

The birds in the *Iliad*



The birds in the *Iliad*  
Identities, interactions and functions

Karin Johansson



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## ABSTRACT/THE BIRDS IN THE *ILIAD*

As the topic of this study embraces and entwines what is routinely divided into two separate categories, “nature” and “culture”, the birds in the *Iliad* challenge modern scientific division and in some ways, our thinking. They are simultaneously birds, signs and symbols.

The investigation aims at determining the various species of the birds in the *Iliad* as far as this is possible with the help of ornithological methods and tries through semiotics and hermeneutics to ascertain the symbolic functions and presence of the birds as transmitters of messages, information, and emotions.

The material consists of thirty-five bird scenes where different kinds of birds and bird names occur, such as *αἰετός*, eagle, *γύψ*, vulture, and *πέλεια*, dove. As a method for carrying out the analysis of each bird and bird scene four aspects are focused upon (1) ornithology, (2) form, (3) interactions, and (4) functions. Concerning the last aspect the emphasis is on the birds’ communicative, informative and conceptual functions and the impact they have on the humans in the *Iliad*.

The analyses of the scenes demonstrate that particular species of birds occur frequently in the *Iliad* and that they have been carefully chosen to fit perfectly into the scenes and the war events that take place there. The results show that the birds are fundamental parts of the structure of the *Iliad* as well as in the human characters lives, consciousness and conditions. They operate in a shared sphere of interactions between animals, humans and gods. Within this sphere birds have specific roles and are used by the humans and gods in different ways. The gods use birds as disguises and as messengers in order to communicate and interact with the humans, and the humans use them as signs and symbols that they interpret to acquire knowledge about the gods’ presences, identities, will and intentions for the future. Birds thus have incredibly important roles as intermediaries between the human and divine spheres. Bird signs usually occur in situations of danger such as war or before risky journeys. To receive a positive bird sign from the gods at such an important moment was thus a powerful experience that raised the warriors’ fighting spirits and evoked emotions of relief. Having these functions the birds satisfy basic human needs of self-esteem and security.

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Karin Johansson

## CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION .....	15
<b>The present study</b> .....	16
Aims .....	16
Assumptions and hypothesis .....	17
Outline .....	17
<b>The material</b> .....	18
<b>Initial framework for the thesis</b> .....	21
The <i>Iliad</i> : considerations on oral tradition, time and space .....	21
Specific features: similes, metaphors, parallels and signs .....	25
Divine intervention, godlike warriors, and the concept of double motivation .....	28
Ancient practice of divination from birds .....	30
Previous research on the birds in the <i>Iliad</i> .....	34
II. THEORY AND METHOD .....	38
<b>Theoretical, scientific and methodological background</b> .....	38
Ornithology .....	39
Semiotics and Ricoeur's perspective on metaphor and symbol .....	43
Signs and "meaning-making" processes .....	43
Animals as agents .....	48
Analytical model .....	49
III. THE BIRD SCENES .....	52
<b>Analysis, comments and interpretation</b> .....	52
Scene I – <i>Il.</i> 2.299–335 .....	52
Scene 2 – <i>Il.</i> 2.445–468 .....	59
Scene 3 – <i>Il.</i> 2.494–510 .....	65
Scene 4 – <i>Il.</i> 2.581–590 .....	69
Scene 5 – <i>Il.</i> 3.1–9 .....	70
Scene 6 – <i>Il.</i> 4.234–239 .....	76
Scene 7 – <i>Il.</i> 5.773–795 .....	79
Scene 8 – <i>Il.</i> 7.54–66 .....	83
Scene 9 – <i>Il.</i> 8.227–252 .....	89
Scene 10 – <i>Il.</i> 10.272–298 .....	95
Scene 11 – <i>Il.</i> 11.153–162 .....	101
Scene 12 – <i>Il.</i> 11.624–644 .....	103

Scene 13 – <i>Il.</i> 12.195–257.....	107
Scene 14 – <i>Il.</i> 13.43–84.....	116
Scene 15 – <i>Il.</i> 13.526–539.....	120
Scene 16 – <i>Il.</i> 13.809–837 .....	125
Scene 17 – <i>Il.</i> 14.283–293 .....	131
Scene 18 – <i>Il.</i> 15.229–245.....	135
Scene 19 – <i>Il.</i> 15.688–695.....	139
Scene 20 – <i>Il.</i> 16.419–443 .....	145
Scene 21 – <i>Il.</i> 16.581–592.....	150
Scene 22 – <i>Il.</i> 16.830–842.....	154
Scene 23 – <i>Il.</i> 17.451–473 .....	158
Scene 24 – <i>Il.</i> 17.673–693 .....	163
Scene 25 – <i>Il.</i> 17.755–761.....	167
Scene 26 – <i>Il.</i> 18.266–283 .....	172
Scene 27 – <i>Il.</i> 18.614–617 .....	176
Scene 28 – <i>Il.</i> 19.342–356 .....	178
Scene 29 – <i>Il.</i> 21.248–256.....	182
Scene 30 – <i>Il.</i> 21.489–496.....	186
Scene 31 – <i>Il.</i> 22.38–45 .....	190
Scene 32 – <i>Il.</i> 22.130–144.....	193
Scene 33 – <i>Il.</i> 22.300–316 .....	198
Scene 34 – <i>Il.</i> 23.850–883 .....	202
Scene 35 – <i>Il.</i> 24.308–321 .....	205
IV. DISCUSSION .....	212
<b>Ornithology</b> .....	212
Behaviour .....	217
Characteristics .....	217
Ornithological accuracy .....	219
Time context .....	223
Spatial context .....	225
<b>Form</b> .....	230
<b>Interactions</b> .....	232
<b>Functions</b> .....	237
Physical .....	238
Transformation.....	245

Metaphorical .....	247
Image .....	253
Other .....	254
V. CONCLUSIONS .....	255
<b>Ornithology</b> .....	256
<b>Form</b> .....	257
<b>Interactions</b> .....	257
<b>Functions</b> .....	257
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	261
<b>Ancient sources</b> (editions and translations used) .....	261
<b>Modern literature</b> .....	261
APPENDIX .....	277
<b>List of photos</b> .....	277



## I. INTRODUCTION

Not many of us living today have experienced a Peregrine hunting a dove in the fields, a Golden Eagle killing a hare, or vultures devouring carrion – and have been able to observe the incredible speed, power, and aggression in their actions. In many ways the capacities and qualities of birds exceed human limits which could probably explain why people in all times have been fascinated by birds. Even fewer of us have seen a Lammergeier, a specific type of vulture, on the wing or fighting over food on a cliff.<sup>1</sup> Our chances of seeing a Lammergeier would of course improve if we lived near its eyrie. It is likely that people in ancient times saw this magnificent creature, as well as other birds that we today reckon as rare or threatened by extinction, much more frequently than we see them today. The Lammergeier was probably known as a bird of the mountains that followed the humans and their activities whether they were pasturing cattle or waging war.

As a young child I started to pay attention to birds because of their different bird-songs and beauty. I grew more and more curious in their identities and habits. As time went by my interest for birds developed in a new way. When for the first time I came across the *Iliad* it was my background as an ornithologist that made the many occurrences of birds there almost jump off the pages at me. The poem fascinated me from the start raising questions like why did birds occur so often in this text? I was also caught by the intense interactions taking place between humans, gods and birds, the blurred line between what we today commonly call “nature” and “culture”, the way the events are told, the detailed and elaborate metaphors, and the richness of experiences that are described in the various scenes. Also I became interested in the long oral tradition that preceded the *Iliad* as well as the *Odyssey*.

Even if ancient grouping and naming of birds differ considerably from the taxonomy we use today and the distribution, diversity, and numbers of birds are different across the world and change over time, the behaviours and characteristics of birds on the whole are unchangeable. In that way bird species are timeless. This makes it possible to study the birds in the *Iliad*, their identities and functions in a modern ornithological sense.

The *Iliad* describes events in the war between the Achaeans and Trojans, a war that has been located to an area on the coast of western Anatolia, Turkey, at a place called

<sup>1</sup> I have searched myself for the Lammergeier many times, on Mount Uludağ in Turkey and in the mountains of Crete and Greece, but I have not even got a glimpse of this rare species. The closest I have come so far is one metre from a stuffed example in the Goulandris Natural History Museum at Athens. Even in that state this large bird was imposing with its wingspan of almost three metres.

today Hisarlık.<sup>2</sup> This region is very rich in birds, especially birds of prey, but also cranes, herons, storks, and a variety of species that breed in the area or pass over it during their migrations. If we also include the mountainous regions to the southeast and the nearby Evros Delta in north-eastern Greece, we can add vultures to the bird populations in these areas. It is likely that Western Anatolia and Hisarlık in earlier times were even richer in birds than today. It is thus not surprising that birds, and many birds of prey and vultures, often occur in the *Iliad*.

The birds in the *Iliad* call for attention in their own right. They are diversified and their behaviours differ. They appear in various spatial and temporal contexts, and occur in different forms. Previous research has paid little attention to the identities of the birds in the *Iliad* as zoological creatures, which may be due to the fact that Homeric studies often take their departure from the humanities, literature or philology. The focus has usually been on the symbolic functions of the birds and there has been little interest in their ornithological status. So who are they and what are they doing in the scenes that describe events where humans, gods and birds are interacting?

## The present study

### Aims

The purpose of this study is to investigate the identities, interactions and functions of the birds in the *Iliad* in order to try to fully understand their inclusion and significance in this epic.

The first aim is to determine the various species of the birds as far as this is possible with the help of ornithological methods. The second aim is to try to ascertain the symbolic functions and presence of birds as transmitters of messages, information, and emotions through semiotics and hermeneutics.

In order to do this the focus will be placed on the following: (1) the **ornithological** aspects – which include behaviours, characteristics and identities according to modern taxonomy. The spatial and timely contexts for the birds are also included in this aspect, (2) the birds' **forms** (for example physical or metaphorical), (3) their **interactions** (with for example gods and humans), and (4) their **functions**. Concerning this last aspect the emphasis is on the birds' communicative, informative and conceptual functions, and the impact they have on the human characters of the *Iliad*.<sup>3</sup>

The material consists of two groups: (1) those birds in the *Iliad* that can get spe-

<sup>2</sup> For a summary and discussion on Homer's Troy at Hisarlık, see Latacz 2004. See also Korfmann 1991, 89–102. For another view cf. Besedow 2007, 49–58.

<sup>3</sup> The birds in the scenes have also other functions such as to create a sense of drama and to evoke mental, “visual” images in the minds of the audience or listeners. These functions that are not negligible are not focused on in this study.



## INTRODUCTION

cies determined according to modern taxonomy, and (2) the scene contexts that they appear in.

The so-called “bird scenes”, this term also used by de Jong,<sup>4</sup> are in all thirty-five.

On a larger scale the material is viewed as a source that provides information on how humans have interacted with birds as co-existent and co-dwelling<sup>5</sup> animals. These interactions are responses such as attitudes, knowledge, and ideas of birds as well as practices that are related to birds in different ways. Ultimately the birds in the *Iliad* offer a possibility to learn more about humans and birds as active “beings-in-the-world”<sup>6</sup> in a past society and how humans have used birds for different purposes.

The birds operate in two major contexts (a) the bird scene context where certain events take place (such as physical and metaphorical interactions and inter-relationships between birds, animals, humans and gods), and (b) the larger context of the *Iliad* as a whole. To get a full understanding of the roles of the birds as a whole, the investigation needs to focus on each bird in each specific scene. So, it is from there that my study takes its departure.

### Assumptions and hypothesis

This study is based on two assumptions. Firstly, that the “poet” (“poets”) who once created the bird scenes had a specific knowledge about birds and their behaviours and that the audience to some extent also shared this lore.<sup>7</sup> The scenes were constructed on the basis of this specific awareness, something that could be received correctly if the audience could relate to the birds as authentic, and secondly, that the various birds that occur in the *Iliad* refer to real species that were carefully chosen to fit in the scenes and to provide them with specific details concerning identity, behaviour, characteristics, voice, environmental preferences and status. They are put into the narrative for very special reasons as will be demonstrated in this study. My hypothesis is that some information would be lost if we do not pay attention to the birds in their own right.

### Outline

After the introductory remarks given above on the background of the thesis, its aims and underlying assumptions, the rest of this first chapter will provide the reader with a short presentation of the material. Then follows a section on a number of topics and

4 de Jong 2001, 33-34, 624.

5 For “co-dwellings” and “species interaction” see Armstrong Oma 2007, 61, 68; Frankin 2002, 8-9; Ingold 2000, and Macnaghten & Urry 1998.

6 See Ingold 2000 and Armstrong Oma 2007, 60-61.

7 Also see Voultziadou & Tatolas who present diverse information on the morphology, ecology or behaviour of mammals and birds as reported in the epics attributed to Homer and Hesiod. Voultziadou & Tatolas 2008, 303-315.

concepts of modern Homeric scholarship and research. Here questions of oral tradition, time and space will be considered, as well as specific features in the *Iliad* such as metaphors, parallels and signs. Divine intervention in the *Iliad*, the godlike warriors and the concept of “double motivation” will also be considered in this section as well as ancient bird divination and previous research on the bird scenes in the *Iliad*.

The second chapter, THEORY AND METHOD, presents the theoretical and scientific background and the methodological tools. Here ornithology, semiotics in combination with Paul Ricoeur’s perspective on metaphor and symbol will be considered as well as hermeneutics. Then follows a presentation of my analytical model which is based on the four relevant aspects for this study: **ornithology**, **form**, **interactions**, and **functions**.

In the third chapter ANALYSIS, the thirty-five bird scenes will be presented in Greek with English translations. Each scene is followed by my analysis, comments and interpretation following the same structure.

In the fourth chapter, DISCUSSIONS, the results concerning the three main aspects **ornithology**, **form**, and **interactions** is dealt with. The fourth aspect, **functions**, will be discussed from a thematic grouping where I have chosen to use the five categories that will emerge under the aspect **form**, namely, *physical*, *transformation*, *metaphorical*, *image* and *other*.<sup>8</sup>

The last chapter presents the CONCLUSIONS. At the end of the thesis is a bibliography, as well as an appendix with photos of some of the suggested species of birds. These photos aim to visually illustrate some of the birds’ specific behaviours, properties and characteristics that have been discussed in this thesis. The species are placed in an order that basically follow the order they occur in the *Iliad*.

## The material

### Greek text and English translation

The bird scenes are delimited to the text passages which I have cited. My ambition has been to include the text passages that bear immediate meaning regarding interpretation of the bird scene. The Greek text is taken from T. W. Allen’s edition of the *Iliad*, Oxford 1931.

The bolded text is mine, used for emphasis. All bird names have also been checked against West’s Teubner edition (1998, 2000). Differences in orthography have not been noted. For the English translations of all bird scenes, names of characters, and other

<sup>8</sup> For my definitions of these categories of form, see chapter 2.

## INTRODUCTION

quotes from the *Iliad*, I have used A. T. Murray, revised by W. F. Wyatt (Loeb Classical Library, 2001), hereafter Murray & Wyatt. This translation was chosen because of its closeness to the Greek text.

### Presentation of Table 1

Table 1 presents the material, which consists of thirty-five bird scenes with passages and bird names such as *αἰετός*, eagle, *γύψ*, vulture, and *πέλεια*, dove. As the table shows the bird names occur fifty-four times in inflected forms and in some cases in more than one scene. The clear-voiced mountain bird in SCENE 17 called by two names, *χαλκίς* and *κίμινδις* in *Il.* 14.291, represents one and the same bird, which means that the material consists of forty-eight bird descriptions.

The table lists the bird scenes in the order in which they occur in the *Iliad*, and the same order will be followed in the analysis. This structure was chosen so as not to violate the structure of the poem, and because the bird scenes accompany the events that take place and the progression of the primary narrative. Table 1 further shows how the bird scenes are evenly distributed in the *Iliad*.

Since one of the aims is to species-determine the birds as far as possible, some scenes have been excluded because of the impossibility of making an ornithological determination. The scenes mention *ἄρνις* and *οἰωνός* simply meaning “bird” in general or “a large bird”, and thus give no clue as to their particular species, are thus examples of exclusions.<sup>9</sup> There is one further case, namely, *ἄλκυών* in *Il.* 9.563. The name of this bird is used as the surname of Meleager’s wife, Cleopatra, called “Halcyone” *because the mother herself, in a plight like that of the halcyon bird of many sorrows, wept because Apollo who works from afar had snatched her child away (Il. 9.562–564)*. This scene has been excluded because of its lack of detail in behaviour, characteristics and environment, making it impossible to determine this bird.<sup>10</sup>

The bird scenes in the *Iliad* are very different in character and structure. In some of them, “physical” birds appear and become part of the human events, such as when Zeus sends an eagle to the human characters and in some scenes the birds appear in metaphorical ways such as when a warrior is metaphorically likened to a bird of prey. Birds also appear as images or in transformations when gods for a while take their shapes. Even if the birds’ forms differ, their identities, operations and functions will be investigated as well as the physical and metaphorical interactions they are part of.

<sup>9</sup> See LSJ s.v. *ἄρνις* and s.v. *οἰωνός*.

<sup>10</sup> Thompson describes the Halcyon as a symbolic or mystical bird. Thompson 1936, 46. Pollard points out that in later ancient sources the *ἄλκυών* seems to have referred to the Kingfisher, *Alcedo ispida*, see Pollard 1977, 96–98. See also Arnott 2007, 12–13. The *ἄλκυών* in the *Iliad* is not discussed by Boraston 1911.

THE BIRDS IN THE *ILIAD*

Table 1. The material: the selected 35 bird scenes with bird references from *the Iliad*.

No.	Passage	Bird name in the nominative with Murray & Wyatt's identification	Bird name in inflected form as presented in the scenes	Line
SCENE 1	<i>Il.</i> 2.299–335	στρουθός, sparrow	στρουθοῖο στρουθοῖο στρουθοῖο	<i>Il.</i> 2.311 <i>Il.</i> 2.317 <i>Il.</i> 2.326
SCENE 2	<i>Il.</i> 2.445–468	χήν, wild geese γέρανος, crane κύκνος, swan	χηνῶν γεράνων κύκνων	<i>Il.</i> 2.460 <i>Il.</i> 2.460 <i>Il.</i> 2.460
SCENE 3	<i>Il.</i> 2.494–510	πολυτρήρων, doves	πολυτρήρωνά	<i>Il.</i> 2.502
SCENE 4	<i>Il.</i> 2.581–590	πολυτρήρων, doves	πολυτρήρωνά	<i>Il.</i> 2.582
SCENE 5	<i>Il.</i> 3.1–9	γέρανος, crane	γεράνων	<i>Il.</i> 3.3
SCENE 6	<i>Il.</i> 4.234–239	γύψ, vulture	γῦπες	<i>Il.</i> 4.237
SCENE 7	<i>Il.</i> 5.773–795	πέλεια, dove	πελειάσιν	<i>Il.</i> 5.777
SCENE 8	<i>Il.</i> 7.54–66	αἰγυπιός, vulture	αἰγυπιῶσι	<i>Il.</i> 7.59
SCENE 9	<i>Il.</i> 8.227–252	αἰετός, eagle	αἰετὸν	<i>Il.</i> 8.247
SCENE 10	<i>Il.</i> 10.272–298	ἔρωδιός, heron	ἔρωδιόν	<i>Il.</i> 10.274
SCENE 11	<i>Il.</i> 11.153–162	γύψ, vulture	γῦπεσιν	<i>Il.</i> 11.162
SCENE 12	<i>Il.</i> 11.624–644	πελειάς, dove	πελειάδες	<i>Il.</i> 11.634
SCENE 13	<i>Il.</i> 12.195–257	αἰετός, eagle	αἰετὸς αἰετὸς	<i>Il.</i> 12.201 <i>Il.</i> 12.219
SCENE 14	<i>Il.</i> 13.43–84	ἴρηξ, hawk* <sup>1</sup>	ἴρηξ	<i>Il.</i> 13.62
SCENE 15	<i>Il.</i> 13.526–539	αἰγυπιός, vulture	αἰγυπιός	<i>Il.</i> 13.531
SCENE 16	<i>Il.</i> 13.809–837	ἴρηξ, falcon αἰετός, eagle	ἰρήκων αἰετὸς	<i>Il.</i> 13.819 <i>Il.</i> 13.822
SCENE 17	<i>Il.</i> 14.283–293	χαλκίς, chalchis, κύμινδης, cymindis	χαλκίδα κύμινδιν	<i>Il.</i> 14.291 <i>Il.</i> 14.291
SCENE 18	<i>Il.</i> 15.229–245	ἴρηξ, falcon	ἴρηκι	<i>Il.</i> 15.238
SCENE 19	<i>Il.</i> 15.688–695	αἰετός, eagle χήν, wild goose γέρανος, crane κύκνος, swan	αἰετὸς χηνῶν γεράνων κύκνων	<i>Il.</i> 15.690 <i>Il.</i> 15.692 <i>Il.</i> 15.692 <i>Il.</i> 15.692
SCENE 20	<i>Il.</i> 16.419–443	αἰγυπιός, vulture	αἰγυπιοὶ	<i>Il.</i> 16.428
SCENE 21	<i>Il.</i> 16.581–592	ἴρηξ, falcon κολοιός, daw ψῆρα, starling	ἴρηκι κολοιούς ψήρας	<i>Il.</i> 16.582 <i>Il.</i> 16.583 <i>Il.</i> 16.583
SCENE 22	<i>Il.</i> 16.830–842	γύψ, vulture	γῦπες	<i>Il.</i> 16.836
SCENE 23	<i>Il.</i> 17.451–473	αἰγυπιός, vulture χήν, goose	αἰγυπιός χηῆνας	<i>Il.</i> 17.460 <i>Il.</i> 17.460

## INTRODUCTION

SCENE 24	<i>Il.</i> 17.673–693	<i>αἰετός</i> , eagle	<i>αἰετός</i>	<i>Il.</i> 17.674
SCENE 25	<i>Il.</i> 17.755–761	<i>ψάρα</i> , starling <i>κολοιός</i> , daw <i>κίρκος</i> , falcon	<i>ψαράων</i> <i>κολοιῶν</i> <i>κίρκων</i>	<i>Il.</i> 17.755 <i>Il.</i> 17.755 <i>Il.</i> 17.757
SCENE 26	<i>Il.</i> 18.266–283	<i>γύψ</i> , vulture	<i>γῦπες</i>	<i>Il.</i> 18.271
SCENE 27	<i>Il.</i> 18.614–617	<i>ἴρηξ</i> , falcon	<i>ἴρηξ</i>	<i>Il.</i> 18.616
SCENE 28	<i>Il.</i> 19.342–356	<i>ἄρπη</i> , falcon* <sup>2</sup>	<i>ἄρπη</i>	<i>Il.</i> 19.350
SCENE 29	<i>Il.</i> 21.248–256	<i>αἰετός</i> , eagle	<i>αἰετοῦ</i>	<i>Il.</i> 21.252
SCENE 30	<i>Il.</i> 21.489–496	<i>πέλεια</i> , dove <i>ἴρηξ</i> , falcon	<i>πέλεια</i> <i>ἴρηκος</i>	<i>Il.</i> 21.493 <i>Il.</i> 21.494
SCENE 31	<i>Il.</i> 22.38–45	<i>γύψ</i> , vulture	<i>γῦπες</i>	<i>Il.</i> 22.42
SCENE 32	<i>Il.</i> 22.130–144	<i>κίρκος</i> , falcon <i>πέλεια</i> , dove	<i>κίρκος</i> <i>πέλειαν</i>	<i>Il.</i> 22.139 <i>Il.</i> 22.140
SCENE 33	<i>Il.</i> 22.300–316	<i>αἰετός</i> , eagle	<i>αἰετός</i>	<i>Il.</i> 22.308
SCENE 34	<i>Il.</i> 23.850–883	<i>πέλεια</i> , dove	<i>πέλειαν</i> <i>πέλειαν</i> <i>πέλειαν</i>	<i>Il.</i> 23.853 <i>Il.</i> 23.855 <i>Il.</i> 23.874
SCENE 35	<i>Il.</i> 24.308–321	<i>αἰετός</i> , eagle	<i>αἰετόν</i>	<i>Il.</i> 24.315

\*<sup>1</sup> Murray & Wyatt here translate it as “hawk”, but I will give another suggestion, see analysis, SCENE 14.

\*<sup>2</sup> Murray & Wyatt here translate it as “falcon” but I will give another suggestion, see analysis, SCENE 28.

## Initial framework for the thesis

There are a multitude of studies dealing with different aspects of the *Iliad* since antiquity. Here I will present and discuss some topics as well as previous research that I have found most relevant for my work. Some of all this will be considered again in the following chapters while some are to be viewed as background information that occurs only in this section.

### **The *Iliad*: considerations on oral tradition, time and space**

Homeric discourse has been dominated by the research initiated by Milman Parry and developed by Albert Lord. Their thesis is based on the idea that the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* have oral roots that go back to the songs of illiterate bards. Parry investigated the oral poetry that was still alive in the Balkans before the Second World War and compared it with the Homeric epics.<sup>11</sup> From his comparisons with Yugoslav heroic poetry, Parry classified the *Iliad*, containing over 15,000 lines, and the *Odyssey* with 12,110, as purely oral, traditional poetry. He concluded that Homer was familiar with many traditional narratives and songs set in the heroic age and that he based his own compositions

<sup>11</sup> Parry 1971. See also West 2011, 3–6; Heubeck 1988, 8; Janko 1998, 1–13.

on traditional material.<sup>12</sup> As Martin West points out, Parry “explored the formulaic language of epic more fully to demonstrate its systematic character, its extension and economy.”<sup>13</sup> What Parry concluded is commonly accepted today: (1) that the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were products of a long tradition of oral poetry, (2) that Homer was a poet who was trained in the traditional manner of composition and who, like the bards described in the *Odyssey*, accompanied himself on a phorminx, a stringed instrument, and (3) that Homer was a poet who used a traditional language that had developed over several centuries in a circle of bards.<sup>14</sup>

Based on the examinations on the Slavic oral songs Albert Lord, who was Parry’s pupil, showed that Avdo Mededović, an illiterate Bosniak guslar (oral singer), from Montenegro, who accompanied himself with a gusle, a single-stringed violin, was able to adorn and expand a tale that he heard in a version of about 2000 lines, to his own version that was much more elaborate and 12,000 lines long.<sup>15</sup> Apart from showing that traditional oral poetry could be of considerable size,<sup>16</sup> Lord argued that in oral poetics, composing and performing are aspects of the same process without the aid of writing.<sup>17</sup> Parry’s and Lord’s aim was, as Lord himself said, not to constitute an oral “theory”, but rather to demonstrate facts concerning oral traditional poetry<sup>18</sup>. Common features are the repeated lines, the recurrent epithets, and the typical scenes.<sup>19</sup> Lord describes how the oral epics that had flourished in the Slavic Balkans for centuries, gradually “came to be written down, and the concept of a fixed text, and of the text, of a song came to be current.”<sup>20</sup>

After Parry and Lord Homeric research have developed in many ways. There are elaborate, varied and plentiful studies: for example, the Neoanalytical scholars have studied the relationship between the two Homeric epics and the Epic Cycle.<sup>21</sup> Gregory Nagy and Egbert Bakker have suggested that cross-fertilisation and resonances between different traditions, genres, episodes and type scenes are the driving forces behind much of the artistic innovation in the Homeric epics.<sup>22</sup> In recent research significant developments have also been made in narratology, where the focus is on how story

12 Parry 1971. See also Heubeck 1988, 8; Kirk 2010.

13 West 2011, 3.

14 Parry 1971; West 2011, 3–4; Heubeck 1988, 10; Janko 1998, 1–13. See also Lord 1954, especially 124–134, 1991, 1995, 2000, and Janko 1990, 326–334, 1992, 37–38; Kirk 1962, and Foley 1985, 1997, 146–173.

15 Lord 1991, 62, 68–71. See also Janko 1998, 3.

16 See also Edwards, who emphasises that the oral traditional poetry has no standard length and that “the features differed at every performance even if sung by the same singer.” Edwards 2005, 302.

17 Lord 2000, 28.

18 See Lord 1995, 191.

19 Lord 1991, 1995, 2000.

20 Lord 1995, 102. Concerning the Homeric poems, see also Janko’s dictation theory, Janko 1998. For the question whether the *Iliad* was dictated or written down, see also West 2011, 1–77.

21 For a summary, see Edwards 1991, 15–19. For a recent study on the Epic Cycle, see Burgess 2005, 344–352.

22 Nagy 1979 and Bakker 1997.

## INTRODUCTION

telling works.<sup>23</sup> Scholars such as Mark Edwards and Ruth Scodel discuss the interactions between the narrator and the audience.<sup>24</sup> John Miles Foley's concept "traditional referentiality", meaning that words, phrases, type-scenes and themes acquire "inherent meaning" through their repeated uses,<sup>25</sup> is also interesting, as is Elisabeth Minchin's application of cognitive theory on the Homeric poems and their value as resources of memory.<sup>26</sup> Highly important are also the increasing number of studies that emphasise the links that connect early Greek poetry with the literatures of Mesopotamia, Anatolia, Canaan and Israel. Martin West, Walter Burkert and others have clearly shown that the *Iliad* is pervaded by themes and motifs of Near Eastern origin.<sup>27</sup>

Let us now turn to the poet of the *Iliad*. Whether the name of this poet was Homer or not, Martin West puts forward the proposition that the *Iliad* is almost entirely the work of one poet. He refers to Schadewaldt's *Iliasstudien* of 1938, and claims that since then the great majority of Homerists have taken the unity of the poem for granted. According to West most scholars today accept that the so-called *Doloneia*, the tenth book of the *Iliad* about the spy Dolon, is an early addition by a different poet. Few deny that there may be minor interpolations by rhapsodes in other places and there is sometimes disagreement about particular passages.<sup>28</sup> West further refers to the guild or corporation of rhapsodes known as the *Homeridai* in the fifth and fourth centuries BC, who regarded Homer as their founder and ancestor. They recited Homer's poetry, told stories about his life and claimed that even if they were not of one family, they once had been. West concludes that "the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were composed at a time when epic poets did not think of themselves as having a proprietary title to the material they re-shaped and performed, so that their names did not become attached to the poems as the names of authors, only as performers."<sup>29</sup>

The geographical details in the *Iliad* suggest that the poet came from the western coast of Asia Minor. West identifies the poet's home territory as the region east of the Aegean which is also the universal agreement today, at least concerning the poet of the *Iliad*. In antiquity various cities claimed to have been Homer's home. Smyrna appears to have had the oldest claim as his birthplace, though he was also held to have lived on Chios and to have died on Ios.<sup>30</sup> One of the best pieces of evidence for the poet's home

23 See, for example, de Jong 1987, 1997, 305–325, 2001 and Bakker 1997.

24 Edwards 1991, 1–10. Scodel 2002.

25 Foley, 1999, 1–34; 2002, 121. See also Ready 2007, 118–119.

26 Minchin 2010, 2001.

27 Burkert 1992, 1997, 292–301. Concerning the *Iliad* in particular, see also West 1997, 334–401. For Homeric and Hittite parallels, see Puhvel 1991, 21–29. See also Foley 2005, especially Part II about Near Eastern epic and Part III about ancient Greek epic. See also Loudon 2006.

28 See West 2011, 7–9 with references.

29 West 2011, 9. For research on Homer the "person", see also Vogt 1991, 365–377 and Latacz 1996, 15–69.

30 On the ancient biographical tradition, see West 2003, 309–313. Also see West 2011, 15–20.

territory is to be found in *Il.* 2.459 ff. where the poet describes the Achaean warriors, pouring out from their ships to the plain, as flocks of lively geese, cranes, and swans that are noisily settling on the meadows beside the river Cayster.<sup>31</sup> As West points out, this is surely not a stock simile that the poet repeated from other singers. It is very likely that he had observed sceneries like this and decided to use it when describing the Achaeans' first advance against the Trojans. West suggests that the poet was familiar with the Cayster and Hermos valleys and western Anatolia, and that he travelled from town to town to give his performances. He further finds it likely that Homer also visited Troy, what is today called Hisarlık close to the Dardanelles and the Aegean Sea,<sup>32</sup> and that it was from the remnants of the massive Bronze Age walls viewing the panorama that the poet pictured the battle between the Achaeans and the Trojans.<sup>33</sup>

The dating of the Homeric epics continues to be a controversial topic. Janko, who uses statistics based on different dialectical indicators, argues that the text of both epics became fixed in the latter half of the eighth century, though he has also argued for an even earlier date.<sup>34</sup> West proposes that there are a series of indications that points to the seventh century for the *Iliad* rather than the eighth, and that some of them point to a date after 680.<sup>35</sup> The eighth century BC to the early seventh century BC is the time-span presented by most scholars.<sup>36</sup> Another question that still remains to be answered is whether the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were composed by one and the same poet, but there is no room for an exposition concerning this here.<sup>37</sup>

There are details in the *Iliad* that goes back to the Mycenaean Bronze Age such as the large tower-like body shields chiefly associated with the greater Aias, and the boar-tusk's helmet described in *Il.* 10.261.<sup>38</sup> Concerning the Iron Age Ian Morris has pointed out that Homer was aware of eighth-century developments in material culture although it has not been possible to identify a single region and period with a material culture exactly like that in the epics.<sup>39</sup> Morris emphasises that even though we can view

31 West 2011, 20. This bird scene is SCENE 2 in the present study.

32 West 2011, 20–25. For a summary and discussion of Homer's Troy and Hisarlık, see Latacz 2004. See also Korfmann 1991, 89–102. For another view cf. Besedow 2007, 49–58.

33 West 2011, 20–25.

34 Janko 1982; 1996. Janko further considers it possible that that full oral compositions in hexameters were still practiced in Greece down to the middle of the sixth century BC. Janko 1998, 3.

35 West 2011, especially 17.

36 See for example Janko 1982, 1996 and West 2011, 17. For a summary, see Lane Fox 2008, 381–384.

37 For a discussion, see for example, Turner 1997, 123–145 with references. Robin Lane Fox and Ruth Scodel are examples of two modern scholars having different views in the question. Lane Fox thinks that the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were composed “by one and the same Homer, not two separate poets.” Lane Fox, 2008, 384. Scodel is “...inclined to think that different poets from the same school composed each epic.” Scodel, 2009, 2, note 7.

38 See for example Kirk 1985, 8. Laffineur also mentions Nestor's cup in *Il.* 11.633–637 (SCENE 12 in the present study) as a classic example of echoes from the Bronze Age. He also mentions a secondary category, pictorial representations of narrative type such as the “warrior vase” from Mycenae. See Laffineur 2007, 89–85. For Homer and the Bronze Age, see also Bennet 1997, 511–534. For recent studies in the Aegean Bronze Age, see for example Shelmerdine 2008.

39 Morris 1997, 557–558. For a detailed study, see also Crielaard 1995.



## INTRODUCTION

Homeric society as a mixture of diverse societies, the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* reflect realities since they “...were both produced by real people, acting in pursuit of their own goals in a period of dramatic change.”<sup>40</sup> In spite of the traces of different time contexts, Kurt Raaflaub has further suggested that the *Iliad*, like other heroic epics, is “historical in appearance but contemporary in meaning”.<sup>41</sup>

### Specific features: similes, metaphors, parallels and signs

A frequent feature in the *Iliad* as well in the *Odyssey* is what is traditionally labelled **Homeric similes**.<sup>42</sup> In modern research the artistry of the Homeric similes has been emphasised and the term “bird similes” is also used at times.<sup>43</sup> As we know, a simile, according to Elisabeth Minchin, is “a formal, verbal comparison, in which one idea or entity is compared with another idea or entity which has similar features. To effect this comparison, the ‘target domain’ (the idea under discussion) is explicitly ‘mapped’ by the domain of the simile (or the ‘source domain’).”<sup>44</sup> According to Edwards Homeric similes have a characteristically everyday content that “unite narrator and audience in their world, not that of the heroes”,<sup>45</sup> and they are introduced by a variety of different words where the commonest is *ὡς*, *ὡς (δ) ὅτε*, *ἥῴτε*, *ἐοικώς*, *ἴσος*, *οἶος*.<sup>46</sup> A good example of a simile with a bird is when Achilles in *Il.* 9 says (this sequence is introduced by *ὡς*): **Just as**<sup>47</sup> *a bird brings to her unfledged chicks any morsel she may find, but with herself it goes ill, so was I used to watch through many a sleepless night, and bloody days I passed in battle, fighting with warriors for their women’s sake (Il. 9.323–327).*<sup>48</sup> James Redfield structures the similes in the *Iliad* into three themes that concern (1) weather and ocean, (2) technical procedures, (3) and hunting and herding. There is yet another smaller group of similes that Redfield wants to add, and this is what he calls the “similes representing wild animals among themselves. This group – and this group alone – includes similes mentioning birds.”<sup>49</sup>

I will use the term “bird metaphorical utterances”<sup>50</sup> for the scenes in the *Iliad* that

40 Morris 1997, 558. For Homer and the Iron Age, see also Coldstream 1977 and Whitley 1991. For Homer and archaeological research see also Buchholz 1991, 11–44, Blome 1991, 45–60, Hiller 1991, 61–88, and Korfmann 1991, 89–102.

41 Raaflaub 1997, 62. For recent studies in the archaic Greek society including their Mediterranean and non-Greek context, see for example Raaflaub & van Wees 2009.

42 For Homeric similes see Edwards 1991, 24–41. See also Fränkel, *Gleichnisse*, from 1921 which is one of the fullest treatments. There is a list of similes in Lee 1964, 62–64. Also see Scott 1974, 2009; Hogan 1966; Nimis 1987; Moulton 1977; Tsagarakis 1982; Mueller 1984, 108–124; Redfield 2004, 186–203 and Danek 2005, 41–77. For a discussion on imagery and memory in Homeric simile, see Minchin 2001, 132–160. For a comparison between Homeric and Hittite similes, see Puhvel 1991, 21–29.

43 See for example Scott 2009, 1974 and Moulton 1977. For “bird similes” see Scott 1974, 77–79. For a list see Scott 2009, 258.

44 Minchin 2001, 133. For the terminology see also Lakoff & Turner 1989, especially 63–64.

45 Edwards 1991, 39.

46 Edwards 1991, 25, 39.

47 My bold emphasis.

48 This example is excluded from my material since the bird is referred here as a “bird” in a general sense and thus cannot be species determined. The example differs also in other aspects in comparison to my selected scene since Achilles is speaking and thus not really in active motion when the simile is expressed.

49 Redfield 2004, 189.

50 For “metaphorical utterances”, see Ricoeur 1976, 49–50 and chapter 2.

describe various birds whose names are more specific than merely ὄρνις and οἰωνός and those used in likenesses to humans or gods where all characters (including the birds) are temporarily in active motion. I have found the “active” structure of these scenes more similar to what is labelled a “Homeric metaphor” as well as the fact that they violate the normal order of things: see the coming section.<sup>51</sup>

The **Homeric metaphor** is related to similes, but it also shows differences.<sup>52</sup> It focuses on “one (or more) similar elements in two otherwise dissimilar things”.<sup>53</sup> According to Edwards “a metaphor stands out by its violation of the normal order of things, stating as a fact what is actually an impossibility.”<sup>54</sup> He further points out that “The ancients’ interest in metaphors often appears in the exegetical scholia.”<sup>55</sup> Discussing that these sometimes explains the source of the metaphor, correctly or fancifully Edwards gives an example from *Il.* 4.274, “where νέφος...πεζῶν is explained as ‘the denseness and frightening aspect of the phalanx is likened to a black and threatening cloud.’”<sup>56</sup> I find it interesting to compare here with *Il.* 16.581–592 (SCENE 21) and *Il.* 17.755–761 (SCENE 25) where the foremost fighters of the Lycians and Trojans in the first case, and the young Achaean warriors in the second case, are “likened to” (marked by ὡς in both cases and thus traditionally labelled as “similes”) fleeing and panicked flocks of daws and starlings.

Edwards points out that the scholia often pay attention to the emphasis given by a metaphor, and usually describe it as “vivid” (ἐμφαντική), as Edwards discusses, and “paying particular attention (as Aristotle did) to cases of the animation of an inanimate object.”<sup>57</sup> The scholia also mention metaphors that are said to be close to a comparison.<sup>58</sup> In addition to Edwards, scholars such as Parry, Stanford and Moulton have discussed Homeric metaphors.<sup>59</sup> Moulton discusses some prominent examples of metaphors that he associate with parallel expressions such as the figurative uses of “bronze” (*Il.* 11.24), and Zeus, who pushes Hector from behind with his large hand (*Il.* 15.693–695).<sup>60</sup> Wayne suggests that good metaphors should be “active” and “lending the energy of animated things to whatever is less energetic or more abstract.”<sup>61</sup>

51 I further agree with Beardsley and Ricoeur in that metaphors possess a double meaning and that a metaphor is “a poem in miniature”. Beardsley 1981, 144; Ricoeur 1976, 46.

52 Metaphors and similes are sometimes discussed as one group, see for example Mueller 1984, 108–124.

53 Edwards 1991, 48.

54 Edwards 1991, 48.

55 See Edwards 1991, 48 who refers to the detailed treatment in Plutarch. *Vit. Hom* 19–20, and Porphyry, *Quaest. Hom.* 1.6 and 1.17.

56 Edwards 1991, 48 based on (AbT). See also LSJ s.v. νέφος ‘cloud, mass of clouds’, and s.v. πεζός ‘on foot, walking...fighters on foot, opp. those in chariots’.

57 See Edwards 1991, 48–49 with references.

58 See Edwards 1991, 49 who mentions *Il.* 13.339 as such an example. See also Janko 1992, 89–90.

59 Parry 1933, 30–43; Stanford 1936, 118–143; Moulton 1979, 279–293.

60 Moulton 1979, 279–293. The last example from the *Iliad* is part of SCENE 19.

61 Wayne 1978, 54–6. For metaphors, see also chapter 2.

## INTRODUCTION

It is easy to observe the many **parallels** in the *Iliad* and in the events taking place there. The different elements are related to each other, and rather often are described in elaborate detail. Maureen Alden, who takes inspiration from the famous Homerist Ionannis Kakridis, calls this parallel structure “para-narratives”.<sup>62</sup> She explains the relationship between the main narrative of the *Iliad* and its secondary narratives and episodes. Alden emphasises that the para-narratives act as a guide to the interpretation of the main plot. She speaks of para-narratives as “a coded reference”<sup>63</sup> that offers an “interval of reflection”.<sup>64</sup> A good example is when Nestor tells Agamemnon the story of the battle of Lapiths and centaurs, see *Il.* 1.259–273. Nestor’s tale is important at two deeper levels, as Alden suggests.<sup>65</sup> Firstly, the audience (and we) associates the battle with the wedding feast of Peirithous and Hippodameia, where the battle is fought to prevent bride-stealing by the drunken centaurs. Secondly, and at a deeper level in Nestor’s story, the Lapiths correspond to the Greeks, and the centaurs to the Trojans, and thirdly, and at an even deeper level Nestor “implicitly” and in “veiled terms” criticizes Agamemnon for taking Briseis away from Achilles.<sup>66</sup> I find Alden’s ideas valuable in regard to my own study and the understanding of the *Iliad* as the multiple and many-layered narrative it is.

Turning now from parallels to **signs**, Gregory Nagy has contributed to our understanding of the Iliadic world of ideas by discussing the concept *σῆμα*. He translates *σῆμα*, as ‘signal’, or ‘sign’, and writes that “the semantics of *sēma* are indeed connected with the semantics of thinking.”<sup>67</sup> As Nagy points out, the recognition of a *σῆμα* requires an act of interpretation. Here Nagy mentions the scar of the disguised Odysseus that his nurse Eurykleia uses as a *σῆμα* to identify him (see *Od.* 13.73). From the *Iliad* Nagy gives the example of the serpent that Zeus sent to the Achaeans before the war had started between the Achaeans and Trojans. The serpent devoured nine sparrows high up in a tree at Aulis when the Achaeans were making offerings to the gods. Calchas, who was the *μάντις*, the professional diviner, recognized the event as a *σῆμα* that predicted that the Achaeans would make war at Troy for nine years and then take the city on the tenth (*Il.* 2.308–332).<sup>68</sup> According to Nagy, Zeus sends different kinds of *σῆματα*, lightning being another example, as codes bearing distinct messages that

62 Alden 2000.

63 Alden 2000, 13.

64 Alden 2000, 18.

65 Alden 2000, 80.

66 Alden 2000, 81.

67 Nagy 1992, 203–222.

68 This bird scene is SCENE 1 in the present study. One could think that the examples that Nagy gives differ to the extreme, but Nagy’s point is to show that signs can exist on many levels in the *Iliad*. For *μάντις* and the ancient practice of divination from birds, see below in this chapter.

are to be interpreted in context by both the characters that witness the event and the narrative itself.<sup>69</sup>

### **Divine intervention, godlike warriors, and the concept of double motivation**

Besides being a narrative that describes events in the Trojan War we can also view the *Iliad* as a myth. Using Bruce Loudén's definition of myth, I mean a sacred, traditional narrative that describes the interrelations of mortals and gods and other details that give us information about humans and societies.<sup>70</sup> By "sacred" Loudén means the "word of god" invested with divine authority, as the *Iliad* so clearly marks in its first line.<sup>71</sup> By "traditional" Loudén means "...both that a myth probably has its genesis in an oral tradition and that it is not believed to be new, or original, but composed entirely out of commonly known, pre-existing elements."<sup>72</sup>

It is especially the prominent warriors, princes and kings who become subjects of the gods' interventions in the *Iliad*, and this makes them special and godlike in some aspects. These men are *the race of men half-divine* (*Il.* 12.23). According to Jasper Griffin "...the heroes were nearer to the gods than later men. 'Born to Zeus', 'nourished by Zeus', 'honoured by Zeus'; these are standard epithets for Homeric kings and princes, and not less interesting are 'loved by Zeus' and 'god-like'.<sup>73</sup> However, I would like to emphasise that the gods do not intervene in the mortals' activities all the time but only occasionally, and usually in important human war activities.<sup>74</sup> Strength, power and valour are closely connected, and concerning the valour of humans, *it is Zeus who increases it for men or diminishes it, just as he is minded, for he is mightiest of all* (*Il.* 20. 241–243). These thoughts are closely connected to those of *aristeia*, which according to Loudén is "...a higher than usual level of prowess attained by a warrior, inspired by a god, who is for a time virtually unstoppable on the battlefield."<sup>75</sup>

Albin Lesky introduced the concept of "double motivation" to improve the understanding of the gods' interactions in the human spheres in the Homeric epics. Double motivation is "...a kind of fusion of what happens in the human mind and what the god intends and causes; this fusion resists any logical division into separate parts, but,

69 Nagy 1992, 204. For a semiotic definition of a "sign", see also chapter 2.

70 Loudén 2006, 9. According to Loudén the *Iliad* is set against a background of siege myths. He suggests that siege myths probably existed in Greek culture as early as the Mycenaean era and draws parallels to the Near Eastern traditions, i.e., Lugulbanda and the Thunderbird, Gilgamesh and Aka, Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta (all Sumerian), and Kirta (Ugarit) as well as to the Old Testament myth. See Loudén 2006, especially 148–239.

71 Loudén 2006, 9. See also *Il.* 1.1.

72 Loudén 2006, 9.

73 Griffin 1980, 82. According to Griffin the subject of Greek mythology is the heroes, and the epic dealt with the 'deeds of gods and men'. For the godlike heroes in the *Iliad*, see Griffin 1980, especially 81–102. See also Kirk 1970, Silk 2004, 61–72, and Nagy 2005, 71–89.

74 For human situations without interference on the part of the gods, see for example *Il.* 6.1–4; 20.26–27.

75 Loudén 2006, 317, see also 171–172. For *aristeia* in Homer, see also Silk 2004, 38, and Wilson 2010, 171–194.

## INTRODUCTION

in our view, is an essential part of how Homer viewed the world.”<sup>76</sup> Lesky pointed out that “the impulses in the human mind and the intervention of the god flow together towards one and the same action, and this action thus receives its motivation from both realms.”<sup>77</sup> These two realms sometimes “agree” and sometimes “disagree”. According to Lesky “The human action cannot be said to be also the action of the god, but the latter reinforces the former, it would still occur without any divine help. It is this ‘extra thrust’ that sometimes characterizes greater events too.”<sup>78</sup> In human combats it is the god who communicates the ecstatic fighting spirit, but as Lesky argues, it is the mortal who executes the feat.<sup>79</sup> It is however not only the physical realm that is influenced by the god when “double motivation” exists, but also the psychological one that is, in Lesky’s words, “undifferentiated in Homer”.<sup>80</sup> Mortals are further sometimes “instructed by a god.”<sup>81</sup> Lesky views “double motivation” in Homer with its multitude of variations as a concept that goes far back in time.<sup>82</sup>

Lesky’s ideas were developed by Eric R. Dodds, who talked of the phenomenon as “psychic intervention”,<sup>83</sup> which he defined as “the communication of power from god to man”. He describes it as a kind of experience and energy that is religious, physical, and psychological.<sup>84</sup> As Dodds discusses it, in the *Iliad* psychic intervention is typically transmitted through a god’s communication of *μένος*, *great might*, to a warrior during a battle. An example is when Athena inserts a triple portion of *μένος* into Diomedes’ breast.<sup>85</sup> Rather often communication of *μένος* comes after a prayer, but it also comes spontaneous and in different situations.<sup>86</sup>

A heightened *μένος* is, as Dodds claims, an abnormal state that needs a supernatural explanation.<sup>87</sup> The effect of psychic intervention is fundamental. As Dodds so clearly describes it, “When a man feels *μένος* in his breast, (...) he is conscious of the mysterious access of energy; the life in him is strong, and he is filled with a new confidence and eagerness.”<sup>88</sup> Finally, Dodds concludes that “... we should not dismiss these statements as “poetic intervention” or “divine machinery”.

76 Lesky 1999, 384.

77 Lesky 1999, 386, see also 385.

78 Lesky 1999, 389.

79 Lesky 1999, 391, see also 293.

80 Lesky 1999, 389. Lesky refers to *Il.* 9.219 and 11.716.

81 Lesky 1999, 392.

82 Lesky 1999, 390.

83 Dodds 1951, 5.

84 See Dodds 1951, 2–8.

85 Dodds 1951, 8. See *Il.* 5.125f., 136. Very soon after this moment Diomedes became lion-like for a while, see *Il.* 5.115–165 and *Il.* 5.253. See also Louden who describes *μένος* as the battle might and the power which a god instills in a warrior to stimulate his *aristeia*. Louden 2006, 318.

86 Dodds 1951, 9.

87 Dodds 1951, 9.

88 Dodds 1951, 6.

No doubt the particular instances are often invented by the poet for the convenience of his plot; and certainly the psychic intervention is sometimes linked with a physical one (...) But we can be pretty sure that the underlying idea was not invented by the poet, and that it is older than the conception of anthropomorphic gods physically and visibly taking part in a battle.”<sup>89</sup>

Silk follows the same idea in saying that the gods are to be thought of as sources of human capacities and impulses over a wide register of behaviour and experience, especially, as he says, concerning “momentary human impulses”.<sup>90</sup> Thus the poet prays to the Muse for inspiration in *Il.* 1–7. In order to be able to compose, he needs, as Silk points out, “...not only his fundamental ‘gift’ (as we still call it) but the god-given inspiration of the moment; and this is the pattern for many special decisions and experiences.”<sup>91</sup> Another example is when Athena gives Diomedes *force and courage* (*Il.* 5.1–2). He enters a state that Silk calls an “unusual human behaviour”.<sup>92</sup> Silk says, “In such cases the gods may still be sources of the special impulse, but they are also symbols of it.”<sup>93</sup> Silk further emphasises, as Lesky did, that a heroes efforts and achievements cannot only be a god’s but also his own. Thus Diomedes said to King Agamemnon that Achilles would *fight when the heart in his breast commands him, and a god rouses him* (*Il.* 9.701–703).<sup>94</sup>

When divine intervention and double motivation are operating this is sometimes marked clearly, as when the poet informs us that Zeus or Athena breathed or put great might into specific humans.<sup>95</sup> In these cases the poet clearly reveals the gods’ identities, but this is not always the case.<sup>96</sup> On other occasions divine intervention is expressed figuratively by means of gods who take different forms as humans, and sometimes birds.<sup>97</sup> In these situations the gods want to influence the humans in different ways, e.g., encourage them to enter the battle or frighten them to make them flee.

### Ancient practice of divination from birds

Ancient *ornithomanteia* is a niche of divination that is discussed within departments of classical studies, philology, anthropology, and religious studies.<sup>98</sup>

Divination is described by modern scholars as an art, a belief, a *techné*, a practice and

89 Dodds 1951, 9.

90 Silk 2004, 71.

91 Silk 2004, 71. See also de Jong 1997, 306.

92 Silk 2004, 71.

93 Silk 2004, 71.

94 See also Silk 2004, 72.

95 It is however not only warriors who receive such extra powers from the gods. At *Il.* 17. 456 Zeus breathed might into Achilles’ divine horses Xanthos and Balius. For another example with horses, see *Il.* 23.468.

96 See for example *Il.* 17.469–473 and discussion of SCENE 23.

97 For examples with birds see SCENES 8 and 17.

98 Other fields that in recent years have given increased attention to divination are gender studies, semiotics and the construction of authority. Iles Johnston 2007, 26–27.

## INTRODUCTION

a praxis, which says something of the multiple nature of this subject.<sup>99</sup> Divination is also described sometimes as a ritual.<sup>100</sup> The communicational aspect of rituals is important to consider. According to Eftychia Stavrianopoulou, “...ritual is not only a suitable medium for enabling communication or transmitting a message, but represents a kind of ‘language’”.<sup>101</sup>

If we speak of Greek sign decipherment in a broader sense, the specialist was the Greek *μάντις*. This word has an unknown etymology and word formation. According to Burkert “Der Akt eines Orakels oder Sehers, Sprüche zu geben, heisst *χρᾶν*, eigentlich wohl schlicht ‘an die Hand geben’; der Spruch heisst darum *χρησιμός*.”<sup>102</sup> Sarah Iles Johnston points out that the work of a *μάντις* (diviner, seer, prophet) was close to divination but also to magic. Emphasising the distinction between magic and divination, she argues that the former endowed one with power and the latter, with knowledge from the divine spheres.<sup>103</sup> Apollo is the particular god of *μαντεία* and sanctuaries dedicated to him were the most successful among oracle shrines while also other gods and heroes could be part of the activities there.<sup>104</sup>

While it seems that no generally accepted practice of bird divination had been established within the Greek context,<sup>105</sup> we see a much more systematic recording of omens (including bird signs) in the Near East where divination became a complex, literate discipline early on.<sup>106</sup> Bird divination is described in the Old Testament and was, according to Burkert, developed in the Orient.<sup>107</sup> It was culturally learnt and culturally differentiated. According to Stephanie Dalley and A. T. Reyes, bird divination was developed in Mesopotamia.<sup>108</sup> Richard Beal points out that there were different means by which people could communicate with the gods in Mesopotamia as well as in Hatti. Both solicited and unsolicited messages were considered as coming from the gods and the ancient Mesopotamians made a science out of carefully collecting such messages from the gods to try to decipher their intentions. Vast glossaries were created and these were later passed along to the Hittites by the Hurrians.<sup>109</sup> The Hittite bird oracles,

99 See Burkert 2005, 1-16; Iles Johnston 2008; Vernant 1974; Bouché-Leclercq 1879, 127-145; Halliday 1913, 246-271; Pollard 1977, 116-129; Malkin 1987, 92; Prichett 1979, 101-108.

100 See for example *Thesaurus Cultus et Rituum Antiquorum*, Vol. 111 from 2005 where divination is one of the subjects together with prayer, veneration, oaths, magical rituals, etc.

101 Stavrianopoulou 2006, 18.

102 Burkert 2005, 2.

103 Iles Johnston 2008, 152-153. For a general description of magic and divination, see also Ciruolo & Seidel 2002.

104 Burkert 2005, 2.

105 See Baumbach & Trampedach 2004, 123-124. See also Bouché-Leclercq 1879, 129 and Pollard 1977, 116-129. For bird divination in Greek contexts and in Homer, see also Dillon 1996, 99-121; Bouché-Leclercq 1879, 127-145; Halliday 1913; Malkin 1987, 108-109; Baumbach & Trampedach 2004, 123-126 and Stockinger 1959.

106 See for example Guinan 2002, 7-40 who focuses on the Akkad Prodigies and *Šumma ālu* in particular.

107 Gen. 15, 11 and Burkert 2005, 1-5. Burkert adds that in Greek sources the Phrygians are mentioned as the inventors. Burkert based on Clem. *Srom.* 1, Tatian. 1., Arr. an. 2,3, Iust. 11, 7, 3. Burkert 2005, 5.

108 Dalley & Reyes 1998, 91. Also see McGeogh 2004, 252 and West 2011, 85, 1997, 47.

109 Beal 2002, 57. Beal further reports that the Hittite archives includes omens from signs of the sun, moon and stars, earthquakes, births, oil, animal behaviour, as well as marks and configurations of the liver, gallbladder, intestines and other internal organs. Beal 2007, 57.

which Beal considers an indigenous Hittite science, were a specific type of oracle that was performed by a bird watcher who observed and recorded the flights, movements and spatial positions of different kinds of birds starting from the time the bird or birds flew into a specific field of vision. Different bird names and a specific terminology were used to record the observations. There is a “good side” and the right-left opposition seems to be important as well as if a bird for example came across a river diagonally. After putting a question to the gods, the birdwatcher did not ask for a favourable or unfavourable response: rather, the birds “confirmed” or “excluded” what was asked in the question.<sup>110</sup> According to Beal “The oracular answer to a single question usually involves several different birds, often of different species, each of which perform several fairly complicated motions...”<sup>111</sup> The methodologies in bird divination differed in different parts of the world, such as in Mesopotamia, Anatolia, Etruria and Rome.<sup>112</sup>

The common Greek terms for bird divination are *οἰωνοσκοπική* and *ὄρνιθομαντεία*.<sup>113</sup> The verbs *οἰωνίζομαι* and *ὄρνιθεύομαι* means “to foretell from birds” or “to prophesy” in general.<sup>114</sup> The words for ‘bird’, *ὄρνις* and *οἰωνός*, were also used to describe mantic signs.<sup>115</sup> According to Burkert, it is possible to trace bird divination practices from ancient sources such as the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.<sup>116</sup> In these poems birds are given important roles as means of getting and coding divine messages. Birds were viewed as potential ‘messengers of the gods’ which is appropriate since some of them dwelled where gods also lived (in mountains) and since they moved freely between the divine and human spheres.<sup>117</sup>

According to Pollard the belief that birds were the agents of the gods’ will is a fundamental feature in Homer.<sup>118</sup> He describes how an ominous bird in the *Iliad* was distinguished as *οἰωνός* by the bird diviner, perhaps because it flew alone.<sup>119</sup> There are two names used in the *Iliad* for persons paying extra attention to birds. Pollard explains that the *οἰωνοπόλος* was an official “bird expert” while the *οἰωνιστής* was a “bird interpreter”.<sup>120</sup> According to Richard Hainsworth the omens that occur in the

110 Beal 2002 57, 65–76 with references.

111 Beal 2002, 70.

112 For Mesopotamia see for example Dalley & Reyes 1998, 91 and Manetti 1993, 1–13. For Anatolia (Hittite) see Beal 2002 65–76, see also 57, and Kammenhuber 1976. For Etruria and Rome see for example McGeough 2004, 252–256.

113 Baumbach & Trampedach 2004, 125 note 12 based on Proclus ad Hes. *Op.* 824.

114 See LSJ s.v. *οἰωνίζομαι* and *ὄρνιθεύομαι*. Also see Baumbach & Trampedach 2004, 125 note 12.

115 Burkert 2005, 5 based on *Av.* 716–722. Also see Dillon 1996, 102.

116 Burkert 2005, 5. See also Dillon 1996, 108–110.

117 See also Pollard 1977, 116–129. This idea is found in *Il.* 24.315–316 (SCENE 35 in the present study). Also see Iles Johnston 2008, 129.

118 Pollard 1977, 116.

119 Pollard 1977, 120.

120 Pollard 1977, 120, see also 14. For *οἰωνοπόλος* see *Il.* 1.69, 6.76; Aesch. *Supp.* 57, and for *οἰωνιστής* see *Il.* 2.858, 17.218. Jan Bremmer, who has discussed the role and social status of the diviner, emphasises his important role in military expeditions. Calchas, the seer who is frequently mentioned in the *Iliad*, is described as *far the best of diviners, who had knowledge of all things that were, and that were to be, and that had been before, and who had guided the ships of the Achaeans to Ilios by the gift of prophecy that Phoebus Apollo had granted him* (*Il.* 1.69–72). Bremmer points out that the seer was often of royal lineage and describes Calchas as “the model of the archaic Greek seer par excellence: male, ornithomancer, problemsolver, closely connected with a god, and a prestigious warrior.” Bremmer 1996, 98.



## INTRODUCTION

*Iliad* such as the heron in *Il.* 10.272–298<sup>121</sup> are usually sent by the god, or are “chance events”. He points out that the role of a *οἰωνοπόλος* or a *οἰωνιστής* was to interpret such signs and not to seek them.<sup>122</sup>

If we turn to Hesiod, he pointed out that bird divination was an essential form of mantic practice.<sup>123</sup> Unfortunately the *Ornithomanteia*, a poetic work that has been attributed to him, has not been preserved.<sup>124</sup> Bird divination frequently occurs as a motive also in later ancient written sources such as Aeschylus, Xenophon, Sophocles, Euripides and Cicero.<sup>125</sup> Sophocles and Euripides mention that there were seers, in their cases Teiresias in Thebe, who had an old bird-watching chair from where he made his bird observations and also initiated offerings.<sup>126</sup> At Athens the place Skiron is mentioned as a location where omen birds were observed.<sup>127</sup> It thus seems that the diviner chose a position for the bird divination-observations.

The ancient textual sources indicate that it was not only the professional diviners who were attentive to birds and their behaviours and made interpretations of them.<sup>128</sup> It further seems that not all birds were considered as sign birds. The most interesting ones were birds of prey, especially eagles and vultures, but also other species such as herons.<sup>129</sup> The bird’s spatiality was another important matter in bird divination practices. It was important where the bird came in from and where it disappeared off to. The right-left oppositions were of particular importance for the decipherment. Right had usually good connotations and left negative.<sup>130</sup>

As Pollard argues, “right” and “left” are however arbitrary terms that raise the question of where the observations were made and if the interpreter were placed in relation to some fixed object or direction.<sup>131</sup> In the last bird scene in the *Iliad* King Priam prays to Zeus for a bird sign from the right, and not much later an eagle appears from this side, which makes Priam rejoice.<sup>132</sup> Of interest is also a fragmentary inscription in Ephesos, dated to the sixth–fifth centuries BC

121 SCENE 10 in the present study.

122 Hainsworth 1993, 182.

123 Pollard 1977, 122 based on Hes. *Op.* 824.

124 Pollard 1977, 12 with references. Also see Iles Johnston 2007, 7 and Burkert 2005, 5.

125 For a comprehensive list see Burkert’s article 2005, 1–6. A series of epigrams that has come down to us quite recently with 15 epigrams (AB 21–35) entitled *Oiōnoskopika* should also be mentioned in this context. These epigrams, attributed to the third century BC poet Posidippus, have been described and analysed by Baumbach & Trampedach. The epigrams describe positive bird signs concerning people’s private lives in contexts of travelling, fishing, marriage, children and slaves while other signs are related to crime or war, almost all of them with negative impact. Baumbach & Trampedach 2004, 23–159.

126 Burkert 2005, 6 based on Soph. *Ant.* 998–1004.– 999: *παλαιὸν θᾶκον ὀρνιθοσκοπίου*. Eur. *Phoen.* 840; Bacch. 347–350.

127 Hesych. s.v. *Σκειρόμαντις*. Also see Burkert 2005, 6.

128 See for example *Il.* 24.292 (SCENE 35) where the Trojan King Priam asks Zeus for a sign and *Od.* 15.172–178 where Helen interprets an event with an eagle. Also see Dillon 1996, 109.

129 Burkert 2005, 5.

130 Burkert 2005, 5–6. Burkert mentions a Hippocratic text that however notices that the ideas about what left and right meant were different between a seer from Asia Minor and an arab, see Burkert 2005, 5 with references. See also Pollard 1977, 120–121.

131 Pollard 1977, 121.

132 *Il.* 24. 292–321 (SCENE 35).

that gives instructions for the interpretation of bird flights by means of right and left oppositions.<sup>133</sup>

### Previous research on the birds in the *Iliad*

#### *Symbolic and ornithological aspects*

Even though birds, and particular species of birds, were a central issue in ancient Greek life and myth in previous research, symbolic and ornithological aspects of the birds in the *Iliad* have been examined together only rarely.

Concerning the aspect of symbolism, previous studies have mainly dealt with (1) the Iliadic birds' relations to bird divination, and (2) whether a bird in the *Iliad* is a transformation of a god<sup>134</sup> or whether a particular deity's movements or activities are just being likened to those of the bird.<sup>135</sup> An example is when Athena and Apollo sat in an oak to watch single combat between Hector and an Achaean warrior that they had arranged. The poet says, *Athena and Apollo of the silver bow in the likeness of vultures sat on the lofty oak of father Zeus (Il. 7,58–60)*. How shall we understand this sequence and the birds' roles? Shall we think that Athena and Apollo had transformed their shapes into those of vultures, or did they just look like vultures at this moment? I will return to this scene and topic further on in my study.<sup>136</sup> The studies that focus on the ornithological aspects on the birds in the *Iliad* are sparse. To my knowledge, the only study that focuses exclusively on the birds in Homer is John M. Boraston's article from 1911, 'The birds in Homer'. Here Boraston lists the birds mentioned in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* and suggests their ornithological identities.<sup>137</sup> Other studies concerning birds and bird names in the ancient world are Otto Keller's *Die Antike Tierwelt* from 1913 and Sir D'Arcy Wentworth Thompson's *A glossary of Greek birds* from 1936. In 2007 W. Geoffrey Arnott published his *Birds in the ancient world from A to Z*, which is an updated version of D'Arcy Wentworth Thompson's material. It is however not as comprehensive as *A glossary of Greek birds*. Important is also Pollard who in his *Birds*

<sup>133</sup> See Burkert 2005, 5 on *Syll.3 1167=IEph V 1678*, 6th–5th cent. BC. – Dion Chrys. 36, 61. Also see Dillon 1996, 104–105; Pritchett 1979, 103 and Dillon & Garland 1994, 358. Pollard suggests that this inscription was probably of Anatolian inspiration since Greek bird divination was never schematized. Pollard 1977, 121.

<sup>134</sup> Transformation in the meaning of having the ability to change form, i.e., to undergo a metamorphosis.

<sup>135</sup> See for example Nilsson 1967, 290–292, 349, note 4; Dirlmeier 1967, esp. 35. Fauth 1975, 235–268; Pollard 1977, 155–161; Bannert 1978, 29–42 and Erbse 1980, 259–274. See also Dietrich who has claimed that gods appear to mortals as a vivid poetic technique for divine inspiration and intervention. Dietrich 1983, 53–79. Dietrich has however been criticized by Carter for insisting too much on the inner logic of the poems. She points out "If the gods can implant their wishes directly into the minds of mortals, that is no reason they should not also appear to mortals or visit the mortal world in disguise.", Carter 1995, 290. For gods appearing as birds in wider Indo-European contexts, see also West 1997, 184–185, 2007, 152–153.

<sup>136</sup> See SCENES 8 and 17.

<sup>137</sup> Boraston 1911, 216–250. In a recension in *Nature* from 1912 where the author is not marked we can read "Mr. Boraston's article records a number of interesting details illustrative of bird-life in the Mediterranean, which will be welcome not only to ornithologists but to classical students, and a survey of the facts which he has collected tends only to increase our admiration for the genius and powers of accurate observation possessed by the greatest of the epic writers.", *Nature*: 88, 1912, n. 2206, 487.

## INTRODUCTION

in *Greek life and myth* from 1977 not only takes up the ornithological identities of the birds mentioned in the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey* and other ancient sources, but also discusses their roles and their symbolism. Recently Eleni Voultziadou and Apostolos Tatolas have further written about the fauna, including the birds, of Greece and the adjacent areas in the age of Homer, based on the epics attributed to Homer and Hesiod, where the *taxa* names recorded in the epics are listed.<sup>138</sup>

### *Pollard on the Bronze Age and Iron Age background*

It is the classical scholar and naturalist John Pollard who has paid most attention to the birds in both an ornithological and symbolic sense. His *Birds in Greek life and myth* deals with birds in Aegean contexts from the Bronze Age to the Classical period, although the survey focuses on the latter era. According to Pollard birds coloured almost every aspect of ancient Greek life whether being weather prophets, good or bad omens, food, or pets. They were also important in myth, cult, and folklore, in contexts of avian transformation and as the familiars of divinities.<sup>139</sup> Pollard does not find it surprising that divine bird transformations occur in the ancient written sources starting with the epics of Homer since birds in the archaeological Bronze Age records and perhaps later times were closely associated to deities.<sup>140</sup> Birds as motives in the Minoan material can appear in contexts of a religious nature where they are accompanied by worshippers, divinities and ritual objects such as double axes, figure of eight-shields, horns, trees and pillars.

These birds have naturally been subjects of controversy among scholars and have been thought to explain the later Greek concern with bird divination and the myths about divine and human transformations into birds.<sup>141</sup> During the Bronze Age, pillars and stones appear to have been regarded as sacred objects. A bird is sometimes represented perching on a pillar or in association with trees. Pollard argues, “it seems probable that birds were regarded as sharing in the divine nature of trees and as representing the epiphanies of the deities to which the trees were sacred.”<sup>142</sup> Another interesting find from the Cretan Bronze Age is the Hagia Triada sarcophagus dating from 1300–1200 BC. It appears to represent a funerary ritual where there are some birds depicted. It has been argued that the birds depicted on the sides of the sarcophagus belonged to certain

<sup>138</sup> Voultziadou & Tatolas 2008, 303, see also 303–315.

<sup>139</sup> Pollard 1977. For early beliefs and the folklore of birds in Eurasian contexts see also Armstrong 1958.

<sup>140</sup> Pollard 1977, 155–161.

<sup>141</sup> Pollard 1977, 149. See also Nilsson who when referring to the Bronze Age material and especially the Shrine of the Double Axes at Knossos, speaks of the bird perched on the head of the idol as “the embodiment of the deity, a form of its epiphany,” Nilsson 1968, 332. See also 330–340, and Nilsson 1967, 290–292, 349, note 4. See also Bannert who is positive to Nilsson’s conception of divine epiphanies in ‘Vogelgestalt’ in the Bronze Age and later religious imagery. Bannert 1978, 29–42.

<sup>142</sup> Pollard 1977, 154.

recognizable species, which might assist in identifying the deity or deities with which they were associated. Birds that have been suggested are eagles, woodpeckers, cuckoos and ravens.<sup>143</sup>

Among other important Bronze Age finds are also the wall paintings at Knossos depicting birds (identified as Hoopoe and the Great Partridge), at the Palace of Nestor in Pylos (resembling pigeons) and at Akroteri on Thera (identified as Barn Swallow).<sup>144</sup>

When turning towards the Iron Age birds frequently occur on handles of cauldrons and tripods and as motives on geometric vessels. Bird figurines on terracotta trees that date from 900–700 BC have further been found at Knossos.<sup>145</sup> According to Pollard the resemblance between the tree-worshipping scenes of the Bronze Age art and later Greek beliefs is apparent. He points out that the Greek veneration for trees and groves has been developed from a general belief that trees were the abodes of spirits and sometimes of gods. As time passed trees could be prophetic, like the oak at Dodona as were presumably the birds that were said to sit in the branches there.<sup>146</sup>

Some gods and goddesses became closely associated with a particular bird or birds which came to be regarded as their divine familiars. According to George E. Mylonas the close association between Zeus and the eagle began only in the later eighth or early seventh century.<sup>147</sup> Pollard points out that the eagle in the *Iliad* “was regarded as an omen of Zeus that offered a sure indication of the god’s will.

It was, in effect, the king god’s own private emissary which he invariably employed when communicating with men, reserving Iris and Hermes for bearing messages to the gods.”<sup>148</sup> The close relationship between Zeus and the eagle is evident also in art. There is a painting on a Laconian cup found in Italy, dated to 560 BC, that shows a bird that has been regarded as an eagle flying towards Zeus, and there are later evidence on coins from Arcadia and Olympia that depict Zeus with eagles flying away, or when he holds an eagle in his left hand and a thunderbolt in his other.<sup>149</sup> Most impressive were perhaps the sculptured two eagles that sat on the pillars before Zeus’ ancient altar on Mount Lycaeus in Arcadia.<sup>150</sup> Eagles were also represented perching on Zeus’s sceptre. The best example of an eagle-tipped sceptre was that carved by Phidias for the colossal cult image

143 See Pollard 1977, 149–150 with references. See also Long 1974 and Cain & Walgate 2002.

144 See Pollard 1977, 149 with references. For Knossos, see also Chapin 2004, 51 with references. For Thera, see also Hollinshead 1989, 339–354.

145 Pollard 1977, 153 with references. For cauldrons and tripods, see also Papalexandrou 2005, 67–70, for geometric vessels, Lenz 1995, and for bird figurines on terracotta trees, Payne 1933, 166ff.

146 Pollard 1977, 153–154. For the doves in the oak of Dodona, see also Parke 1967, 65ff. and Evans 1974, 120–122.

147 Mylonas 1946, 203–207 and Pollard 1977, 141.

148 Pollard 1977, 141.

149 Pollard 1977, 142.

150 Pollard 1977, 142–143.

## INTRODUCTION

of Zeus in the Temple of Olympia.<sup>151</sup> In the *Iliad* other deities occur in close relations to different kinds of birds but not, as we shall see in the analysis, as “fixed” as is the relation between Zeus and the eagle.

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<sup>151</sup> Pollard 1977, 143 based on Paus. 5.II.1. See also Dowden 2004, 25–26.

## II. THEORY AND METHOD

### Theoretical, scientific and methodological background

Being a topic that embraces and entwines what is routinely divided in the categories “nature” and “culture” the birds in the *Iliad* challenge modern scientific division and in some sense our thinking. An interdisciplinary approach that unites the parts in the subject is called for.

Ornithology<sup>1</sup> has been chosen as both the framework and as a methodological tool in this study since in my opinion the material ought to be examined in a more zoological way than has previously been done. Specific applications of semiotics<sup>2</sup> as well as the work on metaphor and symbol as presented by the French philosopher and hermeneutic scholar Paul Ricoeur,<sup>3</sup> have also influenced me: a combination of these demonstrates the communicative and informative aspects of the birds which are the objects of study in this work and provides guidance for grasping the deeper levels in the material. Finally, recent posthumanist discussions of animals as *agents* who cause events to happen<sup>4</sup> have aided me in further visualising the birds and their active roles.

In studying the material, that is, the birds themselves and the bird scenes, I found that some aspects recurred frequently: (1) **ornithology**, (2) **form**, (3) **interactions**, and (4) **functions**. From these four aspects I have developed my own analytical model described in detail in Fig. 1. The aspects form the structure for the investigation and are closely related to my initial theoretical and methodological considerations.

During my work I have further been influenced by the Homeric scholars Mark Edwards, Bryan Hainsworth, Richard Janko, G. S. Kirk, Nicholas Richardson and Malcolm Willcock, the specialists in narratology and in oral tradition Irene de Jong and John Miles Foley, as well as having been inspired by one of the most excellent Swedish translators of Homer, Ingvar Björkeson. What Björkeson once told me I have found particularly valuable in the meeting with the Homeric epics: *to lay my ears close to the text and listen*.<sup>5</sup> His advice is very close to that given by Mark Edwards, who recommends translators of Greek poetry to ask “Why does the poet say this in this way?” rather than “What does this mean?”<sup>6</sup>

Since the birds in the *Iliad* communicate information and possible messages that call for interpretation and understanding I have found the hermeneutic schools of thought

1 Mainly Cramp et al. 1980–1994; Gill 2007; Svensson & Grant 2006.

2 Mainly Chandler 2002 and Eco 1976.

3 Mainly Ricoeur’s essay on metaphor and symbol, see Ricoeur 1976.

4 Mainly Armstrong Oma 2007.

5 Pers comm. 2004.

6 Edwards 2002, 126.

highly applicable for my needs, especially the “hermeneutic circle”, as well as Ricoeur’s three phases of understanding. The hermeneutic circle maintains in broad terms that in order to be able to interpret the whole, one must understand the elements, and to understand the elements, one must comprehend the whole.<sup>7</sup> This basic methodological guidance has been essential for how to grasp and understand my material.

Ricoeur has formulated three phases in understanding utterances or a text: “The first time, understanding will be a naive grasping of the meaning of the text as a whole. The second time, comprehension will be a sophisticated mode of understanding, supported by explanatory procedures. In the beginning, understanding is a guess.”<sup>8</sup> The third time the explanation “will appear as the mediation between two stages of understanding”.<sup>9</sup> In this study Ricoeur’s first phase is represented by the initial “reading” of the material where I tried to “naively grasp” the scenes. The second phase, the structural analysis,<sup>10</sup> is mainly based on the four aspects, **ornithology**, **form**, **interactions**, and **functions**. Finally, the third phase, the synthesis, emerging through my discussion in chapter IV, will be presented in the conclusions, chapter V.

To sum up, the approach of this study is interdisciplinary. Ornithology, semiotics in combination with Ricoeur’s perspectives on metaphor and symbol, and recent posthumanist discussions of animals as agents have been incorporated in the investigation an analysis to different degrees. Below I will give a brief description of these tools.

## Ornithology

The science of ornithology is a branch of zoology<sup>11</sup> that has a long history.<sup>12</sup> It uses a wide range of terms that are sometimes shared with zoology and biology. Ornithology comes from Greek: *ὄρνις*, *ὄρνιθος*, “bird”; and *λόγος*, “knowledge”. Some of the important branches are field observation, naming of birds and taxonomy. Ornithology has further contributed to several key concepts in evolution theory, behaviour theory, and ecology such as the definition of species, the process of speciation, instinct, learning, ecological niches, phylogeography and conservation.<sup>13</sup>

7 Gadamer 1975.

8 Ricoeur 1976, 74.

9 Ricoeur 1976, 75. Recently Ricoeur’s three phases of understanding have been modified by Wiklund, Lindholm and Lindström who describe the three steps (1) naive reading, (2) structural analysis, and (3) synthesis. See Wiklund, Lindholm & Lindström 2002.

10 According to Ricoeur structural analysis provides a certain accuracy to textual analysis but for him one can not give away the whole interpretative project in such a analysis since it is limited to the deep structures in a material. Ricoeur 1974, 217–218. See also Stiver 2001, 62.

11 Zoology is basically a natural science that is part of biology that relates to the animal kingdom, including the structure, embryology, evolution, classification, habits, and distribution of all animals, both living and extinct.

12 As Gill points out “With hardly any other animal has our relation been so constant, so varied, so enriched by symbol, myth, art, and science, and so contradictory as has our relation with birds. Since earliest records of humankind, birds have served as symbols of peace and war, as subjects of art, as objects for study and for sport. Their command of our imagination is not surprising, because they are astonishing creatures, most notably for their versatility, their diversity, their flight, and their song.” Gill 2007, xxi. Man’s hunting of birds is also essential in the history of ornithology since it acquired detailed observations in the field and specific knowledge of different species, behaviours and habits. See for example Armstrong 1958.

13 Mayr 1984, 250–255.

Ornithology differs from closely related disciplines due in part to the high visibility and aesthetic appeal of birds.<sup>14</sup> Further, ornithology is one of the few scientific fields in which nonprofessionals make substantial contributions since field observations by bird watchers provide valuable information on avian behaviour, ecology, distribution, and migration.<sup>15</sup>

The birds in the *Iliad* ought to be examined in a more thorough ornithological and zoological way than has been done before in Homeric studies in order to get a fuller understanding of the scenes and the birds' functions in them. This aspect includes, first of all, the described bird's behaviour, characteristics, time context, and spatial contexts in the Homeric text. Secondly, ornithology is also needed to evaluate the accuracy of the descriptions of the birds in the *Iliad*. Finally, it is used to identify the bird's taxonomic status if possible. The analysis of the bird's behaviour, characteristics and identity is accomplished by means of close observation rather similar to field observation, which, as stated above, is an important branch of ornithology. In field studies birds are observed in their natural habitat, meaning that observation can be made about their field characters. The ornithological analyses of the material are important, since the material indicates that we have to pay close attention to each bird in the *Iliad* in order not to lose the specific information that the poet wanted to communicate in the scene. When emphasising and analysing the ornithological content, this part of the investigation will also give a picture of which kinds of birds and behaviours occur most frequently in the descriptions as well as giving a picture of the knowledge of birds as reflected in the *Iliad*. A brief orientation of the history of ornithological science follows here in order to give a fuller understanding of my purpose with this thesis.

Aristotle's *History of Animals* from the 4th century BC is often mentioned as the first known work in Western culture that systematically accounts for what we observe in nature, and records of initial scientific research. Birds are a prominent part in all of Aristotle's work on natural history. Another ancient source is Alexander of Myndos, who in the first century AD wrote a three-volume work on animals, of which two-thirds is about birds. Unfortunately only fragments survive. Of importance is also Pliny the Elder's *Naturalis Historia* where he summarised the work of some 500 ancient authors and offered his own critical view point. Claudius Aelianus (frequently referred to as Aelian) who lived around 175–235 AD, also paid much attention to birds in his *De Natura Animalium*. Until the Renaissance, the knowledge of the natural history of birds depended largely on these writers.<sup>16</sup> Much of the texts were reliable, but there are also

<sup>14</sup> Newton 1998, 2.

<sup>15</sup> See for example Gill 2007.

<sup>16</sup> Gill 2007, xxiv–xxv.



incorrect notions in these sources. The quotations from Alexander's work are based on close and accurate observation, but Aelianus was sometimes uncritical in relation to his sources.<sup>17</sup> Around 1572 the Dutch anatomist Volcher Coiter produced a classification of birds.<sup>18</sup> In the 17th century Francis Willughby and John Ray came up with the first major system of bird classification that was based on function and morphology rather than on form and behaviour.<sup>19</sup> In the 18th century there was an increase of field observation: a major step towards modern ornithology was taken. In 1789 Gilbert White published a natural history where his observations of birds were precise and beautifully expressed. He also asked questions about the basic biology of birds, about species, ecological niches, physiology, and migration.<sup>20</sup> Some count the Victorian era, with the concept of natural history, with the collection of eggs and skins, as the starting point for the emergence of ornithology as a specialized science.<sup>21</sup>

Today ornithology has many subdisciplines and uses a wide range of terms and techniques. Scientific research on birds has been important in studies of evolution, behaviour and ecology, such as those of species, speciation, instinct, learning, ecological niches, conservation and so on, as mentioned above.<sup>22</sup> The advances in the last decade have been diverse and substantial and ornithology is today a rich and varied science. By the middle of the 1980s, birds provided more textbook examples of biological phenomena than any other class of vertebrates.<sup>23</sup> Our knowledge of birds today is more complete than that of most other classes of animals, and birds feature prominently in primary biological studies. Among important studies are the works of Nicolaas Tinbergen on the evolution of the behaviour of gulls and of Konrad Lorenz with ducks and geese. There are also important studies that have focused on birds' sexual selection, kinship and cooperation, and how they use their senses.<sup>24</sup> Within the science of ornithology there are two niches that are of special interest for this study: *field observation* and *taxonomy*.

### *Field observation*

Field observation is a basic activity in ornithology. In field studies and during *field observation* birds are observed in their natural environments: this involves observations of their behaviour and characteristics in the field. Field characteristics include different

17 Gill 2007, xxv.

18 Allen, 1951, 387–591.

19 Willughby's *Ornithologiae libri tres* from 1676 is sometimes considered to mark the beginning of scientific ornithology, see for example White 1999.

20 Gill 2007, xxv.

21 Allen, 1994; Farber 1982, 92–158.

22 Gill 2007, xxv–xxvi.

23 Gill 2007, xxii. Also see Sutherland et al.

24 Gill 2007, xxv–xxvi.

aspects of birds such as size, wing-span, shape of body, wings, tail, beak, legs and other characteristics, as well as breeding and non-breeding plumages, differentiating between sexes and varying immature stages, colour, general habits and behaviour including gait on land, swimming or diving, feeding behaviour, flight, gregariousness, and voice. Of importance for field studies are also distribution, population, movements, food, social pattern, and breeding.<sup>25</sup> Cramp & Simmons describe that the basis of species diagnosis derives from a combination of structure, proportions, wing attitudes, and flight actions.<sup>26</sup>

### *Taxonomy and naming of birds*

An important branch of ornithology is *taxonomy* (from ancient Greek τάξις “arrangement” and -νομία “knowledge”, “science”, from νόμος “order”). Taxonomy is the theory and practice of classifying organisms into *taxa*.<sup>27</sup> A *taxon* (pl. *taxa*) is any group of animals that is recognized in a classification. Thus, the class *Aves* is a *taxon* that includes all species of birds.<sup>28</sup> The rules of taxonomy are based on the nomenclature developed by the Swedish botanist Carolus Linnaeus. Linnaean taxonomy uses the taxonomic ranks *kingdom*, *phylum*, *class*, *order*, *family*, *genus*,<sup>29</sup> and *species*. The classification system has developed since the time of Linnaeus but its main structure has remained and is used in ornithology.<sup>30</sup> Let us look, for example, at the case of *Nycticorax nycticorax*, the Night Heron. If we describe this species from a higher to a lower taxonomic unit, its kingdom is *Animalia* (animals), its phylum, *Chordata* (animals with a notochord), its class *Aves* (birds), its order *Ciconiiformes*<sup>31</sup>, its family *Ardeidae* (herons and bitterns), and its genus *Nycticorax* (a genus of Night Heron). The species’ name, or scientific name is, as mentioned, *Nycticorax nycticorax* (T. Forster 1827).<sup>32</sup>

25 Cramp & Simmons 1977, 3–34.

26 Cramp & Simmons 1980, 5.

27 Erritzoe et al. 2007, 253 based on Ernst Mayr’s definitions from 1969. Gill describes taxonomy as “the science of naming and classifying organisms, including birds, according to standardized rules.” Gill 2007, 54.

28 Gill 2007, 56.

29 Not to be confused with the term “gender”.

30 See Erritzoe et al. 2007, 152 and Gill 2007, 56. In the 1980s cladistics and DNA analysis indicated changes in the accepted relationships between families. See Monroe & Sibley 1997 and Cracraft et al. 2003. The scientific names of the species treated in this study are however in accordance with the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature (2nd edition 1964) and agree with those Latin and English bird names presented by S. Cramps and K. E. L. Simmons in their *The Birds of the Western Palearctic* (1977–1994).

31 Traditionally, the order *Ciconiiformes* included a variety of large, long-legged wading birds with large bills: storks, herons, egrets, ibises, spoonbills, and several others. Recent DNA evidence does suggest however that every member, except storks, is more related to the *Pelecaniformes*, and thus belong to that group. Hackett, et al. 2008, 1763.

32 Cultures around the world have a rich and varied vocabulary related to birds. In addition to the current scientific taxonomy ‘folk’ bird names are used in different regions and have been used at different periods of time. Thus the Fieldfare, *Turdus pilaris*, “Björktrast”, in Swedish was former called “Snöskata”. Traditional bird names are often onomatopoeic and are often based on detailed knowledge of the behaviour of the particular bird. This knowledge of birds is often passed on through oral traditions. See Gill & Wright 2006 and Hohn 1973, 163–171.

### Semiotics and Ricoeur's perspective on metaphor and symbol

Let us now turn to semiotics and Paul Ricoeur's perspectives on metaphor and symbol since I find that these in combination enrich the understanding of the birds' communicative and informative roles.

The present study is influenced by semiotics as adapted by Daniel Chandler<sup>33</sup> and Umberto Eco,<sup>34</sup> for two main reasons. Firstly, semiotics, as a field that studies signs, sign processes and communication, is relevant for a material that shows the frequent "use" of birds as signs. This particular "use" of birds is a noticeable feature that is exploited by the poet as well as by the human and divine characters in the *Iliad*.<sup>35</sup> Secondly, in my opinion, some of the semiotic terms improve our understanding of how the birds in the material operate, *viz.* acting, functioning and communicating. Paul Ricoeur's ideas are valuable when investigating metaphors and symbols, the relations between them and their potential deeper meanings.

### Signs and "meaning-making" processes

Humans seem to be a species that is driven by a desire and need to make meanings through our creation and interpretation of "signs". This is the main concern of semiotics, a huge field of study that shows a particular interest in signs.<sup>36</sup> It was the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure who first introduced the term *sign* as an entity of two parts, the *signifier* and the *signified*, where the former describes the sign's form and the latter the concept it represents.<sup>37</sup> Put simply a "sign" is a meaningful unit which is interpreted as standing for something other than itself.<sup>38</sup> If we apply Saussure's terms in this study his "signifier" would be the verbal descriptions of the actual birds in the *Iliad* expressed by the poet as well as the birds that are observed by the human characters in the action of the *Iliad*. His "signified" would be the concepts that these descriptions and birds represent. A more detailed example of Saussure's "signifier" is the nine sparrows that are devoured by a serpent in SCENE I. The "signified" can be seen as Calchas' and the Achaean warriors' interpretation of the event that is, the nine killed sparrows meant that the Achaeans would fight at Troy for nine years and then take the city on the tenth. This example illustrates how the birds operate as signs, with the meaning-making process created through the interpretation by the humans.

33 Chandler 2002.

34 Eco 1976.

35 This feature makes the material interesting not only in a semiotic or narratological, textual sense but also from the perspectives of anthropology and the history of ideas.

36 Semiotics exists as departments in some universities. It is however not widely institutionalized as an academic discipline but has its own associations, conferences and journals. See Chandler 2002, 2.

37 Saussure 1983, 67; 1974, 67.

38 Chandler 2002, 2. Also see Peirce 1931-58, 2.228, and Perron & Danesi 1999, 366-367.

*Umberto Eco on communication and the comprehension of “code”*

For Umberto Eco, “semiotics is concerned with everything that can be taken as a sign”.<sup>39</sup> He describes communication in the following way: “So let us define a communicative process as the passage of a signal (not necessarily a sign) from a source (through a transmitter, along a channel) to a destination (...) When the destination is a human being, or “addressee” (it is not necessary that the source or the transmitter be human, provided that they emit the signal following a system of rules known by the human addressee), we are on the contrary witnessing a process of signification – provided that the signal is not merely a stimulus but arouses an interpretive response in the addressee. This process is made possible by the existence of a code.”<sup>40</sup>

So what is then a code? If we briefly turn to Chandler a *code* is “a set of practices familiar to users of the medium operating within a broad cultural framework.”<sup>41</sup> He further points out that a sign has no intrinsic meaning since it becomes a sign only when the sign-users give it meaning with reference to a recognised code.<sup>42</sup> Eco describes a code as an instrument for linking the expression of signs to their content. It is a correlational device which generates sign functions.<sup>43</sup> The concept of “codes” is fundamental in semiotics since no sign is meaningful in isolation. Intentions of interpreting the conventional meaning of signs require a familiarity with appropriate sets of conventions.<sup>44</sup> It is important to be familiar with the material (in the case of this study, the birds and the bird scenes, and the *Iliad* as a whole as well as the genre) to be fully aware of the codifications of the signs used. It is further important to be familiar – as far as possible – with the wider physical, cultural, economical, and historical contexts in which the signs function.

If we should try to apply some of the above cited semiotic perspectives and terms on my material one can view the birds appearing in the *Iliad* as signs that in a communicative process between a source (for example, a god) and a destination (for example, human warriors) transmit signification or *messages* according to Roman Jakobson<sup>45</sup> and that further they are operating within codes, i.e., conventions deeply rooted in society.

39 Eco 1976, 7.

40 Eco 1976, 8. Eco defines a “signal” as a unit of information which may be transmitted from a source to a destination, and argues that a signal may not necessarily be a communicational act but may be a stimulus to a particular response. Eco 1979, 8. Also see Chandler 2002, 177-179.

41 Chandler 2002, 147-148. See also Peirce 1931-58, 2.228 and Perron & Danesi 1999, 348.

42 Chandler 2002, 241.

43 Eco 1976, 36-40.

44 Chandler 2002, 147.

45 According to Jakobson an *addresser* sends a *message* to an *addressee*. The message requires a *context* referred to which is seizable to the addressee. Finally there must be a *contact*, a physical channel and a psychological connection, that enables the parts to stay in communication. Jakobson 1960, 353.

Even if the birds are involved in the sign functions and in the interactions with divine and human characters in the *Iliad*,<sup>46</sup> it is of course always the poet who is the creator of all messages transmitted by means of the birds in the *Iliad*, and the poet is evidently influenced by his own experiences, knowledge, skills, and ideas, as well as his personality, motivations and expectations on the listeners of the poem. Like all poets he was working in the tradition of storytelling and was supposed to operate within the limits and possibilities that were conceivable in the society in which he lived. From a semiotic perspective it can thus be claimed that the birds in the *Iliad* refer to conventions and ideas about social circumstances, hierarchies, historical allusions, cosmology and religion. I would like to add the poet's physical environment, which is of great importance in this study.

### *The role of the interpreters*

In semiotics, as well as in all fields that are occupied in "meaning-making" processes such as hermeneutics, it is important to account for the identity and role of the interpreters.<sup>47</sup> Who are then the interpreters of the birds that occur in the *Iliad*, and of the bird scenes? According to my definition, the interpreters are (1) the humans in the narrative who observe and experience the birds in the events that take place,<sup>48</sup> (2) the ancient audience (listeners and readers), and (3) the modern listeners and readers. As Ricoeur has pointed out, a text is potentially addressed to anyone who can read.<sup>49</sup> And I would like to add that an oral utterance or narrative is potentially addressed to anyone who can hear.

All types of communication involve a process of interpretation in order to obtain transmitted information. In the same way that humans experience things differently, there are numerous interpretations of a source of information, and the more complicated the information is for an interpreter to code, the harder it is to understand the information. The temporal and spatial distance between an ancient material and a modern scholar is an important problem to take into consideration. As Hans-Georg Gadamer has showed, our presuppositions are the bases for our first steps of understanding a studied object.<sup>50</sup> It is when we gain more information about the object that our perspective changes, as does our conception of the object.<sup>51</sup>

46 An example is when Zeus sends an eagle to a human character because he wants to communicate something.

47 See also Chandler 2002, 35.

48 Even if the human characters act and interact in a narrative, they are undoubtedly interpreters and have interpreting roles in some of the bird scenes. It is however important to encounter the differences between these "interpreters" and the other interpreters.

49 Ricoeur 1976, 92.

50 Gadamer 1975, 240.

51 Gadamer 1975, 269-271.

In this study my intention has never been to find the “only true” message and meaning, and I do not regard such an aim as possible or even desirable, since the material has multiple meanings. However, the material also invites the reader to observe patterns and recurrent situations that can be structured and considered. Knowing also that I can never take the role of an ancient listener and interpreter of the bird scenes, this investigation attempts to approach a “fusion of horizon”, as Gadamer so poetically describes it,<sup>52</sup> trying to get as close to the material as possible.<sup>53</sup>

*Metaphors and symbols according to Ricoeur*

Turning from semiotics to Ricoeur’s perspective on metaphor and symbol, the semiotic view will first be briefly summarised. Semioticians claim that a metaphor expresses the unfamiliar in terms of the familiar.<sup>54</sup> According to Chandler, “A metaphor involves one signified acting as a signifier referring to a different signified.”<sup>55</sup> When linking the parts in a metaphor we must thus recognise the resemblance between two things that the metaphor alludes to. Chandler argues that we may also think of these metaphors as symbolic.<sup>56</sup> In the semiotic understanding symbolic/a symbol is “a mode in which the signifier does not resemble the signified but which is fundamentally *arbitrary* or purely conventional, so that the relationship must be learned.”<sup>57</sup>

At this point I would like to consult Ricoeur since in my opinion he deepens the understanding of metaphors and symbols, their relations and functions. Ricoeur demonstrates that both symbols and metaphors are works of resemblance. To him a symbol “...assimilates rather than apprehends a resemblance.”<sup>58</sup> A metaphor, which is also closely related to resemblance,<sup>59</sup> is in Ricoeur’s view more like the resolution of an enigma than a simple association based on resemblance.<sup>60</sup>

If we now focus exclusively on Ricoeur’s perspective on *metaphor* he saw here a general semiotic process.<sup>61</sup> As a figure of speech “metaphor constitutes a displacement and an extension of the meaning of words; its explanation is grounded in a theory of substitution.”<sup>62</sup> According to Ricoeur a metaphor makes sense only in an utterance.

52 For “fusion of horizons” see Gadamer 1975, 269-273.

53 Ricoeur has similarly summarised this task in the following way: “...try to get as close as possible to the most *ordinary* expressions of a community of faith, to those expressions through which the members of this community have interpreted their experience for the sake of themselves or for others’ sake.” Ricoeur 1995, 37.

54 Chandler 2002, 127. See also Lakoff & Johnson 1980, 5.

55 Chandler 2002, 127. This can be understood as involving one concept acting as the concept’s form that refers to another rather different concept.

56 Chandler 2002 127.

57 Chandler 2002, 36–37, see also 243.

58 Ricoeur 1976, 56.

59 Ricoeur 1976, 48.

60 Ricoeur 1976, 52.

61 Ricoeur 2003, 208.

62 Ricoeur 2003, 1. Ricoeur gives this definition of metaphor in his *La métaphore vive* first published in 1975 and later translated into *The rule of metaphor. The creation of meaning in language*. I will however not consult *La métaphore vive* any further but Ricoeur’s *Interpretation*

We should thus “not really speak of the metaphorical use of the word, but rather of the metaphorical utterance.”<sup>63</sup> Adopting Ricoeur’s perspective to my material his “metaphorical utterance” is represented by the bird scenes where birds occur in metaphorical forms.<sup>64</sup> Ricoeur further demonstrates the relation and tension between the literal and figurative meaning in a metaphorical utterance<sup>65</sup> (that in my case is the bird scene) and argues that a metaphorical utterance does not exist in itself, but in and through an active interpretation. It is in this process that it brings a “surplus of meaning”.<sup>66</sup> The meaning of a metaphor is not clearcut and unambiguous, however. It creates multiple levels of meaning through “the positive and productive use of ambiguity”.<sup>67</sup> A metaphorical utterance is further “...not an ornament of discourse. It has more than an emotive value because it offers new information.”<sup>68</sup>

Ricoeur explains that a *symbol* functions in its most general sense as a “surplus of signification.”<sup>69</sup> In this way it is similar to a metaphor. Like metaphors, symbols possess multiple levels of meaning that can be reached only through interpretation. However, a symbol is bound in a way that a metaphor is not. It has, as Ricoeur argues, roots.<sup>70</sup> Symbols are something that in language are powerful and efficacious.<sup>71</sup>

Among his important contributions Ricoeur demonstrates that symbol and metaphor reciprocally provide information about each other. According to him “Everything indicates that symbolic experience calls for a work of meaning from metaphor, a work which it partially provides through its organizational network and its hierarchical levels.”<sup>72</sup> I found Ricoeur’s perspective interesting since some of the birds in the *Iliad*, especially the eagle, appear and operate as both metaphor and as a kind of symbol.

### *Spatial relations*

Returning to semiotics, spatial relations is a topic discussed there, which is interesting since the birds’ spatial positions are frequently described in the present material. According to Chandler spatial relations include aspects such as above/below, in front/behind, close/distant, left/right, north/south/east/west and inside/outside.<sup>73</sup> George La-

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*Theory* from 1976 since I find this essay easier to grasp.

63 Ricoeur 1976, 50, see also 49.

64 For my definition of the different categories of form, see *Fig. 1* later on in this chapter.

65 Ricoeur 1976, 50, 54.

66 Ricoeur 1976, 45 and 52.

67 Ricoeur 1976, 47.

68 Ricoeur 1976, 52–53. For Homeric metaphors see also chapter 1. See also Wikander who emphasises that metaphors and similes can differ much between different times and cultures. Wikander 2010, esp. 170. In his comment and translation of Canaanite myths Wikander describes the deep structures of this material. See Wikander 2003.

