

Exemplarity and Narrative in the Greek Tradition

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This paper investigates the role of what I shall call the ‘principle of alternation’ (the idea that no human life is free of suffering, that the best one can expect is a mixture of good and bad fortune) in (some) ancient Greek narratives. This is not a narratological study in the traditional, formalist sense, but rather reflects my own interests in Greek social and ethical norms and especially in the sociality of emotion in ancient Greek societies. On one level, at least, a written text or formalised oral performance is just one example among many of the ways in which language communicates both thought and emotion. And if texts, narratives and performances are in many ways special, in other ways they bear comparison with all the other physical objects, artefacts and external forms of expression that demonstrate the intersubjectivity and social embeddedness of cognition and affectivity.¹⁾ There are interesting questions to be asked about the role of narrative and the forms it takes as a vehicle of traditional thought, as a way of encapsulating, communicating and eliciting emotions, and as a dynamic force in the development of both cultural and individual emotional repertoires. One of these questions concerns the ways that more or less structured patterns of thought and

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1) See e.g. Colombetti 2009; Smith 2011.

emotion may be related to certain recurrent and structured patterns of narrative. The imaginative sense of others' experiences, thoughts and emotions that underpins human sociality has a particular role to play in narrative. Thus narrative itself has a particular role in developing the audience's inventory of scripts, paradigm scenarios and the range of affective responses that they evoke. The process can, on the one hand, be one of extending and deepening the reader's, auditor's or spectator's powers of imagination and perspective-taking; but it can also, at the same time, be a matter of codification and normalisation: stories can also recur to typical patterns, serving to crystallise the paradigmatic cases and the norms by which audiences respond emotionally to those cases.

My starting point is the encounter between Achilles and Priam in *Iliad* 24, and especially Achilles' remarks on the jars of Zeus (525-35):

“ὥς γὰρ ἐπεκλώσαντο θεοὶ δειλοῖσι βροτοῖσι	525
ζῶειν ἀγχνυμένοις· αὐτοὶ δὲ τ' ἀκηδέες εἰσί.	
δοιοὶ γὰρ τε πίθοι κατακείαται ἐν Διὸς οὔδει	
δώρων οἷα δίδωσι κακῶν, ἕτερος δὲ εἰῶν·	
ᾧ μὲν κ' ἀμμίξας δῶη Ζεὺς τερπικέραννος,	
ἄλλοτε μὲν τε κακῶ ὅ γε κύρεται, ἄλλοτε δ' ἐσθλῶ·	530
ᾧ δὲ κε τῶν λυγρῶν δῶη, λωβητὸν ἔθηκε,	
καὶ ἐκακὴ βούβρωστις ἐπὶ χθόνα δῖαν ἐλαύνει,	
φοιτᾷ δ' οὔτε θεοῖσι τετιμένος οὔτε βροτοῖσιν.	
ὧς μὲν καὶ Πηληϊῆ θεοὶ δόσαν ἀγλαὰ δῶρα	
ἐκ γενετῆς” (κτλ.)	535

‘For thus have the gods spun the thread for wretched mortals, that they should live in pain; but they themselves are without care. For there are two jars placed on the floor of Zeus of gifts that he gives, the one of ills, the other of blessings. If Zeus who delights in the thunderbolt gives a man a mixed lot, that man meets now with evil, now with good; but if he gives only from the evils, he ruins a man, and evil hunger drives him over the divine earth, and he wanders

honoured by neither gods nor mortals. Just so the gods gave splendid gifts to Peleus from birth . . .'

This is a fundamental formulation of a characteristic archaic Greek attitude towards the nature and possibility of happiness. Its broad implications are well known: suffering is inherent in the human condition, which is defined by antithesis with the divine; good fortune is not permanent, but inevitably alternates with its opposite.²⁾ Achilles' formulation is perhaps typically Greek or typically 'archaic', but it is clearly not unique. The inevitability of suffering (and its often arbitrary character) are prominent topics in Near Eastern sources such as the Babylonian *Theodicy* and *Poem of the Righteous Sufferer* or the Old Testament *Book of Job*.³⁾ We have a reasonably close analogue to Achilles' speech in the ale-wife's speech of consolation in the Old Babylonian Version of *Gilgamesh*, X. iii:⁴⁾

'Gilgamesh, where do you roam?
 You will not find the eternal life you seek.
 When the gods created mankind
 They appointed death for mankind,
 Kept eternal life in their own hands.
 So, Gilgamesh, let your stomach be full,
 Day and night enjoy yourself in every way,
 Every day arrange for pleasures.
 Day and night, dance and play,

2) A full sample of poetic passages, from Homer to Euripides, can be found in Krause 1976; see her Index, 298-304; discussion 43-289. See esp. 50-2 on *Il.* 24. 525ff. as the 'Vergleichsbasis für alle späteren Entwicklungen' (p. 50). For similar notions in Homer, cf. e.g. *Od.* 6. 188-9, 16. 211-12.

3) 'Poem of the Righteous Sufferer' in Lambert 1960: 21-62 (cf. *ANET*³ 438-40, where it is called 'A Dialogue about Human Misery'); Babylonian *Theodicy*, Lambert 1960: 63-91. For the divine as the source of alternation in human fortunes and the need for human endurance, cf. *Eccl.* 7: 13-14, *Job* 5: 17-18.

4) *ANET*³ p. 90; trans. by Dalley 1989: 150. Cf. the consolation offered by Ut-napishtim in *Gilgamesh* SBV X. vi, *ANET*³ 92-3, Dalley 1989: 107-8.

seasons and the subtleties of human existence, said to inform not only short poems, but also longer narratives from the eleventh-century *Tale of Genji* to the films of Ozu Yasujiro.⁶⁾ One such narrative, *Heike monogatari* (*The Tale of the Heike*, dating from the thirteenth-fourteenth centuries), begins with what the eighteenth-century scholar and poet, Motoori Norinaga, identified as a classic example of *mono no aware*:

The sound of the Gion Shōja bells echoes the impermanence of all things; the color of the *sāla* flowers reveals the truth that the prosperous must decline. The proud do not endure, they are like a dream on a spring night; the mighty fall at last, they are as dust before the wind.⁷⁾

According to Helen Craig McCullough, 'it is the melancholy preoccupation with transitoriness, or "awareness of mutability" (*mujōkan*) that gives *Heike monogatari* its distinctive tone'.⁸⁾

6) For the terms, see Colombetti 2009: 19. For *mono no aware*, in particular, see Motoori Norinaga, 'On *mono no aware*', in Marra 2007: 184-5:

Now, with regard to the difference between knowing *mono no aware* and not knowing it, I would say that to know *mono no aware* is to be stirred by the view of the wonderful cherry blossoms, or of the bright moon while facing it. One's feelings are stirred up because he understands, deep in his heart, the moving power of the moon and the blossoms. The heart that is ignorant of this moving power will never be stirred, no matter how wonderful the blossoms are and how clear the moon is in front of him. In other words, this is what I mean by the phrase, 'not knowing *mono no aware*'.

The concept of *mono no aware* was the focus of a splendid and extensive exhibition at the Suntory Museum of Art, Tokyo, 17 April-16 June 2013: see Ishida, Sasaki and Shibahashi 2013.

7) *Heike monogatari* 1. 1 = McCullough 1988: 23.

8) McCullough 1988: 473. On the reiteration of this central theme throughout the narrative, the ways in which it affects the structure of the narrative itself, the norms that it articulates and the emotions that it is designed to evoke, cf. McCullough 1988: 456-7, 463-4, 467-75; cf. Kawashima 2000: 5 (and *passim* on similarities and differences between *Heike* and the *Iliad* in their attitudes to fate and death). The similarity between the expression of *mujōkan* in the *Heike*

Despite what are in some ways rather striking similarities, my claim is not that these Japanese notions, and the affective attitudes with which they are associated, are exactly or even very like the principle of alternation in Greek. But their labelling, their currency and their expression in language, symbol and art (both verbal and visual) represents a comparable phenomenon, namely the way that the condensation of such complexes of thought and feeling in typical and traditional forms makes a particular ethical or emotional perspective tangible, tractable and transferable.⁹⁾ These recurrent forms capture important aspects of a culture's emotional and normative repertoire in a way that allows them to be reconstituted and applied in the mind of each recipient or audience member. The encapsulation of traditional norms, with their associated ways of feeling, in a traditional artistic form encourages a symbiotic replication both of the form and of the response that it evokes; it helps define the repertoire of both artists and audience.

A particularly striking example of the systematisation of the relations between artistic form, emotional expression and the emotional response of the audience is apparent in the classical Indian performance tradition's concept of *rasa*.¹⁰⁾ The stylised performance of specific gestures and movements executes the emotional scripts embodied in the work of art and elicits the *rasa* (roughly 'relish'; more literally something like 'juice') that is the spectator's emotional pleasure in the performance. The relation between performed emotion (*sthayi bhava*) and *rasa* is highly codified. As Richard Schechner explains:

In the rasic system, there are 'artistically performed emotions' which

prologue and Achilles' parable of the jars is noted by Mori 1997: 79-80. See also Yamagata 1993: 7-9, 2011: 27 on mutability in Homer and *Heike*. On the paradox of a transcendent epic that memorializes impermanence, cf. Mori 1997: 100-1; Bialock 2007: 281.

9) See further Colombetti 2009.

10) On *rasa* theory, see Schechner 2001; Schwartz 2004; Oatley 2011: 120-4, 2012: 34-7, 46-7, 69-72; cf. Dutton 2009: 122.

comprise a distinct kind of behavior (different, perhaps for each performance genre). These performed emotions are separate from the ‘feelings’ – the interior, subjective experience of any given performer during a particular performance. There is no necessary and ineluctable chain linking these ‘performed emotions’ with the ‘emotions of everyday life.’ In the rasic system, the emotions *in the arts, not in ordinary life* are knowable, manageable, and transmittable in roughly the same way that the flavors and presentation of a meal are manageable by following recipes and the conventions of presenting the meal.¹¹⁾

Greek performance, poetic and narrative traditions do not have anything quite like this; but the general point about the relation between the scripts and scenarios of everyday emotion, the crystallisation of such scripts in narrative and performance, and the eliciting of emotional responses in an audience holds good. Despite all the differences in detail, Aristotle’s *Poetics* (to which we shall return below) works with a similar relation between dramatic form, the emotional scripts implicit in that form, and the pleasurable emotional reactions of the audience.¹²⁾

I guess that if we were to look for ancient Greek analogues to the Japanese notions of impermanence discussed above we should probably think first of *gnōmai*, such as these from the concluding lines of Pindar’s eighth *Pythian* (lines 88-97):¹³⁾

ὁ δὲ καλὸν τι νέον λαχὼν

11) Schechner 2001: 32; cf. Oatley 2012: 34-5, esp. 34: ‘*Rasas* are like the emotions of everyday life, but unlike them in that they are felt in fiction in a way that can make them more understandable.’ See also Schwartz 2004: 15-16, 19, 23.

12) For a comparison of the Greek (esp. Aristotelian) and Indian traditions in this respect, see Munteanu 2012: 29-36.

13) On *gnōmai* in Greek poetry, see Ahrens 1937; on particular poets, see Bischoff 1938; Cocuzza 1975; Lardinois 1997, 2000; Stenger 2004; and cf. Huart 1973 on Thucydides; Gould 1989: 81-2, on Herodotus.

ἀβρότατος ἐπὶ μεγάλας
 ἐξ ἐλπίδος πέταται 90
 ὑποπτεροῖς ἀνοραῖς, ἔχων
 κρέσσονα πλοῦτου μέριμναν. ἐν δ' ὀλίγῳ βροτῶν
 τὸ τερπνὸν αὐξεται· οὕτω δὲ καὶ πίτνει χαμαί,
 ἀποτρόπῳ γνώμα σεσεισμένον.
 ἐπάμεροι· τί δέ τις; τί δ' οὐ τις; σκιᾶς ὄναρ 95
 ἀνθρωπος. ἀλλ' ὅταν αἴγλα δῖοςδοτος ἔλθῃ,
 λαμπρὸν φέγγος ἔπεστιν ἀνδρῶν καὶ μείλιχος αἰών.

But he who has gained some fine new thing in his great luxury flies beyond hope on the wings of his manliness, with ambition that is greater than wealth. But the pleasure of mortals increases but briefly, and in the same way falls to the ground, shaken by adverse thought. Creatures of a day. What is someone? What is no one? Man is the dream of a shadow. But when god-given splendour comes, a shining light is on men, and sweet is their existence.

Here again, there are plenty of parallels in other traditions. M. L. West cites several analogues in West Asiatic sources for Pindar's image of man's ephemerality,¹⁴ as he does for Mimnermus' description of life as 'as short as a dream'.¹⁵ For the impermanence of human creations (as reflected in Simonides 581 *PMG* = 262 Poltera), he cites *BWL* (= Lambert 1960) 109. 9-11 ('Counsels of a Pessimist'):

[Whatever] the people create does not survive for ever;
 [ma]nkind and its creations alike come to an end.

14) West 1997: 541, citing *Ps.* 144: 3-4; *Job* 7: 17-8: 9 (see esp. 8: 9: 'for we were born only yesterday and know nothing, | and our days on earth are but a shadow'); *BWL* (Lambert 1960) 282.

15) Mimnermus 5. 4 West, with parallels from second millennium Egyptian writings in West 1997: 507.

[But do y]ou offer prayers to the god.¹⁶⁾

Similarly, there are Near Eastern analogues for the famous *gnōmē* on the generations of men and leaves at *Iliad* 6. 146-9.¹⁷⁾ Here, however, there are more remote parallels, not just in the Sanskrit sources that perhaps might be argued to reflect indirect transmission or a common Indoeuropean origin,¹⁸⁾ but also in unrelated traditions such as the Japanese.¹⁹⁾ Since the latter are clear evidence of analogy rather than homology, the possibility of analogous development is one that must always be borne in mind, even in the case of related cultures and traditions.

But *gnōmai*, aphorisms, proverbs and other such speech-genres are more than just atomistic nuggets of thought; it is typical, in ancient Greece as elsewhere, for them to be embedded in contexts in which their emblematic significance is more widely applied, especially by being associated with traditional tales that exemplify their point.²⁰⁾ There is an

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- 16) West 1997: 534; cf. e.g. Ut-napistim on impermanence in *Gilgamesh* X. vi, *ANET*³ pp. 92-3, Dalley 1989: 108-9.
- 17) West 1997: 365, comparing *Ps.* 103: 15-16, 90: 5-6; *Isa.* 40: 6-7; *Job* 14: 2. The close parallel at *Ecclus.* 14: 18 ('As of the green leaves on a thick tree, some fall, and some grow; so is the generation of flesh and blood, one cometh to an end, and another is born') is, according to West, *ibid.* n. 37, 'influenced by the *Iliad* passage'.
- 18) E.g. *Katha Upanishad* 1 (trans. Mascaró 1965: 55): 'Remember how the men of old passed away, and how those days to come will also pass away: a mortal ripens like corn, and like corn is born again'. For the principle of alternation more generally in Indian classical literature, cf. *Rigveda* 10. 117. 5 (trans. Doniger 1981: 69): 'Let the stronger man give to the man whose need is greater; let him gaze upon the lengthening path. For riches roll like the wheels of a chariot, turning from one to another'. For the wheel as an image of alternation in Greek, cf. *Hdt.* 1. 207. 2, with Krause 1976: 210 (and cf. below). For the focus on wealth, cf. e.g. *Thgn.* 157-8.
- 19) E.g. *Heike monogatari* 1. 6 (McCullough 1988: 33), cited by Yamagata 1993: 8: 'Since both are grasses | of the field, how may either | be spared by autumn – | the young shoot blossoming forth | and the herb fading from view?'
- 20) Cf. Turner 1996: 5-7; Geary 2011: 182-8. As Gould observes (1989: 81), a *gnōmē* 'is what Walter Benjamin [1973: 108] calls "an ideogram of a story"'

intimate link (all over the world) between the proverb, the parable and the fable.²¹⁾ But these are just instances of the way that aphoristic formulations readily transform themselves into narrative. The general use of narrative to illustrate traditional wisdom must, I think, be universal: constructing tales of the experiences and exploits of individuals is one of the chief ways that we, as social creatures, make sense of our place in a world of social relations.

Let us return to *Iliad* 24. Achilles' parable of the jars illustrates a distinctive world-view, one that rests on the gulf between human and god and emphasises the place of human beings in a universe that cannot be bent to their will and that imposes limits on human aspiration. A number of central features of archaic thought are implicit in or derive from this outlook – that continuing good fortune may be ominous, that human fortunes can change in the space of a day, that hopes for the future are often illusionary, etc. Second, the pessimistic premises have a clear practical point, which in this case is consolatory. Given that this is how the world is, there is no point in incessant lamentation (549-51).²²⁾ This persuasive, rhetorical use of the parable of the jars is linked to its exemplary force: the image of the jars specifies conditions that apply to all, but these general conditions are emphasised by paradigmatic application. Priam wants to stress the similarity but also the difference between himself and Peleus; Achilles uses his knowledge of his own fate to restate the similarity and present his own father as an *exemplum*; he uses the further *exemplum* of Niobe (599-620) to underline the central point, that others suffer as we do, yet persevere, as we must. What Achilles tells Priam, using the *exempla* of Peleus, Niobe and Priam himself, is simultaneously what the stories of both Priam and Achilles tell us. The exemplary force of the

21) Geary 2011: 179-96.

