The Arms of Achilles: Re-Exchange in the *Iliad*

by

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Abstract

This dissertation offers an interpretation of the re-exchange of the first set of Achilles’ arms in the Iliad by gift, loan, capture, and re-capture. Each transfer of the arms is examined in relation to the poem’s dramatic action, characterisation, and representation of social institutions and ethical values. Modern anthropological and economic approaches are employed in order to elucidate standard elements surrounding certain types of exchange. Nevertheless, the study primarily involves textual analysis of the Iliadic narratives recounting the circulation-process of Achilles’ arms, with frequent reference to the general context of Homeric exchange and re-exchange. The origin of the armour as a wedding gift to Peleus for his marriage to Thetis and its consequent bequest to Achilles signifies it as the hero’s inalienable possession and marks it as the symbol of his fate in the Iliad. Similarly to the armour, the spear, a gift of Cheiron to Peleus, is later inherited by his son. Achilles’ own bond to Cheiron makes this weapon another inalienable possession of the hero. As the centaur’s legacy to his pupil, the spear symbolises Achilles’ awareness of his coming death. In the present time of the Iliad,
Achilles lends his armour to Patroclus under conditions that indicate his continuing ownership over his panoply and ensure the safe use of the divine weapons by his friend. Patroclus’ transgression of the terms of the loan of the arms leads to his death, but also signals Achilles’ return to the battlefield and to his traditional fate. Hector kills Patroclus and acquires the arms in accordance with the Homeric mechanism stipulating the despoilment of defeated warriors. Interestingly, however, his acquisition constitutes an improper exchange, because he did not obtain the arms from Achilles, their legitimate owner. Achilles defeats Hector on the battlefield and repossesses his arms. The restoration of the arms to Achilles confirms them as his inalienable possessions and corroborates the principles of the Homeric exchange mechanisms. Yet it leaves Achilles without spoils from his military victory. This study suggests that the ransom that Priam offers to Achilles for the release of Hector’s corpse symbolises the spoils from the sack of Troy, which chronologically will happen after the death of Achilles. Thus the re-exchange of the arms leads to the exchange between Achilles and Priam, which in turn compensates the former for the loss of honour caused by Agamemnon’s confiscation of Briseis that happens in Book 1. In Book 24, Troy has figuratively fallen, while countless Trojan riches are carried to Achilles’ tent.
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INTRODUCTION

Methodology and Outline

Exchange permeates Homeric epic in various modes and forms to such an extent that it often seems a self-evident, expected, and casual feature of the plot. Offers of gifts, parental inheritances, personal loans, property thefts executed individually or collectively, organised plundering expeditions, raids, and war are some instances involving exchange between two parties. The multiplicity of distinct circumstances that appear to cause or accommodate transferences of tokens in the Iliad and the Odyssey signify that exchange, in general, is a very inclusive and complex operation. The diversity and ubiquity of the phenomenon in Homeric society combined with the limited sources of wealth featured in the epics inevitably require that certain tokens change hands more than once. They are exchanged once, and then re-exchanged, and possibly re-exchanged again, frequently under different circumstances and expectations each time. That is, their disposition does not constitute a single one-time action, but a longer process of continuing circulation.

This dissertation explores the phenomenon of re-exchange in Homer, exhibited in a variety of forms, ranging from voluntary permanent re-gifting or temporary re-assignment of possessions to re-appropriation through the use of violence. The extent to which re-exchange recurs in the Iliad and the Odyssey and the emphasis that it receives from the characters and the narrator each time indicate the importance of this phenomenon for both the community depicted in the poems and the story of the poems
weaved around this community. The present study illustrates how Homeric epic employs re-exchange in order to construct its poetic society, which in turn it uses as a foundation, in order to build its plot. In this sense, re-exchange lies at the intersection of Homeric society and Homeric poetics.

There have been many excellent previous studies on exchange in antiquity with special attention to Homer in particular. Yet most focus only on gift-giving, or the exchange of women as a form of gift exchange. A few studies isolate other types of exchanges, such as inheritance bestowals, or ransom and spoils. And some types of Homeric exchange, such as loan stipulations, have been overlooked. This selective and inconsistent treatment of exchange is to be expected, given its versatility and dynamism in Homer. Reconstruction and analysis of individual manifestations of exchange deepen our understanding of certain transactions, but pose the risk of misleading extrapolations concerning the literary phenomenon of exchange as a whole. Evaluation of a transfer between two parties strictly on the basis of general transferring patterns might overlook the peculiarities of the structure in question. This might result in extending principles from a certain exchange type to interpret a transaction that is not completely relevant to it. In order to properly assess a particular example of exchange, this study will pay attention both to the wide systems of exchange operating within the epics at large as well as to the individual exchange context of the case in question.

My particular emphasis is on re-exchange, which is often neglected in Homeric studies. Its distinct and composite mode, fashioned collectively by a series of separate,

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but inter-dependent, transactions is either overlooked or interpreted by hermeneutic tools that fail to capture its scope and idiosyncratic particularities. Looking at its process illuminates the dynamics of its generative force and the degree of its impact in forming Homeric epic as a socio-literary construct.

Although re-exchange occurs to a great extent in the Homeric epics, this project will focus on the *Iliad* and one of the major protagonists of the poem, Achilles. Specifically, the successive exchanges of Achilles’ first set of immortal arms will be analysed in detail. Aside from their importance for Achilles’ peculiar heroic identity, the arms have one of the longest circulation-processes in Homeric epic both in temporal and spatial terms. As gifts to Peleus, they originate in an exchange that takes place in the past yet is recounted in the poem. Their final exchange, on the other hand, happens after Achilles’ death and exceeds the temporal framework of the *Iliad*. It is thus recounted in the *Odyssey* and in non-Homeric works that draw themes from the story of the Trojan War. Spatially, the exchanges of the arms that occur in the Iliadic present and their consequences span from Book 16 to the end of the poem. Their role is so integral to the final part of the narrative that their potential absence would result in a much shorter version of the *Iliad*.

The narratives explicating the circulation-process of Achilles’ arms are not arranged in chronological sequence in the poem. The events involved in this process unfold during the present action of the *Iliad* as well as during flashbacks to the past and projections to the future. This study will undertake to disentangle these narratives, aiming to disclose a strict, large-scale system of principles consistently underlying the society and guiding the plot of the poem.
More specifically, the following chapters will consider separately each transitional stage of the re-exchange of the arms and will attempt to reconstruct the regulatory framework of the distinct mechanisms responsible for each transference that these objects are reported to go through. This framework will provide the basis against which each of the consecutive exchanges will be evaluated as an individual transaction and as a part of a wider circulation-process. In addition, it will help to assemble a unified system, predicking social interaction, and thereby justify the direction, the development, and stalemates of the *Iliad*.

Given the multiformity of individual exchange and the complexity of re-exchange in Homer, this project can benefit from the insights of modern theoretical discussions of economic exchange. A comparative methodology, consisting of an anthropological as well as an economic approach will be adopted, where necessary, to confirm, clarify, and explain standard elements surrounding certain types of exchange. Each of these two approaches, when applied individually to Homeric society, tends to be lacking in flexibility and scope. A combined use of them will provide more perspectives and, thus, will address the depth of Homeric exchange and re-exchange more adequately.

But this methodology sometimes needs to be modified by careful attention to the nature of Homeric poetry. Although modern approaches to exchange often explain the general disposition of the Homeric heroes towards giving and receiving, they can ignore the particular characteristics of Homeric society or impose connotations that are absent from this society. Furthermore, their rigid application to Homer would entail the risk of confusing Homeric poetics with actual reality. An expectation of historical truth might result in disregard of the literary aspects of the *Iliad*. Homeric society constitutes a
poetical portrayal and is not a reflection of a real or (strictly) historical community.\(^3\) This dissertation will draw upon anthropological and economic models, but will necessarily adapt them to the unique literary world of the *Iliad*.

The main focus of the project will be information provided or implied directly from the Homeric epic itself. The study will primarily involve close textual analysis of the Iliadic passages recounting the successive transfers of Achilles’ arms, with frequent reference to the general context of Homeric exchange and re-exchange. Other Homeric passages will help to elucidate the re-exchange of Achilles’ arms. Such an approach will pay attention to the artistic “reality” depicted in Homeric epic and will configure an appropriate framework that will delineate more precisely and respectfully the intricate nature of the poetics of re-exchange in the *Iliad*.

The first chapter lays the general foundation for an exploration of the phenomenon of re-exchange in the *Iliad*. The analysis starts with a survey of a few notable examples of this practice, which have received some attention in Homeric studies. Comparative examination of the Homeric delineation of this practice in relation to anthropological approaches to modern gift exchange societies reveals that two concepts are closely associated with re-exchange in Homeric epic: 1) ownership, and 2) inalienability of possessions. The former is more common, as it is exhibited in the overwhelming majority of instances of exchange in Homer; the latter shows only through

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\(^3\) With regard to the potential relationship of the poetic world of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* to the contemporary world outside the text, Finley (1979:48-50) identifies Homeric society with the real society of the tenth and ninth centuries B.C. Donlan (1982:1-3) is in consensus with Finley. On the other hand, Hooker (1989:87-88) discredits this dating as weak and arbitrary, due to the lack of information about the Dark Ages, and favors an unhistorical, literary treatment of Homer. Moreover, van Wees (1998:13-49) disagrees with the idea that reciprocity, as described in anthropological studies, can function as a historical account of the phenomenon. Crielard (2002:239-295) agrees with arguments that situate the composition of the Homeric epic in the years 700BC-650BC: Kirk 1985:3-16; Janko 1990:238; West 1995:203-219. On the basis of this dating, Crielard argues that the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* refract the aristocratic values of the eighth and seventh centuries B.C.
re-exchange and only when the token that changes hands repeatedly has important familial connotations for the exchangers. Both concepts are apparent in the circulation-process of Achilles’ first set of immortal arms. Understanding the individual dynamic of these two concepts will lead to a better grasp of the complex implications that certain transfers of the arms have for those who participate in their exchanges every time.

Chapter Two sets the stage for the proper consideration of the first immortal arms owned by Achilles in the *Iliad* and their re-exchange process. It surveys the most substantial non-Homeric evidence ---literary and iconographical--- relating to the origin of the weapons, Achilles’ possession of them, and their fortune after the hero’s death. This summary of sources illuminates the standard elements accompanying the mythological tradition of the arms and indicates which aspects of their story are followed, presupposed, or dismissed by the *Iliad*. Inconsistencies between the sources and the *Iliad* about the panoply lead to questions about whether the poem ignores certain versions of the myth or whether it chooses to invent *ad hoc* specific details concerning the circulation of the arms, in order to suit its own purposes. I argue that the Iliadic account of the arms situates the poem in the saga of the Trojan War and allusively, yet powerfully, encompasses events that chronologically fall outside its dramatic boundaries.

The exploration of the Iliadic version of the story of the arms starts in Chapter Three. The passages relating the origin of the panoply, as a wedding gift of the gods to Peleus, and its consequent bequeathal to Achilles construct the first two stages of the circulation of the armour. The principles of marriage as an exchange mechanism will serve as a background for the evaluation of the wedding and the marriage of Thetis and Peleus. Certain peculiarities in the marriage procedure allude to the necessity of Thetis’
pairing with Peleus and reveal the arms as a symbol of the nymph’s capacity to save Zeus’ supremacy by marrying a mortal man and having a mortal son. Despite her divine nature, Thetis’ marriage is subject to the social rules and expectations of human marriages. Her exchange as a bride exhibits known patterns of exchanges of kin in the *Iliad* and on these grounds it concurrently initiates the successive exchanges of the arms. Although the arms are given from the gods to Peleus and from him to his son, Thetis’ function as a bride is vital for Peleus’ acquisition and Achilles’ subsequent inheritance of them. Certain discrepancies in marriage procedure result in her return to her father and thus prove the consistency of how this mechanism operates in Homeric society. Her return to her daughter-status, however, does not cancel her role as a mother or her son’s quality as the proper heir of the arms. Accordingly, the arms, whose exchange stabilised Zeus’ power, become closely connected to Achilles’ choices in the *Iliad* and Achilles’ destiny outside of it.

The fourth chapter takes up the issue of inheritance, as an exchange mechanism, and expands on it in relation to the history of Achilles’ spear. Originally a gift of Cheiron to Peleus, it is later inherited by his son like the rest of the arms. A brief review of non-Homeric literary and visual sources provides extensive evidence for two important elements briefly mentioned or merely implied in the *Iliad*: 1) the close personal relationship of Cheiron to both Peleus and Achilles, preceding the bestowal of the spear, and 2) the significance of the Pelian spear as a product of the Cheiron’s own craftsmanship and as an integral symbol of the centaur’s identity. With these elements in mind, the two consecutive transfers of the spear form a network of inheritance among the three exchangers. Hence, Cheiron’s gift to Peleus eventually becomes the centaur’s
divine bestowal to Achilles directly. Although he received it from his father, Achilles’ individual connection to Cheiron and his own divine descent qualify him, even more than Peleus, as the immediate heir of the centaur’s legacy. His bond to the weapons’ original donor is reiterated in Achilles’ remarkable bond to his spear in the *Iliad*: he is reportedly the only person who can wield it. This is why it never leaves Achilles’ possession and its circulation is shorter than the rest of the arms. This chapter suggests that Achilles’ irrevocable ownership of this unique spear may reflect the unique legacy of a foreknown fate and in this manner provides a supplementary (if not alternative) perspective for the same fate implied by the rest of his arms and mentioned by Achilles in the course of the *Iliad*.

Chapter Five initiates the study of the exchanges of Achilles’ armour in the present time of the *Iliad*. The Homeric loan-system, an exchange mechanism largely ignored by scholarship, is reconstructed from internal data, in order to form an appropriate background for the examination of the loan of the arms to Patroclus. Upon accepting Patroclus’ request for his arms, Achilles puts in place an elaborate loan contract emphasizing several conditions of the loan-mechanism, such as: 1) the temporary use of the loaned object by the borrower, and 2) the prompt return of the loaned object to the original owner, immediately after the completion of the purpose for which it was granted. Withholding his spear from the panoply that he lends to his friend, Achilles indicates his continuing ownership and Patroclus’ limited authority over the arms. Patroclus, on the other hand, disregards the terms of the loan agreement and utilises the arms in an excessive way. His violation threatens consolidated hierarchical relations underpinning Homeric society. Patroclus’ death and simultaneous loss of the arms,
ensuing from his abuse of the loan, not only restore the pre-loan, established hierarchy between Homeric leaders and their subordinates, but also signal Achilles’ return to the battlefield and to his traditional fate.

The final chapter is devoted to the second part of the circulation of Achilles’ armour in the dramatic time of the *Iliad*. Killing Patroclus, Hector acquires Achilles’ arms, and Achilles in turn takes his arms back when kills Hector. The mechanism predicing the despoilment of individual warriors on the battlefield is a normative form of individual acquisition in war, yet it has broader implications for an entire society that participates in warfare. Hector kills Patroclus, but confiscates the arms of Achilles, whom he has not actually confronted on the battlefield. This paradox, originating in Patroclus’ prior violation of the loan of the arms, obscures Hector’s compliance with the rules dictating the despoilment of defeated enemies and ultimately discredits his acquisition. The divine origin of the weapons, the lack of the Pelian spear, and Achilles’ continuing ownership of his panoply denote Hector’s transgressive exchange and prevent him from forming proprietary claims over the arms. His death reverses the two last inappropriate exchanges of the arms and facilitates their return to their proper owner. But in this manner, Achilles’ defeat of the bravest Trojan hero does not provide him with any individual spoils. Nevertheless, the lavish ransom of Hector’s corpse by Priam compensates Achilles by granting him riches and honour on a much larger scale than the arms of the opponent.

The last part of the chapter argues that, although Achilles will not outlive Troy, the circumstances surrounding the ransoming scene allusively link the defeat of Hector to the defeat of Troy and the ransom for his corpse to the spoils potentially generated from
the sack of the city. Therefore, despite the dispersal of the arms to other people, the exchange mechanisms underlying their circulation in the *Iliad* ensure Achilles’ possession of them. Last but not least, although the hero is portrayed as choosing consciously not to outlive Troy, the final stage of the circulation of the arms in the poem necessitates a different exchange, which compensates him with access to the Trojan royal treasury during his lifetime.

In conclusion, the re-exchange of Achilles’ divine arms plays an important role in the *Iliad*. It illuminates constituent principles of Homeric society while, at the same time, it drastically affects the plot of the poem. Although it is related in the final books of the narrative, it provides a solution to the stalemate of the war, caused by Achilles’ loss of Briseis in Book 1. The circulation and subsequent loss of Achilles’ arms marks his return to the battlefield and his reacquisition of them. The hero’s repossession of his weapons confirms his stable ownership of them throughout their circulation-process and corroborates the principles of the Homeric exchange mechanisms that stipulate legitimate acquisitions. In addition, it also contributes to Achilles’ compensation for the loss of honour that he suffered from the beginning of the *Iliad*. The cycle of the circulation of the arms goes beyond their restoration to their legitimate owner and also includes an exchange of new and valuable objects that confer unprecedented honour on their receiver. By the end of Book 24, the symbolic allusiveness of *Iliad* has exceeded the dramatic events encompassed by its closing line, and the burial of Hector and has moved to a post-Iliaidic status quo, where Troy has fallen and countless Trojan riches are carried to the Achaean camp. That Achilles is present in such a picture, despite his traditional fate, is his most profound compensation of all.
Modern Theoretical Considerations: Exchange from an Anthropological and an Economic Perspective

The concept of the gift exemplifies both the complexity and the social function of exchange as a structural element of human relationships in Homeric epic. Mortals dedicate gifts to the gods to display their respect and religiosity and to request granting of their wishes. Occasionally, gods offer gifts to mortals to show their favour and support or to respond to the mortals’ vows. The leader offers gifts to his equals to reward them for their excellence, and to his subjects to repay them for their services and secure their obedience and subordination. The subjects offer gifts to the leader to distinguish him and acknowledge his power. The father offers gifts along with his daughter to the bridegroom, and the bridegroom offers gifts to his father-in-law in return for the bride. The host offers gifts to honour his guest, and guest-friends exchange gifts to seal their friendship, whether they meet in their homes or in the battlefield. Captives or their kin offer gifts to the captor in exchange for freedom. Living kin or companions offer gifts to honour the memory of their dead. It is obvious therefore that in the Homeric context the gift is a powerful instrument that crosses the demarcation of several well-fixed boundaries and bridges the distance between mortals and gods, leaders and subjects, relatives and non-relatives, friends and strangers, friends and enemies, living and dead, self and other.

This abstract and mystifying transcendence of spatial and social boundaries is accomplished with the physical movement of a tangible token from one party to another.
The recurrent emphasis on the practice of giving and receiving gifts in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* and their frequent use of gift-related terminology promoted the notion of gift exchange as the epitome of exchange in Homeric poetics. Consequently, multiple and extensive discussions in scholarship have illuminated the significance of gift-giving in Homer, but have also led to reductive generalizations pertaining to exchange in Homeric society. In particular, the frequency of gift donations in Homeric epic led scholars to see Homeric exchange largely through the prism of the gift-based system that Marcel Mauss describes in his famous *Essai sur le don*. There is no doubt that this approach yielded valuable insights concerning specific cases of gift-giving in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*; however, it obscured the fact that (gift) exchange in Homer is not simply a repetitive phenomenon confined by the same regulatory framework according to which people give and receive goods. A comparison of different exchange examples manifests a number of distinctions and variations, which seem to be consistent with certain types of exchange, but completely irrelevant to others. These internal distinctions indicate different striations and practices of exchange, which are regulated by different sets of principles each time. In other words, there are a number of different mechanisms of exchange, operating within a loose overarching exchange system in Homeric epic. As a result, Mauss’ approach to the gift alone does not adequately treat the complexity, the dimensions, and the subdivisions of exchange in Homer. Strict application of his model to every transference occurring in the Homeric epic will eventually lead to misunderstandings and inaccurate interpretations. Homeric society presents certain exchange peculiarities that distinguish it from the societies studied by Mauss and thus exceed the framework of his analysis.
A brief review of some of the main elements of the anthropological approach to exchange will illuminate the points of contact, but also of conflict between the anthropological description of the phenomenon and the literary depiction of it in the Homeric epic. Marcel Mauss in his anthropological study of the gift shows that gift exchange is the core of social and political organization, as well as the means of economic transaction in societies organised by clan or by great families “more or less undivided internally and isolated from each other externally.”

There is no centralised government in these societies. Their hierarchy is subject to change, as power and acknowledgement can be obtained by anyone who has the resources to compete and win in gift exchange. Mauss contends that the gift has an inalienable bond to the one who gives it. This bond supplies the object offered with a “spirit” which strives for its return to the original donor or urges the receiver to give back something equivalent or greater to take its place. He argues that gifts are “loaned rather than sold” and the inability to return a loan results in the loss of “rank” and “status.” Thus in gift exchange systems, the giver’s aim is to create as many debtors as possible and outrank them by increasing his “net outgoings.”

The work of Lévi-Strauss expands the anthropological approach of gift exchange. While Mauss mainly covers the exchange of objects as gifts and only briefly refers to the exchange of persons, Lévi-Strauss focuses on the latter and particularly on the exchange

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4 Mauss 1966:79.
5 Mauss 1966:91 n.68.
6 For details on the “spirit” of the gift in Maori society, see Mauss 1966:8-10.
7 For the quotations, see Mauss 1966:41-42. As Gregory (1982:19) phrases it, “a gift creates a debt that has to be repaid” and “places the debtor in a subordinate position.”
8 For the term, see Gregory 1982:51. According to Mauss 1966:3-4, this continuous effort to outgive others is translated into a form of war. As Mauss (1966:4) explains, “the agonistic character of the prestation is pronounced. Essentially usurious and extravagant, it is above all a struggle among nobles to determine their position in the hierarchy.”
of women (whom he regards as “the supreme gift”). His contribution is particularly relevant to the Homeric exchange of women. Marriage as a mechanism that transfers a woman from her father’s household to that of her husband is regarded by Lévi-Strauss the most basic type of exchange. He maintains that in gift exchange systems women and material goods are comparable and thus exchangeable. Therefore, he argues, marriage has an economic importance in primitive societies. In these societies, he explains, “brideprice” functions to replace a woman given in marriage with something (symbolically) “equivalent.” This perception suggests that women are gifts and so harmonizes Lévi-Strauss’ method with that of Mauss. Moreover, it implies that women also have an inalienable attribute that Mauss identified in things and they display it in the marriage process. In Mauss’ system, inalienability entails a “rank” and “status” forming quality, emerging during the action of giving. In a similar manner, women, when they are given, also create a hierarchy between givers and receivers, as gifts do.

Besides illuminating the ideology invested in the gift and its powerful role in clan-based or primitive communities, anthropologists have also shown that this concept has a diachronic and cross-cultural merit. People living in different time periods, at different geographical locations, and within different social entities share a basic understanding of the gift. What varies is whether the gift structures and conditions human relations and economic transactions or merely supplements them. Its primary or

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14 For women as gifts, see Lévi-Strauss 1969:65.
15 Mauss 1966:41-42.
secondary role seems to depend on particular community formations and particular interactive needs that these formations impose on community members each time.

The rise of class-based communities and the organization of the state created the need for an interaction not only between individuals, but also between communities. This type of social organization and its subsequent needs are best explained by a Marxist analysis of political economy. Marx points out that commodity exchange, barter, and commerce were initially developed to cover the need for inter-communal intercourse.\(^\text{16}\) These forms of inter-communal activity, combined with the evolution of the monetary system, gradually crept into intra-communal relations and pushed the gift-regulated social and economic transactions aside. Marx notes that class-organized societies develop a strong sense of “private property,” contrary to their “primitive” counterparts, where there is only property “in common.”\(^\text{17}\) Integral to the notion of private property is the concept of “alienation,” as the latter allows for the transference of the former.\(^\text{18}\) According to Gregory, the alienable quality of objects defines commodity exchange as “a price-forming process, a system of purchase and sale.”\(^\text{19}\) He adds that the things exchanged are different, but are treated as of equal value.\(^\text{20}\) The equivalence of the things extends to an equality of the people involved in the transaction. Thus, human relations are constituted through the relations between things.\(^\text{21}\) Gregory concludes that in this type of exchange the giver’s purpose is to increase his profit, his “net incomings.”\(^\text{22}\)

\(^{16}\) Marx 1971:50, 208.
\(^{17}\) Marx 1867:91. Also see Mauss 1966:31, 46; Gregory 1982:18-19.
\(^{18}\) For the concept of “alienation,” see Marx 1867:91; Gregory 1982:12.
\(^{19}\) Gregory 1982:19.
\(^{20}\) For the law of value, operating in commodity exchange, and for the “equality between the objects exchanged,” see Gregory 1982:47.
\(^{21}\) This is what Marx (1867:76-87) calls “fetishism.”
\(^{22}\) Gregory 1982:51.
Both the anthropological and economic approaches pay a lot of attention to the process of exchange and to the reciprocity that accompanies it. In both, the exchange process creates social relations. They differ, however, in the object of their exchange and in the kind of relations they create. Thus, the anthropological approach uses the “gift,” while the Marxian approach to economy uses the “commodity” as the object of their exchange respectively. The exchange of gifts generates “personal relations” between the people taking part in the process, while the exchange of commodities generates “objective relations” between the things involved in the process. Building on Mauss’ and Marx’s exchange models, Gregory succinctly formulates their defining differences. In particular, he says that gift exchange “is an exchange of inalienable things between transactors who are in a state of reciprocal dependence,” while commodity exchange “is an exchange of alienable things between transactors who are in a state of reciprocal independence.”

This brief consideration and comparison of gift exchange and commodity exchange, as constructed by the respective anthropological and economic approaches, will help to highlight their relevance to or difference from exchange in Homer explored in the following section. Treating distinct types of exchange and focusing on different parameters of the exchanges they examine, both these theoretical models could enrich our understanding of alternative aspects of the Homeric manifestation of the phenomenon. Given the versatility and multiformity of exchange in Homeric society, their combined consideration will help to complement the hermeneutic limitations of

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24 For this terminology, see Gregory 1982:8.
25 Gregory 1982:12. Also see Marx 1867:91. Despite their differences, Gregory (1982:7-9) considers the two models compatible and sees the anthropological approach as an extension or another type of political economy.
each and will form a more expansive and inclusive theoretical approach, which will address the complexity and dynamism of Homeric exchange more efficiently.

_Homeric Exchange and Modern Approaches to Exchange: Intersection and Deviation_

In order to evaluate the role of exchange in Homeric epics, we need to verify the principles according to which Homeric community is organised, the kind of social needs and tensions that arise from this particular communal organization, and how various exchanges contribute or respond to these needs and tensions. Since there is not enough external information to help us reconstruct a historical picture of Homeric society, we will stay within the literary frame of the epics and see what kind of society they describe. In the absence of more concrete evidence, the anthropological and economic approaches surveyed above will provide a foundation for an exploration of exchange in Homeric epic. This study will start from the society described in Homer and will examine whether some of its main features are shared with the societies discussed in modern approaches. Such an analysis will determine the extent that these modern approaches are relevant to the literary world of Homeric poetry.

The structure of Homeric society is a complicated topic and has generated a lot of discussion over the years. In the mid-twentieth century, a general consensus emerged with regard to some of its basic characteristics, as derived from the Homeric texts. Homeric society was initially perceived to have a stateless structure where individuals and households are strong and autonomous.\(^{26}\) The arguably pre-state form of the community displayed in the Homeric epics, or at least the inconsistencies of centralized

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organization in them, led scholars to describe Homeric society as a “chiefdom,” where the king (basileus) founds his power not on formalized institutions “but on wealth, prestige, military prowess, an informal authority over the other like-named chiefs (basileis), and on his ability to act as a distributor.” If the main components of Homeric society are the individuals and their households, then communal relations are formed through the interaction between these very basic units. The assumption of the pre-polis nature of the society reflected in Homer is often challenged today. In fact, even scholars who are in support of a “tribal” structure of Homeric society, predicated in personal achievement and “individual competition for prestige,” admit that the emergence of the polis “can be traced in the epics;” by analogy, the competitive spirit, as an element of a tribal community, remains a noticeable aspect of Greek culture and poleis in the years that followed the final composition of the Homeric epics (after 700 B.C.).

Despite varying views concerning the date of composition of the Iliad and the Odyssey and the degree of historicity entailed in them, the Geometric Age “chiefdom” hypothesis, regarding the organization of Homeric society, has been just about been completely abandoned in more recent bibliography. Scholars these days seem to agree that Homeric epics depict “a society in transition,” a complex “amalgam” of different periods, customs, institutions, and cultures. In such a society, both the individual (and his household) as well as the community (as a polis) are in play. In other words, the private and public domains are seen to coexist in Homer, whether they co-operate or clash with one another. In light of this mixed social formation, a pre-polis agonistic ideology, shaped by
individual obligation, success, and excellence, remains fundamental to most analyses of Homeric exchange.

Individuals are certainly foregrounded in Homeric epic (especially in the *Iliad*), and these are usually members of the aristocratic class. Gift exchange in Homer is a defining component of this class, because it is intertwined with the concepts of wealth and honour, the two great concerns of Homeric aristocrats. The ability to participate in gift exchange demonstrates both that an individual owns wealth and can afford to give it away. In fact, the quality of the gifts offered and received plays a significant role in the definition, perception, and preservation of the elite, considering that certain kinds of wealth can also be accumulated through other activities, such as trade. Morris, following the conclusions of the anthropologists who investigated modern gift exchange cultures, classifies objects into “spheres of exchange” and maintains that the “top-rank” gifts in Homer according to their construed high value by society are “women, cattle and finished objects of metal.”

Furthermore, he determines the most appropriate occasions for the exchange of these gifts as “marriages, funeral games and within guest-friendship arrangements.”

The consideration of one of these occasions involving the exchange of “top-rank” gifts will illustrate how honour accompanies their circulation. A host offering a gift to his guest acquires honour by demonstrating his ability to lose a valuable possession, but also honours the guest by supplying him with something precious and by distinguishing him with the host’s hospitality and friendship. The guest offering a precious counter-gift (or a

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30 The quotations are from Morris 1986a:8-9. Similarly, Donlan (1981:101-107) and Seaford (1994:18) argue that treasure items, which are circulated through gift exchange, are never sold or bought as commodities. Finley (1979:60-61) calls precious metal objects *keimelia*, while Gernet (1981:114-115) includes them in the category of *agalmata*. 
promise of a counter-gift) to the host compensates the latter for his lost possession and in turn claims for himself the honour entailed in the act of giving something valuable. At the same time, he reciprocates the honour by giving distinction to his host, deriving both from the value of the counter-gift offered and from the pledged bond of hospitality and friendship. Systematic display of both possession and expenditure of valuable property through the institution of gift exchange frequently ensures preservation or regeneration of “top-rank” wealth through the compensatory mutuality of the process involved, but more importantly confers honour and prestige on both those who give and those who receive.

The material resources required in order to offer or return gifts, and particularly the possession of “top-rank” gifts, are inevitably a prerogative of the few. Exhibiting this prerogative in the practice of gift exchange promotes a comparison of those who are privileged with wealth to those who are not and notionally excludes the latter group from the former. But ultimately, it is the honour and prestige secured by gift-giving that entitle the individuals, who participate in it, to special social status and singles them out from those who lack the means to press such claims. In other words, together the material and immaterial aspects of gift exchange create the ideological demarcation of aristocrats from non-aristocrats. Designation of the few nobles by their ability to engage in the trade of gifts creates a connection among them by separating them as a group from those of inferior status. In this manner, it creates a sense of solidarity and equality between them.

Despite the equality established between the members of the elite, signified by their ability to donate and receive possessions, gift exchange in Homeric epic is a hierarchical process. In accordance with the insights that Mauss draws from modern

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31 For participation in gift exchange as a determining attribute of the elite, see Finley 1979:120-121; Gernet 1981:113; Kurke 1991:94-95; Wohl 1998: xxvi-xxvii.
societies that practise gift exchange, Homeric scholars argue that the prestige generated by the act of giving increases in proportion to the perceived preciousness of the particular gift and the particular occasion of its donation.\(^{32}\) They point out that the more valuable the gift that someone gives away, the higher his standing becomes among his noble peers. In brief, scholars conclude that the offering of “top rank” gifts, which establishes aristocracy as opposed to non-aristocracy, also creates distinction and determines superior status among the members of the established elite.

Thus honour does not come only from donations, acquisitions, and subsequent friendship pledges, but also emerges from an implicit notion of victory that underlies even such an amicable operation as the exchange of gifts. Beidelman describes this operation in Homer as “a system of contention” where “one protagonist’s gain is another’s loss.”\(^{33}\) Donlan also accepts the competitive quality of gift-giving in Homeric society, but he situates it in the cases when the “relative status” of the participants in the transaction is “uncertain or in contention.”\(^{34}\)

The amalgamatic, seemingly stateless, formation of the Homeric community, in which the market-place and coinage are certainly absent, along with the emphasis on competitive gift exchange in Homeric epic, makes Homeric society comparable to the system that Mauss ascribes to primitive societies where all socio-political and economic relations derive from gift-exchange procedure.\(^{35}\) It is also true that most (if not all) exchanges that occur in Homer seal a relationship between the individuals involved in the

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\(^{33}\) For a discussion of this idea, see Beidelman 1989:233.

\(^{34}\) Donlan (1989:3-6) examines cases where the relative status of the two participants in the gift-giving is known and accepted by both of them, and cases where the participants strive to prove and impose their superiority on each other. The quotation is from Donlan 1989:6.

transaction each time, and not between the objects. ³⁶ By focusing on these
correspondences, some scholars see the exchange of gifts in Homeric epic from the
perspective of Mauss’ work. Finley in particular finds Homeric gift exchange “absolutely
consistent with the analysis made by Mauss,” and acknowledges Homer as “a
predecessor of Marcel Mauss,” in the sense that he “invented an institution which nearly
three thousand years later Mauss discovered to be a social reality.”³⁷

Under the influence of Mauss, some critics go one step further and describe
Homeric exchange in general as a two-way transaction, whether it pertains to tangible
and intangible benefactions or to physical and emotional harm.³⁸ Depending on its
intended positive or negative effect, exchange starts with a one-time offer or threat from
one individual to another. This gesture initiates a different one-time offer or threat
respectively, as a response from the second party or his family to the individual or family
who acted first. The two actions might take place simultaneously or be temporally apart,
but the obligation to reciprocate remains, and occasionally it is carried over to the later
generations of the two primary parties until a counter-action has been executed. Once an
initial offer or threat has been reciprocated, the exchange is formally considered
completed. At first glance, this pattern relates directly to the mutual exchange of benefits
in the form of gifts or services and the mutual exchange of more or less abstract injuries
and pain occurring in Homeric epic.

³⁷ See Finley 1979:145.
Nevertheless, complete assimilation of exchange in Homeric society to the mechanism of exchange found in primitive people by Mauss would be misleading.\(^{39}\) Certain characteristics of the mechanism that Mauss established are not (completely) applicable to the Homeric context or are not consistent in it. The purpose of this study is not to discount the undisputed correspondences between Homeric exchange and exchange described by the anthropological approach, but to use their common aspects, in order to reveal a delicate tension between them and illuminate their deviation from each other. Acknowledgment of their intersection, while highlighting their differences, will supplement important conceptual issues for a better assessment of the peculiarities of exchange in Homeric society.

Homeric exchanges are not always as mutual or as homogeneous in their procedure and principles as the anthropological pattern would require them to be. There are frequent examples of exchanges that consist of only a single one-way transaction; exchanges in which the action occurs in a negative form, such as violence and harm, but the counter-action comes in the positive form of a tangible reward; exchanges where the action and counter-action are not reciprocally directed to two parties and their close families; and finally exchanges where the hierarchy created is more complicated than a default superiority of the one who gives (more) to another party. The following discussion will show that there are multiple cases of exchange, which seem normative within the social context of the Homeric epic, but would either have to be considered as

\(^{39}\) Finley (1979:62-64) proposes a close relationship in the perception and treatment of the gift in Homeric society and in “primitive” clan-based societies. Although generally accepting the merit of Mauss’ work in relation to Homeric studies, Seaford (1994:14 and n.56) expresses some skepticism regarding a close application of Mauss’ model to Homer.
failed transactions for Mauss or would fall out of the framework of his gift exchange model.

To be more specific, Mauss shows that primitive societies practise gift exchange in a strictly obligatory manner, which has its roots in the inalienability of an object from its donor.\textsuperscript{40} It has been argued that Homeric gift exchange also involves an obligation to compensate for a gift received.\textsuperscript{41} But scholars note that the inalienable quality of possessions, as Mauss perceives it, does not completely apply to the Homeric world, because there is a clearly developed sense of private property.\textsuperscript{42} In addition, even Finley, who professes the Maussian structure of Homeric gift exchange, notes that not every donation from one individual to another in Homer follows the pattern observed by Mauss in “primitive” people. Gifts to beggars, for instance, which are very common in Homeric society, would not count for this pattern, because they would be likely not to be returned, due to the limited sources of the receivers, but also because of the status difference between donor and recipient.\textsuperscript{43}

Similarly to the mechanism of gift exchange that Mauss identified in primitive people,\textsuperscript{44} Homeric gift exchange creates a social relationship between the transactors and

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{40} Mauss 1966:8-10, 18, 24, 31, 42, 112.
\item \textsuperscript{42} For this idea see, Seaford 1994:14.
\item \textsuperscript{43} See Finley 1981:237. When Eumaeus and later the suitors give gifts in the form of food to Odysseus-beggar, they know that he is not in a position to return them. Sometimes, even gifts to heroes are not expected to be compensated for. For instance, Alcinous, offering gifts to Odysseus before the latter leaves Scheria (\textit{Od.} 13.13-15), knows that he will not be compensated for them. Hence, he asks all the aristocrats of his island to share with him the responsibility and the expense for these gifts, since it would be burdensome for one person to provide them all. Yet he does not refrain from giving. Dougherty (2001:52-60, 115-119, 146) argues that the stories of his adventures that Odysseus narrates at the court of the Phaeacians Bks 9-12 (even his false stories later to Eumaeus and Penelope in Bks 14 and 19) have an exchange value within the aristocratic system of \textit{xenia} and gift exchange and can be traded for material goods. She notes, however, the non-reciprocal aspect of the exchange the Phaeacians conduct and classifies it under an idealised form of gift exchange conducted consciously for no return.
\item \textsuperscript{44} Mauss 1966:4. Gregory (1982:47) considers the system of gift exchange that Mauss describes as a strife of inequality and “domination” between the people involved in the exchange.
\end{itemize}
is often “agonistic” in that it can impose hierarchical claims. It is true that gifts of Homeric leaders to their subjects generally confirm the superiority of the former over the latter. But the “agonistic” element of Homeric gift exchange or exchange in general does not always accord with Mauss’ conclusions. There are instances in Homer where giving is an acknowledgment of lower status and a means to request something from someone of a higher status. The gifts proposed by captives or their kin to the captors in the form of ransom are cases where the status of the receiver is undisputedly higher than that of the giver. In fact, the “agonistic” element of the interaction between the two parties has been displayed before the actual offer of gifts. The captors have already proved their superiority through their military success, independent and prior to the proposed offer. Furthermore, the displacement of the “agonistic” element from the actual offer constructs a non-homogeneous exchange. The initial action that necessitates the offer involves a physical fight and certain emotional distress, entailed in the capture of an individual, while the counter-action consists of material goods. The winner in combat will, of course, release the captive to the latter’s family in return for the gifts, but this does not change the fact that the captive was the recipient of war violence and, instead of responding with counter-violence, proposes gifts. At a basic level, a positive tangible offer attempts to reciprocate a more or less abstract harm, inflicted on the battlefield. Therefore, despite certain common elements between the practice of ransoming captives

45 Agamemnon, who is the leader of the Achaeans in the Iliad, is often presented as the rightful distributor of the booty.
46 Priam, who ransoms Hector’s body from Achilles in II. 24.485-676, might seem as an exception to this rule. Priam, as the king of the Trojans, definitely has high status, maybe higher than Achilles. His appeal and his supplication of Achilles, however, put him in a subordinate position in this particular occasion. Achilles’ behavior also signals his superiority over Priam. Although he consents to the king’s appeal to return Hector’s body, the Achaean hero does it on his own terms. Despite Priam’s wish to take his son’s body and leave immediately, the Trojan king obeys Achilles’ orders to wait longer and eat with the Achaean hero.
in the *Iliad* and the Maussian gift exchange system, the multiple peculiarities involved in the former exclude it from the pattern of gift exchange in Mauss’ terms.

Another case where gifts appear to counter-act violence is the offer of material recompense for a physical or emotional injury. For instance, Ajax, as a member of Agamemnon’s embassy to Achilles, says that it is customary for a man to accept material goods as restitution for the murder of a brother or a son.47 Seaford remarks that in this example positive reciprocity consisting of gift-giving intersects with negative reciprocity and the duty to avenge harm.48 He maintains, however, that rejection of compensatory gifts by someone creates a “crisis of reciprocity.”49 Most notably in the *Iliad*, Achilles declines Agamemnon’s gifts, as a compensation for the seizure of Briseis.50 In the *Odyssey*, somewhat similarly, the eponymous hero refuses to accept gifts from certain suitors as a recompense for the harm they caused in his household while he was away.51

In general, compensatory gifts have received a lot of attention, mainly because of their role in the continuation of Achilles’ wrath in the *Iliad*.52 Although scholars who support the application of Mauss’ insights to Homer note the successful or failed sequence of negative action and positive counter-action in the aforementioned examples, they still interpret these cases through the prism of reciprocity in effect or reciprocity in crisis respectively. In this manner, they seem to neglect that both deeds of negative action and of positive counter-action are performed by one and the same individual. In other

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49 For this phrase, see Seaford 1994:25.
51 *Od*. 22.55-64.
words, the recipient of violence is also the (potential) recipient of gifts. There is definite causality between the two actions, but it does not seem to extend into a mutual relationship between the actors, at least in the beginning. It has been overlooked therefore that despite the involvement of gifts the absence of ensuing reciprocal inter-personal relations denotes a different type of transaction from the gift exchange described by Mauss. In the end, the (potential) receiver of gifts is expected to accept some sort of reconciliation with the donor, but this concession can come only after the full circle of injury and its recompense has been completed by the latter.

In addition, there are numerous cases of exchange in Homeric epic that do not seem to conform to the gift exchange system according to Mauss, simply because it is unclear whether it is giving or receiving that signifies higher status. Gifts of honour termed as *gera*, which play a crucial role in the plot of *Iliad*, delineate such a fluctuating hierarchy. Their allotment is a way to distinguish and reward a hero for a particular attribute that he exhibits and, as such, they prominently dignify the status of the receiver each time. On the other hand, the ability to bestow such prestigious gifts is typically regarded as a leader’s characteristic. Besides rewarding an intangible attribute of an individual, *gera* conceptualise non-homogeneous aspects of Homeric exchange in more ways than one. When conferred for a specific military achievement, they display a peculiar reciprocal dynamic. War violence exerted by a hero on an (individual or collective) adversary elicits a gift offered from a third party, who belongs to the same side with the person who inflicted the violence. Because it is allocated by the friends of the person who exercised the act of violence, a *geras* may also seem to be a benefit in

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53 Several heroes in Homer receive *gera* for different reasons: Agamemnon in *Il.*, 1.111-120, 1.133-136, 1.366-369 for his leadership; Achilles in *Il.*, 1.184-185, 1.275-276, 1.299, 1.347, 1.356, 1.392, 1.507 for his prowess; Nestor in *Il.*, 11.624-627 for his wisdom; Alcinous in *Od.*, 7.10-11 for his kingship.
return for good service. But what is translated into a good service among friends is primarily construed as an action of a profoundly negative impact by the ones who experience the violence. Thus, a *geras* illustrates several conceptual ambiguities that seem to transcend the Maussian standards of gift exchange, ranging from the ranking scheme that it establishes to the number of the participants and the mixed reciprocity, created between negative actions and positive counter-actions.

