

§3. The Trojan War



Lo! Alexandros, the godlike, advanced to the fore of the Trojans,
wearing a panther's pelt, with a bent bow hung on his shoulders,
also a sword; two lances, with bronze bright-shodden, he brandished.
Any and all of the Argive chieftains, the bravest, he challenged,
man against man, in a single deadly encounter to fight him.

– *Iliad* 3:16-20

We have so far noticed two performance modules, a short one of 10 minutes or so, good as an interlude in something else, and a medium one of 28 minutes, acceptable in some situations as a complete performance. We now ask if there is a third module. Suppose we look for *aristeiae*. The next one we find is that of Paris and Menelaos in Id 3. There are no obvious interpolations. Id 3 is 461 lines long (46 minutes in performance). We go on to Id 4, which narratively follows Id 3 (it features the breaking of the Id 3 truce). From it we must deduct the previously noticed 35-line “father of Telemachus” piece,¹ giving Id 4 a net size of 509 lines (51 minutes). There seems to be a pattern here, one where the normal unit of performance is turning out to be somewhere around 45 minutes, distinctly longer than our Agamemnon *aristeia*.

We thus to have a family of possibilities: (1) short interludes, (2) longer but modest independent songs, one lasting 28 minutes, and (3) concert sessions of 45 or 50 minutes.² As we continue, that picture will get clearer. At present, adjusted for interpolations already noted, here is how the *Iliad* books look:³

01 611	05 909	09 713	13 837	17 761	21 611
02 484	06 529	10 510	14 522	18 609	22 515
03 461	07 482	11 848	15 746	19 424	23 897
04 509	08 565	12 471	16 867	20 503	24 804

Our thesis, to be developed in what follows, is that no original book, whether Trojan or Homeric, was longer than an hour in performance. There will be no further innovation in performance conditions until we come to the *Odyssey*.

¹See p11 n2.

²Parry (*Cor Huso* 457-458) reports a 58-minute long poem as delivered in segments of 20, 26, and 12 minutes; close to our 10, 28, and (in toto) 50 minute modules.

³This table will be updated now and then. Those who like to know how things are going to come out may like to check the final version on the Original Menis page, p241. That is not where we are going; it is where we will have gotten at the end of the effort. So also, in its much simpler way, the Original *Odyssey*, p242.

The Stylistic Aspect

A conventional philological argument would have sufficed for the above conclusion. But it is always tempting to see what the stylistic picture looks like, and this page and the next represent a yielding to that temptation.

Iliad 3 has the following narrative divisions:

3a. 1-120 (120 lines)	Challenge and Oath
3b. 121-244 (124 lines)	The Viewing
3c. 245-382 (138 lines)	The Duel
3d. 383-448 (66 lines)	Helen and Paris
3e. 449-461 (13 lines)	Menelaos the Victor

<i>Iliad 3</i>	<i>3a</i>	<i>3b</i>	<i>3c</i>	<i>3d</i>	<i>3e</i>
Words	862	872	946	475	91
<i>3a</i>	~	0.58	0.80	0.73	0.69
<i>3b</i>	0.58	~	0.90	0.64	0.49
<i>3c</i>	0.80	0.90	~	0.42	0.88
<i>3d</i>	0.73	0.64	0.42	~	0.72
<i>3e</i>	0.69	0.49	0.88	0.72	~

The only consecutive segments which are stylistically close are 3c and 3d, the Duel and its aftermath. Aphrodite has snatched Paris from danger and brought him to his house; she then compels Helen to join him for a moment of love, restoring the conjugal bond that was threatened by the arrival of the Greeks. These segments are narratively connected, so their stylistic closeness makes sense. We note in passing that what seem to be Trojan pieces, like those originally composed for the Menis, feature the intervention of gods to guide mortals, or rescue them from danger. In short, to bring about what we knew was going to happen, to preserve the plot from the vicissitudes of the story.⁴

The other close relation is between Agamemnon's declaring the outcome of the duel (3e) and Helen's Viewing (3b). Both are evaluations of the Greek warriors, their potential in the Viewing case, and the final outcome in 3e. The transition to the Duel (3b, 3c) is High ($D = 0.90$). Perhaps the quiet scenes here have a certain generic affinity, whereas violent 3c has no friends in Iliad 3.

Another way of reading the chart is to see the 3c/3d unit (the duel and the rescue of Paris from losing it) as interrupting an originally adjacent 3b and 3e, the Viewing and the final determination of the outcome. This does not seem especially promising. We would prefer to say that the Outcome (3e) "looks back" to the prospect, the evaluation of the warriors (3b). If we imagine Id 3 as being composed consecutively, this may be the better view.

⁴This limit will be seemingly exceeded in Id 5; see §6.

Iliad 4 includes the “father of Telemachus” piece; it and its parallel, the probably original criticism of Diomedes, give $D = 0.44$. The interpolator “had in mind” his model, and kept close to it. Minus those passages, we have this:⁵

4a.	1-67.	(67 lines)	The gods confer
4b.	68-103.	(36 lines)	Athena persuades Pandaros.
4c.	104-182.	(79 lines)	Pandaros wounds Menelaos.
4d.	183-219	(37 lines)	He recovers
4er.	220-412 less 327-364	(38 lines)	Agamemnon reviews his troops
4f.	413-544	(132 lines)	General fighting.

<i>Iliad 4</i>	<i>4a</i>	<i>4b</i>	<i>4c</i>	<i>4d</i>	<i>4er</i>	<i>4f</i>
Words:	479	244	555	263	1089	908
<i>4a</i>	~	0.87	0.54	0.91	0.39	1.03
<i>4b</i>	0.87	~	0.52	0.60	0.93	0.77
<i>4c</i>	0.54	0.52	~	0.73	0.71	0.88
<i>4d</i>	0.91	0.60	0.73	~	0.80	0.30
<i>4er</i>	0.39	0.93	0.71	0.80	~	0.83
<i>4f</i>	1.03	0.77	0.88	0.30	0.83	~

Id 4 is narratively consecutive, with the gods wishing to put the Trojans at fault in the breaking of the truce, Athena persuading Pandaros, he complying, Menelaos hurt but recovering, then the review followed by general fighting.

Athena’s urging (4b) and Pandaros’ action (4f) are stylistically closest, which makes sense. Other consecutive-section transitions are however in the High range; stylistically close relations are between *nonconsecutive* sections. One suggests that the Review (4er) intrudes between Menelaos’ recovery and the general fighting (4d / 4fr, $D = 0.30$). Another (4a / 4er, $D = 0.39$) raises the question, might the gods’ decision for war in 4a be the prelude to war in 4er? The two would take 11 minutes in performance, a standard court interlude. Might Id 4 itself have a formation history?

Notable in 4a is Hera’s offer of her favorite cities (Argos, Sparta, Mycenae) if Zeus will let her destroy Troy. This seems to foretell the Dorian destruction, which indeed did follow the Trojan war, or its historical equivalent. The Greeks who brought their tradition to Ionia, and who surely recalled something of their days of political greatness, probably had a sense of the *end* of that greatness. The greatness being all the greater for having come to an inexplicable end, and from being isolated from the lesser condition of life and culture in which the Greeks of the Dark Ages themselves lived.

⁵“4er” is the residue (r) of 4e when the suspected interpolations have been removed.