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Note on Homeric quotations and names:

- *all quotations from the Iliad are by book and line number in Roman numerals. The poem is not indicated for brevity;*
- *character names are spelt according to A.T. Murray's English translation of the* Iliad*, revised by W. Wyatt (Loeb Classical Library 2nd ed. 1999).*

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INTRODUCTION

Agamemnon, son of Atreus, king of the Argives, commander-in-chief of the Achaean forces at Troy is one of the central characters of the *Iliad*. His supreme authority in matters military, economic, and religious make him an archetypal Indo-European leader[1]. In the social and political struggles revolving around his figure, some scholars see references to the poet's eight-century historical context[2], while others insist that Homeric society, difficult to find in the archaeological record[3], primarily reflects aspects of tenth and ninth-century *oikos*-centred communities[4]. Others yet perceive traces of historical truth back to the Bronze-Age Mycenaean society depicted in the *Iliad*, and even Minoan connections[5]. What is certain is that Homer's epic poems convey timeless aspects of the human experience, and as such they have the power to appeal to different people, at different times, for different reasons. To this day, it would not be difficult to identify political leaders exhibiting some of Agamemnon's traits, from struggling with fair resource distribution and leadership in war, to ill-judged decision-making in matters concerning women.

[1] Dumezil 1958:32-3.
[2] Hammer 1997:13-26; Osborne 2004:210-11,218; Ulf 2009:90-98.
[3] Osborne 2004:216-218.
[4] Finley 1977:43 and, generally, ch.2.
[5] Palaima 1992:135-136.

This dissertation explores how the artful use of multiple narrating voices through the poem's characters could be a contributing factor in the broad appeal achieved by the *Iliad* through the ages. Concentrating on Agamemnon, I aim to demonstrate how listening or reading audiences, by focusing on different narrator-characters, may be steered to perceiving a variety of different aspects of the ruler's personality.

The analysis I shall present involved looking for Agamemnon's character traits within the full text of the epic, being careful to distinguish between narrators. The 'Homeric question'[6] is not addressed here: whenever I will mention Homer, I will be referring to the narrating voice of the epic poet in a generic sense. The analytical approach I followed was informed primarily by the work of two scholars, Elizabeth Minchin and Irene de Jong. Minchin's research, drawing from a model developed by Shank and Abelson in the context of psychology and Artificial Intelligence, offered a means to analyse character profile in Homer; de Jong's application of narratological approaches, in particular from Bal, to ancient texts, provided the basis for exploring the perspective of multiple different narrators[7].

ANALYTICAL APPROACH

Creation of Character

A credible character will generally act in accordance with a set of rules. Shank and Abelson's research in knowledge systems, primarily aimed at improving the way reality may be understood by computers, addressed how such rules may be defined and applied. At the core of their theory is the *script*, a knowledge base of previously executed actions, stored and organised in a logical form, which contains information on

[6] Fowler 2004.
[7] Minchin 2011, Shank & Abelson 1977, de Jong 2004, Bal 1997.

how to operate in a certain situation. Although *scripts* may be used to describe important everyday actions, such as readying for battle or driving chariots, they break down when dealing with novel situations: this is where *Plans*, *Goals* and *Themes* come into play[8].

A *plan*, which may be thought of as a general, rather than specific, *script*, is the set of choices a person has when setting out to accomplish a *goal*. To achieve a *plan*, multiple *goals* may be at work, and failing to reach a primary *goal* may trigger a *goal substitution*; to handle the potential conflict of goals, Shank and Abelson proposed a taxonomy of goal forms: *satisfaction*, *enjoyment*, *achievement*, *preservation*, *crisis*, *instrumental*, *delta*. The detail of such goal forms is not relevant for this dissertation, but the key point is that some forms take a higher priority than others: for example, as we will see, Agamemnon's enjoyment of Chryses, a *satisfaction goal*, will be substituted with a *crisis goal* (to give her back) when an offended Apollo decimates the army.

Themes are the building blocks of goals: they contain the background information upon which we base our predictions that an individual will have a certain goal. Three types of *themes* are used to represent different types of predisposition: *role, interpersonal* and *life. Role themes* are concerned with the physical and social context that may drive an actor's *goals*; for example, Agamemnon may behave differently as commander-in-chief as opposed to when, as a brother, he is concerned for the fate of Menelaus. *Interpersonal* themes are concerned with friendship and enmity ties, often the primary cause of an actor's behaviour. *Life* themes are the main indicators of personality, describing the qualities and aspirations that characterise the actor[9]. The set of relationships that take us from *themes* to the enactment of *plans* or *scripts* hides,

[8] Shank & Abelson 1977:1-2, 67-8.
[9] Shank & Abelson 1977: Plans:69-73; Goal Substitutions and Forms:108-119; Themes:131-149.

under its veneer of simple logic, many complexities and opportunities for subjective interpretation: this partly explains why computers are still far from being able to replicate realistic human behaviour, and reminds us that character analysis is not an exact science.

Acknowledging the limitations of the model, Minchin used it to demonstrate how it might help us understand aspects of the composition of Homer's epics: focusing on the analysis of the interactions of characters during Patroclus' funeral games, she was able to draw conclusions on how Homer, working in, or close to, an oral tradition, was able to construct a set of rich and engaging characters, drawing from an *organised, knowledge-based* procedure. Minchin chose to focus on *plans*, *goals*, and *themes*, where individual character traits could be looked for, as opposed to *scripts*, which describe the kind of 'automatic' behaviour the multitude have in common. By comparing individual character *themes*, Minchin was able to identify differentiating traits that suggest the deliberate creation, by the epic poet, of individualised personalities[10]. This dissertation follows a similar approach, but focusing on the single character of Agamemnon.

Narrators and Focalisers

In Homer, character depth and variety may also be conveyed through multiple narrating voices. de Jong's narratological research uses a well-defined framework, developed by Bal[11], to help us navigate the text in terms of *narrators*, *focalisers*, and their recipients: the *narratee* and the *focalisee*[12]. Central to the framework is the notion that the *text*, which a *narrator* may read, and a *narratee* may listen to, is the expression of a *story*, the object of his narration. This, in turn, is the result of a process of ordering and interpreting the underlying facts and ideas, a process termed *focalisation*, into a

[10] Minchin 2011, in particular 323-4, 341-2.
[11] Bal 1997.
[12] de Jong 2004.

logically and chronologically related series of events, called the *fabula*. The *focaliser* allows a *fabula* to become a *story* by interpreting the context and providing his own viewpoint. *Narrators*, *focalizers* and their recipients should not be thought of as people, but more abstractly as functions: when facts are simply presented to the reader/listener, the *narrator* is also the *focaliser*[13]. The distinction between narration and focalisation helps us appreciate subtler aspect of how performers and their audience may interact with the text.

There are cases where the *narrator* expresses someone else's opinion, as in the following passage: 'then all the rest of the Achaeans shouted their agreement, to respect the priest and accept the glorious ransom' (i.22-23). Here the *narrator* (Homer) is separated from the *focalisers* (the Achaeans), who are given voices and feelings. Another narrative situation where secondary layers of *narrator-focalisers* come into play is *character-text*: this is where Homer's characters use direct speech, which accounts for approximately 50% of the entire *Iliad*. In this case, we see that the secondary *narrator-focalisers*, characters within the poem, interact with internal *narratees-focalisees*. The external or primary *narratee-focalisee*, the actual person who, as a *narratee*, reads or listens to the poem, and, as a *focalisee*, makes his own sense of it, has to contend with multiple layers of communication that add colour and complexity to the text[14].

It is not my aim to review here all the narrative situations that de Jong covers in her exhaustive analysis, but to acknowledge the importance of appreciating distinctions in narration and focalisation, and to apply them, in simplified form, to my own analysis of Agamemnon. Here, in my efforts to identify and categorise *themes* pertaining to the

[13] de Jong 2004:31-36.
[14] de Jong 2004:36-38.

character of the Mycenaean king, I have been careful to differentiate between primary and secondary *narrators* and *focalisers*, and their *focalisees*, so that different profiles of Agamemnon could be constructed from the viewpoints of different narrators: that of the poet, the one that emerges from Agamemnon's *own* words and deeds, and the one projected by the characters that interact with him.

Constraints

Homer was not always hailed as a master in rich and complex characterisation, at least not in terms that can relate to our modern sensitivities. In the last century, Snell stated that 'the belief in the existence of a universal, uniform human mind is a rational prejudice'[15], a stark warning to anyone claiming to understand how the Greeks of Homer's time reasoned. He argued that fundamental concepts such as the distinction between body and soul (and therefore personality) were significantly under-developed in Homer as compared to the classical period, and that depth of character in narrative could not be achieved under such premises[16]. Kirk arrived at similar conclusions by analysing the epic poems from a different angle: building on M.Parry's research on the formular style used by oral poets[17], he explained how the linear, paratactic style of Homer had convinced Victorian scholars of the 'plainness' of Homeric diction, reinforcing the notion that heroic characters were no more than stereotypes. Although he maintained that significant room for creative arrangement existed within the constraints of formular structures and hexameter verse, he saw character in Homer as depicted with 'broader strokes' and little psychological subtlety[18].

