II THE *ILIAD*[1]

1. Structure, Characterization, Themes

The *Iliad* is not an *Achilleid*, although Achilles is the most important character in the epic. One of the most striking features of the poem is the way in which it embraces the action of the whole Trojan War by retrospective and prospective references, rather than by narrating the events in full. In this, as is evident from ancient testimony, the *Iliad* was markedly different from the 'cyclic' epics (see esp. Hor. *Ars P.* 136–7). The human characters refer to the abduction of Helen, the initial embassy to the Trojans, the mustering at Aulis, the earlier campaigns and clashes; the prophecies and comments of the gods, particularly Zeus and Thetis, anticipate the doom of Achilles and the ultimate fall of Troy, also grimly foreshadowed in other ways.[2] In an important passage which seems to be deliberately reserved for a late stage in the poem, Homer himself looks back to the origin of the whole conflict, the judgement of Paris which aroused the implacable anger of Athena and Hera against Troy.[3]

Another remarkable feature is the intensity of the action of the poem. In terms of time, the whole poem occupies some forty days, of which only fourteen include narrated events, and three in particular are the subject of fourteen books.[4] As for place, the human action is virtually confined to three areas: the camp of the Greeks, the city of Troy, and

[1] The commentary by Kirk and others (1985–93) is now the first resource; see also Latacz et al. 2000 - (in progress); Macleod 1982 on Book 24; Griffin 1995 on Book 9; Graziosi and Haubold 2010 on Book 6; and de Jong 2012 on Book 22. For general books on the *Iliad* in English, see also Bowra 1930; Redfield 1975; Mueller 1984; Schein 1984 (useful but rather derivative); M. W. Edwards 1987a; Silk 1987 (short but acute); Taplin 1992; Louden 2006. In German, Reinhardt 1961 and Schadewaldt 1938 are fundamental. Stanley 1993 is extremely useful for book-by-book bibliography even if one finds his analyses over-schematic. M. L. West 2011c is highly selective but has many interesting observations. More specific studies are mentioned below.

[2] 3.443–6; 3.204–24; 2.301–30; for references to earlier campaigning, see e.g. 2.688–93; 9.128–30, 328–33, 663–8; 19.295–6. For anticipation of the fall of Troy, see e.g. 4.163–5 = 6.447–9; 15.69–71; 18.207–13; 22.410–11, etc. For the death of Achilles see below, p. 118. In general, see e.g. Kullmann 1960: ch. 5; Griffin 1980: 1; Mueller 1984: 66–7; Dowden 1996: 55–6.

[3] See esp. Reinhardt 1938; Griffin 1980: 195 n. 49; Richardson 1993: 276–8 (a very careful discussion). M. L. West 2011c: 412 regards this passage as a 'rhapsodic interpolation'.

[4] Taplin 1992, 14–22, with earlier references.

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the plain of battle which lies between. The scenes involving the Olympians are more various and provide a broader perspective, but their attention too is generally focused on the human suffering on the battlefield. Consequently, the *Iliad* gains in emotional power what it lacks in diversity of scene and situation. A third feature, already implied, is the prominence of the Trojans in the poem. The very title *Iliad*, though probably not original, reminds us that this is no jingoistic or 'pan-Hellenic' epic; despite the claims of some ancient commentators, the Trojans are treated by Homer with great sympathy and generosity.[5] That is not to deny the fundamental guilt of Paris or to assert that the Achaean victory is undeserved.

The main subject of the poem is proclaimed as the wrath of Achilles. Much remains undisclosed by the opening lines in which the poet states his theme. In particular, we are given no hint that the anger of the hero will change direction: having first been directed against Agamemnon and his fellow-Greeks, it will be turned after Patroclus' death far more savagely against the Trojans and above all against Hector. Moreover, the way in which the hero's wrath ends proves to be as important as the punishment of his enemies. Rather than making Achilles relent as a result of compensation or apology, Homer allows violent revenge to give way to pity and magnanimity. Heroic wrath itself is clearly a traditional theme,[6] and on the evidence of the formulaic system it is likely that Achilles and Hector had both figured in epic for a long period before the *Iliad*,[7] but it is not so clear whether the tale of Achilles' anger had been narrated before Homer. Whatever the truth about his predecessors, Homer's conception of Achilles as a proud, intransigent, yet ultimately noble figure is central to the plot. In the *Iliad* Achilles is not just a rebellious chief but a tragic figure, remote

[5] G. Nagy, in a series of studies, has described the Homeric epics as 'pan-Hellenic' in a different sense, following use of the term by A. Snodgrass: see e.g. Nagy 1990: 70–1, 1995. By this he means that the epic spread widely, and that a common tradition of heroic song was swiftly established throughout the Greek world. It is certainly remarkable that the epic assumes that characters and readers are familiar with place-names and peoples throughout the Greek mainland and islands. This use of 'pan-Hellenism', however, would not affect the point made in my text, that the epic is not obviously nationalistic.

[6] As the Meleager tale especially makes clear (9.524–99); see also 13.460; 20.178–86; 6.326, 335. Cairns 2003 has a broader discussion of the significance of anger; see also van Wees 1992b: 126–38; Harris 2001; Most 2003.

[7] See Page 1959, ch. 6, esp. 248–51, 286–8; Combellack 1944. But see Kullmann 1960: 182–8 on Homer's enlargement of Hector's role. As for Patroclus, Schadewaldt 1965: 178–81 thought it conceivable that he was invented by Homer; Kullmann 1960: 44–5 prefers to think that Homer significantly enhanced his role.

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from his fellow-heroes and mysterious to them, caught halfway between divinity and humanity, doomed to an early end, hungry for glory yet seeing at times its elusiveness and even its futility.

The main plotline of the *Iliad*, then, is inevitably the sequence involving Achilles' withdrawal from the war and his reactions to the Greeks' overtures and subsequent events. At least the first half of the poem is dominated by his absence; in Book 9 the Greeks unsuccessfully beg him to return; in Book 11 a long and intricate process begins which culminates in Patroclus' more successful appeal in Book 16, an appeal which leads to the latter's death. Thereafter, Achilles' return to battle is inevitable, but characteristically delayed (the well-known Homeric fondness for 'retardation') – first by the time-lapse until he receives the news, then by the need for fresh armour, then by the formal reconciliation with Agamemnon. From that point, the spotlight is on Achilles, who on re-entering the battle carries all before him, and who dominates the last six books of the poem. Heroic revenge is achieved in Book 22, with the slaying of Hector. It has often been maintained that the poem could have ended at this point, with the hero triumphant and the Greeks certain of their future victory. Whatever the truth about earlier versions of the tale, it is difficult to believe that the poet who has throughout shown Hector and his fellow-Trojans in such an attractive light would have abandoned the Trojan hero to the atrocities of Achilles and denied him burial. A further argument comes from the character of Achilles himself. The friend of Patroclus, the man who showed respect for the father of Andromache, the sparer of suppliants in earlier times, the most emotional and articulate, yet most impulsive speaker in the poem is no mere killing machine. The final scenes of the poem including the hero – those between Achilles and Priam – allow gentler feelings to surface and provide a foil to the savagery which has gone before. Verbal and thematic echoes seem to confirm that the twenty-fourth book is a carefully integrated conclusion to the *Iliad*.[8]

Much that is contained in the *Iliad* is only tangentially connected with the main storyline. Hence the analysts sought to identify an 'original' wrath-poem, usually regarding certain books as essential to this narrative (especially 1, 16 and 22),[9] while rejecting others as later

[8] Beck 1964; Macleod 1982, esp. 32–5; N. J. Richardson 1993: 1–14. Contrast Seaford 1994: ch. 5 (hardly tenable).

[9] In all this discussion it must be borne in mind that the book divisions are unlikely to be the work of the poet. They are first attested in Alexandrian times, and may well be the work of the

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additions. The alternative model, now more fashionable, regards the *Iliad* as a creative synthesis, drawing on material which had been previously separate but combining episodes and sequences of events into a greater whole. On this assumption, we may accept that some planks in the structure were originally independent, but we may still see the new combination as harmonious and effective. The adaptation is not always perfect: it is fairly clear that the Catalogue of Achaean forces in Book 2 has been adapted from a poem in which it featured at the beginning of the expedition: in particular, whereas a catalogue of ships makes sense at that earlier point, when the fleet assembled at Aulis, there is little point in listing the number of ships so late in the war, without considering the number of men who survive. The editorial hand is particularly clear in the short passages which adapt the catalogue to changed circumstances, explaining the death of Protesilaus and the absence of Philoctetes.[10]

This approach seems preferable in considering, for example, the early books, in which the Greeks try to maintain their superiority without Achilles. In the hero's absence, other characters (Menelaus, Nestor, Odysseus) take the limelight: in particular, Homer gives special prominence to Diomedes, a hero of great courage and energy, but one who lacks the hot temper and self-destructive tendencies of Achilles, and who functions as a foil to the greater hero. Diomedes enjoys an *aristeia* in Books 5 and 6: that is, a period in battle in which he shows himself to be 'best' (*aristos*) and fights with exceptional success. Much that he says and does there, interesting and exciting in itself, stands in contrast with Achilles' behaviour in his later and more extraordinary *aristeia*, in Books 20 to 22.[11] This is characteristic of Homer's technique: the heroes do not exist in isolation, but are regularly compared or contrasted with one another. Achilles and Patroclus (Book 16), Hector and Paris (Books 3 and 6), Hector and Polydamas (18.249–314), Odysseus and Menelaus (3.205–24), and Odysseus and Achilles (19.145–37) are a few examples.

In the course of the *Iliad*, Homer includes many other heroes and gives them their share of glory. Diomedes has already been mentioned;

school of Aristarchus (Janko 1992: 37; for an earlier date, S. West 1967: 18–25; cf. S. West 1988: 39–40). Their inadequacy has been strenuously asserted by Taplin 1992; Heiden 2008 (and in earlier work cited there) tries to defend them and use them for interpretation. It is a major defect of Stanley 1993 that so many of his analyses assume the division goes back to the poet. On the ancient titles given to books or episodes, see Stanley 1993: 418 n. 133.

