

REPRESENTATION OF THE GODS IN THE *ILIAD* BY HOMER: A BRIEF ANALYSIS

Tuncer YILMAZ¹

ABSTRACT

In classical literature, especially in tragedy and poetry, we see the intervention of the gods at the end of the work in order to resolve the main conflict. Being the first written record of the Greek mythology, the *Iliad* is a good example of weaving this intervention from the beginning to the end. Homer, in order to show this intervention, portrays the gods as humanlike, super powered, controlling, miraculous, heroic, and deceptive. The aim of this article to show Homer's representation of the gods as well as the hierarchy of the gods and their roles in the *Iliad*.

Key Words: *Homer, Iliad, Gods, Greek Literature*

HOMEROS'UN *İLYADA*'DA TANRILARI RESMEDİŞİ: KISA BİR BAKIŞ

ÖZET

Klasik dönem edebiyatında, özellikle de trajedi ve şiirde yapıtın sonundaki ana çelişkiyi çözmek için tanrıların müdahalelerini görürüz. Yunan mitolojisinin yazılı ilk kaydı olan *İlyada* başından sonuna kadar bu müdahaleyi içermesi açısından iyi bir örnektir. Homer bu müdahaleleri göstermek için insan gibi, doğa üstü güçlere sahip, kontrolcü, mucizevi, kahraman ve aldatıcı bir tanrı portresi çizer. Bu makalenin amacı, Homeros'un *İlyada*'da Tanrılarını nasıl resmettiğini ve aralarındaki hiyerarşiyi ve rollerini nasıl gösterdiğini ortaya koymayı amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Homeros, İlyada, Tanrılar, Yunan Edebiyatı*

Probably the most important text we have about Greek mythology is the *Iliad* of Homer and many practicing poets and literary critics have used it as a reference book of Greek mythology for centuries. Edith Hamilton states

¹ Araştırma Görevlisi, Atatürk Üniversitesi, Edebiyat Fakültesi, İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Bölümü, 25240, Erzurum, Türkiye, tyilmaz@atauni.edu.tr.

that “the first written record of Greece is the *Iliad*. Greek mythology begins with Homer, generally believed to be not earlier than a thousand years before Christ.”² In Greek mythology, the gods are portrayed as the most important characters along with titans, humans, demigods and the other creatures. The aim of this paper is to discuss how the gods are represented in the *Iliad*.

In classical literature, especially in tragedy and poetry we see the intervention of the gods at the end of the work in order to resolve the main conflict. Seth L. Schein claims that “one of the most characteristic features of the *Iliad* is the gods.”³ The gods and their relations with men play an important role in the poem. Throughout the poem, Homer represents the gods as intervening in human affairs and by this way they change the destiny of human life. This intervention of the gods is an important part of the poem and an effective way of Homer’s method, because without their intervention the poem would not have continued.

Because of the intervention, the gods start the war between Trojans and Achaeans and the reason of the war leads them to take sides. Before the start of the war, the gods hold a wedding feast for the honor of Thetis and Peleus, the parents of Achilles⁴ and the goddess Eris is not invited to wedding. Eris, in revenge, throws a golden apple inscribed "for the fairest" into the banquet hall, knowing it will cause trouble. All the goddesses claim it for themselves and the goddesses Aphrodite, Hera and Athena ask Zeus to make the final decision but Zeus decides that the task should be delegated to a mortal, Paris who is one of the princes of Troy and a son of Priam. Each of the three goddesses offers Paris a bribe so that he will name her the fairest: Hera promises him a large kingdom; to make him lord of Europe and Asia, Athena promises him a military glory and rampage all over Greece, Aphrodite promises him to give the most beautiful woman in the world, Helen, the wife of Menelaus, who is the king of Sparta.⁵ Paris visits Menelaus in Sparta and falls in love with Helen, taking her back to Troy with him, thus the war starts between Trojans and Achaeans. Because he chooses Aphrodite, both Hera and Athena become against him simply because Paris judges against them in the contest, so they are against the Trojans in general. The gods do several things to support their sides; even they fight in the battle themselves. Siding of the gods is a Homeric invention and Homer divides all the divinities into two groups; Apollo, Aphrodite, Artemis, Leto supporting the Trojans on one side and Athena, Hera, Poseidon, Hermes supporting the Achaeans on the other side. The gods throughout the poem demand of Zeus

² Hamilton, E., *Mythology*, Grand Central Publishing, New York, 1999, p. 14.