[15] Snell 1953:16
[16] Snell:1-22.
[17] Parry 1971.
[18] Kirk 1985a:32-3; Kirk 1985b:56-7.

More recent scholarship gives more credit to the epic poet's ability to convey individuality and depth in his characters. Alles criticises the idea of looking for meaning and uniqueness in the structures of Homer's world as opposed to the dynamic flow of events in his narrative[19]. Lohmann's analysis of ring composition in the *Iliad*'s speeches shows how the epic poet was not constrained by traditional structures, but how he rather enhanced them[20]. Martin's influential research explicitly rejects Snell and Kirk's stances, demonstrating the importance of language and attitudes of the *Iliad*'s characters, and of performance in the context of oral poetry[21].

The analysis carried out for this dissertation was certainly inspired by the possibility of finding more than superficial characterisation within the text. However, it is essential to recognise that, as a *focalisee* living in a modern society, my assessment of the meaning and relevance of narrative clues for the identification and categorisation of *themes*, *plans* and *goals* is, by definition, the fruit of a contemporary perspective and of subjective judgment.

AGAMEMNON: *PLANS, GOALS, RELATIONSHIP* AND *ROLE THEMES*

This section provides an overview of the part of Agamemnon's character construction that is largely independent from who is narrating, but serves as a backdrop against which Agamemnon's different *life themes* are played out in the central part of the analysis.

Plans and Goals

Agamemnon's overall *plan* is to win the war and take Troy, a plan understood even by Chryses, the priest of Apollo who, in the opening scene, wishes for the gods'

[19] Alles 1990:167.
[20] Lohmann 1997:77,85-87.
[21] Martin 1989:98-100.

assistance to help the Greeks accomplish it (i.18-19). Agamemnon's firm rejection of Chryses' supplication to retrieve his daughter Chryseis, a prisoner of war, in exchange of a significant ransom, triggers a tragic pattern[22] that threatens the *plan*: Apollo, offended at the treatment of his priest, retaliates by sending an 'evil pestilence' against the army (i.8-52). As the god's vengeance decimates the troops, the *satisfaction goal* (keeping Chryseis) gives way to a *crisis goal* (to save the army from Apollo's wrath), and Agamemnon agrees to return the girl (i.116). However, after a fierce argument with Achilles, Agamemnon decides he will take his girl, Briseis, as compensation for his loss (i.184-187). This activates a *preservation goal*, an action motivated to protect Agamemnon's social status as supreme leader, though Van Wees calls it an act of *hubris*, with the primary purpose of humiliating Achilles[23]. At this stage it is clear that Agamemnon believes that Achilles' contribution is not essential to his overall *plan*: as the story unfolds, the pursuit of such goal quickly backfires[24]. When Achilles withdraws his cooperation, by refusing to commit to further fighting against the Trojans (i.240-244), a second *crisis goal* (to save the army from Achilles' wrath), slowly emerges. After initial successes, the Achaean contingent suffers severe losses against Hector's Trojans, but it is not until book 9 that Agamemnon decides, in desperation, to request Achilles' help. The *preservation* goal, however, remains throughout, represented, from this point on, by Agamemnon's determination to compensate Achilles with gifts so valuable that could not be reciprocated (ix.122-157): Agamemnon, making no retreat on the moral front, and exhibiting his wealth and power, wants Achilles to acknowledge his superiority (ix.160-161)[25]. It will take until book 19 for final reconciliation to be achieved: Agamemnon will only partially satisfy his *goals*, as Achilles will show

[22] Rinon 2008:13-9.
[23] Van Wees 1992:107
[24] Adkins 1982:294,301,313.
[25] Hainsworth 1993:80.

indifference to the compensation (xix.146-148), and will take centre stage as the foremost, if doomed, Achaean warrior. The audience of the *Iliad* knows that the *plan* to take Troy will ultimately be fulfilled, but the poem terminates before those events.

Relationship themes

Agamemnon interacts will all the main characters in the *Iliad*. His *relationship themes* may be summarised in three categories: *Gods*, *Peers*, *Family*[26]. The first category provides little help in uniquely defining the ruler's personality: he, like all other mortals, is at the mercy of their plots, which are unknown to him, and enjoys the support of some gods (Hera, Athena) and the adversity of others (Apollo, Thetis, Zeus). Zeus' role is particularly tragic in that Agamemnon, νήπιος, believes that he can count on his support (i.175, i.102-108), while the king of the gods has been persuaded by Thetis to hinder the Achaeans. The second category, his *peers*, are a source of unrelenting tension, for Agamemnon is constantly endeavouring to remind them of the superiority of his social status. I will explore this further in my discussion of *life themes*, as I review each *character-narrator*. Under the last category is Menelaus: Agamemnon displays strong attachment to family values (iv.169-182, 189-197, vii.107-108, x.124-127), being concerned for his brother to the point where others, like Nestor, show intolerance at his special treatment (x.114-118).

Role themes

Agamemnon's *role themes* clearly mark him out as the supreme authority, an authority predicated primarily on *tradition* and *wealth*. *Tradition* is emphasised in the

[26] See table T1 for key *relationship themes* throughout the poem.

way he is regularly referred to as "ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν", an archaising title, reminiscent of Mycenaean times, fallen out of use in Greece since the end of the Bronze Age[27]. It is also explicitly articulated, in a reminder that kingly power derived from Zeus himself[28], when Homer describes Agamemnon's sceptre: made by Hephaestus for the king of the gods, it was handed over through Hermes to Pelops, a direct ancestor of the Atreid (ii.100-108). As for *wealth*, there are multiple direct and indirect references to it in the *Iliad*: Agamemnon's sword and armour are made with precious, finely worked materials (ii.45, xi.17-46); he and his city of Mycenae are 'rich in gold' (vii.179-180, xi.46), and he can afford to offer incomparable gifts to Achilles (ix.119-157). Fragments from Hesiod indicate that the *Atreides* were renowned, among Homer's contemporaries, for their inherited wealth, and they describe Menelaus as winning Helen through magnificent gifts[29]. Although Agamemnon is technically a *primus inter pares*, for the other kings are not his subjects[30], his command of such vast resources, also exemplified by the superior number of ships of the Mycenaean lord (ii.576), makes him a ruler to be feared[31].

As a warrior, his moment of glory comes in book 11, when his *aristeia* is enacted. He is portrayed as a victim of divine adversity at two key stages in the poem: when Zeus sends 'a destructive dream' (ii.6) and when Zeus again instructs Iris to advise Hector to hold back until Agamemnon leaps on his chariot (xi.181-194). It is perhaps not coincidental that Homer chooses these moments, when Agamemnon feels most powerful, for the king of the gods to intervene against him. In his last appearances, Agamemnon is portrayed as a compliant mourner, piously helping Achilles overcome his grief, obeying his directives throughout the ritual of the funeral games (xxiii.49-53,

[27] Kirk 1975:832,841.
[28] Kirk 1985b:53.
[29] Merkelbach-West 1967:99[(203) Nicolaus Damascenus (90 F 24)], and 97[(198) P.Oxy.2491 fr.1].
[30] Shewan 1917:149.
[31] Rabel 1984, drawing from Thucydides 1.9.3; Hammer 1997:4.

895). To sum up, Agamemnon is the unequivocal holder of power and authority in the Achaean camp: no matter how powerful, however, he must submit to divine authority, and meet divine punishment for his impiety and *hubris.*

AGAMEMNON'S *LIFE THEMES* ACCORDING TO DIFFERENT NARRATORS

Life themes are our primary tool in identifying how different aspects of Agamemnon's personality are *focalised* by different narrators. This review considers all the characters that have the more significant interactions with Agamemnon: Chryses, Calchas, Achilles, Nestor, Diomedes, Odysseus. It also covers the main narrators of Agamemnon's words and deeds: Homer, and the character of Agamemnon himself.

It is important to keep in mind that the material presented in each narrator section is strictly confined to that specific narrator (aside from occasional digressions for discussion purposes). With the exception of Homer, who speaks indirectly as the *primary narrator*, the text considered for narrator-characters is that of direct speech. For example, if Homer says 'Agamemnon praised Aias', but no direct speech follows between Agamemnon and Aias, the analysis will treat the passage as Homer's narration (albeit with Agamemnon's focalisation), and will ignore it when looking at Agamemnon's narration. Such deconstruction may appear a little confusing, but is consistent with the chosen analytical approach.

