

# LEXIS

Poetica, retorica e comunicazione nella tradizione classica

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Poetica, retorica e comunicazione nella tradizione classica

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## **Gods in Pain: Walking the Line Between Divine and Mortal in *Iliad* 5\***

Ὅμηρος γάρ μοι δοκεῖ παραδιδούς  
τραύματα θεῶν στάσεις τιμωρίας δάκρυα  
δεσμὰ πάθη πάμφυρτα τοὺς μὲν ἐπὶ τῶν  
Ἰλιακῶν ἀνθρώπους ὅσον ἐπὶ τῇ δυνάμει  
θεοὺς πεποιημέναι, τοὺς θεοὺς δὲ  
ἀνθρώπους.

It seems to me that Homer, in recording the wounds of the gods, their conflicts, acts of vengeance, tears, and imprisonments – all their sundry passions – has, to the greatest extent possible, made the men involved in the *Iliad* gods, and the gods men.

Pseudo-Longinus, Περὶ ὕψους 9.7<sup>1</sup>

In the fifth book of the *Iliad*, just before Diomedes' *aristeia* begins, Athena lifts a mist from the Greek hero's eyes, and broadens his vision: now he can tell god from man<sup>2</sup>. The distinction between god and man is a theme that underlies the entirety of the *Diomedea*; in fact, it permeates the poem as a whole, at the heart of which lies a pervading sense of human finitude and mortal vulnerability<sup>3</sup>. The particularity of the *Diomedea* is that it brings to the fore the distinction between god and man in a paradoxical manner: by repeatedly blurring the lines between the mortal and divine realms<sup>4</sup>.

On the divine side, the Olympian gods go further than merely entering the battlefield to support or protect a mortal protégé, as they often do elsewhere in the *Iliad*. When Diomedes goes on his killing rampage, they are actually attacked on three occasions, and painfully wounded in two of them. While mortal wounds in the epic are

\* This paper has greatly benefitted from the various audiences and readers who reacted to it its earlier iterations with useful comments and questions. I wish to thank the audiences of the university of Pennsylvania and the university of Dallas, and voice my gratitude to Paul Demont, Lowell Edmunds, Albert Henrichs, Christine Mauduit, Gregory Nagy, Philippe Rousseau, Monique Trédé, and the anonymous readers for *Lexis*, for their guidance on revising this paper. Any errors that remain are, of course, my own.

<sup>1</sup> Translation mine based on Fyfe's as revised by Russell (Halliwell *et Al.* 1995).

<sup>2</sup> *Il.* 5.128: ὄφρα' εὔ γινώσκῃς ἡμὲν θεὸν ἠδὲ καὶ ἄνδρα ('so that you may tell god from man'). The text I use throughout this article is that of Allen and Munro's OCT (1920). Unless otherwise specified, I use Lattimore's translation of the *Iliad* throughout this chapter, with some slight adaptations.

<sup>3</sup> See e.g., Griffin 1976, 1980; Nagy 1979; Rutherford 1982. Achilles and Hector both are characterized as *améchanoi*; the Homeric use of the epithet foregrounds mortality as their defining characteristic: see Martin 1983, 17-20.

<sup>4</sup> On the relationship between gods and men in Homer, see e.g., Kullmann 1985, with bibliography (n. 1).

omnipresent, wounds dealt to immortals are markedly extraordinary<sup>5</sup>. In each occurrence, the corporeality of the gods and their physical pain are emphatically stressed: not only do the gods ‘bleed’<sup>6</sup>, they also bellow with pain, shed tears, and run to their parents’ laps for comfort<sup>7</sup>. This pain is not abstract; nor can it be easily dismissed as mere allegory<sup>8</sup>. Even more unusual is the fact that the one dealing those wounds and this pain is a mere mortal: the Greek hero, Diomedes, who attains levels of strength and power in his heroic feats that have no equal elsewhere in the poem<sup>9</sup>. Here is a mortal who wounds gods<sup>10</sup>.

What are we to make of such extraordinary occurrences throughout book 5? How might we explain the presence of an episode whose focus appears to be the intensity, strangeness, and singular nature of the gods’ bodily presence and experience of vulnerability, and what should we make of the exceptional mortal prowess Diomedes is granted here, in the face of divine opponents? What follows is an attempt to revisit some of the function(s) fulfilled by the depiction of divine pain at the hands of an unusually empowered mortal, paying close attention to the themes that these scenes foreground, and to the phraseology that is used to do so.

The peculiar aspects of the gods in the *Iliad*, and of their behavior and vulnerability in book 5 in particular, have been noted<sup>11</sup>. Scholars often stress the *bathos* and comic effect inherent in the anthropomorphic debasement of the gods<sup>12</sup>. The tales of divine wounding at the hands of mortals and the detailed accounts of their abject conduct in response have mainly been explained in terms of their entertainment value<sup>13</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> The bibliography on mortal wounds in the *Iliad* is considerable; see Saunders 1999 and 2004, Neal 2006, and Garcia, Jr. 2013. The only other example of gods suffering physically within the narrative (and not within embedded tales) is found in the so-called theomachy (books 20 and 21).

<sup>6</sup> They shed the divine equivalent to human blood: the ἰχῶρ. I return to this below.

<sup>7</sup> Aphrodite rushes to Dione: 5.370 ff; the latter tells the story of Hades rushing to Zeus and Paieon in 5.398 ff.; and Ares bolts up to Zeus’ side and whines about his wound at 5.864 ff. Vernant offers an interesting reflection on the ‘corporeity’ of the gods in comparison with the human body in Vernant 1991, 27-49.

<sup>8</sup> For an overview of different possible interpretations of gods’ anthropomorphism in the *Iliad* and their limits, see Willcock 1970.

<sup>9</sup> See Reinhardt 1961, 446-52; regarding Diomedes’ extraordinary feats over the course of his *aristeia*, see Andersen 1978, chp. 4.

<sup>10</sup> The gods wound each other in the theomachy of books 20 and 21.

<sup>11</sup> Some critics see the unusual elements of Diomedes’ *aristeia* as grounds for questioning its authenticity. There are serious methodological problems posed by an approach positing a ‘Homeric’ core as opposed to later accretions, if we adopt (as I do) Nagy’s evolutionary model (see below, and Nagy 1996). Even for those who assume on the contrary that the poem as we have it is the fruit of a single artistic vision, the book’s exceptional details can and have been shown to ‘fit’ into the *Iliad* as a whole: see Andersen 1978 (chp. 4 discusses the book’s unity and structure at length).

<sup>12</sup> Book 5 is sometimes overlooked in studies focused on humor in Homer. Levine 1982-83, 97 f. gives a valuable survey of laughter in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, which does not include book 5; I offer my exploration of book 5 as a continuation of his examination of the nature and function of humorous touches in Homer. In his piece on humor in the *Iliad*, Bell 2007 offers an engaging discussion of the Olympian squabbles of Books 1 and 21, but also does not address the comic potential of book 5.

<sup>13</sup> For instance, Levy 1979, 218.



No doubt the humorous touches of the various scenes of divine wounding are (at least in part) meant to provoke laughter, and are effective in doing so<sup>14</sup>. The divine audience, as we will see, suggests as much: it sets the tone and thus guides the external audience's response<sup>15</sup>. Yet these episodes do more than simply provide a welcome distraction from the severity of battle, and a (temporary) respite from the overall tragic tone and events of the *Iliad*. Without question, they introduce some variety in the midst of the harsh fighting and gore pervading «deep-browed Homer<'s>» *Iliad*, but there is more to them<sup>16</sup>. Taking stock of their comic nature is one step toward understanding how they fit within the broader thematic and poetic fabric of the *Iliad*.

I do not aim at exhaustiveness within the limits of the present article. My goal is more modest: I want to point out some of the salient ways in which the portrayal of divine pain in book 5, with its emphasis on divine vulnerability and the elevated mortal prowess that makes it possible, leaves us with a paradox. By permitting the gods to be wounded at the hands of a mortal, Homer is subjecting them to typically mortal concerns: concerns that pertain to the body, its vulnerability to pain, and its physical limitations. He thus briefly reduces the gap between the gods of the *Iliad* and its mortal heroes<sup>17</sup>. At such moments, when the gods are depicted at their most anthropomorphic, and the mortal Diomedes portrayed as most akin to the divine, gods and men seem to come closest to one another, physically and ontologically. Yet it is also in those moments that, paradoxically, the essential distinction between gods and men is brought to the fore, with the greatest possible force and pathos. Divine pain is not so much about the gods, but about «gods as opposed to men»<sup>18</sup>. The anthropomorphic suffering of the gods and the outstanding martial achievements of the mere mortal that inflicts it may be a light-hearted parenthesis in the midst of all the violence and bloodshed, but in the end these suffering gods illustrate one of the central themes of the *Iliad*: they serve as a reminder of the irreducible chasm between man and god. The inescapable death that defines the human condition appears all the more starkly when set against the lightness of being tied to immortality<sup>19</sup>.

A brief word on my method and approach here is in order. In what follows, I consider repetition and verbal parallels within the Homeric *Iliad* (and especially variations within these repetitions) to be significant – whether these recurrent elements

<sup>14</sup> I agree with Vermeule 1979, 124 f. that these episodes of divine pain are «an opportunity to laugh». Yet she argues perhaps too simplistically that the theme of the vulnerable immortal was merely «comforting» for the Greeks, whom it «amused... to “kill” their gods in such fables» (126). At any rate, it is important to note the extent to which «divine burlesque» (Burkert 1960, 132) was a typical trait of Greek myth – and, in addition, one of the oldest – for which many Near Eastern parallels exist (see also Burkert 1985, 122, and Nagy 2005, 75 f.). Contrast the motif of the hero facing the horror of his own mortality in the *Iliad*, for which Lord also provides Near Eastern comparanda (Lord 1960, 201).

<sup>15</sup> On the divine audience in the *Iliad* and its various functions, see also Griffin 1980, 179-204.

<sup>16</sup> I borrow the phrase from Keats' *On first looking into Chapman's Homer* (1816).

<sup>17</sup> This was already noted by Pseudo-Longinus 9.7; see the quote that precedes this article. For an overview of the Greek gods' anthropomorphic characteristics and corporeality, see Burkert 1985, 182 ff.

<sup>18</sup> «The gods are there... as a counterpart to the human world for poetic reasons»: Andersen 1981, 325-7.

<sup>19</sup> Regarding the mortality of Achilles in the Homeric tradition, see e.g., Whitman 1958, 181-220.

are thematic (repetition on the level of content) or formulaic (recurring phraseology)<sup>20</sup>. One of the premises the present approach rests upon is the now widely accepted demonstration put forth by Milman Parry and his student Albert Lord, that Homeric poetry is both oral and traditional in character, and that its poetic characteristics must be understood in light of the fact that it follows certain rules essential to its «composition in performance»<sup>21</sup>. Parry's rigid interpretation of the constraints of formulaic diction has been revisited, and scholars have come to a better understanding of the potential for recurring and traditional phraseology to convey meaning, not in spite of but in light of its repetitive nature<sup>22</sup>. Paying close attention to aspects of Homeric repetition is an important way of assessing the poem's poetic force and the ways in which it creates and conveys meaning<sup>23</sup>.

### Gods in Pain.

The gods are no strangers to violence in the *Iliad*<sup>24</sup>. In fact, violent conflict among the gods is a recurrent motif in the poem. One such episode of internecine strife oc-

<sup>20</sup> On the important connection between formula and theme in Homer, see Nagy 1990 (esp. 23).

