

§7. Diomedes



Now unto Tydeus' son, Diomedes, Pallas Athena
gave both valor and vigor, that he should, amid all the Argives,
shine forth foremost in might, and achieve him signal distinction.

– *Iliad* 5:1-3

Iliad 5 is called the *Aristeia* of Diomedes, and he does figure throughout, but there are problems. For example, who spirited away the body of Aeneas? In 5:311, it is Aphrodite, but later (343) she drops it, and it is rescued instead by Apollo (344). Much later (in 440-453), Apollo warns Diomedes off, and saves Aeneas all over again, in these words:

. . . and Tydeus' son gave backward only a little,
avoiding the anger of him who strikes from afar, Apollo,
who caught Aeneas now away from the onslaught, and set him
in the sacred keep of Pergamos, where was built his own temple.
There Artemis of the showering arrows, and Leto within
the great and secret chamber healed his wound, and cared for him.

All very good, but need it be done twice? The matter between these two rescues is taken up with the wounding of Aphrodite by Diomedes. Only twice is a god wounded by a mortal in the *Iliad*. The other one is also in *Iliad* 5, where Ares himself is wounded by Diomedes. The Aphrodite incident is at 5:000-000. The Ares one at 5:000-000; it concludes the book. So atypical are these, apart from the fact that the Aphrodite one is played as comic relief (421-425) . . .

Looking upon it the while, both Pallas Athena and Hera
were with their heart-cutting words provoking Zeus the Cronion.
Pallas, the bright-eyed goddess, was first with a word of derision:
“Zeus, O Father, wilt thou be angry, whatever I utter?
Surely methinks now Cypris was coaxing some dame of Achaia,
luring her off to the Trojans – she loves them so to distraction!
While then she was caressing some fair-robed dame of Achaia,
Thus on some golden brooch she scratched her poor little fingers!”

. . . that an unamused reader may feel inclined to eliminate the whole episode,¹ letting Apollo save Aeneas, if he is so inclined, but once is surely enough.

¹But with a notable lack of support from Willcock **Commentary** (1978) 1/235 (“would cause a thrill of anxiety and excitement in an ancient audience”) and none from Kirk **Commentary** (1990) 2/51, of the wounding of both Aphrodite and, later, of Ares, (“this book’s special theme”). Nor any from Stamatopoulou **Wounding** 2017.

Then there is the Wounding of Ares, which is not comical (Aphrodite is not much of an opponent) but serious business indeed. Removing both would not only eliminate these unique and thus anomalous passages, they would also solve a performance problem: at 909 lines (91 minutes) this is the longest book in the Iliad, longer than the roughly 50-minutes performance module for which we have begun to see evidence.

What about the stylistics? The segments are: