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THE HERO AND HIS ARMS

By MALCOLM DAVIES

Arma virumque cano Virgil sang, or professed to sing, at the start of his epic, and one may reformulate the import of his programmatic words to fit a new context. Obtaining weapons he can call his own is very often a key moment near the start of the career of a folk-tale hero. And very often it is the hero's mother who equips him with them.[1] Paradoxically, this truth may be confirmed, *e contrario,* by reference to the Welsh story of Lleu Llaw Gyffes from the *Mabinogion*,[2] for, in that narrative, the hero's mother Aranhry seeks to thwart at its inception the career of her son –whom she had exposed,[3] since his very existence causes her so much embarrassment – by placing a Destiny or interdiction upon him: he will never bear arms unless and until she herself bestows them. The ban is circumvented by a cunning ruse: the magician Gwydion disguises her son and himself as peripatetic bards, in which capacity they are entertained in Aranhry's castle. When Gwydion conjures up a phantom army and fleet to besiege the citadel, the alarmed Aranhry is all too ready to bestow weapon and armour on the younger of her two guests – only to find the army vanished and her own son in possession of the arms she had sworn he would not bear.

[1] For instance, in Greek myth, it was at his mother Aethra's behest that Theseus rolled away the rock concealing sword and sandals left by his father Aegeus (see the mythographer Apollodorus 3.15–6), before setting out on his heroic career. Apart from Thetis fetching arms for Achilles, we also find Eos doing the same for Memnon in the cyclic epic the *Aethiopis* (Proclus' summary: *Epicorum Graecorum Fragmenta*, 47. 14 ff.) and Venus acting similarly for Aeneas in the Roman epic. 'Improving' Homer's account, the latter places the shield's description as the end and climax of the account of the weapons, contrasting with the *Iliad*, where the shield's description is, in rather desultory manner, followed by brief accounts of breastplate, helmet and greaves. Virgil also reserves his description of the shield for the moment when it has been received by the hero: see K.W. Gransden's commentary on *Aeneid* 8 (Cambridge, 1976), 161.

[2] See the translation by S. Davies (Oxford, 2007), 57 f.

[3] Having encountered the theme of exposure in folk-tale, we may reflect that an exceedingly common feature in such contexts is the oracle, which produces a *Furchtmotif* or fear motif by revealing that if x grows up he will perform some prodigious or catastrophic action: x is accordingly exposed as soon as born, as happens with Cyrus (see below n. 8). See S. Thompson, *Motif Index of Folk Literature* M 373, 'expulsion to avoid fulfilment of prophecy', and my remarks in *Hesperos: Studies in Greek Poetry Presented to M. L. West on his Seventieth Birthday* (Oxford, 2007), 70 ff. There are some similarities between this pattern and the story of Achilles on Scyros, since Thetis' placement of her son on the island can be said to be motivated by prophetic fear.

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The story displays a more than passing and accidental resemblance to the famous account of how an even more famous hero first came to bear arms. According to a tradition, found in the mythographer Apollodorus (3.13.7, cf. Hyginus *Fab.* 96) but significantly absent from Homer, Achilles' mother, Thetis, refused to allow him to participate in the Trojan War, since her prophetic powers told her he must die if he did. She therefore hid him away, disguised as a girl, on the island of Scyros. But the cunning Odysseus, aided and abetted by his henchman Diomedes, winkled him out. Disguised as merchants, the two arrived on the island, attracting its young girls with their display of various feminine trinkets and clothing. When a war trumpet was blasted, the girls fled, leaving only Achilles to reveal his true identity by grabbing up a sword concealed among the clothes.

