CHAPTER 3

Fighting in the *Iliad*

My purpose in this chapter is to survey the representation of battle in the *Iliad*, moving from the components that make up the individual encounter to the devices by which larger narrative units are created from such encounters. This goal requires a very different strategy from the one adopted in the previous chapter. There I was concerned with tracing the design of the central action, and I selected detail in the light of its bearing on the structure and unity of the poem. Here my chief aim is to classify phenomena and to convey a sense of their relative frequency. It is in the battle scenes that the modern reader is most likely to be wearied by the seemingly endless succession of virtually identical incidents and to experience the 'formulaic style' at its stereotyped worst. For this reason there is some virtue in sorting out the frequency of typical incidents and in establishing the degree of variation between closely related phenomena. As it turns out, the impression of endless repetition rests on a fairly small base, and many details of battle owe their 'typically Homeric' status not to repetition but to vividness of language, like the 'Homeric' laughter of the gods that arises only once in the *Iliad* (1.599).

There is no doubt that battle scenes, which amount to 5,500 lines or a good third of the *Iliad*, enjoy considerable autonomy in the poem. The poet and his audience like such scenes, and their periodic occurrence requires no greater motivation than bar-room brawls in a Western. But, although narrative control over the battle scenes is often relaxed, it is rarely absent, and it would be a great mistake to ignore specific narrative aims that guide the elaboration or deployment of particular motifs. Such questions as 'Why does this convention occur three times in this part of the poem?' often have an answer that points to the story of Achilles, Patroklos and Hektor. Often, but not always: a judicious reader must be alert to the function of detail without demanding the rigorous integration of every particular into the design of the poem. (In the following pages I am much indebted to Friedrich, 1956, and Fenik, 1968, whose books subsume much of the extensive literature on fighting in the *Iliad*.)

THE ETHOS OF HOMERIC FIGHTING

Warfare in the *Iliad* depends entirely on the strength and courage of the individual fighter. There is no room for strategy or cunning. There is not even much interest in skill. It is assumed that the warrior knows how to throw a spear or wield a sword, but special dexterity in the use or avoidance of a weapon is not a significant feature of the narrative. This attitude is Iliadic rather than Homeric or heroic. Cunning is highly regarded in the *Odyssey*, and in the *Iliad* there are occasional references to it. The shield of Achilles shows men gathered in an ambush and increasing their strength through cunning (18.513). Idomeneus praises the sang-froid Meriones would display in an ambush (13.275). Nestor likes to give orders and advice of a strategic kind (2.362, 4.297); he also tells Antilochos how a good charioteer can use intelligence (*mētis*) to compensate for inferior horses (23.313), and the dutiful son remembers the advice so well that he seeks to improve his position in the race by reckless cheating (23.402). On another occasion Nestor tells how in the old days Lykurgos killed Areïthoös 'by guile rather than force' (7.142). But, while the *Iliad* is clearly familiar with a world in which the outcome of contests turns on the unscrupulous use of intelligence and the ruthless exploitation of the opponent's weakness, the poem banishes both from its arena and presents a spectacle of war at once brutal and innocent: no ambush, no stratagem, no diversionary or dilatory tactic qualifies the encounter of enemies in the field of battle. The bow is a marginal weapon in this world and does not become a major warrior. It is used by Pandaros, Paris and Teukros, but Odysseus, who gives a taste of his cunning in the wrestling match with Aias (23.725), left his bow at home when he sailed for Troy and like other major warriors fights with spear and sword. Only accident is allowed to qualify open force: some dozen warriors in the *Iliad* lose their lives because they stand in the path of a spear aimed at someone else. The trickery of the gods is a special case. The one part of the *Iliad* in which deception plays a major role, the Doloneia (Book 10), has been firmly established as a later addition to the epic (below, p. 175).

The ethos of fighting is perfectly embodied in the words that precede Hektor's attack on Aias in their duel in Book 7:

> Yet great as you are I would not strike you by stealth, watching
> for my chance, but openly, so, if perhaps I might hit you.
> (7.242–3)

Fighting in this spirit not only despises guile and cowardice; it is also constrained by an implicit notion of fairness. The actual fighting in the *Iliad* does not always live up fully to that ideal; indeed, it is Hektor himself who runs away from Achilles and takes ruthless advantage of Patroklos' injury. How typical are these striking violations of the code?

The question of fairness arises wherever a warrior is taken by surprise. Leaving aside the few bow-shots and the spear-casts that hit someone else, such surprise is not very common. In the fourth book, Elephenor bends over a slain warrior to strip him. As he does so, his ribs are exposed and Agenor hits him (4.463). Similarly, Koön takes Agamemnon by surprise as he removes the armour of Iphidamas (11.248). These incidents reflect on the victim's lack of caution. On two occasions in Book 13 a Trojan warrior unsuccessfully attacks an Achaean only to be caught unawares by Meriones on his retreat (13.567, 650). A more drastic instance of intervention by a third warrior occurs when Menelaos kills Dolops from behind as he is facing an attack by Meges (15.525). All three cases seem less than heroic and occur in a stretch of fighting distinguished by savagery of other kinds (below, pp. 85–6). None of these incidents, however, matches the ruthlessness of Hektor's killing of Patroklos. On three occasions a warrior kills an enemy whom he has previously disabled (below, p. 80). But there is no other case of a warrior killing an enemy whom someone else has disabled.

If the death of Patroklos is the most serious violation of fairness, the duel of Hektor and Achilles provides the most glaring example of loss of courage. The Homeric warrior aims at inspiring in his opponent the uncontrollable fear that leads to flight (*phobos*). Instances of such panic are numerous, but they are typically a collective phenomenon. Individual flight is a much rarer and more qualified phenomenon. When Zeus turns the scales of battle in favour of the Trojans and the Achaeans run away, Diomedes is the only warrior to come to the help of the stranded Nestor. He calls on Odysseus as he runs past, but Odysseus does not hear him or does not listen (the text is ambiguous, 8.97). Odysseus, however, makes the fullest statement of the code of courage when, surrounded by Trojans, he refuses to yield in the face of overwhelming odds (11.401). Between these extremes, there are intermediate positions. Diomedes is afraid to yield lest Hektor accuse him of cowardice. It takes the advice of Nestor and three thunderbolts from Zeus to persuade him that retreat on this occasion is inevitable and not shameful (8.130). The hand of the god is generally a valid excuse for yielding. So Diomedes in Book 5 organises a retreat because Hektor is aided by a god (5.604). Zeus inspires Aias with fear (11.544), but even so his retreat is slow and reluctant. A warrior may without serious loss of face retreat from an enemy who is clearly superior. Thus Menelaos persuades himself that he may abandon the body of Patroklos when Hektor approaches (17.91), and Aeneas yields to Menelaos and Antilochos (5.571), but Diomedes scornfully rejects the advice to retreat before the joint attack of Aeneas and Pandaros, and events prove him right (5.251).

There are limits to Hektor's courage even before the encounter with Achilles. At the order of Zeus he avoids Agamemnon (11.187) just as at the order of Apollo he avoids Achilles (20.376), although he breaks that command when he witnesses the death of his brother Polydoros (20.419). He also avoids Aias on his own initiative (11.542). When Patroklos routs the Trojans, Hektor at first resists the attacks of Aias by his skill at evasive action – the only time in the *Iliad* this skill is made much of (16.359) – but then he, too, joins the rout (367). He teams up with Aeneas against Automedon in the hope of conquering the horses of Achilles, but he retreats in fear when the Aiantes come to the aid of Automedon (17.483). But neither his previous behaviour nor the other scenes of more or less honourable retreat are any precedent for his extraordinary loss of courage at the approach of Achilles. A warrior may persuade himself to stay (Odysseus) or to retreat (Menelaos), but only Hektor persuades himself to stay and fails to live up to his resolution. It is important to remember, however, that the poet sees Hektor's flight less as a failure of Hektor's courage than as a symptom of the overwhelming terror emanating from Achilles.

THE INDIVIDUAL ENCOUNTER

The unit of fighting is the individual encounter. The most salient feature of this unit is its brevity. In other forms of heroic poetry warriors demonstrate their prowess in protracted struggles with one or more opponents. Hours or days and many lines may pass before the decisive stroke, and the victor may suffer as many wounds as the vanquished. Not so in the *Iliad*, where the first blow disables the opponent, occasionally through injury, but mostly through death, which is always instantaneous.

Except for two occasions, the injured warrior has no power to strike back. Agamemnon and Odysseus withdraw from battle after killing the men who injure them. The other injured warriors do not return to battle until a god heals or strengthens them as happens to Diomedes (5.111), Aeneas (5.305, 445, 512), Glaukos (12.387, 16.509) and Hektor (14.402, 15.239). The wounding of Menelaos by Pandaros does not occur in battle. Sometimes injuries are forgotten or trivial and healed by the surgeon. Sarpedon, who suffers a serious thigh-wound on the first day (5.660), fights on the third day as if nothing had happened to him. Similarly, Teukros suffers what appears to be a disabling shoulder injury on the second day of fighting (8.324), but is all there again on the following day. It is hard to tell whether these cases are due to heroic resilience or to a lapse of memory, but the three Achaean leaders wounded in Book 11 hobble to the assembly on the following day (19.47).

Out of some 140 specified encounters only twenty involve more than one blow, and except for the duel of Hektor and Aias no encounter goes beyond a second exchange of blows. On three occasions, the victim is only disabled by the first blow, and it requires a second blow to kill him (4.517, 527; 20.478). The death of Patroklos at the hands of Apollo, Euphorbos and Hektor is an elaboration of these cases.

On two occasions, the warriors let go of their missiles simultaneously (5.655, 13.584). On seven occasions, the aggressor misses the enemy or does not pierce his armour fatally and is killed or disabled in return. The victim is always a Trojan. We find this pattern with Pandaros and Diomedes (5.280), Ares and Diomedes/Athene (5.850), Euphorbos and Menelaos (17.43), Hektor and Aias (14.402). A slight variation occurs in the duel of Meges and Dolops. Meges is hit by Dolops, whose spear does not pierce. Meges, who has used his spear to kill another Trojan, hits Dolops with his sword. This stroke, however, is not fatal, and Dolops is killed by Menelaos, who comes up from behind and pierces his chest with his spear (15.525). Finally, in two closely related scenes, the Trojan aggressor injures an Achaean who retains enough strength to avenge himself on his aggressor but is then forced to leave the battle. This pattern is found in the wounding of Agamemnon and Odysseus in Book 11 by Koön and Sokos (11.248, 428). Agamemnon is injured less seriously than Odysseus but, while he continues to fight for a while after Koön's death, the poet does not attribute any named slayings to him.

Only eight encounters go beyond a first exchange of blows – a telling indication of the narrator's preoccupation with the decisive moment. The first exchange always involves spears and has a variety of outcomes. Peneleos and Lykon miss one another (16.335). So do Sarpedon and Patroklos, but each of them hits another victim, the latter the charioteer of Sarpedon, the former the tracehorse of Patroklos (16.462). The outcome of the first exchange reflects the relative strengths of the combatants in the duels of Paris and Menelaos and Achilles and Aeneas (3.355, 20.259). On both occasions, the Trojan fails to pierce the Achaean's shield. The Achaean does pierce the armour of his opponent, who somehow 'ducks' the spear. On four occasions it is the victor who misses on the first throw. Thus Agamemnon misses Iphidamas (11.233), Menelaos Peisandros (13.605), Achilles Asteropaios (21.171) and Achilles Hektor (22.273–6). In each case the opponent hits but fails to pierce; the ambidextrous Asteropaios discharges two spears at once, one of which sticks in Achilles' shield whereas the other grazes his hand.

There is no standard procedure for the second exchange, although it usually involves a change from spear to sword. Menelaos attacks Paris with a sword, which breaks. He then pulls Paris by the strap of his helmet, but Aphrodite snaps the helmet strap. Agamemnon hits Iphidamas with his sword. The duels of Peisandros and Menelaos and Lykon and Peneleos are alike in that both involve a simultaneous exchange of blows in which the Trojan's blow fails. But Peisandros wields a battle-axe instead of a sword, the only warrior in the *Iliad* to do so. Sarpedon and Patroklos exchange spears in the second round. The former misses, the latter hits. Asteropaios, the man with two spears, has no sword. As he vainly tries to pull the spear of Achilles out of the ground, Achilles dispatches him with his sword. Achilles rushes at Aeneas with his sword, and Aeneas stands ready to throw a rock, but Poseidon puts an end to the encounter before the second exchange can take place. The most famous victim of Achilles can only be a victim of his spear: Hektor rushes at Achilles with his sword, but Achilles kills him with the spear that Athene returned to him after he missed on his first throw.

The longest fight in the *Iliad,* curiously enough, is the not entirely serious encounter of Hektor and Aias in Book 7. Their duel does not involve the characteristic change from spear to sword, but is based on the triple repetition of a throwing contest in which Aias comes out slightly ahead each time. When the warriors turn to their swords the heralds put an end to the fighting by pointing to the onset of night.

INJURY AND DEATH

Battle narrative in the *Iliad* is dominated to the point of obsession by the decisive and disabling blow. Some 170 Trojan and fifty Achaean named warriors lose their lives in the *Iliad*; another dozen, evenly divided between the two sides, are injured. About eighty of these die in lists, two, three or four to a line, such as the following victims of Patroklos:

> Adrestos
> first, and after him Autonoös and Echeklos,
> Perimos, son of Megas, and Epistor, and Melanippos,
> and after these Elasos, and Moulios, and Pylartes. (16.694–6)

The remaining 140, only two dozen of them Achaeans, attract more of the poet's attention at the point of their death. The degree of attention varies enormously and observes a delicately graded hierarchy: Hektor, Patroklos and Sarpedon, but also Euphorbos, Iphidamas and Sokos, stand out against the many warriors about whom the poet tells us no more than their name, patronymic, and the nature of their invariably fatal injury. What unites the greatest and the least warriors is the experience of sudden and violent death.

