

**Δειλοὶ Βροτοί: Human Beings In
The *Iliad***

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INTRODUCTION

A lot has been written about the gods in Homer¹ – their power, their limitations, their interaction with people, their morality (or lack thereof), very generally what it means to be a god. The topic of the relation between fate and the gods and their influence over each other is particularly interesting, and very popular, and Zeus is a particular figure of interest. The links with Greek religion, ritual and cult, as well as with later literature are all fascinating and well-documented topics. Yet, despite the omnipresence of the gods, the *Iliad's* central characters are human beings: heroes, despite the ambiguity of their status, remain above all human beings and mortals, though they may be almost supernaturally brave and valiant and can even be the sons of a god or goddess.

The anthropocentrism of the *Iliad* has been studied, especially in French scholarship. Two scholars in particular have had a great influence on my understanding of the poem: Jacqueline de Romilly and Louis Bardollet are almost lyrical about the humanity of Homer, saying for example that "les héros homériques, eux, sont sans doute beaux et vaillants, mais toujours à la mesure humaine [...]. Tous doivent souffrir et doivent mourir".² Romilly adds "on ne peut imaginer d'univers plus délibérément centré sur l'humain".³ Louis Bardollet in particular talks about "le triomphe de l'humain", "le miracle de l'homme perçu au quotidien",⁴ which has become one of the things that interest me most about the poem.

¹ See for instance Otto (1954), Dietrich (1965), Adkins (1972), Barnes (1974), Boedeker (1974), Clay (1983), Kullman (1985), Slatkin (1986), Winterbottom (1989), Segal (1994), Yamagata (1994), Bardollet (1997), Leach (1997), Lesky (2001).

² Romilly (1992), 31.

³ Romilly (1992), 32.

⁴ Bardollet (1997), 128-30.

However, all those studies remain fairly abstract, and rarely involved a really close reading of the poem, as the points made were often quite general. They offer a very good emotional approach and understanding of the *Iliad*, in a way that is enjoyable and helpful in opening up to the poem. They made me want to know and understand more about human beings in the *Iliad*, and made me wonder what it meant exactly to be human for Homer and what was the Homeric understanding of human life and the human condition.

This dissertation is not an anthropological or sociological survey, and it is not a comparative study, as I tried to remain entirely within the context of the *Iliad* only. Occasional forays are made into the *Odyssey* (which is a very different poem), tragedy, and even archaeological finds to support some arguments, or show continuation (or variation), but the main point is in effect the impression given by one piece of work, and to show a picture of human beings in the *Iliad* only.

The human condition in the poem might at first appear to be very negative one. After all, this is a poem about war, and it is not surprising that distress, grief and death are at the forefront. The main storyline is ultimately about loss and revenge, and the poem ends with the coming together of the grief of two characters, Achilles and Priam.

A speech made by Zeus on the human condition is a key passage in that view of the human condition:

ἤ ἵνα δυστήνοισι μετ' ἀνδράσιν ἄλγε' ἔχητον;
οὐ μὲν γάρ τί πού ἐστιν οἰζυρώτερον ἀνδρός
πάντων, ὅσα τε γαῖαν ἐπι πνεῖει τε καὶ ἔρπει.

'Was it for you [Achilles' immortal horses] to share the pain of unhappy mankind? Since there is nothing more miserable than man among all the creatures that breathe and move on earth.'

XVII, 443-5

Another god, Apollo, gives a slightly more detailed description of human life:

ἐννοσίγαι' οὐκ ἂν με σαόφρονα μυθήσαιο
 ἔμμεναι, εἰ δὴ σοί γε βροτῶν ἔνεκα πτολεμίξω
 δειλῶν, οἱ φύλλοισιν εἰκότες ἄλλοτε μὲν τε
 ζαφλεγέες τελέθουσιν ἀρούρης καρπὸν ἔδοντες, (465)
 ἄλλοτε δὲ φθινύθουσιν ἀκήριοι. ἀλλὰ τάχιστα
 παυώμεσθα μάχης· οἱ δ' αὐτοὶ δηριαάσθων

"Earthshaker, you would not say I was in my right mind if I do battle with you for the sake of wretched mortals, who are like leaves – for a time they flourish in a blaze of glory, and feed on the yield of the earth, and then again they fade lifeless."

XXI, 462-7

It is slightly more positive than Zeus' account, although Apollo gives that description of mortals as a reason not to bother about them.⁵ Those two passages are especially interesting as they present a view of human beings as seen from the *outside*, from the perspective of a god. A human poet imagining what the human condition must look like to a non-human leads to a very poignant and very grim conclusion.

Those examples are what led to the title of this dissertation (δειλοὶ βροτοί), and this is what Part I is about: Mortality, Suffering and the general grimness of human life.

However, another key passage in the poem is far longer, and puts forward a slightly different slant on what it means to be human: the meeting between Priam and Achilles. The passage is also very much about pain, loss and death, but this time from an entirely *human* perspective. Its answer is more in depth and less dismissive:

ἀλλ' αἰδεῖο θεοὺς Ἀχιλεῦ, αὐτόν τ' ἐλέησον
 μνησάμενος σοῦ πατρός· ἐγὼ δ' ἐλεεινότερός περ,
 ἔτλην δ' οἷ' οὐ πῶ τις ἐπιχθόνιος βροτὸς ἄλλος,
 ἀνδρὸς παιδοφόνιοιο ποτὶ στόμα χεῖρ' ὀρέγεσθαι.
 Ὡς φάτο, τῷ δ' ἄρα πατρός ὑφ' ἱμερον ὤρσε γόοιο·
 ἀψάμενος δ' ἄρα χειρὸς ἀπώσατο ἦκα γέροντα.
 τῷ δὲ μνησαμένῳ ὃ μὲν Ἔκτορος ἀνδροφόνιοιο
 κλαῖ' ἀδινὰ προπάροιθε ποδῶν Ἀχιλλῆος ἔλυσθεῖς,
 αὐτὰρ Ἀχιλλεύς κλαῖεν ἐὼν πατέρ', ἄλλοτε δ' αὐτε
 Πάτροκλον· τῶν δὲ στοναχὴ κατὰ δάματ' ὀρώρει.
 αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ ῥα γόοιο τετάρπετο δῖος Ἀχιλλεύς,

⁵ The leaves simile is of course reminiscent of Glaucus' speech in Book VI, although Glaucus, emphasizes the greatness of men despite their weaknesses, while Apollo deduces from it that men are not worth fighting for.

καί οἱ ἀπὸ πραπίδων ἦλθ' ἴμερος ἠδ' ἀπὸ γυίων,
 αὐτίκ' ἀπὸ θρόνου ὤρτο, γέροντα δὲ χειρὸς ἀνίστη
 οἰκτίρων πολίων τε κάρη πολίων τε γένειον,
 καί μιν φωνήσας ἔπεα πτερόεντα προσηύδα·

'Respect the gods, then, Achilles. And have pity on me, remembering your own father. But I am yet more pitiable than he. I have endured to do what no other mortal man on earth has done – I have brought to my lips the hands of the man who killed my children.'

So he spoke, and he roused in Achilles the desire to weep for his father. He took the old man by the hand and gently pushed him away. And the two of them began to weep in remembrance. Priam cried loud for murderous Hector, huddled at the feet of Achilles, and Achilles cried for his own father, and then again for Patroclus: and the house was filled with the sound of their weeping. Then when godlike Achilles had had his pleasure in mourning, and the desire for it had passed from his mind and his body, he stood up from his chair and raised the old man by his hand, in pity for his grey head and grey beard, and spoke winged words to him.'

XXIV, 503-17

This passage is certainly equally grim, but a form of hope appear, in the manifestation of human solidarity. It is a solidarity through tears and suffering of course, and why should it not be? This is war after all. However, the scene between Priam and Achilles transcends many boundaries: war enmity, as the two characters belong to different camps, and also personal enmity, shown poignantly in the image of Priam kissing the hands of the man who killed his children. Human suffering is universal, as is shown by Achilles in the tale of the two jars (from which Zeus picks either only evils or a mix of evils and blessings to give to human beings, XXIV, 525-33), and because of that, compensations have to be found, most powerfully through mutual pity, human solidarity and respect for other people's pain.

A study of those compensations is the object of Part II. The sense of human solidarity shown in Book XXIV made me wonder about other possible compensations to death and suffering that could be found in the poem, ways to look at what makes a human being other than suffering and violence. That is where the concept of mildness comes into play: the ways in which people interact with each other can include care and gentleness, even sometimes with enemies.

Of course, the behaviour of the characters and the qualities which are demanded of

them can appear at times contradictory: Homer seems to insist on the necessity of pity and solidarity, of respect for foes, of self-control and mercy, and at the same time he shows his heroes jeering at dead enemies, and showing the utmost cruelty. Even though Homer never seems to condone cruelty, gentle actions as well as harsher ones appear to be expected from man, and from the warrior in particular. It is noticeable that, to modern scholars, this gentler aspect of the Homeric values often receives little attention and may even be discarded as "later additions", since they believe that man's behaviour and thoughts have to be consistent. If the warriors are at some point shown as bloodthirsty, then to many scholars like Finley, Kirk or Adkins, this has to be their main and only characteristic, and they appear to find that every other quality that conflicts with this is "unnerving" (as Kirk finds the scene between Priam in Achilles in book XXIV). However, these contradictory aspects do not mean that Homer's picture of men is inconsistent, that they only show that men were as complex and variable creatures then as they are now. People cannot be frozen once and for all in one single pattern of behaviour, they are not immutable but multi-faceted beings, and Homer seems to have understood that perfectly.

But violence and martial values have been studied many times, and there is more to the Iliad than these. Further positive aspects have captured my attention. Not all is grim in Homer, and further positive aspects of human life are shown in the happiness and pleasure that can still be found in the poem. A link is created between human beings in the joy they can find in each other and in the world around them: despite war and the omnipresence of death, Homer keeps insisting on the beauty of life. It can of course be found in descriptions of what the warriors have left behind them, and may never see again, but even life on the battlefield can be beautiful and even joyous. The idea which appears is that however hard it can be, life is always desirable. Even if the warriors themselves think a glorious death is the

most important thing in the world, the poet always reminds us that life is beautiful and death a tragedy.

Another positive aspect of human life, and a further way to deal with the human condition, is the topic of Part III: Politics. After what exists in the warrior's personal circle, positive values can be found on a global scale, in political structures. Despite the title of the third part, I have not placed too much emphasis on the question of power as such. My interest is not so much in the question of power in general but in how human beings organise both in their personal lives and in public structures in order to make the most of their situation and compensate for human mortality and suffering: another way for human beings to mitigate the tragic human condition is found through social organisation. Interpersonal relationships and the joy that can be found in them do not prevent conflict, especially conflict of a political/hierarchical nature. Indeed, political conflict is part of the main storyline of the poem, in the dispute between Achilles and Agamemnon. This is complicated by the fact that it is linked to complex heroic values: honour, recompense and prizes.

However, even at that level, respect and understanding can be achieved, and conflict resolution is one of the themes which conclude the poem: during the Funeral Games for Patroclus, Achilles starts re-entering the human community through the resolution of political/hierarchical disputes, which are appeased by respect and understanding. He then can come full circle, and resolves personal conflicts and suffering in the reconciliation with Priam.

As has probably already been perceived, this is an unashamedly humanist, and possibly overly optimistic, approach to the *Iliad*. The key aim of the thesis is to show how the poem

affirms the dignity and worth of human beings, as well as Homer's perception of the communality of the human condition. The dissertation is understood to be a reflection on the representation of the human condition in the *Iliad* in its dual and contradictory nature, positive and negative, comprising both intense suffering and positive values such as solidarity. There is a tension in the poem between the constant presence of death and a wonder at the accomplishments and possibilities of mankind.

In terms of methodology, I have found that a good way to come to terms with concepts and how they are understood in context is through vocabulary studies. Other than looking generally at a passage, I have spent a great deal of time looking at every occurrence of terms belonging to the lexical field of the concept studied.⁶ This was not enough to reach definite conclusions, but allowed me to classify uses, which was useful in achieving a good picture of the Homeric understanding of a given concept. Then it makes it possible apply the broad categories to specific passages.

The translation for the passages quoted is that of Hammond,⁷ sometimes slightly modified, and the Greek text is taken from T. W. Allen's edition.⁸

⁶ A list of those terms is given at the beginning of each chapter.

⁷ Hammond (1987).

⁸ Allen (1931).

PART I

CHAPTER I

MANKIND AND MORTALITY: THE FRAGILITY OF HUMAN LIFE

I – BEING MORTAL

A – MORTALS AS INFERIOR TO THE GODS

In their usages, the words βροτός and θνητός refer to ‘mortals’ or ‘human beings’, and they also both imply the inferiority of mortals, their limitations and suffering, in particular as opposed to the gods. This view is confirmed by the striking etymology of βροτός: it seems that the meaning ‘mortal’ comes from the negative cognate ἄμβροτος ‘immortal’.¹ This would mean that mortals are *defined* by a lack of something, which in this case is immortality. They are defined by their inferiority to the gods, and ultimately by their own imperfection. The initial point of reference is not mortals themselves, but what they constructed as an idealised form of existence, which would not be overshadowed by death, and which they made that of the gods.²

¹ Chantraine (1968), 197-8. Of course, ἄμβροτος is still a privative form based on Indo-European *mr̥. βροτός comes from ἄμβροτος, but ἄμβροτος comes from *mr̥tos or similar. ἄμβροτος is less used in the poems than ἀθάνατος, but it is still present. It is used of things such as the gods themselves, the night, and gifts from the gods to mortals. For a complete classification of the occurrences of ἄμβροτος, see appendix II.

² Vernant (2001) points out for example that one of the questions relating to human mortality is: "alors comment est-ce que je peux trouver le moyen d'atteindre un peu de la stabilité de cette existence, que j'attribue aux dieux?" According to Vernant, the answer is in the remembrance of human exploits kept alive by song and

That mortals are to be regarded as imperfect and inferior to the gods is also visible in the way both human beings and gods understand the 'status' of mortals. This idea is clearly demonstrated in a grim passage where Zeus expresses the general opinion that the gods have of human life:

ἦ ἵνα δυστήνοισι μετ' ἀνδράσιν ἄλγε' ἔχητον;
οὐ μὲν γάρ τί πού ἐστιν οἴζυρῶτερον ἀνδρός
πάντων, ὅσσά τε γαῖαν ἔπι πνέει τε καὶ ἔρπει.

'Was it for you [Achilles' immortal horses] to share the pain of unhappy mankind? Since there is nothing more miserable than man among all the creatures that breathe and move on earth.'

XVII, 443-5³

There is very obviously an impassable boundary between men and gods, whose crossing is a clear transgression,⁴ and the horses of Achilles highlight another aspect of this boundary. These horses are immortal, and were given to Peleus by Poseidon on the occasion of his wedding with Thetis. They are said to be hard to manage for mere mortals.⁵ It is also said that they should not have belonged to a mortal.⁶ John Heath argues that the horses, as well as the other divine gifts to Peleus which were later handed down to Achilles, function "as a foil for Achilles' acceptance of the human condition".⁷ He adds that the gifts are often

monuments. 24. The etymology of ἀνθρώπος is unknown, but Seiler insists that the etymology should start from the function of the word, which is to oppose the human race to that of the gods. Seiler (1953), 225ff. Nevertheless, the uses do not always imply a contrast with the gods.

³ Apollo gives a slightly more positive description of human life at XXI, 462-7, even though he does give that as a reason not to bother about them: "Earthshaker, you would not say I was in my right mind if I do battle with you for the sake of wretched mortals, who are like leaves – for a time they flourish in a blaze of glory, and feed on the yield of the earth, and then again they fade lifeless." The leaves simile is of course reminiscent of Glaucus' speech in Book VI.

⁴ Think for example of the outrage and disbelief expressed when men try to fight the gods: V, 359-62; XXI, 379-80; XXII, 8-10.

⁵ X, 401-4; XVII, 75-8.

⁶ XVII, 443-45.

⁷ Heath (1992), 387. John Wilson (1974) also points out that the amour of Achilles in particular "in its unchanging immortality brings out the contrasting evils of age and of premature death", 385.

“connected in a most destructive fashion with human mortality”.⁸ If we focus solely on the immortal horses,⁹ we can see that they are “tied closely to the mortality of Patroclus as well as that of Achilles”,¹⁰ as they had carried Patroclus to his death and predicted Achilles’ own death.¹¹ According to Heath, “the immortal gifts remind us of our mortality, but hasten our meeting with death as well. In the world of the *Iliad*, then, it is not the case that human beings turn the gifts of the gods to perverse use – the gifts themselves are pernicious”.¹² The case of the horses is also interesting because they have to share human suffering which should not normally be their lot, something Zeus regrets.¹³

Although Heath points out that: “like Thetis,¹⁴ the horses must be exposed to human suffering and come to share it. Zeus questions the rightness of such gifts but seems more to regret that the taint of human tragedy has affected the horses than to feel compassion for human suffering itself”,¹⁵ Zeus’ statement would still have an effect on a human audience listening to the performer.

⁸ Heath (1992), 338.

⁹ Heath also looks at the other presents given to Peleus by the gods, a divine wife, Thetis, armour and a spear and show their interaction with human mortality in the poem.

¹⁰ Heath (1992), 392.

¹¹ Therefore, Harrison seems to be in the wrong when he says that Hector’s lack of involvement with the immortal horses (he does not even seem to know that they exist) points to the poet’s allegiance to the Achaian side. Harrison (1991), 252-4.

¹² Heath (1992), 394.

¹³ XVII, 443-45

¹⁴ J. Wilson (1974) remarks that Thetis, like the immortal horses, “is infected by too close a contact with humanity”, 388.

¹⁵ Heath (1992), 393.

B – MORTALITY AS POTENTIALITY

Because of the clear and unavoidable link to θάνατος, one might think that the uses of θνητός would be more obviously related to mortality than those of βροτός. As it is, both θνητός and βροτός have very comparable uses, in great part linked, as the *Lexikon des Frühgriechischen Epos*¹⁶ points out, to the restrictions human beings face, especially as compared with the immortals, rather than the mere fact of their being subjected to death. That can be shown for example in the fact that in many translations, the words ‘mortal’ and ‘man’ are used almost indifferently to translate βροτός (this does not seem to be the case with θνητός).¹⁷ The fact that βροτός and θνητός are not only used in contexts dealing directly with death, but in contexts dealing with the life of human beings in all its aspects¹⁸ shows that death hangs over mortals all their life, whatever they are actually doing. Anything that human beings do is tainted with death. Glory is an obvious example (this will be discussed further in the parts on heroic and beautiful death). It is to be noted that although the word ἄνθρωπος has extremely similar uses, it refers strictly to mankind as a species and the context of the uses mainly includes the things that are common to human beings), and not specifically to the notion of their mortality, and some differences can be seen in its uses, which add the notion of suffering,¹⁹ and the idea that men dwell in cities.²⁰

¹⁶ Snell *et al.* (1955-), from now on only referred to as the *Lexikon*.

¹⁷ In the context of this particular discussion, the word ‘mortal’ is always used in the translations for reasons of consistency, as we take the words not simply to describe mankind as species, but to describe more or less emphatically a particular characteristic of mankind, mortality, which is shown even in contexts not directly related to death.

¹⁸ See appendix I.

¹⁹ IX, 592; XVI, 326-9; XXIV, 49

²⁰ IV, 84; XVIII, 338-42; XVIII, 490-3; XX, 215-8.

Etymologically, Leumann²¹ insists that the suffix *-to- in βροτός denotes potentiality: 'mortal', meaning 'subject to death' (whereas the Sanskrit *myrtá-* for example means 'dead'): the simple *possibility* of death means that men are limited.

Some men nonetheless almost manage to transcend their human condition and achieve what no one had thought possible: in the face of all the misery of human life, men can still achieve great things. One way of dealing with the spectre of death in the poem is 'excellence': the pressure of mortality creates competition between human beings in displaying excellence. Human beings may be compared to the gods, but the consequences of mortality remain mostly within the human realm: the gods are not really needed any longer as death is more present in men's lives than they are.

According to Vernant, the point of heroism is to set oneself apart from the "commun des mortels",²² and Griffin points out that if the hero were really godlike, he would not be a hero at all: the pressure of mortality "imposes on men the compulsion to have virtues", because death is constantly present in the hero's thoughts.²³ This would mean that the notion of mortality is always present in the background, even though most of the examples do not deal directly with death. The question of heroism and mortality will be analysed in more detail in a later section on heroic death.

Even though not very many occurrences of βροτός and θνητός deal directly with death, the notions of mortality and suffering can be glimpsed frequently, as the two words can be

²¹ Leumann (1950).

²² Vernant (2001), 23. He also insists on the question of meaning: "on voit bien que l'enjeu de la mort héroïque – ce qui est vraiment en question – c'est le fait que nous autres humains, malgré tout, nous ne pouvons pas ne pas nous poser la question du sens de tout cela".

²³ Griffin (1980), 92-3. Griffin mentions in particular Hector and Achilles, who constantly live under the shadow of their own death. He also mentions all the great warriors who, on the battlefield, are suddenly seized by the fear of death.

linked to another word meaning 'mortal', 'man' (and 'woman') or 'living'. One very frequent term applied to human beings is μέροπες, which comes from the Μέροψ, the inhabitants of Cos, who themselves are supposed to descend from the hero Μέροψ, who was born of the earth.²⁴ Because of this origin, the adjective is generally understood to mean 'earth-born'. It always refer to human beings (ἄνθρωποι or βροτοί), but has no direct link to mortality.²⁵ Sometimes Gender is emphasized to differentiate mortals by the addition of the words ἀνήρ²⁶ and γυνή.²⁷ Similarly, ἄνθρωπος²⁸ is also used in conjunction with θνητός, emphasising how human beings are not the only mortal creatures²⁹ and how the meaning of θνητός or βροτός is more than just 'human being'. Finally, ζωός is once used to differentiate between living mortals and dead mortals, (in the example where it shows the greed of the Κήρ, who takes with her mortals who are still alive.³⁰

βροτός is also very often used with a word referring to pain and misery, such as οἰζυρός³¹ or δειλός,³² which show how those limitations and restrictions experienced by

²⁴ Similarly, the bird μέροψ lay eggs in the earth (Chantraine (1968) says on this: "il est difficile de savoir si le nom du héros est pris au nom de l'oiseau ou si le procès est inverse"). Of course, as in most aetiological myth, the hero himself got his name from the inhabitants.

²⁵ This word See βροτός: II, 285 and ἄνθρωπος I, 250; III, 402; IX, 340; XI, 28; XVIII, 288; XVIII, 342; XVIII, 490; XX, 217. Cp. uses with ἐπιχθόνιος, 'who walks the earth': it is used with ἄνθρωπος (IV,45), βροτός (I, 272; XXIV, 505), 3x with ἀνήρ and once on its own, as a noun.

²⁶ θνητός: X, 403; XVI, 441; XVII, 77; XX, 41; XX, 266; βροτός: V, 604.

²⁷ θνητός: XX, 305

²⁸ θνητός: I, 339; XII, 242; XIV, 199; XVIII, 404; XX, 204; XX, 220; XX, 233.

²⁹ Horses are also described as being mortal: in the following example, a mortal horse is put to the test by running alongside the immortal horses, showing how a human creature can aspire to some extent to what the immortals are able to do:

ἐν δὲ παρηορήσιν ἀμύμονα Πήδασον ἴει,
τόν ῥά ποτ' Ἡετίωνος ἐλών πόλιν ἤγαγ' Ἀχιλλεύς,
ὃς καὶ θνητός ἐὼν ἔπεθ' ἵπποις ἀθανάτοισι.

In the side-track he put the excellent Pegasus, a horse that Achilles had brought back when he took Etion's city: mortal though he was, he could run with the immortal horses.

XVI, 152-4

³⁰ βροτός: XVIII, 539.

³¹ XIII, 569.

³² XXI, 463-64; XXII, 31; XXII, 76; XXIV, 525.

mortals lead them to pain and suffering. Again the link to mortality in the uses of the word is clear: apart from being used to mortals in general, it is used to pity dead or dying warriors,³³ but also to taunt them,³⁴ and it is used of grief for dead relatives,³⁵ and of suffering.³⁶

C – CHARACTERISTICS OF MORTALS

Mortals are not only defined as being something less than the gods, but also by their activities, which are common to all human beings. In the plural, the uses of βροτός can vary.³⁷ It can be used to refer to the human condition, to what all men do, what is common to all of them. That picture is particularly striking in the *Odyssey*, with its opposition between real, normal human beings who belong to civilisation, and others who are either monsters or supra-human.

Many things are common to all human beings, such as sleep, pain etc.³⁸ but two things seem to be particularly fundamental to what human beings are: bread and language, two things that define civilisation: power over nature (through agriculture) and communication within the species. As Deborah Levine Gera points out, “speech and diet are,

³³ XI, 816; XVII, 201; XVII,670; XXIII, 65; 105; 221.

³⁴ XI, 441; XVI, 837.

³⁵ XVII, 38; XVIII, 54 (of Thetis); XIX, 287; XXII, 431; XXIII, 223.

³⁶ XXIV, 518.

³⁷ In the singular, it refers to the uniqueness of a particular man, with the idea that “no other man could do what that man does/did”. It can either be used to glorify a particular positive quality, or on the contrary, to expose negative qualities.

³⁸ See appendix I.

in fact, two criteria used by Homer to describe human beings and distinguish them from beasts".³⁹

1 - bread

Mortals are several times defined as bread-eaters. In the link between bread and mortality, the expression for bread is not always σῖτος⁴⁰. It can be Δημήτερος ἀκτῆ', grain of Demeter⁴¹. It can also be ἀρούρης καρπός, 'fruit of the field'.⁴²

Vernant points out that "le pain représente la nourriture humaine par excellence, le symbole d'une vie civilisée ; les hommes sont des "mangeurs de pain" ; et "manger le pain", "vivre du fruit de la terre labourée", c'est une autre façon, pour les Grecs, de dire : être mortel."⁴³ Levine Gera also points out that "the very different kinds of diet found in the *Odyssey* point to the wide cultural differences between various groups of men, and also emphasize the distinction between gods, men, and animals".⁴⁴ In that respect, mortals are opposed to the gods, who do not eat bread (but ambrosia) and have immortal blood (*ichor*): V, 339-42.

The fact that while men eat bread, the gods eat ambrosia (and have *ichor* as opposed to mortal blood) may lead us to think that there is a fundamental link between bread-eating and mortality: ambrosia has the same root as ἀμβροτος, 'immortal'.⁴⁵ It is actually a food

³⁹ Levine Gera (2003), 8. She mentions for example how "Polyphemus the cannibal fails this test of humanity on both counts, for he neither resembles a grain-eater [...] nor is he articulate", 9.

⁴⁰ σῖτος is used in conjunction with mortals in the *Odyssey*: VIII,222 and X, 101. In both books, bread is taken to be such a basic food that it can mean 'food' or 'meal' in general.

⁴¹ XIII, 321-3. ἀλφειστής is not discussed here, as it never appears in the *Iliad*.

⁴² VI, 142-3, XXI, 665.

⁴³ Vernant (1999), 18.

⁴⁴ Levine Gera (2003), 1. Cf. The Cyclops and Phaeacians, who will be mentioned below.

⁴⁵ Vermeule argues that the immortals are "inedible, as well as bloodless and soulless; they are at least exempt from the animal food-chain and from the cycle of nature", since according to her, mortals, βροτοί, are

that confers immortality: when they want to preserve from decomposition the dead body of Patroclus, the gods put ambrosia through his nostrils.⁴⁶ According to Vermeule, the gods “may not eat meat or grain and may not drink wine, because these substances endanger their status”.⁴⁷ Inversely, she argues that since the word nectar comes from νεκρός, “drinking nectar may be fatal to non gods”,⁴⁸ which would go against the idea that a change of diet could lead to a change of status. She gives the example of Calypso who carefully separates her own (immortal) food from that of Odysseus, but she also mentions Circe’s drugs and the lotus-eaters’ food which are capable of transforming whoever eats them.⁴⁹

On the other hand, bread, which is perishable, could be thought to ‘make’ or at least ‘keep’ human beings mortal. Furthermore, according to Herodotus, the Ethiopians, who according to him are the mortals who look the most like the gods (because of their beauty, their nice smell and their long life), do not eat cereal and consider wheat to be a sort of manure.⁵⁰ It seems that eating immortal food means being immortal, while eating perishable food means being perishable. At the other end of the spectrum, sub-human monsters like Polyphemus do not eat bread either:

ἐνθα δ’ ἀνήρ ἐνίαινε πελώριος, ὅς ῥα τὰ μῆλα
οἶος ποιμαίνεσκεν ἀπόπροθεν· οὐδὲ μετ’ ἄλλους
πωλεῖτ’, ἀλλ’ ἀπάνευθεν ἑὼν ἀθεμίστια ἦδη.
καὶ γὰρ θαῦμ’ ἐτέτυκτο πελώριον, οὐδὲ ἑώκει
ἀνδρὶ γε σιτοφάγῳ, ἀλλὰ ῥίῳ ὑλήεντι
ὑψηλῶν ὄρέων, ὃ τε φαίνεται οἶον ἀπ’ ἄλλων.

There, a monstrous man was wont to sleep, who shepherded his flocks alone and afar, and mingled not with others, but lived apart, with his heart set on lawlessness.

“etymologically destined to be eaten, or at least filled with delicious nourishing blood, βρότος.” On the other hand, Chantraine does not think that the two words (βρότος and βροτός) are related.

⁴⁶ XIX, 38-40. In a similar way, Athena instils Nectar and ambrosia in the body of Achilles at XIX, 353 so he does not feel hunger (since he had not eaten since Patroclus died).

⁴⁷ Vermeule (1979), 130.

⁴⁸ Vermeule (1979), 31. But cp. Tantalos’ attempt to steal the food of immortality, e.g. Pindar, *Ol.* I.

⁴⁹ Vermeule (1979), 130. cp. Persephone’s story: often, eating someone’s food means staying with them.

⁵⁰ Herodotus, III, 22, 19.

For he was fashioned a wondrous monster, and was not like a man that lives by bread, but like a wooded peak which stands out to view alone, apart from the rest. ix, 187-92

Bread is also of course linked to agriculture and represents civilisation in the mastery of man over nature, as well as because working on a field implied a settled as opposed to nomadic society.⁵¹ It is also interesting to notice that the word *πόνος*, which can refer to the work of the field, is also a negative word referring to suffering: bread is linked to mortality in its eating, but also in the suffering that is necessary for its preparation.

2 - language

Mortals also use language, which can be regarded as one of the most wonderful accomplishments of human beings:

στρεπτή δὲ γλῶσσ' ἐστὶ βροτῶν, πολέες δ' ἐνὶ μῦθοι
παντοῖοι, ἐπέων δὲ πολὺς νομὸς ἔνθα καὶ ἔνθα.

The tongue of mortals is a versatile thing: it contains every sort of varied speech, and its words can range at large, this way or that.

XX, 248-9⁵²

It is difficult to see language as a separation between gods and mortals, but as Levine Gera points out, "Homer occasionally hints at a special language of the gods", in particular in alternative names to people and places.⁵³

Language also allows for knowledge to be transmitted. *θνητός* is used in the context of human knowledge being transmitted from generation to generation:

ἴδμεν δ' ἀλλήλων γενεήν, ἴδμεν δὲ τοκῆας
πρόκλυτ' ἀκούοντες ἔπεα θνητῶν ἀνθρώπων

⁵¹ It is also interesting to notice a gendered aspect to the consumption of bread: in *Odyssey* xx, 107-8, women make bread and men eat it (it is described as *μυελόν ἀνδρῶν*, 'the marrow of men'.)

⁵² See also *ἄνθρωπος*; II, 804.

⁵³ Levine Gera (2003), 3. For a fuller discussion on the language of the gods, see 50-2.

We both know each other's birth, and we know each other's parents, from hearing the tales that mortal men have long made famous.

XX, 203-4

Ἄνθρωπος is most commonly used in relation to this notion of human history (i.e. what is recorded about human families and their relationships with each other) and memory.⁵⁴

At the same time, language can divide human beings, as different peoples speak different languages. This is the case among the Trojan allies in particular

πολλοὶ γὰρ κατὰ ἄστυ μέγα Πριάμου ἐπίκουροι,
ἄλλη δ' ἄλλων γλῶσσα πολυσπερέων ἀνθρώπων·
τοῖσιν ἕκαστος ἀνὴρ σημαίνεται οἷσί περ ἄρχει,
τῶν δ' ἐξηγείσθω κοσμησάμενος πολιήτας.

'There are many allies with us in Priam's great city, but they are men from far and wide and each speak a different tongue. Have each leader give his orders to the men he commands and have him marshal his own countrymen and lead them out to battle.'

II, 803-6⁵⁵

People can also be described as βαρβαροφώνων (II, 867), 'of foreign speech' and even as ἀγριοφώνους 'wild-spoken' (viii, 294), which is a negative term. As Levine Gera points out, "while the use of the word *barbaros* here may well be onomatopoeic, reflecting the babbling sound of foreign speech, *agrios* is a negative or judgemental term, which refers to life style as much as language".⁵⁶ She also makes the link between speech and civilisation, in particular with the opposition between the Phaeacians (who "[understand] communities and languages") and the Cyclops (whose "partial command of language is all of a piece with his asocial and semi-civilized way of life").⁵⁷

⁵⁴ See I, 250-2; III, 287; 460; VI, 358; VII, 87; X, 213; XVIII, 288-9; XXI, 568-70; XXIII, 331-3; XXIV, 201-2.

⁵⁵ See also IV, 138. The same idea is present in the *Odyssey*, when Odysseus mentions how different languages are spoken in Crete: xix, 175.

⁵⁶ Levine Gera (2003), 2. She also points out that "it is significant that both of these compound adjectives make use of the word φωνή -- rather than αὐδή -- to describe foreign speech, for in Homer the word *phone* is used of sound or noise, while *aude* refers to comprehensible speech."

⁵⁷ Levine Gera (2003), 8. For a fuller discussion on Polyphemus, see 4-7.

According to Hilary Mackie, one importance difference between the Trojans and the Achaians in terms of language is that “the Trojans do not use language to attain social order. While the Achaians speak a common language, the Trojan army embodies a noisy mixture of nations, speaking many tongues.” She adds that at Troy, “social and political strife remains unspoken and under the surface”, unlike the Achaian camp, where everything is endlessly discussed and debated.⁵⁸ More generally, Mackie makes the point that “speeches made in the poem by Achaians and Trojans differ significantly with respect to diction and theme, and, frequently, in length too.”⁵⁹ A more detailed analysis of political difference will be given in the last part of the dissertation. Mackie nevertheless insists that all this does not indicate any national bias on the part of Homer: “ethnic, cultural, and linguistic differences the poet imagines appear to be descriptive and aesthetic, not prescriptive and evaluative.”⁶⁰

All this shows how unavoidable death is: in the narrative, the characters are at all times conscious that they are going to die, the warriors of course, but also other characters, Priam for example. Furthermore, the reader is also constantly reminded of the presence of death, as it also occurs in other parts of the poem, such as the similes, or the stories told by the characters. Even the shield of Achilles is shown as being a complete image of life, as it does not ‘hide’ death, but present it as an unavoidable part of life.⁶¹

⁵⁸ Mackie, H. (1996), 10.

⁵⁹ Mackie, H. (1996), 1. She summarizes the differences in that manner: “Achaean style is aggressive and outward directed where Trojan style is reflective and introspective. Achaean language is public and political; Trojan language is private and poetic. Among the Achaeans, language is primarily used for public blaming, and blame (*neikos*) has a vital social function. Trojans, on the other hand, avoid the use of blame in preference to genres that include praise.” 1

⁶⁰ More on national bias in the second part of the dissertation.

⁶¹ See appendix VI on the universality of death.

II – THE DEAD BODY

A – TREATMENT OF THE DEAD BODY: νεκρός AND νέκυς

One striking and rarely commented on aspect of the *Iliad* is the shockingly overwhelming presence of corpses,¹ and the presentation of an almost apocalyptic vision of the battlefield: for example, we are shown horses trampling dead bodies:

Ὡς ἄρα φωνήσας ἴμασεν καλλίτριχας ἵππους
 μάστιγι λιγυρῇ· τοὶ δὲ πληγῆς αἶοντες
 ῥίμφ' ἔφερον θοὸν ἄρμα μετὰ Τρώας καὶ Ἀχαιοὺς
 στείβοντες νέκυσ τε καὶ ἀσπίδας·

So speaking he whipped on the lovely-maned horses with the whistling lash: and they hearing its crack carried the speedy chariot fast towards the Trojans and Achaeans, trampling on bodies and shields as they ran.

XI, 531-4²

We are told how corpses fill up the rivers³ and how they cover the plain so thoroughly that the living warriors have to find a space clear of corpses to meet:

Τρώων αὐτ' ἀγορὴν ποιήσατο φαίδιμος Ἴκτωρ
 νόσφι νεῶν ἀγαγὼν ποταμῷ ἐπι δινήεντι,
 ἐν καθαρῷ ὅθι δὴ νεκύων διεφαίνετο χώρος.

Then glorious Hector held an assembly of the Trojans, taking them away from the ships to gather beside the swirling river, in a clear space, where room could be seen free of corpses.

VIII, 489-91⁴

It is very clear that, for the warriors, the physical presence of death is unavoidable.

¹ See e.g. Friedrich (2003).

² See also XX, 499.

³ See also XVI, 72; XXI, 220; XXI, 302; XXI, 218-20; XXI, 325 and νεκρός XXI, 235.

⁴ See also X, 199 and νεκρός X, 493. For the plain being covered with dead bodies, see νεκρός XXI, 343; 348 and νέκυς X, 349; XV, 118; XVI, 661.

Another major characteristic of the dead bodies in the poem, is that they have to be fought over. Friends want to take them back to Troy or to the Achaean ships in order to cremate them.⁵ Even the corpses of anonymous or unrecognisable fellow warriors obtain burial, as is shown in the truce of Book VII.⁶

Those examples show that the living have a duty to the dead, the *γέρας θανόντων*, which in the poems is described as washing the dead (xxiv 190), closing their eyes (xxiv, 296), mourning them (XIII, 9; xxiv, 296) and finally burying them (XVI, 457; 675). Vermeule talks about the responsibility of women in the burial and mourning rituals: “the dead are helpless and need comfort or mothering like infants, from mother or wife, to close the eyes, straighten the limbs, fix the jaw shut”.⁷

The fullest account of a funeral that is shown in the poem is of course of that of Patroclus in XXIII. Its unusual aspects (in particular the human sacrifices) have been much commented on, and some of the main conclusions follow Rohde in saying that it depicts an archaic and outdated practice even for the time, linked to a cult of the souls and the belief that the souls of the dead can be harmful for the living unless they are appeased. Achilles therefore sacrifices the young Trojans, the horses and the dogs to appease the soul of Patroclus.⁸ Tsagarakis links this idea to the fear of the “living corpse” which needs placating.⁹ But it has to be said there is no such thing as a “living corpse” in Homer, and as Tsagarakis points out, “the portrayal [of the recurrent motif of mourning] indicates no fear and anxiety

⁵ See also V, 573 and V, 297-8 and *νέκυς* XVI, 321. For the gods protecting the dead body see XXIII, 190; XXIV, 35; XXIV, 108; XXIV, 423.

⁶ VII, 331-5. See also VII, 376; 395; 408; 428; 431 and *νέκυς* VII, 418; 420.

⁷ Vermeule (1979), 14. See Agamemnon’s complaint that Clytemnestra did not even close his eyes (xi, 425). More will be said on women’s ritual lamentation in the next chapter.

⁸ See Rohde (1925), 3-43 and in particular 12-17.

⁹ Tsagarakis (1980), 235.

whatsoever"¹⁰ and Patroclus for example when he comes to see Achilles after his death is not frightening or threatening at all.¹¹ Tsagarakis adds that "the maltreatment and mutilation of the opponent's body [...] demonstrate that warriors at least are not afraid of the dead".¹² No attitude of this kind is perceived elsewhere in the poem.¹³ To Annie Schnapp-Gourbeillon, Patroclus' funeral consists in the perversion of existing rituals: the oxen and sheep are prepared as for a sacrificial meal, but the fat normally offered to the gods is here used to cover Patroclus' body and the jars of honey and oil, normally used as offerings and libations are turned away from their function and burnt. The funeral show excess and disproportion which are condemned by the poet (for example in the expression *κακὰ δὲ φρεσὶ μῆδετο ἔργα*, XXIII, 176¹⁴), but they are not an isolated phenomenon in Achilles' behaviour. She thinks that it is not only this particular practice that Homer condemns, but Achilles' violent behaviour, in war as in the particular ritual chosen to honour Patroclus.¹⁵ Vermeule, on the other hand, insists that the tradition of burning animals alongside the dead man on the pyre is "an old Indo-European custom which intended the warriors' life-long companions to be with him in death, a mark of dignity, leadership and affection".¹⁶

In fact, the only way in which mortals might reasonably be afraid of the dead is not through any supernatural capacities of the dead themselves, but because if they maltreat their bodies too much (or leave them unburied), there is a point where the bodies become

¹⁰ Tsagarakis (1980), 236.

¹¹ Tsagarakis (1980), 237.

¹² Tsagarakis (1980), 237.

¹³ This argument fails in that it is possible to imagine that ghosts can be unhappy and resentful no matter how nice the living person was.

¹⁴ Achilles had planned to sacrifice young Trojans over his friends' pyre since Book XVIII: 336-7. He mentions it again at XXI, 26-33.

¹⁵ Schnapp-Gourbeillon (1998), 81-3.

¹⁶ Vermeule (1979), 59. This tradition is nevertheless changed in the case of Patroclus, since there is no mention that the young Trojans and the animals accompany Patroclus to Hades.

Cp. the Lefkandi site, where horses appear to have been sacrificed and were included in a grave: see e.g. Antonaccio (2002), Calligas (1988), Morris (1987), Popham, M.R., Sackett, L.H. and Themelis, P.G. (1980).

μήνιμα, cause of divine wrath, as is the case with Hector in the *Iliad*¹⁷ and Elpenor in the *Odyssey*.¹⁸

Another form of contention over a corpse is the theft or attempted theft of the body. Two major episodes in the poem are the fighting over the bodies of Sarpedon¹⁹ and Patroclus.²⁰ Warriors can actually try to steal a corpse (XVIII, 539-40)²¹ or they can also most commonly despoil it.²²

The main threat to dead bodies is that they will be humiliated and dehumanised through mutilation²³. Vermeule remarks that the body's condition will affect the condition of the soul: "the magical function of the mutilation of the body [...] apparently ensure that a revenant ghost will be equally helpless", as "wounds in the flesh mean wounds in the shade below (xi, 38)".²⁴ But more interestingly, according to Vernant, the mutilation of a dead body is meant to make them unrecognisable and to take away the 'immortal glory' from them.²⁵ We can add that if a body is disfigured to the point of being unrecognisable, he will not have a burial place reminding future generations of his deeds and of the glory he earned. It is the

¹⁷ XXIV, 31ff.

¹⁸ xi, 51ff.

¹⁹ see νεκρός XVI, 545; 629; 641; 644 and νέκυς XVI, 526; 565; 577.

²⁰ See νεκρός VII, 113; I 104; 108; 235; 275; 300; 357; 362; 412; 509; 581; 589; 635; 713; 718; 722; 734; XVIII, 158; 164 and νέκυς VII, 121; 240; 277; 394; 692; 724; 735; 746; XVIII, 20; 152; 173; 180.

²¹ A reason for wanting to steal an enemy's body could be bargaining: in XVII, Glaucus argues that Hector should try harder to steal Patroclus' body, so that he can use it in exchange for Sarpedon's armour (XVII, 140-168).

²² See also IV, 467-9; IV, 493; V, 620; XIII, 194; XVII, 317; XVIII, 540 and νέκυς IV, 492; X, 343 = 387XIII, 509.

²³ According to Vermeule, the threat of leaving a body to be eaten by dogs and birds is linked to an old, positive idea of "constructive recycling of human flesh by the animal world", which has been "overlaid by a convention of fear and outrage". Vermeule (1979) 48. Redfield, in his article on the *Iliad*'s proem, talks about l.5 of the poem, where, following Zenodotus (contra Arisarchus) he reads δαῖτα, feast, rather than πᾶσι. To him, this use of δαῖτα ("the institution wherein society pre-eminently becomes peaceful") for the "carriion meal of the beasts" is thus "a strong and (as the critics complained) rather repulsive metaphor. [...] The complex phrase suggests the analogies: warriors:victims::dogs:prey and birds:carriion::men:meat." He also comments that "the perfection of victory would be actually to consume the vanquished (Iliad 3.23-8, 13.198-202, 18.161-4, 22.261-5, 24.212-13). Redfield (2001), 468-9. But as Vermeule points out, "[Achilles'] cannibal impulses and his animal language stay in the realm of rhetoric, like almost all "ugly actions" in the *Iliad*". Vermeule (1979), 94.

²⁴ Vermeule (1979), 49.

²⁵ Vernant (2001), 32.

same thing when a body is denied proper burial. That is why mutilation in the poem (or threats of mutilation, as actual mutilation remains very rare) often takes the form of beheading (Hippolochus at XI, 143-7, Dolon at X, 454-7 and Hector's threat to behead Patroclus' body XVII, 127), disfigurement (Achilles with Hector), and leaving the body 'to the dogs and birds' (a recurrent threat in the poem).²⁶

Charles Segal²⁷ insists that the theme of the mutilation of a corpse is part of a developmental progression and creates a 'vast architectural construction'. The warnings concerning corpse mutilation are fulfilled sporadically in the first two-thirds of the poem (for example the beheadings in the Doloneia and in Agamemnon's *Aristeia* mentioned above), and gain greater importance in the last books of the poem, with the mistreatment of Hector's body. Segal insists that contrarily to what the 'primitivist' view of Homer says (i.e. the focusing on the 'savagery' of the heroes, and the idea that we interpose our 'Christian ethic' when we express revulsion, horror or compassion over details like mutilation), the poet is a 'voice of civilisation'. To him, Homer "need not openly censure his heroes for their more extreme acts of cruelty in order to indicate that barbarity is taking place and that something valuable in human life is being outraged. A poet who could create a Hector, an Andromache, a Priam, does not *simply* share his heroes' exultation in bloodthirsty deeds."²⁸ He in particular emphasises the etymological link between ἀεικίλειν (the verb used for the mistreatment of the corpses) and ἀεικίης ('unbecoming', 'unseemly', 'disgraceful' 'ignominious'), which in itself, according to him shows that it is wrong to mutilate corpses.²⁹

²⁶ See also section on the beautiful death below.

²⁷ Segal (1971) 1-8.

²⁸ Segal (1971), 10-11.

²⁹ Jocelyne Poigney argues that "sur la base *weik est aussi formé le nom εἰκών, 'l'image', et tout le groupe disant la ressemblance, nous avons suppose un ἀεικίω signifiant 'priver de la ressemblance avec soi', 'détruire l'image

Another aspect of the corpse is that it is what remains on earth of the individual after his soul has left for Hades. Because the words νεκρός and νέκυς can be used of the dead in Hades, Clarke got the strange notion that the corpse is actually what goes down into Hades: “the inhabitants of Hades are seen in two ways: on the one hand they are corpses, and the other hand they are wraiths, phantoms, images”.³⁰ But he seems to have mistaken νεκρός and νέκυς for σῶμα: σῶμα refers exclusively to the physical corpse that is burnt or rots away,³¹ while νεκρός and νέκυς are used in a more general way of the ‘dead person’. They do most of the time refer to the corpse, but they can refer to something else. As Douglas Cairns pointed out in his review of Clarke’s book: “to say that νέκυς/νεκρός covers both corpse and survivor is not the same as to say that, *qua* νέκυς/νεκρός, the survivor is the corpse”.³²

What will happen to their body seems to concern the Homeric characters deeply:³³ Hector in particular seems almost obsessed with the idea of giving back his enemy’s body to his friends, and having his own body given back for burial (which fits into Segal’s conception of an ‘architectural construction’ of the theme of the mutilation of the body): a crescendo can be

d’un corps.” Wounds aim to suppress the features of the hero with blood and dust, and ἀεικέλιος in the *Odyssey* (IV, 244) est appliqué aux coups que se porte Ulysse pour se rendre ‘insoupçonnable’ à Troie en effaçant provisoirement non son aspect physique mais son image sociale, le signe construit – son corps – qui traduit en lui un guerrier. La trace laissée n’est pas infamante, elle est efficace dans une civilisation qui voit chacun comme un spectacle”. So ἀεικέλιω originally refers to a “mutilation esthétique”, though she accepts that “le caractère sinistre du geste et la honte qu’il provoque dictent toutes sortes d’équivalence”. Peigney (1987), XV.

³⁰ See Tsagarakis (1980) on the link between the living corpse and the need for cremation, 235.

³¹ The word is used 5 times: twice of a carcass eaten by a lion (III, 23; XVIII, 161), twice of Hector wanting his body given back for burial (VII, 79; XXII, 342) and once of the bodies sacrificed over Patroclus and heaped over him (XXIII, 169).

³² Cairns (2003), 60. He also compares the Greek to the French ‘le mort’, which also is a lexical unity and refers to both the corpse and the dead person. He also mentions the fact that the σῶμα is explicitly said *not* to make the journey to Hades.

³³ Vermuele (1979) points out that “the psyche is far less interesting to the poet than the mutilated body which he can control, or threaten with scavengers, or save for burial. 97.

observed in those three passages: in the first passage, Hector makes a purely personal resolution to give the enemy's body back to his family, and hopes that he will be treated the same. In the second passage, he makes a direct promise to his enemy and demands a similar oath. In the final passage, he is dying and begs his enemy to spare his body. Throughout the poem, it is clear that Hector grows more and more personal and more and more anxious about the fate of his dead body, as can be seen in the following examples:

εἰ μὲν κεν ἐμὲ κείνος ἔλη ταναήκει χαλκῶ,
 τεύχεα συλήσας φερέτω κοίλας ἐπὶ νῆας,
 σῶμα δὲ οἴκαδ' ἐμὸν δόμεναι πάλιν, ὄφρα πυρός με
 Τρῶες καὶ Τρώων ἄλοχοι λελάχῃσι θανόντα.
 εἰ δέ κ' ἐγὼ τὸν ἔλω, δῶη δέ μοι εὖχος Ἀπόλλων,
 τεύχεα σύλησας οἴσω προτὶ Ἴλιον ἱήν,
 καὶ κρεμόω προτὶ νηὸν Ἀπόλλωνος ἑκάτοιο,
 τὸν δὲ νέκυν ἐπὶ νῆας εὖσσελμους ἀποδώσω,
 ὄφρα ἔ ταρχύσωσι κάρη κομόωντες Ἀχαιοί,
 σῆμά τέ οἱ χεύουσιν ἐπὶ πλατεί Ἑλλησπόντῳ.

'If he kills me with the long-pointed-bronze, let him strip my armour and take it to the hollow ships, but he must give my body back to my home, so that the Trojans and the wives of the Trojans can give me in death my due rite of burning. And if I kill him, and Apollo grants my prayer, I shall strip his armour and carry it back to sacred Ilios, and hang it in dedication at the temple of Apollo the far shooter, but his body I shall return to the well benched ships, so that the long-haired Achaeans can give him the rites of burial and heap a mound for him by the broad Hellespont.'

VII, 77-86

οὐ γὰρ ἐγὼ σ' ἔκπαγλον ἀεικιά, αἶ κεν ἐμοὶ Ζεὺς
 δῶη καμμονίην, σὴν δὲ ψυχὴν ἀφέλωμαι·
 ἀλλ' ἐπεὶ ἄρ' ἐκέ σε συλήσω κλυτὰ τεύχε' Ἀχιλλεῦ
 νεκρὸν Ἀχαιοῖσιν δώσω πάλιν· ὣς δὲ σὺ ῥέζειν.

'I swear that I will inflict no outrage on you, if Zeus grants me the endurance and I take away your life: but after I have stripped you of your famous armour, Achilles, I will give your body back to the Achaeans – and you do the same.'

XXII, 256-9

Τὸν δ' ὀλιγοδρανέων προσέφη κορυθαίολος Ἴκτωρ·
 λίσσομ' ὑπὲρ ψυχῆς καὶ γούνων σῶν τε τοκῆων
 μὴ με ἔα παρὰ νηυσὶ κύνας καταδάψαι Ἀχαιῶν,
 ἀλλὰ σὺ μὲν χαλκὸν τε ἄλις χρυσόν τε δέδεξο
 δῶρα τὰ τοι δώσουσι πατήρ καὶ πότνια μήτηρ,
 σῶμα δὲ οἴκαδ' ἐμὸν δόμεναι πάλιν, ὄφρα πυρός με
 Τρῶες καὶ Τρώων ἄλοχοι λελάχῃσι θανόντα.

Then with the strength low in him Hector of the glinting helmet answered: 'I beseech you by your life and knees and by your parents, do not let the dogs of the Achaean camp eat me by

the ships, but take the ransom of bronze and gold in plenty that my father and honoured mother will offer you, and give my body back to my home, so that the Trojans and the wives of the Trojans can give me in death the due rite of burning.'

XXII, 337-43³⁴ (42-3 = VII, 79-80)

B – THE 'BEAUTIFUL' DEATH

Vernant, in his article on the beautiful death, insists on the contrast between the death of the young and beautiful warrior on the battlefield and that of the old: as Priam points out, a young man killed in battle is always beautiful:

νέω δέ τε πάντ' ἐπέοικεν
 ἄρηϊ κταμένω δεδαϊγμένω ὄξει χαλκῶ
 κείσθαι· πάντα δὲ καλὰ θανόντι περὶ ὅτι φανήη·

In a young man all is decent if he is killed in war and lies there torn by the sharp bronze – though he is dead all that is revealed of him is beautiful.

XXII, 71-3

But the same violent death, "subie par le vieillard, le ravale en deçà de l'homme, fait de son décès une horrible monstruosité".³⁵ According to Vernant, there is a strong link between the 'beautiful death' and a short life (as Priam pointed out).³⁶ The warrior who dies young escapes death. Or at least escapes an *ordinary* death, in that "[il] ignorera sur son corps les flétrissures, le ramollissement que l'âge apporte à toutes les créatures mortelles".³⁷ The real reason for the heroic exploit, and of the heroic death, according to Vernant, is metaphysical. It comes from a desire to escape old age and death: "on dépasse la mort en l'accueillant au lieu de la subir".³⁸ Here, Vernant goes further than what Priam says: Priam

³⁴ Note that here, the word σώμα is used, and not νεκρός or νέκυς.

³⁵ Vernant (1989), 65.

³⁶ Vernant (2001), 13.

³⁷ Vernant (2001), 16-7.

³⁸ Vernant (1989), 52.

only talks of the horror for an old man of a violent death, when we can say that old age itself is a thing of horror.³⁹

Indeed, the desire to escape old age is more easily understandable, and is copiously illustrated in the poem: the words γῆρας and γηράσκω are always used in a negative context. The words are linked with the incapacity to fight (symbolised by the passing on of one's armour for example).⁴⁰ Old men are also described as being unable to fight and as being only capable of sitting on a bench talking.⁴¹ The fact that Nestor still commands troops is seen for example as his *resisting* old age.⁴² Old age weakens their bodies⁴³ and it makes them dependent on their children.⁴⁴

γῆρας is often used with an epithet such as λυγρός ('wretched, pitiable, ruinous'),⁴⁵ χαλεπός ('bad, dangerous, grievous'),⁴⁶ or στυγερός ('hated, hateful'),⁴⁷ which shows how negatively it is perceived.⁴⁸ Apart from old age, λυγρός is used of death,⁴⁹ of suffering,⁵⁰ hatred,⁵¹ murder,⁵² battle,⁵³ news of someone's death,⁵⁴ and orders pertaining to someone's

³⁹ The important human wish is of course to be ἀγήραος as well as ἀθάνατος.

⁴⁰ VII, 148-9. See also XVII, 197. Old men also cannot compete in games: XXIII, 623.

⁴¹ III, 146-52. This example is the most positive, as the old men are praised for their wisdom. Old men are also said to stay behind and guard the walls with the women and children in a siege, on the shield of Achilles: XVIII, 515.

⁴² X, 76-9. He is also said to be less competent now that he yields to age: XXIII, 644, and at one point, he even has to be rescued by Diomedes: VIII, 99 ff.

⁴³ See IV, 315-6; VIII, 103 and XVIII, 434.

⁴⁴ XXIV, 538-42.

⁴⁵ V, 152-4; X, 79; XVIII, 434; XXIII, 644.

⁴⁶ VIII, 102-3.

⁴⁷ XIX, 334-7

⁴⁸ There is a discussion on whether ὁμοῖον at IV 315 is one of those negative adjectives: many translators consider that it means 'common to all' or as Hammond puts it, 'the leveller', but Murray says that it is to be distinguished from ὁμοῖος, and that 'the traditional rendering, "common to all," is not particularly apt as applied to γῆρας, and is quite inappropriate in connexion with πόλεμος etc. The word occurs in Homer only as an epithet of war, strife, old age, and death. It seems best to follow the ancient glossographers, and understand the word as an equivalent of κακός, although we need not go so far as to read ὁλοῖος, with Nauck'. Leaf (1900-2) agrees with Murray and adds that the adjective should be separated in lexicons from ὁμοῖος. Nevertheless, it can be argued that both old age and war are grievous to all, and in that sense are 'levellers'.

⁴⁹ II, 873; VI, 16; X, 174; XX, 289; 296; XXIV, 531.

⁵⁰ V, 156; XIII, 346; XV, 393; XVIII, 430; XXIV, 735; 742.

⁵¹ III, 416.

⁵² XXIII, 86.

death.⁵⁵ χαλεπός is mostly used of harsh words,⁵⁶ but also of suffering,⁵⁷ chains,⁵⁸ Zeus' thunderbolt,⁵⁹ a blast of wind⁶⁰ and the gods.⁶¹ στυγερός, which comes from the Stu/c is used of war/Ares,⁶² of the darkness of death,⁶³ disease,⁶⁴ suffering,⁶⁵ a funeral feast,⁶⁶ Patroclus' fate,⁶⁷ and of some specific characters of the poem.⁶⁸

Those two words γῆρας and γηράσκω) are not once connected for example with the idea of respect due to elders and experience. The usages are unanimously very negative. It therefore does not come as a surprise that the warriors should tend to glorify a kind of death that allows them to avoid such an undesirable and humiliating part of life, and it is right to point out that the warriors' desire to die gloriously on the battlefield is not only due to their desire for fame and glory, but also to their desire not to face old age.

It seems clear that what will happen to their body is of much greater concern to the warriors than what happens to their ψυχή: they are very concerned about their body being mutilated and left to the birds and dogs (Hector seems to be positively obsessed with that idea). They also wish to leave behind a good-looking young corpse rather than an old withered one. In the poem, it is said that the soul leaves for Hades and what is left behind is called αὐτοί,

⁵³ XXIV, 739.

⁵⁴ XVII, 642; 686; XVIII, 18; XIX, 337.

⁵⁵ VI, 168.

⁵⁶ I, 546; II, 245; 378; III, 438; XVII, 141; XXIII, 489; 492.

⁵⁷ V, 384.

⁵⁸ V, 391.

⁵⁹ XIV, 417.

⁶⁰ XXI, 335.

⁶¹ XX, 131; XXI, 482 (Hera).

⁶² II, 385; IV, 240; VI, 330; XVIII, 209; XIX, 230.

⁶³ V, 47; XIII, 672; XVI, 607.

⁶⁴ XIII, 670.

⁶⁵ XXII, 483.

⁶⁶ XXIII, 48.

⁶⁷ XXIII, 79.

⁶⁸ III, 404 (Helen); VIII, 368 (Hades); XIV, 158 (Zeus).

'the warriors themselves'. On the other hand, they do not talk much about the after-life, their own or anybody else's. Curiously, their concern is not what survives of them after their death (the ψυχή) but both what *does not* survive (the body) and what survives *for others* (their glory).⁶⁹

⁶⁹ However, it is true, as we have seen, that a wounded or mutilated corpse led to a wounded or mutilated ψυχή (or νεκρός, or νέκυς) in Hades. Furthermore, this is also complicated by the fact that the ψυχαί in Hades are credited with a degree of physicality (as we will see in the next section). Concern for the body is therefore also, in a roundabout way, concern for the ψυχή. But that is not what is explicitly mentioned by the warriors.

III – THE MEANING OF DEATH

A – THE ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE AFTER-LIFE

1 – Hades

Hades is the place people go when they die. It is an underground place, apparently situated very close to the surface, since an earthquake would be enough to expose it (XX, 59-65). It contains “great rivers and dead streams” (xi, 157): the Styx (the river of hate) is mentioned as the ‘dead river of oaths’ (II, 755).¹ It is also described by Athena as ‘sheer falling’ (VII, 369). The Lethe does not seem to exist but the Acheron (the river of misery, x, 513), the Cocytus (the river of wailing, x, 514) and the Pyriphlegethon² (the flaming river, x, 513) do. Hades is described in greatest detail by Circe before Odysseus goes there: x, 504-15.³ Erebus is mentioned many times,⁴ but as it is used as an apparently exact synonym of Hades (as the place where the shades are), it is difficult to tell if it is actually a *part* of Hades or only another word for it. Tartarus is a place situated below Hades, where the gods can be sent to, and which is used as a threat by Zeus.⁵ It is probable that Hades, as a god, can also be sent to

¹ Several oaths are made by the gods on the Styx: XIV, 271; XV, 37; v, 185.

² C.J. Mackie mentions how in the scene between the river Scamander and Achilles, the river gains the characteristics of all four of the rivers in Hades (hate, wailing, misery, fire), and in particular of the Pyriphlegethon, as it blazes with fire (πυρὶ φλέγεται, XXI, 365), showing how the return of Achilles makes the battlefield a kind of ‘hell on earth’, a place of otherworldly suffering”. C.J. Mackie (1999), 487 and 494-5.

³ Some have even argued that “such a well defined topography appears to conflict with the otherwise vague descriptions of Hades in Homer” (C.J. Mackie (1999), 486), which makes them question the authenticity of the passage especially considering that Hesiod only seems to know the Styx. See for example Merry and Riddell’s 1886 edition of the *Odyssey*, and Vermeule (1979), 211 n.6.

⁴ See VIII, 368; IX, 572; XIV, 327; x, 528; xi, 37; xi, 564; xii, 81; xx, 356.

⁵ VIII, 10-16.

Tartarus. That would mean that Tartarus is not a part of Hades (the place), and that Hades (the god) does not rule it.

Hades is of course not a place where mortals can look forward to going: it is such a horrible place that Hades himself does not want it to be revealed to either gods or men.⁶

A particularly striking aspect of Hades is that the characters do not talk about it much: there is no description by the warriors of what Hades is like, neither is there any theoretical consistency in their general conception of the after-life:⁷ the only thing the characters seem to know for certain is that when people die, they go to Hades. Precise information about the underworld is almost inexistent.⁸

One of the main characteristics of Hades is that it is dark: it is therefore probable that Hades (the god) does not want light to come into the underworld. Vermeule comments on the apparent contradiction between a dark Hades and a description of it: surely, if it was dark, no-one would be able to see or describe anything. Her interpretation is that Hades needs to be light for poetic reasons: "one would know it was dark but render the needed light".⁹ Nevertheless, this darkness goes quite well with the lack of precise description in the poems: Anticleia calls it a "murky darkness": ζόφον ἠερόεντα (xi, 57). It is also mouldy: εὐρώεντα (XX, 65;x, 512; xiii, 322; xxiv, 10)¹⁰. It makes sense that, if the land of the dead is pure darkness, as it seems to be, the only description we have of it refers to senses others than sight (the notion of it being mouldy can refer to both the sense of smell and of touch).

⁶ XX, 59-65

⁷ For the inconsistencies in the Homeric conception of the after-life, see in particular Sourvinou-Inwood (1995).

⁸ Cp. Hesiod's *Theogony* 722-813: the description is much longer and more precise than in Homer, but some similar expressions occur (the 'murkiness' etc.). Cp. in particular Virgil's *Aeneid* VI 268-901, where the poet gives an extraordinarily detailed description of Hades.

⁹ Vermeule (1979), 29.

¹⁰ The word is only used of the Underworld.

The question of the light only poses itself in scenes glimpsed in Hades, such as the punishment of the 'sinners'. Actual communication with the dead takes place *outwith* Hades. Other descriptions (all in the Nekyia in *Odyssey* xi) are much more abstract: it is according to Tiresias a "region where there is no joy" (xi, 94) and to Anticleia "hard for the dead" (156).

A very important factor in the way Homeric people think about death, and in particular their own death, is the fact that they will find after their death no reward for what they did when they were alive and no consolation or compensation for their suffering, but also, apart from some exceptional mythological cases (such as Tityos xi, 576-81, Tantalus xi, 582-92 and Sisyphus xi, 593-600) no punishment. According to Griffin, "the poet insists on presenting death in its full significance as the end, unsoftened by any posthumous consolation or reward (...); and showing that even heroes fear and hate it".¹¹ Vernant stresses the horror that awaits the heroes after their death: "dans ce système de la mort héroïque, il y a en même temps une idée que la mort est un seuil infranchissable derrière lequel il y a un monde qui est un monde d'horreur, d'anonymat, de magma où chacun se perd".¹² Sourvinou-Inwood also insists on the collective destiny of the shades: there is no differentiation, no reward or punishment depending on the conduct that dead person had in life.¹³

Even on the human plane, nothing much is achieved by death. As Bowra puts it, there is no such thing as a "glamour of defeat". Bowra clearly states that there is not in the *Iliad* the savage exultation in glorious death that can be found in most epics (he mentions in particular *Beowulf*, the *Song of Roland*, the *Fight at Maldon*, the *Edda* poems, the *Lokasenna*, and

¹¹ Griffin (1980), 94.

¹² Vernant (2001), 33.

¹³ Sourvinou-Inwood (1995), 66-7. She also points out that the germs of a development towards an individualised after-life can be found in Homer. She mentions in particular the hierarchical differentiation of Achilles and Minos as 'rulers' among the shades is part of the erosion of the collective destiny of the shades.

the *Song of William*). Indeed, Homer makes defeat more tragic than glorious, and each death, Hector's in particular, seems an irreparable loss. The pitiful side of death seems to interest Homer far more than the heroic side. Certainly, Hector dies a magnificent death, but "the glorious death which Hector finally achieves is no comfort to his defenceless family and friends",¹⁴ on whom the poem ends (at Hector's funeral). Homer shows no feeling that glory triumphs over death: "His heroes die as heroes should, but their death is an irreparable and uncompensated disaster", but he shows an acute sense of the tragedy of death: "death is a thing of horror"¹⁵. That is why the god Hades is said to be the most hated of the gods.¹⁶

2 – the diminished life of the shades

As early as the *Iliad's* proem, we are given an idea of the respective status of 'body' and 'soul':

Μῆνιν ἄειδε θεὰ Πηληϊάδεω Ἀχιλῆος
 οὐλομένην, ἣ μυρὶ Ἀχαιοῖς ἄλγε' ἔθηκε,
 πολλὰς δ' ἰφθίμους ψυχὰς Ἄϊδι προΐαψεν
 ἥρώων, αὐτοὺς δὲ ἐλώρια τεύχε κύνεσσιν
 οἰωνοῖσι τε πᾶσι

Sing, goddess, of the anger of Achilles, son of Peleus, the accursed anger which brought uncounted anguish on the Achaeans and hurled down to Hades many mighty souls of heroes, and made themselves the prey to dogs and the birds' feasting.

I, 1-5

It is clearly stated that the souls leave for Hades while the *men themselves* (αὐτοὺς) remain on the ground. James Redfield, in his article on the *Iliad's* proem, argues that the use of ψυχή in such an expression is non-standard: the traditional expression would be ἰφθίμους κεφαλάς

¹⁴ Griffin (1980), 98.

¹⁵ Bowra (1930), 236.

¹⁶ IX, 158-9 According to the *Lexikon*, the word αἴς originally described a place. αἴδος appeared later as the god of the underworld. In the poem, out of 32 occurrences of the word, it refers only 7 times to the god as opposed to the place. Hades as a god is also described as possessing a cap of invisibility (V, 844-5). He is the brother of Zeus of Poseidon, and when the world was divided into three parts, he received the underworld to rule over (XV, 187-93). He is described as the "ruling over the dead" ἐνέροισιν ἀνάσσων (XV 188) and as the "lord of the dead" ἄναξ ἐνέρον (XX, 61). That is the only information we are given about the god Hades.

(potent heads), as is used at XI, 55. Because of the use of αὐτοῦς I.4, it could have looked like Homer said that a part of the body (the head) went to Hades while the rest of the body remained on the battlefield (not, not because he particularly wanted ψυχᾶς, but because he wanted an acceptable substitute for κεφαλᾶς".¹⁷ He adds that "this notion [of the soul going to Hades while the person remains on earth] is peculiar to the proem. Usually the dead a very nice visual image). Redfield says: "the poet therefore inserted ψυχᾶς person goes to Hades and leaves his body behind".¹⁸ He goes on to say that "with some perturbation of normal usage the poet here focuses our attention on the fate of the dead bodies",¹⁹ a focus which according to him "looks forward to the last third of the epic".²⁰ Onians, however, argues that there is a strong and consistent link between ψυχή and κεφαλή: he says for example that "the head is also important in a different way, is in fact identified with the person and equated with that soul or principle of *life* which the ψυχή appears to be".²¹ Several things can lead us to think that people are before all their body and that the soul is not what matters. When you are a shade, you are obviously very limited, and you cease to count, at least for the living. This, however, might be too dualistic an understanding anyway.

The state in which human beings survive after death is not something the mortals seem to give much thought to: Achilles for example is quite surprised when he meets

¹⁷ Redfield (2001), 466. This would also explain why the ψυχαί are described as being ἰφθιμοί when they lose so much of the man's faculties (it could also be a hypallage, the adjective referring to the actual warriors, who were powerful before they were killed).

¹⁸ Redfield (2001), 466.

¹⁹ Redfield (2001), 466-7.

²⁰ Redfield (2001), 467.

²¹ Onians (1951), 96. He goes on to say that this belief that the head contained the ψυχή might explain the practice of beheading enemies. For a complete discussion of the idea of the ψυχή being equated to the head, or being located in the head, see Onians 95-122. On an alternative explanation for the beheadings, see above.

Patroclus' shade and finally understands that his friend dead is not the same as his friend living:

Ὡς ἄρα φωνήσας ὠρέξατο χερσὶ φίλησιν
 οὐδ' ἔλαβε· ψυχὴ δὲ κατὰ χθονός ἦν τε καπνός
 ὥχετο τετριγυῖα· ταφῶν δ' ἀνόρουσεν Ἀχιλλεύς
 χερσὶ τε συμπλατάγησεν, ἔπος δ' ὀλοφυνδόν ἔειπεν
 ὦ πόποι ἦ ῥά τίς ἐστί καὶ εἰν Αἴδαο δόμοισι
 ψυχὴ καὶ εἶδωλον, ἀτὰρ φρένες οὐκ ἐνὶ πάμπαν·
 παννυχίη γάρ μοι Πατροκλήος δειλοῖο
 ψυχὴ ἐφεστήκει γοῶσά τε μυρομένη τε,
 καὶ μοι ἕκαστ' ἐπέτελλεν, εἵκτο δὲ θέσκελον αὐτῶ.

So speaking Achilles reached out with his arms, but could grasp nothing. The ghost vanished away under the earth like smoke, squeaking. Achilles sprang up in amazement, and clapped his hands together, and spoke sadly to the Myrmidons: 'Ah, so there does remain something of a man even in the house of Hades, a ghost and a semblance of him, but without real being at all. All night long the ghost of poor Patroclus has stood over me weeping and lamenting, and has told me all that I must do – it looked wonderfully like the true man.'

XXIII, 99-107²²

Achilles does not seem to have given much consideration to what happens to people after their death. At the same time, the idea of Patroclus speaking to him does not seem very surprising.²³ He must therefore have assumed that people somehow "live on" (and are able to stay in contact with the living), as is shown by the use of the word *r(a/*, but he had not explored the matter in great depth.

In that passage, we see that shades look like the living human beings, but are as insubstantial as smoke. There have been discussions on the exact meaning of *φρένες* in the passage (*ἀτὰρ φρένες οὐκ ἐνὶ πάμπαν*, 104): after all, Patroclus appears to be perfectly rational in the passage, rather than 'witless'. Commentators seem to agree with Leaf that "*φρένες* from the context must mean something like *bodily life*"²⁴. He goes on to say that "this sense may easily have arisen in the word which is the most material and corporeal expression of mental power". Clarke, who is a firm believer in the purely physical nature of

²² See also a similar scene in the *Odyssey* when Odysseus tries to embrace the shade of his mother Anticleia: xi, 210-4.

²³ His response is simply to interrogate the ghost, with no apparent surprise: XXIII, 93-5.

²⁴ See also Richardson (1993) for example.

the 'psychological organs' cannot but agree, and goes as far as saying: "what [Achilles] has realized is not that the ghost has no mind or wits – what it said was very lucid – but that there was no physical substance²⁵ in the breast when he flung his arms around it"²⁶.

There also have been disputes over the exact capacities of the shades, as there seems to be some inconsistencies, in the *Nekuia* in particular. Sourvinou-Inwood insists that two contradictory traditions are present in the *Nekuia*, in particular relating to the necessity (or lack of) for the shades to drink blood before they can regain their senses.²⁷ Some shades seem to need the blood (such as Achilles), but others do not seem to: Ajax, for example, refuses to talk to Odysseus, apparently still resenting his being chosen over him as the recipient of the arms of Achilles, without drinking any blood, which shows that some shades are "reactive before drinking blood".²⁸ That, to Sourvinou-Inwood, is a proof that another, more modern tradition starts to appear in the poem. She says that *Odyssey xi* "attributed to the senseless ghosts of tradition behaviour pattern that belonged with the more lively shades of their own belief system",²⁹ who did not need blood to be responsive or recognise people. To her the "witless shades were inherited in the epic material while in Homer's society shades were believed to have at least some faculties comparable to those of the living".³⁰ However, this is an unnecessarily complicated explanation, as we shall see.

Emily Vermeule points out that in Hades, "sin" is punished in an "oddly physical manner". She says that there must have been a "feeling that the body was, in fact, existence;

²⁵ Which is not the same thing as "bodily life".

²⁶ Clarke (1999), 74.

²⁷ Vermeule links that to the fact that "the dead in many cultures are rumoured to be thirsty". She adds that "our communication with them is more commonly by toast and libation than by food". She also relates it to the expression "the thirsty ones", *di-pi-si-ju-i*, found on Pylos linear B texts.

²⁸ Sourvinou-Inwood (1995) 81.

²⁹ Sourvinou-Inwood (1995) 79.

³⁰ Sourvinou-Inwood (1995) 82.

that if existence continued it would to some degree be bodily".³¹ Laurence Kahn thinks that human beings choose in their beliefs relative to death to respect "ce qui de leur humanité paraît irréductible"³². But what "survives" death is not the most important part of human beings, and has become pointless. Emily Vermeule differs on that, and chooses poetic reasons both for some capacities of the shades and for the contradictions in what is said of those capacities.³³ According to her, the reason why the psyche cannot be "shrivelled, feeble and witless" is because "a poet who has sent his hero to talk with such a crowd would soon lose his audience". She goes on to say that "Homer injects and liven some souls with blood, to bridge the gap between the stupid³⁴ [the dead] and the bright [the living] with life-fluid; but sometimes the step is forgotten, or suppressed to prevent boredom by repetition".³⁵ She concludes that to talk about "religious inconsistencies" is "to confuse folklore with religion and above all to be discourteous to the poet".³⁶ This explanation seems far more likely than Sourvinou-Inwood's theory of the two overlapping traditions.³⁷

There have also been disputes over what shades exactly are. A *yuxh/* without the body does not seem to amount to much, and it can even possibly be said that the *ψυχή/* alone has lost its purpose, as it does not have a body to animate, but as Clarke has pointed out, the *ψυχή* plays no role in the mental life of the living human being, and is only

³¹ Vermeule (1979), 8.

³² Kahn (1982), 134.

³³ According to her, the shades should normally be much smaller than normal human beings, but she says that "it would be poetically awkward for Odysseus, when speaking with the *psychai* of his dead friends, to go down on all fours outside the mouth of Hades with a magnifying glass". She concludes that it is not a "religious ceremony which inflated the size of the psyche to a reasonable size for conversation; it was the poet, who adjusted the scale of the living and the dead to the requirements of his imagined scene and to the dignity of his characters". Vermeule (1979), 32.

³⁴ For an explanation of the "stupidity" of the dead, see Vermeule, 23-27.

³⁵ Vermeule (1979), 29.

³⁶ Vermeule (1979), 30.

³⁷ Even more simply, we could also say that *ψυχαί* are ontological metaphors drawn from the domain of oral experience.

mentioned in connection with death (or death-like swoons).³⁸ Nevertheless, this leads him to believe that the ψυχή *only* exists as the cold breath of air that leaves the body and does not exist in the living person at all, which is very debatable: Cairns³⁹ in particular says that though it is true that the ψυχή is only mentioned when someone dies, and has no function in the living person, it is also reified by the characters “as a valued possession” (p.48) and also is a “permanent possession” of the living man and the “*conditio sine qua non* for life and consciousness.”⁴⁰

3 – ‘immortal glory’

Nagy, in his study of the adjective ἀφθιτος,⁴¹ explains how κλέος ἀφθιτος refers to the cultural negation (through song and memory) of a natural process (the vegetal cycle as mentioned by Glaucus at VI, 145-9): “heroes are destined for immortality in the form of a *cultural* institution that is predicated on the *natural* process of death”.⁴² He concludes that “this epithet can denote the permanent and sacred order of the Olympians, into which the hero is incorporated after death through such cultural media as epic in particular and cult in general”.⁴³

³⁸ Clarke (1999), 129ff., esp. 133-6.

³⁹ Cairns (2003) 45-51.

⁴⁰ Cairns (2003) 50. When talking about the ψυχή, Clarke insists that two unrelated types of ψυχαί are to be found in the poems. The first one is what we just mentioned, the last cold breath exhaled by the dying man (which to him is not part of the living man, and only exists at the moment of death) and the second one is the ghost of the dead man in Hades. Clarke argues that the ghost in Hades and the last dying breath are “distinct and unconnected”. He also points out that “the deaths of Patroclus and Hector are unique precisely because they bridge that gap”: to him, in other passages in which the ψυχή leaves for Hades, there is no link made between the last breath and the ghost, as the latter “is not closely identified with the last gasp of the dying man”. To him these passages differ fundamentally from others where the ψυχή, or last breath, “vanishes into the air” and is lost. Again, Douglas Cairns offers a valid criticism of that idea: a consistent contrast is drawn throughout the poem between the ψυχή that goes to Hades and the body it departs from, which shows that they must at some point have been united. Furthermore, because the two are not constantly ‘closely identified’ (though they are in the two examples he dismisses) does not mean we are to take them as distinct and unrelated phenomena.

⁴¹ Nagy (1979), 174-89.

⁴² Nagy (1979), 184.

⁴³ Nagy (1979), 189.

The warriors talk a lot about their own and others' glory. It is interesting to see how that is such an important subject to them, when they do not talk much about what happens to them after they die (i.e. when all that is left of them on earth is this 'immortal glory'), as there is nothing they can do about it. This shows very clearly that the warriors give their consideration almost exclusively to their life as living human beings. It also seems that glory is to them the only true after-life worth thinking of: they are not very interested in what happens to their ψυχή, but they want to win a glory that will live long after they have died.⁴⁴ In that respect also they are more interested in the world of the living than in that of the dead. As Griffin points out, "there is no posthumous reward for the brave man in the other world", and as he goes on to add: "the consolation of glory is a chilly one".⁴⁵

But it actually goes even further than that: as Jean-Pierre Vernant pointed out very sensibly, considering that the 'shades' are 'witless' and have no knowledge of what happens in the world of the living⁴⁶ and cannot know what is said about them, they do not know about their own glory: "le renom qu'apporte la mort héroïque, Achille ne l'entend pas lorsqu'il est au royaume des ombres. [...] L'immortalité, le kléos aphthitos que confère la mort héroïque ne passe pas la frontière de l'Hadès".⁴⁷ It can therefore be said that even their main concern for death is actually a concern for life, as the glory of past warriors is something that remains only on earth only (which might explain why they want immediate glory and only talk about 'immortal glory' in the two passages mentioned above). Vernant concludes that the life and death of human beings are ultimately the concern of the living.

⁴⁴ Cp. Pindar, *Olympian VIII*, 72-3.

⁴⁵ Griffin (1980), p.102.

⁴⁶ Cf. Achilles in the *Nekuia*, asking how his son is doing.

⁴⁷ Vernant (2001) 33.

Vernant, when talking about the importance of 'immortal glory' seems to forget that what the warriors actually seem to want is *immediate* glory. It is true that the glory they want might also be immortal at the same time, but they do not mention that aspect: does it mean that it is implicit and so obvious to them (and to the audience) that the poet did not feel the need to mention it all the time (and only does when the contrast mortality/immortality is particularly important to the plot, as in the case of Achilles' choice), or does it mean on the contrary that the warriors are not particularly interested in immortal glory, but only in glory in their lifetime? Murnaghan talks about how the promise of honour after death is a promise that "goes largely unfulfilled for all but the greatest heroes", as there is "no time for recovering and honouring the dead, and even when war is suspended, there is no prospect of distinguishing and memorializing each individual".⁴⁸ She also adds that "given the importance of *kleos* through song to the characters' lives [...], it is striking how little and how joylessly it is actually envisioned within the poem".⁴⁹ She gives the example of Hector, whose visions of future glory are "tied to a painful vision of Andromache's future".⁵⁰ She goes on to say that "the only character to refer explicitly to her future commemoration in song is Helen, and she does so without pleasure"⁵¹ Her conclusion is that "the search of an adequate match between a hero's investment of energy and acceptance of risk and the honor that rewards them is always inadequate".⁵² Of course, only the audience of epic poems would be aware of exactly what immortal glory the characters end up receiving, and whether their efforts can be regarded as fairly rewarded or not.

⁴⁸ Murnaghan (1997), 31.

⁴⁹ Murnaghan (1997), 31.

⁵⁰ Murnaghan (1997), 31-2.

⁵¹ Murnaghan (1997), 32.

⁵² Murnaghan (1997), 32.

B – HEROIC DEATH

1 – A negative portrayal of death

α - θάνατος, θνήσκω, πότημος and κήρ

All four words appear in similar contexts, but, while they all refer to death, they appear to carry slightly different emphasis.

The use of θάνατος in the meaning of death probably results from a euphemism (cf. sanskrit *á-dhvanī-t* 'he disappeared, vanished' and *dhvān-ta-* 'dark').⁵³ As the *Lexikon* points out, it refers both to the 'end of life' and to the 'condition of being dead'. As dictated by the subject matter of the poem, it mostly refers to sudden or violent death (usually in battle). θάνατος (like some of the other words) is often referred to as 'taking away', 'engulfing', 'enfolding'⁵⁴ etc. the dying person, who is therefore seen as the passive victim of death, rather than 'actively' dying. We will look more closely at death as an external force in the rest of the chapter.

Πότημος in Homer, it is linked to an unhappy fate, always referring to or associated with death.

Κήρ is very close in meaning to πότημος, as it refers to the notions of fate, death, and personal *daimon*. In Homer, the word is always equivalent to 'death', most often 'violent death'. It is possible to give κήρ the meaning of 'destruction' and link the word to ἀκήρατος (untouched, undamaged), ἀκήριος (unharmful), etc. This has been strongly criticised by

⁵³ Chantraine (1968-1980). That is why according to Vermeule the gods, ἀθάνατοι "are not subject to the darkening of mortals." 121.

⁵⁴ See below.

D.J.N.Lee,⁵⁵ who says that the original meaning of 'fate' is plausible, but Chantraine does not accept the derivations that he suggests.⁵⁶ When in the singular, it is virtually always synonymous with death, and is often combined with φόνος or θάνατος⁵⁷. In the plural, it is still connected with death: it refers to manifestations of ills, except that in Homer, those ills are always death:

μυρίαι, ἅς οὐκ ἔστι φυγεῖν βροτὸν οὐδ' ὑπαλύξαι,

But as it is, whatever we do the fates of death stand over us in a thousand forms, and no mortal can run from them or escape them.

XII, 326-7⁵⁸

Justensen gives a very bizarre interpretation of that passage: his conclusion is that the role of the Κῆρ is not only 'raping the dead, but regulating the features of the battle, protecting the soldiers, whose hour has not yet come, supervising that the will of fate is realised exactly to the point'. He therefore translates lines 535-7 as: 'the fateful Ker/Rescued a newly-wounded, shielded one, /And haled the corpses midst the fray, feet first.'⁵⁹

The author of the *Shield*, attributed to Hesiod, uses the same scene, but adds to it:

αἱ δὲ μετ' αὐτοῦς
 Κῆρες κυάνεαι, λευκοὺς ἀραβεῦσαι ὀδόντας,
 δεινωτοὶ βλοσυροὶ τε δαφουνοὶ τ' ἄπλητοὶ τε
 δῆριν ἔχον περὶ πιπτόντων· πασαι δ' ἄρ' ἴεντο
 αἶμα μέλαν πιέειν· ὄν δὲ πρῶτον μεμάποιεν
 κείμενον ἢ πίπτοντα νεούτατον, ἀμφὶ μὲν αὐτῶ
 βάλλουσιν ὁμῶς ὄνυχας μεγάλους, ψυχὴ δὲ [Ἄιδόσδε] κατήεν
 Τάρταρον ἐς κρυόενθ'· αἱ δὲ φρένας εὐτ' ἀρέσαντο
 αἵματος ἀνδρομέου, τὸν μὲν ῥίπτασκον ὀπίσσω,
 ἅψ δ' ὄμαδον καὶ μῶλον ἐθύνεον αὐτίς ἰοῦσαι.

And behind them the dusky Κῆρες, gnashing their white fangs, lowering, grim, bloody, and unapproachable, struggled for those who were falling, for they all were longing to drink dark blood. So soon as they caught a man overthrown or falling newly wounded, one of them

⁵⁵ Lee (1961) 191-207.

⁵⁶ Chantraine (1968).

⁵⁷ See also II, 352; II, 858-59; III, 6; 454; V, 22; 652; VII, 254; VIII, 70; XI, 306; 443; XIV, 452; XVI, 47; 687; XVII, 714; XVIII, 117; XXI, 66; XXII, 210; 365; 82.

⁵⁸ See also II, 302; 834; IV, 11; VIII, 73; IX, 411; XI, 332; XII, 113; 402; XIII, 283; XV, 287; XXI, 565; XXII, 202.

⁵⁹ Justensen (1926), 40ff.

would clasp her great claws about him, and his soul would go down to Hades to chilly Tartarus. And when they had satisfied their souls with human blood, they would cast that one behind them, and rush back again into the tumult and the fray. (translation by Hugh G. Evelyn-White)

Sc. 248-57

It appears that there is a difference between Κήρ and θάνατος, in particular a gender difference: θάνατος is not a killer, but simply appears when death strikes, and welcome those who have lost their lives.⁶⁰ This aspect of θάνατος is particularly obvious in the scene in XVI when dead Sarpedon is taken away to Lycia by Sleep and Death⁶¹. On the other hand κήρ is a malevolent force, and an active agent of death.⁶²

Kahn, when talking about the Sirens, wonders why they are women rather than men. What she says may apply to the Κήρες as well: to her, the answer may lie in a "marginalité sociale [des femmes] qui prend appui sur une solide charpente mythologique où, somme toute, le *genos gynaikôn* reste problématique dans sa constitution comme dans son insertion, appesanti qu'il est du trouble initial d'une différence qu'on lui pardonne difficilement. [...] Elles portent en elles le spectre d'une féminité pure où s'annuleraient toutes les valeurs masculines complémentaires. Féminité pure, qui, si elle n'est réduite à l'impuissance, devient probablement aussi monstrueuse que la mort".⁶³ Vernant also reminds us that in mythology, at the time when there were no women, before the creation of Pandora, there was for the men no death either. 'la mort et la femme sont apparues de

⁶⁰ Kahn (1990), 153, Vernant (1989), 131. Vermeule (1979) says that "in some sense there is no agent of death for the Greeks, because death is not a power – so Hades and Thanatos are notoriously unworshipped.", 37.

⁶¹ XVI, 771-5.

⁶² Vernant (1989), 132, Vermeule (1979), 40-1.

⁶³ Kahn (1990), 140-1.

concert'.⁶⁴ The association between reproduction and death obviously rubs off on the representation of women.

b – the epithets and the uses

In the poem, death is always painted in a very negative light. This can be seen both in the usages and in the epithets that characterise death.

Θάνατος is used with a quite large variety of epithets, all of which are very negative: μέλας⁶⁵ (dark, black),⁶⁶ πορφύρεος (purple, or 'spoken of non-transparent substance with a reddish gleam, yet without distinct notion of colour'⁶⁷),⁶⁸ τανηλεγέος (containing long-enduring grief, deeply painful),⁶⁹ κακός (bad),⁷⁰ δυσηχέος (ill-boding),⁷¹ λευγαλέος⁷² (wretched, shameful, ruinous).⁷³

Κήρ, on the other hand, is only used with μέλας⁷⁴ and once with κακός⁷⁵.

Πότμος is only used once with ἀευκής (disgraceful, ignominious)⁷⁶.

⁶⁴ Vernant (1989), 136. Vernant also makes a long comparison between fighting on the battlefield and love-making: p.137-42. On that last theme, see also Monsacré (1984), 63-77.

⁶⁵ See Moreux on the parallel between night and death, with the very Hugolian "la mort est noire, elle est donc une nuit". Moreux (1967), 237. More generally: "[Homère] rattache [...] le phénomène de la mort à la sphère du "sombre-terrible"." 239. See also his very good discussion on the uses of μέλας 254-60.

⁶⁶ II, 834; XI, 332; XVI, 687.

⁶⁷ Autenrieth (2002). According to Chantraine, the meaning of πορφύρεος is ambiguous, as it may come from πορφύρα, the shellfish from which is taken the 'pourpre', hence the meaning of πορφύρεος: 'dyed red'. It may also come from πορφύρω, which is used of "la mer qui se gonfle et s'agite" and "du coeur troublé et bouleversé". Blood can therefore be either red or "bouillonnant", and death can also be red or "telle le gouffre de la mer". But see Moreux on colour adjective meaning 'dark' rather than a specific colour p.251. He says more specifically: "il n'y a pas de concept abstrait qui serait "le rouge" ou "le noir", il y a seulement une série d'emplois plus ou moins comparables et donc chacun peut s'expliquer pour des raisons variables". p.252. On πορφύρεος specifically, see Moreux p.263 ff.

⁶⁸ V, 83; XVI, 334.

⁶⁹ VIII, 70; XXII, 210.

⁷⁰ XVI, 47; XXI, 66; XXII, 300.

⁷¹ XVI, 442; XVIII, 464; XXII, 180.

⁷² Cp with λυγρός used of old age (see above).

⁷³ XXI, 281.

⁷⁴ II, 859; III, 360; III, 454; IV, 11; V, 22; V, 652; VII, 254XI, 360; XI, 443; XIV, 462; XXI, 66.

⁷⁵ XII, 113.

⁷⁶ IV, 396.

It is clear through those epithets that death is never regarded as something positive.

On many occasions, the words are used simply to state the fact that someone is dead. This could be regarded as an unloaded factual description, but even in that case, some of the expressions are relatively negative: the warriors are said to be 'taken away' by death,⁷⁷ 'led on'⁷⁸, 'covered, enfolded'⁷⁹ or 'engulfed'⁸⁰ by it. Death 'comes upon'⁸¹ people and 'comes over their eyes'.⁸²

All the uses of the words for death carry additional negative connotations, which may be taken to indicate the poet's and his characters' attitude to death. The negative implications are as follow. People feel fear and worry at the prospect of death: all four words are used in contexts where warriors are worried they or one of their friends are going to die.⁸³ Unsurprisingly, death also provokes grief.⁸⁴ Very importantly, death is for the warriors something they are happy to escape or be saved from (death is therefore not something they welcome).⁸⁵ Finally, death comes to be accepted and seen as an unavoidable evil.⁸⁶

This idea is illustrated for example by the scales of Zeus:

ἦμος δ' Ἡέλιος μέσον οὐρανὸν ἀμφιβεβήκει,
καὶ τότε δὴ χρύσεια πατήρ ἐτίταινε τάλαντα·

⁷⁷ φέρω: II, 302.

⁷⁸ ἄγω: II, 834; XIII, 602.

⁷⁹ καλύπτω, meaning 'to cover'. It is used of darkness, of grief, and of death: V, 553; XVI, 502 m= XVI, 855.

⁸⁰ ἀμφικαλύπτω, meaning 'to wrap around, veil, shelter, enclose, becloud'. It is used of a swoon, of sleep and of death: V,68: XVI 350.

⁸¹ κιχάνω: XVII, 478 = 672.

⁸² κατ' ὄσσε ἔλλαβε: V, 82-3 = XVI, 334 = XX, 477.

⁸³ See also IV, 155-7; X, 383; XV, 628; XXIV, 152; 181 and 328; Θνήσκα: I, 240-3; κήρ: XII, 326; XIII, 276-83; πότημος: IV, 170 and VI, 412, XXII, 38-41.

⁸⁴ See also XVI, 13-6; XVI, 856-7 = XXII, 362-3; XVII, 538; XIX 300; XXII, 52; XXII, 432; XXIII, 9; XXIV, 743.

⁸⁵ See also I, 60; II, 401; IX, 416; XII, 362; XVII, 464; XVII, 714; XX, 300; XX, 349-50; XX, 449; XXI, 66; XXI, 548; XXII, 180; XXII, 202; Θνήσκα: IV, 10-2; VII, 52; κήρ: also III, 357-60 (360 = VII, 254); IV, 11; V, 22; XI, 360; XII, 402; XIV, 462; XV, 287; XVII, 714; XXI, 66; XXII, 202; πότημος: VII, 52-3.

⁸⁶ See also II, 309; III, 101; III, 101-2; XII, 326-8; XV, 495; XV, 496-7; XVI, 442; XIX, 274; XIX, 420; XXI, 103; XXI, 110; XXI, 565; XXIV, 225; κήρ: XII, 113; XVI, 47; 687; XVIII, 114-6; XVIII, 117; XXI, 565; XXII, 365; πότημος: XV, 494-7; XVIII, 96.

ἐν δ' ἐτίθει δύο κῆρες τανηλεγέος θανάτοιο
 Τρώων θ' ἵπποδάμων καὶ Ἀχαιῶν χαλκοχιτώνων,
 ἔλκε δὲ μέσσα λαβῶν ῥέπε δ' αἴσιμον ἤμαρ Ἀχαιῶν.

But when the sun had straddled the centre of the sky, then the Father opened out his golden scales. In the pans he put two κῆρες of θανάτος long sorrow, one for the horse-taming Trojans and one for the bronze clad Achaeans, and he took the scales in the middle and lifted them up: and the Achaeans' day of doom sank down.

VIII, 68-72⁸⁷

2 – Heroic death?

a - heroic death

Renehan gives a definition of the spirit of the heroic death: “the heroic warrior confronts his death with a dignity born of bravery, unafraid and defiant to the end. His immediate foe may defeat him, but over such a one death, the ultimate foe, can have no dominion”.⁸⁸ Speeches by the warriors such as those we will mention later offer according to him “a coherent attitude towards heroic death that is unambiguous and basically not very different from that found in other cultures: every man must die, and a brave death in battle is the way to immortal glory”.⁸⁹ Vernant offers something similar, and links heroic death to the more general conception of death we saw earlier: “c’est parce que la mort est vécue comme quelque chose de monstrueux que la mort héroïque a été ainsi idéalisée comme solution vertigineuse et incroyable à une condition humaine marquée par la mortalité”.⁹⁰ In other words, the very fact that death is something monstrous explains the existence of the heroic ideal as a way of vanquishing death by dying young and gaining immortal glory through heroic actions.⁹¹

⁸⁷ See also XXII, 210.

⁸⁸ Renehan (1987), 100.

⁸⁹ Renehan (1987), 107.

⁹⁰ Vernant (2001), 28.

⁹¹ Cp. Plato’s Republic III (386 a 6 to ξ 2), where he argues that if soldiers are to be brave, they must not fear death, as it is impossible to be brave if one is scared. If they are afraid of Hades, they will not prefer death to defeat

– *acceptance rather than defiance*

One of the first things that can be noticed is that even among the warriors a precise idea of “heroic” or “glorious death” hardly ever appears in the poem, as the two examples mentioned below are the only ones referring to any kind of heroic death. The rest of the time, death is described as a very negative thing, to be avoided if possible. Though it is true that things such as fleeing are considered inglorious, the idea of dying gloriously (or ingloriously) does not seem to be what concerns warriors most when they are about to die. It may be comforting for the fallen warrior to think about his future glory as he is about to die, but the truth is that the warriors do not talk about how bravely *other people* have died. The glory of dead warriors seems only to reside in victories they achieved before their death. The way they die is not what seems to matter most: glory is found in the actions of the living man. Dying on the battlefield is what truly matters, rather than the exact manner of the death.

The closest we can get in the text to that ideal of a heroic death is an acceptance of death, and resignation to one’s fate. The best example of acceptance we get in the poem is that of Achilles. It is after the death of Patroclus, one of the recurrent themes in Achilles’ speeches:

Ξάνθε τί μοι θάνατον μαντεύεαι; οὐδέ τί σε χροή.
 εὖ νυ τὸ οἶδα καὶ αὐτὸς ὃ μοι μόρος ἐνθάδ’ ὀλέσθαι
 νόσφι φίλου πατρὸς καὶ μητέρος· ἀλλὰ καὶ ἔμπης
 οὐ λήξω πρὶν Τρῶας ἄδην ἐλάσαι πολέμοιο.

‘Xanthos, why prophesy my death? There is no need. I know well myself that it is my fate to die here, away from my dear father and mother. But even so I shall not stop, until I have driven the Trojans to their fill of war.’

XIX, 420-3

and slavery. Because of that, Plato thinks that the Greek need texts that praise Hades. He is explicitly critical of the Homeric view of Hades.

τέθναθι· κῆρα δ' ἐγὼ τότε δέξομαι ὅπποτε κεν δῆ
 Ζεὺς ἐθέλη τελέσαι ἢ δ' ἀθάνατοι θεοὶ ἄλλοι.

'Die! I shall take my death at whatever time Zeus and the other gods wish to bring it on me'.
 XXII, 365-6

Another passage showing the acceptance of death by the warriors is in Book VII, when Hector prepares himself for his duel with Ajax and is very lucid about the possible outcome:

ὦδε δὲ μυθέομαι, Ζεὺς δ' ἄμμ' ἐπιμάρτυρος ἔστω·
 εἰ μὲν κεν ἐμέ κείνος ἔλη ταναήκεϊ χαλκῶ,
 τεύχεα συλήσας φερέτω κοίλας ἐπὶ νῆας,
 σῶμα δὲ οἴκαδ' ἐμὸν δόμεναι πάλιν, ὄφρα πυρός με
 Τρῶες καὶ Τρῳῶν ἄλοχοι λελάχωσι θανόντα.

'And I say this, and let Zeus be our witness to it. If he kills me with his long-pointed sword, let him strip my armour and take it to the hollow ships, but he must give my body back to my home, so that the Trojans and the wives of the Trojans can give me my due rite of burning.'
 VII, 76-80

Renehan insists that "it is true that Greek notions of fate and divine intervention dictated that the hero must accept his death at the destined moment, but the emphasis is on noble resignation rather than defiant resistance"⁹². Nevertheless, this definition seems to be too narrow: 'noble resignation' seems to be as good a definition of heroic death as 'defiant resistance' is. Nevertheless, as we will see, neither of those actually occur very often on the battlefield, and it does not seem to be the poet's understanding of what death actually means.

b - unheroic death

Vernant, when he talks about heroic death as a 'solution' to mortality,⁹³ seems to remain too much on the level of the characters' speeches, without attempting to analyse what is offered by the poet in terms of the 'heroic death'.

⁹² Renehan (1987), 111.

⁹³ See above.

Griffin considers that the poet is mostly interested in the sight of his heroes facing their own death, but there is a difference between the narrative and what the characters say (even though, as we saw earlier, even the characters do not speak that much about heroic death). The noble and heroic sentiments described above are only to be found in speeches.⁹⁴

Indeed, when we look at the death of the warriors on the battlefield, we find that most deaths are actually very "unheroic". Griffin for example points out that "in many killings the victim seems rather to wait passively for his death than to be killed fighting":⁹⁵

- Some warriors beg to be spared:⁹⁶ Lykaon (XXI, 64-96); Pisander and Hippolochus (XI, 122-37); Adrestus (VI, 37-54); Dolon (X, 454-7); and Tros (XX, 463-72).

- Some warriors try to run away, for example Hector (XXII, 136-8) and Patroclus (XVI, 816-7).⁹⁷

- some warriors are terrified: in the following example, Odysseus finds himself alone on the battle field because the other Greeks were afraid:

Οἰώθη δ' Ὀδυσσεὺς δουρὶ κλυτός, οὐδέ τις αὐτῷ
 Ἀργείων παρέμεινεν, ἐπεὶ φόβος ἔλλαβε πάντας

Now Odysseus, the famous spearman, was left by himself, and none of the Argives stood by him, as fear had taken hold of them all.

XI, 401-2

- Some warriors die without even trying to fight: Renehan gives the example of Deucalion as a typically unheroic and pathetic death, in that he is depicted "as placed in the desperate predicament of seeing that he is about to be killed, all helpless to do anything about it. Homer is showing us a pathetic death, not a defiant one":

Δευκαλίωνα δ' ἔπειθ', ἵνα τε ξυνέχουσι τένοντες

⁹⁴ see Renehan (1987), 108.

⁹⁵ Griffin (1980) 94, n.42.

⁹⁶ It is interesting to notice that Hector's speeches at XXII, 337-43 introduces a shift in the traditional supplication pattern: instead of begging to have his life spared, he is begging to have his dead body spared.

⁹⁷ Other characters are seen to flee and manage to save their lives: Odysseus at VIII, 91-8 and Menelaus at VII, 89-108. Renehan gives the latter occurrence as an example of "truly unheroic conduct" (Renehan 1987, 111).

ἀγκῶνος, τῆ τόν γε φίλης διὰ χειρὸς ἔπειρεν
 αἰχμῆ χαλκείῃ· ὃ δέ μιν μένε χεῖρα βαρυνθεῖς
 πρόσθ' ὀρόων θάνατον· ὃ δὲ φασγάνῳ ἀχένα θείνας
 τῆλ' αὐτῆ πῆληκι κάρη βάλε· μυελὸς αὐτε
 σφονδυλίων ἐκπαλθ', ὃ δ' ἐπὶ χθονὶ κείμε τανυσθεῖς.

Deucalion waited for him with his arm crippled, looking at his death there before him. Achilles struck at his neck with his sword, and sent his head and helmet dropping far away: the marrow spurted out from his vertebrae, and he lay there stretched flat on the ground.

XX, 478-83⁹⁸

One thing that is clear in Homer's portrayal of death in the battlefield is that, as Renehan points out, the heroes very often "show fear, panic, and a most definite desire to go on living".⁹⁹ In that, Homer shows his sympathy and compassion for his heroes' fate and for the human condition in general, linking the feeling of pity to deaths that could have simply aroused awe in the reader/listener. While Homer's heroes are chiefly concerned by honour and fame, "Homer is not his heroes [and] broadens his vision so as to embrace the universal experience of human death".¹⁰⁰ He concludes by saying: "heroic death is great and noble to be sure, but it is not coextensive with the human condition, and that is Homer's real and proper subject. When he suppresses details one has come to expect in a description of heroic death, preferring rather to introduce delicate touches of profound pathos, he reveals, here perhaps more than anywhere, his extraordinary sympathy with our common humanity".¹⁰¹ Renehan's definition of heroic death might be too narrow, as we mentioned earlier. Indeed, it would seem reasonable to include in it any time a warrior faces up to his fate and accepts his destruction. Certainly, a warrior who falls raging and fighting to the last is heroic, but a

⁹⁸ Renehan insists that 481 does not mean that Deucalion is "looking death in the eye" but simply that "that he sees its approach – more's the pity for him. The phrase is a fine and delicate touch, but it heightens the pathos of the scene, not its heroic tone", 108.

⁹⁹ Renehan (1987), 111. He also mentions how in the *Odyssey*, the great Greek warriors die an unheroic death, of ten of old age, far from the battlefield: 113.

¹⁰⁰ Renehan (1987), 114-5.

¹⁰¹ Renehan (1987), 115.

more reflective death can be heroic too. It would also broaden the definition of heroism (in death at least), as, at least in theory, non warriors too are capable of this. This also supports Renehan's conclusion that Homer is mostly concerned about common humanity.

c – heroic death – just like any other death?

Sheila Murnaghan points out that "heroic endeavour, however distinguished, is not efficacious enough to overcome death: a heroic death, however distinguished, is not ultimately different from any other death".¹⁰² Hector's death is a good example of that idea: although Hector faces death with the desire to die heroically, that still does not make his death something positive, as his soul goes down to Hades weeping, and Hector himself describes the death that is to come to him as *κακός* (XXII, 300). He does not say that dying heroically will make his death better, only that not doing so will make it *αίκελιος*, inglorious (*as well as κακός*). That would show that contrarily to what Vernant seems to think, dying heroically does not make death less of a tragedy (which also shows that the warrior's ideal and the reality expressed by the narrator are two different things – see above). Furthermore, heroic death is not truly a solution, as all the warriors who panic at the last moment seem to have realised.

¹⁰² Murnaghan (1997), 35.

CONCLUSION

Griffin says that Homer is far more interested in death than he is in war, but Vermeule may be closer to the truth when she says that "it is wrong to regard the *Iliad* as a poem of death: it is truer to regard it as a poem of mortality and mortal accidents, and the kinds of behaviour only mortals need to confront".¹⁰³ Though there is an obvious fascination with the many ways someone may die in the *Iliad*,¹⁰⁴ focusing too much on the moment of death itself (and whether it is heroic or not) may be missing the point a bit: what seems to matter most to Homer is the tragedy which irremediably underlies all of human existence. Whether mortals are kings like Priam, supra-human heroes like Achilles, or ordinary people like those depicted on the shield and in the similes, whatever they achieve, however glorious they may become, they are all going to die and share the miserable fate of all those who have died before them, be they remembered or forgotten.

Nevertheless, death isn't entirely uncompensated. Not only does the constant shadow of death allow for human excellence, but most importantly pity and human solidarity are consequences of human vulnerability, mortality and suffering.

The next chapter will deal with another obstacle to human happiness, suffering.

¹⁰³ Vermeule (1979), 97.

¹⁰⁴ For a complete survey and classification of all those ways, see Garland (1981). See also Friedrich (2003).

CHAPTER II

MANKIND AND SUFFERING

I – SUFFERING IN THE *ILIAD*

The theme of suffering in the *Iliad* is extremely prevalent in the poem, and has received a great deal of attention. This particular study of suffering in the *Iliad* has a strong focus on gender differences, as it is an aspect which appears particularly striking. A look at female suffering in particular reveals a lot about the role of women in the poem.¹

A – THE PERCEPTION OF SUFFERING

1 – Predominantly male suffering

That suffering is predominantly male (statistics show that 82% of the vocabulary of suffering apply to men and only 19% to women) is not surprising for a poem on war, taking place

¹ Particular attention will be given to the lexical field of suffering, as one helpful way to look at occurrences of suffering is to look at whether the words used refer to suffering itself or to the expression of suffering (i.e. tears and lamentations). The words looked at are:

- *suffering itself*: πένθος, grief (923 occurrences), πόνος, toil (44 occurrences), ἄχθος, burden, pain (8 occurrences), κήδος, care, sorrow (54 occurrences), πῆμα, woe (17 occurrences), ὀλοφυδνόν, pitiful, doleful (19 occurrences), ἄλγος, pain, grief (59 occurrences), οἰζύς, woe (10 occurrences), ἄχος, grief, pain (51 occurrences) ὀδύνη, pain (21 occurrences) and ὀδύρομαι, to grieve, to mourn (16 occurrences).
- *tears and lamentations*: στόνος, groaning, wail (15 occurrences), στενάχω, to wail, to groan (39 occurrences), γόος, lamentation (38 occurrences), κωκύω, to shriek, to wail (8 occurrences), δάκρυ, tear (62 occurrences), οἰμωγή, cry of grief, wail (12 occurrences), and κλαίω, to weep (38 occurrences).

above all on the battlefield.²

However, it has to be said (though it may seem obvious) that suffering is not regarded as feminine, unmanly or weak in Homer. Monsacré mentions in particular how the conception of tears as being weak and feminine belonging to the classical period (in book I and II of Plato's *Republic*),³ for example does not apply to the world of Homer⁴: "les héros de *Illiade* [...] sont très souvent présentés en larmes, en proie au chagrin, à la douleur. [...] Tout laisse à penser que pour un héros épique, pleurer n'était pas simplement exprimer un désarroi momentané mais relevait bien plus d'un comportement "constitutif" de sa nature".⁵ As Van Wees points out, "the one reason for not crying which is never given is that it is unmanly. The narrative, in fact, does not suggest that women cry more easily than men. [...] If anything, the male reaction seems the more emotional."⁶ However, the simile in *Odyssey* viii is very interesting, as the tears of a warrior (Odysseus) are compared to those of a woman who has lost her husband to war, suggesting that even though male grief is in no way unmale or reprehensible, and is even predominant in Homer, female suffering could be considered paradigmatic:

αὐτὰρ Ὀδυσσεὺς
 τήκετο, δάκρυ δ' ἔδευεν ὑπὸ βλεφάροισι παρειάς.
 ὡς δὲ γυνὴ κλαίῃσι φίλον πόσιν ἀμφιπεσοῦσα,
 ὅς τε εἴης πρόσθεν πόλιος λαῶν τε πέσῃσιν,
 ἄστει καὶ τεκέεσσιν ἀμύνων νηλεὲς ἤμαρ·
 ἢ μὲν τὸν θνήσκοντα καὶ ἀσπαίροντα ἰδοῦσα
 ἀμφ' αὐτῷ χυμένη λίγα κωκύει· οἳ δέ τ' ὄπισθε
 κόπτοντες δούρεσσι μετάφρονον ἠδὲ καὶ ὤμους
 εἴρερον εἰσανάγουσι, πόνον τ' ἐχέμεν καὶ οἴζυν·
 τῆς δ' ἐλεεινοτάτῳ ἄχεϊ φθινύθουσι παρειαί·

² On the heroes' tears, see Arnould (1990), 51-58.

³ Or for example *Rep.* III 387e-389a.

⁴ Monsacré (1984), 137-8.

⁵ Monsacré (1984), 137-8.

⁶ Van Wees (1998), 14. See also Pope's reaction in his notes on the translation of the *Iliad* (1715): "It is no Weakness in Heroes to weep, but the very Effect of Humanity and Proof of a generous Temper." note ad. I, 458. See also Waern (1985) and Arnould (1990).

ὥς Ὀδυσσεὺς ἔλεεινὸν ὑπ' ὀφρύσι δάκρυον εἶβεν.

But the heart of Odysseus was melted and tears wet his cheeks beneath his eyelids. And as a woman wails and flings herself about her dear husband, who has fallen in front of his city and his people, seeking toward off from his city and his children the pitiless day; and as she beholds him dying and gasping for breath, she clings to him and shrieks aloud, while the foe behind her smite her back and shoulders with their spears, and lead her away to captivity to bear toil and woe, while with most pitiful grief her cheeks are wasted: even so did Odysseus let fall pitiful tears from beneath his brows.

viii, 521-31

For the heroes, tears are also often part of the epic sense of morality: “sens de l’honneur et de l’amitié, de la fidélité envers le compagnon de combat”.⁷ To Monsacré, a hero is a hero as much by his courage as by his “proximité à la douleur”.⁸ Achilles is a figure great by both his heroism and his suffering.⁹ Tears are not unmanly because they are a condition of the “law of war”: “les larmes sont complémentaires du *kleos*; l’un ne va pas sans l’autre”.¹⁰ Nagy points out that “the *kléos* heard by the [epic’s] audience may be *ákhos*/*pénthos* for those involved in the actions that it describes”.¹¹ Warriors earn glory through their suffering, and though war is undoubtedly a great source of glory, it is equally a source of tears, as can be seen in the epithets given to it.¹² More will be said on the link between honour and suffering (in particular in regard to Achilles) in the next part.

On the other hand, Monsacré mentions how Thersites’ tears¹³ highlight the difference between “noble tears” and “weak tears”, which are laughed at by the other

⁷ Monsacré (1984), 141. For examples of warriors weeping, in particular for the death of a comrade, see part II on the consequences of suffering.

⁸ Monsacré (1984), 141. She also mentions how male gods weep as well: 142.

⁹ See in particular Nagy (1979) 69-83 on the etymology of the name Achilles, where he points out that there is “a thematic association between the Achilles figure and the notion of grief.” Monsacré points out that another great hero, Heracles, is also shown in tears (VIII, 364), 141.

¹⁰ Monsacré (1984), 142.

¹¹ Nagy (1979), 101.

¹² See V, 737; VIII, 388; XVII, 512; III, 165; XXII, 487 and *Odyssey* 11, 383.

¹³ Which are also described as *θαλερός*, it is interesting to note. This could point to the fact that male tears are in general regarded as fertile (and therefore seen in a positive light). It doesn’t have to do with the circumstances surrounding them.

warriors (II, 266-70). She does not explain why Thersites tears are not heroic when the tears of the other warriors are, but we can say that first of all, Thersites weeps for himself and not for a friend/family member,¹⁴ and those are tears of pain and humiliation rather than mourning. Furthermore, this is not about “noble” pain inflicted on the battlefield, but in the encampment, by a superior, as a punishment. The content of Odysseus’ rebuke is also particularly humiliating, in particular the allusion to the exposure of Thersites’ genitals.¹⁵

Another interesting aspect of male suffering is how it can be compared to the most female of all sufferings: that of giving birth (in that too, female suffering can be regarded as paradigmatic).

2- Maternity

In book XI of the *Iliad*, the pain of a wound Agamemnon received on the battlefield is famously compared to that of a woman in labour:

αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ τὸ μὲν ἔλκος ἐτέρσεται, παύσατο δ’ αἶμα,
 ὄξειαι δ’ ὀδύνας δύνων μένος Ἀτρεΐδαο.
 ὡς δ’ ὅτ’ ἂν ὠδίνουσιν ἔχη βέλος ὄξυ γυναικῶν
 δριμύ, τό τε προΐεισι μογροστόκοι Εἰλείθυιαι
 Ἥρης θυγατέρες πικρὰς ὠδίνας ἔχουσαι,
 ὡς ὄξει’ ὀδύνας δύνων μένος Ἀτρεΐδαο

But when the wound began to dry and the flow ceased, then sharp pains began to overcome [Agamemnon’s] strength of spirit. As when a woman in labour is taken with the sharp stab of piercing pain sent by the Eileithyiai, daughters of Hera, who bring the bitter pangs of childbirth, so sharp pains began to overcome the son of Atreus’ strength.

XI, 267-72

The various commentaries written on the *Iliad* seem astonishingly dismissive of the

¹⁴ It could be argued that this is also the case of Diomedes at XXIII, 385, where he weeps with anger and frustration during the chariot race, but it has to be said that the context is very different: weeping with anger is not the same as weeping because one has been publicly humiliated. Furthermore, Diomedes was *winning* a race at that point.

¹⁵ For the exposure of genitals as shameful, see Priam’s speech at XXII, 74-6.

significance of this extraordinary simile. Leaf and Willcock do not mention it at all and Hainsworth regards it as a pejorative simile, meant to demean the warrior's glory by comparing it to everyday life experiences: "the great effort of the King of Men ends with his being rushed off to his surgeon like a woman to her accouchement – but like a woman nonetheless". He obscurely adds: "At a deeper level the poet understands the zest for battle [...] but is so carried away by admiration for it that he cannot equate the self-sought suffering of the ἄριστοι [...] with the pains of other's everyday existence".¹⁶ This statement is very difficult to understand, especially considering that the poet does exactly that: he compares the suffering of an *aristos* (Agamemnon) with that of others (women in labour). As for describing childbirth as an "everyday experience", many women would surely disagree. Postlethwaite agrees in thinking that the simile is pejorative: "the simile contributes to the characterization of Agamemnon: [...] the significance of the great king, wounded by a comparative nonentity, being compared to a woman, is marked".¹⁷

It is possible to understand how one could see that simile as negative, since Agamemnon is often thought of as a fairly non-heroic character and being compared to a woman is an insult in battle.¹⁸ Nevertheless, two things come to mind: First of all, Agamemnon may be a bad leader, but he is undoubtedly a good warrior; only extraordinary warriors are given an *aristeia* in the poem (Agamemnon, Diomedes, Patroclus, Achilles). Furthermore, being compared to a woman on the battlefield is only an insult in the mouth of the characters. When the narrator uses similes of women, they are always positive, for example XII, 433-35, where the tenacity of the Achaians is compared to that of a woman spinning:

¹⁶ Hainsworth (1993), 254-5.

¹⁷ Postlethwaite (2000), 156-7.

¹⁸ See Monsacré (1984), 81-85.

ἀλλ' ἔχον ὡς τε τάλαντα γυνὴ χερσητὶς ἀληθής,
ἧ τε σταθμὸν ἔχουσα καὶ εἴριον ἀμφὶς ἀνέλκει
ἰσάζουσ', ἵνα παισὶν ἀεικέα μισθὸν ἄρηται

But the sides held even like the scales a careful spinning-woman holds, lifting the beam with the weight and the wool on either side, so she can earn a meagre provision for her children.
XII, 433-5¹⁹

Moreover, throughout the poem we see clearly the respect Homer had for motherhood. It can be seen in the stunning scene in which Hecuba reveals her breast in an attempt to persuade Hector not to fight Achilles (XXII, 79ff.). According to Monsacré, that scene shows the “proximité initiale de la mère et de l’enfant”²⁰: “le geste d’Hécube est solennel : en montrant son sein, ce symbole de la maternité, en faisant référence à sa fonction nourricière et préservatrice, elle rappelle à Hector, sur le point de mourir, qu’il a été un tout petit enfant, et que le plus vaillant guerrier reste, en un certain sens, un enfant pour sa mère”.²¹

More interestingly, the importance of motherhood is also seen in the many scenes of positive comparisons to women, in particular those in which a warrior protecting another warrior is compared to a woman protecting her child:

Τεῦκρος δ' εἵνατος ἦλθε παλίντονα τόξα τιταίνων,
στῆ δ' ἄρ' ὑπ' Αἴαντος σάκεϊ Τελαμωνιάδαο.
ἔνθ' Αἴας μὲν ὑπεξέφερον σάκος· αὐτὰρ ὁ γ' ἦρωσ
παπτήνας, ἐπεὶ ἄρ' τιν' οἴστεύσας ἐν ὀμίλῳ
βεβλήκοι, ὃ μὲν αὐθι πεσὼν ἀπὸ θυμὸν ὄλεσσεν,
αὐτὰρ ὃ αὐτὶς ἰὼν πάϊς ὡς ὑπὸ μητέρα δύσκειν
εἰς Αἴανθ'· ὃ δέ μιν σάκεϊ κρύπτασκε φαεινῷ

And the ninth to come was Teucer, stringing his curved bow, and he took up position under the cover of Ajax the son of Telamon's shield. The Ajax would move his shield a little to one side: and the hero Teucer would look sharply around him, shoot, and hit a Trojan in the mass of men, and then, leaving the man to fall and die where he was shot, he would dodge back again to Ajax' protection, like a child running to its mother: and Ajax would cover him with his bright shield.

¹⁹ See also IV, 140-7 where the wound inflicted by a warrior on another is compared to a woman staining ivory with scarlet.

²⁰ Monsacré (1984), 89.

²¹ Monsacré (1984), 89.

VIII, 266-72²²

ἀμφὶ δ' ἄρ' αὐτῷ βαῖν' ὡς τις περὶ πόρτακι μήτηρ
 πρωτοτόκος κινυρῆ οὐ πρὶν εἰδυῖα τόκοιο·
 περὶ Πατρόκλω βαῖνε ξανθὸς Μενέλαος

[Menelaus] strode through the front ranks, helmeted in gleaming bronze, and took his stand over Patroclus as a mother cow stands lowing over her first-born calf, untried before in childbirth.

XVII, 4-6

The mental suffering of mothers is also very present in the poem, in particular their mourning. Nicole Loraux points out that “la douleur d’une mère est générale au sens où l’on dirait qu’elle est générique, douleur en general qui contient tous les deuils en elle”.²³ To go back to the Hector/Hecuba scene, Loraux mentions that “comme si, de toute origine, le deuil faisait nécessairement partie d’un destin de mere, Hécube a tellement anticipé la vision, à la fois redoutable et étrangement consolante, de la *prothésis* d’Hector que, devant le fils voué à mourir aux mains d’un féroce adversaire, la mère s’affole, d’avance dépossédée et du fils et de son corps mort et de l’apaisement qu’apporte le rite”.²⁴

On seeing the possible positive connotations of motherhood in the poem, there is no reason to think automatically that because it is Agamemnon, and because the comparison is to a woman, it is necessarily negative. On the contrary, it makes more sense to believe that Homer, like many people, regarded the pain of childbirth as the greatest possible pain. Monsacré points out that “*odunē* est pris ici dans le sens fort: le mot fait référence à une souffrance aiguë, lancinante, alourdissante et épuisante; autant de caractéristiques des douleurs de l’accouchement”.²⁵ Nicole Loraux mentions that Agamemnon’s pain is

²² For an analysis of the implied shield/womb comparison, see Loraux (1990), 48, n.60.

²³ Loraux (1990), 12.

²⁴ Loraux (1990), p.61. On a mother seeing the body of her son, see 59-60.

²⁵ Monsacré (1984), 92-3.

compared to that of a woman in labour “parce que peut-être, en matière d’expérience des ‘douleurs aiguës’, la palme revient aux femmes”.²⁶ She adds that “le scholiaste ajoute que l’acuité des souffrances exclut qu’Agamemnon puisse être traité de lâche lorsque, sur son char, il fuit la douleur: souffrir ainsi est en soi un combat”.²⁷ There is no reason to believe that Homer considered women’s suffering to be less noble than that of a man: the simile is used here to *emphasise* the pain Agamemnon is feeling.

It seems also quite significant that within the simile itself, one of the terms used to refer to labour pains is βέλος ὄξύ, “sharp missiles”, which are warlike terms. In other words, the pain of a battle-wound is compared to the pains of childbirth, which are themselves metaphorically described as battle-wounds. The female realm of childbirth and the male realm of the battlefield seem to be intimately intertwined. This is one aspect of childbirth Nicole Loraux is interested in. She shows in particular how the mother and the hoplite were put in parallel, so that “supporter l’enfantement comme l’hoplite supporte l’assaut de l’ennemi, lutter contre les douleurs: l’accouchement est un combat”.²⁸ She adds that πόνος (which is used strictly of war-toil in the *Iliad*), “est bien l’un des mots qui désignent la douleur de l’accouchement, dans la poésie comme dans la prose, et tout spécialement dans le corpus hippocratique qui n’en farde pas les dangers”.²⁹

Even though male suffering is predominantly present in the poem, female suffering is also very significant and is used in similes (where the pain of a warrior is compared to the pain of childbirth): typically, in times of war as well as in times of peace (childbirth), women suffer,

²⁶ Loraux (1981), 54.

²⁷ Loraux (1981), 54.

²⁸ Loraux (1981), 38. See also of course Medea’s famous speech in Euripides at 250-1. Cp. again simile in *Odyssey* 8: if pain is typically feminine, then so is weeping.

²⁹ Loraux (1981), 44. Cf. ‘labour’ in English, but the reference to childbirth is not primary.

and their suffering can be a basis for a description of male suffering. Nevertheless, the question is not so much whether suffering is typically masculine or feminine, but what are the differences between male and female suffering, in the causes for suffering, the expression of suffering, and even the consequences of suffering.

B – FEMALE SUFFERING: DOMESTIC CAUSES

1 – The effects of war on women

In wartime, women lose their husbands (as Andromache does), their sons (as Hecuba does, and Andromache and Thetis will), and their freedom (as Chryseis and Briseis do and Andromache will). It could be regarded as inconsequential, compared to the fighting itself and the way the warriors face death everyday on the battlefield, but it is treated very seriously by Homer, and it is a recurring theme in the poem. Indeed, Monsacré points out that “*Illiade évoque en permanence la dure nécessité de la condition féminine en temps de guerre*”.³⁰

The lament for Hector at the end of Book XXIV symbolises all that women have to live through because of war: Andromache loses her husband, a protector and the father of her son (723-46), Hecuba loses a son (747-60) and even Helen, who does not belong to his immediate family, and will not lose anything by the defeat of the Trojans, loses the only person who could protect her within Troy from the hostility of the other Trojans (761-76).

It is also worth noticing that the suffering of those whose city is taken (including women) is mentioned in the poem:

καὶ τότε δὴ Μελέαγρον ἐϋζωνος παράκοιτις

³⁰ Monsacré (1984), 148.

Λίσσεται ὄδυρομένη, καί οἱ κατέλεξεν ἅπαντα
 κήδε', ὅσ' ἀνθρώποισι πέλει τῶν ἄστῃ ἀλώη·
 ἄνδρας μὲν κτείνουσι, πόλιν δέ τε πῦρ ἀμαθύνει,
 τέκνα δέ τ' ἄλλοι ἄγουσι βαθυζώνους τε γυναῖκας.

Then his fine-girdled wife entreated Meleager with tears, and described to him all the miseries that come on people when their city is captured - the men are slaughtered, fire razes the city, and other men carry away the children and the deep-girdled women.

IX, 590-94

Even a warrior's own courage can be seen to prove grievous to him and the women surrounding him, as Andromache points out about Hector.³¹

The "obituaries" often mention the suffering of a mother or wife when a warrior dies³². The suffering of women seems to add to the suffering of the man, and puts it into context: in war, not only those on the battlefield suffer.

2 – women and the family sphere

One very striking thing in the *Iliad* is how very limited the causes of suffering for women are. Female suffering is almost entirely limited to mourning a male relative. They mostly mourn sons³³ and husbands³⁴, and sometimes brothers, as is the case for example with Briseis.³⁵ On the other hand, it is interesting to notice that they never mourn fathers.

Typically, women mourn for the men who are there to protect them, which would explain why women are not seen to mourn their fathers, who are too old to protect them efficiently. Furthermore, in case of a war, they are victims and helpless in the same way that women are

³¹ XXII, 454-59

³² See chapter on pity.

³³ II, 315 (sparrow mother); XXI, 122-5 (boast); XXII, 352-4 (boast); XXII, 437-8; XXIV, 90-2; XXIV, 206-9; XXIV, 760, XXII, 407; XXIV, 613; 614-7 (Niobe: boys and girls).

³⁴ V, 412-5 (obituary); XXII, 499-501; XXII, 482-4; XXII, 515; XXIV, 746.

³⁵ XIX, 290-4. See also IX, 565-71; XXIV, XXIV, 703 (Cassandra); XXIV, 773; XXIV, 776 (Helen for Hector, her brother in-law); XXIV, 703 (Cassandra)

(as we will see in a further section). Another explanation would be that women leave their original family when they marry, so their father might not be around to protect them. As will be pointed out, the laments for Hector by Andromache, Hecuba and Helen illustrate this situation very well.

It is also clear that Briseis saw a protector in Patroclus, as he seemed to look after her, comfort her and play the role of an intermediary between herself and Achilles, in terms of their possible marriage for example (XIX, 282-300). This explains why she seems to mourn him as though he was a family member.

Female suffering is therefore very political, since it is entirely linked to their own situation of weakness, helplessness and powerlessness³⁶, and to their role in the community, to which we will come back in the next section. As was mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, suffering is predominantly male in the poem³⁷, and male suffering offers different characteristics from female suffering, and is far more wide-ranging.

B – MEN'S SUFFERING: POLITICAL CAUSES

1 – mourning

It is true that mourning still plays a large part in male suffering. In that respect, it is partly similar to female suffering though there do not seem to be any kind of power-relations

³⁶ Monsacré points out that a characteristic of women in the poem is to be potential preys, Monsacré (1984), 160ff.

³⁷ Though possibly paradeigmatically female.

involved. First of all, the warriors mourn for their comrades.³⁸

The case which occurs the most frequently is, unsurprisingly, that of Achilles mourning for Patroclus. Achilles' suffering is also described by the narrator as follows:

ὡς δὲ πατὴρ οὐ παιδὸς ὀδύρεται ὅστέα καίων
 νυμφίου, ὅς τε θανῶν δειλοὺς ἀκάχησε τοκῆας,
 ὡς Ἀχιλεὺς ἐτάροιο ὀδύρετο ὅστέα καίων,
 ἐρπύζων παρὰ πυρκαϊῆν ἀδινὰ στεναχίζων.

As a father weeps for his son as he burns his bones, a son newly married whose death brings anguished to his unhappy parents, so Achilles wept for his companion as he burnt his bones, dragging his step up and down beside the pyre in ceaseless lamentation.

XXIII, 222-25

The simile involving a father mourning his son is of course a way to emphasise Achilles' grief.³⁹ It is also thematically important, as it introduces the meeting in book XXIV between Priam and Achilles, where father/son relationships are central (Priam/Hector and Peleus/Achilles). The simile also picks up on Priam's grief after the death of Hector in Book XXII. With this simile, Achilles is already put in parallel with Priam, before their meeting in Book XXIV. Because they are seen to be experiencing the same thing, their reconciliation and the empathy they will share at the end of the poem is foreshadowed here.

The comparison between Achilles an old man is also present, if more generally, in the participle ἐρπύζων: Leaf says about that passage that "ἐρπύζων evidently expresses the weary movement of a broken-hearted man". Richardson adds "It is only used here in *Il.*, and once in *Od.*, of the aged Laertes (1.193); it recurs in Hellenistic and later verse. The present participles which frame the verse emphasize Akhilleus' continual sorrow and its physical expression."

³⁸ VII, 424-6; VIII, 36;124; XI, 248-50; 656-8; XIII, 417, 421-3; 538-9; 581; 658; XIV, 458; 475; 486; 508-9; 581-3; 599; XVII, 82-6; 138-9; 591-2; 694-6; 700-1; XVIII, 22-5; 32-3; 73; 460-1; XVIII, 15-7; 63-4; 70; 73; 78; 314-5, 316; 317-8; 323; 333-6; 354-5; XIX, 4-7; 225; 228-9; 303-4; 305-8; 338; 344-6; 365-8; XXIII, 10; 6-9; 15-6; 16-7; 43-7; 59-61; 97-8; 102; 152-3; 154-5; 160; 171-2; 211; 224; 252-4; XXIV, 2-4; 9-12; 128-30; 160; 161-5; 328; 513-4; 548-51.

³⁹ The warriors are also seen to mourn for their sons: V, 156 (obituary); VIII, 364-5; XI, 815; XVII, 34-7; XXII, 41-5; 427-9; 424-6; 429; XXIII, 222-5; XXIV, 507; 549; 619-20; 695-7; 716-7; 740-2.

But of course, other warriors also mourn for their comrades, either individually or collectively.⁴⁰ Furthermore, the two armies take the bodies of their comrades-in-arms away from the battlefield to bury them.⁴¹

Curiously enough, for the warriors, one's own death is also cause for mourning. The same passage is used for the deaths of Patroclus and of Hector:

Ὡς ἄρα μιν εἰπόντα τέλος θανάτοιο κάλυψε·
 ψυχὴ δ' ἐκ ῥεθέων παμμένη Αἴδος δὲ βεβήκει
 ὄν πότμον γοώωσα λιποῦσ' ἀνδροτῆτα καὶ ἥβην

As he spoke the end of death enfolded him: his spirit flitted from his body and went on the way to Hades, weeping for its fate, and the youth and manhood it must leave.
 XVI, 855-57 = XXII, 662-63

As γόος seems to be reserved for formal lamentation, it may be used here because this is how Patroclus would be lamenting if he was actually lamenting with the others.

Nevertheless, men have a lot of other important causes for suffering. We saw earlier how only men felt physical pain, but there are many other causes.

2 – care and pity

Men's position of power means that they can feel pity and care for their comrades. Pity is a very positive emotion in the poem, and the lack of it is chided several times (see next chapter on mildness). The same can be said of concern and worry felt for other, which are common

⁴⁰ XVI, 548-51; XVII, 138-39. Monro translates 139 'letting his sorrow swell in his heart'. He comments that "the phrase occurs several times in the *od.* (11.195 etc.)" Edwards adds that "verse 139 is another reminder of Menelaus' feeling of responsibility for Patroklos' death; the phrase is like *Od.* 11.195 μέγα δὲ φρεσὶ πένθος ἀέξει (of Laertes' grieving for Odysseus)."; XXIII, 159-60; XXII, 270-72; XVIII, 354-55; XIX, 338; XXIII, 208-11.

⁴¹ See also VII, 424-26; XVII, 694-96; 700-1; XVIII, 15-17. Edwards (1991) comments on XVII, 694-96 that "Antilokhos' silence here prepares or that of Akhilleus himself when he hears the news (18.22ff.) 'the silence is more effective than any words. (bT)."

emotions in the poem. This shows how suffering is not limited to entirely negative experiences such as mourning. This is what makes suffering such a key aspect of the poem: it is expected of the characters and unavoidable. If pity is part of expected human behaviour, and it is, then suffering is an unavoidable part of human experience. This shows how suffering is not always something to be avoided but something that can link all human beings together. This point will be developed later on in the chapter.

Here, admittedly we will be dealing with concern in general rather than pity, strictly speaking. It nevertheless still implies care for someone else and their misfortunes.⁴² Pity will be looked at in detail in the next chapter.

a – for others

- concern for individual warriors

Pity and concern can be felt for an individual warrior.⁴³ κήδος (or κήδομαι) is used when a character shows care or worry for another warrior.⁴⁴ At one point, Menelaus is even accused by Agamemnon of caring too much for Trojan suppliants.⁴⁵

We will see later how excessive suffering can be as inappropriate as lack of suffering. Nevertheless, it has to be said that Agamemnon is far from being the norm in terms of empathy, as will be seen in part II. It is actually easier to sympathise with Menelaus' reaction

⁴² For a complete study of care in the poem, see Lynn-George (1996). Pity specifically will be looked at in the next chapter

⁴³ XI, 814-15. It is noticeable that among all the mortals, Patroclus is the only one who suffers for the pain of others. It can also occasionally be felt by the gods: πένθος: XXII, 242; α)/χοj: XX, 293-96; ὀλοφύρομαι (and ὀλοφύδνόν): VIII, 33-34; 201-2; 245; 464-65; XVII, 648; XXII, 168-72, on which Richardson (1993) comments: "φίλον ἄνδρα : 'a man I love'. It is curious that this very simple phrase occurs only here in Homer. In its very plainness it carries a great deal of emotional weight in this context."

⁴⁴ IX, 640-42; XIII, 463-64; XXII, 416-17; XXIII, 160; 163; 674, about which Richardson (1993) says: "there is an echo of 159-60, where those who have responsibilities or Patroklos' burial are asked to remain (μενόντων).

⁴⁵ VI, 55-58

and see Agamemnon as too harsh. Zeus himself feels pity for individual warriors.⁴⁶

- concern for the whole army

Worry and fear can also be felt for the army in general. Patroclus shows his fear for the

Achaians in Book XVI

Πάτροκλος δ' Ἀχιλῆϊ παρίστατο ποιμένι λαῶν
 δάκρυα θερμὰ χέων ὥς τε κρήνη μελάνυδρος,
 ἢ τε κατ' αἰγίλιπος πέτρης δνοφερὸν χέει ὕδωρ.
 τὸν δὲ ἰδὼν ὤκτιρε ποδάρκης δῖος Ἀχιλλεύς,
 καί μιν φωνήσας ἔπεα πτερόεντα προσηύδα·
 τίπτε δεδάκρυσαι Πατρόκλεες, ἦ ὦτε κούρη
 νηπίη, ἢ θ' ἅμα μητρὶ θεοῦσ' ἀνελέσθαι ἀνώγει
 εἰάνου ἀπτομένη, καί τ' ἔσσυμένην κατερύκει,
 δακρυόεσσα δέ μιν ποτιδέσκεται, ὄφρ' ἀνέληται
 τῇ ἵκελος Πάτροκλε τέρεν κατὰ δάκρυον εἴβεις.
 ἦέ τι Μυρμιδόνεσσι πιφαύσκεαι, ἦ ἔμοι αὐτῶ,
 ἦέ τιν' ἀγγελίην Φθίης ἐξέκλυες οἴος;
 ζῶειν μὲν ἔτι φασὶ Μενoitίῳ Ἄκτορος υἱόν,
 ζῶει δ' Αἰακίδης Πηλεὺς μετὰ Μυρμιδόνεσσι;
 τῶν κε μάλ' ἀμφοτέρων ἀκαχοίμεθα τεθνηῶτων.
 ἦε σὺ γ' Ἀργείων ὀλοφύρεαι, ὥς ὀλέκονται
 νηυσὶν ἐπι γλαφυρήσιν ὑπερβασίης ἔνεκα σφῆς;
 ἔξαυδα, μὴ κεῦθε νόω, ἵνα εἶδομεν ἀμφῶ

And Patroclus came up to Achilles, shepherd of the people, letting his warm tears fall like a spring of black water, which trickles its dark stream down a sheer rock's face. Swift-footed godlike Achilles felt pity when he saw him, and spoke winged words to him: 'why are you all in tears Patroclus, like a little girl running along by her mother and demanding to be carried, pulling at her dress and holding her back as she tries to hurry on, and looking up at her tearfully until she picks her up? That is what you look like, Patroclus, with these soft tears falling. Have you some news for the Myrmidons, or for me myself? Have you had some message from Phthia that no-one else has heard? Menoetius, Actor's son, is said to be living still, and Peleus, son of Aecus, is alive among his Myrmidons – these are the two whose deaths would grieve us most. Or is it that you are distressed for the Argives, as they die by the hollow ships through their own folly? Tell me, do not hide it inside you, so that both of us can know.'

XVI, 2-19

It is interesting to note that Achilles compares himself to the mother in the simile is also shown by the fact that the little girl runs in tears to her mother, as Patroclus ran in tears to

⁴⁶ II, 27 = 64 = XXIV, 174. See also: Hera: I, 55-56; 195-96; 208-9; Zeus: VII, 204; the gods in general: XXIV, 748-50.

Achilles.⁴⁷ In an example given above, his grief for Patroclus was compared to that of a father mourning his son: after offering a mother's protection to Patroclus, he then offers a father's sorrow. This emphasises his link to Patroclus, and, interestingly, puts him into parallel with Hector, who is said by Andromache to be "father and honoured mother and brother to [her]".⁴⁸ The humane, affectionate side of both characters appear in those passages. It is also interesting to note that not only is Achilles said to pity Patroclus as soon as he sees him (XVI, 5), but, in the simile, the mother eventually accedes the little girl's demands (XVI, 10), which gives a good indication of what Achilles' reaction is going to be.

On a more general note, it can be said that it is in the character of Patroclus to empathise, for example, that is how Briseis describes him after his death (he knows how to relate to everybody). It is therefore not surprising that he should be able to go beyond individual -to-individual pity and be able to generalise it to whole groups of people. Achilles' inability to do the same is commented on by Nestor: Achilles reacts to the fate of individual warriors, but does not seem capable at that point to generalise it to the whole army:

τίπτε τὰρ ᾧδ' Ἀχιλεὺς ὀλοφύρεται νίης Ἀχαιῶν,
ὅσσοι δὴ βέλεσιν βεβλήγεται; οὐδέ τι οἶδε
πένθεος, ὅσσον ὄρωρε κατὰ στρατόν·

'Now why does Achilles show such concern for those sons of the Achaians who have been wounded by flying weapons – when he knows nothing of the great distress that has afflicted the whole army?'

XI, 656-58⁴⁹

Nevertheless, there is no actual 'wilful obstinacy'⁵⁰ on the part of Achilles in IX: during the Embassy scene, he actually grows *less and less obstinate* and in the end, after Ajax'

⁴⁷ Furthermore, if Patroclus' tears are natural because it is natural for a spring to pour forth water, Agamemnon selfish tears are equally natural, as the same simile is applied to them.

⁴⁸ VI, 429-30.

⁴⁹ See also XVI, 17-18; XV, 397-98.

⁵⁰ Hainsworth (1993), *ad loc.*

intervention, he is no longer talking about leaving in the morning, but merely about keeping away from the fighting until the Trojans reach his ship. It is a huge concession, and makes Achilles' reaction in XI and XVI perfectly logical: he is sensitive to the fate of his fellow Achaians, and gets gradually more involved with them. Yet, Nestor is right in pointing out that Achilles' concern is limited at this point to individual warriors rather than to the whole army.

b – for themselves

- physical safety

The warriors also fear and worry for themselves. First of all, symbolically, Panic itself is present on the battlefield:

Ὡς οἱ μὲν Τρῶες φυλακὰς ἔχον· αὐτὰρ Ἀχαιοὺς
θεσπεσίη ἔχε φύζα φόβου κρυόεντος ἑταίρη,
πένθει δ' ἀτλήτῳ βεβολήατο πάντες ἄριστοι.

So the Trojans kept their watch. But the Achaians were gripped by monstrous Panic, the workmate of chilling flight, and all the leading men were struck down with unbearable sorrow.

IX, 1-3

A question here is the nature of the 'sorrow' the men felt: was it only fear, or perhaps also shame at having to flee? Why is it limited to the ἄριστοι? Does it mean that they have a greater understanding of what is happening, while the 'common soldiers' flee without giving it a second thought? The passage is not particularly clear on any of these issues, but it is interesting to compare it with Odysseus' reaction in the assembly in book II, when all the warriors flee towards the ships after Agamemnon' disastrous speech. While Odysseus hits and insults the common soldiers to stop their flights, he tries to reason with the leadership: it seems that, like in this passage, the common soldiers are impulsive and instinctive while the ἄριστοι are more capable of reflecting on their situation, even though their initial reaction is

the same. More will be discussed in part III on this type of hierarchical thinking.

Wounds are also seen as a worry for the warriors, and it can be expressed by the verb κήδω, here referring to Odysseus' wound:

αἶμα δέ οἱ σπασθέντος ἀνέσσυτο, κῆδε δὲ θυμόν.

Blood shot up as the spear was pulled clear, and pained his heart.
XI, 458⁵¹

Leaf comments that κῆδε δὲ θυμόν is used "of purely physical pain, like ἤχθετο κῆρ" (see next example). If Leaf means that the expression only occurs *in the context of* physical pain (rather than being used *of* physical pain), then he must be right. This expression reflects a secondary indirect reaction to the wound, the worry that it could be serious, or more simply show the warrior feeling a little faint-hearted at the sight of his own blood. This expression occurs again at V, 400-9

The verb ἄχθομαι can also be used to the same effect, here when Agamemnon has just been wounded:

ἔς δίφρον δ' ἀνόρουσε, καὶ ἠνιόχῳ ἐπέτελλε
νηυσὶν ἔπι γλαφυρῆσιν ἐλαυνέμεν ἤχθετο γὰρ κῆρ.

He jumped into his chariot and told his charioteer to drive for the hollow, as he was sick at heart.
XI, 273-74 = 399-400

Again, the exact meaning of the expression ἤχθετο γὰρ κῆρ is not entirely clear. The first meaning of ἄχος is "burden", which suggests that Agamemnon's heart is burdened by something. By worry for his wound? Shame and regret at leaving the battlefield? Worry for the fate of the army without him especially since afterwards, Agamemnon tells the army to keep fighting without him, as he has to leave? The only thing clear is that it cannot be direct

⁵¹ See also V, 400-9; XV, 244-45; XVI, 514-16.

physical pain, as neither Agamemnon nor Diomedes (XI, 399-400) have been wounded in the heart (Agamemnon was wounded in the arm and Diomedes in the foot). Nevertheless, the γὰρ seems to mean that his being “sick at heart” is the *cause* for his leaving the battlefield. Therefore, the last two suggestions seem impossible: he cannot leave *because* he worries for the army or *because* he is ashamed to leave. It is more probably linked to the wound, and means that because of it, he can no longer fight.

Here, we see a self-concern about the body as opposed to general safety. Nevertheless, it is still about the warriors' *physical* safety. Honour may play a part in the concern for wounds, as they might be ashamed about having to leave the battlefield (but that aspect is never explicitly mentioned by the poet), or of being wounded in the back.

-honour

The fact that the warriors' obsession with honour leads them to suffer from its loss is very interesting and tells us much about the respective roles of men and women. This also leads us on to the 'political' aspect of male suffering. Indeed, one major cause of male suffering is their own humiliation or perceived loss of honour. This is what the whole dispute between Achilles and Agamemnon is about (see part III). The leaders can appear to be particularly subjected to worry for their status. Here, Agamemnon fears his own humiliation should the Achaeans be destroyed and prays to Zeus:

ἴζον δ' εἰν ἀγορῇ τετιηότες· ἄν δ' Ἀγαμέμνων
 ἴστατο δάκρυ χέων ὥς τε κρήνη μελάνυδρος
 ἢ τε κατ' αἰγίλιπος πέτρης δνοφερὸν χέει ὕδωρ

Agamemnon rose to speak, his tears falling like a spring of black water which trickles its dark stream down a sheer rock's face.

IX, 13-15

Hainsworth mentions that “14-15 = 16.3-4 (of Patroklos' acute distress at imminent disaster to

the army causes floods of tears in both cases. (...) There is indeed a contrast between the tears of Agamemnon, who is concerned for his reputation, and those of Patroklos, which express his distress at others' sufferings."

Diomedes is another example of this, when he worries about what the Trojans will say of him when he rescues Nestor and has to flee with the old man from the battlefield.⁵² Diomedes also feels personal humiliation during the games at XXIII, when Athena throws the whip away from his hand to prevent him from winning the race, but the tone is of course much lighter.

There is an interesting tension between the fear for one's personal safety and the fear for one's honour, as they contradict each other: a warrior often may feel concern for his own safety and flee, thereby feeling he is at risk of dishonouring himself. This tension is paralleled in that between the yearning for glory and heroic death, and the terror in face of actual death: as we saw in the chapter on mortality, a warrior often may put himself at risk on the battlefield to gain honour and glory, only to flee or be paralysed with terror when the risk taken becomes so great he is actually about to die. Those are two constants in the Homeric world yearning for glory and love of life. Those two aspects are visible in Achilles' speech in IX (401ff. In particular).

The only way a woman can feel something similar would be if she is raped, since in the *Iliad* (as in many cultures), a woman's honour is predominantly linked to her chastity. Nagler for example points out the veil metaphor used of the walls of a city:⁵³ as the dress protects the

⁵² VIII, 147-50

⁵³ Nagler (1974), 44-63. See XVI, 99-100; xiii, 388. See also Monsacré (1984), 104-8. On women's honour and veiling, see Cairns (2002): "women's veiling thus marks them as potential vehicles of dishonour, creatures whose excellence, such as it is, is realized in concealment rather than in openness and exposure", 80. See also 77-8.

woman, the walls protect the city, and when a city is taken, the women are raped. In both cases, the veils, metaphorical or not, are taken away brutally.⁵⁴ When Andromache and Hecuba tear off their veils in Book XXII, they "préfigurent and attestent en même temps la chute de Troie".⁵⁵ The link between the veil and male protection in particular can be seen in the fact that Andromache is seen tearing off her *wedding* veil, which makes her (and symbolically Troy) "à la merci des assaillants grecs".⁵⁶ It is noticeable that Andromache, when she talks about her future if Hector is killed, never mentions it, and neither does Hector, possibly because it is a touchy subject for him, as it is also a loss of honour for the man (who is supposed to be able to protect his dependants).⁵⁷

Furthermore, another major difference between men and women in terms of suffering is that the poem is almost entirely focused on the fate of the men: no sorrow is expressed for women.

C – NO SORROW FOR WOMEN

1 – men and women

While women in the *Iliad* constantly appear to feel sorrow for men, men do not appear to feel any kind of sorrow for women. What Achilles feels for Briseis could fit into this category,

⁵⁴ Monsacré (1984), 68. See also Cairns (2002) who points out the notion of vulnerability implied in the women's veiling: "all three emotions (αἰδώς, anger and grief) involve self consciousness and self protection, and all focus on one's vulnerability as an individual for whom interaction in the public arena has suddenly become problematic." 75. See also Van Wees (2005), n.49, 29 and 20.

⁵⁵ Monsacré (1984), 69.

⁵⁶ Monsacré (1984), 69. See also Llewellyn-Jones 130-31.

⁵⁷ On women's veiling on the honour of the man, see Llewellyn-Jones (2003): "the veil marked out a woman as sexually inviolate and the property of one man whose honour was reinforced by her veiled invisibility." 122.

but as we will see in the next part, it has more to do with his own loss of honour.

The only true exception seems to be Hector's feelings for Andromache:

ἀλλ' οὐ μοι Τρώων τόσσον μέλει ἄλγος ὅπισσῶ,
 οὐτ' αὐτῆς Ἑκάβης οὔτε Πριάμοιο ἄνακτος
 οὔτε κασιγνήτων, οἳ κεν πολέες τε καὶ ἐσθλοὶ
 ἐν κονίησι πέσοιεν ὑπ' ἀνδράσι δυσμενέεσσιν,
 ὅσσον σεῦ, ὅτε κέν τις Ἀχαιῶν χαλκοχιτώνων
 δακρυόεσσαν ἄγηται ἐλευθερον ἡμᾶρ ἀπούρας·
 καὶ κεν ἐν Ἀργεῖ ἐοῦσα πρὸς ἄλλης ἰσθὸν ὑφαίνοις,
 καὶ κεν ὕδωρ φορέοις Μεσσηϊδος ἢ Ὑπερείης
 πόλλ' ἀεκαζομένη, κρατερῇ δ' ἐπικείσεται ἀνάγκη·
 καὶ ποτέ τις εἴπησιν ἰδὼν κατὰ δάκρυ χέουσαν·
 "Ἐκτορος ἦδε γυνὴ δὲ ἀριστεύεσκε μάχεσθαι
 Τρώων ἵπποδάμων ὅτε Ἴλιον ἀμφεμάχοντο.
 ὥς ποτέ τις ἐρέει· σοὶ δ' αὖ νέον ἔσσεται ἄλγος
 χητεῖ τοιοῦδ' ἀνδρὸς ἀμύνειν δούλιον ἡμᾶρ.
 ἀλλὰ με τεθνηῶτα χυτὴ κατὰ γαῖα καλύπτει
 πρὶν γέ τι σῆς τε βοῆς σοῦ θ' ἔλκηθμοῖο πυθέσθαι.

