HOMER, ILIAD 24,614–17*

νῦν δέ που ἐν πέτρῃσιν, ἐν οὔρεσιν οἰοπόλοισιν,
ἐν Σιπύλῳ, ὅθι φασὶ θεάων ἔμμεναι εὐνὰς
νυμφάων, αἵ τ' ἀμφ' Ἀχελώϊον ἐρρώσαντο,
ἔνθα λίθος περ ἐοῦσα θεῶν ἐκ κήδεα πέσσει.

In Achilles' speech to Priam (599–620), encouraging him to eat after the death of Hector, the above lines were thought by some ancient commentators to be a later addition to the text. In modern times too some scholars have rejected them, in particular Ameis and Hentze[1], A. Lesky[2], and J. Th. Kakridis[3]. M. M. Willcock has expressed serious reservations about them[4]. In the apparatus of his text of the *Iliad* M. L. West comments[5] "ath. Aristophanes Aristarchus, fort. recte". On the other hand the lines were accepted by Leaf[6], and have been defended by P. Von der Mühll[7], W. Pötscher[8], C. W. Macleod[9], N. Richardson[10], and Chr. Schmitz[11]. So it might seem that there is room to consider the case for athetesis again.

The basic ground for athetesis given in the scholia is that if Niobe were turned to stone she would be unable to eat, and that it would be absurd for Achilles to encourage Priam to eat by saying "Eat, for Niobe ate and was turned to stone". The schol. in A on 614–17 (Aristonicus and Didymus, following Aristophanes) is:

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1) K. F. Ameis / C. Hentze, Homers Ilias 2 (Leipzig 1885) 139.

2) A. Lesky, Niobe, RE XVII (1936) 644ff.

3) J. Th. Kakridis, Homeric Researches (Lund 1949) 96–105.

4) M. M. Willcock, A companion to the Iliad (Chicago 1976) 272f. and The Iliad of Homer, Books xiii–xxiv (London 1984) 319.

5) M. L. West, Homeri Ilias 2 (Munich / Leipzig 2000).

6) W. Leaf, The Iliad xiii–xxiv (London 1902) 58.

7) P. Von der Mühll, Kritisches Hypomnema zur Ilias (Basel 1952) 384f.

8) W. Pötscher, Homer, Ilias 24, 601ff. und die Niobe-Gestalt, Grazer Beiträge 13 (1986) 21–35.

9) C. W. Macleod, Iliad, Book xxiv (Cambridge 1982) 139–141.

10) N. Richardson, The Iliad of Homer, Books xiii–xxiv (London 1993) 340.

11) Ch. Schmitz, ‚Denn auch Niobe …' – die Bedeutung der Erzählung in Achills Rede (Ω 599–620), Hermes 129 (2001) 145–157.

> νῦν δέ που ἐν πέτρῃσιν ⟨– πέσσει⟩· ἀθετοῦνται στίχοι τέσσαρες, ὅτι οὐκ ἀκόλουθοι τῷ 'ἡ δ' ἄρα σίτου μνήσατ', ⟨ἐπεὶ κάμε δάκρυ χέουσα⟩' (613)· εἰ γὰρ ἀπελιθώθη, πῶς σιτία προ⟨σ⟩ηνέγκατο; καὶ ἡ παραμυθία γελοία· φάγε, ἐπεὶ καὶ ἡ Νιόβη ἔφαγε καὶ ἀπελιθώθη. ἔστι δὲ καὶ Ἡσιόδεια τῷ χαρακτῆρι, καὶ μᾶλλόν γε τὸ ἀμφ' Ἀχελώϊον ἐρρώσαντο (616). καὶ τρὶς κατὰ τὸ συνεχὲς τὸ ἔν (614, 615). πῶς δὲ καὶ λίθος γενομένη θεῶν ἐκ κήδεα πέσσει (617); προηθετοῦντο δὲ καὶ παρ' Ἀριστοφάνει.

bT have:

> νῦν δέ που ἐν πέτρῃσιν ⟨– πέσσει⟩· ἀθετοῦνται τέσσαρες· πῶς γὰρ ἡ λίθος τροφῆς ἐγεύσατο; τί δὲ ὁ Αἰτωλῶν ποταμὸς ἐν Σιπύλῳ ποιεῖ; πῶς τε λίθος οὖσα κήδεα πέσσει;