Each narrator section is complemented by a summary table, referenced in the section *sub-heading in italic font*. Summary tables show a count of the instances where a *life* or a *role theme* was observed. They provide a panoramic view of the strengths and weaknesses of Agamemnon according to each narrator, aggregating the results of the more detailed analysis and categorisation that constituted the foundation for the

material presented here. An example of the detailed data collection and categorisation template is shown in table T2.

Homer

Summary table: T3.1.

The narrating voice of the epic poet, who invokes the help of the muses to create a vivid, detailed picture of the stories recounted, is meant to convey an objective account of the *klea andron*, transporting the audience into a world where they can see the action unfolding before their eyes[32]. If we accept this premise as a starting point, we should expect the most objective view of Agamemnon to come from Homer.

In matters related to power, Agamemnon is kingly, mighty and wealthy, respected, respectful of tradition, and feels the weight of responsibility: every book where he is mentioned contains references to these traits. Despite his mistake with Chryses, he is portrayed as god-fearing in his prompt response to divine instructions, believing Zeus's dream (ii.37), and rousing the Achaeans on Hera's prompting (viii.218-9). His demeanour on the battlefield is that of an eager warrior, in particular during his *aristeia* in book 11. Concerned about honour, he leaps up first among the candidates to fight Hector (vii.162). He respects valour, rejoicing in Aias' performance and honouring him with the long chine of the bull (vii.312,314), and being proud at the sight of Teucer killing enemies with his bow (viii.278). These *themes* are complimentary and entirely consistent with Agamemnon's role.

Some of the traits emerging from Homer's narrative, however, lend themselves to a less sympathetic interpretation: in book 4, as Agamemnon provokes Odysseus and Diomedes (*neikos*), he walks a thin line between banter and insult (iv.336-7, 365-9). He

[32] Ford 1992:53-55.

is, however, able to diffuse tensions by backtracking, apologising after Odysseus' reaction (iv.356-7). Agamemnon rarely requests help explicitly; he is described doing so in the *Doloneia*, setting out to find Nestor in the middle of the night (x.17-20). He appears to prefer to make his mind up regardless of what others think, or let others take the initiative: there are many examples of these traits that will be addressed in the review of *character-text*. As a warrior, Agamemnon's eagerness turns to ruthlessness in the cynical slaying of Adrastus (vi.63-5), a complex and dramatic scene[33], and that of Peisander and Hippolochus (xi.122), which is a stock scene of epic fighting, but coloured by Agamemnon's vengeful motive [34]. All of these characteristics add to the human dimension of Agamemnon's *persona*.

Homer also reveals a darker side. Book 1, in particular, stands out for the presence of predominantly *negative* themes: as he prepares to respond to Chryses, Agamemnon conveys arrogance (i.24-25); the fact that the Achaeans had only just shouted their agreement at Chryses' proposal (i.22-23) highlights a disregard for the opinion of his own men[35]. Prior to addressing Calchas, Homer conveys his rage and frustration through a monstrous transformation of his physical appearance: his 'black heart' is filled with rage, and his bulging eyes are 'blazing like fire' (i.103-4). Agamemnon's ability to turn his might into fearsome aggressiveness is clearly emphasised, a trait firstly introduced by the fear of Chryses after the commander-in-chief's unkind send-off (i.33).

Throughout the *Iliad*, when dealing with Agamemnon's less attractive characteristics, Homer almost invariably describes them through the reactions of other characters. In book 1, Talthybius and Eurybates are unwilling to perform the task of

[33] Kirk 1990:159.
[34] Hainsworth 1993:238.
[35] Greenberg 1993:195,197.

taking Briseis (i.327), indicating a silent disapproval of Agamemnon's leadership. In book 2, Agamemnon comes across as a weak leader as a result of the troops running to the ships upon the mock-invitation to return home (ii.149-151), of Odysseus restoring control alone (ii.185-187), and of Thersites shouting abuse (ii.221-2). Later, on the battlefield, when lots are drawn to fight against Aias, Homer subtly hints at Agamemnon's combat ability as inferior to his peers: he talks of one of the Danaans praying that the lots fall to firstly to Aias, then to Diomedes, and only lastly to Agamemnon (vii.179-180). Prior to the embassy of Achilles, Agamemnon's authority is undermined when the assembly cheers Diomedes' exhortation to fight on (ix.50-51). When the battle comes close to the Greek ships, his insecurity and leadership are berated in Odysseus' angry reaction to the suggestion of fleeing (xiv.82). In these examples, we see that Homer does not ignore the leader's negative traits, but appears to steer clear from expressing them directly, using the characters to *focalise* them.

There are also allusive passages that seem to reflect a less-than-positive judgment on the part of the narrator: as Agamemnon arms for war, his armour appears to be dominated by representations of death[36]: the head of the Gorgon surrounded by Terror and Rout on his shield, snakes on his armour, a three-headed serpent on the shield belt (xi.36-40). During the ensuing *aristeia*, to describe the terror of the Trojans at his sight, Homer uses the simile of a lion who 'crushes the little ones of a swift hind…and takes their tender life' (xi.113-119). Agamemnon's shield could not be more different from Achilles', which celebrates communal life (xviii.478-608) [37], and the lion's

[36] Griffin 2004:165, though some scholars question authenticity of verses (Hainsworth 1993:221).
[37] Edwards 1991:208-9.

helpless prey could be a criticism of Agamemnon's martial prowess, as he furiously slays what appear to be lesser opponents[38].

An all-round picture of Agamemnon emerges from Homer's narrating voice. Not a flat, predictable character, but a leader facing many challenges as a consequence of his ill-considered decisions. Homer's objectivity and detachment seem to break down in the allusive passages and, albeit via the characters as *secondary focalisers*, in his depiction of the ruler's negative traits[39].

Chryses

Summary table: n/a.

Chryses' appearance in the *Iliad* is short (15 verses in book 1), but high-impact. Homer sets the context before Chryses' speech: he comes dressed as a priest of Apollo, holding the god's fillets on a staff of gold, bringing 'incomparable ransom' (i.13-15). Chryses addresses Agamemnon, Menelaus and the well-greaved Achaeans, begging them to accept the ransom and, by this action, honouring the god Apollo (i.17-21). After Agamemnon's rejection, shaking with fear, he retaliates with a curse, praying that Apollo hit back at the Danaans with as many arrows as his tears. Chryses seems to highlight the fact that Agamemnon is primarily motivated by greed. The choice of a public setting, and the veiled threat that a refusal may be tantamount to impiety sets the scene for a dangerous power play against a very proud ruler.

It is easy to focus on the arrogance of Agamemnon's response, which will be addressed later, to lay the blame squarely upon him[40]. Ancient audiences, however, may have equally read a degree of arrogance in Chryses' demeanour. Chryses' supplication is short and to the point, almost as if he'd wanted his priestly status and his

[38] Postlethwaite 1995:98-99.
[39] Cfr. de Jong 2004:221-2
[40] Greenberg 1993 provides a damning portrayal of Agamemnon's attitude around this incident.

money to do the talking. The highly personal nature of his request contrasts with the public, impersonal setting he chooses: had he made a humbler face-to-face supplication, clasping the knees of Agamemnon, a harsh rejection would have been more difficult[41]. This is exactly what Thetis is shown to be doing shortly after, when pleading for her son's revenge with Zeus (i.500), knee-clasping being a specific recommendation from Achilles (i.407). Even if the situation did not allow it, words could be used to the same effect[42]: after the death of Patroclus, Thetis supplicates Hephaistos to build a new armour for Achilles, using the expression "γούναθ᾽ ἱκάνομαι" (xviii.457). Perhaps the most relevant comparison, however, is that against Priam looking to recover his son Hector, where the scene is antithetical in almost every respect to that of Chryses: in the last book, at night, shrouded in secret, with the god (Hermes in this case) acting as mediator rather than antagonist. Here, Priam's first action is to clasp Achilles' knees and kiss the 'terrible, man-slaying hands that had slain his many sons' (xxiv.478-9). When juxtaposing these scenes, one may conclude that perhaps Agamemnon was not so greedy, and that Chryses provided a match for his arrogance[43].

Calchas

Summary table: n/a.

