The Women's War: Natalie Haynes' conceptualization of epic in A Thousand Ships (2019)

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Introduction

The first chapter of Natalie Haynes' 2019 novel *A Thousand Ships* (*ATS*) is called "Calliope", after the muse of epic poetry who is its narrator. The first sentence of this chapter goes as follows:

> Sing, Muse, he says, and the edge in his voice makes it clear that this is not a request.[2]

We are dealing with an epic invocation of the muse, but an inverted one: instead of a poet asking for inspiration, we find the muse herself reflecting on being asked for it. Thus, on the one hand, Haynes presents *ATS* as a continuation of the epic tradition, whereof the invocation of the muse has been regarded a standard feature ever since the *Iliad*.[3] On the other hand, she appears to subvert this very tradition by shifting the focalization from the male poet to the female muse – a move which may be considered programmatic for the book as a whole, which, as the back cover summarizes, provides an "an all-female perspective … [which] gives voices to the women, girls and goddesses who, for so long, have been silent."

This all-female perspective is presented in 43 loosely connected chapters, wherein besides Calliope many other mythological women make their appearance as the protagonists and focalizers of their own stories.[4] The one thing they all share is their involvement in "that legendary [Trojan] war and its terrible aftermath, as well as the feud and the fatal decisions that started it all".[5] Some of the women only appear once in *ATS*, while others return multiple times, picking up their stories where they left off (notably the "Trojan Women" - Hecuba, Cassandra, Polyxena, Andromeda and Helen - who find themselves awaiting their destinies in the Greek army camp). Calliope's seven chapters structurally hold the book together: in them, she comments on the other women's stories, on "the poet" – as the one who is invoking her is consistently called – and, both directly and indirectly, on the nature of the epic genre itself.

ATS is not the only recent book that rewrites classical epic from a female perspective. In 2019, the same year Natalie Haynes published *A Thousand Ships*, Pat Barker released *The Silence of the Girls* – a "feminist *Iliad*"[6] – which was followed in 2021 by *Women of Troy*, a "Troy story for the sisterhood."[7] Madeline Miller's *Circe*, which "gives voice to Circe"[8] and is essentially a biography

[2] Haynes 2019, 11.
[3] See Schindler 2019, 489.
[4] See Appendix 1 for an overview of the chapters, which are named after the protagonist(s).
[5] Haynes 2019, *back cover*.
[6] Wilson 2018.
[7] Cummins 2021.
[8] Messud 2018.

of the mythical witch, was released in 2018.[9] By alluding to Troy, the *Iliad*, or a character from the *Odyssey*, these books present themselves as responses to Homeric epic, and indeed they have been received in the media as new additions to the epic genre themselves: "Epic win! Why women are lining up to reboot the classics,"[10] the *Guardian* wrote about these books, and the *Times* described Miller's *Circe* as "A bold and subversive retelling … that manages to be both epic and intimate."[11] Considering their enormous popularity, it may be no overstatement to say that the way (classical) epic is currently perceived is being profoundly (re)shaped by these feminist rewritings.

How does this strand of feminist rewritings redefine (our view of) the epic tradition? It is my aim in this thesis to form a tentative answer to this question by analyzing the perspectives on and challenges of the epic genre presented by Natalie Haynes in *ATS*. Even though other authors like Barker and Miller engage with classical epic as well, Haynes is the only author who explicitly reflects upon the epic genre (particularly, as mentioned, in the Calliope chapters) and who describes her own work as a new type of epic in itself.[12] As such, *ATS* can be considered a particularly relevant and representative case study for understanding how this recent, feminist trend is (re)defining the epic for a large contemporary readership. This thesis aims to describe this (re)definition, to understand where it comes from, and to critically assess it in the face of the ancient text(s) it is based on.

Scholarship and method

As a recent novel, *ATS* has not been the subject of scholarly attention at all. However, there is a vast amount of secondary literature about other examples of "women's rewriting", a term I borrow from Liedeke Plate and which she uses for books in which stories of the past are "retold from the perspective of a new, marginal, and usually female character in the original story".[13] The scholarship that deals with these rewritings is often focused on the plot, which is considered through the lens of reception studies and gender studies.[14] While I am inspired by the combination of these disciplines, it is interesting to note that a perspective on genre is often entirely missing. How do these rewritings, in fact, cope with, conceptualize and alter the genre of the work they are rewriting?

[9] Christa Wolf's *Kassandra* (1983), Margaret Atwood's *Penelopiad* (2005) and Ursula LeGuin's *Lavinia* (2008), although less recent, are other examples of books rewriting classical (epic) source material from the perspective of a female character.
[10] Higgins 2019.
[11] Alter 2018.
[12] In the afterword, Haynes calls *ATS* "my attempt to write an epic." Haynes 2019, 455.
[13] Plate 2011, ix. Whereas Plate gives a historical overview of the genre of "women's rewriting", Hauser 2017 and Theodorakopoulos 2012 give informative oversights and analyses of examples of "women's rewriting" pertaining to the texts of classical antiquity.
[14] See, for instance: Akgün 2018, Best 2018, Braund 2012, Haneş 2019, Hauser 2018, Haydock 2018, Lanone 2020.

Although the interface of gender and genre has not been studied with regards to "women's rewriting", it *has* been studied in-depth with regards to the literature of ancient Rome. In particular, the studies of Alison Keith (*Engendering Rome*) and Stephen Hinds ("Essential Epic: Genre and Gender from Macer to Statius") about the intersections of gender and Roman epic have rendered insights which, I believe, may be of relevance to the epic tradition as a whole, and which, as such, I will make use of in this study of *ATS*.

For understanding *ATS*' engagement with classical epic I will make use of the theories and methods of reception studies, particularly Charles Martindale's 1993 *Redeeming the Text*, which is considered to have laid the theoretical foundations of the discipline. In Martindale's conceptualization, the meaning of any reception is determined in a dialogical process with its source(s). It is, as Martindale puts it in a later article, "a two-way process of understanding, backwards and forwards, which illuminates antiquity as much as Modernity."[15] Thus, in studying Haynes' definition of the epic genre, we may assume that it is both *informed by* the texts she receives and *informing* (our reading of) those texts themselves, including ideas we might have about their genre.

To complicate this dynamic further, Martindale also stresses that any interpretation of an ancient text is influenced by the way that text was received in the past:

> our current interpretations of ancient texts, whether or not we are aware of it, are, in complex ways, constructed by the chain of receptions through which their continued readability has been effected. As a result we cannot get back to any originary meaning wholly free of subsequent accretions.[16]

This means that the way in which the classical epic is defined in *ATS* is also mediated by its reception history from antiquity to the present.

In sum, from the perspective of classical reception studies, we may conceptualize the definition of the epic genre in *ATS*, which I will study in this thesis, as a construction by Natalie Haynes, informed by (a) source text(s), and mediated by a reception history of that/those text(s).

Based on these insights gained from Martindale's work I propose a method which consists of the following two steps, which I will respectively work out in the two chapters of this thesis.

First, in chapter 1, we will try to recover the *construction ATS* makes of the epic genre, i.e. analyze how it, by looking at the texts of classical antiquity, defines the genre. We will do so specifically by considering the critique of the epic voiced by Calliope in her recurring chapters. For, as any critique does, Calliope's critique of the epic genre inevitably entails and reveals a particular

[15] Martindale 2013, 171.
[16] Martindale 1993, 7. Budelmann & Haubald 2008, 17 make a similar point.

definition of that very genre (if Calliope says "epic should not be (about) x", she reveals a conceptualization of epic as being, precisely, (about) x). Calliope may also contrast *ATS* to the epic genre, effectively showing the reader that *ATS* embodies a redefinition of epic, which again will allow us to deduce how epic is conceptualized in *ATS* (if Calliope says "*ATS*, unlike epic, is not x", she reveals a conceptualization of epic as being, precisely, x).

Second, in chapter 2, we will attempt to "deconstruct" the construction, that is, to critically examine how *ATS* offers a selective reading of its source texts, and to comparatively confront this reading with (alternative readings of) these source texts themselves. Martindale himself has emphasized the value of such a deconstructive method for reception studies, particularly in its function to "bring to light some of the buried assumptions of [our present-day readings of classical texts]," though he remains vague about its implementation.[17] From his above-mentioned two principles of reception, however, we may deduce two ways in which this deconstruction can be realized, which I will apply to *ATS* in this thesis.

Following Martindale's first principle that a reception is constructed in a dialogical process between receiver and received, a deconstruction can work by critically comparing the first to the latter, in order to assess what this dialogue has highlighted, and particularly what has been *left out* in the reception of the source text. An insightful example of this approach may be found in Stephen Hinds' aforementioned article "Essential Epic: Genre and Gender from Macer to Statius". In this study Hinds analyzes the gendered characterization of epic in Rome, but also, importantly, compares that characterization to actual Roman epics. In this way, he is able to show how Roman epic defied gendered, generical expectations as a rule. Similarly, after having recovered the conceptualization of epic *ATS* proposes, we will ask whether it does in fact apply to the source text(s).

From Martindale's second principle that a reception is the result of a "chain of receptions", we may deduce a method of deconstruction which works by historically tracing the origins of the reception in order to uncover its genealogical constructedness. A model for this approach may be found in Glenn Most's article "Generating Genres: The Idea of the Tragic," which looks at the way in which the term "tragic" has been understood throughout history, and how that has affected contemporary notions of what the genre of tragedy entails.[18] By "reconstructing the history of this construction [of "the tragic"]"[19] he shows how ideas about "the tragic" have influenced the way in which ancient texts have been and still are perceived. Just so, I hope to be able to uncover assumptions about the meaning of the genre of epic as it is constructed in *ATS* by tracing its indebtedness to the earlier reception history of the genre. Because of the limited scope of this thesis we can only trace a

[17] Martindale 1993, 40.
[18] Most 2000.
[19] Most 2000, 20.

selected part of this "chain of receptions" – we might note that it is impossible anyway to exhaustively study "the chain" – but I hope it may nonetheless serve to put *ATS* in perspective, and to appreciate it as a product of a longer reception history.