69 Ricoeur 1976, 55.

70 Ricoeur 1976, 45–69.

71 Ricoeur 1976, 63.

72 Ricoeur 1976, 65, and 45–69. See also Harter 2011, 34.

73 Chandler 2002, 87.

koff and Mark Johnson have shown how “orientational metaphors” are routinely linked to key concepts in a culture. They have also observed that the aspect *up* has come to be associated with more, *viz.* goodness, virtue, health, life, future, high status, etc., and *down* with less, *viz.* badness, death, low status, etc.<sup>74</sup> When someone is located “higher” than another, this is thus not simply a spatial relationship but also an evaluative one.<sup>75</sup>

### **Animals as agents**

The birds in the *Iliad* are by no means passive or isolated either as animals within the animal kingdom, or in the human comprehension and use of them as signs, metaphors and symbols. They are in most situations, as will be shown in the analyses, highly operative and interactive and often have a considerable impact on humans as well as on other animals. Their presence and activities make things happen and create changes. To visualise the birds and their active roles further and to be able to place them in a social frame that does not separate “nature” from “culture”, I have found fruitful entries in recent studies in archaeology that focus on the important roles of animals as agents among other agents in a social field of practices.<sup>76</sup>

The perspectives on what is an animal differ across time and space. In Latin “animal” was used to translate the Greek word *zoön*, which means a living creature.<sup>77</sup> A recent view on animals is that they signal something that feels close to us but yet is a world apart.<sup>78</sup> How we define “animal” indicates something about our view of ourselves. Mary Midgley identifies two main perspectives concerning animals. In the first which is based on biology and *taxa*, both humans and non-human animals are included, while in the second, which is based on a moral standard that considers that some behaviours and attitudes are animal-like, beastly, brutal, un-human, etc., they are separate.<sup>79</sup> According to Midgley, “We are not just rather like animals; we are animals. Our differences from other species may be striking, but comparisons with them have always been, and must be, crucial to our view of ourselves.”<sup>80</sup>

Several scholars have recently argued that the ‘modern’ nature-culture dichotomy that views nature and culture as two separate spheres is an artificial division.<sup>81</sup> It is posulated that not only do humans shape nature, but also, that nature shapes humans.<sup>82</sup>

74 Lakoff & Johnson 1980.

75 See Chandler 2002, 88.

76 See particularly Armstrong Oma 2007.

77 See Midgley 1988, 36.

78 See Armstrong Oma 2007, 54 with references.

79 Midgley 1988, 35–36.

80 Midgley 1978, xiii.

81 See Franklin 2002; Ray & Thomas 2003; Armstrong Oma 2007, 60.

82 See Ingold 2000; Ray & Thomas 2003, 38; Armstrong Oma 2007, 61.



Humanity is seen as embedded rather than separated from nature<sup>83</sup> and nature is the outcome of processes, co-dwellings, and species interactions.<sup>84</sup> These approaches have developed from the discussions of whether animals have *agency*. Albert Gell attributes social agency to animals and things. He defines an agent as one “who causes events to happen.”<sup>85</sup>

In her thesis *Human-animal relationships. Mutual becomings in Scandinavian and Sicilian households 900-500 BC* the archaeologist Kristin Armstrong Oma strongly criticises anthropocentric views that consider with human-only societies. She argues that animals “should be seen as pervading every aspect of life in past societies.”<sup>86</sup> Animals make things happen on their own accord as much as do humans. It is as agents in the social field of practice that they generate change.<sup>87</sup> Within this social field agents have different roles. I found the agency perspective interesting in relation to my own study since it views animals (including humans) as well as things in a non-hierarchical way. As Armstrong Oma argues, this perspective also allows animals, wild as well as domestic, to have “a fundamentally active presence in the world as beings-in the world”.<sup>88</sup>

The properties of different animals are further discussed within this field. According to Armstrong Oma different species of animals have different abilities, and are perceived by humans as having unique properties. These have and are being used in many types of narratives and in many contexts such as cosmologies, politics, national symbols, and as metaphors for human qualities. Knowledge of the animal is important in establishing its properties.<sup>89</sup> The properties are however not universal but “embedded in specific historical and cultural context”.<sup>90</sup>

At this point I would like to establish that the perspective on animals as presented here permeates my study totally. Even if I do not use the term “agent” in my analyses I am fully aware of the birds’ active functions as agents who among other agents make things and events happen. It will further be clear that the gods in the *Iliad* have agency that is closely linked to that of the birds. However, in my terminology I will use the words “messenger” and “transmitter”, which are two terms that have their roots in semiotics, instead of agent to describe the birds’ roles.

83 Franklin 2002; Urry & Machnaten 1998. See also Armstrong Oma 2007, 60, 68.

84 Frankin 2002, 8–9; Ingold 2000; Macnaghten & Urry 1998; Armstrong Oma 2007, 61, 68.

85 Gell 1998, 16.

86 Armstrong Oma 2007, 55.

87 Armstrong Oma 2007, 67.

88 Armstrong Oma 2007, 61.

89 See Armstrong Oma 2007, 56 with references.

90 Armstrong Oma 2007, 56. For the concept of “being-in-the world” as a meeting between nature and humanity see also Ingold 2000.

### Analytical model

As a method to carry out the analysis of each bird<sup>91</sup> and bird scene I have developed my own analytical model. I will pay attention to *four aspects* concerning each bird: **ornithology, form, interactions, and functions**. These main aspects were chosen because I have found them important for the understanding of the scene and the bird's presence and functions there.

Fig. 1. Analytical model according to the four aspects with subheadings, explanations and examples.

Aspects	Examples and explanations
<b>Ornitology</b>	
Greek bird reference with line	Example: ἐρωδιός ( <i>Il.</i> 10.274)
Lexica	LSJ s.v. ἐρωδιός, 'heron, <i>Il.</i> 10.274' Cunliffe s.v. 'Perh. the night heron K 274'
Behaviour and characteristics	My analysis of the description of the bird in the scene. Ex.: called in the dark night when it presumably flew. Night active
Time context	Examples: In the winter, in the spring, at night.
Spatial context	Examples: at the Scamander Plain, by the streams of Caÿstrius, At high, medium, low altitude, in a tree, on the ground. The bird's direction of movement, i.e., from one spatial position to another spatial position. Example: cranes that take off and fly high up in the air and continue to fly towards the streams of Ocean. Example: in the air to the right of Odysseus and Diomedes.
Ornithological accuracy	<i>Low, Medium, High</i> The evaluation is based on the description of the bird's behaviour, characteristics and accuracy in the environment. <i>Low</i> – when no accurate aspect of ornithological behaviour, characteristics, and environment is described in relation to the bird. <i>Medium</i> – when one aspect of accurate behaviour or characteristics is described and when the environment fits the bird, and when there is nothing that is zoologically wrong in the description. <i>High</i> – when two or more aspects of accurate behaviour and/or characteristics are described and when the environment fits the bird.
Suggested taxonomic status	According to family, genus and species. For ex. ἐρωδιός, <i>Il.</i> 10.274: <i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i> , Night Heron

91 The term "bird" also refers to "birds" when more than one appear in the scenes.

THEORY AND METHOD

Aspects	Examples and explanations
<b>Form</b>	<p>The bird's form in the scene context according to five categories: <i>physical, transformation, metaphorical, image and other</i>.</p> <p>The eagle in <i>Il.</i> 8, SCENE 9, that is observed by the humans is classified as being in a <i>physical</i> form</p> <p>The sparrows (that were earlier devoured by a serpent) that Odysseus mentions in <i>Il.</i> 2, SCENE 1, are also classified as being in <i>physical</i> forms since they refer to an event with sparrows that has been observed by the human characters. The birds in this group are those whom the human characters have perceived and experienced as "real".</p> <p>The <i>χαλκίς/κύμινδις</i> whose physical form was temporarily taken by the god Sleep in <i>Il.</i> 14, SCENE 17 is classified as being a <i>transformation</i>.</p> <p>The geese, cranes, and swans in <i>Il.</i> 2, SCENE 2, that describe the Achaean warriors and their activities in a parallel way, are classified as being in <i>metaphorical</i> forms. The birds in this group are explicitly resembled other characters, e.g., humans or gods, in the scene.</p> <p>The vultures in <i>Il.</i> 4, SCENE 8, that are not physically present but only referred to by King Agamemnon (a human character in the <i>Iliad</i>) are classified as being in <i>image</i> form.</p> <p>The doves in <i>Il.</i> 11, SCENE 12, that are sculptured decorations on Nestor's cup are classified as being in <i>other</i> forms. The doves in <i>Il.</i> 2, SCENE 3 and 4 that are not physically present in the activities in the <i>Iliad</i> but are only characterising two cities are also classified as being in <i>other</i> form.</p>
<b>Interactions</b>	<p>The bird's physical and metaphorical interactions in the scene context.</p> <p>Bird and other birds Ex.: a dove that fled from a falcon in <i>Il.</i> 21, SCENE 30.</p> <p>Bird and other animals Ex.: the eagle that held a fawn in its talons in <i>Il.</i> 8, SCENE 9.</p> <p>Bird and humans Ex.: vultures that will devour the tender flesh of Trojan warriors in <i>Il.</i> 4, SCENE 6, and Hector who is metaphorically paralleled to an eagle in <i>Il.</i> 15, SCENE 19.</p> <p>Bird and gods and goddesses Ex.: the heron that was sent by Athena to Odysseus and Diomedes in <i>Il.</i> 10, SCENE 10.</p>
<b>Functions</b>	<p>Ex.: Marks Achilles' rapid speed, indicates Hector's fear of being captured, as a good sign it evoked fighting spirits in the Achaean warriors.</p>

### III. THE BIRD SCENES

#### Analysis, comments and interpretation

In this chapter the 35 bird scenes will be presented in the order they occur in the *Iliad* not to erupt that structure. Each bird scene is presented and examined according to the same structure containing of four steps.

Firstly, there is the *presentation of the bird scene* in Greek and English. As reported the Greek text is that of T. W. Allen's edition of the *Iliad* (1931) and the English translation that of A. T. Murray, revised by W. F. Wyatt (Loeb Classical Library, 2001). The bolded text is mine, used for emphasis.

Secondly, there is a short *background* to the scene to give a better understanding of the context. Any one who prefers to read the preview before reading the scene is recommended to do so.

The third step is *the analysis* presented within the frame of my analytical model and the four aspects **ornithology**, **form**, **interactions**, and **functions** according to *Fig. 1*. The ornithological analysis is accomplished, for each species of bird that appear in the scene. This also means that in the scenes where more than one species appear, such as a Peregrine and a Rock Dove, the ornithological analysis will be made separately for each bird.

The fourth step is *the comments and interpretation*.

#### Scene 1 – *Il.* 2.299–335

299 "...τλήτε φίλοι, καὶ μείνατ' ἐπὶ χρόνον ὄφρα δαῶμεν  
300 ἢ ἔτεόν Κάλχας μαντεύεται ἦε καὶ οὐκί.  
301 εἴ γὰρ δὴ τότε ἴδμεν ἐνὶ φρεσίν, ἔστ' ἐδὲ πάντες  
302 μάρτυροι, οὓς μὴ κήρες ἔβαν θανάτοιο φέρουσαι·  
303 χριζὰ τε καὶ πρωΐζ' ὄτ' ἐς Αὐλίδα νῆες Ἀχαιῶν  
304 ἠγερέδοντο κακὰ Πριάμῳ καὶ Τρωσὶ φέρουσαι,  
305 ἡμεῖς δ' ἄμφι περὶ κρήνην ἱερούς κατὰ βωμοῦς,  
306 ἔροδομεν ἀθανάτοισι τεληέσσας ἑκατόμβας  
307 καλῆ ὑπὸ πλατανίστῳ ὄθεν ῥέεν ἀγλαὸν ὕδωρ·  
308 ἐνθ' ἐφάνη μέγα σῆμα· δράκων ἐπὶ νῦτα δαφροῖς,  
309 σμερδαλέος, τόν ῥ' αὐτὸς Ὀλύμπιος ἦκε φύως δέ,  
310 βωμοῦ ὑπαιξας πρὸς ῥα πλατανίστον ὄρουσεν.  
311 ἐνθα δ' ἔσαν στρουθοῖο νεοσσοί, νήπια τέκν  
312 ὄζω ἐπ' ἀκροτάτῳ πετάλοις ὑποπεπτηῶτες,  
313 ὀκτώ, ἀτὰρ μήτηρ ἐνάτη ἦν ἢ τέκε τέκνα.  
314 ἐνθ' ὃ γ' ἐλεεινὰ κατήσδιε τετριγῶτας·  
315 μήτηρ δ' ἄμφοροῦτο ὀδυρομένη φίλα τέκνα·  
316 τὴν δ' ἐλελιξάμενος πτέρυγος λάβεν ἀμφοιαχύϊαν.

"...Endure, my friends, and stay for a time, that we may know whether the prophecies of Calchas are true or not. For this indeed we know well in our hearts, and you are all witnesses to it, those whom the fates of death have not carried off. It was but as yesterday or the day before, when the ships of the Achaeans were gathering in Aulis, bringing woes for Priam and the Trojans; and round a spring we were offering perfect hecatombs to the immortals on the holy altars, beneath a fair plane tree from which flowed the bright water; then appeared a great portent: a serpent, blood-red on its back, terrible, which the Olympian himself had sent into the light, glided from beneath the altar and darted to the plane tree. Now on this tree were the nestlings of a **sparrow**, tender little ones, on the topmost bough, cowering beneath the leaves, eight in all, and the mother that bore them was the ninth. Then the serpent devoured them as they twittered piteously, and the mother flitted around them, wailing for her dear little ones; but he

THE BIRD SCENES

317 αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ κατὰ τέκνα φάγε στρούθοιο καὶ αὐτήν,  
 318 τὸν μὲν ἀρίζηλον θῆκεν θεὸς ὅς περ ἔφηνε·  
 319 λᾶαν γάρ μιν ἔθρηκε Κρόνου πάϊς ἀγκυλομήτεω·  
 320 ἡμεῖς δ' ἑσταότες θαυμάζομεν οἷον ἐτύχθη.  
 321 ὡς οὖν δεινὰ πέλωρα θεῶν εἰσήλθ' ἐκατόμβας,  
 322 Κάλχας δ' αὐτίκ' ἔπειτα θεοπροπέων ἀγόρευε·  
 323 'τίπτ' ἄνεφ' ἐγένεσθε κάρη κομόωντες Ἀχαιοί;  
 324 ἡμῖν μὲν τόδ' ἔφηνε τέρας μέγα μητίετα Ζεὺς,  
 325 ὄψιμον ὀψιτέλεστον, οὐ κλέος οὐ ποτ' ὀλεῖται.  
 326 ὡς οὗτος κατὰ τέκνα φάγε στρούθοιο καὶ αὐτήν,  
 327 ὀκτώ, ἀτὰρ μήτηρ ἐνάτη ἦν ἢ τέκε τέκνα,  
 328 ὡς ἡμεῖς τοσσαῦτ' ἔττα πολεμίζομεν αὔθι,  
 329 τῷ δεκάτῳ δὲ πόλιν αἰρήσομεν εὐρύαγυιαν.'  
 330 κείνος τῶς ἀγόρευε· τὰ δὲ νῦν πάντα τελεῖται.  
 331 ἀλλ' ἄγε μίμνετε πάντες εὐκνήμιδες Ἀχαιοί,  
 332 αὐτοῦ εἰς ὃ κεν ἄστυ μέγα Πριάμοιο ἔλωμεν."  
 333 Ὡς ἔφατ', Ἀργεῖοι δὲ μέγ' ἴαχον, ἀμφὶ δὲ νῆες  
 334 σμερδαλέον κονάβησαν αὔσαντων ὑπ' Ἀχαιῶν,  
 335 μῦθον ἐπαινῆσαντες Ὀδυσσῆος θεῖοιο.

coiled himself and caught her by the wing as she screamed at him. But when he had devoured the *sparrow's* little ones and the mother with them the god who had brought him to the light made him disappear; for the son of crooked-counseling Cronos turned him to stone; and we stood there and marveled at what had happened. So, when the dread portent interrupted the hecatombs of the gods, then immediately Calchas prophesied, and addressed our assembly, saying: 'Why are you silent, long-haired Achaeans? To us has Zeus the counsellor showed this great sign, late in coming, late in fulfillment, the fame of which shall never perish. Just as this serpent devoured the *sparrow's* little ones and the mother with them – all eight, and the mother that bore them was the ninth – so shall we war there for as many years, but in the tenth we shall take the broad-wayed city.' Thus spoke Calchas, and now all this is being brought to pass. But come, remain all you well-greaved Achaeans, just where you are, until we take the great city of Priam." So he spoke, and the Argives shouted aloud, and all around them the ships echoed wondrously at the shouting of the Achaeans, as they praised the words of godlike Odysseus.

(Il. 2.299–335)

## Background

Before the scene started Zeus sent a destructive dream to King Agamemnon, the great commander of the Achaean troops. Agamemnon told the troops that nine years of fighting had passed and that Zeus had still not granted them victory over the Trojans. Since Agamemnon had lost hope he ordered them to return to their ships and sail for their native lands. At that the assembly rushed towards their ships eager to start the journey. Hera then spoke to Athena and persuaded her to go to the Achaeans and make them stay. When Athena found Odysseus she persuaded him to have the warriors stay and to continue fighting the Trojans. Odysseus succeeded in this. When the troops were gathered he spoke to the assembly with Athena in the likeness of a herald at his side. He reminded them of the serpent-sparrow event that took place in Aulis<sup>1</sup> when the Achaeans were making offerings before they went to Troy in their ships.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Aulis was a small port in Boiotia in Greece, where the Achaean fleet assembled before setting out for Troy.

<sup>2</sup> Il. 2.1–298.

THE BIRDS IN THE *ILIAD*

**Analysis**

Aspects	Scene 1 – Il. 2.299–335
<b>Ornithology</b>	
Greek bird reference	<i>στρουθός</i> (2.311; 317; 326)
Lexica	LSJ s.v. ‘sparrow, <i>Fringilla domestica</i> ’* <sup>1</sup> Cunliffe s.v. ‘A sparrow’
Behaviour and characteristics	Eight nestlings covered beneath the leaves on the topmost bough of a plane tree. They twitted as they were devoured by a serpent. Also their mother was devoured. A small bird and a species that has many offsprings.
Time context	Refer to the birds’ breeding season in the spring or summer.
Spatial context	High up in a plane tree at Aulis beneath the leaves on the topmost bough of the tree. Above the Achaeans.
Ornithological accuracy	High
Suggested taxonomic status	Spanish Sparrow, <i>Passer hispaniolensis</i>
<b>Form</b>	Physical
<b>Interactions</b>	
Birds and birds	A sparrow mother tried to protect her eight fledglings when she witnessed that a serpent was devouring them all. She was also devoured by the serpent.
Birds and other animals	An uneven meeting between sparrows and a serpent who ate them all. The serpent is described as a <i>great portent</i> (2.308) that <i>the Olympian himself had sent into the light</i> (2.309). It came from beneath and went upwards into the tree and to the sparrows.
Birds and humans	Below the sparrows the Achaean warriors were making offerings before they set out for the war-expedition to Troy. The seer Calchas* <sup>2</sup> interpreted the sparrow-serpent event as an omen sent by Zeus. He used the nine dead sparrows as signs and let each of them represent a year of fighting. On the tenth year they would take the broadwayed city. On the ninth year Odysseus reminded the Achaean warriors about the omen and they responded positively to it.
Birds and gods	Zeus sent the serpent that devoured the nine sparrows.
<b>Functions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sparrow-specific signs, symbolic numbers and representations that bring information.</li> <li>• One part of Zeus’ symbolic answer to the Achaean warriors and their offering ceremonies.</li> </ul>

\*<sup>1</sup> *Fringilla domestica* is an older species name for House Sparrow. The current name is *Passer domesticus*.

\*<sup>2</sup> The diviner of the Achaeans and son of Thestor. In *Il.* 1 Calchas is described as *far the best of diviners, who had knowledge of all things that were, and that were to be, and that had been before, and who had guided the ships of the Achaeans to Ilios by the gift of prophecy that Phoebus Apollo had granted him* (*Il.* 1 68–72).

## THE BIRD SCENES

Aspects	Scene 1 – Il. 2.299–335
<b>Functions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The animal-event evoked wonder among the Achaeans.</li> <li>• Visual physical signs, being part of an omen, coming with prophetic information to the Achaean warriors.</li> <li>• Symbolic numbers that foretold how many years the Achaeans would fight in Troy before they would take the city.</li> <li>• Odysseus used the sparrows as signs in a speech when he tried to motivate the Achaeans to continue to fight.</li> <li>• As positive signs they increased the Achaeans' warspirits.</li> <li>• Express inferiority, helplessness, horror, loss, and death from an avian mother-and-child perspective.</li> <li>• Possible symbolic representations of the Trojan mothers and children who will be brutally killed/treated by the Achaeans in Troy.</li> </ul>

### Comments and interpretation

#### *Ornithology and form*

This scene is one of the most complicated bird scenes in the *Iliad* with a multiplicity of time and space contexts, interactions that embrace the avian, reptile, human and divine spheres, and with diversified functions and messages that will be suggested below. This is the reason why the comment and interpretation is somewhat longer than in the other scenes.

The scene describes an event that had taken place in Aulis. A serpent came from beneath and went upwards a plane tree. There high up *on the topmost bough* (2.312) were *the nestlings of a sparrow, tender little ones* (2.311)<sup>3</sup>. They were *cowering beneath the leaves, eight in all, and the mother that bore them was the ninth* (2.312–313). *The serpent devoured them as they twittered piteously* (2.314)<sup>4</sup>, *and the mother flitted around them, wailing for her dear little ones* (2.315). The sparrows' nest is not mentioned and it is possible that we shall view the young sparrows as fledglings that had left the nest and sat nearby or on it. All details that describes the birds' behaviours are ornithologically accurate: i.e., the breeding place in a plane tree and the babies that hide up there under the leaves, the mother sparrow's protective behaviour and probably also her calls and the nestlings' behaviour and calls.<sup>5</sup> Also the serpent's behaviour refers to natural conditions in many

<sup>3</sup> LSJ s.v. νεός 'Γ. young, youthful...b. rarely of animals and plants, ...Il.21.38...11. new, fresh'.

<sup>4</sup> LSJ s.v. τρέλλω '...τρετρίγες, Il. 2.314: -prop. of sounds uttered by animals,...utter a shrill cry, of young birds, Il.2.314'. For τρετρίγας in Il. 2.314 Zenodotus has τριζόντας (onomatop.), see s.v. τρίζω '...cheep, like a young bird.' Also see LSJ s.v. ἐλεεινός '...finding pity, pitied, moving pity, pitied'.

<sup>5</sup> Kirk comments that νεοσσοί, νήπια τέκνα (2.311) is a pathetically description for the birds that crouch under the leaves of the highest branch (2.312). Kirk 1992, 149. I would however like to emphasise that the context and behaviour of the sparrows are accurate. Since the nestlings are young and vulnerable they have to hide from enemies. Leaf observes that τέκνα is repeated so as to give a human pathos to the passage. He adds that νήπια especially emphasises this association. Leaf 1900, 72.

ways, its darting up in a tree and its devouring of the sparrows.<sup>6</sup> In an ornithological sense the large number of young is important for the identification of the bird.

The Spanish Sparrow, *Passer hispaniolensis*, is gregarious. The colonies may hold anything from a few up to over a thousand pairs. The sexes are dissimilar. The male has a red-brown crown and a big black bib that meets the black shoulders. The female is greyer in colour and has less black on her mantle and shoulders. The female is normally impossible to separate in the field from the House Sparrow, but the choice of nests is different between these two species. The Spanish Sparrow breeds in trees near rivers or other wet areas in farmlands well away from buildings. Freestanding nests in trees resting on branch forks are most common and the nest height can be 0.5–30 m above ground. On the contrary the House Sparrow, *Passer domesticus*, seldom breeds in trees but more often in holes in buildings. The Spanish Sparrow's nest is large, untidy and rather spherical with an entrance hole on the side. The clutch size is 2–6 and occasionally up to eight, which is a detail that coincides with the number of siblings in the scene.<sup>7</sup> Both parents brood and feed the young, but at the latter part of the nesting period the male reverts to song display.

The calls of the Spanish Sparrow are similar to the House Sparrow but more metallic in tone. The most common call is distinctive. There are no reports in the ornithological literature concerning anti-predator responses of young and parental anti-predator strategies but Cramp & Perrins refer to the alarm-calls, where a nasal 'quer' is given singly in 'guer-quer' couplets or as 'quer-quer-it'. These calls are used by both the female and male. There is no information concerning the calls of young at nest when an enemy is near.<sup>8</sup> To sum up, the ornithological accuracy in the scene is high and there are details in the descriptions that suggest that the Spanish Sparrow was used for the birds in the scene.<sup>9</sup>

6 A species that may have been used as a model for the serpent in the scene is the Aesculapian Snake, *Elaphe longissima*, which is a large snake that is specialised in climbing up trees to take nestlings in birds' nests. It is found mainly in the Mediterranean region and in the south of Europe. It can be up to two metres long. The colour varies and is grey-buff, olive-brown or brown and the underside is pale yellowish or whitish. Information from prof. Göran Nilsson, Dept. of Zoology, Gothenburg University. See also Nicholas & Ovenden, 2004, 214.

7 Cramp & Perrins 1994, 795. Also see del Hoyo et al. 2004, 317.

8 Cramp & Perrins 1994, 308–317, 795. Also see del Hoyo et al. 2004, 317, and Svensson & Grant 2006, 342–343. The Spanish Sparrow is distributed in Iberia, Sardinia and northwest Africa. It is further established in the Balkan countries and Greece, Cyprus, Turkey, the Levant, and the Caucasus area, etc. There are locally hybrid populations with House sparrow. Cramp & Perrins 1994, 310

9 Pollard suggests that the bird nest in the scene is a sparrow's nest and he refers to House Sparrow, *Passer domesticus*. However, he also claims that the sparrows in this scene were clearly not House Sparrows, since they were living in the open with their nest in a plane tree. He says further that here it was the event and not the species that was important. Pollard 1977, 29. Also see Voultsiadou & Tatalos who suggest House Sparrow, Voultsiadou & Tatalos 2008, 308. Boraston thought that *στρούθος* in Homer's time was probably used as a generic word for many species of small birds not easily distinguishable. He suggested that the Homeric *στρούθος* was a Great Titmouse, *Parus major*, because he believed that sparrows could never have more than six eggs. Boraston 1911, 216, 247–248. According to Thompson the name *στρούθος* in the *Iliad* was used generally and not specifically. Thompson 1936, 269. Also see Arnott 2007, 225–227 and Keller 1913, 88–90.



*Interactions and functions in the scene*

Interactions occur at many levels in this scene. There is a clear difference in strength between the serpent and the sparrows. The serpent expresses power and dominance from a hunter/killer perspective while the sparrows express vulnerability, horror and death from a prey/victim perspective. The interaction between them took place high up in a plane tree, which is a huge tree, probably on or nearby a sparrow's nest where the siblings were supposed to be safe and protected.<sup>10</sup> The outcome of their meeting was that the sparrows were devoured by the serpent, while the serpent disappeared. Since snakes have an incredible ability to disappear quickly the idea here was probably that the serpent vanished very rapidly from the sight of the Achaean warriors or the ones who observed the event<sup>11</sup>. The serpent's disappearance plausibly emphasises, as did the serpents' devouring of the sparrows, that they had experienced something out of the ordinary. There are also interactions between the sparrow mother and her young. The sparrow mother obviously saw her offspring being eaten by the serpent and she *twittered piteously* (2.315) when it devoured them.<sup>12</sup> She further *flitted around them, wailing for her dear little ones* (2.315–2.316). With these descriptions the sparrows clearly add emotional dimensions to the scene since the young express vulnerability, horror and helplessness, and since the mother displays the same when she tries to protect her offspring. She also expresses sorrow at losing them. Apart from this, all sparrows express death. The serpent showed no mercy and caught the sparrow mother by her wing and devoured her also. In this way the sparrows, as being part of the sparrow-serpent event, illustrate a family trauma that ended in brutal deaths for children and mother. When commenting on line 2.321, Kirk suggests that "...the innocent sparrows join the snake as terrible monsters because of their role in the portent."<sup>13</sup> He further refers to very ancient fables of a contest between a snake and a bird in a tree, which ends with one of them devouring the other's young. These had various morals such as the Accadian myth of Etana where an eagle devoured a snake's offspring.<sup>14</sup> According to Kirk there is no special moral in the scene in the *Iliad* and for him it is merely the devouring of a particular number of victims that is important where the birds are equivalent to years.<sup>15</sup> To me it is difficult not to view the sparrows with some sympathy since their vulnerability and hopeless struggle against death is so apparent in the scene. Even if they in

<sup>10</sup> As argued the nest is not mentioned only the young sparrows and their mother.

<sup>11</sup> For another interpretation cf. Kirk who prefers "invisible" rather than *turned to stone* (2.319). Kirk 1985, 149–150.

<sup>12</sup> Segal is not discussing the sparrow-serpent event exclusively but rather comments that Homer never describes the death of a human son before a parent's eyes. He adds that there is an allusion to a husband killed before the eyes of a wife in *Il.* 19.291. Segal 1971, 17.

<sup>13</sup> Kirk 1985, 149.

<sup>14</sup> Kirk 1985, 149. Hearsh reports that the sparrow and snake portent is found also in *Cypria* as summarized in Proclus' *Chrestomathy*, see Apollod. *Epit* 3.5 and Hearsh 1999, 396. See also Dowden 2004, 198 and Davies 1989, 43–44.

<sup>15</sup> Kirk 1985, 149.

a way are doomed to get killed by the stronger serpent they indubitably add emotional and tragic dimensions to the scene.

The bird-serpent event interrupted the Achaeans' offering ceremonies which took place just before the Achaean troops set out for Troy with their many ships. It is easy to understand that it was important to search for signs in such an important and risk-filled situation. In a speech the diviner Calchas used the sparrows and the serpent as signs in an omen that had come from Zeus with specific prophetic information. In this interpretation the nine sparrows become symbolic numbers that foretell how many years the Achaeans would fight in Troy before taking the city.<sup>16</sup> When Odysseus reminded his comrade-warriors of the omen that had come to the Achaeans with the serpent and sparrows, nine years had passed: he used the bird-serpent event as a way to motivate the troops to continue the war. From a war-propagandistic perspective his words came at the right moment since the Achaean warriors were eager to return home after many years of fighting.<sup>17</sup> Their loud cries of assent illustrate the strong psychological power of the animal-omen as well as the Achaeans' faith in it. Their spirits raised and they were ready again to do battle.<sup>18</sup>

#### *Interactions and functions in the primary narrative*

If we leave the sparrows' immediate functions in the scene and their effects on the Achaean warriors and consider their possible wider functions in the primary narrative of the *Iliad*, I would suggest that we return to Edwards who advises us to ask: "Why does the poet say this in this way?"<sup>19</sup> Why were a Spanish Sparrow mother and her children chosen for the scene and why were they slaughtered by a serpent? Pollard has suggested that the serpent may be a representation for the invading Greek army.<sup>20</sup> Is there also a possibility that the sparrows implicitly represent those who are going to be invaded, the ones who are most easily taken among the humans, the most tragic victims in war? When commenting on *Il.* 22 Richardson emphasises that the loss of so many of King Priam's sons is an important theme in the *Iliad*, especially in the later books.<sup>21</sup> To

16 According to Kirk the actual interpretation of the omen is badly stated: i.e., one should have expected that eight years had passed and that Troy would fall on the ninth which means that the fledglings would represent the years so far and the mother the year to come. Kirk 1985, 150. Also see Jones 2003, 72. For a confirmation that Troy was sacked in the tenth year see *Il.* 12.15.

17 Also see Willcock 1978, 202.

18 Kirk comments that Odysseus vividly recalls this portent to the Achaean warriors. He says "...the undeniable reality of the portent itself is made to spread over into Kalkhas' interpretation of it." Kirk 1985, 148.

19 Edwards 2002, 126.

20 Pollard 1977, 119.

21 See *Il.* 22.423-426, 24.255-260, 24.493-501, and Richardson 1993, 110, 151. Also see Griffin 1980, 123ff. See also *Il.* 22.22.38-45 and *Il.* 22.453-454 where Andromache, Hector's wife says: "...surely near at hand is some evil thing for the children of Priam. Far from my ear be that word ...". Priam mentions that he had fifty children when the Achaeans came and nineteen were born to him from the same womb while the other women of the palace bore the others, see *Il.* 24.495-497. The children of Priam and Hecamede who are mentioned in the *Iliad* are Hector, Paris, Helenus, Ilione, Deiphobus, Troilus, Polites, Creusa, Leodice, Polyxena and Polydorus. When commenting on *Il.* 17.223-226 Edwards emphasises that we are often reminded that the Trojans are fighting for their wives and children, see e.g., *Il.* 8.57, 15.497, 21.587. Edwards 1991, 85.

have pity on the Trojan wives and their small children in a wider sense is also referred to in Song 6 where the priestess Theano in a prayer to Athena asks for her *pity on the city and the Trojans' wives and their little ones* (*Il.* 6.310). One could thus in a general sense also see the sparrow mother and her young as future-projecting representations of the Trojan mothers and Trojan children who will be brutally cut down by the Achaean warriors (represented by the serpent) in the city of well-protected Troy.<sup>22</sup> With these events in mind one can discern, almost like a seer would do, several parallel events that seem to be related to each other and where one takes place in the interactions between the serpent and the sparrows, and where another will take place in the coming interactions between the humans. In this wider symbolic interpretation the sparrows, apart from their prophetic informative functions, have emotive roles since they allow us to view, feel and comprehend the hard conditions and consequences of the war from the Trojans' points of view, especially from the perspectives of the mothers and children.

### Scene 2 – *Il.* 2.445–468

445 οἱ δ' ἄμφ' Ἀτρεΐωνα διοτρεφέες βασιλῆες  
 446 θῦνον κρίνοντες, μετὰ δὲ γλαυκῶπις Ἀθήνη,  
 447 αἰγίδ' ἔχουσα ἑρίτιμον ἀγήρων ἀθανάτην τε,  
 448 τῆς ἑκατὸν θύσανοι παρχύσειοι ἠερέθονται,  
 449 πάντες εὐπλεκέες, ἑκατόμβοιοι δὲ ἕκαστος.  
 450 σὺν τῇ παιφάσσοισα διέσσυτο λαὸν Ἀχαιῶν  
 451 ὀτρύνουσα ἰέναι· ἐν δὲ σθένος ὤρσεν ἑκάστω  
 452 καρδίῃ ἄλληκτον πολέμιζεν ἠδὲ μάχεσθαι.  
 453 τοῖσι δ' ἄφαρ πόλεμος γλυκίων γένετ' ἢ ἐνέσθαι  
 454 ἐν νηυσὶ γλαφυρῆσι φίλην ἐς πατρίδα γαῖαν.  
 455 Ἦῦτε πῦρ αἰθῆλον ἐπιφλέγει ἄσπετον ὕλην  
 456 οὐρεὸς ἐν κορυφῆς, ἕκαθεν δὲ τε φαίνεται αὐγὴ,  
 457 ὡς τῶν ἐρχομένων ἀπὸ χαλκοῦ θροεπέσιοιο  
 458 αἴγλη παμφανόωσα δι' αἰθέρος οὐρανὸν ἴκε.  
 459 Τῶν δ' ὡς τ' ὀρνίθων πετεηνῶν ἔθνεα πολλά,  
 460 χηνῶν ἢ γεράνων ἢ κύκνων δουλιχοδείρων,  
 461 Ἀσίω ἐν λειμῶνι Καῦστρίου ἄμφι ῥέεθρα,  
 462 ἔνθα καὶ ἔνθα ποτῶνται ἀγαλλόμενα πτερόγεσσι,  
 463 κλαγγηδὸν προκαθίζόντων, σμαραγεῖ δέ τε λειμῶν,  
 464 ὡς τῶν ἔθνεα πολλὰ νεῶν ἄπο καὶ κλισιάων  
 465 ἐς πεδίον προχέοντο Σκαμάνδριον· αὐτὰρ ὑπὸ χθῶν  
 466 σμερδαλέον κονάβιζε ποδῶν αὐτῶν τε καὶ ἵππων.  
 467 ἔσταν δ' ἐν λειμῶνι Σκαμανδρίῳ ἀνθεμόεντι  
 468 μυρίοι, ὅσά τε φύλλα καὶ ἄνθεα γίγνεται ὥρη.

*The kings, nurtured by Zeus, who were with Atreus' son dashed about swiftly, marshaling the army, and with them was the flashing-eyed Athene, holding the priceless aegis, that knows neither age nor death, from which hang a hundred golden tassels, all fine-woven, and each one worth a hundred oxen. With it she sped dazzling through the army of the Achaeans, urging them on; and in the heart of each man she roused strength to war and to fight without ceasing. And to them at once war became sweeter than to return in their hollow ships to their dear native land.*

*Just as a consuming fire makes a boundless forest blaze on the peaks of a mountain, and from afar can the glare be seen, so from their magnificent bronze, as they marched out, went the dazzling gleam through the sky to the heavens.*

*And as the many tribes of winged birds, **wild geese** or **cranes** or long-necked **swans** on the Asian meadow by the streams of Caÿstrius, fly here and there, glorying in their strength of wing, and with loud cries settle ever onwards, and the meadow resounds, so their many tribes poured out of the ships and huts into the plain of Scamander, and the earth resounded terribly beneath the tread of men and horses. And they stood in the flowery meadow of Scamander, countless, as are the leaves and flowers in their season.*

(*Il.* 2.445–468)

<sup>22</sup> See for example *Il.* 17.223–224.

## Background

King Nestor urged King Agamemnon to show himself as the Achaean military leader. He reminded the Achaean warriors that Zeus had given them favourable signs the day they sailed from Aulis and advised Agamemnon not to let any warrior sail away in haste.<sup>23</sup> Somewhat later Nestor asked Agamemnon to *Separate the men by tribes, by clans,...so that clan may aid clan and tribe tribe. If you do this, and the Achaeans obey you, you will know then which of the leaders is a coward, and which of the men, and also which is brave; for each clan will fight for itself. And you will know whether it is the will of heaven that prevents your taking the city, or the cowardice of the men and their ignorance in war (Il. 2.362–369).*<sup>24</sup> At that Agamemnon praised Nestor as a good counsellor and ordered the warriors to eat and feed their horses before they join battle. At that the warriors shouted aloud and they took their meal and made sacrifices and prayers to the gods. Agamemnon sacrificed a bull to Zeus and before his prayer to Zeus he called for Nestor, Idomeneus, the two Aiantes, Diomedes, Odysseus and Menelaus. Zeus accepted the sacrifice and decided to increase the toil of war. After the meal Nestor advised Agamemnon to gather the army and so he did.<sup>25</sup>

## Analysis

Aspects	Scene 2 – Il. 2.445-468
<b>Ornithology</b>	
Greek bird reference	<p>χίην (2.460)                      γέρανος (2.460)                      κύκνος (2.460)</p>
Lexica	<p>LSJ s.v. χίην, 'wild goose, <i>Anser cinereus</i>'*<sup>1</sup>                      Cunliffe s.v. 'A goose'</p> <p>LSJ s.v. γέρανος, 'crane, <i>Grus cinerea</i>, Il. 3.3'<sup>*2</sup>                      Cunliffe s.v. 'A crane B460=O692, Γ3.'</p> <p>LSJ s.v. κύκνος, 'swan, <i>Cygnus olor</i>'*<sup>3</sup>                      Cunliffe s.v. 'A swan'</p>
Behaviour and characteristics	<p>χίην/γέρανος/κύκνος: Flock behavior: flying, moving, glorying in their wings, landing on the Asian meadow, moving forward and calling loudly. The swans are long-necked.</p>
Time context	<p>A morning in early spring is indicated by the behaviour and sounds which suggest the birds' spring migration.</p>

<sup>23</sup> Il. 2.336–361.

<sup>24</sup> Also see Il. 2.123–133.

<sup>25</sup> Il. 2.369–444.

THE BIRD SCENES

Aspects	Scene 2 – II. 2.445-468
<p><b>Ornithology</b></p> <p>Spatial context</p> <p>Ornithological accuracy</p> <p>Suggested taxonomic status</p>	<p>At the Asian meadow by the streams of Caÿstrius.*<sup>4</sup> They fly and settle on the meadow. The impression is that they are coming from above and that they land and take the plain into possession.</p> <p><i>χήνη/γέρανος/κύκνος</i>: High</p> <p><i>χήνη</i>: Greylag Goose, <i>Anser anser</i></p> <p><i>γέρανος</i>: Crane, <i>Grus grus</i></p> <p><i>κύκνος</i>: Whooper Swan, <i>Cygnus cygnus</i></p>
<p><b>Form</b></p>	<p><i>χήνη/γέρανος/κύκνος</i>: Metaphorical</p>
<p><b>Interactions</b></p> <p>Birds and birds</p> <p>Birds and other animals</p> <p>Birds and humans</p> <p>Birds and gods</p>	<p>Flock behaviour: flying, moving, glorying in their wings, landing, moving forward, and calling loudly.</p> <p>-</p> <p>Describe Achaean troops in a goose-, crane-, and swan-like, parallel way when they marched out on the plain of Scamader to meet the Trojans. The “bird-metaphor” indicates that there was something unusual about the warriors at this moment.</p> <p>Athena intervened in lines 2.446-454*<sup>5</sup> urging the Achaeans on with the aegis*<sup>6</sup> to continue the war with the Trojans, i.e., just before the birds appear in the scene. This series of activities indicate that the warriors’ birdlike activities during their military advance can partly be seen as an effect of Athena’s influence on them, i.e., they behaved and appeared like this because they were not only motivated by themselves but also by her.</p>
<p><b>Functions</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Geese-, crane- and swan-specific metaphorical parallels that describe the Achaean troops when they advanced against the Trojans on the Scamander Plain.</li> <li>• Bring information about the Achaean troops and their advance at this moment in time and space.</li> <li>• Show that these warriors entered the plain in large and impressive numbers.</li> <li>• Indicate that they were organised in several military differentiated units together with their leaders.</li> <li>• Indicate that they took the plain quickly.</li> <li>• Indicate that they were all lively and eager when they marched on which indicates that their war spirits were high.</li> <li>• Indicate that they at this moment also made loud war cries.</li> <li>• Indicate their status in the hierarchies of warriors.</li> </ul>

THE BIRDS IN THE *ILIAD*

Aspects	Scene 2 – <i>Il.</i> 2.445–468
Functions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give their activities, voices and states a kind of wild, avian character.</li> <li>• Signal that there was something unusual and more-than-human about the Achaean warriors at this moment which may be a result of “double motivation”.*7</li> </ul>

\*1 *Anser cinereus* is an older Latin name for the Greylag Goose, *Anser anser*.

\*2 *Grus cinerea* is an older Latin name for the Crane, *Grus grus*.

\*3 *Cygnus olor* is the Latin name for the species Mute Swan.

\*4 This location has been identified with the marshy Lesser Menderes Delta on the Turkish west coast where the Cayster River (in Turkish, Küçük Menderes) flows into the Aegean Sea at Ephesos. See Kirk 1985, Willcock 1978, 20, and Jones 2003, 74. The area round Küçük Menderes is a flat and marshy area that is surrounded by low mountains. It is a wetland region, known by ornithologists to be a good spot for bird watching. It is likely that this environment have been favorable for many species of birds for a very long time.

\*5 Lines 2.445–447 indicate that Athena’s role was to support the army in contrast to Zeus who seems more interested in supporting the kings: The kings, nurtured by Zeus (2.445).

\*6 Kirks suggests that the aegis was a goat-skin in some form. It is put around the shoulders at *Il.* 5.738 and 18.204 and it is presumably like a sword (-strap), *ἄσπις*, or shield (-strap), *ἀσπίς*. He emphasises that the description of the aegis as *παργχρόσει* (2.448) “all-golden” is unique here and the word *παιφάσσουσα* on line 2.450 implies darting rather than dazzling. Kirk points out that the phraseology seems to have been developed and adapted for the occasion and that we may see here the work of the main composer himself. Kirk 1985, 62. Willcock describes the aegis as a supernatural weapon of the gods. Willcock 1978, 225. The aegis in the *Iliad* is linked to Zeus, but it is also deployed by Apollo and Athena. For Zeus see *Il.* 4.167, 17.593, for Apollo 15.229; 308; 318; 361, 24.20, and for Athena see 5.738, 18.204, 21.400. See also Janko 1992, 261.

\*7 For the concept of “double motivation” and divine intervention in human war see chapter 1.

## Comments and interpretation

### *Ornithology and form*

There are three different bird references in the scene: *χήν*, *γέρανος*, and *κύκνος* and they appear in metaphorical forms. These names mark a specification and an intention to divide the group “birds”, *ὄρνιθων* (2.459),<sup>26</sup> into further categories. The geese, cranes and swans are separated in the text by the word *ἢ*, *οἷ* (2.460) which implies that they came to the plain in differentiated flocks. The birds are further examples of *ἔθνος* (pl. *ἔθνεα*), *tribes* (2.459). This effort to organise birds into different categories and to give them different names indicates a very early reflection of bird taxonomy, which is an important subfield of ornithology.

The metaphorical geese, cranes and swans behave in a lively way and their behaviour, including their loud honking and trumpeting calls, place them in early spring.<sup>27</sup> The description *glorying in their strength of wing* (2.462) may also be associated with spring when these kinds of birds, especially the males, show off their wings and plumes. As

<sup>26</sup> See LSJ s.v. *ὄρνις*.

<sup>27</sup> Kirk emphasises the links between the Asian meadow and the “Scamandrian meadow” and the connection to the flowery meadow of Scamander in line 2.467. According to him the scene has an extraordinary virtuosity with the images that are woven into one another. The word *ὥσθη* on line 2.468 is in its three other uses in the *Iliad* supported by a word for spring; here it may imply either that or simply “due season” according to Kirk. Kirk 1985, 164–165. Pollard commented that the loud cry of migrating cranes passing in skeins from North Africa to their breeding places was a familiar sound to the ancient Greeks. In ancient times when the succession of the seasons was closely associated with natural phenomena the behavior of birds was closely observed. This is not surprising as their migration followed an almost clock-like regularity. Pollard 1977, 83, 110.

important is that the description is connected as well with the birds' emotions.<sup>28</sup> It is an impressive moment for a human to observe a collective landing of such birds. The most dramatic moment to observe these birds is when they are landing in the early morning during their spring migration, as they are even livelier at this period of time. Geese, cranes and swans may look quite harmless when their wings are not open, but when they show the wings they indeed look large, strong and powerful or one can say "proud".

The sequence *and with loud cries settle ever onwards* (2.463) is also accurate in an ornithological sense since geese, swans and cranes all call in mass when they land and settle on ground. Their calls are especially apparent at early springtime. The Asian meadow by the streams of Caÿstrius is an appropriate habitat for these kinds of birds.<sup>29</sup>

The Greylag Goose, the Crane and the Whooper Swan are all migratory birds that are gregarious on passage.<sup>30</sup> They have in common that they fly in flock formations, have distinguishable flock behaviours, and loud-sounding calls. An earlier Latin name for the Whooper Swan was *Cygnus musicus*. All the species are distributed in the east Mediterranean region during the migration period when they visit wetlands, meadows and grassland regions. The Crane, *Grus grus*, also breeds in the area and substantial numbers of migrating Cranes furthermore pass the winter in Turkey. For the swans I suggest the Whooper Swan and do not include the Mute Swan, *Cygnus olor*, since this specie is not very vocal, and I consider the sound aspect of the birds an important factor in the scene.<sup>31</sup>

#### *Interactions and functions in the scene*

The flocks of birds mainly interact with each other and with the human characters. Generally the geese, cranes, and swans signify the Achaean army's military advance, i.e., its movement on the Scamander Plain towards Troy, but since the warriors are resembled to the birds they also reveal other details about the warriors. There are many

28 See LSJ s.v. ἀγάλλω 'glorify, exalt...Pass., glory, exult in a thing'. Leaf suggests that the word is used here in the primitive sense 'preening themselves', Leaf 1900, 83. Kirk pointed out the birds were "exulting in their wings", swooping about perhaps as they looked for a spot to land." Kirk 1985, 164. Willcock argued that ἀγαλλόμενα agrees with ἐθνεα and that the birds in the flocks are "delighting in", and "making a fine show with" their wings. Willcock 1978, 204.

29 For this location see note \*4, page 62. See also Vivante who emphasises that the scene is the only example where we find a place described in a way that suggests personal knowledge. Vivante 1983, 72. See also West 2011, 20–27.

30 Greylag Goose is also breeding in some parts of Turkey. Svensson & Grant 2006, 42.

31 The Whistling Swan, *Cygnus columbianus*, is also excluded because it is related to the tundra of north-east Europe and Siberia, and since its winter quarters are mainly at the Caspian and Aral Seas. Cramp & Simmons, 1977, 377. For the Greylag Goose, see Cramp & Simmons 1977, 413–422. For the Crane, see Cramp & Simmons 1980, 620–621. For the Whooper Swan, see Cramp & Simmons 1977, 385–391. For discussions on ancient sources, see also Keller 1913, 192, see also 184–193 (crane), 220–225 (goose), and 213–220, esp. 214–215 on swansong (swan). Boraston suggests Greylag Goose and Bean Goose and adds that the word certainly also served to signify other species of goose. He further suggests Mute Swan and Whooper Swan and Crane. Boraston 1911, 249. Also see Thompson 1936, 325–326 (goose), 68–75 (crane), and 178–186 (swan), and Arnott 2007, 30–31 (goose), 52–54 (crane), and 122–124 (swan). Voultziadou & Tatalos suggest Greylag Goose for χήν, Crane for γέζανος, and Whooper Swan for κύκνος. Voultziadou & Tatalos 2008, 308.

possible points of comparisons. I suggest that the geese, cranes, and swans mark that the Achaean troops and warriors were geese-, crane-, and swan-like in the sense of that they entered the Scamander Plain in large and impressive numbers,<sup>32</sup> that they with their leaders marched in several differentiated organized military groups of warriors from the same tribes or clans, cf. ἔδνεα on line 2.459,<sup>33</sup> and that they took the plain quickly. The loud honking and trumpeting from the birds indicate that the warriors made loud war cries as they entered the plain, and the birds *glorying in their strength of wing* (2.464) show that they marched on in a particular lively and glorious way; this signifies also that their war spirits were high. I also suggest that the birds chosen for the scene indicate the status of these warriors. If they had been kings and prominent warriors, they would have been metaphorically shown as eagles or any other birds of prey. All the avian details correspond to size, organization, quality, sounds from the war cries, and emotional states of the Achaean troops at this moment and give their activities, voices and states a kind of wild, avian character.

Kirk points out that “this famous simile illustrates both the numbers and movements of the troops on the one hand and the noise of their marching on the other”.<sup>34</sup> I agree that the scene is in part a simile<sup>35</sup>, and that the birds function parallelly to the humans, but in my opinion the birds have another important function, that of signals that communicate that something unusual and extraordinary is going on with the warriors and their activities and states. What I find apparent in the scene is that the Achaean warriors at a specific moment in time and space are described in such strong ways, i.e., as lively and loud-sounding birds that rapidly take possession of a meadow. They are described not only as humans, but also in a “halfway” sense as birds in activity and emotion. How they can act in this more-than-human way is an open question. We know that they had made sacrifices, were physically fit (had recently been given a meal), and they had just been ordered to fight by the military leaders.<sup>36</sup> However, we

32 Kirk emphasises that the poet is thinking of the multitude of men. Kirk 1985, 164. See also a later passage where Iris makes a comment to King Priam about the Achaean troops: *I have very often before now entered into battles of warriors, but never yet have I seen an army like this in quality and size; for like leaves or sands do they come over the plain to fight against the city.* (*Il.* 2.789–790).

33 Also see the Catalogue of Ships in *Il.* 2.494–759 which lists the contingents of the Achaean army that sailed to Troy for example the Mycenaean and the Cretans. See also West 2011, 111. The metaphorical birds in the scene add a quality that was not expressed in the bee metaphor in *Il.* 2.291–100 since the Greeks at this earlier moment appeared as one big body of warriors who were not differentiated in smaller groups. The importance of organised differentiated troops has already been referred to in the *Iliad* in two previous sequences. In the first sequence Agamemnon told the Achaean warriors that the Trojans should be gathered together while the Achaeans should be divided into ten groups, see *Il.* 2.124–130. This number may allude to ten tribes of the Achaeans that marched on the Scamander Plain as well as to ten metaphorical flocks of birds that landed on the Asian meadow. In the second sequence Nestor advised Agamemnon to separate the warriors by tribes and clans so that clan may aid clan and tribe, tribe: see *Il.* 2.362–363 and the “Background” of the scene. These two sequences make it very likely that the flocks of geese, cranes or swans in the scene metaphorically describe organisation and strategies in military advance.

34 Kirk 1985, 163–164.

35 I however prefer to label it a “bird-metaphorical utterance”. For “metaphorical utterance”, see Ricoeur 1976, 49–50 and chapter 1 and 2 in the present study concerning “metaphors”.

36 See 2.381–443.



can observe from lines 2.445–454 that Athena in particular is urging the Achaean army on with the aegis just before the metaphorical birds appear in the scene.<sup>37</sup> The warriors' strong and birdlike activities and emotions can thus partly be understood as an effect of Athena's influence on them, i.e., they behaved and appeared like this because they were not only motivated by themselves but also by her.<sup>38</sup> We know from previous passages that it was not long ago that they were eager to return home.<sup>39</sup> It seems that food, human and divine motivation changed them. What is also apparent in the scene is that the warriors were in the middle of a military advance. We know from other passages in the *Iliad* that the gods usually support humans and troops in important war events,<sup>40</sup> and that they can motivate and influence the humans' activities and emotions. A bit further on in the *Iliad* King Agamemnon is described as *a bull in a herd stands out far the chiefest, since he is preeminent among cattle as they gather, such did Zeus make Agamemnon on that day* (2.480–483). In this example it seems that Agamemnon appeared as a bull because Zeus made him that way.

### Scene 3 – *Il.* 2.494–510

494 Βοιωτῶν μὲν Πηνέλεως καὶ Λήϊτος ἦρχον  
 495 Ἀρκεσίλαος τε Προδοήνωρ τε Κλονίος τε,  
 496 οἳ δ' Ὑρίην ἐνέμοντο καὶ Αὐλίδα πετρῆεσσαν  
 497 Σχοῖνόν τε Σκῶλόν τε πολύκνημόν τ' Ἐτεωνόν,  
 498 Θέσπειαν Γραιάν τε καὶ εὐρύχορον Μυκαλησσόν,  
 499 οἳ τ' ἄμφ' Ἄρμ' ἐνέμοντο καὶ Εἰλέσιον καὶ Ἐρυθράς,  
 500 οἳ τ' Ἐλεῶν' εἶχον ἦδ' Ὑλῆν καὶ Πετεῶνα,  
 501 Ὀκαλήην Μεδεῶνά τ' εὐκτίμενον πολίεθρον,  
 502 Κώπας Εὐτρησίην τε πολυτρήρωνά τε Θίσβην,  
 503 οἳ τε Κορώνειαν καὶ ποιήενθ' Ἀλίαρτον,  
 504 οἳ τε Πλάταιαν ἔχον ἦδ' οἳ Γλισᾶντ' ἐνέμοντο,  
 505 οἳ δ' Ὑποδήβας εἶχον εὐκτίμενον πολίεθρον,  
 506 Ὀρχηστὸν δ' ἱερὸν Ποσιδῆϊον ἀγλαὸν ἄλλος,  
 507 οἳ τε πολυστάφυλον Ἄρην ἔχον, οἳ τε Μίδειαν  
 508 Νίσάν τε ζαθέην Ἀνθηδόνα τ' ἐσχατόωσαν.  
 509 τῶν μὲν πεντήκοντα νέες κίον, ἐν δὲ ἐκάστη  
 510 κοῦροι Βοιωτῶν ἑκατὸν καὶ εἴκοσι βαῖνον.

*The Boeotians were led by Peneleos and Leitus, and Arcesilaus and Prothoënor and Clonius; these were they who dwelt in Hyria and rocky Aulis and Schoenus and Scolus and Eteonus with its many ridges, Thespeia, Graea, and spacious Mycalessus; and who dwelt around Harma and Eilesium and Erythrae; and who held Elon and Hyle and Peteon, Ocalea and Medeon, the well-built citadel, Copae, Eutresis, and Thisbe, the haunt of doves; and who dwelt in Coroneia and grassy Haliartus, and who held Plataea and dwelt in Glisas; and they who held lower Thebes, the well-built citadel, and holy Onchestus, the bright grove of Poseidon; and they who held Arne, rich in vines, and Mideia and sacred Nisa and Anthedon on the seashore. Of these came fifty ships, and on each went one hundred and twenty young men of the Boeotians.*

(*Il.* 2.494–510)

37 The kings seem to be under some influence of Zeus at this moment, see *The kings, nurtured by Zeus* (2.445).

38 For the concept of “double motivation”, see chapter 1. According to Kirk Athena's divine intervention on lines 2.445–454 is in one respect metaphorical, since she does not take human appearance, or say anything, and nor does the troops see her. They just seem to have felt her presence as she filled them with strength at line 2.451. Kirk 1985, 162. Jones points out that the troops are not said to see Athena, but that she certainly has an effect on them as a god of war who inspires men to battle. Concerning lines 2.455–473 though, which the quoted bird scene is part of Jones comment is that similes announce the advance into battle. Jones 2002, 74. Also compare with *Il.* 20.54: *Thus did the blessed gods urge on the two armies to clash in battle* (*Il.* 20.54–55). See also *Il.* 4 where Hera tells Zeus: *Most dread son of Cronos, what a word you have said! How can you be minded to make my labor vain and of no effect, and the sweat that I sweated in my toil — and my two horses grew weary with my summoning the army as an evil for Priam and his sons?* (*Il.* 4.25–29). See also *Il.* 4.439–441.

39 See *Il.* 2.147–154

40 See for example *Il.* 20.54–55.

## Background

The passage above is the first part of the so called Catalogue of Ships, *Il.* 2.494–759, which is a list of the Achaean contingents as reported in *Il.* 2.<sup>41</sup> It systematically links regions and localities with kings and specific heroes and their people, and sometimes the locality is given a descriptive epithet that offers further differentiation or importance.<sup>42</sup> The main scholarly questions have concerned the extent of historical credibility of the Catalogue of Ships: whether it was composed by Homer himself, to what extent it reflects a pre-Homeric document or remembered tradition, surviving perhaps in part from Mycenaean times, or whether it is a result of post-Homeric development.<sup>43</sup> Edzard Visser concludes that the Catalogue is compatible with the rest of the *Iliad* in its techniques of verse improvisation, that the order of the names is meaningful and that the geographical epithets indicate concrete geographical knowledge. Visser further argues that this knowledge was transmitted by the heroic myth, elements of which introduce each geographical section.<sup>44</sup>

The scene above differs from all other scenes in the material since it seems that the doves refer to and are associated with the physical location Thisbe<sup>45</sup> and nothing more. I have chosen to include the scene in the material since the doves can be identified by family, genus, or species of birds according to current animal taxonomy.

Returning now to the scene above: When the Achaean leaders had marshaled the men on the Scamander Plain, the poet asked the Muses, who had their dwellings on Olympus and who knew all things, who were the leaders and lords of the Achaeans. With the help from the Muses the poet then started to describe the Achaean troops.<sup>46</sup>

## Analysis

Aspects	Scene 3 – <i>Il.</i> 2.494–510
<b>Ornithology</b>	
Greek bird reference	πολυτρήρων (2.502)
Lexica	LSJ s.v. ‘abounding in doves, <i>Il.</i> 2.502, 582.’ Cunliffe s.v. ‘Haunted by pigeons’

<sup>41</sup> A much shorter passage lists the Trojans and their allies in *Il.* 2.816–877.

<sup>42</sup> See Willcock 1978, 206–212. See also Kirk who emphasises that the systematic presentation of the catalogue indicates that the poet had some understanding of the geography of the region. Kirk 1985, 166–240.

<sup>43</sup> See Anderson 1995 181–191 and Page 1959, 132, 134. See also Minton, who discusses the catalogues in Homer and Hesiod and suggests that part of their purpose was to impress the audience with a display of the poet’s memory, Minton 1962, 188–212. Also see West 2011, 111–121.

<sup>44</sup> Visser 1997.

<sup>45</sup> According to Kirk the location “Thisbe” is confirmed by inscriptions near the modern town of the same name “about four kilometres from the sea in the Permessus valley (B11) in the Greek mainland.” He adds that modern pigeons have been observed in large numbers in the neighbourhood. Kirk 1985, 175, 193.

<sup>46</sup> See *Il.* 2.469–493.

THE BIRD SCENES

Aspects	Scene 3 – <i>Il.</i> 2.494–510
<b>Ornithology</b>	
Behaviour and characteristics	Large numbers of doves
Time context	Unspecific
Spatial context	Thisbe where the Boeotians lived.
Ornithological accuracy	High
Suggested taxonomic status	Doves, presumably the Rock Dove, <i>Columbia livia</i>
<b>Form</b>	Other
<b>Interactions</b>	
Birds and birds	Large numbers of doves at Thisbe.
Birds and other animals	-
Birds and humans	The Boeotians lived at Thisbe where there were many doves.
Birds and gods	-
<b>Functions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Add an informative detail, something characteristic about the location of Thisbe, i.e., that there was a large number of doves.</li> <li>• The informative detail may have aided a more collective, oral spatial memory.</li> </ul>

### Comments and interpretation

#### *Ornithology and form*

The scene enumerates the places where the Boeotians dwelt where Thisbe is described as *Thisbe, the haunt of doves* (2.502). Since the doves are not physically present in the activities in the *Iliad* I have classified them as being in “other” form. It is the great numbers of doves that is the important aspect in the description. *Πολυτρήρων* is the word used. *Πολύ* means “many” and according to LSJ *τρήρων* means ‘timorous, shy, in Hom. always epith. of doves’. LSJ supplement says: ‘epith. of, or name for, dove’.<sup>47</sup> Kirk points out that *πολυτρήρωνα* at *Il.* 2.502 and 2.592 shows that *τρήρων* can also be a substantive, the name of the genus, or it can be the wild Rock Dove. He refers further to Hesychius who glossed *τρήρων* as light and swift.<sup>48</sup> There is thus an uncertainty concerning this word.

Rock Doves are gregarious, especially when roosting, feeding and flying some distance. They are commonly seen in pairs or small flocks. Where food is abundant considerable numbers sometimes gather, and there are reports of hundreds and up to 6000 individuals in such flocks. The natural habitat is linked with its nesting sites on rock

<sup>47</sup> See LSJ s.v. *πολυτρήρων* and s.v. *τρήρων*.

<sup>48</sup> Kirk 1990, 139.

faces, especially coastal ones. Rock Doves are discreet birds that are on the look-out for predators. Their relative timidity towards man is mainly due to past treatment. At the sight of a human or any other ground predator, a Rock Dove usually freezes in an erect Alarm posture with its neck extended and feathers sleeked. It can even start to shake its feathers on these occasions.<sup>49</sup> It is possible that the timidity and observant natures of Rock Doves may have inspired the word *τρήρων*. Since *πέλεια* elsewhere in the *Iliad* signifies a Rock Dove and since this species gather in large flocks I would like to suggest that Rock Doves are used also in this scene.<sup>50</sup>

*Interactions and functions in the scene*

As argued this bird scene is unusual in the *Iliad* since it seems that the doves refer to the physical location of Thisbe and nothing more. The main function of the doves is to add an informative detail and a characteristic about the geographical location of Thisbe. Elisabeth Minchin suggests that the Catalogues as a genre supported the bard's memory as a "cognitive map".<sup>51</sup> The different descriptive and informative details that occur in relation to different physical locations in the Catalogue of Ships may thus have helped the poet to remember and structure different spatial localities. In a wider sense, I would like to suggest that the informative detail of Thisbe as *the haunt of doves* (2.502) may have aided the collective oral spatial memory.

Since doves are associated with gods in other scenes of the *Iliad*<sup>52</sup> and since doves in the *Odyssey* are explicitly said to bring ambrosia to Zeus as food<sup>53</sup> it is possible that the doves in the scene also have divine connotations. I have found no indication however for such an association in the scene context.

49 Cramp 1985, 285–286, 288, 290.

50 For doves in Homer and other ancient sources see Pollard 1977, 89–90. According to Pollard *περιστερά* and *πέλεια* were names for pigeons in general whereas *πέλεια* was applied to the Rock Dove and Stock Dove. Pollard 1977, 56. According to Thompson *πέλεια* in Homer undoubtedly means Rock Dove. Thompson 1936, 225–231, esp. 226–227, see also 238–247. Also see Keller 1913, 122–131.

51 Minchin 2001, 84–87. Minchin further refers to Rubin who discusses our memory for spatial imagery. According to Rubin "oral traditions seems to be remarkable spatial." Rubin 1995, 59.

52 See SCENES 7 and 20.

53 See *Od.* 12.62–64. According to Pollard doves were also said to have fed the infant Zeus in the Cretan cave. Pollard 1977, 57, see also 148, 182. For doves that bring ambrosia and nectar to the gods see also Keller 1913, 124.

THE BIRD SCENES

Scene 4 – *Il.* 2.581–590

581 Οἳ δ' εἶχον κοίλην Λακεδαίμονα κητώεσσαν,  
 582 Φᾶρίν τε Σπάρτην τε πολυτρήρωνά τε Μέσσην,  
 583 Βρυσειάς τ' ἐνέμοντο καὶ Αὐγείας ἐρατεινάς,  
 584 οἳ τ' ἄρ' Ἀμύκλας εἶχον Ἔλος τ' ἔφαλον πτολίεθρον,  
 585 οἳ τε Λάαν εἶχον ἠδ' Ὀϊτυλον ἀμφενέμοντο,  
 586 τῶν οἳ ἀδελφεὸς ἦρχε βοήν ἀγαθὸς Μενέλαος,  
 587 ἐξήκοντα νεῶν· ἀπάτερθε δὲ θωρήσσοντο.  
 588 ἐν δ' αὐτὸς κίεν ἦσι προθυμίησι πεποιθὼς,  
 589 ὀτρύνων πόλεμον δέ· μάλιστα δὲ ἔετο θυμῷ  
 590 τίσασθαι Ἑλένης ὀρμήματά τε στοναχὰς τε.

And they who held the hollow land of Lacedaemon  
 with its many ravines, and Pharis and Sparta and Messe,  
 the haunt of **doves**, and who dwelt in Bryseiae and lovely  
 Augeiae, and who held Amyclae and Helos, a citadel by the  
 sea, and who held Laas, and dwelt about Oetylus – these  
 were led by Agamemnon's brother, Menelaus, good at the  
 war cry, with sixty ships; and they were marshaled apart.  
 And he himself moved among them, confident in his zeal,  
 urging his men to battle; and above all others was his heart  
 eager to get requital for his strivings and groanings over Helen.

(*Il.* 2.581-590)

Background

The passage above is another part of the Catalogue of Ships where the poet, with the help from the Muses, lists and describes the Greek contingents.

Analysis

Aspects	Scene 4 – <i>Il.</i> 2.581–590
<b>Ornithology</b>	
Greek bird reference	πολυτρήρων (2.582)
Lexica	LSJ s.v. ‘abounding in doves, <i>Il.</i> 2.502, 582’ Cunliffe s.v. ‘Haunted by pigeons’
Behaviour and characteristics	Large numbers of doves.
Time context	Unspecific
Spatial context	Messe in Lacedaemon.
Ornithological accuracy	High
Suggested taxonomic status	Doves, presumably the Rock Dove, <i>Columbia livia</i> .
<b>Form</b>	Other
<b>Interactions</b>	
Birds and birds	Large numbers of doves at Messe.
Birds and other animals	-
Birds and humans	The Lacedaemoneans lived at Messe.
Birds and gods	-
<b>Functions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Add an informative detail, something characteristic about Messe, i.e., that there was a large number of doves.</li> <li>• The informative detail may have aided a more collective, oral spatial memory.</li> </ul>

## Comments and interpretation

### *Ornithology and form*

The scene enumerates the places in the land of Lacedaemon where Messe is a place that is known for its doves, i.e., *Messe, the haunt of doves* (2.502).<sup>54</sup> Since the doves are not physically present in the activities in the *Iliad* I have classified them as being in “other” form. As in SCENE 3 it is the great numbers of doves that is the important aspect in the description.<sup>55</sup>

The information about the doves in the scene is sparse, but since *πέλεια* elsewhere in the *Iliad* signifies a Rock Dove and since Rock Doves often gather in large flocks, I suggest that Rock Doves are used here also.<sup>56</sup> Their timidity and observant natures, as I have suggested,<sup>57</sup> may have inspired the word *τρήρων*.

### *Interactions and functions in the scene*

This bird scene is unusual in the same way as SCENE 3 since the doves seem to refer to the physical location of Messe and nothing more. The function of the doves is to add an informative detail and a characteristic about the geographical location of Messe, i.e., to tell that there were large numbers of doves. As described earlier Elisabeth Minchin suggests that the Catalogues as a genre supported the bard’s memory as a “cognitive map”.<sup>58</sup> In a wider sense, I would like to suggest, that the informative detail of Messe as *the haunt of doves* (2.502) may have aided the collective oral spatial memory.

## Scene 5 – *Il.* 3.1–9

1 Αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ κόσμηθεν ἄμ' ἠγεμόνεσσιν ἕκαστοι,  
2 Τρῶες μὲν κλαγγῇ τ' ἐνοπῆ τ' ἴσαν ὄρνιθες ὡς  
3 ἦῦτε περ κλαγγῇ γεράνων πέλει οὐρανόθι πρό,  
4 αἶ τ' ἐπεὶ οἶν χειμῶνα φύγον καὶ ἀδέσφατον ὄμβρον,  
5 κλαγγῇ ταί γε πέτονται ἐπ' ὠκεανοῖο ῥοάων,  
6 ἀνδράσι Πυγμαίοισι φόνον καὶ κῆρα φέρουσαι,  
7 ἠέριαι δ' ἄρα ταί γε κακὴν ἔριδα προφέρουσαι.  
8 οἱ δ' ἄρ' ἴσαν σιγῇ μένεα πνεῖοντες Ἀχαιοί,  
9 ἐν θυμῷ μεμαῶτες ἀλεξέμεν ἀλλήλοισιν.

*Now when they were marshaled, the several companies with their leaders, the Trojans came on with clamor and a cry, like birds, like the clamor of cranes that arises before the face of heaven when they flee from wintry storms and boundless rain, and with clamor fly toward the streams of Ocean, bringing slaughter and death to Pygmy men, and in the early dawn they offer evil strife. But the Achaeans came on in silence, breathing fury, eager at heart to come and assist each other.*

(*Il.* 3.1–9)

54 For *πολυτρήρων* see SCENE 3.

55 Kirk translates Messe ‘of many pigeons’ He further comments that Messe “is usually identified with Pausanias’ Messa (3.25.9f.) on the west coast of the Tainaron peninsula, and that with the site of the Frankish Castle of Maina on the Tigani promontory, where there are some possibly Mycenaean remains – and some pigeons nearby (HSL 77), as on many Greek cliffs.” Kirk 1985, 213.

56 Also see Cramp 1985, 285–286, 288, 290. See also SCENE 3. For doves in Homer and other ancient sources see Pollard 1977, 89–90. According to Pollard *περιστέρα* and *πέλεια* were names for pigeons in general whereas *πέλεια* was applied to the Rock Dove and Stock Dove. Pollard 1977, 56. According to Thompson *πέλεια* in Homer undoubtedly means Rock Dove. Thompson 1936, 225–231, esp. 226–227, see also 238–247. Also see Keller 1913, 122–131.

57 See SCENE 3.

58 Minchin 2001, 84–87.

## Background

Before the scene starts the poet has given a long description of who the leaders of the Achaeans were and where they came from. The goddess Iris then came to the Trojans in the likeness of Polites, one of King Priam's sons, with a grievous message. As him she spoke to Priam and told him about the quality and size of the Achaean troops. Since the Trojan allies spoke with different tongues she advised Hector to let each leader of a tribe marshal each tribe. Hector recognized the voice of the goddess and broke up the assembly. The Trojans rushed to arms and the foot soldiers and charioteers were gathered outside the gates. Short after the Trojans and their allies gathered again and separated their companies<sup>59</sup> *in front of the city on a steep mound far out in the plain, with a clear space around it on all sides; this men call Batieia, but the immortals call it the grave mound of Myrine, light of step* (Il. 3.811–815). Then the poet continued to describe the Trojan troops and leaders and where their allies came from.

## Analysis

Aspects	Scene 5 – Il. 3.1–9
<b>Ornithology</b>	
Greek bird reference	γέρανος (3.3)
Lexica	LSJ s.v. 'crane, <i>Grus cinerea</i> , Il. 3.3' <sup>*1</sup> Cunliffe s.v. 'A crane'
Behaviour and characteristics	Flock behaviour: clamoring cranes that rise high up in the air when they are about to start their winter migration towards the streams of Ocean where they will perform some kind of collective act that will injure and kill the pygmy men.
Time context	The behaviours and sounds of the birds indicate that they are in the middle of their winter migration which suggests autumn or early winter. The scene refers to wintry storms. The part concerning the pygmy men refers to the future.
Spatial context	The location for the take off is unspecified but the destination is given as the streams of Ocean <sup>*2</sup> where the pygmies were located. The cranes rise high in the air and fly to the streams of Ocean.
Ornithological accuracy	High
Suggested taxonomic status	γέρανος: Crane, <i>Grus grus</i>
<b>Form</b>	Metaphorical
<b>Interactions</b>	
Birds and birds	Flock behaviour: clamouring cranes that rose high up in the air when they were about to start their winter migration towards the streams of Ocean where they would perform some kind of collective act that would do the pygmy men harm

<sup>59</sup> Il. 2.485–810.

THE BIRDS IN THE *ILIAD*

Aspects	Scene 5 – // 3.1–9
<p><b>Interactions</b></p> <p>Birds and other animals</p> <p>Birds and humans</p> <p>Birds and gods</p>	<p>-</p> <p>Describe the Trojan troops and their allies in a crane-like, parallel way when they advanced together towards the Achaeans. The “crane metaphor” indicates that there was something unusual with the warriors at this moment.</p> <p>The cranes are antagonists of the pygmy men that they intended to fight.</p> <p>-</p>
<p><b>Functions</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Crane-specific metaphorical parallels that describe the Trojan troops when they advanced towards the Achaeans.</li> <li>• Bring information about the Trojan troops and their advance at this moment in time and space.</li> <li>• Mark that these warriors were organised and advanced against the Achaeans in one big group.</li> <li>• Indicate that they were rather confused and un-organised.</li> <li>• Indicate that Hector did not follow Iris advice to organise his troops in different units.</li> <li>• Mark that their intentions and emotions were diversified and that they felt horror and aggression.</li> <li>• Emphasise that they made war cries as they marched on.</li> <li>• Signs being part of an omen that reveal information about the Trojans and the coming war activities between the Trojans and the Achaeans.</li> <li>• Indicate that the Trojans advanced towards their enemies from an elevated position that was higher than the spatial position of their enemies.</li> <li>• Predict that fighting would soon take place between the Trojans and the Achaeans on the plain nearby the Scamander River and the Simoeis River.</li> <li>• Indicate that they viewed the Achaean warriors as small in stature and that they were intended to give them a fight.</li> <li>• Indicate the status of the warriors.</li> <li>• Give their activities, voices and states a kind of wild, avian character.</li> <li>• Signal that it there was something unusual and more-than-human about the Trojan warriors at this moment which may be a result of double motivation.</li> </ul>

\*1 *Grus cinerea* is an older Latin name for the Crane, *Grus grus*.

\*2 Kirk suggests that this location indicates the ends of the earth rather than specifically to the south. Kirk 1985, 264.



## Comments and interpretation

### *Ornithology and form*

The γέγρανος appear in metaphorical forms. The ornithological descriptions refer to the winter migration of the cranes, see line 3.3–4 that indicates a movement direction from east to west or south west.<sup>60</sup> The focus is further on the calls of the cranes: *like the clamor of cranes that arises before the face of heaven when they flee from wintry storms and boundless rain, and with clamor fly towards the streams of Ocean* (3.3–5). The description is accurate in an ornithological sense since it focuses on the moment cranes rise up very high in the air, and when they are up there are trumpeting loudly to each other as they get collected to leave for their winter quarters. This moment is a time of some confusion, since the flock has not yet gotten fully organised in flock formation. The clanging trumpeting notes at take-off are especially characteristic of the Crane which is a detail that suggests this species. Pollard emphasises that the Cranes during migration appoint flight commanders, who are familiar with the route and who would naturally be among the older birds, whose duties include bringing up the rear. When they find a favourable wind blowing from behind, they form an acute-angled triangle in their flight so that when they take to the air they may cleave it and most easily complete their journey.<sup>61</sup> In addition to the V-shaped formations, Cranes also form oblique lines during migration. They are experts in soaring flight and they fly remarkably high when departing for their winter quarters, which is a detail that corresponds with the spatial position of the cranes in the scene. Cranes winters in north and north-east Africa.<sup>62</sup>

Scholars have argued that the war between the cranes and pygmies in the *Iliad* refers to a folk-tale. This does not exclude that the tale and the scene, at least in parts, had a realistic background.<sup>63</sup> It is known today that large number of Cranes occasion great damage to winter cereals and crops when they winter in east Africa. If such extensive feeding results in big losses in harvest today, similar situations probably occurred in ancient times. During dry periods feeding cranes may have caused famine and even resulting death for indigenous people if not repelled, and the description of the war

60 See also Willcock who suggests south. Willcock 1978, 215.

61 Pollard 1977, 83.

62 For the distribution, migration and calls of the Crane see Cramp & Simmons 1980, 618–626. Also see Svensson & Grant 2006, 118.

63 Kirk refers to the folk-tale of the war of the cranes and Pygmies which was a popular theme later as well, first on the Attic black-figure François vase painted by Kleitias from about 570 BC. It is possible that the idea of the war between pygmies and cranes derived from a lost Egyptian folk-tale. Herodotus had heard of little men in the heart of Africa, see Hdt. 3.32.6. Kirk suggests that the idea of the pygmies may have been based on facts and refers to Aristotele who also thought this in his *Hist. An.* 8.597a6. Kirk 1985, 265. Also see Pollard 1977, 181. Willcock refers to a folk story that reflected some knowledge of a diminutive African tribe. He suggests that the idea in the scene arose from the sight of cranes flying south, uttering loud sounds. Willcock 1978, 216. Jones points out that there were pygmies living in the White Nile region and that Greeks knew that cranes migrated south. Jones 2003, 86. Also see Arnott 2007, 53–54; Thompson 1936, 72–73; Keller 1913, 188–190. To mention is also that the motif of the pygmies fighting the cranes are depicted on the François vase (c 575 BC with 19 pygmies mounted on goats fighting 14 Cranes), and on a fragment from a Corinthian portable clay altar (c 530–520 BC). See also Arnott 2007, 53–54.

between the cranes and pygmies might refer to such struggle. Probably the “pygmies” were a people short in stature who protected their crops and themselves against the large cranes.<sup>64</sup> The fact mentioned in *Il.* 3.7, that the cranes would arrive at early dawn and fight the pygmies suit the habits of Cranes since they move to their feeding areas at this time of day.<sup>65</sup>

*Interactions and functions in the scene*

The metaphorical cranes interact with each other and with the human characters. Since the cranes are described together in one group we can suspect that the Trojans were organized in a similar way: i.e., that they advanced against the Achaeans in one large group. Further, the descriptions of the cranes gives information about the warriors’ emotions and intentions at this important moment: i.e., the cranes wanted to flee from cold and hard times, and their future actions refer to aggression and war with pygmy men. The diversified emotions of the cranes thus indicate that the Trojans were confused in their emotions and that they felt both horror and aggression.<sup>66</sup> The cranes thus reveal their deepest human emotions at the tense moment of their military advance. The clamor and cries from the cranes further emphasise that the Trojans made loud war cries at the moment of their advance as opposed to the silent Achaeans, see *Il.* 3.8–9.<sup>67</sup> There are also some other possible parallels between the cranes and the Trojans that I would like to suggest. Based on the ornithological facts on how cranes rise very high up in the air and that they gather in a rather unorganized way there before they leave for their winter quarters, I suggest that the cranes mark that the Trojan troops, at least initially advanced, against the Achaeans in one rather confused and unorganized unit.<sup>68</sup> Hector had further got the advice from Iris to let each leader of a tribe marshal his tribe.<sup>69</sup> The united flock of cranes seems to indicate that Hector failed to organize them in this way, which might also say something about his skills in military organisation.<sup>70</sup>

Except from the functions above I would like to suggest that the cranes are also

64 The length of the Crane is estimated to 96–119 cm with a wingspan of 180–222 cm. Svensson & Grant 2006, 118.

65 According to Arnott *γέγρανος* is universally the Crane, *Grus grus*. Arnott 2007, 52–54. Also Boraston suggests Crane. Boraston 1911, 249, and Voultziadou & Tatalos 2008, 308. According to Pollard the ancient authorities did not distinguish between the Crane and the Demoiselle Crane. Pollard 1977, 84. See also Keller 1913, 184–193 and Thompson 1936, 68–75.

66 See also Kirk who suggests that the birds’ horror of winter is implied in the scene. Kirk 1985, 265.

67 Many scholars have pointed out that the clamour of the Trojans appears in contrast to the silence and discipline of the Achaean troops on lines 8–9. See Willcock 1976, 39; Willcock 1978, 216; Kirk 1985, 265, and Jones 2003, 86.

68 As opposed to the Achaean troops who metaphorically were signified as flocks of geese, cranes, and swans in SCENE 2.

69 See the “Background” of the scene and *Il.* 2.786–810.

70 Compare also with *Il.* 12.60–87 that describes Polydamas who advised Hector in war tactics and how Hector at that time followed his advice and let the Trojan troops be grouped in five companies after their leaders. According to Kirk the simile on lines 3.3–5 is closely related to *Il.* 2.459–265, i.e., SCENE 2. He identified the common elements as the cranes, their noise, and more loosely their landing or taking off and their association with rivers. Kirk 1985, 264. Jones further emphasises the chaotic noise of the Trojans who have yet to enter battle. Jones 2003, 86. According to Willcock the scene expresses “a moralizing contrast between the disorganized Trojans and the well-disciplined Greeks.” Willcock 1976, 39. See also West 2011, 127.

operating as signals. What I find apparent is that the Trojan warriors temporarily are described in an unusual way as rising, emotive and clamouring wild cranes. With the avian layer in the description they do not appear as humans entirely but halfway as birds. When acting in such bird-like strong way it seems that they exceeded their human capacities for a moment of time and space which, as I suggest, can be understood as a result of “double motivating”.<sup>71</sup> I find it likely that a god, one or many, intervene in the warrior’s activities at this important moment when they for the first time advance against the Achaean warriors. I would further like to suggest that “double motivation” can explain why the emotions of the Trojans were so diversified at this moment.

There is something more to say also about the Cranes’ relation to the pygmies. It is told that the cranes were *bringing slaughter and death to Pygmy men, and in the early dawn they offer evil strife* (3.5–7). This passage clearly refers to the future. Who among the humans except the Trojans were intended to fight? The Achaeans, who made themselves ready to clash with the Trojans in battle. There is thus a possible correspondence in the scene between the Achaean warriors and the pygmy men. In such a view the cranes operate as signs being part of an omen that reveals information about the clashing between the Trojans and the Achaeans that will soon take place. I would also like to suggest that the streams of Ocean,<sup>72</sup> which is the destination for the Cranes and the place for the combat with the pygmies, function as a spatial parallel that is associated with the two rivers at Troy, the Scamander River and the Simoeis River, and that the Trojans and Achaeans will soon physically clash in the nearby surroundings of these rivers. This is also what happens. Most of the general fighting in the *Iliad* takes place between these two rivers.<sup>73</sup> Interestingly Walter Leaf suggested that there are strong reasons for supposing that there was only one river named in the original legend.<sup>74</sup> If one looks at the pygmies as possible parallels to the Achaeans and if one views the Trojans as parallels to the Cranes that will arrive from above, this implies that also the Trojans would attack their enemies from above. Where can such place be situated and how can the Trojans look on the stately Achaeans as pygmies? Only if the Trojan warriors observed the Achaean warriors from a distance and/or from high above would they look small, and this would make a visual illusion. The *Iliad* tells that the Trojan troops collected on a steep mound called Batiëia, see *Il.* 2.811–815 and “The background of the scene”. The illusion of the mighty Achaeans as small in size is however contradicted by King Priam, who thought that the Achaeans were tall and powerful when he

71 See also my interpretation of SCENE 2. For the concept of “double motivation” see chapter 1.

72 See also note \*2, page 72.

73 Kirk 1990, 138. For example see *Il.* 6.1–4. See also SCENE 7, *Il.* 5:773–774.

74 Leaf 1900, 246.

observed them from *his* look-out point at the citadel of Troy. The Achaeans that Priam observed were three of their top warriors.<sup>75</sup>

### Scene 6 – *Il.* 4.234–239

234 “Ἀργεῖοι μὴ πῶ τι μεδίετε θούριδος ἀλκῆς·  
235 οὐ γὰρ ἐπὶ ψευδέσσι πατήρ Zeus ἔσσειτ’ ἀρωγός·  
236 ἀλλ’ οἱ περ πρότεροι ὑπὲρ ὄρκια δηλήσαντο,  
237 τῶν ἦτοι αὐτῶν τέρενα χροῶ γῦπες ἔδονται,  
238 ἡμεῖς αὖτ’ ἀλόχους τε φίλας καὶ νήπια τέκνα  
239 ἄξομεν ἐν νήεσσι, ἐπὴν πτολίεθρον ἔλωμεν.”

“Argives, do not relax your furious  
valor; for father Zeus will be no helper of lies; but they who  
were the first to work violence in defiance of their oaths,  
their tender flesh **vultures** will surely devour, and more-  
over we shall carry away in our ships their dear wives and  
little ones, when we have taken their citadel.”

(*Il.* 4.234–239)

### Background

Before the Trojan and Achaean troops clashed, single combat between Paris and King Menelaus was arranged and an oath was taken where all the other Trojans and Achaeans promised to put aside their armour. The winner of the single combat would win Helen and all her possessions, and the others would swear friendship and oaths. King Priam was called for, King Agamemnon prayed to Zeus, and two lambs were sacrificed. Menelaus would have killed Paris in the combat and dragged him away by the strap of his helmet if Aphrodite had not intervened. She broke the strap so that Menelaus ended up with the helmet in his hands. Before Menelaus’ next attack Aphrodite snatched Paris up, shrouded him in a thick mist and took him back to his chamber. Since no one could find Paris anywhere, Agamemnon announced that Menelaus was the winner of the combat.<sup>76</sup> Meanwhile the gods assembled and looked out on the city of the Trojans. Zeus asked the gods what their pleasure was: war or friendship between the armies. Hera and Athena were angered by Zeus since they planned misfortune for the Trojans. After some talking Zeus agreed that Hera could order Athena to arrange it so that the Trojans would be the first to violate the oath. At Troy Athena persuaded the son of Lycaon to shoot an arrow at Menelaus. The arrow just wounded him a little since Athena protected him. Agamemnon shuddered as he saw the blood flowing from the wound and realised that the Trojans had been the first to break the oath. When Menelaus’ wound had been taken care of by Machaon, the healer, the Achaeans put on their battle gear again. Agamemnon was again eager for battle and spoke to the Achaean warriors.<sup>77</sup>

75 For King Priam’s view of King Agamemnon, see *Il.* 3.166–179, of Odysseus 3.191–202, and of Aias 3.225–223.

76 *Il.* 3.10–3.461.

77 *Il.* 3.462–4.233.

THE BIRD SCENES

**Analysis**

Aspects	Scene 6 – Il. 4.234–239
<b>Ornithology</b>	
Greek bird reference	γύψ (4.237)
Lexica	LSJ s.v. ‘vulture, prob. including several species’ Cunliffe s.v. ‘a vulture (except in λ578 always preying on carrion. Cf. αἰγυπιός)’
Behaviour and characteristics	Collective behaviours. Will devour the tender flesh of Trojan warriors. Scavengers.
Time context	Future.
Spatial context	Unspecified, but is associated with the Scamander Plain where the Trojan War takes place.
Ornithological accuracy	High
Suggested taxonomic status	Carrion-eating vultures: Griffon Vulture, <i>Gyps fulvus</i> , Black Vulture, <i>Aegypius monachus</i> and Egyptian Vulture, <i>Neophron percnopterus</i> .
<b>Form</b>	Image
<b>Interactions</b>	
Birds and birds	Collective vulture behaviours: vultures that together will devour the flesh of humans.
Birds and other animals	-
Birds and humans	Will devour the tender flesh of Trojan warriors. Agamemnon used the birds in a “vulture image” when he prophesied about coming events.
Birds and gods	Zeus is mentioned in the scene context, but not in direct reference to the vultures, see line 4.235.
<b>Functions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vulture image that describes and predicts the future.</li> <li>• Agamemnon used the “vulture image” in a speech as a way to motivate his troops to fight.</li> <li>• Predicts that the Trojan warriors will soon be food for vultures.</li> <li>• Implies wild aggression and violent treatment of fallen warriors’ corpses.</li> <li>• Implies that the warriors’ corpses will not be taken care of and buried according to the proper traditions.</li> <li>• Implies horrifying and tragic consequences of human war.</li> </ul>

**Comments and interpretation**

*Ornithology and form*

The description of the vultures is restricted to one sequence when King Agamemnon says *their tender flesh vultures will surely devour* (4.237). Agamemnon here refers to and

uses the birds in a vulture image. From an ornithological point of view the sequence is apt since most vultures are carrion-eaters, and it is likely that most species of vultures feed on human corpses. Individual vultures fly with other ones to locate food and congregate collectively around carcasses.

According to Pollard, Thompson, and Boraston *γύψ* is a generic word for vultures. They suggested that three species of vultures were used in Homer, Griffon Vulture, *Gyps fulvus*, Black Vulture, *Gyps monachus*, and the smaller Egyptian Vulture, *Neophron percnopterus*.<sup>78</sup>

The Griffon Vulture, *Gyps fulvus*, is perhaps the most characteristic carrion eater of all. It is dominant over Egyptian Vulture, *Neophron percnopterus*, but subordinate to the Black Vulture, *Aegyptius monachus*. Different species of vultures are specialised in that they take different parts of the carrion: the Griffon Vulture feeds mainly on soft tissues such as muscle and viscera of medium to large mammals. With its sharp-edged beak it quickly cuts through the soft meat, and a series of sharp spines on the tongue allows it to swallow slippery meat and viscera. In comparison to the Griffon Vulture, the Black Vulture has a stronger bill which it uses to tear through skin, and it is specialised in taking tougher muscle tissues, tendons, and skins from carrion. The Egyptian Vulture feeds on much that is not part of the major diet of larger vultures: it eats not only carrion but also much organic rubbish and when feeding with other vultures it picks up mainly scraps and pecks at bones. Since it is likely that all species would feed on the flesh of human corpses I suggest that they can all apply to the vultures in the scene.<sup>79</sup>

#### *Interactions and functions in the scene*

Agamemnon used the birds in a “vulture image” when he prophesied about coming events. He predicted that vultures would soon devour the corpses of Trojan warriors, and he used the image as a way to motivate his troops to fight.<sup>80</sup> The implication of such behaviour is the mutilation of human bodies made by wild and aggressive vultures. It is in many aspects a threatening and horrifying image of the future since it also means that the Trojans and the Trojan wives cannot take care of the bodies of the fallen warriors and burn them in a proper way and according to the traditions.<sup>81</sup>

78 Pollard 1977, 80; Thompson 1936, 82; Boraston 1911, 216, 239. Also see Keller who added the Nubian Vulture. Keller 1913, 30–36. Arnott says that *γύψ* is a general name for ‘Vulture’. Arnott 2007, 60. According to Thompson *γύψ* was usually used in Homer to express feeding on carrion. Thompson 1936, 82. Pollard observes that Homer and later poets emphasise vultures’ carrion habits. Pollard 1977, 80. Also see Voultziadou & Tatalos who suggest Griffon Vulture, Voultziadou & Tatalos 2008, 307.

79 All mentioned species are distributed in Turkey. Cramp & Simmons 1977, 58–61, 64–67, 73–76, 89–91. Also see Svensson & Grant 2006, 70–75.

80 Edwards comments that corpses to be eaten by vultures and dogs are a common motif in the *Iliad*, used for warnings, threats and taunts. Edwards 1991, 178. Also see Griffin 1976, 169–172 and Willcock 1978, 225.

81 See for example. *Il.* 7.79–80 and 15.349–351. For the theme of the mutilation of the corpses in the *Iliad*, see Segal 1971.

In this way and in a deeper sense as well, the vultures emphasise both the consequences as well as the tragedy of war.

Just before Agamemnon spoke about the vultures he mentioned Zeus, i.e., that *father Zeus will be no helper of lies* (4.235). His words indicate that there will be no divine help in war for those who have lied, i.e., broken an oath, even if the vultures were coming to them to feed on their bodies. Kirk comments that Agamemnon focusses on the Trojans' crime since he wants to encourage an Achaean victory.<sup>82</sup>

### Scene 7 – Il. 5.773–795

773 ἀλλ' ὅτε δὴ Τροίην Ἴξον ποταμῷ τε ῥέοντε,  
774 ἦχι ῥοὰς Σιμόεις συμβάλλετον ἠδὲ Σκάμανδρος,  
775 ἔνθ' ἵππους ἔστησε θεὰ λευκώλενος Ἥρη  
776 λύσασ' ἐξ ὄχεων, περὶ δ' ἠέρα πουλὺν ἔχευε·  
777 τοῖσιν δ' ἀμβροσίην Σιμόεις ἀνέτειλε νέμεσθαι.  
778 Αἶ δὲ βάτην τρήρωσι πελειάσιν Ἴθμαθ' ὁμοῖαι.  
779 ἀνδράσιν Ἀργείοισιν ἀλεξέμεναι μεμαυῖαι·  
780 ἀλλ' ὅτε δὴ ῥ' ἵκανον ὄθι πλεῖστοι καὶ ἄριστοι  
781 ἔστασαν ἀμφὶ βίην Διομήδεος ἵπποδάμοιο  
782 εἰλόμενοι λείουσιν εἰοκότες ὠμοφάγοισιν  
783 ἢ συσὶ κάπροισιν, τῶν τε σθένος οὐκ ἀλαπαδόν,  
784 ἔνθα στᾶσ' ἦῤυσε θεὰ λευκώλενος Ἥρη,  
785 Στέντορι εἰσαμένη μεγάλῃτορι χαλκεοφώνῳ,  
786 ὅς τόνον αἰδῆσασχ' ὅσον ἄλλοι πεντήκοντα·  
787 “αἰδῶς Ἀργεῖοι κάκ' ἐλέγχεα εἶδος ἀγῆτοί·  
788 ὄφρα μὲν ἐς πόλεμον πωλέσκετο δῖος Ἀχιλλεύς,  
789 οὐδέ ποτε Τρῶες πρὸ πυλάων Δαρδανιάων  
790 οἴχρεσκον· κείνου γὰρ ἐδεῖδισαν ὄβριμον ἔγχος·  
791 νῦν δὲ ἐκάς πόλιος κοίτης ἐπὶ νηυσὶ μάχονται.”  
792 Ὡς εἰποῦσ' ὄτρυνε μένος καὶ θυμὸν ἐκάστου.  
793 Τυδείδῃ δ' ἐπόρουσε θεὰ γλαυκῶπις Ἀθήνη·  
794 εἶρε δὲ τόν γε ἄνακτα παρ' ἵπποισιν καὶ ὄχεσφιν  
795 ἔλκος ἀναλύχοντα τό μιν βάλε Πάνδαρος ἰϥ.

*But when they had come to the land of Troy and the two flowing rivers, where the Simois and Scamander join their streams, there the goddess, white-armed Hera, stayed her horses, and loosed them from the chariot, and shed thick mist over them; and Simois made ambrosia to spring up for them to graze on.*

*Then the goddesses went with steps like those of timorous doves, eager to assist the Argive warriors. And when they had come to where the most and best stood close gathered about mighty Diomedes, tamer of horses, like ravening lions or wild boars, whose strength is not feeble, there the goddess, white-armed Hera, stood and shouted in the likeness of great-hearted Stentor of the brazen voice, whose voice is as great as that of fifty other men: “Shame! Argives, base objects of reproach, fair in appearance only! So long as noble Achilles fared into battle, never did the Trojans come out even in front of the Dardanian gates; for they feared his mighty spear; but now far from the city they are fighting at the hollow ships.”*

*So saying she roused the force and spirit of every man. And to the side of Tydeus' son rushed the goddess, flashing-eyed Athene. She found that king beside his horses and chariot, cooling the wound that Pandarus had dealt him with his arrow.*

(Il. 5.773–795)

### Background

Earlier King Agamemnon ordered the Achaean leaders to rouse the troops to return to war. The warriors were also motivated by the gods:<sup>83</sup> *The Trojans were urged on by Ares, and the Achaeans by flashing-eyed Athene, and Terror and Rout, and Strife who rages incessantly* (Il. 4.439–440). The human warriors then clashed and many of them were killed. In a moment of heavy combat the foremost fighters among the Trojans and Hector gave ground while the Achaeans shouted loudly and dragged off bodies of dead

<sup>82</sup> Kirk 1985, 356.

<sup>83</sup> Il. 4.240–338.

warriors. At that, Apollo roused the Trojans to return to war while Athena continued to urge on the Achaeans. She led Ares away from the battle, which resulted in the Trojans fleeing or being killed by the Achaeans many of them died. Diomedes prayed to Athena and at that she came to him, spoke and put the force of his father in his breast. Very soon a strength three times as great took hold of him and he became lion-like for a while.<sup>84</sup> Athena also told Diomedes to wound Aphrodite if she turned up in battle. Diomedes' next victim was Pandarus, who earlier had wounded him with an arrow. Diomedes now killed Pandarus with the help of Athena, and soon after he wounded Aeneas with a stone.

At that Aphrodite carried Aeneas, her son, away from the battlefield. Diomedes followed her and wounded her. As she was wounded Aphrodite had to leave Aeneas, but Apollo saved him in a dark cloud. Aphrodite then borrowed Ares' horses and went to Olympus. When Apollo saw that Athena had gone away he commended Ares to rouse the spirits of the Trojans, and Apollo himself put strength in the breast of Aeneas. The slaughter continued and the Achaeans became aware that Ares was among the Trojans. When Hera noticed that the Trojans were slaying the Achaeans, she and Athena left Olympus and went to Troy to take part in the war, since they, as they said, could not allow Ares to rage like that. On that occasion they came to Troy with Zeus' permission.<sup>85</sup>

### Analysis

Aspects	Scene 7 – Il. 5.773–795
<b>Ornithology</b>	
Greek bird reference	πέλεια (5.778)
Lexica	LSJ s.v. 'dove or pigeon, esp. wild rock-pigeon, <i>Columba livia</i> ' Cunliffe s.v. 'a wild dove or pigeon'
Behaviour and characteristics	The steps of timorous doves.
Time context	Unspecific
Spatial context	Unspecific, but associates to the ground.
Ornithological accuracy	High
Suggested taxonomic status	Rock Dove, <i>Columbia livia</i>
<b>Form</b>	Methaphorical
<b>Interactions</b>	
Birds and birds	The steps of timorous doves.

84 *Il.* 4.441–5.143. For Diomedes lion-like state see also *Il.* 5.159–165 and *Il.* 5.253.

85 *Il.* 5.129–5.772.



THE BIRD SCENES

Aspects	Scene 7 – <i>Il.</i> 5.773–795
<b>Interactions</b>	
Birds and other animals	-
Birds and humans	-
Birds and gods	Describe the steps of Hera and Athena in a dove-like parallel way when they left Hera’s horses and on earth walked away towards the Achaean warriors.
<b>Functions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dove-specific metaphorical parallels that describe Hera and Athena when they walked away from the place where they had left Hera’s horses (a place where the Simois and Scamander Rivers met) and stepped towards the Achaean warriors.</li> <li>• Bring information about Hera and Athena and their steps at this moment in time and space.</li> <li>• Mark that they disappeared and stepped in a quick, silent and very discreet way.</li> <li>• Emphasise their wild and avian characters especially concerning their discretion and way of walking.</li> <li>• Indicate that they crouched as they walked towards the Achaean warriors and that their walk became a loping half-run.</li> </ul>

**Comments and interpretation**

*Ornithology and form*

Since the scene describes that Athena and Hera went with steps like those of timorous doves, eager to assist the Argive warriors (5.778-779)<sup>86</sup> I suggest that the doves appear in metaphorical forms. Scholars have given different interpretations to these lines. According to Pollard Homer “likens Hera and Athena strutting along to ‘shy doves’”.<sup>87</sup> In his chapter of “Gods in bird form” Pollard however says that there is always a hint of an epiphany and that this may even be true concerning Hera and Athena in the scene.<sup>88</sup> I agree with Pollard in this especially if comparing with SCENE 8, *Il.* 7.54–66 and SCENE 17, *Il.* 14.283–293 where discretion also seems to be of great importance.<sup>89</sup> One can ex-

86 See LSJ s.v. *τηρόρων* ‘timorous, shy, in Hom. always epith. of doves’. Also cf. LSJ supplement s.v. *τηρώνων* ‘epith. of, or name for, dove’. Kirk points out that *πολυτηρόωνα* at *Il.* 2.502 and 592 shows that *τηρώνων* can also be a substantive, the name of the genus as LSJ also suggests, or it can be the wild rock-pigeon and *πέλεια* the tamer dove. He further refers to Hesychius who glossed *τηρόρων* as light and swift. Kirk 1990, 139.

87 Pollard 1977, 56–57.

88 Pollard 1977, 157. Thompson suggests that “the allusion is probably neither to swiftness nor to dainty tread, but to the ancient and widespread prefiguration of the deity as a dove.”, Thompson 1936, 228. According to Leaf, “There is perhaps a touch of the humour which was so often associated with the gods of Homer in the vivid comparison of the short and quick yet would-be stately steps of the two goddesses to the strutting of a pigeon, so unlike a hero *μακρὰ βιβάζς*.” Leaf 1900, 247. Willcock thought that there was a comedy here in the description of the delicate little steps taken by the goddesses. Willcock 1976, 63. Also see Jones for a similar interpretation. Jones 2002, 117. Kirk suggests that the goddesses in all events “seem to be imagined as strutting or waddling – hardly a dignified motion, but gently humorous rather than downright comical.” Kirk 1990, 139. He adds that the swiftness of birds is often attributed to the gods, see *Il.* 13.62–65 and 15.237, but believes that ungainly disguises can also be assumed as in *Il.* 7.59. Kirk 1990, 139.

89 See also Kirk’s discussion 1990, 139.

pect that they did not want to be recognised by Ares and Apollo or any human when they visited earth. I would also like to emphasise that speed was of importance for Hera and Athena, which is indicated in the passage: they were eager to assist (5.778), and by the fact that they hurried away from Olympus as soon as they were allowed by Zeus to go to Troy.<sup>90</sup>

Rock Doves are commonly seen in pairs or small flocks and are mainly in pairs during the summer. Some pairs remain together more or less throughout the year. The natural habitat is linked with their nesting site on rock faces, especially coastal. They mostly frequents narrow belts of often marginally cultivated land behind cliff tops, where weeds abound and grain can be picked up, and with access also to drinking water. Apart from the quick flight and timidity that is part of their observant natures an important feature with Rock Doves is their characteristic gait, which is freer than its congeners, with a walk that often becomes a loping half-run.<sup>91</sup> To sum up, the ornithological accuracy is high and I suggest Rock Doves for the birds in the scene.<sup>92</sup>

#### *Interactions and functions in the scene*

There are interactions in both the avian and divine spheres and between the two. It seems that there is something in Hera's and Athena's way of walking that is important in the scene. If we consider again what seems important for the two goddesses, quietness, discretion and speed, the Rock Dove's looping half-run may have given inspiration to the poet's description of the character of Hera's and Athena's specific steps in this situation.

In such a view they moved in a Rock Dove-like, loping half-run towards the Achaean warriors. That means that they probably crouched as they walked and that they took quick and discreet steps since they wanted to assist the Achaeans quickly but without being noticed. To be sure they perhaps also cast a mist over themselves like they cast a mist over their horses some moments ago. But about that we know nothing, and we have to accept that there remains a certain ambiguity concerning the goddesses' forms, too. At least we can say that the doves emphasis Hera's and Athena's wild and avian characters when they discreetly moved on earth.

<sup>90</sup> See *Il.* 5.764–777.

<sup>91</sup> Cramp 1985, 285–290, 297.  
Cramp, 1985, 292.

<sup>92</sup> Boraston suggests that *πέλεια* is a Rock Dove, Boraston 1911, 216; 227. Pollard also suggests Rock Dove. Pollard 1977, 56–57. According to Thompson *πέλεια* in Homer undoubtedly means Rock Dove. Thompson 1936, 225–231, esp. 227. For doves in ancient sources see also Arnott 2007, 170–171; Keller 1913, 122–131, esp. 127. Voultziadou & Tatolas suggest Rock Dove. Voultziadou & Tatolas 2008, 307.

Scene 8 – *Il.* 7.54–66

54 Ὡς ἔφαθ', Ἐκτωρ δ' αὖτε χάρη μέγα μῦθον ἀκούσας,     *So he spoke, and Hector rejoiced greatly when he*  
 55 καὶ ᾗ' ἐς μέσσον ἰὼν Τρώων ἀνέεργε φάλαγγας,     *heard his words; and he went into the midst of the Trojans*  
 56 μέσσου δουρὸς ἑλών· οἱ δ' ἰθρύνθησαν ἅπαντες.     *and kept back their battalions with his spear grasped by the*  
 57 καὶ δ' Ἀγαμέμνων εἶσεν εὐκνήμιδας Ἀχαιοῦς.     *middle; and they all sat down, and Agamemnon made the*  
 58 καὶ δ' ἄρ' Ἀθηναίη τε καὶ ἀργυρότοξος Ἀπόλλων     *well-greaved Achaeans sit. And Athene and Apollo of the*  
 59 ἐξέσθην ὄρνισιν ἑοικότες αἰγυπιοῖσι     *silver bow in the likeness of vultures sat on the lofty oak of*  
 60 φηγῶ ἔφ' ὑψηλῇ πατρὸς Διὸς αἰγιόχοιο,     *father Zeus who bears the aegis, rejoicing in the warriors;*  
 61 ἀνδράσι τερπόμενοι· τῶν δὲ στήχες εἶατο πυκναί,     *and the ranks of these sat close, bristling with shields and*  
 62 ἀσπίσι καὶ κορύθεσσι καὶ ἔγχεσι πεφρικυῖαι.     *helmets and spears. Just as there is spread over the face of*  
 63 οἴη δὲ Ζεφύροιο ἐχεύατο πόντον ἔπι φριξ     *the deep the ripple of the West Wind when it is newly*  
 64 ὀρνυμένοιο νέον, μελάνει δὲ τε πόντος ὑπ' αὐτῆς,     *risen, and the deep grows black beneath it, so sat the ranks*  
 65 τοῖαι ἄρα στήχες εἶατ' Ἀχαιῶν τε Τρώων τε     *of the Achaeans and Trojans in the plain.*  
 66 ἐν πεδίῳ·

(Il. 7.54–66)

**Background**

After Hera had roused the fighting force and spirits of the Achaeans in SCENE 7 she persuaded Diomedes to strike Ares in close combat. Later he wounded Ares with his spear with Athena's help. Ares went to Mount Olympus and told Zeus that when the gods assisted the humans they suffered because of another god's cruel devices. At the beginning of song six, the poet reveals that the war between the Trojans and Achaeans was left on its own for a while. It seems indeed that the divine intervention is very restricted in *Il.* 6 and it is notable that no metaphorical birds or animals occur in the events in this song. Many warriors were killed however and many Trojans would have been driven back again by the Achaeans, vanquished by their lack of courage had not the diviner Helenus,<sup>93</sup> who was also King Priam's son and a warrior, come to Aeneas and Hector and encouraged and advised them in war tactics. Hector listened to Helenus and followed his advice. When Diomedes and Glaucus almost clashed in single combat Diomedes asked Glaucus about his lineage. Their talking resulted in a handshake and an exchange of armour. Because Zeus took away Glaucus' senses, he gave away his far superior armour to Diomedes.<sup>94</sup> At the citadel of Troy Hector asked the women to pray to Athena, but Athena denied their prayers. Hector then took farewell of his wife and son and went back to the battlefield as did Paris. At this moment they were eager to fight, and when Athena saw them slaying Achaeans she darted down from the peaks of Mount Olympus to Ilios. When Apollo saw Athena from Pergamus he rushed to meet her since he was eager for victory for the Trojans. They met by the oak tree and agreed

93 *Il.* 5.796–6.76. See also LSJ: s.v. *οἰωνόπαλος* 'one busied with the flight and cries of birds, an augur'. See also chapter 1 on "Ancient practice of divination from birds".

94 *Il.* 6.77–6.236.

to stop the war and combat for that day having instead single combat between Hector and an Achaean warrior. Helenus understood in his heart the plan that had found pleasure with the gods, and he persuaded Hector to challenge an Achaean (who will be Aias, see *Il.* 7.186–192) in single combat. All others would watch the combat.<sup>95</sup>

### Analysis

Aspects	Scene 8 – <i>Il.</i> 7.54–66
<b>Ornithology</b>	
Greek bird reference	<i>αἰγυπιός</i> (7.59)
Lexica	LSJ s.v. ‘vulture’ Cunliffe s.v. ‘App. a general name for eagles and vultures.’
Behaviour and characteristics	Sat on a lofty oak
Time context	When Athena and Apollo sat in the oak and were rejoicing in the warriors and the ranks of Achaeans and Trojans who sat on the plain.
Spatial context	In Zeus’s lofty oak tree above the Achaean and Trojan warriors who sat on the ground beneath.
Ornithological accuracy	Medium
Suggested taxonomic status	Vultures, possibly Lammergeier (Bearded Vulture), <i>Gypaetus barbatus</i>
<b>Form</b>	Transformation
<b>Interactions</b>	
Birds and birds	Two vultures sat on a lofty oak.
Birds and other animals	-
Birds and humans	-
Birds and gods	Describe Athena and Apollo who had temporarily taken the physical forms of two Lammergeiers while sitting in Zeus’s oak tree. They were waiting to watch a human single combat and were rejoicing in the Trojan and Achaean warriors who sat beneath. Nothing is said about any characters observing them either as vultures or as gods.* <sup>1</sup> Athena and Apollo were intending to watch a single combat between Hector and an Achaean warrior.
<b>Functions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vulture-specific forms that bring information about Athena and Apollo when they sat expectantly in Zeus’ oak tree, waiting to watch human single combat.</li> <li>• Their physical forms were taken by Athena and Apollo at that moment.</li> <li>• Used by Athena and Apollo as disguise.</li> <li>• Indicate that Athena and Apollo did not want to be seen by anyone.</li> </ul>

<sup>95</sup> *Il.* 6.236–7.54.

## THE BIRD SCENES

Aspects	Scene 8 – <i>Il.</i> 7.54–66
<b>Functions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emphasise Athena’s and Apollo’s desire to sit in a tree and from an elevated position observe fighting warriors.</li> <li>• Indicate Athena’s and Apollo’s status in the hierarchies among gods.</li> <li>• Emphasise Athena’s and Apollo’s wild and avian characters especially concerning disguise in a tree, and longtime sitting and watching a human combat from an elevated position.</li> <li>• The positions of the Lammergeiers in Zeus oak and Athena’s and Apollo’s disguises indicate that they transgressed the borders of their divine authorities.</li> <li>• Possibly also predict that the combat between the two warriors would be even.</li> </ul>

\*1 We only know from lines 7.24–42 that the Trojan diviner Helenus understood the divine plan in his heart. Helenus then spoke to Hector and influenced him to arrange the single combat. Also see the “Background” of the scene” above.

### Comments and interpretation

#### *Ornithology and form*

The information on the *αἰγυπιοί* in the scene is sparse. It is said that Athena and Apollo *in the likeness of vultures sat on the lofty oak of Zeus* (7.59–60).<sup>96</sup> The easiest and most natural path to take concerning the gods’ physical appearance is to imagine that they had temporarily transformed themselves into two vultures. As two birds sitting in an oak tree the risk of being recognised by Zeus<sup>97</sup> or any other god or humans was reduced. Furthermore, it was dangerous for humans to interact with gods and goddesses when these appeared in their manifest forms.<sup>98</sup>

In other scenes in the *Iliad* when *αἰγυπιός* occur, this kind of bird is associated with human close combat (SCENES 15, 20) and with an evenly matched fight between two equally strong and skilled warriors (SCENE 20). As will be seen it seems that the *αἰγυπιοί* /Athena and Apollo in SCENE 8 function in the same way.

96 *ἑοικότες*, see LSJ s.v. *ἔοικα* ‘to be like’.

LSJ s.v. *φηγός* ‘Valonia oak. *Quercus Aegilops*, Thphr.Hp 3.3.1, 3.8.2, etc.: freq in *Il.* (not in *Od.*) *Διὸς περικαλλεῖ φηγῷ*, *Il.* 5.693; *φηγῷ ἐφ’ ἰψήγη...* *Διὸς* 7.60.’

97 See as a comparison SCENE 17, *Il.* 14.283–293, where the god Sleep tried to escape the notice of Zeus by taking the form of another bird.

98 See *Il.* 20.129–131. The ancient critics did not leave any opinion about Athena’s and Apollo’s forms. Homerists and modern commentators have however interpreted the scene in different ways, which perhaps is significant for the difficulty in a later period to understand material from an older one. Dietrich views the scene as a poetic device for locating divine presence rather than epiphany or disguise. Dietrich 1983, 53–79. Jones suggests that it is just as possible that the poet meant “in the way that vultures do”. Jones 2003, 133. Kirk remarks that the question of whether the gods were “like vultures” or whether they actually had taken vulturine form “is not merely pedantic and has literary interest; unfortunately ancient critics left no opinion on the matter.” Kirk 1990, 239. He suggests that the poet had some specific sense in mind for this striking and unusual image and referred to other contexts in both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* where gods, especially Athena, move rapidly like birds and on occasion take their form. Kirk prefers to interpret the scene as a temporary metamorphosis but stated that a degree of uncertainty still remains. He concludes that theriomorphism can at least be left out since neither Athena nor Apollo was originally vultures. Kirk 1990, 240. Erbse made a similar interpretation and commented that the two gods masked themselves as vultures. Erbse 1980, 271. According to Leaf there was no doubt that the gods were supposed by the poet to take the forms of birds. He thought that there was no dignity in supposing the gods sat in human form in the top of a tree. Leaf 1900, 303. According to Janko Apollo and Athena turned into vultures. Janko 1992, 252. For West they were perching on a branch in bird form. West 2011, 189.

According to the lexica the identification of *αἰγυπιός* is unclear. Thompson points out that the etymology is unknown.<sup>99</sup> According to Pollard *ai-gypios* “goat-vulture” suggests “lamb-vulture”. He refers to Aelian II, 46, who defined the *αἰγυπιός* as “half-way between vulture and eagle”. Pollard thought that Aelian’s description was a good description of the Lammergeier and he suggests that this species was known to Homer as the *φήνη* or the *αἰγυπιός*. Pollard further points out that the Ancients were confused about the bird’s habits and imagined it attacked live prey, see *Il.* 17.460 and *Od.* 22.302, which he says the Lammergeier does not.<sup>100</sup> However, there are reports today that say that Lammergeiers’ sometimes attack and manage to kill live prey. There are also observations of individuals that force weak, sick or wounded animals to fall down in steep verges. On such occasions the Lammergeier repeatedly assaults the animal by beatings his wings.<sup>101</sup>

I have chosen to follow scholars such as Pollard, Keller, Boraston and Voultziadou & Tatolas in that *αἰγυπιός* is a particular species in the *Iliad*, the Lammergeier, *Gypaetus barbatus*.<sup>102</sup> Even if the Lammergeier today primarily is known as a solitary raptor frequenting mountains and wildernesses, and who rarely perches in trees, there are details that indicate that this species is the most likely bird for the scene. It is further likely that it would sit in a tree if there was nowhere else to perch. Apart from this Lammergeiers are very different in appearance as well as in feeding habits from the *γύψ*, the carrion-eating vultures.

The Lammergeier, also called the Bearded Vulture, is today a rare species. It is an unmistakable large, long-winged and majestic raptor with a conspicuous and colourful plumage. The upperparts, wings and tails contrast with orange-yellow body and yellow or white head. The head has a striking “beard” of feathers which together with the black eye-mask with bristles that extends forward to form the “beard” makes it resemble a goat.<sup>103</sup> The sexes are similar. It is most often seen soaring and looks more like a very large bird of prey than a vulture both when seated and in flight. When perched the Lammergeier adopts an oblique posture with head held up. The wings and wedge-shaped tail are longer and narrower than other large vultures and the flight silhouette differs from more typical vultures such as *Gyps* in the way that it sometimes resembles

99 Thompson 1936, 25–27.

100 Pollard 1977, 79–80, 203 with references.

101 Génsbøl 1995, 108. Also see Cramp & Simmons 1980, 60.

102 Voultziadou & Tatolas 2008, 307, Pollard 1977, 79–80, Keller 1913, 27–30, Boraston 1911, 216, 229–232. According to Thompson *αἰγυπιός* in some parts of the *Iliad* was a Lammergeier and he thought that the best way was to consider the term to suppose that vultures and eagles, *αἰετός* or *αἰγυπιός*, were ill distinguished. Thompson 1936, 25–26. Also see Janko who suggests Lammergeier for the *αἰγυπιός* in *Il.* 13.531, Janko 1992, 112. See also Arnott 2007, 6–7.

103 Cramp & Simmons 1980, 58–59 and Jonsson, 1992 124–126. See also Berg who likens this species to a goat and finds it dragon like in type. Berg 1965, 32.

a large falcon. When in the air Lammergeiers fly tirelessly mile after mile over valleys and along mountain sides on almost motionless wings. The flight gives a slow-motion impression. As mentioned the Lammergeier is largely solitary, especially when hunting, but pairs appear to frequent the same large home-range. Even if Lammergeiers live in remote and unsettled regions (often in mountainous terrain commonly at altitudes of 1000–3000 metres), they also occur in lower forested or steppe areas. In some regions it have a significant relationship with man. It get food near villages, towns and farms and visit human settlements at first light on slaughter days.<sup>104</sup> The Lammergeier feeds chiefly on large bones from medium-sized livestock (sheep, goats) and meat from freshly killed mammals, reptiles, and birds. The preference for bones makes it different from the majority of vultures that prefer the meat and skin of carrion. However, if the food is scarce, it will scavenge from older carcasses. This species have a unique trait – bone-dropping. It takes bones from freshly killed mammals, grips them with its foot, fly up with it and drops it from above so that the bone hopefully cracks exposing the desired bone marrow. On occasions it steals prey caught by other birds.<sup>105</sup> The Lammergeier is called *Γυπαετός* in modern Greek which indicates its halfway position between a vulture and an eagle.<sup>106</sup>

*Interactions and functions in the scene*

There are many examples in the *Iliad* of gods who find enjoyment in watching human combats and wars from high positions such as mountain peaks or mounds.<sup>107</sup> This is however the only explicit example when gods watch a human combat in the form of birds in bird shape.<sup>108</sup> In this way the two Lammergeiers, occupied in watching a human single combat, emphasise the gods' desire for watching human warriors in combat from a high spatial position. The two gods sitting in Zeus's oak imitate Zeus in a way, who in a more grandiose manner and from a higher spatial position frequently sits on a mountain peak and watches warriors in battle. In this way the sitting Lammergeiers/gods evoke a feeling that Zeus is watching the whole event from above.<sup>109</sup> Apart from this the human warriors who sit on the ground are intended to do exactly as the gods,

104 Cramp & Simmons 1980, 58–64. Cramp & Simmons further report that Lammergeiers are “Shy in Europe but in Asia probably commensal with pastoral man, following his flocks and relatively tame.” Cramp & Simmons 1980, 59.

105 Cramp & Simmons 1980, 58–61, Génsbøl 1995, 118, 312, Svensson & Grant 2006, 71, and del Hoyo et al. 2004, 125.

106 See also Boraston who describes the Lammergeier as a “bird that occupies a unique position between the vultures and the eagles. It is vulturine in appearance and gait, but, unlike any true vulture, it captures living prey, though, like true vultures, it consumes carrion also.” Boraston 1911, 231.

107 See for example *Il.* 8.51–52 and 20.21–25; 136–137; 155.

108 But see SCENE 17 where the god Sleep takes the shape of a bird when he hides in a tree. At this moment Zeus and Hera are making love beneath.

109 A little later in the actions Menelaus announced himself as the Achaean champion who will fight with Hector and he says: *Against this man will I myself arm; but from on high are the issues of victory held by the immortal gods* (*Il.* 7.101–102). It was however not Menelaus who finally met Hector in single combat but Aias, see *Il.* 7.191ff.

i.e., to sit and watch a single human combat. Most of them are however not aware of the gods above them, and it is thrilling to imagine that Zeus is watching the whole scenery from an even higher position without anybody's knowing.

It seems that Apollo and Athena decided to come to Troy suddenly to arrange the single combat. Did they have Zeus permission? I would like to suggest that they challenged the limits of their authorities when arranging this single combat. Their actions stopped the Trojan War that was very much Zeus concern and they even seated themselves in his oak! At this moment Zeus had still not yet prohibited the other gods from assisting the Trojans and Achaeans. This is done in the next song, in *Il.* 8.1–27, which is an interesting coincidence when considering the scene. There is, as argued, perhaps a hidden message telling us that Zeus saw Athena and Apollo sitting in his oak even if they were disguised as two Lammergeiers.<sup>110</sup> In such a view the scene includes different characters who are Zeus, Apollo and Athena/two Lammergeiers and the Trojan and Achaean warriors, where all parts from different spatial positions perform the same activity, that of sitting and watching a single combat.

There is another tension in the scene. As the specific vultures they are, Lammergeiers should mainly be interested in human warriors in a specific way, i.e., that the humans would kill each other so the birds can take something of their bones and meat. It is ambiguous here whether the choice of Lammergeiers alludes to Athena's and Apollo's desire to have Hector's and an Achaean warrior's lives even if it is not explicitly expressed.<sup>111</sup> A Lammergeier is further a powerful bird but not as powerful as the large eagles that seem to be closely associated and reserved for Zeus. In this way the choice of Lammergeier may also mark Apollo's and Athena's rank among gods.

I would finally like to add that the two Lammergeiers, being birds of the same kind, were possibly used to predict that the close combat that would soon take place between Hector and Aias would be equally matched. Before the battle starts Aias is actually also praying to Zeus asking him to *...grant to both equal might and glory.* (*Il.* 7.205). The even battle raged on all day and when night came Hector suggested that they should give each other glorious gifts.<sup>112</sup> *So they parted and one went to the army of the Achaeans, and the other went to the throng of the Trojans* (*Il.* 7.306–307).

<sup>110</sup> The *Iliad* describes Zeus as an all-seeing and all-hearing god, see *Il.* 3.276f. Before the single combat starts the Achaeans are also praying to Zeus and in this way verbally informing him of the coming duel between Hector and an Achaean warrior, see *Il.* 7.200–205. This probably made him turn his eyes towards the event and perhaps he soon after recognised Athena and Apollo sitting in his oak.

<sup>111</sup> For an allusion to Hera's lust to devour King Priam and the Trojans raw, see *Il.* 4.34–37.

<sup>112</sup> *Il.* 7.191–306.



Scene 9 – *Il.* 8.227–252

227 ἦύσεν δὲ διαπρύσιον Δαναοῖσι γεγωνῶς·  
 228 “αἰδῶς Ἀργεῖοι, κάκ’ ἐλέγχεα, εἶδος ἀρηητοί·  
 229 πῆ ἔβαν εὐχλωαί, ὅτε δὴ φάμεν εἶναι ἄριστοι,  
 230 ἄς ὀπότ’ ἐν Λήμνῳ κενεαυχέες ἠγοράασθε,  
 231 ἔσθοντες κρέα πολλὰ βοῶν ὀδοκραιράων,  
 232 πίνοντες κρητῆρας ἐπιστεφέας οἴνοιο,  
 233 Τρώων ἄνδ’ ἑκατόν τε διηκοσίῳν τε ἕκαστος  
 234 στήσεσθ’ ἐν πολέμῳ· νῦν δ’ οὐδ’ ἐνὸς ἄξιόι εἶμεν  
 235 Ἐκτορος, ὃς τάχα νῆας ἐνιπρήσει πυρὶ κηλέῳ.  
 236 Ζεῦ πάτερ, ἧ ἴά τιν’ ἦδη ὑπερμενέων βασιλῆων  
 237 τῆδ’ ἄτη ἄσασας καί μιν μέγα κῦδος ἀπηύρας;  
 238 οὐ μὲν δὴ ποτὲ φημι τεὸν περικαλλέα βωμῶν  
 239 νηῖ πολυκλήϊδι παρελθέμεν ἐνθάδε ἔρρον,  
 240 ἀλλ’ ἐπὶ πᾶσι βοῶν δημὸν καὶ μηρί’ ἔκηρα,  
 241 ἰέμενος Τροίην εὐτείχεον ἕξαλαπάξαι.  
 242 ἀλλὰ Ζεῦ τότε πέρ μοι ἐπικρήηνον ἐέλδωρ·  
 243 αὐτοὺς δὴ περ ἔασον ὑπεκφυγέειν καὶ ἀλύξαι,  
 244 μηδ’ οὕτω Τρώεσσι ἕα δάμνασθαι Ἀχαιοὺς.”  
 245 Ὡς φάτο, τὸν δὲ πατήρ ὀλοφύρατο δάκρυ χέοντα,  
 246 νεῦσε δὲ οἱ λαὸν σὸν ἔμμεναι οὐδ’ ἀπολέσθαι.  
 247 αὐτίκα δ’ αἰετὸν ἦκε τελειότατον πετεηνῶν,  
 248 νεβρὸν ἔχοντ’ ὀνύχεσσι τέκος ἐλάφοιο ταχείης·  
 249 πᾶρ δὲ Διὸς βωμῶ περικαλλεῖ· κάββαλε νεβρόν,  
 250 ἔνθα πανομφαίῳ Ζηνὶ ἔέξεσκον Ἀχαιοί.  
 251 οἱ δ’ ὡς οὖν εἶδονδ’ ὅ τ’ ἄρ’ ἐκ Διὸς ἦλυθεν ὄρνις,  
 252 μᾶλλον ἐπὶ Τρώεσσι Δόρον, μνήσαντο δὲ χάριμης.

And he uttered a piercing shout, calling aloud to the Danaans: “Shame, Argives, base objects of reproach, fair in appearance only! Where have our boastings gone, when indeed we used to say that we were bravest, the empty boasts that you uttered when you were in Lemnos eating abundant flesh of straight-horned cattle and drinking bowls brim full of wine, saying that each man would stand to face in battle one or two hundred Trojans! But now can we match not even one, this Hector, who soon will burn our ships with blazing fire. Father Zeus, was there ever before now one among mighty kings whom you blinded with blindness like this, and robbed of great glory? Yet I can truly say that never in my benched ship did I pass by a fair altar of yours on my ill-starred way here, but on all I burned the fat and the thighs of bulls, in my eagerness to lay waste well-walled Troy. But, Zeus, this wish at least fulfill for me: ourselves at least allow to flee and escape, and do not allow the Achaeans to be vanquished by the Trojans in this way.”

So he spoke, and the father had pity on him as he wept, and nodded in assent that his army should be safe and not perish. Immediately he sent an **eagle**, surest of omens among winged birds, holding in his talons a fawn, the young of a swift hind. Beside the beautiful altar of Zeus he let fall the fawn where the Achaeans were used to offer sacrifice to Zeus from whom all omens come. So they, when they saw that it was from Zeus that the bird had come, leapt the more eagerly on the Trojans and took thought of battle.

(*Il.* 8.227–252)

## Background

The next day Idaeus was sent to the Achaean camp to tell them that the treasure that Alexander<sup>113</sup> brought to Troy plus some extra treasures were to be given back to them. Idaeus also declared a wish that both the Achaeans and Trojans would cease from fighting until they had burned the dead. King Agamemnon did not accept the gifts but allowed the Trojans to take care of the killed warriors. At that day both sides met on the battlefield as they tried to identify the killed warriors, and the burning of the corpses on the pyres took place. In the night the Achaeans built a wall as defense for their ships and themselves.<sup>114</sup> At the beginning of *Il.* 8 Zeus held an assembly on Mount Olympus where he told the other gods and goddesses that he

<sup>113</sup> Paris.

<sup>114</sup> *Il.* 7.63–7.482.

would hurt physically whoever of them who would go and assist either Trojans or Achaeans. Zeus then took his chariot and went to Mount Ida where he sat on the mountain peak and looked down on the warriors beneath. They armed themselves and soon clashed again in war.<sup>115</sup> When it was midday Zeus *lifted up his golden scales, and set in them two fates of grievous death, one for the horse-taming Trojans, and one for the bronze-clad Achaeans; then he grasped the balance by the middle and raised it, and down sank the day of doom of the Achaeans* (*Il.* 8.69–72).

He thundered aloud from Mount Ida and at that all the Achaeans fled except Diomedes and Nestor with his wounded horse. These two warriors attacked Hector and wounded or killed his charioteer. Zeus then took notice and hurled a lightning bolt before Diomedes' horses. At that Diomedes and Nestor returned to the Achaean camp. Zeus then thundered thrice giving the Trojans a sign. Hector noticed and shouted aloud that Zeus had assented victory and great glory to him. Also Hera noticed this and she put the idea into King Agamemnon's mind to speedily rouse the Achaeans. It is Agamemnon who speaks when the scene starts.<sup>116</sup>

### Analysis

Aspects	Scene 9 – <i>Il.</i> 8.227–252
<b>Ornithology</b>	
Greek bird reference	<i>αἰετός</i> (8.247)
Lexica	LSJ s.v. 'eagle, as a bird of omen,... <i>Il.</i> 8.247, cf. 12.201... favourite of Zeus... <i>Il.</i> 24.310' Cunliffe s.v. 'An eagle'
Behaviour and characteristics	Was carrying a fawn in its talons which it dropped as it flew. The fawn landed beside the altar where the Achaeans used to offer to Zeus.
Time context	Was sent by Zeus from Mount Ida immediately after King Agamemnon's communication to him.
Spatial context	High up in the air above the Achaean camp and the Achaean warriors in the Troad.
Ornithological accuracy	High
Suggested taxonomic status	Golden Eagle, <i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>
<b>Form</b>	Physical
<b>Interactions</b>	
Birds and birds	-

<sup>115</sup> *Il.* 7.482–8.68.

<sup>116</sup> *Il.* 8.69–8.226.

THE BIRD SCENES

Aspects	Scene 9 – <i>Il.</i> 8.227–252
<p><b>Interactions</b></p> <p>Birds and other animals</p> <p>Birds and humans</p> <p>Birds and gods</p>	<p>The eagle carried a fawn in its talons. There are clear differences in strength and age between the two animals. The eagle was alive and we can presume that the fawn was dead when it fell beside the altar.</p> <p>Appeared above the Achaean warriors directly after King Agamemnon had spoken to Zeus. When they saw it let the fawn fall beside the altar of Zeus they understood that it had come from Zeus. At that they attacked the Trojans more eagerly. Their bodies, thoughts and emotions were influenced by the eagle seeing it as a positive sign coming from Zeus and raising their fighting spirits.</p> <p>Was sent by Zeus to appear to King Agamemnon and the Achaean warriors directly after Agamemnon’s communication to Zeus. It shows that Zeus heard Agamemnon and indicates his divine presence in a visual and symbolic way where the eagle’s sturdy physicality in some sense embodies Zeus’s presence and will.</p>
<p><b>Functions</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An eagle-specific messenger, sign and representation that brings information.</li> <li>• Zeus’s eagle messenger to King Agamemnon and the Achaean warriors.</li> <li>• One part of Zeus’s response and symbolic answer to King Agamemnon’s words to him.</li> <li>• A visual physical sign that for the Achaean warriors indicated and confirmed Zeus’ presence and will.</li> <li>• Indicates a positive sign from Zeus to the Achaeans.</li> <li>• As a good sign it evoked fighting spirits in the Achaean warriors.</li> <li>• Displays the bond between Zeus and the Mycenaean king.</li> <li>• Expresses strength and dominance from an avian hunter/killer perspective.</li> <li>• A possible symbolic representation of the most powerful Achaean warriors who soon will kill inferior Trojan sons.</li> </ul>

**Comments and interpretation**

*Ornithology and form*

This is yet another of the more complicated bird scenes in the *Iliad*. Line 8.247 says that the eagle was *immediately sent* (8.247) by Zeus after he had heard King Agamemnon’s words. This sequence does not entirely refer to an eagle in the wild but may associate to ancient falconry practices where a huntsman sends off an eagle to catch a prey, or to someone who sends away an eagle for other reasons that may have been ritual.<sup>117</sup> It is

<sup>117</sup> See also SCENE 35 where Zeus sent off another eagle to King Priam. See also SCENE 10 where Athena sent off a heron to Odysseus and Menelaus. Falconry and hawking mean the capture of wild mammals and birds using birds of prey such as falcons, hawks or eagles. The origins of falconry may lie in the Asiatic steppes as early as the second millennium BC. See Serjeantson 2009, 314, 320; Benecke 1994, 453–457; Dobney & Jaques 2002. Serjeantson refers also to the Hittites who seem to have been familiar with hawking as it is illustrated

however clear that this eagle is to be considered as a physical eagle that was observed by the human characters and that it was special since it was sent and directed by a god. Line 8.247 refers to the eagle as *τελειότατον πετεηνῶν* (8.247) and Murray & Wyatt translate *surest of omens among winged birds*.<sup>118</sup> This sequence is a statement that refers to divination from birds, and it emphasises eagles as a category of birds that are the most trustworthy among omen-birds. The eagle was further *holding in its talons a fawn, the young of a swift hind* (8.248). This sequence refers to natural behaviour since there is a species of eagle that hunts fawns and manages to fly away with them. The lines that tell us that the eagle dropped the fawn *beside the beautiful altar of Zeus...where the Achaeans were used to offer sacrifice to Zeus from whom all omens come* (8.249–250)<sup>119</sup> is an extraordinary description of an eagle's behaviour that associates to divination from birds and animals and to *manteia* (mantic power).<sup>120</sup> However, eagles that fly with a large prey sometimes have to drop it because of the weight or for some other reason<sup>121</sup> which makes also this detail realistic. To sum up this section, almost all descriptions of the eagle refer to ornithology although some parts are unusual such as the dropping of the fawn beside Zeus's altar. Concerning the eagle's choice of prey and interaction with its prey, the bird scene refers to natural eagle behaviour. The fawn as a prey indicates that the eagle must have been big in size and strong.

The Golden Eagle, *Aquila chrysaetos*, is a very large and powerful eagle that is considered the largest and strongest eagle of all by many ornithologist. The wingspan averages over 2 metres. It has long wings, a light, elegant flight and a proportionate silhouette. The habitat is mountainous, upland, plateaus, steppe, and also lowland forests or marshy areas. It prefers low or sparse vegetation to wooded areas. It nests from near sea-level up to altitudes occasionally over 2000 m and perches on vantage points on rocks or tree. The Golden Eagle is a solitary, versatile hunter although pairs may

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on reliefs and seals from the second and first millennia BC from Anatolia. In one of these reliefs a god carries a raptor and a dead hare on one arm. On another people wearing jesses (the leather thongs that attach a bell to the hawk, and that appears to be a falconer's gauntlet) are shown. Serjeantson 2009, 320. See also Canby 2002, 161–201. Concerning ancient falconry Pollard refers to Ctesias who claims that falconry was practised by the Persians. Ctesias also mentions eagles, which were employed in the east. Pollard further refers to Aristotele who makes two references to hawking in Thrace. Concerning the Thracians Pollard refers to a remarkable feature that the philosophers observed: that the hawks laid the catch by the falconers' feet and shared it with them. He adds that the Thracians had mastered the art of falconry in great measure. Pollard 1977, 108–109. Also see Ctesias IV, 26; Arist. *HA IX*, 620 A 32; Mir. *Ausc.*, 118, 841 B 15. For ancient falconry see also Keller 1913, 5–6. Thompson refers to eagles trained for falconry in Afghanistan and Turkestan. Thompson 1936, 6. In Kazakhstan, Kyrgyztan, western Mongolia and China Golden Eagles are still used in hunting foxes and other mammals and birds. Gates 1990. Today falconry takes place all over the world but is most common in the Arab countries. Even if falconry has since long ceased to supply food for the household, it seems, according to Serjeantson, that it was always primarily a sport or carried out as a symbol of status. Serjeantson 2009, 314.

118 See LSJ s.v. *τέλειος*. According to Kirk *τελειότατον* means “most fulfilling as a portent”, Kirk 1990, 320. Also see *Il.* 24.315. When commenting on 24.314–316 which also describes an eagle that is sent from Zeus, Richardson suggests that *τελειότατον* can mean “most perfect” and “most capable of bringing fulfilment”. Richardson 1993, 305. See LSJ s.v. *πετεινός* ‘able to fly, full-fledged, of young birds,... of birds generally, able to fly, winged’.

119 Also see Willcock who translates “Zeus, god of all omens”. Willcock 1984, 265. Jones suggests “of the Voices”, i.e., of omens. Jones 2003, 143.

120 For divination from birds and *manteia* see chapter 1.

121 Such as an attack from an intruder.

hunt together. It kills with its talons and its long and sharp claws. The food varies according to the habitat but it principally hunts mammals and birds. Mammals vary in size from small rodents to young and adult deer, e.g., roe deer *Capreolus capreolus*, but also red deer, *Cervus*.<sup>122</sup> There are reports of Golden Eagles that manage to fly away with fawns.<sup>123</sup> The Golden Eagle's position in the hierarchy of birds and among eagles makes it suitable to use in relation to Zeus, the strongest of gods, who sent it to Agamemnon, king and commander of the Achaean army. The Golden Eagle further suits the environment since it was sent by Zeus from Ida which is described as a mountain with trees.<sup>124</sup>

*Interactions and functions in the scene*

Interactions occur at many levels in the scene. There are clear differences in strength between the eagle and the fawn, where the former appears as a powerful hunter and presumably also a killer,<sup>125</sup> and the latter as a prey and victim. A fawn is further a young and inexperienced animal.

The eagle-fawn event took place in the air above human activities at a moment when King Agamemnon, while being influenced by Hera,<sup>126</sup> tried to rouse the Achaeans to fight. Agamemnon communicates two wishes to Zeus in the scene, i.e., *ourselves at least allow to flee and escape, and do not allow the Achaeans to be vanquished by the Trojans in this way* (8.243–244). Turning up exactly after Agamemnon's words, the eagle coming with the fawn appears as Zeus' reply to Agamemnon. Even apart from appearing exactly at this moment, an eagle coming with a fawn in its talons must have been considered an unusual event from the warriors' point of view, and the fact that it fell beside Zeus' altar<sup>127</sup> must have been seen as extraordinary. It was when the warriors saw the fawn there that they understood that the eagle had come from Zeus. Even if the eagle is often associated to Zeus in the *Iliad*,<sup>128</sup> it is the position of the fawn beside Zeus' altar that functions as the sure sign and confirmation of his presence.<sup>129</sup> From that moment on, and at least for a while, the Achaean warriors attacked their enemies more eagerly.

122 Cramp and Simmons 1980, 234–239, Génsbøl 1995, 348, Svensson & Grant 2006, 76 and Etchécopar & Hue 1967, 118. See also del Hoyo et al. 2004, 121.

123 See a report of a Golden Eagle and a fawn that fell from the sky in 1998 in Canada at <http://www.fawnrescue.org/updates.html>.

124 For Zeus's spatial position at Mount Ida see *Il.* 8.47–52; 170–171.

For eagles in ancient sources see Thompson 1936, 2–17; Keller 1913, 1–6, and Arnott who says that *ἀετός* and *ἄϊετός* is particularly the Golden Eagle. The word was however also loosely applied to other kind of large raptors. Arnott 2007, 2–4. Also see Boraston 1911, 234–236 and Pollard 1977, 76–79. Also see Voultziadou & Tatalos who identify the *αἰετοί* that occur in Homer not as species but as "Eagle". Voultziadou & Tatalos 2008, 307.

125 The poet does not give any indications that the fawn is alive.

126 Hera obviously did not respect Zeus's prohibition to the other gods not to intervene in the Trojan War, see *Il.* 8.1–27.

127 Kirk comments that the eagle carrying a prey that it let go is a motive that is repeated at *Il.* 12.200–209. Kirk 1990, 320.

128 See SCENES 35, 16, 19, and 24 with interpretations. Also see SCENE 13 with interpretations.

129 According to Kirk the eagle and the altar show the portent to be his. Kirk 1990, 320. West argues that the fawn beside Zeus' altar confirms that it is a genuine omen. West 2011, 207.

Their reactions indicate that they viewed the eagle as a good sign from Zeus and as such it influenced their bodies and emotions and raised their fighting spirits.

Zeus sent the eagle as an answer directly after King Agamemnon had spoken to him.<sup>130</sup> It is clear that the eagle is Zeus' messenger and that its role is to deliver his message to the humans. By exposing itself the eagle becomes a sign that together with the fawn physically and symbolically communicates Zeus' presence and will. It seems that Zeus with the eagle and fawn wanted to say that the Achaeans would not be vanquished by the Trojans.<sup>131</sup> In this by sending the eagle Zeus helped Agamemnon raise the fighting spirits among his troops. We can thus observe a close collaboration between King Agamemnon and Zeus where the eagle plays an important role as a powerful communicative sign in the war propaganda. It evokes fighting spirits in the warriors. At the same time the eagle, by exposing itself just after Agamemnon's communication to Zeus, functions as a sign that displays the close connection and bond between Zeus and the Mycenaean king.

*Interactions and functions in the primary narrative*

If we leave the eagle's immediate functions in the scene and its effects on the Achaean warriors and consider its possible wider functions in the primary narrative of the *Iliad*, I would like to ask: Why was a Golden Eagle chosen and why did it carry a fawn in its talons? In the *Iliad* kings and top warriors are often paralleled to eagles in metaphorical utterances<sup>132</sup> that describe a warrior's advance against an enemy warrior or a group of warriors, or something else about a particular warrior.<sup>133</sup> A fawn, *νεβρός*, signifies fleeing on the part of humans, and someone who covers but do not escape.<sup>134</sup> Since animal signs being part of omens seem to indicate the future concerning coming human activities in the *Iliad*<sup>135</sup>, one could thus see the eagle as being a symbolic representation of the Achaean topwarriors who will soon kill inexperienced Trojan sons (represented by the fawn).

Let us see what happens in *the Iliad* just after the bird scene has taken place. The passage *Il.* 8.253–259 tells us that Diomedes killed Agelaus, Phradmon's son, with his spear when Agelaus turned his horses to flee. In the events that follows Diomedes, Agamemnon, Menelaus, the two Aiantes, Ideomeneus, Meriones, Eurypylus and Teucer

<sup>130</sup> Kirk comments that Zeus reacts immediately and sympathetically. "Zeus's acquiescence goes against his intention of helping the Trojans", Kirk 1990, 319–320.

<sup>131</sup> It is common in the *Iliad* that Zeus does not fulfil all of a human's wishes but only one of them. See for example *Il.* 10.103–107 and 18.328–329.

<sup>132</sup> For "metaphorical utterances" see chapter 2.

<sup>133</sup> See SCENE 19 (Hector), SCENE 24 (Menelaus), SCENE 29 (Achilles), and SCENE 33 (Hector).

<sup>134</sup> See *Il.* 22.1–4. Also see *Il.* 4.242–244, 21.25–33, 22.189–193.

<sup>135</sup> See SCENE 1 with interpretations. For coming analyses see also SCENES 10, 16, and 35 and interpretations.

successfully killed Trojan sons before Zeus turned the tide of war to the Trojans' advantage.<sup>136</sup>

### Scene 10 – *Il.* 10.272–298

272 Τῷ δ' ἐπεὶ οὖν ὅπλοισιν ἐνὶ δεινοῖσιν ἐδύτην,  
273 βᾶν ῥ' ἴεναι, λιπέτην δὲ κατ' αὐτόθι πάντας ἀρίστους.  
274 τοῖσι δὲ δεξιὸν ἦκεν ἐρωδιὸν ἐγγὺς ὁδοῖο  
275 Παλλὰς Ἀθηναίη· τοὶ δ' οὐκ ἴδον ὀφθαλμοῖσι  
276 νύκτα δι' ὀφθαίην, ἀλλὰ κλάγξαντος ἄκουσαν.  
277 χαῖρε δὲ τῷ ὄρνιδ' Ὀδυσσεύς, ἠρᾶτο δ' Ἀθήνη·  
278 “κλυθὶ μευ αἰγιόχοιο Διὸς τέκος, ἣ τέ μοι αἰεὶ  
279 ἐν πάντεσσι πόνοισι παρίστασαι, οὐδέ σε λήθω  
280 κινύμενος· νῦν αὔτε μάλιστά με φίλαι Ἀθήνη,  
281 δὸς δὲ πάλιν ἐπὶ νῆας εὐκλείας ἀφικέσθαι,  
282 ῥέξαντας μέγα ἔργον, ὃ κε Τρώεσσι μελήσῃ.

283 Δεύτερος αὖτ' ἠρᾶτο βοῆν ἀγαθὸς Διομήδης·  
284 “κέκλυδι νῦν καὶ ἐμεῖο Διὸς τέκος Ἀτρυτώνη·  
285 σπεῖό μοι ὡς ὅτε πατρὶ ἄμ' ἔσπεο Τυδείδι δίω  
286 ἐς Θήβας, ὅτε τε πρὸ Ἀχαιῶν ἄγγελος ἦει.  
287 τοὺς δ' ἄρ' ἐπ' Ἀσωπῷ λίπε χαλκοχίτωνας Ἀχαιοὺς,  
288 αὐτὰρ ὁ μελίχιον μῦθον φέρε Καδμείοισι  
289 κεῖσ'· ἀτὰρ αἴψ' ἀπιὼν μάλα μέρμερα μῆσατο ἔργα  
290 σὺν σοὶ δῖα θεά, ὅτε οἱ πρόφρασσα παρέστης.  
291 ὡς νῦν μοι ἐθέλουσα παρίσταο καὶ με φύλασσε.  
292 σοὶ δ' αὖ ἐγὼ ῥέξω βοῦν ἦριν εὐρυμέτωπον  
293 ἀδμήτην, ἣν οὐ πω ὑπὸ ζυγὸν ἠγάγεν ἀνὴρ·  
294 τῆν τοι ἐγὼ ῥέξω χρυσοῦν κέρασιν περιχεύας.”

295 Ὡς ἔφαν εὐχόμενοι, τῶν δ' ἔκλυε Παλλὰς Ἀθήνη.  
296 οἱ δ' ἐπεὶ ἠρήσαντο Διὸς κόρη μεγάληο,  
297 βᾶν ῥ' ἴμεν ὡς τε λέοντε δύο διὰ νύκτα μέλαιναν,  
298 ἄμ φόνον, ἄν νέκυας, διὰ τ' ἔντεα καὶ μέλαν αἷμα.

So when the two had put on their terrible armor, they set out to go and left there all the chief men. And for them Pallas Athene sent on their right a **heron**, close by their way, and though they saw it not with their eyes through the murky night, yet they heard its cry. And Odysseus rejoiced at the omen, and made prayer to Athene: “Hear me, child of Zeus, who bears the aegis, you who always stand by my side in all manner of toils, nor am I unseen by you whenever I move; now again show your love, Athene, as never you did before, and grant that with noble renown we come back to the ships, having performed a great deed that will be a sorrow for the Trojans.”

And after him again prayed Diomedes, good at the war cry: “Hear me now as well, child of Zeus, Arrytone. Follow now with me just as you once followed with my father, noble Tydeus, into Thebes, when he went ahead as a messenger of the Achaeans. Them, the bronze-clad Achaeans, he left by the Asopus, and he was bringing gentle words there to Cameias; but as he journeyed back he devised deeds very grim together with you, fair goddess, for eagerly you stood by his side. So now be minded to stand by my side, and guard me. And to you in return will I sacrifice a yearling heifer, broad of brow, unbroken, which no man has yet led beneath the yoke. Her will I sacrifice to you and will overlay her horns with gold.”

So they spoke in prayer and Pallas Athene heard them. And when they had prayed to the daughter of great Zeus, they set out to go like two lions through the black night, amid the slaughter, amid the corpses, through the armor and the black blood.

(*Il.* 10.272–298)

### Background

After the skilled and prominent Achaean warriors had killed many Trojan warriors, Zeus roused the spirit among the Trojans and Hector pressed the Achaeans back towards the ships. At the sight of them Hera had pity and ignoring Zeus' prohibition she and Athena armed themselves and were ready to descend from Mount Olympus to Troy when Zeus in anger saw them from Mount Ida. He sent Iris to Olympus to stop

<sup>136</sup> See also West, who emphasises that the poet “... instead of continuing the series of killings in the usual way, [he] simply gives a list...of heroes who followed Diomedes in the breakout, even leaving a verb to be understood.” West 2011, 207.

the two goddesses, and when Iris told them that Zeus forbid them to aid the Achaeans, they stayed there. The poet however reveals that Athena and Hera continued to plan misfortunes for the Trojans. In an assembly on Olympus, Zeus told the other gods that they would see Hector destroying Achaeans at dawn. Hector then held an assembly among the Trojans where he ordered them to make many fires during the night that was to come. The plan was to enter into battle by the Achaean ships the next day.<sup>137</sup> At the Achaean camp also, King Agamemnon called for an assembly. With troubled words he told them to take their ships and leave since there was no longer hope that they would take Troy. Nestor advised Agamemnon to be king and take command and Odysseus, Phoenix and some other men tried to persuade Achilles to fight among the Achaeans. Achilles was not interested in entering war until Hector had come to the ships and burned them. Diomedes then urged the Achaeans to prepare themselves to fight the next morning.<sup>138</sup> Agamemnon could not sleep but called for Nestor, Menelaus, the two Aiantes, Idomeneus, Meriones and Diomedes. Nestor suggested that an Achaean should go to the Trojans and spy on them during the night. Diomedes was urged to go and he asked if there was someone who could go with him. Finally Diomedes chose King Odysseus as his spy comrade, and they prepared to leave.<sup>139</sup>

### Analysis

Aspects	Scene 10 – Il. 10.272–298
<b>Ornithology</b>	
Greek bird reference	ἑρφιδίος (10.274)
Lexica	LSJ: s.v. 'heron, Il.10.274' Cunliffe s.v 'Perh. the night heron K 274'
Behaviour and characteristics	Called in the dark night when it presumably flew. Night active.
Time context	The dark night.
Spatial context	Flew by on Odysseus' and Diomedes' right and close to them, i.e., rather low in the air. Close to the Achaean camp that was near the sea.
Ornithological accuracy	High
Suggested taxonomic status	Night Heron, <i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>
<b>Form</b>	Physical
<b>Interactions</b>	
Birds and birds	-
Birds and other animals	-

<sup>137</sup> Il. 8.252–565.

<sup>138</sup> Il. 9.1–713.

<sup>139</sup> Il. 10.1–271.



## THE BIRD SCENES

Aspects	Scene 10 – <i>Il.</i> 10.272–298
<p><b>Interactions</b></p> <p>Birds and humans</p> <p>Birds and gods</p>	<p>Appeared directly after King Odysseus and Diomedes had left the Achaean camp by foot and set out for a risky nightly war-expedition. They heard its cry in the dark. Odysseus rejoiced and prayed to Athena, which indicates that he interpreted the heron as a favorable sign from her. Diomedes prayed to Atrytone*<sup>1</sup> and asked her to support and guard him. Athena heard them. The effect was that their fighting spirits increased partly because they felt Athena’s presence and support through the heron and its call.</p> <p>Was sent by Athena spontaneously to appear to King Odysseus when they were about to set out for a nighttime war expedition. As a sign from her it displays Athena’s divine presence in an audible and symbolic way. The heron’s sturdy physicality in some sense embodies Athena’s presence and support.</p>
<p><b>Functions</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A heron-specific messenger, sign and representation that brings information.</li> <li>• Athena’s heron messenger to King Odysseus and Diomedes.</li> <li>• Athena’s spontaneous communication to Odysseus and Diomedes.</li> <li>• An physical, audible sign, being part of an omen, that indicates Athena’s presence and will.</li> <li>• Indicates a positive sign from Athena to Odysseus and Diomedes that evoked fighting spirits in them.</li> <li>• Displays the close bond between Athena and King Odysseus.</li> <li>• The choice of bird indicates that Athena had left Mount Olympus despite Zeus’ will and was aiding Odysseus and Diomedes from Troy.</li> <li>• Expresses night activity from a an avian hunter /killer perspective.</li> <li>• A possible symbolic representation of Odysseus and Diomedes who will spy on and kill warriors in the Trojan troops during the night.</li> </ul>

\*<sup>1</sup> See LSJ s.v. *Ἀτρυτώνη* ‘the Unwearied, titel of Pallas Athene, *Il.* 2.157, *Od.* 4.762’. According to Hainsworth the original sense of Atrytone is now lost. Hainsworth 1993, 183. Also see Kirk 1985, 133.

### Comments and interpretation

#### *Ornithology and form*

Just when King Odysseus and Diomedes had put on their armour and left all the top men, Athena *for them sent on their right a heron, close by their way* (10.274–275). Since this bird was sent by Athena, it is not entirely wild.<sup>140</sup> Further, it is clear that this bird is physical and the passage indicates that the heron flew rather low in the air close to

<sup>140</sup> Compare with the eagles that were sent by Zeus from Mount Ida in SCENE 9 and from Mount Olympus in SCENE 35.

Odysseus and Diomedes. The heron's position to the right of them associates to divination from birds. It is further said that *though they saw it not with their eyes through the murky night, yet they heard its cry* (10.275–276) which indicates a species that calls in the dark.

The Night Heron is a nocturnal and crepuscular<sup>141</sup> feeder. It is normally solitary and has individual feeding territories. It is a good hunter and eats mainly amphibians, fish and insects. It forages normally on the margins of shallow fresh standing or gently flowing water, and also sometimes in drier grasslands. It flies freely at low altitudes. When disturbed the Night Heron utters a characteristic single croak which is a flight call that recalls the Raven. The voice is mainly hoarse and guttural. The flight call is often heard at dusk and after dark when the bird is on the wing. It roosts by day and flies at dusk to feed except when it is breeding. It is absent all-night and returns just before sun-up.<sup>142</sup> The nightly habits of the Night Heron combined with its flight call makes it suitable as a model for the bird that Odysseus and Diomedes heard near them but could not see in the darkness of the night. The Night Heron's preferred habitats and the environmental context close to the Achaean camp where it was probably marshy, also support this.<sup>143</sup>

#### *Interactions and functions in the scene*

King Odysseus and Diomedes heard the heron's cry during the night when visibility was impeded by the darkness, and the whole situation was risky for the two warriors.<sup>144</sup> One can easily understand their need for divine protection. As Hainsworth has pointed out, the heron appeared at the right psychological moment when the human actors most needed it.<sup>145</sup> The passage *Odysseus rejoiced at the omen, and made prayer to Athene* (10.277) indicates a change in Odysseus' emotional state that was evoked by the heron and its call. It seems that he recognised Athena through the heron's call and its position at the right of them, and that he interpreted it as a favourable sign from her predicting the positive outcome of the war expedition.<sup>146</sup> In his prayer on lines 10.278–282 it

<sup>141</sup> Active in the dim twilight of dusk or dawn.

<sup>142</sup> Cramp & Simmons 1977, 262–268. Also see Svensson & Grant 2006, 30–31.

<sup>143</sup> Voultziadou & Tatalos also suggest Night Heron. Voultziadou & Tatalos 2008, 307 as do Leaf and Keller. Leaf 1900, 445, Keller 1913, 203. Boraston suggested Grey Heron, *Grus grus*. Boraston 1922, 216, 242. The Grey Heron is however not active during night. According to Thompson *ἐρωδιός* is a difficult word with various and uncertain meaning. The etymology is unknown, but possibly connected, like Lat. *ardea*, with Serb. *roda*, a stork. Thompson 1936, 102. Pollard commented that *ἐρωδιός* was a heron and suggested that the Ancients sometimes did not distinguish between different species. Pollard 1977, 68. Hainsworth pointed out that *ἐρωδιός* was the name of several long-legged birds, here clearly a Night Heron, a bird of good omen, see bT and Plutarch, *Mor.* 405D, and a symbol of Athena on coins at Corinth and Ambracia. Hainsworth 1993, 182. For herons in ancient sources see also Arnott 2007, 47; Thompson 1936, 102–104; Keller 1913, 202–207.

<sup>144</sup> See *Il.* 10.218–271. See also *Il.* 10.1–4; 23–28; 65–76; 82–85; 137–141; 150–163; 183–194.

<sup>145</sup> Hainsworth 1993, 182.

<sup>146</sup> Pollard must be right when he suggests that Athena was Odysseus' patroness and because of this bond he may have associated the heron to her. Pollard 1977, 116. Also see Hainsworth 1993, 182.

becomes clear that Odysseus understood that Athena saw him in the dark. He could not see the heron himself, i.e., neither the messenger nor any sign of her, because of the darkness, but she could see him, and the heron's call became her invisible and audible communication to him.<sup>147</sup> The whole scene expresses the communication between Athena and Odysseus, and Odysseus is shown as a human who was observant and sensitive to the gods' signs, especially bird signs, and as someone who was skilled in the interpretation of bird signs. In this way the heron's call also functions as a sign that displays the close bond between Athena and Odysseus.

In the last part of his prayer Odysseus expressed specific wishes for the future where he asked for Athena's support in the great deed he *and* Diomedes were about to perform.<sup>148</sup> The fact that he prayed and asked for success in this situation *after* the call from the heron tells us that he thought that the chances of being heard were good. It seems that the lines of communication between him and Athena were now open. Diomedes prayed as well, and addressed Athena *child of Zeus, Atrytone* (10.284).<sup>149</sup> When Diomedes said *stand by my side, and guard me* (10.291) he was asking for Athena's protection for himself as opposed to Odysseus who asked for support for them both. After their prayers Odysseus and Diomedes set out like two lions, which indicate that their fighting spirits were raised and that their bodies, thoughts and emotions were influenced by the whole situation of which the heron was one part. It is also possible that Athena had given them strength and courage in a more direct, physical way from the moment they set out like lions. There are two good examples of such situations when Diomedes became lion-like, see *Il.* 5.121–144 and *Il.* 10.482–487.<sup>150</sup>

The last time Athena was mentioned in the *Iliad* she was present at Mount Olympus and Iris informed her and the other gods that Zeus had forbidden them to aid any of the humans at Troy.<sup>151</sup> There is no information in the bird scene that reveals *where* Athena and the heron were when Athena sent it away. It is only said, *And for them Pallas Athene sent on their right a heron* (10.274–275). When Zeus sent a Golden Eagle from Mount Ida,<sup>152</sup> the physical environment was correct to the habitat of this

147 See also West who points out that this bird omen "is untypical in being a heron, in being heard and not seen, in being sent by Athena, not Zeus, and by being followed rather than preceded by a prayer". West 2011, 241. See also Stockinger 1959, 129–131.

148 Jones comments that the poet by mentioning "great deeds" prepares us for this to be more than a spying expedition. Jones 2003, 167.

149 See \*1 page 97.

150 In the first situation Athena put the force (*μῆνος*) of his father in Diomedes' breast and then a force three times as great took hold of him and he became lion-like. In the other situation, which is not long after Athena had sent the heron, she breathed *μῆνος*, might, into Diomedes, see line 10.482, and spoke, unseen, see line 10.509. According to Hainsworth "The Iliadic conception of divine intervention at this level is more concrete, the god appearing openly or disguised or literally acting upon events." Hainsworth 1993, 182. Filled with *μῆνος* from Athena Diomedes is then paralleled to a lion that comes on flocks of goats or sheep when he set upon the Thracian warriors until he had slain twelve. See *Il.* 10.482–489. See also an earlier passage in *Il.* 2 that describes Agamemnon as a bull because Zeus made him so: *As a bull in a herd stands out far the chiefest, since he is preeminent among cattle as they gather, such did Zeus make Agamemnon on that day* (*Il.* 2.480–483). For the concept of "double motivation", see chapter 1.

151 *Il.* 8.409–414.

152 See SCENE 9.

species. If we suppose now that Athena sent the Night Heron from Mount Olympus, this physical environment is not at all suitable for this species. The correct habitat for a Night Heron would be some area with shallow, fresh standing, or gently flowing water or drier grasslands. We can find such a landscape close to the Achaean camp where Odysseus and Diomedes were. It thus seems that the choice of bird, Night Heron, indicates that Athena had left Olympus against Zeus' will and was aiding the two warriors from Troy.<sup>153</sup>

*Interactions and functions in the primary narrative*

If we leave the heron's immediate functions in the scene and its effects on Odysseus and Diomedes and consider its possible wider functions in the primary narrative of the *Iliad*, I would like to ask whether there is anything more that the Night Heron adds to the scene? When considering the nighttime habits of this species, that it kills and feeds on amphibians, fish and insects during the night, the choice of bird appears to be a perfect and ideal match to Odysseus and Diomedes and the nighttime war expedition they are about to perform. Could it be the case that it also foreshadows the coming human activities?

What was the outcome of Odysseus' and Diomedes' nighttime war-expedition? Hector had also invited a Trojan to spy on the Achaean camp, Dolon, who was sent out in the night. After a while Odysseus caught sight of Dolon and milked him of information before Diomedes killed him.<sup>154</sup> Further, Diomedes killed twelve Thracian warriors while Odysseus stole Rhesos' horses.<sup>155</sup> When they came back to the Achaean camp they were highly praised,<sup>156</sup> and Odysseus and Diomedes made a libation to Athena,<sup>157</sup> which indicates that they thanked her for her assistance and support during their nighttime raid.<sup>158</sup>

153 Hainsworth points out that Athena was present on lines 10.275–276 but impalpable. Hainsworth 1993, 182.

154 See *Il.* 10.299–468.

155 See *Il.* 10. 468–502.

156 See *Il.* 10.540,554.

157 See *Il.* 10.577–579.

158 According to Hainsworth the two heroes thanked Athena for their success and safe return and considered it a graceful note on which to end *Il.* 10. Hainsworth 1993, 210.

Scene 11 – *Il.* 11.153–162

153 ἀτὰρ κρείων Ἀγαμέμνων  
 154 αἰὲν ἀποκτείνων ἔπετ' Ἀργείοισι κελεύων.  
 155 ὡς δ' ὅτε πῦρ ἀΐθηλον ἐν ἀξύλῳ ἐμπέσῃ ὕλη,  
 156 πάντῃ τ' εἰλυφόων ἄνεμος φέρει, οἳ δέ τε θάμνοι  
 157 πρόρριζοι πίπτουσιν ἐπειγόμενοι πυρὸς ὀρμῆ·  
 158 ὡς ἄρ' ὑπ' Ἀτρεΐδῃ Ἀγαμέμνονι πίπτε κάρηνα  
 159 Τρώων φευγόντων, πολλοὶ δ' ἐριαύχενες ἵπποι  
 160 κείν' ὄχρα κροτάλιζον ἀνά πτολέμοιο γεφύρας  
 161 ἠγνιάχους ποθέοντες ἀμύμονας· οἳ δ' ἐπὶ γαίῃ  
 162 κείατο, γύπεσσιν πολὺ φίλτεροι ἢ ἀλόχοισιν.

And lord Agamemnon,  
 ever slaying, followed after, calling to the Argives. And as  
 when consuming fire falls on a thick wood, and the whirl-  
 ing wind carries it everywhere, and the thickets fall up-  
 rooted as they are assailed by the onrush of the fire; so be-  
 neath Agamemnon, son of Atreus, fell the heads of the  
 Trojans as they fled, and many horses with high-arched  
 necks rattled empty chariots along the lines of battle, long-  
 ing for their incomparable charioteers; but they lay on the  
 ground dearer far to **vultures** than to their wives.

(Il. 11.153–162)

## Background

When song 11 starts it was dawn and Zeus sent Strife to the ships of the Achaeans. She was holding a portent of war in her hands and standing on Odysseus' ship she uttered a terrible shout, a shrill war cry, and at that the fighting spirits were raised among the Achaeans. King Agamemnon armed himself and commanded them to array themselves for battle. The Trojans did the same. The two armies then clashed and they raged like wolves. Iris rejoiced as she looked on them for she was the only god who was with them in the fighting. All other gods were in their halls at Mount Olympus and they blamed Zeus who wanted to give glory to the Trojans. Agamemnon killed many Trojans violently in the fighting to come, and he is in these moments of activity described as a lion. When he killed Hippolochus he lopped off his head and sent him rolling like a round stone among the throng (*Il.* 11.146–147). He then went to the battalions where most of the warriors were routed. Foot soldiers killed foot soldiers as they fled and horsemen killed horsemen. The thundering hooves from the horses rose up the dust from the plain.<sup>159</sup>

## Analysis

Aspects	Scene 11 – <i>Il.</i> 11.153–162
<b>Ornithology</b>	
Greek bird reference	γύψ (11.162)
Lexica	LSJ: s.v. 'vulture', prob. including several species' Cunliffe s.v. 'a vulture'
Behaviour and characteristics	Collective vulture behaviours. Desire to feed on human corpses. Scavengers
Time context	Present

159 *Il.* 11.1–11.153.

THE BIRDS IN THE *ILIAD*

Aspects	Scene 11 – Il. 11.153–162
<b>Ornithology</b>	
Spatial context	Flew by on Odysseus’ and Diomedes’ right and close to them, i.e., rather low in the air. Close to the Achaean camp that was near the sea.
Ornithological accuracy	High
Suggested taxonomic status	Carrion-eating vultures: the Griffon Vulture, <i>Gyps fulvus</i> , the Black Vulture, <i>Aegypius monachus</i> and the Egyptian Vulture, <i>Neophron percnopterus</i> .
<b>Form</b>	Image
<b>Interactions</b>	
Birds and birds	Collective behaviours. Vultures that want to feed on human corpses.
Birds and other animals	-
Birds and humans	Desire to feed on the corpses of the fallen Trojans who Agamemnon had just killed. The “vulture-image” focusses on the vultures’ lust for the corpses.
Birds and gods	-
<b>Functions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vulture image that brings information.</li> <li>• Predicts that the Trojan warriors, newly killed by Agamemnon, will soon be food for the vultures.</li> <li>• Emphasises vultures’ lust for human flesh.</li> <li>• Implies wild aggression and violent treatment of the fallen warriors’ corpses.</li> <li>• Implies that the warriors’ corpses will not be taken care of and buried according to the traditions.</li> <li>• Emphasises the Trojan people’s tragedy and especially the Trojan women’s trauma of losing their husbands in this way.</li> </ul>

**Comments and interpretation**

*Ornithology and form*

The description of the γῦπες is restricted to one sequence: but they lay on the ground dearer far to vultures than to their wives (Il.161–162). This evokes an image of a group of vultures that will soon devour the fallen Trojan warriors. There is an important emotional part in the description that emphasises vultures’ lust for the human corpses as food.

According to the scholars Thompson, Boraston and Pollard γῦψ is a generic word for vultures. As previously argued, I agree with them that three species of vultures are used in Homer, the Griffon Vulture, the Black Vulture, and the Egyptian Vulture, especially since these three species all are specialised to feed on carrion.<sup>160</sup>

<sup>160</sup> Pollard 1977, 80; Thompson 1936, 82; Boraston 1911, 216, 239. Also see Keller who adds the Nubian Vulture. Keller 1913, 30–36. Arnott

*Interactions and functions in scene*

The poet uses the “vulture-image” as a way to let the reader know that the Trojan warriors, newly killed by King Agamemnon, would soon be food for the wild and aggressive vultures. When giving this image the poet sets the wives’ love to their husbands in contrast with the vultures’ lust for their corpses. As argued a mutilation of a corpse on a battlefield is something that is traumatic and tragic for a warrior and his relatives since it is essential to burn the corpses and to be buried and to bury ones relatives in a ritual.<sup>161</sup> The vulture image does not explicitly say however that the vultures are already “there” and that they have started to feed on the fallen Trojans. The message is instead communicated as a threatening and very likely future scenario from the Trojan point of view. The vultures in the scene thus emphasise the Trojan people’s tragedy and especially the trauma among the Trojan wives who lost their husbands in such a way. According to Leaf line II.162 is ironical and he refers to similar instances of savage humour for example *Il.* II.395 and *Il.* II.453.<sup>162</sup> I would like to add that the scene also gives a description of the brutality of war as well as it expresses a reflection on the consequences of war from the fallen warriors’ wives point of view.

**Scene 12 – *Il.* II.624–644**

624 τοῖσι δὲ τεύχε κεκλιῶ ἑυπλόκαμος Ἐκαμήδη,  
 625 τὴν ἄρετ’ ἐκ Τενέδοιο γέρον, ὅτε πέρσεν Ἀχιλλεύς,  
 626 θυγατέρ’ Ἀρσινόου μεγαλήτορος, ἣν οἱ Ἀχαιοὶ  
 627 ἔξελον οὐνεκα βουλήν ἀριστεύεσκεν ἀπάντων.  
 628 ἣ σφωῖν πρῶτον μὲν ἐπιπροΐηλε τράπεζαν  
 629 καλὴν κυανόπεζαν ἐύξοον, αὐτὰρ ἐπ’ αὐτῆς  
 630 χάλκειον κάνεον, ἐπὶ δὲ κρόμμον ποτῆ ὄψον,  
 631 ἠδὲ μέλι χλωρόν, παρὰ δ’ ἀλφίτου ἱεροῦ ἀκτῆν,  
 632 πᾶρ δὲ δέπας περικαλλές, ὃ οἴκοθεν ἦγ’ ὁ γεραίός,  
 633 χρυσεῖοις ἤλοισι πεπαρμένον· οὐατα δ’ αὐτοῦ  
 634 τέσσαρ’ ἔσαν, δοιαὶ δὲ πελειάδες ἀμφὶς ἕκαστον  
 635 χρύσειαι νεμέθοντο, δῶν δ’ ὑπὸ πυθμένεσσι ἦσαν.  
 636 ἄλλος μὲν μογέων ἀποκινήσασκε τραπέζης  
 637 πλεῖον ἔόν, Νέστωρ δ’ ὁ γέρον ἀμογητὶ ἄειρεν.  
 638 ἐν τῷ ῥά σφι κύκησε γυνὴ εἰκυῖα θεῆσιν  
 639 οἴνῳ Πραμνεῖῳ, ἐπὶ δ’ αἰγείῳ κνή τυρόν  
 640 κνήστι χαλκείῃ, ἐπὶ δ’ ἄλφιτα λευκὰ πάλυνε,

*And for them  
 fair-tressed Hecamede mixed a portion, she whom  
 old Nestor had taken out of Tenedos when Achilles sacked  
 it, the daughter of great-hearted Arsinous; the Achaeans  
 chose her out for him, since in counsel he was ever best of  
 all. She first drew before the two of them a table, fair, with  
 feet of cyanus, and well-polished, and set on it a basket of  
 bronze, and in it an onion, a relish for their drink, and pale  
 honey, and ground meal of holy barley; and beside them a  
 beautiful cup, which the old man had brought from home,  
 studded with golden nails; four were its handles, and about  
 each two **doves** were feeding, while below were two sup-  
 ports. Another man could barely budge that cup from the  
 table when it was full, but old Nestor would lift it easily. In  
 this the woman, who was like the goddesses, mixed a por-  
 tion for them with Pramnian wine, and on this she grated  
 cheese of goat’s milk with a brazen grater, and sprinkled  
 white barley meal over it; and she urged them to drink*

says that γύψ is a general name for ‘Vulture’. Arnott 2007, 60. According to Thompson γύψ was usually used in Homer in connection with feeding on carrion. Thompson 1936, 82. Pollard observes that Homer and later poets emphasised the vultures’ carrion habits. Pollard 1977, 80. Also see Voultziadou & Tatalos who suggest Griffon Vulture, Voultziadou & Tatalos 2008, 307. For the habits and distributions of the suggested species see Cramp & Simmons 1977, 64–70, 73–81, 89–95 and Svensson & Grant 2006, 70–75.

161 For the theme of the mutilation of the corpse in the Iliad, see Segal 1971. Also see for example *Il.* 15.350–351.

162 Leaf 1900, 479. Hainsworth suggests that *Il.* II.395, in the mouth of the poet, is pathetic and that it expresses the grim humour of the heat of battle. Hainsworth 1993, 242–243. Also see *Il.* II.453–454.

641 πινόμεναι δ' ἐκέλευσεν, ἐπεὶ ῥ' ὤπλισσε κυκείῳ.  
 642 τῷ δ' ἐπεὶ οὖν πίνοντ' ἀφέτην πολυκαρκέα δίψαν,  
 643 μύθοισιν τέροντο πρὸς ἀλλήλους ἐνέποντες,  
 644 Πάτροκλος δὲ Δύρῃσιν ἐφίστατο ἰσάθεος φῶς.

*when she had made ready the potion. Then when they had drunk, and sent from them parching thirst, they took delight in words, speaking to one another; and Patroclus stood at the door, a godlike man.*

(*Il.* 11.624–644)

### Background

Before the scene starts Zeus drew Hector away from the missiles and King Agamemnon followed after. When Agamemnon was close to the Trojan wall Zeus, came down from heaven and sat down on Mount Ida with the thunder bolt in his hand. He sent Iris away to tell Hector to hold himself back until he saw that Agamemnon was wounded and leaped on his chariot. From that moment Zeus would grant Hector the strength to slay Achaeans until he would come to the Achaean ships and the sun would set.<sup>163</sup> After Agamemnon was wounded by Coön and leaped onto his chariot, Hector roused the spirits among the Trojans and with high heart slew nine Achaeans. Odysseus and Diomedes counter-attacked and slew some Trojans. Watching the warriors from Mount Ida Zeus stretched the line of battle evenly for them and they continued to slay one another.<sup>164</sup> Diomedes struck Hector with his spear, which made him fall on his knees. He managed however to escape in his chariot. When Diomedes chased him he said, *Now again, your dog, you have escaped from death,(...), but once more has Phoebus Apollo saved you (Il. 11.362–363)*. Then Paris wounded Diomedes with an arrow and he leapt onto his chariot and went back to the ships. Odysseus then killed many Trojans and also was wounded by a spear; Pallas Athena did not allow it to pierce deeply, however. Being left alone on the battlefield, Odysseus called loudly for the Achaeans and Diomedes and Aias came to his assistance. Paris then wounded the healer Machaon with an arrow. At that Nestor rescued Machaon in his chariot and they drove towards the Achaean camp.<sup>165</sup> When Hector understood that the Trojans and their horses were being routed and that it was Aias who drove them he drove there but without facing Aias. Zeus then had Aias flee and at that he gave way before the Trojans, much against his will. When Achilles saw Nestor coming back to the Achaean camp with a wounded warrior, he asked Patroclus to find out the identity of this warrior. Patroclus then ran to the huts and ships of the Achaeans. When Nestor's attendant had unharnessed the horses from the chariot Nestor and Machaon went into Nestor's hut and sat down on chairs.<sup>166</sup>

<sup>163</sup> *Il.* 11.163–194.

<sup>164</sup> *Il.* 11.195–337.

<sup>165</sup> *Il.* 11.338–513.

<sup>166</sup> *Il.* 11.283–623.



## THE BIRD SCENES

### Analysis

Aspects	Scene 12 – Il. 11.624–644
<b>Ornithology</b>	
Greek bird reference	πελειάς (Il.634)
Lexica	LSJ: s.v. ‘dove or pigeon, esp. wild rock-pigeon, <i>Columba livia</i> ’ Cunliffe s.v. ‘a wild dove or pigeon’
Behaviour and characteristics	Doves that feed two by two in four pairs
Time context	Unspecific
Spatial context	Unspecific
Ornithological accuracy	Medium
Suggested taxonomic status	Dove, presumably Rock Dove, <i>Columbia livia</i>
<b>Form</b>	Other, i.e., sculptured decorations on a drinking cup.
<b>Interactions</b>	
Birds and birds	Eight doves that feed in four pairs: they are performing the same activity.
Birds and other animals	-
Birds and humans	A possible parallel between the feeding doves and the drinking men.
Birds and gods	-
<b>Functions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sculptured decorations on a drinking cup.</li> <li>• Dove-specific sculptured parallels to the men and their drinking activity that bring information.</li> <li>• Emphasise the men’s drinking activity</li> <li>• Indicate that the Pramnian wine was nutritious.</li> <li>• Give the men’s drinking activity a kind of wild and avian feeding character.</li> <li>• Possibly indicate that the drink and the men’s drinking activity had divine connotations.</li> </ul>

### Comments and interpretation

#### *Ornithology and form*

This bird scene where doves appear as sculptured decorations on a drinking cup is different from all the other bird scenes since their forms differs from the other birds’ forms. I have chosen to include this scene in the material since the doves show a behaviour that is accurate for doves, and since their behaviours seem to have significance for what the humans are doing in the scene.

It is said that Nestor’s cup was studded with golden nails<sup>167</sup> and *four were its handles*,

<sup>167</sup> The gold rivets signify that this is a luxury object, but not as luxurious as the gold cups wielded by the gods as Hainsworth pointed out. According to Hainsworth the word *δέπας* on line 11.632 is of Anatolian origin and referred to the Hittite word *tapišana-*. Commentators’ conceptions of the vessel has changed as archaeological material have accumulated. It has been suggested that the doves recall the gold

and about each two doves were feeding (11.634–635). The passage tells us of doves that perform the same activity, i.e., that of feeding. It further indicates that there were eight doves all together on the handles, and that they were feeding in four pairs with one pair at each handle. Willcock comments that *νεμέδοντο* (11.635) means “were feeding” which he suggests meant that the doves had their heads down as if pecking.<sup>168</sup> Since this is one way that doves eat the interpretation of the bird as pecking is possible.

Rock Doves are social, especially when roosting, feeding and flying some distance, or loafing. They are commonly seen in pairs or small flocks. Their food consists chiefly of seeds of cereals, legumes, and weeds. Wild birds take grains of wheat, barley, oats, and fruits, some green leaves and pieces of potato etc. The food is almost always taken on the ground by walking and pecking. One particularity of doves that they share with flamingos and some penguins is the extremely nutritious crop milk that both parents produce and give to their young from the crop. This liquid is extremely high in protein and fat and contains more of it than cow milk or human milk.<sup>169</sup>

Further, doves’ crop milk contains of vitamins A, B, C, D, and E, and saccharases.<sup>170</sup> In appearance it bears little resemblance to mammalian milk, and being a semi-solid substance it is somewhat reminiscent of pale yellow cottage cheese. This is another way of feeding among doves and the nutritious aspect of doves may have relevance for the scene since Machaon is wounded<sup>171</sup> and is in need of being cured and recovering. Apart from being a co-commander in war together with his brother Podalirius, Machaon is a healer and the son of Asclepius.<sup>172</sup> Machaon is given a drink called Pramnian wine that is described in great detail. It is said that pale honey and onion was eaten with this drink and ground meal of holy barley and that Hecamede grated goat’s milk cheese and sprinkled white barley meal over it.<sup>173</sup> It is my opinion that we must at least consider a parallelism between the liquid shared by doves that is called doves’ milk and that looks like pale yellow cottage cheese, and the Pramnian wine that

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cup found in the fourth shaft-grave at Mycenae, but the problem, as pointed out by Hainsworth, is that that cup is probably a libation vessel and the birds that decorate the handles are falcons. The Linear B ideogram that depicts a vessel with four handles called di-pa has also been discussed among scholars. Hainsworth suggested that the elaborate description of Nestor’s cup in the *Iliad* could as easily be understood to imply that the cup was invented as that it was a well-known object. Hainsworth 1993, 292–293. According to Willcock Nestor’s cup is the third description in the *Iliad* of an artefact which can only have been made in the Mycenaean age, together with the boar’s tusk helmet in *Il.* 10.261–265 and Aias’ tower shield in *Il.* 7.219. Willcock suggests that the gold cup from the shaft grave at Mycenae is much smaller than the one which Homer described, and suggests in contrast to Hainsworth, that the gold cup from the shaft grave at Mycenae is decorated with doves. Willcock 1978, 307. See also Leaf 1900, 509 and West 2011, 259.

168 Willcock 1978, 307. See also LSJ *νεμέδω* ‘in Med., once in Hom., *νεμέδοντο*, of doves, were feeding, *Il.* 11.635’.

169 Cramp 1985, 287–288.

170 Cramp 1985, 288. Concerning “birds’ milk” or “fowls’ milk” see Pollard, who says that such “milk” was employed in ancient times like our phrase “pigeons’ milk” for an unobtainable luxury.” Pollard 1977, 180. He refers to the Aristophanes *Wasps* where Philocleon says “I wouldn’t exchange the life of which you threaten to rob me for bird’s milk”. Pollard 1977, 180 based on Ar. *Vesp.*, 508.

171 See *Il.* 11.504–507 and the “Background” of the scene.

172 See *Il.* 2.129–133.

173 See also West who points out that the scene is treated with much pictorial detail and that the cheese grating seem to come from older poetic tradition, West 2011, 259.

was given to Machaon and shared by the men in the scene.<sup>174</sup> Even if the information about the doves is sparse I suggest Rock Doves since *πέλεια* in other scenes in the *Iliad* signifies Rock Dove.<sup>175</sup>

*Interactions and functions in the scene*

What we have in the scene is a drinking cup where some characters perform activities, i.e., we have the sculptured doves that are feeding, and we have the men who are drinking something called Pramnian wine from the cup. I suggest that the feeding doves constitute parallels to the drinking men where the doves emphasise the men's drinking activity. I further suggest, according to the ornithological details above, that we at least have to consider that the feeding doves refer to doves' regurgitation<sup>176</sup> of crop milk. If this is so, the doves indicate that this drink was nutritious also for the drinking men. As has been seen doves are associated with gods in other scenes of the *Iliad*,<sup>177</sup> and doves in the *Odyssey* are explicitly said to bring ambrosia to Zeus as food.<sup>178</sup> These details together suggests that the doves in the scene indicate that the Pramnian wine and the men's drinking activity both had divine connotations.

**Scene 13 – Il. 12.195–257**

195 Ὀφρ' οἱ τοὺς ἐνάριζον ἀπ' ἔντεα μαρμαίροντα,  
 196 τόφρ' οἱ Πουλυδάμαντι καὶ Ἑκτορι κοῦροι ἔποντο,  
 197 οἱ πλεῖστοι καὶ ἄριστοι ἔσαν, μέμασαν δὲ μάλιστα  
 198 τεῖχος τε ῥήξειν καὶ ἐνιπρήσειν πυρὶ νῆας,  
 199 οἱ ῥ' ἔτι μερμήριζον ἐφισταότες παρὰ τάφρω.  
 200 ὄρνις γάρ σφιν ἐπήλθε περυσέμεναι μεμαῶσιν,  
 201 αἰετὸς ὑψιπέτης ἐπ' ἀριστερὰ λαὸν ἔεργων,  
 202 φοινίηντα δράκοντα φέρων οὐνόχεσσι πέλωρον  
 203 ζῶν ἔτ' ἀσπαίροντα, καὶ οὐ πω λήθετο χάρμης·  
 204 κόψε γὰρ αὐτὸν ἔχοντα κατὰ στῆθος παρὰ δειρῆν  
 205 ἰδνωθεὶς ὀπίσω· ὃ δ' ἀπὸ ἔθεν ἤκε χαμᾶζε  
 206 ἀλγήσας ὀδύνησι, μέσῳ δ' ἐνὶ κάββαλ' ὀμίλῳ,  
 207 αὐτὸς δὲ κλάγξας πέτετο πνοιῆς ἀνέμοιο.

*While they were stripping from these their shining arms, meanwhile the youths who followed with Polydamas and Hector, who were most in number and best and most eager to break through the wall and burn the ships with fire, these still stood by the trench and deliberated. For an omen had come to them as they were eager to cross over an eagle of lofty flight, skirting the army on the left, and in its talons it carried a blood-red, huge snake, still alive and struggling, nor was it yet forgetful of combat; for it writhed backward, and struck him who held it on the chest beside the neck, and the eagle, stung with pain, cast it from him to the ground, and let it fall in the midst of the throng, and himself with a loud cry sped away down the blast of the*

174 According to Hainsworth, *Πράμνιος* ought to designate the provenance of the wine, but no place as such is known, unless we accept Crates' (DT) assertion that there was a mountain *Πράμνη* on Icaria. The term occurs later and the comic poets designated it as a term of quality. The scholiast (T on 624) says red wine. Hainsworth 1993, 204.

175 Boraston suggests that *πέλεια* is a Rock Dove, Boraston 1911, 216; 227. According to Pollard *περιστερά* and *πέλεια* were names for pigeons in general whereas *πέλεια* was applied to the Rock Dove and Stock Dove. Pollard 1977, 56, see also 89–90. According to Thompson *πέλεια* in Homer undoubtedly means Rock Dove. Thompson 1936, 225–231, esp. 227. Voultsiadou & Tatolas suggest Rock Dove. Voultsiadou & Tatolas 2008, 307. For doves in ancient sources see also Arnott 2007, 170–171; Keller 1913, 122–131, esp. 127.

176 Regurgitation is “the ejecting of food through the mouth, for example to feed nestlings”, Erritzoe et al. 2007, 220.

177 See SCENES 7 and 20.

178 See *Od.* 12.62–64. According to Pollard Rock Doves, were said to have fed the infant Zeus in the Cretan Cave and also to have supplied the gods with ambrosia. Pollard 1977, 57, 148, 182. For doves that bring ambrosia and nectar to the gods see also Keller 1913, 124.

208 Τρωῆες δ' ἐρρίγησαν ὕπως ἴδον αἰόλον ὄφιν  
209 κείμενον ἐν μέσσοισι Διὸς τέρας αἰγίοχοιο.

210 δὴ τότε Πολυδάμας θρασὺν Ἴκτορα εἶπε παραστάς·  
211 “Ἴκτορ ἀεὶ μὲν πῶς μοι ἐπιπλήσσεις ἀγορήσιν  
212 ἐσθλὰ φραζομένῳ, ἐπεὶ οὐδὲ μὲν οὐδὲ εἰκοι  
213 δῆμον ἐόντα παρῆξ ἀγορευέμεν, οὔτ' ἐνὶ βουλῇ  
214 οὔτε ποτ' ἐν πολέμῳ, σὸν δὲ κράτος αἰὲν ἀέξειν·  
215 νῦν αὖτ' ἐξερῶ ὡς μοι δοκεῖ εἶναι ἄριστα.  
216 μὴ ἴομεν Δαναοῖσι μαχησόμενοι περὶ νηῶν.  
217 ὧδε γὰρ ἐκτελέεσθαι οἶμαι, εἰ ἐτέον γε  
218 Τρωσὶν ὄδ' ὄρνις ἦλθε περησέμεναι μεμαῶσιν,  
219 αἰετὸς ὑψιπέτης ἐπ' ἀριστερὰ λαὸν ἔεργων,  
220 φοινίχεντα δράκοντα φέρων ὀνύχεσσι πέλωρον  
221 ζώνῳ· ἄφαρ δ' ἀφέηκε πάρος φίλα οἰκί' ἰκέσθαι,  
222 οὐδ' ἐτέλεσε φέρων δόμεναι τεκέεσσιν ἐοῖσιν—  
223 ὡς ἡμεῖς, εἴ πέρ τε πύλας καὶ τεῖχος Ἀχαιῶν  
224 ῥηξόμεθα σθένει μεγάλῳ, εἴξωσι δ' Ἀχαιοί,  
225 οὐ κόσμῳ παρὰ ναῦφιν ἐλευσόμεθ' αὐτὰ κέλευθα·  
226 πολλοὺς γὰρ Τρωῶν καταλείβομεν, οὓς κεν Ἀχαιοὶ  
227 χαλκῷ θηώσωσιν ἀμυνόμενοι περὶ νηῶν.  
228 ὧδὲ χ' ὑποκρίναιτο θεοπρόπος, ὃς σάφα θυμῷ  
229 εἰδείη τεράων καὶ οἱ πειθοίατο λαοί.”

230 Τὸν δ' ἄρ' ὑπόδρα ἰδὼν προσέφη κορυθαίολος Ἴκτωρ·  
231 “Πολυδάμα, σὺ μὲν οὐκ ἔτ' ἐμοὶ φίλα ταῦτ' ἀγορεύεις·  
232 οἶσθα καὶ ἄλλον μῦθον ἀμείνονα τοῦδε νοῆσαι.  
233 εἰ δ' ἐτέον δὴ τοῦτον ἀπὸ σπουδῆς ἀγορεύεις,  
234 ἐξ ἄρα δὴ τοι ἔπειτα θεοὶ φρένας ὤλεσαν αὐτοί,  
235 ὃς κέλει Ζητὸς μὲν ἐριγδούποιο λαθέσθαι  
236 βουλέων, ἃς τέ μοι αὐτὸς ὑπέσχετο καὶ κατένευσε.  
237 τύνη δ' οἰωνοῖσι τανυπτερούγεσσι κελεύεις  
238 πείθεσθαι, τῶν οὔ τι μετατρέπομ' οὐδ' ἀλεγίζω,  
239 εἴτ' ἐπὶ δεξι' ἴωσι πρὸς ἠῶ τ' ἠέλιόν τε,  
240 εἴτ' ἐπ' ἀριστερὰ τοί γε ποτὶ ζῶφον ἠερόεντα.  
241 ἡμεῖς δὲ μέγαλοιο Διὸς πειθόμεθα βουλῇ,  
242 ὃς πᾶσι θνητοῖσι καὶ ἀθανάτοισιν ἀνάσσει.  
243 εἷς οἰωνὸς ἄριστος ἀμύνεσθαι περὶ πάτρησ.  
244 τίπτε σὺ δεῖδοικας πόλεμον καὶ θηϊότητα;  
245 εἴ περ γὰρ τ' ἄλλοι γε περὶ κτεινόμεθα πάντες  
246 νηυσὶν ἐπ' Ἀργείων, σοὶ δ' οὐ δέος ἔσθ' ἀπολέσθαι·  
247 οὐ γὰρ τοι κραδὴν μενεδήϊος οὐδὲ μαχήμων.  
248 εἰ δὲ σὺ θηϊότητος ἀφέξει, ἠέ τιν' ἄλλον  
249 παρφάμενος ἐπέεσσιν ἀποτρέψεις πολέμοιο,  
250 αὐτίκ' ἐμῷ ὑπὸ δουρὶ τυπεῖς ἀπὸ θυμὸν ὀλέσσεις.”  
251 Ὡς ἄρα φωνήσας ἠγήσατο, τοὶ δ' ἅμ' ἔποντο  
252 ἠχῆν θεσπεσίην· ἐπὶ δὲ Ζεὺς τερπικέραυνος

wind. And the Trojans shuddered when they saw the writhing snake lying in their midst, a portent of Zeus who bears the aegis.

Then it was that Polydamas came up and spoke to bold Hector: “Hector, you always rebuke me in assemblies, though I give good counsel, since it would indeed not be right that a man of the people should speak contrary to you, either in council or in war, but he should always increase your power; yet now I will speak what seems to me to be best. Let us not go forward to fight with the Danaans for the ships. For so, I think, will the issue be, since in fact this omen has come on the Trojans as they were eager to cross over, an eagle of lofty flight, skirting the army on the left, carrying in his talons a blood-red, huge snake, still living, yet suddenly let it fall before he reached his dear nest, and did not finish his course, to bring and give it to his little ones; so shall we, though we break the gates and the wall of the Achaeans by our great might and the Achaeans give way, come back over the same road from the ships in disarray; for many of the Trojans will we leave behind whom the Achaeans will slaughter with bronze in defense of the ships. This is the way a soothsayer would interpret, one who in his mind had clear knowledge of omens, and to whom the people give ear.”

Then with an angry glance spoke to him Hector of the flashing helmet: “Polydamas, these things you are saying are no longer pleasing to me; you know how to devise a better speech than this. But if you are really saying this in earnest, then indeed the gods themselves have surely destroyed your senses, since you are asking me to forget the counsels of load-thundering Zeus, that he himself promised me and nodded assent. But you tell us to be obedient to birds long of wing, which I do not regard or take thought of, whether they go to the right toward the dawn and the sun, or to the left toward the murky darkness. Let us be obedient to the counsel of great Zeus, who is king over all mortals and immortals. One omen is best, to fight for one's country. Why do you fear war and combat? For even if the rest of us are slain one and all at the ships of the Argives, yet there is no fear that you should perish, for your heart is not firm in the fight nor warlike. But, if you hold aloof from combat, or win another over with your words, and turn him from war, at once struck by my spear will you lose your life.”

So he spoke and led the way; and they followed after with a woundrous din; and Zeus, who hurls the thunderbolt, roused from the mountains of Ida a blast of wind that car-

THE BIRD SCENES

253 ὤρσεν ἀπ' Ἰδαίων ὀρέων ἀνέμοιο θύελλαν,  
 254 ἣ ῥ' ἰθὺς νηῶν κοίην φέρεν· αὐτὰρ Ἀχαιῶν  
 255 θέλγε νόον, Τρωσὶν δὲ καὶ Ἴκτορι κῦδος ὄπαζε.  
 256 τοῦ περ δὴ τεράεσσι πεποιθότες ἠδὲ βίηφι  
 257 ἐήγγυσθαι μέγα τεῖχος Ἀχαιῶν πειρήτιζον.

ried the dust straight against the ships; and he bewildered  
 the minds of the Achaeans, but granted glory to the Tro-  
 jans and to Hector. Trusting therefore in his portents and  
 in their might they sought to break the great wall of the  
 Achaeans.

(Il. 12.195–257)

**Background**

Many pre-eminent Achaean warriors had been wounded which made King Nestor advise Patroclus to ask Achilles to send him out in war.<sup>179</sup> The fightings about the well-built Achaean wall continued. Hector was eager to cross over the Achaean trench and the wall but his horses did not dare jump over. Polydamas<sup>180</sup> advised Hector to leave the horses and let the foot-soldiers follow after Hector over the trench. This time Hector was pleased and followed Polydamas' advice and the Trojans marshaled in five companies after their leaders. The best and most numerous and those who were most eager to break through the wall went with Hector and Polydamas. The Lycian King Sarpedon led the allies with Glaucus and Asteropaeus at his side. Of Sarpedon it is here said that *he was preeminent even among all* (Il. 12.104). It is then told of the Trojans ... *nor did they think that they would be held back any longer* (Il. 2.106–107). Further on it is said about some Trojans *for they thought that they would no more be held back by the Achaeans...—fools that they were* (Il. 12.125–127). In the fighting that followed, the Trojans first met the sons of Lapith spearman who stood firm as oaks in front of the high gate of the Achaean wall. They had been rousing the Achaeans to fight in *defense of the ships* (Il. 12.141). The Lapith sons got help from the others who hurled stones from the wall *in defence of their own lives and of the huts and of the swift-faring ships* (Il. 12.155–156). The poet then reveals that it was Hector who Zeus wanted to give glory. The Achaeans continued to defend themselves and more men were killed in the fightings close to the wall.<sup>181</sup>

179 Il. 11.645–848.

180 In Il. 18 Polydamas is described in the following way: *Then among them prudent Polydamas was first to speak, the son of Panthous: for he alone saw both before and after. Comrade was he of Hector, and in the one night were they born: but in speech one was far the best, the other with spear* (Il. 18.249–251).

181 Il. 12.1–12.194.

## Analysis

Aspects	Scene 13 – <i>Il.</i> 12.195–257
<b>Ornithology</b>	
Greek bird reference	<i>αἰετός</i> (12.201; 219)
Lexica	LSJ s.v. 'eagle, as a bird of omen,... <i>Il.</i> 8.247, cf. 12.201... favourite of Zeus... <i>Il.</i> 24.310' Cunliffe s.v. 'An eagle'
Behaviour and characteristics	Carried a huge snake in its talons but the snake, that was still alive and struggling, struck the eagle. Stung with pain it cast the snake to the ground and let it fall in the midst of the throng of Trojan warriors. It sped away with a loud cry down the blast of the wind.
Time context	Appeared when Polydamas, Hector and the young Trojan warriors were eager to break through the Achaean wall.
Spatial context	High up in the air and above the Achaean military wall and the Trojan warriors. Skirted the Trojan army on the left. Sped away down the blast of the wind.
Ornithological accuracy	High
Suggested taxonomic status	An eagle, presumably the Short-toed Eagle, <i>Circaetus gallicus</i>
<b>Form</b>	Physical
<b>Interactions</b>	
Birds and birds	-
Birds and other animals	The eagle carried a blood-red, huge snake in its talons. The snake was still alive and was struggling in a defensive way. It struck the eagle on the chest next to its neck and the eagle threw it to the ground, letting it fall in the midst of the throng of Trojan warriors. With a loud cry it then sped down the blast of the wind which indicates that it lost the control and initiative. The snake is described as a portent of Zeus (12.209).
Birds and humans	Appeared above the Trojan warriors when they were eager to break the Achaean wall and burn their ships. The Trojans observed the animals and deliberated which indicates that they viewed the eagle as a sign or as part of a sign coming with information to them. Polydamas and Hector interpreted the animal event differently. The effect of the eagle-serpent event was that the Trojans felt confusion and their fighting spirits were also reduced.
Birds and gods	It is not explicitly said that this eagle was sent by a god, but since the poet describes the snake as a portent of Zeus (12.209) and since Zeus sent away the eagle with the fawn in <i>Il.</i> 8.236–252 and in <i>Il.</i> 24.308–321 it is likely that Zeus sent this eagle also.

## THE BIRD SCENES

Aspects	Scene 13 – <i>Il.</i> 12.195–257
<b>Functions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A possible eagle-specific messenger, sign and representation that brings information.</li> <li>• Probably Zeus' eagle-messenger to the Trojan warriors.</li> <li>• One part of a visual physical sign, being part of an omen, that with its identity and physical position indicates Zeus presence and will.</li> <li>• Evoked wonder and confusion among the Trojan warriors.</li> <li>• Was probably taken as a bad sign by the Trojan warriors that reduced their fighting spirits.</li> <li>• According to Polydamas it warned the Trojans against breaking down the Achaean wall and pass over it.</li> <li>• According to Hector it did not mean anything apart from being an eagle: it was not a sign.</li> <li>• Expresses strength and combat from an avian hunter perspective. The eagle however was struck by the defensive snake.</li> <li>• A possible symbolic representation of the Lycian king Sarpedon who soon will be attacked by Aias when the latter was defending the Achaean wall.</li> </ul>

### Comments and interpretation

#### *Ornithology and form*

This is yet another of the more complicated bird scenes in the *Iliad*. Since this eagle is observed by the human characters it can clearly be identified as physical concerning form. It is at first said that the eagle was *an eagle of lofty flight* (12.201)<sup>182</sup>, which is an accurate description since eagles and some other large birds with broad slotted wings such as vultures, pelicans and storks fly very high up in the air where they make use of thermals<sup>183</sup> to gain height by circling in tight curves as close as possible round the centre of the thermal. This way of flying is called thermal soaring.<sup>184</sup> Even if eagles are often seen soaring in this way I find such a flying technique somewhat odd for an eagle having a snake in its talons. In such a situation an eagle should be expected to fly more directly to the nest, a tree, or some other goal. It thus seems that the passage above here functions as an epithet that accurately describes an important characteristics of eagles. The description *skirting the army on the left* (12.201) emphasises the spatial position of the bird in relation to the human warriors beneath. Since the left side is usually the unlucky side in the *Iliad*, it possibly means that this eagle flew by on the left side of the Trojan army and that it should be interpreted as a bad sign and/or as a warning.<sup>185</sup>

182 LSJ *ὑψιπέτης* 'high-flying, soaring'.

183 A thermal column or thermal is a column of rising warm air in the lower altitudes of the earth's atmosphere. The sun warms the ground, which in turn warms the air directly above it. Bradbury 2000.

184 Videler 2005, 150. Cramp & Simmons describes birds' soaring as a circling flight that usually is performed in a narrow altitudinal plane or with ascent, of a bird that holds its wings fully extended in fixed attitude. Cramps & Simmons 1980, 5. Also see Erritzoe et al. 2007, 238, 257.

