second category is divided into three sub-categories according to whether it refers to information the speaker has not seen, a genealogy, or a reputation of universally admitted fact. Thus, in the majority of cases, *phasi* or a variant is used to refer to knowledge about some matter, and the object of *phasi* remains unspecified. This object is generally information unknown to the speaker, but presumed to be commonly believed, and relatively uncontroversial, such as the place where something is to be found, or a person's descent.

There are, however, a number of more problematic passages, in which *phasi* is used to create (or at the very least, imply) uncertainty about the claims made. As de Jong admits, her category B3 contains some statements which are made in order to bring into question what she terms the 'reputation or universally admitted fact' that is narrated in them.²² For example, at *Iliad* 13.631-35 Menelaos complains that Zeus favours the Trojans unjustly, despite the fact that 'they say' (φασί, 13.631) that he is the wisest of all. Menelaos, of course, is not seriously calling the wisdom of Zeus into question, but it does seem significant that, at least rhetorically, *phasi* can be used to doubt a reputation.²³

¹⁹ Indeed, Tydeus seems to have passed from the recollection of all the mortal characters in the *Iliad*. Rather than being a figure about whom anyone has any personal recollection, he becomes someone who is known only through tradition or second-hand information. Andersen (1978) 34, says of him: '[a]ls Vater ist Tydeus vertraut. Doch zugleich ist er ein ferner Held. ... Tydeus wird in weit entfernte Bereiche gerückt' ('as a father, Tydeus is familiar. But at the same time he is a remote hero. ... Tydeus is moved to far distant spheres'). Even his son Diomedes specifically disclaims personal knowledge about him: Τυδέα δ' οὐ μὲμνημαι, ἐπεὶ μ' ἔτι τυτθὸν ἔοντα / κάλλιφ', ὅτ' ἐν Θήβησιν ἀπώλετο λαὸς Ἀχαιῶν ('I do not remember Tydeus, since he left when I was small, when the army of the Achaians were destroyed at Thebes', 6.222-223).

²⁰ The word occurs at *Iliad* 2.783, 4.375, 5.635, 5.638, 6.100, 9.234, 9.401, 13.631, 16.14, 17.637, 17.674, 19.96, 19.416, 20.105, 20.206, 21.159, 21.569, 23.791, 24.546, and 24.615; and *Odyssey* 1.33, 1.189, 1.220, 2.238, 3.84, 3.188, 3.212, 3.245, 4.201, 4.387, 6.42, 7.322, 11.176, 13.249, 16.143, 16.418, 18.128, 18.261, 19.267, 19.383, and 23.125.

²¹ de Jong (1987) 237-38.

²² de Jong (1987) 237.

²³ A parallel might be made with *Iliad* 19.95-96, at which Agamemnon claims of Ate: καὶ γὰρ δὴ νύ ποτε Ζῆν' ἄσατο, τὸν περ ἄριστον / ἀνδρῶν ἠδὲ θεῶν φάσ' ἔμμεναι ('for she even once misled Zeus, who they say is the best of men and gods'). Here, however, it is more likely that Agamemnon is

The use of *phasi* as a modest way of referring to a universal truth is further complicated by one particular case in the *Odyssey*. In Book 1, Telemachos shows signs of questioning conventional wisdom about his birth and circumstances. He responds to the disguised Athene's assertion that he must be the son of Odysseus by stating gloomily:

μήτηρ μὲν τέ με φησὶ τοῦ ἔμμεναι, αὐτὰρ ἔγωγε
οὐκ οἶδ'· οὐ γάρ πώ τις ἐδὸν γόνον αὐτὸς ἀνέγνω.
ὥς δὴ ἔγωγ' ὄφελον μάκαρός νύ τευ ἔμμεναι υἱός
ἀνέρος, ὃν κτεάτεσσιν ἑοῖς ἔπι γῆρας ἔτετμε.
νῦν δ' ὃς ἀποτμότατος γένετο θνητῶν ἀνθρώπων,
τοῦ μ' ἐκ φασὶ γενέσθαι, ἐπεὶ σύ με τοῦτ' ἐρεεῖνεις.

My mother says that I am hers, but I do not know, for no one ever knows for sure his own descent. If only I were the fortunate son of some man, whom old age overtook among his possessions. But they say that I come from the most luckless man of all mortal humans, since you ask me this. [Hom. *Od.* 1.215-20 (emphases added)]

Telemachos' dilemma does have some clear narrative-based functions in the *Odyssey*, particularly when contrasted with his later simple affirmation of Odysseus as his father (at 15.265-70): it is used to show his transition into adulthood and towards self-knowledge through his knowledge of, and increasing emulation of his father.²⁴ But for our purposes the more interesting insight is the way in which Telemachos can use the word *phasi* to cast doubt on conventional wisdom. It appears, then, from the evidence of the *Odyssey*, that although *phasi* is often used simply and uncontroversially of statements of fact, it can at times be used to introduce statements that might be challenged. Thus, rather than simply being a modest way of telling the truth, *phasi* seems far less authoritative, and hence more easily contested.