'But the pain I feel for the suffering to come is less for the people of Troy, less even for Hecuba and king Priam and my brothers, the many brave brothers who will fall in the dust at the hands of our enemies, than my pain for you, when one of the bronze clad Achaians carries you away in tears and takes away the day of your freedom: and you will live in Argos, weaving at the loom at another's woman's command, and carrying water from a foreign spring, from Messeis or Hyperaia, much against your will, but compulsion will lie harsh upon you. And someone seeing you with your tears falling will say: "This is the wife of Hector, who was always the best warrior of the horse-taming Trojans, when they were fighting over Ilios." That is what they will say: and for you there will be renewed misery, that you have lost such a husband to protect you from the day of slavery. But may I be dead and the heaped earth cover me, before I hear your screams and the sound of you being dragged away.'

VI, 450-65

The feelings expressed are very strong, and she is obviously a priority for Hector, but Hector, like Patroclus, is made to be an unusually gentle and loving character, as can be seen in Helen's lament in XXIV. Furthermore, it can also be argued that a large part of his suffering is linked to his failure to protect his wife and child, and is therefore also linked to the question of his own honour. It is noticeable in particular that he very quickly brings the topic back to himself: "this is the wife of Hector..." (l.460) and "you have lost such a husband..." (l.463). This speech, despite its numerous allusions to Andromache, is still mainly about Hector's fate and death.

It is also interesting to note that women do not appear to feel sorrow for other women either. The only exception to that is the case of Cleopatra's mother mourning the loss of her daughter (IX, 561-64).

Why is it the case that men do not seem to express any kind of suffering for women, even those closest to them? Is it related to Aristotle's understanding of pity, i.e. that it is impossible to feel pity for those closest to us?⁵⁸ But then it would also apply to women's feelings for their men as well, and that is clearly not the case.

Hector's speech is actually quite illuminating: women seem to belong to the men to such an extent that their fate is so intricately linked to that of the men that it becomes very difficult to separate the two: women's misfortunes are their protector's misfortunes and would not exist without them. The focus tends to be on those of the men, and the women's fate is rarely mentioned, because it is obvious perhaps, and also because it is only one of the many consequences of the warrior's death, wounds, etc.

2 – themselves

While men are concerned with their honour, reputation and possible wrong decisions, this is not the case with women. If characters such as Andromache or Briseis can be said to feel sorry for themselves, it is due to their vulnerable position because of the death of a protector, which tends to be the main focus of the suffering expressed anyway: mourning for a male character takes precedence over concern for the women's own fate. Women are hardly ever seen as having regrets for previous decisions they took, or as worrying about their reputation. The only exception to this is Helen. She blames herself and regrets decision that

⁵⁸ For a fuller explanation, see next chapter on pity

she made:

ὡς ὄφελεν θάνατός μοι ἀδεῖν κακὸς ὅπποτε δεῦρο
 νιῆϊ σὺν ἐπόμην θάλαμον γνωτούς τε λιποῦσα
 παῖδά τε τηλυγέτην καὶ ὀμηλικίην ἐρατεινήν.

‘Oh if only vile death had been my choice when I came here with your son, leaving behind the house of my marriage, and my family and my darling child and the sweet company of friends!’

III, 173-5

She also feels responsible for the war.⁵⁹

Unlike the other women who only weep for the loss of za husband or son, Helen weep for herself, for the sorrows that she has caused and for her error and its consequences, as the heroes do. In that, she is the only female character of the epic with such an autonomy of feelings: remorse and guilt tend to be limited to the male characters.⁶⁰ Furthermore, other women tend to blend themselves with their man. It is not so for Helen. Monsacré for example talks about how Andromache is a double for Hector.⁶¹

There is also a link with “feminine honour” as was mentioned earlier: the two adulterous women of the epic, Helen and Clytemnestra are condemned “dans la mesure même où leur infidélité a été source de perils, voir de conflits, pour leur royaume”.⁶²

Polygamy is not meant for women.

Another interesting thing to notice is that while women sometimes mention other people’s suffering in their own lamentation, men do so in boasts.⁶³ The mention of suffering in boasts is often linked to the idea that the enemy they are about to kill is not going to be lamented.⁶⁴

⁵⁹ VI, 354-6

⁶⁰ Monsacré (1984), 159.

⁶¹ Monsacré (1984), 128-31.

⁶² Monsacré (1984), 105.

⁶³ XXI, 122-5, XXII, 352-4

⁶⁴ XXII, 348-54, XXI, 122-25. Richardson (1993) comments on that example that “ἀκηδέες means ‘uncaring’

All this highlights the dichotomy between the two spheres: men and women are different in their priorities and in their state of mind and illustrate how female suffering is inward-looking while male suffering is outward-looking: when they mention other people suffering, more often than not, they are talking about the enemy and are gloating, while women mention their friends' and family's suffering, to join with them. It is now clear that something seemingly as innocent as the causes for suffering for men and women in the *Iliad* is actually very significant of their respective status and political role. This political aspect is something that will be looked at in more detail in the next sections.

(cf.24.526). But the κηδος which they will not provide is above all that of proper burial and mourning, and the point is stressed by "οὐδέ σε μήτηρ...γοήσεται."

II – THE CONSEQUENCES OF SUFFERING

A – SUFFERING AND LAMENTATION

1 – Women and lamentation

When we look at all the occurrences of the words, suffering accounts for 51% (297 examples) and lamentation for 49% (227 examples), but when those words refer to women, lamentation accounts for 69%. Women's link to suffering exists mostly through the external expression of sorrow, as opposed to the internalised pain itself.

One verb, κωκύω,¹ is used only of women. κωκύω is normally translated as 'to shriek' or 'to wail'. Chantraine points out that it is a typically female way of lamenting: "ὄξύ κωκύσασα opposé à βαρύ στενάχω".

This would mean that in the following example, the women in the city lament, rather than the whole city, as it is often translated:

ὤμωξεν δ' ἑλεεινὰ πατὴρ φίλος, ἄμφι δὲ λαοὶ
κωκυτῶ τ' εἶχοντο καὶ οἰμωγῇ κατὰ ἄστυ.

And [Hector's] dear father groaned pitiably, and around them and all through the city the [women?, people?] were overcome with wailing and groans of lamentation.
XXII, 408-9

κωκυτοῦ δ' ἤκουσε καὶ οἰμωγῆς ἀπὸ πύργου·

But now the sound of wailing and lamentation reached her from the tower.
XXII, 447

In the first example (and implicitly in the second one, it is possible to believe that λαοὶ does

¹ XVIII, 35-; 70-1; XIX, 282-5; XXII, 405-7; 408-9; 447; XXIV, 200; 703.

refer to the whole people (or possibly only the men) being overcome with οἰμωγή, and among which only the women are overcome with κωκυτός.

One thing that is particularly noticeable is that women's laments appear to be much more formal than men's. They are organised, follow a clear pattern and are part of a ritual (burial rites):

Ὡς ἔφατο κλαίουσ', ἐπὶ δὲ στενάχοντο γυναῖκες.

Such was [Andromache's] lament, and the women joined with their keening.
XXII, 515 = XXIV, 746

This formal lament has variants:

Ὡς ἔφατο κλαίουσα, γόον δ' ἀλίσστον ὄρινε.

Such was [Hecuba's] lament, and she set [the women] to endless weeping.
XXIV, 760 = XXIV, 776

The following phrase can also be found:

τῶν δὲ καὶ ἀργύφειον πλήτο σπέος· αἱ δ' ἅμα πᾶσαι
στήθεα πεπλήγοντο, Θέτις δ' ἐξήρχε γόοιο·

The silvery cave filled with [the Nereids]; and they all beat their breasts together, while Thetis led the lamentation.
XVIII, 50-1

Those show how the gestures and laments expressed by women in mourning are linked to formal, mostly public mourning and burial rituals.

A traditional pattern, pointed out by Alexiou in particular, is obvious in the lament for Hector in book XXIV and consists in an alternance between γόοι, uttered by the female relatives of Hector, and θρηνηοί, sung by professional mourners²:

"Only the laments of the kinswomen – Andromache, Hekabe and Helen – are given in full, and it is these that we are interested in from a literary point of

² Alexiou (1974), 13. For the full analysis, see 10-14. For a similar analysis, see Vermeule (1979), 15, Holst-Warharft (1992), 111 and Murnaghan (1999), 205-6.

view. Yet the mourning for Hector clearly involved more than a string of solos followed by a refrain a keening: there are two groups of mourners, professional singers and kinswomen. The singers begin with a musical *thrênos*, answered by a refrain of cries, and then the lament is taken up by the three next of kin, each singing a verse in turn and followed by another refrain of cries. Their verses are an answer to the lamentation of the professional singer."

Formal lament is clearly the women's role. According to Murnaghan, "it may bear traces of authentic women's voices and offer women's perspective on actions that are carried out primarily by men and primarily to promote male interests".³

Murnaghan and Holst-Warhaft have made the point that those female laments, though steeped in ritual, are subversive. First of all, they express a female power over death, as Holst-Warhaft points out, "in a patriarchal society where women are consistently undervalued, it leaves in the hands of women, who both as child-bearers and midwives already have a certain control over birth, potential authority over the rites of death."⁴ In the *Iliad*, this almost unique occasion that women have to make their voices heard, they use to express a subversion of traditional epic values. Indeed, as Murnaghan shows, "lamentation threatens to undermine the *kleos*-conferring function of epic because it stresses the suffering caused by heroic death, rather than the glory won by it; lamentation calls into question the

³ Murnaghan (1999), 204. She also makes the point that "Achilles' alienation from male Achaean society leads him into a closer association with lamentation", and therefore, we may add, with women, which can also be seen in "his close tie to his mother Thetis, a figure especially identified with lamentation; his vision of himself in his speech to the embassy in book 9 as a mother bird, the archetypal figure of lamentation [...]; and most overtly in his actual laments, especially the one in book 19, which follows on and echoes the speech of Briseis, who is not only a woman but also a slave.", 210. We can add that in the simile in which he compares the weeping Patroclus to a little girl clinging to his mother, he casts himself in the role of the mother.

On lamentation being mostly a form of female expression, see also Alexiou (1974), 10ff. and 102, Vermeule (1979), 14, and Holst-Warhaft (1992) 1.

⁴ Holst-Warhaft (1992), 2.

glorification of death sponsored by martial societies and the epics that celebrate them."⁵ She adds that "women's laments are subversive, not just because they dwell on the negative consequences of heroic action, but because they ignore the death-defying *kleos* that provides a positive compensation for heroic sacrifice and constitutes a major function of epic itself."⁶

Interestingly, This subversion is similar to what was mentioned in the previous chapter: the warriors' actual attitude when faced with death created an tension between the ideal of heroic death and the characters' love of life and terror when faced with death. This tension between heroic ideals and the reality of the life of the characters is to be found throughout the poem, in different contexts. Women's lamentation brings a tension within the epic and can be regarded as subversive and it is worthwhile to notice that while historically, female lamentation was regarded as a thread to society and strictly controlled by legislation, most famously that of Solon⁷, in the *Iliad*, female lamentation is not repressed, forbidden or even criticized in any way, it is given free rein, and can even be said to be an essential part of the poem, a discourse on war and its consequences compatible with many other aspects of the narrative.⁸

2 – Male/female mourning symbolism

⁵ Murnaghan (1999), 204. She also makes the general point that "women become speakers there primarily when something has gone wrong, and so their proper language is that of complaint." 209.

⁶ Murnaghan (1999), 215.

⁷ On legislation restricting female lamentation, see Alexiou (1974), 14-23, Holst-Warhaft (1992), 114-9 and Murnaghan (1999), 205. Holst-Warhaft has an interesting theory on this phenomenon: "if we accept that women are the ones who, in most societies, turn tears of grief into structured laments, we can view the discrediting of lament as merely an extension of male chauvinism in a patriarchal society, but I think that there is much more to it than that. The male/female opposition displayed in attempt to suppress lament is based, it would seem, on a recognition of women's traditional control of the community's relationship with its dead, and of the authority conferred by such control. There is undoubtedly a strong element of fear involved in the legislation against lament, a fear based on the association of laments not only with the dead, but with possession, madness and violence". 26-27. This is of course difficult to prove, and, on the other hand, there is evidence for the control of funerals as an effort to limit displays of social capital and the exacerbation of tension between families.

⁸ But while the poet uses lamentation fully, the male characters' reaction to lamentation is to wind it up and go back to action. Achilles for example is "an advocate of keeping lamentation in its place", Murnaghan (1999), 212. For a fuller discussion, see below, the part on resignation to suffering.

Men's mourning gestures are more violent and more varied than women's: "le guerrier de l'épopée pleure comme il combat: dans l'un et l'autre cas, ce qui est mis en avant, c'est son corps. Les hommes qui sanglotent le font intensément, *activement, vigoureusement*."⁹ They might hit their faces with his hands,¹⁰ crawl on the ground or in mud,¹¹ tear their hair out.¹² Men's suffering, extravagantly manifested outwardly, is a response to an outward event.¹³

Women may do similar things (tearing their hair, hitting their chests¹⁴), they never dirty themselves the way men do (by rolling in the mud for example): their *enlaidissement* is limited to defacing their beauty by scratching their cheeks.¹⁵ Women's pain, outwith the ritualised lamentation during burial, are normally limited to *inside* the house. Penelope in the *Odyssey* is always seen crying within the palace, in particular in her bedchamber (see for example xvi, 449-50; xvii, 101-3; xix, 594-6; xx, 58). In the *Iliad*, as Monsacré points out, "tandis que les fils de Priam pleurent Hector dans la cour, les filles gémissent 'par le palais' (XXIV, 166.)". Monsacré (1984), p.238, n.94. The place of mourning is also marked between men and women.

While female expression of suffering is fixed in a hyper-ritualised code and limited to ritual, male grief can be expressed more freely.¹⁶ It is interesting to see that even though female suffering is predominantly shown in the expression of that suffering, this expression of suffering is physically more limited for women than for men.

⁹ Monsacré (1984), 183.

¹⁰ XXII, 33-34 (Priam).

¹¹ xiii, 220 (Odysseus); iv, 539 (Menelaus); XXII, 414 (Priam). Jan Bremmer points out the link between the sitting position, supplication, self-abasement and male mourning gestures in the *Iliad*. He says about those mourning gestures: "as in our other examples – begging, supplication, rites of integration, and initiation – sitting or lying on the ground is part of a complex of gestures which all aim at total self-abasement of the subject." Bremmer (1992), 26.

¹² X, 5 (Agamemnon); XXII, 77-8 (Priam).

¹³ Anastassiou (1973), 220.

¹⁴ XVII, 30-1; 50-1; XXIV, 710-1.

¹⁵ XI, 393; XIX, 284-5.

¹⁶ Monsacré (1984), 184. See also Reiner (1938), 42ff.; Neumann (1965), 85-9 and Anastassiou (1973), 22.

Another characteristic of (violent) male mourning is that they remove themselves from social activities. They stop eating, sleeping, washing and having sex. The most obvious example of this is of course Achilles after the death of Patroclus: he cannot sleep,¹⁷ he refuses to eat,¹⁸ and to bathe¹⁹ and we know through Thetis that he is not sexually active.²⁰ His refusal to participate in normal male activities is commented upon both by Odysseus, who tries to urge him to eat²¹ and Thetis. Even Zeus asks Athena to put ambrosia in his chest so he does not collapse.²²

Monsacré analyses this phenomenon as a slowing down of the bodily functions when mourning,²³ but though it might be true, it is certainly more than that. It also represents a refusal to join in communal activities, activities common to all mankind, as well as some kind intimacy with other human beings. Achilles' removal from social bonds and activities is part of his removal from the human realm.²⁴ More generally, this severing of communal links through the refusal to participate in normal social activities is symbolic of the feeling of alienation with the world men feel when going through a great loss.

Women on the other hand have no such link to sever (or would not be allowed to: they

¹⁷ XIX, 1-5; XXIV, 3-8. Even when he does try to sleep, his sleep is constantly interrupted: XXIII, 101; 232; 235

¹⁸ XIX, 209-14; 303-8; 315-21. As Monsacré points out, "dans l'état particulier où il se trouve, la nourriture [...] est incompatible avec les larmes et avec le combat qui en quelque sorte, lui tient lieu de repas." 189.

¹⁹ XXIII, 40-5.

²⁰ XXIV, 128-31.

²¹ XIX, 155ff.; 228-33.

²² XIX, 342-48.

²³ Monsacré (1984), 188ff. See also the similarities between ancient Greece and classical China in Granet (1922), 104.

²⁴ He is several times criticised for his lack of pity, and is very often compared to wild animals during his time mourning Patroclus and slaughtering the Trojans.

cannot refuse sex and do not join in communal meals)²⁵ and as they are not truly part of the community, the symbolic gestures women use when suffering are of a different kind. Here are two different examples:

When learning of the death of Hector, Andromache tears off her wedding veil:

τὴν δὲ κατ' ὀφθαλμῶν ἐρεβεννὴ νύξ ἐκάλυψεν,
 ἦριπε δ' ἐξοπίσω, ἀπὸ δὲ ψυχὴν ἐκάπτυσσε.
 τῆλε δ' ἀπὸ κρατὸς βάλε δέσματα σιγαλόεντα,
 ἄμπυκα κεκρῦφαλόν τε ἰδὲ πλεκτὴν ἀναδέσμιην
 κρήδεμνόν θ', ὃ ῥά οἱ δῶκε χρυσοῖ Ἀφροδίτῃ
 ἤματι τῷ ὅτε μιν κορυθαίολος ἠγάγεθ' Ἔκτωρ
 ἐκ δόμου Ἡετίωνος, ἐπεὶ πόρε μυρία ἔδνα.

Black night covered her eyes, and she swooned backwards, and the spirit breathed out of her. And she flung away from her head her shining headdress, the frontlet and the cap, the woven hair-band and the mantle that golden Aphrodite had given her on the day when Hector of the glinting helmet led her as his wife from Eetion's house, when he had given a countless bride-price for her.

XXII, 466-72²⁶

We talked earlier about the veil/city walls metaphor. Cairns points out that the more traditional response to mourning is veiling, rather than *unveiling*.²⁷ Llewellyn-Jones also mentions how "unveiling was not a natural display for 'proper' female values and was not the kind of action that women readily and willingly performed, certainly not in public."²⁸ In addition, Van Wees mentions how tearing off one's veil represent an abandonment of self-control, in other contexts too: "when a women tears off her head- and hair-bindings (Il. 22.406-7, 468-70) or even rips her veil (Homeric Hymn 2.41) in a show of extreme grief, this may represent a temporary abandonment of self-control."²⁹

As for Andromache specifically, Llewellyn-Jones points out: "it is more than a

²⁵ The only exception is Arete in *Odyssey* vii and viii, but this might or might not be very significant, as the Phaeacian society is dissimilar in many ways to that depicted in the *Iliad*.

²⁶ In a similar vein, Hecuba tears off her veil at XXII, 405-7, also because of Hector's death.

²⁷ Cairns (2002), 75ff. See also his point on the unveiling of the bride as an important element of the wedding ritual, 76.

²⁸ Llewellyn-Jones (2003), 101.

²⁹ Van Wees (2005), 20. See also Cairns (2002) and Llewellyn-Jones (2003). Richardson (1993) only sees in the gesture a reminder of her former happiness (which emphasises her current tragedy).

routine gesture of mourning; with the death of her husband Andromakhe is suddenly unprotected and acts out her downfall symbolically with the removal of her veil. She knows that what lies ahead for her is the threat of sexual violation and slavery and the fearful prospect of becoming a concubine to one of her conquerors. The removal of the veil takes with it Andromakhe's rank of princess and wife as well as the safety she had enjoyed under the sexual protection of one man."³⁰

When trying to convince Hector not to fight Achilles, Hecuba bares her breast:

μήτηρ δ' αὐθ' ἐτέρωθεν ὀδύρετο δάκρυ χέουσα
κόλπον ἀνιεμένη, ἐτέρηφι δὲ μαζὸν ἀνέσχε·
καί μιν δάκρυ χέουσ' ἔπεα πτερόεντα προσηύδα·
Ἴεκτορ τέκνον ἐμὸν τάδε τ' αἶδεο καὶ μ' ἐλέησον
αὐτήν, εἴ ποτέ τοι λαθικηδέα μαζὸν ἐπέσχον·
τῶν μνησαί φίλε τέκνον ἄμυνε δὲ δῆϊον ἄνδρα
τείχεος ἐντὸς ἐών, μὴ δὲ πρόμος ἴστασο τούτῳ
σχέτλιος· εἴ περ γάρ σε κατακτάνη, οὐ σ' ἔτ' ἔγωγε
κλαύσομαι ἐν λεχέεσσι φίλον θάλος, ὃν τέκον αὐτή,
οὐδ' ἄλοχος πολύδωρος· ἄνευθε δέ σε μέγα νῶϊν
Ἀργείων παρὰ νηυσὶ κύνες ταχέες κατέδονται.

His mother now wailed and wept tears beside Priam, and opened the fold of her dress and held out a breast in her hand, and then with her tears falling she called to him in winged words: 'Hector, my child, respond to this and have pity on me, if ever I gave you the breast to soothe your trouble. Remember those times, dear child, and fight off your enemy from inside the wall – do not go out to challenge him, obstinate man. If he kills you, I shall not be able to lay you on the bier and mourn for you, dear creature, my own child, nor will your dowered wife – but far away from both of us out by the Argive ships, the quick dogs will feed on you.'

XXII, 79-89

By doing so, Hecuba significantly transgresses the limits set by αἰδώς, as, obviously, it is not proper for women to uncover themselves in such way.³¹ The fact that Hecuba goes to such a length to persuade Hector not to fight shows that, to her at least, the link between mother and son is stronger and more essential than social customs.³² Hecuba goes very far in terms

³⁰ Llewellyn-Jones (2003), 130-1 and Cairns (1993).

³¹ See for example Llewellyn-Jones (2003) on the veil and αἰδώς, 156-72.

³² It is also a reminder to Hector of what she did for him: it is now time he does something for her, such as not getting killed.

of transgression, and its fits with her level of despair and fear.

Those two reactions are also potent symbols of their suffering, but show that their status as wife and mother is the only relationship women are truly part of.

What was just mentioned is an important difference between women and male non-combatants. It would be possible to think that all the difference mentioned in this chapter are not truly linked to gender but reflect the differences between what happens within the battlefield and outwith the battlefield: old men for example also need protection and are as defenceless as the women.

Nevertheless, though they cannot fight, they retain their political status, for example as counsellors. That is the case of the old men on the wall of Troy³³, and of Priam himself. Priam still possesses his authority and plays a major role in the community. He therefore can stop communal activities as Achilles does. After Hector's death, he does not eat, sleep or wash³⁴ until he meets with Achilles. Through their reconciliation, they become truly human and part of the human community again.³⁵ The ritual aspect will be dealt with in more details in the next part.

³³ III, 146-53.

³⁴ He does not sleep: XXIV, 637-38. He does not eat or wash: XXIV, 635-42.

³⁵ Contra Hammer (2002): the meeting between political resolution of the conflicts of the poems, but a human, personal one. See Cairns' review of Hammer's book (2004b), esp. 247-9. Nagler (1974) talks about the return back to normal life after a grieving period as a traditional part of Indo-European mythology: "The *consolatio* motif seems to have arisen with the earliest strata of New Eastern mythology and was destined to enjoy long continuity in the literary tradition after Homer. The Gestalt may be considered for my purposes as a dramatic psychological manipulation of someone who, in refusing to accept the fact of death (usually of a dear one), is denying the ongoing process of the life cycle – this will have obvious relevance to Achilles, in a general way. If the personage in question is a god, his (or her) abstention may mean the blighting of all terrestrial fertility, his consolation (or reconciliation[...]), a renewal of the life cycle for all mankind." 175-6. He then goes on to give several mythological examples of this motif.

B – "ACTIVE SUFFERING"

Another difference between men and women that include male non-combatants is what could be called "active suffering".

Kim talks about pity, anger or grief leading the warrior to "charge out against the enemy even more ferociously than before."³⁶ In particular, according to her, 'to pity' in many cases means "'to ward off death' or 'to save'".³⁷ Although her focus is on pity, to a great extent the same can be true of suffering: very often, male grief leads to some kind of action: revenge, such as when the Trojans try to avenge Sarpedon's death,³⁸ and defence of the dead body, such as when the Achaeans fight for Patroclus' body.³⁹ There are many other examples, as those are common patterns. The warrior's reaction can be very negative and violent, the most obvious example being Achilles' treatment of Hector's body. Sometimes, the action can also be unique and dramatic, though still fitting a pattern (here rescuing a dead body), such as Priam going into enemy camp to get Hector's body back.

Female suffering on the other hand is entirely passive, as there is no realm in which they can be active. Hecuba does threaten to eat Achilles' liver (or rather wishes that she could),⁴⁰ but of course she will not and cannot do it, and it is a way for to vent her anger (precisely because she cannot actually *do* anything). Andromache's reaction to her husband's death is

³⁶ Kim (2000), 17. See also Fenik (1968) 3 and 177 and Slatkin (1988). On the actions caused by pity specifically, see Kim (2000) 35ff.

³⁷ Kim (2000), 38. See also Burkert (1955), 41-2. She says a lot about the motif of 'saving and healing' as relating to pity.

³⁸ XVI, 548-53.

³⁹ XVII, 132-9.

⁴⁰ XXIV, 212-13.

again quite symbolic: she faints, which may be the most extreme example of passivity possible. Monsacré⁴¹ argues that Andromache's swoon replicates what happens to a wounded warrior: "présentant le malheur, Andromache est atteinte dans son corps exactement comme un guerrier touché [...] façon de dire, peut-être, l'étroite proximité qui existe entre Hector et elle, l'entrecroisement absolu de leur destinées qui font d'eux [...] plus qu'un couple." This seems a little bit far-fetched, and it seems more significant to take it as meaning that, as women are passive in the social and political spheres, even in the expression of utmost suffering they show the utmost passivity by losing consciousness. Nevertheless, the fact that the vocabulary used of Andromache's fainting is similar to that used of a dying warrior highlights the fact that in the poem, she exists only through Hector. As we saw earlier, the only domains in to which women can actively participate are the funeral and formal public lamentations.

The consequences of suffering are very different for men and women: women's suffering is mostly linked to lamentation, passive and can only be truly expressed the formal context of burial of a kinsman. Men can express their suffering more freely, and male expression of suffering often has a social impact, as they withdraw from society, commensality in particular. Men suffering also lead them to actively redress the situation, by avenging a dead friend for example. Nevertheless, the poem also offers a universal vision of suffering, as something which no human being can escape, and which therefore must be borne and accepted.

⁴¹ Monsacré (1984) pp.128-31, esp. 130

III - RESIGNATION TO SUFFERING

We have seen that the expression of suffering is acceptable and never considered never considered unmanly, and that even women's suffering is given free rein. Nevertheless, there are situations where the expression of suffering is inappropriate, and ultimately pointless and even destructive.

There are three main reasons to curb sorrow and lamentation, all in different contexts: it can be inappropriate, futile, and unavoidable.

A – GRIEF AS INAPPROPRIATE

A common reason why suffering is inappropriate is because of the negative effect it might have on other people.

1 - Disturbance

Suffering may be inappropriate because it will cause a disturbance among the soldiers or the population in general. In the following example, Priam asks that the Trojans recover their dead from the battlefield without lamenting over them:

Ἡέλιος μὲν ἔπειτα νέον προσέβαλλεν ἄρούρας
 ἔξ ἀκαλαρρείταο βαθυρρόου Ωκεανοῖο
 οὐρανὸν εἰσανιών· οἱ δ' ἦντεον ἀλλήλοισιν.
 ἔνθα διαγνῶναι χαλεπῶς ἦν ἄνδρα ἕκαστον·
 ἀλλ' ὕδατι νίζοντες ἀπο βρότον αἱματόεντα

δάκρυα θερμὰ χέοντες ἀμαξάων ἐπάειραν.
 οὐδ' εἶα κλαίειν Πρίαμος μέγας· οἱ δὲ σιωπῇ
 νεκροὺς πυρκαϊῆς ἐπινήνεον ἀχνύμενοι κῆρ,
 ἐν δὲ πυρὶ πρήσαντες ἔβαν προτὶ Ἴλιον ἰρήν.

The sun then was just beginning to touch the fields, rising from the gentle follow of Ocean's deep stream and climbing up to the sky, when the two sides met each other. Then it was hard for them to recognise the individual dead: but they washed away the clotted blood with water, and lifted them on to wagons with warm tears falling. And great Priam would not let the Trojans cry aloud – so in silence they kept they kept heaping the bodies on the pyre in anguish of heart, and when they had burnt them in the fire they went back to sacred Ilion.

VII, 421-9

According to Leaf, there is “no reason to limit the shedding tears to the Trojans”. “Priam forbids them to cry aloud, which was the habit of non-Greek people, see W 721; hence the silence of the Greeks does not need mention”.¹ However, there is no reason to believe the Greek were any less vocal in the expression of sorrow, and they lament as much as the Trojans do.² It is likely that the reason why Priam thinks they should not lament over the bodies is to prevent further decrease of the morale of the army. Excessive lamentation would lead the warriors to reflect on the losses they have suffered since the beginning of the war and would demoralise them. According to Segal, the injunction to keep quiet adds more pathos to the burial scene.³

2 - Manipulation

Open expression of grief may also be used to psychologically manipulate other people. In the following example, Phoenix is told not to try and sway Achilles with his tears.⁴

¹ Leaf (1886).

² Kirk (1990) also seems to disagree, as he says: “both sides wept as they lifted the dead (426), but Priam (who had naturally left the city to preside over the cremation) forbade further, perhaps ritual, lamentation [...] as the Trojans piled them on the pyre. No distinction seems to be intended between barbarian laments and Greek self-restraint.” 187.

³ Segal (1971), 26.

⁴ IX, 611-4.

The tears of a loved one may elicit pity, which in turn may lead to a change of heart. In reality, Phoenix did not even mention Agamemnon, but Achilles wants so much to stick to his original decision (letting the Achaians die and going home), that he links any attempt of trying to change his mind with siding with Agamemnon against him. The interesting thing is that, effectively, he is swayed in the end, if not specifically by Phoenix' tears⁵, then by all the arguments that are presented to him, as he gradually makes more and more concessions.⁶

Another example could be Patroclus in XI and XVI, where he attempts to sway Achilles to pity by showing his own suffering. As with Phoenix, Achilles complains about it (see the little girl simile), but it does have an effect on him, showing that Achilles actually is sensitive to his friends' suffering. Though he denies it in words, his actions say as much.

The impression given by the poem is that the expression of grief is rarely inappropriate. A more common reason for it to be avoided though, is its futility.

B – GRIEF AS FUTILE

1 – Physical inferiority

An idea commonly expressed in the poem is that there is not point in grieving over a past or prospective defeat if the adversary is clearly stronger. In I, Hephaistos tells Hera to let Zeus

⁵ Though Loaf (1886) points out that "Achilles acknowledges the effect which Phoenix's speech has had upon him". Hainsworth (1993), like Willcock, only focuses on Achilles' anger, 141

⁶ He is going to go home immediately, then he is going to go home later, then he is going to fight when the fire reaches his ships.

have his own way and not get back at him, since he is so much stronger than her.⁷ In a similar way, in VII, Agamemnon tells Menelaus that he should not be distressed about not fighting Hector, who is much stronger than him.⁸

According to Kirk,⁹ the grief and humiliation referred to by Agamemnon, and Menelaus' "true motive" for standing up, "is likely to have been shame at the failure of others and a feeling of responsibility for the war on his own part – issues Agamemnon may prefer to avoid". Nevertheless, it looks as though shame and guilt are not enough to justify certain death at the hands of a stronger opponent – no one rebukes Menelaus for his eventual decision not to fight Hector.¹⁰

A similar argument can even be used when gods are fighting mortals who are stronger than them, as Dione tells Aphrodite, who has been wounded by Diomedes.¹¹

The idea in that argument is a reinforcement of the hierarchy that exists among fighters (VII, 109-12 and V, 381-4) and among the gods (I, 586-9): there is no point in grieving over one's inferiority (and the consequences of that inferiority, i.e. Defeat or physical pain) since it is the way it is and nothing can change that. There is obviously a twist in the last example, which Dione points out in the ends of her speech, that according to another hierarchy

⁷ I, 586-9

⁸ VII, 109-12

⁹ Kirk (1990), 248.

¹⁰ On this passage see Cairns (1993) 74. This scene makes a striking contrast with the scene in XXII, where Hector's parents try to prevent their son from fighting Achilles, using pretty much the same arguments as Agamemnon here – Achilles is stronger and this is certain death. Nevertheless, Hector, unlike Menelaus, does not let himself be persuaded. Cf also Menelaus at XVII, 91-105.

¹¹ V, 381-4. Willcock (1978) points out that this example (and the rest of Dione's speech) constitutes "a good example of the use of mythological examples as a methods of consolation. The three separate examples have a cumulative effect. The plan of the speech is: (1) you must endure pain. (2) many of the gods have endured pain for similar reasons. (3) three examples. (4) comments on the foolhardiness of mortals who cause such pain to the gods. It is interesting that the three stories given –of Ares, Hera and Hades being hurt by mortals–are to all intents and purposes unique to this passage, and not found independently elsewhere. It makes one suspect that they were invented, or at least modified, by the poet for the purpose of this speech.", 235.

(mortals/gods rather than fighters), those mortals who attack the gods are usually punished. It is also interesting that this context of "inferiority" is the only one containing female examples of the futility of grieving.¹²

2 - "Creatuality"

This idea is not so much about futility as such as it is about the need to accept grief because it is necessary to keep on living. In a way, the 'creaturality' argument is a sophisticated version of "life goes on".

Nagler¹³ uses the expression "creaturality" to refer to the need to accept even extreme suffering such as the loss of a dear one, and keep on participating in the life cycle, fulfilling the biological needs of sleep food etc necessary for survival.¹⁴ This is what Thetis tells Achilles:

τέκνον ἔμὸν τέο μέχρις ὀδυρόμενος καὶ ἀχεύων
σὴν ἔδεται κραδίην μεμνημένος οὔτε τι σίτου
οὔτ' εὐνής; ἀγαθὸν δὲ γυναικί περ ἐν φιλότῃτι
μίσησθ'.

'My child, how long will you eat your heart in sorrow and mourning, with no thought for either food or bed? It is a good thing to join with a woman in love.'

XXIV, 128-31

Food is the most common theme, as far as creatuality is concerned. As Segal puts it, "the taking of food is a recognition of the tragic reality of human life, an acknowledgement of the

¹² If, as we saw earlier, female grieving and lamentation is mostly limited to formal ritual, then it has a social function and cannot be properly speaking "futile".

¹³ Nagler (1974), 175-6.

¹⁴ See also Lynn-George 16-7.

individual's commitment to life's wholeness, continuity, vitality, despite and in the midst of the fearful losses and sufferings which belong to our existence".¹⁵

The most developed version of this *consolatio* pattern is obviously is the Niobe myth as explained by Achilles to Priam. This is Lynn-George, "the *consolatio* is a speech that attempts to show care in the midst of cares, to express concern while trying to relieve the listener of the burden of concerns, a speech that tries to teach to care and not to care; to hush grief without diminishing the harsh reality that is its cause."¹⁶ The paradigm is here: a) you must eat (i.e. go back to normal life), b) mythical characters have suffered worst than you have, c) they ate (went back to normal life):

υἱὸς μὲν δὴ τοι λέλυται γέρον ὡς ἐκέλευες,
 κεῖται δ' ἐν λεχέεσσ'· ἅμα δ' ἠοὶ φαινομένηφιν
 ὄψεαι αὐτὸς ἄγων· νῦν δὲ μνησώμεθα δόρπου.
 καὶ γὰρ τ' ἠῦκομος Νιόβη ἐμνήσατο σίτου,
 τῇ περ δώδεκα παῖδες ἐνὶ μεγάροισιν ὄλοντο
 ἕξ μὲν θυγατέρες, ἕξ δ' υἱέες ἠβώοντες.
 τοὺς μὲν Ἀπόλλων πέφνεν ἀπ' ἀργυρέοιο βιοῖο
 χυόμενος Νιόβη, τὰς δ' Ἄρτεμις ἰοχέαιρα,
 οὐνεκ' ἄρα Λητοῖ ἰσάσκετο καλλιπαρήφω·
 φῆ δοιῶ τεκέειν, ἦ δ' αὐτῇ γείνατο πολλούς·
 τῷ δ' ἄρα καὶ δοιῶ περ ἐόντ' ἀπὸ πάντας ὄλεσαν.

'Well, your son is released for you now, old man, as you asked, and he lies there on a bier. With the showing of dawn you will see him for yourself when you take him. But now let us think of our supper. Even lovely-haired Niobe, you know, thought of food, and she had twelve children killed in her house, six daughters and six sons in the strength of their youth. Apollo killed the sons with his silver bow, in anger at Niobe, and Artemis the archer-goddess killed the daughters, because Niobe would compare herself with beautiful Leto – she said Leto had two children only, but she herself had borne many. But those two, though they were only two, destroyed all her many.'

XXIV, 599-609

¹⁵ Segal (1971), 66 On the importance of food, see also Vivante (1965): "It is that in Homer the taking of food is not simply an indispensable routine: it is a moment of peace, a pause between one crisis and the other, a vantage point in which to dwell for a moment in order to draw upon the sources the sources of life and restore the wholeness of existence. Picturing as he does a vitality which is body and soul at the same time, Homer must necessarily stress the physical process which is its medium, he must tell us how the heroes renew their strength from day to day." 427. See also Redfield (1975), 218-9.

¹⁶ Lynn-George (1996), 6. See also Kassel (1958) on *Consolatio*, and Macleod (1982) on *Iliad* XXIV.

The striking fact about the story told here is that it appears that Homer has invented the central reason for abducting it as a parallel. The Niobe legend and the killing of her children were surely part of the mythology which he and his audience knew. But almost every other detail here is affected by the reflection of the *Iliad* situation: and the main point (that she dried her eyes and ate food) is here precisely because that is what Achilles wants Priam to do.¹⁷

Though food is the most common thing mentioned, the 'creaturality' argument can also be about sex (Thetis to Achilles, XXIV, 128-31) and sleep. Food is simply more obviously and symbolic because of the social bonds linked to it. Indeed, this is about more than just biological needs, and is linked to social needs, i.e. the need for the renewal of social bonds. Food, through the importance of commensality, falls in that category.¹⁸ Refusal of food symbolises Achilles' obvious isolation, as well as Priam, who not only refuses to eat, but rejects his own sons¹⁹ and his own wife worries for his sanity.²⁰

This can be seen in the social practice of offering and accepting compensation: keeping social bonds intact can go as far as forgiving one's enemy. This is one of the points Ajax makes to Achilles in the embassy scene:

καὶ μὲν τίς τε κασιγνήτω φονῆος
 ποιήνῃ ἢ οὐ παιδὸς ἐδέξατο τεθνηῶτος·
 καὶ ὅ' ὁ μὲν ἐν δῆμῳ μένει αὐτοῦ πόλλ' ἀποτίσας,
 τοῦ δέ τ' ἔρητύεται κραδίη καὶ θυμὸς ἀγήνωρ (635)
 ποιήνῃ δεξαμένῳ·

'and yet a man will accept recompense for his dead brother, or his own son, from the man who killed him: the killer pays the great blood-price and stays on in his country, and the other's heart and high anger are kept down when he takes the payment.'

¹⁷ Willcock (1984), 319. On the Niobe story, see also Segal (1971) 66-7.

¹⁸ Schein (1984), 139-40.

¹⁹ XXIV, 239ff.

²⁰ XXIV 201ff.

IX, 632-6²¹

In the scene between Priam and Achilles, it goes as far as the creation of new social bonds:

Achilles treats Priam not as an enemy, but as a φίλος (more on that in the next chapter).

3 – the futility of excessive grief

Furthermore, in the *Iliad*, sorrow has to be accepted because long-lasting grief does not lead anywhere or achieve anything in general, from a more philosophical perspective. The general futility of grief is expressed best in a passage of book XXIV when Achilles tells Priam that nothing can be achieved by grieving:

ἄνσχεο, μὴ δ' ἀλίσστον ὀδύρεο σὸν κατὰ θυμόν
οὐ γάρ τι πρήξεις ἀκαχήμενος υἱὸς ἔηος,
οὐδέ μιν ἀνστήσεις, πρὶν καὶ κακὸν ἄλλο πάθησθα.

'But you must endure, and not grieve endlessly in your heart. You will not gain anything by mourning for your son: you will not bring him back to life, before yet more suffering has come on you.'

XXIV, 549-51

While lamentation provides a clear relief for the person mourning, hence the idea of the 'pleasure of tears' present in the poem (as well as tears being the 'due of the dead')²², Achilles gives a clear impression that it is impossible to achieve anything through excessive grief. This is a fairly subversive view of lamentation: we saw earlier how women's lamentation was subversive in that it exposes the dire consequences of heroic warfare. Here, insisting on the futility of mourning adds the notion that not only does heroism have dire consequences,

²¹ Other allusions to that social custom can be found at XIII, 659 and XVIII, 497ff. (Achilles' shield) for example. Willcock (1978) explains the practice as follows: "In earlier days a killer, whether the killing was intentional or accidental, was held to be guilty of the blood of the dead man, and this used to oblige the relatives to avenge the death and kill in their turn, thus leading to an unending vendetta unless the murderer fled the country, which he frequently did (see for example II, 664-6). A relaxation of this otherwise insoluble problem was eventually achieved by the acceptance of 'blood money' by the relatives of the dead. In that case, honour was satisfied, and the killer could continue to live in the community." 283. On the question of ransom, see Wilson (2002). See also part III on politics.

²² More on the pleasure of tears in the chapter on pleasure and happiness.

but those consequences are irreversible too. The idea that human life is worth more than anything and impossible to regain once lost is present in Achilles' discourse since the Embassy scene.

In the closing book of the *Iliad*, it is made clear that heroic warfare is an irreparable loss of human life. It shows once more²³ that Homer is interested in death far more than in war. For those reasons, and others, the meeting between Priam and Achilles is essential to an understanding of suffering and lamentation in the poem, and will be discussed more below.

C- SUFFERING AS UNIVERSAL

The point that is made in the *Iliad* is not only that grief achieves nothing, but also, and perhaps most importantly, that suffering is universal and cannot be avoided (and therefore that neither can grief). This idea is not as frequent as the other type of *consolatio* (grief as futile), but it is illustrated by Achilles in the famous gnomic 'tale of the two jars':

ὥς γὰρ ἐπεκλώσαντο θεοὶ δειλοῖσι βροτοῖσι
ζῶειν ἀχνυμένοις· αὐτοὶ δέ τ' ἀκηδέες εἰσί.
δοιοὶ γὰρ τε πίθοι κατακείαται ἐν Διὸς οὔδει
δώρων οἷα δίδωσι κακῶν, ἕτερος δὲ ἑάων·
ᾧ μὲν κ' ἀμμίξας δῶη Ζεὺς τερπικέραυτος,
ἄλλοτε μὲν τε κακῶ ὅ γε κύρεται, ἄλλοτε δ' ἔσθλῳ·
ᾧ δέ κε τῶν λυγρῶν δῶη, λωβητὸν ἔθηκε,
καὶ ἑ κακῆ βούβρωστις ἐπὶ χθόνα διὰν ἐλαύνει,
φοιτᾷ δ' οὔτε θεοῖσι τετιμένος οὔτε βροτοῖσιν.

'This is the fate the gods have spun for poor mortal men, that we should live in misery, but they themselves have no sorrows. There are two jars standing on Zeus' floor which hold the gifts he gives us: one holds evils, the other blessings. When Zeus who delights in thunder mixes his gifts to a man, he meets now with evil, and now with good. But when Zeus gives

²³ See previous chapter on mortality.

from the jar of misery only, he brings a man to degradation, and vile starvation drives him over the holy earth, and he wanders without honour from gods or men.'

XXIV, 525-33

All human beings receive a mix of good and evil, or unmixed evils. No-one ever receives unmixed blessings. The best a man can expect is to get s with his ill; he may well have nothing but misery.²⁴ There, the *consolatio* pattern is different from the Niobe passage: it is not about a mythological character, but all of mankind. In this earlier passage, Achilles' thought is universal. The mythological aspect is presented here as a contrast to the human condition: the gods, unlike human beings, are ἀκηδέες, free of sorrow.²⁵

Suffering is part of the human condition and must be accepted as such: there is no point in either rebelling against it or in dwelling on sorrows. As Segal points out in his conclusion, "for Homer [...], understanding reality without passion or suffering is not a given part of the human condition. In the world of the *Iliad* the reality is suffering. The task of human life is to win the strength to grasp and accept what 'the gods have spun out for wretched mortals' (24, 525), that is, what the nature of life is."²⁶ Various occurrences of the *consolatio* motif in the poem show that the characters have a profound understanding of suffering in relation to the human condition: dwelling on suffering is pointless, and no-one can be exempt from loss.

²⁴ Leaf (1888), 467. See also MacLeod (1982) 10-11 and 13, and Dodds 29-30. On human vulnerability and the sharing of tears, see Greene (1999), esp. 195-6.

²⁵ Redfield (1994), gives the following summary of the passage: "the human condition is one of privation; god grants the happiest of men no more than partial happiness. As the gods torment us, they also mock us with their own careless bliss. Man must be modest and enduring or even this partial happiness will be taken from him. Yet just as the gods inflict on man pain and death, so also they have granted man the gift of finitude. Just as happiness is also partial, so also pain must come to some conclusion. The gods destroy, but at the last they bury their victims and there is an ending." 217. On the contradiction of human life see also Lynn-George (1996): "The *Iliad*'s compound of caring and uncaring gods does justice to the problem of the meaning of an often contradictory existence, where contradiction itself is often the only satisfactory explanation." 8. He also points out that "the carefreeness of the gods reinforces the defining car of the human realm", as the life of the gods "lacks what is ultimately more desirable than immortality: the essential element of care and concern", 6-7

²⁶ Segal (1971), 73. For a similar argument, see Lynn-George (1996), 6

CONCLUSION

Human suffering is one of the central themes of the *Iliad*. A gender approach to grieving and sorrow in the poem shows important differences, which reflect their respective social roles and status: for example, female grief is inward-looking while male grief is outward-looking, and female grief is formal and passive while male grief is active and more varied in expression. Most importantly, the poem also offers a universal vision of suffering as something which no human being can escape, and which therefore must be borne and accepted. It is on this understanding of a universal suffering, an understanding which leads to the reconciliation of two bitter enemies, Priam and Achilles, that the poem closes. In a way, it is the lesson of the poem. But the universality of suffering, which, like death and mortality, makes all men equal, is also one of the things which bring about an important way for mankind to overcome and compensate for death and suffering: pity and compassion for other human beings.

CONCLUSION TO PART I

The material examined is at variance with the view of the epic's role as an ideological tool used to support the martial values of a warriors' ruling class, and highlights the tension between heroic ideals and the reality of the life of the characters:

- Mortality: death is hated by the characters while life is highly valued. Mortality is a tragedy which irremediably underlies all of human existence, and heroic death only partially compensates for it, as the warriors are actually terrified when faced with their own death.

- Suffering: Lamentation highlights suffering rather than glory as a consequence of war, bringing a uniquely feminine perspective on war, which nevertheless is in agreement with other aspects of the narrative.

In the next part, we will look at another way humans being have to compensate for death and suffering, namely the Pity which encourages solidarity and fellow-feeling among human beings, even between enemies, as well as the personal happiness that can be found even in the midst of a battlefield, and the gentleness that is shown to friends and family, as well as to enemies. Again, those show the value of human life and the happiness that can be found in human interaction and acts of solidarity, as opposed to war and killing. Part III will look at the social and political functioning of the *Iliad*, with special emphasis on the importance of minimizing conflict.

PART II

CHAPTER III

MANKIND AND PITY

I – PITY AS A NORM

So far, we have seen a very bleak picture of human life in the *Iliad*, in particular through the omnipresence of death and suffering. Nevertheless, one thing that may compensate for that negative portrayal of human life is the fact that death and suffering are not only present for their own sake: they often elicit a response of human solidarity, mostly through the feeling of pity, which is going to be studied in this part.

The words looked at here belong to the family of οἶκτος (οἰκτρός, οἰκτίρω) and of ἔλεος (ἐλεαίρω, ἐλεεινός, ἐλέεω). There is no obvious difference in usage between the two, apart from the fact that the ἔλεος family is much more commonly used (47 occurrences against 6 for the family of οἶκτος), and that οἶκτος is never used of the gods' feelings, but considering the scarcity of the instances, this may not be particularly significant.¹ Burkert points out for example that both words are used interchangeably in phrases such as "pity and pardon", "worthy of pity" etc.²

Others have nevertheless argued that there are differences between ἔλεος and οἶκτος although their arguments are not always very convincing.

¹ As Rachel Hall Sternberg puts it in the most general way possible, "typically, both [οἶκτος and ἔλεος] denote Person A' feeling of sorrow or distress aroused by the misfortunes of Person B, who is in pain or jeopardy", (2005) 18.

² Burkert (1955), 35-6, although he also argues that οἶκτος and ἔλεος have different shades of meaning even in Homer, 36. So Scott (1979), see below.

According to Konstan,³ οἶκτος refers to the expression of ‘audible grief’ or lamentation rather than pity. He gives a few examples in which οἶκτος is very clearly audible: *Trachiniae* 863-4, *Trojan Women* 155 etc. Indeed, this is partly supported by Chantraine (and the ancient grammarians), who points out that the original sense of this family leads one to make a link between οἶκτος and the verb οἴζω, which comes from the interjection οἶ). He translates οἶκτος as meaning ‘lamentation, d’où compassion’. Nevertheless, Konstan’s contention that οἶκτος refers to audible grief is borne out only by usage in tragedy, not in Homer, where the word, though much rarer, does not seem to differ in usage from ἔλεος.⁴ The *Lexikon* also translates it as ‘Jammer, Ergriffenheit, Rührung, Mitleid’, which is very general. Konstan considers that οἶκτος “carries a penumbra of associations different from those ‘pity’ and ought sometimes be rendered by a porte-manteau expression such as ‘pity/grief’”.⁵ οἶκτος in the poem is felt for a dead warrior, an old man with a shameful death, Achilles pitying Eumelus i.e. a participant in the games whose worth is not recognised, an old man mourning, and a wounded warrior.⁶ Those are exactly the same types of uses as ἔλεος.⁷ Certainly, it could be said that grief is somehow mingled with the feeling of pity, but then the same could be said of the examples using ἔλεος. It could even be said that pity *always* encompasses some form of grief for the person pitied, that it is part of the definition of pity. How is there more grief in those examples than in the examples where ἔλεος is used to refer to pity for a dead warrior or an old man?

³ Konstan (2001), 53-4. See also Burkert (1955), esp. 49-51 (on the link between οἶκτος and tragedy).

⁴ On οἶκτος and lamentation, see also Johnson and Clapp (2005), n.2, 154-5.

⁵ Konstan (2001), 53-54.

⁶ All those examples also fit in the Aristotelian definition of pity as being felt for undeserved misfortunes (see later). Odyssean examples are equally doubtful: οἶκτος is felt for the death of someone (xi, 421; xii, 342; xii, 258; xxii, 472; xxiii, 79; xxiv, 34), for Odysseus’ stories (xi, 381) and for someone’s grief and lamentations (ii, 81; iv, 719; x, 409; xi, 412; xix, 543; xxiv, 59; xxiv, 438). The last category could remind us of the ‘pity/grief’ and audible grief question, but in those examples grief, audible or not is *what* is pitied: the spectator’s pity is never said to be audible as well.

⁷ ἔλεος is felt for dead warriors, old men (as well as women and children), lamentations, suppliants.

Unfortunately, Konstan does not say in what way those associations differ from pity. Considering that the usages are very similar to those of ἔλεος, it is difficult to see what the difference is between what Konstan calls 'pity/grief' and straightforward pity, or exactly what sort of emotion 'pity/grief' refers to, and how it differs from both pity and grief. Neither does he explain when it does need to be rendered as 'pity/grief, since it does not seem to be all the time.⁸

According to Mary Scott, there is another difference between ἔλεος and οἶκτος: οἶκτος refers to feeling horrified and appalled at another's failure rather than actually pitying them: "the feeling involved in *oiktros* is aroused only by people placed in a position of peculiar humiliation, of especially shameful failure under Homeric *aretē*-standards".⁹ ἔλεος on the other hand refers according to her to a more traditional understanding of pity, in particular an 'impulse of positive forward drive'.¹⁰ Considering Scott's obsession with the concept of failure, her understanding of οἶκτος is not surprising, but neither is it accurate. Each example that she gives could be read differently, and nothing in the etymology or in the usage of οἶκτος indicates shame.

According to Kevin Crotty, two fundamental aspects of pity in Homeric epic are 'its affinity with the family and its suppression within warrior society'.¹¹ As will be developed later on, this is actually far from being the case. Several things make it clear that in fact, pity in Homer is a norm of conduct: the gods feel and upheld pity, and both gods and mortals face

⁸ Konstan also argues that appeals for οἶκτος are uncommon in Greek literature (53), which is fair enough, but he adds in the footnote that "one may of course employ the verb *oiktirein* in beseeching pity" (n.4, 141.) It is not clear what is the difference, other than grammatical", between appeals for οἶκτος and appeals for οἰκτιρεῖν, especially since Konstan bases the difference between οἶκτος and ἔλεος on etymology.

⁹ Scott (1979), 7.

¹⁰ Scott (1979), 9ff. Lateiner (2005) seems to agree with her, but he is not much more convincing, 68.

¹¹ Crotty (1994), 46.

reproaches if they fail to show suitable pity. Furthermore, pity, rather than being simply a response of solidarity, also has a clear role to play within warrior society. Pity also permeates the narrative itself, and can be expressed by the poet himself.

A – THE GODS AS UPHOLDING PITY

1 – the pity of the gods

Given their superior nature and status, one might think (following Aristotle, see below) that the gods are beyond pity. Nussbaum points out that “in tragedy, pity is the province of humans, not gods”. She adds that the gods, “lacking understanding of suffering as a possibility for themselves, necessarily lack pity also”,¹² and indeed, this seem to be true in the case of tragedy. Nevertheless, in the *Iliad*, it seems to be in the nature of the gods to feel pity. Konstan admits that as far as pity is concerned, there is a difference between tragedy and Homer. As he points out, “tragedy by its nature raises the question of human suffering in a cold, indifferent universe, and is thus the wrong genre in which to look for divine compassion”,¹³ but he insists that even in Homer, divine pity is not something on which human beings can safely rely.¹⁴

The reason why the gods are actually seen to feel pity is that unlike their counterpart in tragedy, the gods of the *Iliad* can actually suffer, both ‘mentally’ (through mourning in

¹² Nussbaum (1992), 120.

¹³ Konstan (2001), 109. He takes the following tragedies as illustrations of the absence of divine pity: Sophocles’ *Ajax* (107-8), *Women of Trachis* (108), *Oedipus at Colonus* (109), Euripides’ *Trojan Women* (108-9), *Electra* (109).

¹⁴ Konstan (2001), 110. We might add that of course, neither is human pity.

particular)¹⁵ and physically.¹⁶ The range of emotions available to the gods seem to be wider. Louis Bardollet points out about the gods that “Homère ne leur a pas épargné la souffrance. Thétis gémit et pleure sur son fils aussi fort qu’Andromaque et Hécube sur Hector. Aphrodite et Arès, féroce ment blessés par Diomède, hurlent de douleur. Les dieux d’Homère souffrent donc dans leur coeur et dans leur corps.”¹⁷

Nevertheless, it is true that the gods never feel pity for another god, but only for humans. This makes perfect sense, as perhaps the gods have no reason to be pitied. However, one may wonder why the gods are able to *feel* pity, but at the same time do not *deserve* pity.¹⁸ In a more telling example, Zeus pities the divine horses of Achilles, because they are immortals among mortal men, living the sort of existence they would not have chosen for themselves.¹⁹ Indeed, it seems that there is a strong link between pity and mortality: those who are pitied experience human reversals of fortune which cannot be experienced by the gods. Nussbaum for example calls pity “a reminder of human vulnerability”.²⁰ Of course, the biggest reversal of fortune is death, which is what human beings are most pitied for, and which is something that the gods cannot experience. Other things that are commonly pitied are general vulnerability (women, children and old men) and being in mortal danger, again things that the gods cannot experience. The only thing the

¹⁵ See for example VIII, 364-5; XV, 113-4; XIX, 132-2.

¹⁶ See for example V, 353-4; V, 395-400; V, 416-7; V, 899-501.

¹⁷ Bardollet (1997), 52. Konstan (2001) also wonders, as a reason for the difference between tragedy and Homer: “was there something in the egalitarian ideology of Athens that widened the gulf between human and divine? We may recall that Aristotle restricts pity to those who are similar (*homoios*) to ourselves” 111. On the gods who both care and do not care, see Lynn-George (1996), 6-8.

¹⁸ It is true that in Book V, Ares and Aphrodite seem to expect pity from other gods (V, 351-62 and 868-87), but those are the only examples, and they are, in a way, the ‘weakest’ gods: they are disliked and mocked by the other gods.

¹⁹ XVII, 44.

²⁰ Nussbaum (1992), 118. See also 120: “in pity the human draw close to the one who suffers, acknowledging that their own possibilities are similar, and that both together live in a world of terrible reversals, in which the difference between pitier and pitied is a matter more of luck than of deliberate action.” On human vulnerability and the importance of pity (especially as opposed to the gods), see Achilles’ speech at XXIV, 485-510, as well as Soph. *Aj.* 121-6, Aesch. *Ag.* 1327-30, Eur. *El.* 1329-30, *Or.* 976-81, *Hec.* 488-91. See also Hdt. 1.86 and 7.46.

gods share in terms of pitiable situations is mourning for the death of someone dear to them, but it is of course much less common for the gods to mourn the death of a relative or friend than for a human being. Indeed, the link which exists between gods and mortals and which allows the gods to feel pity is often family ties: the gods are often seen mourning (or worrying) for their mortal children (Aphrodite for Aeneas, Zeus for Sarpedon, and most importantly, Thetis for Achilles). Nevertheless, that pain they sometimes feel for humans close to them, though it allows them to feel pity for those experiencing similar pain, is still not enough for *them* to be pitied.

It is also true that the gods feel pity for mortals, even though they cannot share or even truly understand their pain. It can be argued that Zeus, having lost several sons, can understand Priam's pain after Hector's death and pity him, but Apollo's pity for Hector's mutilated body cannot be explained along those lines, as he obviously cannot expect to die or be mutilated himself. The pity in this case is most likely linked to the gods' role as upholding pity as a social norm for human beings. The best example of this is Apollo complaining about the lack of pity shown towards Hector:

ἀλλ' ὀλοῶ Ἀχιλῆϊ θεοὶ βούλεσθ' ἐπαρῆγειν,
οὔτ' ἄρ' φρένες εἰσὶν ἐναΐσιμοι οὔτε νόημα
γναμπτὸν ἐνὶ στήθεσσι, λέων δ' ὡς ἄγρια οἶδεν,
ὅς τ' ἐπεὶ ἄρ' μεγάλη τε βίη καὶ ἀγήνορι θυμῶ
εἶξας εἶσ' ἐπὶ μῆλα βροτῶν ἵνα δαίτα λάβησιν·
ὡς Ἀχιλεὺς ἔλεον μὲν ἀπώλεσεν, οὐδέ οἱ αἰδῶς
γίγνεται

'But no, gods, you are determined to favour the deadly Achilles. He has no decency in his heart, his mind cannot be turned in his breast, but his thoughts are savage like a lion's, who follows only his own great strength and his proud heart, and goes to make his meal on the flocks that men keep. So Achilles has lost all pity (ἔλεον), and there is no shame in him.'

XXIV, 39-45²¹

²¹ Cf. also IX, 301-3; XI, 64-65; XXI, 145-47. The other character who is blamed for not feeling pity is Zeus (quite paradoxically, as he is the one character among men and gods who feels pity the most: VII, 26-27).

Among the gods, it is Zeus who feels pity the most (7 instances out of 11: he pities Agamemnon, Priam, Hector, Sarpedon, horses, Achilles and the Achaians in general).²² The other gods who do are Poseidon (2 instances: he pities the Achaians),²³ Hera (1 instance: she pities the Achaians)²⁴ and Apollo (1 instance: he pities Hector).²⁵

2 – reproaches form the gods

The gods also complain about people's lack of pity, which is an important aspect of their upholding pity as a social norm: when a mortal or even a god contravenes this norm, they can be reprimanded. Apollo complains twice once about Athena's lack of pity for the Trojans²⁶ and once about Achilles' cruelty.²⁷ The river Xanthos complains once about Achilles' cruelty towards the Trojan youths he mindlessly slaughters.²⁸

It is interesting to see that, every time, their complaining is followed by immediate action: Apollo convinces Athena to help him stop the fighting by organising a duel. In book XXIV, his complaint leads the gods to send Iris to Achilles, asking him to give Hector's body back to Priam. The river Xanthos immediately attacks Achilles. The feeling of pity can move people to action, as we will see later, but this shows that witnessing cruelty and the absence of pity in someone also moves the characters (or at least the gods) to action. This is important, as it emphasises the point that the gods' feeling pity reinforces the notion of pity as a social norm. It is also clear that though an agreement is possible between gods (such as

²² II, 27; II, 64; XXIV, 174; XV, 12; XVI, 431; XIX, 340; XXIV, 332.

²³ XIII, 15 and XV, 44.

²⁴ VIII, 350.

²⁵ XXIV, 19.

²⁶ VII, 24-30.

²⁷ XXIV, 44ff.

²⁸ XXI, 147.

Apollo and Athena), it is not possible between a god and a mortal: the river Xanthos does not try to negotiate with Achilles; he immediately attacks him.

3 – limits to the pity of the gods

It is also noticeable that, in those few instances, the gods only pity their own camp (Hera and Poseidon pity the Achaians²⁹ and Apollo pities the Trojans),³⁰ while Zeus pities both. We may wonder why gods other than Zeus only pity their own camp. It could simply be that it is easy to believe that one's enemies deserve to die, and Zeus does not regard either camp as personal enemies.³¹ Zeus is seen in the poem as the universal father (he is regularly called *πατήρ ἀνδρῶν τε θεῶν τε*³² and *ζεύς πατήρ*³³), and he cares for warriors in both camps (Sarpedon and Achilles for example). The other gods seem to have 'friendly' ties with one camp only, and complete hatred for the other. Hera is the best example of that, but this is for example not entirely true of Poseidon, who sides with the Achaeans, but saves Aeneas from death.³⁴ Zeus also seems capable of distancing himself from the war, and to avoid partisan feelings. This can be seen in the imagery of the scales: he does not influence the result, and does not even comment on it³⁵.

B – PITY FROM HUMAN BEINGS

²⁹ XIII, 15; XV, 44.

³⁰ VIII, 350.

³¹ Cf. Arist *Rhet.* and *Poet.* on bias.

³² I, 544; IV, 68; V, 426; VII, 49; 132; XI, 182; XV, 12; 47; XVI, 458; XX, 56; XXII, 167; XXIV, 103.

³³ II, 146; III, 350; IV, 23; 235; V, 33; 362; 457; VI, 259; VIII, 397; 438; 460; X, 154; XI, 66; 201; 544; XIII, 796; 818; XIV, 414; XV, 637; 227; 253; XVII, 46; 498; 630; XX, 11; 192; XXI, 83; XXII, 221; XXIV, 100; 287

³⁴ See XX, 291 ff.

³⁵ See VIII, 69ff.; XIX, 221ff.; XXII, 208ff.

Among men, pity is often felt for the dead warrior (4 instances out of 9),³⁶ but Patroclus also pities a wounded warrior,³⁷ Diomedes an old man³⁸ and Hector his wife.³⁹ Achilles is the only man who feels pity for an enemy.⁴⁰ Common to all those examples is the vulnerability of man to death, wounding and old age, that is to say the risks inherent to human life and caused by mortality.

1 – Aristotle

According to Aristotle, pity does not pertain to those who are very close to one, since family and close friends are simply an extension of oneself, whereas pity can only be felt by someone not closely involved: “the persons men pity are those whom they know, provided they are not too closely connected with them; for if they are, they feel the same as if they themselves were likely to suffer.”⁴¹ In the *Iliad*, this is very clearly not the case. True, several examples follow the Aristotelian picture, when warriors pity other warriors. On the other hand, as we saw above, Zeus is clearly said to pity his own son, Sarpedon⁴² and Hector’s closest family begs him to pity them.⁴³ According to Konstan, the case of Hector is explainable by the fact that it is not actual pity, but a hypothetical case which would occur after Hector’s death, in which Hector would be a “helpless, spectral bystander”, and to Konstan, this would not go against the idea of pity ‘from a distance’. Pity, according to Konstan, would not be Hector’s response if he actually saw his family being harmed.⁴⁴ This

³⁶ V, 561; V, 610; XVII, 346; XVII, 352.

³⁷ XI, 814.

³⁸ X, 176.

³⁹ VI, 484.

⁴⁰ XXIV, 516.

⁴¹ Aristotle, *The Art of Rhetoric*, II, viii, 12. See also for example Hammer (2002), 220, who uses the same argument.

⁴² Cf. XVI, 431-34.

⁴³ Cf. VI, 407-9; VI, 431-32 (Andromache); XXII; 59 (Priam); XXII, 82-83 (Hecuba).

⁴⁴ Konstan (2001) pp.61-62.

explanation, although interesting, seems to be special pleading and a bit far-fetched. Konstan also forgets that Hector *does* in fact pity Andromache, while being very much present and alive:⁴⁵

Ὡς εἰπὼν ἀλόχοιο φίλης ἐν χερσὶν ἔθηκε
 παῖδ' ἑόν ἢ δ' ἄρα μιν κηῶδεϊ δέξατο κόλπῳ
 δακρυόεν γελάσασα· πόσις δ' ἐλέησε νοήσας,
 χειρὶ τέ μιν κατέρεξε·ν ἔπος τ' ἔφατ' ἕκ τ' ὀνόμαζε·

So speaking he placed his son in his dear wife's arms. She took him to her scented breast, smiling with tears in her eyes. Her husband saw the tears and was moved to pity.
 VI, 482-85.

Furthermore, according to Aristotle, pity is "a kind of pain, excited by the sight of evil, deadly or painful [things], which befall one who do not deserve it; an evil which one might expect to come upon oneself or one of his friends, and when it seems near".⁴⁶ This definition helps to explain several occurrences of the feeling of pity in the poem, such as the pity a warrior feels when he sees another warrior die, as he can expect to die himself very soon.⁴⁷

Moreover, incapable of pity are to Aristotle those who have lost everything and therefore do not anticipate that anything worse will befall them, and those who believe they are extremely fortunate and cannot envisage that they could suffer the same thing. After Patroclus' death, Achilles can be said to belong to the first category: he indeed feels that he has lost everything, and is resigned to his own death,⁴⁸ and he is therefore immune to any

⁴⁵ See also Cairns (2004), 69. On the possibility of self-pity, see 70-71 (see also Pelling 286, but as relating to Plutarch).

⁴⁶ Aristotle, *Rhetoric* II, viii, 2. An alternative list of conditions to 'identification with others' is given by Dover (1974), 271-2.

⁴⁷ The point about the suffering being undeserved is problematic, as Christopher Pelling has very well analysed: "we all have the capacity for bad actions, not simply the capacity to suffer bad things. And once *that* is conceded, the link of pity with merit becomes a good deal more complex. It no longer becomes so easy to deny pity to one who has brought about his own downfall through culpable actions, for that too or something like that could happen to me or someone close to me. Two of Aristotle's basic postulates have come to be in conflict with one another" (2005), 291. We will see below how showing human beings bring their own doom on themselves through ignorance and bad judgement is an important part of Homeric pathos.

⁴⁸ See XXI, 99-113.

feeling of pity (and therefore feels none,⁴⁹ as in Book XXI, until Priam reminds him he still has a father). On the other hand, the gods can be said to belong to the second category, as they indeed have everything, and are immortals. Yet, as Konstan himself admits,⁵⁰ they do feel pity several times in the poem (see above).

What Pelling said in reference to Plutarch brilliantly applies to Homer, with the same emphasis: "It does look as if Plutarch is not operating with any Aristotle-like notion of a spectrum of closeness, where we need to feel close (bonded by a shared humanity and fragility) but not too close, where some relationships are too thick for pity and some too thin. Such picking and choosing among pitiable fellow humans is not for him."⁵¹ It is simpler to admit that pity in the Homeric epic differs slightly from pity as interpreted by Aristotle, and that therefore the Aristotelian definition is not completely relevant to the poem. Konstan's principle of discussion lumps together Homeric references, 5th century tragedy as well as Aristotle's even later theory. Though some of it is relevant to a discussion which restricts itself to Homer, Konstan's conclusions do not entirely apply to the *Iliad*, where pity is less limited than in Aristotle's definition.

2 – too much pity?

Achilles is the one who feels pity the most among men (with two instances of words from the lexical field of pity)⁵², but he also suffers reproaches and complaints for his lack of pity (in the poem, 4 out of 5 of those reproaches are addressed to him). Interestingly, he is also blamed for pitying too much by Antilochus, when Achilles feels sorry for Eumelus losing the

⁴⁹ Except for Patroclus, in XVI for example.

⁵⁰ Konstan (2001), 106-11. He goes on to say that though it might be true in Homer, the gods do not seem to feel pity in the Attic tragedies (he gives for developed examples of that).

⁵¹ Pelling (2005), 286.

⁵² Kim (2000) shows how Achilles' pity emerges as a motif or a recurrent idea in the poem, 28ff.

race in the Funeral Games (see last part on Politics for a closer look at that passage).⁵³ Antilochus' objection is that if Achilles personally wants to give something more to Eumelus, he should get it from his own resources and not from what now belongs to the public domain. Achilles accepts the objection, and chooses a prize for Eumelus that had not been set beforehand. Note that Antilochus does not actually disapprove of Achilles' reaction and only thinks it is a bit exaggerated. But Achilles' decision to give a prize to the loser out of pity is approved by the army, which shows that pity is never out of place, even in a more "trivial" situation like this one.⁵⁴

3 – human solidarity

Achilles' most interesting acts of solidarity and pity are not aimed at his own people and comrades, which would be the normal and even expected behaviour, but at his enemies. In Book XXI, his reply to Lykaon shows a sense of solidarity in mortality: Achilles has lost the man he cherished the most, he knows he is going to die soon himself, and though still incapable of pity, he sees other men as mortals like himself: everyone is going to die, so why wait? He slays Lykaon after calling him "friend".⁵⁵ At this point, Achilles identifies with the mortality of other men, rather than with the men themselves:

Ὅς ἄρα μιν Πριάμοιο προσήυδα φαίδιμος υἱός
 λισσόμενος ἐπέεσσιν, ἀμείλικτον δ' ὄπ' ἄκουσε·
 νήπιε μή μοι ἄποινα πιφάυσκεο μηδ' ἀγόρευε·
 πρὶν μὲν γὰρ Πάτροκλον ἐπισπεῖν αἴσιμον ἦμαρ
 τόφρα τί μοι πεφιδέσθαι ἐνὶ φρεσὶ φίλτερον ἦεν
 Τρώων, καὶ πολλοὺς ζωοὺς ἔλον ἠδ' ἐπέρασσα·
 νῦν δ' οὐκ ἔσθ' ὅς τις θάνατον φύγη ὄν κε θεός γε
 Ἰλίου προπάροιθεν ἐμῆς ἐν χερσὶ βάλῃσι
 καὶ πάντων Τρώων, περὶ δ' αὐτὸ Πριάμοιο γε παίδων.
 ἀλλὰ φίλος θάνε καὶ σύ· τί ἡ ὀλοφύρεαι οὕτως;

⁵³ XXIII, 544-52

⁵⁴ Nevertheless, we may wonder why, if pity is indeed a social norm, why should anyone be criticised for pitying too much. On pity and anger, see Most (2003). On anger and φιλότις, see Muellner (1996).

⁵⁵ Cf. for this interpretation already e.g. Ameis-Hentze, ad.loc. For the Homeric use of the nominative instead of a vocative ("φίλος" I.106), see Chantraine (1953), 36.

κάτθανε καὶ Πάτροκλος, ὃ περ σέο πολλὸν ἀμείνων.
 οὐχ ὀράας οἶος καὶ ἐγὼ καλὸς τε μέγας τε;
 πατὴρ δ' εἴμ' ἀγαθοῖο, θεὰ δέ με γείνατο μήτηρ·
 ἀλλ' ἐπι τοι καὶ ἐμοὶ θάνατος καὶ μοῖρα κραταυή·
 ἔσσεται ἢ ἠὼς ἢ δειλίη ἢ μέσον ἡμαρ
 ὅπποτε τις καὶ ἐμεῖο Ἄρη ἐκ θυμὸν ἔληται
 ἢ ὄ γε δουρὶ βαλὼν ἢ ἀπὸ νευρῆφιν οἴστῳ.

So the glorious son of Priam spoke to him with words of entreaty, but the answer he heard was hard: 'Fool, do not offer me ransom or talk of it. Before Patroclus met the day of his fate, then perhaps it was more to my mind's liking to spare Trojans, and there were so many I took alive and sold elsewhere. But now there is no-one who will escape death when god puts him into my hands in front of Ilios, none among all the Trojans, and above all none of the sons of Priam. No, friend, you die too – why all this moaning? Patroclus died also, a far better man than you. Do you not see how fine a man I am, and how huge? And I am the son of a great father, and a goddess was the mother who bore me. And yet I tell you death and strong Fate are there for me also: there will be a dawn, or an evening, or a noonday, when some man will take my life too in the fighting with a cast of his spear or an arrow from the string.

