Performing the Past
IHUM22a, Winter Quarter 2000, Lecture III

From lyric to epic, *Song of Songs* to *Iliad*

*The Iliad*, Bks. I, II, VI, & XXII

“Sing, goddess, the anger of Peleus’ son Achilleus . . .”
Simone Weil:
“The true hero, the true subject, the center of the *Iliad* is force.”

epic hero Achilles vs. Agamemnon, end of the Trojan war
*hybris* (hubris), *ate* (delusion), & wrath
A) Dates

Trojan War: ca. 1334-1150 BCE
Homeric Composition: ca. 850 BCE
Later Recensions: 6th cent. BCE

Peisistratos: early 6th cent-527 BCE & Pericles: 495-429 BCE

Aeschylus: 525-455 BCE, Sophocles: 496-406 BCE, &
Euripides: 484-406 BCE

Socrates: 470-390 BCE, Plato: 428-347 BCE, &
Aristotle: 384-322 BCE
B) Audience
   clearly Greek perspective, see battles especially
   possibly Greek nobles
   interest in genealogy
   unsympathetic depiction of commoner Thersites (2.211-270)

C) Characteristics of Homeric language & narration
   dactylic hexameter
   monologues
   intervention of gods
   psychological metaphor, incarnation of Fate, not always direct
   Homeric formulae, cf. Albert Lord, *The Singer of Tales*
   “Atreus’ son, the lord of men,” “man-slaughtering Hektor,”
   “Hera, the goddess of the white arms”, etc.
   extended similes
   “Like the swarms of clustering bees . . .” (2.87-93)
   4 similes up to Catalog of Ships (2.455-483)
D) Relation to History & Culture

Physical activities – anthropological record
“And the men arranged the sacred hecatomb . . .” (1.447-474)
Catalog of Ships (2.494-877)
hospitality
burial rites

E) Episodes

Agamemnon (1.111-14): repudiates Klytemnestra
Achilles, tearful pleading w/ Thetis
Diomedes & Glaukos
“As is the generation of leaves . . .” (6.146-150)
exchange of armor (6.230-236)
Hector, Andromache, & Astyanax
(6.464-481): humanized Hector, helmet & son
Hector’s death & defilement
### House of Atreus

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<th>(Myrtilus’s curse)</th>
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