185 On divination from birds see chapter 1. Hainsworth points out that *λαὸν ἐέργων* (12.201) occurs only here and in the repeated line

The passages that describe that the eagle carried the snake in its talons (12.207), that it was struck by the snake (12.204–205), and that it threw the snake to ground (12.206), all refer to natural conditions and to ornithology. Some species of eagles, especially the Short-toed Eagle, hunt snakes and it sometimes happens that an eagle is forced to drop.<sup>186</sup> Line 12.207 that describes that the eagle *himself with a loud cry sped away down the blast of the wind* (12.207) indicates that the eagle lost the control and initiative, but it did not however fall completely but was still carried by the wind. The passage further refers to an eagle who made a loud call just after it was struck by a snake. Eagles have different calls that they use in different situations, but I have not found any reports on how eagles sound in a situation like this. When Polydamas described the eagle he repeated what had already been said by the poet, but without mentioning that it was struck by the snake. Perhaps the idea was to show that Polydamas was not aware of that the eagle was struck by the eagle and that this knowledge was restricted to the poet and the audience. Polydamas however added that the eagle *suddenly let it fall before he reached his dear nest (...) to bring and give it to his little ones* (12.221–222). This part of Polydamas description refers to ornithology since eagles, especially the Short-toed Eagle feeds its young with snakes.<sup>187</sup> In his speech Hector mentioned *birds long of wing* (12.237)<sup>188</sup> which indicates that the eagle that they had seen was a long-winged species. When Hector mentioned birds *that go to the right toward the dawn and the sun, or to the left toward the murky darkness* (12.239–240) his words do not refer to naturalistic ideas of eagles but to divination from birds, which are ideas that Hector said he rejected. However, his critical words indicate that living ideas of birds as signs being parts of omens existed among people and that they paid attention to different kinds of birds and their spatial positions.

The Short-toed Eagle is called “Snake eagle” in many languages.<sup>189</sup> It is a medium-sized, broad-faced, usually dark-hooded snake eagle. In flight, the long wings and narrow tail are characteristic and the wing beats are powerful and resemble those of the Golden Eagle. The Short-toed Eagle is specialised to hunt snakes and it takes both

12.219. He finds that it reflects the fundamental sense of *ἐέγγω* “bar the way” and suggests that the eagle flew “across the front of the army” from right to left, i.e., from east to west, as appears from line 240, since the Trojans are facing north. Hainsworth further suggests that we are looking at the ominous eagle from the Trojan point of view. He translates “to the left of the Trojans.” Hainsworth 1993, 340. Also see Willcock 1978, 317; Willcock 1976, 141 and Leaf 1900, 539.

186 A species that may have been used as a model for the snake in the scene is the Whip Snake, *Coluber jugularis*, that is a large day-active snake that is bright red on the throat and belly. It is not poisonous but very aggressive and defensive when caught and restrained. It is known for its painful bites. The length can reach 2–2.5 m. *Coluber jugularis* is distributed today in the southwest and south Turkey. It is commonly seen in the ruins of ancient Ephesos. Information from Göran Nilsson, zool. Prof. Göteborg. Bakaloudis et al. report that *Coluber jugularis* featured prominently as preys in nests of Short-toed Eagles in the Evros province in north-eastern Greece. Bakaloudis et al. 1998, 821–828.

187 See Cramp and Simmons 1980, 98.

188 LSJ s.v. *τανύπτερον* ‘...οἰωνοί Il.12.237; ἄρπη 19.350.’ See also *τανύπτερος* ‘with extended wings, long-winged.’ See also *Il.* 19.350 in SCENE 28.

189 German: “Schlangenadler”, Dänish: “Slangeørn” and Swedish “Ormörn”.



non-poisonous and poisonous species.<sup>190</sup> If the prey is small enough, it is carried into the air where it is manipulated with the feet and the head is crushed and neck broken. The Short-toed Eagle has a variety of calls. The utterances are mostly a clear, sharp, whistling “kiiii...” or a “...iook”, or “ieueueuk” that is more variable in pitch and ending with a low, dry sound.<sup>191</sup>

*Interactions and functions in the scene*

The scene is complex and interactions occur at many levels. The eagle and snake are shown in a rather even combat in the air where the snake defended itself and struck the eagle. At that the eagle was stung with pain. It lost its grip and had to drop the snake. Perhaps the snake can be seen as the stronger part since it managed to struck the eagle and since the eagle dropped it. After the eagle had been struck by the snake it cried loudly and sped away down the blast of the wind. It seems that both animals survived.<sup>192</sup>

When the Trojan warriors observed the eagle coming with the snake they were in the middle of an important war situation – they were trying to get through the Achaean wall. From their perspective the eagle-snake event must have been considered unusual, and even more unusual that it took place just at this moment. The animal event affected their motivations since they stopped trying to break down the Achaean wall. Their reactions indicate that they interpreted the eagle as a sign or as a part of a sign. At least they considered that it might be a sign together with the snake. The result was that the Trojans’ got confused and that their fighting spirits were reduced. Polydamas and Hector then had a serious discussion and interpreted the event in different ways. Polydamas saw the eagle as a sign that had come to warn the Trojans troops against breaking down the Achaean wall<sup>193</sup> and Hector rejected the eagle as a sign that had come with special implications for them. Hector could in no way *forget the counsels of*

190 Cramp & Simmons 1980, 98, and Bakaloudis et al. 1998, 821–828.

191 Cramp & Simmons 1980, 98, 101.

Thompson also suggests Short-toed Eagle. He further emphasises the ancient interest in raptors choice of prey, such as the names or epithets “Duck-killer”, “Hare-killer” and “Fawn-killer”. Thompson 1936, 3. Also see Boraston who suggests that *αἰετὸς ὑψηπέτης*, the High-flying Eagle, was Bonelli’s Eagle, *Hieraetus fasciatus*. Boraston 1911, 216, 234–236. Pollard comments on the scene but without identifying the eagle. He says however that “Homer’s omens are dramatic and contrived (...) All of them are drawn from nature. Most of them are convincing and indeed could be observed in Greece today.” Pollard 1977, 122. For eagles in ancient sources see Arnott 2007, 2–4; Thompson 1936, 2–17; Keller 1913, 1–6. Also see Voultsiadou & Tatalos who identify the *αἰετοί* that occur in Homer not as species but as “Eagle”. Voultsiadou & Tatalos 2008, 307.

192 Hainsworth discusses that the eagle and snake, which was probably a favourite combination in mantic art, make up a powerful omen, as the eagle was the bird of Zeus and the snake the symbol of chthonic power. He further refers to the parody in Aristophanes, *Eq.* 197–198. Hainsworth 1993, 340. Concerning the mythical or legendary aspect of the eagle and serpent see Thompson with references. Thompson 1935, 5. Thompson further points out that the eagle with the serpent or dragon, does not occur only in classical coinage (Chalcis, Agriguntum, Elis), but also on Persian and Egyptian sculptures. Thompson 1936, 13.

193 Hainsworth discusses that Polydamas “is no *θεοπόσιπος*, cf. 228–9, but Homeric omens do not usually seem to demand much in the way of arcane knowledge for their interpretation. The eagle, of course, is the bird of Zeus, as the hawk is to Apollo (*Od.* 15.526), and indicates the provenance of the omen, cf. 24.315–20.” Hainsworth 1993, 341. Also see Hearsh, who emphasises Polydamas’ concerns for his city and family, Hearsh 1999, 398.

load-thundering Zeus, that he himself promised me and nodded in ascent (12.235–236)<sup>194</sup>. He said that he did not take thought of whether they [birds] go to the right toward the dawn and the sun, or to the left toward the murky darkness (12.239–240).<sup>195</sup> It seems that Hector was annoyed about the eagle and could not accept Polydamas' interpretation since it did not suit his own plans. Hector's goal as the military leader of the Trojan troops was to continue the military "path" forward and to burn the ships, see line 12.198. It is likely that the idea was that Zeus sent this eagle since the poet describes the snake as a *portent of Zeus* (12.209) and since Zeus sent away the eagle with the fawn in SCENE 9 and in SCENE 35. It thus seems that Zeus wanted to communicate something to the Trojans and it is plausible that it was a warning or perhaps the idea was to confuse them or test them. At least we can see that the result of the animal event was confusion among most of the Trojans. According to Hainsworth there is no doubt that this omen was sent by Zeus and that it conceals the ambiguity of Zeus who first warned the Trojans to desist and then urged them to attack, see *Il.* 12.252–253.<sup>196</sup>

#### *Interactions and functions in the primary narrative*

If we leave the eagle's immediate functions in the scene and its effects on the Trojan warriors and consider its possible wider functions in the primary narrative of the *Iliad*, I would like to ask why a Short-toed Eagle eagle interacting with a snake was chosen for the scene, and why it was important to show that the snake defended itself and struck the eagle? As argued before, kings and great warriors in the *Iliad* are often paralleled to eagles in metaphorical passages.<sup>197</sup> Snakes are also associated with kings and prominent warriors.<sup>198</sup> Since animal signs being part of omens seem to signify the future concerning human activities in the *Iliad*,<sup>199</sup> one could see the eagle as being a future-projecting, symbolic representation of a pre-eminent warrior among the Trojan-Lycian troops, i.e., more specifically of the Lycian King Sarpedon, who will soon be attacked by Aias (represented by the snake) when Aias is defending the wall.<sup>200</sup>

194 This passage refers to *Il.* 11.192ff (=207 ff.). According to Jones, Hector had Zeus' promise for the rest of that day. He adds that it could be foolish to reject omens in the way Hector does in the scene. Jones 2003, 189. See also West 2011, 268.

195 Also see SCENE 16 where Hector ignored another high flying eagle. Hainsworth remarks on Hector's "happy-go-lucky (or fatalistic) approach to war and contempt for divination" and refers to *Il.* 16.859–861. Hainsworth 1993, 342. Hainsworth further comments that Hector's response lies in its clarification of his attitude. He puts his trust in Zeus and his faith both spurs and blinds him to observe every warning. Hector relies on the promise of Zeus given at *Il.* 11.207–210. I agree with Hainsworth when he says that "but to any pious mind his words would represent a fatal illusion. In tragedy contempt for oracles is always a sure precursor of doom." Hainsworth.1993, 399, 343. Jones points out that "bird omens, most of which are sent by Zeus (209), never fail; those who reject them signal their own downfall, as Hector does." Jones 2003, 188. According to Willcock "Hektor's scorn for omens is hardly sensible, and borders on blindness and delusion." Willcock 1978, 317. Also see Willcock 1976, 156.

196 Hainsworth 1993, 340.

197 See SCENE 19 (Hector), SCENE 24 (Menelaus), SCENE 29 (Achilles), and SCENE 33 (Hector).

198 See *Il.* 11.26 (Agamemnon) and *Il.* 22.90–97 (Hector).

199 See the sparrows in SCENE 1 and the eagle in SCENE 9 with interpretations.

200 Also consider that the defence of the Achaean wall was an important subject for the Achaeans before the eagle and snake turned up, see "The background of the scene". Consider also the aggressive and defensive nature of the Whip Snake, see note 186. The Achaean wall is also in focus through the eagle and snake turning up when the Trojans were eager to cross over it.

THE BIRD SCENES

Let us see what happens after the snake-eagle event has taken place. *Il.* 12.290–309 says that Zeus first roused Sarpedon, who was also Zeus' son, against the Achaean wall, i.e., Zeus roused *Sarpedon against the Achaeans, like a lion against sleek cattle* (*Il.* 12.292–293).<sup>201</sup> Sarpedon was then urged by his spirit *to rush on the wall* (*Il.* 12.307–308). In *Il.* 12.400–401 Aias and Teucer acted as the strong human defenders of the Achaean wall. Then *Teucer struck him [Sarpedon] with an arrow on the gleaming baldric of his sheltering shield about his chest* (12.401–402), but Zeus protected Sarpedon so that the arrow did not hurt him badly, see 12.402–403. Compare here with the eagle-snake scene where the snake struck the eagle on almost the same spot, i.e., *on the chest beside the neck* (12.204–205). Soon after Sarpedon was attacked by Aias who *leapt on him and thrust against his shield, but the spear-point did not pass through, but he made him reel in his onset. So he gave ground a little from the battlement, yet withdrew not entirely, for his heart hoped to win glory. And he wheeled about and called aloud to the godlike Lycians* (*Il.* 12.404–408). Interestingly Sarpedon was affected by Aias' attack and he lost control like the eagle in the scene, and it seems that he was not badly wounded. Sarpedon then asked his Lycian comrades to help him breach the wall and *make a path to the ships* (*Il.* 2.411).<sup>202</sup> Compare with the eagle that sped down the blast of the wind, 12.207: it seems that the eagle continued on its way forward as did the Trojans and their allies, who moved towards the Achaean ships that they desired to set on fire, see line 12.198. Finally Zeus granted Hector the right to be the first to leap inside the Achaean wall, see *Il.* 12.437–438 and *Il.* 465–466.<sup>203</sup>

201 It is notable that King Sarpedon, at this moment when his human capacities are strengthened by Zeus, is described parallelly to a lion.

202 The same words are repeated by the poet in *Il.* 12.418.

203 See also *Il.* 16.558–559 that says that it was Sarpedon who was the first to leap inside the Achaean wall.

Scene 14 – *Il.* 13.43–84

43 ἀλλὰ Ποσειδάων γαιήροχος ἐννοσίγαιος  
 44 Ἀργείους ὄτρυνε βαθείης ἐξ ἄλός ἐλθῶν,  
 45 εἰσάμενος Κάλχαντι δέμας καὶ ἀτειρέα φωνήν·  
 46 “Αἴαντε πρῶτω προσέφη μεμαῶτε καὶ αὐτῶ·  
 47 Αἴαντε σφῶ μέν τε σαώσετε λαὸν Ἀχαιῶν  
 48 ἀλκῆς μνησαμένω, μὴ δὲ κρουεοῖο φόβοιο.  
 49 ἄλλῃ μὲν γὰρ ἔγωγ’ οὐ δεῖδια χεῖρας ἀάπτους  
 50 Τρώων, οἳ μέγα τείχος ὑπερκατέβησαν ὀμίλῳ·  
 51 ἔξουσιν γὰρ πάντας ἐϋκνήμιδες Ἀχαιοί·  
 52 τῇ δὲ δὴ αἰνότατον περιδείδια μὴ τι πάθωμεν,  
 53 ἧ ἢ ὄ γ’ ὁ λυσσωδῆς φλογὶ εἴκελος ἠγεμονεύει,  
 54 Ἔκτωρ, ὃς Διὸς εὐχετ’ ἐρισθενέος πάϊς εἶναι.  
 55 σφῶϊν δ’ ὠδε θεῶν τις ἐνὶ φρεσὶ ποιήσειεν  
 56 αὐτῶ θ’ ἐστάμεναι κρατερῶς καὶ ἀνωγέμεν ἄλλους·  
 57 τῷ κε καὶ ἐσσύμενόν περ ἐρωήσασαί’ ἀπὸ νηῶν  
 58 ὠκυπόρων, εἰ καὶ μιν Ὀλύμπιος αὐτὸς ἐγείρει.”

59 Ἢ καὶ σκηπανίῳ γαιήροχος ἐννοσίγαιος  
 60 ἀμφοτέρω κεκόπων πλήσειν μένεος κρατεροῖο,  
 61 γυῖα δ’ ἔζηκεν ἔλαφρὰ πόδας καὶ χεῖρας ὑπερθεν.  
 62 αὐτὸς δ’ ὡς τ’ ἴρηξ ὠκύπτερος ὠρτο πέτεσθαι,  
 63 ὅς ῥά τ’ ἀπ’ αἰγίλιπος πέτρης περιμήκεος ἀρθεῖς  
 64 ὀρμήσῃ πεδίοιο διώκειν ὄρνεον ἄλλο,  
 65 ὡς ἀπὸ τῶν ἦξε Ποσειδάων ἐνοσίχθων.  
 66 τοῖν δ’ ἔργω πρόσθεν Ὀϊλήος ταχύς Αἴας,  
 67 αἴψα δ’ ἄρ’ Αἴαντα προσέφη Τελαμώνιον υἱόν·  
 68 “Αἴαν ἐπεὶ τις νῶϊ θεῶν οἳ Ὀλυμπον ἔχουσι,  
 69 μάντεϊ εἰδόμενος κέλεται παρὰ νηυσὶ μάχεσθαι—  
 70 οὐδ’ ὄ γε Κάλχας ἐστὶ θεοπρόπος οἰωνιστής·  
 71 ἴχνια γὰρ μετόπισθε ποδῶν ἠδὲ κνημῶων  
 72 ῥεῖ’ ἔργων ἀπίοντος· ἀρίγνωτοι δὲ θεοὶ περ—  
 73 καὶ δ’ ἐμοὶ αὐτῷ θυμὸς ἐνὶ στήθεσσι φίλοισι  
 74 μᾶλλον ἐφορμᾶται παλεμίζειν ἠδὲ μάχεσθαι,  
 75 μαιμῶωσι δ’ ἐνερθε πόδες καὶ χεῖρες ὑπερθε.”  
 76 Τὸν δ’ ἀπαμειβόμενος προσέφη Τελαμώνιος Αἴας·  
 77 “οὔτω νῦν καὶ ἐμοὶ περὶ δούρατι χεῖρες ἄαπτοι  
 78 μαιμῶωσιν, καὶ μοι μένος ὠρασε, νέρθε δὲ ποσσὶν  
 79 ἔσσυμαι ἀμφοτέροισι· μενοιώω δὲ καὶ οἶος  
 80 Ἔκτορι Πριαμίδῃ ἄμοτον μεμαῶτι μάχεσθαι.”  
 81 Ὡς οἳ μὲν τοιαῦτα πρὸς ἀλλήλους ἀγόρευον,  
 82 χάραγμα γηδῶσυνοι, τήν σφιν θεὸς ἐμβαλε θυμῶ·  
 83 τόφρα δὲ τοὺς ὄπισθεν γαιήροχος ὠρσεν Ἀχαιοὺς,  
 84 οἳ παρὰ νηυσὶ θοῆσιν ἀνέψυχον φίλον ἦτορ.

But Poseidon, the enfolder and shaker of earth, urged on the Argives, when he had come out from the deep sea, in the likeness of Calchas, in form and untiring voice. To the two Aiantes he spoke first, themselves very eager: “Aiantes, the two of you will save the army of the Achaeans if you take thought of valor and not of chill rout. Nowhere else do I fear the invincible hands of the Trojans who have climbed over the great wall in their multitude, for the well-greaved Achaeans will hold all back; but it is here that I am dreadfully afraid that some evil may befall us, here where that madman is leading on like a flame of fire, Hector, who boasts that he is a son of mighty Zeus. But in the hearts of you two may some god put it to stand firm yourselves, and to command others to do the same; so might you drive him back from the swift-faring ships, despite his eagerness, even though the Olympian himself is urging him on.”

With that the Enfolder and Shaker of Earth struck the two with his staff and filled them with might strength and made their limbs light, their feet and their hands above. And he himself, just as a **hawk**, swift of flight, rises to fly, and poising himself aloft above a high sheer rock, darts over the plain to chase some other bird; so from them sped Poseidon, the shaker of earth. And of the two swift Aias, son of Oileus, was first to recognize the god, and immediately he spoke to Aias, son of Telamon: “Aias, since it is one of the gods who hold Olympus who in the likeness of the seer tells the two of us to fight beside the ships—he is not Calchas, the prophet and reader of omens, for easily did I recognize the signs he left of feet and of legs as he went from us; and plain to be known are the gods—and my own heart also within my breast is the more eager to war and battle, and my feet beneath and my hands above are eager.”

In answer spoke to him Telemonian Aias: “So too my invincible hands are eager now to grasp the spear, and my might is roused, and my feet are swift beneath me; and I am eager to meet even in single fight Hector, Priam’s son, who rages incessantly.”

Thus they spoke to one another, rejoicing in the fury of fight which the god put in their hearts; and meanwhile the Enfolder of Earth roused the Achaeans, who were in the rear beside the swift ships and were refreshing themselves.

(*Il.* 13.43–84)

THE BIRD SCENES

**Background**

After Hector and the Trojan troops had passed over the Achaean wall Zeus brought them to the ships. Zeus then turned away his eyes from Troy since he did not expect that any of the immortals would come and assist any warriors. But Poseidon, who sat and watched the battle from the peak of Samothrace, took pity on the Achaeans and being indignant at Zeus he ignoring Zeus' prohibition<sup>204</sup> and came to Troy in the likeness of the diviner Calchas in form and voice. There he met the two Aiantes.<sup>205</sup>

**Analysis**

Aspects	Scene 14 – Il. 13.43–84
<b>Ornithology</b>	
Greek bird reference	ἰϥηξ (13.62)
Lexica	LSJ s.v. 'hawk, falcon' Cunliffe s.v. 'A bird of the falcon kind, a falcon or hawk'
Behaviour and characteristics	A bird of prey that swiftly flies away and darts over a plain to chase another bird. A swift flyer that uses a high altitude as a starting point for a hunt of another bird.
Time context	Unspecific
Spatial context	Aloft in the air above a high sheer rock and then over the plain.
Ornithological accuracy	High
Suggested taxonomic status	A falcon, presumably a Peregrine, <i>Falco peregrinus</i> .
<b>Form</b>	Metaphorical.
<b>Interactions</b>	
Birds and birds	Is intended to dart on the plain to chase a bird. A hunter and its presumptive prey.
Birds and other animals	-
Birds and humans	After Poseidon who in Chalchas' form sped from the two Aiantes* <sup>1</sup> as a swift flying falcon, Aias, son of Oileus, realised that they had met a god in disguise. According to him there was something distinguishing in Calchas' feet and legs when he left them, that indicated that he was a god. They did however not explicitly identify which god he was. Both Aiantes reacted strongly to the event. Their feet became swifter and their fighting spirits increased.
Birds and gods	Describes how Poseidon sped away from the two Aiantes in a falcon-like parallel way, being disguised as Calchas.
<b>Functions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A falcon-specific metaphorical parallel that describes Poseidon when he in the form of Calchas sped away from the two Aiantes.</li> <li>• Brings information about Poseidon and his movements at this moment in time and space.</li> </ul>

<sup>204</sup> Zeus prohibited the other gods and goddesses to assist the Trojans and Achaeans in Il. 8.1–27.

<sup>205</sup> Il. 12.465–13.42

Aspects	Scene 14 – <i>Il.</i> 13.43–84
Functions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marks that he departed from them very quickly and lightly.</li> <li>• Marks that he moved very quickly and with ease.</li> <li>• Poseidon’s falcon-like departure, speed, and movements function as an indication or sign that the humans had just met a god in disguise.</li> <li>• The event increased their fighting spirits and capacities to run fast.</li> <li>• Gives Poseidon’s departure and movements a kind of wild, avian hunter-character.</li> </ul>

\*1 According to Janko the two Aiantes who were brothers in the *Iliad* originally denoted Teukros and Aias, who clearly derived from the early Mycenaean epic. Janko 1992, 48, 50.

## Comments and interpretation

### *Ornithology and form*

Here we have a scene where Poseidon disguised as the diviner Calchas disappears in front of two Achaean warriors as a swift metaphorical ἰϥηξ.<sup>206</sup> According to the lexica ἰϥηξ is a name used for both hawks and falcons.<sup>207</sup> For a layman falcons and hawks are easily confused with each other especially if they are seen at a great distance. For someone knowledgeable about birds in the field, falcons are rather easily distinguished from hawks however by their longer and more pointed wings, and there are differences in flying techniques, speed, and habits.

The first description of the ἰϥηξ says that it *swift of flight, rises to fly* (13.62). Janko points out that ἀκύντερος (13.62) is unique.<sup>208</sup> LSJ translates it as ‘swift winged’. The next description says that this bird is *poising himself aloft above a high sheer rock, darts over the plain to chase some other bird* (13.63–64). These descriptions points at a falcon rather than a hawk since falcons are known as raptors with fast wing beats. They further fly more rapidly and are usually seen higher up in the air than hawks.

The Peregrine is the strongest of falcons in relation to size. It is medium-sized to large,

206 See also Janko who discusses that Poseidon left with the speed of a hawk and not in the shape of one as is clear from line 71f. According to him πέτεσθαι (13.62) introduces this image. Janko 1992, 50. See LSJ s.v. πέτομαι ‘of birds, *Il.* 12.107, 13.62 (...) of any quick motion, dart, rush, of men, *Il.* 13.755, 22.143, etc.’

207 Thompson points out that the etymology of ἰϥηξ is quite obscure and that the word is non-Hellenic. He translates it as hawk and says it was the generic term especially for the smaller hawks and falcons. He suggested however that the ἰϥηξ in *Il.* 21.493 was a Peregrine. Thompson 1936 114–118. According to Boraston ἰϥηξ was a general term for a hawk or falcon and suggested the Goosehawk, Sparrow Hawk, Peregrine, Saker, Merlin and Hobby. Boraston 1911, 216. According to Pollard it is not clear what ἰϥηξ in the *Iliad* meant. He suggests that ἰϥηξ and κίρκος were the names for hawk and falcon. He discusses that *Il.* 21.493 signified a falcon pursuing a Rock Dove and suggests that the falcon was presumably a Peregrine, and that the ἰϥηξ that scatters Daws and Starlings in *Il.* 16.582; 17.757 was perhaps ment to be a Sparrow Hawk. Pollard 1977, 80–81. According to Janko ἰϥηξ is the general term for smaller raptors. Janko 1992, 51. Arnott emphasises that Hierax is replaced by Irêx in the epic and Ionic dialects. He further says that generally the name refer to all diurnal raptors smaller than the large Eagles and Vultures, but “nevertheless, when a reference to a Hierax/Irêx is embellished with descriptive details, a specific identification can sometimes be achieved.” Arnott 2007, 67, se also 66–68. Voultziadou & Tatolas suggest that ἰϥηξ and κίρκος is a Perigrine. Voultziadou & Tatolas 2008, 307. For falcons in ancient sources see also Keller 1913, 13–26.

208 Janko 1992, 51. See LSJ s.v. ἀκύντερος ‘swift-winged, ἰϥηξ *Il.* 13.62’. Cunliffe: ‘Swift-winged. Epithet of the falcon...N62’.

is “chest-heavy”, and has a compact body and a “bull-head”.<sup>209</sup> The wings are broad-based and rather pointed, the rump is broad and the tail is relatively short. The adult has a dark uniform head and upperparts, and a strong facial pattern including a more prominent moustache than any other large falcon. The underparts are finely spotted black on the chest and barred black on the rest. The sexes are similar.<sup>210</sup> The Peregrine has distinct hunting methods. When hunting it uses a quick pursuit flight. According to Génsbøl no other bird can reach such a speed with so few wingbeats.<sup>211</sup> In the pursuit flight it first arises above the prey and then prepares for a rapid stoop. The estimated speed for a stoop is 160-410 km per hour, and at least 240 km per hour is considered feasible.<sup>212</sup> The Peregrine almost exclusively takes other birds as prey. The majority of these are taken on the wing usually over open country and over water. Common preys are doves, starlings and thrushes, but the species varies extremely depending on the type of habitat.<sup>213</sup> The Peregrine mainly breeds on steep coastal cliffs or in mountains as well as on cliffs in lowlands.<sup>214</sup> Since the description of the bird in the scene focusses on rapid flight, arising in the air, and chasing of other birds, my suggestion is that the ἰρῆξ in the scene is a Peregrine.

*Interactions and functions in the scene*

When the falcon is used to signify Poseidon (in the form of Calchas) the focus is on his very quick and light departure from the two Aiantes. It is not surprising that Poseidon is able to move in a way that is similar to a falcon since he is a god with divine powers. A falcon’s flying capacities, speed, and lightness of movement, however, exceed human movements and capacities and it was probably the remarkable speed and lightness in Calchas’/Poseidon’s departure and movements when he left the two Aiantes that made them react and believe that they had experienced something unusual and that they had met not Calchas but a god in disguise. It was Aias, son of Oileus, who was the first to recognise the god after Poseidon sped away from them in this particular way. In this way these birdlike details function as an indication or a sign that signifies for humans the presence of a disguised god when he was on earth. The two Aiantes could not identify which specific god they had met, only that he was a god.<sup>215</sup>

Something important in the scene is that the two Aiantes reacted strongly to the event

209 Cramp and Simmons 1980, 361 and Svensson & Grant 2006, 98.

210 Cramp and Simmons 1980, 361.

211 Génsbøl 1995, 384. See also Cramp and Simmons 1980, 362.

212 Cramp and Simmons 1980, 366. Also see Svensson & Grant 2006, 98.

213 Génsbøl 1995, 242; Svensson & Grant 2006, 98; Cramps and Simmons 1980, 365–366.

214 Svensson & Grant 2006, 98. See also Cramp and Simmons 1980, 362.

215 See also West who suggests that Poseidon’s departure reveals his divinity. West 2011, 274. West further argues that the gods’ disguise is not always perfect and that their divine nature sometimes betrays itself. West 2007, 133.

where Poseidon's falcon-like departure and movement were important for their reactions. The effect of the meeting end experience was that their fighting spirits increased and it seems that their capacities to run fast also increased. In a sense the quality of the falcon's speed and lightness in movement seems to have been transferred to the two Aiantes after the meeting with the god, who appeared to them in a falcon-like way.<sup>216</sup>

The part of the metaphorical description that describes the falcon as a hunter that is intended to *chase some other bird* (13.64) emphasises Poseidon as a wild and avian hunter. From the moment after Poseidon had left the two Aiantes he intended to find other Achaean warriors in order to rise their fighting spirits.

### Scene 15 – *Il.* 13.526–539

526 Οἱ δ' ἄμφ' Ἀσκαλάφῳ αὐτοσχεδὸν ὀρμήθησαν·  
 527 Διήφοβος μὲν ἀπ' Ἀσκαλάφου πῆληκα φαινήν  
 528 ἤρασαε, Μηριόνης δὲ Διοῦ ἀτάλαντος Ἄρηι  
 529 δουρὶ βραχίονα τύψεν ἐπάλμενος, ἐκ δ' ἄρα χειρὸς  
 530 αὐλῶπις τρυφάλεια χαμαὶ βόμβησε πεσοῦσα.  
 531 Μηριόνης δ' ἐξ αὐτῆς ἐπάλμενος αἰγυπιὸς ὤς,  
 532 ἐξέρυσε πρυμοῖο βραχίονος ὄβριμον ἔγχρος,  
 533 ἄψ δ' ἐτάρων εἰς ἕδνος ἐχάζετο. τὸν δὲ Πολίτης  
 534 αὐτοκασίγνητος περὶ μέσσω χεῖρε τιτήνας,  
 535 ἐξῆγεν πολέμοιο δυσηχέος, ὄφρ' ἴκεθ' ἵππους  
 536 ὠκέας, οἳ οἱ ὀπισθε μάχης ἠδὲ πολέμοιο  
 537 ἔστασαν ἠρίοχόν τε καὶ ἄρματα ποικίλ' ἔχοντες·  
 538 οἳ τὸν γε προτὶ ἄστυ φέρον βαρέα στενάχοντα  
 539 τειρόμενον· κατὰ δ' αἷμα νεουτάτου ἔρρεε χειρὸς.

*Then over Ascalaphus they clashed in close fight, and  
 Deiphobus tore from Ascalaphus his shining helmet, but  
 Meriones, the peer of swift Ares, leapt at Deiphobus and  
 struck his arm with his spear, and from his hand the crested  
 helmet fell to the ground with a clang. And Meriones  
 sprang out again like a vulture, and drew out the mighty  
 spear from the upper arm of Deiphobus, and shrank back  
 into the throng of his comrades. And Polites, Deiphobus'  
 brother, reached his arms around his waist, and led him out  
 of dolorous war until he came to the swift horses that  
 stood waiting for him at the rear of the battle and the  
 conflict with their cariooteer and inlaid chariot. These car-  
 ried him to the city groaning heavily in his distress; and  
 down ran the blood from his newly wounded arm.*

### Background

(*Il.* 13.526–539)

Poseidon spurred on the Achaean warriors to continue the fighting and the two Aiantes and their battalions stood strong and awaited the Trojans and Hector to come towards the ships. Hector led the Trojans, who advanced in a close throng. Teucer was the first to kill someone, killing a spearman who fought for the Trojans. He rushed to strip him of his armour, but Hector protected the body. Then Hector killed a warrior who fought for the Achaeans and tried to steal his armour but he failed in this since the Achaeans protected it and they pulled the two bodies away. The two Aiantes were like two proud lions when they carried away Imbrius and stripped his armour.<sup>217</sup> Poseidon grew angry because his son's son had died, and he set out to rouse the Achaeans again at their ships and huts. He first urged the Cretan leader Idomeneus on to fight so he and his

216 See also a passage where Aeneas says ...but Zeus saved me, who roused my might and made swift my knees (*Il.* 20.92–93).

217 *Il.* 13.89–13.200.



THE BIRD SCENES

attendant Meriones, who was temporarily at the camp to get a new spear, turned to the battle. These two fought in the left of the Achaean army since it was there there was most need of strong and skillful warriors. They clashed with the Trojans by the sterns of the ships as Poseidon and Zeus were fashioning trouble for the warriors of both sides. Idomeneus roused the Trojans to flight by slewing and exulting over Othryoneus. Then Asius and his charioteer were killed by the Achaeans. At that the Trojan Deïphobus<sup>218</sup> grieved for Asius and challenged Idomeneus. He did not however kill him but wounded Hypsenor. At that Antilochus ran up to his comrade and with some other help from the Achaeans they carried Hypsenor to the ships. Deïphobus then asked Aeneas for help in rescuing Alcatous. They clashed in close combat over Alcatous with their spears. Ideomeneus struck Oenomaus and drew out his spear from the corpse. As he drew back Deïphobus cast a spear at him but again he missed and instead struck Ascalaphus, who was the son of Ares. Ares had however yet not heard anything of his son's fall in the war.<sup>219</sup>

**Analysis**

Aspects	Scene 15 – Il. 13.526–539
<b>Ornithology</b>	
Greek bird reference	<i>αἰγυπιός</i> (13.531)
Lexica	LSJ s.v. ‘vulture’ Cunliffe s.v. ‘App. a general name for eagles and vultures’
Behaviour and characteristics	Sprang out again and then possibly drew out something from a corpse and then possibly shrank back into a throng. The movements seem to be very quick. In a metaphorical sense it is possible to associate the throng of warriors to a group of vultures that have surrounded a corpse. In such bird situations the movements have to be quick so as not to be wounded by some other vulture when trying to get a piece of meat from the corpse.
Time context	Unspecific
Spatial context	Unspecific, but is associated with the ground.
Ornithological accuracy	Medium
Suggested taxonomic status	A vulture, plausible the Lammergeier, <i>Gypaetys barbatus</i>
<b>Form</b>	Metaphorical
<b>Interactions</b>	
Birds and birds	Sprang out again to draw out something from a corpse and then quickly shrank back into a throng of vultures

<sup>218</sup> A Trojan and son of King Priam, brother of Helenus, Il. 12.94–95.

<sup>219</sup> Il. 13.201–525.

THE BIRDS IN THE *ILIAD*

Aspects	Scene 15 – <i>Il.</i> 13.526–539
<b>Interactions</b>	
Birds and other animals	-
Birds and humans	Describes Meriones* <sup>1</sup> in a Lammergeier-like parallel way when he sprang out again and drew out his own spear from Deïphobus' arm, and then shrank back possibly very quickly into the throng of his comrades. The “vulture metaphor” indicates that there was something unusual about him and his movements at this moment. In a metaphorical sense it is possible to associate the throng of warriors to a group of vultures that have gathered round a corpse.
Birds and gods	Meriones is described as the peer of swift Ares in 15.228.
<b>Functions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A vulture-specific metaphorical parallel that describes Meriones when he rushed forward to take back his spear from Deïphobus arm.</li> <li>• Brings information about him and his movements at this moment in time and space.</li> <li>• Marks his quickness and aggression in a close combat.</li> <li>• Indicates his status as a warrior in the hierarchies of warriors.</li> <li>• Emphasises his need for his spear.</li> <li>• Gives his activities a kind of wild, avian character.</li> <li>• Signals that it was something unusual and more-than-human about Meriones and his movements at this moment which may be a result of double motivation.</li> </ul>

\*<sup>1</sup> The attendant of the Cretan leader Idomeneus and second in command of the Cretans, 2.650–652. See also the “Background” of the scene.

## Comments and interpretation

### *Ornithology and form*

Ornithological aspects of a metaphoric *αἰγυπιός*<sup>220</sup> are used to describe Meriones and his movements in a specific situation on the battlefield where a human corpse is lying on the ground. More specifically the scene tells about a clash between Deïphobus<sup>221</sup> and Meriones over Ascalapus<sup>222</sup> who had newly been wounded by Deïphobus.<sup>223</sup> When Deïphobus tried to plunder the fallen Ascalapus and take his helmet Meriones stabbed him in his arm with his spear. The spear was struck in Deïphobus' arm, and Meriones, who wanted to retrieve his spear *sprang out again like a vulture, and drew out the mighty spear (...) and shrank back into the throng of his comrades* (13.531–533). One can imagine

<sup>220</sup> Concerning the name *αἰγυπιός*, see SCENE 8.

<sup>221</sup> See note 218.

<sup>222</sup> Ascalapus was an Achaean, son of Enyalios/Ares and Astyoche and co-commander of the Minyans from Orchomenos, killed by Deïphobus, see *Il.* 2.602, 13.519. Enyalios in Greek mythology is generally a byname of Ares, the god of war, but in Mycenaean times is differentiated as a separate deity. On the Linear B Knossos Tablet KN V 52 the name E-nu-wa-ri-jo is interpreted as this same Enyalios. Chadwick 1976, 88 and fig. 37.

<sup>223</sup> See *Il.* 13.516–520.

that Meriones' movements had to be quick so that he could continue to fight and protect Ascalapus' body and armour and protect himself with his own spear.<sup>224</sup> Janko finds it odd that Meriones darts forward twice, and does not simply stab his foe, extract his spear and retreat. He says that "...the poet reran the action to include this second comparison."<sup>225</sup>

Since vultures occur frequently in the *Iliad* in relation to human corpses that lay on the battlefield, and since Ascalapus' body lay on the battlefield in the scene, a vulture is an appropriate choice of bird here. This vulture, however, behaves in a somewhat different manner than the other vultures in the *Iliad*, the carrion-eating vultures, γύψ, since it is the quick movements of this vulture that are emphasised and not mainly its eating habits. Also Janko observes that this vulture is different from the γύψ in the *Iliad*. He finds it closer to an eagle in its habits and suggests the Lammergeier.<sup>226</sup> Other scholars such as Pollard have also suggested Lammergeier for the vulture in the scene and I agree in this identification.<sup>227</sup> I further suggest that aggression seems to be associated to Meriones' vulture-like activities since he violently protects Ascalapus' body and armour. He does not kill Deïphobus, however, but merely wound him in his arm, which is, as we shall see, appropriate behaviours for vultures having fights with each other over carrion.

Turning back to the scene context again it is said that Meriones *shrank back into the throng of comrades* (I3.533). It seems that he went back there since he felt safer there. As I have argued the throng of warriors may be likened here to a group of vultures that have gathered round the corpse of a dead warrior. In such association the fighting Achaeans and Trojans can be paralleled to vultures of different kinds, and Deïphobus' effort to rob Ascalapus helmet can be paralleled to a vulture who tries to steal a piece of meat and bones from carrion. Perhaps the spear Meriones takes back can be associated with a Lammergeier's robbing of a large bone from a carrion or corpse.<sup>228</sup>

In feeding situations vultures usually have ranking orders between species and within species. The Lammergeier, *Gypaetus barbatus*, does not normally compete for food with *Gyps* or *Aegyptius* vultures, and waits until they have finished.<sup>229</sup> The Black Vulture,

224 According to Janko Meriones is like an αἰγυπιός because of his speed in darting after his spear. Janko 1992, 112. Also see Edwards, who suggests that the vulture expresses the speed of Meriones on foot. Edwards 1991, 108–109.

225 Janko 1992, 112–113.

226 Janko further emphasises that hawks or eagles are usual in similes describing speed in attack. He adds that αἰγυπιοί in *Il.* and *Od.* appear in different contexts. He refers to *Il.* 17.460; 16.428 and *Od.* 22.302–6. Janko 1992, 112–113.

227 Pollard 1977, 79–80, 203, note 21 and 24, and 79 and 79, 203, note 21. See also Thompson 1936, 25–26; Boraston 1911, 216, 230–232; Keller 1913, 27–30, and Voultsiadou & Tatolas 2008, 307, who all suggest the Lammergeier. For αἰγυπιός in ancient sources see also Arnott 2007, 6–7.

228 The continuing actions describe more plundering of fallen warriors and stripping of their armours. See for example *Il.* 13.550–554. For the Lammergeier's specific feeding habits and use of bones for food, see SCENE 8. Also see Janko who says that the comparison implicitly likens Deïphobus to the bird's prey. Janko 1992, 112–113.

229 Cramp & Simmons 1980, 61.

associates at the carcass with *Gyps* and the Lammergeier, but is dominant and aggressive. In encounters at the carcass it drives away the Lammergeier in wild tumult.<sup>230</sup> The Lammergeier is however not without aggression. It fight successfully at times for its place at a carcass with larger vultures and the Golden Eagle.<sup>231</sup> There are also reports that describe Lammergeiers in intraspecific fights over food. These are never mortal.<sup>232</sup> As argued Meriones acts in a quick and aggressive way in the scene and I suggest that his quick movements and aggression are likened to a Lammergeier's behaviour regarding ranking orders among vultures when feeding.

*Interactions and functions in the scene*

The war actions that takes place before the scene starts focus on close combat and on the robbing and protection of the bodies and armour of fallen warriors on both sides. When the *αἰγυπιός*, presumably a Lammergeier, is described in a way paralleling Meriones' actions, the focus is on his movements as he is fighting in close combat over a human body, *that* of Ascalaphus, and his armour. Meriones' major intention is to retrieve his spear from Deïphobus' arm. As argued it seems that the vulture marks that he acts in an aggressive and rapid way which further corresponds with an earlier description of him where Idomeneus described him as being *swift of foot* (*Il.* 13.249). The Lammergeier gives Meriones' activity and state an avian character and I suggest that, when acting in this way, he temporarily exceeds his human limits. How he could act in this way is an open question. Perhaps the *αἰγυπιός* marks that he was motivated not only by himself at this moment but also by a god. Interestingly the poet describes Meriones as *the peer of swift Ares*, see line 13,528 in the scene, which marks him as a special human. He is described in exactly the same way also in *Il.* 13.295 and *Il.* 13.228. This specific bird further indicates Meriones' status in the hierarchies of warriors. If he had been one of the top warriors he would plausible, have been shown as an eagle or a falcon if there had been a suitable situation and certainly not in a close combat like this. The Lammergeier in the scene further emphasises Meriones need for his spear in the continuing war actions.<sup>233</sup>

<sup>230</sup> Cramp & Simmons 1980, 89–93.

<sup>231</sup> Cramp & Simmons 1980, 58–64.

<sup>232</sup> Negro et al. 1999, 15.

<sup>233</sup> Meriones had actually already lost a spear before this episode when his spear had got stuck in Deïphobus' shield, see *Il.* 13.254–258.

## Scene 16 – Il. 13.809–837

809 Αἴας δὲ πρῶτος προκαλέσαστο μάχρα βιβιάσθων·  
 810 “δαμόνιε σχεδὸν ἔλθε· τί ἢ δειδίσσαι αὐτως  
 811 Ἀργείους; οὐ τοί τι μάχης ἀδαήμονές εἰμεν,  
 812 ἀλλὰ Διὸς μάστιγι κακῆ ἑδάμημεν Ἀχαιοί.  
 813 ἢ θῆν πού τοι θυμὸς ἐέλπεται ἐξαλαπάξειν  
 814 νῆας· ἄφαρ δέ τε χεῖρες ἀμύνειν εἰσὶ καὶ ἡμῶν.  
 815 ἢ κε πολὺ φθαίῃ εὐ ναιομένη πόλις ὑμῆ  
 816 χερσὶν ὑφ’ ἡμετέρῃσιν ἀλοῦσά τε περσομένη τε.  
 817 σοὶ δ’ αὐτῷ φημί σχεδὸν ἐμμεναι ὅπποτε φεύγων  
 818 ἀρήσῃ Διὶ πατρὶ καὶ ἄλλοις ἀθανάτοισι  
 819 θάσσοντας ἰσθήκων ἐμμεναι καλλιτρίχας ἵππους,  
 820 οἷ σε πόλιν δ’ οἴσοισι κονίοντες πεδίοιο.”  
 821 Ὡς ἄρα οἱ εἰπόντι ἐπέπτατο δεξιὸς ὄρνις,  
 822 αἰετὸς ὑψιπέτης· ἐπὶ δ’ ἴαχε λαὸς Ἀχαιῶν  
 823 θάρσυνος οἰωνῶ· ὃ δ’ ἀμείβετο φαιδιμος Ἔκτωρ·  
 824 “Αἴαν ἀμαρτοεπὲς βουγάιε ποῖον ἔειπες.  
 825 εἰ γὰρ ἐγὼν οὕτω γε Διὸς πάϊς αἰγιόχοιο  
 826 εἴην ἡμάτα πάντα, τέκοι δέ με πότνια Ἥρη,  
 827 τιοίμην δ’ ὡς τίετ’ Ἀθηναίη καὶ Ἀπόλλων,  
 828 ὡς νῦν ἡμέρη ἦδε κακὸν φέρεῖ Ἀργείοισι  
 829 πᾶσι μάλ’, ἐν δὲ σὺ τοῖσι πεφῆσαι, αἶ κε ταλάσσης  
 830 μείναι ἐμὸν δόρυ μακρόν, ὃ τοι χροῖα λειριόεντα  
 831 δάψει· ἀτὰρ Τρώων κορέεις κύνας ἠδ’ οἰωνοὺς  
 832 θημῶν καὶ σάρκεσσι πεσῶν ἐπὶ νησὶν Ἀχαιῶν.”  
 833 Ὡς ἄρα φωνήσας ἠγήσατο· τοὶ δ’ ἄμ’ ἔποντο  
 834 ἠχῆ θροεσίῃ, ἐπὶ δ’ ἴαχε λαὸς ὀπίσθεν.  
 835 Ἀργεῖοι δ’ ἐτέρωθεν ἐπίαχον, οὐδὲ λάθοντο  
 836 ἀλκῆς, ἀλλ’ ἔμενον Τρώων ἐπιόντας ἀρίστους.  
 837 ἠχῆ δ’ ἀμοπτέρων ἵκετ’ αἰθέρα καὶ Διὸς αὐγὰς.

And Aias came on with long strides, and was first to challenge him.: “You are mad! Come close; why do you seek vainly to frighten the Argives? In no way, I tell you, are we ignorant of battle, but by the evil lash of Zeus were we Achaeans subdued. Your heart hopes, I suppose, to destroy our ships, but be sure we too have hands to defend them. In fact before that your well-peopled city is likely to be taken and sacked at our hands. And for yourself I declare that the day is near when in flight you will pray to father Zeus and the other immortals that swifter than **falcons** may your fair-maned horses be that will carry you cityward, raising the dust of the plain.”

Just as he spoke, a bird flew by on the right hand, an **eagle** of lofty flight; and at that the army of the Achaeans shouted aloud, heartened by the omen; but glorious Hector made answer: “Aias, witless in speech, you braggart, what a thing you have said! For my part I would wish that I were all my days as surely the son of Zeus who bears the aegis, and that my mother were the queenly Hera, and that I might be honoured like Athene and Apollo, as now this day surely brings evil on the Argives, one and all; and among them will you too be slain, if you have the heart to await my long spear that will rend your lily-like skin; and you will glut the dogs and birds of the Trojans with your fat and your flesh when you have fallen at the ships of the Achaeans.”

So he spoke, and led the way; and they followed after with a wondrous din, and the army shouted aloud behind him. And the Argives from the other side shouted in answer and forgot not their valour, but awaited the best of the Trojans as they came on; and the clamor of the two armies went up to the aether and the splendour of Zeus.

(Il. 13.809–837)

## Background

Violent close combats continued between the Achaeans and Trojans close to the ships. Many of the less prominent warriors were painfully wounded or killed and robbing armour continued. Aeneas and Antiochus killed some warriors and Poseidon protected Antiochus when he robbed Thoon of his armour. Meriones then killed Adamas painfully with his spear and drew it out of the flesh of Adamas’ belly. When Menelaus saw Helenus kill Deïpyrus he attacked Helenus, and one of Helenus’ arrows hit Menelaus’ breastplate but without hurting him. Menelaus then wounded Helenus’ hand with his spear. After killing Peisandros Menelaus accused the Trojans of never getting their fill of blood and war that mercilessly affected everyone. When Hector understood that the

Trojans were being killed on the left flank close to the ships, his plan was to rush away to meet the Achaean elite warriors there. Polydamas however advised Hector to call for the best men and then organise the warriors in another way. This time Hector followed Polydamas advice. Then Zeus incited Paris and Hector to fight. When the Trojan troops were organised and were following their leaders Hector tried to create confusion in the Achaeans but without success.<sup>234</sup>

## Analysis

Aspects	Scene 16 – Il. 13.809–837
<b>Ornithology</b>	
Greek bird reference	<i>ἰϥηξ</i> (Il.819) <i>αιετός</i> (Il.822)
Lexica	LSJ s.v. <i>ἰϥηξ</i> , 'hawk, falcon, ...Il.13.62, cf. 819'. Cunliffe s.v. 'A bird of the falcon kind, a falcon or hawk' LSJ s.v. <i>αιετός</i> 'eagle, as a bird of omen,...Il.8.247, cf. Il.20.1... favourite of Zeus...Il.24.310'. Cunliffe s.v. 'An eagle'.
Behaviour and characteristics	<i>ἰϥηξ</i> : A swift bird. The quality of speed is emphasised. <i>αιετός</i> : An eagle of lofty flight flew by on the right hand.
Time context	<i>ἰϥηξ</i> : Unspecific <i>αιετός</i> : The eagle appeared immediately after Aias had spoken to Hector.
Spatial context	<i>ἰϥηξ</i> : Unspecific but are associated with the air. <i>αιετός</i> : An eagle of lofty flight flew by on the right hand and above the Achaean and Trojan warriors.
Ornithological accuracy	<i>ἰϥηξ</i> : Medium <i>αιετός</i> : Medium
Suggested taxonomic status	<i>ἰϥηξ</i> : Peregrine, <i>Falco peregrinus</i> . <i>αιετός</i> : An eagle, plausible the Golden Eagle, <i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>
<b>Form</b>	<i>ἰϥηξ</i> : Image <i>αιετός</i> : Physical
<b>Interactions</b>	
Birds and birds	<i>ἰϥηξ</i> : - <i>αιετός</i> : -
Birds and other animals	<i>ἰϥηξ</i> : Interactions between falcons and Hector's fair-maned horses concerning the quality of very high speed. <i>αιετός</i> : -

<sup>234</sup> Il. 13.540–13.808.

THE BIRD SCENES

Aspects	Scene 16 – Il. 13.809–837
<p><b>Interactions</b></p> <p>Birds and humans</p> <p>Birds and gods</p>	<p><i>ἴρηξ</i>: Aias used the falcons as a future image and as a point of a reference to the quality of very high speed in a speech to Hector where he prophesied about the future, see lines 13.810–820. He used the “falcon speed reference” as a way to frighten and mock Hector in a war context.</p> <p><i>αἰετός</i>: Appeared to the Achaean and Trojan warriors directly after Aias’ speech to Hector. When seeing it the Achaeans shouted loudly, and were heartened by the omen. Hector did not comment on the eagle but replied to Aias in lines 13.825–832 and gave another interpretation, which was also prophetic in character.</p> <p><i>ἴρηξ</i>: Interaction between falcons and Zeus and the other immortals, since Aias mentioned them in his prophecy in lines 13.817–820.</p> <p><i>αἰετός</i>: It is not explicitly said that this eagle was sent by a god, perhaps Zeus, but since it is explicitly said that Zeus sent the eagle in Il. 8, and most likely in Il. 12 it is plausible that this eagle also was sent by Zeus.</p>
<p><b>Functions</b></p>	<p><i>ἴρηξ</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Falcon-specific image that prophesies about the future.</li> <li>• Aias used the falcons in a speech that predicted Hector’s future.</li> <li>• Describes and predicts that Hector will soon be in a very risky situation where he will be in great need of divine support.</li> <li>• A point of reference concerning the quality of very high speed.</li> <li>• Aias used the “falcon image” and “falcon speed reference” as a way to frighten and mock Hector.</li> </ul> <p><i>αἰετός</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An ambiguous eagle-specific messenger, sign and representation that brings information.</li> <li>• Zeus’ hypothetical eagle messenger to the Trojan and Achaean warriors.</li> <li>• Zeus’ hypothetical answer and confirmation to Aias’ speech.</li> <li>• A visual physical sign and omen that with its presence and physical position incicates Zeus’ presence and will. It gives an unclear message concerning his will.</li> <li>• Indicates a positive message from Zeus to the Achaeans since they were heartened by the eagle as an omen.</li> <li>• Hector did not comment on the eagle but claims that this day will be fatal for the Achaeans at their ships.</li> <li>• A possible symbolic representation of Hector who will soon rush onto the Achaean ships as an eagle that hunts on geese, see SCENE 19.</li> </ul>

**Comments and interpretation***Ornithology and form*

## ἰρῆξι

The information is sparse but Aias refers to the ἰρῆκων (13.819) as birds that are swift. He even says *swifter than falcons may your fair-maned horses be* (13.819) which is an impossibility without divine intervention since the fastest species of falcons move faster than horses. The passage indicates that the speed of this bird was thought to be considerable. Concerning the birds' form the ἰρῆκων appear as an image with references to the future and to a very high speed. I have chosen to place them in the category "image form" and not "metaphorical form" since in my opinion they are not aiming at describing a parallel and resemblance to the speed of the horses but a difference.<sup>235</sup>

Falcons are the fastest birds of prey and especially the Peregrine, *Falcon Peregrinus*. As has been reported it uses a quick pursuit flight and reaches an incredible speed with few wingbeats.<sup>236</sup> The estimated speed for the stoop is 160–410 km per hour, and at least 240 km per hr is considered feasible.<sup>237</sup> Since it is the quality of high speed that describes the bird and nothing else, my suggestion is that the ἰρῆξι in the scene refers to the Peregrine. It also seems natural that Aias refers to the fast-flying Peregrine, and that Hector, in a desperate situation, would pray to Zeus and ask him to make his horses quicker than a Peregrine, the fastest of all birds of prey.<sup>238</sup>

In a coming episode in the *Iliad* the poet describes Achilles' fast hunt for Hector and his final killing of him, and that episode seems to be related to the scene above. At that hunt Achilles is metaphorically described as a κίρκος, *falcon* (*Il.* 22.139), according to Murray & Wyatt's translation, and Achilles hunts Hector, who is paralleled to a πέλεια, *dove* (*Il.* 22.140). On that occasion both the warriors were not on chariots driven by horses however but were on foot, see *Il.* 22.139–140. Hector's speed is thus in this later context not faster than falcons but slower since a dove flies slower than a falcon. After this hunt Hector was killed by Achilles and was finally dragged behind Achilles' chariot. His corpse raised the dust on the plain, see *Il.* 22.399ff., and compare with line 13.820 in the scene above where it is Hector's horses that raise the dust.<sup>239</sup>

235 Janko describes Aias' ἰρῆκων as "his hawk-metaphor" that introduces a real bird, Zeus's eagle (24.310ff.)." Janko 1992, 146. I prefer to refer to it as Aias' "falcon-image" since I have chosen to distinguish "metaphor" from "image" in this study and since I will suggest the Peregrine instead of hawk. For my definitions of the categories of form *physical*, *metaphorical*, *transformation*, *image*, and *other*, see chapter 2.

236 Génsbøl 1995, 384.

237 Cramp & Simmons 1980, 366. Also see Svensson & Grant 2006, 98.

238 According to Janko the hawk is the fastest bird and he refers to *Od.* 13.86f. He says that its speed is traditional in comparisons and refers to *Il.* 13.62–65, 15.237–238nn. Janko 1992, 51–52, 145–146. For other scholars' interpretations of the bird reference ἰρῆξι, see SCENE 14.

239 For a similar interpretation, see Janko 1992, 146.



*αἰετός*

Since the eagle was observed by the warriors it is identified as a physical bird. The description *a bird flew by on the right hand* (13.821) indicates that this bird was positioned at the right side of something, which refers to the spatial aspects of birds and to divination from birds. We cannot say anything for sure how this eagle was positioned in relation to the Achaean and Trojan warriors, but perhaps it flew by on the right side of the Achaeans since they immediately shouted loudly and were heartened by it. If the Trojans were standing opposite the Achaeans that would possibly mean that the eagle flew by on their left (unlucky) side. The bird is further described as *an eagle of lofty flight* (13.822). This descriptive epithet implies that the eagle was soaring high in the air with extended wings which is an apt description of an eagle and its flying technique.<sup>240</sup>

Because the information of the eagle is sparse, its description is only of medium ornithological accuracy. I suggest a Golden Eagle since it is often seen flying high and circling, and since this species seems to be closely connected to Zeus.<sup>241</sup>

*Interactions and functions in the scene**ἴκηξ and αἰετός*

It seems that Aias' words about the falcons aimed to provoke and strike fear in Hector in a war situation. Hector showed signs of irritation but not of fear.<sup>242</sup> Aias referred to the falcons as a speed reference and he used his "falcon image" in a predictive way to express a possible future scenario that describes Hector in a risky situation and when being in great need of divine support.

When the Achaean warriors had observed the eagle just after Aias' speech they reacted immediately and collectively: *at it they shouted aloud and were heartened by the omen.* (13.822–823). It is clear that there was no hesitation on their part and that they were positive that this eagle was a favourable sign that had come to them with positive news for the future. The practical function of the eagle is thus informative but also

240 Of eagles' soaring on thermals (rising currents of warm air), see SCENE 13.

241 See SCENE 9. The Golden Eagle often circles at great elevations. This high-circling is often a part of the display but it also uses this circling to gain height prior to travelling elsewhere. The Golden Eagle is not hunting when it is soaring high but at lower levels (up to 100 m) it is part of the main hunting technique. A high-circling bird usually rises entirely by soaring, though it will flap its wings if necessary. Cramp & Simmons 1980, 239–240.

See also Pollard 1977, 76–79. For eagles in ancient sources, see Thompson 1936, 2–17, and Keller 1913, 1–6. Also see Voultziadou & Tatalos who identify the *αἰετοί* that occur in Homer not as a specific species but as "Eagle". Voultziadou & Tatalos 2008, 307.

242 Willcock emphasises that throughout the middle books of the *Iliad*, Homer keeps reminding us of the confrontation of Hector and Telemonian Aias. They met at *Il.* 13.189–194 and clashed again in *Il.* 14 and *Il.* 15. Willcock 1976, 156. Jones comments on Aias' and Hector's challenge and insulting of each other in the following way, "These two best fighters on either side (in Achilles' absence) will clash frequently in the following books (...) as Hector drives forward to fire the Greek ships and Ajax desperately tries to defend them. This clash, however, stops almost at once, with exchange of insults but not of weapons, and resumes at *Il.* 14.402ff. Some have thought the intervening section (13.833–14.401) has been inserted into an existing Ajax-Hector duel sequence." Jones 2003, 202. See also West 2011, 287.

emotional and psychological since the eagle influenced their emotional states in a positive way. Appearing at exactly this moment the eagle further functions as a kind of answer and confirmation of Aias' words and as Zeus' hypothetical messenger since the poet does not confirm that this eagle was really sent from Zeus. As argued I suggest that there are reasons to suspect that it was sent from Zeus as a messenger and sign since it said explicitly in *Il.* 8, and most likely in *Il.* 12 that he sent the eagle. Interestingly Janko emphasises that the poet does not state clearly whether Zeus sent this eagle in order to maintain suspense in the audience about the degree of Zeus' attentiveness. This ambiguity is also expressed at the end of the scene where the poet tells us that the clamour of the two armies went up to *αἰθέρα καὶ Διὸς ἀυγὰς* (13.837), translated as *the aether and the splendor of Zeus* (13.837) by Murray & Wyatt. According to Janko, *Διὸς ἀυγὰς* reverts here to the theme of Zeus' eyes. Janko further points out that the idea of an all-seeing god is ancient and that it is aptly evoked in the scene. He adds that "we are still in suspense: the din has only reached his eyes, not his ears!"<sup>243</sup>

Hector's reply to Aias' prophetic speech after the eagle had appeared is also prophetic in character, see lines 13.825–832, but what he says about the future differs greatly from Aias' version. Another difference is that Hector expressed his prophecy after the eagle turned up and not before. In my opinion it seems that Hector still relied on the counsels of Zeus and the promises he had given Hector earlier in the *Iliad*.<sup>244</sup> It seems that these counsels and promises have made Hector blind to all signs that are shown to him since that moment.<sup>245</sup>

### *Interactions and functions in the primary narrative*

#### *αἰετός*

If we consider the eagle's possible wider functions in the wider context, i.e., in the primary narrative of the *Iliad*, I would like to ask whether there are any other reasons why a high flying Golden Eagle was chosen for this scene in this situation? Apart from Hector's high flying ideas about himself and his divine lineage, he will soon, with the help from Zeus, rush on the Achaean ships as an eagle, a Golden Eagle according to my identification, that hunts among a flock of geese, crane and swans, see SCENE 19,

<sup>243</sup> Janko 1992, 146–148. According to West Zeus' attention is elsewhere. West 2011, 287.

<sup>244</sup> Hector referred to these promises at *Il.* 12.235–236.

<sup>245</sup> According to Janko Hector opens with abuse and with the presumptuous words I wish I were as surely the son of Zeus (13.825–828). Janko further comments that if Hector was the son of Zeus and Hera, he would be immortal. He adds, "It is fine to call another 'honoured like a god', but to refer it to oneself, adding that one would be equal to Athene and Apollo, smacks of presumption." According to Janko verse 827 is associated with the ancient tradition of impossible wishes. He states that bird omens always come true in Homer and that "scoffers like Hektor or Eurumakhos (*Od.* 2.181f.) are doomed to a bad end." Janko 1992, 146–147. Also see Willcock 1984, 22. Leaf suggests that "...since Aias words are in the end to be fulfilled there is no reason why Zeus should not have confirmed them." Leaf. 1900, 60.

*Il.* 15.688–695. Since in my opinion the physical birds in the *Iliad* do not function only as signs and omens for the human characters in the scenes but also seem to function as future-projecting representations for particular human warriors and their coming activities that exceeds the scene context<sup>246</sup>, and since kings and prominent warriors in the *Iliad* are often paralleled to eagles in metaphorical scenes<sup>247</sup>, I would like to suggest that the eagle here functions as a symbolic representation of Hector, who will soon, when being aided by Zeus, rush straight against an Achaean ship in SCENE 19.

### Scene 17 – *Il.* 14.283–293

283 Ἴδην δ' ἰκέσθην πολυπίδακα μητέρα θηρῶν,  
 284 Λεκτόν, ὅθι πρῶτον λιπέτην ἄλα· τὼ δ' ἐπὶ χέρσου  
 285 βήτην, ἀκροτάτη δὲ ποδῶν ὑπο σείετο ὕλη.  
 286 ἔνθ' Ἔπνος μὲν ἔμεινε πάρος Διὸς ὅσσε ἰδέσθαι,  
 287 εἰς ἐλάτην ἀναβὰς περιμήκετον, ἣ τότε ἔν Ἴδῃ  
 288 μακροτάτη πεφυῖα δι' ἠέρος αἰθέρ' ἴκανε·  
 289 ἔνθ' ἦστ' ὄζοισιν πεπυκασμένος εἰλατίνοισιν,  
 290 ὄρνιθι λιγυρῇ ἐναλίγκιος, ἣν τ' ἐν ὄρεσσι  
 291 χαλκίδα κικλήσκουσι θεοί, ἄνδρες δὲ κύμινδιν.  
 292 Ἥρα δὲ κραϊπνῶς προσεβήσεται Γάργαρον ἄκρον  
 293 Ἴδης ὑψηλῆς· ἶδε δὲ νεφεληγερέτα Ζεὺς.

*To many-fountained Ida they came, mother of wild  
 beasts, to Lectum, where first they left the sea; and they  
 went on to the dry land, and the topmost forest quivered  
 beneath their feet. There Sleep halted, before the eyes of  
 Zeus saw him, and mounted up on an exceedingly tall fir  
 tree, the highest that then grew in Ida; and it reached up  
 through the mists into heaven. On it he sat, hidden by the  
 branches of the fir, in the likeness of a clear-voiced moun-  
 tain bird that the gods call **chalcis**, but men call **cymindis**.  
 But Hera swiftly came up to topmost Gargarus, the  
 peak of lofty Ida, and Zeus, the cloud-gatherer, saw her.*

(*Il.* 14.283–293)

### Background

In the beginning of *Il.* 14 King Nestor saw a shameful act, the Achaeans in rout and the Trojans high of heart behind them driving them on (*Il.* 14.14–15). The Achaean wall was now broken down. Nestor pondered whether to go into battle or go to Achilles and he decided to go and find Achilles. On his way there he met the kings who had been wounded in the war: Diomedes, Odysseus and Agamemnon. Nestor said that no wounded man would fight in war. Agamemnon expressed some bitterness towards Zeus, accusing him of giving glory to the Trojans and for forgetting the Achaeans. Again Agamemnon wanted to flee with the ships from the Trojans. At that, Odysseus said that he wished that Agamemnon was not king over them. Diomedes wanted them to return to battle and spur on the others even if they were wounded. They then went back to the battle and Agamemnon led them while Poseidon urged them on to fight. Hera observed Poseidon from Olympus and rejoiced. She also noticed Zeus at the peak of Mount Ida. Hera considered how to distract the mind of Zeus so that he would not intervene in the Trojan War. She anointed her body with oil and fragrance, combed

246 See SCENES 1, 9, 10, 13, and 35 with interpretations.

247 See SCENES 19 (Hector), 24 (Menelaus), 29 (Achilles) and 33 (Hector).

her hair, dressed herself beautifully and asked Aphrodite to give her love and desire. After this was done she sped away from Mount Olympus and came to Lemnos where she met the god Sleep, the brother of Death. She asked him to lull the gleaming eyes of Zeus to sleep as soon as she had lain down by his side in love. Sleep was clearly afraid of helping Hera with this since he had learned a lesson previously when he had helped her with a similar favour. On that occasion Zeus had been very angry when he awakened and sought Sleep. Sleep would then have suffered much if Night had not saved him from Zeus. When Hera offered Sleep one of the Graces to wed as a favour for his help he changed his mind, however. Hera and Sleep then left Lemnos, they clothed in mist, and sped lightly on their way towards Zeus on the peak of Mount Ida.<sup>248</sup>

### Analysis

Aspects	Scene 17 – Il. 14.283–293
<b>Ornithology</b>	
Greek bird reference	<i>χαλκίς</i> (Il.14.291) <i>κύμινδις</i> (Il.14.291)
Lexica	LSJ s.v. <i>χαλκίς</i> ‘an unknown bird (cf. <i>κύμινδις</i> ), Il.14.291’ Cunliffe s.v. ‘The name given by the gods to a bird not identified (cf. <i>κύμινδις</i> ) E291’ LSJ and supplement s.v. <i>κύμινδις</i> ‘name of a bird...Il.14.291’ Cunliffe s.v. ‘The name given by mortals to a bird not identified (cf. <i>χαλκίς</i> ) E291.’
Behaviour and characteristics	A clear-voiced mountain bird with two names, <i>χαλκίς</i> and <i>κύμινδις</i> . The scene indicates that it likes to sit in high fir trees hidden by the branches.
Time context	When Sleep* <sup>1</sup> sat on the tall fir tree and did not want to be seen by Zeus. Daytime is indicated.
Spatial context	Hidden by the branches in the highest fir at the topmost forest of Mount Ida.* <sup>2</sup>
Ornithological accuracy	High
Suggested taxonomic status	An owl, plausibly the Scops Owl, <i>Otus scops</i> .
<b>Form</b>	Transformation
<b>Interactions</b>	
Birds and birds	-
Birds and other animals	-
Birds and humans	-
Birds and gods	Describes the god Sleep when he temporarily took the form of a bird called <i>χαλκίς/ κύμινδις</i> at a moment when he did not want to be seen by Zeus. It is intended that Sleep would later on lull Zeus to sleep.* <sup>3</sup>

<sup>248</sup> Il. 14.1–282.

THE BIRD SCENES

Aspects	Scene 17 – <i>Il.</i> 14.283–293
<b>Functions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Owl-specific form that brings information about Sleep when he sat in a fir tree waiting to lull Zeus to sleep without being noticed by him.</li> <li>• Its physical form were taken by Sleep at that moment.</li> <li>• Used by Sleep as disguise.</li> <li>• Emphasises how important it was for him not to be seen by Zeus.</li> <li>• Indicates his deep fear of Zeus.</li> <li>• Indicates his status in the hierarchies among gods.</li> <li>• Emphasises his wild and avian character especially concerning his ability to disguise himself in a tree.</li> <li>• Evokes tension as to whether Sleep saw Zeus and Hera or not.</li> </ul>

\*1 <sup>1</sup> *Ἵπνος*, Sleep, is the brother of *Θάνατος*, Death, see *Il.* 14..231. At. 14.243–259 Sleep says that he will never use his powers on Zeus, that is, lull him to sleep, because *Νύξ*, Night, had to rescue him the last time he did such a thing. Hera did however make Sleep changed his mind, see 14.263-279 and the “Background” of the scene.  
 \*2 The modern Turkish name for Mount Ida in Turkey is Kaz Dağı.  
 \*3 See *Il.* 14.233–241.

**Comments and interpretation**

*Ornithology and form*

The easiest and most natural path to take concerning the god’s (Sleep’s) physical appearance here is to conceive that he temporarily transformed his body into the form of a bird called *χαλκίς* and *κύμινδης*.<sup>249</sup> When being transformed in this way, hidden by the branches of the fir,<sup>250</sup> the risk of being recognised by Zeus was reduced<sup>251</sup>. The description of the bird says that it was *a clear-voiced mountain bird that the gods call chalcis, but men call cymindis* (14.290–291). According to Janko, poets sometimes invented the “divine” name, or called it divine to explain why there were two names, stressing their privileged knowledge.<sup>252</sup>

Pollard points out that the meaning of both *χαλκίς* and *κύμινδης* is unknown: *χαλκίς* has been taken to mean “bronze-like”, which Pollard thinks is a good description of the colour of the Eagle Owl, *Bubo bubo*. Interpreting the word in this sense the ancient commentator described the colour of the *κύμινδης* as ‘dark and verging on bronze’, though there is no certainty that *χαλκίς* is connected with *χαλκός*, bronze. Pollard suggests that it is natural to identify the bird with some nocturnal species like an owl or nightjar.<sup>253</sup> The scene context further suggests that this bird prefers to sit in high trees

249 Most scholars have suggested that Sleep changes his form into a bird, see Thompson 1936, 187; Pollard 1977, 82; Janko 1992, 196; Kirk 1990, 240. See also SCENE 8, *Il.* 7.54–66 where Athena and Apollo took the form of two Lammergeiers as they sat in Zeus’s oak.  
 250 Compare with SCENE 1 where eight young sparrows hide under the branches of a plane tree.  
 251 Also see SCENE 8 and interpretation.  
 252 Janko refers to Fowler, *Phoenix* 42, 1988, 98f. Janko 1992, 197.  
 253 Pollard 1977, 82.

in the daytime – high firs, where it hides among the branches, and the natural environment is the highest forest of Mount Ida.

From an ornithological point of view a night-active owl is the first bird that comes to mind since night-active owls sit and sleep in firs and other trees in the daytime and they are masters in camouflaging themselves. Janko points out that the *κύμινδις* was far from being unknown and fabled and that it was a kind of owl that was known in Ionia, with an Anatolian name. According to him a bird that was sleepy by day certainly suited Sleep best.<sup>254</sup> There is one such species of owl that in my opinion suits the scene perfectly and also fits the environment: the Scops Owl, *Otus scops*.

The Scops Owl is a nocturnal, arboreal species that is found up to an altitude of 2000 m. It normally inhabits conifers and is found in lower-range mountains. The plumage colour varies: some are brown-grey and some are rufous-brown. The latter colour variant may refer to the word *χαλκίς*. It hunts at night in the open but needs ample cover to provide a quiet, shaded roosting site. It typically roosts in dense foliage close up against trunks or branches for camouflage.<sup>255</sup> When observing it at daytime it looks sleepy, with its eyes almost shut. What is also typical for this species is its remarkable ability to hide itself. When the bird suddenly becomes aware of being watched, it adopts an upright position and then uses its plumage to camouflage it: in the blink of an eye draws the foot up and the bird tenses, sleeking its body plumage and raises its ear-tufts. The eyes are almost shut so that the bird faces the source of danger while turning slightly away from it. The bird then draws its folded wings across its breast so that the head looks over the carpal joint. The bird is perfectly motionless and resembles bark of the tree behind it.<sup>256</sup> Further, the Scops Owl has a characteristic territorial call: a constantly repeated, short, deep, whistling 'tyuh' every 2–3 (4) seconds. It is easy to mimic and is audible up to about one km. The female has a slightly higher-pitched version and sings a duet with the male. The difference in sound is noticeable in the duet.<sup>257</sup> I would like to suggest that the old idea that Sleep and Death were brothers<sup>258</sup> may be associated with the nightly duetting between two Scops Owls.

To sum up, the descriptions of the *χαλκίς-κύμινδις* shows a high ornithological accuracy. I suggest the Scops Owl for the bird in the scene because of its considerable ability

254 Janko 1992, 106. According to Willcock the *χαλκίς-κύμινδις* has not been identified. Willcock 1976, 161. Boraston suggested the Long-eared Owl, *Asio otus*, which frequents conifers. Boraston 1911, 216, 240–241. According to Pollard *χαλκίς-κύμινδις* cannot certainly be identified. 1977, 19, 81–82. Also see Thompson 1936, 187. Voultziadou & Tatolas describe this bird as unknown. Voultziadou & Tatolas, 2008, 307. Arnott says that the precise identity of this bird is uncertain. He suggests that the *χαλκίς-κύμινδις* in Homer is an Eagle Owl or a Long-eared Owl. Arnott 2007, 27, 125.

255 Cramp 1985, 455, 457–458.

256 Cramp 1985, 458.

257 Cramp 1985, 461–462; Svensson & Grant 2006, 214–215.

258 See note \*1, page 133.

to disguise itself in trees, its sleepy expression, its typical call, and since it can be found in the physical environment described in the scene.

*Interactions and functions in the scene*

Hera ordered Sleep to let Zeus fall asleep. She said, *Lull to sleep the gleaming eyes of Zeus... for me; as soon as I shall have lain down by his side in love* (*Il.* 14.236–237). Hera’s intention was to prevent Zeus from intervening in the Trojan War for a while. Sleep seems to have hidden himself well in the tree as a Scops Owl: a successful disguise is important since he must not be noticed by Zeus. Janko discusses how Sleep is keener not to be seen by Zeus than not to see him.<sup>259</sup> One interesting detail concerning the Scops Owl, as mentioned above, is that its eyes are *almost* shut when in camouflage mode, so that in this way it is facing the source of danger while turning slightly away from it. About 50 lines later in the *Iliad* it says that Zeus clothed Hera and himself with a golden cloud so that not even Helios could see them. Zeus then clasped his wife in his arms and beneath them the earth made grass, lotuses, crocuses and hyacinths grow. Even if Helios could not see Zeus and Hera perhaps Sleep could. The question whether Sleep observed Zeus and Hera making love beneath him is an open question that evokes tension.

When Zeus was repleted with love and had fallen asleep, Sleep went to the ships of the Argives where he told Poseidon to go and assist the Achaeans and grant them glory. There was little time since Zeus was still sleeping.<sup>260</sup> The *χαλκίς-κύμινδις* further emphasises Sleep’s wild and avian character especially concerning his ability to disguise himself in a tree, and concerning his ability to be so quiet and discreet so that not even Zeus, the all-seeing god, would notice him even at very close distance.

**Scene 18 – *Il.* 15.229–245**

229 “ἀλλὰ σύ γ’ ἐν χεῖρεσσι λάβ’ αἰγίδα θυσανόεσσαν,  
230 τῇ μάλ’ ἐπισσεῖων φοβέειν ἥρωας Ἀχαιοῦς·  
231 σοὶ δ’ αὐτῷ μελέτω ἑκατηβόλε φαίδιμος Ἔκτωρ·  
232 τόφρα γὰρ οὖν οἱ ἔγριε μένος μέγα, ὄφρ’ ἂν Ἀχαιοὶ  
233 φεύγοντες νῆάς τε καὶ Ἑλλάσποντον ἴκωνται.  
234 κείθεν δ’ αὐτὸς ἐγὼ φράσομαι ἔργον τε ἔπος τε,  
235 ὣς κε καὶ αὖτις Ἀχαιοὶ ἀναπνεύσωσι πόνοιο.”  
236 Ὡς ἔφατ’, οὐδ’ ἄρα πατὴρ ἀνηκούστησεν Ἀπόλλων,  
237 βῆ δὲ κατ’ Ἰδαίων ὄρέων ἴρηνι εἰοικῶς  
238 ὠκέϊ φασσοφόνῳ, ὅς τ’ ὠκιστος πετεηνῶν.  
239 εὔρ’ υἱὸν Πριάμοιο δαΐφρονος Ἔκτορα δῖον,  
240 ἤμενον, οὐδ’ ἔτι κείτο, νέον δ’ ἔσαγείρετο θυμόν,

“But take in your hands  
the tassled aegis, and shake it fiercely over the Achaean  
warriors to frighten them. And for you yourself, god who  
strikes from afar, let glorious Hector be your care, and  
rouse in him great might until the time that the Achaeans  
will come in flight to their ships and the Hellespont. From  
that moment will I myself contrive word and deed so that  
yet again the Achaeans may have respite from the toil of war.”  
So he spoke, nor did Apollo fail to heed his father, but  
went down from the hills of Ida like a fleet **falcon**, the  
slayer of doves, which is the swiftest of winged things. He  
found the son of the battle-minded Priam, noble Hector, sit-  
ting up, for he lay no longer, and he was just now gathering

259 Janko 1992, 196.

260 See *Il.* 14.341–355.

241 ἀμφὶ ἔγινώσκων ἑτάρους· ἀπὸρ ἄσθμα καὶ ἰδρῶς  
 242 παύετ', ἐπεὶ μιν ἔγειρε Διὸς νόος αἰγιόχοιο.  
 243 ἀγχοῦ δ' ἰστάμενος προσέφη ἐκάεργος Ἀπόλλων·  
 244 "Ἕκτορ νιῆ Πριάμοιο, τί ἦ δὲ σὺ νόσφιν ἀπ' ἄλλων  
 245 ἦσ' ὀλιγηπελέων; ἦ πού τί σε κῆδος ἰκάνει;"

*back his spirit, and recognized his comrades around him, and his gasping and his sweat had ceased, for the mind of Zeus, who bears the aegis, revived him. And Apollo, who works from afar, came up to him, and said: "Hector, son of Priam, why is it that you sit here fainting apart from the rest? Is it perhaps that some pain has come on you?"*

(*Il.* 15.229–245)

### Background

After Hera had tricked Zeus to come to bed and Sleep had made him slumber, Poseidon assisted the Achaean warriors eagerly. The Achaean kings marshalled the warriors even if they were wounded while the Trojans opposite them were marshalled by Hector. The war continued. Aias struck Hector with a stone and he fell to the ground. Polydamas and the best men then protected Hector with their round shields and carried him out from the toil of war. He recovered later at the Xanthus River.<sup>261</sup> When Hector was wounded, the Achaeans,<sup>262</sup> who were aided by Poseidon, were even more victorious. When *Il.* 15 starts Zeus awoke on Mount Ida beside Hera. When he saw Poseidon among the Achaeans chasing the Trojans and Hector lying on the plain distressed and in pain, he felt pity and spoke angrily to Hera and threatened to whip her. At that Hera shuddered and spoke insincerely to him. Zeus smiled and ordered her to call Iris to tell Poseidon that he should cease getting involved in war and go to his own house. He also asked her to tell Apollo to rouse Hector to fight again and to breathe strength into him again. Zeus further expressed his other plans: that Achilles would send Patroclus out to war, that Hector would slain him, that King Sarpedon would die, that Achilles would slay Hector in wrath over Patroclus, and that Zeus from that moment would cause the Trojans to be driven back from the ships until the Achaeans took steep Ilion. Iris and Apollo then came to Zeus and at first Iris carried out his orders. When Poseidon got Zeus' message he left the Achaean armies. When the scene starts Zeus and Apollo are positioned on the hills of Mount Ida and Zeus has started to give Apollo directions for his mission.<sup>263</sup>

<sup>261</sup> *Il.* 14.350–14.439.

<sup>262</sup> Especially Aias, the son of Telamon, see *Il.* 14.508–522.

<sup>263</sup> *Il.* 14.350–15.228.



THE BIRD SCENES

**Analysis**

Aspects	Scene 18 – Il. 15.229–245
<b>Ornithology</b>	
Greek bird reference	ἰϥηξ (15.237)
Lexica	LSJ s.v. ‘hawk, falcon’ Cunliffe s.v. ‘A bird of the falcon kind, a falcon or hawk’
Behaviour and characteristics	A bird of prey that flies fast and is regarded the swiftest of winged things. It preys on and kills doves.
Time context	Unspecific
Spatial context	Unspecific, but associated with the air. Went down from the hills of a mountain.
Ornithological accuracy	High
Suggested taxonomic status	The Peregrine, <i>Falco peregrinus</i> .
<b>Form</b>	Methaphorical
<b>Interactions</b>	
Birds and birds	The falcon kills dove. A hunter and its presumptive preys.
Birds and other animals	-
Birds and humans	-
Birds and gods	Describes Apollo in a falcon-like parallel way when he left Zeus and went down from the hills of Mount Ida. He was supposed to meet Hector and rouse great strength in him.
<b>Functions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A falcon-specific metaphorical parallel that describes Apollo when he went down from Mount Ida and moved towards Hector.</li> <li>• Brings information about Apollo and his movements at this moment.</li> <li>• Indicates that he left and disappeared from Zeus quickly.</li> <li>• Indicates that he transported himself very quickly, powerfully and with ease towards Hector.</li> <li>• Gives Apollo’s departure and movements a kind of wild and avian hunter/killer character.</li> </ul>

**Comments and interpretation**

*Ornithology and form*

The ἰϥηξ appears in metaphorical form in the scene. According to Janko Apollo was probably like the bird in the scene because of his speed, not because he takes avian form.<sup>264</sup> Jones suggests that Apollo moves with the speed of this bird, not in its form.<sup>265</sup> This is the third time an ἰϥηξ occurs in the *Iliad*.<sup>266</sup> Also in the previous two scenes in

264 Janko 2002, 252.

265 Jones 2001, 215. Also see Leaf 1900, 120.

266 For the previous occurrences, see above, SCENES 14 and 16, interpretations and notes.

*Il.* 13, the speed of this bird was emphasised. It is now described as *the swiftest of winged things*. (*Il.* 15.238). As argued, the Peregrine is considered the fastest bird of prey at least if one considers its fast stoop. The estimated at 160–410 km per hour.<sup>267</sup> Svensson & Grant say that its speed suddenly increases when a prey is spotted.<sup>268</sup> According to Génsbøl no other bird can reach such a speed with so few wingbeats.<sup>269</sup>

The bird is further described according to another aspect, that of killing, that is, as *the slayer of doves* (*Il.* 15.239).<sup>270</sup> Since the Peregrine is known as a skilful dove hunter, this description tallies with the species.<sup>271</sup> The physical environment is Mount Ida, since it was from there Apollo went down like a falcon. Peregrines are found in mountainous environments. For breeding they need cliffs, crags, or other undisturbed environments.<sup>272</sup> To sum up, the descriptions of the ἴρηνξ shows a high ornithological accuracy and I suggest the Peregrine.

#### *Interactions and functions in the scene*

The falcon mainly interacts with Apollo in a parallel, metaphorical way. Since a Peregrine flies at a considerable speed from a cliff or mountain peak, I suggest that it implies that Apollo departed and disappeared very quickly from Zeus, and that he moved quickly and with ease and power towards Hector. It is not surprising that Apollo was able to move in such way since he was a god. Why the falcon is described in a hierarchic relation to doves – as a *slayer of doves* (*Il.* 15.238) – is more ambiguous. The description focusses on the falcon as a deadly hunter of doves and by its metaphorical force it emphasises the character of Apollo as a fierce and deadly god. Apollo did not kill Hector however when he met him at Troy. Instead he spoke to him, revealed his identity, and advised him to urge on his charioteers against the ships.<sup>273</sup> Apollo told Hector that he himself would take the lead and send the Achaean warriors into flight. After Hector had received great strength from Apollo he left him swiftly and forcefully, and he was at this moment like a horse that thundered over the plain looking for mares. When

<sup>267</sup> Cramp & Simmons 1980, 366.

<sup>268</sup> Svensson & Grant 2006, 98.

<sup>269</sup> Génsbøl 1995, 384.

<sup>270</sup> LSJ s.v. φασσοφόνος 'dove-killing, ἴρηνξ *Il.* 15.238'

<sup>271</sup> Boraston suggests a falcon killing a Wood Pigeon, Boraston 1911, 226–227. Janko says that φασσοφόνος is a hapax in Homer that was later the name of a type of hawk. Janko 1992, 252. See also Jones 2001, 215 and Thompson 1936, 300–302. Cramp & Simmons reports that Peregrines almost entirely feed on living birds and that includes an extremely wide range of species. The prey range in size from the Goldcrest, *Regulus regulus* to the Grey Heron, *Ardea cinerea* and goose, *Anser*. In some parts of the world birds such as pigeons, starlings, thrushes, and other small birds taken. European data in breeding season emphasises the importance of Feral Pigeons as the main prey, as well as starlings and thrushes. Cramp & Simmons 1980, 366–367.

<sup>272</sup> Cramp & Simmons 1980, 362.

Janko points out that ἴρηνξ is the general term for smaller raptors. Janko 1992, 51. Voultziadou and Tatolas suggest that ἴρηνξ and κίρκος is a Peregrine. Voultziadou & Tatolas 2008, 307. For falcons in ancient sources see also Arnott 2007, 66–68; Thompson 1936 114–118; Keller 1913, 13–26. For other scholars interpretations of the bird reference ἴρηνξ see also SCENE 14.

<sup>273</sup> See *Il.* 15.253–259.

the Achaean warriors saw Hector, who recently had been badly wounded, coming on them like this, they were seized with fear. Hector and the Trojans then slew many Achaeans.<sup>274</sup> When considering Hector's activities and state after the interaction with Apollo, it is almost as if the two sequences in the scene that focus on the falcon's speed and deadliness had had an impact on Hector or were transferred to him so that even he became as swift-footed and deadly as the falcon for a while.<sup>275</sup> As Janko suggests, "Apollo will bring the Greeks the death a hawk brings fleeing pigeons or doves," which is also possible.<sup>276</sup>

**Scene 19 – Il. 15.688–695**

688 νηυσί τε καὶ κλισίησιν ἀμυνέμεν. οὐδὲ μὲν Ἴεκτωρ  
689 μίμνεν ἐνὶ Τρώων ὁμάδῳ πύκα θωρηκτάων·  
690 ἀλλ' ὡς τ' ὄρνιθων πετεηνῶν αἰετὸς αἰΐθων  
691 ἔθνος ἐφορμάται ποταμὸν πάρα βοσκομενάων,  
692 χηνῶν ἢ γεράνων ἢ κύκνων δουλιχοδείρων,  
693 ὡς Ἴεκτωρ ἴθυσσε νεὸς κυανοπρόροιο  
694 ἀντίος αἰξᾶς· τὸν δὲ Ζεὺς ὤσεν ὀπισθε  
695 χειρὶ μάλα μεγάλη, ἔτρυνε δὲ λαὸν ἅμ' αὐτῷ.

Nor did Hector  
remain among the throng of the mail-clad Trojans,  
but as a tawny **eagle** darts on a flock of winged birds  
that are feeding by a river's bank – a flock of  
wild **geese**, or **cranes**, or long-necked **swans** – so  
Hector made for a dark-prowed ship, rushing straight at  
it; and from behind Zeus thrust him on with exceeding  
mighty hand, and roused the army together with him.

(Il. 15.688–695)

**Background**

The fleeing Achaeans were forced inside their wall by Hector and the Trojans. Leading the way Apollo dashed easily down the banks of the deep trench and pushed down the Achaean wall so that the Trojans could march forward. Nestor then prayed to Zeus, begging that they would not to be vanquished by the Trojans like this. When Patroclus realized the situation, he hurried to Achilles to try to persuade him to return to the battle. Meanwhile Zeus protected Hector from being wounded. Apollo continued to intervene in the human battles and Zeus urged the Trojans on.<sup>277</sup> They rushed on the ships *like ravening lions (...)* and were fulfilling the orders of Zeus, who ever roused great might in them, and distracted the hearts of the Argives, and took away their glory, while he spurred on the others. For it was Hector (...) that he willed in his heart to give glory, so that he might cast on the beaked ships unwearied, wondrous-blazing fire, and so fulfill completely the monstrous prayer of Thetis (Il. 15.592–599). Zeus had this in mind when he

<sup>274</sup> See Il. 15.260–342.

<sup>275</sup> For a similar but also different situation, see SCENE 14 and interpretation where the two Aiantes became swift-footed in their feet and more bellicose after the meeting with Poseidon disguised as Calchas and departing from them as a swift "hunter-falcon". See also West who emphasises that Hector's recovering is not only a result of Apollo's intervention since Hector had started to recover already when Apollo turned up. But this is, as West argues, "thanks to Zeus' will, which is apparently conceived as operating from afar without Zeus himself coming near; cf. 461", West 2011, 303.

<sup>276</sup> Janko 1992, 252.

<sup>277</sup> Il. 15.246 – 15.591.

roused Hector to go against the ships even if Hector was eager himself.<sup>278</sup> The Achaeans stood firm did not flee for a while, but when Hector was coming on them like a lion falling on cattle that were grazing, they all fled in terror. Hector however slew only one man, Periphetes of Mycenae, and it was not a very glorious way of killing him. Periphetes stumbled and fell backward and Hector was quick to notice and killed him with his spear. The Trojans then came among the ships and Nestor begged the men to stand firm and not turn back in flight. Athena thrust away a cloud of mist and Aias called loudly to the Achaeans to defend their ships and huts.<sup>279</sup>

### Analysis

Aspects	Scene 19 – Il. 15.688–695
<b>Ornithology</b>	
Greek bird reference	<i>αἰετός</i> (15.690) <i>χήν</i> (15.692) <i>γέρανος</i> (15.692) <i>κύκνος</i> (15.692)
Lexica	LSJ s.v. <i>αἰετός</i> ‘eagle, as a bird of omen,...Il.8.247, cf. 12.201... favourite of Zeus...Il.24.310’ Cunliffe s.v. ‘An eagle’ LSJ s.v. <i>χήν</i> ‘wild goose, <i>Anser cinereus</i> , ...Il.2.460’*1 Cunliffe s.v. ‘A goose’ LSJ s.v. <i>γέρανος</i> ‘crane, <i>Grus cinerea</i> , Il.3.3’*2 Cunliffe: ‘A crane’ LSJ: s.v. <i>κύκνος</i> ‘swan, <i>Cygnus olor</i> , ....Il.2.460’*3 Cunliffe s.v. ‘A swan’
Behaviour and characteristics	<i>αἰετός/χήν/γέρανος/κύκνος</i> : A tawny eagle darts into a flock of geese, or cranes, or long-necked swans that feeds on a river bank.
Time context	<i>αἰετός/χήν/γέρανος/κύκνος</i> : Unspecific.
Spatial context	<i>αἰετός</i> : In the air, and presumably in a rather low altitude. <i>χήν/γέρανος/κύκνος</i> : On the ground, on a river bank.
Ornithological accuracy	<i>αἰετός/χήν/γέρανος/κύκνος</i> : High
Suggested taxonomic status	<i>αἰετός</i> : An eagle, possibly an adult Golden Eagle, <i>Aquila chrysaetos</i> <i>χήν</i> : Greylag Goose, <i>Anser anser</i> <i>γέρανος</i> : Crane, <i>Grus grus</i> <i>κύκνος</i> : Whooper Swan, <i>Cygnus cygnus</i>
<b>Form</b>	<i>αἰετός/χήν/γέρανος/κύκνος</i> : Metaphorical

<sup>278</sup> See Il. 15.604–605. This is a good example of “double motivation”. For “double motivation” see chapter 1.

<sup>279</sup> Il. 15. 606–687.

THE BIRD SCENES

Aspects	Scene 19 – Il. 15.688–695
<p><b>Interactions</b></p> <p>Birds and birds</p> <p>Birds and other animals</p> <p>Birds and humans</p> <p>Birds and gods</p>	<p><i>αἰετός/χήν/γέρανος/κύκνος</i>: An eagle that darts on a flock of feeding geese, cranes, and swans that is feeding on a river bank. An individual hunter and its presumptive prey.</p> <p>-</p> <p><i>αἰετός</i>: Describes Hector in an eagle-like parallel way when he rushed straight at an Achaean dark-prowed ship. The “eagle-metaphor” indicates that there was something unusual and special about Hector at this moment.</p> <p><i>χήν/γέρανος/κύκνος</i>: The Achaean ships. Describes no humans in a metaphorical, parallel way.</p> <p><i>αἰετός</i>: When Hector rushed at a ship like an eagle it is said that Zeus thrust Hector on from behind with an exceeding mighty hand (15.694-695) which indicates that Zeus motivated and supported Hector at this moment.</p> <p><i>χήν/γέρανος/κύκνος</i>: -</p>
<p><b>Functions</b></p>	<p><i>αἰετός</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An eagle-specific metaphorical parallel that describes Hector when he rushed straight at a Trojans ship.</li> <li>• Brings information about Hector at this moment.</li> <li>• Emphasises the speed, power and lightness in Hector’s movements and attack.</li> <li>• Emphasises his confidence and focus.</li> <li>• Marks Hector’s high status as a human and as a warrior.</li> <li>• Gives his activities and states a kind of wild and avian hunter-character.</li> <li>• Signals that there was something unusual and more-than-human about Hector at this moment which can be understood as a result of double motivation.</li> <li>• Indicates that Zeus allows Hector temporary glory due to the status of the eagle.</li> </ul> <p><i>χήν/γέρανος/κύκνος</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Goose-/crane-/swan-specific, metaphorical parallels that describe the Achaean ships.</li> <li>• Bring information about the ships.</li> <li>• Mark the ships as a group of many.</li> <li>• Mark the ships as targets for an attack.</li> <li>• Give the ships avian characters concerning their shapes.</li> <li>• Possibly signify, together with the dark-prowed ship, one individual bird.</li> </ul>

\*1 *Anser cinereus* is an older Latin name for the Greylag Goose, *Anser anser*.

\*2 *Grus cinerea* is an older Latin name for the Crane, *Grus grus*.

\*3 *Cycnus olor* is the Latin name for the species Mute Swan.

**Comments and interpretation***Ornithology and form**αἰετός*

The *αἰετός* appears in metaphorical form. It is described as *a tawny eagle* (15.690)<sup>280</sup>. Since there are eagles that are tawny in colour, reddish brown or russet, the description is accurate in a natural sense. It is further said that the eagle *darts on a flock of winged fowl that are feeding by a river's bank – a flock of wild geese, or cranes, or long-necked swans* (15.689–692). Also this sequence refers to natural conditions for an eagle hunting for prey and it indicates that the eagle's intention was to kill. It can be concluded that we are dealing with an eagle that has capacity to hunt and kill birds of considerable size. It presumably also hunts in open habitats that include wetlands where these kinds of prey occur.

The Golden Eagle is mainly an individual hunter. It takes mammals and birds from the size of larks to cranes, *Gruinidae*. It also hunts geese and swans, *Anatidae*. Most preys are taken on the ground. The Golden Eagle rarely kills birds in mid-air, but will pursue prey flushed from cover. The upper part of the plumage of the adult is dark red-brown or brown, marked only by pale grey to yellow-brown wing-coverts. The juvenile differs from the adult with dark brown plumage and a white panel along the bases of the inner primaries and the outer secondaries on the tail. The lanceolate feathers of the crown and nape of an adult have dark centres and a golden-buff or tawny edges and tips. The under parts of the plumage are dark brown. To sum up, the description of the eagle shows a high ornithological accuracy and I suggest an adult Golden Eagle.<sup>281</sup>

*χήν/γέρανος/κύκνος*

The *χήν/γέρανος/κύκνος* appear in metaphorical forms. They are described collectively and in three different groups: *geese, or cranes, or long-necked swans* (15.692). The only description that distinguishes the birds is that the swans are described as *long-necked*

280 LSJ and supplement s.v. *αἰετός* 'fire, etc., dark red...II. of bronze, bronze objects, dark red or brown *Il.* 4.485...by poetic transf., of iron, *Il.* 4.448, *Od.* 1.184. III. of animals or birds, reddish brown, tawny, *ἴπποι Il.* 2.839; *αἰετός* 15.690..., since sleek, shining, or fiery, fierce do not suit all cases...pr.n. of a horse, *Il.* 8.185...IV. metaph. of complexion, dark, app. with the implication of manliness.' Hammond translates as "a russet eagle", Hammond 1987, 271.

281 Golden Eagles inhabit upland or mountain wilderness, and nests on trees or cliffs. In eastern parts of the West Palearctic this specie occurs in lowland forests or wetland terrain, where human population density is low. The Golden Eagle is the largest widespread *Aquila* in Eurasia, but it is on average smaller than the Verreaux's Eagle, *A. verreauxii*. Cramp and Simmons, 1980, 234–244. Boraston suggests Bonelli's Eagle, *Hieraetus fasciatus*, for the eagle in the scene partly based on the fact that Hector was beaten off in the end and that this was suitable for the simile that suggested the possibility of failure on the part of Bonelli's Eagle. Boraston 1911, 216, 237. I do not agree with Boraston that Hector was failing in his attack since he actually grasped the stern of the Protesilaus ship, see *Il.* 15.716–717, and since in a duel with Aias he made way for the Trojans who just after this duel set the ship on fire, see *Il.* 16.114–123. Bonelli's Eagle further feeds mainly on medium-sized mammals and birds and has a dark-brown plumage without reddish-brown colours. Cramp & Simmons 1980, 258–259. Also see Pollard 1977, 76–79. For eagles in ancient sources, see Arnott 2007, 2–4; Thompson 1936, 2–17; Keller 1913, 1–6. Also see Voultsiadou & Tatalos who identify the *αἰετοί* that occur in Homer not as species but as "Eagle". Voultsiadou & Tatalos 2008, 307.

(15.692).<sup>282</sup> Even if geese and cranes are also long-necked birds, swans have even longer necks which make the description accurate.

Furthermore, it says that the birds are *feeding by a river's bank* (15.691). A river's bank is a natural place for these kinds of birds to feed and their collective feeding emphasises their gregariousness.<sup>283</sup> Since I suggested that the Achaeans in SCENE 2 were paralleled to Greylag Geese, Cranes and Whooper Swans, I find these species plausible for the birds under discussion. The Greylag Goose, Crane, and Whooper Swan are all gregarious, migratory birds.<sup>284</sup>

### *Interactions and functions in the scene*

#### *αἰετός*

No killing is described in the scene but hierarchies are shown since the eagle darts on the other birds. The eagle is described as an individual hunter as opposed to the other birds that are described in a collective way. It is the eagle that has taken the initiative.

The eagle interacts with Hector in a metaphorical parallel way since it is described that he rushes straight against the ship like an eagle darting into a flock of birds. The eagle is used to show that Hector as a human moved swiftly and with power and ease, and that he was confident and was focussed on his goal. I agree with Janko, who has pointed out that the eagle's intention to kill the prey resembles Hector's intention to destroy the ship by setting it on fire.<sup>285</sup>

I would like to suggest that it signals that his behaviour is not entirely human, but also has elements of a wild avian hunter. Since no human under normal conditions has the ability to move and attack like a powerful eagle, it seems that something very unusual and more-than-human is happening here. It is my opinion that Hector is able to behave like this at this moment because he at the same moment is receiving some extra driving force from a god, in accordance with the concept of "double motivation."<sup>286</sup> At the end of the scene it is said of Zeus that *from behind Zeus thrust him on with exceeding mighty hand, and roused the army together with him.* (15.694–695). This sequence tells us that Zeus at this temporal and spatial point supported Hector and indicates that he

<sup>282</sup> Also see *Il.* 2.460 and SCENE 2.