[10] 2.699, 721–6, cf. 686–94. In general on the Catalogue, see Kirk 1985:168–87, 237–40; Visser 1997; Sammons 2010; Kullmann 2012.

[11] Andersen 1978 is a detailed study of Diomedes' role. See also Reichel 1994: 217–30.

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the Cretan heroes Idomeneus and Meriones are prominent in Book 13; Patroclus has his brief hour of glory in Book 16; and the greater Ajax, typically excelling in defence, plays a key part in blocking the Trojan onslaught on the ships (Books 15 and 16). Even Agamemnon, though shown in no very favourable light by Homer, has a somewhat abbreviated *aristeia* in Book 11 until he is wounded. Defenders of Book 10 might wish to see it as an atypical *aristeia* (at night, and involving spying and trickery), suitable for the crafty Odysseus.[12] After the fighting of the *Iliad* has come to an end, the funeral games held by Achilles for Patroclus are used by the poet to show the various heroes in action once more, but in lighter vein: Taplin has described the episode as a 'curtain-call'. The contests of the games show the Greeks contending with each other, in pursuit of honour and prizes as on the battlefield, but with less deadly consequences.[13] All of this implies an audience familiar with these characters and eager to see them play their part in an unusually ambitious epic.

Not much has been said so far about the Trojans and the scenes within the city (especially Books 3, 6, 22, 24); yet these are among the most memorable aspects of the poem.[14] While it was natural that in a poem of this scale much should be seen of the warriors on both sides, it was not inevitable that the Trojans, particularly Hector, should be portrayed with such sympathy. Indeed, there are indications that the earlier epic tradition may have treated the opposing side in more negative terms. Even in Homer the advance of the Trojans and their allies is described as a noisy, undisciplined movement (3.2–13, 4.428–38). Trojans slain greatly outnumber the Greek dead (189 versus 54). Trojan heroes propose duels they are unlikely to win. Most significantly, there are a number of typical patterns on the battlefield which discredit the Trojans: they need to be whisked away from death by divine protectors (3.379–80, 5.445, etc.); the most gruesome wounds tend to be inflicted on Trojans and their allies; and all those who supplicate and beg for their lives to be spared are Trojans.[15]

[12] Dué and Ebbott 2010; Fantuzzi 2005.

[13] The quotation is from Taplin 1992: 253. See further Redfield 1975: 206–12; Macleod 1982: 28–32. Postlethwaite 1995 (correcting a rare error of Macleod's regarding 23.891) argues that tensions among the Greeks remain even at the end of Book 23.

[14] J. T. Kakridis 1971, 54–67 rejects simple assertions of Homeric philhellenism; see also E. Hall 1989: ch. 1. Sale 1989 argues that Homer greatly expanded the role of the Trojans.

[15] See further Stoevesandt 2004 (there is a useful review of this book by M. Willcock in *BMCRev* 2006).

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But if the tradition did indeed have a pro-Hellenic bias, the *Iliad* shows far more generosity. In Book 24 Helen stresses Hector's gentleness, and that of his father Priam: it is obvious that these qualities, illustrated in Books 3 and 6, were important to the poet's conception of these major characters.[16] The household of Hector, with loving wife and infant son for whom his father hopes for so much in vain, epitomizes the civilized life of the city which the Greeks will destroy; moreover, the family life of Hector stands in contrast with the isolated individualism of Achilles, whose son Neoptolemus is mentioned only once, as the son of a war-bride being brought up far away, and whose feelings for Briseis, the cause of the quarrel, veer from possessiveness to exaggerated affection and later to animosity. If Achilles shows us what a supreme hero, son of a goddess, is like, Hector embodies a more human ideal: a warrior who fights not just for glory but to protect his family and his fellow-citizens.[17] The frivolity and vanity of Paris, an archer and generally an unheroic figure, is perfectly contrasted with the more sombre and serious Hector; the adverse judgement and taunting comments of Helen reveal the disharmony that reigns in their household, where there is no child and no true marriage. Yet Paris can rally and behave well when rebuked by his brother, and is later prominent in battle: he has been disparagingly described as 'the archetypal Trojan', but this is unfair both to him and to his countrymen.[18] Finally, Priam, who is too old to fight and in some episodes cuts a curiously ineffective figure, rises to a genuinely heroic level of determination and courage when he journeys by night, at the risk of his life, to beg Achilles for Hector's corpse. The wonder and compassion which Achilles feels, and the way in which the two men sit gazing in admiration at one another, guide the audience's response (24.483, 516, 628–34). Suffering and endurance of loss are part of the heroic life as well as victory and slaughter.[19]

Returning to principles of structure, some generalizations may be offered, most of which will recur at a later stage. We have seen that Homeric poetry is characterized by repetition on both a verbal and a

[16] 24.762–75, esp. 767, 771–2.

[17] Other ways in which Hector and Achilles are contrasted are discussed below, pp. 71–5.

[18] Griffin 1980: 3–6 and 23 overstates the case against Paris. On p. 23 he is mistaken in saying that the wound Paris inflicts on Diomedes is 'superficial': Diomedes' heated response is mere bluff, and he is incapacitated for the remainder of the fighting (see 19.48–9). Collins 1988: 27–39 makes a case for Paris as representing an alternative 'ethic of Aphrodite'.

[19] Macleod 1982: 22 n. 2.

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thematic level; situations recur, on both large and small scales, and are described in the same or comparable ways. If variations are introduced, these are often important. One striking case of a small-scale episode which provides a parallel to the main plot of the poem concerns a minor character, Euchenor, the son of a prophet. He was warned by his father that he had a choice of lives: either he could die of a slow and cruel disease at home, or else in battle at Troy. He chose the latter, and is slain by Paris in Book 13 (660–72). The motif of the choice of lives is used on a grander scale with Achilles, especially in Book 9; since the choice of a long illness is an easier one to reject, the poet makes the alternative more tempting: a long life of prosperity and comfort in his native land – but without glory (9.410–16).

Another case concerns the origins of the quarrel and of the war itself. The Greeks have come to Troy because of the abduction of a woman, Helen, after peaceful efforts have failed to recover her; the priest Chryses calls down Apollo's retribution on the Greeks because Agamemnon has seized his daughter Chryseis, after his own efforts to reclaim her have failed; and Achilles denounces Agamemnon and withdraws from the war because the king has deprived him of his prize, Briseis. The analogy between the two slave-girls is particularly clear from the parallelism of name. The poet composed naturally in such patterns.[20]

The *Iliad* achieves its vast length partly by elaboration of episodes, partly by retardation. On the whole, the more important an episode, the more fully it is narrated, usually with the addition of speeches and similes. Thus the advance of the Achaean forces in Book 2 is adorned with no fewer than four similes. When an important warrior is about to embark on an *aristeia*, he is often given an arming scene; the most extensive such scene is that of Achilles, for whom new armour is actually manufactured by the gods. When a major duel is to be fought, the gods observe and comment; their attention enhances the significance of an event. Often a less significant or less emotional incident will precede and prepare for a greater: thus the attack by Diomedes on Aphrodite can be seen as a more humorous, less formidable anticipation

[20] See further Schadewaldt 1938: 148; Reinhardt 1961: 63–8; Rabel 1988. Fenik 1974: 172–207 discusses the *Odyssey*'s fondness for 'character doublets' (e.g. Eurycleia and Eurynome), and illustrates this tendency also from the *Iliad*; cf. Fenik 1968: 147–50. On Briseis, see further Dué 2002.

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of the attack on Ares.[21] On a larger scale, the whole episode of Diomedes' attack on the gods is a prefiguration of the more momentous battle between Achilles and the River-god. From one point of view these sequences show the poet manipulating formulaic or traditional material, but he is in control of his techniques and resources, not deploying them at random.

As for retardation, this is conspicuous in both epics on both a large and a small scale. The promise of Zeus to Thetis in Book 1 is not even referred to again for several books, and he only begins to go to work in Book 8; the return of Achilles to the field is anticipated as early as Book 9 and becomes imminent in Book 16, but does not actually take place until Book 20. The urgent message of Nestor to Achilles is delayed while Patroclus pauses to tend Eurypylus (11.809–48, taken up at 15.390–404). Similarly in specific episodes: in Book 16 the narrator has made clear that Patroclus is doomed, and we are shown Zeus looking down on the combat, pondering over the hero's fate: will he strike him down now, or allow him a little longer, a few more moments of deluded triumph? The god, here a mirror image of the poet, chooses the latter. As in Attic tragedy, the audience relishes the suspense while aware of the inevitable outcome; what is in doubt is not so much what will happen, but when and how it will happen.[22]

As the last example suggests, Homer makes extensive use of foreshadowing, whether explicit (as in the prophecy of a god or a comment by the omniscient narrator) or implicit (as in the symbolic moment when Patroclus must leave behind Achilles' spear, which he cannot lift: like other details in that scene, this suggests that he is no adequate substitute for Achilles).[23] Major prophecies by Zeus foretell subsequent events and map out the course of the poem (8.470–7; 15.49–77); narrative commentary on misguided hopes or unfulfilled prayers provide irony and poignancy (e.g. 2.419–20; 16.249–52). Other forms of intervention by the narrator include invocations (usually at powerful

[21] 5.318–52, 792–865. For another case, see Patroclus' assault on the wall, 16.698–711 (where he yields ground before Apollo), and his renewed onslaught at 782–804 (where Apollo strikes him down). On the principle see esp. Fenik 1974: 180–7; also M. W. Edwards 1991: 13, 19–21.

[22] 16.644–55. On retardation in general, see Reichel 1990; also Bremer 1987: 33–7. A related technique, misdirection (that is, leading the audience to expect one development and then surprising them), is also present in Homer, though less important: on this see Morrison 1992 (confined to the *Iliad*).