22) “ἀνσχεο, μὴ δ’ ἀλίσστον ὀδύρεο σὸν κατὰ θυμόν· | οὐ γάρ τι πρήξεις ἀκαχήμενος υἱὸς ἔηος, | οὐδέ μιν ἀνστήσεις, πρὶν καὶ κακὸν ἄλλο πάθῃσθα” (‘Bear up, and do not lament incessantly in your *thymos*. You will not achieve anything by grieving for your son, nor will you bring him back to life, before some other evil befalls you’). Cf. the Niobe paradigm, 599-620.

narrative is highlighted by the use of the exemplary mode *in* the narrative. The *Iliad* employs this mode at some of its most crucial junctures; such passages underline the exemplary force of the poem itself.²³⁾

At this crucial point, looking back on the two narrative strands ('Troy' and 'Achilles') that have now converged, the *Iliad* is saying something important about its own aesthetics – about its reception, its ethos and its plot. The effect of the encounter on its participants, and in particular the effect of Achilles' consolation on his internal audience, steers the response of the external audience. This in turn is a matter of the poem's ethos: it is a poem in which the great deeds of heroes (among which are counted both Priam's journey to ransom Hector's body and Achilles' acceptance of his appeal) are seen against a background of shared loss, vicissitude and fallibility. And these are fundamental principles of the poem's plot: the plan of Zeus is fulfilled, but the plans of Agamemnon, Achilles, Patroclus and Hector – to name but a few – are not. In this way, a typical Greek script for emotion (the emotion of pity) becomes an aspect of plot construction and audience response.²⁴⁾ The particular circumstances in which this script is enacted (in which a man returns his worst enemy's body for burial), the narrative salience of the context, the emotional power of the episode, and the exemplary force both of the passage itself and of the poem that this passage brings to a close are of inestimable significance in terms of the contribution that this model makes in developing and extending the imaginative scope of the ancient Greek emotional repertoire.²⁵⁾

23) See, above all, Howie 1995/2012. For a definition of exemplarity, as part of a splendid account of its importance in Roman culture, see Roller 2004.

24) For shared vulnerability to misfortune as a typical condition for pity in traditional Greek thought, cf. B. 5. 155-62 (esp. 160-162 and cf. 89-92); S. *Aj.* 121-6, *Phil.* 501-506, *OC* 566-568; E. *Hec.* 282-7; *Hdt.* 1. 86. 6, 7. 46. 2; cf. Pelling 2005: 289, 291-2 on Plutarch.

25) As George Steiner writes, with only moderate exaggeration (1984: 242), 'The more one experiences ancient Greek literature and civilization, the more insistent the suggestion that Hellas is rooted in the twenty-fourth Book of the *Iliad*'.

The principle of alternation in general specifies no particular cause of misfortune: Priam and Peleus serve as examples of human beings whose good fortune is undercut by the suffering they experience at the end of their lives. But the development of the principle in the plot of the poem itself emphasises the influence of human fallibility (and especially of the phenomenon called *atē*, the disaster that strikes both one's wits and one's fortunes).²⁶⁾ The importance of this notion is emphasised by the fact that *atē* itself becomes a personified agent in two paranarratives placed at crucial stages in the development of the plot.²⁷⁾ These paranarratives present in exemplary form elements of gnomic wisdom that illustrate a crucial aspect of the poem's implicit theory of action. That implicit theory of action is central both to the development of the plot and to an audience's affective and evaluative responses to the plot. The pattern by which gnomic wisdom on the principle of alternation is used to generalise a more specific action-sequence is a common one. Solon's *Musenelegie* (13 W), for example, deals mainly with the ruin (*atē*) that is the consequence of the *hybris* (the overvaluation of oneself that entails the failure, by commission or omission, to value others) that is prevalent in those who pursue wealth and prosperity by improper means; but it also features prominently (at lines 63-70) a series of *gnōmai* on the apparently arbitrary alternation of good and bad fortune. Similarly, the theme of *atē*, as both delusion and disaster, runs through Sophocles' *Antigone*,²⁸⁾ where the final verdict, accepted by all, is that Creon is very much the agent of his own misfortune; he has, as the Chorus put it, 'erred his own *atē*, no one else's' (1259-60).²⁹⁾ Yet the Messenger who announces the deaths of Antigone and Haemon begins his speech by presenting Creon as a paradigm of the mutability of fortune (1155-71). In neither Solon nor Sophocles are the two perspectives

26) See Cairns 2012.

27) *Il.* 9. 502-14, 19. 85-136. On these and other paranarratives, see Alden 2000.

28) See Cairns 2013b.

29) Cf. *Ant.* 1261-2, 1265, 1269 (Creon); 1304-5, 1312-13 (Eurydice, as reported by the Messenger).

assimilated into a single harmonious explanation. Human error or transgression and the mutability of fortune differ, by definition, as explanations of human suffering. Yet in neither place is the moralising on alternation merely juxtaposed with the explanation in terms of error or transgression; we have not the 'peaceful coexistence' of logically incompatible notions,³⁰⁾ but general and specific versions of a similar pattern, each of which presents a perspective on human beings' failure to secure their own happiness by their actions and intentions. We should think less of separate and competing explanations than of a dynamic model in which a general, focal conception is capable of specification in variety of different ways. We can see this in terms of there being, as patterns of human action, a variety of related scripts of more or less specific types; this variety at the level of the script equates to a variety of interrelated narrative patterns at the level of the plot, and to a variety of affective and evaluative responses in an audience.³¹⁾ What *Iliad* 24 does, then, is to set human limitations and the inevitability of reversal in a universal context of shared humanity, making the misfortunes that we bring on ourselves part of a wider pattern in which misfortune (of whatever kind) is inevitable. The poem's effect on its audience is a function of a type of plot whose overall narrative principles also embody the culture's shared assumptions about (a) the nature of human agency, the (b) norms of human behaviour and (c) the place of humans in a world of forces beyond their control. These assumptions are not latent, but explicitly activated in salient passages in which gnomic wisdom is presented in exemplary form.

Archaic poetry is also suffused with reflections of the principle of alternation. There are too many examples to discuss.³²⁾ I make only two

30) Versnel 2011: 212, 231.

31) On actions, scripts, plots and narratives, see Oatley 2012: 45-7, esp. 46: 'Scripts are not just cognitive components of understanding. They can also be sequences that are deeply rooted in a society's beliefs and values'. On the emotional aspects of this, cf. Boyd 2009: 107-8, 138-41.

32) See Krause 1976: 61-151.

general points. First, there is always an application. In epinician poetry, for example, the purpose of what Bundy calls ‘vicissitude foil’ is typically positive – the fragility of human happiness, its inevitable alternation with its opposite, provides an argument for appreciating the temporary felicity of agonistic achievement all the more intensely.³³⁾ Epinician exploits what is only a logical possibility in *Iliad* 24,³⁴⁾ that suffering might give way to bliss.³⁵⁾ One poem that does this extensively is *Olympian* 2, in which the regular epinician sequence of *hēsychia* (peace) as recompense for *ponos* (toil) blends with patterns of positive alternation in the fortunes of mythological dynasties and in the fate of the soul after death.³⁶⁾ The general point is substantiated by the repeated use of exemplary mythological figures. At every stage, *gnōmai* about the possibility of positive alternation are illustrated by means of concrete examples: the daughters of Cadmus, the Labdacids and (on the island of the blessed) Peleus, Cadmus and Achilles. In each case, only the minimum of narrative detail is given; the rest is supplied in the minds of the audience.

Two further examples, both in odes for Hieron, tyrant of Syracuse, illustrate the interactive quality of the exemplary style and its explicit debt to the *Iliad*. In *Pythian* 3, Achilles’ parable of the jars of Zeus is reduced to a bare *gnōme*: ἐν παρ’ ἐσλὸν πῆματα σὺνδύο δαίονται βροτοῖς ἀθάνατοι (‘for every good thing the immortals distribute two pains to mortals’, 81-2).³⁷⁾ This is

33) Bundy 1962/1986, esp. 47-53, 74-5. See the passage from *P.* 8 quoted above and cf. e.g. *P.* 7. 20-1. For further discussion and examples of the theme of vicissitude in Pindar, cf. Bischoff 1938, 125-65; Kirkwood 1975, esp. 63-74; Krause 1976: 91-138 (cf. 138-51 on Bacchylides); Maravela 2011.

34) So, rightly, Krause 1976: 51.

35) See e.g. *I.* 7. 37-9: ἔτλαν δὲ πένθος οὐ φατόν· ἀλλὰ νῦν μοι | Γαῖαοχος εὐδίαν ὄπασσεν | ἐκ χεῖμῶνος (‘I endured sorrow beyond words; but now the god that holds the earth has granted me calm after the storm’).

36) Krause 1976: 101-6 (102 on *ponos* and *hēsychia*); Lloyd-Jones 1985/1990; Nisetich 1988 (esp. 4-5 on *ponos* and *hēsychia*); Theunissen 2002: 698-783; Adorjáni 2011: 172-96. On *ponos* and *hēsychia* in epinician more generally, see e.g. Slater 1981; Dickie 1984.

37) I think the scholia (Σ *P.* 3. 141a-b, ii. 81 Drachmann; cf. Σ *A.* *Il.* 24. 528) are right

explicitly presented as a truth that can be applied to Hieron's situation (80-1, 84-6), before it is illustrated (in 86-103) by the narrative *exempla* of Cadmus (as in *Olympian* 2) and Peleus (as in *Olympian* 2 and *Iliad* 24). But the ode as a whole is punctuated by *gnōmai* on the instability of fortune, and humans' inability to cope with good fortune is exemplified by the myths of Asclepius and Coronis earlier in the poem. *Gnōmai*, *exempla* and extended exemplary narrative all underline the central rhetorical point – that illness may impair Hieron's happiness, but his prosperity nonetheless endures, because he knows how to deal with it.

