Heroism in Homer and Shakespeare

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This thesis is presented in accordance with the requirements of the degree of Master of Philosophy. All sources have been acknowledged and except where otherwise noted this thesis is my original work.

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I am very grateful for assistance with this thesis to my supervisors Dr Simon Haines, Reader in English and Head of the School of Humanities, and Dr Elizabeth Minchin, Reader in Classics. It has been enjoyable and rewarding to have them as my supervisors. If I was starting this thesis again I would wish to have them again as my supervisors.

Contents

Preliminary Discussion

This thesis will give a comparative analysis of the hero in Homer and in Shakespeare. In this preliminary discussion I will give an outline of the thesis. I will discuss the aims of the thesis, the argument that is expressed in it, the motivation for the thesis, the scope of the thesis, and its methodology. I will then discuss some of the possible problems with the thesis.

The aim of the thesis is to look at what a hero is in Homer and in Shakespeare and to examine the extent to which there are similarities and differences between heroism in Homer and Shakespeare. The thesis will also look at whether these conceptions of heroism in Homer and Shakespeare represent a continuous and sequential process of evolution or whether they are different and separate strands of development.

The argument of the thesis will be that there are similarities between the hero in Homer and the hero in Shakespeare that reflect characteristics that are common to the hero in literature in general, and that there are differences between the hero in Homer and the hero in Shakespeare that reflect conceptions of heroism that are particular to Homer and to Shakespeare. The thesis will look at the etymology of the word 'hero', the hero's connection to war and peace, the hero's relationship with life and death, and the qualities that give the hero definition. The thesis will then examine the similarities between the conceptions of heroism in Homer and Shakespeare. It will look at characteristics that are common to the hero in Homer and the hero in Shakespeare (and to heroes in literature more generally), like courage, strength,

beauty, birth, charisma, eloquence, and wisdom. The thesis will then examine the differences between the hero in Homer and the hero in Shakespeare, like the way that they think, feel, and act, the way that they are represented as simple or complex, and the way that they are affected by free will or determinism. The thesis will then give a conclusion that will re-express the argument.

The motivation for the thesis is that it is (as I will show) an absorbing topic and that there is only limited research in comparative analysis in this area. The research that has been done on Homer and on Shakespeare is exceedingly plentiful, and this thesis will look mainly at works by Redfield, Schein, Nagy, Dietrich, Williams, Bulman, Kirsch, Kiernan, and Proser. They give discussions that relate to the hero in Homer or the hero in Shakespeare, but they do not discuss the similarities and differences of the hero in Homer and Shakespeare. This thesis will gain an understanding of the hero in Homer and the hero in Shakespeare and will then use that understanding to make a comparative analysis. Thus the thesis will make a significant contribution to comparative analysis in literature in its area. It will interest scholars of Homer and Shakespeare and scholars interested in comparative studies.

The scope of the thesis is necessarily restricted and much further research could be done in this area. The thesis will be looking only at the hero in tragedy. The thesis will focus on the *Iliad* of Homer and on the tragedies of Shakespeare like *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*. It will examine a cluster of heroes. It will look closely at the heroes Achilles, Odysseus, Hamlet, and Macbeth, and will also consider the heroes Hector, Aias, Brutus, Coriolanus, and Othello. There are many other heroes who are not insignificant, but whom the scope of the thesis cannot be dilated to include in detail.

There are also significant female characters, and it would probably be very interesting to look at conceptions of feminine heroism. But this thesis will be looking only at the male heroes.

The methodology of the thesis is important in expressing its argument. The thesis will use the concepts of the mean, deficiency, and excess in its argument. For example, the thesis will suggest that the hero in Homer and Shakespeare is characterised by the mean of courage and not by the deficiency of cowardice or the excess of recklessness. The thesis will also use contraries in its argument. Again to give an example, the thesis will argue that the hero in Homer is simple and static whereas the hero in Shakespeare is complex and dynamic.

This brings us to a possible problem with the thesis. The thesis may sometimes seem too simplistic in its analysis through the use of contraries. For example, the thesis will suggest that the hero in Homer shows a spontaneity and impulsiveness that the hero in Shakespeare does not. This is problematic because words like 'spontaneity' and 'impulsiveness' may not make sense for the hero in Homer in the same way that they make sense for the hero in Shakespeare. In Homer we might say that the hero does not act 'spontaneously' or 'impulsively', but just acts as he does. It may be a problem here that we cannot look at the hero in Homer and the hero in Shakespeare through the same lens, that we cannot analyse the hero in Homer and the hero in Shakespeare using the same standards. So in expressing an argument using contraries the thesis may be forcing its analysis into an artificial position. I will deal with this problem as the thesis goes on.

There is a more general problem with the thesis that may be insuperable. The hero goes through metamorphoses. In Homer what it is to be a hero develops from the *Iliad* to the *Odyssey* and even within one poem there are different kinds of heroism. In Shakespeare too what it is to be a hero develops as the plays go on. So the kind of heroism in *Julius Caesar* may be very different from the kind of heroism in *Hamlet*. Thus the hero in Homer and Shakespeare and even within Homer and within Shakespeare is not isomorphic, and what a hero is for Homer and Shakespeare develops through their artistic lives as poets.[1] This means that we may not be able to talk about only one kind of heroism. But (as the thesis will show) there are some things that are essential to the hero in Homer and Shakespeare (and literature in general). As a result of this we can make some meaningful statements about what heroism is to Homer and Shakespeare.

Regarding referencing in the thesis I use the Oxford style. References in footnotes give the author, title, and page number of the text (and the translator where appropriate). I give the author and the title of the text even if the text has already been cited. For a full reference for each text see the corresponding entry in the bibliography. The only exceptions to this style of referencing are references to Homer and Shakespeare.

In the thesis all references to Homer give the title and the book and line or page numbers from the Rieu translations. Any variation on this (such as reference to a

[1] I use the name Homer to mean both the poet of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. I also assume that Shakespeare wrote all the plays that are generally attributed to him. It may be that Shakespeare did not write all the plays that we give his name to or that Homer did not compose both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. But it is important for my argument only that, for example, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were composed by poets from the same tradition, and this seems very likely.

different translation) is indicated in footnotes. References in footnotes give the author, title, and book and page numbers (or book and line numbers depending on the translation). I generally do not give line numbers for references to the *Iliad*. This is because the main translations I use (that is the Rieu and Hammond translations) do not give them. I give only the book and page numbers. This results in an irregularity that for references to the Rieu translation of the *Iliad* I give page numbers while for references to the Rieu translation of the *Odyssey* I give line numbers.

In the thesis all references to Shakespeare give the title and the act, scene, and line numbers and each of these references corresponds to those given in the bibliography. References in footnotes always give the author, title, and the act, scene, and line numbers.

Regarding names I use the familiar names rather than the transliterations. So I use 'Achilles' rather than 'Achilleus' or 'Akhilleus'. I also retain the Greek names for characters even when their Roman names are used. Thus I still refer to Shakespeare's 'Ajax' as 'Aias' and Shakespeare's 'Ulysses' as 'Odysseus', while making it clear that these are Shakespeare's characters and not Homer's.

What is a hero?

Etymology

There are different etymologies of the word 'hero' in English. Some are more interesting than they are reliable, but they do tell us something about the nature of heroism. Thus a good understanding of what heroism is can be gained by looking at many of these origins.

The word 'hero' in English has its origin in the Greek word 'heros', which has an adjectival significance of 'good' or 'noble', and can be connected with 'lord' or 'master'.[2] The 'hero' is originally a 'protector' and a 'defender', someone who saves and preserves.[3] He safeguards and protects.

We can see this in Agamemnon as the great ruler of his people. It is likely that 'Agamemnon' means 'ruling mightily', from 'aga' meaning 'very much' and 'memnon' meaning 'to protect, rule over'.[4] Indeed Agamemnon states that 'I wish my people to be saved, not die'.[5] Here his chief concern is to see his people safe.

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[2] Dietrich *Death, Fate, and the Gods* p25.
[3] Klein *A Comprehensive Etymological Dictionary of the English Language* p344.
[4] Klein *A Comprehensive Etymological Dictionary of the English Language* p17.
[5] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Hammond 1 p6.

'Hero' also seems to be etymologically related to the Greek word 'hore' meaning 'season of spring'.[6] This is helpful for an understanding of the hero because it presents him as a man at his most vital and fruitful. He has blossomed and as a man he has reached the point of his fullest perfection. He is in the flower of his life.[7] He is flourishing and is ripe, and he is an embodiment of life. But there is also the implicit suggestion that he can now only fall away. He is in bloom, and before too long he will be cut off. He is at a point of decadence. We see that he is cut off from life so young.[8] Crops are harvested by farmers, just as the hero is sacrificed, or sacrifices himself, so that his people may flourish. The hero reaps too, because he takes the lives of other heroes, as Achilles says when pursuing the fleeing Trojans towards their city: 'you Trojans running in flight and I behind cutting you down'.[9] Achilles reaps a crop of men, cutting down so many men who were in the bloom of their youth.[10] Achilles cuts down so many flowering young men.[11] On one day of fighting the warriors cut each other down just as 'reapers work towards each other on a rich man's land, cutting their swathes to meet across a field of wheat or barley: and the crop falls handful after handful to the ground'.[12] The battle-field is like rich ploughland.[13] Men are like crops bowing in the wind.[14] The crops are cut and gathered in when they are ripe, and similarly death always hangs over the head of the hero and defines his life. This etymology suggests that the hero is fully developed physically and mentally. This etymology is more attractive than it is convincing. There may be a more significant

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[6] See Schein *The Mortal Hero* p69.
[7] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Hammond 13 p212.
[8] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Fagles 24.853.
[9] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Hammond 21 p338.
[10] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Fagles 22.498.
[11] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Lattimore 22.423.
[12] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Hammond 11 p167.
[13] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Hammond 10 p160, 19 p316.
[14] See Homer *The Iliad* translated by Hammond 2 p22.

problem here that we are discussing not heroism as much as we are looking at what it is to be a man. But the concepts of heroism and humanity are linked so intimately, where a hero is the fullest embodiment of a man. Thus this etymology is meaningful and contributes to an understanding of heroism.

In the *Iliad* there are many examples where the lives and deaths of men are compared to the recurring seasons of nature.[15] The men in their tens of thousands are as many as the leaves and flowers that come in springtime (*Iliad* 2 p52). Men in their generations are like leaves on the trees. When the wind blows in autumn the sapless leaves are scattered on the ground, but when spring comes the trees burst into bud and put on fresh leaves (*Iliad* 6 p121). The hero, like a leaf on a tree, flourishes for a while and shows his brilliance, but in a moment droops and fades away (*Iliad* 21 p392). The life of the hero flees and flits away. Again this may be more about what it is to be a man than about what it is to be a hero, but a hero represents the ultimate of what it is to be a man, and the repeating successions of life and death are especially significant for conceptions of heroism.

In the *Iliad* when heroes are killed in battle, they are said to lie like fallen saplings. One hero is compared to a tree that had been planted in the rich soil, and had sucked up plenty of moisture. It had grown into a fine young tree and had put out beautiful blossoms. But a gusty wind had blown up one day, uprooting it from the soil and stretching it out on the earth (*Iliad* 17 p317). Another hero is compared to a slender poplar with flourishing branches springing at its top. It shot up in a meadow by a

[15] Nagy *The Best of the Achaeans* p178.

gushing stream, but was cut down and fell in the dust (*Iliad* 4 p89). Another hero is compared to a tree that had grown on the top of a hill, but was cut down and swept the ground with its leaves (*Iliad* 13 p238). We also see Achilles compared to the most beautiful plant in an orchard. 'He shot up like a sapling' (*Iliad* 18 p338). But he is soon to be cut off. We see here again the hero dying in the prime of his life, dying when he is at his most beautiful. The hero is killed at the moment of his fullest beauty.

It is interesting to look at how the hero is presented in other sources too because this shows that there is something essential about what a hero is. There is something that serves as a foundation for conceptions of the hero in general. Here the notion that the hero is the fullest embodiment of a man and is cut off at the point of his fullest perfection is a significant part of this foundation for heroism.

In Quintus when Nireus is killed he is plucked away from life. Nireus is compared to a sapling that is uprooted when a river rushes down in roaring flood, tearing the bank away, 'low it lieth heavy-blossomed'.[16] Those who are killed die like trees uprended by the roots, dashed down on the earth, their 'tall stems blossom-crowned'. Their trunks are snapped, they lie a ruin of splintered stems.[17] The men fight in a 'grim harvest-field', and those killed are the 'fruits of death's harvest'.[18] They lie on the earth like the long swathes of sun-ripened crops that have fallen to the reaper's hands and are spread over the field.[19] They are hewed down just as the swathe falls when the swift-handed reaper ranges down the furrow plying his sickle.[20] When Achilles kills

[16] Quintus Smyrnaeus *The Fall of Troy* 6 p283, 6 p281.
[17] Quintus Smyrnaeus *The Fall of Troy* 1 p41.
[18] Quintus Smyrnaeus *The Fall of Troy* 1 p65, 2 p85.
[19] Quintus Smyrnaeus *The Fall of Troy* 3 p141.
[20] Quintus Smyrnaeus *The Fall of Troy* 11 p465.

Troilus, he refts his life from him like a gardener who mows down with his scythe the dewy-fresh and blossom-flushed plant in bloom.[21]

In Apollonius Jason ploughs a field in response to a challenge set by King Aietes. He binds the yoke tightly on the necks of the animals, and with a firm grip on its well-made handle he skilfully guides the plough.[22] He then sows some dragon's teeth into the black soil. From the teeth armed men shoot up like wheat. Jason reaps the lives of these men, hurling himself on them and mowing them down with his sword.[23] Here we see Jason as a farmer, sowing the crops in the dark soil with his plough, and as a warrior, cutting men down with his sword.

We also see in Shakespeare that a hero is compared to a reaper, mowing down the lives of men, who wipes the sweat from his forehead as he moils in the ploughlands just as he wipes the blood from his forehead as he toils on the battle-field.[24]

Also in Shakespeare we see that a hero is ripe and is at the point of fullest perfection.[25] The hero is compared to a rose that is 'quite, quite down' just when it was at full bloom.[26] A hero is compared to a cut flower that, although beautiful, will be short-lived. He will die even before the flower withers away.[27] When a hero knows that he is soon to die, he suggests that he is like a tree that has lost its leaves.[28] His short season is over.

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[21] Quintus Smyrnaeus *The Fall of Troy* 4 p199.
[22] Apollonius Rhodius *The Voyage of Argo* 3 p144.
[23] Apollonius Rhodius *The Voyage of Argo* 3 p145.
[24] Shakespeare *Coriolanus* 1.3.35-37.
[25] Shakespeare *Henry V* 1.2.120-121.
[26] Shakespeare *Hamlet* 3.1.146-154.
[27] Shakespeare *Macbeth* 4.3.171-173.
[28] Shakespeare *Macbeth* 5.3.22-23.

The word 'hero' is also etymologically connected with the goddess Hera.[29] At the wedding of Zeus and Hera, Mother Earth gave Hera a tree with golden apples, which was later planted in Hera's orchard on the slopes of Mount Atlas where the daughters of evening lived.[30] The garden in which the tree was planted was where the panting chariot-horses of the sun rested after completing their journey, and the island was therefore in the west.[31] A hero was a man who was sacrificed to Hera, and the island where the apple tree was planted was in the west because the setting of the sun in the west represented the hero's death.[32] The hero's body was put safely under the earth with a golden apple, where the golden apple was a passport into Hera's paradise.[33] It may also be significant that golden apples are round and bright like the sun, where this may hint at the connection between the hero and life and death.

We also see more generally that the hero is connected to this island in the west. In Greek mythology Heracles goes to the garden where the golden apples grow on the island in the west as one of his heroic labours.[34] We also see in the *Epic of Gilgamesh* Gilgamesh race the sun through a vast cavern to arrive in a garden of jewels where gems grow like fruit on the trees. Gilgamesh then crosses an ocean of death to the island in the west where he hopes to learn the secrets of immortality.[35] These connections point to an intimate relationship between the hero and life and death.

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[29] Klein *A Comprehensive Etymological Dictionary of the English Language* p344.
[30] Hesiod *Theogony* p30.
[31] Graves *The Greek Myths* 133 a p507.
[32] Graves *The Greek Myths* 133.4 p513.
[33] Graves *The Greek Myths* 12.5 p52.
[34] Apollodorus *The Library of Greek Mythology* 2.5.11 p81.
[35] *The Epic of Gilgamesh* 9.138-196, 10.169-211.

The hero's connection with apples is complicated. The word 'apple' is 'melon' in Greek.[36] There is a close relationship between the hero and apples, and this suggests that a hero is a man of peace, given that apples are grown in the orchards that are tended during peace. But in Greek mythology a golden apple was also used by Strife to bring about war. Strife created conflict among the lovely-shaped goddesses by offering a golden apple as a prize to the most beautiful,[37] and this finally resulted in war among humans. This tells us that the relation of the hero to apples connects him to war just as it does to peace.

The connection between the hero and sheep is also interesting, and helps to give a full understanding of the nature of the hero. The word 'melon' in Greek also means 'sheep', and this makes a further connection between the hero and peace, given that flocks of sheep are tended during peace. In Homer flocks of sheep are presented as something for the hero to contend for, and as a prize of war.[38] Flocks of sheep also allow the hero to feed his army at war. It may seem odd that sheep are presented in this way because flocks of sheep seem to be more generally connected with peace. But what is suggested by the hero's connection to sheep is that war is not his only concern. What he wins through war will enlarge his rich estate in his native land, and he hopes to return to it again to farm the dark soil during peace. So one purpose of war is to gain prosperity in peace. So the hero is a farmer and a warrior.

Thus the hero's connection with apples and sheep depicts him as a man of both peace and war. There is a similarity (perhaps incidental) between Heracles's struggle to

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[36] Shipley *The Origins of English Words* p2.
[37] Apollodorus *The Library of Greek Mythology* E 3.1 p146.
[38] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Rieu 9 p171, 11 p215.

recover the golden apples from the beautiful orchards and Jason's striving to retrieve the golden fleece of the sheep Chrysomallus, especially given the connection between apples and sheep through the Greek word 'melon'. This hints at the connection between the hero and the orchards and flocks he fights for during war and tends during peace.

It is also significant that the relationship the hero has with gold through apples and sheep also connects him to immortality. Gold represents immortality and immutability just as the flourishing and withering of plants and animals represents the changing seasons of life and death in nature.[39] We see this explicitly in the sceptre that was made by the gods to last for all time and given to humans (*Iliad* 2 p42). It was gilded with imperishable gold after it was cut from its stem in the hills and stripped of its bark and foliage. It would never put out leaves or twigs again.[40] It is removed from the recurring seasons of nature. This points very generally to the notion that a man gains a sort of immortality through his nature as a hero.

In English the word 'hero' refers to a man of exceptional ability.[41] The hero is a man who does great things, and although they are human deeds they are performed at a higher level. In Homer we see that the hero is a man who outdoes other men. He strives to be the best and no ordinary man can compare with him.[42] In Shakespeare

[39] See also Nagy *The Best of the Achaeans* p179.
[40] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Rieu 1 p29, 2 p47.
[41] Ayto *Dictionary of Word Origins* p280.
[42] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Hammond 6 p96.

too we see that a hero gives the world 'assurance of a man'.[43] He is such a person that it is said to all the world, 'this is a man!'.[44]

In English a 'hero' is also a man who forms the subject of an epic. He is the chief male personage in a poem, play, or story. The interest of the story is centred on the hero.[45] He is the 'protagonist', which has a prefixal significance of 'chief in importance',[46] emphasising again his prominence. It is also interesting that a 'protagonist' refers to someone who struggles against something. The word 'agonia' which forms the suffix of 'protagonist' originally referred to a contest, especially an athletic one, but came to apply generally to any striving.[47] It also extended to denote the physical and mental anguish one may endure in striving for something.[48] It gives us the English word 'agony'. So a protagonist is also someone who struggles and suffers.

Thus in English a 'protagonist' is someone to whom the agony happens, and this is helpful for an understanding of heroism because it is through this agony that a hero's character is revealed and his heroic qualities are fully tested. Odysseus's character is revealed through the sufferings he endures on his wanderings in the *Odyssey*, and this agony he goes through and the way he bears it gives us a deeper understanding of him than we gain in the *Iliad*. The heartache Achilles goes through similarly exposes the nature of his character. Hamlet's character is revealed through the agony he goes

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[43] Shakespeare *Hamlet* 3.4.62.
[44] Shakespeare *Julius Caesar* 5.5.73-75.
[45] *The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology* edited by C. Onions p438.
[46] Klein *A Comprehensive Etymological Dictionary of the English Language* p595.
[47] Partridge *A Short Etymological Dictionary of Modern English* p10.
[48] Shipley *The Origins of English Words* p3.

through following the murder of his father. The tribulations of Macbeth also reveal the flaws in his character and his failing heroism. The hero suffers beyond ordinary human experience. We see that suffering is what produces song.[49] Through this suffering and the way the hero endures it his heroism is made clear. He maintains his

sense of himself as a hero whatever happens to him. When the sea is tranquil all boats alike show mastership in floating.[50] When the sea is untroubled every 'shallow bauble boat' has the daring to sail upon it, making their way with greater ships. But when the weather turns rough there is no sign of these little ships, who flee back to the safety of the harbour or sink straight away under the waves. When the storm hits only the best ships continue.[51] 'The strong-ribbed bark through liquid mountains cut'.[52] Until such dangers strike the bold and the coward, the wise and the fool, the hard and the soft, may seem all alike, so these misfortunes reveal the hero.[53] 'In the reproof of chance / Lies the true proof of men'.[54] The hero is a man whose greatness 'the shot of accident nor dart of chance / Could neither graze nor pierce'.[55] When humans are fully tested then the hero is revealed.

In the *Odyssey* we see that Odysseus's heroism is revealed through his suffering. Odysseus says 'think of the wretches who in your experience have borne the heaviest load of sorrow, and I will match my griefs with theirs' (*Odyssey* 7.211-213). He is a

[49] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Hammond 6 p100.
[50] Shakespeare *Coriolanus* 4.1.6-7.
[51] Shakespeare *Troilus and Cressida* 1.3.34-54.
[52] Shakespeare *Troilus and Cressida* 1.3.40.
[53] Shakespeare *Troilus and Cressida* 1.3.21-30.
[54] Shakespeare *Troilus and Cressida* 1.3.33-34.
[55] Shakespeare *Othello* 4.1.268-270.

'man of misfortune' (*Odyssey* 11.93). The agonies he endures and the way that he bears them reveal his heroic qualities.

Thus it can be seen in Homer and in Shakespeare (and elsewhere) that through his life and death the hero shows what is best in humans during war and peace.

War and Peace

In Homer the action centres on war. Almost all the main characters are warriors. The hero needs battle to give him an opponent against whom he can test himself. It is in battle that the best men prove themselves.[56] The hero yearns for the clamour of war.[57] He is enamoured with the thought of fighting.[58] His heart glows for war. In Shakespeare too, in the tragedies at least, almost all the main characters are warriors. Hamlet is perhaps an exception, but he is skilled with the sword and wins a warrior's funeral.[59] He is described as a 'soldier'.[60]

The intimacy the hero has with war could almost not be more clear in the *Iliad*. The *Iliad* is saturated with blood.[61] When two warriors exchange words before their duel, one tells the other that battle and slaughter are familiar things to him. He claims that he knows how to use a shield and how to deal with chariots on the move. He states

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[56] Homer *The Odyssey* translated by E. Rieu and D. Rieu 24.506.
[57] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Hammond 1 p15.
[58] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Rieu 2 p52.
[59] Shakespeare *Hamlet* 5.2.374-382.
[60] Shakespeare *Hamlet* 3.1.145.
[61] Finley *The World of Odysseus* p138.

that 'in close fighting I know all the steps of the war god's dance' (*Iliad* 7 p138). So warfare is something that the hero is intimately familiar with.

We see that the hero is a protector in Hector's relationship with his city. Hector states that in safeguarding the city war is the concern of all the men, but 'myself above all' (*Iliad* 6 p130). He states that he will fight to protect his city, 'that is the best' (*Iliad* 12 p227). He is its 'guardian' and watches over its cherished wives and helpless children (*Iliad* 24 p457). He was considered to be the city's 'best man' because he had never failed to protect it from the enemy (*Iliad* 24 p447). Homer deliberately elucidates Hector's connections to his city through his diverse relations, with his father, his mother, his wife, his child, his brothers, his cousins, and his friends.[62] This is emphasised by Hector's relationship with Andromache, where she says to him that he is her father and mother and brother as well as her beloved husband (*Iliad* 6 p128). Indeed 'Andromache' means 'she whose husband excels in the fight'.[63] That Hector is a protector is also shown by the name the people give to Hector's son. They call him 'Astyanax' meaning 'he whose father alone is the protector of the city'.[64] Indeed the word 'Hector' is related to the verb 'ekho' in the sense of 'to protect',[65] indicating Hector's nature as a defender. The verb 'ekho' here means 'to hold up, to hold fast, to have hold of'. It is also interesting that the name of Hector's brother is Alexandros, from 'alexesis' meaning 'protecting' and 'andros' meaning 'man'.[66] Thus here we see that almost everything that is connected with Hector suggests that he is a man who protects and defends.

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[62] Redfield *Nature and Culture in the* Iliad p109.
[63] Klein *A Comprehensive Etymological Dictionary of the English Language* p35.
[64] See Homer *The Iliad* translated by Rieu 6 p127.
[65] Nagy *The Best of the Achaeans* p146.
[66] Apollodorus *The Library of Greek Mythology* note R. Hard 125 p236.

The destruction of Hector's city follows his death, indicating the nature of the hero as the protector. When he is killed, his city dies with him. It is as if the city were fired and smouldering from top to bottom when he is killed.[67] The whole city gives a cry of grief and gives itself up to despair (*Iliad* 22 p408). His parents are disconsolate. They have other children, but they care for and depend on Hector so much that they find no consolation in the ongoing lives of their other children. Finally his parents too are killed, and his child is flung upon the rocks below the walls, his wife is taken as a prize by Achilles's son, and his city is destroyed.[68] His city is ruined when Hector is killed, so much did it depend on him.

It may be, however, that Hector sacrifices his city to maintain his notion of himself as a hero. We see this in his decision not to go back into the city. Through this he chooses death not only for himself but for his city and his people too.[69] So while he fights to protect his city, ultimately he fights for himself. This is a failing of his heroism given that he is the protector of his city and that it is destroyed because of his actions.

We also see that the hero is a protector in Brutus. He is afraid that Caesar is like a serpent that is about to hatch, so he decides to kill him in the egg (*Julius Caesar* 2.1.32-34). He thinks that it must be that either Caesar dies and the people live free or Caesar lives and the people die as slaves. So he kills him in an attempt to protect the people (*Julius Caesar* 1.2.85-87). His motives do seem admirable. Even his opponents

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[67] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Hammond 22 p361.
[68] These events, however, are only anticipated in the *Iliad*, and we have to wait until later sources for their fulfilment. See Graves *The Greek Myths* 168 a-o p698-704.
[69] Finley *The World of Odysseus* p135.

admit that he acted with a genuine thought for 'a common good to all' (*Julius Caesar* 5.5.71-72). But it is his failing that although he is concerned for his city he succeeds in sacrificing it in order to live up to his conception of himself.[70] The image of himself that he has becomes irresistible to him and he gives himself up to it. Thus it seems that he kills Caesar more for himself than for the people. His killing of Caesar allows him to maintain his sense of himself as a hero. We see this in his suggestion that he is concerned for the 'general good' and that he is prepared to die to protect the people from danger (*Julius Caesar* 1.2.85-89). He is absorbed in his conception of himself as a protector. One of his friends begs him to think of the people (*Julius Caesar* 1.2.304). This friend suggests that 'there was a Brutus once' that would not have allowed things to remain the way they are, referring to a relative of Brutus's who once freed the people from tyranny (*Julius Caesar* 1.2.150-160). This casts Brutus into this role. It is in Brutus's thoughts already though to take this role up, 'what you would work me to, I have some aim' (*Julius Caesar* 1.2.162). But his friend's statements do have an effect on him, and later he reflects on the role his relatives once took up (*Julius Caesar* 2.1.52-54). There is a feeling here of his desire to emulate his relatives as protectors of the city. It seems that Brutus is acting out of a desire to be heroic rather than just acting heroically, and this results in disaster. Although he does seem genuine in his concerns about Caesar, it may be that he convinces himself and allows himself to be convinced that there is more of a danger than there really is and that this is brought about because of his desire to be a hero. He himself says that Caesar is an admirable man and that his only complaint against Caesar is that 'he would be crowned' (*Julius Caesar* 2.1.10-12). But Caesar has just rejected the crown.[71] Brutus

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[70] Proser *The Heroic Image* p22.
[71] See Shakespeare *Julius Caesar* 1.2.215-242.

considers how Caesar would be if he did take the crown, 'how that might change his nature, there's the question' (*Julius Caesar* 2.1.13). Thus he decides to take anticipatory action to address a possible future danger (*Julius Caesar* 2.1.10-34). It may be though that in his desire to be a hero he sees danger where there is none. It is true that Brutus is not the only conspirator, and this seems to hint that Caesar may really be a danger to the city because there are quite a few people who are willing to take action against him. But few of the conspirators seem motivated by the possible threat that Caesar poses to the city and many of them seem to be stirred rather by injuries and complaints they themselves have. So it may be that the danger was not really there. Brutus tries to live up to the notion of himself as a protector, but is blinded by his conception of himself, failing to see the instability and destruction his actions will bring to his city. The failing of his heroism given his role as a protector is evident in the damage that his city suffers by his actions.

We also see that the hero is a protector in the suffering that he brings about when he gives up his role. When the hero does not protect or defend the people disaster strikes.

Achilles gives an example of this. He brings sorrow not to the enemy, but to his own people (*Iliad* 1 p23). Achilles does not try to save his people, but endangers them to satisfy his own fractious nature. He transforms his own suffering into the suffering of his people.[72] Achilles even delights when he sees that none but him can save them (*Iliad* 16 p294). Thus his action of withdrawing from the battle is taken to show that

[72] This is discussed in Nagy *The Best of the Achaeans* p81-83.

only he can rescue his people from disaster.[73] The relationship between Achilles and the people is damaged by this, and when he finally rejoins the battle it is not for them that he does it. Achilles becomes a terrible monster fighting only for himself. He rejects his responsibilities to the people, and becomes an isolated figure, dislocated from his people.[74] This rejection of his role as a protector is a failing of his heroism.

Coriolanus gives another example of this, but he does so by directly attacking his own people. The relationship between Coriolanus and his people is similarly damaged, and his spitefulness against them is intense. He discharges his destructiveness upon his own people to satisfy his resentment. He means to forge himself in the fire of his burning city (*Coriolanus* 5.1.11-15). But we are told that by attacking his own people he does 'unknit himself / The noble knot he made' (*Coriolanus* 4.2.31), and this shows the closeness between the hero and his role as the protector of the people. Even before he takes the decision to attack his city, he shows no inclination to be the protector of the people. When there is discontentment among the people, his solution is to take to them with his sword and make a heap of thousands of their bodies (*Coriolanus* 1.1.195-198). He seems to forget in his readiness for slaughter that the people he wants to kill are his own people. When he is importuned not to destroy his people, it is significant that it is his mother, wife, and child that beg him (*Coriolanus* 5.3.77-78) because this points to his dislocation from all the generations of his people. Indeed it is horrible that the mother, wife, and child must see the son, husband, and

[73] Nagy *The Best of the Achaeans* p72.
[74] For further discussion of this see Redfield *Nature and Culture in the* Iliad p103-108.

father tearing out his country's life (*Coriolanus* 5.3.101-103). His actions show how much the people depend on him, and how terrible he can be when he is turned against them. It is a failing of his heroism that he turns away from his role as a protector.

The people depend for their existence on the ability of the hero as a warrior. The hero is their protector through war, and (perhaps more so in Homer than in Shakespeare) fighting is regarded as the most important human activity because before everything else the people must be able to protect themselves.[75] Here we see that the hero has a powerful relationship to violence, as force is often needed to protect his people and to maintain his sense of himself as a hero.

We see how important war is to the hero when he loses his sense of himself as a great warrior. In *Antony and Cleopatra* Antony is desperately trying to recapture his conception of himself as a great hero.[76] Antony reflects that if he loses this sense of himself as a hero then he loses himself (*Antony and Cleopatra* 3.4.22-23). His heroism is defined (by himself and others) by what he can win with his sword (*Antony and Cleopatra* 1.3.97-101), so if he should fail in war then his heroism will diminish. He himself does show a concern that he is no longer the hero he was, and others are aware of this change too (*Antony and Cleopatra* 3.13.142-143). He seems to waver between self-assurance and loss of confidence in his heroism, and this in itself is a diminution of his heroism. He fears that he has fled himself, and that he has taken 'a most unnoble swerving'.[77] Then he claims 'I am Antony yet' (*Antony and Cleopatra* 3.13.92-93). But it is not long before he is again overtaken by feelings of uncertainty

[75] See Redfield *Nature and Culture in the* Iliad p99 for a discussion on this.
[76] Proser *The Heroic Image* p182.
[77] Shakespeare *Antony and Cleopatra* 3.11.7, 3.11.50.

and doubt. He is the man he was one moment, and then not (*Antony and Cleopatra* 4.14.13-14). When he enjoys success in war he becomes assured of his heroism. He speaks with self-assertion, and his active language reflects this sense of himself (*Antony and Cleopatra* 4.8.1-39). For the moment Antony is the man he once was.[78] But then Antony is defeated in war and he loses his conception of himself. It is significant that it is a eunuch who comes to talk to Antony at the moment of his most terrible dejection (*Antony and Cleopatra* 4.14.22-34). The eunuch is appropriate here because Antony's defeat has unmanned him.[79] 'The soldier's pole is fall'n' (*Antony and Cleopatra* 4.15.65). This sexual quibble emphasises Antony's failing potency and diminishing heroism.

It is clear that battle and death are means through which life amounts to something for the hero.[80] But it is too narrow an understanding that a hero's life finds meaning through only fighting and death. 'Hero' is not just another word for 'warrior'.[81] The hero is too often mentioned meaningfully in moments of peace to be associated with only war and death. War is glorified, but its tragic futility is also emphasised.[82] The horrors of war also hint that heroism is about more than just a tremendous bloodbath. The hero is also intimately connected with peace.[83]

In Homer we see the terrible nature of war in the presentation of the god of war. Homer describes all the gods with sympathy except Ares. Zeus hates him more than

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[78] Proser *The Heroic Image* p202.
[79] Proser *The Heroic Image* p206.
[80] Schein *The Mortal Hero* p84.
[81] This disagrees with Finley *The World of Odysseus* p131.
[82] Johnston *The Ironies of War* p23.
[83] The connection the hero has to war is elucidated in sources like Bulman, Proser, and Schein, but there is less discussion of his relationship to peace in such sources.

any other god because of his delight in war and fighting (*Iliad* 5 p116). Ares is 'a maniac' (*Iliad* 15 p274). He is 'pernicious', 'pugnacious', 'monstrous', 'murderous', and 'cruel'.[84] He is 'hateful'.[85] He is 'the destroyer', a 'butcher of men', and a 'killer of men'.[86] He is 'the curse of men'.[87] He is 'man-slaughtering, blood-stained'.[88] He is spattered with the blood of men (*Iliad* 5 p115). He slaughters them wantonly, and is glutted by their blood.[89] We are told that he has no favourites (*Iliad* 18 p345). Ares is intimately connected with the horrors of battle. Ares's sister is Strife and his sons are Fear and Terror.[90] Strife 'helps him in his bloody work', and it is the groans of dying men that together they long to hear (*Iliad* 4 p88). Strife is the goddess of misery, and she looks on the cruel fighting with joy.[91] This presentation of the god of war shows the terrors of battle, and hints that a great hero is not connected only with death and war.