[23] 16.140–2. See further, for explicit cases, e.g. 2.35–40, 419–20; 11.604; 16.46–7; for implicit, e.g. 18.22–7 (pp. 117–18 below); 18.207–13 and 219–22; 22.420–2 (similes which anticipate the sack of Troy). On this whole topic, see Duckworth 1933, Reichel 1994.

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moments) and résumés; also noteworthy are the frequent occasions where we are told that an event *nearly* happened, but, for example, a quick intervention by a god averted this outcome.[24] But at this point study of narrative technique merges into more detailed analysis of style, which cannot be attempted here.

Major episodes in the Homeric poems are frequently linked in some way other than by explicit cross-reference. Important parallels connect the parting of Hector and Andromache, and other moments in Book 6, with the passage in Book 22 in which Andromache learns of her husband's death. Similarly, Thetis' appearance in Book 18 in response to her son's grief is a mirror scene, a repetition of the moment in which she came to comfort him for a far less important loss in Book 1; verbal parallels reinforce the connection. The analogies between the death scenes of Patroclus and Hector are well known: the parallels are too prominent, the occasions too important, for these to be coincidental.[25] The sequence of scenes involving exchanges between Hector and Polydamas leads up to the climactic moment of wise advice ignored in Book 18.[26] Above all, the scene in Book 24 in which Priam successfully appeals to Achilles seems to cap and surpass the embassy scene in Book 9. In both, Achilles receives an unexpected visitor or visitors by night; in both, he is offered rich compensation; in both, food and drink are consumed (though in Book 24 only after the appeal has succeeded); and in both Achilles gives a passionate statement of his disillusionment. The differences are of course equally significant: Priam, a king, has come face to face with Achilles as Agamemnon did not (cf. esp. 9.372–3, 387, with 24.519–20); he has brought the treasure with him, rather than merely sending a catalogue; he humbles himself far more than the Greek ambassadors, and approaches Achilles at far greater risk.[27] As for Achilles, his self-centred eloquence in Book 9 has given way to a more sombre and compassionate mood in Book 24, and, although still bitter and quick to anger, he is able to see the parallels between his own and Priam's situations.[28]

[24] E.g. 2. 155; 8. 217; 16.698–701; see further Reinhardt 1961: 107–13; de Jong 1987a: 68–81; Nesselrath 1992; Kelly 2007b: 128–32.

[25] For detailed analysis, see Fenik 1968: 217; Janko 1992 on 16.830–63; N. J. Richardson 1993 on 22.330–67.

[26] 12.60–80, 210–50; 13.725–53; 18.249–313. See Schadewaldt 1938: 104–6; Redfield 1975: 272–7; Bannert 1988: 71–81; Reichel 1994: 175–82.

[27] The simile applied to Priam at 24.480–4 brings out the extraordinary nature of his situation: see the note in Macleod 1982.

[28] For further analysis of corresponding scenes of this type, see Schadewaldt 1938; Taplin 1992.

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Something has been said about structure and characterization. A more nebulous concept is that of the poem's 'theme' or themes, as distinct from the plot. The term is sometimes used for the recurring motifs or typical episodes in Homeric epic (thus an arming scene might be an instance of a theme),[29] but here I use it in a different sense, found in analysis of literary as well as oral texts. In this context, the term refers to the larger abstract, moral, or metaphysical issues which seem to be implied or to arise out of the text. With a work as long and complex as the *Iliad*, this raises problems: must we insist on specifying a single theme for the whole, and, if not, how many themes are to be allowed? The late G. S. Kirk voiced reservations about 'single-minded interpretations in terms of tragic essence or human predicament',[30] and there are indeed dangers in losing contact with the particularities of the poem. Nevertheless, it is natural to want to go beyond mere retelling of the story, and we are on relatively safe ground in considering the issues which seem to matter most to, and to be most extensively debated by, the characters themselves. Conduct in war, the winning of honour, the rights and wrongs of the quarrel and of the war itself, the justice of the gods, and the morality of victory matter greatly to Homer's heroes and presumably to the poet and his society. The privileged access which the audience is allowed to the counsels of the gods also helps us to assess the overall import of the story, though the divine perspective raises questions as well as answering them. In the sections which follow I shall discuss three major topics: warfare, men's relation to the gods, and human error or folly. I shall try to describe the way in which the poet presents these themes and to draw out some of the possible implications for an Iliadic view of the world.[31]

2. War and the hero

In the proem we are already told that we must expect violent death in battle; the Achaean and Trojan hosts are marshalled for combat in Book 2; wholehearted conflict begins at the close of Book 4; and

[29] See further Lord 1960: 68–98; Powell 1977; M. W. Edwards 1991: 11–23 (contrast N. J. Richardson 1993: 14–24).

[30] Kirk 1985: ix – though he goes on to allow that 'such dimensions undeniably exist'.

[31] I say 'Iliadic' deliberately, since it is not necessarily the case that Homer the man held precisely these views in his everyday life: not only are literature and life distinct, but the *Iliad* itself clearly represents a deliberately selective vision of the heroic world.

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warfare dominates most of the poem up to the climax of Hector's death in Book 22. Even the most memorable scenes off the battlefield – the meeting of Hector and Andromache, the embassy, the Olympian episodes, Nestor's lecture to Patroclus – are overshadowed by the war and their outcome often influences its progress. The fighting of the *Iliad* has been much studied: some of this work has concentrated on the formulaic and thematic construction of the battle scenes, while other scholars have discussed the relation of this poetic fighting to real-life tactics and warfare of the Dark Age. Finally, there has been intense discussion of the ideology of war in the *Iliad*, and of the attitudes of the poet and his characters to the slaughter which the poem relentlessly narrates.

The fighting in the *Iliad* involves large forces on both sides, but the focus is constantly narrowing to describe the exploits of individuals, usually in one-to-one combat. The leaders organize formal duels in Books 3 and 7 (Menelaus vs. Paris, Ajax vs. Hector), and in Book 22 Achilles will permit no-one else to share his revenge upon Hector; but even in books which represent a general battle scene the poet normally prefers to follow the progress of particular heroes, whether major figures of the poem or lesser characters temporarily given the limelight. True, there are passages which take a broader view, and similes sometimes describe the clash of opposing armies, but the main narrative focuses on individuals. Moreover, this is aristocratic combat: the common man is almost invisible.[32] In Book 2, Odysseus rebukes any noisy slacker of the lower ranks: 'you are of no account in war or in counsel' (202). Thersites, their clownish spokesman, gets a beating for daring to question his betters.[33] Although numerous characters are introduced, and no doubt often invented, to die in battle, the poet in his introductions usually makes them of at least respectable birth. In a bizarre passage, Thoas even recommends that the Achaeans send the common troops back to the ships, 'and let us, who can claim to be the best men among the host, stand firm' (15.294–9). His advice is followed: in a crisis, it seems, one is actually better off without the lower ranks.

There are many other respects in which the warfare of the *Iliad* is highly unrealistic, even if we set aside the numerous interventions by

[32] Morris 1986 and van Wees 1992b: 78–89 argue that the epics serve to 'legitimize' kingly rule (similarly Janko 1992: 38). This works well with the Thersites episode, but surely does not represent the primary purpose of the poems.

[33] See further Thalmann 1988; Reichel 1994: 106 n. 9; Halliwell 2008: 69–77. It is astonishing that Thersites figures only in a single nugatory footnote in Haubold 2000.

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the gods for later discussion. The army of the Achaeans has been at Troy for nine years, yet only after a setback in Book 7 of the poem is a defensive wall constructed around the camp (this aspect also perplexed Thucydides, who gave a different account of events on *a priori* grounds, 1.11).[34] The sources of supplies for so vast an army are never fully clarified: the most explicit hint is the arrival late in Book 7 of a fleet of ships from Lemnos bringing fresh wine.[35] There seems to be no concept of a supporting staff of carpenters, smiths, oarsmen, or other camp-followers to handle practical matters: the heroes themselves perform all such tasks, and the army apparently contains no non-combatants. The physician Machaon is wounded in 11.504–15, and, in the absence of his fellow-doctor Podalirius, he has to be treated by amateurs (11.618–43; cf. Eurypylus, 11.828–36). Even the aged Nestor is still active at least in advising the charioteers on tactics, and sometimes even participates in the fighting (4.322–3; cf. 8.80–159; 11.500–1); still more surprising is the appearance of old Phoenix as commander of one of the columns of the Myrmidons (16.196).[36] There are no slaves except for those (mostly female) taken in war. Little is said about the discomfort of life in camp (though Odysseus allows that separation from their families for so long is indeed hard to bear; 2.289–97). The weather never varies (except in similes), and the heroes suffer neither privation nor natural diseases – the exception is, of course, the plague imposed on them as divine punishment in Book 1. The heroes have horses and chariots, which could hardly have been brought *en masse* from mainland Greece by sea; perhaps they are thought to be part of the loot from raids in the Troad mentioned by Achilles and others, for Diomedes captures Aeneas' horses within the poem itself. But the chariots themselves are mysterious vehicles: the poet seems not entirely to grasp their possible function in war, and the heroes use them merely to ride to the battlefield, whereupon they dismount and fight on their feet. Sometimes the concept of chariot transport and horse-riding are confused: in one notorious passage the Trojan forces try to leap across the Achaean trench, horses, chariots, and all! (16.364–76, cf. 380).[37]

[34] Against Page 1959: 315–24, who argued from Thucydides for late interpolation of the passages concerning the wall, see M. L. West 1969 and Tsagarakis 1969.

[35] In the Cycle the solution was magical: *Cypria* fr. 26; cf. Griffin 1977, 40–1. On the passage in *Iliad* 7 (466–82) see Finglass 2006, with the reply by Kelly 2008b.

[36] In general on the problems concerning Phoenix, see pp. 108–10 below.