Briseis given to Achilles as his *geras* by Agamemnon (or by the Achaean host) exemplifies these ambiguities. Her bestowal on the Myrmidon hero rewards him for his prowess and emphasises his high status. One could argue that Agamemnon, as the distributor of the booty, offering this prestigious type of gift to Achilles, also emphasises his own status, as the leader of the Achaeans, and his superiority, as a giver over the receiver. On the other hand, Agamemnon’s own need to obtain a *geras* (Chryseis) and cling to it blurs whether giving or receiving a *geras* means higher status. Regardless of which transactor’s status is highlighted, it is the capture of a number of cities in Troad by Achilles that motivates his prize of honour. The inhabitants of these cities as the recipients of the hero’s violence consequentially turn him into a receiver of a *geras* from Agamemnon, altering the conventional duality of participants in an exchange. Providing the reason for the bestowal of this *geras*, they also contribute to a non-homogeneous mutuality of the exchange, according to which a negative action elicits a positive return, not as compensation, but strictly as a reward. In fact, Briseis, who essentially constitutes the *geras* in question, reflects the paradoxical nature of this exchange. Being the target of violence at first, she then becomes the prize rewarding it. Her role in the realisation of the exchange is instrumental, both eliciting and embodying a return gift.
Even in cases of gift exchange that would seem strictly mutual and homogeneous from Mauss’ perspective, in terms that two given parties exchange positive offers, there is ambiguity surrounding the hierarchy created. This ambiguity brings into question Mauss’ claim that giving more automatically means prevalent status. In the famous encounter between Glaucus and Diomedes in *Iliad*, Book 6, the two warriors mutually offer gifts of the same (tangible) nature to each other, but of greatly different value. Both acts of giving more and receiving more seem to press legitimate superiority claims by either hero. The two transactors part satisfied not only with their friendship commitment, but also with their respective performance in the exchange. Considering that Glaucus gave significantly more than what he received, he should be regarded as the undisputed winner of the transaction according to Mauss. But the narrator’s comment attributing the Lycian’s lavish offer to his delusion, due to divine intervention, undercuts his entitlement to superior status against Diomedes.

The practice of exchange in Homer definitely exhibits similarities with the mechanism of gift exchange in modern precapitalist societies, as Mauss established it. Yet profound differences outlined above show that the system of gift exchange in Mauss’ terms does not cover all types of exchanges, observed in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, and hence indicate the hermeneutic limitations of his model. Certain parameters of exchange in Homer are better understood when examined against the principles of commodity rather than gift exchange.

Developed in a modern industrialist system, this economic approach may at first seem entirely incompatible with the ancient precapitalist world. Indeed, there is

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expressed scepticism or opposition in the field of classics to the use of such a model, as a
guide to interpret ancient Greek economy. In particular, scholars frequently question the
extent of ancient consciousness regarding the exchange of commodities and maintain that
crucial characteristics of ancient Greek economic activity that do not correspond to
modern reality, such as the assimilation of economic and social relations as well as the
peculiar perception and manner of production in ancient society, caution against the use
of Marxian principles, in order to consider ancient socio-economic structures.56 Aside
from the obvious differences between ancient and modern economic life, the conceptual
contrast between gift and commodity, firmly established by anthropologists, creates
further scepticism regarding the application of a theory based on commodities for a
society marked by the ubiquity of the gift.

Commodity exchange is certainly not emphasised in Homeric society, but it does
exist. For instance in *Iliad*, Book 7, the narrator gives a list of objects with which the
Achaean host bought Lemnian wine.57 Furthermore, in *Iliad*, Book 21 we are told that
Achilles earned a profit worth a hundred oxen from the sale of the captured Trojan
Lycaon as a slave in Lemnos.58 In principle, commerce does not happen among the

56 Wohl (1998:63-64, nn.17, 18, 19, 24, 25) provides a concise review of the arguments that discourage the
application of the theory of commodities to ancient Greek society. On the other hand, she notes the
Marxian approach to the economy of ancient Athens by de Ste. Croix (1981), although she criticises his
focus on strict economics, which leads him to overlook the symbolic aspect of Athenian socio-economic
life. Ultimately, however, she argues for the value of a Marxist approach and proposes that a
methodological synthesis between economic and symbolic theoretical models provides a better grasp of
ancient Greek economy. For the classic discussion on Marxism and ancient Greek literature, see
Rose:1992. Acknowledgement of slave labour, as a prevalent mode of production that differentiates ancient
Greek society from modern industrial societies, does not prevent Rose from approaching several Greek
authors, including Homer, through a Marxist perspective.

57 See *Il.* 7.467-475. For this example, see Finley 1981:191. For sales of objects in the *Odyssey*, see *Od.*
15.445, 459-463.

58 See *Il.* 21.35-43, 58, 78-80, 23.746-747. For sales of slaves in the *Odyssey*, see *Od.* 14.202, 15.388-429,
452. For selling slaves in places conventionally located far away, see *Il.* 21.100-102, 22.45, 24.751-753;
also see Wilson 2002:25 and n.52.
Achaean warriors on the camp with one another or among the Trojans with one another.\textsuperscript{59} In this respect, Seaford sees in Homer an application of Marx’s principle that “the exchange of commodities evolves originally not within primitive communities, but on their margins, on their borders.”\textsuperscript{60} Homeric aristocrats disassociate themselves but are not completely freed from the trade of commodities. In the \textit{Iliad}, members of the leaders’ own camp or their own household participate in such transactions, and the outcome directly affects their personal subsistence or wealth. In the aforementioned two examples of commodity exchange, the Achaeans, as a whole, are said to buy wine from Lemnos, while Achilles’ θεράπων, Patroclus, sells Lycaon to Euneus in Lemnos. Commodity exchange then is conducted under the anonymity of the Achaeans’ collective identity or is undertaken by the subordinates of prominent Achaean heroes.

The most explicit expression of aristocratic aversion to the trade of commodities is in the \textit{Odyssey} Book 8, where Odysseus is insultingly accused by the Phaeacian prince Euryalus of looking more like a trader than an athlete.\textsuperscript{61} But the very charge of Euryalus is an acknowledgement of mercantile practice, and some have even argued that Odysseus’ obsession with non-reciprocal gift accumulation masks a mercantile ideology emergent in the \textit{Odyssey}.\textsuperscript{62} Though aristocratic gift-giving is more frequent and more


\textsuperscript{60} Seaford 1994:18 cites from Marx 1971:50.

\textsuperscript{61} See \textit{Od}. 8.162-164. Seaford (1994:18-19) notes the “dislike of the trader” in Homer, but also suggests that gift exchange and commodity exchange are not mutually exclusive activities, insofar as they can be practised by the same people. He supports his argument by citing examples of traders who engage in some gift exchange. Thus Euneus from Lemnos, besides selling wine to the Achaeans, reportedly gives wine to Agamemnon as a gift (\textit{Il}. 7.467-475); the Phoenicians, the established professional traders in both the \textit{Iliad} and the \textit{Odyssey}, offer a gift to king Thoas of Lemnos (\textit{Il}. 23.740-745); Mentes, although a trader of iron, is supposed to be a guest-friend of Odysseus and Telemachus also offers to give him a gift before he departs from Ithaca (\textit{Od}. 1.180-184, 307-318).

\textsuperscript{62} Dougherty (2001:13-16, 43-50, 111-121) maintains that Odysseus, as a member of the aristocratic class who travels in pursuit of profit, reconciles trade with the aristocratic world of gift exchange. As she
marked in Homer, sporadic references to trading and traders justify a Marxist approach to Homeric exchange. Overall, Homeric society acknowledges both gift and commodity exchange and has developed a vocabulary to differentiate between them, when there is need for such a distinction.63

Despite the implication for the status of those who engage in the circulation of gifts and commodities and contrary to what is found in most clan-based modern societies studied by the anthropologists, the distinction between the two types of objects in Homer is more often blurred than foregrounded. In addition to the few noted cases of commodity exchange, a commodity element is inherent even in gift exchange. This is because the principles of “rank” and “value,” which, as modern theorists point out, are exclusive to the exchanges of gifts and commodities respectively, appear to coexist in most Homeric exchanges.64 Like Mauss’ model, the exchange of gifts in Homer involves objects with prestigious and symbolic merit (or “rank” in anthropological terminology); however the “value” of an object and a conscious (but more or less open) calculation of it is almost always present in the transaction. But “value” is what establishes objects as commodities suitable for exchange and as such it is a key concept of the Marxian approach.65 In particular, “value” is the determining factor of the “equality” of objects and the criterion that permits or justifies commodity exchange. Although in modern theoretical discussions the “value” and “equality” of commodities have no position in the socio-economic world of gifts structured by “rank” and “domination,” Homeric exchange

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63 Wilson (2002:25-26) also agrees that both systems of gift exchange and commodity exchange are present in Homer.

64 The terminology employed in this paragraph is borrowed from Gregory 1982:47, citing several anthropological and economic systems of exchange.

65 Marx 1867:43; Gregory 1982:10-11, 47.
mechanisms successfully integrate crucial principles from both systems, only to intensify the social impact of the exchange.

Certain examples of attempted or accomplished transfers that do not explicitly involve commodities illustrate this merging of principles that underlie Homeric exchange. It was mentioned above that the custom of ransoming captives in the *Iliad* displays a very different dynamic from Mauss’ model of gift exchange. Nevertheless, compared to other exchanges in the narrative, it exhibits certain characteristics that consistently mark the exchange of gifts in Homer. Ransoming seems to have been a successful practice in the Iliadic past. In the dramatic time of the poem, it is often proposed, but due to entrenched hostility resulting from the duration of the war, it is never accepted. The frequent and casual references to this practice indicate an analogy to the frequent occasions of gift exchange, as opposed to the rarity of commodity exchange in the poem. Besides the quantitative argument, it is significant that the addressees of ransoming propositions are Achaean aristocrats, who are constantly involved in conspicuous exchanges of gifts and consistently avoid overt commodity transactions. That captives casually ask their captors to accept ransom in return for their release indicates that they believe in the possibility of their request being granted. But such a request to aristocrats can have a prospect of acceptance only if ransoming is a construed as gift exchange. To be more specific, offers for ransoming captives from their captors mentioned in the *Iliad* have been extended only to important heroes, such as Agamemnon, Menelaus, Odysseus, Diomede, and Achilles.66 They have reportedly been

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accepted, however, solely by Achilles himself, an individual who is highly conscious of the concept of the gift and its ensuing honour.

In addition, the ideology that underlies the ransoming process is that of gift exchange. Bravery that results in the capture of an opponent on the battlefield incurs honour for the victor. Wilson argues that ransom offered or paid in order to redeem a captive’s freedom aims to compensate the captor for the loss of honour entailed in the release of his defeated opponent. Honour is a concept closely tied to the elite exchange of gifts and almost absent from the more base exchange of commodities. This balance of honour involved in a ransoming offer confirms its conceptualization as gift exchange by those who consent to it.

On the other hand, though the exchange proposed by a request for ransoming someone might initially suggest gift exchange, in truth the matter is more complicated. War captives, such as Chryseis and Briseis, become prestigious gifts of honour for Agamemnon and Achilles respectively; however, their formal designation as *gera* does not completely exempt them from commodity elements lurking in the exchange. Bereft of their free-born status, they are assigned to particular heroes and are viewed as slaves expected to work on household tasks, offer handiwork, contribute to production of slaves, and serve as concubines. Apart from the forced labour they are required to provide to their owners, they can be sold and exchanged for material goods. To put it more succinctly, captive women have an undeniable economic value as commodities. But the

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67 *Il.* 6.425-428, 11.104-106, 24.685-688. Lycaon’s successful ransoming, which takes place not at Troy but at Lemnos and is requested not from his captor but from Euneus, his buyer, by Eëtion of Imbros, confirms this observation. In contrast, Wilson (2002:31 and n.89) maintains that Agamemnon also used to accept ransom from the families of Trojan captives.


69 For the “productive” and “reproductive” value of slave women, see Gottschall 2008:69, 79 and n.57.
public distribution mechanism, which allocates them to warriors, is in its essence a gift exchange system that confers rewards on the ones deserving them and thus turns the female captives into gifts.\textsuperscript{70} In contrast to Chryseis and Briseis, who are conspicuously offered as gifts to Achaean heroes, Lycaon, who is also a war captive, is reportedly sold as a commodity in Lemnos. Gender seems to play a role in the future disposition of a captive,\textsuperscript{71} but ultimately it is the exchanges following captivity that determine whether the captured person is a gift or a commodity. A request to ransom a captive, whether female or male, entails particular circumstances that qualify for commodity exchange. Provided that it is granted by the captor, the ensuing transaction is an intra-communal affair, and as such it fits both the pattern of commodity exchange in the \textit{Iliad} and the Marxian description of the phenomenon.

Moreover, although within their community the captives are defined as free human beings,\textsuperscript{72} during their intra-communal exchange they are deprived of their freedom and they are equated to the objects offered as ransom. Beyond the temporary objectification of the captives, the large quantity and value of the proferred goods are consistent with the constituent principles of commodity exchange.\textsuperscript{73} In fact, this emphasis

\textsuperscript{70} Gottschall (2008:83-84, 87) argues that the acquisition of women is central to the social standing of men and vice versa, in terms that it bestows higher status, which in turn ensures “privileged access to women.”

\textsuperscript{71} For female captives being considered as “prestige goods,” see Wilson 2002:18.

\textsuperscript{72} Wilson (2002:18) argues that this applies only male captives.

\textsuperscript{73} Non-Homeric traditions of the Trojan myth also support the commodity aspect of the ransoming practice. See, for example, Achilles accepting gold weighed in a scale in which Hector’s corpse is placed. Burgess (2001:68-70, nn.78, 79, 80) lists the evidence for this version of the myth and underscores the economic aspect of it. He argues that this version has pre-Homeric origin and indicates that Achilles’ words in \textit{Il}. 22.349-350, stating that he would not give Hector’s body to his family for burial, even if the Trojan king weighed it out with gold, constitute an allusion to the traditional “economic” scene of the release of the corpse. He notes, nevertheless, that the Iliadic ransoming of Hector’s corpse, despite its emotional depth, also presents “an economic basis for the persuasion of Achilles” on the grounds of the precious gifts that Priam offers to the Achaean hero.
on commodity elements in ransom is so standard in the poem that it is often presented with formulaic expressions.\textsuperscript{74} See for instance:

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“ζώγρει, Ἀτρέος υἱέ, σὺ δ’ ἄξια δέξαι ἀποινα·
pολλά δ’ ἐν ἀφνείου πατρός κειμήλια κείται,
χαλκός τε χρυσός τε πολύκµητός τε σίδηρος,
tῶν κέν τοι χαρίσαιτο πατήρ ἀπερείσι ἀποινα…”  (Il. 6.46-49)\textsuperscript{75}
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“Take me alive, son of Atreus, and take appropriate ransom.
In my rich father’s house the treasures lie piled in abundance;
bronze is there, and gold, and difficulty wrought iron,
and my father would make you glad with abundant repayment…”\textsuperscript{76}

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“ζώγρει’, αὐτάρ ἐγὼν ἐμὲ λύσομαι· ἔστι γὰρ ἐνδον
χαλκός τε χρυσός τε πολύκµητός τε σίδηρος,
tῶν κ’ ὑμῖν χαρίσαιτο πατήρ ἀπερείσι ἀποινα…”  (Il. 10.378-380)
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“Take me alive, and I will pay my ransom: in my house there is bronze, and gold, and difficulty wrought iron,
and my father would make you glad with abundant ransom…”

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“ζώγρει, Ἀτρέος υἱέ, σὺ δ’ ἄξια δέξαι ἀποινα·
pολλά δ’ ἐν Αντιμάχοιο δόμοις κειμήλια κείται,
χαλκός τε χρυσός τε πολύκµητός τε σίδηρος,
tῶν κέν τοι χαρίσαιτο πατήρ ἀπερείσι ἀποινα…”  (Il. 11.131-134)
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“Take us alive, son of Atreus, and take appropriate ransom.
In the house of Antimachus the treasures lie piled in abundance,
bronze is there, and gold, and difficulty wrought iron,
and our father would make you glad with abundant repayment…”

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κεῖθεν δὲ ξείνοις μιν ἐλύσατο, πολλά δ’ ἔδωκεν...
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from there a guest and friend who paid a great price redeemed him…

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“…χαλκοῦ τε χρυσοῦ τ’ ἀπολυσόμεθ’· ἔστι γὰρ ἐνδον”  (Il. 22.50)
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“…then I can set them free for bronze and gold; it is there inside…”

\textsuperscript{74} For a detailed analysis of the dictional repetition in the theme of ransom, see Wilson 2002:22-23.

\textsuperscript{75} All quotations from the Homeric epics are from the Oxford Classical Text edition.

\textsuperscript{76} All translations of the \textit{Iliad} are from Lattimore 1951. For purposes of consistency with the rest of the dissertation, however, I change Lattimore’s direct transliteration of ancient proper names into the Latinized spellings.
In a similar tone, quantity, precious material, and elaborate craftsmanship emphasise the value of the mixing-bowl that Achilles received as payment, when he sold Lycaon to Jason’s son in Lemnos:

“...καὶ με πέρασσας ἀνευθεν ἀγων πατρός τε φίλων τε
Λήμνον ἐς ἡγαθῆμ, ἔκατομβιοιν δὲ τοι ἡλφον.”  (Il. 21.78-79)

“...and took me away from my father and those near me, and sold me away into sacred Lemnos, and a hundred oxen I fetched you.”

...ἀργύρεον κρητῆρα, τετυγμένον· ἡς δ’ ἀρα μέτρα
χάνδανεν, αὐτὰρ κάλλει ἑνίκα πάσαν ἐπ’ αἰαν
πολλοῦ, ἐπεὶ Σιδόνες πολυδιδαλοὶ εὗ ἡκησαν,
Φοίνικες δ’ ἄγον ἄνδρες ἐπ’ ἱεροειδεὰ πάντων,
στήσαν δ’ ἐν λιμένσσι, θόαντι δὲ δῶρον ἐδωκαν·
ὑὸς δ’ Πριάμωι Λυκάονος δῶκεν ἐδωκε
Πατρόκλω ἣρωι ἤσουδῆς Εὐνῆσος.  (Il. 23.741-747)

...a mixing-bowl of silver, a work of art, which held only six measures, but for its loveliness it surpassed all others on earth by far, since skilled Sidonian craftsmen had wrought it well, and Phoenicians carried it over the misty face of the water and set it in the harbour, and gave it for a present to Thoas. Euneus, son of Jason, gave it to the hero Patroclus to buy Lycaon, Priam’s son, out of slavery...

But the greatest proof of value as an integral factor of Homeric gift exchange is presented in the exemplary scene between Glaucus and Diomedes in Il. 6.212-236. Trading their arms, the two warriors reenact their ancestral guest friendship and they also become bonded to each other. In other words, they create a historical continuum of gift exchanges and gift exchange relations. It was previously noted that the claims of the two heroes in “status” and “hierarchy,” ordinarily conferred by gift exchange, originate precisely from the “value” of their arms, noted explicitly by the narrator. Wohl, commenting on this scene, argues convincingly that the narrator’s remark equates the symbolic worth of the arms offered to their market price in cattle and collapses a prestigious exchange into an economic transaction and gifts ideologically invested into
“mere commodities.” Surprisingly, however, this unexpected equation in the middle of a prominent gift exchange does not alter the type of exchange and does not discount the power or the symbolism of the gifts. It simply qualifies the gifts as commodities, manifesting, in this manner, that a commodity element is an underlying component of even the most ideal gift exchange in Homeric epic. Regardless of the controversy, whether the hero who gives more or receives more is superior to the other, the “value” of their gifts stated precisely in commodity terms justifies their individual claims to gift exchange hierarchy. Therefore, although according to modern economic approaches the “value” of the objects exchanged normally establishes “equality” and permits commodity exchange in capitalistic societies, curiously in Homer it is the “value” of objects that enables “domination” and fulfils gift exchange.

Besides the explicit equation of gifts to commodities in the exchange between Glaucus and Diomedes, the obvious utility of the objects traded further emphasizes their economic preciousness. Before their meeting, the two heroes wear their own arms, while after their encounter, they don each other’s war gear. Their mutual change into each other’s armor demonstrates their ancestral and personal friendship, but also indicates their urgent individual need of those objects at that particular moment that goes beyond their long term social connection. Following the exchange, the gifts are put into immediate use and become necessary means of the heroes’ survival in the battlefield. According to Marx, an object’s inherent use, which satisfies specific human needs, is a constituent property of the value that defines the object as a commodity. The immediate need of arms that the two warriors face, after they mutually donate their own panoplies,

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77 For more details, see Wohl 1998:62-64; the quotation is on p.63.
78 For the definition of the commodity, as an object with use value, that is an object with particular qualities that satisfy some sort of human needs, see Marx 1867:43-44; also see Gregory 1982:10-11.
and the consequent instant usefulness of the gifts they receive from each other indicate once again that a commodity element is a structural characteristic of these prestigious tokens of guest friendship. Using each other’s arms, the heroes both fulfill an imminent personal need and validate their inter-personal bond.

The strong link of gifts to commodities emerging from the exchange between Glaucus and Diomedes shows that economic value and utility are, more or less overtly, defining aspects of both types of objects. These parameters that gifts and commodities share in the Homeric epic bridge the sharp distinction between them drawn by the anthropologists. Their difference then is created by the ideology invested in the exchange system by which they are transferred each time. Circulation of goods through gift exchange is considered a noble operation generally undertaken by aristocrats; disposal of goods through mercantile transactions, though often conducted with aristocratic households, is usually reserved for individuals of inferior status or practiced by aristocrats under the guise of other personas (e.g. Odysseus). In her discussion of gifts and commodities, Wohl points out that “there is no inherent difference” between them; the same object can be disposed as a gift or a commodity at different times “and yet this fictional difference is vital to the maintenance of the elite.”79 In other words, their distinction is conditioned by their particular exchange and exchanger each time.80

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80 In fact, this ideological distinction between the two types of objects observed in Homeric epic becomes even more marked in the historical societies of archaic and classical Greece, where market exchanges were more firmly established and elite identity more embattled. For more details, see Kurke 1991, 1999; Wohl 1998. In addition, see II. 23.744-748, where the silver bowl originally offered by Phoenician men, as a gift to Thoas, is later given to Patroclus, as a payment for Lycaon’s sale, and finally becomes a prestigious prize in the funeral games for Patroclus. Ready (2007:38 and n.78) notes that the bowl is converted from an item of a “long term transaction,” such as gift exchange, to an item “employed in the short-term transaction of ransoming” and again back to an item of a “long term transaction,” as a prize in the foot race. But, although he observes some sort of change in the conception of the object, coinciding with its different exchanges, he confuses Lycaon’s sale with ransoming and thus fails to grasp the bowl’s radical switches.
The volatility and adaptability of Homeric objects of exchange, due to the absence of inherent classifying markers in them prior to their disposition, are not limited to their potential alternation between gifts and commodities. Once it is clear that an object is circulated as a gift among the Homeric elite, it is subject to further differentiation and distinctive attributes. This is because gift exchange in Homer is not a unified process, as it, more or less, appears to be in modern precapitalist societies studied by the anthropologists. The same object could be a gift of guest-friendship, a gift from distribution of booty, or a prize in a competition, for instance. Thus, an object acquires different qualities and forms different kinds of relations between the transactors each time, depending on the particular exchange mechanism that regulates the type and the circumstances of its transference as a gift.

The variation observed in Homeric poetry not only between gifts and commodities, but also between gifts themselves suggests that a definition of the gift, focusing on its conceptual antithesis to commodity, as commonly perceived by the anthropologists, may not sufficiently convey its qualitative gradations featured in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. On the contrary, a definition that shortens the discrepancy between gifts and commodities, but leaves room for internal differentiation among gifts themselves, conveys more accurately the connotations of the term and highlights the chameleonic potential of the shifts of the gift in Homeric society.

Reconciling the anthropological with the Marxian approach to exchange and extrapolating from scholars who either endorse or reject these approaches with regard to ancient economy, this study will consider the Homeric gift as an object with both

\[\text{from a gift to a commodity and vice versa. For the potential shifts of people or objects from gifts to commodities, see von Reden 1995:60, 67-68.}\]
economic value and symbolic value. To begin with the former, economic value is constructed by potential market price or proper utility and is relatively stable, limited, and objective. In fact, market value in Homeric standards corresponds to a quantity of other material goods that an object could generate to its owner, if it were exchanged strictly as a commodity. The quantity of objects for which it could be traded each time is proportionate to the preciousness of the material that it is made of and the artfulness of its workmanship, and may relatively fluctuate, designating higher or lower material gain for its owner. Despite possible fluctuation of profit, the exchange is based on the conventional view that an object has a certain selling or buying merit. This selling or buying merit can be translated into a set and static amount of material wealth acquired only once and strictly within the spatial and temporal context of the object’s trading. Proper utility is entirely fixed and requires less explanation. An object can be used only for a certain number of practical applications in which it has been conventionally found to be of service. It is obvious then that, due to its limited and conventional nature, economic value is a property that accompanies any object independently of its exchange, and qualifies it for exchange if such an occasion arises.

Symbolic value, on the other hand, is fluid, indefinite, and abstract. It consists of the prestige that an object can bestow on its previous and future owner and the particular relation that it creates between them upon its donation and receipt as a gift. This kind of value does not exist prior to the exchange. It is actually contingent on the exchange, but it

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81 Wilson (2002:18-20) discusses this mixture of material and immaterial aspects only in relation to *timē* “taken away or paid back in compensation themes in the *Iliad.*” It is present, however, in any Homeric transaction that does not explicitly exchange mere commodities. Also see Beidelman 1989:238; Donlan 1993:160.

82 Crielaard (2002:250) mentions in passing the cost of the materials and the craftsmanship of a gift as criteria for the assessment of its value.

83 Also see Marx 1867:43-44.
outlives the occasion of an object’s transference, since both the prestige and the personal relations it generates accompany the transactors for an indefinite period of time. Given the variety and multiformity of gift exchange in Homeric epic, the symbolic value of an object can be an individualised quality, peculiar to a specific gift exchange or at least a specific type of gift exchange. Different transferring circumstances can supply a gift with different symbolic qualities, translated into different perceptions of prestige, and reflecting accordingly on the people involved in the exchange. In brief, symbolic value is determined by the particular gift exchange by which an object is transferred each time and continues to qualify the transactors long after its exchange.

Economic value, which conditions all exchanges in Homer, inevitably affects the symbolic value of a gift, which is formed post-exchange, but it does not change the essence of the exchange. Although important, as it conventionally establishes one-time equivalences between different objects, it is usually overlooked or concealed by the harder-to-measure-and-grasp symbolic value which in turn signifies lasting distinctions between equal subjects. Value perceived in commodity terms, when it is not obfuscated by the overwhelming immaterial aspects of gift exchange, adds quantity and weight to the quality of the gift offered, thus enhancing its symbolism further.\(^{84}\)

To sum up: in the world depicted in Homeric epic, gift exchange mainly generates and conditions socio-political relations and economic transactions between individuals. It is, however, complemented by commodity exchange, which has already settled “on the borders” of a perceived community and its inter-communal relations and gradually spreads intra-communally, as it creeps into the core of its gift exchange. The quasi-commodification of the gift suggests not only that the “Homeric reality” both conforms

\(^{84}\) For the overlap of between gift exchange and commodity exchange, see Bourdieu 1977.
to and diverts from the reality that Mauss views in primitive societies, but also indicates that both models of gift exchange and commodity exchange could add to a more thorough evaluation of Homeric society and its attributes.
CHAPTER ONE – RE-EXCHANGE IN THE *ILIAD*

*Introduction*

Before proceeding to an examination of the circulation-process of Achilles’ first set of arms in the *Iliad*, which is the primary focus of this project, it seems appropriate to begin the discussion with a broader consideration of re-exchange and its parameters in Homer. Though re-exchange is a subtopic of exchange, it has larger implications that either amplify the impact of a certain exchange or communicate a discrete dynamic stemming from the hybridic nature of re-exchange. Both the Homeric narrator and the characters often go to some lengths to let the audience know that a particular token has been transferred more than once to different people. What is interesting is that when Homeric epic makes it a point to notify us about the longer circulating process of an item, this item is not something of limited value or easily replaceable to its consecutive owners. Instead, there is special merit attached to it; at times it is unique, and almost always it is presented as highly desirable, something which the proprietor each time would be likely to want to reserve than to dispose of. This chapter will briefly review a number of relevant examples in order to establish certain patterns of re-exchange and demonstrate how this complex structure illuminates, supplements, and occasionally even reverses the effect of its constitutive component of simple exchange.
It was mentioned in the introduction that despite many excellent studies on the theme of exchange in Homeric epic, the related topic of consecutive exchanges of the same object has been almost ignored by scholarship. Discussions of re-exchange are marginal and often limited to objects with an extensive history of transfers, which is outlined, for the most part, linearly and sequentially in a particular passage of Homer. Thus the most thorough treatments of the theme pertain to Agamemnon’s sceptre and Meriones’ boar’s tusk helmet.¹ Both examples relate the long history of the objects in question in order to justify their immeasurable value, provide an account of how and why they ended up in the hands of their latest owners, as well as explain the reasons for their temporary use by heroes other than their current proprietors in the Iliadic present.

To begin with the sceptre, Hephaestus crafted it and gave it to Zeus, who gave it to Hermes. Hermes gave it to Pelops and he, in turn, gave it to Atreus. Atreus left it to Thyestes, who in the end left it to Agamemnon, its latest owner in the poem (II. 2.100-111, 185-332). Its origin from the gods and its possession by Zeus, the king of the gods, as well as its history of ownership by mortal kings makes it a potent symbol of power and kingship. In this function, Agamemnon employs it to validate his leadership over the geographical territory of Argos, but also over the whole army of the Achaeans who fight in Troy.² As such, he prominently exhibits it and uses it to speak in the Achaean

² See, in particular, II. 2.108, 204-206.
assembly in *Iliad* Book 2. When joy at the prospect of retuning home early overtakes the army, Odysseus temporarily takes the sceptre from Agamemnon in order to assert authority and counsel the leaders and the host, but also to punish the dissenter Thersites and restore trust in Agamemnon’s kingship.³

The boar’s tusk helmet is a very elaborate piece of war equipment that also exhibits a long history of exchanges. Autolycus stole it from Amyntor of Eleon and gave it to Amphidamas from Cythera, who, in turn, gave it as a guest-friendship gift to Molos. Molos, afterwards, gave it to his son Meriones, who took it with him to Troy and eventually lent it to Odysseus to wear for the purposes of the *Doloneia* (*Il.* 10.261-271). Its unique craftsmanship combined with its extensive history of different owners makes it a symbol of prestige that dignifies Odysseus and his night-spying mission to the Trojan camp. In addition, the fact that Autolycus, who is Odysseus’ maternal grandfather,⁴ had possession of the helmet for some time creates a point of connection and continuity with its latest reported user in the *Iliad*, Odysseus himself.

Scholars occasionally note that both Agamemnon’s sceptre and Meriones’ boar’s tusk helmet undergo different modes of transference.⁵ Sometimes, they even notice parallels between these two famous artefacts and other objects from the broader story of the Trojan War that have extensive circulation-processes related in non-Homeric sources. Davies, in particular, calls attention to the similarity between Agamemnon’s sceptre and the golden vine, which the *Little Iliad* (fr. 29 Bernabé) reports was fashioned by Hephaestus and subsequently presented to Zeus; Zeus, in turn, offered it to Laomedon, as

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³ *Il.* 2.185-332.  
⁴ *Od.* 19.394-412.  
⁵ See, for instance, Grethlein 2008:36-37, 40-41.
a compensation for the abduction of his son, Ganymedes.⁶ Eventually, it must have come down to Priam’s hands, who, according to Sophocles’ Eurypylus, gave it as a bribe to the mother of the eponymous hero in order to convince her to despatch her son at the aid of the Trojans towards the end of the war.⁷ Davies remarks the Homeric fashion of this object’s transfer from deities to human beings and its subsequent circulation among mortals, a motif exemplified aptly by Agamemnon’s sceptre in the Iliad.

But re-exchange in Homeric epic does not only involve material objects but also human beings. Most notably, Briseis is reported to go through a number of different exchanges starting in the Iliadic past and continuing in the dramatic time of the poem. Her transfers from her father to her husband, next to Achilles, then to Agamemnon, and finally back to Achilles again involve issues of gender and social status.⁸ Her double experience as a free-born woman and as a captive subjects her to transitions stipulated by distinct systems of exchange, such as the marriage institution and the mechanism for distribution of spoils, respectively. Although she receives a lot of scholarly attention owing to her role in Achilles’ wrath, the topic of the Iliad, Homeric studies tend to focus on some of her exchanges individually, particularly those which are directly related to Achilles’ honour and lead to his withdrawal from the battlefield.⁹ Yet, a comprehensive analysis of the entire network of intertwined exchanges she undergoes is lacking in scholarship. The sequence of her transfers does not merely affect the perception of her and of those who exchange her every time, but drives the action of the war to stalemates.

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⁶ Davies 1989:67. The Iliad offers a different version of this story according to which Zeus gave Tros divine horses in recompense for kidnapping his son, Ganymedes, while Laomedon is Ganymedes’ nephew. Cf. II. 5.265-267, 20.231-236. For this version, also see Hymn. Hom. Aphr. 202-217.
and twists that sweep along all the Iliadic characters and take over the entire plot of the *Iliad*. In the end, the re-exchange of Briseis becomes a poetic device through which to envision alternatives to the tradition of the Trojan War that dictates Achilles’ fighting and subsequent death on the Trojan battlefield. Ultimately, however, Briseis’ return to Achilles, which precedes the hero’s return to the battlefield, reintegrates the plot of the *Iliad* in the storyline of the Trojan War.

Besides these occasions of re-exchange that have received some attention from scholarship, there are numerous cases of Homeric objects with a history of multiple transferrals, albeit not sequential or concentrated in a single passage of Homer, which are treated by scholars only in passing. The funeral games for Patroclus in *Iliad* Book 23 include many examples of this kind, since several prizes that Achilles gives to the contestants are war spoils that either he himself or Patroclus won in battle.¹⁰ For instance, the prize set for the close combat contest is the silver-nailed sword that Achilles seized from Asteropaeus’ corpse along with the armour of Sarpedon that Patroclus stripped from his body after killing the Lycian hero; in the end, Diomedes wins Asteropaeus’ sword and shares Sarpedon’s arms with Ajax.¹¹

Even when scholars take notice of a long circulation-process exhibited by a certain token, they do not engage in further analysis of the overall structure of the phenomenon of re-exchange illustrated by the token in question. In this way, they overlook its amalgamatic synthesis, its larger impact on a greater number of participants.

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¹⁰ For passing comments on the history and value of the prizes in the games see, for instance, Redfield 1994:205-206; Crieaard 2002:250, 280; Ready 2007:38; Grethlein 2008:37 n.60. For an example of an object with long history of exchanges in the *Odyssey*, see Odysseus’ bow (*Od*. 21.11-41).

than a simple exchange, and the special context it creates in the narrative that recounts it. As will be shown in the later chapters of this dissertation, the study of re-exchange as a whole reveals a compound regulatory framework that supersedes that of individual mechanisms of exchange. Validating or discrediting each of the encompassed single transactions affects the consequent exchange-step every time and, on this basis, contributes a legitimate explanation of the length and direction of the larger circulation-process. In addition, it sheds light on certain cooperative or conflicting forces steering the human community that practises re-exchange and on the development of the poetic plot, contingent on the continuity or disruption of its poetic community. In other words, an examination of re-exchange provides insights into an interdependence between the larger process and the individual stages that build up to it, the society that engages in such a process, and the literary account that describes it.

Re-exchange, Ownership, and Inalienability of Possessions

Except for Briseis, who displays several peculiarities due to her human nature and to her centrality in the story of the *Iliad*, the aforementioned examples of material objects explicitly said to change hands more than once can be considered paradigmatic cases of this practice. Providing details on a chain of exchanges and exchangers, they exemplify and epitomise the rules of re-exchange in Homeric epic and particularly in the *Iliad*, this study’s poem of interest. A crucial matter illuminated by these paradigmatic examples is the issue of ownership of objects in relation to their circulation. In general, when an individual receives something from another person he becomes its sole current owner.
That is, he acquires absolute authority over the economic and the symbolic aspects of it. Thus, he can utilise it and take advantage of its practical application, he can store it as a token of prestige and display it on particular occasions in order to preserve and multiply its symbolic impact, or he can exchange it and potentially derive both status and material profit. Agamemnon presumably stores his sceptre and selectively displays it in the assembly to declare his leader status, but also makes use of it in order to indicate his will to speak. Amphidamas, on the other hand, gives the boar’s tusk helmet to Molos as a present of guest-friendship and elicits prestige and possibly a return gift or a promise of one. In turn, Meriones likely uses the helmet in war, but also takes the opportunity to exhibit it among his friends by lending it to Odysseus for his night expedition. Achilles initially stores the spoils of Asteropaeus and Sarpedon; upon the occasion of the funeral games, however, he demonstrates them as prestigious possessions and allots them as prizes to the contestants. Through such a public and conspicuous disposal of wealth, he lays claim to the superior status of the distributor.\footnote{For Achilles acquiring prestige by conferring prizes on the competitors in the games, see Donlan 1981-1982:170 n.57; von Reden 1995:26; Postlethwaite 1998:100-101; Wilson 2002:124-125; Ready 2007:38.}

But if giving coincides with surrendering complete authority of an object to the recipient, then why do the narrator and the characters often go at lengths to report the name(s) of its previous owner(s)? Recalling a former owner, while an object is in the possession of someone else or is about to be given to someone else, is reminiscent of what the anthropologists identify as the inalienability of the object from its giver. Mauss, in particular, maintains that this bond of the object to the one who gives it supplies it with a “spirit” and makes it strive for its return to the original donor or urges the receiver to give back something equivalent or greater to take its place (see further below). For Mauss
then, inalienability emerges from the act of receiving gifts and is responsible for the obligation of the recipient to give something valuable in return of what he received.\textsuperscript{13} In this manner, it establishes the norm of reciprocity in gift exchange and, through this norm, it generates hierarchy.\textsuperscript{14} On the other hand, Weiner, who investigates modern gift exchange societies in Oceania, presupposes Mauss’ notion of an object’s attachment and return to its original donor,\textsuperscript{15} but views inalienability differently from him. She contends that this notion necessitates giving while retaining the most valuable possessions to the donor’s own self.\textsuperscript{16} What determines a possession’s value is its inalienable quality consisting of “its exclusive and cumulative identity with a particular series of owners through time. Its history is authenticated by fictive or true genealogies, origin myths, sacred ancestors, and gods.”\textsuperscript{17} Objects with such inalienable attributes “are kept by their owners from one generation to the next within the close context of family, descent group, or dynasty.”\textsuperscript{18} Hereditary possession of those “symbolic repositories of genealogies and historical events” authenticates lineage for the ones who own them, creates hierarchy, motivates the conduct of other exchanges with those individuals, and attracts friends and enemies to them.\textsuperscript{19} In other words, it entitles the owners every time to “economic and political power.”\textsuperscript{20} On the contrary, “loss of such an inalienable possession diminishes the self and by extension, the group to which the person belongs.”\textsuperscript{21}

\textsuperscript{13} Mauss 1966:8-10, 18, 24, 31, 41-42, 112.
\textsuperscript{14} On exchange and hierarchy, see Mauss 1966:41-42, 62-63, 91, n.68. For a survey of various anthropological views on gift exchange establishing hierarchy, see Gregory 1982:47-51.
\textsuperscript{15} Weiner 1992:44-46, 62.
\textsuperscript{16} See, in particular, Weiner 1992:46, 63-65.
\textsuperscript{17} Weiner 1992:33.
\textsuperscript{19} Weiner 1992:32-40, 44-54, 62-66; the quotation is on p.33.
\textsuperscript{20} On inalienable possessions and individual empowerment, see Weiner 1992:33, 36-37, 52; the quotation is on p.33.
As was noted in the introductory chapter, Marx points out that this close connection between an object and its donor occurs only in (“primitive”) societies that do not have a notion of “private property,” but instead perceive only property “in common.” Thus, it initially seems contradictory to Homeric exchange where the receiver normally assumes full proprietary rights to the object received. The undisputed authority repeatedly demonstrated and practised by recipients over their new acquisitions in Homeric society overshadows elements that suggest a link of objects to their givers and has discouraged a more systematic scholarly exploration of this aspect. Homeric studies, in general, seem to take for granted the absence or the minimal occurrence of the inalienability of objects in the exchanges taking place in the Iliad and the Odyssey. Seaford, for example, remarks that this quality is not entirely extinct from Homeric gifts, yet considers it restricted only to cases where the receiver appears obliged to offer a counter-gift. More specifically, he does no more than to note that “failure of complete separation…in Homeric gifts…has clearly been limited by the (incomplete) development of the principle of alienability, i.e. in effect of private property.” Therefore, even when the possibility of an inalienable attribute in Homeric exchange is not completely dismissed in scholarship, critics do not consider it in relation to the action of gift-giving per se. Under the influence of Mauss, they at best perceive an echo of it in the potential reaction to gift-giving to the extent that the gift materialises a return from the receiver.

Indeed, a quick look at various objects exchanged in Homeric epic indicates, as Seaford points out, that Homeric heroes exhibit a clear sense of private property over

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22 Marx 1867:91.
newly acquired possessions. Upon their consignment to someone, possessions are exclusively owned by the receiver each time. References to former proprietors evoke a prior bond of a given object to a previous owner, but do not seem to interfere with its current ownership. They only aim at creating a formal historical record which symbolically benefits the latest person to obtain the object. Depending on the status of those to whom it previously belonged, an account of past proprietors can add grandeur to the material value of the object. Citing a former possessor then, once a token has been surrendered to someone else, constitutes a landmark of prestige in the token’s history, a way to modify and amplify its literal description while it is under the authority of a new person. Ultimately, the name of an old owner becomes a point of reference for the new owner and a means to emphasize, elaborate, and dignify his status after his new acquisition. It does not signify a shared or partial ownership or a claim for reacquisition by an individual who possessed the object before. The new owner every time is the only one with authority to hold on to it, put it to use, or pass it to someone else. Hence, possession of an object with a notable proprietary history contributes both to the wealth and status of the individual who obtains it last. Consecutive transitions declare succession of ownership rights, but, at the same time, accumulate prestige for the most recent possessor.

In the paradigmatic examples from the *Iliad* mentioned above, possession of the sceptre by gods and mortal kings, let alone Zeus, the king of gods himself, makes it a powerful symbol of status and validates Agamemnon’s kingship. Molos’ acquisition of the boar’s tusk helmet from Amphidamas, as a prestigious token of guest-friendship,

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24 On private ownership as a Homeric institution, also see Rose 1992:58-59.
25 Crielaard (2002:250, 280) briefly mentions that the “biography” of an object, consisting of the past owners, donors, and the occasion of its acquisition are some of the factors that determine its value as a gift.
confirms his aristocratic standing, but also confers additional honour on him. The fact that this prestigious elite exchange is recounted upon the occasion of Meriones lending it to Odysseus shows that the noble associations of the helmet have not faded away with time. They accompany the object as Molos bequeath it to his son and thereby highlight Meriones’ own status and by extension Odysseus’, who borrows it from the latter. Finally, possession of the armour of Sarpedon, who is the son of Zeus and the most important Lycian warrior, not only dignifies Achilles, its subsequent owner, but also enhances the status of Diomedes and Ajax, who obtain it from him. They receive the weapons of the most famous Lycian from the hands of the most famous Achaean in such a prominent aristocratic context as the athletic contest.

