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Identities of Armor: The Function of Armor in Homer's Iliad

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Identities of Bronze: The Function of Armor in Homer's Iliad

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by

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To my family, Mary, Mitch, and Athena, who gave me the opportunity to study whatever my heart desired and supported me through it all.

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Introduction

Early in Homer's *Iliad,* the poet gives an epic simile to suggest the visual glamor of the armor the warriors are wearing:

> As when obliterating fire rages through an immense forest
> on the mountain height, and from afar the flare shows forth,
> so the gleam of the sublime bronze of marching men
> glinting through the clear sky reached heaven.
>
> (2.455-458)

And yet the dangerous beauty of the armor the men have donned can distract us from the most important function of armor as a tool of war, which is to protect the body within it. The bronze equipment that every man wears into battle covers all vital parts of the body, shielding the flesh and vital organs from danger. But as the simile suggests, Homer's interest in armor extends beyond its purely practical function. The importance of the armor is signaled by the frequency with which armor appears as an element of many epithets. A frequent stock epithet for the Achaeans is "well-greaved," used twenty eight times; so too the equally common "bronze-clad Achaeans." The epithets both describe the visual markings of the Achaeans and symbolize the importance of warfare in Achaean culture. The Achaeans are dressed in these shining hard shells of bronze armor and are shown to be well equipped and prepared for battle with these epithets. Homer builds the visual world of his epic with epithets and similes that keep armor very much before the eyes of his audience

These small and early references to the visual qualities of the armor and how it appears in the world of the Iliad draws our attention, in turn, to larger issues: for what these warriors are

wearing and how they appear throughout the epic turns out to be deeply connected to their identities overall. The presence of armor in the epic's narrative only becomes more pronounced and notable as Homer's tale goes on, and with this, its importance to the central narrative and characters increases. Arming sequences, for instance, occur throughout the epic, depicting central characters such as Agamemnon and Achilles donning their armor in great detail. These moments of arming are dramatic—indeed, practically cinematic in their description of a hero donning the finely wrought and intricate designed armor, covering all parts of the body in shining bronze. The arming sequence informs us of what these men look like on the battlefield, how they dressed themselves for the dangerous and heroic moments of warfare. (This motif of a character donning armor is so common, useful, and integral to the poem's narrative and creation of its visual world, that Homer even riffs on the sequence and plays around with its form by using it for moments where characters dress themselves in garments other than armor, such as in Book 14 during Hera's seduction of Zeus, a passage I shall examine in detail). We will see characters put on and take off armor, robes, and animal pelts throughout the story as a means to accomplish their mission, whether it be an act of heroism, or a moment of deception. And of course, along with the grand moments of characters donning their armor, comes the inversely brutal act of characters stripping a dead body of its armor as a reward and symbol of their glory. Pieces of armor frequently take on the role of defining the wearer both in the small forms of epithets and similes, but through arming sequences and long ekphrastic descriptions of pieces of armor, such as the famous shield of Achilles, armor takes a leading role in the poem's narrative and form.

But armor has more complex functions in the *Iliad*. One sequence that pops up every so often is the exchanging of armor from one man to another. These exchanges come and seemingly

enact a moment of pause from the action of the poem, and in them we witness a moment of peaceful offering. The armor is transformed from a tool of war to an object of sentimentality. There are major exchanges of armor, such as the one between the Trojan Glaucus and the Achaean Diomedes, that reveal to us customary forms of *xenia*, the rules and limits of war, and reveal aspects of both parties in the exchange. A part of what makes a piece of armor so valuable beyond the material it is made from, is the history of the object's past owners and how it has been passed down from wearer to wearer. What this allows, is for both the owner of the armor and the armor itself to carry the legacy of past wearers and the glory they gained with their armor. The exchanges of armor open up a custom within the epic, a broader form of exchange where objects, status, and bodies are offered up with monumental stakes.

Armor allows the audience to visualize the world of Iliad and its characters, revealing aspects of their identity by what they wear. But within this ability to reveal is the ironic element of armor covering and obscuring the person underneath it. The physical body is protected, but hidden underneath the armor, unable to be seen and recognized by their natural features. This aspect of armor is brought to a realm of deception when it is used to disguise. The act of disguise becomes more and more prominent as the poem goes on, first told in the stories of Nestor in Book 7, to the deceitful actions of Odysseus and Diomedes in Books 10, and culminating in the continuous swapping and wearing of Achilles' armor throughout Books 16 to 22. Disguise is the most extreme and taboo usage of armor, as it offers little reward for the danger that comes with disguising yourself as another person. With disguise, armor's ability to define, in a sense, also contains the ability to redefine the wearer. The identity of the person disguised in the armor of another is obscured by the identity of another, which, through their ability to act and assume the

identity contained in the armor, puts their own identity to the test of living up to the legacy and ability of who they disguise themselves as.

In this thesis, I will examine the three major functions of armor in the *Iliad*. In Chapter 1, I will discuss the uses of armor to define a character's identity, revealing aspects of character and their motivations in moments of glory, redemption, and deception. In Chapter 2, I look at three tightly grouped scenes of exchanges of armor in Books 6 and 7, unpacking how the exchange of armor also works to reveal certain aspects of the characters involved in the exchange and the societal customs of *Xenia* that are explored within them. At the end of this chapter, I expands the findings from my examination of how the exchange of armor functions in this epic, using those insights to explore major scenes of "exchange" more generally as they function in the epic, notably the exchanges of bodies with which the *Iliad* begins, and ends with. In the final chapter I analyze the use of armor as a disguise, notably the scenes in the latter half of the epic in which first Patroclus and then Hector don Achilles' armor, with fatal results. All three chapters, I hope, will show the vital role of armor in the epic, not just as an extraneous element but as deeply embedded in the epic's treatment of bodies, life, and death.

Chapter 1

The Arming of Agamemnon

Throughout the *Iliad*, Homer gives long descriptive scenes of warriors arming themselves for a battle. Though we rarely get a description of what these men naturally look like, these moments help the audience understand how to visually conceptualize these characters as soldiers and the action within the battle sequences. And though the donning of armor may appear as just preparation for war, the explicit details that Homer gives about a character's armor reflect aspects of the characters strength, status, and state of mind. One of the longest arming scenes is given to Agamemnon in Book 11 right before his entrance onto the battlefield. The style and form of the description is standard, following in a pattern laid out in previous moments such as in Book 3, in which Paris arms himself before his second duel with Menelaos[1]. These arming sequences commonly initiate a character's aristeia as it shows a preliminary form of greatness and glory through the armor's intensity of beauty. Much of what makes Agamemnon's arming sequence so impactful is how it acts as a visual representation for his character's redemption arc. Though he is the leader of the Achaean army, his actions in the beginning of the story have had major consequences for the events of the story. From the very beginning of the epic Agamemnon has been an adversarial force to Achilles and his own Achaean army. The anger and pride which led Agamemnon to take Briseis and dishonor Achilles then sets off the rage which pulls Achilles out of battle and threatens the lives of all his men and the entire campaign of the war. Agamemnon is

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[1] Book 3.330-337. The stylistic and poetic similarities between Agamemnon and Paris' arming scene, as well as other prominent arming sequences in the epic is discussed by James I. Armstrong.
Armstrong, James I. "The Arming Motif in the Iliad." *The American Journal of Philology*, vol. 79, no. 4, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1958, pp. 337–54, https://doi.org/10.2307/292347.

depicted as a selfish and arrogant ruler whose actions consistently go against the thinking and well being of his men. For more than half of the epic he is an antagonistic force in the story who is not easily sympathized with, and thus, Homer begins his redemption arc. Agamemnon's appeal to Achilles in Book 9 is the failed attempt at redeeming himself by trying to literally pay for his actions and consequences. This leads Agamemnon, for the first time in the *Iliad*, to don his armor and join the fight. Homer lists and shows the armor being put onto Agamemnon's body from feet to head, marking the ascension of importance and glamor of the armor as well as the metaphorical ascension of Agamemnon's character during this critical moment of redemption.

> First he strapped the splendid greaves around his shins,
> fitted with silver bindings around his ankles;
> next he girt about his chest a breastplate,
> which in time before Kinyras gave him to be a guest friend,
> for the great rumor had been heard in Cyprus that the Achaeans
> were about to sail out in their ships to Troy;
> for this reason Kinyras gave it to him, seeking favor with the king.
> And on it were ten bands of dark enameled blue,
> twelve of gold and twenty bands of tin;
> snakes of blue enamel reared toward his throat,
> three on either side, like bands of a rainbow that the son of Cronus
> has propped upon a cloud, a portent in the eyes of mortal men.
> And over his shoulders he slung his sword; and on it glittered
> studs of gold, and the scabbard round was
> silver, fitted with straps of gold.

Then he took up his man-surrounding, much emblazoned forceful shield,
a thing of beauty, around which ran ten rings of bronze,
and on it twenty pale-shining disks of tin,
and in the very center was one of dark enameled blue.
And crowning this a snake-bristling Gorgon face
stared out with dreadful glare, Terror and Rout about her;
and the shields baldric was silver, and on it
a blue-dark serpent writhed, with three heads
turned in all directions, growing from a single neck.
Then on his head he placed his helmet, ridged on both sides, with four
bosses,
Plumed with horsehair; and the crest nodded terribly above.
He took two strong spears, tipped in bronze,
and sharp; and the bronze flashed far from him into heaven;
and in response Hera and Athena cried out,
giving honor to the king of gold-great Mycenae[2].

(11.15-45)

The layers of intricate design on Agamemnon's armor as well as the historical significance of certain parts of his armor show his power and importance to the poem's own hierarchy of power. The castings of shiny bronze and silver throughout every single piece of the armor are reflective of his status as all of his armor including the strap that holds his shield and the sheath for his sword are coated in precious metals. The blue enameled details and designs are used to show the king's wealth but also his individuality and separation from the other soldiers as

[2] Homer, translation by Caroline Alexander. *The Iliad*. Ecco Press, 2016.

the blue dye and coating is reserved for Agamemnon's armor and no one else's. Agamemnon's breastplate contains forty two bands ranging in materials of enameled blue, gold, and tin connecting both rarity and value to the added layer of quantity to define his greatness. Quantity is emphasized again on Agamemnon's armor when his shield is described as having thirty layers of bronze, tin, and a final layer of blue enamel.

The Gorgon and snakes surrounding Agamemnon's armor are embedded with the integral feature of armor needing to intimidate and strike fear into the enemies seeing it. The Gorgons face is a clear symbol of destruction and doom as well as it being surrounded by the gods Terror and Rout, striking an even more intense warning. Snakes are a significant animal to have coating Agamemnon's armor due to their power as omens and portents from the gods. This is referenced in the simile that Homer uses to describe the snakes on Agamemnon's chest, "like bands of a rainbow that the son of Cronus / has propped upon a cloud, a portent in the eyes of mortal men." This connection to the portents of rainbows being made by Zeus works to remind us of how snakes are used as portents themselves. In Book 2.301-332, just after Agamemnon has declared that he will be leaving Troy and ending their campaign, the omen of a snake devouring a family of nine birds and then being turned to stone by Zeus is witnessed by Agamemnon and the Achaeans. This omen sways both the Achaeans and stubborn Agamemnon into staying and continuing the war against Troy. The snakes which brought Agamemnon back into the battle mentally, now adorn his armor and weapons just as we see him about to reenter the fight physically. Agamemnon's armor is able to display his identity through aspects of his recent past, as well as reflecting through its beautiful decorations, the changes of his character brought on by his actions.

The breastplate which Agamemnon is given by Kinyras brings the audience back to the beginning of the story and reminds us of the stakes and reasons for the battle that is about to take place, as well as the honorable act of Agamemnon to launch this campaign after his brother had been wronged by Paris. This is a choice by Homer to show us what Agamemnon stands for and the type of leader and brother he is. It connects the multiple and historical identities that his character possesses and allows them to be expressed visually on the armor, which Homer uses as a vehicle to include deeper layers of storytelling and characteristic into his characters. Agamemnon's armor is able to express an identity which encapsulates his character from both his turbulent past and his glorious near future.

Arming scenes like these, therefore, not only show us what a character looks like with their armor on but also hints at their individual and complex identities. Such arming scenes in the *Iliad* are a common motif that Homer uses for many of the major characters in the story and even some lesser ones. The formula becomes standard as it is used to describe the armor and weapons of a character we are familiar with. Odysseus (10.260-271), Patroclus (16.129-139), and Achilles (19.369-383) all have comparable scenes of arming themselves for battle. The importance of such arming scenes is revealed by the fact that even non-warrior characters get similar scenes—scenes in which Homer seems to be playing with variations of this arming theme.

Arming to Deceive: Hera's Beautification

Take for instance the long scene of Book 14 in which Hera seduces Zeus. Hera's beautification is nearly twenty lines long and depicts her anointing herself with potions and cloths which enhance her physical features. Hera's physical appearance is heightened in every

aspect as she cleans and lathers her body in oils and perfumes to shine and scent her skin. Her "impurities" are washed away so that Zeus sees nothing wrong or deceitful about his wife's actions.

> Then first with ambrosia she cleansed from her lovely body
> all impurities, and anointed herself with lush oil,
> ambrosial sweet, which she had been scented for her;
> and when it was stirred, the fragrant breath all through the bronze-
> floored house of Zeus
> spread alike to earth and heaven.
> Then having anointed her beautiful skin and hair with this,
> and combed it, with her hands she braided the shining
> beautiful, ambrosial locks flowing from her immortal head.
> And she put about her an ambrosial robe that Athena
> had brushed smooth and skillfully finished for her, and set on it many
> intricate decorations;
> and with golden broaches she fastened this across her breast;
> and she girded herself about with a belt fitted with a hundred tassels;
> then in her carefully pierced ears she placed earrings,
> with three drops, like mulberries, and their rich beauty shone forth;
> shining among goddesses she covered herself above with a flowing
> headdress
> fresh and fine—white shining like the sun;
> and beneath her smooth feet she bound her splendid sandals.

(14.170-187)

Once again we are seeing a connection between the quality, quantity, and historical significance of the clothing and armor that a character wears to the identity of that character. Hera is such a significant character in the poem as she is a savior of the Achaeans, the queen of the gods of Olympus, and wife to Zeus himself, and is thus given such a long scene to fully show how her physical appearance matches her greatness as a goddess. Armor and the clothing of battle can be viewed not just as a covering of the body but as an enhancement of the physical appearance of the wearer to its ideal state. The accented parts of the armor which replicate parts of the body such as the chest and abdominal muscles are made to look bigger and stronger than the actual physique of the person underneath it. The helmets are made to cover the face and hair and replace it with a towering main and shining metal so as to show dominance and strike fear into the enemy. But where armor is typically used to show the ideal state of the male physique and character, Hera's beautification shows an enhanced state of physical beauty and a heightened intellect for women.