Chapter 1: The Construction of Epic in *ATS*

1.1 Introduction

In this chapter we will look at how *A Thousand Ships* (*ATS*) constructs epic, in order to answer the question: how is epic conceptualized in *ATS*?

To do so, this chapter will consist of three parts. In the first part, we will investigate which epic or epics, specifically, Calliope is interacting with in her critique of the genre. Given the fact that the epic tradition is vast and diverse, spanning over - even when only looking at the Western tradition - three millennia, it would be difficult - not to say impossible - to criticize it as a whole. Which epic's "epicness" is *ATS* redefining and thus, in fact, receiving? In the second part of this chapter, we will take a closer look at characteristics ascribed to the epic genre as represented by the epic text(s) we have found Calliope to be interacting with. To conclude the chapter, we will focus on Calliope herself and, specifically, her relationship to "the poet".

1.2 Paradigmatic Homeric epics

In the introduction we saw that the first chapter of *ATS* begins with a subverted invocation of the muse. Immediately after this invocation, Calliope reflects upon the subject matter of epic, which offers a clear and programmatic clue as to which epic(s) specifically are the object of the book's critique.

> How much epic poetry does the world really need?
> Every conflict joined, every war fought, every city besieged, every town sacked, every village destroyed. Every impossible journey, every shipwreck, every homecoming: these stories have all been told, and countless times. Can he really believe he has something new to say?[20]

According to Calliope, it is unlikely that "the poet" will add something new to the epic genre,[21] because poets have apparently tended to discuss the same two topics, wars and journeys, over and over again. As Joseph Farrell has analyzed in his article *The Narrative Forms and Mythological*

[20] Haynes 2019, 11.
[21] We might note that Calliope's usage of the term "new" in connection to the epic genre is somewhat ironic since epic, especially Homeric epic, is often seen as a genre concerned with tales of the past; cf. Ford 1992.

Materials of Classical Epic, these two topics have indeed been the "dominant story patterns" in the epic tradition ever since, and arguably because of, its roots in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*: [22]

> the influence of Homer was such that no subsequent poem in any genre, especially any epic, could escape it… No matter its subject, no epic after Homer could avoid being read as a poem of Iliadic warfare, Odyssean voyaging, or some combination of the two.[23]

Calliope, then, implicitly reinforces the paradigmatic status of the Homeric epics in the Western history of the epic genre by referring to Homeric subject matter as the ultimate epic subject matter.[24]

In other respects, too, *ATS* reveals a predominant engagement with Homeric epic. The above-mentioned (subverted) invocation of the muse, which opens the novel with "Sing, muse", is particularly reminiscent of the Homeric epics, which begin as follows:

1. μῆνιν ἄειδε θεὰ: "sing of the wrath, goddess"
2. ἄνδρα μοι ἔννεπε, μοῦσα: "tell me about the man, muse"

In the first two words of her novel, Haynes has arguably combined the two Homeric invocations, taking "sing" (ἄειδε) from the *Iliad* and "muse" (μοῦσα) from the *Odyssey*. Moreover, "the poet" invoking Calliope reminds one very much of Homer. He may not ever be given a name, but we do learn that he is a poet who has had great success in the past, and moreover that he is blind, which is the one physical characteristic always attributed to Homer.[25] Lastly, in her afterword Haynes specifically comments on the *Iliad*'s invocation of the muse, saying that even though "Homer doesn't name her […, i]t seems reasonable to assume […Homer is] addressing Calliope, muse of epic poetry …," thus emphasizing the connection between Calliope and Homer and cementing the idea that *ATS* is a reception (and critique) of Homeric epic in particular.[26]

If this is so, however, why does Haynes/Calliope keep "the poet" emphatically nameless throughout the novel? Considering Haynes' explicit comment on the namelessness of Calliope in the proem of the *Iliad* quoted above, we may interpret this as a form of poetical justice, a retribution for

[22] Farrell 2020, 52.
[23] Farrell 2020, 60.
[24] Of course, other epics fit this description based on subject matter too, in the first place the *Aeneid*, which famously combined Homeric subject matter. I hope to show in the remainder of this paragraph that it is Homeric epic, specifically, with which *ATS* seems to engage.
[25] For "the poet's" blindness see Haynes 2019, 110: "Tears flow from his ["the poet's"] blind eyes". For his success in the past see page 12: "So someone has rewarded him ["the poet"] handsomely for his poetry in the past. He has talent and he has prospered."
[26] Haynes 2019, 326.

the namelessness of the muse in Homer's poetry.[27] Yet this namelessness also has another important effect: "the poet," despite his most obvious likeness to Homer, becomes a generic entity, capable of standing in for every poet who has ever composed epic poetry, something that is made explicit when Calliope likens "the poet" to "all poets":

> like all poets, he thinks only of himself. But it is surprising that he hasn't considered how many other men there are like him, every day, all demanding my unwavering attention and support.[28]

Homer is thus, implicitly, framed as the paradigmatic epic poet, just like his epics are, implicitly, framed as the paradigmatic epics. This granting of paradigmatic status to Homer and his epics is neither strange nor groundbreaking, since Homer was the first epic poet of the Western epic tradition and we already found that Joseph Farrell characterized the Homeric epics as, basically, blueprints for that tradition (at least when it comes to story patterns).[29] Interestingly, however, in the remainder of *ATS* a very specific conceptualization of Homeric epic is developed, which further narrows down the supposed essence of the epic genre, as we shall discuss in the next sections.

1.3 Iliadic Subject Matter

In *ATS*' twelfth chapter - Calliope's third - this first becomes clear. "The poet" seems to have presented himself reluctant in composing the story Calliope is granting him the inspiration for, and she remarks:

> Perhaps he thought he was writing about one of those other wars. Devastation is what happens in war: it is its nature. I murmur to him in his dreams sometimes (I do have other things to do, but I like how he looks when he sleeps): you knew Achilles would die. You knew Hector would die before him. You knew Patroclus would die. You've told their stories

[27] On another level, we might argue that Calliope not naming "the poet" has the effect of reducing him to one aspect of his identity. This is a phenomenon we might recognize from the way in which media tend to speak (especially in headlines) about women and (other) groups of marginalized people. Thus, NOS Teletekst featured the headline *Vrouw (69) Kanselier van Oostenrijk* ("Woman (69) Chancellor of Austria"). Haynes arguably does something similar in *ATS*: by reducing the identity of "the poet" very literally to his being a poet, he is denied (the privilege of) an individual personality; he becomes replaceable. (For a picture of the NOS headline, as well as some other examples of the phenomenon see: Madeleijn van den Nieuwenhuizen [@Zeikschrift]. 05-01-2021. <https://www.instagram.com/p/CJq8yIAl8Sx/>).

[28] Haynes 2019, 11.

[29] The granting of paradigmatic status to one work which comes to represent an entire genre, is comparable to the "search for an *auctor*" Harrison 2013, 3 discusses in his introduction on genre in antiquity.

> before. If you didn't want to think of men cut down in battle, then why would you want to compose epic verse?[30]

The first sentence makes clear to us that Calliope expects the poet was counting on composing about a different war, but a war nonetheless. Furthermore, Calliope sums up some of the things he has sung about before, and the things she mentions are the deaths of Patroclus, Hector and Achilles. All of these events - save for the last one, which is only hinted at - are featured in the *Iliad*.[31] This does not only confirm our thesis that "the poet" mostly recalls Homer; it also shows us that, somehow, Calliope's characterization of epic has been narrowed down: from either portraying war or a journey, it has become a genre about war, represented by the *Iliad*. Indeed, it is this supposed war-centered essence of the genre which becomes the main object of Calliope's criticism:

> If he truly wants to understand the nature of the epic story I am letting him compose, he needs to accept that the casualties of war aren't just the ones who die. And that a death off the battlefield can be more noble (more heroic, if he prefers it that way) than one in the midst of fighting. … all the Trojan women – should be memorialized as much as any other person. Their Greek counterparts too. War is not a sport, to be decided in a quick bout on a strip of contested land. It is a web which stretches out to the furthest parts of the world, drawing everyone into itself. I will teach him this before he leaves my temple. Or he will have no poem at all.[32]

Calliope is on a mission to teach "the poet" something about "the nature of the epic story" she is "letting him compose". Her lesson is, at its core, a lesson on what war is. That means that "war" seems to have become the subject not only of *ATS*, but of epic in general, since it is crucial for "the poet" to understand what war is if he wants to understand "the nature of the epic story". More importantly, it makes clear that, while having shown herself aware of the distinction between the archetypal subject matters of the Western epic tradition, of the, in other words, existence of both the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad* as models for the epic genre, Calliope deliberately suppresses the "journey" motif, and with it the paradigmatic status of the *Odyssey*.

This move on the part of Calliope doesn't, historically speaking, stand on its own, for it corresponds to a dynamic that can be observed in the reception history of the Homeric poems, which

[30] Haynes 2019, 109.
[31] For the death of Patroclus see *Iliad* book 16; for the death of Hector see *Iliad* book 22; see Fabian Horn 2020 for ways in which Achilles' death is foreshadowed throughout the *Iliad*.
[32] Haynes 2019, 110.

is described by Colin Burrow in his book *Epic Romance: Homer to Milton*. In the reception of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* he discerns

> [a] determination to see the two Homeric poems as rottenly distinct from each other: the *Iliad* shows fighting, and heroic goings-on, so it is epic; the *Odyssey* relates wanderings, magical adventures abroad, and a final comic reunion in the return of the hero to his wife and home, so it is a romance.[33]

A confirmation of the fact that Natalie Haynes is aware of this historical prioritization of the *Iliad*, of its, in short, being valued as more epic than the *Odyssey*, may be found in her most recent book, *Pandora's Jar*.[34] She writes there:

> The *Iliad* was for a long time considered grander, more epic than the *Odyssey*, because the former is full of war and the latter is stuffed with women and adventures.[35]

In other words, *ATS*' suppression of the *Odyssey* as a paradigmatic epic seems to be a conscious one, mimicking the reception history of the Homeric epics, which Haynes elsewhere characterizes as having viewed the *Iliad* as more epic because of its dealing with war.