In all three cases, no one of the previous owners of the objects in question is reported to raise a claim against the objects’ current ownership or to attempt to re-obtain them after these are passed on to the next individual. It is particularly significant that even the helmet, which is initially taken from Amyntor unwillingly and through stealth, has an impressive later circulation to a number of different people, while Amyntor does not have any authority over it once he loses it to Autolycus. The initial reported owner does not play any role in its later exchanges and does not seem entitled to its repossession. Following its theft, the helmet exhibits a remarkable chain of successive exchanges independently of its first rightful proprietor.

The formal position of a previous owner and donor in the history of an object illustrates one way in which inalienability of objects is implemented and manipulated in Homeric re-exchange. Notwithstanding Mauss’ perception of inalienability evoked in the frequent references to reciprocal exchanges in Homer, an inalienable attribute in objects
of exchange is manifested in the process of gift-giving or re-gifting. In fact, Weiner’s
description of inalienable possessions appears consistent with how an inalienable quality
of certain Homeric objects is denoted by their reported re-exchange, regardless of
whether it causes a reciprocal reaction from the recipient every time or not. Moreover,
her anthropological account allows for the possibility of transference of inalienable
possessions along with their proprietary rights provided that the recipient belongs to the
same close circle as the donor. Undisrupted post-exchange transition of ownership
substantiated by the recipient’s overt exercise of full proprietorial control is the norm in
Homeric society. Therefore, reference to consecutive transfers of a given object
accompanied with information on its prior owners offers unique insights into a less overt,
yet real, quality of Homeric exchange that scholarship so far has regarded as
contradictory, or at least peripheral, to Homeric transactions.

In principle, undisputed proprietary authority over new acquisitions indicates that
objects of exchange in Homer are detachable and non-returnable. Despite the
detachability generally exhibited by Homeric exchange, the following discussion will
show that there are a few distinct cases where the movements of possessions as well as
persons are configured, modified, and even compromised by their intrinsic tendency not
to be separated from the ones who give them away. This tendency reflects more precisely
the common anthropological notion of the gift’s return to the donor; as such, it
illuminates Homeric inalienability in a more substantial way than the formal and rather
superficial recounting of history of prior ownership.

Before examining the parameters of this more essential delineation of Homeric
inalienability, it should be noted here that both Mauss’ and Weiner’s conceptualisations
of inalienable possessions entail a degree of supernatural associations that are absent from Homer. According to Mauss, objects have a “spirit” that regulates the terms of their exchange or their return to the ones who initially exchange them.\(^{26}\) Weiner considerably downplays Mauss’ premise of the objects’ independent life force which attaches them to their owners. She introduces history as a factor contributing value to possessions and determining which ones should be disposed through exchange and which ones should be kept by their owners. But due to the nature of the cultures she studies, she cannot completely demystify the relations formed between humans and their possessions. Inevitably, she takes into account beliefs according to which objects can extend “the presence of a person” and ultimately stand for it or replace it.\(^{27}\) When such objects are offered as gifts outside of one’s family or clan, they never really belong to the recipients and should not be circulated by them to other people; regardless of the time elapsed since they were initially given, they should be returned to those who originally owned them and donated them.

On the other hand, inalienability in Homer is rationalised and free from supernatural elements that underpin its anthropological counterpart. Objects are not projected to have an independent spiritual force that drives or resists their exchange. Yet, there are a few exceptional cases that involve an attempted or an actual return to the giver of an object of exchange, after it has been passed on to other people. In contrast to the anthropological view, however, such a return is not propelled by a magical power hidden in the given objects, but, as we will see below, it is logically explained by violation of standard exchange procedure.

\(^{26}\) For the “spirit” of the gift, see Mauss 1966:8-10, 41-42. For details on this element of the Maussian approach, also see Weiner 1992:45-49.

\(^{27}\) Weiner 1992:49-50, 54-56, 60-65; the quotation is on p.56.
Homeran society has developed formalised mechanisms that institutionalise exchange and facilitate devolution of property. These consolidated mechanisms are also responsible for the circulation of inalienable possessions. Depending on the particular transactors and the exchange objects every time, movements of possessions or persons with inalienable attributes are stipulated and accomplished in three main ways: 1) by transference, involving simultaneous transmission to the recipient each time of a prior bond to the donor, 2) by achievement of a conventional degree of alienation necessary for the execution of the exchange, and 3) by temporary consignment only, which does not attempt to alter a prior inalienable bond, but is essentially predicated on the premise of return to the one who gives. Under these strictly regulated conditions, a quality with such a narrowly personal focus, as the inalienability of certain possessions or persons exchanged, becomes smoothly channelled into the inter-personal sphere and ultimately perpetuates community and intra-communal interactions. But if the movement of possessions or persons with inalienable attributes transgresses the terms of circulation dictated by the appropriate exchange mechanisms, the transaction fails. In this case, the strong, pre-existing attachment between the original authority figure and the possession or person in question prevails and enables the former to re-unite with the latter.

For all its rationalisation, a connection between the exchanger and exchange object that allows the return to the donor, a radical development by Homeric standards, transcends the social and temporal boundaries which the anthropologists ascribe to their own concept of inalienable possessions. More specifically, it exceeds the relationship between owners and objects and precedes the actual process of exchange. Instead, it originates in the relationship between humans themselves and between kin in particular.
Kinship rooted in blood ties connects humans in a manner that is by default inalienable and integral to their identity. Exchange simply allows this human affinity to become apparent and at times to expand to things. In accordance with the regulations of the mechanisms responsible for the transference of inalienable exchange objects in Homer, transactions that qualify the donors for potential re-acquisition of what they initially gave are: 1) exchanges with kin or exchanges of objects that reproduce and affirm kinship, 2) exchanges of kin, and 3) exchanges that do not interfere with, but preserve intrinsic kin relations that designate and construct someone’s identity.

Exchanges with kin in the form of bequeathal show how familial relationship is sanctioned between relatives and recognised by non-relatives through acquisition of objects. An individual validates his kin identity by inheriting a family token from a family member. The more significant the token, the stronger the impact of the person’s familial identity on non-kin. Considering that multiple transfers of an object supply it with additional prestige, inheritance of an object that has been re-exchanged several times increases the acknowledgement and respect that its heir enjoys from non-relatives. Exchange with kin not only emphasises the inalienable relation of the subjects, but also conveys this quality to the given object because, although strictly speaking it changes hands, it still remains within the confines of the family. In this manner, it features a peculiar way of returning to the original owner. This particular manifestation of inalienability in Homeric epic corresponds to Weiner’s model of inalienable possessions.

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29 Redfield (1994:111), although he does not examine the inalienable aspect of objects passed on by a father to his son, points out that inheritance is the institution that ensures the stability and continuity of the household.
in “primitive” societies.\textsuperscript{30} Agamemnon’s sceptre exemplifies an inalienable quality exactly in this hereditary manner. Aside from its remarkable origin and prior exchanges, Atreus bequeathed it to his brother Thyestes, who in turn bequeathed it to his nephew and Atreus’ own son Agamemnon.\textsuperscript{31}

In the case of Agamemnon’s sceptre, a family token is considered as returned to a rightful owner over and over, because it is fittingly re-exchanged among relatives according to the mechanism that stipulates inheritances. If, however, such a kinship affirmative token is lost to a proper owner against his will and is circulated to non-kin (in violation of the inheritance principles), it then qualifies to be re-acquired by the legitimate heir. Achilles, in particular, provides examples for both types of inalienability of inheritable objects, attachment as well as return to the proper owner (see subsequent chapters). In brief, after receiving arms from his father, Peleus, Achilles, on the one hand, keeps his spear out of circulation, while on the other hand, he is able to re-possess the rest of his weapons after they end up in Hector’s hands against his will.

Exchanges of kin are mainly conducted in marriage settlements and present the strongest inalienable attribute among all exchanges in Homeric society. The kinship that permanently ties a father and his daughter with an inalienable connection is translated into a long term guardianship which authorises the former to choose the latter’s husband according to his own judgement. Thereby, a father legitimately offers his daughter in marriage to the bridegroom. Examples of fathers choosing their daughters’ husbands

\textsuperscript{30} In fact, Weiner (1992:23) uses the Homeric passage referring to the transmission of Agamemnon’s sceptre as an incipit of her first chapter.
\textsuperscript{31} \textit{Il.} 2.105-108, 185-186.
abound in Homeric epic.\textsuperscript{32} As the husband becomes a new authority figure for the woman in marriage, the long term kinship bond that relates a daughter to her father from birth and the authority-relationship ensuing from it are blurred, but not disrupted.\textsuperscript{33} Their continuity is overtly manifested by the return of the daughter to her father in cases where there is an interruption of the marriage and the father of the bride is still alive. Icarius in the \textit{Odyssey}, for instance, can receive Penelope back to his home and can decide to marry her again to one of the suitors, since Odysseus is still missing.\textsuperscript{34}

Aside from marriage arrangements, women can also be taken away from their guardians during a raid or war. Capture of females by the winners during such military conflicts constitutes a legitimate mechanism of exchange of women in Homeric society. Victory in combat achieves a conventional separation of the captured women from their previous authority figures and facilitates their attachment to new ones. This separation is accomplished by the victor killing the woman’s guardian or sanctioned by the guardian’s lack of explicit effort or inability to bring about the woman’s restoration to him, which is perceived as an ostensible withdrawal from his authority over her. If, however, the father of a captured woman remains alive and does not passively resign from her guardianship, but expresses his wish to bring his daughter back, his will takes precedence over the will of the captor.\textsuperscript{35} The father of Andromache’s mother offers an example of a father acting

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item E.g. the Lycian king gave his daughter as a wife to Bellerophon (\textit{Il}. 6.179-195); King Priam promised Cassandra to Othryoneus (\textit{Il}. 13.365-369); Agamemnon offered one of his daughters to Achilles in exchange for his return to battle (\textit{Il}. 9.141-157, 283-299); Briseis’ marriage was arranged by her father and mother (\textit{Il}. 19,291).
\item Redfield (1994:122) remarks that a married woman is still “part of her father’s family.”
\item Cf. \textit{Od.} 1.274-278, 2.113-114, 130-133, 15.16-18. For details on this case, see Lacey 1966:57, 61-65.
\item Redfield (1994:122) mentions the examples of Andromache’s mother and Chryseis and argues that a father is always the one responsible to ransom a captured woman. He does not, however, offer any explanation for other cases, where there is no information regarding whether the fathers of certain captured women are still alive or dead and no ransoming request is made. See, for instance, Briseis, who talks about
\end{enumerate}
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as a guardian of his already married daughter. After the death of her husband, she returns to her father’s home and is possibly ransomed by him when she is captured by Achilles at the sack of Thebe.\textsuperscript{36} Chryses furnishes an example of a father claiming guardianship over his captured unmarried daughter and superseding the will of her captor.\textsuperscript{37} He comes to the Achaeian camp to ransom Chryseis and, despite the initial rejection of his request by Agamemnon, ultimately he achieves the return of his daughter to his custody.

Exchanges that preserve an established kinship \textit{status quo} are conducted through the loaning system. A loan facilitates only temporary movements of objects and presupposes their return to the one who gave them in the first place. In this fashion, transference does not ultimately separate the object in movement from its giver, but instead preserves his ownership rights over it. By virtue of this, a loan constitutes a way to exchange without detaching, or, figuratively speaking, without really exchanging. This system is particularly apt for the exchange of inalienable tokens, which are by default inseparable attributes of their donors. Featuring the least invasive manner of transferring possessions, it does not interfere with how inalienable qualities single out an individual and define his personality on the basis of his unique consanguineal kinship and family lineage. In other words, a loan does not attempt to alter intrinsic kin relations underlying inalienable attributes, but under the premise of their mandatory return it perpetuates them and even proclaims them publicly. Odysseus, for instance, borrows Agamemnon’s sceptre, an inalienable family heirloom, in order to assume authority for the purposes of

\textsuperscript{36} \textit{Il.} 6.427-428.
\textsuperscript{37} \textit{Il.} 1.12-21, 370-375.
his speaking to the assembly of the Achaeans. It is understood that the sceptre will be returned to its owner after the performance of this task, though the relevant details are omitted from the narrative. Presumably there were previous assembles held during the ten years siege of Troy, where the sceptre was used in a comparable way, and Agamemnon still has it in his possession at this point of the war.

Illegitimate devolution of an inalienable attribute against the principles of the lending system enables the proper owner of the loaned object to regain it and recover from the familial deficit to his persona caused by the loss of it. Achilles’ loss of the divine arms he inherited by his father after their loan to Patroclus will be studied in detail in the final chapters of this dissertation. In brief, this loss deprives the hero of a token that embodies his birth history, origin, as well as familial relationships and thereby help to construct his unique heroic identity. Transgression of the principles of the loan, according to which the arms were temporarily consigned to Patroclus, entitles Achilles to a restoration of his arms and also of his identity, which was disrupted by their loss.

Conclusion

In sum, re-exchange, although largely neglected by Homeric studies, sheds light on two different aspects of exchange in Homeric epic: ownership and the potential inalienability of what is being transferred every time. The former seems to be the general rule governing the practice of giving and receiving in Homer, while the latter is a correlative of a few specific transactions. The overwhelming frequency of examples confirming a recipient’s ownership over his new acquisitions renders this element an expected effect,

38 II. 2.185-206, 245-269, 278-332.
as well as a powerful motive of Homeric exchange. Thus, change of ownership becomes an important factor contributing to the pervasiveness of exchange in Homer. Inalienability, on the other hand, pertains to only the most valuable and exclusive possessions owned by a few prominent heroes and desired by many others. Those possessions, indispensable to their primary owners, appear to modify, resist, and occasionally even reverse their circulation.

Despite the statistical inequality between these two aspects of Homeric exchange quantified by their relative number of respected cases in the epics and despite their seemingly contradictory forces, the *Iliad* makes a point of stressing their equal importance and reconciling them in the name of social cohesiveness. More specifically, the poem establishes the norm of ownership over new acquisitions, but devotes the most lengthy and crucial parts of its plot, to special cases of inalienable possessions. In addition, it draws attention to the competitive elements between these two aspects only to illuminate the particular conditions of their cooperation within the context of the community. For, although they both relate to the interests of the individual, their oppositional considerations are responsible for clashes that affect the continuation of community at large.

Co-operation between private ownership and inalienability of possessions is then ensured by a set of fixed principles that aim at balancing the antagonism between self and other and between personal and interpersonal concerns. Compliance with these principles harmonises the needs of the individual with those of his society and inhibits the centrifugal inclinations of the former, making it an inseparable unit of the latter. The phenomenon of re-exchange in the *Iliad* exhibited in free, restricted, and forbidden
successive transfers of the same token highlights both the benefits and the consequences ensuing from the respect and the potential violation of those principles. In problematising re-exchange, the poem confronts the ways in which the individual is identified, acknowledged, honoured, offended, or remunerated by its society. Sometimes an offense suffered by an individual is so profound that society proves unable to make amends for it. In this case, the epic, through its plot rich in symbolism, undertakes to compensate for the failure of the society it features.
CHAPTER TWO – THE FABULA OF ACHILLES’ ARMS

Introduction

The previous chapter offered a brief overview of the practice of re-exchange in Homer and the main conceptual issues associated with it. This discussion will serve as a foundation for the consideration of the story of Achilles’ arms in the Iliad, which is, indeed, the story of their origin and subsequent process of circulation. The present chapter, in particular, will proceed with a comparative examination of the tale of the arms in the Iliad and in extant non-Homeric sources. Such a synthesizing approach to this topic will show the extent to which Homeric epic conforms to or diverts from the broader tradition of the story. Agreement with or departure from the version of the story transmitted by extra-Iliadic sources has implications for the degree of creative licence enjoyed by the Iliadic bard and our understanding of the inventive process of oral poetry. This study will suggest that the Homeric conception of the re-exchange of Achilles’ arms realises a compositional idiosyncrasy in terms that it exhibits innovation in a traditional manner. The circulation-process of the arms forms a peculiar internal context that serves particular purposes of its encompassing Iliadic narrative, but also structures the temporality of the Iliad within the larger external temporality of the Trojan War epic tradition.
The Arms in the Iliad

The background and implementation of the first set of Achilles’ arms as related in the *Iliad* is coherent and complete. Passages about the background of the arms do not provide information in chronological order, yet they account for the arms’ origin and qualities. The successive stages of their complex circulation are also indicated. The circulation of the arms then continues within the course of the *Iliad*’s narrative, up until these objects end up in Achilles’ hands for second time. A summary of the arms’ story line, both pre-Iliadic and intra-Iliadic, will be useful for the itemised examination of the circulation narratives of the arms in the following chapters of this dissertation. My re-arrangement of relevant information about the arms in the *Iliad* constitutes, in narratological terms, a *fabula*, or coherent, chronological reconstruction of a narrative.¹

A. The first set of Achilles’ arms consists of greaves, corselet, sword, shield, helmet with horse-hair crest, and an ash spear (*Il*. 16.130-141).

B. The arms (along with the horses) constitute markers of distinction for Achilles. It is repeatedly stated in the *Iliad* that the hero has the best arms (and the best horses) in the Achaean camp. His arms (and horses) are splendid, glorious, and immortal (*Il*. 11.796, 17.194-196, 23.276-278).


¹ For details on the *fabula* as a layer in a narrative text, see de Jong 1987:xiv, 31-32; 2001:xiv.
D. Achilles’ first set of arms (with the exception of the spear) was a (wedding) gift of the gods to Peleus (*Il.* 17.194-196, 18.84-85).²

E. When Peleus grew old he passed his arms to his son (*Il.* 17.196-197).


G. Achilles allows Patroclus to wear his arms and lead the Myrmidons to battle in order to offer respite to the Achaeans in the war (*Il.* 16.129, 18.451).


I. Apollo strikes off Achilles’ helmet, shield, and corselet from Patroclus’s body (*Il.* 16.793-800, 802-804).


L. Achilles wears a new panoply that Thetis brings him from Hephaestus, but he also takes his father’s ash spear in order to join battle again and avenge the death of his friend (*Il.* 19.368-385, 387-388).

M. Asteropaeus cannot wrench with his hand Achilles’ spear from the river-bank and he un成功fully tries to break it (*Il.* 21.174-178).

N. Hector fights Achilles in the arms that he stripped from dead Patroclus (*Il.* 22.306-311, 322-323).

O. Achilles’ spear initially misses Hector and sticks in the ground, but Athena restores it to him (*Il.* 22.273-277).

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² Edwards (1991:140, 156-157) offers a brief review of the bibliography on the first set of arms, as the work of Hephaestus and the gods’ gift at the wedding of Peleus and Thetis.

Q. Achilles strips his own arms from Hector’s dead body (*Il.* 22.368-369).

Two immediate observations come from the story of Achilles’ first set of arms in the *Iliad*: 1) Achilles’ first panoply consists of both defensive armour (greaves, corselet, shield, helmet)\(^3\) and offensive weapons (sword, ash spear), and 2) there is not a single instance in the whole poem where a warrior is reported to wear the complete set. Achilles is never portrayed fighting in his first set of arms in the *Iliad*.\(^4\) Patroclus and subsequently Hector who wear them lack the ash spear. Achilles himself uses his spear together with the second set of arms that Thetis fetches him from Hephaestus. Therefore, when in use, Achilles’ first panoply is always divided into two parts: a) the defensive weapons together with the sword\(^5\) and b) the ash spear.

The separation of the arms is sometimes apparent and some other times concealed under general vocabulary for war equipment. The term τεύχεα, in particular, is employed to refer both to the armour as a whole and to the incomplete set which lacks the ash spears.

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4. Wilson 1974:385. Occasional flashbacks to Achilles’ pre-Iliadic war achievements either on the battlefield of Troy or during the sack of its neighbouring cities lead the audience to assume that Achilles used his first set of arms in the past before his quarrel with Agamemnon and his withdrawal from the war.

5. There is a debate concerning whether Patroclus took Achilles’ or his own sword when he wore the rest of Achilles’ arms in *Il.* 16.130-138. The controversy originates in the fact that Hephaestus is not said to make a sword for Achilles while forging a new set of arms for him in *Il.* 18.478-613, yet a sword is included in the arming scene of Achilles in *Il.* 19.372-373. The scholiast on *Il.* 18.460 proposes that Thetis gave Achilles another Hephaestus-made sword that she received from her father Nereus and that Patroclus took his own sword with him when he donned Achilles’ arms. Hesiod fr. 209.2-3 (M-W) presents a story according to which the gods gave Peleus a magic sword made by Hephaestus, as a reward for his chastity. In that case, Hephaestus would not need to make a new sword for Achilles, because the latter might already have a second god-made sword at his disposal. There is no indication in the *Iliad*, however, that Patroclus might have taken his own sword or that Achilles might have received a second sword from his father. Kakrides (1961:297) maintains that Patroclus picks up Achilles’ sword and attributes the oversight in Achilles’ arming scene to the formulaic nature of the arming scenes in general. A similar oversight occurs in the disarming scene of Patroclus in *Il.* 16.791-804, where Apollo knocks off the spear, shield, and corselet from the hero’s body, but there is no reference to the greaves and the sword. For more details, see Janko 1992:412.
spear. When Nestor prompts Patroclus to join battle wearing Achilles’ panoply, he uses the word τεύχεα without distinguishing between the spear and the rest of the arms (II. 11. 796-801). Similarly, when Patroclus asks Achilles’ permission to wear his arms and lead the Myrmidons to war, and when Achilles consents to his friend’s request the word τεύχεα is used to denote the whole set (II. 16.38-43 and 129). During the arming scene of Patroclus, the narrator describes the hero wearing the arms one by one. The narrator also refers to the ash spear, which shows that this weapon is normally a part of these τεύχεα, but he explains that this time it will be excluded from the rest of the arms (II. 16.130-141). Beyond this point whenever the term τεύχεα is applied to Achilles’ first panoply, it always refers to the rest of the arms save the spear, although there is no relevant reminder or explanation by the narrator or the characters.\(^6\)

The division of the arms in two parts is connected to the circulation of the arms in the present time of the Iliad. Patroclus wears Achilles’ arms in order to help the hard-pressed Achaeans, but he cannot wield the spear and he leaves it behind. Subsequently Hector, who kills and despoils Patroclus of the arms, also lacks the spear. The successive transitions of the arms from Achilles to Patroclus and from Patroclus to Hector move the plot of the second half of the poem forward. The simultaneous loss of his friend and his arms leads Achilles to join battle again. His return to war carries the action of the Iliad beyond the stalling point that was created by the hero’s refusal to accept Agamemnon’s gifts proposed to him by the envoys, if he would fight with the Achaeans again against the Trojans. If the circulation of the arms is a decisive factor for the development of the plot, the division of the arms is a constituent element of this factor. It defines the

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transitions of the arms as incomplete and creates a need as well as an expectation for their reunion. Achilles’ return to battle cannot bring Patroclus back to life and reunite the two friends, but it recovers Achilles’ lost arms and brings the whole first set together again.

The motif of the separation of the arms in two parts during the present time of the Iliad provides thematic links to their origin in the pre-Iliadic past. According to the narrator and Achilles himself, the arms were given by the immortals to Peleus, who in turn passed them to his son. But there is a distinction in the individual origin of the arms. The immortal centaur Cheiron is named as the donor of the ash spear, while the Olympian gods collectively are understood as the donors of the rest of the arms. The Iliad becomes more obscure and elliptical regarding the circumstances under which Peleus received these gifts from the gods. There is absolute silence about the occasion on which Cheiron gave Achilles’ father the ash spear. On the other hand, the rest of the arms are specified as the gods’ gift to Peleus on the day of his marriage with Thetis only in one of the two references where the Olympians are reported as the donors. The different donors and the lack of information connecting the two instances of deities giving weapons to the hero lead to the conclusion that the Iliad favours a version of the story according to which the spear was bestowed on Peleus at an independent time and occasion from the rest of the arms. This lack of specific information makes the audience wonder whether the spear was also a wedding gift offered individually by Cheiron. Nevertheless, whether he received these arms separately or at the same time, Peleus in old age passed them down to his son. Together the defensive and offensive weapons that Peleus received from the immortals constitute the first set of the ἀμβροτα τεύχεα of Achilles in the Iliad.

7 Il. 16.143-144 = 19.390-391, 17.194-196, 18.84-85.
The Arms in Extra-Iliadic Sources

The vagueness of the information concerning the origin and the past of the arms before they came to Achilles’ hands has puzzled scholars and has led to the question whether the history that the Iliad ascribes to these objects is known from tradition or is due to ad hoc invention. The scarcity of evidence that securely predates the Iliad compels us to use all relevant available sources, whether early or late, and to compare them with the Iliadic version of the story. In general, the surviving accounts that refer to the wedding of Peleus and Thetis or Achilles’ arms cover a wide spectrum of events that spans from a pre-Iliadic past to a post-Iliadic future. A detailed examination of all relevant literary and iconographical sources, although interesting, would be a long digression in a project that focuses on the Iliad. The current section will only summarize the information transmitted by the main non-Iliadic sources with the intention to illuminate their similarities to and differences from the Iliadic version of the story of the arms. Such a comparative study will offer a better understanding of the broader fabula of the re-exchange of Achilles’ arms and of the Homeric contribution to this fabula within the binding conventions of oral poetry. I will argue that the Iliad manipulates the re-exchange process of the arms in order to mediate at the same time its compliance with the requirements of epic tradition and its own individual mark within this tradition.

Among the sources that refer to pre-Iliadic events, the scholiast of the Iliad mentions the account of the Cypria, according to which the gods went to the wedding of Peleus and Thetis on Mount Pelion and brought gifts to Peleus; in addition, Cheiron offered a spear to Peleus as a wedding gift, which was made from an ash tree cut by the
centaur, polished by Athena, and assembled by Hephaestus (fr. 3 Bernabé = scholia AD on *Il.* 16.140). Similarly, Apollodorus in *Library* 3.13.5 tells us that the gods attended the wedding of Peleus and Thetis and that Cheiron presented the bridegroom with an ash spear, while Poseidon gave him the two immortal horses Balius and Xanthus. Pindar, on the other hand, in *Nemean* 3.33 refers to Peleus having made the spear himself. The *Little Iliad* includes a description of the spear that Cheiron gave to Peleus (fr. 5 Bernabé). The François vase from the early sixth century BC depicts, among other scenes, the gods attending the wedding of Peleus and Thetis carrying gifts. Cheiron also proceeds to the wedding holding a branch with slain animals, which Stewart identifies as the future ash spear of Peleus.

Other vase iconography from the mid-sixth century suggests that Thetis gave divine armour to her son before he left from Phthia for the war. The famous plate by Lydos, for instance, shows Achilles arming himself in front of Peleus, Thetis and Neoptolemus. Burgess argues that the presence of Peleus in the image suggests that this scene took place in Phthia before the Trojan War and should be distinguished from the arming scene of Achilles in *Il.* 19.368-391. The inclusion of Neoptolemus in an arming scene in Phthia is troubling, because he was supposed to have been born later by Deidameia in Skyros. In agreement with Scaife, Burgess considers the scene as

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9 Stewart 1983:64-65.
12 Burgess 2009:23.
“temporally synoptic, looking back to Achilles’ origins (Peleus), pointing forward to the impending birth of his son (Neoptolemos), and looking beyond to the hero’s Trojan battles and eventual death (the armor).”

13 Euripides also favours versions of the story in which Achilles received his armour in Phthia. In the Electra (422-485), Thetis and the Nereids bring the Hephaestus-made armour to Phthia; in the Iphigeneia at Aulis (1067-1079) Achilles, upon his arrival at Troy, already wears arms given to him by Thetis.

Pausanias 3.3.8 claims he saw the spear that Cheiron gave to Peleus in the temple of Athena at Phaselis and gives a description of it. Catullus in 64.278-284, describing the wedding of Peleus and Thetis, mentions that the gods came carrying gifts and that Cheiron came bringing a flower garland.

Among the sources that refer to post-Iliadic events, Proclus’ summary of the Aethiopis tells us of the death of Achilles and of the battle that broke out over his body. In this battle, Ajax lifted Achilles’ body from the battlefield and Odysseus kept the Trojans off and defended him. The details of Achilles’ funeral rites follow and Proclus concludes his résumé by saying that a dispute arose over Achilles’ arms between Odysseus and Ajax. In the summary of the Little Iliad, Proclus mentions the judgement of the arms, as well as Ajax’s madness and suicide after the arms were awarded to Odysseus. There seems to be a variation, however, in the particular way that the judgment was resolved among the sources of the Little Iliad. Proclus names Athena as the responsible advisor for Odysseus’ victory in the dispute. On the other hand, the Little Iliad (fr. 2 Bernabê) explains that the issue was decided when, on Nestor’s advice, the Achaeans sent scouts to spy on the Trojans. The spies overheard two Trojan girls disagreeing about which of the two Achaean heroes played the most important role in the

rescue of Achilles’ corpse from the Trojan field. The girl that prevailed argued that Odysseus, who fought the Trojans and covered Ajax’s retreat with the corpse, undertook a much harder task than Ajax. The fragment stops at that point, but we can infer that the report of the outcome of the girls’ argument would have secured Achilles’ arms for Odysseus.

Pindar in Nemean 8.23-32 assigns the issue of the judgement of the arms to a panel of Achaean judges, who decided in favour of Odysseus, and attributes Ajax’s suicide to their unfair verdict. In the Odyssey 5.308-310, Odysseus may allude to his role of keeping the Trojans off while Ajax carried Achilles’ body away from the battlefield. When Odysseus sees Ajax’s ghost in the Underworld at Odyssey 11.543-551 he recalls his victory in their quarrel. He says that the Trojans and Pallas Athena were the judges who bestowed the arms on him and he mentions Ajax’s suicide that followed their dispute. A scholion on Odyssey 11.547 informs us that the Achaeans questioned Trojan prisoners regarding which of the two heroes deserved Achilles’ arms more. Aeschylus in his lost tragedy Judgement of the Arms treated the issue. In his also lost Thracian Women, he might have explored the theme of Ajax’s suicide. Sophocles’ Ajax builds on the background of the arms having been allotted to Odysseus and engages with the theme of Ajax’s madness and suicide that followed that decision. Apollodorus in Epitome 5.4 refers to the battle for Achilles’ corpse; he reports that Ajax killed Glaucus in this battle and carried the corpse, while Odysseus fought his assailants. In Epitome 5.6-7, he

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14 Davies (1989:64) suggests that the two versions offered by Proclus and by the relevant fragment on how the judgment of the arms was decided do not have to be considered as mutually exclusive, but can be complementary. He explains that there might be just one and the same version that includes a “double-motivation” in the decision of the issue.
15 See Burgess 2009:40.
17 Radt 1985:205-208. Also see Mette 1959:105-106.
mentions that the Trojans were the judges in the contest for the arms that followed the funeral games for Achilles and they decided in favour of Odysseus. Quintus of Smyrna in his *Posthomerica* 3.204-387 also describes the battle over the corpse of Achilles and refers to Ajax killing Glaucus among others. Later in *Posthomerica* 5.121-321, he specifies that Trojan captives judged the competitors for the arms. Moreover, there are multiple early depictions of Ajax carrying the corpse of Achilles and of his suicide, dated from the end of the eighth century to about 600BC.18

It is obvious that the judgement of the arms and Ajax’s subsequent fate are very well documented in the sources. In addition, there is surviving evidence about other post-Iliadic events related to the theme of the arms. Proclus’ summary of the *Little Iliad* informs us that, after Achilles’ death, Odysseus fetches Neoptolemus from Scyros and gives him the arms of Achilles. Finally, Pausanias 1.35.4 mentions that, after the Achaeans departed from Troy and Odysseus was shipwrecked, the arms were washed ashore at Ajax’s grave.

The review of the non-Iliadic accounts that refer to the wedding of Peleus and Thetis and Achilles’ arms shows that there are five elements that occur most through the various versions of the myth:

1) the gods went to the wedding of Peleus and Thetis and brought gifts,

2) Cheiron also attended the wedding and brought a gift,

3) Peleus owned an ash spear.

4) Thetis gave Hephaestus-made armour to Achilles in Phthia,

5) after the death of Achilles, a quarrel over his arms arose between Odysseus and Ajax.

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18 See Burgess 2001:36, 205 n.105; For a list of early representations of Ajax carrying the corpse of Achilles and of his suicide, see Burgess 2001 Appendix C, nos. 26-36; also figure A.
The Arms and Homeric Innovation

Although these elements identified above are relatively persistent in the sources, they occur in a variable manner and there is no version that includes all five of them. A comparison of the persistent elements of the sources that refer to the wedding of Peleus and Thetis or Achilles’ arms with the history that the *Iliad* ascribes to the arms shows that the Iliadic account of the story deviates from the rest of the preserved sources. The fact that only the *Iliad* presents Peleus as the recipient of the immortal arms on his wedding day and as the one who gave them to Achilles led scholars to conclude that this idea is not traditional, but invented.\(^{19}\) On the other hand, the story according to which Achilles received his armour from his mother in Phthia before he departed for Troy is generally considered to be much earlier than the *Iliad*.\(^{20}\) In addition, the availability of early evidence and the abundance of both literary and artistic sources on post-Iliadic events, such as Ajax carrying Achilles’ body to safety, the judgement of the arms, and Ajax’s suicide, strongly suggest that these stories were traditional and predated the *Iliad*.\(^{21}\) Tradition would require Achilles to possess only one set of armour, because two would render the story of the quarrel between Ajax and Odysseus over Achilles’ arms meaningless.\(^{22}\) Edwards argues that the *Iliad* highlights Peleus as the donor of the arms in order to allow Thetis to give a second divine panoply to her son after the first one has

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21 Burgess 2001:40. For details on the sources for these stories, see above in this chapter.
22 Burgess 2001:40, 206 n.120.
been lost to Hector. According to the neoanalysts, the second set of divine armour offered by Thetis in *Il.* 18.615-617 is invented as a parallel to the divine armour that Eos gave to Memnon in the *Aethiopis.*

More specifically, the story of Achilles’ arms in the *Iliad* employs traditional themes, such as Peleus possessing an ash spear, the gods and Cheiron attending the wedding of Peleus and Thetis and bringing gifts, and Achilles receiving immortal arms from his mother in Phthia, but blends them in a new version. In this new version, Cheiron gives Peleus an ash spear at some unspecified time and the gods attend the wedding of Peleus and Thetis, where they give Peleus divine armour as a gift. Peleus bequeaths both the spear and the armour to his son, who takes them to Troy. After Achilles’ anger and withdrawal from the war, Patroclus borrows his arms (save the spear) and fights against the Trojans. Eventually, Hector kills Patroclus and gains the divine arms. Thetis brings a new set of divine arms to Achilles in Troy in order to fight Hector and avenge the death of his friend.

Willcock, who treats the issue of *ad hoc* invention in the Homeric epics, argues that the oral epic poet invents mythological exempla for the needs of his immediate context. For instance, in his discussion of the story of Niobe in *Il.* 24.602-617, he contends that the unfamiliar details of the myth of Niobe in the poem are invented in

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24 Pestalozzi 1945:43; Schadowaldt 1965:171; Schoeck 1961:53-54; Kullmann 2005:16. Also see Edwards 1990:316-321, 1991:156. For Memnon’s Hephaestus-made armour, see Proclus’ summary of the *Aethiopis* (Bernabé). There has been a debate whether Memnon or Achilles was the first hero with a divine mother and immortal arms. Contrary to the dominant neoanalytical view, West (2003:4) considers Achilles as the model for Memnon. Burgess (2009:28) suggests that the motif is typological and does not seek to establish priority of one hero over the other, but considers the duel of two heroes in divine armour, as it occurs in *Il.* 22.273-369, as a reflection of the “Achilles *fabula.*”
25 Willcock 1977:45.
order to create a “parallel in the paradeigma.”

Dué criticises Willcock’s argument of invention “for the needs of the moment” because it suggests that oral performance leads to mythological invention, which would contradict the work of Parry and Lord. She points out that if the content changes, as Willcock proposes, the diction should change respectively. But according to Parry, oral composition requires a stock of traditional diction, which expresses traditional content, and changes in the dictional stock occur very gradually over generations of oral poets.

Slatkin concurs that we do not always have sufficient sources to identify and corroborate mythological material that is incorporated in the Homeric poems, but, strictly speaking, it does not form a part of their principal plot. Nevertheless, she disagrees with the concept of ad hoc invention of various mythological details for the sake of a rhetorical effect that suits the immediate needs of certain character speeches. She maintains, in fact, that hortatory contexts would be likely to employ the most recognisable mythological examples in order to obtain full persuasive force; she proposes, instead, that “selection, combination, and adaptation” are inherent properties of oral poetics and points out that the proper audience of oral poetry would have been familiar with the mythology included in compositions such as the Iliad and the Odyssey. According to her, allusion to stories or mere details that may initially seem not closely pertinent to the main plot of the poems becomes a means to introduce and recall useful and meaningful mythological themes for the main narrative. In particular, information drawn from Thetis’ own past, regarding the Nereid’s rescue of Zeus from

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26 Wilcock 1964:142.
30 Slatkin 1991:114-118; the quotation is on p.114.
binding and her marriage to Peleus, is integrated to the *Iliad* in order to recall traditional myths about Zeus’ supremacy.\(^{31}\) These mythological allusions, Slatkin continues, invest Thetis with a cosmic quality that compensates for her seemingly weak position as a secondary deity in the *Iliad*; reminiscence of the goddess’ powerful past also creates a meaningful contrast to her grieving present and implicates Achilles, for whom she grieves, in the larger theme of human life in relation to cosmic structure.\(^{32}\)

Willcock’s and Slatkin’s approaches are both convincing for the particular contexts they examine. Yet the story of Achilles’ first set of arms in the *Iliad* seems more complex than the examples on which these two scholars concentrate. The review of the relevant sources proves that there is plenty of available evidence to corroborate the key elements of the mythology invested in the origin and circulation-process of the arms, as they are related in the *Iliad*. A comparative study of this story with the relevant surviving sources, however, leads to the conclusion that there is a degree of invention involved in the Iliadic version of the account of the arms. As discussed above, the neoanalysts, utilizing evidence both from the *Iliad* and from external sources, draw the same conclusion in relation to this story. Such a conclusion would seem to confirm Willcock’s argument about the possibility of *ad hoc* invention in the Homeric epics.

On the other hand, the inventive quality of the arms’ story differs from the qualities that define Willcock’s conception of *ad hoc* invention in the Homeric poems.

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\(^{31}\) Slatkin (1991:59-70) sees a connection between Thetis summoning Briareus in Zeus’ rescue from Hera’s, Athena’s, and Poseidon’s attempt to bind him in *Il.* 1.396-406 and Zeus overthrowing Cronus and the other Titans with the support of his brothers as well as Briareus in Hesiod *Theog.* 644-719. With regard to her marriage, Thetis talks briefly to Hephaestus, in *Il.* 18.429-434, about Zeus forcing her to marry a mortal man, despite her unwillingness. Slatkin (1991:55-56, 70-77, 96-98) associates this statement of the sea goddess with the mythological tradition that emphasizes the role of Thetis’ marriage in keeping the cosmic order followed by Pindar in *Isth.* 8.29-38, Aeschylus (?) in *Prometheus Bound*, and Apollodorus in *Library* 3.13.5. On the *Iliad* at the same time recalling and suppressing this tradition, see Schein 1984:91-92.

\(^{32}\) Slatkin 1991:77-105.
More specifically, the details that form the account of Achilles’ weapons in the *Iliad* are not concentrated in one and only one passage and are not marginal to the plot of the poem, as is the story of Niobe, for instance. Moreover unlike the mythological example of Niobe, the tale of the arms is not central to any rhetorical argument of persuasion or dissuasion; hence, it is not devised to create a superficial parallel precedent in order to serve the needs of an immediate hortatory context. On the contrary, the history of the immortal weapons is not presented formally in a linear and sequential manner, but only in passing references dispersed throughout the second half of the poem. As will be demonstrated in the following chapters, such references take place before or during crucial moments of the *Iliad* and have a meaningful contribution to these moments, which makes the topic of the arms an indispensable and organic part of the main narrative.

The constitutive parts of the history of the immortal weapons and its functional significance for the plot of the *Iliad* exhibit qualities comparable to those that Slatkin attributes to her concept of mythological allusion and the objective it fulfills in Homeric epic. In particular, the inventive manner of the Iliadic version of the arms’ story consists of a re-creative selection, combination, exclusion, amplification, and adaptation of traditional elements of pre-existing accounts of this topic. The collective effect of this version is of a much wider scale than the marginal and isolated narrative situations, where Willcock discovers *ad hoc* invention. In accordance with Slatkin’s analysis of Homeric allusion, the Iliadic account of the divine weapons provides a supplementary extra-Iliadic context with a greater thematic impact on the primary context of the plot of
the poem and its characters.\textsuperscript{33} In other words, the story of Achilles’ arms in the \textit{Iliad} is being inventive in an allusive manner and for an allusive purpose.

This kind of innovation within the range of a flexible tradition, as outlined above, conforms completely to the rules of oral composition as well as to the neoanalyst approach to the myths and motifs employed by Homeric epic. The fact that the innovative elements of the tale of Achilles’ first set of arms in the \textit{Iliad} are components of traditional stories suggests that they are already incorporated in a traditional system. That means that they are already accompanied by their own traditional phraseology. Their creative reapplication to the Iliadic context abides completely by Parry’s principle that “the poet, who would not think of trying to express his ideas outside the traditional field of thought of the poetry, can make his verses easily by means of a diction which time has proved to be the best.”\textsuperscript{34} Moreover, innovation consisting of easily identifiable traditional elements aids the poem in creating its own past and imposes assumptions of foreknowledge of the story on the audience. According to the theory of oral composition, familiarity with a story originated in tradition is what allows the audience to assess the merit and approve of an oral poem.\textsuperscript{35} The traditional manner of Iliadic innovation displayed in the story of the arms manipulates and transfers the audience’s attention from the novelty aspects of this version to the particular associations it carries for certain characters and plot developments. In brief, the Homeric account of the arms validates the

\textsuperscript{34} Parry 1932:8.  
\textsuperscript{35} Lord (1995:3) shows that an oral poet does not seek to divert from tradition and differentiate himself. Parry (1932:9-10) speaks of the conservative nature of the “oral style,” which allows for very slight changes on the level of diction in the form of individual formulas. Martin 1993:228: “the full ‘meaning,’ and the full enjoyment, of traditional poetry come only when one has heard it all before a hundred times, in a hundred different versions.”
Iliad as oral poetry while, at the same time, it has an innovative significance for the Iliadic poetic context in particular.

Such an inventive reworking of tradition creates a greater background against which, as the following chapters will show, the complexity of the story of the Iliad as a whole can be fully illuminated and grasped. Scholars discussing the first set of Achilles’ immortal arms in the Iliad have pointed out that, unlike Peleus and Achilles, Patroclus and Hector, who also wear them, lack a relationship with the divine and as such they are not able to handle them. Therefore, the innovative combination of the immortal arms with the wedding theme of a mortal to an immortal provides a model of mortal heroes who are allowed to assume immortal attributes. Failure to measure up to the model of Peleus and Achilles signifies illegitimate possession of the immortal arms and results in the destruction of the heroes within the temporal framework of the Iliad. Legitimate possession of immortal attributes cannot help someone evade the rule of mortality, which applies to all humans, but it has the power to expand the lifespan of even the shortest-living human and postpone his death until after the dramatic time of the Iliad.