The act of bathing is done not just to clean and freshen up her skin but works to erase any past actions that Hera committed against Zeus during the many times she disobeys and clashes with him. Through the bathing she is able to enter the seductive encounter with her husband without him being reminded of all her past deceptions. The robe that she puts on contains the divine material of ambrosia, but its significance, just as Agamemnon's breastplate was given to him by another king, comes from the fact that it was made for and given to her by Athena, the goddess of weaving and warfare. Here, the robe is crafted also by another goddess of significant importance to the story and one who is on the same side as Hera as Athena also backs the

Achaeans in the war. The belt she wraps around her chest is decorated with a hundred tassels which again shows the importance of quantity on an object and how it defines status. The shining quality of her earrings and headdress is seen in the armor of men such as Hector and Achilles and reminds us of the visual element that armor plays in warfare as the acts of greatness in battle must be seen in order to be remembered. Hera is shining with beauty like the sun, a beauty so bright that it can blind Zeus from her trickery. Hera's clothes and jewelry allow us to see the goddess at the height of both her beauty and intellect, defining her character for not just this moment, but throughout the entire poem. This is made even more clear to us through the composition of the scene as the sequence moves from the top of Hera's body to the bottom, beginning with her putting on fragrant perfumes and potions around head, and ends with her putting sandals on her feet. Inversely, Agamemnon's arming sequence reads from the bottom to top which mirrors his redemptive rise from an antagonist to an honorable leader. Here, Hera is shown getting ready for a deceptive mission which ultimately lowers and morphs our understanding of her as a goddess, since she is committing something so deceitful. The scene is given an ironic tinge as we are seeing an enhancement and elevation of the physical and cunning features of Hera's character, while also witnessing a lowering of her character through her deceitful actions.

A Desperate Night: The Doloneia and the Armor of The Hunt

Throughout the many arming scenes in the *Iliad*, the armor that is put on is not only required for the particular moment of battle, but the armor also matches the wearer's inner feelings and desires. The armor morphs to become not just a symbol of the character but of the

character's current state of being, and is thus able to illustrate moments of glory, despair, or desperation through a visual and deeper textual level. These armors are made of not just metal, but with words, and it is clear that Homer is using tools of warfare such as armor, weapons, and shields to reveal and emphasize the intensity of each isolated moment in the poem.

During the Doloneia in Book 10 we see the Achaean forces at their most desperate and depleted. The war has turned against them and the possibility of defeat has never been greater. Along with the change in the tide of the war, the scene also changes the plain which our characters fight in by setting it under the darkness of night. The night is usually a respected time of sleep and rest, a time when the fighting and labor of the day stops and everyone goes back to their shelters. But that connection between the act of sleeping at night to the nature of war and civilization has dissipated during this book as we turn to a more archaic and desperate time. Trickery and deception become the new order of war, and just as the tactics of war shift for the Achaeans, so does their armor and appearance. The main example of this change is shown through the armor of Odysseus, Diomedes and the Trojan soldier Dolon. They Achaeans choose to lead an expedition into the enemy camp under the veil of night to gain information on the location of the enemy camp and to steal supplies such as war gear and horses. Odysseus and Diomedes are given armor which contrasts with the armor we see throughout the epic. The flashy, loud, and distinctly human appearance of the bronze armor that they wear during the day is replaced with animal skins and leathers which hide their figures in the darkness.

So speaking the two stepped into their dread armor.
And to the son of Tydeus steadfast Thrasymedes gave

a double-edged sword (his own was left beside his ship)
and shield; and round Diomedes' head he placed his bull-hide
helmet, without ridge or plume, which is called a
skull cap, and guards the head of hot-blooded young men.

(10.255-260)

Diomedes is given these pieces of armor for his mission in a way that separates his character from the gear. His sword, shield, and helmet are all not his own, nor are they meant to be related to his identity as a warrior. As the case of Hector reminds us, one of the most important and most easily identifiable pieces of armor is the helmet which here is stripped of all glorious elements. With no large ridge and plume and no decoration, the skull cap is armor at its most elemental form as it covers the skull simply for the purpose of protection. It is also fitting that the skull cap is given to Diomedes as it says that these helmets are used to guard the heads of "hot blooded young men" which connects to Diomedes as he is the youngest and most hot blooded warrior of the Achaeans. Diomedes' armor is given to him for the purpose of holding the fiery and flashy personality that was shown during his aristeia in Book 5, and turning him into a soldier of stealth. Odysseus' armor has not only more interesting stylistic changes but also some deeper connections to his identity.

And to Odysseus Meriones gave quiver, bow
and sword; and round his head he placed his helmet
made of hide, stretched tight inside with many
thongs, while outside the white-shining teeth
of a bright-tusked boar ran close-set round and round,

well and skillfully applied, and felt was fitted in the center;
this in time before Autolykos had carried out of Eleon,
after breaking into the snug house of Amyntor son of Ormenos,
and Autolykos then gave it to Amphidamas of Cythera to take to Skandeia,
and Amphidamas gave it to Molos as a guest-gift,
and he gave it to his son Meriones to carry with him.
And now it was put around and protected Odysseus' head.

(10.260-271)

Odysseus is given a leather hide helmet like Diomedes but this one is decorated with rows and rows of white boar tusks. Any connection between Odysseus and boars should remind us of the revelation of Odysseus's identity in Book 19 of the *Odyssey,* when Eurykleia recognizes the scar he received during a hunt[3]. In the story Odysseus is sent on a hunt and wounded by a boar's tusk, which is told to us directly after we learn the story of Odysseus' name. The boar teeth that now decorate his new helmet allows a key part of his identity to be expressed while highlighting that we are seeing a change of customs from that of the warrior to those of the hunter. This adds to the underlying sense that we are seeing a reversal of customs and age brought on by the desperation of the moment.

This desperation has led them to commit a treacherous act by breaking the rules of war—a violation that is implicit in the representation of the helmet as a stolen object. The history of the helmet is one of thievery and fraudulent kindness, since Amphidamas had obtained the helmet by breaking into the house of another man and stealing it. The helmet is then passed down as an act

[3] Odyssey, 14.511-531.

of kindness in the name of friendship as the stolen object is placed in different hands and heads. This story prepares us, so to speak, for the act that Odysseus is about to commit when he sneaks into the enemy camp and steals the Trojan horses. Though the taking of armor in battle is considered a normal part of warfare, taking property from someone's house and then passing it down to others was clearly a dishonorable act. (We will see an even greater dishonorable act be committed by Odysseus and Diomedes when they lie to Dolon by saying they will spare him, and after gaining valuable information, the two end up brutally murdering him.) The soldiers are now preparing for a hunt in which one must stay quiet and unseen to take down their prey, while also preparing for the possibility of going against a dangerous predator. This becomes clear when we meet Dolon who takes on the role of the prey for the Achaean hunters.

Dolon is given the most animalistic set of armor which we can easily connect to his behaviors in this scene. But Dolon is not the only character during this book that dons the skins of predatory animals. In the beginning of Book 10, Agamemnon is the first to wake from his sleep, anxious and terrified at the existential threat they are facing. He gets up to go to Nestor for advice on what to do, and as he prepares he puts on, “the tawny skin of a gleaming / huge lion that reached to his feet, and took up his spear” (10. 23-24). The lion's skin which covers Agamemnon's entire body represents his role as the leader of the Achaean forces in the same way that his armor defines him in Book 11. The strength and ferocity of a lion is paired with Agamemnon’s own strength and leadership status that defines both man and beast. After Agamemnon puts on his lion skin we see his brother Menelaos wake up and he similarly, “covered his broad back with a dappled / leopard skin;” (10. 29). The leopard is fitting of Menelaos as it is an animal that is strong but still lesser than the lion which has more courage

and strength. Menelaos is close to his brother in strength but lacks the status and aggression of his older brother to lead the Achaeans. Dolon's fur is put on with a mixed reasons, as he needs armor that is suited for a secretive night mission, as well as personifying the nocturnal animals that his armor comes from.

> At once Dolon cast across his shoulders his curved bow,
> and put about him as an outer cover a gray wolf hide,
> and on his head a cap of weasel skin and took his sharp throwing-spear.
>
> (10.333-335)

Dolon's pelts allow the reader to see Dolon not as a man but as an animal of the night. The choice of skins are deliberate as both the wolf and the weasel highlight two separate parts of who Dolon is. The nocturnal wolf that drapes over his back hides his human form. The fearsome wolf is the animal that Dolon believes himself to be; a lone wolf stalking for prey and prizes at night, ready to take on whatever he may find in the dark. But in Dolon's actions he is more like the weasel he puts on his head. Replacing a shining helmet or a hunter's tight skull cap is a weasel fur. Weasels are notoriously finicky creatures who squirm and flee at the first sense of danger. With Diomedes and Odysseus taking the role of the human hunters and Dolon dressing as their animal prey, the book takes its final change from a proper battle to that of a wild hunt.

Diomedes and Odysseus plan to trap their prey between themselves and the Achaean tents. 'Let us allow him first to pass by us out upon the plain / a little away, then rushing him we could grab him / quickly. And if he should get ahead of us with speed of feet, / keep driving him toward the ships away from his army, / rushing at him with your spear, that he not somehow escape to the city' (10. 341-348). The armor of Diomedes and Odysseus now clearly shows its

origins as being old hunting armor repurposed for this expedition in the dark. The leather caps and boar teeth would be no match in a battle between men with bronze weapons, but are perfect tools for hiding in the trees and bushes of the forest while one is hunting an animal. Dolon's response to the attack is also fitting of a pack animal such as a wolf, for when he hears the pounding feat of men he thinks, "that comrades were coming from the Trojans to turn him back, Hector having summoned him / again" (10.357). He hopes that he may be relieved of this mission that he agreed to only moments ago and that his allies will come to bring him home. But once Dolon understands that he is trapped he is, "stopped in terror / jabbering—the clattering of teeth came from his mouth— / green with fear" (10.374-376). Dolon is shown as a rather helpless and frightened man whose reactions turn only more cowardly when he is seized by the hunters as his plea to be spared shows a weasel like fear.

> "Take me alive, and I will redeem myself; for in my home is
> bronze and gold and well-worked iron,
> and from this my father would freely give you untold ransom,
> were he to learn that I was alive by the ships of the Achaeans."
>
> (10. 378-381)

Dolon immediately tries to save his own life with his request to be captured and ransomed back home. The low and desperate point in the war which brought these men to this critical moment is expressly shown in Dolon's actions during his capture. Dolon's desperation turns to a complete collapse of his loyalty, wits, and his own life as he is tricked by Odysseus and Diomedes into revealing the location of the Trojan men and their spoils. Odysseus lures Dolon into a sense of safety assuring him that he has nothing to fear from the two hunters: "Take

courage, let no thought of death be on your heart" (10.383). This leads Dolon to let his guard down enough to reveal his identity both as a Trojan spy. He then gives up the exact location of the Trojan tents and their horses too Odysseus and Diomedes, allowing the hunters to turn their expedition into a slaughtering raid[4]. After he weasels out his fellow Trojans, Dolon expects to be released but is instead met with trickery and cruelty. "Then looking from beneath his brows powerful Diomedes addressed him: / 'Do not before me, Dolon, make dreams of escape, / excellent though your news be, seeing that you have come into our hands'" (10.445-449). Diomedes explains that they never had any intention of releasing the spy and have deceived him into giving up valuable information. Before Dolon can react with charming words, "Diomedes struck the middle of his neck, / flashing out with his sword, and cut through both tendons, / and the head of the man as he was speaking was jumbled in the dust. / Then they took from his head the cap of weasel skin, / and his wolfhide and back-curved bow and his long spear" (10.455-459). This cruelty is only extended through Diomedes and Odysseus' slaughter of sleeping Trojans and the stealing of horses and gear. We witness a moment of savagery and immoral warfare from the Achaeans which we have rarely seen in the epic. The Achaeans' desperation has pushed them back into an older and more primitive form of fighting, one that is based around hunting and lacking the rules or form of standard ancient battle. Though commonly considered a parody of epic form and style, Book 10 is rather a sinister and anxious section of the epic veiled in darkness and horror. The connection between the appearance of the men seems to be a highly conscious choice to show the lengths with which these men have been and will

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[4] 10. 482-497: "Athena breathed strength into Diomedes / and he began to kill, turning this side and that; and abject groaning rose / from the men / struck by his sword, and the ground was made red with blood…"

change under the pressure of war. The book ends with a rather fascinating scene that highlights how the armor and the actions of this book represents a change of identity in these men, for the first thing Diomedes and Odysseus do when they return to their camp is take a long cleansing bath.

> And on his ship's stern Odysseus laid Dolon's bloodstained war-gear,
> until they could prepare their dedication to Athena.
> They themselves wading into the sea washed away the copious sweat
> from their shins and neck and thighs.
> And when the sea's swell had washed the dense sweat
> from their skin, and their very spirits were refreshed,
> then stepping into well-polished baths they bathed;
> and when both had been bathed and anointed luxuriantly with oil,
> they sat down to a feast, and drawing from the full mixing bowl
> they poured libation of honey-sweet wine to Athena.
>
> (10. 570-578)

The final moments of the book seem to be working to bring back the men to the realm of their civilized humanity and out of the primitive and animalistic forms they just possessed. Odysseus has taken the spoils of Dolon back to his ship and lays them out like a hunter stretching out the skins of his prey to dry in the sun, repeating the actions that already were taken to turn those skins into hides. The men first take a bath in the ocean, allowing the natural world to clean them just as men of older times and animals do. They then go and clean themselves in proper baths with fresh water and oils, in similar fashion to the cleansing of Hera, as the men wash away not just the filth and blood from them but wash away the evil deeds they have just committed.

They transform before us back into the soldiers we are accustomed to seeing. Their spirits are refreshed and awakened from the tiresome mission and from its transformation from cruelty to normalcy. They end with invoking two of the most human acts that we see throughout the epic by sitting down to eat a meal as civilized men and pour a libation to their goddess, reconnecting their acts with their religion and societal customs.

The Stripping of Armor

The ending of the Doloneia offers us another important aspect of armor and an integral part of the arming sequence, that being the act of disarming. The removal of a character in the *Iliad* is most commonly done by force and usually following the death of a character. The stripping of armor in epic is an integral aspect of ancient warfare as well as giving new significance to armor as an object with honorary importance and material value. Just as we have seen in Book 10, there are countless times where we witness two warriors fighting on the battlefield, and once one has killed the other, the victor goes to strip the armor of the soldier they have defeated. The soldier who obtains the armor then has a record of his victory over the man he killed and a mark of his time and efforts during the course of war. Agamemnon and Achilles are characters who are attributed with having amassed mountains of gear and spoils from warfare as they are both strong warriors who have killed many men, as well as being given many gifts due to their high ranking positions as leaders of men. Their status and ability allows them to collect more gear than others which leads to the gear becoming a symbol of their greatness. However, there is danger in stripping armor as many men are killed in the process of claiming

their prize[5]. There is a vulnerability that comes from the stripping of armor as well as a shift in the value of the body that has been killed and stripped. Once the armor is removed from the corpse, the body is just a body, in some cases damaged to a point of unintelligibility and is vulnerable to being stomped and forgotten if not recovered quickly. There is a nakedness and an added sense of unmanliness that arises when the body is stripped on the battlefield as it allows for the men to be seen by others without their armor on.