1.4 *Iliad* as "the men's war"

So epic in *ATS* is essentially "Iliadic," taking war as its paradigmatic subject matter, but how, exactly, is it characterized? The answer to this question becomes clearest in passages which explicitly juxtapose Iliadic epic and the "new" type of epic *ATS* is supposed to embody, most centrally the following passage (from chapter 21, the fourth chapter in which Calliope is featured as narrator/protagonist; italics are mine):

> There are so many ways of telling a war: the entire conflict can be encapsulated in just one incident. *One man's anger at the behaviour of another*, say. A whole war – *all ten years of it* – might be distilled into that. But this is the women's war, just as much as it is the men's, and the poet will look upon their pain – the pain of the women who have always been

[33] Burrow 2011, 2.
[34] Published in 2021, this book traces various famous mythological women (Pandora, Hecuba, Medusa, to name a few) throughout different (antique as well as modern) versions of their myths.
[35] Haynes 2021, 370.

> relegated to the edges of the story, victims of men, survivors of men, slaves of men – and he will tell it, or he will tell nothing at all. They have waited long enough for their turn.[36]

Obviously, the "way of telling a war" referred to in the example of "one man's anger at the behaviour of another" is the *Iliad*, which, from Aristotle's interpretation in the *Poetics* onwards,[37] has been famous for concentrating the entire scope of the Trojan War in the single and unified plot of Achilles' wrath. Here however, this concentration is cast in a negative light, as a myopic focus on the acts of men, leaving out women and others, which, moreover, is presented as paradigmatic for the epic tradition ("*always*… relegated to the edges"). To this, Haynes opposes "this," i.e. *ATS*, which she characterizes as "the women's war."

But what does it mean to say that (Iliadic) epic only deals with "the men's war"? I will highlight three aspects of *ATS*' redefinition of "epicness" that are implied in Calliope's characterization of *ATS* as dealing with "the women's war". They are: the featuring of women, a widening of scope and a challenging of the definition of heroism. These aspects show certain overlaps and together help us interpret the meaning of "the women's war", in turn leading to an understanding of the characterization of epic as "the men's war". Note that, at this point, we will only try to reconstruct *ATS*' conceptualization of (Iliadic) epic; in chapter 2 we will critically assess this conceptualization.

1.5 The featuring of women

The first thing implied by describing *ATS* as "the women's war" is, of course, that it differs from (Iliadic) epic with regards to the roles of women.

> These are the stories of the women embroiled in that legendary war… *A Thousand Ships* gives voices to the women, girls and goddesses who, for so long, have been silent.[38]

As this paratextual summary of *ATS* on the back cover illustrates, the suggestion is not that women were entirely absent from earlier (Iliadic) epics, but rather that they did not speak. They were "relegated to the edges of the story", as Calliope put it (see paragraph 1.4). The main contrast, then,

[36] Haynes 2019, 173.
[37] *Poetics* 1459a 31-2.
[38] Haynes 2019, *back cover*.

is that *ATS* is presented as an epic giving full attention and voice to female characters, while (Iliadic) epic is characterized as featuring women only as minor, silent characters.

1.6 Scope

Second, "the women's war" implies a difference in the scope of the portrayal of war. In the above-quoted passage wherein Calliope teaches the poet what war *really* is, she says:

> war is not a sport, to be decided in a quick bout on a strip of contested land. It is a *web* which stretches out to the furthest parts of the world, drawing everyone into itself. I will teach him this.[39]

The implication is that Iliadic epic takes place *only* on a battlefield and depicts war as a kind of "sport". Calliope's conceptualization, by contrast, stresses that war is never limited to the group of men fighting at a specific time and place: it has serious consequences for many more people (not just the male fighters themselves) around the world, over a much longer period of time. None of the chapters in *ATS*, in fact, deal with the fighting itself, nor do the warriors feature as protagonists; instead, most chapters take place after the war has ended, investigating its consequences for other people (mostly women) in other places, in the periphery of the 'web', so to speak. Thus, by contrastive implication, Calliope constructs (Iliadic) epic as dealing with a very limited portion of war, which takes place on a battlefield between men, with no focus on causes or consequences of the very battle that is taking place.

ATS' preoccupation with widening the scope of war may also be related to the *form* of *ATS*: through the episodic nature of *ATS*, its plot becomes fragmented, and the reader is provided with multiple perspectives on the same event. In this way, the notion that "war is a web" is actualized: from different positions in this "web", different women experience the Trojan War and its fall-out. Such a fragmentation of the plot may be related to postmodernism, postcolonialism and feminism, and the conviction of these movements that no (historical) event - in this case the Trojan war - can be narrated in one way, since there is no objective "telling" of it, only different and differing experiences (we already found an obvious echo of this sentiment when Calliope said "there are so many ways of telling a war").[40] As such, it becomes apparent that *ATS* basically treats the *Iliad* as a piece of

[39] Haynes 2019, 110 (my emphasis).
[40] Plate 2011, 10.

historical writing, and accuses it of one-sidedness, of only representing the male perspective of this history, to which the episodic and polyphonic structure of *ATS* is presented as a contrast.[41]

1.7 What is a hero?

The third aspect of "the women's war" concerns the *status* granted to the women that are featured in the stories taking place off the battlefield. *ATS* seems to both criticize (Iliadic) epic's definition of heroism and to redefine it, so that it may include the women of *ATS*. An example of a combination of both may be found in the twenty-first chapter. In it, Calliope reflects on the content of the previous chapter, chapter 20, which dealt with Oenone, the (first) wife of Paris. In *ATS*' version Oenoene is raising their son.[42] Calliope remarks:

> If he ['the poet'] complains to me again, I will ask him this: is Oenone less of a hero than Menelaus? He loses his wife so he stirs up an army to bring her back to him, costing countless lives and creating countless widows, orphans and slaves. Oenone loses a husband and she raises their son. Which is the more heroic act?[43]

In questioning what it means to be a hero, Calliope implicitly but clearly conceptualizes what a traditional "epic hero" is, and - as we have learned to expect at this point - she uses the *Iliad* to do so. Menelaus, in this particular case, is advanced as the ultimate example of the epic hero and his shortcomings. His heroism is a (non-moral) status gained simply by being a male, aristocratic ruler going to war. This idea recurs throughout *ATS*, as "warrior" and "hero" are often used as synonyms.[44] Yet the "heroism" of these men is at the same time often questioned and criticized, not only by Calliope, who draws attention to the death and destruction caused by Menelaus' need to defend his honor, but also by other characters in *ATS* who have been personally affected by the deeds of these "heroes". An example is provided by Briseis, who calls into question Achilles' "heroism" in *ATS*' tenth chapter, called *Briseis and Chryseis*, in a conversation with Patroclus.

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[41] We might also interpret the fragmented structure of *ATS* as a reference to the way in which texts by and about women have survived antiquity (Emily Hauser talks about the "layered, fragmentary, mediated tradition in which we receive female-authored texts"; 2016, 137).
[42] Haynes has reworked Pseudo-Apollodorus's version of the myth in his *Bibliotheca* iii 12.6, the fifth letter in Ovid's *Heroides* (from Oenone to Paris), and Quintus Smyrnaeus' take on the story in his *Posthomerica* 10.11.
[43] Haynes 2019, 174.
[44] See, for instance, page 102: "The Greeks did not need him when they had so many heroes who fought on their side"; page 105 "Achilles left the Trojan Hero"; page 110 "Heroes don't become heroes without carnage."

> your friend should hope the bards treat him so kindly. Many men would see no glory in the murder of an old man and his wife [Briseis' parents]. Perhaps they will sing of his senseless cruelty and lack of honour. Patroclus laughed. 'They will call him the greatest hero who ever lived,' he replied.[45]

Whereas Patroclus is granted a metapoetical gift of foresight (and, we might note, a certain lack of empathy), Briseis is presented as challenging the heroic status of Achilles. Briseis makes us aware of what Achilles is like for those he defeated - cruel, dishonorable, and ruthless - and suggests that few people could find such amoral behavior heroic. What *ATS* offers as an alternative to this male, Iliadic model of the hero, is a moral type of heroism exemplified by courageous and resilient women like Oenone - who, as we have seen, is explicitly called a hero - and Briseis, who may not be called a hero explicitly, but who certainly is painted as a resilient, noble and likable character. Indeed, in her afterword Haynes suggests that all the women featured in her book may be considered heroes:

> I hope that at the end of this book, my attempt to write an epic, readers might feel that heroism is something that can reside in all of us, particularly if circumstances push it to the fore. It doesn't belong to men, any more than the tragic consequences of war belong to women.[46]

Combining both Calliope's and Briseis' critique of (Iliadic) heroes and *ATS*' redefinition of epic heroism, we can see that (Iliadic) epic heroism is constructed throughout *ATS* as military, amoral, and a by-definition quality of male warriors.

In sum, "the women's war," i.e. the counter-epic as which *ATS* presents itself, has three aspects: 1. Women are given significant roles and voices 2. War is conceptualized as a web of consequences extending far beyond the (action of the male heroes on) the battlefield 3. Heroism is a moral quality consisting of courage and resilience, which women may have as much as men. Epic, dealing solely with "the men's war," is thus conceptualized as its counterpart: 1. Women are (almost) absent and silent 2. War takes place only on a battlefield and 3. The aristocratic men fighting on those battlefields are heroes, no matter what.