<sup>283</sup> The activity, i.e., the feeding birds can be associated with the grazing cattle that the lion (a metaphorical parallel to Hector) was focusing on earlier, see *Il.* 15. 630–635.

<sup>284</sup> For the Greylag Goose, see Cramp & Simmons 1977, 413–422. For the Crane, see Cramp & Simmons 1980, 620–621. For the Whooper Swan, see Cramp & Simmons 1977, 385–391.

Also see Pollard 1977, 83–84; Arnott 2007, 30–31 (goose), 52–54 (crane), and 122–124 (swan); Thompson 1936, 325–326 (geese), 68–76 (cranes) and 179–186 (swans), and Keller 1913, 220–225 (goose), 184–193 (cranes) and 213–220 (swans). Voultsiadou & Tatalos suggest Greylag Goose for *χίην*, Crane for *γέβανος*, and Whooper Swan for *νύκνος*. Voultsiadou & Tatalos 2008, 307.

<sup>285</sup> See Janko 1992, 303–304.

<sup>286</sup> For the concept of double motivation, see chapter 1. See also West who points out that it is uncharacteristic of Hector to leave his troops. West 2011, 311.

also supported Hector when the latter as an eagle attacked the ship: that is, he acted in such unusual way because he was also motivated by Zeus.<sup>287</sup>

Some 100 lines before the bird scene under discussion, Zeus' intentions are openly revealed: *For it was Hector, son of Priam, that he willed in his heart to give glory, so that he might cast on the beaked ships unwearied, wondrous-blazing fire (Il. 15.596–598).*<sup>288</sup> It thus seems that Zeus' plan concerning the ship-/fire event was also to give glory to Hector. When considering the bird scene and especially the moment when Hector is described as a darting eagle, one asks whether the eagle was also used by the poet as a way to indicate that Zeus is glorifying Hector for a moment of time. This is of course an open question but I suggest that it is worth considering since the poet openly reveals that Zeus supports Hector in the scene, and since in the *Iliad* it is always elevating for a human to be paralleled to an eagle or to another bird of prey or a Lammergeier.<sup>289</sup> As the strongest of birds, by itself, the eagle marks Hector's high status as a human and as a warrior<sup>290</sup>. Its status is also affected by its close connection to Zeus.<sup>291</sup>

*χήνη/γέρανος/κύκνος*

The geese, cranes and swans do not interact with any human characters but with the Achaean ships in a metaphorical way. They signify a group of many that are targets for an attack. As Janko has pointed, out there are apparent similarities in the physical shape between these kind of birds and ships mainly because of the long necks and the end of the bodies that resemble hulls and sterns of ships.<sup>292</sup> Other similarities are that ships and these kinds of birds are both related to waters and wetlands and they can also be seen on seashores and riverbanks. The sequence that tells us that Hector *made for a dark-prowed ship* (15.693) emphasises a specific ship as the goal of Hector's attack. Since Hector is already paralleled to an eagle that darts on a flock of geese, cranes and swans, I would like to suggest that this specific ship is associated with one individual bird within one of these flocks. It may seem confusing to resemble a greater number of elements, i.e., flocks of birds, to one single element, i.e., one ship. But when considering

287 See also again *Il.* 15.604–605. According to Janko, Zeus' hand is a metaphor for Zeus' power. Janko 1992, 304.

288 LSJ s.v. *κῆδος* 'glory, renown, esp. in war'. For the context to this passage also see the section the "Background" of the scene.

289 But see also the metaphorical cranes, geese and swans in SCENE 2 and interpretation. Janko points out that an attacking warrior is often likened to an eagle or hawk chasing birds or other prey and refers to *Il.* 16.582f., 17.460, 21.252f., 22.308–310. Janko 1992, 303. Jones regards the eagle in the scene as a simile that is commonly used of warriors on the attack and refers to 16.582–583 and 17.460. Jones 2003, 221.

290 See SCENE 35 where an eagle is also described as the bird that is dearest to Zeus.

291 See in particular SCENE 9 and 35. West suggests that the geese, cranes and swans "ought to represent the mass of helpless warriors on whom Hector swoops" and that these are replaced by a ship on line 15–633. West 2011, 311.

292 Janko argues for the parallel between the birds and the ships in a convincing way. According to him the "long-necked birds evoke the ships' thin curved prows and sterns." He refers to *Il.* 15.716–717 and points out that Geometric vase painters often put such a bird by the ends of a ship, as if to make this comparison. He adds that "again a simile probably had a Geometric background, although LHIIIC vase-painters certainly knew the Sea-Peoples' bird-headed ships." Janko 1992, 303. Concerning the Sea People's ships, Wachsmann refers to the iconographic evidence of Ramses III's relief at Medinet Habu dated to ca. 1176 BC. That scene is instructive for ship-based warfare before the introduction of the ram as a nautical weapon. The ships' sterns resemble birds' heads. Wachsmann 1998, 166–173.



Hector's intention at this moment combined with the hunting technique of an eagle and the natural behaviours of the gregarious birds, it makes sense. Hector wants to set the Achaean ships on fire and he has to start with one of them. Hector's war tactics thus correspond to the hunting technique of an eagle that chooses one individual prey among the masses of birds. We know from lines 15.704–706 that the individual ship that Hector chose was that of Protesilaus,<sup>293</sup> but is it possible to identify one individual bird among the flocks of geese, cranes and swans as the eagle's victim? As seen the ship is described as *dark-prowed* (15.693).<sup>294</sup> If one considers the species of birds that have been suggested one representative is more apt than the others for such description. The Crane is the only of the three that is dark grey on the chin, throat and foreneck (ending abruptly two-thirds down the neck), which makes a possible parallel to the dark prow of Protesilaus' ship.<sup>295</sup> Even if the question must remain open, I find that we at least have to consider such an association.<sup>296</sup>

### Scene 20 – *Il.* 16.419–443

419 Σαρπηδὼν δ' ὡς οὖν ἴδ' ἀμιτροχίτωνας ἐταίρους  
420 χέρσ' ὑπὸ Πατρόκλοιο Μενoitιάδαο δαμέντας,  
421 κέκλετ' ἄρ' ἀντιθέοισι καθαρπτόμενος Λυκίοισιν·  
422 “αἰδῶς ὦ Λύκιοι· πόσε φεύγετε; νῦν θοοὶ ἔσθε·  
423 ἀντήσω γὰρ ἐγὼ τοῦδ' ἀνέρος, ὄφρα δαείω  
424 ὅς τις ὄδε κρατεεῖ καὶ δὴ κακὰ πολλὰ ἔοργε  
425 Τρώας, ἐπεὶ πολλῶν τε καὶ ἐσθλῶν γούνατ' ἔλυσεν.”

426 Ἥ ῥα, καὶ ἐξ ὀχέων σὺν τεύχεσιν ἄλτο χαμᾶζε.  
427 Πάτροκλος δ' ἐτέρωθεν ἐπεὶ ἴδεν ἔκθορε δίφρου.  
428 οἱ δ' ὡς τ' αἰγυπιοὶ γαμφύωνυχες ἀγκυλοχεῖλαι  
429 πέτρῃ ἐφ' ὑψηλῇ μεγάλα κλάζοντε μάχωνται,  
430 ὡς οἱ κεκλήγοντες ἐπ' ἀλλήλοισιν ὄρουσαν.  
431 τοὺς δὲ ἴδων ἐλέησε Κρόνου πάϊς ἀγκυλομήτεω,  
432 Ἥρην δὲ προσέειπε κασιγνήτην ἄλοχόν τε·  
433 “ὦ μοι ἐγὼν, ὅ τέ μοι Σαρπηδόνα φίλτατον ἀνδρῶν,  
434 μοῖρ' ὑπὸ Πατρόκλοιο Μενoitιάδαο δαμῆναι.  
435 διχθὰ δέ μοι κραδίη μέμονε φρεσὶν ὀρμαίνοντι,  
436 ἥ μιν ζῶν ἔοντα μάχης ἄπο δακρυόεσσης  
437 θείω ἀναρπάξας Λυκίης ἐν πίοιι δήμῳ,  
438 ἥ ἦρδ' ὑπὸ χερσὶ Μενoitιάδαο δαμάσσω.”

*But when Sarpedon saw his comrades who wear the tunic beltless being vanquished at the hands of Patroclus, son of Menoetius, he called aloud, reproaching the godlike Lycians: “Shame, Lycians, where are you fleeing? Now be swift to fight; for I myself will meet this man so that I may know who this person is who so prevails, and who has done the Trojans much harm, since he has loosed the knees of men many and noble.”*

*He spoke, and leapt in his armor from his chariot to the ground. And Patroclus opposite him sprang from his chariot when he saw him. And as vultures crooked of talon and curved of beak fight with loud cries upon a high rock, so with cries they rushed against one another. And the son of crooked-counseling Cronos took pity when he saw them, and spoke to Hera, his sister and his wife: “Ah, woe is me, since it is fated that Sarpedon, dearest of men to me, be vanquished by Patroclus, son of Menoetius! And my heart is divided in counsel as I ponder in my thought whether I shall snatch him up while yet he lives and set him afar from the tearful war in the rich land of Lycia, or whether I shall let him be vanquished now at the hands of the son of Menoetius.”*

293 *Il.* 15.716–719. Janko notes that Homer does not identify the ship as Protesilaus' until line 15.705, as if a sudden inspiration and that line 15.706 is an allusion to Protesilaos death, which makes the loss of his ship something that cannot disgrace him. Janko 1992, 304.

294 LSJ s.v. *κτανόπρωρος* 'dark-prowed, of ships, *Il.* 15.693, 23.852'.

295 Cramp & Simmons 1980, 618.

296 See also *Il.* 17.716–717 which gives a detailed description of Hector when he grasped Protesilaus' ship by the stern and would not loosen his hold but kept the stern post in his hands. In this situation Hector could easily and accurately have been described as a metaphorical Golden Eagle that with its talons and sharp claws had laid hold of the neck of a Crane without letting the crane get away.

THE BIRDS IN THE *ILIAD*

439 Τὸν δ' ἠμείβετ' ἔπειτα βοῶπις πότνια Ἥρη·      *Then ox-eyed queenly Hera answered him: "Most*  
 440 αἰνότατε Κρονίδη ποῖον τὸν μῦθον ἔειπες.      *dread son of Cronos, what a word have you said! Are you*  
 441 ἄνδρα θνητὸν εἶντα πάλαι πεπρωμένον αἴσῃ,      *minded to free from dolorous death a mortal man, one*  
 442 ἂψ ἐθέλεις θανάτοιο δυσσηχέος ἐξαναλῦσαι;      *doomed long since by fate? Do it: but be sure we other*  
 443 ἔρδ'· ἀτὰρ οὐ τοι πάντες ἐπαινέομεν θεοὶ ἄλλοι.      *gods do not all assent to it.*

(*Il.* 16.419–443)

**Background**

Hector held the stern of Protesilaus' ship and the Trojans and Achaeans were slaying each other in close combat around this ship. When Hector grasped the ship by the stern he asked the Trojans to bring fire to the ships. Aias then urged the Achaeans on and wounded twelve men in close fight.<sup>297</sup> When song 16 starts Patroclus came crying to Achilles and asked him not to be angry, for great sorrow was upon the Achaeans. He asked Achilles to send him out speedily to war and to lend him his armour and Achilles agreed. Then the Trojans set the ship on fire and when Achilles saw the flames he sent Patroclus out to do battle. Patroclus armed himself and went away with Automedon, who drove the chariot with Achilles' two immortal horses Xanthus and Balius. Achilles then prayed to Zeus and asked him to send glory with Patroclus and to let him come back when he had driven the Trojans away from the ships. Zeus heard him and granted him one desire but refused him the other. The Trojans were shaken when they saw Patroclus in Achilles' armour. The Achaeans drove them from the ships. Aias was eager to challenge Hector but was busy saving his comrades. Hector left the men of Troy and Patroclus followed after. Patroclus then slew many Trojans close to the ships.<sup>298</sup>

**Analysis**

Aspects	Scene 20 – <i>Il.</i> 16.419–443
<b>Ornithology</b>	
Greek bird reference	<i>αἰγυπιός</i> (16.428)
Lexica	LSJ s.v. 'vulture, <i>αἰ.</i> γαμφώνυχες ἀγκυλοχεῖλαι <i>Il.</i> 16.428, cf. 17.460' Cunliffe s.v. 'App. a general name for eagles and vultures.'
Behaviour and characteristics	<i>Αἰγυπιοί</i> with crooked talons and curved beaks fight with each other with loud cries upon a high rock.
Time context	Unspecific

<sup>297</sup> *Il.* 15.696–15.746.

<sup>298</sup> *Il.* 16.1–16.418.

THE BIRD SCENES

Aspects	Scene 20 – Il. 16.419–443
<b>Ornithology</b>	
Spatial context	Upon a high rock.
Ornithological accuracy	High
Suggested taxonomic status	A vulture, possibly the Lammergeier, <i>Gypaetus barbatus</i>
<b>Form</b>	Metaphorical
<b>Interactions</b>	
Birds and birds	<i>Αἰγυπιοί</i> with crooked talons and curved beaks fight with each other, uttering loud cries upon a high rock.
Birds and other animals	-
Birds and humans	Describe Patroclus and King Sarpedon in a Lammergeier-like parallel way when in arms* <sup>1</sup> and with cries they rushed against each other in close combat. The “vulture-metaphor” indicates that there was something unusual about the two warriors at this moment.
Birds and gods	Zeus and possibly Hera* <sup>2</sup> watched the event that took place.
<b>Functions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vulture-specific metaphorical parallels that describe Patroclus and King Sarpedon when they rushed against each other in close combat.</li> <li>• Bring information about Patroclus and Sarpedon at that moment.</li> <li>• Mark that they rushed aggressively against each other.</li> <li>• Emphasise that they were shouting.</li> <li>• Mark that they soon clashed in violent and equally matched close combat.</li> <li>• Mark their status as equally strong and skilled warriors.</li> <li>• Give their activities and states a kind of wild, avian character.</li> <li>• Signal that there was something unusual and more-than-human about them at this moment which may be a result of double motivation.</li> </ul>

\*<sup>1</sup> Il. 16.426. Also see Il. 16.466; 477.

\*<sup>2</sup> Il. 16.339–457.

## Comments and interpretation

### *Ornithology and form*

The *αἰγυπιοί* appear in metaphorical forms. The scene describes the first stages of close combat on the ground between King Sarpedon and Patroclus when Patroclus wears Achilles armour. Since the two warriors rushed towards each other as *αἰγυπιοί*, I suggest

that the *αἰγυπιοί* signify two birds of the same kind.<sup>299</sup> The scene tells us that *αἰγυπιοί* are *crooked of talon and curved of beak* (16.428) and that they *fight with loud cries upon a high rock* (16.429–430). The birds in this scene are thus associated with intraspecific encounters on high rocks where the birds scream as they rush at each other.

There are skirmishes, aggression, and ranking order among vultures of different species and within the same species: on such occasions vultures use their claws, beaks and wings. The Lammergeier is essentially known as a raptor living in high mountains and wilderness. This species is known to be generally non-aggressive apart from alleged predatory attacks or attacks on conspecific intruders and other large birds of prey, including the Golden Eagle.<sup>300</sup> Negro et al., however, reports on agonistic encounters over food. During these “fights” the head and neck feathers stand up and the individuals swing their heads, while remaining face to face.<sup>301</sup> I have not found any reports of Lammergeiers that have killed each other during these fights and none that state whether they are vocal in such encounters. The ornithological references say that this species is usually silent except during aerial displays at breeding sites where they utter a shrill, loud whistling notes or a trill.<sup>302</sup> To sum up, the descriptions of the birds seem correct in most aspects and show a high ornithological accuracy: I suggest the Lammergeier for the vultures in the scene.<sup>303</sup>

#### *Interactions and functions in the scene*

Since both Patroclus and Sarpedon are described as *αἰγυπιοί* this identification indicates that they were equally strong and skilled warriors at this moment, and the birds further mark their status as warriors.<sup>304</sup> The *αἰγυπιοί* are *fighting upon a high rock* (16.429) where the spatial reference may also mark the pre-eminence and equality of these two warriors.<sup>305</sup>

I further agree with Janko who suggests that the overt point of comparison is the din the warriors make while charging,<sup>306</sup> but I would like to add that the Lammergeiers

299 According to Janko Sarpedon and Patroclus are likened to two great birds of prey. Janko 1992, 373. Also see Pollard who identifies this bird as the Lammergeier, Pollard 1977, 79–80, 203, note 21 and 24, and 79 and 79, 203, note 21. Also see Thompson 1936, 25–27, and Keller 1913, 27–30. For *αἰγυπιός* in ancient sources see also Arnott 2007, 6–7.

300 Cramp & Simmons 1980, 61, 63.

301 Negro et.al., 1999, 15.

302 Svensson & Grant 2006, 71. See also Cramp & Simmons 1980, 62

303 Also see Boraston who thought that *αἰγυπιός* was a vulture-like bird associated with *γύψ*. He suggested that it was a Lammergeier, *Gypaetus barbatus*. Boraston 1911, 216, 230–232. Also see Voultziadou & Tatolas who suggest Lammergeier. Voultziadou & Tatolas 2008, 307.

304 Also see Janko who comments that Patroclus and Sarpedon are well-matched warriors and that Sarpedon is Patroclus’ “first adversary of equal calibre.” Janko 1992, 373–374.

305 Janko suggests that the vultures fighting on a high cliff recall how Sarpedon and Patroclus excel the rest in valour. Janko 1992, 373–374.

306 Janko 1992, 374. For a similar interpretation see Jones 2003, 231. Edwards emphasises the screeching of the fighting birds in the simile and the battle cries of Sarpedon and Patroclus in the narrative. Edwards 1991, 31.

due to their natural behaviours in encounters also indicate the aggression between Patroclus and Sarpedon at this moment. I also agree with Janko that the talons and beaks of the birds signal mutual danger,<sup>307</sup> and suggest that they can plausibly be associated with Patroclus' and Sarpedon's weapons when rushing against each other. Sarpedon's armor is mentioned already in the scene, see 16.426, and his spear is mentioned again in *Il.* 16.466 and 16.477, while Patroclus' spear is mentioned in *Il.* 16.504. Neither of the two warriors however killed the other in the scene, which is well-matched by encounters between two Lammergeiers. The balance of strength soon change, however, as we shall see.

When Patroclus and Sarpedon rushed against each other as screeching Lammergeiers they behaved partly as birds in action and emotion. I would like to suggest that the *αἰγυπιοί* signal that Patroclus and Sarpedon temporarily exceeded their human limits and that their unusual activities can be understood as a result of double motivation. The poet, however, does not reveal any further details except for informing that Zeus, and possibly also Hera,<sup>308</sup> saw Sarpedon and Patroclus at the moment they rushed against each other. When Zeus spoke to Hera he said, *And my heart is divided in counsel as I ponder in my thought whether I shall snatch him up while yet he lives and set him afar from the tearful war (...) or whether I shall let him be vanquished now at the hands of the son of Menoetius* (16.435–438). The temporary equality in strength between Patroclus and Sarpedon can perhaps be viewed as a reflection of Zeus' ambivalence and agony regarding Sarpedon's fate. Sarpedon was Zeus' son and he did not want him to die even if Fate has so ordained. Hera's answer to Zeus is full of reproach. She asked him, *Are you minded to free from dolorous death a mortal man, one doomed long since by fate?* (16.440–442). Hera continued to speak to Zeus and later she said, *But if he is dear to you and your heart is grieved, then allow him to be vanquished in the mighty combat at the hands of Patroclus* (*Il.* 16.450–452). Zeus obeyed Hera and showing honour to his dear son he shed bloody rain drops on earth (*Il.* 16.485–461). It did not take long then until the balance of strength between Patroclus and Sarpedon changed. Patroclus wounded Sarpedon badly, probably also a result of Zeus' will (*Il.* 16.458–484). Zeus had nothing to set against Fate, at least not with Hera at his side watching, and since he had no choice, he could not save Sarpedon's life even if he had wanted to.<sup>309</sup> Patroclus then struck Sarpedon a mortal blow and is at this moment metaphorically paralleled to *a lion that comes upon a herd and slays a bull* (*Il.* 16.487–491). In *Il.* 16. 502–503 Sarpedon dies.

307 Janko 1992, 274.

308 See *Il.* 16.431–432.

309 According to Willcock Zeus is responsible for all that happens in the world, and so he frequently fulfils what is fated. Fate seems to be limited to death and finality, the death of an individual or the destruction of a city. Willcock 1978, 221. See also West 2011, 322.

Scene 21 – *Il.* 16.581–592

581 Πατρόκλιφ δ' ἄρ' ἄχος γένετο φθιμένου ἐτάροιο,  
 582 Ἴφυσεν δὲ διὰ προμάχων ἴρῃκι εἰοικῶς  
 583 ὠκέϊ, ὅς τ' ἐφόβησε κολοιούς τε ψῆράς τε·  
 584 ὡς ἰδύς Λυκίων Πατρόκλεες ἰπποκέλευθε,  
 585 ἔσσυο καὶ Τρώων, κεχόλωσο δὲ κῆρ ἐτάροιο.  
 586 καὶ ῥ' ἔβαλε Σθενέλαον Ἰθαιμένεος φίλον υἱόν,  
 587 αὐχένα χερμαδίφ, ῥῆξεν δ' ἀπὸ τοῖο τένοντας.  
 588 χώρησαν δ' ὑπὸ τε πρόμαχοι καὶ φαιδιμος Ἴκτωρ.  
 589 ὄσση δ' αἰγανέης ῥίπῃ ταναοῖο τέτυκται,  
 590 ἦν ῥά τ' ἀνῆρ ἀφέη πειρώμενος ἢ ἐν ἀέθλω  
 591 ἦε καὶ ἐν πολέμῳ δῆϊών ὑπο θυμοραϊστέων,  
 592 τόσσον ἐχώρησαν Τρώες, ὥσαντο δ' Ἀχαιοί.

*Then*  
 over Patroclus came grief for his slain comrade and he  
 charged through the foremost fighters like a fleet **falcon**  
 that drives in flight daws and starlings; so straight against  
 the Lycians did you, Patroclus, master of horsemen,  
 charge and against the Trojans, and your heart was full of  
 anger for your comrade. And he struck Sthenelaus, the  
 dear son of Ithaimenes, on the neck with a stone, and  
 broke the sinews away from it; and the foremost fighters  
 and glorious Hector gave ground. Far as is the flight of a  
 long javelin that a man cast, making trial of his strength in  
 a contest, perhaps, or even in war when he is pressed by  
 murderous enemies, so far did the Trojans draw back, and  
 the Achaeans drove them.

(Il. 16.581–592)

## Background

Glaucus was greatly grieved when he understood that King Sarpedon was dead. He was wounded himself and prayed to Apollo to heal him and give him strength to protect Sarpedon's body. Apollo heard him, healed his wound, and put courage and strength in his heart. Glaucus recognised Apollo's help and urged the Lycians to fight for Sarpedon. He then accused Hector of being forgetful of the allies and informed him that Sarpedon was killed by Patroclus. At that Hector led the Trojans against the Achaeans, who tried to take Sarpedon's armour and body to mangle it. When the two armies clashed, Zeus drew a destructive darkness over the mighty combat. First the Trojans drove back the Achaeans and Hector killed a Myrmidon, Epeigeus, with a stone. Epeigeus fell on his face on Sarpedon's corpse.<sup>310</sup>

## Analysis

Aspects	Scene 21 – <i>Il.</i> 16.581–592
<b>Ornithology</b>	
Greek bird reference	ἴρῃξ (16.582) κολοιός (16.583) ψῆρ (16.583)
Lexica	LSJ s.v. ἴρῃξ 'hawk, falcon, ...Il.13.62, cf. 819' Cunliffe s.v. 'A bird of the falcon kind, a falcon or hawk' LSJ s.v. κολοιός 'jackdaw, <i>Corvus monedula</i> , Il.16.583, 17.755' Cunliffe s.v. 'a jackdaw' LSJ s.v. ψῆρ 'Ion. ψῆρ ...starling, <i>Sturnus vulgaris</i> ...Il.17.755 ...16.583' Cunliffe s.v. ψῆρ, ψῆρ 'a starling'

310 *Il.* 16.502–16.580.

THE BIRD SCENES

Aspects	Scene 21 – <i>Il.</i> 16.581–592
<p><b>Ornithology</b></p> <p>Lexica</p> <p>Behaviour and characteristics</p> <p>Time context</p> <p>Spatial context</p> <p>Ornithological accuracy</p> <p>Suggested taxonomic status</p>	<p>LSJ s.v. ψάρο ‘Ion. ψήρ ...starling, <i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>...<i>Il.</i>17.755 ...16.583’ Cunliffe s.v. ψάρο, ψήρ ‘a starling’</p> <p>ἰρῆξι/κολοιός/ψήρ: A swift bird of prey that drives daws and starlings into flight. An individual hunter of other birds in groups. It is indicated that all birds fly when the former hunts the latter.</p> <p>ἰρῆξι/κολοιός/ψήρ: Unspecific</p> <p>ἰρῆξι/κολοιός/ψήρ: Up in the air.</p> <p>ἰρῆξι/κολοιός/ψήρ: High</p> <p>ἰρῆξι: Peregrine, <i>Falco peregrinus</i> κολοιός: Eurasian Jackdaw, <i>Corvus monedula</i> ψήρ: Common Starling, <i>Sturnus vulgaris</i></p>
<p><b>Form</b></p>	<p>ἰρῆξι/κολοιός/ψήρ: Metaphorical</p>
<p><b>Interactions</b></p> <p>Birds and birds</p> <p>Birds and other animals</p> <p>Birds and humans</p> <p>Birds and gods</p>	<p>ἰρῆξι/κολοιός/ψήρ: Hierarchies: a hunter and its presumptive prey.</p> <p>ἰρῆξι: - κολοιός/ψήρ: -</p> <p>ἰρῆξι: Describes Patroclus in a falcon-like way when he quickly and with precision charged through and straight against the foremost fighters among the Lycians and the Trojans. The “falcon metaphor” indicates that there was something unusual about Patroclus at this moment.</p> <p>κολοιός/ψήρ: Describe in a daw- and starling-like way the foremost fighters of the Lycians and Trojans when they were driven into flight by Patroclus.</p> <p>ἰρῆξι: No god is mentioned in the scene but I suggest that Patroclus’ unusual charge may partly be a result of powers given from Zeus.</p> <p>κολοιός/ψήρ: -</p>
<p><b>Functions</b></p>	<p>ἰρῆξι:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A falcon-specific metaphorical parallel that describes Patroclus when he charged straight through and against the foremost fighters among the Lycians and Trojans.</li> <li>• Brings information about him and his attack at this moment.</li> <li>• Shows the high speed, precision and power in his attack.</li> <li>• Shows his dominance, superiority and status as a warrior.</li> <li>• Indicates that Zeus made Achilles’ first wish concerning Patroclus (as reported in <i>Il.</i> 16.234–248) come true.</li> </ul>

Aspects	Scene 21 – <i>Il.</i> 16.581–592
<b>Functions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emphasises his aggression and indicates that he was intending to kill one of them.</li> <li>• Gives his activities and states a kind of wild, avian hunter-character.</li> <li>• Signals that there was something unusual and more-than-human about Patroclus at this moment which may be a result of double motivation.</li> </ul> <p><i>κολοιός/ψήη:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Daws- and Starling-specific metaphorical parallels that describe the foremost fighters among the Lycians and the Trojans at the moment when they were driven in flight by Patroclus.</li> <li>• Bring information about them and their fleeing at this moment.</li> <li>• Indicate that they fled in one mixed group.</li> <li>• Show them as targets for Patroclus' attack.</li> <li>• Show their inferiority and status and ability as warriors.</li> <li>• Indicate their panic and fear for Patroclus.</li> <li>• Give their activities and states a kind of wild, avian prey-character.</li> <li>• Signal that there was something unusual about them at this moment. Their reactions may have been evoked by the fact that they observed that there was something unusual and more-than-human about Patroclus.</li> </ul>

### Comments and interpretation

#### *Ornithology and form*

ἴρηνξ

The ἴρηνξ appears in metaphorical form. It is described as *a fleet falcon that drives in flight daws and starlings* (16.582–583). The focus is thus on this bird's speed and dominance over the other birds. It is further a threat to them. Scholars have made different interpretations of the ἴρηνξ in the scene. Thompson, Janko and Jones suggest “hawk”, and Boraston “falcon”.<sup>311</sup>

As has been argued, the Peregrine is the fastest flying bird of prey with its stoop estimated to 160-410 km per hour.<sup>312</sup> It feeds almost entirely on living birds and hunts and kills Eurasian Jackdaws, *Corvus monedula* and Common Starlings, *Sturnus vulgaris*. When a Peregrine is hunting it causes spectacular panic in any large bird community.<sup>313</sup> Since ἴρηνξ in the other scenes in the *Iliad* seem to refer to falcons rather than hawks, I suggest that the ἴρηνξ in this scene most likely also signifies a falcon and more specifically a Peregrine.

<sup>311</sup> Thompson 1936, 114–118, Janko 1992, 388, Jones 2003, 233, Boraston 1911, 225. Pollard suggests Sparrow Hawk but is uncertain about the identification. Pollard 1977, 81. See also Arnott 2007, 66–68. Voultziadou & Tatolas suggest that ἴεραξ and κίρκος in Homer is a Peregrine. Voultziadou & Tatolas 2008, 307. For falcons in ancient sources, see also Keller 1913, 13–26.

<sup>312</sup> Cramp & Simmons 1980, 366. See also Génsbøl 1995, 384.

<sup>313</sup> Cramp & Simmons 1980, 362, 366–367.



*κολοιός and ψήρ*

The *κολοιός* and *ψήρ* appear in metaphorical forms. They are described as fleeing in a group, which emphasises their gregarious habits.<sup>314</sup> The Eurasian Jackdaws and the Common Starlings often join in the same flocks when feeding, which gives a realistic ornithological background to the scene.<sup>315</sup> Since the Peregrine hunts Eurasian Jackdaws and Common Starlings,<sup>316</sup> I find that these two species fit in the scene.<sup>317</sup>

*Interactions and functions in the scene**ἴρηξ*

The *fleet falcon* (21.582) indicates that Patroclus charged against the foremost fighters among the Lycians and Trojans very quickly. The falcon further emphasises that he is a wild and aggressive hunter-warrior. We do not know whether he went by chariot or on foot. The last time Patroclus was mentioned he killed Sarpedon and at that moment he was fighting on the ground.<sup>318</sup> Later in the action, in *Il.* 16.684, it is said that Patroclus was in his chariot.<sup>319</sup> I find it more likely that Patroclus in the scene under discussion charged against the Lycians and Trojans by foot since the fightings around Sarpedon's corpse seems to take place on the ground and not from a chariot. Since no human under normal conditions can run as fast as a falcon flies, it seems that the falcon indicates that there is something unusual and more-than-human about him at this moment. I would like to suggest that he could run as swift as a falcon because of his great grief and because he was also temporarily influenced and motivated by a god who was Zeus. We know from an earlier event at *Il.* 16.234–248 that Achilles made libations and asked Zeus to send out glory with Patroclus so that Hector would know that even Achilles' attendant was a skilful fighter, and would let him come back to the ships. In the *Iliad* it is honourable for a warrior to be described as a bird of prey, and I would like to suggest that the falcon metaphor indicates here that Zeus made Achilles' first wish come true.<sup>320</sup> In the next bird scene, SCENE 22, we will see that Achilles' second wish was not fulfilled by Zeus.

Together the Peregrine and the jacks and the starlings indicate the hierarchies and

314 Thompson emphasises that starlings are always coupled with jackdaws in Homer. Thompson 1936, 335.

315 Cramp & Perrins 1994, 128, 243.

316 Cramp & Simmons 1980, 366–367.

317 Thompson refers to the Eurasian Jackdaw, *Corvus monedula* and the Common Starling, *Sturnus vulgaris*. Thompson 1936, 155–158 (daw), 334–335 (starling). Pollard suggests Jackdaws and Starlings or Rose-coloured Starlings, *Sturnus roseus*. Pollard 1977, 27. I do not find any reports however that Rose-coloured Starlings join flocks with Eurasian Jackdaws. Boraston suggests the Jackdaw and the Spotless Starling, *Sturnus unicolor* and the Common Starling. Boraston 1911, 225–226. The Spotless Starling occurs only in the west Mediterranean range, however. Cramp & Perrins 1994, 260; Johnsson 1992, 484. Voultziadou & Tatolas suggest that *κολοιός* is the Jackdaw and *ψήρ* the Starling. Voultziadou & Tatolas 2008, 307–308. See also Arnott 2007, 104–105 (daw), 199 (starling).

318 *Il.* 16.502–507.

319 In *Il.* 16. 733 Patroclus leapt from his chariot to the ground to face Hector.

320 For the whole earlier passage see *Il.* 16.249–252. I have seen in other bird scenes in the *Iliad* as well, where there are connections between human wishes in prayers and human characters who in the *Iliad* are described as birds for a moment of time, see for example SCENE 19 (Hector) and SCENE 25 (Aeneas and Hector).

actual balance of power at this moment *between* Patroclus and the foremost fighters among the Trojans and Lycians. The fact that the falcon drives daws and starlings into flight indicates that it/Patroclus was intending to kill one of them = a starling or daw/a Trojan or Lycian.<sup>321</sup> The result of Patroclus' charge was that he killed Sthenelaus and at that, *the foremost fighters and glorious Hector gave ground* (*Il.* 6.586–588).

*κολοιός and ψήρ*

Compared to the falcon, the daws and starlings have more passive roles. Since daws and starlings often are found in the same flocks, they possibly indicate that the foremost fighters of the Lycians and Trojans fled in one mixed group, which in such a case adds information about the military organisation of the Trojan troops. The daws and starlings further mark the warriors as targets for Patroclus' charge. Since both daws and starlings are mentioned as are both Lycian and Trojan fighters, there may be an idea here of a more specific matching. Since daws are bigger than starlings it is possible that they represent the foremost fighters among the Lycians *or* the Trojans. The daws are mentioned close to the Lycians in the text which perhaps indicates that they are associated with the Lycians, and the starlings with the Trojans. Daws and starlings that flee from a Peregrine are further panicked which also says something important about the emotional states of the warriors who are fleeing. It is possible that they fled when they saw with what extra-human speed Patroclus charged against them. Because of this they also behaved in an unusual way. Even if they were highly skilled warriors, they perhaps realised that they could not stop Patroclus at this moment.

**Scene 22 – *Il.* 16.830–842**

830 "Πάτροκλ' ἢ που ἔφησθα πόλιν κεραιζέμεν ἀμύν,  
831 Τρωϊάδας δὲ γυναῖκας ἐλεύθερον ἡμαρ ἀπούρας  
832 ἄξειν ἐν νήεσσι φίλην ἐς πατρίδα γαῖαν,  
833 νήπιε· τᾶων δὲ πρόσθ' Ἐκτορος ὠκέες ἵπποι  
834 ποσσὶν ὀρωρέχονται πολεμίζειν· ἔγχεϊ δ' αὐτὸς  
835 Τρωσὶ φίλοπτολέμοισι μεταπρέπω, ὃ σφιν ἀμύνω  
836 ἡμαρ ἀναγκαῖον· σὲ δέ τ' ἐνθάδε γῦπες ἔδονται.  
837 ἂ δαίλ', οὐδέ τοι ἐσθλὸς ἐὼν χραίσμησεν Ἀχιλλεύς,  
838 ὅς πού τοι μάλα πολλὰ μένων ἐπετέλλετ' ἰόντι·  
839 μή μοι πρὶν ἰέναι Πατρόκληες ἵπποκέλευθε,  
840 νῆας ἔπι γλαφυρὰς πρὶν Ἐκτορος ἀνδροφόνιο  
841 αἰματόεντα χιτῶνα περὶ στήθεσσι δαΐξαι.  
842 ὡς πού σε προσέφη, σοὶ δὲ φρένας ἄφροني πείθε·"

*"Patroclus, you said,  
I imagine, that you would sack our city, and would take the  
day of freedom from the women of Troy and carry them in  
your ships to your dear native land – you fool! In front of  
them the swift horses of Hector stride out to fight, and with  
the spear I myself am preeminent among the war-loving  
Trojans, I who ward from them the day of doom; but as for  
you, vultures shall devour you here. Ah, poor wretch, even  
Achilles, for all his valor, protected you not, who, I imag-  
ine, through himself remaining behind, gave strict com-  
mands to you as you went out; 'Come not back, I charge  
you, Patroclus, master of horsemen, to the hollow ships, till  
you have cleft man-slaying Hector's tunic about his chest  
and stained it with his blood.' So, I imagine, he spoke to  
you, and persuaded your senses in your senselessness."*

(*Il.* 16.830–842)

321 According to Janko the ἴσηξ emphasises deadly speed. Janko 1992, 388.

### Background

After Patroclus' swift and powerful charge at the foremost fighters of the Lycian and Trojan warriors, Glaucus was the first leader who again dared to attack the Achaeans. He killed one man and Meriones slew one Trojan. The warriors still thronged about King Sarpedon's corpse, which was now covered with weapons and blood. Zeus, who watched it all from above, debated about the slaying of Patroclus: whether Hector should slay Patroclus there and then or whether he should wait a little more. In Hector first of all Zeus then *roused cowardly rout, and he leapt on his chariot and turned to flight, and called on the rest of the Trojans to flee; for he recognized the holy scales of Zeus* (*Il.* 16.656–658). The Lycians were also driven to flight and the Achaeans could strip the armour from Sarpedon and take it to the ships.

Zeus then spoke to Apollo and asked him to take Sarpedon's body from the battlefield, cleanse him, and give him to the twin brothers Sleep and Death, who would take him to Lycia. Patroclus continued to press after the Trojans and Lycians but before he was to meet his fate Zeus filled his heart with courage. Patroclus then slew many Trojans and rushed against the Trojan wall, but at that, Apollo intervened and stopped him. At the Scaean Gate Hector was of two minds. In the likeness of Asius, Apollo persuaded Hector to face Patroclus by saying that Apollo would give him glory. Then Apollo caused great panic among the Achaeans and granted glory to the Trojans and Hector. Facing each other Patroclus leapt from his chariot to the ground with a spear in his left hand and a stone in his right.

He struck Hector's charioteer Cebriones with a stone and rushed against Hector like a lion. At that Hector leapt from his chariot and the two of them clashed like two lions fighting over a slain hind, both being eager, both hungering and both brave of heart. Other Trojans and Achaeans also met each other in destructive combat over Cebriones' body. The Achaeans finally dragged Cebriones off the battlefield and stripped his armour. Patroclus then rushed thrice on the Trojans and slew nine men but when he rushed on them the fourth time, his life ended. He then met Apollo in combat but without seeing him. When Hector saw Patroclus drawing back he thrust his spear at him. Patroclus fell and lost his (Achilles) helmet which Zeus for a while granted to Hector. When Patroclus was dying Hector was boasting and spoke to him.<sup>322</sup>

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<sup>322</sup> *Il.* 16. 593–829.

## Analysis

Aspects	Scene 22 – II. 16.830–842
<b>Ornithology</b>	
Greek bird reference	γύψ (16.836)
Lexica	LSJ s.v. ‘vulture, prob. including several species, 22.42’ Cunliffe s.v. ‘a vulture (except in λ578 always preying on carrion. Cf. αἰγυπιός)’
Behaviour and characteristics	Collective behaviours. Shall feed on a human corpse. Scavengers.
Time context	Future
Spatial context	Associated with the Scamander Plain.
Ornithological accuracy	High
Suggested taxonomic status	Griffon Vulture, <i>Gyps fulvus</i> , Black Vulture, <i>Aegypius monachus</i> and Egyptian Vulture, <i>Neophron percnopterus</i> .
<b>Form</b>	Image
<b>Interactions</b>	
Birds and birds	Collective behaviours. Vultures that shall feed on a human corpse.
Birds and other animals	-
Birds and humans	Will feed on Patroclus corpse. Hector used the vultures as images in a speech that prophesied about the coming mutilation of Patroclus’ body.
Birds and gods	-
<b>Functions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vulture image that describes and predicts the future.</li> <li>• Hector used the “vulture image” in a speech and prophecy as a way to boast over his own preeminence and Patroclus’ loss and inferiority, and as a way to verbally threaten an enemy in war.</li> <li>• Predicts that Patroclus’ corpse will be devoured by vultures.</li> <li>• Implies wild aggression and violent treatment of a fallen warrior’s corpse.</li> <li>• Implies that Patroclus’ corpse will not be taken care of and buried according to traditions.</li> <li>• Implies horrifying and tragic consequence of human war.</li> <li>• Possibly also associate with the warriors who will glut their spears with human flesh, i.e., to human and not vulture-like mutilation of a warrior’s corpse.</li> </ul>

## Comments and interpretation

### *Ornithology and form*

The vultures appear in image form in a prediction. The ornithological description of the birds is restricted to one phrase: *vultures shall devour you here* (16.836). The description evokes an image of a group of vultures that would soon surround Patroclus’ corpse.

From an ornithological point of view the description is apt since vultures collectively feed on human corpses. As argued I agree with the scholars Thompson, Boraston and Pollard, all of whom suggest that three species of vultures are used in Homer: the Griffon Vulture, the Black Vulture, and the Egyptian Vulture, especially since these three species are all specialized in feeding on carrion.<sup>323</sup>

*Interactions and functions in the scene*

Hector used the vultures as images in a speech where he prophesied about vultures which he said would devour Patroclus. He used the “vulture image” as a way to boast over his own preeminence and Patroclus’ loss and it can be seen as a verbal threat to an enemy in war who is just about to die.<sup>324</sup> The implication of such vulture behaviour is a mutilation of a human body.<sup>325</sup> It further means that Patroclus cannot be buried in a proper way and according to tradition,<sup>326</sup> which is a tragedy for Patroclus, his relatives and the Achaeans.

Apart from referring only to vultures, i.e., to the avian sphere, I would like to suggest a possibility that the vultures in the scene are associate with human warriors who will glut their spears with human flesh.<sup>327</sup> If we go forward in the action, Patroclus was not devoured by vultures at all. Instead his corpse was brought to the Achaean camp where Achilles arranged a honourable funeral for him. In the coming actions when Achilles had finally killed Hector with his spear, the Achaean warriors dealt Hector wounds, and then Achilles dragged Hector’s corpse behind the chariot so that it became even more mutilated.<sup>328</sup> In this way Hector’s prophecy came true but in a reverse and different way.<sup>329</sup>

323 Pollard 1977, 80; Thompson 1936, 82; Boraston 1911, 216, 239. Also see Keller, who added the Nubian Vulture. Keller 1913, 30–36. Arnott says that γούψ is a general name for ‘Vulture’. Arnott 2007, 60. Thompson pointed out that γούψ was usually used in Homer with the idea of feeding on carrion. Thompson 1936, 82. Also see Voultziadou & Tatalos who suggest Griffon Vulture, Voultziadou & Tatalos 2008, 307. For the habits and distributions of the suggested species see Cramp & Simmons 1977, 58–61, 64–67, 73–76, 89–91; Svensson & Grant 2006, 70–75.

324 Edwards comments that corpses to be eaten by vultures and dogs is a common motif in the *Iliad*, used for warnings, threats and taunts. Edwards 1991, 178. See also Griffin 1976, 169–172.

325 For the theme of the mutilation of the corpse in the *Iliad*, see Segal 1971.

326 See for example *Il.* 15.350–351.

327 See *Il.* 11.574 where spears are eager to glut themselves with flesh (*Il.* 11.574). Janko emphasises that warriors’ flesh is called ‘tender’ and ‘white’ at *Il.* 13.553; 11.573 = 15.316 and 14.440 (of Aias) and ‘soft’ at Meropis frag. 3.3.B. He discusses that such epithets contrast their flesh with the spear that hungers for it. Janko 1992, 147.

328 See *Il.* 22.317–375, 22.395–404 and 23.19–26.

329 Also see Willcock who discusses that the interchange in 16.830–863 is closely similar to that between Achilles and Hector in *Il.* 22.331–368 and a kind of foreshadowing of the later scene, with Hector proud here and the dying man there. Willcock 1984, 254. Also see Leaf 1900, 213; Jones 2003, 236.

Scene 23 – *Il.* 17.451–473

451 "...σφῶϊν δ' ἐν γούνεσσι βαλῶ μένος ἥδ' ἐνὶ θυμῷ,  
 452 ὄφρα καὶ Αὐτομέδοντα σαώσεται ἐκ πολέμοιο  
 453 νῆας ἐπι γλαφυράς· ἔτι γὰρ σφισι κῦδος ὀρέξω,  
 454 κτείνειν, εἰς ὃ κε νῆας εὖσσέλμους ἀφίκωνται  
 455 δῦη τ' ἠέλιος καὶ ἐπὶ κνέφας ἱερὸν ἔλθῃ."  
 456 Ὡς εἰπὼν ἵπποισιν ἐνέπνευσεν μένος ἥψ.  
 457 τῶ δ' ἀπὸ χαιτῶν κονίην οὐδας δὲ βαλόντε  
 458 ῥίμφα φέρον Δοὸν ἄρμα μετὰ Τρῳῶς καὶ Ἀχαιοῦς.  
 459 τοῖσι δ' ἐπ' Αὐτομέδων μάχετ' ἀχνύμενός περ ἑταῖρον,  
 460 ἵπποις ἀΐσσω ὡς τ' αἰγυπιὸς μετὰ χῆνας·  
 461 ῥέα μὲν γὰρ φεύγεσκεν ὑπ' ἐκ Τρῳῶν ὄρμαμαθοῦ,  
 462 ῥεῖα δ' ἐπαῖξασκε πολὺν καδ' ὄμιλον ὀπάζων.  
 463 ἀλλ' οὐχ ἦρει φῶτας ὅτε σεύαιτο διώκειν·  
 464 οὐ γὰρ πῶς ἦν οἷον εὐνδ' ἱερῶ ἐνὶ δίφρῳ  
 465 ἔγχει ἐφορμαῖσθαι καὶ ἐπίσχειν ὠκέας ἵππους.  
 466 ὄψ' ἐ δὲ δῆ μιν ἑταῖρος ἀνῆρ ἶδεν ὀφθαλμοῖσιν  
 467 Ἀλκιμέδων υἱὸς Λαέρκεος Αἰμονίδαο·  
 468 στήθ' ὅπιδεν δίφροιο καὶ Αὐτομέδοντα προσηΐδα·  
 469 "Αὐτόμεδον, τίς τοί νυ θεῶν νηκερθεῖα βουλὴν  
 470 ἐν στήθεσσι ἐθήκε, καὶ ἐξέλετο φρένας ἐσθλάς;  
 471 οἷον πρὸς Τρῳῶς μάχεαι πρώτῳ ἐν ὄμιλῳ  
 472 μοῦνος· ἀτὰρ τοι ἑταῖρος ἀπέκτατο, τεύχεα δ' Ἐκτωρ  
 473 αὐτὸς ἔχων ὤμοισιν ἀγάλλεται Αἰακίδαο."

"...In your knees and in our heart I will  
 put might so that you may bring Automedon also safe out  
 of the war to the hollow ships; for still I shall grant glory to  
 the Trojans, to slay and slay, until they come to the well-  
 benched ships, and the sun sets and holy darkness comes on."  
 So saying he breathed great might into the horses,  
 and they shook the dust from their manes to the ground,  
 and lightly bore the swift chariot among the Trojans and  
 Achaeans. And behind them fought Automedon, though  
 he sorrowed for his comrade, swooping with his chariot  
 like a **vulture** on a flock of **geese**, for easily would he flee  
 out of the battle din of the Trojans, and easily charge, set-  
 ting on them through the great throng. But no man could  
 he slay as he hurried to pursue them, for in no way was  
 it possible for him alone in the holy chariot to attack  
 them with the spear and to hold the swift horses. But at last  
 a comrade spied him with his eyes, Alcimedon, son of  
 Laerces, son of Haemon, and he stood behind the chariot  
 and spoke to Automedon: "Automedon, what god has put  
 in your breast unprofitable counsel and taken from you  
 your sense, that in this way in the foremost throng you  
 fight with the Trojans, alone as you are? For your com-  
 rade has been slain, and his armor Hector himself wears  
 on his shoulders, the armor of the grandson of Aeacus,  
 and glories in it."

(Il. 17.451–473)

## Background

When Hector had killed Patroclus he set after Automedon<sup>330</sup> who drove away with Patroclus'/Achilles' chariot. Hector could not catch him and the horses, however, since the swift and immortal horses Balius and Xanthos carried Automedon away. While Menelaus was protecting Patroclus' corpse, he killed some Trojans and when he was about to strip the armour of Euphorbus, Apollo roused Hector against him. Menelaus gave ground when Hector and the Trojans came against him. After Hector had stripped Patroclus' armour (that is, stole Achilles' armour) he saw Aias coming at him and at that he left the corpse. When Zeus saw that Hector had put on Achilles' immortal armour he shook his head. He granted Hector great might and in return Hector was not to return from the battle again. With Achilles' armour on his own body Hector spurred the Trojans to drag Patroclus' body to Troy, but the Achaeans defended his body heroically with Zeus's help. Many Trojans died, Hector killed a man, and

330 Automedon is described as the godlike attendant of the swift-footed grandson of Aeacus (Il. 16.864–865).

THE BIRD SCENES

Aeneas was urged on by Apollo. Heavy fighting then took place among the chief men around Patroclus' corpse but neither side could take it. Achilles had yet not heard that his friend was dead, and he was expecting him to come back. When Achilles' horses learnt about Patroclus' death they wept. They did not want to go back to the ships or return to war but bowed their heads down to earth. When Zeus saw them he pitied them and shook his head. He said that he would never allow Hector to mount their chariot. When the scene starts Zeus is still speaking to the horses.<sup>331</sup>

**Analysis**

Aspects	Scene 23 – Il. 17.451–473
<b>Ornithology</b>	
Greek bird reference	<i>αἰγυπιός</i> (17.460) <i>χήν</i> (17.460)
Lexica	LSJ s.v. <i>αἰγυπιός</i> : 'vulture, αἰ. γαμφιώνυχες ἀγκυλοχεῖλαι Il.16.428, cf. 17.460' Cunliffe s.v. 'App. a general name for eagles and vultures.'
Behaviour and characteristics	LSJ s.v. <i>χήν</i> 'wild goose, <i>Anser cinereus</i> , ...Il.2.460'* <sup>1</sup> Cunliffe s.v. 'a goose' <i>αἰγυπιός</i> : Swoops on a flock of geese. An individual hunter. It did not catch or kill any of the geese. <i>χήν</i> : A flock is being hunted.
Time context	<i>αἰγυπιός/χήν</i> : Unspecific <i>αἰγυπιός</i> : In the air.
Spatial context	<i>χήν</i> : Unspecific, but the context indicates the ground.
Ornithological accuracy	<i>αἰγυπιός/χήν</i> : High
Suggested taxonomic status	<i>αἰγυπιός</i> : Lammergeier, <i>Gypaetus barbatus</i> <i>χήν</i> : Greylag Goose, <i>Anser anser</i>
<b>Form</b>	<i>αἰγυπιός/χήν</i> : Metaphorical
<b>Interactions</b>	
Birds and birds	<i>αἰγυπιός/χήν</i> : Hierarchies: the vulture swoops on a flock of geese, but do not catch or kill any.
Birds and other animals	<i>αἰγυπιός</i> : Are somewhat related to the immortal horses Balius and Xanthos since they are pulling the chariot that is driven by Automedon. <i>χήν</i> : See above

331 Il. 16. 85–17.472.

THE BIRDS IN THE *ILIAD*

Aspects	Scene 23 – Il. 17.451–473
<p><b>Interactions</b></p> <p>Birds and humans</p> <p>Birds and gods</p>	<p><i>αἰγυπιός</i>: Describes Automedon in a Lammergeier-like parallel way when he alone from Achilles’ chariot was fleeing from the battle din of the Trojans and was charging on them through the great throng. The “Lammergeier metaphor” indicates that there was something unusual about Automedon at this moment.</p> <p><i>χήν</i>: Describe in a goose-like parallel way the group of Trojan warriors that Automedon fled from and charged through.</p> <p><i>αἰγυπιός/χήν</i>: Il. 17.451-458 says that Zeus put strength into the horses so that they would bring Automedon safely out of battle, but it was not mentioned whether he put might into Automedon also.</p>
<p><b>Functions</b></p>	<p><i>αἰγυπιός</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A vulture-specific metaphorical parallel that brings information about Automedon when he fled from and charged through the Trojan warriors from the chariot.</li> <li>• Indicates that he was intending to chase and kill and not to flee.</li> <li>• Emphasises his aggression against the Trojans.</li> <li>• Shows that he was slightly superior to the Trojan warriors.</li> <li>• Emphasises the ease in his transportation.</li> <li>• Indicates a struggle between different powers and intentions.</li> <li>• Gives his activities and state a kind of wild, avian hunter-character.</li> <li>• Signals that there was something out of the ordinary and more-than-human about Automedon at this moment, which may be a result of double motivation.</li> </ul> <p><i>χήν</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Goose-specific metaphorical parallels that bring information about the Trojan warriors who Automedon fled from and charged through.</li> <li>• Show the Trojan warriors as a homogeneous group of many.</li> <li>• Indicate that they were passive targets for an attempt to attack.</li> <li>• Indicate that they were slightly inferior to Automedon.</li> <li>• Emphasise them as wild, avian preys.</li> </ul>

\*1 *Anser cinereus* is an older Latin name for the Greylag Goose, *Anser anser*.

**Comments and interpretation**

*Ornithology and form*

*αἰγυπιός*

The *αἰγυπιός* appears in metaphorical form in the scene. The description is sparse, only a vulture’s swooping down on a flock of geese that is associated with Automedon when he is charging on the great throng of the Trojan warriors and at the same time is fleeing out of the



battle din. Since in other cases when *αἰγυπιός*<sup>332</sup> occurs in the *Iliad* I have suggested the Lammergeier, I would like to see whether this could also be the case for the *αἰγυπιός* in this scene.

The vulture in the scene behaves in another way than most vultures since it hunts on living prey. The majority of vultures feed on carrion exclusively such as the Griffon Vulture. The Lammergeier is adapted to both hunting and scavenging, however. It eats chiefly bones and meat from freshly killed mammals, reptiles, and birds. Attacks on healthy victims are rare, but it happens that it succeeds to kill live prey. According to Cramp & Simmons such attacks are possibly more common in central Asia, where the contents of their stomachs have contained birds, hares, marmots, and ibex.<sup>333</sup> The scene above does not say whether any geese were caught or killed by the vulture, which is a detail that fits with the Lammergeier, who rarely succeeds in capturing a living bird. Since Automedon neither succeeds in catching or killing any Trojans, the choice of a hunting Lammergeier is a perfect match. A Griffon Vulture would not have been suited for the scene since it is not a hunter. An eagle would not have fit either because Automedon was not a king or of the calibre of the most prestigious warriors. He was Patroclus' attendant.<sup>334</sup>

The flight silhouette of a Lammergeier is characteristic, with uniquely narrow and pointed wings for being such a large raptor. It sometimes resembles a large falcon,<sup>335</sup> which makes it look like a bird of prey and not a vulture even in flight silhouette. Its movements are very different from a falcon or any other bird of prey, however. Génsbøl describes that uses slow, soft and elastic wing beats in active flight.<sup>336</sup> It is said of Automedon that *for easily would he flee out of the battle din of the Trojans, and easily charge, setting on them through the great throng* (17.461–462). It seems that there is more focus on the lightness of Automedon's movements and attack than on speed and power, and I suggest that the Lammergeier's active elastic flight during a hunt may have inspired the scene when describing Automedon and his activities driving Balius and Xanthus at this moment.<sup>337</sup>

### χῆν

The metaphorical geese describe the large throng of Trojan warriors that Automedon fled out of and charged on. To describe the geese in a flock is accurate in an ornitho-

332 See SCENES 8, 15 and 20, interpretation, and notes.

333 Cramp & Simmons 1980, 59, 61. See also Génsbøl 1995, 108.

334 *Il.* 16.864–865.

335 Svensson & Grant 2006, 71; Cramp & Simmons 1980, 58.

336 Génsbøl 1995, 312.

337 Boraston suggests the Lammergeier, *Gypaetus barbatus*. Boraston 1911, 216, 230–232. For *αἰγυπιός* in Homer and other ancient sources also see Pollard 1977, 79–80, 203, note 21 and 24, and 79 and 79, 203, note 21; Arnott 2007, 6–7; Thompson 1936, 25–26, and Keller 1913, 27–30. See also Voultziadou & Tatolas who suggest Lammergeier. Voultziadou & Tatolas 2008, 307

logical sense since geese are gregarious. It is further likely that geese would occur in an environment that was close to the sea: the place of the Achaean camp. When analysing SCENE 2, I suggested the Greylag Goose. I suggest the same species even for this scene since they suit the environment that is described in the scene and since the Greylag Goose occurs in Asia Minor.<sup>338</sup>

*Interactions and functions in the scene*

*αἰγυπιός*

The beginning of the scene says that Zeus breathed great might into the horses that drove Automedon's chariot. Zeus' purpose was to let them bring Automedon safely out of the battle to the Achaean ships, see lines 17.452–453. Even if the horses were under the control of Zeus it was Automedon who charged on the Trojans and not the horses, and it was Automedon who attempted an attack on the Trojans like a Lammergeier.<sup>339</sup> So why is the Lammergeier in the scene? What happen if it were not there? The Lammergeier emphasises Automedon as a wild warrior-hunter and indicates that he was intending to hunt and kill and not flee. Edwards discusses that lines 17.465–466, *for in no way was it possible for him alone in the holy chariot to attack them with the spear and to hold the swift horses* (17.465–466) have no parallel in the *Iliad* concerning Automedon's behaviour,<sup>340</sup> and Willcock comments that the episode is rather strange. According to Willcock Automedon could not harm the enemy because he was alone in the chariot. Willcock further refers to Dodds who suggested that this episode was an example of ἄτη.<sup>341</sup> I find that the reason why Automedon failed in his attack on the Trojans could also be that he could not handle the two empowered horses that had other intentions than he did himself. In such a case the scene describes a struggle between different intentions and powers, i.e., mainly between Zeus, through the horses, and Automedon. Automedon may also himself have been under the influence of Zeus or some other god when the event takes place and because of that he failed in his attack as Dodds suggested. It seems that we will have to settle on not getting any clear answers since the reason why Automedon failed in his attack can be explained in many ways. At least one can say that the Lammergeier-metaphor indicates that there was something unusual about Automedon and his activities at this moment, which is also indicated by Alcimedon in the scene.

<sup>338</sup> For the Greylag Goose, see Cramp & Simmons 1977, 413–422.

Also see Boraston who suggests the Greylag Goose and Bean Goose for the geese in the scene. He adds that the word certainly also served to signify other species of goose. Boraston 1911, 249. Also see Pollard 1977, 64–65; Arnott 2007, 30–31; Thompson 1936, 325–326, and Keller 1913, 220–225.

<sup>339</sup> A bit further on in the action, in *Il.* 17.481–490, Automedon left his chariot and fought on the ground, and in *Il.* 17.501–502 he asked Alcimedon to hold the horses close so that their breaths would strike his own back. It thus seems that Automedon was aware of the extra powers that he could receive from the horses.

<sup>340</sup> Edwards 1991, 109.

<sup>341</sup> Willcock 1984, 260; Dodds 1951, 4. ἄτη is a blindness of the mind sent by a god which leads to evil doing or mischance.

χήν

The flock of geese have more passive roles than the Lammergeier and they show no activities, emotions or reactions to the attack. They are displayed as wild targets and preys for the Lammergeier's/Automedon's attack and signify the Trojan warriors as one homogeneous group.

### Scene 24 – Il. 17.673–693

673 Ὡς ἄρα φωνήσας ἀπέβη ξανθὸς Μενέλαος,  
674 πάντοσε παπταίνων ὡς τ' αἰετός, ὃν ῥά τέ φασιν  
675 ὀξύτατον δέρεσθαι ὑπουρανίων πετεηνῶν,  
676 ὃν τε καὶ ὑψόθ' ἔόντα πόδας ταχὺς οὐκ ἔλαθε πτώξ  
677 θάμνω ὑπ' ἀμφοκόμῳ κατακείμενος, ἀλλὰ τ' ἐπ' αὐτῷ  
678 ἔσσυτο, καὶ τέ μιν ὄκα λαβὼν ἐξείλετο θυμόν.  
679 ὡς τότε σοὶ Μενέλαε διοτρεφὲς ὅσσε φαιινῶ  
680 πάντοσε δινεΐσθην πολέων κατὰ ἔθνος ἐταίρων,  
681 εἴ που Νέστορος υἱὸν ἔτι ζῶοντα ἴδοιτο.  
682 τὸν δὲ μάλ' αἴψ' ἐνόησε μάχης ἐπ' ἀριστερὰ πάσης  
683 θαρσύνονθ' ἐτάρους καὶ ἐποτρύνοντα μάχεσθαι,  
684 ἀγχοῦ δ' ἰστάμενος προσέφη ξανθὸς Μενέλαος·  
685 “Ἄντιλοχ' εἰ δ' ἄγε δεῦρο διοτρεφὲς ὄφρα πύθῃαι  
686 λυγρῆς ἀγγελίης, ἢ μὴ ὤφελλε γενέσθαι.  
687 ἦρθ' μὲν σὲ καὶ αὐτὸν οἴομαι εἰσορόωντα  
688 γιγνώσκειν ὅτι πῆμα θεὸς Δαναοῖσι κυλίνδει,  
689 νίκη δὲ Τρώων πέφαται δ' ὄριστος Ἀχαιῶν,  
690 Πάτροκλος, μεγάλη δὲ πόθῃ Δαναοῖσι τέτυκται.  
691 ἀλλὰ σύ γ' αἴψ' Ἀχιλῆϊ θέων ἐπὶ νῆας Ἀχαιῶν  
692 εἶπεῖν, αἶ κε τάχιστα νέκυν ἐπὶ νῆα σαώσῃ  
693 γυμνόν· ἀτὰρ τά γε τεύχε' ἔχει κορυθαίολος Ἔκτωρ.”

*So saying, tawny-haired Menelaus went away, glancing warily on every side like an eagle, which, men say, has the keenest sight of all winged things under heaven, by whom, though he be on high, the swift-footed hare is not unseen as he crouches beneath a leafy bush, but the eagle swoops on him and swiftly seizes him, and takes away his life. So then, Menelaus, nurtured by Zeus, did your bright eyes range everywhere over the throng of your many comrades, in the hope that they might see Nestor's son still alive. Him he caught sight of very quickly on the left of the whole battle, encouraging his comrades and urging them on to fight. And drawing near tawny-haired Menelaus spoke to him, saying: "Antilocheus, up, come here, nurtured by Zeus, so that you may learn woeful tidings, such as I wish had never been. By now, I suppose, you realize, for your eyes look on it, that a god is rolling ruin on the Danaans, and that victory is with the men of Troy. And slain in the best man of the Achaeans, Patroclus, and great longing for him has been fashioned for the Danaans. But quickly run to the ships of the Achaeans and bring word to Achilles, in the hope that he may immediately bring the corpse safe to his ship—the naked corpse; but his armor Hector of the flashing helmet holds."*

(Il. 17.673–693)

### Background

Automedon asked Alcimedon to take the reins of Balius and Xanthus because he himself wanted to fight from ground. Alcimedon then leaped on the chariot and Hector noticed and said to Aeneas that the swift-footed horses appeared in battle with weakling charioteers. Automedon prayed to Zeus and was filled with valor and strength. He asked Alcimedon to keep the horses very close behind him so that their breath would reach him. They then co-operated skilfully and Automedon killed Aretus with his spear. At that Hector cast a spear at him but the spear fixed itself in the ground. The two Aiantes then parted Hector and Automedon in their fury and at their appearance Hector and Aeneas gave ground. Automedon then stripped Aretus of his armour and set it in the chariot which he himself mounted. Once again the Trojans and Achaeans

were engaged in heavy fighting over Patroclus' body. Athena encouraged the fighting since Zeus had sent her to urge on the Achaeans, as his mind had been turned. She first roused King Menelaus, who killed a Trojan who was dear to Hector, and dragged the dead body away from the Trojans. Apollo then urged Hector on and Zeus shook the aegis from Mount Ida, giving victory to the Trojans and routing the Achaeans. Meriones, Aias and Menelaus noticed that the strength of the Achaeans was diminishing, and that it was Zeus himself who was aiding the Trojans. They discussed what was best to do and wished that there was someone who could quickly carry the message to Achilles about Patroclus' death. Aias then prayed to Zeus to make the sky clear so that they could see and at that, Zeus took pity on him and drove away the darkness. Aias asked Menelaus to look for Antiochus in the hope that he was alive and to have him go quickly to Achilles' with the news. Menelaus left Patroclus much against his will since he was afraid that the Achaeans would let Patroclus be preyed upon by his enemies. Menelaus then asked them to remember the kindness of Patroclus.<sup>342</sup>

### Analysis

Aspects	Scene 24 – Il. 17.673–693
<b>Ornithology</b>	
Greek bird reference	<i>αἰετός</i> (17.674)
Lexica	LSJ s.v. 'eagle, as a bird of omen,...Il.8.247, cf. 12.201... favourite of Zeus...Il.24.310' Cunliffe s.v. 'An eagle'
Behaviour and characteristics	From high above, it catches sight of a hare that crouches beneath a leafy bush, and swoops on it and swiftly seizes and kills it. Has the best sight of all winged things.
Time context	Unspecific
Spatial context	Unspecific
Ornithological accuracy	High
Suggested taxonomic status	An eagle, plausible the Golden Eagle, <i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>
<b>Form</b>	Metaphorical
<b>Interactions</b>	
Birds and birds	-
Birds and other animals	Catches sight of a hare that crouches beneath a leafy bush, and swoops on it and swiftly seizes and kills it. A hunter and its prey.

<sup>342</sup> Il. 17.474–672.

## THE BIRD SCENES

Aspects	Scene 24 – Il. 17.673–693
<p><b>Interactions</b></p> <p>Birds and humans</p> <p>Birds and gods</p>	<p>Describes King Menelaus in a eagle-like parallel way when his eyes searched for Antiolochos in the throng of Achaean warriors. The “eagle metaphor” indicates that there was something unusual and special about Menelaus and his eye sight at that moment.</p> <p>When Menelaus’ eyes searched for Nestor’s son, he is described as “<i>nurtured by Zeus</i>” (17.679).</p>
<p><b>Functions</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An eagle-specific metaphorical parallel that brings information about King Menelaus when his eyes searched for Antiolochos.</li> <li>• Emphasises how he looked for Antiolochos in all directions.</li> <li>• Emphasises his eagle-like eye sight.</li> <li>• Emphasises how focused and eager he was to catch sight of him.</li> <li>• Emphasises that he caught sight of him quickly and at a great distance.</li> <li>• Emphasises his status as king and prominent warrior.</li> <li>• Gives his activities a kind of wild, avian character.</li> <li>• Signals that there was something unusual and more-than-human about Menelaus and his eye sight at this moment, which can be understood as a result of double motivation.</li> </ul>

### Comments and interpretation

#### *Ornithology and form*

The *αἰετός* appears in metaphorical form. It is described as *an eagle, which, men say, has the keenest sight of all winged things under heaven* (17.574–675). This sequence focusses on one of the qualities of an eagle, its excellent eye sight. The next description, *by whom, though he be on high, the swift-footed hare is not unseen as he crouches beneath a leafy bush* (17.676–677) refers to this quality once again, but more specifically referring to an eagle’s remarkable eye sight at long distances. As seen, the sequence also emphasises the eagle’s high position in the air and its role as a hunter. The third sequence *but the eagle swoops on him and swiftly seizes him, and takes away his life* (17.677–678) stresses the eagle’s swoop and how quickly it catches the hare, and how it then kills it. Eagles kill with their talons and claws, which are their killing weapons. When King Menelaus was *glancing warily on every side like the eagle* (17.674) he was somehow acting in a way that is similar to an eagle’s behaviour when it moves its neck and glances in all directions.

The descriptions refer to an eagle with well-developed eye sight and to an eagle, that means being a quick and skilful hunter of hares. Génsbøl points out that among several birds of prey we have presumably reached the top of what nature can achieve when it comes to the development of visual faculties. This capacity is due to the need to observe

a prey from a long distance away or under hard conditions.<sup>343</sup> According to Cramp & Simmons the excellent vision of eagles, hawks and vultures is a result of their proportionately large eyes: their great acuity is due to the presence of the largest number of cones per unit area of retina in all vertebrates.<sup>344</sup>

The Golden Eagle has remarkable eye sight and hunts animals from a long distance. It feeds on different kinds of preys. Over much of western Palaearctic, medium-sized species are preferred, e.g., rabbits, *Oryctolagus cuniculus*, hares, *Lepus*, marmots, *Marmota*, and other medium-sized mammals.<sup>345</sup> Adult Golden Eagles have light red-brown head feathers, which I suggest may associate with the description of Menelaus as *tawny-haired* (17.673).<sup>346</sup>

#### *Interactions and functions in the scene*

The scene stresses some points of possible comparisons between the metaphorical eagle and King Menelaus. It emphasises how Menelaus glanced around in all directions, looking for Antiochus, and indicates how focussed and eager he was to catch sight of Nestor's son. It further indicates that he quickly found Antiochus and at a great distance. I further suggest that the use of the eagle shows that there was something special about Menelaus and his eye sight at this moment since no human can normally catch sight of anything in the way an eagle can.<sup>347</sup> Whether Menelaus behaved in such an extra-human way as the result of temporary powers he was given from Zeus, or whether he already had these capacities due to his hero status is an open question. An interesting detail however is that the poet describes Menelaus as *nurtured by Zeus* (17.679) the moment his eyes searched for Nestor's son. I suggest that Menelaus' excellent eye sight is temporarily caused not only by his own eagerness and need to find Antiochus, but also through motivation from Zeus. The fact that Menelaus is described as an eagle further marks his status: only kings and prominent warriors are metaphorically paralleled to eagles in the *Iliad*.

The fast hare that is described as the *swift-footed hare* (17.676) seems to be associated with Menelaus' words when he asked Antiochus to *quickly run* (17.692).<sup>348</sup> The fact

343 Génsbøl 1995, 9.

344 Cramp and Simmons 1980, 7.

345 For Golden Eagles, see Cramp & Simmons 1980, 237–238 and Génsbøl 1995, 183–184; Svensson & Grant 2006, 77. Boraston suggests that the scene refers to no particular eagle since several kinds catch hares. Boraston 1922, 239. For eagles in ancient sources, see also Arnott 2007, 2–4; Pollard 1977, 76–79; Thompson 1936, 2–17; Keller 1913, 1–6. Also see Voultziadou & Tatalos who identify the *αἰετοί* that occur in Homer not as species but as “Eagle”. Voultziadou & Tatalos 2008, 307.

346 For “tawny-haired Menelaus”, see also for example *Il.* 4.183, 11.125. Cramp & Simmons describe Golden Eagles as having a gold shawl on the crown and hindneck. Cramp & Simmons 1980, 234, 243. Génsbøl describes the “light” back of the head and crown among the most important field characteristics of Golden Eagles. More specifically he describes the dark forehead and the contrasting back of the neck and crown, which are lighter red-yellow to yellow/brown/ochra-coloured. Génsbøl 1995, 348. See also Cramp & Simmons 1980, 7.

347 Jones comments that there is a focus on the eagle's sight rather than on the speed of attack. Jones 2003, 246.

348 Also see Edwards who says, “The hare's epithet *πόδας ταχέως* will be applied to Antilokhos when he approaches Akhilleus” (18.2). Edwards 1991, 128.

that a metaphorical *killing* of a hare is described in the scene is somewhat surprising since Menelaus did not kill Nestor's son Antiochus when he found him.<sup>349</sup> Perhaps the metaphorical hare whose life was taken away can be connected with Antiochus' fears of being killed by Achilles<sup>350</sup> since he is the one to bring the message that Patroclus was dead. With this interpretation the hare evokes suspense as to whether Achilles will kill Antiochus when he receives the terrible message. Achilles however did not kill the messenger but reacted powerfully by tearing his hair and groaning aloud so that even his mother, the goddess Thetis, heard him where she sat in the depth of the sea.<sup>351</sup> It is also possible that the poet added that detail to create suspicion about whether Antiochus was already dead before Menelaus found him.<sup>352</sup> At least we can say that the dead hare generates ambiguity and that the eagle brings information about King Menelaus at this important moment.

### Scene 25 – *Il.* 17.755–761

755 τῶν δ' ὡς τε ψαρῶν νέφος ἔρχεται ἠὲ κολοιῶν,  
 756 οὔλον κεκλήγοντες, ὅτε προῖδωσιν ἰόντα  
 757 κίρκον, ὃ τε σμικρῆσι φόνον φέρει ὀρνίθεσσι,  
 758 ὡς ἄρ' ὑπ' Αἰνεία τε καὶ Ἑκτορι κοῦροι Ἀχαιῶν  
 759 οὔλον κεκλήγοντες ἴσαν, λήθοντο δὲ χάραγης.  
 760 πολλὰ δὲ τεύχεα καλὰ πέσον περὶ τ' ἀμφὶ τε τάφρον  
 761 φευγόντων Δαναῶν· πολέμου δ' οὐ γίγνεται ἔρωή.

*And as a cloud of starlings or daws flies, shrieking cries of destruction, when they see a falcon coming on them that brings death to small birds, so before Aeneas and Hector fled the youths of the Achaeans, shrieking cries of destruction, and forgot all fighting. And many fair pieces of armor fell around and about the trench as the Danaans fled; but there was no ceasing from war.*

(*Il.* 17.755–761)

### Background

Antiochus obeyed the orders from King Menelaus and went to Achilles with the message that Patroclus' was dead. When Antiochus started to run, Menelaus went back to protect Patroclus' corpse from the Trojans. There he spoke to Telemonian Aias, who suggested that Meriones and Menelaus should carry Patroclus off the battlefield while the two Aiantes would continue to fight with the Trojans and Hector. When they started to carry the corpse towards the ships, the Trojans pursued them, but they hurried on successfully with the help of the two Aiantes, who protected them. There were two among the Trojans who followed after them, Aeneas and Hector.<sup>353</sup>

349 See also Fränkel 1921, 106.

350 See *Il.* 17.685–699. When Antiochus had given Achilles the message he was *holding the hands of Achilles, who groaned in his noble heart, for he feared that he might cut his throat with the knife* (*Il.* 18.33–34).

351 See *Il.* 18.35–37.

352 Compare with *Il.* 17.653.

353 *Il.* 17.693–17.754.

## Analysis

Aspects	Scene 25 – Il. 17.755–761
<b>Ornithology</b>	
Greek bird reference	<i>κίρκος</i> (17.757) <i>κολοιός</i> (17.755) <i>ψάρ</i> (17.755)
Lexica	LSJ s.v. <i>κίρκος</i> ‘a kind of hawk or falcon, ἴρηξ <i>κίρκος</i> (where ἴρηξ is the generic term, <i>κίρκος</i> the specific), Od. 13.87, cf. Il.22.139’ Cunliffe s.v. ‘A bird of the falcon kind, a falcon or hawk’ LSJ s.v. <i>κολοιός</i> , ‘ <i>jackdaw</i> , <i>Corvus monedula</i> , Il.16.583, 17.755’ Cunliffe s.v. ‘a jackdaw’ LSJ s.v. <i>ψάρ</i> , ‘Ion. ψήρ ... <i>starling</i> , <i>Sturnus vulgaris</i> ...Il.17.755...16.583’ Cunliffe s.v. <i>ψάρ</i> , ψήρ ‘a starling’
Behaviour and characteristics	<i>κίρκος/ψάρ/κολοιός</i> : A flock of starlings or daws were shrieking when they saw a <i>κίρκος</i> coming on them. The flock is described as a cloud and the <i>κίρκος</i> is said to bring death to small birds. <i>κίρκος/ψάρ/κολοιός</i> : Unspecific
Time context	<i>κίρκος/ψάρ/κολοιός</i> : Up in the air.
Spatial context	<i>κίρκος/ψάρ/κολοιός</i> : High
Ornithological accuracy	<i>κίρκος</i> : Peregrine, <i>Falco peregrinus</i>
Suggested taxonomic status	<i>ψάρ</i> : Common Starling, <i>Sturnus vulgaris</i> <i>κολοιός</i> : Eurasian Jackdaw, <i>Corvus monedula</i>
<b>Form</b>	<i>κίρκος/ψάρ/κολοιός</i> : Metaphorical
<b>Interactions</b>	
Birds and birds	<i>κίρκος</i> and <i>ψάρ/κολοιός</i> : Hierarchies: an individual hunter and its presumptive victims in a flock that shriek when they see it coming on them.
Birds and other animals	-
Birds and humans	<i>κίρκος</i> : Describes Aeneas and Hector in a falcon-like parallel way when they were coming on the youths of the Achaeans. “The falcon metaphor” indicates that there was something unusual and special about them at this moment. <i>ψάρ/κολοιός</i> : Describe the youths of the Achaeans in starling- or daw-like parallel ways when they saw Aeneas and Hector coming on them, when they cried and when they fled from them.
Birds and gods	<i>κίρκος</i> : No god is mentioned in the scene but Aeneas and Hector’s strengthened activities may partly be a result of powers given from a god, who may have been Zeus or Apollo or both of them. <i>ψάρ/κολοιός</i> : -



## THE BIRD SCENES

Aspects	Scene 25 – II. 17.755–761
<b>Functions</b>	<p><i>κίρκος</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A falcon-specific metaphorical parallel that brings information about Aeneas and Hector when they were coming on the youths of the Achaean warriors.</li> <li>• Shows the high speed and power of their advance.</li> <li>• Shows their superiority over the Achaean youths.</li> <li>• Indicates their status in the hierarchis of warriors.</li> <li>• Gives their activities and appearances a kind of wild avian hunter-character.</li> <li>• Signals that there was something unusual and more-than-human about Aeneas and Hector at this moment, which may be a result of double motivation.</li> </ul> <p><i>ψάρ/κολοιός</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Starling- and Daw-specific metaphorical parallels that bring information about the youths of the Achaean warriors when they saw and fled from Aeneas and Hector.</li> <li>• Show their inferiority.</li> <li>• Show them as a thick group of many.</li> <li>• Indicate their status in the hierarchis of warriors.</li> <li>• Emphasise their shrieking.</li> <li>• Emphasise their panic and death-fear for Aeneas and Hector.</li> <li>• Emphasise that they fled before Aeneas and Hector.</li> <li>• Give their activities a kind of wild avian fleeing prey-character.</li> <li>• Signal that there was something unusual about them. Their reactions may have been evoked by the fact that they observed that there was something unusual and more-than-human about Aeneas and Hector.</li> </ul>

### Comments and interpretation

#### *Ornithology and form*

##### *κίρκος*

The *κίρκος* appears in metaphorical form in the scene. Edwards, who suggests that the bird of prey in the scene is a hawk, points out that the more generic word *ἰρηνξ* is more common, with six occurrences in *the Iliad* and one in *the Odyssey*, and that both words are used in apposition, i.e., *ἰρηνξ κίρκος* in *Od.* 13.86-87.<sup>354</sup> Pollard identifies *ἰρηνξ* and *κίρκος* with hawk and falcon without separating the two names, and he further refers to Aristotle who ranked *κίρκος* the third among “the hawks”. Pollard suggests that Aristotle meant that *κίρκος* was a Lanner, *Falco biarmicus*.<sup>355</sup> I would like to emphasise that the *κίρκος* in the scene does not necessarily have to be the equivalent of Aristotle’s *κίρκος* as bird names change over time and space in all cultures. Pollard further suggests

<sup>354</sup> Edwards 1991, 137.

<sup>355</sup> Pollard 1977, 81.

that the *κίρκος* in the scene is perhaps a Sparrow Hawk, *Accipiter nisus*.<sup>356</sup> The *κίρκος* in the scene is described mainly from the perspective of the starlings or daws and at the same time from the young Achaeans' perspective,<sup>357</sup> i.e., it *brings death to small birds* (17.757). The starlings or daws were *shrieking cries of destruction, when they see* (17.756) this kind of bird *coming on them* (17.756). All descriptions suggest a large and powerful bird of prey that pursues its prey and causes panic among the birds that are being chased. I immediately think of the Peregrine as plausible model for such a bird. When a Peregrine is hunting, it causes spectacular panic over any large bird community. I myself have observed a Peregrine that was hunting above a thick flock of daws in this way. The daws moved very quickly and close to each other, shrieking loudly, and there was a great panic in their flock. It was difficult to see where the falcon was since it moved so fast.<sup>358</sup>

*ψάρο/κολοίος*

*Ψάρο* or *κολοίος* are described in metaphorical form as *a cloud of starling or daws flies, shrieking cries of destruction, when they see a falcon coming on them* (17.755-757). A cloud suggests "a flock" of starlings or daws. Since both Common Starlings and Eurasian Jackdaws have gregarious habits the description is accurate in an ornithological sense. When the individuals fly very closely to each other in the flock, they indeed resemble a moving dark cloud.

As mentioned earlier the Common Starling and the Eurasian Jackdaw often join in the same flocks when feeding.<sup>359</sup> The jackdaws have many different calls and among them alarm calls, warning calls, and a rattle call that is a loud, repeated, harsh, grating 'kaaarr' or 'rrrrrrrrrr' that is heard when warning about the approach of a predator.<sup>360</sup> Starlings have a distress call that is a high-pitched, repeated, raucous, penetrating scream given when held or cornered by a predator. There is also a chip call that is a short metallic "chip" or "spet" that changes according to which predator is coming. If

356 Pollard 1977, 81. According to Thompson *κίρκος* is a poetic name for a hawk. He adds that it in the scene under discussion is hostile to the other birds, and that it in *Il.* 22. 139 and *Od.* 13.87 is an emblem of swiftness. Thompson 1936, 144–146. According to Boraston the bird in the scene may be referred to under the name *ἰρηξ* in *Il.* 16.582. He suggests Hobby but consider also Peregrine and Lanner Falcon. Boraston 1911, 225. According to Keller "Homer unterscheidet zwischen *ἰρηξ* und *κίρκος* so wenig, daß er, wie schon erwähnt, geradezu *ἰρηξ κίρκος*, Falkenhabicht sagt (*Od.* XIII 86). Welche Habichtspezies Homer im Auge hat, läßt sich nicht ausmachen." Keller 1913, 19, also see 13–26. Cf. also Voultsiadou and Tatolas suggest that *ἰρηξ* and *κίρκος* in Homer is a Peregrine. Voultsiadou & Tatolas 2008, 307. On *κίρκος* see also Arnott 2007, 99

357 De Jong points out that *ἵππο* (17.758) presents the two Trojans from the viewpoint of the Greeks, as the hawk is seen by the flock of birds. de Jong 1985, 276.

358 Peregrines live almost entirely on birds with the choice of prey varying according to with availability and type of habitat. As mentioned earlier the preys vary in size from the Goldcrest, *Regulus regulus* to the Grey Heron, *Ardea cinerea* and goose *Anser*. The majority of prey is taken on the wing, usually over open country and over water. Cramp & Simmons 1980, 362, 365–366. Also see Svensson & Grant 2006, 98.

359 Cramp & Perrins 1994, 128, 243.

360 Cramp & Perrins 1994, 133.

the predator is near, the call may be repeated as rapidly as seven times per second.<sup>361</sup> To sum up, I find that the ornithological accuracy is high concerning the descriptions of both birds and I suggest Common Starling and Eurasian Jackdaw.

*Interactions and functions in the scene*

κίρκος

There are some possible points of comparisons that can be drawn between the falcon/Aeneas/Hector and the flock of starlings/daws/the group of young Achaean warriors. Since Aeneas and Hector in movement and activity resemble a Peregrine at this moment, they must have been coming on the young Achaeans with great power and at a tremendous speed.<sup>362</sup> The falcon indicates the high status of the warriors but it also signals that they behaved and moved at that time in an unusual way. If we take the falcon away from the scene, Hector and Aeneas would not have acted in a “halfway” sense as wild and powerful “hunter falcons”. Two gods had recently urged the Trojans on: first Zeus, who said that he would still *grant glory to the Trojans, to slay and slay, until they come to the well-benched ships* (*Il.* 17.453-455), and secondly in *Il.* 17.582, Apollo came up to Hector and urged him on. In *Il.* 17.629–630, somewhat before the bird scene under discussion, Telamonian Aias said, “*Well! Now any man, no matter how foolish, may realize that father Zeus himself is aiding the Trojans...*” (*Il.* 17.629–630). But is Aias right in his interpretation and if this is so: do Aias’ words indicate that Zeus was still aiding Hector and Aeneas when the scene event took place?<sup>363</sup> Or were Hector and Aeneas at that moment motivated by Apollo? I find that there is an ambiguity in the scene concerning what god or gods were supporting Hector and Aeneas the moment they are paralleled to a metaphorical falcon.

ψάρ/κολοιός

The metaphorical Common Starlings and Eurasian Daws bring information about a group of young Achaean warriors when they saw Aeneas and Hector attacking them. The starlings and daws emphasise the young Achaeans as wild prey that fled in a tight group. As they fled both the birds and the youths were *shrieking cries of destruction*

361 Cramp & Perrins 1994, 252. Also see Pollard who suggests Jackdaws and Starlings or Rose-coloured Starlings, *Sturnus roseus*. Pollard 1977, 27. Boraston suggests the Jackdaw and the Spotless Starling, *Sturnus unicolor* and the Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*. Boraston 1911, 225–226. The Spotless Starling only occurs however in the west Mediterranean range, Cramp & Perrins 1994, 260; Johnsson 1992, 484. Thompson refers to the Jackdaw, *Corvus monedula* and Starling, *Sturnus vulgaris*. Thompson 1936, 155–158 (daw), 334–335 (starling). Voultziadou & Tatolas suggest that ψάρ is the Starling and κολοιός the Jackdaw. Voultziadou & Tatolas 2008, 307–308. See also Arnott 2007, 199 (starling) and 104–105 (daw).

362 See also Edwards 1991, 137 and Fränkel 1921, 80–81. According to Willcock the Greeks fly before Aeneas and Hector like little birds before a hawk, Willcock 1976, 200.

363 Compare with SCENE 14 where Aias, son of Oileus, was the first of the two Aiantes to recognise that they had met a god. They did not identify who the god was, however.

(17.756 and 17.759). It is thus the emotional reactions of fear and panic that are in focus here.<sup>364</sup> Even if the young Achaean warriors were probably inexperienced in war and their fear in this situation is understandable, I would like to suggest that they reacted in such a strongly emotional way because they observed that there was something unusual with Aeneas and Hector at the moment they were coming on them. Their panic continued and seemed to have increased, since we can also see that their armour fell as they fled, see 17.760–761.<sup>365</sup> It is further ambiguous if the young Achaeans should be viewed as a flock of starlings *or* of daws *or* of both kinds of birds.

### Scene 26 – *Il.* 18.266–283

266 “...ἀλλ’ ἴομεν προτὶ ἄστυ, πίθεσθέ μοι· ὧδε γὰρ ἔσται.  
267 νῦν μὲν νύξ ἀπέπαυσε ποδώκεα Πηλεΐωνα  
268 ἀμβροσίη· εἰ δ’ ἄμμε κινήσεται ἐνθάδ’ ἔοντα  
269 αἴριον ὀρηγηθεὶς σὺν τεύχεσιν, εὔ νύ τις αὐτὸν  
270 γνώσεται· ἀσπασίως γὰρ ἀφίξεται Ἴλιον ἱρήν  
271 ὅς κε φύγη, πολλοὺς δὲ κύνες καὶ γῦπες ἔδονται  
272 Τρώων· αἶ γὰρ δὴ μοι ἀπ’ οὐρατος ὧδε γένοιτο.  
273 εἰ δ’ ἂν ἐμοῖς ἐπέεσσι πιθώμεθα κηθόμενοι περ,  
274 νύκτα μὲν εἰν ἀγορῇ σθένος ἔξομεν, ἄστυ δὲ πύργοι  
275 ὑψηλαί τε πύλαι σανίδες τ’ ἐπὶ τῆς ἀραρυταί  
276 μακρῆαι ἐϋξεστοὶ ἐξενγμέναι εἰρύσσονται·  
277 περὶ δ’ ὑπηροῖοι σὺν τεύχεσσι θωρηχθέντες  
278 στησόμεθ’ ἄμ πύργους· τῶ δ’ ἄλγιον, αἶ κ’ ἐθέλησιν  
279 ἔλθων ἐκ νηῶν περὶ τείχεος ἄμμι μάχεσθαι.  
280 ἄψ πάλιν εἶσ’ ἐπὶ νῆας, ἐπεὶ κ’ ἐριαύχενας ἵππους  
281 παντοῖου δρόμου ἄση ὑπὸ πτόλιν ἠλασκάζων·  
282 εἶσω δ’ οὐ μιν θυμὸς ἐφορμηθῆναι ἐάσει,  
283 οὐδὲ ποτ’ ἐκπέρσει· πρὶν μιν κύνες ἀργοὶ ἔδονται.”

“... *But let us go to the city; obey me, for this is the way it will be. For now has immortal night stayed the swift-footed son of Peleus, but if on the morrow he comes out armed and catches us still here, well will many a one come to know him; for with joy will he who escapes reach sacred Ilios, but many of the Trojans will the dogs and vultures devour – far from my ear be that tale. But if we obey my words though we are loath to do so, this night we will keep our forces in the place of assembly, and the city will be guarded by the walls and high gates and by the tall well-polished doors that are set in them bolted fast. But in the morning at the coming of Dawn, arrayed in our armor we will make our stand on the walls; and the worse will it be for him if he is minded to come out from the ships and fight with us to win the wall. Back again to his ships will he go, when he has given his arched-necked horses enough of coursing to and fro, as he drives vainly under the city’s walls. But to force his way inside will his heart not allow him nor will he lay it waste; before that will the swift dogs devour him.*”

(*Il.* 18.266–283)

### Background

When *Il.* 18 starts, Antiochus came as a messenger to Achilles. He told him that Patroclus was dead, that they were fighting around the corpse, and that Hector had taken his armour. Achilles groaned so loudly so that even his mother, the goddess Thetis, heard him where she sat in the depth of the sea. After heavy lamenting Thetis went to

<sup>364</sup> See also Jones who comments that the Achaeans were confused. Jones 2003, 246.

<sup>365</sup> Edwards emphasises that *κίρκος* in the quoted scene represents Hector and Aeneas, but that the main point of comparison is between the shrieking of the smaller birds at its appearance and the cries of the panic-stricken Achaeans. Edwards 1991, 137. Edwards further refers to the exegetical scholia, (bT on 755–757) that carefully explain that the Greeks’ cowardly behaviour is the result of Zeus’s intervention, whereas when the same simile was used at *Il.* 16.582–583 the Trojans fled because of the courage of Patroclus, a human hero, Edwards 1991, 138. At lines 17.760–761 in the scene it is said that many pieces of armor fell when the Achaeans fled. The bT scholia (bT on 760–761) has pointed out that the poet avoids saying directly that the Achaeans threw their equipment away. Edwards 1991, 138.

THE BIRD SCENES

Achilles.<sup>366</sup> Achilles spoke to her and said: for my heart commands me neither to live on nor to remain among men, unless Hector first, struck by my spear, loses his life, and pays for his despoiling of Patroclus, son of Menoetius (*Il.* 18.90–93). Thetis answered that he was then doomed to a speedy death for after Hector was his own death nearby. Achilles said that he would accept it when Zeus and the other gods were minded to bring it to pass. He was now planning to kill many Trojan warriors and to make the Trojan women cry and mourn heavily. Thetis told him to wait until she came back to him with armour from Hephaestus. While she went to Mount Olympus the Achaeans fled with great shouting from Hector, who was like a flame in valour. The Trojans had overtaken Patroclus’ corpse and Hector tried to drag it away. The two Aiantes could not at this moment frighten Hector. Without Zeus’ knowing Hera then sent Iris to Achilles and she urged him on to defend Patroclus’ corpse.

Achilles was however without armour and Iris advised him to show himself at the trench in the hope that fear would seize the Trojans when they saw him. Achilles then rose up and Athena flung the aegis around his strong shoulders, sat a golden cloud around his head, and made blaze a gleaming flame from him. When he showed himself from the trench and made his voice sound he spread confusion and panic among the Trojans and the Achaeans could then easily take Patroclus’ corpse to the ships. The Achaean camp went into heavy mourning and the day came to an end. The Trojans still trembled because Achilles had appeared. Before they had their meal Polydamas advised the Trojans not to stay where they were until dawn but to return to the city now since he feared that Achilles would now fight for their city and for their wives. Polydamas is still speaking when the scene starts.<sup>367</sup>

**Analysis**

Aspects	Scene 26 – <i>Il.</i> 18.266–283
<b>Ornithology</b>	
Greek bird reference	γύψ ( <i>Il.</i> 18.271)
Lexica	LSJ s.v. ‘vulture, prob. including several species’ Cunliffe s.v. ‘a vulture (except in λ578 always preying on carrion. Cf. αἰγυπιός)’
Behaviour and characteristics	Collective behaviours. Will eat human corpses. Scavengers.
Time context	Future

<sup>366</sup> *Il.* 18.1–90.

<sup>367</sup> *Il.* 18.94–266

THE BIRDS IN THE *ILIAD*

Aspects	Scene 26 – Il. 18.266–283
<b>Ornithology</b>	
Spatial context	Presumably at the Scamander Plain.
Ornithological accuracy	High
Suggested taxonomic status	Griffon Vulture, <i>Gyps fulvus</i> , Black Vulture, <i>Aegypius monachus</i> and Egyptian Vulture, <i>Neophron percnopterus</i> .
<b>Form</b>	Image
<b>Interactions</b>	
Birds and birds	Collective behaviours. Vultures that will eat human corpses.
Birds and other animals	Vultures that will eat human corpses together with dogs.
Birds and humans	Vultures that will feed on Trojan corpses. Polydamas used the vultures as images in a speech that prophesied that the vultures would feed on Trojan corpses.
Birds and gods	-
<b>Functions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vulture image that predicts the future.</li> <li>• Polydamas used the “vulture image” in a speech as a way to warn Hector and the Trojans against staying on the Scamander Plain.</li> <li>• Describes and predicts that many Trojans will be devoured by vultures and dogs if the Trojan warriors stay on the Scamander Plain.</li> <li>• Implies wild aggression and violent treatment of the corpses of fallen Trojan warriors; further that they will not be taken care of and buried according to the traditions.</li> <li>• Implies horrifying and tragic consequence of human war.</li> <li>• Possibly also associate with the Achaean warriors who might possibly mutilate and damage the bodies of Trojan warriors, i.e., more generally to human mutilation of warriors’ corpses.</li> </ul>

**Comments and interpretation**

*Ornithology and form*

The description of the birds is restricted to one sequence: *but many of the Trojans will the dogs and vultures devour* (18.271). As in other descriptions of γύψ in the *Iliad* the sequence evokes an image of a group of carrion-eating vultures that will soon surround the corpses of dead Trojan warriors on the battlefield. From an ornithological point of view the description is apt since vultures such as the Griffon Vulture, Black Vulture and Egyptian Vulture collectively feed on carrion which includes human corpses, and they can feed on them together with dogs.<sup>368</sup>

<sup>368</sup> For the habits and distributions of the suggested species see Cramp & Simmons 1977, 58–61, 64–67, 73–76, 89–91; Svensson & Grant 2006, 70–75. Boraston suggests the same species. Boraston 1911, 216, 239. For vultures in Homer and other ancient sources, see also Pollard 1977, 80; Arnott 2007, 60–61; Thompson 1936, 82; Keller 1913, 30–36. See also Voultziadou & Tatalos who suggest the Griffon Vulture, Voultziadou & Tatalos 2008, 307.

*Interactions and functions in the scene*

Polydamas used the vultures as images in a speech where he prophesied about vultures that would feed on many of the Trojan warriors if they stayed on the plain until dawn. He used his “vulture image” as a way to warn Hector and the Trojan warriors to stay on the Scamander Plain. This was his way to motivate them to return to the city and inside the Trojan walls.<sup>369</sup> As have been argued also in other scenes with carrion eating vultures in the *Iliad*, they refer to mutilation of human bodies.<sup>370</sup> They further imply horror and tragedy since the vultures’ feeding on human corpses means that the bodies will not be treated in the proper way according to tradition.<sup>371</sup>

So what happened after the scene? Were any Trojan corpses devoured by vultures? At first Hector answered Polydamas aggressively and rejected his advice. Hector once again referred to Zeus, who had allowed him to win glory at the ships, and in no way would he allow the Trojans to obey Polydamas. Instead he ordered them to take their meal out on the plain and to stay where they were.<sup>372</sup> The next day Zeus asked Athena to put nectar and ambrosia into the breast of Achilles, and not long after, Achilles armed for battle and went to the plain to fight the Trojans. Achilles was especially eager to face Hector in combat.<sup>373</sup> Further on in the action Apollo advised Hector not to meet Achilles alone in close combat but to await him in the mass of men. Hector was seized with fear after hearing the voice of the god. Achilles then killed many Trojan warriors, of whom the last one was Polydorus, Hector’s brother. When Hector saw his brother being killed by Achilles he went to face him in combat. This was their first physical clash, and this time Apollo saved Hector. When Achilles understood that Apollo had interfered he focussed on the other Trojan warriors, many of whom were brutally killed by him.<sup>374</sup> It is not explicitly mentioned whether any of the fallen Trojans became food for carrion-eating vultures on the plain. Their bodies were damaged and mutilated, however, by Achilles and the Achaeans in different ways during that day.<sup>375</sup> In this way the vultures in the scene are possibly also associated with Achaean warriors who mutilate and damage bodies of Trojan warriors.<sup>376</sup>

369 Edwards comments that corpses eaten by vultures and dogs are a common motif in the *Iliad*, used for warnings, threats and taunts. Edwards 1991, 178. See also Griffin 1976, 169–172.

370 See for example *Il.* 18.170–179. For the theme of the mutilation of the corpses in the *Iliad*, see Segal 1971.

371 See for example *Il.* 7.79–80 and 15.350–351.

372 See *Il.* 18.285–314.

373 See *Il.* 19.342–20.76.

374 *Il.* 20.376–503.

375 See for example *Il.* 20.381–400.

376 Also see Edwards who comments that Polydamas’ prediction comes true at *Il.* 21.606–611. Edwards 1991, 178. This episode tells us of the Trojans who luckily fled inside the Trojan walls. Also see Willcock who comments that Polydamas’ words in line 18.272 *ἀπ’ οὐρατος* means “unheard”. He adds that Polydamas wished to avoid a bad omen by saying, “May my words be as if they had not been said.” Willcock further refers to *Il.* 22.456 where Andromache uses the same expression. Willcock 1984, 266. The idea seems to be here that it is dangerous to make threatening images and speak aloud about them since they may then come true. Also see Hainsworth, who identifies line 18.272 as an omen that is an example of “unlucky words”. The other omen categories he mentions are eagles, rainbows, thunder, and lightning. Hainsworth 1993, 182.

**Scene 27 – Il. 18.614–617**

614 Αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ πάνθ' ὅπλα κάμει κλυτὸς ἀμφιγυῖης,  
 615 μητρὸς Ἀχιλλῆος θῆκε προπάροιθεν ἀείρας.  
 616 ἣ δ' ἴρηξ ὣς ἄλτο κατ' Οὐλύμπου νιφέντος,  
 617 τεύχεα μαρμαίροντα παρ' Ἥφαιστοιο φέρουσα.

*But when the glorious god of the two lame legs had fashioned all the armor, he took and laid it before the mother of Achilles. And like a **falcon** she sprang down from snowy Olympus, carrying the flashing armor from Hephaestus.*

(Il. 18.614–617)

**Background**

As reported Hector did not follow Polydamas advice to return to the city. He ordered the Trojans instead to fight again at the ships at dawn. At that the Trojans shouted aloud in assent since Athena had taken away their senses. They had their meal and stayed on the plain while the Achaeans lamented that night for Patroclus. Achilles promised Patroclus that he would not give him a burial until he had brought the armour and Hector's head there and cut the throats of twelve glorious sons of the Trojans. Thetis then came to Hephaestus and asked him to help her making a new helmet and armour for Achilles. Achilles' shield is then described in detail.<sup>377</sup>

**Analysis**

Aspects	Scene 27 – Il. 18.614–617
<b>Ornithology</b>	
Greek bird reference	ἴρηξ (18.616)
Lexica	LSJ s.v. 'hawk, falcon, ...Il.13.62, cf. 819' Cunliffe s.v. 'A bird of the falcon kind, a falcon or hawk'
Behaviour and characteristics	Presumably a swift bird of prey that flies down from a mountain.
Time context	Unspecific
Spatial context	Unspecific, but Mount Olympus is referred to.
Ornithological accuracy	Medium
Suggested taxonomic status	A falcon, presumably the Peregrine, <i>Falco peregrinus</i>
<b>Form</b>	Metaphorical
<b>Interactions</b>	
Birds and birds	-
Birds and other animals	-
Birds and humans	-
Birds and gods	Describes the goddess Thetis in a falcon-like parallel way when she left Hephaestus and sprang down from snowy Mount Olympus. She was intending to meet Achilles and give the shield and armour to him.

<sup>377</sup> Il. 18.284–613.



## THE BIRD SCENES

Aspects	Scene 27 – <i>Il.</i> 18.614–617
<b>Functions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A falcon-specific metaphorical parallel that brings information about Thetis when she sprang down from Mount Olympus and moved towards Achilles at Troy.</li> <li>• Indicates that she departed and disappeared from Hephaestus very quickly.</li> <li>• Indicates that her movements were very swift and light and that she transported herself with ease.</li> <li>• Gives her disappearance and movements a kind of wild and avian character.</li> </ul>

### Comments and interpretation

#### *Ornithology and form*

The falcon appears in metaphorical form.<sup>378</sup> This is the fifth time *ἵρηνξ* occurs in the *Iliad*. In three of the cases the speed of this bird has clearly been emphasised.<sup>379</sup> There is no information in the scene that describes the *ἵρηνξ* exclusively. It says only, *And like a falcon she sprang down from snowy Olympus* (18.616). Since the falcon describes Thetis in a metaphorical way we can presume that the *ἵρηνξ* is a bird that moves fast and with ease since gods and goddesses move in such ways, and that it is a bird that is connected to mountains since Thetis left Mount Olympus.<sup>380</sup>

As argued before the Peregrine is considered the fastest bird of prey.<sup>381</sup> Its quick flight and the fact that it occurs in mountainous environments<sup>382</sup> makes it appropriate to describe Thetis who left Olympus at this moment.

#### *Interactions and functions in the scene*

The metaphorical falcon describes Thetis and her movements at a moment when she needed to transport herself to Achilles. This is the first time that a female is metaphorically paralleled to a falcon in the *Iliad*. As argued the use of a falcon indicates that she departed from Hephaestus quickly, that her movements were very swift and light, and that she transported herself with ease.<sup>383</sup> The falcon further emphasises her wild and avian character when moving.

<sup>378</sup> Also see Edwards 1991, 30, 233.

<sup>379</sup> For the previous occurrences that mention *ἵρηνξ*, see analysis and interpretation of SCENES 14, 16, and 18. *Il.* 15.229-245.

<sup>380</sup> Also see Edwards who discusses that gods always move quickly and that Thetis again hurries to meet her son at *Il.* 24.121. Edwards 1991, 233.

<sup>381</sup> Cramp & Simmons 1980, 366; Svensson & Grant 2006, 98; Génsbøl 1995, 384.

<sup>382</sup> See Cramp & Simmons 1980, 362.

See also Voultziadou & Tatolas who suggest that *ἵρηνξ* and *κίρκος* in Homer is a Peregrine. Voultziadou & Tatolas 2008, 307. See also Arnott 2007, 66–68; Thompson 1936, 114–115; Keller 1913, 13–26; Boraston 1911, 216; Pollard 1977, 80–81 and Janko 1992, 51.

<sup>383</sup> Leaf remarks that the use of line 18.614 is very rare and he comments that it seems strange that Thetis leaves without a word of thanks. Leaf 1900, 316.

**Scene 28 – *Il.* 19.342–356**

342 “Τέκνον ἐμόν, δὴ πάμπαν ἀποίχεται ἀνδρὸς ἐῆος.  
 343 ἢ νῦ τοι οὐκέτι πάγχυ μετὰ φρεσὶ μέμβλετ’ Ἀχιλλεύς;  
 344 κείνος ὃ γε προπάροιθε νεῶν ὀδοκραιράων  
 345 ἦσται ὀδυρόμενος ἔταρον φίλον· οἱ δὲ δὴ ἄλλοι  
 346 οἴχονται μετὰ δεῖπνον, ὃ δ’ ἄμμηρος καὶ ἄπαστος.  
 347 ἀλλ’ ἴθι οἱ νέκταρ τε καὶ ἀμβροσίην ἐρατεινὴν  
 348 στάξον ἐνὶ στήθεσσ’, ἵνα μὴ μιν λιμὸς ἴκηται.”  
 349 Ὡς εἰπὼν ὄτρυνε πάρος μεμαυῖαν Ἀθήνην·  
 350 ἣ δ’ ἄρπη εἰκυῖα ταυπτέρυγι λιγυφώνῳ  
 351 οὐρανοῦ ἐκκατεπᾶλτο δι’ αἰθέρος, αὐτὰρ Ἀχαιοὶ  
 352 αὐτίκα θωρήσσοντο κατὰ στρατόν· ἣ δ’ Ἀχιλῆϊ  
 353 νέκταρ ἐνὶ στήθεσσι καὶ ἀμβροσίην ἐρατεινὴν  
 354 στάξ’, ἵνα μὴ μιν λιμὸς ἀτερπῆς γούναθ’ ἴκοιτο·  
 355 αὐτὴ δὲ πρὸς πατρός ἐρισθενέος πυκινὸν δῶ  
 356 ᾗχετο, τοὶ δ’ ἀπάνευθε νεῶν ἐχέοντο θοάων.

“My child, you utterly forsake your own warrior. Is there then no place in you thoughts any more for Achilles? He sits there in front of his ships with raised sterns mourning for his dear comrade; the others have gone to their meal, but he fasts and will have nothing of food. But go, shed into his breast nectar and pleasant ambrosia so that hunger may not come to him.”

So saying he urged on Athene, who was already eager: and she like a **falcon**, wide of wing and shrill of voice, leapt down from heaven through the air. And the Achaeans were arming themselves speedily for battle throughout the camp; and she shed nectar and pleasant ambrosia into the breast of Achilles so that grievous hunger should not come upon his limbs; and then herself was gone to the well-built house of her mighty sire, and the Achaeans poured out from the swift ships.

(*Il.* 19.342–356)

**Background**

When *Il.* 19 starts it was dawn and Thetis came to the ships and Achilles with his new armour. No men dared to look at the armour that evoked their fear. To Achilles the armour however made his wrath increase and he rejoiced as he held the gifts of Hephaestus in his hands. He then told Thetis that he would arm himself for battle. Achilles then gathered and roused the Achaean warriors. When King Agamemnon came Achilles declared that he no longer felt wrath towards him. Agamemnon protected himself by saying that it was not he who was at fault, but Zeus and Fate and the Erinyes who had cast blindness on his mind. Agamemnon advised him to think quickly about battle. Odysseus then reminded the men that the god breathed might in both armies and advised Agamemnon to let them have a meal with wine first to strengthen the warriors before combat. Achilles disapproved of the idea since he was thinking of the Achaeans who were lying on the plain unburied. He could not eat or drink until his comrade was revenged. Then Agamemnon sacrificed a bear and the Achaeans had their meal. The elders begged Achilles to eat but Achilles still refused. In tears he told the others that he could suffer nothing worse than this and he started to think of his father wondering if he was dead. The elders added their laments as they all remembered the ones they had left at home. Zeus saw them as they mourned and pitied them. Immediately he spoke to Athena.

THE BIRD SCENES

**Analysis**

Aspects	Scene 28 – Il. 19.342–356
<p><b>Ornithology</b></p> <p>Greek bird reference</p> <p>Lexica</p> <p>Behaviour and characteristics</p> <p>Time context</p> <p>Spatial context</p> <p>Ornithological accuracy</p> <p>Suggested taxonomic status</p>	<p><i>ἄρπη</i> (19.350)</p> <p>LSJ s.v. <i>ἄρπη</i>, ‘unknown <i>bird of prey</i>, prob. <i>shearwater</i>...Il.19.350’</p> <p>Cunliffe s.v. ‘An unknown bird of prey’</p> <p>Wide of wing and with a shrill voice. Is probably moving, i.e., flying from a mountain and through the air.</p> <p>Unspecific</p> <p>Is probably flying downwards through the air from a high mountain.</p> <p>High</p> <p>Lammergeier, <i>Gypaetus barbatus</i>.</p>
<p><b>Form</b></p>	<p>Metaphorical</p>
<p><b>Interactions</b></p> <p>Birds and birds</p> <p>Birds and other animals</p> <p>Birds and humans</p> <p>Birds and gods</p>	<p>-</p> <p>-</p> <p>-</p> <p>Describes Athena in a Lammergeier-like parallel way when she left Zeus and leapt down from Olympus. She was intended to meet Achilles and shed ambrosia and nectar in his breast to take away his hunger.</p>
<p><b>Functions</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A vulture-specific metaphorical parallel that gives information about Athena when she leapt down from heaven through the air having the intention to still Achilles hunger.</li> <li>• Indicates that she moved lightly and that she transported herself with ease, and that she probably moved in an imposing and rather slow way.</li> <li>• Indicates that she was crying shrilly as she left the mountain.</li> <li>• Gives her disappearing, movements, transportation and voice a kind of wild avian character.</li> <li>• The shedding of ambrosia and nectar into Achilles’ breast possibly associates to a Lammergeier that feeds its chick by regurgitation.</li> </ul>

## Comments and interpretation

### *Ornithology and form*

The ἄρπη in the scene appears in metaphorical form.<sup>384</sup> According to Edwards this word is a hapax that appears only here in poetry.<sup>385</sup> The two characteristics that are described are that this bird is *wide of wing* (19.350)<sup>386</sup> and *shrill of voice* (19.350).<sup>387</sup> Athena who left Zeus and from Mount Olympus *leapt down from heaven through the air* (19.351) probably also associate to the environment and behaviour of this bird.

The ἄρπη in the scene is by Murray & Wyatt translated as “falcon”.<sup>388</sup> In other scenes that describes a falcon, it is the high speed of this bird or its role as a bird of prey that is mainly referred to. The ἄρπη is not described here with those two characteristics. It is instead its width of wing and shrill voice that is emphasised. These details indicate a larger bird than a falcon and a bird that dwells in mountains. Edwards suggests that ἄρπη is a sea-bird<sup>389</sup>, but I do not find that likely since Athena leaves from Mount Olympus. A sea-bird simply does not fit in the physical environment.<sup>390</sup> According to Leaf ἄρπη is presumably from its name a bird of prey that he finds cannot be identified.<sup>391</sup> Pollard refers to Dionysius’ detailed and generally accurate description of the Lammergeier, under “Harpies”. According to Pollard the Lammergeier was however known to Homer as the φήνη or the αἰγυπιός.<sup>392</sup> Since different bird names can signify one and the same bird in the *Iliad*,<sup>393</sup> and since the bird in this scene is not described with the usual characteristics of a falcon in the *Iliad*, I suggest that ἄρπη may here be an alternative name for the Lammergeier. Athena has further in *Il.* 7 together with Apollo appeared in the physical form of an αἰγυπιός, which I in agreement with some scholars have suggested is a Lammergeier.<sup>394</sup>

The Lammergeier is essentially a raptor found in mountainous regions and wildernesses. Its large size and characteristic shape make an imposing impression. The sexes are similar. Svensson & Grant describes the Lammergeier as huge and especially long-

384 According to Edwards *ἐκνύα* (19.350) suggests a metamorphosis and not simply a simile and he also emphasises that speed is the essential point and that a decision is hard to make. Edwards 1991, 275. I would like to question whether speed is the essential point in the scene, but agree in that there may be an ambiguity concerning Athena’s form.

385 Edwards 1991, 275.

386 LSJ *τανύπτερος* ‘...οἰωνοί *Il.* 12.237; ἄρπη 19.350.’ See also *τανύπτερος* ‘with extended wings, long-winged.’

387 LSJ s.v. *λιγύφωνος* ‘clear-voiced, loud voiced.’ According to Boraston the word *λιγύς* is used by Homer to denote the shrill sounds of wind and of human wailing. Boraston 1911, 227–229. See LSJ s.v. *λιγύς*, and LSJ intermediate ‘clear, whistling, of winds, ...of a clear, sweet sound, clear-toned, *Il.* Adv. shrilly, Hom.; clearly, *Il.*’

388 Also see LSJ and Cunliffe s.v. ἄρπη according to above.

389 Edwards 1991, 275. See also *Ar.HA.* ix 2.4.

390 See Boraston for a similar interpretation. Boraston 1911, 228.

391 Leaf 1900, 342. But cf. Boraston who suggests Kite, Boraston 1911, 216, 227–228. Edwards mentions hawk as another possible alternative. Edwards 1991, 30, see also 275. Voultziadou and Tatolas suggest falcon. Voultziadou & Tatolas 2008, 307.

392 Pollard 1977, 79 based on Dionys. *Av.* i.4. Also see LSJ s.v. φήνη ‘A kind of vulture, perh. lammergeyer, *Gypaëtus barbatus*’. Cunliffe: s.v. ‘A bird not identified, commonly taken as the sea-eagle or the lammergeyer.’ See also Arnott who says, “Homer’s comparison of Athena...also picks out features that characterise the Lammergeier, whose wingspread is two and a half times its length and whose voice is a loud squeal. In Sicily arpe and in Spain harpa are still used as names for the Lammergeier.” Arnott 2007, 64.

393 See SCENE 17.

394 See SCENE 8. In SCENE 18, Apollo however went down from the hills of Mount Ida like a fleet falcon, see *Il.* 15.336–337.

winged, with uniquely narrow and pointed wings for being such a large raptor. As has been mentioned previously, the flight silhouette sometimes suggests a large falcon.

Its call is characteristic and shrill in tone. When listening to it one gets the impression that there is breath coming in the tone resembling the sound of a transverse or silver flute, which is interesting when considering the meaning of the word *λιγύς* on line 19.350.<sup>395</sup> Cramp & Simmons describes its call during aerial displays as a “shrill, querulous screaming or whistling”. They also describe loud squeelings, a piercing whistle, and a high-pitched, piping ‘fiiij’ or ‘biidj’ that sometimes develop into a trill.<sup>396</sup> In active flight the Lammergeier uses slow, soft and elastic wingbeats.<sup>397</sup> Since the Lammergeier is essentially a raptor found in mountains and wildernesses I find that it fits well to the environmental context in the scene.<sup>398</sup>

#### *Interactions and functions in the scene*

Regarding the ornithological details according to the above, I suggest that the use of the *ἄρπη* indicates that Athena moved lightly and that she transported herself with ease towards Achilles. There is nothing in the descriptions that tell us about speed. I suggest rather that Athena moved in an imposing and rather slow way that could be similar to a Lammergeier’s way of moving. The *ἄρπη* emphasises Athena’s wild and avian character when moving and we can suspect that when she left Mount Olympus she uttered a shrill call that was like the Lammergeiers’ shrill, querulous screaming or whistling.

There is no information that describes whether Achilles observed or recognised Athena when she shed nectar and ambrosia into his breast or how this activity was carried out.<sup>399</sup> Since Lammergeiers partly feed their chick by regurgitation even when it is rather large,<sup>400</sup> Athena’s shedding of ambrosia and nectar into Achilles breast might associate to this activity within the avian sphere.<sup>401</sup> After the interaction between her and Achilles she returned back to Zeus and Mount Olympus.

395 See note 387.

396 Cramp & Simmons 1980, 58–62. Also see Génsbøl 1995, 106, 312–313 and del Hoyo et al. 2004, 195, 125.

397 Génsbøl 1995, 312–313.

398 There is a decrease in the number of Lammergeiers in Greece and in most parts of the world. They were resident on Mount Olympus in Central Greece until 1995 but are rarely seen there nowadays. Uludağ, the ancient Mysian Olympus, that is a 2,543 m high mountain in the Bursa province in Turkey, is still a refuge for mountain birds such as the Lammergeiers, Golden Eagle and more than 20 raptor species. For more details, reports about the distribution of Lammergeiers in Europe and particularly Greece, and Anatolia, see Heredia & Heredia 1994, 152–153, Handrinos & Akritis 1997, and Heredia, Rose & Painter 1996. Also see [http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/conservation/wildbirds/action\\_plans/docs/gypaetus\\_barbatus.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/conservation/wildbirds/action_plans/docs/gypaetus_barbatus.pdf) and [http://www.ornithologiki.gr/page\\_iba.php?aID=44&loc=en](http://www.ornithologiki.gr/page_iba.php?aID=44&loc=en)

399 As mentioned previously, nectar and ambrosia were the food of the gods and were used also to preserve human flesh. See *Il.* 19.37–39. According to West Achilles receives necessary sustenance before fighting through divine agency. It is natural that Athena supply Achilles needs even if she intervenes on Zeus’ instructions. West 2011, 359.

400 Regurgitation is “the ejecting of food through the mouth, for example to feed nestlings” Erritzoe et al. 2007, 220. The Lammergeier chick later feeds itself from food brought to the nest, but the age is not known. Cramp & Simmons 1980, 62.

401 The Lammergeier male plays a more intimate part in the care of his young. Though the chick is capable of swallowing bulky food from an early age, it is also fed by both male and female by complete and incomplete regurgitation and is fed small morsels into its bill even when it is quite large. Cramp & Simmons 1980, 62, see also 58–59. Cf. also West who suggests that the idea of the infusion is adapted from *Il.* 19.37–39. West 2011, 359–360.

**Scene 29 – *Il.* 21.248–256**

248 οὐδέ τ' ἔληγε θεὸς μέγας, ὦρτο δ' ἐπ' αὐτῷ  
 249 ἀκροκελαινιῶν, ἵνα μιν παύσειε πόνοιο  
 250 δῖον Ἀχιλλεῖα, Τρώεσσι δὲ λοιγὸν ἀλάλκοι.  
 251 Πηλεΐδης δ' ἀπόρουσεν ὅσον τ' ἐπὶ δουρὸς ἐρωή,  
 252 αἰετοῦ οἶματ' ἔχων μέλανος τοῦ θηρητῆρος,  
 253 ὅς δ' ἅμα κάρτιστός τε καὶ ὠκιστος πετεηνῶν.  
 254 τῷ εἰκὼς ἦϊξεν, ἐπὶ στήθεσσι δὲ χαλκός  
 255 σμερδαλέον κονάβιζεν· ἕπαιδα δὲ τοῖο λιασθεῖς  
 256 φεῦγ', ὃ δ' ὄπισθε ῥέων ἔπετο μεγάλῳ ὄρμαγδῷ.

*But the great god ceased  
 not, but rushed on him with dark-crested wave, so that he  
 might stay noble Achilles from his harbor, and ward off  
 disaster from the Trojans. But the son of Peleus Achilles  
 rushed back as far as a spear-cast with a swoop of a black  
 eagle, the mighty hunter, that is both the mightiest and  
 swiftest of winged things; like him he darted, and on his  
 chest the bronze rang terribly while he swerved from  
 beneath the flood and fled ever onwards, and the river  
 followed after, flowing with a mighty roar.*

(Il. 21.248–256)

**Background**

The Achaeans and Trojans armed themselves for battle. Zeus asked Themis *to summon the gods to the place of assembly from the brow of many-ridged Olympus* (*Il.* 20.4–5) and there he told them that even if he cared for the humans, even though they would die, he wanted to gaze at them and give his mind enjoyment from Mount Olympus. He then allowed the other gods to assist whomever they wanted to assist. At that the gods urged the two armies on to clash in battle and at the same time the gods themselves clashed in strife. Against Hephaestus stood the great deep-eddying river that the gods called Xanthus, and men called Scamander, and among the humans Achilles was eager to meet Hector. Hector wanted to face Achilles, too, in combat but Apollo advised him to await him in the mass of men. When Hector saw his brother Polydorus being killed by Achilles he could no longer wait but went to face Achilles. When Hector hurled his spear Athena turned it back with a breath, and when Achilles leapt on Hector Apollo snatched him up and shrouded him in a thick mist. Since Achilles realized that it was not time yet for the final combat between him and Hector, he leapt among the other Trojans and killed many of them. When he had killed Lycaon, another of the sons of King Priam, he threw his body into the Scamander River. At that the river god grew angry and wanted to stop him from killing more Trojans. But Achilles continued to kill Trojans and to throw their bodies into the river, making the river god even angrier. In the likeness of a man the river god told Achilles to at least do his grim work on the plain. Achilles accepted this, but did not stop slaying the Trojans.<sup>402</sup> In line *Il.* 21.227 it says that Achilles *rushed on the Trojans like a god* (*Il.* 21.227), and he then *sprang from the bank and leapt into the middle of the stream* (*Il.* 21.233–234). The river rushed after Achilles with a surging flood, casting out the dead that Achilles had slain on the

<sup>402</sup> *Il.* 19.357–21.226.

THE BIRD SCENES

land, and bellowing like a bull. The warriors who were still alive he saved under his fair streams. Achilles then tried to save himself by grasping an elm but it fell uprooted and dammed the river itself. Achilles managed to get up of the river, and was seized with fear for it when he quickly ran over the plain.

**Analysis**

Aspects	Scene 29 – Il. 21.248–256
<b>Ornithology</b>	
Greek bird reference	<i>αἰετός</i> (21.252)
Lexica	LSJ s.v. ‘eagle, as a bird of omen,...Il.8.247, cf. Il.2.01... favourite of Zeus...Il.24.310’ Cunliffe s.v. ‘An eagle’
Behaviour and characteristics	Is considered the mightiest and swiftest of winged things. It is swooping, black/dark, and is called the mighty hunter.
Time context	Unspecific
Spatial context	Unspecific, but associates to the air.
Ornithological accuracy	High
Suggested taxonomic status	An Eagle, possibly an adult Verreaux’s Eagle, <i>Aquila verreauxii</i>
<b>Form</b>	Metaphorical
<b>Interactions</b>	
Birds and birds	Is described as <i>the mighty hunter</i> (21.252) but does not hunt any other bird in the scene.
Birds and other animals	Is described as <i>the mighty hunter</i> (21.252) but does not hunt any other animal in the scene.
Birds and humans	Describes Achilles in an eagle-like parallel way when he ran away from the flood that was sent on him by the river god Scamander. The “eagle metaphor” indicates that there was something unusual and more-than-human about Achilles at this moment.
Birds and gods	The Scamander River is related to the river god Scamander.
<b>Functions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An eagle-specific metaphorical parallel that describes Achilles when he ran away from the flood.</li> <li>• Brings information about Achilles at this moment in time and space.</li> <li>• Shows Achilles’ great speed and powerful and yet effortless movements when he ran away from the flood and the river god.</li> <li>• Indicates Achilles high status as a human and as a warrior.</li> <li>• The eagle as a “hunter” indicates that Achilles was still focussed on killing Trojans even if he ran away from the flood.</li> <li>• Indicates that he was not afraid of the flood at this moment.</li> </ul>

Aspects	Scene 29 – Il. 21.248–256
Functions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gives his movements and states a kind of wild and avian hunter-character.</li> <li>• Signals that Achilles surpassed his human limits at this moment which may be a result of double motivation.</li> </ul>

### Comments and interpretation

#### *Ornithology and form*

The eagle appears in metaphorical form and is described parallelly to Achilles when he rushed back from the flood: i.e., he rushed: *with a swoop of a black eagle, the mighty hunter, that is both the mightiest and swiftest of winged things* (21.252–253). All these details are specifications, and the sequence focusses on the many qualities of this eagle, i.e., mainly its capacity to swoop, its strength as a powerful hunter and its swiftness.<sup>403</sup> As has been mentioned previously, the Peregrine is the fastest of all birds. To describe the black eagle as the swiftest is thus an error. Eagles are also very fast flying birds, however, and we need to search here for a species of eagle with a capacity to fly rapid. The fact that the *αἰετός* in the scene is described as the mightiest *and* swiftest emphasises its superiority over other birds. Its colour is further described as *μέλανος* (21.252), *black*, according to Murray & Wyatt.<sup>404</sup> Together the qualities of this bird imply excellence and high status among birds. The descriptions of the eagle suggest a species that is black or at least very dark and one being one of the most powerful and fast flying eagles of them all.

Verreaux's Eagle, *Aquila verreauxii*, also known as the Black Eagle,<sup>405</sup> is connected with the wilderness. Its habitat is the exclusively wild, extensive, mountainous regions. It apparently has favourable sites and territories, and shows a tendency to prefer a neighbourhood with eyries of other large birds of prey.<sup>406</sup> It has a very restricted distribution today and occurs in south Chad and west Sudan and from Israel, Egypt (Sinai) and the south east Arabian Peninsula and south Ethiopia.<sup>407</sup> The Verreaux's Eagle is a dark and very large eagle that is heavier than the Golden Eagle. Génsbøl describes it as the largest eagle in the west Palearctic.<sup>408</sup> According to Svensson & Grant "...the adult is striking with black plumage with large whitish 'windows' on the primaries above and

403 According to Willcock this eagle as the hunter is referred to again at *Il.* 24.316. Willcock 1984, 289. See SCENE 35.

404 LSJ s.v. *μέλας* 'Il. 24.79...black, dark: in Hom. generally, dark in colour... Il. 4.149, 23.693'. Richardson refers to the eagle as "a dark one, the hunter" and mentions some different interpretations that have been made. Among them some scholars read *μελανόσπου* ('black-eyed'), but Richardson does not find this interpretation plausible. He also mentions one extraordinary conjecture *μελανόσπου* ('black-boned'), attributed to Aristotle, which he says is apparently relying on Democritus' view that eagles have black bones (68 B 22 D-K). Richardson, 1993, 73–74. This is, as Leaf points out, zoologically false. Leaf 1900, 403.

405 Also known as Kaffer Adler in German.

406 Cramp & Simmon s 1980, 245. Also see Génsbøl 1995, 186.

407 del Hoyo et al. 2004, 198.

408 Génsbøl 1995, 346. See also Cramp & Simmons 1980, 245–251; Svensson & Grant, 2006, 80.



below, and white sides to mantle and white rump/uppertail coverts, together forming a large U (in flight) or V (at rest) on upperbody.<sup>409</sup> The flight silhouette is very characteristic: it soars with the wings raised in a distinct V.<sup>410</sup> Cramp & Simmons say that the Verreaux's Eagle has longer wings than the Golden Eagle and that it is very powerful in flight. It flies both gracefully and effortlessly and is an excellent hunter that feeds mainly on medium-sized mammals. It hunts over open upland habitats usually by systematic quartering and may stoop down prey almost vertically with folded wings. People who have observed the Verreaux's Eagle express that to see it is to watch something exceptional.<sup>411</sup>

*Interactions and functions in the scene*

There are many points of comparisons and possible associations in the scene between the eagle and Achilles. The most important is the parallel between the eagle's swoop and Achilles' darting away from the flood. One wonders how Achilles looked in this situation. When Achilles darted like a black eagle, he must have run with a considerable speed and exceptional power, since no ordinary human can move as fast as an eagle. If we consider the effortless flight of the Verreaux's Eagle, the choice of bird may also indicate that Achilles were running very lightly. How Achilles could move in such a light and unusual way at this moment is an open question. His more-than human capabilities can be explained by the fact that he was a hero who was born by a goddess and/or because he was temporary supported by a god, possibly Athena and/or Zeus. There is certainly an ambiguity in the scene concerning this question, but I would like to suggest that we can consider the phenomenon double motivation in this case.<sup>412</sup> When considering different levels and balances of strength and power it is further interesting to compare with SCENE 32, where Hector is paralleled to a fleeing dove when he fled from Achilles (a falcon). In the scene under discussion Achilles moved away from the river as a powerful eagle.<sup>413</sup>

The way it is described in the scene, the eagle emphasises Achilles as an avian and wild hunter. It may seem surprising that Achilles fled from the river while he coevally is

409 Svensson, & Grant 2006, 80.

410 Svensson & Grant, 2006, 80.

411 Cramp & Simmons 1980, 245–251. Also see Boraston who suggests Golden Eagle for the bird in the scene. Boraston 1911, 237–238. For eagles in Homer and other ancient sources see Arnott 2007, 2–4; Thompson 1936, 2–16; Keller 1913, 1–12. Also see Pollard 1977, 76–79 and Voultziadou & Tatalos who identify the *aietoi* that occur in Homer not as species but as “Eagle”. Voultziadou & Tatalos 2008, 307.

412 See also what happened some moments after Achilles moved from the flood like a black eagle. At that moment Achilles was charged by Athena and Poseidon, and when Athena filled him with great strength, he rushed straight on against the flood. See *Il.* 21.285–304. He could possibly meet the river at that moment since he knew and felt that he had the power to do so. He could give the river god a match. Perhaps we can see that moment and description as an indication that Achilles was earlier, in the scene under discussion, motivated by only one of the gods, presumably Athena.

413 But see also SCENE 33, where Hector is paralleled to an eagle.

described parallelly to an eagle as a hunter. From my point of view it seems that Achilles, fled from the flood because he knew he could not overcome the river god at that moment. A similar situation occurred when Achilles left Hector the moment he saw that he could not stop him since he understood that Hector was motivated by gods.<sup>414</sup> If we also consider line *Il.* 21.227, that says that Achilles *rushed on the Trojans like a god*, Achilles' activities make sense. Achilles ran away from the flood like an eagle intending to hunt since his aim was to hunt/chase Trojans and then kill them. The choice of eagle further seems to indicate that he was not afraid of the flood in the way that Hector was afraid of Achilles in SCENE 32.

The passage that describes the eagle as *both the mightiest and swiftest of winged things* (21.253) may allude to Achilles as the strongest and swiftest among all humans. I further suggest that the Verreaux's Eagle, as the large, strong and excellent bird of prey it is, marks Achilles' status not only as a human but as a warrior.<sup>415</sup>

### Scene 30– *Il.* 21.489–496

489 Ἥρα, καὶ ἀμφοτέρως ἐπὶ καρπῶν χειρῶς ἔμαρπτε  
490 σκaiῆ, δεξιτερῆ δ' ἄρ' ἀπ' ὤμων αἶνυτο τόξα,  
491 αὐτοῖσιν δ' ἄρ' ἔθεινε παρ' οὐατα μειδιόωσα  
492 ἐντροπαλιζομένην· ταχέες δ' ἔκπιπτον ὀϊστοί.  
493 δακρυόεσσα δ' ὑπαιδα θεὰ φύγεν ὡς τε πέλεια,  
494 ἣ ἴα δ' ὑπ' ἴρηκος κοίλην εἰσέπτατο πέτρην,  
495 κρηαμόν· οἶδ' ἄρα τῆ γε ἀλώμεναι αἴσιμον ἦεν·  
496 ὡς ἣ δακρυόεσσα φύγεν, λίπε δ' αὐτόθι τόξα.

*She spoke and caught both the other's hands by the wrist with her left hand, and with her right took the bow and its arrows from her shoulders, and with these same weapons, smiling the while, she beat her about the ears, as she turned this way and that; and the swift arrows fell out of the quiver. Then weeping the goddess fled from before her like a dove that from before a falcon flies into a hollow rock, a cleft – nor is it her fate to be taken; so Artemis fled weeping, and left her bow and arrows where they lay.*

(*Il.* 21.489–496)

### Background

The Xanthus/Scamander River almost completely captured Achilles since gods are mightier than men. Athena however strengthened Achilles so that he rushed towards the flood. This made the river god Scamander ask his brother, the flood Simoïs to help him stop Achilles. Then also the other gods intervened. Hephaestus set the plain on fire and he burned the many dead that Achilles had slain. Burned too was the river, and the angered river god asked Hephaestus to cease from strife. Finally Hera made Hephaestus stop blaze fire on the river, but the gods were annoyed by what had happened so they started to clash in strife. As Zeus saw them fighting he laughed with joy. Hera

<sup>414</sup> See *Il.* 20. 438–454 and the “Background” of the scene.

<sup>415</sup> Gregory Nagy focusses on this theme in his book *The best of the Achaeans* from 1979. Also see *Il.* 19.216 where Odysseus calls Achilles *far the mightiest of the Achaeans* (*Il.* 19.216). Richardson argues that the river's pursuit of Achilles' is expressed in two contrasting similes which are a short and rapid one describing Achilles' flight, and a more leisurely and detailed one for the pursuit. He further notes that the description on line 21.251–256 is similar to that of *Il.* 22.138–144, which he defines as a hawk simile describing flight and pursuit. Richardson 1993, 73.

THE BIRD SCENES

accused Artemis of opposing her and she told her that she herself was no easy foe for Artemis to rival in strength even if Artemis had a bow.<sup>416</sup> When the scene starts Hera starts beat her physically.

**Analysis**

Aspects	Scene 30 – Il. 21.489–496
<b>Ornithology</b>	
Greek bird reference	<i>πέλαια</i> (21.493) <i>ἰρῆξ</i> (21.494)
Lexica	LSJ s.v. <i>πέλαια</i> ‘dove or pigeon, esp. wild rock-pigeon, <i>Columba livia</i> , Od. 15.527 etc’ Cunliffe s.v. ‘a wild dove or pigeon’ LSJ s.v. <i>ἰρῆξ</i> , ‘hawk, falcon, ...Il.13.62, cf. 819’. Cunliffe s.v. ‘A bird of the falcon kind, a falcon or hawk’
Behaviour and characteristics	<i>πέλαια</i> : Flies before a falcon into a hollow rock, a cleft. <i>ἰρῆξ</i> : Chases a dove from behind.
Time context	<i>πέλαια/ἰρῆξ</i> : Unspecific
Spatial context	<i>πέλαια/ἰρῆξ</i> : Flies before a falcon into a hollow rock, a cleft.
Ornithological accuray	<i>πέλαια/ἰρῆξ</i> : High
Suggested taxonomic status	<i>πέλαια</i> : Rock Dove, <i>Columbia livia</i> <i>ἰρῆξ</i> : Peregrine, <i>Falco peregrinus</i>
<b>Form</b>	Metaphorical
<b>Interactions</b>	
Birds and birds	Hierarchies: a hunter and its presumptive prey. The dove flies before the falcon and tries to escape.
Birds and other animals	-
Birds and humans	-
Birds and gods	<i>πέλαια</i> : Describes Artemis in a dove-like parallel way when she fled before Hera. <i>ἰρῆξ</i> : Describes Hera in a falcon-like parallel way when she chased Artemis from behind.
<b>Functions</b>	<i>πέλαια</i> : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A dove-specific metaphorical parallel that describes Artemis when she fled before Hera.</li> <li>• Brings information about her at this moment in time and space.</li> <li>• Shows Artemis as Hera’s prey.</li> <li>• Shows her fast flight from Hera.</li> <li>• Indicates that she moved slower than Hera.</li> <li>• Emphasises her panic and fear of Hera.</li> </ul>

<sup>416</sup> Il. 21.257–488.

Aspects	Scene 30 – <i>Il.</i> 21.489–496
<b>Functions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shows Artemis as the weaker and inferior of the two.</li> <li>• Gives her movements and flight a kind of wild and avian fleeing prey-character.</li> <li>• Emphasises her spatial position in relation to Hera and indicates the place she tried to escape to, which was where she finally comes to safe haven.</li> </ul> <p><i>ἴεηξ:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A falcon-specific metaphorical parallel that describes Hera when she chased Artemis.</li> <li>• Brings information about her at this moment in time and space.</li> <li>• Shows Hera’s high speed when she chased Artemis and that her speed was faster.</li> <li>• Shows her as the stronger, mightier and superior goddess of the two.</li> <li>• Indicates her aggression against Artemis.</li> <li>• Gives her movements, appearance and hunt a kind of wild and avian hunter-character.</li> <li>• Emphasises her spatial position in relation to Artemis.</li> </ul>

### Comments and interpretation

#### *Ornithology and form*

##### *πέλεια*

The *πέλεια* appears in metaphorical form in the scene. It is described as a *dove that from before a falcon flies into a hollow rock, a cleft* (21.493–494). This is an accurate description of a dove that has to flee from predators such as falcons that are faster flyers. The environment suggests that a Rock Dove has acted as model for the dove in the scene.

The Rock Dove is a common prey for Peregrines. The natural habitat of Rock Doves is linked to its nesting on rock faces, especially coastal. In inland environments it occupies rocky habitats and it occurs where rocks, some vegetation, and permanent water are to be found. In some sites it also nests in deep wells. The Rock Dove moves rapidly with clipped wing beats. It has the most dashing flight of the genus. The loud and sharp wing-clapping is characteristic of birds that fly up in alarm or when they intend to fly some distance. As has been previously argued, this species is further discreet and always on the watch for predators. Its relative timidity towards man is mainly dependent on past treatment by him. At sight of man or any other ground predator a Rock Dove usually freezes in an erect Alarm position with its neck extended and feathers sleeked. It can even start to shake its feathers on these occasions.<sup>417</sup>

<sup>417</sup> Cramp et al. 1985, 285–286, 288, 290; Cramp & Simmons 1980, 366–367; Svensson & Grant 2006, 200. Also see SCENE 18 where an *ἴεηξ* is described as the slayer of doves (*Il.* 15.238). See also Boraston who suggests that *πέλεια* is a Rock Dove, Boraston 1911, 216; 227, and Pollard who also suggests Rock Dove. Pollard 1977, 81. According to Thompson *πέλεια* in Homer undoubtedly means Rock Dove. Thompson 1936, 225–231, esp. 227. Voultziadou & Tatolas suggest Rock Dove. Voultziadou & Tatolas 2008, 307. For doves in antiquity,

ἴσηξ

The ἴσηξ appears in metaphorical form. It is described as an individual hunter of a dove. As discussed above, the Peregrine is known as a skilful dove hunter, which makes this species adequate as a model for the falcon in the scene.<sup>418</sup> As argued this species is considered the fastest bird of prey.<sup>419</sup>

*Interactions and functions in the scene*

πέλεια

The metaphorical dove is a description of Artemis the moment she fled from Hera after Hera had beaten her. Shown in this way Artemis appear as Hera's wild and avian prey, fleeing from her. The falcon emphasises that Artemis moved fast, but that she was slower than Hera. In the fact of its fleeing, it emphasises her panic and fear.<sup>420</sup> Together the dove and the falcon marks the balance of strength and power between the two goddesses. The dove, being the weaker of the two birds, clearly indicates Artemis' inferiority. Lastly, it indicates where Artemis tried to escape: in the scene it is clearly stated that the dove fled *into a hollow rock, a cleft* (21.494–495). Some lines later Artemis came to Zeus at Mount Olympus where she *sat down weeping on her father's knee, while about her the fragrant robe quivered* (21.505–508). When viewing that episode in relation to the bird scene, the hollow rock may associate to Mount Olympus and the cleft to Zeus' knee where Artemis finally found her rescue. Even the robe that quivered may associate to a Rock Dove that shakes its feathers when it gets alarmed. If we consider again the avian perspective, the arrows that fell when Artemis fled from Hera (see 21.496 in the scene), may be associated with wing quills that fall from the wings of a dove after being attacked by a falcon. To sum up, the dove in the scene has an important role, emphasising Artemis' panic and fear of Hera at this moment as well as marking her inferiority.

ἴσηξ

The metaphorical falcon describes and give information about Hera who chased Artemis in a falcon-like flight. It shows that her speed when moving was very high and

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see also Arnott 2007, 170–171; Keller 1913, 122–131, esp. 127.

418 Peregrines almost entirely feed on living birds and that it shows an extremely wide range of species. In some parts of the world are smaller birds as Feral Pigeons, *Columbia livia*, Starlings, *Sturnus vulgaris*, thrushes (Turdidae), and other small birds taken. European data in breeding season emphasises importance of feral Pigeons as main prey, as well as Starling and thrushes. Cramp & Simmons 1980, 366–367.

Also see Pollard who suggests that the falcon in the scene is a Peregrine, Pollard 1977, 81. Boraston suggests Peregrine or the Lanner Falcon. Boraston 1911, 225. Richardson suggests a hawk. Richardson 1993, 73, 95. See also Voultziadou & Tatolas who suggest that ἴσηξ and κίρκος in Homer is a Peregrine. Voultziadou & Tatolas 2008, 307. For falcons in ancient sources, see also Arnott 2007 66–68; Thompson 1936, 114–118; Keller 1913, 13–26.

419 Cramp & Simmons 1980, 362–366; Svensson & Grant 2006, 98; Génsbøl 1995, 384.

420 According to Richardson line 393, “the light, dactylic rhythm suits Artemis' bird-like flight”. Richardson 1993, 95.

that she moved faster than Artemis. The falcon further shows the aggression that Hera felt for Artemis at this moment. It displays her wild and aggressive character and indicates that she was superior and much stronger than Artemis.<sup>421</sup>

### Scene 31– *Il.* 22.38–45

38 “Ἐκτορ μὴ μοι μίμνε φίλον τέκος ἀνέρα τοῦτον  
39 οἶος ἄνευθ’ ἄλλων, ἵνα μὴ τάχα πότμον ἐπίσπης  
40 Πηλεΐωνι δαμείς, ἐπεὶ ἦ πολὺ φέρτερός ἐστι,  
41 σχέτλιος· αἶθε θεοῖσι φίλος τοσσόνδε γένοιτο  
42 ὅσσον ἐμοί· τάχα κέν ἐ κύνες καὶ γῦπες ἔδοιεν  
43 κείμενον· ἦ κέ μοι αἰνὸν ἀπὸ πραπίδων ἄχος ἔλθοι·  
44 ὅς μ’ υἱῶν πολλῶν τε καὶ ἐσθλῶν εὖνιν ἔσθηκε,  
45 κτείνων καὶ περὶ νήσων ἐπι τηλεδαπάων...”

“Hector, my dear child, I pray you, do not face that man alone with no one to aid you, lest quickly you meet your fate, slain by the son of Peleus, since surely he is far the mightier – hard man that he is. I wish that he were as much loved by the gods as he is by me! Then would the dogs and **vultures** speedily devour him as he lay unburied; so would dread sorrow depart from my heart, since he has robbed me of sons many and mighty, slaying them and selling them into distant isles...”

(*Il.* 22.38–45)

### Background

Apollo went to Ilios since he was worried about the Trojan wall while the other gods went to Mount Olympus where they sat down beside Zeus. Achilles continued to chase and slay Trojans. King Priam groaned when he saw Achilles raging and ordered the gatekeepers to open the gates so that the Trojans could get in. Because of Apollo who foiled Achilles, the fleeing Trojans eagerly entered through the gates but Achilles did not. When the Trojans fled like fawns into the city, fate caused Hector to still remain in front of the Scaean gates. King Priam was the first to see Achilles running on the plain. He gleamed like the star that men call the Dog of Orion as he ran and Priam uttered a groan, beating his head with his hands, and raised them on high calling aloud. With a sound of pain, he spoke to his son who stood outside before the gates, eager to do battle with Achilles. Priam spoke to him piteously, stretching out his arms.<sup>422</sup>

### Analysis

Aspects	Scene 31 – <i>Il.</i> 22.38–45
<b>Ornithology</b>	
Greek bird reference	γύψ (22.42)
Lexica	LSJ s.v. ‘vulture, prob. including several species’ Cunliffe s.v. ‘a vulture (except in λ578 always preying on carrion. Cf. αἰγυπιός)’

<sup>421</sup> Richardson suggests that the “hawk-simile” describes a flight and pursuit. Richardson 1993, 73. Jones defines line 21.493 as a simile and comments that “the pigeon/Artemis, attacked by the hawk/Hera, flying/running for protection to the rocks/her father Zeus (as it will emerge, 505–7).” Jones 2003, 284.

<sup>422</sup> *Il.* 21.514–22.37

THE BIRD SCENES

Aspects	Scene 31 – Il. 22.38–45
<b>Ornithology</b>	
Behaviour and characteristics	Collective behaviours. Would quickly devour an unburied human corpse. Scavengers.
Time context	Future
Spatial context	Presumably on the Scamander Plain.
Ornithological accuracy	High
Suggested taxonomic status	The Griffon Vulture, <i>Gyps fulvus</i> , The Black Vulture, <i>Aegyptius monachus</i> and the Egyptian Vulture, <i>Neophron percnopterus</i> .
<b>Form</b>	Image
<b>Interactions</b>	
Birds and birds	Collective behaviours. Vultures that would quickly devour an unburied human corpse.
Birds and other animals	Vultures that quickly would devour a human corpse together with dogs.
Birds and humans	Vultures that quickly would devour Achilles' unburied corpse. King Priam uses the vultures as images in a speech to Hector as a way to express his wishful thinking about the future, and as a way to warn Hector about facing Achilles alone in combat.
Birds and gods	Priam mentioned the gods as if he searched for support from them in his desperate situation.
<b>Functions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Vulture image” that brings information.</li> <li>• Expresses an image of vultures and dogs that would speedily devour Achilles' corpse as he lay unburied.</li> <li>• King Priam used the “vulture image” in a speech as a way to express his wishful thinking about the future and as a way to warn Hector about facing Achilles alone in combat.</li> <li>• Emphasises Priam's worries and fear about Achilles, and his love for Hector .</li> <li>• Implies wild aggression and violent treatment of a human corpse.</li> <li>• Implies horrifying and tragic consequence of human war.</li> <li>• Associated with and foreshadows Achilles' coming mutilation of Hector's body.</li> </ul>

**Comments and interpretation**

The *γύψ* appear in image form. The description of the birds is restricted to one sequence: *Then would the dogs and vultures speedily devour him as he lay unburied* (22.42–43). The description evokes an image of a group of vultures that quickly devour Achilles' corpse. From an ornithological point of view the sequence is suitable since vultures such as Griffon vultures, Black vultures and Egyptian vultures collectively feed on carrion which includes human corpses, and they can feed on them together with dogs.<sup>423</sup>

<sup>423</sup> For the habits and distributions of the suggested species see Cramp & Simmons 1977, 58–61, 64–67, 73–76, 89–91; Svensson & Grant

*Interactions and functions in the scene*

King Priam used the vultures as images in a speech to Hector where he forecasts the future and where the vultures and what he wants them to do are part of his wishful thinking: wanting Achilles devoured by vultures and dogs. If only Achilles was dead and gone Priam's worries would also be gone, and if Achilles body was devoured, Priam would not even *see* him any more. It is interesting to consider that Priam uttered this wish when he actually *saw* Achilles running on the plain towards Hector.<sup>424</sup> I would thus like to suggest that the vulture image strongly contributes to an expression of Priam's inner emotions and wishes at this particular moment and allows us to be privy to them. It is easy to understand Priam's wishes since at this moment is he terrified that Achilles, who has already killed so many of his sons, will also kill Hector.<sup>425</sup> Priam's words are also a warning to stop Hector from fighting Achilles alone and to persuade him to seek protection inside the walls.<sup>426</sup> Priam refers to fate,<sup>427</sup> and the implication of what Priam is saying is that something evil will happen if Hector stays outside the wall and Achilles gets hold of him. Priam mentions the gods in his speech most probably as a way to search for support from them in his desperate situation. Even if Priam does not say it explicitly, the mutilation of Achilles' corpse by vultures and dogs foreshadows the coming mutilation of Hector's body by Achilles. In this way Priam's wishes are answered by the gods in a reversed way.<sup>428</sup> As have been argued in the other scenes that describe vultures devouring human corpses, the image in a deeper sense alludes to the horrifying and tragic consequence of human war.

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2006, 70–75.

Boraston suggests the same species. Boraston 1911, 216, 239. Also see Pollard 1977. Also see Keller who adds the Nubian vulture.

Keller 1913, 30–36. According to Arnott γύψ is the general name for 'Vultures'. Arnott 2007, 60. Thompson pointed out that γύψ was usually used in Homer for birds feeding on carrion. Thompson 1936, 82. Also see Voultziadou & Tatalos, who suggest Griffon Vulture, Voultziadou & Tatalos 2008, 307.

424 See *Il.* 22. 25–37.

425 Edwards discusses that corpses to be eaten by vultures and dogs are a common motif in the *Iliad*, used for warnings, threats and taunts. Edwards 1991, 178. Also see Griffin 1976, 169–172. According to Richardson vultures and dogs that devour human corpses is a persistent theme throughout book 22 that leads to the issue of Hector's burial. Richardson 1993, 110. For mutilation of corpses in the *Iliad*, see also Segal 1971, 33–47. Also see Jones 2001, 290.

426 See also *Il.* 22.56–58. For Hecabe's desperate attempt to persuade Hector to seek protection inside the walls see *Il.* 21.78–89.

427 LSJ s.v. πῶτος 'i. In Hom. always of evil destiny, esp. of death'.

428 Somewhat later in *Il.* 22 the poet describes the beginning of Achilles' mutilation of Hector's body: *Then when he had mounted his chariot and had lifted into it the glorious armor, he touched the horses with the whip to start them, and nothing loath the pair sped onward. And from Hector as he was dragged the dust rose up, and on either side his dark hair flowed outspread, and all in the dust lay the head that was formerly so fair; but now Zeus had given him over to his foes for mutilation in his own native land.* (*Il.* 22. 309–404). See also *Il.* 23.179–191.



Scene 32– *Il.* 22.130–144

130 "... εἶδομεν ὀπποτέρῳ κεν Ὀλύμπιος εὖχος ὀρέξῃ."  
 131 Ὡς ὄρμαινε μένων, ὃ δὲ οἱ σχεδὸν ἦλθεν Ἀχιλλεύς  
 132 Ἴσος Ἐνυαλίῳ κορυθαίϊτι ποταμιστῆι,  
 133 σεῖον Πηλιίδα μελίην κατὰ δεξιὸν ὤμων  
 134 δεινὴν· ἀμφὶ δὲ χαλκὸς ἐλάμπετο εἴκελος αὐγῆ  
 135 ἢ πυρὸς αἰδομένου ἢ ἡελίου ἀνιόντος.  
 136 Ἔκτορα δ', ὡς ἐνόησεν, ἔλε τρόμος· οὐδ' ἄρ' ἔτ' ἔτλη  
 137 αὖθι μένειν, ὅπισω δὲ πύλας λίπε, βῆ δὲ φοβηθεῖς·  
 138 Πηλεΐδης δ' ἐπόρουσε ποσὶ κραιπνοῖσι πεποιδώς.  
 139 ἢ ὅτε κίρκος ὄρεσφιν ἐλαφρότατος πετεηνῶν,  
 140 ἐηϊδίως αἶμησε μετὰ τρήρωνα πέλειαν,  
 141 ἢ δὲ θ' ὕπαιθα φοβεῖται, ὃ δ' ἐγγύθεν ὄξυ λεληκώς  
 142 ταρφέ' ἐπαῖσσει, ἐλέειν τέ ἐ θυμὸς ἀνώγει·  
 143 ὡς ἄρ' ὃ γ' ἐμμεμαῶς ἰδυς πέτετο, τρέσε δ' Ἔκτωρ  
 144 τεῖχος ὑπο Τρώων, λαίψηρά δὲ γούνατ' ἐνώμα.

"...let us know which of us the Olympian will grant glory."  
 So he pondered as he waited, and near him came Achilles,  
 the peer of Enyalios, warrior of the waving helmet,  
 dashing over his right shoulder the Pelian ash, his  
 terrible spear; and all around the bronze flashed like the  
 gleam of blazing fire or of the sun as it rises. But trembling  
 seized Hector when he caught sight of him, and he dared  
 no longer remain where he was, but left the gates behind  
 him, and fled in fear; and the son of Peleus rushed after  
 him, trusting in his fleetness of foot. As a **falcon** in the  
 mountains, swiftest of winged things, swoops easily after a  
 fluttering **dove**: she flees before him, and he close at hand  
 darts again and again at her with shrill cries, and his heart  
 commands him to seize her; so Achilles in his eagerness  
 sped straight on, and Hector fled in terror beneath the wall  
 of the Trojans, and fled his limbs swiftly.

(Il. 22.130–144)

## Background

Hecabe, Hector's mother, also tried to persuade Hector to come inside the wall for protection, but Hector remained where he was outside the walls awaiting Achilles. When he saw Achilles coming against him he debated with himself about what to do and concluded that it was better to clash in strife as quickly as possible with Achilles. When the scene starts Hector is still talking to himself.<sup>429</sup>

## Analysis

Aspects	Scene 31 – <i>Il.</i> 22.130–144
<b>Ornithology</b>	
Greek bird reference	κίρκος (22.139) πέλεια (22.140)
Lexica	LSJ s.v. κίρκος, 'a kind of hawk or falcon, ἴρηξ κίρκος (where ἴρηξ is the generic term, κίρκος the specific), Od.13.87, cf. Il.22.139' Cunliffe s.v. 'A bird of the falcon kind, a falcon or hawk' LSJ s.v. πέλεια 'dove or pigeon, esp. wild rock-pigeon, <i>Columba livia</i> , Od.15.527 etc' Cunliffe s.v. 'a wild dove or pigeon'
Behaviour and characteristics	κίρκος: Swoops easily after a dove. Close at hand it darts again and again on the prey with shrill cries. Its instinct is to seize the prey. A bird of the mountains. The swiftest of winged things. An individual hunter.

429 *Il.* 22.77–129.

THE BIRDS IN THE *ILIAD*

Aspects	Scene 32 – Il. 22.130–144
<p><b>Ornithology</b></p> <p>Behaviour and characteristics</p> <p>Time context</p> <p>Spatial context</p> <p>Ornithological accuracy</p> <p>Suggested taxonomic status</p>	<p><i>έλεια</i>: Flees before a bird of prey and tries to escape. Fluttering.</p> <p><i>κίρκος/πέλεια</i>: Unspecific</p> <p><i>κίρκος/πέλεια</i>: Up in the air with one bird chasing the other from close behind.</p> <p><i>κίρκος/πέλεια</i>: High</p> <p><i>κίρκος</i>: Peregrine, <i>Falco peregrinus</i>  <i>πέλεια</i>: Rock Dove, <i>Columba livia</i></p>
<b>Form</b>	<i>κίρκος/πέλεια</i> : Metaphorical
<p><b>Interactions</b></p> <p>Birds and birds</p> <p>Birds and other animals</p> <p>Birds and humans</p> <p>Birds and gods</p>	<p><i>κίρκος/πέλεια</i>: Hierarchies: a hunter and its presumptive prey. The falcon is intended to kill. The dove flees before the falcon and tries to escape.</p> <p>-</p> <p><i>κίρκος</i>: Describes Achilles in a falcon-like parallel way when he sped straight at Hector. The “falcon metaphor” indicates that there was something unusual and special about Achilles at this moment.  <i>πέλεια</i>: Describes Hector in a dove-like parallel way when he fled before Achilles beneath the wall of the Trojans.</p> <p><i>κίρκος</i>: -  <i>πέλεια</i>: -</p>
<b>Functions</b>	<p><i>κίρκος</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A falcon-specific metaphorical parallel that describes Achilles when he sped straight at Hector beneath the Trojan wall.</li> <li>• Brings information about him at this moment in time and space.</li> <li>• Shows his great speed when he run straight on Hector and that his speed was faster.</li> <li>• Shows how easily he chased Hector and that he darted on him again and again.</li> <li>• Marks his aggression and eagerness to kill Hector, i.e., his “war-like” character.</li> <li>• Indicates that he was screaming repeated war cries as he chased Hector.</li> <li>• Shows his spatial position in relation to Hector, and how close he was to Hector and in this way also threatening.</li> <li>• Marks him as the stronger, mightier and superior warrior of the two and shows him in a more glorious way.</li> <li>• Gives his movements, voice and mental states a kind of wild and avian hunter/killer-character.</li> <li>• Signals that there was something unusual and more-than-human about him at this moment which may be a result of double motivation.</li> </ul>

## THE BIRD SCENES

Aspects	Scene 32 – Il. 22.130–144
<b>Functions</b>	<p>πέλεια:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A dove-specific metaphorical parallel that describes Hector when he fled before Achilles beneath the Trojan wall</li> <li>• Brings information about him at this moment in time and space.</li> <li>• Emphasises him as Achilles' target.</li> <li>• Shows his quick speed when he tried to run from Achilles and that his speed was slower.</li> <li>• Shows his spatial position in relation to Hector.</li> <li>• Emphasises his panic and fear for Achilles.</li> <li>• Marks him as the weaker and inferior warrior of the two and shows him in a less glorious way.</li> <li>• Gives his movements and states a kind of wild and avian fleeing prey-character.</li> <li>• Signals that there was something unusual about him at this moment. His reactions may have been evoked by the fact that he observed that there was something unusual and more-than-human about Achilles.</li> </ul>

### Comments and interpretation

#### *Ornithology and form*

##### *κίρκος*

The *κίρκος* appears in metaphorical form and it is described in relation to a specific environment, the mountains, see 22.139. One of the qualities of *κίρκος* is further described: it is *swiftest of winged things* (22.139). The description: *swoops easily after a fluttering dove* (22.140) indicates that this bird is a skilful bird of prey that moves with ease when hunting and that it is a dove-hunter. The description *he close at hand darts again and again at her with shrill cries* (22.141–142) implies that the bird makes frequent swoops<sup>430</sup> and that it has a loud call. The sequence *his heart commands him to seize her* (22.142) emphasises the instinct to kill and all together the descriptions emphasise *κίρκος* as a wild, fast and powerful bird of prey that hunts doves skilfully and has a “war-like” character.

I find that all these descriptions, when analysed both separately and together, describe the Peregrine and its habits, behaviour and characteristics. The Peregrine is often seen in mountainous environments. As mentioned it is the fastest flying bird of prey and an excellent hunter of Rock Doves. It has a variety of calls. As an adult it has a cackling call with harsh, chattering, comprising a single staccato note repeated rapidly. According to Coward the females ‘heck’ or ‘hek’ units are more quickly repeated by the female, running into a fierce chattering scream ‘hek hek ek- ek- ek’.<sup>431</sup>

<sup>430</sup> See also Richardson 1993, 122,

<sup>431</sup> Coward 1920. Also see Cramp & Simmons 1980, 366–375.

Arnott says that the description of the *κίρκος* in the scene fit the Peregrine. Arnott 2007, 99. According to Keller “Homer unterscheidet zwischen ἰσηξ and κίρκος so wenig, daß er, wie schon erwähnt, geradezu ἰσηξ κίρκος, Falkenhabicht sagt (Od. XIII 86). Welche

*πέλεια*

The *πέλεια* appears in metaphorical form in the scene. It is described as a *fluttering dove* (22.140)<sup>432</sup> that *flees before* (22.140) a falcon.

Rock Doves are quiet and discreet birds that are at the look-out for predators. The loud and sharp wing clapping is characteristic of birds flying up in alarm.<sup>433</sup> As argued, this sound, produced by their wings, combined with their observant natures may have been a reason, as suggested above, for describing them as “fluttering”. The rapid, angled wing beats of wings result in great speed.<sup>434</sup> Rock Doves are often hunted by Peregrines.<sup>435</sup>

*Interactions and functions in the scene**κίρκος*

The metaphorical falcon serves as a description for Achilles, who chased Hector from behind. The falcon as well as the dove mark the warriors’ movements and spatial positions in relations to each other. There are clear hierarchies in strength and might between the falcon and the dove which emphasise the balance of strength and might between Achilles and Hector at this moment. Further the use of the falcon indicates that Achilles’ speed was very great as he chased Hector, and that he ran faster than him. It is likely that the falcon *as swiftest of winged things* (22.139) implies that Achilles was the swiftest among all humans. Achilles and Hector seem to move about as fast here as the two goddesses Hera and Artemis did in SCENE 30. Since no human can run as fast as a Peregrine I suggest that the falcon indicate that Achilles exceeded his human limits. He was not entirely a human however, since he was born of a goddess. He may also have been motivated by a god at this moment.

A falcon is wild and aggressive and it calls with shrill cries during the hunt, something which signals that Achilles was wild and aggressive as well at that moment and that he probably screamed in repeated and Peregrine like war cries as he chased Hector. Since the falcon darted on the dove again and again we can presume that Achilles

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Habichtspezies Homer im Auge hat, läßt sich nicht ausmachen.” Keller 1913, 19, also see 13–26. According to Thompson *κίρκος* is a poetic name for a hawk and that it in the scene is an emblem of swiftness. Thompson 1936, 144–146. Boraston comments, “he who wrote those four lines had known Peregrine and Lanner in their mountain haunts, and the rock doves in their caves.” Boraston 1911, 227. Pollard does not comment on this scene in particular but when an *ἴρην* pursued a dove in *Il.* 21.494 (SCENE 30) he suggested the Peregrine. Pollard 1977, 81. Richardson suggests “hawk”. Richardson 1993, 122. Voultziadou & Tatolas suggest that *κίρκος* and *ἰέραξ* in Homer is a Peregrine. Voultziadou & Tatolas 2008, 307.

432 See LSJ s.v. *πρήρων* ‘timorous, shy, in Hom. always epith. of doves’. Also see LSJ supplement s.v. *πρήρων* ‘epith. of, or name for, dove’. Kirk points out that *πολυπρήρωνα* at *Il.* 2.502 and 592 shows that *πρήρων* can also be a substantiv, the name of the genus, or it can be the wild rock-pigeon and *πέλεια* the tamer dove. He further refers to Hesychius who glossed *πρήρων* as light and swift. Kirk 1990, 139.

433 Cramp & Simmons 1980, 285, 290.

434 Cramp & Simmons 1980, 285.

435 According to Pollard the dove in the scene is a Rock Dove. Pollard 1977, 81; Boraston 1911, 227. According to Thompson *πέλεια* in Homer undoubtedly means Rock Dove. Thompson 1936, 225–231, esp. 227. Voultziadou & Tatolas suggest Rock Dove. Voultziadou & Tatolas 2008, 307. For doves in antiquity also see Keller 1913, 122–131, esp. 127.

chased Hector in a similar way and that like the falcon he was close at hand to his prey, Hector. Being that close, Achilles becomes even more threatening to Hector. The falcon's heart that commands it to seize the dove says something also about Achilles' eagerness and "instinct" to kill Hector. It is easy to understand Achilles' own emotions at this moment and his wish to seize Hector and kill him, and by doing so avenge Patroclus. The falcon however makes Achilles appear more like a wild avian hunter and killer than a human at this moment. The falcon did not kill the dove in the scene, however, nor did Achilles kill Hector – yet.

*πέλεια*

Hector is shown as a dove that tries to escape from someone who is stronger, more aggressive and faster. The dove marks Hector as Achilles' wild and avian prey as well as emphasising his panic and fear of getting caught by him. It was when Hector saw Achilles coming against him that he got scared and started to, see 22.136–137. It is not strange that Hector feared Achilles since he came towards him so powerfully. We know from *Il.* 19.12–14 that only to look on Achilles' armour was enough to evoke fear even in the brave and skilled Myrmidons.<sup>436</sup> It is however somewhat startling that Hector as the Trojan commandor reacted in this way when he was aware that he was being watched by Trojans and Achaeans. Perhaps Hector realised that the divine support from Zeus and Apollo that he had earlier received were not as strong any longer, and perhaps he observed in what more-than-human way Achilles darted towards him and realised that he could not repel him at this moment. It is interesting that Hector said, *let us know to which of us the Olympian will grant glory* (22.130) just before Achilles came near. The bird scene in a way indicates that it was not Hector's fleeing as a dove that was glorious but Achilles's chasing of him as a Peregrine. It seems to be a message here saying that humans have to be cautious about what they are saying. Further one starts to suspect that Zeus or some other god, is mixed up in what was happening. If we further compare with SCENE 30 again, we know that Artemis, who tried to escape from Hera, fled to Zeus on Mount Olympus.<sup>437</sup> There was however nowhere for Hector to escape at this moment. He was left alone with no help forthcoming. Apollo did not leave Hector completely however until *Il.* 22.213.<sup>438</sup>

436 Willcock discusses that lines 22.136–137 contrast with line 22.96 and he adds that "this ambivalence about Hector's real courage appeared already in Book XVI, where line 367 neglected the impression of line 363." Willcock 1984, 293. Jones suggests that "the hawk/Achilles, with its speed/his swift feet determined to kill, swoops after/fles after a timid dove/terrified Hector, which runs for it/who turns in flight. The shriek of the hawk (Achilles' battle cry) and its strikes at the dove foreshadow what is about to happen." Jones 2003, 292.

437 See *Il.* 21.505–508.

438 At *Il.* 22.201–204 Apollo for the last time roused Hector's might and made his knees swift. The next moment Zeus lifted up the golden scales and down sank the day of doom for Hector. At that Apollo left him. See *Il.* 22.167–213.

Scene 33 – *Il.* 22.300–316

300 “... νῦν δὲ δὴ ἐγγύδι μοι θάνατος κακός, οὐδ’ ἔτ’ ἀνευθεν,  
 301 οὐδ’ ἀλέη· ἣ γὰρ ὅα πάλαι τό γε φίλτερον ἦεν  
 302 Ζηνί τε καὶ Διὸς υἱὶ ἐκηβόλω, οἱ με πάρος γε  
 303 πρόφρονες εἰρύατο· νῦν αὐτὲ με μοῖρα κιχάνει.  
 304 μὴ μὰν ἀσπουδί γε καὶ ἀκλειῶς ἀπολοίμην,  
 305 ἀλλὰ μέγα ῥέξας τι καὶ ἐσσομένοισι πυθέσθαι.”  
 306 Ὡς ἄρα φωνήσας εἰρύσσατο φάσγανον ὀξύ,  
 307 τό οἱ ὑπὸ λαπάρην τέτατο μέγα τε στιβαρόν τε,  
 308 οἴμησεν δὲ ἀλείς ὡς τ’ αἰετὸς ὑψιπετής,  
 309 ὅς τ’ εἶσιν πεδίον δὲ διὰ νεφέων ἐρεβενῶν  
 310 ἀρπάξων ἢ ἄρν’ ἀμαλῆν ἢ πτώκα λαγιών·  
 311 ὡς Ἴκτωρ οἴμησε τινάσσων φάσγανον ὀξύ.  
 312 ὀρμήθη δ’ Ἀχιλεὺς, μένεος δ’ ἐμπλήσατο θυμὸν  
 313 ἀγρίου, πρόσθεν δὲ σάκος στέρνοιο κάλυψε  
 314 καλὸν δαιδάλεον, κόρυδι δ’ ἐπένευε φαιειῇ  
 315 τετραφάλω· καλαὶ δὲ περισσεύοντο ἔθειραι  
 316 χρύσειαι, ἃς Ἥφαιστος ἴει λόφον ἀμφὶ θαιμειάς.

“...Now surely is evil death near at hand, and no more far from me, nor is there a way of escape. So I imagine long since this was the pleasure of Zeus, and of the son of Zeus, the god who strikes from afar, those who in the past used to protect me with ready hearts; but now again has my fate caught up with me. Not without a struggle let me die, not ingloriously, but having done some great deed for men yet to be born to hear.”

So saying, he drew his sharp sword that hung beside his flank, a great sword and a mighty, and gathering himself swooped like an *eagle* of lofty flight that darts to the plain through the dark clouds to seize a tender lamb or a cowering hare; so Hector swooped, brandishing his sharp sword. And Achilles rushed at him, his heart full of savage might, and before his chest he made a covering of his shield, fair and elaborately worked, and tossed his bright four-crested helmet; and fair about it waved the golden plumes that Hephaestus has set thick about the crest.

(*Il.* 22.300–316)

## Background

When Achilles had chased Hector thrice about Priam’s city Zeus spoke and said that he was grieved for Hector. He asked the gods whether they should save him from death or vanquish him now at the hands of Achilles. Athena replied by saying, *what a thing you have said! A mortal man, doomed long since by fate, are you minded to free from dolorous death?* (*Il.* 22.179–180). Zeus answered that he was in no way speaking in earnest and told her that he wanted to be kind to her. He said to her “*Be done with it as your mind is set and hold back no longer.*” (*Il.* 22.185). At that she darted down from the peaks of Olympus. Apollo roused might in Hector a last time and made swift his knees. When he and Apollo had come to the springs the fourth time, Zeus *lifted up his golden scales, and set in them two fates of grievous death, one for Achilles, and one for horse-taming Hector; then he grasped the balance by the middle and raised it; and down sank the day of doom of Hector and went away to Hades; and Phoebus Apollo left him* (*Il.* 22.209–213). Athena then came to Achilles and told him that she would go and persuade Hector to fight with him in single combat. In the likeness of Deiphobus, Hector’s loved brother, Athena spoke to Hector and spurred him on, and in this way she deceived him into fighting with Achilles. Being now more confident, Hector went to face Achilles again. He tried to make Achilles agree with him under oath that there should not be any maltreatment of their corpses, but Achilles refused and said that it was not possible for them to be

THE BIRD SCENES

friends. Achilles added that there was no escape for Hector and said, *but soon will Pallas Athene vanquish you by my spear* (*Il.* 22.270–271). Athena then intervened so that Hector lost his spear and when he called after Deïphobos for his long spear, his brother was not there. At that moment Hector realised that the gods had called him to his death and that Athena had deceived him. Hector is speaking to himself when the scene starts.<sup>439</sup>

**Analysis**

Aspects	Scene 33 – <i>Il.</i> 22.300–316
<b>Ornithology</b>	
Greek bird reference	<i>αἰετός</i> (22.308)
Lexica	LSJ s.v. <i>eagle</i> , as a bird of omen,... <i>Il.</i> 8.247, cf. 12.201... favourite of Zeus... <i>Il.</i> 24.310' Cunliffe s.v. 'An eagle'
Behaviour and characteristics	Darts to the plain through the dark clouds to catch a lamb or covering hare. Highflying.
Time context	Unspecific
Spatial context	High up in the air. A movement through the clouds and towards the ground.
Ornithological accuracy	High
Suggested taxonomic status	An eagle, possibly the Golden Eagle, <i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>
<b>Form</b>	Metaphorical
<b>Interactions</b>	
Birds and birds	-
Birds and other animals	Hierarchies: a hunter and its presumptive prey An eagle that seizes lambs or hares.
Birds and humans	Describes Hector in an eagle-like parallel way when he swooped against Achilles and was brandishing his sharp sword against him. The "eagle metaphor" indicates that there was something unusual and special about Hector at this moment.
Birds and gods	-
<b>Functions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An eagle-specific metaphorical parallel that describes Hector when he swooped against Achilles and was brandishing his sharp sword against him.</li> <li>• Brings information about Hector at this moment in time and space.</li> <li>• Shows that Hector's movements against Achilles were powerful and fast.</li> </ul>

439 *Il.* 22.145–299.

Aspects	Scene 33 – Il. 22.300–316
Functions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shows that Hector’s movements against Achilles were powerful and fast.</li> <li>• Indicates his view of Achilles as a smaller and lesser enemy.</li> <li>• Gives his movements and states a kind of wild and avian hunter character.</li> <li>• Signals that there was something unusual and more-than-human about him at this moment which may be a result of double motivation.</li> </ul>

### Comments and interpretation

#### *Ornithology and form*

The *αἰετός* appears in metaphorical form. It is described as *an eagle of lofty flight that darts to the plain through the dark clouds to seize a tender lamb or a covering hare* (22.308–310). This sequence focusses on the eagle’s high position in the air and that it swoops down from above onto a smaller mammal. It emphasises the eagle as a hunter of a medium sized mammal, a hare.

The Golden Eagle is high circling, often to great heights especially on fine days in winter and early spring. It normally hunts by flying low but it happens that it stoops from a height after a prey. On those occasions the eagle’s stoop is fast and it strikes with its talons in a brief rush or with a swift pounce. Most preys are taken from the ground. Golden Eagles hunt mammals, and medium-sized species are preferred, e.g., rabbits, *Oryctolagus cuniculus*, hares, *Lepus*, marmots, *Marmota*, and other medium-sized mammals such as sheep, *Ovis*.<sup>440</sup>

#### *Interaction and functions in the scene*

The eagle is used to describe Hector at a very special moment of time. He knows that no god supports him any longer and that his death is near.<sup>441</sup> Athena has robbed him of his spear and shortly before he was running before Achilles in a dove-like way. Now Hector wants his attack to be glorious and he attacks Achilles/a hare in a powerful and swooping eagle-like way. Described in this way the eagle emphasises Hector as a wild and avian hunter. Hector is however not fully armed for the combat since he drew his sword, the only weapon he has left.

There are many possible points of comparisons between the eagle versus Achilles, but not many between the hare and Achilles since Achilles almost immediately rushed at

<sup>440</sup> For Golden Eagles see Cramp & Simmons 1980, 236–240. Boraston suggests that the eagle in the scene refers to Bonelli’s Eagle. Boraston 1922, 235–236. Also see Pollard 1977, 76–79. For eagles in ancient sources see also Arnott 2007, 2–4; Thompson 1936, 2–17; Keller 1913, 1–6. Voultziadou & Tatalos identify the *αἰετοί* in Homer not as species but as “Eagle”. Voultziadou & Tatalos 2008, 307.

<sup>441</sup> It is interesting to consider the dark clouds on line 22.309 as an allusion to Hector’s coming death.



Hector not as a hare but as the powerful warrior he was. It seems that the hare is not in the scene to emphasise the balance of strength and might between Hector and Achilles but mainly to mark Achilles as the target for Hector's attack. The hare is further described from the eagle's point of view. Does the hare perhaps have something to say about Hector's view of his enemy? I suggest that it has, and it may also say something about Hector's deepest emotions. Since Hector wants to make a last and glorious stand, he even asks for it, see line 22.305, and since he is deeply afraid of Achilles since he knows Achilles is the stronger, he has to view Achilles as lesser than himself.<sup>442</sup> When he thinks of Achilles as a hare he makes the situation endurable for himself at this critical and risky moment. With this view he dares to attack Achilles even if he is afraid of him.<sup>443</sup> In a deeper sense the tender lamb or cowering hare can be seen as projections of Hector himself and his temporary mood and deepest emotions when being in this dangerous situation. In such interpretation it is Hector who feels vulnerable and a victim, i.e., like a tender lamb, and who wants to escape<sup>444</sup> and who is terrified like a cowering hare. At the same time one view his last wild attack as his last heroic charge, but the question must be asked: could Hector muster his forces to attack like this without divine motivation?<sup>445</sup>

Since Hector swooped down like an eagle we can presume that his movements were fast and powerful. As when other powerful and swift birds are used in the *Iliad* as metaphorical parallels to a warrior and his temporary activities and states, I suggest that the powerful "eagle metaphor" indicates that Hector surpassed his human capacities for a while. I would also like to suggest that he was given help from Zeus, and that Zeus' "eagle-empowerment" of Hector was Zeus's, as well as the poet's, way to honour Hector in the last minutes of his life.<sup>446</sup> I further suggest that Hector's sharp sword that hung by his side in line 22.306 in the scene, is associated with the eagle's killing weapons, its talons. It is further likely that Hector's movements when he was gathering his forces in line 22.307, can be associated with a Golden Eagle that gathers its wings before an attack on a prey.

442 Compare also with SCENE 5 where I suggested that the Trojan warriors viewed the Achaeans as lesser than they were, i.e., as high-flying cranes looking at the Achaeans as pygmy men.

443 Also see Jones who suggests that Hector is bolstering up his courage and strength for a final effort, picturing himself as the winner and Achilles the loser. Jones 2003, 294.

444 See lines 22.301.

445 Willcock suggests that Hector attains true heroism and nobility in the scene. Knowing it to be hopeless, he attacks like an eagle. Willcock 1976, 246. See also Richardson 1993, 137.

446 Zeus usually pities humans who accuses him of wrong-doings and Hector accused Zeus on lines 22.301–302. In this situation Zeus still had a chance to fulfil Hector's last wish: *Not without a struggle let me die, not ingloriously, but having done some great deed for men yet to be born to hear* (22.304–5). One might however find that such honouring appears "half-hearted" if there was one since the eagle neither succeeds to kill a lamb nor a hare. Instead Hector died from a spear struck from Achilles, see 22.617–363. At least Hector did not appear as a terrified dove in his last combat.

Scene 34 – *Il.* 23.850–883

850 Αὐτὰρ ὁ τοξευτῆσι τίθει ἰόντα σίδηρον,  
 851 κὰδ δ' ἐτίθει δέκα μὲν πελέκεις, δέκα δ' ἡμιπέλεκκα,  
 852 ἰστὸν δ' ἔστησεν νηὸς κυανοπρώροιο  
 853 τηλοῦ ἐπὶ ψαμάδοις, ἐκ δὲ τρήρωνα πέλειαν  
 854 λεπτῇ μηρίνῳ δῆσεν ποδός, ἧς ἄρ' ἀνώγει  
 855 τοξεύειν· ὅς μὲν κε βάλῃ τρήρωνα πέλειαν,  
 856 πάντας ἀειράμενος πελέκεις οἶκον δὲ φερέσθω·  
 857 ὅς δὲ κε μηρίνῳοι τύχῃ ὄρνιθος ἀμαρτῶν,  
 858 ἦσσαν γὰρ δὴ κείνος, ὃ δ' οἴσεται ἡμιπέλεκκα.”  
 859 Ὡς ἔφατ', ὤρτο δ' ἔπειτα βίῃ Τεύκροιο ἄνακτος,  
 860 ἄν δ' ἄρα Μηριόνης θεράπων εὖς Ἰδομενῆος.  
 861 κλήρους δ' ἐν κυνέῃ χαλκήρεϊ πάλλον ἐλόυτες,  
 862 Τεῦκρος δὲ πρῶτος κλήρω λάχεν· αὐτίκα δ' ἰὸν  
 863 ἦκεν ἐπικρατέως, οὐδ' ἠπειλήσεν ἄνακτι  
 864 ἄρνῶν πρωτογόνων ῥέξειν κλειτὴν ἐκατόμβην.  
 865 ὄρνιθος μὲν ἄμαρτε· μέγῃ γὰρ οἱ τό γ' Ἀπόλλων·  
 866 αὐτὰρ ὁ μήρινδον βάλε παρ πόδα, τῇ δέδετ' ὄρνις·  
 867 ἀντικρὺ δ' ἀπὸ μήρινδον τάμει πικρὸς οἰστός.  
 868 ἢ μὲν ἔπειτ' ἦίξε πρὸς οὐρανόν, ἢ δὲ παρείδη  
 869 μήρινδος ποτὶ γαῖαν· ἀτὰρ κελάδῃσαν Ἀχαιοί.  
 870 σπερχόμενος δ' ἄρα Μηριόνης ἐξείρυσσε χειρὸς  
 871 τόξον· ἀτὰρ δὴ οἰστὸν ἔχεν πάλαι, ὡς ἴδυνεν—  
 872 αὐτίκα δ' ἠπειλήσεν ἐκηβόλῳ Ἀπόλλωνι  
 873 ἄρνῶν πρωτογόνων ῥέξειν κλειτὴν ἐκατόμβην.  
 874 ὕψι δ' ὑπὸ νεφέων εἶδε τρήρωνα πέλειαν·  
 875 τῇ ἢ ὅ γε δινεύουσαν ὑπὸ πτέρυγος βάλε μέσσην,  
 876 ἀντικρὺ δὲ διήλθε βέλος· τὸ μὲν ἄψ ἐπὶ γαίῃ  
 877 πρόσθεν Μηριόναο πάγῃ ποδός· αὐτὰρ ἢ ὄρνις  
 878 ἰστῷ ἐφεζομένη νηὸς κυανοπρώροιο  
 879 αὐχέν' ἀπεκρέμασεν, σὺν δὲ περὰ πικρὰ λίασθεν.  
 880 ὡκὺς δ' ἐκ μελέων θυμὸς πτάτο, τῆλε δ' ἀπ' αὐτοῦ  
 881 κάππεσε· λαοὶ δ' αὖ θεῶν τε δάμβησάν τε.  
 882 ἄν δ' ἄρα Μηριόνης πελέκεις δέκα πάντας ἔειρε,  
 883 Τεῦκρος δ' ἡμιπέλεκκα φέρεν κοίλας ἐπὶ νῆας.

Then for the archers he set out as a prize dark iron – ten double axes he laid down, and ten single; and he set up the mast of a dark-prowed ship far off in the sands, and with a slender cord fastened to it by the foot a fluttering **dove**, and commanded them to shoot at it. “Whoever hits the fluttering **dove**, let him take up all the double axes and carry them home; and whoever hits the cord, though he miss the bird, since his is the worse shot, he shall take as his prize the single axes.”

So he spoke, and Meriones sprang up the might of the lord Teucer, and Meriones the mighty attendant of Idomeneus. Then they took the lots and shook them in a brazen helmet, and Teucer drew the first place. Immediately he let fly an arrow mightily, but he did not vow that he would sacrifice to the lord Apollo a glorious hecatomb of firstling lambs. So he missed the bird, for Apollo grudged him that, but hit the cord beside its foot with which the bird was tied, and clean away the bitter arrow cut the cord. Then the dove darted skyward, and the cord hung loose toward earth; and the Achaeans shouted aloud. But Meriones speedily snatched the bow from Teucer's hand – an arrow he had long been holding while Teucer aimed – and vowed immediately that he would sacrifice to Apollo who strikes from afar a glorious hecatomb of firstling lambs. High up beneath the cloud he spied the fluttering **dove**; there as she circled round he struck her squarely beneath the wing, and clean through passed the shaft, and fell again and fixed itself in the ground in front of Meriones' feet; but the dove, lighting on the mast of the dark-prowed ship, hung down her head, and her thick plumage drooped. Swiftly the life fled from her limbs, and she fell far from the mast; and the men gazed and were struck with wonder. And Meriones took up all ten double axes, and Teucer took the single to the hollow ships.

(*Il.* 23.850-883)

## Background

Achilles killed Hector with his spear and stripped him of his armour. He ordered the Achaeans to go back to the Achaean camp and carry Hector's body there. He then pierced holes in the tendons of Hector's feet and fastened throngs of oxhide there. In these throngs he dragged Hector's body after his chariot so that Hector's corpse and head that trailed behind became mutilated against the ground. As they watched that, the Trojans groaned and wailed for their loss of Hector and his body. When the Achaeans came to their camp they wailed and mourned for the death of Patroclus. After

THE BIRD SCENES

Patroclus' funeral pyre and the offerings, the funeral games took place. When the scene starts Achilles is arranging for the archery contest.<sup>447</sup>

**Analysis**

Aspects	Scene 34 – Il. 23.850–883
<b>Ornithology</b>	
Greek bird reference	<i>πέλεια</i> (23.853; 855; 874)
Lexica	LSJ s.v. 'dove or pigeon, esp. wild rock-pigeon, <i>Columba livia</i> ' Cunliffe s.v. 'a wild dove or pigeon'
Behaviour and characteristics	Was fastened to a mast by its foot. It darted towards the sky when it got loose from the cord. High up under the clouds it circled round and was struck beneath the wing by an arrow. It fell down onto the top of a mast with its head and wings hanging down before it died and fell down.
Time context	When an archery contest took place during the funeral games for Patroclus.
Spatial context	Close to a mast that was fastened to the ground, then high up under the clouds, then at the top of a mast, and then far from the mast, presumably on the ground.
Ornithological accuracy	High
Suggested taxonomic status	Rock Dove, <i>Columbia livia</i>
<b>Form</b>	Physical
<b>Interactions</b>	
Birds and birds	-
Birds and other animals	-
Birds and humans	The Achaean warriors Teucer and Meriones shot at the dove in an archery contest during the funeral games for Patroclus. Meriones shot the dove and won the first prize. The arrow passed through the dove and affixed itself in front of Meriones' feet. The wounded dove dropped onto the mast and when dying it hung down its head and drooped its feathers. It then fell far from the mast. The Achaean men gazed and were struck with wonder.
Birds and gods	-
<b>Functions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A dove-specific living target in a context.</li> <li>• A target in a contest for archers.</li> <li>• Evoked the Achaean warriors wonder.</li> </ul>

<sup>447</sup> Il. 22.361–23.849.

## Comments and interpretation

### *Ornithology and form*

The *πέλεια* appears in physical form in the scene. It is described as a *fluttering dove* (23.853; 874)<sup>448</sup> which is realistic since the Rock Dove, which is the species I have suggested, is a quiet and discreet species of dove that are very observant for predators. The loud and sharp wing-clapping is characteristic of birds flying up in alarm.<sup>449</sup> As argued, this clutter that is produced by the wings, combined with Rock Doves observant natures may have inspired to describe them as *fluttering* (23.853; 874). The scene further describes that the dove *darted skyward* (23.868) and that it *circled round* (23.875). Rock Doves are often circling high up in the sky and the circling is often a behavior that precedes landing. Its flight is further the most dashing of the genus, and its rapid, angled beats of wings produce a great speed.<sup>450</sup> The sequence that describes how the dove seated itself down on the mast again bending down its neck and wings after being wounded is however dramatized.<sup>451</sup>

### *Interactions and functions in the scene*

The dove is interacting with the Achaean warriors, who have an archery contest during the funeral games for Patroclus. It is the men's contest that is in focus and the dove acts mainly as a target. The dove was at first tied by the foot to the mast.<sup>452</sup> When Teucer's arrow cut the cord and the dove flew away, the Achaeans shouted aloud (23.869)<sup>453</sup> Meriones then shot the dove beneath the wing when it was up in the sky. The arrow landed in front of his feet. The dove fell down on the mast and hung down its head and the plumage drooped.<sup>454</sup> Dying she fell far from the mast. At all that the men gazed and were struck with wonder (23.881) All these details indicate that the Achaeans reacted strongly to the event and that they had experienced something that was unusual. It seems that the warriors initially did not care about the dove as a living creature at all: for them it was just a target. At the end of the event, it seems that they viewed the dove

448 LSJ s.v. *τρήρων* 'timorous, shy, in Hom. always epith. of doves'. Also see LSJ supplement s.v. *τρήρων* 'epith. of, or name for, dove'. Kirk points out that *πολυτρήρωννα* at Il.2.502 and 592 shows that *τρήρων* can also be a noun, the name of the genus, or it can be the wild rock-pigeon and *πέλεια* the tamer dove. He further refers to Hesychius who glossed *τρήρων* as light and swift. Kirk 1990, 139.

449 Cramp & Simmons 1980, 285, 290.

450 Cramp & Simmons 1980, 285, 290.

451 Boraston suggests that *πέλεια* is a Rock Dove, Boraston 1911, 216; 227. According to Pollard *περιστερά* and *πέλεια* were names for pigeons in general whereas *πέλεια* was applied to the Rock Dove and Stock Dove. Pollard 1977, 56. According to Thompson *πέλεια* in Homer undoubtedly means Rock Dove. Thompson 1936, 225–231, esp. 227. Voultziadou & Tatolas suggest Rock Dove. Voultziadou & Tatolas 2008, 307. For doves in ancient sources see also Arnott 2007, 170–171; Keller 1913, 122–131, esp. 127.

452 Richardson refers to the scholia that records the variants *πόδα* for *ποδός* and *ὡς γὰρ ἀνώγει*. bT (855) points out that the dove was harder to hit when tied by the foot, as it could flutter about. Richardson 1993, 267.

453 Richardson suggests that the spectators applauded and refers to 23.847. Richardson 1993, 268.

454 Richardson discusses how this is a vivid and pathetic picture. He further refers to Aristarchus who in line 879 seem to have read *λίασθεν* active *λίάζω*, which occurs once in Lycophron, meaning "loosen". *λίασθεν* means "dropped" or "drooped"; cf. 15.543 etc., of a fallen warrior. Richardson 1993, 269. Also see Leaf 1900, 531–533; Willcock 1984, 311 and Jones 2003, 308.

somewhat differently - that they viewed it a sign. It is ambiguous whether the dove was a sign from the gods or not since no confirmation is given by the poet. At least one can say that the dove became a subject for wonder among the Achaean warriors and for us who are exposed to the scene so many years after it was created.

Perhaps the dying dove with its hanging head expresses a gesture and a message of sorrow in a similar way to Balius and Xanthus, Achilles' two horses, who in sorrow for Patroclus death bowed their heads when he had died.<sup>455</sup>

### Scene 35 – *Il.* 24.308–321

308 “Ζεῦ πάτερ Ἰθῆθεν μεδέων κύδιστε μέγιστε,  
 309 δός μ’ ἐς Ἀχιλλῆος φίλον ἐλθεῖν ἥδ’ ἐλεεινόν,  
 310 πέμψον δ’ οἰωνόν ταχὺν ἄγγελον, ὅς τε σοὶ αὐτῷ  
 311 φίλτατος οἰωνῶν, καὶ εὐκράτος ἐστὶ μέγιστον,  
 312 δεξιόν, ὄφρα μιν αὐτὸς ἐν ὀφθαλμοῖσι νοήσας  
 313 τῷ πίσυνος ἐπὶ νῆας ἴω Δαναῶν ταχυπόλων.”  
 314 Ὡς ἔφατ’ εὐχόμενος, τοῦ δ’ ἔκλυε μητίετα Ζεὺς.  
 315 αὐτίκα δ’ αἰετὸν ἦκε τελειότατον πετεηνῶν,  
 316 μόρφον θηρητήηρ’, ὃν καὶ περκνὸν καλέουσιν.  
 317 ὅσση δ’ ὑφορόφοιο θύρη θαλάμοιο τέτυκται  
 318 ἀνέρος ἀφνειοῦ ἐὺ κληῖσ’ ἀραρυῖα,  
 319 τόσσ’ ἄρα τοῦ ἐκάτερθεν ἔσαν πτερά· εἵσατο δέ σφι  
 320 δεξιὸς αἴξας διὰ ἄστεος· οἳ δὲ ἰδόντες  
 321 γήθησαν, καὶ πᾶσιν ἐνὶ φρεσὶ θυμὸς ἰάνθη.

“Father Zeus, who rules from Ida,  
 most glorious, most great, grant that I may come to Achilles’ hut as one to be welcomed and pitied; and send a bird of omen, the swift messenger that to yourself is dearest of birds and is mightiest in strength; let him appear on my right hand, so that, noting the sign with my own eyes, I may have trust in it, and go to the ships of the Danaans of swift steeds.”

So he spoke in prayer, and Zeus the Counselor heard him. At once he sent an **eagle**, surest of omens among winged birds, the dusky eagle, the hunter, that men call also the black eagle. Wide as is the door of some rich man’s high-roofed treasure-chamber, a door well fitted with bolts, so wide spread his wings this way and that; and he appeared them on the right, darting across the city. And at sight of him they rejoiced, and the hearts in the breasts of all were warmed.

(*Il.* 24.308–321)

### Background

After Patroclus’ funeral games Achilles binded Hector’s body once more behind his chariot and hauled him thrice round Patroclus mound. He then left Hector’s body there with his face in the dust. At that Zeus from Mount Olympus sent Thetis to Achilles to tell him that the gods were angered with him since he had not given Hector’s body back to King Priam. Zeus also sent Iris to Priam who told him to bring gifts to Achilles. Iris further told Priam that a herald, Argeiphontes,<sup>456</sup> would attend and guide him. At that Priam went to his treasure chamber, and spoke to his wife Hecabe. When Hecabe understood what was going on she uttered a shrill cry, and Priam replied and said that she should not seek to stay him who was minded to go, and to prove herself a bird of ill-foreboding in his halls. When Priam and his driver were about to leave He-

455 See *Il.* 17.437.

456 Hermes, see *Il.* 24.334–339.

cabe came up to them with wine to libate to Zeus. She asked Priam to pray to Zeus, “... the son of Cronos, lord of the dark clouds, the god of Ida, who looks down on all land of Troy and ask him a bird of omen, the swiftest messenger that to himself is dearest of birds and is mightiest in strength; let him appear on your right hand, so that, noting he sign with your own eyes, you may have trust in it and go to the ships of the Danaans of fleet steeds. But if Zeus whose voice resounds afar grants you not his own messenger, then I at least would not urge you on and ask you to go to the ships of the Argives, no matter how eager you may be.” (*Il.* 24.290–298). Now Priam listened to Hecabe’s desires and said that it was good to lift up the hands to Zeus in the hope that he may have pity. After his hand was washed with water he poured out the wine while looking towards heaven, and he then prayed to Zeus.<sup>457</sup>

### Analysis

Aspects	Scene 35 – <i>Il.</i> 24.308–321
<b>Ornithology</b>	
Greek bird reference	<i>αἰετός</i> (24.315)
Lexica	LSJ s.v. ‘eagle, as a bird of omen,... <i>Il.</i> 8.247, cf. 12.201... favourite of Zeus... <i>Il.</i> 24.310’ Cunliffe s.v. ‘An eagle’
Behaviour and characteristics	Darted across the city. Its spread wings were wide as the door of some rich man’s high-roofed treasure-chamber. A dusky eagle, the hunter, that men also call the black eagle.
Time context	Was sent away by Zeus immediately after King Priam’s prayer.
Spatial context	Up in the air at the right of King Priam and some Trojans. It then darted across the city. Priam and the Trojans were at the citadel of Troy.
Ornithological accuracy	High
Suggested taxonomic status	An eagle, presumably an adult Verreaux’s Eagle, <i>Aquila verreauxii</i>
<b>Form</b>	
Physical	
<b>Interactions</b>	
Birds and birds	-
Birds and other animals	-
Birds and humans	Appeared at the right of King Priam and some Trojans directly after Priam’s prayer to Zeus. He made his prayer on his wife Hecabe’s advice, see <i>Il.</i> 24.281–307. At sight of the eagle they rejoiced and their hearts were warmed, i.e., their mental states were influenced by the eagle as a positive sign coming from Zeus. The effect

<sup>457</sup> See *Il.* 24.1–307.

## THE BIRD SCENES

Aspects	Scene 35 – Il. 24.308–321
<p><b>Interactions</b></p> <p>Birds and humans</p> <p>Birds and gods</p>	<p>of Zeus’ eagle-sign-communication was that they felt relieved and reassured that Priam could go to Achilles safely and that he would be welcomed and pitied.</p> <p>Was sent by Zeus to King Priam as a response to his prayer. It shows that Zeus heard Priam and indicated his divine presence and will in a visual and symbolic way where the eagle’s sturdy physicality in some sense embodied Zeus presence and will.</p>
<p><b>Functions</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An eagle-specific messenger, sign, and representation that brings information.</li> <li>• Zeus’ eagle messenger to King Priam and the Trojans.</li> <li>• Zeus’ response and symbolic answer to King Priam’s prayer.</li> <li>• A visual, physical sign, being part of an omen, that with its presence and physical position communicates Zeus’ presence and will.</li> <li>• A good sign that confirmed for Priams and the Trojans that his expedition to and meeting with Achilles would turn out well.</li> <li>• As a good sign it influenced them and their mental states, i.e., they felt trust in Priam’s risky expedition to Achilles and his meeting with him.</li> <li>• Displays the close bond between Zeus and the Trojan king.</li> <li>• Expresses superior swiftness, strength and power from an avian hunter-perspective, and emphasises some kind of darkness.</li> <li>• A possible symbolic representation of Achilles who will soon meet Priam at his hut.</li> </ul>

### Comments and interpretation

#### *Ornithology and form*

The *αἰετός* appears in physical form in the scene. King Priam asked Zeus to send a *bird of omen* (24.310) that was for Zeus *dearest of birds* (24.311) and *mightiest in strength* (24.310). Priam wished that it would appear on his *right hand* (24.312).<sup>458</sup> Zeus heard his prayer and *sent an eagle, surest of omens among winged birds* (24.315)<sup>459</sup> The sequence that describes that Zeus sends away an eagle does not refer entirely to an eagle in a wild sense but may associate to ancient falconry practices where a huntsman sends away an eagle to catch a prey or someone who sends away an eagle for other reasons that may

<sup>458</sup> According to Richardson the eagle appeared to them darting towards the right through or over the city. Richardson 1993, 306.

<sup>459</sup> Richardson refers to Arn/A who observed that *τελειότατον* does not mean “physically perfect” but “most capable of bringing fulfillment.” Richardson adds that the epithet could mean both ‘most perfect’ and ‘most capable of bringing fulfillment’. He further refers to Zeus *τέλειος* (A. *Supp.* 525-526, A. Ag. 973, Fraenkel *ad loc.*). Richardson 1993, 305. Macleod argues that “...Zeus bird is like him, so too, at 293, its power is greatest as his is. It may also be implied that the eagle brings the “most perfect” augury, the one that is most surely fulfilled.” Macleod 1989, 114. See Il. 8.247, SCENE 9, that uses the same words, *τελειότατον πετεηνών*, to describe another eagle that was sent by Zeus to the humans.

have been ritual.<sup>460</sup> It is notable that the poet wants to emphasise this particular eagle as a bird that was very special and highly loved by Zeus. Since Zeus seems to be positioned on Mount Olympus<sup>461</sup> Priam's recalling of Zeus as *Father Zeus, who rules from Ida* (24.308) appears to be wrong.

The eagle is then described as *μόρφονον θηρητῆρ', ὃν καὶ περκνὸν καλέουσιν* (24.316) which Murray & Wyatt translate to *the dusky eagle, the hunter that men call also the black eagle*.<sup>462</sup> According to Richardson *πέρκνος* means "dusky", "dark-coloured" and he suggests that the original sense may have been "dappled", "with dark patches". He further suggests that the eagle in question might have been the same as the one described at *Il.* 21.252–253.<sup>463</sup>

I agree with Richardson in that the two eagles seem to be the same kind. The eagle in song 21 is a metaphorical eagle that describes Achilles in a parallel way in a particular moment in time and space. That eagle is described as *the black eagle, the mighty hunter, that is both the mightiest and swiftest of winged things* (21.252–253).<sup>464</sup> It is interesting that it is Achilles who in that scene is paralleled to a black/dark eagle and that Priam in the scene in *Il.* 24 aims to visit Achilles at his hut.

The next description of the eagle in the scene under discussion says that it was *wide as is the door of some rich man's high-roofed treasure-chamber, a door well fitted with bolts, so wide spread his wings this way and that* (24.317–319). This passage indicates an eagle with a considerable wing-span and a species that might have a particular pattern where the wings meet, constituting a parallel for the bolts that locks the doors/wings.

The Verreaux's Eagle, also known as the "Black Eagle", is a skilful hunter that takes mainly medium-sized mammals. Its habitat is exclusively wild, extensive, and mountainous regions, remote from human settlements which suits it to the physical environment that Zeus probably sent it from, i.e., Mount Olympus.<sup>465</sup> People who have observed a Verreaux's Eagle say that this species is something exceptional to see. It is a dark, very large eagle that is heavier than the Golden Eagle. Génsbøl describes it as the largest eagle in west Palaearctic.<sup>466</sup> Its wingspan is 225–245 cm which is longer than

460 See note on falconry in SCENE 9 and interpretation. See also SCENE 10 where Athena sent a heron to Odysseus and Diomedes.

461 See *Il.* 24.103–104, 24.329–348.

462 LSJ s.v. *μόρφονος* 'epith. of an eagle, dub. sens., *Il.* 24.316' The intermediate LSJ suggests 'dusky, dark'.

See also LSJ s.v. *θηρητῆρ'* 'poet for *θηρατής*'. Also see LSJ s.v. *θηρατής* 'hunter' and LSJ s.v. *πέρκνος* 'dusky, dark in colour, or grapes when beginning to ripen, or of olives, *Poll.* 1.61, 5.67...II. Subst., name of a kind of eagle, ...*Il.* 24.316 (Aristarch. *πέρκνον*), cf. Arist. *Mir.* 835<sup>a</sup>2, *Lyc.* 260; = *πλάγγος* acc. to Arist. *HA* 618b23. (Cf. *πρακνόν*, Skt. *prsnis* 'spotted', OIr. *erc*, Welsh *erch* 'speckled', 'dusky'.)

463 See SCENE 29. Richardson adds that Aristarchus seems to have treated *πέρκνος* as the substantive here (HRD/A). Richardson 1993, 305. Macleod suggests "dark", "livid" (in colour). Macleod 1989, 114.

