

Epic

Lecture 4

Main issues discussed in this lecture

- Battle scenes: recurrent motifs and narrative techniques
 - Descriptions of killing
 - Catalogues of dead warriors
 - Obituaries
 - The poet's use of the *aristeia*
 - The deaths of Sarpedon, Patroclus and Hector.
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Important questions I

- How does Homer portray war?
 - How does he portray death? What view of life and death is given by the poet?
 - Which narrative techniques are employed by the poet to make the battlefield scenes vivid?
 - How are minor warriors portrayed on the battlefield?
 - How does the poet handle catalogues of the dead? How does the poet avoid that we become immune to human suffering by so many descriptions of heroes killing and dying?
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Important questions II

- Which techniques and motifs does the poet use in the obituaries of warriors?
 - How does the poet achieve pathos in battle scenes?
 - How does the poet build up major battle scenes? You need to know what an *aristeia* is. Which elements are added if we compare the descriptions of their deaths with those of minor warriors? I.e. how does he mark their deaths as special and different from those of other warriors?
 - Which motifs do we commonly find in battle field speeches?
 - The presence of the gods on the battle scene: divine spectators, interventions
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Iliad 5.40-48

- And Agamemnon fixed his spear in his back between the shoulder-blades, and drive it on out through the chest. He fell with a crash, and his armour clattered about him. Idomeneus killed Phaistos, son of the Maionian boros, who had come from the fertile ground of Tarne. Idomeneus the famous spearman stabbed him with his long spear in the right shoulder, as he tried to mount behind his team: he crashed from the chariot, and the hateful darkness took him. Idomeneus' followers then set to stripping his armour.
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Iliad 5.50-58

- Strophios' son Skamandrios, skilled in the hunt was caught by Menelaos' son of Atreus with his sharp spear – he was a fine huntsman: Artemis herself had taught him to shoot down all the wild things that the forest breed in the mountains. But Artemis the archer-goddess did not protect him then, not his archer's skill in which he had excelled before: but the son of Atreus, the great spearman Menelaos, stabbed him with his spear as he fled before him, in the back between the shoulder-blades, and drove it on out through the chest. He crashed down on his face, and his armour clattered around him.

Iliad 5.65-75

- As Meriones caught up with him, running him down, he struck him in the right buttock: and the spearpoint went right on through under the bone into his bladder. He screamed, and dropped on his knees, and death enfolded him. And Meges killed Pedaios, Antenor's son – a bastard son, but godlike Theano reared him with all the care she gave her own dear children, to please her husband. Phyleus' son, the famous spearman, came close behind him and struck him with his sharp spear in the nape at the back of his head: the bronze pushed straight on through his teeth and cut away his tongue. He crashed in the dust, the cold bronze clenched in his teeth.
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Iliad 5.76-88 & 95-98

- Eurypylos, Euaimon's son, killed godlike Hypsenor, son of proud-hearted Dolopion, who was the priest of Skamandros and honoured like a god by the people. As he fled before him, Eurypylos, the splendid son of Euaimon, running him down lunged forward with his sword and slashed him at his shoulder, and sheared away his whole massive arm. The arm dropped bloody on the ground and over his eyes came the surge of death, and strong fate took him. So they laboured in the fighting's fury. But as for the son of Tydeus you would not know which side he fought on, whether he was of the trojan camp or the Achaian. He swept over the plain like a river full in winter spate, which bursts the dykes in the speed of its current.
- Now when Lykaon's splendid son, Pandaros, saw him sweeping over the plain and driving the battalions before him, he quickly drew his curved bow against the son of Tydeus and shot him as he came.

Iliad 5.101-106

- At this Lykaon's splendid son gave a great shout: 'On, Trojans, you great hearts, horsemen skilled with the whip! The best of the Achaians is hit, and I do not think he will hold out long against the arrow's power, if it truly lord Apollo, son of Zeus, who inspired my coming here from Lycia.' So he spoke in triumph, but the long arrow has not brought Diomedes down.'
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Iliad 16.458-469

- 'And the father of men and gods did as she wished, but drops of blood rain to the ground, to do honour to his dear son, whom he was now to see killed by Patroclus, in fertile Troy, far from his native land. When they had advanced to close range, Patroclus cast and hit famous Thrasymelos, the brave lieutenant of lord Sarpedon, in the lower belly, and collapsed his strength. Sarpedon then made his attack. He missed the man with his shining spear, but the spear struck Pedasos the horse in the right shoulder; he shrieked as the life breathed from him, and fell screaming in the dust, and his spirit flitted away.'
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Iliad 16.479-500