[37] Janko 1992 ad loc. defends Hector's success in crossing the ditch by appealing to an earlier passage where Apollo opened the way for the Trojan attack (15.358–9), but the lines still seem

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More striking still are the actual clashes between warriors.[38] These follow regular patterns: a common sequence is for a hero to cast a spear, which misses his opponent, and for the opponent to respond with fatal effect. Alternatively, the first shot may miss its intended target but kill another hero close at hand. A chain of killings regularly develops, with a friend of the slain man rallying to avenge his comrade by attacking the slayer. The weapons used are the throwing spear, the thrusting spear and the sword; archery, though practised by certain individuals such as Paris and Teucer, is as far as possible marginalized, and the term 'archer' can even be used as an insult (11.385). Apart from the *Doloneia*, the poem almost entirely excludes any kind of fighting that would involve deception or devices other than hand-to-hand combat.[39] This partly explains the curious way in which the 'disguise' of Patroclus in Achilles' armour is handled: Patroclus is quite clear that the object is 'to make them think I am you' (16.41) but, although this is indeed the initial effect, it is not long before Sarpedon suspects an impostor (423–5), and thereafter the idea is dropped: by line 543 Glaucus is in no doubt that the new arrival is Patroclus.[40]

There is a recognized hierarchy of heroes on both sides, though a particular hero's status may be questioned or mockingly challenged in moments of anger. Major heroes slay more people than minor figures; moreover, it is virtually impossible for a minor hero to kill a major figure, and this can only be achieved with the aid of a god (as Apollo will aid Paris in slaying Achilles, 22.359–60). Success is swift once a hero actually confronts his foe: duels are rarely prolonged beyond a single exchange of shots. If a man is wounded, he either dies at once or is rescued by his allies and recovers. Pain is real but short-lived: the hero may groan deeply, but Homer does not show his characters delirious or raving in pain (contrast Soph. *Phil.* 730–806).

difficult. However, van Wees 2004 (and earlier articles) argues that modern scholarship has been over-sceptical about the presentation of chariots in Homer.

[38] Fundamental treatment by Fenik 1968; see also Strasburger 1954; W. H. Friedrich 1956; Krischer 1971; Kirk 1976: ch. 3; Latacz 1977; Mueller 1984: ch. 3 (a very useful brief account); Kirk 1990: 15–27; van Wees 1992a, 1992b, 2004: ch. 11. Willcock 1983b compares Homeric and Virgilian battle scenes.

[39] The brief reference to ambushes by Idomeneus in 13.279–87 (cf. 1.226–7) is abnormal. Contrast the *Odyssey*, and see further A. T. Edwards 1985: ch. 1. Deception and treachery were more prominent in the Cyclic poems: e.g. Odysseus and Diomedes murdered Palamedes in the *Cypria* (fr. 27); the same heroes sneaked into Troy and stole the Palladium in the *Little Iliad* (fr. 11).

[40] For another reason for the dropping of this motif, see M. W. Edwards 1987a: 57. Ibid. 261 thinks even Sarpedon's uncertainty is a stock motif, cf. 5.175–6.

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If the wound is not severe, careful medical treatment (occasionally with divine intervention) restores him to unblemished health. Only in exceptional cases – Sarpedon, Patroclus, and Hector – can the dying man even speak a few words before the end. Perhaps most strikingly of all, there are no walking wounded: on neither side do we see cripples or other permanently maimed warriors. After battle has ended, the bodies must be recovered and burned with honours: this procedure is carried out with dignity and without gruesome descriptions of the condition of the dead.

All of these conventions serve to create a highly artificial yet curiously convincing world, in which warfare is straightforward and noble.[41] Naturally victory in the war remains the ultimate goal, but in the day-to-day action of the battlefield the most important challenge for each warrior is to face the foe courageously, and if necessary to meet a heroic death. Individual achievement is of greater moment than overall strategy or united planning. Despite the occasional wise pronouncement by Nestor, there is little in the way of tactical discussion before the battle, and next to none when actually on the field. Obligations and duties are conceived on a personal level: naturally one rallies to the aid of a friend or a brother in danger. But the immediate aim is simple: to kill one's opponents until the enemy are put to flight. Beyond that, the Achaeans are fighting for glory and booty, as well as to win back Helen and avenge the insult to Menelaus' honour. The Trojans, whom many modern readers find more sympathetic, are fighting for their city's survival and for their wives and children (15.494–9); the scenes in Troy in Book 6 show us something of what this means. Hence the Trojans, a threatened community, have no choice but to fight. Whether the war is worth fighting, whether the suffering is justified, is something which can only be considered by those on the Achaean side, and in the *Iliad* only Achilles has the leisure and the insight to ask such questions.

At the heart of the value system of the Homeric heroes is honour, *timē*, expressed through the respect of one's peers and embodied in tangible forms – treasure, gifts, women, an honourable place at the feast. In time of war it is inevitable that honour be won above all through prowess in battle, ability as a leader and a fighter. Other qualities are also admired – ability as a speaker, piety, sound judgement and

[41] See Griffin 1980, *passim*, e.g. 48–9.

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advice, loyalty, hospitality, gentleness, but these are secondary and the last would indeed be out of place in combat. The crisis of the *Iliad* arises because the greatest of the Greek warriors is not given the honour (both prizes and respect) which he feels to be his due. Because he is a hero, and quick to anger, he will not tolerate this treatment. The situation is worsened by the tactless and injudicious aggressiveness of Agamemnon, and there are no constitutional procedures which can defuse the dispute. It has been plausibly argued that Agamemnon has no clearly defined authority over his fellow-kings, but acts as *de facto* overlord because of the size of his forces (100 ships) and his relationship to the wronged Menelaus.[42] A further contributing factor is Achilles' bitterness at the prospect of a short life: in his knowledge of his own future he differs from all other major characters in the poem (1. 352; 9.410–16, etc.). Despite his passionate account of his own motives in Book 9, his fellow-Greeks cannot understand the depth of his feelings.

The heroic outlook on life, above all as expressed in the speeches of Achilles, is one of the great contributions of the *Iliad* to western literature.[43] Modern discussions have perhaps tended to schematize 'heroic ethics' too rigidly. A few memorable lines are naturally prominent in these discussions: 'always to excel, and to be superior to other men' (6.208 = 11.783); 'one omen is best, to fight for one's native land' (12.243); 'I feel terrible shame before the Trojans and the Trojan women with their trailing robes, if like a base man I hang back and skulk away from the war' (6.441–3). Most famous of all, justly, is Sarpedon's speech to Glaucus in Book 12, which sums up the hero's credo with moving simplicity and realism (12.310–28):

> 'Glaucus, why is it that we two are held in the highest honour in Lycia, with pride of place, the best of the meat, the wine-cup always full, and all look on us like gods, and we have for our own use a great cut of the finest land by the banks of the Xanthos…? That is why we should now be taking our stand at the front of the Lycian lines and facing the blaze of battle…. Dear friend, if we were going to live for ever, ageless and immortal, if we survived this war, then I would not be fighting in the front ranks myself or urging you into the battle where men win glory. But as it is, whatever we do the fates of death stand over us in a thousand forms, and no mortal can run from them or escape them – so let us go, and either give his triumph to another man, or he to us.'[44]

[42] Taplin 1990; Reichel 1994: 198–203.

[43] Bowra 1957: ch. 2 and 1961: ch. 3; also Bowra 1964. More recently, see e.g. van Wees 1992b: 64–5, 69–77, 107–25.

[44] Translation from Hammond 1987, slightly modified.

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Things are not as simple as Sarpedon's account suggests. There is a potential conflict between the striving for individual excellence and the collaborative effort to achieve an end in unison: the individual may pursue his own prestige to the detriment of the army as a whole, as happens when Achilles dismisses his fellow-Greeks and allows them to die.[45] In the end, Achilles bitterly reproaches himself not only for the death of Patroclus but for many others' as well (18.102–3; 19.61–2) – because of his insistence that he receive the honour he believes he is due. The complexities are differently illuminated by the case of Hector. Unlike Achilles and unlike his self-centred brother Paris, Hector has played the very role that Sarpedon envisages, as a king who fights among the foremost, inspires his men, defends his fatherland. But his very devotion to this task, his own prowess and success as a fighter, carries him too far, bringing both leader and army to the brink of disaster. Standing outside Troy and facing defeat, Hector dreads the accusation, partly justified, that in his pride and self-confidence he has destroyed the host (22.107).

'The host', the people (normally *laos*), have become more prominent in some recent discussions of Homer.[46] The leaders of the armies may be superior in birth, status, and wealth than the rank and file, but they cannot entirely ignore the common soldier. The very first scene of the *Iliad* highlights the fact that Agamemnon, in rejecting Chryses' appeal, is ignoring the will of the people in assembly (1.22–3), and it is the people who suffer in consequence (51–2). The assembly scenes of Books 2 and 19 in particular remind us of the role of the masses, and the need for the rulers to sustain their authority and retain the loyalty of the people. Even Achilles is conscious of the discontent among his Myrmidon followers while he abstains from battle (16.200–7). Along with much else, the *Iliad* is an early exploration of community politics. It is of course possible to overstate this element; the populace has little power to do more than express its dissatisfaction. Horace sardonically commented: *quidquid delirant reges, plectuntur Achivi* ('whatever lunacy the kings get up to, the Greek army takes the knocks') (*Epist.* 1.2.14; he obviously has the beating up of Thersites in mind). Nevertheless, the origins of Greek political discourse are clearly visible in Homer, as in Hesiod, and the conflict of interest between personal honour and civic responsibility is at the heart of the main plot. This would remain

[45] See Irwin 1989: ch. 2.

[46] For what follows see especially Hammer 2002; Haubold 2000; Barker 2009; Allan and Cairns 2011.