Major moments of this collocation of stripping and nakedness can be found in the scenes following the deaths of both Patroclus and Hector. After Patroclus is killed by Hector[6], his body is stripped and becomes the center of a pitched battle between the Achaeans and the Trojans over his dead corpse. The reclaiming of the body is crucial for the Achaeans so that they may honor him with a funeral. His body loses its power and his identity is almost obscured by the way he is handled as an object and prize to be taken. Similarly, Hector's body is mutilated by Achilles in the cruelest ways imaginable. Achilles hooks the ankles of Hector's corpse to his chariot and drags the body behind him after he and the Achaean troops have already repeatedly stabbed Hector's lifeless flesh. The body is totally disgraced and destroyed as Achilles channels his rage onto Hector's body, seemingly trying to strip his body of its physical features by mangling his head and body.

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[5] *Iliad* 4.457-468: “But his haste was short lived. / For great-hearted Agenor, seeing him dragging the dead man, / thrust at his ribs, which showed forth beneath his shield as he bent over, / with his bronze headed spear, and unstrung his limbs.”
Odyssey 22.95-98: “Telémakhos sprang back up, leaving his long-shadowed spear / right inside Amphínomos, for he was terrified: what if / some Achaean came out of nowhere and ran him through with a sword / as he pulled on the long-shadowed spear, or struck him down as he stooped there?”

[6] Book 16.818-823

The stripping of armor is one of the only recurring moments in the *Iliad* where we and the other characters within the story are able to see the faces and figures of the men they are fighting alongside and of those they are fighting against. Because stripping happens so often this is probably the largest and most common way nakedness is allowed to be seen and expressed beyond direct moments of disarming and larger intentional moments when characters take their armor off such as in Book 3[7].

Hector And His Shimmering Helm: The Limits of Armor

One of the most famous epithets in the *Iliad* refers to a piece of armor that both describes and defines its owner. During the lengthy Catalog of Ships in Book 2, Homer begins his list of Trojan fighters by naming Hector for the first time with his stock epithet.

> Great Hector of the shimmering helm was leader of the Trojans
> Priam's son; with him by far the most numerous and best
> troops were mustered, at the ready with their spears
>
> (2.816-818).

This is the first time that Hector is referred to by means of his epithet, "Hector of the shimmering helm." Hector's shining helmet first and foremost describes his physical appearance, showing how Hector appears to his allies and his enemies on the battlefield. We can envision Hector's appearance through this epithet as well as his role as a soldier fighting in the Trojan War to save his people, his family, and his city from destruction. The most prominent identity that the

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[7] 3. 113-115: "And they reined the chariots into line, and themselves descended / and took off their armor, and placed it on the ground / close together, and there was little earth left between." A striking moment when the image made by disarming because of the possibility of peace mirrors how armored bodies cover the battlefield in times of war.

male characters in the Iliad contain is that of the warrior. Hector's stock epithet is the strongest representation in the poem of the heroic soldier's identity being represented by his armor. His ability to fight, lead, and protect his city are aspects of his warrior identity and thus the armor becomes an expression of this particular aspect of his life. Hector is Troy's last chance at survival, their last shimmer of hope as he is the only character in the Trojan ranks that can stand up against the feared Achilles. Just as the shining helmet covers and shadows his physical face in order to protect him and brings forth a more menacing and ferocious appearance, it also hides away other aspects of his identity that can not be expressed on the battlefield.

As with the arming scenes, Homer finds ways to vary the armor-stripping scene, with all its meaningful implications. One of the most famous, meaningful, and beautiful scenes in which a character's armor comes off occurs in Book 6 during Hector's meeting with his wife Andromache. Atop the walls of Troy, Hector finds his wife looking out onto the battlefield searching for her husband with their son Astyanax. Hector approaches his wife and child dressed in his full suit of armor as she pleads with him to fight closer to the walls so that he may be safer and be closer to her and their child. Hector refuses his wife but reassures her that his priority is always the safety of his wife and child and that he must go fight, knowing that he ultimately will have to sacrifice his life for the sake of his family and city. Hector's response to Andromache is a moment of revelation for the audience as we see Hector at his most emotionally honest and vulnerable. The scene works to build our sympathies for Hector and acts to define his character as a much more complex antagonist who we can find ourselves rooting for throughout the story. The ending of this moment heightens that sense of revelation in the scene by having Hector take off his helmet and reveal his face.

Shining Hector reached out for his son;
but the child turned away, back to the breast of his fair-belted nurse,
crying, frightened at the sight of his own father,
struck with terror seeing the bronze helmet and crest of horsehair,
nodding dreadfully as he thought from the topmost of the helmet.
They burst out laughing, his dear father and lady mother.
At once shining Hector lifted the helmet from his head,
and placed it, gleaming, on the earth;
then he rocked his beloved son in his arms and kissed him

(6.465-473)

The poignancy of the scene arises from the disconnect between the armor and the setting. Astyanax's reaction to his father's helmet echoes the fear and terror that the helmet is meant to impose on Hectors enemies. The helmet covers Hector's face in such a complete and fearsome manner that his own son is unable to recognize them. A major part of Hector is him being a warrior, a soldier with the capacity for great destruction and a murderous intent which at points takes over his character and overshadows the man we meet in this scene. His helmet symbolizes this dark necessity in his identity which Hector must assume to save those he loves. By taking off his helmet, Hector takes off that part of his identity that is a brutal warrior to fully show the audience the kinder aspects of his character. In line 471, as Hector takes off his helmet, it is not the helmet that shines but the very head and face of Hector as we see him embrace his wife and child for the last time. He now assumes all of those identities which are incompatible with what the moment requires of him, those roles that men can only assume in times of peace and enjoy the acts of a man with no need or desire to fight.

Hector's helmet is a wonderful example of poetic expression and layered narrative form with an explicit attention to the link between armor and identity that is only given to a few major characters. And no other character's armor is more intensely linked to his complex identity than that of Achilles. Achilles' story largely revolves around the question of his identity as a demigod, the limits of his humanity, and the fatal decisions he makes during his time at Troy. Achilles has two sets of armor in the epic, the first being the one he arrives with which is from his father Peleus, a mortal set of armor, and the second being the receives from his mother, an immortal set of shining gold armor, with its famous shield.

The first armor of Achilles can be defined as his mortal armor. It is the armor of his mortal father Peleus and is passed down for Achilles to wear into battle so he can gain glory for himself. Even though this is the armor that Achilles has been wearing for the entirety of the Trojan War, we never get to see Achilles wear this armor during the events of the *Iliad*. The armor is not described to us until Book 16 when Patroclus disguises himself as Achilles. This usage, or rather the lack of usage of the armor by Achilles reflects the questioning and distancing of his mortal identity. Achilles is a lost figure in terms of his placement between the realms of mortals and immortals which is even reflected through him having two sets of armor from each side of his family. This mortal armor is what has allowed for Achilles to be defined as a great and glorious man among mortals, while at the same time limits him from ascending to his immortal potential. This disconnect between Achilles identity and the armors he wears becomes more fraught after the death of his companion Patroclus. In an effort to turn the tides of war, Patroclus asks to wear Achilles' armor into battle to scare off the Trojan army and force them away from the Greek ships. Achilles accepts and Patroclus enters the battlefield disguised as Achilles.

Patroclus is then taken down by Hector and killed in battle before being stripped of Achilles' armor. His naked body is fought over by the Achaeans and Trojans but is ultimately returned to the Greek camp by a crazed and naked Achilles. Patroclus' death is the catalyst for Achilles' wrath to completely take over and begins a form of testing of his mortal limits. When Achilles learns of Patroclus' death, he mourns and cries in both sorrow and in anger.

> A dark cloud of grief enveloped Achilles.
> Taking with both hands the fire-blackened ashes,
> he poured them down upon his head, and defiled his handsome face;
> on his fragrant tunic the black ash settled;
> and he lay outstretched in the dust,
> a great man in his greatness, and with his own hands he defiled his hair, tearing at it
>
> (18.22-27)

The defiling of his features is not just an act of mourning but is an attempt to change his own figure to match that of Patroclus' dirty, mutilated, and naked body. Achilles is trying to distance himself from his own identity, trying to sully the features which make him distinctly himself. Since Patroclus' body was stripped of Achilles' armor, the body of Patroclus has been returned naked, but this also means that Achilles no longer has any armor of his own to put on and to march into battle with. Without his armor he is both vulnerable and undefinable in battle making it much harder to attempt the rescue of Patroclus' corpse. But then, the goddess Iris comes to Achilles and urges him to enter the battlefield to return the body of Patroclus without any armor, instead racing in naked and unprotected.

> "But go as you are to the ditch and show yourself to the Trojans—

Perhaps in dread of you they might retreat from fighting…”
And Athena cast the tasseled aegis about his mighty shoulders;
she, shining among goddesses, encircled round his head a cloud of
gold, and from it blazed bright-shining fire

(18. 198-199, 205-207).

The call from Iris to run into battle naked, followed by the protected garments and shining fire of Athena bring out the more immortal aspects of Achilles’ identity. Gods do not need armor to enter battle, and when they do, they do not always put on the kind of armor that completely covers the face and body in the way mortal armor does. Athena has many scenes in which she goes to battle with armor such as the aegis that she puts around Achilles, the same aegis which she has been given by her father Zeus and that she carries throughout the story. The aegis is first shown back in Book 2 when Athena comes to encourage the Achaeans in which it is described as, “revered, ageless and deathless, / a hundred tassels of solid gold gloated from it, / each intricate woven, each worth a hundred oxen” (2.447-449). With Athena carrying it, the aegis works to define her as a goddess of war with a special connection to her father Zeus. By giving Achilles the aegis, Athena anoints him into a divine status. It is unclear whether other mortals are able to see the aegis draped around Achilles, though we do know that they can see the light shining from his head when he enters the battle in dramatic fashion as he yells and shouts on the threshold of battle.

And when they heard the brazen voice of Aecides,
the spirit of each man was thrown into turmoil; the horses with their fine
manes

wheeled their chariots back, for in their hearts they forebode distress to
come,
And the charioteers were struck from their senses, when they saw the
weariless
terrible fire above the head of Peleus' great hearted son
Blazing; and this the gleaming-eyed goddess Athena caused to blaze.
Three times across the ditch godlike Achilles cried his great cry,
and three times the Trojans and their illustrious allies were thrown in
panic.

(18.222-229)

Achilles appears on the battlefield naked, with his fiery anger and face brimming with an immortal glow. Achilles fights with nothing blocking his face and appearance from being recognized by his friends and his enemies. He is easily distinguished as himself and his overwhelming presence, strength, and character make the Trojans flee in terror. But this Achilles is devoid of any clear link to his mortal identity and is only partially veiled in the clothes and appearance of his immortal side. His struggle with the strange circumstances of his heritage leaves him lacking a clear standing in the worlds of either mortal or god. This Achilles can only be defined by his anger, by his exhausting lust for battle, and by the ferocity of his killing. Without any armor to distinguish him as a warrior, he is more like a crazed god running around and slaughtering his enemies (5.594-599). There is the added layer of his nakedness mimicking that of the dead bodies which lie on the battlefield and that of Patroclus. The nakedness of the stripped and dead bodies is displays the vulnerability and loss of the warrior identity that is encapsulated in armor. Without the armor there is no longer that definitive warrior identity, and is

replaced with the intimate, somber, and universal identity of a mortal. The visibility of the face and body of the dead bodies allows them be defined as humans whose lives and legacies should be honored through proper burial. Achilles is again found in the middle of this mortal expression as his nakedness is a sign of his fearlessness towards his own mortality while also showing his vulnerable flesh. Without any sense of his place in the realms of humans and gods, and without the identities embedded in his armor to define him as a mortal warrior, Achilles begins to raise himself above the realm of the mortals to enter a new and divine state. As the poem continues Achilles will indeed begin to act increasingly less human by refusing food and sleep, battling with and against gods, and changing his appearance to match this lost immortal identity.

A Shield For All Time

The two-suits of armor and the divinely-forged shield of Achilles defines Achilles' identity as a demigod, someone living in between the lines of human and god, while also representing parts of his life that have been radically changed due to the decisions he has made throughout the course of the epic. It depicts aspects of Achilles' life that he has experienced before and many things he will never be able to experience since he will not return home from the shores of Troy. Achilles' choice of either living a long life at home without glory or living a short life and dying with glory on the battlefield is majorly worked into the narrative of his shield and shows us all parts of Achilles' two lives, being the one he chose and the one he left behind. Achilles' armor is made by the god Hephaestus who makes all of the brilliant armors and objects for the gods. Hephaestus agrees to make Achilles a suit of armor that will present and protect him in divine fashion. Hephaestus begins the base of the shield first forming its shape and thickness

before setting off on its intricate design. Hephaestus forms the earth, the heavens and the sea while filling the sky with constellations such as the Pleiades, the Hyades, Orion, and the Bear[8]. The creation of the cosmos and the earth show the wonderful ability of Hephaestus as well as representing the beginning of all life, both immortal and mortal. The realms of heaven and earth are created and distinguished immediately, softly reminding us of the distance and difference between the two realms that Achilles stems from. Hephaestus then sets two cities on the shield, the first of which depicts a civilization at peace with all the trimmings of what life and society is like when there is not a war going on.

> And on it he made two cities of mortal men,
> both beautiful; and in one there were weddings and wedding feasts,
> and they were leading the brides from their chambers beneath the gleam
> of torches
> through the city;
>
> (18.490-494)

The weddings show us the festivals, feasting, and joy that is spread throughout the city in times of peace. We are immediately given something that Achilles has lost due to his preference of glory over living as the wedding scene tells us that Achilles was and will never be able to marry a wife and enjoy a wedding. But during the wedding a feud breaks out between two men which leads to a lawful and civil resolution that works to highlight the peaceful way feuds are dealt with through the societal law and courts. “And there a dispute / had arisen, and two men were contending about the blood price / for a man who had been killed. The one was promising

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[8] 18. 483-489

to pay all, / declaring so to the people, but the other refused to accept a thing;\" (497-500). This feud is made to resemble the feud between Agamemnon and Achilles throughout Books 1 and 9. The way that the two men argue over the value of the body of another person mirrors the way that Agamemnon fights with Achilles over the bodies of Chryseis and Briseis. This feud in Book 1 between the two Achaean captains was the catalyst for Achilles' initial rage and his decision to remain in his tent away from the battle, costing the Achaeans countless lives and changing the tide of the war. Another mirrored aspect between the fight on the shield and the fight between Agamemnon and Achilles is that one man tries to solve the problem by paying back the other but is refused by the man who was wronged. In Book 9 Agamemnon tries to appeal to Achilles and have him resume fighting with a large number of precious and honorable gifts. He seeks to repay him not only with items such as tripods, gear, horses, and full talents of gold, but he also pledges to return Briseis to Achilles and give Achilles one of his own daughters to marry, becoming his son in law with a sizable fortune and lands to rule. Achilles refuses these gifts and honors and continues his absence from battle, allowing for more Achaeans to die.

The shield reminds us of this great conflict which began the poem and its severe costs, but it instead depicts a resolution that ends in peace and understanding. This amicable solution to the initial feud between the two Achaeans could have stopped the deaths of not just the Achaean soldiers but even the death of Patroclus, and thus prevent the death of Achilles himself. Hence the two features of this peaceful city may be said to mark the possibilities that Achilles' life could have taken but were drastically changed based upon the consequences of his choices throughout the poem. This is a part of Achilles' identity that he is unable to function in since we are not in a city at peace, but deeply enfolded in the world of war.

The second city that Hephaestus puts on the shield is caught in the midst of war. Its inclusion on the shield reinforces our understanding that war and strife are parts of life just as peace and prosperity are. By this point in the *Iliad* we are accustomed to the images that Hephaestus displays in his scene of war and the obvious impression of this city is one that reminds us of Troy and the major narrative of the epic. While the peaceful city showed us specific plot points which contributed to the story's progression but with opposite outcomes, this city shows us what we have come to recognize in war due to the nature and setting of the poem. Instead of looking back at aspects of Achilles life and reimagining them, this picture of war actually works to both mirror the pressure and strife of war we have seen in the recent past and foreshadow major moments in the story's future.

> But around the city lay two armies of men,
> shining in their armor. And they were between two plans,
> either to sack the city, or to divide equally with its people,
> as much wealth as the lovely town held within.
> But the city was not yielding, and the men were secretly arming for
> ambush.
>
> (18.509-514)

The opening is quite a familiar scene with men dressed and ready for war on each side. There is the prospect of peace and understanding here which is reminiscent of Book 3 when the war was almost ended by the duel between Menelaos and Paris. And in both cases, this chance at peace is lost and war becomes the only solution.

> but the other men set forth; and Ares led them and Pallas Athena,

both made in gold, and the clothing on them was golden,
magnificent and mighty with their armor, like very gods,
standing out apart; and beneath them the people were smaller.

(18.515-519)

Here we are given details of the size and splendor of the gods Ares and Athena, who just as they have throughout the course of the poem, are leading men into battle. The detail Hephaestus gives to the armor and the look of the gods, giving them golden armor with intricate designs reminds us of the very piece he is working on being the golden armor that he is making for Achilles. Achilles' armor is made from gold as this new armor will come to define him as a semi-divine being who starts to appear more like a god as he takes on immortal ways of living. We can now understand the previous people discussing the prospect of peace but secretly arming the battle to be a stand in for the Trojans, and the god led, bronze clad soldiers to be a version of the Achaeans. This side also becomes the side that launches the first attack against the city and begins the war. The fight breaks out after an ambush by one side on a group of shepherds and their flocks.[9]

Hephaestus ends the section of the warring city with a destructive and intrinsic aspect of war flooding the battle with an eerie included detail.

and having arrayed the battle, began fighting by the riverbanks,
smiting one another with their bronze-headed spears.
And Strife was joining the throng of battle, and Tumult, and painful

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[9] The act reminds the audience of previous sections in the story such as the Doloneia in 10 as well as the stories of past battles and cattle raids told by Nestor.

Death,

Holding now a living man new wounded, now one unharmed,

now dragging a man who had died by his feet through the press of battle;

and Death wore around her shoulders a cape crimsoned with the blood of men.

And they clashed in battle and fought like living men,

dragging away the bodies of those slain by one another.

(18.534-540)

The fighting in this battle takes place near the river bank, just as the Trojan war has taken place next to the Xanthous river. These new gods of war that enter the battle take on the major themes of war as well as the overwhelming feelings that surround the soldiers fighting within it. The most horrifying of these three is Death whose dominating presence literally holds the men in battle as he takes life after life. The most disturbing of his actions is the dragging of a dead body around the battlefield, an action that Achilles himself will commit after killing Hector. The shield thus shows a version of the identity that Achilles will turn too, emboldened by his rage, he becomes a cruel and ruthless warrior who kills with more speed and violence than any mortal soldier we have seen in the epic. Through these images that rest on the face of Achilles shield we shown every aspect of Achilles' life: the life he would have had back home, the decisions that shaped his fate in the present, and the dark depictions of the man he will soon become.

Hephaestus also includes images of a pastoral kingdom, filled with large agricultural fields, castles and rulers overseeing their land, and a festival where young men and women dance and sing with joy. All of these decorations are allusions to land and life beyond the warlike world of the poem itself. They are again reminders of the things in life that make up mortal existence,

things that Achilles will never be able to experience again or ever due to his fated death at Troy. We see agriculture and viticulture and an honoring of the hard labor that comes with farming crops and reaping the harvest, a form of life Achilles will not be able to live. The representation of mortal existence is bittersweet as all of these elements are out of Achilles reach. Hephaestus adds a kingdom with a king sitting with his heralds and advisors which can be understood as the likely role Achilles would have assumed if he returned to his homeland and succeeded his father Peleus. The final scene on the shield is of the dance with unmarried youths which not only brings the shields narrative back to the earlier image of the peaceful city and the wedding but also reminds us of Achilles youth and the beautiful things he could not experience such as a marriage festival of his peers and finding a wife of his own.

The beauty of Achilles' shield is that it represents almost all aspects of mortal life, honoring the moments outside of war that we see so little of in the poem, and uses them to represent the parts of Achilles life that both we as the reader never see and he himself will never experience. There is resonance to Achilles' identity even in its creation as it is a piece of armor made by an immortal being but for the purpose of protecting someone who is mortal. This piece of armor being the shield means it is one of the most visual parts of a soldier's gear and one that the bearer of the shield stands behind to protect his life. Achilles stands behind and is protected by a shield which depicts the stories of his own life, past, present and future, symbolizing the things he fights for and the things he sacrifices by fighting. Just as Hector's helmet defines him and his warrior identity while also concealing those parts of him which he can not express in order to save them, Achilles' shield shows us all possible forms of his identity, even the ones he

will never experience. He charges into the front line with the life he could have had protecting him, guiding him to his own demise.

Chapter 2

Glaucus and Diomedes: A Tale, A Trade, and A Trick

In Book 6, at the very end of Diomedes' bloody aristeia, there is a pause in the battle and a brief moment of peace. While Diomedes is tearing through the battlefield he spots a Trojan from the frontlines and meets him not with his sword, but with his words.

"Who are you, brave friend, of men consigned to death?
For I have never seen you in battle where men win glory
before this time, but now striding far in front of all men
in your bold courage, you stand to wait my long-shadowed spear—
and they are sons of brokenhearted men, who face my might."

(6.124-128)

Diomedes' sudden recognition of Glaucus and his prodding questions give us the first exchange in the scene which is one of information and identity. Though Diomedes is being intimidating and boasting of his strength and ability to battle with gods[10]in his questioning of Glaucus' identity, Diomedes is able to understand his opponent and whether there is any great glory to be obtained in battling with him or if there is danger in battling another god.[11] Throughout this encounter what we learn about Diomedes is his ability to read and assess his current situation, leveling the factors of risk and reward, and how he might be able to achieve glory without having to fight. The exchange of armor is the end of Diomedes' aristeia, and so

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[10] 6.127-132. Athena gives Diomedes the ability to see immortals on the battlefield and is even able to cut the goddess Aphrodite.

[11] 6.128-141.

after we have read of his greatness in physical battle, his moment of true glory comes from an exhibition of the strength and greatness of his wits. This adds layers of character into Diomedes as his cleverness brings him beyond the strong hot-headed youth he appears to be.

In Glaucus' response we learn about his lineage and how his family came to settle in Lycia. The story of Glaucus' family and more specifically the tale of his grandfather Bellerophon, is cast as a classic hero's journey as he is forced away from his home and must overcome trials in a new land to prove himself. We immediately find out that Bellerophon was an Argive from the city of Ephyre (6.128-141), making him and his grandson Glaucus more closely related to the Achaeans than to the Trojans. Bellerophon is said to have been forced from his home in Ephyre by the king Proitos. Proitos does not kill Bellerophon but instead, "sent him to Lycia, and gave him baneful signs, / scratching on a folded tablet many destructive things, / and instructed him to show them to his father-in-law, so that he / might die" (6.167-170). Once Proitos' father-in-law reads the message he sends Bellerophon into battle to kill many dangerous foes, in the hopes that Bellerophon will be killed (6.179-190). After Bellerophon is able to defeat all of these enemies, he is recognized as a worthy hero. "And when the king perceived that he was from the noble lineage of a god, / he detained Bellerophon there, and indeed offered him his daughter, / and gave him half of all his royal honor" (6.191-193).

Bellerophon's story of hardship and glory shows both the audience and Diomedes the great lineage of Glaucus which paints an identity of both Glaucus and his family as being strong and worthy people. Diomedes is now aware of the divine lineage and historical strength of Glaucus and as a result he is able to size-up his opponent and the danger that could come in fighting him. Glaucus appears proud of his family's past and uses his family's divine heritage and

the story of his grandfather to represent his own strength and glory. By giving both his lineage and the story of how his forefathers came to Lycia, we now have a core understanding of Glaucus' identity and the pressure that follows him to Troy as the heir to Bellerophon's legacy. “And Hippolochos begot me, and I say I am born of him; / he sent me to Troy, and gave many directives to me, / always to be best and to be better than all others, / not to disgrace the line of my fathers, who were far the best / in Ephyre and in broad Lycia” (6.206-210). This is one of the earliest examples of heritage and the story of a relative being used as a symbol of identity.

What Diomedes understands from this exchange of story and lineage is not only an introduction to Glaucus’ identity, but also a remembrance of a historical connection between his family and Glaucus’. Diomedes does not respond with his own introduction nor does he give his family lineage, instead, he tells Glaucus a story of kindness and of pledged friendship from the past.

> “Now then surely you are my guest friend from my father’s side of long
> ago;
> for noble Oineus once received blameless Bellerophon
> as guest friend in his halls, detaining him for twenty days.
> They even gave to each other splendid gifts of friendship;
> Oineus gave a war-belt bright with crimson,
> and Bellerophon a two-handled cup of gold;
> and I left it in my home when setting forth;”
>
> (6.215-221)

This revelation of the history between the two families gives us one of the earliest moments of an exchange of armor in the epic. Oineus and Bellerophon's exchange shows the rituals of *xenia* in which two people consecrate their friendship with an exchange of gifts. The gifts are used to symbolize the respect the two men hold for each other and as a remembrance of their friendship. This peaceful moment of the past allows for a peaceful break in the present moment of the war where we are separated from the heavy action of the story. This scene of historical friendship in the poem shows how strong the acts of *xenia* are for the people in the story and sets the exchange of goods as a major aspect of the rules and customs of peace, a thing we see rarely in this epic that is so entrenched in the customs of war. This causes Diomedes to shift his perspective and demeanor towards Glaucus as he seeks to honor the friendship between their families with a reenactment of the exchange.

> "Let us exchange armor with each other, so that these others here
> will know that we claim to be guest friends from our fathers."
>
> Having so spoken, they both leapt from from their chariots
> and took each other's hands and pledged their trust.
> But Zeus the son of Cronus took away the wits from Glaukos,
> who exchanged with Diomedes son of Tydeus armor of
> gold for that of bronze, a hundred oxen's value for nine.
>
> (6. 230-236)

Though these exchanges are done out of an act of respect, friendship, and peace, there is an inherent inequality of value between the two objects in both cases. In the exchange between Bellerophon and Oineus, Bellerophon gives a golden two-handled cup whose sentimental value

can be read as a gift to commemorate the many days of hospitality Bellerophon was shown in the house of Oineus. The cup's great commemorative value is matched in its monetary value as it is made out of a precious metal. In contrast, the crimson leather belt that Oineus gives his guest has a much lower material value than the golden cup. The gift can be seen as useful or even commemorative as it could refer to the protection that Oineus gave to Bellerophon in housing him for so long. The gifts are exchanged with no thought of deception or trickery and so we may believe that this exchange has allowed for both parties to be properly honored for their roles in the foundation of a guest friendship.

But we might consider whether the exchange between Bellerophon and Oineus was never meant to be an equal one. Walter Donlan asserts that in the rituals of gift giving as it pertains to guest-friendship is inherently unequal as the hosts "generous hospitality and abundant gifts impose a heavy obligation on the guest.[12]" Oineus, as the host, has already given the gift of hospitality and protection to Bellerophon and is thus allowed to give a lesser gift upon his departure. Bellerophon's gift should be greater than Oineus' given that he is in debt to Oineus for housing and protecting him.

With this understanding of the inherent inequalities of the guest friendship and the exchange between Oineus and Bellerophon being a "normal" one expressive of ritual friendship, the exchange between Glaucus and Diomedes is only complicated by the fact that there is no host or guest in this new found friendship and the setting of the exchange has changed from a period of peace to the period of war. Glaucus' understanding of the exchange between Bellerophon and

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[12] Donlan, Walter. "The Unequal Exchange between Glaucus and Diomedes in Light of the Homeric Gift-Economy." *Phoenix*, vol. 43, no. 1, 1989, pp. 1–15, https://doi.org/10.2307/1088537. Accessed 26 Apr. 2022.

Oineus is that Bellerophon gave a greater gift in the exchange, and thus he must give a greater gift to Diomedes to properly honor the familial friendship. But this is clearly a false judgment by Glaucus as his wits were taken away by Zeus and he gave away a much too expensive set of armor for what he received. Here again, there is a parallel to the past: Glaucus' quick action and failure to comprehend the implications of the story he has heard parallels, to some extent, Bellerophon's failure to understand the import of the evil message he brought to Lycia. The underlying message of the Bellerophon story is to not go into a situation without properly reading the signs given to you, for they might lead you to ruin and suffering. Glaucus, just like his grandfather, fails to see this, and likewise fails to understand the story of his grandfathers exchange: he can't read into the rituals and reasons, as well as the proper evaluation of the items exchanged. Glaucus' giving away of the golden armor represents a seemingly hereditary foolishness as well as being appropriately the same material as the golden cup. In chapter 1, I explored how armor in the *Iliad* mirrors or represents a given characters identity in all its complexity; in this scene we see how an exchange of armor can represent identity as well, marking as it does a characteristic flaw in Glaucus which only strengthens his identity as the grandson of Bellerophon.

Diomedes' role in the exchange allows for him to receive glory through outsmarting Glaucus. In this way Diomedes is able to obtain a victory even though there was no actual fight: he is rewarded with a brilliantly valuable suit of armor just as if he had fought and killed Glaucus. Diomedes is able to read the past in a way that Glaucus is unable to, and this aspect of understanding and use of the past to his advantage is what confirms him as the victor. We may also say that it confirms him in another identity, too: that of a Greek, since throughout the epic

the Achaeans are shown to be more mischievous and clever than the Trojans. The armor that Diomedes gives is, moreover, of bronze and hence representative of the typical Achaean gear. There are, too, further implications about identity in this complex scene. Diomedes returns a set of distinctively Greek bronze armor to a Trojan who has Greek blood, thereby partially restoring part of Glaucus' own identity, while, Diomedes receives gold armor which symbolizes his superiority. The gold armor can also be seen as a suit that matches the gods' gear of gold as Diomedes was just able to see the immortals on the battlefield during his aristeia and is now given one to commemorate his moment of greatness.

Thus the exchange of armor offers an insight into who these characters are and how they act in times of war and peace. The historical connections between the identities of these two men, furthermore, allows for aspects of the world outside of the *Iliad* and the world of the past to enter into the story and influence the ways in which our characters go about their lives during the tense plains of war. The exchange of armor offers an evaluation of ability and shifts the symbolism of an exchange from one of peaceful offering to a system which honors the hierarchies of war, honor, and glory.

Nestor and The Mace-Fighter

Once someone possesses another person's armor, there are many ways that he can use it. Some keep their spoils of armor in their tents to be brought back home as a token of one's glorious times at war. Other's use the armor to honor the gods and make an offering as Odysseus does in Book 10 when he offers Dolon's armor too Athena. But the moments that are the most intriguing are those when someone actually wears the armor of another person. The first instance of someone appropriating another warrior's armor is in book 7 when Nestor, in an attempt to

rally his men to take on Hector in a duel, tells the Achaean soldiers a story of his youth. When he was a young man, he recalls, he fought Ereuthalion who had been given a set of armor from the great Lykourgos:

> "Ereuthalion stood as their champion, a man like to a god,
> bearing on his shoulders the armor of lord Areithoos,
> godlike Areithoos, he whom men and fair-belted women
> called by the name Mace-Fighter,
> because it was not with bows he used to fight, nor with the long spear,
> but with an iron mace he shattered battle lines.
> Lykourgos slew him, by craft, not at all by strength,
> in a narrow pass, where his mace did not ward off his destruction,
> for all that it was iron; for Lykourgos got his blow first,
> and speared him through the middle, and he lay stretched face up upon
> the ground;
> he stripped the armor that the brazen war god gave him,
> which he himself then bore through the trials of war.
> But when Lykourgos grew old within his halls,
> he gave it to Ereuthalion his beloved henchmen to wear;
> and it was wearing his armor that Ereuthalion challenged the best
> men.
> And they trembled greatly before him and were afraid, and no man dared,
> but my much enduring spirit compelled me to fight

in reckless boldness; and in age I was the youngest of all;

and I—I did battle with him, and Athena granted my prayer.

And I killed him, the tallest and mightiest man;

a vast man who lay sprawled out from here to there."

(7.136-156).

The story is a warning that armor can be deceiving as the man underneath it is not always who one assumes it to be nor as fierce as he appears to be. It is also a reminder of how important the visual aspect of armor and its role as an identifier is in the world of the *Iliad* and how armor can allow for people to become something they are not. Nestor's flashback demonstrates how a suit of armor allowed its new owner to assume the identity and credibility of its former owner, allowing him to disguise his visual identity while assuming the mythic identity carried within the armor. The intricacies of Ereuthalion's story and how this armor was granted to him adds to the idea that, when armor is being used to disguise and a different identity is being assumed through the wearing of armor, it is a test of one's identity in which they are either proven to be worthy of wearing the armor and are thus equal in greatness, or they are proven to be unworthy of wearing it and are then punished for their failure.

There are further complexities to Nestors tale. Areithoos, the original Mace-Fighter, who obtained great glory while wearing his armor and fighting with his signature weapon, is a warrior of brute strength. He is characterized by nothing but his brutality and blood lust as a strong foe whom no one is able to defeat. Lykourgos wins the glory and honor of killing Areithoos, not with his strength but with a trick that rendered both his brute strength and weapon useless. Lykourgos is like certain great Achaean fighters in the *Iliad,* such as Odysseus, who use tricks and their

intellect to defeat someone stronger or greater. Lykourgos strips the armor, claiming his victory over the strong Mace-Fighter and brings it back to his home for it to be used as a mark of his greatness. Lykourgos in turn gives the armor of Areithoos as a gift to Ereuthalion, who while wearing it is emboldened by the story of the armor's provenance and by the fear that it strikes in his enemies

But the fact is that Ereuthalion is not Areithoos and that he is not as strong a fighter as his armor leads his enemies to believe. This new identity that he has obtained by wearing the armor is further shown to be false, since he has been given the armor—he did not kill and strip Areithoos himself. Ereuthalion is exhibiting a form of "stolen" valor, because he not only wears someone else's armor to appear as someone stronger, but is wearing the spoils of someone else's achievement. Ereuthalion's own character and ability are not just replaced by Areithoos' armor and identity, but is completely erased from the battlefield and from the narrative: it is impossible for him to gain glory for himself. Nestor is able to overcome Ereuthalion and the domineering presence of his armor due to his youthful strength and faith in divine help. Nestors' own ability as a young man hungry for glory outdoes the fake identity and false strength of Ereuthalion, who is proven as being unworthy of wearing Areithoos' armor and carrying the weight of the armor's legacy.

Nestor uses this story to tell the young Achaean soldiers to not fear the myth and legend of a man's name or armor and to remember that the person underneath is still only a mortal. It appears that the value of the body is lesser than the value of the armor that protects it, so much so that the identity of that body appears to be irrelevant and erased by the armor. But within this story of offerings of armor and lost identities being erased by great legacies, there is also a

corresponding, ironic increase in the value of the body that lies underneath the armor: after all, the armor cannot, in the end, achieve any greatness without a fit and choice wearer to properly use it. Nestor's tale, with its themes of identity, disguise, and the legacies that are contained within armor, lays the foundation for many of the *Iliad's* later moments in which these concepts are brought out from the past and into the present moment of the Trojan War.

Ajax and Hector's Almost-Climactic Exchange

What immediately follows Nestor's story of the Mace-Fighter is a duel and an exchange between Ajax and Hector (7.160-305). This fight between the strongest men on either side contextualizes Nestor's story of the Mace-Fighter as well as reminds us of the exchange between Diomedes and Glaucus at the end of the previous book. But the scene also encompasses many key aspects of the culture of war, and that exchanges can be used to purposefully and definitely grant a victory to someone. It is, in fact, the last of a trio of exchanges and offerings of armor that we find in Books 6 and 7 that take place on the battlefield, and the scene in question marks a shift in how such exchanges function, as the war reaches a new climax.

The climactic quality of the fight in question owes much to the fact that it mirrors the important aborted duel in Book 2 between Menelaos and Paris, where the possibility of peace was on the line and the outcome of the war could have been decided with this single battle. Here, it is Ajax who is picked by lot to fight Hector, and this act of chance has allowed for the Achaeans' strongest warrior to take on the leader of the Trojans in what might be their best chance at victory yet. Ajax readies himself for war, "bearing his shield like a tower, / bronze, of seven layers of oxhide, which had been made for him with toil / by Tychios" (7.218-220), and meets the fearsome Hector on the battlefield. The fight is close as both men first attack with their

spears (7.244-254), and then move into close combat where Ajax lands the first blow to draw blood (7.259-262). In a desperate moment Hector grabs a jagged stone and brings it down on Ajax's shield, to which Ajax picks up an even larger stone and throws it at Hector's shield so hard that it knocks Hector down (7.263-274). This would be Ajax's moment to finish Hector off and end both the battle and the war, but he is stopped by the coming of night; he adheres to the customs of war which do not permit battle after the setting of the sun. Ajax's respect and honor are shown along with his strength in this scene as he spares Hector's life and the fight ends with no victor.

The stalemate between the two men officially ends with an exchange of armor which Is meant to indicate who the victor of this duel would have been just as it did in the exchange between Glaucus and Diomedes:

> "Come, let us give to each other illustrious gifts, both of us,
> so that someone might speak in this way, Achaean and Trojan:
> 'The two fought in heart-devouring strife,
> but then parted united in friendship.'
> So speaking, he gave over his silver-studded sword,
> bringing with it the sheath and well-cut baldric;
> and Ajax gave his war-belt bright with crimson."
>
> (7.299-305)

Through their exchange Hector is shown to be both characteristically Trojan as he gives a greater gift just as Glaucus did, as well as clearly weaker than expected to be by the Achaeans. In this unequal exchange Hector gives Ajax a silver-studded sword along with the sheath and

baldric—a three piece set of gear made from a precious metal— while Ajax gives a crimson leather war belt: in fact, the very same item that Oineus gave to Bellerophon. Ajax is shown to be the victor in this duel as he walks away with more precious items than Hector does,—the lesser value of his gifts corresponding to his inferior performance in the deal since he is the more injured and would likely have lost the fight. This exchange, in turn, suggests a third inequality, implying that even within the world of peace, friendship, and gift giving there are still losers, victors, and a culture of dominance. Though this scene of exchange is shorter than the one that precedes it, it ends a tightly grouped succession of exchanges and offerings of armors which all work to show how the passing and claiming of another person's armor can reveal the strengths or weaknesses of a character's identity. It also works to paint an image of coming events, since Hector will, like Ereuthalion, don the armor of another man, which leads him to fight a much stronger Achaean warrior who will kill him. Hence both Hector's fate and his identity are being alluded to through the context and the battle itself in Book 7.

*

These three moments of exchanges and offerings—Glaucus and Diomedes, Nestor's story of the Mace-Fighter, Ajax and Hector's duel and their exchange of gifts—makes us more aware than ever of how exchanges and offerings allow for a shift in power and a revelation of a character's identity. Just like armor itself, the exchange of armor becomes a vehicle for defining the values of a character's body and legacy. In concluding this section, I want to now track the

major exchanges that set the story of the *Iliad* into motion with the insights and understanding that these three exchanges of armor gives us with respect to the value of life and the mortal body.

Throughout the *Iliad,* the exchange of goods and spoils is at the forefront of the major conflicts and resolutions of the story. Within the exchanges of armor and embedded in the object of armor itself is the question of what is the value of a human body. The status, ability, fame, and importance of a character are symbolized by both the armor it wears and the armor or gear that it's given. It becomes explicitly clear that the exchange of armor and goods is representative of the value of the body beneath it when we look at a larger theme, one that runs through the entirety of the *Iliad,* of the exchanging and honoring of bodies.

In Book 1, the incident that triggers the epic's action and causes Achilles' rage stems from the capture of Chryseis by the Achaeans. In an attempt to bring his daughter home Chryses offers loot and prizes for his daughter. "For he came to the Achaeans' swift ship / bearing countless gifts to ransom his daughter" (1.12-13). Chryses' action shows that he initially tried to handle the capture of his daughter peacefully, with a ransom, pleading and offering gifts in exchange for the safe return of Chryseis before he takes deathly actions by invoking Apollo to send a plague on the Achaeans. The rejection of the exchange, resulting from Agamemnon's stubbornness led to ruin for the Achaeans—ruin that suggests both how much more effective peaceful offerings would have been and the futility of such peaceful actions in the setting of war. Chryseis is returned but not without blood being shed with the massively consequential exchange of flesh for flesh, blood for blood.

> Thus he prayed, and Phoebus Apollo heard him,
>
> and set out from the heights of Olympus, rage in his heart,

with his bow on his shoulders and his hooded quiver;

the arrows clattered on his shoulders as he raged,

as the god himself moved; and he came like the night.

Then far from the ships he crouched, and let loose an arrow—

and terrible was the ring of his silver bow.

First he went after the mules and sleek dogs,

but then, letting fly a sharp arrow, he struck at the men themselves,

and the crowded pyres of the dead burned without ceasing.

(1.42-52)

The first thing to be exchanged in this epic are bodies: after the failed ransom the plague offers a punishment and revenge with the deaths of countless Achaean men. This forces Agamemnon to comply—in a manner that enacts yet another exchange, this time between Agamemnon and Achilles. Here, Agamemnon demands to be compensated for having to give up Chryseis by taking Achilles' enslaved girl, Briseis. The dispute between Agamemnon and Achilles is filled with tension as the two men hurl insults and threats at each other with the fate of the very war on the line. Their fight almost grows violent—only Athena's intervention prevents Achilles from slaying his commander—and Achilles is forced to give up Briseis to Agamemnon both to appease the king's anger as well as protect the other Achaean men from giving up their prizes or being sent back home without glory.

"But I promise you this:

As Phoebus Apollo robs me of Chryseis,

whom I will send away, on my ship, with my companions—

so I will take Briseis of the pretty cheeks,

yes, your prize, going myself to your hut, so that you will discern

how much I am your better and so another man will be loath

to speak as my equal, openly matching himself with me."

(1.181-187)

This forced exchange is a theft, of course; still, Achilles begrudgingly allows for Agamemnon to take Briseis away in order to appease and stop the plague. Achilles' sacrifice of honor in giving up Briseis effectively stops the death of many Achaeans, but this act is also the catalyst for Achilles to be so overcome by rage that he sits out from the war and allows for more men to die. Agamemnon's actions are thus doubly ruinous as his rage and arrogance come to define his character for most of the early story.

But Achilles understood in his heart, and spoke to them:

"Hail heralds, messengers of Zeus, as also of men—

come close; you are not to blame in my eyes, but Agamemnon,

who sends you two forth on account of the girl Briseis.

But come, Patroclus, descended from Zeus, bring out the girl,

and give her to these two to take away. And let them both be witnesses

before the blessed gods and mortal men alike,

and before him, this stubborn king, if ever hereafter

other men need me to ward off shameful destruction."

(1.333-340)

With this Achilles gives into the demands of Agamemnon and officially announces his withdrawal from battle as he vows to not protect or fight for another man. The retreat and inaction of Achilles is the most consequential moment for the Achaeans, for the war, and for the entire story of the Iliad until his return after the events of Book 16. We might say that Agamemnon has now lost yet another body as Achilles' departure means his greatest soldier and greatest chance at victory has been lost. But Agamemnon's stubbornness continues as his men die and the Achaeans are pushed back by the Trojans, who are emboldened by Achilles' absence. So far the bodies of everyone involved have not only been dishonored but every action within the exchanges, whether it be of acceptance or rejection leads to a greater loss of life and a lowering of value of the mortal body.

It is not until Book 9 that Agamemnon tries to make amends for his actions by offering a series of magnificent gifts. The long list of gifts that Agamemnon promises to Achilles is by far the largest and grandest exchange we see in the epic culminating in his offer of a marriage to his own daughter, along with land for Achilles to rule in back in Argos:

> "But since I was struck with delusion, guided by my wretched sense,
> I am willing to make amends and to offer untold recompense.
> To all of you I will enumerate the illustrious gifts:
> seven tripods untouched by fire, ten talents of gold,
> twenty gleaming cauldrons, twelve horses—
> muscular, bearers of prizes, who won contests with their speed of feet.
> A man would not be bereft of possessions,
> nor lacking in valuable gold, who owned as much

as the single-hoofed horses have won for me in prizes."

(9.119-127)

The first part of Agamemnon's offer consists of material objects, similar to those we have seen in the exchanges of Bellerophon and Oineus—objects representative of luxury and wealth. These are also domestic objects rather than swords, shields, or spears alluding to the life of leisure that Agamemnon and Achilles enjoy back home. It is not just the value of these items, but the sheer quantity of gifts he is willing to give, that speaks of Agamemnon's desperation and his need for Achilles to enter the battle.

"And I will give seven women, skilled in flawless works of hand,
women of Lesbos, whom, when he himself took strong-founded Lesbos,
I selected, who in beauty surpass all tribes of women;
these I will give to him, and among them will be the one I took away,
the daughter of Briseus. And more—I will swear a great oath
that I never mounted her bed and lay with her,
which is the custom of humankind, of men and of women.
These things, all of them, will be his at once; and if later
the gods grant us to sack the great city of Priam,
let him heap his ship with gold and bronze in abundance,
coming in when we Achaeans divide among ourselves the spoils;
and let himself chose twenty Trojan women,
who, after Helen of Argos, are most beautiful."

(9.128-140)

The offering of women more directly corrects the wrong Agamemnon has done to Achilles in taking Briseis; the fact that he pledges to give women from Lesbos, a city Achilles sacked and won glory at for Agamemnon, adds a historical irony. Agamemnon directly references the sacking of Lesbos by Achilles and how he was granted many prizes including many women from Achilles efforts, just as he has been doing while at Troy. This exchange appears to be making up for all of Achilles' hard labors of both past, present, and future. By giving back both women of Lesbos and Briseis, Agamemnon is attempting to repay for all of the labor and strength that Achilles has won him and which Achilles withholds. And if he were to agree to this exchange, he would be rewarded even more after with the bodies of twenty Trojan women. The exchange of bodies, including the untouched body of Briseis, is meant to correct the initial taking and stealing of women's bodies: flesh and blood becomes the major marker of value, along with the striking promises of chastity and future reward which become larger and greater as Agamemnon's offer goes on.

"And if we return to Achaean Argos, nurturer of tilled fields,
he will be my son in law, and I will honor him equally with Orestes,
who, late-born to me, was raised in great luxury.
I have three daughters in my well-built halls,
Chrysothemis, Laodike, and Iphianassa;
of these, let him take which he will have as his own, without bride-price,
to the house of Peleus; and I will give bride-gifts with her,
a great many, such as no man has yet bestowed upon his daughter.

Seven citadels I will give him, well-inhabited,

Kardamyle and Enope and grassy Hire,

sacred Pherai and Antheia of the deep meadows,

and lovely Aipeia and Pedasos with its vines.

All are near the sea, on the border of sandy Pylos,

and in them dwell men who are rich in sheep and rich in cattle,

who will honor him with gifts as they would a god,

and who under scepter of his rule will fulfill his prospering laws.

These things I will accomplish for him if he gives over his anger."

(9.141-157)

This vow of gifts, by far the greatest offering in the *Iliad*, reveals the lengths that Agamemnon is willing to go to honor Achilles. If Achilles accepts, he will enter the family of Agamemnon as a king with multiple lands to rule—an offer to outshine all other offers. In return, Agamemnon only asks for Achilles to give up his rage. What has been set up is an exchange of material items and honors for the emotional and moral standing of a man, an exchange that seeks to quantify and place a value on Achilles' honor. And as it turns out, his honor has a higher price than Agamemnon can pay: we understand the value of Achilles' identity when he denies the exchange and chooses to remain in his camp. All of these gifts, and oaths, and promises will not bring Achilles to the war and can not undo Agamemnon's assault on his honor: however vast and rich they may be, all the gifts offered by Agamemnon, can not make up for the original insult of his seizure of Briseis and her status as a symbol of his honor. With no exchange committed, nothing is traded and nothing is gained, but we are now able to understand Achilles and

Agamemnon's characters and the qualities which have and will define them for the entire poem. Agamemnon is not able to redeem himself until he fights in Book 11, but the feud between these two characters is not remedied until Book 22. It should be noted that the one thing that Agamemnon does not offer in the exchange is an actual apology. Agamemnon does not even face Achilles to offer the gifts to him but sends men to offer it for him. The lack of an actual apology and the inability to claim responsibility adds to the failure of Agamemnon's attempt at appeasing Achilles with a proper apology and a proper exchange.

In the penultimate book of the *Iliad,* Achilles himself is shown to understand the dynamics of exchange much more keenly than Agamemnon does. Here, Achilles holds funeral games for Patroclus in which he hands out prizes from his personal inventory of spoils to the winners of each event. Throughout these games men are given weapons, horses, or other war items that coincide with the game they have competed in. This moment allows Achilles to act as the royal law-maker he will never be since he will not return home, as he is shown granting prizes and ending feuds between the competitors.

Here, Achilles is able to diffuse and deal with tense situations in a way that both mirrors and inverts the dynamics of his original feud with Agamemnon. The anger that both men showed in that moment was unchecked and was allowed to grow into an immensely costly event with the lives of countless men being lost and Achilles' own deathly fate set into motion. But the way that Achilles appeases the men in these scenes reveal to us that he is capable of being a good and reasonable leader and that he has learned from the consequences of his anger. In a particularly striking moment at the very end of the games, Achilles hands out a prize to Agamemnon himself

for a competition he did not compete in, allowing the feud between them to be put to rest and Patroclus' life to be honored without any quarrels and fights remaining.

Then the son of Peleus set out a long-shadowed spear,
and a cauldron unmarked by fire and patterned with flowers,
worth an ox, bearing them into the place of assembly; and the spearmen
rose up;
the son of Atreus rose, wide-ruling Agamemnon,
and Meriones rose, the noble henchmen of Idomeneus.
And these men swift-footed Achilles addressed:
"Son of Atreus, we know by how much you are superior to all men
and by how much you excel in power and the throwing of spears;
come, you take this prize and go back to your hollow ships,
and let us give the spear to the Meriones the warrior,
if you should in your heart so choose; for I, indeed, am urging this."
So he spoke and lord of men Agamemnon did not disobey;
and he gave the bronze spear to Meriones; and then the warrior
Agamemnon
gave his splendid prize to his herald Talthybios.

(22.884-898)

Achilles' sacrifice of gear and arms permits him to give away the spoils he has won that he will not carry home as well as symbolize the sacrifice of both his and Patroclus' lives for the sake of war and glory. Agamemnon's acceptance of the cauldron over the spear, which is given to

Meriones, cements the act as one of peace and friendship as he receives the decorative cauldron, an object associated with peace rather than with war. Achilles is painted as a leader of peace and that he is able to respect Agamemnon's status and rank regardless of their feud and the pain it has caused both of them. Agamemnon has done his best to rectify his initial sin, and this moment allows the audience to fully forgive him as we now have a sense of his changed nature and of the power he holds which is still to be respected. Once this peace offering is made, the contentious feud that led to Achilles' decision to refrain from the war, which in turn brought death to Patroclus, has been righted by the two men who caused it. And even though Achilles is honoring Agamemnon in this moment, the offer and respect he shows to the man who wronged him, so different from the contempt Agamemnon first showed Achilles and which was implicit in his refusal to apologize even while ostensibly making amends to him, ennobles Achilles, suggesting in the end the superiority of his character to Agamemnon's. In the end, it is he who ushers in this time of peace.

Chapter 3

An Armored Disguise: The Hiding and Testing of Identity

In the previous chapters, I examined the ways in which armor reveals aspects of the characters who wear it. But one of the most intriguing uses of armor in the *Iliad* is to conceal or even falsify the identity of the warrior who wears it. The implications of such falsification will be the subject of the present chapter. To be sure, the early books of the *Iliad* feature moments in which armor is used as a kind of disguise, such as Nestors' story of the Mace-Fighter and Ereuthalion in Book 7 as well as during the Doloneia in Book 10 with Odysseus, Diomedes, and Dolon all putting on disguises for their night of espionage. These moments, especially Nestor's story, turn out to be foretaste of a major theme which emerges powerfully in the last third of the epic, in which armor as disguise becomes the catalyst for the fate of the three most important characters: for the intertwined fates of Patroclus, Hector, and Achilles are revealed and enacted through the sharing of the armor of Achilles. Achilles' armor becomes a tool for deception when it is worn by Patroclus, and is ultimately worn by Hector, working in the epic to test the identities of the different wearers to see if they are worthy of the armor of the "best of the Achaeans" and can truly assume his identity.

This concept of armor as disguise, and the exploration of how it hides or tests the identity of the wearer, is already implicit in the way Homer treats Hector and his helmet in Book 6. There, the shimmering helmet of Hector works to define his character: it is a symbol of his martial prowess and marks his status as leader of the Trojan host. But as his scene with Andromache and Astyanax makes clear, the armor that defines that one aspect of his identity simultaneously—and quite literally—obscures the other aspects of his character. The conflicting

identities of Hector are resolved when he leaves the walls and dons his helmet, fully accepting his identity as a warrior and declaring that he will give his life in order to protect those he loves and the city he cherishes. Hector chooses to suppress his other nature and instead defines himself solely as a warrior. This warrior identity brings out a ferocity in Hector, an ability to fight and kill like no other Trojan. We see this throughout the major battle sequences sprinkled through out Books 7 to 16. One moment in Book 12 describes the bloodlust of Hector and how he appears to his enemies while in battle:

> Glorious Hector sprang at them,
> his face dark like the rushing night; he shone with the dreadful
> gleam of bronze that he had put about his body; in his hands he held
> two spears. No one coming against him could have restrained him
> except the gods, when he leapt through the gates; and his eyes blazed
> with fire.
>
> (12.462-467)

Here, the shining helmet and armor that denoted Hector's greatness now symbolizes his brutality and intensity with his face darkened by both his rage and the helmet itself. His eyes shine through with a burning bloodlust and his strength meets unmatchable heights as he turns more violent and terrifying. This Hector, shinning in his own armor, will soon be changed by the different armor he puts on and his own identity put to the ultimate test.

Nestor's Strange Advice to Patroclus

At the end of Book 11 Patroclus is distraught at the way the war is heading for the Achaeans and Achilles' continued refrain from fighting. He seeks guidance from Nestor and asks how he might be able to persuade Achilles into joining the battle and cease his stubborn attitudes. Nestor tells Patroclus to put on the armor of Achilles and enter battle, believing that the Trojans will be frightened at the sheer sight of Achilles and flee the battlefield, allowing the Achaeans a moment to regroup after their strongest soldiers have all been seriously injured. Interestingly, this suggestion of wearing another person's armor to scare the enemy off conflicts with another story he has told—the story of the Mace-Fighter. In that tale, Nestor stresses how important it is not to be afraid of a man due to his appearance or renown, as it is still only a mortal man underneath that armor and the person wearing it is not who he appears to be (7.136-156). Nestor's story warns of the risks of putting on someone else's armor and thereby claiming his identity without having the ability and glory to match the legacy of the armor and of the person they are disguised as. Nestor has either forgotten the moral of his own story or, more likely, is merely changing track out of desperation. The mere appearance of Achilles—or someone who looks just like him—is enough, at this point: Patroclus need not slay many men but merely has to put on the armor to instill fear and project the identity of Achilles onto the battlefield. It is worth noting that in his speech he makes no mention of any possible dangers of this plan: those possible dangers will not only become a reality but will lead into a chain of fated deaths that will bring us to the very end of the book.

Patroclus' Plea and Achilles' Limits

Nestor offers his advice in Book 11, but it is not until Book 16 that Patroclus, weeping at the injuries, deaths, and failures the Achaean troops, finally tells Achilles of Nestor's plan. Patroclus relays the idea verbatim to Achilles, who responds with a reply that reminds us of his original intent in staying away from the battlefield; but his absence has become inexcusable now that the war has turned against the Achaeans.

"The girl, who the sons of the Achaeans picked out as prize for me,
acquired by my spear, after I sacked her strong-walled city,
she it was, from my hands, lord Agamemnon took back,
the son of Atreus, as if I were some worthless vagabond.
But let us leave these things in the past; for it was not, after all, possible
for my heart to be angered forever. But assuredly I did say
I would not make an end of my wrath, except when
the battle and the fighting reached my own ships.
You then put on your shoulders my illustrious armor,
and lead the war-loving Myrmidons to battle,
if in truth a dark cloud of Trojans now closes round
the ships in overwhelming might, and the Argives are backed against
the breakers of the sea, having little portion of land."

(16.56-68)

In his response Achilles reminds Patroclus and the audience of the initial feud and forceful exchange that spurred Achilles' rage and his abstention from fighting. Even though Achilles' rage has subsided, it is now the power of his will and his word that keep him from the battlefield as he honors the promise he made to both himself and his fellow Argives. Nonetheless, Achilles agree to Patroclus using his armor, and so Patroclus may now enter the battlefield dressed in Achilles armor: which is to say that, for the first time in the poem, Achilles' armor appears on the battlefield. With this disguise Patroclus will enter the battle as a surrogate Achilles, and so will be tested as to whether he is capable of living up to the identity of Achilles.

But before Patroclus can assume this identity and make his way to his inevitable demise, Achilles sets a boundary for Patroclus, in an effort to protect his loving companion and keep his own identity and glory for himself.

> "But hear me, as I lay in your mind the sum of my instruction,
> so that you win great honor and victorious glory for me
> from the Danaans, who will then send
> the beautiful girl back again, and hand over glorious gifts in addition.
> After you have driven the Trojans from the ships, come back; and if
> Hera's far thundering husband should grant you to win glory,
> you must not, without me, strive to battle
> the war loving Trojans; you will render me less honored;
> do not—as you exult in the war and throng of fighting,
> as you kill Trojans"
>
> (16.83-92)

Achilles thus limits just how far Patroclus can claim his identity on the battlefield. Patroclus can not go so far as to claim too much glory, as this would leave both men in a dishonorable position with Achilles receiving glory that he did not work for and Patroclus would be using the identity and honor of another man to claim glory for himself. Achilles' warning thus protects both Patroclus and Achilles while also recognizing that a disguise can only cover and hide the physical features and not replace the abilities of the wearer.

The Arming of Patroclus: The First Disguised Achilles

The scene in which Patroclus dons Achilles' armor is in fact the first time we learn what Achilles looks like in battle.What marks this arming scene as being different from previous ones is that it is describing a set of armor that the man underneath does not own or is defined by.

Patroclus began to arm himself with gleaming
bronze.
First he strapped the splendid greaves around his shins,
fitted with silver bindings around his ankles;
next he girt about his chest the breastplate—
elaborate, star strewn—of swift-footed Aecides;
across his shoulders he slung his bronze sword
studded with silver; and then the great strong shield;
Over his powerful head he placed the well-forged helmet
with its flowing horsehair; and terribly the crest nodded on it.
He took strong spears, fitted to his hand.
Only the spear of blameless Aecides he did not take up,

heavy, massive, powerful; this no other of the Achaeans could

wield, but only Achilles knew how to wield it,

the spear of Pelian ash, which Chiron gave to his beloved father

from the heights of Mount Pelion to be death to warriors.