464 Here *μέλανος* (252) is used. See LSJ s.v. *μέλας* 'black, dark: in Hom. generally, dark in colour'.

465 For the current distribution of Verreaux's Eagle see SCENE 29 and del Hoyo et al. 2004, 198.

466 Génsbøl 1995, 346; Cramp & Simmons 1980, 245–251; Svensson & Grant, 2006, 80.



the Golden Eagle.<sup>467</sup> Cramp and Simmons describes that its large size and the characteristic shape of its wings rule out confusion with other eagles of all ages. Its flight is considerably powerful but still effortless, and the flight action is graceful and clearly akin to that of the Golden Eagle. An adult Verreaux's Eagle is all black with white on the mantle bordering the scapulars, it have a white lower back and rump, and almost white bases to primaries and primary coverts. Cramp & Simmons describe the white on the mantle as contrasting white parts that goes between the wings and makes a V- or U-shaped line on the back. The underwings are distinctly patterned<sup>468</sup> which is a detail I suggest agrees with Richardsons reading of *πέρικνος* as “dappled”, “with dark patches”, see above.<sup>469</sup>

*Interactions and functions in the scene*

Interactions occur in the scene between Zeus, the eagle, King Priam, the Trojans who observed the eagle, and Hecabe since Priam actually prayed to Zeus on his wife Hecabe's advice, see 24.281–307.<sup>470</sup> In his prayer Priam asked Zeus for a concrete sign that he could see with his own eyes, see line 24.312.<sup>471</sup> He asked Zeus to send the bird of omen that was for him dearest of birds and mightiest of strength, see 24.310–311. He further wanted the eagle to appear at his right hand so that he could trust it and go to Achilles. This marks that “at the right of” was an important spatial placement for omen interpretation. Priam knew that he was about to set out on a risky mission and he risked his life not only in the meeting with Achilles, but also in travelling to him over the battlefield.<sup>472</sup> Feeling a need of protection and support he searched for help and security when he prayed to Zeus. The fact that the eagle turned up at this moment must have been considered exceptional. When Priam and the Trojans caught sight of it and that it indeed appeared to them on the right darting across the city *they rejoiced, and the hearts in the breasts were warmed* (24.321). The reactions and emotions came immediately and were collective and unambiguous. Perhaps the eagle's darting across

467 Cramp & Simmons 1980, 234, 245.

468 See Cramp & Simmons 1980, 244; Svensson & Grant 2006, 80–81.

469 See Cramp & Simmons 1980, 244–245, 250; Svensson & Grant 2006, 80–81. Jones suggests a Golden Eagle because of its wingspan that reaches seven feet, which would fit the dimension that is suggested in the comparison. Jones 2003, 315. Cramp & Simmons reports that the wingspan of the Golden Eagle is 204–220 cm. As mentioned earlier the wingspan of the Verreaux's Eagle is 225–245 cm. Cramp & Simmons 1980, 234, 245.

Pollard refers to the eagle in the scene as *μόρφνος*. Based on Aristotle, HA IX, 618 B11–619 A 3 he suggests the Marsh Harrier or the Lesser Spotted Eagle. Pollard 1977, 76, also see 77. Since it is likely that the eagle under discussion was sent by Zeus from Mount Olympus I find that an eagle that prefers mountainous regions more apt for the scene. For eagles in Homer and other ancient sources see also Arnott 2007, 2–6; Thompson 1936, 2–16; Keller 1913, 1–12. See also Voultziadou & Tatalos 2008, 307.

470 Also see the “Background” of the scene.

471 Richardson points out that this is the only time in the *Iliad* where an omen is prayed for and that this is an Odyssean motif. Richardson 1993, 304.

472 It is interesting to compare here with SCENE 10 where Odysseus and Diomedes set out for a risky nighttime war expedition. At that moment Athena spontaneously sent a heron as a good sign for them.

the city also marked for them the direction of Priam's path towards Achilles. With this eagle we can finally establish that the Trojans as well got a good sign from Zeus and a sign that for them was not clouded by ambiguity.<sup>473</sup> Their emotions indicate that they interpreted the eagle as a good sign from Zeus that confirmed for them that Priam's expedition would turn out well.<sup>474</sup> Their reactions also indicate the strong psychological power of the sign that turned up at this moment as well as Priam's and the Trojans faith in it. The effect of Zeus's eagle-sign communication was that Priam and the Trojans were relieved and felt confidence in that Priam could go to Achilles safely and that he would be welcomed there. Even if the Trojans' reactions were positive, I would like to suggest that the black eagle expresses some kind of darkness that may be associated with Hector's death, and that the colour aspect of the eagle raises questions about what is coming.<sup>475</sup>

There is no doubt that this eagle was sent by Zeus to King Priam (lines 24.315). Appearing directly after Priam's prayer to Zeus the eagle represents the clear connection between Zeus and the Trojan king. As Zeus' messenger and as a sign, the eagle also functions as a communicative channel for Zeus when he needed to communicate with the humans, more specifically, when he wanted to inform them of his will concerning coming human activities. This communication and information that was delivered by an eagle is not only verbal or conceptual: it has above all an emotional and psychological effect.

#### *Interactions and functions in the primary narrative*

If we leave the eagle's immediate functions in the scene and its effects on King Priam and the Trojans and consider its possible wider functions in the primary narrative of the *Iliad* I would like to suggest that the black eagle described as the hunter in the scene can be seen as a future-projecting representation of Achilles, who Priam will soon meet. As argued, eagles in the *Iliad* are often used to signify kings and prominent warriors in parallel ways<sup>476</sup> and as argued we know from SCENE 29 that a similar eagle, that seems to be the same kind,<sup>477</sup> was used metaphorically to describe Achilles. It is quite striking that Zeus in the scene under discussion chooses to send the Black Eagle to Priam at this moment since when turning up now it becomes a consoling bird for Priam who fears Achilles so deeply. It seems thus that the eagle can be seen as both a consoling and

473 Compare with the eagles in SCENES 9, 13, and 16.

474 On his way to Achilles Priam was escorted by Idaeus, who drove the four-wheeled wagon pulled by horses and he was guided and supported by Hermes on his way to Achilles' hut, see *Il.* 24.322–478.

475 For a passage that indicates that not all Trojans were confident that Priam's expedition would be safe, see *Il.* 24.328. See also Segal 1971, 66.

476 See *Il.* 15.688–695, 17.673–689, 21.251–256, 22.306–319.

477 See also Richardson 1993, 305.

#### THE BIRD SCENES

threatening bird, sign, and omen at this moment. Priam will soon meet his son's killer and worst enemy but will Achilles be his worst enemy? If we take some steps further in the action we see that Achilles at first acted in a way that indicates that he might even not spare Priam's life, but after a while, when Achilles and Priam have had some talking, they shared a meal. Achilles then started to listen to Priam, and finally he gave Hector's body back to him. When turning back to the bird scene under discussion it seems that the Black Eagle, as a symbolic representation of Achilles, comes to meet Priam, and perhaps also its flying direction across the city spatially displays the direction to Achilles' hut where Priam will meet him. When viewing Achilles in the "light" of the Black Eagle, the eagle implies that Achilles was the human who was dearest to Zeus and the human who was also the swiftest and mightiest of them all.

## IV. DISCUSSION

In the previous chapter the analysis of the 35 bird scenes was made. It is now time to discuss the results. To do so, I will start by taking up my four main aspects, **ornithology**<sup>1</sup>, **form**, **interactions**, and **functions**, in that order to reach a synthesis and conclusion concerning the birds' presence and roles in the *Iliad* as a whole.

First, the results concerning **ornithology** are presented in five tables and discussed with concluding remarks. The first one, *Table 2* deals with *behaviour, characteristics, ornithological accuracy, and suggested species*. In *Table 3* the *bird references are set in alphabetic order with suggested species*. *Table 4* and *Table 5* presents the birds' *time contexts* and *spatial contexts* while *Table 6* presents *the most common spatial contexts for the birds*.

Following this, the result for the aspect **form** is discussed by means of *Table 7* that presents the birds' *forms* as presented in the *Iliad*.

The birds' **interactions** are discussed next. *Table 8* deals with *the birds' interactions with the other characters* while *Table 9* presents the *relations and interactions between the metaphorical birds and the human and divine characters*. All tables are commented and discussed in a concluding section.

The fourth and last aspect in this chapter, the **functions** of the different birds, is presented: this required some sort of thematic grouping. I have chosen to use the five categories that emerge under the aspect **form**, *physical, transformation, metaphorical, image* and *other*.<sup>2</sup> It is important to emphasise that in this discussion the aspect **function** does not focus on any specific bird in any specific scene as was the case in the analyses. The aim here is instead to discuss and try to explain the birds' presence, functions and roles in the whole of the *Iliad*.

### Ornithology

*Table 2.* The 35 bird scenes. Behaviour, characteristics, ornithological accuracy, and suggested species, see page 213–216.

<sup>1</sup> Including time context and spatial context.

<sup>2</sup> For my definitions of the five categories of form, see Fig. 1. in chapter 2.

No	Passage	Bird reference in the nom. with Murray & Wyatt's identification	Behaviour	Characteristics	Ornithological accuracy	Suggested species according to this author
1	<i>Il.</i> 2.299–335	στρουθός, sparrow	Eight young sparrows were devoured by a serpent. The young were screaming. The mother flitted around her young and was also devoured by the serpent.	Small bird with many (eight) offspring. Vulnerably preys getting killed. Family-trauma and death.	High	Spanish Sparrow, <i>Passer hispaniolensis</i>
2	<i>Il.</i> 2.445–468	χήνη, wild geese ρέβανος, crane κύκνος, swan	Flying in group, landing on a meadow, glorying in wings and calling loud.	Gregarious and loud. The swans are long-necked. Eager, lively, proud.	High High High	Greylag Goose, <i>Anser anser</i> Crane, <i>Grus grus</i> Whooper Swan, <i>Cygnus cygnus</i>
3	<i>Il.</i> 2.494–510	πολυπτεράων, doves	In large numbers.	Gregarious	High	Rock Dove, <i>Columbia livia</i>
4	<i>Il.</i> 2.581–590	πολυπτεράων, doves	In large numbers.	Gregarious	High	Rock Dove, <i>Columbia livia</i>
5	<i>Il.</i> 3.1–9	ρέβανος, crane	Rising in group high up in the air, winter-migrating and clamouring. Will harm pygmy men.	Gregarious and clamouring. Terrified and aggressive.	High	Crane, <i>Grus grus</i>
6	<i>Il.</i> 4.234–239	γύψ, vulture	Will devour human flesh.	Birds that feed on human flesh together. Scavengers.	High	Griffon Vulture, <i>Gyps fulvus</i> / Black Vulture, <i>Aegypius monachus</i> / Egyptian Vulture, <i>Neophron percnopterus</i>
7	<i>Il.</i> 5.773–795	πέλειια, dove	Walked.	Two birds. Discreet and quick-walking.	High	Rock Dove, <i>Columbia livia</i>
8	<i>Il.</i> 7.54–66	αιγυπιός, vulture	Sat on a lofty oak and watched.	Two birds. Spectators of a human single combat where the warriors were using deadly weapons.	Medium	Lammergeier, <i>Gypaetus barbatus</i>
9	<i>Il.</i> 8.227–252	αιετός, eagle	Flew and carried a fawn in its talons that it dropped. Was sent by Zeus from Mount Ida.	Individual. Appears as a hunter and killer of a fawn that it dropped. Related to mountains.	High	Golden Eagle, <i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>
10	<i>Il.</i> 10.272–298	εραυδός, heron	Called in the dark night when it presumably flew. Was sent by Athena.	Individual. Calling at night. Night active.	High	Night Heron, <i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>
11	<i>Il.</i> 11.153–162	γύψ, vulture	Desire to feed on human corpses.	Birds that desire to feed together on human flesh. Scavengers.	High	Griffon Vulture, <i>Gyps fulvus</i> / Black Vulture, <i>Aegypius monachus</i> / Egyptian Vulture, <i>Neophron percnopterus</i>

No	Passage	Bird reference in the nom. with Murray & Wyatt's identification	Behaviour	Characteristics	Ornithological accuracy	Suggested species according to this author
12	<i>Il.</i> 11.624–644	πελειώϊς, dove	Feed two-by-two in four pairs.	Eight birds that feed in pairs. Feeders.	High	Rock Dove, <i>Columbia livia</i>
13	<i>Il.</i> 12.195–257	αϊετός, eagle	Flew while it carried a snake in its talons. Was struck and cast the snake to the ground. Cried and sped away down the wind.	Individual. Appears as a snake hunter. Dropped the snake.	High	Short-toed Eagle, <i>Circus gallicus</i>
14	<i>Il.</i> 13.43–84	ἰσηξ, hawk*	Flies swift and high up in the air and then darts over a plain to chase some other bird.	Individual. A hunter of birds that occur on a plain. A swift flyer.	High	Peregrine, <i>Falco peregrinus</i>
15	<i>Il.</i> 13.526–539	αἰγυπιός, vulture	Springs out and possibly draws out something and then possibly shrinks back into a throng of birds.	Possibly a vulture interested in feeding on a human corpse without being wounded by other vultures.	Medium	Lammergeier, <i>Gypaetus barbatus</i>
16	<i>Il.</i> 13.809–837	ἰσηξ, falcon	Flies swiftly.	Very swift flyers.	Medium	Peregrine, <i>Falco peregrinus</i>
17	<i>Il.</i> 14.283–293	αἰετός, eagle χαλκίς, chalcis κύμινδις, cymindis	Flies high up in the air. Presumably likes to sit in high fir trees and hide in the branches in the daytime.	Individual. Soars at high altitudes. Individual. Likes to hide in high fir trees in the day-time. Related to wooden mountains.	Medium High	Golden Eagle, <i>Aquila chrysaetos</i> Scops Owl, <i>Otus scops</i>
18	<i>Il.</i> 15.229–245	ἰσηξ, falcon	Hunts and kills doves. Flies swift.	Individual. A dove hunter and killer. Swiftest bird of all.	High	Peregrine, <i>Falco peregrinus</i>
19	<i>Il.</i> 15.688–695	αἰετός, eagle	Darts on flocks of geese, cranes, and swans. Feeding in groups.	Individual. A hunter of large birds. Tawny. Gregarious, feeds together. Preys.	High High High	Golden Eagle, <i>Aquila chrysaetos</i> Greylag Goose, <i>Anser anser</i> Crane, <i>Grus grus</i> Whooper Swan, <i>Cygnus cygnus</i>
20	<i>Il.</i> 16.419–443	αἰγυπιός, vulture	Fight with each other and cry upon a high rock.	Two birds fight with each other with loud cries. Have crooked talons and curved beaks.	High	Lammergeier, <i>Gypaetus barbatus</i>
21	<i>Il.</i> 16.581–592	ἰσηξ, falcon κολοίός, daw ψήγε, starling	Drives daws and starlings into flight. It is indicated that it flies. Fleeing from a falcon. It is indicated that they fly.	Individual. A hunter of medium-sized birds. A swift flyer. Gregarious, flee in flocks. Preys. Gregarious, flee in flocks. Preys.	High High High	Peregrine, <i>Falco peregrinus</i> Eurasian Jackdaw, <i>Corvus monedula</i> Common Starling, <i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>

No	Passage	Bird reference in the nom. with Murray & Wyatt's identification	Behaviour	Characteristics	Ornithological accuracy	Suggested species according to this author
22	<i>Il.</i> 16.830–842	γύψ, vulture	Will devour a human corpse.	Birds that will feed on human flesh together. Scavengers.	High	Griffon Vulture, <i>Gyps fulvus</i> / Black Vulture, <i>Aegypius monachus</i> / Egyptian Vulture, <i>Neophron perc-nopterus</i>
23	<i>Il.</i> 17.451–473	αἰγυπιός, vulture	Swoops on a flock of geese.  A flock is being attacked.	Individual. A geese hunter that fails in its hunt.  Gregarious: a flock is being attacked by a Lammergeier. Preys.	High  High	Lammergeier, <i>Gypaetus barbatus</i>  Greylag Goose, <i>Anser anser rubri-rosis</i>
24	<i>Il.</i> 17.673–693	αἰετός, eagle	Catches sight of a hare from high above, swoops on it and swiftly seizes and kills it.  A flock shrieks when it sees a falcon coming towards them	Individual. A hare hunter and killer with the best sight of all birds.	High	Golden Eagle, <i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>
25	<i>Il.</i> 17.755–761	ψάα, starling κολοιός, daw	Hunts on flocks of starlings or daws.	Gregarious, get terrified when seeing a falcon. Preys.	High High	Common Starling, <i>Sturnus vulgaris</i> or Eurasian Jackdaw, <i>Corvus monedula</i>
26	<i>Il.</i> 18.266–283	ρίπτος, falcon	Will devour human corpses.	Individual. A hunter and killer of medium-sized birds.	High	Peregrine, <i>Falco peregrinus</i>
27	<i>Il.</i> 18.614–617	γύψ, vulture	Presumably a movement downwards by a swift bird of prey.	Birds that will devour human flesh together. Scavengers.	High	Griffon Vulture, <i>Gyps fulvus</i> / Black Vulture, <i>Aegypius monachus</i> / Egyptian Vulture, <i>Neophron perc-nopterus</i>
28	<i>Il.</i> 19.342–356	ἰήρξ, falcon	Presumably flies from a mountain and through the air.	Individual. A swift flyer. Related to mountains.	Medium	Peregrine, <i>Falco peregrinus</i>
29	<i>Il.</i> 21.248–256	αἰετός, eagle	Swoops and flies swift.	Individual . Wide of wing and with a shrill voice. Related to mountains.  Individual. Is black/dark and is called the mighty hunter. The mightiest and swiftest of birds. Related to mountains.	High	Lammergeier, <i>Gypaetus barbatus</i>  Verreaux's Eagle, <i>Aquila verreauxii</i>

No	Passage	Bird reference in the nom. with Murray & Wyatt's identification	Behaviour	Characteristics	Ornithological accuracy	Suggested species according to this author
30	<i>Il.</i> 21.489–496	πέλειαια, dove ἰγυξ, falcon	Flies before a falcon into a hollow rock. Hunts a dove from behind.	A fleeing prey that tries to escape. Related to mountains. Individual. A dove hunter.	High High	Rock Dove, <i>Columbia livia</i> Peregrine, <i>Falco peregrinus</i>
31	<i>Il.</i> 22.38–45	γύψ, vulture	Would quickly devour a human corpse.	Birds that together would devour a human corpse. Scavengers.	High	Griffon Vulture, <i>Gyps fulvus</i> Eurasian Black Vulture, <i>Aegypius monachus</i> Egyptian Vulture, <i>Neophron percnopterus</i>
32	<i>Il.</i> 22.130–144	χιόκος, falcon	Swoops easily after a dove at close hand with a shrill voice. Flees before a falcon. Tries to escape.	Individual. A dove hunter. Swiftest of birds. Related to mountains.	High	Peregrine, <i>Falco peregrinus</i>
33	<i>Il.</i> 22.300–316	αιετός, eagle	Darts to the plain through the dark clouds to catch a lamb or hare.	Individual. A fleeing prey that tries to escape. Fluttering.	High	Rock Dove, <i>Columbia livia</i>
34	<i>Il.</i> 23.850–883	πέλειαια, dove	Darted towards the sky when it got loose from the cord it was tightened with. Circled round there and was struck by an arrow and finally died from the wound.	Individual. A lamb- and hare-hunter. Highflying. Individual. Circles round high up in air. A target and a prey for humans in a contest for archers.	High High	Golden Eagle, <i>Aquila chrysaetos</i> Rock Dove, <i>Columbia livia</i>
35	<i>Il.</i> 24.308–321	αιετός, eagle	Flew and darted across the city. Was sent by Zeus.	Individual. A hunter with very long wings. Black. Related to mountains.	High	Verreaux's Eagle, <i>Aquila verreauxii</i>

\*1 Murray & Wyatt 2001 here translate to 'hawk', but I suggest Peregrine, *Falco peregrinus*.

\*2 Murray & Wyatt 2001 here translate to 'falcon', but I suggest Lammergeier, *Gypaetus barbatus*.



## DISCUSSION

### Behaviour

Table 2 shows that the birds occur in every songs of the *Iliad* except for 1, 6, 9, and 20, and that all are described in relation to zoological behaviour, i.e., in 35 of 35 bird scenes and in 48 of 48 bird descriptions<sup>3</sup>.

The birds' behaviours are diversified. They fly, fly swiftly, swoop, circle around, carry preys in their talons that are dropped, land on a meadow, call, cry, shriek, attack each other, catch sight of a prey, hunt and attack mammals or other birds, are being attacked, try to escape, flee, sit in a tree, hide in a tree, take steps on ground, winter-migrate, spring-migrate, run out on ground, will soon feed on human corpses, breed, scream when seeing the killing of their young, are struck by a snake, etc. These are all ornithologically accurate behaviours depending on the size and nature of the bird.

The most common behaviour in the material is flying or associated with flying (in 35 of 48 bird descriptions). The birds' behaviour is often associated to hunting prey (17), and feeding (9), and they are often calling out and clamouring (9).

The eagles and falcons are usually flying and/or are swooping (13) and are attacking or are intended to chase a prey (11). The doves mainly are shown fleeing from attacks by a falcon (2), and in large numbers (2). Doves and Starlings are other birds that try to escape from falcons (2). The sparrow mother did not try to escape from the serpent in *Il.* 2, but stayed with her young and tried in vain to protect them. It is further interesting that the carrion-eating vultures are associated so often with scavenging for human corpses but without describing the actual scavenging itself (5): rather they set the scene for what is going to happen later on. It is said that they *desire* or *will* devour human corpses.

*To conclude the birds' behaviour*, the most common behaviour is birds that fly in the air. They are frequently associated to hunting but feeding, calling and clamouring also are common behaviours. Another common one is fleeing. In all descriptions the behaviours suit to the birds chosen ornithologically.

### Characteristics

Table 2 shows that the most apparent characteristic is whether the birds appear alone, in pairs, or are associated with a group or flocks of birds (presumably more than 4 individuals). In 24 of 48 bird descriptions the birds appear individually, in 19 cases they appear in flocks, and in 4 cases in pairs. In one case the number of birds cannot be determined (the Peregrines in SCENE 16). The individual birds are mainly eagles of

<sup>3</sup> In this number I count the Griffon Vulture, Black Vulture and the Egyptian Vulture (all γύψ) as one bird description, Greylag Goose (γήν), Crane (γέρανος) and Whooper Swan (κύκνος) as three bird descriptions, and Eurasian Jackdaw (κολοιός) and Common Starling (ψήρ/ψάρ) as two bird descriptions. The bird called χαλκίς and κύμινθις in SCENE 17, represents one more bird description.

various species and Peregrines (8+7), but Rock Doves (3), Lammergeiers (2), a Night Heron (1) and a Scops Owl (1) appear individually also. The group- and flock birds are mainly Griffon Vultures/Black Vultures/Egyptian Vultures (5), Greylag Geese/Cranes/Whooper Swans (2), Greylag Geese (1), Cranes (1), Eurasian Daws/Common Starlings (2), Rock Doves (2) and Spanish Sparrows (1). The pair birds are Rock Doves (2) and Lammergeiers (2).

A second important characteristic is whether the bird is a hunter or a bird prey. In 14 bird descriptions, the birds are raptors or are associated with hunting prey – birds or mammals. In 7 cases birds are described as prey. The eagles are described as hunting a fawn, a snake, geese, cranes, swans, a lamb and a hare, while the Peregrine is described as a hunter of doves, daws and starlings. The Lammergeier is shown as a hunter of geese, but does not succeed in taking any prey. The prey birds on the other hand are described as victims of stronger powers, of birds of prey and in one case of a serpent (the sparrows in SCENE 1). In one case also an eagle is struck by a snake (SCENE 13). The emphasis is on the behaviour, like chasing and hunting, the fleeing from the prey's point of view, and on the balance of strength between the interacting animals. It may seem surprising that the actual killing of the prey is seldom described, but if one considers that it is the temporarily balance of strength (especially concerning the metaphorical birds) that is in focus and not the killing it makes sense.<sup>4</sup> The sparrow family in SCENE 1 is an important exception since their killing is carefully described.

Strikingly often the birds express and are associated with different emotions such as eagerness, aggression, lust for meat, panic, fear, and sorrow. Thus, the flock of geese/cranes/swans in *Il.* 2 (SCENE 2) are described in a lively way, while the flock of cranes in *Il.* 5 (SCENE 5) appear in a terrified and aggressive way. The carrion-eating vultures that occur in many scenes desire to feed on human corpses which says something of their lust for meat. Eagles and falcons are often shown as strong and powerful hunters. They are usually aggressive and intend to kill prey such as the Peregrine in *Il.* 15 (SCENE 18) that is described as a dove killer, and the Peregrine in *Il.* 22 (SCENE 32) whose *heart commands him to seize her* [the dove] (22.142). Towards the other end of the emotional scale, we find the Rock Doves, which are usually shown as timid and timorous birds. They usually try to escape from the falcons and their behaviours when fleeing indicates their fear. Daws and starlings also flee from falcons, and the very sight of a Peregrine terrifies them (SCENE 25). At the end of this side of the scale, we find the sparrows, which express vulnerability, helplessness, panic, and death.

<sup>4</sup> See further discussion in the section "Metaphorical".

## DISCUSSION

To conclude the birds' characteristics, among the most important we find three groups, (A) the birds that are described individually, in pairs, or in a flocks, (B) the birds that are described as hunters or their prey, and (C) the birds whose emotional states are described, emphasised or associated to someone/something else. In this last group we see birds in eagerness, wild aggression, lust, fear, and panic. In all descriptions the characteristics suit to the birds chosen ornithologically.

### Ornithological accuracy

Table 2 shows that the descriptions of the birds generally show a high ornithological accuracy. From the total number of 48 bird descriptions, 43 show high and 5 medium accuracy. Counted in bird scenes, 31 scenes out of 35 are highly accurate. The results indicates that the composer of these scenes possessed a high and detailed knowledge of different birds that was presumably achieved by extensive observations in the field.

My analysis suggests that translations of the bird references can be subdivided into taxonomic species. Thus, *αἰετός* in the *Iliad* is not mainly used to signify “eagles” in a general sense but refers to different species of eagles such as the Golden Eagle, the Verreaux's Eagle and the Short-toed Eagle. In some cases the bird reference is specific such is in the case of the *ἐρωδιός* in SCENE 10 that clearly describes the nightly habits of a Night Heron in an accurate naturalistic way. The *στρουθός* in SCENE 1 is another example that seems to describe eight fledglings of Spanish Sparrow, a species that lays as many as eight eggs. This number coincides with the number of young sparrows devoured by the serpent.

The analysis suggests that *γύψ* signifies the carrion-eating vultures *per se*, namely the Griffon Vulture, the Black Vulture and the Egyptian Vulture, and in agreement with scholars such as Pollard and Boraston I have suggested that *αἰγυπιός* is a name for the Lammergeier. This species differs much from the carrion-eating vultures in looks and feeding habits since it feeds mainly on bones and meat from freshly killed mammals. I have further suggested that *ἄρπη* is an alternative name for the Lammergeier in the *Iliad*.

The bird called *ἴρηνξ* is used to signify the most fast flying of all birds of prey and the analysis suggests that *ἴρηνξ* is a name for the Peregrine. I have further suggested that *κίρκος* is an alternative name used for the Peregrine.

*Χήν* means goose and for the flock of geese in SCENE 2, 19, AND 23 I suggest Grey-lag Goose. For the *γέρανος* and *κύκνος* that occur together with the geese in SCENES 2 and 23 I suggest Crane and Whooper Swan. For the *γέρανος* in SCENE 5 I also suggest Crane.

THE BIRDS IN THE *ILIAD*

In the analyses of the doves it is my opinion that *πέλεια/πελειάς* and *πολυτρήρων* are two alternative names used for Rock Dove due to the descriptions of their behaviours and their names. For the *κολοιός* and *ψήρ/ψάρ* that appear in flocks and are hunted by a Peregrine in SCENES 21 and 25 Eurasian Jackdaws and Common Starlings are the most probable species. Finally, the bird with the two names *κύμινδις* and *χαλκίς*, whose physically form was taken by the god Sleep, seems to be a Scops Owl, which is a species that has a sleepy look and a remarkable way of disguising itself in trees.

Table 3. The bird references set in alphabetic order and with suggested species.

Bird name in nom.	Lines	SCENE number	Suggested species according to this author
<i>αίγυπιός</i>	<i>Il.</i> 7.59	SCENE 8	Lammergeier, <i>Gypaetus barbatus</i>
<i>αίγυπιός</i>	<i>Il.</i> 13.531	SCENE 15	Lammergeier, <i>Gypaetus barbatus</i>
<i>αίγυπιός</i>	<i>Il.</i> 16.428	SCENE 20	Lammergeier, <i>Gypaetus barbatus</i>
<i>αίγυπιός</i>	<i>Il.</i> 17.460	SCENE 23	Lammergeier, <i>Gypaetus barbatus</i>
<i>αἰετός</i>	<i>Il.</i> 8.247	SCENE 9	Golden Eagle, <i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>
<i>αἰετός</i> <i>αἰετός</i>	<i>Il.</i> 12.201 <i>Il.</i> 12.219	SCENE 13	Short-toed Eagle, <i>Circaetus gallicus</i>
<i>αἰετός</i>	<i>Il.</i> 13.822	SCENE 16	Golden Eagle, <i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>
<i>αἰετός</i>	<i>Il.</i> 15.690	SCENE 19	Golden Eagle, <i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>
<i>αἰετός</i>	<i>Il.</i> 17.674	SCENE 24	Golden Eagle, <i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>
<i>αἰετός</i>	<i>Il.</i> 21.252	SCENE 29	Verreaux's Eagle, <i>Aquila verreauxii</i>
<i>αἰετός</i>	<i>Il.</i> 22.308	SCENE 33	Golden Eagle, <i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>
<i>αἰετός</i>	<i>Il.</i> 24.315	SCENE 35	Verreaux's Eagle, <i>Aquila verreauxii</i>
<i>ἄρπη</i>	<i>Il.</i> 19.350	SCENE 28	Lammergeier, <i>Gypaetus barbatus</i>
<i>χαλκίς</i>	<i>Il.</i> 2.460	SCENE 2	Crane, <i>Grus grus</i>
<i>γέρανος</i>	<i>Il.</i> 3.3	SCENE 5	Crane, <i>Grus grus</i>
<i>γέρανος</i>	<i>Il.</i> 15.692	SCENE 19	Crane, <i>Grus grus</i>
<i>γύψ</i>	<i>Il.</i> 4.237	SCENE 6	Griffon Vulture, <i>Gyps fulvus</i> , Black Vulture, <i>Aegypius monachus</i> Egyptian Vulture, <i>Neophron percnopterus</i>
<i>γύψ</i>	<i>Il.</i> 11.162	SCENE 11	Griffon Vulture, <i>Gyps fulvus</i> , Black Vulture, <i>Aegypius monachus</i> Egyptian Vulture, <i>Neophron percnopterus</i>
<i>γύψ</i>	<i>Il.</i> 16.836	SCENE 22	Griffon Vulture, <i>Gyps fulvus</i> , Black Vulture, <i>Aegypius monachus</i> Egyptian Vulture, <i>Neophron percnopterus</i>

DISCUSSION

Bird name in nom.	Lines	SCENE number	Suggested species according to this author
γύψ	Il. 18.271	SCENE 26	Griffon Vulture, <i>Gyps fulvus</i> , Black Vulture, <i>Aegypius monachus</i> Egyptian Vulture, <i>Neophron percnopterus</i>
γύψ	Il. 22.42	SCENE 31	Griffon Vulture, <i>Gyps fulvus</i> , Black Vulture, <i>Aegypius monachus</i> Egyptian Vulture, <i>Neophron percnopterus</i>
ἐρωδιός	Il. 10.274	SCENE 10	Night Heron, <i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>
ἰρῆξ	Il. 13.62	SCENE 14	Peregrine, <i>Falco peregrinus</i>
ἰρῆξ	Il. 13.819	SCENE 16	Peregrine, <i>Falco peregrinus</i>
ἰρῆξ	Il. 15.238	SCENE 18	Peregrine, <i>Falco peregrinus</i>
ἰρῆξ	Il. 16.582	SCENE 21	Peregrine, <i>Falco peregrinus</i>
ἰρῆξ	Il. 18.616	SCENE 27	Peregrine, <i>Falco peregrinus</i>
ἰρῆξ	Il. 21.494	SCENE 30	Peregrine, <i>Falco peregrinus</i>
κίρκος	Il. 17.757	SCENE 25	Peregrine, <i>Falco peregrinus</i>
κίρκος	Il. 22.139	SCENE 32	Peregrine, <i>Falco peregrinus</i>
κολοιός	Il. 16.583	SCENE 21	Eurasian Jackdaw, <i>Corvus monedula</i>
κολοιός	Il. 17.755	SCENE 25	Eurasian Jackdaw, <i>Corvus monedula</i>
κύκνος	Il. 2.460	SCENE 2	Whooper Swan, <i>Cygnus cygnus</i>
κύκνος	Il. 15.692	SCENE 19	Whooper Swan, <i>Cygnus cygnus</i>
κύμινδης	Il. 14.291	SCENE 17	Scops Owl, <i>Otus scops</i>
πέλεια	Il. 5.777	SCENE 7	Rock Dove, <i>Columbia livia</i>
πελειάς	Il. 11.634	SCENE 12	Rock Dove, <i>Columbia livia</i>
πέλεια	Il. 21.493	SCENE 30	Rock Dove, <i>Columbia livia</i>
πέλεια	Il. 22.140	SCENE 32	Rock Dove, <i>Columbia livia</i>
πέλεια	Il. 23.853	SCENE 34	Rock Dove, <i>Columbia livia</i>
πέλεια	Il. 23.855		
πέλεια	Il. 23.874		
πολυτρήρων	Il. 2.502	SCENE 3	Rock Dove, <i>Columbia livia</i>
πολυτρήρων	Il. 2.582	SCENE 4	Rock Dove, <i>Columbia livia</i>
στρουθός	Il. 2.311	SCENE 1	Spanish Sparrow, <i>Passer hispaniolensis</i>
στρουθός	Il. 2.317		
στρουθός	Il. 2.326		
χαλκίς	Il. 14.291	SCENE 17	Scops Owl, <i>Otus scops</i>
χήν	Il. 2.460	SCENE 2	Greylag Goose, <i>Anser anser rubrirostris</i>
χήν	Il. 15.692	SCENE 19	Greylag Goose, <i>Anser anser rubrirostris</i>
χήν	Il. 17.460	SCENE 23	Greylag Goose, <i>Anser anser rubrirostris</i>
ψήρ	Il. 16.583	SCENE 21	Common Starling, <i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>
ψάρ	Il. 17.755	SCENE 25	Common Starling, <i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>

Table 3 shows that there are 18 different bird references in the *Iliad* that can be identified by species of birds according to modern biological taxonomy.

Of a total number of 48 bird descriptions *αἰετός* occurs most often (8), and it is followed by *ἴρηξ* (6), *γύψ* (5), *πέλεια/πελειάς* (5), *αἰγυπιός* (4), *χήν* (3), *γέρανος* (3), *κίρκος* (2), *κύκνος* (2), *πολυτρήρων* (2), *κολοιός* (2), *ψήρ/ψάρ* (2), *ἄρπη* (1), *ἐρωδιός* (1), *χαλκίς/κύμινδις* (1), and *στρουθός* (1).

The majority of the birds are represented by birds of prey and vultures, *αἰετός* (8), *ἴρηξ* (6), *γύψ* (5), *αἰγυπιός* (4), *κίρκος* (2), and *ἄρπη* (1) that together give a number of 26 out of 48.<sup>5</sup> Rock Doves occur in five scenes as *πέλεια/πελειάς* (5) and in two scenes as *πολυτρήρων* (2). Greylag Geese, Cranes and Whooper Swans occur quite often in the material, *χήν* (3), *γέρανος* (3), *κύκνος* (2), while Eurasian Jackdaws and Common Starlings occur in two scenes *κολοιός* (2), *ψήρ/ψάρ* (2). Finally there are some birds that occur only in one scene each, the Night Heron *ἐρωδιός* (1), the Scops Owl, *κύμινδις/χαλκίς* (1), and the Spanish Sparrows *στρουθός* (1).

When adding up the suggested species the Peregrine (8) and the Rock Dove (7) occur most frequently. These species are followed by the Golden Eagle (5), the Griffon Vulture/Black Vulture/Egyptian Vulture (5), the Lammergeier (5), the Greylag Goose (3), the Crane (3), the Verreaux's Eagle (2), the Whooper Swan (2), the Eurasian Jackdaw (2), the Common Starling (2), the Short-toed Eagle (1), the Scops Owl (1), the Night Heron (1), and the Spanish Sparrow (1).

To conclude the section on ornithological accuracy, the analysis shows that the ornithological accuracy is high in the *Iliad*, in 43 of 48 bird descriptions. The bird references do not signify mainly groups or families of birds but rather refer to particular species with specific behaviours and characteristics within those families. Birds of prey and vultures occur in more than 50% of the birds scenes. Another large group is the gregarious birds that live in flocks: geese, cranes, swans, jackdaws and starlings. Among the suggested species, Peregrine (8), and Rock Dove (7) occur most frequently in the *Iliad*.

<sup>5</sup> Counted in bird scenes these group of birds are represented in 26 of 35 scenes.

## DISCUSSION

### Time context

Table 4. Time context for the birds and their behaviours.

SCENE Number	Time context	Suggested species according to this author
1	In breeding season, spring or summer. After the Achaeans' offering rites.	Spanish Sparrow
2	Early spring and morning, and during spring migration is suggested.	Greylag Goose Crane Whooper Swan
3	Unspecific	Rock Dove
4	Unspecific	Rock Dove
5	During winter migration. Are associate with the future.	Crane
6	Future	Griffon Vulture/ Black Vulture/ Egyptian Vulture
7	Unspecific	Rock Dove
8	When Athena and Apollo sat in an oak to watch a single combat.	Lammergeier
9	Was sent by Zeus after Agmemnon's verbal communication to him.	Golden Eagle
10	The dark night. After Odysseus and Diomedes had left the Achaean camp. Athena sent it to them.	Night Heron
11	Unspecific	Griffon Vulture/ Black Vulture/ Egyptian Vulture
12	Unspecific	Rock Dove
13	When some Trojan warriors were eager to break through the Achaean wall.	Short-toed Eagle
14	Unspecific	Peregrine
15	Unspecific	Lammergeier
16	Unspecific After Aias had spoken to Hector.	Peregrine Golden Eagle
17	When Sleep sat in the tall fir tree. Day-time is indicated.	Scops Owl
18	Unspecific	Peregrine
19	Unspecific Unspecific Unspecific Unspecific	Golden Eagle Greylag Goose Crane Whooper Swan
20	Unspecific	Lammergeier

THE BIRDS IN THE *ILIAD*

SCENE Number	Time context	Suggested species according to this author
21	Unspecific Unspecific Unspecific	Peregrine Eurasian Jackdaw Common Starling
22	Future	Griffon Vulture/ Black Vulture/ Egyptian Vulture
23	Unspecific Unspecific	Lammergeier Greylag Goose
24	Unspecific	Golden Eagle
25	Unspecific Unspecific Unspecific	Common Starling Eurasian Jackdaw Peregrine
26	Future	Griffon Vulture/ Black Vulture/ Egyptian Vulture/
27	Unspecific	Peregrine
28	Unspecific	Lammergeier
29	Unspecific	Verreaux's Eagle
30	Unspecific Unspecific	Peregrine Rock Dove
31	Future	Griffon Vulture/ Black Vulture/ Egyptian Vulture
32	Unspecific Unspecific	Peregrine Rock Dove
33	Unspecific	Golden Eagle
34	During an archery context and the funeral games for Patroclus.	Rock Dove
35	After Priam's prayer to Zeus.	Verreaux's Eagle

*Table 4* shows that the birds occur in different time contexts, which are sometimes not specified at all. In as many as 28 of 48 bird descriptions, the time context for the bird is unspecific. The main part of these descriptions are the metaphorical ones used to signify a human warrior and his temporary activities on the battlefield. Since the main focus in those scenes is on the human warrior, the description of the bird does not normally refer to any separate avian time context. Exceptions are the flocks of geese, cranes, and swans in SCENE 2 that are used to resemble the Achaean troops that are advancing on the Scamandrian Plain towards the Trojans, and the flock of cranes in SCENE 5 used parallelly to the Trojan troops and their advance towards the Achaean



## DISCUSSION

warriors. It seems that SCENE 2 refers to birds' spring migration and SCENE 5 to winter migration, which also, as I have suggested, may be associated with the Achaeans' military movements towards the east and the Trojans' movements towards the west when they first advanced against each other.

In cases when the time context for the bird is specified, the description refer mainly to the future concerning human war (4 descriptions of carrion-eating vultures), to seasons (3 of sparrows and geese/cranes/swans) and to the night (1 of a Night heron). Birds also appear after human prayers (2 of eagles), after a human had spoken (1 of an eagle), when gods sit in trees (1 of Lammergeiers and 1 of an owl), when warriors try to break through the enemy's military wall (1 of an eagle), and during an archery contest (1 of a dove).

*To conclude, the time context for the birds* are unspecific in 28 of 48 bird descriptions. The main part are metaphorical birds that signify warriors or group of warriors on the battlefield. When the time context is specified the birds mainly appear in reference to the future, to different seasons, after human prayers, or when gods sit in trees.

### Spatial context

*Table 5.* Spatial context for the birds and their behaviours.

SCENE number	Spatial context	Suggested species according to this author
1	High up in a plane tree at Aulis.	Spanish Sparrow
2	At an Asian meadow by the streams of Caÿstrius. They possibly fly at medium and low altitudes, land, settle on the meadow, and move forward.	Greylag Goose Crane Whooper Swan
3	Thisbe where the Boeotians lived.	Rock Dove
4	Messe in Lacedaemon.	Rock Dove
5	Rise and fly high up in the air and then towards the streams of Ocean and the pygmies.	Crane
6	Are associated with the ground.	Griffon Vulture/ Black Vulture/ Egyptian Vulture
7	Movements on the ground close to two rivers.	Rock Dove
8	At tree level in Zeus's lofty oak and above the Achaean warriors.	Lammergeier
9	Is sent by Zeus possibly from Mount Ida. Flies high up in the air above the Achaean camp and warriors.	Golden Eagle

THE BIRDS IN THE *ILIAD*

SCENE number	Spatial context	Suggested species according to this author
10	Is sent by Athena possibly from the wetlands nearby the Achaean camp. Flies by on Odysseus' and Diomedes' right and close to them, rather low in the air.	Night Heron
11	Are associated with the ground.	Griffon Vulture/ Black Vulture/ Egyptian Vulture
12	Unspecific	Rock Dove
13	High up in the air above the Achaean wall and the Trojan warriors. Skirts the Trojan army on the left and speeds away down the wind.	Short-toed Eagle
14	Rises to fly and flies aloft in the air, above a high sheer rock and then over the plain.	Peregrine
15	Movements on the ground.	Lammergeier
16	Is associated with the air. Of lofty flight. Flies by on the right hand of and above the Achaean and Trojan warriors.	Peregrine Golden Eagle
17	Hidden in the branches of the highest fir at the topmost forest of Mount Ida.	Scops Owl
18	Is associated with the air and down from a hill of a mountain. Is associated with Mount Ida.	Peregrine
19	In the air, presumably at medium altitude. At a river's bank. At a river's bank. At a river's bank.	Golden Eagle Greylag Goose Crane Whooper Swan
20	Upon a high rock.	Lammergeier
21	In the air, presumably a medium altitude. In the air, presumably at medium altitude. In the air, presumably at medium altitude.	Peregrine Eurasian Jackdaw Common Starling
22	Are associated with the ground.	Griffon Vulture/ Black Vulture/ Egyptian Vulture
23	In the air, presumably at medium altitude. Unspecific	Lammergeier Greylag Goose
24	Unspecific	Golden Eagle
25	In the air, presumably at medium altitude. In the air, presumably at medium altitude. In the air, presumably at medium altitude.	Common Starling Eurasian Jackdaw Peregrine
26	Are associated with the ground.	Griffon Vulture/ Black Vulture/ Egyptian Vulture
27	Mount Olympus is referred to. It probably flies downwards.	Peregrine

DISCUSSION

SCENE number	Spatial context	Suggested species according to this author
28	Flies down from heaven through the air. Is associated with Mount Olympus.	Lammergeier
29	Is associated with the air.	Verreaux's Eagle
30	Flees from a falcon into a hollow rock, a cleft.	Rock Dove
31	Chases a dove from behind.	Peregrine
	Are associated with the ground.	Griffon Vulture/ Black Vulture/ Egyptian Vulture
32	Up in the air and close behind a dove. Up in the air and in front of a falcon.	Peregrine Rock Dove
33	In the air. A movement through the clouds and towards the ground.	Golden Eagle
34	Tied to a mast of a ship that is fastened on the ground. Then it flies high up under the clouds, is shot and lands at the top of the mast, and then falls far from the mast, possibly on the ground.	Rock Dove
35	Is sent by Zeus possibly from Mount Olympus. It then flies to the right of King Priam and some Trojans and darts across the city of Troy.	Verreaux's Eagle

Table 6. The most common spatial contexts for the birds

Spatial contexts of birds	Scenes that refer to or are associated with such spatial contexts	Birds involved
Flying at medium and/or low altitudes	SCENES 2, 5, 10, 14, 19, 21, 23, 25, 29, 30, 32, 33, 34, 35	Greylag Goose, Crane, Whooper Swan, Night Heron, Verreaux's Eagle, Peregrine, Common Starling, Eurasian Jackaw, Lammergeier, Rock Dove
Associated with rather specific localities in the the ancient Greek mainland, Asia Minor or elsewhere.	SCENES 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 9, 18, 27, 28, 35	Spanish Sparrow, Greylag Goose, Crane, Whooper Swan, Rock Dove, Golden Eagle, Peregrine, Lammergeier, Verreaux's Eagle
Rising and/or lowering its position in the air.	SCENES 2, 5, 13, 14, 18, 27, 28, 33, 34	Greylag Goose, Crane, Whooper Swan, Golden Eagle, Peregrine, Lammergeier, Rock Dove
Associated with rocks, mountains and mountain peaks	SCENES 9, 14, 18, 20, 27, 28, 30, 35	Golden Eagle, Peregrine, Lammergeier, Rock Dove, Verreaux's Eagle

THE BIRDS IN THE *ILIAD*

Spatial contexts of birds	Scenes that refer to or are associated with such spatial contexts	Birds involved
Flying at high altitudes	SCENES 5, 9, 13, 14, 18, 27, 28	Crane, Golden Eagle, Short-toed Eagle, Peregrine, Lammergeier
Associated with behaviour on the ground	SCENES 6, 7, 11, 15, 22, 26, 31	Griffon Vulture/Black Vulture/Egyptian Vulture, Lammergeier
In wetlands and nearby rivers	SCENES 2, 5, 7, 10, 19	Greylag Goose, Crane, Whooper Swan, Rock Dove, Night Heron
In a tree or a mast	SCENES 1, 8, 17, 34	Spanish Sparrow, Lammergeier, Scops Owl, Rock Dove
Flying on the right or left side of humans.	SCENES 10, 13, 16, 35	Night Heron, Golden Eagle, Verreux's Eagle
Flying where the direction is described or indicated	SCENES 2, 5, 35	Grey-lag Goose, Crane, Whooper Swan, Verreux's Eagle
A prey is fleeing and a bird of prey is pursuing from behind	SCENES 30, 32	Rock Dove, Peregrine
Landing and settling	SCENES 2	Grey-lag Goose, Crane, Whooper Swan

*Table 5* and *Table 6* show that the spatial context for the birds are specified in almost all cases and that they occur in different spatial contexts. In only 3 of 48 bird descriptions is the spatial context for the bird not specified. These are the sculptured dove decorations on Nestor's cup in SCENE 12, the geese/Trojans that a Lammergeier/Automedon swoops among and escapes from in SCENE 23, and the eagle that *has the keenest sight of all winged things under heaven* (*Il.* 17.675), used to signify Menealus in SCENE 24.

In 9 bird descriptions of 48 birds are associated with rather specific localities in the ancient Greek mainland, Asia Minor or elsewhere. In five of these cases the physical location is clearly specified with a site name, Thisbe and Messe, the streams of Caÿstrius, and the streams of Ocean (SCENES 1, 2, 3, 4, 5). In the other five cases specific places have been identified in the analyses and these are usually a mountain from where Zeus sends out an eagle (SCENES 9, 35), or from where a god has just departed as a metaphorical Peregrine (Apollo in SCENES 18, and Thetis in SCENE 27) or a Lammergeier (Athena in SCENE 28).

Common environments where birds occur are sites that are associated with rocks, mountains and mountain peaks. In those 8 cases in the *Iliad* we find the Golden Eagle, the Peregrine, the Lammergeier, the Rock Dove and the Verreux's Eagle (SCENES 9, 14, 18, 20, 27, 28, 30, 35). Other common environments are wetlands and nearby rivers. In the five cases we find the Greylag Geese, Cranes, Whooper Swans, Rock Doves, and the Night Heron (SCENES 2, 5, 7, 10, 19). In four bird descriptions we also find birds in

## DISCUSSION

trees or on a mast: the Spanish Sparrows in a platan, the Lammergeiers in an oak, the Scops Owl in a fir tree, and the dove on a ship's mast (SCENES 1, 8, 17, 34) Altogether the bird descriptions are ornithologically accurate in relation to the environment.

The birds are further described in relation to different altitudes, i.e., high, medium or low. The eagles that are frequently described as being in *lofty flight* (*Il.* 12.201; 219, 16.822, 22.308) are those who occur highest up in the air, but also the Cranes in SCENE 5 that *arises before the face of heaven* (*Il.* 3.3–4), the Peregrine in SCENE 14 that flies *aloft above a high sheer rock* (*Il.* 13. 63), and the Lammergeiers that in SCENE 20 fight *upon a high rock* (*Il.* 16.429) are described in reference to high altitudes. Among the birds that fly at medium and/or low altitudes we find Greylag Geese, Cranes, Whooper Swans, the Night Heron, the Verreaux's Eagle, Peregrines, Common Starlings, Eurasian Jackdaws, Lammergeiers, and Rock Doves. We also find Lammergeiers sitting in a tree (SCENE 8) and on the ground where they are associated with close fighting (SCENES 15, 20). Lowest on the ground we mainly find Griffon Vultures, Black Vultures, and Egyptian Vultures. These vultures constitutes a large group (SCENES 6, 11, 21, 22, 26 and 31).

Further, birds occur at different spatial positions in the air in relation to humans. They are usually seen by humans when the bird is above them and their war activities. The Night Heron flies close by Odysseus' and Diomedes' way (SCENE 10), and it as well as other birds (exclusively eagles) occur to the right or left of humans (SCENES 10, 13, 16, 35). Some birds also seem to fly in a certain direction such as the Cranes in SCENE 5 that fly towards the streams of Ocean.

*To conclude the birds' spatial contexts:* these are specified in almost 100%. Common environments are mountains and wetlands or nearby rivers. Behaviours that are related to activities on the ground performed by carrion-eating vultures and fighting Lammergeiers, as well as birds in trees, are also important. In many descriptions the birds occur at different altitudes in the air where they sometimes are rising or lowering their positions or are described according to whether they are positioned to the right or to the left of human warriors. In all descriptions the physical environments fit the choice of bird in an ornithological sense.

It is now time *to sum up the ornithological aspects.* The variety of species and accurate and diversified behaviours and characteristics of birds in the *Iliad* indicates a deep interest and knowledge of different birds. The ornithological accuracy indicates that this epic tradition embraces extensive experiences from field observations of birds. The material further demonstrates that the poet was a master in choosing the most "perfect" bird and the most "perfect" behaviour and characteristics, for the other contents and details in the scene.

THE BIRDS IN THE *ILIAD*

The time contexts are both specific and unspecific. The physical eagles turn up three times after human prayers or after a human has spoken. The image-vultures appear in references to the future, and the transformation-birds occur in contexts when gods sit in trees. The time contexts for the metaphorical birds are mostly unspecific, but sometimes they are associated with different seasons such as spring and winter.

The spatial contexts is almost always specified. Common environments are mountains, wetlands or rivers, and the ground as in the case of the carrion-eating vultures. In all descriptions the behaviour, characteristics, and physical environment fit the choice of bird in an ornithological sense.

## Form

Table 7. The birds forms as presented in the *Iliad*.<sup>6</sup>

SCENE no	Passage	Forms	Suggested species according to this author
1	<i>Il.</i> 2.284-335	<i>physical</i>	Spanish Sparrow, <i>Passer hispaniolensis</i>
2	<i>Il.</i> 2.459-466	<i>metaphorical</i> <i>metaphorical</i> <i>metaphorical</i>	Greylag Goose, <i>Anser anser rubrirostris</i> Crane, <i>Grus grus</i> Whooper Swan, <i>Cygnus cygnus</i>
3	<i>Il.</i> 2.494-510	<i>other</i>	Rock Dove, <i>Columbia livia</i>
4	<i>Il.</i> 2.581-590	<i>other</i>	Rock Dove, <i>Columbia livia</i>
5	<i>Il.</i> 3.1-9	<i>metaphorical</i>	Crane, <i>Grus grus</i>
6	<i>Il.</i> 4.234-239	<i>image</i>	Griffon Vulture, <i>Gyps fulvus</i> / Black Vulture/ <i>Aegypius monachus</i> / Egyptian Vulture, <i>Neophron percnopterus</i>
7	<i>Il.</i> 5.767-791	<i>metaphorical</i>	Rock Dove, <i>Columbia livia</i>
8	<i>Il.</i> 7.54-66	<i>transformation</i>	Lammergeier, <i>Gypaetus barbatus</i>
9	<i>Il.</i> 8.236-252	<i>physical</i>	Golden Eagle, <i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>
10	<i>Il.</i> 10.272-282	<i>physical</i>	Night Heron, <i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>
11	<i>Il.</i> 11.155-162	<i>image</i>	Griffon Vulture, <i>Gyps fulvus</i> / Black Vulture, <i>Aegypius monachus</i> / Egyptian Vulture, <i>Neophron percnopterus</i>
12	<i>Il.</i> 11.628-643	<i>other</i>	Rock Dove, <i>Columbia livia</i>
13	<i>Il.</i> 12.195-257	<i>physical</i>	Short-toed Eagle, <i>Circaetus gallicus</i>
14	<i>Il.</i> 13.43-75	<i>metaphorical</i>	Peregrine, <i>Falco peregrinus</i>
15	<i>Il.</i> 13.526-539	<i>metaphorical</i>	Lammergeier, <i>Gypaetus barbatus</i>
16	<i>Il.</i> 13.809-832	<i>image</i> <i>physical</i>	Peregrine, <i>Falco peregrinus</i> Golden Eagle, <i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>
17	<i>Il.</i> 14.283-292	<i>transformation</i>	Scops Owl, <i>Otus scops</i>

<sup>6</sup> For my definitions of the five categories of form, physical, metaphorical, transformation, image and other see chapter 2.

DISCUSSION

SCENE no	Passage	Forms	Suggested species according to this author
18	<i>Il.</i> 15.236–244	<i>metaphorical</i>	Peregrine, <i>Falco peregrinus</i>
19	<i>Il.</i> 15.688–695	<i>metaphorical</i> <i>metaphorical</i> <i>metaphorical</i> <i>metaphorical</i>	Golden Eagle, <i>Aquila chrysaetos</i> Greylag Goose, <i>Anser anser rubrirostris</i> Crane, <i>Grus grus</i> Whooper Swan, <i>Cygnus cygnus</i>
20	<i>Il.</i> 16.426–432	<i>metaphorical</i>	Lammergeier, <i>Gypaetus barbatus</i>
21	<i>Il.</i> 16.581–592	<i>metaphorical</i> <i>metaphorical</i> <i>metaphorical</i>	Peregrine, <i>Falco peregrinus</i> Eurasian Jackdaw, <i>Corvus monedula</i> Common Starling, <i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>
22	<i>Il.</i> 16.830–842	<i>image</i>	Griffon Vulture, <i>Gyps fulvus</i> / Black Vulture, <i>Aegypius monachus</i> / Egyptian Vulture, <i>Neophron percnopterus</i>
23	<i>Il.</i> 17.456–465	<i>metaphorical</i> <i>metaphorical</i>	Lammergeier, <i>Gypaetus barbatus</i> Greylag Goose, <i>Anser anser rubrirostris</i>
24	<i>Il.</i> 17.673–693	<i>metaphorical</i>	Golden Eagle, <i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>
25	<i>Il.</i> 17.755–761	<i>metaphorical</i> <i>metaphorical</i> <i>metaphorical</i>	Common Starling, <i>Sturnus vulgaris</i> Eurasian Jackdaw, <i>Corvus monedula</i> Peregrine, <i>Falco peregrinus</i>
26	<i>Il.</i> 18.267–272	<i>image</i>	Griffon Vulture, <i>Gyps fulvus</i> Black Vulture, <i>Aegypius monachus</i> Egyptian Vulture, <i>Neophron percnopterus</i>
27	<i>Il.</i> 18.614–617	<i>metaphorical</i>	Peregrine, <i>Falco peregrinus</i>
28	<i>Il.</i> 19.349–356	<i>metaphorical</i>	Lammergeier, <i>Gypaetus barbatus</i>
29	<i>Il.</i> 21.251–256	<i>metaphorical</i>	Verreaux's Eagle, <i>Aquila verreauxii</i>
30	<i>Il.</i> 21.489–496	<i>metaphorical</i> <i>metaphorical</i>	Rock Dove, <i>Columbia livia</i> Peregrine, <i>Falco peregrinus</i>
31	<i>Il.</i> 22.38–45	<i>image</i>	Griffon Vulture, <i>Gyps fulvus</i> Black Vulture, <i>Aegypius monachus</i> Egyptian Vulture, <i>Neophron percnopterus</i>
32	<i>Il.</i> 22.138–144	<i>metaphorical</i> <i>metaphorical</i>	Peregrine, <i>Falco peregrinus</i> Rock Dove, <i>Columbia livia</i>
33	<i>Il.</i> 22.306–319	<i>metaphorical</i>	Golden Eagle, <i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>
34	<i>Il.</i> 23.850–883	<i>physical</i>	Rock Dove, <i>Columbia livia</i>
35	<i>Il.</i> 24.308–321	<i>physical</i>	Verreaux's Eagle, <i>Aquila verreauxii</i>

Table 7 shows that the birds occur in metaphorical forms in 30 of 48 bird descriptions, physical (7), image (6), other (3), and transformation (2).

Among *the physical birds*, eagles are most common (4 of 7). Golden Eagles occur in SCENES 9 and 16 (each was seen by the Achaean warriors and by the Achaean and Trojan warriors). Among the physical eagles we also find the Short-toed Eagle in SCENE 13

(it was seen by the Achaean and Trojan warriors), and the Verreaux's Eagle in SCENE 35 (it was seen by King Priam and some Trojans). In this group are also the Spanish Sparrows that Odysseus referred to SCENE 1, the Night Heron that Odysseus and Diomedes heard in SCENE 10, and the Rock Dove that was shot by Meriones in SCENE 34.

When it comes to *transformation* we have the two Lammergeiers, whose forms were taken by Apollo and Athena in SCENE 8, and a Scops Owl whose form was taken by Sleep in SCENE 17.

*The metaphorical birds* are as seen the largest group concerning the birds' forms (30 of 48). From the most common to the least common they are: Peregrine (6 of 30), Lammergeier (4), Golden Eagle (3), Rock Dove (3), Greylag Goose (3), Crane (3), Whooper Swan (2), Eurasian Jackdaw (2), Common Starling (2), and Verreaux's Eagle (1). All the metaphorical birds but one (the geese, cranes and swans in SCENE 19 that are metaphors for the Achaean ships) resemble in a way and signify divine characters when they are acting and moving, or one or many humans when the latter are engaged in war activities, see also *Table 9*.

The birds that occur in *image forms* are the carrion-eating vultures, the Griffon Vulture, the Black Vulture, and the Egyptian Vulture that occur in SCENES 6, 11, 22, 26, 31, and the Peregrines that occur once in SCENE 16.

The birds that occur in *other forms* are the Rock Doves in SCENE 3 and 4 that characterise two cities and the Rock Doves in SCENE 12 that are sculptured decorations on King Nestor's cup.

*To conclude the birds' forms*: birds occur in metaphorical form in 30 of 48 bird descriptions, physical (7), image (6), other (3), and transformation (2). This means that birds in the *Iliad* are most frequently used metaphorically to signify a human or divine character. Birds are further used in *image form* by the human characters almost as often as they are experienced by the human characters as *physical* in the meaning of "real". Birds that occur as part of a god's or goddess's *transformation* or those being in *other forms* occur rather seldom.

## Interactions

In this part the focus is on the birds' interactions with other characters:

- Bird and other birds (BB)
- Bird and other animals (BA)
- Bird and humans (BH)
- Bird and gods/goddesses (BG)



DISCUSSION

Table 8. Bird references, suggested taxonomic status and in regard of the birds' interactions with the other characters.

SCENE no.	Passage	Bird name in the nominative	Suggested species according to this author	Interactions with other characters
1	<i>Il.</i> 2.284-335	<i>στρουθός</i>	Spanish Sparrow	BB, BA, BH, (BG)* <sup>1</sup>
2	<i>Il.</i> 2.459-466	<i>χήν</i> <i>γέρανος</i> <i>κύκνος</i>	Greylag Goose Crane Whooper Swan	BB, BH (BG)
3	<i>Il.</i> 2.494-510	<i>πολυτρήρων</i>	Rock Dove	BB
4	<i>Il.</i> 2.581-590	<i>πολυτρήρων</i>	Rock Dove	BB
5	<i>Il.</i> 3.1-9	<i>γέρανος</i>	Crane	BB, BH, (BG)
6	<i>Il.</i> 4.234-239	<i>γύψ</i>	Griffon Vulture/ Black Vulture/ Egyptian Vulture	BB, BH
7	<i>Il.</i> 5.767-795	<i>πέλεια</i>	Rock Dove	BB, BG
8	<i>Il.</i> 7.54-66	<i>αίγυπιός</i>	Lammergeier	BB, BH, BG
9	<i>Il.</i> 8.236-252	<i>αίετός</i>	Golden Eagle	BA, BH, BG
10	<i>Il.</i> 10.272-282	<i>ἔρωδιός</i>	Night Heron	BH, BG
11	<i>Il.</i> 11.155-162	<i>γύψ</i>	Griffon Vulture/ Black Vulture/ Egyptian Vulture	BB, BH
12	<i>Il.</i> 11.621-644	<i>πελειάς</i>	Rock Dove	BB, BH
13	<i>Il.</i> 12.195-257	<i>αίετός</i>	Short-toed Eagle	BA, BH, (BG)
14	<i>Il.</i> 13.43-84	<i>ἴρηξ</i>	Peregrine	BB, BH, BG
15	<i>Il.</i> 13.526-539	<i>αίγυπιός</i>	Lammergeier	BH, (BG)
16	<i>Il.</i> 13.809-832	<i>ἴρηξ</i> <i>αίετός</i>	Peregrine Golden Eagle	BA, BH, BG BH, (BG)
17	<i>Il.</i> 14.283-292	<i>χαλκίς</i> <i>κύμινθις</i>	Scops Owl	BG
18	<i>Il.</i> 15.236-244	<i>ἴρηξ</i>	Peregrine	BB, BG
19	<i>Il.</i> 15.688-695	<i>αίετός</i> <i>χήν</i> <i>γέρανος</i> <i>κύκνος</i>	Golden Eagle Greylag Goose Crane Whooper Swan	BB, BH, (BG) BB
20	<i>Il.</i> 16.419-443	<i>αίγυπιός</i>	Lammergeier	BB, BH, (BG)

THE BIRDS IN THE *ILIAD*

SCENE no.	Passage	Bird name in the nominative	Suggested species according to this author	Interactions with other characters
21	<i>Il.</i> 16.581–592	ἰρῆξι κολοιός ψήρη	Peregrine Eurasian Jackdaw Common Starling	BB, BH, (BG) BB, BH BB, BH
22	<i>Il.</i> 16.830–842	γύψ	Griffon Vulture/ Black Vulture/ Egyptian Vulture	BB, BH
23	<i>Il.</i> 17.451–473	αἰγυπιός χήνη	Lammergeier Greylag Goose	BB, BH, (BG) BB, BH
24	<i>Il.</i> 17.673–692	αἰετός	Golden Eagle	BA, BH, (BG)
25	<i>Il.</i> 17.755–761	ψάρο κολοιός κίρκος	Common Starling Eurasian Jackdaw Peregrine	BB, BH BB, BH BB, BH, (BG)
26	<i>Il.</i> 18.266–273	γύψ	Griffon Vulture/ Black Vulture/ Egyptian Vulture	BB, BA, BH
27	<i>Il.</i> 18.614–617	ἰρῆξι	Peregrine	BG
28	<i>Il.</i> 19.349–356	ἄρπη	Lammergeier	BG
29	<i>Il.</i> 21.248–256	αἰετός	Verreaux's Eagle	BH, (BG)
30	<i>Il.</i> 21.489–496	πέλεια ἰρῆξι	Rock Dove Peregrine	BB, BG BB, BG
31	<i>Il.</i> 22.38–45	γύψ	Griffon Vulture/ Black Vulture/ Egyptian Vulture	BB, BA, BH, (BG)
32	<i>Il.</i> 22.130–144	κίρκος πέλεια	Peregrine Rock Dove	BB, BH, (BG) BB, BH
33	<i>Il.</i> 22.300–316	αἰετός	Golden Eagle	BA, BH, (BG)
34	<i>Il.</i> 23.850–883	πέλεια	Rock Dove	BH
35	<i>Il.</i> 24.308–321	αἰετός	Verreaux's Eagle	BH, BG

\*1 In the table I have placed parentheses for those cases where a god might have been involved in the interaction that takes place and where I suggest that we can trace here through the metaphorical birds that a god or gods have motivated the warriors according to the concept "double motivation". For "double motivation" see chapter 1. In the cases of the physical birds the parentheses suggest that a god has sent the bird.

*Table 8* shows that the birds are interacting with birds in 30 bird descriptions of 48, and with animals in 7 (serpent, fawn, snake, horses, hare, dogs, and lamb). Interactions occur with human characters on 31 occasions, and with divine characters in 29.

## DISCUSSION

*Table 9.* The relations and interactions between the metaphorical birds and the human and divine characters.

No	Metaphorical birds	Human characters	Activity and intention	Divine characters	Activity and intention
2	Greylag Goose Crane Whooper Swan	Achaean warriors	Military advance and sound from troops.		
5	Crane	Trojan troops	Military advance and sound from troops.		
7	Rock Dove			Hera and Athena	Quickly and discreetly walked on earth. Intended to support human warriors.
14	Peregrine	(Calchas)* <sup>2</sup>		Poseidon	Disappeared from the human warriors.
15	Lammergeier	Meriones	Was rushing out to take his spear back in a war context.		
18	Peregrine			Apollo	Descended from the hills of Mount Ida to support Hector.
19	Golden Eagle	Hector	Was rushing at one Achaean ship. Desires to set it on fire.		
20	Lammergeier	Patroclus and Sarpedon	Were rushing towards each other to fight.		
21	Peregrine  Eurasian Jackdaw Common Starling	Patroclus  Lycian and Trojan warriors	Was charging through the foremost fighters and attacking the Lycian and Trojan warriors.  Were driven into flight.		

THE BIRDS IN THE *ILIAD*

No	Metaphorical birds	Human characters	Activity and intention	Divine characters	Activity and intention
23	Lammergeier	Automedon	Was easily fleeing from and charging on the Trojans warriors through the great throng.		
	Greylag Goose	Trojan warriors	The group of Trojan warriors that Automedon fled from and charged on.		
24	Golden Eagle	Menelaus	His eyes were searching for Nestor's son in the throng of Achaean warriors.		
25	Common Starling Eurasian Jackdaw	Young Achaean warriors	Were crying and fleeing from Aeneas and Hector when they saw them coming towards them.		
	Peregrine	Aeneas and Hector	Were following after the young Achaean warriors.		
27	Peregrine			Thetis	Sprang down from Mount Olympus. Was intending to meet Achilles and give him his new armour and weapons.
28	Lammergeier			Athena	Left Mount Olympus. Was intending to meet Achilles and still his hunger.
29	Vereraux's Eagle	Achilles	Rushed back from the River and the River god Scamander. Was intending to kill Trojans.		

## DISCUSSION

No	Metaphorical birds	Human characters	Activity and intention	Divine characters	Activity and intention
30	Rock Dove			Artemis	Fled before Hera. Wanted to escape.
	Peregrine			Hera	Chased Artemis. Probably wanted to hit her once more.
32	Peregrine	Achilles	Rushed after Hector intending to kill him.		
	Rock Dove	Hector	Fled before Achilles. Intending to escape.		
33	Golden Eagle	Hector	Swooped and brandished his spear against Achilles. Wanted his last attack to be glorious.		

\*1 Poseidon disguised in form and utterance as the seer Calchas.

Table 9 shows that the metaphorical birds describe one or many human or divine characters. It is much more common that a metaphorical bird resembles a human (16 cases) than a god/goddess (7).

To conclude the birds' interactions: Tables 8 and 9 speak for themselves. The interactions between bird and other birds, bird and other animals, bird and humans, and bird and gods and goddesses are intense.

## Functions

It is now time to focus on the fourth aspect, the **functions** of the birds in the *Iliad*. This part of my discussion is structured in a different way, not by means of tables and concluding remarks, but from five categories which are all based on one of the four aspects used in the analytical model, the birds' **forms** as presented in the *Iliad*. I have chosen to return to this aspect, that was previously used to divide the material into smaller parts, since in my opinion this structure helps to clarify the understanding of the birds' diversified and partly similar functions and to show how humans use them in multiple ways. The five categories will be presented in the following order; *physical* (7 of 48 bird descriptions), *transformation* (2), *metaphorical* (30), *image* (6), and *other* (3).<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> For definitions of the five categories of form see my analytical model in chapter 2. For the distribution of the categories in the *Iliad* see Table 7.

### Physical

The physical birds occur in six scenes, in SCENES 1, 9, 10, 13, 16, 34 and 35. They are the **Spanish Sparrows** that were devoured by the serpent in Aulis during the Achaeans offering ceremonies (SCENE 1), the **Golden Eagle** that was sent to King Agamemnon by Zeus (SCENE 9) and the **Golden Eagle** that was seen by the Achaean and Trojan warriors after Aias' speech to Hector (SCENE 16), the **Night Heron** that was sent to Odysseus and Diomedes by Athena (SCENE 10), the **Short-toed Eagle** that dropped the snake amongst the Trojan warriors (SCENE 13), the **Rock Dove** that was shot during the funeral games for Patroclus (SCENE 34), and the **Verreaux's Eagle** that Zeus sent to King Priam before he went to Achilles asking him for Hector's body (SCENE 35).

All physical birds have been perceived and experienced by the human characters as "real". The most common human perception is visual observation that occurs in six of seven scenes. The Night Heron in SCENE 10 was exclusively perceived by Odysseus and Diomedes by means of hearing. The physical birds mainly interact with male characters being kings and warriors.

The physical birds occur in war contexts or in association to war. All these situations are risky from a human point of view. An exception is the dove being a target in the funeral games for Patroclus. The spatial contexts of the birds are generally at a high latitude in the air or up in trees. All birds except the unfledged young sparrows are flying.

### *Messengers and transmitters from gods to humans*

The physical birds in all but one case (the dove in SCENE 34) function as the gods' (Zeus and Athena exclusively) messengers to the humans, sending particular birds (and occasionally other animals such as the serpent that devoured the sparrows in SCENE 1) in order to communicate and interact with the humans.<sup>8</sup> The birds thus offer a communicative channel to the gods.

Using semiotic terminology, being in Zeus's and Athena's service the physical birds are transmitters that deliver information<sup>9</sup> from a source, meaning a god, to an addressee, meaning a human. The destination is always the humans, never the divinities.<sup>10</sup> In this communicative process there are however some details that we need to consider. When the physical birds work as the gods' transmitters, they do not operate in the sense of

<sup>8</sup> However, Zeus and Athena as well as the other gods have other ways as well to communicate and interact with the humans such as Zeus' thunder and Athena's intervention on the battlefield when being disguised in different forms.

<sup>9</sup> This is coded through an interpretative process.

<sup>10</sup> In SCENE 1 the source is Zeus and the addressees are the Achaean warriors, in SCENE 9 the source is Zeus and the addressee, King Agamemnon, in SCENE 10 the source is Athena and the addressees, Odysseus and Diomedes, in SCENE 16 the source is not openly revealed but probably Zeus and the addressees, the Achaean and Trojan warriors and perhaps in particular Aias and Hector, and in SCENE 35 the source is Zeus and the addressee, is King Priam.

## DISCUSSION

delivering Zeus's and Athena's communication as a fixed and ready verbal utterance or "letter" that is announced by someone. Rather, they transmit the message by simply turning up and showing themselves in the actual time and space context. To function, the birds have to be ornithologically identified and interpreted by the humans as divine messengers. The idea that is expressed in the *Iliad* is that the physical bird, by showing itself visually and audibly to the humans – in combination with its movements, spatiality, and ornithological identity in time and space, transmits the god's message, and also, as will soon be discussed, his or her identity and will.<sup>11</sup>

### *The mountain-dwelling and sharp-eyed eagle – a powerful symbol of Zeus*

Even if the birds appear in lower hierarchical position when operating as Zeus' and Athena's messengers, they are still in close relation to them. Considering the physical environments from where birds are being sent: in one case Zeus sent a Golden Eagle from Mount Ida to King Agamemnon, and in another a Verreaux's Eagle from Mount Olympus to King Priam. On yet another occasion Athena sent away the Night Heron to Odysseus and Diomedes and it was not revealed from what environment it was sent. But since this species is closely related to waters and wetlands it is highly probable that it appeared from the marshy environments of Troy, and not from Mount Olympus. This indicates, as argued, that Athena had left Mount Olympus and aided the Achaeans against Zeus' will.

It is further not clearly revealed whether Zeus himself sent away the eagles that occur in SCENES 13 and 16, but this is highly probable. When we turn to SCENES 9 and 35 it is said that he *sent away an eagle* (*Il.* 8.247, 24.315). It is not clear how Zeus's sending away of eagles was carried out. This concept may be associated with eagles sent away by huntsmen or eagles used for ritual purposes.<sup>12</sup> In any case, Zeus sending eagles from mountains makes the eagle closely related to him in a deep physical sense. Since both eagles and Zeus are closely related to mountains when it comes to eyries and dwelling, respectively, the matching is apt. Furthermore, both are strong and powerful and have remarkable vision: thus, they share properties.<sup>13</sup> Being displayed frequently as Zeus's special messenger, the mountain-dwelling and sharp-eyed eagle not only become a sign of Zeus but also a powerful symbol of him. Having a keen eye and an observation point on the top of a high mountain are linked to power and high status in the *Iliad*. The Night Heron and Athena are also displayed in close physical proximity, but since the heron appears only once in the poem we may not consider it a symbol of Athena.

<sup>11</sup> See section "Signs for a god's presence and will".

<sup>12</sup> See also my discussion in SCENE 9.

<sup>13</sup> For Zeus as an all-seeing, all-hearing and all-knowing god, see also *Il.* 3.276f. and West 2007, 171–173.

*“Hotline” between humans and gods*

The physical birds are verbally and ritually summoned by the humans hoping for a divine answer. Relevant examples of such “callings” are King Priam’s libation and prayer to Zeus (SCENE 35, the Verreaux’s Eagle appears), and the Achaeans’ offering rites at Aulis (SCENE 1, the Spanish Sparrows in the tree). Golden Eagles also turn up directly after two humans have spoken and where gods have been mentioned (SCENE 9, Agamemnon mentions *Father Zeus* (8.236), and SCENE 15, Aias mentions *Father Zeus and the other immortals* (13.818) when talking to Hector).

The eagles that Zeus sends thus function as his responses to the humans and their prayers, rites and speeches. In this way the birds become part of a communicative process that is also a ritual. It is interesting that Zeus never communicates with the humans verbally. He does not disguise himself as a human or as anything else in his interactions with humans as other gods do. He is shown as a much more spatially distanced god than the other Olympians. When Zeus communicates with the humans he thunders from far away or sends off eagles from mountains, and as I have mentioned before, there are details in the characterisation of Zeus that are reminiscent of eagles, such as his passion for sitting high up on mountain peaks and watching what is going on below, and his exceptional vision as the all-seeing god.

As has been argued, the eagle that Zeus sends away offers a communicative channel for him, and as soon as the eagle appears the humans react and respond. The eagle that lets fall the snake in the middle of the Trojans warriors made Polydamas and Hector debate heavily, and the Achaean warriors fell more eagerly on the Trojans after they had seen that the eagle had dropped the fawn at Zeus’s altar. When Odysseus heard the call from the Night Heron from the right, he rejoiced, and so on. It was *after* Odysseus and Diomedes had noticed the heron that they made prayers to Athena, and in their prayers they expressed specific wishes to her. In this scene Odysseus is displayed as a human warrior who is observant of signs. He rightly associates the heron to Athena, which also says something about the close bond between Odysseus and his patroness. I have argued that the scene displays the sublime communication between Athena and Odysseus and that it seems that the line for communication with Athena was open at that moment.

I view the Night Heron scene as an example that implies that bird omens not only offer a communicative channel for gods: they also function as a kind of avian “hotline” between humans and gods. We find another good example if we return to SCENE 35 where King Priam prayed to Zeus and asked him to send him a *bird of omen* (*Il.* 24.309) so that he may see it with his own eyes and have trust in it – and in his expedition to



## DISCUSSION

Achilles. Just after, Zeus replied by sending the Verreaux's Eagle and at catching sight of it, Priam and the Trojans rejoiced.

### *Signs and omens*

An interesting detail is that all the physical birds that we are discussing apart from the dove in SCENE 34, clearly function as signs that signify something other than itself.<sup>14</sup> As Pierce said, "Nothing is a sign unless it is interpreted as a sign,"<sup>15</sup> which is very true for the physical birds in the *Iliad*. They become signs since the humans interpret them as such. This happens through an interpretative process where the humans use codes<sup>16</sup> to understand and emotionally "take in" the gods' messages. In my investigation the following two functions (a. and b.) of these bird signs can be identified.

#### a. Signs for a god's presence and will

The Golden Eagle in SCENE 9 is a good example of coding a bird as a sign. The eagle appeared with a fawn in its talons and dropped it beside Zeus's altar. Seeing the fawn there the Achaean warriors understood that the eagle had come from Zeus. The fact that their fighting spirits increased indicates that they interpreted the eagle as a good sign. The Night Heron that called and flew by on Odysseus' and Diomedes' right side when they went out on a risky war expedition became for them a sign of Athena coming with good messages. The identification of Athena through the Night Heron became possible since Athena was Odysseus' patroness. Her will is being signalled by the heron's spatial position at their right side (right side of humans=good fortunate and left side = bad fortune). Of importance for them was also that the heron appeared at this very special moment.

The Short-toed Eagle that had an aerial fight with a snake that it dropped amongst the Trojan warriors is more ambiguous. They shuddered and did not know how to interpret the animal event. Polydamas and Hector had a deep discussion about whether to view the eagle as a bad sign or as no sign at all. Also the Golden Eagle that appeared after Aias had spoken to Hector is ambiguous. The Achaean warriors however reacted to it as a positive sign. The Verreaux's Eagle that appeared to King Priam in SCENE 35 functioned for him as a positive sign from Zeus. Just before the eagle turned up, Priam had prayed to Zeus to send *a bird of omen* (*Il.* 24.310) so that he may trust it and go confidently to Achilles at the Achaean ships.

Essential items in the coding process are the following: (1) the bird itself that with

14 For the semiotic definitions of "sign" see chapter 2.

15 Pierce 1931-58, 2.172. Also see Chandler 2002, 2.

16 For a semiotic definition of "code", see chapter 2.

its materiality is the sign's form, (2) the bird's ornithological identity, (3) spatial position, (4) where it drops its prey, (5) the humans' intentions and (6) what they are doing when the bird appears, and (7) what they had said in a prayer or speech just before the bird turns up. It is through this process that the god's presence, identity and will are revealed.

b. Signs with predictive functions

The physical birds do not function as signs for the gods' temporary presence and will only. An interesting fact is that they are also omens predicting and revealing for the humans something about the future that would be of great importance for them. Having this function the birds are frequently observed by the humans in animal-events where a sign bird interacts with other animals. Such events take place between the Spanish Sparrows and the serpent (SCENE 1), the Golden Eagle and the fawn (SCENE 9) and the Short-toed Eagle and the snake (SCENE 13).<sup>17</sup>

A good example of the birds' predictive functions is the scene with the nine sparrows that were devoured by the serpent. They revealed for the Achaean warriors that they were going to fight in Troy for nine years before they would take the city. It was through the diviner Calchas that this message was revealed for them the first time and the second time Odysseus repeated the message to them. Calchas thus become an important link and a kind of medium in the communicative and interpretative process where humans interpret the god's message about the future through birds. Odysseus does not have such an important function since he only repeated what Calchas had already prophesized. Odysseus however reminded his warrior comrades about the sparrow-serpent event in a moment when they wanted to take their ships and return to their homes. His words become powerful since his retelling of the event changed their emotional states and raised their motivation to return to war. This scene shows that birds are used in the *Iliad* as "war-propaganda" aimed at raising the warriors' fighting spirits.

Being signs with predictive functions the eagles further revealed for the Achaeans, and at last King Priam and some Trojans, that they would have Zeus on their side for a while (SCENES 9, 16, 35). The Night Heron had a similar function for Odysseus and Diomedes indicating that their war-expedition would turn out well since they had Athena's support (SCENE 10).

Even if the result shows that the physical birds in the *Iliad* have this predictive

<sup>17</sup> See also Pollard who emphasises that since birds were one of the most common forms of omen, their activities were observed in a very detailed way. Pollard 1977, 14.

## DISCUSSION

function it is likely that eagles and other birds were not always considered to be omen birds. They became omens under certain circumstances where the bird's ornithological identity, behaviour, spatial position to the right or to the left, eventual interaction with another animal, and time context were of importance. When considering the predictive function of these birds one easily understands how they suited the purpose of giving an indication or kind of guidance before important and risky future events such as dangers in war.<sup>18</sup> Getting assurance that the outcome of the event would be in their favour must have been a great relief, as we will also see in the next section.

Considering the physical birds' predictive functions in the *Iliad* as a whole, I have suggested that these birds and their activities not only have important functions for the humans in the scene, but also operate as future-projecting representations to signify other persons and future events that are not explicitly pronounced in the scene. I have thus suggested that the nine sparrows that was devoured by the serpent (SCENE 1) are operating as possible symbolic representations of the Trojan mothers and children who will be brutally killed/mistreated by the Achaeans in Troy. If we turn to the other examples, I have likewise suggested that the Golden Eagle turning up with a fawn (SCENE 9) is a representation of the most powerful and prominent Achaeans warriors who will soon kill inferior Trojan sons; the Night Heron (SCENE 9) a representation of Odysseus and Diomedes and their coming nighttime war raid; the Short-toed Eagle that was attacked by the snake in the air (SCENE 13) was a representation of King Sarpedon, who will get a blow from Aias; and finally, the Verreaux's Eagle (SCENE 35) a symbolic representation of Achilles who will meet King Priam. Operating in this way the bird/animal-event that takes place in the scenes functions as a kind of, what I would like to label, "parallel event" to what will happen later among the humans.<sup>19</sup>

### *Influence the physical and emotional states of humans*

Finally in this communicative process let us consider the physical and emotional effect that the birds have on the humans. Even if birds such as eagles are imposing to see, it is not mainly the birds in themselves that causes humans to react strongly on certain occasions but the humans' comprehension of them as powerful signs coming with specific but not always unambiguous messages of great relevance for them at a certain moment. Thus the Achaean warriors *shouted aloud* (Il. 2.333, SCENE 1) when Odysseus recounted the event with the sparrows and serpent: thus the Achaeans on one occasion, *leapt more eagerly on the Trojans and took thought of battle* (Il. 8.252, SCENE 9) on the Trojans after

<sup>18</sup> See also Dillon who emphasises that the the divine signs guided humans through difficulties in their mortal existence. Dillon 1996, 99.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. also Alden's discussion on para-narratives. Alden 2000. See also chapter 1 in this study.

seeing that the eagle had dropped the fawn beside Zeus's altar, and on another *shouted aloud, heartened by the omen* (*Il.* 13.823, SCENE 16); thus *Odysseus rejoiced* (*Il.* 10.277, SCENE 10) when he heard the heron's call; thus the Trojans had different ideas that led to great debate about the eagle that dropped a snake in their midst (see *Il.* 12.195–257, SCENE 13); and thus King Priam and the Trojans who saw the Verreaux's Eagle *rejoiced and the hearts in the breasts of all were warmed* (*Il.* 24. 321, SCENE 35).

It is apparent that the humans in almost all cases are affected emotionally with a feeling of relief after observing a bird sign (SCENES 9, 10, 16, 35) and that the bird signs, as reflected in the material, are more often taken as good than bad. In most cases the humans are influenced even physically since their strength increases' after seeing and experiencing the bird. In this way the bird (usually an eagle), operating as a sign and an omen, has a great physical and emotional impact on the humans and their states. This is not surprising. If a warrior knew that he had a god on his side for a while a risky situation must have been experienced as less threatening, and the belief in success in an activity increased. The bird signs thus function as a kind of self-supportive system that satisfy human needs in risky situations.

Since the fighting spirit usually grows after warriors have seen an avian omen, important sign birds such as eagles also play an important part in motivating troops to fight and thus have an important function in military contexts. There is nothing in the material that indicates that eagles or other sign birds were used in the military propaganda in the sense that they were sent by humans to the troops in specific situations to increase or reduce the warriors' war spirits. On the contrary, the eagles appear spontaneously and in zoologically accurate situations in the *Iliad*, and all sign birds are always sent to the humans by the gods. It was professional diviners such as Calchas who had the preferential right of interpretation of bird signs, but as I have mentioned other humans such as Polydamas interpret bird signs openly in the *Iliad*. Calchas' interpretation was however never questioned by any other human, while Polydamas' was challenged by Hector. The physical birds in the *Iliad* indicate that it was important to be sensitive to birds that appeared in different environments and situations: to observe them and listen to them, to be skilled in interpreting them, to judge whether they were bird signs or not, and if they were, to follow their advices and have trust in them. Reading the bird signs correctly could be a matter of life or death.

#### *Display bonds, status and hierarchies*

Being the strongest, the eagle is on the top of the avian hierarchy. It is thus also natural that the eagle is Zeus' special bird. Its status enforces Zeus' role as ruler. In the *Iliad*

## DISCUSSION

he is described as *king over all mortals and immortals* (*Il.* 12.241–242). Zeus's eagles also show him as stronger and more powerful than Athena and her Night Heron. (A Golden Eagle is capable of hunting and killing a Night Heron)

Zeus and Athena send their birds to kings and prominent warriors. It is possible here to see a pattern where Zeus sends eagles to kings in particular. Odysseus is also a king, but it is Athena who is his patroness: this makes it logical that he receives a "bird" from her.

The eagles and the heron contribute to display the close bond between Zeus and human kings and between Athena and Odysseus and emphasise the high status of these persons as warriors and prominent men in society.

### Transformation

There are two species in this group: two **Lammergeiers** whose forms were taken by Athena and Apollo when they sat in Zeus's oak on the Scamander Plain in SCENE 8, and one **Scops Owl** whose form was taken by Sleep when he sat in the tall fir tree on Mount Ida in SCENE 17.

#### *Used by gods as disguise*

An interesting fact with the birds in this group is that in both cases they occur in situations when the gods desired, or were asked, to intervene in the human war without being recognised by anyone. As argued in SCENE 8 Athena's and Apollo's disguise as Lammergeiers indicate that it was important for them not to be seen by any human or god, in particular Zeus. They wanted to watch the human single combat between Hector and an Achaean warrior that they had arranged: thus they placed themselves in Zeus's oak. It would have been more ornithologically accurate if the poet had placed the Lammergeiers (Athena and Apollo) on a cliff or on the ground. But as argued we can suspect that the poet chose Lammergeiers for particular reasons and that he wanted to communicate something in particular by placing them in Zeus' oak. One reason to choose Lammergeiers was probably that they fit in a scene that referred to a coming human single combat since Lammergeiers occur in such contexts also in other scenes (see SCENES 14, 20). It can be concluded that Lammergeiers correlated with the status of these gods in the divine hierarchy.

In SCENE 17 it is obvious that the god Sleep did not want to be seen by Zeus. At this moment, transformed to a Scops Owl, he waited for Zeus in the pine tree. His intention was to lull Zeus to sleep after his and Hera's lovemaking. The initiative came from Hera, who had previously asked Sleep for this favour since it would prevent Zeus from

intervening in the human war for a while. As previously argued, Sleep must have been terrified that Zeus would discover him being so close: thus, it must have been of prime importance to have a perfect disguise, one that would completely fit into the physical environment. No other bird would suit the situation better than a Scops Owl.<sup>20</sup>

The Lammergeiers and Scops Owl being used in this way emphasise the gods' abilities to easily perform activities that humans cannot. The immediate function of the transformation is that the birds offer a disguise for the gods when the latter are in need of such.

*Display the gods' lust to watch fighting warriors*

If we return to SCENE 8 – being disguised as two Lammergeiers, Athena and Apollo planned to watch a single combat from an elevated position. The Achaean and Trojan warriors intended to do the same thing but they sat on the ground. They were just obeying the orders from their leaders and were probably not aware of the two gods sitting above them. At this moment Athena and Apollo were *rejoicing in the warriors* (*Il.* 7.61). One wonders in what way? Because they were beautiful to watch, because of excitement, or because of something else? As argued there is a tension in the scene that is evoked by the fact that the two gods had taken the form of Lammergeiers. As said before this species feeds chiefly on large bones of medium-sized animals such as sheep and goats. Lammergeiers also take meat from freshly killed mammals. The question of whether the choice of birds was also to indicate that Athena and Apollo were interested in the lives of the two warriors who were soon to start to fight is ambiguous. Undoubtedly the Lammergeiers emphasise the gods' desire to watch fighting human warriors while sitting in an elevated position.

*Create a tension about who sees whom*

I have argued that Athena and Apollo sitting in Zeus' oak in the form of two Lammergeiers imitates the great god himself, who in a more grandiose way and from a higher spatial position often sits on mountain peaks and watches fighting human warriors. I have further suggested that Zeus on those occasions resembles a watchful eagle with a keen eye. It is my opinion that SCENE 8 creates an ambiguity if Zeus observes the whole event from above but without Athena and Apollo's knowing it. The question evoked is: Who is really watching whom? The Achaean and Trojan warriors sitting on the

<sup>20</sup> West brings up the point that the gods' disguises are not always perfect. Sometimes their divine nature betrays itself in certain visible clues. An example is when Poseidon disguised as Calchas departs as a falcon and Atias observes something unusual in his movements (13.71 f.). Another example is when Helen recognises Aphrodite by her beautiful neck and breast and her sparkling eyes (*Il.* 3.396 f.; cf. Hymn. *Aphr.* 181). West 2007, 133.

## DISCUSSION

ground are watching the two fighting warriors. Apollo and Athena are watching the warriors from the tree where they are perched probably thinking that they are perfectly disguised, but it is possible that Zeus is watching all of them from above.

As argued at this moment Zeus had not yet prohibited the other gods from assisting the Trojans and Achaeans. This was done soon after in the next song (in *Il.* 8.1–27) which I have previously suggested is an interesting coincidence that indicates that Apollo and Athena already challenged the limits of their authorities when arranging this single combat.

If we turn to SCENE 17 there are reasons to suspect that this scene also creates a tension about who sees whom. Carefully transformed into a Scops Owl, the god Sleep did not want to be seen by Zeus. But what about the opposite? We can suppose that to be able to execute his mission at the right moment, i.e., to lull Zeus to sleep after Hera's and Zeus' lovemaking, Sleep had to take notice of what was happening beneath him. I have previously argued that it is ambiguous whether Sleep actually observed Zeus' and Hera's intimate situation very much due to the Scops Owl's habit of almost shutting its eyes so as to face the source of danger while slightly turning away from it. As Janko has further argued "Sleep is keener not to be seen by Zeus than not to see him."<sup>21</sup> The ambiguity concerning who is really watching whom remains since shortly after the episode with Sleep's disguise it is said that Zeus spoke to Hera encouraging her to *fear not in this that any god or man will see, with such a cloud shall I enfold you, a cloud of gold. Through it not even Helios could discern us, though his sight is the keenest of all seeing. At that the son of Cronus clasped his wife in his arms, and beneath them the bright earth made fresh-sprung grass to grow, and dewy lotus, and crocus, and hyacinth thick and soft that kept them from the ground. On this they lay, and were clothed about with a cloud, fair and golden, from which fell drops of glistening dew* (*Il.* 14.341–351).

### Metaphorical

The metaphorical birds occur in 18 scenes and in 30 of 48 bird descriptions (SCENES 2, 5, 7, 14, 15, 18, 19, 20, 21, 23, 24, 25, 27, 28, 29, 30, 32, and 33). Most common is the **Peregrine** that is used in metaphorical resemblance to Poseidon, Apollo, Patroclus, Aeneas and Hector, Thetis, Hera, and Achilles (SCENES 14, 18, 21, 25, 27, 30, 32). The **Lammergeier** occurs four times signifying Meriones (SCENE 15), Patroclus and King Sarpedon (SCENE 20), Automedon (SCENE 23), and Athena (SCENE 28). The **Golden Eagle** occurs three times to signify Hector (SCENES 19 and 33) and King Menelaus (SCENE 24). The **Rock Dove** also occur thrice as a metaphorical device for Hera and Athena (SCENE 7),

21 Janko 1992, 196

Artemis (SCENE 30), and later Hector (SCENE 32). Flocks of **Greylag Geese**, **Cranes**, and **Whooper Swans** occur almost as often to signify the Achaean troops (SCENE 2) as well as the Achaean ships that Hector is rushing against in an eagle-like attack (SCENE 19). **Cranes** (SCENE 5) and **Greylag Geese** further occur once more each to indicate the Trojan warriors in both cases. Flocks of **Eurasian Jackdaws** and **Common Starlings** are used metaphorically for groups of Lycian and Trojan warriors (SCENE 21) and the young Achaean warriors (SCENE 25). Finally, the **Verreaux's Eagle** occurs only once as a metaphorical bird for Achilles (SCENE 29).

The birds are metaphors for male warriors, but also, for four different goddesses but only two gods, see also *Table 9*. On one occasion they signify the Achaean ships. Most of the metaphorical birds occur in human war contexts.

*Signify/Used for gods' and goddesses' bird-like departures and movements*

The metaphorical birds used to resemble gods and goddesses are all solitary or in pairs. They occur in situations when the divinities quickly need to transport themselves from one place to another. Peregrines, a Lammergeier, and Rock Doves are the birds involved in these interactions. The focus is mainly on the departure, and the whole transportation to the destination is never described entirely. Apollo departed from Mount Ida and Zeus as a Peregrine (SCENE 18). Also Poseidon disappeared as a Peregrine from the two Aias' at the Achaean camp (SCENE 14). The third Peregrine is Thetis, who departed from Mount Olympus and Hephaistos (SCENE 27), while Athena left Zeus at Mount Olympus as a Lammergeier (SCENE 28). The function of the birds in these scenes is to inform of the gods' quick and sudden, bird-like departures, and their quick and light movements.<sup>22</sup> They are gods and not humans and can thus move in a way that humans can not. These metaphorical birds thus emphasise the gods' abilities to easily perform extraordinary activities.

When Hera and Athena had left their horses at the place where the Rivers Simoïs and Scamander join, they did not depart as two fast-flying birds, however, but walked away as two Rock Doves (SCENE 7). In this case it seems that the focus is not mainly on quickness but rather on the silence in their movements and their intension not to be observed. The Rock Dove here is a very apt choice of bird since it is very clever at avoiding detection by predators.

Finally, we have the rather odd scene when Artemis is fleeing from Hera like a Rock Dove that tries to escape from a Peregrine (SCENE 30). Here it is not only speed that is emphasised but also fear and aggression as well as the balance of power between Hera

<sup>22</sup> Once a Lammergeier's call also emphasised a goddess's call when she departed from a mountain, see SCENE 28.



## DISCUSSION

and Artemis.

### *Signify/Used for warriors and signal when they exceed their capacities*

Characteristic of a solitary metaphorical bird is that it is used to signify a warrior when he moves and performs in a strong, unusual, and more-than-human way in the battlefield. In these situations the birds are frequently used metaphorically to indicate a warrior's emotions such as his aggression or eagerness, and their calls emphasise how a warrior or groups of warriors sound in these moments. At this point I would like to return to Edwards, who says, "a metaphor stands out by its violation of the normal order of things, stating as a fact what is actually an impossibility."<sup>23</sup> I find his statement valuable when considering the metaphorical birds (especially the eagles, the Peregrine, and the Lammergeier) in situations when these signify an individual warrior who is acting powerfully in the battlefield. I have previously argued that the warrior's activities here are unusual because under normal circumstances he is not able to perform in such a strong way. I have further argued that when the warrior temporarily exceeds his normal human limits, at that moment he resembles a bird of prey. My conclusion is that the metaphorical bird signals that something exceptional is going on, some "extra" driving force is pushing him forward, which can be understood as an effect of "double motivation".

Lesky pointed out that when the concept "double motivation" is operating, "...the impulses in the human mind and the intervention of the god flow together towards one and the same action, and this action thus receives its motivation from both realms."<sup>24</sup> In human combat it is the god who communicates the ecstatic fighting spirit, but it is the mortal who executes the feat.<sup>25</sup> Lesky argued, "It is this 'extra thrust' that sometimes characterizes greater events too."<sup>26</sup> In my material the eager and lively Greylag Geese, Cranes and Whooper Swans in SCENE 2 as well as the aggressive and fearful Cranes in SCENE 5 (signifying the Achaeans' and the Trojans' first military advances against each other) are in my opinion examples of metaphorical birds that express and signal this extra driving force. Dodds further described the concept of double motivation as typically transmitted through a god's communication of *μένος*, *great might*, to a warrior during a battle.<sup>27</sup> Rather often communication of *μένος* comes after a prayer, but it also comes

23 Edwards 1991, 48. See also chapter 1.

24 Lesky 1999, 386, see also 385. Also see chapter 1.

25 Lesky 1999, 391, see also 293.

26 Lesky 1999, 389.

27 Dodds 1951, 8. See *Il.* 5.125f., 136. Very soon after this moment Diomedes became lion-like for a while, see *Il.* 5.115–165 and *Il.* 5.253. See also Louden, who describes *μένος* as the battle might and the power which a god instills in a warrior to stimulate his *aristeia*. Louden 2006, 318.

spontaneously and in different situations.<sup>28</sup> A heightened *μένος* is, as Dodds claims, an abnormal state that needs a supernormal explanation.<sup>29</sup> Silk speaks of the phenomenon as an “unusual human behaviour”.<sup>30</sup> In the *Iliad* this unusual behaviour always occurs in war situations. I do not find it surprising that a concept such as “double motivation” was used to explain the situation, as well as the experience, when a human in extreme situations is able to exceed his normal capacity. The motivation coming from the god explains from where that extra energy or impulse suddenly came.

As I have argued in the analyses of the scenes, it seems that it is mostly Zeus who communicates exceptional power, speed and quickness to a warrior, who is likened to a strong, aggressive, or eager and lively metaphorical bird. In some cases it is however ambiguous whether some other god, for example, Apollo or Athena, may be involved. I have further suggested that these metaphorical birds of preys seem to be a way to show that Zeus is temporary honouring specific warriors.<sup>31</sup> The “bird of prey” display of a warrior thus becomes part of showing his *aristeia*. Louden describes *aristeia* as “...a higher than usual level of prowess attained by a warrior, inspired by a god, who is for a time virtually unstoppable on the battlefield.”<sup>32</sup> One example is Patroclus, who is likened to a Peregrine chasing jackdaws and starlings (the foremost Lycian and Trojan warriors) shortly before he is killed by Hector (SCENE 18). Together the birds here also emphasise the actual balance of power between the warriors as is the case in all scenes where metaphorical birds interact with other birds or animals. SCENE 33 is another example of a “bird of prey” display of a warrior, which becomes an important part of showing his *aristeia*. In this scene Hector resembles a Golden Eagle in his last powerful attack against Achilles (SCENE 33). (Hector is soon after killed by Achilles, however.)

Eagles occur frequently in this context. A Golden Eagle signifies Hector when he is powerfully rushing straight at a ship as an eagle that darts on a flock of wild geese, cranes, and swans (SCENE 19), as well as when he, as mentioned, in a last heroic effort attacks Achilles whom he is picturing at that moment as a hare or lamb (SCENE 33). A Golden Eagle that is described as having *the keenest sight of all winged things under heaven* (*Il.* 17. 675) is also used to signify King Menelaus when his eyes were searching for Antiochos on the battlefield (SCENE 24). A black Eagle, that I suggest is a Verreaux’s Eagle, further used metaphorically as Achilles when he powerfully rushed back from the surging river and the river god Scamander (SCENE 29). It is worth observ-

28 Dodds 1951, 9.

29 Dodds 1951, 9.

30 Silk 2004, 71.

31 Concerning the valour of humans the *Iliad* informs that it is *Zeus who increases it for men or diminishes it, just as he is minded, for he is mightiest of all* (*Il.* 20. 241–243).