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a key issue in Greek society: in the fifth century, the *Ajax* of Sophocles memorably developed the theme.[47]

The special status of Achilles makes him an exceptional case: a more 'normal' hero – Diomedes, for instance – would not react so tempestuously to an insult as Achilles, nor hold out so long against Agamemnon's overtures.[48] Moreover, though all heroes value honour and respond to challenges, different heroes excel in different fields: thus Odysseus is superior at stratagem and counsel, Achilles in combat. Paris, archer and sensualist, seems only to be a hero on a part-time basis, though it is true that he responds readily enough to protests from Hector. Taplin has argued that the whole conception of a 'heroic code' should be abandoned as over-simplifying; in particular, he rejects the assertion by Finley (in one of the weakest sections of a valuable book), that 'The heroic code was complete and unambiguous, so much so that neither the poet nor his characters ever had occasion to debate it.'[49] In this emphatic form, such a view is clearly untenable: the characters of the epic regularly hold rational as well as heated discussions of proper conduct, though it is of course true that they do not debate abstractions in the manner of speakers in Plato's dialogues. Patroclus faces a conflict of loyalties, between his friend Achilles and the rest of the Greeks. Nestor, Odysseus, and Diomedes in various scenes recall Agamemnon to the demands of his position and correct his misguided suggestions. In Book 19, the argument between Odysseus and Achilles about whether the army should eat is a dispute between passion and expediency. Sound advice and good judgement are valued, and Achilles himself ruefully admits that others are superior to him in these areas.[50] But it remains true that, apart from Achilles, few of the heroes in the *Iliad* have cause or opportunity to question the values by which they live or the justification for their own behaviour.

In an influential discussion, E. R. Dodds described Homeric society as a 'shame-culture' rather than a 'guilt-culture'; that is, the primary source of morality in that society was what others said and thought about you, rather than a self-conscious assessment of the moral rightness and wrongness of one's actions, irrespective of others'

[47] Goldhill 1986: 154–61; note also Arist., *An. Post.* 97b15, identifying Achilles, Ajax, and Alcibiades as men characterized by pride.
[48] Andersen 1978; Griffin 1980: 74; Macleod 1982: 25 n. 1.
[49] Taplin 1992, 6–7, 50–1, 71–2, 166 against Finley 1979: 113, cf. 115.
[50] See 18.105–6, and further Schofield 1986; also Greenhalgh 1972.

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opinions.[51] Homer's heroes are indeed alert to potential loss of face, and this motivates many of the most important decisions of the poem. 'I would be called a coward and a good-for-nothing, if I am to yield to you in whatever you say', declares Achilles to Agamemnon (1.293–4). 'I feel shame before the Trojans,' says Hector, and remains on the field to face his death (22.105, echoing 6.442). Subsequent interpretation has sometimes taken this insight so far as virtually to deny any other moral force in the Homeric universe: Homeric society is, it is claimed, a 'results-culture', where only success counts.[52] Competitive values must overwhelm gentler attitudes and cooperative ethics.[53] Moreover, the inner man – the sense of obligation, responsibility, or conscience – is virtually eradicated. Here moral and psychological analysis meet, since it has also been maintained that 'Homeric man has no unified concept of what we call "soul" or "personality"'.[54]

A moderate version of this argument now prevails. As Dodds himself allowed, shame and guilt are not mutually exclusive motivations, in an individual or a society, and Homer's characters do show themselves affected by other considerations besides loss of face.[55] Indeed, *aidōs* itself, the term commonly rendered as 'shame', is a concept which covers more than the English term might imply: it also includes embarrassment, a sense of inhibition, and respect, including self-respect.[56] Important passages can be cited in which other moral or emotional factors override the simple consideration of 'what people will say'. Achilles did not strip Andromache's father of his armour, 'for he felt awe at that in his heart' (*sebassato*; 6.417). Achilles' grief and self-reproach at the harm he has brought upon Patroclus (and, indeed, his other friends) also go beyond any sense of loss of prestige (18.102–4; 21.134–5). *Aidōs* is felt towards the suppliant in the case of Priam in Book 24, yet many suppliants are slain elsewhere in the poem, and there is no

[51] Dodds 1951: chs. 1–2, esp. 17–18, 28, 47–50. For modern studies of honour and shame, see e.g. J. K. Campbell 1964; Peristiany 1965; also Lloyd-Jones 1990; Scodel 2008. Recent approaches are surveyed by Cairns 2011.

[52] Adkins 1960, and many subsequent articles. For criticism, see Long 1970 (contrast Adkins 1971); Lloyd-Jones 1971: ch. 1; Dover 1983; B. Williams 1993; Zanker 1994, esp. ch. 1. A polemical exchange between Adkins, Gagarin, and Lloyd-Jones may be found in Adkins 1987; Gagarin 1987; and Lloyd-Jones 1987. Rowe 1983 is a review of the issues. Yamagata 1994 retraces the ground at book length.

[53] Again the terminology derives from Adkins, e.g. 1960, 31–46.

[54] Dodds 1951: 15. Cf. Snell 1953: ch. 1, esp. 17–20; Fränkel 1975: 75–80. Contrast B. Williams 1993: ch. 1; also Fenik 1978b, and the works cited in n. 89 below.

[55] Lloyd-Jones 1971; Dover 1983.

[56] Cairns 1993, an exhaustive treatment; see also B. Williams 1993: ch. 4.

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implication that Achilles would have been regarded with disapproval by his peers if he had struck down the aged king. It is not loss of face he fears but (if anything) the anger of the gods; even that motive is overwhelmed by fellow-feeling and pity for a weak old man.

What of heroic morality in the context of the battlefield?[57] That men die in war is a truism (calculations differ, but one scholar counts 318 deaths in the *Iliad*); but the *way* in which Homer's characters kill, the fervour of bloodlust and the viciousness of some of the wounds, have disturbed many readers in recent times. There is a certain taste for gruesome descriptions, and some of the wounds, though occasionally impossible, are ghoulishly narrated.[58] The spear lodged in a dying man's heart still vibrates in the air with the desperate efforts of the heart's final beating (13.441–4); a man's eyeballs fall to the earth at his feet (13.616–7; 16.741–2); the brain comes oozing out from the eyeholes along the spear (17.296). Agamemnon, in a scene which sets the pattern for denial of supplications in the poem, urges Menelaus to kill the helpless Adrastus: let no Trojan escape, not even the child still slumbering in the mother's womb (6.57–60).[59] Dead men are decapitated, their heads sent rolling through the crowd of the battlefield (11.146, 261; 13.203). Hector threatens to stick the head of Patroclus upon a stake (17.126 and 18.175), and the related threats of denial of burial and permanent mutilation of the corpse gain prominence by increasingly frequent repetition in the last third of the epic.[60] That threat is finally perpetrated by Achilles upon Hector; his revenge for Patroclus also extends to the unique horror of human sacrifice, passed over hastily and perhaps uneasily by the poet.[61] The ultimate barbarity of cannibalism does not go beyond a threat, though uttered with appalling force: 'If only the strength and the heart within me might drive me to hack off your limbs and eat them raw, such harm you have done me.'[62]

[57] See further Segal 1971b; Vermeule 1979: ch. 3; Parker 1985.

[58] The standard instance of an impossible wound is 13.545–9. For gruesomeness, see W. H. Friedrich 1956; Griffin 1980: 91; Mueller 1984: 82–6. Saunders 1999 (not for the squeamish) presents the medical facts.

[59] On supplication, see above all Gould 1973 (80 n. 39 for a full list) (= Gould 2001: 32 n. 39); also Thornton 1984; Goldhill 1990; Crotty 1994; Naiden 2006.

[60] Segal 1971b: 18–47. See also Griffin 1980: 44–6, for Eastern parallels and contrasts.

[61] Threatened at 21.27–31, fulfilled at 23.175–83. Cf. G. Murray 1934: ch. 5.

[62] Achilles to Hector, 22.346–7; cf. 4.34–6, Zeus to Hera on her hatred for the Trojans; also 24.212–13, Hecuba on Achilles. See Redfield 1975: 197–9; Griffin 1980: 20.

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How are we to regard these endlessly brutal slayings? Is this the inevitable content of a battle epic, which Homer would avoid if he could? That view would be hard to sustain, given the fullness of the description and the length at which Homer narrates these conflicts. When a hero launches upon an *aristeia*, the audience is surely meant to sympathize with his energy and to relish the excitement of the battlefield, to enjoy the cruel wit of the taunts directed at his opponents; the analogies drawn with the modern western or war film are not unreasonable.[63] It does not follow, however, that Homer is merely a glorious primitive, revelling in the savagery of an age in which violence came naturally.[64] We must distinguish the poet from his characters, and also between the characters in the heat of battle and in calmer or more reflective moments. The violence of the slaughter is balanced by the sympathetic treatments of the victims, whose deaths are often softened with a beautiful simile or dignified with one of the famous epitaphs or 'necrologues'.[65] Besides the similes, the extended description of the scenes on Achilles' shield reminds us of other aspects of life, far from the horrors: there we find scenes of marriage and celebration, ploughing and harvesting, within the framework of earth, sea, and sky. War is on the shield too, but it is a more 'normal', local kind of warfare, seen as a part of the larger world of human existence.[66]

The anger and distress of the survivors in the war, and still more the moving portrayal of the non-combatants such as the women of Troy or Briseis in the Greek camp, make sufficiently clear that dismay at the savagery and grief for those who have fallen are not inappropriate or anachronistic reactions. As for Achilles' mutilation of Hector, it seems important that this is a repeated action, prolonged artificially for days after the actual slaying; in this it differs from the decapitations and other violent wounds perpetrated by Agamemnon and Meriones.[67]

[63] See Vermeule 1979, esp. 99–103; Parks 1990.

[64] A memorable essay by S. Weil, 'The *Iliad* as a Poem of Force' (Weil 1940–1), emphasizes both the pity and the horror of Homeric warfare; the horror is more cheerfully accepted by Finley 1979: 118 ('The poet and his audience lingered lovingly over every act of slaughter') and by Vermeule 1979: 84, 85, 96, 99, 114 (who speaks of 'wit' and 'ballet' in the battle scenes).