(16.129-144)

This armor of Achilles, which was formerly the armor of his father Peleus, is a rather simple set of Achaean armor. The bronze and silver details are similar to what we have seen in Agamemnon's arming sequence, but here there are far fewer decorative flourishes or rich materials as well as it being a rather short arming sequence. The armor is a war ready set, not flashy and elaborate, but is rather a practical set that is given its importance by its wearer and the heroic acts that the men that have worn it perform. Achilles is referred to by his family name Aecides, which evokes the history and familial identity of the man who has also worn this armor, Achilles' father, Peleus. Patroclus does not only take on the identity and title of a single man, but now the weight of the Aeacus' line lays upon his shoulders. It is also poignant that Patroclus does not take the spear of Pelian ash as it is a weapon that only Achilles can wield being passed down from Peleus and Chiron the centaur. This weapon symbolizes the divide between the real Achilles and the fake Achilles: even though Patroclus can look like Achilles and wear all of his gear, Patroclus' ability is not equal to Achilles. The history of this weapon also has a layered, ironic connection to Patroclus' own identity, since Chiron taught Achilles the healing arts[13]

[13] 11.828-832: "Come, you at least save me, taking me to my dark ship, / and cut the arrow from my thigh, and from it wash the dark blood / with warm water, and sprinkle on soothing herbs, / and good ones, which they say you learned from Achilles, / which Chiron taught him, the most honorable of Centaurs."

which he then taught Patroclus. This reminds us of his known identity as a healer—a truer identity, that is, than the one he how assumes.

Up to this point, Patroclus has been characterized by his love and care for Achilles and as someone to whom the audience can easily connect. The irony is that when Patroclus enters the battle, moved to do so by his sorrow over the Achaean losses and his strong desire to help his fellow soldiers, he enters it not as himself but as the man whose rage has caused those losses and injured those soldiers.

The Fated Death of Patroclus and The First Death of Achilles

Patroclus' strength and ability are displayed during an aristeia in which he kills one Trojan after the other. However, this glorious disguised attack is fated to end in death for Patroclus. Earlier in Book 15, Zeus tells Hera about the destined death of four men whose lives and identities are all interlinked.

"And he, Achilles, will rouse his companion
Patroclus, whom shining Hector with his spear will kill
in front of Ilion, after Patroclus has destroyed a multitude
of young men, among them my own son, godlike Sarpedon;
and enraged at Patroclus dying, godlike Achilles will kill Hector."

(15.64-68)

The connected fate between these four characters is both told to us by Zeus and then immediately played out in the epic's action. With this fate driving the narrative plot for the rest of the story, what is depicted in the poem does not stray from Zeus' words, but the way that this is

shown to us is done with specific attention to the visual world of the story and how the symbolic power of armor elevates the poem's action and meaning.

Along with this prophecy, the three men who belong to this fated death, Sarpedon, Patroclus, and Hector, all build to enact and reflect the fate of Achilles who is fated to never return to the shores of his father's kingdom if he fights on the battlefields of Troy. Achilles' questioning of how his life should be lived and whether it is better to live long and die old without glory or to give his life to the pursuit of glory at the cost of dying young is the story's central question which, through the linked fates of Sarpedon, Patroclus, Hector, and Achilles, is played out and revealed to us through the multiple times that the image and figure of Achilles dies.

After Patroclus kills Sarpedon, he reaches the limit of his adventure by claiming enough glory through the slaying of many men and successfully pushing back the Trojans. A battle for the body of Sarpedon breaks out, and this is the moment when Patroclus breaks the boundaries of Achilles' limitations. As the men fight over the body, Zeus is overwhelmed by his grief over the loss of his son Sarpedon and so he decides that this is where Patroclus shall fall and the will of Zeus shall move forward:

> Nor ever did Zeus
> turn his shining eyes from the ferocious combat,
> but ever gazed down upon them, and pondered in his heart
> many things as he brooded on the slaying of Patroclus,
> whether now in the ferocious combat,
> right there about godlike Sarpedon, shining Hector

should kill Patroclus with his bronze spear and take the armor from his

shoulders

(16.644-650)

Zeus has planned for not just the death of Patroclus at the hands of Hector, but has also willed the stripping and taking of Achilles' armor. It is essential for Hector to not only take the armor of Achilles as a sign of Hector's minor victory over the Achaeans, but will be catastrophic for him in his duel against Achilles, which by the will of Zeus requires him to die. Patroclus' death is told to us before it is shown to us as it is repeated through the prophecy of Zeus as well as when the poet directly addresses Patroclus as he points out the exact moment that Patroclus breaks the limitations of Achilles boundaries.

blinded to great folly—

fool; if only he had observed the son of Peleus' command,

he might yet have escaped from the fated evil of dark death.

But the mind of Zeus is ever mightier than the mind of man;

Zeus who puts even a brave man to flight and takes away his victory

easily, but at another time urges him on to battle;

Zeus who now put fury in his breast of Patroclus.

(16.685-691)

This address to Patroclus in the second person marks the turn in his character as he is given the fury and rage which will push him past his limit and lead his march into death. Patroclus moves forward into the Trojan ranks, slaying men around him until he is met by Hector

and Apollo. The death of Patroclus is one of the longest and strangest death sequences in the poem as it takes three different characters to take him down, one of which is a god.

From his head Phoebus Apollo struck the helmet;
and rolling beneath the horses' hooves it rang resounding,
four-horned, hollow eyed, the horsehair crest defiled
with blood and dust. Before this it was forbidden that
the horsehair-crested helmet be defiled by dust,
for it had protected the handsome head and brow of the godlike man
Achilles; but now Zeus gave it to Hector
to wear on his head; but his own death was very near.
In Patroclus' hands the long-shadowed spear was wholly shattered,
heavy, massive, powerful, pointed with bronze; from his shoulders
his broadened shield and belt dropped to the ground;
Then lord Apollo, son of Zeus, undid his breastplate.

(16.793-804)

In the most definitive representation of Patroclus' failed test of identity and ability to become as great as Achilles, the entire armor is stripped from Patroclus' body before he is even killed. Patroclus has gone too far in his disguise and is unmasked by the gods. His revealed identity leaves him physically vulnerable to attacks as his armor is gone but also vulnerable as he is without the protective identity that allowed him to fight so fiercely. The stripping of Patroclus' armor and his subsequent death are representative of Patroclus' failed disguise and his inability to live up to the identity of Achilles. This is underscored by the detail given to the helmet of

Achilles and how it was never to be defiled and touch the earth, but here its defilement is doubled by it touching the ground and it being used by someone other than Achilles. When Hector sees Patroclus' face and the identity of this fake Achille is revealed to him, he vaunts and mercilessly runs his spear through the already injured man.

> But Hector, when he saw great-hearted Patroclus
> drawing back, when he saw him wounded with sharp bronze,
> then through the ranks he closed upon him, and stabbed with
> his spear
> into his lower flank, and drove the bronze point through;
> with a thud Patroclus fell, and his falling brought great anguish on the
> Achaean army.
>
> (16.818-823)

The dishonorable and inglorious victory that Hector achieves by being the third man[14] to kill Patroclus is marked by his own death being prophesied by both Zeus and Patroclus (16.850-854). With the death of Patroclus—which is to say, the first time we see an "Achilles" falling in battle—two new Achilleses will arise: Hector, who will himself don the the hero's armor, thereby hiding his own identity much as it had hidden Patroclus' identity (and with the same ultimate result), and the real Achilles, who will once again become consumed by his rage that will elevate him to divine levels of ability.

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[14] After Apollo strikes Patroclus: "Behind him, in his back, between his shoulders, / a Dardanian man struck with a sharp spear at close range, / Euphorbos son of Panthoos" (16.806-818).

Achilles' Immortal Armor

Without his armor, Achilles' identity becomes more undefinable and is clouded by both his immense rage and grief as well as a change in attitude which sees him lean into his immortal heritage. The armor that was lost with Patroclus and is now worn by Hector was the armor that defined Achilles as the demigod we have read and learned about through the poem, and it is also the armor which most clearly defines him as a mortal. Achilles, now in desperate need of new armor, is given an immortal set, made and given to him by the gods, which raises Achilles to a new level of being and pushes the boundaries of his identity to new limits. In chapter 1, I discussed the qualities that characterize the shield of Achilles as a definitive piece of armor. The shields physical and visual form as an object signifies Achilles presence and status, as well as having the qualities of a symbolic object that contains the different lives and identities of Achilles. But along with the shield Achilles is given a golden set of armor, which when paired with his shield and certain changes in his behavior, all work to redefine and immortalize the identity of Achilles.

Achilles' character and humanity begins to shift in Book 19 when he refuses to take part in mortal rituals such as eating. Odysseus encourages Achilles to allow his men to rest and take a meal before battle, but Achilles rejects these customs until he avenges the death of Patroclus. "But, I / would command the sons of the Achaeans to go to war now / without eating, without food, and at the setting of the sun / to prepare a great meal, after we have avenged the outrage. / Before this, nothing will go down my own throat, / neither drink nor food, with my companion dead" (19.205-210). Achilles also stops sleeping, a characteristically mortal act as we have been shown through the Doloneia's breaking of the custom and the stopping of Ajax and Hector's duel

when the sun sets. But Achilles refuses to sleep due to his continued suffering and anguish over the death of Patroclus, which lasts even after he has avenged Patroclus and given his body a proper funeral:

> The games were dispersed, and the men scattered to go
> each to his own swift ship. And they began to think about their meal
> and giving themselves over to the pleasure of sweet sleep; but Achilles
> wept still, remembering his beloved companion, nor did he sleep,
> who masters all, take hold of him, but he turned himself this side and that
> yearning for the manly strength and noble spirit of Patroclus,
> and remembered with yearning all he been through with him and all the
> woes he had suffered,
> running through dangerous waves and the conflicts of men.
> Recalling these things he let the warm tears fall,
> as he lay now on his side, now again
> on his back, and now face down; then starting up
> he would wander in distraction along the sea shore.
>
> (24.1-12)

By not eating food and rejecting sleep, Achilles mimics the immortal gods who do not take food as nourishment but instead feed on ambrosia and nectar. Achilles may be said to shedding his mortal identity, as his rage and desire for revenge pushes him to become something greater than a man, a more powerful being. Paired with this change in custom and mortal physiology is a change in appearance as Achilles is given his new armor along with an ambrosial

gift from the gods: “and the goddess / dropped into Achilles’ breast nectar and delectable ambrosia, / so that hunger’s distress should not weaken his knees” (19.352-354). Now more than ever, Achilles appears to his comrades, his enemies, and to the audience as a divine figure which is matched by illustrious armor that is made for him. Just seeing his new armor causes him and the other Achaeans to marvel at its greatness: “the goddess laid out the armor down / before Achilles; and it clashed loud, all that was elaborate wrought. / And trembling took all the Myrmidons, nor did any dare / to look upon it straight, and they shrank afraid; but Achilles / as he gazed upon it, so anger entered him all the more, and his eyes / terribly shone out beneath his lids like fire flare; / and he rejoiced as he held in his hands the glorious gifts of the gods" (19.13-18). The sheer intensity of the effects it has on those who see it inform us of the terror that armor is able to inflict on mortal beings. Just the appearance of the armor and the reactions to it separate Achilles from the other mortals who tremble at the sight of it, while he rejoices and is flooded by a wave of rage and hunger to kill. The identity that is symbolized by the armor is one of immortal rage, bloodlust, and an elevated ability which is brought to full form when he dons his new armor.

> First he strapped the splendid greaves around his shins,
> fitted with silver bindings around his ankles;
> next he girt about his chest a breastplate,
> and across his shoulders he slung his bronze sword
> studded with silver; and then he took his great strong shield,
> whose light shone afar, like the moon.
> As when to sailors at sea there appears the light

of a watchfire burning, which blazes high on the mountains
in a lonely farmstead, as storm winds carry them unwilling
across the fish-filled sea far from their friends,
so the flare from Achilles shield, beautiful and intricate wrought,
reached the high clear air. And lifting his heavy four-ridged helmet
he placed it about his head; and it shone far like a star,
the helmet crested with horsehair, the gold-maned plume flowing about it,
which Hephaestus had set thickly about its ridge.

(19.369-383)

The arming of Achilles in his new gear adheres the structure of past arming sequences with descriptions of how the armor is placed on the body as it reads with the raising eye of the description by starting with his greaves and finishing with his helmet. But the arming sequence is noticeably interrupted with a simile describing the shield of Achilles, and although we have already gotten a detailed description of what the shield looks like, this simile works to describe both the shield and this new Achilles in all his glory. It is described as a flame of light that guides wary sailors hounded by the sea, making the shield a beacon of safety which leads both Achilles and the other soldiers to salvation. With the shield being the piece of gear that leads in front of the body and is a defensive tool in battle, this simile works to strengthen the shields' ability to guide Achilles into war and protect his body from the harm of battle.

Whereas the other armor of Achilles tested the identities of its new wearers to see if they are able to embody the armor and identity of Achilles, Achilles must test his new armor to fit his identity. Achilles tests his armors abilities and the feel of wearing his new gear, ensuring that it is

suited to his own capabilities, body, and will allow him to move as freely, both physically and figuratively as his identity must be able to be symbolized properly with the armor.

> And godlike Achilles made trial of himself in his armor,
> to see if it fitted him and if his splendid limbs ran freely;
> and for him it was as if they were wings that lifted the shepherd of the
> people.
> Then from its stand he drew his father's spear,
> heavy, massive, powerful; this no other of the Achaeans could
> wield, but Achilles knew how to wield it,
> the spear of Pelian ash, which Chiron gave to his beloved father
> from the heights of Mount Pelion to be death to warriors.
>
> (19.384-391)

The armor is fitted perfectly to Achilles body and abilities, matching and elevating his godlike form. The one mortal item which he still uses is the spear of Pelian ash, which only he is able to wield in battle. The description of the spear is exactly the same one used in the scene where Patroclus armed himself for battle (16.140-144): but the contrast between the two men, highlighted by the fact that one leaves the spear behind and the other takes it up, could not be greater. Here we are reminded of the spears history, as a weapon crafted by inhuman beasts to kill mortal men by mortal beings. The spear is a complicated weapon: it is both a representation of Achilles' paternal mortality and the lineage of his family but is also a weapon that is not crafted by mortals and can not be used by any mortal being. It passes from the hands of both human and gods, and has been made for only the greatest of warriors and those who are glorious

and strong enough to wield. This is a very apt weapon for Achilles who is born from both an immortal and mortal being leaving his identity in a state of limbo between god and human, but his heritage and overwhelming power elevate him to a place beyond the mortals.

Achilles is lifted by the armor to complete his transformation into an all powerful mortal who, now with the power and armor of the gods, will be able to take on the very gods themselves. In Book 21 we witness the battle between Achilles and the river Xanthous, a water god who Achilles defiles and angers with the blood and bodies of Trojan soldiers. The battle between this god and Achilles is the very moment where the boundaries of Achilles identity is pushed to its limits and he must be checked by the gods themselves who stop him from almost killing and surpassing a god. Without his new armor, his immortal powers and identity would not be evident and represented properly or even able to be utilized as his armor gives him the strength and protection to battle with the immortal gods. and at the end of this chapter, in a strange moment of reversal, a frenzied Achilles chases down the god Apollo in a moment we are soon to see repeated.

