

## BLOOD AND HUNGER IN THE *ILIAD*

TAMARA NEAL

**B**LOOD AND BLOODSHED ARE inevitable by-products of war, literally representative of lost life and suffering. Unsurprisingly, Homer's *Iliad* embellishes numerous accounts of fighting and death with references to blood. Perhaps it is also unsurprising, given the regularity of wounding and death, that the form and function of bloody description have received little scholarly attention.<sup>1</sup> The purpose of this paper is to show that blood and what I term "bloodspill" have poetic significance by surveying the contextual distribution of αἷμα in the *Iliad*. The lexeme does not appear haphazardly but is associated with certain contexts and individuals. Of particular importance is that blood is increasingly represented as a comestible. Moreover, its desired consumption by the war god Ares and the hero Achilles graphically problematizes the warrior ethic presented in the poem.

### BLOOD AND BLOODSPILL IN THE *ILIAD*

Despite the prodigious number of individual deaths in the battle epic (approximately 240), just twelve comprise specific mention of αἷμα. All of these gory fatalities occur in the second half of the poem. The data relating to individual bloodspill prompt additional observations pertaining to blood. First, the representation of slaughter—of which αἷμα is an element—descends from symphonic overture into grim refrain as the narrative progresses. Second, accounts of carnage are always linked with turning points in the narrative, finding culminating expression in Achilles' rampage. Lastly, the contextual distribution of αἷμα changes in the course of the poem. Initially primarily incorporated into episodes describing nonfatal injury and mass slaughter, blood is in the latter part of the *Iliad* linked also with individual death and predacious animal similes.

I dedicate this paper to the memory of Dr. Charles Tesoriero, friend, partner, and colleague, who passed away on August 21, 2005.

Versions of the paper were delivered to the Classics seminar at the University of Sydney in May 2003 and at the Language and Literature Colloquium at Macquarie University, Sydney, on October 24, 2003. I would like to thank all who were present on those occasions for their input, and especially the convenor of the latter, Dr. Trevor Evans. I am indebted also to Dr. Chris Mackie for comments on an early version of the material, and to the anonymous readers who gave generous advice on both content and style. Any remaining errors and infelicities are, naturally, entirely my own.

1. Blood has been the subject of investigations in H. Koller, "Αἷμα," *Glotta* 45 (1967): 149–55; D. Gourevitch, "Le sang dans la médecine antique," *La recherche spéciale* 24 (1993): 511–17; M. Leumann, *Homericische Wörter* (Basel, 1950), s.v. βρότος. See also J. S. Clay, *The Wrath of Athena: Gods and Men in the Odyssey* (Lanham, Md., 1983), 143–45.

Let us first consider αἷμα in the context of mass slaughter. Throughout the *Iliad*, the formulaic image of the earth running with blood regularly represents carnage. This is depicted by the fixed phrase ῥέε δ' αἵματι γαῖα (4.451; 8.65) or its variant ῥέε δ' αἵματι γαῖα μέλαινα (15.715; 20.494). Elsewhere, the earth is stained with blood: ἐρυθθαίνετο δ' αἵματι γαῖα (10.484; cf. 21.21), or αἵματι δὲ χθών / δεύετο πορφυρέῳ (17.360–61). More literal descriptions of carnage include references both to blood and to either φόνος or corpses.<sup>2</sup> Thus: ἄμ φόνον, ἄν νέκυας, διὰ τ' ἔντεα καὶ μέλαν αἷμα (10.298 = 10.469), or ἔκ τ' ἀνδροκτασίης ἔκ θ' αἵματος ἔκ τε κυδοιμοῦ (11.164).<sup>3</sup> A division of the poem into days (rather than books) reveals fluctuations in the distribution of accounts of carnage. Day 1 (Books 2–7) yields just one authorial reference (4.451), although Nestor also comments on wholesale death with a bloody metaphor (τῶν νῦν αἷμα κελαινὸν ἐϋρροον ἀμφὶ Σκάμανδρον / ἐσκέδασ' ὁξὺς Ἄρης, 7.329–30). Day 2 (Book 8) includes only one—authorial—reference to mass slaughter (8.65). The first and third descriptions of carnage are identical, forming the concluding element of combat en masse (4.446–51 = 8.65–70):

οἱ δ' ὅτε δὴ ῥ' ἐς χθῶρον ἕνα ξυνιόντες ἵκοντο,  
 σύν ῥ' ἔβαλον ρινούς, σύν δ' ἔγχεα καὶ μένε' ἀνδρῶν  
 χαλκεοθωρήκων· ἀτὰρ ἀσπίδες ὀμφαλόεσσαι  
 ἔπληντ' ἀλλήλησι, πολὺς δ' ὀρυμαγδὸς ὀρώρει.  
 ἔνθα δ' ἄμ' οἰμωγὴ τε καὶ εὐχολὴ πέλεν ἀνδρῶν  
 ὀλλύντων τε καὶ ὀλλυμένων, ῥέε δ' αἵματι γαῖα.

Now as these advancing came to one place and encountered,  
 they dashed their shields together and their spears, and the strength  
 of armoured men in bronze, and the shields massive in the middle,  
 clashed against each other, and the sound of the fighting grew huge.  
 There the screaming and the shouts of triumph rose up together  
 of men killing and men killed, and the ground ran blood.<sup>4</sup>

The grand portrait heralds a momentous event, the return to fighting. Battle recommences after Pandarus shoots Menelaus, an act of treachery that reprises the initial circumstances of the war. On Day 2, the description follows the indecisive duel of Hector and Ajax, where the subsequent account of Zeus balancing the fate of the armies on his golden scales underlines the gravity of the occasion (8.69–74). Subsequently, the Greeks will be defeated and so compelled to make the embassy to Achilles in Book 9. The eve of Day 3 (Book 10) and Day 3 itself (Books 11–18) see a sharp, and temporary, increase in references to mass bloodspill. The *Doloneia* is notable for its brutal violence, and three descriptions of carnage in fewer than two hundred

2. φόνος is sometimes found with κτήρ to describe “carnage” or “slaughter”: 2.352 (expressing potential for the future); 3.6 (an element in the crane simile). Cf. 14.139–40; 17.365; 19.214. φόνος/φονή can also denote blood: 10.521; 16.162; 24.610.

3. Koller, “Αἷμα” (n. 1 above), 150, suggests that αἷμα is in the last example informed by “murder” and “fighting-tumult,” and is to be understood as “bloodspill,” “massacre.” This description also includes “dust” (κοιμή, 11.163), a common signifying element in descriptions of death.

4. All translations are from R. Lattimore, *The “Iliad” of Homer* (Chicago, 1951), occasionally adapted.

lines emphasize this aspect of it (10.298 = 10.469, 10.484; cf. 10.521). A concentration of gory detail distinguishes Book 10 from the first nine books of the *Iliad*. Thereafter, throughout Day 3, five descriptions of bloody slaughter are dispersed over Books 11 through 17 (11.164; 11.534–37; 12.430–31; 15.715; 17.360). Three are clustered in Books 11 and 12, prefacing this long day of battle. Indeed, a Zeus-sent blood dew is a portent of the many deaths to occur, including those of Sarpedon and Patroclus (κατὰ δ' ὑπόθεν ἦκεν ἑέρσας / αἵματι μυδαλέας ἐξ αἰθέρος, 11.53–55). As earlier in the poem, each account on Day 3 registers a turning point in the action. Carnage proclaims the beginning of both Agamemnon's and Hector's ἀριστεΐαι; likewise, a bloody description of battle heralds the breach of the Achaean rampart.<sup>5</sup> In Book 15, the formulaic image of the ground running with blood (ῥέε δ' αἵματι γαῖα μέλαινα, 15.715) signals another critical moment: the fighting has reached the ships and Hector is preparing to set them alight. Then, in Book 17, Ajax orders the Achaeans to guard Patroclus' corpse and, consequently, the earth grows red with blood (17.360–61). The motif accentuates the dramatic significance of Patroclus' death and the emotional intensity of the *Leichenkampf*. Finally, on Day 4, Achilles' ἀριστεΐα incorporates the bloodied-earth image, a now very familiar motif that underscores his martial ability and brutality (20.494; cf. 21.21; also 20.499–500 = 11.534–35). Throughout the poem, the recurring image has a cumulative effect, portraying increased levels of slaughter. Similarly, earlier associations signal an event's importance in the narrative.