The two narratives have much in common. In each, a mother's determination, benevolent or otherwise, to keep her son away from weapons, is thwarted through a strategem engineered by an individual renowned for his cunning. He and an ally conceal their identity (in one version the young hero himself is the ally; in the other the hero, though ignorant of the ploy, is still in disguise). They then infiltrate a female company, and a feigned warlike assault, specifically a trumpet blast, leads to the young hero obtaining his first arms. It may be objected that the mother's role differs vastly from one tale to the other (a difference veiled by the phrasing adopted above). Thetis does not, even unintentionally, arm her own son. But she virtually does in the version of Achilles' arming which we find in the *Iliad*, and, as we shall see, she actually does arm him on certain vase paintings (as on a number of Etruscan mirrors) that have been taken to reflect a pre- and extra-Iliadic tradition.

It is well known[4] that the *Iliad's* poet ingeniously constructed entire episodes in his composition by transferring them from portions of the Trojan War that precede his actual plot. Thus, the Catalogue of Ships, the *Teichoscopia*, the duel of Menelaus and Paris, the love-making of the latter with Helen, and the truce and building of the Achaeans' defensive wall and trench, all owe their existence to this device, and have inspired various qualms as to the propriety of their featuring at so late a stage as the War's ninth year. Logic and other considerations would lead us to expect Priam, for instance, to have had the chief

[4] As Ø. Andersen has put it (in *Homer. Beyond Oral Poetry* [Amsterdam, 1987], 2): 'the representation of earlier stages of the war by their transformation into episodes in the actual plot'. See further my remarks in M. Davies, 'Nestor's Advice in *Iliad* 7', *Eranos* 54 (1986), 69 ff.

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leaders of the Greek forces identified to him at a far earlier stage than the penultimate year of a decade-long siege.

This technique has deeper and wider roots in the poem than many realize. I recently showed[5] that Hector's successive encounters with three female figures, Hecabe, Helen, and Andromache at *Il.* 6.242 ff. almost certainly represent a reworking of the pre-existing pattern of his brother's simultaneous encounter with three goddesses, Athena, Hera, and Aphrodite, in the Judgement of Paris. I now think that yet a further instance of the process occurs with the armour of Achilles. 'Logic and other considerations' lead us to expect the hero to receive his weapons at the beginning of his career, not in the ninth year of the war, and that, after all, is what the version of events summarized above, presents.

Perhaps, then, the Iliadic episode of the armour of Achilles is inspired by some such pre-Homeric account. It might, indeed, even be argued that the Embassy to Achilles in *Iliad* 9 also represents an adaptation of this account: the visit to a hero keeping or kept away from fighting, with the aim of inducing him to participate in the war; Odysseus, let it be noted, features in both.

Enlightenment may follow if we ask what sort of story that of Achilles on Scyros actually is. The question is surprisingly difficult to answer with any degree of confidence, precisely because there are so many ways of looking at it. For instance, the core idea could be summarized as conveying an individual's central, ultimately unconcealable ethos, which is inadvertently revealed by a significant action ('nature will out'). Put like this, the narrative is somewhat reminiscent of the fairy tale of the Princess and the Pea or the Aesopic fable about the cat who successfully prayed to be turned into a human girl, but gave the game away on her wedding night when a mouse scurried over the floor and she pounced on it (Babrius *fabula* 32 = Perry, *Aesopica* 50).[6]

Furthermore, since we are dealing with the son of Thetis, we might recall that Thetis herself exemplifies the folk-tale pattern of the nixie or swan maiden[7] who temporarily engages in union with a mortal, setting aside (sometimes literally) her supernatural aspect, but finally and permanently returning to her natural habitat (in the case of the

[5] M. Davies, 'The Judgements of Paris and Solomon', *CQ* 53 (2003), 32 ff.

[6] More accurately, the animal here that cannot be rid of its 'mouser' qualities is a weasel. Cf. H. Lloyd-Jones on Semonides 7.50–6 (*Females of the Species* [London, 1975], 76).

[7] See Ursula Dronke, *The Poetic Edda* ii *The Mythological Poems* (Oxford, 1997), 258 ff.