The narrative of Heracles' encounter with Meleager in Hades in Bacchylides' fifth ode draws on several Homeric models, but one of them is certainly the meeting of Achilles and Priam in *Iliad* 24.³⁸⁾ As in the *Iliad*, the lesson drawn from the inevitability of suffering, even for the greatest, is endurance rather than resignation, and the reactions of the characters (the tears of Meleager that are answered by the tears of Heracles) guide those of the audience, with the result that, as the career of Meleager embodies a truth for Heracles, so the presentation of both great heroes serves an exemplary function for the audience. But though the narrative is extensive, it is also truncated. Heracles proposes a marriage with Meleager's sister, Deianira, and the audience see that the human limitations that apply to Meleager will be exemplified by Heracles too.

The principle of alternation is not the only motif from which tragic plots are fashioned, but it is a central aspect of several, and the norms with which it belongs are reflected more peripherally in many more.³⁹⁾ This is

about the allusion to the parable of the jars, but it would not affect my general point if we followed B. Currie in believing that there is none (2005: 390-2).

38) See B. 5. 162-3: “ἀλλ' οὐ γάρ τις ἐστὶν | πρᾶξις τάδε μυρομένοις ...” (‘But since there is no purpose in bewailing these things ...’) and cf. *Il.* 24. 524 (οὐ γάρ τις πρῆξις πέλεται κρυεροῖο γόοιο), 550 (οὐ γάρ τι πρῆξεις ἀκαχήμενος υἱὸς ἔηος). Cf. also B. 5. 84-5 (θάμβησεν δ' ἄναξ | Ἀμφιτρωνιάδας) with *Il.* 24. 483-4 (ὧς Ἀχιλεὺς θάμβησεν ἰδὼν Πρίαμον θεοειδέα· | θάμβησαν δὲ καὶ ἄλλοι). See further Cairns 2010: 46, 88-9, 231, 241; on the theme of alternation in this ode and in B. 3 (also for Hieron), cf. Cairns 2011.

39) See Krause 1976: 151-285; Cairns 2006, 2013b, 2013c; Easterling 2013; Lloyd

not a point that needs to be laboured, and there is no time either for exhaustive survey or for detailed analysis of even the best examples. But it is worth noting that in these 'best examples' – e.g. Sophocles' *Ajax* or *Oedipus Tyrannus* – (a) the development of the theme of alternation involves the characteristic whole-life perspective on the career of a single heroic figure; (b) the exemplary nature of the central character's change of fortune as a manifestation of the principle of alternation is explicitly highlighted; (c) the limits on what is possible for human beings are defined, as an explicit aspect of the plot's exemplary force, by what is possible for gods; and (d) the responses of internal witnesses not only point the moral in terms of alternation but also explicitly guide the emotional responses of an external audience.

This is by no means the only kind of tragic plot, and the plots of even these two Sophoclean plays are in some ways very different. In *Ajax*, for example, the exemplarity of Ajax's change of fortune is outlined by Athena in the prologue (118-33); she and Odysseus respond to the same phenomena, but exhibit very different evaluations and emotions. The notion of alternation then underpins both the false hope that Ajax can be saved if he survives the current day and the determination of Ajax himself to abandon a world of change and vicissitude, until (paradoxically) his fortunes take a turn for the better when his enemy, Odysseus, behaves like a friend. In *OT*, on the other hand, it is after the prodigious scale of Oedipus' misfortunes becomes clear that the chorus present him as a paradigm of the vulnerability of all mortals (1186-96).⁴⁰⁾ A central focus on

2013. Among primary sources, and apart from those discussed in the text, cf. e.g. *A. Ag.* 1327-9; *S. Tr.* 1-3, 29-30, 129-31, 296-302, 943-6; *OC* 394, 607-20; fr. 871 R; *E. Med.* 1224-30; *Hipp.* 1105-10; *Supp.* 331; *Oedipus* frs. 92, 97 Austin = 549, 554 Kannicht.

40) Cf. *Ant.* 1155-71 (with Simonides 521 *PMG* = 244 Poltera), 1347-53, picking up a theme of the play's central and fundamentally important second stasimon (582-625). The *Ant.* resembles the *OT* in so far as the moral of mutability is drawn summatively in the play's closing stages, but in other ways their plots are very different, especially in the *Ant.*'s dual focus on the fates of Antigone and Creon. Though these are very closely interlinked, if the principle of alternation is

a profound change of fortune and the presentation of such a change in explicitly exemplary terms does not dictate a single type of plot-structure. But still the principle of alternation is a crucial factor in the presentation of the story in each individual case. And this is a salient enough feature of tragic plots to find its way into Aristotle's *Poetics*. The details are well known: in one of Aristotle's two paradigms of the best type of plot (*Poetics* 13),⁴¹⁾ the audience is emotionally affected by a character's change from good fortune to bad; this emotional reaction relies on the ability to refer what happens to the character to what might happen to oneself; the character should contribute to his own misfortune but not entirely deserve it; and while the character should therefore be in some respects like us, the typical examples are provided by a few familiar (heroic) figures. Aristotle's preference for this classic plot type in the *Poetics* is matched by the serious consideration that he gives its archaic ethical underpinnings in the *Ethics*.⁴²⁾ It is true, at least in a sense, that one should count no man happy until he is dead;⁴³⁾ *eudaimonia* is a quality of a whole life, and lives as wholes are vulnerable to the kinds of vicissitude that feature in the representations of the downfall of exemplary figures from the heroic past in epic and tragedy. In conceding something to traditional wisdom, Aristotle tellingly makes his point by means of a traditional *exemplum* – Priam (*EN* 1100a 4-9, 1101a6-13). In the *Poetics* Aristotle goes beyond the archaic principle of alternation by omitting its theological dimension; he also insists on the individual's contribution to his or her own undeserved suffering, a prominent and recurrent, but not an essential form of the traditional complex. Aristotle's template fits only a few tragedies; but this is in itself

applicable to both, its ethical and religious implications will differ in each case. See further Cairns 2013b.

- 41) On the relation between *Po.* 13 and 14 on the best kind(s) of plot, see Heath forthcoming.
- 42) See esp. *EN* 1100a4-11, 1101a6-13.
- 43) As in Sim. 521 *PMG* = 244 Poltera; *A. Ag.* 928-9 (with Fraenkel 1950: ii. 420 ad loc.); *E. Andr.* 100-2, *Hclid.* 865-6 (with Fränkel 1946: 135), *Tro.* 509-10; *Hdt.* 1. 32. 7.

interesting. In eschewing a purely descriptive model, Aristotle obviously has his own agenda, but this is an agenda that in both the *Ethics* and the *Poetics* makes room for central concepts of archaic Greek thought. The plot-type that he finds instantiated in the *OT* is not typical, but it is prototypical, at least in the respects that I have outlined and in so far as these are important culturally, to the tragedians (especially to Sophocles) and to Aristotle.⁴⁴⁾ Aristotle's focus on plots that involve the representation of human agency, the fallibility of human choice, a resulting change in fortune and the arousal of sympathetic but self-referential emotions in an audience, together with his insistence that these emotions are best aroused by drawing on the best-known examples from a limited corpus of traditional exemplary figures, fastens on to a prominent cultural model, in both aesthetic and ethico-emotional terms.

We could pursue this model in other genres, for example in historiography. The abundance of material in that area is well demonstrated by the splendid but still unpublished dissertation of Lisa Hau, which provides an exhaustive collection of evidence and thorough analysis of the many variations on the theme of mutability from Herodotus to Diodorus Siculus.⁴⁵⁾ Moralising on the mutability of fortune, Hau argues, is an important narrative theme from the beginning of historiography, but becomes a standard feature of the genre especially in the fourth century. She concludes:

All the extant historiographies discussed have as one of their core didactic messages the fact that human life is unstable and that one should not be overconfident about the future. They all depict such overconfidence as leading to disaster.⁴⁶⁾

44) For prototypical thinking in Arist., see e.g. (on the *Rhetoric's* definitions of the *pathē*) Harris 2001: 58-9 and Fortenbaugh 2008: 29-47.

45) Hau 2007. For aspects of the work in published form, see Hau 2009 (on Diodorus), 2011 (on Polybius).

46) Hau 2007: 242.

In Herodotus, for example, the principle of alternation operates at the individual level, but also at that of the rise and fall of great powers.⁴⁷⁾ Both are linked in the reflexions of 1. 5. 4,⁴⁸⁾ where Herodotus justifies his intention to treat the affairs of both great and small communities alike (1. 5. 3, ὁμοίως μικρὰ καὶ μεγάλα ἄστεα ἀνθρώπων ἐπεξιών) by observing:

τὰ γὰρ τὸ πάλαι μεγάλα ἦν, τὰ πολλὰ αὐτῶν σμικρὰ γέγονε· τὰ δὲ ἐπ' ἐμέο ἦν μεγάλα, πρότερον ἦν σμικρὰ. τὴν ἀνθρωπιήν ὧν ἐπιστάμενος εὐδαιμονίην οὐδαμὰ ἐν τῶντῷ μένουσαν, ἐπιμνήσομαι ἀμφοτέρων ὁμοίως.

