

## Anthrophony and Sonic Experience on the Iliadic Battlefield

In his autobiography *The Tiger and the Rose*, the poet Vernon Scannell (1971, 94) described as ‘emasculating’ the special fear caused by the acoustic experience of shelling on the beaches of Normandy--“the pure physical terror that savages you when loud and violent death is screaming down from the sky and pounding the earth around you, smashing and pulping everything in the search for you.” When interviewed by the BBC in the decades following his service in the Royal Welch Fusiliers, Robert Graves, author of *I, Claudius* and *Classicist*, recalled how difficult it was to relate to his family when he returned home from the front: “The idea of being and staying at home was awful because you were with people who didn’t understand what this is all about... You can’t communicate noise. Noise never stopped for one moment—ever.” In an essay exploring the poetry of the first world war, James Campbell (1999, 203) termed this experiential, phenomenal, and cognitive gap between combat personnel and civilians “combat Gnosticism”—that is, the belief that combat represents a totally unintelligible experience that is difficult, if not impossible, to communicate to those who have not experienced it. The emerging cybernetic warfare of WWI and WWII changed forever the soundscape of war, its psychological impact, and the kinds of trauma that it inflicts, and studies on WWI modernist literature (Lambrecht, 2017, for example) are leading the way in considering the impact of auditory experiences on the pre-industrial war literature.

This paper contributes to a burgeoning interest in poetic representations of sound in ancient Greek literature (Heath, 2005; Gurd, 2016; Nooter, 2012 and 2017; Greenwood, 2009; Butler and Nooter, 2018) by considering how non-similitic, anthropophonic (i.e., human-produced) representations of battlefield soundscape elements in the *Iliad* attempt to capture the extreme phenomenological experiences of warfare through attunement to aural sensory perception. Shay (1994) has argued that the story of Achilles represents a sophisticated, archetypal scenario of the causes and effects of PTSD that bears resemblance to the phenomenological, physical, emotional, and spiritual experiences of U.S. combat veterans of the Vietnam War who experienced severe post-traumatic stress. Of interest in this paper are not just the

discrete and accretive sounds of the Iliadic battlefield or the “auditory aesthetics” of dissonance (as per Gurd, 2016), but the *experiential relevance and impact* of anthropophonic sonic experiences upon combatants, such as voiced, non-verbal battle-cries (16.267, e.g.), the inarticulate groaning of the wounded (16.289), the clanging of weapons as the deceased fall in death (16.818-822, 17.50, e.g.), the clatter of horse and chariot around the wounded and dying (16.795, e.g.), and the clash and clamour of two massive armies straining to destroy each other (16.377-379 and 566, e.g.). This paper will focus on the soundscape elements of book 16, and will argue that acoustic poetics of the two armies clashing peaks in this book, in terms of frequency of sound representations and the phenomenological and devastational impact they convey.

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