futuroclassico

Expressing the Inexpressible: Conceptions of Pain in Isaac Rosenberg's War Poetry and Homer's Iliad

«they only live who have not lived in vain,
for in their works their life returns again»[1]
Isaac Rosenberg

Introduction

Dolon's death comes suddenly. Sent by Hector to spy on the enemy's camp, the Trojan is discovered by Diomedes and Odysseus. In an attempt to avoid his approaching fate, Dolon shares information with his Achaean opponents and thus betrays the Trojans – yet in vain. Diomedes reminds him, there would be no rescue, only beaten under his own hands, only with Dolon's life being lost, would he no longer bear a threat to the Argives. Upon hearing these words, the Trojan, holding on to life, reaches for Diomedes' chin, to supplicate him. But Diomedes waits no longer and as he strikes the middle of his opponent's neck with a sweep of the sword, both tendons slashed, «Dolon's head *still speaking* dropped in the dust» (X, 371-459)[2].

How to make sense of this image we find in book ten of the *Iliad*? How can the head of a killed man continue to speak beyond

[1] V. Noakes, *21st-Century Oxford Authors Isaac Rosenberg*, Oxford University Press, New York 2012, p. 12.

[2] Passages from the *Iliad*, quoted in this paper, are taken from R. Lattimore, *The Iliad of Homer*, 2nd ed., Chicago University Press, London 2011.

«FuturoClassico» n. 5, 2019 ISSN: 2465-0951
pp. 92-132

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death? The incoherence of this image strikes us. Far from being a unique case, apparent incoherence recurs in both Homer's *Iliad* and Isaac Rosenberg's war poetry. The following exploration of conceptions of pain will consider this incoherence, alongside other factors. An incoherence that is emblematic for a treatment of pain, as one is confronted with the impossibility to express it. It is just this difficulty to express that remains significant, as, in the words of Derek Attridge, it evokes «the paucity of our vocabulary in dealing with affective experience [...] but also the capacity of literature to engage powerfully and subtly with the extraordinary complexity of emotional responses»[3]. In examining the Great War poet's reception of the ancient epic, I reflect on the complex presence of pain, *expressions of the inexpressible*, which, I argue to open new ways of understanding both texts[4].

I am in pain. A statement so obvious and clear, yet is it that evident after all? As historian William Reddy rightly finds, while «emotions [might be] most self-evident, and the most relevant of our orientations towards life, [...] the moment the question is taken seriously, troubling difficulties of definition arise»[5]. Indeed, to what extent can one express and put the emotion, the feeling of pain they are experiencing into words? Though faced by everyone, we all experience pain differently, as our personal experiences of pain bar us from a universal understanding. Pain and other emotions can be seen as neither ultimately individual, nor as shared collectively[6]. This complexity unravels in an endeavour to understand war's painful consequences today, as well as in past conflicts.

In analysing the presence of pain in Rosenberg's poetry, who fought in the First World War between 1915 till his death in April

[3] D. Attridge, *Once more with feeling: art, affect and performance*, «Textual Practice» XXV, 2, 2011, p. 330.

[4] Rosenberg's poems that will be quoted in this reflection can be found in Noakes, *21st-Century Oxford* cit.

[5] W. Reddy, *Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions*, University Press, Cambridge 2001, p. 315.

[6] Reddy, *Navigation of Feeling* cit., p. 330.

of 1918, and his reception of Homer's *Iliad*, I set out to show the possible, albeit complex, articulation of pain. A brief overview of discussions of emotions, published in the past decades[7], that will contextualise my reading of pain in Rosenberg and Homer might at first be surprising. Is pain an emotion? A question, as agreed on by various scholars, that does not allow for a simple answer. In his discussion of layers of consciousness Antonio Damasio differentiates clearly between emotions, he considers as «outwardly directed and public», and feelings, «which are inwardly directed and private», both reaching their «full and lasting impact» through consciousness[8]. Emotions can further be classified in primary or universal emotions, as happiness, sadness, or anger, secondary and social emotions, such as jealousy or pride, as well as background emotions, as well-being or tension. Indeed, pain does not feature within these categories. Yet, as Damasio continues to demonstrate, «the label emotion has also been attached to drives and motivations and to the states of pain and pleasure»[9]. Emotions, «a complicated collection of chemical and neural responses» should indeed be distinguished from pain, «a consequence of a state of local dysfunction in a living tissue»[10]. If emotions and states of pain are thus seen as two distinct entities, they are nevertheless intimately related, as pain is a «constituent quality of certain emotions as well as a trigger for certain emotions»[11]. While views, as of Damasio, remain clearly significant, the aim to find an unambiguous definition for or situating *pain* within categoric bounds of emotion, feeling, or affect is not central to the following reflection. As Attridge rightly points out, «many attempts have been made to distinguish them, but there is no agreement on how this

[7] This overview is in no way exhaustive. It traces major explorations of emotions that support readers to further their understanding of the history of emotions.

[8] A. Damasio, *The Feeling of What Happens Body and Emotion in the Making of Consciousness*, Harcourt Brace, New York 1999, p. 36.

[9] Damasio, *The Feeling* cit., p. 51.

[10] Damasio, *The Feeling* cit., pp. 51, 71.

[11] Damasio, *The Feeling* cit., p. 76.

should be done, and since each term functions differently in different grammatical contexts it's probably wise not to be too dogmatic about their meanings»[12]. As this paper considers Rosenberg's reception of the *Iliad,* the focus lies rather on the different nuances of pain: pain that appears at times as a result of physical damage, notably the warriors' wounds, as a psychic experience, the ways it is associated with other emotions, like sadness, which we will see amongst other in Homer's mourning Andromache, as well as pain reported through narratorial techniques.

In this consideration, I will explore the relation of death and the positioning of the reader it entails, *kléos* seen in the context of pain, as well as the underlying narrative techniques. One might not be able to answer why and at what point exactly the drooping head of a poppy representing death evokes pain. But as is discussed towards the end of this paper, it is just this insecurity, which communicates pain most strongly. This approach shall contribute to the question, why it was that Homer provided «a crucial source for the discourse about war», whilst offering «no analogue of elements of modern warfare»[13], as it examines how pain is never obvious, yet powerfully present through evocations in Rosenberg, as well as in the *Iliad.* The analysis of Rosenberg's reception of the epic, of *Iliadic* echoes, that appear in his modern war poetry, at times twisted, ironised, or deconstructed, shall illustrate this view on pain.

Reflections on emotions: an overview

Various scholars have examined emotions in history, literature or other fields in the past decades. What Damasio calls «the strange history of the science of emotion», as 20th century neuroscience and cognitive science overturned the interest in emotions of the 19th century and «gave emotion a very cold shoulder»,

[12] Attridge, *Once more with feeling* cit., p. 330.

[13] E. Vandiver, *Stand in the Trench, Achilles*, Oxford University Press, New York 2010, p. 454.

might also apply to the history of human sciences[14]. While French historian Lucien Lefebvre's famous call for the reconstitution of the affective life from the past, *d'autrefois*, in 1941[15], *The Affective Fallacy*, published eight years later by Wimsatt and Beadsley[16], as well as works of Norbert Elias[17] present an interest in emotions, analyses of the history of emotions have only been growing considerably in the past thirty years. Particularly so since the mid-1990s, a period of heightened interest in emotions, which sociologist Patricia Clough identifies as the *Affective Turn* in humanities and social sciences[18]. We henceforth find a diverse range of scholars drawing out the complexities of emotions in different time periods. Piroska Nagy and Damien Boquet, as well as Barbara Rosenwein reflect on emotions in the Middle Ages[19]. Emotions in

[14] Damasio, *The Feeling* cit., p. 38.

[15] L. Lefebvre, *La sensibilité et l'histoire: comment reconstituer la vie affective d'autrefois?*, «Annales d'Histoire Sociale (1939-1941)» III, 1/2, 1941, pp. 5-20.

[16] W.K. Wimsatt Jr.-M.C. Beardsley, *The Affective Fallacy,* «The Sewanee Review» LVII, 1, 1949, pp. 31-55. Though this reflection does not account for the reader's response, the authors' reflection remains interesting through their acknowledgment of the fundamental connection between literature and emotion.

[17] E. Norbert, *Über den Prozess der Zivilisation soziogenetische und psychogenetische Untersuchungen, Band 1: Wandlungen des Verhaltens in den weltlichen Oberschichten des Abendlandes*, Verlag Haus zum Falken, Basel 1939.

[18] P. Clough-J. Halley, *The Affective Turn: Theorising the Social*, Duke University Press, Durham 2007. For further discussion on *the affective turn*, see also *Towards a New Epistemology: The 'Affective Turn',* ed. by A. Athanasiou *et al.*, «Historein» 8, 2008, pp. 5-16. Helpful overviews of academic works on the history of emotions, can also be found in B. Hitzer, *Emotionsgeschichte – ein Anfang mit Folgen*, «H-Soz-Kult» 32, 2011 available online (<www.hsozkult.de/literaturereview/id/forschungsberichte-1221>); and J. Plamper, *Geschichte und Gefühl, Grundlagen der Emotionsgeschichte*, Siedler, München 2012.

[19] These studies were the result of the project *EMMA: Emotions au Moyen Âge*, see *Le Sujet des Émotions au Moyen Âge*, ed. by P. Nagy-D. Boquet, Beauchesne, Paris 2009; *Histoire intellectuelle des Émotions, de l'Antiquité à nos Jours*, ed. by P. Nagy-D. Boquet, Centre de Recherches Historiques, Paris 2015. For Rosenwein, see B. Rosenwein, *Anger's Past: The Social Uses of an Emotion in the Middle Ages*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca 1998; Ead., *Worrying about*

late modern times are evoked by works, as of scholars Ute Frevert, Gesa Stedman or William Reddy[20]. Additionally, one can find analyses spanning various periods that offer insightful reflections on emotions, such as *Emotions in Ancient and Medieval Philosophy* by Simo Knuutila[21], the two volumes of the collective publication *Histoires des Émotions*[22], or an analysis of gender and emotion through time that has most recently been published in the French Gender History Journal, «Clio»[23].