The poet goes out of his way to introduce variety into his grim litany. Take the narrative stretch that describes a rout of the Trojans and shows six Achaean leaders each killing an opponent (5.37–83). Hodios falls off his chariot hit by Agamemnon's spear between the shoulders. Idomeneus hits Phaistos on the right shoulder as he mounts his chariot. Menelaos, like his brother, hits the fleeing Skamandrios between the shoulders. Meriones' spear pierces the right buttock and bladder of Phereklos. Meges hits Pedaios in the back of the head, cutting through his teeth and tongue. Eurypylos rushes at Hypsenor with a sword and cuts off his arm. A similar stretch in the Patrokleia features wounds in the thigh, chest, hip, flank, shoulder, neck, shoulder, mouth, as well as a cut-off head (16.306–50).

Here are the victims of Achilles, the final list of slayings in the *Iliad*

(20.381–489). Iphition is hit in the middle of the head, Demoleon on the temple. His helmet does not hold: the spear crashes through the bone and brain splatters on the inside of the helmet. Hippodamas is hit in the back, Polydoros in the navel: he falls holding his guts in his hands. The spear of Achilles hits Dryops in the neck and Demouchos in the knee. Laogonos and Dardanos are dispatched with spear and sword respectively, but their injuries are not specified. Tros vainly seeks to supplicate Achilles: a sword-stroke makes his liver slip out. The spear drives in at one ear of Moulion and out at the other. The sword plunges deep into the neck of Echeklos and is heated by his blood. Deukalion is hit in the elbow; unable to move, his head is cut off and flung away with the helmet. Marrow jets out of his spine. Rhigmos is hit in the abdomen, Areïthoös in the back.

This survey of some two dozen injuries from four killing scenes provides a fairly representative sample of injury and death in the *Iliad*. The upper body and the head are the most common targets for the spear, the neck and head for the sword. In any sequence of killings the poet will vary the injuries and the degree of detail. He may state the mere fact of death, or he may dwell in great detail on the circumstances of a particular slaying, but most commonly he will use a phrase that is specific without being very descriptive, such as 'on the right shoulder', 'through the chest', 'below the ear'. Against the background of ordinary killings some scenes stand out for their special precision, atrocity or extravagance. In our sample, the victims of Meriones and Meges in Book 5 as well as several of Achilles' victims fall in this category.

These special injuries require separate attention because they have an effect quite disproportionate to their scarcity. Mention the *Iliad* in a conversation, and someone is likely to point to some particularly grisly injury as a typical instance of Homeric narrative. But such injuries are not nearly so pervasive as casual readers assume. Out of 140 specified injuries only thirty are remarkable in one way or another, and their description takes up a bare hundred lines. Far from being instances of epic battle-lust, these descriptions are associated with particular characters or situations, and they owe their prominence as much to strategic placement as to vividness of detail.

First a brief survey of the grisly scenes. A few injuries are remarkable less for their cruelty than for their attention to real or imagined anatomical detail. Thus Amphiklos is hit 'at the base of the leg where the muscle/of a man grows thickest so that on the spear head the sinew/was torn apart' (16.314–16). Ancient scholiasts wondered about this injury because it does not appear to be particularly lethal. Antilochos rushes at Thoön and 'shore away the entire vein/which runs all the way up the back till it reaches the neck' (13.546–7). For all its precision, the description defies human anatomy. The third example of what Friedrich (p. 44) has called fake realism occurs in Book 14 where Archelochos is hit 'at the joining place of head and neck, at the last/vertebra, and cut through both of the tendons' (14.465–6).

Much more important to the tone of the poem are scenes in which a head is either severed or smashed in a particularly brutal way. Three times, and in words that echo each other, the helmet shatters under the blow of a spear and is besplattered on the inside with brain (11.97, 12.183, 20.397). Idomeneus drives a spear through the mouth and into the brain of Erymas. The skull splits, teeth fall out, and the eye sockets fill with blood, which also wells up through nose and mouth (16.345). The helmet of Hippothoös cannot withstand the force of Aias' blow, 'and the brain ran from the wound along the spear by the eyehole, bleeding' (17.297–8). The spear of Diomedes drives through eye, nose and teeth of Pandaros before cutting off his tongue at the base (5.291). A whole line is given over to Pandaros' tongue, perhaps because he had been such a braggart in his life, but Pedaios (5.73) and Koiranos (17.617) suffer a similar fate. The realm of the probable is clearly left behind in two scenes where the violence of the blow forces the eyes out of their sockets so that they fall on the ground, the fate of Peisandros (13.616–17) and Kebriones (16.741–2).

Decapitation occurs half a dozen times, sometimes as a form of mutilation. Aias Oileus cuts off the head of the dead Imbrios and throws it before Hektor's feet (13.202). Agamemnon chops off Koön's head over the body of his brother Iphidamas (11.261). When he hews off the arms and head of Hippolochos, killing and mutilation are both present (11.145). The same is true of one of the most grotesque scenes in the *Iliad*. Ilioneus is speared in the eye; as he falls backward, Peneleos cuts off his head and triumphantly lifts his spear, with the head stuck on it 'like a poppy' (14.499). The same Peneleos later severs the head of Lykon so that it dangles from the body by a mere piece of skin (16.339).

Abdominal injuries are not uncommon, but are usually not specified beyond such phrases as *kata laparēn* ('in the flank'), *mesēn kata gastera* or *neiairēi en gastri* ('in the middle or lower belly'). Where the wound is elaborated, the poet dwells on the image of guts spilling out of the body. This happens to Peiros (4.525), and to three victims of Achilles (20.418, 470, 21.180). The gruesomest image, however, occurs in Book 17. On two occasions a spear misses and continues to quiver after it hits the ground (13.504, 16.614). This image is varied in the death of Aretos, whom Automedon, the charioteer of Patroklos, kills in revenge for his fallen comrade: the spear quivers in the entrails of the hapless victim (17.523).

Groin injuries occur four times. One of them is passed over in a phrase (4.492), the other three are remarkable for being the work of Meriones, a ruthless and somewhat sneaky warrior. The first injury is suffered by Phereklos, son of the man who built the ships for Paris' fateful voyage (5.59). An ancient scholiast interpreted the wound as poetic justice for the whoring of Paris. The other two occur in adjacent and similar passages in the aristeia of Idomeneus (below, p. 96, for a discussion of the term): a Trojan fails to pierce the armour of an Achaean; as he retreats, Meriones hits him in the groin 'where beyond all places/death in battle comes painfully to pitiful mortals' (13.568). The death spasms of the victims are compared to a twitching bull (13.571) and a wriggling worm (13.654) - unique images that make it clear that a sense of revulsion is intended and not the result of a more refined sensibility.

There remain three unique and bizarre scenes of death in the *Iliad*. Two of them involve charioteers. A straightforward version of a charioteer's death occurs after the death of Asios. His unnamed charioteer loses his wits, is hit in the stomach by Antilochos and falls off his chariot (13.394). In Book 5, Menelaos kills Pylaimenes, and once more it is Antilochos who kills the charioteer, but the motif of the fallen warrior is varied: his head is stuck in the deep sand, and the body remains standing for a while - an image that gains force from the contrast with typical closing phrases like 'he fell thunderously and his armour clattered about him'. In the other version, the motif of the charioteer's paralysis is varied. Patroklos kills the terrified Thestor by stabbing him in the jaw and then

> hooked and dragged him with the spear over the rail, as a fisherman
> who sits out on the jut of a rock with line and glittering
> bronze hook drags a fish, who is thus doomed, out of the water.
> So he hauled him, mouth open to the bright spear, out of the chariot,
> and shoved him over on his face, and as he fell the life left him.
> (16.406-10)

Finally, perhaps the most bizarre death of all, a second variation on the theme of the spear quivering in the ground. Paralysed by Poseidon, Alkathoös stands immobile as Idomeneus pierces his armour and drives the spear through his heart:

> He cried out then, a great cry, broken, the spear in him,
> and fell, thunderously, and the spear in his heart was stuck fast
> but the heart was panting still and beating to shake the butt end
> of the spear. Then and there Ares the huge took his life away
> from him. (13.441-4)

With the exception of Koiranos (17.617), the victims of gruesome injuries are always Trojans, a reflection of the bias of the poet's narrative sources. Some interesting conclusions emerge from looking at the distribution of these injuries and at the identity of the killers. Twenty-eight of thirty injuries occur in Books 5, 13-14, and in the aristeias of Achilles, Agamemnon and Patroklos (including the fight over his body). The killers are either minor warriors or major warriors in extreme situations. The reasons for this distribution are not hard to find. Minor warriors are both distinguished and placed by their association with fanciful and cruel injuries. Meriones is the specialist in groin injuries; Peneleos acquires similar notoriety through the brutality of head wounds he inflicts. The cluster of unusual injuries in Books 13 and 14 has two reasons. We may distinguish in the *Iliad* between fights that sharply focus on a concrete object (the wall in Book 12, the ships in Book 15, the body of Patroklos in Book 17) and diffuse fighting scenes in which the general sense of battle yields to the individual encounter. Gruesome injuries are almost completely absent from the fighting scenes of the former type (except for the fighting over Patroklos), and they are clustered in the scenes of the latter type. The desire to make individual encounters more colourful and inevitably more brutal accounts for the frequency of unusual injuries in Book 5 and in Books 13 and 14, but it does not explain the much greater brutality of Books 13 and 14. Again the reason is not hard to find. The cruelty of Books 13 and 14 measures the changing nature of the war. The reminder of increasing brutality comes just before Patroklos re-enters the fighting. Patroklos, we recall, is singled out in the *Iliad* for his gentleness, and the brutality of his fate is a major theme of the poem. But, if Patroklos becomes a victim of war, he is also transformed by its rage: the fighting he leads is exceptionally bloody, and of the five unusual injuries it causes he himself is responsible for two.

It is hardly necessary to point out why cruel injuries are frequent in the aristeia of Achilles: his violence is a response to and further intensification of the brutality that has claimed Patroklos, but as with Patroklos it is at odds with his 'character': 'Achilles' unyielding harshness to both living and dead enemies is less the function of his nature than of his fate' (Friedrich, 60).

Agamemnon is a different case. His cruelty manifests itself in the first scene of the *Iliad* when he rebuffs Chryses, and his bloody aristeia seems quite in character. On the other hand, Agamemnon as the leader of the expedition has the strongest sense of the wrong done by the Trojans. His killing of the suppliants Adrestos and Hippolochos is motivated by his sense of outrage. Thus even the Iliadic Agamemnon may not be cruel by nature, but we discover in his portrayal the theme of the brutalising force of a moral mission, which Aeschylus was to develop with magnificent thoroughness.

. . . AND HIS ARMOUR CLATTERED ABOUT HIM

The preoccupation with the individual encounter and the decisive stroke of death appears in another Iliadic convention, the phrase, ranging in length from a half-line to three lines, by which the poet confirms the death of the victim. These poetic death certificates appear roughly a hundred times and exhibit considerable variety.

Death appears as the loosener of limbs in a set of phrases of which *luse de guia* (× 6) is the commonest. Another set of phrases equates death with the literal fall of the warrior. *Doupēsen de pesōn,* 'he fell with a thud' (× 12), occurs most frequently, its very sound echoing the fall of the warrior on the ground. Less onomatopoeic is a set of phrases that are derived from the verb *ereipein,* 'to fall', and specify the direction or origin of the fall, such as 'from the chariot', 'over his feet', or 'in the dust'. The phrases *keito tanustheis* (× 2) and *keito tatheis* (× 2), 'he lay stretched out', dwell on the result of the fall. After the death of Kebriones there is fighting over his body, and the poet returns to the body on the ground: *ho d'en strophalingi koniēs/keito megas megalōsti lelasmenos hipposunaōn* ('he lay in the whirling dust mightily in his might, his horsemanship all forgotten', 16.775–6).

The falling phrases may stand by themselves but more commonly they are combined with others. The most famous of these combinations contrasts the thudding sound of the body with the clatter of its armour, imitating the contrast in its own phonetic structure: *doupēsen te pesōn, arabēse de teuche' ep'autōi,* 'he fell with a thud and his armour clattered about him' (× 6). Another phrase for the accompanying noise of the armour is *amphi de hoi brache teuchea poikila chalkōi,* 'his glittering armour clattered about him' (× 3), and a unique variant focuses on the noise of the helmet: *amphi de pēlēx smerdaleon konabēse peri krotaphoisi pesontos,* 'the helmet crashed fearfully about the temples of the falling man'.

The sound can also be the death shout of the falling warrior, as in *gnux d' erip' oimōxas,* 'he fell backwards in the dust with a shout', and in the phrase that closes the falls of Asios and Sarpedon:

> *hōs ho prosth' hippōn kai diphrou keito tanustheis*
> *bebruchōs, konios de dragmenos haimatoessēs*
> So he lay there felled in front of his horses and chariot,
> roaring, and clawed with his hands at the bloody dust.
> (13.392–3 = 16.485–6)

A similar gesture of futility appears in the line *ho d'en koniēisi pesōn hele gaian agostōi,* 'falling in the dust he clutched the earth with his hand' (× 5). Even more pathetic is the vision of the dying warrior stretching out his hands towards his comrades: *ho d'huptios en koniēisi kappesen amphō cheire philois hetaroisi petassas,* 'he fell backward in the dust stretching out his hands towards his companions' (× 2).

The contrast of death and fertility occurs in a line that closes catalogue killings: *pantas epassuterous pelase chthoni pouluboteirei,* 'all these he felled to the bountiful earth in rapid succession' (× 3). Perhaps a similar association informs the line *keito tatheis, ek d'haima melan rhee, deue de gaian* ('he lay at length, and the black blood flowed, and the ground was soaked with it', 21.119).

The most impressive of these closing phrases transform the absence of life into a dark and threatening presence. *Ton de skotos osse kalupse*, 'darkness covered his eyes' (× 11), is the commonest version of a theme on which the poet likes to play sombre variations: *thanatos de min amphekalupse*, 'death covered him all around'; *nephelē de min amphekalupse kuaneē*, 'a dark cloud covered him all around'; *stugeros d' ara min skotos heilen*, 'hateful darkness took him' (× 3); *ton de kat' osse/ellabe porphureos thanatos kai moira krataiē*, 'the red death and destiny the powerful took hold of both his eyes'; *amphi de min thanatos chuto thumoraistēs*, 'life rending death was poured about him'; *ton de kat' ophthalmōn erebennē nux ekalupse*, 'baleful night covered him from the eyes down'.

In a few cases, this possession appears as a grim exchange: *ōka de thumos ō 'chet' apo meleōn, stugeros d' ara min skotos heilen*, 'swiftly the spirit fled from the limbs but hateful darkness took him' (× 2); and *psuchē de kat' outamenēn ōteilēn essut' epeigomenē, ton de skotos osse kalupse*, 'life rushed from the wound, urged on, but darkness covered his eyes'.

The collective impact of these phrases is very powerful and shapes the representation of death as a sudden and violent disaster. The frequency and elaboration of such phrases in different parts of the narrative is random. In this they differ from the unusual injuries, which are highly context-bound. It is clear, however, that the poet avoids the use of the same phrase in successive scenes. Such repetition occurs twice with relatively colourless phrases (7.12 - 16, 11.240, 260), and the arresting line *ho d'en koniēisi pesōn hele gaian agostōi*, 'falling in the dust he clutched the earth with his hands', occurs twice within the space of thirteen lines (13.508, 520), possibly to underscore the tit-for-tat of slaying and counter-slaying. But a survey of scenes in which warriors are killed in quick succession shows the poet at pains to achieve variation. This is most apparent in the fifty-line stretch in Book 5, where six Trojans die, each with a different closing statement:

> He fell, thunderously, and his armour clattered upon him (5.42)
>
> He dropped from the chariot, and the hateful darkness took
> hold of him. (5.47)
>
> He dropped forward on his face and his armour clattered upon
> him. (5.58)
>
> He dropped, screaming, to his knees, and death was a mist
> about him. (5.68)
>
> and he dropped in the dust gripping in his teeth the cold
> bronze. (5.75)

and the red death
and destiny the powerful took hold of both eyes. (5.82–3)

The deaths of Patroklos and Hektor are so central to the poem that the poet invents a special elaborate death formula and stresses the interrelation of the two events through its use on those two occasions only:

He spoke, and as he spoke the end of death closed in upon him,
and the soul fluttering free of his limbs went down into Death's house
mourning her destiny, leaving youth and manhood behind her.
(16.855–7, 22.361–3)

NECROLOGUES AND GLOATING SPEECHES

Of the victims in the *Iliad* only Sarpedon, Patroklos and Hektor, and to a lesser degree Asios, Pandaros and Euphorbos, play any role prior to their death. The rest appear and disappear at the moment of their death and occupy the poet's attention for the space of a few lines only. Most of these victims might as well be nameless, but in some thirty cases the poet gives a sketch of the warrior's background and history. These little necrologues, consisting typically of three or four lines, are, like the similes, a master-stroke of Iliadic art. Through them the poet not only introduces variety into his narrative, but also the collective effect of these miniatures is to create a powerful image of the suffering of war and to extend the narrator's sympathy to Trojans and Achaeans alike.

Evidently the narrative has a strong Achaean bias. Achaeans are killed rarely; even in scenes of Trojan victory, the Achaeans win most of the individual fights, and Achaeans are spared cruel and undignified injuries. Despite the premiss that without Achilles the Achaeans are at the mercy of Hektor, no Achaean fighter of rank is defeated by Hektor, who in fact loses both to Aias and to Diomedes, does not confront Agamemnon, and is even denied the glory of killing Patroklos in open combat. It would have been possible for the poet to motivate this superiority of the Achaeans in moral terms and to attribute the defeat of the Trojans to a moral failing. Herodotus, who thought of his history as in some sense a continuation of the *Iliad*, interpreted the war of the Greeks and Persians as an east-west conflict, in which voluntary submission to law triumphs over the despotism of an oriental ruler. There are traces of such a conception in the *Iliad*. When the armies first clash, the order and silence of the Achaeans are contrasted with the noisy confusion of the Trojans and their allies (4.428). Such lack of control is easily related to great wealth and to the foolish passion of Paris that caused the war. Occasionally a Trojan death is seen as the consequence and punishment of wickedness. Thus Menelaos in

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> and destiny the powerful took hold of both eyes. (5.82–3)

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Such moralising, however, is exceptional in the *Iliad*. The necrologue characteristically ignores the division of Achaean and Trojan and deals with the death of the warrior as a human event. Thus the pro-Achaean narrative bias of the poem generates its own counterpoint: the greater the successes of the Achaeans on the battlefield, the more the Trojan victims evoke the poet's sympathy. The poem's narrative bias leads to an unequal division of the poet's impartial sympathy: only seven victims with stories are Achaeans.

The narrator's impartial pity is established early and firmly. At the end of Book 4, the Aetolian Dioreus, an Achaean ally, and the Thracian Peiros, a Trojan ally, have both been killed. The poet takes leave of this part of the battle by dwelling on the common fate that unites them in death:

> So in the dust these two lay sprawled beside one another,
> lords, the one of the Thracians, the other of the bronze-armoured
> Epeians; and many others beside were killed all about them. (4.536–8)

The simplest necrologues add to the name of the father that of the mother and dwell on the circumstances of birth or conception. One is tempted to call the effect pastoral because it turns on the nostalgic evocation of a natural habitat from an unnatural perspective. On three occasions the mother is a *numphē nēis*, a water nymph whom the father encountered while tending his flocks or herds. Here is the story of Aisepos and Pedasos and their father Boukolion (the name means 'cowherd'):

> Aisepos and Pedasos, those whom the naiad
> nymph Abarbare had borne to blameless Boukolion.
> Boukolion himself was the son of haughty Laomedon,
> eldest born, but his mother conceived him in darkness and secrecy.
> While shepherding his flocks he lay with the nymph and loved her,
> and she conceiving bore him twin boys. But now Mekistios'
> son unstrung the strength of these and the limbs in their glory. (6.21–8)

Similar stories are told about Satnios (14.444) and Iphition (20.383). The mother of Simoeisios was human, but not unlike a water nymph she gave birth to her son on the banks of Simoeis, while following the flocks of her parents (4.474). On other occasions the poet simply states the beauty of the mother (8.304) or the wealth and status of the father (5.77, 14.490, 16.595, 16.604, 17.575).

Some of the biographical detail is anecdotal in character. Skamandrios, killed by Menelaos, was a favourite of Artemis, who taught him skill in hunting,

> Yet Artemis of the showering arrows could not now help him,
> no, nor the long spearcasts in which he had been pre-eminent. (5.53-4)

Pedaios was the bastard son of Antenor, whose wife treated him like one of her own children to please her husband (5.70). The three Achaean victims Medon, Lykophron and Epeigeus are exiles who left their home after killing a man (15.334, 431, 16.571). This is of course the fate of Patroklos as well, and it may not be random that the three vignettes occur shortly before or during the Patrokleia. Periphetes, a victim of Hektor, is described as a better man than his father Kopreus (Dung), whom Eurystheus sent on errands to Herakles (15.639). This is one of two occasions when a necrologue refers to the body of legend outside the poem. The other and rather obscure passage refers to the father of Atymnios and Maris as the man who reared the *amaimaketē chimaira*, a monster of uncertain nature (16.328). In another case, the necrologue refers to an earlier event in the Trojan war: when Agamemnon slays Isos and Antiphos we learn that on a previous occasion Achilles captured them alive and freed them for ransom (11.104).

A motif that occurs three times in Book 13 and nowhere else involves a Trojan ally who is married to or a suitor of a Trojan princess. Imbrios married a bastard daughter of Priam and returned to Priam's house when war broke out (13.174). Othryoneus wooed Kassandra, the most beautiful of Priam's daughters, and boasted that he would drive off the Achaeans in return for her hand (13.363). Alkathoös was the son-in-law of Anchises

> and had married the eldest of his daughters, Hippodameia,
> dear to the hearts of her father and the lady her mother
> in the great house, since she surpassed all the girls of her own age
> for beauty and accomplishments and wit; for which reason
> the man married her who was the best in the wide Troad. (13.429-33)

It is quite common in the *Iliad* for brothers to suffer death at the hands of one warrior, and three passages in which the poet looks at brothers united in death are particularly affecting (5.541, 11.262, 16.326). But the most memorable of the necrologues dwell on the grief of the survivors, the parents - more specifically the father - and the wife. They echo and universalise the suffering of Andromache, Priam and Peleus, and in so doing they establish a powerful thematic link between the major and minor characters of the *Iliad*. Simoeisios, the first warrior to be singled out for a necrologue, 'did not return his parents' care for him' (4.477). If in this instance the grief of the survivors is only implicit, it is very explicit in the story of the father of Xanthos and Thoön:

> but Phainops was stricken in sorrowful old age
> nor could breed another son to leave among his possessions.
> There he killed these two and took away the dear life from them
> both, leaving to their father lamentation and sorrowful
> affliction, since he was not to welcome them home from the fighting
> alive still; and remoter kinsmen shared his possessions. (5.153–8)

Harpalion followed his father to war 'and did not come home again to the land of his fathers' (13.644); indeed, the grieving father walks behind the Paphlagonians who rescue the son's body (13.658). Ilioneus, we learn, is the only son of his wealthy father (14.492); Polydoros the youngest and favourite son of Priam, who vainly tried to keep him out of battle (20.408). In the case of Sokos, the figure of the grieving parents appears in Odysseus' speech of exultation (11.452). The motif also appears in the exchange of speeches between Euphorbos and Menelaos and is confirmed in the elaborate tree simile in which the dead Euphorbos is compared to a young tree, tended carefully by a man in a lonely place and suddenly torn up by a gust of wind (17.53).

Sometimes the father is a prophet. The soothsayer Merops vainly tried to prevent his sons from joining the war (11.329). Eurydamas, on the other hand, refused (or neglected) to interpret the dreams of his sons Abas and Polyides (5.149). Euchenor faces a dilemma not unlike that of Achilles: his father tells him that he must choose between a lingering sickness at home or death in battle. He chooses the latter and, curiously enough, dies at the hands of Paris, as Achilles later will (13.660).

The grieving wife appears in the story of Protesilaos, the first Achaean warrior to die at Troy, while his wife 'cheeks torn for grief, was left behind in Phylake/and a marriage half completed' (2.700–1). The theme is implicit in the finest and most elaborate of all necrologues, the story of Iphidamas. Brought up by his maternal grandfather, he married his daughter and went from his wedding straight to the war, where he was killed by Agamemnon:

> So Iphidamas fell there and went into the brazen slumber,
> unhappy, who came to help his own people, and left his young wife
> a bride, and had known no delight from her yet, and given much for her.
> First he had given a hundred oxen, then promised a thousand
> head of goats and sheep, which were herded for him in abundance.
> (11.241–5)

The impartial sympathy that the poet shows for the fallen warrior sharply contrasts with the savage partisanship the victors display on such occasions. But the gloating speeches are similar in function to the necrologues in that they keep the fallen warrior a little longer in the limelight. The distribution of gloating speeches relates them closely to grisly injuries. Of the sixteen instances, eight are found in Books 13 and 14, three in the Patrokleia, and four in the aristeia of Achilles. Only one such speech (11.450) is found outside this complex of scenes. On two other occasions, Pandaros (5.284) and Paris (11.380) exult prematurely at the prospect of triumph over Diomedes. But Pandaros misses his target and Paris does not inflict a fatal wound.

The gloating speeches share with the necrologues the motif of the grieving survivor, but they vary it to reflect the hostile perspective of the speaker. The triumphant warrior dedicates the corpse to animals and imagines the survivors' mourning deepened by the lack of the body to care for. The motif occurs in Achilles' speeches to Lykaon and Hektor (above, p. 70); Odysseus' words to the body of Sokos form an unusually sombre and restrained instance of the genre:

> Sokos, son of wise Hippasos the breaker of horses,
> death was too quick for you and ran you down, you could not
> avoid it. Wretch, since now your father and your honoured mother
> will not be able to close your eyes in death, but the tearing
> birds will get you, with their wings close-beating about you.
> If I die, the brilliant Achaians will bury me in honour. (11.450–5)

The motif of burial is absent from the speech over the body of Ilioneus in which Peneleos contrasts two sets of survivors. The whole scene is worth quoting because it shows a single slaying elaborated by a grisly wound, a necrologue, a simile (short but striking) and a gloating speech, with the different components carefully interrelated. The death of Ilioneus brings to a close the string of brutal slayings in Books 13 and 14; its elaboration is in accordance with the climactic position it occupies:

> He then stabbed with the spear Ilioneus
> the son of Phorbas the rich in sheepflocks, whom beyond all men
> of the Trojans Hermes loved, and gave him possessions.
> Ilioneus was the only child his mother had borne him.
> This man Peneleos caught underneath the brow, at the bases
> of the eye, and pushed the eyeball out, and the spear went clean
> through
> the eye-socket and tendon of the neck, so that he went down
> backward, reaching out both hands, but Peneleos drawing
> his sharp sword hewed at the neck in the middle, and so dashed
> downward

> the head, with helm upon it, and still the spear point stuck
> in the eye socket. He lifted the head high like a poppy,
> displayed it to the Trojans, and spoke vaunting over it:
> 'Trojans, tell haughty Ilioneus' beloved father
> and mother, from me, that they can weep for him in their halls, since
> neither shall the wife of Promachos, Alegenor's
> son, take pride of delight in her dear lord's coming, on that day
> when we sons of the Achaians come home from Troy in our vessels.'
> (14.489–505)