<sup>21</sup> See Parry 1928 and Lord 1960. On the concepts of *traditionality* in oral poetics and the important implications of Parry and Lord's findings for our understanding of Homeric poetry, see Dué 2002, 1-5, with bibliography. While the oral and traditional character of Homeric poetry is not in question, scholars still disagree regarding the date and manner in which the Homeric *Iliad* reached its fixed, written form. I find Nagy's evolutionary model of Homeric poetry, which posits a gradual emergence of a fixed text from the performed, oral tradition, most convincing: see e.g., Nagy 1996, esp. 29-63. The aim of this article is not, however, to refute or defend any particular stance regarding the modalities of fixation of the Homeric *Iliad*. My argument stands, whether one supposes that one particular poet (or poets) is behind the careful repetitions and echoes that I point up, or whether one thinks, as I do, that the recurring formulas and themes of Homeric poetry can and must be understood in relation to one another, as characteristic of and intrinsic to the «traditional and constantly self-referential system within which the *Iliad* was composed» (Dué 2002, 5). On the Homeric question, and the relation between Neoanalysis and oral theory in twenty-first century scholarship, see Montanari – Rengakos – Tsagalis 2012. In the epilogue to his book on meat in the *Odyssey*, Bakker 2013 offers a useful synoptic discussion of repetitions and what he calls «interformularity» within Homeric poetry, and stresses the fact that it is not necessary to assume that a single, artistic mind deliberately introduced repetitions and variations for these to be significant. Bakker also highlights the importance of taking into account the semantic and pragmatic aspects of Homeric formulas, which the Parry-Lord conception neglects to some extent. At 158 n. 1 he provides bibliography regarding the Neoanalysts' current position with respect to 'the oral poetry theory'.

<sup>22</sup> See Foley 1991, chp. 1, *From Traditional Poetics to Traditional Meaning*. Foley demonstrates the theoretical shortcomings of seeing no alternative to the «mechanism versus aesthetics» debate, which pits 'orality' against 'literacy', by putting forward the concept of «traditional referentiality». Danek 2002, 3-19 offers a good discussion of oral poetics and «traditional referentiality». The latter appellation is a preferable alternative to the more problematic use of the term 'intertextuality', in reference to poetics that stem from an oral tradition.

<sup>23</sup> Bakker 2013, 157-69 coins the term «interformularity» and prefers it to 'intertextuality' because interformularity does not presuppose that textual fixity is necessary for repetitions to be significant. Purves 2006, 183 n. 9 provides some select bibliography regarding formulaic repetition in oral and traditional epic poetry. Regarding Neoanalysis, intertextuality, and the contributions of the 'oralist' perspective to Homeric motif transference, see Burgess 2006.

<sup>24</sup> *Pace* Otto 1954, 250.

cupies a large part of book 21 (commonly referred to as the ‘theomachy’)<sup>25</sup>. On other occasions, such as when Zeus senses that his authority seems threatened, the father of gods and men reasserts his power by taking violent, punitive action against his divine sons and daughters, causing them severe pain<sup>26</sup>. Scenes involving gods suffering at the hands of mortals are far more rare. In fact, such incidents are not usually portrayed within the narrative; typically, they are second-hand accounts, embedded within speeches spoken by gods to each other, in commiseration (and with some degree of shared outrage)<sup>27</sup>.

Book 5 is exceptional: the poet reports how a mortal, Diomedes, wounds the gods, and he does so within the narrative proper. Of course, the mortal hero does not harm the divine beings he encounters on his own. He is given exceptional power by Athena, starting with a singular sort of vision (noted above), which brings with it a special form of knowledge (5.127 f.):

ἀχλὺν δ’ αἴ τοι ἄπ’ ὀφθαλμῶν ἔλον ἦ πρὶν ἐπῆεν,  
ὄφρ’ εὔ γιγνώσκῃς ἡμὲν θεὸν ἠδὲ καὶ ἄνδρα.

I have removed from your eyes the mist that previously clouded them, so that now you can tell god from man<sup>28</sup>.

This ‘removable mist’ is a unique variation on the mist motif, which is otherwise ubiquitous in the *Iliad*<sup>29</sup>. It sets the tone for Diomedes’ unique actions during his killing spree. Gods lift mist from, or cast mist upon mortals on various other occasions, either to eliminate confusion and provide clarity, or to shroud a hero’s corpse in protective obscurity. In the present instance, the implication of Athena’s gesture and statement is that there exists a mist that occludes the sight of all mortals at all times, and renders them habitually unable to differentiate god from man. Book 5 thus starts off with Diomedes being given a chance to have a different relationship to the divine, for the extent of his *aristeia*, through his ability to see gods on the battle-

<sup>25</sup> E.g., 21.361 ff. For an overview of passages in which the gods endure pain in Homer, see Andersen 1981, 323 f. Divine strife and violence is intrinsic to the gods’ generational struggles for succession in Hesiod’s *Theogony*, following Near-Eastern traditions.

<sup>26</sup> In book 8, Zeus threatens Hera and Athena with ‘wounds that will last more than ten years’ (8.418 f.). See also Hephaistus’ tale when he accepts to fashion Achilles’ shield: 18.394 ff. For a list of Zeus’ violent threats, see Janko’s commentary regarding 15.18-31, *ad l.*

<sup>26</sup> In book 8, Zeus threatens Hera and Athena with ‘wounds that will last more than ten years’ (8.418 f.). See also Hephaistus’ tale when he accepts to fashion Achilles’ shield: 18.394 ff. For a list of Zeus’ violent threats, see Janko’s commentary regarding 15.18-31, *ad l.*

<sup>27</sup> In book 21, in the midst of the theomachy, Poseidon reminds Apollo of their shared suffering at the hands of the Trojan Laomedon (21.435 ff.). Dione’s comforting words to her daughter Aphrodite in book 5 consist of a succession of mythological *exempla* in which gods were wounded by mortals; I turn to this below.

<sup>28</sup> On mortals’ varying ability to see the gods in the *Iliad*, see Slatkin 2007, *passim*, and Turkeltaub 2007. Slatkin brings out the degree to which human vision in the *Iliad* is always «dimmed by mortality» (2007, 21).

<sup>29</sup> For an overview of the numerous occurrences of clouds or mist removed by gods for greater clarity among mortals, see Fenik 1968, 22, 53 f., and Janko 1992, 301 and 386.

field, and to identify them for who they are<sup>30</sup>. This is part of what enables him to reach the culminating point of his heroic feats, when he, a mortal hero, attacks and wounds not one, but two divinities.

Aphrodite is the first god that Diomedes encounters. He catches her in the process of wrapping her white arms around the Trojan hero Aeneas, as she attempts to rescue her son from the Greek warrior's spear. In a protective maternal gesture, she covers Aeneas with her robe. Mindful of Athena's words to him (other gods are not to be challenged, but the goddess of love can be attacked without fear, 5.129-32), the son of Tydeus pounces on her without a moment's hesitation, thrusting his bronze spear against her soft hand (5.330-3). His spear cuts right through Aphrodite's ambrosial robe, and soon he draws the divine equivalent of blood, ἰχώρ (5.339 f., 416). Her pain is such that she drops Aeneas to the ground (5.343-6.).

Later, at the close of book 5, it is the god of war himself that Diomedes wounds. Though at times the indication that a warrior was 'killed by Ares' can potentially be read as a metaphor for death at war<sup>31</sup>, and though Ares' presence on one side or the other in the fighting can be understood as a way of signaling the greater martial prowess of a given side at a particular point in time, there is no allegorizing Ares' physical being here. When Athena and Diomedes catch him in the act of stripping the body of a dead warrior on the battlefield, he is present on the same level, it seems, as other mortal combatants (5.842-5)<sup>32</sup>. The bT scholia note that if Diomedes is able to wound the god in the lower belly (5.857), then the latter cannot be as titanic a figure here as he is in the theomachy, where, on being hit in the neck by Athena, he covers several acres of land when he crumbles to the ground (21.406 f.)<sup>33</sup>. Ares, too, sheds 'divine blood', ἄμβροτον αἶμα (5.870). Divine battles among the gods themselves do not prompt any such physiological consequences.

That the gods should shed the divine equivalent of human blood is an ambivalent event. It is, to be sure, an occasion for pushing their anthropomorphism to the limits of acceptability: this is what provoked Leaf's indignation<sup>34</sup>. Yet it ultimately provides an opportunity to underscore their profoundly discrete nature from that of humans: the gods' 'bloodshed' is distinguished from humans *in extremis* through the

<sup>30</sup> The specific time frame within which Diomedes is able to distinguish god from man is limited; I will return to this.

<sup>31</sup> See Willcock 1970, 9 n. 20.

<sup>32</sup> Ares' despoiling of Periphas is not only an ignoble action, but a unique event: gods usually kill from afar, and do not find themselves caught in the pollution of killing and its aftermath, as here. In Euripides' *Hippolytus*, Artemis famously takes leave of her worshipper Hippolytus on his deathbed, for just this reason. Note 5.844 in particular: τὸν μὲν Ἄρης ἐνάριξε μαιφόνος, 'Ares was getting polluted with blood as he stripped him'. Though μαιφόνος is a standard epithet for the god, it is tempting, as Kirk 1990 suggests *ad l.*, to see it taking on a particular significance here given the context: it could be perceived as a means of highlighting the abject pollution Ares is enduring for the sake of plunder. On Ares *miaiphonos* in Homer, see Eck 2012, 116-22.

<sup>33</sup> On the Homeric inconsistencies between the present mention of ἰχώρ and that of αἶμα, see Detienne – Sissa 1989, 42 ff. Regarding the nature of this ἰχώρ, see Jouanna – Demont 1981, who argue that at 339-42 it designates a liquid that is not the exact equivalent of blood (cf. ἰχώρ in Aeschylus and the Hippocratic corpus). Kleinlogel 1981 comes to a similar conclusion. For further reflections on the unusual character of ἰχώρ here, see Lateiner 2002, 44 n. 8.

<sup>34</sup> Leaf 1900-02 *ad l.* dismisses these lines and especially the aetiology as «a very poor interpolation», which he finds «quite meaningless and absurd».

aetiology of ἰχόω that follows Aphrodite's wounding (5.341 f.): 'since these eat no food, nor do they drink of the shining wine, and therefore they have no blood and are called immortal'. This aetiology, along with the specification that what Ares sheds is ἄμβροτον αἷμα, draw attention to the fine line that is being treaded here: these punctual moments of anthropomorphism simultaneously underline the limits of that anthropomorphism. The essential point is that, although the divine blood is equivalent to the vital bodily fluid of mortals, it is, however, not the same. Its loss is accompanied by pain, but it can never portend death. These gods may be wounded, but they remain immortal. In the end, the gods' superior, divine essence comes to the fore<sup>35</sup>.

What is true of the physiological symptoms of the gods' pain is true of the depictions of their responses to that pain as well: therein, too, lies great ambivalence. If the wounded gods' reactions are anything to go by, then we might well assume that their pain is intense. When Diomedes pierces Aphrodite's skin, she utters a loud scream and drops her son Aeneas (5.343): ἦ δὲ μέγα ἰάχουσα ἀπὸ ἔο κάββαλεν υἱόν, 'and she gave a great shriek and let fall her son, whom she was carrying'<sup>36</sup>. The sheer concentration of terms referring to her pain is striking: the poet twice mentions Aphrodite's sharp pangs (ὀδύναι), both before and after the embedded tale spoken by her mother in consolation. Led by Iris, she departs from the battlefield 'hurt badly', ἦ δ' ἀλύουσι' ἀπεβήσετο, τείρετο δ' αἰνῶς (5.352), 'suffering intense pains', ἀχθομένην ὀδύνησι, that were 'grievous', ὀδύναι ... βαρεῖαι, (5.354 and 417 respectively)<sup>37</sup>. All of these specifications are delivered in the voice of the narrator, and the searing nature of Aphrodite's pain might well seem to be 'objectively' true because it is expressed in the third-person narrator's voice. De Jong has convincingly shown, however, that embedded focalization – instances in which the poet represents the focalization of one of his characters within the narrator-text – is not infrequent in the *Iliad*<sup>38</sup>. We have at least two reasons for presuming *a posteriori* that it is Aphrodite's perspective and experience that the poet is conveying when he stresses her pain's severity in the lines quoted above. First, the subsequent reactions of other gods (Athena and Hera) to her suffering and the joviality of their tone invite us to question its seriousness; and later, the speed and ease of her recovery further undermine any credence we might have given to its apparent severity (as perceived by the victim herself). I shall return to this below.

The report Aphrodite gives to her mother Dione of what has occurred continues to belabor her suffering and the gravity of the incident as she perceives it. She describes Diomedes' attack as a generalized offensive on the part of mortals against the gods (5.379 f.). Dione, in turn, treats her daughter's pain with grave solemnity. To console her, the goddess speaks comforting words, telling her various stories of other gods who have previously suffered at the hands of mortals (5.381-415). Each of her stories stresses these gods' unusual exposure to bodily pain (caused by mor-

<sup>35</sup> Ballabriga's analysis also comes to the conclusion that it is the difference between gods and mortals that is ultimately underscored in this passage (Ballabriga 1997, 120).

<sup>36</sup> Apollo takes over the rescue of Aeneas at this point, by wrapping him in a dark cloud: 5.344-6.

<sup>37</sup> Ἀχθομαι is then used again just a few lines further, by Aphrodite herself, as she reports her pain to Ares and begs him to cede her his horses so she can be rushed to Olympus (5.361).

<sup>38</sup> See De Jong 1987, esp. chp. 4.

tals), and their vulnerability<sup>39</sup>. In one such mythological *exemplum*, Ares, trapped in a bronze jar for thirteen months, ‘almost died’ from pain, she says. Her account stresses how close he was brought to the mortal condition, through his suffering<sup>40</sup>. The same is true of Hera’s wounding at the hands of Heracles, which, Dione says, led the goddess to feel pain that she describes as ‘incurable’ (5.394: ἀνήκεστον ... ἄλγος)<sup>41</sup>. As we will see, the narrative of Aphrodite’s and Ares’ healing shortly thereafter demonstrates just how rapidly curable divine wounds actually are, and undermines the very notion put forward by Dione that the gods could ever experience any condition eternally (such as an ‘incurable’ wound), other than immortality itself.

Ares’ reaction on being wounded by Diomedes at the conclusion of book 5 also suggests formidable pain at first. He reacts to the blow he is dealt by Diomedes with a howl of massive proportions (5.859-63):

... ὃ δ’ ἔβραχε χάλκεος Ἄρης  
 ὅσσόν τ’ ἐννεάχιλοι ἐπίαχον ἢ δεκάχιλοι  
 ἄνδρες ἐν πολέμῳ ἔριδα ξυνάγοντες Ἄρης.  
 τοὺς δ’ ἄρ’ ὑπὸ τρώμοις εἶλεν Ἀχαιοὺς τε Τρωάδας τε  
 δείσαντας· τόσον ἔβραχ’ Ἄρης ἄτος πολέμοιο.

And Ares made of bronze bellowed as loudly as nine or ten thousand warriors shouting in the midst of Ares’ strife. A trembling fear seized the Achaeans and Trojans alike, so great was the shout produced by Ares, insatiate of war.

Aphrodite’s scream had Apollo rushing to the rescue (5.344-6). Ares’ cries are more impressive still, cosmic even in scale and reach: they cause mortals on both the Greek and the Trojan sides to tremble with fear. Ares’ crying out in response to his being wounded and experiencing pain stresses his concrete, corporeal presence and his physical vulnerability – elements we would associate with a mortal warrior. Yet the sheer awesomeness of his shout reminds us of his divine status. Distinguished as it is by its colossal proportions, his reaction brings out the formidable nature of his divinity. There may be a subtle pun at hand in the description of Ares’ cry, which further plays up the divinity (or inhumanity) of the god, even as he is put in a mortal’s situation by being stabbed by a hero’s spear. The phrase ὃ δ’ ἔβραχε χάλκεος Ἄρης, ‘then Ares made of bronze bellowed’ (5.859) describes his shouting (ἔβραχε) with a verb that is elsewhere the term used to describe the metallic, ringing sound made by weapons. In fact, the verb often makes reference to the sound made by ar-

<sup>39</sup> Hades’ sharp pain, ὀδύνη, is mentioned three times in the space of less than ten lines, at 5.397, 399, 401. On the term ὀδύνη and the intense pain it conveys (in connection with its usage in reference to birth pangs), see Loraux 1995, 30 ff. Mawet 1979 explores the semantic range of the terminology of pain in Homer. On ὀδύνη in the *Iliad*, see also Holmes 2007.

<sup>40</sup> 5.388: καί νύ κεν ἔνθ’ ἀπόλοιτο Ἄρης ἄτος πολέμοιο, ‘and now might Ares, insatiable in fighting, have perished’. The notion of a god dying is a ‘theological absurdity’ that is not to be taken literally: Kirk 1990 *ad l.* On Ares’ near-death experience, see Lord 1960, 202, where he discusses the theme of sacrifice and the «dying god»; cf. also Sinos 1980, 5 and Loraux 1986. Vermeule 1979, 124 sees this as one instantiation in Greek myth of «the comforting theme of the vulnerable immortal».

<sup>41</sup> Dione also harps on the pain Hades suffered at the hands of the same hero (5.395-402).

mor as it collapses atop a mortally wounded warrior with a clang<sup>42</sup>. Earlier in book 5, the same term is used of the chariot squeaking under Athena's colossal weight (5.838). It is not a term normally used in reference to the sounds produced by living creatures. It suggests that there is a decidedly inhuman sound at the heart of Ares' cries, an essentially martial note at their core. The presence of the formulaic epithet *χάλκεος*, 'made of bronze', juxtaposed as it is alongside the verb *ἔβραχε*, may further contribute to suggest that Ares' shout has a metallic ring to it, something like no human cry<sup>43</sup>. At any rate, the contrast is stark between the context in which the term occurs in reference to mortals – the verb refers to the clang that sounds the moment of their doom, following their fatal wounding – and its occurrence in reference to Ares: it is the wounded god's voice itself, not his armor, that produces the metallic sound. The metal sound (his own voice) signals his survival, not his death, as it does for mortals.

The gods' pain may be sharp – we cannot know for sure whether it is or not<sup>44</sup>. What the poet makes clear, at any rate, is that it lacks any gravity. With considerable and somewhat comical lack of dignity, they leave the fighting to go weeping in their mother's lap (Aphrodite), or at their father's side (Ares). The ridicule of their (extreme) reactions to their suffering is highlighted by the ease and speed with which they are then cured from their affliction by their parents: for all its supposed intensity, the gods' pain is, in fact, brought to an end nearly instantly. When her arm is scraped by Diomedes' spear and the *ἰχώρ* begins to ooze from her wounded wrist, Aphrodite borrows her brother Ares' horses to rush to her mother Dione, shedding tears and seeking parental comfort, like a child (5.364 ff.)<sup>45</sup>. Her pain is promptly eradicated by the comforting touch of her divine mother, who merely wipes away the *ἰχώρ* from her arm (5.416 f.):

<sup>42</sup> On the clang of armor signaling death, see Leuzzi in Aceti – Leuzzi – Pagani 2008, 286, with a list of other occurrences.

<sup>43</sup> On the «Homeric sensitivity to epithets», including formulaic epithets, and for a convincing argument questioning «hard Parryists» and their explanation of fixed epithets as «metrical fillers», see e.g., Lowenstam 1993, esp. chp. 1. For additional scholarship on sensitivity to context in the deployment of 'fixed' epithets, see Elmer 2013, 239 n. 63. We can never know for certain whether the Homeric tradition was fully deliberate in its use of an epithet and its meaning in any specific passage, but some indications, including those of a contextual nature, allow us to suggest that it was. The metrical equivalent *ῥοιμῶς* would have been a possibility here, so the poet (and the bard performing the Homeric poem and composing in performance) was presented with two metrically convenient possibilities in this instance. For *ῥοιμῶς* as a fixed epithet qualifying Ares in the same position in the line, see e.g., 13.444, 15.112.

<sup>44</sup> We ultimately have no way of knowing whether the gods' pain is described in terms that suggest it is severe only because of the gods' low pain threshold, or as a means of further emphasizing the gods' power to remedy even the gravest of pains. As noted above, the terms used to describe their pain (such as *βαρῆται*) are not necessarily to be taken at face value; they could be a subtle, embedded focalization of the gods' perception of a physical experience to which they are simply not accustomed.

<sup>45</sup> See 5.370 f. in particular, where she collapses into her mother's lap. For Ares' complaints to his father Zeus, see 5.868 ff. Family scenes in which the gods' anthropomorphism is pushed to the point where they are given the roles of «crying child, consoling mother, and... wise and somewhat distanced father» have earlier analogies in oriental epic. Burkert 2001, 82 cites the striking parallel from the *Gilgamesh* epic, in which Ishtar, after being spurned by the eponymous hero, goes weeping to her father and mother, Anu and Antu.

Ἦ ῥα καὶ ἀμφοτέρησιν ἀπ' ἰχῶ χειρὸς ὀμόργυ·  
ἄλλθετο χεῖρ, ὀδύνας δὲ κατηπιόωντο βαρεῖαι.

She spoke, and with both hands stroked away from her arm the *ichôr*, so that her arm was made whole again and the strong pains rested.

In her case, no actual remedy or medicinal substance is even necessary. Ares is also healed almost instantaneously, though he tells Zeus he has come close to being forever deprived of his power (the divine equivalent of being dead, ἀμηνής, 5.887) after Diomedes thrusts his spear into his lower belly (with the help of Athena)<sup>46</sup>. The speed of his recovery saps any sense that there is a true urgency to his condition. Zeus calls upon Paieon to apply the necessary anodyne, and Ares' pain disappears 'as quickly as milk thickens with fig juice' (5.902-4)<sup>47</sup>.

The gods who react to their fellow immortals' pain play an important role in trivializing the suffering of their divine peers. This internal, divine audience debunks, if not our sense of that pain's acuteness, then certainly our sense of its gravity. Hera and Athena mercilessly mock their sister's pain as they report it to Zeus (5.421-5). Athena tells Zeus that Aphrodite must be crying because she scraped her hand on a mortals' brooch while caressing one of her beloved Trojans (5.422-5), thereby stressing the fact that the goddess of love had wandered far outside of her purview, by coming onto the battlefield. Zeus smiles in amusement in response to his daughter's mocking jibe (5.426). His bemused reaction contributes to the general lightness of tone surrounding the wounding of Aphrodite<sup>48</sup>. When Ares is the victim of Diomedes' attack (5.888 ff.), he exits the battlefield dramatically, in the guise of a dark cloud, and hastens to Olympus to sit down sulking beside his father, Zeus, who has him immediately cured. Zeus' dismissive reaction on seeing his son shifts the tone and register in an instant, from the cosmic to the domestic and even trivial. The contrast between Ares' dramatic exit and Zeus' response to it emphasizes how little is actually at stake here (5.890 f.): Zeus greets his son with irritation, but no sign of true concern. Rather, he orders him to 'stop whining' (μυνοῖζω, 5.889), while chiding him for the destruction he causes among mortals (as the god of war) as though he were scolding a disobedient child. He reluctantly calls upon Paieon to heal him

<sup>46</sup> The lines are problematic. On ἀμηνής, see Chantraine s.v.: «ἀμηνής, 'sans force,' d'où ἀμηνός dit notamment des âmes des morts, mais signifiant aussi 'sans force'». See also Loraux 1986, 337 and Tsomis 2004. For another pun in the passage, see 5.906, which describes Ares as 'rejoicing in his triumphant glory'. Schein 1984, 52 sees this pun (*pace* Aristarchus, who emended it as spurious) as fulfilling a function that reflects what he also sees as the point of the scene as a whole: it, too, points up the fact that what would be fatally serious for a mortal is «an occasion for wit» at the expense of a divinity, for whom the consequences are ultimately minimal, and blatantly so.

<sup>47</sup> Compare the similarly immediate recovery of Hades, who is wounded at the hands of Heracles in Dione's embedded tale to Aphrodite (5.401 f.).

<sup>48</sup> These smiles may reflect the gods' moods and emotions (Levine 1982-83, 100; Woodbury 1944, 5); but they also serve as a model for the reaction expected of the external audience. Regarding laughter in Homer, including divine laughter, as both a sign of detachment and superiority on the part of those laughing, and a reinstatement of the normal order of things after a disruption, see Citti 1994, 166 f., with bibliography (at n. 2).



only because he is his son, and hence, an immortal, who cannot be left to suffer for long (ἀλλ' οὐ μάν σ' ἔτι δηρὸν ἀνέξομαι ἄλγε' ἔχοντα, 5.895)<sup>49</sup>.

The mortal hero who attacks the gods in book 5 experiences pain himself, within the very same book, and early on, when he is struck by Pandarus' arrow. His reaction provides an unflattering foil for the gods' responses to their wounds. When hit, Diomedes does not cry out (5.106); he merely turns to his driver, Sthenelus, to ask him to remove the arrow from his shoulder. Diomedes 'good at the war shout' does eventually scream, but not to give voice to his pain – only to address Athena<sup>50</sup>. He does not seek comfort, as Aphrodite and Ares do; rather, he asks the goddess for help in wreaking revenge on the enemy that wounded him (5.118)<sup>51</sup>. The goddess answers Diomedes' call, but she does not heal his wound, the way Dione and Zeus do for their divine offspring. Diomedes does not even ask her to. The hero's quiet endurance of his painful wound heightens the audience's sense of his fortitude and courage, in contrast to the gods' subsequent lack thereof when they are wounded by him. The sheer time and narrative span between the infliction of the wound and its healing also aggrandize the hero, at the gods' expense. At 5.793-5, Athena appears to Diomedes while he is 'cooling his wound'. His pain has persisted until then, from the time when he first received the wound (5.106); even so, she still does not heal his wound, but joins him in confronting the god Ares himself (5.835 ff.). By comparison, the amount of time between the infliction of wounds and their cure, as far as the gods are concerned, is striking for its brevity<sup>52</sup>.

The disparity between the mortal hero Diomedes' reaction to his wound, and the gods' reactions when he wounds them, is noteworthy, all the more so as the stakes and potential outcomes of divine and mortal wounds could not be more different. For the gods, being wounded when they enter the fray is unpleasant, and at times extremely so – at least from their own perspective (perhaps because they are delicate, like Aphrodite, or simply because they are unaccustomed to such unpleasant bodily experiences). It hardly bears stressing, however, that divine wounds do not have any potentially fatal consequences. Death never actually threatens these wounded victims: they are immortal. Conversely, the threat of death looms large over every Homeric warrior's reentry into battle, which involves the exposure to possibly deadly wounds: a mortal's participation in the fighting entails an exposure to wounds at any moment; and wounds bring with them the prospect of demise. The threat of death is immediate, and weighs heavily on the hearts of those who look on as heroes dear to them join the fighting ranks once more: before the latter even reach the fighting, they invoke the gods' protection for them, or try to prevent them from

<sup>49</sup> For the reluctant healing, see 5.895 f.

<sup>50</sup> It is tempting to read βοῆν ἀγαθός as more than just formulaic, given the particular context here.

<sup>51</sup> When Diomedes shouts again shortly thereafter, he is still not voicing pain, but reprimanding Aphrodite for entering a realm that is not hers (5.347 f.).

<sup>52</sup> Compare Hector's protracted experience of pain, as conveyed by the way in which the narrative makes mention of it, and then returns to it much later. He is first wounded by the greater Ajax at 14.418, and vomits blood and loses consciousness at 14.436-9. We find him still wounded, and vomiting blood again at the beginning of book 15 (15.9-11). On the wounding of heroes, see Neal 2006; at 33-44 in particular, she discusses the significance and variety of wound narratives.

returning to the front, with desperate, useless pleas<sup>53</sup>. Proleptic laments even accompany some warriors as they head into battle, so ineluctable is their death in their *philoï's* eyes<sup>54</sup>. When a warrior is, in fact, seriously wounded, critics have noted that the phraseology used to describe the consequences of these wounds suggests that death is not far. For instance, in book 14, Hector is so severely wounded that he spits up blood several times. He loses consciousness, and ‘a dark night covered his eyes’ (τὼ δέ οἱ ὄσσε / νύξ ἐκάλυψε μέλαινα, 14.438 f.). When Diomedes wounds Aeneas, we find a close variant to this formulaic hexameter: ἀμφὶ δὲ ὄσσε κελαινὴ νύξ ἐκάλυψεν (‘and a covering of black night came over both eyes’, 5.310)<sup>55</sup>. These phrases describe a loss of consciousness, but they are remarkably close to the semantically equivalent phrase τὸν δὲ κατ’ ὀφθαλμῶν ἐρεβεννὴ νύξ ἐκάλυψε, ‘and over his eyes was mantled the covering mist of darkness’, which is one of several that use the image of darkness or night descending upon a hero to report a warrior’s actual death<sup>56</sup>. No equivalent to this dark night is ever used in reference to the gods. The only darkness that comes upon Aphrodite is that of ἰχώρ blackening her fair skin in a visually stunning image (5.354): μελαίνεται δὲ χροὰ καλόν, ‘her lovely skin turned black’<sup>57</sup>. It has none of the foreboding undertones or serious potential implications of the above formulas, whose similarity with those employed to report death remind the audience that the latter is a distinctly possible outcome for the mortals concerned.

### Gods in Tears.

When Ares is wounded by Diomedes, as we have seen, he rushes to Olympus to seek solace from Zeus. He shows his father the blood flowing from his wound, ‘lamenting’ (ὄλοφυρόμενος, 5.868-71):

καρπαλίμως δ’ ἴκανε θεῶν ἔδος αἰπὸν Ὀλυμπον,  
 πάρ δὲ Διὶ Κρονίῳνι καθέζετο θυμὸν ἀχέων,  
 δεῖξεν δ’ ἄμβροτον αἶμα καταρρέον ἐξ ὠτειλῆς,  
 καὶ ῥ’ ὄλοφυρόμενος ἔπεα πτερόεντα προσηύδα.

Lightly he came to the gods’ citadel, headlong Olympus, and sat down beside Zeus, son of Cronus, grieving in his spirit, and showing him the immortal blood dripping from his wound. And lamenting his fate he addressed him with these winged words.

<sup>53</sup> See Achilles’ prayer to Zeus in 16.233-48, that Patroclus might be granted glory in battle and to return safely to him. Ominously enough, the narrator’s voice then informs us that Zeus only granted half of the prayer (16.250).

<sup>54</sup> Andromache’s entreaties to Hector come to mind: 6.407 ff., as does her lament before Hector has actually died, earlier in book 6 (6.373); see also Thetis’ lament to the Nereids in 18.54-62.

<sup>55</sup> Hector also blacks out after being wounded by the same Diomedes at 11.356, and the same formula occurs.

<sup>56</sup> In book 5, it is used in reference to the death of Tlepolemus at the hands of Sarpedon (5.659). It is also used to describe the death following the fatal wounding of Adamas at the hands of Meriones, at 13.580.

<sup>57</sup> On the spectacular visual effect of the blood staining Aphrodite’s arm, see Holmes 2007, 61 f. Contrast the black blood at Hector’s neck when the Trojan is wounded by Ajax (7.262), which portends a death that is, in the end, postponed; see Leuzzi in Aceti – Leuzzi – Pagani 2008, 284.

‘Lamenting’ is a hyper-translation of ὄλοφυσόμενος; one could, and perhaps should translate: ‘spoke lamentably’ or ‘piteously’. I chose to remain literal here, in order to try to reproduce the associations that we can assume the term prompted in the audience’s mind, based on its other occurrences. Ὀλοφυσόμενος occurs here within a formulaic hexameter: καὶ ᾧ’ ὄλοφυσόμενος ἔπεα πτερόεντα προσηύδα (15.571). It is one of the (many) introductory formulas that we find in Homeric poetry, which fulfills the function of «marker» or «literary label» and establishes the tenor of the ensuing speech<sup>58</sup>. The same hexameter only occurs two other times in the entire *Iliad*: at 11.815, and at 18.72. In both of these other instances, it is strongly associated with death and lament<sup>59</sup>. It is worth pausing to examine the contexts in which the same hexameter and the speeches that it introduces occur, as well as their tone, in order to grasp just how incongruous a place the formula occupies in introducing words so petty and inconsequential as Ares’ whining complaint to Zeus regarding a wound that will heal, as we have seen, ‘as quickly as milk thickens with fig juice’ (5.904).

Near the end of book 11, the Greek Eurypylus has just been hit (11.581 ff.)<sup>60</sup>. Like Ares, the hero is wounded; like Ares, he cries out, but not in pain – only to rally the Greeks around the greater Ajax, who also has been wounded, and whom he had been protecting (11.585-91)<sup>61</sup>. The narrative then moves away from Eurypylus, and returns to him only towards the end of book 11, when Patroclus catches sight of him. Even then, Eurypylus does not show his wound to Patroclus, and he is not the one to speak in a lamenting manner (ὄλοφυσόμενος). The introductory formula καὶ ᾧ’ ὄλοφυσόμενος ἔπεα πτερόεντα προσηύδα – the very same hexameter that we find preceding Ares’ complaint to Zeus when he is wounded – introduces a despairing speech, but it is spoken by someone *other* than the wounded mortal in question. It is Patroclus who cries out on seeing Eurypylus thus wounded (11.814 f.)<sup>62</sup>:

τὸν δὲ ἰδὼν ᾤκτειρε Μενoitίου ἄλκιμος υἱός,  
καὶ ᾧ’ ὄλοφυσόμενος ἔπεα πτερόεντα προσηύδα.

And the strong son of Menoetius felt pity on seeing him and lamented over him, as he addressed him with these winged words.

Patroclus witnesses Eurypylus’ pain, and laments on seeing his friend thus harmed. His pitying utterance underscores the wretched state of his fellow Greek, while sim-

<sup>58</sup> See Tsagalis 2004, 12 f.

<sup>59</sup> I agree with Elmer’s observation that, «while it obviously cannot be claimed that every repeated word in the poem gives voice to some significant theme, nevertheless, in the case of words ... that express the poem’s central themes, every occurrence provides important evidence» (Elmer 2013, 15). It seems to me that both of the speeches that are spoken in a lamenting tone (ὄλοφυσόμενος) are indeed expressing some of the poem’s central themes, and providing an important foil and contrast to Ares’ speech.

<sup>60</sup> Eurypylus is wounded by none other than Paris – as we know Achilles is to be, according to the epic cycle (on the death of Achilles in the non-Homeric tradition, see e.g., Burgess 2009).

<sup>61</sup> The contrast between Eurypylus’ stoic endurance as he exits the battlefield in excruciating pain and Ares’ earlier, extreme reaction to his own wound is remarkable.

<sup>62</sup> Though Eurypylus does not cry out, his pain is obvious to Patroclus, who heals him by cutting out the barbed arrow with a knife and applying an anodyne: 11.844 ff.

ultaneously amplifying the grit with which the latter bears it<sup>63</sup>. For all of Eurypylus' fortitude, however, a strong sense of the fragility of the mortal condition pervades the scene of his wounding, especially in the reaction that it elicits from a fellow, mortal hero. It is noteworthy that it is Patroclus who tends to Eurypylus, and Patroclus who pities and laments over his wounded friend. The son of Menoetius will later be wounded just as Eurypylus has been: by the cast of a spear (several spears, in fact: see 16.791 ff.)<sup>64</sup>. The audience knows that he, unlike Eurypylus, will not survive his multiple wounds. Ominously enough, what Patroclus laments on seeing the wounded Eurypylus is the destiny that threatens all of the Greeks – the prospect of being cut down by Hector's spear – which is precisely the fate that will befall him (11.816-21):

ἄ δειλοὶ Δαναῶν ἡγήτορες ἠδὲ μέδοντες  
ὣς ἄρ' ἐμέλλετε τῆλε φίλων καὶ πατρίδος αἴης  
ἄσιν ἐν Τροίῃ ταχέας κύνας ἀργέτι δημῶ.  
ἀλλ' ἄγε μοι τόδε εἰπέ διοτρεφὲς Εὐρύπυλ' ἦρωες,  
ἦ ῥ' ἔτι που στήσουσι πελώριον Ἔκτορ' Ἀχαιοί,  
ἦ ἤδη φθίσονται ὑπ' αὐτοῦ δουρὶ δαμέντες;

Poor wretches, you leaders and men of counsel among the Danaans, was it your fate then, far from your friends and the land of your fathers, to glut with your shining fat the running dogs here in the land of Troy? But tell me this, lord Eurypylus, grown under a god's hand: will the Achaeans be able to hold back huge Hector, or will they perish, beaten down by his spear<sup>65</sup>?

Compare the two contexts in which we find ὀλοφυρόμενος in a variant to the introductory formula above. At 15.398, it introduces Patroclus' concluding words to Eurypylus, for whom he has been caring since the above speech in book 11. He takes his leave from Eurypylus with a speech of lamentation, introduced by the formulaic hemistich ὀλοφυρόμενος δ' ἔπος ἠΐδα. Slapping his thighs as he speaks, he prepares to head to Achilles' hut in haste, where he will, in effect, beg (unwittingly) for his own death (15.397-402)<sup>66</sup>:

ᾧμωξέν τ' ἄρ' ἔπειτα καὶ ὦ πεπλήγετο μηρῶ  
χερσὶ καταπρηνέσσ', ὀλοφυρόμενος δ' ἔπος ἠΐδα·  
Εὐρύπυλ' οὐκ ἔτι τοι δύναιμαι χατέοντί περ' ἔμπης

<sup>63</sup> Eurypylus is first wounded in 11.583, and is healed only at the very end of book 11 (11.844-8), nearly 300 lines later. Comparably elongated is the duration of Glaucus' wound. The hero is first shot in the arm by Teucer in 12.387; yet we find him still fighting in 14.226. I do not believe as Janko 1992, 382 suggests, presuming as he does that a single, artistic mind is behind the 'text' of the *Iliad*, that «Homer had forgotten his wound». Rather, as the similar cases of Diomedes and Eurypylus show, the poet often delays his treatment of mortals' wounds until far later in the narrative (and in the performance of that narrative) as an effective way of conveying considerable endurance on their part.

<sup>64</sup> On the fall of Patroclus at the hands of Apollo, Euphorbus, and, finally, Hector, see Allan 2005.

<sup>65</sup> Regarding the motif of dying far from home and its particular pathos, see Griffin 1976.

<sup>66</sup> On the significance of thigh-slapping in the Homeric poems, especially in connection with the death motif, see Lowenstam 1981; *contra* Di Benedetto 1998, 281.

ἐνθάδε παρμενέμεν· δὴ γὰρ μέγα νεῖκος ὄρωρεν·  
ἀλλὰ σὲ μὲν θεράπων ποτιτεροπέτω, αὐτὰρ ἔγωγε  
σπεύσομαι εἰς Ἀχιλλῆα, ἵν' ὀτρύνω πολεμίζειν.

And then he uttered a groan, and struck both his thighs  
with the flats of his hands, and lamenting over him, he spoke these winged words:  
“Eurypylus, much though you need me, I cannot stay here  
longer with you. This is a big fight that has arisen.  
Now it is for your henchman to look after you, while I  
go in haste to Achilles, to stir him into the fighting”.

The aftermath of Patroclus’ visit to Achilles is well known to the audience, and adds an additional, gloomy undertone to the hero’s words and the ‘lamenting’ manner (ὄλοφυρόμενος) in which he utters them here. Achilles will refuse to join the battle despite Patroclus’ entreaties, and will send his dearest friend to fight in his stead, thus indirectly causing Patroclus’ death. Patroclus’ lamenting tone applies most aptly to himself, in a moment of poignant tragic irony<sup>67</sup>.

The first of the only other two occurrences of the introductory formulaic hexameter καὶ ᾧ ὄλοφυρόμενος ἔπεα πτερόεντα προσηύδα outside of Ares’ whining complaint, then, precedes Patroclus’ pathetically charged and tragically ironic words to the wounded Eurypylus. The next time it occurs (with a slight variation: the participle is in the feminine), the context marks a significant progression with respect to its first occurrence (quoted above): it is Patroclus, now dead, who is being lamented by Thetis. She has heard her son’s cries of extreme grief on learning the news of his dearest friend’s death, and knows this to be the trigger whereby Achilles will decide to return to battle and kill Hector, and sign his own death sentence. She launches into a lament, along with the Nereids (18.54-62), and then rises from the sea to visit her son, lamenting over him as she speaks to him (18.70-3)<sup>68</sup>:

<sup>67</sup> It bears mentioning that the same formulaic hemistich ὄλοφυρόμενος δ’ ἔπος ηὔδα that introduces Patroclus’ parting words to Eurypylus also introduces a speech whose grave content is in keeping with the other two introduced by the full hexameter of interest to me here, καὶ ᾧ ὄλοφυρόμενος ἔπεα πτερόεντα προσηύδα. The speaker is none other than Ares. When Hera breaks the news of his mortal son Ascalaphus’ death to him, the god of war expresses his extreme grief. Like Patroclus when he leaves Eurypylus, he slaps his thighs and speaks in a lamenting voice, resolute in his wish to avenge his dead son (15.113-6):

ᾠς ἔφατ’, αὐτὰρ Ἄρης θαλερῶ πεπλήγετο μηρῶ  
χερσὶ καταπρηνέσ’, ὄλοφυρόμενος δ’ ἔπος ηὔδα·  
μὴ νῦν μοι νεμεσήσεται Ὀλύμπια δώματ’ ἔχοντες  
τίσασθαι φόνον υἱὸς ἰόντ’ ἐπὶ νῆας Ἀχαιῶν...

So she spoke. Then Ares struck both his big thighs with the flats of his hands, and spoke a word of sorrow:  
“Now, you who have your homes on Olympus, you must not blame me for going among the ships of the Achaeans, and avenging my son’s slaughter”.

<sup>68</sup> On the stylized mourning for Achilles here, and the prefiguration of Achilles’ dead self through the death of his surrogate (or *therapōn*), Patroclus, see Nagy 1979, particularly 113-7 regarding the present lament. I discuss Patroclus’ death as a foreshadowing of Achilles’ demise (already noted by the bT scholia at 18.96) more at length in Allen-Hornblower 2012, with bibliography.

τῷ δὲ βαρὺ στενάχοντι παρίστατο πότνια μήτηρ,  
ὄξυ δὲ κωκύσασα κάρη λάβε παιδὸς ἑοῖο,  
καὶ ῥ' ὀλοφυρομένη ἔπεα πτερόεντα προσηύδα·  
τέκνον τί κλαίεις; τί δέ σε φρένας ἵκετο πένθος;

There as he sighed heavily the lady his mother stood by him and cried out shrill and aloud, and took her son's head in her arms, then lamenting over him she addressed him with these winged words: "Why then, child, are you crying? What grief has come to your heart?"

These two other occurrences of the same formulaic hexameter provide us with comparanda that can, I think, help us grasp the incongruous place of the formulaic hexameter καὶ ῥ' ὀλοφυρόμενος ἔπεα πτερόεντα προσηύδα at 5.871, where it introduces Ares' whining complaint to Zeus, a speech entirely different in tone and content from the other speeches preceded by what we might call 'ὀλοφυρόμενος speech formulas' for shorthand. The formulaic hexameter is a preliminary marker, with which the poet creates a set of expectations, by evoking death and lament in the audience's mind. The contrast is thus sharply accentuated, between the expected gravity of what is to come, and the actual speech to follow, whose trivial nature is highlighted by Zeus' dismissive response and relabeling of Ares' pseudo-lament as mere 'whining' (μυυρίζειν). Μυυρίζων, it seems, would be more appropriate a label to define the tenor of the speech to come, perhaps, but it would be far less subtle in expressing the divine pettiness of Ares, as it would not simultaneously contrast it, as ὀλοφυρόμενος does, with the «dead seriousness» of mortal preoccupations<sup>69</sup>.

### Divine Consolation.

When Aphrodite is hurt, the goddess rushes to her mother, Dione, and cries in her lap (5.367 ff.)<sup>70</sup>. The reference to and naming of a mother figure for Aphrodite, Dione, is unique: there is no other such mention of her name or person throughout the entire Homeric *epos*<sup>71</sup>. Zeus is the prime comforter of the gods in their suffering, as evidenced both in the case of Hades (in Dione's embedded tale), and in that of Ares, which we have just examined. He is also the one to whom Artemis turns when she gets her ears boxed by Hera during the theomachy of book 21: Leto's daughter rushes to Zeus' knees in tears (21.489 ff.)<sup>72</sup>. Why might an otherwise unattested mother figure be found here? I do not believe, as some have suggested, that Dione's presence can be explained merely as a welcome variation from the other two scenes

<sup>69</sup> Regarding the «dead seriousness of death» being the exclusive realm of mortal heroes in epic, see Nagy 2005 § 76.

<sup>70</sup> Commentators including the bT scholia remark on the childish nature of Aphrodite's behavior and its humorous effect.

<sup>71</sup> Dione is mentioned in Hesiod's *Theogony*, but only as a minor divinity (*Theogony* 11-21 and 353): see West's 1966 commentary *ad l.* In the *Theogony*, Aphrodite is not the daughter of Dione: she comes to life in the sea, as it mingles with the 'foam' (*semen*) emanating from Ouranos' severed genitals (*Theogony* 188 ff.).

<sup>72</sup> Hades rushes to Zeus' side in Dione's tale: 5.398-400; we saw that Ares, too, darts up to seek comfort from his father at 5.864 ff.

of divine wounding in the book, where the gods in question rush to their *father* to seek parental comfort for their pain. Nor is she introduced simply because of the fact that «a mother is an apt comforter»<sup>73</sup>. The diction at hand may hold a more plausible answer: it connects the present scene, in which Dione comforts Aphrodite for a mere scratch, with other scenes of motherly consolation, which are of central import to the Homeric poem: those scenes that bring together Achilles and his mother Thetis.

Parent-child interactions are not ubiquitous in the *Iliad*: only few examples come to mind<sup>74</sup>. Even fewer are the scenes in which a divine parent interacts with and consoles his or her mortal offspring. Only the scenes between Thetis and Achilles truly fit this category; furthermore, they are also the only scenes of the *Iliad* in which a mother comforts a son. One of the important roles fulfilled by the exchange between the divine figure of Dione and her divine daughter, I suggest, is that it serves as a foil for the interactions between Thetis and Achilles. The scene between Aphrodite and Dione is a variation on the consolation scenes that bring together Thetis and Achilles, and it acquires its meaning from the connections and contrasts that the motifs and phraseology that they share establish between them.

Before Dione speaks to her divine daughter, she cradles her in her arms, strokes her with her hand, and ‘calls out her name’ (5.370-3):

ἦ δ' ἐν γούνασι πίπτε Διώνης δι' Ἀφροδίτη  
μητρὸς ἑῆς· ἦ δ' ἀγκὰς ἐλάζετο θυγατέρα ἦν,  
χειρὶ τέ μιν κατέρεξεν ἔπος τ' ἔφατ' ἐκ τ' ὀνόμαζε.

And now bright Aphrodite fell at the knees of her mother,  
Dione, who gathered her daughter into her arms' fold and stroked her with her hand  
and called her by name and spoke to her.

Dione's comforting speech to Aphrodite is preceded by the very same introductory formula – the formulaic hexameter *χειρὶ τέ μιν κατέρεξεν ἔπος τ' ἔφατ' ἐκ τ' ὀνόμαζε* – that we find before two of the main consolation speeches spoken by the goddess Thetis to her mortal son, Achilles: the first is at the very start of the epic (book 1), and the second at its end (book 24).

Let me be clear about my method here: I am not suggesting that we should rely solely on the presence of the same introductory formula in the different scenes that I examine as evidence *per se* of any meaningful parallels between them. It is the presence of these identical formulas, *along with* the other similarities in context, motif, and theme – the mother-child interaction, and the consolatory content of the speeches – that unquestionably do suggest (in my opinion, at least) that their respective significance can best be understood if we pay heed to the correspondences and dis-

<sup>73</sup> See Kirk 1990, 99.