Although the timeframe of the Iliad does not allow the inclusion of scenes that happen after the death of Achilles, scholars have pointed out that the poem alludes even to Ajax’s post-Iliadic myths. According to the neoanalysts, the death of Patroclus, the fight over his corpse, and his funeral rites in the Iliad mirror the death of Achilles, the battle over his corpse, and his own funeral rites. Contrary to the traditional role of Ajax


37 The story of Achilles’ arms in the Iliad has a paradigmatic quality. This quality, however, has a much wider application and value than Wilcox’s concept of ad hoc invention for the sake of a passing and marginal example with no particular weight for the rest of the poem.

38 For bibliography on the neoanalyst argument, see Burgess 2001:219 n.98, 221 n.121, 222 n.129. For an assessment of the neoanalyst views and a detailed examination of Patroclus’ death and its aftermath in the
carrying Achilles’ body while Odysseus defends his retreat, in *Il.* 17.530-535, 669-672, and 700-753 Ajax plays a more active part. He, together with the Locrian Ajax, is responsible for pushing the Trojans away while Menelaus and Meriones bring Patroclus’ corpse to the ships. Nevertheless, Ajax’s contribution to the rescue of the dead bodies of both Patroclus and Achilles is decisive. Even though the roles he played in each case are not identical, it is very likely that his participation in the battle over Patroclus’ corpse is an allusion to his participation in the battle over Achilles’ corpse. Moreover, many scholars see the wrestling contest between Ajax and Odysseus in the funeral games of Patroclus in *Il.* 23.700-739 as a reflection of their later quarrel for the arms of Achilles. Although they share the prizes equally after the contest Odysseus seems to have an advantage over Ajax during the match.

The fact that in most surviving accounts the role that Ajax played in rescuing Achilles’ corpse weighed in the decision of the judgement of the arms, which caused Ajax’s suicide, indicates that these three events are closely connected. An allusion to any of these events in the *Iliad* hints not only at the post-Iliadic fate of Ajax, but also at the related issue of the post-Iliadic circulation of Achilles’ arms. In the end, the allusive

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*Iliad* in relation to Achilles’ death and its aftermath in non-Homeric sources, see Burgess 2001:74-84. For the “*fabula* of the death of Achilles” and the ancient sources that refer to the hero’s death and the events following it, see Burgess 2009:38-42.

39 For the inversion of Ajax’s role in the two battles over the bodies of Patroclus and Achilles, see Burgess 2001:83, 223 n.134.

40 For particular correspondences between Ajax’ roles in rescuing Patroclus’ corpse in the *Iliad* and in rescuing Achilles’ corpse in non-Homeric sources, see Burgess 2001:82-83, 223 n.132. Also see Burgess 2009:39-40, 143 nn.32, 33, 34.

41 Schein 1984:25. For the main bibliography on this argument, see Burgess 2001:222 n.122.

42 The favourable decision for Odysseus in the non-Homeric judgement of the arms might also be alluded to in the individual performances of the two heroes in other games, where they did not compete with each other. More specifically in *Il.* 23.740-797, Odysseus with the help of Athena comes first in the foot-race and receives the first prize. In *Il.* 23.798-825, Ajax fights against Diomedes in the close combat contest. The Achaeans interfere and stop the contest, because they fear for Ajax’s life. Despite the unfinished fight, Diomedes is in a more favourable position and he is rewarded with the first prize by Achilles.

43 For details on the sources in relation to these events, see above in this chapter.
power of the story of the arms and its interconnected events in the *Iliad* not only leaves a decisive mark on the plot of the poem, but also contextualises this plot in relation to its aftermath in the broader story of the Trojan War.

**Conclusion**

Overall, the theme of the circulation of Achilles’ arms serves a multiple purpose in the *Iliad*. Synchronically, it is a poetic device that restarts the plot of the *Iliad* after Achilles’ persistent withdrawal from battle and brings the poem to its end. Diachronically, it has a coherent pre-Iliadic past and post-Iliadic future, which are artfully incorporated or alluded to in its Iliadic present. Although the *Iliad* does not present the story of the arms in a linear manner, it provides all the pieces necessary for its linear assemblage. Reconstruction of the full story of the arms enriches the *Iliad* with a three dimensional perspective that exceeds the spatial and temporal limits of its 15,693 lines, as it situates the poem in the background of the saga of the entire Trojan War. The full story of the arms extends the beginning of the *Iliad* long before its formal *in medias res* starting point, which is the quarrel between Agamemnon and Achilles. Implicitly, the story of the arms stretches the *Iliad*’s beginning even before the abduction of Helen by Paris, which was the cause of the war, and locates it as far in the past as the time of the wedding of Peleus and Thetis. It was during this wedding that Eris caused the quarrel between the three goddesses, which led to the judgement of Paris, the abduction of Helen, and the Trojan War. The Iliadic story of the arms also notionally prolongs the end of the *Iliad* far beyond the formal ending point of the poem, which consists of the death of Hector and
his lamentation by the Trojans, and even beyond its explicit future images of the much
discussed death of Achilles and his lamentation by the Nereids. It looks forward to a
point after the death of Achilles and the quarrel between Ajax and Odysseus over his
arms. The final future glimpse of the arms offered proleptically in the *Iliad* is when their
judgment is resolved and they are awarded to Odysseus. The allusion to the arms in the
hands of Odysseus, the mastermind of the Trojan horse, foreshadows a switch of focus
onto this hero and signals a significant temporal approach of the *Iliad* to the sack of Troy
and the end of the Trojan War. In this way, the circulation-process of the arms, as it is
presented, recalled, and alluded to in the *Iliad* promotes independently the plot of this
poem, the plot of the entire Trojan War, and a link between these two.
CHAPTER THREE – THE HOMERIC ORIGIN OF ACHILLES’ ARMS

Introduction

The account of Achilles’ arms in the non-Iliadic tradition, surveyed in the preceding chapter, provides a useful background for their study in the *Iliad*. The frequent references to the arms in the poem, whether passing allusions or extensive narratives, establish them as a persistent and central theme. An examination of the references to the pre-Iliadic story of the arms in relation to the Iliadic context surrounding them will show how the poem spins the theme of the arms in order to situate its own literary account within a supra-literary mythological temporality.

The main part of this chapter will proceed to a detailed analysis of the Iliadic passages engaging specifically with the origin and exchange history of Achilles’ first set of arms (except for the spear). The relevant narratives will not be examined in the order of their occurrence in the poem; instead they will be treated in the chronological fashion of their Iliadic *fabula*, as constructed in the previous chapter. The origin of the arms essentially coincides with their first exchange as a gift from the Olympian gods to Peleus on the occasion of his wedding with Thetis. An overview of the main principles underlying the institution of marriage as an exchange mechanism in Homeric society will offer a better grasp of the general framework in which the interconnected exchanges of Thetis and the arms take place. Tackling the circulation of the arms from the transaction highlighted as the Homeric beginning of this process will demonstrate how the *Iliad*
employs its established exchange mechanisms to nuance and manipulate its own past, in order to build its present and future and serve its poetic objectives.

The story of the origin of the arms does not take place in the present time of the *Iliad*, yet it is incorporated in the Iliadic narrative in the form of brief flashbacks. These flashbacks do not present a distant and crystallized past for Achilles’ weapons, but construct the history of these objects in parallel with their present delineation in the poem. In this way, past and present both illuminate and are illuminated by each other. The old transfers of the arms introduced and developed in the narrative, along with their current exchanges, emphasise the continuity of the story and promote the interactive use of past and present in the interpretation of the re-exchange of these objects reported in the *Iliad*. In the end, the circulation-process of the arms, consisting of a sequence of reported past and present exchanges becomes a hermeneutic guide by which to understand the Iliadic characters involved in it and the Iliadic plot as a whole.

*The Origin of the Arms and the Nexus of Exchanges between the Iliad and the External Tradition*

The history that the *Iliad* attaches to Achilles’ arms consists solely of an account of their exchange past. This section will proceed to an exploration of the particular nuances and associations deriving from the arms’ function as a wedding gift of the gods to Peleus. More specifically, it will demonstrate that the first transfer of the weapons, incorporated in the wedding ritual of Peleus and Thetis, is fashioned in a manner to obscure or even overcome certain irregularities observed in their marriage settlement. A more careful
look at the parties involved in the couple’s marriage arrangement and the qualitative exchanges it accomplishes will unveil an unconventional and complex process with a long-term aftermath in the present time of the *Iliad*. It will be argued that the arms, originating as a wedding gift to the bridegroom, legitimate Peleus’ pairing with the sea goddess, while investing him with proprietary as well as transferral authority over this gift he received from the gods. Accordingly, they set off a chain of interdependent exchanges that happen in past time and are related in the *Iliad* and non-Iliadic sources, ranging from Thetis’ being given in marriage to the transfer of the arms to Achilles. This sequence of exchange becomes a conduit of communication between Homeric epic and external tradition, as well as a generator of a context peculiar to the *Iliad*. Not only does it shed light on how the poem relates to mythological events not formally included in its narrative, but also exhibits a strong influence on the Iliadic plot and the characters explicitly or implicitly associated with this supra-Iliadic process.

The *Iliad* provides information on the origin of Achilles’ weapons on two occasions: 1) while describing Hector wearing them, the narrator reports that these arms were initially given by the Olympian gods to Peleus, who, in turn, when he grew old, passed them to his son (*Il*. 17.192-196); 2) while telling his mother about the death of Patroclus, Achilles adds that Hector stripped the corpse of the weapons, which were originally given by the gods to Peleus on his wedding day (*Il*. 18.80-85).

Both passages that refer to the history of Achilles’ arms remark the extraordinary nature of the objects in question and the fact that they were first given by the gods to Peleus:

\[\ldots\text{ἄμβροτα τεύχεα...}\\ \text{Πηλείδεω άχυλός, ἀ οἱ θεοὶ Οὐρανίωνς}\\ \text{πατρὶ φίλῳ ἐπορον} \quad (Il. 17.194-196)\]
that armour immortal
of Peleid Achilles, which the Uranian gods had given
to his loved father;

“…τεύχεα...
…πελόρια, θαύμα ιδέσθαι,
καλά· τὰ μὲν Πηλήθι θεοὶ δόσαν ἁγλαὰ δῶρα
ήματι τῷ ὅτε σε βροτοῦ ἀνέρος ἐμβαλον εὖνή.” (II. 18.82-85)

“…that gigantic armour, a wonder to look on
and splendid, which the gods gave Peleus, a glorious present,
on that day they drove you to the marriage bed of a mortal.”

Nevertheless, the preceding excerpts highlight different points in the arms’ past. The
former stresses their consecutive transfers from the immortals to Peleus and from him to
his son, while the latter draws attention to the circumstances under which the first
transfer of the arms took place, namely the wedding of Peleus and Thetis. Despite their
distinct focus, the two passages do not contradict but supplement each other, providing
different but coherent details to the same narrative of the origin of the arms.

As was discussed in the previous chapter, the version of the story of the arms
according to which Peleus (and not Thetis) is the one who receives them from the gods
and, consequently, the one who passes them to his son appears to have been invented by
the poet of the Iliad. Nevertheless, though the poem seems aware of a mythological
tradition according to which Peleus enjoyed favour and gifts from the immortals
independently of his later connection to the sea nymph,¹ it chooses not to employ it in the

¹ Pindar in Nem. 4.54-65 alludes to a story according to which the wife of Acastus fell in love with Peleus,
who was her husband’s guest at Iolcus. When the hero rejected her, she accused him to Acastus, who in
turn hid the sword that Daedalus had forged for Peleus and plotted his death. In the end, Peleus was rescued
by Cheiron. The scholiast of Pindar Nem. 4.59 explains Acastus’ plan and quotes Hesiod fr. 209 (M-W)
according to which the sword that Acastus hid was wrought by Hephaestus. In Anacreon 497 (PMG), the
sword was given to Peleus by the gods to reward him for his chastity. Also see Aristophanes Clouds, 1061-
1063, the scholia ad loc., the scholia on Apollonius Rhodius, Arg. 1.224, and Apollodorus, Library 3.13.3.
In Pindar Isth. 8, Themis counselled the Olympians to give Thetis in marriage to Peleus, as a divine prize
for his piety.
narrative of Achilles’ arms. If the arms were presented as part of those rewards of the gods to Peleus, then Thetis would be excluded from their story. Despite presenting Peleus as the exchanger of divine weapons and other gifts, the *Iliad* does not aim to foreground his role by limiting Thetis’ part in the story of the arms. On the contrary, her involvement is introduced in a very strong and complex manner. First, as the neoanalysts note, the Iliadic invention of Achilles’ second arming in Troy restores Thetis as the agent of receiving immortal arms and delivering them to her son, two tasks that were traditionally attributed to her. Second, with regard to Achilles’ first set of arms, it is Thetis’ wedding to Peleus that provides not only the occasion on which the latter receives them from the gods, but also the reason for this exchange. Marriage to a goddess accounts for the immortals attending the wedding ceremony and bringing him wedding gifts. In other words, she enables the hero first to receive and later to bestow divine arms on his son. Even when Peleus is assigned two actions normally performed by Thetis in earlier versions of the myth, she is still the generative cause behind them. In the end, the second arming of Achilles in the *Iliad*, although overtly more faithful to pre-existing tradition, is not corrective, but creatively reassertive of the traditional conception of the first one.

The fact that the origin of Achilles’ first set of arms in the *Iliad* is related as part of a wedding ritual suggests the assessment of their initial transfer within the framework of the marriage exchange. Marriage as an institution in Homeric society refers to the mechanism that regulates the movement of a woman from one household to another in

\[2\] In *II*. 24.59-61, Hera says that she reared Thetis and gave her as a bride to Peleus, who was beloved by the immortals. Thus Peleus’ marriage to the Nereid is not highlighted as the reason for the gods honouring him, but as the result of their favour towards him prior to the couple’s pairing. In addition, Achilles talks about the gifts with which the gods honoured Peleus from his birth in *II*. 24.534-537. He does not mention the arms or the wedding of his parents as the reason for these gifts, but he includes Thetis as a separate and independent gift that his father received from the gods.


the form of a bride. A brief review of some basic elements displayed by this institution in Homeric epic will show whether and in what respects Peleus’ and Thetis’ marriage diverges from it and how the exchange of the arms is used to cast a guise of conventionality on this marriage.

It has been noted that marriage procedure in Homer displays variety and flexibility. Despite such variety, however, two things are constants in Homeric marriage patterns: 1) the lack of a bride’s independence, and 2) the element of gifts. In principle, marriage arrangements in Homeric epic are conducted by the guardian of the bride and are sanctioned by gifts. The guardian of the woman, her κύριος, who usually is her father, is responsible for making the choice of her future husband. Gifts customarily accompany marriage settlements and are crucial in the conception of marriage as an exchange. The father of the bride offers gifts along with his daughter to the bridegroom, or the bridegroom offers gifts or services to the father of the bride in order to obtain his daughter, or both. In effect, the bride changes households and authority figures in a fashion similar to the way in which the material objects, which seal this transfer, change hands. That is, she might be perceived, at least figuratively, as being paired with material

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5 Distribution of spoils, ransom, and trade are other types of exchange, engaging in the movement of women between two parties. E.g. in Il. 1.368-392; 18.444; 19.291. Achilles is said to have received Briseis as his geras from the booty collected from the sack of Lynnessos; in Il. 1.12-16, Chryses offers to ransom his daughter from Agamemnon; in Od. 1.430-431, Laertes is said to have purchased Eurycleia.


7 For details on fathers arranging the marriages of Homeric women, see Lacey 1966:64. Gottschall (2008:109-111) notes that although there are certain clear cases in Homer where women have no role in selecting their mate, yet there is evidence that a woman’s preference for a husband seems “substantially aligned” with that of her male kin.

8 The same term ἐδῶσα is used in Homer to denote both the gifts offered by the bridegroom or the bride’s father to each other. For ἐδῶσα, see Finley 1981:239-241; Seaford 1994:16 and n.62. Morris (1986b:106) considers the reported cases of “dowry” as exceptions from the rule of “bride-price” given by the bridegroom to the father of the woman.
objects or portrayed as equivalent to them or both.\(^9\) But the bride does not have the same quality as the material objects given by either party. Her mutual transfer and acceptance does not constitute an instantaneous transaction, but an ongoing bond between two noble houses.\(^10\) This bonding ability of the woman being given in marriage invests her with distinct symbolic value and establishes her as the “supreme gift” among those offered or received along with her.\(^11\)

At first glance, the procedure followed in the marriage of Achilles’ parents is in agreement with the general pattern of Homeric marriage settlements. Despite their different perspectives Achilles, Thetis, and Hera remark on various occasions that the Nereid was given as a bride to a man chosen for her by someone else, crediting the gods, Zeus, and Hera, respectively for the choice of Peleus as Thetis’ husband (\textit{Il.} 18.85, 432-434, and 24.59-62). In addition, Achilles refers to the gifts Peleus received along with the bride on his wedding day (\textit{Il.} 18.84-85). Though not referring only to Peleus’ marriage arrangement but to the all blessings he enjoyed from his early age, Achilles places his mother at the top of a list of gifts with which the gods honoured his father (\textit{Il.} 24.534-537). So far, the marriage of Peleus and Thetis seems to conform to the exchange conceptions and principles of Homeric marriage procedure.

It has been noted in scholarship that, although almost all Homeric marriages happen within the noble class, different ranks of nobility between the families of the

\(^9\) Lyons 2003:102, 2012:22: “Sometimes the bride herself is regarded as the most valuable of the gifts that change hands between two families connecting themselves through marriage.” On Greek marriage, see Vernant 1973:51-74.


\(^11\) For the bride as the “supreme gift,” see Lévi-Strauss 1969:65. Also see the Introduction to this dissertation.
bride and the bridegroom were not unusual. Exchange of material gifts or services between the father of the bride and the bridegroom or performance of acts of excellence from the latter are practices designed to minimise or overcome the social difference between the two sides. On the one hand, gifts or services offered by the party with the relatively inferior status manifest a certain degree of opulence and resources, but mainly compensate the other family for a less than desirable marriage deal. On the other hand, when offered by the party with the relatively higher position in terms of wealth and power, gifts function as a reminder of his socio-economic superiority, but, at the same time, signify an intention to overcome the differences and approve the settlement. Sometimes, a suitor of lower status performs an act of bravery or excels in a competition and receives gifts from the father of the bride along with his daughter. These gifts serve to acknowledge that the additional prestige the suitor gained through his deed qualifies him to marry into a family of superior social status. Therefore, the gifts, whether offered by the weaker or the stronger party, denote an existing hierarchy, but also indicate a potential for social fluidity to the extent that they condition a conventionally

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12 Lacey (1966:55 n.4) observes that the only exceptions to marriages within the “kingly” class are those of Odysseus’ servants and remarks that there is no reference to ἱεδναί in these cases. Also see Finley 1955:170.
13 Andromache, the daughter of the local king Eëtion, married the son of king Priam, famous for his power and wealth, and brought him many gifts from her father in the form of dowry. See Il. 6.394, and Il. 22.88. Also see Kirk 1990:210-211; Richardson 1993:115. Othryoneus, on the other hand, was promised Cassandra by king Priam in exchange for his military service. See Il. 13.365-369. Also see Lacey 1966:59-60 and n.24; Donlan 1989:4 and n.11; Seaford 1994:17.
14 For the role of marriage gifts as a display of wealth, power, and social status, see Beidelman 1989:5 and n.3; Donlan 1989:4.
15 Hector, the son of the famous king Priam, also gave gifts to Eëtion for his marriage with Andromache. See Il. 22.472. Agamemnon, the leader of the Achaean army in Troy, offered one of his daughters, along with dowry, to Achilles in exchange for the latter’s return to the war. See Il. 9.141-157, 283-299.
16 Bellerophon, after killing Chimera and defeating the Solyomoi, the Amazons, and the men of Lycia, who were sent to trap him, was offered the daughter of the Lycian king as his wife, half of the royal honour, and an exceptional piece of ploughland. See Il. 6.179-195. A local prince winning in the bow contest would seem worthy of marrying Penelope, the queen of Ithaca, wife of Odysseus, and daughter of king Icarius. See Od. 21.74-79. Also see Finley 1981:234.
achieved equality.\textsuperscript{17} That is, they become a means of adjustment of the very statuses they denote, and thus they bridge the social gap between the two families. In this way, they sanction a marriage settlement between the father of the bride and the bridegroom and enable the successful transfer of the daughter from the former to the latter.

The difference between Achilles’ parents, however, is not one that can be adjusted or bridged. One peculiarity of their marriage, also evident to the characters of the \textit{Iliad}, is that the bride is a goddess, while the bridegroom is a mortal man.\textsuperscript{18} Since their distinction does not pertain to wealth or social status, properties which can be obtained or augmented, but to nature, it is not subject to fluidity or change. Peleus, a human being, is undisputedly and unchangeably in an inferior position to Thetis and her family, who are divinities. Gifts are involved in their wedding, but are not offered either by Peleus, the weaker party, or Nereus, the father of the bride. Given the profound and absolute distance separating the two sides, gifts could not, indeed, serve as a balancing factor or as a pretext of equality between them.

Furthermore, while in accordance with general marriage procedure, Thetis does not have a part in picking her husband, yet this choice and its entailed arrangements are not made by her father, as would normally be the case. It was mentioned earlier that this role has been attributed by different speakers to the gods collectively, or to Zeus or Hera specifically.\textsuperscript{19} Nevertheless, the \textit{Iliad} acknowledges Thetis’ father in several instances. In fact, the poem calls her “the daughter of the sea’s old man” (\textit{II}. 1.538 = 556). In addition,

\textsuperscript{17} For gift exchange, in general, as a prestigious practice that marks its participants as members of an elite class and declares a certain equality between them, see Kurke 1991:94; Wohl 1998:xxvi-xxix, 61-62.
\textsuperscript{18} \textit{II}. 18.84-87, 432-433, 24.537.
\textsuperscript{19} Cf. \textit{II}. 18.84-85, 24.534-537; 18.432-434; 24.59-62. Also see Apollonius of Rhodes 4.790-809 and Apollodorus 3.13.5. Braswell (1971:23-24) argues that the idea of Hera bringing up Thetis is invented by the \textit{Iliad}. Edwards (1991:196), on the other hand, comments that Hera’s words in \textit{II}. 24.59-62 do not necessarily imply that the initiative to marry Thetis with Peleus was hers.
it reports that she leaves the cave of her father to visit her son in Troy (Il. 1.357-361, 18.35-69) and that she sends her sisters to inform their father about Achilles’ sorrows, while she visits Hephaestus to request new arms for her son (Il. 18.140-144). It seems odd then, almost inconsistent, that Nereus is not involved in the settlement and the proceedings of his daughter’s marriage.

Among the characters who refer to Thetis’ wedding, Hera is not concerned with the incompatible nature of Thetis and Peleus. She focuses, instead, on the favourable disposition of the Olympians towards each of them individually and casts a veil of propriety on their union (Il. 24.59-62). Achilles touches on the issue of the inequality between the bride and the groom; however, he perceives it not in relation to the ill-suited pairing conducted by this wedding, but only in relation to the long-term consequences of this wedding on his family. In his eyes, the misalliance of his parents will result in his own short life and his mother’s eternal grief for his death (Il. 18.84-93).

In her talk with Hephaestus, Thetis is also mindful of the mortal fate of her son, but before elaborating on the corollary aftereffects of her marriage, she first draws attention to her wedding arrangement per se. In particular, she illuminates her own individual viewpoint, while underscoring the contrast between her own divine nature and Peleus’ mortality:

“…όσα θεαί εισ’ ἐν Ὀλύμπω, τοσάδε’ ἐνι φρεαίν ἡσαν ἀνέσχετο κήδεα λυγρά, ὀσα’ ἐμοὶ ἐκ πασέων Κρονίδης Ζεὺς ἄλγες ἔδωκεν; ἐκ μὲν μ’ ἀλλάσων ἀλίσων ἀνδρὶ δάμασσεν, Αἰακίδη Πηλῆτὶ, καὶ ἐτλην ἄνερος εὐνῆν πολλὰ μᾶλ’ οὐκ ἠθέλουσα.” (Il. 18.429-434)

“…is there among all the goddesses on Olympus one who in her heart has endured so many grim sorrows as the griefs Zeus, son of Cronus, has given me beyond others?

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20 Also see Schein 1984:132.
Of all the other sisters of the sea he gave me to a mortal, to Peleus, Aeacus’ son, and I had to endure mortal marriage though much against my will.”

The Nereid presents her marriage to Peleus as a result of Zeus’ discrimination and harsh treatment of her. She is explicit about her personal opposition regarding this marriage, and emphasises that the king of gods imposed it on her. Besides revealing both Zeus’ and her own subjective perspective, she also formulates an objective argument. She highlights her treatment as abnormal and extraordinary for the community of goddesses, in general, and sea nymphs, in particular. Not only was her marriage an obvious mismatch between a goddess and a mortal man, but it also constituted an exception; she was singled out among female deities to undergo such a fortune. Thus despite her personal disagreement and the alleged unprecedented disparity between the groom and herself, this marriage arrangement was carried out due to Zeus’ biased attitude towards her.

The *Iliad* does not state the reasons for Thetis’ marriage to Peleus. Two main motives, however, related alternatively or in combination by a number of later sources, justify the background information that the nymph provides on her marriage in *Iliad* Book 18. On the one hand, a potential threat to Zeus’ power posed by Thetis’ offspring, or Zeus’ intention to punish Thetis for rejecting him, on the other, could both explain his decision to marry the Nereid to Peleus and the exceptional strictness of the king of the gods with her with regard to her marriage.

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21 Thetis draws attention to the fact that her union with Peleus was involuntary. In *Hymn. Hom. Aphr.* 45-291, Aphrodite was also compelled by Zeus to bear a mortal child to the mortal Anchises. Eos in the *Aethiopis*, on the other hand, was willingly married to the mortal Tithonus and gave birth to Memnon, who was also mortal; also see *Hymn. Hom. Aphr.* 218-238. Calypso and Odysseus furnish another example of a female deity with a mortal lover. For details and more epic examples, see *Od.* 5:118-144. For a discussion of goddesses with immortal lovers, see Boedeker 1974:67-69; Slatkin 1991:22-44.

22 For a survey of the several versions of the story in the sources and for relevant bibliography, see Edwards 1991:196-197.
More specifically in Pindar’s *Isthmian* 8.26a-48 (Snell and Maehler), both Zeus and Poseidon compete for Thetis’ hand. Yet, an oracle from Themis warns that the sea goddess will bear a son greater than his father and counsels against her marriage to Zeus or any of his brothers. The goddess advises instead that Thetis be forced to marry a mortal man and suggests that the Nereid should be given to Peleus as a reward for his piety. In this way, she will have a mortal son who will die in war. The Olympians obey the oracle and Zeus approves Thetis’ marriage to Peleus. Similarly in Aeschylus’ (?) *Prometheus Bound* 907-927, Gaea, conflated with Themis, has shared with her son, Prometheus, a secret according to which Thetis, whom Zeus plans to marry, will give birth to a child greater than his father. On the other hand in *Cypria* fr. 2 (Bernabé) as well as the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women* fr. 210 (Merkelbach and West), Thetis rejects Zeus’ sexual advances in order to gratify Hera, and Zeus angrily swears to punish her by marriage to a mortal. In the *Argonautica* 4.790-809, Apollonius of Rhodes combines both these versions.\(^23\) In this passage, Hera explains that she nursed Thetis and loves her more than her sisters, because the Nereid spurned Zeus’ demands. Zeus, in turn, swears an oath that Thetis will never have an immortal husband, but keeps chasing her until Themis informs him that he would father a son on her who would be greater than his father. In return for the respect that Thetis had shown to her, Hera married the sea nymph to Peleus, “the best of the mortals” (*Arg.* 4.805). Apollodorus, in the *Library* 3.13.5, lists various reasons for the marriage of Peleus and Thetis.\(^24\) He refers both to the revelations by Themis and Prometheus and to Thetis’ own rejection of Zeus as a favour to Hera, who brought her up, and reports that Zeus in anger decided to marry her to a mortal man and

\(^{23}\) For the sources of Apollonius of Rhodes 4.790-809, see Vian 1981:175-176.

\(^{24}\) On Apollodorus’ sources, see Reitzenstein 1900:74-75 and n.1.
that Peleus became her husband, because he followed Cheiron’s instructions to seize her, while she changed shapes, and hold her until she assumed her previous form.

In the *Iliad*, Thetis, recounting her life-sufferings to Hephaestus, points out that her undesirable marriage resulted in her having a great but mortal son, whose short life is currently full of sorrows at Troy (*Il. 18.429-461*). Achilles’ mortality, as the outcome of his mother’s marriage to Peleus, is reminiscent of Themis’ oracle in *Isthmian* 8 and her advice to the Olympians to marry the sea goddess with a mortal man, so that she can see her son die in war:25

> ταῦτα καὶ μακάρων ἐμέμναντ’ ἁγοραί,  
> Ζεὺς ὡς ἀμφὶ Θέτιος  
> ἀγλαός τ᾽ ἔρισαν Ποσειδᾶν γάμῳ,  
> ἀλοχοῦ εὐειδέα θέλων ἐκάτερος  
> ἐὰν ἐμεῖν· ἔρως γὰρ ἔχειν.  
> ἀλλ’ οὗ σφιν ἀμβροτοὶ τέλει-  
> σαν εὐνᾶν θεῶν πραπίδες,

> ἑπεὶ θεσφάτων <ἐπ>', ἀκου-  
> σαν· εἶπε δ’ εὐβουλος ἐν μέσοις Θέμις,  
> εἶνεκεν πετρωμένου ἤν, φέρτερον πατέρος  
> ἀνακτὰ γόνων τεκεῖν  
> ποντίαν θεόν, ὦς κεραυ-  
> νοῦ τε κρέασον ἄλλο βέλος  
> διώξει χερὶ τριόδου-  
> τός τ᾽ ἁμαιμικέτου. Ζηνί τε μισγομέναν  
> ἢ Διὸς παρ’ ἀδελφείσιον. "ἀλλὰ τὰ μὲν  
> παύσατε βροτέων δὲ λεχέων τυχοίςα  
> υἱὸν εἰσιδέω θανόντ’ ἐν πολέμῳ,  
> χείρας Ἀρεῖ <τ’> ἐν-  
> αλλύκιον στεροπαῖς τ’ ἁκίμαν ποδῶν.  
> τὸ μὲν ἐμὸν, Πηλεῖ γέρας θεόμορον  
> ὀπάσασαι γάμου Αἰακίδα,  
> ὄν τ’ εὐσεβέστατον φάτις  
> Ιαολκοῦ τράφειν πεδίον.” (*Isth. 8.26a-40*)26

Even the assembly of the blessed gods remembered this, when Zeus and splendid Poseidon quarrelled over marriage to Thetis, each wishing her to be his own beautiful wife, because love held them in its grip. But the gods’ imm mortal minds did not accomplish that wedlock for them,

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26 All quotations from Pindar are from Snell and Maehler 1987.
when they heard what was ordained.
For wise-counseling Themis said in their midst
that it was fated for the goddess of the sea
to bear a royal son mightier
than his father, who would wield
another kind of weapon
stronger than the thunderbolt
or the tireless trident, if she was joined
to Zeus or to Zeus’ brothers. “Come, stop this.
Let her win a mortal’s bed
and see her son die in war,
a match for Ares with his hands,
and like lightning in the power of his feet.
My advice is to grant the divine gift
of this marriage to Aeacus’s son Peleus,
who is said to be the most pious man
the plain of Iolcus has reared.”

Slatkin convincingly argues that the mythological tradition narrated in Pindar’s *Isthmian* 8 accounts both for Thetis’ words about her marriage in the *Iliad* and for her influence over Zeus and her involvement in the action of the war. She points out that Thetis’ grief, originating in the mortality of her son, is associated with the nymph’s “cosmic capacity,” revealed in *Isthmian* 8, to threaten or save divine order with her marriage. According to this scholar, such a “cosmic capacity” is pointedly alluded to by Achilles, when he recounts how his mother had protected Zeus from the attempt of Hera, Athena, and Poseidon to bind him (*Il.* 1.394-406). Thetis had summoned Briareus who, in turn, sat by Zeus and discouraged the three mutineers from proceeding with their plan. His Iliadic portrayal as Zeus’ saviour, Slatkin suggests, recalls his Hesiodic role in the divine succession myth. Indeed, Briareus and his brothers help the Olympians to overthrow Cronus and the other Titans in Hesiod’s *Theogony* 658-663 and 713-735. She concludes

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27 All translations of Pindar are from Race 1997. For purposes of consistency with the rest of the dissertation, however, I change Race’s direct transliteration of ancient proper names into the Latinized spellings.
28 Slatkin 1991:53-55, 70-77. Slatkin (1991:76 and n.26) remarks that Pindar is known for his use of archaic material and refers to Benveniste 1945:5-12 on *Pythian* 3. She also supports her view of the *Isthmian* 8, as a source for Homeric mythology, citing Greengard (1980:36 n.27), who argues that this particular Pindaric ode draws on Iliadic themes.
29 Slatkin 1991:66-72; for the phrase “cosmic capacity” see p.72.
that Thetis, summoning the hundred-handed as Achilles reports, performs “an act that restores the cosmic equilibrium;” Briareus sitting next to Zeus is “a reminder of Zeus’ final mastery in the succession myth struggle.”

In particular, Achilles’ comment on Briareus, ὅ γὰρ αὐτὲ βίην οὗ πατρὸς ἀμείνων (“but he is far greater in strength than his father,” II. 1.404), can also be construed as self-referential, since it delineates Thetis’ offspring and his potential role in a succession myth. Hence, by requesting that his mother ask Zeus to give victory to the Trojans on the grounds of her past rescue of the god from being bound, the hero hints at her “cosmic capacity” with respect to her marriage. Thetis did not oblige Zeus merely by saving him once from binding. She could herself have endangered his supremacy. She preserved it, however, by having a mortal son, who would be greater in strength than his mortal father. Achilles’ mortality and his mother’s grief ensuing from it constitute the implied favour that Zeus really owes to return to Thetis.

As Slatkin points out, the Iliad seems to rely on an external mythological tradition, such as the one followed in Pindar’s Isthmian 8 and Aeschylus’ Prometheus Bound, for the particular reasons for Thetis’ marriage to Peleus. But, besides the allusions to the warnings of the prophecy, the poem implements non-Homeric tradition in a more substantial manner by taking over developments that derive from those warnings. More

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30 For the quotations, see Slatkin 1991:69.
31 For this idea, see Slatkin 1991:76-77. The succession contest between the gods for hegemony, as described in Hesiod’s Theog., is an on-going plot in Greek divine myth. Besides allusions to the succession myth and the potential threat to Zeus’ rule posed by Achilles, the Iliad includes brief but explicit references to Zeus’ victory against the Titans, whom he challenged, and against Typhoeus, who challenged him. See II. 14.203-204 and 2.782-783 respectively.
32 Slatkin (1991:64) notes that conventionally when gods ask each other for favours, they do not remind them of past favours or promise future ones. On the other hand, gods asking favours from other gods on behalf of heroes mention the hero’s past services. Achilles, however, instructs his mother to ask Zeus for a favour based on her own services to him. For the favour that Zeus grants to Achilles and its price, see Slatkin 1991:33-38, 101-105.
specifically, it constructs its literary past, narrating how Zeus executed the orders of the oracle. The oracle required the king of the gods not to marry Thetis, as well as to exercise control in the choice of her future husband. According to Thetis’ words in *Il.* 18.429-434, Zeus forcefully gave her as a bride to Peleus.\(^{33}\) From her potential “recipient” in external tradition, Thetis portrays him as her “giver” in marriage in the *Iliad*. Standard marriage procedure in Homeric society determines that the duty of “giving” a woman as a bride normally belongs to her father. The *Iliad* indicates that Zeus averted the prophesied threat not simply by giving up on Thetis, but by assuming a much closer relationship with her than the one he originally pursued in external poetic tradition. He switched roles from being her potential suitor to being her surrogate father, though strictly as a means to control her and not to favour her.

It was mentioned above that Thetis is not in need of a father in the *Iliad*. Then, how does Zeus play this role with regards to her marriage, bypassing Nereus? He cannot really assert paternal rights over her on account of his wife’s declaration that she reared the sea goddess (*Il.* 24.59-60). Hera maintains that she performed the nursing duties for Thetis, in an attempt to dissuade the gods (save Poseidon and Athena) from stealing Hector’s corpse from Achilles.\(^{34}\) She is insisting that Hector and Achilles are not equal and should not be cared about equally. In fact, Zeus is among those pitying Hector’s

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\(^{33}\) Achilles might also imply that when he says that the gods married Thetis with a mortal man (*Il.* 18.84-85). For a parallel, see Euripides’ *Electra*, where Aegisthus marries Electra to a farmer, so that her son will not be strong enough to seek revenge.

\(^{34}\) In *Il.* 24.59-60 Hera reminds the gods of her own relationship with Thetis in order to justify her support of Thetis and her son. The truth is, however, that she has a personal grudge against the Trojans and favouring Achilles and his mother serves her purposes better at this point. Braswell (1971:23-24) points out that Hera’s words in *Il.* 24.59-63 are in contrast with her behaviour in *Il.* 1.536-538, 555-559, where she suspects that the Nereid pleaded with Zeus to honour Achilles and pressure the Achaeans in the war. It should not be overlooked that Greek gods have a highly self-interested attitude in general, which leads them to align themselves with certain individuals. Besides that, since they are immortal, they are not always deeply affected by the misfortunes of humans. Cf. *Il.* 1.573-579, 595-611.
body. He finally dismisses the idea of snatching it away, not because he sides with Hera’s alleged parental disposition towards Thetis, but because the Nereid stands constantly by her son (Il. 24.71-73). Hera’s function as Thetis’ surrogate parent, then, is exclusive and does not extend to Zeus in his capacity as the former’s husband.

In addition, Hera seems to have a special relationship with Thetis’ family in the *Iliad*, which justifies her rearing of the Nereid. When she plans Zeus’ deception, though she names Ocean and Tethys as the primeval parents of all gods, she emphasises that the two sea deities acted specifically as her own surrogate parents. But Ocean and Tethys are Thetis’ grandparents. By analogy, Hera is entitled to act as Thetis’ surrogate mother in turn. On the other hand, Thetis’ “biological” mother Doris is not mentioned in the *Iliad*. Her absence justifies Hera’s claim that she performed motherly duties for the sea nymph. It is obvious, therefore, that the poem systematically builds a long term mother-daughter relationship between the two goddesses. It is first founded between Hera and Thetis’ ancestors and continued (at least according to the former) until after Thetis’ wedding and her abandonment of Peleus. Such a dual and long term familial connection

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35 For this theogony and its differences from Hesiod, see Janko 1992:180-183.
36 In particular, Hera reveals that Ocean and Tethys received her from Rhea and reared her in their house at the time when Zeus vanquished Cronus. See Il. 14.200-210, 301-306.
37 Hunter (1993:99) makes this observation in relation to the Iliadic passages concerning Zeus’ deception. Also see Hesiod, *Theog.* 240-244.
38 The Doris referred to in Il. 18.45 is clearly Thetis’ sister and not her mother. For Doris, daughter of Ocean, mother of Thetis, see Hesiod, *Theog.* 240-242, 337-350. For Doris, daughter of Nereus, sister of Thetis, see Hesiod, *Theog.* 240-250.
39 Apollonius of Rhodes, who borrows the idea of Thetis’ bringing up by Hera from *Iliad* 24.59-63 and elaborates on it, also stresses the duration of this guardianship (*Arg.* 4.790-809). He has Hera recall that she reared and loved Thetis already from infancy. Her long-term parental care is further supported by her claim that, when Zeus swore an oath that the Nereid would never have an immortal husband, she herself arranged a pleasing marriage for Thetis with “the best of mortals” and invited the gods to the wedding feast. According to her words, Hera also lifted the nuptial torch, which demonstrates that she acted at the wedding in a ritual manner appropriate for the mother of the bride. See Mooney 1912:348-349. It is worth noting that besides Thetis’ own debt to her surrogate mother, Hera reveals that Achilles is destined to marry Medea after death, when he is transported to the Elysian Fields, and retrojects a mother-daughter-in-law relationship between Thetis and Medea long before it officially starts (*Arg.* 4.810-815). In fact, it is on the basis of her own motherly services to the sea nymph and Thetis’ future obligations to her daughter-in-
not only excludes Zeus from this bond, but also creates a sharp contrast with his circumstantial act as the Nereid’s surrogate father, which occurs merely for the purposes of her wedding.

It was discussed earlier that gift exchange between the father of the bride and the bridegroom is a standard element of wedding patterns in Homeric society. It was also noted that Peleus receives gifts for his wedding with Thetis, though not from Nereus. Achilles, on the one hand, mentions that the gods, in general, gave his father the arms as gifts and were responsible for his mother’s marriage to a mortal man: “θεοὶ δόσαν ἀγλαὰ δῶρα...ἡμιτι τῷ ὅτε σε βροτοῦ ἀνέρος ἐμβαλον εὐνῆ” (“which the gods gave...a glorious present, on that day they drove you to the marriage bed of a mortal,” *Il.* 18.84-85). The hero’s general tone is justified by the fact that in this passage he is not so much concerned with the particularities of this mother’s wedding; instead he is distressed about Patroclus’ death and the concurrent loss of his divine arms, and about the forthcoming consequences that Thetis’ marriage to a mortal will have for both his mother and himself. Thetis, on the other hand, in her words to Hephaestus states specifically that “Κρονίδης Ζεὺς...μ’...ἀνδρὶ δάμασσεν Αἰακίδη Πηλῆ” (“Zeus, son of Kronos...gave me to a mortal, to Peleus, Aiakos’ son,” *Il.* 18.431-433). Wedding gifts normally bind the party who gives them with the one who receives them in a contract of mutual acceptance and formalise the bride’s transfer from her father to her future husband. The arms, as a wedding gift to Peleus, coming not from Thetis’ biological father but from the gods, seal a marriage settlement between them and the bridegroom. Superseding Nereus in gift-giving displaces him from his default agency in the sequence of transactions entailed in

law-to-be that Hera asks the Nereid to aid Jason’s ship to escape Charybdis and Scylla in the present time of the narrative.
his daughter’s marriage agreement and initiates a chain of exchanges between the actual donor of gifts and their recipient instead. Zeus’ participation in the collective bestowal of wedding gifts to Peleus makes him an actor in this chain of marriage exchange and, subsequently, enables him to substitute for Nereus, casting himself in the role of Thetis’ surrogate father. It qualifies him, at least formally, to choose her husband according to his own will and benefit.

Fundamentally, Zeus’ decision to marry Thetis to Peleus, as she contends, is at odds with the intrinsic principles of the institution of marriage that determine the individual authorised to give a woman in marriage. But in terms of marriage procedure in Homeric society, as an order of successive, interdependent exchanges involving gifts and the bride herself, it can be formally presented as justified.

The exchange of the arms that legitimises, at least seemingly, the offer of Thetis from the gods, or more precisely from Zeus, to Peleus also serves to overcome the obvious difference between the divine bride and the mortal bridegroom. In principle, Peleus is not in a position to exhibit such excellence as to prove himself worthy of marrying into a divine family or to emulate the immortal gifts that the gods grant him. Yet the acceptance of wedding gifts, normally signifying and bridging, at the same time, the possible hierarchical distance between the bridegroom and the family of the bride, confers on him a sense of approval and validates his otherwise unequal pairing with the goddess.