So far, we have tried to reconstruct *ATS*' conceptualization of (Iliadic) epic by looking primarily at what Calliope has to say about it. In the last part of this chapter, we will take a closer look at Calliope herself, specifically in relation to "the poet". In doing so, we will not only reflect on how *ATS* conceptualizes (Iliadic) epic, but also consider to what extent *ATS* seems to be indebted to

[45] Haynes 2019, 96.
[46] Haynes 2019, 328.

the epic tradition. As such, we will be looking ahead to chapter 2, in which we will perform our "deconstruction" of *ATS*' conceptualization of epic - "bring[ing] to light some of [its] buried assumptions", as Martindale would say.

1.8 The muse and "the poet"

At various points in this chapter, we have noted that Calliope's relationship to "the poet" is depicted as arduous in *ATS*: it is clear from the way Calliope describes "the poet" that he is both hesitant and somewhat incapable to do what she wants him to do - to convey the women's stories into an "epic story". This becomes especially clear after Creusa's story (chapter 2), when Calliope concludes in chapter 3 that "the poet" "hasn't understood at all" and, slightly later, states that it is necessary that he "stops complaining and starts composing."[47] "The poet", in fact, seems so uncomprehending and bothered in the face of the inspiration Calliope is lending him, that in her last chapter Calliope actually wonders whether he will tell her story at all. She says:

> If the poet refuses the song I have offered him, I will take it away and leave him silent… I am ageless, undying: time does not matter to me. All that matters is the telling.[48]

This passage seems to account for the fact that Homer - nor any other epic poet - obviously never did compose an epic like *ATS*. The question raised in this passage, whether or not the poet will "refuse the song," is thus answered affirmatively by our knowledge of the epic tradition. But more so, the historical *absence* of female-centered epic is now explained and given a new dimension: it is not because the material and inspiration for it was unavailable; it is, in *ATS*' view, instead, because "the (male) poet" actively refused this inspiration and material. A similar accusation is made by Calliope in the first chapter of *ATS*:

> But I am not in the mood to be a muse today. Perhaps he [the poet] hasn't thought of what it is like to be me. Certainly he hasn't: like all poets, he thinks only of himself. But it is surprising that he hasn't considered how many other men there are like him, every day, all demanding my unwavering attention and support.[49]

[47] Haynes 2019, 63.
[48] Haynes 2019, 340.
[49] Haynes 2019, 11.

What "the poet" has in common with "all poets" (of the epic tradition), is the fact that none of them seem to have wanted to listen to Calliope. They were merely interested in gaining her "attention and support": they wanted Calliope to listen to *them*. We may remember the line on the back cover of *ATS*: "*A Thousand Ships* gives voices to the women, girls and goddesses who, for so long, have been silent." Calliope herself is one of the women (goddesses, in fact) who have been silent - not because they chose to be, but because they were kept that way. The poet(s) have silenced her.

ATS' depiction of Calliope as all-knowing, as the one who possesses the knowledge of the stories "the poet" needs in order to compose his poem, is very much in line with the way the relationship between poet and muse is depicted in Homeric epic, which seems to presuppose that the knowledge conveyed in the poem finds its origin with the muse. Claudia Schindler summarizes:

> Both [Homeric] pleas for inspiration are based on the assumption that the invoked divinity has access to comprehensive information about all aspects of the action. For himself, on the other hand, the poet claims no prior knowledge… In the *Iliad* the poet even seems, as the imperative ἄειδε suggests, to function as a mere channel through which the divinity gives utterance, whereas in the *Odyssey* it is suggested by μοι ἔννεπε that the poet is receiving information from the Muse, which he will then pass on.[50]

Since *ATS*' "the poet", who is clearly meant to personify Homer himself (while also representing all other epic poets), is not actually interested in Calliope's story, we might read *ATS*' conceptualization of the relationship between poet and muse as a correction of the way it is depicted in Homeric epic: despite its suggestion, the content of the Homeric poems is *not* the result of her inspiration, Calliope seems to say. She effectively "exposes" Homeric epic as being the result of male fabrications rather than of female inspiration. Thus, the relationship between poet and muse in Homeric epic is conceptualized as a struggle for power and the right to be heard, which is clearly won by the poet himself.[51]

Interestingly, if we consider a wider range of proems from classical epic, we might observe that such a "power struggle" between poet and muse is, to some extent, already present in the epic tradition.[52] Apollonius Rhodius' invocation of the muses (Μοῦσαι δ' ὑποφήτορες εἶεν ἀοιδῆς, "May the muses be the ὑποφήτορες of my song") is postponed to the 22nd line. While it has confused

[50] Schindler 2020, 500.
[51] The coercive nature of the relationship is also reflected in the very first line of *ATS*, in which Calliope remarked that it's clear the poet's invocation "is not a request". We might understand this remark as a reference to a famous comment of the sophist Protagoras, known to us from Aristotle's *Poetics* 1456b, in which we learn that Protagoras apparently criticized the *Iliad*'s opening line for containing an imperative instead of an optative when addressing a goddess (see Rademaker 2013 on this topic). By ascertaining the reader that the invocation "is not a request", Calliope seems to agree with Protagoras: "the poet" *is* not politely asking her, as he should, but commanding her.
[52] On classical epic, see: Foley 2004, Hardie 2020, Martin 2005, Toohey 2009.

scholars through its usage of the word ὑποφήτορες - which some have translated as "helpers", and others as "inspirers" - [53] it is clear from (part of) the *Argonautica's* first two lines - παλαιγενέων κλέα φωτῶν μνήσομαι: "I will bring into memory the glorious deeds of men of old" - that the *poet* here claims to be the one who "will bring into memory" the content of the poem, rather than the muse. Virgil's *Aeneid*, which starts with "Arma virumque cano", "I will sing of weapons and the man", equally, through *cano* ("I will sing") puts the emphasis on the poet. In lines 1-7, Virgil continues to announce the subject of his poem, which suggests that, at least to some degree, these events are already known to him.[54] Only in the eighth line do we find the actual invocation of the muse: *Musa, mihi causa memora*: "muse, recount to me the causes", by which the poet seems to ask the muse's help solely in bringing into memory the causes (*causas*) of the divine anger directed at Aeneas. In the proem to Statius' *Thebaid*, lastly, the author at first glance seems to conceptualize the relationship between poet and muse differently. In line 3-4 we find: *Pierius menti calor incidit, unde iubetis ire, deae?*, "The muses' fire befalls my mind, where do you command me to start, goddesses?" The inspiration (fire; *calor*) seems to "befall" (*incidit*) the mind of the poet (*menti*), implying that the poet has no influence on this process and making him, in Schindler's words, a "subordinate person who is subject to a higher command, with no initiative of his own."[55] However, in the last passage of the twelfth book, Statius speaks directly to his own work and says: *Durabisne procul dominoque legere superstes, o mihi bissenos multum vigilata per annos/ Thebai?,* "My Thebaid, on whom I have spent twelve wakeful years, will you long endure and be read when your master I gone?"[56]. Statius is very much in control and presents the *Thebaid* as his poem, referring to himself as *dominus*, "master" - the muses remain unmentioned.

All these ancient epics, it seems, (re)negotiate the relationship between poet and muse as it is found in Homeric epic, and, in doing so, explore a tension which may be summarized as: who has the agency to tell the story? Who possesses the knowledge that is conveyed in the story? While some epics, notably Homer's, seem to grant (all) agency in the telling of the story to the muse and presuppose that all knowledge comes from her, others, such as Virgil's, seem to reduce the role and knowledge of the muse in favor of the poet.

Thus, we could say that *ATS receives* this tension between poet and muse – and in particular the downplaying of the role of the muse in the epics after Homer – and turns it into a central struggle in its chapters on Calliope, while employing it as a critical commentary on classical epic in general, including Homer, whose apparent channeling of the muse is unmasked as a fraud. "All poets" have

[53] This uncommon word appears to be Apollonius' variation on the Homeric *hapax legomenon* ὑποφήτης (*Iliad* 16.235). See Klooster 2011, 213, footnote 20 and 21 for more information on the term.
[54] My analysis of the first lines of the *Aeneid* is based on Schindler 2020, 501.
[55] Schindler 2020, 497.
[56] Translation by Shackleton Bailey 2004.

merely sought the "attention and support" of the muse, including notably the divine status she conveys, but not her true (female) inspiration. Isn't it a bit *hypocritical*, Haynes appears to suggest, to conceptualize a female deity as the inspirational power of an entire genre only ever composed by men? Indeed, while male epic poets spent several millennia pondering over questions of authorship and narratorial agency through intellectual, metapoetic games starring Calliope (and other fictional women), no woman author, no real female voice ever resounded in the epic tradition. If we take Calliope as a symbol for female (epic) authorship, the fact that in *ATS* she regains her voice makes all the more sense: Natalie Haynes must be seen as the modern, female poet picking up the true female inspiration "the poet" refused, finally writing Calliope's desired epic about "the women's war".

1.9 Conclusion

In this chapter we have tried to identify the way in which epic is conceptualized in *ATS*. We found that, implicitly, the *Iliad* is constructed as the paradigmatic epic, characterized as exclusively dealing with "the men's war," the events of the battlefield, involving aristocratic men who are considered "heroes" simply for taking part in them, wherein women and their voices and perspectives have no place. In the last part of this chapter, we zoomed in on Calliope and her relationship with "the poet". We found that *ATS* conceptualizes the *Iliad*('s poet) as having silenced the muse, but we also concluded that *ATS* seems to "receive" a tension which is already a part of the epic tradition: the struggle for power between poet and muse. In chapter 2 we will continue the search for "indebtedness" thus begun here: how do we account for *ATS*' conceptualization of the epic genre and does it accurately represent epic and, specifically, the *Iliad*?