Calchas the seer, like Chryses, is a short-lived but critical character: on one hand he provides the solution for placating Apollo by suggesting the return of Chryseis, but on the other is a catalyst in the escalation of the argument between Agamemnon and Achilles. Called to speak in the assembly by Achilles to shed light on the reason for Apollo's anger, which is decimating the Achaeans (i.59-67), his first concern is to

[41] Naiden 2006:43-4.
[42] Naiden 2006:62-3.
[43] Greenberg 1993:193 comments on the symmetry between the two episodes, but does not see redeeming features in Agamemnon's response to Chryses.

request protection from Agamemnon (i.76-83). These words reinforce the theme of aggression introduced with Chryses, in a climax that culminates with Agamemnon's eye-popping, furious reaction described earlier. Since he will go on to point out that Agamemnon, as a god-offender, is the root cause for the disaster sent by Apollo (i.94), his fears are understandable. However, his most significant utterance with regards to unveiling the less attractive side of Agamemnon's *life themes*, in my opinion, is "κρείσσων γὰρ βασιλεὺς ὅτε χώσεται ἀνδρὶ χέρηϊ" (i.80). This is the kind of statement where Chalchas, as the *secondary focaliser*, seems to be speaking not only to Achilles, but also to the primary *narratee-focalisee*. It could also be seen as a prolepsis for Agamemnon's choice of opponents in combat and the lion simile described earlier: if so, it would strengthen the idea that Agamemnon was most mighty against the weakest, and perhaps hint at the possibility that the *primary narrator* shared Calchas' view.

Calchas reappears in book 13, when he rouses the troops in the heat of battle. Or so it would seem to the Achaeans, for it is actually Poseidon that chooses the likeness of the seer to manifest himself. Poseidon-Calchas declares that, even if Agamemnon is the cause of Achilles' wrath, the warriors must fight on (xiii.112-114). Oddly, Poseidon will reappear as an old man, this time encouraging Agamemnon and telling a totally different story: the gods are not angry at him, and Achilles is doomed for not understanding the consequences of his wrath (xiv.139-146). de Jong highlighted these episodes as an example where the speaker adapts his presentation according to the addressee, the difference in Poseidon's appearance seeming to symbolise the difference between the opinions he voices[44]. With Agamemnon's *life themes* in mind, I can only agree with de Jong, as the choice of making Poseidon appear as Calchas seems deliberate, with the function of reminding the audience of the kind of qualities that

[44] de Jong 2004:155.

make the ruler deserving of divine punishment: impiety and the exercise of might against the weak.

Agamemnon

Summary table: T3.2.

The majority of Agamemnon's *life themes* in the *Iliad* manifest themselves already in the first half of book 1, as his character is tested through a sequence of unexpected situations and arguments that see the character's authority under threat. However, as the chain of events triggered by his confrontation with Achilles unfolds throughout the poem, Agamemnon's personality is further revealed by the way he progressively adjusts his *goals* in dealing with the crisis. Since Agamemnon is the central focus of this dissertation, I will discuss more thoroughly the character traits that his direct speeches reveal. As there is significant overlap with the profile that emerged in Homer's narration, this gives me an opportunity to revisit in more detail some aspects that earlier were afforded only a rapid mention.

The confrontation with Chryses is the first scene that sees Agamemnon in action. Greed, impiety, and arrogance stood out when we looked at it through the words of Homer and of the priest of Apollo, although we saw how Chryses' mode of supplication could have been inappropriate. Agamemnon's rejection is forceful and intimidating from the start, with no attempt at pondering the situation. His short speech (i.26-32) unequivocally rejects both the request and the threat[45] with two negative imperatives ("μή … κιχείω", "μή νύ τοι οὐ χραίσμῃ…"), conveying arrogance and impious disregard for Apollo.

[45] Greenberg 1993:196

It is worth, however, exploring the Atreid's harsh rejection further: the role of the *supplicandus* carried important obligations: a 'yes' response implied a duty to comply, whereas a 'no' response had to be forceful, the force matching the importance of what was at stake[46]. These considerations make Agamemnon's reaction more understandable; a further mitigating factor is the Greeks' extremely poor track record of responding positively to suppliants, who, in the heat of battle at least, they are almost invariably rewarded with death[47]. Yet, Agamemnon's ill-judged confidence in his own counsel, highlighted unsympathetically by Homer, as we saw earlier, through his disregard for the favourable reaction of the Achaeans, is likely to have hit a raw nerve with contemporary audiences, at a time when *polis* formation promoted egalitarianism rather than elitism[48]. Such confidence would soon disappear to be replaced by insecurity.

Following the rejection of Chryses, Achilles and Calchas' words wind up Agamemnon to the extreme, and he responds aggressively in both demeanour and speech. In my opinion, the third verse of his address to Calchas (i.108) artfully conveys the build-up of utmost frustration through its chiastic form, alliterations and metre[49], in a perfect example of how structure can enhance, rather than constrain, content:

ἐσθλὸν δ᾽ οὔτέ τί πω εἶπας ἔπος οὔτ᾽ ἐτέλεσσας:

Agamemnon then proceeds to retell, re-interpreting it his own way, Calchas' accusations against his actions that caused Apollo's wrath, choosing to omit any reference to his

[46] Naiden 2006:105-6.
[47] Diomedes x.454-6; Agamemnon xi.130-47; Achilles xx.463-9, xxi.64-119, xxii.345-354ff.
[48] Morris 2009:73-77.
[49] A personal observation after multiple recitations of these dialogues. Cfr. Kirk 1985a:65.

atimia against the priest of Apollo and mentioning only his refusal to take the ransom. He also re-interprets his own speech to Chryses (i.109-115), articulating in a more kindly way his motives to keep Chryseis as a companion more desirable than his legitimate wife. The *themes* at play here are a reluctant honesty in admitting his responsibility, coupled with a sense of insecurity, feeling a need to justify himself as he sees his position of authority under threat[50]. Agamemnon is proud, but able to backtrack: he complies with Calchas' counsel to give up Chryseis so that the army may be saved (i.116-117). His overriding concern about honour, however, as he asks to receive compensation (i.118-119), triggers the escalation of the dispute with Achilles.

Agamemnon's response to Achilles' initial outburst reveals more of the same *themes* in quick succession: insecurity in his apprehension at being outwitted (i.131-132); concern about honour in insisting on adequate compensation from the Achaeans (i.135-136); aggressiveness in suggesting that he may seek compensation from Achilles or any other of his peers (i.137-139); ability to backtrack to diffuse tension when he suddenly postpones the issue for later discussion, perhaps realising he had overstepped the mark (i.140). However, Achilles does not let it drop so simply, and follows-up with a vicious reply. Attacked in a very personal way, Agamemnon responds aggressively, vowing to take Briseis and stressing how superior he is to Achilles (i.173-187). This masks a profound personal insecurity[51]. Kirk observes the contrast between the adjectives "καρτερός" (Achilles) and "φέρτερός" (Agamemnon) as an acknowledgment of inferiority on the battlefield, though not in status[52]. Though obviously angry and intimidating, Agamemnon's language retains a certain formality, keeping the scope of

[50] de Jong 2004:176. Greenberg 1993:202.
[51] Donlan 1971:111.
[52] Kirk 1985a:72.

the dispute to the need of compensation, in stark contrast with Achilles who, as we will see later, opens up a host of dormant issues and frustrations[53].

Throughout the succession of disputes, what seems to be primarily at stake for Agamemnon is *timē*, a word that describes the degree of prestige of an individual in society, something that includes taking into account the well being of the *demos*[54]. Such a concern, described in my earlier comments as a desire to defend his honour or status, will resurface a number of times. In Homeric society, the right to property and the right to rule appear to be under constant threat: for Agamemnon to keep enjoying power, he must defend it[55]; however, by the end of book 1, a suppliant Thetis will persuade Zeus to nod his assent to inflict cruel punishment on Agamemnon and the Achaeans (i.524-527).

Unaware of the divine plot, book 2 opens with the deception of Agamemnon through Zeus' dream. The dream, in the likeness of Nestor, reminds the ruler of his responsibilities in caring for the army and assures him of victory on that day (ii.23-34). When Agamemnon relates the dream's words to the kings, his *verbatim* repetition is consistent with the nature of messenger-speeches in epic poetry: the message, in particular across characters of different status (gods *versus* humans in this case), must look to be unadulterated; the fact that he chooses to retell exactly the whole speech, including the first, more personal, part on the recommendation of responsibility, also suggests that concern for the troops resonates well with him[56].