Antiquity has equally been attracting studies of emotion. With *Unveiling Emotions* Angelos Chaniotis edits a collective publication with contributions on a variety of topics linked to emotions[24]. Similarly Douglas Cairns and Laurel Flukerson further our understanding with the collective publication *Emotions Between*

Emotions in History, «The American Historical Review» CVII, 3, 2002, pp. 821-845; Ead., *Problems and Methods in the History of Emotions*, «Passions in Context: Journal of the History and Philosophy of the Emotions» I, 1, 2010, pp. 1-32.

[20] See *inter alia*: G. Stedman, *Stemming the Torrent. Expression and Control in the Victorian Discourses on Emotion, 1830-1872*, Ashgate, Aldershot 2002; W. Reddy, *Honour and Sentiment in Post-revolutionary France 1815-1848*, University of California Press, Berkley 1997; Reddy, *Navigation of Feeling*, cit., 2001.

[21] S. Knuutila, *Emotions in Ancient and Medieval Philosophy*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 2004. See also: *Lament: Studies in the Ancient Mediterranean and beyond*, ed. by A. Suter, Oxford University Press, New York 2008.

[22] *Histoire des Émotions:De l'Antiquité aux Lumières*, ed. by A. Corbin *et al.*, I-II, Éditions du Seuil, Paris 2016.

[23] D. Boquet-D. Lett, *Le Genre des Émotions*, «Clio Femmes Genre Histoire» 47, 2018, pp. 7-293. On gender and emotion, see also: *Ritual Dynamics in the Ancient Mediterranean: Agency, Emotion, Gender, Representation*, ed. by A. Chaniotis *et al.*, Franz Steiner Verlag, Stuttgart 2011; *Sexed Sentiments: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Gender and Emotions*, ed. by W. Ruberg-K. Steenbergh, Rodopi, Amsterdam 2011.

[24] This publication, among others, was the result of the research project *The Social and Cultural Construction of Emotions: the Greek Paradigm* at the University of Oxford: *Ritual Dynamics in the Ancient Mediterranean: Agency, Emotion, Gender, Representation*, ed. by A. Chaniotis *et al.*, Franz Steiner Verlag, Stuttgart 2011; see also: *Unveiling Emotions II. Emotions in Greece and Rome: texts, images, material culture*, ed. by A. Chaniotis-P. Ducrey, Franz Steiner Verlag, Stuttgart 2013.

Greece and Rome[25]. David Konstan reflects on envy and jealousy in ancient Greece[26], and in *The Emotions of the Ancient Greeks* he analyses emotions in ancient philosophy, as do scholars, such as Richard Sorabji or more recently Kristján Kristjánsson[27], while Robert Kaster notes the interplay between emotions and ethics in ancient Rome[28]. The close relationship between emotion and speech is also noted by Ed Sanders and Matthew Johncock, as they explore ways in which emotions form strategies of persuasion[29], as well as by Dominique Arnould, who reflects on laughter and tears in antiquity or Thorsten Fögen with his discussion *Tears in the Graeco-Roman World*[30].

Among this abundance of studies considering antiquity, scholars have also reflected on emotions in Homer's *Iliad*. Braund and Most reflect not surprisingly on anger, a topic «the epic surely

[25] D. Cairns-L. Flukerson, *Emotions Between Greece and Rome*, Institute of Classical Studies, London 2015.

[26] *Envy, Spite and Jealousy: The Rivalrous Emotions in Ancient Greek*, ed. by D. Konstan-K. Rutter, University Press, Edinburgh 2003.

[27] R. Sorabji, *Emotion and the Peace of Mind from Stoic Agitation to Christian Temptation*, University Press, Oxford 2000. For a reflection on emotions and ancient philosophy, see also: *The Emotions in Hellenistic Philosophy*, ed. by J. Shivola-T. Engberg-Pedersen, Kluwer Academic Publishers, Dordrecht 1998. M.R. Graver, *Stoicism and Emotion*, University of Chicago Press, London 2007; K. Kristjánsson, *Aristotle, Emotions, and Education*, 2nd ed., Routledge, Abingdon 2016; W. Fortenbaugh, *Aristotle on Emotion*, 2nd ed., Bloomsbury Academic, London 2002.

[28] D. Konstan, *The Emotions of the Ancient Greeks: Studies in Aristotle and Classical Literature*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto 2007; R. Kaster, *Emotion, Restraint, and Community in Ancient Rome*, Oxford University Press, New York 2005.

[29] *Emotion and Persuasion in Classical Antiquity*, ed. by E. Sanders-M. Johncock, Franz Steiner Verlag, Stuttgart 2016.

[30] D. Arnould, *Le Rire et les Larmes dans la Littérature grecque d'Homère à Platon*, Les Belles Lettres, Paris 2009; *Tears in the Graeco-Roman World*, ed. by T. Fögen, De Gruyter, Berlin 2009. For a reflection on crying in Homer, see also S. Föllinger, *Tears and Crying in Archaic Greek Poetry*, in Fögen (ed. by), *Tears* cit., pp. 17-36.

lays claim to», as put by the authors[31], while lament and tears in the *Iliad* have given rise to various works since Hélène Monsacré's famous publication of *Les Larmes d'Achille*[32], alongside other monographies on individual emotions, such as Wissman's reflexion on cowardice and gender in the *Iliad* and Greek tragedy[33]. The feeling and emotion of pain in Homer, however, has only received more attention in recent years. So traces Maurice Sartre the importance of pain to the *Iliad* in an introductory statement, as he finds that it is anger and pain that dominate the ancient poem[34]. With an insightful article Mary Ebbott points to the intersection of poetry and pain in the *Iliad*[35], while Brooke Holmes examines the «*Iliad's* Economy of Pain» in an analysis of the relationship between violence, payment, and *timê* in the poem[36].

A question of methodology: how to find pain in the text?

Sarah Cole has powerfully shown how literature «developed strategies and forms of bodying forth the reality of pain» against

[31] S. Braund-G. Most, *Ancient Anger. Perspectives from Homer to Galen*, University Press, Cambridge 2003, p. 3; on anger in antiquity, see also: W. Harris, *Restraining Rage. The Ideology of Anger Control in Classical Antiquity*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge (MA) 2001.

[32] H. Monsacré, *Les Larmes d'Achille. Le Héros, la Femme et la Souffrance dans la Poésie d'Homère,* Albin Michel, Paris 1984. On lamentation in the *Iliad,* see also: D. Bouvier, *Du frisson (phrikè) d'horreur au frisson poétique: interprétation de quelques émotions entre larmes chaudes et sueurs froides chez Platon et Homère*, «Mètis» 9, 2011, pp. 15-35; C. Perkell, *Reading the Laments of Iliad 24*, in Suter (ed. by), *Lament* cit., pp. 93-117.

[33] J. Wissmann, *Cowardice and Gender in the Iliad and Greek Tragedy*, in D. LaCourse Munteanu (ed. by), *Emotion, Genre, and Gender in Classical Antiquity*, Bloomsbury Academic, London 2013, pp. 35-55.

[34] M. Sartre, *Les Grecs*, in Corbin *et al.* (ed. by), *Histoire des Émotions* cit., vol. I, pp. 17-56.

[35] M. Ebbott, *Tell me how it Hurts: An Intersection of Poetry and Pain in the Iliad*, «New England Review» XXXVII, 2, 2016, pp. 31-46.

[36] B. Holmes, *The Iliad's Economy of Pain*, «Transactions of the American Philological Association» CXXXVII, 1, 2007, pp. 45-84.

«a fundamental inexpressibility»[37]. Agreeing fully with this insight, I will take these reflections on pain further, situating my approach among works, such as Tatum's *The Mourner's Song – War and Remembrance from the Iliad to Vietnam* or Vandiver's *Stand in the Trench, Achilles*, which have shown the potential to further our understanding through studying the modern war poet's reception of ancient texts. The combined reading of Rosenberg's reception of Homer alongside the *Iliad* seeks, hereby, to draw out the often-surprising ways, in which both poets evoke pain.

This analysis, directed mostly at the poetry itself, seeks to remind of a further noteworthy aspect. As one considers the context of war, surrounding Rosenberg and influencing his writing of poetry, a similarity between the modern and ancient poet comes to mind. Letters written by the former from the trenches shall hereby contribute to the analysis, while not overruling a discussion of his poems, which not only compare to Homer, but show how Rosenberg's reading of the *Iliad* can lead to a further understanding of the Homeric epic. «Given the perilous intimacy of life and art» of trench poetry, «some critics might say: after such experience, what theory»?[38] Yet, as the following dialogue between Homer and Rosenberg will show, it is not necessarily theory that entails the understanding of pain in poetry written about or during war, but the permission of the undecidable and vague that lets moments of pain become clear.

Therefore, I invite my readers to reflect, to question moments seemingly incoherent at first and look further. In 1911 Isaac Rosenberg writes in a letter to his friend Miss Seaton about the power of the «almost imperceptible , of the «delicate greys and hues, the star in the puddle, the quiet sailing cloud» that to most people

[37] S. Cole, *The Poetry of Pain*, in T. Kendall (ed. by), *The Oxford Handbook of British and Irish War Poetry*, University Press, Oxford 2009, p. 3.