On the surface, then, it seems as though a clear juxtaposition is evident between ineffectual reliance on tradition on one hand, and authoritative appeals to memory on the other. Yet this seemingly simple distinction is complicated somewhat by one of Nestor's speeches, which seems to introduce a note of ambiguity into the generally positive picture of his autobiographical authority. In Book 11 he ends his reminiscence to Patroklos with the puzzling sentence: ὥς ἔον, εἴ ποτ' ἔην γε, μετ' ἀνδράσι (‘I was such a one, if it ever happened, among men’ 11.762). The uncertainty introduced by this statement is problematic, and might be seen to parallel the doubting statement made by Telemachos in the *Odyssey*. The phrase *ei pot' eēn ge* occurs twice more in the *Iliad*, and twice in the *Odyssey*, and on all occasions it is used to present the past as something distant, and by extension dim.²⁵ At *Iliad* 3.178-80, Helen describes Agamemnon, and by extension her earlier life at Sparta with this

making a point about Ate's ability to outwit even the most powerful of the gods, rather than rhetorically calling into question Zeus' abilities (as Edwards [1991] *ad* 19.95-133 says, it ‘is used to show how Ate can delude even Zeus’).

²⁴ On this, see, e.g., Jones (1988) 496-506, Mandell (1990) 65-83, and Murnaghan (2002) 133-53, but cf. Allione (1963) 24-27, Olson (1995) 65, and Toher (2001) 149-68.

²⁵ Hooker (1979) 393-95 argues that the *ei* in this formula should not be taken as conditional, but rather as introducing ‘a kind of anaphora, taking up a noun already expressed and adding a pathetic exclamation’ (Hooker [1979] 395). Thus he translates the phrase as something like ‘so at least he [or it] once was’ (on this see also Leaf [1888] *ad* 3.180, who raises the possibility of ‘the interjectional use of *ei*’ being used here, but seems more convinced by the idea that ‘[t]he doubt expressed is ... only a rhetorical way of emphasizing the bitter contrast between the past and the present’). Hooker's explanation, however, is not only grammatically complex to an almost absurd degree, and clearly *ad hoc*, but also, as Kirk (1985) *ad* 3.180 notes, totally unnecessary. Indeed, it may even undermine the pathetic tone Hooker searches for, since the indefinite expression is clearly far more touching than a simple reference to the past would be.

phrase, while Priam does the same with reference to Hektor at 24.426-27. The phrase, then, as Michael Lynn-George states, 'articulates distance, uncertainty and discontinuity in relation to a past which, in its remoteness, is situated on the blurred borders of the real and the imaginary.'²⁶ The same is true in the *Odyssey*, where it is used by both Penelope and Laertes to refer to Odysseus (at 19.315 and 24.289 respectively).

Of course, this is the same kind of ambiguity that was noted above when discussing the use of *phasi* in traditional stories. And indeed, the *Odyssey* specifically connects the two through the person of Odysseus, of whom Telemachos speaks with the deliberate vagueness of tradition, and whom Penelope and Laertes invoke only to question the very notion that he ever existed.²⁷ Based on this, it might be possible to read this explicit distrust of one's own memory as a parallel to the ambiguities created by using *phasi* in reference to tradition, or even as the equivalent phrase available to someone relying on their own memory, rather than the guidance of traditional authority. After all, the only difference between Telemachos, who questions tradition, and Laertes and Penelope, who question memory, is that the latter two have personal knowledge of Odysseus from the past. In this reading, Nestor's uncertainties might retroactively discredit (or at least problematise), his narratorial authority.

Nestor does in fact cut an ambiguous figure elsewhere in the poem. In particular, while his counsel is rhetorically effective, it is not always as effective in other ways.²⁸ Most notably for our purposes, his advice at the beginning of Book 1 is markedly ineffectual: neither Agamemnon nor Achilles is persuaded by his paradigm, and their quarrel continues unabated.²⁹ Of course, on a narrative level there must be a quarrel to facilitate the *Iliad's* plot, but this does not exculpate Nestor's failure to persuade, surely the most important thing on which a counsellor can fairly be judged.

However, there is one significant and instructive difference between Nestor's recollections and the traditional story told by Agamemnon: Nestor's version of events is never directly challenged by his listeners. While the details of Agamemnon's narrative can be, and are, contested by his audience, Nestor's audience responds respectfully to his reminiscences, and even confirms their accuracy, as in Book 1, where Agamemnon responds to Nestor's speech by saying: *ναὶ δὴ ταῦτά γε πάντα, γέρον, κατὰ μοῖραν ἔειπες* ('truly you have said all these things rightly, old man',

²⁶ Lynn-George (1988) 36.