Agamemnon's next decision, and the chaotic action that follows, is not easy to make sense of: totally unprompted, he tells the assembled kings to arm the Achaeans, but only after 'I will make trial of them with words, *as is customary* ("ἢ θέμις ἐστί"), and

[53] Cfr. Griffin 2004:165. Hesiod (note 29) also uses "φέρτερον" for Menelaus.
[54] Ulf 2009:89.
[55] Van Wees 1992:108; Whitley 2001:98 suggests that in historical Iron Age Greece positions of leadership were temporary; Finley 1977:119-122 describes honour in Homeric society.
[56] de Jong 2004:185.

tell them to flee with their benched ships and you, one here, on there, try to restrain them with words' (ii.73-75). This test of morale results, as we have seen earlier, in the entire army running for the ships. Donlan sees it as a sign of mental stress[57]; Kirk considers it a 'bizarre idea', hinting at the possibility that other versions of the poem omitted the whole episode, but speculates that the word θέμις could designate ritual behaviour[58]. Knox and Russo take this further, interpreting the test as compliance to religious law: in a Holy War, where the assurance of victory comes from the gods, no infidel must take part. Either way, Agamemnon emerges as a weak leader unable to exercise persuasive charisma on the troops, making another ill-judged decision[59]. With order restored thanks to Odysseus' action and Nestor's counsel, Agamemnon's closing words in book 2 eventually show an eagerness to join battle with his troops; his rousing speech (ii.381-393) finally elicits an excited reaction from the army (ii.395-397). The *theme* of the eager warrior is thus introduced.

Agamemnon's fighting spirit will come and go, punctuated by insecurity, until his *aristeia* in book 11. In the moments of greatest anxiety, four elements consistently appear: the weight of responsibility for others [1], the intention to flee or go home [2] and, importantly, the mention of Zeus, either in hope of his assistance, or in despair at his adversity [3]. A number of episodes follow this pattern: when Menelaus lies wounded from Pandarus' arrow (iv.156 [1], iv.169-182 [2], iv.166-168 [3]); when Hector's Trojans seem to be getting the upper hand (viii.244 [1], viii.243 [2], viii.236-242 [3]); prior to sending, in desperation, the embassy to Achilles (ix. 22 [1], ix.26-27 [2], ix.18-21 [3]); lastly, after the Trojans have broken down the defensive wall (xiv.67-70 [1], xiv.75-81 [2], xiv.69 [3]). Yet, in the first two instances the words of uncertainty

[57] Donlan 1971:112.
[58] Kirk 1985b:54; Kirk 1985a:125,122.
[59] Knox-Russo 1989.

are the counterbalance to rousing, fighting talk (iv. 155-168, viii.228-236), but from then on, as Agamemnon's *crisis goal* eventually takes over, there is only room for desperate, ruthless fighting (book 11)[60] and gloomy pessimism.

In moments of difficulty, Agamemnon keeps reminding himself and his audience his connection with Zeus, to remove the responsibility from himself. This attitude is expressed very explicitly a number of times (ii.375.376, x.88-89, xiv.65-73), together with the mention of *Ate*, the blindness of heart that is the root cause of his mistakes (ii.111, ix.18)[61]. This will culminate in Agamemnon's speech in book 19, as we will see further on. Agamemnon, his confidence shaken to the core, comes across a worn-down leader torn between conflicting impulses, making repeated efforts to regain his prestige.

In the events that follow, in order to achieve his *goals*, Agamemnon must command the help and respect of his peers. This requires efforts to strike a balance between maintaining friendly relationships and defending his status as 'best of Achaeans' (as Achilles ironically puts it in i.91). Agamemnon manages to do this well with Idomeneus and the Aiantes, whom he praises with warm words as they prepare for battle (iv.257-264, iv.285-291). He also consistently shows respect for Nestor, representative of the older generation, whose counsel is always welcome (i.286, ii.370-372, x.87, x.120, xiv.42-43). He is much less successful with Odysseus (with Menestheus) and Diomedes (with Sthenelus), showing an abrupt manner by rebuking them for their apparent reluctance to ready themselves for battle (iv.338-348). In particular, he gets quite personal with Diomedes by comparing him unfavourably against his father, sarcastically claiming that the young king is better at talking than

[60] Donlan 1971:113.
[61] '*Ate* is almost the only explanation … by Homer … for bridging the void between divine and human responsibility' (Dawe 1968:96).

fighting (iv.370-400)[62]. If this is battlefield banter, Agamemnon does not seem to be able to make his comrades see the funny side of it. Even if he genuinely intends to be complimentary, as when, in a later episode, he praises Teucer (viii.281-291), his words somehow manage to elicit an offended reaction (viii.293-299)[63]. The preservation of *timē* was a balancing act that required a sensitivity that Agamemnon simply did not seem to possess: rather than 'walking that fine line', his abrupt demeanour makes him constantly step over it (only to step back when he realises the damage done). The embassy to Achilles is a good example: not only does he want to regain Achilles' support with the offer of handsome gifts (ix.119-157), but he demands that his opponent submit to him in recognition of his superiority (ix.160-161: "βασιλεύτερός", "γενεῇ προγενέστερος")[64], a request that Odysseus will conspicuously omit when relating the message, as we will see later. Such overriding concern for status and honour seems the primary cause for Agamemnon's awkward relationships with the more competitive among his peers.

Agamemnon's backtracking deserves further attention: it may be looked at with contempt as the sign of a weak, insecure personality[65], but, given the ruler's coarse manners, it is a sure political survival skill. As Ulf puts it, " 'a warrior' who is able 'to think simultaneously ahead and back' (i.343) has the best chance of improving his personal prestige"[66]. Agamemnon is quick to remedy with kind words Odysseus' response to his *neikos* (iv.358-363). Despite the tension from the *neikos*, he can acknowledge his agreement with Diomedes in his rejection of Idaeus' offer from the

[62] The rebuke, or *neikos*, is a typical scene in the language of epic, and is governed by a set of rules (Minchin 2007:3-5).
[63] Hammer 1997:8 "there is an incompleteness to Agamemnon's authority evidenced by the reaction of others".
[64] Hainsworth 1993:80 considers the attitude 'not tactful', but 'real' in consideration of honour code.
[65] Greenberg 1993:198,200,203.
[66] Ulf 2009:88-89.

Trojans (vii.407), and responds generously to Tydeus' son's request to choose a man to accompany him in the dangerous night-time raid (x.234-9). In the embassy to Achilles, the offer includes an oath that he has not (sexually) touched Briseis (x.133), a somewhat surprising demonstration of forward thinking[67], reinforcing the idea that Agamemnon is a consummate politician, focused in pursuing, if not always achieving, his *goals*.

Achilles eventually renounces his wrath, opening the door for reconciliation. With this, in front of the assembly, comes a final opportunity for Agamemnon to rescue his *timē*[68]. It is the last time Agamemnon will speak, for his appearance in book 23, at the funeral games, will be as a compliant executor of Achille's wishes. His sense of insecurity seems to have filtered down to the troops, since he must request, twice, for people to show respect to the speaker and be quiet (xix.79-80, 81-82), clearly conveying embarrassment at his position[69]. Yet Agamemnon does not admit to moral blindness[70]: his first concern is to declare that the situation for which he is apologising is not his fault, but that of Zeus, Fate and the Erinys, through the workings of *Ate* (xix.86-90)[71]. After a long account on how *Ate* managed to deceive Zeus himself (xix.91-133), and ascribing again the responsibilities for his faults on the divine blindness (xix.134-138), he finally declares his willingness to stick to the promises made with the earlier, failed, embassy (xix.138-144). If Agamemnon ultimately escapes the consequences of his own *Ate*[72], and formally recovers his honour, by this stage his figure as the supreme authority is severely diminished. Achilles is now the *de facto* leader, and Agamemnon's final words, to proceed with the handover of his gifts (xix.185-197) and with the oath on

[67] Greenberg 1993:203.
[68] Ulf 2009:90-91 'the *demos* dominates as the point of reference for the allocation of *timē*'.
[69] Edwards 1991:245.
[70] Adkins 1982:312-313.
[71] Rinon 2008:36-7.
[72] Arieti 1988:11.

Briseis (xix.258-265), seem to convey, at least on the surface, a resigned humility. When considering the rules of reciprocity in Homeric society, however, the insistence on gift-giving raises a subtle but critical point: on one hand, compensation is the only socially authorised mechanism available to Agamemnon for making amends; on the other, it creates an obligation for Achilles. Either way, it is an important vehicle for Agamemnon to enhance his *timē*: even if Achilles has made it ineffective through his indifference and the renouncing of wrath (for a new wrath to avenge Patroclus: xix.15-18)[73], the Atreid is eager to use it to the full until the very end[74].

Achilles

Summary table: T3.3.

If Calchas, as I suggested earlier, *focalises* Agamemnon's impiety and rule of might, Achilles *focalises* his shortcomings as a leader and as a warrior. Table T3.3 reveals an interesting contrast: no positive *life theme*, but predominantly positive *role themes*. For all the hatred towards Agamemnon, which is reflected in his inability to describe any positive character trait of his, Achilles does acknowledge and submit to the ruler's formal supremacy when he interacts with him. In book 1, after Agamemnon demands compensation for the return of Chryseis, Achilles seems to acknowledge his authority in the distribution of booty and the legitimacy of his claim, proposing that he is repaid three or four times as much after Troy is taken (i.122-129). Similarly, after exchanges so violent that Athena has to intervene to stop Achilles from drawing his sword against Agamemnon (i.210), Achilles declares he will let Briseis go without fighting, saying that the Achaeans are only 'taking away what they gave' (i.297-299)[75].