The linguistic objections, the supposed Hesiodic expression ἐρρώσαντο and the triple repetition of ἐν, can be quite easily answered, as they have been by Leaf and Richardson ad locc. The objection τί δὲ ὁ Αἰτωλῶν ποταμὸς ἐν Σιπύλῳ ποιεῖ; is also not formidable. The scholia point out that Acheloos is a common name for a river: καὶ πᾶν ὕδωρ Ἀχελῷόν φασιν and they mention a variant τινὲς 'αἵ τ' ἀμφ' Ἀχελήσιον'.

The fine poetic quality of the lines is undeniable, and Richardson regards them as "memorable and evocative verses, whose style is not out of place in Achilles' mouth". He quotes J. Griffin: "A last feature of Achilles' speech … is his tendency to invoke distant places and resounding names, lines which … open out into a spacious rhythm which goes with a vision of places far removed from the battle-ground of Troy or the crowded assembly of the Achaeans."[12]

But although there are no serious linguistic objections to 614–17, their relation to their context may arouse doubts. Neither Macleod nor Richardson directly answers the objections εἰ γὰρ ἀπελιθώθη, πῶς σιτία προσηνέγκατο; καὶ ἡ παραμυθία γελοία· φάγε, ἐπεὶ καὶ ἡ Νιόβη ἔφαγε καὶ ἀπελιθώθη.

One way of meeting this point would be to suppose that Niobe did indeed eat, after drying her tears, but was then, at a later stage, turned to stone. This view was proposed by Leaf, who thought that Homer was following the story in Apollodorus 3.5.6: αὐτὴ δὲ Νιόβη Θήβας ἀπολιποῦσα (after the death of her children) πρὸς τὸν πατέρα Τάνταλον ἦκεν εἰς Σίπυλον, κἀκεῖ Διὶ εὐξαμένη

12) J. Griffin, Homeric Words and Phrases, JHS 106 (1986) 53.

τὴν μορφὴν εἰς λίθον μετέβαλε, καὶ χεῖται δάκρυα νύκτωρ καὶ μεθ' ἡμέραν τοῦ λίθου.

There is evidence for this version of the myth of Niobe much earlier than Apollodorus, cf. Pherecydes, FGrHist. 3 F 38: ἡ δὲ Νιόβη ὑπὸ τοῦ ἄχεος ἀναχωρεῖ εἰς Σίπυλον, καὶ ὁρᾶι τὴν πόλιν ἀνεστραμμένην καὶ Ταντάλῳ λίθον ἐπικρεμάμενον· ἀρᾶται δὲ τῷ Διὶ λίθος γενέσθαι· ῥεῖ δὲ ἐξ αὐτῆς δάκρυα, καὶ πρὸς ἄρκτον ὁρᾶι, and Sophocles, TrGF 4, p. 363 (= schol. T on 24,602): ἡ δὲ συμφορὰ αὐτῆς, ὡς μέν τινες, ἐν Λυδίᾳ, ὡς δὲ ἔνιοι, ἐν Θήβαις· Σοφοκλῆς δὲ τοὺς μὲν παῖδας αὐτῆς ἐν Θήβαις ἀπολέσθαι, νοστῆσαι ⟨δὲ⟩ αὐτὴν εἰς Λυδίαν. According to this version Niobe might well have eaten in Thebes, before returning to her native Lydia, where she was turned to stone. However the fact that this version is wholly consistent with the transmitted text of 24,614–17 raises the possibility that it was suggested by that text, and is not independent of it. We cannot assume that Homer was familiar with a version of a myth which is attested only some centuries after his time, although equally, we cannot be certain that he did not know it. However it is more natural to suppose that if Niobe were indeed able to dry her tears and to take food there was no reason for her to be turned to stone as a result of her grief.