On four prominent occasions the gloating speeches display coarse and savage irony. Thus Idomeneus addresses the body of Othryoneus, the boastful suitor of Kassandra, and offers him one of Agamemnon's daughters if he would join the Achaeans (13.374). After Idomeneus has killed Asios, Deïphobos kills Hypsenor in return and boasts that he has provided him with an escort on the way to Hades (13.413). Poulydamas goes one better on this conceit and boasts that his spear will serve his victim as a walking-stick (14.456). It is significant that the gentle Patroklos at the height of his triumph is tempted into such language. Here he is commenting on the fall of Kebriones from his chariot:

> See now, what a light man this is, how agile an acrobat.
> If only he were somewhere on the sea, where the fish swarm,
> he could fill the hunger of many men, by diving for oysters;
> he could go overboard from a boat even in rough weather
> the way he somersaults so light to the ground from his chariot
> now. So, to be sure, in Troy also they have their acrobats. (16.745–50)

Twice the gloating speech turns into genealogical display (13.449, 21.184). More important to the structure of the poem is the preoccupation of several speeches with the theme of revenge. This theme links the speeches of Books 13 and 14 so that in each book they form a tight cluster. Thus, in Book 13, Deïphobos thinks of his killing of Hypsenor as revenge for the death of Asios (13.414), but Idomeneus retaliates by killing Alkathoös, and referring to his victories over Othryoneus, Asios and Alkathoös he replies: 'Deïphobos, are we then to call this a worthy bargain,/three men killed for one?' (13.446–7). In Book 14, Aias kills Archelochos in return for the slaying of Prothoenor by Poulydamas, whose boast he answers thus: 'Think over this Poulydamas, and answer me truly./Is not this man's death against Prothoenor's a worthwhile/exchange?' (14.470–2). The Trojan Akamas thereupon kills Promachos and boasts that the Trojans are not alone in suffering pain and misery (14.479). This prompts Peneleos to kill Ilioneus and to compare the sufferings of his parents with those of Promachos' wife in the passage quoted above. The chain of retribution that is thematised in these exchanges clearly points forward to the major version of the revenge triangle in the story of Patroklos, Hektor and Achilles. The theme recurs in the speech of Automedon over the body of Aretos, whose death he sees as retribution, however inadequate, for the death of Patroklos (17.538). For the last time, it appears in Achilles' words to the dying Hektor:

> Hektor, surely you thought as you killed Patroklos you would be
> safe, and since I was far away you thought nothing of me,
> o fool, for an avenger was left, far greater than he was,
> behind him and away by the hollow ships. (22.331–4)

Speeches of exultation form an important part of the aristeia of Achilles and culminate in the words just quoted. The first addressee is Iphition, for no other reason than that he is his first victim. The victim's fate is briefly summarised, but then Achilles lingers over the description of his home in a manner that recalls the rhetoric of the unreal with which he envisaged the life in Phthia to which he, likewise, will not return:

> Lie there, Otrynteus' son, most terrifying of all men.
> Here is your death, but your generation was by the lake waters
> of Gyge, where is the allotted land of your fathers
> by fish-swarming Hyllos and the whirling waters of Hermos. (20.389–92)

The other speeches occur in the encounters with Lykaon, Asteropaios and Hektor. Of these only the Asteropaios scene stays within the convention of minor encounters. In both the Lykaon and Hektor scenes the speech of exultation is part of a more complex pattern.

NARRATIVE PATTERNS BEYOND THE INDIVIDUAL ENCOUNTER

Homer has two procedures for weaving short individual encounters into larger narrative structures. The *serial* connection links the successive victims of one warrior (or group of warriors) without establishing a causal chain. In the *reciprocal* connection one slaying prompts a slaying by the other side and generates a chain of retribution.

CATALOGUES AND ARISTEIAS

The simplest string of slayings is the catalogue of names that are listed as the victims of one warrior (e.g. 16.694–6, quoted above, p. 82). In a more complicated version of such a catalogue, the poet lists the successive victims of two or more Achaean or Trojan warriors. Thus the poet lists the victims of Diomedes and Odysseus (11.320), or those of Leontes and

Polypoites (12.182). Book 6 begins with a catalogue of the victims of the Achaeans, while in Book 7 it is the Trojans' turn to have their victims listed (7.8). There is another Trojan catalogue in the battle of the ships (15.328). The catalogues of Books 5 and 16 differentiate elaborately between the victims and their wounds (above, p. 82); a somewhat less detailed version describes the rout of the Trojans at the end of Book 14 (above, p. 12).

By far the most important type of serial fight is the 'aristeia', in which a warrior becomes for a while the star of the show and displays his prowess. A very simple example of such an aristeia occurs when Teukros, protected by the shield of his half-brother Aias, kills eight Trojans in catalogue form and then takes three shots at Hektor (8.266–334). The first two miss Hektor and hit Gorgythion and Archeptolemos instead; he has no chance to get off the third shot because Hektor hits him with a stone that paralyses his arm.

The important aristeias are much more complex structures in which fighting comes to play a subordinate role. There are four major aristeias, and their respective heroes are Diomedes, Agamemnon, Patroklos and Achilles. Each of them leads to a turning-point in the narrative. The aristeias of Agamemnon, Patroklos and Achilles mark turning-points in Hektor's career: his course of victory is explicitly dated from the withdrawal of the injured Agamemnon, it culminates with the death of Patroklos, and comes to an end with his defeat by Achilles. The aristeia of Diomedes fits this pattern after a fashion, for it provides the background for the formal introduction of Hektor in Book 6.

The major aristeia begins with a scene of arming. The simplest version of this scene maintains the same order of elements that appears in the more elaborate forms. It occurs in the preparation for the duel between Paris and Menelaos, which is not, however, an aristeia:

> First he placed along his legs the fair greaves linked with
> silver fastenings to hold the greaves at the ankles.
> Afterwards he girt on about his chest the corselet
> of Lykaon his brother since this fitted him also.
> Across his shoulders he slung the sword with the nails of silver,
> a bronze sword, and above it the great shield, huge and heavy.
> Over his powerful head he set the well-fashioned helmet
> with the horse-hair crest, and the plumes nodded terribly above it.
> He took up a strong-shafted spear that fitted his hand's grip. (3.330–8)

The other arming scenes maintain the same order but elaborate various elements in different ways. Thus the arming of Agamemnon (11.17) gives detailed descriptions of his corselet and shield, which are remarkable both for the skill of their metalwork and for the figures of terror inscribed on them. The arming is a prelude both to the aristeia of Agamemnon and to the third day of fighting: the emphasis on the terror emanating from Agamemnon's armour heralds the ferocity of the battle to come.

The greater achievement of Achilles is marked by an even more emphatic scene of arming. Indeed, the arms of Achilles are described in three separate scenes, as they are made, as Achilles first sees them, and as he puts them on. The making of the arms by Hephaistos at the request of Thetis is one of the most elaborate divine scenes in the *Iliad*. It fills half a book and culminates in a 130-line description of the shield of Achilles (18.478). The scene pre-empts a further description of the arms in the arming scene, which focuses on their effect. When Achilles first receives the arms, their brightness terrifies everybody but Achilles, whose eyes shine in a corresponding fire (19.13). When Achilles finally puts on his armour, the motif of brightness appears three different times (19.373). The gleam of armour is the typical finale to the arming scene; it is a harbinger of the destruction the warrior will cause. Its elaboration in the case of Achilles, in line with the fire motif that accompanies him throughout his aristeia, is a sign of his special destructiveness.

In the aristeia of Diomedes, where a complete arming scene would disrupt the narrative flow, the gleam of the armour synecdochically replaces such a scene:

> There to Tydeus' son Diomedes Pallas Athene
> granted strength and daring, that he might be conspicuous
> among all the Argives and win the glory of valour.
> She made weariless fire blaze from his shield and helmet
> like that star of the waning summer who beyond all stars
> rises bathed in the ocean stream to glitter in brilliance.
> Such was the fire she made blaze from his head and his shoulders
> and urged him into the middle fighting, where most were struggling.
> (5.1–8)

In contrast to such emphatic brilliance, the arming of Patroklos is an impoverished account, remarkable for its negative qualities. No gleam emanates from his armour – any more than from that of Paris – signal of his eventual defeat. And the most elaborate detail in this arming scene concerns the spear of Achilles that Patroklos does *not* take (16.140).

The aristeia of Agamemnon is the shortest and simplest of the major aristeias. After the arming scene, there is an extended description of general preparation for battle and the first clash of armies (11.47–91), which is followed by the account of Agamemnon's victims. After an interlude about the absence of Hektor from this phase of the fighting (11.163–217), the poet returns to Agamemnon and describes in detail his victory over Iphidamas and the partial success of Koön, who pays with his life for his attempt to avenge his brother but wounds Agamemnon and forces him to leave the battle.

The aristeias of Diomedes and Patroklos are very similar to one another.

After an initial killing by the hero, the poet continues with extended catalogues of slayings by Achaean warriors. In the Patrokleia, this leads to a rout of the Trojans and a catalogue of slayings by Patroklos. In the Diomedeia, the Achaean catalogue is followed by the first part of the Pandaros episode. Diomedes' re-entry into battle after his slight injury leads to a catalogue of his slayings. Thus both Diomedeia and Patrokleia observe the sequence (1) arming, (2) first slaying by the hero, (3) deeds of other Achaean warriors, (4) deeds of the hero. The third item is absent from the aristeias of Agamemnon and Achilles for obvious reasons. Agamemnon's aristeia is only a prelude to a day of battle that will introduce many heroes, and as his aristeia is also part of the successive wounding of Achaean warriors elaboration would obscure the proportions of the narrative. With Achilles, on the other hand, the single-minded concentration on his deeds reflects the theme that with the death of Patroklos the war has become his war alone. No other Achaean is mentioned once Achilles re-enters the battle – an exclusion that is made explicit in the pursuit of Hektor:

> But brilliant Achilleus kept shaking his head at his own people
> and would not let them throw their bitter projectiles at Hektor
> for fear the thrower might win the glory, and himself come
> second. (22.205–7)

As the aristeias of Patroklos and Diomedes continue, each develops its own shape to fit its narrative context, but there remain significant parallels and contrasts. The common element involves Apollo's hostility to the hero and the hero's victory over a Trojan opponent whose body becomes the special care of Apollo. In the Diomedeia that opponent is Aeneas, who is rescued from death and restored to health by the god. In the Patrokleia it is Sarpedon, whose body is rescued by Apollo and given to Sleep and Death to bury in his native Lykia. The victory over the Trojan leads on both occasions to a confrontation with Apollo in which the hero heeds the god's advice to retreat (5.433, 16.698). In the Patrokleia the god maintains his hostility and eventually strikes Patroklos; in the Diomedeia, the hero's respect for Apollo serves as the background for his successful attacks on the less dignified deities Ares and Aphrodite. It is probably a mistake to see in these common elements a conventional schema of heroic poetry; rather, the Diomedeia and Patrokleia are proleptic variations of the aristeia of Achilles, where the hostility of Apollo and his care for the Trojan opponent find their most significant expression.

THE CHAIN OF RETRIBUTION

Chain killings claim some sixty victims in the *Iliad* and occur typically in passages that link two to five deaths with more or less sharply drawn boundaries. There are fifteen to eighteen such chains in the *Iliad*, depending on how one draws the boundaries, and they are heavily concentrated in Books 13-17, with only seven scenes lying outside those books. The chains typically have 'scores' like 2:1, and they sandwich one, occasionally two, Trojan successes between Achaean victories. On a few occasions there is a draw; there is no chain in which Trojans outscore Achaeans.

The crucial importance of the chains consists in the fact that they exhibit the structure of retribution through which the destinies of the minor warriors are linked to those of the protagonists. Patroklos kills Sarpedon, Hektor's closest ally, and Kebriones, his charioteer. Hektor avenges their death by killing Patroklos, whereupon Achilles kills Hektor. Finally, Paris will take revenge on Achilles. In this strict form the pattern does not recur in the chain killings, if only because it consumes too many known characters. Only in one minor scene is the killer killed: the Trojan ally Peiros kills the Aetolian Dioreus, whose companion Thoas kills Peiros in turn. The incident occurs at the very beginning of the fighting (4.517), and its exemplary nature is stressed by the fact that the poet dwells on the sight of the two enemies lying side by side on the battlefield, united in death. But this is the only encounter of two unknown, and therefore equally dispensable, warriors in the *Iliad*. The typical procedure is to pit an unknown against a known warrior, whom the poet cannot spare if he is not to run out of characters.

Narrative economy thus accounts for the fact that the motif of the slayer slain appears in variously displaced forms. On five occasions, injury displaces death in the act of retribution. Deïphobos and Helenos are both wounded after killing an Achaean warrior (13.527, 581). More interesting and elaborate are the injuries of the Achaean leaders. The Agamemnon and Odysseus scenes are very similar. The Achaean kills a Trojan whose brother injures him in return. The Achaean then kills the brother as well but is forced to leave the battlefield (11.221, 426). The pairs of Iphidamas-Koön and Charops-Sokos are unknown and dispensable. But this is not the case with Hektor and Paris, the opponents of Diomedes, neither of whom can be lost at this point of the narrative. Accordingly we find the following variation (11.338). Diomedes kills the unknown Agastrophos, whereupon Hektor attacks Diomedes but is stunned by Diomedes' spear. Diomedes proceeds to strip the body of Agastrophos, when Paris injures him with an arrow in the foot. Paris exults, but Diomedes taunts him in return, belittling the injury and threatening death for the future. Momentary fainting, a minor wound, the threat of death, and the death of an 'extra' replace the fatal injuries that would enchain slayer and slain in the pure version.

Displacement can also be achieved through substitution, which produces a narrative sequence in which a major warrior after killing a minor warrior is attacked by an opponent whose shot misses its intended target and hits another minor warrior. This happens half a dozen times in the *Iliad*. A good example occurs in the first fighting scene when Aias' victory over Simoeisios provokes an attack by Antiphos, who misses and hits a companion of Odysseus instead (4.489). The same scene includes another and unique device for 'saving' a well-known Achaean: Antilochos kills Echepolos but, instead of Antilochos, another Achaean, Elephenor, seeks to strip the fallen warrior and is killed by Agenor (4.457). Substitute slayings and other narrative restrictions abound in the opposition of Hektor and Aias, which on the one hand dominates much of the fighting during Achilles' absence but on the other hand must not produce an event of significance. On the part of Hektor we find avoidance of the enemy (11.542); on the part of Aias there is failure to pierce Hektor's armour (13.191, 16.358) or temporary injury (14.402). Substitute deaths occur on several occasions (13.183, 15.419, 17.304). The doubling of Patroklos' slayers permits the death of Euphorbos to function as a proleptic substitute for the death of Hektor.

Chain deaths are often motivated by the poet in terms of special ties of kinship or friendship that link warriors to one another. Sometimes retribution depends solely on the solidarity that warriors feel for anyone fighting on their side (4.473, 13.170, 15.518, 17.293). But on some two dozen occasions the poet provides an explicit motive for the act of retribution. He may point to the pity felt by one warrior at the side of a fallen warrior on the same side (5.561, 610). The simple statement of a relationship can also serve as a motive: Agamemnon kills a companion of Aeneas, whereupon Aeneas kills Krethon and Orsilochos (5.533). The two motivations appear together when Aeneas kills Leiokritos, 'the good companion of Lykomedes', Lykomedes 'pities' his fall and kills the companion of Asteropaios, whose death moves Asteropaios to an unsuccessful attack (17.344).

Grief and anger are more common than pity. The subject of these emotions is usually an individual, but they may seize all Trojans (14.475) or Achaeans (16.599); they may also seize the Achaeans and one of them in particular, as with Antilochos (13.417), Aias (14.459) and Peneleos (14.484). The emotion is deepened by the closeness of the relationship between the fallen warrior and his avenger. Thus Odysseus feels 'fierce anger' at the death of his companion Leukos, and because his slayer had been a son of Priam he takes revenge on another son of Priam (4.491; cf. 8.124, 316, 12.392). Koön's reaction to the death of his brother is given in particular detail:

> When Koön, conspicuous among the fighters, perceived him,
> he who was Antenor's eldest born, the strong sorrow
> misted about his eyes for the sake of his fallen brother. (11.248–50)

There are other occasions when the death of a kinsman is a spur to action. Sokos and Euphorbos say so explicitly in their attacks on Odysseus and Menelaos (11.430, 17.34). When Hektor's 'cousin' Kaletor is killed by Aias in the battle of the ships, Hektor kills Lykophron, of whom Aias says:

> See, dear Teukros, our true companion, the son of Mastor,
> is killed, he who came to us from Kythera and in our household
> was one we honoured as we honoured our beloved parents.
> (15.437–9; cf. 13.463, 554)

The death of Sarpedon provokes feelings commensurate with his greatness. The grief of his friend Glaukos is heightened by the fact that the injury he suffered earlier in the day keeps him from avenging his death or rescuing his body. After Apollo miraculously heals him he scolds Hektor for not coming to Sarpedon's aid, and collective grief strikes the Trojans (16.548), who are then led by Hektor, 'angered at the death of Sarpedon' (16.553). From this elaboration of the motif it is only a step to Achilles' reaction to the death of Patroklos – the wildest and most extravagant version of a familiar response:

> In both hands he caught up the grimy dust, and poured it
> over his head and face, and fouled his handsome countenance,
> and the black ashes were scattered over his immortal tunic.
> And he himself, mightily in his might, in the dust lay
> at length, and took and tore at his hair with his hands, and
> defiled it. (18.23–7)

The close relationship of chain killings to the story of Achilles and Patroklos is also borne out by their distribution. They are most common in the fighting that precedes Patroklos' entry into battle, where they pursue the grim logic of retribution in multiple detail. They dominate Books 13 and 14. The centrepiece of Book 13 is the aristeia of Idomeneus and his companion Meriones, which differs from the other aristeias in that it contains no catalogues but is an elaborate chain of reciprocal deaths. This narrative stretch comes to a close with the killing of Euchenor by Paris, which is motivated by his anger at the death of his guest friend Harpalion. The death of Euchenor, who chooses between sickness and death in battle, has reminded some critics of the fate of Achilles. If they are correct, the placement of this episode at the end of a succession of retributive deaths may not be arbitrary. The fighting in Book 14 is dominated by a chain of five reciprocal slayings, all but the first followed by gloating speeches dwelling on the tit-for-tat of battle.

THE PROGRESS OF BATTLE

An account of individual fights and their concatenation covers much but not all there is to be said about battle in the *Iliad*. Mass scenes are common, and in some stretches of narrative the contest for a particular objective takes precedence over individual encounters. There is a narrative rhythm that alternates general battle with individual encounters and fighting for strategic objectives with pure displays of individual prowess. To trace this rhythm is to describe the progress of battle as it unfolds in the *Iliad*.

The first major segment of battle narrative stretches from the initial clash of the armies after the broken truce to the beginning of the aristeia of Diomedes. Only a hundred lines long, this section is a prelude both to the Diomedeia and to the war at large. It is an astonishingly rich piece and, like an overture, sounds virtually every theme that will become important in the fighting. It begins with a majestic account of the clashing armies emphasised by an unusual river image:

> Now as these advancing came to one place and encountered,
> they dashed their shields together and their spears, and the
> strength
> of armoured men in bronze, and the shields massive in the middle
> clashed against each other, and the sound grew huge of the
> fighting.
> There the screaming and the shouts of triumph rose up together
> of men killing and men killed, and the ground ran blood.
> As when rivers in winter spate running down from the mountains
> throw together at the meeting of streams the weight of their water
> out of the great springs behind in the hollow stream-bed,
> and far away in the mountains the shepherd hears their thunder;
> such, from the coming together of men, was the shock and the
> shouting. (4.446–56)

The narrative then turns to a chain of five reciprocal slayings (457–504). It moves back to a broader perspective when it shows a Trojan retreat and the intervention of Apollo on the Trojan and Athene on the Achaean side, each encouraging the troops to attack (506–16). Once again the poet focuses on an individual encounter: Peiros slays Dioreus only to be slain in turn by Thoas. With the pathetic image of the two fallen warriors lying side by side on the battlefield (above, p. 99), the poet returns to a broader perspective, where he rests emphatically before proceeding to the aristeia of Diomedes:

> There no more could a man who was in that work make light of it,
> one who still unhit and still unstabbed by the sharp bronze spun in
> the midst of that fighting, with Pallas Athene's hold on

> his hand guiding him, driving back the volleying spears thrown.
> For on that day many men of the Achaians and Trojans
> lay sprawled in the dust face downward beside one another. (4.539–44)

The Diomedeia is dominated throughout by individual encounters. While digressing to include the deeds of other warriors, both Achaean and Trojan, it pursues the hero's career from his victories over Pandaros and Aeneas to his attacks on Aphrodite and finally the god of war himself. Except for the curiously chivalric duel between Aias and Hektor in Book 7 there is not much fighting for the remainder of the first day.

Battle resumes in earnest on the following day. The events of that day are described in Book 8, which the ancients dubbed the 'curtailed battle' (*kolos machē*) because night falls before a decision is reached and perhaps also because the summary and truncated form in which an entire day of fighting is crammed into 300 lines (8.53–349) contrasts sharply with the lavish detail that characterises the battle descriptions of the first and third days.

After a general account of indecisive fighting, the turning-point in the second day's battle comes when Zeus intervenes on the side of the Trojans. In the Achaean rout the poet focuses on the rescue of Nestor by Diomedes and their counter-attack on Hektor. Threatened by the thunderbolts of Zeus, Diomedes retreats, and Hektor in a few lines pushes the Achaeans back on their ships that are now threatened with fire (a situation that it takes all of Book 15 to bring about on the following day). Inspired by Hera, the Achaeans stave off defeat temporarily, and in the description of their rally the poet focuses on Teukros. But when Teukros fails to hit Hektor and is injured by him the Trojans can no longer be stopped: once more they push the Achaeans back to their ships, where only nightfall saves them.

The battle scenes of the third day (11–18.242) can be divided into three phases of two movements each. The first phase, consisting of Books 11 and 12, narrates the wounding of the Achaean leaders and the battle of the wall. As in each of the three phases, the first movement is dominated by individual encounters. The aristeia of Agamemnon concludes with his injury, which is varied in the injury scenes of Diomedes and Odysseus. The narrative then focuses on the reluctant retreat of Aias and on the wounding of Machaon and Eurypylos by Paris. The second movement of this phase has as its subject the fight over the wall. The Trojan attack proceeds in three waves. A first attack by Asios is rebuffed by Polypoites and Leontes and ends with a brief aristeia of the two brothers (12.108–94). A second attack by Sarpedon and his Lykians leads to a first breaching of the wall but is beaten back by Aias (12.290–436). The third attack by Hektor is decisive and meets with no resistance. There is a clear crescendo in the three waves of attack. The first two conclude with the comparison of thrown stones to a blizzard, an image that is much elaborated in its second occurrence (12.156, 278). The climactic event, however, is individual. The hail of stones provides the background for Hektor's decisive attack, the elaborate description of which reflects its weighty position in the narrative:

> Meanwhile Hektor snatched up a stone that stood before the gates
> and carried it along; it was blunt-massed at the base, but the upper
> end was sharp; two men, the best in all a community,
> could not easily hoist it up from the ground to a wagon,
> of men such as men are now, but he alone lifted and shook it
> as the son of devious-devising Kronos made it light for him.
> As when a shepherd easily carries the fleece of a wether,
> picking it up with one hand, and little is the burden weighting him,
> so Hektor lifting the stone carried it straight for the door leaves
> which filled the gateway ponderously close-fitted together.
> These were high and twofold, and double door-bars on the inside
> overlapping each other closed it, and a single pin-bolt secured them.
> He came and stood very close and taking a strong wide stance threw
> at the middle, leaning into the throw, that the cast might not lack
> force, and smashed the hinges at either side, and the stone crashed
> ponderously in, and the gates groaned deep, and the door-bars
> could not hold, but the leaves were smashed to a wreckage of splinters
> under the stone's impact. Then glorious Hektor burst in
> with dark face like sudden night, but he shone with the ghastly
> glitter of bronze that girded his skin, and carried two spears
> in his hands. No one could have stood up against him, and stopped him,
> except the gods, when he burst in the gates; and his eyes flashed fire.
> (12.445–66)

At this moment it seems as if nothing could stand between Hektor and the ships. But new obstacles arise suddenly and create the second phase of fighting, where again we may distinguish between a first movement dominated by individual fights (Books 13 and 14) and a second movement that portrays the attack on a strategic objective, in this case the ships (Book 15). The advance of the Trojans is stopped by the intervention of Poseidon. The elaborate accounts of his arrival (13.10) and departure (15.157) mark off the first movement of the second phase. The fighting of this movement interwines two narrative strands. Less prominent, but of greater significance to the progress of the plot, is the strand that follows the fortunes of Hektor and develops his opposition to Aias, which will dominate the battle of the ships. This strand appears at the beginning and end of Book 13 (136–205, 674–837), as well as in Book 14, where it comes to a temporary halt with the defeat and injury of Hektor by Aias (14.402–32). The other, and in the immediate context more prominent, strand consists of the aristeia of Idomeneus and the related chain killings, which illustrate the growing intensity and ferocity of the war.

The second movement of this phase brings Hektor's successful attack on the ships. Once more the intervention of a god marks the articulation of battle. Poseidon had stopped the progress of the Trojans beyond the wall; now Apollo completes it. At the end of Book 12 we saw Hektor smashing the gates of the wall; when he resumes his course of victory in Book 15 he does so under the guidance of Apollo, who levels wall and ditch with childish ease and creates a broad and level passageway to the ships (15.343).

While the ensuing battle is dominated by Hektor and Aias, they appear mainly as leaders of their contingents rather than as individual warriors. In Book 13 and 14 the warriors had revelled in gloating speeches. These are entirely absent from Book 15, where by contrast there are four occasions on which Hektor and Aias each rally their troops (15.425, 486, 553, 718). The frequency and placement of these two types of speech in Books 13–15 has no parallel in the poem and is clear evidence that the poet used them as a structural device to characterise the opposition of the two movements of fighting in this phase.

In the battle of the ships we can again observe a triple articulation, although the dividing-lines are not as clear as in the wounding of the Achaean leaders or in the attack on the wall. A first attempt to set fire to a ship fails as Aias kills Kaletor, who had come close to a ship with a torch (15.416). This event introduces two chains of reciprocal slayings, in which the Achaeans as usual have the upper hand. The second attempt produces a fierce battle over the ship of Protesilaos in which the poet goes out of his way to stress the closeness of the fighting:

> It was around his ship that now Achaians and Trojans
> cut each other down at close quarters, nor any longer
> had patience for the volleys exchanged from bows and javelins
> but stood up close against each other, matching their fury,
> and fought their battle with sharp hatchets and axes, with great
> swords and with leaf-headed pikes, and many magnificent
> swords were scattered along the ground, black-thonged, heavy-hilted,
> sometimes dropping from the hands, some glancing from shoulders
> of men as they fought, so the ground ran black with blood. (15.707–15)

Hektor's call for fire and Aias' retreat leave the outcome in suspense, and the poet turns to Patroklos and Achilles to prepare for the next movement. The second phase closes with the decisive attack: fire is set to the ship of Protesilaos (16.112). But this event is also the beginning of the third phase as Patroklos kills Pyraichmes ('Fire-lance') at the ship and drives the Trojans back to their citadel (16.284).

The third phase of the fighting consists of the aristeia of Patroklos and of the fight over his body. The first movement reverses the advances of the Trojans: the battle moves from the ships all the way back to the walls of

Troy, and it takes the intervention of Apollo to prevent Patroklos from conquering Troy. Catalogues of individual slayings provide the background for the major individual encounters that pit Patroklos against Sarpedon, Kebriones and Hektor. But, although the aristeia is that of Patroklos, the triumph is Hektor's. The death of Patroklos leads to the second movement, the protracted fight over his body.

The body of the fallen warrior that is contested in this final segment returns us to the individual encounter that is at the heart of battle in the *Iliad*. The fight over a body serves as a common transition from one encounter to the next. The motif appears in the first fighting scene, when Elephenor is killed:

> So the spirit left him and over his body was fought out
> weary work by Trojans and Achaians, who like wolves
> sprang upon one another, with man against man in the onfall. (4.470–2)

Similarly the Thracians protect the body of their fallen leader Peiros from the attack of Thoas (4.532). Having been sounded in the overture, the motif virtually disappears until Book 13, where Hektor kills Amphimachos in return for Imbrios, but the Achaeans secure both bodies and mutilate that of Imbrios (13.195). Battles rage over the bodies of Alkathoös and Askalaphos (13.496, 526). The motif appears more elaborately in the Patrokleia. The fighting over Sarpedon becomes the subject of speeches by the dying Sarpedon (16.498), Glaukos (544) and Patroklos (559). Fighting over the body is intense:

> No longer
> could a man, even a knowing one, have made out the godlike
> Sarpedon, since he was piled from head to ends of feet under
> a mass of weapons, the blood and dust, while others about him
> kept forever swarming over his dead body, as flies
> through a sheepfold thunder about the pails overspilling
> milk, in the season of spring when the milk splashes in the buckets.
> So they swarmed over the dead man . . . (16.638–44)

Apollo finally removes the body from the battlefield and gives it to Death and Sleep to carry to Lykia for burial (16.676). No such peaceful fate awaits Hektor's charioteer Kebriones. Hektor and Patroklos contend over him with one dragging him by the head and the other by the feet (16.762). Not burial but dust and oblivion is our last view of him 'as he in the turning dust lay/mightily in his might, his horsemanship all forgotten' (16.775–6).

These occurrences of the theme are shaped with a view to its fullest version in the fighting over the body of Patroklos. The entire Book 17 is a gigantic elaboration of the initial theme: *ep' autōi d'ergon etuchthē argaleon Trōōn* *kai Achaiōn* ('and over his body was fought out weary work by Trojans and Achaians', 4.470–1).

While the fighting over the body of Patroklos is confusing in the wealth of its detail, the outlines are simple. At the beginning there is a focus on individual encounters. Menelaos successfully protects the body against Euphorbos but retreats from Hektor, who strips the body of its armour but yields in turn to Aias before realising his purpose of beheading the body and throwing it to the dogs. There follows a general fight in which now one and now the other side is successful (17.262). This is most vividly expressed in the grotesque simile in which Patroklos 'becomes' a bull's hide stretched by tanners (17.389; below, p. 110), a simile that signals the climactic position of the fight over Patroklos' body and goes much farther than the corresponding passages about Sarpedon and Kebriones to express the transformation of living warrior into mere thing. At length Zeus gives victory to the Trojans (593), and in a passage richly studded with similes the poet describes the retreat of the Achaeans, with Meriones and Menelaos carrying the body while the two Aiantes provide cover (722).

It is a characteristic feature of the final phase of the third day that it moves towards reversals. The smashing of the wall and the setting of fire to the ship of Protesilaos had been climaxes towards which the narrative had moved steadily. But the aristeia of Patroklos ends with his death, while the fight over his body moves towards a triumph of Hektor that is suddenly aborted. The organised retreat of the Achaeans seems to fail before his insistent pursuit. Three times he seizes the foot of Patroklos, but while beaten back on each occasion he persists in his attempt, like a lion who will not let go of a carcass (18.155). The narrative moves to the 'almost' of his taking possession of the body when the apparition of Achilles routs the Trojans. With the rescue of Patroklos' body general fighting in the *Iliad* comes to an end. What remains is the personal vendetta of Achilles. His aristeia celebrates in the most monumental form the individual encounter that is at the core of heroic fighting.

CHAPTER 4

The Simile

Simile and metaphor are so common in poetry of all kinds that their occurrence as such in the *Iliad* calls for little comment. More specifically, heroic poetry of all ages and countries has found it easy to illustrate qualities of the warrior through reference to animals and other phenomena of nature. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that warriors in the *Iliad* are as fierce as lions or boars, as aggressive as hawks, as swift as horses or as persistent as dogs, and that their fighting rages with the violence of a forest fire or a sea storm. What is surprising is the frequency with which such comparisons are elaborated into the 'Homeric simile', the elaborately wrought comparison that pursues a usually traditional metaphor for several lines. Out of more than 300 comparisons in the *Iliad*, close to 200 are of the extended kind. The 'simile with a tail', as Charles Perrault called it in the seventeenth century, has for us become so integral a part of the epic that it is hard to imagine that it may well owe its privileged standing to an idiosyncrasy of the poet of the *Iliad*. There are many more similes in the *Iliad* than in the *Odyssey*, and they occur for the most part in the books of fighting. It is natural to infer from this that the extended simile was a standard feature of battle poetry, designed to add variety to a type of narrative in which repetition was unavoidable and diversity at a premium. But there are two other considerations that give pause. First, the roughly 700 lines taken up by similes contain many 'late' phrases and constructions that cannot be assigned to traditional diction. Moreover, internal repetition among this corpus is much lower than for the *Iliad* as a whole. Second, the similes relate to their immediate and wider narrative contexts in remarkable detail. There is hardly a simile of any complexity that cannot be shown to fit its context with subtle propriety. The linguistic evidence of lateness and the literary evidence of close fit suggest that in its Iliadic form the extended simile was a Homeric speciality, a virtuoso device developed by the poet of the *Iliad* from much simpler materials to provide a suitably brilliant and extensive form of decoration for his monumental epic. If lost epics from the time of Homer were to turn up, we should not expect them to show anything like the complexity of Iliadic similes, not to speak of the skill with which they are woven into the narrative.

THE NARRATIVE FUNCTION OF SIMILES

Similes discharge some of their most important functions by virtue of their position in the narrative, quite apart from any particular content. They are a kind of narrative punctuation mark and paragraphing device. One might also call them 'narrative particles'. Ancient Greek is studded with little words or particles that articulate the relationship of clauses and modify the meaning of the statement in various ways. What particles are to the sentence, similes are to the Homeric narrative, and their syntactic function must be grasped before one can talk about the content of individual similes.

At the simplest level the simile marks its context as worthy of special attention. Whenever Homer wants to say something important he slows down the pace of the narrative – a procedure that has been much misunderstood. We are all familiar with the term 'epic length', a term which implies that the epic world, unlike the world of drama, is always leisurely and that the urgency of action is subordinated to a stately and imperturbable flow of narrative. The opposite is the case. Homeric narrative has a keen sense of narrative tension and hierarchy, but slowing down is its major tool of emphasis (Austin, 1966). Its seeming digressions and endless descriptions are, like still shots or slow-motion sequences, moments of heightened suspense. When Pandaros prepares to shoot Menelaos, half a dozen lines are given over to an account of how he made his bow (4.106–11). The description underscores the gravity of the broken truce. The elaborate account of Agamemnon's arming (11.16–45) signals the opening of the Great Battle. The description of Achilles' arms, including 130 lines about his shield, pushes the principle to its extreme.

Like these descriptions, the similes arrest the reader's attention and by their mere presence make him recognise a momentous point in the narrative. Similes occur predominantly in battle scenes. Here they articulate change and are found when a warrior joins or withdraws from battle, defeats his opponent or is defeated by him. When Sarpedon joins the attack on the wall, his entrance is marked by the unusually long simile of a hungry lion attacking the stable (12.299–306). The longest lion simile in the *Iliad* marks the re-entry of Achilles into battle (20.164–73). The retreats of Aias and Menelaos are marked by the identical simile of a lion beaten back by herdsmen (11.548 = 17.657). The fall of a major warrior is an important moment. Simoeisios, important only because he is among the very first to fall, receives a tree simile (4.482). Asios, Sarpedon and Euphorbos have their narrative role confirmed when a tree simile accompanies their fall (13.389 = 16.482, 17.53). The temporary fall of Hektor at the hands of Aias merits no less than the image of an oak struck down by lightning (14.414).

The point of decision can be seen from the perspective of victory or of defeat. The latter, illustrated by the previous examples, is the standard procedure when the fallen warrior is of any note. To honour him with a simile or necrologue is the least the poet can do for him. Similes of victory occur at lesser moments and mark the warrior's progress towards a final encounter. Thus Agamemnon and Hektor are lions singling out a cow from a stampeding herd (11.172, 15.630). The victim in both cases is of no consequence.

While the simile generally marks change, it will sometimes focus on a state of equilibrium that is the result of an extraordinary expenditure of energy on both sides. Thus the first clash of armies is compared to a confluence of torrents (4.452). In the fight over the wall the Achaeans and Trojans have at each other noisily but indecisively. The event is compared to a snowstorm that blankets both land and sea. Indeed, the image appears twice, and its elaboration on the second occasion marks the growing intensity of the battle (12.156 8, 278 86).

Two similes of precise measuring mark the balance of battle before Hektor smashes the gate of the wall. In the first, two men dispute the proper location of a boundary stone (12.421); in the second a poor woman measures wool on a pair of balances (12.433). Some of the most vivid similes in the *Iliad* illustrate intense but indecisive fighting over the body of a fallen warrior. The dead Sarpedon is hidden from view in the heat of the fighting while the noise of battle about him is compared to the work of woodcutters and the warriors swarm around him like flies around a milk-pail (16.633, 641). The most remarkable instance of a fiercely contested draw occurs in the fight over the body of Patroklos:

> As when a man gives the hide of a great ox, a bullock,
> drenched first deep in fat, to all his people to stretch out;
> the people take it from him and stand in a circle about it
> and pull, and presently the moisture goes and the fat sinks
> in, with so many pulling, and the bull's hide is stretched out level;
> so the men of both sides in a cramped space tugged at the body
> in both directions; and the hearts of the Trojans were hopeful
> to drag him away to Ilion, those of the Achaians
> to get him back to the hollow ships. (17.389 97)

If one simile is not enough to underscore the significance of the moment, the poet can use two or more. The most stunning example of this technique occurs in the *Odyssey*. At the climactic moment of Odysseus' revenge on Polyphemos, at the point when the smouldering tip of the olive staff is plunged into Polyphemos' eye, the poet transforms this instant of agonising pain into a detached technological description: the rotation of the staff is compared to a shipbuilder's drill; the sizzling of the eye to a red-hot axe tempered in cold water (*Odyssey* 9.384).

In the *Iliad*, the most effective double simile is used on the occasion of Aias' reluctant retreat on the morning of the Great Battle. First he appears as a lion who after a night of being beaten back by men and dogs abandons his attack on a herd of cattle (11.548). Immediately afterwards, he is a donkey who goes into a cornfield

> in despite of boys, and many sticks have been broken upon him,
> but he gets in and goes on eating the deep grain, and the children
> beat him with sticks, but their strength is infantile; yet at last
> by hard work they drive him out when he is glutted with eating.
> (11.558–62)

Here the wonderful contrast of heroic frustration and comic satisfaction serves to underscore both the reluctance of Aias' retreat and the ambiguity of heroic existence: if you can limit your desire to corn rather than meat, you will get what you want.

The most elaborate simile cluster in the *Iliad* occurs in Book 2 when the marshalling of the army on the plain of Skamander is expressed through a sequence of five similes. This unique cluster expresses not only the sheer mass of the army but also the process by which the confused multitude is turned into an orderly force (2.455).

Similes are often found in complementary distribution balancing one another and their context not unlike the *men...de* of the typical Greek sentence. Thus at the opening of Book 3 the progress of the armies towards each other is marked by a simile for each side (3.3, 10). As the armies approach, Paris and Menelaos jump ahead of their men, and each of them receives a simile (3.23, 33). The procedure is repeated in the encounter of the armies in Book 4, where a simile describing each side is followed by a simile describing their clash (4.422, 433, 452). In the final duel of Hektor and Achilles, the initial position of each man is marked by a simile. Hektor is a hissing snake waiting for its attacker (22.93), Achilles is seen at the moment of Hektor's flight as a hawk pursuing a trembling dove (22.139). The race that delays their encounter receives three similes, and in the encounter itself each man is once more defined by a simile. Hektor, no longer the trembling dove, has turned into a high-flown eagle (22.308–10), but Achilles has been removed from the world of nature altogether and has become a cosmic force:

> And as a star moves among stars in the night's darkening,
> Hesper, who is the fairest star who stands in the sky, such
> was the shining from the pointed spear Achilleus was shaking
> in his right hand with evil intention toward brilliant Hektor. (22.317–20)

To these instances in which the placement of similes articulates the structure of a particular scene, we must now add instances in which a chain of similes underscores narrative continuity through successive scenes. The most striking example is the chain of similes that associate Achilles' re-entry into battle with fire and range from a burning city to the light of the stars. The simile quoted above is the final link in this chain and prefigures night in its choice of constellation. The chain begins with the apparition of Achilles that puts a sudden end to the fighting over the body of Patroklos. There the divinely caused radiance (*selas*) from his head is compared to fire signals sent by a beleaguered city (18.207). When he receives his new armour from Thetis, the Myrmidons dare not look at it, but Achilles' eyes light up with fire (*selas*) as he gazes at it (19.16). The same word is mentioned in the arming scene, where the brilliance of his shield is compared to a mountain fire seen by sailors in distress, and his helmet shines like a star (19.375). In the aristeia of Achilles the fire metaphors are 'reliteralised' when Hephaistos in his elemental form helps Achilles in the fight with the river. After this literal interlude the metaphors resume. The slaughter Achilles causes among the Trojans becomes a burning city doomed by divine wrath (21.522). As Priam watches Achilles' approach to the city he sees him as the Dog Star (22.26). Hektor is turned to flight by the brightness from Achilles' spear 'shining like fire or the rising sun' (22.135). (Note how rising sun and evening star frame the duel itself!)