[65] E.g. 4.473–89 (well discussed by Schein 1984: 73–6), 5.152–8 (the bereaved father), 11.241–7 (the bride left behind); more examples in Strasburger 1954; Griffin 1980: ch. 4. For similes used to enhance the pathos of death, see e.g. 8.306–7; Porter 1972.

[66] On the shield, see Schadewaldt 1965: 352–74; Reinhardt 1961: 401–11; Taplin 1980. There has been much interest in the shield among students of *ecphrasis* (the formal description of a work of art in literature): e.g. Becker 1995, with earlier bibliography.

[67] It is misguided to lay too much stress on the phrases 'unseemly acts' and 'harsh deeds' (22.395; 23.24, 176), used to describe Achilles' actions (as is done by e.g. Bowra 1930: 21;

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The continuous victimization of Hector represents an impossible wish on Achilles' part to extend his revenge indefinitely; it would not even be possible if the gods were not preserving Hector's corpse from decay, and in the scene on Olympus in Book 24 we see that the gods themselves, prompted by Apollo, view Achilles' excesses with displeasure. To deny that Homer treats death in war as both glorious and tragic is to deny something vital to the greatness of the *Iliad*.

3. Gods and men[68]

It is obvious that the gods are fundamental to the nature of the *Iliad*. Not only do their activities underlie the action and provide its premises (the Judgement of Paris, the abduction of Helen), and not only do they regularly intervene in the events narrated in the poem; the poet also allows his audience to observe the life of the gods, which becomes an essential foil or contrast to the existence of men. 'Thus the gods have woven destiny for unhappy mortals, for them to live in misery. But they themselves are free of cares' (24.525–6). The most important aspect of the gods in the *Iliad* is the way in which they help to define the human condition.

Immortal themselves, the gods are involved in various ways in the world of mortals. They depend on them for sacrifice and regard this and the other honours which humans pay them as their due.[69] Divinities may also be the parents of mortals through brief liaisons with human lovers: Aphrodite and Aeneas, Zeus and Sarpedon, and above all Thetis and Achilles: her marriage to Peleus seems to be an unusual case of a longer relationship, but by the time of the *Iliad* she has returned to the sea and Peleus lives alone. Gods may also have particular favourites among mortals, without any kinship between them: Aphrodite cares for Paris, Athena for Odysseus. More broadly, this favouritism extends to cities and their peoples: although the gods receive worship from all, they may have special affection for certain places: thus Hera cares most for Argos, Sparta, and Mycenae, while

Segal 1971b: 13); they do not necessarily convey moral criticisms. See Griffin 1980: 85; Vermeule 1979: 234 n. 11; Hainsworth 1993: 49–50; N. J. Richardson 1993; and de Jong 2012, ad loc.

[68] See esp. Griffin 1980: chs. 5–6; Erbse 1986; M. W. Edwards 1987a: ch. 17; Kirk 1990: 1–14; Janko 1992: 1–7. On religion more generally, see above all Burkert 1985 and Bremmer 1994. For illustrations of the gods in art, see Simon 1985.

[69] For various consequences of this see Parker 1998.

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Zeus admits to particular affection for Troy (4.44–52). In the *Iliad*, the gods are thoroughly involved in the war, often fighting in disguise on one side or the other. Athena, Hera, and Poseidon have a special hatred for Troy: in vain the Trojan women convey rich offerings to Athena's temple in an attempt to win her over (6.237–311). It is a striking example of Homer's sympathy with the Trojans that they are not represented as worshipping some separate pantheon of barbarian gods (contrast Virgil, *Aeneid*, 8.698–700).[70]

As in other areas, we must distinguish between what the characters know of the gods and what the poet tells or represents.[71] The mortals in the Homeric poems generally regard the gods as powerful supporters; in particular, they regularly assume that they will reward piety and uphold justice. Thus, in Book 4, Agamemnon declares that the Trojans, who have broken the truce, will receive certain punishment as oath-breakers should; similarly Menelaus declares that Paris and the other Trojans will be punished in the end for their offences against Zeus, god of hospitality (4.155–68; 13.620–7). The reality is more complex and disturbing, for the gods as shown in their own habitat display little concern for justice as humans understand it. Zeus yields to Thetis' importuning out of reluctance to reject her request (and perhaps from gratitude for past favours), even though it will mean the death of many Greeks. The gods themselves plot to disrupt the truce sworn in their name. Apollo strikes Patroclus down and renders him helpless, as later Athena lures Hector to his doom. The favouritism shown by Aphrodite to Paris is even less defensible on moral grounds: having aided him in his seduction of Helen, she whisks him away from deserved retribution. Although gods do sometimes respond to human prayers, their response is swiftest when their own honour is involved, as when Apollo sends plague to punish the Greek army for spurning his priest.[72] The heartfelt prayer of Hector, that his son may grow up to be a great fighter and bring joy to his mother, receives no reply (6.476–81).[73]

This contrast between human and divine perspective permits much irony and pathos. Human hopes and fears are prompted by their lack

[70] E. Hall 1989, 43–5.

[71] Jörgensen 1904.

[72] Cf. the stories of Niobe (24.602–9) and of Meleager's father (9.533–7); Page 1973a: 79–83; Weiler 1974.

[73] On this case, and on prayers in Homer more generally, see Macleod 1982: 42; more bibliography in Reichel 1994: 73; Pulleyn 1997.

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of knowledge of the future; even Achilles understands only in part what his own future involves, and is crucially blind to the significance of a divine warning (18.6–14). Agamemnon is deluded by a false dream, and supposes he will sack Troy on the very next day (2.35–9). Patroclus asks Achilles to send him forth to battle, 'in his great folly, for he was praying for evil death and doom for himself' (16.46–7); much is made in Book 16 of the fact that Patroclus is fighting, so to speak, on borrowed time. Even when a divine message grants a mortal some insight, it is partial and often misunderstood or neglected: thus Hector forgets the limitations set on his success, and anticipates further victories beyond the day that Zeus promised him (11.193–4; 17.453–5; 18.293–5).[74] The gods themselves feel the pity of the situation: rather than presenting them solely as capricious or sadistic gamesters, Homer often shows Zeus in particular observing events with concern and compassion (15.12; 16.644–55; 17.198–208). Yet the essence of the divine is that it is separate from the human: the gods can always turn away and rest their eyes from combat, which man cannot escape (13.1–7). For this reason mankind and its concerns can be regarded as trivial: 'you would not call me sensible if I were to fight with you over wretched mortals', comments Apollo to Poseidon (21.462–4; cf. 1.574, 8.428). The exception is Thetis: once married to a mortal, devoted to her mortal son, she is bound up with the human world as the other gods are not.[75]

The paradigm case of the contrast between human and divine spheres is the first book of the *Iliad*, in which the disagreements on Olympus, arising from Hera's suspicion of Zeus, mirror the human quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon. The uncertain authority of Agamemnon is contrasted with the unchallengeable supremacy of Zeus, king of the gods; the comical figure of Hephaestus, the peacemaker, is a light-hearted reflection of Nestor, who intervenes without success in an effort to calm the heroes. Detailed verbal connections confirm the parallel. But the scene on earth ends with the angry departure of Achilles, which will bring 'innumerable woes'; on Olympus, although bitterness remains, the quarrel is temporarily suspended as the gods laugh at Hephaestus' antics; forgetting the affairs of mortals, they turn to enjoy the feast and the song of Apollo and the Muses. Human beings cannot be important enough to spoil the festivities.[76]

[74] R. B. Rutherford 1982: 156–7, with other examples.
[75] In general on Thetis' role in the *Iliad*, see Slatkin 1991.
[76] The scene is discussed in detail by Halliwell 2008: 77–86.

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This opposition, between tragically serious mortals and frivolous divinities, is one of the most brilliant creative strokes of the epic tradition. The 'divine comedy' can, however, be overstated: it is always possible for the gods to reassert their authority and their dignity, as Zeus does in this book. Yet total seriousness is denied them, for they are immortal and cannot suffer or perish. Hence Longinus' famous paradox: 'Homer, it seems to me, has done his best to make the men of the Trojan War gods, and the gods men' (*On the Sublime*, 9.7).

Despite the frequency with which the gods appear and the apparent abundance of detail in their treatment, the *Iliad* is extremely selective in its presentation of the divine. The focus is mainly on a few major divinities (Zeus, Apollo, Hera, Athena, Aphrodite, Poseidon; more rarely Hephaestus, Hermes, Iris, and others). The earlier background of wars among the gods, including the overthrow of Cronos, is taken for granted but only mentioned in vague terms. There are passing references to Demeter, Dionysus, Hades, Persephone, the Erinyes, and other powers, but these do not play speaking roles. The exclusion of Demeter and Dionysus has sometimes been explained on the grounds that they are less aristocratic, more popular gods; it may be more plausible to maintain that they are benefactors of all humanity, and so not easily fitted in to the partisan line-up of deities in the Trojan War. The powers of the underworld are more easily explained, since the *Iliad* is clearly averse to this more uncanny side of the supernatural; we hear almost nothing of what Hades' realm is like, and the finality of death is a central fact of the *Iliad*, an essential premise of the heroic outlook. There are no exceptions: 'even Heracles died', says Achilles as he accepts his own fate; and Castor and Pollux both lie under the soil in their homeland. The *Odyssey*, by contrast, allows Menelaus immortality together with Helen, daughter of Zeus, and seems also to be aware of the legend that Castor and Pollux enjoyed immortality day and day about. Later poetry was still more accommodating.[77]

Those gods who do appear are presented as an extended family, mostly resident together on Olympus; like any family, they have their disagreements and their changing moods. Zeus is affectionate towards both Aphrodite and Athena; Hera uses her feminine charms to try to get her way; Aphrodite is sometimes at odds with Hera, sometimes willing to help her. In other scenes the appropriate human parallel may be rather

[77] *Il.* 18.117; 3.243–4; *Od.* 4.561–69; cf. *Od.* 11.299–304, on Castor and Pollux. See M. L. West 1978 on Hes. *Op.* 166–7; Griffin 1977: 42.

