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Journal

Classical Antiquity, 25(1)

ISSN

0278-6656

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Publication Date

2006-04-01

Peer reviewed



Falling into Time in Homer's *Iliad*

This paper addresses the question of the relation between mortal and immortal time in the *Iliad* as it is represented by the physical act of falling. I begin by arguing that falling serves as a point of reference throughout the poem for a concept of time that is specifically human. It is well known that mortals fall at the moment of death in the poem, but it has not been recognized that the movement of the fall is also connected with the time of birth, aging, and generation. In light of the significance of falling for mortals, I then go on to examine the problematic case of two particular immortals who fall in the *Iliad*. When Hephaestus tumbles down to earth from Olympus, and when Ares is knocked flat on the battle field, both gods, I argue, also “fall into” human time. This complicates their status as ageless and eternal beings, and draws into question the different temporal registers at work in the narrative (such as repetition, “long time,” and time that is steady or continuous [*empedos*]). The single action of falling brings together several key concepts in the poem which hinge on the issue of the separation between the mortal and immortal spheres in the *Iliad*.

Our human vision depends on gravity,
that is, on the fact that one does or does not fall.
Paul Virilio, “Gravitational Space”

The movement of falling—of feeling one’s center of balance slip, one’s limbs give way, and, eventually, of hitting the ground—is central to the experience of mortality in the *Iliad*. As the regularity of such phrases as $\lambda\upsilon\sigma\epsilon\ \delta\grave{\epsilon}\ \gamma\upsilon\iota\alpha$ (“his

This paper was first presented at the UCLA *Temporalities* Conference and has benefited greatly from the comments and suggestions of the audience there, as well as from audiences at subsequent versions of this talk delivered at UC Irvine, Princeton University, Scripps College, Oberlin College, and Newnham College, Cambridge. My thanks to Kathryn Morgan for inviting me to speak on the topic of Homer and time. I also wish to thank Mark Griffith, Sheila Murnaghan, William G. Thalmann, and the anonymous readers for *Classical Antiquity* for their guidance on revising this paper for publication.

limbs went slack”) and δούπησεν δὲ πεσών, ἀράβησε δὲ τεύχε’ ἐπ’ αὐτῷ (“he fell with a thud and his armor rang about him”) indicate, falling in the *Iliad* is the predominant device by which Homer registers the moment of death on the battle field. Falling to one’s death is an irreversible action which is connected to the unalterable lot of mankind.¹ By contrast, Apollo makes the point clearly in the *Eumenides* that, while gods may be bound in a form of quasi-death, those bonds can always be undone:

πέδας μὲν ἂν λύσειεν, ἔστι τοῦδ’ ἄκος
καὶ κάρτα πολλὴ μηχανὴ λυτήριος·
ἄνδρὸς δ’ ἐπειδὰν αἶμ’ ἀνασπάσῃ κόνις
ἅπαξ θανόντος, οὔτις ἔστ’ ἀνάστασις.
τούτων ἐπρωδᾶς οὐκ ἐποίησεν πατήρ
οὐμός, τὰ δ’ ἄλλα πάντ’ ἄνω τε καὶ κάτω
στρέφω τίθησιν οὐδὲν ἀσθμαίνων μένει.

Aeschylus *Eumenides*, 645–51²

Zeus could undo the bonds (of gods), such hurt can be made
good,
and there is every kind of way to get out. But once
the dust has drained down all a man’s blood, once the man
has died, there is no standing up for him again.
This is a thing for which my father never made
curative spells. All other states, without effort
of hard breath, he can completely rearrange.

For this reason, among others, we do not expect the Olympian gods to have the kinds of bodies that fall. Yet, in the *Iliad*, they do. At specific points within the epic, Hephaestus, Ares, and Aphrodite each join with humans in the act of having fallen. By imitating what is, elsewhere in the poem, a uniquely human posture, these Olympian falls not only open up a new avenue through which to explore the much-discussed topic of “immortal death” in Homer,³ they also throw into new light the question of how differently gods and humans in the *Iliad* experience space and time. For, as I will go on to show, the significance of falling in the *Iliad* resonates beyond the act of dying, to encompass a complex interplay between different temporal registers at work in the poem.

1. In the vast majority of cases in the *Iliad*, the time of one’s death is fixed by the moment of one’s fall. As Lowenstam 1981: 85n.29 observes, λῦσε δὲ γυῖα always signals death in the *Iliad*, as do λέλυντο δὲ γυῖα and ὑπέλυσε δὲ γυῖα, with the exception of 23.726. See further nn.9 and 17 infra. On Iliadic death in general, see e.g. Fenik 1968; Griffin 1980; Garland 1981; Morrison 1999.

2. All translations by Richmond Lattimore (with occasional modifications).

3. On which see Braswell 1971; Willcock 1977; Levy 1979; Vermeule 1979: 118–44; Loraux 1986.

What relationship can we posit between falling and time?⁴ On a purely physical level, falling sweeps the body up into its own sense of time, its own “free-fall” (where one’s weight is in its purest state), beginning with the moment that it loses its secure, vertical standing on the earth and ending at the point when it hits the ground. To set our reading of the fall within the context of the *Iliad*, we can state that the experience of falling onto the Trojan plain subjects the body to two kinds of time at once. The first is the speed at which one falls, which is determined by the weight of one’s body as it moves through space. The second, and the one that is most readily apparent given the subject of the poem, is the time of death. In tracing a path from vertical to horizontal, falling takes the body from a firm, rooted position on the earth to one where it begins to wear away into the earth’s physical matter, as the ground soaks up the blood of a fallen warrior and dust mixes in with the hair, or as the teeth bite into the earth at the moment of death. The physics of the Homeric fall can be explained by the ancient principle that heavy objects must, eventually, drop downwards towards the earth.⁵ But, if we go so far as to posit this as a “law” of the Homeric natural world, we are left with the problem of explaining how gods, who also have bodies and who also move downwards through space, do or do not partake in the activity of falling. Part of the difficulty here lies in seeking to identify what kind of body the gods inhabit. As divinities, they are immune from the usual vicissitudes and inconveniences of time and space, yet as anthropomorphic beings their immortal status is sometimes complicated by their corporeality. Falling is one movement which exposes the gods’ somatic side, and that prompts us to ask new questions about the way that divinities experience their bodies. For example, how do the effects of vertigo or velocity factor into Hephaestus’ fall from Olympus? Is it possible for a god to lose control of his body and to fall victim to the effects of his own weight? Do gods’ bodies change in some way when they come into contact with the earth?

The three Olympians who fall in the *Iliad* also do so in ways that are problematic for the cohesive structure of the poem. Their falls allow us to see a small but telling stumbling block in the passage between immortal and mortal time and space, a passage that the gods otherwise appear to navigate

4. For other approaches to time (not having to do with falling) in the *Iliad*, see e.g. Fränkel 1955; Bergren 1980; Bakker 1999; Pucci 2000; Kullman 2001; Bassett 2003: 26–46. For approaches to falling and time from a modern perspective, see Virilio 1994; Gilpin 1994 (my thanks to Ann Bergren for alerting me to this work). For a comparative study of falling in epic, see Greene 1963. Unsurprisingly, one area of literary studies that has paid a fair amount of attention to falling is work on Milton’s *Paradise Lost* (cf. Jones 1975; Quint 2004).

5. This can be deduced from the way that objects fall to earth in Homer and Greek thought overall. See Aristotle *Phys.* 216a13; Hes. *Th.* 722–23; West ad loc., and my n.55 infra. In the *Odyssey*, the description of Sisyphus’ stone, which a “mighty force” compels to roll back down the hill, speaks to an ancient principle of the downward movement of weighted objects, translated by Lattimore as “the force of gravity” (τότ’ ἀποστρέψασκε κραταίς: *Od.* 11.597). Only in Hesiod’s *χάσμα μέγα*, located beyond the gates of Tartarus, does epic entertain the idea of a region, “terrible to gods and men,” where objects that fall do not reach the ground, even after the passing of a year (*Th.* 740–44).

seamlessly in their travels between Olympus and earth. I argue here that it is the physical engagement of two of these gods (Hephaestus and Ares) with the human sphere, and—speci cally—with the human movement of falling, that causes them accidentally to “fall into time.” By this I mean that, on certain rare but telling occasions in the poem, gods come close to experiencing, through the downward pitch of their bodies to the ground, what it is for time to have length and what it means to su er through the mortal cycle of events that are connected with the earth.

This paper is organized into two parts. In the rst, I examine the movement of the fall in the mortal sphere, showing how it serves as a temporal marker within the “human” time frame of the poem. I argue that falling is not only connected with the human time of death, but also with the time of birth, aging, and generation, and that in turn the falling of bodies in the poem drives the plot forward from one death to the next. In this part of the paper, I also argue that the Olympians typically remain aloof from the mortal experience of time, inhabiting their own temporal zone which is set far apart from that of the mortals on the ground. In the second half of the paper, I examine what happens to the gods’ conception of time on the rare occasions when they are caught up in the human activity of falling. By comparing human and divine falls side by side, we will be able to plot an outline for ways in which the divine body, through the act of falling, destabilizes the idea of a clearly demarcated separation between the mortal and immortal realms.

MORTAL FALLS

The verb πίπτω, in all its forms, and the verb ἐρείπω in its aorist form (ῥίριπε) occur over 150 times in the poem in connection with the falling and death of the warrior on the battle eld. As every reader of the *Iliad* knows, Homer tends to dwell on the actual moment of the fall, adding details that make it both graphic and familiar—such as the armor ringing out, hair being strewn in the dust, teeth biting into the earth, bodies face up or face down, and blood soaking into the ground.⁶ To lose one’s footing in the *Iliad* is, in the vast majority of cases, to lose one’s life. To fall is to be pulled into mortality—to be pulled appropriately downward towards death.