Chapter 2: Deconstructing the Construction of Epic in *ATS*

2.1 Introduction

Whereas in chapter 1 we *reconstructed ATS*' conceptualization of the epic genre, in this chapter we will *deconstruct* it. We proposed, in the introduction to this thesis, two ways to go about such a deconstruction. First, by taking the construction of epic we found in the first chapter and comparing it to the source material *ATS* engages with in forming it: the *Iliad*. We will critically assess to what extent the characteristics ascribed to the epic genre by *ATS* - that is, women as marginal and silent characters, an exclusive focus on the battlefield, and a glorification of warriors as heroes - may be recognized in the *Iliad*. The characteristics will be dealt with one by one in the paragraphs 2.2-2.5.

Second, we will try to historically trace the provenance of the characteristics ascribed to the *Iliad* (and by implication to the epic genre as a whole) by *ATS*. Because of the modest scope of this thesis, it is impossible to attempt a comprehensive reception history of the epic genre or the *Iliad*. Nevertheless, pointing out a few significant ways in which *ATS*' engagement with the *Iliad* is mediated by a preceding "chain of receptions" may suffice, I hope, to make more palpable the "constructedness" of *ATS*' characterization of Iliadic epic, as well as provide some tentative explanations for the specific nature of this construction.

2.2 The *Iliad* is paradigmatic for the epic tradition

In chapter 1 we found that *ATS* takes the *Iliad* as paradigmatic for the entire (Western) epic tradition, and, as such, as focal point for its critique. Yet, as a first step in our deconstruction, we may ask ourselves to what extent the *Iliad*, and in particular *ATS'* conceptualization of it as "the men's war," is truly representative of the Western epic tradition. A few examples of other canonical classical epics may suffice to challenge this assumption.

Interestingly, when we look at the ancient source material of *ATS*, listed in Haynes' afterword, we immediately find an epic which defies the label of "the men's war": Quintus Smyrnaeus' *Posthomerica*. The entire first book of this 3rd-century "sequel" to the *Iliad*,[57] recounts "the aristeia and death of the Amazon heroine Penthesilea," which (by her own admission in the afterword) inspired Haynes' chapter on Penthesilea (chapter 7 in *ATS*).[58] So, paradoxically, one ancient epic

[57] See James 2004, xviii-xix for some considerations regarding the dating of the *Posthomerica*.
[58] Fratantuono 2016, 208; Haynes 2019, 452.

actually used as source material for *ATS* clearly contradicts the book's characterization of epic as "the men's war," reacting, like *ATS*, to the *Iliad*, and, at least in its first book, putting a woman center stage. The *Aeneid* (which inspired Haynes' chapter on Creusa), of course features women in prominent roles as well: Camilla, as Frantantuono has argued,[59] in fact has a fighting role similar to that of Penthesileia, and particularly Dido has been analyzed in Vergilian criticism time and again as a voice which in fact challenges the legitimacy of "the men's war" (and journey) throughout the epic.[60] Other ancient epics not explicitly referenced in *ATS* defy the generalization of "the men's war" as well: in Apollonius Rhodius' *Argonautica* and in Statius' *Thebaid*, to name two famous, ancient epics, women play a significant and arguably "heroic" role. Of the latter, Federica Bessone remarks: "In the course of the *Thebaid*, Polynices's wife Argia shifts from being an abandoned woman to a masculine female hero."[61] Of the former, Ingrid Holmberg observes that "the text identifies Medea as the salvation of the Argonauts, implicitly conferring traditionally male heroic status upon her".[62] However exactly we should interpret the roles of these women in their respective epics – there is neither space nor need here to go into this in detail – these few examples should suffice to challenge the idea that a "men's war" characterizes the entire epic tradition, and, by implication, *ATS'* suggestion that the *Iliad* is paradigmatic of that tradition. (Whether such a characterization of the *Iliad* itself is appropriate will be investigated in paragraphs 2.3-2.5.)

In a more positive light, however, we could understand the representativeness ascribed to the *Iliad* by *ATS* not as an objective claim about the corpus of ancient epic, but as a critique of the *reception history* of the *Iliad* itself. In chapter 1, we saw that Natalie Haynes showed an awareness of the historical privileging of the *Iliad* over epics like *the Posthomerica*, which in the past has often been considered an "anaemic pastiche".[63] What would the epic tradition have looked like if (parts of the) epics like Quintus' and Statius', wherein women ostensibly have more prominent and critical roles, had received the same genre-defining status as the *Iliad*? From this perspective, we might take Haynes' book as an effort to reintroduce female stories to the *fore* of the epic genre, not necessarily claiming that they were absent from ancient epic altogether, but rather that they have not, but should have, received the same status and attention as Iliadic war. (We may wonder though, when interpreted like this, whether such a critique is effective, given the fact that Haynes, above all, perpetuates the *Iliad*'s status by engaging with it as the paradigmatic epic.)

[59] Fratantuono 2016, 208.
[60] See e.g. Perkell 1982 and Keith 2000.
[61] Bessone 2015, 119.
[62] Holmberg 1998, 135.
[63] Lloyd-Jones 1969, 101, in James 2004, vii.

2.3 The *Iliad* silences women

Yet is "the men's war" even an accurate way to describe the *Iliad* itself? First off, we may observe that this characterization of (Iliadic) epic may be traced back to Homeric epic itself. Alison Keith, in her book *Engendering Rome*, points out that

> The Homeric poet in his own voice … defines the subject of epic song as the 'famous exploits of men', a gender-specific interpretation of the genre echoed by poets and critics for millennia.[64]

Keith is referring to the description of epic, found both in the *Iliad* (9.189; 9.524) and in the *Odyssey* (8.73), as being about *klea andrôn*, translated here as "famous exploits of men". She emphasizes, however, that this description, even though given by the Homeric author himself, is an "interpretation," necessarily selective and urging our reading towards the male- and war-centered parts of the Homeric epics. As opposed to this, Keith argues, we could also emphasize other programmatic and metapoetic passages in the epics which *do* suggest that women and their deeds are considered essential "song material." Keith remarks:

> By projecting herself into her tapestry, the Homeric Helen implies that women and their activities are central themes of epic song. Elsewhere in the *Iliad* Helen explicitly refers to her relationship with Paris as a fertile subject of song for later ages, while in the *Odyssey* Agamemnon envisions two competing traditions of epic respectively devoted to the celebration of Penelope's virtue and Clytemnestra's vice.[65]

In other words, *klea andrôn*, we must realize, entails a "(self)construction" of Homeric epic in much the same way as the description of Iliadic epic as "the men's war", found in *ATS*, entails a selective construction of its content.

But besides a *selective* description of Homeric epic, *klea andrôn* may be considered as a *selected* description: it was, as Keith observes, "echoed by poets and critics for millennia". Because it was perpetuated by others (notably in the *Aeneid*'s first line starting with *arma virumque*) it both shaped the Western epic tradition and the way we tend to look at that tradition, including the *Iliad*

[64] Keith 2000, 2.
[65] Keith 2000, 2.

itself.[66] Can we challenge the characterizations of the *Iliad* as being about "the men's war" and *klea andrôn*?

To do so, let us continue our deconstruction of *ATS*' conceptualization of epic by comparing the three features it ascribes to "the men's war," supposedly exemplified by the *Iliad*, to the *Iliad* itself, starting with the first feature, the supposed silencing of women. What can we say about (the significance of) female characters in the *Iliad* and particularly the role of their speech?

While it is clear that women form a minority compared to men in the *Iliad,* especially the characters of Andromache, Hecuba, Helen, and Briseis do play significant roles. Despite the fact that these women, often in connection to their roles (wife, mother, seductress, possession, slave) have little agency with regards to the course of the war (for starters, they do not fight or make executive decisions), several scholars have pointed out that, through their speech, they critically comment on their own situations, their dependency on men, and on the war in general.[67] Marella Nappi, for instance, concludes:

> Far from being confined to the role of possessions or portrayed as silent spectators and victims of war atrocities, women express their point of view and give a voice to the horror that overwhelms them. By their words, they take part in the action that constitutes the narrative fabric of the *Iliad*.[68]

We may show how this works for lament, a form of speech strongly associated with women in antiquity and practiced by many women in the *Iliad*.[69] On the one hand, lament functions to memorialize and glorify the fallen hero.[70] On the other hand, laments - particularly in the *Iliad* - have the potential to, as Sheila Murnaghan describes it, "become testaments of what it is like to be a woman in a world focused on male interests and values."[71] Rebecca Muich analyses how this works for Andromache in the *Iliad*:

> [Andromache's] laments show, in the most pitiable way possible, what exactly is at stake for women during times of war. Her laments threaten to undermine the commemoration of Hector in the sense that she brings to the fore the suffering of his child, his people, and his

[66] A detailed analysis of the way in which gender, gendered definitions and the epic tradition interact, especially transhistorically, would be helpful here, but is unfamiliar to me. As such, these conclusions are somewhat speculative, also due to the fact that the scope of this thesis does not allow for a fuller description.
[67] Nappi 2015, 35.
[68] Nappi 2015, 35.
[69] Felson & Slatkin 2004, 97. See Muich 2010 for a detailed analysis of Andromache's laments in the *Iliad*; Nappi 2015 for an analysis of different forms of female speech in the *Iliad*, including lament.
[70] Muich 2010, 39.
[71] Sheila Murnaghan in Muich 2010, 39, footnote 6.

wife rather than unabashedly praising him for the good he did as Troy's predominate warrior.[72]

Interestingly, one of the laments of Andromache that Muich examines, found in book 6 of the *Iliad* (which is actually a lament of anticipation, since Hector is still alive), is also reworked in *ATS*. I quote both a segment of Andromache's lament in *Iliad* book 6 (A), and the passage from *ATS* inspired by it (B).