For those that we great in the past have for the most part become small; and those that were great in my time were small in the past. Therefore, since I know that human *eudaimonia* never remains in the same place, I shall make mention of both alike.

The historian then proceeds immediately (1. 6. 1) to the exemplary tale of Croesus, the man who incurred 'great *nemesis* (indignation) from god' because he did not take to heart Solon's warning to count no man happy until he is dead (1. 32. 2-7), but thought himself the most prosperous of men (1. 34. 1), and thus, as prophesied, destroyed a great empire (1. 53. 3). Croesus' experience of the mutability of fortune then qualifies him to share his insight with his conqueror, Cyrus (1. 207. 2):

εἰ μὲν ἀθάνατος δοκέεις εἶναι καὶ στρατιῆς τοιαύτης ἄρχειν, οὐδὲν ἂν εἶη πρῆγμα γνώμας ἐμὲ σοὶ ἀποφαίνεσθαι· εἰ δ' ἔγνωκας ὅτι ἀνθρωπος καὶ σὺ εἶς καὶ ἐτέρων τοιῶνδε ἄρχεις, ἐκεῖνο πρῶτον μάθε ὡς κύκλος τῶν ἀνθρωπιῶν ἐστὶ πρηγμάτων, περιφερόμενος δὲ οὐκ ἔῃ αἰεὶ τοὺς αὐτοὺς εὐτυχέειν.

47) On alternation in Hdt., see (besides Hau 2007) Krause 1976: 199-223; Harrison 2000: 31-63 and *passim*.

48) Cf. Krause 1976: 221-2; Harrison 2000: 31-3, 62-3; Raaflaub 2002: 177; Van Wees 2002: 328-36; Hau 2007: 84.

If you think that you, and likewise the army you lead, are immortal, there would be no point in my declaring my views to you. But if you accept that you are a human being and that those you lead are the same, then you must first of all understand that there is a wheel of human affairs, and that wheel, as it turns, does not permit the same people always to be fortunate.

Throughout this important opening narrative, gnomic wisdom is expanded using narratives of exemplary, mythologised individuals (Croesus, Solon and the subjects of Solon's paranarratives, especially Cleobis and Biton, 1. 31), all serving to illustrate traditional maxims that stand in direct relation to the principle of alternation – 'the divine is grudging and meddling' (1. 32. 1; cf. 1. 32. 9), 'count no man happy until he is dead' (1. 32. 5, 7, 9), 'man is nothing but chance' (because his fortunes can change in a single day, 1. 32. 4), 'no human being is happy in all respects' (1. 32. 8), and 'the best thing for human beings is not to be born, or (failing that) to die as soon as possible' (1. 31. 4-5).⁴⁹⁾ The Croesus-narrative has an important structural and thematic function in priming the audience for what is to come, and thus is exemplary of patterns replicated throughout.⁵⁰⁾

One could follow these narrative patterns even in the comparatively austere pages of Thucydides,⁵¹⁾ and certainly in fourth-century and later

49) On this *gnōmē*, see Easterling 2013; on the traditional background of Solon's speech, cf. Harrison 2000: 38-9.

50) See Harrison 2000: 31-63, esp. 33, 51-2, 62-3; Thomas 2000: 105, 123; Fisher 2002: 201-2; Gray 2002: 296-7; Raaflaub 2002: 167-74; Hau 2007: 90.

51) E.g. in the structuring of his narrative of the Sicilian expedition (Cornford 1907: 188-220), where the sequence of cause and effect, from exaggerated expectations and ambitions (6. 6. 1, 6. 8. 2-3, 6. 24. 2, 6. 31), despite Nicias' warnings (6. 9-14) and the initial setback of the mutilation of the herms (6. 27-9), to disastrous failure (7. 75, 7. 84. 2-85. 1, 7. 86. 2, 7. 87. 5-6), at least makes room for the reflections on *tychē* and divine *phthonos* (jealousy) attributed to Nicias (7. 77. 2-4), and may well prompt similar thoughts in at least some of the historian's readers, perhaps especially given the historian's own verdict on the gulf between Nicias' *dystychia* (ill-fortune) and his deserts, 7. 86. 5 (the negation

historiography.⁵²⁾ For the purposes of this discussion, however, I propose to end with just one more example, one that that both draws on the historiographical tradition and attests the continued prominence of the Iliadic prototype of the principle of alternation many centuries after it was first promulgated – Plutarch’s *Life of Aemilius Paullus*.⁵³⁾

The pair of *Lives* of Aemilius and Timoleon (in which the Roman, unusually, is the first) opens with one of Plutarch’s strongest statements of the exemplarity purpose of biography (*Aem.* 1. 1, 1. 5):⁵⁴⁾

ἐμοὶ τῆς τῶν βίων ἄψασθαι μὲν γραφῆς συνέβη δι’ ἑτέρους, ἐπιμένειν δὲ καὶ φιλοχωρεῖν ἤδη καὶ δι’ ἑμαυτόν, ὥσπερ ἐν ἐσόπτρῳ τῇ ἱστορίᾳ πειρώμενον ἀμῶς γὰρ πῶς κοσμεῖν καὶ ἀφομοιοῦν πρὸς τὰς ἐκείνων ἀρετὰς τὸν βίον ...

ἡμεῖς δὲ τῇ περὶ τὴν ἱστορίαν διατριβῇ καὶ τῆς γραφῆς τῇ συνηθείᾳ παρασκευάζομεν ἑαυτούς, τὰς τῶν ἀρίστων καὶ δοκιμωτάτων μνήμας ὑποδεχομένους ἀεὶ ταῖς ψυχαῖς, εἴ τι φαῦλον ἢ κακὴθες ἢ ἀγεννὲς αἰ τῶν συνόντων ἐξ ἀνάγκης ὁμίλια προσβάλλουσιν, ἐκκρούειν καὶ διωθεῖσθαι, πρὸς τὰ κάλλιστα τῶν παραδειγμάτων ἴλεω καὶ πρᾶξιαν ἀποστρέφοντες τὴν διάνοιαν.

of the *eutychia* with which he is credited at 5. 16. 1, 6. 17. 1), echoing Nicias’ own at 7. 77. 2, and the contrasts he draws between aims and outcome at 7. 75. 6-7 and between the glory of the victors and the *dystychia* of the defeated at 7. 87. 5; possibly also, as Cornford famously argued (1907: 174-87, esp. 185), in the juxtaposition of the Melian Dialogue and the Sicilian Expedition as illustration of the inevitable results of blind over-confidence. See further Macleod 1983: 140-58; Connor 1984: 161-8, 187-8, 198-209; Stahl 2003: 180-222; Hau 2007: 55, 66-8, 111-12, 168-75, 206-8.

52) For examples from Diodorus and esp. from Polybius, cf. below.

53) On the continuity between Plutarch’s *Lives* and his predecessors among the historians in their use of what one might regard as ‘tragic’ themes, cf. Pelling 2002, esp. 97-98, 106, 111 n. 27; cf. 117-41 (esp. 120-1, 130-1); cf. Pelling 2005: 280-3.

54) Cf. Russell 1973: 100; Desideri 1989: 199-204, 212-15, 1992: 4473-5; Duff 1999: 34-6, 50, 53-4; Lamberton 2001: 72-4; Zadorojnyi 2010: 169-73, esp. on the mirror motif.

I find that, though I commenced the writing of my *Lives* for the benefit of others, I now persist and return with pleasure to the task for my own sake too, attempting, as though in a mirror, to arrange my life and assimilate it to the virtues of my subjects by telling their stories ... In my own case, since my mind is always welcoming towards the remembrance of the best and most esteemed individuals, I am equipped by the study of history and the familiarity therewith that my writing produces to shun and reject anything base, malicious or ignoble that enforced association with others may press upon me, diverting my thoughts calmly and dispassionately towards the fairest *paradeigmata* there are.

The introduction similarly emphasises the role of good fortune (*agathai tychai, eupotmia*) in the success of each of the pair's subjects (*Aem.* 1. 6):⁵⁵⁾

ὧν ἐν τῷ παρόντι προκεχειρίσμεθά σοι τὸν Τιμολέοντος τοῦ Κορινθίου καὶ Αἰμιλίου Παύλου βίον, ἀνδρῶν οὐ μόνον ταῖς αἰρέσεσιν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ταῖς τύχαις ἀγαθαῖς ὁμοίως κεχηρημένων ἐπὶ τὰ πράγματα, καὶ διαμφισβήτησιν παρεξόντων, πότερον εὐποτμία μᾶλλον ἢ φρονήσει τὰ μέγιστα τῶν πεπραγμένων κατώρθωσαν.

Among these are the *Lives* I have chosen for you now, of Timoleon the Corinthian and Aemilius Paullus, men who were alike not only in their principles, but also in the good fortune that their careers manifested, making it a matter of debate whether their greatest successes were due to luck or to judgement.