Elsewhere in archaic literature, particularly in Hesiod’s *Theogony*, the source of that downward pull is often located beneath the earth, in the Underworld.⁷ In the *Iliad* it is located on the very surface of the earth. The plain at Troy can

6. On the variety of formulae and repeated patterns associated with Homeric battle, see Fenik 1968.

7. On the geography and role of Tartarus in the *Theogony*, see Clay 1992; Johnson 1999. Although the Homeric underworld is understood to be located in a general downward direction (Hector’s spirit ees downward at death, 22.362; cf. 22.425–26) and although *Il.* 8.15–16 closely parallels Hes. *Th.* 811 and 720, the *Theogony* is much more interested than the *Iliad* in constructing an underground geography. It is noteworthy that in *Odyssey* 11, Odysseus does not actually appear

be thought of as a magnetic field that draws the bodies of the heroes towards it—Patroclus, Hector, and eventually Achilles. In this way it not only suggests mortality, but also works as a kind of narrative force. By falling on cue, these figures mark out the successive stages of the plot. Alongside the falls of Patroclus and Hector, which, in their own ways, are dress rehearsals for the final, untold fall of Achilles, are the thuds of other bodies that echo through the poem.⁸ Indeed, the narrative tempo of the *Iliad* is regulated by the frequency of formulaic phrases that cluster around the movement of falling.⁹ This is not to suggest, of course, that other formulaic phrases do not cluster around other actions in the poem. It is rather that the rhythm of falling in the *Iliad* establishes its own unique movement through the course of the poem, that in turn has direct bearing upon the action of the narrative.¹⁰

In the first four books of the *Iliad* instances of falling are relatively few.¹¹ Until the first death to occur in the poem (that of Ecepholus at 4.461–62), the verb πίπτω, including compounds, and the aorist of ἐρείπω occur only ten times. Unsurprisingly, the use of verbs meaning “to fall” increases in the books where the fighting is heaviest (Books 5, 8, 11, 13, 15, 16, and 17).¹² After a period of

to go underground. In Homer, the geography of death is horizontal rather than vertical. On horizontal and vertical space in Homer, see Wohl 1993; Nakassis 2004; and, in Hesiod, Purves 2004.

8. On Patroclus' role as a surrogate (*therapōn*) for Achilles, and on his connection—through Achilles' armor—to Hector (all three are described as “equal to Ares”), see Nagy 1999: 32–34, 292–95. See also Thalmann 1984: 50: “Against the background of the other heroes' deaths that are its forerunners, Achilles' death takes on coherence.”

9. λῦσε δὲ γυῖα; λῦντο δὲ γυῖα; γούνατ' ἔλυσε(ν); δοῦπησεν δὲ πεσῶν, ἀράβησε δὲ τεύχε' ἐπ' αὐτῷ (translated above); ἤριπε δ' ἐξ ὀχέων (“he fell from his chariot”); ἤριπε δ' ἐν κονίῃ (“he fell in the dust”); θάνατος δέ μιν ἀμφεκάλυψε (“death covered him over”); ἔλε γαῖαν ἀγοστῶ (“he grasped hold of the earth”); λίπε δ' ὀστέα θυμός (“his spirit left his bones”); ἀμφὶ δέ μιν θάνατος χύτο θυμοραιστής (“life destroying death drifted about him”); ῥέε δ' αἵματι γαῖα (“the earth ran with blood”). On the variations in phraseology used to describe a victim's collapse, see Kirk ad 5.58; Fenik 1968; Lowenstam 1981. The bibliography on the topic of formulaic repetition in oral epic is too vast to list in detail here. See, among others, Lord 2000; Hainsworth 1968; Nagy 1996; Russo 1997; Edwards 1997.

10. For instances of falling by book of the *Iliad*—counted as occurrences of the following words in any form: πίπτω, ἀναπίπτω, καταπίπτω, ἐκπίπτω, ἐμπίπτω, aorist of ἐρείπω, including ὑπήριπε, ἐξερίπουσα, etc., except when used in the figurative sense of to have an emotion “fall upon” the *thumos* (9.436; 14.207; 14.306; 16.206; 17.625), to have *eris* fall upon the gods (21.385), or to “fall” from favor (23.595)—see nn.11–15 infra.

11. Bk. 1 (x3): 243, 593, 594; Bk. 2 (x2): 175, 266; Bk. 3 (x2): 289, 363; Bk. 4 (x10): 108, 134, 217, 462, 463, 482, 493 (x2), 504, 523.

12. Cf. Garland 1981: 43, who notes that the greatest number of deaths occur in Books 5, 11, and 16. Bk. 5 (x19): 42, 47, 58, 68, 75, 82, 92, 288, 294, 309, 357, 370, 540, 560, 561, 583, 585, 610, 617; Bk. 6 (x3): 82, 307, 453; Bk. 7 (x2): 16, 256; Bk. 8 (x11): 67, 122, 260, 270, 314, 329 (x2), 330, 380, 476, 485; Bk. 9 (x1): 235; Bk. 10 (x1): 200; Bk. 11 (x19): 69, 85, 155, 157, 158, 179, 241, 250, 297, 311, 325, 355, 425, 449, 500, 676, 743, 745, 824; Bk. 12 (x8): 23, 107, 126, 156, 278, 386, 395, 459; Bk. 13 (x21): 178, 181, 187, 205, 207, 289, 373, 389, 399, 442, 508, 520, 522, 530, 549, 578, 617, 618, 742, 832; Bk. 14 (x5): 414, 418, 452, 460, 468; Bk. 15 (x19): 63, 280, 319, 421, 421, 423, 428, 435, 451, 452, 465, 524, 538, 578, 624, 624, 647, 648, 714; Bk. 16 (x24): 81, 113, 118, 276, 290, 319, 325, 344, 378, 401, 410, 414, 469, 482, 482, 500, 580, 599,

mourning for Patroclus in Books 18 and 19, instances of falling rise again with Achilles' *aristeia* and the gods' engagement on the battle field in Books 20 and 21.¹³ In Book 22, each of the five falling movements corresponds to the death of Hector. The first three literally narrate his fall on the battle field (266, 330, 384), and the remaining two figuratively re-enact it, as Andromache lets first her shuttle (448) and then her body (467) fall in response to his death.¹⁴ In Book 23, the instances of falling are high but none of them plays out in the sphere of battle.¹⁵ In Book 24, as the *Iliad* draws to a close, there are no falls at all.

The Homeric body usually falls as a whole, but it can also fall in pieces. Weapons, armor and a general assortment of body parts complement, or sometimes replace, the fall of the warrior on the field. Apart from the case where *πίπτω* means to "rush or throw oneself bodily upon,"¹⁶ falling in battle always indicates loss or misdirection: a spear fallen short, a helmet pulled from the head, a fallen sword, the dropped leg of a corpse almost pulled clear of the fighting. In the thick of battle, instances of falling pile up, with these minor falls anticipating or echoing the capsizing of the body itself.

If this preliminary introduction to the treatment of falling in the poem indicates anything, it is that falling, in the *Iliad*, marks the temporality of death. It is extremely unusual for a warrior ever to stand up again after falling all the way down to the earth.¹⁷ Usually, the fall signals a turn towards the end—a gesture of finality and closure for the individual who experiences it. As the moment of closure, though, the movement of turning towards death is startling for its seriality, as each fall ensures that the battle—and the poem—will go on.¹⁸ Four times in the *Iliad*, Homer describes the fall of bodies on the field as a repetitive motion

600, 662, 741, 778, 803, 822; Bk. 17 (x17): 10, 50, 300, 311, 315, 346, 352, 361, 428, 440, 522, 523, 580, 619, 633, 639, 760.

13. Bk. 18 (x2): 395, 552; Bk. 19 (x3): 110, 227, 406; Bk. 20 (x5): 388, 417, 441, 456, 487; Bk. 21 (x7): 9, 241, 243, 246, 387, 407, 492.

14. On further parallels between Andromache's fall and that of a warrior on the battle field, cf. Segal 1971: 43–51; Morrison 1999: 141–42.

15. Bk. 23 (x10): 120, 216, 251, 437, 467, 687, 691, 728, 731, 881.

16. 2.175; 7.256; 9.235; 11.297; 11.325; 12.107; 13.742; 15.624; 15.624; 16.81; 16.276; 17.639; 21.241; 21.387; 23.687.

17. Those warriors who do manage to regain their footing often fall only to their knees: ἐστῆ γυνῆ ἐριπῶν καὶ ἐρείσατο χειρὶ παχείῃ/γαίης, 5.309–10 (Aeneas); 11.355–56 (Hector); στῆ δὲ γυνῆ ἐριπῶν, τόξον δὲ οἱ ἔκπεσε χειρός., 8.329 (Teucer). See further Fenik 1968: 34–35. This in itself is only a half-fall—in a true fall, the knees should go completely (γούνατ' ἔλυσε[ν]). The connection between getting up again and escaping death is explicit enough for it to be particularly noteworthy when Hector revives after having fallen all the way to the ground (14.418–20). After being rescued by his friends, Hector gets up on one knee at 14.437–39, vomits blood, and then sinks back down again, before reappearing "sitting up" at 15.239–40 where he says that he was sure he had died. See also 15.286–89, when Thoas is surprised and disappointed that Hector has "got to his feet once more and eluded the death spirits," and Diomedes' similarly surprised observation that Hector has escaped death at 11.362. The fact that Hector keeps getting up like this is evidently a measure of his greatness. Cf. Morrison 1999: 141.

18. Thalmann 1984: 50: "These deaths are really the same. Each hero, as he kills and is killed, advances a process and falls victim to it."

that fills a continuous stretch of time, as warriors fall one after another (“So long as it was early morning and the sacred daylight increasing / so long the thrown weapons of both took hold and men fell [πίπτε δὲ λάοις],” 8.66–67 = 11.84–85, 15.318–19, 16.777–78). The effect is compounded by Achilles’ lament in Book 19 that “Too many fall day by day, one upon another, / how could anyone find breathing space from the toil?” (19.226–27). In his words, the repetitive falling of bodies fills time so incessantly that it even appears to clog it up, leaving no room to breathe (ἀναπνέω). This is not unlike the experience of reading (or listening) to the poem during certain stretches of the narrative, wherein the space of the text is itself cluttered with the descriptions of toppling bodies.

The movement of death drives the narrative pace of the poem forward, giving it its own kind of regenerative energy. Yet, because bodies must always come to rest, eventually, on the surface of the earth, the Trojan plain turns at times into a space that is so overloaded with fallen men that it impedes the flow of the action and the progress of the narrative. So, in Book 7, the battle briefly has to be stopped in order to catch up with the backlog of corpses that fill the battle field (7.375–409). Similarly, in Book 8, Hector has to lead his troops away from the ships in order to call a meeting in a place uncluttered with fallen warriors (8.491). At the same time, just as too many falls can clutter the limited area of the plain, preventing the battle from moving forward, so, conversely, can too few falls slow the action of the poem down. In the first four books of the *Iliad*, before the fighting resumes, instances of falling are relatively few, reflecting the stasis of both sides and the hope for an end to the conflict that is differently expressed in the second and third books. As soon as falling properly begins, however, it quickly gains momentum. The very first death in the poem, that of Ecepholus, has a domino effect on the narrative, causing the end of Book 4 and the beginning of Book 5 to pile up thick and fast with fallen bodies. In the cluttered sequence between the death of Ecepholus at 4.462 and the end of the book (4.544), which comprises just over 80 verses, seven warriors fall in quick succession.