As Kakridis remarks, "A Niobe who after burying her twelve children remembers to eat cannot be compatible with the Niobe who, although turned to stone on Mt. Sipylus, still remembers her sorrows and weeps"[13]. He goes on to show that "the story of Niobe eating soon after burying her children does not give the impression of being a genuine popular tradition. It looks more like poetic invention. On the other hand there is no doubt that the story of her petrifaction is an αἴτιον, and one of the commonest αἴτια all the world over"[14]. The question then arises why Homer invented the story of Niobe eating after the loss of her children. Kakridis concludes that "Niobe in Ω eats for the simple reason that Priam must eat"[15]. He goes on to show that all the details of the story of Niobe in Achilles' speech (excluding 614–17), apart from her boast of superiority to Leto and her consequent punishment, have been invented by Homer, in order to meet the

13) Kakridis (above, n. 3) 96–98.
14) Kakridis (above, n. 3) 96–98.
15) Kakridis (above, n. 3) 96–98.

needs of his narrative, that is Achilles' attempt to persuade Priam to eat.

It is not necessary to relate here the whole of Kakridis' exposition, but one curious feature of Achilles' speech should be noticed. If 614–7 are retained, the speech uses the motif of petrifaction twice, both in 617 and in 611 λαοὺς δὲ λίθους ποίησε Κρονίων. The story that Zeus petrified the people, with the result that it fell to the gods to bury the Niobids, provides, Kakridis suggests, a parallel for Achilles' own behaviour, in that he left the body of Hector unburied for twelve days (24,31), before consenting to its burial. He concludes: "It is probable that Homer took away the motif of petrifaction from Niobe, where it embarrassed him – as he had now remoulded her, his heroine could not, as we saw, be turned into stone in the end – and transferred it to her people, where he needed it, ..." (Kakridis' emphasis).[16]

Whether the people are petrified because Homer has transferred the motif of petrifaction to them from Niobe is debatable, but it remains true that in the transmitted text the motif of petrifaction is used first in one way and then very shortly afterwards in another way, and this seems odd. Willcock reasonably comments: "... after the motif of petrifaction has been transferred to the local people in 611, it is a little disconcerting to find it applied to Niobe as well."[17]

We may now ask if this is the only occasion in the *Iliad* when Homer invents details of a myth, in order to enhance the persuasive power of a speech. Willcock[18] has well shown that there are indeed other examples of this practice, which is a notable feature of Homer's use of mythology. He gives seven other examples. If this is accepted, it follows that it is unlikely that Homer would admit into a myth in a speech any motifs which might enfeeble or blur the speech's central message.

So far we have considered 614–17 in relation to their immediate context, the speech of Achilles (599–620) in which they occur. But it may also shed some light on the textual problem to consider them against the background of the preceding narrative. Priam arrived as a suppliant at Achilles' hut at the moment when

16) Kakridis (above, n. 3) 109.

17) Willcock, The Iliad of Homer (above, n. 4) 319.

18) M. M. Willcock, Mythological Paradeigma in the Iliad, CQ 14 (1964) 141–154.

Achilles has just finished a meal (471–76). As has been well shown by Christine Schmitz[19], it is no accident that Priam should arrive at the hut at just this moment. At the beginning of book 24 Achilles was refusing food and was unable to sleep as a result of his grief for Patroclus. His mother however advised him against unending mourning and fasting:

> τέκνον ἐμόν, τέο μέχρις ὀδυρόμενος καὶ ἀχεύων
> σὴν ἔδεαι κραδίην, μεμνημένος οὔτε τι σίτου
> οὔτ' εὐνῆς; (128–30)

That Achilles should now take a meal shows that he is following Thetis' advice. He is thus in a good position to urge Priam also to take food and to moderate his grief. As Schmitz remarks (on 599–620): "Er spricht zu Priamos, aber auch zu sich selbst. Wie Priamos hat auch er den geliebtesten Menschen verloren"[20].