XXI, 97-113

In Book XXIV, with Priam, he transforms this solidarity in death into solidarity in grief, which is made obvious by the fundamental image of the sharing of tears.⁵⁶ Words for pity are used three times in this passage (ἐλέησον 1.503; ἐλεεινότερός 1.504; οἰκτίρων 1.516):

ἀλλ' αἰδεῖο θεοὺς Ἀχιλεῦ, αὐτόν τ' ἐλέησον
 μνησάμενος σοῦ πατρός· ἐγὼ δ' ἐλεεινότερός περ,
 ἔτλην δ' οἷ' οὐ πῶ τις ἐπιχθόνιος βροτὸς ἄλλος,
 ἀνδρὸς παιδοφόνιοιο ποτὶ στόμα χεῖρ' ὀρέγεσθαι.
 ὣς φάτο, τῷ δ' ἄρα πατὴρ ὕψ' ἴμερον ὤρσε γόοιο·
 ἀψάμενος δ' ἄρα χειρὸς ἀπώσατο ἦκα γέροντα.
 τῷ δὲ μνησαμένῳ ὃ μὲν Ἔκτορος ἀνδροφόνιοιο
 κλαῖ' ἀδινὰ προσάροιθε ποδῶν Ἀχιλλῆος ἔλυσθεις,
 αὐτὰρ Ἀχιλλεὺς κλαίεν ἔδον πατέρ', ἄλλοτε δ' αὐτε
 Πάτροκλον· τῶν δὲ στοναχὴ κατὰ δώματ' ὀρώρει.
 αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ ῥα γόοιο τετάρπετο δῖος Ἀχιλλεὺς,
 καὶ οἱ ἀπὸ πραπίδων ἦλθ' ἴμερος ἠδ' ἀπὸ γυῖων,
 αὐτίκ' ἀπὸ θρόνου ὤρτο, γέροντα δὲ χειρὸς ἀνίστη
 οἰκτίρων πολιόν τε κάρη πολιόν τε γένειον,
 καὶ μιν φωνήσας ἔπεα πτερόεντα προσηύδα·

'Respect the gods, then, Achilles. And have pity on me, remembering your own father. But I am yet more pitiable than he. I have endured to do what no other mortal man on earth has done – I have brought to my lips the hands of the man who killed my children.'

So he spoke, and he roused in Achilles the desire to weep for his father. He took the old man by the hand and gently pushed him away. And the two of them began to weep in

⁵⁶ Kim's analysis is very useful to understand this passage: it is linked to Achilles' transformation of who truly are his φίλοι started in IX (or even actually in I: his sense of community changes throughout the poem): he starts by rejecting all who obey Agamemnon as his enemies, and ends up in Book XXIV, by accepting all those who are suffering (such as Priam) as his φίλοι.

remembrance. Priam cried loud for murderous Hector, huddled at the feet of Achilles, and Achilles cried for his own father, and then again for Patroclus: and the house was filled with the sound of their weeping. Then when godlike Achilles had had his pleasure in mourning, and the desire for it had passed from his mind and his body, he stood up from his chair and raised the old man by his hand, in pity for his grey head and grey beard, and spoke winged words to him.

XXIV, 503-17

As Kim points out, "Achilles' response to Priam is as extraordinary as the supplication itself: he receives him not just as a suppliant but as a φίλος".⁵⁷ She justifies this idea by saying that "Achilles' reception of Priam as a φίλος is also evident in the way he treats and talks to Priam as one who shares and empathizes with Priam's sufferings. We need only recall, for example, how he says to Priam that it is the common lot of all 'us miserable mortals' as opposed to gods, to live with sufferings [...] It comes as no surprise, in the end, when Achilles addresses Priam as a φίλος: γέρον φίλε (24.650)."⁵⁸ We may add that his trend of turning suppliants into φίλοι had obviously been started in the previous example, where Achilles calls Lykaon φίλος before killing him, although Achilles' state of mind, and the consequences of this φιλότις are obviously different. As Kim remarks, at the end of the poem, Achilles' "conception of φίλοι has been redefined: they are no longer just the Achaians but all humans, in that death and suffering bind all mortals".⁵⁹

Pity is a common feature of life in the poem: the gods feel it and encourage it, and mortals seem naturally inclined to pity. The only passage where pity is seen by a character as inappropriate is when Achilles is said to pity Eumelus during the funeral games. It has to be

⁵⁷ Kim (2000), 63.

⁵⁸ Kim (2000), 63-4. On the universality of suffering, see previous chapter.

⁵⁹ Kim (2000), 151. Similarly, Nussbaum (1992) says: "the two men draw close in the recognition of the ways in which the afflictions and the destructions of war can come to any man, and heroic character proves insufficient to ward them off. Through his pity Achilles arrives at a new understanding of the shared vulnerabilities of human beings, and becomes able to think of his enemies as human beings like himself." 121.

remembered first of all that Achilles never says that himself, and it is Antilochus' rhetorical construction, and, moreover, what is truly seen as inappropriate is not even the feeling of pity itself, which the warriors seem to agree with, but the gesture that follows it. Not only is pity a norm upheld by the gods, but it is fundamental to life in the warrior society.

II – PITY WITHIN THE WARRIOR SOCIETY

A – NO PLACE FOR PITY?

It has been argued that pity has no place in what often called the ‘warrior code’ of the *Iliad*. Later philosophers such as Plato talk about the ‘pleasurable’ aspect of pity, an emotion which is, according to Nietzsche (who would probably be horrified at finding himself in agreement with Plato on that point) a refusal to acknowledge the importance of suffering,¹ a “pleasurable sap, whose general effect is to squelch out not only suffering, but the powerful acts of self assertion that necessarily entail suffering and that suffering alone can call forth.”² This analysis, which seems to be in the background of some Homeric scholars, is wrong: pity is not a pleasurable emotion in the *Iliad*. It is on the contrary very painful, and neither is it some kind of wishy-washy emotion which prevents action, as we will see in the rest of this chapter.

According to Kevin Crotty, a warrior’s life becomes on the battlefield a commodity, and that is the point of Sarpedon’s speech in XII (309-28): “to the extent that the warrior may lose in battle, he must contemplate his life essentially as a commodity – a boast for another. Considered in this way as a form of exchange, death can scarcely be expected to arouse deep

¹ See Nietzsche (ed. Horstmann and Norman, 2002), §199, where pity is described as “those characteristics that make [man] tame, easy-going and useful to the herd” 87; and §202 where he says that those “united in the cries and the impatience of pity” are “in deadly hatred against suffering in general, in the almost feminine inability to sit watching, to *let* suffering happen” 91. See also §222 and §225.

² Crotty (1994), 11-12.

emotions".³ Because of that, pity is according to him "associated with an emotionally intense, less sublimely heroic response towards death, and one which is at some odds with the dispassionate attitude that shame and the warrior require".⁴ It is therefore 'repressed', because it is "uncoded, felt only occasionally, and unforeseeable as to its effects" and "cannot provide a sure and steady basis for the warrior's conduct". It is therefore "inconsistent with the dictates of the warrior code, which accordingly requires that the undeniable power of this emotion be resisted and not acted upon."⁵ One of many problems that appears here is that Crotty seems to follow unquestioningly Adkins' division between competitive and cooperative values.⁶ If one agrees with Adkins on this, it is indeed clear that cooperative values such as pity, while they may be useful in the family, have no place on the battlefield. Scott, who admits to following Adkins' system unconditionally,⁷ is also very critical of pity which according to her does not show sympathy, but shows horror at another's failure.⁸

The point of this section is to how wrong that understanding of pity is. Crotty misunderstands both pity and its consequences and the 'warrior code', if such a thing truly exists. As we will see, pity is present on the battlefield, is not criticised as being inappropriate, and is an integral part of the warrior's expected conduct.

³ Crotty (1994), 42-3. The two parts of the argument do not seem to follow, which makes his point more difficult to understand.

⁴ Crotty (1994), 44.

⁵ Crotty (1994), 47-51. he also makes the point that Phoenix' Meleager tale is a cautionary tale against pity: 52-55. For similar arguments, see also Redfield (1994) with the idea that the warrior must overcome mercy (104), and Motto & Clark (1969) with the idea that the inhumanity and excess shown in the second half of the poem "are simply the decorum of warfare", 111. All those points also demonstrate a severe misunderstanding of the role of pity and the 'gentler values' in the poem.

⁶ See for ex. Crotty (1994) 19, although he criticises others (in particular Mary Scott) for doing the same.

⁷ Scott (1979), 1.

⁸ Scott (1979), 1-5.

B – WHO DESERVES PITY?

Pity does occur in the poem, both within and outwith the warrior society. Five categories of people are pitied or regarded as worthy of pity (if only by themselves) in the *Iliad*. They are mostly vulnerable people, who need help or revenge.

1 – people in mourning

The first category puts together people who have just lost a friend or relation, or who feel pity for someone close to them (13 instances, 11 of which refer to Priam only). It is noticeable that people who have lost someone do not need physical help but only compassion, which shows that pity is not only an active cooperative quality. Priam for example is regarded as worthy of pity after he has lost Hector.⁹

2 – endangered people

The next category comprises people who are in danger, who are about to die, and very often do not know it, which adds to the pathos (12 instances). The following example is an example of pity from a god, Poseidon, who feels pity for the Achaians who are being killed. Since the Trojans are losing the war at this point, it is mostly Trojan warriors who belong in this category.¹⁰

3 – women, children and old men

The fourth category is made up of women, children and old men (9 instances)

⁹ XXII, 405-409. See also: XIX, 340; XXII, 408; XXII, 419; XXIII, 110; XXIV, 174; XXIV, 207; XXIV, 301; XXIV, 309; XXIV, 332; XXIV, 357; XXIV, 503; XXIV, 504; XXIV, 516.

¹⁰ XIII, 10-16; VI, 94; VI, 275; VI, 309; VII, 27; VIII, 350; IX, 172; IX, 302; XI, 665; XV, 12; XV, 44; XXI, 273.

ἀλλ' ὅτε δὴ πολίων τε κάρη πολίων τε γένειον
αἰδῶ τ' αἰσχύνωσι κύνες κταμένοιο γέροντος,
τοῦτο δὴ οἰκτιστον πέλεται δειλοῖσι βροτοῖσιν.

'But when an old man has been killed and the dogs are mutilating his grey head and grey beard and private parts, this is the most pitiable (οἰκτιστον) thing poor mortals can see.'
XXII, 74-76

Andromache also reproaches Hector of not feeling pity for her.¹¹

4 – dead warriors

The third category comprises young warriors who have just been killed (7 instances). Whereas the whole army being destroyed is pitied mostly by the gods, individual dead warriors are pitied by their comrades.¹²

The pathos of this motif is made obvious in the “obituaries” (see below), which always imply pity on the part of the poet, to which can be added an explicit expression of pity from a god or from another warrior.

5 - suppliants

Finally, we encounter 4 instances of suppliants seeking pity.¹³

As could be expected, the people who deserve pity are the weakest, most vulnerable, and those who suffer the most, as well as in general those who suffer an undeserved and unexpected disaster.

There also a notable difference between appealing for pity (the way suppliants, women, and old men do) and expressing spontaneous pity. Spontaneous pity is only felt by

¹¹ VI, 407-9. See also: VI, 431; VI, 484; XXII, 37; XXII, 59; XXII, 82; XXII, 494.

¹² V, 561; V, 610; XI, 241-43; XVI, 431; XVII, 346; XVII, 352; XXIV, 23.

¹³ XX, 463-65; XXI, 74; XXI, 147; XXII, 123. Success rates and norms of supplication will be looked at in greater detail below, in the chapter on 'mildness towards enemies'.

the gods and by warriors. Warriors fluctuate between a powerful and a vulnerable position: they attack enemies and protect their friends and family, but the next minute they may be in danger themselves. On the other hand, women, children and old men are constantly vulnerable. They are even defined by their vulnerability, as is shown in boasts, obituaries and encouragements to fight. They are very much the stake of the fighting and they are regarded as being unable to protect anyone, or even to defend themselves.¹⁴

Gods are at all times powerful, and even though they can be in danger (on the battlefield, or from each other), the danger they are in is always fairly trivial. Unlike for men, it is never a question of life and death. Death itself is a major theme as far as pity is concerned. Death, or the risk of death are almost the only reasons pity is present in the poem at all. There are obvious risks for the warriors on the battlefield, but the shadow of death is present over other categories as well, such as women, and old men: think for example of Priam's vision of his own fate in XXII. Simone Weil points out that all men in the poem are vulnerable at some point: "les hommes ne sont pas divisés dans *l'Iliade*, en vaincus, en esclaves, en suppliants d'un côté, et en vainqueurs, en chefs, de l'autre; il ne s'y trouve pas un seul homme qui ne soit à quelque moment contraint de plier sous la force".¹⁵ The vulnerability that is pitied in the poem is mostly the vulnerability to death, and any loss of control over one's life in general, the ultimate loss of control being of course death. As we saw above, vicissitude is fundamental to pity, and, as Achilles observes, to human life.

¹⁴ See for example Hecuba's reaction to Priam's plans to visit Achilles (XXIV, 200ff): Hecuba's point is that Priam is too vulnerable to go into the Achaian camp, as he cannot defend himself and is likely to get killed.

¹⁵ Weil (1953), 19.

C – “ACTIVE” PITY

Another characteristic of pity is the reaction that it elicits. That is what shows more than anything else that pity is an important part of the warrior society:¹⁶ three are warriors who feel pity, and also some who react to it. Kim points out that “it is precisely the constant reality of the warriors’ killing or being killed that generates [...] the ethic of acting pitiless towards the enemy, but at the same time, and no less importantly, a different ethic – the need to have pity for one’s fellow warriors who are being killed”.¹⁷ She adds what is the main point of this argument, the idea of what could be called ‘active pity’: “when a warrior sees his friend(s) fall and is thereupon filled with pity, anger or grief, he is invariably shown to charge out against the enemy even more ferociously than before. In this respect, as a catalyst of warriors’ actions in battle, pity is no less potent than *χόλος* or *ἄχος*.”¹⁸ She adds that “the subject of the phrase [τῷ δὲ πεσόντ’ ἐλέησε] witnesses his friend(s) being killed in close combat, and pities; and each time, he charges out (or wishes to, but is impeded) to avenge his friend’s death”.¹⁹ It is absolutely true, and quite remarkable, that in the poem, every time a dead warrior is pitied by one of his comrades, the ‘pitier’ takes action, more or less effectively, to avenge him:²⁰

Τῷ δὲ πεσόντ’ ἐλέησεν ἄρηϊφίλος Μενέλαος,
βῆ δὲ διὰ προμάχων κεκορυθμένος αἶθοπι χαλκῷ
σειῶν ἐγχείην·

When [Crethon and Orsilochus] fell the warrior Menelaus felt pity for them, and strode through the front ranks helmeted in gleaming bronze, shaking his spear.

¹⁶ On how pity is valued in the poem, see Segal (1971), 12. and on how it is valued in ancient Greece more generally, see Dover (1974) 190-205.

¹⁷ Kim (2000), 16.

¹⁸ Kim (2000), 17. For a fuller analysis see 35ff.

¹⁹ Kim (2000), 41. This is not the view of Crotty and Redfield, who think that the ‘heroic code’ does not include, and is even adverse to pity.

²⁰ See also Fenik (1968), 3 and 177.

V, 561-3²¹

This is also true of the gods: most of the instances of pity concerning a warrior in danger involves the gods. They may act (XIII, 15; XXI, 273), sometimes do nothing (XV, 12; XVI, 431, it is Zeus in both cases) and sometimes want to but are prevented to by Zeus (VIII, 350; XV, 44). It is interesting to see that Zeus, although he is the god who feels pity the most, is also the one who acts the least on it, and even prevents other gods from acting. As we saw earlier, this is symbolised in the scales of Zeus: he watches what happens, but does nothing, and accepts whatever is about to come to pass.

But this 'active pity' does not only concern fellow warriors, and that is particularly clear in the scenes of supplication, where an appeal for pity is effectively an appeal for survival. Similarly, appeals to pity another warrior can be addressed to a warrior or to a god, and tend not to be successful: VII, 27; IX, 172; 302; XI, 665.

Pity is therefore not something that inhibits from action in the poem: it is in fact part of the warrior's expected response to life on the battlefield. Pity is not in contradiction with heroic behaviour, and can on the contrary encourage it. Pity is also an important part of the narrative, and is to be found in the poet's attitude towards his characters.

²¹ See also V, 610; XVII, 346; XVII, 352; XXIV, 23.

III – PITY FROM THE POET

It is not only the characters who are seen to feel pity: pity permeates the whole poem through the way Homer presents the tragic events that are taking place.

A – νήπιος

1 - etymology

As we saw earlier in the chapter, there are differences in the poem as far as death is concerned: in particular in the conception of death shown by the warriors and by the poet: for the warriors, death should be heroic and glorious whereas for the poet it is always tragic and pathetic. This difference is paralleled in the uses of the word νήπιος, and though it is not immediately apparent, νήπιος is a word which can allow us to shed light on some aspects of human mortality in the *Iliad*, as it is often linked to death.

The literal meaning of νήπιος is 'small child' or when used as an adjective, 'very young' and 'puerile, childish'. It has been said traditionally that it actually means 'who cannot speak' (cf. the word infant) because of its link with ἔπος, 'word, that which is spoken'. People have now more or less renounced that idea (Chantraine for example, but the links between the Mycenaean *nāputijo* and the Greek νηπύτιος makes him think of ἦπτω, 'to call', but he does not consider this as certain).¹ Edmunds offers the hypothesis that νήπιος in fact comes from a root *āp-* meaning 'to join' or 'to connect', which can be found in the Latin

¹ Nevertheless, the fact that it can be used of lion cubs for example (XXVII, 132-5, see below), show that it may actually have nothing to do with speech (unless that particular use is entirely metaphorical).

apīscor ('reach', 'attain') and Sanskrit *āpnoti* ('reach', 'attain'). She admits that there are problems with that derivation, and that there is more semantic than phonological evidence (although her semantic evidence is also doubtful).²

The main distinction is between νήπιος used of actual children and νήπιος used metaphorically of adults. Indeed, the *Lexikon's* classification follows this separation: 1- νήπιος as a descriptive term when it is used of children 2- νήπιος as a judgemental term when it is used of adults. Those are two useful categories, which this study is going to follow to a certain extent, but they are not enough to attain a full understanding of the word and in particular of its importance in understanding the way the human condition is described in the poem. The main focus of this study will be the adult uses.

2 – νήπιος as description: used of children

The word νήπιος is used firstly of the ingenuousness of a small child, and is often used in reference to children. With 27 out of 53 occurrences, it is the main usage.

a – general uses

The expression νήπια τέκνα is used 3 times on its own³ and 11 times when associated with the word ἄλοχοι.⁴ Edmunds understands the expression νήπια τέκνα as linked to the thematic absence of the father in the poem: "children are *nēpios* when their fathers have gone off, not to return, leaving them with their mothers and disaster." She adds that "this is a virtually fatal condition. Such a *nēpios* child does not ordinarily grow up to become a

² Edmunds (1990), 7-9 and 98-9. See also the possibilities given by Vermeule (1979), 113.

³ II, 311 (an animal simile); XI, 113 (an animal simile); XXII, 63.

⁴ II, 136; IV, 238; V, 480; 688; VI, 95; 276; 310; 366; XVII, 223; XVIII, 514; XXIV, 730.

warrior".⁵ Nevertheless, it can be said that the absence of fathers is more accurately linked to the theme of the poem, i.e. war, and does not really explain the meaning of νήπιος. Furthermore, as she admits herself, though it works for Astyanax, whom she calls the 'paradigm' for this usage of the word, there are several exceptions to that 'rule', such as Telemachus in the *Odyssey*, and Diomedes in the *Iliad*, both of whom are orphans, and end up being fine warriors, rather than dead. This use actually mainly highlights the role of the warriors as protectors of their wives and children (or as killers of the enemy's wives and children), and it emphasises the helplessness of the νήπια τέκνα who are unable to defend themselves. In each case, it is used to encourage the warriors to fight.⁶

It is used 5 times of Astyanax in particular⁷ (Hector's son, the only child to actually appear in the poem) and once of Achilles (to say that he was just a child when he went to war).⁸ Astyanax is according to Edmunds the paradigm of the νήπιος child. She points out that "Astyanax is called *nēpios* almost every time he is mentioned".⁹ This may be true, but it does not necessarily have the deep significance Edmunds seems to infer from it: quite simply, νήπιος means young child and Astyanax is a young child. Why should the fact that he is called νήπιος be so significant? But to her, as we saw earlier, being called νήπιος means that the father is absent, and the use of the word implies "imminence or possibility of doom and destruction".¹⁰ She insists that Hector's death (as the absence of fathers in general), will lead to the "social disconnection" of Astyanax, and that this social disconnection is part of the

⁵ Edmunds (1990), 35. For her general analysis of νήπιος children, see 25-59.

⁶ e.g. IV, 234-9.

⁷ VI, 400; 408; XXII 484; XXIV, 726.

⁸ IX, 440.

⁹ Edmunds (1990), 30.

¹⁰ Edmunds (1990), 28.

meaning of the word νήπιος.¹¹ She also points out that “few Homeric heroes seem to have grown up as orphans”, while at the same time pointing to major exceptions: Orestes, Diomedes and Telemachus.¹² Her conclusion on νήπιος children is that “children, being essentially ephemeral, disconnected from past and future, have no past in them”. She then goes on to apply this ‘disconnection’ which is to her at the centre of the meaning of νήπιος to the adult uses of the word, all of which seems very far-fetched.

The word νήπιος is used very generally of the helplessness of youth. In the following example, extreme youth is presented as something negative, grievous (ἀλεγεινός).¹³

b - children in similes

The Trojans are compared to wasps tormented by children:

αὐτίκα δὲ σφήκεσσιν ἐοικότες ἐξεχέοντο
 εἰνοδίους, οὓς παῖδες ἐριδμαίνωσιν ἔθοντες (260)
 αἰεὶ κερτομέοντες ὁδῶ ἐπι οἰκί' ἔχοντας
 νηπίαχοι-ξυνὸν δὲ κακὸν πολέεσσι τιθείσι

They swarmed out all at once like wasps by the side of a road, constantly irritated by boys who made a habit of teasing them in their nests by the roadside the little fools / children that they are, they create a nuisance for many others.

XVI, 259-62

It is not entirely clear in this example if νηπίαχοι refers to their youth and inexperience (“children that they are”) or if it is a judgemental use (“the little fools”), where older boys for example are treated as adults and are censured for behaving like babies. The context seems

¹¹ Edmunds (1990), 31-2.

¹² According to her, the reason why they have turned out alright is because they have gone through a kind of initiation rite which compensate for the absence of their father, see Edmunds 44-53 for a detailed analysis of those initiation rites. In essence, her point is that those three warriors die a symbolical death through the initiation rites, in the same way that actual fatherless νήπιος children such as Astyanax die a real death “without fulfilling their epic destiny”. The difference with Diomedes, Orestes and Telemachus is that “they are reborn, and as warriors”.

¹³ IX, 490-1. Edmunds understands ἀλεγεινός not as meaning ‘grievous’ and referring to the helplessness and infancy, but as meaning ‘troublesome’, and therefore as referring to Phoenix’ problems rather than Achilles’. Edmunds, 57.

to allow both understandings. Edmunds' understanding is that the children (and Patroclus) "were unaware of the consequences of their actions, and, for this reason, both are called *nēpios*".¹⁴ Nevertheless, this can also be understood as a behaviour typical of childhood, rather than as a judgement of those specific children.

In the same book, Patroclus is compared to a little girl:

τίπτε δεδάκρυσαι Πατρόκλεες, ἤϋτε κούρη
νηπίη, ἢ θ' ἅμα μητροὶ θεῶν ἀνελέσθαι ἀνώγει
εἰανοῦ ἀπτομένη, καὶ τ' ἐσσυμένην κατερύκει,
δακρύεσσα δέ μιν ποτιδέσκεται, ὄφρ' ἀνέληται.

'Why are you all in tears, Patroclus, like a little girl running along by her mother and demanding to be carried, pulling at her dress and holding her back as she tries to hurry on, and looking at her tearfully until she picks her up?'

XVI, 7-10

Again in this example, it is possible to understand νηπίη as judgmental: Patroclus behaves like a silly girl. Nevertheless, it seems that κούρη is too vague a descriptive term to allow a full understanding of the simile. Only tiny little girls would behave like that: only very young children can expect to be picked up by their mother, and it would make much more sense if we take νηπίη as a descriptive term here. Willcock points out that "Homer sets before us wonderfully clearly the unchanging behaviour of children".¹⁵ Edmunds links this child with Astyanax, who displays the same behaviour ("crying and clinging to an adult"). According to her "Patroklos himself is like Astyanax in fretting about something other than the ultimate disaster that is approaching." Nevertheless, Astyanax is only a baby, and it is difficult to see how significant is the fact that he is not fretting about the specifics of the future, and Patroclus does not even know yet that he is about to go on the battlefield, so this point (whose aim is obviously to show the 'disconnection' linked to the use of νήπιος in

¹⁴ Edmunds (1990), 56.

¹⁵ Willcock (1984), 244.

both passages) is again very far fetched. All in all, though the word is likely to be only descriptive of the κούρη, it is very obviously judgemental of Patroclus: an adult male is not supposed to behave like a little girl.

νήπιος is also used of the young of an animal.¹⁶

Children, and even very young children are present throughout the poem, either in person, in similes, or presented as victims of war. This is the most straightforward use of the word. In almost every case, the word is there to excite sympathy. The emphasis is most of the time on dependency and helplessness, and Edmunds' arguments on children being disconnected are very weak.

3 – νήπιος as judgement: used of adults

The word is used almost as often to refer to adults (26 occurrences), sometimes in the vocative. The link with the original meaning is that compared with the omniscient gods, men, in their ignorance, are like children, and like children they behave unwisely or unthinkingly. Edmunds also talks about adult νήπιοι being disconnected: "they are adults who are disconnected from the past and, especially, the future. As in the case of children who are *nēpios*, this disconnection is both mental (they do not have foresight) and social (their lack of foresight almost always has fatal consequences; it disconnects them from the fellowship of the living)".¹⁷ We will see in this part that νήπιος indeed implies a lack of

¹⁶ XVII, 132-5. It is clear that in this example, νήπιος cannot be linked with ἔπος, as animals cannot be expected to speak. Of course, it could simply be a metaphorical use.

¹⁷ Edmunds (1990), 60.

foresight, but it has to be said that her last point – that because this lack of foresight tends to be fatal, they are disconnected from the living - is again very far fetched and a bit silly.

It is true in a way that νήπιοι adults are like children, but it is more general than a simple 'disconnection'. Their ignorance, limited understanding and, indeed, lack of foresight are all part of the human condition. There is no real need to bring in this idea of a connection or disconnection. The common ground is not so much with infancy itself, but with an aspect of it: the helplessness and inadequacies of children. But it is not enough to simply say that: there are specific uses and differences according to who uses the word:

This word can be used either by a mortal, to refer to another mortal (10 occurrences), by a god, to refer either to a mortal (2 occurrences), or to a god (1 occurrence), or by the poet, in the narrative, only to refer to a mortal (13 occurrences). In each case, there is a clear difference, if not of meaning, at least of intention.

a – Used by a mortal

In the mouth of a mortal, it is a term of abuse and contempt (the word 'child' is not strong enough in English). It is used mostly in boasts, of enemies, when about to kill them. For example, Hector uses it of Patroclus in XVI:

Πάτροκλ' ἧ που ἔφησθα πόλιν κεραϊζέμεν ἀμῆν,
 Τρωιάδας δὲ γυναῖκας ἐλεύθερον ἡμαρ ἀπούρας
 ἄξειν ἐν νήεσσι φίλην ἐς πατρίδα γαῖαν
 νήπιε· τάων δὲ πρόσθ' Ἔκτορος ὠκέες ἵπποι
 ποσσὶν ὀρωρέχεται πολεμίζειν·

'Patroclus, you must have thought that you would sack our city, and take the day of freedom from the women of Troy and carry them off in your ships to your own native land - nh/pioj!
 In their defence Hector's swift horses speed into battle.'

XVI, 830-34¹⁸

¹⁸ See also: VIII, 177-79; XX, 196-98; XXI, 99.

According to Edmunds, “those who do not take good advice are *nēpioi*. They disconnect themselves from their leaders and usually also their own life as a consequence. On the other hand, those who give bad advice are disconnected from their own future and success”.¹⁹ Again, this is very far-fetched: not everything that leads a man to ‘disconnect from his life’ (die) are linked to being *νήπιος*! Heroic behaviour and accidents kill too.

The word can also be used of an ally during a heated argument, to expose the foolishness of the opponent and their lack of understanding of a situation: For example, Hector accuses Polydamas of being *νήπιος* when Polydamas advises him to retreat for the night.²⁰ In this particular case the man using the word *νήπιος* is actually the one who is wrong and is himself called *νήπιος* a few lines later by the poet. Men can make a wrong judgement when using this word, and can be guilty of what they accuse other people of.

b – used by the gods

In the mouth of a god, it always refers to a man’s misapprehension of his relationship to the gods: it is always a question of rank and hierarchy.

On one occasion, it also refers to the gods’ failure to comprehend their own relationship with Zeus.²¹ In the next example, Hera is speaking:

νήπιοι οἱ Ζηνὶ μενεαίνομεν ἀφρονέοντες·
ἢ ἔτι μιν μέμαμεν καταπαυσέμεν ἄσσον ἰόντες
ἢ ἔπει ἠὲ βίη· ὁ δ’ ἀφήμενος οὐκ ἀλεγίζει
οὐδ’ ὀθεταί· φησὶν γὰρ ἐν ἀθανάτοισι θεοῖσι
κάρτεϊ τε σθένει τε διακριδὸν εἶναι ἄριστος.

‘νήπιοι we are, thoughtless idiots, to storm against Zeus! We are still intent on facing him, and trying to stop him with argument or force. But he sits there by himself without thought or regard for us, saying that he is pre-eminently the best of the immortal gods in power and strength.’

XV, 104-8

¹⁹ Edmunds (1990), p.87.

²⁰ XVIII, 293-96. See also: II, 337-38; VII, 400-2; XVII, 30-32; XVII, 629-30.

²¹ This points out to the possible ignorance and lack of understanding of even the gods.

In those cases, the word is not necessarily used as an insult, it is not used to boast or to laugh at the misfortunes of an enemy, there is not even necessarily any anger involved. The point is mostly to state facts of hierarchy between the gods and the mortals, as well as among the gods. There can even be a touch of pity (in the case of Poseidon, where it is linked with sorrow (ἄχος) and is in the form of a lament, with the expression ὦ πόποι), which places those occurrences as an intermediate between the word used by mortals and used by the poet.

c – used by the poet

It is the most significant use (usually the only one mentioned by scholars, Romilly for example²²). The tone is extremely different when the word is used by the poet himself, as it then very often has a connotation of pity and compassion. What is very interesting is that it is almost always used when someone is about to die. The causes of death are always linked to something innate to the human condition. Very often, it is used when a character is about to die because of his ignorance or misunderstanding of the true reality of a situation (it is very frequent: 8 times). This is a recurrent idea with νήπιος (cf when it is used by mortals and gods):²³ those men are about to die because of an error of judgement, and even though the sympathy felt for them can be minimal, their plight is typical of the human condition as seen in the poem. In the following example, Patroclus asks Achilles to let him fight in his place:

Ὡς φάτο λισσόμενος μέγα νήπιος· ἦ γὰρ ἔμελλεν
οἱ αὐτῷ θάνατόν τε κακὸν καὶ κῆρα λιτέσθαι

²² Romilly (1997), 138-44.

²³ XII, 124-130. See also: II, 872-75; XII, 110-15; XVI, 830-33; XVII, 494-98; XX, 411-12.

So he spoke in entreaty, νήπιος – what he was begging would be a wretched death for himself and his own destruction.

XVI, 46-7²⁴

This time, because of the sympathy cultivated for Patroclus as a very likeable character, the pity felt for him is more obvious. Nevertheless, in terms of content, this example does not differ so much from the previous one, as, again, excessive confidence and lack of judgement leads him to his death. In the following example, Tros begs Achilles for his life:

Τρώα δ' Αλαστορίδην, ὃ μὲν ἀντίος ἤλυθε γούνων,
εἷ πῶς εὖ πεφίδοιτο λαβῶν καὶ ζῶν ἀφείη
μηδὲ κατακτείνειεν ὀμηλικίην ἐλεήσας, (465)
νήπιος, οὐδὲ τὸ ἤδη ὃ οὐ πείσεσθαι ἔμελλεν·
οὐ γάρ τι γλυκύθυμος ἀνὴρ ἦν οὐδ' ἀγανόφρων,
ἀλλὰ μάλ' ἐμμεμῶς·

Then Tros, son of Alastor – he came to take hold of Achilles' knees, in the hope that Achilles would spare him, taking him prisoner and releasing him alive, and would not kill him out of pity for a man of his own age: νήπιος, he did not realise that Achilles would never listen – this was no sweet-minded man, no gentle heart, but a man in full fury.

XX, 463-8

Pity for suppliants is the normal reaction in the poem (see chapter on 'mildness for enemies' for a more detailed analysis). Here, Tros is also said to be very young (the same age as Achilles).

Men may also die because the gods tricked them. Again, it is actually a misunderstanding of the gods' true intentions.²⁵

It is often the case that it is a man's own over-confidence and pride that leads him to his doom. This can also be described as ignorance or a misunderstanding, and in this case an overestimation of his own capacities:

Πάτροκλος δ' ἵπποισι καὶ ἄυτομέδοντι κελεύσας
Τρώας καὶ Λυκίους μετεκίαθε, καὶ μέγ' ἀάσθη (685)

²⁴ According to Edmunds, this example shows that being νήπιος "does not present a contrast to warrior-like behaviour", 4.

²⁵ II, 35-40; XX, 293-96.

νήπιος· εἰ δὲ ἔπος Πηληϊάδαο φύλαξεν
 ἦ τ' ἄν ὑπέκφυγε κῆρα κακὴν μέλανος θανάτοιο.
 ἀλλ' αἰεὶ τε Διὸς κρείσσων νόος ἢ ἐπερ ἀνδρῶν

But Patroclus called to his horses and Automedon and went in pursuit of the Trojans and Lycians, and this was a fatal error, νήπιος – if he had kept to the instructions of the son of Peleus, he would have escaped the vile doom of black death.

XVI, 684-87²⁶

It can also be pride and vanity, as in the case of gold-wearing Nastes.²⁷ In both cases, the characters foolishly believe something that they should not believe.

In all the previous examples, the play on the contrast between the characters' knowledge and the narrator's (and therefore the audience's) knowledge, the expectations described by the poet and the dire reality that awaits are what creates a lot of the pathos in the poem. The vanity of human hopes in apparently on the poet's mind. But even in these cases, the word is not linked to a condemnation of pride, but to a feeling of pity for men.

When it is used of children, the word νήπιος is simply a description of them as children, and does not have anything to do with their doing something specific. If they are doing something (in the similes for example), it might be something foolish, but the main point is still that it is something a child would typically do. But when it is used of adults, the word νήπιος is extremely important to the understanding of the condition of mortals in Homer: men are ignorant, careless and foolhardy like children, and it leads them to their death, and this deserves pity rather than ridicule or condemnation.

Key in understanding the word is the idea of misunderstanding or ignorance: misunderstanding of the situation, of the gods' intentions, but also of their own capacities. It

²⁶ See also: XII, 110-15; XVII, 494-98.

²⁷ II, 870-5.

is in that respect that there is a clear link with the original meaning: like children have a limited understanding of the adults' worlds, men have a limited understanding of the world as a whole, of fate, the gods and all that is metaphysically beyond them. As opposed to what Edmunds says, it does not seem to be 'disconnectedness' that applies to both children and foolish adults. It seems that when it is used of adults, the word is used metaphorically: by making those mistakes and errors of judgement, when, as adults, they should know better, men, in their misunderstanding of the world, are like children.

B – THE "OBITUARIES"

Another way of looking at the expression of the poet's pity in the *Iliad* is through an examination of what Griffin calls the "obituaries",²⁸ i.e. "those illuminations of minor warriors who exist in order to be killed",²⁹ a discreet but fundamental set which gives a flavour of what the poet's general attitude is.

According to Jasper Griffin,³⁰ in the "obituaries", Homer manages to confer significance on the slain, and to make their deaths have an emotional meaning for the audience. Even the dispassionate manner in which the deaths are recorded conveys emotion, and that is one of the most telling and representative aspects of the *Iliad*. Griffin records ten different motifs that are used by the poet to accentuate the pathos of death and make it moving and significant to the audience. These motifs are: dying far from home, dying near

²⁸ It is interesting to note that these motifs are mostly used by the poet himself to explain how tragic the death of such and such warrior is. They are also used in lamentations, by the friends and family of the dead warrior, but also in taunts, by the man who killed him, in which case, the pathos is still present, but is not intended by the character.

²⁹ Griffin (1980), 103.

³⁰ Griffin (1980), chapter IV "Death, pathos and Objectivity", 103-43.

friends, lack of care after death, the figure of the bereaved wife, the figure of the bereaved parents, the short life of a warrior, the divine perspective on human life, the young husband slain, beauty brought low, being unrecognisable in death and mutilation.

In the following pages, those categories have been slightly changed, to fit the uses more closely. Furthermore, what Griffin did not recognise is that although these motifs can also be used in things such as taunts or laments, those are not really obituaries (which are only used by the poet). It is clearer to stick strictly to obituaries, as they are very specific and unique expression of pathos in the poem. Therefore, the following examples are slightly different from those given by Griffin, as he tended to incorporate examples that followed the motifs but were not 'real' obituaries. Those are given in footnotes with the context in which they are used. Furthermore, it is worth adding that the obituaries can be used just before or after a warrior's death, but also a long time before his death, as a prediction by the poet. The following categories are classified starting with the most common motif and finishing with the rarest. As the conclusions from this classification remain fairly similar to Griffin's, though the focus is slightly different, descriptions of each category will remain brief.

1 – the bereavement of the warrior's family:³¹

Pity for a dead warrior is often expressed through mentioning the pain his death will cause to those closest to him. This motif is very important as it shows the world that exists outside the battlefield: the warriors do not exist in a vacuum, only to kill or be killed. There are people who care deeply about what happens to them. This motif also adds individual

³¹ From the father: XI, 328-34; the wife: II, 698-702; XIII, 170-6; 427-35. (See also as a boast: IV, 237-9; as a plea: VI, 431-2; XVIII, 120-24) The parents: V, 59-64; V, 148-58; XVII, 194-97; XX, 407-10. (See also: as a taunt: XIV, 501-5; XVII, 24; as a lament: XVII, 34-40; XXIV, 255-60.) The warrior did not have time to have children: XI, 240-5, and did not have time to repay his parents for his upbringing: XVII, 300-2.

biographical details to the life of the warriors, showing that they have an existence outside the limited sphere of the battlefield.

2 – friends cannot prevent the warrior's death:³²

This is partly similar to the previous motif in that it shows how the warrior's death affects people around him, here his comrades-in-arms. The pathos is also expressed in the inevitability of the death: even other warriors cannot prevent it from happening.

3 – loss of beauty and disfigurement:³³

The physical appearance of the warriors is important and is often commented on. In many ways, beauty equals courage and is part of the excellence of the warrior. Cowardice and a lower-class background is associated very often with ugliness, as is the case for example with Thersites, while there are several comments on Achilles' and Hector's beauty. In this particular obituary there is pathos in the fact that it is a shame to lose such a thing of beauty. Disfigurement on the other hand, is more than just a loss of beauty: its aim is to make the warrior unrecognisable, and therefore his exploits unsung.³⁴

4 – the short life of a warrior (almost exclusively used of Achilles):³⁵

One of the tragic themes that is present throughout the poem is that of the premature death that awaits Achilles. It is present in Thetis' lamentations from the start and after Patroclus'

³² IV, 522-24 = XII, 548-50, XIII, 653-55. It is also used when friends and allies are nearby but cannot give any help: XV, 650-52; V, 49-54. (See also: as a lament: XVI, 837).

³³ XVI, 638-40; XVII, 50-53; XXII, 401-4. That idea is also shown in the way the bodies of the minor warriors are left untended: VIII, 491 = X, 199, and are driven over by chariots: XI, 531-37; XX, 498-502. Griffin included the loss of helmets in this category. I have chosen not to.

³⁴ See Vernant (1999).

³⁵ XV, 610-14; XVII, 194-7; XVII, 300-3. See also in a lament: I, 352-53; I, 413-18; XV, 610-14; XVII, 201-2; XXIV, 540; XXIV, 725-26.

dearth, the knowledge and acceptance of that premature death colours everything that Achilles does.

5 – dying far away from home:³⁶

A common theme linked to Achean death is that they are never going to see their homeland again. It actually is not certain whether the Achaean dead were going to be buried in Troy or if their bodies were going to be brought back to Greece, as there is evidence for both. Furthermore, it is clear that the warriors greatly miss their homeland. It is also used very cleverly of Hector, even though he dies in his own country:

νηπίη, οὐδ' ἐνόησεν ὃ μιν μάλα τῆλε λοετρῶν
χερσὶν Ἀχιλλῆος δάμασε γλαυκῶπις Ἀθήνη.

Poor child, she did not know that far away from any bath bright-eyed Athena had brought him down at the hands of Achilles.

XXII, 445-6

6 – lack of burial:³⁷

Burial and the lack of it is a major theme in the poem and a very real concern for the warriors³⁸, as for example Hector's behaviour shows throughout the poem.

Of course, some examples can belong to several of those categories at the same time. All these obituaries, according to Griffin, show how pervasive the expression of pathos is in the *Iliad*. To him, "the universality of the Homeric vision confers significance on the victims of the great heroes who, in most warlike epics, count for nothing."³⁹ By showing the

³⁶ XV, 704-6; XVI, 298-303 (linked to the two other motifs "short life" and "bereaved wife"). (See also: as a reproach: XVI, 538-40; as a taunt: I, 29-31; XX, 389-92; in a lament: XI, 814-18; V, 684-88).

³⁷ XXI 200-4. See also: as a prediction: XVIII, 281-83; as a fear: XXII, 86-89; XXII, 66-68; as a boast: II, 391-93; XIII, 829-32; XI, 391-95; as a taunt: XXII, 333-34; XVI, 834-36; XXI, 122-27; in a lament: XI, 814-18; as a general statement: I, 1-5; XI, 159-62.

³⁸ See Griffin (1980).

³⁹ Griffin (1980), 139.

diversity in the lives those warriors have left behind them and in the manner of their death, the poet affects our perception of the nature of heroism and of the world in which the heroes struggle and die.

CONCLUSION

Pity is pervasive in the poem. It is a way to overcome death and suffering through human solidarity and fellow-feeling, as well as through the actions that pity leads to such as revenge or protection. It is not only an inner feeling, as it leads to gestures which have great significance on the battlefield: defending the body of a fallen warrior, avenging a comrade or even reconciliation between enemies. Unexpected acts of pity, such as what happens between Achilles and Priam, are what conclude the poem.

CHAPTER IV

MANKIND AND MILDNESS

I – MILDNESS IN CHARACTERS

The vocabulary of mildness in the *Iliad*, which for the purpose of this study includes gentleness and pleasantness, has been subjected to exhaustive classification in the *Lexikon*. Furthermore, words such as ἥπιος and μείλιχος (or μείλιχιος) have been examined by Romilly,¹ but not in such a way as to include all available occurrences. In this present study, the divisions used do in fact coincide largely with those to be found in the *Lexikon*, but are not dependent on them. The words ἥπιος, μείλιχος, ἀγανός, γλυκύς, ἡδύς and μαλακός as well as some derivatives such as γλυκύθυμος or μελιηδής are considered in the light of all their occurrences in the *Iliad*.

A simple examination of the lexical field of mildness therefore shows that those 'gentler' values were not unknown in the Homeric society.²

¹ Romilly (1979), 13-22.

² See in particular the criticism of Adkins made by Pearson (1962), 37-8 and 60-1.

A – AS A NATURAL QUALITY

Only three characters are specifically described as “mild” in the *Iliad*: Patroclus, Hector and Priam. With no other characters is an adjective meaning “mild” (ἥπιος or μέλιχος) used as the complement of the verb εἶμι and applied to the individual, rather than to words or actions, suggesting that when used predicatively, it appears to designate a general characteristic of the person rather than an incidental attribute.³

Jacqueline de Romilly studied in depth the word ἥπιος.⁴ To her, this adjective refers to a particular kind of mildness, that of a father towards his children and by extension, of a king towards his subjects. Odysseus in the *Odyssey* she sees as best exemplifying both these meanings of the word. The approval of his reign repeatedly expressed by his Ithacan subjects provides her principal evidence.⁵ This is to Romilly a mildness characteristic of patriarchal royalty. Even when the word is applied to other human values it retains this sense. This is why this word is used in regard to kings or leaders such as Zeus,⁶ Priam,⁷ and Hector.⁸ Those who are treated kindly are in their turn devoted to their “masters”, and it was this reciprocity that continued to be seen in the Classical period as a reason to recommend mild behaviour in rulers. Romilly gives examples of such a use of the term ἥπιος in Hesiod, Herodotus and Thucydides, as well as in tragedy and Aristophanes.⁹

³ Expressions such as ἥπια οἶδε will also be looked at later on.

⁴ Romilly (1979), 16-20.

⁵ She quotes Telemachus' remark about Odysseus: πατήρ δ' ὡς ἥπιος ἦεν (“he was mild as a father”) Mentor and Athena use the same formula in II, 234 and V, 12. Eumeus also complains that he will never find a master as ἥπιος as Odysseus (XIV, 139). Romilly (1979), 17.

⁶ VIII, 40 and XXII, 184.

⁷ XXIV, 770.

⁸ XXIV, 775.

⁹ See Romilly (1979), 18. Aristophanes in particular is mentioned in n.4 and tragedy in n.2. After Thucydides, it seems that the word disappears (other than brief mentions in Hippocrates), which, according to Romilly, could

Ἥπιος is used to designate a human quality having high social and political value. To evoke a more general attitude of gentleness, other words are used, such as μείλιχος or ἐνηής. Romilly says that those words are used in particular in relation to Patroclus who is not a king or even a leader, and cannot have the "mildness of a father", but who still has a "tempérament égal et bienveillant" and reproaches Achilles for his harshness, calling him νηλής (XVI, 33) and ἀπηνής (XVI, 35).

Yet, Romilly seems to forget that Patroclus is also called ἥπιος by Achilles. This raises the question of whether all of Romilly's conclusions relating to the patriarchal meaning of the word are undermined, since it is used to refer to someone who is not a king or a leader. Yet, if we look at the context in which this word is used in reference to Patroclus, we find that Achilles is talking about the gentleness that Patroclus, as a charioteer, shows to Achilles' horses:

τοίου γὰρ κλέος ἐσθλὸν ἀπώλεσαν ἠνιόχοιο
ἠπίου, ὅς σφωῖν μάλα πολλάκις ὕγρον ἔλαιον
χαιτάων κατέχευε λοέσσας ὕδατι λευκῷ.

They have lost their great and glorious charioteer, that ἥπιος man who so often would pour soft olive oil down over their manes after washing them in bright water.

XXIII, 280-2

This is clearly a relationship in which Patroclus is the master. But is the attitude of a charioteer towards his horses like that of a father towards his children, or that of a king towards his subjects? Indeed, the horses seem to miss Patroclus in the same way that Odysseus' people missed their king.¹⁰

If so, then we can indeed consider that the mildness expressed by the word ἥπιος has a precise meaning which presupposes a relationship such as that between ruler and

be due to the fact that "cette conception toute patriarcale de la douceur n'avait plus place dans la cité de type nouveau qui s'était alors instituée", 18.

¹⁰ XXIII, 283-4.

ruled.¹¹ Patroclus is also on two separate occasions described as μείλιχος once by Menelaus and once by Briseis. In Book XVII, the word describes his gentleness towards his comrades, equals and even superiors:

πᾶσιν γὰρ ἐπίστατο μείλιχος εἶναι

His way was to be μείλιχος to all men
XVII, 671

The use of the word πᾶσιν clearly rules out every possibility of using ἥπιος as defined above, since even considering Patroclus “ruled” some of the warriors (which is not at all obvious, since he is not a leader but Achilles’ charioteer),¹² it includes Menelaus himself and the other kings. Menelaus thus evokes Patroclus’ general attitude towards men, be they kings or simple soldiers. And indeed, one can even say that the word ἐπίστατο suggests an intellectual capacity for adaptability:¹³ he knew how to be kind to everybody, and expressed his kindness in ways which others, whatever their rank, clearly found appropriate.

The second example shows his gentleness towards a woman. Briseis says to him after his death:

τὼ σ’ ἄμοτον κλαίω τεθνηῶτα μείλιχον αἰεὶ.

‘And so I weep endlessly for your death. You were always μείλιχος’
XIX, 300

And it must be noticed that first of all, Briseis was never really treated as a slave, but more as a part of the household he and Achilles belonged to. Furthermore, with her, he played the part, not of a superior or “master”, but of a friend, consoling her and promising

¹¹ There are numerous other examples of that use of ἥπιος in the *Odyssey*, which seem to carry that same meaning: they refer to the attitude of a king towards his subjects (II, 230; II, 234; XIV, 139; XV, 153), of a husband towards his wife (X, 337; XI, 441), of the suitors towards Penelope and Telemachus (XX, 326), and of a goddess towards a mortal (XIII, 314). A similar link to hierarchy will be found in the chapter on pleasure. However, in *Odyssey* XV, 557, the word is used to describe the feelings of the swineherd Eumaeus has towards his masters: ἀνάκτεσιν ἥπια εἰδώς. This use seems to be in complete contradiction to the other examples.

¹² He is called Achilles’ ἠνίοχος at XVII, 427; 439; XXIII, 280.

¹³ On the link between character and knowledge, see Dodds (1951), 16ff. and n.103 and 104, 26. See also Marg (1967), 69ff., Nestle (1942), 33ff. and Gernet (1917), 312.

her a marriage with Achilles. On the other, one may wonder whether, in a way, Patroclus played the part of *Achilles'* father: he seems to be organising his marriage, as he talks not only of making Briseis his wife (θήσειν, XIX, 298) but also of organising a wedding feast (δαίσειν δὲ γάμον, XIX, 299). According to Nestor, Menoitius advised his son Patroclus to give counsel to Achilles, which is also one of the roles of fathers (XI, 783ff.).¹⁴

We can thus say that μείλιχος is not simply a synonym of ἥπιος, but implies a different kind of gentleness. It must also be noted that, similarly, the word ἐνηής is used in the *Iliad*, meaning "gentle". This adjective, and the corresponding noun, ἐνηεΐη, are to be found only in the *Iliad* (XVII, 204; XVII, 670; XXI, 96; XXIII, 252; XXIII, 648) and (except in XXIII, 648 where it is used of Nestor) only in reference to Patroclus, the adjective always as complements of the word ἑταῖρος. Etymologically, this rather mysterious word may be related to the Sanskrit ávas- meaning "benevolence" or "help".¹⁵

Even if Patroclus is the character who is the most talked about in terms of gentleness, he is not the only one described as possessing this quality. Helen describes king Priam as being ἐκυρός δὲ πατὴρ ὡς ἥπιος αἰεὶ, 'a father-in-law who was always ἥπιος as a father' (XXIV, 770), an expression in which we again find the idea of the father's mildness. And indeed, Priam treats Helen as his own daughter, calling her φίλον τέκος (III, 162). Helen also uses ἥπιος of Hector at his funeral, and not only that, but he also is the only one in Troy to behave kindly to her:

οὐ γάρ τις μοι ἔτ' ἄλλος ἐνὶ Τροίῃ εὐρείη
ἥπιος οὐδὲ φίλος, πάντες δὲ με πεφρόκασιν.

¹⁴ See below.

¹⁵ Pierre Chantraine (1968).

‘There is no-one else now in the broad land of Troy to be kind to me and a friend, but they all shudder with loathing for me.’

XXIV, 774-5

Hector thus stands as an exception within Troy (apart from his own father), and the use of the adjective ἥπιος in particular may mean that, like his father, he would have become a good king. The use of ἥπιος is explicable perhaps not so much by the fact that Hector is a man and Helen a woman, though it is possible. But Hector is the leading active man in Troy, and Helen seems all through the text to place herself under his power, perhaps as an acknowledgement of her own part in bringing about the war. Helen’s use of the noun ἀγανοφροσύνη to characterise Hector points to the fact that his influence over other people may have been enhanced by his own mild temperament. For example, Helen acknowledges to him that he has prevented his brothers to abuse her thanks to this quality:

σῆ τ’ ἀγανοφροσύνη καὶ σοῖς ἀγανοῖς ἐπέεσσι.

through your own gentle-hearted way and your gentle words.

XXIV, 772

The noun ἀγανοφροσύνη also suggest a mental disposition rather than a merely superficial reaction, in common with other –φροσυνη words. It may show than Hector’s gentleness resides more in reasoned thoughtfulness.¹⁶

B – LACK OF MILDNESS

Two characters in the *Iliad* are specifically described as lacking gentleness, Achilles and Agamemnon. It is interesting to notice that they are the ones who are responsible for the crisis which is the subject of the poem. They are several criticised for their harshness, as we

¹⁶ See also φιλοφροσύνη at XIX, 256.

will see, which shows that their attitude was regarded as abnormal by the rest of the Achaeans. Yet, if Agamemnon seems by nature to be harsh, Achilles' harshness is only linked to the circumstances, namely the way Agamemnon treats him, and then, more importantly, the death of Patroclus.

Agamemnon is never directly said not to be ἥπιος, but to lack the qualities connoted by the term ἥπιος, which, according to Achilles, makes it impossible to reach an agreement with him:

τάχα κεν φεύγοντες ἐναύλους
πλήσειαν νεκύων, εἴ μοι κρείων Ἀγαμέμνων
ἥπια εἰδείη·

"They would soon run in flight and fill the gullies with their dead, if lord Agamemnon would be ἥπιος to me"

XVI, 71-73

Ironically enough, this reproach comes from Achilles himself. The use of the word ἥπιος is here again perfectly understandable: Agamemnon does not behave as a king should (and is incapable of those ἥπια δῆνεα he boasts of).¹⁷ He is incapable of treating his "subordinates" properly, and this is to Achilles a reason not to oblige him, since he now considers himself to be outside of the laws of hierarchy, as is shown in the embassy scene.¹⁸

Achilles' status is clearly distinct from his usefulness, and because Agamemnon did not seem to think much of him in Book I, when he took Briseis from him, Achilles' use of the word βασιλεύτερος is ironic. By saying that even if Agamemnon's daughter was "as beautiful as Aphrodite and as talented as Athena" (IX, 389-90) he would not marry her, he

¹⁷ VI, 361. Does this mean that Achilles actually accepts Agamemnon's authority? It seems to be the case at XXIII, 156-7. Achilles' gripe, as we will see in the last part of the dissertation, is not necessarily about the social hierarchy of the Achaian camp as such, but has more to do with the fact that he is expected to perform the duties of an "inferior" while Agamemnon ignores his duties as a "superior".

¹⁸ IX, 391-2.

rejects the social implication of the match.¹⁹ This shows in negative the reciprocity occurring when a king is ἦπιος. Being ἦπιος is shown here as possessing a necessary social quality, which Agamemnon himself seems to acknowledge when he praises Odysseus' diplomacy in Book IV. Agamemnon has belatedly shown flexibility and some spirit of compromise and, objectively, Achilles should have taken advantage of the considerable advancement in his standing which the promised marriage would have conferred. In his refusal, however, he displays the very harshness he criticises in Agamemnon.²⁰

Achilles, on the other hand, is clearly described as being neither γλυκύθυμος nor ἀγανόφρων. This idea is linked to his refusal to spare a suppliant:

Τρώα δ' Ἀλαστορίδην, ὃ μὲν ἀντίος ἦλυθε γούνων,
εἶ πῶς εὖ πεφίδοιτο λαβῶν καὶ ζῶν ἀφείη
μηδὲ κατακτείνειεν ὀμηλικίην ἐλεήσας,
νήπιος, οὐδὲ τὸ ἦδη ὃ οὐ πείσεσθαι ἔμελλεν·
οὐ γάρ τι γλυκύθυμος ἀνὴρ ἦν οὐδ' ἀγανόφρων,
ἀλλὰ μάλ' ἔμμεμαῶς

Then Tros, son of Alastor – he came to take hold of Achilles' knees, in the hope that Achilles would spare him, taking him prisoner and releasing him alive, and would not kill him out of pity for a man of his own age: the fool, he did not realise that Achilles would never listen – this was no γλυκύθυμος man nor ἀγανόφρων man, but a man in full fury.

XX, 463-8²¹

Achilles not only is in no mood to spare anybody, but he would also consciously refuse anyway. This mental aspect of his attitude is also made clear by the participle ἔμμεμαῶς used to describe his state of mind, and which gives a connotation of desire and eagerness to Achilles' attitude: not only is he in no state to spare anybody, but he also *wants* to kill. Interestingly enough, this refusal to spare supplicants he shares with Agamemnon. In

¹⁹ See Donlan (1993).

²⁰ More on this topic in the part on politics.

²¹ On θυμός vs. φρένες/φρήνη, see in Clarke (1999), chapter 4 passim, esp. n.72, 31; 64 (+ n.9), 78 (+n.41 and n.42) and 83ff.. See also Jahn (1987), Caswell (1990), Darcus (1979, 1980 and 1988).

Book XI, Pisander and Hippolochus beg Agamemnon to spare their lives, but he does not listen to them:

Ὡς τῷ γε κλαίοντε προσαυδήτην βασιλῆα
 μελιχίοις ἐπέεσσιν· ἀμείλικτον δ' ὅπ' ἄκουσαν·

So these two wept their appeal to the king: meili/xioi words, but the answer they heard was ἀμείλικτος.

XI, 136-7

Agamemnon even shows the utmost cruelty to them by cutting off their hands and their heads. His words are also clearly described as being ἀμείλικτοι. In VI, 55-60, he says to his brother who wanted to spare a suppliant:²²

ὦ πέπον ὦ Μενέλαε, τί ἦ δὲ σὺ κήδεαι οὕτως
 ἀνδρῶν; ἢ σοὶ ἄριστα πεποιήται κατὰ οἶκον
 πρὸς Τρώων; τῶν μὴ τις ὑπεκφύγοι αἰπὺν ὄλεθρον
 χειρᾶς θ' ἡμετέρας, μηδ' ὄν τινα γαστέρι μήτηρ
 κούρον ἐόντα φέροι, μηδ' ὄς φύγοι, ἀλλ' ἅμα πάντες
 Ἰλίου ἐξαπολοίατ' ἀκήδεστοι καὶ ἄφαντοι.

"Menelaus, dear brother, why this concern for men's lives? Did you get the very best treatment from the Trojans in your house? Not one of them must escape stark destruction at our hands, even the boys still carried in their mothers' wombs – not even they must escape, but all be extinguished together, wiped from Ilion without sight or ceremony."

VI, 55-60

Curiously enough, one may think this cruel statement seems to be approved by the poet himself, who says:

Ὡς εἰπὼν ἔτρεψεν ἀδελφειοῦ φρένας ἦρως
 αἴσιμα παρειπῶν·

With these words the hero turned his brother's mind, winning him αἴσιμα παρειπῶν.

VI, 61-62

The poet usually never condones the cruelty he describes,²³ and the sentence quoted above has puzzled scholars like Grace Macurdy.²⁴ Yet, here, αἴσιμον does not necessarily mean

²² Supplication is a very important theme in the *Iliad*, and will be looked at in greater detail in the next chapter.

²³ The poet, unlike some of his characters, never seems to rejoice in bloodshed. On the poet's "objectivity", see Griffin (1980). On cruelty not being condoned, see also Segal (1971) and Romilly (1985, 1992 and 1997).

²⁴ Macurdy (1940), 20-21. The general puzzlement which exists over this expression can be seen in the following quotation: "But to our dismay the epic story continues in a way that has caused great dismay to commentators:

“just” or “suitable” as is often thought, but retains its primary meaning of “decreed by fate”. Homer may simply state that the Trojans’ destruction is fated, and this may be the implication of using the word αἴσιμον in this context. It does not necessarily imply that Homer approves of what is going to happen, but simply states an irrefutable fact. It does not undermine in the least the general idea that that the normal attitude is that of Menelaus, since the only people who kill suppliants, Achilles and Agamemnon, are also criticised elsewhere for their harshness. Furthermore, Agamemnon seems to take too much pleasure in killing the suppliants (when he cuts off their hands and heads in Book XI for example) to appear simply as “doing his duty”, and we are also told that Achilles himself used to spare suppliants before Patroclus’ death.²⁵ He tells Lycaon:

πρὶν μὲν γὰρ Πάτροκλον ἐπισπεῖν αἴσιμον ἦμαρ
τόφρᾳ τί μοι πεφιδέσθαι ἐνὶ φρεσὶ φίλτερον ἦεν
Τρώων, καὶ πολλοὺς ζωοῦς ἔλον ἠδ’ ἐπέρασσα·

“Before Patroclus met the day of his fate, then it was more my mind’s liking to spare Trojans, and there were many I took alive and sold elsewhere.”

XXI, 100-2

Thus, there is a precise reason for his sudden cruelty, which is represented as abnormal even for the hero himself. We can also notice that the word αἴσιμον is used again here (αἴσιμον ἦμαρ), and does not mean “just” or “suitable” either, but simply indicates that Patroclus died on the day Fate decided he should die. It is an objective statement and not an approval.²⁶

‘with these words he diverted the heart of his brother from his purpose, giving *him just counsel*.’ Thus the poet commends Agamemnon’s monstrous words of cruelty. I do not approve of a change of αἴσιμα (just) to αἴσυλα (unjust), nor do I agree with miss Stawell’s argument that παρειπών in this passage and in Il., VII, 121 means “uttering awry”, “perverting the right”. The phrase αἴσιμα παρειπών appears to me to be an “unexpurgated” phrase, left over from an older lay, perhaps used here carelessly for “giving him timely advice”, i.e., just in time to prevent Menelaus from yielding to his impulse of mercy.”

²⁵ However, killing suppliants is also never directly condemned by the poet. The pathos of a scene such as the encounter with Lycaon indirectly shows Achilles’ cruelty, but there is no direct condemnation. The closest we get to a direct condemnation is that of human sacrifice at XXIII, 176 (κακὰ ἔργα).

²⁶ For a similar argument, see Goldhill (1990).

It is also important to notice that the only gods who are said to lack mildness are also those who are the most hated by men and gods alike, namely Hades and the Erinyes. Before sending the embassy, Agamemnon says that he hopes Achilles will yield:

δηθήτω· Αἴδης τοι ἀμείλιχος ἢ δ' ἀδάμαστος,
τοῦνεκα καί τε βροτοῖσι θεῶν ἔχθιστος ἀπάντων

'Let him yield'²⁷ – Hades is the one who is ἀμείλιχος and pitiless, and for that he is of all gods the most hated by men.

IX, 158-9

And during the embassy itself, when telling Achilles the story of Meleager, who eventually relented and saved his people, Phoenix mentions the Erinyes ἀμείλιχον ἦτορ ἔχουσα (IX, 572), "having an ἀμείλιχος heart". Those two divinities are used as counter-examples, and exemplify the behaviour men should avoid, and are themselves abnormal by "divine" standards: they are hated, and unlike the gods who are said to be moved by prayers and sacrifices, they are implacable.

D – THE INAPPROPRIATENESS OF MILDNESS

If gentleness of words and attitudes seems to be highly valued by the Homeric heroes, this quality becomes a flaw when it is transferred from social relationships to the battlefield. During Hector's funeral, Andromache explains to Astyanax that people mourn him because he was such a fierce warrior:²⁸

ἐπεὶ μάλα πολλοὶ Ἀχαιῶν
Ἐκτορος ἐν παλάμῃσιν οὐδ' ἔλον ἄσπετον οὐδας.

²⁷ Yielding is a fairly important theme in regards to the Achilles/Agamemnon dispute, where Achilles, as an 'inferior', is expected to 'yield' to Agamemnon's authority. It is interesting to note that the same verb is also used of being vanquished on the battlefield (IV, 99; V, 646; XIV, 316; XVIII, 113).

²⁸ Cf. also Astyanax' reaction to his father's helmet in Book VI.

οὐ γὰρ μείλιχος ἔσκε πατήρ τεὸς ἐν δαΐ λυγρῇ
τῷ καὶ μιν λαοὶ μὲν ὀδύρονται κατὰ ἄστυ,

"There were many of the Achaeans who sank their teeth in the broad earth, brought down at Hector's hands. Your father was no μείλιχος man in the misery of battle. And so the people are mourning him all through the city."

XXIV, 737-40

She probably means that they are sorely going to miss his prowess in battle. On the other hand, when Agamemnon is said to be ἀμείλικτος (XI, 137) on the battlefield, it is not meant to be a compliment. But there are here two very different attitudes: Hector is harsh to enemies while defending his country,²⁹ and Agamemnon is harsh to suppliants, when he should have been gentle. Harshness is appropriate when used in a fair fight, not towards helpless people. Unlike Agamemnon, Hector is harsh only when it is called for.

In Book XV, when the Trojans are very near to setting fire to the Achaean ships, Ajax says:

τῷ ἐν χερσὶ φόως, οὐ μείλιχίη πολέμοιο.

"So salvation is in the strength of our hands, not in μείλιχίη in battle."

XV, 741

The word is often (unnecessarily) translated by "weakness" rather than "gentleness", and indeed, it is difficult to imagine what sort of μείλιχίη Ajax is referring to. It does seem like a bit of an obvious statement ("strength is better than gentleness in battle!"), and indicates that Ajax enjoys valour and that μείλιχίη has no place on the battlefield. It looks like a simple "no mercy to our enemy" statement., rather than anything really specific. It is a rallying cry for courage and action, made dramatic by the use of a polar expression: μείλιχίη/χερσί. The use

²⁹ The Achaians, on the other hand, are described as pillaging neighbouring town (which is where they get captives and booty from: I, 124-6; 163-4; II, 133; VI, 414-6; IX, 185-9) whereas the Trojans (Andromache for example), are focusing on defending the wall around Troy to prevent an incursion (V, 471-6; 489-92; VI, 433-4; also the fact that the most common epithet of Troy is εὐρυάγυια is quite significant).

of the term is very similar to what Andromache says of Hector in the previous example:

μελιχίη is not a welcome quality in the middle of battle.

Mildness is a welcome and valued quality in the poem, and even appears to be link to important qualities of leadership.³⁰ Some individuals seem to be gifted with more gentleness than others (Patroclus and Hector as opposed to Agamemnon in particular), and, interestingly, Zeus himself is described as especially gentle. We will now look at the importance of this quality within the circle of family and friends.

³⁰ See also section on persuasion below and part III on Politics.

II – MILDNESS WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS

Family is typically the place in which a reciprocal mild behaviour is expected from the characters (especially when women are involved). A study of the words referring to family (μήτηρ, πατήρ, ἄλοχος, πόσις, παῖς, τέκνον, ἀδελφός, κασίγνητος) highlights the kind of mild relationships that usually exist within the family circle in the *Iliad*.¹ Harshness within the family can of course happen, but it is generally viewed as abnormal, as is Anthea's hatred for her son, Meleager:

τῇ ὃ γε παρκατέλεκτο χόλον θυμαλγέα πέσσω
ἐξ ἀρέων μητρὸς κεχολωμένος

This was the wife that Meleager lay with, and he brooded on the anger that pained his heart, made furious at his mother for her curses.

IX, 565-66

A father's anger driving his son to exile is similarly uncommon:

φεύγων νείκεα πατρὸς Ἀμύντορος Ὀρμενίδαο,
ὅς μοι παλλακίδος περιχώσατο καλλικόμοιο

running from the anger of my father Amyntor, son of Ormenus. He was enraged at me over his lovely-haired concubine.

IX, 448-49²

Thus, the familial relationship and the roles attributed to each member can be used as a paradigm to explore relationships outside the sphere of the family.

¹ For a general look at kinship mildness in the context of care, see Lynn-George (1996), *passim*, esp. as linked to funeral rites.

² See also Priam's behaviour towards his son at XXIV, 248-54.

A –WOMEN IN THE *ILIAD*

Women play a surprisingly large part in the *Iliad* and the female characters, though they are not as central to the action as the heroes are, are arguably as striking.

The female gender is often used as a symbol of cowardice on the battlefield,³ but women also have a very positive role to play outside the sphere of war. For example, their role as birth-givers makes them a symbol of life, offering a sharp contrast to the reign of death on the battlefield.⁴ Women are also very much present through their suffering and their mourning for their male relatives, which makes theirs a mild and sympathetic presence.⁵ The poem also presents them as symbols of the fate of the non-combatants during a war, insofar as most women are Trojans, and are seen as representing all women whose men-folk are engaged in a war.⁶

Women also reveal another aspect of the warrior: Hector in particular, is not only a fierce combatant, he also is a gentle husband,⁷ a respectful son,⁸ and a man capable of treating Helen kindly, though she is reviled by the rest of the Trojans.⁹

Women have particular relationships with warriors, specific "roles" to fulfil, and specific responses to expect, most of which are linked with the theme of mildness.¹⁰

³ Cf. II, 235 and VII, 96. See also II, 289-90; VII, 235-35; XI, 389; XVI, 2-8; XX, 252-54; XXII, 124-25.

⁴ On maternity and metaphors of maternity on the battlefield, see chapter I on mortality.

⁵ See chapter II on suffering. This 'mildness' nevertheless has some striking exceptions, such as Hecuba's desire to eat Achilles' liver at XXIV, 209-13.

⁶ Mossé (1981) points out that the only female characters in the *Iliad* are either servants or royalty: "des femmes du peuple, aucune mention, comme si les Thersyte et autres hommes du vulgaire qui constituent le gros de l'armée en étaient dépourvus." She adds: "il est bien évident que ni le poète, ni ses auditeurs n'en avaient cure.", 210. However, ordinary working women do appear in the poem, in important and memorable similes, as well as on the shield of Achilles. Considering the importance and significance in Homer of both the shield and the similes, it seems very unreasonable to conclude that the poet does not care about the characters that appear in them. On the contrary, they show Homer's love for the ordinary life, and that he saw the beauty and the significance of it, even in an aristocratic, heroic context, and used it side by side with the heroes. On this point see in particular Romilly (1985). On similes involving women, see chapter I on mortality. For similes involving men compared to women in the *Odyssey*, see Foley (1978).

⁷ See in particular VI, 399-502.

⁸ See in particular VI, 250-85.

⁹ See in particular XXIV, 762-75.

1 - mothers

The social role of the mother in the *Iliad* follows the son throughout his entire life, since mothers give birth, raise and finally bury their sons. Even when the warriors have reached their full manhood, and even in times of war, mothers are still present at their sons' side. They give them advice,¹¹ they console them,¹² and if they can, they protect them.¹³

This last role is mostly reserved to the goddess-mothers such as Thetis or Aphrodite.¹⁴ The mother also appears as a *mater dolorosa*, lamenting over her son's misfortunes or mourning over his corpse.¹⁵

It is noticeable that Thetis is the foremost mother figure in the *Iliad* (out of 98 occurrences of the word μήτηρ, 33 refer to Thetis).¹⁶ Of course, the fact that she is a goddess means that she is more capable of helping her son than say, Hecuba, but it is interesting to see that even the "best of the Achaians" can require the help and love of his mother, without

¹⁰ On the role of women in the poem, see in particular Arthur (1973), Clader (1976), Foley (1978), Groten (1968), Hirvonen (1968), Kahn (1998), Llewellyn-Jones (2003), Loraux (1981, 1990), Monsacré (1984), Mossé (1981), Rose (1993), Van Wees (2005).

¹¹ See also: XVIII, 189 and XVIII, 216.

¹² See also: I, 357-63; V, 370-74; VI, 251-54; XVIII, 35-37; XVIII, 70-73; XVIII, 78-82; XXIV, 126-131; XXIV, 141-42.

¹³ See also: IV, 130-31; VI, 429-30; VIII, 271-72; XXIII, 782-83; XXIV, 72-73.

¹⁴ On Thetis' grief, see Slatkin (1986), 14, and for a comparison with Demeter, 17. On the point of motherly affection to foreground mortality, see Leach (1997), 355. On female suffering, see chapter II of the dissertation.

¹⁵ I, 413-18. Another example is Hecuba in Book XXII:

Τρωῆσιν δ' Ἐκάβη ἀδινού ἐξήρχε γόοιο
τέκνον ἐγὼ δειλή· τί νυ βείομαι αἰνὰ παθοῦσα
σεῦ ἀποτεθνηῶτος;

And Hecuba led the women of Troy in the loud lament: 'child, oh, my misery! Why should I live now, when I have suffered the agony of your death?' (XXII, 430-32)

and Andromache in Book XXIV:

καὶ μὲν ἐγὼ μετὰ τῆσι· σὺ δ' αὖ τέκος ἢ ἔμοι αὐτῇ
ἔψεται, ἔνθά κεν ἔργα ἀεικέα ἐργάζοιο
ἀθλεύων πρὸ ἀνακτος ἀμειλίχου, ἢ τις Ἀχαιῶν
ὀίψει χειρὸς ἐλὼν ἀπὸ πύργου λυγρὸν ὄλεθρον

And you, child, you will go where I go, where you will be put to shaming work, slaving for a cruel master. Or some Achaian will catch you by the arm and fling you from the walls to a miserable death. (XXIV, 732-35).

¹⁶ For a comparison with the relationship between Eos and Memnon in the *Aithiopsis*, see Slatkin (1986), 2ff.

being diminished in his manhood.¹⁷ A mother is expected to be with her son when he needs her, and often, as H  l  ne Monsacr   pointed out, the initial proximity between mother and son underlines their encounter: Thetis often has for Achilles the mild gestures a mother has for a very small child (cf. XVIII, 35; XVIII,70; XVIII, 71). Aphrodite, to protect her son Aeneas, repeats the gestures of maternity: she takes him in her arms and holds him against her breast:

Καί ν  κεν  νθ'  πόλοιτο  ναξ  νδρ ν Αινείας,
 εἰ μὴ  ρ'  ξ  νόησε Διὸς θυγάτηρ Αφροδίτη
 μήτηρ, ἣ μιν  π' Αγχίση τέκε βουκολέοντι
  μφι δ'  ν φίλον υἷον  χεύατο πῆχρε λευκῶ,
 πρὸσθε δ  οἱ πέπλοιο φαεινοῦ πτ γμα κάλυψεν
  ρκος  μεν βελέων, μὴ τις Δαναῶν ταχυπῶλων
 χαλκὸν  νι στήθεσσι βαλὼν  κ θυμὸν  λοιτο.

And now Aeneas, lord of men, would have perished there, if Zeus' daughter Aphrodite ¹⁸had not quickly seen it, his mother, who had conceived him to Anchises, when he was herding cattle. She threw her white arms around her dear son, and held the fold of her shining robe in covering him, to shield him from the spears, so that no fast-horsed Danaan should cast a bronze spear in his chest and take the life from him.

V, 311-17

That scene can be compared with the one between Andromache and Astyanax, in which the gestures are quite similar:

 ς εἰπὼν  λόχοιο φίλης  ν χερσῖν  θηκε
 παῖδ'  ν·ἣ δ'  ρα μιν κηῶδει δ ξατο κόλπῳ
 δακρυόεν γελάσασα·

So speaking, he placed his son in his dear wife's arms. She took him to her scented breast, smiling with tears in her eyes.