As these falls are connected to one another by a causal sequence,¹⁹ so are they also connected to a variety of other falls in the larger scope of the epic by means of the repeated use of formula, language, and theme. In this way, every fall in the poem is both analeptic and proleptic—it cannot help but remind us of falls that have already taken place in the battle and warn of falls that are yet to come.²⁰ This has an interesting effect on the narrative, though, for if each fall draws the reader either backwards or forwards to another point in the poem, then the narrative itself is in danger of becoming caught in a loop and never reaching an endpoint. With each fall, the end is technically closer, but narratologically further, from sight.

19. Classified by Fenik as a typical example of a “chain-reaction” battle motif (“in which Greeks and Trojans slay each other alternately, each man avenging himself, or trying to, on the slayer of the previous victim,” 1968: 10).

20. Genette 1980: 33–85. See also Bergren 1983; de Jong 1987; Lynn-George 1988: 270.

These analeptic and proleptic characteristics also mirror something of the *Iliad*'s structure, as a poem whose own themes and patterns of action circle out beyond the last line of the work to encompass the sack of Troy and the returns of the Achaeans.

In the larger scheme of things, falling's repetitive sequence partakes in the concept of cyclical time, best expressed by Glaucus' famous comparison of humankind to leaves:²¹

οἷη περ φύλλων γενεή, τοίη δὲ καὶ ἀνδρῶν.
 φύλλα τὰ μὲν τ' ἄνεμος χαμάδις χέει, ἄλλα δέ θ' ὕλη
 τηλεθώσα φύει, ἔαρος δ' ἐπιγίγνεται ὥρη·
 ὡς ἀνδρῶν γενεὴ ἢ μὲν φύει ἢ δ' ἀπολήγει.

6.146–49

As is the generation of leaves, so is that of humanity.
 The wind scatters the leaves to the ground, but the live timber
 burgeons with leaves again in the season of spring returning.
 So one generation of men will grow while another dies.

Like the seasonal recycling of leaves to the ground, the motif of falling creates its own self-perpetuating structure within the narrative logic of the poem. So, all the way through from Ecepholus to Rhigmus or from Sarpedon to Patroclus, one fall generates another in the *Iliad* until the final cumulative fall of Hector.²² It is only with Hector's death that the movement of falling is diverted into other less grievous contexts, and finally stilled through the reconciliation of Achilles and Priam.²³

The action of falling is “generative,” too, in its association not only with death but also the other cycles of human life, including birth and descent through the family line. In a society where women typically gave birth in a vertical position (Hes. *Theog.* 460; *Hom. Hymn Ap.* 117–18), humans enter as well as leave the world by falling. In the *Iliad*, the birth of Heracles is described as a “fall between the feet of a woman,” and it is this action, more than any other, that ensures his

21. On the notion of “cyclical time” in archaic Greek poetry, see Vidal-Naquet 1986: 39–60; Vernant 1990: 1–33. On this passage and its relation to man's growth and decline, cf. Clay 1982: 113–14.

22. Ecepholus and Rhigmus are the first and last minor Homeric warriors to “fall” in the poem (4.462; 20.487).

23. After the monumental fall of Hector, the motif of falling begins to wind down in the poem. Despite Achilles' best efforts, Hector's body remains impervious to the earth across which it grazes, again and again, while Achilles, although still alive, takes on the role of fallen victim as mourner for Patroclus (24.10–11; cf. Seaford 1994: 166–70; Morrison 1999: 141.n.58, with references). The motif of falling shifts in direction and emphasis as the poem draws towards closure—consider Ajax's humorous fall in the dung or where the significance of falling briefly short-circuits in the repetitive rising and falling of the combatants in the wrestling match (23.725–34, 774–77). The poem does not suggest, however, that the repetitive nature of falling will not start up again in the story of the Trojan War that continues beyond the borders of the poem (most obviously, we know that Achilles will soon fall).

mortal life of hardship. As it is told in Book 19, Hera tricks Zeus into granting power to whichever child of his own blood “falls” in birth on a particular day and then prematurely advances the birth of a distant cousin, Eurystheus, while holding back the birth of Heracles:

τὸν δὲ δολοφρονέουσα προσηύδα πτόνια Ἥρη·
 φευστήσεις, οὐδ' αὖτε τέλος μύθῳ ἐπιθήσεις.
 εἰ δ' ἄγε νῦν μοι ὄμοσον, Ὀλύμπιε, καρτερόν ὄρκον,
 ἧ μὲν τὸν πάντεσσι περικτιόνεσσιν ἀνάξειν,
 ὅς κεν ἐπ' ἧματι τῶδε πέσῃ μετὰ ποσσὶ γυναικὸς
 τῶν ἀνδρῶν οἱ σῆς ἐξ αἵματός εἰσι γενέθλης.
 ὡς ἔφατο· Ζεὺς δ' οὐ τι δολοφροσύνην ἐνόησεν,
 ἀλλ' ὄμοσεν μέγαν ὄρκον, ἔπειτα δὲ πολλὸν ἀάσθη.

19.106–13

Then in guileful intention the lady Hera said to him:
 “You will be a liar, nor put fulfillment on what you have spoken.
 Come, then, lord of Olympus, and swear before me a strong oath
 that he shall be lord over all those dwelling about him
 who this day shall fall between the feet of a woman,
 that man who is born of the blood of your generation.” So Hera
 spoke. And Zeus was entirely unaware of her falsehood,
 but swore a great oath, and therein lay all his deception.

By an “accident” of the timing of his birth, Heracles falls into a life marked by suffering. Murnaghan has discussed the close connection between birth and death in Greek thought, particularly through the connection between maternity and mortality and the earth (1992: 243–44). She has shown how the fall of Demophoon’s body to the earth in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* (253–54), for example, which is instigated by the cry of his mother, ensures the child’s mortality through a return to the ground.²⁴

The correspondence between birth, death, and the movement of falling to the ground naturally adheres, in the account of the death of Patroclus in Book 16, to the idea of generation and descent. Here, the toppling of Achilles’ helmet and its muddying in the earth seals Patroclus’ fate and, through a causal chain, Hector’s as well:

τοῦ δ' ἀπὸ μὲν κρατὸς κυνέην βάλε Φοῖβος Ἀπόλλων·
 ἧ δὲ κυλινδομένη καναχὴν ἔχε ποσσὶν ὑφ' ἵππων
 αὐλώπις τρυφάλεια, μιάνησαν δὲ ἔθειραι
 αἵματι καὶ κονίησι· πάρος γε μὲν οὐ θέμις ἦεν
 ἵππόκομον πῆληχα μιάνεσθαι κονίησιν,
 ἀλλ' ἀνδρὸς θείοιο κάρη χαρίεν τε μέτωπον

24. 1992: 245–46. Contrast Demophoon’s fall with the ascension of Ganymede, which, as Andrew Ford suggested to me, works as a kind of “reverse fall” by freeing a human being from the trappings of mortality, aging, and death.

ῥύετ' Ἀχιλλῆος· τότε δὲ Ζεὺς Ἔκτορι δῶκεν
ἧ κεφαλῇ φορέειν, σχεδόθεν δέ οἱ ἦεν ὄλεθρος.

16.793–800

Apollo now struck away from his [Patroclus'] head the helmet four-horned and hollow-eyed, and under the feet of the horses it rolled, clattering, and the plumes above it were de led by blood and dust. Before this time it had not been permitted to de le in the dust this great helmet crested in horse-hair; rather it guarded the head and the gracious brow of a godlike man, Achilles; but now Zeus gave it over to Hektor to wear on his head, Hektor, whose own death was close to him.

The importance of Patroclus' death is symbolically heightened by the fall of the divine helmet and the de lement of its plume in the dust and blood of the ground (lines 795–97). The horse-hair plume, the highest part of the helmet, should not touch the ground, and it is signi cant that later, in Book 17, Achilles' immortal horses let their manes fall to the ground and become (using the same verb, *μιαίνεσθαι*) muddied in the dust as they mourn Patroclus' death (17.439–40; cf. 19.405–406):²⁵

θαλερῇ δ' ἐμιαίνετο χαίτη
ζεύγλης ἐξεριποῦσα παρὰ ζυγὸν ἀμφοτέρωθεν.

17.439–40

their bright manes were made dirty
as they fell down either side of the yoke from under the yoke pad.

The touching of the divine helmet and horse-hair to the ground signi es a fall from the immortal realm towards the realm of death and mortality, especially since Achilles' horses stand motionless in this posture like “a grave monument which is set over / the mounded tomb of a dead man or lady” (17.434–35). Only after Zeus breathes immortal strength back into them do the horses raise their manes from the ground (456–57) and return with divine swiftness to the ships.

But, besides marking death, the fall of Patroclus' arms also tells the story of lineage, of descending from one generation to the next. Achilles' pristine helmet started with the gods and was then passed on from Peleus to Achilles, to Patroclus, and nally to Hector. The death of Patroclus signi cantly alters the sequence of exchange, because it is only then that the helmet falls to the ground for the very rst time. As one of the last of the race of heroes to marry an immortal, Peleus received the armor from the gods before passing it on to his son:

ὁ δ' ἄμβροτα τεύχεα δῶνε
Πηλεΐδew Ἀχιλλῆος, ἅ οἱ θεοὶ Οὐρανίωνες
πατρὶ φίλῳ ἔπορον· ὁ δ' ἄρα ᾧ παιδὶ ὅπασσε

25. See further Thalmann 1984: 48–49, and Schein 2002.

γηράς· ἀλλ' οὐχ υἱὸς ἐν ἔντεσι πατρὸς ἐγήρα.

17.194–97

[Hector] himself put on the armor immortal of Peleid Achilles, which the Uranian gods had given to his loved father; and he in turn grown old had given it to his son; but a son who never grew old in his father's armor.

Although the armor protects Peleus from death, in doing so it also commits him to the time-bound process of aging. Achilles, on the other hand, will avoid old age, yet he must suffer the consequences of what it means for his armor to fall.

