

## Suspenseful Iteration in Homeric Epic

This paper explores the repeated narrative structure *τρὶς μὲν... τρὶς δέ...* (11x *Iliad*, 4x *Odyssey*), often followed by a change of narrative direction (de Jong 2012: 101) introduced by a verse that includes the adverb *τέταρτον* (5x *Iliad*, once *Odyssey*). This paper will briefly explore the general patterns that characterize such structures before focusing on two *τρὶς μὲν... τρὶς δέ... τέταρτον* scenes that appear in the *aristeia* and death of Patroclus (*Il.* 16.702-703 and 16.784-86). While the first one, in which Patroclus tries repeatedly to wound Apollo but is ultimately driven back by the god's resistance, shows Patroclus observing appropriate limits on the battlefield, the second one – uniquely – features Patroclus as the subject of both the *τρὶς μὲν* and the *τρὶς δέ* elements of the expression. Here, Patroclus fails to behave in the way that this repeated narrative motif would lead an audience to expect, and as he did in fact behave at 16.702-703. Instead, he forges ahead with his doomed attacks and as a result, Apollo's assault sets in motion the train of events that ultimately leads to Patroclus' death. The specific features of the *τρὶς μὲν... τρὶς δέ... τέταρτον* structure here draw attention to Patroclus' death: they play against audience expectations for such expressions to vividly depict the swift and stark difference between his successes in battle immediately before being attacked by Apollo and his downfall soon afterward.

The word *τρὶς* mainly appears in Homeric epic in *μὲν / δέ* clause pairs. For instance, at *Il.* 5.436-37, Diomedes tries three times to attack Aeneas (*τρὶς μὲν ἔπειτ' ἐπόρουσε κατακτάμεναι μενεαίνων*, 436) but three times Apollo fends him off (*τρὶς δέ οἱ ἐστυφέλιξε φαινήν ἀσπίδ' Ἀπόλλων*, 437). On Diomedes' fourth attempt, Apollo admonishes him to retreat (*ἀλλ' ὅτε δὴ τὸ τέταρτον ἐπέσσυτο δαίμονι ἴσος, / δεινὰ δ' ὁμοκλήσας προσέφη ἐκάεργος Ἀπόλλων*, 438-39), and he does. Ultimately, Diomedes survives not only this encounter, but the Trojan War. This scene in *Iliad* 5 displays several regular patterns for such *τρὶς μὲν... τρὶς δέ* structures (briefly

surveyed by Janko 1992: 400, *ad* 16.702-706): the μέν and δέ clauses present repeated actions by two different people in battle, with the δέ clause often depicting an action that foils an attack being attempted or considered in the μέν clause (cf. *Il.* 8.169-70, 18.155-58, 18.228-29, 20.445-46). When the verse ἀλλ' ὅτε δὴ τὸ τέταρτον ἐπέσσυτο δαίμονι ἴσος appears (*Il.* 5.438, 16.705, 16.786, and 20.447), a prominent warrior has tried three times unsuccessfully to attack an adversary, but with τέταρτον, the attacker is foiled because of some action by a god. While Patroclus' first encounter with Apollo (16.702-706) is the same as that of Diomedes in almost every respect, his second displays several unique features that highlight this extremely dramatic moment in the story.

First of all, at 16.784- 85, τρις μέν and τρις δέ present two stages of repeated successful attacks that Patroclus makes against Trojan fighters: τρις μέν ἔπειτ' ἐπόρουσε θεῶ ἀτάλαντος Ἄρηι / σμερδαλέα ἰάχων (784-85; see Nagy 1979: 293 on the formula ἀτάλαντος Ἄρηι) is followed not by some resistance that stymies Patroclus, but by his slaughter of many Trojan warriors (τρις δ' ἐννέα φῶτας ἔπεφνεν, 785). Thus, Patroclus is conspicuously successful as a fighter within a narrative pattern that normally indicates that a hero was *not* successful in his attempted assault, which strongly emphasizes not only the fact of his success, but how many Trojans he kills here. However, doom immediately follows Patroclus' short-lived triumph. The large and speedy change in his fortunes is once again emphasized by an unusual twist on a formulaic expression: only here does τέταρτον introduce a development in which the attacker is not simply foiled but is physically attacked by a god and eventually killed. In fact, τέταρτον as an adverb appears in the *Iliad* only in this expression and a very similar verse in Book 22, as Hector at last meets his doom after running three times around the walls of Troy with Achilles in

pursuit (22.208, ἀλλ' ὅτε δὴ τὸ τέταρτον ἐπὶ κορυνοὺς ἀφίκοντο...; see further de Jong 2012 *ad loc.*).

### Bibliography

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