A key difference lies between the depiction of mass slaughter on Days 1 and 2, and that described on the eve of Day 3 and on Day 3 itself. Carnage from Book 10 includes explicit reference to the bodies of the slain (10.298 = 10.469; 11.64) and the earlier grand tone is replaced by something more ugly: blood drips from axles and horses' hooves as chariots drive over the corpses (11.534–37 = 20.499–502), and gore is splashed over the walls of the barrier (12.430; cf. 4.451 = 8.65).<sup>6</sup> The description in Book 15 illustrates this tonal development (15.707–15):

τοῦ περ δὴ περὶ νηὸς Ἀχαιοὶ τε Τρῳεῖς τε  
 δῆρουν ἀλλήλους αὐτοσχεδόν· οὐδ' ἄρα τοί γε  
 τόξων ἀϊκάς ἀμφὶς μένον οὐδ' ἔτ' ἀκόντων,  
 ἀλλ' οἳ γ' ἐγγύθεν ἰστάμενοι, ἓνα θυμὸν ἔχοντες,  
 ὀξέσι δὴ πελέκεσσι καὶ ἀξίνῃσι μάχοντο  
 καὶ ξίφεσιν μεγάλοισι καὶ ἔγχεσιν ἀμφιγύοισι.  
 πολλὰ δὲ φάσγανα καλὰ μελάνδετα κωπήεντα  
 ἄλλα μὲν ἐκ χειρῶν χαμάδις πέσον, ἄλλα δ' ἀπ' ὤμων  
 ἀνδρῶν μαρναμένων· ῥέε δ' αἵματι γαῖα μέλαινα.

5. See 11.164: Hector is removed from the carnage to make way for Agamemnon's rampage; 11.534–37: Hector charges in his ἀριστεΐα; 11.534–37 = 20.499–502: Achilles charges across the battlefield in his own ἀριστεΐα; 12.430–31: the rampart is breached.

6. Cf. the portent in the *Odyssey*: the walls and rafters of the hall where the suitors are eating suddenly appear to be dripping with blood (αἵματι δ' ἑρράδαται τοῖχοι καλαὶ τε μεσόδμοι, 20.354); just prior to this the meat that they are consuming appears “defiled with blood” (αἰμοφόρυκτα δὲ δὴ κρέα ἦσθιον), prefacing the slaughter that Odysseus will shortly accomplish.

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

As elsewhere, the formular image of the ground running with blood is the last component of a passage describing general combat. The account details how men fight hand to hand with “battle axes, hatchets, swords, and double-pointed spears” (15.711–12). There is no ringing bronze, no groans of death or cries of triumph. Rather, the men fight silently, a grim reflection of the exertion of battle.<sup>7</sup> These differences, coupled with the cumulative effect of descriptions of mass bloodspill, contribute to the impression of increasingly merciless and intimate death. In Book 20, Achilles, compared to a blazing fire and equal to a god, wreaks vast destruction.<sup>8</sup> Again, the familiar image of the bloody earth caps the description (20.490–94). On this occasion, the hero is seemingly alone responsible for all the carnage, and the entire account is embellished with a simile likening him—as he crushes corpses underfoot—to oxen threshing barley (20.495–96).

Just as the descriptions of mass slaughter evolve, contributing to the tone of the poem, we find that the other contexts in which αἷμα is found change dramatically. As Table 1 illustrates, during the first two and a half days of battle, blood is primarily found in episodes describing nonfatal injury. There are nineteen such instances, compared to nine in accounts of carnage (three of which occur in the *Doloneia*), and none at all in accounts of individual death.<sup>9</sup> It is surely notable that no man explicitly bleeds to death even in Books 5 and 11, which include, respectively, the second and third highest number of individual deaths of any book in the *Iliad*.<sup>10</sup> Gory death is apparently reserved for the latter part of Day 3.

The close association of blood with nonfatal injury, coupled with its exclusion from death, indicates that bloodspill has a special value in the first part of the *Iliad*. I suggest that blood connotes worth, that is, for the warrior who spills his own.<sup>11</sup> A man’s bleeding wound functions as a badge of honor,

7. See also W. Marg, “Kampf und Tod in der *Ilias*,” *Würzburger Jahrbücher* 2 (1976): 9. I thank the anonymous reviewer who prompted me to read this article.

8. Compare the description of Hector at 15.605–6.

9. Nonfatal injury: 4.140, 146, 218; 5.100, 113, 208, 339, 798, 870; 7.262; 11.266, 267, 458, 459, 477, 813, 829, 845, 848. Carnage: 4.451; 7.329; 8.65; 10.298, 469, 484; 11.164, 534–37 (= 20.499–502); 12.430–31. Hypothetical death: 1.303; 5.289; 11.394. Only one account of individual death includes a reference to blood (5.82). Even there, αἷμα appears not in its nominal form but as an adjective, αἱματόεις. At 4.158, an animal sacrifice involving blood is mentioned; at 6.268, Hector asserts that he is covered in αἷμα; at 6.211, αἷμα refers to “lineage” (cf. 19.105, 111; 20.241). See also Table 1.

10. Book 5: 38 deaths; Book 11: 36 deaths.

11. N. Loraux, *The Experiences of Teiresias: The Feminine and the Greek Man* (Princeton, N.J., 1995), 97. On nonfatal injury as an indicator of heroic worth, see W.-H. Friedrich, *Verwundung und Tod in der Ilias* (Göttingen, 1956), 33; C. Salazar, *The Treatment of Battle Wounds in Graeco-Roman Antiquity* (Leiden, 2000), 126–58; and T. Neal, *The Wounded Hero: Nonfatal Injury in Homer’s “Iliad”* (Bern, forthcoming).

TABLE 1: DISTRIBUTION OF AIMA IN THE *ILIAD*

αἶμα	Books 1–7 Day 1 (Bks. 2–7)	Book 8 Day 2	Book 10 Night raid	Book 11 Day 3: Morning	Books 12–15 Day 3: Continuation	Books 16–17 Day 3: Deaths of Sarpedon and Euphorbus	Books 19–22 Day 4
In nonfatal injury	4.140, 146, 149, 218; 5.100, 113, 208, 339, 798, 870; 7.262			11.266, 267, 458, 459, 813, 829, 845, 848	13.539, 14.437; 15.11	16.518, 529	21.167
In individual death (hypothetical)	1.303			11.394			
In individual death (actual)					13.655	16.333, 349, 639, 667, 796; 17.51, 86	20.470, 476; 21.119, 123
In similes				11.176, 477		16.159, 162; 17.64, 572	
Describing carnage	4.451; 7.329	8.65	10.298, 469, 484	11.164, 534	12.430; 15.118, 715	17.360	19.214 (Achilles’ speech); 20.494, 499; 21.21, 325
Other	4.158 (blood sacrifice); 6.268 (Hector asserts he is covered in)			11.54 (Zeus’ blood dew)			22.70 (dogs to drink)
Glutting Ares	5.289						20.78; 22.267
As “lineage”	6.211						19.105, 111; 20.241

NOTE: In Book 18: Κῆρ wears a cloak red with blood of men (ᾧμοισι δαφοινεὸν αἶματι φορέων, 538); simile of lions consuming blood and viscera (583).

a highly visible decoration that signals his bravery and endurance. For the most part, it is the foremost heroes in the *Iliad* who bleed when they are non-fatally wounded in battle. This distinguished group includes Agamemnon, Diomedes, Glaucus, Hector, Menelaus, Odysseus, and even Achilles.<sup>12</sup> In nearly every instance of nonfatal injury where blood is mentioned, hemorrhage underlines strength and other heroic qualities. For instance, Agamemnon continues fighting while the blood flows from his wound (11.264–66); Hector can still fight with a bleeding wound (7.263); and Odysseus is compared to a deer who is able to run while the blood flows warm (11.477–78). Achilles scarcely notices his “grazing” wound but continues fighting without pause and kills his attacker (21.166–81).<sup>13</sup> Diomedes, apparently as a direct consequence of bleeding, is granted the ability to discern gods from men (5.127–29);<sup>14</sup> thereafter his μένος is triply increased (5.136). Menelaus is not injured in battle; nevertheless, his blood is compared to a king’s treasure (4.141–47). Each of these warriors loses the very substance that defines mortality, yet successfully evades death.

As the labor of battle becomes more grievous, however, the distribution of αἷμα changes, as do the symbolic aspects of bloodspill. References to αἷμα slightly increase and they begin to appear in other contexts, most notably in accounts of individual death. Following Book 12, six references to αἷμα describe nonfatal injury but twice that number are associated with individual fatality.<sup>15</sup> Earlier in the poem, flowing blood proclaims heroic virility; now it is representative of death.<sup>16</sup> Corresponding to these bloodier descriptions of individual slaughter, instances of αἱματόεις jump from five in Books 1–12 to fourteen in Books 13–24. The vast majority of these, describing actual occurrences in the narrative, are associated with death.<sup>17</sup>

12. Menelaus: 4.140, 146, 149, 218; Diomedes: 5.100, 113, 208; Hector: 7.262; Agamemnon: 11.266, 267; Odysseus: 11.458–59; Glaucus: 16.518, 529; Achilles: 21.167. Also Eurypylus, who deports himself in a heroic manner; his bloodspill is mentioned at 11.813, 829, 845, 848; and Deiphobus’ at 13.539.