40 In Pindar’s *Isth. 8*, Themis advises that Thetis is given to Peleus as a reward for his piety. This advice, however, ensues from the main prediction of her oracle. If Thetis’ future offspring did not endanger Zeus’ power, Peleus’ piety independently would not necessarily be projected as being worthy of a divine marriage.
To sum up: the *Iliad* illustrates that Zeus retains and enforces his supremacy by employing a conventional and well recognised procedure in an unconventional marriage. In this manner, marriage patterns in Homer fulfill the requirements of external mythological tradition, while smoothing out any social irregularities that the required the union of a deity with a mortal would introduce into the Homeric social system. Not only does the exchange of the arms entitle Zeus to replace Nereus in the intra-Iliadic narrative of Thetis’ wedding, but also serves to re-standardise this non-standard marriage settlement and harmonise it, at least temporarily, with what has been considered the Homeric norm. In the end, the origin of the arms as a wedding gift works concurrently on three levels. It provides an internal poetic background for the plot of the *Iliad*, it adds to a consistent delineation of Homeric society in general, and it contributes to a broad, interliterary mythological framework.

Procedural conformity covers the oddness of Peleus’ pairing with Thetis and enables the arrangement of their wedding in the Iliadic past. In the context of this wedding, the arms and Thetis function for each other interchangeably as a cause and result. On the one hand, the nymph is given as a bride to Peleus, because of the exchange of the arms; on the other, Peleus receives immortal weapons, because of his marriage to Thetis. This aetiological sequence, however, does not complete the nexus of exchange initiated by the first transfer of the arms. The subsequent product of Thetis’ wedding, her mortal offspring, is the return that Zeus receives for offering her along with the weapons to Peleus. Although the *Iliad* verbally suppresses, or at best alludes to Themis’ oracle,\(^{41}\)

\(^{41}\) Achilles, Thetis, and Hera talk about Peleus’ and Thetis’ marriage (*Iliad* 18.84-93, 429-440, 24.59-63). Yet, they are not concerned with the successive and reciprocal exchanges that it entailed. Instead, they narrowly focus on individual offers extended by one exchange-participant only, on their personal involvement in it, or on its repercussions on Achilles’ family.
the chain of exchanges that this oracle sets off can be grasped by looking into the status quo of the poem’s divine society. The omnipotence of Zeus, compared to all immortals and humans, and the stability of power that he enjoys throughout the poem account for the reciprocal nature and the full dimensions of this large scale transaction. He arranged Thetis’ wedding in the past and, in return, he secured the unquestioned sovereignty that he displays in the Iliadic present. In light of Thetis’ extraordinary (even cosmic) power, her marriage exchange becomes a power struggle between surrogate father and daughter with serious implications for her son and for the cosmos as a whole.

The Inheritance of the Arms and its Symbolism

That Peleus legitimately received the arms from the gods and that Zeus maintains his supremacy through this donation indicate that, despite Peleus’ later abandonment by Thetis, the exchange has been successfully completed. Accordingly, Peleus retains ownership of the weapons, meaning that he is invested with authority both to possess them and to transfer them. Aside from their immense value owed to their immortal origin, which automatically qualifies them to become a family heirloom, it is only appropriate that he gives them to his son, whose life and death are actually prescribed by them. Indeed, the hero is born in order to die, because his father receives the divine panoply as a wedding gift. Therefore, although initially bestowed on Peleus, the arms instantly bear an inalienable connection to Achilles, in terms that they necessitate his

42 For instance, see *Il.* 1.578-583, 589-594 and particularly *Il.* 8.5-32, 447-456, 461-468.
43 In Homeric society, when a marriage is disbanded for reasons other than the death of a spouse, there might be a claim for the return of the material gifts exchanged as part of the marriage agreement. For details, see Lacey 1966:58, 60. Also see *Od.* 2.130-133, 8.317-320.
existence and determine his fate. It is expected then that the hero will eventually come to possess them.

The arms’ bequest by Peleus to his son intensifies Achilles’ inalienable attachment to them. According to Weiner’s theoretical approach to inalienable possessions discussed in Chapter One, inheritance by kin facilitates giving without essentially alienating the donor from the object of exchange, which ultimately remains in the possession of the same family. On the one hand, this intimate way of giving designates a new owner for the object in movement. On the other hand, it formalises the heir’s lineage in the eyes of those who attest to or acknowledge the transference. Consequently, Achilles’ acquisition of the arms from Peleus highlights the former as their new legitimate owner; at the same time, it signifies the inseparable kinship bond between the two transactors and defines the heir’s peculiar identity in relation to this familial exchange.

Although Peleus’ bequest to his son follows the standardised principles and conceptions of the relevant mechanism in Homeric society, Thetis’ intricate aetiological connection to the arms broadens and enriches their normal spectrum of symbolical connotations. Receiving the arms from his father formally demonstrates Achilles as Peleus’ son, but, in truth, it also establishes him as the son of Thetis. According to the Iliadic version of the story, it is she who entitles Peleus to receive the weapons and pass them to their offspring in the first place. On a first level, their transference from the father to the son may seem to validate the use of Achilles’ patronymic as the son of Peleus in the Iliad. Yet, such a validation becomes ironic, as it sharply contrasts the Phthian king’s idle helplessness and his distance from the hero to Thetis’ omnipresence at Troy and her
active devotion to her child. Peleus, the receiver and giver of the arms, is only a sad and
passive memory in the minds of both Thetis and Achilles.\textsuperscript{44} He grows old far from his
son, in sorrow and in need of care. Thetis, on the other hand, remains committed to her
offspring even after she deserts her husband.

Achilles’ strong and permanent connection to his mother is apparent throughout
the \textit{Iliad}. The Nereid has the most personal contact with her child among all mortal and
divine parents of the Achaean and Trojan heroes who fight on the plain of Troy.\textsuperscript{45} In
addition, she exhibits the deepest understanding of the struggles her son goes through. As
a result, she is able to differentiate her own wishes from those of Achilles’ and ignore the
former, despite the significant emotional cost that this has on her. Instead of snatching
her son from death, as Aphrodite does,\textsuperscript{46} or begging her son to avoid close combat and
save himself, as Hecuba does,\textsuperscript{47} she assists Achilles to fulfill his own will (and make his
life more meaningful, but lose it) on the battlefield, regardless of the pain his decisions
cause to her.

At the crucial moment when the hero is about to return to war and reclaim his
position in the aristocratic Homeric society, she practically reaffirms and renews the
bond signalled by the first set of arms. She supersedes Peleus and becomes herself the
agent of receiving and giving divine weapons to her son. The second panoply reasserts,
but also manifests more overtly, the arms as a symbol of Thetis’ bond to her son.\textsuperscript{48}
Handed to Achilles directly by his mother, it provides him with the means to win glory as

\textsuperscript{44} \textit{Il.} 18.434-435, 19.323-324, 334-337, 24.538-541. Also see \textit{Od.} 11.494-503.
\textsuperscript{45} Schein (1984:91) points out that the conversations between Achilles and his mother are the longest and
most intimate ones among those taking place between divinities and their mortal sons in the \textit{Iliad}.
\textsuperscript{46} \textit{Il.} 5.311-318.
\textsuperscript{47} \textit{Il.} 22.79-89.
\textsuperscript{48} Shannon (1975:27-28) does not pay attention to the role of Thetis in enabling Peleus to pass immortal
arms to their son and considers only the second armour as a link of Achilles to his mother.
a hero, as well as to recover the first armour. Thetis’ devotion to her son reaches such a height as to provide him with a second set of military equipment, although she knows that it will not protect him from death. In the end, the arms, that in the Iliadic past have symbolically signified Thetis’ only temporary attachment to a new male guardian, designates her as the permanent guardian of her own son in the Iliadic present. Achilles is mortal, after all, and his mother cannot save him from death. She proves very effective, however, in aiding him to save his honour in the male aristocratic society, something that the hero deems more important than his own life.

The transfers of divine arms from the gods to Peleus and from him to Achilles, in conjunction with the additional transfer of new divine arms from Thetis to Achilles, construct the hero’s fate in the *Iliad*, as the mortal son of the goddess Thetis. Both his life and his honour depend on these exchanges that Thetis indirectly causes at first and directly conducts later. As the recipient of arms, Achilles is the subject of exchange in terms of the structural logic of the movement of a token among two exchangers, but the object of exchange in the symbolic logic that the exchange of the arms enacts within the poem.

*Thetis, as the Subject of (Dis-)Exchange*

In contrast to Thetis’ close connection to her offspring, her relationship with her husband appears to follow exactly the opposite course. Although the *Iliad* indicates that Thetis was present when her son left from Phthia to join in the war (*Iliad* 18.57-59) and that she would welcome him back if he returned (*Iliad* 18.59-60, 329-332, 440-441), in the dramatic
present the sea nymph seems to have abandoned Peleus. She is reported to live in her father’s cave in the depths of the sea, both when she visits Achilles at Troy (Il. 1.357-361, 18.35-69) and when Iris summons her to Olympus (Il. 24.77-84). This section will explore the issues underlying the separation of the couple, in order to determine whether the arms, which facilitated the wedding of Thetis and Peleus and which, in turn, originated in the context of this wedding, are affected by the outcome of the marriage. The causes that led Thetis back to the cave of her father in the Iliadic past present strong parallels with the causes that end the arms’ long circulation back in the hands of Achilles in the Iliadic present. These parallels suggest that the marriage of Achilles’ parents continues to be intertwined with his arms, in such a way that the marriage becomes paradigmatic for the exchange process of the arms in the poem. In this sense, the conclusions drawn from investigating the former can serve as an instructive tool and illuminate the assessment of the latter in the following chapters of this dissertation.

The Iliad offers no information regarding the time when and the reasons why Thetis deserted Peleus. Burgess notes that she could have abandoned his halls even before Achilles left for Troy and could have returned only to see her son, similarly to the way in which she appears on the battlefield every time Achilles needs her. Although later sources seem to agree that Thetis left her husband at some point, particular details of the couple’s married life, which could potentially explain her departure, are contradictory to the Iliadic account. For instance in Hesiod fr. 300 (Merkelbach and West) and in

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49 In addition, when Thetis goes to supplicate Zeus on behalf of her son, she emerges from the sea and, upon her departure from Olympus, she dives back in it (Il. 1.495-497, 531-533).
51 For a detailed review of the evidence regarding Thetis’ marriage to Peleus and her attempts to make Achilles immortal or invulnerable, see Burgess 2009:9-13, 102-103, 138 n.6. For Achilles’ immortality in the Epic Cycle, see Burgess 2001:165-167. For details on the so called “Achilles’ heel,” see Burgess 1995:217-243.
Lycophron 177-179, Thetis kills her children when testing their immortality by putting them in a cauldron of water, and Peleus prevents her from testing that of Achilles. Apollonius of Rhodes 4.869-879 states that Thetis left Peleus when he stopped her from making their son immortal by anointing him and placing him in fire. In the *Iliad*, Achilles is the only child of his parents (*Il*. 18.436-438, 24.540) and there is no indication of an effort by his mother to test or change his human nature. Since Thetis constantly mourns her son’s mortality, she would have many opportunities to refer to her failed attempts to make him immortal and to resent Peleus for preventing them, but Homeric epic avoids mentioning this mythological tradition.\(^{52}\)

Achilles’ parents do not furnish the only Homeric example of a couple’s separation on account of an act by the woman. Helen and Clytemnestra commit adultery and abandon their husbands to marry their lovers.\(^{53}\) Aphrodite also commits adultery with Ares and, despite the fact that she does not officially leave her husband, Hephaestus, in anger, indicates his desire to divorce her.\(^{54}\) Although not an adulterer, Penelope, in ignorance whether Odysseus is alive or dead, is given the choice to leave her husband’s residence, go back to her father, and marry one of the suitors.\(^{55}\) Aside from their obvious differences, all four examples show that adultery or desire to remarry on the wife’s part, while her spouse is still alive, can constitute probable cause for separation of a married couple.

\(^{52}\) See Burgess 2009:13. For a mythological parallel, see Demeter’s efforts to make Demophoön immortal in *Hymn. Hom. Dem.* 231-274.


\(^{54}\) *Od*. 8.317-320. Also see Lacey 1966:58.

\(^{55}\) *Od*. 2.130-133, 15.16-18. Also see Lacey 1966:57, 61-65.
Contrary to the examples above, Thetis’ motive for abandoning her husband is not adultery or desire for remarriage. She simply goes back to live with her father and sisters. What is, then, the cause of her separation from Peleus? As was previously discussed, Zeus assumed the role of her κύριος and, despite her unwillingness, gave her as a bride to Peleus. In accordance with Homeric marriage patterns, she was not in a position to object to his choice of her future husband (Il. 18.432-434). Nevertheless, she does not completely commit to the marriage that the king of gods arranged for her. The Iliad indicates at several points that Peleus grows old, suffering in mournful solitude. Thetis becomes the only bride in the Homeric epic to detach herself from her husband not from an urge to commit to someone else, but in order to return to her premarital life, while her husband is still alive. The following discussion will argue that Thetis’ union with Peleus, as Zeus’ response to the mythological tradition of Themis’ oracle, overrides fundamental principles of the institution of marriage that the procedural conformity of the wedding ceremony could not fully conceal or legitimize.

As was mentioned in Chapter One, classical scholarship remarks that in general the inalienability of the gift from its owner, which the anthropologists note in modern primitive societies, is not an attribute of Homeric gift exchange. This study has suggested, however, that inalienability applies exceptionally to women given in marriage by their fathers in the literary world of the Iliad and the Odyssey. While given to her future husband in the form of a gift, a bride is a free-born person and is still tied to her father by kinship. On the basis of those qualities, the institution of marriage invests the woman with an inestimable symbolic quality that inhibits an objective measurement of her value and prevents the possibility of a calculated exact repayment for her. Thus, even

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if there is reciprocal transfer of riches between the two sides, the bride is not construed as interchangeable with them. Instead, material gifts highlight her distinct conception as a part of her father’s self.Channelled through the institution of marriage, the natural, inalienable link of the bride to the one who gives her facilitates another two strong, albeit conventional, links; one between her donor and her receiver and one between the bride herself and her future husband. Anthropological studies argue that, in principle, the exchange of gifts forms “personal relations” between those who give and receive.\(^{57}\) As an exchange mechanism, then, the institution of marriage creates an even wider range of “personal relations” between all the individuals who take part in the process, whether they are exchanging or being exchanged.

Under closer scrutiny, the marriage arrangement of Achilles’ parents reveals significant deviations from the conceptual and regulatory framework of marriage as an institution. More specifically, when Zeus plans and executes the Nereid’s marriage according to his will, he assumes a role normally played by a woman’s father. Before her marriage to Peleus, however, Zeus had no interest in becoming a father figure for her, but, according to external mythological tradition, he was her suitor.\(^{58}\) The king of the gods may temporarily perform parental duties with regard to Thetis’ marriage, but in the absence of direct kinship or a previous parental relationship with her, he fails to

\(^{57}\) For this term, see Gregory 1982:8; also see the Introduction to this dissertation.

\(^{58}\) The fact that Zeus grants Thetis’ wish to help the Trojans in the war, so that the Achaians honour Achilles, does not derive from an alleged fatherly care for her. Instead, it is pointedly presented as a favour in return for the prior assistance that the nymph offered to him and a direct outcome of her supplication to him (\textit{Il.} 1.498-530). In particular, her supplication of the king of the gods exhibits more fully an absence of the familiarity and immediacy that normally characterizes a relationship between a child and a parent. Achilles, for instance, does not need to supplicate Thetis in order to ask her to plea with Zeus on his behalf (\textit{Il.} 1.393-412). Athena, in the divine domain, simply disagrees with her father, when he contemplates saving Hector from Achilles, and Zeus instantly responds, allowing her to go stand by Achilles’ side (\textit{Il.} 22.177-185). While granting the requests of both goddesses, note the different tone that Zeus assumes when addressing Thetis and his daughter, Athena (\textit{Il.} 1.510-527, 22.183-185).
reproduce the long-term bond naturally connecting a father and a daughter.\(^{59}\) Despite the guise of paternal authority that compliance with standard wedding procedure renders to him, when he dictates that the nymph becomes the bride of Peleus, as she herself alleges, Zeus is essentially alienated from her. This is at odds with the exceptional quality of a woman given in marriage by her father, as an inalienable part of his own self.\(^{60}\) Hence, although offered as a bride to Peleus, Thetis is stripped of the symbolic conceptions that distinguish the bride from the material gifts with which she changes hands and delineate her as the unsurpassable bounty of her father to the bridegroom.\(^{61}\)

Consistency in gift-giving procedure and terminology employed in regard to the institution of marriage create a pretext of superficial regularity that veils important peculiarities of Thetis’ marriage arrangement. Nevertheless, her offer to Peleus along with the arms and her perceived position at the top of a list of gifts that the gods gave to him (\textit{Il.} 18.84-85 and 24.534-537) cannot rectify her problematic relationship to the one who gives her. The lack of an inalienable bond with her donor results in her inability to forge subsequent bonds between her exchangers as well as between herself and the bridegroom, which, as will be shown below, allows Thetis an extraordinary degree of autonomy within the marriage exchange. In other words, the absence of a natural, pre-existing relationship of the bride to her giver initiates a ripple effect-disruption in the “personal relations” her marriage would conventionally create.

\(^{59}\) In contrast, consider Hera’s ongoing motherly relationship with the Nereid. Besides claiming that she was Thetis’ surrogate mother and that she arranged her marriage, she continues to care for her surrogate daughter after the latter has abandoned her husband. See \textit{Il.} 24.56-63. For details, also see above in this chapter.

\(^{60}\) In fact, “alienation” between the agent and the object of exchange is a characteristic that Marx (1867:91) observes in the exchange of commodities and as such it contradicts the premise of the institution of marriage as a gift exchange mechanism. Extrapolating from Marx’s analysis, Gregory (1982:12) defines commodity exchange as “an exchange of alienable things between transactors who are in a state of reciprocal independence.”

\(^{61}\) For the bride as the “supreme gift” offered by her father to her husband, see Lévi-Strauss 1969:65.
The mortal nature of the bridegroom, as opposed to the divine bride and her donor, complicates further the interpersonal relations expected to ensue from a marriage agreement. In general, the institution of marriage follows the principles and the social patterns of its overarching mechanism of gift exchange. More specifically, participation in gift-giving places an individual in a group of noble peers, while it sets off a strife to give more, which can extend to a strife of “domination” among the transaction partners. In sum, it introduces the donor and the recipient in a social system of both equality and inequality, friendship and competition. Consequently, a marriage settlement is expected to cement this kind of complex personal relation, establishing, at the same time, an alliance and a hierarchy between the exchangers. As Vernant formulates it: “The framework is that of social interchange between the great noble families, with the exchange of women seen as a means of creating links of union or dependence, of acquiring prestige or confirming vassaldom.” The fact that Peleus is a mortal man, thus by definition inferior to Thetis and Zeus, intensifies the impossibility of marriage forming a new power dynamic among those involved in the arrangement. Even though taking the Nereid as a wife might seem like aiding Zeus to keep his power, Peleus is unable to measure up to the immortals by exchange standards, in order to enter an alliance or a competition with them. In fact, Hera mentions that the gods were well disposed towards him before his marriage. The benefit that the king of the gods derives from this marriage does not originate in a conscious counter-offer by the bridegroom, but

62 See Gregory 1982:19; the term is on p.47. For gift exchange as a process that determines position in the hierarchy, also see Mauss 1966:4.
64 For marriage as an alliance between noble families, see Finley 1955:238. Also see Lacey 1966:55; Morris 1986b:113.
it is the result of his own self-interested calculation. In effect, Peleus is not an exchange partner (equal or subordinate) to Zeus, but a means to an end. Zeus does not seek to establish a hierarchy between the two exchangers and therefore he does not need to conduct an exchange necessarily with Peleus. He does seek to gain a different type of domination, however, and in order to achieve that, he needs to conduct an exchange of Thetis. The oracle dictates that the Nereid cannot marry any of the Olympians, but the choice of Peleus as her husband seems to have been a simple suggestion by Themis (Pindar, *Isth.* 8.38-40). Marriage to any other mortal would presumably have the same positive impact for Zeus’ power. Normally, there is always some calculation of value or benefit at work in marriage settlements, which, nevertheless, is disguised under the symbolic logic of the institution of marriage. The advantage that the individuals may try to gain is euphemised as a disinterested and generous exchange of gifts, intending to form desirable “personal relations.” But in this particular settlement, the prospect of personal profit has completely replaced any prospect of profitable “personal relations” between the participants.66 This objective contradicts intrinsic premises of the institution of marriage and the perception of marriage as gift exchange. Keeping it unspoken, however, allows Zeus to proceed with his plan under the pretext of a marriage arrangement.

The social realities that underlie Thetis’ pairing with Peleus and the motives that lead to this union exhibit substantial discrepancies when compared to the Homeric

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66 Features such as calculation of value and motive of self-interest or profit define both the symbolic exchange of gifts and the more commercial exchange of commodities. Objectives for gain remain silent in the former type of transaction, but are overtly declared in the latter. Yet adding to these common objectives the “reciprocal independence” that characterises Thetis’ exchangers seems to bring her marriage arrangement particularly close to the Marxian principles of commodity exchange. For the type of non-personal relations generated by commodity exchange, see Marx 1906:83, 1867:91; also see Gregory 1982:8, 12, 19. For the overlap of between gift exchange and commodity exchange, see the Introduction to this dissertation.
delineation of the institution of marriage. Inconsistencies, which are only temporarily covered under the ritual veil of the wedding proceedings, in the long run have a disintegrating effect on the couple’s partnership. As was mentioned earlier, the absence of a premarital, inseparable bond of Thetis to the one who makes her the bride of Peleus deprives the marriage agreement of the proper long-term relationship between the donor of the bride and the bridegroom, as well as between the bride herself and her future husband. Once the Nereid gives birth to Achilles and Zeus’ supremacy is secured, according to Themis’ oracle, the lack of a cohesiveness generated by the faulty premises of this marriage settlement is prominently manifested. Lacking a symbolic bonding relationship to her husband by proper marriage conventions, Thetis exhibits an exceptional autonomy in her marriage. She leaves Peleus and returns to her divine κύριος with whom she truly has an inalienable affinity. That is not Zeus, who gave her in marriage, but her biological father Nereus.

Interestingly, Thetis’ abandonment of her husband does not create the social upheaval caused by the desertion of Menelaus by Helen or, to a lesser extent, by Aphrodite’s affair with Ares. This is because her speeches harmonise her with the proper perception of a female, as a subject of thoughts and words, within a community of male aristocrats responsible for actions in Homeric epic. In her words, she never renounces the mechanisms responsible for her exchange or the gains generated for her exchangers and the personal grief that those gains cost her.67 Furthermore, her reiterated sorrowful acceptance of her son’s mortal fate emphasises the alleged passivity of her character.

67 Thetis’ own account of her marriage to Peleus, despite her personal disagreement (Il. 18.432-434), assimilates her to Briseis, who was given to Agamemnon against her will (Il. 1.345-348).
Nevertheless, though uncharacteristic of a woman in Homeric society, Thetis is undeniably presented as the subject of action as well. It is surprising, then, that her initiative to leave her husband does not bring her into conflict with the male world of the poem and its systems of exchange that facilitated her marriage. It is the non-threatening tone of her speech, combined with her deep understanding of the very principles underpinning male society, that entitle her to greater autonomy and action. In particular, the violation of constituent principles of the institution of marriage observed in her union with Peleus dictates certain developments that coincide remarkably with Thetis’ own wishes prior to her marriage. Manipulating this coincidence, she is able to act on her own will without alarming the male society of the *Iliad*. In contrast to other illegitimately exchanged women in Homeric epic,\(^\text{68}\) she does not wait to be claimed by her rightful male guardian. Instead, she is portrayed as the agent of her own “dis-exchange.” With her departure from Peleus’ palace, she disavows the role of the wife and reinstates herself as a daughter and a sister in the depths of the sea.

But, although the cycle of Thetis’ own exchange closes in the Iliadic past with the abandonment of her husband, she continues to engage in male activity in the Iliadic present. In the beginning of the poem, she supplicates Zeus and influences the course of the Trojan War on behalf of her son.\(^\text{69}\) She then steps into the heroic male arena, providing Achilles with a new set of divine arms and enabling him to return to battle, avenge Patroclus, and win glory. Once an unwilling bride offered along with arms, she becomes the giver of arms, expressing herself in the same terms as the elite male society by which she was exchanged in the past.

\(^{68}\) Cf. Chryseis and Briseis.
\(^{69}\) For Thetis interfering in the Trojan War, see Slatkin 1991:53-54, 83, 103-105.
Despite her pervasive interference with the aristocratic male world in the *Iliad*, Thetis is never criticised for her actions implicitly or explicitly. The reason for her immunity to blame or mockery is that she does not seek to deny or transcend her female identity. Her actions do not assimilate her to a male character and do not construct a new and unconventional female personality. On the contrary, they communicate and proclaim a traditional female perception in a male society. The driving force behind Thetis’ involvement in prominent male activities in the dramatic time of the *Iliad* is motherhood, the most distinct and inherent attribute of female identity. Her uncompromised devotion to her son, in conjunction with her divine nature, justifies her female presence in the Achaean camp not as a seeker of her own glory, but as an enabler of glory.

In brief, Thetis achieves a balanced combination of both female and male forms of expression. Her acquiescence to the rules of the human male society with regard to her marriage is consistent with what is construed as appropriate for her gender in the aristocratic male Homeric society. Her passionate involvement with the human world, and the significant psychological influence that this world has on her, approximate her more to the character of a mortal woman than of a goddess. But despite her resemblance to a human female, the aberrant nature of her marriage to a weak mortal and her pathetic helplessness with regard to the fate of her son strengthen her femininity. She surpasses the limits of perceived acceptable female expression with impunity. This is because she is able to poise between the passivity of Briseis or Andromache and the insolent, self-

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70 Helen, who abandoned Menelaus and eloped with Paris, reproaches herself for her actions and is also blamed by the Trojans (*Il*. 3.171-180, 410-412, 6.344-358, 24.762-775). Andromache’s counsels on war-issues are dismissed by Hector and she is told to retreat to her womanly tasks of spinning and weaving (*Il*. 6.490-493). It is worth noting that the source of Thetis’ unquestioned permission in engaging in prominent male activities is not her divine nature. After all, even Aphrodite was hurt and mocked when she entered the battle to save her son, Aeneas (*Il*. 5.330-351, 418-430).
centered, independence of Helen in the human domain, as well as between the guileful, occasionally ridiculed, femininity of Aphrodite and the extreme, rigid masculinity of Athena in the divine realm. Thetis “dis-exchanges” herself from her own prior transference as a bride and becomes the exchanger of arms. Thus, not only does she abandon the status of a wife, normally considered legitimate for a female by male social standards, but she also undertakes prominent male activity, employing these very standards in order to profess maternity, the most legitimate female characteristic in Homeric society.

**Conclusion**

As was argued earlier in this chapter, the weapons that the gods gave to Peleus temporarily fulfilled the procedural conditions for his marriage with Thetis, enabling Zeus to make the sea goddess Peleus’ bride. Although the arms’ offer as a wedding gift does not fashion links between the parties involved in this marriage agreement, yet it qualifies and seals a new permanent bond. Setting the conditions for the birth of Achilles to whom Thetis remains devoted even after her separation from Peleus, the arms become the symbol of the hero’s ongoing connection to his mother. Indeed, Thetis gives birth to Achilles, because she is offered to Peleus along with the arms. On the other hand, Peleus, who actually gives the arms to his son, simply becomes the mediator of Thetis’ legacy to Achilles. The fact that she is the reason for Achilles’ possession of immortal defensive armour indicates her motherly desire to protect him that is exhibited actively by her continuing guardianship of her son in the *Iliad*. 
The close relationship between the origin of the immortal arms and Achilles’ birth, combined with his acquisition of them in the form of family inheritance and his ensuing guardianship by his mother, signify his own strong and inalienable attachment to them. Such an attachment designates the hero as the ultimate proper owner of these objects, while it juxtaposes his expected fixed possession of them to the circulatory mobility that the arms display in the present time of the Iliad. In this sense, the hero’s inseparable connection to his arms serves as a warning against their unauthorised exchange outside of his hands.

In the end, the history that the Iliad assigns to the first set of Achilles’ arms provides an instructive background against which their consecutive exchanges taking place in the dramatic time of the narrative can be assessed. More specifically, the origin of the arms as a wedding gift to Peleus and their instrumental role in his marriage to Thetis make the exchange of the Nereid paradigmatic for the future transfers of the arms in the poem. Despite employing different mechanisms and unfolding in different stages, her successive exchange and “dis-exchange” as a bride maps out the arms’ long circulation-course in the Iliadic present. In this sense, Thetis helps the audience navigate through the consecutive transfers of the arms, alerting it to the possibility and the consequences of unrightful exchange, in contrast to the rules of the appropriate mechanism. In particular, her abandonment of her husband and subsequent return to her father call in question the legitimacy of the process that compelled her to become the bride of Peleus and disclose a violation of constituent principles of the institution of marriage. The exchange model constructed from the arrangement, as well as the closure of her marriage, provides insights that not only dictate the scrutiny of the principles
stipulating the later transfers of the arms, but also anticipate developments that look forward to the final return of the arms to Achilles’ hands. Achilles’ inalienable attachment to his weapons is translated into an inherent link between them and his own life. That is, during his lifespan the arms cannot be properly possessed by anyone else but him. The *Iliad* comprises the last part of Achilles’ life; it opens with the hero’s loss of his *geras*, resulting in his loss of honour among his society, and progresses with the loss of his arms. The standard systems of exchange in Homeric epic and Thetis’ skilful manipulation of their inviolate principles ensure that the poem closes with Achilles having restored his lost possessions and being honoured both by men and gods.
CHAPTER FOUR – CHEIRON AND ACHILLES’ SPEAR

Introduction

Chapter Two discussed how the items comprising Achilles’ first set of arms in the *Iliad* do not come from a single source. Cheiron gives Peleus his ash spear, while the Olympian gods provide him with the rest of the arms. Peleus, later, bequeaths both parts of this armour to his son. Achilles’ acquisition of them by inheritance denotes them both as his inalienable possessions. Their different origin, however, invests them with different symbolical connotations. It was suggested in the previous chapter that when Peleus passes down to his son his defensive weapons, which he reportedly received at his wedding with Thetis, he becomes the mediator of the Nereid’s bequest to Achilles. The strong link of these weapons with Thetis designates them as a token of her maternal guardianship over her son. The current chapter will show that the spear represents Achilles’ true paternal inheritance, which, nevertheless, connects him more to Cheiron, its original donor and the hero’s pedagogue, than to his biological father, Peleus. It was mentioned earlier that the rest of the arms are correlative of Achilles’ birth through his mother’s marriage. The spear, on the other hand, is more associated with the hero’s death, but also bears a connection to his birth to the extent that death naturally presupposes birth. It will be demonstrated that, as a legacy of Cheiron to his pupil, this weapon is the most inseparable of Achilles’ possessions, because it best represents the hero’s uniqueness in relation to his centaur teacher. In the end, this chapter will argue
that the spear embodies and defines Achilles’ semi-divine nature, distinct from all other semi-divine warriors at Troy, and his peculiar destiny.

**Cheiron, Peleus, and the Ash Spear**

After the death of Patroclus, Achilles explicitly connects his panoply, now lost to Hector, to his parents’ wedding (*Il*. 18.80-93). The spear is not a part of this panoply, because Patroclus did not take it with him into battle and, therefore, it has not fallen into Hector’s hands (*Il*. 16.140). When Achilles receives a second set of arms from his mother, a new spear is not included among them. He still keeps the one that his father gave him and reportedly uses it together with the new armour to avenge the death of his friend.\(^1\) Several non-Homeric surviving sources report that Cheiron attended the wedding of Peleus and Thetis and brought a gift, whether a spear or not.\(^2\) *The Iliad*, however, does not specify whether Peleus obtains his offensive weapon at his wedding as well. Scholars frequently consider this omission as an indication that Achilles’ father receives his spear on the same occasion, along with his defensive armour. The idea of the spear being one more wedding gift would create a unified image for all the arms that the hero has in his possession; however, it would overshadow the spear’s own significance, which lies in its uniqueness. There are two sets of arms, but only one spear. Its different origin from the rest of the weapons, combined with the lack of information regarding its acquisition and its separation from the first panoply in the course of the *Iliad*, suggests a deeper distinction between them. Such a distinction necessitates its exclusion from the

\(^1\) Cf. *Il*. 19.369-391, 20.273-90, etc.

\(^2\) For a brief review of the sources, see Chapter Two.
associations of the wedding gift and requires its separate consideration apart from Achilles’ defensive arms.

An overview of the mythological traditions about Cheiron and Peleus will reveal a substantial connection between the two of them that appears to have started prior to the latter’s union with Thetis. The exploration of the relationship between them will justify the possibility of the centaur offering a gift to the hero independently of the wedding. At the same time, it will illustrate that the acquisition of the spear follows a different system of exchange than the one employed by the institution of marriage. Putting this weapon in its appropriate exchange context will help unfold its special significance and symbolism not only for Peleus, who obtains it first, but also for Achilles, who receives it from him.

To begin with, certain sources present the possibility of kinship ties between Cheiron and Peleus. Although the evidence concurs that Peleus is the child of Aeacus and Endeis, there seems to be some variant information regarding his mother’s lineage. Pindar in *Nemean* 5.11-12 and Bachylides in 13.96-99 simply mention her name, but the scholia on *Il*. 16.14 and on Pindar *Nemean* 5.12 call this Endeis the daughter of Cheiron. In fact, a familial relationship between the centaur and Achilles’ father supports the story cited by the same Iliadic scholion, according to which, Pleleus, after killing his half-brother Phocus, flees to Cheiron. On the other hand, Apollodorus *Library* 3.12.6, Plutarch *Theseus* 10, and Pausanias 2.29.9 name the brigand Sciron, whom Theseus killed, as Endeis’ father. Robbins favours her origin from the centaur and attributes the

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3 Also see the emendation on Hyginus *Fab*. 14.8.
4 There are variant versions of the story of Phocus’ murder. Some sources attribute the murder to Peleus, while some others credit his brother Telamon with the deed. For details, see Frazer 1921, 2:57-59 n.2; Gantz 1993:222-223.
discrepancy of the sources to a possible confusion of the names Cheiron and Sciron.\(^5\) He argues that “the fact that Achilles’ spear is the spear given by Chiron to Peleus calls to our attention the close association of Peleus himself with the centaur who was his neighbour on Mount Pelion and his maternal grandfather.”\(^6\)

Aside from a marginally attested blood connection between them and its role in Cheiron offering refuge to Peleus for the murder of Phocus, tradition appears more unified as to the centaur’s contribution to another early life adventure of Aeacus’ son, his mistreatment by his host Acastus. In general, the story has it that after he accidentally kills Eurytion during the Calydonian boar hunt, Peleus goes to Acastus’ court in Iolcus and is purified by him. The king’s wife unsuccessfully attempts to seduce the hero and in revenge accuses him of improper conduct. Reluctant to kill his guest, Acastus prepares a plan that would lead to Peleus’ destruction. The Hesiodic Catalogue of Women (fr. 209 Merkelbach and West) more specifically says that Acastus hid the sword that Hephaestus made for Peleus and left him alone on Pelion so that he would be killed by the centaurs. Pindar in Nemean 4.57-61 alludes to Acastus plotting the death of Peleus and adds that Cheiron saves the hero.\(^7\) Apollodorus in Library 3.13.1-3 offers the most detailed account of the story. He refers to the unsuccessful proposition of Peleus by the king’s wife, her false accusations to her husband, the hero’s abandonment on Pelion by Acastus, and his rescue from the centaurs by Cheiron. Apollodorus also adds that Cheiron finds Peleus’ sword that Acastus hid from him and restores it to its owner. This tale is also mentioned,

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\(^5\) See Robbins 1993:11 n.17. The likelihood of the confusion between the names Cheiron and Sciron is also supported by the fact that Plutarch, who assigns the brigand as Endeis’ father, calls her mother Chariclo, a name by which Cheiron’s wife is known in the sources. Cf. Titanomachy (fr.10 Bernabé). Also see Gantz 1993:220.

\(^6\) See Robbins 1993:11.

\(^7\) Pindar in Nem. 5.25-36 offers more details on the false accusations of Acastus’ wife against Peleus.
although with some variant details, by the scholia on Pindar *Nemean* 4.54 and 59, on Aristophanes *Clouds* 1063, and on Apollonius Rhodius *Argonautica* 1.224. In addition, there are several illustrations of the story in sixth-century iconography. In particular, an amphora in the Villa Giulia depicts Peleus on a tree, wild beasts gathering below, and Cheiron approaching the scene.⁸

In Pindar and Apollodorus, the hero’s rescue by the benevolent centaur is closely followed by the story of Peleus winning Thetis as his bride after he successfully wrestles her while she changes forms. Both authors connect Cheiron implicitly or explicitly to Peleus’ marriage with the Nereid. Pindar, on the one hand, obliquely alludes to Cheiron’s role in the couple’s marriage, when he says that by saving Peleus from destruction the centaur carried out the destiny fated by Zeus. That destiny, which is described immediately after in the poem, consists of Peleus’ escape from the danger of fire, a lion, and a dragon and of his wedding to Thetis:

> τὰ Δαιδάλου δὲ μαχαίρα φύτευε οἱ θάνατον
> ἐκ λόχου Πελίαο παῖς ἔλαλκε δὲ Χύρων,
> καὶ τὸ μόρσιμον Διόθεν πεπρωμένον ἐκφέρεν:
> πῦρ δὲ παγκρατέως ἄρειμαχάνων τε λεώντων
> ὄνυχας ὀξυτάτους ἀκμάς
> καὶ δεινοτάτων ὀδόντων

Using the sword of Daidalus, Pelias’ son was plotting death for him from ambush, but Cheiron averted it, and he carried out the destiny fated by Zeus. After thwarting the all-powerful fire, the razor-sharp claws of boldly devising lions and the points of fiercest teeth, he married one of the lofty-throned Nereids.

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Peleus’ dangerous encounters refer to the various transformations of Thetis during the couple’s struggle.⁹ Apollodorus in Library 3.13.5, on the other hand, states explicitly that Cheiron instructs Peleus to seize and hold the sea goddess, despite her shape changes, until she resumes her previous form. The author continues with a brief description of the divine celebration of the couple’s wedding on Mount Pelion, during which Cheiron gives Peleus an ash spear and Poseidon gives him a pair of immortal horses.¹⁰ A more general allusion to Cheiron’s contribution to the union of the couple or to the close relationship between the bridegroom and the centaur may also be found in Alcaeus 42 (Lobel and Page), where Peleus leads Thetis from Nereus’ place to the home of Cheiron and invites the gods to his wedding.¹¹

Cheiron is frequently included in visual representations portraying Peleus clinging to Thetis while she changes shapes and dating from as early as the mid-seventh century.¹² For instance, an amphora in Munich shows him attending the couple’s

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⁹ Pindar in Nem. 3.34-36 alludes to the same story very briefly: ὃς καὶ Ἰακὸλον ἐλιπό μόνος ἀνευ στρατιᾶς, / καὶ ποντιαν Θέτιν κατέμαρος / ἐγκοριντ ("he took Iolcus all alone without an army / and captured the sea nymph Thetis / with great effort"). For this tale, also see the scholia on Pindar Nem. 3.35 and 4.62; Pausanias 5.18.5; Quintus Smyrnaeus 3.618-624; Tzetzes, Schol. on Lycophron, 175, 178 (Müller, 1:446-457); scholia on Apollonius Rhodius Argon. 1.582; Ovid Met. 11.235-265. For the literary sources for this story and a commentary on the motif of shape-shifting, see Frazer 1921, 2:67-68 n.6.

¹⁰ These are presumably the immortal horses that Achilles is said to possess in II. 2.769-770, 10.321-324, 329-331, 16.148-154, 867, 17.76-78, 443-444, 475-483, 486-488, 496, 504-505, 19.397, 399, 424, 23.276-278.

¹¹ Stewart (1983:62 and nn.25, 26) notes that the extant literary sources, with the exception of Catullus 64, unanimously present Cheiron’s cave on Pelion as the setting for the wedding of Peleus and Thetis. That Cheiron had his residence on Mount Pelion in conjunction with his prior relationship with Peleus justifies the conclusion that the centaur hosted the wedding ceremony. Some of Peleus’ own adventures occurred on Pelion, and his own home in Phthia was not that far away from the mountain.

¹² E.g. a plate from Praesos, Crete dated to mid-seventh century has been interpreted to show Peleus clasping a fish, which is also a woman (LIMC, “Peleus,” no. 78; Heraklion, no#). A Melian amphora from Kavalla, dating to late seventh century, depicts Peleus seizing Thetis among the Nereids (LIMC, “Peleus,” no. 61 = “Thetis,” no. 8 = “Nereides,” no. 279; Kavalla A1086). A Late Corinthian column krater, dating to the mid-sixth century, portrays Peleus waiting for Thetis, as she comes by with her sisters (LIMC, “Peleus,” no. 47 = “Nereides,” no. 271; Louvre E639). Three of the Loeb tripods from Perugia, dating to later sixth century, present Peleus chasing Thetis as she transforms into several animals (LIMC, “Peleus,” nos. 74*, 75*, 76*; Munich SL 67, 66, 68). Also Attic visual art of various periods often shows Peleus clasping to
wrestling. His presence in such scenes hints at his intention to protect Peleus from danger or his advice to the hero on how to seize the sea nymph, and thus accords with the accounts offered by Pindar and Apollodorus.

This brief overview of the sources confirms that Cheiron is a central figure in Peleus’ life. The evidence that presents the centaur attending the hero’s wedding and offering him a gift should not mislead us to consider Cheiron as just a random guest. His presence at the ceremony is a reminder and an illustration of his strong bond with Peleus. This bond pre-existed the wedding and, in fact, contributed to it to the extent that Cheiron helped Peleus to win Thetis. It then continued after the union and the separation of the couple, since Cheiron reared Achilles after Thetis abandoned her husband. The persistence with which the centaur appears in various episodes of Peleus’ life and the aid that he consistently offers to the hero even led scholars to believe that there should have been a myth that featured Cheiron as Peleus’ tutor in his youth.

Indeed Peleus’ entire life shows him to be the constant beneficiary of Cheiron’s kindness and generosity, whether it is translated into assistance to escape risks, advice for success, the offer of gifts, or the upbringing of his son. The frequent and timely manner in which the centaur benefits the hero throughout his life, combined with the fact that Peleus is never assumed to be in any debt towards Cheiron, manifests a strong bond between them, reminiscent of that between Thetis and Achilles in the Iliad. Cheiron, then, as Peleus’ (possible) grandfather, protector, friend, and son’s pedagogue, acts as a father figure in the hero’s life. By specifying that it was he, and not the gods, who gave

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Thetis, while several animals or monsters spring from her body (LIMC, “Peleus,” no. 79*; Paris, Louvre CA 2569). For more details on these representations of the scene in art, see Gantz 1993:229.