We see in war that Strife, Confusion, and cruel Death go with men into battle. Death has a cloak on her shoulders that is red with men's blood. Death grasps one man unwounded, grips another man with a fresh wound alive, and drags yet another man dead by the feet through the chaos (*Iliad* 18 p351). This suggests that in war death takes all men alike. Even the greatest heroes are killed. Again there is a feeling that there is something more to heroism than just killing.

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[84] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Rieu 5 p116, 17 p326, 8 p137, 5 p116, 7 p140.
[85] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Hammond 2 p28.
[86] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Rieu 5 p104, 5 p93, 8 p152.
[87] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Hammond 5 p80.
[88] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Lattimore 5.455.
[89] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Rieu 5 p112, 22 p404.
[90] See Homer *The Iliad* translated by Hammond 13 p207.
[91] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Hammond 11 p168.

Although war is glorified, the horrible destructiveness of battle is made clear in Homer. There are numerous descriptions of men dying terribly in bloody battle. One man is struck in the navel with a spear, and his insides pour out onto the ground. Another man is hit on the nose beside the eye with a spear, and the point cuts off his tongue at the root and then comes out at the base of his chin. Another man is hit in the eye-socket under the brow by a spear, and the point dislodges his eyeball and then comes out at the nape of his neck. Another man has a spear thrust through his mouth. His teeth are shattered as the point goes through. His eyes fill with blood, and blood spurts from his mouth. Another man is struck in the head with a large rock. His skull shatters, and his eyes fall out and roll in the dust at his feet. Yet another man is struck with a spear in the head, and his brains gush out and run down the shaft of the weapon.[92] Through these gruesome descriptions (which are characteristic of many of those that we see in Homer) the inhumanity of war is made clear. In such accounts when we see the weapon hit the body, go through the tissue and bone, and then leave the body, taking the life of the man with it, we see clearly, moment by moment, the destruction and suffering of battle.[93] The horrors of war we see here hint that heroism is about more than just killing and dying.

The sorrow and ruinous nature of war are often emphasised by Homer. War heaps high men's misery.[94] In the *Iliad* there is an old and ailing man who has only two sons, and no others to whom he can bequeath his wealth. His sons are killed in war together, leaving their father broken-hearted. 'He never saw them in the flesh again, home from the war', and his nephews stepped into the estate when the old man died

[92] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Rieu 4 p91, 5 p99, 14 p270, 16 p301, 16 p312, 17 p324.
[93] Johnston *The Ironies of War* p24-25.
[94] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Hammond 4 p64.

(*Iliad* 5 p96). Hammond translates those who divide up the inheritance as 'distant relatives', which further emphasises the losses that people suffer in cruel war because the old man is left with only his wealth, and cannot leave even this to those close to him. This touching moment in the *Iliad* shows the sadness and destruction of war. We see here the misery of war's work.

The lamentation of war is also movingly expressed by Homer when he says about one day of deadly fighting that 'it was a day when many Trojans and Achaeans were stretched out side by side' (*Iliad* 4 p91). Later on in the *Iliad* the battlements are drenched with 'mingled Trojan and Achaean blood' (*Iliad* 12 p232). The Achaeans and the Trojans agree to a truce at one point to bury their dead, but they find it difficult to recognise who is Trojan and who is Achaean until they have washed away the clotted blood with water (*Iliad* 7 p142). In the same way both the Achaeans and the Trojans heap the bodies of their dead on the pyre in anguish of heart and with their tears falling.[95] The terrible war is a great wave of disaster that crashes over the Trojans and the Achaeans alike (*Odyssey* 8.82-83). The horrible fighting brings anguish and groaning on the Trojans and the Achaeans alike (*Iliad* 2 p41). Their joyless hardships are heaped up high. The men here are equal in their mortality.[96] The closeness between the men on both sides is often shown in Homer. Two men who had fought hard against each other decide to break off the fight because it is getting dark. They give each other gifts to show that although they were trying to kill each other they were reconciled and parted as friends (*Iliad* 7 p139). Two other men who were about to kill each other in battle realise after detailing their family histories to each

[95] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Hammond 7 p116.
[96] Griffin *Homer on Life and Death* p106.

other that they are guest-friends from far back in their families. They give each other gifts, and agree that their families' friendship has made friends of them (*Iliad* 6 p123). Achilles's reconcilement with Priam is also a significant acknowledgement of a shared human condition. For a moment they seem to be no longer Achaean and Trojan. They are just two broken-hearted men lamenting the cruelty of war. They have both suffered terribly, and have lost those dearest to them. They both break down, sobbing in sadness (*Iliad* 24 p450). So we see in Homer that there is a closeness between the Achaeans and the Trojans, and that the deaths of friends and enemies alike are tragedies. There seems to be a feeling here in Homer that the hero cannot be defined only by something that brings such sorrow.

Again and again an Achaean kills a Trojan, then he is killed by a Trojan, and this man is in turn killed by another Achaean.[97] There is a seemingly ceaseless succession of death for death. 'Too many fall day by day, one upon another'.[98] In battle there are only 'the killers and the killed' (*Iliad* 11 p199). There is a hint of something useless about their killing and dying, and this suggests that this killing and dying is not all there is to heroism.

We also see this in Quintus where 'here, there, fast fell the warriors mid the fray', and the earth turns dark with blood as friends and enemies alike are engulfed by dark doom.[99] As in Homer the walls are 'blood-besprent' as Trojans and Achaeans alike are killed.[100] 'The beating of full many a heart, / Trojan and Argive, was for ever

[97] See Homer *The Iliad* translated by Hammond 4 p64, 8 p119, 14 p231-232, 16 p261 for some characteristic examples.
[98] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Lattimore 19.226.
[99] Quintus Smyrnaeus *The Fall of Troy* 9 p393.
[100] Quintus Smyrnaeus *The Fall of Troy* 8 p375.

stilled'.[101] Trojan and Achaean warriors are slain by pitiless doom, and 'friends with foes in heaps on heaps were strown'.[102] Many Achaeans reflect sadly on what they have given up to make war on the Trojans, thinking 'of white-haired fathers left in halls afar, / Of wives new-wedded, who by couches cold / Mourned, waiting, waiting, with their tender babes / For husbands unreturning'.[103] There is a closeness between the Achaeans and the Trojans, and both sides are sorely afflicted and suffer terribly in the war. This is perhaps most movingly expressed by Quintus when he says that the Achaeans allowed their friends, the warrior Trojans, to recover their dead, and did not begrudge those killed 'tear-besprinkled graves'.[104] The Trojans too allowed the Achaeans to recover their slain, for anger is not maintained against the dead, 'pitied are foes when life has fled, and left them foes no more'.[105] We are told that there are 'all round face-downward men remembering not / The death-denouncing war-shout',[106] and here there is something empty and pathetic about the way they killed and died. Quintus (and Homer) seem to be suggesting that this slaughter is not all there is to heroism.

The ruinous nature of war is also present in Shakespeare. In *Hamlet* twenty thousand men go to their graves like beds, and they die for nothing. There is no good reason why the men die (*Hamlet* 4.4.28). They will be killed for some barren land which is not even large enough to bury the dead (*Hamlet* 4.4.60-65). It is significant that it is a soldier who says he would not farm it, because this indicates the profitlessness of

[101] Quintus Smyrnaeus *The Fall of Troy* 1 p27, 1 p81.
[102] Quintus Smyrnaeus *The Fall of Troy* 8 p375, 10 p437.
[103] Quintus Smyrnaeus *The Fall of Troy* 3 p143.
[104] Quintus Smyrnaeus *The Fall of Troy* 1 p65.
[105] Quintus Smyrnaeus *The Fall of Troy* 1 p67.
[106] Quintus Smyrnaeus *The Fall of Troy* 3 p141.

what they are fighting for. The concern of the man of war is also peace, for the soldier is thinking of the farming he will return to when the fighting is over. That the men are said to 'fight for a plot' (*Hamlet* 4.4.62) further suggests the pointlessness of war, where the quibble here on 'plot' suggests that their efforts are aimed at death, that they are fighting their way into their graves. Shakespeare seems to be questioning how a man can gain a sense of himself as a hero through fighting and killing alone.[107] Shakespeare may be suggesting here that ability in war alone is not enough to make one a hero.

Given these presentations of war and fighting, a hero must be connected to more than just these things.

In Homer we see that the hero enjoys the delights of peace but suffers in the anguish of war. For him there is plenty during peace and suffering during war.

We see this in the *Iliad* with Sarpedon. In his native land he is given the best seat at the banquet, the first cut off the joint, and a cup that is always full (*Iliad* 12 p229). He has been made lord of a fine estate on the banks of a river with lovely orchards and splendid fields of crops. Sarpedon says that this means that he has to fight for his people, so that they will say of him that: 'he lives on the fat of the land during peace but he pays for it in war' (*Iliad* 12 p229). There is an implicit acceptance here that his people give him life and yet send him to his death.[108]

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[107] This is also discussed in Kiernan *Eight Tragedies of Shakespeare* p224.
[108] Redfield *Nature and Culture in the* Iliad p101.

Homer's shifting from the battle-field in the *Iliad* to the farm in the *Odyssey* helps to indicate that heroism is not just about war. The hero is not defined only by war, and is concerned too with matters of peace.

The horrors of war are juxtaposed with the tranquillity of peace, and the significance of this for conceptions of heroism is that it hints that the hero is not connected only with the agony of war but is also connected with the enjoyments of peace. The hero is intimately related to war and peace, where the hero makes the delights and joys of peace possible as a protector and brings suffering and anguish in war as a destroyer.

In Homer there are numerous reminders of the tranquillity of peace among the terrors of war. Again and again we see an insignificant man killed in battle, but we are almost always given his name, and are often told about the delights he had enjoyed in the contentment of his distant home before the war. Through this we form emotional attachments with these men, and their deaths are more touching to us. Most of these men die 'far from their dear ones' (*Iliad* 11 p219). One man had lived in a comfortable house in a small quiet community by a lovely stream below a wooded hill, and had left his dear family behind never to see them again (*Iliad* 5 p105). Another man was newly wed, and had left his bride behind without even having spent one night with her, dying far from the wife he had just married but had no joy of (*Iliad* 11 p203). Another man is killed a long way from the house that he lived in, 'his life had been too short, and now he could never repay his parents for their care' (*Iliad* 17 p324). We see here that these men live short lives, die far from their homes, and leave

dear families to weep for them.[109] These accounts of what they had enjoyed during peace and what they have given up to fight in the war often come just before their deaths by the thrust of a spear or the firing of an arrow, and this brings the horrors of war into sharper focus. It seems that many of these men are brought into the story only so that they may be killed, but the point here is that 'their deaths affect our perception of the nature of heroism and of the world in which the hero struggles and dies.[110] We see here the destruction of what might have flourished and brought joy.[111] The agony of war here hints that heroism is about more than just killing and dying.

Again in Homer we see the delights of peace that are destroyed in war in the relationship between Andromache and Hector. Andromache is waiting for

her husband to return to the city from the fighting and she makes the household preparations that she would normally make for him. She heats some water for the bath that her husband will have when he returns (*Iliad* 22 p408-409). But Hector has remained outside the city. She does not realise that 'far away from all baths he lay dead' (*Iliad* 22 p409). Even though Hector is killed in his own homeland, there is a feeling that he dies far from his home because he is killed far from the comforts prepared for him by his loving wife.[112]

In the *Iliad* on Achilles's shield we see the people of some cities enjoying the delights of peace, and this highlights the terrors of war. On Achilles's shield in the land around

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[109] Griffin *Homer on Life and Death* p104-108.
[110] Griffin *Homer on Life and Death* p103, p140-141.
[111] See Taplin 'The Shield of Achilles within the *Iliad*' p112.
[112] Griffin *Homer on Life and Death* p109-110.

one city we see a fertile ploughland where there are many farmers driving their teams this way and that through the rich dark soil. When they turn at the end of the field, a man gives them a cup of wine to drink.[113] On Achilles's shield in the land around another city we see a fruitful vineyard where there are abundant clusters of delicious grapes. Girls gather the grapes in woven baskets and a boy plays a lyre and sings a beautiful song with his delicate voice. The girls follow him down a path joyously singing and dancing, their feet in time to the music.[114]

In the *Odyssey* we see the people of the cities of Pylos, Sparta, and Phaeacia delighting in peace and the people of the cities of Ithaca and Mycenae still in distress because of war. We see the joys of peace especially in Phaeacia, where Alcinous lives in a radiant palace. The gold doors to the palace hang on posts of silver that are set into the walls. The banquet hall in the palace has fine chairs along the walls on either side, and each chair has a covering that has been delicately woven by a woman of Phaeacia. Here the lords of Phaeacia enjoy the food and wine that is always in rich abundance (*Odyssey* 7.81-102). In the land around the palace there is a large orchard where there are pears, pomegranates, apples, figs, and olives, and a fruitful vineyard where there are grapes (*Odyssey* 7 112-129). 'Here the bud, and there the ripening fruit' (*Odyssey* 7.119). The people are delighting in their lives, where they are eating, drinking, singing, dancing, playing games, and making love. The cities of Pylos and Sparta also show a return to peace after the horrors of war. We can compare the cities of Pylos and Sparta with the cities of Ithaca and Mycenae, where things are not as joyous. These cities are deteriorating while the hero is away at war.

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[113] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Hammond 18 p308.
[114] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Hammond 18 p309.

In the *Iliad* we see also that the people of the city of Troy once enjoyed peace, and this emphasises the destructiveness of war. The city had lovely people, wondrous riches, and fertile pasturelands in plenty.[115] We are told that the city prospered once (*Iliad* 24 p451). The city was once wealthy, but now the treasures are gone and that time has passed (*Iliad* 18 p344). Now all the time there is fighting round the city.[116] Here we see the hero at once as a protector and as a destroyer of the joys of peace. One hero tries to protect Troy and another hero tries to destroy Troy.

We see Achilles running through the lush pasturelands around the city of Troy, killing all of the shepherds as they tend their flocks.[117] On Achilles's shield we see some shepherds bringing their flocks down to the flowing water of a beautiful river. They are playing their musical instruments as they are walking through the pastureland. But then a group of warriors kills them and takes their flocks (*Iliad* 18 p350). The shepherds are delighting in their simple lives and then they are lying killed in the grass.[118]

We also see Achilles chasing Hector around the walls of Troy, running past the lovely spring of a stream near the rock pools. We are told that this had been where the women of Troy had washed their clothes in the days of peace before the Achaeans came (*Iliad* 22 p401). This place where everyday activities should be taking place is transformed into a setting for death.[119]

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[115] Also see Taplin 'The Shield of Achilles within the *Iliad*' p109.
[116] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Hammond 24 p401.
[117] See Homer *The Iliad* translated by Lattimore 6.421-424 for a characteristic example.
[118] See Taplin 'The Shield of Achilles within the *Iliad*' p102.
[119] Freeman *The Greek Achievement* p61.

We see the beauty of what the hero protects in the intimate meeting of Hector, Andromache, and Scamandrius in their pleasant home in Troy (*Iliad* 6 p127-130). Andromache had been in sore distress for her beloved husband, and it gladdens her heart when she sees him alive, back from the deadly fighting. She cries with relief and smiles through her tears, taking her husband's hand in hers. He gives her some caring words and then goes to take Scamandrius in his arms. But the child is alarmed by his father's appearance. Hector still has his weapons and armour, and the child is frightened by the glittering bronze and the crest of horse-hair nodding from the top of his helmet (*Iliad* 6 p129). The nodding of the crest of horse-hair intrudes upon this domestic scene, reminding us of the terrors of war. But we could hardly have forgotten. The whole scene is played out in the shadow of the war.[120] Hector has only just left the destructive battle and he will soon rejoin it to fight for the delights of peace that the people had once enjoyed.

When Hector had returned from the battle-field he was surrounded by the wives and daughters of the Trojans who came running to ask after their sons, brothers, husbands, and friends.[121] In the Rieu translation Hector is 'besieged' by the women and girls (*Iliad* 6 p123), and the use of this word highlights that war has reached into every part of the lives of the Trojan people.[122]

This points also to the importance of peace for having a family. The bringing up of sons to be the future heroes of the city and daughters to be the future mothers of these

[120] This scene is also discussed in Owen 'The Farewell of Hector and Andromache' p96.
[121] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Hammond 6 p97.
[122] This is Rieu's word only though, and in the Greek they simply 'run' to him.

heroes is critical, and peace gives the opportunity for this. The most significant example of this is Hector's wish that 'this boy of mine may be, like me, pre-eminent in Troy', and a great hero of his people. Hector hopes that the people will say of his son: 'here is a better man than his father' (*Iliad* 6 p129). We see that war has a destructive effect on the families of a city, especially when Hector's son is killed. He does not grow up to be a great man like his father.[123] We see it with Hector's wife too for her parents and siblings are killed in war, and then her husband and his parents and siblings are also killed through war.[124] Two whole families that she is a part of are destroyed in war. Hector's father too says that he will live to see many horrors, his sons killed and his daughters dragged off, their homes looted, and their children dashed on the ground in the destructiveness of war.[125] Yet a purpose of peace here is to prepare for war. We see here that war and peace are intimately related and that the hero is tied to this relationship as a protector and a destroyer.

In the *Iliad* we often see the figure of the sad father who loses his children. Homer gives significant attention to the pitiable state of the father who loses his daughter or son. We see especially Chryses, Peleus, and Priam in anguish for the loss of their children. Indeed 'Priam is an important character, whose function is to lose his sons and lament over them'.[126] Priam's feelings of loss become more intense as the *Iliad* goes on.[127] At the end of the *Iliad* Priam says 'I fathered sons who were heroes in the broad land of Troy, and I tell you not one of them is left' (*Iliad* 24 p444). The young

[123] We have to wait for later accounts to see this, and it is only foreshadowed in Homer.
[124] See especially Homer *The Iliad* translated by Hammond 6 p101.
[125] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Hammond 22 p352.
[126] Griffin *Homer on Life and Death* p126.
[127] Griffin and Hammond 'Critical Appreciation: Homer *Iliad* 1.1-52' p71.

men die, the old men, the women, and the children suffer and grieve.[128] The father brings up his children during peace, but during war his daughters are dragged off and his sons are killed. Here again we see a close relationship between life and death in peace and war.

Homer often uses imagery of farming to describe the scene of a battle, and this hints at the connection between the hero and both war and peace. The fight at the Achaean wall is compared to two men quarrelling across a fence in the field fighting for their fair share of land to farm (*Iliad* 12 p232). Homer says of the same battle that it was as well balanced as a set of scales in which an honest widow balances the wool against the weights to make sure of the meagre pittance she is earning for her children (*Iliad* 12 p232). This imagery reminds us that human life is not just concerned with war, and reminds us of the struggles of peace.

Homer uses similes to compare the hardships of war to the toils of peace, and this helps to connect the hero to both war and peace. The dust that was kicked up by the hooves of the horses settled on the warriors and whitened them, like chaff whitened by the falling dust when farmers are winnowing to separate the grain (*Iliad* 5 p105). When a chariot driver has his horses trample some dead warriors this is compared to a farmer who has his oxen trample the barley on a threshing floor (*Iliad* 20 p379). For all their numbers a group of warriors is unable to withstand a great attack just as the splendid work of a farmer is wrecked by a flood during heavy rains despite the dams and walls that protect it (*Iliad* 5 p94). These similes bring the experiences of the

[128] Griffin and Hammond 'Critical Appreciation: Homer *Iliad* 1.1-52' p79.

warrior and the farmer closer together and they are characteristic of those we see in Homer.[129]

Homer also uses similes to compare the destructiveness of war to the productivity of peace, and again this hints at the connection the hero has to both war and peace. As the heroes are about to go into battle they are compared to sheep in a farmyard ready to give their milk (*Iliad* 4 p88). Here the milk hints at the blood that they are prepared to shed in battle. The coagulation of blood is compared to the curdling of milk (*Iliad* 5 p116). As the heroes are battling over the bodies of those killed they are compared to flies around some buckets overbrimming with milk (*Iliad* 16 p309). This image of excess gives a feeling of overabundance that points to a relationship between the overflowing milk in peace and the gushing blood in war, cloyed with plenty in peace and glutted with slaughter in war.

In Homer the terrors of war are made more tragic by the view we get of the joys of peace through the use of similes. We see the delights of peace, where flowers and crops grow plentifully in the fields and shepherds tend their abundant flocks. Conversely the view we get of the joys of peace is made more touching by the violence and destruction of war.[130]

In Homer we see that the hero is connected with both war and peace, not just through imagery, but through material items too. By examining the parallel between the uses

[129] See Homer *The Iliad* translated by Rieu 11 p199, 12 p225, 16 p309 for more examples.
[130] Taplin 'The Shield of Achilles within the *Iliad*' p111.

of metal in war and in peace we can see an intimacy between the hero and both war and peace.

It is significant that one of the prizes Achilles offers at the games for Patroclus is a lump of iron (*Iliad* 23 p434) because this suggests that a hero prospers during peace too. Iron was not yet used to make weapons or armour, and was used primarily for agricultural purposes. Achilles also remarks that he will enrich his estate in Phthia with among other things the iron that he has won (*Iliad* 9 p170). It is odd that it is Achilles who says this because he is not so much a man of peace and shows no great concern for the ordinary people of his native land. But what is indicated here is that iron is a fine treasure, and that it is valuable to the hero for its usefulness during peace.[131] So the hero is also concerned with how he will live and rule in peace, bringing prosperity to his native land.

It may be significant that the shield of Achilles is made of bronze, tin, gold, and silver (*Iliad* 18 p349) because this may hint that the hero is a man of peace too. It was typical to use bronze for breastplates and weapons, tin for greaves, gold for jewellery and bowls, and silver for drinking cups. In the shield of Achilles then there are the metals of the terrors of war and the joys of peace. This may hint that the hero is closely connected with both war and peace.

Achilles's shield shows the terrible destructiveness of war, with warriors attacking a resplendent city, and all the lovely works of peace, with weddings, banquets, and

[131] Also see Homer *The Iliad* translated by Hammond 10 p160, 11 p169.

assemblies in the meeting-places of a beautiful city (*Iliad* 18 p349-353), and this suggests that the concerns of great heroes extend to both war and peace. Achilles's shield shows men ploughing fields of soft soil, with the rich earth requiting their toil with a plenteous harvest. The people are reaping with sharp sickles in their hands, 'and there among them was the king himself, staff in hand, standing by the swathe in quiet satisfaction' (*Iliad* 18 p351). This emphasises that a great hero takes delight in peace too.

That a shield is connected with protection further symbolises that the great hero is a guardian of his people in peace and war. The shield of another hero is a thing of terror only, with the figure of Gorgon glaring terribly with Fear and Terror on either side (*Iliad* 11 p198). Comparing this shield to the shield of Achilles, we may suggest that a great hero is not just a killer of men in war, but is a protector of men in peace too.

Indeed it seems unbefitting that it should be Achilles's shield, because it is one of the failings of Achilles's heroism that he chooses a short life of destruction in war rather than a long life as a protector of the people in peace. Why is it then that it is his shield? Maybe this hints that Achilles is not just a horror of horrors and that there is more to Achilles.[132] But Achilles is obsessed with the heroic definition that is gained in war. Achilles chooses to give up his life to the cast of a spear or the firing of an arrow from the string (*Iliad* 21 p383). He lives and dies in war. Achilles does not balance his heroic responsibilities, and it seems that he thinks that ability in war is the

[132] This possibility will be looked at as the thesis goes on.

only condition of heroism. It seems that to him war is all that makes a hero. But there is something missing from the hero who excels only in war and destruction.

It is also a failing of Othello's heroism that he is not well-equipped to live in peace. War has been Othello's nurse, and he is defined by war. His greatest moment is in victory in war (*Othello* 2.1.179-187), and he seems discomfited and clumsy when he is not at war. Peace does not allow him his full sense of himself. His power is in war, and when he does not have war to give him definition and reveal his abilities, the failings of his character are exposed. There may be a suggestion here that heroism is not possible in peace. Perhaps heroism can be expressed only in war. But it seems rather that this is how it is here for Othello and not something that is necessarily pertinent to heroism in general. It remains that the hero is connected to more than just war.

We also see in Shakespeare the delights of peace compared to the horrors of war. A woman gives her child milk from her breasts, and when the child grows up he goes into battle and blood gushes from the wounds he suffers. The breasts of the woman as the milk flows out are described as no more beautiful than the body of the man as the blood spurts out.[133] This brings war and peace closer together.

So the great hero is a champion of peace and a shepherd of his people. He protects the people, and his cares are manifold. He is a loving provider for his people and brings prosperity to his native land. He is a lord of humans during peace.

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[133] Shakespeare *Coriolanus* 1.3.40-44.

In the *Epic of Gilgamesh* Gilgamesh is a 'shepherd' of his people and he is their protector.[134] When he does leave his native city Gilgamesh gives instructions for how it is to be run without him.[135] When Gilgamesh's companion dies, he wishes that the mountains and the pastures mourn him; the animals of the wild, and the men that saw him in battle; and 'may the ploughman mourn for you in his furrow, / When he extols your name with his sweet' song.[136] That it is both the warriors and the farmers who mourn for him indicates the intimacy between the hero and both war and peace.

In Hesiod too a hero is a 'shepherd' of the people.[137] Hesiod describes peace as 'blooming',[138] suggesting the prosperity that attends the toil of the people when the land is not ravaged by war. The hero makes this abundance and plenteousness possible as a protector, and thus the hero is closely connected with peace.

What we see here is consistent with what we see in Homer and in Shakespeare: that the hero is intimately connected with peace.

The hero in Homer is connected with the fecundity of the land, and this highlights the connection the hero has to peace. The result of the hero's protection of the land is that the dark soil gives up wheat and barley, the trees grow ripe fruit, the sheep never fail to produce their lambs, nor the sea to provide fish, and the people prosper under him (*Odyssey* 19.110-114). The people prosper under his care (*Iliad* 9 p165). He is the

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[134] *The Epic of Gilgamesh* 1.71.
[135] *The Epic of Gilgamesh* 3.202-211.
[136] *The Epic of Gilgamesh* 7.23-24.
[137] Hesiod *Theogony* p56.
[138] Hesiod *Theogony* p52.

source of the greatness of his people. All the people's power stems from him. He is the soil of their vitality, and he nurtures them (*Odyssey* 6.197-198). At the end of the *Odyssey* Zeus proclaims, 'let peace and plenty prevail' (*Odyssey* 14.485). That this statement is made after much death and destruction suggests that a great hero cares for his people when war is over just as he does during the fighting. Zeus is also 'the farmer's god',[139] further connecting Zeus's great power with the affairs of peace.

In Quintus too the people rejoice and it gladdens their hearts when they see the hero among them, as when they delight when the rain comes to parched fields, relieving the crops for which they had sighed in distress.[140] The intimate relationship the hero has to the land and the people is clear here.

In the *Odyssey* Odysseus shows the intimate relationship between the hero and peace through his relationship with the land. When he was a boy Odysseus had been taken around the farm by his father, and was carefully shown the pear trees, apple trees, and fig trees, and the rows of vines that were to be his one day (*Odyssey* 24.335-344). His father was preparing him to be a ruler, and this shows how important the affairs of peace are to the hero. When Odysseus did take rulership over his people he never did anything improper to a single person in the land (*Odyssey* 4.689-690). He gave all the people in his land their appropriate share.[141] He looked after his people with loving care (*Odyssey* 2.47). His people said that Odysseus was the 'best of masters' and that

[139] Hesiod *Works and Days* p73.
[140] Quintus Smyrnaeus *The Fall of Troy* 1 p7.
[141] Homer *The Odyssey* translated by E. Rieu and D. Rieu 9.41-43, 9.548.

they would never find a master so affectionate as Odysseus wherever they might go.[142]

In Homer we see that the warrior in war is also a farmer in peace. 'The warrior is the husbandman in arms, the farmer is the warrior at home'.[143]

In the *Odyssey* Odysseus shows that the hero is a warrior and a farmer. When Odysseus is insulted, he longs to show what kind of man he is. He thinks that he can show this in the ploughlands and the battle-field. He wishes that he could prove himself with a sickle in his hand and plenty of grass to cut or by ploughing a field of loam that will yield to the ploughshare (*Odyssey* 18.365-374). 'You'd see then whether I could cut a furrow straight!' (*Odyssey* 18.374-375). He also wishes that war would come to test him. He would take up a shield, a helmet, and a spear (*Odyssey* 18.375-378). 'It would be out in the front line that you'd find me then' (*Odyssey* 18.378-379). Odysseus seems to say to the man who insults him: 'you are not a hero! Here is how a man proves himself'. Odysseus seems to consider that his heroism is shown equally in the ploughlands and the battle-field. So here we see that the hero is a man of peace as much as he is a man of war.

In the *Iliad* Tydeus also shows that the hero is a man of war and peace. During war there was no better man than Tydeus with the spear, and during peace Tydeus lived in a fine estate with fertile ploughlands in plenty, many planted orchards on all sides,

[142] Homer *The Odyssey* translated by E. Rieu and D. Rieu 14.40, 11.202, 14.139-145.
[143] Griffin 'Heroic and Unheroic Ideas in Homer' p30.

and abundant flocks of sheep, goats, and cows (*Iliad* 14 p260). The concerns of the hero extend beyond the battle-field to the fecund ploughlands.

In the *Iliad* we see the intimacy between the hero and peace through the hero's relationship with the fertile land. The hero may go to war because men have made off with his flocks or because men have ravaged the crops that grow out of the rich soil to feed his people (*Iliad* 1 p27). We see here that the hero has a close connection to the fertile land, protecting it from attack and destruction.

We see in the *Iliad* that the hero also protects the land from animals that ravage the countryside. We are told about a voracious boar that had been furiously attacking the flocks and herds, and the shepherds and dogs could not stop it. It was ripping up orchards and rooting up fruit trees, and strewing the land with their broken branches (*Iliad* 9 p175). The terrible creature was trampling down the tender shoots of the growing crops, and was preventing the men from sowing the land.[144] The hero takes up his weapons and goes to relieve the people from this danger. Here we see that the hero is closely connected to peace through his relationship with the productivity of the land that is tended in peace.

We also see the relationship between the hero and peace through the hero's connection to the fruitfulness of the land in Achilles's harangue addressed to Agamemnon. Achilles may be implying that Agamemnon's rulership is deficient by commenting on the state of his sceptre. The sceptre has been cut from the tree and will

[144] Apollodorus *The Library of Greek Mythology* 1.8.2 p40.

never again put out leaves or twigs. It will sprout no more (*Iliad* 1 p29). Achilles may be suggesting that Agamemnon's rule is infructuous and that he cannot nurture those he rules over, where the sceptre is a symbol of Agamemnon's rulership.[145] This emphasises that a great hero (maybe unlike Agamemnon) nourishes his people.

Also in Homer the importance of a hero to his land can be seen by what happens in the hero's native country when he is away and cannot protect it. In Ithaca the suitors abuse Odysseus's estate and make trouble for his people and family while he is away.[146] Sarpedon worries that while he is away his covetous neighbours in Lycia are longing to get their hands on his possessions (*Iliad* 5 p105). There are murderous plots hatched in Mycenae that entangle Agamemnon when he returns home (*Odyssey* 11.409-433). Achilles fears for his father in Phthia now that he is gone and can no longer protect him.[147] Achilles frets for his father in what is a rare display of humanity for him. In these examples the hero is unable to safeguard his people because he is fighting a war far from his native land. He does protect them through war, but his absence also endangers them.

In the *Iliad* we also see what happens to the countryside under the rule of a wrongful hero. The whole countryside is darkened and the land is oppressed under a stormy sky. The terrible rain roars down from the mountains, wrecking the farmland on its

[145] We should not make too much of this, however, for the sceptre has come to Agamemnon from a line of kings before him who as Achilles himself tells us have ruled properly.
[146] Homer *The Odyssey* translated by E. Rieu and D. Rieu 1.106-107, 1.189-193, 1.225-229, 1.247, 1.250-252, 2.47-58, 2.197-199, 4.317-322, 4.334-335, 11.116-117, 14.25-28, 14.92-109, 15.351-359, 16.120-129, 17.530-537, 17.563-565, 18.212-214, 20.214-216, 24.227-232.
[147] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Rieu 19 p362, 24 p450-451, Homer *The Odyssey* translated by E. Rieu and D. Rieu 11.495-504.

way to the sea (*Iliad* 16 p303). So here wrongful rule is directly connected to the destruction of the crops and the devastation of the countryside, and by this the relationship between the hero and the land is further elucidated.

In Shakespeare there is an even more powerful connection between the hero and peace through the hero's relationship with the land, where the relationship is almost one of identity. The hero almost becomes the land itself. The two are made almost into one.[148]

In *Antony and Cleopatra* Cleopatra has a dream in which Antony is like the fecund earth from which comes an abundant harvest. He has no shortages, and he 'grew the more by reaping' (*Antony and Cleopatra* 5.2.86-88). That he grows more as he is harvested by the people indicates how his greatness stems from the people and the land and how they depend on him. His connection to them makes him a greater man. The dream shows the connection between a hero and peace through the connection the hero has with the land and the people.

In *Hamlet* the health of the land depends on the greatness of its ruler (*Hamlet* 1.3.20-24). The bloom of one reflects the bloom of the other. The people's fortunes are tied to the hero (*Hamlet* 3.3.15-23). The wrongful killing of a great hero brings sickness and rottenness to the land. 'All is not well' (*Hamlet* 1.2.253-258). 'Something is rotten in the state' (*Hamlet* 1.4.90). There is an 'eruption' in the land (*Hamlet* 1.1.69).

[148] This intimate relationship is emphasised by the use of synecdoche, whereby the king of a land is referred to by the name of the land itself.

At the wrongful killing of a great hero the earth and the heavens are troubled. The dead leave their graves and gibber in the streets. Stars shoot across the sky, and the sun and the moon cast evil influences (*Hamlet* 1.1.115-125).

In *Macbeth* we see a very similar thing. The great hero is like the abundant earth out of which his people grow (*Macbeth* 1.4.33-34). The people are like plants that are full of growing under his rule (*Macbeth* 1.4.29-30). The great hero's 'two bodies' are earthly and heavenly,[149] and when he is wrongfully killed 'the frame of things disjoint, / Both worlds suffer' (*Macbeth* 3.2.17-18). 'The earth / Was feverous and did shake' (*Macbeth* 2.3.61-62). The rulership of a wrongful hero poisons the land. The earth cries and bleeds, and 'each new day a gash / Is added to her wounds' (*Macbeth* 4.3.39-41). The land becomes a grave where sighs and shrieks tear the air (*Macbeth* 4.3.164-168). All this results in disorder. 'Nature', 'natural', and 'unnatural' are ubiquitous terms in the play,[150] and we see that 'unnatural deeds / Do breed unnatural troubles' (*Macbeth* 5.1.69-70). So the disruption of nature has a close relationship with the collapse of social order. The effects of usurpation reveal a powerful link between the hero and the land and the people.

The disintegration of order is clear at the dinner party Macbeth holds with the other lords. He attempts to restore order at the dinner, but his failure to achieve this is reflected in the way the lords end up leaving confusedly, 'stand not upon the order of your going, / But go at once' (*Macbeth* 3.4.120-121). Macbeth's 'disorder' breaks up the good meeting (*Macbeth* 3.4.110-111).

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[149] Shakespeare *Macbeth* 2.3.55-64, 90, 115, 2.4.1-10, 19.
[150] Kiernan *Eight Tragedies of Shakespeare* p134.