In his supplicatory speech (486–506) Priam reminds Achilles of the suffering which may well be the lot of Peleus, who will be of much the same age as Priam himself (486–89). The theme of community of suffering continues after Priam's speech. Priam mourns for Hector, while Achilles mourns for Peleus and Patroclus; the two mourning figures seem as it were to balance each other (509–12). Achilles' concern for Priam is clearly shown in the words preceding his speech (518–551): γέροντα δὲ χειρὸς ἀνίστη,/οἰκτίρων πολιόν τε κάρη πολιόν τε γένειον (515f.). In Achilles' later speech (599–620), as Macleod observes, the use of the first person plural in addressing Priam in 601 (μνησώμεθα) and 618 (μεδώμεθα) "denotes sympathetic participation"[21]. There is a similar use of 'we' in the earlier speech: ἄλγεα δ' ἔμπης/ἐν θυμῷ κατακεῖσθαι ἐάσομεν ἀχνύμενοί περ (522f.) But it is not only Priam and Achilles who share in their suffering; the gods have decreed that all men should suffer, though they themselves are carefree (525f.) Achilles resumes the comparison of the sufferings of Peleus and Priam (534–48), a theme which Priam had touched on in his speech. Men should

19) Schmitz (above, n. 11) 148f.

20) Schmitz (above, n. 11) 149. The similarity of the suffering of the two heroes had earlier been reflected in a simile (Il. 23,222–25) in which Achilles mourns for Patroclus in just the way a father mourns for his son (Schmitz 149 n. 12).

21) For this use of the first person plural see J. Wackernagel, Vorlesungen über Syntax 1 (Basel 1920) 42f.

therefore learn to endure their lot, a lesson which is clearly indicated by the ring-form in which ἄνσχεο occurs both at the beginning and the end of the speech (though in 518 it is aorist indicative and in 549 imperative). In 549 Achilles clearly encapsulates his advice: ἄνσχεο, μηδ' ἀλίαστον ὀδύρεο σὸν κατὰ θυμόν. He does not forbid Priam to lament altogether, just as in his later speech he allows him, as it were, to weep for Hector when he has brought his body back to Troy: ἔπειτά κεν αὖτε φίλον παῖδα κλαίοισθα, / Ἴλιον εἰσαγαγών· πολυδάκρυτος δέ τοι ἔσται (619f.). It would only be human for Priam to weep over his son, after bringing his body home. And it would be especially unfeeling of Achilles to forbid him to mourn, as it was he himself who had killed Hector[22]. But it is not implied that Priam might weep incessantly, thereby rejecting the advice ἄνσχεο, μηδ' ἀλίαστον ὀδύρεο σὸν κατὰ θυμόν (549). πολυδάκρυτος (620) is not the same as ἀειδάκρυτος. The petrified Niobe does however lament uncontrollably; it could be said of her ἀλίαστον ὀδύρεται ὃν κατὰ θυμόν. Such behaviour would imply a rejection of the lesson expressed in Achilles' words οὐ γάρ τις πρῆξις πέλεται κρυεροῖο γόοιο (524) and οὐ γάρ τι πρήξεις ἀκαχήμενος υἷος ἑοῖο (550). And Achilles, who had himself heeded his mother's reproach τέκνον ἐμόν, τέο μέχρις ὀδυρόμενος καὶ ἀχεύων σὴν ἔδεαι κραδίην; would not be likely to countenance never-ending mourning in others. The petrified Niobe is also, as the scholia remark, incapable of eating. But immediately after hearing Achilles' second speech Priam accepts his invitation to join him in a meal. So it would not be appropriate for Achilles to present to Priam a mythical figure who was unable to eat. Some passages from later consolationes may serve as commentaries on our passage, for example Plutarch's advice to his wife that she need not suppress her maternal feelings for her lost daughter, but that she should not give in to uncontrolled grief[23]:

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22) For the cruelty of prohibiting the expression of grief cf. Plutarch, C. Gracchus 17.5 τὰ δὲ σώματα καὶ τούτων καὶ τῶν ἄλλων εἰς τὸν ποταμὸν ἐρρίφη, τρισχιλίων ἀναιρεθέντων· … ἀπεῖπαν δὲ πενθεῖν ταῖς γυναιξί. Cicero, Pis. 18 *quis hoc fecit ulla in Scythia tyrannus ut eos quos luctu adficeret lugere non sineret?* with R. G. M. Nisbet's note. To his parallels add Suetonius, Tib. 61 *interdictum ne capite damnatos propinqui lugerent*.