13. Cf. the similar “scratching” wounds at 4.139; 11.388; 17.599; cf. 13.552–53.

14. See also S. Benardete, “The *Aristeia* of Diomedes and the Plot of the *Iliad*,” *Agon* 2 (1968): 29. Wounded heroes are at times able to communicate with gods; for instance, Hector recognizes Apollo as a god (15.247–52); Poseidon and Athena identify themselves as gods to Achilles, who is overwhelmed by the river Scamander (21.288–97). H. Pelliccia (*Body, Mind and Speech in Homer and Pindar*, Hypomnemata, 107 [Göttingen, 1995], 274–77) argues that the “wounded condition is itself the explanation.”

15. Nonfatal injury: 13.539; 14.437; 15.11; 16.518, 529; 21.167. Individual death: 13.655; 16.333, 349, 639, 667, 796; 17.51, 86; 20.470, 476; 21.119, 123. Carnage: (15.118); 15.715; 17.360–61; 20.494, 499–500; 21.21 (cf. also 21.325). Similes: 16.159, 162; 17.64, 572; 18.583. Other: 22.70 (Priam’s dogs to drink [hypothetical]); 22.267 (glut Ares with [hypothetical]); 23.34 (animal sacrifice); 23.697, 717, 806 (these three occur during funeral games; none describes flowing blood; the last is hypothetical); 24.419 (washed from Hector’s body). See also Table 1.

16. In most instances, the verb indicates vigorous blood flow. For instance, Eurypylus’ blood streams (κελάρουε) from his wound in the way that a channel of water flows when undammed (11.813; cf. 21.261 and *Od.* 5.323). When Diomedes is wounded in Book 5, the blood spurts up (ἀνγκόντιζε, 5.113); Agamemnon’s blood gushes forth (ἀνήνοθεν, 11.266), as does Achilles’ (σύτο, 21.167), and Odysseus’ (ἀνέσσυτο, 11.458). Cf. Deiphobus, whose blood “runs” down his newly wounded arm (κατὰ δ’ αἷμα νεουτάτου ἔρρε χειρός, 13.539). An excess of blood is indicated when Menelaus is wounded; the blood stains not only his thighs, but his legs and ankles too (4.146–47).

17. See 2.267 (Thersites’ weal); 5.82; 7.425; 9.326, 650; 13.393, 617, 640; 14.7; 16.459 (Zeus’ blood tears), 486, 841; 17.298, 542; 18.345; 19.313; 22.369; 23.41. The incidence of βρότος (always with αἱματόεις and in the context of washing) and βροτοείς also increases in the second half of the poem: βρότος: 7.425; 14.7; 18.345; 23.41; βροτοείς: 6.480; 8.534; 10.528, 570; 14.509; 15.347; 17.13, 540; 22.245.

The accounts of bloody slaughter vary in their length and detail. Brief descriptions vividly convey the finality of death, while longer accounts, as is usual for the epic poems, are reserved for more important events. The first time that a man bleeds fatally is in Book 13. There, Harpalion, fleeing Menelaus, is shot by Meriones (13.653–55). The narrator explains that the warrior's life ebbs away as his vital substance flows to the ground (13.655 = 21.119). In Books 16 and 17, and later, during Achilles' ἄριστεία, a number of warriors bleed in their death throes (16.333, 349; 17.51, 86; 20.470–71, 476; 21.119). Graphic descriptions of blood filling a man's eyes (16.348–50), warming the blade of a sword (16.331–33 = 20.475–76), and welling up in a man's chest (20.471–72) contribute to a more visceral representation of individual death. A notable and expansively described death is that of Zeus' own son, Sarpedon, who dies at the hands of Patroclus in Book 16. The event is the structural centrepiece of the book—hence its length—and first in a chain of deaths that will result in Achilles' demise. Two remarkable references to αἷμα illustrate a close association of blood with death and defilement (16.639; 16.667).<sup>18</sup> Gore and dirt render Sarpedon's body unrecognizable, and emblemize the abuse of his corpse by the Achaeans (16.638–43):

οὐδ' ἄν ἔτι φράδμων περ ἄνῃρ Σαρπηδόνα δῖον  
 ἔγνω, ἐπεὶ βελέεσσι καὶ αἵματι καὶ κονίῃσιν  
 ἐκ κεφαλῆς εἴλυτο διαμπερὲς ἐς πόδας ἄκρους.  
 οἱ δ' αἰεὶ περὶ νεκρὸν ὀμίλειον, ὥς ὅτε μύϊαι  
 σταθμῷ ἐνὶ βρομέωσι περιγλαγέας κατὰ πέλλας  
 ὥρῃ ἐν εἰαρινῇ, ὅτε τε γλάγος ἄγγεα δεύει·  
 ὥς ἄρα τοὶ περὶ νεκρὸν ὀμίλειον . . .

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

The description is a vivid representation of death, both violating and violent, with blood a distinctive component. Αἷμα is also implicitly evoked, for instance, in the image of the flies thronging about the body as though about pails of milk. As Richard Janko has observed, “milk slops everywhere, like the blood” on the battlefield.<sup>19</sup> The simile calls to mind also the flies that would have swarmed the battlefield, to whom, as the narrator observes later

18. On increasing defilement in the *Iliad*, see for instance, P. Friedrich, “Defilement and Honour in the *Iliad*,” *JIES* 1 (1973): 119–26, esp. 121; R. Rabel, *Plot and Point of View in the “Iliad”* (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1997), 27, on the “ascending level of violence and bitter feeling.” R. Garland's indexes in “The Causation of Death in the *Iliad*: A Theological and Biological Investigation,” *BICS* 28 (1981): 55–56, indicate that expressions for depicting biological death are more numerous in the latter part of the poem. C. Segal, *The Theme of the Mutilation of the Corpse*, Mnemosyne Suppl. 17 (Leiden, 1971), 72, asserts that “acts or threats of mutilation begin to accumulate.” Cf. H. van Wees, “Heroes, Knights and Nutters,” in *Battle in Antiquity*, ed. A. Lloyd (London, 1996), p. 78, n. 138.

19. R. Janko, ed., *The “Iliad”: A Commentary* (Cambridge, 1992), ad 16.641–44.

in the poem, “sweet is the blood of men” (17.572). The second reference to blood is when Zeus commands Apollo to wash the κελαινεφές αἶμα from the hero’s body (16.667). Washing blood from corpses is not uncommon in the *Iliad*, but the phrase elsewhere used in this context is βρότος αἱματόεις.<sup>20</sup> The use of αἶμα suggests here the immediacy of death. Thereafter, the god is to take Sarpedon far away, to bathe him, anoint him with ambrosia, and dress him in immortal clothing. The visual impact of the scene derives from telling juxtapositions. Contrasting with the miasma of the hero’s battered, bloody body is its purification by the Olympian god, thereby invoking polarities of mortal/immortal, dark/bright, battle/peace, and the like.

In addition to the nominal αἶμα, the adjective αἱματόεις appears twice in the description of Sarpedon’s death (all these related words fall within the same two hundred lines). An unusual and sanguinary omen heralds his demise: Zeus weeps blood tears for his son (αἱματοέσσης . . . ψιάδας, 16.459). This unique occurrence in the *Iliad* recalls Book 11, when the god disperses a blood dew, a similar omen that heralds a multitude of deaths (11.54–55). In Book 16, however, the precipitation honors Sarpedon alone, reflecting the narrative’s movement from the general to the specific. It is a peerless display of sorrow by an immortal generally characterized by his distance from the mortal world. The second occurrence of αἱματόεις occurs when Sarpedon falls to the ground: as he dies, he clutches at the bloodied earth (κόνιος δεδραγμένος αἱματοέσσης, 16.486). Grasping at the dirt is another image that is exclusive to the second part of the poem (cf. 13.393). The familiar image of bloodied earth achieves extra poignancy here because it is associated with an individual’s death. Nor is this just any individual, but a prominent and sympathetic warrior whose end is structurally and thematically significant.