²⁷ On the connection between this phrase and the family of Odysseus, see Lynn-George (1988) 23.

²⁸ Falkner (1989) 31, notes: 'Nestor's record as a wise counsellor at critical moments is mixed, and his advice can be empty, ignored, or tragically off-course'. On these flaws, see also, e.g., Finley (1962) 133-34, Roisman (2005) 18-21, and Stanley (1993) 226, who sums Nestor up as a character 'of many words but few deeds, whose contribution to the present remains in doubt'.

²⁹ I would like to thank the anonymous reviewer of this work for pointing out to me that Nestor does of course successfully persuade Patroklos of the wisdom of his advice through his use of reminiscence in Book 11 (and for that matter the Achaians as a whole in Book 7; both successes are confirmed by the external narrator, at 11.804 and 7.161 respectively). Even here, however, his persuasiveness is not entirely without complication. His success in Book 7 is relatively straightforward (although even here the outcome of the duel between Aias and Hektor that follows Nestor's advice is inconclusive), but in Book 11 his attempt to persuade Patroklos that he in turn should convince Achilles to return to battle, or if not, to at least allow Patroklos himself to fight in Achilles' stead, while successful (and necessitated by the epic's plot), ultimately leads to Patroklos' death. On the tragic consequences of this speech, and its necessity for the plot, see in particular Pedrick (1983) 55-68, who notes that Nestor's persuasion in effect works on the wrong character (although it still achieves his primary aim, to avert the defeat of the Achaians), and it is Patroklos who is persuaded, rather than Achilles (on this possibility, see also Minchin [2005] 58-59, although cf. Alden [2001] 96-102, who argues that Patroklos is the intended recipient all along, and that Nestor tailors his reminiscence to suit Patroklos' situation).

1.286).³⁰ For the purposes of evaluating the authority invested in his reminiscences, this outcome is more important than whether or not his advice is actually apt, or even taken seriously.

Similarly, Phoinix's narrative is unchallenged by its audience, but it is not entirely successful either: just as Agamemnon did in Book 1, Achilles steadfastly refuses to be persuaded. As mentioned above, Phoinix's less dextrous use of this trope might even correspond to a more ambiguous response by his audience: where Agamemnon softened his refusal by explicitly admitting that Nestor had spoken 'rightly' (κατὰ μοῖραν, 1.286), Achilles' refusal is more harsh, and even contains an explicit threat, that Phoinix may 'become hateful' (ἀπέχθηαι, 9.614) to him. Of course, this difference could indicate nothing more than the difference in rhetorical style between Agamemnon and Achilles, who is famously blunt in his speech.³¹ But it may instead be indicative of a less effective speech to parallel Phoinix's slightly less masterful use of rhetoric, and the necessity for him to rely on traditional authority, as well as feats of memory. Regardless, the use of memory, when combined with his downplaying of the story's traditional provenance, helps Phoinix's speech attain more authority than Agamemnon manages in his simple and explicit appeal to tradition.

We might, therefore, finally assess the Odyssean passages as poor parallels by which to gauge Iliadic notions of uncertainty. While Telemachos, Penelope, and Laertes all doubt the authority of conventionally phrased truths about Odysseus, the very purpose of this doubt is to draw attention to the uniqueness of Odysseus' situation. He is the only Trojan War hero whose story is not yet finished, and thus he hovers in something of a liminal world between the here and now of the narrative, and the epic past about which the bards in Ithake are already singing (in Phemios' song at 1.325-327, for instance). Of course, to an extent the same thing is true of Nestor's age in the *Iliad*: he is a figure placed between the heroic world of the past, and the poem's narrative present.³² However, the important distinction to be made between the two liminal figures is that Nestor's liminality manifests itself as a constant presence, while Odysseus is defined by absence. While the *Odyssey* presents an image of Odysseus that relies heavily on his absence from the real world of Ithake to portray his slow fading into the heroic past, the *Iliad*'s Nestor represents the heroic past brought to life, and therefore legitimated.³³ We should, then, be cautious about using the *Odyssey* as a parallel to the *Iliad* in this case, and instead we should perhaps rely more on the reactions of the internal audience of the poem itself, which I have argued are significantly different across the three examples.

Of course, as noted above, the significant ambiguities associated with these speeches do still exist, and they are an important aspect of Nestor's broader

³⁰ Although he does go on to qualify this – his next word is 'but' (ἀλλ', 1.287). On this speech, and Nestor's relationship to Agamemnon in general, see in particular Hammer (1997) 4-12.

³¹ On this, see, e.g., Friedrich and Redfield (1978) 263-288, Martin (1989) 146-205, and Parry (1989) 1-7, but of course Agamemnon is hardly notable for his tact either, as the ill-advised reproach of Diomedes that we have been discussing above indicates.