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swan maiden, after she uncovers the wings which she had doffed when bathing and which her husband-to-be had then hidden). Here, too, an individual's real nature cannot be indefinitely concealed. And there is also the story of the young Persian Cyrus' upbringing to compare, as recounted by Herodotus (1.107 ff.). Though exposed as a baby and brought up away from his real parents, he showed his innately royal qualities when he played the game of 'king' in the company of young herdsmen of his age.[8] From the world of folk-tale proper and its heroes we may be reminded of the way in which the Irish hero Finn 'was brought up secretly in a forest by two warrior women because his hereditary enemies…were lying in wait for him. On leaving the women he wandered *incognito*, but his skill as a hunter and *fidchell*-player betrayed his identity when he entered the service of one king after another'.[9]

A further comparative reference may be made to a story within the cycle of Arthurian legend, the late twelfth-century *Lanzelet* of Ulrich von Zatzikhoven,[10] which explains the suggestive name of its hero, Sir Launcelot *of the Lake*, by building upon the motif of a child's abduction, after its parents' deaths, at the hands of a sea fairy, who takes it to her island paradise, populated only by females, where the child grows under instruction into a heroic knight. Of course, this last feature is at odds with Thetis' purpose in secluding her son, which is to keep him away from martial enterprise. That motivation may remind admirers of Richard Wagner of one of the presuppositions of the plot of his last and greatest music drama, *Parsifal*, whose titular hero has been hidden away in the forest by his mother Herzeleide ('Heartsorrow') from very much the same concerns as Thetis entertains and with as little ultimate success. The work's libretto was based on Wolfgang von Eschenbach's thirteenth-century work *Parzival*, where the mother is already called Herzeloyde. This composition, the twelfth-century Welsh Romance *Peredur*, Chretien de Troye's *Perceval* (1184), and the fourteenth-century *Sir Perceval of Galles*, all share this basic plot feature, which can be shown to reflect folk-tale values.[11]

[8] See G. Binder, *Kyros und Romulus: die Aussetzung des Konigskindes* (Beitr. zur. Klass. Philol. 10 [1964]), 17 ff.

[9] A. and B. Rees, *Celtic Heritage* (London, 1961), 250.

[10] See, D. P. Nastali and P. C. Boardman (edd.), *The Arthurian Annals* (Oxford, 2006) i. 56.

[11] See G. Goetinck, Peredur. *A Study of Welsh Tradition in the Grail Legends* (Cardiff, 1975). It must be admitted that this scholar herself believes (164) that 'probably the original reason was to conceal the boy so that he could not be found and killed by the enemies of his family, and to bring him up until he was of an age to return and regain his lands', none of which remotely

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However, what I believe to be the most illuminating reading of the story of Achilles on Scyros is that it shows the hero making a life choice comparable to Heracles' at the Crossroads.[12] The Ulster hero Cuchulain, who has often been invoked as a contrast to the Iliadic Achilles, made a comparable choice to Heracles, but in the by now familiar context of the folk-tale hero's first bearing of arms: at the precocious age of seven he heard a druid declare that the youth who took arms on that day would have a short life but a fame-filled one. Immediately he demanded arms, only to smash them all until he was given those of King Conchobar.[13] In the case of Achilles, we find the hero rejecting a quite literally effeminate life of ease (straightforwardly symbolized by his dwelling as a maiden among maidens) in favour of martial valour and death (symbolized by the sword). And this Choice of Achilles, as it were, is the folk-tale source, or so I would argue, for the *Iliad*'s version of Achilles' decision.[14] In that instance, the poem again places the motif at a point later than expected, after the death of Patroclus, and closely associates it with the hero's acquisition (or reacquisition) of weapons.