The transition of the armor from Peleus, who lives (if problematically) with an immortal, to Achilles as he embarks on a war that will mark the final separation between gods and men, is drawn out further to include its transition between the bodies of Patroclus (who has just fallen) and Hector (who will fall sooner than he realizes). As it comes into increasingly close contact with falling and mortality, the armor underscores the acceleration with which the *Iliad* marks the movement, in Zeus' overall plan, towards the transition from (and separation between) a time that is purely mortal and a time that is purely divine. For as long as gods are involved in the cycle of human genealogy and its connection to human birth and death, in other words, they will always, by implication, be involved in humankind's repetitive sequence of falling from one generation to the next.

The plot of the *Iliad* has been understood as an attempt to mark the separation between those two kinds of time; to distance immortals once and for all from human genealogy and generation.²⁶ I have suggested that one of the ways in which the poem marks this separation is through the act of falling, whose movement in the direction of the earth (ἔραζε, χαμάδις, χαμαί) indicates a temporality that is bound up with the vegetative processes of death, regeneration, and the mortal condition. Even if we narrow our focus to consider mortal time only within the lifespan of a human being, it can still be imagined as working in a cycle that differs markedly from the divine experience of time, as Apollo explains to Ares in his famous rephrasing of Glaucus' simile:

οἱ φύλλοισιν εἰοικότες ἄλλοτε μὲν τε
ζαφλεγέες τελέθουσιν, ἀρούρης καρπὸν ἔδοντες,
ἄλλοτε δὲ φθινύθουσιν ἀκήριοι.

21.464–66

26. The armor traces a genealogy that goes back to the marriage of Peleus and Thetis, when immortals, through the parenting of the race of heroes or "demi-gods," were still involved in the complicated human processes of birth and death. The *Iliad*, as a poem set in the penultimate year of the Trojan War, marks the end of the race of heroes and the end of the gods' familial involvement in mortal affairs. As Slatkin 1991 has shown, the difficulties of that familial bond between god and man are represented most strongly in the relationship between Thetis and Achilles, but it is also marked by the suffering that several of the gods experience in trying to protect their sons on the battlefield.

(mortals) who are as leaves are, and now flourish and blaze with life, and feed on what the ground gives, but then again fade away and are dead.

As men experience the movement of cycling through time, they also *feel* the effect of time upon their bodies, and this effect is marked by the action of falling. Gods are able to “blaze” continually, but mortal moments of brilliance can only last so long. Eventually, time will catch up with men and they will die, grow old, or at the very least, feel the physical effects of fatigue. Thus, although Diomedes claims that his strength is *empedos*—steady or continuous—during his *aristeia* in Book 5 (ἔτι μοι μένος ἔμπεδόν ἐστιν· 5.254), towards the end of the same book he will already have tired, worn out (ἔτειρεν; τείρετο; κάμνε) by the physical effects of sweat and blood upon his body, and by the weight of the shield upon his arm (“For the sweat made him sore underneath the broad strap of the circled / shield; this made him sore, and his arm was tired,” 5.796–97).²⁷ The adjective *empedos* literally means “standing firmly on (in?) the ground” (*Lfgre*), with a sense that developed to mean unchanged or continuous.²⁸ Scholars have observed that the young Diomedes’ claim to have a strength that is *empedos* calls to mind the counter example of the aged Nestor and his weak knees.²⁹ Agamemnon’s comments in Book 4 are part of a larger Iliadic refrain that Nestor’s strength was *empedos* in his youth but has now been wracked by old age:³⁰

ὦ γέρον, εἴθ’, ὡς θυμὸς ἐνὶ στήθεσσι φίλοισιν,
ὡς τοι γούναθ’ ἔποιτο, βίη δέ τοι ἔμπεδος εἴη,
ἀλλὰ σε γῆρας τείρει ὁμοῖον

4.313–15

Aged sir, if only, as the spirit is in your bosom,
so might your knees be also and the strength stay steady within
you;
but age, which comes to all, wears you down.

Here and at 11.668–70, being *empedos* translates to having strength specifically in one’s knees (γούνατα) and limbs (μέλεα):

οὐ γὰρ ἐμῆ ἴς
ἔσθ’ οἷη πάρος ἔσκεν ἐνὶ γναμπτοῖσι μέλεσσι.
εἴθ’ ὡς ἠβώοιμι βίη δέ μοι ἔμπεδος εἴη,

11.668–70

27. Note also the physical weariness of Ajax at 16.106–11, where the words κάμνω and ἀναπνέω describe his body, although his shield remains *empedos*.

28. *Lfgre* s.v. “from the lit. meaning ‘standing firmly on (in?) the ground’ (πέδον) developed on the one hand to *unchanged, undisturbed, (still) present* (1a), on the other to (metaph.) *firm, reliable* (1b); sometimes w. a temp. connot.: *continuous* (1c). . . . The adv. 2x (*P* 434, ρ 464) applied in the lit. sense to standing (upright and immovably) *in* the ground.”

29. Vernant 1991: 39–41; Redfield 1975: 172–73, 180.

30. Cf. 7.157; 11.669; 23.627, 629.

Since there is not
any longer in my gnarled limbs the strength that there once was.
If only I were young now, and the strength still steady within
me. . . .

Aging, then, is just another way of being unstrung, of having one's limbs loosened and thereby losing the grounded, upright position of being *empedos*. It simply draws out, into a process of slow time, what the act of falling can accomplish in a half-line with the words λῦσε δὲ γυῖα or γούνατ' ἔλυσε(ν). It parallels, in other words, the process of falling to the ground.³¹

In this way, falling can be seen to telescope the moment of aging, to show in fast-forward the body's inevitable loosening and movement towards the horizontal that is brought about with the passage of time. So Thetis complains that her aged husband, Peleus, now "broken by mournful old age," can do nothing but lie prone in the halls, adopting the same posture that the dead adopt as they lie on the battle eld (18.434–35). So too does Dawn rise every day from the side of her immortal but aging husband, Tithonus, although he, tragically, is unable to rise with her.³² Knees are of considerable importance in the *Iliad* because they hold a person upright (*empedos*), and in several instances they represent a prime site of strength and vigor for the body. At *Il.* 15.262–70, for example, Apollo breathes strength back into Hector's weakened legs and knees in order to revive him, and at 19.354, Athena feeds Achilles with nectar "in order that weakening hunger might not fall upon his knees." To be *empedos* is thus briefly to achieve an ideal of the human body that cannot be upheld in practice—to be secure on the feet and lasting throughout time.³³

Appropriately, therefore, the quality of being *empedos* is linked to the human grave-stone, or *sêma* (where the body is symbolically turned upright again), rather than to the body itself.³⁴ The *sêma* is grounded by a strong connection to the earth in which it stands, and its perdurant quality specifically suggests a length of time that extends beyond the limited lifespan of the human body. Achilles' choice of *kleos aphthiton* (unwithering fame) over a long life reflects on this role of

31. On "being released in the knees" as a euphemism for dying, see e.g. 5.176; 13.360; 15.291. See also Lowenstam 1981: 85n.29 as well as the new Sappho poem on old age ("my heart's grown heavy, my knees will not support me," fr. 58, 5; West 2005, esp. 5–6).

32. *Il.* 11.1–2. The myth is explained at *Hom. Hym. Aph.* 218–38. Cf. Clay 1982. On both Thetis and Eos' special relationship to time, see Slatkin 1991: 28–33.

33. In this way, to be *empedos* can be considered diametrically opposed to the "ephemeral" state of mankind. Fränkel 1946 has argued that the adjective *ephereros* which the Greeks employed to describe the mortal condition, "was used as an equivalent to 'unstable' . . . the idea is not that our condition is shifting constantly, but rather that there is no certainty of permanence" (134).

34. Vernant 1991: 69; Zeitlin 1996: 31, 42. In the description of Achilles' horses in Book 17 immobilized in their grief for Patroclus (17.434–35) that we discussed above, note that they stand *empedos* like a *stêlê* or grave marker. On the *sêma*'s role as a marker that exists indefinitely through time, outlasting the lifespan of the mortal body but attaching to the concept of undying *kleos*, see Red eld 1975: 180; Vernant 1991: 50–74, esp. 69; Nagy 1990: 202–22.

the *sêma*, for the upright and enduring status of the grave-marker attaches more closely to the idea of a divine, transcendent time than it does to a vegetative, mortal cycle of time that “blazes and fades” as it alternates through the seasons via its contact with the earth.

In falling, then, mortals undo any claim to being *empedos*, or continuous through time, in their experience of life. Yet, just as the cycle of fall upon fall can be so repetitive as even to become tedious for the reader of the *Iliad*, a different kind of temporal experience, one that is attached to the idea of “long time,” is also fundamental to the experience of the Homeric characters on the ground. The last aspect of “human” time that I will discuss in this section is speed: not only the speed at which warriors move across the plain, but also the rate at which they experience time in their daily lives. Speed, as we will see, bears a close correspondence to the contact of the feet with the earth, which in turn bears important associations with the movement of falling. The connection of humans to the ground slows them down and causes them to suffer through time at a laborious rate.³⁵ Although the life of a Homeric hero may be short, his *experience* of time is unquestionably long. The Greeks’ effort at Troy is described by Odysseus as an ἔργον / αὐτῶς ἀκράαντον, a “task forever unfinished” (2.137–38), and the arguments about returning home in Book 2 are framed around the ability to endure the extended length of the war. Who better than Odysseus to repeatedly emphasize the motifs of patience (μένων, μιμνόντεσσι, δηρόν τε μένειν, μείνατ’), impatience (ἀσχαλάα, ἀσχαλάαν) and endurance (τλήτε) in his rallying of the troops in Book 2 (291–300), in a speech that is set against the backdrop of ships whose timbers have rotted with the passing years (2.135)?

In a poem that presents the tragedy of men who die so young, especially as the idea is emblemized by the “untimely” and “short lived” lifespan of Achilles (1.352; 1.416; 24.540), it is somewhat paradoxical that the passage of time is unbearably slow for the warriors at Troy. The idea of time being “slow” or “long” in quality is accentuated by the extended stretch of time that Achilles sits out of the battle, twice described as δῆρον in the poem (18.125; 19.46).³⁶ It may also serve us well here to remember Fränkel on the subject of archaic time, who argued that *chronos* in Homer always equals a duration, never a point; and that a state of affairs described with the word *chronos* in early Greek poetry typically suggests a negative evaluation (1955: 1–2).³⁷

The famously long “third day” of fighting, which extends all the way from 11.1 to 18.242, dramatizes the heavy sense of endurance through time that combat

35. On the dramatic alteration brought about in the pace of modern life with the invention of the bicycle and motor vehicles, see Kern 2003: 109–30. The Homeric equivalent would be the horse, whose speed brought it close to divine status, and which the immortals themselves often used in their passage between Olympus and the ground (5.752 = 8.396). Cf. Achilles’ immortal horses at *Il.* 17.434–57 and 19.404–17, Schein 2002, and my discussion above.