A. δαιμόνιε φθίσει σε τὸ σὸν μένος, οὐδ᾽ ἐλεαίρεις
παῖδά τε νηπίαχον καὶ ἔμ᾽ ἄμμορον, ἢ τάχα χήρη
σεῦ ἔσομαι: τάχα γάρ σε κατακτανέουσιν Ἀχαιοὶ
πάντες ἐφορμηθέντες (6.407-410)

ἀλλ᾽ ἄγε νῦν ἐλέαιρε καὶ αὐτοῦ μίμν᾽ ἐπὶ πύργῳ,
μὴ παῖδ᾽ ὀρφανικὸν θήῃς χήρην τε γυναῖκα
λαὸν δὲ στῆσον παρ᾽ ἐρινεόν, ἔνθα μάλιστα
ἀμβατός ἐστι πόλις καὶ ἐπίδρομον ἔπλετο τεῖχος (6.431-434)

Reckless one, my Hector — your own fiery courage will destroy you! Have you no pity for him, our helpless son? Or me, and the destiny that weighs me down, your widow, now so soon? Yes, soon they will kill you off, all the Achaean forces massed for assault … Take your stand on the rampart here, before you orphan your son and make your wife a widow. Draw your armies up where the wild fig tree stands, there, where the city lies most open to assault, the walls lower, easily overrun.[73]

B. For everything she had once told Hector had now come to pass: don't keep going out to fight on your own, she had said. Don't take so many risks. Fight among the Trojans, not ahead of them. Your honour is already assured. Catch the eye of Achilles and he will cut you down and then what will become of your wife and son? We will be enslaved with no one to care for us.[74]

[72] Muich 2010, 41.
[73] All translations of the *Iliad* are by Fagles 1990.
[74] Haynes 2019, 437.

Passage A shows us the *Iliad*'s Andromache, who urges her husband Hector to be careful and confronts him with the consequences his death will have for his family. Passage B shows us *ATS*' Andromache who, in hindsight, reflects on a dialogue between herself and Hector very similar to the one (probably the very dialogue) we find in the *Iliad*. The similarity between both passages makes us aware of a remarkable continuity between the *Iliad* and *ATS*: both question the *Iliad*'s supposed glorification of *klea andrôn* by drawing attention to the consequences of (men fighting for glory in) war for the women, through the voice of one of them.[75]

Thus, paradoxically, *ATS'* conceptualization of the *Iliad* as a "men's war" which "silences women," like the gendered (self)description of Homeric epic as *klea* andrōn, glosses over the presence of critical female voices in the *Iliad* itself, which identifiably even inspired similarly critical passages in *ATS*. We may understand this contradiction in analogue with Stephen Hinds' analysis of Roman epic in his article "Essential Epic: Genre and Gender from Macer to Statius". He argues that in Roman times an essentializing, gendered characterization of epic could exist as a pervasive, intellectual genre discourse, often used, for example, to distinguish epic from the supposedly more effeminate genre of elegy, despite the continuously strong presence of women in actual Roman epics (e.g. as mentioned above, Dido in the *Aeneid* and Argia in the *Thebaid*). I would like to propose that this was, perhaps, also the case for the *Iliad*, insofar as its self-definition as *klea andrôn* and its long reception history (including in antiquity itself) as a poem about male heroes could exist irrespective of, or indeed as a distraction from, its identifiably critical female voices. This leads us to see another interesting commonality between Homeric epic and *ATS*: the very incompatibility of their own content (which does include women) with their emphatic (self-)characterization of epic as a masculine genre is, in fact, a pervasive feature of the epic tradition.

2.4 The *Iliad* focuses on a limited scope of war, i.e. only on the battlefield

We found in chapter 1 that in *ATS* the *Iliad*, and by implication epic in general, was characterized as focusing only on the part of war that takes place between male fighters on the battlefield, without concern for causes or consequences of that very war. In this paragraph we will briefly assess whether such a characterization fits the content of the *Iliad*.

While temporally the action of the *Iliad* indeed consists of approximately two months of fighting taking place during the tenth year of the Trojan war, the poem makes frequent use of what Irene de Jong refers to as "external" prolepses and analepses to narrate all sorts of events taking place

[75] For an overview of all instances of female lament in the *Iliad*, see Tsagalis 2004, 109-165.

before and after the main plot itself.[76] Through these narratological mechanisms, Gregory Nagy rightly observes in his article "The Epic Hero"

> [the *Iliad*] manages to retell … the entire Tale of Troy, including from the earlier points of the story-line such memorable moments as the Judgment of Paris, the Abduction of Helen, and the Assembly of Ships. More than that: the *Iliad* foreshadows the Death of Achilles, which does not occur within the bounds of its own plot. In short, although the story of the *Iliad* directly covers only a short stretch of the whole story of Troy … it still manages to mention something about practically everything that happened at Troy[77]

The analepses and prolepses mentioned by Nagy not only greatly widen the scope of the *Iliad* in a temporal sense, but in a spatial sense as well, as many of the scenes he mentions take place *off* the battlefield, just like the scenes of Iliadic women lamenting discussed in paragraph 2.2. Thus it seems the *Iliad* includes a much larger spatio-temporal "scope of war" than *ATS* suggests. Again, paradoxically, the "inclusive scope of war" *ATS* proclaims to incorporate presents much less of a contrast than a continuation of the *Iliad*.

However, in this regard, *ATS'* episodic structure is significant. Because its episodes are told fragmentedly, without much concern for the linear chronological timeline of the war itself, *ATS* has little need of ana- and prolepses to incorporate events before and after the war (although within individual stories these mechanisms are used, since characters constantly reflect on the past). The *Iliad*, on the other hand, has a dominant main storyline, starting with the feud between Achilles and Agamemnon and ending with Hector's burial, to which narrative past and future are related. *ATS*' fragmented structure may be read as an accusation against the *Iliad*'s emphasis on a central, war-oriented timeline and plot, creating a hierarchy between events, some of more importance (the narrative present of the battle) and others of lesser importance (excursions to the causes and consequences of the battle in the past and future).[78] The effect of *ATS*' fragmented structure, by contrast, is that *all stories*, in this case all female-centered stories taking place beyond the action of the battlefield, *are presented as equally important,* as they are all elevated to the status of "main story".

This critique become clearer when we take into consideration that a very large portion of the stories in *ATS* may be considered receptions of a particular type of external prolepses found in the

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[76] De Jong 1997, 320.
[77] Nagy 2005, 15-16.
[78] Whether or not this is in fact the *Iliad*'s "main story", and besides that, whether or not a timeline influences the importance of events and stories, are statements that deserve to be more fully investigated. I am particularly thinking of how reception history comes into play here, especially Aristotle's *Poetics*. However, this is too much to look into for now.

Iliad: those referencing the fate of the women after the war. In the previous paragraph we saw that Andromache, in her lament in *Iliad* 6, anticipates her fate after Hector's death. This is one of many passages which foreshadow what happens to (Trojan) women should the war be lost;[79] another, quite explicit example may be found in Hector's reply to Andromache's lament. He says that the (anticipation of the) grief which taunts him most is imagining Andromache being led off into slavery:

> ὅτε κέν τις Ἀχαιῶν χαλκοχιτώνων
> δακρυόεσσαν ἄγηται ἐλεύθερον ἦμαρ ἀπούρας (6.454-455)
>
> when some brazen Argive hales you off in tears, wrenching away your day of light and freedom!

In the *Iliad*, this future is foreshadowed, but not lived through by the women. Most of the stories in *ATS,* however, actually take place *after Troy has fallen*. In fact, the chapters featuring Iliadic characters in *ATS* - "Trojan Women", "Chryseis and Briseis", "Hecabe" and "Andromache" (together making up 14 chapters, see appendix 1 for an overview of the chapters) - all relate what happens after the women are taken captive by the Greeks. (This explains why Andromache, in the reception of her lament in *ATS* discussed in the previous paragraph, reflected on her interaction with Hector *in hindsight*.) The content of many of *ATS*' chapters thus represents an actualization of the fate of the women foreshadowed in the *Iliad*, or, in other words, an elevation from external prolepsis in the *Iliad* to "main story" in *ATS*.

But the individual chapters just mentioned have, in the case of "Trojan Women", "Hecabe" and "Andromache", a clear classical source other than Homeric epic: Euripides' plays of the exact same names (*Trojan Women*, *Andromache*, *Hecabe*). The fact that Haynes was inspired by these plays is attested to in her afterword, where she mentions these (and other) Euripidean tragedies as inspirations for *ATS* (it is also very apparent from the chapters themselves, which largely follow the plot of Euripides' plays).[80] Haynes is thus both directly inspired by the plot of Euripides' plays and by their intertextual relation to the *Iliad*: they relate, after all, stories of Homeric women taking place *after the Iliad*, thus adding to and "rewrit[ing] the Homeric tradition," as Annemarie Ambühl states.[81] As such, these plays function as a crucial mediation in the "chain of receptions" between the *Iliad*

[79] See Davidson 2001, 69 for an overview of examples in the *Iliad* of such external prolepses.
[80] The tragedies that are mentioned by Haynes in her afterword are: Euripides' *Trojan Women*, *Hecabe*, *Iphigenia in Aulis*, *Iphigenia Among the Taurians*, *Andromache, Hippolytus* and Aeschylus' *Oresteia*. See Haynes 2019, 450-453.
[81] Ambühl 2010, 116. See also Goldhill 1986, 138-167 on the relationship between epic and tragedy as one of "rewriting". See Torrance 2013, 183-263 and Davidson 2001 on Euripides' work in relation to Homeric epic. Lacourse Munteanu 2010 and Sansone 2009 provide fascinating interpretations of Euripides' *Trojan Women* as a direct response to Homeric epic.

and *ATS*: they are an ancient precedent which, like *ATS*, already put the terrible fate of the Trojan women proleptically hinted at in the *Iliad* center stage. The one difference is that, while Euripides wrote tragedy, Haynes explicitly calls her work an epic. Perhaps then, we should read *ATS* not only as an attempt at elevating external prolepses in the *Iliad* to main stories in their own right, but also at elevating the status of certain "tragic" stories to that of "epic" stories.