One might observe that another hero has to be summoned from an island, this time his own, to attend the Trojan War: Odysseus, who pretends to have gone mad, and to be ploughing the seashore, until his infant son Telemachus is set down directly in front of his plough (the story was related in the *Cypria*). I have the feeling that this story too is emblematic and symbolizes the different, more pragmatic, type

applies to Achilles' position. However, Goetinck raises an issue of considerable relevance to our inquiry when she adds (169) that 'the emphasis of the forest upbringing could be laid on concealment rather than on training'. In a sense, Achilles' sequestration on Scyros represents an alternative to or doublet of his forest upbringing by the centaur Chiron (cf. B. K. Braswell, 'Mythological Innovation in the *Iliad*', *CQ* 21 [1971], 22 n. 3; J. M. Padgett, *The Centaur's Smile* [Yale, 2004], Index *s.v.* 'Achilles and Chiron'). The Peredur of the Welsh Romance, while in the forest, drives two hinds into the goats' company within a pen and 'the whole household…marvels at the boy's strength and fleetness of foot' (Goetinck, 42). This is highly reminiscent of Achilles' feats during his apprenticeship with the centaur. Either tradition could be interpreted in terms of initiation (see, for instance, K. J. Dover, *The Greeks and their Legacy* [Oxford, 1988], 134).

[12] See my remarks in 'The temptress throughout the ages: further versions of Heracles at the Crossroads', *CQ* 54 (2004), 606 ff.

[13] See the Irish epic known as the *Táin Bó Cúailinge* ('The cattle raid of Cooley'), ed. C. O'Rahilly (Dublin, 1976), 142. It is striking that, by means of a character's reference to past events, this epic too includes the hero's arming in a narrative that, strictly speaking, only covers action that transpired several years after that arming. (For the possibility that the work is directly indebted to classical epic such as the *Iliad*, see T. O'Cathasaigh in H. L. C. Tristram [ed.], *Studien zur* Táin Bó Cúailinge [Tubingen, 1993], 114 ff.)

[14] See especially W. Schadewaldt, *Von Homers Welt und Werk*, 4th edn. (Stuttgart, 1965), 234 ff. ≈ *Homer. German Scholarship in Translation* 143 ff.

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of hero embodied in Odysseus. His reluctant and enforced participation in the war is as characteristic of him as Achilles' enthusiastic (and literal) grasping of his heroic destiny in the equivalent tale. And, of course, this was not the only early episode of the Trojan War that was used to contrast the different outlooks of the two – realism pitched against passion.[15]

The *Iliad's* Thetis acts as intermediary between Hephaestus, the maker of Achilles' armour, and her son, and this fact will serve as transition to the second half of this article. As we saw above, the folk-tale hero frequently gets his weapons from a female, often his mother. Norse literature is particularly rich in parallels for this process. For instance, Grettir the Strong gets his sword from his mother; the *Viga Glums Saga* supplies an instance of a young man receiving a gift of weapons from his mother's side of the family; and a sword is often granted to a young hero by a Valkyrie figure or a giantess.[16] Achilles ultimately receives his armour from Hephaestus, the lame smith-god, and it has been remarked how folk-tale heroes frequently receive their characteristic weapons from 'a deity represented as a divine smith who has forged a supremely powerful weapon. Another deity obtains the weapon and kills the divine smith with it. Thereafter the conqueror becomes heroically powerful and the weapon becomes his characteristic instrument of aggression. The two deities are often represented as father and son…various versions…exhibit a greater or lesser degree of rejection and destruction of father by son'.[17] Sigurd or Siegfried in German legend is a case in point: in his story, the skilled smith is the dwarf Mimir or Reginn, who forges the wonderful sword Notung. Wielding this, the

[15] See in particular the episode of Telephus, with my remarks in 'Euripides *Telephus* fr. 149 (Austin) and the Folk-Tale Origins of the Teuthranian Expedition', *ZPE* 133 (2000), 8 ff. A third example of the motif occurs in the story of Achilles' son Neoptolemus, who is another hero requiring to be lured from an island (Scyros again, where his father had begotten him) and brought to the Trojan War. Sophocles' play *Philoctetes* reminds us that this version, too, involves a character-revealing choice of personal destiny: for Neoptolemus must choose between the type of heroism once embodied in his father Achilles and now in Philoctetes, or that represented by Odysseus.