<sup>74</sup> The scene between Andromache, Hector and Astyanax in book 6 is a rare example. There are only three scenes bringing together Hector and his mother, Hecuba: in book 6, when he is still alive, and after his death, when she laments over his body, in books 22 and 24 (see 6.253 ff., 22.430 ff., and 24.746 ff.). There are, in addition, scenes in which the gods intervene in the fighting on behalf of or at the side of protégés who are also their offspring, such as when Aphrodite removes Aeneas from the battlefield in book 5; but these scenes do not involve any sort of exchange or consolation between the divine parents and their mortal progeny.

parities between them. Pucci 1993 rightly sounds a note of methodological caution when he underlines the fact that chance and mechanical routine may well be a factor of repetition in Homeric poetry. At the same time, he maintains that there are instances where the suggestive power of variation-within-repetition invites one to examine formulaic parallels as significant<sup>75</sup>. I believe that the repetitions noted here deserve to be in the category of significant parallels, for reasons that become apparent in what follows.

Let us turn, then, to those two speeches spoken by Thetis to console Achilles that begin with the same introductory formula (χειρί τέ μιν κατέρεξεν ἔπος τ' ἔφατ' ἐκ τ' ὀνόμαζε) as the one that precedes Dione's consolation speech to her daughter. This will enable us to better grasp the diction and the function of the latter consolation scene, as we bring to light distinctive particularities of its context, content, and tone. The first occurrence of the formula is in the very first scene that brings Achilles and Thetis together, in book 1 of the *Iliad*, when the sea goddess seeks out the son she bore to Peleus to comfort him because he is in tears: the captive Briseis has been taken away from him on the orders of Agamemnon (1.361). The second time we find the line is in the very last book of the *Iliad*, when she rushes to her son's side to exhort him to return Hector's body to the Trojans and embrace a normal existence for what little time he has left to live (24.127)<sup>76</sup>. In the first instance, the formula introduces Thetis' maternal, protective speech that will ultimately lead to her seeking out Zeus' support in giving the Trojans the upper hand, until the Greeks grant her son the honor he deserves. It sets in motion the events of the twenty-three remaining books of the *Iliad* (1.509 f.)<sup>77</sup>. In the second instance, the formula introduces a maternal speech that marks the ineluctable culmination of these events: Achilles' forthcoming doom at Troy.

The introductory formulas to the consolatory speeches spoken by Dione and Thetis to their offspring may be identical, but the causes, stakes, and outcomes of these consolations could not be more different. Dione is able to provide immediate physical relief and emotional comfort to her daughter, eliminating the cause for Aphrodite's tears with a single touch. Thetis, though she is a goddess, does not bring any true consolation to Achilles; the consolation scenes between the latter two are, in fact, characterized by her incapacity to provide any meaningful comfort to the Greek hero, in the face of the absolute certitude and finality of the death that awaits him. Her helplessness to console or save her son is proverbial, due to the mortal nature of

<sup>75</sup> Pucci 1993, 269.

<sup>76</sup> There is one other occurrence of the hexameter at 6.485, which does not involve a divine mother and her offspring. It introduces Hector's response to his wife Andromache's entreaties in the famous scene in which she begs him (unsuccessfully) not to return to the battlefield and face Achilles, a fight which (she rightly anticipates) means his certain death. It is interesting to note that, though it does not involve a parent-child interaction, Hector's speech is in fact meant as a sort of consolation for Andromache, and that she herself has just described Hector as one who fulfills all roles for her, including that of father (6.429 f.): Ἐκτορ ἀτὰρ σύ μοι ἔσσι πατήρ καὶ πότνια μήτηρ / ἠδὲ κασίγνητος, σὺ δέ μοι θαλερὸς παρακοίτης. Also worthy of note is the fact that Hector's attempt at consoling Andromache, like Thetis' with Achilles, utterly fails: after he departs, Andromache proceeds to lament for him, as though he were already dead (6.494-9).

<sup>77</sup> For an analysis of Thetis' power in her relationship to Zeus (in contrast to her helplessness to prevent her son's doom), see Slatkin 1991, chp. 2.



her offspring: his father was the mortal Peleus. Thetis' visits to Achilles mark up her helplessness, and actually remind the audience of the inescapability of his fate<sup>78</sup>. When she comes to her son's side, she even comes to embody «the thought of Achilles' approaching death»<sup>79</sup>. The sources of Achilles' tears and grief are not eliminated, nor can they be: nothing will change the fact that Patroclus has died, and that Achilles must as well. In their final interaction, she reminds Achilles that 'already death and powerful destiny stand closely above <him>' (24.131-2). Aphrodite, of course, is never threatened by death. The trivial nature of her cause for pain and the ease with which her mother soothes it are carefree in comparison with Achilles' own metaphorical yet permanent wounds, and his mother's genuine, helpless lament. Therein may lie the explanation for the unique presence of Dione in book 5: she is preferred to Zeus because, as a mother figure, she bears special associations with lament – and the phraseology preceding her speech corroborates this thematic connection with the motif of imminent death. By evoking lament and death, the scene draws attention to the fact that there is, in the case of Aphrodite, no death and no reason to lament: she, like her mother, is immortal<sup>80</sup>.

Dione's speech to Aphrodite also provides a parallel and contrast to Thetis' consolatory speeches to Achilles in another significant respect. When Thetis pays her son a visit in book 18, he is stricken with intense grief and excruciating pain, having just learned from Antilochus the shattering news that Patroclus has died. Achilles blames himself (18.82: τὸν ἀπώλεσα). Thetis brings what meager solace she can; but in her consolatory speech, she also states that '<his> fate will follow shortly after Hector's', if he is to kill the latter as he says he intends to, and will (18.96). Even as she seeks to soothe her son, Thetis also reminds him of his impending doom. Dione also makes reference to human mortality, but with an opposite goal in mind: consoling her daughter. After she tells Aphrodite various stories of gods who were harmed at the hands of mortals<sup>81</sup>, she reminds her of the fate that awaits all warriors who dare to fight any god greater than Aphrodite (5.406-9): death on the battlefield. Dione goes into specific detail as she conjures up what painful consequences Diomedes' (imagined) death would have for the hero's *philoï*, going so far as to picture the future of his (widowed) wife and (orphaned) children in two evocative and pathetic vignettes. Should he continue to challenge the gods, she says, Diomedes' young children will no longer sit on his knees and call out their father's name. Instead, his grieving widow will wake the house at night with her cries of grief (5.406-15):

νήπιος, οὐδὲ τὸ οἶδε κατὰ φρένα Τυδέος υἱὸς  
ὅτι μάλ' οὐ δηναῖος ὃς ἀθανάτοισι μάχηται,

<sup>78</sup> On the helplessness of Thetis, see Slatkin 1991, chp. 1, 17-52 in particular.

<sup>79</sup> Owen 1946, 11. On Thetis' function in highlighting Achilles' mortality, see Murnaghan 1992, 251-7. Murnaghan's article discusses the connection between mothers and death in Homeric poetry more broadly as well. On the association between the figure of Achilles himself and the motifs of death and grief, see Nagy 1979, 69 ff., and 78 ff. in particular.

<sup>80</sup> On mothers as representatives of mourning, see Loraux 1990. Alexiou 2002 (1<sup>st</sup> edition 1974) remains a reference concerning women's roles in Greek lament, ancient and modern.

<sup>81</sup> 5.383-405; in order, Ares, Hera, and Hades, the first at the hands of Otus and Ephialtes, the latter two at the hands of Heracles.

οὐδέ τί μιν παῖδες ποτὶ γούνασι παπάζουσιν  
ἐλθόντ' ἐκ πολέμοιο καὶ αἰνῆς δηϊοτήτος.  
τὼ νῦν Τυδεΐδης, εἰ καὶ μάλα καρτερός ἐστι,  
φραζέσθω μὴ τίς οἱ ἀμείνων σεῖο μάχηται,  
μὴ δὴν Αἰγιάλεια περιφρων Ἄδρηστίνη,  
ἔξ ὕπνου γοώσασα φίλους οἰκῆας ἐγείρη  
κουρίδιον ποθέουσα πόσιν, τὸν ἄριστον Ἀχαιῶν,  
ἰφθίμη ἄλοχος Διομήδεος ἵπποδάμοιο.

Poor fool, the heart of Tydeus' son knows nothing of how that man who fights the immortals lives for no long time: his children do not gather on his knees calling him "pa-pa" when he returns home from the horrors of war; so let the son of Tydeus, then, strong as he may be, take care that no one stronger than you should fight him, or Aigialeia, Adrastus' wise daughter, will wake out of their sleep the loved ones who share her household with her mourning cries, longing for her husband, *the best of the Achaeans*, she, the strong wife of Diomedes tamer of horses.

The motif of family members – parents, spouses, or children – mourning the loss of a hero is a common means of heightening the pathos at the moment of a hero's death<sup>82</sup>. Here, it is used as a source of comfort to a god, in a blatant expression of divine *Schadenfreude*<sup>83</sup>.

The scene between Dione and Aphrodite thus presents the audience with a variation on the theme of maternal grief and lament. There are meaningful disparities between it and the consolatory scenes bringing together Achilles and Thetis. It is the inevitability of mortal finitude that makes Thetis' attempts to console Achilles so vain, and so tragically akin to death notices. That same mortal finitude is also prominently featured in Dione's consolation speech – not as a source of grief (as it is for Thetis), however, but as a source of comfort for her addressee, the wounded but immortal Aphrodite.

The only true lament within Dione's speech is not her own, but that of Diomedes' imagined widow. The term she uses to refer to the imagined wailing of Diomedes' widow is, I think, highly significant: γοώσασα (5.413)<sup>84</sup>. Tracing the occurrence of a single term within the *Iliad* and finding significance in the term's every occurrence is not always a reliable methodological path to follow<sup>85</sup>; yet one cannot but be struck by the fact that, aside from the present one, every subsequent occurrence of γοώσασα (and of the term γοός) throughout the *Iliad* is made in reference to its three prime

<sup>82</sup> See Griffin 1976, 1980.

<sup>83</sup> Though gods regularly intervene in mortal affairs to favor their protégés in battle throughout the *Iliad*, rejoicing in mortals' plight is not common divine behavior. Even the often merciless Apollo (see Patroclus' death in 16.788 ff.) adopts a (perhaps self-serving) moral high ground in the midst of the theomachy, when he advocates non-intervention in mortal affairs, displaying some degree of compassion for the human condition. Mortals, he says, are no more than fragile leaves on a tree, 'flaming briefly to life' (tr. Lombardo) only to wither and die soon thereafter (21.461-7).

<sup>84</sup> For γοός as opposed to θρῆνος, see the work of Alexiou 1974 (2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 2002), particularly 10-4.

<sup>85</sup> Regarding the impossibility of claiming that every repeated word in the Homeric poem is significant, *except* in the case of words that express the poem's central themes, see Elmer 2013, 15 (quoted above, n. 59). Like ὀλοφυρόμενος, the participle γοώσασα also refers to lament, and is directly connected to the poem's central theme of heroic mortality.

antagonists and their deaths: Achilles and Patroclus, on the one hand, and Hector on the other. In other words, this form of kin-performed lamentation is specifically associated with the three principal heroic figures of the *Iliad* – and with their deaths<sup>86</sup>.

When Hector returns to his father's palace, he is surprised not to find his wife in the halls of the house. His servants inform him that Andromache has run out to the walls, where she stands, lamenting and weeping (πύργῳ ἐφειστήκει γοόωσά τε μυρομένη τε), even though Hector still lives (6.369-73)<sup>87</sup>. The term γοόωσα occurs again when Patroclus dies at Hector's hands: his life-force (ψυχή) leaves his body and 'laments' over its destiny and Achilles' beloved friend's youth, cut off in its prime (16.855-7)<sup>88</sup>. Hector's ψυχή in turn mourns: γοόωσα occurs along with the same exact three hexameters that we find at the time of Patroclus' death, when Achilles kills the Trojan prince to avenge his friend's death (22.361-3). The causal connections between the heroes' deaths (it is to avenge Patroclus that Achilles kills Hector) is thus reflected within the poetics: the repetition of the same motifs and the shared formulas on both occasions (the three formulaic hexameters describing the mourning ψυχή) make clear that one killing has led to another. We come full circle as the subsequent occurrence of γοόωσα reverts to Andromache, who performs a second lament for Hector – this time after his death, over his corpse (22.475-7). The phraseology that Dione uses to describe the (imagined) grief of Diomedes' widow (γοόωσα) therefore creates a dictional connection between the imagined (and imaginary) fate of Diomedes, and the actual fates that await Patroclus, Hector, and Achilles. Dione's prognosis is wrong, however. Diomedes will actually survive the war at Troy. The other three heroes will not.