This chain of images associating the aristeia of Achilles with various forms of fire is framed by two images of a burning city, which provide a prologue and epilogue to the chain. As Menelaos and Meriones carry the body of Patroklos towards the ships the fighting around them is compared to fire that rages through a city (17.737). The simile is clearly proleptic and looks ahead to the conflagration of Troy that begins when Achilles learns about the death of Patroklos. The epilogue shows us the smouldering ruins of Troy in a simile that illustrates the desolate laments of the Trojans when Hektor dies (22.410).

THE CONTENT OF SIMILES

Similes are drawn from a wide range of phenomena but with a very uneven distribution. A handful of simile families account for well over two-thirds of all occurrences. By far the largest group is made up of hunter–hunted similes. Here we may further distinguish between a smaller group in which the hunter is human and a much larger group in which he is an animal. The latter category is dominated by lion images but also includes birds of prey, dogs, wolves and, on one occasion, dolphins (21.22). The most interesting of the hunted animals is the boar because it allows the poet to represent a strong and aggressive animal in a posture of defence or counter-attack (11.324, 414, 12.146, 13.471). Odysseus surrounded by Trojans turns on them like a savage boar (11.414); a little later, when he is injured, exhausted, and lost but for the timely help of Aias, the poet sees him as an injured stag (11.474).

Not all animal images involve hunting. We also find bleating sheep (4.433), flies around a milk-pail (2.469, 16.641), swarming bees (2.87), goats (2.474), wasps attacking boys who disturbed them (16.259), prancing horses (6.506 = 15.263), a cow giving birth (17.4), snakes attacking or waiting for a by-passer (3.33, 22.93), a donkey shrugging off the sticks of little boys (11.558).

Vegetation imagery is dominated by the family of tree images. The warrior falls like a tree (4.482, 13.178, 13.389=16.482). The first occurrence of this simile is particularly moving. Simoeisios falls at the hands of Aias and 'did not repay his parents' care for him' (4.477). He crashes to the ground like a poplar that a carpenter cut down for use in making a chariot. The implicit contrast with the uselessness of the corpse continues the theme of wasted care. The falling tree can be elaborated in the direction of pathos or terror. When Hektor is felled by Aias he is like an oak uprooted by a thunderbolt (14.414), but the half-grown Eurphorbos is compared to a sapling tended carefully by a man in a lonely place and torn up by a sudden gust (17.53). The simile casts a shadow over Thetis' comparison of her son to a young tree (18.57). Trees do not always fall: Leontes and Polypoites, defenders of the wall, are like sturdy oaks that no storm can uproot (12.131). If the falling tree is the chief image of violent death, the cycle of leaves is a haunting reminder of the ephemerality of human life (6.146).

The weather, especially in its violent forms, provides the subject of a loose and extended simile family. Wind and water combine in images in which warriors are seen in various phases of a wave (2.144, 209, 394, 13.795, 15.381, 618, 624). There are dust storms (13.334), snow storms (12.156, 278), rivers in spate (4.452, 11.492), lightning (13.242), and forest fires (2.455, 14.396). From violent weather it is only a step to catastrophes such as earthquakes, mentioned once in a simile (2.781) and once directly in the preparation for the battle of the gods (20.57). Sometimes the weather spells relief in the form of a clear night (8.555) or a helpful breeze (7.4). When Patroklos beats back the attack on the ships, Zeus in his frequent role as weather god suddenly lifts clouds from a mountaintop (16.297). But for the Trojans the intervention of Patroklos is an almost apocalyptic flood sent by Zeus to punish wicked mortals (16.384). On two occasions, uncertainty of mind is expressed in the striking image of the sea torn by winds from different directions (9.4, 14.16).

It is often said, and with some justice, that the similes are drawn from a wider experience of the world than the narrative itself reveals. It is more questionable to argue that the major collective function of the similes is to add variety and provide some relief from the grim and monochromatic business of battle. The dominant simile families of hunter-hunted and violent weather are themselves drawn from a very narrow segment of the world and one that is very close to the phenomena of war the similes are meant to illustrate. Rather than provide variety and relief, the dominant simile families underscore the austerity of the poem and intensify its obsession with force and violence. Redfield has interpreted the *Iliad* as an inquiry into the paradoxical place of war in human society: dedicated to the preservation of a particular culture, it is an activity opposed to the work of culture as such. He points out (p. 189) that many of the similes are located *agrou ep' eschatiēn*, in the marginal zone between human habitation and the wilderness. The collective effect of the dominant simile families is to establish the battlefield as a similar marginal zone.

One way of developing this theme further is to look at the role of eating in the similes and in the narrative. The frequent descriptions of food are a justly famous element of Homeric style, but it is well to remember how little the poet says about eating itself. Take the following example. When the Achaean delegates come to Achilles they are first treated to a dinner. Chines of mutton, goat and pork are carved, put on spits, salted, and roasted when the fire has died down. The meat is put on platters and served together with bread in 'beautiful baskets'. After sacrificing to the gods,

> They put their hands to the good things that lay ready before them.
> But when they had put aside their desire for eating and
>   drinking . . .(9.221 - 2)

No less than fifteen lines are devoted to food (9.206 - 20), but eating occurs in the space between one line and the next. In the narrative of the *Iliad* eating is a purely cultural phenomenon the natural basis of which is taken for granted and ignored. By contrast, the hunting similes often stress the hunger of the predator and sometimes conclude with the image of a feeding animal:

>   like a lion who comes on a mighty carcass,
> in his hunger chancing upon the body of a horned stag
> or wild goat; who eats it eagerly, although against him
> are hastening the hounds in their speed and the stalwart young
>   men. (3.23 - 6)

> First the lion breaks her neck caught fast in the strong teeth, then
> gulps down the blood and all the guts that are inward. (11.175 - 6)

> And as herdsmen who dwell in the fields are not able to frighten
> a tawny lion in his great hunger away from a carcass . . .(18.161 - 2)

The *Iliad* thus shows a contrast between immediate and mediated satisfaction of physical needs. Mediation is specifically human: in the ritual eating scenes of the *Iliad* it has reached such a degree that the 'original' purpose of the mediated activity is almost forgotten. Despite the frequency of meals in the *Iliad*, one cannot really say that the warriors like to eat. The opposition between mediated and unmediated food clarifies the role of the animal images of the *Iliad*, which do not simply show that the warrior is as strong as a lion, swift as a hawk or dangerous as a boar. Rather, they say that he has returned to a state of nature and has abandoned the mediations of law, custom and ritual that make up human society. It is fully in keeping with this theme that Achilles in his fury expresses a desire to eat Hektor raw (above, p. 69), but that the action of the poem comes to a close with the ceremonious meal of Achilles and Priam (24.621).

And odd simile in Book 11 appears in a new light from this perspective and permits some further modification of the food theme. Odysseus has been injured but is saved by Aias. This situation generates the following simile:

> They found Odysseus, beloved of Zeus, and around him
> the Trojans crowded, as bloody scavengers in the mountains
> crowd on a horned stag who is stricken, one whom a hunter
> shot with an arrow from the string, and the stag has escaped him,
> running
> with his feet, while the blood stayed warm, and his knees were
> springing beneath him.
> But when the pain of the flying arrow has beaten him, then
> the rending scavengers begin to feast on him in the mountains
> and the shaded glen. But some spirit leads that way a dangerous
> lion, and the scavengers run in terror, and the lion eats it. (11.473–81)

Odysseus is the wounded stag. But to persist in this identification raises difficulties. First he is eaten by his enemies, which is not true because he does not die, and then he is eaten by his friend, which is absurd. Clearly this is not the way to read the simile, but neither can we read the detail as gratuitous elaboration. While not homologous with the immediate context, the simile fits into the wider theme of the brutalising power of war, sounded by the poet when in his proemium he envisages the warriors' corpses as food for dogs and carrion birds. If we are in a speculative mood we may go farther and ask why the fate of being eaten twice should happen to Odysseus of all warriors. The question leads to the exceptional relation of Odysseus to food, both in the *Iliad* and in the *Odyssey*. Odysseus is the only Homeric warrior whom we ever see eating and drinking (*Odyssey*, 7.177, 14.109). He speaks of his belly as an independent and shameless agent who cannot be gainsaid (7.216). He is on one occasion compared to a haggis, a stomach filled with blood and meat, turning over the fire (20.25–7). These are of course Odyssean passages that fit into the wider theme of Odysseus as the survivor. The brainiest of the warriors, he has also the most accepting attitude towards the body. But even in the *Iliad* Odysseus is the one warrior who stresses the physical necessity of food. After the reconciliation of Achilles and Agamemnon he insists, against the impetuosity of Achilles, that the army must eat before going into battle.

This unique connection between Odysseus and food remains striking, whether or not we see it as related to the simile in which he is a stag eaten first by dogs and then by a lion.

THE FUNCTION OF DETAIL: THE LION SIMILES

There is an old question about the degree to which detail in similes is relevant to narrative context. It was raised with polemical intent by Charles Perrault, who in his *Parallèle des anciens et des modernes* (3.65–7) ridiculed the 'simile with a tail'. The tail for him is the elaboration that does not contribute to the point of the simile. Thus, in the simile that illustrates the thigh-wound of Menelaos (4.141) he does not object to the basic conceit of comparing the blood on the white thigh to a piece of ivory stained with purple. But why does the poet tell us that the piece was stained by a Maeonian or Karian woman, that it is a cheek-piece for a horse, that many horsemen desire it, that it lies in the king's treasure chamber, and that it brings beauty and prestige both to the horse and to the horseman? What has any of this to do with the simple notion of 'red on white'? The question depends on two premisses of dubious merit. The first is that every simile is dominated by a specific point of departure. The second premiss is that the point of departure governs a homological relationship between simile and narrative hammered out in close detail just as Shakespeare's Richard II in his prison cell hammers out the conceit of the prison-as-world. Because Perrault cannot reconcile the subsequent detail of the simile with its alleged point of departure he shrugs it off as useless. But the search for a dominant point of departure and for a hierarchy of corresponding detail often leads nowhere with Homeric, as indeed with later, similes. It is more useful to think of the simile as an entity with its own structure capable of illuminating the immediate or wider content of narrative without being isomorphic at every point. It is also important to distinguish between the point of departure of a simile and its main idea. Often the two are the same, but sometimes they are not. Thus 'red on white' is not the central element in the purple ivory simile, which develops a precious mood that stresses the triviality of the injury and ironically undercuts the hysterical despair of Agamemnon's reaction to his brother's wound.

A good way of sharpening our eyes for the manner in which detail is relevant is to look at the individual simile in relation to its siblings and ask whether it could be interchanged with them or whether its individual features are strongly motivated by the particular narrative context. My discussion of tree and fire images has already given some answer to that question, but the demonstration can be made more systematically by a survey of the two dozen lion similes, by far the largest and most complex family of similes in the *Iliad*.

The lion either wins or loses. The class of winning similes is differentiated by the nature of the victim: fawn, cow, bull or boar. The differentiation fits the hierarchy of victims in the narrative. The hapless warrior on whom Agamemnon and Hektor fasten in their rout of the enemy is a cow (11.172, 15.630). Euphorbos, greatest of the minor warriors, is also a cow when he falls to Menelaos. But, unlike the random victims in the other two examples, he is the 'best cow' (17.62). Sarpedon is a bull (16.487), Patroklos a boar (16.823). The ascending hierarchy is completed in the only simile that pits a lion against another lion and ends in a draw: it applies to Patroklos and Hektor as they fight over the body of Kebriones (16.756).

The simile in which the victims of the lion are fawns deserves special attention. Agamemnon kills Isos and Antiphos, whom Achilles on a previous occasion had captured and ransomed. They are like the helpless young of a hind who helplessly looks on while they are killed in their lair (11.113). The pathos and cruelty of this simile are relevant to the characterisation of Agamemnon in his aristeia and throughout the poem. In the scene following the killing of Idos and Antiphos, Agamemnon denies ransom to the sons of Antimachos. The scene recalls the earlier supplication of Adrestos that Menelaos was willing to grant but Agamemnon denied (6.37). On that occasion Agamemnon's hatred of the Trojans culminated in the desire to bring death to all of them, including the infant in the mother's womb (6.58). Given the poet's way of expressing Agamemnon's cruelty through its effect on children, there is an ironic justice when the pain of the injured Agamemnon is compared to labour pains (11.269).

Other birth images in the *Iliad* bear suggestive links to the Agamemnon images. Menelaos stands over the body of Patroklos like a heifer over her first-born calf (17.4). War gives birth to death, and Patroklos is first-born because with him the war begins in a radically different way. The simile also looks forward to the inadequacy of Menelaos as a protector: like the hind in the Agamemnon simile, the cow will be unable to guard her calf against assault. The retreat of Menelaos from the body is described in the simile of a retreating lion (17.109). Then Aias takes over and protects the body

> like a lion over his young, when the lion
> is leading his little ones along, and men who are hunting
> come upon them in the forest. He stands in the pride of his great strength
> hooding his eyes under the cover of down-drawn eyelids. (17.133 6)

The relationship of this to the previous simile requires no comment. The final birth image once more casts Patroklos as the lion cub. But this time the cub is dead, killed by a hunter during the lion's absence (18.318).

Grieving and seized by fierce anger the lion goes in search of the hunter. The simile describes the grief of Achilles as he keeps watch over the body of Patroklos, and it looks forward to his aristeia on the following day. The precise internal shadings of the group are noteworthy: the cub or calf is seen alive as long as the body of Patroklos is fought over and in need of protection. The death of the cub is reserved for Achilles, in keeping with the perspective that governs the representation of Patroklos' death (above, p. 52).

The theme of Patroklos as the child of war is linked to the Agamemnon images through the suppliant scenes, which are restricted in the *Iliad* to Agamemnon and Achilles. Thus all Iliadic similes that deal with birth and the fate of the very young are related to the pivotal events – the wounding of Menelaos and the killing of Patroklos – that set the war on a course of savage destruction. Aeschylus showed himself a very good reader of Homer when he figured the hubris of Agamemnon in the omen of the eagle devouring the young of the hare (*Agamemnon*, 115).

Some curious features occur in similes that show a lion and a carcass. A fairly elaborate version occurs when Menelaos' joy at seeing Paris is expressed through the image of a lion who finds a carcass and will not let go of it in despite of hunters and hounds (3.23). A second and sketchier version occurs when Hektor hangs on to the body of Patroklos like a hungry lion whom herdsmen cannot frighten away from a carcass (18.161). In Book 16, Patroklos and Hektor fight over the body of Kebriones like lions over a dead deer (16.756). The three similes share the only Iliadic occurrences of the word *peinaō*, 'to be hungry'. The similes of Books 16 and 18 are easily related to each other since they occur at the beginning and end of a narrative stretch that leads from the death of Patroklos to the rescue of his corpse. If we add to these similes the lion-boar simile (16.823), we get a short chain that transforms Patroklos from equal opponent through noblest of the vanquished into mere body. The simile in Book 3 at first resists integration into any pattern, and the potential identification of Paris with a carcass seems to humiliate him even more than he deserves. One is tempted to shrug it off as one of those similes that do not fit very precisely, but for a curious verbal echo between Books 3 and 17. The same line is used to describe the near-success Menelaos and Hektor have in dragging Paris and Patroklos to their side (3.373 = 18.165). Were it not for the intervention of Aphrodite, Paris would suffer the ignominious fate of being dragged away by Menelaos – not unlike a carcass being dragged away by a lion. If we now recall the prominent and ironic role that Menelaos plays in the fighting over the body of Patroklos (above, p. 67), we begin to see a thematic connection between the carcass similes. Because Menelaos does not fulfil the expectation raised in the first lion-carcass simile, Patroklos must die and almost suffers the fate of being dragged away like a carcass.

Not all lion similes fit into such elaborate contexts. Two similes of a lion chasing away other predators are applied to Hektor and Aias without any apparent relationship (11.474, 15.271). The two Aiantes carry off the slain enemy Imbrios like two lions carrying off a goat (13.198). The simile bears no relation to, but neither is it interchangeable with, another carrying simile: Menelaos and Meriones carry off the body of Patroklos, like mules dragging a ship's mast down a rocky mountain path (17.742). This version of the felled-tree simile emphasises the value of the thing carried rather than the valour of those carrying it.

The lion does not always get his way. He may be beaten back; he may be injured or killed; he may survive on one occasion only to be killed later. Nine similes focus on temporary setback or ultimate defeat. Two similes describe a lion under pressure from dogs and men. They are both used of Menelaos when he leaves the body of Patroklos, the first time threatened by Hektor, the second time ordered by Aias (17.109, 657). The second simile is also used of Aias in conjunction with the donkey simile to describe his reluctant retreat one of the rare instances in which a simile is repeated verbatim (11.548).

Only once is the lion killed outright. In Book 5, Krethon and Orsilochos have the temerity to face Aeneas, and they are compared to young but full-grown lions who kill sheep and cattle until their time comes to be killed (5.554). On two occasions the outcome of the lion's attack is left open but the possibility of death is explicitly stated. The similes refer to Hektor (12.41) and Sarpedon (12.299), both of whom die in turn. On a third occasion, Patroklos is compared to a lion whose courage brings death to him (16.752). The proleptic function of these similes is unmistakable.

Twice the lion is injured. The first time Diomedes, grazed by Pandaros, is compared to a lion whose fighting rage is tripled by his wound: he wreaks havoc among the sheep and escapes without further harm from the terrified shepherd (5.136). The other injured lion occurs in the final and longest lion image in the *Iliad*, which describes Achilles as he embarks on his aristeia and confronts Aeneas, his first opponent:

> From the other
> side the son of Peleus rose like a lion against him,
> the baleful beast, when men have been straining to kill him, the county
> all in the hunt, and he at the first pays them no attention
> but goes his way, only when some one of the impetuous young men
> has hit him with the spear he whirls, jaws open, over his teeth foam
> breaks out, and in the depth of his chest the powerful heart groans;
> he lashes his own ribs with his tail and the flanks on both sides
> as he rouses himself to fury for the fight, eyes glaring,
> and hurls himself straight onward on the chance of killing some one
> of the men, or else being killed himself in the first onrush. (20.164 73)

The simile refers to the entire aristeia of Achilles rather than to the specific encounter with Aeneas. It clearly connects with the simile of Book 18 about the grieving lion stalking the killers of his cubs. It is a fuller and more serious version of the Diomedes simile, just as Achilles is a fuller and more serious version of Diomedes. The wound of Diomedes at the hands of Pandaros repeats the wound Pandaros/Paris inflicted on Menelaos. The wound of Achilles is the death of Patroklos, another and more fateful repetition. The lion both times responds to the pivotal nature of the wound, but the five-line description of his response, culminating in the image of the tail furiously lashing ribs and flanks, far exceeds the power of the simple phrase 'stirred up the lion's strength' (5.139). Finally, this simile, too, is proleptic: like Hektor, Sarpedon and Patroklos, Achilles is a lion who will die.

CONTRAST AND SIGNIFICANCE IN THE ILIADIC IMAGE

The typical simile families stay close to the world they illustrate, and within a narrow range of subject-matter they show a high degree of subtle differentiation that is very responsive to simile placement. There are other similes that are no less responsive to narrative context but operate through contrast rather than through resemblance. The heifer and her calf (17.4) or the woman in labour (11.269) come to mind as examples. One of the most affecting similes in the *Iliad* compares the head of a falling warrior weighed down by his helmet to a poppy bent down by rain and the weight of its fruit (8.306). Discrepancy is also the point of two similes that stress the difference between men and gods. The bow-shot of Pandaros, elaborately prepared and disastrous in its final consequences, fails utterly of its intended result, for Athene deflects the arrow like a mother brushing away a fly from her baby (4.130). When Apollo destroys the wall he does so with the ease of a boy tearing down a sandcastle (15.362).

Most of the contrast similes are drawn from the human world and are deeply suffused with ironic pathos. This effect derives from their relation to the common simile families that compare the warrior to an animal. The power and frequency of such similes blur the dividing-line of man and animal: it is a highly charged moment in the poem when Apollo questions the humanity of Achilles and says that in his treatment of Hektor he behaves like a savage lion (*leōn d' hōs agria oiden*, 24.41). In contrast to the blurring function of animal images, similes drawn from the human sphere measure the loss of the warrior's humanity by drawing a line between him and other men. We find this effect when Achilles likens the weeping Patroklos to a little girl begging her mother to be picked up (16.7). Similarly, Hektor considers the possibility of negotiating with Achilles and rejects it in an image that epitomises the world of human conversation from which he is now excluded:

> There is no
> way any more from a tree or a rock to talk to him gently
> whispering like a young man and a young girl, in the way
> a young man and a young maiden whisper together. (22.126–8)

The most powerful effect of this kind occurs in an image that is not a simile. The race of Hektor and Achilles takes them from the walls of Troy to the springs, one hot, the other cold, where the Trojan women washed their clothes 'before the coming of the sons of the Achaeans' (22.156). The topographical detail, transformed into a vignette of deepest peace, measures the distance of the warrior from ordinary humanity. Such images, whether or not they occur in similes, perhaps come closer than any other feature of style or narrative to suggest an answer to the question: What is Iliadic about the *Iliad*? Three points suggest themselves. First, as Paolo Vivante (p. 106) has said, the poet knows 'where to look and what to ignore – how to focus his vision upon the vantage points of reality'. Homer's descriptive mastery is less a matter of technique than of the choice of the image in the first place. To focus on the springs is the stroke of genius in the last example, and time and again we observe that Iliadic effects derive from the manner in which the poet simply takes note of certain things, such as Hektor's spear in Paris' house, the lyre on which Achilles plays when the delegates arrive, Andromache's headgear, the flowers she embroiders or – a significant contrast – the loom on which Helen weaves the sufferings of the Achaeans and Trojans (above, p. 75).

Second, the image, by virtue of being noticed, is endowed with a significance that does and does not point beyond itself. Jasper Griffin (p. 121) has written about the 'intrinsic symbolism' of certain Homeric gestures and images. Vivante (p. 87) states the same point more fully:

> It was the genius of Homer to draw his images true to life, and at the same time endow them unwittingly with a symbolic significance. Symbolic of what? we may ask. Certainly not of any superimposed value, but of a stress or mode of being which appears native to the objects themselves.

The women at the spring evoke a world of peace and are 'allegorical', in the literal sense in which all poetry is all-egorical, that is, 'says something else' beyond what it says. But the Iliadic image possesses to an eminent degree the quality many theorists consider the secret of the poetic image: it resists the interpretation it invites. It is not opaque, but it cannot be interpreted away. Whatever thought is inspired by the women at the spring, our gaze never abandons them. The poet creates significance by foregrounding his image – hence the traditional admiration for the plasticity and lucidity of Homeric narrative – and this foregrounding has an arresting power that keeps the reader from abandoning the lively concreteness of the image.

Third, the significant and arresting image is part of a whole of which it is one extreme and which is conveyed in its wholeness as a contrast of polar opposites. This is an example of the pervasive tendency in Greek culture to think of the cosmos, the order of things, as a balance of opposites. The Iliadic totality, however, is unbalanced and moves towards its destruction in one extreme. In the static image of the shield of Achilles war and peace are evenly balanced, but in the narrative war and destruction prevail. Hence the poignancy of such scenes as Hektor's reminiscence of the conversation of boys and girls, the description of the women at the spring, or the flashback to Andromache's wedding: the poet celebrates beauty and order at the point of their destruction. The greatest example of this technique is, of course, the encounter of Priam and Achilles where the characters share the poet's vision of an order about to be destroyed.

THE HOMERIC SIMILE AND THE EPIC TRADITION

The elaborate form of the epic simile, which may owe its origin to an idiosyncrasy of the *Iliad* poet, became a defining feature of the Western epic. The grand epic must be studded with these jewels of poetic virtuosity, and the poet gained fame by reshaping traditional similes, as in the following unbroken chain of homage and rivalry:

> As is the generation of leaves, so is that of humanity.
> The wind scatters the leaves on the ground, but the live timber
> burgeons with leaves again in the season of spring returning. (*Iliad*, 6.146–8)
>
> quam multa in silvis autumni frigore primo
> lapsa cadunt folia . . . (*Aeneid*, 6.309–10)
>
> Come d'autunno si levan le foglie
> l'una appresso de l'altra, fin che 'l ramo
> vede a la terra tutte le sue spoglie (*Inferno*, 3.112–14)
>
> Thick as autumnal leaves that strew the brooks
> In Vallombrosa, where the Etrurian shades
> High over arched embower . . . (*Paradise Lost*, 1.302–4)

The relationship of the Homeric simile to its successors is often discussed in misleading evolutionary terms. A critic of Vergilian or Miltonic similes will dwell on extensive homology with the immediate and wider context, prolepsis and the interrelation of similes, often with the implication that these are distinct qualities of the post-Homeric simile and that the Homeric simile is by comparison 'simple'. But, as I have shown, the integration of the simile into the narrative and thematic structure of the poem is a cardinal feature for the *Iliad*. It may be possible to prove that later poets use even more elaborate similes just as one can show that Liszt wrote more difficult piano music than Beethoven. But the demonstration is pointless. Once a certain level of complexity has been achieved, the opposition of 'simple' and 'complex' ceases to be a useful analytical tool.

Moreover, the perception of an increase in complexity is often due to false inferences drawn from the revision of Homeric similes by later poets. A poet will often take a marginal and undeveloped element in his model and give it greater weight. Vergil was the great master of this procedure. He read Homer with an eye for unfinished business: his very choice of his hero is an example. Take the following example in which a Vergilian simile serves a more elaborate and structurally significant function that results from moving its Homeric elements to a more central position. Hektor's advance comes to a standstill, and he is compared to a boulder falling down a mountainside until it comes to a rest on the plain (13.137). The simile may be inspired by the memory of the rock with which Hektor had recently smashed the gate of the Achaean wall, but it is only one of many similes that articulate the fighting in the middle books of the *Iliad*, and it does not mark an especially critical moment. Vergil transfers the simile to the end of the *Aeneid*, where it measures Turnus' final decline and interprets it as the inevitable consequence of force without wisdom (*Aeneid*, 12.684). To underscore the point Vergil dwells on the stability of Aeneas, who is compared to a rising Apennine mountain (12.701). The pair of similes concludes the role reversal of Aeneas and Turnus. The former has been transformed from refugee to autochthonous ancestor; the other has lost his place and is doomed to headlong destruction. The example illustrates Vergil's opportunism and virtuosity in 'stealing the club of Hercules'. But it is a critical error to conclude that, because Vergil makes more of the simile of the falling stone than Homer did, his use of similes is in general more complex than Homer's.

A related argument can be made about the case in which a poet's more elaborate use of a particular kind of simile reflects a difference in purpose rather than an advance in technique. Striking instances of proleptic similes can be found both in the *Iliad* and in the *Odyssey*, but none of them is as resonant or strategically placed as the Leviathan and Proserpina images of *Paradise Lost* (1.200, 4.268). Milton's epic, however, is a meditation on origins, and the centrality of proleptic images derives from the simple fact that the reader's knowledge of the outcome, his own fallen condition, is the point of departure for the work.

Finally, the interpretation of difference in evolutionary terms may derive from the critic's unreflective adoption of the later epic poet's ideology. The epic ambition 'pursues/Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme' (*Paradise Lost*, 1.15–16) and demonstrates its superiority through revisions. But, while the desire to outdo the predecessor has been a constant motive in the epic tradition, it is by no means certain that the results are most usefully studied in a context that values (or devaluates) epic devices according to their complexity. If one takes the most powerful and most strategically deployed similes in the *Iliad* and holds them against their competitors in later epics, one will find little cause to extol or denigrate the Homeric simile on the grounds of its relative simplicity.