32 Louden 2006, 317. See also Silk who describes *aristeia* as a state when no one on the battle-field can withstand a warrior. Silk 2004, 38.

## DISCUSSION

ing that these human characters are all prominent warriors. Menelaus is also King of Sparta. By means of its status among birds and because of its connection to Zeus, the metaphorical eagle emphasises the status of these men and they, through their status in society, consolidates the status of the eagle.

The Peregrine is another species that occurs frequently in this context. It signifies Patroclus who is likened to a Peregrine that chases Eurasian Jackdaws and Common Starlings (SCENE 21), and Aeneas and Hector, to a Peregrine chasing the same species (SCENE 25). The Peregrine is further used metaphorically for Achilles when he chases Hector, who thus is likened to a fleeing Rock Dove (SCENE 32). In this group we thus find Patroclus, Aeneas and Hector and Achilles. The Peregrine is a status bird, which is indicated by the fact that it also signifies gods and goddesses (Poseidon, Apollo and Thetis), although lesser ones compared to Zeus.

The Lammergeier also occurs frequently in this context used for Meriones, a Cretan warrior, when he quickly draws out his spear from Deïphobus' arm (SCENE 15), Patroclus and King Sarpedon when they were rushing rapidly against each other in close combat (SCENE 20), and Automedon, who is Achilles' charioteer, when he was fleeing from and charging/hunting the Trojan warriors, who are metaphorically likened to a flock of geese (SCENE 23). I have argued that the last example describes a situation when Automedon's will and intention is not the same as Zeus'. Automedon wants to fight the Trojans and Zeus wants the horses that Automedon is driving to bring him safely out of war. The scene thus illustrates a collision of motivations and it is of course finally Zeus' will that rules. I have further argued that the Lammergeier is an excellent choice of bird for this scene that partly illustrates a Lammergeier's unsuccessful hunt since this species is not a very skillful hunter. In this group of warriors we thus find Meriones, Patroclus and the Lycian King Sarpedon, and the charioteer Automedon. As with the eagles and the Peregrine the metaphorical Lammergeier emphasises the status of these men by means of its status among birds and because of its association with Athena and Apollo.

Finally, we have to consider the Rock Dove that signifies Hector, fleeing from a pursuing Peregrine or Achilles (SCENE 32). The Rock Dove here mainly emphasises Hector's panic and fear of getting caught by Achilles. The function of the dove thus differs considerably from the other metaphorical birds when warriors are likened to the strong and powerful birds of prey.

*Signify advancing or fleeing groups of warriors and emphasise their emotions*

Characteristic of the metaphorical birds that appear in flocks is that they signify a

group of warriors when these are marching against an enemy or together are fleeing, panicked. Sometimes the birds and their calls also signify how these warriors sound in these moments.

The flocks of Greylag Geese, Cranes, and Whooper Swans mentioned above occur twice in this context. When these birds settle, they signify the Achaean troops when they advanced in organised groups against the Trojans on the Scamandrian Plain for the first time (SCENE 2). These species also signify the Achaean ships that Hector rushed against in an eagle-like attack (SCENE 19). Greylag Geese occur once more signifying the Trojan warriors that Automedon fled through and charged against (SCENE 23). Cranes also occur once more signifying the Trojan troops when they in a mixture of fear and aggression advanced for the first time against the Achaeans (SCENE 5). The Cranes in this particular scene also have a predictive function. As previously argued they foretell that fighting will soon take place between the Trojans and the Achaeans on the plain nearby the River Scamander and the River Simoeis. This is the most explicit example in the *Iliad* of metaphorical birds having also a clearly predictive function.

Finally, flocks of Jackdaws and Starlings signify the foremost fighters among the Lycians and Trojans when these fled in panic from Patroclus in a group (SCENE 21), and similarly, the same species are used to signify the young Achaean warriors when they fled in panic from Aeneas and Hector (SCENE 25). In this group we thus find large groups of warriors, and groups of foremost fighters in the Lycian and Trojan troops, as well as young Achaean warriors. When considering status it is my opinion that these “flock birds” emphasise the inferior status of these warriors since as we have seen, it is much more prestigious to be likened to a solitary bird of prey. We can further suspect that it is more honourable to resemble the larger “flock birds” (geese, cranes and swans) than the smaller. The fact that it is the foremost fighters of the Lycians and Trojans who are likened to daws and starlings and the *young* Achaean warriors may well be a way to show the superiority of the Achaean troops.

As seen the birds in this group emphasise human emotions among the Achaean and Trojan warriors at different moments of time. The eager and lively flocks of – as we can presume – spring-migrating geese, cranes and swans (SCENE 2) bring important information of the actual states of the Achaean troops at the moment they marched against the Trojans, as well as the winter-migrating clamouring cranes (SCENE 5) tell us something about the emotional states of the Trojan troops. Similarly, the flocks of fleeing starlings and daws help us to understand the fear of the warriors who were panicked and fled in a group. The metaphorical birds thus bring us closer to the emotions of the human characters.

### Image

The image birds are the carrion-eating vultures, γῦπες, which I have suggested refer to the **Griffon Vulture**, **Black Vulture**, and **Egyptian Vulture**. These birds occur in SCENES 6, 11, 22, 26 and 31. We have further the **Peregrines** that occur in SCENE 16. All these birds refer to human war, especially the consequences of war.

#### *Prediction of vultures' desecration of warriors' corpses*

A general feature is that all birds in this category associate to contexts where fallen warriors will soon be vulture food. This does not only mean that the warriors' corpses will be eaten up but also, as I have argued, that there will be a desecration and no bodies to bury and to mourn according to the traditions. An interesting fact is that the actual devouring of the corpses is never described in the *Iliad* even if we understand that it will happen.<sup>33</sup> The image vultures thus mainly have a predictive function, as when King Agamemnon told the Achaean warriors that the vultures *will surely devour* (*Il.* 4.237, SCENE 6) the Trojans' flesh since they had broken the oath; when Hector told the dying Patroclus that *vultures shall devour you here* (*Il.* 16.836, SCENE 22); or when Polydamas told the Trojans and Hector that if they would not retreat behind the walls of Ilion, *many of the Trojans will the dogs and vultures devour* (*Il.* 18.271–271, SCENE 26).

There are two scenes that differ from the other. In SCENE 11 it is ambiguous whether the vultures have a predictive function or whether they have actually started to feed already on the Trojan warriors. In this scene King Agamemnon is likened by the poet to a consuming fire which kills the Trojans *who lay on the ground dearer far to vultures than to their wives* (*Il.* 11.161–162, SCENE 11). The last time γῦπες occur in the *Iliad*, King Priam expresses his thoughts by saying that he wishes that the dogs and vultures would *speedily devour* Achilles (*Il.* 22.42, SCENE 31). In his desperate situation he seems to think that his sorrows would depart if only this could come true. King Priam's wish does not come true. Instead almost the opposite happens. Hector's corpse is mutilated, not by the vultures but by Achilles and the Achaeans. Thus the tables are turned. At the same time there is a kind of fusion between vultures and warriors where both parties are engaged in the desecration of warriors' corpses during war. As I have further argued, it seems to be dangerous to express wishes like Priam's or to tell a dying warrior that vultures will soon devour him. What evil one wishes to befall another almost always befalls on oneself.

The Peregrine in SCENE 16 has a similar predictive function. Aias tells Hector that

<sup>33</sup> That the warriors will be devoured by dogs and birds is confirmed already in the first lines of the *Iliad*: *The wrath sing, goddess, of Peleus' son Achilles, the accursed wrath which brought countless sorrows upon the Achaeans, and sent down to Hades many valiant souls of warriors, and made the men themselves to be the spoil for dogs and birds of every kind; and thus the will of Zeus was brought to fulfillment.* (*Il.* 1.1–5).

soon the day will come when Hector will pray to *Zeus and the other immortals that swifter than falcons may your fair-maned horses be that will carry you city-ward, raising the dust of the plain* (*Il.* 13.818–820, SCENE 16). As I have argued, Aias is partly right in his prediction, since Hector’s death is nearby, but what befalls Hector is something quite opposite. Later in the *Iliad* Hector is chased by Achilles by foot thrice round the Trojan citadel and Achilles then kills him and drags his body behind his horses. It is actually Hector’s body which at that moment raises the dust of the plain. Also in this example we see pattern of “tables turning” and a kind of fusion of ideas.

### Other

The birds that occur in “other” forms because of their odd forms are the Rock Doves in SCENES 3 and 4 that characterise two cities and the **Rock Doves** in SCENE 12 that are sculptured decorations on King Nestor’s cup. These three scenes are very different in character from the other scenes and the birds cannot be classified into the form categories physical, transformed, or metaphorical. The discussion of this category will be brief.

#### *Characterise two cities as abounding in doves*

SCENES 3 and 4 are part of the Catalogue of Ships, where the poet lists the Greek contingents. The main function of the doves in the scenes is to add informative detail and to characterise Thisbe and Messe as two cities that were rich in doves. As previously argued, this detail may have aided a more collective oral spatial memory.

#### *Emphasise the men’s nutritious drinking activity*

The doves in SCENE 12 are sculptured decorations on King Nestor’s cup. The scene shows that the *doves were feeding* (*Il.* 11.634) in pairs, which I have suggested may be associated with Rock Doves’ regurgitation of crop milk to its young. The chicks grows amazingly quickly when being given this nutritious food and as argued the crop milk and the doves may allude here to the nutritious drink that King Nestor and Machaon shares. It is also possible that the doves by means of their associations to gods and goddesses indicate that the men’s drinking activity had divine connotations.

## V. CONCLUSIONS

While previous research has mainly focused on the symbolism of the birds in the *Iliad*, this study has devoted equal attention to the ornithological aspects in order to try to fully understand the birds' inclusion and significance in this epic. The results show that the birds' ornithological identities are of vital importance for any explanation of their presence and functions in the *Iliad*.

The investigation has analysed, considered and discussed the identities, interactions, and functions of the birds in the *Iliad*. The focus has been on the birds' communicative, informative and conceptual functions and the impact they have on the human characters of the epics.

As presented in the first chapter INTRODUCTION, the material is viewed as a source that provides information on how humans have responded to birds as co-existent and co-dwelling<sup>1</sup> animals and how they have used birds for different purposes.

Two assumptions were presented: (1) that the "poet" ("poets") who once created the bird scenes had a specific knowledge about birds and their behaviours and that the audience to some extent also shared this lore. The scenes were constructed on the basis of this specific awareness, something that could be received correctly by the audience if it could find the birds authentic, and (2) that the various birds that occur in the *Iliad* refer to real species that were carefully chosen to fit in the scenes and to provide them with specific details concerning identity, behaviour, characteristics, voice, environmental preferences, status, and so on. They were put into the narrative for very special reasons as was demonstrated in this study. My hypothesis is that some information will be lost if we do not pay attention to the birds in their own right. Aimed at penetrating more deeply into the *Iliad* and the bird scenes, the first chapter also briefly presented the material as well as the subjects and previous research that were considered most relevant for this study. Thus the oral background of the *Iliad*, questions of time and space, and specific features such as metaphors, parallels, signs, and the concept of "double motivation" were taken up. The second chapter, theory and method, presented and considered the framework behind the methodology, as well as ornithology and semiotics combined with Paul Ricoeur's perspective on metaphor and symbol.

The third chapter, THE BIRD SCENES, was a presentation, analysis and interpretation of the 35 bird scenes. In this chapter each bird scene was analysed in the same way. The investigated aspects were (1) ornithology, (2) form, (3), interactions, and (4) functions.

<sup>1</sup> For "co-dwellings" and "species interactions, see Armstrong Oma 2007, 61, 68; Frankin 2002, 8–9; Ingold 2000; Macnaghten & Urry 1998.

## Ornithology

The discussion of the results was presented in chapter IV. DISCUSSION. The results of the ornithological investigation indicate that the descriptions concern birds that are flying, hunting a prey, fleeing, calling, feeding, and attacking each other. The focus is also on whether the birds appear solitary or in pairs, groups or flocks, and whether they are birds of prey or prey birds. The results also show that there is an interest in the emotional states of the birds in the descriptions. They can be lively, aggressive, have a desire to kill, panic when they are fleeing and so on. The ornithological accuracy in the descriptions is generally high (in 43 of 48 descriptions). No description shows low ornithological accuracy.

Seventeen species have been identified and suggested according to modern taxonomy. Most common is the Peregrine, *Falco Peregrinus*. The other species are Rock Dove, *Columbia Livia*, Golden Eagle, *Aquila chrysaetos*, Lammergeier, *Gypaetus barbatus*, Griffon Vulture, *Gyps fulvus* / Black Vulture, *Aegyptius monachus* / Egyptian Vulture, *Neophron percnopterus*, Greylag Goose, *Anser anser*, Crane, *Grus grus*, Verreaux's Eagle, *Aquila verreauxii*, Whooper Swan, *Cygnus cygnus*, Eurasian Jackdaw, *Corvus monedula*, Common Starling, *Sturnus vulgaris*, Short-toed Eagle, *Circaetus gallicus*, Scops Owl, *Otus scops*, Night Heron, *Nycticorax nycticorax*, and Spanish Sparrow, *Passer hispaniolensis*.

In the cases when the time contexts are specified, the birds appear mainly in reference to the future, to different seasons and after human prayers. The study of the birds' spatial contexts shows that these are almost always specified. Common environments are mountains and wetlands, or nearby rivers. Birds whose activities take place on the ground are associated with scavenging vultures and close-fighting Lammergeiers; also those that sit in trees are important. In many descriptions the birds occur at different altitudes in the air, are rising or descending, or are positioned to the right or to the left of humans. The birds' behaviours, characteristics and the physical environments generally suit very well to the choice of bird.

As an answer to my assumptions and hypothesis put in the introduction, the detailed and accurate descriptions of the birds strongly suggest that the one (or those) who created the bird scenes not only knew birds well, but also had achieved this detailed knowledge from observations and experiences in the field.<sup>2</sup> The choice of birds and frequency of detailed bird descriptions indicate that this poet/poets was a keen observer and had a substantial interest in birds, and in different species and behaviours. The creator of the bird scenes had also another skill, which was to match the most perfect bird for each situation in the *Iliad*. These two skills demonstrate both a creativity and

<sup>2</sup> I would like to emphasise that this is not to be compared to modern ornithological field observation.



## CONCLUSIONS

a specific interest in birds.

### Form

The investigation of the birds' forms show that the birds in the *Iliad* can be structured into five categories of form, *physical*, *transformation*, *metaphorical*, *image*, and *other*. The birds occur mainly in *metaphorical* form. Most common among the metaphorical birds is the Peregrine, while different species of eagles are the most common physical birds.

### Interactions

The results from the study of the birds' interactions indicate that the relations and interactions between bird and other birds, bird and other animals, bird and humans, and bird and gods/goddesses are intense. The birds and their behaviour are essential in all these "spheres" of interactions regardless of their forms.

### Functions

The birds' presences and functions were discussed based on the five categories of form.

As presented, the *physical* birds, dominated by eagles, are generally messengers and transmitters from a source, Zeus or Athena to an addressee, usually a king (Agamemnon, Odysseus, Diomedes, Priam). The results make it clear that the purpose of the physical birds in their function as messengers and transmitters is to operate as sign birds; as signs, by revealing themselves visually or audibly to the humans, combined with their movements, spatiality, and position on the right (=good fortune) or left (=bad fortune) of humans, and their ornithological identities, they transmit the god's presence, message and will, and sometimes his or her identity. They are also omens that predict the future (the first example is the Spanish Sparrows in SCENE 1). The predictive function of the physical birds is essential. Of incredible importance for the interpretation is also what the humans are occupied with or what has just been said when a sign bird turns up. As my results indicate, both the Achaean and Trojan warriors and kings generally paid attention to bird signs and believed in them. The gods' messages are sometimes difficult for the humans to interpret, however, or they have different opinions on how to interpret the signs. Hector distinguishes himself in the *Iliad* as the one who rejects bird signs. Bird signs are mostly interpreted as good. A misreading could however be a matter of life or death.

At times the humans make libations and pray to the gods for bird signs. The physical birds (mainly different species of eagles and a Night Heron) are thus important for the

humans when they need to be in contact with the gods. They offer a communicative channel and functions as a kind of hotline between humans and gods.

A sign bird often appears in situations that are risky from a human's point of view. All situations when a physical bird appears in the *Iliad* are associated with human war. Positive bird signs were often followed by a feeling of relief and when a sign bird appeared to warriors in the battlefield, its presence usually raised their fighting spirits. In this way the bird, operating as a sign and an omen (usually an eagle), had a great physical and emotional impact on the humans and their states of minds at that moment. This is not surprising. If a warrior knew that he had a god on his side for a while, he would believe that a risky situation was less threatening, and his confidence in winning and self-confidence would increase. These signs thus functioned as a kind of self-supporting system that satisfies human needs in danger-filled situations.

Birds are also parts of gods' and goddesses' *transformations* (shape shifting to Lammergeiers and a Scops Owl). The birds' roles here are to offer temporary disguises for the gods when these were in need of such. This happens when they did not want to be recognised by Zeus.

The *metaphorical* birds signify both gods and humans. To start with the divine sphere, they indicate the gods' and goddesses' bird-like departures and movements and occur in situations when the divinities need to transport themselves. Peregrines, a Lammergeier, and Rock Doves are the birds involved in these interactions. The function of the birds in these scenes is to tell about the gods' very rapid and sudden departures, and their quick and light movements. These metaphorical birds thus emphasise the gods' abilities to easily perform extraordinary activities.

Solitary metaphorical birds, especially eagles and Peregrines, describe an individual warrior who is acting with power and speed in the battlefield. I have argued that the warrior's abilities become heightened, since under normal circumstances he would not have been able to perform in such a strong and more-than-human way. I have further argued that when the warrior temporarily exceeds his normal human limits, he is likened to a bird of prey at that moment. My conclusion is that the metaphorical bird signals that something exceptional is happening to him, some "extra" driving force, which can be understood as an effect of "double motivation". As argued I do not find it surprising that a concept such as "double motivation" was used to explain the situation, as well as the experience, when a human in extreme situations such as war, was suddenly able to perform above his capacity. When having such an experience it could be seen that the impulse was a result of divine intervention.

Metaphorical flock birds (flocks of geese, cranes, swans, daws and starlings) further

## CONCLUSIONS

signify advancing or fleeing groups of warriors when they are marching towards an enemy, or fleeing in panic in lively, aggressive, or fearful ways, as the case may be. The major purpose of the roles of the birds here is to bring us listeners closer to the actual emotions of these warriors as well as to the sounds of their war cries.

When the interacting, metaphorical birds belong to two different species, they emphasise the power positions of the human counterparts; in the same way, two birds of the same species signify that two warriors were equally strong and skilled in fighting. Regarding strength and status it is most prestigious to be likened to an eagle (usually kings), or in the second best case, to a Peregrine or a Lammergeier, than for example to a daw or a starling.

The *image* birds are exclusively the carrion-eating vultures, the Griffon Vulture, Black Vulture and Egyptian Vulture. Their function is mainly to predict the desecration of warriors' corpses by vultures and the subsequent fact that these fallen warriors would not be taken care of and buried according to the traditions. Ultimately the vultures emphasise the tragic consequences of war for the humans.

The birds placed in the category *other* are the Rock Doves, that occur in three scenes. Their function is mainly to characterise Thisbe and Messe as two cities abounding in doves, and, as I have suggested, to emphasise a nutritious drinking activity that takes place between Nestor and Machaon.

This study has demonstrated that the birds' overall function in the *Iliad* is to operate in a system that embraces different spheres: bird–bird, bird–animal, bird–human, bird–divine. The birds are highly influential in all these spheres and have essential communicative, informative and emotional functions as intermediaries between the divine and human spheres.

The birds are of great interest for both the human characters in the *Iliad* and the audience/listeners since they act as the gods' messengers to the humans. However they are not only messengers but also messages in themselves – just their appearance as birds making visible their identities, spatial positions and behaviours, carrying and disseminating divine knowledge. More specifically this means knowledge about the gods' and goddesses' presences and will, and sometimes their identities.

Another important function is that the birds carry and reveal knowledge about the future. The birds' predictive function is closely related to the gods and their will. To the humans the birds fulfil needs of safety and protection especially in dangerous situations such as war or before risky journeys. Humans generally take bird signs seriously and follow their advices. The importance of the gods' guiding of humans through birds and bird signs is well attested in the material. Every time a bird and bird sign

#### THE BIRDS IN THE *ILIAD*

turn up the humans react strongly to it. Usually the humans rejoice and the warriors' fighting spirits rise.

As birds of different kinds and species, and as signs, symbols and metaphors the birds in the *Iliad* add important information, or with Ricoeur's perspective on metaphors and symbols, we could say that they bring a surplus of meaning and signification.<sup>3</sup> Their specific roles as the gods' messengers to the humans together with their predictive functions make them unique. They are fundamental parts in the structure of the *Iliad* and in the war events that take place there, and as beings in the world they are deeply rooted in the humans' lives, conditions, consciousness and emotions.

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<sup>3</sup> Ricoeur 1976, 45, 52 (on metaphors) and 55 (on symbols). See also chapter 2.

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## APPENDIX

## List of photos

- **Cover:** Lammergeier, *Gypaetus barbatus*. Photo: Juan Manuel Menacho
- **Photo 1:** Whooper Swan, *Cygnus cygnus*. Photo: Jonas Forsberg
- **Photo 2:** Greylag Goose, *Anser anser*. Photo: Bengt Ekman
- **Photo 3:** Crane, *Grus grus*. Photo: Jan-Michael Breider
- **Photo 4:** Cranes, *Grus grus*, aggregation on a field. Photo: U. Walz
- **Photo 5:** Cranes, geese and swans. Photo: Erling Schön
- **Photo 6:** Cranes, *Grus grus*. Photo: Per-Olof Eriksson
- **Photo 7:** Griffon Vulture, *Gyps fulvus*. Photo: FLPA/Mark Sisson
- **Photo 8:** Two Lammergeiers, *Gypaetus barbatus*, searching for bones. Photo: Marcos Veiga
- **Photo 9:** Lammergeiers, *Gypaetus barbatus*. Photo: Morales
- **Photo 10:** Lammergeier. Photo: Juan Manuel Menacho
- **Photo 11:** Golden Eagle, *Aquila chrysaetos*. Photo: Magnus Martinsson
- **Photo 12:** Golden Eagle, *Aquila chrysaetos*. Photo: Ulf Risberg
- **Photo 13:** Golden Eagle, *Aquila chrysaetos*. Photo: C. Huetter
- **Photo 14:** Golden Eagle, *Aquila chrysaetos*. Photo: Patrik Olofsson
- **Photo 15:** Golden Eagle, *Aquila chrysaetos*. Photo: Magnus Martinsson
- **Photo 16:** Night Heron, *Nycticorax nycticorax*. Photo: Mark Duffy
- **Photo 17:** Short-toed Eagle, *Circaetus gallicus*. Photo: Jan Schützer
- **Photo 18:** Peregrine, *Falco peregrinus*. Photo: Bengt Ekman
- **Photo 19:** Peregrine, *Falco peregrinus*. Photo: Peter Lindberg
- **Photo 20:** Peregrine, *Falco peregrinus*, chasing dove. Photo: Jim Zipp
- **Photo 21:** Peregrine, *Falco peregrinus*. Photo: Kats Edwin
- **Photo 22:** Eurasian Jackdaw, *Corvus monedula*. Photo: Ulf Risberg
- **Photo 23:** Common Starling, *Sturnus vulgaris*. Photo: Jonas Forsberg
- **Photo 24:** Scops Owl, *Otus scops*. Photo: Richard Brooks
- **Photo 25:** Verreaux's Eagle, *Aquila verreauxii*. Photo: Emanuel Maria



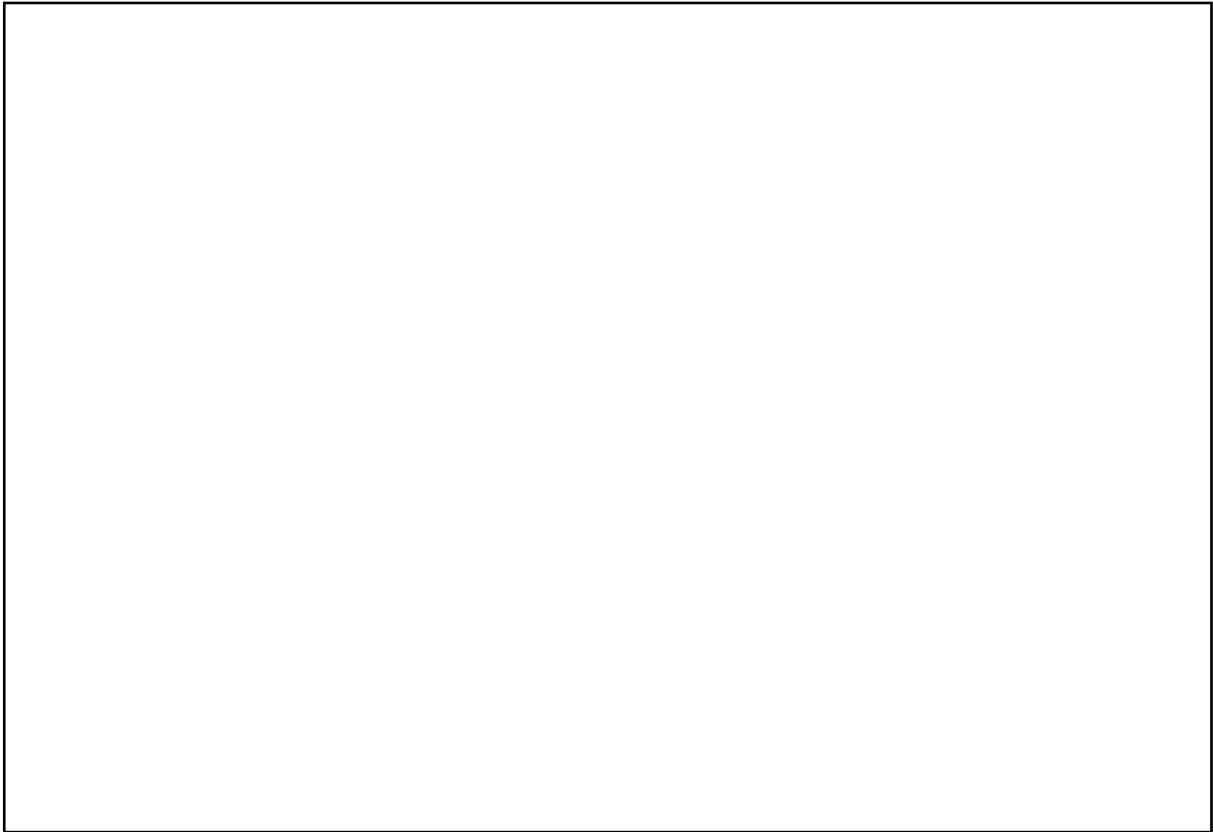


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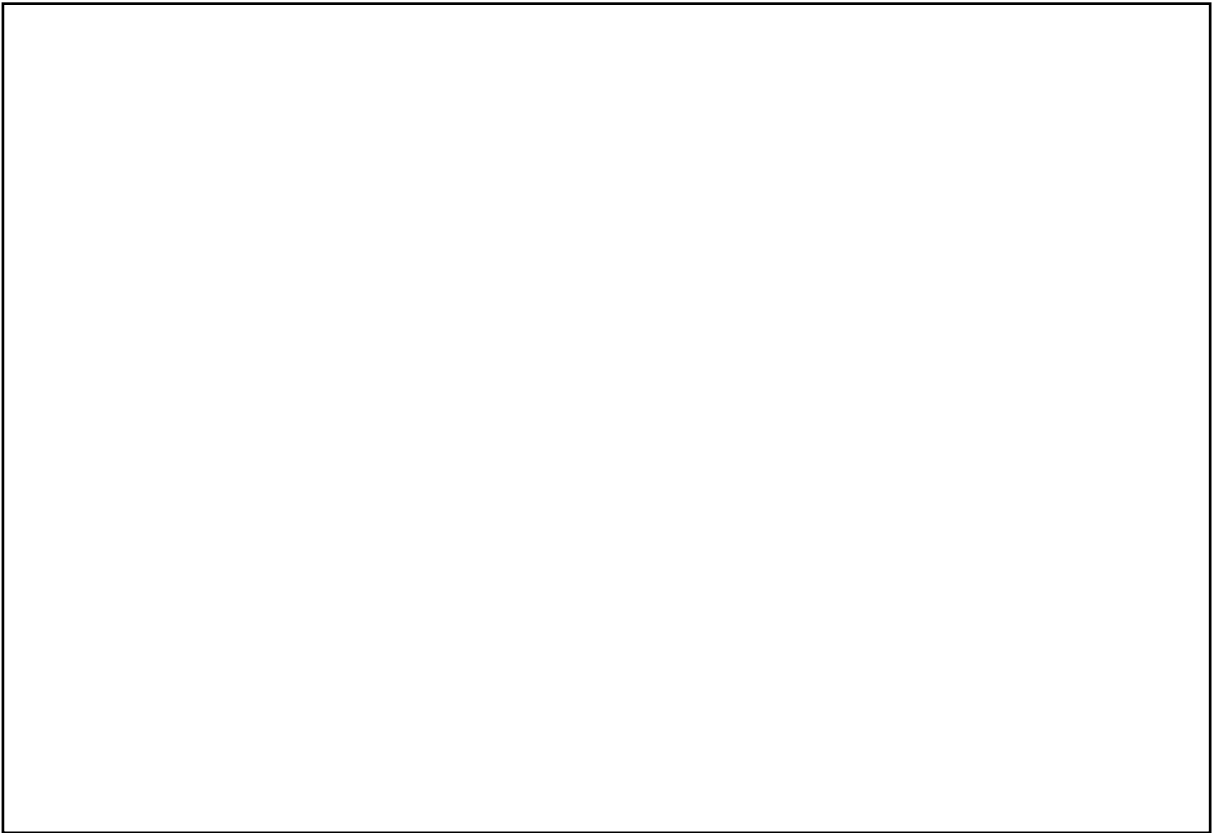


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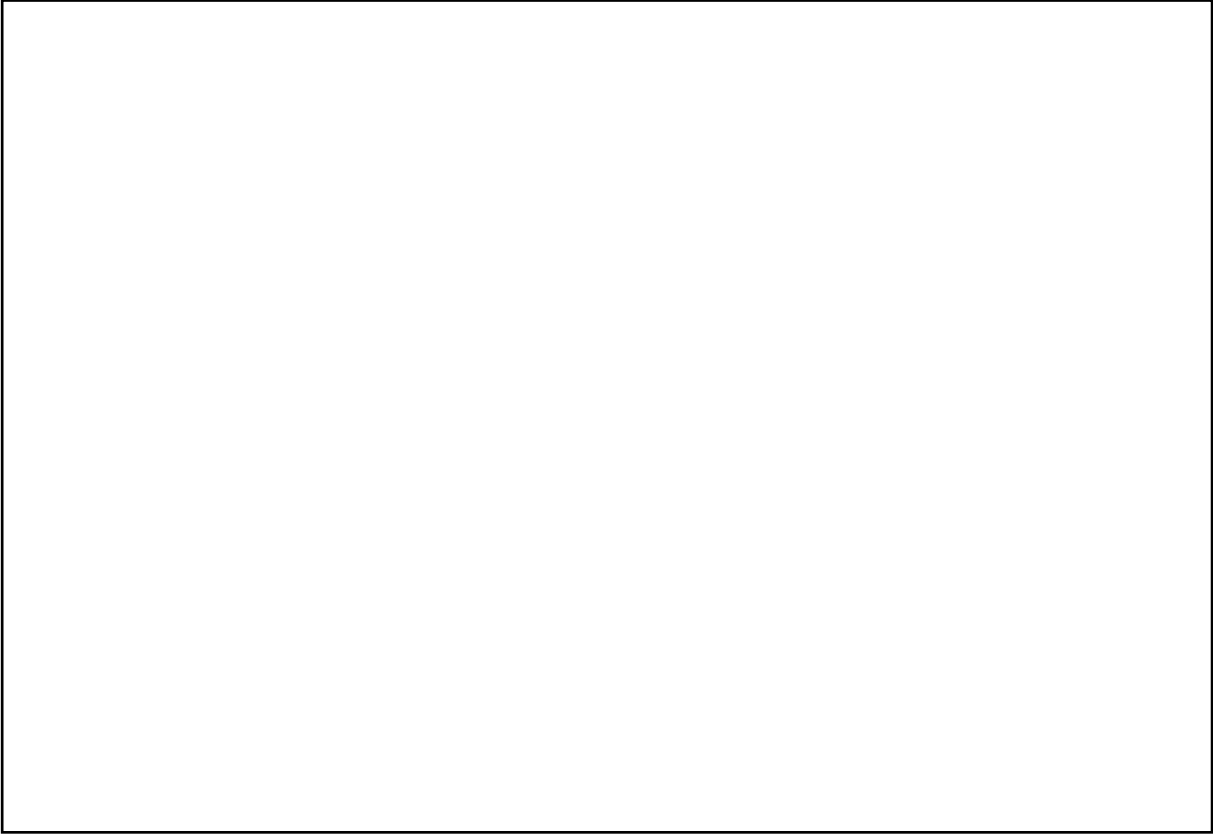


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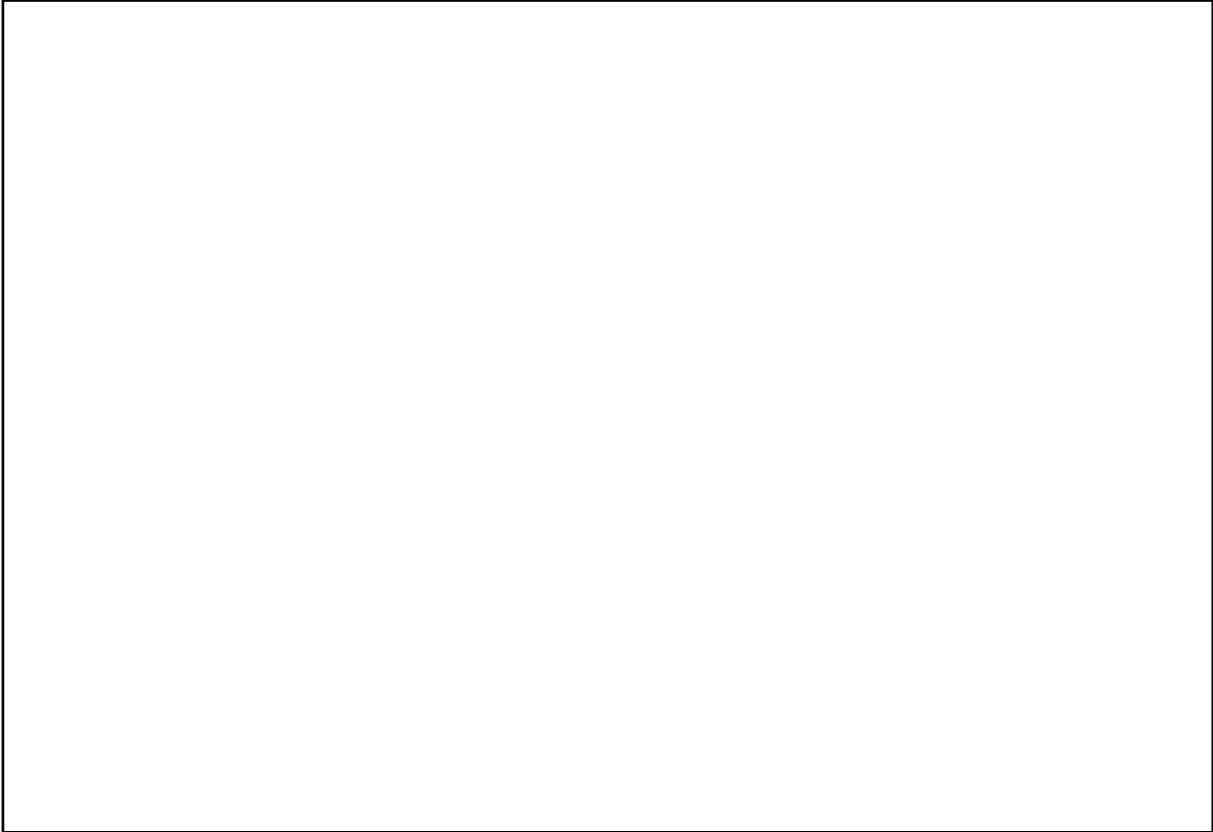


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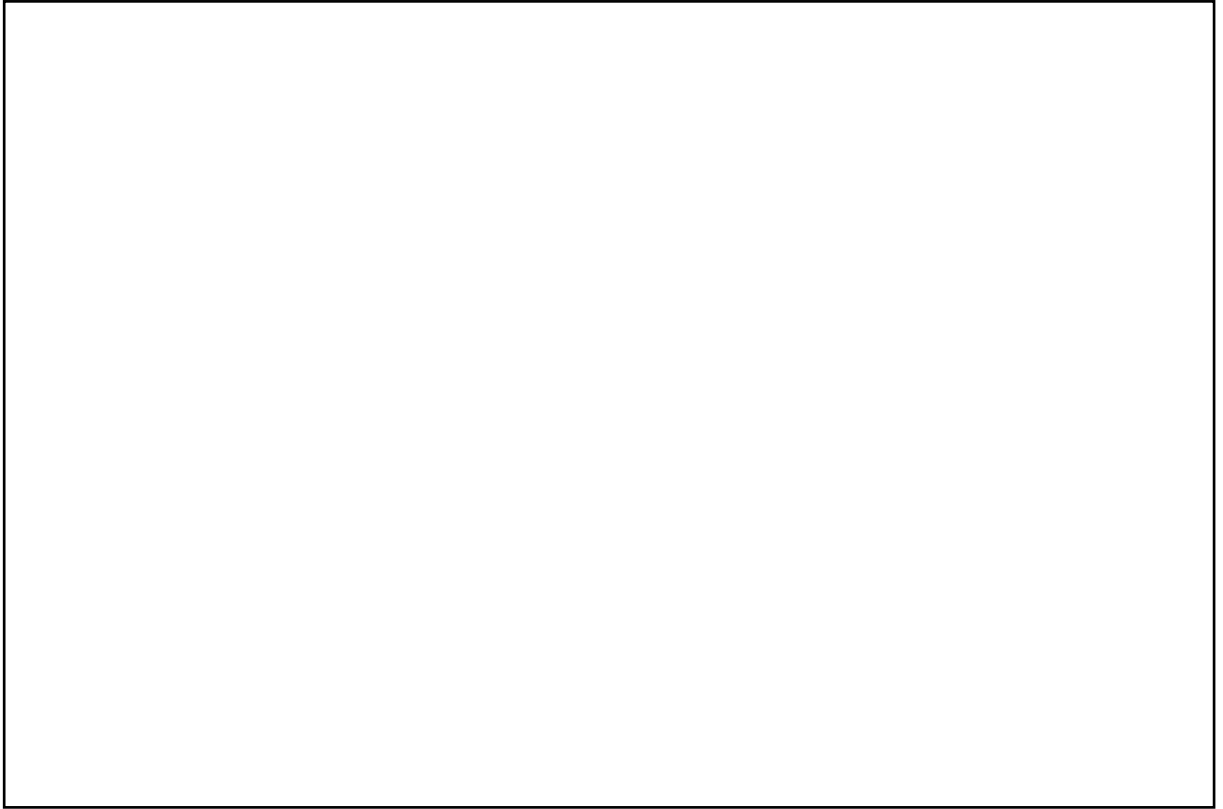


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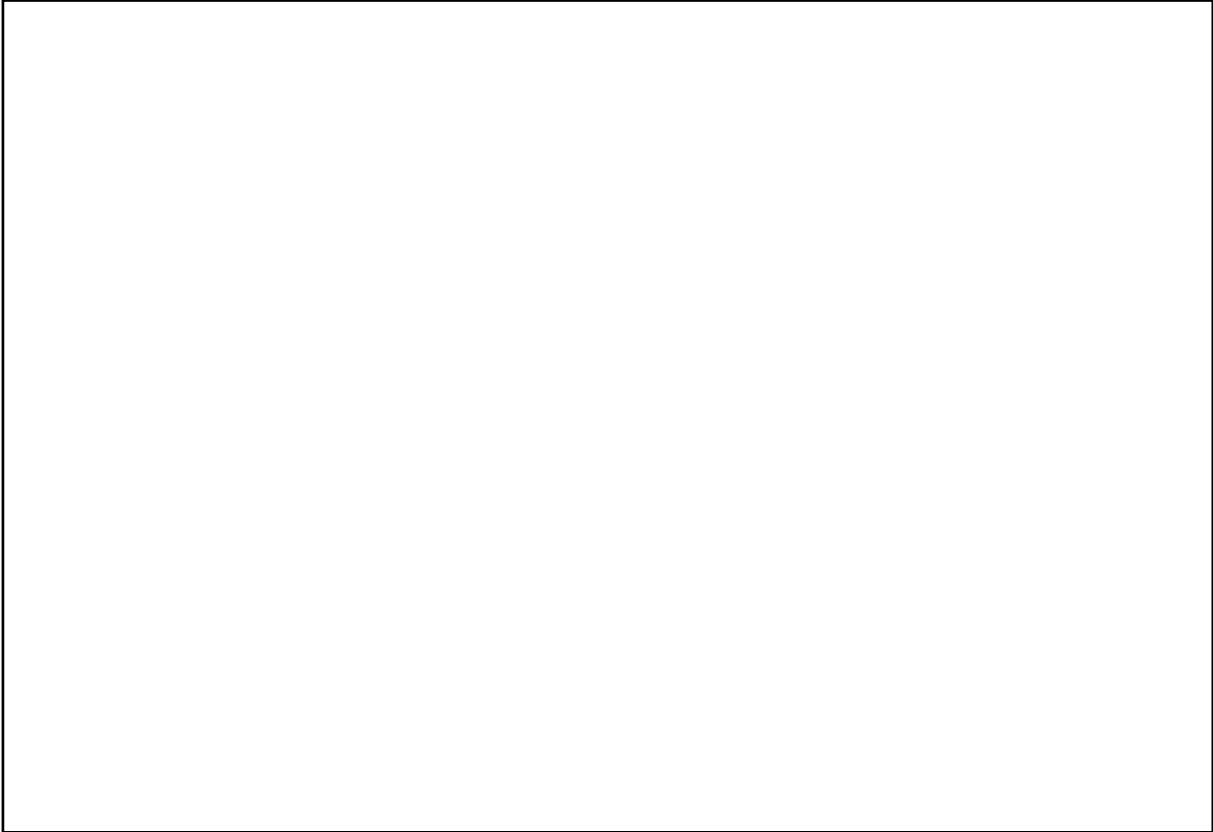


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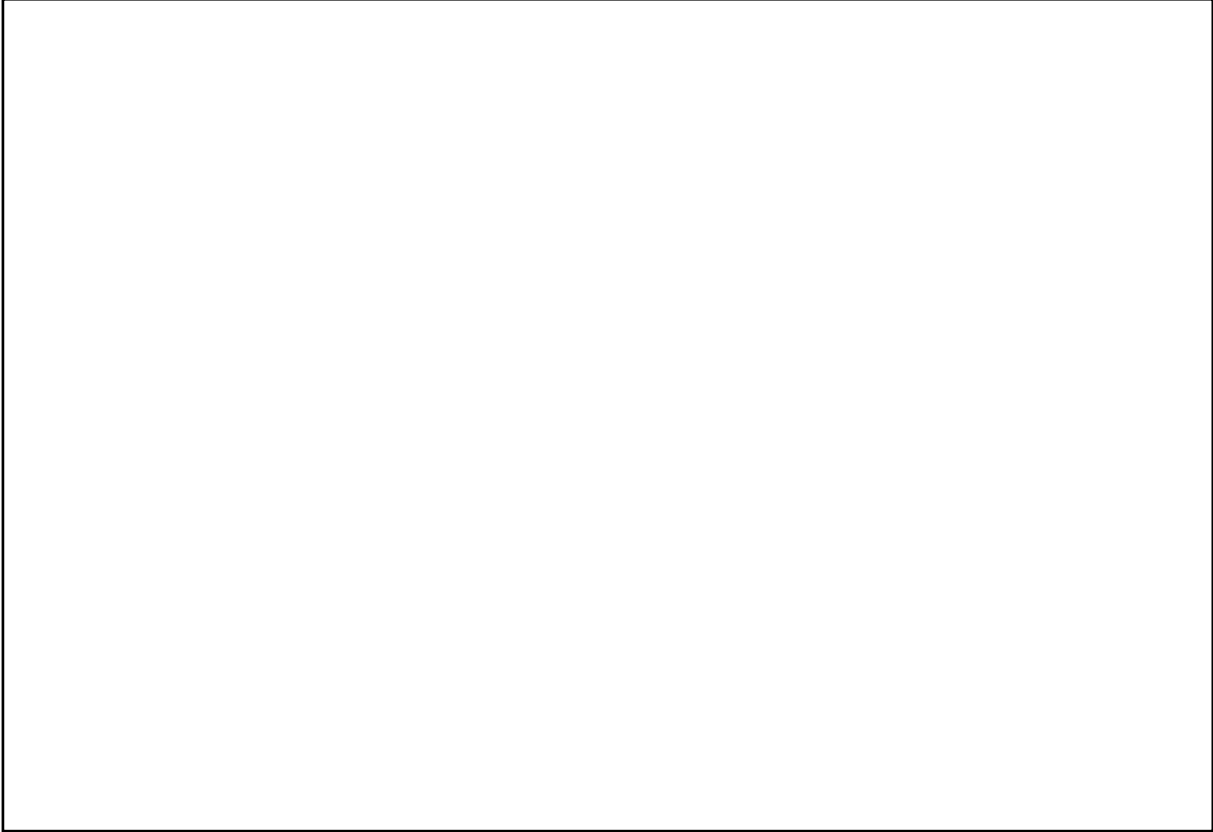


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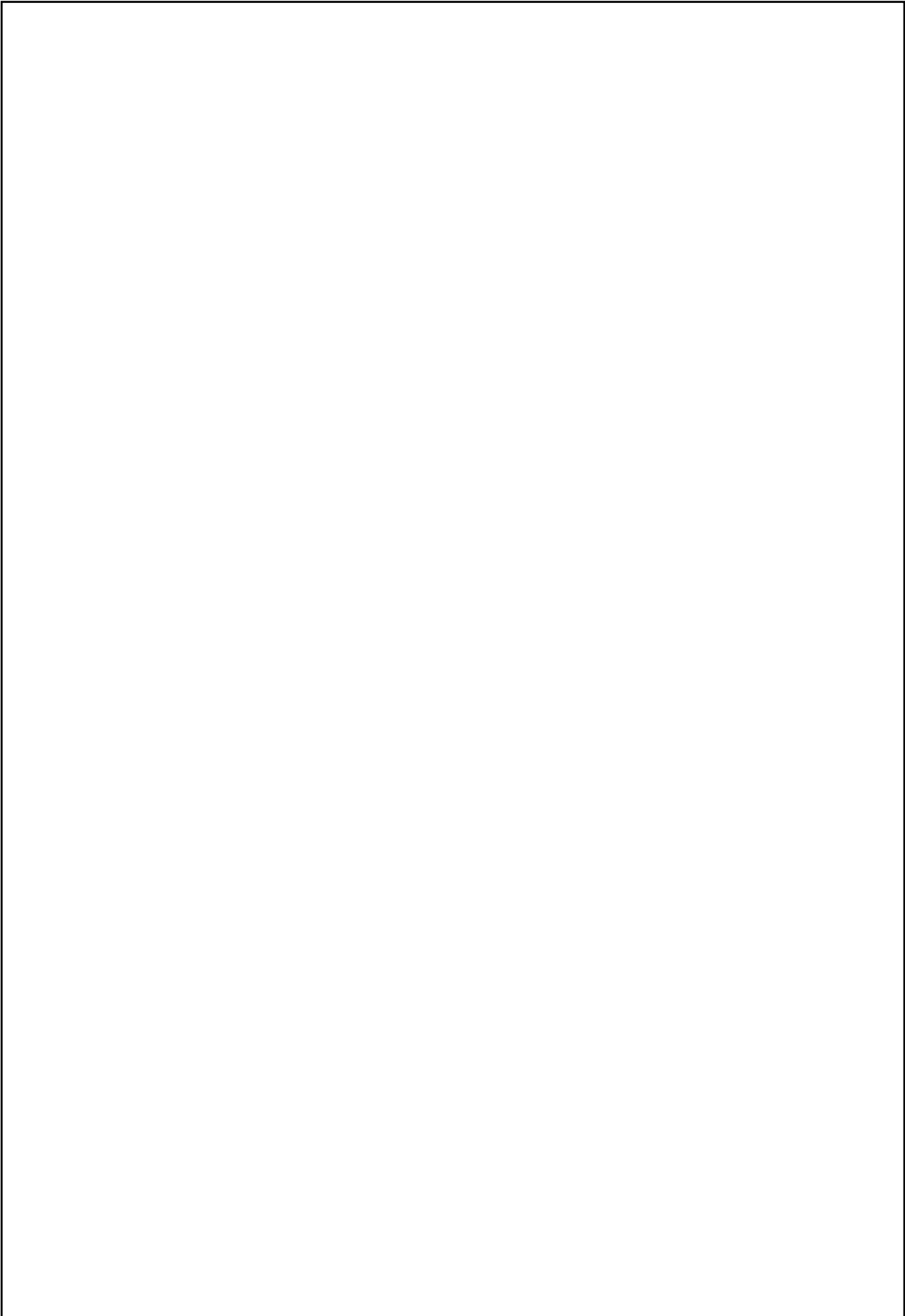


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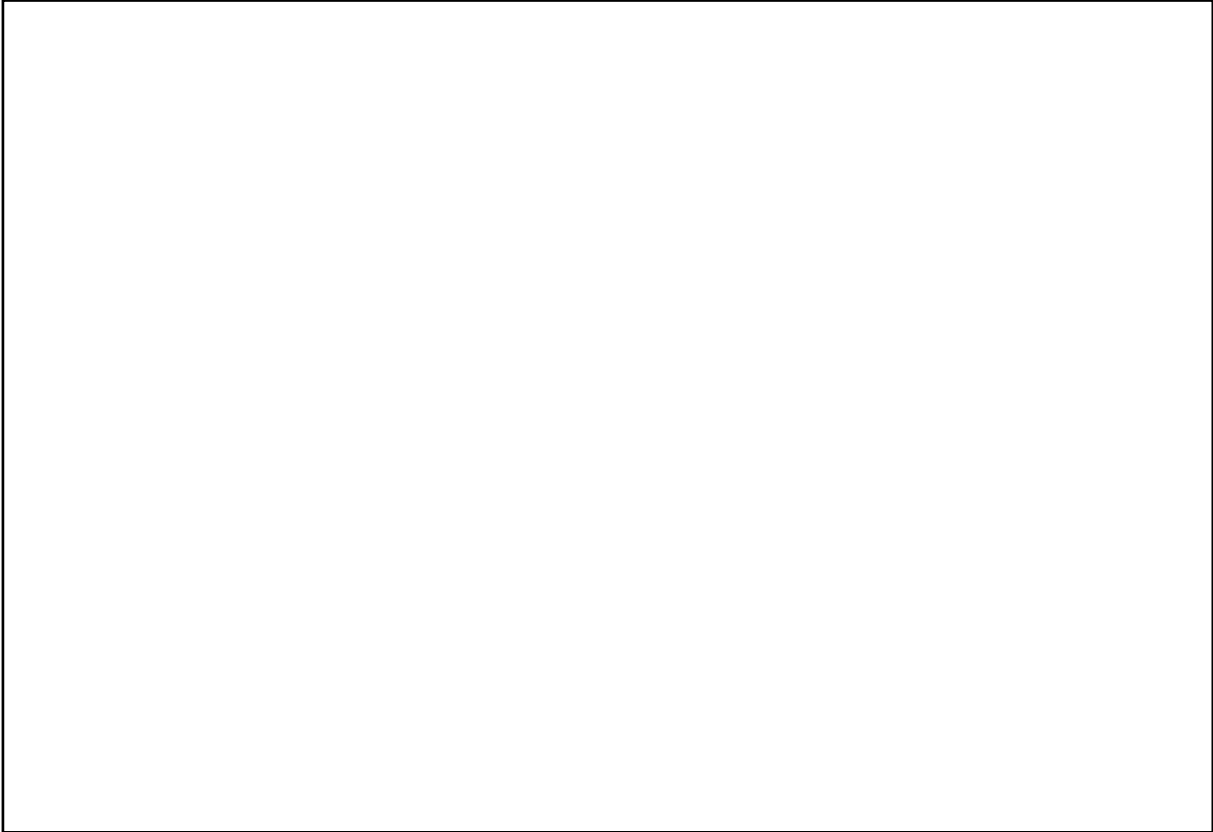


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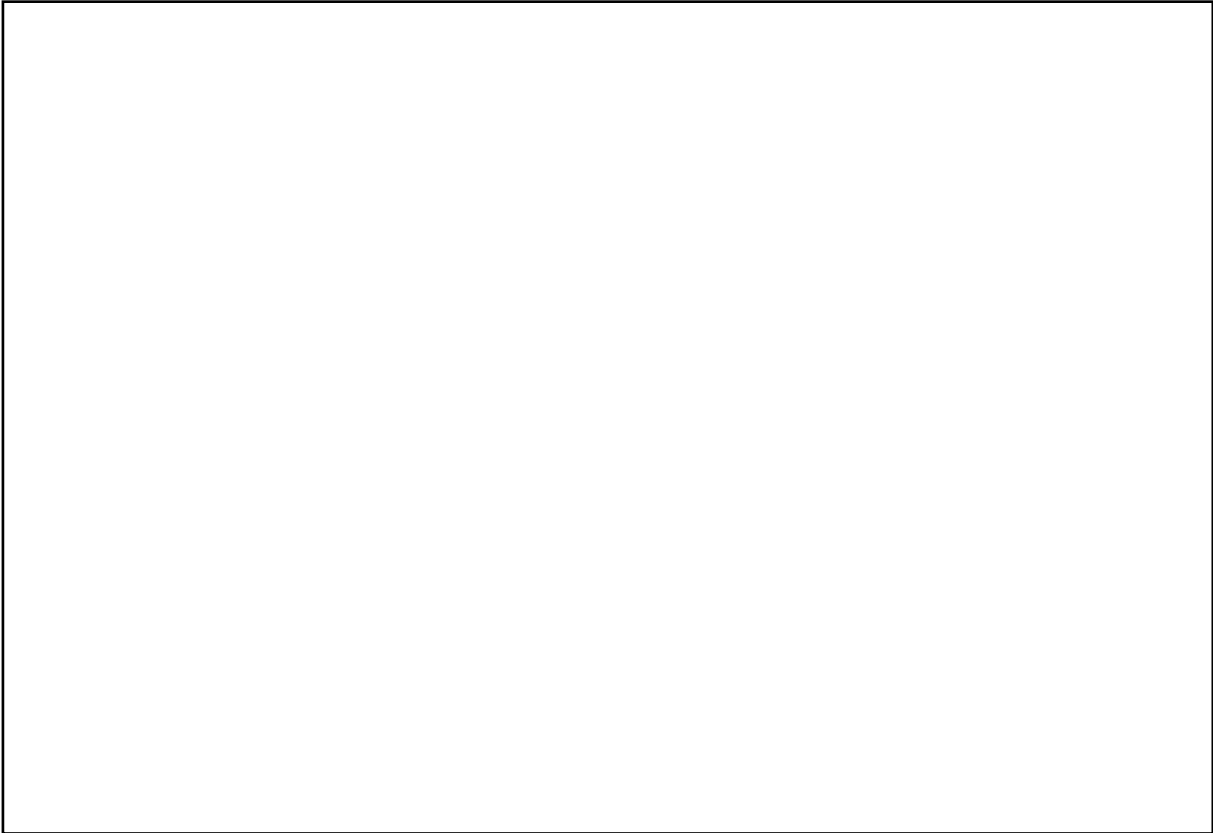


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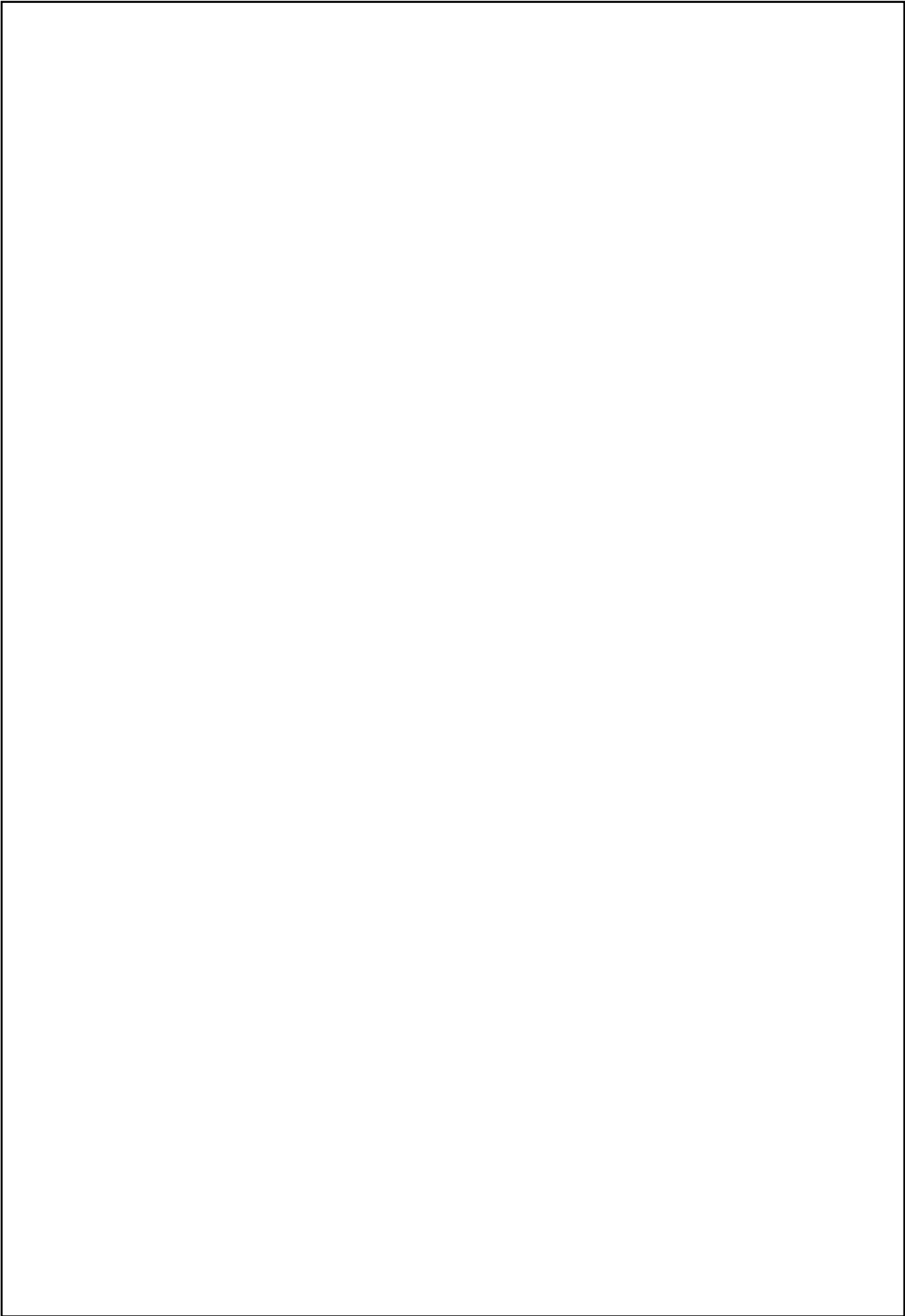


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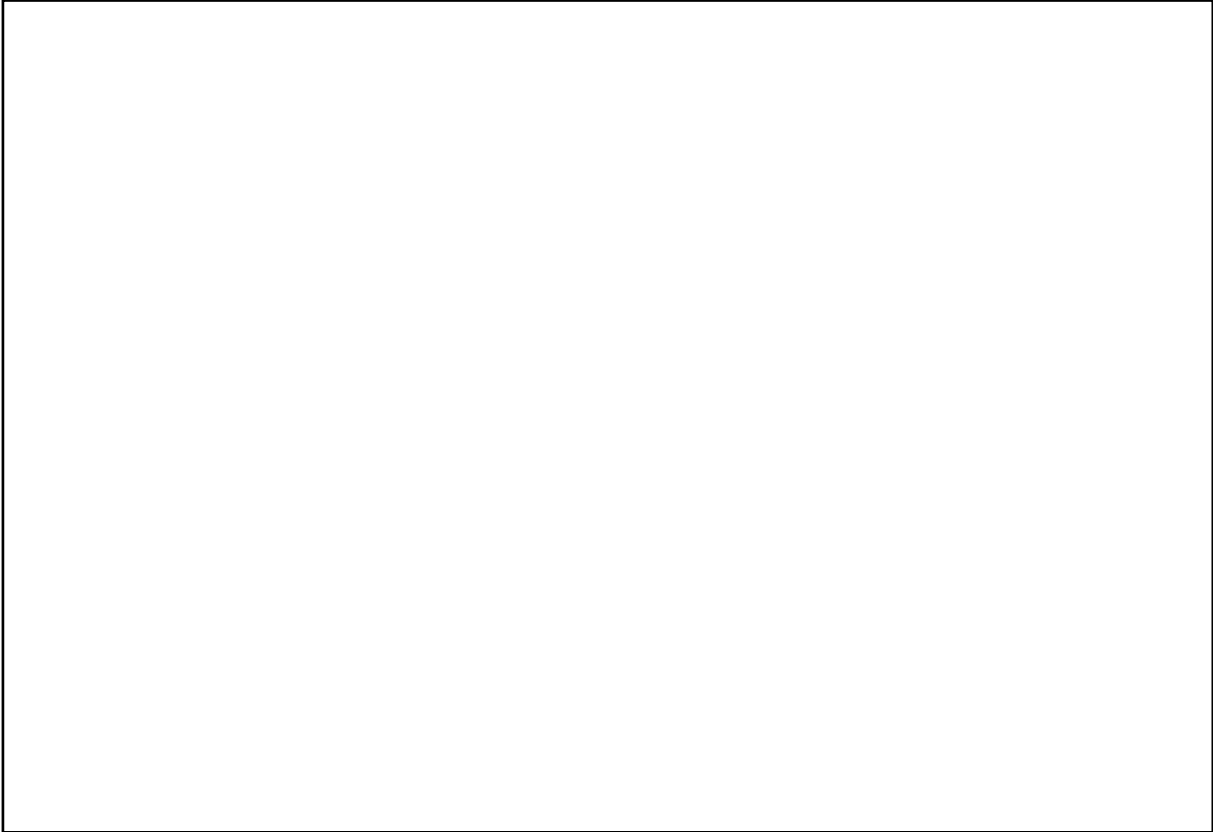


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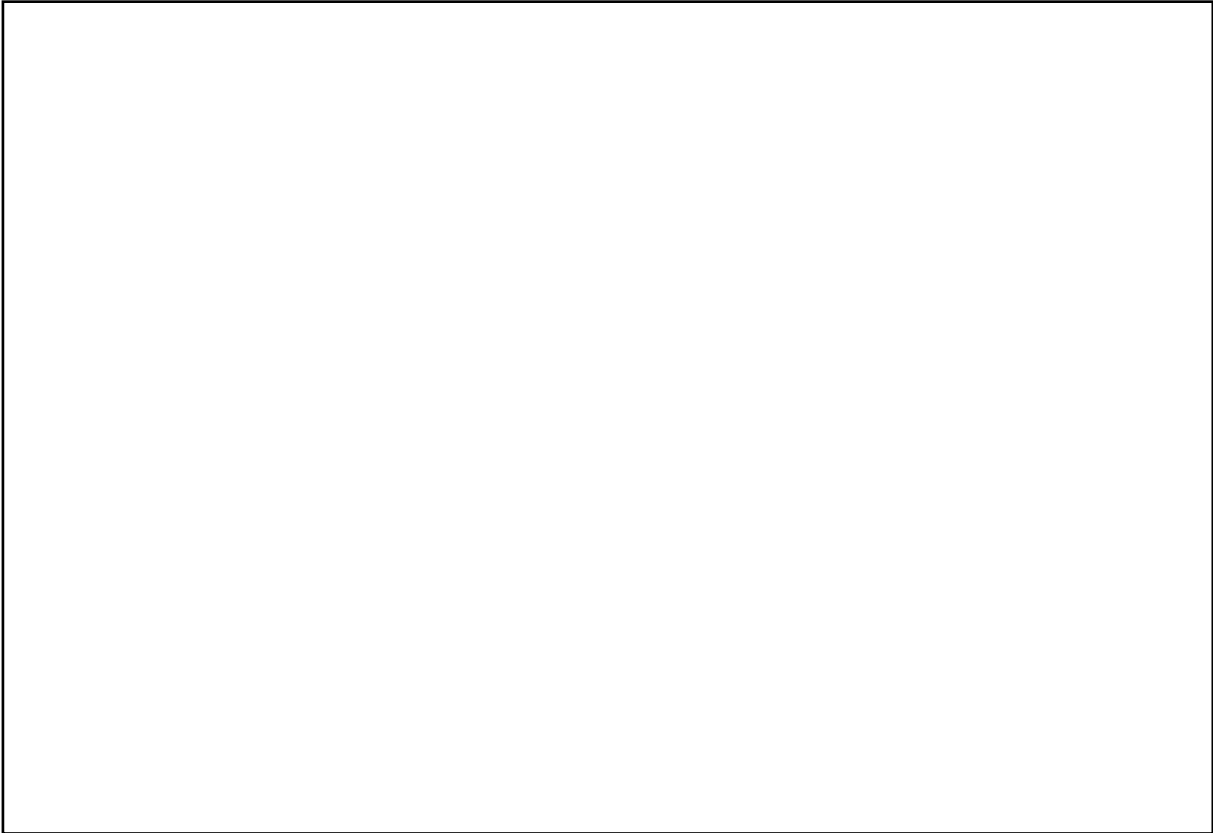


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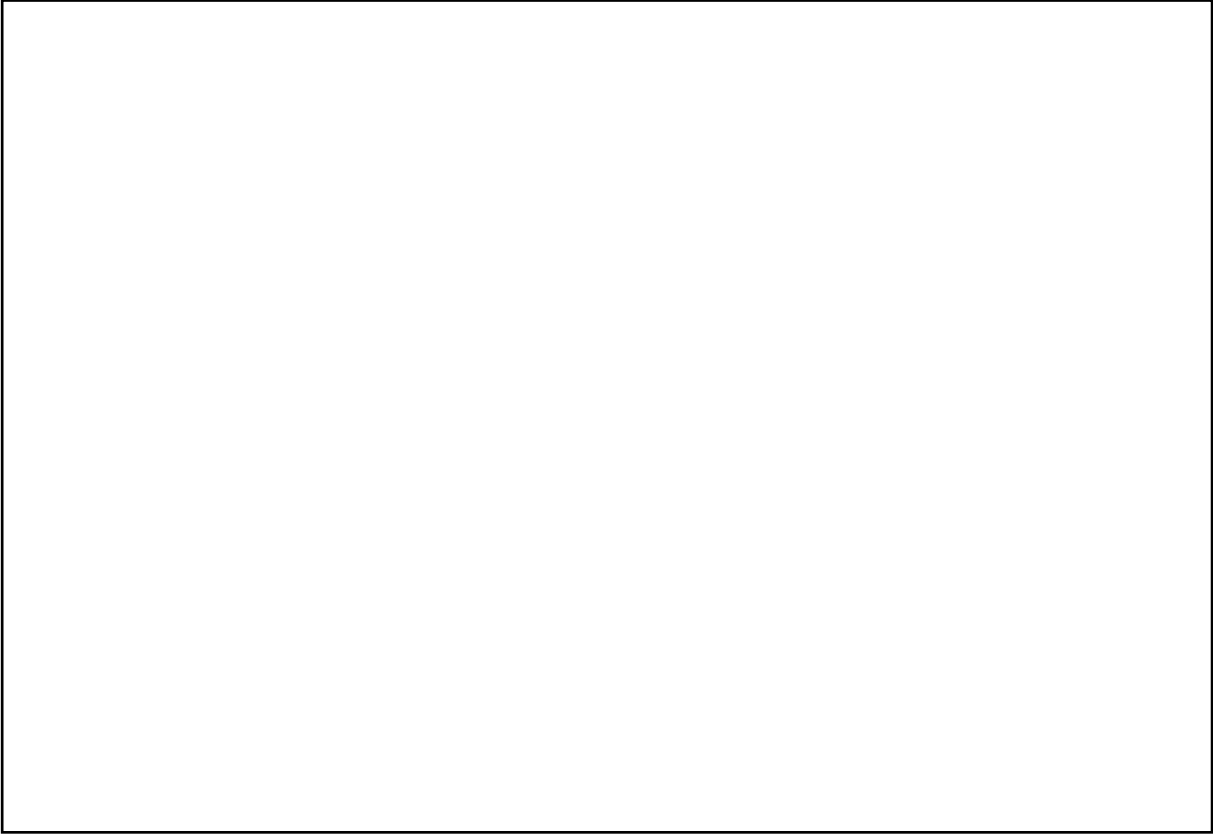


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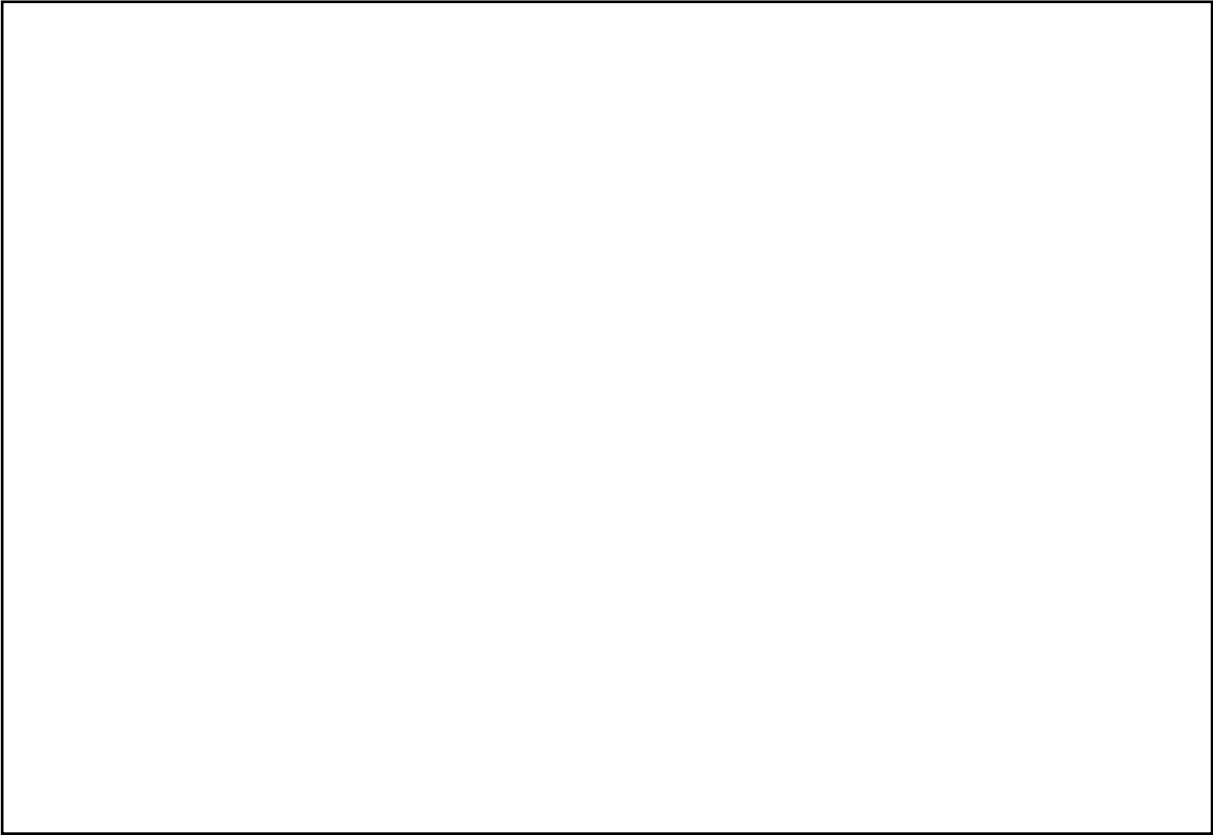


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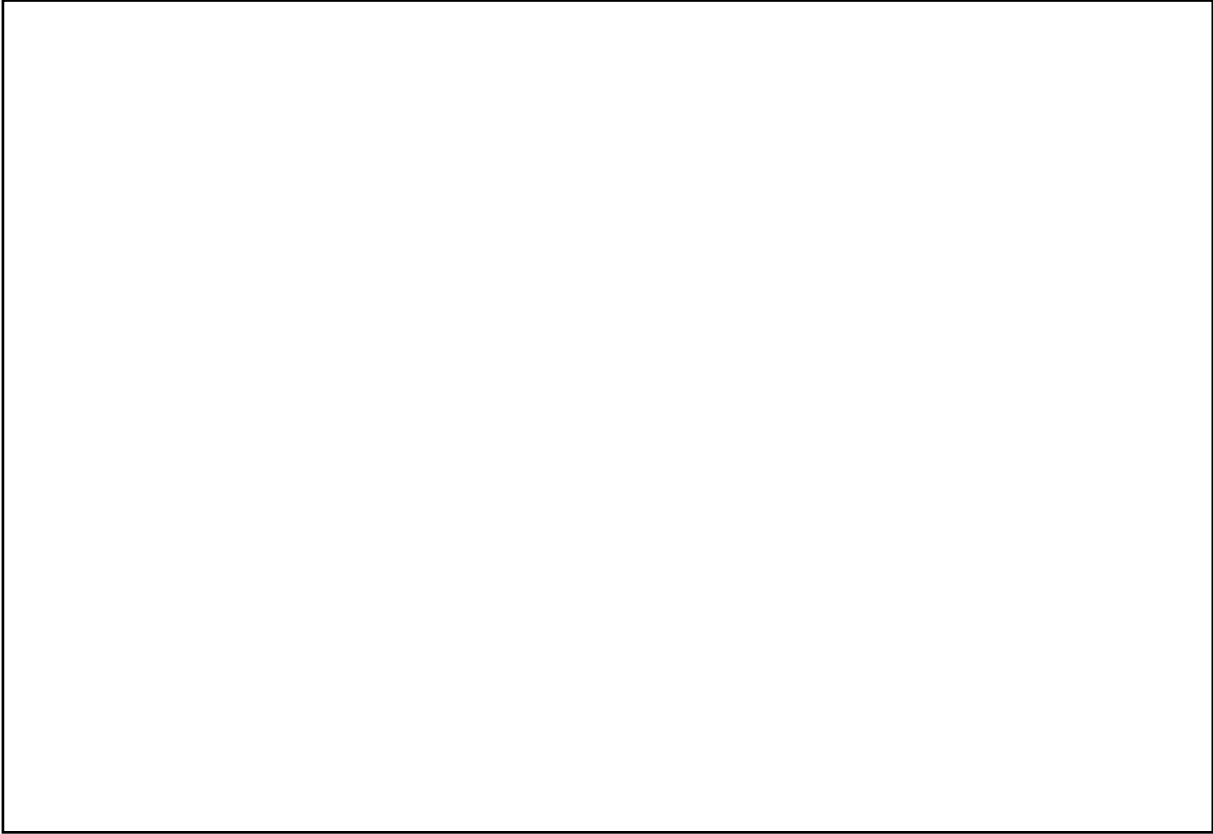


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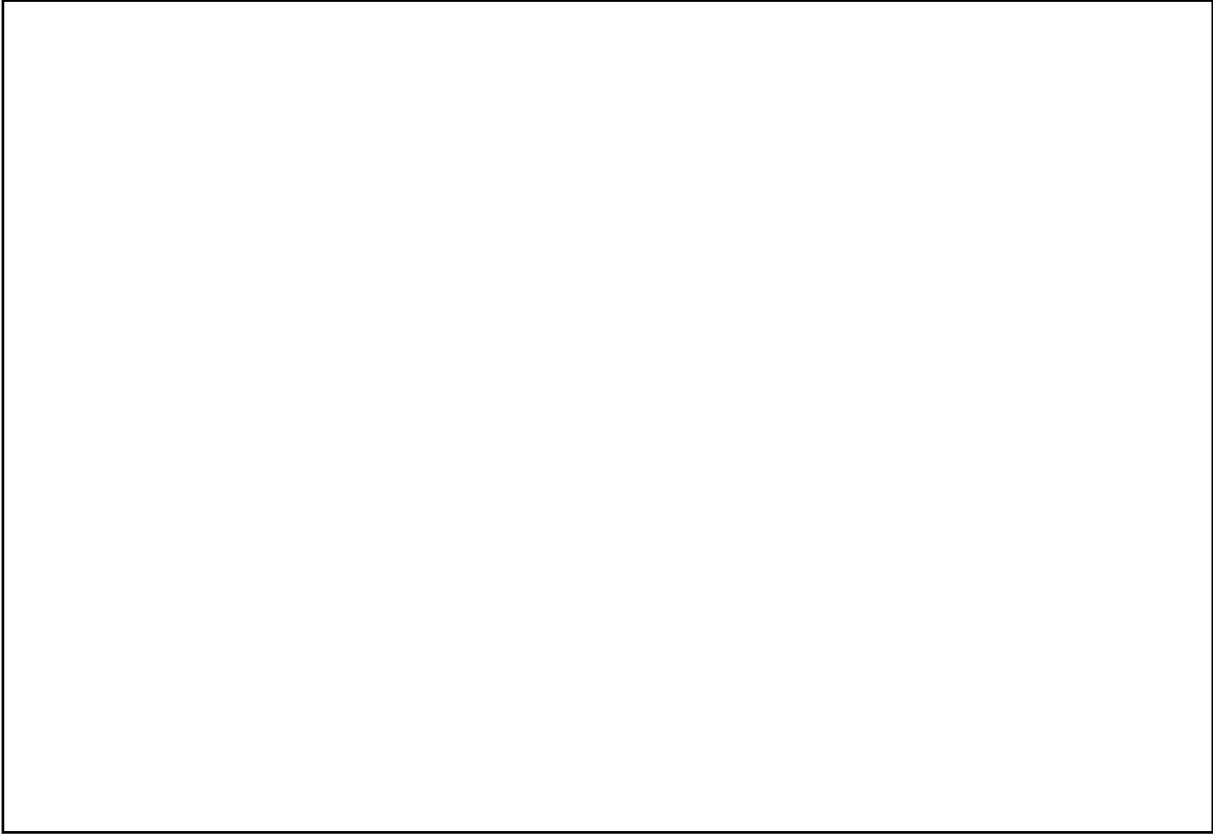


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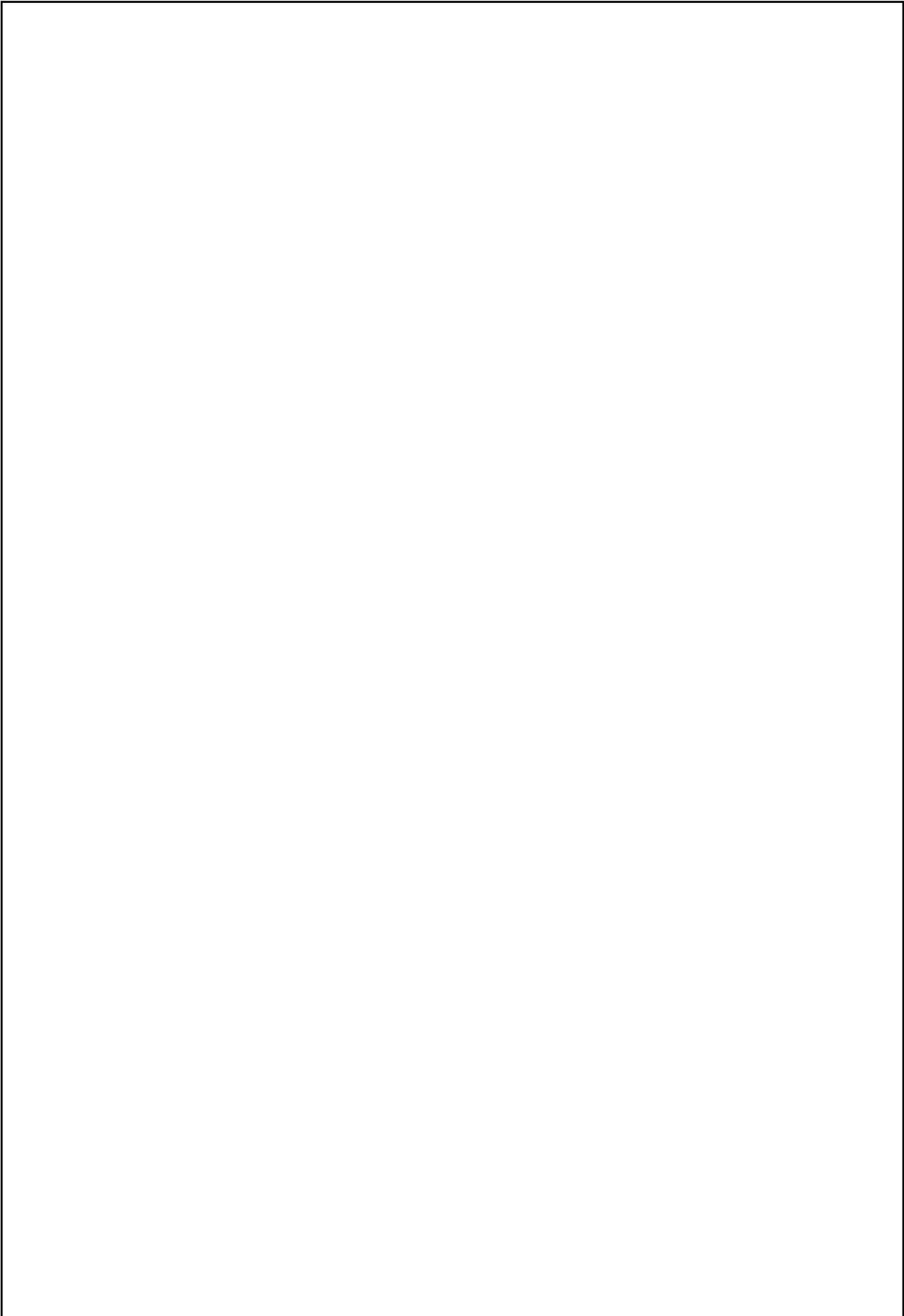


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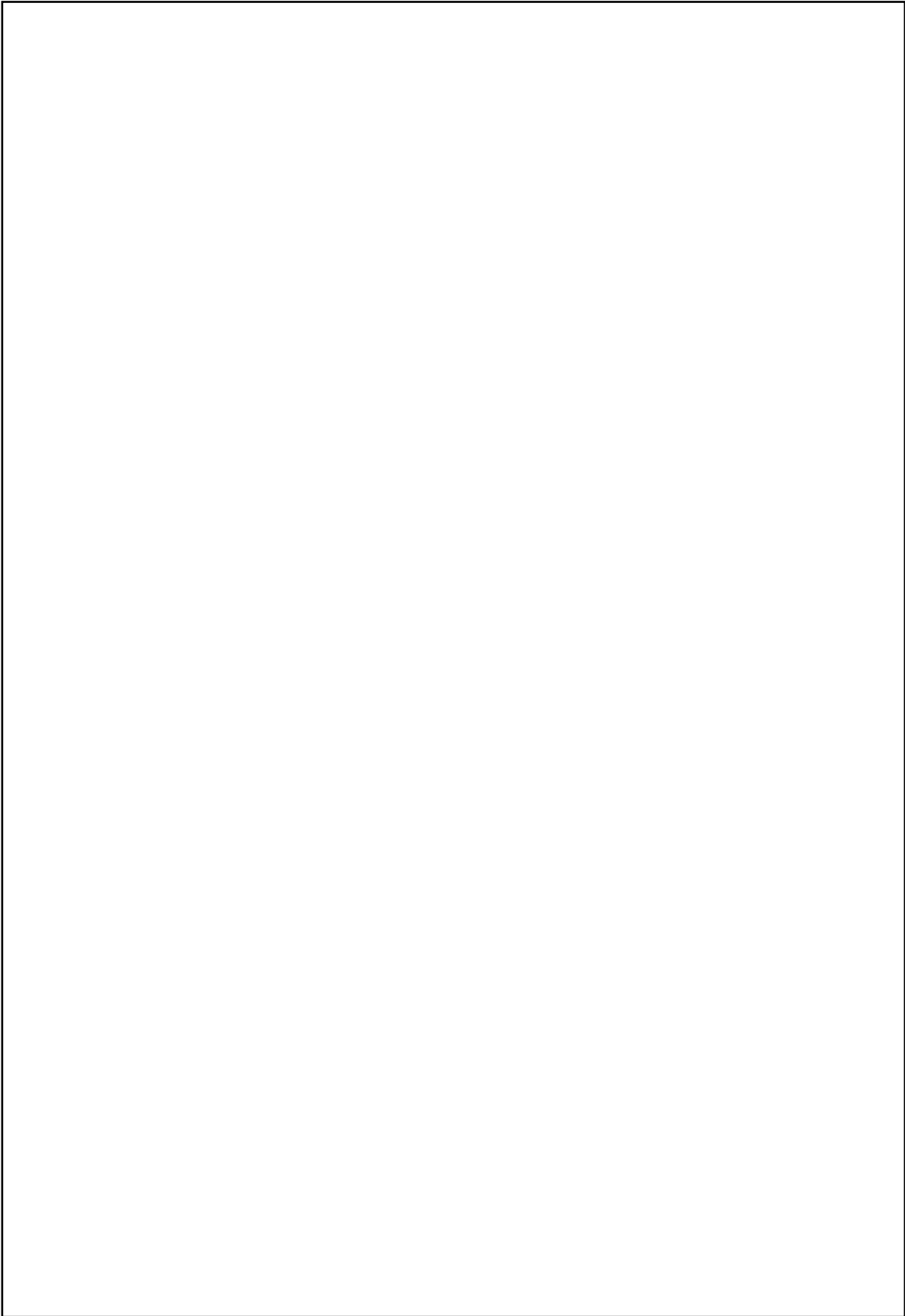


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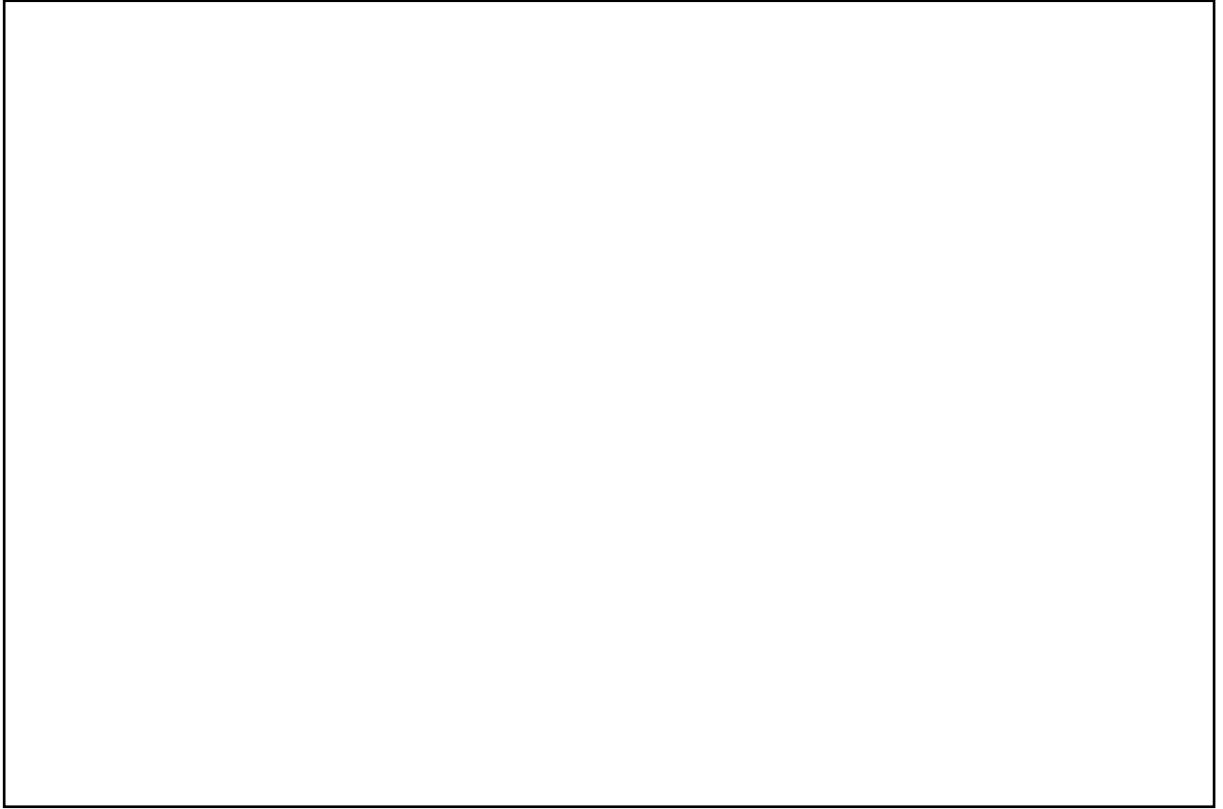


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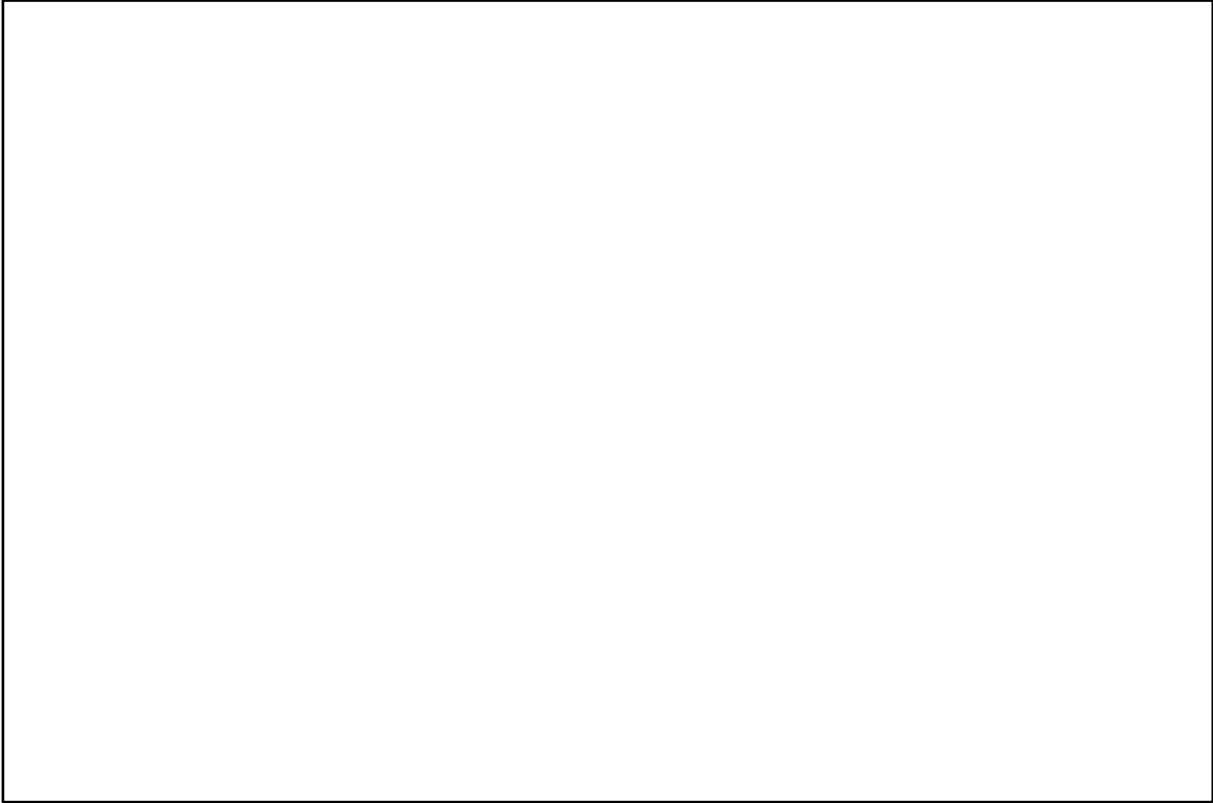


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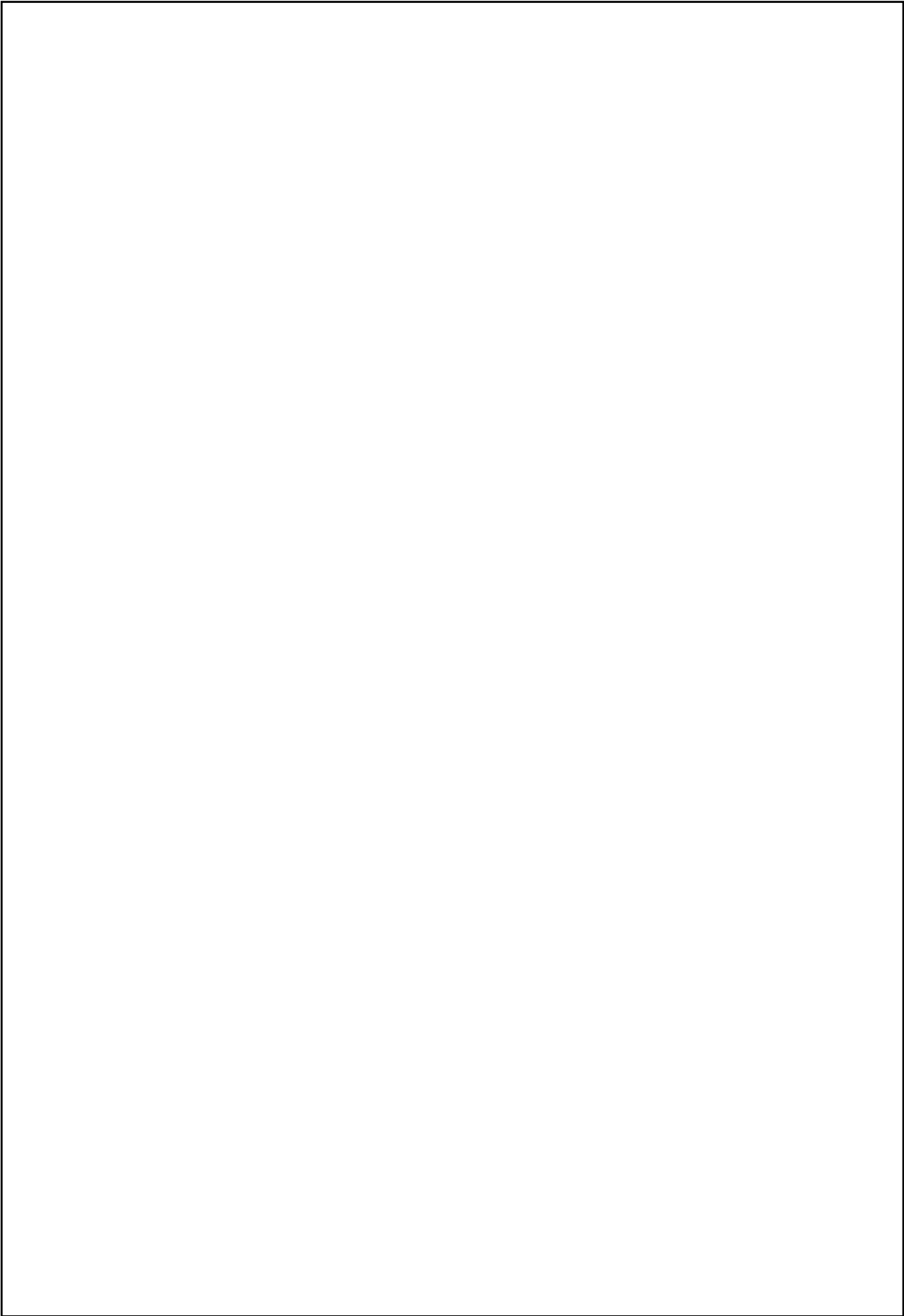


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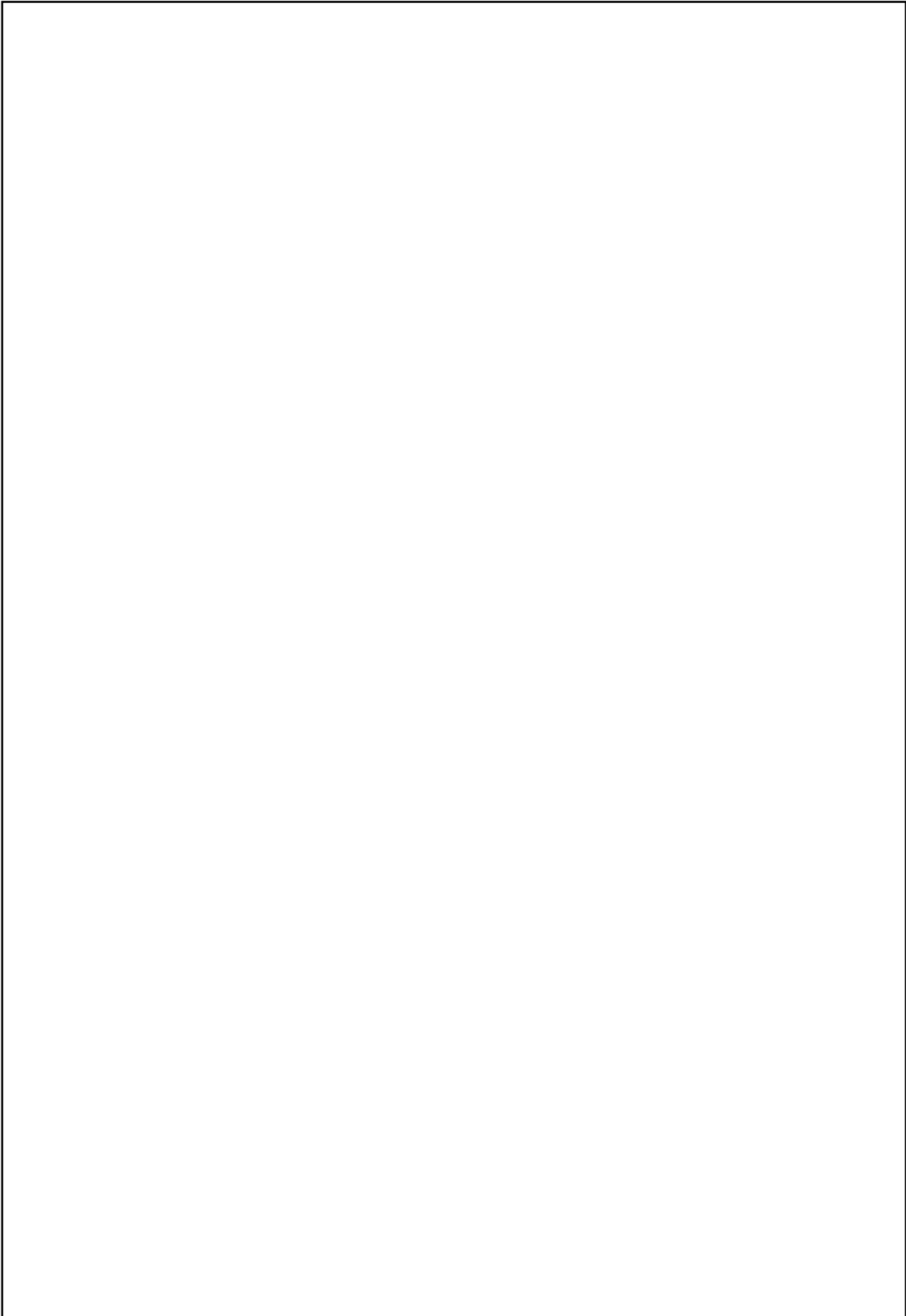


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