[38] S. Das, *Reframing First World War Poetry: An Introduction,* in Id. (ed. by), *The Cambridge Companion to the Poetry of the First World War*, University Press, Cambridge 2013, pp. 3-34, p. 9.

means nothing, but influences them nonetheless[39]. I seek to follow this call for the almost imperceptible and in trying to look beyond the obvious, I hope to show that the reading I propose of both the WWI poet's writing and his reception of Homer's *Iliad* offers new possibilities to read both texts. Hereby, the perspective lies not only in obvious articulations of pain, but pain reaching the reader through subtle framing, imagery and the narrator's workings.

As has been shown by various scholars, thinking about emotions of different times is a complex process. Indeed, how can someone's writing do justice to the complex emotions and feelings one faces in experiencing pain? Even more so in an attempt to compare the uttering of pain between different languages and periods, contemporary and modern times, as the *sense* of emotions, their nuances, their inflections and their intensity, are shaped by a particular culture and time[40]. Various factors thus complicate a reflection on emotions in the past. Firstly, language proves to be a barrier, which lays ground to Thomas Scheff's criticism of how «studies of emotions are trapped in unexamined cultural assumptions», as they use vague and ambiguous «vernacular words rather than well-defined concepts»[41]. But what words or rather categories can be used? Can an emotion, experienced in antiquity, transcend time to reach our modern understanding? Does the interpretation of a text depend on the reader's horizons of expectations, as proposed by Hans Robert Jauss, on a process that is closely connected to stages of historical reception?[42] Or as put by Douglas Cairns, «is emotion a pan-

[39] Letter to Miss Seaton [1913/1914], N253-254. (Letters found in Noakes (2012) – abbreviated with *N* – will thus be listed henceforth.)

[40] Corbin *et al.* (ed. by), *Histoire des Émotions* cit., vol. I, p. 6.

[41] T.J. Scheff, *Routines in Human Science: The Case of Emotion Words.* Available online (http://www.soc.ucsb.edu/faculty/scheff/I.html), 2004.

[42] H.R. Jauss, *Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory,* «New Literary History» II, 1, 1970, p. 20.

cultural category»?[43] Moreover, as Benno Gammerl notes how do we come to terms with the historian's emotions?[44]

Indeed, a reflection on pain, a reading of powerful images, affects and influences the reader. Konstan is right in insisting on the importance of realising the difference between emotions of the ancient Greek from our own[45]. An ambition to «understand» pain or any emotion through texts faces us with complexities, which has given rise to various attempts of theory and reflection in diverse fields[46]. After all, how can readers not be implicated, as they think back on personal experiences and use these to react to instances of pain illustrated in their reading? A process complicated further by the subject matter taken for this analysis, as it reads not one, but two authors, Rosenberg and Homer, each separated by culture, language, time and other factors.

Translating pain: the difficult search for the 'right' translation

The aim of finding new ways of *reading* pain is further complicated by the issue of translation. In choosing to read the *Iliad* in the English translation by Richmond Lattimore alongside the poetry of Isaac Rosenberg, one might certainly argue that this approach simplifies an understanding of pain, as it disregards the

[43] D. Cairns, *Look both ways: studying emotion in ancient Greek,* «Critical Quarterly» 50, 2008, pp. 43-62; on this question see also: A. Wierzbicka, *Cross-cultural Pragmatics. The Semantics of Human Interaction*, De Gruyter Mouton, Berlin, 1991; D. Konstan, Their Emotions and Ours: A Single History?, «L'Atelier du Centre des recherches historiques» 16, 2016, available online (https://journals.openedition.org/acrh/6756).

[44] B. Gammerl, *Emotional styles - Concepts and Challenges*, «Rethinking History - The Journal of Theory and Practice» XVI, 2, 2012, pp. 161-175.

[45] Konstan, *The Emotions* cit.

[46] See for example: P.N. Stearns-C.Z. Stearns, *Emotionology. Clarifying the History of Emotions and Emotional Standards*, «The American Historical Review» XC, 4, 1985, pp. 813-830; and their concept of *Emotionology*; for further reflection, see: R. Harré, *The Social Construction of Emotion*, 2nd ed., Basil Blackwell, Oxford 1989; M.C. Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions*, Cambridge University Press, New York 2001.

different expressions in the ancient Greek, and thus the linguistic nuances. The moment of Dolon's death that has opened my discussion evokes such a concern. Indeed, as they read in Lattimore of «Dolon's head *still* speaking», readers of ancient Greek will realise that this adverb does not appear in the original text. There, Dolon dies in in the Iliad «*as* he was speaking». The text does not feature *still*, used in the English translation, that renders the image of dying Dolon all the more shocking.

Aware of the differences between the Greek and English translations, the aim of this exploration lies elsewhere. It is not an analysis of the differences in language I seek, but a deeper understanding of the Great War poet's reception, as well as the ancient text. What was it in the *Iliad* that spoke to Isaac Rosenberg, a young British soldier, as he grappled with his experiences of war? Rosenberg read the *Iliad* in translation, though no direct references bear proof of the exact translation that he might have used. For my reflection on the war poet's reception of the ancient text, I have chosen the most recent edition of Lattimore's translations of the *Iliad*, «the gold standard for generations of students and general readers», as the editor states. I have chosen this particular English translation of the epic, as it is as commonly used today as one of the translations, Rosenberg had chosen for his own reading, might have been some hundred years earlier. In considering which translation WWI poets, as Wilfred Owen, Isaac Rosenberg, and J.W. Streets would have most likely used, Vandiver argues correctly for the impossibility to make out «the direct source of particular phrases» for any them. All three being admirers of Keats, Chapman might have certainly appealed in particular through Keats' «famous appreciation of that translation». Nevertheless, other translations, as by Alexander Pope, Edward Derby, or T. A. Buckley might have just been as likely to influence the WWI poet(s) «on the grounds of reputation and familiarity», as well as «availability and price»[47].

[47] Vandiver, *Stand in the Trench* cit., pp. 111-112. For an insightful discussion of translations and their impact on modern literature: L. Hardwick,

Looking back on the example of Dolon's death, do these translations, potentially used by Rosenberg, feature the noteworthy use of *still,* setting up a haunting temporal connection between the dying warrior and his inability to speak? Might this incongruence have influenced Rosenberg a century ago as much as it marks my reading of Lattimore today? While the translation by Chapman does not set up this temporal connection, we do retrieve it in the other three translations noted in the paragraph above. Thus, in Pope we read of «the head, *yet* speaking», Derby's translation reads «*ev'n while* he spoke, his head was roll'd in dust», while in Buckley Dolon's head «*still* muttering was mingled with the dust»[48]. While the temporal connection that marks us today in Lattimore's edition also appears in a translation(s) that Rosenberg may have read, there is no certainty. In the face of this uncertainty present in moments, as of Dolon's death, that disable the reader to establish a direct relationship between the ancient text and a modern translation, I insist on the necessity of incorporating a modern perspective into the reading. While points, discussed henceforth, might vary according to specific translations in style, language, or the narrator's perspective, they appear in all accurate translations and influence their readers.

In his letters, Rosenberg does not refer to a particular translation of the *Iliad,* the poet's only reference to Homer, «the Homer for this war hasn't been found»[49], in a letter to Edward Marsh, proving merely the former's knowledge of the ancient poet. Yet, his poems demonstrate a close acquaintance with Homer. Their

'Murmurs in the Cathedral': The Impact of Translations from Greek Poetry and Drama on Modern Work in English by Michael Longley and Seamus Heaney, «MHRA - Modern Humanities Research Association» XXXVI, 1, 2006, pp. 204-215.

[48] For translations, see: S. Shankman, *The Iliad of Homer Translated by Alexander Pope,* vol. I, Eugene, Wipf and Stock Publishers 1996; G. Wills, *Chapman's Homer The Iliad*, University Press, Princeton 1998; E. Derby, *The Iliad of Homer,* J. M. Dent & Sons, London 1864; T.A. Buckley, *The Iliad of Homer*, Coy and Wyman, London 1851.

[49] Letter to E. Marsh [1916], N324-325.

analysis makes one wonder, why Rosenberg, (as often attested by scholars[50]) a member of the working class, to whom «nobody ever told what to read»[51], who chose his reading himself, remembered Homer in particular as he found himself on the battlefield.

This reference to Homer in his letter to Edward Marsh raises another question: what might constitute «the Homer of this war»? Though Parry's and Lord's discoveries of Homer as the oral poet came long after Rosenberg's death, they draw out a similarity between the two poets: both the ancient and modern poets «write» their poems in their mind, through memory. Before the outbreak of war, John Amshewitz recalls how Rosenberg came to his studio, proclaiming to have a poem, only to realise that he forgot «to write it»[52]. Such creation of poems in his head must have continued during Rosenberg's time in the trenches. Acutely aware of the danger of poems being lost, a fear he manifests in various letters[53], he was forced to memorise. Though this worry differentiates Rosenberg from Homer, as «it would never occur to the singer that his song would be lost to mankind»[54], it creates a similarity between them: just like the oral poet in the process of dictation, Rosenberg must have experienced a sharpened moment of creation, as through the lack of material he «affords time to think of lines and song»[55]. Defying the constant lack of stationery[56], envelopes impossible to send, as they «get stuck and use-

[50] C.H. Sisson, *English Poetry 1900-1950 An Assessment*, Rupert-Hart-Davis Ltd, Manchester 1971, p. 86; Vandiver, *Stand in the Trench* cit., p. 93; B. Bergonzi, *Heroes' Twilight: A Study of the Literature of the Great War*, Constable, London 1965, p. 110.

[51] Noakes, *21st-Century Oxford* cit., p. 229.

[52] Noakes, *21st-Century Oxford* cit., p. XVI.

[53] See Letter to S. Schiff [1916], N295; Letter to Trevelyan [1916], N300. Letter to Marsh [1916], N308.