Shakespeare also uses plant imagery to show the powerful connection between the hero and the land. When the other lords are considering dethroning Macbeth they express a wish to 'dew the flower' of the rightful ruler and 'drown the weeds' of the tyrant usurper (*Macbeth* 5.2.30). This points to a relationship between the hero and the land where they form a whole. The bloom of one reflects the bloom of the other.

We again see the image of a sceptre used to suggest the infructuous nature of the rulership of a wrongful hero. Macbeth's crown is fruitless and his sceptre is barren (*Macbeth* 3.1.61-62). Although the immediate meaning here is that Macbeth will have no children, an added implication is that his rule over the land and the people will not blossom. Macbeth fails to nurture the people or nourish the land. This reflects a failure of his heroism.

We see too the positive aspects of the restoration of order. The terrors of tyranny have injured the country, but when the usurper is killed, the land is restored and a rightful ruler is crowned (*Macbeth* 5.7.92-105). There is a feeling of desolation, but from this a new lush green plant is emerging.

Peace, however, has its own dangers. Hamlet reflects that when peace has gone on too long it will break in on itself (*Hamlet* 4.4.27-28). Peace produces abundance, and abundance results in degeneracy. Hamlet suggests that the fatness of peace makes men overweight and out of condition (*Hamlet* 3.4.154-156). When Hamlet himself has a duel with another hero, his mother teases him that he is out of breath after only a few rounds (*Hamlet* 5.2.264). This hints that Hamlet is unprepared for the dangers

that threaten him. Here Shakespeare seems to be asking whether there can be heroism in peace.

What might be concluded here then is that for the hero war and peace are halves of the same reality. There seems to be a paradox that there is something not so heroic about war in its terrible destruction but that the agony of war is necessary for a man to be a hero. There also seems to be a paradox that the hero is intimately connected with peace but that heroism may not be possible in peace. How can slaughter in war be all there is to heroism and how can heroism be possible in the tranquillity of peace? It seems that we might conclude here that the heroic qualities of a man cannot be fully tested in either war or peace alone. The hero is intimately connected with the repeating successions of war and peace, and is never completely separated from one or the other. He is defined by both. The hero is powerful during peace as he is in war and is a protector and a destroyer.

Life and Death

There is a powerful relationship between the hero and death. The nature and conditions of heroism in Homer are such that to be a hero means to kill and to be killed.[151] A hero fights man to man to kill or to be killed (*Iliad* 22 p403). A hero lives and dies in battle, pressing on into the fighting, bespattering his hands with gore. This points to a close relationship between heroism and killing. The tragedy is that the very

[151] Schein *The Mortal Hero* p71.

activity of killing which confers heroic standing necessarily involves the deaths of other heroes who live and die by the same values as their killers, but eventually, in most cases, also of the killers themselves.[152] So the activity of killing realises many of the values of the hero just as it destroys those who best embody those values.[153] 'Thus, the same action is creative or fruitful and at the same time both destructive and self-destructive'.[154]

We see in the *Iliad* that the hero is at once mighty and mortal. Multitudes of heroes are hurled into the gloomy lands of the dead (*Iliad* 1 p23). The screams of the dying are mingled with the cries of triumph of their killers (*Iliad* 4 p89). There is a juxtaposition of the glory of their lives and the terrors of their deaths.[155] Here the hero is defined by life and death.

In the *Iliad* the intimate relationship between the hero and death is made clear by Sarpedon. He says to his dear friend that if he could be sure that they would live for ever, ageless and immortal, he would not take his place in the front line or urge his friend into the terrible fighting. But as it is, he goes on, death stands over them in a thousand forms, and no mortal can outrun or escape death.[156] 'So in we go, whether we yield the glory to some other man or win it for ourselves' (*Iliad* 12 p229). Thus here to be a hero is to deal death and die. The hero here is defined through the deaths of other men and in the end through his own death. His life is fugacious, and so he

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[152] Schein *The Mortal Hero* p71.
[153] Johnston *The Ironies of War* p27.
[154] Schein *The Mortal Hero* p71.
[155] Griffin and Hammond 'Critical Appreciation: Homer *Iliad* 1.1-52' p69-70.
[156] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Hammond 12 p196.

tries to be the best man he can in the short time he has to give his life meaning. Whether winning or losing, to fight in the forefront of battle is to enter an arena that confers heroism. This activity is presented as characteristic of the most worthwhile type of life (given that humans are mortal), and it seems that what Sarpedon is speaking in favour of is not the winning or losing as such, but the kind of life defined by battle.[157] So whether the hero survives or dies in battle is not as important as the decision itself to live this kind of life.

We see a similar thing in the *Iliad* in Idomeneus. 'His one desire was to bring down black night on a Trojan's eyes, or himself to fall in saving the Achaeans from destruction' (*Iliad* 13 p245). Here we see that to be a hero means to kill or to be killed.

We also see in the *Iliad* Odysseus reflect on what it is to be a hero, and he suggests that to be a hero in battle is to stand unflinching to kill or die (*Iliad* 11 p208). Odysseus states that the lot of men like him is to see battles through to the end, 'till one by one we drop' (*Iliad* 14 p259). This intimates the relationship between the hero and death. The hero finds definition in the deaths of other men like him and indeed ultimately in his own death. He recognises the limits of human existence and has a consciousness of death.[158] His heroism is defined by death.

In the *Iliad* Hector too reflects on the relationship the hero has to death. Hector states that it is the sweet invitation of battle for a man to turn his face straight forward and

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[157] Gill *Personality in Greek Epic, Tragedy, and Philosophy* p134-135.
[158] Mueller 'Knowledge and Delusion in the *Iliad*' p106.

kill or die.[159] Hector suggests that if a man is about to find his death in glorious battle through the thrust or the cast of a weapon then 'let him die'.[160] It is great for him to die in such a way.

This relationship to death is perhaps more characteristic of the hero in Homer (and in the *Iliad* more than the *Odyssey*), but there are similar connections to death for the hero in Shakespeare.

In *Coriolanus* we see Coriolanus covered in the blood of the men he has killed (*Coriolanus* 1.8.9-10). For him this killing brings him definition as a hero. As he is about to go into battle, he reflects that a good death outweighs a bad life (*Coriolanus* 1.6.71-75). He feels that as one must die, one should have a fine death. So for Coriolanus heroism is to deal death and die.

The hero gains definition by killing other heroes like him. The heroes he kills sustain his heroic sense of himself.

In *Julius Caesar* Brutus importunes the other conspirators to carve Caesar 'as a dish fit for the gods, / Not hew him as a carcass fit for hounds' (*Julius Caesar* 2.1.173-174). They will gain definition as heroes if they dine on him, but not if they gorge themselves in bloody slaughter. For Brutus killing Caesar as if he were a sacrificial animal will maintain his image of himself as a hero because he will maintain a proper relationship to death.

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[159] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Lattimore 17.227-228.
[160] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Lattimore 15.494-499.

A hero who kills a man who is excellent in every fine quality enhances his own heroism. The killing of such a man gives his killer yet higher definition as a hero.

We see this in the *Iliad* when Achilles is chasing Hector around the walls of Troy. They are running at full stretch, and we are told that this is no ordinary race with glittering treasure as a prize. They are competing for the life of Hector (*Iliad* 22 p401). They are compared to powerful race-horses sweeping round the turning post, galloping all out for the splendid prize offered at the games of a hero (*Iliad* 22 p401). What is won by competing in a race is compared with what is gained through killing a hero. The life of a man is presented as a prize to be won.

We also see this in the *Iliad* in the struggle over the body of Patroclus. Both the Achaeans and the Trojans are anxious to recover the body, and the sweat pours over them as they pull the body this way and that between them (*Iliad* 17 p326). They fight over the body with their weapons, cutting each other down. Neither the Achaeans or the Trojans will give way (*Iliad* 17 p327). They consider that recovering the body of such a pre-eminent warrior will bring them definition as heroes. Thus they will not give it up without a fight.

In *Antony and Cleopatra* Antony implores his follower to kill him. He reassures his follower that 'thou strik'st not me', and that it is his opponents he defeats (*Antony and Cleopatra* 4.14.68). Antony will not be taken through Rome with his hands tied behind him, 'his face subdued / To penetrative shame' (*Antony and Cleopatra* 4.14.71-77). Thus Antony takes from his opponents the heroic definition they might have gained by killing him.

In *Julius Caesar* too Brutus asks his friend to help him kill himself. His friend satisfies his request, and then states: 'the conquerors can but make a fire of him / For Brutus only overcame himself, / And no man else hath honour by his death' (*Julius Caesar* 5.5.55-57). Brutus takes from his opponents the triumph of killing him, and also spares himself from the ignominy of capture and execution, thus maintaining his heroic image.

We see in the *Iliad* that the hero also gains definition through his own death. We see that the body of a man stained with dark blood is compared to a beautiful piece of ivory dyed with purple dye (*Iliad* 4 p80). We also see that a man who has died gloriously in battle and lies on the ground with his wounds upon him is still beautiful even though he is dead (*Iliad* 22 p399). He is beautiful because he fought well and had a good death. He is not so much undone by death, but seems to depend on it for definition. Here it is his own death that defines him.

In the *Odyssey* too we see that a hero gains definition through his own death. In the conversation between the shades of the dead, Achilles's shade reflects sadly that Agamemnon had a pitiable death and wishes that he could have died gloriously in battle. If Agamemnon had died in battle at Troy he would have had full enjoyment of the honour due to him, and the whole nation would have joined in heaping up a mound to him and his great name (*Odyssey* 24.30-34). Agamemnon's shade is plunged into grief because of his miserable end, and this indicates that in Homer as much importance is placed on the manner of one's death as on achievements made in life. But he tells Achilles's shade that Achilles had a glorious death and funeral. Death did not destroy him. Achilles is accounted fortunate (compared to Agamemnon)

because he died in battle at Troy (*Odyssey* 24.86-95). Here death seems to be important for heroic definition.

In Shakespeare we see that a man may gain heroism through his own death even when he actively takes it (or has someone close to him take it).

In *Antony and Cleopatra* Antony appeals to his companion to kill him, saying 'come then; for with a wound I must be cured' (*Antony and Cleopatra* 4.14.78). He asserts, 'I will be / A bridegroom in my death, and run into't / As to a lover's bed' (*Antony and Cleopatra* 4.14.99-101). Antony suggests that he will bathe his dying heroism in his blood to make it live again (*Antony and Cleopatra* 4.2.5-7). Thus he will renew himself through his own death. He needs his own death to restore his heroism. He has lost his sense of himself as a hero, and perceives that his death is the only way to recapture this conception of himself.

But it understates the full role of the hero to connect him only with death. The great hero does not desire life or death in itself, but tries to accomplish both excellently.

The intimacy between the hero and life and death is suggested by Agamemnon's anguish when he is seriously wounded. On one day of fighting Agamemnon is stabbed below the elbow with a spear and the point of the weapon passes right through his arm. As long as the blood gushes warm from his wound, Agamemnon continues to fight. But when the flow of blood stops, he feels a sharp stab of piercing pain, as biting as the pangs of childbirth that overcome a woman in labour (*Iliad* 11 p204). The pain suffered while giving birth is compared with the pain suffered while

bringing death in battle. This points to the close connection the hero has to the repeating successions of life and death.

We see that the hero is not connected only with death through Achilles's complicated relationship with life and death and the negativity that can be imputed to an imbalance in this relationship. Achilles is the deadliest of fighters. For a hero like Achilles, violence and killing are the 'breath of life' (*Iliad* 1 p27). Always his delight is in killing.[161] As the *Iliad* goes on death casts a darker and darker shadow over Achilles.

The imbalance in Achilles's connection to life and death is clear in his encounter with Lycaon on the banks of a river. Not long before this encounter Achilles had captured Lycaon, and ransomed him on an island. Lycaon makes his way back to Troy, but he has only a short while left to him. Soon after he comes back he meets Achilles again on the banks of the river, and this time Achilles will not spare him. Achilles is going to kill him (*Iliad* 21 p381). Achilles makes the terrible exclamation that he will take Lycaon's life to satisfy his curiosity, to see whether he will return as he did from the island or whether death will hold him down (*Iliad* 21 p381). Achilles's actions seem to be the result of his pitiless nature. So he is separated even from the hero's normal relationship to death. Achilles says to Lycaon 'you too must die. Why make such a song about it?' (*Iliad* 21 p383). Achilles speaks to Lycaon as his 'friend' (*Iliad* 21 p383), which as many commentators note is much more powerful in the Greek and implies that they are equals. Achilles seems to suggest that they are both warriors who live and die in battle, so his killing of him is actually a show of friendship, expressing

[161] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Hammond 1 p7.

a feeling between them of common sympathies and aspirations. But they are not equals, and Achilles seems disingenuous here. Indeed Achilles implies that he is a much greater man than Lycaon (*Iliad* 21 p383). It might be suggested here that Achilles means that like Lycaon he too will die and that they are brought closer together by their shared mortality, where Achilles is saying to Lycaon that he will treat him as he treats himself, that is he will kill him.[162] But it seems that what Achilles is suggesting here is that even heroes die so an ordinary man like Lycaon should not weep and cry about dying. Achilles states that previously he was inclined to spare any Trojans he captured, but that now he will not allow anyone to live and there is no-one who will escape death (*Iliad* 21 p382). This highlights the imbalance in Achilles's connection to life and death. Achilles admits that he would normally have spared Lycaon (*Iliad* 21 p382). Lycaon is not a pre-eminent warrior and killing him will not enhance Achilles's heroism. It seems that Achilles is urged on here to kill Lycaon only by an insatiate longing for slaughter. Achilles is just a killer here, and this is a consistent failing of his heroism in the *Iliad*. The *Iliad*'s Achilles is not in the proper connection to life or death.

Achilles's closeness with death is hinted at by the ends that come to those who put on his armour. Those who put on his armour themselves become overshadowed by death. Achilles himself is defined by death. Then Patroclus asks Achilles to let him put his armour on his shoulders (*Iliad* 16 p293). Patroclus ties the greaves around his legs, puts the breastplate on his chest, puts the helmet on his head, and takes up the great shield (*Iliad* 16 p295). The putting on of the armour puts Patroclus on the path of

[162] Schein *The Mortal Hero* p148.

death, and he becomes a double for Achilles, to die in his place. Patroclus is killed by Hector. Then Hector strips the armour from Patroclus and puts it on himself (*Iliad* 17 p319). But we are told that Hector will not 'enjoy it long' (*Iliad* 18 p340). Indeed once he puts on the armour he also becomes a double for Achilles, again to die in his place. Death hangs over him. He is killed by Achilles. But Achilles himself does not have long to live and death will soon take him too.

We also see Achilles's intimacy with death in his unwillingness to use his healing abilities. Achilles has been taught the tender touch of healing (*Iliad* 11 p219), but he never uses it in Homer.[163] He is reluctant to relieve the hurt of his people. We can compare Achilles here with Patroclus, who is much more caring and affectionate. Patroclus is moved to compassion by the suffering of his people, and we see him tend to a hero who has been badly wounded. He cuts the sharp point of an arrow out of his thigh, washes the blood away with warm water, and then applies pain-killing medicines to the wound (*Iliad* 11 p220). At this time there are few healers who are not themselves hurt (*Iliad* 11 p219), and this makes us reflect on what Achilles is withholding from his people. Achilles could bring invaluable relief to them if he would use his healing abilities. 'A healer is a man worth many others'.[164] We see that Achilles remains 'intractable' even when all the greatest heroes are wounded and the healers are trying to heal their wounds (*Iliad* 16 p292). This places further attention on Achilles's destructiveness, and his intimacy with death rather than life.

[163] Although we might suggest that he 'heals' Priam by returning his dead son to him.
[164] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Hammond 11 p179.

However, the great hero is connected not only to death, but to life too. We see this in the *Odyssey* when Achilles's shade comments on the terrors of death. The *Odyssey*'s Achilles implores Odysseus not to treat death lightly, saying 'I'd rather slave on earth for some dirt-poor impoverished farmer who scrapes to keep alive than rule down here over all the breathless dead' (*Odyssey* 11.488-491). This realisation of how terrible death is shows a change from the way the *Iliad*'s Achilles thinks about death. In the *Iliad* Achilles claims that nothing equals the worth of his life, not all the treasures of Troy, because although a man can win material riches, there is no winning a man's life back again once the breath has left his lips (*Iliad* 9 p171-172). But this does not reflect his true feelings. After saying that life cannot be set off against anything, he then tells all the other Achaeans that he is going to leave Troy, and encourages them to do the same. This seems motivated more by a desire that they should not win glory without him. He thinks that he will win no glory by returning home, and is disconcerted about others remaining to fight, especially if they should take Troy. This is why he seems insistent that they will not succeed. But he never really looks like leaving. He returns to the fighting knowing that he will be killed, revealing that to him life is a worthy cost to pay for glory. He shows again that to him the winning of glory through killing and dying is what makes a hero, and this is limiting to his heroism. Thus in their attitudes to death the *Odyssey*'s Achilles and the *Iliad*'s Achilles show (in different ways) that heroism is not just about death.

This also reflects a difference between the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* in their presentation of the hero and life and death. In the *Iliad* the hero is defined more through death and mortality. In the *Odyssey* we see that the hero is defined more by hopefulness and a belief in the possibilities for happiness even under the threat of suffering and

destruction. In the *Iliad* Achilles chooses between death and returning home. He feels that he cannot maintain definition as a hero unless he is killed in battle. So he cannot have both heroism and a homecoming. As Achilles chooses between them he is no longer risking his life, but is sacrificing it. Thus for Achilles death (his own most of all) is necessary for heroism. But in the *Odyssey* we see that Odysseus wins both heroism and a homecoming.[165] He gains definition as a hero through the dangers he overcomes, and his death is not required for him to be a hero. Here survival is less inconsistent with the conditions of heroism. This seems to reflect a change in attitudes towards the connection the hero has to life and death. In the *Odyssey* it seems that the hero is defined by a relationship with both life and death, perhaps more so than in the *Iliad.*

But it remains in Homer (in both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*) that the hero is defined by both life and death.

This is clear in Shakespeare too. We see this most clearly in *Julius Caesar* in Brutus's conception of himself as a hero. After Brutus kills Caesar he washes his hands up to the elbows in his blood, and for Brutus the stain of the blood on his hands and weapon signifies freedom for his people (*Julius Caesar* 3.1.105-110). He sees himself as a hero who has won liberty for his people and protected his city. He claims that it is not that he didn't love Caesar but that he loved Rome more (*Julius Caesar* 3.2.21-22). He says to the other conspirators, 'let us be sacrificers, but not butchers' (*Julius Caesar* 2.1.166). This would put him in a right relationship with life and death. He is not

[165] Both Nagy *The Best of the Achaeans* p40 and King *Achilles* p45 make this excellent point.

wallowing in slaughter, but is one who both exults and despairs at the killing. He is bold but not wrathful. He says, 'let's carve him as a dish fit for the gods, / Not hew him as a carcass fit for hounds' (*Julius Caesar* 2.1.173-174). This is related to Calphurnia's dream. She dreamt that the Romans came to wash themselves in the blood pouring out of a statue of Caesar, smiling on the blows that pierced the statue. This implied that they took joy from Caesar's death. But one of the conspirators suggested that in the dream the people bathing in the blood spouting from the statue signified that Rome will be revived by Caesar (*Julius Caesar* 2.2.85-89). His gushing blood brings his death, but at the same time it is seen by some as a fountain of life. So he is like an animal that is sacrificed for the people to dine on, and indeed his sacrifice is seen by some as necessary for the continued health of the city. This allows Brutus, regardless of whether he is right, to see himself as a protector of the people through his relationship to life and death.

So we see that there is a double meaning to the hero, where he creates and destroys, protects and attacks.[166] The hero is inextricably connected to both life and death as a protector and a destroyer.

Qualities

The hero is fully-rounded in physical and mental qualities. He has outer qualities, like strength and beauty, and he also has inner qualities, like wisdom and charisma. He has the right qualities and he has them in the right degree.

[166] See Redfield *Nature and Culture in the* Iliad p99-101 for a detailed discussion on this point.

A hero has many admirable qualities, but sometimes his heroism is diminished by a certain failing. A hero, like Agamemnon or Othello, has many heroic qualities, but he has significant failings too. A hero, like Macbeth or Hector, has many heroic qualities but is undone by a failing, often the excess of an heroic quality. A hero like Shakespeare's Achilles is also undone by his failings, but these failings are so egregious that they destroy any sympathy we could have had for him, and undermine any of the heroic qualities that he has.

We see in *Antony and Cleopatra* a hero who has many admirable qualities, but has significant failings too. Antony by his own assessment is the 'greatest' and the 'noblest' man in the world (*Antony and Cleopatra* 4.15.54-55). But his friends suggest that just as he has qualities that reflect well on him he also has failings that do not reflect well on him (*Antony and Cleopatra* 5.1.31-32). His actions are often worthy of praise and as often worthy of blame. When Antony disgraces himself by fleeing the sea battle when the situation is critical, his friends say of him 'I never saw an action of such shame. / Experience, manhood, honour, ne'er before / Did violate so itself' (*Antony and Cleopatra* 3.10.21-23). This action is an 'unnoble swerving' (*Antony and Cleopatra* 3.11.49) indicating that he is a noble hero who has taken an ignoble course. His opponents had before the sea battle described him as 'a man who is the abstract of all faults' (*Antony and Cleopatra* 1.4.9). This is a failing of his heroism.

Just as 'aischros' is ugly or bad in a physical and a moral sense, 'kalos' is beautiful or good in a physical and a moral sense. Extrapolating from this we can suggest that just as a hero has outer qualities, like strength and beauty, he also has inner qualities, like wisdom and charisma. So the hero is fully-rounded in physical and mental qualities.

We see in Homer that the hero has a balance of physical and mental qualities. We are told that 'balance is best in all things'.[167] A hero has all that is 'lovely' (*Iliad* 6 p121). Good looks alone do not make a hero, and a hero also has strength and courage (*Iliad* 3 p65). He is as strong as he is beautiful (*Odyssey* 3.111). He is a fast runner and a powerful fighter (*Odyssey* 3.111-112). He is swift at running, strong in fighting, and keen in intelligence (*Iliad* 15 p288). A hero uses all his 'eloquence and strength' (*Iliad* 1 p25). He has 'courage, strategy, and intelligence' (*Odyssey* 12.211-212). No-one can touch him at plots or battles.[168] A hero is great through his judgements and his strength.[169] A hero makes himself pre-eminent through his strength and his wisdom.[170] He has a mind that ponders and a hand that strikes.[171] A hero is excellent in planning and in action (*Iliad* 9 p171). He proves himself 'not only on the battle-field but off it' (*Iliad* 4 p83). Thus the council-chamber and the battle-field are both arenas of excellence where the hero can give a superb performance and gain heroic definition.

In the *Odyssey* we are told that the qualities of good looks, wisdom, and eloquence are not possessed by all men equally. One man may be insignificant to look at, but he has an ability for flowing speech. Another man may be handsome in appearance but is short of brains (*Odyssey* 8.165-178). In the *Iliad* too it is not often that a man has all the qualities together. One man has skill in battle, another can dance, another can play the lyre or sing, and another is ripe of mind (*Iliad* 13 p253). This is why the great hero

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[167] Homer *The Odyssey* translated by Fagles 7.355.
[168] Homer *The Odyssey* translated by Fagles 14.557.
[169] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Hammond 16 p266.
[170] Nagy *The Best of the Achaeans* p24.
[171] Redfield *Nature and Culture in the* Iliad p110.

is so extraordinary, because he has many of these qualities together.[172] All of what is most admirable in humans is concentrated in him.

We see in Shakespeare too that heroic definition is gained through having a balance of physical and mental qualities.

In *Hamlet* we see that the hero has a balance of physical and mental qualities. Hamlet has 'the courtier's, soldier's, scholar's, eye, tongue, sword' (*Hamlet* 3.1.145-148). It is interesting here that the eye is not given to the scholar, the tongue to the courtier, nor the sword to the soldier.[173] This may hint that Hamlet is disconcerted, and that he is not able to use his abilities properly. But Hamlet does appreciate that words alone are not enough, and that action too is needed (*Hamlet* 2.2.502-540). So it seems that what may be suggested here is that a hero does not use his eye just as a scholar, his tongue merely as a courtier, or his sword simply as a soldier, but turns his abilities to diverse occupations. In everything he uses all his abilities. He is a thinking warrior and a philosopher in action.

In *Troilus and Cressida* we see the failing of heroism when a man does not have a balance of mental and physical qualities. Shakespeare's Aias is pre-eminent in outer qualities (like physical attributes) but does not have the inner qualities to support them. Thus his heroism is crushed into dust by its own tremendous weight. His heroism collapses in on itself. He has heroic qualities, but he also has many

[172] Also see Adkins *Homeric Ethics* p706 on this.
[173] See Shakespeare *Hamlet* note P. Edwards p150.

significant failings (*Troilus and Cressida* 1.2.19-26). 'He hath the joints of everything, but everything is out of joint' (*Troilus and Cressida* 1.2.27-28). Aias's sense of himself as a hero depends only on his power in battle. He values 'no act / But that of hand' (*Troilus and Cressida* 1.3.199-200). He appreciates only the physical qualities and not the mental qualities that are used in a battle (*Troilus and Cressida* 1.3.197-210). This is a failing of his heroism.

We see again in *Troilus and Cressida* that a man's heroism is diminished when he does not have a balance of physical and mental qualities. It is a failing in Troilus's heroism that he is 'speaking in deeds, and deedless in his tongue' (*Troilus and Cressida* 4.5.98). He does not appreciate that heroism is defined by action and words together.

We see a similar failing in *Coriolanus*. Coriolanus thinks that action is louder than words, 'action is eloquence' (*Coriolanus* 3.2.77-79). He does not have all the heroic qualities together, but he seems to think that his physical attributes more than make up for this failing. He does not have a balance of physical and mental qualities and because of this his heroism is diminished.

Not only does the hero have these admirable qualities, but he has them in the right degree. The hero is characterised by the mean of the quality, where the deficiency or excess of the quality is a failing.[174] The hero has the quality in the right degree, or the mean between excess and deficiency.

[174] The concepts of the mean, deficiency, and excess of a quality come from Aristotle *Ethics* 2 p100-110, and as I will show are useful in understanding conceptions of heroism in Homer and Shakespeare.

In *Hamlet* we see the failing of heroism when the man is not characterised by the mean of the quality. Hamlet remarks that the 'o'ergrowth' of a quality will mar a man just as too much yeast in the dough will ruin bread (*Hamlet* 1.4.23-36). This one failing he goes on will undo the man however great he is. Hamlet himself gives us the proof of his statement.

So we see that the hero is fully-rounded in physical and mental qualities. Just as he has outer qualities, like strength and beauty, so too he has inner qualities, like wisdom and charisma. He has the right qualities and he has them in the right degree.

Similarities

There are many similarities between the hero in Homer and the hero in Shakespeare. Many of the qualities that the hero in Homer has correspond to those that the hero in Shakespeare has. It may be suggested that these similarities are indications that some qualities are common to the hero in literature in general, so that the similarities do not so much indicate a correspondence between Homer and Shakespeare in themselves, but a broader similarity between heroes in literature more generally.

The characteristics we see in the heroes in Homer are recognisable in the heroes in Shakespeare. The qualities that belong to or constitute the hero in Homer and in Shakespeare are similar. This seems to suggest common features of heroes more generally.

Courage

The hero in both Homer and Shakespeare has courage. There is no-one like him for courage. He cannot be easily cowed by danger. The courage of the hero in Homer is much the same as that of the hero in Shakespeare, and it is expressed in much the same way. The intimacy the hero has with courage is perhaps the greatest similarity between the hero in Homer and the hero in Shakespeare.

The hero in Homer has an imperturbability and is intimately connected with courage. He is defined by the statement 'always be the bravest, always be the best' (*Iliad* 6 p122). There is no place for fear in his heart (*Iliad* 17 p329). Fear takes away one's heroism (*Iliad* 5 p114). A coward is a man who fears everything and stands up to nothing. The coward shifts from foot to foot, his heart thumps in his chest, and his teeth chatter as he thinks of death in all its forms. But the hero is not unduly perturbed and thinks only of joining the fighting as soon as can be (*Iliad* 13 p241). As danger comes closer the coward flees, but the hero stands his ground unflinching (*Iliad* 11 p208). The opposite of a hero is explicitly given as a coward,[175] which emphasises the intimate connection between heroism and courage. Cowardice results in a failure to strive for heroic goals, and so it can be regarded as the only unheroic quality.[176] This seems to overstate the matter, but it does help to highlight the importance of physical bravery for the hero in Homer.

The hero in Shakespeare is brave and is closely connected with courage. The failure of physical courage is uncommon in his characters, and we almost never see it in his heroes.[177]

Aias shows courage in battle, and there is no-one to whom he will give way in single combat (*Iliad* 13 p242). On one day of fighting the Trojans attack the black ships, and many Achaeans are daunted and detach themselves from the battle. But the idea of joining these fleeing men does not commend itself to the heart of Aias (*Iliad* 15 p289). Aias, seemingly alone, beats back the whole Trojan force. He is unfaltering

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[175] See Homer *The Iliad* translated by Rieu 6 p130.
[176] See Finley *The World of Odysseus* p28.
[177] Kiernan *Eight Tragedies of Shakespeare* p212.

and holds his place in the battle-line, and even becomes the battle-line. But then the attack of the Trojans becomes more intense, and Aias is overwhelmed by missiles. Even now, however, Aias gives way only 'a little' (*Iliad* 15 p291). He stands his ground for as long as he does because the notion of flight is inconsistent with his conception of the hero as a man of courage. On another day of fighting, Aias looks anxiously at the numbers around him, and finds that no-one on his side is standing with him, that he is standing alone between the Achaeans and the Trojans. He is unwilling to fall back from his position because of the shame of retreat, but he reluctantly gives ground, with many a backward look and 'much against his will' (*Iliad* 11 p212). He wheels about many times, fending off the whole Trojan force, before turning once again in retreat. He is as 'stubborn as a donkey' in his withdrawal (*Iliad* 11 p212). He is distressed at heart because his actions will not uphold his heroic sense of himself. He is worried that his actions are not consistent with his conception of himself as a man of courage. We see how important courage is here to the hero.

We also see Agamemnon make a bold attack on the Trojan battle line. When the Achaeans break though the Trojan line, he is the first of them all into the break. 'In rushed Agamemnon, first of them all' (*Iliad* 11 p199). He is eager to be in front of all others. He runs in to where the fighting is hottest and bespatters his irresistible hands with gore (*Iliad* 11 p199-200). His courage gives him heroic definition.

We are told that the courageous deeds of Odysseus cannot easily be described or even numbered (*Odyssey* 4.240-241). Odysseus is the 'best and bravest' (*Odyssey* 4.724).

'His heart within him was always full of daring'.[178] Odysseus is 'all-daring' (*Iliad* 10 p187). We see again that courage is a significant part of what makes a hero.

Macbeth is also bold and his boldness is an important part of what makes him a hero. He too runs in to where the fighting is hottest, and his sword runs with blood as he cuts down his opponents (*Macbeth* 1.2.15-23). He routs his opponents and puts them to flight, but then a large number of reinforcements arrives to support them. But this does not daunt Macbeth. Indeed it seems to urge him on to the performance of yet more terrific deeds. He doubly redoubles blows upon them, bathing in their blood (*Macbeth* 1.2.29-41). We see how important courage is to his sense of himself as a hero when his boldness is brought into question (*Macbeth* 1.7.47-54). It is suggested that his cowardice 'does unmake you' (*Macbeth* 1.7.53-54). He is affected by this. He connects his heroism to his ability to dare dangers. The questioning of his courage thus threatens his selfhood. He tries to reassert himself and regain the sense of his own heroism. We see here that his courage is critical to his heroic image of himself. By the end of the play he has lost definition as a hero, but when he is again called a coward, this puts him on his character (*Macbeth* 5.7.53-64). This rouses his conception of himself as a courageous hero.[179] His courage is almost all he has left to remind him of his heroic nature. He cannot lose that too. Thus by giving his courage expression he recaptures his sense of himself as a hero.

Hamlet too shows courage when he is out at sea and a pirate ship attacks his ship. As the pirate ship comes close he jumps onto it and attacks the pirates. His courage is not

[178] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Hammond 10 p156.
[179] Proser *The Heroic Image* p89.

'compelled' but is the result of his heroic nature. (*Hamlet* 4.6.14-15). He does not board the pirate ship because he has to, but because his courage is up. That he alone among his crew is on the pirate ship when it breaks away emphasises that his courage is extraordinary. His courage is a significant part of what makes him a hero.

In these examples in Homer and in Shakespeare courage is a condition of heroism. Courage is a critical attribute for the hero in both Homer and Shakespeare.

But the hero avoids the excess of courage. A hero takes care to protect his life and does not risk it recklessly. He is not without fear, but he controls his fear, and does not let his courage control him.

Diomedes is defined by his excess of courage, and this is a failing of his heroism. He acts so boldly and seems to give no thought to the danger he is in. For all their numbers there is not often one man ahead of Diomedes as they clash with the enemy.[180] On one day of fighting his charioteer begs him not to risk losing his life and to return to the chariot. He cries out to Diomedes that two enemy warriors have singled him out and are making their way toward him. But Diomedes gives his charioteer an angry look, and scorns the protection of the chariot. He takes delight in the danger (*Iliad* 5 p114). On another day of fighting night comes and puts an end to the battle. Diomedes and a companion decide to go on a night sortie into the enemy camp. They do terrible damage to the enemy. His companion is satisfied that they

[180] See Homer *The Iliad* translated by Hammond 8 p124 for a characteristic example.

have done enough, and thinks that they should not take any more undue risks. But Diomedes is in no hurry, and looks around for 'the most outrageous thing he could do' (*Iliad* 10 p194). It is astounding that Diomedes survives for as long as he does given all the risks he takes. He is too reckless to be a great hero, and is ruled too much by his courage. He thinks that courage alone is the 'secret of power' (*Iliad* 9 p162), and does not fully appreciate that a great hero has a balance of qualities.

Patroclus is overly courageous. He storms the walls of Troy (which he was warned not to do), and is killed. Patroclus was 'a fool and made a fatal error' (*Iliad* 16 p310). This reveals a connection between recklessness and foolishness.

Hector is ruled by his courage, and this is a failing of his heroism. He never hangs back with the crowd, and does not let anybody be as daring as himself (*Iliad* 22 p398). He runs after the enemy, and attacks them single-handedly (*Iliad* 8 p154). He attacks where he sees the largest number of opponents.[181] He faces the enemy alone and unsupported (*Iliad* 22 p398). He must go forward always. His wife suggests that 'this bravery of yours will be your end' (*Iliad* 6 p128). He is like a lion who is closed round by hunters, where 'his very courage kills him' (*Iliad* 12 p222). Shakespeare makes his Hector value his heroism more than his life (*Troilus and Cressida* 5.3.26-31), and he will not risk losing his reputation for courage even if his life must pay the cost of keeping it. Although it is not such an egregious failing to have, it is a failing of Hector's heroism in Homer and in Shakespeare that he is too often defined by his excess of courage.

[181] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Hammond 15 p249.

We see that the hero is defined by the mean of the quality in *Coriolanus*. A hero is 'neither foolish in our stands / Nor cowardly in retire' (*Coriolanus* 1.6.2-3).