14 See Davies 1989:16-17. For the possibility of such a myth being included in the Cypria, see Davies 1989:36, 51-52.
Peleus the ash spear (Il. 16.143-144 = 19.390-391), the Iliad alludes to the close relationship between the two of them presented in non-Homeric sources. A continuous presence in the hero’s life, he presumably had numerous occasions, besides the wedding ceremony, to present his (possible) grandson, protégé, or friend with a gift. There is no need, therefore, to consider the spear as one more wedding gift, especially since such an association blurs its own qualities and subtracts from its carefully made distinction from the rest of the arms in the Iliad.\footnote{Stewart (1983:62-64 and nn.25, 27) notes the uniqueness of the spear, originating from Cheiron, in contrast to the rest of Achilles’ arms, which were made by Hephaestus and given to Peleus by the gods. But relying on visual representations of the marriage of Peleus and Thetis, showing Cheiron carrying a tree branch, and on the account of the Cypria (fr. 3 Bernabé), regarding Cheiron presenting Peleus with the spear at the latter’s wedding, he considers that the Iliad concurs that the spear, or at least the ash branch from which the spear was made at a later occasion, was one more wedding gift to Peleus. The Iliad, however, does not supply any specific details that connect this weapon to the wedding of Achilles’ parents.}

In light of the close relationship between Cheiron and Peleus, the spear becomes a particularly charged choice of gift. The bond that connects the two exchangers affects its merit as a gift, in terms that the bond defines the gift and is, in turn, defined by it. As a gift, the spear is expected to have both economic and symbolic value. Economic value, in this case, consists primarily of this gift’s apparent utility for a Greek hero.\footnote{For a gift suiting the needs of its receiver, see Od. 4.589-619, where Menelaus initially offers three horses to Telemachus, but swaps them for a silver mixing bowl after the Ithacan prince declares that his homeland does not have appropriate meadow-land to sustain horses.} Activities such as hunting, athletic contests featuring duels, and war have a central position in the life of the aristocratic community. A spear is clearly a useful asset for participation in all these activities. The Iliad underscores the weapon’s utilitarian aspect, stating that Cheiron gave it to Achilles’ father “to be death for fighters” (16.143-144 = 19.390-391). Besides the evident usefulness, the craftsmanship of the spear is also part of its economic worth. Unlike the immortal armour that the gods gave Peleus as a wedding gift, which
according to non-Homeric sources is forged by the smith-god Hephaestus, Cheiron himself seems to have, at least, participated in the making of the spear that he offers. More specifically, the *Cypria* (fr. 3 Bernabé) refers to sources which reported that Cheiron cut an ash tree and gave it to Peleus as a spear at his wedding. The same sources noted that Athena polished this spear and Hephaestus assembled it. The *Iliad* does not explicitly say that Cheiron made this weapon, but it definitely alludes to the centaur manufacturing it from scratch, while referring to its origin in a punning fashion:

…Πηλιάδα μελίνα, τὴν πατρὶ φίλω πόρε Χείρων
Πηλίου ἐκ κορυφῆς, φόνον ἐμμεναι ἠρώεσσιν. (Il. 16.143-144 = 19.390-391)

…the Pelian ash spear which Cheiron had brought to his father from high on Pelion to be death for fighters.

Noting the ashen nature of the spear and that Cheiron brought it to Achilles’ father “from high on Pelion” highlights the centaur as (solely) responsible for finding the raw material on Mount Pelion and, possibly, for shaping it into a spear. In other words, Cheiron is not assumed to pass on a gift that he receives from someone else or an object that he simply happens to have at his disposal; instead, he presents Peleus with a gift which he puts personal effort into making. Thus, the economic value of this spear constituted by its proper use, wooden substance, and craftsmanship is correlative to the giver’s choice and contribution, as well as to the pre-existing relationship connecting the exchange partners. This is because the donor is also the creator of the gift and produced it individually for the particular receiver.

As was mentioned in the introductory chapter, an object’s economic value is relatively fixed and accompanies it regardless of its potential transference to other people. On the contrary, symbolic value, though in part dependent on the economic one,
is more abstract; it is conditioned by the object’s exchange and it qualifies those who give and receive. The symbolic properties of the ash spear, deriving from its utility, raw material, and workmanship, are shaped by the consolidated bond between Cheiron and Peleus, which, in turn, is renewed and remoulded by the exchange of the gift. The following discussion will explore the symbolic significance of this gift for the two transactors. Made from a tree branch and possibly by Cheiron himself for Peleus, the spear is not simply tailored to the utility needs of the recipient for a weapon, but also to the semi-wild nature of the donor. Exchanging it tightens their prior relationship in a new, inalienable fashion.

Surveying a few notable sources for centaurs across antiquity will show that there is a persistent conception of them carrying trees or branches in both literature and iconography. More specifically, in the Hesiodic Shield 188-190, the centaurs face the Lapiths holding fir trees. In Pindar fr. 167 (Snell and Maehler), the centaurs strike Caeneus, one of the Lapiths, also with fir trees.\(^\text{18}\) Ovid Metamorphoses 12.245-535 mentions pines and oaks as the centaurs’ weapons. Diodorus’ Library of History 4.12.3-8 relates the centaurs’ attack with trees, firebrands, and axes against Pholus and Heracles, when the two friends open a jar of wine given to the centaurs by Dionysus. Apollodorus in Library 2.5.4, referring to the same myth, reports that when Pholus opens the wine, the wild beasts arrive at his cave armed with rocks and firs.

Early Greek representations of centaurs confirm the consistency of their image with trees or branches. For instance, a Protocorinthian pyxis lid from Perachora portrays

\(^{18}\) Also see Apollonius of Rhodes 1.63-64 and the scholia ad loc., according to which Pindar is Apollonius’ source.
Pholus together with another centaur who carries a branch.\textsuperscript{19} On one side of a terracotta shield in Nauplion from ca. 700 BC, a centaur, often indentified as Cheiron, is depicted with an animal hanging from a branch he holds.\textsuperscript{20} In the Centauromachy scene on the reverse of the François vase, dated to the early sixth century BC, the centaurs fight using tree branches, which Stewart argues are ash branches in particular.\textsuperscript{21} The obverse of the François vase and the Attic, so-called the Erskine dinos, also from the first half of sixth century, present Cheiron proceeding to the wedding of Peleus and Thetis holding an ash branch, which would presumably be Peleus’ famous ash spear. A bronze relief on an Etruscan chariot from the second half of the sixth century BC shows another image of Cheiron with a branch while hunting with Achilles.\textsuperscript{22} A hydria of the Leagros-group in Berlin, dating from the end of sixth century, also presents Cheiron in the hunt holding a tree.\textsuperscript{23}

The preceding overview of literary and representational evidence indicates that centaurs are typically portrayed carrying trees or branches. Whether they just hold them or use them as weapons to fight or to hunt, such objects symbolise the savage side of these hybrids.\textsuperscript{24} The fact that they are content with a tree or a branch cut directly from

\textsuperscript{19} \textit{LIMC}, “Pholos,” no. 365 (Perachora II, 115, cat. no. 1114).
\textsuperscript{20} The other side of the shield shows a warrior, thought to be Achilles, fighting with an Amazon. See \textit{LIMC}, “Amazones,” no. 168* = “Achilleus,” no. 719 = “Penthesileia,” no. 8 (Nauplion 4509). For this image as part of evidence reflecting a coherent account of Achilles’ childhood at an early date, see Burgess 2009:19-20, 141 nn.40, 41.
\textsuperscript{22} Cheiron and hunting Achilles (?). Bronze relief on Etruscan chariot, New York, Metropolitan Museum 03.23.1. For an interpretation of the chariot’s various representations and for an illustration of the scene between Cheiron and Achilles, see Burgess 2009:23, 26.
\textsuperscript{23} \textit{LIMC}, “Achilleus,” no. 22*. For this example as representative of Cheiron’s iconography, also see Robbins 1993:16 and n.32.
\textsuperscript{24} Robbins (1993:16) considers Cheiron’s representations with killed animals tied to a tree he is carrying as evidence for the centaur’s savage side. He notes, however, that this particular centaur displays a mixture of elements which can be traced in his student Achilles, who is also “an amalgam of civilization and of savagery, semi-feral like his celebrated centaur-teacher.”
nature and without further processing suggests the uncivilised, beastly nature of these creatures, who live in caves on the mountains.

Cheiron, in particular, has a distinct parentage from the rest of the centaurs and is construed to have a very different character from the majority of them. His favourable disposition towards humans conferred him the title of the “most just of the centaurs” (Il. 11.832) and established him as the wise educator of many famous Greek heroes including Achilles. Yet the positive elements of Cheiron’s character do not eliminate the fact that he is definitely one of the centaurs and he displays some of the prevalent characteristics of his race. His figure is identical to the rest of the centaurs (half human, half horse). Despite the fact that he reportedly has his own family, he also lives in a cave on Mount Pelion. As his name implies, he excels in the works of the hands with both positive and

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25 For the origin of Cheiron as the offspring of Philyra, see Hesiod Theog. 1001-1002. The Titanomachy (fr.10 Bernabé) explains that Cronus in the form of a horse mated with Oceanus’ daughter, Philyra and fathered Cheiron. The story is also told in Pherecydes 3 F 50 (F.Gr.Hist.) and Apollonius of Rhodes 2.1232-1241. Pindar Pyth. 3.4, 4.102-103, and 4.115 give the same parentage for the famous centaur. Apollodorus Library 2.5.4 is the only source that attributes a separate lineage also to Pholus, calling him the offspring of Silenus and a Melian nymph. In principle according to Pindar Pyth. 2.21-48, the race of the centaurs comes from Centaurus, who was born when Ixion mated with a cloud in the shape of Hera. This Centaurus, who has a human figure, produces the centaurs when he mates with horses on Mount Pelion. The Suda 602F1 considers Cheiron a son of Ixion, as are the rest of the centaurs. For the sources on the origin of the centaurs, also see Gantz 1993:145-147.

26 The centaur Pholus has also been described in the sources as well disposed towards Heracles. Cf. Diodorus 4.12.3-8; Apollodorus, Library 2.5.4. For Cheiron as a teacher of famous young men, see Hesiod Theog. 1001 and Catalogue of the Women 40.2, 204.87-92 (M-W).

27 Although in some representations his forelegs are of a human not of a horse, hinting at the more humanized attributes of his personality compared to the other centaurs, he still has a hybrid form. (For instance see LIMC, “Cheiron,” nos. 15, 18, 19, 21, 23, 26, 28, 29, 30, 33, 40, 45, 47, 51 57, 100; Rome VG 24247, Paris, Louvre CA 156, Munich 1740, Vienne IV 3599, Cambridge (Mass.) 1925.30.49, Bochum S 487, Munich 8738, Paris, Louvre G 373, Malibu, Getty 77.AE. 11, Boston, MFA 1972.850, Palerme V 762, Palerme ABV 65, Rome ABV 361, 23, Palerme 2792, Berne 45142, Munich 1615.)

28 See, for instance, Pindar Pyth. 4.
destructive effects.\textsuperscript{29} Such works consist of healing as well as killing, qualities that he is attested to transmit to his students.\textsuperscript{30}

Peleus’s spear may have its origins in the wild branches associated with savage centaurs, but it has been transformed into a “civilized” utensil. This seems a perfect symbol for Cheiron, given his ambiguous status between savagery and civilization. The spear’s refinement is not merely an adjustment to the human nature of its recipient, but also to the peculiar, ambivalent character of its donor. Centauric and human, at the same time, it bridges the gap between these domains and brings the prior relationship of its exchangers to a new level. Its mutual offer and acceptance make the two actors partake in each other’s worlds. Primarily, it makes Cheiron’s otherwise exclusive semi-wild nature more inclusive, allowing the receiver access to it. Since it constitutes an integral part of the centaur’s own wild nature, its transference to Peleus does not create a respective loss or separation from it for the donor. On the contrary passing it to the hero, the centaur makes it a token that they both share, a communicative tool between them. By virtue of these, it signals the ongoing (quasi) parental relationship between the two of them. The peculiar manner of its exchange, in which the donor gives something while being able to keep it, and its symbolism as the token of the exchangers’ pre-existing close relationship make it comparable to a case of an inheritance, where a father grants his son objects known to construct the latter’s lineage as well as their common identity in the eyes of the community. In this sense, it fulfills the theoretical model of Weiner regarding the

\textsuperscript{29} For the etymology of Cheiron’s name, see Escher 1899:2302, \textit{RE} III 2 s.v. “Chiron;” von Kamptz 1982:270; Robbins 1993:12-16.
\textsuperscript{30} For Cheiron training his students both in healing arts and in killing animals, see Robbins 1993:15-19. The \textit{Iliad} reports that Achilles and Asclepius learnt medicine from the wise centaur (\textit{Il.} 4.219, 11.832). Pindar \textit{Nem.} 3.43-47 describes the capacity and the savagery of the young Achilles in slaughtering lions and boars and carrying their panting bodies to Cheiron’s cave. For iconographical evidence presenting Achilles hunting with Cheiron or under his instruction, see above in this chapter.
circulation of inalienable possessions among relatives in “primitive” societies. It is not so much an instance of gift exchange, not least because it is not an exchange, but a kind of substitution of one kin owner (surrogate son) for another (surrogate father). Peleus is a human, of course, but the ash branch that constitutes his most famous weapon permanently links him to the peaks of Mount Pelion, the centaur’s natural habitat. The play by the narrator of the *Iliad* on Peleus’ own name, his Pelian ash spear, Mount Pelion, and the verb πάλλειν confirms this connection and articulates it in a way that it is hard to miss:  

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\text{τὸ μὲν οὐ δύνατ' ἄλλος Ἀχιλῆς πάλλειν, ἀλλὰ μὴν οἶσος ἐπίστατο πῆλαι Ἀχιλλεὺς, Πηλίαδα μελίην, τὴν πατρὶ φίλῳ πόρε Χείρων Πηλίου ἐκ κορυφῆς, φόνον ἔμιμενα ἡρώεσσιν. (II. 16.141-144 = 19.388-391)}
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…the spear which no one else of all the Achaeans could handle, but Achilles alone knew how to wield it; the Pelian ash spear which Cheiron had brought to his father from high on Pelion to be death for fighters.

As an inalienable possession, its bestowal on the hero does not deprive Cheiron of his inherent attachment to branches. Received by Peleus, however, it becomes his own inalienable possession, in a manner such that it formalises and symbolises his inseparable bond to its donor. Although it reflects the distinct natures of both of them, it also remarkably seals the merging of their individual identities into a parental guardianship, which entitles the human to supernatural means without requests, supplications, or counter-offers.

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31 For this pun and the narrator’s habit to indulge in word-play in contexts relevant to Cheiron, see Robbins 1993:12 and n.20. Also see Janko 1992:335.
As happened with the rest of the divine weapons, later in his life Peleus passes his spear to his son, who, in turn, takes them all with him to Troy. Achilles’ acquisition of the arms by means of inheritance from his father establishes his rightful possession of them. It was argued in the previous chapter that, despite Achilles receiving his defensive weapons from his father, their transference signifies a bond between the hero and his divine mother. Thetis, who enables Peleus to give this panoply to their son, remains close to him when he is away from his homeland in Troy and withdrawn in his tent, isolated from his friends on the Trojan field. As was noted in Chapter Two, some later surviving sources also present the spear as wedding gift from Cheiron to Peleus; nevertheless, the strong relationship between the centaur and Peleus prior to the wedding limits Thetis’ contribution to her husband’s acquisition of this object. Distinguishing its origin from that of the rest of the arms and, possibly, from the theme of the wedding, and drawing attention to the bond between the exchangers of the spear, the *Iliad* excludes any possible connection between Thetis and this weapon.

It was demonstrated earlier in this chapter that the spear is specifically made for Peleus by Cheiron and that its exchange between them formalises the latter’s fatherly role in the life of his protégé. Its following transference from Peleus to Achilles enriches it with an even broader spectrum of symbolic connotations. From a token of Peleus’ connection to Cheiron, it becomes not only the token of Achilles’ bond to his father, but

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32 Shannon (1975:30-32) concludes that the spear denotes Achilles’ association to his father, simply by noting that it is not a wedding gift to Peleus by the gods, but it is given to him separately by Cheiron. Shannon, however, neglects to trace this bond of Achilles to his father back to the bond between Cheiron and Peleus that the spear initially signified.
also the symbol of Achilles’ own relationship with the centaur.\textsuperscript{33} Achilles’ acquisition of the spear from his father overtly designates it as his paternal inheritance. But, that this inheritance has its origin in Cheiron, with whom Achilles has a separate connection independently of his father, suggests that Peleus is simply the mediator of the centaur’s legacy to his son. The following discussion will explore Achilles’ own relationship with Cheiron with the intention to show that the spear is a bequest to Achilles from the centaur, as a father figure in his own life, and that the hero inherits it with some of the qualities of the bequeather. The legacy of Cheiron embodied in this object becomes instrumental in Achilles’ personal choice of fate mentioned in the \textit{Iliad} and his ensuing post-Iliadic death. Integral to his military performance, when he rejoins battle, its successful use essentially brings him closer to his end. These associations invested in the spear highlight it as the most Achillean of his arms and explain why it is the only piece of his military equipment that it is kept out of further circulation in the poem.

This chapter will ultimately argue that the references to the spear and its creator have a special significance for the dilemma that Achilles faces in the \textit{Iliad}. In particular, they constitute an allusive account, which implicitly supplements all the explicit discussions of the hero’s death in the poem. As will be shown, this account does not just reiterate the prospect of death as the limitation of Achilles’ human nature, but redefines it as the privileged choice stemming from his divine heritage. In the end, the legacy of Cheiron, underlying Achilles’ uninterrupted possession of the spear, not only explains the hero’s character in the \textit{Iliad}, but also provides an interpretation of his fate in the larger scope of a notionally perceived Achilles-\textit{fabula}.\textsuperscript{34}

\textsuperscript{33} The link between Achilles and Cheiron is noted in Robbins 1993:11.
\textsuperscript{34} For Achilles’ \textit{fabula} as a unified story of Achilles’ life and death, see Burgess 2009:6, 27.
A constant element of Achilles’ early life in ancient sources is, in fact, his education by Cheiron. Early literary accounts of Achilles’ tutelage by Cheiron are rare and fragmentary, but evidence of an entire poem focusing on the centaur’s advice to young Achilles entitled the *Precepts of Cheiron* and attributed to Hesiod suggests that the ancient authors showed a strong interest in this theme.

Despite the scarcity of extant literary sources, there is consistent early iconographical evidence referring to Achilles’ being raised and trained by the wise centaur. More specifically, a neck-amphora in Berlin dating from the middle of the Protoattic period is thought to represent Peleus leading his son to Cheiron. A black-figure cup by the Heidelberg painter shows the centaur and his family receiving Achilles, who is accompanied by both his parents (Würzburg 452). Whether Peleus hands his child over to Cheiron on his own or whether Thetis is also present in the scene, the theme of the young hero’s consignment to his tutor appears to be very popular in art. In addition to images of the centaur receiving the child from one or both his parents, depictions of a half-human, half-horse figure next to scenes that portray Achilles fighting or hunting are particularly important for the story of his rearing by Cheiron. Two examples that were previously mentioned in relation to the iconography of centaurs with tree branches are also relevant here. In particular, the terracotta shield in Nauplion from around 700 BC,

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35 There are variant traditions regarding whether Peleus’ decision to place his son under Cheiron’s instruction was a consequence of his abandonment by Thetis or independent of that. Cf. the scholia on *Il.* 16.222b and 18.57a; Bernabé 1987, 1:62 classifies these passages as *fragmenta dubia* of the *Cypria*. For versions of the story about Thetis’ deserting Peleus and fleeing to her father, also see Apollonius of Rhodes 4.816; the scholia on Apollonius 4.816 (= Hesiod, fr. 300 M-W). For the ancient sources regarding Cheiron’s role in Achilles’ childhood, see Escher 1899:2302-2308, *RE* III 2 s.v. “Chiron.” Robbins (1993:8-9) and Mackie (1997:1) remark on the uniformity of evidence on the theme of Achilles’ education by Cheiron.


37 *LIMC*, “Achilleus,” no. 21* = “Cheiron” no. 44 (Berlin 31573 [A9]).
representing a centaur carrying a branch with a hanging fawn and on the other side a warrior fighting an Amazon, has been interpreted to portray Cheiron and Achilles respectively. Furthermore, the bronze reliefs on an Etruscan Chariot in New York from the late sixth century are thought to show multiple scenes from Achilles’ life. Among images of the reliefs reminiscent of Achilles’ duel with Memnon and his victory over Penthesileia, there is a depiction of a centaur and a young man catching a panther, which is understood to portray Cheiron and Achilles hunting. Burgess discusses these examples in detail and underscores the importance of such representations for Achilles’ biography as a whole, because they “effectively emphasize the thematic link between Cheiron’s raising of Achilles and his later military success.”

It has often been noted that the *Iliad* seems to marginalise Cheiron’s role in Achilles’ early life. Indeed, the centaur’s name is mentioned only four times in the entire poem. The first two refer to him as the teacher of medicine. More specifically in *Iliad* 4.218-219, Cheiron appears to have taught healing arts to Asclepius, who in turn passed this knowledge to his son, Machaon. The passage describes Machaon treating the wound of Menelaus, inflicted by Pandarus’ arrow, with medicines that Cheiron had given to his father, Asclepius. In *Iliad* 11.828-832, Cheiron is mentioned as Achilles’ teacher in medicine. More specifically, Eurypylus asks Patroclus to patch up his wound since Achilles taught him the medical skills that he learnt from his centaur tutor. The final two references to Cheiron come from *Iliad* 16.141-144 = 19.388-391 and concern the ash spear that he gave to Peleus who, in turn, passed it down to his son, Achilles.

39 *LIMC*, “Achle,” nos. 100*, 123*, 148*; “Cheiron,” 82* (NY 03.23.1).
40 For more details, see Burgess 2009:19-20, 23; the quotation is on p.20.
Scholars have expressed varying views on the limited part that Cheiron appears to play in Achilles’ life according to the *Iliad* compared to other ancient sources. Examining the embassy to Achilles in *Iliad* 9, Griffin remarks on the absence of Cheiron as Achilles’ teacher and his substitution by the human educator Phoenix. This scholar attributes the centaur’s elimination from the embassy scene to a systematic attempt of the poem to suppress any fantastic and supernatural elements, a feature that distinguishes the *Iliad* from the poems of the Epic Cycle.\(^{41}\) Robbins, on the other hand, disagrees with the idea that the *Iliad* replaces Cheiron with Phoenix with respect to Achilles’ education. He maintains that, since Phoenix does not reassert his role as the hero’s pedagogue elsewhere in the poem and there is a complete absence of further literary or iconographical evidence to support a possible traditional origin of this theme, Phoenix’ portrayal as Achilles’ teacher is invented to suit the particular context of his speech in *Iliad* 9.\(^{42}\) At the same time, Robbins observes that the reference to Achilles’ education by Cheiron appears “quite unforced” in a context where there is no rhetorical need for it.\(^{43}\)

Furthermore, he remarks, Thetis also speaks of her own part in raising her son (*Il*. 18.55-60), and she mentions that she prepared a chest for him to take to Troy (*Il*. 16.220-227). This scholar concludes that Thetis’ claims of her responsibilities in her son’s upbringing contradict Phoenix’s account of his services to Achilles; instead they are harmonised with

\(^{41}\) Griffin 1977:39-53. Hainsworth (1993:121) follows on Griffin’s point and considers Cheiron inappropriate as a tutor to Achilles in Homeric epic, because he is “one of the mountain duelling φύλακες (1.268), whom Homer banishes to the sidelines of the *Iliad.*”

\(^{42}\) More specifically, Robbins (1993:8-10) notes that Phoenix’s role as Achilles’ educator is peculiar to Bk 9 and that the details of the relationship between the two men are chosen to strengthen the hortatory frame of the embassy. The old man is trying to convince Achilles to join battle again on the basis of the past services he offered to the hero in his childhood. For the possibility of Phoenix being a traditional character, see Burgess 2001:85, 224 n.147.

\(^{43}\) For the quotation, see Robbins 1993:9. Also see *Il*. 11.828-832. Cheiron, as a teacher of medicine to Asclepius, is also mentioned in *Il*. 4.218-219. Asclepius’ sons, Machaon and Podaleirius, are the doctors of the Achaean army (*Il*. 2.731-732).
Cheiron’s role as Achilles’ teacher, as they are supported by several vase paintings showing her present in the scene when the child was first given over to the centaur. Mackie reconciles the views of the previous scholars, adopting a moderate approach concerning Achilles’ raising by different characters in the Iliad. He attributes the matter to the flexibility of the narrative and its occasional need to emphasise the responsibility of different figures for Achilles’ welfare in different contexts, but also to the complexity of the hero’s personality which “requires double, or even multiple, tutelage.” Mackie argues that the old human teacher alone suffices to account for Achilles’ instruction in the “community skills” also possessed by the other Achaeans commanders and required by the “common war effort,” but would not justify the hero’s exceptional qualities as an unparalleled warrior, a healer, and a lyre player, which distinguish him from the rest of the army. In principle, Mackie accepts Hainsworth’s claim of Cheiron being pushed “to the sidelines of the Iliad,” but modifies it, proposing that the non-human teacher is being purposely kept within the boundaries of the poem. The centaur primarily trained his student in the arts of self-reliance which, if needed, could also be transformed into valuable military expertise. According to Mackie then, it is Cheiron’s discreet presence that indicates the particular pedagogical process that Achilles underwent in his childhood, which made him the unique hero that he is in the Iliad, divided between his desire to participate in the “common war effort” but to distance himself from the host.

44 For details on the roles of Cheiron and Thetis in Achilles’ childhood, see Robbins 1993:7-8, 10.
45 Mackie (1997:3) does not oppose the general aspect of the Iliad’s suppression of supernatural elements, but he disagrees with Griffin’s radical view of Cheiron’s exclusion from the narrative, citing the four references to him in the poem. He seems in consensus with Robbins’ observation that the allusions to the centaur do not serve a particular rhetorical objective in the places they appear, pointing out that complete elimination of this hybrid figure from the narrative would be entirely possible.
46 Mackie 1997:2-4; the quotation is on p.4.
47 Mackie 1997:4-9; the quotations are on p.5.
48 Hainsworth 1993:121.
Mackie’s argument that Achilles’ character, as described in the *Iliad*, reaches back to his instruction by Cheiron during his childhood harmonizes the poem with pre-Homeric and post-Homeric tradition regarding the hero’s upbringing; it also accounts for the limited occurrences of the centaur’s name in the Iliadic narrative. Cheiron, however, not only connects Achilles’ present to his pre-Iliadic past. The following analysis will suggest that the ash spear, a product of Cheiron’s labour, which stays with Achilles throughout the *Iliad* and presumably after the end of it, provides an outlet into the hero’s post-Iliadic future. Similarly to the rest of Achilles’ arms then, but separately from them, the spear becomes a means of Homeric intertextuality that links the *Iliad* to a vast mythological tradition that starts before and extends beyond the temporal points that formally open and close the plot of the poem.

The brief reference to the origin of the spear included in the Iliadic narrative helps to shed light on a rich spectrum of associations conveyed by this weapon. As a gift of Cheiron, the spear constitutes one more of his countless benefactions to Peleus. Providing him, independently of Thetis, with what will soon be known as his most notable piece of military equipment, the centaur enables Peleus to bestow his paternal inheritance on his son. Cheiron’s gesture of giving the ash spear to Peleus seals a pre-existing relationship between the two of them, but it may also look forward to the birth of Achilles. As was argued above, the spear is a gift that represents Cheiron’s wild nature. If he gives it to Peleus knowing that he, in turn, will transfer it to his son, this weapon signifies not only Peleus’ legacy, but also Cheiron’s own legacy to Achilles. In fact, prophetic knowledge was among the skills for which the wise centaur was famous in ancient tradition. For instance, Pindar in *Pythian* 9.38-65 portrays him giving a prophecy about Cyrene to
Apollo, the god of the oracles himself. In particular, the chorus in Euripides’ *Iphigeneia at Aulis* 1062-1075 mentions that Cheiron foretold Achilles’ future prowess to Thetis during the celebration of her wedding with Peleus. It is possible, therefore, that when the centaur offers Peleus the spear on some unspecified occasion, as the *Iliad* reports, he may do so with Achilles in his mind. Although the hero does not obtain it directly from its creator, but from his father, its inheritance seals Achilles’ own personal relationship with the centaur, who brought him up as a child.

At first glance, the passage that refers to the origin of the spear in the *Iliad* seems to focus on the relationship between Cheiron and Peleus. It explains that the former brought this weapon to the latter from Mount Pelion “to be death for fighters” (φόνον ἔμεναι ἰράξασσιν, *Il.* 16.144 = 19.391). Despite the statement about the purpose of the donation of the spear to Peleus, the poem does not mention any of his personal achievements of him with it. On the contrary, it refers to many warriors that Achilles kills with this weapon after he returns to the battlefield. Within the broader Iliadic context, then, the narrator’s comment about the function of the spear applies to Achilles and not to his father. Achilles’ own bond to the centaur, although not explicitly mentioned in the passage referring to this object, is implied by his strong connection to the spear (*Il.* 16.141-144 = 19.388-391). Its reported exclusive use by the hero indicates his superior physical ability to all the other warriors, but it also alludes to his education by Cheiron. No one else in the host “could” (δύνατο, *Il.* 16.141 = 19.388) handle it, but Achilles alone “knew” (ἐπίστατο, *Il.* 16.142 = 19.389) how to wield it. Achilles’ knowledge,

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49 For an assessment of all the ancient sources that imply or indicate that Achilles’ future is predicted during his parents’ wedding and for Thetis’ own foreknowledge of his destiny, see Burgess 2004:21-40.
50 The poem also implies that Achilles had killed many enemies with his spear before he withdrew from battle. See the comments on his spear made by Hera in the form of Stentor in *Il.* 5.790 and by Aeneas in *Il.* 20.97-98.
which the rest of the army lacks, suggests the specific training that he received in his childhood, which now qualifies him to use this weapon. And no one else would be able to teach such a unique skill other than the one who made the spear himself. Achilles’ connection to the spear combined with the brief account of the origin of the weapon provides an aetiological explanation for his distinct ability to use it. This ability recalls his personal relationship with Cheiron in his early life and signifies the spear as the token of the centaur’s legacy to Achilles.

Peleus might have been Cheiron’s friend and protégé and might have been helped by him countless times, but Achilles has a stronger association than his father with the centaur. Not only is he actually raised and trained by Cheiron himself, but he also shares certain features with his teacher. Achilles is born from a goddess and, thus, he has a dual, nature (semi-divine). Cheiron, on the other hand, is the offspring of two deities and he also has a dual nature, though different from that of his pupil (half-human, half-horse). Moreover, Achilles has access to prophecy through his mother, as is often mentioned in the *Iliad*, while Cheiron traditionally exhibits prophetic abilities himself. Achilles, then, can identify with his pedagogue on the basis of their similar traits and, as such, he is a more appropriate heir of Cheiron than his father.

An investigation of the legacy that the centaur bestowed on his pupil along with the ash spear requires considering certain episodes from Cheiron’s mythological biography that are independent of Achilles and his father. As was noted earlier, Cheiron has a different lineage from the rest of the similarly shaped, half-human half-horse creatures. Born from two gods, Cronus and Philyra, he is the only centaur who is

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immortal. Despite his divine origin, however, the sources assign him an unusual fate for an immortal being. More specifically, Pindar in *Pythian* 3.1-5 mentions that Cheiron is dead. Sophocles in *Trachiniae* 714-715 acknowledges his immortality, but also refers to Cheiron’s wounding by one of Heracles’ arrows. Ovid in *Metamorphoses* 2.649-654 alludes to the centaur’s wound and subsequent death, yet he does not supply any information regarding the circumstances of the latter. Somewhat similarly, Diodorus’ *Library of History* 4.12.3-8 reports the accidental wounding of Cheiron by Heracles during the battle with the centaurs, but does not give any information on the aftermath of this incident. Finally, Apollodorus in *Library* 2.5.4 attests to the immortality and wounding of the benevolent centaur, but he also gives some details that may help to clarify Cheiron’s peculiar fate. This author explains that when the centaurs rush to Pholus’ cave because he opens a jar of wine for Heracles that belongs to all of them, Heracles chases them using firebrands along with his bow and arrows. Pholus and Heracles eventually seek refuge with Cheiron at Cape Maleia and Cheiron is accidentally struck in the knee by one of Heracles’ arrows. Cheiron is immortal and cannot die, but the wound proves to be incurable and he is endlessly tortured from the pain. In order to be released from his suffering, he trades his immortality for someone else’s mortality and, in this manner, he is able to die.\(^{52}\) Hyginus in *Astronomia* 2.38, on the other hand,

\(^{52}\) Prometheus intervenes to facilitate the exchange, but, due to textual problems, it is not clear who receives Cheiron’s immortality. Hermes’ reference to a liberator in Aeschylus’ (?) *Prometheus Bound* 1026-1030 led many scholars to believe that Prometheus switched positions with Cheiron. Gantz points out that Prometheus is unlikely to have participated in such an exchange, because, as a Titan, he is already immortal. On the other hand, Heracles could possibly have received Cheiron’s immortality, because he is a mortal who eventually obtains some sort of immortality. For more details on the textual problems and for possible solutions to them, see Gantz 1993:147, 392.
offers a version of the story according to which Cheiron himself dropped one of Heracles’ arrows on his foot and died.\textsuperscript{53}

The \textit{Iliad} does not mention any substantial details regarding Cheiron’s life. Yet, the story of his death could well be in the traditional repository from which Homeric epic draws its mythological material. Despite occasional inconsistency and imprecision in the ancient accounts concerning the centaur’s biography, elements such as his immortality, wounding, and death are shared between two or more of the aforementioned sources. Immortality is an obvious feature, due to Cheiron’s birth from two gods; this is why it is not frequently noted by ancient authors. His death, however, would normally require further explanation, since it contradicts his apparent immortality. Nevertheless, the references to his wounding and, particularly, his subsequent death are often incomplete and appear casually in the sources. This pattern suggests that such references recall a commonly known story, regarding Cheiron’s voluntary exchange of his immortality for mortality, which brought his life to an end. A full account of the circumstances under which Cheiron’s death occurred is preserved only by a later author, Apollodorus. But the fact that the theme of his death appears elliptically in the extant literature as early as Pindar indicates the traditional origin of the story and justifies its consideration as a legitimate mythological background for Achilles’ destiny delineated in the \textit{Iliad}.

In the discussion to follow, it will be shown that death as a personal choice, which is a fate peculiar to Cheiron, underlies Achilles’ Iliadic choice of death and is signified by his inheritance of the ash spear. Before proceeding to an analysis of the legacy that the

\textsuperscript{53} In other sources, this type of self-inflicted accidental death is attributed to Pholus instead of Cheiron. See Diodorus \textit{Library of History} 4.12.8; Apollodorus \textit{Library} 2.5.4. Scholars speculate that Aeschylus’ (?) trilogy of Prometheus and a lost work entitled \textit{Kentauroi} by Lasos (704 \textit{PMG}) might also have related some details of this story. For a comprehensive discussion of all the sources concerning Cheiron’s fate briefly surveyed here, see Gantz 1993:147, 390-392.
pedagogue passes to his pupil through the spear that he crafted, it is worthwhile to look briefly into the general issue of the hero and his destiny. Several characters in the poem speak about this matter in either specific or vague terms. Most notably in the embassy episode, Achilles himself tells Agamemnon’s envoys that his mother has informed him that he has two fates. He can either stay at Troy, gain fame, and die young or return home and live a long but inglorious life (II. 9.410-416). This is the only occasion that two different fates concerning Achilles are specified. There is a long debate in the scholarship whether the motif of two fates is a matter of typology or it is an ad hoc invention for the particular context of the embassy episode and whether such a motif implies a choice of fate on the hero’s part during the timeframe of the Iliad.\(^{54}\) Whether Achilles does actually have such a choice at the dramatic time of Book 9 of the Iliad or whether he simply refers to a choice that he had in the past for its rhetorical effect on the plea of the embassy are issues that have caused further disagreement among scholars. Despite the questions that arise regarding the motif of the two fates, there is no doubt that Achilles and certain other characters know that his fate, whether decided long ago or recently, will be that he dies at Troy.

Unlike his divine teacher, Achilles has a semi-human nature, stemming from his mortal father, and, thus, cannot ultimately evade death. Cheiron’s spear and his instruction in wielding it, however, qualify the hero to be personally involved in his death. As an offensive weapon, it is inevitably associated with death. The narrator articulates that, noting that the centaur gave Peleus the spear “to be death for fighters” (II. 16.144 = 19.391). But this terse, vague, and elliptical comment by the narrator has an

\(^{54}\) For a detailed analysis of all the references to the fate of Achilles in the Iliad, the inconsistencies between them, and the controversy in the scholarship over these inconsistencies outlined briefly here, see Burgess 2009:43-55.
ambiguously oracular tone in it. At a first level, it refers to the opponents that one can kill with this spear; at a second level, it could also be construed to mean that this spear can somehow entail the death of the fighter who uses it to fight.\textsuperscript{55}

The former interpretation of the narrator’s remark concerning the spear might initially seem more plausible than the later and more obscure one. Yet, a careful look into the second half of the Iliadic plot indicates that the poem supports both dimensions of the lethal attribute of this weapon. More specifically, when Achilles announces his decision to exact revenge for the loss of Patroclus, he states that he wishes to kill Hector with his spear:

\begin{quote}
α/uniNF3. κε µ/uniNF7. /uniNFΝDκτωρ
πρ/uniNF6τος /uniNFΝψµ/uniNF7 /uniNF5Νπ/uniNF78 δουρ/uniNF76 τυπε/uniNF76ς /uniNFψψπ/uniNF78 θυµ/uniNF78ν /uniNF.ψλέσσ/uniNF3,
Πατρόκλοιο δ/uniNFBD /uniNFΝ5λωρα Μενοιτίαδεω /uniNFψψποτείσ/uniNF3.”  \textit{(Il. 18.91-93)}
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
“…except on condition that Hector first be beaten down under my spear, lose his life and pay the price for stripping Patroclus, the son of Menoetius.”
\end{quote}

Hearing the words of her son, Thetis specifically informs him that his own death is destined to come soon after Hector’s \textit{(Il. 18.95-96)}. This revelation does not change the mind of Achilles, who responds that he will accept death when the gods send it to him \textit{(Il. 18.115-116 = 22.365-366)}. In the description of Achilles arming himself with his new panoply from Hephaestus and his father’s ash spear, the narrator repeats the lines about the spear’s origin from Cheiron and its death-inflicting quality \textit{(Il. 19.387-391)}. Finally, in the crucial duel with Hector, the spear is in the spotlight of the scene in multiple ways.

\textsuperscript{55} Heath (1992:394) hints at this second interpretation, but disregards the distinction of the spear from the rest of Achilles’ arms that Patroclus dons, which is noted in the context surrounding the phrase in question \textit{(Il. 16.141-144 = 19.388-391)}. Instead, he classifies the spear together with Achilles’ divine armour and horses as gifts from the gods and understands the narrator’s comment about it as a general reminder of the destructive quality of divine gifts and not as a specific remark on the spear’s function in particular. He argues that this comment emphasises the humans’ inherent mortality, which can be hastened by the use of immortal gifts. His point may seem valid in the cases of Patroclus, Hector, and Achilles, but it does not apply to Peleus, who receives many gifts from the gods and still lives a long life.
Although it first misses its target and falls on the ground (*Iliad* 22.273-276), interestingly, Achilles does not need to resort to a different weapon to continue the duel, as Hector does when he loses his own spear (*Iliad* 22.289-293, 306-311). Athena restores it to Achilles (*Iliad* 22.276-277) and it is with this ash spear that he deals the fatal blow to his opponent:

τῇ β’ ἐπὶ οἱ μεμαυτ’ ἔλασ’ ἔχει δίος Ἀχιλλεύς,
ἀντικρὺ δ’ ἀπαλοίς δι’ αὐχένος ἥλυθ’ ἀκώκη.’
(*Iliad* 22.326-327)

in this place
brilliant Achilles drove the spear as he came on in fury,
and clean through the soft part of the neck the spearpoint was driven.

It is remarkable that despite Achilles’ loss of his spear in the middle of the duel, his decision to kill Hector is ultimately realised by this weapon. Being instrumental in Hector’s killing, it ultimately facilitates Achilles’ own death to the extent that the former anticipates the latter. In this sense, Cheiron’s ash spear is involved in the death of both the fighter who is struck by it and the fighter who wields it.

Achilles’ early death has already been alluded to a number of times before he kills Hector, but this particular incident is presented in the *Iliad* as the turning point in the hero’s life. In addition to Thetis’ prediction to her son mentioned above, Hector himself prophesies Achilles’ end before he issues his last breath (*Iliad* 22.355-360). In truth, the death of the Trojan hero does not essentially decide the fate of Achilles. Instead, it reactivates his pre-decided fate, after it has been forestalled by his long absence from

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56 On the contrary, when Achilles misses his target and loses his spear in his duel with Asteropaeus, which does not have a particular weight in the hero’s fate, he uses his sword in order to kill his opponent (*Iliad* 21.169-182).

57 Hector presents Achilles’ death as a retribution for the maltreatment of his corpse. Also see Richardson 1993:143.
battle, and underscores Achilles’ personal involvement in his own death. Killing Hector, he consciously confirms his fate that he knew all along.\footnote{Since Achilles’ death does not occur right after Hector is slain, but there is a lot that happens in between, the neoanalysts argue that the death of Achilles is to follow immediately after Memnon is killed. Indeed in Proclus’ summary of the \textit{Aethiopis}, Thetis prophesies to Achilles regarding Memnon’s arrival at Troy. Although there is no further information regarding her particular words, the neoanalysts assume that she foretells his own death to her son. According to Proclus’ account again, Achilles’ death does happen soon after Memnon’s in the \textit{Aethiopis}. Thus the neoanalysts consider that the connection between Hector’s and Achilles’ deaths in the \textit{Iliad} is an imitation of the connection between Memnon’s and Achilles’ deaths in the \textit{Aethiopis}. What matters for the purposes of this study is that, whether it is Memnon’s or Hector’s killing that precedes Achilles’, a death of a major warrior from the Trojan side is the trigger, yet not the cause, of Achilles’ fate. For details on the motifs transferred from the \textit{Aethiopis} to the \textit{Iliad}, a discussion on the neoanalyst controversy, and an interpretation that resolves the issue, see Burgess 2009:30, 38-39, 85-87, 152 n.38.}

The fact that Achilles is portrayed as having prior knowledge that his death is destined to follow that of the Trojan prince, but still kills him with his spear, makes this weapon synonymous with his certainty of his fate. Indeed at the end of the duel-scene, Achilles repeats that he will accept his death when it comes, as he earlier told his mother, while he pulls his spear from the now dead body of his opponent:

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κῆρα δ’ ἐγὼ τὸτε δέξομαι, ὅππότε κεν δῇ
Ζεὺς ἐθέλη τελέσαι ἢδ’ ἀβάνατοι θεοὶ ἄλλοι.
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'Ἡ ῥα, καὶ ἐκ νεκροῖο ἐρύσαστο χάλκεον ἐγχος… \textit{(Il.} 18.115-116 = 22.365-366, 367) \textit{\ldots and I will take my own death at whatever time}

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Zeus and the rest of the immortals choose to accomplish it.”
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He spoke, and pulled the brazen spear from the body…

Pairing his declaration of death-acceptance with the retrieval of the spear from the corpse of the person whose death is prophesied to precede the hero’s own death, the \textit{Iliad} emphasises the connection between Achilles’ foreknown destiny and his famous offensive weapon.