- 'Then after him Patroclus rose to his cast, and the weapon did not fly wasted from his hand, but struck him where the midriff is close to the beating heart. He fell as an oak-tree falls or a poplar or a tall pine which carpenters cut down in the mountains with fresh-whetted axes to make a ship's timber. So he lay there stretched flat in front of his horses and chariot, bellowing, and clutching at the blood-soaked dust. Like a bull that a lion kills in attack on the hard, gleaming and proud among the shambling cattle, and it dies roaring under the jaws of the lion, so the leader of the Lycian shield-fighters struggled as he died at Patroclus' hands, and called out to his dear companion: 'Glaukos, dear friend, warrior among men, now is the time above all to show yourself a spearman and a brave fighter. Not grim war must be all your desire, if you have courage in you. ... After this I shall be a shame and disgrace to you all your days without end, if the Achaians strip me of my armour where I have fallen, here by the assembly of ships.'
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Iliad 16.502-507

- As he spoke, the end of death covered over his eyes and nostrils. Patroklos braced his foot against his chest and pulled the spear out of his flesh, and the midriff came with it: it was both life and spear-point that he drew from Sarpedon's body. And the Myrmidons held close by his snorting horses, trying to bolt now they had left their master's chariot.'
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Iliad 16.559-568

- ‘if only we could capture his body and dishonour it, and strip the armour from his shoulders, and bring down some of his companions with the pitiless bronze as they fight to defend him! So he spoke and they were ready for defence even without his urging. When both sides had strengthened their ranks, Trojans and Lycians and Myrmidons and Achaians, they clashed together over the dead man’s body, shouting terribly, and the men’s armour rang aloud. And Zeus spread a deadly darkness over the furious battle, so there should be dire work in the fighting for his dear son.’
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Iliad 16.577-587

- 'Now as he was putting his hand to the corpse glorious Hektor struck him with a stone on the head: his head was smashed completely in two inside the heavy helmet, and he fell face-forward over the dead body, and death the breaker of spirits poured round him. Anguish for his fallen companion came over Patroklos, and he darted through the front-fighters like a swift hawk who scatters the jackdaws and starlings. So fast, horseman Patroklos, did you charge straight for the Lycians and the Trojans, angered at heart for your companion. And he hit Sthenelaios, dear son of Ithaimenes, in the neck with a stone and broke through its tendons.'
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Iliad 16.818-829

- ‘But when Hektor saw great-hearted Patroklos moving back, and wounded by the sharp spear, he came up close to him through the ranks and stabbed him with his spear in the base of his belly, and drove the bronze right through. He fell with a crash, and brought anguish to the Achaian army. As when a lion masters an untiring boar in battle, when they fight in high fury on the peak of a mountain over a little spring of water where both want to drink, and the boar, panting hard, is brought down under the lion’s power – so Hektor, son of Priam, with close spear-thrust took the life of the brave son of Menoitios where he had killed many men, and spoke winged words in triumph over him.’
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Iliad 16.843-846 & 851-857

Then with the strength low in you, horseman Patroklos, you said to him: Yes, make your great boasts now, Hektor. You were given the victory by Zeus, son of Kronos and Apollo – it was they who overpowered me with ease; they took the armour from my shoulders.

I tell you another thing, and you mark it well in your mind. You yourself, you too will not live long, but already now death and strong fate are standing close beside you, to bring you down at the hands of Achilles, great son of Aiakos' stock. As he spoke the end of death enfolded him: and his spirit went on the way to hades, weeping for its fate, and the youth and manhood it must leave.

Iliad 22.1-6

- Then the Trojans, panicked like deer spread through the city . They leaned against the fine battlements, and dried the sweat from their bodies and drank and slaked their thirst. And meanwhile the Achaians came up closer to the wall, sloping their shields against their shoulders. Then his cruel fate shackled Hector to stay there outside in front of Ilios and the Skaian gates.
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Iliad 22.21-34 & 37 & 56-58

- So speaking he [Achilles] set out for the city with high thoughts in mind, moving at speed like a champion horse pulling a chariot, who runs lightly at the gallop over the plain. So Achilleus set his legs and knees running fast. The old man Priam's eyes were the first to see him, as he rushed on over the plain glittering like the star that comes in late summer, and its light is seen the clearest among the many stars in the darkness of light: men call this star Orion's Dog, and it is the brightest of stars, yet a sign of evil, bringing much fever on poor mortals. Such was the shining of the bronze on his breast as he ran. The old man groaned aloud, and lifted his hands above him and beat his head.
- The old man stretched out his arms and spoke pitiably to his son: ... No, come inside the walls, my child, so you can save the men and women of Troy. Do not give a great triumph to the son of Peleus and have your own dear life taken from you.