Blood imagery also pervades another, lesser warrior’s death—that of Euphorbus.<sup>21</sup> When he is killed by Menelaus in vengeance for Patroclus’ death, αἶμα covers the young man’s decorated hair (17.51–52):

αἶματί οἱ δεύοντο κόμαι Χαρίτεσσιν ὁμοῖαι  
πλοχοῖοι θ’, οἱ χρυσῶ τε καὶ ἀργύρῳ ἐσφήκωντο.

in blood was his hair drenched, that was like the hair of the Graces,  
and his tresses that were braided with gold and silver.

The death resonates with images occurring throughout the poem. For instance, blood “drenches” the man’s hair; elsewhere this verb—δεύω—describes blood drenching the earth (17.360–61). Euphorbus’ defiled hair was once an ornament symbolizing youth, beauty, and manliness (ἀνδρότης).<sup>22</sup> The comparison with Menelaus—whose bleeding wound is compared to an ἄγαλμα—is striking. Blood now obliterates beauty and life and draws attention to death’s disfigurement. The poet also evokes an implicit distinction between mortal and immortal; the warrior’s hair was like that of the Graces but, unlike the gods, he is heir to death. When Hector catches sight of the corpse, blood is again an explicit element (17.85–86):

20. See n. 17 above.

21. See H. Mühlestein, *Homerische Namenstudien* (Frankfurt am Main, 1986), 83, on Paris as a model for Euphorbus. I thank the anonymous reviewer who drew my attention to this article.

22. Cf. Hdt. 7.208–9; Verg. *Aen.* 12.98–100.



τὸν δ' ἐπὶ γαίῃ  
κείμενον· ἔρρει δ' αἷμα κατ' οὐταμένην ὠτειλῇν.

the other,

sprawled on the ground, and blood running from the gash of the spear thrust.

Hector's response contributes to the sense of tragedy that imbues the young warrior's death (17.83–89). The familiar motif of flowing blood recalls earlier incidents, both nonfatal and fatal, but at this point in the poem blood more regularly signifies receding life. Euphorbus' demise is one of several utilizing the motif, and the accumulation of gory deaths contributes to the changing tone of the poem.<sup>23</sup> These bloody slayings—especially those of Sarpedon and Euphorbus—effect an emotional intensity because they are described in terms of their effect on other people, even the gods. The distance between the poem's characters and death becomes ever smaller as their companions and loved ones are swallowed up in bloody battle.

### PREDACIOUS ANIMAL SIMILES

The *Iliad's* progressively bloody accounts of individual death parallel the appearance of αἷμα in predacious animal similes. Throughout the poem, similes depict lions and other animals eating carcasses and viscera.<sup>24</sup> Yet of the many similes up to Book 11, including those that describe either aggressive behavior or the eating of prey or both, none includes specific mention of αἷμα or its consumption.<sup>25</sup> In the latter half of the poem, four similes mention αἷμα as a substance to be consumed (11.176; 16.159, 162; 17.64; 17.572; cf. 18.582–84<sup>26</sup>). Although only a small number of similes, they are found exclusively on Day 3, paralleling the incidence of αἷμα in accounts of individual death.

The occasions on which warriors are compared to blood-hungry predators reveal an interesting correspondence between narrative and simile. This centers, as Stephen Nimis has shown, on fighting and eating.<sup>27</sup> In Book 11,

23. The *Odyssey* is not a battle epic; nevertheless, a large number of men are killed before Odysseus returns to Ithaca, and a similarly graduated appearance of blood and bloodspill is evident in that poem also. Even the visceral description of Polyphemus eating Odysseus' companions does not explicitly mention blood (*Od.* 9.288–97). It is only in Book 22, when Odysseus performs the Iliadic feat of killing the suitors, that bloodspill features in the text (although Athena speaks of the suitors' bloodspill at 13.395).

24. Eating prey but not marauding: 3.23–26; 11.480–81; 13.198–200; 17.542. Marauding and/or aggressive: 5.136–42, 161–62, 554–58; 10.297–98, 485–86; 11.129–30; 12.41–48 (among men), 293, 299–306; 16.752–53, 756–58, 823–26; cf. 11.239. Marauding and eating prey: 11.113–19, 172–76; 15.630–36; 17.61–68; cf. 16.485–89; 24.41–43. Hungering: 5.782–83; 7.255–57; 11.548–55; 12.299–306; 15.592; 16.756–58; 17.657–64; 18.161–62; 20.164–73. Eating prey, but no blood: 3.23–26; 15.630–36; 24.41–43. Cf. 5.161–62, 554–58; 11.113–19; 12.299–306; 13.198–200.

25. A number of similes compare warriors fighting en masse to animals that are described as ὀμοφάγοι. This adjective is found at 5.782, where both Greeks and Trojans are λείουσιν ἑοικότες ὀμοφάγοισιν / ἦ σοσι κάπροις; cf. 7.256 (= 5.782) to describe Ajax and Hector; at 11.479, the Trojans are like “ravening jackals,” and at 15.592 “ravening lions.” At 16.156–57, the Myrmidons are compared to “ravening wolves.” Flesh-eating (ὀμηστής) birds are mentioned by Odysseus at 11.454; the adjective appears again at 22.67, describing dogs (where Priam imagines they will also drink his blood); 24.82, where it refers to fish, and finally at 24.207, where Hecuba describes Achilles, the only time that it describes a person. Note that this term appears only on Day 3 and following. It may be worthy of Portia to insist on distinguishing between “flesh-eating” and “blood-eating,” but the point is that the poet can and does refer to blood when the context specifically demands it.

26. Κῆρ in that context is depicted wearing a cloak red (δαφνοεινόν) with the blood of men (18.538).

27. S. Nimis, *Narrative Semiotics in the Epic Tradition: The Simile* (Bloomington, Ind., 1987), 23–95.

the ἀριστεύων Agamemnon kills a warrior with a blow to the neck (11.240). The lion to whom he is compared overcomes its prey in a similar manner, also with a blow to the neck (11.175; resumptive simile at 11.239; cf. also 11.113–15, 129). The creature then devours the blood and innards of the cow (ἔπειτα δέ θ' αἶμα καὶ ἔγκατα πάντα λαφύσσει, 11.176). Indicative of Agamemnon's brutal fighting style, the blood-eating image occurs here for the first time in the narrative.<sup>28</sup> The next simile incorporating blood is at 16.156–62, where an extensive description likening the Myrmidons to wolves includes two references to αἶμα:

οἱ δὲ λύκοι ὥς  
ὠμοφάγοι, τοῖσιν τε περὶ φρεσὶν ἄσπετος ἄλκη,  
οἷ τ' ἔλαφον κεραὸν μέγαν οὔρεσι δηρώσαντες  
δάπτουσιν· πᾶσιν δὲ παρήϊον αἵματι φοινόν·  
καί τ' ἀγελήδον ἴασιν ἀπὸ κρήνης μελανύδρου  
λάψοντες γλώσσησιν ἀραιῇσιν μέλαν ὕδωρ  
ἄκρον, ἐρευγόμενοι φόνον αἵματος·

and they, as wolves,  
who tear flesh raw, in whose hearts the battle fury is tireless,  
who have brought down a great horned stag in the mountains, and then  
feed on him,  
till the jowls of every wolf run red/bloody with blood,<sup>29</sup> and then go  
all in a pack to drink from a spring of dark-running water,  
lapping with their lean tongues along the black edge of the surface  
and belching up the clotted blood;

A vivid anticipation of forthcoming conflict, the *Auszug* simile is a formal element of Patroclus' incipient ἀριστεία, standing immediately after his arming scene (16.130–54). No other simile so luridly portrays bestial gluttony. The wolves' thirsty drinking suggests how they would have earlier feasted on the raw flesh of the stag and slurped up its blood.<sup>30</sup> The chiasitic juxtaposition between red blood and dark water evokes the excess of αἶμα (αἵματι φοινόν—μελανύδρου—μέλαν ὕδωρ—φόνον αἵματος);<sup>31</sup> the use of φόνος, here denoting “gore” instead of the usual “violent death” or “slaughter,”<sup>32</sup> further emphasizes the surfeit. The entire account points up the similarity between wolfish appetites and warrior battle lust.

Predatory bloodlust continues as a motif in Book 17, where two warriors, Menelaus and Automedon, are compared to blood-eating lions. The Achaean king, like his brother in Book 11, is engaged in a rampage (although not on the same scale as Agamemnon's). He is compared to a lion who kills his prey with a blow to the neck, then devours its blood and innards (αἶμα καὶ

28. Further, Agamemnon's hands are covered in “gore” at 11.169: λύθρῳ δὲ παλάσσετο χεῖρας ἀάπτους (= 20.503, Achilles); cf. 6.268 (Hector).

29. φοινός is a hapax (cf. 12.202, 220).