[73] Alles 1990:173-4.
[74] Allan-Cairns 2011:126,132; Ulf 2009:87-88; Donlan 1971:114.
[75] Van Wees 1992:35 explains the plural in "ἐπεί μ᾽ ἀφέλεσθέ γε δόντες" as 'not because Homer confuses responsibilities' - it is Agamemnon who's in charge - 'but because ruler awards prizes in the name of the entire community'. Also Allan-Cairns 2011:115.

In so doing, he is again, reluctantly, submitting to Agamemnon's authority. From book 18, when he chooses to abandon his wrath and resume contact with Agamemnon so he may avenge Patroclus, he refers to him as *anax andron* (xviii.111, xix.146, xix.199), and, at the funeral games, he flatters him as the one whose 'words as those of no other will the army of the Achaeans obey' (xxiii.156-157); he also addresses him first when asking all the kings to perform a libation and help gather the bones of Patroclus from the ashes (xxiii.236-238). For Achilles, despite the threats and the hatred, Agamemnon at no time ceases to be the supreme authority[76].

On the personal level, however, Achilles reviles the Argive as inferior in combat and as an unworthy leader. In his response to Calchas, he makes it clear he would have no problem standing up to Agamemnon if required (i.90-1). Achilles' verbal reaction to the prospect of having hard-won prizes snatched back is replete with personal insults, and questions the fundamentals of Agamemnon's leadership: 'how can any Achaean eagerly obey your words either to go on a journey or to do battle? (i.150-151)'; Agamemnon is unjust and biased in the distribution of booty: he has 'never' given Achilles an equal prize and always keeps the greater one for himself (i.163-167)[77]. He is a coward who 'never' arms himself for battle with his troops, a 'people-devouring' king, ruler over 'nobodies' (i.226-228, i.231)! Finally, Achilles declares he will obey him no longer (i.296); ironically, this is the same speech where, as I have pointed out earlier, he actually concedes to having Briseis taken from him. Achilles will talk of Agamemnon in similar derogatory terms to Odysseus, Phoenix and Aias in the embassy of book 9, rejecting all the arguments posed to him and reacting with contempt at the generous

[76] Postlethwaite 1995:95.
[77] Griffin 2004:164 observes how Homer economically suggests a background of bad feeling through the use of adverbs like *always* and *never* in the tit-for-tat between the two opponents.

gifts offered (ix.315, 319, 332-333, 346-355, 372, 373-378, 612-613, 647-648). Agamemnon, in short, is an unworthy leader.

Amidst all the insults, the allegations of greed reveal interesting parallels between Chryses and Achilles: with both, a harsh reaction is triggered when they convey the assumption that it is greed that motivates Agamemnon. In the case of Achilles, this happens in the short speech which he starts by addressing Agamemnon as 'most covetous of all men' (i.122), and goes on to propose triple or quadruple recompense. Ulf observes that the accusation of greed suggests that it matters *how* one achieves economic success[78]; if we consider this, it is not surprising that Agamemnon, greedy or not, would promptly retaliate.

From the moment Achilles starts to come round to the idea of abating his wrath, his opinions on the ruler change little, though he adopts a more compromising attitude. He describes to Patroclus, just before his ill-fated *aristeia*, how he was treated like a refugee without rights when Agamemnon took Briseis (xvi.56-59), and refers to Agamemnon as 'hated head', inferior to Hector in shouting at the troops (xvi.76-77). After Patroclus' death, Achilles is dismissive about taking the generous gifts, feigning indifference (xix.147-148), and then urges Agamemnon, who is eager to proceed, to delay the gift-giving and set off for battle (xix.200-202). In acting this way he is perhaps most concerned about the obligation he would put himself under by accepting the gifts[79], but also continues to suggest that Agamemnon is a leader unworthy of respect, and unable to prioritise appropriately.

In the final interactions between Agamemnon and Achilles at the funeral games, Achilles acknowledges Agamemnon as 'best of spearmen', asking him to accept the first

[78] Ulf 2009:88.
[79] Ulf 2009:87-88.

prize without competing (xxiii.890-894): could this be a genuine sign of final reconciliation? According to Willcock, this is 'a gracious compliment to Agamemnon'[80] on the part of Achilles. Donlan goes as far as saying that Achilles honours Agamemnon 'as a hero'[81]. The optative "ἐθέλοις", remarks Richardson, conveys Achilles' courteous tone[82]. This act would, however, be the only exception to an unrelenting, deep-seated hostility: even when talking to Priam in the closing scenes of the *Iliad*, Achilles manages to slight Agamemnon by commenting on how he would be asking for a ransom thrice as great if he discovered the ruler of Troy was in his camp (xxiv.686-688). Postlethwaite observes that, by readily accepting something for nothing, Agamemnon acts precisely in the way Achilles accused him of doing at i.225-230[83], in contrast with the contemptuous indifference exhibited by Achilles in receiving his own gifts. It is therefore possible to view the gift-giving scene at the games, and the praise as best of spearmen, as a final humiliation of Agamemnon as a weak leader[84].

Nestor

Summary table: T3.4.

Nestor is the most respected speaker in the Achaean camp, on account of his age and experience, and is always at hand to help resolve disputes: the beginning of his very first speech establishes this (i.259-261), and he does not tire to make the audience aware of it throughout the poem. Intervening as a mediator after Agamemnon's threat to take Briseis from Achilles, his recommendation is to leave the girl with Achilles (i.275-276). Nestor also seems to draw a careful distinction between obedience 'by right' and obedience arising out of persuasion of the rightness of the action (ii.273-

[80] Willcock 1973:2; Postlethwaite 1995:95-97 summarises the many favourable views by different scholars.
[81] Donlan 1971:115.
[82] Richardson 1993:217.
[83] Postlethwaite 1995:96.
[84] Postlethwaite 1995:98-103.

274)[85]: he wants Achilles and Agamemnon to discuss and resolve the issue in a civilised way, drawing attention to the dangers in matching might with might. He explicitly recognises the dispute as one of *timē* (i.278), and requests that Agamemnon check his rage (i.282), highlighting the ruler's aggressiveness. Nestor's language is firm but always respectful: as the upholder of the standards of tradition[86], he is the first to apply the rules in recognising and addressing Agamemnon as the supreme authority.

In book 2, Nestor accepts (not without some scepticism) and supports Agamemnon's account of the dream, and does not disagree with the plan of testing the troops described earlier (ii.79-72). Later, after order is restored by Odysseus, Nestor delivers the kind of speech you would have expected Agamemnon to deliver in the first place, describing the dream of victory and the need to weed out cowards (ii.337-368). This counsel, which Agamemnon explicitly welcomes (ii.372) is a good example of the character trait I called 'lets others take initiative', which one could view sympathetically as a sign of benevolent rule, where wise counsellors are given a voice, or unsympathetically as an indication of weak leadership and abdication of responsibility. Nestor is certainly not shy of taking advantage of this when he proposes to build a defensive wall (vii.327-343), when he suggests to make amends with Achilles, coordinating the logistics of the embassy (ix.111-113, 165-172), or helps Agamemnon in awaking the kings and plan the nigh-time raid in the *Doloneia* (ix.108-113). He does not refrain from criticising, always constructively, behaviour that is unnecessary or unbecoming to a king, pointing the finger at Agamemnon's boastfulness and arrogance (ii.82, ix.109-110), and at his tendency to discount the opinion of others (ii.361, ix.106-109). Nestor's honest talk could be untactful: in a personal conversation with

[85] Hammer 1997:4.
[86] Finley 1977:116-117.

Agamemnon, at a time when the son of Atreus is eager to plan a surprise attack on the Trojans, he ponders how Hector might be even more worried than they currently are if only Achilles (who had just rejected the embassy) 'turned his heart from grievous anger' (x.105-107), an untimely reminder that Agamemnon is not best in combat. In relation to Agamemnon, Nestor seems to perform two key functions: to provide an example of how to deal with traditional authority, and to act as Agamemnon's conscience, kindly but firmly pointing out faults and suggesting solutions.

Diomedes

Summary table: T3.5.