### Equal to a God.

The connections between Diomedes and the other great heroes of the *Iliad* are drawn sometimes even more explicitly. Critics have already devoted much attention to the similarities between Diomedes and Achilles in particular, and the elements of Homeric phraseology that point these similarities, while drawing attention to Achilles' supremacy by contrast with Diomedes<sup>89</sup>. It is not my goal to revisit these in detail in

<sup>86</sup> The causal interconnectedness between the deaths of Patroclus, Hector and Achilles is reflected in the poetics of the *Iliad* through many specific dictional and structural parallels. Fenik 1968, 216 ff. closely analyzes the parallels between the deaths of Hector and Patroclus, including with regards to the use of what I designate below as 'the triple attempt type scene'. On Patroclus as the epic surrogate of Achilles, see Whitman 1958, particularly 199-203. For parallels in structure and diction between the three heroes' deaths (especially Patroclus and Hector), see more recently Leuzzi in Aceti – Leuzzi – Pagani 2008, 271-326.

<sup>87</sup> Compare Thetis' lament over the death of Achilles while he is still living: 18.54-62. On the interdependence between the epic celebration of martial and heroic values and the implicit challenges to those values conveyed by lament, see Murnaghan 1999. For a detailed analysis of Andromache's lament, and its resonance with other traditional laments in the *Iliad* (Briseis' in particular), see Dué 2002, 67 ff.

<sup>88</sup> Later on, when the same ψυχή visits Achilles in his dreams (23.105 ff.), it laments and weeps for Patroclus' death once more.

<sup>89</sup> On Diomedes as a 'stand in' and alternative for Achilles in the earlier part of the poem, see Andersen 1978. See also Burgess 2009 chp. 4, esp. 66 ff. For instance, in our scene, the formula that Dione uses to describe Diomedes is normally reserved for Achilles: she calls him 'the best of

what follows. I simply want to provide a cursory overview of some of the most obvious dictional parallels that are drawn between Diomedes and the other major heroes of the *Iliad* (principally Achilles), and to take note of those thematic and formal elements that highlight the exceptional nature, not just (nor even mainly) of Diomedes' deeds during his *aristeia*, but of his fate: survival.

Diomedes' outstanding feats, just like the gods' wounds at his hands, are exceptional and unique events within the *Iliad*. He provides a 'bright' counterpart and foil for Achilles: «no extra vista of tragedy attends the work of Diomedes. His is the heroic pattern without thought, victory without implicit defeat»<sup>90</sup>. The thematic and poetic parallels that are drawn between him and other heroes remind the audience just how much his deeds – and especially his fate – are extraordinary. He both foreshadows and eludes the other great heroes' fates. Every boundary that he crosses is a reminder of that boundary's existence to begin with. The other heroes that cross them will not be so lucky.

At the height of his *aristeia*, after wounding Aphrodite, Diomedes is emboldened to attempt to kill her son Aeneas, in the midst of what I will refer to in shorthand as a 'triple attempt type scene'<sup>91</sup>. The son of Tydeus makes three attempts to kill Aeneas, and on the fourth try, he knowingly (γινώσκων) challenges the divinity that is protecting the Trojan hero, who is none other than Apollo (5.431-7)<sup>92</sup>:

Ὦς οἱ μὲν τοιαῦτα πρὸς ἀλλήλους ἀγόρευον,  
 Αἰνεΐα δ' ἐπόρουσε βοὴν ἀγαθὸς Διομήδης,  
 γινώσκων ὃ οἱ αὐτὸς ὑπέριεχε χεῖρας Ἀπόλλων·  
 ἀλλ' ὃ γ' ἄρ' οὐδὲ θεὸν μέγαν ἄζετο, ἴετο δ' αἰεὶ  
 Αἰνεΐαν κτεῖναι καὶ ἀπὸ κλυτὰ τεύχεα δῦσαι.  
 τρὶς μὲν ἔπειτ' ἐπόρουσε κατακτάμεναι μενεαίνων,  
 τρὶς δὲ οἱ ἐστυφέλιξε φαιρινὴν ἀσπίδ' Ἀπόλλων.

Now as these were talking in this way to each other, Diomedes of the great war cry made for Aeneas. Though he saw how Apollo himself held his hands over him he did not shrink even from the great god, but forever forward drove, to kill Aeneas and strip his glorious armor. Three times, furious to cut him down, he drove forward; and three times Apollo battered aside the bright shield.

the Achaeans', τὸν ἄριστον Ἀχαιῶν. While the formula is also applied elsewhere to Agamemnon, Ajax and Diomedes, it is used primarily in reference to Achilles. Regarding the formula, its applications and implications, see Nagy 1979, 26-31 and *passim*.

<sup>90</sup> Whitman 1958, 167. Whitman later (265) describes Diomedes' *aristeia* as «a heroic comedy, which corresponds to the heroic tragedy of the *aristeia* of Achilles toward the end of the poem».

<sup>91</sup> Throughout my analysis of this triple attempt scene and its connections with others, I am indebted to Fenik's analysis of type-scenes (Fenik 1968, 46 ff.) The scenes that follow the triple attempt pattern share common phrases with the present one: see e.g., 18.155 ff., 21.176 ff., 22.165 ff. and 208 ff. See also 7.244, with a slight variation.

<sup>92</sup> Fenik 1968, 46 remarks at some length on the unique character of the present passage within the *Iliad* (citing 3.399 f. as a distant parallel), and points to other occurrences in Greek literature and myth.

On this fourth attempt, Diomedes is said to be δαίμονι ἴσος, ‘equal to a god’ (5.438-9):<sup>93</sup>

ἀλλ’ ὅτε δὴ τὸ τέταρτον ἐπέσσυτο δαίμονι ἴσος,  
δεινὰ δ’ ὁμοκλήσας προσέφη ἐκάεργος Ἀπόλλων.

But when he charged for the fourth time, equal to a god, Apollo who strikes from afar cried out to him in a terrifying voice.

The hero is summarily put in his place with a sharp warning from the god (5.438-44). He backs down, and he lives. Diomedes recognizes his mortality and acts accordingly; when he faces Apollo in book 16, Patroclus does not, with fatal consequences.

The «three + one crescendo» that we find here is a sequence that traditionally points up the threat posed to the greatest heroes, as each of them reaches the pinnacle of his heroic achievements<sup>94</sup>. Δαίμονι ἴσος marks the moment in which a hero reaches the acme of his *aristeia*, and signals the climactic point of the antagonism between a god and a hero, which usually proves deadly<sup>95</sup>. All triple attempt scenes are identically structured and similarly phrased<sup>96</sup>. Several of these depict confrontations among mortal warriors (albeit with divine aids at hand); but there is only one other triple attempt scene that pits a major Iliadic hero against a god: it is Patroclus’ confrontation with Apollo in book 16. After a first triple attempt sequence, Patroclus is pushed away from the walls of Troy by Apollo (16.702 ff.). Shortly thereafter, however, Patroclus confronts the god once more. He has not heeded Achilles’ clear warning to him when he sent him to battle in his stead<sup>97</sup>. On Patroclus’ fourth attempt, we find the epithet equating him with a god, δαίμονι ἴσος (16.784-9):

τρὶς μὲν ἔπειτ’ ἐπόρουσε θεῶν ἀτάλαντος Ἄρηι  
σμερδαλέα ἰάχων, τρὶς δ’ ἐννέα φῶτας ἔπεφνε.  
ἀλλ’ ὅτε δὴ τὸ τέταρτον ἐπέσσυτο δαίμονι ἴσος,  
ἔνθ’ ἄρα τοι Πάτροκλε φάνη βιώτοιο τελευτή·  
ἦγτετο γάρ τοι Φοῖβος ἐνὶ κρατερῇ ὑσμίνη  
δεινός· ...

<sup>93</sup> For a list of passages in which heroes are compared to gods, see Anne Parry 1973, 178-87, and 218-23.

<sup>94</sup> I am borrowing the «three + one» designation from Parry 1972, 14.

<sup>95</sup> It is when mortals come closest to being ‘like a god’ that they come nearest to their deaths and what makes them unlike the gods. On the phrase as marker of the climactic point of the antagonism between god and hero, see Nagy 1979, 143. On the other occurrences of this phrase in the *Iliad*, see Moulton 1977, 59. Janko 1992, 399 provides other examples of these triple attempt scenes, in which the fourth attempt ends in death.

<sup>96</sup> There is usually a divine intervention *in extremis* in the scenes involving mortals only as well, whereby one of the mortals (consistently a Trojan, since Apollo is the rescuer) is whisked away to safety: at 5.445 ff., Apollo rescues Aeneas from the battlefield, leaving only a phantom (an εἶδωλον) of the hero for the Greeks and Trojans to fight over. The same occurs when Achilles repeatedly charges against Hector in 20.445 ff.; Apollo eventually snatches the Trojan prince away to safety.

<sup>97</sup> For Achilles’ warning words, see 16.87-96. According to the tradition, Achilles also will not back down when faced with Apollo; see Whitman 1958, 201 and Lowenstam 1981, 115-8.

Three times he charged in with the force of the running war god Ares,  
Screaming with a terrible cry, and three times he cut down nine men.  
But when on the fourth attempt, like a god, he charged,  
Then, Patroclus, the end of your life shone forth, since Phoebus came against you there  
in the strong encounter, dangerously.

Patroclus does not back down before Apollo, and he does not survive.

In book 5, however, δαίμονι ἴσος does not mark the hero thus labeled for death. Diomedes is not fated to die at Troy. The scene that Dione conjures up when she consoles Aphrodite – the one in which she imagines his widow wailing in the night after he dies at Troy – turns out to have been only imaginary, and wrong. Though Diomedes does in fact challenge a god far greater than Aphrodite (here, Apollo; later, the god of war himself), the scene of lament pictured with relish by Dione never actually takes place, at least not in the poetic tradition as we have it<sup>98</sup>. Diomedes does not die within the *Iliad*, and we know from non-Homeric sources that he did return home after the end of the Trojan War<sup>99</sup>. His *aristeia* foreshadows, but also contrasts with the somber fates and heroic deaths of the aforementioned heroic triad<sup>100</sup>.

On witnessing Diomedes' brazenness, Apollo rushes to fetch Ares, and begs him to join in the fight, in order for him to stop the hero who is 'behaving like a god' and has knowingly tried to harm even the likes of him – Apollo (5.455-9):

Ἄρες Ἄρες βροτολοιγὲ μαιφόνε τειχεσιπλῆτα,  
οὐκ ἂν δὴ τόνδ' ἄνδρα μάχης ἐρύσαιο μετελθὼν  
Τυδείδην, ὃς νῦν γε καὶ ἂν Διὶ πατρὶ μάχοιτο;  
Κύπριδα μὲν πρῶτα σχεδὸν οὐτάσε χεῖρ' ἐπὶ καρπῷ,  
αὐτὰρ ἔπειτ' αὐτῷ μοι ἐπέσσυτο δαίμονι ἴσος.

Ares, Ares, man-slaughterer, blood-stained, destroyer of strong walls, is there no way you can go and hold back this man from the fighting, the son of Tydeus, who right now would battle Zeus father himself? Just now he stabbed Cypris in her hand, at the wrist, and, then again, godlike, he even charged against me!