VI, 482-84¹⁹

¹⁷ Nevertheless, constantly saving a mortal warrior from danger, as Aphrodite does with Aeneas, prevents him from being truly heroic. As Slatkin (1986) points out: "To snatch a hero from danger, to protect him from death, however, offers a paradox of which the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are conscious: that preserving a hero from death means denying him a heroic life.", 7., On the relationship between Thetis and Achilles, see Slatkin (1986) 8ff. And 22. On the protection motif, see 8ff and 20ff and on the theme of concealment, 7. On the relationship between Aphrodite and Aeneas in the *Aeneid*, see Winsor Leach (1997), esp. 351ff, 362ff (363-4 for a comparison with the *Iliad*), and Wlosok (1967), 86-88 and 110-111.

¹⁸ A handmaid also uses the same gesture towards Astyanax (VI, 400).

¹⁹ See also Achilles comparing Patroclus to a little girl wanting to be picked up by her mother (XVI, 7-10).

Curiously, Thetis is said to have used the same maternal gesture, not towards Achilles, but towards Dionysus (VI, 136) and Hephaistos (XVIII, 398). In a way, this shows Thetis as the quintessential mother.

While begging Hector not to fight Achilles, Hecuba unveils her breast, the symbol of maternity. By doing that, "elle rappelle à Hector, sur le point de mourir, qu'il a été un tout petit enfant, et que le plus vaillant guerrier reste, en un certain sens, un enfant pour sa mère."²⁰

In the *Iliad*, all those gestures seem to exist only between mother and child, whatever the age of the child.²¹

2 - wives

Of course, the social role of the wife is to be submissive to her husband and to obey him.²² It is also to fulfil domestic duties, such as running a bath for the warrior's return from the battlefield.²³ She is also expected to give him children.²⁴

The relationship between husband and wife as shown in the poem, is very complex and intimate.²⁵ Women can give help and advice to their husbands, and their main tool is persuasion.²⁶

²⁰ Monsacré (1984), 89. Although her purpose is really to remind Hector of what she did for him, so he does her a favour in return and does not fight Achilles.

²¹ Lateiner (1998) does not seem to have picked up on those gestures. On the other hand, the 'protection motif' (see Slatkin 1986) can also involve male gods: Apollo covers Hector's dead body with the Aegis (XXIV, 20), Hephaistos covers Idaeus (V, 23) and Molione (XI, 752) in darkness to save them from death, Apollo covers Agenor in mist (XXI, 597), Apollo send a cloud to protect Hector's body (XXIII, 189). It is once seen from a human being, when Ajax covers Patroclus' body with his shield (XVII, 132).

²² III, 408-9, V, 70-71

²³ XXII, 440-44. See also: XXII, 155-57. For a list of domestic duties to be expected from the wife, see Mossé (1986), 216 (esp. Penelope, 217) and Arthur (1973), 13.

²⁴ XIX, 115-17. Interestingly, this is not something that seems particularly emphasized in the *Iliad*. Arthur (1973) argues convincingly that "since heirs were freely bred from concubines, or freely adopted, the child-bearing services of the wife were less critically essential than in an era when only the legitimate wife could produce a legitimate heir.", 17. We will see in the sub-part on happiness how the husband/wife relationship, like many others, is both hierarchical and reciprocal.

The example of Meleager's story, as told by Phoenix during the embassy scene is also quite significant, as it shows a certain power of the wife, persuasion. While the elders and priests, family and even dear friends fail, only his wife convinces him to fight.

The wives are also shown to share a special relationship with their husbands. They for example expect to share knowledge:

Ἥρη μὴ δὴ πάντας ἐμοὺς ἐπιέλπεο μύθους
εἰδήσειν· χαλεποί τοι ἔσονται ἀλόχῳ περ' εὐούσῃ.

'Hera, do not expect to know of all my thoughts – they will be hard for you, even though you are my wife.'

I, 545-46

But more importantly, love can play a great part, as is particularly plain in the relationship between Hector and Andromache:

ἀλλ' οὐ μοι Τρώων τόσσον μέλει ἄλγος ὀπίσσω,
οὔτ' αὐτῆς Ἑκάβης οὔτε Πριάμοιο ἀνακτος
οὔτε κασιγνήτων, οἳ κεν πολέες τε καὶ ἐσθλοὶ
ἐν κόνιῃσι πέσοιεν ὑπ' ἀνδράσι δυσμενέεσσιν,
ὅσσον σεῦ, ὅτε κέν τις Ἀχαιῶν χαλκοχιτώνων
δακρύνεσσαν ἄγηται ἐλεύθερον ἡμαρ ἀπούρας

'But the pain I feel for the suffering to come is less for the people of Troy, less even for Hecuba and king Priam and my brothers, the many brave brothers who will fall in the dust at the hands of our enemies, than my pain for you, when one of the bronze-clad Achaian carries you away in tears and takes away the day of your freedom.'

VI, 450-55²⁷

Arthur argues that although "the social position of women in Homeric times was roughly the same as in later times in Greece", "the new importance of man's personal life, especially the life of the family", is treated by Homer "as part of the forward-moving element in society [...]. As a result, woman's position was upgraded ideologically; the everyday relations

²⁵ See Mossé (1986) in particular on the relationships between Hector and Andromache and Priam and Hecuba, 213-14.

²⁶ VI, 337-38 and IX, 590-96.

²⁷ See also: for Andromache: VI, 366; VI, 394; VI, 482; for other wives: IX, 335-37; IX, 340-41; XIV, 315-16.

between man and wife especially were the subject of romanticization which contrasted strongly with the epic emphasis on heroic exploits."²⁸

Furthermore; Kakridis shows very clearly that the Meleager story points to a scale of affection, which the wife tops.²⁹ In a later work,³⁰ Kakridis points out that women have a role in the *Iliad*, which is of exercising a restraining power. Nevertheless, he defines this "restraining power" as something negative, since to him it consists in "trying to dissuade them from doing their duty, as they feel they must, and by keeping alive the agonizing conflict in their souls." While this may be partially true of Andromache (she does offer good strategic advice regarding the defence of the wall, but it is not what Hector "feels he must" do), it does not match what Cleopatra does in the Meleager story: she actually *encourages* him to do his duty. Helen also does the opposite of restraint, as she reviles Paris for not fighting and behaving like a coward.³¹ As for Hecuba, she does try to prevent Priam from going into the Achaian camp to claim Hector's body, but considering that in the same breath she talks about eating Achilles' liver,³² "restraint" might not be the most appropriate term too use here.

In a context of war, protecting one's wife and children is an incentive to fight, as women are characterised by their potentiality to be a prey to the enemy. Women are also first and foremost linked to their husbands, they have no existence outside of them.³³ Andromache for example is always mentioned in relation to Hector; she has no real individual existence.³⁴

The relationship between Priam and Hecuba also seems to be a very close one, as is shown

²⁸ Arthur (1973), 14. On Hector in particular, see 11-12 and on Odysseus/Penelope, see 14-15.

²⁹ Kakridis, Th. (1949), 19-20.

³⁰ Kakridis, Th. (1979).

³¹ III, 428-36.

³² XXIV, 201-216.

³³ This is also the case of children, as will be seen below.

³⁴ Cf. VI, 369-502; VIII, 185-190; XXII, 437-515 and XXIV, 723-746.

by Hecuba's reaction when Priam decides to go and see Achilles: she rants and raves at him to try and prevent him from going into the Achaian camp (XXIV, 139-227), while the relationship between Paris and Helen seems to be much more problematic: she seems to feel sexual desire for Paris (as embodied by Aphrodite), but she also seems to despise him (III, 383-450).

Men in the *Iliad* generally show kindness to women, and sometimes, even to women who are actually outside their family circle: Hector and Priam show great kindness to Helen, even though she is a stranger to them, and the cause of their woe.³⁵ Patroclus is also kind to Briseis, even though she is only a captive (XIX, 300).

In general, the attitude of warriors towards women is significant of their attitude in general, and towards those more vulnerable than themselves in particular. Hector and Patroclus are a very good example of that. Agamemnon on the other hand, who speaks dismissively of his wife Clytemnestra³⁶ and treats the two captives Chryseis and Briseis as mere possessions rather than as human beings, is also the one who systematically refuses to spare suppliants.³⁷

Therefore, it is safe to say that Finley is wrong when he says:

Be that as it may, there is no mistaking the fact that Homer fully reveals what remained true for the whole of antiquity, that women were held to be naturally inferior and therefore limited in their function to the production of offspring and the

³⁵ XXIV, 765-67 and III, 161-64

³⁶ See I, 113-5.

³⁷ See VI, 51-65 and XI, 122-47.

performance of household duties, and that the meaningful social relationships and the strong personal attachments were sought and found among men.³⁸

Arthur of course strongly disagrees with Finley, and her conclusion is that his statement assumes a connection between women's social function and an active desire on the part of society as a whole to establish their inferiority. Yet nowhere in the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey* do we find any disparaging remarks about women's role, nowhere do we encounter the expressions of misogyny which appear so frequently in later Greek literature. Although it may be true that the position of women in Homeric times was little different from that of later times in Greece, there *is* a difference in the Homeric attitude towards this social role. The Homeric poet focuses almost exclusively on the positive side of the position of women; it emphasises women's *inclusion* in society as a whole, rather than her exclusion from certain roles; it celebrates the importance of the functions that women do perform, instead of drawing attention to their handicaps or inabilities.³⁹

It is also noticeable that that the judgement of the Trojan women seem to matter to Hector as much as that of the Trojan men:

ἀλλὰ μάλ' αἰνῶς
αἰδέομαι Τρῶας καὶ Τρῳάδας ἔλκεσιπέπλους,
αἶ κε κακὸς ὧς νόσφιν ἀλυσκάζω πολέμοιο

"But I would feel terrible shame before the men of Troy and the women of Troy with their trailing dresses, if like a coward I skulk away from the fighting."

VI, 441-3⁴⁰

There also exists a female version of the Council of the elders, with Hecuba at its head.⁴¹

³⁸ Finley (1954), 128.

³⁹ Arthur (1973), 13-14. For the *Odyssey*, see also Foley (1978) on the similes equating Penelope with Odysseus. On the same topic, see also Podlecki (1971), 90 and Arthur (1973), 15.

⁴⁰ See also XXII, 104-5.

B - CHILDREN

Children are very often mentioned alongside their mothers, much more rarely on their own, unless it is a reference to a specific child, and are more or less in the same situation as wives, in that they also are potential prey for the enemy, and must be defended.⁴² But as is the case for wives, it does not mean they are necessarily defended as possessions, but most of the time as "loved ones", as the use of words like τέκνον or παῖς as terms of affection outside the family circle shows quite well. Better still is the short scene where Hector sees his son Astyanax in Book VI, and where tenderness is clearly present, in passages such as those:

ἦτοι ὁ μὲν μείδησεν ἰδὼν ἐς παῖδα σιωπῇ

Hector looked at his son and smiled in silence.

VI, 404

Ὡς εἰπὼν οὗ παιδὸς ὄρεξατο φαίδιμος Ἴκτωρ
 ἄψ δ' ὁ παῖς πρὸς κόλπον ἐϋζώνοιο τιθήνης
 ἐκλίνθη ἰάχων πατρὸς φίλου ὄψιν ἀτυχθεῖς
 ταρβήσας χαλκὸν τε ἰδὲ λόφον ἵππιοχαίτην,
 δεινὸν ἀπ' ἀκροτάτης κόρυθος νεύοντα νοήσας.
 ἐκ δ' ἐγέλασσε πατήρ τε φίλος καὶ πότνια μήτηρ
 αὐτίκ' ἀπὸ κρατὸς κόρυθ' εἶλετο φαίδιμος Ἴκτωρ,
 καὶ τὴν μὲν κατέθηκεν ἐπὶ χθονὶ παμφανόωσαν
 αὐτὰρ ὁ γ' ὄν φίλον υἷον ἐπεὶ κύσε πηλέε τε χερσίν

So speaking glorious Hector reached out to take his son. But the child shrank back crying against the breast of his girdled nurse, terrified at the sight at the sight of his own father, frightened by the bronze and the crest of horse-hair, as he saw it nodding dreadfully from the

⁴¹ VI, 270, 287, 296. See Mossé (1986), 215. As for the topic of women in the poem, a comparison with Hesiod's violent misogyny is not uninteresting. See in particular Arthur (1973), 20ff., esp. 22-25. Her conclusion is that: "The Hesiodic attitude towards women and their social roles, then, is part and parcel of the developing trend toward a society made up of individual, small families, but an attitude formulated from the perspective of that class for whom the small family was an economic and political necessity and for whom, consequently, woman's enforced participation in a society in which she had no concrete stake posed a problem. From the Homeric or aristocratic point of view, this evolution was part of a promising movement towards a new humanism, and no immediate threat to a class for whom the small family was only part of larger network of clan affiliations which assured the security of their political positions.", 25.

⁴² VIII, 55-57; IV, 130-31; IV, 238-39; VI, 94-95 = VI, 275-76 = VI, 309-10; VI, 237-41; VI, 407-9; VIII, 55-57; VIII, 271-72; IX, 594; XII, 433-35; XV, 497-99; XV, 661-66; XVII, 223-24; XXII, 63; XXIV, 729-30

top of the helmet. His dear father and honoured mother laughed aloud at this, and glorious Hector took the helmet straight from his head and laid it gleaming bright on the ground. Then he kissed his dear son and dandled him in his arms.

VI, 466-74

Even the fact that Hector has a special name for his son, Scamandrios, is significant of the special love he has for the child (VI, 399-403).

Furthermore, out of 23 occurrences of the word φίλτατος, 6 refer to a son.⁴³

Male children are also heirs to their father, and the theme of transmission⁴⁴ is very present in the poem, and helps create another kind of privileged relationship between father and son. Children are also put forward as an image of innocence and thus show an aspect of life different from the picture of war that is predominant in the poem⁴⁵.

C – MALE RELATIVES

1 - brothers

In times of war, the relationship between two brothers takes different forms: co-operation in battle,⁴⁶ protection,⁴⁷ revenge when one of the siblings is killed.⁴⁸ As Van Wees points out,

⁴³ V, 378; XV, 111; XVI, 433; XVIII, 118; XX, 410; XIV, 748.

⁴⁴ Knowledge: IV, 218-19; bravery, XIV, 113; houses and objects, XVII, 194-97; but also misfortunes and responsibility: XI, 142 and family traits: V, 892-93

⁴⁵ See for example II, 337-38; VII, 234-36; XI, 558-62; XV, 362-4; XVI, 259-62; XVIII, 554-56; XVIII, 569-71.

⁴⁶ XXI, 308-310; VII, 2-3; XV, 436-41; XV, 466-70; XV, 545-47; XVI, 326-27; XXIII, 607-8. The *Odyssey* points out that:
ἦ τι κασιγνήτοισ' ἐπιμέμφει, οἷσιν περ ἄνηρ
μαρναμένοισι πέποιθε, καὶ εἰ μέγα νείκος ὄρηται; (16, 97-8 = 115-16)

⁴⁷ VIII, 330-31; V, 20-21; V, 357-60; VI, 429-30; XI, 257-58; XIII, 533-35; XIV, 469-85. Not doing so is a great source of disgrace, as the *Odyssey* points out:

λώβη γὰρ τάδε γ' ἐστὶ καὶ ἐσσομένοισι πυθέσθαι,
εἰ δὴ μὴ παίδων τε κασιγνήτων τε φονῆας
τεισόμεθ' (24, 433-4)

⁴⁸ XVI, 319-21; IX, 566-71; XI, 248-53; XX, 419-23; XXIV, 433-5; 736.

kinship ties "involve mutual support in conflict", and kinsmen and friends "are potentially a great source of power."⁴⁹

But as with women, it can also take the form of a gentler kind of interaction, such as: persuasion,⁵⁰ an open display of worry, when one of them is wounded for example,⁵¹ affection:

Δηϊφωβ' ἢ μὲν μοι τὸ πάρος πολὺ φίλτατος ἦσθα
γνωτῶν οὖς Ἑκάβη ἠδὲ Πριάμος τέκε παῖδας·

Deiphobus, you have always been the brother I loved far the most of all the sons born to Hecuba and Priam.

XXII, 233-34⁵²

According to Whitman, Agamemnon at IV, 148ff, when Menelaus is wounded, seems to be merely fussing over Menelaus rather than showing real affection⁵³ (and their relationship is very unlike the "high-hearted friendship of Diomedes and Sthenelus" or "the passionate unity of Achilles and Patroclus"). Nevertheless, the brothers also appear to be particularly close, for example when Menelaus instinctively feels his brother needs him in Book II:

αὐτόματος δέ οἱ ἦλθε βοῆν ἀγαθὸς Μενέλαος·
ἦδεε γὰρ κατὰ θυμὸν ἀδελφεὸν ὡς ἐπονείτο.

And Menelaus, master of the war-cry, came without need for summons, as he knew in his heart how his brother was suffering.

II, 408-9

On the other hand, Hector and Paris seem to interact only in a warlike context, even outside of the battlefield. There is no obvious affection between them: all Hector wants to talk about with his brother is the battlefield and Paris' role in it, and all he does is chastise his brother for his cowardice and laziness.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ Van Wees (1992), 140. Contra Adkins (1970), who says that the head of a household "could rely on no-one else, and the other members of the *oikos* needed him to secure their very existence", 28 (cf. 1960b, 28; 1963, 32-3; 1972, 12; 1982, 294; as well as Gouldner 1967, 17).

⁵⁰ VII, 120-21 = VI, 61-62; VI, 102; VII, 47-48.

⁵¹ IV, 148-49; III, 234-38; VI, 237-41; VI, 451-53.

⁵² See also: XIX, 293-94.

⁵³ Whitman (1958) p.162.

⁵⁴ Cf. III, 38-78; VI, 312-41 and XIII, 765-88.

It seems that the battlefield roles tend to override brotherly affection, but it does not prevent the latter from being present to some degree.

2 - fathers

Like the mother, the father gives protection (and like divine mothers, divine fathers are more likely to be able to help their sons).⁵⁵ They also give advice.⁵⁶ The father figure is nevertheless also clearly respected and his anger is even sometimes feared by his children (male and female).⁵⁷

Unlike women relatives, the natural authority he possesses in this patriarchal society means that he never has to use persuasion (and he is perhaps the only family figure who does not), as he can simply give orders, which are unlikely to be disobeyed. He also clearly displays his love for his children and show them kindness, as is made obvious by the expression "mild as a father", πατήρ δ' ὡς ἥπιος, which is repeated several times in the *Iliad*.⁵⁸ Even when they are fully grown warriors, fathers still worry about their sons⁵⁹, and are stricken with grief at their death. Both those attitudes are particularly clear in Priam's reactions to his son's attempt to fight Achilles and to his subsequent death (XXII, 21-78; XXII, 405-29).

⁵⁵ V, 660-62; VI, 429-30; XI, 751-52.

⁵⁶ IX, 252-53; XXIII, 304-5. The actual content of Peleus' advice is also very interesting, as it about mildness, curbing anger, and the kind of behaviour Achilles is expected to show:

τέκνον ἐμὸν κάρτος μὲν Ἀθηναίη τε καὶ Ἥρη
 δώσουσ' αἶ κ' ἐθέλωσι, σὺ δὲ μεγαλήτορα θυμὸν
 ἴσχειν ἐν στήθεσσι· φιλοφροσύνη γὰρ ἀμείνων·
 ληγέμεναι δ' ἔριδος κακομηχάνου, ὄφρα σε μᾶλλον
 τιῶσ' Ἀργείων ἤμην νέοι ἢ δὲ γέροντες. (IX, 254-8)

⁵⁷ XXIV, 265; I, 533-35; I, 578-79; VI, 468; IX, 444-63; XXIV, 265.

⁵⁸ See previous chapter.

⁵⁹ See for example Achilles' concern for Neoptolemus in *Odyssey* 11.

It is also quite significant that out of the 151 occurrences of the word *πατήρ* in the *Iliad*, 52 refer to Zeus as “universal father”, in the expressions *πατήρ ἀνδρῶν τε θεῶν τε* and *πατήρ Ζεῦς*. Zeus indeed possesses all of the characteristics of a father, both for his actual children and for mortals and immortals in general.

It can thus be said that the kind of relationship to be found within the family circle is indeed one of respect and protection, within war and outside of war. The display of affection is not overbearing, but is still present.

D – WITH COMRADES-IN-ARMS

Three words can be said to express the possible relationships between warriors on the battlefield: *ἑταῖρος* (or *ἕταρος*), “companion”, *θεράπων*, “squire” and *ἡνίοχος*, “charioteer”. David Konstan and Hélène Kakridis have analysed the words *ἑταῖρος* and *θεράπων*, but Konstan seem to have overlooked *ἡνίοχος* completely, while Kakridis does not sufficiently distinguish the functions of the *θεράπων* and of the *ἡνίοχος*. Stagakis also has analysed all three terms.⁶⁰

Hélène Kakridis divides the usages of the word *ἑταῖρος* into four different categories and provides a useful analysis of the term in question and its range of meanings. According to her, in general, it refers to a battle-companion who belongs to a group of warriors taking part in a common enterprise, but there are nuances to the word, depending of the context it is used in:

⁶⁰ Also Dirlmeier (1931) on *ἑταῖρος*, 22-3.

1 - ἑταῖροι may be men belonging to a same contingent commanded by a single leader. In that case their role is to take care of the spoils of a killed enemy,⁶¹ and to remove a wounded or dead leader from the battlefield.⁶² The bond between that kind of ἑταῖροι is particularly evident in the case of the Myrmidons, who share Achilles' mourning:

παννύχιοι μὲν ἔπειτα πόδας ταχὺν ἀμφ' Ἀχιλῆα
Μυρμιδόνες Πάτροκλον ἀνεστενάχοντο γοῶντες·

Then all night long the Myrmidons gathered round swift-footed Achilles and mourned in lamentation for Patroclus.

XVIII, 354-55

For him and Patroclus, they are like family.⁶³

2 – they may also be the whole of the Greek or Trojan army. For example, the fight Hector has started for his “companions” in Book XIII can only be a general fight⁶⁴

3 - the leaders are also ἑταῖροι of each other. Kakridis draws attention in particular to the Embassy, when Ajax complains that Achilles does not care for the friendship of his companions:

σχέτλιος, οὐδὲ μετατρέπεται φιλότητος ἑταίρων
τῆς ἧ μιν παρὰ νηυσὶν ἐτίομεν ἔσσοχον ἄλλων

‘Cruel man, he has no thought for the love of his e(tai)roi, how we honoured him more than any other by the ships.’

IX, 630-31⁶⁵

4 - and it can finally be used of individuals who are singled out from the group of the ἑταῖροι. Their roles are then quite varied. On the battlefield, their task is to carry the warrior's heavy weapons,⁶⁶ to carry the spoils,⁶⁷ including chariots, to take care of the

⁶¹ III, 378; V, 26, 165; XIII, 641; XXIII, 512; XIII, 710ff.

⁶² V, 574, 663, 692; XIII, 213; XIV, 428; XV, 241; XV, 9; XXIII, 695.

⁶³ It is perhaps worth noting that all this and what was said previously about Achilles' relationship with his mother and with Briseis goes to disprove Bowra's theory, according to which Achilles has no friends, and “lives largely for himself and his own honour”. Bowra (1972) 113-14. This is also disproved by *Iliad* I.

⁶⁴ VI, 5f., X, 355; XI, 461; XII, 49f.; XII, 122f.; XIII, 778; XV, 249; XV, 501f.; XV, 671f., XVI, 362f.; XVI, 512; XVII, 189ff.; XVII, 273; XVII, 635f.; XVIII, 102f.; XXII, 271; XVIII, 128f.; IV, 154.

⁶⁵ See also: XIII, 477f.; XIII, 489ff.; XIII, 780.

⁶⁶ XIII, 710.

⁶⁷ V, 26, 165; VI, 378; XIII, 641; XVI, 665; XVII, 189.

prisoners,⁶⁸ to move away the wounded warriors,⁶⁹ and to lend one another assistance.⁷⁰ Outside of the battlefield, their task is to prepare the beds (with the help of the captives),⁷¹ and to prepare the meals.⁷² The best *ἑταῖροι* are often killed near their leaders.⁷³

She also mentions that a few personal epithets accompany the occurrences of the word (for example, Oeleus is called *πλήξιππος* at XI, 93). The relationship between *ἑταῖροι* is very important and implies one of the most powerful human bond. It also creates deep friendships. The verb expressing the feelings one hero has for his favourite companion is *τίω* (to honour, to value highly, to esteem),⁷⁴ which she takes as a reminder of how honour is the ideal of the Homeric heroes, but she does not seem to develop the point much more.⁷⁵ We can add, though, that it is obviously necessary to respect and show honour to one's close war companions, and the two are obviously linked, but it is not clear what she means when she says that *τίω* expresses the "feelings" of the hero for his companion. Riedinger argues more clearly on *τιμή* in the private sphere and between *ἑταῖροι*, and talks about the "étroite liaison entre les notions d'amitié et d'honneur".⁷⁶ David Konstan⁷⁷ has a slightly different analysis: to him, only those *ἑταῖροι* who are singled out as *φίλοι* and *πιστοί* can really be described as "friends".⁷⁸

⁶⁸ XXI, 32.

⁶⁹ V, 574; V, 663f., 692f.; VIII, 332 = XIII, 421; XIII, 213 = XIV, 428; XVIII, 233; XXIII, 134.

⁷⁰ III, 32 = IV, 585 = XII, 165 = 553 = 566 = 596 = 648 = XIV, 408 = XVI, 817; IV, 113; IV, 523f. = XIII, 549f.; IV, 532; V, 325; V, 694f.; VII, 115; XI, 50f.; XI, 91; XI, 461; XI, 595; XII, 122f.; XIII, 477; XIII, 653f.; XIV, 650ff.; XV, 9f.; XV, 591; XV, 650; XVI, 558f.; XVII, 114; XVII, 273; XVII, 532; XVII, 581; XVII, 640; XVII, 698; XXIII, 612.

⁷¹ IX, 658; XXIV, 643.

⁷² XXIV, 123sq., 622.

⁷³ II, 417f.; VIII, 537; X, 559f.; XVI, 560.

⁷⁴ V, 325-26; XVII, 575f.; XVIII, 80ff.; XX, 425f.

⁷⁵ H. J. Kakridis (1963), 51-77.

⁷⁶ Riedinger (1976), 247-8.

⁷⁷ Konstan (1997), 31-33.

⁷⁸ Though on Konstan's eccentric understanding of *φίλος*, see (1997), 33. On the other hand, Stagakis argues very strangely that not only is *ἑταῖρος* only used in one context, it also means exactly the same as *θεράπων*, it is not necessarily reciprocal (one can apparently be a *ἑταῖρος* in general rather than someone's *ἑταῖρος*), and applies to all the Danaans all the time because of the expression *θεράποντες Ἄρηος* (if they are all *θεράποντες*, i.e. *ἑταῖροι* of Ares, then they are all *ἑταῖροι* of each other), Stagakis (1966, 1968, 1971). The argument does not follow, and none of this is helpful in understanding what *ἑταῖροι* are.

Kakridis also gives an analysis of the role of the θεράπων: he is a free man, and sometime even a nobleman bound to the family for whom he accomplishes a certain number of functions. Indeed, according to Konstan again, the word θεράπων does not indicate any social status. Glaucus, who comes from a rich and noble family⁷⁹ is Sarpedon's θεράπων and Sthenelus, an Achaian leader, is Diomedes', and there is not much of a difference between 'main' warrior and θεράπων. It is the "duty or privilege" of the θεράπων to wait on the other man in various ways (setting the table), but at the same time, he can be "frankly critical of him",⁸⁰ as Patroclus is of Achilles in Book XVI. A few of them are presented as having been obliged to go into exile after a homicide. There again, Patroclus is the best example:

μη ἐμὰ σῶν ἀπάνευθε τιθήμεναι ὅστέ' Ἀχιλλεῦ,
 ἀλλ' ὁμοῦ ὡς ἐτράφημεν ἐν ὑμετέροισι δόμοισιν,
 εὐτέ με τυτθὸν ἐόντα Μενόϊτιος ἐξ Ὀπόεντος
 ἤγαγεν ὑμέτερον δ' ἀνδροκτασίης ὑπο λυγρῆς,
 ἤματι τῷ ὅτε παῖδα κατέκτανον Ἀμφιδάμαντος
 νήπιος οὐκ ἐθέλων ἀμφ' ἀστραγάλοισι χολωθεῖς·
 ἔνθα με δεξάμενος ἐν δώμασιν ἱππότηα Πηλεὺς
 ἔτραφέ τ' ἐνδυκέως καὶ σὸν θεράποντ' ὀνόμηνεν·

'Do not let my bones be laid away from yours, Achilles, but let them be together, as we grew up together in your house, after Menoetius had brought me there from Opoeis when I was little, because of a dreadful manslaughter, on the day when I killed the son of Amphidamas – I was just a boy, I did not mean to, I was angry over a game of knucklebones. Then the horseman Peleus welcomed me in his house and brought me up lovingly and made me your θεράπων.'

XXIII, 83-90⁸¹

A deep friendship binds them to the lords who have welcomed them. They come to the help of the heroes with devotion. The ἡνίοχοι in particular do everything with the hero, and are associated with his valour, as is shown in Patroclus' speech to the Myrmidons:

Μυρμιδόνες ἔταροι Πηληϊάδεω Ἀχιλῆος
 ἀνέρες ἔστε φίλοι, μνήσασθε δὲ θούριδος ἀλκιῆς,
 ὡς ἂν Πηλεΐδην τιμήσομεν, ὃς μὲγ' ἄριστος
 Ἀργείων παρὰ νηυσὶ καὶ ἀγχέμαχοι θεράποντες

⁷⁹ Cf. VI, 144-211.

⁸⁰ Cf. Konstan (1997), 40.

⁸¹ See also the case of Lycophron, Ajax' and Teucer's θεράπων: XV, 437-39 and XV, 429-31.

‘Myrmidons, companions of Achilles son of Peleus, be men, my friends, and fill your minds with fighting spirit, so we can bring honour to the son of Peleus, who is far the best of the Argives by the ships and has the best close-fighters serving him’

XVI, 269-72

Furthermore, the victory, and even the life of the warrior depend on his charioteer, which is seen in the frequent occurrences of the “shared death” of the warrior and his charioteer⁸².

Kakridis and Konstan’s analyses are valuable, but the difference between the three words (including this time ἡνίοχος) must be emphasised. It must be pointed out that if all three words can be used to describe the relationships between two people (for example, we find Patroclus is sometimes called Achilles’ ἑταῖρος,⁸³ sometimes his θεράπων,⁸⁴ and sometimes his ἡνίοχος),⁸⁵ they actually refer to different roles. A warrior may have many ἑταῖροι,⁸⁶ some of whom are simply other warriors from different cities fighting with him, while some are closer to him, come from the same place and “serve” him in battle as his θεράποντες.⁸⁷ And even among those θεράποντες, only some have the specific task of driving his horses, and are then described as his ἡνίοχοι.⁸⁸ The word ἑταῖρος/ἑταρος has over 200 occurrences,

⁸² Cf. V, 576f.; VI, 320f.; XI, 320ff.; XX, 485ff. On the different types of θεράποντες see also Stagakis (1966), 411ff. He nevertheless has the strange notion that while the ἑταῖρος relationship is not necessarily reciprocal, the θεράπων one is, 414, which leads him to believe for example that Achilles and Patroclus are θεράποντες of each other. Even more strangely, he also seem to argue that the ἡνίοχος relationship is reciprocal, 417 (see also Stagakis 1980). Of course, this is not supported by any passage, and the relationship between a warrior and his θεράπων or ἡνίοχος is a hierarchical one.

⁸³ IX, 205; XI, 602; XV, 64; XVI, 195, 240; XVII, 204, 411, 557, 642; XVIII, 80, 81, 98, 235, 317, XIX, 210, 315, 345; XX, 29, 426; XXI, 96; XXII, 390; XXIII, 18, 37, 137, 178, 646, 591, 746; XXIV, 4, 416, 596, 755.

⁸⁴ XVI, 165, 244, 653; XVII, 164, 271; XXIII, 90.

⁸⁵ XVII, 427, 439; XXIII, 280.

⁸⁶ The noun ἑταῖρος can etymologically be compared to ἔτης, *Fétas*, referring to the kinsmen and dependants of a great house. See Glotz (1904) 85ff., Jeanmaire (1939) 105ff. and Andrewes (1961) 134ff. On ἔται as more than kinsmen, see Stagakis’ not completely convincing analysis: Stagakis (1968).

⁸⁷ The etymology of the word θεράπων is obscure. Chantraine considers that *théraps* is a Greek loan from the Hittite “*tarpassa*” referring to a “ritual substitute”. This altered meaning would explain the usage of the word in Homer, where, according to Chantraine, the θεράπων would play the part of a substitute to the warrior (cf. perhaps Patroclus being sent into battle in place of Achilles). Cf. Chantraine (1968), pp.430-31. On the θεράπων as a ‘ritual substitute’, see also Van Brook (1959), Lowenstam (1975), Nagy (1980), 33ff. On the link between Patroclus’ death and that of Achilles, see Whitman (1958) 136-7 and 200-2 and Pestalozzi (1945). Nevertheless, considering that there are many θεράποντες other than Patroclus, who certainly never seem to play the role of a substitute, the other possible etymology, which is to extract the meaning “servant” from the noun θεράπνη, meaning “dwelling, abode”, is much more convincing.

⁸⁸ From ἡνία, reins.

and is either used in the plural ('comrades-in-arms'), or in reference to a specific warrior. *θεράπων* only has 57 occurrences, very rarely in the plural (when the warriors are described as *θεράποντες Ἄρης*, the squires of Ares, which, contrarily to what Stagakis believes, is simply a metaphor), and *ἡνίοχος* has even less: 35 occurrences, only used once in the plural. Sarpedon, for example, is Hector's *ἑταῖρος* (XVII, 150), but he is not his *θεράπων* (he is an ally leader). Eniopeus is described as Hector's *θεράπων* and as his *ἡνίοχος*:

καὶ τοῦ μὲν ῥ' ἀφάμαρτεν, ὃ δ' ἡνίοχον θεράποντα
 υἱὸν ὑπερθύμου Θεβαίου Ἥνιοπῆα
 ἵππων ἡνί' ἔχοντα βάλε στήθος παρὰ μαζόν.

He missed Hector, but hit his *ἡνίοχος* and *θεράπων*, Eniopeus the son of great-hearted Thebaid, striking him in the chest by the nipple as he held the horses' reins.

VIII, 119-121

In that example, *ἡνίοχος* is used as an adjective, and the expression means something like "rein-holding servant" rather than charioteer.⁸⁹ The *ἡνίοχος* is a specialised *θεράπων*, and is distinguished from the *θεράποντες* who do not have these duties, but the *ἡνίοχος* may also act as a general servant. Similarly, after Patroclus' death, Automedon becomes Achilles' main *θεράπων* and *ἡνίοχος*.⁹⁰ This time, the functions are clearly separated, as Automedon was simply Achilles' servant (*θεράπων*) before Patroclus' death.⁹¹ The difference between those terms is thus a question of the role played by the character. A *ἡνίοχος* is always a *θεράπων*, and he is only described as *ἡνίοχος* when he is actually driving the chariot.

Interestingly, the words of affection are always associated with the term *ἑταῖρος*. *θεράπων* and *ἡνίοχος* are only used to describe a *role* played by a warrior, looked at objectively, and not considered from the point of view of friendship. When the poet wants to

⁸⁹ See also: V, 580 and XII, 111.

⁹⁰ XVI, 864-65:

αὐτίκα δὲ ξὺν δουρὶ μετ' Αὐτομέδοντα βεβήκει
 ἀντίθεον θεράποντα ποδώκεος Αἰακίδαο·
 Then immediately he went after Automedon with his spear, the godlike *θεράπων* of swift-footed Achilles.

see also XIX, 400-3.

⁹¹ IX, 209.

show the affection between the two characters, he generally uses the word ἑταῖρος. This can be seen in the way the adjective φίλος and others (φίλτατος etc.) are used in relation to those three words. φίλος is never used with ἠνίοχος, once with θεράπων and 26 times with ἑταῖρος (φίλτατος is not used at all with the first two words, and 4 times with ἑταῖρος).

The noun πέπων (“dear friend”, always used in the vocative in the poem) is also quite interesting, and has not been studied by scholars. Though in the plural it means “cowards” and is a term of abuse,⁹² in the singular, it is used as a term of affection and closeness, and is only addressed to the most intimate of the ἑταῖροι. Etymologically, its first meaning is “ripe, ripened by the sun”, which became either a quality: “nice, tender”, or an insult, especially on the battlefield: “soft”.⁹³ It appears only in four specific contexts:

1 - It appears in request for help and collaboration.⁹⁴

2 – It also appears when a warrior shares his fears about the way the fighting is going, which he would only do with someone he can trust, so as to avoid demoralising the troops.⁹⁵

3 – It is used to make reproaches in the mildest way possible, as calling the warrior πέπων can soften the blow (a method used by Odysseus, Patroclus and Nestor, for example, who are the kind of people to use persuasion rather than abuse).⁹⁶

4 – It also appears when a warrior wants to express general thoughts on the human condition.⁹⁷

All these examples show the closeness that could exist between warriors in the *Iliad*, as well as the fact that they could choose to talk with gentleness and consideration, even on the

⁹² See II, 235 and XIII, 120.

⁹³ Cf. Chantraine (1968), 884

⁹⁴ XI, 311-15; V, 109-10; XV, 437-41; XV, 472-75; XVII, 120-21; XVII, 238-45.

⁹⁵ XVII, 237-44.

⁹⁶ XVI, 626-29; VI, 55-60; IX, 252-53; XI, 765-66; XVII, 179-82.

⁹⁷ XII, 322-28.

battlefield. Other more “utilitarian” qualities are to be looked for in a squire or charioteer, such as his being ἐσθλός, ἀγαθός, or θρασύς. Nevertheless, this shows that affection between warriors is still very much present, even if in the heat of battle, bravery and strength become more important.

Mildness is extremely important within the circle of family and friends: warriors are expected to treat their dependants as well as their equals with kindness and respect. This is not entirely surprising, even for poem of war. However, friends and dependants are not the only people the warriors are expected to treat with mildness: we will see that to some lesser degree, even enemies can be shown gentleness.

III - MILDNESS WITH ENEMIES

A – NO RACIAL BOUNDARIES

Contrarily to the opinion common in classical Greece, Homer is not biased, and the *Iliad* is not a nationalist epic poem.¹ The Trojans and the Achaians are the same, and are almost indistinguishable in the way they talk and behave.² The Trojans are not described as “barbarians”: they have the same gods (for example, Hecuba prays to Athena in Book VI, even though the goddess protects the Achaians, and Apollo is the patron-deity of Calchas, even though the god is on the side of the Trojans) and the same tongue as the Achaians (apart from the Trojan allies, who come from different countries and speak different languages),³ as well as a similar political system (i.e. a kind of hereditary monarchy: Agamemnon plays a similar part as political and military leader of the Achaians as Priam as political leader of the Trojans and of their allies, and Hector as their military leader. Both camps also summon assemblies⁴ where everyone is allowed to speak). The fact that both camps understand each other perfectly well only serves to emphasize the absurdities of war.

¹ See for example J. Th. Kakridis (1971), 59-64. See also H. Mackie (1996), esp. 7.

² On difference in the way the Achaians and the Trojans use language, see chapter I on mortality. See also H. Mackie (1996).

³ Cf. II, 803-4:

πολλοὶ γὰρ κατὰ ἄστυ μέγα Πριάμου ἐπικούροι,
ἄλλη δ' ἄλλων γλῶσσα πολυπερέων ἀνθρώπων·

There are many allies with us in Priam's great city, but they are men from far and wide and each speaks a different tongue.

But as Oliver Taplin remarked, even the Trojan allies are not treated as foreign and barbarous: the Lycian leaders Sarpedon and Glaucus stand out from both sides for their nobility and chivalry, and their unfailing martial courage. Cf. Taplin (1992), 114.

⁴ Cf. the Achaians in Book and the Trojans in Book XVIII, for example.

This is particularly obvious in the agreements (see part II), when both sides pray for exactly the same thing, in exactly the same words.⁵

It is true that the Trojans appear to be slightly more effeminate than the Achaians, and for example wear golden armour,⁶ which are useless in battle. The problem of the noise they make has often be discussed by scholars, with the idea that the Trojans are described as noisy and undisciplined, while the Achaians are silent and stern. But, as Oliver Taplin remarked,⁷ they based this argument on only one example.⁸ He points out that all the Trojans are sometimes silent, and the Achaians sometimes noisy:⁹

Ἦνιόχῳ μὲν ἔπειτα ἔῳ ἐπέτελλεν ἕκαστος
ἵππους εὐ κατὰ κόσμον ἐρुकέμεν αὐθ' ἐπὶ τάφρῳ,
αὐτοὶ δὲ πρυλέες σὺν τεύχεσι θωρηχθέντες
ῥῶοντ' ἄσβεστος δὲ βοή γένετ' ἠῶθι πρό.

Then each [Achaian leader] gave instructions to his charioteer to pull in the horses in proper order right by the ditch's edge, and they themselves swarmed over on foot, dressed in all their armour: and their shouts rose ceaselessly inn the early morning.

XI, 47-50

Sometimes they are both noisy:

οὔτε θαλάσσης κῦμα τόσον βοάα ποτὶ χέρσον
ποντόθεν ὀρνύμενον πνοιῇ Βορέῳ ἀλεγεινῇ·
οὔτε πυρὸς τόσσός γε ποτὶ βρόμος αἰθομένοιο
οὔρεος ἐν βήσσης, ὅτε τ' ὤρετο καιέμεν ὕλην·
οὔτ' ἄνεμος τόσσόν γε περὶ δρυσὶν ὑψικόμοισι
ἠπύει, ὅς τε μάλιστα μέγα βρέμεται χαλεπαίνων,
ὄσση ἄρα Τρώων καὶ Ἀχαιῶν ἔπλετο φωνῇ
δεινὸν αὐσάντων, ὅτ' ἐπ' ἀλλήλοισιν ὄρουσαν.

Louder than the waves of the sea crashing against dry land, driven in from the deep by the cruel blast of the north wind; louder than the roar of fire in the hollow of a mountain, when it has caught the forest in its burning; louder than the wind's scream in the high branches of oak-trees, and the wind in its anger roars loudest of all things – so huge was the sound of the fearful shouts of the Trojans and Achaians as they stormed at each other.

XIV, 394-401

⁵ The Trojans are ploygamous, which could be a difference, although concubines are common among the Achaian leaders.

⁶ Glaucus: VI, 234-36 and Amfidamas: II, 870-75.

⁷ Taplin (1992), 113.

⁸ i.e. III, 1-9.

⁹ Unfortunately, none of the passages he quotes seem to support his idea that the Trojans are sometimes silent, but it would surprising if they were not at times. See also H. Mackie (1996), 161.

Griffin is then wrong when he says that Homer shows the Trojans as “gorgeous, frivolous and noisy”, whereas the Achaeans are “serious and grim” and concludes that the Achaeans win the war because their discipline is better, “as we are told explicitly: their silence and obedience to their commanders go with this. The Trojans lose because they are the sort of people they are – glamorous, reckless, frivolous, undisciplined”.¹⁰ Unfortunately, Griffin chooses not to illustrate any of these points, and they might not be as “explicit” as he would like to believe.

B – THE SUPREMACY OF HOSPITALITY

It looks like ξένος is the exact opposite of φίλος, as it refers first of all to a stranger. Nevertheless, the relationship between two strangers can then evolve into friendship. Two friends whose friendship begins with hospitality, keep the name of ξένοι, and this friendship is transmitted to the sons.¹¹ ξένια may have facilitated travel in a rough world.¹²

Hospitality is quite obviously a central theme of the *Iliad*, since the very beginning, as it is in fact the actual cause of the war itself: if Paris’ abduction of Helen is so outrageous, it is because he has breached the laws of hospitality by eloping with his host’s wife. In Book III, the cause for the war is clearly said to be this breach of hospitality, which shows how important the notion is in the poem

Ζεῦ ἄνα δὸς τίσασθαι ὃ με πρότερος κάκ’ ἔοργε
 δῖον Ἀλέξανδρον, καὶ ἐμῆς ὑπὸ χερσὶ δάμασσον,
 ὄφρα τις ἐρρίγησι καὶ ὀψιγόνων ἀνθρώπων
 ξεινοδόκον κακὰ ῥέξαι, ὃ κεν φιλότιτα παράσχη.

¹⁰ Griffin (1980), 4-5.

¹¹ H. J. Kakridis, 86-108.

¹² Konstan, 33-7.

'Zeus, lord, grant me vengeance on the man who did me first wrong, godlike Alexander, and bring him low under my hands, so that even among generations yet to be born a man may shrink from doing wrong to a host who shows him friendship.'

III, 351-54

However, despite Menelaus' feeling of righteousness, his prayer is not granted at that point,

but we know it will be in the future, and we know that what will be is the Διὸς βουλή.

The role of Zeus himself is made clear as the protector of hosts and guests:

ἄλλης μὲν λώβης τε καὶ αἰσχεὸς οὐκ ἐπιδευεῖς
ἦν ἐμὲ λωβήσασθε κακαὶ κύνες, οὐδέ τι θυμῷ
Ζηνὸς ἐριβρεμέτεω χαλεπὴν ἐδείσατε μῆνιν
Ξεινίου, ὅς τέ ποτ' ὕμμι διαφθέρσει πόλιν αἰπήν·

'No shortage already of your shame and outrage - that outrage done to me, you vile dogs, with no fear in your hearts for the punishing anger of Zeus the thunderer, god of hosts and guest, who in time will destroy your high city.'

XIII, 622-25

We are also reminded that those laws of hospitality exist even among the gods (here between Thetis and Charis):

τίπτε Θέτι τανύπεπλε ἰκάνεις ἡμέτερον δῶ
αἰδοίη τε φίλη τε; πάρος γε μὲν οὐ τι θαμίξεις.
ἀλλ' ἔπεο προτέρω, ἵνα τοι παρ Ξείνια θείω.

'What is it, Thetis, fine robed-goddess, that has brought you to our house? You are honoured and loved here, but before now you have not visited us often. But come inside with me, and let me give you hospitality.'

XVIII, 385-87

On the battlefield, it also appears that ξένοι were expected to protect, and if necessary avenge one another.¹³

The love and affection between guest-friends can be seen for example in the fact that the noun ξένος can be accompanied by adjectives such as φίλος, φίλτατος or ἑταῖρος.¹⁴

Furthermore, it is also particularly striking that the demands of ξένια are stronger than the demands of war: even war, and even the pact concluded between the various

¹³ XIII, 660-62; XVII, 149-51 and XXI, 42-43.

¹⁴ See VI, 224; XVII, 150; XVII, 584.

leaders cannot make a foe out of a former ξένος. Even people who are supposed to be enemies on the battlefield remain “guest-friends”, and that even if the bond dates back from generations. The obvious example of that is the encounter between Glaucus and Diomedes in Book VI, who, once they have acknowledged their bond of ξένια, decide to exchange their armour and to avoid each other on the battlefield:

ἔγχος μὲν κατέπηξεν ἐπὶ χθονὶ πουλυβοτείρῃ,
 αὐτὰρ ὁ μειλιχίοισι προσηύδα ποιμένα λαῶν·
 ἦ ῥά νύ μοι ξεῖνος πατρῴϊός ἐσσι παλαιός·
 Οἴνευς γάρ ποτε δῖος ἀμύμονα Βελλεροφόντην
 ξείνισ' ἐνὶ μεγάροισιν ἔείκοσιν ἡματ' ἐρύξας·
 οἳ δὲ καὶ ἀλλήλοισι πόρον ξεινήϊα καλά·

He fixed his spear fast in the nourishing earth, then spoke with friendly warmth to the shepherd oh the people: ‘well then, you are a guest-friend of mine from far back in our families! Godlike Oeneus once entertained the excellent Bellerophon in his house, and kept him for twenty days, and they also gave each other gifts of friendship.’

VI, 213-18

τῷ νῦν σοὶ μὲν ἐγὼ ξεῖνος φίλος Ἄργεϊ μέσσω
 εἰμὶ, σὺ δ' ἐν Λυκίῃ ὅτε κεν τῶν δῆμον ἴκωμαι.
 ἔγχεα δ' ἀλλήλων ἀλεώμεθα καὶ δι' ὀμίλου·

‘So now you have me as your loyal host in the heart of Argos, and I have you in Lycia, whenever I come to that country. Let us keep away from each other’s spears, even in the thick of the fighting.’

VI, 224-26¹⁵

The use of the expression μειλιχίοισι προσηύδα at VI 214 is particularly significant, and shows the mildness that appears between ξένοι, even when they are fighting on opposite sides. Furthermore, since the war started with a breach of ξένια, this reaction is perfectly relevant to the story line.

But the most striking and significant scene is that between Priam and Achilles in Book XXIV. Even if the word ξένια is not mentioned, they do share a meal together, which is the beginning of guest-friendship,¹⁶ and exchange “gifts”,¹⁷ even if those are quite grim ones

¹⁵ On the unequal exchange of armour that follows this conversation, see Donlan (1989).

¹⁶ See XVIII, 408-9.

¹⁷ See VI, 218; X, 269; XV, 532; XVII, 387.

(the ransom for Hector's body). Achilles even offers Priam hospitality for the night (although he has to sleep outside of the warrior's tent). Priam and Achilles are not only official enemies of war, they are first and foremost personal enemies, since Hector has killed Patroclus and Achilles has killed Hector in return. This particular situation makes the scene of ξένια and of forgiveness all the more moving and significant: a poem relating an official quarrel which has started because of a breach of ξένια ends with a private reconciliation through ξένια.

C – MILD TREATMENT OF ENEMIES

Mildness towards enemies can be divided in two different kinds of approach: towards the enemy as a people (the Trojans and the Achaians) and towards one individual enemy. Those two approaches can be found respectively in concluding agreements and in the behaviour shown towards suppliants.

1 - agreements

The most important word relating to agreements is ὄρκια, always used in the plural, and very often with the adjective πιστός (it accompanies ὄρκια 12 times out of 27), which shows just how important keeping one's promise is to the two armies. The idea of a pact and truce between Trojans and Achaians appears three times in the poem, and suffers a progressive degradation. The first occurrence of the idea is in Book III, and follows a clear plan:

1 - Paris has the idea that a duel between himself and Menelaus might save everything:¹⁸ the winner gets to keep Helen and the loser dies. He shares this with Hector, who officially makes the proposition to both armies.¹⁹

2 - Menelaus acknowledge the religious dimension of pacts: they are governed by Zeus.²⁰ The shows the gods are understood by human beings as upholding values.²¹ Nevertheless, in this instance it is quite ironic, as the gods themselves break the truce (through Pandarus). It seems to point to a difference between what the characters think of the gods and how the gods actually behave, although it is true that Zeus refuses the oath at the onset.²²

3 - To be official, the pact has to be ratified by Priam himself,²³ which shows the political dimension of the pact.

4 - the preparations for the ceremony²⁴

5 - the official oath, sacrifice and libations made by Agamemnon, accompanied by the armies' curses on the man who breaks the pact²⁵

6 - the intervention of the gods, who want the pact to be broken and send Athena to persuade a Trojan to wound Menelaus²⁶

7 - the indignation of the Achaians at this treachery²⁷

8 - the Achaians get ready to fight, certain that the Trojans will be punished for what they did.²⁸ Not knowing that the gods are possibly less involved than they think, human beings

¹⁸ III, 67-75.

¹⁹ III, 85-94.

²⁰ III, 107.

²¹ See for example chapter on pity.

²² See Winterbottom (1989): "The *Iliad* gives us the tragic picture of men acting in the name of gods who show little sign of moral awareness", 40. He also points out that even in the *Odyssey* Zeus *Xenios* never interferes. Contra e.g. Kullman (1985).

²³ III, 105-6 and 249-58.

²⁴ III, 268-70.

²⁵ III, 271-301.

²⁶ IV, 62-72.

²⁷ IV, 155-57.

²⁸ IV, 234-71.

still believe they are in the right, and that breaking the truce would be an offence punishable by the gods.

Throughout the episode runs the idea that those who break pacts are going to pay for it. In that it is not unlike the respect of *ξένια*, which can be regarded as a *de facto* agreement between host and guest, the breach of which is followed by the same consequences as the breach of a pact. The Trojans have broken both, and from this moment on, their fate is more and more certain, as the likelihood of a pact with the Achaians decreases.

In Book VII, Hector proposes to give back Helen in exchange for peace (after Antenor has told the Trojans that if they fight, nothing good will come of it because of the broken pact), and to give the warriors time to bury their dead. Agamemnon accepts the second proposal, but strongly refuses the first one, as the Achaians know already the Trojans are doomed.²⁹ In the first episode, the word *ὄρκια* appeared 19 times. Here it occurs only 3 times, as if it was not worth mentioning any longer. Once people have broken an agreement, it becomes difficult to reinitiate it (the word *πιστά* is therefore crucial). The diminishing occurrences of the word *ὄρκια* reflect that idea.

The last appearance of the word is in Book XXII, when Hector wishes he could conclude a pact with Achilles, who violently refuses it. The word appears this time only twice, and the absolute impossibility of a pact is not only political (between the leaders) but has become both an individual matter (himself and Hector) and a global and almost cosmic one (there are no pacts in nature: he gives the example of lions and men and of wolves and

²⁹ VII, 347-411.

lambs).³⁰ All through the poem, the occurrences of the word become rarer and rarer, until finally the very notion of a pact becomes unthinkable and even unnatural.

Nevertheless, in Book III, the men were happy that things could be solved in that way, and took pains to organise everything properly. Differences between them seemed forgotten, and they were all gathered together with exactly the same desire for peace.³¹ But for the gods' intervention, the war would have been over, and in the event, neither of the two combatants need have died, since though Aphrodite had saved Paris, it was generally understood that he had lost and that Menelaus had won.

The very idea of a friendship between the two peoples is expressed in the poem, with the word φιλότης, which is often found in the same sentence as ὄρκια πιστά. According to Kakridis,³² other than the usual meanings (see previous chapter),³³ this word refers to the "restoration of an agreement" between two parties, where it is then linked to the idea of a pact or even truce:³⁴

οἱ δ' ἄλλοι φιλότητα καὶ ὄρκια πιστὰ ταμόντες
 ναίοιτε Τροίην ἐριβόλακα, τοὶ δὲ νεέσθων
 Ἄργος ἐς ἱππόβοτον καὶ Ἀχαιΐδα καλλιγύναικα.

'The rest of you then make a solemn truce of friendship (φιλότητα): you live on in fertile Troy, and let them return to the horse-pasture of Argos and Achaia where the women are handsome.'
 III, 73-75³⁵

³⁰ XXII, 261-67.

³¹ See in particular III, 297-301.

³² H. J. Kakridis, 43-6.

³³ 1 - friendship and affection, for example between Zeus and Thetis (XXIV, 110-11), or between ἑταῖροι (IX, 630-31). Furthermore, the expression φιλότητα δ' ἐλέσθαι means "to be reconciled" (II, 232; VI, 25; XIII, 636; XIV, 207, 237, 295, 306, 314, 331, 353, 360; XV, 32; XVI, 281-82; XXIV, 130).

2 - To romantic love and sex (II, 232; III, 353-54).

3 - to hospitality (e.g. III, 353-54.)

³⁴ For some reason, Konstan does not mention the possibility of friendship between peoples, or even of truces.

³⁵ See also III, 73; I92-94; 256-58; 320-23; IV, 14-16; 82-84; VII, 301-2.

The most prominent figure in all those discussions of pacts and of reconciliation is very clearly Hector: he is the one making the propositions to both armies and organising the duels. He even goes as far as offering to exchange gifts with Ajax when their duel had to be stop because night was falling.³⁶ Hector is in the poem the man of agreements, and the man of civilisation.

2 - the attitude towards suppliants

No suppliant is actually spared in the narrative of the *Iliad* during battle, but the simple fact that they do think of begging for their lives shows that they at least hope that they will be spared, and that it is a possibility worth considering. It is hard to say if sparing suppliants is normal behaviour or not, as the poem narrates a particularly critical time in the war, especially after the failure of the truce (see above). Menelaus is tempted to spare a suppliant at VI, 43-53. We are also told Achilles used to do so before Patroclus died.³⁷

On the other hand, Agamemnon has no intention of sparing anyone, and even took some delight in slaughtering those who begged him for their lives.³⁸ But we have to remember that Agamemnon does not represent the average warrior, and is consistently harsh throughout the poem (cf. his attitude towards Chryses and Achilles in Book I). Menelaus is a much more tender-hearted character as showed for example by his reaction to Antilochus' cheerful apologies during the funeral games:

Ἥ ῥα καὶ ἵππον ἄγων μεγαθύμου Νέστορος υἱὸς
 ἐν χεῖρεσσι τίθει Μενελάου· τοῖο δὲ θυμὸς
 ἰάνθη ὡς εἴ τε περὶ σταχύεσσιν ἔέρση
 ληΐου ἀλδήσκοντος, ὅτε φρίσσουσιν ἄρουραι·

³⁶ It is also quite significant that there is no mention of the "fate" of those gifts: in later tradition, Hector is dragged around Troy, bound to Achilles chariot by the belt Ajax gave him, and Ajax kills himself with the sword Hector gave him. None of that is even hinted at in Homer, which may give the scene less tragic beauty, but much more innocence and optimism.

³⁷ XXI, 100-2.

³⁸ XI, 129-47. On this passage, see for example Zanker (1998), 81.

ὥς ἄρα σοὶ Μενέλαε μετὰ φρεσὶ θυμὸς ἰάνθη.

So he spoke, and then great-hearted Nestor's son led the mare across and gave her into Menelaus' hands. And his heart was melted like the dew on the ears of growing corn, when the fields are bristling with the crop – so your heart, Menelaus, was melted within you.

XXIII, 596-600

Finally, Achilles' usual generosity and magnanimity is simply not appropriate to the morbid state of mind he is in after his friend's death.³⁹

Interestingly, only Trojans beg for their lives and offer ransoms in battles. The Trojans keep going with money, which may save their lives, but does not win battles. The Greeks are interested in victory, and the Trojans in avoiding defeat, which may explain why the former never ask for mercy. Furthermore, more Trojans than Greeks die in the course of the battles shown in the poem.

If we take a look at the occurrences of the word *λίσσεσθαι*, we see that begging for a favour (in particular for mercy) does not always occur in a context of battle. In most cases (33 out of 41 occurrences of the word), the characters are just 'begging' men⁴⁰ or gods⁴¹ for a favour or for help (or heavily insist on the fact that they are *not*). In the *Iliad*, unless those supplications are directed at enemies, they can be granted (see for example the success of Meleager's wife's supplications), and sometimes not (see for example the failure of the Embassy). If they are directed to enemies, they never are (cf. Chryses in Book I).⁴² But it is noticeable that between the gods, supplication is always successful.⁴³

³⁹ Cf. XXI, 106-113.

⁴⁰ Cf. I, 173-74; 282-84; 500-2; V, 490-92; IX, 451-52; 464-65; 519-23 (the embassy); 590-92 (Meleager's family); 697-99; XI, 608-10; XII, 49-50; XV, 659-60; XVI, 46-47; XIX, 303-7; XXII, 35-36; 90-91; XXIII, 609-11.

⁴¹ Cf. I, 393-95; IX, 499-501.

⁴² On supplication, see in particular Gould (1973), esp. 78ff. (on responses to supplication), 90ff. (on supplication and hospitality). His point that when suppliants who are killed, the act of supplication is either interrupted or does not involve physical contact (see esp. 81) is interesting, but a little bit unconvincing. See also Pedrick (1982), esp. on the differences between the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, 133ff. Unfortunately, she seems to ignore the important differences in context between the two poems (supplication by the enemy on the battlefield is very different from supplication by a stranger in peace-time).

⁴³ Cf. II, 15; 32; 69; V, 357-58; VIII, 370-72; XV, 75-78; XXI, 367-68.

Quite significantly, the last time the word *λίσσεσθαι* appears in the text, it refers to Priam's supplications to Achilles, which represent the only successful supplication to an enemy to be narrated in the whole of the *Iliad*. Even if the poem seems rather pessimistic in its treatment of the relations between enemies, its final book opens up to a more hopeful and optimistic outlook.⁴⁴

The gentler virtues are not only limited to the warriors' personal circle of friends and dependants: mildness towards strangers and enemies, particularly through hospitality, truces and supplication, is also a possibility in the poem, and is seen several times. As a broader quality, persuasion, both within one's camp and with enemies, is understood to be an essential quality, especially of the leaders.

⁴⁴ All of this also contradicts Bowra's idea that the heroes are consistently shown 'treating their friends with courtesy and consideration and their enemies with the utmost fury'. Bowra (1972), 113.

IV – MILDNESS AND PERSUASION

In some instances, the adjectives denoting mildness are applied to the language used by the characters, and they are often employed with the term ἔπος. Sometimes, an alternative form of the adjective is used in such cases: μείλιχος is only used of human beings, but μειλίχιος is used to describe words (cf. the difference between φίλος and φίλιος). Different kinds of people are said to use persuasion, but it must be noticed that only a particular kind of persuasion and advice uses the vocabulary of mildness. Indeed, councillors such as Polydamas, who generally gives advice quite bluntly, are never said to use “gentle words”. The “gentle words” are those of diplomacy, used to appease two belligerents or to calm an angry man.¹

A - OLD MEN

Old men are not warriors in the *Iliad*, but councillors: They use their experience to advise younger warriors, leaders in particular. The most obvious figure is that of Nestor. The first time he appears in Book I, he is said to be ἡδυεπής (I, 248), which means that he knows how to speak words which please his interlocutor: ἡδύς is the adjective associated with pleasure, enjoyment or satisfaction.² Indeed, persuasion seems often to be linked with pleasure and satisfaction, as being pleasant to someone is often the best way to make them take the course

¹ For that reason, the expression ἐν φρονέων will also be looked at in this chapter.

² It is used of a laugh (ἡδὺν γέλασσαν, used of the gods in II, 270; of Paris after he has hit Diomedes in XI, 378; of Zeus when he sees Artemis wounded in XXI, 508; and of the Achaeans after Ajax's fall during the race in XXIII, 784) or the reception given to an idea or a course of action (ἡδὺν γένοιτο). See also Latacz (1966) on the vocabulary of pleasure. See also the next chapter.

of action you are recommending. So the word ἡδυεπής might be an indication that Nestor's means of persuading people is by being deferential and conciliatory and by making them feel pleased with themselves, and incidentally with him. In the next line, his voice is said to be μέλιτος γλυκίων (I, 249), which only emphasises the pleasing effect of his particular kind of persuasion, as honey is in the *Iliad* something pleasant *par excellence*.³ In Book IX, he is the one who encourages Agamemnon to send an embassy to Achilles, and he wants the embassy to persuade him δώροισίν τ' ἀγανοῖσιν ἔπεσσι τε μελιχίοισι (IX, 113). When ἀγανός is used of gifts,⁴ the adjective refers to the effect of the gifts and are not simply a description of them. Like gentle words, gifts are made to *soften* and the adjective has an active use.

But Nestor is not only deferential; he is clearly said to be wise, and his wisdom and experience are the necessary basis on which he can humour the Achaean leaders: he is said several times to be ἐὺ φρονέων (which refers to goodwill towards others) and he has a clear notion of the purpose of persuasion. Out of nine occurrences of the phrase ἐὺ φρονέων,⁵ four are applied to Nestor. Indeed, he says to Agamemnon that it is even more important for a king to listen to advice, because he has to take decisions for all of his people:

οὔνεκα πολλῶν
λαῶν ἔσσι ἄναξ καὶ τοι Ζεὺς ἐγγυάλιξε
σκηπτρόν τ' ἠδὲ θέμιστας, ἵνα σφισι βουλευήσθα.
τῷ σε χρὴ περὶ μὲν φάσθαι ἔπος ἠδ' ἔπακούσαι,
κρηῆναι δὲ καὶ ἄλλω, ὅτ' ἂν τινα θυμὸς ἀνώγη
εἰπεῖν εἰς ἀγαθόν·

³ See the use of the adjective μελιτῆς: IV, 346; VI, 258; X, 495; X, 569; X, 579; XII, 320; XVII, 17; XVIII, 545; XVIII, 568.

⁴ It is also used once of sacrifices to the gods: IX, 499. Hecuba is also once described as being ἡπιόδωρος at VI, 251, but there is no link with persuasion.

⁵ It is also interesting to notice that the words ἐὺ φρονέων, are mostly applied to old men, like Nestor (I, 253; II, 78; VII, 326; IX, 95), Priam (VII, 367), Calchas (I, 73). The only exceptions are Odysseus (II, 283) (but Antilochus says about him at XXIII, 790: οὗτος δὲ προτέρης γενεῆς προτέρων τ' ἀνθρώπων, "but this man belongs to another age than ours and is one of the ancients"*, so we can suppose he is not very young), and Polydamas (XVIII, 253), who is the same age as Hector, and therefore cannot be that old.

‘since you are the king of many peoples and Zeus has entrusted to you the sceptre and the ways of law, to make judgements for your people. Therefore you more than any other man should speak the thoughts of your mind and listen too, and act even on another’s advice, whenever a man’s heart prompts him to speak for the good.’

IX, 97-102

Nestor uses “honey-sweet words” to make his interlocutor choose the right course of action.

Phoenix is the other old man to use persuasion in the poem (though he is not specifically said to use gentle words”), in the embassy to Achilles in Book IX, where he encourages him to listen to ‘gentle words’ and to be open to persuasion. He is very different from Nestor, in that he speaks mostly out of affection for Achilles, and his kindness is linked to his love for the young man. He says to him that even gods are not inflexible, but can be moved

θυέεσσι καὶ εὐχολῆς ἀγανῆσι
λοιβῆ τε κνίσῃ τε

‘with the penitence of sacrifices and humble prayers, and offerings poured and burnt.’

IX, 499-500

Here again, an association can be found between gentle words (or prayers, to be precise) and gifts. And that is exactly what the embassy is here for: to offer Achilles both gentle words and kingly gifts, as Nestor advised. So Phoenix urges Achilles to accept the gifts by comparing him to the gods, making the assumption that Achilles craves glory and immortality: since Achilles is not superior to the gods, he should at least be moved by prayers and gifts like they are. But this is ineffective, considering Achilles’ present state of mind: he no longer wants glory and has decided to choose life instead: οὐ γὰρ ἐμοὶ ψυχῆς ἀντάξιον (IX, 401), “nothing, to me, is equal to life”. So Phoenix’s urging is inadequate, as he misjudged Achilles’ frame of mind.⁶

⁶ On Phoenix’s speech, see app. VI. All his observations were well-meaning and valid, and Phoenix seems to remember Achilles as the warrior who was always prepared to take pity on others (including suppliants). But Achilles has changed and will not go back to that state of mind until book XXIV (see chapter on pity). It is to be noted that Phoenix is never referred to as being ἐὺ φρονέων.

B – SUPPLIANTS

In the *Iliad*, two suppliants, Pisander and Hippolochus beg Agamemnon for their lives *μειλιχίοις ἐπέεσσιν* (XI, 137). And again, their entreaty is linked with gifts, i.e. with a ransom: they tell Agamemnon *σὺ δ' ἄξια δέξαι ἄποινα* (XI, 131), “take appropriate ransom”, as is normal if an enemy is taken prisoner. Yet, even so Agamemnon kills them, which might go to show that to have an effect, ‘gentle words’ have to be heard by a ‘gentle person’. But then, what is the point of the gentle words? Surely a mild man would be persuaded anyway: Polydamas never uses gentle words with Hector, but relies only on the force of his arguments, and possibly on the natural gentleness of his leader. But men are nevertheless more likely to be persuaded by mild words. Furthermore, those who are good at persuading people are clearly valued, Nestor being the most obvious example.⁷ Polydamas is the same age as Hector,⁸ and he is his friend, and is evidently seen as an equal who can speak freely. Nestor on the other hand is respected for his age and experience, but is not very powerful, and often has to convince kings mightier than he. The explanation seems to be that gentle words are used as a matter of course when trying to convince somebody, especially if that person is more powerful than the speaker. Nevertheless Agamemnon, being harsh by nature, is rarely responsive to them.⁹

⁷ See for example the way he is introduced in the poem at I, 245-53: he is called *εὐ φρονέων* and *λιγύς ἀγορητής* and his experience is praised by the poet.

⁸ He is said to have been born on the same night at XVIII, 251.

⁹ See chapter on pity and previous chapter on mildness towards enemies.

C – WARRIORS

Warriors use persuasion and “gentle words” for two purposes: to urge other warriors to battle, and to show friendship. Five warriors are seen to use persuasion in battle: Odysseus, Agamemnon, the Aiantes, and Automedon.¹⁰ It is noticeable that two methods are generally used to urge soldiers to fight: either gentle or harsh words. The Aiantes are said to persuade warriors ἄλλον μελιχίους, ἄλλον στερεοῖς ἐπέεσσι (XII, 267), “using μελιχίοι words to one, harsh words to another”. It is not, in this instance, clearly said on what basis they choose to use either harsh or mild words, but the example of Odysseus might clarify this question. Indeed, in book II, Odysseus has two very different attitudes, according to the rank of the man he is talking to. He treats kings and leaders with respect and uses kind words:

Ὅν τινα μὲν βασιλῆα καὶ ἔξοχον ἄνδρα κιχείη
τὸν δ’ ἀγανοῖς ἐπέεσσιν ἐρητύσασκε παραστάς·

Whenever he met with a king or a man of importance, he would come up to him and turn him back with gentle words.

II, 188-9

He behaves quite differently with common soldiers:

Ὅν δ’ αὖ δήμου τ’ ἄνδρα ἴδοι βοόωντά τ’ ἐφεύροι,
τὸν σκήπτρῳ ἐλάσασκεν ὀμοκλήσασκέ τε μύθῳ·

But whenever he saw a commoner and found him shouting, he would strike him with the sceptre and berate him.

II, 198-9

It is another proof that persuasion and diplomacy are only used among equals, and that simple force prevails in dealings with inferiors. Agamemnon’s behaviour is slightly more

¹⁰ See also Schofield’s excellent study of the importance of *euboulia* as a virtue expected of the warriors (1986), esp. 225ff.

erratic: he uses kind words to Idomeneus in Book IV, to encourage him to fight.¹¹ Almost immediately afterwards, he abuses Odysseus for no apparent reason:

καὶ σὺ κακοῖσι δόλοισι κεκασμένε κερδαλεόφρον
τίπτε καταπτώσσοντες ἀφέστατε, μίμνετε δ' ἄλλους;

'and you, the expert in low trickery, you with your thoughts always set on gain, why are you cringing here on the side and waiting for others?'

IV, 339-40

This might show that "gentle words" are the norm when addressing an equal or a superior, but that, in that too, Agamemnon shows his incapacity to behave as a king should, preferring to show his authority in brutal and unnecessary ways.¹²

Others, namely Diomedes and Hector, use "gentle words" in friendly gestures. When he realises that Glaucus' ancestors have been given hospitality at his house, Diomedes μιλίχιοισι προσηύδα ποιμένα λαῶν, "spoke μιλίχιοι words to the shepherd of the people" (VI, 214), to make peace with him. They then promise to avoid each other on the battlefield (VI, 226) and exchange armour. It shows that ξένοι treated each other kindly and did not consider themselves to be enemies, even if they were on opposite sides. As for Hector, as we saw earlier, he uses "gentle words" to prevent his brothers from abusing Helen, that is, to protect an Achaean woman, and what is more, one who is the cause of the war.

D – WOMEN

In the *Iliad*, the only female character to use "gentle words" is Helen. Persuasion is indeed also used by women, as is shown by the example of Meleager's wife, told in Book IX.

¹¹ IV, 256.

¹² Cp. for example with Nestor in I, with Odysseus in II and XIV, etc.

Meleager, angry against the Aetolians, can only be persuaded to defend them against the Kouretes by her entreaties. Helen's gentle words are used to encourage Paris to go to the battlefield, exactly as a king or leader would do (Paris says himself: *vũv dẽ me parreipouõs' âloxos malakoĩs êpẽessiv* VI, 337, "but just now my wife talked me round with μαλακά words", which shows that Helen is given more than the usual feminine characteristics, since she can occasionally behave as a male character would. Monsacré points out that Helen is the first and last female character to speak in the Iliad. She always speaks in her own name and even initiates dialogue. She is also the only female character who does not weep (as opposed for example to Andromache, who weeps and speaks about her own vulnerability as Hector's wife and Hecuba, who is 'toute entière du côté de la maternité').¹³ Monsacré says that Helen 'est une femme qui serait à égalité avec les homes, une femme dont les paroles pourraient intervenir avec pertinence dans un monde masculin. Elle a cette capacité de parler en son nom, sans faire référence systématiquement à son époux'.¹⁴ She adds: 'Hélène semble donc être la seule femme dont la parole soit acceptable pour des hommes : elle ne gémit ni ne les retient d'aller au combat ; elle ne les trompe ni ne les charme pour les détruire ; elle parle sans cris, sans pleurs. Elle se situe à la charnière du "discourse" masculin et des "voix" féminines.¹⁵ But here, the word used is not *meilichios* or *aganos* but *malakos*, which is mostly used to describe the softness of clothes or beds.¹⁶ It may thus be that she attempts to mollify him in a "softer" way, which is specific to women.¹⁷ The only

¹³ Monsacré (1984), 121.

¹⁴ Monsacré (1984), pp.120-1.

¹⁵ Monsacré (1984), p.123.

¹⁶ It is used of clothes: II, 42; XXIV, 796; of beds: IX 618; X, 75; XXII, 504 and of carpets: XIV, 349.

¹⁷ Helen also uses persuasion in a different way, when she talks to Hector with respect and humility in apologising for being the cause of the war: *τὸν δ' Ἑλένη μύθοισι προσηύδα μειλίχοισι*. "And Helen spoke to him with μειλίχοι words". VI, 343. In this case, it does not seem to be persuasion strictly speaking, but simply a friendly approach, as Helen is not actually asking Hector to do anything in particular.

other instance where the word is used in connection with persuasion is when Hephaestus encourages Hera, another female character, to mollify Zeus and make her peace with him:

ἀλλὰ σὺ τὸν ἐπέεσσι καθάπτεσθαι μαλακοῖσιν·
αὐτίκ' ἔπειθ' Ἴλαος Ὀλύμπιος ἔσσεται ἡμῖν.

'No, you should approach him with μαλακοί words, and then the Olympian will be kindly to us again.

I, 582-3

E – GODS

Hera and Athena use persuasion pretty much as the kings and leaders do, that is to urge the warriors to fight: Hera tells Athena

σοῖς ἀγανοῖς ἐπέεσιν ἐρήτυε φῶτα ἕκαστον

'Speak to each man with ἀγανοί words'

II, 164

Athena repeats the same words to Odysseus in II, 180. The river Xanthus, Hera warns, will use gentle words, as well as threats, to convince Hephaestus not to harm him. He would try anything to protect himself, and Hera tells Hephaestus not to listen to him:

μὴ δέ σε πάμπαν
μειλιχίους ἐπέεσιν ἀποτρεπέτω καὶ ἀρειῆ·

And do not let him turn you back with any μειλίχιοι words or threats.

XXI, 338-9

In these instances, gods use "gentle words" just in the same way as men do.