Achilles’ informed decision to fight again, while he knows that such an act will bring him closer to his death, assists his fate, in terms that it makes it more imminent. The spear embodies his personal awareness in reaching his fate. Killing Hector with it
highlights Achilles as the agent of his own destiny. The glory that he derives or the revenge that he exacts from the death of the Trojan warrior does not really suffice to cure Achilles from the pain incurred by the loss of his friend.\textsuperscript{59} On the other hand, the killing of Hector, as a factor that precipitates Achilles’ own end, has the power to release him from his suffering and to offer some satisfaction in the hope that he may reunite with Patroclus.\textsuperscript{60} Achilles’ personal agency in his own death, as the only effective means of deliverance, disconnects him from the human model of his mortal father, whose delayed death indefinitely prolongs his sorrows,\textsuperscript{61} and makes him the mortal equivalent of his immortal teacher. They both surrender their life consciously in exchange for relief from an incurable pain.\textsuperscript{62}

\textit{Conclusion}

The \textit{Iliad} draws attention to the significance of the ash spear for Achilles by setting it apart from the rest of his arms. The repetition of the lines that refer to its unique qualities and origin in the arming scenes of both Patroclus and Achilles (\textit{Il.} 16.141-144 = 19.388-391) does not simply indicate the poem’s oral mode of composition, but also stresses the distinction of the spear from the rest of the items that comprise the first set of the hero’s

\textsuperscript{61} For Peleus growing old in sorrow and grief, see \textit{Il.} 18.434-435, 19.323-324, 334-337, 24.538-541.
\textsuperscript{62} Besides Achilles’ personal involvement in his fate and the concept of death as deliverance from his suffering, both delineated in the \textit{Iliad}, the manner of his death as described in some non-Homeric sources might constitute one more link between him and his teacher. It was mentioned earlier in this chapter that ancient mythographers specify that the cause for Cheiron’s death was a wound from an arrow in his knee or foot. Similarly, there are ancient sources that point to a wound that Achilles received from an arrow in the lower leg or foot area, despite the absence of the notion of his incomplete invulnerability, which is related in much later surviving literary accounts. For a detailed discussion of all the literary and iconographical evidence on Achilles’ wounding and death, see Gantz 1993:625-627; Burgess 2009:11-13.
arms. As a material gift, the spear could normally be subject to further transferring through various exchange mechanisms. But contrary to the rest of the first arms, it is not lent or passed over to any other warrior. Instead, once in the possession of Achilles, it remarkably resists any kind of exchange and remains with him throughout the *Iliad*. The brief reference to its qualities and origin justifies its resistance to reacquisition. Unlike any other weapon that can be obtained and used by different people, it is accompanied by a special skill, the lack of which makes the use of the spear impossible and essentially renders it non-transferable. Achilles’ tutor, who crafted this weapon, taught him the skill of wielding it. Although Achilles teaches Patroclus medicine that he also learnt from Cheiron, he does not train his friend in the use of the spear. This weapon is a personal gift that Cheiron gave to Peleus and through him to Achilles. Patroclus, who lacks a relationship with the centaur, is not qualified to learn how to use it. Peleus, a close friend and protégé of Cheiron, is qualified merely to use the spear and transfer it to his son. Achilles, who is born from a divinity and taught by the divine centaur himself, is the only person who can attain to the full potential of the spear not only as a weapon but also as a token of his teacher’s legacy.

As it is presented in the *Iliad*, Achilles is conscious that his use of the spear brings him closer to his death. His life is set on the boundary between the human and divine domains and consists of a constant struggle to grasp the contradictions of his semi-divine nature. His death resolves this struggle and makes him part of a community; but the resolution lies in the eye of the beholder. Seen from the perspective of several characters of the *Iliad*, his death subjects him to the same end as any other hero, who dies fighting in Troy, and thus appears to integrate him fully in the human community. Construed by the
audience as being brought about by Cheiron’s spear and understood through the authoritative comments of the narrator regarding this weapon, Achilles’ death is reached with foreknowledge, certainty, and through personal involvement. Such a death, inaccessible to any other human, is found only in the mythological biography of his immortal teacher. It befits Achilles’ divine heritage and relocates him in the divine community. Achilles’ failure to live the common life of a mortal is compensated by his exceptional ability “to die as an immortal,” another exclusive skill that he owes to his celebrated divine pedagogue.
CHAPTER FIVE - THE LOAN TO PATROCLUS

Introduction

This chapter will focus on the account of Achilles’ arms in the present time of the *Iliad* and will consider the first part of their circulation as it unfolds in the poem. More specifically, their transfer from Achilles to Patroclus will be examined in relation to the loaning system as another standard, albeit less prominent, mechanism of exchange in Homeric society. Its secondary position in the frequency scale of socio-economic transactions occurring in the Homeric epics and its multiple similarities with gift exchange often hide its distinct pattern and conceal the temporary character of the transfer that it accomplishes.

This study will start with a general discussion of the principles of the loan, as opposed to those of the gift, in order to define the separate procedure and the objectives of the system. An assessment of the loan arrangement of Achilles’ arms to Patroclus against the laws of the loan-mechanism will show that, on the one hand, the agreement between the two friends conforms to these laws; on the other, it manipulates them so as to accomplish more than the mere exchange of the divine weapons among the transactors.

Achilles constructs an exceptionally detailed loan contract, which is designed to secure the return of his arms, to preserve or increase his individual *kleos*, and to navigate his friend safely off battlefield and back to his tent. The material and immaterial capital invested in this loan contract indicates that violation of its rules from the borrowing party entails a more serious risk than illegitimate possession of the lent objects and unfrightful
devolution of property. When Patroclus diverts from the rules outlined in the loan
agreement of the arms, he generates an unprecedented chain of loss and gain that affects
both participants and their society. In the end, the loss and gain of the characters
following from the loan of the arms determines the progression of the plot of the Iliad
and whether the poem competes or cooperates with the tradition behind it.

The Loan as an Exchange Mechanism in Homeric Society

The story of Achilles’ weapons in the past studied in the two previous chapters highlights
Achilles’ familial relationships with his mother, father, and pedagogue. Despite their
different origins, both the armour and the spear are the gifts of divinities to Peleus and
both of them are transferred to Achilles in the form of inheritance from his father. The
similar mechanisms that accomplish the pre-Iliadic successive exchanges of the weapons
and the notion that Achilles uses them together to fight at Troy, before his anger at the
loss of Briseis, is responsible for their unified conception at least in the Iliadic past. In the
present time of the Iliad, Achilles’ quarrel with Agamemnon results in the former’s
withdrawal from battle, which in turn creates a lack of need for his arms and a
subsequent absence of references to them for almost the first half of the poem.¹

The urgent need for help caused by the casualties suffered in the Achaean camp
during Achilles’ absence, combined with the failure of Agamemnon’s embassy to
convince the hero to rejoin the war, form a peculiar context for the appearance of his
arms in the Iliadic present. Nestor proposes that should Patroclus ask to wear Achilles’

¹ Occasional references to Achilles’ successful use of his arms in the past only serve to recall Achilles’
prowess and military achievements before he withdrew from the war. Cf. Il. 5.790. Also see Il. 1.165-166,
weapons and lead the Myrmidons to war, in order to offer some relief to the hard pressed Achaean... 

Exchange concepts previously employed to evaluate the circulation of the arms in the Iliadic past, such as wedding gift, friendship gift, or inheritance are not appropriate to describe the current passing of the weapons from Achilles to Patroclus, simply because Achilles’ offer of them to his friend does not signify a gift, but a loan.

Though not a dominant phenomenon, as opposed to gift exchange, giving or receiving something in the form of a loan is an existing practice in Homeric society. For instance, Lycaon lends Paris a corselet before the latter’s duel with Menelaus (II. 3.332-333). Unprepared for the last minute night spying-expedition in the Trojan camp, Diomedes and Odysseus borrow weapons from Thrasymedes and Meriones respectively, in order to equip themselves (II. 10.255-271). Idomeneus lends Meriones a spear from his war spoils after the latter broke his own during his attack against Deiphobus (II. 13.255-297). Menelaus borrows a mare from Agamemnon, in order to compete in the horse race contest in the funeral games for Patroclus (II. 23.293-300). Similarly, in the Odyssey the Ithacan Noemon yields to the request of Athena disguised as Odysseus’ son and offers his ship for Telemachus’ trip to Pylos (Od. 2.382-387 and 4.632-637).²

Generally speaking, the loan-procedure consists of three stages: 1) request and granting of an object, 2) its use by the borrower, and 3) its return to the lender. Not every loan-example in the Homeric epics includes details about all three stages. Comparative

² Additional relevant examples are scattered in both the Iliad and the Odyssey. For instance, in the fight against the suitors, the cowherd and the swineherd borrow Odysseus’ old armour (Od. 22.101-115).
examination of the aforementioned examples will help to consider the principles that condition the various stages of the loan-process. Establishing the regulatory framework of the loan will help to distinguish it from various types of gifts discussed in previous chapters and will provide a useful background for study of the transfer of Achilles’ arms to Patroclus.

Although there are different circumstances peculiar to different loan requests, there is always a cause that drives an individual to resort to such a measure. All the examples mentioned above explain the reason why each receiver lacks the item in question at that particular time or the particular purpose for which he requires it. The loan, then, is arranged to cover an immediate, but temporary, specific need of the receiver.³

In gift exchange, despite occasional needs of the receiver,⁴ the initiative to give something rests mainly with the donor. The gift creates a debt between the participants and, through this debt, implicates them in a personal yet hierarchical relationship. The debt from accepting a gift can be paid off only if the recipient is able to give back more than what he originally accepted.⁵ Inability to compensate properly for a received gift places the recipient in a subordinate position to the donor.⁶ The offer of a loan also creates a debt between the two parties involved, but, unlike gift exchange, this debt is incidental, unintentional, and easily written off. The borrower pays it off simply by

³ The case of Odysseus’ cowherd and the swineherd armed with their master’s weapons in order to help him fight the suitors initially seems like an exception to this pattern, since their need for borrowing equipment is dictated by the lender’s need for help. They do have a vested interest in aiding Odysseus, however, because, besides their loyalty to him, he also has promised to arrange their marriages and give them property in return for their help (Od. 21.207-216).
⁴ For a discussion of gift exchange that happens on the basis of the receiver’s need, see van Wees 1992:229-230.
⁵ Mauss, 1966:41-42.
returning the same item he received in the first place, and there is no expectation to exceed the initial offer. Lacking the element of the competitive counteroffer observed in gift exchange, the loan does not mark the transactors socially.\(^7\) It does not create, but instead it presupposes a personal relationship between them, in order that it be successfully conducted.\(^8\) The pre-existing bond that connects them encourages the one party to express his need of something or to request it openly and the other to respond by granting the object in question.\(^9\) 

A quick look at the examples gathered above confirms this idea. Paris and Lycaon, as well as Menelaus and Agamemnon, are brothers. Diomedes and ThrasyMedes are figuratively portrayed as brothers. They are both young and, as the Pylian king comments, Diomedes could have been Nestor’s own youngest son (\textit{Il.} 9.57-58).\(^10\) Similarly, Odysseus and Meriones appear closely related in Homeric epic, if not interchangeable personalities, on the basis of essential characteristics that they share, 

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\(^7\) As discussed in the previous chapter, giving in the form of an inheritance is a special case of gift exchange. It does not create the obligation to reciprocate the offer, because its function is to accomplish the devolution of property primarily between family members. As in any other type of gift exchange, however, inheritance also has a social significance. Although a personal relation between the parties involved pre-exists the transaction, the transfer still qualifies them socially. It renews the relationship, seals it, and formally proclaims it in the eyes of others.

\(^8\) van Wees (1992:229-230) argues that gift-giving upon “special request” also involves a pre-established relationship between the exchangers. But his example of Thetis’ asking Hephaestus for a new set of arms for her son does not confirm this idea. Hephaestus’ relationship with Thetis is, in fact, created by a prior exchange between them. He owes Thetis for caring for him in the past and forges new arms for Achilles, in order to repay the favour to her. On the contrary, a loan does not compensate for a previous debt created by a gift or a favour, but it is offered exclusively on the basis of prior intimacy or collegiality between the transactors.

\(^9\) For the bestowal of honour, as another emotional exchange between friends, see Riedinger 1976:248; van Wees 1992:74-76.

\(^10\) When summoning Diomedes and Odysseus for a night war council before the spying mission, Nestor stirs the former with his heel, while he is sleeping (\textit{Il.} 10.157-158). West (2011:238) remarks that, as a young man, Diomedes receives “a ruder awaking than Odysseus.” The casual way in which the Pylian king wakes Diomedes up suggests a fatherly type of relationship between them. Moreover, when Diomedes is surprised that the old king is running at night to wake up the Achaean leaders, Nestor responds that he has sons and followers whom he could send to do that; instead, he ends up asking Diomedes himself to finish this task for him (\textit{Il.} 10.164-175). Later at council, Diomedes is the first who responds to Nestor’s suggestion and volunteers to spy in the Trojan camp; Nestor’s own son among others offers to go with him (\textit{Il.} 10.220-232). After the night foray, Nestor is the first to hear the noise of horses approaching the Achaean camp and worries about the life of Diomedes and Odysseus (\textit{Il.} 10.532-540).
such as an ability in ambush warfare and in archery.\footnote{For the common aspects of Odysseus and Meriones, see Clay 1983:85-89; von Reden 1995:30. In the “Cretan lies,” Odysseus assumes a persona that has many associations with Meriones and Meriones’ own relationship with Idomeneus. Cf. Od. 13.250-286, 14.192-359, 19.172-202. For Odysseus’ and Meriones’ ability in ambush warfare, see Il. 10.339-514, 13.274-291. Furthermore, Meriones’ victory in the archery contest in the funeral games shows him excelling in a skill for which Odysseus is famous in the Odyssey. Cf. Il. 23.859-883; Od. 19.572-575, 21.404-411, 419-426.} In addition, Meriones possesses the boar’s tusk helmet of Autolycus’, who, in the Odyssey, is Odysseus’ own grandfather and is considered responsible for his grandson’s abilities in trickery and deceptiveness.\footnote{Cf. Od. 19.394-412. The entire nostos of Odysseus as described in the Odyssey is a proof of his exceptional skill in trickery. See Edwards 1985:15-42.} On the other hand, Meriones is reportedly the best friend and retainer (\(\thetaεράπων\)) of Idomeneus (as Patroclus is to Achilles).\footnote{For relevant passages on the relationship of Meriones with Idomeneus and Achilles with Patroclus, see Il. 13.240-250, 330-332, 23.528-529, and 9.201-220, 658-668, 11.602-617, 652-654, 786-789, 793, 16.146, 164-166, 244, 653, 17.411, 655, 18.81-82, 114-115, 19.315-337, 23.740-747. For Meriones as \(\thetaεράπων\), see Lowenstam 1981:131-140. For Patroclus as Achilles’ best friend, see Sinos 1980:39-46; Nagy 1999:105-109; Staten 1993:354-355.} Finally, Noemon is not merely a fellow Ithacan, but has deep sympathy for Telemachus’ woes especially at a point when the Ithacan assembly has shown that the people of the island are indifferent to his situation (Od. 2.382-287 and 4.648-651).\footnote{In the assembly, Telemachus blames the Ithacan folk for tolerating, even encouraging, the Suitors to continue their unrightful behaviour. (Od. 2.64-79). When he cries, the Ithacans feel some pity for him, but they do not offer him comfort or support (Od. 2.80-83).} To sum up, in Homeric society the participants in loan transactions are reported kinsmen, characters with strikingly similar characters, good friends, or close acquaintances, and it is exactly on the basis of their close relationship with one another that the loan is requested and granted.

The ability of the gift to subordinate the receiver to the donor explains why the latter may not necessarily expect to be compensated or why his compensation may be indefinitely postponed in the future. On the contrary, the absence of a hierarchical quality in the case of a loaned object requires its immediate return to the lender shortly after it completes the function for which it was actually given. The act of giving back or the
obligation to give back borrowed items is not always explicitly stated in the Homeric epic. Nevertheless, two cases that strongly emphasise the lack of a timely return of objects that have been loaned suggest that prompt return of any borrowed object is so obvious an expectation that it can be omitted from the narrative. More specifically, Achilles and Noemon both remark, almost protest, the fact that the former’s arms and the latter’s ship have not been brought back to them respectively (Il. 18.188, Od. 4.632-634).

Return as a constituent element of the loan might cause a misconception that the loan-mechanism forges a mystified connection between the loaned item and the lender, comparable to the inalienable bond that, as Mauss argues, links the gift to its donor. According to Mauss, this bond causes the return of the gift or its replacement with something equivalent or greater in the form of a reciprocal counter-offer from the receiver.\textsuperscript{15} The inalienability of the gift emerges from the structure of gift exchange as a mechanism that permanently separates the gift from its donor and connects it to the recipient. The recipient succeeds the donor in the gift’s ownership. He has full authority over its material and symbolic value; that is he can use it, display it, store it, or exchange it. The loan-process, on the other hand, involves merely a partial or short term transition of the object offered and does not alienate it from its giver, who does not surrender ownership of the conceded item. The receiver benefits from the temporary use of it, but has no long term rights over its material or symbolic value. He is no longer authorised to use it or display it after completing the purpose for which he first borrowed it, and he is not entitled to store it as part of his wealth or dispose of it in a new exchange. In brief, he cannot treat it as his own κειµήλιον and employ it to enhance his status through its

\textsuperscript{15} For the inalienable quality of the gift, see Mauss 1966:8-10; Gregory 1982:12. For the application and the limitations of the concept of the inalienability of the gift from its donor in Homeric society, see Chapter One.
possession.¹⁶ But the mandatory return of the loaned object, deriving from the restricted and conditioned manner that the object in question is initially offered, makes the loan an appropriate mechanism for the exchange of possessions which are already inalienable from their owners. Hence, Achilles’ immortal arms, which, as was discussed in Chapter Three, have an inalienable connection to the hero, are given to Patroclus under the premises of the loaning system. Their presupposed return stipulated by the principles of this system ensures Achilles’ uninterrupted bond to them, while they are being used by his friend.

Transferral of ownership along with an item offered as a gift means that potential future re-exchange of it, whether through voluntary re-gifting or involuntary loss by means of theft or despoiling, impacts strictly the person who originally received it and had it in his hands at the time of its subsequent exchange. In contrast, potential re-exchange of a borrowed item, while being used by the receiver, does not impact him, but the one who lent it to him and still owns it. Even delayed return creates a stake for the lender that approximates its permanent loss. Both delayed return and potential loss of a loaned object disrupt the lender’s private property, status, and everyday life. His wealth is temporarily or permanently reduced, and his social status, stemming from this wealth, is accordingly diminished.¹⁷ Moreover, his ability to function and perform tasks that he routinely performed prior to the loan is threatened. This is because prolonged or interrupted return of the object he conceded inflicts on him a need similar to the need that the receiver had before he was granted the loan. Such a need interferes with his previous,

¹⁶ For κειµήλιον, see Finley 1979:61; van Wees 1992:218, 224.
self-sufficient living, inhibits his freedom of will or action, and occasionally forces him to look for a loan himself in order to face certain demanding situations in his life.

Particular Homeric examples that highlight the inconvenience in the lender’s life from the problematic return of loaned objects help to differentiate the loan from the gift. More specifically, Achilles, who, before his quarrel with Agamemnon and the subsequent loan of his panoply to Patroclus, is assumed to have fought routinely on the battlefield, notes that he cannot join the fighting after the loss of his arms, despite the urgent need to defend the corpse of Patroclus (Il. 18.188). Noemon claims that he cannot be transported to his mules in Elis across Ithaca without his ship (Od. 4.632-637). Finally, both Achilles and Thrasymedes who lent parts of their armour to Patroclus and Diomedes, respectively, need to borrow someone else’s weapons, in order to join the war later. Achilles thinks that he could borrow Ajax’s shield, if the hero were not already out fighting over dead Patroclus (Il. 18.192-195). Thrasymedes, on the other hand, is mentioned as fighting with a shield borrowed from his father (Il. 14.11). The potential consequences for the lender from the hindered return of a loaned object confirm that the post-loan ownership of the item in question remains unaltered from before it was temporarily given to the borrower. In the end, the aforementioned examples demonstrate that the loan, although a relatively marginalised practice in Homer compared to gift-

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18 Menelaus also acknowledges that Achilles would need his arms, in order to join battle and help the Achaeans save the body of dead Patroclus (II. 17.711). In addition, Achilles himself, Thetis, and Iris, remark the loss of the arms many more times, though they do not necessarily connect it to the need for new arms with which the hero is faced after (II. 18.82-84, 130-132, 197, 460-461).

19 This borrowing sequence continues when Nestor, lacking his own shield, borrows his son’s shield, which by now Diomedes has presumably returned to his tent after the spying-mission, and goes out to investigate the din coming from the battlefield (II. 14.9-11). West (2011:288-289) notes that the reference to Thrasymedes and Nestor exchanging shields is intended to allude to the story of the Doloneia, even though the details of Diomedes’ return of the shield to the Pylians are omitted.
giving, is another legitimate exchange mechanism that operates within the literary world of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.

**The Anatomy of the Loan to Patroclus**

*a) Request and Granting*

The preceding overview of the main principles of the loan-system in Homeric society will help to assess the transfer of Achilles’ arms to Patroclus. In general, this case is the most complex example of a loan in the Homeric epics. On the one hand, it offers a complete loan account containing details about all three stages of the loan-process; on the other, as will be shown in this section, it involves many peculiarities regarding the principles that regulate these stages.

To begin with the first stage of Achilles’ loan to Patroclus, this discussion will open with the request for the arms and the subsequent granting of them. Two of the constituent elements of the loan as an exchange mechanism are immediately evident: 1) there is an urgent need that dictates the request for the arms, and 2) there is a strong pre-existing relationship between the two actors that ensures the acceptance of such a request.

There is some variance from other instances of loans in the Homeric epics. In particular, Patroclus’ need for Achilles’ arms is not a personal one. At this point, he stays back at the camp and watches the war develop from a distance. His plea to borrow the arms is dictated by the current need of the Achaean army for some respite in the war (*Il.* 20)

The example of Noemon lending Telemachus his ship in the *Odyssey* also includes details of all the three stages of the loan-process. It does not, however, exhibit noticeable deviations from the general principles of the loan-mechanism and thus does not compare in complexity to the loan of the arms to Patroclus in the *Iliad*.

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11.796-803, 16.38-45). In addition, it is Nestor, a third party, who counts on the strong friendship between Patroclus and Achilles and proposes to the former that he ask for the latter’s arms and lead the Myrmidons to war (II. 11.786-793). Patroclus, known for his humane and merciful nature, takes pity on the Achaean woes and proceeds with the request (II. 16.1-45).²¹

When Patroclus later pleads with Achilles, the Myrmidon hero protests his friend’s solidarity with the Achaeans on the basis of the insult that he suffered from Agamemnon (II. 16.52-59); he thus dismisses Patroclus’ pity for them as an acceptable motive to ask for the loan. Nevertheless, he consents to the loan, but reformulates the request, describing the approach of the Trojan army to the Achaean fleet as a direct threat to the Phthian ships, which could endanger his own and Patroclus’ safe return home:²²

“So do you draw my glorious armour about your shoulders; lead the Myrmidons whose delight is battle into the fighting, if truly the black cloud of the Trojans has taken position strongly about our ships, and the others, the Argives, are bent back against the beach of the sea, holding only a narrow division of land, and the whole city of the Trojans has descended upon them boldly;”

“But even so, Patroclus, beat the bane aside from our ships; fall

²² Lowenstam (1981:46-47) notes Achilles’ comments about his nostos, but does not connect them to the loan. Instead, he discusses them in relation to the gesture of thigh-slapping in the Iliad and its association with death. He concludes that they indicate that Achilles considers the possibility of losing his return and dying at Troy.
upon them with all your strength; let them not with fire's blazing
inflame our ships, and take away our desired homecoming.”

“Achilles revises the reason that necessitates the loan into a threat to both Patroclus and
himself. In this manner, he personalises the need that dictates the loan, but he also
remains consistent with his words to the embassy that he will not be concerned with the
war until Hector reaches his ships (Il. 9.650-653). Furthermore in accordance with the
rules stipulating loan agreements in Homer, Achilles emphasises his own personal
relationship to Patroclus:

“Aì γὰρ, Ζεῦ τε πατέρα καὶ Αθηναίη καὶ Ἀπόλλων,
μητὲ τίς οὖν Τρώων βάσιτον φύγοι, δάσοι ἔμηι,
μητὲ τίς Αργείων, νῷον δ’ ἐκδύμεν ὠλιβρον,
ἀπρ’ οίοι Τροῖς ιερὰ κρήδεμα λύσωνε.” (Il. 16.97-100)

“Father Zeus, Athena and Apollo, if only
not one of all the Trojans could escape destruction, not one
of the Argives, but you and I could emerge from the slaughter
so that we two alone could break Troy's hallowed coronal.”

Achilles’ strong pre-existing relationship with Patroclus plays an important role in the
acceptance of his friend’s request.23 His recent rejection of the pleas of the embassy
members stands in illuminating contrast to his distinct bond with Patroclus.24 Achilles,
recasting the loan request into one he finally accepts, rectifies its initial divergence from
the general loan pattern and harmonises his friend’s plea with the requirements of the
loan-system in Homeric epic.

23 Also see Il. 16.5-11.
24 See, in particular, his response to Phoenix’s heartfelt plea in Il. 9.611-614.
As was discussed earlier, a loan sets up a debt that the recipient easily pays off with the prompt return of the object he borrowed, while the lender cannot expect to receive more than what he initially gave. But the special quality of Patroclus, as Achilles’ best friend and retainer (θεράπων), which actually facilitates the approval of the request for the arms, involves him in a reciprocal relationship with Achilles independent of the loan. Patroclus relies on Achilles for his livelihood and performs services for his friend in exchange. This relationship also allows Achilles to project the mission that Patroclus will fulfill in his arms as one more service on his behalf:

“πείθεο δ’ ὦς τοι ἐγὼ μόθου τέλος ἐν φρεσί θείω,
ὡς ἐν μοι τιμήν μεγάλην καὶ κόσμος ἀρησι
πρὸς πάντων Δαναῶν, ἀτὰρ οἱ περικάλλεα κούρην
ἀψ ἀπονάσσωσιν, ποτὶ δ’ ἄγλαδ δώρα πόρωσιν.” (Il. 16.83-86)

“But obey to the end this word I put upon your attention so that you can win, for me, great honour and glory in the sight of all the Danaans, so they will bring back to me the lovely girl, and give me shining gifts in addition.”

Although, on the basis of the loan, Achilles cannot expect to receive back anything more than his own arms, he is actually entitled to request honour, glory, the return of Briseis, and additional gifts on the top of his arms on the basis of Patroclus’ relation of retainership to him. In the end, the loan agreement enables Achilles to send Patroclus to fight on his behalf, while he remains officially withdrawn from battle and persistent in his anger at Agamemnon.

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26 Patroclus’ words of encouragement to the Myrmidons confirm Achilles’ view that they should fight, in order to honour Achilles himself as his θεράπωντες (Il. 16.270-274).
27 Cf. Il. 16.60-63, 76-77. Redfield (1994:17-18 and n.16) suggests that Achilles is restricted by his words to the embassy, although he has now “digested” his anger and is able “to think about gifts and reconciliation.” He notes, however, that the hero still has the same objective as before, which is to humble Agamemnon. Benardete (2005:107) comments that by sending Patroclus as his surrogate, Achilles can turn the Trojans back while remaining in his tent.
The potential danger to the ships as the reason for the request and granting of the loan (Il. 16.64-70) would normally also serve as the notional, mutually accepted terms of the permissible use of the arms. Interestingly, however, Achilles proceeds to regulate the extent of activity that Patroclus is allowed to undertake in his arms. He tells his friend that once he drives the Trojans away from the ships, he should come right back; regardless of winning glory, Patroclus should not be carried away and attempt to attack Troy. Continuing to fight further on the Trojan field would diminish Achilles’ own glory and would threaten Patroclus himself with destruction from the Olympians:

“ἔκ νηῶν ἐλάσσας ἵναι πάλιν· εἴ δὲ κεν αὖ τοι δῶρον κόδος ἀρέσθαι ἐργῶντος πῦρ ἰλίης, μὴ σὺ γὰρ ἄνευθεν εἰμεῖο λιλαίεσθαι πολεμίζειν Τρῶσι φιλοπολέμοιοι ἀτμιότερον δὲ με θήσεις· μὴ δ᾽ ἐπαγαλλόμενος πολέμω καὶ δημιουργήτη, Τρῶας ἐναιρόμενους, προτί ἱλιον ἥγεμονεῦειν, μὴ τις ἄπτ᾽ Ὀυλύμποιο θεῶν αἰειγενετάων ἐμβῆ· μᾶλα τοὺς γε φιλεῖ έκάργος ἀπόλλων· ἀλλὰ πάλιν τρωπάσθαι, ἐπὶν φάος ἐν ψεόσι θῆς, τοὺς δ᾽ ἐτ᾽ ἕαυν πεδίον κάτα δηριάασθαι.” (Il. 16.87-96)

“When you have driven them from the ships, come back; although later the thunderous lord of Hera might grant you the winning of glory, you must not set your mind on fighting the Trojans, whose delight is in battle, without me. So you will diminish my honour. You must not, in the pride and fury of fighting, go on slaughtering the Trojans, and lead the way against Ilion, for fear some one of the everlasting gods on Olympus might crush you. Apollo who works from afar loves these people dearly. You must turn back once you bring the light of salvation to the ships, and let the others go on fighting in the flat land.”

Achilles’ instructions indicate that he is concerned about losing honour if Patroclus actually supplants him in battlefield prowess. On the other hand, he is also concerned about his friend’s safety. He emphasises the current the partisan tendencies of the

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28 Schein (1984:34) notes that Patroclus’ donning Achilles’ armour also becomes invested with “his comrade’s triumphant power.” Benardete (2005:108) suggests that Achilles’ rules show that he thinks it might be his weapons alone that are responsible for success and not himself as a warrior. He therefore orders Patroclus to come back from the battle quickly, in order to prevent him from excelling more than Achilles himself.

29 On Achilles’ double concern regarding Patroclus joining the battle, also see Schein 1984:119.
Olympians who favour the Trojans. Apollo supports the Trojans throughout the *Iliad*. But Achilles’ vague words τις ἀπ’ Οὐλώμπου θεῶν αἰειγενετάων imply that, besides Apollo, there might be another god with less overt favouritism towards the Trojans, who is also aiding them right now, and who would inhibit Patroclus’ advance against Troy. He knows that Zeus is temporarily siding with the Trojans as part of the god’s promise to Thetis to compensate her son for the offense to his honour by Agamemnon (*Il*. 1.393-412, 503-510, 524-527). By stating explicit “rules” according to which Patroclus is allowed to use his divine arms, Achilles protects his own heroic interests and aims to secure his friend’s return from the battlefield.

The description of Patroclus wearing Achilles’ arms completes the first stage of their loan-process, consisting of the request and granting of the loan. This description confirms the successful exchange of the arms between Achilles and Patroclus and the temporary nature of their exchange as a loan. Despite the pattern common to all arming scenes in the *Iliad*, where both the armour and the warrior are described, this scene includes a distinctive element. It informs the audience not only of all the pieces that Patroclus wears, but also of the particular piece with which he does not equip himself. He puts on all the rest of the armour, but does not take up Achilles’ spear. The explanation offered is that only Achilles is able to handle this spear, which was given to Peleus by Cheiron (*Il*. 16.140-144). The narrator describes thoroughly the elaborate craftsmanship of the arms, but mentions only the origin of the spear. Later in the poem, both the

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31 For details on the arming type-scene and on how Patroclus’ arming scene relates to other arming scenes in the *Iliad*, see Janko 1992:333.
32 Also see *Cypria*, fr. 3 Bernabé, 3 Davies = schol. A on *Il*. 16.140.
narrator and Achilles say that the rest of the arms were also given to Peleus by the gods, but in Patroclus’ arming scene their origin is withheld. Patroclus is presented as eligible to wear the arms, because their divine origin is omitted and because Achilles, their legitimate owner, lends them to him. Patroclus is by no means a new legitimate owner, but only a legitimate temporary carrier of these arms. These weapons have an inalienable connection with Achilles. Consequently, the hero retains sole proprietorial authority over them and gives them to his friend only as a loan. The temporary nature of this exchange and Achilles’ own expectation to receive his arms back are delineated in his prayer to Zeus to bring Patroclus back with all his companions and his arms (Il. 16.246-248).

The brief history of the spear incorporated in Patroclus’ arming scene lends emphasis to this weapon, but also illustrates the difference between Patroclus and Achilles. As was discussed in the previous chapter, possession of the spear signifies Achilles as heir to the name and legacy of his mortal father, as well as to the legacy and fate of his immortal teacher. His unique bond to it is exemplified by his unique ability to use it, owed to his personal instruction by Cheiron, the weapon’s creator. The story of the origin of the spear shows that Patroclus, a mere mortal, lacks the necessary personal relationships that would entitle him to such a weapon. Moreover, the fact that Achilles did not teach Patroclus the practical skill of using his ash spear forbids him from wielding it even temporarily.

33 Il. 17.195-197, 18.82-84.
34 Note that after the death of Patroclus in battle, Menelaus knows that Achilles cannot help the Achaians save Patroclus’ body from the Trojans, because he has no arms (Il. 17.709-711). Achilles himself also tells Iris that he cannot go to the battlefield and defend his friend’s body, because he has no arms (Il. 18.188-195).
Patroclus’ inability to use Cheiron’s spear closes the first stage of the arms’ loan with a lack. He asked Achilles for his weapons (δῶς δὲ μοι ὠμοίων τὰ σὰ τεύχεα θωρηχθῆναι; “give me your armour to wear on my shoulders into the fighting,” Il. 16.40), and Achilles agreed to give them to him (τύνησδι’ ὠμοίων μὲν ἐμὰ κλυτὰ τεύχεα δῷθι; “get on your armour; faster; I will muster our people,” Il. 16.129). Patroclus’ arming scene, however, portrays him equipping himself with Achilles’ arms minus the ash spear. The fact that Patroclus is incompletely armed in Achilles’ gear imposes one more limitation in his use of his friend’s weapons.

The background information on Cheiron’s ash spear compels its separation from the rest of the weapons and initiates a division of the divine arms in the Iliadic present that corresponds to their separate origin in the Iliadic past. Achilles’ exclusive knowledge of how to wield his spear enables him to retain it, while granting Patroclus’ request to use his arms. On the one hand, withholding the spear from the loaned arms signifies Achilles’ continuing ownership of the panoply that his friend temporarily wears. On the other, it becomes a means of enforcing his instructions to his friend.37 Without Achilles’ main offensive weapon, Patroclus is able to perform defensive tasks, such as to ward off destruction from the ships, but he is not properly equipped to lead the way against Troy alone (Il. 16.87-96). The spear remaining in the tent of Achilles symbolically proclaims his desire for the reunion of his arms in his own possession and the prompt return of his friend from battle.

The conversation that Patroclus and Achilles have in the beginning of Book 16 problematises many crucial issues that operate throughout the Iliad and allows for

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37 Later in Il. 18.13-14, before Achilles hears the news of Patroclus’ death, he senses that his friend has been killed and he recalls the rules that he gave to Patroclus before he sent him to war.
different, even contradictory, interpretations. On the one hand, it may be construed as a declaration of the heroic code, outlining what Achilles owes to his fellow Achaeans and what in turn they owe to him. In these terms, it may delineate his obligation to help the Achaeans and their counter-obligation to restore his honour. On the other hand, his expressed concern that Patroclus should not cast him in the shadow and lessen his honour may imply that Achilles is solely interested in his own *kleos* and not in the communal good. Last but not least, Achilles may predominantly worry about Patroclus’ life. His concern with his own *kleos* might only serve as a pretext, in order to bring his friend safe back from the battlefield.

Due to the multiple issues at play, one cannot be sure which perspective is the most valid. In the end, this conversation manifests a clash between different needs, whether personal or communal. What is important for the purposes of this project is that the discussion between the two friends negotiates the exchange of the divine arms and sets the terms of it. By configuring a limited course of Patroclus’ permissible action in these arms and by withholding his spear, Achilles indicates his expectation of receiving them back shortly, and thus asserts his continuing ownership of them for as long as his friend wears them. Limited use and subsequent prompt return of a given object, stemming from the fact that the giver retains sole ownership of it, are the defining elements of a loan as opposed to a gift in the society represented in Homeric epic. From an exchange point of view, then, the conversation of Patroclus and Achilles in the beginning of Book 16 functions as a loan contract. Although it does not eliminate the validity of any of the interpretations noted above, such a contract gives a different
perspective in which to understand both the actions of Patroclus and the developments of the *Iliad*, following Achilles’ consignment of the arms to him.

**b) The (Ab)Use of the Arms**

Patroclus’ joining battle in Achilles’ arms constitutes the middle stage of the loan-process, the use of the loaned object by the borrower. This stage provides the reason for the loan arrangement and hence looks backward to the request for the loan and forward to the return of the loan, once this reason has been fulfilled. The logical sequence of the three stages of the loan-process applies for as long as Patroclus fights and drives the Trojan army from the Achaean ships. His success in saving the ships while killing many enemies, however, soon drives him to move rashly against the Trojan wall (*Il.* 16.462-507, 684-685, 692-709).38

Once the safety of the fleet has been secured, Patroclus should stop using the arms and proceed to return them. Continuing to use them beyond the defence of the ships transgresses the terms on which he received them and delays or puts at risk their return to the owner. The moment that Patroclus decides to chase the Trojans and the Lycians in the open Trojan plain is the turning point that breaks the sequence of the loan-process.

Scholars have noticed that Patroclus, wearing Achilles’ arms, performs military deeds, such as killing Sarpedon and attacking the Trojan wall, which exceed his social standing as Achilles’ attendant. The neoanalysts explain this within the context of correspondences that they see between the *Iliad* and the traditional story of Achilles’

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38 It has been pointed out in scholarship that Patroclus’ over-confidence and disregard of Achilles’ instructions make him partly responsible for his own death. Allan (2005:4) notes Patroclus’ share in his destruction. Strasburger (1954:n.57) and Janko (1992:397) discuss Patroclus’ actions and Zeus’ plan as a double reason for his forthcoming death. Such arguments, however, ignore Patroclus’ violation of the principles of the loan-exchange-mechanism in Homeric society.
death from which the poem draws its material. According to their view, Patroclus in the *Iliad* is modelled on Antilochus in non-Homeric myth; therefore, Achilles killing Hector in order to avenge Patroclus’ death reflects Achilles’ killing of Memnon in revenge for the death of Antilochus in non-Homeric myth.\(^3^9\) In addition, they propose that Patroclus’ feats in the arms of Achilles, his death, and the events following his death in the *Iliad* correspond to Achilles’ own feats, his own death, and the events following it in the non-Homeric story of the hero’s death.\(^4^0\)

Burgess disagrees with the neoanalytic correspondence between Antilochus and Patroclus, but accepts that Patroclus’ heroic actions compare to those of Achilles in the *fabula* of his death.\(^4^1\) He notes that Patroclus’ subordinate status, as Achilles’ retainer (\(\theta\epsilon\rho\alpha\tau\pi\rho\alpha\omicron\nu\)), would customarily confine his role in the heroic world of the *Iliad* to performing everyday tasks for Achilles and maybe fighting next to him in battle. Patroclus’ fear of Achilles is one more element that supports the former’s lower social position in relation to the latter.\(^4^2\) Achilles, in turn, rewards Patroclus’ labour with tangible gifts, a gesture that distinguishes the leader from his subjects, and reciprocates his fear with love.\(^4^3\) Thus, although they mutually depend on each other for certain

\(^4^1\) For a sympathetic summary and a critique of the neoanalytist arguments, see Burgess 2001:74-84, 218 nn.92-93, 2009:72-92, 150-152, with relevant bibliography. For the mythological biography of Achilles’ early life and the *fabula* of his death, in particular, see Burgess 2009:8-42.
\(^4^2\) For Patroclus’ fear of Achilles, see *Il.* 11.648-654, 838-840. On fear in master-retainer relations, also see van Wees 1992:118-120.
favours, they are not on equal terms with one another; Patroclus is certainly the weaker party in their relationship. Normally in the Homeric epics, a θεράπων does not display more merit than his master in activities that secure superior social recognition, such as war. Yet, despite his inferior status as Achilles’ attendant, Patroclus performs a large scale aristeia in the Iliad, one that is not justified by his secondary role in the heroic hierarchy of the poem. It is nevertheless justified, as Burgess argues, by the Iliad’s allusion to Achilles’ future actions and death, which take place outside the narrative boundaries of the poem. Patroclus’ Iliadic aristeia, in particular, corresponds to Achilles’ own aristeia in the Aethiopis (as in the summary of the poem by Proclus).

But this possible Iliadic allusion to post-Iliadic myth about Achilles generates a conflict with the internal pattern of loan exchange in the poem. Patroclus’ attempt to attack Troy entails his transgression of the loan-agreement with Achilles. It constitutes excessive use of the arms beyond the purpose for which he requested to borrow them (the defence of the ships) and, consequently, beyond the terms according to which they were granted to him. It also calls into question one of the premises under which loans are granted in Homer, that of the close relationship between the loan transactors. If Patroclus were to succeed in his ambition to sack Troy, the retainer would appear to have exceeded the master in status. Although it seems restricted on a personal level, the relationship between a king and a θεράπων is a constituent element in Homeric society, and any

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44 Ready (2007:14 and n.28) comments that the fact that Diomedes’ retainer, Sthenelus, is the one who captures Aeneas’ horses, but Diomedes boasts to Nestor about taking them himself, shows the subordinate status of the θεράπων (Il. 5.319-327, 8.108, 23.290-292). For Idomeneus and Meriones, see Il. 13.254-297.

45 Burgess (2009:90) points out that Homeric epic paves the way for the correspondence between Patroclus in the Iliad and Achilles in the extra-Iliadic fabula of his death. More specifically, Patroclus’ ambition to put an end to the ten-year siege of Troy and take the city (Il. 16.698-699, 702-703) is reminiscent of some of Achilles’ later actions, outlined at the end of the Iliad. Cf. Il. 20.29-30, 21.536, 544-546.

46 Also see Burgess 2009:38-39.
change or confusion within this unit would have larger implications for the community. The unquestioned hierarchy created by the distinct roles of domination and submission played by masters and their retainers, respectively, is more or less loosely replicated by members of other well-acknowledged social pairs. Indeed, this type of hierarchy operates in every relationship that is initiated and refuelled by mutual exchange of favours, such as that of the military leader and the soldier, the host and his guest, even the relationship between equals as long as they reciprocally become donors and recipients. An attempt to reverse the power dynamic within these pairs of the Homeric socio-political system could call into question all the ties that conventionally hold the community together and threaten to destabilise the current social order. Hence, Patroclus’ misuse of the arms constitutes a divergence from the loan agreement, which in turn threatens to create a divergence from firmly established social norms and structures in the poetic world of Homer.

c) Failure to Return and Loss of Return

In the loan agreement, Achilles warned Patroclus about the gods favouring the Trojans and instructed him to come back to the camp once he ensures the safety of the Achaean ships. When Patroclus disobeys his friend’s advice and proceeds to attack the Trojan wall, Apollo strikes him and disarms him (ll.16.788-804). First, he throws away Partoclus’ helmet which rolls under the feet of the horses and its plumes mix with blood and dust. The narrator comments that when it guarded the head of Achilles, it had not
been permitted to be defiled in the dust;\textsuperscript{47} Zeus, however, gives it to Hector now and his death (in the dust) is approaching. Apollo, who openly sides with the Trojans as Achilles noted to his friend before he joined war, plays a more active role in stripping off Patroclus; yet it is Zeus, whom Achilles implied as currently favouring the Trojans, who reportedly grants the helmet to Hector and finalises Patroclus’ loss of the arms (\textit{Il.} 16.799-800).\textsuperscript{48}

The brief digression on Hector in the middle of Patroclus’ disarming scene highlights Hector’s problematic exchange of the helmet as a correlative of its deteriorating properties and the doom of the hero. The reference to the helmet’s impeccable condition for as long as it was worn by Achilles reminds a reader or listerner that Hector does not receive it from its proper owner, or with the knowledge or consent of the proper owner, but takes it from Patroclus, who has it only provisionally. The loan of the arms to Patroclus that intervenes between Achilles’ and Hector’s possession of the helmet creates a gap between the actual owner of it and its new receiver and subsequently discredits the latter. In addition, at this point the helmet is not a glorious defensive weapon any more, but a defiled one that fails the warrior, whom it is supposed to cover, and leaves him defenceless. Its symbolic decline is in sharp contrast with its past splendid quality, when it was used by its rightful owner, but also with its own functional purpose as a helmet. It seems to have lost its regular function of concealing and protecting and has become an instrument of exposing and compromising the one who wears it. The

\textsuperscript{47} Thalmann (1984:46) remarks that the adjective \textit{θείοιο} (\textit{Il.} 16.798) that modifies Achilles’ forehead denotes his divine lineage and implies that he is the only one who is allowed to wear immortal arms with impunity.