³ Schein, S. L., *The Mortal Hero: an Introduction to Homer’s Iliad*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1984, p. 45.

⁴ Balme M, and Morwood, J., "Homer and the *Iliad*- 1." *The Oxford Latin Course: Part I*, 47-48, 1996, p. 47.

⁵ Balme and Morwood, "Homer and *Iliad*," p. 48.

to support their sides but Zeus, most importantly, does not take a side, but intervenes in parts of the war where he sees necessary.⁶

Homer represents the gods in many aspects; as humanlike, super being, controller, having miraculous actions, life savers, and disguisers. Firstly, Homer demonstrates the humanization of the gods throughout the poem. Wallace Anderson names the features of Homer's gods as anthropomorphic; they behave as if they are human. In other words, as Anderson claims, the gods in the *Iliad* "exhibit traits and feelings which are decidedly human."⁷ For instance, Thetis cannot stand and weeps when she sees her son Achille's sorrowing after the death of Patraclos, when the gods match against each other at the battle Zeus laughs, when Achaeans build the wall, Poseidon gets jealous and angry so that he is not offered any hecatomb, and when Ares and Aphrodite are wounded, they run to Zeus to complain as well as to get sympathy of him.

Another humanlike function of the gods in the *Iliad* is the organization of the gods; it resembles to the model of human beings. Being the youngest son of Cronus and Rhea who is hidden away by his mother before eventually overthrowing his father, both brother and husband of Hera, brother of Poseidon and Hades, Zeus is the king of all the gods and the god of sky and thunder.⁸ As the head of all the gods, Zeus's will is the ultimate law since he is the monarch and acknowledged. Like a mayor in the human world each of the gods rules a region with their certain rules and responsibilities. Therefore, as G. M. A. Grube claims all the gods "have to respect each other's right and powers"⁹ because Zeus is the final authority.

Since the genre of the *Iliad* is a moral tragedy, the gods "demand among men strict adherence to oaths, proper regard for and mercy to suppliants, respect for the aged and for the dead, and obedience to the gods."¹⁰ In terms of this moral code in the poem, when men violate the rules or do not respect to the gods, they cannot escape from their punishment. *Iliad* begins during the tenth year of the Trojan War and in an earlier attack against the Trojans, Achaeans captures two beautiful women and keeps them as a war prize; Chryseis is awarded to the commander of the Greek army Agamemnon and Briseis to Achilles.¹¹ In the First Book, when Agamemnon offends Chryses, the priest of Apollo, and drives him away harshly by refusing to ransom back his daughter, Chryses appeals to Apollo. Then Apollo "heard him...Over against the ships he dropped to a knee, let fly a

⁶ Homer, *The Iliad*, Trans. Robert Fagles, Penguin, New York, 1990, p. 48.

⁷ Anderson, W. L., "Of gods and Men in the *Iliad*." *College English* 14, no. 7 1953, p. 392.

⁸ Kirk, G. S., Edt., *Heraclitus: The Cosmic Fragments*, Cambridge University Press, London, 1975, p. 246.

⁹ Grube, G. M. A., "The Gods of Homer." *Phoenix* 5, no. 3/4, 1951, p. 65.

¹⁰ Anderson, "Of gods and Men in the *Iliad*," p. 392.

¹¹ Homer, *Iliad*, pp. 72-76.

shaft and a terrifying clash rang out from the great silver bow,”¹² and sends a plague upon the Achaeans in retribution. Hence, the first intervention of Apollo leads to the angering of Agamemnon and then Achilles’ withdrawal for the battle.

After the army has suffered nine days, the goddess Hera like a human being takes pity on them and puts the thought in the mind of Achilles to arrange an assembly to discuss the matter. Agamemnon not only betrays to his wife physically but also he claims that he does not like her sexually any more: “because I, I refused that glittering price for the young girl Chryseis. Indeed, I prefer *her* by far, the girl herself; I want her mine in my own house! I rank her higher than Clytemnestra, my wedded wife-she’s nothing less in build or breeding, in mind or works of hand.”¹³ Because Agamemnon betrays his wife and insists on not to send Chryseis, he is punished by the god Apollo but he will be also punished in the future by his wife, Clytemnestra and her lover.

