

§30. Conclusions

kani kani

– Victoria Howard, *at the end of almost any Clackamas myth*

That formula (literally, “story, story”) takes us out of the world of myth she has been recreating for us, and back into the regular world. The *entry* into the story world may also be conventionalized. In Japanese, we have

mukashi, mukashi

or, if it was a *very* long time ago,

mukashi, mukashi, ô-mukashi

This, Homer does not do. Nor does his tradition do it for him. He has free choice when ending a story. It is one place he shows his own artistic technique. He suits his endings to the character of the session. Sometimes there is a quiet ending, to let the story fade out. Or a hectic one, as though impatient for the next book to begin. Here are some samples of different Homeric conclusions:

Restful

Gong to sleep is one way to end peacefully:

1:605-611, of Zeus, with suitable dignity, at the end of the council of gods:

But as the radiant light of the sun went down to its setting,
yielding to slumber they fared, each godhead, home to his dwelling,
where the renowned Hephaestus, in both hands equally clever,
had with a cunning conception, for each god builded a palace;
Zeus too went to his couch, the Olympian lord of the lightnings,
as he was wont, unto slumber, whene'er sweet sleep overtook him.
There he went up and reposed, with the gold-throned Hera beside him.

• **7:480-482**, with the Greeks nervous about the morrow:

Men poured wine from their cups to the earth, and no one would dare
even to drink, till he made to all-mighty Cronion libation.
All then laid them down, and partook of the blessing of slumber.

Or, somewhat analogously, the cessation of pain.

• **11:842-848**, Patroclus finishes healing Eurypylos:

Spake he, and under the breast he clasped the shepherd of peoples,
helped him thus to his barrack; a squire, on seeing, spread ox-hides,
stretching him on them at length, with his knife he cut out the arrow,
sharp and stinging, out of his thigh, and from it the dark blood
washed with warm water away, and laid thereover a bitter
root he had rubbed in his hands, which soothed his suff'ring, assuaging
all of his pains, and the wound grew dry, and the hemorrhage ended.

This leaves us with an impression of the gentleness of Patroclus, a trait which is frequently mentioned or implied in what follows.

This device of implicit characterization is in addition to the inherited, and (to be fair) sometimes rather clunky, characterization by epithet.

Decisive

Deciding a contested issue gives finality. Two pre-Homeric examples:

- **3:455-461**. Agamemnon declares Menelaos the winner of the duel with Paris:
 So Agamemnon, the king of men, then shouted amid them,
 “Hear me, Trojans and Dardans and ye allies of the city!
 now, it appears, Menelaos, beloved of Ares, is victor;
 give back Helen of Argos, and with her all her possessions.
 pay an indemnity too, whatever may seem to be fitting,
 such as in ages to come may serve unto men as example.”
 Thus Atrides spake, and the other Achaeans applauded.
- **6:526-529**, Hector, temporarily patching up a spat between him and Paris:
 Howbeit, let us away. All this hereafter we’ll settle
 haply, if Zeus e’er grant us to offer the cup of deliv’rance
 here in our halls to the gods aye-living, inhabiting heaven,
 once we have driven from Troyland the well-greaved sons of Achaeans.

Active

There is also the headlong ending, with a sort of fadeout to the heavens:

- **12:469-471**, as the Trojans leap over the smashed Greek wall:
 Some of them leaped o’er the rampart at once, while others were pouring
 in through the firm-wrought gateway; the Danaans, stricken with panic,
 fled ‘mid the hollow ships, and uproar constant ascended.
- **13:835-837**, another, with matching fadeout:
 Then, on the other side, the Argives shouted, forgetting
 naught of their might, but awaiting the charge of the best of the Trojans.
 Shouting from both sides arose, to the radiance of Zeus and to heaven.
 Or with no fadeout at all,
- **14:520-522**, describing the retreat of the Trojans:
 Aias, howe’er, slew the most, the fleet-footed son of Oileus,
 since no other was like him in fleetness of foot to o’ertake them,
 when men were fleeing in terror, when Zeus spread panic among them.
 Or there can be an explicit *refusal* to pause:
- **19:421-424**, Achilles in reply to Xanthos, who has foretold his death:
 “Well do I know it myself, how here I am fated to perish,
 far from my father dear, and my mother. Yet will I never
 cease until I have given their fill of war to the Trojans.”
 Said he, and shouting, he drove his whole-hoofed steeds ‘mid the foremost.

This is how we know we have entered on the final sequence; close to the end.
 There is also pure continuity, as we have seen (§15) between Id 20 and 21.

The bottom line here is that Homer’s conclusions are as varied as his stories,
 and these too are far from hackneyed or predictable. *He is in charge.*