This paper examines how speech-craft and material-craft converge to represent the creation of song in Archaic Greek poetry. Mimetic representations of oral composition appear in the forging of Achilles’ shield, Helen’s weaving of the soldiers’ struggles, and the carpentry of Odysseus’ bed. Direct speech, meanwhile, expresses the verbal equivalent to these material compositions. I use speech analysis in the Odyssey to clarify the relationship between Penelope’s weaving and rhapsodic composition-in-performance. Over the course of the epic, three characters craft almost identical speeches concerning Penelope’s garment-weaving and her persuasive ability. While Penelope’s speech is a personal account (19.138-156), the formulaic resemblance of Amphimedon’s report (24.125-146) and Antinoos’ indictment (2.94-110) demonstrates the oral transmission of a crafted speech. This evidence is an internal representation of the diffusion and eventual fixity of the Odyssey text. By applying Gregory Nagy’s evolutionary model of Homeric song, I claim that the passage of one speech through multiple voices provides a framework to approach the text as a performative record. I use J. L. Austin and John R. Searle’s work on speech-act theory to situate Penelope’s combination of persuasion and weaving in terms of speech-craft and material-craft. In the absence of primary compositional evidence, I argue that the epics themselves provide abundant mimetic renderings of the rhapsode at work. My paper advances a critical perspective of epic song by using literary methodologies to engage with historical data. By examining the intersection of audible and tactile elements in speech and material composition, I emphasize the motions of performance within the static text.

*Visual aids will not be necessary for my presentation*
Abbreviated Bibliography