The gods intervene in human affairs and change the results of events. In the third book, in the battlefield, a truce is made so that Menelaus and Paris can meet in single combat, and the winner will take Helen and all her treasures home with him. Solemn oaths are sworn by both sides to abide by the outcome of the duel. However, Paris suddenly loses his nerve and turns back to the troops. His brother Hector who is the leader of the Trojan army is mortified by this cowardice. Hector declares to Paris that he is ashamed of him and his selfishness in stealing another man’s wife and causing the war. Meanwhile, Helen is watching the fight with King Priam from the walls of Troy. Just as Menelaus is about to kill Paris, his protector, the goddess Aphrodite takes him safely out of the battle and brings him back to his bedroom in Troy. Helen tells Paris what she really thinks of him that she wishes he had died in the battle. If the goddess Aphrodite did not intervene in the battle, Paris would have died and the Trojans would have lost the victory to the Achaeans.¹⁴

Like human beings the gods quarrel with each other and sometimes break the rules of peace and harmony in their world. Hephaestus is pictured as a peace maker who tries to reconcile the gods. According to Barry Powell, Homer in *Iliad* tells the “curious tension between the gods’ carefree world and the heroes’ world of violence and pain.”¹⁵ In Book One, heroes quarrel on earth and the gods quarrel on Olympus: Achilles feels himself dishonored by Agamemnon and so does Hera by Zeus by promising Thetis to support Trojans in order to take revenge of Achilles. Michael Silk states that “The

¹² Ibid, p. 79.

¹³ Ibid, p. 81.

¹⁴ Homer, *Iliad*, pp. 81-82.

¹⁵ Powell, B. B., *Homer*, Blackwell, London, 2004, p. 50.

heroes' quarrel is set to bring death and destruction: the gods', by comparison, is aimless and even frivolous."¹⁶ In Book Four, like human beings, the gods argue over the outcome of the duel on Mount Olympus. Although Zeus declares that Menelaus has won, so the war should end as promised, the goddesses Hera and Athena disagree. Hera hates Troy and wants to see it completely destroyed after all her work to help the cause of the Greeks and retrieve Helen. As Hera has other plans, she lets the Trojans break the oath and Zeus agrees and sends Athena to stir up the men to battle again. By the intervention of Athena, the war continues; she disguises herself as a soldier and appears to a Trojan, named Pandaros, and makes him shoot an arrow to Menelaus and so Agamemnon is angered when he sees that the truce has been broken. When the truce is over, fighting breaks out again; Apollo helps the Trojans while Athena helps the Greeks.

Secondly, although the gods have some human qualities, they are presented as super beings with divine power. In fact they are superior to human beings since they are more than human; they can be wounded in the battle but can recover immediately, they know the future before it happens, because "they have the capacity to see everything and to know everything,"¹⁷ so they can change the fate of the human beings. In other words, the control of the human life is in the hands of the gods. Moreover, they can change their appearance into a human or an animal and they can also go from one place to another in light speed. For example, Zeus sends Athena to the battlefield and "down the goddess swept from Olympus' craggy peaks and dove like a star the son of Cronus flings."¹⁸ They can be visible or invisible as they wish and also as George Calhoun states "a god may make the hero invisible, or transfigure him, or inspire him with divine fire..."¹⁹

The gods are always represented as bigger than human beings although the gods and soldiers are mingled in the battle. Warren Smith also adds that the gods "are not only tall, but freakishly gigantic, monstrous;"²⁰ Hera and Hypnos shake the trees when they walk²¹; Ares' body covers seven acres when he falls²² and Zeus's giant hand pushes Hector into the battle. In addition the gods shout very loud; Ares shouts with a high decibel as loud as 10.000 men, Hera 50 men and Poseidon 10.000 men as well.²³ In other words, the gods have a loud tone of voice and a huge appearance. However, Homer also portrays human beings especially great heroes like the gods

¹⁶ Silk, M. S., *Homer, The Iliad*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2004, p. 69.

¹⁷ Grube, "Gods of Homer," p. 63.

¹⁸ Homer, *Iliad*, p. 148.

¹⁹ Calhoun, G. M., "Homer's Gods: Prolegomena." *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 68, 1937, p. 15.

²⁰ Smith, W., "The Disguises of the Gods in *The Iliad*." *Numen* 35, no. 2, 1988, p. 174.

²¹ Homer, *Iliad*, p. 277.

²² *Ibid*, p.474.