³² On this, see, e.g., Dickson (1995) 35-37, but cf. Minchin (2005) 65, who answers her own rhetorical question, '[d]oes Nestor live in the past?', with the blunt, 'not at all'.

³³ A parallel could perhaps be drawn here between Nestor's representation of the past brought to life and the theme that some have seen in the *Odyssey* of an Odysseus who increasingly comes into being as a hero, and thus to some extent re-emerges from the distant past during the course of the epic. On this, see in particular Murnaghan (1987), particularly 166-75, but also more recently van Nortwick (2009), particularly 3-23.

characterisation.³⁴ Nevertheless, for our fairly narrow purposes, the effectiveness of Nestor's tactics is so much more pronounced, and the response of his audience so different, that there is certainly an instructive comparison to be made between the mainly effective strategy of Nestor, which is reliant on his personal authority as an accurate and faithful narrator of his own experience, and the mainly ineffective appeals to traditional authority used by Agamemnon.

In sum, then, Agamemnon's example demonstrates that the use of *phasi* when narrating stories about the past has a dual outcome for the characters of the *Iliad*, but in both cases it serves to de-authorise their narrative. The term *phasi* itself creates distance, and therefore the possibility of uncertainty in the facts narrated, and the term can thus be used to indicate that what is narrated should not necessarily be taken at face value. On the other hand, those who rely on the traditional authority that can be implied by *phasi* are liable to have their narratives called into question.³⁵ Narratives which rely on this form of traditional authority, then, are portrayed as unreliable, and even prone to manipulation by self-interested narrators.

By contrast, those who portray their stories through the vocabulary of memory, like Phoinix, or who utilise autobiographical paradigms, like Nestor, are able to establish their authority successfully with their internal audiences, who, despite occasional unwillingness to follow the advice embedded in them, never question the accuracy of their statements. There is then a positive correlation between memory and narrative authority on the one hand, and between reliance on tradition and lack of such authority on the other. Tradition seems to be available to all, and therefore more up for grabs and contestable, while memory, with its more personal impetus, cannot be questioned in the same fashion. This of course presents an immediate problem for the Homeric narrator himself, who is also relying on tradition, albeit one mediated through the memory of the Muses, to tell his story, but perhaps that is a problem for another time.

[Table 1 follows overleaf]

³⁴ Despite Roisman's glib dismissal of them (in Roisman [2005] 23) as products of the disjunction between intention, which is the only thing on which a speaker should be judged, and outcomes (which are in the hands of 'the ever arbitrary and fickle gods') or success in persuasion (since he cannot be 'a sorcerer who can impose his will on reluctant chattel'). For a similar argument, see Schofield (1986) 15, who argues that his failure in Book 1 'does not detract from the esteem Nestor wins ... for his splendidly sensible intervention'. While this point does have merit, Nestor's failures seem to me to be more complicated than this, and inextricably linked with his role as embodiment of inter-generational tension (on which see in particular Falkner [1989] 21-67, and Querbach [1976] 55-64).

³⁵ Although it is noteworthy that Sthenelos does not contest the tradition itself, merely Agamemnon's ability to narrate it truthfully: 'Ἀτρεΐδῃ, μὴ ψεύδε' ἐπιστάμενος σάφα εἰπεῖν ('Son of Atreus, do not lie, when you know how to speak clearly', 4.404).

Table 1: Use of *phasi* and variants in the epics*(Adapted from de Jong (1987) 237-238)***CATEGORY A: *phasi* occurs with a definite subject (8 instances)**

| | |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------|
| <i>Iliad</i> (3) | <i>Odyssey</i> (5) |
| 9.234, 17.637, 21.569 | 1.33, 2.238, 7.322, 11.176, 19.383 |

CATEGORY B: *phasi* occurs without a definite subject (34)**Category B1: *phasi* concerns information the speaker has not seen (11)**

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| <i>Iliad</i> (4) | <i>Odyssey</i> (7) |
| 2.783, 4.375, 16.14, 24.615 | 1.189, 3.84, 3.188, 3.212, 4.201, 13.249, 16.143 |

Category B2: *phasi* refers to descent (8)

| | |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------|
| <i>Iliad</i> (5) | <i>Odyssey</i> (3) |
| 5.635, 6.100, 20.105, 20.206, 21.159 | 1.220, 4.387, 18.128 |

Category B3: *phasi* concerns ‘a reputation or universally admitted fact’ (15)*(de Jong [1987] 237)*

| | |
|--|--|
| <i>Iliad</i> (9) | <i>Odyssey</i> (6) |
| 5.638, 9.401, 11.831, 13.631, 17.674, 19.96, 19.416, 23.791, 24.546 | 3.245, 6.42, 16.418, 18.261, 19.267, 23.125 |

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