[54] A.B. Lord, *Homer's Originality: Oral Dictated Texts*, «Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association» 84, 1953, pp. 124-134, pp. 130-131.

[55] Lord, *Homer's Originality* cit., p. 132.

[56] Letter to Father [1916], N321 (see also: N335).

less with the damp»[57], in short «rotten conditions»[58], Rosenberg memorised his poetry before writing it down. It is here that the former, who worked «on massive and complex poems in [his] head amid the manifold terrors and routine hard labour of life»[59], resembles an oral poet and is in a way «the Homer of this war». Though his isolation in the trenches makes it questionable whether he would have performed his poetry to other soldiers[60], this lack of writing materials, as well as the absence of books[61] put him in a position, when through remembering alone, he integrates tradition creatively into his poetry – a process that recalls Homer's creation of the *Iliad*.

The reader's implication through pain

In a search for Iliadic echoes in Rosenberg's poetry, *Dead Man's Dump* comes to mind, when the poem's fifth and sixth stanzas clearly evoke book XVI and V of the *Iliad*[62]:

> None saw their spirits' shadow shake the grass,/or stood aside for the half used life to pass/out of those doomed nostrils and the doomed mouth,/when the swift iron burning bee/drained the wild honey of their youth./What of us, who flung on the shrieking pyre,/ Walk, our usual thoughts untouched,/our lucky limbs as on ichor fed,/ Immortal seeming ever?/ Perhaps when the flames beat loud on us,/ a fear may choke in our veins/ and the startled blood may stop (*Dead Man's Dump*, R27-39).

The poem's fifth stanza presents a clear reception of Sarpedon's death in the *Iliad*, as «death's end closed over [the hero's]

[57] Letter to S. Schiff [1917], N338-339.

[58] Letter to R.C. Trevelyan [1916], N298.

[59] G. Hill, *Isaac Rosenberg, 1890-1918*, «Proceedings of the British Academy» 101, 1999, pp. 209-228, p. 213.

[60] J.H. Johnston, *English Poetry of the First World War*, University Press, Princeton 1964, p. 211.

[61] Vandiver, *Stand in the Trench* cit., p. 112.

[62] Noakes, *21st-Century Oxford* cit., pp. 113-116.

nostrils and eyes» (XVI, 502-503) (R29). Furthermore, «our lucky limbs as on ichor fed» (R34), recalls book five of the *Iliad*, as «blood immortal flowed from the goddess [Aphrodite], ichor, that which runs in the veins of the blessed divinities» (V, 339-340). Amidst these echoes, however, the question of «immortal seeming ever» (R35) in *Dead Man's Dump* creates distance from the Homeric model. In connecting immortal, ichor and the shrieking pyre, Vandiver rightly finds that this «strongly suggests the classical trope of apotheosis through fire, in which a mortal becomes an immortal by burning». But while Rosenberg alludes to the possibility of it, «he does so only to underline the illusory nature of such a hope», as «seeming» recalls how easily the impression of immortality «can be shattered at any instant by explosions»[63]. The *us*, at all times conscious of this transience, painfully stresses the disparity between Rosenberg and moments framing ichor in the *Iliad*. Nevertheless, the painful realisation of uncertain immortality recalls also the Homeric hero, who, albeit striving for *kléos,* faces doubt, like Hector wishing to be «in all [his] days immortal and ageless and be held in honour as Athene and Apollo» (VIII, 538-540). This is thus an instance in Rosenberg's poetry, where the modern war poet remembers an element of the *Iliad,* while changing its nuances.

Dead Man's Dump offers a further remarkable similarity between Homer and Rosenberg. The title of Rosenberg's poem «suggests the brutal indifference to death as well as to life»[64], something which might recall the ever-present death in the *Iliad.* But as Rosenberg's title «nevertheless expresses the mystery of a sudden, violent death with a deep compassion»[65], so Homeric moments communicate painful emotions in such brutal descriptions of death. It might seem both in *Dead Man's Dump* and the *Iliad*

[63] Vandiver, *Stand in the Trench* cit., p. 300.

[64] Johnston, *English Poetry* cit., p. 238.

[65] V. Noakes, *War Poetry, or the Poetry of War? Isaac Rosenberg, David Jones, Ivor Gurney*, in Kendall (ed. by), *The Oxford Handbook* cit., p. 8.

«that it is not the moment of pain that attracts»[66], but this insight oversees how words strike us through their painful exactitude. Pain reaches us through words, as «dump» or Homer's brutal descriptions of death. Both poets trace strong images, which become clear in the readers' own imagination, as they fill in their own conception of pain in the given framework. This technique manifests a recurrent and striking similarity between both poets, as examples of the poppy simile or the image of tearing will show.

This approach, embracing modern, as well as past perspectives in a combined reading of both, enables us to reflect and react to passages that often tend to be overlooked. A reading of pain presents us with moments, marked by incoherence, recalling the inexpressibility of pain that, while certainly shared, will never fully be congruent between author and reader. In reading a modern translation and not the original ancient Greek text alongside the war poet's text, I propose a reading that insists on the presence of doubt and embraces the incoherence, the «inexpressibility» of the experience of pain. This will lead to a new understanding of Homer's *Iliad,* as it is considered through Rosenberg's reception of it. In *Night and Day,* the former writes of «twilight's wide eyes are mystical/with some far off knowledge,/secret is the mouth of her,/and secret her eyes»[67] (R326-329). It is just this way of considering knowledge and mystery, secret and certainty closely bound together that lies at the heart of this paper. Full certainty of the conceptions of pain in Homer and Rosenberg cannot be attained, as the emotion of the past is necessarily seen through the lens of the present; a lens that further nuances itself, as it is not only an exclusively individual response that might affect one's reading. Reading is not solely an individual process, but as Stanley Fish has shown, implicates readers in «interpretative communities», as they read according to the conventions of this com-

[66] S. Das, *War Poetry and the Realm of the Senses: Owen and Rosenberg*, in Kendall (ed. by), *The Oxford Handbook* cit., p. 23.

[67] Noakes, *21st-Century Oxford* cit., p. 50.

munity[68]. This does not mean, however, that these communities and individuals find an unambiguous interpretation, a single way of reading the text: secret and mystery persist. Yet it just this notion of uncertainty that brings us closer to a more nuanced understanding of the nature of pain, of its inexpressibility.

This paper might thus be seen to closely relate to reader-response criticism. Marked by scholars as Stanley Fish, Wolfgang Iser, or Hans Robert Jauss this criticism underlies to some extent the following discussion through its emphasis of the role of the reader or the audience. Agreeing with the necessity to evaluate the readers' implication in texts for our understanding, of considering reading a «dynamic process», this paper does not, however, consider readers of texts as the absolute way of creating meaning. In questioning new criticism that regarded texts as autonomous, reader-response critics, as Wolfgang Iser regarding the text «a potential effect that is realised in the reading process»[69], brought new perspectives to the analysis of a text. Texts cannot be read in isolation but should be analysed with a consideration of its readers and authors (implied or real). Nevertheless, and this is what this paper continues to emphasise, while stressing the importance of accounting for readers reacting to and being guided by narrators, this does not allow for an unequivocal meaning, an absolute authority contributed to neither the reader nor a text's author. After all, as Eagleton rightly asserts, «language is not in fact something we are free to do what we like with»[70]. The following reading of pain does therefore believe in concepts established in reader-response theory, notably so in its consideration of silence and the absence of descriptions of pain that reminds of Iser's theory of blanks. These concepts, however, do not

[68] S. Fish, *Is there a Text in this Class? Authority of Interpretive Communities*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge-London 1980, p. 14.

[69] W. Iser, *The Act of Reading A Theory of Aesthetic Response*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore-London 1978, p. IX.

[70] T. Eagleton, *Literary Theory - An Introduction*, 2nd ed., Blackwell Publishing, Oxford 1996, p. 76.

ultimately guide the exploration, but work in hand with the conviction of points being marked by their uncertainty. Moments of doubt that do not, however, prevent an understanding, as I argue. As seemingly incoherent images unravel, they give meaning to the text.

The search for pain in Homer might seem unfruitful: according to Shay, «Homer does not hide the frightful wounds that soldiers inflict on each other. Nonetheless, he denies the suffering of the wounded by declaring them dead within moments of being cut, stabbed, or crushed»[71]. And as Schein rightly points out, an «emphasis on killing rather than wounding shows that Homer is interested not so much in the technique of battle or the detailed, anatomical description of wounds – vivid as this is – as in questions of death itself»[72]. While the text might thus direct the audience's focus away from wounds and pain, the reception of the *Iliad* brings out aspects that are not initially explicit. Let us consider one example. Achilles drives the deadly spear «clean through the soft part of [Hector's] neck». As the windpipe of the dying Trojan is not severed, he can still speak to his Achaean opponent. This moment does not only relate the words spoken by Hector, it also makes us imagine the pain he must face in his inability to articulate fully, suffering from the deadly wound to his throat (22.337). Holmes is right in calling «the wounded warrior silent»[73]. These moments of silence, however, make Homeric readers *speak* through their imagination. Deleuze and Guattari argue in their insightful *What is Philosophy?* for art being independent of viewers, hearers, and creators, as affects and percepts are «independent of a state of those who experience them»: «sensations, percepts, and affects are *beings* whose validity lies in themselves and exceeds any lived». If the «work of art is [thus] a being of sensation and nothing else», if «it exists in itself», if the *Iliad* and

[71] As quoted in Vandiver, *Stand in the Trench* cit., p. 230.

[72] S.L. Schein, *The Mortal Hero: An Introduction to Homer's Iliad*, University of California Press, Berkeley 1984, p. 77.

[73] Holmes, *The Iliad's Economy* cit., pp. 45-84, p. 57.