36. Contrast with the phrase οὐ τι μάλα δῆρον, used to describe Achilles’ lifespan at 1.416.

37. Cf. Bakker 2002.

requires. Midway through this third day, Hector uses the verb *στρεύγεσθαι* (to be slowly hemmed in or choked) to describe the experience of fighting in battle (15.512). The word primarily conveys a sense of exhaustion, and elsewhere in Homer it refers to the slow experience of dying by starvation (*Od.* 12.351). In both of these cases, man's labored relationship to time is mediated through a connection to the earth. His groundedness commits him to enduring the slow progress of human time, for he can move only as quickly as it takes for his feet to make contact with the earth, one limb at a time. In Homeric language, humans are differentiated from gods as beings who "walk upon the earth" (5.441–42), and, perhaps unsurprisingly, walking is the one activity that gods have a particular difficulty getting quite right. Commentators have often noted the strangeness of Athena and Hera's "shivering-dove" walk across the plain (5.778–79), and, in Book 13, it is the unusual nature of Poseidon's feet and legs as he walks away from men that reveals him to be a god in human form (13.70–72).³⁸ Perhaps it is their own particular weightiness that fixes humans in time, enabling them to secure the kind of contact with the ground that gods can never quite replicate. The heaviness of mankind is such that the earth thunders beneath the feet of marching warriors and even motivates, according to at least two accounts, Zeus' instigation of the Trojan War.³⁹

The correspondence between walking (or running) and falling is impossible to avoid for the mortal characters of the *Iliad*, who are bound, more than anything else, to a pair of feet that carry them back and forth across a single stretch of earth.⁴⁰ On rare occasions mortals do escape the slow, weighty rate of their bodies and achieve brief superhuman moments of speed and brilliance. Achilles and Diomedes, in their respective *aristeias*, are chastised by Apollo for trying to keep pace with the gods (5.440–42; 22.8–9).⁴¹ But, although in such moments mortals might feel themselves to be invincible and unstoppable, it would be more accurate to describe them as simply accelerating towards death, as Dione makes all too clear in her judgment of Diomedes (5.407), and as is also proved by the speed of Patroclus (16.582–83), Hector (5.689–91), and of course Achilles—the most swift-footed of humans (*πόδας ὠκλὺς Ἀχιλλεύς*), who is also the most swift-fated (*ὠκυμωρώτατος*).⁴²

By contrast, the feet of the immortals need not touch the ground even when they step. The tree and mountain-tops tremble beneath Poseidon's feet as he

38. Fenik 1968: 75; Dietrich 1983: 73n.39; Sissa and Detienne 2000: 29.

39. *Cypria* 1.7 claims that the weight of the human population was becoming too much for Gaia to bear. A similar explanation for the *Dios Boulê* at 1.5 is offered by the D-scholium (Scodel 1982: 39). In Book 18, Achilles appears to register that fact, by describing himself as a useless burden on the earth (*ἔτῳσιον ἄχθος ἀρούρης*, 18.104); see Murnaghan 1997: 28.

40. On walking as a form of "controlled falling," see e.g. Virilio 1994; Gilpin 1994: 52; Solnit 2000: 33.

41. The phenomenon of superhuman speed among mortals is nevertheless severely restricted in the *Iliad*. See Griffin 1977: 40 and n.16b.

42. 1.505. Cf. 1.417; 18.95; 18.458. Cf. n.36 supra and Lynn-George 1988: 162.

completes his journey between Olympus and his underwater home in just four strides (13.18–19). In Book 14, Hera crosses over Pieria, Emathia, and the Thracian hills without her feet once touching the ground (14.224–28), and on her journey with Sleep to Mount Ida, their feet touch the tops of the trees, not the earth (285). Even in sex, the immortals avoid the ground—as Zeus and Hera lie down together, a soft, thick grass of clovers and flowers breaks out, which “held the hard ground deep away from them” (ὄς ἀπὸ χθονὸς ὑψόσ’ ἔεργε, 14.349).⁴³

Homer focuses on the point of the gods’ departure from Olympus when they descend to the plain at Troy (e.g., βῆ δὲ κατ’ Οὐλύμποιο καρῆνων: “(s)he came down from the peaks of Olympus,” 24.121), rather than on their landing on the earth. The movement itself is often described using the verbs *ἄισσω*, to dart, or *πέτομαι*, to fly, especially with reference to the swift passage of Thetis, Athena, and Hera.⁴⁴ When the gods travel, as Scott has observed, Homer attempts to describe a sense of speed that is, in itself, outside the realm of human possibility, by nevertheless drawing analogies with human points of reference.⁴⁵ Thus, the gods will travel between Olympus and earth as fast as birds,⁴⁶ “like a meteor,”⁴⁷ “as swift as thought,”⁴⁸ “as rapidly as snow or hail,”⁴⁹ and so forth. Hera’s return from Ida to Olympus in Book 15 is described using a simile that draws attention to the inherent differences between mortal and immortal experiences of space and time (15.80–83):

ὥς δ’ ὅτ’ ἂν αἴξῃ νόος ἀνέρος, ὅς τ’ ἐπὶ πολλὴν
 γαῖαν ἐλληλουθῶς φρεσὶ πευκαλίμησι νοήσῃ,
 “ἔνθ’ εἶην, ἢ ἔνθα,” μενοινήσῃ τε πολλά,
 ὥς κραιπνῶς μεμαυῖα διέπτατο πόντια Ἥρη·

15.80–83

As the thought flashes in the mind of a man who, traversing much territory, thinks of things in the mind’s awareness, “I wish I were this place, or this,” and imagines many things; so rapidly in her eagerness winged Hera, a goddess.

The simile draws a comparison between the flight of the god and the rapid manner in which the human mind is able to jump mentally from one thought to another.

43. One might compare here the suspension of Ares and Aphrodite in the net above Hephaestus’ bed, caught in the act of making love in *Odyssey* 8, and—as Mark Buchan has suggested to me—contrast both of these divine acts of passion with the nature of Achilles’ revenge upon Hector, which is all about getting the body of his assailant as mixed in with the ground as possible.

44. The adverb *καρπαλίμως* and adjective *ὠκύς* are frequently used to describe the flight of the gods. Some common epithets of Iris, whose prime purpose is crossing the space between Olympus and earth, are *ποδήνεμος* (wind-footed), *ὠκέα* (swift), and *ταχεῖα* (fast).

45. Scott 1974: 19–22. See also Lloyd 1987: 185–87.

46. Lloyd 1987: 187n.1.

47. 4.75–77. Lloyd 1987: 187.

48. Janko ad 15.80.

49. 15.170–73.

But the simile is also set in context by the slow progress of the man crossing a large stretch of land (ἐπὶ πολλήν γαῖαν ἐληλουθώς), in contrast to the airborne flight of the goddess (διέπτατο). Once again, it is their relationship to the ground that leads mortals to experience a fixed sense of duration and time, while the gods, who exist far above what we might call the gravitational or temporal force of the earth, experience a different register of time, where movement through space can be almost instantaneous.

The simile illustrates how time on Olympus is of a different quality, and is also experienced in a different way, from time on the ground. Gods understand the movement of human time and use some of the same temporal markers as humans do (e.g., sunset) to determine it. However, they do not typically know what it means to *experience* time or—because they live forever—what it means for time to have *length*. While humans age, decay, and die in their passage through time, gods remain fixed and unchanging; they are always still in time and do not move with it.⁵⁰ Another way of putting it would be to say that gods do not have their “own” time. Instead, from a position outside time, they are able to observe and monitor the time of mortals. In the *Iliad*, Zeus underscores the gods’ spatial separation from human time by never descending lower than the peaks of Mount Ida.⁵¹ The distance this affords him allows him to keep his own being at a remove from the mortal experience of time.

IMMORTAL FALLS

I have suggested that the mortal experience of time, as it is experienced by the Iliadic warrior on the battlefield, can be characterized by a tendency towards the movement of falling, which in itself represents the pull not only towards death, but also towards time that is lived or experienced. I now want to reconsider the notion that the gods—who are undying and ageless and who, as far as humans can tell, live easily (ῥεῖα ζῶοντες, 6.138) and without cares (ἀκηδέες, 24.526)—should be completely immune to these temporal effects. The mark of a god is to experience speed without exhaustion, time without wear upon the body, and descent without feeling either the weight of one’s body or its contact with the earth. In his essay on the body of the divine, Vernant has categorized the body of the god as one that is complete, a “super-body” against which the sub-body of the human should be

50. See Clay 1982 on the immortals’ securing of agelessness through ambrosia and nectar. As she argues, immortality does not naturally confer agelessness, but the infusion of ambrosia and nectar works to hold back the passage of time that brings with it aging and decay. On the gods’ label as “immortal and ageless” (ἀθάνατος καὶ ἀγήρως ἦματα πάντα, 8.539; 12.323; 17.444; *Od.* 5.136, 218; 7.95, 257; 23.336) see further Griffin 1980: 144–78; Edwards 1987: 138; Sissa and Detienne 2000: 13–27.

51. The one exception is telling: Zeus lets tears of blood drop towards the ground (ἔραζε) in sorrow at Sarpedon’s death (16.459). This is the only time that the king of the gods physically interacts with the human landscape at Troy, and—as Lateiner 2002 has shown—it is the closest Zeus comes to crossing the line between the immortal and mortal condition.

measured (1991: 27–49). The super-body of the gods differs from that of mortals, in that it possesses the ability to be “here and there at the same time” (46). In his words (Vernant 1991: 46):

... by traveling at a speed as swift as thought, the constraints imposed by the externality of the divisions of space are child’s play to [the gods], just as, through the independence they enjoy from natural cycles and their successive phases, they do not know the externality of the divisions of time as they relate to one another. In a single impulse, the gods’ corporeal vitality extends across past, present, and future, in the same way that its energy is deployed to the ends of the universe.