But a hero can show a deficiency in courage, and still be regarded as a hero, as long as he is not defined by this deficiency. On one day of fighting Hector is 'a coward' and flees from danger (*Iliad* 16 p310). On another day of fighting trembling takes hold of Hector when he sees Achilles making his way towards him. He no longer has the courage to stay where he is and runs in terror (*Iliad* 22 p400). But even as he is running away he is described as 'a brave man'.[182] It is important that Hector is not defined by these deficiencies of courage. Perhaps we can say at these moments just that he is not excessively brave, and not that he is a coward. It remains that Hector is characteristically brave.

Paris challenges Menelaus to fight him in single combat, but gets scared when Menelaus jumps down from his chariot and makes his way toward him like a hungry lion. Paris's heart fails him completely. His cheeks turn pale and he flees trembling. But Hector's rebuke provokes again Paris's courage, and Paris returns to the fight (*Iliad* 3 p64-66). Paris is not a great fighter, but he still has the courage to fight Menelaus, who is by so much his better in battle. When the Trojans are attacking the black ships of the Achaeans, Hector admonishes Paris for not fighting bravely enough. But Paris responds to Hector's reproof, 'if I have ever shrunk from fighting, I have not done so today' (*Iliad* 13 p255). He has fought against the enemy relentlessly. He claims that he is not a coward, and that he has fought with all the courage that is in

[182] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Hammond 22 p355.

him (*Iliad* 13 p255). Even though he is not characteristically brave, he has shown courage, and fought to the limit of his abilities. Paris is not a great hero, but his example does show how a hero can be both cowardly and brave.

But a hero is not defined by a deficiency in courage. Shakespeare makes his Achilles a 'great-sized coward' (*Troilus and Cressida* 5.10.26). Although Hector spares him, Achilles does not requite him, and thinks only of killing him (*Troilus and Cressida* 5.6.13-21). At the end of the play Achilles does not have the courage to fight Hector himself, even though Hector is unarmed, and makes his men close round him and kill him with their spears. Achilles does, however, take the credit for killing Hector (*Troilus and Cressida* 5.8.9-14). Shakespeare's Achilles is a cowardly anti-hero, and this emphasises that a hero typically has courage.

Strength

A hero in both Homer and Shakespeare is strong and has unconquerable hands. He is formidable in battle. He is a man who takes his place in the front line. He presses on into the fighting, and is irresistible in battle. He cannot be outmatched. Strength is critical to the performance of almost every physical heroic action, so it is an attribute that he values dearly and that is important to his sense of himself as a hero.

We see in Homer that the hero's strength is unlike the ordinary man's. A hero has surpassing strength, and is more mighty by far than ordinary men. A hero hurls rocks around that are beyond the ability of normal men even to lift. He handles these rocks

alone without an effort. The weight is little burden to him.[183] It is clear here that the hero's strength is extraordinary and that the hero transcends normal human limitations.

Hector has great strength in battle and his strength is a critical part of what makes him a hero. He kills many of his opponents with the strength of his hands (*Iliad* 24 p457). He is 'all-destroying' (*Iliad* 17 p331). His opponents admit that they have never seen or heard others tell of one man by himself inflicting so much damage in a single day of fighting as him (*Iliad* 10 p182). His opponents had claimed that they would each take their place in battle against a hundred Trojans, but on one day of fighting their whole force was no match for Hector alone (*Iliad* 8 p151). 'All of us are not even a match for one of them'.[184]

Diomedes maintains that a man proves his heroism through his strength in battle. Diomedes destroys his opponents, and they are unable for all their numbers to withstand him. Not a man can hold him.[185] No-one can match his strength.[186]

Without strength one is not a great hero, as is clear in the examples of those who are yet to gain strength, those who had strength but have lost it, and those who have never been strong.

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[183] See Homer *The Iliad* translated by Rieu 5 p100, 12 p231, 12 p233, 20 p373.
[184] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Hammond 8 p124.
[185] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Rieu 5 p92, 5 p95-101, 5 p103, 5 p114-115, 6 p119.
[186] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Hammond 6 p93.

Telemachus has not yet reached manhood, and he does not have the strength that defines a hero. Although he claims that his childhood is a thing of the past (*Odyssey* 20.310), it is clear from what he does and from how others treat him that he is still a boy. His mother suggests that there is nobody to take charge of her husband's palace, and she does not let her son order even the maids about (*Odyssey* 22.425-427). He is not strong enough to lay his hands on the suitors and rid the palace of the dissolute mob.[187] One day Telemachus will gain the strength that is proper to a man and will become as great a man as his father, but at the moment he is still just a boy. He himself reflects on this, 'I myself am young and do not yet have the physical strength to cope with anyone who might pick a quarrel with me'.[188]

Nestor is like an old lion compared to the cub Telemachus. Nestor was a great hero (as he often reminds us), but he has lost the strength of his youth. Nestor reflects that he was a hero among heroes and that there was no man to equal him, but that he is no longer the man he once was Old age has its hold on him now, and he must bow to it.[189] Nestor admits that he is weak of limb (*Iliad* 23 p429). Nestor says, 'my limbs are not so supple now and my old strength is gone' (*Iliad* 11 p215). His age impairs his strength. When an Achaean warrior sees Nestor in battle, he remarks to him that 'these young warriors are proving too much for an old man like you, my lord, with all those years to carry' (*Iliad* 8 p147). Nestor himself comments that he must leave the handling of spears to younger men because of the vigour needed for the activity (*Iliad*

[187] Homer *The Odyssey* translated by E. Rieu and D. Rieu 1.254-255, 2.58-63, 17.537-541.
[188] Homer *The Odyssey* translated by E. Rieu and D. Rieu 14.176, 16.72.
[189] See Homer *The Iliad* translated by Hammond 23 p381 for a typical example.

4 p85), and there is a clear relation here between strength and heroic action. When Shakespeare's Nestor meets an opponent he wishes that 'my arms could match thee in contention' as they might have done when he was younger (*Troilus and Cressida* 4.5.205). This makes it clear that he is no longer a great man of action. He is deficient in nothing but strength, but without it he is no longer a great hero.

Lear makes a similar statement concerning the physical prowess of his youth (although it is not as lengthy as any of Nestor's reflections). Lear reminds a warrior that 'I have seen the day, with my good biting' sword / 'I would have made him skip' (*Lear* 5.3.274-275). But now the weight of age bows him down, and he is no longer a great man of action.

Menenius too recalls the strength he once had, and the strength that once made him a great hero. When his dear friend is about to go into battle, Menenius states: 'if I could shake off but one seven years / From these old arms and legs, by the good gods, / I'd with thee every foot' (*Coriolanus* 4.1.55-57). He is willing to join the fighting, even though he no longer has the strength to bear the weight of his armour (*Coriolanus* 3.2.34-35). Without his strength, however, Menenius cannot be a great hero.

Furthermore the man who never had strength cannot be a great hero. Paris is not strong in battle. He is teased for not facing the enemy man to man with real weapons because he uses a bow and arrows. The enemy make fun of him and suggest that he can do no more damage than 'a woman or a naughty boy' (*Iliad* 11 p207). He is ridiculed on account of his physical weakness. This makes it clear that a great hero is not deficient in strength.

But a great hero is not defined by his strength alone. He does not rely solely on his strength. Strength is not such a fine quality that its presence alone is enough for one to be a great hero.

In Homer we are told that it is skill that makes a good woodcutter, much more than strength. It is skill too that enables the helmsman to guide his ship safely through a storm. We are also told that a charioteer who relies merely on his strength will not be able to control his horses and they will stray from the straight.[190] From these examples we can conclude that a great hero does not depend entirely on his strength.

On one day of fighting many of the Achaeans's strongest fighters are wounded and cannot take further part in the battle. They decide to go to the front line but to stay out of range so that they do not suffer any more wounds. There they exhort the men (*Iliad* 14 p258). What this suggests is that a hero is not defined solely by his strength in battle. It seems that even in battle it is not only physical attributes that are useful. There are other ways the hero can make his presence felt in the fighting.

Achilles has irresistible strength, and is by far the strongest of the Achaeans (*Odyssey* 11.476). He is the strongest of all men (*Iliad* 21 p385). He is the 'breaker of the battle-line',[191] and he is the destroyer of cities.[192] Although these formulations are given to other heroes too, they have a particular force for Achilles. He states that always the greater part of the cruel fighting is the work of his hands.[193] He is 'a glutton for battle'

[190] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Hammond 23 p373.
[191] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Rieu 13 p242, Homer *The Odyssey* translated by E. Rieu and D. Rieu 4.6.
[192] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Rieu 8 p155.
[193] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Lattimore 1.165-166.

and wallows in slaughter.[194] He longs for the terrors of battle.[195] Killing is what is dearest to him. His opponents look death in the face as he runs at them, and their knees quake in terror at the mere sight of him (*Iliad* 20 p367). He attacks his opponents with terrible violence in his heart. He stops killing only when the slaughtering tires his arms, and he takes some of the enemy captive to kill them later (*Il* 21 p379-380). Achilles is horribly destructive, and he relies on the strength of his deadly hands (*Iliad* 11 p197). Achilles 'follows only his own great strength'.[196] He takes definition primarily from his strength. It does seem that because of his strength he wants to be held above all others, to control all, to rule all, to dictate to all. However, he is not entitled to the 'whip-hand' just because he is strong in battle (*Iliad* 1 p30). His heroism relies almost exclusively on his strength, and this is a failing.

There is a clear imbalance in Achilles's connection to strength. We are often reminded of this imbalance. When he is singing among his dearest companions we are told that the lyre he is playing was taken from a city he destroyed (*Iliad* 9 p166). Even though he tells us that he loves Briseis with all his heart, Achilles himself notes that he won her through his strength with

the spear (*Iliad* 9 p170). When he is reflecting on the loss of Patroclus, he puts his hands on the breast of the body of his beloved friend, and his hands are described as 'man-killing' (*Iliad* 18 p345). In such examples it is hinted that there is something else other than strength and violence to Achilles, but this feeling is never allowed to

[194] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Rieu 13 p254, 21 p386.
[195] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Hammond 1 p15.
[196] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Hammond 24 p389.

fully come out. It is suggested but is then immediately overcome by images of destruction.

It may be significant that Achilles is compared to a flaming star of damaging influence. Achilles flashes out like a star that outshines all the other stars in the darkness of the night, and 'though it is the brightest of all stars it bodes no good' (*Iliad* 22 p397). It may be significant that in mythology this star that Achilles is compared to is the parent of some terrible monsters like the Chimera and the Hydra,[197] because this suggests the destructiveness of Achilles. The name of this star means 'hot, scorching',[198] and this also suggests the violence of Achilles.

Achilles is defined by strength and violence, and this is limiting and is a failing of his heroism.

Aias is incredibly strong. Aias is admired for his stupendous strength and size. He stands out for his height and broad shoulders.[199] He is 'big, sturdy, and redoubtable' and 'gigantic'.[200] He has 'indomitable strength' and his great size makes him like a fortification for the Achaeans.[201] It is a hard thing for any man to beat through his strength and his mighty hands (*Iliad* 13 p242). He is called 'greater' Aias to distinguish him from the other Aias at Troy, and it is his strength and seeming indestructibility that makes him great. For Aias there is nothing better than to engage

[197] Graves *The Greek Myths* 34.3 p130.
[198] Klein *A Comprehensive Etymological Dictionary of the English Language* p687.
[199] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Hammond 3 p46.
[200] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Rieu 3 p70, 5 p109, 17 p325.
[201] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Rieu 11 p212, 13 p242, 6 p117.

his opponent in close fighting, 'hand to hand and strength to strength'.[202] He thinks that power for men is in the strength of their hands.[203] But, like Achilles, he is 'a glutton for battle' (*Iliad* 12 p230). He attacks the enemy, killing everything he can, animal and man (*Iliad* 11 p210). Here he is a thing of thoughtless destruction.

In Homer Aias is referred to as a 'clodhopper' and as an ox.[204] He is like an ox straining at the ploughshare in the field as he joins the fighting.[205] In Shakespeare too the kings yoke Aias like an ox to plough up the battle-field (*Troilus and Cressida* 2.1.105-106). It is clear here that he is used merely for his strength. Aias is good for fighting, but is useless for anything else.[206]

In addition Aias's failures during the games for Patroclus indicate that a great hero has more than strength alone. Aias does not win any of the contests he enters. He ties the wrestling match with Odysseus, loses the single combat to Diomedes, and loses the discus throw to Polypoites (*Iliad* 23 p431-435). The failures of his strength to bring him victory in these trials, even though they are physical, help to make clear the point that strength alone does not make a great hero.

Coriolanus is 'the best man i'th'field' (*Coriolanus* 2.2.95) and is his country's 'greatest soldier' (*Coriolanus* 4.5.166-167). He is the foremost of warriors (*Coriolanus* 1.6.33). He is matchless in battle, and 'cannot in the world / Be singly

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[202] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Hammond 15 p246.
[203] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Hammond 15 p252.
[204] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Rieu 13 p256, *The Iliad* translated by Fagles 13.952.
[205] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Hammond 13 p217.
[206] This perhaps overstates Aias's failings. He (especially Homer's Aias) does show some other qualities that reflect well on him and I will look at these as the thesis goes on.

counterpoised' (*Coriolanus* 2.2.84-85), indicating that he has no equal in one-to-one fighting. He thinks that a man shows his worth in battle (*Coriolanus* 5.3.70-72). Indeed he is given the name Coriolanus because of his conquest of Corioles (*Coriolanus* 2.1.155-159),[207] and this connects him powerfully with strength and destruction. At one point he seems not to acknowledge his real name revealing how much he defines himself by this conquest.[208] He is also often compared to metals, indicating his intimacy with hardness and fighting and perhaps implying that he is just an instrument of battle. He considers that the only thing that happens when there is no fighting is that weapons rust (*Coriolanus* 4.5.226). It seems that for him fighting is the highest human activity. This points to his limiting emphasis on strength as the sole condition of heroism. He is strong, but he is a 'thing of blood' and tears through the lives of men (*Coriolanus* 2.2.107). His strong arm brings destruction (*Coriolanus* 2.1.153-154). He is defined too much by his strength, and this is a failing of his heroism.

Othello's heroism is also damaged because it relies too much on his strength. He has used himself only in fighting, and he admits that he can speak of little in the world except killing and battle (*Othello* 1.3.81-89). With his strong arm and his mighty sword he has overcome many powerful opponents (*Othello* 5.2.259-262). He has been tempered by the 'hardness' of battle (*Othello* 1.3.227-231), and here again we see a comparison with metal that connects him with hardness and war. Iago suggests that Othello is 'horribly stuffed' with the attributes of a warrior (*Othello* 1.1.14), and although this reflects Iago's jealousy of Othello it is a fitting description. It is also the

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[207] Shakespeare gives the name Corioles to the city of the Coriolani called Corioli.
[208] See Shakespeare *Coriolanus* 5.6.7-11.

first thing we hear about Othello, and so from the beginning of the play we are urged to think of Othello as a strong fighter and not much else. As the play goes on we see the appropriateness of Iago's statement. This excessive image hints that there is something unhealthy about Othello's emphasis on strength. We see this failing most clearly in Othello's confusion of the battle-field and the marriage-bed. He thinks of the hardness of battle as a soft 'bed of down' (*Othello* 1.3.227-229). He later turns his marriage-bed into a 'death-bed', smothering Desdemona with a pillow (*Othello* 5.2.24-51). So we see here that although Othello can cope with outer conflict (like physical dangers), he is unable to deal with inner conflict. This failing diminishes his heroism.

Macbeth is inexorable in battle, destroying all those who stand against him (*Macbeth* 1.2.16-23). He fights terrifyingly, and 'all's too weak' for his strong arm (*Macbeth* 1.2.15-16). He is said to be the bridegroom of the goddess of battle (*Macbeth* 1.2.54). Macbeth considers that heroism depends on taking physical action, so strength is critical because it allows him this sense of himself. But we are not allowed to admire Macbeth's strength overmuch (even though the king and others seem to) because many of those he fights against are his own countrymen. Even though these men are fighting against the king there is something questionable here about Macbeth's attacking them. This point is emphasised later when we see that another hero will not attack his own countrymen even though they are on the opposing side. This hero considers that it will reflect badly on him if he kills them given this relationship (*Macbeth* 5.7.18-21). Thus Macbeth's strength is presented as something admirable that is used in a questionable fashion.

It remains, however, that while the hero is not defined by strength alone, he must be strong. Ultimately battles are won by deeds.[209] There is a time for fighting, when nothing else will do. Sometimes nothing else will do any more good.[210] Sometimes there is nothing for it but to fight man to man and hand to hand.[211] An example of this is given in the *Odyssey*. For all his scheming and plotting, Odysseus ultimately needs strength to deal with his opponents in the palace.

Beauty

A hero in both Homer and Shakespeare is beautiful. His beauty is extraordinary, and all eyes are turned on him in admiration. Beauty is a physical expression of his pre-eminence.

In Homer a hero is like a god in his beauty. We are told that the gods are 'big and beautiful' (*Iliad* 18 p350). We also see that Achilles is admired by others who remark that he is 'big and beautiful' (*Iliad* 24 p448). Achilles himself says: 'look at me. Am I not big and beautiful?' (*Iliad* 21 p383). The beauty of a hero is unlike that of a normal man.

We see in Homer that the hero exults in his beauty. One hero is compared to a stallion breaking free from the stables, knowing how beautiful he is as he runs to where the mares graze in the pastures (*Iliad* 15 p278). Another hero is compared to a bull with

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[209] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Rieu 16 p309.
[210] See Homer *The Iliad* translated by Rieu 14 p258.
[211] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Rieu 15 p285.

his head held aloft who stands out in the herd, conspicuous among the grazing cows (*Iliad* 2 p52). It is significant that in such examples the animal referred to is a powerful male animal, emphasising the manliness of the beauty of a hero.

Achilles has extraordinary physical beauty. He is the handsomest man among the Achaeans (*Iliad* 2 p57). He has a 'comely face' (*Iliad* 16 p313). He seems to have prettiness rather than the beauty that seems more appropriate to a man.[212] Achilles is, however, a young man so we should perhaps not be surprised that his beauty is not so manly. It may be important that Achilles's name means 'lipless',[213] because this physical imperfection may suggest a flaw in his nature. But it remains that Achilles's beauty is extraordinary and that his beauty suggests that he is a hero.

Odysseus is physically beautiful (*Odyssey* 8.134-137). He has good looks and is attractive (*Odyssey* 11.337). Odysseus's locks hang from his head thick like the petals of a lily in bloom (*Odyssey* 6.231-232). Odysseus excites the desire of many females.[214] It is interesting that Odysseus does have a physical imperfection, where his legs are short so that he looks nobler sitting than standing.[215] But this does not diminish his beauty. Odysseus is a good-looking man and his beauty shows that he is a hero.

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[212] King *Achilles* p3-4.
[213] Graves *The Greek Myths* p747.
[214] See Homer *The Odyssey* translated by E. Rieu and D. Rieu 5.206-213, 6.237-245, 9.28-32 for some examples.
[215] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Hammond 3 p46.

Romeo has a face and a body better than any man's. Nobody can compare with Romeo's beauty (*Romeo and Juliet* 2.5.39-42). The Q1 version of *Romeo and Juliet* has 'baudie' for 'body' here as a quibble on Romeo's sexual attractiveness.

Coriolanus is beautiful, and his 'comeliness plucked all gaze his way' (*Coriolanus* 1.3.6-7). His body and form stand out, and he has been made better than any ordinary man (*Coriolanus* 4.6.91-93).

But beauty alone is not enough to make one a great hero. This is clear in the example of Paris. When Paris's fight with an opponent goes badly, Aphrodite saves him and returns him to his perfumed bedroom (*Iliad* 3 p74). It is significant that it is Aphrodite, the goddess of love, who saves him because this intimates that he is not so much a fighter, but a love-maker. Paris's intimacy with Aphrodite is also suggested when he is running to catch up with his brother, and is laughing in merriment (*Iliad* 6 p130). This points to the connection between Paris and 'laughter-loving Aphrodite'.[216] She is the 'smiling goddess'.[217] Aphrodite is always smiling and laughing. She cares for Paris, and he is her man.[218] He has the goddess's precious gifts. He has 'pretty lovelocks and a glad eye for the girls' (*Iliad* 11 p207), and he is a 'pretty boy' (*Iliad* 13 p254). Paris is not a hero of battle, but 'a hero of the dance' (*Iliad* 24 p444). His heroism becomes pale in the luxury of his perfumed bedroom. His elopement with Helen brings trouble to his people because the Achaeans come to fight to get her back, and Paris does not have the attributes required to conclusively fight the battle. So

[216] See Homer *The Iliad* translated by Rieu 14 p262.
[217] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Hammond 4 p53.
[218] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Fagles 4.11.

although his beauty helps to put his people in danger, he does not have the other qualities necessary to get his people out of danger. He is a curse for his people.[219] When he was born Paris's mother dreamed that she was giving birth to a blazing ember, and this is what he turns out to be for his people. In *Troilus and Cressida* Paris's sister cries: 'Paris burns us all' (*Troilus and Cressida* 2.2.111). It is clear that he is generally not admired for his ability in battle, and this means that even though he is beautiful his heroism is diminished.

Nireus is beautiful, but he is weak and has few followers (*Iliad* 2 p57). He has good looks, but he achieves nothing of significance. We are not told of anything he does. When Nireus is killed in Quintus the man who kills him tells him that 'thy beauty marvellous naught hath availed thee'.[220] We see here again that beauty is not enough to make one a great hero.

The inner nature seems to affect the outer nature, so where a hero is often beautiful, an insignificant man is often physically imperfect.

Thersites is ugly and this hints at his insignificance. He is distorted and his shoulders are bent inwards over his chest. His head is warped to a point. He is the ugliest man of his time (*Iliad* 2 p45). He is a useless man.[221] He is an impudent fellow, and he is beaten for abusing his betters. When he is struck he bends down terrified, looks

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[219] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Hammond 3 p42, 6 98, 7 115.
[220] Quintus Smyrnaeus *The Fall of Troy* 6 p281.
[221] For a different (perhaps more sympathetic) view of Thersites here see Postlethwaite 'Thersites in the *Iliad*' especially p92-93.

around him helplessly, and bursts into tears (*Iliad* 2 p47). He is told to shut up, and it is certainly done as his betters wish. He is not mentioned again.

Dolon is not good looking and this suggests that he is not someone of importance. We are told that he is by no means an attractive man (*Iliad* 10 p189). He agrees to go reconnoitre in the enemy camp, but he doesn't seem to know what he is getting himself into (*Iliad* 10 p189). Before he can achieve anything, some enemy warriors on a sortie spot him. They chase him, and he is compared to a small trembling animal running in terror and screaming as it goes (*Iliad* 10 p190). When they catch him he is white with fear and quakes before them. He stutters, his teeth chatter, and then he bursts into tears. He reveals everything to them, and then they kill him. He achieves nothing.

But it does seem that Homer attaches more importance to physical beauty than Shakespeare does. Beauty and importance seem to be directly related in Homer, where they go together. Beauty seems to be commensurate with significance. In Shakespeare the connection is not as intimate. It is also important that there is often much more of a difference between appearance and reality in Shakespeare, where inner qualities cannot always be seen in the way things look.

Birth

A hero in both Homer and Shakespeare is a man of good family. He is born of a high line. There is a correspondence between birth and importance, thus we almost never see a commoner get the better of a noble, that is an ordinary man prevail over a hero.

In Homer we are told that a 'man of substance' always has excellent parentage (*Iliad* 13 p252). Somebody of high birth has good looks (*Iliad* 24 p447). Parentage makes an impression upon one's looks (*Odyssey* 4.61-62). 'Mean men' can not produce significant children.[222] Someone of low birth is a weakling and a coward, and is of no account at all in affairs of any significance (*Iliad* 2 p45). A man from a good family has the 'right blood' in him (*Odyssey* 4.612). A good family produces men with admirable qualities (*Odyssey* 24.505-509). This points to an intimate relationship between birth and importance.

We see the importance of parentage to a hero in the way that the heroes are referred to by patronymics. Sometimes the name of the hero is left out entirely and only the patronymic is given.[223]

Glaucus makes clear his parentage (*Iliad* 6 p121-122). He tells the story of his family. He explains who they are, where they come from, and what they have done (*Iliad* 6 p122). This is the family that he calls his.[224] He claims that most people 'know it already' (*Iliad* 6 p121). It is clear here that his parentage reflects on the kind of man he is and is important to his heroism.

Diomedes is from a good family and this gives him a sense of himself as a man of significance (*Iliad* 14 p260). He says that he has good parentage, thus no thought that

[222] Homer *The Odyssey* translated by Fagles 4.72.
[223] For example, Agamemnon is often referred to as Atreides after his father Atreus.
[224] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Hammond 6 p96.

he is of low birth should make others reject any proposals he makes.[225] It is suggested here that a man of poor parentage is not likely to be someone of significance.

Hector ignores the propositions of a commoner, and considers it impertinent for a commoner to disagree with him (*Iliad* 12 p227). He takes exception to the commoner's proposal, and rejects his advice. What the commoner says is not to his liking (*Iliad* 18 p344). There are times when he accepts this commoner's advice,[226] but it seems that this is only because it accords with what is already in his thoughts. When there is agreement between them the poor birth of the commoner is not an issue, but when they disagree the commoner's views mean nothing. This shows that someone from a poor family is often not someone of importance. It is significant, however, that this commoner was joint leader of the greatest Trojan force (*Iliad* 12 p223), because this suggests that sometimes ability can to some extent overcome the limitations of birth. But it remains that his poor parentage diminishes his importance. It is Hector that the men follow.

Odysseus does not think it right to threaten men of good family, but with the commoners he has a different way. When commoners displease him, he strikes them with a sceptre and rates them severely (*Iliad* 2 p45). When a commoner speaks out against Agamemnon, he finds Odysseus standing next to him with a black look in his eye. Odysseus gives him a sharp rebuke and then beats him with a sceptre. The commoner bursts into tears and shuts up straight away (*Iliad* 2 p46-47). It is

[225] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Hammond 14 p224.
[226] See Homer *The Iliad* translated by Rieu 12 p223, 13 p254.

significant that Odysseus uses a sceptre to thrash these commoners because the sceptre itself represents the sway that the noble has over the commoner. It is a symbol of preponderance and is also used to physically express this difference.

When Odysseus receives gifts from other nobles in Phaeacia, the nobles suggest that they will recover their losses 'by a collection from the people' (*Odyssey* 13.14). The commoners do not explicitly agree to this arrangement, and are not even consulted.

But this expresses the preponderance of the nobles over the commoners. Odysseus too will repair the damage done to his estate and property by raiding the countryside, regardless of their complicity in what has happened while he was away. The commoners of Ithaca will pay too, 'until they have filled up my folds again' (*Odyssey* 23.357-358).

Birth alone, however, is not enough to make a hero. We see this when Menelaus offers to go on the night sortie with Diomedes (*Iliad* 10 p187). Agamemnon is afraid for Menelaus and he does not want him to go with Diomedes on the night sortie. He says to Diomedes: 'you must choose as your companion the man you want, the best of those you can see, since many are eager to join you. And do not let any respect felt in your heart make you pass by the better man and take the less good with you – do not be ruled by respect and look to a man's birth'.[227] Here we see that someone of good family does not necessarily have the other qualities of a hero.

[227] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Hammond 10 p157.

We also see that we should not attach too much importance to birth in Eumaeus. It is interesting that Homer presents a man like Eumaeus with such affection. There is perhaps no character in Homer who is treated with as much sympathy as Eumaeus.[228] He is the child of the king of the island of Syrie (*Odyssey* 15.402-414). But he is an ordinary man and tends animals for a living. He has a good birth and is an admirable man, but it remains that we cannot see Eumaeus as a hero or as a man who is the equal of a man like Odysseus.

In Shakespeare too we see that a hero has good parentage. There is again a close connection between birth and importance. Someone from a good family often enjoys preponderance over someone of poor birth.

Hamlet has good parentage, and this contributes to his importance. The 'tether' around him is not as short as it is with commoners (*Hamlet* 1.3.125). Hamlet is aloof in his relationship with commoners. We see this in Hamlet's conversation with the gravedigger, where Hamlet uses the familiar 'thee' and 'thou', and the gravedigger uses the respectful 'you' in reply.[229] Hamlet also uses 'sirrah' to address the gravedigger, which is somewhat contemptuous.[230] Hamlet says, 'the hand of little employment hath the daintier / Sense' (*Hamlet* 5.1.58-59), which indicates his feeling of superiority at his birth. He does not have to labour for his livelihood like a commoner does. Hamlet frowns that 'the age has grown so picked, that the toe of the peasant comes so near the heel of the courtier, he galls his kibe' (*Hamlet* 5.1.116-118). This reflects Hamlet's view that there is a proper distance between the

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[228] See especially Homer *The Odyssey* translated by E. Rieu and D. Rieu 14.36-184.
[229] Shakespeare *Hamlet* note Kittredge p217.
[230] Klein *A Comprehensive Etymological Dictionary of the English Language* p687.

commoner and the noble, and that the man of good family is someone of greater significance.

We see the preponderance of a man of good family over those with poor parentage in Coriolanus's attitude towards the commoners. He often compares them unfavourably with small animals, suggesting that they have no admirable qualities.[231] He thinks that the commoners should not be indulged, and he often ridicules them.[232] He would agree that the man who is 'worst in blood' is 'lowest, basest, poorest' (*Coriolanus* 1.1.154-156). The superciliousness of his responses to them suggests that his contempt for them may be excessive, but it remains that the noble seems to be more important than the commoner.

We again see this preponderance in Henry V's exhortation to the men of good family who fight with him. They are about to go into battle together, and he urges them to perform admirable deeds. He encourages them to 'be copy now to men of grosser blood' (*Henry V* 3.1.24). This suggests that nobles are most fit for imitation, and that they provide an example for meaner men to follow. A commoner cannot be an example to a youth, and cannot bring him into manhood. He 'cannot be man to me' (*Henry V* 3.2.26). There is a clear relationship here between 'blood' and significance. We see also that a man of low birth is 'a man of no estimation in the world' (*Henry V* 3.7.12). He is 'a man of mould' (*Henry V* 3.2.20). The use of the word 'mould' here may suggest that there is something dirty and muddied about the man of poor birth. We see here again a connection between birth and importance.

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[231] Shakespeare *Coriolanus* 1.6.42-45, 3.1.139.
[232] Shakespeare *Coriolanus* 1.9.7, 3.3.121.

Thus the hero in both Homer and Shakespeare is a man of good parentage. He is from a good family. There is a correspondence between birth and significance.

Charisma

A hero in both Homer and Shakespeare has charisma. He is a lord of humans. He is wide-ruling, holding sway over humans. He goes before his people. He has the force of personality to take the lead. He excites fear, respect, and love, and the people he rules over are in awe of him. He cares for them and they admire and respect him.

Just as Zeus rules over the gods, a hero rules over humans. Zeus is the father of humans and gods, and kings of humans take after him. The gods bow to Zeus's will and are in awe of him (*Iliad* 5 p116), just as humans are of kings of humans. Zeus promises to teach any god who goes against him by how much he is the most powerful of all the gods, by so much does his power exceed that of gods and humans (*Iliad* 8 p145). Zeus proclaims that he is 'by far the stronger god' (*Iliad* 15 p275), and it is clear that the other gods are afraid of him. We see a similar thing in the world of humans when Agamemnon takes Achilles's prize to show Achilles that 'I am more powerful than you' (*Iliad* 1 p28). He takes Achilles's prize to requite Achilles for openly going against him and for challenging his authority, and also because Agamemnon simply wants the prize. He demands that Achilles give in to him because 'I am his greater by so much, both as a man and as a king' (*Iliad* 9 p165). This is very much like Zeus, and shows that in Homer it is with a king of humans as it is with the king of the gods.

Agamemnon's people are in awe of him. He commands a huge force of men (*Odyssey* 24.24-27). He has 'by far the finest and most numerous force' among the Achaeans (*Iliad* 2 p55). He is outstanding among all the heroes because he brings by far the largest force.[233] Agamemnon is considered the best man because he rules the most people (*Iliad* 1 p30). He is the king over many when many are gathered.[234] He is the man whom all the thousands of Achaeans serve (*Iliad* 3 p68). He is responsible for his people (*Iliad* 2 p40). He has many men in his keeping.[235] He is troubled by the suffering of his people in the fighting. His heart is pounding as if it would burst from his breast, his body is trembling under him, and he can get no rest in his sore distress for them (*Iliad* 10 p183). He cares for his people. On one day of fighting the men are about to join battle. Agamemnon goes on a kingly review of his forces. He motivates them all for the fight (*Iliad* 4 p82). On another day of fighting the Trojans break through the wall and are about to destroy the black ships. The men are trembling with fear and their hearts are in their mouths. Agamemnon cries out to his men and his voice rings throughout the whole force. Again he inspires them all for the fight (*Iliad* 8 p151). At these critical points he has the charisma to lead his people. Agamemnon does not, however, always show great leadership.[236] On another day of fighting to find out if his men still long for battle he tells the Achaeans that they will not defeat the Trojans and urges them to flee to their native lands at once (*Iliad* 2 p42-43). He then does nothing as the men run for the black ships (*Iliad* 2 p44). Another hero must take the sceptre from him and take up the role of the king to regain control of the men.[237]

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[233] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Hammond 2 p33.
[234] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Hammond 5 p134-135.
[235] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Hammond 2 p20.
[236] See especially Homer *The Iliad* translated by Rieu 9 p161, 14 p259.
[237] Griffin and Hammond 'Critical Appreciation: Homer *Iliad* 1.1-52' p73.

Agamemnon himself admits this failing in his leadership (*Iliad* 14 p259). He regards with regret some of the decisions he has made. It may seem that Agamemnon takes on a role that is beyond him and that he is out of place as the supreme commander of the Achaeans.[238] But it remains that the Achaeans need a leader, and Agamemnon is the hero they look to. Even Achilles admits that he is 'the man to whom the troops will listen' (*Iliad* 23 p416). Agamemnon is 'revered' by his people (*Iliad* 4 p87), which suggests that he is feared, respected, and loved.

Hector's people follow him with everything that is in them. He commands the 'best and biggest' force of men among the Trojans and their allies (*Iliad* 12 p223). He has 'by far the finest and most numerous force' (*Iliad* 2 p61). He draws up his men and leads them into battle (*Iliad* 2 p61). 'Lead us now wherever you wish. We shall follow you with a will' (*Iliad* 13 p255). His charisma is clearly shown when the Trojans are fleeing the battle-field in terror, and he jumps down from his chariot in all his armour with a spear in his hand. He ranges all through his men, and heartens them for the fight. They turn about at once and hold their ground.[239] When Hector is hit with a huge rock he falls to the ground seriously wounded, and the Achaeans run forward, longing to stab him with their spears. But none of them can hurt him because before that all the Trojans come to stand over him. They come to where he is, and some hold their shields in front of him while some put their arms under him and carry him out of the fighting (*Iliad* 14 p268). His people love him dearly. Indeed Hector is a joy to all his people (*Iliad* 24 p456). Hector is beloved of the Trojans. This is an important part of what makes him a hero.

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[238] See Redfield *Nature and Culture in the* Iliad p102.
[239] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Rieu 5 p105, 6 p119.

Sarpedon takes the lead of his people and this is a significant part of what makes him a hero. He commands the fine allies of Troy, and has selected under him Glaucus whom he considers beyond question to be the best man among the allies next to himself (*Iliad* 12 p223).

Odysseus is a man whose lead others are glad to follow whole-heartedly (*Odyssey* 23.126). He has a fine force of men at his back (*Odyssey* 6.164). He brings men under control as he walks among them (*Iliad* 3 p69). He treats his people with a parent's loving care and they adore him (*Odyssey* 2.233-234). They respect and love him, and this is an important part of what makes him a hero.