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the court of a king and his fellow-nobles: we have seen that Zeus possesses the authority that Agamemnon would like to have. In Book 15, Poseidon asserts his status like a blustering aristocrat, but eventually yields to the threat of Zeus's superior power (185–217, esp. 185–6, 206–10). Yet Zeus sometimes faces determined opposition (as at the opening of Book 4) and occasionally he must allow an outcome which he does not himself want, as when his son Sarpedon must die in Book 16.

Some at least of Homer's conception of the gods is 'poetic' in the sense that it probably lacks any basis in cult. Homeric religion is both selective and creative. The detailed description of scenes on Olympus, such as the cloud garage in which Hera keeps her chariot; the robots of Hephaestus; Poseidon's chariot ride, with the sea creatures gambolling in his wake; the mysterious ichor which runs in the gods' veins – all of these are surely colourful elaborations. The idea of a god intervening in human disguise is closer to everyday belief,[78] but the forms which that belief is given in epic spring from a poetic imagination: Athena seizing Achilles by the hair from behind, whereupon he spins round and recognizes her, though for others she is invisible (1.194–200); Apollo smashing through the Achaean wall like a playful child destroying a sandcastle (15.360–6); Zeus brandishing the aegis high upon Mount Ida, while thunder shakes the mountain (17.591–6). Images such as these influenced all later Greek poetic presentation of the gods and much of Greek art.[79] The pre-eminent example is Pheidias' statue of Zeus at Olympia, one of the wonders of the ancient world: the artist is said to have modelled it on the majestic lines in which Zeus nods his head in promise to Thetis (1.528–30, with Dio Chrys. 12.25, etc.).

I have implicitly assumed that one form of interpretation, which sees the gods as symbols of natural forces or human psychological impulses, is mistaken. Such an approach not only makes nonsense of the scenes in which gods are represented on their own, talking, fighting, or making love; it also runs into difficulties even with the scenes such as Athena's restraint of Achilles, or Helen's exchange with Aphrodite, which the approach was devised to explain. For the purposes of the poem, the gods are real and play a physical part in the poem; they are part of the natural world, though existing on a higher plane than mortals. As we have seen, the poet embroiders their life and personalities imaginatively (unexceptionable in a society which lacked a formal creed limiting the options of believers); he

[78] Cf. *Od.* 17.483–7; Kearns 1982; Lane Fox 1986: ch. 4.
[79] Burkert 1985: 119–25.

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sometimes introduces characters who are indeed personifications (Fear and Panic, companions of Ares, for example). But to suggest that the gods were fictions or symbols to the poet or his audience is perverse.

The precise relationship of divine influence and human response is more difficult: sometimes we seem to have 'double motivation', where the divine prompting duplicates the natural reaction of the mortal character, but in certain cases the god's influence seems more compelling (as perhaps in 16.684–91). Even then, however, the gods seem to work on what they find in the human heart: it is predictable, for instance, that the resourceful Odysseus should be the one whom Athena prompts to stop the rout in Book 2 (167–82).[80] Naturally enough, mortals are often confused or uncertain in these cases; in some circumstances tact or self-defensiveness may cause one of them to emphasize the divine role unjustifiably.[81] Some of the characters refer to the malign influence of 'Atē', often rendered 'madness' but probably better interpreted as 'affliction' or 'harm'. Whatever the exact sense, Atē is a divine force or personification, which characters can blame for their own errors or blindness. She is prominent in Agamemnon's famously awkward apology in Book 19.[82] But the normal Homeric rule is that a human is responsible for his or her actions, whether or not a god was involved (something which it is hard for the characters to establish). With rare exceptions, there is no suggestion that the presence of the gods eliminates human motivation or decision-making.[83]

The vindictiveness of Hera and Athena, and the frivolity of the gods in combat, astonish readers who assume that gods should be upholders of morality and should exemplify that morality in their own behaviour. Yet, although the links are sometimes tenuous, religion is not entirely dissociated from morality in Homer.[84] We have seen that the mortal characters expect that oath-breakers will receive punishment: the

[80] See esp. Lesky 1961; also Willcock 1970; Versnel 2011: 163–78.

[81] As 3.164, Priam to Helen; 19.86–138, Agamemnon's apology; more outrageously, Paris at 3.439 (see p. 106 below). See Dodds 1951: ch. 1; Hutchinson 1985 on Aesch. *Sept.* 4–9; Taplin 1990: 75–7; and M. W. Edwards 1991: 245–7 on 19.85–138.

[82] This was the starting point for Dodds's classic discussion, but for criticism of his analysis see already Barrett 1964 on Eur. *Hipp.* 241. On the interpretation of Ate ('harm' or 'Ruin'), see esp. Cairns 2012.

[83] For one particularly complex case, Aphrodite and Helen in *Iliad* 3, see pp. 104–6 below. Another in which psychic intervention is clearly involved, and which seems to involve some distortion of the mortal's 'natural' reactions, is Athena's prompting of Penelope to show herself to the suitors in *Odyssey* 18, a controversial scene (see R. B. Rutherford 1992: 29–33; D. Steiner 2010: 179–203).

[84] For an argument that divine justice is much more significant than I have allowed here, see Allan 2006.

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invocations at solemn moments of ritual in Books 3 and 19 refer to such punitive action as taking place in the underworld, and these assumptions are not contradicted elsewhere in the poem. Zeus is also concerned with oaths, and in certain passages seems to be regarded as lord of hospitality.[85] A difficult passage in Book 1 seems to associate the leading Greeks with Zeus in their function as overseers of the *themistes* ('ordinances'; 1.238–9). In a famous simile, Zeus is described as sending storms upon men who have perverted justice in the assembly (16.384–93); the vocabulary and morality seem close to the *Odyssey* and to Hesiod's *Works and Days*.[86] Most important of all is Book 24, where the gods debate, if not the justice, at least the propriety of Achilles' continued revenge, and where Zeus declares that he must be brought to rein or suffer the gods' anger. Hector's piety, stressed throughout that book, deserves some recognition and reward. In a work which narrates an episode of destructive war, in which good men die on both sides, the gods must often seem callous or malicious. In some episodes they are depicted as anxious to save their favourites, but the opposition from other gods is too great (a good example of the explanatory powers of polytheism). In other cases it seems that the gods, including even Zeus, must yield to the impersonal force of fate: thus Sarpedon must die, and Zeus himself weeps tears of blood for his son.[87] This too is a poetic concept introduced for pathetic effect, and should not be pressed for theology. There is more explicit reflection on the gods' role in relation to human wrongdoing in the *Odyssey* (pp. 83–4 below), though even there the poet does not achieve a totally coherent picture.[88]

4. Choices and consequences

As has already been implied, Homeric characters are clearly conceived personalities who make deliberate decisions.[89] Often but not always

[85] Zeus invoked at oath-taking: 3.104, 274, 298–301, 320. See 3.351–4 and 13.625 (Menelaus) for Zeus Xeinios. The oath-breaker Pandarus is indeed killed shortly after his offence, though it is not clear whether this is to be seen as either divine or poetic justice: see A. Parry 1971: lvii n. 1; Taplin 1992: 104–9.

[86] Cf. 18.507–8; Hes. *Theog.* 85–6 with West's note; Hes. *Op.* 35–6, 250–69.

[87] 16.458–61. In general, see Greene 1944; Dietrich 1965; Burkert 1985: 129–30; Janko 1992: 4–7.

[88] Dodds 1951: 32–4; Lloyd-Jones 1971: 28–32, Fenik 1974: 208–30; Kullmann 1985; Versnel 2011: ch. 2, esp. 156–7.

[89] Sharples 1983; Halliwell 1990; Gaskin 1990; M. Clarke 1999: 66–9.

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these are based on rational considerations or moral assumptions: thus Odysseus contemplates flight in Book 11, but concludes that this is not a step that he, an *aristos*, one of the heroic elite, can legitimately take (11.403–10).[90] In many cases, the character's choice is made in the heat of the moment, sometimes in the grip of anger, grief, hatred, anxiety, or some other highly emotional force. Aristotle compared epic to drama: both genres present individuals in action, and it is through their actions and choices that their character is illuminated.[91] This could be shown in detail by following the presentation of many of the characters, but the most important cases are Hector and Achilles. A brief survey of the major choices of each of these two heroes will assist comparison.

The chief scenes involving Hector in significant decisions are in Book 6, where he resists the blandishments of his womenfolk, above all the pleading of his wife, and resolves to return to the battle; in Book 18, where he violently rejects the advice of Polydamas to return to the city; and in Book 22, where he chooses to remain outside the walls despite the pleas of his father and mother.[92] Later in the same book his nerve cracks and he runs from Achilles, his former resolve shaken; deceived by Athena, he stands and fights after running; finally, seeing his doom clearly, he makes a last heroic stand: 'let me at least not die without effort and without glory, but only once I have achieved some great deed, for posterity to be told of' (22.304–5). Each of these scenes has been much discussed: in the first, we see what Hector is fighting for, and what he means to his family, and we witness the transition from bleak realism, as he acknowledges the inevitable fate of Troy, to a tempered hope for the future founded on resolution.[93] In the second, the key example of Hector's bad judgement, we see a more violent and over-confident side of his character.[94] This enthusiasm for battle and assurance of success has been steadily built up by the

[90] These and parallel speeches are discussed by Fenik 1978b and G. Petersmann 1974 .

[91] For bibliography on the relationship of Homer to tragedy, see Reichel 1994: 11; ancient texts on the subject are gathered by Herington 1985: 213–15. Some of the connections are discussed in R. B. Rutherford 1982, but I would now lay less emphasis on the Aristotelian concept of tragic error (*hamartia*). Seaford 1994: 275–8, 338–44, stresses the differences between the genres.