30. Λάπτω and λαφάσσω (the verb that usually describes feasting animals) are cognate.

31. Blood is regularly black in the *Iliad*, either μέλαν or κελαϊνεφές. Water and blood are graphically juxtaposed at 21.21; cf. 21.202 where Asteropaeus' body is left lying on the banks of Scamander. Compare also 4.452–56, where a description of a river in spate follows the image of the earth running with blood.

32. φόνος denotes “blood” elsewhere only at 24.610. Cf. the adjective μαινοφόνος to describe Ares (see discussion below). Koller (“Aἶμα,” 151) suggests that the wolves “speien das Blut des blutigen Kampfes, des Blutbades aus ist einzig möglich.”

ἔγκατα πάντα λαφύσσει, 17.64 = 11.176). Once again, there is a notable correspondence between simile and narrative. The lion's mode of killing recalls how Menelaus killed Euphorbus with a blow to the neck. Thereafter, the lion consumes the blood and innards of its prey; suggestively, as noted earlier, blood is prominent in the description of Euphorbus' death (17.49; 17.86).<sup>33</sup> The exploits of Patroclus' driver Automedon also comprise a blood element (17.541–42). The situation is as follows: Automedon strips the armor from Aretus, whom he has killed together with the Mysian Chromius. These two had been addressed by the narrator as “fools” for attempting to get Patroclus' horses back from Automedon, for “not without bloodspill” (οὐδὲ ἀναιμωτί), that is, “not without death,” would this be accomplished (17.497–99). It is the second time that this phrase occurs (only twice in the poem; cf. 17.363), and conspicuous for its explicit equation of bloodspill with death. The victorious hero then takes up Aretus' “bloody spoils” (17.540–42):

ὥς εἰπὼν ἐς δίφρον ἐλὼν ἔναρα βροτόεντα  
θῆκ', ἂν δ' αὐτὸς ἐβαινε πόδας καὶ χεῖρας ὕπερθεν  
αἱματόεις ὥς τίς τε λέων κατὰ ταῦρον ἐδηδώς.

So saying he took up the bloody spoils and set them in the car,  
his feet and his hands above all bloody,  
even as a lion that devours a bull.

Automedon seems nearly more animal than human.<sup>34</sup> The description includes two references to blood, albeit in adjectival form: the spoils are bloody (βροτοίεις) as is Automedon himself (αἱματόεις).<sup>35</sup> Yet here too, reference to the lion's act of consumption echoes the warrior's acts of bloody slaughter.

Even the simile that compares Menelaus to a blood-hungry fly contributes to the overt bloodlust expressed in Book 17. Athena puts βίη into the hero's shoulders and knees and into his chest she puts the θάρσος of a fly (17.571–72),

ἧ τε καὶ ἐργομένη μάλα περ χροὸς ἀνδρομέοιο  
ἰσχανάα δακείνιν, λαρόν τε οἱ αἶψ' ἀνθρώπου·

which though it is driven hard away from a man's skin,  
still persists in biting him, for sweet to it is the taste of human blood.

This is the first time in the *Iliad* that a simile describes human blood as the object of another's appetite. It is a sentiment that graphically contributes to the descending tone of the narrative.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, the unpleasant image of flies hovering around the stinking remains on the battlefield has tangential relevance to another prominent theme, that of the mutilated corpse.<sup>37</sup> As

33. M. Edwards (*The “Iliad”: A Commentary* [Cambridge, 1995], ad 17.61–69, citing Fraenkel) points out an additional correspondence between the lion tearing at his victim's entrails and the warrior stripping off his enemy's armor.

34. M. Clarke, “Between Lions and Men: The Image of the Hero in the *Iliad*,” *GRBS* 36 (1995): 149.

35. A similar image is found in the *Odyssey*. After the *Iliad*-style feat of killing the suitors, Odysseus is spattered with blood like a lion who has feasted on a bull: αἶματι καὶ λύθρῳ πεπασαγμένον ὥστε λέοντα / ὅς ρά τε βεβρωκὼς βοὸς ἔρχεται ἀγραυλοῖο· / πᾶν δ' ἄρα οἱ στήθος τε παρήϊά τ' ἀμφοτέρωθεν / αἱματοέοντα πέλει (*Od.* 22.402–5; 22.402 = 23.48).

36. Cf. 22.70–71.

37. Achilles expresses concern for Patroclus' corpse in terms of the flies (and worms) that will beset it (19.23–27). Cf. 22.509 and 24.414–15. W. Schadewaldt (“Book 11 of the *Iliad* as Anticipation,” in *Homer*:

noted earlier, soldiers throng like flies around the bloodied and defiled corpse of Sarpedon. The longing for blood is a telling element in the comparison between Menelaus and the fly, both of whom exhibit θάρσος in the face of attack.

The inclusion of blood in similes in the latter part of the poem conveys the gradual brutalization of warriors in the *Iliad*. Displacement of normative social rituals such as meal taking compound the increasingly bestial aspects of warrior behavior. A quick survey will illustrate the point. The comparison of Agamemnon to a blood-eating lion coincides with the absence of ritual meal taking prior to battle on Day 3. Up to Book 11, communal eating is a regular occurrence for the warriors before they engage in combat. But on the morning of Day 3, they do not take their meal. Instead, Agamemnon and the Achaeans go straight into the fighting. Battle is “sweeter” (γλυκίων) to them even than returning home (11.13). Thereupon, Agamemnon’s rampage begins and he is soon compared to a lion that devours the blood and viscera of his victims (11.175–76). The lion’s predatory appetite reflects the Achaean king’s lust for battle, which is then given more concrete expression when the animal actually consumes its victim’s innards. Three noteworthy elements distinguish the episode: the communal meal is overlooked for the first time; battle is described in terms analogous to food; and—also for the first time—a warrior is compared to a predatory animal that, killing its prey, feasts on its blood. In relation to the slaving wolf simile describing the Myrmidons, Nimis argues that it is a “negative articulation” of the conventional preparatory feast.<sup>38</sup> The representation of battle as a substitute for communal eating is also observed on Day 4. Instead of eating, Achilles fights (19.209–14).<sup>39</sup> The coincidence of bloody death and similes describing blood-eating creatures in the poem is suggestive. Death and its synecdochic by-product, blood, are comestibles that warriors—albeit figuratively—increasingly consume.

There remains one important observation to be made in relation to blood-eating predators: only Achaean warriors are described thus.<sup>40</sup> This adheres to the pattern that generally favors Achaeans in the *Iliad*. Trojans endure the more horrific and graphic injuries in the poem, and incur injuries to the back, which are indicative of cowardice. More Trojans than Achaeans die in the poem.<sup>41</sup> Even in Book 11 when the Achaean leaders are wounded and with-

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*Critical Assessments*, ed. I. de Jong [London, 1999], 73) draws attention to the way that an “arrow” is equated with a “stinging insect” at 4.131, with the enemy’s body as its prey, indicating the predatory nature of the fly as it appears in Homer.

38. Nimis, *Semiotics* (n. 27 above), 41.

39. While the others eat (19.345–46), there is no suggestion that they fight; at the very least, the wounded Agamemnon, Odysseus, and Diomedes do not (the Achaeans ready themselves for battle at 19.351–52). Fighting is a kind of ritualized behavior as well, and in one sense signals male maturity. But, as J. Redfield (*Nature and Culture in the “Iliad”: The Tragedy of Hector* [Durham, N.C., 1994], 97) comments, “the image of the warrior as raw-meat-eater catches an aspect of the impurity of war.”

40. S. Lonsdale (*Creatures of Speech: Lion, Herding and Hunting Similes in the “Iliad”* [Stuttgart, 1990], 81) finds an “ambiguous equation” between Trojans and gluttonous dogs; see, e.g., 17.125–27; cf. 17.557–58 and 22.266–71; 22.509; cf. 22.66–70.

41. Sixty-one Greeks and 208 Trojans (figures from B. Armstrong, “The Casualty Lists in the Trojan War,” *G&R* 16 [1969]: 30). Cf. H. van Wees (*Status Warriors: War, Violence and Society in Homer and History* [Amsterdam, 1992], p. 52, n. 136), who claims that the ratio of Trojan to Achaean dead is 221:52. See Garland, “Causation,” (n. 18 above), 52–53, for a chronological list of named characters killed.

draw, signaling the beginning of the rout, and in Books 16 and 17 during the *Patrocleia* and Hector's *Siegeslauf*, this remains the case. No Trojan ever causes an Achaeans' blood to flow in death; Achaeans bleed only in episodes of nonfatal injury.<sup>42</sup> Trojan warriors, by contrast, die from their bleeding wounds, an aspect of the poem's narration that underscores Greek ἀρετή and superiority. Driven by an appetite for battle and figured as consuming predators, Achaeans feed on Trojan death and, more specifically, their blood. In this regard, the Sarpedon and Automedon episodes are particularly telling, for, on both occasions, the Achaean killer is alive and lionlike while the Trojan is dead and described as prey.<sup>43</sup> In yet another way, then, the *Iliad*—somewhat ambivalently—privileges the vanquishers.