One other way used by the gods to persuade warriors to go into battle is to make battle itself seem "sweeter" than home-coming, though in general battle is described by the poet and by men (and sometime by the gods) as πολύδακρυς and φσιθήνωρ. This is a "trick" used by the gods to deceive men into fighting, once by Athena and once by the goddess of Hate:

τοῖσι δ' ἄφαρ πόλεμος γλυκίων γένετ' ἢ ἐ νέεσθαι
 ἐν νηυσὶ γλαφυρῆσι φίλην ἐς πατρίδα γαίαν.

Then war became a γλυκίων thought to them than returning in their hollow ships to their own dear native land.

II, 453-4 and XI, 13-14

It is interesting to notice that the adjective γλυκίος, in half of its occurrences, is used to describe the “pleasures of life”: sleep (I, 610; II, 71; X, 4; XXIII, 232; XXIV, 3; XXIV, 636), love and desire (III, 139; III, 446; XIV, 328), food (XI, 89), singing (XXIII, 637) and for the gods, nectar (I, 598). It has a subjective meaning, in that it describes what each individual would find desirable. Thus gods, like men, only use persuasion with other gods. With their inferiors, i.e. men, they find it more convenient simply to play with their minds and make them find pleasant and desirable what they actually hate. A similar use of the word γλυκίων can be found in XVIII, 109, when Achilles says that anger seems to men “sweeter than honey”.¹⁸ There, anger too is said to be deceitfully attractive.

F – THE EXPRESSION ἡδὺ γένοιτο IN AGREEMENTS

Twice in the *Iliad* the word ἡδύς is used in the expression ἡδὺ γένοιτο, to suggest that an idea or a course of action is thought pleasant and desirable. The adjective ἡδύς strongly implies an idea of pleasure and satisfaction (cf. the use of the word ἡδυεπής relating to Nestor in Book I).¹⁹

The expression ἡδὺ γένοιτο is first used in Book IV, when Zeus suggests that the Trojans and the Achaeans might find an agreement and stop the war:

εἰ δ' αὖ πῶς τόδε πᾶσι φίλον καὶ ἡδὺ γένοιτο,

¹⁸ XVIII, 108-10. Here again, we find honey as a pleasurable thing *par excellence*.

¹⁹ It is only used once in the *Odyssey* (XXIV, 436), and it is used of life in general, and not of an agreement.

ἦτοι μὲν οἰκέοιτο πόλις Πριάμοιο ἄνακτος,
αὐτίς δ' Ἀργεῖην Ἑλένην Μενέλαος ἄγοιτο.

'Now if somehow this second way could be pleasing and ἦδὺ γένοιτο to us all, then lord Priam's city may still be peopled, and Menelaus take back Argive Helen to his home.'

IV, 17-19

Yet, Zeus simply says that in order to irritate Hera, and does not actually mean any of it. He offers the gods (namely Hera and Athena) a choice between πόλεμόν τε κακὸν καὶ φύλοπινα ἀινῆν, "grim warfare and the terrible fighting" (IV, 15) and φιλότητα μετ' ἀμφοτέροισι "friendship with each other" (IV, 16). Of course, the goddesses choose war. It shows that it is the gods who inflict war upon the mortals: if it were up to men, they would probably be at peace, but the gods are the ones who want to accomplish their revenge. For example in Book IV, the result of Zeus' "teasing", is that Athena herself is sent to break the truce and make the war start again.²⁰

Yet, men themselves also find it difficult to reach an agreement: the only time the expression ἦδὺ γένοιτο is used by human characters, it is also in the context of a proposal which comes to nothing. In Book VII, a herald tells the Achaeans:

ἦνώγει Πριάμος τε καὶ ἄλλοι Τρῶες ἀγαυοὶ
εἰπεῖν, αἴ κέ περ ὕμμι φίλον καὶ ἦδὺ γένοιτο,
μῦθον Ἀλεξάνδροιο, τοῦ εἴνεκα νεῖκος ὄρωρε·

'Priam and the other proud Trojans have ordered me to tell you, if it should be pleasing and ἦδὺ γένοιτο, the offer made by Alexander, the man who gave rise to our quarrel.'

VII, 386-8

Paris proposes to give back Helen's treasures to the Greeks, and even to add some of his own, but stops short of offering to restore Helen herself to Menelaus. In any case, according to Diomedes' answer, no agreement is conceivable at that stage, since the Achaeans are confident of their success in the war. They would not even accept Helen back:

τοῖον Ζεὺς ἐπὶ Πατρόκλῳ ἀνδρῶν τε καὶ ἵππων

²⁰ Again, this seems to point to an important difference between what the characters believe (that the gods uphold some fundamental moral values) and what actually takes place: there does not seem to be much point in involving the gods in a truce, as they are the ones who actually want to break it.

ἤματι τῷ ἐτάνυσσε κακὸν πόνον· οὐδ' ἄρα πῶ τι
ἦδεε Πάτροκλον τεθνηότα διὸς Ἀχιλλεύς·

'Let no one now accept possessions from Alexander, nor accept Helen either. Even a fool can see that now the threads of death are fastened on the Trojans.'

VII, 400-2

All the Achaeans approve Diomedes' words (VII, 403-4).

Persuasion is a tool often used by the most vulnerable people in the poem, such as old men and women, but also by the warriors themselves, and even the gods. As Schofield has shown in his article on *euboulia*, it is even a virtue deemed necessary for good leadership, and the warriors who can use language in a convincing manner are praised for it.²¹ It is also a gentler way of resolving problems and of dealing with other people.²²

²¹ Schofield (1986).

²² See next Part III on politics.

CONCLUSION

We saw earlier how mortality and suffering encouraged such positive values as pity, human solidarity and fellow-feeling among human beings, even between enemies. The poem ends with a striking act of compassion for a personal enemy: indeed, those gentler virtues ultimately transcend even nationalities and war, as can be seen in the meeting between Priam and Achilles.

However, those are not the only compensations for the negative aspects of the human condition: even though the *Iliad* is a poem full of suffering and brutality (and even downright cruelty at times), gentleness is an important quality in the poem, and acts of kindness and generosity are surprisingly frequent, not only among friends and family, but occasionally with enemies as well.

Another compensation for suffering, in the form of pleasure and happiness, will be next discussed.

CHAPTER V

MANKIND AND HAPPINESS

I – THE VOCABULARY OF PLEASURE AND HAPPINESS

As we saw earlier, the omnipresence of death and the suffering in the *Iliad* is very real, but attenuated by the equal omnipresence of the feeling of pity. The poem is not only a reflection on the tragedy of death, even though it is a major theme of the poem, but a reflection more generally on human life. As such, more positive things are also present.¹ It is an often overlooked fact that joy, pleasure and happiness are also part of the poem as a whole.² They may not be the most frequent emotions and it may not be always entirely positive and admirable (e.g. pleasure in killing people), but it is part of the poem. To understand the representation of the human condition in the *Iliad*, it is fundamental to study what it is that makes people happy. Even if the poem deals mostly with death, pain, pity and suffering, the vocabulary of pleasure and happiness is very much present and can tell us a lot about the joys of human life as shown in the *Iliad*, be they grim, like the joys of war, or innocent, like dancing and singing. It is interesting to note that both bodily pleasure and more reflective pleasure are present, and both seem equally valued.

This chapter will show a progression from individual pleasure to pleasure found in interaction with other people, and will look at in what context happiness and pleasure are

¹ For definitions of pleasure in ancient philosophy, see Gosling and Taylor (1982).

² Though for a vocabulary study and classification, see Latacz (1966).

felt, what form they take, how they are expressed (which is where the vocabulary of laughing and smiling comes in).

Among the four verbs expressing pleasure and joy (i.e. χαίρω, γηθέω, τέρω, ἀγάλλομαι: to rejoice),³ there are differences in usage which suggest distinct nuances of meaning in each case. We will start with the most straightforward cases, moving to those with less clear-cut divisions of meanings. The words μαλακός, γλυκός and μελιηδής will also be looked at.

1 - τέρω

The situation is very clear and unambiguous for τέρω, and the findings provided by a study of the occurrences in the *Iliad* are corroborated by Chantraine's *Dictionnaire étymologique*, which divides the meanings of τέρω into two main categories: "trouver une pleine satisfaction de son désir"/"trouver son plaisir à, s'amuser à" in general, and in particular as applied to games and pastimes. Indeed, the uses show either a meaning relating to physical satisfaction (food and drink, sleep etc).⁴ It can also relate to entertainment and peaceful activities (singing, dancing etc.), for example:

Μυρμιδόνων δ' ἐπί τε κλισίας καὶ νῆας ἰκέσθην,
τὸν δ' εὖρον φρένα τεροπόμενον φόρμιγγι λιγείη
καλῆ δαιδαλέη, ἐπὶ δ' ἀργύρεον ζυγὸν ἦεν,
τὴν ἄρετ' ἐξ ἐνάρων πόλιν Ἡετίωνος ὀλέσσας·

³ Εὐφραίνω and εὐφροσύνη will be given a passing mention, and the vocabulary of smiling and laughing will be looked at in the next chapter. On ἰαίνω (which does not appear in the *Iliad*), see Clarke (1999), 97ff.

⁴ IX, 705-6; XI, 780-81; XXIII, 10-11; XXIII, 97-98; XXIV, 2-3; XXIV, 633-34; XXIV, 635-36. Unexpectedly, weeping also belong to that category. This may seem a paradoxical idea, but in a way, tears relieve the tension of grief. It can therefore be seen as the kind of joy that diminishes discomfort or pain (rather than improve a previously neutral state), as does eating and sleeping (which provide relief from hunger and tiredness respectively). It releases tension and is enjoyable as an activity. Interestingly, grief is not one of Aristotle's πάθη (see Konstan 2006, 246).

They came to the huts and the ships of the Myrmidons, and found Achilles giving pleasure to his heart with a clear-voiced lyre, a beautiful finely-wrought thing with a cross-piece of silver, which he had won from the spoils when he destroyed Eëtion's city.

IX, 185-88⁵

It is not immediately clear if sex belongs to the first or the second category, but it can be argued that it is seen as simply an enjoyable activity rather than a physical need.

ἀλλ' ἄγε δὴ φιλότῃτι τραπείομεν⁶ εὐνηθέντε·

"No, come, let us enjoy the bed of love."

III, 441⁷

Of course, Homer does not seem to need to make a difference between the two categories, the emphasis being on the enjoyment: physical satisfaction and entertainment are both seen as ways of enjoying oneself.⁸

Furthermore, in contrast to the uses of *χαίρω* in particular (see below), those are examples of pleasure found in a mostly non-competitive context. The question may be asked whether throwing the discus involves competition or not, but the fact that the verb *τέρπω* and not *χαίρω* is used suggests that the pleasure found there is purely in the activity and not in winning.⁹

⁵ Furthermore, Leaf comments that "this is the only case in the Iliad where we find music among men; the concert in L 603 is heavenly. The exigencies of war perhaps account for the fact that the *Iliad* knows nothing of the αἰδοί, who are so prominent in *Od.*" This is fair enough, but it is incorrect to say that this is the only occurrence of music among men, for example in I, 472-74, men sing and dance (arguably, in prayer to Apollo) and in XVII, 525-26, a shepherd plays the pipe. See also: XI, 642-43; XVIII, 525-26; XVIII, 603-4. Those activities can include games:

ἀλλ' ὁ μὲν ἐν νήεσσι κορωνίσι ποντοπόροισι
κεῖτ' ἀπομνήσιας Ἀγαμέμνονι ποιμένι λαῶν
Ἀτρεΐδῃ λαοὶ δὲ παρὰ ῥηγμῖνι θαλάσσης
δίσκοισιν τέρποντο καὶ αἰγανέησιν ἰέντες
τόξοισίν θ'·

But Achilles was keeping by his beaked seafaring ships in his fury at Agamemnon son of Atreus, shepherd of the people. And his men were amusing themselves along the shore where the sea breaks with games of discus and spear-throwing and archery.

II, 771-75

⁶ *Τραπείομεν* is an irregular form of *ταρπέωμεν* (see Autenrieth 299-300) and not the verb *τέρπω*.

⁷ See also: X, 335-37; XIV, 314.

⁸ On the dissimilarities of pleasure, see Plato's *Philebus* (and on it Gosling and Taylor, 134-7), esp. 32c on the difference between pleasures of anticipation and pleasures of replenishment, as well as 43a-c on replenishment more specifically. On the question of insatiability, see Gosling and Taylor 137-8.

⁹ Furthermore,

2 - ἀγάλλομαι

There are very few occurrences of this verb in the poem (5), but nevertheless, a very clear pattern can be found: ἀγάλλομαι seems to refer specifically to the joy one has in *possessing* something. It can be armour,¹⁰ a chariot,¹¹ or be used in animal similes, and be used to refer to the joy a bird has in its wings¹² or a mare in its foals.¹³

The 4 first occurrences refer to things which have a function. They do not merely refer to the possession of the object or body part mentioned, but the pleasure felt is also linked to the power that they confer as an extension of the individual, and to the capacity that possession gives (power to fight with the armour and chariot, power to fly with the wings).¹⁴

In the case of the mares, we are perhaps to think there is a reference to their capacity to be mothers or to the fact that possession of offspring confers status on the possessor. It is also possible to argue that the human feelings involved may be those of the owner, who not

It is also interesting to note that peace in itself is to be enjoyed: staying at home and not going to war at all, as when Echeolus buys himself off the army, is seen as a pleasure:

τὴν Ἀγαμέμνονι δῶκε' Ἀγχισιάδης Ἐχέπωλος
 δῶρ', ἵνα μὴ οἱ ἔποιθε' ὑπὸ Ἴλιον ἠνεμόεσσαν,
 ἀλλ' αὐτοῦ τέροποιτο μένων·

Aithe had been given to Agamemnon by Echeolus son of Anchises, a gift made so that he should not have to go with him to windy Ilion, but could stay at home and enjoy his life.
 XXIII, 296-98.

A peaceful life away from the grief or the glory of the battlefield is clearly seen as a source of joy in itself. We can think of the 'choice' of Achilles between a short, martial and glorious life and a long peaceful and quiet life. This shows that happiness is not necessarily what everybody would go for: at the end of the day, Achilles chooses the suffering of the battlefield over the joy of his home.

¹⁰ XVII, 472-73 and XVIII, 131-32.

¹¹ XII, 113-15.

¹² II, 459-62.

¹³ XX, 222.

¹⁴ Leaf (1900-2) wrongly assumes in his comment on this passage that ἀγάλλομαι is "perhaps here in the primitive sense (root gal 'to shine') 'preening themselves'", whereas Willcock properly translates it as "delighting in". Furthermore, a bird cannot 'preen itself' while flying.

only owns 3000 steeds, but many foals as well,¹⁵ feelings which are poetically transferred to the mares themselves.¹⁶

In Chantraine's *Dictionnaire*, possession as such is not emphasized, but the definition:¹⁷ "ressentir une joyeuse fierté de", would certainly cover pride of the possession of an object, implicit in the examples found in the *Iliad*.

The *Lexikon* indicates the meaning of ἀγάλλομαι in the example of the bird is a weakened meaning ("in schon abgeschwächter Bedeutung"), presumably because flying is a normal function of the birds: wings are no more to the birds than legs to men, but viewed from a human standpoint, the ability to fly is enviable. Therefore the meaning need not be weaker than in the other cases.

3 - χαίρω and γηθέω

The differentiation between these two verbs is much more problematic.

When we look at the occurrences (34 for χαίρω and 28 for γηθέω), it seems that they are almost exact synonyms, and both express two main types of pleasure: relief (χαίρω: 8 occurrences,¹⁸ γηθέω: 3 occurrences)¹⁹ and satisfaction at achieving something (χαίρω: 18 occurrences,²⁰ γηθέω: 20 occurrences),²¹ or in being *able* to achieve something (fighting in particular, when the pleasure is mostly in the anticipation). Both can also be used in negative

¹⁵ Cf. XX, 221-22. For a similar idea, see also XI, 676-81, in particular line 680.

¹⁶ Incomprehensibly, Edwards (1991) says that "καί (223) links the thought of ἀγαλλόμενοι to that of ηράσσαω; they were lovely mares, and so he loved them." How he manages to understand ἀγαλλόμενοι as 'lovely' is very difficult to understand.

¹⁷ Chantraine (1968). The same idea is expressed in Snell's *Lexikon des frühgriechischen Epos*.

¹⁸ I, 446-47; III, 111-12; VII, 311-12; X, 564-65; XIX, 74-75; 185-86; XXIV, 490-92; 704-6.

¹⁹ VII, 121-22; XXIV, 319-21; 422-24.

²⁰ I, 158; 255-58; III, 23-26; 27-28; 76; X, 277; 462-64; XIV, 153-56; XVI, 599-600; XVIII, 259-60; XXI, 346-47; 423-25; XXII, 224-25; XXIII, 563-65; 624-25; 646-49; 797.

²¹ I, 254-58; IV, 255; 272-73; 283-84; 311-12; 326; VII, 189; VIII, 277-78; VIII, 555-59; X, 190-93; XI, 683-84; XIII, 81-82; 343-44; 414-16; 494-95; XIV, 139-41; XVI, 530-31; XVII, 567-68; XVIII, 554-57; XXI, 388-90.

ways, as litotes (“he won’t be glad that” etc.), or, as Willcock calls them “effective understatements”. In which case, both verbs are used in expression of either fear or anger.²²

The only nuance that seems to be obvious is that χαίρω belongs mostly to the domain of family and friends, and γηθέω to that of war (see next part).

Various scholars have expressed divergent views on the differences between χαίρω and γηθέω, but generalisations regarding the semantic distinction between the two words, though interesting, are for the most part untenable. For a complete discussion of those distinctions, see appendix III. A brief summary is as follows:

1 - Willcock's idea of γηθέω meaning “quiet satisfaction” may be true on occasion, it is by no means always the case, and not even in the perfect, as Willcock seemed to believe. Furthermore, the idea of “quiet satisfaction” can also be expressed by other verbs.

2 - Chantraine's idea of γηθέω as expressing a “joie rayonnante” is even less convincing, as it is not relevant to every single occurrence of the verb, and because χαίρω too can have a meaning not dissimilar to “radiant” and in more instances than γηθέω.²³

3 - According to the *Lexikon*, the main difference between the two verbs is that with γηθέω, the cause of the pleasure is either expected or solicited, and with χαίρω, it is typically unexpected. When looking at the examples in the *Iliad*, we find that this idea also seems highly questionable.

²² I, 329-30; VIII, 376-78; IX, 75-77.

²³ Furthermore, the etymology of χαίρω also indicates the meaning of “light, illumination” etc. See Borgeaud and MacLachlan (1985).

- Parallel usages

What makes a differentiation between the two terms even more difficult is the fact that they on several occasions appear to be used as substitutes for each other, in otherwise similar contexts:

The Trojans and Odysseus respectively are glad at an omen:

χαίρει δὲ τῷ ὄρνιθ' Ὀδυσσεύς, ἤρᾳτο δ' Ἀθήνη·

Odysseus was delighted at the omen of the bird, and prayed to Athena.
X, 277

εἶσατο δὲ σφι
δεξιὸς αἴξας διὰ ἄστεος· οἱ δὲ ἰδόντες
γήθησαν, καὶ πᾶσιν ἐνὶ φρεσὶ θυμὸς ἰάνθη.

The eagle showed swooping across the city on the right: and they were all delighted when they saw him, and their hearts warmed within them.
XXIV, 319-21

χαίρω I, 158 = γηθέω XIII, 494-95: The leader is glad that his troops have followed him.

I, 254-58: the two verbs are used in the same sentence to express the idea that Priam would rejoice if he knew that the Achaian leaders are fighting each other.

χαίρω III, 27-28 = χαίρω VII, 191-92 = γηθέω VII, 189: a warrior (Menelaus in the first example or Ajax in the last two) is glad that he is going to fight a Trojan.

χαίρω XXI, 346-47 = γηθέω VII, 555-59: a peasant, farmer or shepherd, is glad in his work and in the weather.

χαίρω XVI, 599-600 = γηθέω VIII, 277-78: a warrior rejoices at seeing another warrior killing an enemy.

χαίρω and γηθέω are noticeably used in competitive contexts: In the sporting competition that can be found in Book XXIII, the funeral games of Patroclus, the warriors take great pleasure in winning prizes:

Ἦ ῥα, καὶ Αὐτομέδοντι φίλῳ ἐκέλευσεν ἑταίρῳ
οἰσέμεναι κλισίῃθεν· ὃ δ' ᾗχετο καὶ οἱ ἔνεικεν,
Εὐμήλῳ δ' ἐν χερσὶ τίθει· ὃ δὲ δέξατο χαίρων.

So he spoke, and told his dear companion Automedon to bring the corselet from his hut. He went off and brought it back, and placed it in Eumelus' hands: and he accepted it with delight."

XXIII, 563-65²⁴

Those examples highlight the competitive nature of some aspects of the Homeric society. It is noticeable that the verb used here is *χαίρω*. The difference with *τέρπω* is that here, the pleasure is taken in winning the prize, rather than in the competition itself. With *τέρπω*, on the other hand, we saw in the examples that the characters make a deliberate attempt to amuse themselves, often in order to pass time, as in the examples in the next category.

Thus, when looking at the examples from the *Iliad*, we find it difficult to make a clear division between the meanings of *χαίρω* and *γηθέω*. Even if the indications given by various scholars are partly true, it is nearer the truth to say that the two verbs are synonymous, with *χαίρω* being less often used in a context of expected events, and also in the domain of family and friends, while *γηθέω* is more often used in the domain of war. On the other hand, *τέρπω* seems to refer her to a different type of pleasure, where the subject is more directly involved in the enjoyment, and the pleasure is found in the possession of an object, in being physically engaged in an activity, or in enjoying a particular condition of life. With *χαίρω* and *γηθέω*, the participation may be indirect, and the pleasure occasioned by events or circumstances in which the subject is not directly involved.

²⁴ See also: XXIII, 624-25; 646-49; 797.

4 – The beauty of life: μαλακός, γλυκός and μελιθής

Despite war and the omnipresence of death, Homer keeps insisting on the beauty of life. It can of course be found in descriptions of what the warriors have left behind them, and may never see again, but even life on the battlefield can be beautiful and even joyous. The idea which appears is that however hard it can be, life is always desirable. Even if the warriors themselves think a glorious death is the most important thing in the world, the poet always reminds us that life is beautiful and death a tragedy.

Μαλακός is one word used to suggest the mildness of life. It describes the softness in reference to touch, and is used of clothes: μαλακὸν χιτῶνα (II, 42), πέπλοισι μαλακοῖσιν (XXIV, 796), of beds: εὐνήν ἔνι μαλακῇ= (IX, 618; X, 75 and XXII, 504) and of grass and fields: ποίην...μαλακόν (XIV, 347-9), νειὸν μαλακῆν (XVIII, 541). It is also used to describe flesh, when the Achaeans claim that Hector's body is softer now that he is dead than it was when he was alive:

ὦ πόποι, ἦ μάλα δὴ μαλακώτερος ἀμφαφάασθαι
Ἐκτῶρ ἦ ὅτε νῆας ἐνέπρησεν πυρὶ κηλέω.

"Look, Hector is much more μαλακός to handle now than when he fired our ships with burning flame."

XXII, 373-4²⁵

There is a gradation between clothes, grass and flesh, but the common idea is that μαλακός is applied to something which *yields* to the touch, or other pressure (the poking of swords, in Hector's case). It feels soft, and does not offer resistance. Metaphorically, the word is also used to describe sleep: μαλακῶ δεδμημένοι ὕπνω (X, 2 and XXIV, 678), "yielding to μαλακός sleep", μαλακὸν περὶ κῶμ' ἐκάλυψα, (XIV, 359), "I have wrapped

²⁵ On the sexualization of Hector's dead body, see Vermeule (1979) on the pornography of death, 145-77; Monsacré (1984), 69-77 and n.88, 217 on the link between erotic desire and desire to fight and Vernant (2001), 59-60.

him in a μαλακός deep sleep”, and describes the softness and pleasantness of sleep, rather than any “yielding” aspect. It is interesting to note that this adjective is also used, as was seen earlier, to refer to the type of persuasion used by women, whose aim is to humour the person one is talking to, and, in a way, to yield, or at least to appear to yield to them.

The word mostly used to describe the pleasantness of life is γλυκύς (and γλυκερός, there is very little difference between the two). It first suggests sweetness to the taste, for example when describing the gods’ nectar: γλυκὸν νέκταρ (I, 598) or food:

σίτου τε γλυκεροῖο περὶ φρένας ἴμερος αἰρεῖ²⁶

Desire for γλυκερός food takes over his mind
(XI, 89)

The food is here described as “sweet”, perhaps because of the prospect of satisfying one’s hunger, not necessarily because the food itself is sweet. As for nectar, it is of course impossible to know if it was thought of as sweet or not. It is thus possible that even when describing food, the idea of sweetness is simply metaphorical, and that the words only means “pleasant” (as sweet things are). But it is mostly used in a transferred sense of things which are not characterised by taste of any kind. In such cases, it is used metaphorically of what people find pleasant, the paradigm of pleasantness being sweetness of taste. It is used of sleep: γλυκὺς ὕπνος (I, 610; II, 71; XXIII, 232), ὕπνος γλυκερός (X, 4), μέδοντο ὕπνου τε γλυκεροῦ ταρπήμεναι (XXIV, 2-3), “they thought of enjoying γλυκερός sleep”, ὕπνω ὑπο γλυκερῶ (XXIV, 636), as well as of singing: μολπῆς τε γλυκερῆς (XIII, 637), and of different sorts of ἴμερος: nostalgia:

ᾠς εἰποῦσα θεὰ γλυκὺν ἴμερον ἔμβαλε θυμῶ
ἀνδρός τε προτέρου καὶ ἄστεος ἠδὲ τοκῆων·

²⁶ αἰρεῖ means to seize, to take possession of, and is used metaphorically here. It is used of a number of emotions: joy, grief, courage, astonishment, longing, fear, and shows emotions as quasi physical entities.

So speaking the goddess put in Helen's heart a γλυκὺς yearning for her past husband and her city and her parents.
III, 139-40

Sexual desire is another one.²⁷

The pleasures of life are clearly marked as such and are universally sought after. The fact that this adjective is very often use with words such as ἴμερος or μέδοντο shows that anticipation plays an important part. Both the thing desired and desire itself are pleasant. In such contexts, desire is only γλυκὺς because it is likely to be realised.

Another adjective which possesses a meaning close to that of γλυκὺς is μελιηδής, "honey-sweet". It also quite obviously suggests something sweet to the taste, and is mostly used to describe wine (IV, 346; VI, 258; X, 569; XII, 320; XVI, 545). But it cannot be assumed that wine so described had actually been mixed with honey, and the adjective may simply mean that wine is pleasant. When Nestor prepares a cup of wine for Patroclus in Book XI, honey is listed as a separate ingredient (XV, 631). Thus, the adjective need not mean that wine is mixed with honey, especially since the other uses of the adjective do not imply sweetness of taste at all: wheat cannot be thought of as being sweet (μελιηδέα πυρὸν ἔδοντες, X, 569), in the same way as fruits (μελιηδέα καρπὸν, XVIII, 568). It is likely that the dominant significance is pleasantness rather than simply sweetness. Honey is a particularly enjoyable food, and it is that element of enjoyment that is transferred. Like γλυκὺς in its transferred sense, it simply means pleasant. Moreover, in the Odyssey, μελιηδής covers the same range of vocabulary as γλυκὺς, and can refer for example to sleep (Od. XIX, 551). It is

²⁷ III, 446; XIV, 328.

possible to conclude that wine is not “sweet” as distinct from “enjoyable”. More interestingly, this adjective is also used to describe the human “breath of life”, the θυμός.²⁸

Since the sweetness of honey is the paradigm of an enjoyable quality, it is significant that Homer uses an adjective based upon it to describe human life, and it assesses the value that was attached to it.²⁹

Despite the grimness of the warriors' life, it is possible for them to find some joy, and many aspects of their lives are described as pleasant and beautiful. The characters' response to pleasure and happiness, essentially through laughing and smiling, is also quite interesting, and is the subject of the next part.

²⁸ X, 495 and XVII, 17

²⁹ Ἡδύς is also part of the vocabulary of pleasure, but because it is only ever used with γέλαω, it will be looked at in the next section.

II – EXTERNAL SIGNS OF JOY

The two words which will be looked at in this section are *μειδάω*, “to smile” and *γέλαω*, “to laugh”.

According to the *Lexikon*, the usage of *γέλαω* includes “physical and emotional phenomena beside or without the acoustic manifestation”. They add that the sound of laughing is nowhere directly mentioned in Homer, which, to them, seems to undermine the meaning of *γέλαω* as “to laugh”. Indeed, they say that *γέλαω* is often nothing but a “brightening of the countenance (without accompanying sound)”, as fits the etymological meaning (root **γλ*: to shine), and that there is no necessary contrast between *γέλαω* and *μειδάω*.¹ The difference between the two is difficult to tell from the uses in the poem, as the two are used in very similar contexts.

Hera’s bitter laugh when she is still scared of Zeus and outraged at his plans, and laughs “only with her lips” (i.e. not truly, not with her eyes), shows that a sign of joy can be distinct from the actual feeling with which it is normally associated. That clearly shows that this is a separate thing from the feelings themselves, as expressed in the preceding part.

Ἡ μὲν ἄρ' ὡς εἰποῦσα καθέζετο πότνια Ἥρη,
 ὄχθησαν δ' ἀνὰ δῶμα Διὸς θεοὶ ἢ δ' ἐγέλασσε
 χεῖλεσιν, οὐδὲ μέτωπον ἐπ' ὄφρῦσι κυανέησιν
 ἰάνθη πᾶσιν δὲ νεμεσσηθεῖσα μετηύδα·

So speaking queen Hera sat down, and there was an uproar among the gods in Zeus’ house. She laughed with her lips, but on the forehead above her dark brows there was no softening. And she said to them in vexation.

XV, 100-3

¹ See also Levine (1982-83), 98 and n.7.

Of course, it is actually more likely to be a bitter smile rather than laughter (can anyone be said to laugh only with their lips?), but both are acceptable in the context.²

In the case of smiling and laughing, the situation is often not only about simple enjoyment, as the aim is often to make one's feelings known to someone and possibly to have an effect on them.³ Either positive (friendliness, reassurance) or negative (ridicule, contempt).⁴ There are two main aims to smiling and laughing, which parallel the duality between peaceful and martial pleasure: to show friendliness and to show hostility or aggression.

A- TO SHOW FRIENDLINESS

1- to show affection

In the simplest way possible, smiling and laughing can simply be used to show affection, for example to a friend:

Ὡς φάτο, μείδησεν δὲ ποδάρκης δῖος Ἀχιλλεύς
χαίρων Ἀντιλόχῳ, ὅτι οἱ φίλος ἦεν ἑταῖρος·

She spoke, and swift-footed Achilles smiled in delight at Antilochus, as he was a dear friend.
 XXIII, 555-56

² Janko, in the *Cambridge Commentary*, gives a lengthy analysis of that particular passage: "If a speaker breaks off and resumes, the poet indicates some odd circumstance (cf. 1.511ff., 584ff.) – here, the goddess's forced laugh, confined to her lips while she still scowled. She does not relax her *μέτωπον*, properly the bridge of the nose. (...) This laugh warns us not to take at face value what Here says next"; Levine (CJ 78 (1982) 97n.) detects 'an attempt to show self confidence... as she tries to cover up her defeat at Zeus's hands and preserve her dignity'; bT-scholia (on 108) thinks she waits to see if the gods will defend themselves against Zeus, and then bursts out in rage at their silence, but Homer had ways to say this; rather, she pauses to increase their curiosity and suspense.

³ Non verbal behaviour is important to look at, and smiling and laughing are the most obvious expressions of joy and pleasure. On the importance of non verbal behaviour in general, see Lateiner (1998), esp. 6 and his point that laughter is easier when the social control settings are slack (which is true, see in particular the banquets of the gods and the games).

⁴ On how laughter always implies superiority (while smiling can imply superiority but does not always), see Levine (1982-83), 97ff., on smiles of affection or conciliation, 100-102.

The *Lexikon* classifies this example in the “affection and/or satisfaction toward progeny” category. This category extends towards “younger and/or subordinate” other people. Nevertheless, Achilles is said to be the youngest of the Achaians, so Antilochus is necessarily the elder. Neither is he Achilles’ subordinate: he is a prince of Pylos, and the leader of the region, his father Nestor, comes to Troy with 90 ships when Achilles comes with 50. He is from a different region and cannot be a subordinate. Furthermore, Achilles calls him his φίλος ἑταῖρος, and the combination of the two words indicates that Antilochus is not a subordinate, but is on an equal footing with Achilles: Kakridis explains that the leaders are the ἑταῖροι of each other,⁵ and David Konstan remarks that only those ἑταῖροι described as φίλοι can really be described as “friends”. Being φίλος and πιστός is an essential element of friendship, which is “a select relationship between non-kin grounded in mutual affection (“dearness”) and loyalty or trust”.⁶ The relationship between Achilles and Antilochus is thus one of friendship and not of subordination. On that passage, Willcock comments that “Achilleus is amused by the youthful eagerness of Antilochos. This must be the first time he has smiled since the death of Patroklos. In 786-92, the young man again speaks in a way that pleases Achilleus. There is evident sympathy between the two.”⁷

Γέλω and μειδάω can also be used in a familial context, in particular in the last meeting between Hector and his wife and son:

ἦτοι ὁ μὲν μείδησεν ἰδὼν ἐς παῖδα σιωπῆ·

Hector looked at his son and smiled in silence.

VI, 404

⁵ H.J. Kakridis (1963), 51-77.

⁶ Konstan, (1997), 31-33.

⁷ Similarly, Kirk (1990) says: “Akhilleus smiles for the first and only time in the whole poem, and is delighted by his friend’s frankness.”

Here, Hector is explicitly said to smile in silence, and the poet makes a point of saying so, which reinforces the contrast with γέλαω (which is never said to be σιωπηῖ). The silence refers to the absence of words rather than the absence of sounds in general: he does not address his son, and the first person to speak in this episode is Andromache.

Ὡς εἰπὼν οὐ παιδὸς ὀρέξατο φαίδιμος Ἴκτωρ·
 ἄψ δ' ὁ πάϊς πρὸς κόλπον εὐζώνοιο τιθήνης
 ἐκλίνθη ἰάχων πατρὸς φίλου ὄψιν ἀτυχθεῖς
 ταρβήσας χαλκὸν τε ἰδὲ λόφον ἵππιοχαίτην,
 δεινὸν ἀπ' ἀκροτάτης κόρυθος νεύοντα νοήσας.
 ἐκ δ' ἐγέλασσε πατὴρ τε φίλος καὶ πότνια μήτηρ·

So speaking, glorious Hector reached out to take his son. But the child shrank back crying against the breast of his girdled nurse, terrified at the sight of his own father, frightened by the bronze and the crest of horse-hair, as he saw it nodding dreadfully from the top of the helmet. His father and his dear mother laughed aloud at this.

VI, 466-71

This time, the prefix ἐκ tends to emphasize the audible aspect of the laugh. Furthermore, the context also indicates that we are dealing with audible laughter: Hector and Andromache are laughing because they find the situation funny, and as Kirk comments “the emphatic ἐκ δ' ἐγέλασσε suggests the parents' release from tension as well as their love of this child”.⁸

Ὡς εἰπὼν ἀλόχοιο φίλης ἐν χερσὶν ἔθηκε
 παῖδ' ἑόν ἢ δ' ἄρα μιν κηῶδεϊ δέξατο κόλπω
 δακρῦόεν γελάσασα πόσις δ' ἐλέησε νοήσας

So speaking he placed his son in his dear wife's arm. She took him to her scented breast, laughing through her tears; and her husband was touched to pity at the sight of her.

VI, 482-84

According to the *Lexikon*, in this example, Andromache did not laugh aloud, but “rather she forced a smile”. Of course, there is no proof for that, and it is perfectly possible to laugh and cry at the same time, as Mazon's translation for this expression “avec un rire en pleurs” shows.

⁸ Kirk (1990).

Hera can also be seen to smile to her son Hephaistos, with an emphasis on the smile through the repetition of μειδάω:

Ὡς φάτο, μείδησεν δὲ θεὰ λευκώλενος Ἥρη,
μειδήσασα δὲ παιδὸς ἐδέξατο χειρὶ κύπελλον·

So he spoke, and the white-armed goddess Hera smiled, and smiling took the cup from her son.

I, 595-96

Her smile shows her appreciation for her son's comforting words, after she had been frightened by Zeus. Again, Hera obtains what she wants, and this could be a simple smile of satisfaction (see below).

2- as a show of good humour (socially engineered smile)

This is particularly the case in Antilochus' reaction when he loses the race gracefully, which is the appropriate reaction: showing good humour in defeat. Furthermore, Antilochus is also being a bit cheeky, talking about the "old age" of the other contestants (XXIII, 787-92), which may mean that he was smiling in advance, knowing what he was going to say.⁹

3- to show satisfaction

It is also used when a favour has been granted, to express the satisfaction of obtaining something:

Ὡς φάτο, μείδησεν δὲ βοῶπις πότνια Ἥρη,
μειδήσασα δ' ἔπειτα ἔῳ ἐγκάτθετο κόλπῳ.

So she spoke, and the ox-eyed queen Hera smiled, and smiling put the band back away in her breast.

XIV, 222-23

Here, Hera is glad that she managed to get the aphrodisiac she wanted from Aphrodite so she could seduce Zeus. According to the *Lexikon*, this smile is caused by the success of her

⁹ XXIII, 785-86. Levine (1982-3), 101-2, understands this passage differently, but he does not give enough credit to the apparently rather cheerful nature of Antilochus.

deception of Aphrodite. It is also possible that the deception was incidental, and that it was not the deception as such that made her happy, but the fact that she got what she wanted. Levine's point that smiles can indicate superiority is very obvious here: Hera manipulates people as much as she can, often through deceit. The smile could express satisfaction at her own cleverness and powers of persuasion.¹⁰ Janko¹¹ analyses that passage thus: "Aphrodite confidently predicts that her talisman will work whatever Here has in mind. The latter may well smile at this, since vague expressions uttered by those not in the know were taken as omens, e.g. at Od.2.33ff., 18.112ff. (see Aristarchus). The repetition of Here's smile stresses her eloquent silence." Hera smiles because Aphrodite made the right kind of propitious remark. Also, it is not the smile that is repeated, but the word.

Ὡς φάτο, μείδησεν δὲ πατὴρ ἀνδρῶν τε θεῶν τε,
καί μιν ἀμειβόμενος ἔπεα πτερόεντα προσηύδα·

So she spoke, and the father of men and gods smiled, and spoke winged words in answer.

XV, 47-48

After Hera had plotted against Zeus, he forces her to promise not to meddle with human combatants. According to the *Lexikon*, Zeus smiles at Hera because he saw through her speech and is about to force her to act according to his will. That is true, but here again, Zeus is pleased with himself because he got what he wanted out of her, not because of the deception itself. Janko comments that "it is one of the charms of Homer's style that we are left to wonder whether Zeus smiles because Here agrees, or because he sees through her wiles, or for both reasons."¹²

¹⁰ Cp. Penelope's laugh: Levine (1983). Also cp. scene with Hephaistus mentioned above.

¹¹ Janko (1992).

¹² Janko (1992).

4- in entertainment

People in the poem also laugh, quite simply, when a joke is told, or when they take pleasure in watching games.¹³

ἔξείρης δ' ἴσταντο, σόλον δ' ἔλε δῖος Ἐπειός,
ἦκε δὲ δινήσας γέλασαν δ' ἐπὶ πάντες Ἀχαιοί.

They stood in order, and godlike Epeios took up the weight, swung it round, and hurled it – and all the Achaians laughed at that.

XXIII, 839-40

Here, it is a collective laughter. Commentators do not agree on the meaning of this passage. According to Monro, who is followed by Willcock, they laugh because of a bad throw. Willcock even adds: “Epeios is perhaps something of a buffoon (670)”. Leaf had given a different explanation: “we are not told whether the Achaians laughed in derision of a bad “put” or admiration of a good one. Epeios seems to be the representative of brute strength (see 640), so the latter is perhaps more probable.” A more detailed analysis is given by R.C. Howland in his article about Epeius,¹⁴ says about this passage: “The other event with which Epeius is concerned is putting the weight, and in this he is distinctly less successful, not on account of any lack of strength but because he lacks the necessary skill. He was the first competitor, and he took the σόλος, the lump of iron which was the implement and the prize in this contest, ἦκε δὲ δινήσας (...) – ‘he whirled it before he let it go’. Now this is no way to deal with a σόλος. It was much too heavy to whirl and, as Homer knew, the effect of trying to whirl it would be ridiculous. The Achaians laughed because Epeius clearly had no idea of how to put the weight. He had the strength but not the skill.” But it also possible to think that the verb δινήσας is here used intransitively,¹⁵ and that *he* got into a spin, not the σόλος,

¹³ See Levine (1982-83) on frivolous and derisive laughter. Also cp. with the τέρω examples.

¹⁴ Howland (1954-55), 16.

¹⁵ It is used intransitively in XVIII, 494, to describe a young man “whirling in the dance”.

which is why the Achaeans laughed. Indeed, how could anyone even try to whirl a lump of iron?

Ὡς φάτο, μείδησεν δὲ πατὴρ ἀνδρῶν τε θεῶν τε,
καί ῥα καλεσσάμενος προσέφη χρυσοῖν Ἀφροδίτην·

So she spoke and the father of men and gods smiled, and calling golden Aphrodite to him he said

V, 426-27

Here, Zeus is amused at the joke that Athena had just made, saying that the cause for Aphrodite's wound (actually inflicted by Diomedes on the battlefield) was that "when caressing one of these Achaian women with their lovely dresses she must have scratched her delicate hand on a gold dress-pin". He does not necessarily approve of it, as afterwards he tries to comfort Aphrodite, which may be why he only smiled. Kirk adds that "the goddess [Athena] muttered against Zeus at 4.20 after his little joke; here the father of the gods merely smiles as at 15.47, then summons Aphrodite and addresses her kindly, perhaps to annoy the others."¹⁶

ἄσβεστος¹⁷ δ' ἄρ' ἐνώρτο γέλωσ μακάρεσσι θεοῖσιν
ὡς ἴδον Ἥφαιστον διὰ δώματα ποιπνύοντα.

And uncontrollable laughter rose among the blessed gods, as they watched Hephaistos bustling to and fro in the palace.

I, 599-600

Γέλωσ is described even by the *Lexikon* as being an overtly audible laugh. Here, Hephaistos makes himself into a clown to entertain the gods. Anthon, in his commentary,¹⁸ remarks that "the gods laughed at the clumsy attempts of the lame deity to imitate the graceful movement

¹⁶ Kirk (1990).

¹⁷ ἄσβεστος refers here to the famous "Homeric laughter". The word is also used of fire, cry and glory. It might be a fire metaphor and come from σβένυμι "éteindre" (Chantraine). How can laughter be like fire though? It is only used of the gods' laughter, so it can be understood that their laughter is as inextinguishable as they are immortal.

¹⁸ Anthon (1958).

of a Hebe or Ganymede.”¹⁹ Levine’s point that laughter always express superiority (real or imagined) is still valid. He does not go into detail in that context, but making fun of someone is to a degree putting them down, if only temporarily. In the first two examples of derisive laughter given above, those who are made fun of are usually in a superior position (kings and great warriors), so the laughter can be a relief from ordinary social circumstances.²⁰

5- to appease, to reassure

Smiling and laughing are also used to conciliate somebody who is angry:²¹

Τὸν δ’ ἐπιμειδήσας προσέφη κρείων Ἀγαμέμνων
ὡς γνῶ χωρόμενοιο· πάλιν δ’ ὁ γε λάζετο μῦθον·

Lord Agamemnon answered with a smile, when he saw his anger, and took back what he had said.
IV, 356-57

Again, the *Lexicon* classifies this example as “affection and/or satisfaction” toward a younger man or a subordinate. While Odysseus is indeed Agamemnon’s subordinate, the point of the scene is that Agamemnon has to pacify Odysseus after insulting him. It has nothing to do with either affection or satisfaction, and everything to do with what could be called “damage limitation”. The relationship between Agamemnon and Odysseus is one in which Agamemnon recognises his dependence on Odysseus.²²

In another passage, Zeus reassures Athena who was afraid for the Achaians.

Τὴν δ’ ἐπιμειδήσας προσέφη νεφεληγερέτα Ζεὺς·
θάρασει Τριτογένεια φίλον τέκος· οὐδὲ νύ τι θυμῷ
πρόφρονι μυθέομαι, ἐθέλω δέ τοι ἥπιος εἶναι.

¹⁹ Willcock also comments on that example, and says: “It was the sight of the clumsy movements of Hephaistos which drove the simple-minded and carefree gods to laughter, and so relieved the tension (570), as Hephaistos no doubt intended.”

²⁰ Cf. Lateiner (1998) on laughter being present in a slack social setting.

²¹ Cf. Levine (1982-83), 100-102. Facial expressions can also be meant to have a calming effect, and smiles of affection and conciliation are not mutually exclusive. See also Lateiner (1998).

²² Incidentally, Sophocles’ portrayal of Agamemnon’s obsequiousness with is consistent with Homer’s: see Ajax 1330-1 and 1370-1.

Then Zeus he cloud-gatherer smiled at her and said: 'Do not worry, Tritogeneia, dear child. I do not speak with my heart in full earnest, and my intention to you is kind.'

VIII, 38-40

It is also used to pacify someone who is complaining or who just been injured:

τὴν δὲ προτὶ οἴ
εἶλε πατὴρ Κρονίδης, καὶ ἀνείρετο ἡδὺ γέλασας·

Her father the son of Cronos held her to him, and asked her with a gentle laugh
XXI, 507-8

Here, Zeus comforts Artemis who has been hit by Hera. Interestingly, according to the *Lexikon*, the expression ἡδὺ γέλαω is only used when the subject is making fun of someone .

But here, Zeus holds her in his arms to comfort her. He might be amused by what happened, but his general attitude is one of protection and sympathy.

B- TO SHOW HOSTILITY²³

1 – Making fun of someone

Those words can also be used more negatively, to make fun of someone. This can be understood as showing hostility to a certain extent, but the hostility does not go beyond laughing at someone, and is very mild.²⁴

στῆ δὲ κέρασ μετὰ χερσὶν ἔχων βοὸς ἀγραύλοιο
ὄνθον ἀποπτύων, μετὰ δ' Ἀργείοισιν ἔειπεν·
ὦ πόποι ἦ μ' ἐβλαψε θεὰ πόδας, ἦ τὸ πάρος περ
μήτηρ ὡς Ὀδυσῆϊ παρίσταται ἡδ' ἐπαρήγει.
Ὡς ἔφαθ', οἳ δ' ἄρα πάντες ἐπ' αὐτῷ ἡδὺ γέλασαν.

He stood there with his hand on a horn of the field ox, spitting out dung, and said to the Argives: 'Oh, I swear it was that goddess that fouled my feet, the one who is always at Odysseus' side taking care of him like a mother.' So he spoke, and they all laughed happily at him.

XXIII, 780-84

²³ On the malicious laugh, see Arnould (1990), 31-36.

²⁴ cf. Levine (1982-83) on derisive laughter.

This is a typical example of an event (someone falling, and on top of that in cowpat) that would make people laugh. Furthermore, it is a collective laugh again, and is very similar to the Epeius example, which, if the analysis according to which Epeius spun himself off his feet is correct, could belong to this category.

The characters also smile when someone is being so ludicrous he becomes amusing, as when Dolon tells Odysseus he went as a spy in order to be given Achilles' immortal horses as a reward.

Τὸν δ' ἐπιμειδήσας προσέφη πολύμητις Ὀδυσσεύς·

Then resourceful Odysseus smiled at him and said
X, 400

The *Lexikon* argues that Odysseus smiles ironically, because he is about to deceive the Trojan. Yet, they had just met, and it seems more likely that he smiles at the idea of someone like Dolon could be awarded the horses of Achilles.²⁵

It can also be used more cruelly, such as when Thersites gets beaten up:

Ὡς ἄρ' ἔφη, σκῆπτρῳ δὲ μετάφρενον ἠδὲ καὶ ὤμῳ
πληξεν· ὁ δ' ἰδνώθη, θαλερὸν δέ οἱ ἔκπεσε δάκρυ·
σμῶδιξ δ' αἱματόεσσα μεταφρένου ἐξυπανέστη
σκῆπτρου ὑπο χρυσείου· ὁ δ' ἄρ' ἔζετο τάρβησέν τε,
ἀλγήσας δ' ἀχρεῖον ἰδὼν ἀπομόρξατο δάκρυ.
οἱ δὲ καὶ ἀχνύμενοί περ ἐπ' αὐτῷ ἠδὺν γέλασσαν·

So he spoke, and then used the sceptre to beat him on the back and shoulders. Thersites writhed, and a heavy tear fell from him, and a bloody weal sprang up on his back under the gold-studded sceptre. He sat down frightened and in pain, and with a helpless look wiped away the tears. For all their disaffection the men laughed happily at him.

II, 265-70

It is again a collective laughter. Furthermore, the violence of the scene might naturally lead us to think their reaction would either be horror or laughter, and a moderate reaction like

²⁵ See also Levine's take (1982-83), 101.

smiling might seem to us inappropriate, although they do not like Thersites.²⁶ Besides, the *Lexikon* says the following thing about γέλαω being used with ἦδύ: “perh. *chuckle, chortle derisively and/or maliciously* at another’s pain or humiliation; naturally self-satisfaction plays a role, particularly when harm inflicted by the subj.” It is in general right, and the notion of self-satisfaction is very true for example of XI, 375-79 (see below) for example, and in the example where the Achaians laugh at Thersites, laughter is caused by someone’s pain and humiliation (although it is not clear where the warriors find self satisfaction in that situation, as they have not done anything, just witnessed someone being hurt), but what about when Ajax falls in a cow pat? Ἦδὺ γέλαω is also used, as we saw, when Zeus comforts Artemis.

2 – pleasure in fighting

Like the other words studied, laughter and smile can express joy in battle, very often when attacking, or when watching a fight. In those cases, the hostility is much more obvious (as is the feeling of superiority, since they believe they are going to win). It is used when Ajax is attacking and when Hera is hitting Artemis

τοῖος ἄρ’ Αἴας ὥρτο πελώριος ἔρκος Ἀχαιῶν
μειδιῶν βλοσυροῖσι προσώπασι·

Such was the monstrous Ajax, the bulwark of the Achaians, as he rose to battle, and his face brittle in a grim smile.
 VII, 211-12²⁷

Ajax's grim smile is very interesting.

αὐτοῖσιν δ’ ἄρ’ ἔθεινε παρ’ οὐατα μειδιόωσα
 ἐντροπαλιζομένην· ταχέες δ’ ἔκπιπτον οἴστοι.

²⁶ Willcock (1978) comments on the expression ἀχνύμενοί περ in II, 270 and says: “they were upset because morale was low, because of the plague and the quarrel between their leaders, perhaps because they were not allowed to depart for home. They were not at all upset by the treatment of Thersites.” Much more will be said on the Thersites passage in Part III on Politics.

²⁷ See also: XXI, 434, where Hera smiles when she sees Athena attacking Aphrodite. The lexicon, classifies this as “malicious satisfaction”, which is fair enough, but why put it in the same category as “affection”?

She used her own weapons to box her about the ears, smiling as Artemis writhed and twisted, and her quick-flying arrows came scattering from the quiver.
XXI, 491-92²⁸

It is also used when Zeus is watching the gods fighting (cf. part I). In this case, he is very clearly not laughing out loud, as is shown by the expression φίλον ἦτορ. This is the only time when the laughter is explicitly silent.

σὺν δ' ἔπεσον μεγάλη πατάγῳ, βράχε δ' εὐρεῖα χθών,
ἀμφὶ δὲ σάλπιγγεν μέγας οὐρανός. αἶε δὲ Ζεὺς
ἦμενος Οὐλύμπῳ ἐγέλασσε δέ οἱ φίλον ἦτορ
γηθοσύνη, ὅθ' ὄρατο θεοὺς ἔριδι ξυνιόντας.

They joined with a great crash, so the wide earth roared under them, and the great heaven rang loud like a trumpet. Zeus heard it where he sat on Olympus: and his heart within him laughed for joy, when he saw the gods joining in conflict.
XXI, 387-90²⁹

There is also the striking image where the whole earth laughs in pleasure at the fights:

αἴγλη δ' οὐρανὸν ἴκε, γέλασσε δὲ πᾶσα περὶ χθών
χαλκοῦ ὑπὸ στεροπῆς· ὑπὸ δὲ κτύπος ὄρνυτο ποσσὶν
ἀνδρῶν·

The glitter struck into the sky, and all the earth around them laughed at the gleam of bronze: and a thunder swelled under the feet of the men.
XIX, 362-64

The *Lexikon* considers this example, and every case where the word is applied to nature or to an object, to bear the etymological meaning “to shine”.³⁰ Again, commentators do not agree on this point: To Monro, it means ‘was brightened’ and “this is perhaps the literal meaning of γέλαω.” Leaf and Edwards (in the *Cambridge Commentary*) accept both meanings. Leaf says: “The ideas of *laughing* and *shining* pass so naturally into one another that we can hardly confine the word γέλασσε here absolutely to the latter sense, though it is no doubt

²⁸ Richardson, in the *Cambridge Commentary*, says of that passage that “μειδιώσα stresses the comic character of the scene, but Here’s smile is one of triumph, as at 434, 14.222-3.”

²⁹ See also Odysseus’ barking heart’ (xx, 18-21), which does not prove that barking is normally silent.

³⁰ But it is also possible that it is used as a metaphor, and this idea is reinforced by the fact that the main sense of the word (to laugh) is used of human beings in similar contexts (joy in fights).

the original one; the former must have been prominent also in the poet's mind."³¹ Similarly, Edwards comments: "Here the primary meaning of γέλασσε is 'shine' (...). But the idea 'rejoice' may also be present, as it is in the Hesiod and *HyDem* passage. Similarly earth 'smiles' (μειδίησε) at the birth of Apollo (*HyAp* 118)."³²

The warriors are also seen laughing in triumph:

ὁ δὲ τόξου πῆχυν ἄνελκε
καὶ βάλεν, οὐδ' ἄρα μιν ἄλιον βέλος ἔκφυγε χειρός,
ταρσὸν δεξιτεροῖο ποδός· διὰ δ' ἀμπερὲς ἰός
ἐν γαίῃ κατέπηκτο· ὁ δὲ μάλα ἠδὺ γέλασσε
ἐκ λόχου ἀμπήδησε καὶ εὐχόμενος ἔπος ἠΐδα·

The weapon did not fly wasted from his hand, but hit on the flat of his right foot, and the arrow went right through and fixed in the ground. Alexander jumped out from his cover with a happy laugh, and spoke in triumph.

XI, 375-79

Again, it is obvious that Paris is laughing out loud in pride, to show his superiority over Diomedes. In this case, simply smiling would be inappropriate.³³

The notion of pleasantness and its vocabulary are also linked to the idea of joy. The adjective ἠδύς is often used in the *Iliad* to describe laughter, in the expression ἠδὺ γέλασσαν, which again suggests something pleasant (either than laughing itself is pleasant, or the situation that originated laughter).³⁴ Yet, the laughter it describes seems to be linked to a kind of cruelty: in the first example of this use in II, 271, the Achaians are glad to see Odysseus hitting Thersites. In XI, 378, Paris laughs after striking Diomedes. In XXI, 508, Zeus laughs when he sees his daughter Artemis weeping (she had just been hit by Hera) and finally, in XXIII, 784, the Achaians laugh when they see Ajax fall in the race, during Patroclus' funeral

³¹ cf. "beam" in English, German strahlen, but not "briller" in French as Levine seems to believe (1982-83), n.8, 96.

³² See Levine (1982-83), 98.

³³ If we follow Levine (1982-83), it would also be inappropriate because smiling is always linked to real superiority (as opposed to an imagined one), and Paris is obviously an inferior warrior. As we see later on in the text, the wound inflicted on Diomedes is fairly minor.

³⁴ cf. Gosling and Taylor (1982), 275.

games. The characters seem mostly to rejoice when they see somebody else in pain, an enemy, or even one of their own. This is undoubtedly a kind of joy well suited to the battlefield,³⁵ but this lack of empathy from the characters is nevertheless surprising. Yet, each time, they seem to laugh at a minor incident, in which the life of the sufferer is never in danger. The expression is not used over somebody else's death. Even though they might jeer at a dead enemy with the utmost cruelty, the expression ἡδὺ γέλασσαν is not employed.

Physical expressions of joy such as smiling and laughing are used for various reasons in the poem: they can show genuine affection and good will, or more, negatively, they can show the grim enjoyment of another's suffering, however mild. Levine's interpretation of laughing as always showing superiority, real or imagined, and of smiling as showing affection or real superiority are correct,³⁶ but seem to apply more clearly to the *Odyssey*. In the *Iliad*, the two seem to be used in very similar contexts.

³⁵ Cp. *Odyssey*, where joy of "superiority" is mostly about deception.

³⁶ Levine (1982-3, 1983).

III- PLEASURE IN HIERARCHICAL RELATIONSHIPS

Interestingly, words relating to pleasure and happiness have social implications that go beyond simple personal joy. Indeed, many times they are linked to reciprocal favours deeply embedded in the hierarchical social construction of the poem.

In this category can be found mostly words linked to *χάρις*, which means “grace, favour”, and brings the idea of gaining or granting a favour, pleasing someone or being pleased by someone, actions which involve at least two parties, be they gods or mortals. In this category, pleasure does not come from a thing or an event, but a person and their actions.¹

The words used are *χάρις* itself, *χαρίζομαι*, but also *χαρίεις*, which refers to something “pleasing”, therefore intended to gratify, and indeed, while it is sometimes used in an aesthetic sense² (as a description of someone’s head or face), it is used most of the time to characterize gifts.³

Another word which belongs to this category is *εὐφραίνω* (only 3 occurrences), which is derived from *εὐ* + *φρήν* in the sense of “frame of mind” rather than just “mind”, and is used of something that cheers and/or puts the recipient in a good disposition.⁴ It is therefore linked to the idea of “pleasing someone”, and the emphasis is on the mental state of the person affected.

The three verbs which have been looked at earlier, *τέρπω*, *γηθέω* and *χαίρω*, when

¹ *Χάρις* is also a quality that people have or do not have, and they can be judged according to whether or not they are capable of showing *χάρις*.

² XVI, 796-99; XVIII, 22-24; XXII, 401-3.

³ I, 39; VI, 90-92; 271-73; VIII, 201-4; IX, 597-99.

⁴ For example: XXIV, 101-2.

used in a certain way⁵ can also belong to the “interactive” section: sometimes, the pleasure described is intentionally created by someone else, and therefore is linked to the meaning, “being pleased by someone”.

Χάρις' primary meaning is 'delight' rather than 'favour', and Parker in his article on reciprocity acknowledges that this is the case when it is used in the context of a mortal/god relationship. He comments that the point is for mortals to bring the gods things 'in which they delight' and that despite the later change to the meaning 'gratitude', the 'fundamental conception at all period' is 'that of an unceasing exchange of delightful gifts and services, a kind of charm war'.⁶ The same applies to relationships other than the mortal/god one: pleasure is always, it seems, at the centre of the exchanges.

This idea of “pleasing someone” might seem to carry no particular implication for the relative status of those involved at first glance, but interestingly, this type of interaction is found to be exclusively of the inferior/superior type. Four types of relationship are involved: wife/husband, vanquished/victor, mortals/gods and warriors/leader.

This notion of ‘pleasing someone’ does not appear in any other context, among warriors of equal rank for example, and as we will see, the context indicates that the ‘inferior/superior’ relationship is central to the exchange. Another noticeable feature of those relationships is that the idea of reciprocity is very important, as the relationships work both ways, and involves both services rendered and the answer to those service, in the form of recompense or a show of gratitude.

⁵ NB: this kind of context does not reveal any new difference between χαίρω and γηθέω, and all the examples about to be given have already been dealt with in the first section of this chapter.

⁶ Parker (1998), 108-9.

1 – wife/husband

The wife is described as acting (here, against her own interest) with a view to pleasing her husband:

Πήδαιον δ' ἄρ' ἔπεφνε Μέγης Ἀντήνορος υἱὸν
ὅς ῥα νόθος μὲν ἔην, πύκα δ' ἔτρεφε διὰ Θεανῶ
ἴσα φίλοισι τέκεσσι χαριζομένη πόσει ᾧ.

And Meges killed Pedaios, Antenor's son – a bastard son, godlike Theano reared him with all the care she gave her own dear children, to please her husband.

V, 69-71⁷

Similarly, χάρις is used once to describe the joy a wife did not have time to give her husband before he died:

ὧς ὁ μὲν αὐθι πεσῶν κοιμήσατο χάλκεον ὕπνον
οἰκτρὸς ἀπὸ μνηστῆς ἀλόχου, ἀστοῖσιν ἀρήγων,
κουριδίης, ἣς οὐ τι χάρις ἶδε, πολλὰ δ' ἔδωκε.

So he fell where he was and slept the bronze sleep – pitiable man, far from the wife he had won, bringing help to his countrymen – far from the bride of his marriage: he had known no joy from her, and had given much to win her.

XI, 241-43

The “benefit” involved seems at first unclear: having a young wife is nice in itself, and could not χάρις simply be the pleasure to see her? Furthermore, the direct return for the bride price had been given (the bride). But the ulterior reason (an heir), was not obtained: we see that Iphidamas actually expected something back *from his wife*, after he had given so much to be able to marry her. It is possible that the marriage had not been consummated at all, if the bride was too young. Indeed, Leaf comments that the husband “saw no return for the ἔδνα, as price he had paid to the father for his bride. This passage very clearly shews that marriage was a bargain.”⁸ But the bargain is not completed until children are born. The point of having a wife is having an heir. Iphidamas would not have been οἰκτρὸς to the same extent

⁷ see also: XI, 241-43.

⁸ Leaf (1900-2).

if he had a son.

From those two examples it is clear that the role of women is mainly to provide sons for their husband, to the extent of raising another woman's child with her own so the man could be certain to have heirs. If the bastard child had been a girl, it is likely no such demand would have been made on the legitimate wife.

On the other hand, εὐφραίνω is used of the effect of a husband returning safe from the war (here, it is used ironically, as the man died). It also expresses the relief freeing the family from anxiety (which corresponds to the category 1a given by the *Lexikon*) of being an unprotected household:⁹

οὐδέ ἔφημι πόδεσσί γε οἴσι κίοντα
εὐφροῖναι ἄλοχόν τε φίλην κεδνούς τε τοκῆας.

'It was not his own feet, I think, which carried him back to gladden his dear wife and his loved parents.'

XVII, 27-28¹⁰

Of course, the wife and parents might simply be glad to see him alive, but considering that their own safety and livelihood is at stake, it does not seem too far-fetched to see their relief as being about their own lives as well. It therefore appears that in exchange for the wife's raising his sons, the husband is due them protection. In this specific example of course, he is unable to do so, being dead.

2- vanquished/victor

The relationship between suppliant and captor is a complex one. It is interesting to see that the verb χαρίζομαι "to please", also means "to grant ransom", making obvious the

⁹ Only three instances of εὐφραίνω are to be found in the whole poem. It might not be enough to draw definite conclusions on the usage of the word, but all three fit in the hierarchical/reciprocal pattern of pleasure, so it is used here to complement the occurrences of χάρις.

¹⁰ See also V, 684-88 for a similar usage.

(expected) satisfaction of the captor who manages to gain goods and gold though his military exploits:

τῶν κέν τοι χαρίσαιτο πατήρ ἀπερείσι' ἄποινα,
εἰ νῶϊ ζωοὺς πεπύθοιτ' ἐπὶ νηυσὶν Ἀχαιῶν.

'Our father would give you unlimited ransom from his store, if he learnt that we were alive by the ships of the Achaians.'

XI, 134-35¹¹

In exchange, there is granted the simplest thing of all, the life of the suppliant. As the examples given in this type of relation only deal with ransoms, there is no reference to the benefit given in exchange, namely the life of the suppliant, which is implied rather than actually mentioned

3- mortals/gods

Mortals have several ways of pleasing the gods: they can raise them a shrine (I, 37-41), they can also give them offerings (XX, 297-99) and they can pray and sing to them (I, 472-74).

Once again, it seems possible to say that in this example, listening to prayer is seen as a pleasant activity for Apollo, so it can still be described as a kind of entertainment (which is why *τέρπω* is used), whereas the next example, using *γηθέω*, refers to the joy Athena has to be the first god Menelaus prays to, so it is more a pleasure of the ego than it is entertainment:

Ἦς φάτο, γήθησεν δὲ θεὰ γλαυκῶπις Ἀθήνη,
ὅττι ῥά οἱ πᾶμπρωτα θεῶν ἠρήσατο πάντων.

So he spoke, and the bright-eyed goddess Athena was pleased that she was the god he prayed to before all the others.

XVII, 567-68¹²

¹¹ See also: VI, 49-50; X, 78-81.

¹² The following example is similar: Athena should rejoice because she is the first Odysseus prays to, and in return he asks her a favour:

χαίρει θεὰ τοῖσδεσσι· σὲ γὰρ πρώτην ἐν Ὀλύμπῳ

Φέρειν χάριν and χαρίζομαι are used of the gods when they are doing favour for mortals. In the examples below, the partiality of the gods for this or that mortal has given rise to hostility among them.¹³

Where some specific favours are referred to, then other verbs are used (χαίρω and γηθέω). Gods please men by sending them omens.¹⁴ They also offer mortals protection.¹⁵

A similar situation can exist between a god (here Hera) and an inferior god, such as Hera and Thetis (XXIV, 101-2), and Hera and Sleep (XIV, 233-35). The fact that Hera is involved in both cases as the superior god asking for or repaying favours might be significant. She does not have the power of simply ordering gods about, like Zeus, but she is still keen to have things her own way. Entering a reciprocal relationship of favour and counter-favour is therefore necessary for her.

πάντων ἀθανάτων ἐπιδωσόμεθ'· ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτίς
πέμψον ἐπὶ Θρηκῶν ἀνδρῶν ἵππους τε καὶ εὐνάς.

'These are yours, goddess, to gladden you – you are the first we will call to of all the immortals on Olympus. Now be with us once more and guide us to the Thracians' camp and their horses.'

X, 462-64

The gods can also be invoked when someone else wants to show their gratitude, as when Nestor wishes the gods would recompense Achilles in return for his kindness to him:

σοὶ δὲ θεοὶ τῶνδ' ἀντι χάριν μενοεικέα δοῖεν.

'May the gods give you your heart's desire in recompense for this.'

XXIII, 650

¹³ V, 872-74; XXI, 458-60 and XIII, 631-35, where it is interesting to note that Zeus, who is expected to be impartial, is used in those two examples as a referee.

¹⁴ X, 274-77 and XXIV, 319-21.

¹⁵ XXII, 224-25. A favour can also be granted after a mortal had specifically asked for it, like when Glacus is wounded and prays to be healed (XVI, 530-31).

4- warriors/leader

This is possibly the most interesting and the most developed and complicated relationship.

Warriors are expected to do their best with the satisfaction of their leader in mind:

ήνία χερσίν ἔχοντα· ὁ μὲν πεπόνητο καθ' ἵππους·
τῇ γὰρ ἔχ' ἧ ῥα πολὺ πλείσται κλονέοντο φάλαγγες
Ἴκτορι καὶ Τρώεσσι χαριζόμενος·

He had the reins in his hands and was busy with his horses, as he was driving them in to where the fighting ranks swarmed thickest, thinking this would please Hector and the Trojans.

XV, 447-49

Achilles even argues that the whole Achaian army came to Troy in order to please their leader Agamemnon:

ἀλλὰ σοὶ ὦ μέγ' ἀναιδὲς ἄμ' ἐσπόμεθ' ὄφρα σὺ χαίρης

'No, it was you, you great shameless creature, you we came with, in order to please you.'

I, 158¹⁶

The idea of pleasing their leaders, while not as important as gaining glory for themselves, seems to be at the forefront of the warriors' mind when they fight the enemy.

In return, the leader, like the husband cited above, provides relief to his people when he comes back from a battle unscathed:

νύξ δ' ἤδη τελέθει· ἀγαθὸν καὶ νυκτὶ πιθέσθαι,
ὡς σὺ τ' εὐφορήνης πάντας παρὰ νηυσὶν Ἀχαιούς,
σοὺς τε μάλιστα ἔτας καὶ ἑταίρους, οἳ τοι ἔασιν·

'And night is coming on now. It is good to give way to the night, so that you can bring gladness to all the Achaians by your ships, and most of all your kinsmen and companions.'

VII, 293-95¹⁷

The idea seems to be the same than in the case of the husband: the warriors count on

¹⁶ As will be seen below, Achilles' complaint is about Agamemnon's lack of χάρις, and therefore of reciprocity: they did a favour to him, but were mistreated in return. On the link between χάρις and αἰδώς (Agamemnon is called ἀναιδής) see Cairns (1993), 98-9.

¹⁷ XXIV, 704-6 and VII, 296-98.

their leader to protect them.

When a leading warrior serves his people well, he is rewarded with honour and gratitude. Interestingly, the following example is not about a leading warrior, but about Pandarus the bowman, when Athena tries to coax him into wounding Menelaus despite the truce. He can be considered as a quite mediocre warrior (bowmen are not very highly regarded), so the prospect of such a rise in status must seem particularly attractive to him.

ἦ ῥά νύ μοί τι πίθοιο Λυκάονος υἱὲ δαΐφρον.
 τλαίης κεν Μενελάω ἐπιπροέμεν ταχὺν ἰόν,
 πᾶσι δέ κε Τρῳέεσσι χάριν καὶ κῦδος ἄροιο,
 ἐκ πάντων δὲ μάλιστα Ἀλεξάνδρῳ βασιλῆϊ.

'Do something now that I tell you, warlike son of Lycaon. You could bring yourself to shoot a quick-flying arrow at Menelaus, and then you would gain gratitude and glory among all the Trojans, and most of all with prince Alexander.'

IV, 93-96

Similarly, a leader is expected to show consideration and respect for the exploits his troops are accomplishing for his sake. Interestingly, that usage of the word only occurs in the negative in the poem, to highlight the lack of gratitude the warriors are getting. This shows that to some extent, the main dispute of the poem is about χάρις.

οὐτ' ἔμεγ' Ἀτρεΐδην Ἀγαμέμνονα πεισέμεν οἴω
 οὐτ' ἄλλους Δαναούς, ἐπεὶ οὐκ ἄρα τις χάρις ἦεν
 μάρνασθαι δηϊοσιν ἐπ' ἀνδράσι νωλεμές αἰεὶ.

'I do not think that Agamemnon son of Atreus will win me over, nor the rest of the Danaans, since it now appears that there is no thanks if a man fights the enemy relentlessly on and on.'

IX, 315-17. 17 = XVII, 148.

On XVII, 147-48, Edwards, in the *Cambridge Commentary* say that "the couplet recurs in Akhilleus' complaint to Odysseus (9.316-17.) Both Hector and Agamemnon have problems keeping their army in the field." Interestingly, both characters are also accused of being ungrateful: Agamemnon by Achilles, as we saw, and Hector by Glaucus. They also both are

occasionally seen struggling to retain their army's loyalty.¹⁸

One may also wonder what the exact implications of χάρις are in such a precise and structured social system as that of the Greek and Trojan armies. Is it only gratitude? From the two examples above, we can deduce that χάρις implies the necessity of a tangible recognition of services rendered: that is exactly what Achilles asks of Agamemnon, and Glaucus accused Hector of being ungrateful because he did not try to rescue Sarpedon's body, even though the Lycians had suffered a lot for the survival of Troy (XVII, 140-68). But χάρις is not meant to be only words, but also material rewards (which can explain the difference between χάρις and κῦδος in the Pandarus example): several lines after Glaucus' indignant speech, Hector promises to share the spoils (as well as κῦδος) with whoever manages to get Patroclus' body back (XVII, 220-32). A clear, tangible sign that you are honoured can thus be to be given things: κῦδος comes with the size of the reward given to you (which is why Achilles was so angry when his own prize of honour was taken away from him).¹⁹

In each case discussed here, the 'inferior' performed a ranged of services for the 'superior', and what he gets back are various forms of protection. Although both sides perform a very different type of service, both are described as giving χάρις to the other, so the equivalence of the two kinds of services is clear in Greek. However, the relationships are slightly more

¹⁸ Agamemnon most strikingly in Book II, and Hector when he keeps refusing the advice given to him by Polydamas. Both cases are related to the question of personal honour/interest vs. Group interests. The two lines mentioned above are repeated couplets but the complaints are different: the complaint aimed at Agamemnon is very general and has to do with him as leader, whereas the complaint aimed at Hector is linked to a very specific incident, (Hector not fighting hard enough to get Sarpedon's body back). Similarly, the failings of the two leaders are very different. More will be said on this point in the next part on politics, as this is a much wider question than simply pleasing people, but it is interesting to note that it is also grounded in the vocabulary of pleasure.

¹⁹ For a longer discussion on the role of leaders, see the chapter on politics.

subtle than simply inferior/superior: there is also a question of possession and dependency (which explain the hierarchical relationship). The 'inferiors' are mostly inactive/passive/weak physically or politically. They are either too old, or young, or female. The wife, and elderly parents depend on the man of the family for physical protection.²⁰ The warriors depend on their leaders to give them good orders which will not put their lives at risk unnecessarily. The relationship between mortals and gods is slightly different as the warriors for example are not in any way weak or passive and do not really depend on the gods, but they can be seen as extremely weak and powerless in comparison with the gods, and they can be dependent on the gods for their lives, as the gods are capable of killing them on a whim.

The fact that those relationships are about reciprocity and is hierarchical does not make them less valuable. As Van Wees points out, this idea of "lesser relationships" is due to modern Western ideology, "which draws a black and white distinction between 'purely altruistic' gift-giving and 'purely interested' market transactions – a distinction peculiar to capitalist society."²¹

A question that can be asked is what pleasure has to do with those relationships at all. Is it possible to have reciprocity without an explicit mention of pleasure?²² That words of pleasure are used show a different facet to the characters, away from competition and honour-seeking, where real joy can be found in relationships with others.

²⁰ So do the children, but they do not appear in those relationships as they do not seem to perform any services themselves, other than exist as an heir for example.

²¹ Van Wees (1998), 14.

²² According to the *Lexikon*, γηθήω is the only verb that should be used, as it refers to 'expected' pleasures: when you enter a relationship based on reciprocity, you tend to expect to be offered services back.

CONCLUSION

We saw that the tragic dimension of the human condition, mostly seen through mortality and lamentation could lead to the expression of positive human values such as pity, solidarity, mildness and empathy. Those, however, are not the only compensations for death and suffering: the characters of the *Iliad* constantly manage to find some degree of personal happiness in the poem, and find pleasure in the joys of life.

CONCLUSION TO PART II

So far, the dissertation has investigated how Homer portrays the complex dynamic between the negativity of mortality and suffering and their potential positive consequences, such as human solidarity: a striking act of compassion for a personal enemy is what the poem ends on. We also looked at how some possible compensations can be found in personal happiness and pleasure, essentially through personal relationships.