Vernant’s statements apply to the divine body in general, but in the *Iliad* the case is considerably more complex. On the one hand, it is true that while gods perceive and monitor time, they do not have to go to the trouble of physically experiencing it. According to this logic, gods should also resist the temporal implications of falling. There is a problem, though, in that the passage between Olympus and earth is a vertical one, and that the path of the gods’ movement is downwards, towards the plain at Troy. If both mortals and immortals ultimately move in the same direction (that is, towards earth), and if, once they are on the ground, both share the same space and act in the same plot, how is it possible to keep the separate mortal and immortal registers of time apart? Although the divinities, who live in the season-less, unchanging world of Olympus, are set apart from the vicissitudes of time, when they enter into the human space of the earth it follows that they will at least run the risk of falling. Furthermore, without the clear, structural delineation of time separated into the different spatial categories of earth and Olympus, there is always a danger that the figure of the descending god will overlap with the figure of the man who falls at the moment of death or becomes immobilized, and thereby falls, with old age. In turn, the falling of the figure may itself be understood figuratively—leading to what can be described, more simply, as a fall into human time.⁵²

Vernant’s statement that “the gods are here and there at the same time” does not take into account the fact that immortals, because they have bodies, can *only* be in one place at one time. Their bodies bind them to time in the sense that they can only be here now, and *then* there.⁵³ Even if they can transport themselves from here to there in the fraction of a second (as we have seen in the example of Hera, above), they can never physically exist in two places simultaneously.

52. On the figurative aspects of the falling figure, see especially Paul de Man’s reading of Keats’ *The Fall of Hyperion* (de Man 1986: 3–20) and Cathy Caruth’s reading of de Man (Caruth 1995).

53. Cf. Dietrich 1983: 53: “[Individual gods] had to move from place to place like men, and it was unusual for one to be seen in two places at once.” Dietrich’s analysis gets to the heart of many of the questions and problems that revolve around the gods’ human form. The extent to which the Homeric gods were limited by their position in space has also been discussed recently by Kearns 2004: 63.

Our understanding of divine movement through time will always be complicated by the body of the god, and the way in which it both imitates and differs from the death-bound, aging, and tiring body of mankind.

Through certain devices, such as the simile comparing immortal speed to the process of human time, or the gates of the Horae (Seasons) that explicitly mark the crossing over into a different temporal register (5.749; 8.393), Homer attempts to smooth over the transition between the time of the immortals and the time of men. And yet, written into the background of the gods' effortless descents is another kind of movement, one in which the body of the god is forced into an engagement with lived or experienced time via the process of moving downwards towards the ground. Our first example comes from the end of Book 1, when Hephaestus tells of how he was once hurled out of Olympus by Zeus, and was left to free-fall through the air until he came crashing down to earth:

ἦδη γάρ με καὶ ἄλλοτ' ἀλεξέμεναι μεμαῶτα
 ῥῖψε ποδὸς τεταγῶν ἀπὸ βηλοῦ θεσπεσίοιο,
 πᾶν δ' ἡμᾶρ φερόμην, ἅμα δ' ἠελίῳ καταδύντι
 κάππεσον ἐν Λήμνῳ, ὀλίγος δ' ἔτι θυμὸς ἐνῆεν·
 ἔνθα με Σίντιες ἄνδρες ἄφαρ κομίσαντο πεσόντα.

1.590–94

There was a time once before now I was minded to help you,
 and he caught me by the foot and threw me from the magic threshold,
 and all day long I dropped helpless, and about sunset
 I landed in Lemnos, and there was not much life left in me.
 After that fall it was the Sintian men who took care of me.

This story appears, in this context, to explain the origins of Hephaestus' limp, which the Olympians proceed to laugh at in the passage directly following this one. Unlike the other gods whom we have looked at so far, Hephaestus not only falls helter-skelter (that is, tossed out by his foot), but he also falls according to the effects of his own weight. His limp testifies to this, for the injury (if it is sustained from the fall) must be the result of being crushed by his own heaviness. Unusually, too, Hephaestus falls for an entire day (1.592). This is not because he is *lighter* than other gods who drop through space almost instantaneously; it is rather because he alone has taken on the qualities of corporeality in the process of free-fall.⁵⁴ The gods can certainly make the impact of their bodies felt when they want to, but as “super-bodies” they should ordinarily not be subject to the effects of their own weight.

A passage from Hesiod's *Theogony* provides some illumination on the rates at which objects were expected to fall through space. In his description of Tartarus, Hesiod accounts for the distance between earth and Ouranus by relating how long

54. At 24.80–82 Iris drops *like* a lead weight, but that is not the same as her embodying the weight herself.

it would take for a bronze anvil to fall through it (*Th.* 722–23). His claim that the anvil would drop for nine days and come to earth on the tenth implies that there is a fixed relation between the weight of an object and the time which it would take to fall.⁵⁵ The nine-day period that it takes for Hesiod’s anvil to reach the earth underscores the immense distance that separates the regions of gods and men.⁵⁶ According to the physics of the human world, it is a distance that takes a long time to traverse. In Book 1 of the *Iliad*, the weighty body of Hephaestus appears to be bound by the same laws of physics, causing him also to fall over a period of “long time.” The scholiasts were understandably concerned by the phrase πᾶν δ’ ἤμαρ φερόμεην (1.592), but eventually concluded that it should be understood to mean no more than that he arrived at night, on the grounds that it was inconceivable that a god should fall for an entire day.⁵⁷ The discomfort of the scholiast here is important, for it exposes a glitch in the transition from divine to human time frames in the poem.

When Hephaestus falls at the end of Book 1, he not only falls according to a human time scheme, but he also adopts a human posture on the ground. Like so many Homeric warriors whose legs have given way beneath them, Hephaestus lies “fallen” (πεσόντα), a word that, like καταπίπτω which describes his fall just a line earlier, is used in the *Iliad* to refer to men who have died in battle.⁵⁸ Through his phraseology, therefore, Hephaestus’ account of his fall from Olympus inevitably overlaps, both conceptually and linguistically, with the Iliadic fall of men.

The *Iliad* registers its own anxiety about what it means to fall in such human terms, by having the god claim ὀλίγος δ’ ἔτι θυμὸς ἐνήεν—that there was “not much life left in me” by the time he reached the ground. In several ways, then, Hephaestus, pitched from Olympus to Lemnos, figuratively represents the Homeric hero gasping out his last breath on the battle field. The suggestion that an immortal might come close to death occurs elsewhere in the *Iliad*, but usually

55. As West ad loc. observes, we can assume that Hesiod chose the anvil because it is the heaviest moveable object that comes to mind: “The simplest explanation of the choice of an anvil in this connexion is that, like the anvil which Zeus tied to each of Hera’s feet to increase her pain when he strung her up (*Il.* 15.19), it is the first example that comes to mind of a movable object of great weight. Aristotle believed that the heavier an object is, the faster it falls (cf. *Phys.* 216a13, etc.), and this was no doubt generally assumed to be the case in antiquity.” Cf. n.5 supra.

56. One might argue that Hesiod is simply describing a cosmos of different proportions. But see *Il.* 8.15–16 and *Th.* 720, 811 for the overlap between these two descriptions of the geography of the universe. Some indication of the vast distance between the mortal and immortal regions in Homer can be found in the story of Otus and Ephialtes, who, having attained the height of nine fathoms within nine years, attempted to pile mountain upon mountain to reach Olympus (*Od.* 11.307–20), and in the description of the terrifying Eris, whose divine body spans the distance between heaven and earth (*Il.* 4.442–45).

57. Erbse 1969: 157–58.

58. It also conforms to the majority of cases by appearing in the final position in the line (1.594; 5.288; 11.745; 15.428; 16.500; 18.395; 22.266). One might also draw a tentative comparison between the use of the verb κομίζω at 1.594 to describe the rescue of Hephaestus by the Sintiains, and at 13.195–96, where it denotes the retrieval of fallen bodies on the battle field. It should be noted that the word has a broad meaning, however (cf. its use to describe the rescue of Aphrodite at 5.359).

in connection with binding rather than falling.⁵⁹ The best-known example in this category is Ares, who lay bound in a bronze jar for thirteen months:⁶⁰

τλῆ μὲν Ἄρης, ὅτε μιν Ὀτος κρατερός τ' Ἐφιάλτης,
παῖδες Ἀλωῆος, δῆσαν κρατερῶ ἐνὶ δεσμῶ·
χαλκῆ δ' ἐν κεράμῳ δέδετο τρισκαίδεκα μῆνας·
καὶ νῦ κεν ἔνθ' ἀπόλοιτο Ἄρης ἄτος πολέμοιο,
εἰ μὴ μητρυιή, περικαλλῆς Ἡερίβοια,
Ἐρμέα ἐξήγγειλεν· ὁ δ' ἐξέκλειψεν Ἄρηα
ἤδη τειρόμενον, χαλεπὸς δέ ἐ δεσμὸς ἐδάμνα.

5.385–91

Ares had to endure it when strong Ephialtes and Otus, sons of Aloeus, chained him in bonds that were too strong for him, and three months and ten he lay chained in the brazen cauldron; and now might Ares, insatiable of fighting, have perished, had not Eeriboia, their stepmother, the surpassingly lovely, brought word to Hermes, who stole Ares away out of it as he was wearying and the hard bondage was breaking him.

Just as Hephaestus' spirit is almost defeated after falling for a day, Ares is “almost destroyed” by the time he spends entrapped in the jar. It is not clear where the jar was located, but the most likely place for a large jar in the archaic period is beneath or partially submerged in the earth. As binding restricts the god's physical range, preventing him from moving through space “as swift as thought,” so too does it restrict him to the confines of human, grounded time. Through the physical location of his body in the earth, the god finds himself engaged in time.⁶¹ Like the human characters in the *Iliad*, Ares, in almost dying, is forced to *endure* time (τλῆ; τειρόμενον) and to experience what it is for time to be thirteen months long.⁶² Both gods, in this way, either fall into or are trapped within a temporality where the passing of months and days is not simply an empty category to be filled up with quotidian pursuits, but rather a kind of time, inasmuch as the god physically experiences it, where every hour or minute counts.

The fall of Hephaestus thereby marks several temporalities at once, and all of them are connected with the idea of human time. It marks the time of death,

59. Detienne and Vernant 1991: 115–16. On the differences between binding and falling, see Aesch. *Eum.* 640–46 (discussed at the beginning of this paper which I also return to at the end).

60. For a reading of this passage within the context of binding in apotropaic ritual, see Faraone 1992: 74. Also important in this context (and much discussed in the scholarship), is the supposed binding of Zeus, alluded to in the *Iliad* by Achilles in conversation with his mother (1.396–400). Cf. Braswell 1971; Willcock 1977; Lang 1983; Slatkin 1991: 66–69; Alden 2000: 38–39.

61. Similarly, in the *Theogony*, gods who have transgressed are punished by being placed beneath the earth, in Tartarus, and are forced to endure a specific length of time away from the gods (one year in a breathless sleep, followed by nine in isolation), *Th.* 795–804.

62. Cf. Detienne and Vernant 1991: 115–16. On the frequent appearance of the motif of endurance in archaic poetry, in man's response to the gifts of the gods, see Thalmann 1984: 82–92. On the unusual longsuering of the immortal Thetis, see Slatkin 1991: 17–52, esp. 27.

but also the long, slow process of enduring time, before the moment of death itself. As the legs of the god crumple beneath him, the *gure* of divine time loses a status that I earlier compared to being *empedos*: sure of foot and everlasting. But Hephaestus' act of falling also associates him with human time (and the narrative tempo of the *Iliad*) by setting him within a cycle of seriality and repetition. For, after Hephaestus has fallen once, he is doomed to fall again, re-enacting with his own, singular body the sequence of fall upon fall that drives the plot of the *Iliad*. In Book 18, he explains that his limp so embarrassed Hera that she herself threw him a long way from the heavens. Having fallen (*πεσόνηται*) into the ocean, he was rescued by Thetis and Eurynome, and lived with them for nine years before returning to Olympus (18.394–405).

Hephaestus is twice caught up in the cycle of falling, and he comes close to suffering, like mortals, through the process of his fall. As an aftereffect of falling, Hephaestus displays his strained relationship to time through his body. The dragging of his foot lingers on as a physical trace of his encounter with human temporality. Through his limp, the god will always carry with him the sign of a specific event that took place in his past. In a way that is not generally applicable to the other gods, moreover, Hephaestus' movement—even on Olympus—is always connected to the passage of time. He is described in Books 1 and 18 as “hurrying” and “bustling” with his crooked feet.⁶³ While Thetis' nature as “silver-footed” and Iris' as “wind-footed” make it easy for them to move virtually instantaneously, Hephaestus feels the burden of time: his “nimbleness” is energetic, rather than effortless, and he, like a tired Homeric warrior, sweats in his workshop.⁶⁴ Like Odysseus (*Od.* 8.321), Hephaestus carries the experience of his suffering through time in his legs.⁶⁵

Scholarship on the *Iliad* has sought to account both for this “second fall” of Hephaestus and for the phenomenon of “immortal death” in general. This

63. 18.369–74, 410–17. Note the attention paid to Hephaestus' gait at 18.371, 372, 373, 393, 411, 417. Hephaestus is an interesting case as an immortal in several ways, and his special relationship to the human *gure* and human time opens up a number of questions for further inquiry. On his status as a craftsman that connects him, “doomed in his legs,” to a lower social stratum, see Thalmann 1988: 24. On his associations with the half-land, half-sea creatures of the seal and especially the crab, see Detienne and Vernant 1991: 259–75. The limping, manufacturing, smith-god, who is also the only god whose semen engenders a human race without the aid of a mortal partner, is thereby appropriately positioned in the *Iliad* as the god who comes closest to human time and experience.

64. 18.372, 414–15. The only other god to sweat in the *Iliad* is Hera, who describes how she has expended a great deal of sweat and energy in bringing the Trojans to ruin (4.27; cf. Zeus' comment about immortal sweat at 15.228). Hephaestus' special relationship to toil and labor (and the mortal condition) might be traced through his mother Hera. My thanks to Denis Feeney for pointing out this connection. Although an immortal, Hera is so engrossed in the human temporality of the narrative that she too begins to experience time according to a human scheme. Her connection to mortality must in some way be connected to her strange role as substitute mother to both Achilles (24.56–63) and, although only in later sources, Heracles (Murnaghan 1992: 246).

65. The parallels between Odysseus and Hephaestus were first explored fully by Braswell 1982. For other instances of Odysseus' weak legs (*Il.* 3.191–224; *Od.* 8.230–33; *Od.* 17.196–338), see Newton 1987: 13–14 and n.8.

work has drawn on, amongst other approaches, that of neo-analysis, mythological innovation, Homeric religion, and the use of the precedent or paradigm.⁶⁶ Many of these approaches are based on solving the problem of how to make the passages I have been discussing either “t” or “not t” into the formal structure of the poem or the religious structure of Homer’s world. I would argue, on the other hand, that their “out-of-place” nature is important to the make-up of the epic as a whole, precisely because their disjointed status thematizes the awkward transition that is in play in the *Iliad* between the time of gods and the time of men.⁶⁷ Pucci has argued that, despite the temporal framing of the plan of Zeus upon the structure of the narrative, the correspondence between the time of men and the time of the gods in the *Iliad* is always indeterminate, and sometimes incoherent.⁶⁸ The jolt in the formal structure of the poem that occurs in descriptions of Hephaestus’ fall is important, because it registers the corresponding jolt that takes place within the overall logic of a narrative that seamlessly attempts to insert the gods “who are immortal and ageless” into the human time on the ground at Troy.

Nowhere is this jolt more explicit than in the wounding of the gods in Books 5 and 21. The associations that I have been tracing between the falling body of the god Hephaestus and the falling body of the Homeric warrior finally converge in the figure of Ares. Struck by a spear in Book 5, Ares follows Aphrodite up to Olympus enraged and in pain. Once there, he complains to Zeus that only the swiftness of his feet enabled him to escape the fate of either lying on the battlefield among the corpses “for a long time” (δηρόν) suffering pains or living without strength (5.885–87):⁶⁹

ἀλλά μ’ ὑπήνεικαν ταχέες πόδες· ἦ τέ κε δηρόν
αὐτοῦ πῆματ’ ἔπασχον ἐν αἰνῆσι νεκάδεσσιν,
ἦ κε ζῶς ἀμενηνὸς ἔα χαλκοῖο τυπῆσι.

5.885–87

But my swift feet took me out of the way. Otherwise I should
long be lying there in pain among the stark dead men,
or go on living without strength because of the strokes of the
bronze spear.

66. Willcock 1964; Braswell 1971; Willcock 1977; Griffin 1978; Dietrich 1979; Levy 1979; Anderson 1981; Lynn-George 1982; Lang 1983; Alden 2000.

67. For scholars who have celebrated these moments of disjuncture, see, e.g., Dietrich 1979: 145–46 (on the “rough joins” in the treatment of the different religious elements in Homer); Slatkin 1991 (on Thetis); Pucci 2000 (on the *Dios Boulê*, see n.68 infra).

68. Pucci 2000: 35 seeks to establish “dans quelle mesure le récit [de l’*Iliade*] renferme et articule dans ses plis le temps divin, et le rapport qu’il établit entre le temps divin et le temps humain.” As he concludes, “On verra que l’encadrement que le temps divin fournit à l’action humaine est toujours, dans une certaine mesure, indéterminé, parfois incohérent et même bafoué par l’action réelle.” But cf. Murnaghan 1997, who sees the “plan of Zeus” and the “plan of Achilles” as operating essentially in concert, yet without Achilles’ full understanding of events.

69. Even Zeus, who hates Ares most among the gods, claims that he would not have allowed him to suffer for a long time in this way (ἀλλ’ οὐ μὲν σ’ ἔτι δηρόν ἀνέξομαι ἄλγε’ ἔχοντα: 5.895).

Ares' speed, the celebrated swiftness of his feet, saves him from the human predicament of falling, which—as we have seen in the case of Hephaestus and humans whose limbs eventually tire—is often associated with weakness in the feet or legs. Even so, Ares does not seem to be able to shake the image of his own body lying strewn on the battle field. Later in the poem, he claims that he will disobey Zeus' instructions and fight among the men, even if this means that he will end up lying among the corpses “in the blood and the dust”:

εἴ μὲρ μοι καὶ μοῖρα Διὸς πληγέντι κεραυνῷ
κεῖσθαι ὁμοῦ νεκύεσσι μεθ' αἵματι καὶ κονίησιν.

15.117–18

... even though it be my fate to be struck by Zeus'
thunderbolt, and lie in the blood and dust by the dead men.

Like Hephaestus, Ares appears to be unable to fall just once in the poem. As it turns out, these two virtual falls are just trial runs for his actual fall in Book 21, where he topples under the weight of a stone thrown by Athena:

ἡ δ' ἀναχασσαμένη λίθον εἴλετο χειρὶ παχείῃ
κείμενον ἐν πεδίῳ μέλανα τρηχύν τε μέγαν τε,
τόν ῥ' ἄνδρες πρότεροι θέσαν ἔμμεναι οὔρον ἀρούρης·
τῷ βάλε θοῦρον Ἄρηα κατ' αὐχένα, λῦσε δὲ γυῖα.
ἑπτὰ δ' ἐπέσχε πέλεθρα πεσών, ἐκόνισε δὲ χαίτας,
τεύχεά τ' ἀμφαράβησε: γέλασσε δὲ Παλλὰς Ἀθήνη,
καὶ οἱ ἐπευχομένη ἔπεα πτερόεντα προσηύδα:

21.403–409

But Athene giving back caught up in her heavy hand a stone
that lay in the plain, black and rugged and huge, one which men
of a former time had set there as boundary mark of the corn field.
With this she hit furious Ares in the neck, and unstrung him.
He spread over seven acres in his fall, and his hair dragged
in the dust, and his armor clashed. But Pallas Athene laughing
stood above him and spoke to him in the winged words of triumph.

As Loraux has observed in her reading of these three passages from the *Iliad* and of a similar scene depicting the fall of Ares in the *Shield of Heracles* (359–67), the virtual deaths of Ares here are made both real and symbolic by what she calls a “textual ruse.” In her words, “Ainsi, toutes les formules qui, inlassablement, donnent le mort aux combattants sont là, mais parfois affectées d’une légère modification, unique dans l’œuvre” (1986, 341). This textual strategy must take place, according to Loraux, because Ares' is not an ordinary death, and the modification to the formulaic language of death goes to show that he is not

really dead.⁷⁰ Like the oversize body of Ares, then, that IIs seven *plethra* of the battle field,⁷¹ the fall of the god does not t exactly into the language of Homeric death, but—importantly—the diction of falling is both typical *and* modi ed just enough to let the poem succeed in having it both ways.