#### ARES' APPETITE

The changing contextual distribution of blood, coupled with an increasing emphasis on the predatory nature of warriors, echoes in the figure of Ares. Bloodlust is a primary trait of the war god in the *Iliad*. But, although his appetite is "appropriate" to his function, it is anomalous given his Olympian status. His identification with mortals betrays another and rather grotesque aspect of the god. On the other hand, Ares' representation and association with blood plays a key role in the depiction of battlefield heroism. In particular, the god is manifest in Achilles during that hero's ἀρυστεία.

One of the most important aspects of the well-known passage elucidating immortal difference in Book 5 is that it implies that the gods are self-sufficient (5.335–42). They neither eat food (σῖτος) nor drink wine (οἶνος), hence they are bloodless (ἀναίμονες, 5.340–42). Gods are not imagined to desire nourishment, and they rarely eat or drink in the *Iliad*.<sup>44</sup> The poet does mention νέκταρ or ἄμβροσία, primarily when the gods use them to preserve and sustain mortals, to bestow on them temporarily a characteristic that defines immortality. The apparent reluctance to depict the gods eating and drinking

42. Even when Patroclus dies, there are no concrete references to his bloodied body in the account of his death. His helmet falls to the ground and is covered in blood and dust (16.794); Hector utters a speech that he imagines Achilles would have spoken to Patroclus (μή μοι πρὶν ἵεναι . . . "Ἐκτορος ἀνδροφόνου / αἱματόεντα χιτῶνα περὶ στήθεσσι δαΐζει, 16.839–41). It is only at 18.344–45 that the blood, or more properly, the "bloody gore" (βρότον αἱματόεντα) covering Patroclus' body is finally mentioned, when Achilles calls for it to be washed off. See also n. 17 above for incidence of this phrase.

43. Sarpedon is likened to a bull that has fallen beneath the jaws of a lion; Patroclus is the devouring lion who would eat the remains (16.489). E. Vermeule asserts that animal art similarly "expressed valor and pathos in duels between a predator and a grass-eater" (*Aspects of Death in Early Greek Art and Poetry* [Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1979], 84).

44. At 1.598, Hephaestus "wine-pours" (οἶνοχόει) sweet nectar (γλυκὺ νέκταρ) for the gods after the recent contretemps between Zeus and Hera (cf. 4.3, where Hebe performs the same task). Thereafter, the narrator recounts that the gods "feasted, nor did anyone's heart lack for a feast" (δαίνυντ', οὐδὲ τι θυμὸς ἐδεύετο δαυτὸς ἔσσης, 1.602), a formulaic description. The only "foodstuff" mentioned is νέκταρ. The phrase appears emblematic of the indulgent lives led by the Olympians; it underlines the lack of the ritual with which the formula is principally associated; for instance, either sacrifice or funeral preparation: see 1.468 (esp. since closely juxtaposed with the instance under discussion); 2.431; 7.320 (each part of a larger formulaic phrase describing sacrifice); and 23.56 (where it describes men preparing for Patroclus' funeral). It seems significant that the formula, in every other instance of its occurrence, is linked with either sacrifice or death (and πόνος), as a dedication to the gods. Elsewhere, Aphrodite provides her horses with "ambrosial food" (ἄμβροσιον . . . εἶδαρ, 5.369), while Hera's horses eat by the banks of Simoeis (τοῖσιν δ' ἄμβροσίων Σιμόεις ἀνέτειλε νέμεσθαι, 5.777).

stands to reason. It is illogical that they should need to nourish and perpetuate what is already perpetual.

Ares, however, is an exception to the convention that the gods have no desire for “nourishment.” He is said, explicitly, to have an appetite;<sup>45</sup> for instance, he is formulaically described as “insatiate of war” (ἄτος πολέμοιο, 5.388, 863; 6.203).<sup>46</sup> That a god should have an appetite is unusual in itself. More striking is that Ares is elsewhere imagined to want to glut (ἄσαι) himself with mortal blood, that is, αἷμα. We first hear of Ares’ appetite in Book 5 when Diomedes addresses Pandarus and Aeneas and claims that they will glut the god with their blood (5.288–89):

... πρίν γ’ ἢ ἕτερόν γε πεσόντα  
αἵματος ἄσαι Ἄρῃα, ταλαύρινον πολέμιστήν.

... until one or the other of you has fallen  
to glut with his blood Ares the god who fights under the shield’s guard.

The sentiment (αἵματος ἄσαι Ἄρῃα) is expressed on two other occasions, indicating its formulaic nature (20.78; 22.267=5.289, also 288b=22.266b). Ares’ appetite is even more striking when we consider that were the gods to eat, it would be νέκταρ or ἄμβροσία, that is, immortal or “bloodless” food. They themselves are bloodless, as the passage in Book 5 explains (5.337–45). Moreover, when gods have a “feast” (δαίς), either actually or hypothetically, this takes place in the immortal sphere.<sup>47</sup> So, Ares’ appetite for blood is unusual on three counts. First, he has no need of nourishment yet is imagined to desire it; second, he is without blood, yet craves (mortal) blood; third, he is an Olympian, yet would indulge himself in the mortal sphere.<sup>48</sup> Driven to kill, his motivation is expressed as a desire for blood.

Linked to the idea of a blood-thirsting Ares is the image of war as a mouth, through which warriors pass into “bleeding battle” (πολέμου στόμα αἱματόεντος, 19.313).<sup>49</sup> Battle fury, ἄρης, at times closely identified with Ares the god,<sup>50</sup> inspires this idea. Similarly, the primary instrument of war—the

45. At 4.34–36, Zeus hypothesizes that Hera’s rage is so aberrant that she could only “cure” (ἐξακέσαι) it by eating (βιβρώθεις) the raw flesh of the Trojans; that is, her anger is expressed as (the symptom of) an illness (χόλον). Cf. 22.94. The difference between Ares and Hera is twofold. First, Hera’s appetite is hypothesized only; it is given expression as part of a remote conditional clause. Second, her appetite is expressed as a disease-like affliction that is precipitated by anger. Such a desire is anomalous and abnormal, hence the shocking force of Zeus’ insult. Ares’ appetite, on the other hand, is formulaic and an integral part of his representation in the *Iliad*. For similar expressions, cf. 24.212–13 (Hecuba) and 22.346–47 (Achilles). In both the latter instances, it is a symptom precipitated by grief and anger. See G. Kirk, *The “Iliad”: A Commentary* (Cambridge, 1985), ad 4.34–36.

46. P. Pucci (*The Song of the Sirens: Essays on Homer* [Lanham, Md., 1998], p. 105, n. 15) asserts that “the terms *asai*, *aatos*, produce a series of generic expressions evoking martial hatred, weapons, animals feeding on corpses, etc.”

47. See 1.424, 579; 15.95; cf. 23.201; 24.63; and 9.535, where the gods “feast” (δαίνυνθαι) on hecatombs (cf. a δαίς made by mortals at the altar of Zeus [4.48; 24.69]).

48. As Loraux points out, he never actually gets to drink this “breuvage” (“Le corps vulnérable d’Ares,” in *Corps des Dieux*, ed. C. Malamoud and J.-P. Vernant, Temps de la réflexion, 7 [Paris, 1986], 354). Nevertheless, it is a constant desire.

49. Cf. 23.78–79. On the “mouth of death,” see, for instance, C. Mackie, “Homer and Thucydides: Corcyra and Sicily,” *CQ* 46 (1996): 105–7. Cf. Shakespeare, *Henry IV, Part 1* 1.1.5–6 (I thank the referee for the latter reference).

50. See M. Clarke, *Flesh and Spirit in the Songs of Homer* (Oxford, 1999), 269–72.

spear—would glut itself with human flesh (χροὸς ἀνδρομέοιο). Ares, the embodiment of battle frenzy, is responsible for the μένος of this weapon.<sup>51</sup> Phrases describing the savage appetites of a spear and war naturally reflect on the war god himself. War is beloved of Ares because, as Emily Vermeule observes, “death in wartime becomes a feast.”<sup>52</sup> In the *Iliad*, and especially from Day 3, dogs and birds regularly have unpleasant appetites attributed to them. Patroclus explains, for instance, that he is fearful lest the Achaeans be mutilated, lest they glut dogs with their white fat (11.818), and Priam expresses a horror that his maddened (ἀλύσσοντες) dogs will drink his blood (22.70).<sup>53</sup> Death is a feast for scavenging animals, creatures whose appetites for flesh, fat, and more pertinently, blood, parallel those of Ares.