Iliad 22.82-85 & 90-97

- Hektor, 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.
 - So those two called to their dear son in tears, imploring him over and over again. But they could not move Hektor's heart, but he waited there for huge Achilles as he came closer. As a mountain snake in his hole waits the approach of a man, when he has eaten poisonous herbs and savage anger has sunk deep into him, and he glares out malevolently, coiling round his hole; so Hektor kept his fury unabated and would not give his back, leaning his bright shield against a jutting buttress.
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Iliad 22.98-114

- But he spoke in dismay to his own dear heart: ‘What am I to do? If I go back inside the gates and the wall, Poulydamas will be the first to lay blame on me, because he urged me to lead the Trojans back to the city during this last fatal night, when godlike Achilles had roused himself. But I did not take his advice – it would have been far better if I had. Now that I have destroyed my people through my own arrant folly, I feel shame before the men of Troy and the women of Troy with their trailing dresses, that some man, a worse man than I will say: ‘Hector trusted in his own strength and destroyed his people.’ That is what they will say and it would be far better for me to face Achilles and either kill him and return home, or die a glorious death myself in front of my city. But suppose I put down my bossed shield and heavy helmet, and lean my spear against the wall, and go out as I am to meet the excellent Achilles, and promise to return Helen and all her property with her to the sons of Atreus for their keeping...’
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Iliad 22.122-131

- But what need for this debate in my heart? I fear that if I go up to him he will not show me any pity or regard for my appeal, but will simply kill me unarmed like a woman, when I have taken off my armour. There can be no sweet murmuring with him now, like boy and girl at the trysting-tree or rock, the way a boy and girl murmur sweetly together. Better to close and fight as soon as can be. We can see then to which of us the Olympian is giving the victory. Such were his thoughts as he waited.'
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Iliad 22.131-143

- And Achilles came close on him like Enyalios the god of war, the warrior with the flashing helmet, shaking his terrible spear of Pelian ash over his right shoulder: and the bronze on his body shone like the light of a blazing fire or the sun when it rises. And trembling took hold of Hektor when he saw him. Now he no longer had the courage to stand his ground where he was, but he left the gates behind him and ran in terror: and the son of Peleus leapt after him, confident in the speed of his legs. As a hawk in the mountains, quickest of all flying things, swoops after a trembling dove with ease: she flies in terror before him, but he keeps close behind her, screaming loud, and lunging for her time after time as his heart urges him to kill. So Achilles flew straight
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Iliad 22.137-157

- And Hektor fled away from him under the walls of Troy, setting his legs running fast. They sped past the look-out place and the wind-tossed fig-tree, keeping all the time to the wagon-track a little way out from the wall, and came to the two well-heads of lovely water: here the twin springs of swirling Skamandros shoot up from the ground. One spring runs with warm water, and steam rises all around it as if a fire were burning there. But the other even in summer flows out cold as hail, or frozen snow, or water turned to ice. There close beside these springs are fine broad washing-troughs made of stone, where the Trojan wives' and their lovely daughters used to wash their bright clothes, in earlier times, in peace, before the sons of the Achaians came. The two men ran past here, one in flight, the other one chasing him.
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Iliad 22.158-166

- A brave man was running in front, but a far greater one was in pursuit, and they ran at speed, since it was no sacrificial beast or ox-hide shield they were competing for – such as are the usual prizes that men win in the foot-race – but they were running for the life of Hektor the tamer of horses. As when champion strong-footed horses wheel round the turning-posts running at full stretch, when a great prize is there to be won, a tripod or a woman, in the funeral games for a man who has died: so those two raced round the city of Priam, circling it three times with all speed of their legs, and all the gods looked on.
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Iliad 22.167-185

- The father of men and gods was the first of them to speak: 'oh, I love this man who is being pursued around the wall under the gaze of my eyes. My heart is saddened for Hektor, who has burned the thigh-bones of many oxen to me on the peaks of valleyed Ida ... Well, then, give thought to it, and consider whether we shall save him from death, or bring him down now, for all his bravery, at the hands of Achilles son of Peleus. Then the bright-eyed goddess Athene said to him: 'Father, master of the bright lightening and the dark clouds, what is this you are saying? Do you intend to take a man who is mortal and long ago doomed by fate, and release him from grim death? Do it then – but we other gods will not all approve you.' Then Zeus the could-gatherer answered her: Do not worry, Tritogeneia, dear child. I do not speak with my heart in full earnest, and my intention to you is kind. Do as your purpose directs and do not hold back any longer.
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Iliad 22.188-193 & 199-204

- And swift Achilles kept driving Hektor on with his relentless pursuit. As when a dog has started the fawn of a deer from its lair in the mountains, and chases it on through the hollows and the glens: even if it takes to cover and crouches hidden under a bush, the dog smells out the track and runs on unerringly until he finds it. So Hektor could not throw off the swift-footed son of Peleus.
 - As a man in a dream is unable to pursue someone trying to escape, and the other cannot run away just because he cannot give chase: so Achilles could not catch him with his running, nor Hektor get away. And how could Hektor have kept clear of the fates of death, if Apollo had not come close to him for the last and final time, and spurred strength in him and speed to his legs?
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Iliad 22.208-213