23) Cons. ad uxorem 4 (609a). Cf. R. G. M. Nisbet and M. Hubbard on Horace, Odes 2.9 (Commentary on Odes 2, Oxford 1978). They quote (p. 137) Ps. Plutarch, Cons. ad Apoll. 114f. τὸ γὰρ δὴ ἀτελεύτητον νομίζειν τὸ πένθος ἀνοίας ἐστὶν ἐσχάτης.

οὐ γὰρ ἐν βακχεύμασι δεῖ μόνον τὴν σώφρονα μένειν ἀδιάφθορον, ἀλλὰ μηδὲν ἧττον οἴεσθαι τὸν ἐν πένθεσι σάλον καὶ τὸ κίνημα τοῦ πάθους ἐγκρατείας δεῖσθαι διαμαχομένης οὐ πρὸς τὸ φιλόστοργον, ὡς οἱ πολλοὶ νομίζουσιν, ἀλλὰ πρὸς τὸ ἀκόλαστον τῆς ψυχῆς. τῷ μὲν γὰρ φιλοστόργῳ χαριζόμεθα τὸ ποθεῖν καὶ τὸ τιμᾶν καὶ τὸ μεμνῆσθαι τῶν ἀπογενομένων, ἡ δὲ θρήνων ἄπληστος ἐπιθυμία καὶ πρὸς ὀλοφύρσεις ἐξάγουσα καὶ κοπετοὺς αἰσχρὰ μὲν οὐχ ἧττον τῆς περὶ τὰς ἡδονὰς ἀκρασίας, λόγῳ δὲ συγγνώμης ἔτυχεν ὅτι τὸ λυπηρὸν αὐτῆς καὶ πικρὸν ἀντὶ τοῦ τερπνοῦ τῷ αἰσχρῷ πρόσεστι.

After Achilles has completed his speech Priam declines his invitation to sit down, while Hector's body is still uncared for (553f.). He presents his ransom for Hector to him, and asks him to release the body. Achilles agrees to do so, and his concern for Priam is shown especially in the fact that he lifts Hector's body on to the beir by himself (αὐτὸς τόν γ' Ἀχιλεὺς λεχέων ἐπέθηκεν ἀείρας 589). Achilles then delivers the speech containing the myth of Niobe (599–620), in which he invites Priam to share a meal with him, even though he has himself already eaten. As schol. T on 618f. well remarks, he thereby seeks to revive the old man's confidence: χαρίεις ὁ συνδειπνῶν πρὸς ἀνάκτησιν τοῦ γέροντος, καίτοι προδειπνήσας. We may contrast Alcinous' reception of the suppliant Odysseus; Alcinous gives Odysseus something to eat and drink only after he has been prompted to do so by Echeneus, and Odysseus eats by himself. There is no indication that Alcinous, like Achilles, took part in the preparation of the meal (Od. 7,55–77).

After the meal Achilles and Priam gaze at each other; the way in which αὐτὰρ ὁ Δαρδανίδην Πρίαμον θαύμαζεν Ἀχιλλεύς (631) closely echoes ἤτοι Δαρδανίδης Πρίαμος θαύμαζ' Ἀχιλῆα (629) may reflect Homer's concern to present the two men as being of equal status with each other, in the same way as, earlier, the two mourning figures had seemed to balance each other (509–12). We may ask why it is at this point in the story that the two heroes are free to gaze on each other. It is doubtless because Priam, by accepting Achilles' invitation to join him in a meal and break his fast, has been enabled to moderate his overpowering emotion. He has in fact followed the example of Achilles himself, who had heeded his mother's advice to take food (128–30). He asks Achilles for a bed, so that he, just as Achilles himself (cf. ταρπώμεθα 636), may enjoy the blessings of sleep, something which each of them had denied himself. His own words (635–42) show that Achilles' invitation to share a meal has had a consoling effect on him.