The god’s association with blood is expressed in other ways throughout the poem. Ares is held responsible for spilling the blood of those who die in battle (τῶν νῦν αἶμα κελαινὸν ἔϋρροον ἀμφὶ Σκάμανδρον / ἐσκεῖδασ’ ὄζυς Ἄρης, 7.329–30).<sup>54</sup> Elsewhere, he is described as μαιφόνος (“bloodstained” or “bloodthirsty,” 5.31 = 5.455; 5.844; cf. 21.402, where he again appears as himself).<sup>55</sup> The latter translation is in keeping with the idea that Ares is driven by an appetite for blood. At 5.844 (cf. 21.402), the narrator employs the epithet at an apt moment: Ares has just killed a man and at close range. The epithet highlights a transgressive aspect of Ares’ behavior. To be blood-spattered is, for a mortal, not such a bad thing. A warrior stained with other men’s blood and, more particularly, with his own, demonstrates heroic prowess. As such, only leading warriors are this way represented (albeit they are increasingly figured as bestial). But Ares is not mortal, and the graphic epithet draws attention to a defilement that, wrought through blood, derives from the fact that he is a god. Elsewhere, the polluting properties of (mortal) blood in relation to the gods are indicated. For instance, Hector refuses to pray to Zeus until he has washed himself of blood and filth (αἵματι καὶ λύθρῳ, 6.268). Further, as G. S. Kirk notes, other gods kill from afar, and hence at a remove from bloody carnage.<sup>56</sup> Ares, however, engages in hand-to-hand combat. The god defiles himself indelibly, and doubly (as it were), with both “blood” and “slaughter.” It is worth noting here that φόνος, where it denotes “blood” in the poem, seems pragmatically to indicate a significant quantity.<sup>57</sup>

51. Spear eager to glut itself with flesh (ἐγχείη . . . / ἱεμένη χροὸς ἄμειναι ἀνδρομέοιο): 21.69–70, 168 (these references occur in Achilles’ ἀπιστεῖο; also 11.574; 15.317; Ares takes away a spear’s μένος: 13.444; 16.613; 17.529. Lonsdale (*Creatures* [n. 40 above], 99) suggests that ἀκοκή (20.260; 21.60; 22.327 = 17.49) evokes the “fangs of a scavenger.” Parallels in other literature abound; for instance, J. Griffin (*Homer on Life and Death* [Oxford, 1983], p. 34, n. 89) quotes Deut. 32:41, “I will make my weapons drunk with blood, and my sword shall devour flesh, it shall glut itself from the blood of the wounded,” etc. Ironically, when Ares himself is injured, Diomedes’ spear “devours” the god’s flesh (διὰ δὲ χροῖα ἔδωπεν, 5.858; cf. 21.398 [where Ares reiterates this]).

52. Vermeule, *Aspects* (n. 43 above), 105.

53. Dogs and birds also glut (κοπέννυμι) themselves on fat and flesh (8.379–80; 13.831–32; cf. 24.207).

54. The only time this expression occurs in the *Iliad*.

55. L. Muellner (*The Anger of Achilles: Menis in Greek Epic* [Ithaca, N.Y., 1996], 10, 16), translates (following Chantraine) μαιφόνος “murder-defiled.” Cf. R. Parker, *Miasma: Pollution and Purification in Early Greek Religion* (Oxford, 1983), 134: “[it] means presumably, ‘one who kills in a polluting way’ and in later texts is applied to the most culpable murderers.”

56. Kirk, *Commentary* (n. 45 above), ad 5.842–43: “so are not directly polluted by blood.”

57. 10.521; 16.162; 24.610. See also Koller, “Αἶμα,” 155.

Crucial to Ares' characterization is that his αἰμοποσία is rendered more obscene—even monstrous—by his willingness to identify with mortals and mortality.<sup>58</sup> He is a god often figured as mortal, possessed of an affinity with death because he is the god of war. Ares even imagines that he might die the death of a mortal (5.885–87; 15.117–18; cf. the “quasi-death” at 21.406–14). He is more intimately linked with the human realm than perhaps any other god in the *Iliad*. Yet the would-be mortal is driven by a bloodlust, specifically for the blood of humans.<sup>59</sup> As a result, the war god manifests a kind of “intra-specific predation,” even exhibiting a kind of cannibalism, hunting down and consuming the very “species” with which he would most identify.<sup>60</sup> In other words, he disguises himself as a mortal and identifies as a mortal in order the better to fulfill his desire for mortal blood. This is another reason why Ares is called βροτολογός.<sup>61</sup> Where mortal warriors are—at least initially—concerned with the defeat of a common enemy, Ares has no such motivations. He is not a warrior inspired by loyalty (5.832–34; 18.309), nor are mortals his enemies.

The portrayal of Ares as a bloody and blood-hungry god is important for our understanding of heroic behavior, particularly in the latter part of the poem. His characterization represents war as an essentially cannibalistic exercise—albeit, in Redfield's terms, “vicarious.”<sup>62</sup> The god departs the mortal battlefield after Book 5, but his “spirit” continues to imbue warriors. They are likened to Ares βροτολογός following the god's withdrawal from the battlefield.<sup>63</sup> He reduces men to ravening creatures that glut themselves on blood and death. Afflicted with a divine compulsion, men turn on each other, “consumed” with a boundless fury.

#### ACHILLES' APPETITE

Achilles has a unique association with blood in the poem that is a critical and fitting expression of his temper. In Books 19–21 the hero single-handedly causes a bloodbath, one in which he literally immerses himself when he

58. See Loraux, “Corps vulnerable” (n. 48 above), 335–54.

59. See F. Hartog, “Self-Cooking Beef and the Drinks of Ares,” in *The Cuisine of Sacrifice among the Greeks*, ed. M. Detienne and J.-P. Vernant, trans. P. Wissing (Chicago, 1989), 170–82; and B. Lincoln, *Death, War, and Sacrifice* (Chicago, 1991), 202–3, on Herodotus' account of Ares' worship in Scythia. Hartog (181) notes that as well as animal victims, Ares alone of the Scythian gods has humans sacrificed to him. This ritual to Ares involves blood, whereas sacrifices to other gods do not. It includes pouring the animal's blood on a saber, and making a libation; “Ares ‘drinks’ this blood.” At the same time, “the victims' bodies undergo another violence, mutilation.” The latter ritual is a literal “disarmament” since their right arms are cut off. See Griffin, *Homer* (n. 51 above), 20–21, for parallels in the *Nibelungenlied* and elsewhere. Cf. Hdt. 4.64, describing the Scythian custom in which a young warrior drank the blood of his first victim. Homeric men do eat blood, although cooked, thus *Od.* 20.25–27.

60. R. Rabel, “Agamemnon's *Aristeia*,” *SyllClass* 2 (1990): 6. Rabel notes that intraspecies aggression is “carried out for purposes of reproduction, control of territory, and dominance”; while “predation . . . involves unmitigated violence, is lacking in rituals, and has as its goal the death and consumption of prey.”

61. See 5.31, 455 (with μαιφόνος); also 5.518, 846, 909 (ceased from his ἀνδροκτασία); cf. 21.421. Vermeule (*Aspects*, 94) suggests that “mortals, βροτοί, are etymologically destined to be eaten, or at least filled with delicious nourishing blood, βρότος.”

62. Redfield, *Nature and Culture* (n. 39 above), 97–99. I am indebted to the reviewer who drew my attention to this discussion.

63. See 8.349; 11.295; 12.130; 13.298, 802; cf. ἀρηκταμένω, 22.72. Cf. where warriors take part in his μένος (18.264); and where Hector is imbued with Ἄρης (17.210–11).



slaughters the Trojans in the waters of Scamander. Like other warriors, he is motivated by bloodlust, an appetite that powerfully underscores his ἀριστεία. But the hero's "hunger" is demonstrably different from that of other warriors. This aspect of Achilles and the evolving contexts with which αἷμα is associated as the poem progresses mean that blood imagery significantly contributes to the nature of his rampage. Especially notable, too, is that the figure of Ares is nowhere else so manifest as in Achilles' rampage. A cannibalistic appetite characterizes both.