[16] I take these instances from H. R. Ellis's article 'The Sword at the Wedding', *Folklore* 71 (1960), 1 ff.

[17] See M. Clunies Ross, 'An Interpretation of the Myth of Thórr's Encounter with Geirroðr and his Daughters' in U. Dronke et al. (edd.), *Speculum Norroenum* (Odense, 1981), 389. Cf. also Goetinck (n. 11), 200: 'the smith is often related to the hero, his uncle or godfather; he provides him with special arms, and he advises him'. See further ibid. n. 157 and Index *s.v.* 'Smith', and the entry *s.v.* 'Schmied' by E. Marold in *Enzyklopädie des Märchens* (12.105 ff.). Heracles received a golden breastplate from Hephaestus according to Apollodorus 2.4.11.

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hero dispatches the dragon Fafnir and then the dwarf himself.[18] The dwarfish smith had acted as foster-father to the parentless hero, and it is interesting to note that, in motivating Hephaestus' acquiescence in Thetis' request for armour, Homer goes out of his way to bring in, perhaps invent,[19] a similar feature but transferred to *Hephaestus*: thrown out of Olympus, the god was looked after by Thetis, and it is gratitude for this act of foster-parentage that determines the divine artificer's decision to comply with Thetis' petition. That the folk-tale's smith 'represents both the positive, socially useful assistant in the processes that guard and thus continue life and the darker…forces pressing in against and continually threatening these positive processes', has led one scholar to observe that 'in this he is analogous to the hero himself'.[20] Hephaestus and Achilles have both been exiled from the company of their peers.

One consideration encourages me to move even closer together the two divinities most obviously connected with the armour of Achilles: his mother Thetis and the smith Hephaestus. The scholar just quoted points out that, in certain cases, the folk-tale hero 'is born already armoured, with an integument of steel', and thus forged invulnerable from birth.[21] In Greek myth, the motif was memorably transferred to Athena, who emerges fully armed, and with a fearsome shout, from the cleft head of her father Zeus. This tradition, though unmentioned by Homer, must be the source of the powerful picture at *Il.* 18.203 ff. where, as immediate sequel to Achilles' decision to re-enter the fray, and the dispatch of Thetis to Hephaestus for fresh armour, Achilles at the trench utters a mighty cry, seconded by Athena's. If we turn to world mythology for some examples, the *Mahabharata's* Karna is thus born, after his mother Kunti has prayed that he may emerge with earrings and unpierceable plated armour.[22] Or again, in a tradition from the Caucasus, 'while still in his anomalous womb – an abscess on his father's back – Batradz "burned", and at birth he emerged blazing and already armoured in two kinds of steel, so that he had to be immediately doused or tempered in vats of cold water'.[23] This

[18] See J. Simpson, *The Northmen Talk. A Choice of Tales from Iceland*, Everyman series (London, 1965), 37 ff. for a translation, and J. Fontenrose, *Python* (Los Angeles, 1959), 534 ff., esp. 539 and Binder (n. 8), 225 ff. for introductions to this tradition.

[19] See, for instance, M. M. Willcock, 'Mythological Paradeigma in the *Iliad*', *CQ* 14 (1964), 146, B. K. Braswell, 'Mythological Innovation in the *Iliad*', *CQ* 21 (1971), 20–1.

[20] D. A. Miller, *The Epic Hero* (Baltimore and London, 2000), 269.

[21] See Miller (n. 20), 270.

[22] See Binder (n. 8), 205ff.

[23] See Miller (n. 20), 271.