Plutarch did not invent the association between Aemilius and *tychē*

55) On Plut.'s views on *tychē*, in philosophical and non-philosophical works, see Swain 1989a, esp. 274-5: 'In more serious thinking Plutarch has no time for τύχη but he does believe in δαίμονες'. Thus the usage of the *Lives* simply reflects contemporary idiom; cf. Tatum 2010: 449. On *eupotmia* in *Aem.* 1. 6, cf. Swain 1989a: 300.

(fortune).⁵⁶ Its role, for good or for ill, in the life and career of Aemilius and Aemilius' own circumspection with regard to *tychē's* role in human affairs are clearly present in Polybius' fragmentary narrative of the Third Macedonian War,⁵⁷ reflected in the adaptations of that account by Diodorus and Livy, and virtually proverbial by the time of Plutarch.⁵⁸ But though the centrality of *tychē* in the *Life* is not a Plutarchan invention, it will be instructive to explore the subtlety and artistry with which Plutarch has taken this theme and turned it into the *Leitmotiv* that structures the narrative.⁵⁹

L. Aemilius Paullus had a long and distinguished career, but Plutarch's *Life* concentrates on a single campaign (his victory over Perseus of Macedonia, during his second consulship, at the age of around sixty, in 168 BC). The introduction to this episode begins in chapter 8; the decisive battle occupies chapters 15-21; Aemilius' triumph and the events that surround it are narrated in chapters 30-6; the narrative of the war is concluded in chapter 37; and the work ends in 39. Its climax is clearly the (three-day) triumph held in September 167, the height of Aemilius'

56) Cf. Swain 1989b: 323: 'Aemilius' association with fortune was one which Plutarch found in his sources'. Cf. Geiger 1981: 103 = 1995: 189.

57) See Walbank 1957-79: iii. 378; Geiger 1981: 102-3 = 1995: 187-8; Swain 1989b: 317, 324-7; Tatum 2010: 453-8.

58) With *Aem.* 24. 4-6, cf. Cic. *Nat. D.* 2. 6; Val. Max. 1. 8. 1; Pliny, *HN* 7. 86; Florus 1. 28. 14-15. With *Aem.* 27. 2-5, cf. Plb. 29. 20 (with Walbank 1957-79: iii. 392; Hau 2007: 141); Livy 45. 8. 6-7; D. S. 30. 23. 1-2; Florus 1. 28. 11. With *Aem.* 28. 4, cf. Plb. 30. 10; Livy 45. 27. 7. With *Aem.* 34. 8-38. 1, cf. Cic. *ad Fam.* 4. 6. 1, *Tusc.* 3. 70; Livy 45. 41; D. S. 31. 11; Vell. 1. 10. 3-5; Val. Max. 5. 10. 2; App. *Mac.* 19. Cf. also Plb. 29. 21 (Perseus' downfall prompts citation of Demetrius of Phalerum on mutability; cf. D. S. 31. 10, perhaps also Livy 45. 9. 2-7, with Walbank 1957-79: iii. 393); D. S. 31. 9. 4 (Aemilius once more – cf. 30. 23. 1-2 – sees Perseus as an example of the mutability of fortune and the need for humility in triumph); Livy 44. 40. 3-10 (*fortuna* initiates the battle of Pydna; contrast *Aem.* 18. 1-3); Pliny, *HN* 34. 54 (Aemilius dedicates a Phidian statue of Athena in the temple of Fortuna Huiusce Diei).

59) As indeed it structures, in ways that I explore in Cairns 2014, the paired *Lives* of Aemilius and Timoleon as an integrated work of art. Cf. Geiger 1981: 103-4 = 1995: 188-90; Swain 1989b: 314, 327-9; Tatum 2010: 449-50.

success. The triumph itself is narrated as a climactic tricolon:⁶⁰⁾ its first day occupies chapter 32. 4, the second chapter 32. 5-9 and the third chapters 33-4.

The climactic triumph, however, is postponed by a dramatic moment of crisis – the envy of Aemilius’ inferiors, masked as indignation,⁶¹⁾ together with the political opportunism of his enemies, threatens the triumph, until (in true epinician fashion) generous recognition of genuine merit and achievement prevail (30. 4-32. 1). In the midst of the victory celebrations, all eyes are on Aemilius and he is admired by all good men (34. 7):

ἔδαφνηφόρει δὲ καὶ σύμπας ὁ στρατός, τῷ μὲν ἄρματι τοῦ στρατηγοῦ κατὰ λόχους καὶ τάξεις ἐπόμενος, ἄδων δὲ τὰ μὲν ᾠδὰς τινὰς πατριῶς ἀναμειγμέναις γέλωτι, τὰ δὲ παιᾶνας ἐπινικίους καὶ τῶν διαπεπραγμένων ἐπαίνους εἰς τὸν Αἰμίλιον, περιβλεπτον ὄντα καὶ ζηλωτὸν ὑπὸ πάντων, οὐδενὶ δὲ τῶν ἀγαθῶν ἐπίφθονον ...

The whole army also carried laurel, following the chariot of their general by companies and divisions, and singing, partly certain traditional songs with a comic element, and partly victory paeans and encomia addressed to Aemilius, the object of everyone’s attention and admiration, begrudged by no one that was good.

But Aemilius’ success is immediately undercut by adversity: no decent human being wishes him ill, but there is some force that sees to it that no prosperity is unmixed with evil (34. 8):⁶²⁾

60) Cf. Swain 1989b: 325.

61) For the issues here, see Cairns 2003 (with further lit.).

62) Plut. certainly seems to believe in the phenomenon to which this passage refers, but his subsequent references to Tyche and her *nemesis* present it in a traditional idiom to whose implications he presumably does not subscribe (Swain 1989a: 300). At *Mar.* 23. 1 the force which leaves no great success *akratos* and *katharos* is indifferently *tychē*, *nemesis* or the necessary nature of affairs’ (ἡ

πλὴν εἴ τι δαιμόνιον ἄρα τῶν μεγάλων καὶ ὑπερόγκων εἴληγεν εὐτυχιῶν ἀπαρύτειν καὶ μειγνύναι τὸν ἀνθρώπινον βίον, ὅπως μηδενὶ κακῶν ἄκρατος εἶη καὶ καθαρὸς ...

Unless it is true that some divine force has been allotted the task of detracting from exceedingly great good fortune and of making a mixture of human existence, in order that no one's life should be unsullied or without admixture of trouble ...

Two of Aemilius' sons (aged 14 and 12) died, one five days before the triumph and the other three days after it. The Roman people see this as an illustration of the mutability of fortune (35. 3):

ὥστε μηδένα γενέσθαι Ῥωμαίων τοῦ πάθους ἀνάλητον, ἀλλὰ φρῖξει τὴν ὀμότητα τῆς Τύχης ἅπαντας, ὡς οὐκ ἠδέσατο πένθος τοσοῦτον εἰς οἰκίαν ζήλου καὶ χαρᾶς καὶ θυσιῶν γέμουσαν εἰσάγουσα, καὶ καταμειγνύουσα θρήνου καὶ δάκρυα παιᾶσιν ἐπινικίους καὶ θριάμβους.

The result was that there was no Roman unaffected by his suffering; rather, they all shuddered at the cruelty of Tyche, as she felt no compunction at bringing such great grief into a house that was full of admiration, joy and sacrifices, or at mixing up laments and tears with peans of victory and triumphs.⁶³⁾

δὲ μηθὲν ἔῶσα τῶν μεγάλων εὐτυχημάτων ἄκρατον εἰς ἡδονὴν καὶ καθαρὸν, ἀλλὰ μεῖξει κακῶν καὶ ἀγαθῶν ποικίλλουσα τὸν ἀνθρώπινον βίον, ἢ τύχη τις ἢ νέμεσις ἢ πραγμάτων ἀναγκαῖα φύσις ...). Plut.'s use of traditional forms of expression in such passages shows how easily notions of mutability, fate and the begrudgery of divine agents can blend into one another. On *nemesis'* shift from 'righteous indignation' in Homer to something more like *phthonos* in later authors, see Konstan 2003.

63) Cf. the reversal (within single hour) in the fortunes of the cities and people of Epirus, with the result that φρῖξει δὲ πάντας ἀνθρώπους τὸ τοῦ πολέμου τέλος, εἰς μικρὸν οὕτω τὸ καθ' ἕκαστον λῆμμα καὶ κέρδος ἔθνους ὅλου κατακερματισθέντος ('all men shuddered at the outcome of the war, that a whole nation could be chopped up and shared out with so little profit or gain for each individual', 29.