Those personal relationships mostly involve interaction between the warriors and their loved ones but they are also noticeably present within the social structures of the poem. Indeed, hierarchical social relations are often tinted with the vocabulary of pleasure: duties are understood as the desire to please one's superior, and in exchange, the superiors appear bound to please their inferiors in return.

The next part will explore such relationships in more detail: in addition to individual interpersonal relationships, another way for human beings to mitigate the tragic human condition is found through social organisation. The next few chapters analyse this by looking at forms of conflict resolution, and the different approaches to political organisation offered in the poem.

PART III

CHAPTER VI

THE PEOPLE IN THE *ILIAD*

I - λαός, δῆμος AND πληθός

A way to start investigating how human beings organise themselves in the poem is to look at the common people: how they are referred to, what their role is in the poem. Three words are used of the people in general in the *Iliad*: λαός, δῆμος and πληθός.

A – λαός

The word relating to the lexical field of the people with the most occurrences in the poem is undoubtedly λαός (226 occurrences). It refers to two main things: to the army as a whole (or, according to Autenrieth, the infantry as opposed to the fleet or troops fighting from chariots¹), or soldiers, and to the civilian people of a city (mostly the Trojans).²

¹ Cf. also LfrgE p. 1636: “als auch Fußvolk im Gegensatz zu den (die Führung repräsentierenden) Wagengespannen (λ. neben ἰ/πποι: H 342, I 708, S 153).

² cp. στρατός in classical Greek.

Most of the time, however, it refers to the army.³ In this category, both the plural and the singular seem to be used apparently indifferently. In each case it is very difficult to know exactly what the plural and the singular refer to: the plural seem to refer to several individual soldiers or to several contingents, and similarly, the singular can refer to the whole of the army, to one single contingent or even to one single soldier. Therefore, when referring to the whole of the army, the poet can use a singular referring to the army, a plural referring to the soldiers or a plural referring to the contingents. It makes it almost impossible to find a clear pattern. Nevertheless, the *Lexikon* contends that *λαός* as a singular collective cannot be used in the plural (*λαός* = army or contingent,⁴ but *λαοί* can never mean armies or contingents): “Eine Mehrzahl zum koll. Sg. Wird nicht gebildet, *-oi/* sind immer *Leute, Männer*, nie ‘Völker, Heere’”.

This contention is difficult to prove, and the examples given by the *Lexikon* are not particularly convincing.⁵

1 - λαός and passivity

The word can refer to the **army as a physical entity** (or ‘throng’), which the warriors can go through or hide in:

ἀλλ’ οὐ πως ἔτι εἶχεν ὑποτρέσαι οὐδ’ ἀναδῦναι
ἀψ λαῶν ἐς ὄμιλον, ἐπεὶ προκαλέσσατο χάρμη.

But there was no chance of shrinking back or retreating into the mass of the laoi/ since it was he in his eagerness for battle who had made the challenge.
VII, 217-8⁶

³ It is occasionally much more inclusive and refer to the entire population of a land or a city. It is not surprising that most of the time, it refers to the Trojan people: IV, 47; 165; VI, 449; IX, 420; 687; XI, 676; XVII, 145; 226; XXI, 458; XXII, 54; 408; 412; XXIV, 28; 37; 611; 715; 740; 777; 789.

⁴ e.g. II, 119-22 and VII, 341-3.

⁵ See appendix IV.

⁶ See also II, 163; 179; 450; IV; 199; V, 513; VII, 218; 306; VIII, 76; X, 364; XII, 201; 219; XIII, 196; XV, 56; XVI, 368; 377; XXI, 599.

It may be noted that when referring to the army as a 'throng', the poet always uses *λαός* in the singular, except in the example above, where it is used in connection with *ὄμιλος*.

Most of the time, the emphasis is on the **passivity** of the army (in particular the unnamed common soldiers). The army seems to be there only to be killed⁷ or saved⁸ by a leader or a god. They are also described as being led by their leader, and being looked after by him:⁹

οὐ χροῖ παννύχιον εὐδειν βουληφόρον ἄνδρα
ᾧ λαοί τ' ἐπιτετράφεται καὶ τόσσα μέμηλε·

'Sleep should not last long for a man of command, who has laoi/ in his keeping and so much to concern him.'
II, 24-5¹⁰

Another mark of their passivity is the fact that they are very often shown as being given orders,¹¹ as being gathered by a leader¹² and as showing obedience.¹³

The **active roles** of the *λαός* are very few and far between: they distribute prizes,¹⁴ and form assemblies.¹⁵ Interestingly, they are most active where their duties lie in something other than war, such as burial¹⁶ and entertainment.¹⁷

⁷ I, 10; 54; 382; 454; II, 115; V, 465; 758; VI, 223; 327; VIII, 67; IX, 22; 118; XI, 85; 309; 764; XIII, 349; 676; XV, 15; 319; XVI, 237; 778; XXI, 295; XXII, 104; 107.

⁸ I, 117; IV, 184; VIII, 246; IX, 424; 681; X, 14; XIII, 47.

⁹ This is the duty of the leaders for their troops. In exchange, they gain material goods and honour. See section on hierarchical relations in the previous part.

¹⁰ See also II, 62; 578; 580; 675; 818; III, 186; IV, 91; 202; 407; 430; V, 643; IX, 98; 483; X, 79; XIII, 495; XVI, 551; XVII, 390; XVIII, 452; XIX, 139.

¹¹ I, 313; II, 280; IV, 287; V, 486; VI, 80; IX, 708; XI, 189; 204; 758; XV, 218; 311; 475; 506; 695; 723; XVI, 38; 501; 714; XVII, 559; XIX, 171; 234; XXII, 205.

¹² II, 438; 664; IV, 28; 377; IX, 338; XI, 716; 770; XV, 129.

¹³ II, 86; XIV, 93.

¹⁴ I, 125-6.

¹⁵ II, 95-6.

¹⁶ VII, 433-5

¹⁷ II, 773-5.

It is clear that in battle, the leaders are seen as active while the army is passive. War is really the domain of the princes and not of the common soldiers, and the leaders seem to stand out from an indistinct throng. This is also reflected in the functioning of the assemblies (see below). However, this is not so much the case outwith the battlefield, where group activities are more common.

According to Haubold, this passivity of the army increases their dependence on their leader: The Iliadic λαοί are “both strong and weak, all inclusive and hopelessly dependent”, which also explains that “from the beginning, the *Iliad* focuses on the innate problems of Homer’s people specifically in terms of the interaction between groups and leaders”.¹⁸

2- λαός and class

According to Chantraine, the word means “people (par opposition aux chefs)” and in the plural “simples soldats” in Homer. As we saw above, while this meaning is occasionally very clearly present, at other times, it is difficult to tell whether the word is inclusive and refers to the whole army, including the leaders or if it only refers to the common soldiers. This is especially the case when it seems to be used of the army as a physical ‘throng’, in which case it is difficult to see how the leaders could be excluded from it.

Furthermore, when we look at the occurrences in the poem, it appears as we saw earlier that the plural and the singular are used indiscriminately: even when referring to the people of a city (most of the time Troy), Homer uses both λαός and λαοί. The only categories in which the use of one or the other is consistent is when referring to the army as a physical entity or a throng, in which case it is always in the singular.¹⁹ It is also always in the

¹⁸ Haubold (2000).

¹⁹ Except in one occasion, where the genitive plural is used in connection with the word ὄμιλος which means the expression as a whole retains the same meaning: i.e. the army as a solid block.

singular when referring to the army as needing protection and being gathered, but the reason is less clear, and it could be a coincidence.

The meaning of λαός can often be inclusive and refer to the whole of the army without exception, but it is also true that sometimes, it is socially limited to common soldiers (as opposed to their leaders):

εἰ δέ κεν ὡς ἔρξης καὶ τοὶ πείθωνται Ἀχαιοί,
γνώση ἔπειθ' ὅς θ' ἡγεμόνων κακὸς ὅς τέ νυ λαῶν
ἦδ' ὅς κ' ἐσθλὸς ἔησι· κατὰ σφέας γὰρ μαχέονται.

'If you do this and the Achaeans follow our order, you will then be able to discover the cowards among your leaders and your λαοί, and the brave men, because they will be fighting in their own divisions.'

II, 364-6²⁰

The word is also used in expressions referring to **leaders** which show a consistent antithesis leader/λαός, in particular the expression ποιμένα λαῶν and other similar ones. It can be used with no obvious meaning, simply as a polite epithet, but it is also used in relation with what could be called 'kingly characteristics', such as being obeyed and respected, but also having privileges (such as being helped by a god):

Ὡς ἄρα φωνήσας βουλῆς ἐξῆρχε νέεσθαι,
οἱ δ' ἐπανεύστησαν πείθοντό τε ποιμένι λαῶν
σκηπτοῦχοι βασιλῆες· ἐπεσεύοντο δὲ λαοί.

So speaking he led the way back from the council, and the other sceptred kings rose from their seats and obeyed the shepherd of the λαοί: and the army streamed out to meet them.

II, 84-6²¹

On the other hand, it is not all about respect, and it can also be used in contexts where more negative aspects of kingship are highlighted, such as being criticised, killed (XIV, 516), cheated by the gods (XXII, 276-7), and worrying for one's army (X, 3-4):

Ὡς φάτο νεικείων Ἀγαμέμνονα ποιμένα λαῶν,
Θεοσίτης·

²⁰ See also II, 99; 191; XII, 492; 834.

²¹ See also II, 105; IV, 413; V, 513; VI, 214; IX, 81; XIV, 423; XIX, 386; XXIII, 389.

So Thersites spoke, taunting Agamemnon, the shepherd of the λαοί.
II, 243-4

Why is that the expression is used in contexts where the king is (rightly or wrongly) criticised or in a difficult situation? As will be seen later on, the role kingship and leadership is contested and debated in the poem. That, added to the passivity of the army, can be very problematic

According to Haubold, the dichotomy between leaders and group becomes even more evident when one looks at Agamemnon's leadership, since the needs of the people (protection by the leader) uncomfortably interferes with their leader's aspirations (taking Troy). Indeed, to Haubold, what is clear in Agamemnon's speech in II is that the catastrophe of the people is no longer due to the failure of their leader but to their own lack of success in their fight against Troy, and the king goes as far as threatening the group with blame (II, 119-22). Not to save the *laoi* but to take the city is now the successful criterion for an epic career.²² This kind of failure of the leader (also called *ποιμήν λαῶν, see above) is to Haubold linked to the recurring theme in archaic poetry of the failure of the *shepherd*. The shepherd of early Greek poetry guaranties stability to his social world (by controlling the herd, means of survival of the people) and is therefore of central importance to it, but he is at the same time a marginal figure (he lives in the fields), and there are many stories about shepherds failing to do their duty, which culminate in the almost proverbial-sounding expression from the *Odyssey*: ...αὐτὰρ μῆλα κακοὶ φθείρουσι νομῆες. (... but bad herdsmen ruin the flock, xvii, 247). Haubold goes as far as to say that the failure of the shepherd is the rule and not the exception. He is indispensable and yet ineffective, like the leader, in particular Agamemnon, in the poem. Like shepherds, Epic leaders typically lose or

²² Haubold (2000), 50-8.

destroy their group (for examples, cf Haubold, n. 61 p. 28).²³ Haubold explains that failure partly through an imbalance of interest: the herdsman is not the owner of his flock. His collaboration must be bought at a price (*misthos*). The shepherd of the people too must be paid, which leads to a fundamental imbalance of interest, and hence of loyalty, between the leader and the group. People are said to 'miss' their leaders (see for example XVI, 822), but the leader does not miss his group: the group ensure cooperation not through an appeal to his emotions but by assigning and withdrawing tokens of social status (fame, blame, honour). Since the λαοί have no monopoly over those tokens of social recognition, co-operation regularly breaks down.²⁴

Nevertheless, to Haubold, early epic as a genre carries in itself a strong bias in favour of the people, which neither Homer nor his characters ever question. Destroying the λαός is never acceptable. Failure of the leader and destruction of the people are part of the same image.²⁵ He then talks about Hector specifically, but his conclusions are a bit far-fetched (the tension between "Hector 'the holder'" and "Hector the shepherd" which is resolved through Hector's idea of dying for his family which finally coincides with that of dying for the people, and his notion the leader must die even after his people have perished)²⁶. A lot of this seems a misreading of XXII, 99-130: the people are always forefront in Hector's mind, and he dies *because* they are lost.

B - πληθός (AND πλ□θος)

²³ Haubold (2000), 19-28.

²⁴ Haubold (2000), 36-7.

²⁵ Haubold (2000), 29-32.

²⁶ Haubold, (2000), 85-94.

Πληθύς is another word used to refer to the people. The usage is very similar to that of λαός: It refers to people in the **assembly**, to the **army in general** (or a contingent), and to the **army as a physical entity**, with the added notion of **numbers and multitude**.

Πληθος and πληθύς come from the verb πίμπλημι, which, according to Chantraine means “emplir, rassasier” and in the passive “être empli, plein, rassasié”. Πληθος to him means “grand nombre, foule”, is used of a democratic assembly, and also means “grande quantité, abondance”. Πληθύς means “foule, grand nombre”.²⁷ This is all true of the *Iliad*, but Chantraine forgot to mention that it can occasionally be a synonym of λαός, and refer to the army in general, as well as to the army as a “throng”. In the poem, of the 17 occurrences of the two words, πληθος appears only twice, and in each case, it refers very clearly to the notion of numbers, and in particular of superiority in numbers.

The notion of numbers is really what differentiate it from λαός. Otherwise, the uses seem quite similar. It is nonetheless a significant difference, as it is not so much used in social contexts: it refers to the army as a physical entity rather than a social entity.²⁸

As λαός, it can also refer to the **common soldier** as opposed to the leaders (indeed, Autenrieth says that πληθύς and πληθος refer to people, especially as opposed to chiefs).²⁹

C – δῆμος

The word δῆμος can refer to the **land** people live on,³⁰ but in the poem, it most of the time refers to the people themselves (like the other two words), even though it refers less often to

²⁷ Chantraine (1968).

²⁸ II, 142-3; V, 676; XI, 359-60; 405; XV, 305; XVII, 31; 221; XX, 458; XXIII, 639.

²⁹ XV, 290-5 XVII, 330; II, 488.

the army, and more to the whole of a people living in a country or city. According to the *Lexikon*, “wegen des engen prinzipialen u. hist. Zuch.s der beiden Aspekte ist e. Bed.-entw. Von ‘Land’ zu ‘Volk (...) oder umgekernt (...) nicht notw. Vorauszusetzen, auch nicht im fgrE, im Myk., oder etym. Erschließbar.”

The class distinction is even more obvious then with λαός. It is often used of common soldiers as opposed to the leaders,³¹ and in particular of how they suffer at the hands of those leaders. The important thing in those occurrences is the exploitation and mistreatment of low-class characters:

-physical violence:

Ὅν δ' αὖ δῆμον τ' ἄνδρα ἴδοι βοόωντά τ' ἐφεύροι,
τὸν σκῆπτρῳ ἐλάσασκεν ὁμοκλήσασκέ τε μύθῳ·

But whenever he saw a man of the δῆμος and found him shouting, he would strike him with the sceptre and berate him.

II, 198-9³²

-lack of rights:

Ἐκτορ ἀεὶ μὲν πῶς μοι ἐπιπλήσσεις ἀγορῆσιν
ἔσθλα φραζομένῳ, ἐπεὶ οὐδὲ μὲν οὐδὲ ἔοικε
δῆμον ἔόντα παρῆξ ἀγορευέμεν, οὐτ' ἐνὶ βουλῇ
οὔτέ ποτ' ἐν πολέμῳ, σὸν δὲ κράτος αἰὲν ἀέξειν·

‘Hector, you always seem to be hard on me in assemblies when I give good advice, since of course it is not all right for a man of the δῆμος to speak his mind against yours, either in debate or on the battlefield – no, we must all uphold your authority.’

XII, 211-4

Polydamas' argument is that Hector does not want low class citizens to speak against him.³³

However, Polydamas is quite clearly allowed to speak, and Homer makes it clear that he gives the right advice. Neither does Hector prevent him from speaking in any way. Though this could show the Trojan assembly as particularly democratic (if Polydamas uses that

³⁰ II, 547; 828; III, 201; V, 710; VI, 158; 225; IX, 634; XVI, 437; 455; 514; 673; 683; XIX, 324; XX, 385; 481.

³¹ II, 198; XII, 213.

³² Persuasion, on the other hand, is used with the aristocrats. See previous section on persuasion.

³³ Cp Achaian assemblies (see next section): only the kings are allowed to speak (+ cp. treatment of Thersites).

argument to attack Hector, it should mean that the norm is to accept advice from commoners), it seems more likely that Polydamas is exaggerating, and simply expressing his frustration at not feeling heard by Hector.³⁴

- economic exploitation:

δημοβόρος βασιλεὺς ἐπεὶ οὐτιδανοῖσιν ἀνάσσει·

A king who grows fat on his δῆμος, with mere ciphers for subjects.

I, 231

Here, the δῆμος appears to be used by the king for his own material gain. This is an important part of the accusations made against Agamemnon by Achilles and Thersites.

- submission

Εὐρύπυλος δ' Εὐαιμονίδης Ὑψήνορα δῖον
υἷὸν ὑπερθύμου Δολοπίονος, ὅς ῥα Σκαμάνδρου
ἀρητῆρ' ἐτέτυκτο, θεὸς δ' ὦς τίετο δῆμῳ

Euypylos, Evaemon's son, killed godlike Hypsenor, son of proud-hearted Dolopion, ho was the priest of Scamander and honoured like a god by his δῆμος.

V, 76-8

The *Lexikon* agrees that δῆμος very often has a connotation of exploitatio, suffering and submission: "doch warden die polit. U. milit. Führer i.d.R. dem δῆμος ggübergestellt (...), δῆμος dann ≈ 'Untertannen'. (...) Auch Aspekt der soz. Klasse ('niederes Volk' im ggs. zu 'Adel)."

Like the other words, it can also more generally refer to the people of a land or city (again, probably including the women):

εἴ ποτε καὶ ζῶοντι μάχης ἐκνοστήσαντι
χαίρετ', ἐπεὶ μέγα χάσμα πόλει τ' ἦν παντί τε δῆμῳ.

'See, men and women of Troy, come and see Hector, if ever you rejoiced to see him return from battle still living, since he was a great joy to our city and our δῆμος.'

XXIV, 705-6³⁵

³⁴ More on this in the next section on assemblies.

³⁵ See also XV, 738; XX, 166.

Here, we see that the 'men *and* women of Troy' are associated to the δῆμος, which would tend to show that the word can be used in a 'non-political' sense and refer to the entire population rather than just the free men. Though the political aspect is not particularly obvious here, it does not mean that it is not present at all, but only that it is not made obvious by the addition of other political references.

Nevertheless, it is also generally agreed that δῆμος does not refer to everyone in a land, but to a restricted group, the property-owning citizens, the "body of citizens, *civitas*" as Autenrieth calls them, 'as opposed to βουλή γερόντων and βασιλεύς' (this idea could be exemplified by XI, 703-5 above where it refers to a decision-making group). It means women are not included, but as far as men are concerned, it is not clear if anybody *not* belonging to this group is present in the poem. In some of the examples above, we saw that indeed women could be included when the word is a synonym of λαός (in the sense of population as a whole) and loses its strictly political meaning. We can also add that in Troy, women also have a civic and religious function: in VI, they offer prayers and clothes to Athena, so they are not completely alien to the political aspect of the city. According to the *Lexikon*, the difference between δῆμος and λαός is as follows: "zu δῆμος wird λ. teilw. Synonym verwendet: λ. als die Menschen, Männer, die einen δῆμος, z.B. in seiner polit. Versammlung, bilden, aber allg. Sind l. eher die Leute, Einwohner überhaupt, ohne daß auf die Gemeinde direct Bezug genommen wird, u. ohne lok., nur mit per. Bezug (aber lok. Bed. Mögl.)".

In one example (XXIV, 704-6), the words δῆμος and πόλις are put together, and it is difficult to tell exactly what the difference between the two is. Most of the time, πόλις is used in a geographical sense: it refers the city towards which people flee or from where they come and a place that can be sacked, and it has a meaning very similar to ἄστυ.³⁶ Occasionally nonetheless (e.g. XXIV, 706), it refers to the people in the city. As Chantraine

³⁶ On πόλις, see Glotz (1929), 33-57 and Nilsson (1933), 212-44.

points out, "πόλις se distinguee de ἄστυ en tant que le mot désigne une communauté politique et religieuse" (rather than the city as a material thing). In that case, the difference between πόλις and δῆμος is that πόλις always refers to every single person in the city while δῆμος can refer to the restricted group of citizens (and probably has a meaning very similar to πολῖται).³⁷

Though all those words can be used in a very wide sense, as meaning "the whole army" or "the whole people", some political connotations seem to emerge, in particular with mentions of passivity or exploitation. Those are important themes which underpin most of the political conflicts in the poem, as will be seen later on, in particular the question of the basis of political authority and its misuses. To keep on with the question of the "people" in the *Iliad*, we will next have a look at the function of the assemblies, and their role in the poem.

³⁷ Nevertheless, δῆμος also appears to be used more inclusively, and refer to every inhabitant of a region.

II - THE PEOPLE IN ASSEMBLY

There are two types of “gatherings” in the *Iliad*: the Council (Βουλή) and the Assembly (Άγορή). According to Chantraine, ἀγορά (or ἀγορή) means “assemblée du peuple, par opposition à la Βουλή”. The Council is composed only of some of the kings, while the whole army takes part in the Assembly.¹ The topics discussed do not differ greatly, and the speakers are likely to be the same, but the main difference resides in who takes part in them. It is interesting to see that not all the kings take part in the Council, only eight people, who are called elders, γέροντες (II, 53ff) and σκηπτούχοι βασιλῆες, “sceptred kings” (II, 86). There is a list of the “elders” called at a meeting by Agamemnon at II, 404ff. They are: Nestor, Idomeneus, the two Aiantes, Diomedes, Odysseus and of course Menelaus.

The rest of the kings or chieftains only take part in the Assembly, as do the rank-and-file warriors. This is particularly clear in the assembly of Book II: the members of the Council are aware that Agamemnon only intends to test the army in suggesting that they return home. Nevertheless, many kings are seen to flee with the rest of the warriors, to the point where Odysseus has to stop them and talk them into remaining calm, which shows that they cannot have been in the know (II, 188-91).

Does it mean that those kings are not “sceptred kings” and, quite literally, do not own a sceptre (while still being referred to as “kings”)? Do you need a sceptre to be in the Council? The expression σκηπτούχος βασιλεύς is used only twice in the poem, and only once in reference to the Council. It is therefore impossible to determine the link between the sceptre, kingship and

¹ It is occasionally explicitly said that the whole of the army (or the people) without exception were present at the Assembly: II, 785ff.; XVI, 42ff.

membership of the Council. The fact that some kings are not members of the Council says nothing about their ownership of a sceptre. Furthermore, the sceptre appears to be a sign of *being* a βασιλεύς. On the shield of Achilles, it is the way the artist has to show that the man in the centre of the scene is indeed a king (XVIII, 550-7). Therefore it seems impossible to be a king without having a sceptre.

It is difficult to fathom on what grounds exactly people are chosen to be part of the Council. The members of the Council are called γέροντες, and it seems that the word, when used in the singular, actually refers to an old man, in particular someone's father (cf. the expression πατρὶ γέροντι XVII, 324 etc.) or it can be used as an epithet (e.g. γέρον ἱππηλάτα Πηλεὺς, IX, 438). When used in the plural, it refers to "elders" or members of the Council. According to Chantraine, "en raison de l'importance de l'âge dans le système social et politique des Grecs (cf. γέρας), [γέρον] désigne les Anciens, membres du conseil".² Indeed, some members of the Council are clearly old men: Nestor, who is otherwise called γέρον, and possibly people like Odysseus, Idomeneus, Agamemnon. Some, on the contrary, are very young, like Diomedes (who is described as being of the same age as Nestor's youngest son: IX, 57-8). It is therefore clear that age is not a factor in being part of the Council (or a γέρον). Neither are the members of the Council all particularly powerful (in terms of how many troops they brought), as Odysseus, who only brought 12 ships, is also part of the Council.

In fact, the Βουλή simply seems to be composed quite conveniently of the main characters in the poem. As they are only listed once, it is difficult to know if the list ever changes or not, or, in other words, if the Council is constitutional or more fluid. It does not appear that previously non-Council members suddenly gain prominence (for example, Diomedes was a member of the Council even before his *aristeia*). It is also difficult to tell whether Achilles was a

² Chantraine (1968), *ad loc.* Similarly, Autenrieth, in his *Homeric Dictionary*, distinguishes two different meanings of the word: 1- old, aged; 2- elder, member of the Council.

member of the Council, as the list is given after his quarrel with Agamemnon. Nevertheless, it is quite probable that he was.

The people as a whole do not take part in the Βουλή, but it is striking that the same individuals, or 'sceptred kings' who compose the Βουλή are the only ones who speak in the Assembly (with a few notable exceptions). Indeed, ordinary soldiers do not take part in the discussions, and if by chance they do (as Thersites did: II, 211ff), they are severely punished for that, and it is regarded as a normal and welcomed procedure for restoring order (II, 265-77).³

As we saw earlier, Polydamas is another warrior who regards himself as a man of the people and considers that, because of that, Hector does not let him speak in the Assembly (or at least does not allow him to *contradict* him in the Assembly: XII, 210-4). Indeed, Hector replies angrily:

Τὸν δ' ἄρ' ὑπόδρα ἰδὼν προσέφη κορυθαίολος Ἴκτωρ·
Πουλυδάμα, σὺ μὲν οὐκ ἔτ' ἐμοὶ φίλα ταῦτ' ἀγορεύεις·

Hector of the glinting scowled at him and said: 'Polydamas, what you say no is not to my liking.'
XII, 230-1

Nevertheless, he does not go as far as beat up Polydamas, who is on the contrary generally considered to be a trustworthy counsellor:

τοῖσι δὲ Πουλυδάμας πεπνυμένος ἦρχ' ἀγορεύειν
Πανθοΐδης· ὁ γὰρ οἶος ὄρα πρόσσω καὶ ὀπίσσω·
Ἴκτορι δ' ἦεν ἑταῖρος, ἠῆ δ' ἐν νυκτὶ γέγοντο,
ἀλλ' ὁ μὲν ἄρ' μύθοισιν, ὁ δ' ἔγχεϊ πολλὸν ἐνίκα·

The first to speak was Polydamas in his wisdom, the son of Panthoos, the only man among them with eyes for both past and future. He was a companion of Hector, the two of them born in the same night, but Polydamas was far the better with words, as Hector was better with the spear.
XVIII, 249-52

Can it be then said that the Trojans are slightly more democratic than the Achaeans, in that a man of the people can speak in the Assembly and be honoured for that (Polydamas gives advice three

³ More will be said about Thersites in the next section.

times in the poem), even if his advice may anger the leader? However, as we saw earlier, it is more likely that Polydamas was being sarcastic and exaggerated the situation because he was angry at Hector. Furthermore, Polydamas is never described as being a commoner.

Ordinary people are normally not expected to speak either in the Trojan or the Achaean camp. The only way they can express their opinion is either by shouting their approval after a leader's suggestion, or by remaining silent if they are not happy with what has been proposed. For example, the Achaeans shout their approval after Calchas' ἄποινα offer (I, 22-23), after Odysseus' speech in Book II (saying that they should endure a little longer and go home only after they have sacked Troy (II, 333ff) and a little afterwards, when Agamemnon tells them to get ready for battle (II, 394ff.), after Diomedes tell them to refuse the Trojan offer to give Helen back (VI, 403f), when Diomedes tells Agamemnon that the army will remain in Troy (IX, 50ff). Similarly, the Trojans shout their approval when Hector tells them to go and have their supper, and then light fires in the city to pretend they are still there, whereas they actually will be on the plain (VIII, 542ff) and when Hector tell them to remain on the battlefield and not flee to the city (XVIII, 310ff). The Achaeans' Assembly is also shown as 'being glad' that Achilles has renounced his wrath (XIX, 74ff), and in a slightly different context, on Achilles' shield, people are depicted as cheering both opponents in the trial scene (XVIII, 502ff).

On other occasions, they remain silent, either out of fear or out of disapproval: when Hector asks for an Achaean opponent in the duel (VII, 92), when Agamemnon says they should all go home (IX, 29), and when Odysseus speaks of Achilles' refusal of the embassy's offer (IX, 693).

A distinct pattern that can be found here is that the crowd seems at its happiest when a warlike, bellicose suggestion is made. Nevertheless, they are also seen to be silent when they

have to fight in a duel, and one must not forget their joy when they thought they could go home in book II, and after the truce, when they thought war as over (III, 111-2).

According to Hammer, the fact that people shout their approval in assemblies makes the political system of the *Iliad* similar to the “plebiscitary politics” described by Weber. He notes that when scholars dismiss the public role of the assembly, they often do so by noting that the leaders make the ultimate decision, often in disregard of the opinion of the public. But that is to him a misunderstanding of the nature of plebiscitary politics. As Weber indicated, the assent or dissent of the public in a plebiscitary form of government may at times be “only formal or fictitious”. A plebiscitary form of politics rests upon a system of values in which decisions are enacted in a public space and subject to community acclaim and sanction. It is to Hammer a space constituted by both the elite and the δῆμος. By depicting the people as shouting their approval, Homer does not only reveal the force of the people, but also lends their voice some legitimacy by associating it with the agonistic, heroic world.⁴

We may add that it is true that the fact the crowd approves of something does not necessarily mean it will be carried out (but it is what happens on most occasions): in Book I, the Achaeans cheered Chryses’ offering of ἄποινα for his daughter, and nevertheless, Agamemnon refused the offer. But it is important to point out that this is the only time such a thing happens, and it seems to have been a particularly unseemly thing to do, since when he recalls the whole incident to his mother, Achilles insists that Agamemnon did this, *despite the fact that the army had agreed to accept the gifts*, which shows that it was regarded as a breach of the norm: I, 136). What happens in every other case is that when a suggestion made by a leader is agreed to by the army, it is carried out without any more discussion (e.g. II, 394-8). This shows that decisions are supposed to be approved by the army before being implemented.

⁴ Hammer (2002b), 155-9.

It also happens that the crowd does not intervene at all in a debate, even if they have been gathered to an assembly. The scene then has all the hallmarks of a Βουλή rather than an Αγορή, as no reaction from the people is reported. This is what takes place for example in Book I, when Achilles summons the assembly to discuss the cause of the plague. The only people who intervene in any way are Achilles, Agamemnon, Calchas and Nestor, three of whom are members of the Βουλή (Calchas is the only non-Council member to speak in Assembly, and he only does so because he is specifically asked his advice as a seer). This shows that there is little practical difference between members of the Council acting by themselves and members of the Council acting in an Assembly. Nevertheless, it is dramatically necessary that the whole army is witness to the quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon, so that everyone knows clearly what is going on, of course, but also because Achilles blames the army for not supporting him against Agamemnon,⁵ and perhaps also because one of the political points of the dispute is to emphasize the contradiction in Agamemnon's rule between what he considers to be his personal power, and the powers of the assembly, as he already showed earlier by going against the will of the army.

- The organisation of the assembly

The pattern of the assemblies is quite clear and formal: they are called by one of the leaders (possibly always a member of the Council) (e.g. Achilles I, 53-54, Hector VIII, 489ff. etc.), in order to solve a problem or decide a course of action (for example to discuss the cause of the plague, to organise a duel in order to put an end to the war, to devise a plan to deceive the enemy etc.). The discussion itself is simply an alternation of speeches by major warriors (almost always members of the Council), interrupted or not by shouts from the crowd.

⁵ As will be seen in the next section, γέγρα are distributed by the whole army.

The heralds' role is to gather the people.⁶ It is also to restrain them:

ἐννέα δέ σφεας
κίρυκες βοόωντες ἐρήτυον, εἴ ποτ' αὐτῆς
σχοίατ', ἀκούσειαν δὲ διοτρεφέων βασιλῆων.

Nine heralds shouted in the effort to control them, to make them stop their clamour and listen to the god-ordained kings.

II, 96-8

It is from time to time made clear that every man without exception is present at the gathering

(II, 785ff; XVI, 42ff.).

⁶ e.g. IX, 9-11.

CONCLUSION

All things considered, the people are relatively powerless in the decision-making process, as they can neither convene the assembly nor speak out and give their point of view. Nevertheless, they have an important part to play, as no decision concerning the whole army and its course of action is implemented against their will (or if it is, it is evidently regarded as a breach of the norm). As we will see in the next section, assemblies and their role will play a part in the major conflicts in the poem, in particular that between Achilles and Agamemnon.

CHAPTER VII

MANKIND AND POLITICAL CONFLICT

I— THE BASIS OF AGAMEMNON'S AUTHORITY

At first glance, Agamemnon seems to be the leader of the Greek expedition simply because it concerns him and his family: Menelaus' wife Helen had been stolen by the Trojan prince Paris, and it seems only natural that Menelaus' elder brother, Agamemnon, should be in charge of the operations.

Nevertheless, there is a clear distinction between organizing an expedition and having supreme and unquestionable power over the whole of the army, where many contingents are under the authority of kings from other parts of Greece. Agamemnon is seen not only as the organizer of the expedition, but as the most politically powerful warrior whom all must obey. Furthermore, this idea that he is commander-in-chief simply because his brother is the offended party is never mentioned in the text, even though the wrong done to the family is never far from the reader's or the listener's mind. Agamemnon's position of supreme power is in fact justified by two main reasons, each having its own separate basis.

Indeed, it is not always clear whether he is the 'king of kings' because he has the biggest contingent of warriors or because he had been given the sceptre of Zeus. It must be noted that he brings 100 ships (II, 576-8), when Nestor brings 90 and Idomeneus and some others 80. It is therefore not such a huge difference as might in itself justify Agamemnon's

authority. It is hard to believe that he expects to be obeyed by the whole of the army, and in particular the leaders, just because he has a superiority of 10 ships, even though Nestor seems to think it is important (I, 280-1). True, it seems natural that the leaders should wish to have Agamemnon on their side, since with 100 ships (plus Menelaus' 60), he is a powerful ally, but this seems to be a relatively minor point, especially if he keeps taking wrong decisions and endangering the army, which is clearly what he does.

Furthermore, this argument is not used with as much insistence as his having been given the sceptre of Zeus. The sceptre is very important for Agamemnon's authority, as it shows that his power has divine origins, since the sceptre has been transmitted from Zeus himself, hence the numerous occasions on which Agamemnon compares himself (explicitly or not) to Zeus. The transmission of the sceptre is described as follows:

ἀνὰ δὲ κρείων Ἀγαμέμνων
ἔστη σκήπτρον ἔχων τὸ μὲν Ἥφαιστος κάμε τεύχων.
Ἥφαιστος μὲν δῶκε Διὶ Κρονίωνι ἄνακτι,
αὐτὰρ ἄρα Ζεὺς δῶκε διακτόρω Ἀργεΐφόντη·
Ἑρμείας δὲ ἄναξ δῶκεν Πέλοπι πληξίππῳ,
αὐτὰρ ὁ αὐτε Πέλοψ δῶκ' Ἀτρεΐ ποιμένι λαῶν,
Ἄτρεὺς δὲ θνήσκων ἔλιπεν πολύαρνι Θυέστη,
αὐτὰρ ὁ αὐτε Θυέστ' Ἀγαμέμνονι λείπε φορῆναι,
πολλῆσιν νήσοισι καὶ Ἀργεῖ παντὶ ἀνάσσειν.

Then Lord Agamemnon rose, holding his sceptre, the work of Hephaistos' labour. Hephaistos gave it to lord Zeus the son of Kronos: and Zeus gave it to Hermes the guide, the slayer of Argos: and lord Hermes gave it to Pelops the charioteer, then Pelops in turn gave it to Atreus, shepherd of the people. Atreus as he was dying left it to Thyestes, rich in flocks, then in turn Thyestes left it to Agamemnon to carry, to be king over many islands and all of Argos.

II, 100-8

Agamemnon is therefore defined as an outstandingly great hereditary ruler and the sceptre of Zeus marks his divinely given prerogative.¹ This shows that the superiority and authority he claims over the army are not so much material and pragmatic (he has more troops and it

¹ See Easterling (1989), 105.

is therefore a bad idea to cross him), as they are ‘supernatural’, since the sceptre symbolises the transmission of power from Zeus himself.²

Agamemnon is not the only character possessing a sceptre or “staff”: the heralds have one (VII, 273-78), which can be given in turn to people speaking at the assembly (XXIII, 565-69),³ and to elders passing judgement, which can be construed as another form of public speaking, as is depicted on the shield (XVIII, 503-5). It is also used in the swearing of oaths (I, 233-39; VII, 412-13; X, 321-24; 328). But the *king’s* sceptre is a symbol of power:⁴

αὐτὰρ οἱ Προΐτος κακὰ μήσατο θυμῶ,
ὅς ῥ’ ἐκ δήμου ἔλασεν, ἐπεὶ πολὺ φέρετος ἦεν,
Ἀργείων· Ζεὺς γὰρ οἱ ὑπὸ σκῆπτρῳ ἐδάμασσε.

But Proitos intended [Bellerophon] harm, and drove him out of the land of the Argives – his was the greater power, since Zeus had made them subject to his sceptre.
VI, 157-9⁵

Kings other than Agamemnon have sceptres too, but Agamemnon’s is presented as even more symbolic of power since it comes directly from Zeus, the king of gods. This particularity of Agamemnon’s sceptre is obvious not only in the example where he is said explicitly to have more authority because of the transmission of his sceptre:

Ἀτρεΐδῃ κῦδιστε ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν Ἀγάμεμνον
ἐν σοὶ μὲν λήξω, σέο δ’ ἄρξομαι, οὐνεκα πολλῶν
λαῶν ἐσσι ἄναξ καὶ τοι Ζεὺς ἐγγυάλιξε
σκῆπτρόν τ’ ἠδὲ θέμιστας, ἵνα σφισι βουλευῆσθα.

² For the argument that the sceptre is divine rather than political, see Mondì (2003).

³ See e.g. Seymour (1907), 108 and scholia (for a list of passages, see Combellaç (1948), 209-10). Combellaç (1948) argues on the other hand that the sceptre is not used by all the speakers, but only before a particularly solemn or important speech, but also that important speeches do not always mention sceptres. However, if even in passages which do not mention the sceptre explicitly its presence can be implied, why would it only be with certain types of speeches? Could it not more simply be implied every time? It does seem more likely that the traditional scholarship listed at great length by Combellaç is right, and that Homer simply did not feel the need to mention the presence of the sceptre every single time it is used.

⁴ Andreev (1979) argues that there is a categorical confusion between two kinds of sceptres: the king’s sceptre and the speaker’s staff, 367.

⁵ See also e.g. IX, 154-56 = 296-98

'Most glorious son of Atreus, Agamemnon, lord of men, you will be the beginning of my words, and you will be their end, since you are the king of many peoples and Zeus has entrusted you with the sceptre and the ways of the law, to make judgement for your people.'
IX, 96-99

Here, however, the point is not that Agamemnon is sole king, but that he is supreme king, and there is no necessary implication that only Agamemnon enjoys power from Zeus or that his power over the *army* is from Zeus.⁶

The particular status of Agamemnon's sceptre is also clear in the fact that in II, Odysseus uses that sceptre and not his own to regain control over the army:⁷

αὐτὸς δ' Ἀτρεΐδῃω Ἀγαμέμνονος ἀντίος ἑλθὼν
δέξατό οἱ σκῆπτρον πατρῷον ἀφθιτον αἰεὶ·
σὺν τῷ ἔβη κατὰ νῆας Ἀχαιῶν χαλκοχιτώνων.

[Odysseus] ran straight up to Agamemnon son of Atreus, and took from him the sceptre of his fathers, imperishable for all time: then with this in his hand he went down to the ships of the bronze-clad Achaians.

II, 185-87

It seems that as Odysseus wants authority not only over his own troops, but over the whole of the army, and for that reason he apparently needs *the supreme king's* symbol of authority. Nevertheless, it is said that Thyestes left the sceptre to Agamemnon to be king "over many islands and all of Argos", and not the whole of Greece, but Agamemnon's position in *war-time* apparently makes the authority given by the sceptre even greater.⁸

Nevertheless, Agamemnon does not manage the authority he had been given by Zeus properly, and usurps more power than he ought to have.⁹ Agamemnon seems to believe that he has the sole right to decide policy (although he calls the Βουλή a few times) but the basis of his role is relatively insecure: as Seaford points out, his power does not seem

⁶ But the situation may be complicated by conflict of families (an early πόλις with one paramount leader as well as the fictive situation of a multi-πόλις force overseas).

⁷ See Easterling (1989), 109. on the topic of threats as an aspect of the king's authority, see Mondi (1980), 208. Obviously, the fact that Odysseus takes over at that point does not mean that Agamemnon is incapable of making threats.

⁸ Contra Mondi (1980) who believes that the sceptre does not represent kingship, see esp. 208.

⁹ On Agamemnon's failures, see Easterling (1989), 110.

to be boosted up by the kind of arrangements which would apply in a peace-time situation (taxation, royal officials etc.).¹⁰

¹⁰ Seaford (1994), 22. Seaford also mention the judicial function of the king in that list, but that function is in fact mentioned in relation to Agamemnon (IX, 96-9), who is a ruling and judging king.

II – THE CONFLICT BETWEEN ACHILLES AND AGAMEMNON

A- BOOK I

The opening book presents quite clearly the type of rule Agamemnon exemplifies, both in his attitude towards Chryses, and towards Achilles. It is also the point at which he is the most powerful.

1 - Agamemnon and Chryses

To sum up the situation, Agamemnon had taken Chryseis as a prize when sacking a city. Her father, Chryses, a priest of Apollo, offers a ransom (ἄποινα) to get her back, but Agamemnon refuses violently.

One of the first things to notice is that Agamemnon clearly goes against the general feeling of the army, who shouted their agreement to Chryses' speech at I, 22-3.¹ Agamemnon is also clearly encouraged by the warriors to feel αἰδώς for the priest. Kevin Crotty has stated that the exercise of shame (αἰδώς) regularly implies "restraint in exercising one's prerogatives as victor".² A similar idea is expressed by Douglas Cairns in his book about αἰδώς: one aspect of αἰδώς is "self-restraint" (the other being on the contrary self-assertion), especially with suppliants beggars and strangers. He also adds later on that αἰδώς is an important part of supplication and is frequently mentioned in appeals.³ Riedinger distinguishes between an "aidos personnelle", linked to τιμή and social position, and an

¹ See Flaig (1993).

² Crotty (1994), 33-34, n.17.

³ Cairns (1993), 87 and 118-119.

"aidos éprouvée devant d'autres hommes", linked this time to self-restraint and shame.⁴ With Chryses, those two types of aidos could be of use, as he deserves respect and honour as a priest, and he also appears as suppliant, whom it is shameful to harm.⁵

Agamemnon therefore appears as early as the first book as lacking self restraint. This can also be seen in the unexpected violence of his answer to the priest:

ἀλλὰ κακῶς ἀφίει, κρατερόν δ' ἐπὶ μῦθον ἔτελλε·

He sent him shamefully on his way, with harsh words of command.
I, 25⁶

However, κακῶς here is not a direct judgement on Agamemnon and does not refer to him: it is shameful and humiliating for the priest to be sent on his way in that manner. However, it can also be said to be some kind of indirect judgement on Agamemnon, as publicly humiliating a priest of Apollo who came as a suppliant is not an appropriate behaviour, especially considering that the army supported Chryses' claim.

As Erwin Cook has shown, self-restraint is the essential and defining quality of Homeric "cunning intelligence", μῆτις.⁷ From the very beginning of the poem, Agamemnon can therefore be seen to choose βίη over μῆτις, through insults, anger and threats of physical damage.

Furthermore, Agamemnon's decision is even more difficult to understand since, as Donna Wilson pointed out, accepting ἄποινα would in no way diminish his τιμή.⁸

⁴ Riedinger (1980).

⁵ All this is contra Scott (1980) who, following Adkins as always, believes that Aidos is a very weak emotion, and that the warriors tend to have better things to do that act accordingly.

⁶ The old man feels understandably afraid of the king: I, 33. A bit later, Calchas too is afraid of Agamemnon: I, 78-83 and has to ask for protection.

⁷ Cook (1995), 49-92, although βουλή might be more relevant here, see Schofield's article on Euboulia (1986).

⁸ Wilson (2002), 42. Wilson's book significantly highlights the difference in the vocabulary of ransom between ἄποινα and ποινή: ἄποινα refers to the paying of a ransom for someone's property or family from the person who stole or captured them (typically father's buying off their sons captured on the battlefield), and ποινή refers to the price paid by an offender for his offence, whether in goods or blood (for example when the brother of a dead warrior kills the man who slew him, or someone close to him). Therefore, ἄποινα keep the imbalance

Nevertheless, his use of vocabulary to express his refusal, however unjustified, is quite clever: Wilson highlights the different perception of the girl shown by the priest and the king: Chryses refers to her as his child (παῖδα φίλην, I, 20) placing her in the sphere of family, whereas to Agamemnon, she is only τὴν, “that woman”, I, 29, and is therefore placed in the sphere of goods,⁹ diminishing the emotional aspect of Chryses’ request. The same distinction may also appear when Calchas refers to the girl as θύγατρα, and Agamemnon answers with only κούρης Χρυσηΐδος, refusing to employ family-terms.

Nevertheless, Chryses is not as totally unable to retaliate as Agamemnon thought him to be, and will get revenge or compensation through Apollo (the ἄποινα theme becomes a ποινή theme, cf. n.10). It is interesting to notice, as has Wilson, that from this point on, Chryseis occupies a position in Chryses’ ποινή theme analogous to that of Helen in the archetypal theme (i.e. Chryses will get revenge for the abduction of his daughter just as the Achaians will get revenge for the abduction of Menelaus’ wife). In refusing to return the captive woman, Agamemnon is assimilated to the role of Paris.¹⁰ Nevertheless, after the plague, when he has to give up Chryseis to save the army, he compares her with his wife, to the detriment of the latter:

καὶ γὰρ ῥά Κλυταιμνήστρης προβέβουλα
κουριδίης ἀλόχου, ἐπεὶ οὐκ ἔθεν ἔστι χερσίων,
οὐδέμας οὐδὲ φυγὴν, οὐτ’ ἄρ’ φρένας οὐτέ τι ἔργα.

And indeed I prefer her to Clytemnestra the wife of my marriage, as she is in no way inferior in body or stature, or good sense or the craft of her hands.

I, 113-5.

By doing that, he invites further comparison with the Helen theme. Furthermore, as

(it is the party who suffered a loss who has to pay, and is still disadvantaged) while ποινή restores the equilibrium (the party who has suffered a loss gets compensation). Chantraine expresses the same idea when he translates ποινή as “prix du sang, châtement, paiement pour un crime, vengeance” and ἄποινα as “rançon, prix payé pour racheter la vie ou la liberté, compensation, indemnité de guerre”.

⁹ Wilson (2002), 41-42.

¹⁰ Wilson (2002), 47.

he says he is losing more than a wife, the intended emotional impact is great.¹¹

This also allows him to put himself in the position of the injured party: He offers Chryseis as ἄποινα to preserve the army and not as a penalty (ποιινή) paid by him because of his treatment of Chryses

ἀλλὰ καὶ ὧς ἐθέλω δόμεναι πάλιν εἰ τό γ' ἄμεινον·
βούλομ' ἐγὼ λαὸν σῶν ἔμμεναι ἢ ἀπολέσθαι·

But even so I am willing to give her back, if that is for the best – I wish my people to be saved, not die.

I, 116-7.

There is no mention that the army would not have been in danger in the first place if he had behaved differently to the priest: he represents the return of Chryseis as merely a generous gesture on his part in order to protect the army, He will use a similar tactic with Achilles in IX: for example, in both cases he simply uses the neutral verb di/dwmi as part of his refusal to present either offer as ποινή.

Agamemnon is also described by Calchas as impious towards Apollo's priests and prophets: Chryses, whom he has dishonoured (I, 94) and Calchas himself, who is afraid of the king's potential violence against him, which is not long to appear (I, 106). Agamemnon's lack of respect for priests seems to be a consistent pattern in his behaviour.

2 - Agamemnon and Achilles

Finding himself without a prize, Agamemnon threatens to take the gift of honour from another Achaean leader, first by appealing to the common sense of the army: he, the commander-in-chief, cannot be the only warrior without a prize (I, 118-19). Achilles attempts to calm him down by saying that it is not right to take away something that had been given by the Achaeans' assembly, and promises him a huge amount of spoils from the sack of Troy.

¹¹ See Kakridis J.Th. (1949), 21-24 on the wife in the highest rank in an ascending scale of affection.

Who is responsible for the distribution of the plunder is a very important question in the dispute between Achilles and Agamemnon, and we will come back to it.

Nevertheless, Agamemnon reads this offer as an attempt to cheat and deceive him:

μη δ' οὕτως ἀγαθός περ ἔων θεοείκελ' Ἀχιλλεῦ
κλέπτε νόω, ἐπεὶ οὐ παρελεύσεαι οὐδέ με πείσεις.

'Great man though you are, godlike Achilles, do not think you can cheat me like this – you will not trick me or persuade me to it.'

I, 131-2

According to Wilson, it is because it means he will be dependent on Achilles (as the distributor and winner of booty, which will actually be his role in the funeral games), and Agamemnon will not risk his strategic role as distributor of spoils.¹² Yet what Agamemnon *actually* says is that *the Achaeans* will have to give him someone else (as he does not want to lack visible proof of success vis-à-vis all the others, as he says himself):

ἄλλ' εἰ μὲν δώσουσι γέρας μεγάθυμοι Ἀχαιοὶ
ἄρσαντες κατὰ θυμὸν ὅπως ἀντάξιον ἔσται.

No, if the great-hearted Achaians will give me a prize, suiting it to my heart's liking, to be of equal value – then so be it.

I, 135-6

Similarly, Achilles had offered that *the Achaeans* would give him numerous spoils after he sack of Troy:

ἀλλὰ σὺ μὲν νῦν τῆνδε θεῶν πρόες· αὐτὰρ Ἀχαιοὶ
τριπλῆ τετραπλῆ τ' ἀποτείσομεν, αἴ κέ ποθι Ζεὺς
δώσι πόλιν Τροίην εὐτείχεον ἔξαλαπάξαι.

'No, you now let the girl go at the god's will: and we Achaians will recompense you three and four times over, if ever Zeus grants that we sack the well-walled city of Troy.

I, 127-9,

None of that departs from normal practice, and the only distributors of spoils mentioned are the Achaeans as a whole. Nevertheless, it is true that in IX, Achilles does describe Agamemnon as a distributor of booty:

¹² Wilson (2002), 57.

τάων ἐκ πασέων κειμήλια πολλά καὶ ἐσθλά
 ἐξελόμην, καὶ πάντα φέρων Ἀγαμέμνονι δόσκον
 Ἀτρεΐδῃ· ὁ δ' ὀπίσθε μένων παρὰ νηυσὶ θοῆσι
 δεξάμενος διὰ παῦρα δασάσκετο, πολλά δ' ἔχεσκεν.

From all these [cities] I took many fine treasures, and every time I brought them all and gave them to Agamemnon son of Atreus: and every time, back there by the fast ships he had never left, he would take them in, share a few, and keep the most for himself.

IX, 330-3

Why would he do that after having insisted on the communal nature of plunder distribution?

Is it only out of anger and resentment for Agamemnon? Van Wees attempts to reconcile the evidence by making two assumptions: "first, that, when men are said to have "given" a *geras* to their leader, this means that they have put the entire booty at his disposal, for him to choose his *geras* from", and second, "that, when it is said that men have given *gera* to subordinate princes, such as Akhilleus and Nestor, this means that the ruler has presented these men with gifts 'on behalf of the people'".¹³ However, this really means that the power of the Achaian assembly is purely symbolic and that the king is the one with the actual power to distribute prizes, which is not entirely consistent with the insistence of both parties in Book I that the Achaians are the ones distributing the prizes.¹⁴ It does appear to be a communal function, even if Agamemnon plays a leading role.

What can be said however is that this power the warriors' assembly partly has of distributing gifts limits Agamemnon's power as commander-in-chief. He does go against the rules, first by refusing to accept that the spoils had already all been distributed and that there was nothing the warriors could do about that, and secondly by threatening to take an already distributed captive from one of the leaders without the consent of the assembly:

¹³ Van Wees (1992), 301-2. and for a full discussion of the distribution of booty, see app. 4.

¹⁴ On other compromises, i.e. where both the king and the assembly have some influence over the division of plunder, see Moreau (1895), 309-14, Murray (1917), 187-94 and more recently, Donlan (1982), 158-9.

εἰ δέ κε μὴ δώωσιν ἐγὼ δέ κεν αὐτὸς ἔλωμαι
 ἢ τεὸν ἢ Αἴαντος ἰὼν γέρας, ἢ Ὀδυσῆος
 ἄξω ἑλών· ὃ δέ κεν κεχολώσεται ὄν κεν ἴκωμαι.

'But if [the Achaians will not give me a prize], then I myself shall go and take your prize, or Ajax', or Odysseus', and carry it away with me: and he will be angry, whichever of you I visit.

I, 137-9

Thereby he highjacks the role of distributor of spoils, which may not even have been his in the first place, and does so emphatically, as can be seen in the use of both ἐγὼ and αὐτὸς in line 137.¹⁵ He also ends up no longer resorting to common sense, but clearly imposing his power *via* force and threats:

πέμψω, ἐγὼ δέ κ' ἄγω Βρισηΐδα καλλιπάρηον
 αὐτὸς ἰὼν κλισίην δὲ τὸ σὸν γέρας ὄφρ' εὖ εἰδῆς
 ὅσσον φέρτερός εἰμι σέθεν, στυγέη δὲ καὶ ἄλλος
 ἴσον ἐμοὶ φάσθαι καὶ ὁμοιωθήμεναι ἄντην.

So I shall take the beautiful Briseis, your prize, going myself to fetch her from your hut, so that you can fully realise how much I am your superior, and others too can shrink from speaking on a level with me and openly claiming equality.'

I, 184-7

He there impinges on the other warriors' right to speak, which is another very important aspect of the political conflict shown in the poem.

Hammer highlights the fact that the quarrel between Agamemnon and Achilles broadens from a dispute about war booty (who has the power over the distribution of goods and honour) into a more fundamental question of authority (who has the power to control the troops). Achilles structures the conflict by asking who shall 'readily' obey Agamemnon:

ὦ μοι ἀναιδείην ἐπιειμένε κερδαλεόφρον
 πῶς τίς τοι πρόφρων ἔπεισιν πείθεται Ἀχαιῶν
 ἢ ὄδον ἐλθέμεναι ἢ ἀνδράσιν ἴφι μάχεσθαι;

'Oh you, your thoughts are always set on gain, and shamelessness is your very clothing! How can any of the Achaians willingly follow your orders, to go on expeditions or fight an enemy with all their strength?

¹⁵ Cp. Works and Days 359-60:

ὅς δέ κεν αὐτὸς ἔληται ἀναιδείῃφι πιθήσας,
 καὶ τε σμικρὸν ἔόν, τό γ' ἐπάχνωσεν φίλον ἦτορ.

On Agamemnon's arbitrary disregard of the collective responsibility of prize distribution, see also Teffeteller (1990).

I, 149-51

For Achilles, the exercise of authority consists in the ability to get others to act together willingly, in particular by showing αἰδώς and respecting others' property. For Agamemnon, the exercise of authority lies in the ability to compel obedience, through force if need be.¹⁶ Achilles' withdrawal is not a repudiation of the competition for τιμή in the status system, but a protest against the constraints, represented immediately by Agamemnon, that stand in the way of his using the system to rise to the top of the hierarchy.¹⁷ In other words, since to Achilles, the way to get warriors to act together is to allow them to gain status according to their ability,¹⁸ when Agamemnon refuses to do that, Achilles has no reason to keep fighting. As Hammer suggests, Achilles' withdrawal is more than the discontent of one warrior: it suggests the limit of force. As Achilles says, the resort to force will slowly deplete Agamemnon's ranks since the only people who remain, who will submit to Agamemnon's leadership, are 'nonentities', those who no longer speak or act:

δημοβόρος βασιλεὺς ἐπεὶ οὐτιδανοῖσιν ἀνάσσεις·

'a king who feeds fat on his people, with mere nobodies for subjects.'

I, 231¹⁹

Pucci points out that "Agamemnon does not deny Achilles the right to speak, he denies him the same weight, the same commanding power, the same authority of speech that he enjoys".²⁰ But his display of force does not demonstrate his power, and certainly does not successfully turn back Achilles' challenge: in the ensuing books, the "neat equation between word and power" will be dramatically undermined,²¹ as Agamemnon will lose control over the situation and his troops more and more.

¹⁶ Hammer (2002b), 16.

¹⁷ Wilson (2002), 69. See also Gill (1996).

¹⁸ See discussion of καττερός and φέρτερος below.

¹⁹ Hammer (2002b), 85.

²⁰ Pucci (1998), 189.

²¹ Pucci (1998), 183.

We may add that Achilles, like others will afterwards, also emphasise the fact that

Agamemnon is a coward:

οὔτε ποτ' ἐς πόλεμον ἄμα λαῶ θωρηχθῆναι
οὔτε λόχον δ' ἰέναι σὺν ἀριστήεσσιν Ἀχαιῶν
τέτληκας θυμῶ· τὸ δέ τοι κῆρ εἶδεται εἶναι.

'You have never had the courage to join your people in arming for battle, or to go with the leading men of the Achaians into ambush – that seems sheer death to you.'

I, 226-28²²

Nevertheless, he always gets more booty than the rest of the warriors, who actually do the work (in particular Achilles himself):

οὐ μὲν σοί ποτε ἴσον ἔχω γέρας ὅππότε Ἀχαιοὶ
Τρώων ἐκπέρσασ' εὐ ναιόμενον πτολίεθρον·
ἀλλὰ τὸ μὲν πλείον πολυαΐκος πολέμοιο
χεῖρες ἐμαὶ διέπουσ'· ἀτὰρ ἦν ποτε δασμὸς ἴκηται,
σοὶ τὸ γέρας πολὺ μείζον, ἐγὼ δ' ὀλίγον τε φίλον τε
ἔρχομ' ἔχων ἐπὶ νῆας, ἐπεὶ κε κάμω πολεμίζων.

I never have a prize equal to yours, whenever the Achaians sack some well founded Trojan town. My hands bear the brunt of the battle's fury. But when the division comes, your prize is by far the larger, and I come back to the ships with something small but precious, when I have worn myself out in the fighting.

I, 163-68

This reproach can also be seen in the vocabulary of venality used by Achilles to address Agamemnon (I, 123), which Thersites will also use.²³

On top of all these arguments, it can be seen that a conflict between the two characters is brewing right from the beginning, as Achilles, even before the quarrels starts, seems to disagree with the fact that Agamemnon is the best warrior at all, in his reassuring reply to Calchas, that no-one is going to hurt him

οὐ τις ἐμεῦ ζῶντος καὶ ἐπὶ χθονὶ δερκομένοιο
σοὶ κοίλης παρὰ νηυσὶ βαρείας χειρὸς ἐποίησει
σὺμπάντων Δαναῶν, οὐδ' ἦν Ἀγαμέμνονα εἵπης,
ὅς νῦν πολλὸν ἀριστος Ἀχαιῶν εὐχεται εἶναι.

While I live and see the light upon earth, no man will lay violent hands on you by our hollow

²² However, we may wonder whether that is in fact the case, as Agamemnon does perform an *aristeia* in the poem.

²³ Diomedes also makes similar points, see below.

ships, no man among the whole number of the Danaans, even if you speak of Agamemnon, who now claims to be far the best of the Achaians.'

I, 88-91

The meaning of Achilles' throwing down the sceptre at I, 270-1 can be understood in different manners: the most obvious understanding of the passage is to see it as a rejection of authority, while Mondy curiously sees it as an affirmation of it.²⁴ Hammer links it with the themis-function of the sceptre.²⁵ It does make more sense however to see the gesture as a refusal on the part of Achilles to "play the game" in a rejection of the symbol of both kingly power and assemblies, both of which he considers have failed him.²⁶

It is quite clear that in those conflicts Agamemnon resorts to βίη rather than μῆτις to show his power and reinforce his position, which has indeed become quite insecure: simply "by contesting Agamemnon's refusal [of the priest's offer of ἄποινα for his daughter], Chryses calls his position of superiority into question",²⁷ which explain the king's anger at Calchas for daring to suggest that Apollo is angry at him (I, 106-8).

Furthermore, Agamemnon had decided to refuse the ἄποινα offered by Chryses against the will of the army, which is his right, but in doing so he takes the wrong decision, and then repeats his mistake with Achilles: his position of superiority in the army is called into question by the simple fact that he does not seem to be able to take the right decision which, since he is commander-in-chief, is quite problematic.

²⁴ Mondy (1980), 211.

²⁵ Hammer (2002b), 132.

²⁶ This symbolic gesture will have its verbal explanation in Book IX.

²⁷ Wilson (2002), 44.

B - BOOK II: THE ASSEMBLY (II, 84-397)

The aim of Agamemnon's speech to the warriors' assembly in Book II is at best unclear. It is possible that his aim is to use a falsely pessimistic and fatalistic approach (telling the warrior that Zeus is against them all and that they might as well all go home) in order to get the Achaeans to show their attachment and faith in the expedition. As Dean Hammer puts it, he "calls an assembly to test precisely what Achilles had claimed was lacking: the ready obedience of the Achaian troops".²⁸ Unfortunately, his power is almost dissolved as the order of the assembly gives way to tumult (the warriors rush to the ships in hope of finally being able to go home):²⁹

κινήθη δ' ἀγορῆ φῆ κύματα μακρὰ θαλάσσης
 πόντου Ἰκαρίοιο, τὰ μὲν τ' Εὐρός τε Νότος τε
 ὄροσ' ἐπαΐξας πατρὸς Διὸς ἐκ νεφελῶν.
 ὡς δ' ὅτε κινήσῃ Ζέφυρος βαθὺ λήϊον ἐλθὼν
 λάβρος ἐπαιγίζων, ἐπὶ τ' ἡμῶν ἀσταχύεσσιν,
 ὡς τῶν πᾶσ' ἀγορῆ κινήθη· τοὶ δ' ἀλαλητῶ
 νῆας ἐπ' ἐσσεύοντο, ποδῶν δ' ὑπένεοθε κονίη
 ἴστατ' ἀειρομένη· τοὶ δ' ἀλλήλοισι κέλευον
 ἄπτεσθαι νηῶν ἠδ' ἐλκέμεν εἰς ἄλα διαν,
 οὐρούς τ' ἐξεκάθειρον· αὐτὴ δ' οὐρανὸν ἴκεν
 οἴκαδε ἰεμένων· ὑπὸ δ' ἦρεον ἔρματα νηῶν.

The assembly was stirred like the great waves of the sea, in the deep water by Icaria, when the east wind and the south wind rush down from father Zeus' stormclouds and raise them high. As when the west wind stirs a deep cornfield with its coming, and the standing crop bows its ears in the fury of the blast, so the whole assembly was stirred to movement. The men swarmed cheering to the ships, and under their feet the dust rose high in a cloud. They urged each other to lay hands to the ships and drag them down to the holy sea, and they set to clearing the slipways. Their shouts reached heaven as they surged for home: and they began to pull the props from under the ships.

II, 144-54

The "public field" fragments as there is neither the will nor the desire to act together in

²⁸ Hammer (2002b), 87. On the role and use of the gerontes by Agamemnon in that scene, see Cook (2003), 170ff.

²⁹ Cook (2003) puts it that way: "In a single stroke, Agamemnon rouses the army's sense of betrayal by the gods, their frustration and despondency over the war effort, longing for their homeland, concern that if they don't return soon they never will, and anxiety over the state of their households, in particular, their wives and children." 169.

war.³⁰

Odysseus is the only one able to control the crowd. It has been said that in doing so, he restores Agamemnon's power to the full. Yet, to Hammer, "in upholding Agamemnon's authority as the one king, Odysseus is actually the only one at this point acting as a king. Agamemnon's powerlessness is evident as he stands by helplessly, while his sceptre is used to violently reassert his authority."³¹ Odysseus does not restore Agamemnon's power, because what holds the political field together is no longer people acting together but force.

We can add that it is also singularly significant that Odysseus, the hero of μήτις, when holding the symbol of Agamemnon's authority (the "hero" of βίη), uses it to beat up people. He takes the place of Agamemnon not only with his symbolic authority, but also with his means of action (i.e. brute force).

Both Hammer and Pat Easterling have noticed the irony underlying the fact that the resort to force necessary to restore order is seen as affirming Agamemnon's claim to divine kingship, even though Zeus, the basis of such claim, has deliberately deceived him.³² We may add that the same unconscious irony underlies Nestor's response to Agamemnon's intentions at the beginning of the passage, when he tells him that if anybody else had said that they had such a dream (that Zeus was on their side and they were going to conquer Troy that very day), nobody would have believed them (II, 79-83).³³

Agamemnon, after being absent for most of the scene, finally gets approval from the crowd by saying exactly the opposite of his initial speech:

ὄν δέ κ' ἐγὼν ἀπάνευθε μάχης ἐθέλοντα νοήσω
μυμνάζειν παρὰ νηυσὶ κορωνίσιν, οὗ οἱ ἔπειτα

³⁰ Hammer (2002), 87-88. See also Cook (2003), 167ff.

³¹ Hammer (2002b), 88. On Odysseus' self-restraint, see Cook (2003), 182ff.

³² Hammer (2002b), 119 and Easterling (1989), 110.

³³ On Nestor's response, see Thalmann (1988), 8ff: "In this case, Nestor is correct: the account of the dream was truthful. But the dream it told was a lie", 8.

ἄρκιον ἔσσειται φυγέειν κύνας ἢ δ' οἰωνούς.
 Ὡς ἔφατ', Ἀργεῖοι δὲ μέγ' ἴαχον ὡς ὅτε κῦμα
 ἀκτῆ ἐφ' ὑψηλῆ, ὅτε κινήσῃ Νότος ἐλθῶν,
 προβλήτι σκοπέλω· τὸν δ' οὐ ποτε κύματα λείπει
 παντοίων ἀνέμων, ὅτ' ἂν ἐνθ' ἢ ἐνθα γένωνται.

'And any man I see trying to keep back from the battle by the beaked ships – he cannot be sure then of escaping the dogs and the birds.

So he spoke, and the Argives roared loud, like the waves on a sheer headland, when the south wind whips them with its coming. And they roar against a jutting cliff: storm-waves never leave it, driven by every wind there is, blowing on this side and that.'

II, 391-97

In this scene, we see how Agamemnon's power is eroding, as was warned by Achilles in I. The king cannot make his troops want to act together in war, and he cannot even control them when they are dispersing. Furthermore, the use of force as the only means of social control is becoming truly dominant.³⁴

C - BOOK IX: THE EMBASSY

In order to get Achilles to fight again and to save the Achaeans, Agamemnon sends Odysseus, Ajax and Phoenix to Achilles, offering him "unlimited ἄποινα". Before that was another assembly scene, very similar in content to that of Book II: Agamemnon expression his desire to give up and go home (IX, 10-30), and Diomedes this time contradicted him and manages to rouse the army's spirit (IX, 31-52). Nestor, possibly to prevent Agamemnon from making even more of a fool of himself in front of the whole army, wisely suggested a meeting with only the γέροντες. Again, Agamemnon has to rely entirely on the γέροντες to keep things in control. During that meeting, Nestor has to point out to him (however

³⁴ On the role of akhos in the scene, see Cook (2003). Interestingly, Agamemnon does start to recognise his responsibility in the dispute (II, 370-80), uses expressions such as ἀντιβίους ἐπέεσσιν (378) and even acknowledges that he started it: ἐγὼ δ' ἦρχον χαλεπαίνων (378). Cp. with the accusations of u(brij and a)naidei/h made by Achilles in Book I.

tactfully) that he behaved unadvisedly towards Achilles:

Ἀτρεΐδῃ κύνιστε ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν Ἀγάμεμνον
 ἐν σοὶ μὲν λήξω, σέο δ' ἄρξομαι, οὐνεκα πολλῶν
 λαῶν ἔσσι ἄναξ καὶ τοι Ζεὺς ἐγγυάλιξε
 σκῆπτρόν τ' ἠδὲ θέμιστας, ἵνα σφισι βουλευῆσθα.
 τῷ σε χρὴ περὶ μὲν φάσθαι ἔπος ἠδ' ἐπακοῦσαι,
 κρηῆναι δὲ καὶ ἄλλω, ὅτ' ἂν τινα θυμὸς ἀνώγη
 εἰπεῖν εἰς ἀγαθόν· σέο δ' ἔξεταί ὅτι κεν ἄρχῃ.
 αὐτὰρ ἐγὼν ἐρέω ὡς μοι δοκεῖ εἶναι ἄριστα.
 οὐ γάρ τις νόον ἄλλος ἀμείνονα τοῦδε νοήσει
 οἷον ἐγὼ νοέω ἡμὲν πάλαι ἠδ' ἔτι καὶ νῦν
 ἐξ ἔτι τοῦ ὅτε διογενὲς Βρισηΐδα κούρη
 χωομένου Ἀχιλλῆος ἔβης κλισίῃθεν ἀπούρας
 οὐ τι καθ' ἡμέτερόν γε νόον μάλα γάρ τοι ἔγωγε
 πόλλ' ἀπεμυθεόμην· σὺ δὲ σῶ μεγαλήτορι θυμῷ
 εἶξας ἄνδρα φέριστον, ὃν ἀθάνατοὶ περ ἔτισαν,
 ἠτίμησας, ἐλὼν γὰρ ἔχεις γέρας· ἀλλ' ἔτι καὶ νῦν
 φραζώμεσθ' ὡς κέν μιν ἀρεσσάμενοι πεπίθωμεν
 δώροισιν τ' ἀγανοῖσιν ἔπεσσι τε μιλίχιοισι.

Most glorious son of Atreus, Agamemnon, lord of men, you will be the beginning of my words, and you will be their end, since you are the king of many peoples and Zeus has entrusted to you the sceptre and the ways of law, to make judgement for your people. Therefore you more than any other man should speak the thoughts of your mind and listen too, and act on another's advice, whenever a man's heart prompts him to speak for the good – yours will be the credit for all that he begins. Now I shall tell you what seems best to me. There can be no better thought than what has long been the thought of my mind, and still is now, ever since the time, my lord, when you went and took the girl Briseis from Achilles' hut, for all his anger – quite against our feeling: I certainly tried long to dissuade you. But you gave in to your heart's high passion and brought dishonour on the greatest of men, a man whom the very immortals have honoured – you have taken his prize and keep it for yourself. But even at this late day let us consider how we may appease him and win him over with soothing gifts and kind persuasion.

IX, 96-113

In his answer to the old man, Agamemnon replaces Nestor's previous expression "took τιμή from" (ἠτίμησας, IX, 111) with "delusion" (ἄτας, IX, 115), in order to mitigate his own responsibility in Achilles' absence from the battlefield.³⁵ According to Hans Van Wees, by shifting responsibility onto someone else (here, the gods), people are trying to deny that they intended to behave as offensively as they have undeniable done, and hope for greater leniency on account of this.³⁶ It is less the case here than in Book XIX however, where

³⁵ Wilson (2002), 75.

³⁶ Van Wees (1992), 113. On divine and human causation, see also Said (1978), 75-83, Schmitt (1990), 36-52, 72-114,

Agamemnon blames the gods entirely: here, he uses phrases such as φρεσὶ λευγαλέησι πιθήσας (IX, 119), and οὐδ' αὐτὸς ἀναίνομαι (IX, 116). Those will not be present in his 'apology' speech to Achilles in Book XIX.³⁷

Agamemnon does send gifts to Achilles, but he does not define them as ποινή: he uses the language of ἄποινα:

ἀλλ' ἐπεὶ ἀασάμην φρεσὶ λευγαλέησι πιθήσας,
ἄψ ἐθέλω ἀρέσαι δόμεναί τ' ἀπερείσι' ἄποινα.

'But since I was blinded and listened to my heart's wretched persuasion, I am ready to take it back and offer the appeasement of limitless ἄποινα.'
IX, 119-20

Wilson argues that he intends to represent to himself as attempting to spare the Achaeans from the life-threatening situation he represents Achilles as now inflicting on them. In other words, he *gives* ἄποινα to recover something (Achaean lives), rather than *giving back* Briseis or *paying back* τιμή. She points out that Agamemnon uses δίδωμι, which is a very neutral verb, instead of verbs like (apo)ieimen, (apo)tinemen and (apo)tinusthai, meaning to pay back (or to get oneself paid back).³⁸ However, it is clearly intended by Agamemnon as reparation. He in fact uses the expression ἄψ ἐθέλω ἀρέσαι twice in his speech (IX, 120 and 138). It is understood as an offer of reparation by the Embassy, and even to a degree by Achilles (even though it is not what he was looking for).

Nevertheless, as Wilson points out, he at the same time inverts the social function of ἄποινα, as the gifts would cease to consolidate the status Achilles had earned and make it a function of Agamemnon's own largesse. The offer also places Achilles under heavy

with the point that human beings have no clear idea what is up to them and what up to the gods, Finkelberg (1995), Lesky (2001), 171ff. and esp. 195ff., Cairns (2001), 13-20, esp. 17-19 on Agamemnon. More will be said on this in the section on Book XIX.

³⁷ On the difference between Agamemnon's speeches in IX and XIX, see Willamovitz (1931-2), II, 117; Gundert (1940), 229 and Lesky, 197ff. However, Agamemnon still seems to openly blame himself in Book XIV, where he worries that the whole army hates him because of the way he treated Achilles (XIV, 49-51).

³⁸ For a study of the vocabulary of ποινή and ἄποινα, see Wilson (2002), 20-26.

obligation to Agamemnon, for example the obligation to return to battle.³⁹ Agamemnon offers to give Achilles women “he chose for himself from the spoils”, and *among them* is Briseis (IX, 129-132). According to Wilson, Briseis is given away generously by Agamemnon but at no point is she said to be given back,⁴⁰ Nevertheless, we have to admit that it must be clear to everyone present that Agamemnon is giving Briseis back (he says himself that he took her from Achilles: ἦν τότ’ ἀπηύρων, IX, 131).

Another implicit aspect of the offer Wilson points out is that in the *Iliad*, ἄποινα is never between φίλοι: Agamemnon therefore cleverly casts Achilles in the thematic role of the enemy.⁴¹ Furthermore, the point of the embassy is about Achilles yielding

δηθητῶ· Αἴδης τοι ἀμείλιχος ἢ δ’ ἀδάμαστος,
τοῦνεκα καί τε βροτοῖσι θεῶν ἔχθιστος ἀπάντων·
καί μοι ὑποστήτω ὄσσον βασιλεύτερός εἰμι

‘Let him yield – Hades is the one who never pities or yields, and for that he is of all gods the most hated by men – and let him submit to me, in that I am the greater king and can claim to be his senior in age.’