Rosenberg's poetry go beyond the individual, how can one understand the audience experiencing sensations in their reading?[74] The readers' interests might be guided in various directions. Yet this does not exclude the possibility for the reader to conceive the presence of pain in moments, such as Hector's death, that are surrounded by silence. Silence on moments of pain, the absence of a focus on wounds are significant, as they invite us to add in our own understanding of pain, the wounded or dying warrior must have experienced. Through the framing of such death scenes, the reader becomes part of the painful process to imagine, what kind of agony the Homeric hero would have experienced in his very last moments: the text expresses the inexpressible.

Reporting pain: narratorial techniques in Homer and Rosenberg

In both Homer and Rosenberg, the narrator offers a noteworthy insight into the articulation of pain: the need to raise distance. While comparing Agamemnon's pain to the pain of a woman in labour (XI, 269-272) might simply stress the intensity of the hero's pain, it also makes us wonder: to what extent can the Achaian's pain be *like* that of woman? Our recognition of this difference, the distance between Agamemnon and his point of comparison, illustrates the complexity surrounding pain: in the words of Holmes, in uttering pain «we have to assume our pain is like someone else's», to reach beyond the individual[75]. Distance between speakers and listeners, narrators and readers has to be overcome.

It is also «the achievement of distance», Rosenberg is praised for by Banerjee[76]. In *Dead Man's Dump* «the poem's narrators,

[74] G. Deleuze-F. Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, Columbia University Press, New York 1991, p. 164.

[75] Holmes, *The Iliad's Economy* cit., p. 43.

[76] A. Banerjee, *Spirit Above Wars: A Study of the English Poetry of the two World Wars*. Macmillan, London 1976, p. 71. See also: M. Seymour-Smith, *Guide to Modern World Literature*, Wolfe, London 1973, p. 240.

the «we» who provides its frame, remain detached»[77], a perspective that draws the reader into the poem, much like the silence. In a letter to Mrs Cohen, Rosenberg writes himself even that war should be approached in a «colder way, more abstract, with less of the million feelings everybody feels»[78]. We do therefore find distance in painful moments of Rosenberg's poetry recalling Homeric narration. But how is it possible to do so, when first-person writing, «more often meets with an emotional response because the reader identifies with the position of the speaker»?[79] The direct perspective of an «I-speaker», one finds in Rosenberg's *Soldier: Twentieth Century,* implicates us directly, as we read the poem's beginning[80]:

> I love you, great new Titan!/am I not you?/ Napoleon and Caesar/out of you grew./out of unthinkable torture,/Eyes kissed by death,/won back to the world again,/ lost and won in a breath,/ cruel men are made immortal./out of your pain born (*Soldier: Twentieth Century*, R1-10).

While readers are thus incited to ponder on themselves, their «I», this perspective is always ready to be shifted, as distance is established. Rosenberg's situation as a private soldier pressed him «into extraordinary expressiveness», writes Stevenson[81]. Agreeing with this insight and taking it further, I argue that his poems are not extraordinary through moments of loud expressions, but especially through the silent upholding of distance. Mere additions like the word *may* of «a fear *may* choke in our veins» in *Dead Man's Dump* (R37) keep «pressing realities of panic, terror and

[77] Vandiver, *Stand in the Trench* cit., p. 298.

[78] T. Kendall, *Modern English War Poetry*, Oxford University Press, New York 2006, p. 1.

[79] P. Childs, *The Twentieth Century in Poetry*, Routledge, London 1999, p. 4.

[80] Noakes, *21st-Century Oxford* cit., p. 120.

[81] R. Stevenson, *Literature and the Great War 1914-1918*, University Press, Oxford 2013, p. 199.

pain [...] carefully distanced from the poem's "us"»[82]. A similar use of the same auxiliary verb *may* can be found in the image of a rat that decidedly marks Rosenberg's *Break of Day*[83] as soon as the fourth verse:

> Only a live thing leaps my hand,/A queer sardonic rat/As I pull the parapet's poppy/To stick behind my ear/Droll rat, they would shoot you if they knew/Your cosmopolitan sympathies./Now you have touched this English hand/You will do the same to a German/Soon, no doubt, if it be your pleasure/To cross the sleeping green between./It seems, odd thing, you grin as you pass/Strong eyes, fine limbs, haughty athletes,/Less chanced than you for life/Bonds to the whims of murder,/Sprawled in the bowels of the earth,/ The torn fields of France (R4-18).

This moment is noteworthy in various ways. In anthropomorphising the rat, the narrator evokes the absurdity of war's violence: a rat might easily move between soldiers of different nationalities, while they are facing one another in fighting. The narrator addressing the rat directly in the second person heightens this effect, as it makes us imagine a conversation with an animal. However, moments of distance counter this, albeit absurd, clear image of the rat crossing the battlefield. The two conditional clauses in «they would shoot you if they knew» and «soon, no doubt, if it be your pleasure / to cross the sleeping green between» remind the audience that the figure of a rat forming an actual threat to the soldiers does not exist. As we read on, the verse «it seems, odd thing, you grin as you pass» makes us doubt, whether the rat actually crosses the narrator's sight: the narrator does not presume but allows for space of doubt. Just as Agamemnon *may* feel something like the pain of a woman in labour, Rosenberg's «us» *may* experience something like fear, or the rat *seems* to grin

[82] E. Vandiver, *Homer in British World War One Poetry*, in L. Hardwick-C. Stray (ed. by), *A Companion to Classical Receptions*, Blackwell, Oxford 2008, p. 300.

[83] Noakes, *21st-Century Oxford* cit., p. 106.

inwardly. Both narrators carefully frame stark emotions of pain, as they introduce a notion of vagueness, something which seemingly distant, acts to involve, as it allows for multiple points of identification and the involvement of the reader. Both narrators introduce thus a sense of uncertainty to their expression of pain.

A further aspect often discussed in Homer, as well as in Rosenberg's poetry, is the lack of pity. The final lines of *Dead Man's Dump* might certainly shock its readers through the we-narrator's indifference to violence[84]:

> Here is one not long dead;/his dark hearing caught our far wheels,/and the choked soul stretched weak hands/ to reach the living word the far wheels said,/the blood-dazed intelligence beating for light,/crying through the suspense of the far torturing/wheels/ swift for the end to break,/or the wheels to break,/cried as the tide of the world broke over his sight./Will they come? Will they ever come?/even as the mixed hoofs of the mules,/the quivering-bellied mules,/and the rushing wheels all mixed /with his tortured upturned sight,/so we crashed round the bend,/we heard his weak scream,/we heard his very last sound, /and our wheels grazed his dead face (*Dead Man's Dump*, R62-79).

The repetition of *we* at the beginning of the lines, makes it seem, that although «we heard his weak scream / we heard his very last sound» (R77-79), *we* acted consciously against this awareness and grazed over his dead face nonetheless. Through this perspective *we* appear fully aware of *his* presence and kill him. The narrator almost seems unaffected in relating this moment of brutality. Yet this does not eliminate the presence of pain. As narration thus presents agonising moments of death in battle, it does not take on an indifferent distance but a distance to communicate the inevitability, the brutality of these painful instances to the reader.

The Homeric narration works in similar ways, as distance does not eliminate but intensifies pain. Superficially, one might

[84] Noakes, *21st-Century Oxford* cit., pp. 113-116.

find that the proliferation of violence «often works to keep pain from intruding into the spectator's field of vision by shifting the attention away from the embodied individual who suffers»[85], as is most prominently done in Achilles' slayings in Book 21. Lists of killings might insist on the ease, with which the narrator relates death, focusing on the act of shooting rather than the shooter himself[86]. But there is more: as these lists reach us, the painful consciousness that violence is ready to break out at any given moment accompanies them. Indeed, «the capacity for the omniscient narration to speak from within is quickly disappearing», something that gives us more prescience than pain[87]. Nevertheless, it is exactly this foreknowledge that renders Homeric narration painful. Though we all know what will happen, we experience pain like the narrator in our inability to impede events. Patroclus' plea for Achilles' armour not only informs the reader of his departure to fight. His «great innocence» is painful, as it bars the warrior from knowing that it was «his own death and evil destruction he was entreating» (XVI, 46-47), while we are aware of what is to come. Pain arises within such anticipation, which is stressed all the more, as the narrator relates Achilles' ignorance about Patroclus' death (XVII, 404-406).

This omniscient narration by both poets makes me wonder if it is more than just brutality that marks them. Why would the Homeric narrator dwell on Patroclus' great innocence? Why would Rosenberg's narrator add just the painful image of the *seeing dead*, if aiming to recount brutality only? This accumulation of violence might imply something else. Moments, such as the description of innocent Patroclus or Rosenberg's *seeing dead*, evoke how both narrators, recounting images of violence neutrally, might still be affected by this brutality. The seemingly unaffected narration gives way to the painful consciousness that nar-

[85] Holmes, *The Iliad's Economy* cit., pp. 45-84, p. 46.

[86] W. Marg, *Kampf und Tod in der Ilias*, «Die Antike» XVIII, 1942, pp. 167-179, p. 171.

[87] Holmes, *The Iliad's Economy* cit., pp. 45-84, p. 46.

ration, though presenting the horrors of wars, cannot control them: violence, brutality and pain are inevitable.

Plays with vision and perspective: the reader's sight of pain in poetry

The description of the rat in *Break of Day*, cited above, not only illustrates the narrator's technique to create distance, it also stands out in its relation of vision. The rat seems to *inwardly grin* as it passes, a phrase that makes us wonder: how can one perceive an inward grin? After all, grinning is an action that one typically associates with being directed towards the outside, rather than the inside. In taking the image of the rat further, the narrator dwells on the animal's possible vision of its surroundings. *Break of Day* make us realise the complexity of understanding through vision, as the narrator wonders:

> What do you see in our eyes/at the shrieking iron and flame/hurl'd through still heavens?/What quaver – what heart aghast»? (R19-23).

This image of the inward grinning rat paired with a focus on crossing the animal's vision with the soldiers' eyes leaves us perplexed, as it raises a question: what can we learn through vision, from seeing and being seen? Indeed, we see a lot in our reading, as bodies strike through their visuality.

> Grotesque and queerly huddled/contortionists to twist/the sleepy soul to a sleep,/we lie all sorts of ways/but cannot sleep./ The wet wind is so cold,/and the lurching men so careless,/that, should you drop to a doze,/wind's fumble or men's feet/is on your face (*The Troop Ship*, R1-10)[88].

Just as Rosenberg's *The Troop Ship* presents a visual description of soldiers in their experience of war, the visual language in

[88] Noakes, *21st-Century Oxford* cit., p. 105.

the opening of *Dead Man's Dump* sets up a clear image in the readers' mind:

> The plunging limbers over the shattered track/racketed with their rusty freight,/stuck out like many crowns of thorns,/and the rusty stakes like sceptres old/to stay the flood of brutish men/upon our brother clear (*Dead Man's Dump*, R1-6)[89].

Also, in the *Iliad* moments unsettle through their clear descriptions. Brutality is easy to imagine, as we face recurrent images of smashed heads (XI, 97; XII, 183; XX, 397), spears piercing eyes, nose and teeth (XVII, 297-298; V, 291; V, 73; XVII, 617) or eyes thrust out of sockets (XIII, 616-617; XVII, 741-742). Both the experience and the expression of pain appear with the notion of seeing. Limits, as raised through the rat's inward grin that an outside onlooker cannot fully perceive, clash with pictorial elements. Pain can be seen. Yet, as Rosenberg's rat evokes, these pictorial elements are not just a mere visual description of brutal death.

Though we see a lot, these visual moments are peculiarly accompanied by weighing silence. They evoke pain not through their visibility but the silence that surrounds them. After the preliminary description of «plunging limbers» in *Dead Man's Dump*, the narrator guides readers' interests from what can be seen to what might be heard:

> The wheels lurched over sprawled dead/but pained them not, though their bones crunched,/their shut mouths made no moan,/they lie there huddled, friend and foeman,/man born of man, and born of woman,/and shells go crying over them/from night till night and now (*Dead Man's Dump*, R7-13)[90].

While we might hear shells, the sound of bones being crunched, the dead's «mouths made no moan» (R10). And as we saw at the beginning of this exploration, Dolon, who is decapitated in book

[89] Noakes, *21st-Century Oxford* cit., pp. 113-116.
[90] *Ibid.*

ten of the *Iliad*, dies, as his head drops in the dust, *still speaking*, though the reader hears no word (X, 454-457). In both poems the dying are thus muted at the very point of being so visually exposed to the reader's imagination, descriptions that make us wonder if this is an *absolute* silence. After all, Dolon does not only utter words just before his death, he continues to do so even beyond life. While the reader knows this to be impossible, it is almost as if this moment invites us to fill in the words Dolon might have said. Equally, the pain of Rosenberg's «sprawled dead» is not mute, as «the reader, like the watcher, identifies himself with crushed corpses» and thus cannot believe that they were not pained, «partly because the identification is so strong»[91]. Both narrators widen the disparity between stark vision and pain that is not expressed verbally but implied. Far from weighing the reader's reactions down, the apparent silence, in Wolfgang Iser's terms, «stimulates the reader's imaginative activity», as it entices them to fill in «the blank»[92]. Pain does not remain mute.

Furthermore, darkness is used repeatedly as a metaphor for death in the *Iliad.* We find a similar connection between darkness and death in Rosenberg's *Through these Pale Cold Days*: «they leave these blond still days / in dust behind their tread / they see with living eyes / how long they have been dead» (9-12)[93]. While it certainly does not surprise us to read of living eyes able to see, the poem's last line startles us, as we realise that those living eyes are in fact dead. They see how long they *have been* dead. The use of the perfect tense turns the image upside down and makes us realise that it is actually the dead that see with living eyes. This paradoxical image draws up the possibility of vision even at the darkest point: death. But how can the dead see – let alone with living eyes? It is this angle, which makes the description painful. It makes us imagine the impossible and nostalgic

[91] J. Silkin, *Out of Battle: The Poetry of the Great War*, 2nd ed., Macmillan Press, London 1998, p. 282.

[92] Iser, *The Act of Reading* cit., pp. 182, 191.

[93] Noakes, *21st-Century Oxford* cit., p. 123.

look, the dead hold over their lost life. Such incoherence similar to the seeing dead arises elsewhere. Thus, we read in *Dead Man's Dump*:

> Perhaps when the flames beat loud on us,/A fear may choke in our veins/and the startled blood may stop./They air is loud with death,/the dark air spurts with fire/the explosions ceaseless are (*Dead Man's Dump*, R36-41)[94].

While one would normally not describe flames to beat *loud* or air to be *loud* with death, the seemingly incoherent use of language emphasises the painful experience of the ceaseless explosions. The opening of *Break of Day in the Trenches* confronts us similarly with a surprising image, as we read of a darkness that *crumbles away,* a word we would normally associate with physical objects, rather than the abstract concept of darkness. Yet, again the incoherence heightens the poem's power, as it makes us conceive the slow passing of time, «the same old Druid Time as ever», the narrator continues to say before moving on to describe the rat, discussed earlier in this paper, that completely appears out of the context of fighting, of time itself. These incoherent images present in Rosenberg's poetry certainly evoke the impossibility to express painful images literally. What is more, they heighten the impact on their readers, who are incited to wonder, what it might exactly *mean*, when darkness is said to *crumble,* or a flame is described to beat *loud.*

Silkin writes that «the new circumstances necessitated a new vocabulary» for war poets in the 20th century, as «traditional forms were tested»[95]. Yet, this is already the case in Homer's epic, when painful moments are marked by their unfeasible nature. According to Andromache, Hector's death causes «his parents mourning and sorrow beyond words», a pain, the intensity of which no expression can do justice to. And even as she states the reason for her «bitterness and the pain», she locates it in the «un-

[94] Noakes, *21st-Century Oxford* cit., pp. 113-116.
[95] Silkin, *Out of Battle* cit., p. 343.

sayable», as Hector has left her without saying «some last intimate word that [she] could remember always» (XXIV, 740-745). Ebbott finds war poetry and pain «well matched», neither of them giving an unequivocal meaning, as they both resist language[96]. It is in moments like Andromache's lament or the incoherent imagery of Rosenberg's narrator, that we see this resistance most clearly.

In the context of what we see or not see, both poets are often found to lack focus on the wounded body: Rosenberg rarely evolves «the war-torn body», when only «bodily details punctuate his poetry», writes Das[97]. And in the words of Pelling, also in Homer «wounds are either immediately lethal or manageably mild»[98]. Yet views, as of Pelling or Das, or Marg's argument on the rapidity of dying[99], risk to oversee that it is exactly in such descriptions of sudden death that pain resides. Both the modern and ancient poet describe death as the outcome of painful fighting, an angle, which might not dwell on the wounded body but raises pain nevertheless, as it makes readers imagine the very last moments before the deadly result. In Rosenberg's *Dead Man's Dump the* «sprawled dead» are not «pained, though their bones crunched» (R7-8). This is a painful passage «in the sense that the limbers' weight will damage the body as much as if it were alive» and «the watcher feels that if he can see the body, he cannot feel that it is dead; the corpses are still perhaps too nearly human»[100]. Similarly, in the *Iliad* descriptions of warriors that *suddenly* lay their opponents lifeless (XI, 391-395), raise pain: depictions become gruesome in their abruptness, as in images discussed earlier. Images of smashed heads, spears piercing through eyes, nose and teeth or eyes thrust out of sockets certainly affect us with the

[96] Ebbott, *Tell me how it Hurts* cit., pp. 31-46, p. 37.

[97] Das, *War Poetry* cit., p. 18.

[98] M. Wyke-C. Pelling, *Twelve Voices from Greece and Rome - Ancient Ideas for Modern Times,* University Press, Oxford 2014, p. 4.

[99] Marg, *Kampf und Tod* cit., pp. 167-179, p. 172.

[100] Silkin, *Out of Battle* cit., p. 282.

sheer brutality they hold. Yet, in doing so, they also incite the reader to imagine how such unexpected violence would have pained its victims, thereby implicating us in them.

It is this proliferation of killings that contributes to what Schein calls «the movement toward death»[101], the painful consciousness of transience on the battlefield. Suffering in the *Iliad* is «woven by Destiny with the strand of Achilles' birth» (XX, 127-128) and also in Rosenberg's *Soldier: Twentieth Century*, earlier discussed by this paper, pain and birth are interrelated in «pain born»[102]. Not only is pain present since birth in both poets, it also resists the suddenness of descriptions and persists: Homer makes it appear laborious (XXI, 525), wearisome (XXI, 51), hard (XV, 365-366; XXIII, 7-8), ever accumulating on the warrior (XVI, 109-111). Descriptions thus that stress pain's continuing effect on the hero. Rosenberg's poetry portrays the injured soldier not only as facing enduring pain but also as being affected by his fore-knowledge. So, he writes in a letter to his friend Gordon Bottomley «it's a toss-up whether you're going to be the carried or the carrier» to the hospital[103]. Through both poets we realise: while the wounded might be «far away» (XV, 391), «out of the sorrowful fighting» (XIII, 535), «apart from the others» (XV, 245), painful traces are ever-present, ever-burdening on the battlefield through the awareness of transience.