Aemilius agrees, and gives a speech in which he reflects that, in this case, this universal rule applies only to his own fortunes and not to those of the Roman state (36. 3-9). This speech is the longest of three that Aemilius makes on the same subject, and it contains several themes that occur in earlier passages of the *Life* and play a significant role in the structure of the narrative. First, Aemilius notes that, although his campaign against Perseus had been attended by good fortune from start to finish, he himself had never taken this for granted, but had always been afraid of some reversal (36. 3, 5-6):

ἔφη γάρ, ὅτι τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων οὐδὲν οὐδέποτε δέισας, τῶν δὲ θεῶν ὡς ἀπιστότατον καὶ ποικιλώτατον πρᾶγμα τὴν Τύχην αἰεὶ φοβηθείς, μάλιστα περὶ τοῦτον αὐτῆς τὸν πόλεμον ὥσπερ πνεύματος λαμπροῦ ταῖς πράξεσι παρούσης, διατελοῖη μεταβολὴν τινα καὶ παλίρροιαν προσδεχόμενος.

He said that he had never been afraid of any human power, but among divine powers he had always feared Tyche, regarding her as a most untrustworthy and variable thing; and since in this war in particular she had been present in his actions like a favourable wind, he had never ceased to expect some change or reversal.

“ἀπιστῶν δὲ τῇ Τύχῃ διὰ τὴν εὐροῖαν τῶν πραγμάτων, ὡς ἄδεια πολλὴ καὶ κίνδυνος οὐδεὶς ἦν ἀπὸ τῶν πολεμίων, μάλιστα κατὰ πλοῦν ἐδεδίδειν τὴν μεταβολὴν τοῦ δαίμονος ἐπ’ εὐτυχία <τοσαύτη>, τοσοῦτον στρατὸν νενικηκότα καὶ λάφυρα καὶ βασιλεῖς αἰχμαλώτους κομίζων. οὐ μὴν ἀλλὰ καὶ σωθεὶς πρὸς ὑμᾶς, καὶ τὴν πόλιν ὀρῶν εὐφροσύνης καὶ ζήλου καὶ θυσῶν γέμουσαν, ἔτι τὴν Τύχην δι’ ὑποψίας εἶχον, εἰδὼς οὐδὲν εἰλικρινὲς οὐδ’ ἀνεμέσητον ἀνθρώποις τῶν μεγάλων χαριζομένην.”

‘Since I distrusted Tyche because things were going so well, now that there was nothing to fear and no danger from the enemy, during my

5). On this passage, cf. Pelling 2005: 209.

voyage home, in particular, I feared the *daimōn*'s change after such good fortune, since I was bringing home a victorious army of such size, with spoils and royal prisoners. Indeed, even when I had got safely back to you, and saw the city full of festive joy and admiration and sacrifices, I was still suspicious of Tyche, because I knew that she grants human beings no great favour that is straightforward or free of *nemesis*.'

Second, he draws the conclusion that the vanquished Perseus and the victorious Aemilius are both equally good *paradeigmata* of human vulnerability (36. 9):

“ικανῶς γὰρ ἔμοι καὶ τοῖς ἔμοις κακοῖς εἰς τὴν τῶν κατωρθωμένων ἀποκέχρηται νέμεσιν, οὐκ ἀφανέστερον ἔχουσα παράδειγμα τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης ἀσθενείας τοῦ θριαμβευομένου τὸν θριαμβεύοντα· πλὴν ὅτι Περσεὺς μὲν ἔχει καὶ νενικημένος τοὺς παῖδας, Αἰμίλιος δὲ τοὺς αὐτοῦ νικήσας ἀπέβαλεν.”

‘For she [sc. Tyche] has made sufficient use of me and my afflictions to satisfy her *nemesis* at our successes,⁶⁴ since she has as clear an example of human frailty in the hero of the triumph as in its victim; except that Perseus, even though defeated, keeps his children, while Aemilius, the victor, has lost his.’

Both these points punctuate the work as it builds towards its climax: there are repeated references to Aemilius’ exceptional good fortune (or divine protection),⁶⁵ portents presage Aemilius’ success and Perseus’ defeat,⁶⁶

64) For the thought that one’s sufferings to date should be enough to satisfy divine resentment, cf. Nicias at Thuc. 7. 77. 3. Nicias speaks of *phthonos*, but Aemilius of *nemesis*; cf. n. 62 above.

65) 12. 1, 19. 6, 24. 2-6.

66) 10. 6-8, 17. 7-11, 24. 4-6.

and the contrast between the noble Aemilius and the avaricious, cowardly and possibly base-born Perseus, especially in their reactions to good or ill fortune, recurs.⁶⁷⁾ Where Perseus' faults and misjudgements contribute to Aemilius' luck and Perseus' own downfall, Aemilius himself is careful throughout to avoid tempting fate, remaining cautious when things go well and constantly reminding others, especially the less experienced, of the dangers of becoming carried away by success.⁶⁸⁾ These dangers are exemplified by his own son, Scipio Aemilianus (22. 2-9): Aemilius fears that the seventeen-year-old Scipio has become elated by victory and perished, but he lives to become the destroyer of Carthage and Numantia, while Tyche merely defers the effects of her *nemesis* at Aemilius' success until another day (22. 9):

Αἰμιλίῳ μὲν οὖν τὴν τοῦ κατορθώματος νέμεσιν εἰς ἕτερον ἢ Τύχῃ καιρὸν ὑπερβαλλομένη, τότε παντελῆ τὴν ἡδονὴν ἀπεδίδου τῆς νίκης.

So Tyche deferred her *nemesis* at Aemilius' success for another occasion, and for the moment gave him back in its entirety his pleasure in his victory.

This is not just the general idea that good fortune is inherently unstable and that vicissitude is inevitable,⁶⁹⁾ an idea that might simply be regarded as the common currency of Greek popular thought. Rather, the notion is explicitly presented in thoroughly Iliadic terms.⁷⁰⁾ The climax of the *Life's* narrative, the reversal which occurs at the height of Aemilius' success,

67) 12. 3-6, 12. 12, 19. 4-6, 23. 1-24. 1, 26. 4-12, 27. 4-5, 33. 6-8, 37. 2. For Perseus as a foil, cf. Swain 1989b: 325. On the presentation of Perseus, see further Scuderi 2004-5.

68) 17. 3-4, 17. 10-13, 27. 1-6.

69) On the mutability of fortune in the *Lives* in general, see Russell 1973: 115; Duff 1999: 41-2; Pelling 1986: 93-5 = 2002: 356-8.

70) On Homeric (and tragic) patterns in the *Lives*, see Mossman 1988/1995; Zadorojniy 1997; D'Ippolito, 2004; cf. n. 53 above.

is introduced with a direct allusion to the parable of the jars (34. 8): ὅπως μηδενὶ κακῶν ἄκρατος εἶη καὶ καθαρός, ἀλλὰ καθ' Ὅμηρον ἄριστα δοκῶσι πρᾶττειν, οἷς αἱ τύχαι ῥοπήν ἐπ' ἀμφοτέρα τῶν πραγμάτων ἔχουσιν ('in order that no one's life should be unsullied or without admixture of trouble, but that, as Homer says, those may be regarded as best off whose fortunes shift in the balance, now this way, now that').⁷¹) But this is not all. We are alerted to the relevance of Achilles' encounter with Priam in the very first chapter, when Plutarch, presenting his research on his biographical subjects as a kind of personal acquaintance, quotes *Il.* 24. 630 (Priam admires Achilles' 'stature and appearance', ὄσσοσ ἔην οἷός τε). But the influence goes further: the captured Perseus supplicates (26. 9), as does Priam, and Aemilius accepts his supplication, and not only the acceptance, but also the language in which it is described recalls the Iliadic scene: with *Aem.* 27. 1 (τοῦτον μὲν ἀναστήσας καὶ δεξιωσάμενος Τουβέρωνι παρέδωκεν, 'he raised Perseus up, gave him his hand and entrusted him to Tubero') compare *Il.* 24. 515-16 (γέροντα δὲ χειρὸς ἀνίστη οἰκτίρων πολιόν τε κάρη πολιόν τε γένειον, 'he raised the old man by his hand, pitying his hoary head and hoary beard'). The difference is that, whereas Achilles pities his enemy (a feature of the *Iliad* passage whose cultural significance can scarcely be overestimated),⁷²) Aemilius is deprived of the opportunity to pity Perseus by the latter's ignoble behaviour: he at first takes Perseus to be 'a great man brought

71) Plut. cites or alludes to the passage also at *Aud. poet.* 20e (*Il.* 24. 525-6), 22b (24. 525-6), 24a (24. 527-8); *Cons. Apoll.* 105c-d (24. 522-33); *Is. et Os.* 369c (24. 527-8); *Tranq. an.* 473b (24. 527-8); *Exil.* 600c (24. 527-8). Cf. the quotation of *Il.* 24. 560-1, 569-70 and 584-6 at *Aud. poet.* 31a-c. The versions of 24. 527-8 used in 24b and 600d are influenced by the variant cited by Plato at *Resp.* 379d (Díaz Lavado 2010: 277; Hunter and Russell 2011: 135). On Plut.'s use of the parable in the *Moralia*, see D'Ippolito 2004: 28-30; Díaz Lavado 2010: 276-80. On his use of Homer in general in the *Moralia*, see Bréchet 2004/5; D'Ippolito 2004 (cf. id. 2007); Díaz Lavado 2010.