[92] On Hector see esp. Redfield 1975: 109–27; also Erbse 1978; Schein 1984: 168–95; Reichel 1994: 156 n. 1 (bibliography).

[93] See further Lohmann 1988.

[94] The point is emphasized not only by the earlier series of exchanges with Polydamas, but also by the carefully planned contrast between this scene and the corresponding Trojan assembly in Book 8 (note esp. 8.542 = 18.310). Cf. R. B. Rutherford 1985: 135.

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triumphs of Books 11 to 17, in a sense Hector's *aristeia*.[95] The energy of his attack can be seen as fuelling his own arrogance. The ancient scholiasts dealt harshly with Hector's proud declarations, and modern critics are sometimes tempted to speak of *hubris*,[96] but Hector's response is all too human. It is natural and even justifiable for him to be overjoyed by what the Trojans have achieved. His mistake is to forget the limitation set by Zeus and to think himself a match for Achilles. In Book 22 he is shown more sympathetically: in a moving soliloquy, he laments his folly in rejecting good advice, flinches at the thought of humiliation, considers and rejects the vain notion of throwing himself on Achilles' mercy, and finally braces himself – though only briefly – to confront his formidable opponent. His introspection, his moment of panic, and his deluded joy at the appearance of Athena/Deiphobus all show his humanity, as a foil to Achilles, who in this episode appears both more and less than human. In general, what emerges from a survey of this kind is that Hector's decisions are both more conventionally heroic and more constrained by external circumstance than the choices of Achilles.[97]

To illustrate this further requires some general comment on Achilles' situation.[98] Three points are highlighted from the beginning: Achilles is the supreme fighter, 'the best of the Achaeans',[99] far outshining his nominal overlord Agamemnon;[100] he is the son of a goddess, who has access even to the ear of Zeus; and he is to die young. The details of his fate are revealed gradually, and in Book 9 he apparently still has some freedom to choose another destiny, but the overwhelming impression is that Achilles is unlikely to accept that inglorious option. In his reply to the embassy he shows himself keenly aware of the progress of the war (esp. 9.348–55); he makes some concessions in the course of the episode; in Book 11 he is still observing the combat from a distance, and it is because he cannot turn his back on the war that he sends Patroclus on his fateful mission to gather news (11.599–617). Achilles' situation is more complex than

[95] There are of course setbacks, notably the episode in which Hector is wounded (14.402–522, 15.1–12, 220–70), but this does not affect the overall pattern.

[96] For the scholia, see N. J. Richardson 1980: 273–4. Moderns who use the term *hubris* (a word remarkably rare in the *Iliad*) are listed and criticized by Fisher 1992: 177–8 (now the standard work on this difficult term; but note the criticisms of Cairns 1996; also Chadwick 1996: 292–7).

[97] See also Schadewaldt 1965: 268–351 (translated as Schadewaldt 1997a).

[98] On Achilles generally, see the very full bibliography in Reichel 1994: 99 n. 1; also Zanker 1994; Muellner 1996; Burgess 2009.

[99] Much rhetorical play is made with this phrase: see 1.91, 244, 412; 2.82, 580, 761, etc.

[100] This formulation can stand, even if the case for informality of command structure pressed by Taplin 1990 is accepted in full.

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Hector's, his personality still more passionate and impulsive. Each of his decisions is important and in its way extraordinary: his initial decision to withdraw from the war; his rejection of the embassy's overtures, contrary to precedent and to the original advice of Athena; his concession in Book 16 to send out Patroclus in his place; his determination to avenge Patroclus (this is the natural heroic response, but is made to seem momentous by the link with his own death: 'next after Hector is your death waiting', mourns Thetis); his resolve to pursue revenge even beyond Hector's death, by dragging and exposing his corpse; and finally, his willingness to respect Priam's supplication and release Hector's body for burial.

Achilles and Hector are contrasted throughout the poem,[101] not only as the crucial military figures on either side but in their confrontation of death. When Hector stands triumphant over the dead Patroclus, he rejects his victim's prophecy that Achilles will take revenge: 'who knows whether Achilles, son of Thetis of the lovely locks, may not lose his life, falling first beneath my spear?' (16.860–1). When Achilles stands in the same position above the dying Hector, his response to his enemy's warning is subject to no such delusions: 'Die. As for my own death, I shall accept it whenever Zeus and the other immortal gods desire to bring it about' (22.365–6). Hector, despite the brief moment of realism in Book 6, still believes he can win, and only at the very end recognizes that the gods have tricked him: death is inevitable. Achilles, who sought to impose his own will on the gods, finds that his prayers once fulfilled bring him only unhappiness, and accepts death with open eyes (18.98–9, 22.365–6 ~ 18.115–6), without fear though not without bitterness.[102]

Achilles is also a greater hero than Hector, and a more intriguing figure than any of the other heroes, because of his powers as a speaker.[103] This goes beyond formal oratory, of which Odysseus is a master, to a more eloquent style and a broader vision of the world. Recent work has established that Achilles, particularly in major speeches such as those in Books 9, 16, and 18, uses a highly individual style which transcends the usual vocabulary, idioms, and formulae of Homeric speakers.[104] His speeches are enriched by hyperbolic expressions, exotic place-names, violence which

[101] See further my remarks in R. B. Rutherford 1982: 157–8, and context.
[102] Schadewaldt 1965: 234–67 (translated as Schadewaldt 1997b); Griffin 1980: 163–4.
[103] On Homeric rhetoric, see Lohmann 1970; Latacz 1974; R. B. Rutherford 1992: 58–69.
[104] The essential discussion is by Griffin 1986, developed in 1995; some criticism in Kirk 1990: 28–35. See also Lohmann 1970, esp. 236–45 on Book 9; Martin 1989, important though vulnerable in some details.

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can become tenderness; he also uses similes more abundantly than any other character. These observations reinforce the sense that Achilles is an exceptional hero, not only in his prowess as a warrior but in the extent of his demands, the intensity with which he pursues them, and the magnitude of his self-esteem. The depth of his emotional commitment to Patroclus also seems to go beyond the norms of heroic comradeship, illustrated in more conventional form by the alliance of Idomeneus and Meriones: notoriously, later Greek readers assumed that the two men were lovers.[105] That such a tradition was known to Homer is conceivable, but there is no suggestion of it in the poem. It is notable that in Book 9 Achilles and Patroclus retire to bed not together but each with a separate slave-girl (9.664–8).

The eloquence of the speech in Book 9 in which Achilles rejects Odysseus' overtures and expresses his own dilemma has led to a wide range of interpretations. In one view, Achilles is violating the 'heroic code'; in another, he questions its very foundations; or is it that the conventions and assumptions of his world cannot cope with a hero who goes as far as he does?[106] Certainly the embassy, and perhaps even Patroclus himself, find it hard to understand him. Without insisting on an over-rigid definition of 'normal' heroic behaviour, we can at least agree that Achilles sees more clearly and, more importantly, feels more intensely and expresses himself more powerfully than other characters in the poem. He proclaims his disillusionment with the war and with his destiny, without having an alternative to put in its place. In the superb speech in which he responds to Patroclus' appeal, we see him shift from annoyance to anger, resignation to concession, renewed vindictiveness to sympathetic concern, culminating in the impossible wish that all others should perish, leaving him and Patroclus to sack Troy together: throughout this speech there is the same passionate intensity, but he is no longer certain how he wishes to direct his energy. Once he learns of his friend's death in battle, there is no more room for restraint or indecision, and again his

[105] Aeschylus' *Myrmidons* seems to have been particularly important: see frr. 134–7 Radt, with Dover 1978: 196–201; Halperin 1990: 75–87; M. W. Edwards 1991 on 18.82. Even the favour shown by Zeus to Ganymede is treated in asexual terms in the *Iliad*, despite reference to the young man's beauty (5.266; 20.232–5). Davidson 2007: 255–60, insists that the Achilles–Patroclus relationship is erotic already in Homer, with much polemic but no new arguments.

[106] A. Parry 1956 was seminal in this discussion. For specific criticism see Reeve 1973; Lynn-George 1988: ch. 2 (esp. 93–101); and for development see e.g. Redfield 1975: 3–23, 103–6; M. W. Edwards 1987a: 231–6; Martin 1989: ch. 4.

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determination to fight, to avenge, and to die is expressed in a series of powerful speeches (esp. 18.79–93, 98–126, 324–42; 19.315–57). As in the embassy book, so in the scene in which the hero is 'reconciled' with Agamemnon, it is clear that the other Greek leaders do not fully understand Achilles, who can hardly be restrained from entering battle immediately: they want everything to be as it was before, whereas he is impatient with their talk of gifts and food.[107] Once he has returned to the conflict, the certainty of his own death adds a further note of cruelty to his voice, as most unforgettably in the speech to the ill-fated Lycaon (21.99–113, cf. 122–35). Although Book 9 has been the focus of most discussion of Achilles since the landmark article of Adam Parry, my own inclination would be to attach still more importance to Book 24. There, and particularly in the dialogue with Priam, the motifs of impending death and exhaustion with the war recur (540–2), but passion and egotism give way to generosity and resignation, in a sublime expression of the human situation (522–40). The original quarrel had turned Achilles against Agamemnon and all his comrades. His new wrath following the death of Patroclus brought him back to fight against the enemy with far greater fury than before. In the last book of the *Iliad*, he comes to recognize that even an enemy may deserve compassion and respect. This is both heroism and humanity.[108]

[107] Edwards' commentary (M. W. Edwards 1991) is invaluable on Book 19, which earlier treatments often underrated; also helpful is Taplin 1992: 203–18. On the importance of feasting together, see Griffin 1980: 14–21, an excellent section; van Wees 1992b: 44–7.

[108] For a different approach see Seaford 1994: 159–80, who lays much emphasis on the importance of ritual in re-integrating Achilles into the community.

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