As might be expected, Achilles' ἀριστεία is far bloodier than those of the other major ἀριστεύοντες. Towards the end of Book 20 and the beginning of Book 21, a literal accumulation of blood determines the tone of the ἀριστεία. There are in total 11 references to αἷμα in Books 20 and 21 (Achilles' rampage begins at 19.367). Achilles is wholly responsible for all the bloodspill described here, which is in part an inevitable consequence of the narrow focus of these books (and the general nature of ἀριστεῖαι in the *Iliad*). But two aspects relating to blood distinguish Achilles' rampage. First, αἷμα occurs with a concentrated frequency, and second, it is associated with a narrow range of contexts, primarily individual death and carnage.<sup>64</sup> Eight references to blood are directly consequent on death, describing both individual and mass fatalities. Achilles slays a number of men who explicitly bleed to death, a feat that no other hero achieves. He is also, seemingly, entirely responsible for the mass carnage that is described both formulaically and in a novel variation. The familiar image of the earth stained red with blood (20.494, reiterated at 499–500), is climactically transformed when the river Scamander becomes reddened with the blood of Achilles' numberless victims (21.21; cf. 21.325). Interestingly, the narrator describes an ascending scale of "bloodiness": from gory individual slayings, to mass carnage, then focusing on the blood-spattered perpetrator of these deeds, and finally depicting him immersed in the red waters of Scamander. It is clear that the character of the rampage derives, in part, from the relative density and number of blood references in the rampage, of which the majority describe death.

Achilles' appetite for αἷμα and φόνος molds the bloody cast of his ἀριστεία. His grisly desire is coupled with an explicit refusal to eat and drink, and to take part in the communal ritual of meal taking. Early in Book 19, the Achaean chiefs urge the grief-stricken hero to take some food, but he declines (19.213–14):

... τό μοι οὔ τι μετὰ φρεσὶ ταῦτα μέμνην,  
ἀλλὰ φόνος τε καὶ αἷμα καὶ ἀργαλέος στόνος ἀνδρῶν.

... These things [food and drink] mean nothing to my heart  
but slaughter does, and blood, and the grievous groaning of men.

He rejects food and drink again at 19.306–7:

64. Individual: 20.470, 476; 21.119, 123; mass: 20.494, 499; cf. Achilles spattered with "gore" at 20.503. The exceptions are the blood from Achilles' flesh wound (21.167) and a reference to Aeneas' ancestral claims, that is, his "bloodline" (20.241; cf. 19.105, 111). At 19.214, Achilles speaks of blood and death.

μή με πρὶν σίτοιο κελεύετε μηδὲ ποτῆτος  
ἄσασθαι φίλον ἦτορ, ἐπεὶ μ' ἄχος αἰνὸν ἰκάνει·

Stop urging me to satisfy the heart in me  
with food and drink, since this strong sorrow has come upon me. . . .

At 19.312–13, the narrator again recounts how the Achaean chiefs remain with Achilles, attempting to console the hero. But to no avail:

. . . οὐδέ τι θυμῷ  
τέρπετο, πρὶν πολέμου στόμα δύμεναι αἱματόεντος.

. . . yet his heart would not be comforted  
until he went into the jaws of bleeding battle.

Achilles' appetite for food and drink are replaced by a need for vengeance, represented as a desire for φόνος and blood. As Pietro Pucci observes, "a different gruesome sort of nurture satiates his heart—the blood of his enemy."<sup>65</sup> The hero forsakes taking part in the ritual of meals in favor of "war-fare." Like Ares, he is "insatiate of battle" (13.746; cf. 13.621, 22.218).<sup>66</sup>

On the face of it, Achilles' desire for blood and death seem little different from those of other warriors. Yet there are significant distinctions. First, the hero explicitly rejects taking a meal. Elsewhere, meal taking has simply been omitted. Second, Achilles is alone in rejecting a meal. Where other warriors have forsaken meals, they have done so as a group. In this instance, on Day 4, the others are said to have eaten, as Zeus explains to Athena (19.342–48). Not eating, and being alone in not eating, is a manifestation of Achilles' removal from society.<sup>67</sup> His isolation distinguishes him and is a characteristic of his ἄριστεία. A third and highly significant element is the manner in which Achilles' appetite for battle is expressed. Elsewhere, predator similes represent a warrior's appetite for battle. Men are compared to blood-hungry animals, suggesting that the desire is somewhat abstract and at one remove. A metaphor for fighting and killing, the bestial consumption of blood remains just that, a metaphor. Achilles, however, himself articulates his blood-lust. He declares his desire without the mediation of the narrator, either directly, or through the use of similes. The absence of simile, and the fact that it is his own θυμός—an "organ" frequently compelling hunger<sup>68</sup>—that now compels him, renders the hero's desire more immediate and more transgressive.<sup>69</sup> There is another aspect to Achilles' predatory behavior that

65. Pucci, *Sirens* (n. 46 above), 104–5. See also Segal (*Mutilation* [n. 18 above], 48–49), who comments that "the refusal of food in book 19 reflected Achilles' total concentration on death and bloodshed."

66. It is worth noting the grisly allusion to eating in the simile at 20.495–502 that likens Achilles to oxen threshing barley—but Achilles is threshing corpses. From these, blood splashes on the axle and wheels of his chariot, while the hero himself is covered in "gore" (see n. 64 above). Achilles is there compared to a raging fire (20.490); cf. how fire "consumes" at 23.183.

67. The rejection of another social ritual underscores Achilles' ambiguous status: he refuses to wash the "gore" (βρότον αἱματόεντα) from himself until Patroclus' corpse is burned (23.41).

68. See Clarke, *Flesh* (n. 50 above), pp. 69, 88, n. 71; G. Nagy, *The Best of the Achaeans: Concepts of the Hero in Archaic Greek Poetry*, rev. ed. (Baltimore, 1999), 136–37.

69. Cf. 22.346; 24.42–43; *Od.* 17.603; also 12.300; cf. 19.319–20. At *Il.* 20.77–78 Achilles' θυμός impels him αἵματος ἄσαι Ἄρηα ταλαύρινον πολεμιστήν. Cf. 22.267, where again he gives expression (in words) to this compulsion.

distinguishes him: while warriors in the *Iliad* are compared to lions who would feast on other kinds of animals, Achilles expresses a desire to feast on the death and blood of his own kind. Like Ares, Achilles would glut himself on blood and death, not as an animal feeding on prey, but driven by a nihilistic urge that is visited on his own kind.

Achilles' bloodthirstiness underscores his ἀριστεία, a brutal and bloody rampage that affirms his role as "best of the Achaeans." Throughout, he is characterized as both divine and bestial. The excess of his rampage contrasts with and calls into question the seemingly idealized heroism of the earlier books of the *Iliad*. Only the *Doloneia*, an anomalous and brutal exercise that describes a different sort of heroism, sees such a close articulation between animal and warrior. It too describes an excess of blood. That incident more than any other parallels Achilles' rampage. What distinguishes Achilles even from that episode is that he carries out his slaughter alone. Moreover, where Odysseus and Diomedes are likened to predatory animals, Achilles is a ravening hybrid, a man-beast-god driven by an all-consuming desire for the death and blood of mortals.

#### CONCLUSION

Blood is an important motif in the *Iliad*, one hitherto given comparatively little prominence in Homeric studies. This paper has sought to demonstrate its importance and its development throughout the poem. Initially, in relation to individuals, bloodspill functions as a badge of honor, a highly visible adornment attesting to a hero's mortality and his willingness to sacrifice life for glory. Likewise, in depictions of mass carnage, the image of the earth flowing with blood concludes grand portraits of combat. But blood and bloodspill are evolving motifs. As the war becomes progressively more laborious, so blood ceases to have "economic" or even "heroic" value, as when in Book 4 Menelaus' bleeding injury is compared to a king's treasure. It is revealed to be a finite and "priceless" substance because it is representative of mortality. At the same time as αἷμα becomes closely associated with grim death, so too warriors—especially Achaean warriors—are brutalized. They pass over ritual meal taking and are compared to gluttonous animals. Blood, a by-product of fighting, is the substance upon which, figuratively, they would feast. Ares is the inspiration for their bloody pursuit, Ares the warrior god, whose αἱμοποσία is at the core of his fighting nature. Achilles, at the end of the *Iliad*, is the ultimate embodiment of this grisly appetite, apparently seeking to overcome his own mortality by immersing himself in the gore and death of others. Ultimately, the sanguinary exploits of Ares and Achilles reveal not heroism but monstrosity. Their insatiable appetite for the blood of men—no longer simply a metaphor for fighting fury—is both self-consuming and self-destructive. The poet of the *Iliad* thereby graphically conveys the savagery, and ultimately, futility, of battle.

*University of New England*