Achilles then arranges for Priam to sleep in the portico, out of regard for his interests; Macleod comments (on 649): "By making Priam sleep in the αἴθουσα he eases the old man's departure". Achilles then asks Priam how long a truce he will need to allow the Trojans to mourn and bury Hector. It is remarkable that Achilles takes the initiative in raising this matter with Priam, so that Priam is not placed in the position of having to make such a request himself, as a suppliant might be expected to do. Achilles replies courteously that he will meet Priam's wishes. At his parting with Priam (617f.) Achilles clasps his right hand at the wrist, so that he will not be afraid. To return to the textual problem, it remains true that some basic grounds for the athetesis of 614–17 are given by the scholiasts. However it may also be suggested that it would be inconsistent with the way Homer presents the relationship of Achilles to Priam for Achilles to tell Priam that his lot might resemble that of a Niobe who was turned to stone and wept eternally. Such a chilling image would do nothing to restore the old man's confidence.

So far we have considered the relationship of 614–17 to their context. We may now ask if the structure of the speech throws any light on the question of their authenticity. The speech is an example of ring composition, and can be analysed as follows[24]:

a	599–601	Your son is now released; you will see him in the morning when you take him home.
b	601	Now let us eat,
c	602	for Niobe ate
d	603–6	though her children had been killed,
e	607–8	because she had offended Leto.
d1	609–12	Her children were killed, but eventually buried.
c1	613	But she ate food.
b1	618–19	So let us also eat!
a1	619–20	Later, when you take him home, you can weep for your son.

It appears that there is no place for 614–17 in the ring, because they relate to nothing in its earlier part. And it will be noticed that if 614–17 are removed 618f. follow 613 very easily, with μεδώμεθα … σίτου taking up σίτου μνήσατ'. Prendergast lists thirty-two instances of ἀλλ' ἄγε and ἀλλ' ἄγεθ' in the *Iliad*[25]. In each case the

24) I follow D. Lohmann, Die Komposition der Reden in der Ilias (Berlin 1970) 13, and Willcock, The Iliad of Homer (above, n. 4) 318ff.

25) G. L. Prendergast, Concordance to the Iliad (London 1875) 4. Unaccountably Prendergast does not mention 24,618 under ἄγε.

words introduce an imperative or hortatory subjunctive, and generally follow an indication of the grounds for the action required[26]. But in our passage it is not the lines (614–17) immediately preceding the recommendation to eat which give the grounds for eating, but rather 601–13, and especially 613.

We may now consider some of the arguments which have been used to defend 614–17. P. Von der Mühll acknowledges the ring structure of the speech, and goes some way to accepting the arguments of Kakridis. However he concludes: "Aber es kommt 614–17 nicht so sehr auf die Versteinerung der Niobe an als darauf, dass sie auch nach ihrem Essen als Stein noch klagt, und so schliesst Achill die Aufforderung, nun zu essen, mit den Worten, dass Priamos später, wenn er Hektor nach Ilios gebracht habe, den Sohn nochmals reichlich beklagen werde. Nur mit Einschluss von 614–17 wird demnach das Exempel ganz adäquat."[27] It is to be expected that if 614–17 are taken as foreshadowing Priam's mourning for Hector, after he has brought his body back to Troy, they should be seen to give greater prominence to Niobe's weeping than to her petrifaction. But such an interpretation is a little arbitrary; on an unbiased view the two aspects of her fate go together. And the lines seem to reflect the notion expressed more clearly in later sources that the streams flowing down the sides of Mt. Sipylus a r e the tears of Niobe (cf. Apollodorus 3.5.6, Pausanias 1.21.3, Quintus Smyrnaeus 1.293–306). The introductory words νῦν δέ που ἐν πέτρῃσιν, ἐν οὔρεσιν οἰοπόλοισιν would strengthen the effect of ἔνθα λίθος περ ἐοῦσα in the mind of a listener.

Von der Mühll also notes that κήδεα μυρία πέσσω (639) seems to echo κήδεα πέσσει (617): "κήδεα πέσσει 617 wirkt auf die Formulierung 639 ein, nicht umgekehrt" (and others have followed him)[28]. As he believes in the authenticity of 614–17, it is natural for him to take this view, but it is equally possible that an interpolator might have found in the poet's own words a good source for his own composition. And we should notice that the use of the present tense is different in the two lines. In 639 πέσσω corresponds to an English present perfect, with the meaning "Up to now I have been

26) Cf. J. D. Denniston, Greek Particles (Oxford ²1954) 14 or ἀλλά expressing "a transition from arguments for action to a statement of the action required".

27) Von der Mühll (above, n. 7) 385.