The painful strife for immortal fame: an interplay between pain & memory

A further aspect that is very present for the Homeric heroes is *kléos*. In the *Iliad* we continuously read of their strain for *kléos* and according to Vandiver it is just this heroic imagery that Rosenberg implicitly refutes[104]. But does the strife for immortal fame

[101] Schein, *The Mortal Hero* cit., p. 34.
[102] Noakes, *21st-Century Oxford* cit., pp. 120-121.
[103] Letter to G. Bottomley [1916], N312.
[104] Vandiver, *Homer* cit., p. 463.

eliminate the possibility of pain in achieving it? Hector's plea to Achilles not to let him «die without a struggle» but to «do some big thing first that men shall come to know of» (XXII, 303-305), exemplifies the connection between pain and *kléos.* One must be slain by «a brave man», one must fight in painful battle to avoid oblivion after death (XXI, 280). Indeed, the characters' preoccupation with the undying fame is «an idea that one finds often enough in the *Iliad*»[105]. Often, however, it comes with the notion of pain. Sarpedon brings out the painful necessity of fighting, as he states that he would neither continue to fight, nor encourage his companion to do so if through «escaping this battle [they] would be able to live on forever, ageless, immortal» (XII, 322-328). Such moments relate «the brutal consciousness of limited options and destiny», as *kléos* becomes «the most urgent need of all»[106]. *Kléos* does not appear as one option among others but the only destiny for every hero. Realising that there is no alternative to it, we understand how *kléos* is not just an aim, but, as Sarpedon's words evoke how it can become the painful compulsion for some heroes. Furthermore, to reach this destiny, to reach immortality, the Homeric hero must be remembered and his glorious fighting on the battle field be related by others. As these stories are recounted, he reaches posterity. In order to be remembered, the hero's fighting must, to some extent, be remarkable, connected to a form of pain and struggle. It is this, which Hector reminds us of, as he pleads to Achilles not to let him «die without a struggle» (XXII, 303-305): he desires a hard, a painful battle, as no one will remember his glorious fighting, if death comes too easily.

Painful suffering is also what seems to make Rosenberg a hero in 20th-century discussions of his poetry. His statement of joining war «with no patriotic convictions» in a letter to Edward Marsh[107], differentiates him from Homer's Hector, who insists on the pro-

[105] Wyke-Pelling, *Twelve Voices* cit., p. 11.

[106] M. Clarke, *Manhood and Heroism,* in R. Fowler (ed. by), *The Cambridge Companion to Homer*, University Press, Cambridge 2006, pp. 74-90, p. 77.

[107] Letter to E. March [1915], N288 (see also: Letter to S. Schiff [1915], N277).

tection of his city, Troy (VI, 493). Nevertheless, they are similar, as Rosenberg's fame amongst critics also arises from the painful necessity of fighting: So writes Laurence Binyon in 1922 that the former «suffered terribly during his war service [...] but he endured the inhuman horror of modern war with great heart; he would not have liked to be called a hero, but his fortitude was truly heroic»[108]. A statement that similarly to Homer raises the question, whether painful struggles condition the process of becoming the «undying hero». Through the reception of Rosenberg, as well as of Homer's presentation of the painful strife for undying fame, we realise *kléos'* connection to pain. While this link appears differently, as Rosenberg would not have aspired to the epic hero's *aristeia*, it nevertheless shows fighting to be painful in the context of both poets.

Isaac Rosenberg dies in April of 1918. Only eight years after the end of war, however, the poet's death is confirmed, as remains of a group of men belonging to his regiment are discovered in a mass grave. While Rosenberg's death, known to be among this very regiment, could thus be certified, his body could not be made out individually: it should stay unidentifiable[109]. Had he been a Homeric hero, he would not have been allowed to enter the Underworld, a death, that Achilles' dream of Patroclus illustrates with its most painful nuances and implications (XXIII, 70-79). Already in battle Homeric warriors stress the importance of identification (see X, 68; XXI, 95; XXI, 203-205). While this clear identification might continue in describing the dead warrior, a recurring detail accompanies these descriptions of death: the Homeric heroes are repeatedly thrown into the misty dust (see IV, 521; XIII, 548; XIII, 507; XVI, 469) and also in Rosenberg's *Through these pale cold days* it is specifically «days in dust», the «dark faces» leave behind[110] (R10). Dust, so light an aspect of na-

[108] Laurence Binyon quoted in Vandiver, *Stand in the Trench* cit., p. 138.

[109] J. Cohen, *Journey to the Trenches: The Life of Isaac Rosenberg, 1890-1918,* Robson Books, London 1975, p. 5.

[110] Noakes, *21st-Century Oxford* cit., p. 123.

ture, might not conceal the warrior to oblivion, but evokes painfully how time will almost gently cover the warrior's identity. Dust accumulates over his body, as time passes on, always pushing his identity a little further away from the present into a misty past.

A further point should be made in this context: Vandiver's comment that Homer did not provide «a precedent for the constant presence of the unburied dead»[111] oversees instances, where corpses assimilate painfully with nature in the *Iliad.* Hector searches twice «a space not cumbered with corpses» (VIII, 491; X, 199), Odysseus and Diomedes have to walk «through the corpses» (X, 349) and the river god complains that «the loveliness of [his] waters is crammed with corpses» (XXI, 218). Such instances of dead bodies left undistinguished, evoke how easily one's identity can be lost. Thus, against the warriors' identifications on the battle field, painful nuances arise, as distinctions cannot be made as easily anymore, most strongly so in the description of Sarpedon's dead body, whom «no longer could a man, even a knowing one have made out». Blood, dust and weapons concealed him (XVI, 639-643). The reader's unchanging knowledge that this is Sarpedon, however, checks this pain, a perspective that makes this specific corpse stand in for all the other ones assimilated in nature, while keeping the focus on the individual body. Such perspective appears similarly in Rosenberg's *Dead Man's Dump*:

> A man's brains splattered on/a stretcher-bearer's face;/his shook shoulders slipped their load,/but when they bent to look again/ the drowning soul was sunk too deep/for human tenderness (*Dead Man's Dump,* R48-53)[112].

This stanza and later on in the poem the line «here is one not long dead» (R62) focus on the individual's dead body. Yet, both moments lack details to identify it exactly. This is what makes

[111] Vandiver, *Homer* cit., p. 454.
[112] Noakes, *21st-Century Oxford* cit., pp. 113-116.

«the man's death particular and representative»[113], as Jon Silkin puts it. In both poems we therefore find painful echoes, as they evoke the loss of (national) identity, something which makes the dead in the *Iliad* as well as in Rosenberg elicit pain in a collective and individual perspective.

The recurring action of *tearing* evokes pain in a similar way. Odysseus boasts that «tearing birds» will get to his enemy (XI, 453-454), «dogs shall tear [Hector's opponent] to pieces» (XV, 351), Priam imagines Hector being eaten by dogs and vultures (XXII, 42-43) and warriors themselves are said to «tear the life out» of another (XXII, 68; XIX, 211; XXIV, 50). The beginning of the *Iliad* laments «pains thousand-fold upon the Achaeans», something that is two lines later concretely connected with the picture of «bodies to be the delicate feasting of dogs, of all birds» (I, 2-4), an image that also evokes the torn apart body. This painfully visual image of tearing not only haunts Homeric epic but also Rosenberg's poetry, as we read of «the torn fields of France» in *Break of Day in the Trenches* (R18). In Silkin's words the action of tearing «has a deliberate, human sense», as «landscape cannot be torn». *Tearing* thus «merges two scales, as the poet suggests «that the ground is torn with as much ease as hands tear paper»[114]. Stating that ground is as easily torn as a piece of paper stresses its vulnerability, something that extends to soldiers, just as easily ripped out of life on the battlefield. The Homeric warrior faces a similar situation, as the possibility that he, once so strong, might be torn apart by dogs, is repeatedly raised. Indeed, as in Rosenberg's words, «everybody and everything seems to be tumbling to pieces»[115]: everything on the battlefield faces the risk of painfully being torn apart before the soldier's eyes.

[113] Silkin, *Out of Battle* cit., p. 288.
[114] Silkin, *Out of Battle* cit., p. 279.
[115] Letter to L. Binyon [1916], N324.

Fragmented descriptions of pain: the encounter of beauty and death

Not only is pain apparent in the context of nature, it is peculiarly framed by beautiful imagery. Death in the *Iliad* becomes beautiful, as «war poetry is also to be found in the killing»[116]. Actions of killings are assimilated to beautiful imagery (XVI, 402-408; XVI, 745-750) and the warrior continues to be called beautiful in death (XXII, 370; XXII, 70-73). Buxton is certainly right in finding that there is no unequivocal answer in the *Iliad*, for why «sometimes there is no other word but "beautiful" to describe the evocation of death»[117]. But Rosenberg's reception might shed light on this question. The last line of *I am the Blood,* a poem, Rosenberg writes before war, also connects death and beauty: «I am the death/whose monument is beauty and forever/although I lie unshrouded in life's tomb/She is my cenotaph»[118] (R10). This notable link could be seen in the context of a further nuance: thanking Bottomley for his letter, Rosenberg writes that «it touched [him] in the way a beautiful sad relic might, say a Greek fragment»[119]. Notions of sadness and beauty come together in the form of a fragment. Is it thus fragmentation, where painful death and beauty assume shape in both poets?

A further surprising simile is found in Patroclus being described to kill like a fisherman. Again, an image that strikes through its incoherence, as one certainly cannot kill in the same way the fisherman drags his fish. And indeed, we cannot help but find it, despite its painful accuracy, beautiful, when the Achaean's act of hooking a spear through Thestor's teeth is likened to «a fisherman who sits out on the just of a rock with line and glittering bronze and hook drags a fish» (XVI, 402-408). What is more, warriors continue to be described as beautiful, even after

[116] J. Tatum, *The Mourner's Song - War and Remembrance from the Iliad to Vietnam*, The University of Chicago Press, London 2003, p. XIII, 119.