²³ *Ibid*, p. 321.

while he represents the gods as human like.²⁴ As they are immortal, the gods do not decay, are more powerful and “are all beautiful, tall, and without blemish than human beings but do not risk their lives for glory as men.”²⁵ Hector's pride also contributes to the tragedy. He can't bear the thought of being considered a coward, and he considers which course of action will bring him the most glory.²⁶

Anderson claims that “The intervention of the gods not only makes for plausibility and continuation of the action but further complicates the action and adds unexpectedness, surprise, and inner suspense from moment to moment.”²⁷ Homer decides when the gods will intervene and how the events will happen by using his creative genius and poetic talent. Homer warns the audience before the action comes; we are informed about the death of Patroklos as a turning point of the poem in advance, Thetis gets the promise from Zeus that Achilles will take his revenge, and we again learn the doom of Achilles from the mouths of his horses in advance. Homer portrays all this information as the plan of Zeus.

Thirdly, Homer represents the gods as having miraculous actions; they can give life to a human being who is dead or they can convey their message through animals. In Book Seventeen, for the death of Patroklos, Achilles' horses weep: “But standing clear of the fray Achilles' horses wept from the time they first had sensed their driver's death...warm tears flowing down their eyes to wet the earth...the horses mourned.”²⁸ In the same way, when Achilles grieves bitterly after he has learnt the death of Patroklos, crying so loud that his mother, the goddess Thetis hears him from the depths of the sea, and comes to grieve with him and like a human being she weeps.²⁹ Homer represents the gods as they pity the lives of human beings. Thetis prophesies to her son in tears that: “You're doomed to a short life, my son, from all you say! For hard on the heels of Hector's death your death must come at once.”³⁰ When the goddess realizes she will not change his mind, she arranges a new armor from the god of fire. Everything unfolds as Zeus has planned and Achilles finally throws himself into the fight.

After humanization of Achilles' horses, Hera also gives them speech and lets them foretell the doom of Achilles. When he is ready, and his horses are yoked to his chariot, he raises his voice:

Roan Beauty and Charger,... bring your charioteer back home

²⁴ Silk, *Homer, The Iliad*, p. 70.

²⁵ Smith, “The Disguises of the Gods in *The Iliad*,” p. 165.

²⁶ Homer, *Iliad*, p. 532.

²⁷ Anderson, “Of gods and Men in the *Iliad*,” p. 394.

²⁸ Homer, *Iliad*, p. 456.

²⁹ *Ibid*, p. 534.

³⁰ *Ibid*, p. 470.

alive...Don't leave Achilles there on the battlefield as you left Patroclus-dead" and at this unjust charge, Hera gives the horse, Roan Beauty (Xanthos), a voice, and he answers his master: "Yes! We will save your life- this time too- master, mighty Achilles! But the day of death already hovers near, and we are not to blame but a great god *is* and the strong force of fate...still *you* are doomed to die by force, Achilles, cut down by a deathless god and mortal man!"³¹

Homer makes his gods give speech to animals to reveal the destiny of the human. In other words, the gods are heavily involved in the events.

Next, Homer portrays the gods as manipulative. That is, Homer represents the gods and their ability to control mortal lives, actions and consequences. Because human beings are victims of their passions, they need to be controlled by reason, by the gods. Athena is the goddess of wisdom and reason and Homer says that men are guided by reason. Only with the guidance of Athena, Achilles can control his anger. In the First Book at the assembly, Achilles reminds Agamemnon that he has all the prizes of the battle up to the present. Soon Agamemnon agrees to give Chryses back but demands another woman as compensation and chooses the girl of Achilles, and takes Briseis. Then Achilles calls him shameless and greedy but Agamemnon counters that he doesn't need Achilles. This announcement makes Achilles even angrier and he is on the point of drawing his sword to kill Agamemnon and telling Athena "I tell you this, and so help me it's the truth--he'll soon pay for his arrogance with his life!"³² The goddess Hera sends Athena at this point to stop him because Athena as a symbol of reason always controls the anger of Achilles. Athena prevents him from losing his temper and promises him greater glory. Achilles stops killing Agamemnon but pulls his whole army out of the war. If Athena had not intervened at this point, the entire plot would have been changed; without Agamemnon there will be no war and without Achilles there will be no hero and rage, thus the intervention of the gods greatly affects the plot of the epic. In addition, he prays to his mother, the goddess Thetis, to beg Zeus to avenge his dishonor by supporting the Trojans against Achaean forces. Thetis convinces Zeus to take the side of the Trojans.