Concerning Ares' "second fall" (15.115–16), moreover, we might add to Loraux's observation about the substitution of ὄμοῦ for the usual ἐν with νεκύεσσι at 15.118 (κεῖσθαι ὄμοῦ νεκύεσσι: "lie among the dead").⁷² In Ares' case, it is important to note that he lies not only (ἐν) among, or in the same place, as the corpses on the battle field, but also—if we expand our reading of ὄμοῦ to include all its de nitions—at *the same time* as them. By uniting with mortals in the act of having fallen, Ares enters into a relationship with them that he imagines might even exist on the same temporal register.

Like Ares and Hephaestus, Aphrodite's knees collapse beneath her as she is struck by Athena in Book 21. This is potentially a dangerous moment for the narrative, as the gods' bodies start to topple on the battle field in a wave that comes close to imitating the endless cycle of human falls. Lowenstam has observed that this scene resembles the pattern of death and ghting among humans on the battle field (1981: 84–87). But it is a potential that is never realized in the *Iliad*, a poem where gods do not, in the end, lose their immortality on any count. It is important to the foundation of Zeus' rule, however, that the potential to fall be kept alive amongst the gods. The fall from Olympus hangs as an ominous threat over the immortals throughout the poem, underscored by Zeus' tossing of Ate out of the heavens by her hair (19.130–31) and by his attempt to throw out Sleep

70. Loraux here follows Lowenstam 1981, who describes this phenomenon as a "mock scene" (a scene that "suggest(s) unrealized possibilities by means of transformations of commonly attested formulae," 84). See also Morrison 1999: 138. The following words and phrases used to describe the fall of Ares (21.403–409) employ typical battle-scene language (the one anomaly is the feminine gender of the participles denoting Athena as the assailant): . . . ἀναχασσαμένη λίθον εἴλετο χειρὶ παχείῃ/κείμενον ἐν πεδίῳ μέλανα τρηχύν τε μέγαν τε ("But Athene giving back caught up in her heavy hand a stone / that lay in the plain, black and rugged and huge," 21.403–404); κατ' αὐχένα ("in the neck," 21.406); λῦσε δὲ γυῖα ("his knees went slack," 21.406); πεσών ("falling," 21.407); καὶ οἱ ἐπευχομένη ἔπεα πτερόεντα προσηύδα: ("she stood above him and spoke to him in the winged words of triumph," 21.409). The formula is modi ed in the following places: ἐκόνισε δὲ χαίτας ("his hair dragged in the dust," 21.407); τεύχεά τ' ἀμφαράβησε ("his armor clashed," 21.408). For a detailed reading of these passages, see Lowenstam 1981: 84–87.

71. On the problem of the gods' size in relation to both the human world on the ground and the cosmic world of Olympus, see, e.g., 5.838–39 (where Diomedes' chariot groans under Athena's weight); 18.516–19 (on the relative size of Athena and Ares as they are depicted on Achilles' shield). Gordon 1979: 14 is illuminating on this topic in reference to Pheidias' colossal statue of Zeus at Olympia (inspired, according to tradition, by *Il.* 1.528–30). In reference to Strabo's complaint (8.3.30) that the god was so tall that, if he had stood up, he would have broken through the ceiling of the temple, Gordon observes (14): "I take it that Pheidias incorporated a deliberate allusion to the puzzle over the gods' ability to transcend human polarities into his design: Zeus is in the temple, but also not—he does not 't.'"

72. Loraux 1986: 340nn.15–16. For ἐν + νεκύεσσι, see 5.397; 10.349.

(14.258).⁷³ In Book 8, Zeus imitates the actions of his Hesiodic counterpart by threatening to hurl those gods who disobey him “far into murky Tartarus” (8.13). In his threats, Zeus makes it clear that he can subject the bodies of the gods to the human physics of falling, but that he will always escape this particular form of “gravity” himself. A few lines later (19–27), he claims that even if all the gods tied a golden cord to Olympus and attempted to pull him down from the sky, they would never succeed in toppling him. He goes on to threaten, however, that—if he wished—he might easily drag all the gods, along with the earth and sea, up by that same golden cord, and securing it around the horn of Olympus, leave all of them suspended there, dangling in midair:

εἰ δ' ἄγε πειρήσασθε, θεοί, ἵνα εἴδετε πάντες·
σειρήν χρυσεῖην ἐξ οὐρανόθεν κρεμάσαντες
πάντες τ' ἐξάπτεσθε θεοὶ πᾶσαι τε θέαιναί·
ἀλλ' οὐκ ἂν ἐρύσαιτ' ἐξ οὐρανόθεν πεδίονδε
Ζῆν' ὑπατον μήστωρ', οὐδ' εἰ μάλα πολλὰ κάμοιτε.
ἀλλ' ὅτε δὴ καὶ ἐγὼ πρόφρων ἐθέλοισι ἐρύσσαι,
αὐτῇ κεν γαίῃ ἐρύσαιμι' αὐτῇ τε θαλάσση·
σειρήν μὲν κεν ἔπειτα περὶ ῥίον Οὐλύμποιο
δησαίμεν, τὰ δέ κ' αὖτε μετῆρα πάντα γένοιτο.
τόσσον ἐγὼ περὶ τ' εἶμι θεῶν περὶ τ' εἶμι ἀνθρώπων.

8.18–27

Come, you gods, make this endeavour, that you all may learn this.
Let down out of the sky a cord of gold; lay hold of it
all you who are gods and all who are goddesses, yet not
even so can you drag down Zeus from the sky to the ground, not
Zeus the high lord of counsel, though you try until you grow weary.
Yet whenever I might strongly be minded to pull you,
I could drag you up, earth and all and sea and all with you,
then tie the golden rope about the horn of Olympos
and make it fast, so that all once more should dangle in mid air.
So much stronger am I than the gods, and stronger than mortals.

It is noticeable in this passage that Zeus distances himself from the other gods by emphasizing that he cannot be pulled downwards (πεδίονδε) towards the condition of mortality. At the same time he is careful to remark on the physical strain such exertion would wear upon the bodies of the other gods (οὐδ' εἰ μάλα πολλὰ κάμοιτε, 8.22), although he himself, he suggests, would be able to lift the entire cosmos without any effort at all. But what is perhaps most interesting about Zeus' bizarre threat is that it culminates in an image of the entire earth, and the gods along with it, suspended in the moment of free-fall. As scholars have noted, the image is reminiscent of the punishment of Hera, whom Zeus recalls having once suspended from the heavens with anvils tied to her ankles:

73. Cf. 5.897–98; 8.402–405; 15.21–24.

ἦ οὐ μέμνη ὅτε τ' ἐκρέμω ὑψόθεν, ἐκ δὲ ποδοῦν
 ἄκμονας ἦκα δύω, περὶ χερσὶ δὲ δεσμὸν ἴηλα
 χρύσειον ἄρρηκτον; σὺ δ' ἐν αἰθέρι καὶ νεφέλῃσιν
 ἐκρέμω·

15.18–21

Do you not remember that time you hung from high and on your feet
 I slung two anvils, and about your hands drove a golden
 chain, unbreakable? You among the clouds and the bright sky
 hung.

In both examples the punishment of the gods is associated with binding (δησαίμην, δεσμὸν), conforming to the traditional means that scholars have argued brings immortals closest to the human state of death. But now there is something more that we can say about these particular forms of punishment. For in both the gods are pulled downwards by a physical weight (the earth or the anvils) that keeps them poised in a permanent state of almost-falling. Scholars have long drawn a connection between the anvils that pull Hera down from the heavens and the anvil used by Hesiod to illustrate the distance between the heavens and earth.⁷⁴ The connection helps us to understand the hanging of Hera as the beginning of a fall, especially if we consider that Hephaestus, the Olympian who falls most memorably in the *Iliad*, bears the anvil as one of his trademark tools (18.476; *Od.* 8.274). Indeed, it may well be the association that Hephaestus shares with anvils and that Ares shares with bronze that causes them to be attracted, through the weight of their particular metals, to the concept of heaviness which we have traced in our history of falling.⁷⁵

What is the particular effect of Zeus' punishment of Hera by hanging her with anvils attached to her ankles, or his threatening of the Olympians with the story of the golden cord? In both cases, the suspension of the gods in space, dangling in midair, puts them in a position of also being suspended in time. If the end result of falling, for humans, is death, then it is most appropriate that the supreme punishment for the gods should be always to be kept on the brink of the moment before death—the moment of the fall—because, for the gods, the full (human) implications of falling can never be realized. By forcing the Olympians to engage with weight and falling, Zeus also forces them to come as close as possible to death and the human experience of suffering through time. As Apollo's words from Aeschylus' *Eumenides* with which I began this paper suggest, falling presents a unique kind of threat to the immortals because

74. *Th.* 722–23. Cf. Beckwith 1998: 92n.4; nn.5 and 55 supra.

75. Hesiod describes his anvil as being made of bronze (*Th.* 722), but it is hard to determine whether Homer's anvils are made of bronze or iron (cf. Gray 1954). On Ares' connection with bronze, cf. Loraux 1986: 347; Nagy 1999: 156§ 9n.1, with references. James Ker first suggested to me that Hephaestus' connection to the human activity of falling might be tied to his role as a god of technology, especially given that he uses the anvil, Hesiod's measure of falling.

it, unlike binding, is also associated, in the human sphere, with events that are irreversible in time.

CONCLUSION

Although similar sets of anxieties and questions have clustered around those moments in the *Iliad* when the immortal status of Ares and Hephaestus is compromised, scholars have not put these “quasi-deaths” side by side and considered their significance as a paired set of falls. Nor has falling itself been recognized as a sustained motif, which extends far beyond its primary role as a formulaic marker of death for the Homeric warrior on the battlefield. I hope to have shown here that the shared diction and expression between the long falls of Hephaestus, from Olympus to earth, and the warrior-falls of Ares on the Trojan plain illustrate different versions of the same thing. In each case, a god falls victim to the weight of his own body and, in turn, experiences time—through his body—in a way that is similar to how humans experience time on the ground. In attempting to “fit” the gods into a narrative which is told to human scale and with human points of reference, Homer places the divine body at the intersection between mortal and immortal worlds. I have explored here some of what happens when that body falls out of place and consequently finds itself caught up in the nuances and movements of human time.

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