72) Cf. esp. *S. Aj.* 121-6. The notion that an enemy's defeat underlines the mutability to which all are subject, and should therefore appeal to the humanity of the victor, is common in the Hellenistic and later historiography on which Plutarch draws. See esp. *Plb.* 29. 20-1, on Aemilius and Perseus, and cf. *Plb.* 15. 17. 4, 38. 21; *D. S.* 13. 20-7, 28-32, 17. 38. 4-7, 27. 6. 1, 31. 3. 1-3 (with Hau 2007: 37-43, 139, 141).

low by the anger of the gods and the hostility of fortune' (ὡς ἀνδρὶ μεγάλῳ πεπτωκότῳ πτώμα νεμεσητὸν καὶ δυστυχέες) and comes to meet him with tears in his eyes (ἐξαναστὰς προϋπήντα μετὰ τῶν φίλων δεδακρυμένος, 26. 8), but Perseus' abject behaviour leads him to believe that it is the latter's prosperity, not his misfortune, that is undeserved (26. 10). Defeat of such an unworthy opponent detracts from Aemilius' success (26. 11), and Perseus is devoid of the *aretē* (virtue) that attracts *aidōs* (respect),⁷³ even for a defeated enemy (26. 12):

“τί τῆς τύχης” εἶπεν “ὦ ταλαιίπωρε τὸ μέγιστον ἀφαιρεῖς τῶν ἐγκλημάτων, ταῦτα πράττων ἀφ’ ὧν δόξεις οὐ παρ’ ἀξίαν ἀτυχεῖν, οὐδὲ τοῦ νῦν, ἀλλὰ τοῦ πάλαι δαίμονος ἀνάξιος γεγονέναι, τί δέ μου καταβάλλεις τὴν νίκην καὶ τὸ κατόρθωμα ποιεῖς μικρόν, ἐπιδεικνύμενος ἑαυτὸν οὐ γενναῖον οὐδὲ πρέποντα Ῥωμαίοις ἀνταγωνιστήν; ἀρετὴ τοι δυστυχοῦσι μεγάλην ἔχει μοῖραν αἰδοῦς καὶ παρὰ πολεμίοις, δειλία δὲ Ῥωμαίοις κἂν εὐποτυμῇ πάντων ἀτιμότεατον.”

‘You wretch,’ he said, ‘Why do you free *tychē* from the strongest charge you could make, by behaving in ways that will make people think that you deserve your misfortunes, and that it is not your present lot, but your previous one that was undeserved? And why do you undermine my victory and diminish my success, by showing that you are not a noble or even a fitting antagonist for Romans? *Aretē* in the unfortunate brings great *aidōs* even in the eyes of their enemies, but, for Romans, cowardice, even if it prospers, is the most dishonourable thing of all.’

Plut. *Aem.* 26. 10-12

Clearly, then, the presentation of the theme of the mutability of fortune in the *Aemilius* draws explicitly on the classic articulation and presentation of that theme in the *Iliad*. As in the *Iliad*, the principle of alternation not only structures the narrative but is also voiced authoritatively at an

73) Another feature of the source context in Homer: see *Il.* 24. 503.

important point in that narrative. Also as in the *Iliad*, the ethical and emotional implications of the theme for the external audience are drawn out by means of the focalisation of internal audiences – as Achilles pities Priam, so the Romans shudder at the misfortune that strikes Aemilius at the height of his success (35. 3).⁷⁴⁾ And, again as in the *Iliad*, the theme is used to articulate the vulnerability that unites all human beings, friend and foe, winner and loser: as the Romans shudder at the fate of Aemilius, so ‘everyone’ shudders at the outcome of the war, that the wealth of an entire nation should amount to so little once divided in the hands of its conquerors (29. 5); and the counterpart of Aemilius’ success is the downfall of Perseus, a reminder of that vulnerability that is realised in the personal tragedy that strikes at the height of Aemilius’ success.

As we see not least from their presence in Livy, these ideas were in Plutarch’s day common coin of Roman as well as Greek thought.⁷⁵⁾ But Plutarch re-emphasises their Greekness. He does so partly in his presentation of Aemilius as an untypically philosophical Roman, allegedly descended from Pythagoras, the *nomen* of his *gens* etymologised in Greek (2. 2), who practised virtue, not forensic oratory (2. 6), and who sees the value of Greek education (6. 8-9), so that his sons became devoted to literature (28. 11).⁷⁶⁾ But above all Plutarch re-Hellenises the theme of the mutability of fortune by situating it firmly in the Greek poetic tradition, in particular

74) Cf. Pelling 2005: 282-3.

75) For the appeal of classic Greek formulations of the principle of alternation at Rome, cf. Cic. *Tusc.* 3. 24. 59-25. 60, quoting E. *Hyps.* 921-7 (in translation). At a *very* general level, we may even be dealing with a narrative universal, in so far as ‘the narrative mode ... deals in human or human-like intention and action and the vicissitudes and consequences that mark their course’ (Bruner 1986: 13; cf. Bruner 1986: 16-18, 88; Oatley 2012: 23, 45, 191).

76) Cf. 3. 3: Aemilius’ augurship is not just a step on the *cursus honorum*, but manifests a genuine, quasi-philosophical religiosity. As Swain notes (1989b: 316) Aemilius’ ‘unusual and Hellenic sounding education (2. 6), which Plutarch has probably fabricated, prefigures his philhellenism (28) and moral courage (36)’; cf. Swain 1990: 132-3 = 1995: 240-1. Tatum 2013 sees Plutarch’s project of emphasising Aemilius’ quasi-Hellenic virtues also in the account of Aemilius’ decision to dig wells in the vicinity of Mt Olympus at *Aem.* 14.

by means of two quotations and one clear allusion to the encounter of Achilles and Priam in *Iliad* 24. In making the life of Aemilius conform to a pattern established in a salient passage of Greek civilisation's most exemplary artistic production, and by making Aemilius himself – the man who finally ended the Macedonian monarchy and thus completed a crucial step in Rome's rise to hegemony – a prototype of Roman philhellenism, Plutarch underlines the abiding claims of a Greek literary and intellectual culture that survives Greece's political and military subordination to Rome.⁷⁷⁾

Central to Plutarch's narrative in *Aemilius* is the Iliadic and archaic idea that good fortune is a fragile thing, because suffering is intrinsic to the human condition, whether one is good or bad, careful or reckless, great or insignificant. These are traditional ideas about the nature of happiness that bring with them traditional ways of feeling, traditional ways of responding to the texts that embody these ways of feeling, texts that exemplify traditional values by associating them with exemplary narratives of the lives of exemplary figures. The Greekness of the *Life of Aemilius Paullus* lies not only in the way that its narrative structure, its exemplary moral purpose and its intellectual and emotional content are all inextricably linked, but also in the way that, like other texts that engage with the same ideas, it returns explicitly to the source of these narrative and cultural models in the most seminal and authoritative works of Greek literature.⁷⁸⁾ The principle of alternation is not unique as traditional wisdom or as narrative theme, nor is the tradition that recurs to that principle uniquely Greek in intellectual, affective or aesthetic terms. Yet the principle has, for the Greeks themselves, a special place in Greek culture. It is a normative pattern to which Greek artists and audiences repeatedly turn as a means of making sense of and giving form to experience. This they do in forms as

77) For Rome's philhellenism as a factor in her providential rise to dominance, see *Flam.* 12. 1-10, with Swain 1989a: 293.

78) On the importance in Plutarch's biographical project of the characteristic norms and paradigms of traditional Greek thought, cf. Desideri 1992: 4481-6.

minimal as a single *gnōmē* and as extensive as the *Iliad*, but at either end of the spectrum the principle of alternation is a pattern that cries out for exemplification in narratives of the doings and sufferings of specific individuals. The tendency to encapsulate the pattern of vicissitude, with its attendant normative and emotional associations, in traditional narratives of an exemplary character is a salient and typical feature of the Greek literary tradition, found in some of its most authoritative and influential manifestations. It is thus an interesting example of the ways in which the shared and social aspects of traditional literary genres play a constitutive role in the ways that a culture represents to itself its models of mind, morality and emotion.

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Abstract

This discussion starts from the encounter between Achilles and Priam in *Iliad* 24, and especially Achilles' remarks on the jars of Zeus (525-35), the seminal expression of a characteristic Greek attitude towards the mutability of fortune and the instability of happiness. Such ideas can be readily paralleled in other cultures, literatures and narrative forms, both ancient and more recent, Greek and non-Greek. Their expression in language, symbol, and art (both verbal and visual) illustrates the way that the condensation of such complexes of thought and feeling in typical and traditional forms makes a particular ethical or emotional perspective tangible, tractable and transferable. These recurrent forms capture important aspects of a culture's emotional and normative repertoire in a way that allows them to be reconstituted and applied in the mind of each recipient or audience member. The paper considers some of the implications of this in the Greek narrative tradition, from Homer, through archaic poetry, tragedy and Aristotle's theory of tragedy to a detailed examination of the persistence of the phenomenon and its extensive influence on narrative shape in Plutarch's *Life of Aemilius Paullus*, a splendid example of how later Greek narratives return explicitly to the most authoritative of all Greek narrative sources as a way of locating themselves in what their authors clearly regard as a distinctive Greek tradition.