In conclusion, *ATS*' characterization of the *Iliad*, and thereby epic, as presenting a narrow scope of war is at odds with the content of the *Iliad* itself, which proleptically and analeptically includes a wide range of events beyond the place and time of the central war plot itself. As such, rather than a contrast, *ATS* embodies a continuation of the "inclusive scope" of war found in the *Iliad*, but a critical one at that: *ATS*' episodic structure prevents the privileging of one "main" (male-centered) story and presents the tragic stories of the war's consequences for women only foreshadowed in the *Iliad* as significant (epic) subjects in their own right – a practice for which Euripidean tragedy probably served as an important, mediating model.

2.5 The *Iliad* glorifies fighting men as heroes - no questions asked

In chapter 1 we found that *ATS* constructs epic as considering all fighting men heroes, and as glorifying them without asking questions. In this paragraph we will compare these views to the content of the *Iliad*. What is a hero in the *Iliad* and how does the poem reflect on the hero's deeds?

The Greek word that is translated into English as "hero", is *hērōs*. The English word "hero" is defined by the Cambridge English Dictionary as either a story's main character, or as "a person who is admired for having done something very brave or having achieved something great".[82] As Michael Clarke observes, there is a difference in semantics between the English word "hero" and the Greek *hērōs,* even though, etymologically, the former derives from the latter.[83] While the modern word entails a certain moral agency – a "hero" has to *do* something *good* ("brave" or "great") – "the Homeric hero is defined as such by one thing alone: his membership of a specific generation or race of men, belonging at a particular point along the scale of human history."[84]

What this means is that, in a way, *ATS* is very much correct in constructing the *Iliad* as presenting all fighting men as "heroes". A *hērōs* in the *Iliad* is, just as we saw with regards to the word "hero" in *ATS*, basically a synonym for an aristocratic "man".[85] Yet while Haynes applies the Iliadic notion that "hero" is a synonym for warrior throughout *ATS*, at times she also seems to tap

[82] Cambridge Dictionary, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/hero>.
[83] Clarke 2004, 79.
[84] Clarke 2004, 79.
[85] Nagy 2005, 14.

into the modern English sense of the word (i.e. dependent upon moral deeds); indeed, her criticism of Iliadic heroism seems to work largely by playing these two meanings against each other. For example, we found Briseis in paragraph 1.7 questioning Achilles' status as a hero by calling attention to the fact that he had killed her family. Similarly, we saw how Calliope compared Oenone's walk of life to Menelaus' coming to war and remarked: "Oenone loses a husband and she raises their son. Which is the more heroic act?"[86] In both cases, the book problematizes the "heroic" status of male warriors in the *Iliad*, and in the latter case it also raises the "heroic" status of a female character, by implicitly drawing on the expectations set by the modern (moral) sense of the term. Achilles and Agamemnon are no true "heroes" because their actions are not morally good, while Oenone *should* be regarded a "hero" (but unjustly is not) because her actions are! While of course it is true that women are no "heroes" in the *Iliad*, Haynes' critique appears somewhat disingenuous, as it depends on the creative use of two very different senses of the term.

Nevertheless, the fact that any Homeric warrior would by definition be called a *hērōs* does not mean that the term has no moral component at all. Iliadic "heroes" are the possessors of extraordinary and almost superhuman qualities. They have great strength, wisdom or excel in the act of public speech.[87] In that sense, they seem to represent an ideal of manhood, and, as Alison Keith points out, they were seen as such "until well into the Byzantine period" by (male) students, who were encouraged to emulate their example.[88] This exemplary quality of the *hērōs* partly corresponds to the morally positive and ideal connotation of the English word "hero". But Keith emphasizes that the example the *hērōs* sets, could also, at times, be one to *avoid*:

> the actions of the epic hero are interpreted … as models of good (or bad) behaviour, for imitation (or avoidance) by the student[89]

In the *Iliad*, of course, the prime example of this is Achilles, whose deeds, despite his being a *hērōs* with superhuman traits, are decidedly not morally unproblematic. In fact, during a large part of the *Iliad* Achilles refuses to act at all. When he finally does, he commits deeds - killing indiscriminately, even supplicants; dishonoring Hector's body - that appear transgressive. While I am much in agreement with Michael Clarke, who observes that the *Iliad* "forbids us to frame an easy answer" to the question to what extent Achilles' behavior is morally reprehensible, both from the perspective of

[86] Haynes 2019, 174.
[87] Clarke 2004, 80.
[88] Keith 2000, 3.
[89] Keith 2000, 3.

ancient and modern audiences;[90] we may at least conclude that the *Iliad* shows us a *hērōs* whose example urges us to moral reflection. This point is excellently summarized by Michael Clarke:

> Seen in this light, the exalted version of human nature represented by the Homeric warrior becomes fraught with half-hidden tensions. The men of the heroic race command wonder because of their strength, their fierceness, their superhuman force, in some cases their heightened wisdom or skill in the arts of speech: to that extent they are models to be imitated by young men, especially young soldiers, and praise is part of what the epic poet communicates to his audience. By the same token, however, the energy that underlies such excellence is liable to push the hero to dangerous extremes of anger, passion and recklessness: so that his exalted status makes him deeply problematic if one tries to take him as a model of moral excellence.[91]

In this sense, *ATS*' moral challenging of the "hero" is not new, but, again, a striking continuation of a practice already present in the *Iliad* itself: arguably, like *ATS*, the *Iliad* uses the voices of women in particular to show us the (moral) consequences of a *hērōs'* behavior, as we saw above in Andromache's lament. An example which both illustrates this quality in the *Iliad* and provides a comparison with *ATS* which reveals continuity between the two works, is the only (!) speech uttered by Briseis in the *Iliad*, which forms part of the funeral rites for Patroclus in book 19.

> ἄνδρα μὲν ᾧ ἔδοσάν με πατὴρ καὶ πότνια μήτηρ
> εἶδον πρὸ πτόλιος δεδαϊγμένον ὀξέϊ χαλκῷ,
> τρεῖς τε κασιγνήτους, τούς μοι μία γείνατο μήτηρ,
> κηδείους, οἳ πάντες ὀλέθριον ἦμαρ ἐπέσπον.
> οὐδὲ μὲν οὐδέ μ᾽ ἔασκες, ὅτ᾽ ἄνδρ᾽ ἐμὸν ὠκὺς Ἀχιλλεὺς
> ἔκτεινεν, πέρσεν δὲ πόλιν θείοιο Μύνητος,
> κλαίειν, ἀλλά μ᾽ ἔφασκες Ἀχιλλῆος θείοιο
> κουριδίην ἄλοχον θήσειν, ἄξειν τ᾽ ἐνὶ νηυσὶν
> ἐς Φθίην, δαίσειν δὲ γάμον μετὰ Μυρμιδόνεσσι.
> τώ σ᾽ ἄμοτον κλαίω τεθνηότα μείλιχον αἰεί. (19.291-300)

> The husband to whom my father and noble mother gave me, I saw him torn by the sharp bronze before our city, and my three brothers — a single mother bore us: my brothers, how I

[90] Clarke 2004, 84.
[91] Clarke 2004, 80.

> loved you! — you all went down to death on the same day . . . But you, Patroclus, you would not let me weep, not when the swift Achilles cut my husband down, not when he plundered the lordly Mynes' city — not even weep! No, again and again you vowed you'd make me godlike Achilles' lawful, wedded wife, you would sail me west in your warships, home to Phthia and there with the Myrmidons hold my marriage feast. So now I mourn your death — I will never stop — you were always kind.

Briseis mourns for Patroclus, but in doing so, she mentions the fact that Achilles murdered her husband and plundered her city. While she doesn't condemn these actions, her speech nevertheless, in only a few lines and for the first time in the *Iliad*, makes us aware of the fact that Briseis has been forced to live with the murderer of her husband. It makes palpable what life is like for those who face the consequences of the deeds of the *hērōs* Achilles, and as such the speech arguably has a subversive quality, functioning almost like a footnote to Achilles' immortal fame. Indeed, this speech forms the obvious inspiration for Briseis' above-quoted critique of Achilles' fame in *ATS*, the passages being near-identical considering their contents. The biggest difference is that *ATS* has Briseis explicitly condemn Achilles' deeds – "Perhaps they will sing of his senseless cruelty and lack of honour" – adding an explicit moralistic commentary.[92] Considering the complex ways in which we have found the *Iliad* itself to comment on the deeds of the *hērōs*, we might wonder if that commentary adds anything *new*. Despite the suggestion of contrast, continuity rather than discontinuity may be discerned between the *Iliad* and *ATS*.

However, *ATS* does make us aware of something. Even if we conclude that the *Iliad* problematizes the deeds of the *hērōs*, such ambiguity and nuance is lost when we call Achilles and his peers "heroes" in English, which modern translations still often do. We may wonder to what extent the pervasiveness of this label, applied without much concern for the etymological shift we have been discussing, especially in popular adaptations like the movie *Troy* and Stephen Frye's recent mythological overviews, guides modern (popular) interpretations of the poem, inadvertently suggesting a morally positive conception of its "heroes". In that sense we might regard *ATS* as a correction: not of the *Iliad* itself (although that is suggested), but of how the *Iliad*, through receptions and translations, is popularly viewed.

[92] Haynes 2019, 196.