Homer also represents the gods as life savers. In Book Five, Diomedes as the best Greek warrior in Achilles' absence, finds himself face to face with Pandaros and when he is injured, calls to Athena for help. Athena heals Diomedes, and takes away from his eyes the veil that keeps men from seeing the gods so that he can tell when the gods are helping the enemy. When Diomedes kills Pandaros and wounds Aeneas, the goddess

³¹ Homer, *Iliad*, p. 502.

³² *Ibid*, p. 84.

Aphrodite interferes to save her son Aeneas from the death at the hands of Diomedes. However, although Athena warns Diomedes not to fight with the gods, he goes after her with his spear, and wounds Aphrodite's hand. Homer represents Aphrodite as a human, mortal who can be wounded by another human. Like a human being, she goes crying to the arms of her mother Dione in pain. Dione heals Aphrodite and consoles her like a mortal mother. Homer gives justice not only to his mortal characters but also to his gods and goddesses. In a way, it is a sort of justice that Aphrodite is injured on the battlefield because of her interference in the lives of Paris and Helen that has started the war, and resulted in so many lives lost among the Greeks and Trojans.

Like the mortal men, the gods also vary in their characters. Although Ares who seems brutal and unconcerned with human life, and seems to take pleasure in battle, Aphrodite displays the same kind of obsession, but hers is focused on physical love instead of war. Even though they are brother and sister, they show two sides of human being; love and war. Again in Book Five, when Ares continues to strengthen Hector, the Greeks are driven further and further backward. Then the goddess Hera convinces Athena to become involved again. The two goddesses approach Zeus like little children to complain the intervention of Ares, who is violently killing so many Greek warriors unnecessarily. They take Zeus's permission to drive Ares out of the battle as if they are interested in fairness and justice. With Ares out of the battle, Athena and Hera withdraw as well, leaving the mortals to fight without the help of the gods for a while.

In Book Eight, Zeus takes some real action on behalf of Achilles' honor, as he has promised to his mother Thetis and assembles the gods on Mount Olympus to tell out his plans. He forbids the divinities to cross him and says that no one is allowed to help the mortals on either side. Zeus gives Hector power that forces the Greeks back to the wall they have built on the beach. When Hera sees the Greeks are overwhelmed, she calls Poseidon to take pity on them, but Poseidon refuses to cross Zeus. When Hector is about to fire on the Greek ships, Hera breaks the rule of Zeus by intervening on her own by stirring Agamemnon's heart to call his army to action. This is not enough for Hera, and she speaks to a willing Athena, suggesting they dress for battle and help the Greeks regardless of Zeus. Zeus notices their preparations and sends his messenger, Iris, to intercept them so they return to Olympus, in an angry and sorrowful state, but Zeus repeats his warning that he is stronger than they are, and they must obey him.³³ In case the absence of Achilles is not enough, the Greeks have lost most of their best warriors. Achilles can see that Zeus is doing as Thetis asked and he is beginning to realize it is time to forgive Agamemnon.

³³ Homer, *Iliad*, pp. 199-200.

Poseidon, brother of Zeus, is the next god to disobey the will of Zeus and intervene in the war. When the Greeks have been driven back to their ships by the Trojans and are barely able to keep the Trojans away from their ships, Zeus leaves the battle temporarily, while he casts his eyes over the rest of his territory. At that time, Poseidon disguised himself as the soothsayer, Kalchas covertly assists the Achaeans, and Ajax thanks Poseidon for his inspiration and help and manages to halt Hector's advance. Poseidon intervenes one step further when he sees that his grandson, Amphimachos is killed by Hector and appears in disguise to Idomeneus by inspiring him to fight eagerly against the Trojans. Menelaos is also inspired by seeing the successes of the other men, and fights valiantly. Hera becomes happy to see Poseidon's interference, but she is concerned Zeus might discover it. In order to help Achaeans, like a human being full of passions, Hera plans to deceive Zeus. Therefore, while Poseidon helps the Achaean forces, she decides to beguile him to keep his attention away from the battle so that the gods can intervene in the war freely. After she entices her husband into making love on the top of Mount Ida, she lulls him into a deep sleep with the help of the appropriate god of sleep. Homer creates a sort of erotic scene and represents the great goddess Hera as an attractive woman by humanizing her. Hera as a human being prepares herself in order to impress Zeus:

Hera cleansed her enticing body of any blemish, then she applied a deep olive rub, the breath-taking, redolent oil she kept beside her...one stir of the scent in the bronze-floored halls of Zeus and a perfumed cloud would drift from heaven down to earth. Kneading her skin with this to a soft glow and combing her hair, she twisted her braids with expert hands, and sleek, luxurious, shining down from her deathless head they fell, cascading. Then round her shoulders she swirled the wondrous robes that Athena wove her...³⁴

As the two of them sleep after their lovemaking, Poseidon continues to help the Achaeans, who drive the Trojans back from the ships. The Greeks continue to dominate the battlefield. Ajax wounds Hector with a large stone, causing him to withdraw from the battle to regain his strength but Apollo sent by Zeus heals him and the Trojans drives the Greeks back to their ships. Grube states that Homer uses the sense of fear and laughter together. The gods can be funny on Olympus but they arouse fear in the lives of human beings; they use their power towards men in a serious way.³⁵ They both limit and control the human life. When Zeus wakes up learns the plan of Hera and intervention of Poseidon, he reveals his plan about the war and remind the other gods and goddesses to obey his plan. Gods are finally falling in line behind Zeus, whether like it or not. Zeus may tell his plan from the

³⁴ Homer, *Iliad*, p. 375.

³⁵ Grube, "Gods of Homer," p. 67.

beginning and perhaps the battle would not be so long however, Zeus might have tested the obedience of the gods and demonstrates that any interference does not change the destiny of the human being and the matters in the end.

In the Sixteenth Book, the intervention of the gods goes on and they obey the rules of Zeus and arrange the death of Patroclus. Patroclus tries to convince Achilles to fight for Achaeans but when he fails he wears the armor of Achilles and goes the war in his place. Hector is able to rally his troops temporarily against the Greeks until Zeus intervenes. Then the Trojans retreat, Patroclus follows them by killing many men and attempts to storm the walls of Troy. Apollo reminds him that it is not his fate to take the city: "Back--Patroclus, Prince, go back! It is not the will of fate that the proud Trojans' citadel falls before your spear, not even before Achilles--far greater man than you!"³⁶ Although Apollo warns him three times, Patroclus continues his attack and as a result Apollo strikes him with an arrow, and also encourages Hector to attack Patroclus. That makes Patroclus vulnerable because Apollo has struck off his armor and splintered the spear in his hands, so that Hector is finally able to kill him. Although his death is decided before, his actions almost seem to justify his death; he disobeys Achilles, takes pleasure of killing men and also killing Sarpedon, the son of Zeus. Zeus, in fairness, cannot intervene to save his son from Patroclus because Hera points out that "if you send Sarpedon home, living still, beware! Then surely some other god will want to sweep his own son clear of the heavy fighting too,"³⁷ so he tearfully allows fate to take her course. Homer demonstrates that not only the human beings suffer from death also the gods and even the animals share it in the tragedy.

In Book Twenty, all the gods meet on Mount Olympus and are told by Zeus that they can now interfere in the battle on either side in whatever way they wish. Zeus above everything watches the war as a spectator and in Book Twenty he says: "Still, here I stay on Olympus throned aloft, here in my steep mountain cleft, to feast my eyes and delight my heart. The rest of you: down you go, got to Trojans, go to Achaeans. Help either side as the fixed desire derives each god to act."³⁸ Achilles kills Hector's brother and Hector goes after Achilles, and is almost killed more than once, but Apollo saves him each time. Achilles sees that his efforts are in vain and tells Hector that he knows the gods are aiding him. In the same way, when Aeneas confronts Achilles, Poseidon, who actually favors the Greeks, steps in to help the Trojan and intervenes to prevent Achilles from killing Aeneas, whose destiny requires him to live, so he carries the Trojan from the field. Even though the gods who favor the Trojans have immediately jumped in to help

³⁶ Homer, *Iliad*, p. 435.

³⁷ Ibid, p. 427.