Henry V's people are in awe of him. He shows his charisma on the night before a critical battle when he visits all his men. He goes from watch to watch, from tent to tent. He reassures his men, and their fears vanish (*Henry V* 4.0.28-47). They follow him with devotion. Henry V inspires awe in his people (*Henry V* 4.1.220). 'Never was monarch better feared and loved' (*Henry V* 2.2.25), and never did a monarch have 'more loyal subjects' (*Henry V* 1.2.126-127). He is loved, feared, and respected, and this is a significant part of what makes him a hero.

Brutus is adored by his people. He is loved 'in all the people's hearts' (*Julius Caesar* 1.3.157). He is a great leader and his people follow him eagerly, 'I follow you, / To do I know not what; but it sufficeth / That Brutus leads me on' (*Julius Caesar* 2.1.332-334). Brutus leads and his people follow on his heels (*Julius Caesar* 3.1.120-121). We can see the importance of charisma for a hero when we look at the way that the hero is presented when he is deficient in this quality.

Achilles's heroism is diminished because the love his men have for him is not given whole-heartedly. His men must fear and respect him to be kept out of the fighting for so long by only his insistence, but they resent his churlishness. There was not one of them who did not abuse Achilles for keeping them out of the battle (*Iliad* 16 p297). They often met and expressed their displeasure about him to each other (*Iliad* 16 p297). It is difficult to imagine Achilles looking after his people with loving care. He himself rejects the chance to be a king of humans and chooses not to take the rulership of his people.[240]

Macbeth's heroism is diminished because his men do not love or respect him. The men Macbeth rules over once he takes the kingship 'move only in command, / Nothing in love' (*Macbeth* 5.2.19-20). They are constrained to his rulership, but their hearts are 'absent' (*Macbeth* 5.4.13-14). Macbeth hears 'curses, not loud but deep', and it is clear that the people are terrified of him (*Macbeth* 5.3.27). He himself reflects that he does not have the adoration of the people, where they just make a show of devotion to him and are too afraid to reveal what is in their hearts (*Macbeth* 5.3.25-28). When Macbeth's opponents attack his position we see what the people really think of him. The people go into battle against Macbeth's opponents, but they 'strike beside us' (*Macbeth* 5.7.28-29). This suggests that the people deliberately hit to miss or that they turn to fight beside them.[241] The only men who show any devotion (and it is by no means whole-hearted) to Macbeth are assassins and killers. Although Macbeth inspires fear, his people do not love or respect him.

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[240] These possible courses of action and Achilles's decision between them are also discussed in Nagy *The Best of the Achaeans* p135.
[241] Shakespeare *Macbeth* note N. Brooke p207.

Paris's (Shakespeare's) heroism is diminished because his men do not love, fear, or respect him. Paris's follower says that he follows Paris 'only when he goes before me' (*Troilus and Cressida* 3.1.1-3), which shows his contempt for him. Paris's people hate him because of the disaster he has brought upon them.

It is a failing of Coriolanus's heroism that his people do not love, but rather only fear, him. Many of his people had been grateful to him, and had gathered in the streets, jostling with each other just to catch a glimpse of him.[242] They admired him so much. But then he makes himself (perhaps with a little help) hated by his people. He becomes 'feared, / So hated' (*Coriolanus* 4.7.47-48). He comes to care nothing for the love of the people and finally looks only for their fear.

So a hero in both Homer and Shakespeare is a man who has charisma. He is a lord of his people. The people he rules over fear, respect, and love him, and they are in awe of him.

Eloquence

A hero in both Homer and Shakespeare is a man of speaking and action. His words are mellifluous and he has force of utterance.

[242] Shakespeare *Coriolanus* 2.1.197-213, 2.1.254-260.

In Homer we see that a hero is a speaker of words and a doer of deeds.[243] He uses words and action.[244] The hero excels in the council-chamber and on the battle-field.[245] Phoenix notes that it is on the battle-field and in the council-chamber where men prove themselves (*Iliad* 9 p172). Thus ability in the council-chamber is valued as highly as ability in battle.[246] When a hero wants to influence his men, he speaks to some with winning words and uses force with others (*Iliad* 2 p44-45). He uses verbal and physical persuasion. Even Zeus finds it hard to control his wife 'by word of mouth alone' (*Iliad* 5 p116). This shows the importance of words and action together.

Odysseus is a man of action and words (*Odyssey* 2.272-273). There is no man alive who can compete with Odysseus in speaking (*Iliad* 3 p69). He is the best in speaking (*Odyssey* 13.297-298). Odysseus is consummate in the council-chamber (*Odyssey* 16.241). Nothing is missing from his speeches, and his words are delightful (*Iliad* 19 p358). Odysseus has 'eloquence' and his words are melodious (*Odyssey* 11.367-369). Odysseus's words are enchanting.[247] The 'spell of his words' entrances men (*Odyssey* 13.1-3). When the Trojans are assessing the Achaeans, a Trojan tells a story about Odysseus when Odysseus spoke before the Trojans. In the story the Trojans had thought Odysseus was no-one extraordinary, but when he spun his thoughts in speech, releasing his great voice from his chest, they all looked upon him admiringly (*Iliad* 3 p69). Here Odysseus's eloquence is an important part of what makes him a hero.

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[243] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Hammond 9 p143.
[244] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Fagles 1.89-90.
[245] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Rieu 1 p36, 6 p119.
[246] This point is also made in Nagy p49, p147.
[247] Homer *The Odyssey* translated by E. Rieu and D. Rieu 11.333-335, 17.518-520.

We see Odysseus as a speaker of words and a doer of deeds in the palace when he takes up his bow and is compared to a bard tuning his lyre. He plucks the string of the bow and it sings (*Odyssey* 21.404-412). Here Odysseus is at once a bard who delights men with his singing and playing and an archer who kills men with his bow and arrows. Thus we see Odysseus as a man of words and action, and this enhances his heroism.

Odysseus's words are admired for their aesthetic beauty, but also for the way they reveal his good character. They have both a moral and an aesthetic quality.[248] We see this in the delight others take in Odysseus's words, where he is admired for his eloquence and for what his words reveal about the sort of man he is.[249]

We also see this in Odysseus's criticism of the words of others who are not good speakers or good men. One man has a high-pitched voice, and his words are not beautiful. He is full of abuse, and his talk is nothing but insult. His words are empty (*Iliad* 2 p45). Odysseus impugns him as a 'loud-mouth' and a useless man (*Iliad* 2 p46). Indeed there is no worse man than him.[250] Another man is a presumptuous fool, and his words are insulting. Odysseus says that the inept remarks of this man are not beautiful and do not show him to be a fine man. Odysseus says that his words are 'unbecoming' (*Odyssey* 8.165-185). Alcinous too maintains that this man shows that he does not know how to talk sense (*Odyssey* 8.240).

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[248] See Pratt *Lying and Poetry from Homer to Pindar* p85-88.
[249] See Homer *The Odyssey* translated by E. Rieu and D. Rieu 7.227-228, 14.508-509.
[250] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Hammond 2 p25.

Diomedes is the best man among all of his age in the council-chamber.[251] When the Achaeans are despondent and are thinking of giving up, Diomedes makes a speech and urges them to persevere. They are delighted and shout their approval. He turns their dejected hush into an exultant cheer. None of them make any frivolous objections or gainsay a word of his speech (*Iliad* 9 p162). Later many heroes are wounded and cannot take further part in the battle that has now become desperate. Diomedes comes forward and suggests to them that they go to the front line and exhort the men, remaining themselves out of range so that they do not suffer any more wounds. The kings find no fault with his proposal and accept it (*Iliad* 14 p260). In both these examples his proposal follows a suggestion that they leave Troy altogether. The kings (especially Agamemnon) are considering going back across the sea in their black ships. Diomedes's words renew their determination to stay, and bring delight to the kings. Sometimes he does not bring his arguments to their conclusions, where there are parts of his speeches that remain to have their implications fully explained by those with more experience (*Iliad* 9 p162). But he is a good speaker, and is admired by the best men for his eloquence.[252] His eloquence is an important part of what makes him a hero.

We see in Shakespeare too that a hero is a man of action and a man of speaking.

Brutus is a fine speaker. He is entreated by the conspirators to 'speak, strike, redress' (*Julius Caesar* 2.1.46-47). In this eloquence is as important as action, for the

[251] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Hammond 9 p134.
[252] See also Homer *The Iliad* translated by Fagles 7.462-470, 9.865-866.

conspirators must gain the understanding of the people through their words or their deeds will alienate them. Action by itself is not enough. Brutus shows his eloquence when he influences the people who are hostile to the conspirators and what they have done. The people are outraged, but his persuasive words mollify them. They are no longer inimical to the conspirators (*Julius Caesar* 3.2.1-62). It may be significant that the people are just as easily influenced by Antony's eloquence a few moments later, for if they are so fickle then Brutus's eloquence seems diminished. Brutus's persuasion of them does not seem so impressive if they are so easily convinced, one moment passionately believing one thing and then the next moment believing something totally different with equal enthusiasm. But Brutus does influence them, and perhaps loses out only because Antony has the advantage of speaking last. Furthermore Antony is himself a great speaker. Antony claims that he is no speaker of words as Brutus is. Antony suggests that he cannot influence men's hearts with his words as Brutus can (*Julius Caesar* 3.2.218-231). But Antony is clearly equivocating here. Antony is a persuasive speaker. It remains that Brutus is eloquent, and that his eloquence is an important part of what makes him a hero.

But we also see in Homer that there can be different kinds of eloquence. Some kinds of eloquence may be aesthetically beautiful, but be morally questionable. Other kinds of eloquence may not be aesthetically delightful, but may nonetheless reveal the good character of the speaker. We see this in the embassy scene at the tent of Achilles. Nestor proposes sending the embassy to Achilles (*Iliad* 9 p163), and himself selects the men who will go. Nestor urges each of them to do everything he can to mollify Achilles, but 'with his eye for the most part on Odysseus' (*Iliad* 9 p165). Nestor expects that the eloquence of Odysseus will be the most telling. But the outcome is

quite different. Achilles rejects all the speeches made to him, but Odysseus's most of all. He tells them not to coo him with their entreaties, for he will not be persuaded by their words. Achilles says that he hates the man who says one thing but has another in his heart (*Iliad* 9 p169), and it seems that he is thinking mostly of Odysseus here.[253] This suggests that for Achilles Odysseus's words are not attractive (maybe they are aesthetically beautiful, but they are not morally beautiful). Achilles's more indulgent responses to the other men's speeches (especially Aias's) perhaps also show that there are different kinds of eloquence. It seems that Aias's words have the most effect on Achilles, even though Aias is perhaps the least mellifluent speaker. Aias (perhaps in contrast to Odysseus) expresses himself plainly, and is straightforward and ingenuous. This may suggest that Aias's words are beautiful in their way (perhaps more morally than aesthetically). Achilles repudiates what Odysseus says at length, but can only accept what Aias says. He makes no attempt to contradict Aias, and just querulously brings attention again to the insults that he has endured. Achilles even admits to Aias that 'there is much in what you say' (*Iliad* 9 p178).

Indeed it seems that Aias's eloquence does not depend on beautiful or enchanting words but relies on the sort of man he is. When Aias is protecting the black ships, he exhorts the men to join in the terrible fighting. His words put fresh heart into all of them.[254] The men put his words away in their hearts.[255] It seems here that they respond more to his example than to what he says, looking at him standing at the prow of one of the black ships fending off a multitude of opponents with a spear.

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[253] There is much disagreement here among commentators, but I think it is likely that Achilles means to suggest Odysseus here given Achilles's conduct in the scene and Achilles's character in general.
[254] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Lattimore 15.501-514.
[255] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Lattimore 15.565-567.

We see a similar thing in Shakespeare.

Othello is not a delightful speaker, and he admits that 'rude am I in my speech' (*Othello* 1.3.81). Yet his words reveal the good nature of his character. Iago's words may sometimes be aesthetically beautiful, but they are morally questionable. The eloquence of Iago has a damaging influence (*Othello* 3.3.322). His words are 'eloquent in their reverberative meaning' and they are dangerous.[256] He abuses his hearers with his destructive words (*Othello* 1.3.389). There is a repugnance about eloquence when it degenerates to this kind of use.

We also see that eloquence alone is not enough to make one a hero.

Pandarus is a bold speaker, but although he has many of the other qualities of a hero ultimately his actions do not support his words. On one day of fighting he fires an arrow from his bow at Diomedes. He hits him and exults that his victim will soon be dead. But Diomedes is not killed, and goes on fighting.[257] Then Pandarus throws a spear at Diomedes. He again rejoices in what he thinks is a killing blow. 'You have given me my great triumph'.[258] But the spear point fails to take Diomedes's life. Then it is Diomedes's turn. He throws his spear, and the point hits Pandarus by his eye, goes through his white teeth, cuts off his tongue by the root, and comes out at the base of his chin (*Iliad* 5 p99). It seems appropriate that Pandarus's tongue is cut off after he

[256] Proser *The Heroic Image* p118.
[257] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Hammond 5 p69.
[258] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Hammond 5 p74.

exults the way he does for his words are empty.[259] This suggests that words that are not reinforced by action are useless.

Polydamas is brilliant in the council-chamber (*Iliad* 18 p343), but he is not the best on the battle-field. He is not the man to stand and fight it out (*Iliad* 12 p227). He does not have the heart to face his opponents in battle.[260] This is a failing of his heroism.

The Trojan counsellors, like Thymoetes, Hicetaon, and Antenor, are old men. They are eloquent speakers, and are like cicadas chirping in a leafy tree (*Iliad* 3 p68). But we are told that their old age has brought their fighting days to an end (*Iliad* 3 p68). It remains that they are no longer great heroes because they cannot take their places in the front line. That cicadas chirrup incessantly might also suggest that all the talking of the old men is an annoyance.

Nestor is consummate in speaking. He is admired for his eloquence. He is characterised by a readiness of utterance. He frequently addresses the other kings, persuading them with his words.[261] He carries all before him in argument (*Iliad* 2 p50). His name itself may suggest his ability in speaking, where it may mean 'speaker'.[262] But it is a failing of Nestor's heroism that if eloquence can do no more good then he does not have many other qualities to prove himself. Indeed Nestor himself says that sometimes words are of no more use to men, however long they talk.

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[259] See Mueller 'Knowledge and Delusion in the *Iliad*' p115.
[260] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Hammond 12 p194.
[261] Homer The *Iliad* translated by Hammond 2 p21, 2 p27, 2 p29, 6 p92, 7 p108, 7 p113, 9 p134, 9 p135, 10 p156, 15 p250.
[262] Graves *The Greek Myths* p771.

Words do not always give a solution (*Iliad* 2 p49). Thus words should not be the only weapon a hero uses. Nestor's heroism is diminished because he is no longer a great man of action, and because most of his heroic deeds live only in the retelling.

Nestor is the opposite of Achilles on this point. Nestor's physical ability in battle is gone, and he influences others by speaking. Achilles is a man of violence, and his primary concern is fighting. Achilles admits that he is not pre-eminent in speaking. He exclaims, 'I, the best man in all the Achaean force, the best in battle, defeated only in the war of words' (*Iliad* 18 p339). He is better with his hands than with his tongue. Nestor praises Achilles's father as a fine speaker and a famous commander of his people,[263] emphasising the excellence of words and deeds together. When Achilles left his native land he was untrained in action or speaking (*Iliad* 9 p172), and although he acquires an ability in battle, he has little ability with words. This is a failing in Achilles's heroism.

Thus we see that a hero in Homer and in Shakespeare is diminished without eloquence.

Wisdom

There is a similarity between the hero in Homer and Shakespeare that self-knowledge, understanding, and judgement are praiseworthy qualities. A hero is ripe of mind and displays wisdom in judgement. He has wise thoughts in his mind.

[263] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Fagles 7.144-145.

It may be that the wisdom of the hero in Homer is unlike the wisdom of the hero in Shakespeare. The deliberations of the heroes in Homer do not seem to be rational in the same way as the reflections of heroes in Shakespeare.[264] The heroes in Homer do not seem to show the same consideration of the implications of possible courses of action as the heroes in Shakespeare.[265] Nevertheless there is a similarity that the qualities of the mind are important to the hero.

In Homer we see that wisdom 'brings benefit to many men and is the saving of many too', fending off disaster again and again.[266] If wisdom should fail then disaster is never far behind (*Iliad* 10 p182).

Zeus is by far the greatest god. He is Zeus 'the Counsellor' and Zeus 'the Thinker',[267] which indicates the importance of the qualities of the mind. He is not the greatest by physical power alone. And it is with humans as it is with the gods. A hero is the 'equal of Zeus' in wisdom.[268]

Odysseus's ripeness of mind is perhaps his finest heroic quality. Zeus describes Odysseus as 'the wisest man alive' (*Odyssey* 1.66). He is a man as wise as the gods are wise, and his thoughts are like the thoughts are Zeus. His wisdom competes with that of Zeus.[269] In the world of humans Odysseus has no competitor in judgement or

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[264] See Finley *The World of Odysseus* p132.
[265] See Finley *The World of Odysseus* p132.
[266] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Hammond 9 p135, 13 p218 are characteristic examples.
[267] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Rieu 1 p27, 15 p281.
[268] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Rieu 7 p133, 11 p202.
[269] Homer *The Odyssey* translated by E. Rieu and D. Rieu 13.89, Homer *The Iliad* translated by Rieu 2 p51, p56.

argument (*Odyssey* 13.297). 'There was not a man who dared to match his wits against the admirable Odysseus, who in every kind of strategy proved himself supreme' (*Odyssey* 3.119).

Odysseus has 'the quickest brain of any man' (*Iliad* 10 p187). Odysseus is a man of understanding and has presence of mind (*Odyssey* 6.258). He is 'wily', 'crafty', 'astute', 'ingenious', 'inventive', and 'shrewd', and he is 'ready-witted', 'quick-witted', 'nimble-witted', and 'keen-witted'.[270] He is a man of 'many resources' (*Odyssey* 9.1). He is a master of stratagems (*Odyssey* 11.119-120) and is 'the master-schemer' (*Odyssey* 11.356). He is a master of all kinds of clever plans (*Iliad* 3 p69). All the men are thankful to him for the sound schemes he puts forward (*Iliad* 2 p47). The men need look no further than his proposals.[271] Through his wisdom he is for his allies victory and for his enemies disaster. His ripeness of mind is an important part of what makes him a hero.

Odysseus suggests to a powerful warrior: 'you are a stronger man than I, and not a little better with the spear, but in view of my greater age and experience I may well claim to have more judgement than you, and that being so, you must constrain yourself to accept my ruling' (*Iliad* 19 p359). We see a similar thing in Quintus where Odysseus says to another powerful warrior: 'I boast me better far than thou' for it is by wisdom that hewers of rock undermine craggy mountains, that sailors cross the

[270] Homer *The Odyssey* translated by E. Rieu and D. Rieu 18.50, 18.51, 19.336, 5.204, 14.191, Homer *The Iliad* translated by Rieu 10 p192, Homer *The Odyssey* translated by E. Rieu and D. Rieu 18.337, 13.333, 5.214, 8.19. It is worth noting here that some of these synonyms are translations of the same Greek word.

[271] Homer *The Odyssey* translated by E. Rieu and D. Rieu 8.492-495, 9.414-416, 12.211-212, 22.229-231.

thunderous-plunging sea, and that hunters defeat fierce animals.[272] In Ovid too Odysseus suggests to a powerful warrior that 'the man who steers the ship is superior to the one who rows, the general is greater than the soldier and, to the same extent, I am superior to you'.[273] These presentations of Odysseus are generally in agreement with what we see in Homer, and they suggest that a hero does not prove himself just by his outer qualities, but by his inner qualities too.

Nestor and Odysseus share a 'single mind' and both enjoy good sense and judgement (*Odyssey* 3.128-129). It is remarkable that Odysseus should be equal in wisdom to Nestor given Nestor's age. Nestor has seen two generations of men come to life, grow up, and die, and now he rules the third (*Iliad* 1 p29). Shakespeare's Nestor has 'so long walked hand in hand with time' (*Troilus and Cressida* 4.5.203), just as Homer's Nestor has.

Nestor embodies the wisdom of the time. His knowledge of men's ways and thoughts is unrivalled (*Odyssey* 3.244-245). He is rich in wisdom and it is not uncommon for his wisdom to win an argument (*Odyssey* 24.51-52). He is supreme in the giving of advice.[274] He proposes what he thinks is best with the certainty that nobody will hit on a better proposal than his (*Iliad* 9 p163). Agamemnon praises his wisdom, suggesting that if he had ten Nestors Troy would soon fall (*Iliad* 2 p50). This emphasises the advantage that wisdom can bring. Nestor's proposal to build a wall and dig a ditch around their camp (*Iliad* 7 p140) saves the men and the black ships for a time. This suggests that wisdom is as important as fighting ability.

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[272] Quintus Smyrnaeus *The Fall of Troy* 5 p227.
[273] Ovid *Metamorphoses* 13 p295.
[274] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Hammond 11 p181.

There are times, however, when wisdom is not enough. When the wall Nestor had proposed falls and the men are in a desperate fight by the black ships, Nestor urges the heroes to think what they should do, 'if thinking can do any good' (*Iliad* 14 p258). Wisdom alone does not make a man a great hero for there are times when it is no more use and other qualities are needed.

A great hero does not have wisdom alone.

Paris shows some wisdom, but this is not enough to make him a great hero. He exclaims that 'what a man cannot do, however keen, is to fight beyond his powers' (*Iliad* 13 p255). He understands that one man can fight, another can dance and sing, and another has a ripeness of mind (*Iliad* 13 p253). So he turns to those things in which he has ability. He knows his limits, and realises that he is not the best fighter. But his heroism is diminished because although at times he shows understanding and self-knowledge he is deficient in other heroic qualities.

If a hero does not have understanding and self-knowledge then this is a failing in his heroism.

Agamemnon does not show understanding in his interactions with Achilles. He makes a critical and damaging mistake in treating Achilles as he does (*Iliad* 1 p26-28). He later admits that it was 'folly' that made him affront Achilles (*Iliad* 9 p164). But even as he is offering Achilles plenteous recompense, he demands that he 'bow down

before me',[275] which shows that Agamemnon still does not understand Achilles.[276] Agamemnon is superbly incapable of reconciling himself with Achilles.[277] This reflects a failing in his heroism.

Aias is not a great thinker, and this is a failing in his heroism. On one day of fighting he is beset by missiles when he is fending off the Trojans. He falls back, the missiles hitting all the time. The helmet on his head maintains a great clanging under the constant hitting of missiles (*Iliad* 16 p295). He is hit repeatedly in the head and he comes away seemingly unaffected, and this hints that his thoughts in his head are not a significant part of what makes him a hero.

Shakespeare's Aias is not ripe of mind, and his heroism is diminished because of his folly. He does not seem to be able to think for himself. He follows others in an unthinking manner and shows no originality of thought. He is consistently 'blockish' and 'brainless'.[278] The thoughts in his head are 'scarce' (*Troilus and Cressida* 2.3.13-15). We are told that if all men were of his mind then wisdom would be 'out of fashion' (*Troilus and Cressida* 2.3.213-214). He is repeatedly ridiculed for his folly.[279] It is suggested that Aias's horse is 'the more capable creature' (*Troilus and Cressida* 3.3.306). He is clearly someone people respect only for his physical ability.

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[275] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Fagles 9.165.
[276] Odysseus shows discretion in leaving out this demand when he repeats Agamemnon's offer of reconcilement to Achilles, see Homer *The Iliad* translated by Rieu 9 p167-169.
[277] Redfield *Nature and Culture in the* Iliad p102.
[278] Shakespeare *Troilus and Cressida* 1.3.375, 1.3.381, 2.1.43, 2.1.72, 2.1.79, 3.3.256.
[279] Shakespeare *Troilus and Cressida* 1.3.328, 2.1.98-100, 2.1.118-119.

Lear is foolish, and this diminishes his heroism. He has the folly to ask which of his children 'doth love us most' (*Lear* 1.1.51), and then is more foolish not to recognise whose is love and whose is just cajolery. Even Gonerill accounts it 'poor judgement' that her father rejects Cordelia (*Lear* 1.1.290). Cordelia damages Lear's image of himself through her unwillingness to excessively indulge him. He loves Cordelia the most of all his children, and had wanted to live the rest of his life in her care (*Lear* 1.1.123-124). But he feels that she does not adequately return his love. So he rejects her, and disclaims 'all my paternal care' of her (*Lear* 1.1.108-120). He punishes the love of Cordelia and rewards the perfidy of Gonerill and Regan. Through his folly he does 'kill thy physician and thy fee bestow / Upon the foul disease' (*Lear* 1.1.163-164). This sickness begun by his folly grows powerful and climaxes with Cordelia's and Lear's death.

Othello does not advance to self-knowledge, and this is a failing in his heroism. He loses his selfhood through Desdemona's (imagined) affair, and he tries to recapture his sense of himself as a hero by killing her (*Othello* 5.2.1-22). Othello smothers Desdemona in the bed which she has 'contaminated' (*Othello* 4.1.206-207), thus the bed that is stained by lust 'shall with lust's blood' be spattered (*Othello* 5.1.36). But then he finds out that Desdemona did not have an affair. Only at the end does he understand. Othello is not one of Shakespeare's thinking heroes, and we do not expect him to gain full self-knowledge.[280] Nevertheless this diminishes his heroism.

[280] Bulman *The Heroic Idiom of Shakespearean Tragedy* p120-122.

This failing seems to reflect more negatively on the hero in Shakespeare than on the hero in Homer. But it remains in both Homer and Shakespeare that if a hero does not have understanding and self-knowledge then this is a failing in his heroism.

But a hero is not always wise, and may be excused for some foolishness as long as he is not defined by this deficiency. Even Odysseus is not always wise and does sometimes behave thoughtlessly. He teases the Cyclops when his men are fleeing the island, and almost brings disaster upon them as the Cyclops breaks off the top of a mountain and throws it at their fleeing ship (*Odyssey* 9.470-499). Although they only just escape, Odysseus's temper is up, and he shouts back at the Cyclops once more, despite the pleadings of his men. The Cyclops throws a jagged boulder at them, and it only just misses (*Odyssey* 9.536-542). Then Odysseus is foolish enough to give the Cyclops his name. This allows the Cyclops to requite him (as he knows who he is), and invoke disaster upon him and his men (*Odyssey* 9.502-536). Here Odysseus acts without due consideration for consequences. Odysseus's heroism is not diminished by this, however, because he is characteristically wise.

So we see that there is a similarity between the hero in Homer and Shakespeare that self-knowledge, understanding, and judgement are part of what it is to be a hero. The hero shows wisdom and is ripe of mind.

Differences

These similarities may suggest that there are many qualities that are common to heroes in general. But the similarities do not mean that there is a complete identity between the hero in Homer and the hero in Shakespeare. The nature of the hero is not completely the same in Homer and Shakespeare, and there are significant differences between them.

The hero in Homer and the hero in Shakespeare represent phases in the evolution of conceptions of heroism more generally. But the evolution of the hero is not a stream flowing from point to point in one direction. The hero in Homer is not a rudimentary form that progresses through a succession of changes into the more advanced form of the hero in Shakespeare. They are not points on a straight line. They are different and separate strands of evolution rather than part of a continuous and sequential process of evolution. Thus we see considerable differences between the hero in Homer and the hero in Shakespeare.

Thinking, Feeling, and Acting

There are significant differences between the heroes in Homer and Shakespeare in the way that they think, feel, and act. It sometimes seems that the hero in Homer is a character who acts with immediacy and who is impulsive and shows a spontaneity whereas the hero in Shakespeare is a character who thinks before acting and who is

reflective. We should make certain, however, that we do not explain this is an unduly simple way. It may be that words like 'spontaneity' and 'impulsiveness' do not make sense for the hero in Homer in the same way that they make sense for the hero in Shakespeare. It may be that we cannot understand the hero in Homer and the hero in Shakespeare in terms of simple contraries here. Perhaps we cannot look through the same lens at how the hero in Homer and the hero in Shakespeare think, feel, and act. There are different patterns of thinking, feeling, and acting in the heroes in Homer and the heroes in Shakespeare. But there are underlying differences between the characters in Homer and the characters in Shakespeare in the way that they think, feel, and act that are significant and we can talk meaningfully about these differences in relation to heroism.

The hero in Homer is active. His world is one of speaking and doing.[281] There is not much that separates thought and action, where once he thinks of something he does it.[282] His world is one of action and consequence.[283] The consequences of the action he takes seem to be considered only as they ensue and not so much before the action is taken.[284] He does not reflect on things and then decide what to do, but responds to the immediate situation in which he finds himself.[285] He seems to be untroubled by conscience. He seems to act without the interference of consciousness. He seems to act without conscious intention.

[281] Homer *The Odyssey* introduction by P. Jones xliv.
[282] Homer *The Odyssey* introduction by P. Jones xxiv.
[283] Griffin and Hammond 'Critical Appreciation: Homer *Iliad* 1.1-52' p76.
[284] There may be exceptions here and I will look at these possible exceptions as the discussion goes on.
[285] Johnston *The Ironies of War* p50.

His thoughts and his feelings are not separate, but are joined together. His thoughts and feelings form a whole, and it is through this synthesis that he acts. He seems to experience thoughts and feelings concurrently. Indeed for him they are not two different things.[286] The same word is used to refer to the thoughts and feelings. It may sometimes seem that the heart and the mind are separate. We see that 'the heart is addressed in the style appropriate to a person, and it responds accordingly'.[287] But the heart and mind are not separate interlocutors in the discussions about what to do. The heart and the mind do not respond separately from each other. He consults his heart and mind together as one thing to reach a decision about what action to take.

We see this pattern of thinking, feeling, and acting in Odysseus.[288] His thoughts and feelings are joined together. He turns things over in his heart and mind (*Odyssey* 5.354-366). He deliberates in his heart and mind about what action to take (*Odyssey* 24.235-237). He probes his heart and mind.[289] His heart is in some 'perplexity' (*Odyssey* 20.37) and there is a 'perplexing matter' on his mind (*Odyssey* 20.41-42). Here his mind and his heart are involved in the same deliberation. He ponders in his mind what he will do (*Odyssey* 20.29-31). He plots within himself what he will do.[290] He is 'torn in thought, debating, head and heart'.[291] He has an 'inward debate' about what to do (*Iliad* 11 p208). He debates in his mind and heart what to do (*Odyssey* 20.9-11).

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[286] The relation of the heart to the mind in Homer is also discussed in Caswell *A Study of 'Thumos' in Early Greek Epic* p11-50.
[287] Gill *Personality in Greek Epic, Tragedy, and Philosophy* p188.
[288] There is a problem here with Odysseus that I will get to before long.
[289] Homer *The Odyssey* translated by Fagles 5.391-402.
[290] Homer *The Odyssey* translated by Fagles 20.7.
[291] Homer *The Odyssey* translated by Fagles 20.12.

We see the pattern of thinking, feeling, and acting when Odysseus sees Tlepolemus get killed. The point of a spear passes right through Tlepolemus's neck, and darkness comes down on his eyes (*Iliad* 5 p110). Odysseus is disconcerted by Tlepolemus's killing, 'his heart raged within him'.[292] But he is 'uncertain what to do' and has a debate with himself (*Iliad* 5 p110). 'He pondered then in heart and mind' what to do.[293]

But there is a problem in the pattern of thinking, feeling, and acting that we see in Odysseus. We see this when Odysseus criticises Achilles for urging the men into battle before they have had food and drink. Odysseus states that once the fighting is joined it will not soon be over and he thinks that it is better that the men eat and drink before they go into the battle (*Iliad* 19 p358). Odysseus thinks about things and then proposes to take action. His thinking is not long-lasting and he does not reflect extensively on things before taking action, but the way that he thinks is different from other heroes in Homer. He does reflect and consider things before acting and he does show a concern for consequences, and while this is characteristic of him it is not at all characteristic of other heroes in Homer. It may be here that Odysseus is the exception that proves the rule. However that may be it reflects positively on his heroism that he is able to maintain control of himself and take appropriate action.

We see a more typical exemplification of the pattern of thinking, feeling, and acting in Antilochus. His actions in the chariot race at the games for Patroclus are not taken

[292] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Hammond 5 p84.
[293] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Hammond 5 p84.

with due consideration (*Iliad* 23 p423). When he has the chance to pass another chariot he acts exuberantly and impulsively without considering the implications of his actions, that is the danger of injuring himself or the charioteer he is passing (*Iliad* 23 p423). His thinking is not prolonged, and he just acts. It may be that this is just because he is young, but the pattern of thinking, feeling, and acting that he exemplifies does seem characteristic of other more mature heroes.

Maybe we see the pattern of thinking, feeling, and acting more clearly when Agamemnon affronts Achilles. Agamemnon is forced to give up a prize he has gained, but he will not just accept the loss of the prize. He insists that the Achaeans give him another prize, for he considers that it is not appropriate that he should be the only one with empty hands (*Iliad* 1 p26). If he is given a prize that is to his liking then that will satisfy him, but if he is not given a prize then he is just going to take one from someone else (*Iliad* 1 p26). Achilles annoys him and so he decides that he will take Achilles's prize. Agamemnon just acts on his desires. He wants something and so he takes it, and seems to have no regard for the consequences. He does not reflect on what he is going to do but just acts with spontaneity.

In Achilles we see a much more extreme exemplification of the same pattern of thinking, feeling, and acting. Achilles's thoughts and feelings are joined together like Odysseus's, but Achilles seems to experience them with more intensity. Achilles does not show the same control of himself that Odysseus does. This seems to reflect negatively on his heroism.[294]

[294] It is possible, however, that this does not reflect negatively on him, and I will look at this possibility as the discussion goes on.

We see the pattern of thinking, feeling, and acting when Achilles is insulted by Agamemnon. Achilles is enraged by Agamemnon's treatment of him and longs to kill Agamemnon with his sword. He deliberates with himself whether to kill him or not (*Iliad* 1 p28). He is torn by an 'inward conflict' (*Iliad* 1 p28). 'His heart was torn in thought', and he ponders in his mind and heart what to do.[295] His thoughts and feelings are not separate, but are joined together. Achilles's sword is half out of its sheath, and this is a physical manifestation of his psychological state. He is just able to keep himself from killing Agamemnon with his sword.

But Achilles is not able to control the rage that he feels towards Agamemnon, and this seems to reflect negatively on his heroism. He is obstreperous and petulant and rails against Agamemnon. Then he chafes and smoulders and nurses his resentment.[296] He is not able to sheathe his anger. He maintains his anger against Agamemnon. He turns his heart's passion to inexorable rage in his breast.[297] He is intoxicated with rage. His anger becomes a narcotic to him. He wastes his heart out day after day.[298] He will not remit his anger. He shows a combination of animosity and arrogance, and is implacable in his anger (*Iliad* 9 p178). Anger swells to fill his heart.[299] Anger holds sway in his heart, and he cannot quench his rage.[300] Achilles himself admits that he should be able to force down the passion in his heart and that it is unbecoming for him

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[295] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Hammond 1 p7-8.
[296] There are numerous examples of this. See Homer *The Iliad* translated by Rieu 1 p25-34, 9 p169-172 for some significant examples.
[297] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Hammond 9 p148.
[298] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Hammond 1 p15.
[299] See Homer *The Iliad* translated by Hammond 18 p297, 19 p312.
[300] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Fitzgerald 9 p162.

to go on in unrelenting rage for ever.[301] The uncontrollable power that his feelings have over him seems to reflect negatively on him.

We see that this reflects negatively on him especially in Patroclus's criticism of him. Patroclus suggests that Achilles's rage has 'warped a noble nature to ignoble ends' (*Iliad* 16 p293). Achilles's heroism is damaged by his inability to control his emotions. It is especially significant that it is Patroclus who criticises Achilles because Patroclus is Achilles's closest friend and so is perhaps less likely to criticise him unwarrantedly.