Hector's Disguised Destruction

Moments before his duel with Achilles in Book 22, the Trojan hero begins to second guess whether he has to sacrifice his life to end the war and how he might be able to stop the wrath of Achilles.

"But what if I put aside my studded shield
and my strong helmet, leaned my spear against the walls,
and going out alone approached noble Achilles,
and pledged to him Helen and the possessions with her?

All those things—as much as Alexandros carried away to Troy

in his hollow ships, which was the beginning of this quarrel—"

(22.111-116)

Before his final duel, he contemplates peace through exchange, peace that would see him without his armor and weapons and come to Achilles in his most vulnerable state to ask to end the war. This moment reminds us of the initial action that caused the war and seeks to right it by giving back what was taken in an exchange of bodies—the dynamic that we have seen throughout the story. But this moment also see's a return of the old Hector, the one whose greatest concern is to protect his family, people, and city. Here, he envisions himself without any armor at all, either his own or Achilles' strapped around his body, and it is this unarmed Hector who is able to think in terms of peace instead of the warrior identity which blocks out his other identities and is brought out through his armor. By having this Hector revealed to us once again immediately after his family has once again pleaded for him to stay within the walls and to stop his sacrifice, Homer shows a radical change of attitude from the one he displayed in Book 6, and allows his affect—rarely glimpsed since then—to surface once again.

But Hector knows that this possibility is too late to become a reality and that he must set himself against the might of Achilles and stand in the vows he made in Book 6 to give his life for Ilion. And as these thoughts race through his mind, a menacing figure approaches him and the battle is set into motion.

Thus his thoughts churned as he waited, and Achilles drew near,

equal to the war god, the helmet-shaking warrior,

brandishing his Pelian ash-wood spear above his right shoulder,

terrifying. The bronze glinted around him like the flare

of blazing fire or the sun rising.

And as he watched him, trembling took hold of Hector; and he could no

longer endure

there to stand his ground, but left the gate behind and, terrified, he ran.

(22.131-138)

Achilles enters the battle in menacing fashion, decked in his armor that emits a glow so intense it is as if his rage is burning and flaring all over his body. Hector's reaction is one that is not typical of the idealized hero or the fearsome warrior that we have seen in the past books, but it is a reaction that is inherently human and similar to that of the Achaeans who previously saw the armor. The chase takes the men around the walls of Troy three times, circling the city in a chase of death that will eventually lead to the fall of the walls themselves. Hector's flight from Achilles' overbearing presence is out of self-preservation and fear, as the divine force of Achilles comes off as villainous in its description which puts the audience closer to the perspective of Hector then of Achilles. While running Hector is wearing the armor of Achilles, still assuming the visual identity of the man who is chasing him, but here it appears that Hectors test of identity has already failed him as fleeing from a fight is an uncharacteristic action of Achilles, but he is literally being chased by the man whose identity he has assumed—a disguise that reveals his failure to fit Achilles identity.

Achilles vs, Achilles: The Visual Enactment of Fate

As a result of the persuasion and deceit of the gods (22.226-231), Hector eventually stops his fleeing and stands to face Achilles. The battle between the two is filled with vaunting as they

hurl words at each other just as they hurl their spears. In the final moments of the fight, the action focuses on the visual nature of the fight highlighting the armor of each man to point to the visual storytelling and the emphatic effect that the armor has in telling the story of Achilles' death.

> But Achilles charged, his spirit filled with
> savage passion. Before his breast he held his covering shield,
> beautiful and intricately wrought, and nodded with his shining
> four-ridged helmet; splendid horsehair flowed about it
> of gold, which Hephaestus had set thickly around the helmet crest.
> As a star moves among other stars in the milky murk of night,
> Hesperus the Evening Star, the most beautiful star to stand in heaven,
> so the light shone from the well-pointed spearhead that Achilles
> was shaking in his right hand, bent upon evil for Hector,
> surveying his handsome flesh, where it might best give way.
> The rest of his body was held by brazen armor,
> the splendid armor he stripped after slaying the strong Patroclus—
> but at that point where the collarbone holds the neck from the shoulders
> there showed
> his gullet, where death of the soul comes swiftest;
> and at this point shining Achilles drove with his spear as Hector strove
> against him,
> and the spearhead went utterly through the soft neck.

(22.312-327)

Hector's final moments are described in cinematic detail as Homer visually depicts Achilles enacting his fated death upon himself. In redescribing Achilles appearance we are reminded of his immortal identity which is brought out through his divine armor, his shield leading and protecting his movements as he streaks across the battlefield like the star his spear is compared to. The star comparison is the repeated simile to describe Achilles' appearance in this particular armor as it relates the bright shine of the armor as well as asserting his identity as a semi-divine figure by setting him amongst the stars just like the gods who live above the earth and populate the skies and heaven. The description here reminds us of his presence, his prowess, and his identity as a demigod who is able to be both an immortal and mortal being within one body.

In fact, the immortal armor of Achilles is the story's only successful disguise as Achilles is able to change into a divine figure for these last moments of his life. However Achilles is still a mortal being who knowingly accepts and enacts his own fate as he reconciles his confused identity. Here is where the shield of Achilles works as a perfect symbol of the complexities of Achilles' life as demigod as its portrait of the totality of the life and death of mortal beings encapsulates his mortal nature, while the shield itself as an object is definitive of his immortal heritage in its appearance and in the fact that it was crafted by divine hands.

Achilles' ultimate choice is to live as a god and die as one of most glorious men among mortals, doing what Patroclus and Hector both fail to do in their disguises as they do not live up to the identity they assume. Following the description of Achilles, we are reminded of the body of Hector which will become the central focus of the epic's final books. Achilles surveys his

body looking for an opening to strike but the body is encased in the armor of Achilles which he took upon killing Patroclus. In fact, the covering of Hector's entire body in the bronze armor of Achilles leads to a doubly layered end to his character in a tragically ironic form as both the physical and figurative identities of Hector are replaced by the bronze image and identity of Achilles which is what ultimately allows for Achilles to take Hector's life. By having Hector's body encased in the armor of Achilles, Homer physically erases him from the scene, his body literally blotted out from the visual perspective of Achilles and the audience. Disguised as Achilles, Hector is also undefinable, since he is without his own armor and shimmering helm that has come to symbolize so much of Hector's identity throughout the poem. If Hector had worn his own armor into battle and left the armor of Achilles in his tents, Achilles would have been unable to so perfectly know the weak point of his armor and kill him and Hector could have fought with the strength of his own power and identity. By rejecting his own armor and identity, Hector leaves himself physically vulnerable and devoid of any of the qualities such as his strength, his bravery, and his honor that defined and elevated his character beyond that of a typical antagonist, leaving him dead in the bronze shadow of the man he pretended to be.

Although Hector's disguised demise is a tragic ending for his character, it is also a visually stunning moment for Achilles, who, in slaying a figure who to all appearances is himself, ironically alludes to his own imminent fate. In choosing to fight and avenge the death of Patroclus, Achilles makes a decision to end his life short and obtain heroic glory, thus accepting his mortality and the limits of his semi-immortal identity. The knowledge of his armor's vulnerabilities and using that weakness in his armor to kill Hector is an acknowledgment of the weakness in his own identity, the strange middle ground between the realms of humans and gods.

These killings of the visual representation of the various "Achilleses" in the *Iliad*, each represented by the hero's armor as worn by Patroclus, Hector, and eventually Achilles himself, represent the epic's rich use of armor as both object and symbol, linking together the work's overarching themes of heroism and mortality. The dense complexities of this moment help to create some of the Iliad's more trenchant ironies. When the divinely armed figure of Achilles kills the Achilles wearing his mortal armor, we see a visual representation of the conflict between the hero's two identities; and yet the moment also represents, ultimately an acceptance of his mortality and the fulfillment of the fate which defines him as a mortal being.

Conclusion

Armor, as I hope to have shown, is a tool with functions beyond its seemingly simple use as a protective object: as a definer of identity, as a crucial kind of currency in exchanges, and as a deceptive tool of disguise. Though armor covers the body and hides the human form, much of its importance and power comes from what armor is able to reveal to the audience about the characters that wear it. The audience's understanding of many functions of armor and the ways it is used throughout the poem by Homer, are all brought to the forefront in the poem's climax, as theses themes and uses of armor are woven into the final book.

In the final book of the *Iliad*, we are shown one final exchange, a disguise, and a powerful moment of recognition. After Hector's death, Priam is persuaded to try to rescue the body of his son with a ransom. He is told to make a great offer to Achilles so that he will cease mutilating Hector's body and return it to Troy so that he may have a proper burial. Priam quickly collects the items from his chests and arranges a pile of gifts to take with him to Achilles' tent, hoping to exchange Hectors' body for spoils.

> Then he drew out twelve splendid robes,
> and twelve single folded woolen cloaks, and as many blankets,
> as many mantles of white linen, and as many tunics too,
> and he weighed and brought out ten full talents of gold,
> and brought out two gleaming tripods, and four cauldrons,
> and he brought out a splendid cup, which Thracian men gave to him
> when he went to them on a mission, a magnificent possession; not
> even this did the old man withhold, as he desired with all his heart

to ransom back his beloved son.

(24.229-237)

The array of spoils that Priam collects are all items associated with peace: no weapons or armor are offered. Many of the elements of past exchanges are present in this one as there are items of wealth and great quality, as well as a high quantity of objects. We also have objects that have historical and sentimental value, always considered the most valuable, and in this moment, the most important to give. The cup, an object that refers to Priam's past and recalls the exchange between Bellerophon and Oineus, shows that it is the ultimate object of peace and friendship.

To get into the Achaean camp, Priam is guided by the god Hermes, who is given his own arming sequence as well as a disguise in order to not reveal his immortal identity.

Straight away he bound beneath his feet his splendid sandals
immortal, golden, which carried him over the water
and over the boundless earth with the breath of the wind;
he took up his wand, with which he charms the eyes
of whichever men he wishes, and rouses them again when they have
slumbered;
and taking this in his hands the mighty slayer of Argos flew away.
Swiftly he arrived at Troy and at the Hellespont;
then he set out in the likeness of a noble youth
with his first beard, which is when early manhood is most graceful.

(24.340-348)

The arming of Hermes shows him putting on his most defining pieces, those being his golden sandals which allow him to travel anywhere at divine speeds, and his wand which he uses to charm and deceive mortal men. The gear of Hermes is described and then immediately used to show the usefulness of the sandals and the wand; Hermes lands in Troy instantly in the very next line after he flies away, and just as quickly, he uses his wand's power to disguise his appearance into that of a young Achaean soldier. The instant gratification of the sequence displays Hermes' divine powers, which all work to aid in the epic's final moments. Hermes has stayed out of the conflict for almost the entirety of the poem, only being referenced by mortals and other gods in passing speech. However, his importance to the poem's conclusion gives him a special place in the narrative as a god who seeks to mend the feuds between mortals instead of encouraging war. His contrasting role as a bringer of peace is why it is important that we understand his powers and why his arming sequence is included in the poem. Moreover, his use of his powers to disguise himself to aid Priam in his journey to retrieve his son is not only an example of divine ability, but shows a form of disguise which does not deceitfully deceive, nor lead to terrible ruin, but is used to help restore peace among mortals.

The meeting between Priam and Achilles is an exceptional moment in the poem, showing at once two enemies coming together for an exchange; and two characters who are in many ways each other's opposites. Achilles is the young conqueror, who chooses honor and glory over the possibility of seeing his father and his homeland ever again, and Priam is an old king who abdicates his pride and honor to meet with the man who killed his son and will do whatever he can to have his son's body back. Achilles accepts the ransom of Hector's body as he is instructed by his mother to do, but he leaves out two of the fine robes so that he may honor Hector's body

as it is taken home. “And from the strong-wheeled wagon / they lifted / the boundless ransom for the body of Hector. / But they left two fine-spun robes and a tunic, / so Achilles could wrap the body and give it to be carried home” (24.578-581). This honoring of Hector by Achilles is interesting as he not only takes out items from his own pile of gifts but uses them to dress and properly clean the body of his enemy so that he may be buried with the same honor and rites as his own companion Patroclus.

This exchange, which of course leads into the final act of the *Iliad*, the funeral of Hector, brings us full circle to the very beginning of the epic when Chryses came to the Achaeans to ransom his child. Just as the various earlier scenes of exchanges between Agamemnon and Achilles work, ultimately, to redeem and show a more peaceful course of events, this ransom of Hector's body shows that the act that triggered the epic’s tragic action has at last been corrected. It is significant that in this final exchange, in which the two highest powers of the warring parties are able to meet in peace, Achilles takes from his prizes and wraps his enemy in what are now his own robes, which are also the robes of Hector's own father. Hector’s body, being the physical embodiment of the Trojan people, is honored and valued just as much as the body of Achilles’ closest companion Patroclus, emphasizing that the difference between Achaean and Trojan is weaker than the shared humanity between the two peoples. The strength and martial prowess of Achilles, Patroclus, and Hector may be quantified by the spoils they win or take, but the value of their humanity is displayed by how much the people that love them are willing to give to honor their bodies.

After Achilles and Priam complete the exchange, the two men share in a meal, marking the first time Achilles eats after the death of Patroclus. Achilles prepares cooked sheep, bread,

and wine for his guest, and together they enjoy the food. But it is in a brief moment after their meal that reveals that the two men have truly been able to find peace.

> And when they had put away desire for eating and drinking,
> then did Priam son of Dardanos look in wonder at Achilles,
> how massive he was, what kind of man; for he was like the gods to
> look upon;
> and Achilles looked in wonder at Dardanian Priam,
> gazing on his noble face and listening to his words.
>
> (24.628-632)

This moment of recognition, where seemingly two enemies who have each caused each other suffering and sorrow are able to see the bare faces of one another, and see not just the beautiful, or the noble, or the strength of their faces, but also see something shared. Priam looks at Achilles and sees his "massive" size and divine face and stature. Priam marvels at Achilles' unobscured body in its most natural form: his most human form. Within Achilles, Priam can see the greatness of his ability and the divine qualities within him, but Priam also sees a man who undoubtedly looks like his lost son Hector. Similarly, Achilles can see the noble status of Priam and the wisdom of his age, but can also see someone who resembles both his own father Peleus, who he will never see again, as well as the life he will never be able to have. Achilles will not grow old and rule a kingdom, nor will he raise a family with many children, and he will not be able to commit the noble acts of Priam in risking his life for his son.

This recognition of the shared humanity between the mortal characters of the Iliad is reinforced by the fact that for so much of the epic these men are only recognized by the armor

that covers their body and face. Moreover, it must be said that the wearing of armor is not the opposite of being naked, but is rather a tool for exhibiting our mortal nature. When we visualize the world of this epic, much of it is covered in the bronze and gold armors that cover our characters. Armor is an object that shines in the sun for it to be seen, it clashes against the body for it to be heard, and encases its wearer in a heavy protective shell for all of its weight to be felt. Armor, so to speak, is a human object that reflects truest aspects of our nature, enhancing our physical form so as to be defined by our great qualities, all while protecting our vulnerable bodies and lives.

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