Diomedes is the youngest of the warrior-kings, and his actions and speeches reflect the energy, pride and eagerness of a youth wanting to assert his authority among more experienced peers[87]. His first exchange with Agamemnon exemplifies the tension of the relationship, which will later explode: *in words*, Diomedes rebukes his friend Sthenelus for reacting to Agamemnon's taunt, and explicitly declares that the ruler's *neikos* should not be faulted (iv.412-418). *In actions*, the manner in which he leaps from his chariot, such that 'terror would have seized even one who was steadfast at heart' (iv.420-421), paints a vivid image of an unspeakable wounded pride. To Diomedes, Agamemnon is provocative and disrespectful.

Diomedes' verbal self-control eventually breaks down and, after hearing the dispirited words of Agamemnon, weeping, inviting the troops to go home, he lashes out against him with a force reminiscent of Achilles[88] (ix.32-49). Diomedes' words, which explicitly paint Agamemnon as a coward, are perhaps even more dangerous, as his now proven valour on the battlefield gives him the right to speak credibly about this *theme*;

[87] Minchin 2011:332-333; Hammer 1997:9.
[88] Minchin 2011:331-332 suggests that Homer has cast Diomedes as a surrogate for Achilles while the latter is absent from the battlefield.

crucially, he tries to carry the crowd with him by praising the Achaeans' valour, unlike the unrestrained Achilles calling them 'nobodies' for their loyalty to Agamemnon (ix.40-41 vs i.231). After the failed embassy, Diomedes speaks again by authoritatively urging the kings to ignore Achilles and be ready to fight on after a good night's rest (ix.697-699). This time the tone is measured and respectful; however, the contents of the speech point out poor judgement in sending the embassy in the first place, and lack of valour in considering the army doomed without Achilles.

In Diomedes' final exchange with Agamemnon, as the Trojans are breaking through the last defences, the circle of the *neikos* is finally closed: wounded, after reasserting his noble warrior lineage, Tydeus' son kindly exhorts Agamemnon and Odysseus, also wounded, to rejoin the others in battle (xiv.110-132). To me, Diomedes comes across as a young version of Nestor: his criticism is not aimed at unseating Agamemnon, but at shaking off his insecurities and reminding him of his honour and duties. Diomedes' sparring with Agamemnon is harsh on account of his youth, but Agamemnon appears to show tolerance in recognition of the fact that Diomedes is always formally respectful of his role.

Odysseus

Summary table: T3.6.

Odysseus's relationship with Agamemnon is coloured with more sinister shades. *Wile*, a useful political skill, defines him both positively and negatively: he is loyal to the cause and recognises Agamemnon as the commander, but you get the feeling that he could easily take over if he wanted to. This is precisely what happens in the episode of the test of the troops: alone among the kings he follows Agamemnon's original instructions to restrain the men (ii.75). He does it in emphatic style, by taking

Agamemnon's hallowed ancestral staff, calling back all the Achaeans in his path (ii.190.197, 200-206); and when Thersites reviles Agamemnon (ii.224-242), in a politically charged episode[89], he strenuously defends the commander-in-chief with a fierce rebuke (ii.246-264). Odysseus manages both to protect and undermine Agamemnon: he tells everybody of the Atreid's supreme authority, but at the same time exposes him as a weak leader.

Odysseus' reaction to Agamemnon's *neikos* is more confident and mature than that of Diomedes: irritated at the rebuke, he immediately responds in kind, making no big deal of it (iv.350-355), and the offender is quick to backtrack. Later on, when Odysseus is chosen to relate Agamemnon's message in the embassy to Achilles, we see more of his double-sided nature: on one hand he presents to Achilles Agamemnon's positive qualities, describing him as always greeting his peers with an equal feast, and emphasising the generosity of his gifts in his desire for reconciliation (ix.226-228, ix.260-261); on the other, as we have seen before, he does not make any mention of the final recommendation to let Achilles yield to Agamemnon's superior authority[90]. This is a conspicuous omission because the full list of gifts was repeated *verbatim* (aside from the reformulation of the first into the third person, ie. *I* to *he*), verse for verse (ix.122-157 vs 264.299), except for the final four verses: here is a case of a messenger-speech where the message does not remain unadulterated, a sign that Odysseus does not consider himself inferior in status to Agamemnon[91]. For our purposes, this suggests that Odysseus may have regarded the comment, and therefore Agamemnon, as arrogant and/or ill-judged.

[89] Marks 2005.
[90] Van Wees 1992:132.
[91] de Jong 2004:185.

As the *Iliad* progresses, and Agamemnon's star continues to fade, Odysseus will be more explicit in his disapproval of the commander-in-chief. When morale hits rock-bottom as the Trojans approach the ships and the kings are wounded, Odysseus unleashes, in a thematic and emphatic progression, a scathing criticism of Agamemnon's planning, leadership, and handling of his obligations as a general (xiv.83-102)[92]. Yet, by avoiding any mention of cowardice, he leaves the Atreid's honour unhurt[93]. When Achilles chooses to re-enter the fray, he exhorts Agamemnon, with the tone of someone who gives orders, to deliver on his promised gifts and oath, and requests he be more just in future (xix.172-183)[94]. Odysseus seems to embrace the leadership of Achilles at this stage, addressing him as 'far the mightiest of Achaeans'; however, exhausted by the fighting and concerned with practicalities[95], he pleads for the troops to eat and drink prior to re-engaging in battle (xix.216-237). Agamemnon appears dismissed as a decision maker. Odysseus' character exposes many of Agamemnon's less flattering qualities, but often does it in a way that says more about himself than about the supreme commander.

CONCLUSIONS

Plans, *goals* and *themes* are the building blocks for bringing to life the stored knowledge that allow an individual to deal with new situations in the environment that surrounds it. Minchin's application of these principles against the Homeric text demonstrated that the characters in the *Iliad* are not simple stereotypes, but have individualised 'mental moulds', and provided insights into construction of character in

[92] Lohmann 1997:95-97.
[93] Janko 1994:160.
[94] Martin 1989:64 calls Odysseus, at this stage, "the enforcer of Agamemnon's proposals".
[95] Edwards 1991:259-260.

epic song[96]. In the *Iliad*, the same story may have multiple narrators, and de Jong highlighted how focalisation and narration from different characters adds richness to the characters and to the plot[97]. From these premises I sought to demonstrate how Homer's multiplicity of narrators was used to represent different facets of an individual character, and different ways to interpret his words and actions, offering the *narratee* considerable scope in choosing his or her own way to *focalise* it.

The vivid experience of hearing the epic song of the *Iliad*, and the narrower, though not necessarily less powerful, way to enjoy it today as a reader, transports the audience into a world where they can judge Agamemnon, and what he stands for, in their own personal way, through the voices of different narrators. The sympathiser of authoritarian rule, who may identify with Agamemnon, will delight in the character's overarching authority, display of might and extreme defence of his honour; however, he will not be misled into the assumption that absolute power guarantees impunity or peace of mind, for Agamemnon will lead him into his world of insecurity and self-doubt, where much energy is spent in trying to preserve the position of power. The narrating voice of Homer will steer the audience to consider subtler aspects of Agamemnon's character, encouraging critical thinking by gently revealing the possible aberrations concealed behind the official portrait of the ruler. The religious authorities will rejoice with Chryses, virtually wiping his tears, one by one, against each of the many moments of uncertainty, humiliation and despair that Agamemnon faces throughout the poem as a result of his impiety; they will see in Calchas the defender of religious 'truth', and of the vulnerability of the weaker, reminding everyone of the ruler's moral accountability. Representatives of the older generation will be appreciative of Agamemnon's respect

[96] Minchin 2011:341-342.
[97] de Jong 2004:150-160.

for tradition and for the counsel of a more experienced peer, and will join Nestor in pointing out errors and areas for improvement. The young crowd will be pleased to see Agamemnon shaken and impressed by Diomedes, and relieved to see that the eagerness of their hero is understood and tolerated by the man in charge. Homer also finds room for the crafty and the revolutionary: the former will draw comfort from Agamemnon's inability to adequately pre-empt or contrast Odysseus' wile; the latter will cheer Achilles in his demolition work against the ruler, and exult in Agamemnon's fall from grace.

I think it is now possible to affirm that each narrator delivers to the audience a different Agamemnon and, through him, a different way to interpret political and social tension. Each character shows a specific set of coherent traits in the build-up of a complex and immensely rich central character that invites multiple hearings or readings. It is impossible to tell whether such balanced variety is the result of the selective process of centuries of oral tradition or the genius of the monumental poet; in all likelihood, the answer lies somewhere in the middle. However, if we return to my initial observation regarding the *Iliad*'s appeal to different people at different times, for different reasons, I think it is beyond doubt that the character of Agamemnon is a good example of how Homer's use of multiple narrating voices helped achieve this.

TABLES

T1. Agamemnon's main relationship themes

Colour Legend: Peers | Family | Gods

Book	+	-
i	Nestor (respectable elder) Athena (placates Achilles)	Achilles (hostility/hatred) Calchas (a frustrating relationship) Apollo (avenger of Chryses) Thetis (avenger of son) Zeus (agrees to Thetis' request)
ii	Nestor (friendly support) Nestor, Idomeneus, Aiantes, Diomedes, Odysseus (as friends in banquet) Odysseus (helps take control)	Zeus (deceiver) Thersites (enemy)
iii	Odysseus (attendant to sacrifice) Menelaus (brother)	
iv	Aiantes (rally to fighting) Idomeneus (rallies to fighting) Menelaus (wounded brother) Meriones (rallies to fighting) Nestor (organises charioteers)	Diomedes (cowering? ->neikos) Odysseus (unready, waiting ->neikos)
ix	Nestor (friendly support) Odysseus, Phoenix, Aias (ambassadors)	Diomedes (stands up to him)
vii	Aias (worthy fighter) Menelaus (brother)	
viii	Teucer (skilled archer) Hera (prompting Agamemnon to rouse the Achaeans)	
ix	Nestor, Odysseus, Phoenix, Aias (embassy)	
x	Aias, Idomeneus, Nestor (first to be called upon for help) Kings, including Odysseus and Diomedes (assembled at night) Menelaus (a worried brother)	
xi	Athena and Hera (thundering in support)	Zeus (instructing Iris to advise Hector)
xiii		Poseidon (as Calchas: Agamemnon is the cause of unfavourable events)
xiv	Poseidon (as old man: encourages Agamemnon) Nestor (needing to discuss what to do) Diomedes (sharing their condition of wounded leaders)	Odysseus (contemptuosly reacts to his cowardice)
xix	Achilles (ending hostilities)	Odysseus (unsympathetic mediator)

T2. Detailed analysis/data collection template: example

Primary Narrator	**Secondary Narrator/ Focaliser**	**Focalisee**	**From**	**To**	**Type**	**Sub-Type**		**Theme**	**Details**
Homer	Agamemnon		7		ROLE	General	+	Anax andron	*anax andron*
Homer	Agamemnon		11	12	ROLE	General	-	God-offender	dishonoured Chryses -> angered Apollo
Homer	Chryses	Agamemnon	15	16	ROLE	General	+	Supreme authority	*kosmetore laon - addresses both Atreidai…*
Chryses	n/a	*Atreidai te kai alloi*	20		LIFE	Attitude	-	Greedy	By offering a glorious ransom, he's primarily appealing to Agamemnon's greed for possessions.
Chryses	n/a	*Atreidai te kai alloi*	21		LIFE	Attitude	+	God-fearing	Chryses assumes he and the Achaeans are god-fearing in his emphasising that Apollo would be honoured by his daughter's release.
Homer	Agamemnon		24		LIFE	Attitude	-	Arrogant	***ouk hendane thumo***, ***kakos aphiei*** despite Acheaean's shouting agreement
Homer	Agamemnon		24		LIFE	Relationships	-	Dismissive of others	Disregards opinion of subjects / peers
Agamemnon	n/a	Chryses	26	32	ROLE	General	+	Supreme authority	Rejects the request and the argument (veiled threat). Second part (Arist.): attempt at softening blow?

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*T3. Agamemnon according to Different narrators (***role *and* life themes *summaries)***

The tables in this appendix show the *role* and *life* themes identified, using Shank & Abelson's model, to describe aspects of Agamemnon's character.

Note:

- Each table represents the viewpoint of a different narrator, and shows the books in which he interacted, directly or indirectly, with Agamemnon. Among the secondary narrators, only characters that had multiple interactions with Agamemnon across a number of books are represented here: Achilles, Nestor, Diomedes, Odysseus (as well as Agamemnon himself).
- The shaded numbers represent the number of occurrences that a character trait came to evidence within a given book.
- The Sub-Types (Attitude, Power, Relationships, Valour) are my own addition to the model, to allow for higher-level categorisation of themes.
- **The colour shading represents *positive*, *in-between*, and *negative* traits according to my subjective judgment. Their main purpose is to highlight potential contrasts for the purpose of discussion.**

Table T3.1 – Homer

			Books												
Type	**Sub-Type**	**Theme**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	**11**	**14**	**19**	**23**
LIFE	Attitude	Arrogant	1												
		God-fearing		1					1						
		Seeks help									1				
	Power	Insecure							1						
		Weak Leader	1							1			1		
		Weak Leader?		2											
		Unworthy leader		1											
		Kingly, powerful									1	1			
		Religious authority												1	
		Respected leader			2	2			1			1			
		Respected speaker			1										
		Respects tradition		1											
		Responsible								1	1				
		Wealthy		1				1				1			
		Can backtrack				1								1	
		Lets others take initiative									1				
	Rel'ships	Adversely affects others by 'polar' behaviour								1					
		Aggressive	2												
		Dismissive of others	1												
		Protective of family				1					1				
		Provocative				2									
	Valour	Mighty against the weaker										1			
		Not the best in combat						1							
		Concerned about honour						1							1
		Eager warrior				1			1			8			
		Respects valour						2	1						
		Ruthless with enemy					1								
ROLE	General	God-offender	1												
		Anax andron	2	1	2	1		2	1	2	4	1	3	3	1
		Commander		1		3					2	3	4	1	
		Family Head				1									
		Judicial Authority						1		1					
		Religious authority	1		1			1							
		Religious Authority?		2											
		Supportive peer												1	
		Supreme authority	2	5				1							1
		Warrior										1			
		Compliant mourner													2
		Victim of divine adversity		1								1			

Table T3.2 - Agamemnon

			Books											
Type	**Sub-Type**	**Theme**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	**11**	**14**	**19**
LIFE	Attitude	God-fearing	2	2		1			2	1				
		Honest	1	1						1				
		Humble												1
		Seeks help											1	
	Power	Insecure	2	1		1			1	1	2		2	1
		Confident in own counsel	1	1										
		Religious authority												1
		Respects tradition	1	1							2		1	
		Responsible		1		1					1			
		Wealthy								1	1			
		Can backtrack	2			1		1		2			1	3
		Seeks external excuses for faults		1							1		1	
	Rel'ships	Aggressive	6											
		Dismissive of others	1											
		Encouraging									1			
		Protective of family				1		1			1			
		Provocative				2			1					
	Valour	Concerned about honour	2							1				
		Eager warrior		1		1					2			
		Respects valour				1			1	1				
		Ruthless with enemy					1					1		
ROLE	General	Commander		2							2			
		Judicial Authority	1		2			1						
		Religious authority	1		1									
		Religious Authority?		1										
		Supreme authority	1		1			1						
		Victim of divine adversity								1				1

Table T3.3 - Achilles

Type	Sub-Type	Theme	1	9	16	18	19	23	24
LIFE	Attitude	Arrogant	1			1	1		
		Boastful	1						
		Greedy	2	1					1
	Power	Lacks judgment					1		
		Unjust		1	1				
		Unworthy leader	4	6			1		
		Can backtrack			1				
		Lets others take initiative	1				1		
	Valour	Coward		2					
		Not the best in combat	1		1				
		Best of spearmen						1	
ROLE	General	*Anax Andron*				1	2		
		Religious authority						1	
		Supreme authority	2					1	
		Compliant mourner						4	
		Victim of divine adversity					1		

Table T3.4 - Nestor

			Books					
Type	Sub-Type	Theme	1	2	7	9	10	14
LIFE	Attitude	Arrogant				1		
		Boastful		1				
	Power	Responsible				1		
		Can backtrack				1		
		Lets others take initiative		2	1	2	1	
	Relationships	Aggressive	1					
		Dismissive of others		1		1		
		Protective of family					1	
		Not the best in combat					1	
ROLE	General	*Anax Andron*		1		2	1	
		Commander				1		1
		Supreme authority	1	1				

Table T3.5 - Diomedes

			Books		
Type	**Sub-Type**	**Theme**	**4**	**9**	**14**
LIFE	Power	Unworthy leader		1	
		Kingly, powerful		1	
		Lets others take initiative		1	1
	Relationships	Adversely affects others by 'polar' behaviour		1	
		Disrespectful		1	1
		Provocative	1		
	Valour	Coward		1	
ROLE	General	*Anax Andron*		1	
		Supreme Authority	1		

Table T3.6 - Odysseus

			Books				
Type	**Sub-Type**	**Theme**	**2**	**4**	**9**	**14**	**19**
LIFE	Attitude	Arrogant			1		
	Power	Unjust					1
		Weak Leader				1	1
		Can backtrack			1		
		Lets others take initiative					2
	Relationships	Disrespectful		1			
		Friendly with peers			1		
ROLE	General	*Anax Andron*			1		
		Supreme authority	4				

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