2.6 Conclusion: similarities masked as differences

In this chapter we have compared *ATS*' construction of Iliadic epic, as found in chapter 1, to the actual *Iliad*. With regards to each characteristic ascribed to Iliadic epic by *ATS* the conclusion has essentially been the same: while *ATS* frames its own content as a complete contrast to the *Iliad*, it seems more accurate to regard it as a continuation of the *Iliad*. Though *ATS* positions itself as a *new* type of epic against traditional epics exemplified by the *Iliad*, finally "giving a voice" to women, providing an all-inclusive picture of war, and challenging the notion of the "hero", all these features can, in fact, already be identified in the *Iliad* itself. Not only does the *Iliad* present us with female speeches that complicate and challenge female dependence, war in general, and the epic ideology of the *Iliad*, it also alludes to many events that take place outside of the immediate scope of the poem (both in time and place) and presents us with morally ambiguous "heroes". *ATS* basically masks its similarities with the *Iliad* as differences, so as to appear as a "new" type of epic. Upon closer look, it turns out it is not so new at all.

Conclusion

We started this thesis with the observation that Natalie Haynes refers to *ATS* as "my attempt to write an epic".[93] This thesis has been my attempt to describe the (re)definition of epic Haynes inevitably established in doing so, to understand where it comes from, and to critically assess it in the face of the ancient text(s) it is based on.

Specifically, we endeavored both to *reconstruct* and to *deconstruct ATS*' conceptualization of epic. This method was inspired by Charles Martindale's book *Redeeming the Text*, where he argues that every reception - in our case *ATS* - must be seen as a dialogue with its source text(s), in which, furthermore, the "accretion" of previous dialogues cannot be unseen: how a text was received in the past, influences its present reading.[94]

Consequently, we spent the first chapter determining how and in dialogue with which text(s) *ATS* constructs its conceptualization of the epic genre. Through an analysis of Calliope's critique of the epic genre, we uncovered several characteristics *ATS* ascribes to epic. We found that the *Iliad* is conceptualized, even if it is never explicitly mentioned by name, as the paradigmatic epic. We also found that the *Iliad*, and all epic it represents (henceforth we spoke of (Iliadic) epic), is characterized as dealing solely with "the men's war", which we further unpacked by looking at three interdependent sub-characteristics: 1. Iliadic epic features women in marginal and silent roles. 2. Iliadic epic has a scope which is limited to the battlefield. 3. Iliadic epic glorifies male heroes and excludes women from the category of "hero". Presenting itself as a new type of epic, "the women's war", *ATS* instead proclaims to: 1."Give a voice" to the (silenced) women of antiquity's literature. 2. Feature a larger scope that includes scenes taking place off the battlefield (that feature women). 3. Problematize the heroism of warriors and elevating (silenced) women to the status of "heroes". In the last part of chapter 1, we turned to *ATS*' Calliope, and concluded that her rather turbulent relationship to "the poet" serves to expose the relationship between poet and muse in the *Iliad* as a (symbolic) struggle for the right to be heard, and a deliberate "silencing" of Calliope. We consequently traced *ATS'* depiction of this struggle over agency between poet and muse back to the epic tradition.

This last observation looked ahead to the deconstruction of chapter 2, in which we critically assessed the conceptualization of epic found in chapter 1. We did so by comparing it to the *Iliad* and by tracing some receptions that mediate the dialogue between *ATS* and the *Iliad*. In reviewing to what extent the *Iliad* itself answers to the conceptualization of "the men's war", we firstly concluded that multiple epics challenge the conceptualization of "the men's war", making the paradigmatic status

[93] Haynes 2019, 328.
[94] Martindale 1993, 7.

ascribed by *ATS* to the *Iliad* questionable. We then looked at the three characteristics ascribed to Iliadic epic and asked ourselves to what extent they are present in the *Iliad*. We found that:

1. Female speech presents an opportunity for women in the *Iliad* to comment on and even to challenge their own position, the war in general and, in effect, the ideology underlying the *Iliad* at large. The way in which *ATS* presents its own content, as "giving a voice" to silenced women, should therefore not be seen as a contrast with the *Iliad*, although in *ATS* the women do take center stage. Both the women of *ATS* and the women of the *Iliad* question and complicate the Iliadic ideology through their speech.

2. The scope of the *Iliad* includes much more than just battles and battlefields, but incorporates, in Gregory Nagy's words, "the entire Tale of Troy".[95] Although this, again, shows similarity instead of dissimilarity between the *Iliad* and *ATS*, we also concluded that many chapters in *ATS* embody the actualization of the fates of women that are foreshadowed in the *Iliad*, but not highlighted.

3. Although the *Iliad* upholds a definition of the "hero" (*hēros*) that excludes women and that is dependent on rank of birth rather than on moral deeds (as the modern English word "hero" is), it does ask questions about its "heroes"; by presenting us with their morally ambiguous behavior,[96] and in particular through questions raised in female speech. *ATS*, too, asks questions about the *Iliad*'s "heroes", although it seems to do so through the lens of a modern and English definition of "hero".

In conclusion, although *ATS* frames itself in contrast to Iliadic epic and suggests that it "renews" the epic genre by highlighting "the women's war", its very depiction of "the women's war" can be seen as a reception and a continuation of elements already present in the *Iliad*.

Besides comparing *ATS'* conceptualization of epic to the *Iliad*, we also tried to trace parts of the "chain of reception" that lies between the two texts. We found multiple ways in which the reception history seems to mediate the dialogue between *ATS* and the *Iliad*. In some instances, we found that *ATS* seems to be in dialogue not so much with the text of the *Iliad*, but with how it was read and valued throughout history. In paragraph 2.3 we concluded that one of the ways in which *ATS*' granting of paradigmatic status to the *Iliad* can be interpreted, is as a critique on the very status the poem received throughout history, which was not granted to other texts (such as Quintus Smyrnaeus' *Posthomerica*, which features many women). In paragraph 2.5, we concluded that we

[95] Nagy 2005, 15-16.
[96] Clarke 2004.

might read Haynes' problematization of the Iliadic "hero" as a reaction to the fact that Achilles (and peers) is always called a hero, despite semantic differences between the English and the Greek word.

In other instances, the "chain of receptions" seemed to form not so much the partner of *ATS*' dialogue, but its inspiration: in paragraph 1.9 we found that the relationship between Calliope and "the poet" in *ATS* can be seen as a reception of the power struggle between poet and muse which is present in (ancient) epic, too. In paragraph 2.4, we concluded that Euripides is a model for the way in which *ATS* elaborates on the external prolepses in the *Iliad* which foreshadow the fate of the women after the war, and as such a crucial mediation between the *Iliad* and *ATS*.

We may conclude that *ATS*, through its conceptualization of (Iliadic) epic, both criticizes the reception history of the *Iliad* (critique of reception) and receives critique found in the reception history of the *Iliad* (reception of critique). While many other parts of the "chain" could be traced and their influence on *ATS*' conceptualization of epic could be reconstructed, I hope the examples provided suffice to show how inseparable the dialogue between *ATS* and the *Iliad* is from how the *Iliad* has been read and received in the past.

On a last note, we might observe that *ATS*' depiction of Iliadic epic as dealing with "the men's war" is not necessarily false - the poem deals primarily with men who, often but not always, fight - but incomplete. When we look closely at the *Iliad*, we see that it also shows us "the women's war", in the sense that it makes clear – often through female speech – what is at stake for women during a war. Such nuance must be lost on the reader who takes *ATS*' critical characterization of the *Iliad* for an accurate description of the poem. At the same time, paradoxically, our very findings, which typify the *Iliad* as nuanced in its depiction of war for men and women, were also enabled and encouraged by *ATS*. This paradox lies at the heart of every "rewriting", as Liedeke Plate observes, since such texts *react* and *invite*:

> As a form of 'productive reception', rewritings embody a reaction to the texts they rewrite. They speak of how their writers 'received', understood, and interpreted what they read. Inviting a double, comparative reading, they also stage a particular scene of reading, one in which readers are encouraged to look again at the rewritten text, and to look at it in the light of the new text.[97]

Plate helps us realize that every work placing itself in a tradition must, to some extent, both be guilty of stereotyping its "predecessors" in claiming a position for itself, *and* enable a new reading of those "predecessors". To go one step further: even within a work, this is perhaps unavoidable, since we saw

[97] Plate 2011, 41-42.

that the self-description of the Homeric epics as recounting *klea andrôn* can be challenged in the same vein. In this sense, in our search for *ATS*' (re)definition of the epic genre, we may have found a surprising constant in the epic tradition, in that the opposition between epic as a supposedly "male" genre and the inclusion of critical female voices, is as old as Homeric epic itself. For further research, it would be worthwhile to study to what extent these conclusions hold up for other recent "female rewritings" of classical texts. Moreover, while in this thesis I have focused on the reception of epic, it seems equally important to consider the reception of *other* aspects of antiquity in these books, including other genres (what about tragedy?) and other historical periods (what about Roman antiquity?). Thus, we may come to a comprehensive view of how these female rewritings are reshaping the (popular) conception of antiquity for a new generation of readers.

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Appendix 1: the chapters of *ATS*

1. Calliope
2. Creusa
3. The Trojan Women[98]
4. Theano
5. Calliope
6. The Trojan Women
7. Penthesilea
8. Penelope
9. The Trojan Women
10. Briseis and Chryseis
11. Thetis
12. Calliope
13. The Trojan Women
14. Laodamia
15. Iphigenia
16. The Trojan Women
17. Aphrodite, Hera, Athene
18. Penelope
19. The Trojan Women
20. Oenone
21. Calliope
22. The Trojan Women
23. Penelope
24. The Trojan Women
25. Eris
26. The Trojan Women
27. Calliope
28. Hecabe
29. Penelope
30. The Trojan Women

[98] Chapters about *The Trojan Women* deal with Hecabe, Cassandra, Polyxena, Andromache and Helen, though not each of these women is featured in every chapter.

31. Polyxena
32. Themis
33. Penelope
34. The Trojan Women
35. Calliope
36. Cassandra
37. Gaia
38. Penelope
39. Clytemnestra
40. Penelope
41. The Moirai
42. Andromache
43. Calliope