IX, 158-160⁴²

This does take the focus away from Agamemnon’s intention of making amends (which he does nevertheless, contrarily to what Wilson says). Furthermore, in order to impose his authority on Achilles even more, Agamemnon puts himself explicitly in the role of the father, by offering him one of his daughters to marry and promising to honour him like his own son:

εἰ δέ κεν Ἄργος ἰκοίμεθ’ Ἀχαιϊκὸν οὖθαο ἀρούρης
γαμβρός κέν μοι ἔου· τίσω δέ μιν ἴσον Ὀρέστη,
ὅς μοι τηλύγετος τρέφεται θαλίῃ ἐνι πολλῇ.

‘And if we reach the udder-rich soil of Achaian Argos, he can become my son-in-law: and I will honour him as much as Orestes, my loved young son growing there in abundant

³⁹ On Agamemnon’s gifts as offensive, See Donlan (1993).

⁴⁰ Wilson (2002), 78.

⁴¹ Wilson (2002), 78.

⁴² The audience remembers this, but Odysseus omits this passage when he recounts Agamemnon’s offer to Achilles.

prosperity.
IX, 141-43

This could be seen as an honour, but also as a demand for submission, submission which Agamemnon openly mentions in the last few lines of his speech.

Achilles' frame of mind is understandably different from that of Agamemnon and the members of the embassy. Achilles is not willing to fight unless he is certain of the possibility of earning τιμή in both material and non-material form, which is certainly not the case at the moment, at least in the warrior's opinion:

οὐτ' ἔμεγ' Ἀτρεΐδην Ἀγαμέμνονα πεισέμεν οἴω
οὐτ' ἄλλους Δαναούς, ἐπεὶ οὐκ ἄρα τις χάρις ἦεν
μάρνασθαι δῆϊοισιν ἐπ' ἀνδράσι νωλεμές αἰεὶ.
ἴση μοῖρα μένοντι καὶ εἰ μάλα τις πολεμίζοι·
ἐν δὲ ἰῆ τιμῆ ἡμὲν κακός ἦδὲ καὶ ἐσθλός·

I do not think that Agamemnon son of Atreus will win me over, nor he rest of the Danaans, since it now appears that there is no thanks if a man fights the enemy relentlessly on and on. Stay at home or fight your hardest – your share will be the same. Coward and hero are honoured alike.

IX, 315-19

Furthermore, according to him, there is no difference between the abduction of Helen and that generated by the seizure of Briseis, as he defines her as his wife: IX, 337-43 (when it suits his purpose; he will later wish her dead), which only adds to his humiliation and sense of self-righteousness. It can even be said that Achilles seems to be offered goods not only for sparing the army, but as a compensation for his own life (because if he stays in Troy, he will die there, even if Agamemnon does not know that): in his own words, it would therefore be foolish to accept, as he can have all he needs in Phthia *and* live a long life (IX, 393-400 + IX, 414-19).

Achilles' arguments are not only personal (he deserves compensation and honour from Agamemnon), but are also broadly political: if Agamemnon uses only force to impose

his authority and does not leave any scope to the warriors to gain status and honour through their deeds, he will lose support and will undermine the cohesion of the army.

Wilson's analysis is interesting, and goes a long way to explain Achilles' rejection of the Embassy's offer, but it also goes too far. Agamemnon does make amends, and he does acknowledge, however grudgingly, that he made a mistake. His offer clearly lacks humility, which understandably grates on Achilles' nerves, but that does not mean it was not a genuine offer of reparation.

Furthermore, it is time to point out that Achilles is not alone in his accusations against Agamemnon: two other warriors seem to share at least some of his views.

D – THERSITES AND DIOMEDES

1 - Thersites

Thersites' argument is quite similar, yet less profound and developed than that of Achilles (but he is given less time to expose it): to him, kings (in general, but in particular Agamemnon) steal their wealth from the toil of ordinary workers:

Ἄτρειδῆ τέο δ' αὐτ' ἐπιμέμφεαι ἠδὲ χατίζεις;
 πλείαί τοι χαλκοῦ κλισίαι, πολλαὶ δὲ γυναῖκες
 εἰσὶν ἐνὶ κλισίῃς ἐξαίρετοι, ἅς τοι Ἀχαιοὶ
 πρωτίστῳ δίδομεν εὖτ' ἂν πτολίεθρον ἔλωμεν.

'Son of Atreus, what is your complaint this time? What are you missing? Your huts are filled with bronze, and there are women enough in your quarters – choice girls, offered to you before all others by us Achaians whenever we capture a town.'

II, 225-28

He does not mention status, but simply states that the redistribution scheme is not

working. His argument is more economic than political, as he does not seem to contest the actual authority of the kings, but simply explains that they are driven by their greed.

He also accepts that Achilles has been dishonoured, and even claims that he did not go far enough in revenge:⁴³

ὄς καὶ νῦν Ἀχιλῆα ἔο μέγ' ἀμείνονα φῶτα
 ἠτίμησεν· ἐλὼν γὰρ ἔχει γέρας αὐτὸς ἀπούρας.
 ἀλλὰ μάλ' οὐκ Ἀχιλῆϊ χόλος φρεσίν, ἀλλὰ μεθίμων·
 ἦ γὰρ ἂν Ἀτρεΐδῃ νῦν ὕστατα λωβήσαιο·

'Now he has even dishonoured Achilles, a much better man than he is: he has taken his prize with his own hands and keeps him for himself. But Achilles has no fury in his heart, he lets things pass – otherwise, son of Atreus, this would be your last outrage.'

II, 239-42

This shows some kind of unexpected solidarity, as he was said to be an enemy of Achilles, as well as of Agamemnon and Odysseus (II, 220-21). He also encourages the other soldiers to do as Achilles did, i.e. leave Agamemnon on his own to see how he can manage by himself:

ὦ πέπνες κάκ' ἐλέγχε' Ἀχαιῖδες οὐκέτ' Ἀχαιοὶ
 οἴκαδ' ἐπερὶ σὺν νηυσὶ νεώμεθα, τόνδε δ' ἐῶμεν
 αὐτοῦ ἐνὶ Τροίῃ γέρα πεσσέμεν, ὄφρα ἴδῃται
 ἦ ῥά τί οἱ χῆμεῖς προσαμύνομεν ἦε καὶ οὐκί·

'My poor weak friends, you sorry disgraces, mere women of Achaia now, no longer men – yes, let us go back home with our ships, and leave this man here in Troy to brood on his prizes, so that he can see whether the rest of us are of some help to him or not.'

II, 235-38

We may wonder why someone like Thersites end up sharing the same point of view as Achilles.⁴⁴ As many have pointed out, he is the lowest and ugliest soldier in the army.⁴⁵

⁴³ Hence the importance of Athena's intervention in Book I: the audience know that Thersites is wrong, and that Achilles was in fact very close to killing Agamemnon.

⁴⁴ On the Thersites scene as comedy, see Thalmann (1988), 16ff. and Lowry (1980).

⁴⁵ On Thersites' ugliness, see Rose (1988), 18-19. See also Brown, in his study of Greek myth, who pointed to the common strategy of an oppressed underclass which reverses the terms of a negative stereotype imposed by a ruling class. He gives the example of Hermes the thief, cheat and liar, used as an emblem of the merchant class

What immediately comes to mind, though, is that if the best warrior and the worst warrior share an opinion, this goes a long way to show that this opinion is to some degree universal.⁴⁶ However, the reaction of the army to Thersites' humiliation at the hands of Odysseus seems to point to a complete rejection of the former's speech:⁴⁷

Ἦς ἄρ' ἔφη, σκῆπτρῳ δὲ μετάφρενον ἠδὲ καὶ ὤμῳ
 πλῆξεν· ὁ δ' ἰδνῶθη, θαλερὸν δὲ οἱ ἔκπεσε δάκρυ·
 σμῶδιξ δ' αἱματόεσσα μεταφρένου ἐξυπανέστη
 σκῆπτρου ὑπο χρυσοῦ· ὁ δ' ἄρ' ἔζετο τάρβησέν τε,
 ἀλγήσας δ' ἀχρεῖον ἰδὼν ἀπομόρξατο δάκρυ.
 οἱ δὲ καὶ ἀχνύμενοί περ ἐπ' αὐτῷ ἠδὺ γέλασαν·
 ὧδε δὲ τις εἶπεσκεν ἰδὼν ἐς πλησίον ἄλλον·
 ὦ πόποι ἦ δὴ μυρὶ Ὀδυσσεὺς ἐσθλὰ ἔοργε
 βουλὰς τ' ἐξάρχων ἀγαθὰς πόλεμόν τε κορύσσων·
 νῦν δὲ τόδε μέγ' ἄριστον ἐν Ἀργείοισιν ἔρεξεν,
 ὅς τὸν λωβητῆρα ἐπεσβόλον ἔσχ' ἀγοράων.
 οὐ θῆν μιν πάλιν αὐτίς ἀνήσει θυμὸς ἀγήνωρ
 νεκείειν βασιλῆας ὄνειδείους ἐπέεσσιν.

So he spoke, and then used the sceptre to beat him on the back and shoulders. Thersites writhed, and a heavy tear fell from him, and a bloody weal sprang up on his back under the gold-studded sceptre. He sat down frightened and in pain, and with a helpless look wiped away the tears. For all their disaffection the men laughed happily at him, and one would glance at his neighbour and say: 'Oh yes, Odysseus has done thousands of fine things before now, proposing good plans and leading in battle. But this now is far the best thing he has done among the Argives, putting a stop to this horror's rantings in assembly. I doubt that his proud heart will ever again impel him to taunt the kings with insults.'

II, 265-77

This is often used by scholars to point out the poet's aristocratic bias: Thersites is an impudent commoner who gets what he deserves.⁴⁸ However, a more subtle conclusion can be reached. After all, the warriors are clearly said to be demoralised by the whole situation,

despised by the landed aristocracy. Here, Thersites represents the stereotype of the ugly, impudent commoner. Thalmann (1988) points out that though there is a clear equivalence made in the poem between physical appearance, moral worth and social class, the audience have just witnessed handsome heroes behaving in a less than admirable manner, 15.

⁴⁶ See for example Postlethwaite (1988) on the parallels with Achilles' speech in Book I, 126-30.

⁴⁷ On Thersites as a scapegoat, see Thalmann (1988), 21-26, as well as Usener (1897), 137, Murray (1967), 212-5 and Girard (1979).

⁴⁸ Interestingly, this view tends to point more to the scholars' personal ideological bias. See in particular Atchity (1978), 126-8, Arnheim (1977), 14-15, Redfield (1975), 161, de Ste Croix (1981), 413, Bury (1967), 75, Finley (1954), 110-11, Forrest (1966), 63-4 and Donlan (1973), 150-1. On the other hand, Thalmann (1988) points out that though the ideology is validated by what happens to Thersites, the text makes it clear that what that ideology is is mystification, 19.

and it is that feeling Thersites expressed. Thalmann points out that Thersites' marginal status (his appearance for example) prevent a close identification with him. Distance is key here to the warriors' reaction.⁴⁹ He adds that the result does not cancel the effect of the scene for the audience.⁵⁰ All in all, we need to wonder whether the result of Thersites' intervention is really enough to turn the audience (or at least all the audience)⁵¹ against him.⁵²

2 – Diomedes

Diomedes is an interesting example, in that he starts off the poem by showing exaggerated respect to Agamemnon:⁵³

Ἦς φάτο, τὸν δ' οὐ τι προσέφη κρατερὸς Διομήδης·
αἰδεσθεὶς βασιλῆος ἐνὶ πῆν αἰδοίοιο·

So he spoke, and strong Diomedes made no answer, silenced by respect for the king and his rebuke.
IV, 401-2

After Capaneus has responded angrily to Agamemnon's attack, he even shows his disapproval of his friend's conduct, justifying the king's behaviour:

Τὸν δ' ἄρ' ὑπόδρα ἰδὼν προσέφη κρατερὸς Διομήδης·
τέττα, σιωπῆ ἦσο, ἐμῶ δ' ἐπιπέιθεο μύθο·
οὐ γὰρ ἐγὼ νεμεσῶ Ἀγαμέμνονι ποιμένι λαῶν
ὄτρύνοντι μάχεσθαι ἐϋκνήμιδας Ἀχαιοὺς·
τούτῳ μὲν γὰρ κῦδος ἄμ' ἔψεται εἴ κεν Ἀχαιοὶ (415)
Τρῶας δηώσωσιν ἔλωσί τε Ἴλιον ἰρήν,
τούτῳ δ' αὖ μέγα πένθος Ἀχαιῶν δηωθέντων.

Then strong Diomedes scowled at him and said: 'Friend, stay still and be quiet, and do as I tell you. I do not resent Agamemnon, shepherd of the people, for urging the well-greaved Achaians into battle: because his will be the glory that follows if the Achaians slaughter the

⁴⁹ Thalmann (1988), 18.

⁵⁰ Thalmann (1988), 21.

⁵¹ On the likelihood of a diverse audience (i.e. from different social strata), see for example Rose (1988), 12-13.

⁵² Rose's interpretation of the reaction of the army is that their laughter is "bitterly ironic from precisely the perspective of the politically powerless members of the audience. [...] Thersites is, on the reading, the manifest butt of their laughter because of his incomprehensibly stupid failure to foresee the consequences of his outburst in a society where he is utterly powerless.", 20-21. This interpretation, however incredibly attractive, sounds a little bit like special pleading.

⁵³ On this scene, see Cairns (2001), 210-11.

Trojans and capture sacred Ilios, but his again the depth of grief if the Achaians are slaughtered.’
IV, 411-17

Yet in IX, after Agamemnon’s speech, in which he encourage the Achaeans to abandon Troy and flee to their ships (IX, 17-28), the assembly is stricken to silence, but Diomedes, no longer in awe of Agamemnon, “inserts himself in the political field by pointing out that it is his ‘right’ to speak out against the king”:⁵⁴

Ἀτρεΐδη σοὶ πρῶτα μαχήσομαι ἀφραδέοντι,
ἢ θέμις ἐστὶν ἀναξ ἀγορῆ· σὺ δὲ μή τι χολωθῆς.

‘Son of Atreus, this is folly, and it is you I will take issue with first of all – such is the right of custom, my lord, in the assembly, and you must not be angry.’
IX, 32-33

Of course, we can say that one reason for Diomedes’ apparently sudden change of mind over the legitimacy of Agamemnon’s authority⁵⁵ is that by IX, he had performed his *aristeia* (Books V and VI), and had been acknowledged by both the Achaeans and the Trojans as the greatest Achaean warrior in the absence of Achilles. This must have given him the confidence necessary to stand up to the king. Similarly we saw that Agamemnon has been called a coward several times by his opponents. Nevertheless, he too does accomplish his *aristeia* in XI, and proves those accusations of cowardice to be wrong. It is, however, true that he seems to have waited as long as possible before truly engaging in action himself, and he is wounded almost immediately (he still had the time to perform a few shocking acts of cruelty), which could not have raised his reputation much.

Diomedes then launches into a critique of Agamemnon’s power: the king has the sceptre of Zeus but no courage, and the Achaeans should not listen to him:

σοὶ δὲ διάνδιχα δῶκε Κρόνου πάϊς ἀγκυλομήτεω·
σκήπτρω μὲν τοι δῶκε τετιμῆσθαι περὶ πάντων,
ἀλκὴν δ’ οὐ τοι δῶκεν, ὅ τε κράτος ἐστὶ μέγιστον.

⁵⁴ Hammer (2002), 89-90.

⁵⁵ He does refer to the scene of Book IV at IX, 34-5.

'But your gifts from the son of devious-minded Kronos go both ways: he has given you the pre-eminent honour of the sceptre, but courage he did not give you, and this is true power.'

IX, 37-39

He finally states that if Agamemnon wants to leave he can, but the Achaeans will stay:

εἰ δέ τοι αὐτῷ θυμὸς ἐπέσσυται ὥς τε νέεσθαι
 ἔρχεο· πᾶρ τοι ὁδός, νῆες δέ τοι ἄγχι θαλάσσης
 ἐστᾶσ', αἷ τοι ἔποντο Μυκῆνηθεν μάλα πολλαί.
 ἀλλ' ἄλλοι μενέουσι κάρη κομόωντες Ἀχαιοὶ
 εἰς ὃ κέ περ Τροίην διαπέρομεν.

'If your own heart is eager for return, then go – the way is open, your ships are standing by the sea, all those many ships which followed you from Mycene, But the rest of the long-haired Achaians will stay here until we sack Troy.'

IX, 42-46

This time (as opposed to Thersites' speech), it is a political attack on Agamemnon, stating that his status is not enough to grant him the authority he claims to have over the troops, but that courage will show itself and push the warriors to act as they should. Interestingly, Thersites' and Diomedes' arguments put together are a good summary of Achilles' reason for withdrawing from war.

Nestor, as we have seen also criticizes Agamemnon in Books I and IX. Interestingly, Odysseus, although he rescues the king during the assembly in Book II, is critical of Agamemnon too, especially in Book XIV, where he rebukes Agamemnon for his cowardice (XIV, 83-102).⁵⁶The content of that speech is quite similar to that of Diomedes in Book IX.⁵⁷

E – ACTING TOGETHER

In the view of Dean Hammer, Agamemnon considers power as a possession that he can use to compel others to obey him, but he is in fact powerless because power is located not in a

⁵⁶ See also Poseidon' criticism of Agamemnon at XIII, 107-15, when he's encourages the Achaians to fight.

⁵⁷ See also XIX, 181-3 where he encourages Agamemnon to make amends.

person but in the political field. Power originates from some kind of cooperation among people when they act together to pursue particular goals. It is manifested in the joint consultation and action of a group of and it is not available to any single individual. Agamemnon's power will dissolve the moment it is not actualised by people acting together. Deception and violence, such as those Agamemnon uses constantly, prevent the development of power by denying the condition of power, namely people acting and speaking together. To him, throughout the *Iliad*, Homer brings into question the traditional bases of authority: wealth, heredity, even prowess in battle. Hammer believes that none of these attributes are enough to become a successful leader. A leader's power is not composed simply of a set of characteristics that he possesses, whether Achilles' prowess in war or Agamemnon's genealogy. What emerges instead is a notion of power that rests on relationships that make up the political field.⁵⁸

What Hammer does not seem to take into consideration is the fact that all three characters who rail against Agamemnon's rule (Achilles, Thersites and Diomedes) think that the warriors collectively should be allowed to manage the army: Thersites says that since they have no power over the decisions taken by Agamemnon, in particular distribution of booty, the warriors should just leave (II, 235-38). Achilles says something similar, adding the notion of *τιμή* to that of prizes: the warriors cannot gain anything from this war, so they should just go home (IX, 417-26). Diomedes, surprisingly enough, is perhaps the most radical of the three: he does not say that the army should leave Agamemnon alone in Troy, but that *Agamemnon* should leave and that the army would manage very well without him (IX, 42-46). All three therefore agree with the right of the warriors to speak, express their discontent and participate in decision-making, in the "political field".

⁵⁸ Hammer (2002b), 114-15.

All this goes against Agamemnon's conception of power: as Hammer points out, he is a king chosen by Zeus and therefore thinks he alone owns the right to power and is the only one entitled to make decisions: in Book I, Achilles calls an assembly to *discuss* the problem of the plague, an assembly in which Agamemnon refuses to listen to the seer Calchas and threatens him, refuses to listen to the wishes of the warrior whose prize he threatens to take, and eventually treats Achilles' threats of withdrawing from the battlefield with contempt, saying that he does not need him anyway. This shows two very different conceptions of the role of the assembly: Achilles wants to discuss a problem and Agamemnon wants to bully his way through decision-making.

F – καρτερός AND φέρτερος

One remark of Achilles is particularly interesting: in his answer to Odysseus in the Embassy scene, he says that Agamemnon has made it impossible for the warriors to earn τιμή, and so they might as well go home, since they have nothing to gain in Troy:

ἴση μοῖρα μένοντι καὶ εἰ μάλα τις πολεμίζοι·
ἐν δὲ ἰῆ τιμῆ ἡμὲν κακὸς ἡδὲ καὶ ἐσθλός

Stay at home or fight your hardest – your share will be the same. Coward and hero are honoured alike.

IX, 318-19⁵⁹

It seems that, to Achilles, Agamemnon's type of political power goes against the quest for τιμή, which can also be understood to be political. Achilles ought to be the most powerful warrior, as he is the best fighter and the one who should be able to gain the most τιμή from the expedition. But Agamemnon imposes an arbitrary control over the army and makes this

⁵⁹ See also IX, 321-22; IX, 417-19.

power impossible to gain.

This seems to be linked to a remark Nestor made earlier, in Book I, saying that even if Achilles is *καρτερός* among the warriors, Agamemnon is *φέρτερος* and therefore should be obeyed:

εἰ δὲ σὺ καρτερός ἐσσι θεὰ δέ σε γείνατο μήτηρ,
ἀλλ' ὅ γε φέρτερός ἐστιν ἐπεὶ πλεόνεσσιν ἀνάσσει.

'You may be *καρτερός*, with a goddess for your mother, but he is *φέρτερος*, because his rule is wider.

I, 280-81

According to Chantraine, *καρτερός* refers only to physical strength, and at the root of it is the notion of harshness, "*dureté*". He also translates *κράτος* by "*force physique qui permet de triompher*" and seems to refer to a general capacity to do things. It is used in the context of a meritocratic order.

Φέρτερος can have a very similar meaning and be used of people "*qui l'emportent sur d'autres par la force physique, par l'habileté aux armes*" (indeed, it is used several times as a synonym for *καρτερός*) but also, and perhaps most importantly "*par la place dans la hiérarchie sociale*", and is used in the context of an aristocratic order. This can be seen in particular in the following example:

οἱ σέο φέρτεροί εἰσι, σὺ δ' ἀπτόλεμος καὶ ἀναλκις
οὔτε ποτ' ἐν πολέμῳ ἐναρτίθμιος οὔτ' ἐνὶ βουλῇ·
οὐ μὲν πως πάντες βασιλεύσομεν ἐνθάδ' Ἀχαιοί·
οὐκ ἀγαθὸν πολυκοιρανίη· εἷς κοίρανος ἔστω,
εἷς βασιλεύς, ᾧ δῶκε Κρόνου πάϊς ἀγκυλομήτεω (205)
σκήπτρόν τ' ἠδὲ θέμιστας, ἵνα σφίσι βουλεύησι.

'Fool, sit quiet and listen to what others tell you, your superiors (*φέρτεροί*) – you are a coward and a weakling, of no account either in war or in counsel. We cannot all be kings here, every one for the Achaians. To have each man his own master is ruin: there must be one master, one king, the man endowed by the son of devious-minded Cronos with the sceptre and the ways of law, to make judgement for his people.'

II, 201-3⁶⁰

Furthermore, it is quite telling that *φέρτερος* is typically used of Zeus:

⁶⁰ See also: III, 431; VI, 158.

εἴ περ γὰρ φθονέω τε καὶ οὐκ εἰὼ διαπέρσαι,
οὐκ ἀνύω φθονέουσ' ἐπεὶ ἦ πολὺ φέρετερός ἐσσι.

'Because even if I should resent it and try to refuse you [Zeus] her sack, I can achieve nothing by resentment, as you are far φέρετερός.'

IV, 55-56⁶¹

It is also used of gods compared to men:

ὦ Νέστορ Νηληϊάδη μέγα κῦδος Ἀχαιῶν
ῥεῖα θεός γ' ἐθέλων καὶ ἀμείνονας ἤε περ οἶδε
ἵππους δωρήσασαί', ἐπεὶ ἦ πολὺ φέρετεροί εισιν.

'Nestor, son of Neleus, great glory of the Achaians, a god, if he wished, could easily give even better horses than these, since gods' power is much greater than ours.'

X, 555-57⁶²

Chantraine adds that the vocative φέρετατε can be used as a deferential apostrophe, and it appears twice in the *Iliad* (XVI, 21; XIX, 216). Interestingly enough, this form of address is used both time to refer to Achilles, and not Agamemnon, which shows that Nestor's view that Achilles is only καρετός when Agamemnon is φέρετερος is not necessarily shared by everyone.⁶³ Not even Nestor uses it of Agamemnon! The comparative φέρετερος along with the superlative φέρετατος corresponds to the adjective ἀγαθός in every sense of the word. Chantraine compares it to the French expression "l'emporter", which expresses every kind of superiority: physical, moral and social.⁶⁴

Of course, this is therefore very different from καρετός,⁶⁵ which only refers to physical superiority. Achilles is described as being merely physically superior, i.e. a better fighter, whereas Agamemnon is superior in every domain. This simple fact shows that Nestor is not unbiased in the conflict between Achilles and Agamemnon, but on the contrary clearly sides with the latter, and shows his deference to him by using this adjective, as it is

⁶¹ See also: VIII, 144; 211; XV, 165; 181.

⁶² See also: XXI, 264.

⁶³ Although it can be argued that the word can be used by people entirely out of politeness, without much political theorizing.

⁶⁴ Chantraine, (1968), *ad loc.*

⁶⁵ Which is not formally a comparative, for one thing.

very questionable that Agamemnon is the best in everything (especially the physical and moral domains).⁶⁶ Nestor often criticises Agamemnon's decisions (I, 275-76; IX, 108-111) but he never seem to question the basis of the king's authority. We can add to that "camp" Odysseus, who in II does his best to restore Agamemnon's authority, by using the sceptre (II, 185-86)⁶⁷ and telling the warriors that there can be only one king (II, 203-6, see above for full quotation).

⁶⁶ However, this is the argument he uses to persuade Achilles. What he says to Agamemnon (that he should respect Achilles as a great warrior) is of course very different.

⁶⁷ Although he has to take it off him!

CONCLUSION

It is clear that Agamemnon's authority is undermined by his actions and his own perception of the nature of political power. It can even be said that Homer himself, in showing the dissent to this type of power and in presenting Agamemnon in an unflattering light (cruelty, lack of pity etc.) also contests this particular form of power.⁶⁸ The difference between the two characters is most clearly shown in the way they resolve conflict: Agamemnon when he finally reconciles with Achilles, and Achilles in the way he handles the funeral games for Patroclus.

⁶⁸ Hammer (2002b) reminds us of Aristotle's distinction between a newer form of tyranny, in which tyrants rise to power by gaining the trust or belief (*πιστευθέντες*) of the people (*δήμου*) and the multitude (*πλήθους*) and an older form, in which kings went beyond their hereditary power to establish a "more despotic rule" (*δεσποτικτέρας ἀρχῆς*), 162 (Aristotle, *Politics*, 1310b 12-32). Agamemnon, by systematically using force and distorting traditional systems of compensation, may be regarded as close to the later definition.

CHAPTER VIII

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

A – BOOK XIX – THE RECONCILIATION

There is not much more to say about that passage, as Agamemnon's attitude remains very much what it was in IX. He still does not accept any responsibility, and again uses ἄτη as an excuse (XIX, 90-92). It is different this time, though, as he uses ἄτη to deny that he had any responsibility in what happened. Up to then, he did seem to accept that he behaved unadvisedly (see section on Book IX).

Interestingly, in the illustration of the deception ἄτη creates, he uses a story where Zeus is deceived by Hera in a similar way (XIX, 95-133): as Herakles was about to be born, Zeus said that the child from his blood about to see the day was going to "reign over all his neighbours". Hera asked him to swear a solemn oath over that, which Zeus did, and she hurried to a woman pregnant with the great-grand son of Zeus, whom Zeus had forgotten about, and made her give birth prematurely, so that child would fulfil the prediction rather than Herakles. Zeus was furious and banished ἄτη from Olympus. Agamemnon therefore puts himself in a situation similar to one Zeus has lived, implicitly clinging to his role of all-powerful monarch chosen by Zeus.

It is not entirely clear why he suddenly decides that it is not his fault after all. This is the first time Achilles is actually present when Agamemnon talks about the conflict, and this

may have had an influence on the way Agamemnon decides to present his offer.¹ The king is not exactly doing himself any favours though, as he appears surly and dishonest.

Odysseus' role is interesting in this scene, as he practically stage-manages the whole thing, and he is very critical of Agamemnon as well.²

However, the real passage showing successful resolution of conflicts take place later on, when Achilles and not Agamemnon is in charge.

B – THE FUNERAL GAMES

To Hammer, the funeral games are the “outstanding, ritualised, non-military expression of a value-system in which honour was the highest virtue”,³ but, as we saw earlier, they are actually more than that: they are the opportunity for Achilles to put into practice his own view of power and authority in a context where, as distributor of prizes, he can organize the event as he sees fit.

1 – the prizes

Before each contest, Achilles gives a precise list of the prizes that are to be distributed to the contestants, so that they know exactly what they are competing for (e.g. XXIII, 262-70). As Hammer points out, this is a departure from Agamemnon's notion of distribution as an “act

¹ On Agamemnon having different faces which he presents to different people, see Lesky (2001) 197ff.

² See above.

³ Hammer (2002b), 134.

of largesse",⁴ and, by announcing the prizes, Achilles "makes the apportionment a public activity instead of a private matter" which also gives legitimacy to public disagreements with the way distribution is handled.⁵

Indeed, we can notice that the announcement of prizes is very firmly respected. One conflict occurs between Achilles and Antilochus, precisely on the distribution of the prizes: Achilles, after the horse race, considers that Eumelus' worth as a charioteer is greater than his actual place in the race (he came last). He therefore decides to give him the second prize instead of the last, which he considers a true reflection of the τιμή Eumelus deserves. (XXIII, 534-38). Antilochus is the one who actually came second, and he claims that as the prizes had been set beforehand, he should get what had been announced. If Achilles personally wants to give something more to Eumelus, he should get it from his own resources and not from what now belongs to the public domain (XXIII, 543-54).⁶ Achilles accepts the objection, and chooses a prize for Eumelus that had not been set beforehand (XXIII, 555-62). Unlike Agamemnon, Achilles accepts the fact that once the prizes had been distributed (or set for distribution), he cannot go back on it and give a prize set for one person (here the driver who comes second in the horse-race) to somebody else. This is the opposite of Agamemnon's attitude in Book I where he take a prize back (Briseis) even after she had been *given* to Achilles by the army.

Another example which shows that the announcement of how prizes would be distributed was regarded as binding occurs later, when Diomedes and Ajax are spear fighting: Diomedes is so efficient that the Achaians fear for Ajax (who probably is not the kind of person who would give up in a contest, even if he is endangered), and call for the

⁴ Hammer (2002b), 135.

⁵ Hammer (2002b), 136.

⁶ Cp. I, 298-301.

fight to stop and equal prizes to be given (XXIII, 820-23). Achilles stops the fight, but nevertheless gives the first prizes to Diomedes, as is his due (XXIII, 824-25), which shows that the Achaians do not have the power to change the prizes once they have been set for distribution.

These examples show the respect of the announcement of prizes, but they also show that the necessity to have a winner is not so strong that they would allow harm to come to one of the contestants, and it is worth noticing in this context that the army is less concerned to have a winner than to preserve Ajax from injury.⁷ This is even more obvious in a previous passage where Ajax and Odysseus are fighting and neither seem to be the better: Achilles, rather than allow the fight go on and the contestants to exhaust themselves, calls a draw and gives equal prizes, since to him, everyone can see that each of them is as good as the other and deserves as much τιμή.

Achilles also seems to take animals into consideration: he refuses to participate in the horse-race, even though he is sure to win, because, he says, his horses are still mourning for Patroclus (XXIII, 274-86). Of course the horses' grief symbolises his own grief, which prevents him from participating in the games. Furthermore, as the organiser and prizes distributor, it would be difficult for him also to compete for the same prizes he is offering.

As Hammer puts it, the prizes are "subject to public claims" rather than being under the authority of one individual. Achilles' response to objections stands in dramatic contrast to Agamemnon's: "Achilles responds not with 'might' but recognizes Antilochos's public claim to the property",⁸ Furthermore, violence seems to be absent from the competition itself, since as soon as a contestant is in danger of being seriously harmed, the fighting is stopped.

⁷ Cf the quarrel between Ajax and Idomeneus. See below.

⁸ Hammer (2002b), 139.

2 – Resolution of Conflicts

According to Hammer, Achilles initially plans to be the distributor of prizes, “but ultimately becomes an arbiter of disputes”.⁹ Hammer appears to be arguing that Achilles’ role in organising the games as intended merely to act as distributor of prizes, and that it had extended to that of arbiter of disputes. There is no evidence that as organiser of the games, his role stops at prizes distribution, and it is to be expected that he would solve the disputes.

For example, the first conflict that happens in the funeral games is between Idomeneus, who claims that he can see Diomedes leading the race and Ajax son of Oïleus (the lesser Ajax), who claims that Idomeneus is too old and has bad eyesight, and therefore cannot see what he claims he sees. They end up insulting each other, and almost come to blows (XXIII, 448-87). Achilles then intervenes, accepts that they are both angry, but says that they should not talk in such a way to each other: let them wait, and they soon will know who the winner is (488-98). He also advises them to imagine themselves as another warrior watching such a quarrel.¹⁰ Here, Hammer points out “this ability to place themselves in another’s position stands in dramatic contrast to Agamemnon’s inability to place himself in the position of the other warriors, a point made by Achilles (I, 149-51) and Nestor (I, 272-74)”.¹¹ Indeed, Achilles actually encourages them to display αἰδώς: they should feel shame in front of the community for quarrelling over such a trivial thing, and they are asked to reflect on what they would think if they saw someone else behaving as they do.¹² Nevertheless,

⁹ Hammer (2002b), 137.

¹⁰ This is an important point: as Cairns (2001) argues, the inappropriateness of that quarrel is such “that disapproval of it is presented as a universal response, one which rests on values which even the participants in the quarrel share”, 207. On the consequences of that for the meaning of the word *aischros* (which is used of the way the lesser Ajax addresses Idomeneus, see Cairns (2001-207ff.).

¹¹ Hammer (2002), 137.

¹² Wilson (2002) points out that Achilles is generous and gentle, and that the Achaians respond by restraining their own anger, which results in the crises being resolved without the competition being stifled. 124-25.

neither Wilson nor Hammer seems to notice that if Achilles intervenes in one dispute, the rest of the crises are solved by the warriors themselves without his intervention.

The second conflict, as we saw, takes place between Achilles himself and Antilochus, but the third conflict is between Antilochus and Menelaus, and Achilles does not have to intervene: Menelaus says that Antilochus has cheated, and that *he* should be awarded the second prize instead of the third (566-85). Antilochus points out that Menelaus *did* in fact come second, but graciously offers to give up his prize (586-95), which may have something to do with status. Menelaus is mollified, and says Antilochus can keep the prize: he should know better next time, but he and his family have been of great help in the war (Nestor, Antilochus' father, has 90 ships when Menelaus has 60) (596-611). To Hammer, Antilochus and Menelaus manage to solve their problem thanks to "their ability to be ruled by the judgement of another party",¹³ but there is in this scene no need for Achilles to intervene, even though it is about prize distribution (unlike the previous conflict between Idomeneus and the lesser Ajax, which was peripheral to the organisation of the games): it seems that he had set the tone of the games in his intervention in the conflict between Idomeneus and Ajax, and now the warriors can take care of themselves and solve any problems they have themselves.¹⁴ The conflict between Antilochus and Menelaus could have been very serious, and its resolution is strikingly peaceful and civilised. This is a good example of how the warriors have the right to "manage themselves" under Achilles' supervision.

¹³ Hammer (2002), 140-41.

¹⁴ However, it is true that they are ready to submit to arbitration, but it is still the case that it ends up being entirely unnecessary.

3 – Honour and Success

It is also clear in Book XXIII that, surprisingly, success in itself is not the most important thing: honour that ought to belong to the individual is given to him, in spite for example of poor actual results in the games: as we saw earlier, Achilles considers that Eumelus deserves more honour than would be given to him if he took in consideration only his result in the race (he was last). Hammer describes the scene as follows: “to rectify this seeming imbalance between recognition by the community and the excellence of the man, Achilles proposes giving Eumelos the second prize. (...) For Achilles now, it is not enough that Eumelos be the best man, the community must honour him sufficiently”.¹⁵ Honour is therefore not only linked for him to success, as Hammer seemed to think earlier, but to the value of someone: Eumelus is a very good charioteer, and should be recognised as such by the community, even if he came last in that particular race.

A similar line of reasoning occurs later, when they have no one to give the last prize to: Achilles does not keep it to himself, but gives it to someone who did not even *participate* in the race: Nestor (616-23). Achilles regards the old man as important to the army and deserving of honour, even though he cannot compete for prizes anymore. To Achilles, prowess is only one way of earning τιμή. Being of good counsel, as he considers Nestor to be, is equally important.

Strangely enough, friendship also plays a part in the distribution of prizes: when Antilochus praises Achilles, the latter adds a half-talent of gold to his prize (784-96). It seems that prizes are given to give recognition and τιμή, but they are also given in exchange for a rise in one's own τιμή.

¹⁵ Hammer (2002), 137.

Finally, we can see a discreet attack against Agamemnon in the end of Book XXIII, when the king is given a prize by Achilles without having to compete for it (889-94). Van Wees considers that the gesture is meant to spare Agamemnon the risk of defeat.¹⁶ To him, the reference to Agamemnon's power suggests not only his reputation as a javelin-thrower is protected, but also his prestige as ruler of the Achaians. It seems fairer to say that it is an ironic comment on the part of Homer on how Agamemnon usually get prizes (i.e. doing nothing to deserve them), and is also a way for Achilles to show his own natural generosity (again in opposition to Agamemnon, who is described as being very tight-fisted with the prizes). Wilson seems to believe that this ironic comment is made by Achilles himself, although even if it is true that Agamemnon is not allowed to display his prowess, it is still unlikely that Achilles would want to provoke Agamemnon: he does not want conflict, and he had also accepted Agamemnon's gifts of reconciliation.

¹⁶ Which Agamemnon needs, as he has not done himself many favours in the course of the poem, especially in front of the whole army.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we can say that the funeral games do seem to function as an illustration of a political system based on honour (gained by prowess or otherwise), where the distribution of prizes is a public activity and not a private matter, and can be subject to public claims. In this system, conflicts are solved peacefully, first by Achilles but then by the warriors themselves, and all warriors have the right to express themselves and contest the decisions taken by others (even by Achilles who, as the distributor of prizes, is not exempt from criticism, which he accepts gracefully). This shows a great contrast with Agamemnon's behaviour in those same domains: he regards distribution of booty as his own prerogative, he uses force to make the warriors obey him, he prevents the warriors from being able to gain τιμή, by withdrawing from them the obvious signs of recognition of honour (i.e. prizes), and imposes an authority he has inherited and not earned, through force only. The book also ends with the idea that Achilles would have made a much better king than Agamemnon, and it also ends on an act of generosity even towards his enemy, in which τιμή is rightly accorded to Agamemnon. This shows that Achilles does not let his personal feelings go against the fairness of the τιμή-based system he seems to represent, and in that as well, he shows himself to be superior to Agamemnon.

Unlike death and suffering, which can at best be compensated by things such as human solidarity and care, the conflicts created by human organisation can actually be resolved and avoided.

CONCLUSION TO PART III

The functioning and organisation of human groups, through assemblies and decision making are an important way to deal with the human condition. They are also a very important source of conflicts, and, indeed, the main plot of the poem is about political conflict, and about disagreement over honour and hierarchies. The human condition is grim and difficult not only because of things inherent to human life, such as death and suffering, but also because of human constructs and the discord and dissension they create.

However, those, unlike mortality for example, can be resolved by human beings, rather than simply compensated. Conflict resolution is a very important aspect of the *Iliad*, and is part of the way the poem closes: in the funeral games to Patroclus, Achilles demonstrates how respect and understanding can make human organisation function.

Political resolution and appeasement, essentially in Book XXIII lead to the true and full resolution and appeasement of the whole poem, which is not on the hierarchical and political level, but on a personal and human one: the reconciliation between Priam and Achilles in the last book of the *Iliad*.

CONCLUSION

Death and human suffering are two of the central themes of the *Iliad*. What seems to matter most to Homer is the tragedy which irremediably underlies all of human existence: whether mortals are kings like Priam, supra-human heroes like Achilles, or ordinary people like those depicted on the shield and in the similes, they are all going to die and share the miserable fate of all those who have died before them, be they remembered or forgotten. The poem also offers a universal vision of suffering as something which no human being can escape, and which therefore must be borne and accepted. It is on this understanding of a universal suffering, an understanding which leads to the reconciliation of two bitter enemies, Priam and Achilles, that the poem closes.

It is also noticeable that the way those two subjects are dealt with in the poem show a subtle subversion of the epic's role as an ideological tool used to support the martial values of a warriors' ruling class, and highlight the tension between heroic ideals and the reality of the life of the characters: death, which is everywhere in the poem, is hated by the characters while life is highly valued and heroic death only partially compensates for it, as the warriors are actually terrified when faced with their own death. There is also no happy afterlife to look forward to. Furthermore, lamentation highlights suffering rather than glory as a consequence of war, and brings a uniquely feminine perspective on war, which nevertheless is in agreement with other aspects of the narrative. Interestingly, gender differences can be seen in the manner suffering is portrayed in the poem, not only in the fact that though suffering seems to be paradigmatically female, it is predominantly male, but also in ways

that reflect men and women's respective social roles and status. Female grief is formal and limited to burial ritual as well as passive (nothing ever comes from it). It is also limited to the family sphere, and women only mourn their male protectors: husbands and sons. On the other hand, male grief is active, as it leads to revenge and protection. It is also more varied in expression, and can be manifested in all sorts of contexts.

But the universality of suffering, which, like death and mortality, makes all men equal, is also one of the things which bring about an important way for mankind to overcome and compensate for death and suffering: pity and compassion for other human beings.

Indeed, compensations to the grimness of the human condition can also be found in the *Iliad*. Pity in particular is pervasive in the poem. It is a way to overcome death and suffering through human solidarity and fellow-feeling, as well as through the actions that pity leads to such as revenge or protection and the poem ends with a striking act of compassion for a personal enemy: those gentler virtues ultimately transcend even nationalities and war, as can be seen in the meeting between Priam and Achilles.

However, those are not the only compensations for the negative aspects of the human condition: even though the *Iliad* is a poem full of suffering and brutality (and even downright cruelty at times), gentleness is an important quality in the poem, and acts of kindness and generosity are surprisingly frequent, not only among friends and family (for example, the attitude of warriors towards women is significant of their attitude in general, and towards those more vulnerable than themselves in particular, and affection is clearly present between the warriors and their friends and family) but occasionally with enemies as well. Hospitality and respect for supplication are two key values expressed in the poem.

Important characters such as Hector and Patroclus are described as being ἥπιος and μέλιχος, and lack of mildness is often criticised, by the warriors or by the gods themselves. Persuasion, rather than simply brute force, is another thing which is highly valued in the poem.

Moreover, the characters of the *Iliad* constantly manage to find some degree of personal happiness, and find pleasure in the joys of life. Unsurprisingly, family and friends play a great part in this, but even the battlefield can be a source of joy, be it grim such as the joy the warriors often find in killing and cruelty, or innocent, such as the pleasure found in food or sleep. This capacity for joy and happiness is also noticeably present between superiors and inferiors, and hierarchical relations are often tinted with the vocabulary of pleasure: duties are understood as the desire to please one's superior, and in exchange, the superiors appear bound to please their inferiors in return.

Furthermore, another way for human beings to mitigate the tragic human condition is found through social organisation. Although the functioning and organisation of human groups, through assemblies and decision-making are a very important source of conflicts in the poem, they are also an occasion for the characters to show their capacity for understanding and mutual respect. Unlike death and suffering, which can at best be compensated by things such as human solidarity and care, the conflicts created by human organisation can actually be fully resolved and avoided.

Political resolution and appeasement, essentially in Book XXIII, lead to the true and full resolution and appeasement of the whole poem, which is not on the hierarchical and political level, but on a personal and human one: the reconciliation between Priam and

Achilles in the last book of the *Iliad*. Because he became fully part of the Achaian community again, and shown his capacity to function peacefully in a political, hierarchical setting such as the funeral games, Achilles can reach his full human potential in the meeting with Priam in Book XXIV, and transcend the boundaries of human organisation by sharing tears with an enemy.

It is not a perfect compensation for the sorrow human beings have to endure, but by recognising the universality of suffering, the heroes, even the sons of gods and goddesses, finally become fully human.

APPENDIX I

BEING MORTAL: βροτός, θνητός, άνθρωπος

1 – comparisons between human beings

	βροτός	θνητός	άνθρωπος
courage	XXIV 505 XXIV, 565-66	XIII, 321-3	
strength	V, 302-4 XII, 382-3 XX, 286-7		XXI, 566
rhetorical skills	III, 223		
negative qualities	II, 248-9 XXIII, 439		
wealth	XX, 219-20		XXIV, 534-7
beauty	XX, 231-3		

2 – the human condition: things common to all mankind

	βροτός	θνητός	άνθρωπος
Food: hunting and agriculture	XXIV, 39-43		V, 557 XVI, 389-921 XVII, 547-52
sleep	X, 82-3 X, 385-6 XXIV, 362-3		XIV, 361
pain	XIII, 567-9		
fighting	XVIII, 361-71		XVI, 620-2 XIX, 221-4
Unhappiness	XXIV, 524-26		
death	VI, 142-3 XII, 326-7 XXIII, 331		
language	XX, 248-9		II, 804
Transmission of knowledge		XX, 203-4	I, 250-2 III, 287 III, 406 VI, 358 VII, 87 X, 213 XVIII, 288-9 XXI, 568-70 XXIII, 331-3 XXIV, 201-2
General limitations		XVI, 620-2 XXI, 568-70	XX, 350-7

3 – contrast gods/mortals

	βροτός	θητός	άνθρωπος
Men should not fight the gods	V, 359-62 XVI, 379-80	XXII, 8-10	
Men are not worth fighting for	VIII, 427-31 XXI, 462-7	I, 573-6	
Men should not (or cannot) be saved		XVI, 440-2 XXII, 178-80	XVI, 39-41
Men are ignorant	XVIII, 361-3		
Men need the gods	XIII, 242-4 (portents)	XX, 41-3 XVIII, 242-44 (portents)	XI, 28 (portents) XII, 280 (portents)
The gods are more skilful	XIX, 21-2	XX, 262-6 XVII, 361-3	
Men are inferior to the gods		XXIV, 255-9 XXIV, 58	V, 637
Men can die	VI, 141-3		
The boundary can be crossed through marriage and children	XVII, 82-7 XXIV, 534-7	XVII, 82-7 XXIV, 534-7 XX, 302-5	

4 - Parallels between men and the gods

	βροτός	θητός	άνθρωπος
The sun rises for both	XI, 1-2 XIX, 1-2		
They are all subjected to the rule of Zeus	XV, 96-9	XII, 241-2	II, 669 VIII, 227
They can all be ignorant		XVIII, 402-5	XVIII, 402-5
They can be used as witnesses to an oath		I, 337-42 XX, 61-5	I, 337-42 I, 554-8
They all love		XIV, 197-9	XIV, 197-9

APPENDIX II

Αμβροτος (*Iliad* and *Odyssey* occurrences)

Immortal god (= ἀθάνατος θεός)	XX, 358 XXII, 9 (opposition to θνητός) XXIV, 460 xxiv, 445
A god's blood (αἷμα)	V, 339 V, 870
Achilles' immortal horses (ἵπποι)	XVI, 381 XVI, 867
Clothes (εἴματα) (given by the gods to mortals)	XVI, 670 XVI, 680 v, 347 (veil) vii, 260 vii, 265 xxiv, 59
Achilles' Armour (τεύχεα) (given by the gods to Peleus)	XVII, 194 XVII, 202
Other: - gifts (δῶρα) (given by the gods to a mortal - Oil (ἐλάτινον) - Loom (ἰστός) - the night (νύξ)	xviii, 191 viii, 365 x, 222 xi, 330

APPENDIX III

χαιρώ and γηθέω

Does γηθέω refer to quiet satisfaction?

Willcock, in his note on XI 683-84, observes that γηθέω expresses a “quiet satisfaction”, that is to say what one feels when something positive that is anticipated is duly achieved. To him, γηθέω always carries that meaning when it is used in the perfect (γέγηθε), but we can have a look at all the occurrences of the verb, as the tense does not seem to make a difference. The verb is used in the perfect tense in only two occasions in the poem, and in both cases, the meaning “quiet satisfaction” is very questionable, whereas it can be present when the verb is used in another tense. The idea of “quietness” can indeed be found in the fact that γηθέω is often accompanied by words such as θύμω, indicating that this is an internal feeling.¹ On the other hand, it is not enough to differentiate it from χαίρω, which is also used 4 times with θύμω, and once with ἦτορ.

This feeling or “quiet satisfaction” can indeed be found associated with γηθέω.² Nevertheless, many cases are even more problematic, and clearly do not involve “quiet

¹ + κῆρ x3, + θύμω=κατὰ θυμόν x2, + φρένα x1 + ἐνὶ στήθεσσι x1, + φίλον ἦτορ x1

² This can be seen in several examples when Agamemnon is glad to see that his warriors are respectful to him and ready to fight (IV, 255; IV, 272-73; IV, 283-84; IV, 311-12; IV, 326) and in parallel cases with leaders other than Agamemnon (X, 190-93; XII, 494-95; see also XVIII, 554-57, when the king is glad to see his peasants working on his field). Other examples could arguably be described as quiet satisfaction. Willcock suggests Neleus’ pride in his son Nestor (XI, 683-84. For a more complete study of this example, see part “expected and unexpected”) and the shepherd who is glad to see a beautiful night (VIII, 555-59. This is the other time the verb is used in the perfect. Willcock also comment on that example, saying that “the perfect of this verb denotes a state of quiet satisfaction”). Yet, Neleus’ pleasure is not that of satisfaction with an expected performance by his son, but rather gratifying surprise at the unexpected success of one so young. Similarly, the shepherd is relieved to see the weather is so nice, and is enjoying the beauty of the night, but we cannot really speak of “satisfaction”. Some might want to add other examples, such as Agamemnon seeing Teucer kill a lot of Trojans (VIII, 277-78). Achilles’ supposed joy in seeing the Achaians slaughtered (XIV, 139-41) may better be explained as the joy of revenge, which is too grim to be “quiet satisfaction”, but satisfaction may play a part. Another example is when Athena is gladdened by the priority accorded to her by Menelaus when he prays (XVII, 567-68).It is as likely that what she feels is pleasant surprise at what she had not necessarily expected, rather than quiet satisfaction at what she would have taken for granted.

satisfaction", for example when the word is used in litotes³ or when it expresses relief.⁴ The pleasure a warrior finds in the anticipation of fighting⁵ cannot be described as "quiet satisfaction" either, and neither can the satisfaction in achieving revenge.⁶ Sometimes, the circumstances are such that the joy felt is too intense a feeling to be just "quiet satisfaction".⁷ In the same way, pleasures such as a shepherd glad to see a beautiful night, the sea being glad to part for Poseidon,⁸ or Zeus' delight in seeing the gods fighting,⁹ are difficult to classify, but do not seem to belong to the "quiet satisfaction" category.

Furthermore, even if γηθέω is indeed several times used with the meaning of "quiet satisfaction", it is not a meaning associated only with that verb, as χαίρω can sometimes also have that sense, for example when the Achaians follow Agamemnon to make him glad¹⁰, or when Hera recognizes Poseidon fighting on her side on the battlefield¹¹.

Thus, it can be said that while this idea of γηθέω meaning "quiet satisfaction" may be true on occasion, it is by no means always the case, and not even in the perfect, as Willcock seemed to believe. Furthermore, the idea of "quiet satisfaction" can also be expressed by other verbs.

Does γηθέω mean "radiant joy"?

³ I, 329-30; VIII, 376-78; IX, 75-77.

⁴ χαίρω: I, 446-47; III, 111-12; VII, 311-12; X, 564-65; XIX, 74-75; 185-86; XXIV, 490-92; 704-6; γηθέω: VII, 121-22; XXIV, 319-21; 422-24.

⁵ VII, 189; XIII, 81-82; XII, 343-44.

⁶ XIII, 414-16; XIV, 139-141.

⁷ Priam learning that the Achaians are fighting among themselves (I, 254-58) and Diomedes discovering Glaucus is his hereditary guest-friend (VI, 212).

⁸ XIII, 27-29. On that example, Leaf comments that "this is the only passage in Homer where a distinct human emotion is ascribed to inanimate nature, though some approach to the idea may be found in C 392, T 362, F 387."

⁹ XXI, 388-90.

¹⁰ I, 158.

¹¹ XIV, 153-56.

Chantraine, whose short paragraph announces that γηθέω express a “joie rayonnante”, seems hardly more satisfying. It is not without interest, however, that his choice virtually excludes the notion of “quiet satisfaction”, as this joy at any rate seems glaringly obvious. Apart from the fact that it is a bit difficult to know exactly what is “radiant joy”, the only instance in which it appears to apply fully, is that in which Diomedes discovers that Glaucus is his hereditary guest-friend.¹² It might also conceivably apply to the joy the warriors feel during or just before a fight, but “radiant” seems somehow too positive to be associated with the grim pleasure of killing people, as *rayonnant* is a word that does not have any sinister connotations.

Furthermore, χαίρω too can have a meaning not dissimilar to “radiant” and in more instances than γηθέω: when Chryses gets his daughter back,¹³ when Sleep learns he can marry one of the Graces, whom he had loved for many years,¹⁴ when Achilles is pleased with his friend Antilochus,¹⁵ when the competitors in the funeral games receive prizes.¹⁶

It is clear that Chantraine’s contribution is not very helpful in understanding the difference between γηθέω and χαίρω.

Expected and unexpected?

According to the *Lexikon des frühgriechischen Epos*,¹⁷ the main difference between the two verbs is that with γηθέω, the cause of the pleasure is either expected or solicited, and with χαίρω, it is typically unexpected. When looking at the examples in the *Iliad*, we find that this idea also seems highly questionable.

¹² IV, 212.

¹³ I, 446-47.

¹⁴ XIV, 267-70.

¹⁵ XXIII, 555-56.

¹⁶ XXIII, 563-65; XXIII, 624-25; XXIII, 646-49; XXIII, 797.

¹⁷ See also Latacz (1966), which consists in the very detailed preliminary notes for the *Lexikon*’s article.

First of all, though it is true that γηθέω is sometimes used for solicited favours that have been granted or outcomes that are expected, or at any rate likely,¹⁸ some cases are very problematic. Indeed, there are cases where it is not clear whether the outcome is expected or not, and other cases where it is clearly unexpected. For example, there is no question that Diomedes could not have been expecting to meet a hereditary guest-friend on the battlefield.¹⁹ He did not know there was such a person as Glaucus on the battlefield, as he had to ask him his name!²⁰ Also, there is no mention of a meeting between the two families after Bellerophon and Oeneus, so Diomedes could not have known Glaucus existed. In the *Cambridge Commentary* relating to that passage, Kirk says that “Diomedes’ joy is unexpected, and the emphatic γήθεσεν δέ seems designed to show that”. When Ajax is chosen to fight Hector in VII, 189, it is something he had hoped for, but since the decision was arrived at by drawing lots, he could not have foreseen his lot would come out. In VIII, 376-78, in expressing her intention to join the Achaians on the battlefield, Athena announces that Priam won’t be pleased to see her. It is not at all obvious that Priam could have expected to see Athena on the battlefield, and she probably means that it would be a shock to him. In VII, 555-59, when the shepherd rejoices at the good weather, we may say that it is something would have hoped for, but it is not something he would have depended on, hence his pleasure. In XI, 683-84, as we mentioned above, the point of Nestor’s story is that he was surprisingly young to be so successful in war, as is shown in the text by the emphasis on both νέω πόλεμον δέ κίοντι and τύχε πολλά: the degree of success he gained as such a young age surpassed all the hopes a heroic father had for his son. In XVII, 567-68, Athena is glad that Menelaus has prayed to her first. Whatever pleasure she has, it makes more sense if

¹⁸ I, 254-58; 329-30; IV, 255; 272-73; 283-84; 311-12; 326; VII, 121-22; VIII, 277-78; IX, 75-77; X, 190-93; XIII, 27-29; ; XIII, 81-82; 343-44; 414-16; 494-95; XIV, 139-41; XVI, 530-31; XVII, 567-68; XVIII, 554-57.

¹⁹ VI, 212-15

²⁰ VI, 121-23.

there is a degree of surprise. In XXIV, 422-24, it probably was a pleasant surprise to Priam to learn that his son's body was protected by the gods, as he had probably feared the worst.

The idea that γηθέω even "generally" applies to expected events receives very little support from the above examples.²¹ Just as questionable is the notion that χαίω, by contrast, is generally used in connection with unexpected events and surprises. In I, 158, Agamemnon obviously expected the Achaians to follow him! In I, 446-47, Chryses had prayed to Apollo to have his daughter back, so her return certainly did not come as a surprise. In III, 27-28, Menelaus could not have been surprised to see Paris on the battlefield, as the latter was responsible for the war, and it was very likely they would meet at some point, so surprise could only have been relative. In XIV, 267-70, Sleep had hoped for years that he would marry one of the Graces, so it must have been on his mind, even though he may not have expected the offer to be made at that precise moment. He knew it was possible as he had envisaged it, and his wish must have been known for some time. He could have been surprised that his wish was granted, but the pleasure is not in the surprise but in the content of the offer. In XIX, 74-75 and 185-86, to settle the quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon, the army had sent an embassy to try to resolve matters. They had strived to make it happen, so it must not have come as a total surprise.

Though χαίω, in a majority of cases, contains an element of surprise, this is far from being invariably always the case.

²¹ The *Lexicon* also argues that γηθέω is never used for un-hoped for reunions, but what about the meeting between Diomedes and Glaucus?

APPENDIX IV

λαός

The *Lexikon* argues that λαός as a singular collective cannot be used in the plural (λαός = army or contingent, but λαοί can never mean armies or contingents): "Eine Mehrzahl zum koll. Sg. Wird nicht gebildet, -oi/ sind immer *Leute, Männer*, nie 'Völker, Heere'", but the examples they give are not particularly convincing:

First of all, they seem to take the existence of the expression ἔθνεα/στρατοὶ λαῶν as a proof that λαοί cannot mean armies or peoples, which it is not. They also use the following examples: XIII, 492; II, 578; II, 365.

Αἰνεΐας δ' ἐτέρωθεν ἐκέκλετο οἷς ἐτάροισι
 Δηϊφοβόν τε Πάριν τ' ἔσορῶν καὶ Ἀγήνορα δῖον,
 οἳ οἳ ἄμ' ἡγεμόνες Τρώων ἔσαν· αὐτὰρ ἔπειτα
 λαοὶ ἔπονθ',

And Aeneas on the other side called to his companions, looking to Deiphobus and Paris and godlike Agenor, fellow-leaders of the Trojans. And then the λαοί followed after him.
 XIII, 489-9

The fact that several leaders are mentioned could prove on the contrary that λαοί does refer to several contingents.

τῶν ἑκατὸν νηῶν ἦρχε κρείων Ἀγαμέμνων
 Ἄτρεΐδης· ἄμα τῷ γε πολὺ πλείστοι καὶ ἄριστοι
 λαοὶ ἔποντ'.

A hundred ships of these men were led by lord Agamemnon son of Atreus. With him there followed by far the most and bravest λαοί.
 II, 576-8

It is the same idea as the preceding example, but this time, the troops follow only one leader (Agamemnon). Nevertheless, that λαοί is used in both examples does not prove that it has exactly the same meaning every time (though it is true that the same *expression* is repeated rather than simply the same word).

κρῖν' ἄνδρας κατὰ φύλα κατὰ φρήτρας Ἀγάμεμνον,
 ὡς φρήτρη φρήτρηφιν ἀρήγη, φύλα δὲ φύλοις.
 εἰ δέ κεν ὡς ἔρξης καὶ τοὶ πείθωνται Ἀχαιοί,
 γνώση ἔπειθ' ὅς θ' ἡγεμόνων κακὸς ὅς τέ νυ λαῶν
 ἦδ' ὅς κ' ἔσθλός ἐησι· κατὰ σφέας γὰρ μαχέονται.

'Divide your men by tribes and by clans, Agamemnon, so that clan can support clan and tribe help tribe. If you do this and the Achaeans follow your orders, you will then be able to discover the cowards among the leaders and the λαοί, and the brave men, because they will be fighting in their own divisions.'

II, 362-6

In that example, l. 365 is constructed on a parallel: the first ὅς refers to one leader (among all the leaders), which could lead us to believe that on the same basis, the second ὅς refers to one contingent (among all the contingents that are commended by those same leaders, in which case λαῶν would mean 'several contingents'), rather than 'one warrior among all the warriors'. The fact that the warriors are said to fight in their own divisions can either mean that it makes it easier to distinguish the different contingents, or that if they fight among their comrades, they have more chance to show their courage. In any case, that example is not clear enough to be used as a proof that λαοί never means 'several contingents'.

APPENDIX V

PHOENIX' SPEECH IN THE EMBASSY SCENE (IX, 432-605)

Phoenix is the second person to speak in the embassy scene. It is clear from what Phoenix says about himself that he feels real love for Achilles, and only wants him to do the right thing. He also gives what is the closest we get to fatherly advice, as he actually presents himself as Achilles' surrogate father (585-86). At the same time, it can be construed as an alternative fatherly advice from that given by Agamemnon (though not directly to Achilles): as we saw earlier, the king puts himself in a fatherly position, not least by offering Achilles one of his own daughters in marriage. Furthermore, Phoenix' speech is the single longest speech in the poem, and must therefore have some importance.

1 - the Litai (IX, 496-523)

The *Litai* allegory is unique in the poem, and has probably been made up *ad hominem* by Phoenix in order to make Achilles change his mind (in the same way that Achilles in XXIV changed the Niobe story to convince Priam to get some sleep).

In the story, the *Litai* (supplicatory prayers) are said to be the daughters of Zeus, certainly because Zeus is the god of supplication (Leaf adds in his commentary that it is also because "to forgive is divine", and "perhaps to explain their power over the other gods (497-501)"). They follow after Ἄτη, to ask forgiveness to the person who has been offended. They are described as "limping" (χωλαί) "because of [the penitent's] reluctance to go to ask pardon", "wrinkled" (ῥῦσαι) "from his face wrinkled with the mental struggle", and "squint-eyed" (παραβλῶπές τ' ὀφθαλμῷ) "because he dares not look in the face him whom he had wronged".¹

¹ Leaf (1900-2).

The man who accepts the prayers is said to be loved by them, as they then pay attention to his own prayers. As Leaf points out, "what is meant is that that they, as representations of the heavenly powers, ensure a man's prayers being heard". But when a man refuses to listen to the prayers, they tell Zeus to send Ἄτῆ to him until full atonement.

Of course, the point of the story was to convince Achilles that he himself has to respect the prayers: Agamemnon is offering him gifts and is not angry anymore. He has also sent Achilles' closest friends to appease him. It is worth noting, as did Wilson, that supplicatory prayers are offered by those who are guilty of some transgression, which means that Phoenix acknowledges what Agamemnon refuses to do, i.e. that he has inflicted harm on Achilles.

It all seems to be a sound general principle: people should accept apologies (or "supplicatory prayers") to prevent conflictual situations from getting worse. However, the allegory does not fit the actual situation: Agamemnon has not made any supplicatory prayer, all he did was to mention Ἄτῆ as a way of shirking his responsibilities. He does not say a word about *Litai*. Phoenix tries to make the point that Agamemnon is not only offering gifts, but also an apology, but he seems a bit embarrassed as to explain how: all he manages to say is that Agamemnon is no longer angry (515-16, although it is Achilles who has reasons to be angry, not Agamemnon), and that he has sent Achilles' dearest friends to beseech him (519-22), which Leaf considers to be "yet another proof of the sincerity of Agamemnon's penitence".

Nevertheless (passing on the problems posed by the Achilles/Odysseus supposed friendship), this is not what Achilles wanted at all: to him, the point is that Agamemnon did not even bother to come and apologise himself, and the way he presented the gifts took away any notion of an apology. As it is, he is buying a favour off Achilles, i.e. releasing the troops by going back to the battlefield. It is a conditional offer, which detracts from its value as an

apology. According to Wilson, the problem is that "Delusion and Supplicatory Prayers come from separate individuals", i.e. respectively Agamemnon and Phoenix: Phoenix deploys the *exemplum* to transform the embassy into an act of supplication by the transgression, but ultimately, Phoenix is no more able Odysseus to disguise Agamemnon's refusal to offer anything like supplication.²

Furthermore, we can say that if the man who refuses to accept the prayers is sent Ἄτη by Zeus, what would Achilles' Ἄτη be? Neither the narrator nor any of the characters anywhere suggests that Patroclus' death comprises or is a result of Achilles' Ἄτη. Furthermore, the Ἄτη would not *follow* the refusal to listen to the prayers, as is shown in the allegory, but would *be* the refusal itself, since it is the only time Achilles can be thought to make a mistake. Again, the allegory does not fit the situation.

Nevertheless, it is possible to say that while Achilles is justified in his refusal of the gifts, it does not mean that he is *right*. Phoenix is actually probably in the right in suggesting a peaceful resolution to the conflict, which would furthermore allow Achilles to gain considerable wealth and power.

2 - Meleager (IX, 524-605)

Again, Phoenix distorted the traditional myth to create a story *ad hominem* for Achilles. With this *exemplum*, Phoenix insists on the material (rather than honorific and divine) gains Achilles will make by accepting Agamemnon's offer. He show a warrior who was in the same situation as Achilles (refusing to fight after having been insulted, in Meleager's case being cursed by his mother), who refused gifts and eventually had to fight for nothing. According to Leaf in his commentary, "Meleager now has to pay for his stubbornness (512) inasmuch as he has to yield his point without the gifts which would have made his relenting honourable." Does it mean that to leaf, relenting without the gifts would be dishonourable? This would

² Wilson (2002), 100.

add a new dimension to Phoenix' *exemplum*, and phoenix never says anything like that explicitly. It is also quite ironic, as Achilles considers that *accepting* the gifts would be dishonourable.

Once again, while Phoenix may be right on the general principle, the example does not fit the actual turn of events, as Achilles will eventually get the gifts. It is also quite misdirected, as Achilles is not in the least interested in the gifts, even when he does get them (as maybe Meleager himself was not). Furthermore, according to Wilson, Phoenix uses the myth to figure the gifts the embassy offers as "an exchange of *dōra* among *philoī*" (i.e. unlike *ἄποινα*, which one conventionally offered to outsiders), since it is Meleager's fellow citizens, family and friends who beg him to fight and offer him the gifts. That allows him to brush *ποινή* and Agamemnon's offer aside. This is according to her part of a consistent strategy of excluding Agamemnon from the exchange: Phoenix, not Agamemnon is *in loco parentis*, the embassy, not Agamemnon, makes the supplication and *philoī*, not Agamemnon, offer gifts for protection. All this may explain why Achilles, who is aware of the strategy, is not impressed by Phoenix' efforts.

APPENDIX VI

THE UNIVERSALITY OF DEATH

In the same way that death is present in all aspects of human life, it is present in all aspects of the poem: of course, it is there on the battlefield, but also outwith it. Similarly, death strike all ages.

1 - on the battlefield

On the battlefield, death as well as the fear or prospect of death touches every age group. Young warriors constitute the most widely represented group, partly because of course many warriors tend to be young rather than middle-aged, but also because the pathos engendered by the death of a warrior in the prime of his youth not only shows clear literary possibilities, but is in a way what the poem is about. As for very young characters dying, Tros, the youngest son of Priam, is a good example: He is the same age as Achilles¹, which makes him the youngest character to die in the poem.

Not only is Achilles' predicted untimely death a recurrent theme in the poem, and a central element in the plot, but in a way, that untimely death that will come to Achilles is prefigured into all these other deaths.

Τὸν δ' ἡμείβετ' ἔπειτα Θέτις κατὰ δάκρυ χέουσα·
ὦ μοι τέκνον ἐμόν, τί νύ σ' ἔτρεφον αἰνὰ τεκοῦσα;
αἰθ' ὄφελος παρὰ νηυσὶν ἀδάκρυτος καὶ ἀπήμων
ἦσθαι, ἐπεὶ νύ τοι αἴσα μίνυνθά περ οὐ τι μάλα δῆν·
νῦν δ' ἅμα τ' ὠκύμορος καὶ οἴζυρος περὶ πάντων

¹ XX, 403-5.

ἔπλεο· τὼ σε κακῆ αἴσῃ τέκον ἐν μεγάροισι.

Then Thetis answered him with her tears falling: 'oh my child, what did I rear you for, after the pain of your birth? If only you could sit by your ships without tears of sorrow – because your fate is of short span, not at all long. But now you are both short-lived and miserable as well beyond all others: so it was a cruel fate for which I bore you in our house.

I, 413-8²

But death is obviously not reserved to very young warriors: more mature men also die in the poem: Hector, Patroclus and Sarpedon are but a few examples.

Middle-aged men face death as well: Odysseus (who is irreverently said by Antilochus to be "a green old age", XXIII, 791) is afraid he is going to die and considers fleeing (XI, 401-10). Even a very old man, Nestor, who is described as having "already seen the passing of two generations of humankind" (I, 250-1), fears he is going to be killed on the battlefield.³

As can be imagined, the simple fact of being on the battlefield means that the warriors, whatever their age, are at risk of dying, and they are very much aware of that. However, death is also present to all the age groups even *outwith* the warriors' group.

2 - outside the battlefield

It is not only in battle that young men die: though they are warriors, the twelve young Trojans sacrificed by Achilles on Patroclus' pyre do not die a warrior's death.⁴ Some people also die (or expect to die) of disease.⁵ Old people are also expected to die, mostly of old age.⁶

This presence of ordinary death (of old age) and extraordinary death (human

² See also for example I, 352-3; XV, 610-4; XVII, 201-2; XXIV, 540; 725-6.

³ VIII, 90-1; 137-8

⁴ XXIII, 175-6.

⁵ XIII, 665-8.

⁶ XIX, 355.

sacrifice) shows a strong contrast between the ordinary course of life and the brutal inhumanity of Achilles' behaviour at that point of the poem. Barbarism is not limited to the battlefield.

3 - women

Interestingly, death or even the fear of death is very rarely present among women in the poem. Andromache for example never talks about her own death,⁷ only about Hector's and Astyanax's. The closest thing we find is Helen saying to Priam she wishes she had died:

ὡς ὄφελεν θάνατός μοι ἀδεῖν κακὸς ὅππότε δεῦρο
 υἱεῖ σὺν ἐπόμεν θάλαμον γνωτούς τε λιποῦσα
 παῖδά τε τηλυγέτην καὶ ὀμηλικίην ἐρατεινήν

'Oh if only vile death had been my choice when I came here with your son, leaving behind the house of my marriage, and my family and my darling child and the sweet company of friends!'

III, 173-5

There are several reasons why women do not die in the poems: there are relatively few of them (especially compared to the male warriors), they obviously do not fight on the battlefield and when a city is sacked, women are enslaved rather than killed. It could also be that the death of women was regarded as distasteful (the gruesome death of the servants in the *Odyssey* give us an example of that).⁸

4 - Achilles' shield

People of all sorts and condition die in the actual narrative of the poem, but death is also featured outside the narrative itself.

⁷ Though she does mention her mother's death at VI, 425-6.

⁸ When depicted in the *Odyssey*, the killing of women is an example of justice because of the moral element we get with it: we know *why* they are killed, and it serves as a warning.

Oliver Taplin points out that the shield of Achilles is a “microcosm, not a utopia, and death and destruction are also there, though in inverse proportion to the rest of the *Iliad*.”⁹ Indeed, death is a dominant theme in no less than three scenes.

- Elders are discussing the blood-price to be given to the relative of a man who had been murdered:

λαοὶ δ' εἰν ἀγορῇ ἔσαν ἀθρόοι· ἔνθα δὲ νεῖκος
ὠρώρει, δύο δ' ἄνδρες ἐνείκεον εἵνεκα ποιηῆς
ἄνδρὸς ἀποφθιμένου· ὁ μὲν εὐχετο πάντ' ἀποδοῦναι
δήμῳ πιφαύσκων, ὁ δ' ἀναίνετο μηδὲν ἐλέσθαι.

The men had gathered on the market place, where a quarrel was in progress, two men quarrelling over the blood-money for a man who had been killed: one claimed that he was making full compensation, and was showing it to the people, but the other refused to accept any payment.

XVIII, 497-500

- During the siege of a city, warriors waiting in an ambush slaughter shepherds:

οἱ μὲν τὰ προΐδόντες ἐπέδραμον, ὦκα δ' ἔπειτα
τάμνοντ' ἀμφὶ βοῶν ἀγέλας καὶ πῶεα καλὰ
ἀργεννέων οἰῶν, κτεῖνον δ' ἐπὶ μηλοβοτήρας.

The men in ambush saw [the herdsmen] coming and rushed out on them, then quickly surrounded the herds of cattle and fine flocks of white-wooled sheep, and killed the shepherds with them.

XVIII, 527-9

- During the same siege, a battle takes place:

στησάμενοι δ' ἐμάχοντο μάχην ποταμοῖο παρ' ὄχθας,
βάλλον δ' ἀλλήλους χαλκήρεσιν ἐγχείησιν.
ἐν δ' Ἔρις ἐν δὲ Κυδοιμός ὁμίλειον, ἐν δ' ὀλοῇ Κήρ,
ἄλλον ζῶν ἔχουσα νεούτατον, ἄλλον ἄουτον,
ἄλλον τεθνηῶτα κατὰ μόθον ἔλκε ποδοῖν·
εἶμα δ' ἔχ' ἀμφ' ὤμοισι δαφοινεὸν αἵματι φωτῶν.
ὠμίλειον δ' ὡς τε ζωοὶ βροτοὶ ἠδ' ἐμάχοντο,
νεκρούς τ' ἀλλήλων ἔρουον κατατεθνηῶτας.

Then they formed for battle and fought it out by the banks of the river, casting at each other with their bronze-tipped spears. And Strife and Confusion were in their company, and cruel Death – she gripped one man alive with a fresh wound on him, and another one unwounded, and was dragging a dead man by the feet through the shambles: the cloak on her shoulders was deep red with men's blood. The figures closed and fought like living men, and dragged

⁹ Taplin (2001), 357.

away from each other the bodies of those who were killed.
XVIII, 533-40

The vision of the human condition as described by the poet on the shield includes death in war, as well as murder in peacetime. Death is not something that can be avoided, even in a work of art: the shield is not some form of escapism for the warriors; it is their own world, put in a wider context.

5 - the similes

Human death is very rarely present in the similes. Achilles' grief over Patroclus is at one point compared to that of a father whose son died (XXIII, 222-5) and there is a second simile at XXII, 93-5 where Hector's determination is compared to a poisonous snake about to attack a man (but we do not know if the man dies of it or not, nor is it relevant). On the other hand, animals are very often seen to die. Sarpedon' death for example is compared to that of a bull (XVI, 487-91).

Nevertheless, the most common occurrence of death, by far, is that of cattle being killed by wild animals (when the warriors attacking their enemies are compared to the wild beasts).¹⁰

¹⁰ See for example V, 554-8; XI, 172-8.

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