- But when they came round to the well-heads for the fourth time, then the Father opened out his golden scales. In the pans he put two fates of death's long sorrow, one for Achilles and one for Hektor the tamer of horses, and he took the scales in the middle and lifted them up: and Hektor's day of doom sank down, away into Hades, and Phoibos Apollo left him.
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Iliad 22.224-228 & 232-241

- So Athene spoke, and Achilles was happy at heart, and did as she told him: so he stood there leaning on his bronze-barbed ash spear. She then left him and caught up with godlike Hektor, taking the form and tireless voice of Deiphobos. She came close and spoke winged words to him...
 - Then great Hektor of the glittering helmet said to her: 'Deiphobos, you have always been the brother I loved far the most of all the sons born to Hekabe and Priam. And now my heart is minded to honour you yet more, since you had the courage, when your eyes saw my trouble, to come outside the wall on my account, while the others stay inside. Then the bright eyed Athene said to him: 'Brother, our father and honoured mother, and my friends around me, did indeed beseech me one after another, and implored me again and again to stay where I was inside – such is the terror on them all.
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Iliad 22.250-259

- Son of Peleus, I shall not run away from you anymore as I did when you chased me three times round the great city of Priam, and I did not dare to stop and take your attack. But now my heart prompts me to stand and face you – I shall kill or be killed. But first let us swear here before the gods – they will be the best witnesses to keep watch on our agreement. 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 Achaians – and you do the same.'
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Iliad 22.260-267

- Then swift-footed Achilles scowled at him and said: ‘Hektor, do not talk to me of agreements, you madman. There are no treaties of trust between lions and men, wolves and lambs share no unity of heart, but are fixed in hatred of each other for all time – so there can be no friendship for you and me, there will be no oaths between us, before one or the other falls and gives his blood to Ares.
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Iliad 22.306-323

- So speaking he drew the sharp sword that hung long and heavy at his side, gathered himself, and swooped like a high-flying eagle which darts down to the plain through the dark clouds to snatch up a baby lamb or a cowering hare. So Hektor swooped to attack, flourishing his sharp sword. And Achilles charged against him, his heart filled with savage fury. In front of his chest he held the covering of his lovely decorated shield, and the bright four-bossed helmet nodded on his head, with the beautiful golden hairs that Hephaistos had set thick along the crest shimmering round it. Like the Evening Star on its path among the stars in the darkness of the night, the loveliest star set in the sky, such was the light gleaming from the point of the sharp spear Achilles held quivering in his right hand, as he purposed death for godlike Hektor, looking over his fine body to find the most vulnerable place. All the rest of his body was covered by his bronze armour, the fine armour that he had stripped from mighty Patroklos when he killed him.
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Iliad 22.324-330

- But flesh showed where the collar-bones hold the join of neck and shoulders, at the gullet, where a man's life is most quickly destroyed. Godlike Achilles drove in there with his spear as Hektor charged him, and the point went right through his soft neck: but the ash spear with its weight of bronze did not cut the windpipe so that Hektor could still speak and answer Achilles. He crashed in dust and godlike Achilles triumphed over him.
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Iliad 22.335-354

- Now dogs and birds will maul you hideously, while the Achaians will give Patroklos full burial.' Then with the strength low in him Hektor of the glinting helmet answered: 'I beseech you by your life and knees and by your parents, do not let the dogs of the Achaian 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 my due rite and burning. Then swift-footed Achilles scowled at him and said: 'Make me no appeals, you dog, by knees or parents. I wish I could eat you myself, that the fury in my heart would drive me to cut you in pieces and eat your flesh raw, for all that you have done to me. So no man is going to keep the dogs away from your head, not even if they bring here and weigh out ten times or twenty times your ransom, not even if Dardanian Priam offers to pay your own weight in gold. Not even so will your honoured mother lay you on the bier and mourn for you, her own child, but the dogs and birds will share you for their feast and leave nothing.'
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Iliad 22.355-366

- Then dying Hektor of the glinting helmet said to him: 'Yes I can tell it – I know you well, and I had no chance of swaying you: your heart is like iron in your breast. But take care now, or I may bring the gods' anger on you, on that day when for all your bravery Paris and Phoibos Apollo will destroy you at the Skaian gates.' As he spoke the end of death enfolded him; and 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. Then godlike Achilles spoke to him, dead though he was: Die! I shall take my death at whatever time Zeus and the other immortal gods wish to bring it on me.'
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