Having the phrase δαίμονι ἴσος be employed by a god, rather than having it spoken in the narrator's voice, is an unusual and noteworthy touch: a god is describing a mortal as 'godlike', thereby showing himself to be self-consciously assessing his own divine nature, along with the egregious mortal transgression that he has just witnessed<sup>101</sup>. There is also some irony to having this particular phrase uttered by none other than Apollo – the very δαίμων in reference to whom the formula is habitually employed. The formula aggrandizes Diomedes, and further contrasts his

<sup>98</sup> Regarding the other traditions, see Kirk 1990, *ad l.*

<sup>99</sup> On the Homeric and post-Homeric adventures of Diomedes, see for instance Papaioannou 2000.

<sup>100</sup> Schein 1984, 81 f. notes how the *aristeiai* of other heroes serve as foils for the outstanding heroism of Achilles, whose uniqueness can only be grasped through juxtaposition and contrast with theirs.

<sup>101</sup> As we have seen, however, Diomedes does actually back down before Apollo, unlike Patroclus and, later Achilles.

survival with Patroclus' and Achilles' doom: it is spoken in the voice of an otherwise formidable god, who is here in an uncommonly meek and vulnerable position<sup>102</sup>, but is the very one who will play the principal role in destroying the greatest of the Greek heroes, including 'the best of the Achaeans' (Achilles). In his complaint to Zeus, Ares also describes Diomedes as δαίμονι ἴσος, repeating Apollo's words (5.458 f.) *verbatim*. His words continue to play up the reversal of roles and boundary crossing at hand: a mortal is behaving like a god, while he, a divine being, has come as close to the condition of mortals as possible when he was left to lie 'in torment among a heap of ghastly corpses, barely alive from the blows of Diomedes' spear' (5.886 f.)<sup>103</sup>.

When Patroclus braves Apollo for the second time, and when death comes at him in the form of Apollo, he is not just said to be 'equal to a god' (δαίμονι ἴσος, 16.786), he is also said to be θεῶν ἀτάλαντος Ἄρηϊ, 'equivalent in force to the running war god Ares' (16.784). The association of a hero with Ares is reserved for those that are fated to die soon, as evidenced in the case of Achilles' best friend (11.604): ἔκμολεν ἴσος Ἄρηϊ, κακοῦ δ' ἄρα οἱ πέλεν ἀρχή, '<Patroclus> came forth <from the hut>, equal to Ares; and this for him was the beginning of evil'<sup>104</sup>. The formulaic ἴσος Ἄρηϊ is applied to – in fact reserved for – the two main antagonists of the *Iliad*, Achilles and Hector, and once applied to Patroclus in the above context, where he explicitly doubles as Achilles. Given that Diomedes not only attacks, but also wounds the god of war Ares (with the help of Athena: 5.853 ff.), one might expect him to receive one of the formulaic epithets that declare the hero to be 'equal to Ares'. He is, in fact, the only hero who actually *does* fight Ares within the narrative (5.864 ff.), and thus literally proves to be his 'equal' (if only temporarily). The son of Tydeus *is* ἴσος Ἄρηϊ, in deed, but not in word. Perhaps the actual narrative and content of the scene make the use of the formula to some extent unnecessary or redundant. Perhaps the omission is due to the fact that the acme of Diomedes' *aristeia* does not spell his impending doom as it does for Patroclus and Hector (and will, in turn, for Achilles). The epithet is directly associated with the death of the hero to whom it is applied: it has no place here.

While Apollo describes Diomedes as 'equal to a god' (and thus heightens his achievements in the audience's eyes), Diomedes subsequently likens a god – Ares – to a mortal. His statement is not intended to demean the god, nor does it have that effect. Rather, his speech draws attention to the *apparent* and deceptive nature of the god's disguise, and to the (potentially) deadly gap between mortals' and immortals' respective powers, which such a likeness can superficially and treacherously hide. He gives his men a sharp warning to retreat immediately because he can see that, beneath the semblance of a man, there is a powerful and destructive god lurking

<sup>102</sup> Note his breathless and distraught appeal to his brother, Ἄρεος Ἄρεος.

<sup>103</sup> Adding to the irony is the fact that lingering among corpses was precisely what Ares had, in fact, already been doing when Diomedes attacked him, plundering the dead and polluting himself through contact with their blood (6.842-5).

<sup>104</sup> Patroclus leaves Achilles' tent, after donning the latter's armor, and sets off (unwittingly) to meet his doom. The formula likening a hero to Ares signals that he is performing, or about to perform his *aristeia* (see Griffin 1980, 85 and Di Benedetto 1998, 277): it marks the imminent culmination of heroic martial excellence, which also heralds the heroes' forthcoming doom.

(5.603): καὶ νῦν οἱ πάρα κείνος Ἄρης βροτῶ ἀνδρὶ εἰκώς. The implication is clear: he has no intention of braving the one whom he rightly suspects is the god of war himself – until, that is, Athena steps in and convinces him to do otherwise, with her (significant) aid. Diomedes himself is well aware of the exceptional nature of his abilities during his *aristeia*, and wary of his limitations. That Diomedes should utter his warning to others just moments before extraordinary circumstances enable him to attack that very same god serves as a reminder that such brazenness would normally prove deadly. His words remind the audience of his exceptional fortune, and of the fact that the other main heroes of the *Iliad* will not be so fortunate. The only reason why Diomedes is able to confront Ares, after having faced Apollo, neither of which is a ‘weak god’ as Aphrodite was (5.330-3), and the only reason he is able to survive these affronts to the gods, is because of the assistance of the goddess Athena. She actually steps in and fights alongside him, and the two of them face Ares together. She is so concretely, physically present at his side that his chariot squeaks under her weight (5.838). She is the one who drives the spear into Ares’ belly (5.855-7)<sup>105</sup>.

Even after facing a powerful divinity head-on, Diomedes recognizes that his ability to attack gods is exceptional, and due in no small part to the divine assistance he was provided. He is mindful of his human limitations and of his mortality. Just as he shows caution at 5.603, he does so again as early as the very following book (book 6), when he feels doubt regarding the mortal or divine nature of the opponent before him (Glaucus). He is reluctant to fight the latter, because he suspects he may be an immortal in disguise (6.128 f.):

εἰ δέ τις ἀθανάτων γε κατ’ οὐρανοῦ εἰλήλουθας,  
οὐκ ἂν ἔγωγε θεοῖσιν ἐπουρανίοισι μαχοίμην.

But if you are some one of the immortals come down from the bright sky, know that I would not fight against any god of the heavens<sup>106</sup>.

In the lines following this statement (6.130-40), the son of Tydeus recalls the rather obscure *exemplum* of Lycurgus, who was punished by Zeus for persecuting Diony-

<sup>105</sup> Though he could not see Athena because of the cap of Hades she had donned that rendered her invisible to other gods (5.844 f.), Ares is nonetheless well aware of her primary responsibility in his wounding (5.875-80).

<sup>106</sup> In his introduction to book 5, Leaf 1900-02, 146 voices his mystification at Diomedes’ words in book 6, which he finds «quite unintelligible» in light of the fact that he has just attacked Aphrodite and Ares in book 5. He takes this as grounds for supposing that «the incident of wounding Aphrodite is an addition to the original narrative». Yet as we have just seen, already in book 5, Diomedes shows great prudence when it comes to gods taking on the guise of mortals – before Athena jumps in beside him to help. The point is precisely that the wounding of the gods by a mortal is exceptional. The hero who is given this task himself makes the audience well aware of this, as he himself is. To be sure, no reference is made here to Diomedes’ exploits and physical confrontation of the gods in book 5; perhaps they are deliberately avoided. These are not grounds for labeling one or the other passage as a later accretion; see above note 11. Kirk 1990 *ad l.* suggests that Diomedes may be complacent or sarcastic here. I do not believe he is. Rather, the point of his articulating such a reluctance is to heighten the role played earlier by Athena in book 5, and his awareness of what his own limitations are, when left to his own devices.



sus and his nurses, and did not live long. His account of a struggle between a mortal and an immortal ends in the severe punishment of the transgressive mortal in question, and further underscores the extraordinary nature of his own actions in the previous book. He reiterates his refusal to fight with the gods again in conclusion (6.141-3):

οὐδ' ἂν ἐγὼ μακάρεσσι θεοῖς ἐθέλωμι μάχεσθαι.  
εἰ δέ τις ἔσσι βροτῶν οἱ ἀρούρης καρπὸν ἔδουσιν,  
ἄσσον ἴθ' ὥς κεν θᾶσσον ὀλέθρου πείραθ' ἴκηαι.

Therefore neither would I be willing to fight with the blessed gods; but if you are one of those mortals who eat what the soil yields, come nearer, so that sooner you may reach your appointed destruction.

The scene points the distinction between Diomedes when he is alone, and a mere mortal (as he is once again by book 6), and when he is helped by Athena (book 5) and endowed with superhuman powers.

### Conclusion.

Diomedes' excellence on the battlefield, especially when he confronts the gods, is unusual: it does not culminate in his death. Within the *Iliad*, he lives, and within the non-Homeric tradition, he is one of the warriors who do return home. However, the poetics of his *aristeia* evoke the fate (death) and the glory that await the great heroes of the *Iliad*, all of whom *do* die at Troy: Patroclus, Hector, and Achilles. The son of Tydeus' confrontations with the gods in book 5 are essential to the economy of the *Iliad*, in that the themes and phraseology to which they give rise suggest the fate that awaits its three most prominent heroes, who will not meet as fortunate an outcome as he. It is precisely because these heroes *do* face mortality that they will obtain eternal glory (*kleos*), which is a form of immortality unto itself<sup>107</sup>. The very moment that differentiates these mortal heroes from the divine in the most fundamental of ways (death) is also the moment that enables these heroes to attain the only form of immortality accessible to mortals in the *Iliad*: the ineluctability of death, which is the exclusive realm of humans in epic, is the very condition for *kleos*<sup>108</sup>.

The gods, who are immortal, cannot ever achieve any such glory. They serve a similar and complementary purpose to the hero that attacks them in book 5 with respect to the other mortal heroes of the *Iliad*, albeit at the opposite end of the boundary-crossing spectrum. The paradox of the Homeric gods that stands out especially during the *Diomedea* is that it is when they seem to be at their most anthropomorphic that their distinctly divine status shines forth in all its pettiness, in contrast to the mortal finitude of the heroes whose tragic yet noble greatness they simultane-

<sup>107</sup> The heroes' mortality is an essential condition of their glory; see e.g., Nagy 1979 *passim*; Griffin 1980; Schein 1984; Slatkin 1991; Monsacré 1984, 185-96. On the opposition between the mortal hero and the gods, and the petty insignificance of the gods' internal struggles for honor (because of their immortality), see Schein 1984, esp. 45-66.

<sup>108</sup> On the relationship and tension between *kleos* (glory) and *penthos* (grief) in the Homeric poems, see Nagy 1979, 94-117.

ously evoke and elude, *qua* gods. As they cry in pain and experience distress, and in some cases fall ‘nearly dead’ (Ares), the phraseology that is used to describe these gods’ pain does not actually express any serious suffering or vulnerability on their part. Rather, it evokes, by contrast, the finitude and vulnerability of the *Iliad*’s mortal heroes, whose tragic condition and noble endurance stand out all the more starkly when set against the backdrop of the gods’ superficial pain and petty concerns. As Goethe stated, «the purpose and goal of the Greeks is to deify man, not to humanize deity. This is not anthropomorphism but theomorphism»<sup>109</sup>.

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<sup>109</sup> As quoted by Otto 1954, 236 (translation M. Hadas).

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## *Gods in Pain*

**Abstract:** The Diomedea of *Iliad 5* brings to the fore the distinction between god and man in a paradoxical manner: by repeatedly blurring the lines between the mortal and divine realms. The mortal hero Diomedes goes on a killing rampage, attacking the gods on three occasions and painfully wounding two of them. How might we explain the presence of an episode whose focus appears to be the intensity, strangeness, and singular nature of the gods' bodily presence and experience of vulnerability, and what should we make of the exceptional mortal prowess Diomedes is granted here, in the face of divine opponents? What follows is an attempt to revisit some of the function(s) fulfilled by the depiction of divine pain at the hands of an unusually empowered mortal, paying close attention to the themes that these scenes foreground, and to the phraseology that is used to do so.

**Keywords:** Homer, Gods, Hero, Aristeia, Mortality.