28) Von der Mühll (above, n. 7) 385 n. 65, cf. Schmitz (above, n. 11) 152.

constantly brooding over my sorrows (but do so no longer)". But in 617 πέσσει is a present progressive, and means "(Niobe) is now brooding over her sorrows (and will doubtless continue to do so)". In view of this difference it cannot be simply assumed that 639 is a recollection of 617, but there is no obstacle to the hypothesis that the two lines have different composers. Indeed πέσσει (617) resembles, perhaps suspiciously, the present tenses used in later sources to express Niobe's eternal weeping, e. g. Sophocles, El. 150 ff. ἰὼ παντλάμων Νιόβα, σὲ δ' ἔγωγε νέμω θεόν, / ἅτ' ἐν τάφῳ πετραίῳ / αἰεὶ δακρύεις, Ant. 828 ff. καί νιν ὄμβροι τακομέναν, / ὡς φάτις ἀνδρῶν, / χιών τ' οὐδαμὰ λείπει, / τέγγει δ' ὑπ' ὀφρύσι παγ- / κλαύτοις δειράδας, Apollodorus 3.5.6 καὶ χεῖται δάκρυα νύκτωρ καὶ μεθ' ἡμέραν τοῦ λίθου, Quintus Smyrnaeus 1.293 ff. ᾖχι θεοὶ Νιόβην λᾶαν θέσαν, ἧς ἔτι δάκρυ / πουλὺ μάλα στυφελῆς καταλείβεται ὑψόθι πέτρης.

614–17 have also been defended by Walter Pötscher in an article[29] which deserves attention, though I shall not here attempt an exhaustive treatment of it. Pötscher rejects Kakridis' view that Homer transferred the motif of petrifaction from Niobe to her people, and he interprets the narrative in 602–13 differently. In punishment for her hybris towards Leto, Apollo and Artemis kill all Niobe's twelve children. And not only are the children killed, but her people are turned to stone. This accords with the belief that a whole community might suffer for the sin of a single person; Pötscher[30] recalls Hesiod, Erga 240 ff.: πολλάκι καὶ ξύμπασα πόλις κακοῦ ἀνδρὸς ἀπηύρα, / ὅστις ἀλιτραίνῃ καὶ ἀτάσθαλα μηχανάαται. / τοῖσιν δ' οὐρανόθεν μέγ' ἐπήγαγε πῆμα Κρονίων, / λιμὸν ὁμοῦ καὶ λοιμόν· ἀποφθινύθουσι δὲ λαοί. On the other hand Niobe, the guilty one, appears to suffer no punishment. This is odd; as Pötscher remarks "Wenn die (unschuldigen) Kinder und das (unschuldige) Volk sofort vernichtet werden, ist es nicht einzusehen, warum die (schuldige) Täterin nicht oder nicht sofort vernichtet werden soll."[31]: We might reasonably have expected that Niobe should be killed as well, and in particular, be turned to stone, as in Ovid, Met. 6,145–312. In fact a scholium of Aristonicus, who, like Ovid, belonged to the Augustan era, on 613 πρὸς τὴν δια-

29) Above, n. 7.
30) Pötscher (above, n. 8) 32.
31) Pötscher (above, n. 8) 30 n. 25.

φωνίαν τῶν νεωτέρων· φασὶ γὰρ καὶ αὐτὴν ἀπολελιθῶσθαι, Ὅμηρος δὲ οὐ shows that some later poets did record that Niobe was turned to stone, as well as (καί) her people. Her death however is clearly implied in the words οὐδέ τις ἦεν κατθάψαι. If she were alive she would, as mother, be under the strongest obligation to bury her children. As Pötscher remarks[32], the Olympian gods normally shun the dead, and it can have been only because there were no mortals available to perform this inescapable duty that the gods buried the Niobids themselves. There is thus an implicit contrast between ἣ δ' ἄρα σίτου μνήσατ', ἐπεὶ κάμε δάκρυ χέουσα (613) and the preceding lines. This contrast is a strong one, because it is common in stories recording the punishment of hybristic mortals by the gods for the punishment to follow the offence without delay, with no time for, say, weeping or the taking of food. Pötscher mentions Ovid, Met. 6.215, where Apollo tells his mother to cease her complaints against Niobe, because they are delaying his taking of revenge[33]. In Od. 4,502ff. Ajax, son of Oileus, like Niobe, utters a boast, and Poseidon immediately (αὐτίκα 506) punishes him with drowning. Similarly (Od. 8,224–28) Eurytus challenged Apollo to an archery match, only to meet with a swift death (τῷ ῥα καὶ αἶψ' ἔθανεν μέγας Εὔρυτος 226). In Callimachus, hymn 5.77–82 Tiresias loses his sight immediately after seeing the naked Athena. In Call. h. 6.37–67 Erysichthon takes his axe to a poplar in Demeter's grove. He disdains her remonstrances, and she straightway punishes him.

We may now ask why Homer should, in 610–13, combine motifs which are strictly incompatible, a question which is independent of the problem of the authenticity of 614–17. He doubtless needed to put into Achilles' mouth an exemplum which would not fail to induce Priam to eat, after the loss of his dearest son. What would be suitable would be a story in which a mythical figure underwent a supreme disaster, but yet managed to take food. Niobe, who had lost all her children at the hands of the gods, might well seem to be a figure whose suffering could not be surpassed. The loss of her children was indeed punishment for Niobe, but in our passage she does not suffer in her own person. On the contrary, she recovers from her mourning sufficiently to take food. It seems

32) Pötscher (above, n. 8) 28.
33) Pötscher (above, n. 8) 30.

likely that Homer has modified an earlier story, because it would not serve the needs of the context. He made Niobe eat in order that Priam might be prevailed upon to do the same. The needs of the context were more important to him than adherence to mythological tradition[34].

We may now turn to 614–17 and ask if they are suited to the context. It may be granted that they do not conflict with 613, if only because, as Pötscher points out[35], Niobe would need to eat properly if she were to accomplish the long journey from Thebes to Lydia. The fact that 613 does not conflict with 614–17 led Pötscher to the view that 613–17 all belong to the same version of the myth of Niobe, and that in Achilles' speech two differing versions of the myth have been combined: "Wir haben zwei Varianten der Niobe-Sage vor uns, von denen die erste in den Versen 610 bis 612 zu finden ist und die zweite in den Versen 613 ff."[36] In the first version Niobe perishes with her people, and naturally does not take any food, whereas in the second she weeps, and after weeping eats, and then at a later stage, in answer to her prayers, and not as a punishment, is turned to stone, and weeps eternally. But although this thesis is well argued it suffers from the disadvantage that 614–17 are not wholly suited to Achilles' speech. After Homer had in 613 modified mythological tradition, it would seem, for rhetorical reasons, it is not likely that he would have admitted into the same speech any motifs which might weaken the main message of the speech. Nor, as was shown earlier[37], are 614–17 entirely appropriate to the wider context of the speech. Athetesis is the preferable option. If we ask the reason for the interpolation, it is likely that an account of the myth of Niobe, which did not mention her petrifaction, a most striking feature of that myth, might have seemed incomplete. And the fact that her people are said to have been turned to stone would have highlighted the absence of any mention of

34) Cf. above, p. 15 f. Cf. K. J. Dover, Theocritus (London 1971) p. lii: "… it must be remembered that all poets had always assumed the right of creative variation of inherited mythology.", and W. Allan, The *Andromache* and Euripidean Tragedy (Oxford 2000) 11: "For it is vital to bear in mind that the tragedians' skill in inventing, adapting, and reshaping myths is part of a well-exampled tradition in Greek poetry."

35) Pötscher (above, n. 8) 27.

36) Pötscher (above, n. 8) 30.

37) See above, p. 16–20.

Niobe herself suffering a similar fate. And so an ancient reader was moved to compose some attractive verses to remedy the poet's deficiency[38].

Aberdeen Thomas Pearce

38) Willcock, A Companion (above, n. 4) 273, plausibly compares the problem of 614–17 with that of 6,200–202: "the situation is in fact similar to the one encountered in the lines that tell of the ultimate fate of Bellerophontes in 6.200–02, where (as here) a reference to the well-known end of the story interrupts an ordered narrative".