We see the pattern of thinking, feeling, and acting in Achilles's concern for Patroclus. Achilles worries that Patroclus has been killed, and he discusses this with his heart as the thoughts tear through his mind (*Iliad* 18 p337). His mind is afraid and he speaks to his heart in apprehension. 'He was pondering this in his mind and his heart'.[302] Achilles probes his heart and his mind.[303] Here again his thoughts and feelings are joined together, and are not two different things.

Achilles's concern for Patroclus ultimately results in his losing control of himself. Achilles is about to relent and admits that he cannot after all feel rage in his heart for ever (*Iliad* 16 p293). He is about to give up his anger.[304] But then Patroclus is killed, and Achilles is overcome by his emotions again. Achilles comes up from the depths of

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[301] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Hammond 19 p312.
[302] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Hammond 18 p295.
[303] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Fagles 18.5-16.
[304] But only to the extent that he allows Patroclus to join the battle. Achilles will not himself go back to the fighting at this point.

his anger, but has only one breath before diving back down into an even darker rage. Achilles is transported by rage. Achilles states that now that Patroclus is dead he cannot interest himself in anything but blood and slaughter and the groans of dying men (*Iliad* 19 p359). He longs for slaughter.[305]

We see Achilles's inability to control himself most clearly in the extremely violent action he takes following the killing of Patroclus. Achilles is the most violent of all men.[306] He is obsessed by his anger. He glows for slaughter. He is 'inflamed' with rage (*Iliad* 22 p405). He slashes out the lives of men (*Iliad* 21 p385), cutting them down left and right (*Iliad* 21 p380). The innumerable bodies of his victims lie all around him (*Iliad* 21 p386). He is overcome by his rage.[307] His anger climaxes with the killing of Hector (and the mangling of his body).

The games for Patroclus do something to suggest that Achilles has at last given up his anger.[308] But the games for Patroclus also highlight Achilles's cruel treatment of Hector's body. Achilles indulges his feelings for Patroclus and mourns for his dear friend, but he does not allow those who love Hector to weep over his body. Achilles does not give the body back. The severity of this is further emphasised when Patroclus's shade implores Achilles to bury Patroclus's body. Patroclus's shade cannot go through the gates of the dead. The shades of the dead will not let him cross the river in the world below to join them. Patroclus's shade is left alone and in a pitiful condition, and he begs Achilles to bury him as soon as can be (*Iliad* 23 p414).

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[305] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Fagles 19.254-255.
[306] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Hammond 21 p340.
[307] See also Nagy *The Best of the Achaeans* p158 here.
[308] See Homer *The Iliad* translated by Rieu 23 p415-436.

This reminds us of what Achilles is denying Hector. Hector had himself set out the proper way to deal with the body of a man who is killed. The body of the man is to be returned to his people so that he can be given his due burial (*Iliad* 7 p134). Hector also implored Achilles to return his body if he should kill him so that his people could weep over him (*Iliad* 22 p404). Achilles's cruel treatment of Hector's body shows that Achilles is still obsessed by his anger. This reflects negatively on his heroism.

Does Achilles show that he has regained control of himself with Priam when he finally gives Hector's body back? Achilles is compassionate to Priam (*Iliad* 4 p450). Achilles empathises with Priam's sorrow, and weeps for Patroclus and for his own father. He is sad that his father is growing old, and that he will not be able to care for him (*Iliad* 24 p451). This seems uncharacteristic for Achilles because although he thinks of himself by indulging his emotions at his loss of Patroclus, he also thinks of what his father will feel when he himself dies. He is not absorbed just in himself, but considers the feelings of other people. He realises and appreciates that his tragedy is the tragedy of the condition of human life.[309] Achilles relents and gives Hector's body to Priam, and he even lifts it with his own hands onto the burial litter (*Iliad* 24 p453). This is especially significant because Achilles claimed that not even Hector's own mother would get to put his body on a burial litter and that his body would be eaten by the scavengers (*Iliad* 22 p406). Indeed Hector's mother herself thought she would never get to put his body on a burial litter and that his body would be eaten by the scavengers (*Iliad* 22 p399). But she does get to weep over him and touch his head.[310]

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[309] Schein *The Mortal Hero* p162.
[310] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Hammond 24 p406.

Achilles even vows to hold up the fighting until Hector can be properly buried (*Iliad* 24 p455). This seems to suggest that he has recovered control of his feelings and has begun to bash out the damage done to his heroism.

Achilles's regaining of ordinary feelings is further emphasised by his eating and drinking with Priam. Achilles had stated that no food or drink would pass down his throat.[311] He would not satisfy himself with food or drink in his sadness for Patroclus (*Iliad* 19 p362). Later Achilles threatened Hector that he would cut him into pieces and eat his flesh raw (*Iliad* 22 p406). But now with Priam he thinks again of food and drink (*Iliad* 24 p453-454). They eat and drink again even in their terrible sorrow. They put their hands to the food and drink set prepared before them, and fulfil their desire for eating and drinking.[312] Achilles's mother had urged him to eat, sleep, and have sex again (*Iliad* 24 p440), and Achilles does ultimately take up again all these normal human activities.[313] Thus we see that Achilles has regained ordinary feelings.

However, it remains that Achilles had not been able to control himself and had treated Hector's body horribly. Achilles had cut through the tendons of both Hector's feet from heel to ankle and had pulled straps through them and tied him to the back of his chariot. He had then dragged Hector's body through the dust. Hector's hair streamed out behind him and was dirtied in the dust.[314] When he could not sleep at night, he would get up and go outside. He would then harness the horses to his chariot, and tie Hector to it and drag him in the dust for a while. He would then leave the body flung

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[311] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Hammond 19 p316, 19 p318.
[312] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Hammond 24 p402.
[313] King *Achilles* p40-41.
[314] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Hammond 22 p361.

face down in the dirt.[315] Achilles treated Hector's body terribly (*Iliad* 24 p437). So when Achilles consents to give the body back it is only because he can think of no other outrages to perform. He gives the body back only when his anger has run its course. He extinguishes his rage by suffering it to the full. This perhaps overstates things because Achilles does not give Hector's body to the scavengers as he had threatened to do. There are worse things Achilles might still have done. Nevertheless what Achilles has done is bad enough, and reflects poorly on him for his inability to control himself.

We are reminded of Achilles's inability to control himself by his flashes of anger at Priam. When Priam asks Achilles to give Hector's body back straight away Achilles becomes angry. Achilles scowls at him and warns him not to provoke him. Achilles warns him not to stir his heart or he may lose control of himself and kill him.[316] Priam is afraid, and takes Achilles's threats to heart (*Iliad* 24 p452). These flashes of anger suggest that Achilles's rage is still like a glowing ember ready to jump up again into flame. His control of himself is 'precarious'.[317] Achilles himself seems to appreciate that he does not have full control of himself. We see this when Achilles tells the women-servants to wash Hector's body in another part of the house away from Priam. Achilles is worried that if Priam sees Hector's body then he will be unable to control his feelings and that he himself will then become so enraged by this that he will kill Priam (*Iliad* 24 p452-453). It is paradoxical here that Achilles shows perceptiveness in realising that he will probably not be able to control his emotions. It remains that

[315] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Hammond 24 p388.
[316] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Hammond 24 p402.
[317] Griffin and Hammond 'Critical Appreciation: Homer *Iliad* 1.1-52' p81.

Achilles's flashes of anger tell us that he is still the same man who could not control himself and who did all those horrors.

But many of the gods seem to be indulgent of Achilles's inability to control himself, and this suggests that it may not be so clear that this reflects negatively on him. Apollo rails against Achilles (*Iliad* 24 p438), and although Apollo's criticisms seem appropriate, Apollo is sympathetic to the Trojans, so we might expect him to oppose Achilles given that Achilles has done so much damage to the Trojans. Hera repudiates Apollo, and expresses her support for Achilles (*Iliad* 24 p438), as we might also expect given her hatred for the Trojans. But Zeus also supports Achilles. Zeus takes no sides in the war between the Achaeans and the Trojans, so his position is perhaps more meaningful for it is more disinterested. Although Zeus admits that Achilles's emotions have been excessive, he does not reproach him. Indeed Zeus seems to give him only approbation (*Iliad* 24 p439). Zeus does, however, threaten Achilles. Zeus is 'displeased' with him because of his excessive anger and urges him to acquiesce (*Iliad* 24 p440). Thus we see that many of the gods support Achilles, and this suggests that we cannot simply state that Achilles's loss of control reflects negatively on him.

How then should we understand a hero's loss of control in Homer?[318] It seems that it reflects positively on his heroism if he is able to maintain control of himself as we see with Odysseus, but that it does not necessarily reflect negatively on his heroism (even

[318] There is a problem here that I have not been able to solve for myself. It may be that it does not make sense to suggest that the hero in Homer maintains or loses control of himself. It seems that words like 'thoughts' and 'emotions' may not make sense for the hero in Homer. I may not be able to use these words in looking at the hero in Homer. But using these words seems necessary to the development of my argument. Maybe the most sensible thing I can do here is to use these words with an appreciation of the problem.

though it may not be altogether worthy of approval) if he is unable to control himself as we see with Achilles. The uncontrollable emotions that we see in Achilles seem to be reflective of the impulsiveness and spontaneity that is characteristic of the hero in Homer. Perhaps we see them particularly in Achilles because no other hero in Homer experiences extremes of feeling as intensely as he does. So this inability to control himself is especially characteristic of Achilles and may be characteristic (in reduced amplitude compared to Achilles) of the hero in general in Homer.

In comparison the hero in Shakespeare is more passive. He seems to be less likely to act without the help of consciousness. He seems to act with more conscious intention. It seems that he takes more into account before deciding to act and that he looks at things more attentively and reflects on things more before acting. His thoughts and feelings are disjoined and are two separate things for him. It is also characteristic for him to maintain a distance between thinking and acting. This distance is important for the hero in Shakespeare to reflect and consider the consequences of the action he is going to take. It is much more important for his heroism for him to maintain control of himself and to take deliberated action.

We see this pattern of thinking, feeling, and acting in Brutus. His thoughts and feelings are separate and he acts with conscious intention. He states that 'vexed I am / Of late with passions of some difference, / Conceptions only proper to myself, / Which give some soil, perhaps, to my behaviours' (*Julius Caesar* 1.2.39-42). This suggests that before he will act he will reflect on the courses he might take. His feelings will perhaps make him act but not before he has considered them in his thoughts. He is not impulsive (*Julius Caesar* 1.2.28-29). When the conspirators come

to see him and reveal their scheme to him, he does not immediately tell them what he thinks. He prefers to wait until he has considered their proposal properly (*Julius Caesar* 1.2.166-167). When he has deliberated on their proposal he decides to be a part of the conspiracy and then consummates his decision in action (*Julius Caesar* 3.1.76-95). There is a distance for him between thinking and acting. This is clear when he states that 'between the acting of a dreadful thing / And the first motion, all the interim is / Like a' nightmare 'or a hideous dream' (*Julius Caesar* 2.1.63-65). The distance between thinking and acting allows his conscience to affect him. Indeed his conscience is unsettled and his sleep is troubled in the period between his thinking and acting (*Julius Caesar* 2.1.61-62). He thinks and acts with consciousness. His actions are deliberately taken after he has reflected on things. He pensively states: 'there is a tide in the affairs of men, / Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune; / Omitted, all the voyage of their life / Is bound in shallows and in miseries. / On such a full sea are we now afloat, / And we must take the current when it serves' (*Julius Caesar* 4.3.216-221). He appreciates that one should look into things and act when it is fitting. He controls his thoughts and feelings and takes what seems to him to be appropriate action. This reflects positively on his heroism.

In *Othello* we see the same pattern of thinking, feeling, and acting. We see again that there is a separation between the thoughts and feelings. We also see that unless the hero can maintain control of himself his heroism will be damaged. Othello's feelings swell in his heart, and his inability to control his feelings reflects negatively on his heroism. He also fails to maintain a distance between thinking and acting and this also damages his heroism.

Othello considers that he has gained control of his emotions. He suggests that he no longer needs to 'comply with heat' (*Othello* 1.3.258-261). But then his emotions throb within him when he thinks Desdemona has had an affair. He becomes obsessed by jealousy. The intensity of his jealousy is a reflection of the intensity of his love.[319] It is suggested that he will try to kill the man who he thinks has slept with Desdemona with his 'truncheon' (*Othello* 2.1.263-265). This sexual quibble emphasises that his passion has gotten the better of him, where he is acting just through his impulses. He wishes that this man who he thinks has slept with Desdemona had more lives than one to take because one is not enough for his revenge (*Othello* 3.3.439-440). He would have him 'nine years a-killing' (*Othello* 4.1.177). He states that if this man had numberless lives 'my great revenge / Had stomach for them all' (*Othello* 5.2.75-76). The use of the word 'stomach' here emphasises that his decisions are coming from emotional longing rather than reflective thinking. He is 'eaten up with passion' (*Othello* 3.3.388). He cries 'blood, blood, blood' (*Othello* 3.3.448) and 'bloody thoughts with violent pace' overtake him (*Othello* 3.3.450-457). He states that 'some bloody passion shakes my very frame' (*Othello* 5.2.44). Othello even realises that 'my blood begins my safer guides to rule' and that his emotions have hit him on the head and are now leading the way (*Othello* 2.3.199-201). But he still cannot control the intensity of his feelings. He is 'perplexed in the extreme' (*Othello* 5.2.342). He is suffering from a disenchantment with the woman he loves and cannot help still loving.[320] He also feels a disillusionment that something he valued so much should seem to be worthless.[321] Othello moves from extreme to extreme, from love to

[319] Kirsch *The Passions of Shakespeare's Tragic Heroes* p68.
[320] Shakespeare *Othello* introduction by K. Muir p38.
[321] Shakespeare *Othello* introduction by K. Muir p38.

disintegration and destruction.[322] His uncontrollable emotions destroy him and undo his heroism. He kills Desdemona. Then he finds out that she did not have an affair. He finally understands that unrestrained emotions can drive people to 'preposterous conclusions' (*Othello* 1.3.323-328), but by then it is too late. The use of the word 'preposterous' here emphasises that things are turned on their heads when emotions get the better of people. He is overcome by feelings of hopelessness, and in the end he kills himself. We see here that tragedy is brought about by his inability to control his feelings.

In *Othello* we also see that disaster comes about when there is not a distance between thinking and acting. Iago moves the action along and does not give Othello a moment to think. Iago decides that he will not lose his purpose by thinking too much about what he is going to do. He determines that he will not hesitate (*Othello* 2.3.376-377). In his desire to move the action along to its climax as soon as can be it seems that Iago is worried that his conscience might get the better of him as much as he is concerned about anything else. So Iago acts at once to forestall the interference of his conscience. Iago makes Othello think that Desdemona has had an affair, and brings Othello to the decision he wishes him to make, that is to kill Desdemona (*Othello* 4.1.169-212). Iago then urges Othello to take action straight away (*Othello* 4.1.178-209). Iago here is like a man who keeps hitting a snake with a stick until the snake is so incensed that it will strike at anything. Othello decides that he will not discuss the matter with Desdemona 'lest her body and beauty unprovide my mind again' (*Othello* 4.1.203-205). Here he is afraid that he will lose his determination to act if he has to

[322] Kirsch *The Passions of Shakespeare's Tragic Heroes* p44.

think. He has decided what he will do and he wants to be able just to act. When Othello is about to kill Desdemona in their bedroom, she begs him not to kill her. She asks for a night more, then for less than an hour more, and finally for but a moment more. But he does not give her even a moment more, and he himself will not take a moment more to think about what he is going to do. He smothers her in their bed (*Othello* 5.2.79-85). Othello states 'being done, there is no pause' (*Othello* 5.2.83). Then Othello finds out that Desdemona did not have an affair. His failure to maintain the distance between thinking and acting has disastrous results and reflects negatively on his heroism.

In *Macbeth* we also see this pattern of thinking, feeling, and acting. We see again that the thoughts and feelings are two different things. We also see that unless the hero is able to maintain control of himself his heroism will be damaged. Macbeth is not able to control his emotions and this reflects negatively on his heroism. He also tries to reduce the distance between thinking and acting to nothing and this is also damaging his heroism.

Macbeth is scared to consummate his desires (*Macbeth* 1.7.1-28). He is afraid to fulfil his desires, and this fear 'shakes so my single state of man' (*Macbeth* 1.3.141). He asks the stars to darken their fires to 'let not light see my black and deep desires' (*Macbeth* 1.4.51-52). He is afraid of what he desires. He is afraid to be the same in action as he is in desire (*Macbeth* 1.7.39-41). There is a separation here for him between thought and action. Here he does not act at once on what he desires, but allows himself to reflect on things.

But stabs of desire cut him deeply. He decides that he is going to act on his desires (*Macbeth* 1.7.1-2). He will dare to fulfil his desires (*Macbeth* 1.7.44). Macbeth states: 'I dare do all that may become a man' (*Macbeth* 1.7.46). But then he is distressed by the horror of what he has done and he says: 'I am afraid to think what I have done; / Look on't again, I dare not' (*Macbeth* 2.2.50-51). But then later he states: 'what man dare I dare' (*Macbeth* 3.4.100). There is a conflict here between his image of himself as a man who acts with consciousness and his image of himself as a man who can just act with spontaneity on what he desires. He seems to change between these images of himself, flashing fitfully between them like a flickering flame. Here there is a conflict between what he would wish himself to be and what his unrestrained desires are making him.

We see this in his killing of the king. He seems to be troubled that the way that he is going to kill the king (that is by knifing him in the dark like an assassin) is not at all consistent with the image of himself that he would wish to have. He wishes that the act of killing the king could be 'the be-all and the end-all' (*Macbeth* 1.7.1-5). It seems that he just wants to have the act done and then return to the man who he had been. Thus his wish that the act of killing the king would be the end of the matter is a way for Macbeth to try to avoid what he is afraid his conscience will exact from him.[323] He also hopes that the act will do away with the agony he has gone through in wishing to consummate his desires but restraining himself.[324] He will fulfil his desires and then he wants just to be done with the matter. He feels that he will not be able to look on as

[323] Proser *The Heroic Image* p68.
[324] Proser *The Heroic Image* p68.

he kills the king, and it seems as though he wishes that someone else would act through him and give the killing stab (*Macbeth* 1.4.53-54). Indeed the act appears to do itself by prestidigitation.[325] He seems to drug that part of him that is conscious of what he is going to do in an attempt to put his killing of the king out of the sight of his conscience. His killing of the king almost seems to be a 'thoughtless activity'.[326]

He does try to reduce the distance between thought and action. He loses his ability to act by thinking 'so brain-sickly of things' (*Macbeth* 2.2.44-45). He says that 'strange things I have in head, that will to hand, / Which must be acted, ere they may be' reflected on (*Macbeth* 3.4.140-141). He realises that if he thinks about what he is going to do then he may not be able to act. He decides that he will just act on his desires. He determines that the 'very firstlings of my heart shall be / The firstlings of my hand' (*Macbeth* 4.1.162-163). This indicates that he is attempting to reduce the distance between thought and action to nothing. He wants to be able to act straight away on his impulses. Indeed he says: 'be it thought and done' (*Macbeth* 4.1.164). This is damaging to his heroism.

He tries to act without conscious intention and to fulfil his desires without the interference of consciousness. He tries to convince himself that he can act without a concern for his conscience.[327] He tries to maintain this notion as though his insistence on it could by itself make his act appropriate and in itself be a kind of heroism.[328] He

[325] Proser *The Heroic Image* p64.
[326] Proser *The Heroic Image* p67.
[327] Bulman *The Heroic Idiom of Shakespearean Tragedy* p177.
[328] Bulman *The Heroic Idiom of Shakespearean Tragedy* p177.

becomes committed to the self alone, and rejects almost all other considerations.[329] He says that all things will give way to his desires (*Macbeth* 3.4.136-137). He tries to rid himself of the uncertainty that he can act just on his desires, but the assuredness he gains seems like a temporary inebriation because straight after the consummation of his desires he is overcome by the horror of what he has done. There is a feeling of hopelessness about him now. He reflects: 'I am in blood / Stepped in so far' (*Macbeth* 3.4.137-138). All the oceans will not wash the blood from his hands, rather the blood on his hands will turn the oceans red (*Macbeth* 2.2.59-62). He acts on his desires, but then he must cope with their consequences.[330] He is psychologically distressed. His sleep is troubled and his mind is tortured (*Macbeth* 3.2.19-29). His mind is 'full of scorpions' (*Macbeth* 3.2.39). He is bitten and stung by a terrible sense of the horror of what he has done. He is overcome with despair, 'from this instant / There's nothing serious in mortality' (*Macbeth* 2.3.94-95). This gives a negativity to his acting with spontaneity and to his acting merely according to his desires.

In *Hamlet* we see a more complex exemplification of the same pattern of thinking, acting, and feeling. The thoughts and feelings are separate, and it is important for the hero to be able to control himself. Hamlet is not able to control his thoughts or his feelings. He enlarges the distance between thought and action with the result that the point where he is going to take action gets so far away that it seems that he will never get there. This reflects negatively on his heroism. But then he regains control of his thoughts and feelings. He is able to take action again. This restores his heroism.

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[329] Bulman *The Heroic Idiom of Shakespearean Tragedy* p174.
[330] Proser *The Heroic Image* p68.

He is not able to control his feelings. He is disconsolate at the death of his father, and his emotions are excessive. He is gloomily downcast. His eyes are lowered and he will not cast off his 'nighted colour' (*Hamlet* 1.2.68-71). His mother does not show sympathy for him in his grief. She does not seem to care about his heartache.[331] His uncle does try to sympathise with him, but he is by no means the appropriate person to do it.[332] Hamlet shows at once anger and sadness. Then when there are hints that there might be more to find out about the death of his father he waxes in the excitement of his passion (*Hamlet* 1.4.87). It is revealed to him that his father was murdered, and he is overcome by a desire for revenge (*Hamlet* 1.5.22-39). He is still obsessed by a passion, but this passion is urging him to act rather than to mope in dejection.

But then his thinking gets the better of him, and he reflects too much on the action he is going to take.[333] He does not tear to his revenge – far from it. His thinking makes him inactive. He is afraid to act (*Hamlet* 3.1.56-82). He states that his 'conscience' is troubling him and is making him turn from action (*Hamlet* 3.1.83). The word 'conscience' here can also mean consciousness.[334] This suggests that thinking is making him scared to act. We see that there is a distance here between thinking and acting. He states that his ability to act 'is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought' (*Hamlet* 3.1.84-88). He reflects on all the actions he might possibly take and he cannot make a decision about what action to take (*Hamlet* 3.3.75). His thoughts divert him from action, and 'the natural thrust of the active mind is parried'.[335] His inaction

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[331] Kirsch *The Passions of Shakespeare's Tragic Heroes* p33.
[332] Kirsch *The Passions of Shakespeare's Tragic Heroes* p25.
[333] See Shakespeare *Hamlet* 4.4.41 for a characteristic example.
[334] Some commentators disagree here saying that 'conscience' simply means 'conscience'. See Shakespeare *Hamlet* note P. Edwards p147.
[335] Rossiter *Angel With Horns* p176.

is the result of 'thinking too precisely on th'event' (*Hamlet* 4.4.41). His thinking paralyses him into inaction. He 'entangles himself in fine-spun cogitations'.[336] He reflects that thoughts are infinite and realises that he cannot act without self-consciousness.[337] It sometimes seems that he is about to act, and he suggests that he is constant to his purposes,[338] but it is not long before he again becomes absorbed in thinking and unable to act. He does seem to be obsessed with the relationship between thought and action.[339]

But it seems that Hamlet is ultimately able to take control of himself. He suggests that his 'conscience' now supports him taking action (*Hamlet* 5.2.67). He deliberates about what action to take and then he proposes to act. He states that the period between his thinking and acting will not be long, and that 'the interim's mine' (*Hamlet* 5.2.71-73). He suggests that he has concerns about what is going to happen, 'but it is no matter' (*Hamlet* 5.2.185-186). When he is reflecting on what is going to happen, he states: 'if it be now, 'tis not to come; if it be not to come, it will be now; if it be not now, yet it will come – the readiness is all. Since no man of aught he leaves knows, what is't to leave betimes? Let be' (*Hamlet* 5.2.193-196). Here he seems unworried and unperturbed, and there is a feeling of tranquillity about him. This is perhaps the most touching tragedy of Hamlet: that the moment that he finally takes control of himself is also the moment of his death.[340]

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[336] Kiernan *Eight Tragedies of Shakespeare* p85.
[337] Rossiter *Angel With Horns* p177.
[338] See especially Shakespeare *Hamlet* 2.2.520, 5.2.177.
[339] Kirsch *The Passions of Shakespeare's Tragic Heroes* p42.
[340] Kirsch *The Passions of Shakespeare's Tragic Heroes* p39.

We also see in *Hamlet* the dangers of taking action without thinking and reflecting on things.

Claudius takes action before considering the consequences of what he is going to do. It is significant that he says: 'that we would do, / We should do when we would' (*Hamlet* 4.7.117-118). He kills the king and is then troubled by the consequences of the action he has taken. His conscience afflicts him. The more he reflects on the action he has taken the more terrible it seems to him.[341] He reflects dejectedly that nothing can wash the blood from his hands.[342] This gives a negativity to his taking action without thinking about what is going to happen.

Laertes does not reflect on things before taking action. He is extremely distressed by the killing of his father, and he is overcome by a desire for revenge. His father had told him not to act on things without thinking (*Hamlet* 1.3.60), but he disregards this in his passion for revenge. He states that he cannot be persuaded not to take action and that his desire for revenge will be fulfilled no matter what (*Hamlet* 4.5.130). He suggests that he will take revenge, 'let come what comes' (*Hamlet* 4.5.133-136). All other considerations give way to his determination to act and he seems to have no concern for the consequences of his actions. He will not allow his 'conscience' to prevent him from taking action (*Hamlet* 4.5.131-133). The disastrous results of this give a negativity to his taking action without thinking.

[341] See especially Shakespeare *Hamlet* 3.3.36-72.
[342] See Shakespeare *Hamlet* 3.3.43-46.

Thus we see that there are significant differences between the hero in Homer and the hero in Shakespeare in relation to thinking, feeling, and acting. In Homer the hero's thoughts and feelings are difficult to tell apart, and they seem to be joined together and seem not to be two different things. In Shakespeare the hero's thoughts and feelings are separate. There is an important difference between the hero in Homer and the hero in Shakespeare in the distance he maintains between thought and action. For the hero in Homer an action is as soon thought as done, whereas for the hero in Shakespeare an action is reflected on before it is taken. The hero in Homer acts with more immediacy than the hero in Shakespeare. The hero in Homer acts without conscious intention and acts without the interference of consciousness. There is almost no interjection of conscience. The hero in Shakespeare acts with consciousness, and he takes decisions with the help of his conscience. So we see that there are different patterns of thinking, feeling, and acting in the characters in Homer and the characters in

Shakespeare and that these differences in the way that the characters think, feel, and act are significant in relation to heroism.

Simplicity and Complexity

There is an important difference between the heroes in Homer and the heroes in Shakespeare in the way that their characters develop. The heroes in Homer seem simple and static in comparison to the complex and dynamic heroes in Shakespeare. In the heroes in Shakespeare there is a multiplicity and ambiguity that is not as present in the heroes in Homer. The heroes in Homer may sometimes seem undeveloped,

incomplete, and not fully formed in comparison to the heroes in Shakespeare. The heroes in Homer do not grow in the same way that the heroes in Shakespeare do. There is much more inner conflict in the heroes in Shakespeare than in the heroes in Homer. There is a significant difference in the quality and condition of their consciousness. This affects our understanding of heroism in Homer and Shakespeare.

In Homer the heroes seem to have a simplicity. It sometimes seems that they do not have an inner individuality.[343] The characters seem to be a joining together of psychological states that are essentially separate and unaffected by each other and that do not form a whole.[344] But they are not one-dimensional or cardboard-cutouts. It is clear that for them a single characteristic does not altogether define their characters. There is more to them than just one quality. They do have characteristics that make them particularised individuals, that is that make them significantly different from other heroes around them. They are recognisable as individuals and they do have characteristics that are peculiar to them. It may be that they are not so ambiguous and that they are not so defined by a multiplicity of meaning, but they do have sides to their characters.

It sometimes seems in the repeated speeches of some of the heroes that the hero just participates in a character type and that he is not so much of an individual. A speech by one hero is sometimes repeated in every detail by another hero.[345] This may seem to reflect a general and not a particular heroism, where some heroes seem to be much

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[343] Johnston *The Ironies of War* p50.
[344] Sharples 'But Why Has My Spirit Spoken With Me Thus?' p164.
[345] Compare the speeches by Agamemnon at Homer *The Iliad* translated by Fagles 5.610-614 and by Aias at Homer *The Iliad* translated by Fagles 15.651-655 for a typical example.

the same as each other and do not seem to be distinguishable from one another. But the heroes are recognisably different from one another and do have characteristics that are peculiarly theirs.

We see essentially simple characters in heroes like Diomedes, Antilochus, and Idomeneus. They are not characters who can be understood in lots of different ways. But they are distinct individuals. Their characters ring out with intonations that are peculiarly theirs. We see a particularised individual especially in a hero like Aias. He also seems to be a simple character. He is not, however, wholly simple and does have sides to his character. He is not defined by only a single characteristic. He is not a cardboard-cutout, and has dimension.[346]

The heroes in Homer do seem to be static, however. It does seem that they are defined by qualities that are unchanging. We see this in Homer's use of formulas. Homer often uses the same word or group of words to express a quality that is regarded as characteristic of a hero. It is not meant that the

hero is always defined by this quality, but that he is typically defined by it. As Jones suggests we still refer to a fast car as a fast car even when it is parked.[347] These descriptions come and go 'like familiar friends'.[348] These repetitions are reminders of

[346] Aias is strong and courageous but is perhaps not so intelligent, and it may appear to be that he is just a character type of someone who has physical qualities but does not have mental qualities. But (as I have already discussed) Aias is also eloquent and charismatic, and there are sides to his character. It remains that his character is not general but is particular.
[347] Homer *The Odyssey* introduction by P. Jones xxx.
[348] Homer *The Odyssey* introduction by D. Rieu ix.

the permanency of these qualities.[349] The formulas are used again and again and in this repetition we see the immutability of the hero. Indeed the hero as a character is much the same at the end of the story as he was at the start of the story.[350] This sometimes makes it seem that the hero does not grow and that he remains undeveloped and incomplete.

We see a static character in Odysseus. The experiences he has do not seem to have a lasting effect on him. We see this in Phaeacia. As he is crossing the sea he is hit by a tremendous storm, he is dashed on some rocks, and then he is swept ashore. His legs and arms are worn out and the skin is stripped from his hands (*Odyssey* 5.453-457). He is at his 'last gasp' (*Odyssey* 5.468). 'Waves of exhaustion overwhelmed him'.[351] But then he bathes in a river and this seems to wash away all that he has gone through. He seems to be brought

back to how he had been before as if nothing had happened to him. This is emphasised when he competes in the games after only just having been washed ashore and outdoes all the other competitors. He says 'in spite of what I have gone through, I'll try my hand at the sports' (*Odyssey* 8.183-184). All that he has endured seems to be nothing to him in the performance of the physical competition. He does hint that he may have lost some suppleness in his legs so that he might be outstripped in the foot race (*Odyssey* 8.230-233). But in all other ways he seems to be entirely as he had been. 'I'm ready to meet and match myself against all comers' (*Odyssey* 8.212-213). We see this again in Ithaca. He comes back to his home so long after he had left it and

[349] Homer *The Odyssey* introduction by P. Jones xxx.
[350] Achilles is perhaps an exception here, and I will deal with him as the discussion goes on.
[351] Homer *The Odyssey* translated by Fagles 5.506.

he takes in his hands the bow that had been his before he left. Many other men had tried to string the bow, but could not. 'He strung the great bow without effort' (*Odyssey* 21.409-410). He strings the bow and fires an arrow at a target, and he states that 'I did not miss the target, or make hard work of stringing the bow. My powers are unimpaired' (*Odyssey* 21.423-426). He is just the same as he was. He is seemingly unchanged by all that he has gone through since he left his home long before. And even once he has arrived back home, he is soon to leave it again to continue on his never-ending adventures (*Odyssey* 23.247-252). He will 'set out once more' (*Odyssey* 11.119.133). The Odysseus we see at the end of the *Odyssey* has undergone no significant change from the Odysseus we see at the start of the *Odyssey*.

It may sometimes seem that Odysseus is dynamic. He is a man of a thousand faces and he is 'Nobody'. Again and again we see Odysseus take a different form and make himself appear to be somebody else.[352] But these changes are only in his outward appearance. He seems to be different, but his character is just the same as it has always been. He is not 'Nobody', but has a defined and unchanging character. Again this immutability is clear in the formulas that are given to Odysseus, where he is repeatedly described in the same way. It may be that Odysseus remakes himself again and again, but it is always the same image of himself that he remakes.

Maybe in Achilles we see a different exemplification of character. We see that he is a more complex character. His responses to the experiences he has are particular and not general, that is they are altogether his and could not be those of any other hero. He

[352] See especially Homer *The Odyssey* translated by E. Rieu and D. Rieu 4.244-249, 9.364-367, 13.256-286, 17.202-203.

is a particularised individual. We see that Achilles is complex especially in the multitude of different ways that we can look at his character. We also see that he is a dynamic character, where the Achilles we see at the start of the *Iliad* does not seem to be the same Achilles we see at the end of the *Iliad.* It seems that he does change and develop. Achilles seems to be 'a kind of arena of forces'.[353] He is at once trying to be like other heroes and trying to find out for himself what it is to be a hero. At the start of the *Iliad* he seems to be a part of a group of heroes and seems to depend on this participation for his sense of himself as a hero. But as the *Iliad* goes on his conduct is not expressive of what is typical of the other heroes. He seems to be disillusioned with what it is to be a hero and he takes himself away from the group.[354] His sense of what it is to be a hero is dynamic and he transcends what is expected or regarded as normal for a hero.[355] We see that he is separate from the other heroes in his speeches in his tent. He feels that he has given a lot to the group but has not gotten much for it (*Iliad* 9 p169). He seems to feel that the group has failed him. So he decides that he will no longer be a part of the group no matter how they cheep for him to rejoin them. We also see that he is separate from the other heroes in the games for Patroclus. The games allow the heroes to re-express their connections to each other. Achilles does not compete in the games and, although he is the host, this suggests his disjoining from the group. 'I will not compete' (*Iliad* 23 p419). He is detached and does not seem to be closely connected with the other heroes. By the end of the *Iliad* he has still not rejoined them and it does not seem that he is able to. Achilles has been changed by what has happened to him. He does not seem to be able to restore himself to how

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[353] Redfield *Nature and Culture in the* Iliad p107.
[354] Johnston *The Ironies of War* p106.
[355] See Mueller 'Knowledge and Delusion in the *Iliad*' p107.

he had been, and he seems to have developed.[356] Again it seems that he is the exception that proves the rule on this point.

In comparison the hero in Shakespeare is complex and dynamic. He is more defined by a multiplicity and ambiguity. He has characteristics that make him a particularised individual. He is recognisable as an individual and he does have characteristics that are particular to him. He is unique in the characteristics he has. He is many-faceted and does not have only one dimension. His character is not of one piece. His character is more defined by psychological progression and self-consciousness. It does seem that he is more developed and more fully formed. He grows in a different way. He goes through points of crisis from which his character develops. He is changed by the experiences he has. There is more of a sense of becoming to his character.

We see this in the way that his sense of himself develops. Perhaps like Achilles he is at once trying to fulfil what is expected of him as a hero and trying to find out for himself what it is to be a hero. But maybe more intensely than Achilles there are continuous or recurring conflicts ringing through his inner life and as a result of these experiences he tunes his definition of himself again and again.

We see a complex character in Macbeth. This is clear in the multitude of different ways that we can look at his character and in our uncertainty about his heroism. His character is imbued with admirable qualities just as it is with qualities that we recoil from.[357] We feel for him both admiration and abhorrence, and cannot feel one wholly

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[356] Johnston *The Ironies of War* p121.
[357] Bulman *The Heroic Idiom of Shakespearean Tragedy* p170.

without the other.[358] We are both attracted to him and repelled by him.[359] We do not want to watch him and yet we are not able to look away from him. He makes a woeful spectacle.[360] We feel a sense of regret for the waste of what he had and the loss of what he might have been.[361] And perhaps his most moving tragedy is that he seems to come to have the same image of himself that we do.[362]

He is torn by inner conflict. We see his psychological perturbation in the dagger soliloquy. The dagger appears before him and he tries to take it, but it seems that it is sensible to sight and not to touch (*Macbeth* 2.1.33-50). 'I have thee not, and yet I see thee still' (*Macbeth* 2.1.36). He cannot take the dagger but it will not disappear, and this suggests that he is in conflict with himself as he tries to achieve full self-possession.[363] This conflict throbs within him like the beating of a heart. Nightmares go out and still the hearts of everything that they meet but then turn to set upon their source.[364] And he seems to know that they will come back. The conflict in his inner life gives him a complexity.

He is a particularised individual. The responses he has to the things he goes through are recognisably his. He is unique in the characteristics he has.

He is also dynamic. His character is mutable and he goes through points of crisis from which his character develops. His character does not develop according to a sequence

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[358] Bulman *The Heroic Idiom of Shakespearean Tragedy* p190.
[359] Bulman *The Heroic Idiom of Shakespearean Tragedy* p184.
[360] Kiernan *Eight Tragedies of Shakespeare* p200.
[361] Bulman *The Heroic Idiom of Shakespearean Tragedy* p170.
[362] Kiernan *Eight Tragedies of Shakespeare* p200.
[363] Bulman *The Heroic Idiom of Shakespearean Tragedy* p184.
[364] See Proser *The Heroic Image* p80 for a similar argument.

or arrangement, rather earthquakes bring up unexplored continents from the floor of his mind.[365]

We see that he is dynamic in his inability to deal with the future. He cannot accept the consequences of his actions. He wishes that the effects could be contained in his actions (*Macbeth* 1.7.1-5). He reflects 'to know my deed, 'twere better not to know myself' (*Macbeth* 2.2.72). He has been changed by what he has done.

We also see a complex character in Hamlet. This is clear in the multitude of different ways that we see him and indeed in the multitude of different ways that the other characters in the play see him. Some of the characters in the play try to 'glean' things from him (*Hamlet* 2.2.14-17). They wish to shine some light onto his character so that they may see it even if it is in the shadows of the darkest cavern in the earth (*Hamlet* 2.2.155-157). They try to plumb the depths of his character. They try to sound him from his lowest to his highest note (*Hamlet* 3.2.331-332). But they cannot bring him to an 'utterance of harmony' and they cannot play upon him (*Hamlet* 3.2.318-336). They cannot bring him to any divulgence of how things really are with him (*Hamlet* 3.1.1-10). He overpaints his character with so many layers that no-one seems to be able to see him as he really is. Indeed even he does not seem to be able to see himself clearly. It seems for him that 'there is no self, but only selves'.[366] He appreciates that there is a multiplicity and an ambiguity to the self. He seems to be someone who changes from moment to moment, even in the way that he sees himself.

[365] Kiernan *Eight Tragedies of Shakespeare* p200.
[366] Rossiter *Angel With Horns* p178.

Hamlet himself reflects on the indeterminacy of someone's character. He states that a cloud can look like lots of different things (*Hamlet* 3.2.339-345), and he seems to be suggesting that just as we see a cloud as something that takes different forms and that does not have a permanent shape so too we see someone's character as something that is indefinite and that changes again and again.[367] Indeed Hamlet's character is inenubilable, and this is an indication of his complexity. He has many dimensions.

His character is defined by self-consciousness, and we see this in his looking into what it is to be a human. He reflects 'what a piece of work is a man!' (*Hamlet* 2.2.286-289) and he asks 'what is a man?' (*Hamlet* 4.4.32-39). He asks 'what should we do?'.[368] Hamlet looks into what it is to be a human and to be in the world. He suggests that there is much that is extraordinary about humans, 'and yet to me, what is this quintessence of dust' (*Hamlet* 2.2.289-290). For all that we do and all that we take in our hands while we live, we end up as a skull full of dirt and a pile of bones, taking up no more space than a coffin in the ground.[369] For all that we are while we live in the end we return to dust (*Hamlet* 5.1.176-183). He reflects that maybe we should just give in to death and end the thousand troubles that close round us on all sides (*Hamlet* 3.1.60-64). But he also considers that perhaps we should endure the 'slings and arrows' that hit and cut us, and that this endurance is critical to our humanity (*Hamlet* 3.1.56-58). His sense of what it is to be a human changes again and again, and this points to his complexity.

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[367] See Shakespeare *Hamlet* note P. Edwards p168.
[368] Shakespeare *Hamlet* 1.4.57, 3.1.124-125.
[369] See Shakespeare *Hamlet* 5.1.83-94.

He also looks into what it is to be a hero. He at once tries to fulfil what is required of him as a hero and tries to find out for himself what it is to be a hero. He wishes to fulfil the role of the hero, but his consciousness of it as a role makes it hard for him to do it.[370] He tilts between the image of himself as a hero and the image of himself as someone who is playing the role of the hero. He does finally take on the role of the hero. He states 'this is I, / Hamlet' (*Hamlet* 5.1.224-225). He suggests that he can strut and holler as well as anybody (*Hamlet* 5.1.250-251). But it seems here that he is just expressing himself with the hyperbolic language that is appropriate to the role and that he is conscious that he is just playing a role.[371] It seems that for him there is something empty about the role of the hero. Indeed he does not seem to be fully committed to the role. One half of his character plays the role while the other half of his character looks on with a teasing smile or with a face wrung out of shape by sourness that he is just playing a role.[372] It seems that the role of the hero cannot adequately reflect his self. His character is in conflict with itself throughout the play, and as a result of this his sense of what it is to be a hero changes again and again.

His responses to the things he goes through are peculiarly his. There is a modulation and intonation to his character that is his and could not belong to any other hero.

Hamlet is also dynamic. He does not develop as an orderly whole. He does not develop in a consistent sequence or arrangement. As the play goes on 'nor th'exterior nor the inward man / Resembles that it was' (*Hamlet* 2.2.5-7). He goes through a 'transformation' (*Hamlet* 2.2.5), and there is a sense of becoming about him. It may

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[370] Bulman *The Heroic Idiom of Shakespearean Tragedy* p77.
[371] See Bulman *The Heroic Idiom of Shakespearean Tragedy* p80 for more here.
[372] See Bulman *The Heroic Idiom of Shakespearean Tragedy* p184.

be that he does not change in the way that some of the other characters suppose that he does, but he does go through points of crisis through which his character develops.

We also see in Shakespeare that a character who is not dynamic is presented with negativity.

Coriolanus is not dynamic. He is 'no changeling', that is his character is not mutable (*Coriolanus* 4.7.10-11). He will do nothing that was not like him before (*Coriolanus* 4.1.51-53). His character admits and allows for no changes. His character does not go this way or that but continues straight on like a juggernaut. He is not able to respond to things as they change. He is the same at the end of the play as he was at the start of the play. It reflects negatively on him that his character does not develop.

So in as much as a simplification here is useful for an understanding of heroism we may suggest that the hero in Homer is simple and static and that the hero in Shakespeare is complex and dynamic. The characters of the heroes in Homer and the heroes in Shakespeare do not develop in the same way. In the heroes in Shakespeare there is a multiplicity and ambiguity that is not as present in the heroes in Homer. The heroes in Homer sometimes seem incomplete and not fully formed in comparison to the heroes in Shakespeare. There is much more inner conflict in the heroes in Shakespeare than in the heroes in Homer. The quality and condition of their

consciousness is different. This affects our understanding of heroism in Homer and Shakespeare.

Free will and Determinism

There are significant differences between the hero in Homer and the hero in Shakespeare in the way that they are affected by free will and determinism, and it is important for an understanding of heroism in Homer and Shakespeare to look at how free will and determinism affect the hero. If the actions of a hero are immutably determined solely by fate then this takes away from his heroism. If the hero's decisions are just parts of the pattern of fate's fulfilment then the point is taken off his heroism. If he is not able to affect his future through origination and voluntariness then the possibilities for heroism are cut off. If his future will be the same no matter what he chooses then his life and death will become pointless and meaningless. If on the other hand a hero does have free will, or the force of destiny is a figure of speech for the responsibility he himself has for necessitating events, then his actions do show his heroism. We see then that the life of a hero is given ultimate meaning through the decisions he himself takes and through an absolute fate that affects him. In Homer we see free will and determinism, where here the hero is able to choose the possibilities of his future and there the hero is affected by an absolute pattern that determines his fate. The presentations of fate in Homer are not always consistent and are not always characterised by uniformity or significant regularity. In Shakespeare there is a much more consistent and coherent presentation of fate. The end of the hero in Shakespeare is often determined, but it seems that what happens to him during his life is much more characteristically the effect of his own decisions. The hero in Shakespeare seems

to be able to have more effect on the possibilities of his future. It does seem that free will and determinism are inconsistent with each other, and it may be that the relationship between free will and determinism cannot be completely reconciled. But it is clear that free will and determinism are important in giving a proper context for heroism.

In Homer a discussion of fate is difficult because it is not the case that there are consistent presentations of fate. 'There exist side by side in Homer various concepts of fate'.[373] The presentations of fate do not always agree with each other, and are not always characterised by uniformity or significant regularity. So it is hard to give an explanation of fate that is broadly applicable.

It is difficult to discuss fate in Homer because of the differences between fate in the *Iliad* compared to the *Odyssey*. Indeed even within one or the other of the poems fate is presented inconsistently. In general it seems that fate as a force superior to human will is more present in the *Iliad* than in the *Odyssey*. In the *Iliad* fate is irresistible in the lives of humans, but at times there is also significant voluntariness in action. The gods are at once subject to fate, and at other times seem to represent it too. In the *Odyssey* humans seem much more in control of the possibilities of their future, and the gods seem much more the ministers of destiny, rather than exerting a direct control over the lives of humans themselves.

It is also the case in the *Iliad* that fate is connected more powerfully with death than it is in the *Odyssey*. In the *Iliad* it is most often doom that fate spins with its web. It

[373] Dietrich *Death, Fate, and the Gods* p279.

seems characteristic of fate in the *Iliad* that when it leads someone down a path, at the end of the path is death.[374] It often seems that good people are more afflicted with sorrow and anguish than bad people are. So in general in the *Iliad* there does not seem to be a necessary connection between fate and what humans seem to deserve given their actions and characters. In the *Odyssey* there is generally more concern for what humans do during their lives, and how this is significant in affecting their fate. However, we should not be too surprised to find this difference because the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are very different. The *Iliad* is a tragedy so it seems not unexpected that the heroes suffer beyond their desert. Conversely the *Odyssey* is about a hero making it back to his native land so we do not expect the hero to die.

We can see the inconsistencies in the way fate is presented in Homer by examining Zeus and his role in the lives of humans.[375] Zeus is said to weigh the scales of destiny. He balances the golden scales but he does not decide their movement (*Iliad* 22 p402). He raises the scales by the middle of the beam, and they come down on one side or the other without his further action or interference (*Iliad* 8 p147). Zeus is not connected with either the Achaeans or the Trojans in themselves. Although he is accused of supporting the Trojans (*Iliad* 1 p36), he never throws his full weight behind either the Achaeans or the Trojans. He does not take sides with the gods either, often resolving disputes between them. At the beginning of the *Iliad* Zeus adjudges between the arguments of Hera and Thetis (*Iliad* 1 p37-38) and at the end of the *Iliad* Zeus settles the dispute between Apollo and Hera (*Iliad* 24 p439). At the beginning of

[374] See Homer *The Iliad* translated by Rieu 13 p250.
[375] Also see Dietrich p324-326 in this connection.

the *Odyssey* Zeus makes the authoritative decision in the quarrel between Athene and Poseidon (*Odyssey* 1.45-79). So here he seems like a minister of fate, disinterested and objective.

Zeus is also shown in the *Iliad* as an enforcer of fate. When Achilles returns to the fighting, he threatens to reach beyond fate (*Iliad* 20 p366). Zeus fears that Achilles will act 'against the will of fate',[376] and so Achilles must be prevented by divine action. Zeus implores the gods to intervene in the battle to stop Achilles from forestalling fate. Zeus works to ensure that fate is fulfilled, or that humans do not go beyond its bounds. On this account Zeus can be understood to work with fate. It is Zeus and fate together who give humans their allotted share.

But Zeus is also presented in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* as an embodiment of fate, having the power himself to directly affect the outcome of events.[377] Zeus tips the golden scales as he chooses to give victory or defeat to humans (*Il* 16 p310). Zeus no more just weighs the scales, but directly affects their movement. On the floor of his palace, Zeus has two jars in which he keeps his gifts for humans, sufferings in one and blessings in the other. He gives to humans from these jars according to his own desires (*Iliad* 24 p451). In the *Iliad* the anguish that the Achaeans and the Trojans suffer is said to happen 'in fulfilment of the will of Zeus' (*Iliad* 1 p23), and Zeus himself implies that the fortunes of humans reflect the satisfaction of his will (*Iliad* 1 p38). In the *Iliad* the Trojans and the Achaeans suffer because Zeus intends misery for

[376] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Fagles 20.36.
[377] For more here see Dietrich *Death, Fate, and the Gods* p309, p322-323.

both sides (*Iliad* 7 p133). Similarly in the *Odyssey* the terrible waves of disaster that crash over the Achaeans and the Trojans alike are said to happen 'by the will of mighty Zeus' (*Odyssey* 8.82-83). Zeus is called the 'Plan-maker' (*Iliad* 15 p287), and he devises triumph or ruin for humans. It is up to Zeus to determine how the affairs of humans will end.[378] The actions of humans effect the will of Zeus.[379] No human may run counter to the will of Zeus (*Iliad* 8 p149). The interference of the gods in the affairs of humans render all the struggles of humans 'futile' (*Iliad* 16 p295). Zeus is responsible for what happens to humans on earth, and he deals with each human as he sees fit (*Odyssey* 1.348-349). Zeus assigns fate to humans, good and bad alike (*Odyssey* 6.188-189). Zeus may make one man powerful and reduce another man to impotence (*Iliad* 14 p259). He may bring glory to one man and shame upon another man.[380] His will cuts through the frail tissue of human action.[381] It is by his will that the futures of humans are elaborated. All the things that happen come about because they are his will, where he arranges for things to take place and is powerful enough to stop other things from happening if he wishes.[382] So here Zeus is no mere minister, but is fate itself, possibly only figuratively, but nevertheless powerfully.[383]

In the *Iliad* it is said that humans think that Zeus and the other gods have woven sorrow into the very patterns of their lives (*Iliad* 24 p451), and that disaster is brought upon humans by the gods so that the humans may figure in the songs of those yet to be born (*Iliad* 6 p126). Similarly in the *Odyssey* Zeus and the other gods are held to be

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[378] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Hammond 4 p53.
[379] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Hammond 15 p249.
[380] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Lattimore 15.490-493.
[381] Griffin and Hammond 'Critical Appreciation: Homer *Iliad* 1.1-52' p78.
[382] Griffin and Hammond 'Critical Appreciation: Homer *Iliad* 1.1-52' p70.
[383] Also see Nagy *The Best of the Achaeans* p77 for a discussion on this.

responsible for events, weaving catastrophe into the lives of humans to make a song for future generations (*Odyssey* 8.578-580). This is consistent with the view that the futures of humans depend on the will of Zeus and the other gods.

On the other hand Zeus is also separate from fate. At times in Homer Zeus has no control over fate spinning its destiny-thread for humans. In the *Iliad* a man 'must endure what destiny spun for him with the first thread of life when he came from his mother's womb' (*Iliad* 20 p369), and there is no mention of Zeus having a hand in determining a human's fate. Accordingly in the *Odyssey* a man must suffer whatever fate has spun for him with the first thread of life when he came from his mother's womb (*Odyssey* 7.196-198). It seems here that humans are powerless to affect their own futures, and so have no control over their destinies. And Zeus is also powerless to affect what fate decides for humans.

It is significant, however, that Zeus may say: 'I am not one who is fated'.[384] He is not himself subject to fate. In Homer at times the gods have no control over the destinies of humans, but they always control their own actions. The gods rule themselves, and are affected by fate only through the humans that are dear to them.

That Zeus in Homer is separate from fate and is affected by it is plain in his inability to save from disaster his favourites among humans when fate comes to lay them low. Zeus sighs in distress that fate is unkind to him in killing those that he loves dearly (*Iliad* 16 p304). Zeus is reluctant to let Sarpedon die, and thinks about subverting fate.

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[384] See Homer *The Iliad* translated by Hammond 22 p351.

But his wife is shocked that he proposes to reprieve a man whose fate has 'long been settled' (*Iliad* 16 p304), and Zeus relents. Similarly when Zeus considers saving Hector his daughter remonstrates with him for trying to forestall Hector's doom when his fate too has 'long been settled' (*Iliad* 22 p401), and Zeus again relents. He cannot save them. Even Zeus cannot turn away the fate of death for humans.[385] As we are told in the *Odyssey*: it is a man's fate to die, and not even Zeus can fend death away from a man he loves when fate takes hold and lays him low at last.[386] We see here a separation between Zeus and fate, where although Zeus considers subverting fate, he will not (or cannot) go through with it, and in the end he must accept the power fate has over humans, and even over him through them.

It is interesting that Zeus had saved Sarpedon in the past, more than once. When Sarpedon was struck by Tlepolemus's spear, Zeus saved him from destruction (*Iliad* 5 p110), and when Sarpedon was in danger at the Achaean wall, Zeus did not wish him to die there and so turned away disaster (*Iliad* 12 p231). This is interesting because it exemplifies many of the inconsistencies in the presentation of fate in the *Iliad.* One understanding here is that Zeus exercised his power over the future of a man's life, choosing to save him because it was his will. Another understanding is that it was not Sarpedon's fate to die just then, so Zeus's actions are in fulfilment of a destiny which, as we are told later, is already settled. Apparently Zeus is not involved in the reaching of this decision, and so he seems separate from fate. These inconsistencies are not fully resolved in the *Iliad.*

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[385] Dietrich *Death, Fate, and the Gods* p326.
[386] Homer *The Odyssey* translated by Fagles 3.269-271.

The *Odyssey* perhaps attempts to address the inconsistencies by diminishing the role of Zeus and the gods in determining a human's destiny. In the *Odyssey* it is much more characteristic for humans to be accountable for their own actions, gaining greater responsibility for themselves even though they may not always acknowledge this responsibility. In the *Odyssey* Zeus himself laments that humans should blame him and the other gods, regarding them as the source of their troubles, when 'it is their own transgressions which bring them suffering that was not their destiny' (*Odyssey* 1.33-35). Here we see that humans have the power to change their destinies, and can take control over the possibilities of their future. They can bring about events that were not their fate. In the *Odyssey*, much more than in the *Iliad*, the anguish that humans suffer is often the price they pay for their own wrongdoing.

This difference between the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* is clear in the very different beginnings of the two poems. At the start of the *Iliad* we are explicitly told that the destinies of humans are determined by the will of Zeus moving towards its end (*Iliad* 1 p23). Conversely at the start of the *Odyssey* we are told that none of Odysseus's crew made it back alive, but that 'it was their own transgression that brought them to their doom'. They themselves chose to act in a way that resulted in their own deaths (*Odyssey* 1.6-7). The utter dissimilarity here can be seen as expressing characteristic differences between the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* in connection to fate, but the inconsistencies in the way fate is presented in the remaining parts of these poems makes it difficult to make a reliable conclusion on this matter.

Nevertheless there seems to be in the *Odyssey* a direct relation between wrongdoing and punishment, that is not as present in the *Iliad*.[387] There seems to be a concern in the *Odyssey* more than in the *Iliad* with humans getting their due share given their actions.[388]

The suffering of the Cyclops in the *Odyssey* follows his own wrongdoing. Homer does present the Cyclops with sympathy and compassion. During the day the Cyclops tends his flocks in the lush pastures, and when night comes he shepherds the flocks into his cave. He milks the animals, and gives each mother its young one in due course (*Odyssey* 9.336-343). In his cave the Cyclops has baskets of cheese, pails of milk, and pens where the animals are carefully herded (*Odyssey* 9.218-223). There is also a touching moment between the Cyclops and his favourite ram (*Odyssey* 9.447-461). But it is significant that in the immediate context of this the Cyclops is also shown behaving outrageously. He lives in a dark cave, which hints that he is barbarous, and he is physically out of the ordinary in that he has only one eye, which hints that he is morally out of shape. Indeed before long the Cyclops shows that he is a bloodthirsty monster. He is a terror of no small proportion for Odysseus

and his men. The Cyclops is murderous (*Odyssey* 9.212-215). His treatment of Odysseus and his men is terrible, and it is clear that he sets what is right at nought. Odysseus asks the Cyclops to give him and his men gifts and hospitality as is expected for hosts to offer to their guests (*Odyssey* 9.267-272). But the Cyclops

[387] Also see Dietrich *Death, Fate, and the Gods* p218-220, p323-324.
[388] Dietrich *Death, Fate, and the Gods* p280.

subsequently devours Odysseus's men. It is terrible that he should eat human flesh in addition to refusing the claims of hospitality. But then the Cyclops is terribly wounded by Odysseus and his remaining men. They thrust a sharpened burnt stick into his eye, and he is blinded, moaning in agony (*Odyssey* 9.381-416). As Odysseus is sailing away, he shouts out to the Cyclops that his wrongdoing was bound to catch up with him. The Cyclops is paid out for what he has done (*Odyssey* 9.475-479). His suffering can be seen as the outcome of his wrongdoing.

The destruction of the rest of Odysseus's men in the *Odyssey* is similarly the result of actions that they take with origination and voluntariness, even if they are compelled by their desperate situation. They arrive at the island of Thrinacia and look hungrily at the animals that fodder on the island. Odysseus has been told that the animals belong to the gods and that if they eat the animals then the gods will destroy them.[389] Odysseus tells his men not to eat the animals (*Odyssey* 12.319-323). If they can keep from eating the animals then there is a 'chance' that they will make it back to their homes (*Odyssey* 11.110-112). Here their fates are not set but are to be determined by their own actions. When they arrive on the island they have plenty of food, but finally their food runs out and their stomachs tell them to eat the animals. While Odysseus is asleep they decide to slaughter and eat the animals. When they later set out from the island their ship is at once destroyed at sea by the gods to pay them for their wrongdoing, and they are swallowed by doom. 'There was no homecoming for them' (*Odyssey* 12.419). Their destruction is the result of their own human failure. They receive what they deserve according to their actions. Just as they slaughter and slice

[389] Homer *The Odyssey* translated by Rieu 11.104-113, 12.137-142, 12.271-275.

up the animals to gorge themselves on so too they must swallow the portions that they carved for themselves as their fates. Odysseus alone is able to withhold himself from the animals, thereby avoiding wrongdoing, and thus he survives.

The deaths of the suitors in the *Odyssey* are also a result of their own actions. Odysseus states that 'these men the doom of the gods has brought low, and their own indecent acts'.[390] This exemplifies an inconsistency in the presentation of fate, where the suitors are at once doomed by a power out of their control and are able to affect the possibilities of their futures through their own actions. But in general in the *Odyssey* it seems that it is their actions that are most responsible for their doom. Their deaths at the hands of Odysseus follow their abuse of Odysseus's household. They are doomed by their own actions, where 'their own transgressions have brought them to this ignominious death' (*Odyssey* 22.413-417). They are paid out for their own wrongdoing (*Odyssey* 11.118). Their destiny is the outcome of their own decisions, so we can see here that men have power over their own lives. Phemius the minstrel and Medon the herald are the only two men among those in Odysseus's household who are not killed, because they had participated involuntarily or done no wrong themselves. Odysseus tells them that they have not been killed so that they may know in their hearts and tell others that 'doing right is a much better policy than doing wrong' (*Odyssey* 22.372-374). The fact that they alone are not killed points to a direct relationship between wrongdoing and suffering that seems typical of the *Odyssey*.

[390] Homer *The Odyssey* translated by Fagles 22.438-439.

The relationship between wrongdoing and suffering is more present in the *Odyssey* than in the *Iliad.* In the *Iliad* fate can bring death to a human without them necessarily deserving that end, but in the *Odyssey* humans become much more responsible for what happens to them.

We see in Homer free will and determinism existing uncomfortably side by side, where there is both the individual freedom to choose the possibilities of one's future and an absolute pattern giving overall meaning to one's life.[391] This relationship is uncomfortable because one seems to exclude the other, and they are never fully reconciled in Homer.

There are many examples in Homer where free will and determinism are combined.

We see a combination of determinism and free will in Hector's death. When Hector decides to remain outside the city to confront Achilles, we are told that it was fate that kept Hector where he was (*Iliad* 22 p397). Later though, when he is implored by his parents to return into the city, it seems that it is his decision alone to wait for Achilles to approach. He has reasons to stay where he is and he debates with himself about what course to take. He is the only one who takes part in this debate, no gods impress themselves upon him (*Iliad* 22 p399-400). For Hector fleeing back into the city would not be consistent with his image of himself as a hero, so he tries to take possession of himself by controlling his death. He seems to choose his own death as an act of self-determination, knowing that remaining outside the city to confront Achilles probably

[391] Homer *The Iliad* introduction by Fagles p40.

means that he will be killed. He loses heart when Achilles comes towards him, and although in the end he makes a stand, we are told that a goddess tricked him into fighting Achilles (*Iliad* 22 p403). It does seem that her ruse deprives him of his free will, and takes from him his self-determination. The goddess herself says that Achilles and she together are going to kill Hector, 'you and I are going to kill him' (*Iliad* 22 p403). Was it his decision to remain outside the city, making his death a consummation of that determination? Or was it fate that made him wait outside the city to fight Achilles? His actions seem in turn to be the result of free will and determinism.

It is important to decide whether Hector's death is the result of free will or determinism because if what happens is going to happen no matter what he does then there is an emptiness to his life and death. It may seem that it doesn't really matter what Hector does because he can only die. However, what matters most for Hector's heroism is not how death comes for him, but what his response is to it as it comes.[392] How does he feel as death comes closer and what will he say as he dies?[393] It is not only the fight with Achilles in itself that is important. Its effect on its participants is also significant, and these human responses are beyond the ability of fate to control. What happens to humans is sometimes controlled by fate, but the human responses to what happens to them are not. It is this combination of determination and human response, or arbitrariness and involvement, that allows Homer to be at once heroic and human.[394] But it is not always easy in Homer to tell what heroes are feeling, and this

[392] Kirk *Homer and the Epic* p96.
[393] Kirk *Homer and the Epic* p97.
[394] Kirk *Homer and the Epic* p98.

makes it difficult to use their human responses as critical in pointing to their heroism. The heroism of a man in Homer is generally shown through his actions. We see his heroism through what he does rather than through what he feels. This makes his responsibility for his actions of special importance.

There is a similar combination of free will and determinism in the quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon. When anger comes over Achilles and he is about to attack Agamemnon with his sword, a goddess comes down to him and grabs him by the hair to restrain him (*Iliad* 1 p28). It seems that the goddess controls his actions. But Achilles was already torn between which course to take. He was debating with himself, as Hector was, about what to do before the goddess put her hands on him. That he alone sees her and that no-one notices the pulling of his hair may hint that it is an inward debate, rather than an outside force controlling him. It seems that the goddess comes to urge the claims of the safer course Achilles was already considering.[395] This understanding gives him some free will. Is he ruled by the will of the goddess? Or does he decide himself what he will do, where the goddess just helps him reach his decision? We see here at once divine interference and human responsibility.

We also see free will and determinism side by side in Achilles's double destiny, although in a way dissimilar to any other in the *Iliad*. It almost anticipates the seemingly more significant free will that the hero enjoys in the *Odyssey*, but is different even from the free will we see there. Achilles knows that he has two fates

[395] Homer *The Iliad* introduction by Fagles p39.

that could carry him to the end of his life, and that he has a choice between them. Either he stays to fight in Troy, and gone is his homecoming, or he returns to his dear native land, and his life stretches long. If he stays he will die but he will win glory that will never die, and if he goes he will live but he will be forgotten (*Iliad* 9 p172). The possibilities for Achilles's choices are not his to determine, but he does have a choice between the possibilities put before him. Thus his free will is qualified by the setting of alternatives for the way in which he will live and die. His free will is confined within bounds imposed by a deterministic destiny.

There are some parts of the *Iliad* where Achilles's fate appears to be hard upon him, and they seem to take from him some of his free will. There is an irresistible sense of destiny about him. It does sometimes seem that Achilles's fate is like an illness that is moving inevitably towards a point of crisis. Achilles himself states that he knows that fate will soon lay him low (*Iliad* 18 p340). When Achilles defeats a Trojan warrior and is about to kill him he says that: 'death and fate will soon overtake even me' (*Iliad* 21 p383). Another Trojan warrior Achilles defeats warns him not to treat his body badly because his turn will come and he will soon be killed himself (*Iliad* 22 p406). Even one of Achilles's horses knows Achilles's fate. The horse (given the power of human speech for a moment) tells Achilles that he is coming to the end of his allotted days and that the hour of his death is drawing near (*Iliad* 19 p364). It tells him: 'not far hence the fatal minutes are / Of thy grave ruin'.[396] Achilles rebukes his horse, and responds that he knows well enough that he is doomed to die before long

[396] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Chapman 19.410-411.

(*Il* 19 p365). Indeed at the end of the *Iliad* fate does stand so close by Achilles, ready to take him. Achilles has so short a time to live (*Iliad* 24 p440).

But these intimations of Achilles's impending death all follow his own choice between his destinies. Achilles chooses between his double destinies soon after he finds out about Patroclus's death. He tells his mother that she is going to lose her child and that she will never welcome him home again for he is determined to kill the man who killed his beloved friend, realising that this act decides his own end. His mother tells him that if he takes this course he surely has not long to live. He responds: 'then let me die' (*Iliad* 18 p339). The references to the inescapability of his death are made only after Achilles has himself chosen which course he will take. This maintains the feeling of his double destiny, where he is at once free to choose and limited by determinism.

It is a failing of some translations that, perhaps to escape this uncomfortable combination of free will and determinism, they focus on either one or the other. D. Rieu observes that E. Rieu's translations often delete phrases that show divine will ruling over human will, giving too much importance to free will. Thus 'a god put this into my mind' is translated as 'it occurred to me'.[397] This may show an attempt to reconcile the inconsistencies concerning fate in Homer, but no such reconcilement is acceptable because it clearly goes against how fate is presented in Homer.

[397] Homer *The Odyssey* introduction by D. Rieu ix.

There are also many examples in Homer of determinism getting the better of free will, and this slashes and hacks at the possibility for heroism.

We see determinism in the prefigured death of Hector. He himself states that fate is a thing that no-one can escape (*Iliad* 6 p130). He claims that no-one will kill him before his proper time (*Iliad* 6 p129). He is reassured by this, and suggests that his wife too should take comfort from it. He knows deep in his heart that his country and his people will be destroyed (*Iliad* 6 p129), and again and again his own impending death is foreshadowed.[398] Indeed his wife and maidservants 'mourned for Hector in his own house, though he was still alive, thinking that he would never survive the violence and fury of the

Achaeans and come home from the battlefield' (*Iliad* 6 p130). As the *Iliad* goes on, his end comes nearer and nearer, and destiny gets closer and closer to him. His death seems set. On one day of fighting, he is told that it is not his destiny to die that day and that he should not fear for his life (*Iliad* 7 p133). Hector accepts this uncritically, and takes great confidence from these assurances. They affect his actions, as he immediately addresses the Achaeans on the battle-field. He challenges any Achaean who has the nerve to stride forward from the line to fight him in single combat. But this challenge seems empty because Hector's life is safeguarded and is not at risk. Fate does not have him dying that day. This takes him out of his proper relationship with life and death, and dulls the point of his heroism here.

[398] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Rieu 15 p288, 16 p313, 16 p315, 18 p340.

We also see determinism in Agamemnon's explanation for the quarrel between him and Achilles. Agamemnon claims that he should not be blamed for his quarrel with Achilles because it was fate that affected him. He cries out 'what could I do?', suggesting a powerlessness before the force of fate (*Iliad* 19 p356). It may be important that Agamemnon did not suggest that fate ruled him when he took the decision at the beginning of the *Iliad*, because this makes it seem like an excuse when he later blames fate for an action he regrets. But it remains that Agamemnon claims it was fate that brought things to their end. We were also told at the very beginning of the *Iliad* that it was a god who began the quarrel between Agamemnon and Achilles (*Iliad* 1 p23), so Agamemnon seems justified in dismissing the responsibility for his actions because they have their ground in divine interference.

In Homer there are also many examples where free will is more significant than determinism in affecting the life and death of the hero, and these examples allow his actions to reflect on his heroism.

We see this in Patroclus's death. Patroclus was 'a fool and made a fatal error' when he ignored his friend's advice and attacked the walls of Troy. The gods made Patroclus foolish and beckoned him to his death (*Iliad* 16 p311). But it is noted that Patroclus could have saved himself from doom and the black night of death (*Iliad* 16 p310). He has free will and is able to affect his future so his actions reflect on his heroism.

We see this again with Asius's death. Asius was a fool, and fate engulfed him when he attacked the Achaean wall against the advice of the rest of the Trojans and their allies (*Iliad* 12 p224). Here it was Asius's decision that determined his fate. His fate

gaped for him and swallowed him when he himself went right in to it. There is no mention of anything other than himself affecting his actions. He has a destined end, but that fate is brought on by his own actions. His fate is the consequence of the decisions that he takes with free will. He himself necessitates events so his actions reflect on his heroism.

In the *Iliad* the free will that Diomedes shows reflects on his heroism. On one day of fighting he was sweeping over the battle-field and driving companies of warriors before him, having it all his own way. But just then he was hit with an arrow in the shoulder, and it seemed likely that this injury would force him to withdraw from the battle. He prayed to a goddess to be healed, and hearing his prayer, she stopped the blood gushing from his shoulder. She revitalised his legs, arms, and hands. She filled his heart with a longing for the fight, and he again took his place in the front line. But, we are told, 'even without her he had been determined to fall on the enemy again' (*Iliad* 5 p95). She does not make him act contrary to his own intention. The help he gets from the goddess does not undermine his heroism because his actions depend on his own decisions. He was going to take the same course with or without her help, so his future is the outcome of his own choices.

Again in the *Iliad* the free will that Hector shows reflects on his heroism. When Hector is attacking the black ships of the Achaeans and threatening to set them ablaze, Zeus lashes him on and inflames his fury (*Iliad* 15 p287). We are told that Zeus pushes him from behind with his tremendous hand (*Iliad* 15 p290), and it may seem that Hector's actions are ruled by Zeus. But we are told that Hector does not need the

added encouragement from Zeus because he is 'full already of his own fury'.[399] We are told that Hector 'raged in his own right'.[400] The encouragement he gets from the god does not undermine his heroism because, like Diomedes, his inclination was already for the course the god urges.