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latter detail is reminiscent of the disposition of the Irish hero Cuchulain, 'not born with his armour but…well and truly forged, and his ungovernable internal heat…reflects the potency of the smith's furnace fire' – he is associated with a smith.[24] When possessed by rage, his heat was such that to cool it he had to be plunged into three vats of cold water. The staves and hoops of the first vat burst with the heat, the second vat boiled, and even in the third the water became heated.[25]

Cuchulain is regularly cited[26] by way of *antithetical contrast* with the less obviously fantastic Achilles and other Homeric heroes, and rightly so. But, apart from the fire kindled about Achilles' helmet by Athena at *Il.* 18.206, it should be further noted that, when Homer wishes to present Achilles as pushing most forcefully against the boundaries that separate men from gods, he has him pitted against the river god Xanthus, who certainly cools him, and is only prevented from annihilating him by the intervention of the fire god and divine smith, Hephaestus. And my point of further contact between the latter and Thetis was the tradition (Apollodorus 3.13.6) that Thetis sought to burn away the mortality of the newborn Achilles by placing him on the fire. (The better known alternative – immersion in the waters of the Styx – is first encountered as late as the Roman poet Statius.)

These tales may aptly serve as the point of transition to the remaining stretch of our argument. Achilles' invulnerability is certainly first *attested* surprisingly late and its actual lateness of origin has often been asserted, most intelligently by P. J. Kakridis,[27] the scholar who has also shown it most likely that the notion of a second arming of Achilles was invented by the *Iliad's* poet. As he demonstrates, the internal evidence of the epic suggests that Achilles' original armour, as worn (for no very convincing reason)[28] by Patroclus, was itself impenetrable, so that Apollo needed to strike it off before killing its new wearer, and when donned by Hector it fills him with strength and his opponents with dread. It was probably god-forged, the god in question being Hephaestus (Euripides *IA* 1071 ff., Quintus of Smyrna 1.550–7, 444 ff.), and inherited by Achilles

[24] Miller, 272.

[25] See the translation (n. 13), 148.

[26] See especially J. Griffin, *Homer on Life and Death* (Oxford, 1980), 39 nn. 97 and 98 on the contrast with 'the restraint and "human-ness" of Homer'.

[27] P. J. Kakridis, 'Achilleus' Rustung', *Hermes* 89 (1961), 288–97.

[28] Or so says Kakridis: but the motive assigned – to create fear among the Trojans that Achilles has returned to battle – seems rational enough.

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from his father Peleus, who received it at his wedding to Thetis (*Il.* 17.194 ff., 18.82, *Cypria* fr.3).

The evidence of Attic vases should also be taken into account.[29] Several of these show Thetis giving armour to Achilles before his departure for the Trojan War. The idiomatic nature, in folk-tale terms, of the mother's role here has been established above. The locale is regularly assumed to be Pthia in Thessaly, not least because the Lydos plate (*LIMC* 187) shows, in addition to mother and son, an elderly (and labelled) Peleus, whose farewell to his son (cf. Phoenix's report thereof in *Il.* 9.254 ff.) would, it is argued, be an appropriate moment for the handing over of the weapons. However, the self-same plate also shows Achilles' son Neoptolemus. His presence has been thought 'to cast doubts on the painter's knowledge of myth'.[30] But a different artefact (a hydria: *LIMC* 200) shows Odysseus present (as he was according to Nestor in *Il.* 11.765 ff., talking of the Pthian location) at the scene. Why should it not, therefore, be envisaged as set at Scyros, where Neoptolemus was conceived and born and Achilles, as we have seen, detected by Odysseus? Thetis could have fetched Peleus' weapons thither, and Peleus need not be interpreted as literally present but rather as serving as a reminder of the weapons' original owner.[31] The passage of the *Iliad* cited above is by no means fatal to this hypothesis. Scholars have shown that the *Iliad* shies away from the idea that its heroes would ever have been associated with anything so dastardly as avoidance of fighting;[32] and its scene of farewell between father and son may be the poet's own invention, designed to rule out implicitly any skulking on Scyros by replacing that motif with something more heroic.

To return finally to the issue of Achilles' invulnerability with which this final portion of the article began: as I there remarked, Kakridis, who showed the way to a correct understanding of the significance of Achilles' armour, also deduced that the tradition of Achilles' invulnerability cannot have been pre-Homeric: for why then would Achilles

[29] See M. W. Edwards, 'Neoanalysis and Beyond', *CA* 9 (1990), 311 ff. For the artistic depictions of Achilles receiving arms as he first sets forth see Kossatz-Diessmann in *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythorum Classicorum* 1.69 ff. (no. 186 ff.).

[30] Edwards (n. 29), 320.

[31] A frequent phenomenon in Greek vase painting would thus be at play. A good example is the way in which depictions of the ransoming of Hector's corpse show it as stretched out beneath the couch of the feasting Achilles, because, as H. T. Wade-Gery, *The Poet of the* Iliad (Cambridge, 1952), fig. 3 opposite p. 81 puts it, it is 'in all their thoughts', not because it was supposed to be literally there.

[32] See e.g. J. Griffin, 'The Epic Cycle and the Uniqueness of Homer', *JHS* 97 (1977), 46.

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have needed impenetrable armour? But this line of argument perhaps concedes too much to what its author elsewhere refers to as 'rationalistische Kalkulationen'.[33] We may rather be faced with the phenomenon of 'trebling' so familiar from folk tale, whereby what is in effect the same action occurs on three successive occasions.[34] The traditions concerning Achilles' life before he arrived at Troy embody Thetis' concern to protect her son from his foreseen death in various forms, all ultimately doomed to failure. She may make him (almost) invulnerable as a baby, by resort to fire or water; she may hide him away on Scyros; or she may secure for him his father's impenetrable armour. The folk-tales considered earlier, which envisage their hero born with an impenetrable integument upon him, suggest that there is no real or significant difference between the first and last of these motifs.

There is evidence, then, for as many as *three* instances of Achilles' mother making him invulnerable or contributing to his invulnerability – perhaps in his infancy; and perhaps by arming him once or even twice. I have presented parallels for the significant role of a great hero's mother in his career; and I have suggested that the familiar folk-tale pattern of trebling may be in play here. These arguments, it is hoped, corroborate and further illustrate the idea that Achilles' arming in the *Iliad* is a doublet or even a triplet of other instances of his arming earlier in his career: thus the Arming, like the *teichoscopia* and other examples mentioned above, is a further instance of the *Iliad*'s tendency to encompass within its chronologically limited scope significant elements of the Trojan story as a whole. In this way, the short but crucial episode of the Wrath of Achilles is ramified in range and importance throughout the ten years of the war by the technique of re-enacting or repeating events that must logically have first occurred years earlier.

To employ folk-tale in this way is not to denigrate the contribution of any poet – or poets – to the *Iliad*; nor is it to suggest that Homeric narrative is deterministically formed by a poet's slavish adherence to pre-existing archetypes. But it is incontrovertible that related story-patterns and motifs are attested throughout the Indo-European world; and that by a comparative method other instances of such patterns may illuminate and enrich our approach to Homer. The poet

[33] Kakridis, (n. 27), 289.
[34] See my article (n. 5), 34 f.

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did not work in a vacuum, as I have illustrated in this article and elsewhere, and he is quite literally not beyond compare; nor did his epic, like Athena, spring fully armed in unassailable magnificence from the head of a single and splendidly isolated Zeus.[35]

[35] Dr. Neil Sewell-Rutter helped in various ways with the finalization of the present article. In particular, his aid with these two paragraphs of summary reminded me of Alexander Pope's famous letter of thanks to Warburton: 'I know I meant just what you explain; but I did not explain my own meaning so well as you. You understand me as well as I do myself; but you express me better than I could express myself'.

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