[117] R. Buxton, *Similes and Other Likenesses*, in Fowler (ed. by), *The Cambridge Companion* cit., pp. 139-155, p. 151.

[118] Noakes, *21st-Century Oxford* cit., p. 94.

[119] Letter to G. Bottomley [1917], N333.

having been killed: «Achaeans gaze upon dead Hector's stature and the imposing beauty» (XXII, 370) and Priam finds that «for a young man all is decorous when he is cut down in battle», as «though dead still all that shows about him is beautiful» (XXII, 70-73).

How to make sense of this recurring presence of beauty in moments of pain and death? Finding literal conformity is not the point here. The fragment of peaceful time lines itself alongside the fragment of death, something we also find in Rosenberg's poetry, in particular in *Returning we hear the Larks*:

> But hark! Joy-joy-strange joy./Lo! Heights of night ringing with unseen larks./Music showering our upturned list'ning faces./Death could drop from the dark/as easily as song-/but song only dropped,/like a blind man's dreams on the sand/by dangerous tides,/like a girl's dark hair for she dreams no ruin lies there,/or her kisses where a serpent hides (*Returning we hear the Larks,* R7-16)[120].

Reading the last lines of this poem renders us aware of the similes being fragmented in two images. Yet, it is just this fine division between life and death, which communicates how painfully beautiful life is at the very moment of being lost. Did Rosenberg think so, too, as he wrote in *Break of Day in the Trenches*: «the realisation that beauty and the awareness of having lived are of ultimate significance, even in the imminent presence of death»?[121] As painful a reminder these fragments recalling the loss of life might be, they frame descriptions of death and render these beautiful.

In the context of painful beauty there is one other prominent image that comes to mind immediately: the poppy, which appears twice in the *Iliad.* Gorgythion's head drops like a garden poppy (VIII, 306-308) and Peneleos lifts his opponent's eyeball «high like the head of a poppy» (XIV, 499). The beautiful poppy

[120] Noakes, *21st-Century Oxford* cit., p. 113.
[121] Cohen, *Journey to the Trenches* cit., p. 155.

appears thus at a moment of sheer death. While Hardwick correctly asserts that it connotes with «heroic associations», as indeed the act of vaunting over the victim's dead body is often associated with *kléos,* her comment that Rosenberg «sardonically transplanted [this Homeric image] away» from these associations falls short of the image's complexity[122]. As explored above, it is also painful fragmentation here, which renders the imagery of the poppy beautiful: the warrior tumbling under a spear's thrust, as if worn down by a drop of water, makes this image forceful, as it beautifully illustrates laborious pain, weighing on each warrior, through its nuanced fragmentation. An image that resonates all the more with the Homeric reader, as one realises that the poppy not only represents the dying man. In the words of Vandiver, it also «delicately performs its task of looking back through layers of earlier literature to the Homeric scene where it first appears»[123]. Indeed, the poppy simile is also central in Rosenberg's war poetry, as two poems draw the image of this flower in the reader's minds:

> As I pull the parapet's poppy/To stick behind my ear. […]/ Poppies whose roots are in man's veins/Drop, and are ever dropping/ But mine in my ear is safe-/Just a little white with the dust (*Break of Day in the Trenches*, R5-6, 23-26)[124].

> I snatched two poppies/from the parapet's edge,/two bright red poppies/that winked on the ledge./Behind my ear/I stuck one through,/one blood red poppy/I gave to you./The sandbags narrowed/and screwed out our jest,/and tore the poppy/you had on your breast…/down-a shell-O! Christ./I am chocked…safe…dust blind-I/ See trench floor poppies/strewn./Smashed you lie (*In the Trenches*)[125].

[122] L. Hardwick, *Translating Words, Translating Cultures*, Duckworth, London Duckworth, 2000, p. 51.

[123] Vandiver, *Homer* cit., p. 463.

[124] Noakes, *21st-Century Oxford* cit., p. 106.

[125] Noakes, *21st-Century Oxford* cit., p. 105.

Both images are complex, as they tempt us, just like the simile in Agamemnon's pain, to overanalyse, to force an absolute meaning, rather than «experience [...] feelings that poetry can reveal to a nature open enough to understand it»[126]. Kirk's reading of the Homeric poppy bears proof of this risk, as he finds it to be «a further piece of poetical pseudo-realistic fantasy – for the body would tend to collapse all at once, and the sagging of the head not stand out from the rest»[127]. However, drawing exact parallels between simile and reality is not the point, as Rosenberg's reworking of the poppy shows. Finding this simile pseudo-realistic and therefore interpreting the imagery as a moment of excessively realistic detail prevents us from seeing its emotionality[128]. It is certainly unlikely that a head drops in the exact same manner that it might do, when weighed down by a drop of water. It is also unlikely that when shells fall on soldiers, poppies lay strewn on the ground. What can be experienced, once one looks beyond mere likelihood?

When we consider the poppy similes in both Homer and Rosenberg not as a whole but as a frame to different fragments, we might grasp the painful reality of war. They evoke how a soldier, aware of his possible death, might at the very same moment think back to beautiful memories or might find beauty in things only the presence of death makes him see. Aware «that every moment is his next to last», he finds beauty in «normally trivial things»[129]. Death and life, fragments closely connected to one another, evoke thus war's overbearing reality, as well as the soldier's painful awareness of it: death comes as effortlessly as water drops on a poppy.

[126] Ebbott, *Tell me how it Hurts* cit., pp. 31-46, p. 41.

[127] G.S. Kirk, *The Iliad: A Commentary, Volume II: books 5-8*, Cambridge University Press, New York 1990, p. 324.

[128] I owe this point to Dr. Antony Makrinos, with whom I had insightful discussions about Homer and Rosenberg's war poetry.

[129] P. Fussel, *The Great War and Modern* Memory, University Press, Oxford 1975, p. 327.

Death is ever dropping (R24) and, as we have seen above, in *Returning, We Hear the Larks* it «could drop from the dark / as easily as song» (R10-11)[130], which again emphasises the soldier's prescience of his imminent death. Rosenberg insists on the presence of death, as he describes his poppy «just a little white with dust» (Break of Day, R23). In calling his own poppy safe, even though it is plucked and thus in effect already dead and dusty, he painfully retraces Homer's image through «the most ironic word»[131]: even what is believed safe is already ever dropping. Rosenberg's powerful reception of Homer lies here. Instead of overanalysing Homer, his poetry uses the space opening up in between threads that loosely connect the dead body and the drooping flower and reworks it. Seeming congruence falls apart into fragments, which encourage us to align them in our very own process of imagination. It is thus the «imperfect» simile that makes us understand the inexpressibility of pain. After all, how can one explain the pain of war, when life and death come so closely together?

Conclusion

In the words of Goldensohn, reading of «fear, rage, destruction, suffering, and blood sacrifice», makes us curious «about who asks us to look at these things, and with what authority»[132]. Yet as we are eager to find out about the poet, readers reflect on their own position. Angelos Chaniotis rightly finds that «the ancient historian does not only – perhaps not even primarily – study texts in order to understand emotions. It is far more urgent for an ancient historian to study emotions in order to understand texts»[133]. With my reflection on pain in Rosenberg and Homer I hope to have drawn out the possibilities of understanding both texts in

[130] Noakes, *21st-Century Oxford* cit., p. 113.
[131] Fussel, *The Great War* cit., p. 253.
[132] L. Goldensohn, *Dismantling Glory: Twentieth-Century Soldier Poetry*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2003, p. XI.
[133] Chaniotis *et al.* (ed. by), *Ritual Dynamics* cit., p. 23.

new ways. Realising that neither the modern nor the ancient poet lists obvious expressions of pain, one finds that it is through moments of the vague, the infeasible that pain expresses itself most clearly. Poetry and pain are closely related – or in the words of Jacques Derrida, «no poem without accident, no poem that does not open itself like a wound, but no poem that is not also just as wounding»[134]. Pain exceeds the text's boundaries to grip and implicate us by our personal experiences. Never obvious but always present, pain exists in the *Iliad* and Rosenberg's war poetry. Decades and centuries later, a search for pain's manifestations might entice one to pressure both texts to understand pain fully. Yet, only in resisting this temptation, in allowing for «suggestiveness, mystery, vagueness, something underlying what is actually put down, a hauntingness of», as writes Isaac Rosenberg in *Thoughts on Art*[135], can the vague adumbrate pain, that to some extent always remains hidden. Only as readers look beyond the obvious, they glimpse the inexpressible, as the painful reality of war reaches out to them.

Abstract.
This paper explores conceptions of pain in Homer's *Iliad* and Isaac Rosenberg's war poetry. In analysing the modern poet's reception, who fought World War I between 1915 and 1918, of the ancient epic, it illuminates both texts in new lights. Aware of the impossibility to communicate pain exactly this study revolves around such complexity, moments that nevertheless achieve to express the inexpressible. Stressing the reader's and the narrator's positioning, the paper draws out questions on textual silence, notions of distance, on moments that stand out through their uncertainty, incoherence even. Hereby, a noteworthy instant unravels in the close relationship between pain and

[134] J. Derrida, *Che cos'è la poesia?*, E. Weber (ed. by), *Points...Interviews, 1974-1994,* University Press, Stanford 1995 (ed. orig., *Points de suspension, Entretiens*, Éditions Galilée, Paris 1992), p. 297.

[135] Noakes, *21st-Century Oxford* cit., p. 222.

beauty. As pain resists the suddenness of descriptions, the exploration reflects further on pain in the context of *kléos*: does the strife for immortal fame eliminate the possibility of pain? Or do painful struggles condition the process of becoming the undying hero?

Keywords.
Pain, Reception, War Poetry, Homer, Isaac Rosenberg.

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