³⁸ Homer, *Iliad*, p. 504.

their side, the Trojans are still suffering great losses in the face of Achilles' anger. When Achilles kills twenty men and turns the Xanthus River into a blood and dead body river. The river god Xanthus begs Achilles to stop but Achilles refuses and continues to fill river until Xanthus comes after him with huge waves. Then Achilles begs to Zeus for help because he cannot swim. The reason why he cannot escape from the river is Achilles fights with his own passions irrationally without the guidance of Athena, just thinking of his anger by killing young men. Several gods come to his aid to calm down the river and at that time Hera calms down Achilles. A fight starts between the gods of fire and water - natural enemies. The battle of men turns out the battle of the gods and the gods begin fighting each other; Ares and Aphrodite to Athena, Apollo to Poseidon, Hera to Artemis, and Hermes to Leto. The battle ends when Hera injures Artemis, who runs to Olympus to complain to Zeus that makes him laugh.

The disguise of the gods is the last representation of the gods by Homer; "The gods transform themselves into the likeness of men and other creatures."³⁹ For example, the gods appear in the guise of friends: in Agamemnon's dream, Nestor advises him to go on battle, Antenor's son Laodokos persuades Pandora to violate the oath. Athena appears in the disguise of Phoenix, "she took the build and tireless voice of Phoenix" to warn Menelaos to guard the Patroclus and Menelaos deceived by the appearance calls her as Phoenix.⁴⁰ The most important example of the deception by disguise is Athena's. Just before being killed, Hector is encouraged by his brother Deiphobos, in fact it is Athena who takes "the build and vibrant voice of Deiphobos."⁴¹ When Hector realizes that his brother is not helping him and he is deceived by Athena, he accepts his fate: "My time has come! At last the gods have called me down to death. I thought he was at my side, the hero Deiphobos-he's safe inside the walls, Athena's tricked me blind, no longer far away. No way to escape it now...So now I meet my doom."⁴² As Silk states, Homer presents Zeus as "the symbol of fate, as when he holds up his gold scales, weights the fate of Hector and Achilles, and finds the fate of Hector heavier."⁴³ Hector stands alone outside the walls waiting his fate and then Achilles chases Hector around the walls of Troy and finally kills him. At the point of death, Hector also tells the doom of Achilles: "But now beware, or my curse will draw god's wrath upon your head, that day when Paris and lord Apollo-for all your fighting heart-destroy you at the Scaean Gates!"⁴⁴ After he kills Hector, Achilles drags him behind

³⁹ Smith, "The Disguises of the Gods in *The Iliad*," p. 161.

⁴⁰ Homer, *Iliad*, p. 460.

⁴¹ Homer, *Iliad*, p. 549.

⁴² *Ibid*, p. 551.

⁴³ Silk, *Homer, The Iliad*, p. 56.

⁴⁴ Homer, *Iliad*, p. 553.

his chariot and insists on saving Hector's body, but Apollo goes on guarding Hector's body although he is dead. Then Thetis instructs her son and makes him soften his anger and Iris is sent to Priam to make him humble. In order to take his son's body back, Priam grasps Achilles' knees: "Pity me in my own right, remember your own father!...I put to my lips the hands of the man who killed my son."⁴⁵ Then Achilles gives the body and swears not to attack during the funeral of Hector. As a final intervention of a god, Hermes guides Priam to leave the Greek camp and wakes him up so that he may retreat successfully.

Overall, Homer's *Iliad* reflects the conflicts of the gods as similar to a conflict of humans. The Greeks and Trojans are on the point of ending the war, but the gods are not ready for this and stir them up to continue battling each other because the gods still want to resolve their own struggles, so they use the men for their own purposes. We can say that the battle turns to be a war of the gods.

Consequently, Homer in his *Iliad* represents the gods as humanlike, super being, controller, having miraculous actions, life savers, and disguisers. By means of humanization of the gods, Homer makes his audiences feel better sympathy towards them; the more the gods have human characteristics as jealousy, weeping, complaining, the more the audience empathize themselves with the gods. Besides these humanizations, we see the gods as super beings; they can recover easily, can see everything, arrange the future and so change the fate of human beings by intervening. In addition, by their miraculous actions, a dead person can be revived or an animal can speak; in other words, they can give life and sound to everything that seems impossible. Homer makes the gods intervene the human affairs to show that whatever human beings try to change their fate, the control of everything is in the hands of the gods; a man cannot escape from his destiny. Therefore, the gods are represented as the controllers of human lives and in order to control or intervene in the human affairs, the gods disguise themselves into animals or people so that they can cheat people or help them as they wish. Hence, Homer weaves the *Iliad* by representing the gods with his own myth making talent; demonstrating the gods as both human like and god like.

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⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 605.

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