In the *Odyssey* the origination and voluntariness Odysseus shows reflects on his heroism, in a way though that is more acute than examples in the *Iliad.* When Odysseus sets out from Circe's island on his raft to cross the sea, storms, waves, and rough winds clash together lashing his raft this way and that. A goddess advises him to abandon the raft and swim for the coast, and promises him that she will protect him. But Odysseus decides against her advice, 'I shall do what I myself think best' (*Odyssey* 5.359-360). He even says that 'there's no better plan for now'.[401] For him his human plan is superior to the divine one, and he even risks his life on it succeeding. This is an excellent acknowledgement of the freedom of thought that humans have in the *Odyssey.* But there is a hint of determinism following this. As Odysseus comes closer to the coast the waves threaten to dash him on the rocks or hurl him far out to sea and pull him under. We are told that he would have come to an 'unpredestined end' if another goddess had not given him a good idea (*Odyssey* 5.437), which seems damaging to his origination. But some translations give this as the goddess 'prompting' Odysseus's thoughts,[402] which is much more sensitive to his heroism and free will. Indeed there is an overriding feeling here that Odysseus is acting with origination and voluntariness. Odysseus receives divine advice twice

[399] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Hammond 15 p249.
[400] Homer *The Iliad* translated by Fagles 15.702.
[401] Homer *The Odyssey* translated by Fagles 5.401.
[402] See Homer *The Iliad* translated by Chapman 5.428.

while he is crossing the sea, and he decides which advice he will take, refusing one and accepting the other. Finally it is Odysseus's decision as to which course he will take.

Again when yet another goddess is advising Odysseus about how to negotiate the dangers of Scylla and Charybdis, she tells him that the threat of Scylla although terrible is less than that of Charybdis. But unsatisfied

Odysseus questions her further if there is not some other way to avoid both dangers. The goddess responds angrily to his obstinacy, saying: 'are you not prepared to give in to immortal gods?' (*Odyssey* 12.117). Odysseus is self-willed, and is always looking for his own human solution. He is never content just to let the gods tell him what to do without thinking about the matter himself. He follows his own course, and shows free will in reaching decisions. He tests the limits of what he can achieve as a human. By showing origination and voluntariness Odysseus's survival in the *Odyssey* is much more a human triumph.

In the *Odyssey* there are numerous references to Odysseus's fated return,[403] but we are left with an overwhelming sense that Odysseus decides for himself what he will do. Odysseus appreciates that the gods have helped him and he is grateful to them for their assistance. But he also remonstrates with a goddess for leaving him to himself when he was crossing the stormy sea, 'I did not notice you then' (*Odyssey* 13.313-

[403] See Homer *The Odyssey* translated by E. Rieu and D. Rieu 1.200-205, 2.174-176, 5.29-42, 5.345, 11.100-117, 12.141, 14.151-164, 14.393-400, 15.172-178, 15.525-534, 17.150-165, 17.541-550, 18.117, 18.143-150, 19.268-307, 19.555-558, 19.585-587, 20.103-104, 20.120-121, 20.226-239, 21.413.

324), and this suggests that he survives even without the help of the gods. Again this makes his survival more of a human triumph.

Perhaps it could be suggested that Penelope spins her own fate, and that this symbolises the free will that characterises the *Odyssey*. On her loom she set up a web and wove a delicate and beautiful piece of work, promising to marry one of the suitors when the web was finished (*Odyssey* 2.94-110). By day she wove the web, but by night she had torches set beside it and undid the work. She took control of her own destiny. For three years she took the suitors in by this stratagem, until she was discovered, and forced to complete the work (*Odyssey* 19.138-159). No sooner had she been made to finish it though, than Odysseus turned up (*Odyssey* 24.125-150). She spun her own destiny-thread until her husband could return and deal death to the suitors.

So we can note some important differences and similarities between representations of fate in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, and it is clear that different conceptions of fate have different implications for the hero. The differences between fate in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, and the lack of uniformity even within one or other of the poems, makes it difficult to give conclusions that are accurate all of the time. In addition there can be no reconcilement of the inconsistencies, making it even more difficult.

What we see in Shakespeare is a much more consistent and coherent presentation of fate. The representations of fate in Shakespeare are not characterised by a sameness at all times, but it is much more common for there to be agreement concerning fate. The relationship between free will and determinism is not completely reconciled in

Shakespeare (or anywhere else for that matter). But there is much less conflict between them, and the conflict that there is has a different character.

There is not the same inexorability and human powerlessness that we see in the *Iliad*, and perhaps also in the *Odyssey*. The force of fate is not so much superior to the human power to decide, and it affects humans in a different way to what we see in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. The power of fate does not tend to have the same control over the actions of humans, and there is much less explicit divine interference. The freedom to choose the possibilities of their futures through origination and voluntariness is also generally more present.

But this does not represent a progression from determinism in Homer to free will in Shakespeare.

We see in Shakespeare a different kind of determinism and free will, and a different relationship between them. In Shakespeare the end of a hero is sometimes determined, but what he decides during his life is generally much more the effect of his own decisions. The heroes in Shakespeare show a more constant origination and voluntariness. They can affect how fate lays hold of them, but they cannot affect that it will lay hold of them, despite any attempt they might make to turn it away from them. A hero in Shakespeare has the freedom to choose the possibilities of his future, but there is also an overall pattern affecting his end. There is an inevitability about his end, but how he arrives at that end is his decision to make. The ultimate meaning of human life is given through the courses humans take with free will and through an absolute destiny affecting their ends.

Concerning the heroes in Shakespeare it is often much more easy to tell what they are feeling and what their motives are. Their human responses are free, and this helps to reduce the conflict between determinism and free will, because although the events may be controlled, their feelings are theirs. Thus their feelings and responses reflect on their heroism more than their actions do. Extending from this we may note in Shakespeare that it is not as important whether heroes are responsible for their actions, because what matters most is what their motives and feelings are and that they are fully theirs.

We see voluntariness and origination in the way in which some of the heroes in Shakespeare control their fates through their own deaths. In these examples the heroes take their own lives as a consummation of free will and self-determination. A problem here though is that the control humans take over their fates through death seems inconsistent with the absolute destiny that gives ultimate meaning to human life and death. Do they take their lives in fulfilment of their absolute fate or because that was their human decision? This difficulty is never fully solved in Shakespeare.

In *Julius Caesar* we see Cassius and Brutus take their lives as acts of self-determination. Cassius thinks that humans can affect their destinies, where their destinies are 'not in our stars, / But in ourselves' (*Julius Caesar* 1.2.139-140). Cassius suggests to Brutus that 'the affairs of men rest still incertain' (*Julius Caesar* 5.1.95), suggesting that they might still influence them. But Brutus responds that there are 'some high powers / That govern us below', and that he will wait to see what fate has for him. He suggests that he will give way to divine power over human affairs (*Julius Caesar* 5.1.105-107). However, he then insists that he will not be led in chains in

triumph through Rome (*Julius Caesar* 5.1.110-112), indicating the force of human will over whatever fate has for him. The way he does this is through taking his own life. Cassius and Brutus both take the same course. When Cassius thinks that his dear friend has been killed and that their forces have been defeated, he says that his life has run its course. He feels that his life has run its compass (*Julius Caesar* 5.3.25), and decides to kill himself. That Cassius is in error over the thing he kills himself for suggests that his decision is an all too human one. When Brutus knows that they have lost, he also determines to kill himself, noting 'it is a deed in fashion' (*Julius Caesar* 5.5.5). Brutus reflects 'I know my hour is come', and feels that it is more worthy to leap into death himself than to wait to be pushed (*Julius Caesar* 5.5.19-25). Cassius and Brutus do not wait for their fate to overtake them or for events to push them into action. They decide what their fate will be, or at least control the final character of their fate.

Antony in *Antony and Cleopatra* also takes his own life as an act of self-determination. He reflects that 'the time is come', and he makes the decision to kill himself, much like Brutus (*Antony and Cleopatra* 4.14.67). He also fears that he will be taken back to Rome in triumph by his conquerors, so by killing himself he takes his fate into his own hands. Antony chooses his own image of himself, and takes possession of himself through controlling his death. He sees himself as a hero, and considers that his death will fix him as that. There is, however, something pitiable about his death, because Cleopatra deceives him into thinking she is dead and this encourages him to take the decision he does. His death also seems pathetic because he stabs himself so unskilfully that he fails to die straight away, not giving himself a sufficing stroke for death. This reminds us of Cassius's death, and his all too human

end. Following Antony's death Cleopatra considers that however powerful a man is, 'not being Fortune, he's Fortune's knave, / A minister of her will' (*Antony and Cleopatra* 5.2.3-4). This gives humans no control over the possibilities of their futures, where they are merely acting out fate's plan. But then she suggests that humans can take control over their fates through their deaths. She defies the fate that afflicts her, and implies that her human choices are the equals of fate's plans for her (*Antony and Cleopatra* 4.15.72-90). Cleopatra feels that the killing of oneself 'shackles accidents and bolts up change' (*Antony and Cleopatra* 5.2.6). Her death gives her control over the mutability of fortune and the uncertainties of human affairs. Thus her self-slaughter, perhaps even more so than Antony's, is an act of self-determination.

In *Romeo and Juliet* we also see Romeo try to use death to control his destiny. Romeo is 'star-crossed' (*Romeo and Juliet* 1.0.6). Romeo is concerned that consequences hang in the stars (*Romeo and Juliet* 1.4.107). He also says 'he that hath the steerage of my course / Direct my sail' (*Romeo and Juliet* 1.4.112-113), suggesting that there is a force that has power over his fate. Romeo despairs that he is a plaything for fate, 'I am fortune's fool' (*Romeo and Juliet* 3.1.136). When Romeo thinks that Juliet is dead he cries 'I defy you stars' (*Romeo and Juliet* 5.1.24). The Q2 version has 'I deny you stars', but it seems that Romeo is not denying astrological significance, but is defying his ill-luck.[404] So the 'defy' version seems more appropriate. His defiance takes the form of killing himself, as all his thoughts from that point on are on taking his own life. We see his defiance as he is about to kill himself in his statement that he will

[404] Shakespeare *Romeo and Juliet* note T. Spencer p269.

throw off the power of the stars over his life (*Romeo and Juliet* 5.3.109-112). He binds the mutability of fortune to his human choice through his own death. He kills himself almost to spite fate. Again that Juliet is alive and that he is mistaken about the thing he kills himself for makes his decision seem very human.

In *Macbeth* we also see Macbeth try to use death to control his fate. That Macbeth considers that his life is charmed seems to give power over his life and death to the force of destiny. He smiles at swords and laughs at weapons, for he thinks that they cannot harm him unless they are swung by someone not of woman born (*Macbeth* 5.7.13-14). He reflects 'what's he / That was not born of woman? Such a one / Am I to fear, or none' (*Macbeth* 5.7.2-4). He again and again takes comfort that his life is protected. There is a danger here that this will take him out of a proper relationship with life and death, for he can go about things in the confidence that he is not at risk. When events turn against him Macbeth is perturbed, feeling that some force is juggling with his life and equivocating with him, promising him one thing and delivering another (*Macbeth* 5.7.49-52). This points to a human powerlessness to control the future. But when fate brings disaster upon Macbeth, he does not just give in. Even when things look hopeless, he will not surrender. He fights on even though he finds out that his opponent Macduff is the one fated to defeat him. At first he will not fight when he discovers this, but then he pronounces that despite this 'I will try the last' (*Macbeth* 5.7.62) before attacking Macduff. Through this act he re-affirms his human power in the face of his destiny. Macbeth very deliberately brings on his own death and becomes the source of his own fate.[405] It might be noted, however, that even

[405] Proser *The Heroic Image* p89.

a small animal will take heart when cornered, and that this need not reveal a greatness of character in the animal. Macbeth is similarly trapped and fights with desperate hopelessness. His despair is revealed in his exclamation that 'I'll fight, till from my bones my flesh be hacked' (*Macbeth* 5.3.31). But there is also something heroic about his death, and a comparison with a small animal here is not fitting. It does seem that Macbeth uses his death to attempt to re-define himself as a hero. He seems to accept his mistakes, but knows that there is no way out for him now other than death. He contritely embraces his death as an acknowledgement of his wrongdoing. He is worried that he will be captured and displayed in triumph, and it is threatened that he will be 'the show and gaze o'th' time. / We'll have thee, as our rarer monsters are' (*Macbeth* 5.7.54-55). He also could have ended like the traitor Macdonald, who renounced his actions and was executed (*Macbeth* 1.4.2-11). But Macbeth himself chooses the character of his end. He turns from the tyrant assassin back into the warrior hero,[406] and this reassertion of his character is an ultimate act of self-determination.

It is much more characteristic though for the heroes in Shakespeare to show origination and voluntariness in their actions to affect their lives not just by ending them. They are generally self-ruled, and choose and decide for themselves in their lives. They are accountable for their own actions, and are responsible for themselves. When they show free will, we can give them the approbation or blame that goes with their decisions, because the courses they take are properly their own. Their actions are taken without external necessitation. This means that we can make more accurate

[406] Proser *The Heroic Image* p90.

judgements about how great they are, for the desires they have and the actions they take are their own. So we see how notions of fate affect conceptions of heroism.

We see in *Othello* a characteristic example of how the actions a hero takes with origination and voluntariness make him responsible for his own destiny. When Othello is suffering under the heavy stroke of misfortune, he despondently asks what man can 'control his fate?' (*Othello* 5.2.263). But it may be that this helplessness is transformed into a kind of excuse.[407] Othello denies his responsibility for events, and cannot see that his own desires and motives have brought him to this end. His image of himself as a hero has been used against him, and has helped to bring disaster upon him. Even though he is deceived by Iago, the decisions he takes are his, so he cannot wholly reject his responsibility for them. It is the activity of his will that is in the end responsible for the tragic events that overcome him. There are some events, like Desdemona dropping her handkerchief (*Othello* 3.3.284-285), that may be considered to be accidents of fate that take away from humans control over their destinies. But Othello's responses to these events are not controlled. Thus his responses show his free will, and because of this his actions reflect fully on his heroism. His actions do not reflect well on him, and as he is fully responsible for them, they diminish his heroism.

Even some of the less admirable characters acknowledge responsibility for themselves. In *Lear* Edmund takes responsibility for his nature. He proclaims that 'I should have been that I am' regardless of what star shone when he was born (*Lear*

[407] Proser *The Heroic Image* p110.

1.2.130-132). He states that the stars are not to blame for his actions. He claims that his actions are not taken through necessity but are a result of his own nature (*Lear* 1.2.126-128). Thus, according to Edmund, we are responsible for our own fate. When we wish to turn from our responsibility, he goes on, 'we make guilty of our disasters the sun, the moon, the stars, as if we were villains on necessity, fools by heavenly compulsion, knaves, thieves, and treachers by spherical predominance, drunkards, liars, and adulterers by an enforced obedience of planetary influence; and all that we are evil in by a divine thrusting-on' (*Lear* 1.2.120-126).

The nature of fate in Shakespeare though is most often different to that in Homer. The free will the hero in Shakespeare shows is different to the free will the hero in Homer shows, and affects his life and death differently. The end of the hero in Shakespeare is often determined, but what he decides during his life is much more characteristically the effect of his own will than it is for the hero in Homer. It is much rarer in Shakespeare than in Homer for the feelings or actions of the hero to be affected by something other than his own will, excepting fate's power over his end. A hero in Shakespeare is free with respect to his feelings and motives during his life, but often his end is immutably determined. He can affect how fate takes hold of him, but he cannot affect that it will take hold of him, regardless of what actions he takes. He has the freedom to choose the possibilities of his future, but there is also an overall pattern that affects his end. The changeable and inconstant nature of fortune reflects his ability to take control of his own fate, but his immutably determined end shows fate's absolute power over human life. His life is given ultimate meaning through the decisions he himself takes and through an absolute destiny affecting his end.

There is a paradox here because it is unclear whether human life in itself means anything if its end is immutably determined. If the end of a hero's life is determined can he meaningfully be said to have free will? This paradox is never fully solved by Shakespeare (or by anyone else for that matter).

The differences in fate are hinted at in *Coriolanus*. Coriolanus shows self-determination, and claims that he is 'author of himself' (*Coriolanus* 5.3.36). But it is ironic that Coriolanus is killed by the jealousy and resentment he sought to escape. He rejects his city out of disgust with the people. He feels that their displeasure with him is just petty resentment. His nature 'made him feared, / So hated, and so banished' (*Coriolanus* 4.7.47-48). He then joins the enemies of his city. But in time they too become jealous of him, and kill him, crying 'kill, kill, kill, kill, kill'! (*Coriolanus* 5.6.131). This may suggest that while he is free to make the decisions during his life his end is set. He tries to escape the resentment his character inspires but he is killed by it all the same. So while his feelings and responses during his life are his and are not determined, there is also an absolute pattern that affects his end.

The differences in destiny are more present in *Hamlet*. At the start of the play Hamlet's friend suggests that foreknowing fate we may avoid it (*Hamlet* 1.1.133-134). This indicates that human will can affect fate. It is a person's character that gives power to fortune to affect his life. Hamlet seems to agree, suggesting that a person is not an instrument for fortune to play whatever note it pleases (*Hamlet* 3.2.55-61). So we see that humans may take control over their own destinies and may take courses that are not determined. But later one of the characters observes that 'our wills and fates do so contrary run / That our devices still are overthrown; / Our

thoughts are ours, their ends none of our own' (*Hamlet* 3.2.192-194), and this view of fate becomes typical of Hamlet's own view, expressing the power of fate over human life. There is some force at work in human life outside our control. Our human feelings and responses are ours, and are not determined. But we cannot control our destined ends. Hamlet reflects that what happens to a human is affected by 'fortune's star' (*Hamlet* 1.4.32). As the play goes on we see that some events are immutably determined by an absolute destiny. An example of this is the pirate ship episode (*Hamlet* 4.6.13-22), through which Hamlet seems to be brought back to his native land to fulfil his destiny. Just before the end of the play Hamlet reflects that 'there's a divinity that shapes our ends, / Rough-hew them how we will' (*Hamlet* 5.2.10-11). Despite all our human efforts our ultimate fate is just the same. Here Hamlet seems to accept the power of destiny over his destined end. He seems to give himself over to his fate. He embraces and endures his fate without complaint. It seems that Hamlet shifts between his belief in his power to control his own fate and his belief in the meaninglessness and purposelessness of things, but that in the end he gives up both of these for the belief that his actions are guided by divinity.[408] And this reminds us of what Hamlet's friend says at the start of the play, that 'heaven will direct it' and will determine the issue of events (*Hamlet* 1.4.89-91).

In *Macbeth* we can also see the different character of fate. At the beginning of the play the witches are discussing their future meeting with Macbeth (*Macbeth* 1.1.7). They seem to draw Macbeth to them, and just before they meet him they join in a magical chorus, and 'the charm's wound up' (*Macbeth* 1.3.31-37). This helps to

[408] Shakespeare *Hamlet* introduction by P. Edwatds p55.

create a feeling that there is some inexorable force at work in Macbeth's life, affecting his future. When they meet him, they proclaim that he will be king. But he is alarmed at their suggestion, which hints that it may have been in his thinking already to be king. Macbeth starts and is 'rapt' at their declarations (*Macbeth* 1.3.51-57). Is he just surprised at something which as he says stands not in the prospect of belief? Or has he thought already to kill the king and is shocked that someone should know what is in his mind? It seems likely that the witches' words, like his wife's words, give heart to a part of him that he has up until then been able to control or repress. They stir in him dark thoughts that have been scattered but then converge to form a terrifying purpose.

While Macbeth believes that what has been foretold for his life can come true he also believes that what has been foretold for others can be repudiated. Macbeth believes that destiny can be altered through human action. This belief is expressed in Macbeth's purpose to kill Banquo and Macduff. Macbeth is told that he will be king, but that he will beget none (*Macbeth* 1.3.48-69). Instead of submitting to fate he determines to destroy the line of future kings by killing Banquo and his child. He hopes to change what has been foretold through his own actions. He seems to acknowledge fate when it is in his favour, but not to recognise it when it goes against him. Reflecting on his position he challenges fate to enter the fight and battle to the death (*Macbeth* 3.1.70-71). It is unclear here whether Macbeth is willing fate to fight for or against him.[409] If he wishes to fight against fate then this acknowledges his determination to take his own course no matter if fate stands in his way. It does seem that this is the case, because immediately following this challenge Macbeth sends out

[409] Shakespeare *Macbeth* note N. Brooke p144.

assassins to murder Banquo and his child. He does not wait for events, but brings them on. Macbeth is also told to be careful of Macduff. When he is told that none of woman born shall harm him, he feels that it is less necessary to kill Macduff. But 'yet I'll make assurance double sure' (*Macbeth* 4.1.95-99). The language here reminds us of him doubly redoubling blows upon his opponents, using his human power to overcome the uncertainties of human affairs. He does not trust entirely to his fortune as it seems to have been outlined to him. Macbeth tries to kill Macduff in an attempt to take absolute control of his fate.

Macbeth's future is the outcome of his own decisions. Macbeth wills his own fate. We see this in the dagger soliloquy. The dagger 'marshall'st me the way that I was going' (*Macbeth* 2.1.43). This reminds us of the heroes in Homer whose inclinations are already for the courses they are urged to take by the gods. The difference here, however, is that the dagger represents a force within Macbeth himself.

Fortune is like a strumpet, smiling now on this man, now on that. But Macbeth disdains fortune, slashing his way through his opponents (*Macbeth* 1.2.14-20). It is like fortune has no power over him. When events seem to be turning to favour his opponents, he doubly redoubles blows upon them (*Macbeth* 1.2.38). He uses his human power to overcome the uncertainties of human affairs and the fickleness of fortune. We see this again when he considers how he will take the kingship. Macbeth understands that the child of the king is an obstacle upon which he must fall down or 'else o'er-leap' (*Macbeth* 1.4.49-50). Again he tries to use his human power to overcome what is in his way. Macbeth takes his fate into his own hands. Instead of submitting to fate, Macbeth is wrenching it into a pattern of his own determination,

forcing it to comply with his will.[410] By an effort of the will he is trying to control the world.[411] Macbeth is trying to re-take possession of himself.

As has already been discussed Macbeth's heroism is a failure in general, and has success only in his death where he is able to re-define himself as a hero through his actions. His motives and feelings are his, and the action that he takes with origination and voluntariness to bring on his death is one of self-determination. Again there is an incongruity here that his end is immutably determined and yet he seems to have some control over it. There is a feeling that Macbeth is free in his decisions and that they are fully his, and also that there is a point he is inevitably moving towards while fate looks on and cajoles him towards his end.

Again this tension in never resolved in Shakespeare.

There is a conflict in Shakespeare as there sometimes is in Homer between whether there is a necessary connection between what one suffers and what one deserves. We see in Shakespeare as in Homer (more so in the *Odyssey* than in the *Iliad*) that humans bring anguish on themselves through their own actions. But suffering also comes to those who have not done anything to deserve it, perhaps more so in Shakespeare than in Homer. Do humans always get what they deserve? Are humans always paid out for their actions? Do some humans suffer who do not deserve to?

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[410] Proser *The Heroic Image* p63.
[411] Proser *The Heroic Image* p81.

In addition the nature of suffering in Shakespeare is different to that in Homer. In Shakespeare more so than in Homer suffering takes the form of mental and psychological anguish followed by death.

We see in *Lear* the relationship between suffering and desert. Gonerill and Regan lose their lives (*Lear* 5.3.21-25), and this seems to support the view that humans are paid out for their actions, so doing right is better than doing wrong. Edmund too admits his wrongdoing and is undone, losing his hold on power. He is remorseful and even attempts to make up for what he has done, dispatching a man to rescue Cordelia whom he has consigned to death (*Lear* 5.3.241-245). But Cordelia is hanged before help arrives. Cordelia's resolution to 'out-frown false Fortune's frown' (*Lear* 5.3.6) is a powerful acknowledgement of the human ability to endure the inconstant nature of fortune, but it does not affect her end. She dies all the same. At the end of the play we are told that 'all friends shall taste / The wages of their virtue, and all foes / The cup of their deservings' (*Lear* 5.3.300-302), but there is an emptiness here because the misfortunes that Cordelia suffers exceed what she deserves. There is not a necessary connection for humans between their end and what they deserve.

The relation is also apparent in the blinding of Gloucester. His eyes are put out with the terrible statement: 'out, vile jelly!' (*Lear* 3.7.82). It is made more horrible because Gloucester does not seem to deserve the terrible hurt that he suffers. His blindness does not follow from his wrongdoing. It can be noted here that he fails to apprehend, like Lear himself, the character and qualities of his children. Even at the moment he is blinded, he calls out for the child who has betrayed him, expecting that he would help him. Only then is it revealed to him that his child has dealt double with him, and

abandoned him to the distress he is now suffering (*Lear* 3.7.84-90). So his physical blindness reflects the failure of his understanding up to this point, and perhaps even represents the mental insight he has just gained. But, again like Lear, there is no necessary relationship between what he suffers and what he deserves.

In *Hamlet* we also see the complicated relationship between suffering and desert. When Hamlet takes up his role as a revenger he promises that 'foul deeds will rise' (*Hamlet* 1.2.256). He is sure that murder though it has no tongue will speak (*Hamlet* 2.2.546-547). So it seems that wrongdoing will be exposed, and punishment will follow.

Claudius seems to be in a similar position to Macbeth, wishing that the act of killing Hamlet's father could have been the be-all and the end-all, that there were no further consequences. He cries out that 'my fault is past' (*Hamlet* 3.3.51), despairing that his deed will not release him from its hold. Can he not be cleared of the wrongdoing even though he is still the one who did the murder? Can he not escape his deed? (*Hamlet* 3.3.56-69).

The torment of Claudius's moral struggles followed by the pitiful end he suffers seems to suggest that there is a direct relationship between wrongdoing and suffering. Claudius has a troubled conscience, and he is like an animal with sore shoulders that flinches in pain at the heavy load it is carrying on its back (*Hamlet* 3.2.219-220). Claudius is suffering under the weight of his transgressions. He tries to pray but his guilt is stronger than his will, and he cannot (*Hamlet* 3.3.40). He longs to wash his hands clean of the deed (*Hamlet* 3.3.45-46). Claudius is anguished, and it is clear that

he is wrung with guilt. Then he is forced to drink the same poison he sought to kill others with, and is also stabbed with the envenomed sword (*Hamlet* 5.2.301-304). It is stated that by this Claudius is paid out for his wrongdoing because it is the poison he himself is responsible for (*Hamlet* 5.2.304-305). He is hoist on his own petard. So first he suffers, then he dies. It may seem here that humans are paid out fully for their actions, and that humans get the fate they deserve.

But Ophelia, like Cordelia, does not deserve what she suffers, and she is not the only one. Indeed Claudius is perhaps the only character in the play whose end fits his actions.

A more powerful example of the relationship between wrongdoing and desert is given in *Macbeth*. Macbeth states that 'blood will have blood' (*Macbeth* 3.4.123), and this reminds us (although the tone is different) of Hamlet's confidence that bloody deeds will rise. The feeling here is that wrongdoing will be exposed and then punished, and that this cannot be avoided.

Macbeth is sorely afflicted by his wrongdoing. His conscience is contaminated. He anticipates that bloody instructions when taught will return to strike down the inventor (*Macbeth* 1.7.9-10). He states that he is 'in blood / Stepped in so far' (*Macbeth* 3.4.137-138), and he seems to know that he must pay the consequences for his actions. When he sees the ghost of his friend who he has had killed, he sees all his wrongdoing. The ghost seems for Macbeth to concentrate in itself all the wrongs he has committed. Macbeth wishes that it would 'quit my sight, let the earth hide thee – / Thy bones are marrowless, thy blood is cold (*Macbeth* 3.4.94-95), and this is much

like Claudius's longing to be disengaged from his deed. Macbeth's deed is similarly past, but its consequences still oppress him. Just like Claudius, he cannot say 'amen', the word sticking in his throat (*Macbeth* 2.2.27-32).

Lady Macbeth thinks (or wants to think) that the deed of killing the king can be washed away as easily as the blood, that the deed can be imputed on others by painting them with the blood (*Macbeth* 2.2.45-49). But the guilt cannot be transferred so easily. In the heat of the deed Macbeth is troubled that all the oceans will not wash the blood clean from his hands, that rather the blood will turn the oceans red (*Macbeth* 2.2.59-62), and this again reminds us of Claudius. As the play progresses Lady Macbeth too is overcome by her complicity in the murder of the king, and tries to wash her hands clean. She is consumed by this effort. It becomes an accustomed action for her to try to wash the taint from her hands, and this thought fills her mind with an overpowering force. But she cannot wash the stain from her hands and for her no perfume can sweeten her hands, removing the smell of the blood. She cries despondently: 'will these hands ne'er be clean' (*Macbeth* 5.1.41). Her heart is sorely afflicted, and she is torn by her wrongdoing (*Macbeth* 5.1.25-66). What all this might seem to indicate is that there is no escape from the consequences of wrongdoing, that humans are in the end paid out for their actions.

This also seems present in the struggle between darkness and light in the play. At the start of the play darkness seems to dominate. There are ubiquitous allusions to darkness and the power of the night in the play.[412] The forces of darkness are working

[412] See Shakespeare *Macbeth* 2.3.54, 2.3.60-61 for some typical examples.

against humans, and one character fears that 'oftentimes, to win us to our harm, / The instruments of darkness tell us truths, / Win us with honest trifles, to betray's / In deepest consequence' (*Macbeth* 1.3.124-127). But then towards the end of the play light seems to be prevailing. The power of 'evil' is about to be challenged, and 'the powers above / Put on their instruments', using humans for 'good' purposes (*Macbeth* 4.3.238-239). Given this we might expect that 'evil' would be punished and 'good' would be rewarded.

But we see that humans are not necessarily paid out according to what they deserve. 'Heaven' seems to look on unmoved as innocent men, women, and children are slaughtered, and will not take their part (*Macbeth* 4.3.204-224). The king too is murdered despite his goodness. His death summons him to heaven or to hell (*Macbeth* 2.2.65). Macbeth contritely wishes that the king could be awoken from death, but the deed is done (*Macbeth* 2.2.73-74). He is dead.

So we can conclude that in Shakespeare there is no consistently necessary connection between suffering and desert. There may be a direct relationship when wrongdoing is paid out, but suffering also afflicts those who have done nothing to deserve it. Thus the end of a hero is not always related to what they deserve according to their natures.

We sometimes see wrongdoing punished in Homer (much more often in the *Odyssey* than in the *Iliad*), but there is not the same sort of suffering for those who have done no wrong as we see in Shakespeare. There are heroes in Homer who excite our compassion through what they suffer, but the distress they endure is not as acute as the sufferings of many of the heroes in Shakespeare. The suffering we see in Homer

often takes the form of death, whereas again and again in Shakespeare suffering takes the form of mental and psychological anguish followed by death.

It is clear that there are significant differences between the hero in Homer and the hero in Shakespeare in the way that they are affected by free will and determinism, and that it is important for an understanding of heroism in Homer and Shakespeare to look at how free will and determinism affect the hero. If the actions of a hero are immutably determined solely by fate then the possibilities for heroism are cut off. If his decisions are just parts of the pattern of fate's fulfilment then the point is taken off his heroism. If the hero is not able to affect his future through origination and voluntariness then this takes away from his heroism. If his future is the same no matter what he chooses then his life and death are empty and meaningless. If on the other hand a hero does have free will and is able to necessitate events then his actions do show his heroism. We see then that the life of a hero is given ultimate meaning through the decisions he himself takes and through an absolute fate that affects him. In Homer we see free will and determinism, where here the hero is able to choose the possibilities of his future and there the hero is affected by an absolute pattern that determines his fate. The presentations of fate in Homer are not always consistent and are not always characterised by uniformity or significant regularity. In Shakespeare there is a much more consistent and coherent presentation of fate. The end of the hero in Shakespeare is often determined, but it seems that what happens to him during his life is much more characteristically the effect of his own decisions. The hero in Shakespeare seems to be able to have more effect on the possibilities of his future. It does seem that free will and determinism are inconsistent with each other, and the

relationship between free will and determinism is never completely reconciled in Homer or Shakespeare. But it is clear that free will and determinism are important in giving a proper context for heroism.

Conclusion

In looking at what a hero is in literature in general we see that the hero is a protector and a destroyer in war and peace through his life and death. The hero is intimately related to war and peace, where he makes the delights and joys of peace possible as a protector and brings suffering and anguish in war as a destroyer. One hero tries to protect and nurture what might blossom and bring delight but another hero tries to destroy it. Here war and peace are halves of the same reality. There seems to be a paradox that there is something not so heroic about war in its terrible destruction but that the agony of war is necessary for a man to be a hero. There also seems to be a paradox that the hero is intimately connected with peace but that heroism may not be possible in peace. How can slaughter in war be all there is to heroism and how can heroism be possible in the tranquillity of peace? It seems that we might conclude here that the heroic qualities of a man cannot be fully tested in either war or peace alone. The hero is intimately connected with the repeating successions of war and peace, and is never completely separated from one or the other. He is defined by both. We see that there is a double meaning to the hero, where he creates and destroys, protects and attacks, and lives and dies.

In comparing the hero in Homer to the hero in Shakespeare it is clear that there are many similarities between them. Many of the qualities that the hero in Homer has correspond to those that the hero in Shakespeare has. We see that the hero in Homer and in Shakespeare is fully-rounded and has outer qualities, like strength and beauty, and inner qualities, like wisdom and charisma. It seems that these similarities are

indications that some qualities are common to the hero in literature in general, so that the similarities do not so much indicate a correspondence between Homer and Shakespeare in themselves, but a broader similarity between heroes in literature more generally. There is something essential about what a hero is. There is something that serves as a foundation for conceptions of heroism in general.

But the similarities do not mean that there is a complete identity between conceptions of heroism in Homer and in Shakespeare. The nature of the hero is not completely the same in Homer and Shakespeare, and there are significant differences between them.

The hero in Homer and the hero in Shakespeare represent phases in the evolution of conceptions of heroism more generally. But the evolution of the hero is not a stream flowing from point to point in one direction. The hero in Homer is not a rudimentary form that progresses through a succession of changes into the more advanced form of the hero in Shakespeare. They are not points on a straight line. They are different and separate strands of evolution rather than part of a continuous and sequential process of evolution. Thus we see considerable differences between the hero in Homer and the hero in Shakespeare.

In comparing the hero in Homer to the hero in Shakespeare we see that there are significant differences between them. They think, feel, and act in a different way. The hero in Homer is a character who acts with immediacy and who is impulsive and shows a spontaneity whereas the hero in Shakespeare is a character who is more passive and who is more reflective and thinks more before acting. They also develop in a different way. The hero in Homer seems simple and static in comparison to the

complex and dynamic hero in Shakespeare. In the hero in Shakespeare there is a multiplicity and ambiguity that is not as present in the hero in Homer. The hero in Homer sometimes seems undeveloped, incomplete, and not fully formed in comparison to the hero in Shakespeare. The hero in Shakespeare is more defined by psychological progression and self-consciousness compared to the hero in Homer. They are also different in the way that they are affected by free will and determinism. The end of the hero in Homer and in Shakespeare is often determined. But it seems that the hero in Shakespeare shows more free will in the decisions he makes in his life compared to the hero in Homer. The hero in Shakespeare seems to be able to have more effect on the possibilities of his future compared to the hero in Homer.

So we see that there are similarities between the hero in Homer and the hero in Shakespeare that reflect characteristics that are common to the hero in literature in general, and that there are differences between the hero in Homer and the hero in Shakespeare that reflect conceptions of heroism that are particular to Homer and to Shakespeare.

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