\textsuperscript{48} See, for instance, \textit{Il.} 15.490-493 on which Janko (1992:420) comments that Zeus is the one who gives victory or defeat. Also see \textit{Il.} 16.844-846, where the dying Patroclus acknowledges that Zeus and Apollo were the ones who really subdued him and stripped him from his arms.
narrator’s comments on the helmet that Apollo strikes off Patroclus’ head disclose Hector’s fallacy about his acquisition of it. This fallacy anticipates Patroclus’ later prediction of the death of the Trojan warrior (II. 16.852-854) and the ominous scene of Hector dressing in Achilles’ arms (II. 19.198-208). In this manner, the helmet anticipates the problematic future exchange of Achilles’ armour and its ramifications for the exchanger.

After Apollo removes Patroclus’ helmet from his head, he also makes the hero’s shield and corselet drop to the ground, but breaks his spear into pieces (II. 16.801-804). Interestingly, the three adjectives “heavy, huge, and strong,” which describe the spear that Patroclus holds during his divine disarming, are the same ones which were used to modify Achilles’ own spear in the former’s arming scene (II. 16.802, and II. 16.141). Aside from this passage, the formula “heavy, huge and strong” is exclusively applied to immortal spears in the Iliad, those of Athena and Achilles in particular. Its use for Patroclus’ spear serves to allude to Achilles’ famous weapon. The reminiscent association of Achilles’ immortal spear in a context where Patroclus’ own spear is said to break into pieces recalls the terms under which the latter borrowed his friend’s arms. Patroclus put on the rest of the divine armour, but he left behind the ash spear that Cheiron gave to Peleus, because he was unable to handle it. Achilles reserved the skill of wielding his spear for himself, which resulted in his keeping this crucial piece from the armour that he loaned to Partoclus. As was discussed earlier in this chapter, the lack of

49 Janko (1992:412) points out that with the exception of the helmet, which is the weapon that Patroclus loses first, his disarming reverses the order of an arming scene. The scholiast ad loc. comments that we are not told of what happened to Patroclus’ greaves and sword.

50 Janko (1992:413) attributes the use of the formula in this passage to a lapse of attention during composition; he suggests that this phrase, which is otherwise reserved for divine spears, indicates that the narrator may think that Patroclus carries Achilles’ spear.
this weapon denotes Patroclus’ temporary authority over the arms he wears and the restricted activity that he is allowed to undertake in these arms, but the absence of Cheiron’s spear renders Patroclus incompletely armed in Achilles’ military gear. The fact that Patroclus’ spear shatters emphasises, by contrast with Achilles’ divine arms, that this is Patroclus’ own mortal weapon. Its permanent damage hints at the hero’s own mortality and constitutes an omen for his own destruction, which will follow in moments after. Indeed after Patroclus’ disarmament, the Trojan Euphorbus wounds him with his own ash spear (II. 16.806-815). The reference to Euphorbus’ weapon correlates with the use of the aforementioned formula that describes immortal spears, as one more reminder of Peleus’ ash spear that Patroclus lacked. The subtle allusions to Achilles and his spear recall the rules of the loan of his arms to Patroclus. Exceeding the boundaries determined by the loan agreement, Patroclus exceeds the limits of his own mortal spear and the limits of his mortal nature. His interlinked transgressions will jeopardise his safety, as Achilles predicted in the loan agreement. Patroclus draws upon himself the exact outcome that Achilles had striven to avert by strictly regulating the loan of his arms. In the end, the structures of exchange have more force than the agents who use them. Patroclus will lose both the divine arms and his life, and Achilles will lose both his divine panoply and his best friend.

After Apollo and Euphorbus, Hector strikes Patroclus with his own spear and wounds him fatally (II. 16.818-829). Following the wounding, he also, alleges that Patroclus failed to carry out Achilles’ orders to kill the Trojan prince (II. 16.837-841).

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51 See Il. 21.174-178, where Asteropaeus unable to extract Achilles’ ash spear from the bank of Skamandros unsuccessfully tries to break it.
52 On Euphorbus and his ash spear, see Shannon 1975:64-68. Nickel (2002:221, 228-231) pays special attention on Euphorbus’ spear made of ash-wood and argues that he acts as Achilles’ doublet. Allan (2005:3-6) discounts the importance of such a connection.
Although Hector’s words are in sharp contrast with what Achilles had actually told his attendant before he sent him to battle, surprisingly Patroclus does not refute them. Instead before he dies, Patroclus discounts Hector’s achievement noting that the Trojan hero was only the last one to smite him and prophesies his own death.

“Now is your time for big words, Hector. Yours is the victory given by Cronus’ son, Zeus, and Apollo, who have subdued me easily, since they themselves stripped the arms from my shoulders. Even though twenty such as you had come in against me, they would all have been broken beneath my spear, and have perished. No, deadly destiny, with the son of Leto, has killed me, and of men it was Euphorbus; you are only my third slayer.”

Patroclus’ explanation of what happened to him, however, alludes to his conversation with Achilles in the beginning of Book 16, as it accurately corresponds to the aftermath that his friend had described to him, if he failed to conform to the rules of the loan. He credits Zeus and Apollo, the two gods that Achilles meant to warn him about, for killing him and stripping him.

Patroclus’ disarmament harmonises the Iliad with the external mythological tradition about the impenetrability of Achilles’ arms. Their removal from the hero’s
body by the gods facilitates his subsequent wounding by Euphorbus and Hector.\textsuperscript{57} But above all, the stripping of the arms is perfectly explicable in the internal Iliadic context of the loan-arrangement. The arms are associated with Patroclus’ well-being not only because they may be understood as invulnerable, but also because, by the terms of the loan, Achilles equated their designated legitimate use with their safe use. Patroclus, however, uses them beyond the point determined by the loan-agreement and incurs divine intervention against himself, as Achilles indicated to him upon granting him the loan. His being stripped of the arms by the gods exposes him to danger and subsequently causes him to lose his life. His words to Hector, σὺ δὲ μὲ τρίτος ἔξευαριζεις (“you are only my third slayer,” \textit{Il.} 16.850), semantically confirm this cause and effect sequence between the arms and his life. The verb ἔξευαριζω originally signified “stripping off (arms),” but eventually lost this sense and simply denoted “killing.”\textsuperscript{58} The transition between the two meanings of the verb aptly reflects Patroclus’ double loss of the arms and his life, as well as the connection between the two facts. Therefore, although Patroclus does not explicitly refer to the terms of the loan and his deviation from them, in the account of his defeat he implicitly acknowledges the link of his transgression to his suffering, as was outlined in the loan agreement.

The death of Patroclus is a crucial turning point in the plot of the \textit{Iliad}. From the moment that the hero leaves Achilles’ tent to inquire about the identity of the wounded


\textsuperscript{57} Edwards (1987:264) argues that Patroclus’ stripping suggests that he is not qualified to wear divine arms, because he lacks a divine affiliation.

\textsuperscript{58} Cunliffe 1963 s.v. ἔξευαριζω 1, 2, and 3 and ἐναρίζω 1, 2. Janko (1992:420) considers its old meaning (stripping someone off his arms) proper in this passage, because it draws attention to Achilles’ armour. Allan (2005:6) suggests that the use of this verb indicates that Hector “merely reaped the rewards of other people’s efforts.”
warriors who returned to the camp, until after his death, when Achilles hears that his friend has been killed, several reasons have occasionally been highlighted or alluded to in the poem as possible causes of this outcome: Patroclus’ own compassion for the troubles that the Achaeans encounter in the war, Achilles’ decision to send him to battle alone without accompanying him, Zeus’ grudge due to the death of his son, Sarpedon, and Zeus’ plan to support the Trojans as part of his promise to Thetis to honour her son seem to be more or less associated with Patroclus’ killing. Half of these naturalistic or traditional causes stem from Patroclus’ selfless character, caught between his loyalties to Achilles and to the Achaeans; the other half of the causes accords with Achilles’ character and his obsession with his personal honour. The latter may initially suggest that the Myrmidon leader is responsible for his friend’s end. Yet the loan terms that aim to safeguard Achilles’ status at the same time would secure impunity for Patroclus using the divine arms and are meant to protect his life. The equation of these two objectives absolves Achilles from potential blame that he caused Patroclus’ death in order to protect his own honour.

From an exchange perspective, the measures for the protection of Achilles’ status and Patroclus’ life included in the agreement regarding the arms may seem a novelty in terms of Homeric loan formulation, but ultimately they accord with the standard, albeit sometimes less overt, principles of the loan-mechanism in Homeric epic. The rights of the lender, as the sole owner of the loaned object, and the obligation of the borrower to give it back to the owner after the completion of the purpose for which he received it, are not always explicitly stated in loan contracts, and therefore they can easily be neglected.

59 Although he does not see Achilles’ instructions to Patroclus in the frame of the loan-agreement, Mueller (2009:54) notes their double aim as to preserve Achilles’ supremacy and guarantee Patroclus’ safety.
But Achilles charts the temporary permitted use of his arms in the loan-agreement and seals his own rights and expectations from the loan by withholding a token from the armour for which he was asked and which he consented to lend. Furthermore, in accordance with Homeric loan-procedure, the loan of the arms, as Achilles determines it, would preserve the prior interpersonal relations of the transactors. In brief, besides securing Achilles’ honour and Patroclus’ life, compliance with its terms would unobstructively continue their former personal friendship and retain the social hierarchy of a king and his θεράπων, by virtue of which community recognises, marks, and encompasses them in its ranks. In other words, the loan-arrangement of the arms, as Achilles perceives it, is intended to inhibit any changes, whether they pertain to the status, life, personal or social relations of the participants, and maintain post-loan the pre-loan private and public status quo.

The pervasive use of the borrowed arms not only has implications for the private and public relations among the characters of the poem, but also suggests an alternative to the mythological material inherited in the poetic tradition. Considering that at the peak of his aristeia, Patroclus intends to take Troy, his military feat in Achilles’ arms could potentially create a significantly different variation to the story of the Iliad. Central motifs of the poem, such as Achilles’ anger and withdrawal from the war-action, Agamemnon’s embassy to him, discussions of his compensation, and the need and expectation of his return to the battlefield, would become meaningless if Patroclus were to successfully substitute for him. As was mentioned earlier, according to the neoanalysts Patroclus’ grand aristeia in the poem reflects Achilles’ splendid aristeia in the traditional story of his fabula. But it is exactly on the basis of his approximation to Achilles that at
some point in the *Iliad* he nearly seems capable of conquering Troy. Had that been brought to fruition he would have accomplished an achievement that tradition emphatically denies even to Achilles.

Therefore, allowing for the transgression of the loan-agreement of the arms, the *Iliad* plays with innovation synchronically within its internal social borders and diachronically within its monumental mythological framework. The loan rules in effect, that would normally deter the borrower from this transgression, instead serve to cut off the innovative process in the poem, before it brings forth results. In this sense, the loan-agreement pertaining to Achilles’ arms not only demonstrates the compelling force of the loan-system, as an established exchange mechanism in Homeric society, but also reinforces the traditional character of the *Iliad*. Considered in the context of his deviation from the rules of the loan, Patroclus’ death preserves his celebrated Iliadic friendship with Achilles, the established Homeric hierarchy, and the known myth of the siege and fall of Troy.

In the end, the loan-exchange-system operating in the economy of the *Iliad* can contribute a new approach to the discussion of the hero’s death. The preceding analysis of the events prior to his killing reveals striking similarities between the action that escalated to the loss of his life and the precautionary narrative included in the loan-arrangement of Achilles’ arms. An assessment of his death in relation to the terms of the loan creates another perspective on the incident; it draws attention to the role of the loan and the responsibility of Patroclus himself for his end, as a result of his improper exchange of Achilles’ arms.
Conclusion

The loan agreement of Achilles’ arms marks a large-scale sequence of intertwined gain and loss for both participants that exceeds by far the purpose that dictated the arrangement of the loan and the expectations that derived from it. Patroclus is allowed to perform a very successful *aristeia*, but, when he disobeys the rules of the loan, he reaches his end. As the neoanalysts have pointed out, Patroclus’ death, the battle that arises over his corpse, the lamentation for him by Thetis and her sisters, the athletic contests in his memory, and his burial present significant similarities with the respective events that pertain to Achilles’ death in non-Iliadic sources. Patroclus’ loss of his life, then, also leads him to achieve the greatest gain of all. It entitles him to die and be buried not as a *θεράπων*, but as a king; and not as any king, but specifically as the one that the *Iliad* repeatedly calls “the best of the Achaeans.”

But by prefiguring his friend’s death and funeral rites in the *Iliad*, Patroclus postpones the occurrence of the actual incident and pushes it out of the timeframe of the poem. The exclusion of Achilles’ heroic death and burial from the narrative of the *Iliad* prolongs his life while he has not made the choice to leave for Phthia, but still remains at Troy. Nevertheless, the increase of his poetic life expectancy, ensuing from Patroclus’ divergence from the rules of the loan of the arms, comes with significant losses for the hero. Hector kills Patroclus and collects the divine arms that he wears as spoils. That inflicts Achilles with two more losses after Agamemnon confiscated Briseis, the captured woman from Lyrnessos, who was awarded to him as his *geras*. He now loses his best

60 Cf. *Il.* 1.244, 412, 16.274.
friend and θεράπων, as well as his divine armour. Patroclus’ death deprives Achilles of the human character closest to him, and the only one with whom he communicated during his withdrawal from the battle and the social life in the Achaean camp. On the other hand, the killing of Patroclus entitles Achilles to redefine his priorities without altering the peculiar qualities of his personality exhibited from the beginning of the poem. Although it does not eliminate Achilles’ persistent emotions of anger and desire for revenge, it redirects them from Agamemnon and the Achaeans to Hector and the Trojans.62 The loss of his friend does not oblige Achilles to dismiss his initial anger and submit to Agamemnon, yet it allows him to conceive a much superior wrath, which overshadows his feelings towards Agamemnon. The fact that the common enemy of the Achaeans becomes the new target of his negative emotions permits him to remain consistent to his Iliadic heroic personality while it puts an end to the social isolation of his character. In return, the community that profits from the reprioritisation of Achilles’ anger re-bonds with him, acknowledges his merit, and offers support for his suffering.

Above all, however, the death of Patroclus provides Achilles with an important and dignified reason to rejoin war. His return to the battlefield offers him the opportunity to become in the Iliadic present the hero that the poem portrays him to have been in the past. It is the loss of his friend that enables him to display his prowess, realise the essence of his heroic identity, and reclaim his forestalled kleos. But the gaining of kleos reconnects Achilles with his traditional fate of a glorious, yet short, life and hence it also signals his mortality. The loan of his divine arms and its transgression then becomes a decisive factor in facilitating Achilles’ attainment of the most prevalent elements of his fabula: his glory and his death.

CHAPTER SIX - THE SPOILS OF HECTOR AND THE SPOILS OF ACHILLES

Introduction

This chapter will trace the second part of the circulation of Achilles’ arms in the poetic time of the *Iliad*. The consecutive transitions of the arms from Patroclus to Hector and from him back to Achilles again will be assessed against the ideology, which permeates interaction between enemies on the battlefield, and the systems of exchange that it generates. This analysis will demonstrate that the final exchanges of the arms present an unusual clash between heroic ideology and the mechanism that stipulates transference of property between opponents after battle. Such a conflict necessitates a reconsideration of the circulation of the arms in the Iliadic present from the moment that Achilles lends them to Patroclus until the moment that he removes them from Hector’s dead body. The successive stages of this circulation exhibit a consistent pattern of cause and effect sequence that highlights the issue of legitimacy in the acquisition of the arms. This chapter will argue that illegitimate acquisition of the arms signifies an erroneous exchange and implicates the participating warriors in a complicated martial reality, where winners are ultimately conflated with losers. In such a reality, personal victory is not defined by the anticipated individual gains anymore. Instead, it is qualified by the restoration of prior individual losses and the ability to lay claim to large scale gains that normally seal a collective victory.
Despoiling as an Exchange Mechanism in the Iliad

Devolution of property that ensues directly from some sort of battle between two parties is a frequent phenomenon in the Homeric epics. The two opponents are usually strangers to each other,¹ and victory or defeat in the fight between them determines who will gain or lose possessions respectively. Two types of property-transference among opposing warriors fit this general description: 1) collective raiding after an invasion of a city that occurs with the intention to plunder it,² and 2) individual despoiling of a warrior on the battlefield after capturing him or killing him. Examples of acquisition through battle, such as the sack of Thebe (Il. 1.366-367, 2.691, 6.415-416) and the defeat of Asteropaeus by Achilles (Il. 21.179-183, 23.560-562, 807-808, 824-825), entail distinct patterns of garnering spoils that correspond to these two types of property transference respectively.³

The following discussion will focus on the second type of war acquisition and will consider the principles that underlie individual despoiling of a rival on the battlefield. This analysis will help to assess the spoils that Hector and Achilles obtain from their duels with Patroclus and Hector respectively, which is the primary concern of the present study.

Despoiling is a practice by which a warrior increases his hoard, and it runs parallel to a regular war expedition. It occurs among two individual opponents, fighting

¹ See Ready 2007:22.
² In this classification, raiding refers to the activity of war-heroes, who only occasionally engage in raiding missions (cf. Il. 1.162-168, 366-368, 2.689-691, 9.128-130, 328-333, 666-668, 11.624-627, 671-705; Od. 3.106, 9.40-42), as opposed to the, so called, ληιστήρες, who are professional raiders (cf. Od. 3.73, 9.254, 15.425-429, 16.426, 17.425). For the similarities and differences between heroes, who interrupt their regular war activity to search for booty, and professional marauders, see van Wees 1992:207-217, 390 n.92; Ready 2007:15 and n.31.
³ Ready (2007:13-22) classifies both raiding and despoiling under the common heading of individual acquisition. Donlan (1981:108-109) also seems to conflate the two practices.
in close combat, as members of organised armies, which engage in a declared war with each other. Victory in close combat qualifies the dominating party to raise proprietary claims over the adversary.\textsuperscript{4} The extent of these claims might vary. Sometimes, the two rivals might reach an agreement concerning the spoils of the winner, as happens in the duel of Hector and Ajax (\textit{Il.} 7.77-86). Nevertheless, such agreements are rare, whether they are not proposed or the negotiations for them fail\textsuperscript{5}. The winning combatant can choose to capture his opponent alive or kill him and is entitled to take the possessions that the defeated one carries with him at the time.\textsuperscript{6} In cases where the vanquished party is killed, his friends and allies often try to defend their dead comrade and his possessions against the proprietary action of the victor, who in turn may also be assisted by his own friends in achieving his claims.\textsuperscript{7}

The fact that a defeated dueller may consent, while alive, to surrender his arms or that the winner is willing to engage in subsequent struggle over the corpse of his vanquished rival, in order to collect possessions, shows that despoiling is a constituent activity of Homeric warfare. The general acceptance of this practice and the material benefit deriving from it play an important role in identifying despoiling as an acknowledged mechanism of exchange in the \textit{Iliad}. In addition, the semantics of terms associated with this type of acquisition also contribute to conceptualizing despoiling as a

\footnote{Redfield (1994:210) points out that “in combat the loser becomes himself the victor’s prize.”}

\footnote{Most notably, Hector tries to negotiate with Achilles before and during their duel, but his pleas are met with rejection (\textit{Il.} 22.256-272, 337-354).}

\footnote{E.g. Automedon kills Aretus and seizes his weapons (\textit{Il.} 17.516-542); Achilles kills Asteropaeus and strips him of his armour (\textit{Il.} 21.179-83, 23.559-65, 805-808, 824-825).}

\footnote{For instance, in \textit{Il.} 16.663-665, the Achaeans win the armour of the dead Sarpedon, killed by Patroclus, and defended by his Lycian and Trojan friends; in \textit{Il.} 16.781-782, the Achaeans take the corpse of Cebriones, who has also been killed by Patroclus.}
form of exchange. More specifically, the words \(\muοῖρα\) and \(\alphaἰσα\) mean “share of meat or booty,” as well as (ultimate) fate or death. Killing an enemy, the victor delivers the due share of fate or death to the defeated opponent and earns the right to seize possessions from the dead body.

Homeric scholarship describes despoiling as an exchange in which military service is offered in return for individual acquisition on the battlefield. A hero, who demonstrates bravery and risks his life, is compensated by the spoils he obtains, when he removes possessions from those he kills. In other words, despoiling is a legitimate way to transition riches directly from one fighter to another during Homeric warfare.

Two warriors, who engage in close combat and lay claim to the possessions carried by each other at the time, are not connected by any friendship bonds; yet they are not mere strangers. Aside from each one’s individual identity, which is often known to the adversary, especially in cases involving major heroes, they casually view and acknowledge each other through their collective identities, as members of their respective armies. Their personal fight simply enacts a preconceived enmity against each other on behalf of the groups they belong to; on the basis of this enmity, the outcome of their struggle may affect the outcome of the general battle between their armies. Their identification as inseparable parts of their communities transfers their intracommunal relationship to the interpersonal level. They consider and call each other personal foe

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8 For the connotations of \(\muοῖρα\) and \(\alphaἰσα\), see Staten 1993:341. Also see Cunliffe 1963 s.v. \(\muοῖρα\) 3, 4, 6, 7, and \(\alphaἰσα\) 3, 4, 5, 6.
10 Compare to raiding, which involves two collective opponents, who usually have no prior relationship or interaction with each other. On this issue, see Donlan 1981-1982:142. Places nearby Troy, such as Thebe, Lynnessos, Lesbos, Scyros, Tenedos, and Pedasos with which the Achaean host has no reported friendship, enmity, or even commercial ties, have been attacked and plundered by Achilles alone or together with his Myrmidons (\(II\). 1.366-367, 2.690-691, 6.414-428, 9.129-130, 271-272, 328-331, 664, 668, 11.625, 16.57, 18.341-342, 19.60, 295-296, 20.89-92, 191-194; also see Proclus’ summary of the \(Cypria\) and Apollodorus \(Epitome\) 3.33).
even before their close encounter. Therefore, the two rivals have a mutually recognised relationship embedded in the larger social relations of war.

Sociologists have frequently discussed the relationship between individuals, who perceive each other as enemies, from an exchange perspective and in a diachronic timeframe. A crucial element of such a relationship is what Gouldner calls “negative reciprocity” and defines it as “the return of injuries.” In Homeric studies particularly, Seaford observes that the heroes are often faced with “the obligation to avenge violence” and adopts the term “hostile reciprocity” to describe the execution of that obligation. A duel between two individual warriors, who act on their predetermined enmity and exchange violent blows, exemplifies best the meaning of “hostile reciprocity.”

The localized and targeted violence among the two opponents and its ensuing small scale material benefit, consisting merely of possessions that the warriors happen to have with them during their combat, result in gain claimed by one person only, the winner. The new proprietor has complete authority over the goods he takes from dead foes. He can hold on to them and store them among his treasures or exchange them and pass them on to someone else. The fact that they may still continue to be referred to in

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11 Gouldner 1960:172. For Gouldner’s concept of “negative reciprocity” and the Iliad, see Wilson 2002:13-15. Gouldner’s “negative reciprocity’ should be distinguished from Sahlin’s use of the term. Sahlin (1972:195) considers “negative reciprocity” as “the attempt to get something for nothing with impunity.” He explains that in “negative reciprocity” the participants have “opposed interests, each looking to maximize utility at the other’s expense.” For an exploration of Sahlin’s perception of “negative reciprocity” in relation to Homeric society, see Donlan 1981-1982:141-143.


13 Seaford (1994:7, 23-25 and n.97) applies this term to wide a range of situations that cause heroes to become negatively disposed toward one another. According to him, “hostile reciprocity” can also be developed between members of the same group, who are turned into enemies due to harm that the one party may have inflicted on the other.

14 On the contrary, acquisitions from raids entail a controversy concerning the ownership of the confiscated goods. It is unclear when that booty immediately becomes the private property of only the leader of those who seized it or of the whole group of the raiders and when it makes it into a common pool of wealth to be publicly redistributed to the entire community to which these raiders belong. The secondary literature on the ownership and distribution of booty in Homeric society is extensive: Murray 1917:190-193; Donlan 1981:108-109, 1981-1982:158; van Wees 1992:35, 299-310; Ready 2007:3-43.
relation to the previous owner is simply a way to recall the occasion of their transference, namely the defeat of that individual by the new owner, and thereby to affirm the legitimacy of their acquisition. Thus, the name of a hero, who has been despoiled after close combat, becomes part of the spoils’ history and validates their new ownership in the present time.

Despite its localized occurrence between two individuals and the personalized benefit that it creates, despoiling is an integral part of the broader hostilities during a declared war between two armies. Thus, it normally takes places in a relatively neutral territory for both opponents. In the *Iliad*, this territory is the plain outside the Trojan wall, which has a certain distance from both the city of Troy and the Achaeian camp. At the end of each day, both sides retreat from it to their regular establishments. The distance that separates the battlefield from the heroes’ permanent settlements makes their subsistence goods and household property (but also family members in the case of the Trojans) inaccessible to their enemy. The war-setting of a duel and the circumstances under which it takes place then limit both the amount and the types of the goods that can be earned. The spoils amassed by defeating warriors in close combat consist of: 1) items of armour, 2) horses, and 3) captured men.

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15 Hector’s decision to keep his army on the Trojan plain during the night in *Il.* 8.489-541, 18.243-313 is an exceptional military plan and is strongly opposed to by Poublydamas. The night-spying mission of the Achaeans in the Trojan field, delineated in *Il.* 10.297-298, 340-531, is another exceptional military strategy.


As other types of acquisitions, war spoils have a certain economic value, depending on their on their contribution to the wealth of their owners or their utilitarian aspect. Male captives, for instance, could generate material enrichment for their captors, when sold as slaves or ransomed to their families; sparing the life of a vanquished hero, however, seems to have been a practice only in the Iliadic past. On the other hand, armour and horses, which are the more common types of goods acquired through despoiling, have a relatively fixed economic value. This value stems from their inherent utilitarian attribute as military equipment, as well as from their material and craftsmanship, in the case of the armour, or from their particular breed, in the case of horses.

Although stripping the vanquished opponent contributes to the material enrichment of the winner, acquisition of wealth is not the primary motive for close combat between two individuals. As Ready notes, a warrior who fights on the battlefield is not in need of military gear. His action to take the arms and horses of an adversary “highlights his triumph over his enemy and the corresponding degradation of

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19 It should be noted that these are different kinds of spoils. Horses are less frequently taken by enemies, compared to pieces of armour, and they do not necessarily conform to the rules according to which arms are surrendered. Having a life of their own, they often have an independent fate from the warrior and his weapons. E.g. Aeneas’ horses are captured while he escapes (Il. 5.319-327, 8.108); Balios and Xanthos leave safely from the battlefield, while Patroclus lies on the ground dead and stripped of his arms (Il. 16.862-867, 17.75-77, 19.400-403, 408-416). On the other hand, Rhesus’, Asios’, and Sarpedon’s horses are won over by the enemy after their owners are killed (Il. 10.487-514, 566-569, 13.400-401, 16.506-507).

20 For craftsmanship enhancing the value of a material object, see Brown 1998:166.

the corpse.” The possessions that he earns signify the result of measuring his prowess in relation to his opponent and convert the outcome of the fight into a hierarchy between the rivals. Acquisition of spoils designates success and domination, while bereavement of possessions marks failure and submission. The physical subordination that necessitates this type of property transference disqualifies the inferior combatant from the additional status normally conferred on someone who participates in prestigious giving transactions, such as gift exchange. He is not perceived as a “giver,” but as a “loser.”

Confiscation of spoils and potential seizure of the dead body of a defeated opponent by the winning party signal, to an extent, the collective defeat of the army to which he belongs. The defeat and death of this warrior has a collective effect, whether his companions gather to defend the corpse from despoiling and seizure or not. It inflicts loss on the ranks of his host and minimizes its military power. Thus, the hierarchy between two individual foes constituted by the economics of individual loss and gain in combat expands into a generalised hierarchy of military inferiority and superiority between their opposing armies.

Besides contributing to a hierarchy between enemies, possessions subtracted from an adversary also document a warrior’s victory, in both the present and the future, in the eyes of his friends who watched it and those who missed it. Hence, spoils become a tangible testimony of military excellence in a post-fight time. By virtue of this, they

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23 For prestige and power deriving from participation in full scale war, see van Wees 1992:249-252.
24 For the exchange of gifts increasing the renown and the status of the giver, see Donlan 1981:107-109.
25 The fight over someone’s corpse manifests not only a personal bond of the dead warrior to his defenders, but also an attempt to reverse the impression of a collective defeat. See the motives of the Lycians and the Trojans to defend Sarpedon’s corpse from despoiling and seizure (Il. 16.492-501, 538-553, 17.142-168).
26 For spoils functioning as a proof of military valour, see Finley 1979:119; also see Gottschall 2008:90.
27 For objects causing “vividness of memory” to the internal and external audiences of epic poetry, see Minchin 1999:49-51, 58-64; the quoted phrase is on p.49. Also Bassi (2005:1-32) convincingly argues that
figuratively turn the entire community of the winner into a spectator of his triumph and thus elicit communal acknowledgment and respect for his achievements. Public recognition of personal merit is instrumental to advancement among peers and friends in a competitive hierarchy.  

Contrary to their material value, the symbolic quality of spoils can create hierarchies among enemies and friends, but it is fluid and therefore hard to quantify. Several elements factor in the degree of personal and social acknowledgement they generate for the ones who seize them. First, the reputation and prominence of the warrior who owned them before his defeat affects their value as spoils. For example, the arms of Sarpedon, Zeus’ own son and the most famous Trojan ally, are particularly conspicuous spoils and Patroclus takes extra pains to strip them from their dead owner (Il. 16.558-561, 663-665). Second, the decision of the new owner of despoiled weapons to hold on to them or to dispose of them through subsequent exchange has an impact on the symbolic benefits they yield to him. On the one hand, storing them among his treasures and displaying them to his friends on certain occasions will commemorate his victory, renew public admiration of his qualities, and elicit more social recognition. Idomeneus, for instance, exhibits his large collection of spears gathered from vanquished enemies with the intention of boasting of his skill and effectiveness in fighting (Il. 13.260-262). On the other hand, the spoils’ prime symbolic quality makes them worthy objects of high level

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28 For war prowess increasing the social status of individual warriors and contributing to a political hierarchy, see Donlan 1981:109, 1981-1982:142; van Wees 1992:75, 77, 98-99, 249-258. Ready (2007:13, 22 and n.42) points out that enrichment from individual activities, such as despoiling an enemy, contributes to a warrior’s status and to the general order of his society, in so far as they become a matter of public knowledge.

29 For possession and display of treasure items affirming the status of their owners, see Donlan 1981:107, 1993:160.
social exchanges, such as dedications to the gods or gifts and prizes to a few chosen aristocrats.\textsuperscript{30} Participation in these elite exchanges increases the symbolic value of these objects; it shows their donor as invested with the gods’ favour or further elevates his position in his society, highlighting him as a distributor of wealth. Odysseus, in particular, dedicates Dolon’s armour to Athena, his patron goddess (\textit{Il.} 10.460-464, 570-571). Most notable among the prizes that Achilles awards to the winners in the funeral games for Patroclus are certain items that he stripped from Trojans he killed (\textit{Il.} 23.559-565, 805-808, 824-825). This mystifying quality of spoils to multiply indefinitely their symbolic capital outweighs their material value, however high it may be, and justifies the emphasis of the \textit{Iliad} on the practice of despoiling enemies. Its implications exceed the narrow boundaries and the hostilities of the battlefield, where it actually takes place, and expand to the private quarters and communal relations of the individuals, when they associate with their companions and peers. By virtue of this, the practice is not simply an integral part of Iliadic warfare, but also an integral part of Iliadic society in general.

\textit{The Spoils of Hector}

Consideration of the circumstances, objectives, and benefits associated with material gain drawn from close combat with an enemy during a full-scale war operation discloses a system of principles that regulate acquisition through despoiling, as an established heroic practice in Homeric society. The overview of the despoiling system attempted above contributes to a more accurate assessment of the spoils that Hector obtains from killing Patroclus in the \textit{Iliad}. An examination of Hector’s gains against the principles of the

\textsuperscript{30} For disposition of treasure enhancing the status of the exchange actors, see Donlan 1981:107-108.
exchange mechanism reveals certain peculiarities that undermine the propriety of what is presented as the most prominent example of despoiling in the Homeric epics. These peculiarities may discredit the legitimacy that Hector emphatically claims for his acquisition, but they completely justify the development that this acquisition causes in the plot of the *Iliad*.

After Patroclus’ death, Hector takes the arms from the corpse and a fight arises between the Achaeans and the Trojans for the body of the dead hero (*Il. 17.130-139, 233-699, 716-761*). At first glance, Hector’s deed conforms to the well-known ideology of war and the appropriate exchange mechanism that it sets in motion. Two proclaimed enemies, one Achaean, one Trojan, fight on the battlefield, and the warrior who manages to kill his opponent earns the right to strip the arms from the corpse. In this sense, Hector reaps the rewards of his bravery and military success. Moreover, his handing the spoils to his comrades to take to the city demonstrates his awareness of all the material and immaterial benefits ensuing from the despoilment of an enemy. The narrator’s description reveals how the hero values the arms that he collected from his enemy:

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\text{διδου δ’ ὦ γε τεύχεα καλὰ} \\
\text{Tρωσὶ φέρειν προτὶ ἄστυ, μέγα κλέος ἐμεναι αὐτῷ.} \\
\text{(*Il. 17.130-131*)}
\]

but handed over the beautiful armour
to the Trojans, to take back to the city and to be his great glory.

On the material level, Hector obtains a beautiful panoply. On the symbolic level, he knows that this panoply can grant him κλέος. It is indeed a long-term proof of his victory and entitles him to advancement in a sequence of hierarchies that it initiates. He prevailed over his opponent in battle and secured a collective military advantage for his army, which is saved from a destructive enemy. Consequently, he caused considerable harm to the opposing host, which lost a great warrior. The decision to store his spoils inside the
city walls betrays an intention of displaying them later to the entire community of his friends, in order to publicise his personal military superiority and his contribution to the collective superiority of his army against the common enemy. Such a declaration of his success would bestow prestige and glory on Hector, which in turn would promote his status among his noble friends and peers.

Surprisingly, at a point when Hector thinks that he deserves “great glory,” Glaucus, grieving for the death and despoiling of Sarpedon, rebukes the Trojan hero for cowardice. In response to Glaucus’ accusations, Hector states that he will display his bravery in the battle over Patroclus’ corpse and announces that he will wear the arms that he took from the Achaean warrior (II. 17.170-187). His attempt to defend himself consists of 1) a promise to renew his valour in the present time, and 2) a reminder of the valour he exhibited in the near past when he killed and stripped Patroclus. Hector’s change of heart and decision to wear the seized arms instead of storing them inside the city are dictated by his immediate need of their symbolic benefit. In light of Glaucus’ words, he cannot afford to save their symbolic capital for the future. As a tangible proof of his previous prowess, these arms should present him as worthy of the status of a hero.

In his defence of his heroic status, Hector argues that he acted in accordance with established war ideology. He successfully practised the well-known “hostile reciprocity” of warfare and followed the principles that dictate the despoilment of a defeated warrior. More specifically he says:

“…δὴ φη ώς ἀν ἐγὼν Αχιλής ἀμύμονος ἐντεια δύω καλά, τὰ Πατρόκλου ὑπὶ ἐνάριεα κατακτάς.” (II. 17.186-187)

“…while I am putting on the beautiful armour of blameless Achilles, which I stripped from Patroclus the strong when I killed him.”

31 Also see Ready 2007:13.
While he takes credit for killing and stripping Patroclus, Hector refers to the seized arms in relation to Achilles. As discussed earlier in this chapter, it is customary to mention the previous owner of the possessions that someone obtains on the battlefield. The name of the warrior, who lost his armour due to his military defeat, recalls the victory of the current owner and affirms the legitimate transference of the armour from the one individual to the other. If the previous owner was a renowned hero, reference to his name increases the victor’s prestige, stemming from his war achievement. Hector is aware that the arms he seized belong to Achilles. Mentioning the name of the most famous Achaean hero, he formally glorifies his own acquisition of them and notionally extends further the list of his praiseworthy accomplishments. His claim to have killed and stripped Patroclus is turned into a claim of having stripped Achilles himself.

In addition, the Achaeans, possibly unaware of Apollo’s interference, appear to share Hector’s view that he killed and despoiled Patroclus and they also implicitly credit him, though unconsciously, with stripping Achilles. When Menelaus calls Ajax to help him save Patroclus’ corpse, and instructs Antilochus to inform Achilles that Hector killed his friend, he uses the adjective γυμνός to describe the disarmed body of Patroclus.

“Αἶαν, δεῦρο, πέπον, περὶ Πατρόκλου θανόντος σπεύσομεν, αἳ κε νέκων περ Ἀχιλλῆι προφέρωμεν γυμνόν· ἀτάρ τά γε τεῦχε’ ἔχει κορυφαίολος Ἕκτωρ.” (II. 17.120-122)

“This way, Ajax, we must make for fallen Patroclus to try if we can carry back to Achilles the body which is naked; Hector of the shining helm has taken his armour.”

“Ἀντιλόχῳ[ε]… ἀλλὰ σὺ γ’ αἰῇ Ἀχιλῆι θέων ἐπὶ νῆς Ἀχαιῶν εἴπει, αἳ κε τάχιστα νέκων ἐπὶ νῆα σασώσῃ γυμνόν· ἀτάρ τά γε τεῦχε’ ἔχει κορυφαίολος Ἕκτωρ.” (II. 17.685-693)

“Antilochus… Run then quickly to Achilles, by the ships of the Achaeans,
and tell him. He might in speed win back to his ship the dead body which is naked. Hector of the shining helm has taken his armour.”

Antilochus, in turn, tells Achilles that the Achaeans fight over the “naked” body of Patroclus.

“ὦ μοι, Πηλέος υἱὲ δαίφρονος, ἢ μάλα λυγρῆς πεῦσαι ἄγγελις, ἢ μὴ ὤφελλε γενέσθαι. κεῖται Πάτροκλος, νέκυος δὲ δὴ ἁμφιάχονται γυμνός: ἀτάρ τὰ γε τεύχε’ ἔχει κορυφαῖος “Εκτωρ.” (Il. 18.18-21)

“Ash me, son of valiant Peleus; you must hear from me the ghastly message of a thing I wish never had happened. Patroclus has fallen, and now they are fighting over his body which is naked. Hector of the shining helm has taken his armour.”

Menelaus uses the same adjective for Achilles himself when he tells the Ajaxes that Achilles cannot help them save Patroclus’ body, because he cannot fight against the Trojans γυμνός.32

“οὐδὲ μιν οἶον νῦν ἵναι μάλα περ Κεχολωμένου Ἐκτορι δίω· οὐ γὰρ πῶς ἔως γυμνὸς ἔως Τρώεσσι μάχοιτο.” (Il. 17.709-711)

“...yet think not even he can come now, for all his great anger with Hector the brilliant. There is no way he could fight bare of armour against the Trojans.”

The characters’ limited knowledge initially seems to lend support to Hector’s bragging. In truth, however, even the disarming and the death of Patroclus are not entirely Hector’s own achievements. Apollo played an important role in both actions.33 An examination of Hector’s extended list of accomplishments in light of the chain of facts that preceded

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32 A number of other characters, such as Thetis, Achilles himself, and Iris acknowledge Achilles’ loss of arms to Hector and the Trojans, although they refrain from explicitly attributing the action of stripping them to Hector (Il. 18.130-132, 188, 197, 460-461).

33 Cf. Il. 16.700-710, 720-730, 788-806, 844-850, 18.454-461, 19.413-414. For Apollo as the one who killed Patroclus, see Reinhardt 1961:337. The gods’ participation in warfare is a frequent phenomenon in the Iliad. The heroes often request or acknowledge a god’s help and dedicate certain offerings in return. Despite Patroclus naming Apollo as the first one who vanquished him, Hector monopolizes the credit for this achievement. On the contrary, Achilles acknowledges Athena’s contribution to his victory over Hector even before the two heroes engage in fight (Il. 22.270-271). For divine involvement in human combat, see Allan 2005:8 and n.32.
them ultimately discredits his claims. In the eyes of the omniscient audience, Hector’s agency in his alleged war achievements is not exclusive or can be seen as incidental.

Interestingly, the argument intended to confirm Hector’s merit only unveils the flawed premises of exchange that clash with the very ideology with which he claims to have complied. The transaction that he executed on the battlefield reveals certain inconsistencies with the principles of the system that regulates such practices. Scholars have described despoiling a warrior after overpowering him in battle as a standard exchange mechanism in Homeric society. According to this exchange mechanism, Hector’s acquisition of Achilles’ arms initially seems legitimate, as it happens in the battlefield after the defeat of the opponent. Under closer scrutiny, however, Hector’s claim that he stripped the armour from Patroclus is inaccurate, because the audience knows that it was Apollo who disarmed Patroclus. Moreover, the knowledge of the true origin of the arms becomes a pretext for Hector’s boasting. Note, however, that Achilles’ name is not a mere landmark in the past history of the arms, but a reminder of their current ownership. Hector does not take the arms from Achilles, who is still their rightful owner, and who has the right to transfer them, but from Patroclus, who is only a temporary carrier of the arms, and who is not authorised to pass them to someone else. Patroclus’ defeat, as the source of his prestigious spoils, disqualifies Hector from the particular acquisition he boasts about and its ensuing glory.

34 Cf. Ready 2007:13-41. For details on despoiling as an established system of exchange between enemies, see above in this chapter.
35 Also see Reinhardt 1961:337.
36 Also see Il. 17.191, 198-199, 202-203, 207-208, where both the narrator and Zeus continue to refer to the arms as a possession of Achilles, even after Hector has taken them from Patroclus.
37 Allan (2005:8-9) also remarks that Hector does not receive the arms from the rightful owner. He does not, however, consider Hector’s problematic acquisition in relation to the principles of the loan-system. The arms’ exchange, as a loan, results in Patroclus’ limited authority over them and his inability to transfer them to other people. For Achilles expecting his arms back and retaining their ownership for as long as Patroclus uses them, see Chapter Five.
Vanquishing an opponent is the crucial condition that entitles a warrior to despoil his rival. Hector might have defeated a brave enemy, yet he despoiled a far more powerful one. Either he achieved less than what he is rewarded for or he is overcompensated for what he achieved. The unconventional elements of Hector’s despoilment of Patroclus signify a crisis of exchange: the Trojan hero obtains the material objects, the arms, but not the symbolic value he claims from them, which would derive only from the defeat of Achilles. Since objects of exchange symbolise social relations and hierarchies, Hector’s acquisition creates a breakdown in the symbolic logic of exchange itself. His military accomplishment entitles him to a superior position in a hierarchy between him and Patroclus, but his spoils falsely enter him into a hierarchy with Achilles, without having measured up against him in action.

The unorthodox manner in which Hector obtains the arms from Patroclus and the peculiar manner of the previous transfer of the arms, as a loan from Achilles to Patroclus, undermine the legitimacy of Hector’s acquisition. Indeed, Heath notes that the arms are “never called Hector’s.” As was remarked in the previous chapter regarding the excessive use of the borrowed weapons by Patroclus, exchange mechanisms in Homeric society operate under rigid principles and are resistant to and unforgiving of transgression. Divergence from their rules devalues the attempted exchanges and disrupts the transition of ownership along with the object transferred each time. The

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38 For the false victory claim implied in Hector’s acquisition of the arms, also see Allan 2005:9.
40 For example, Patroclus used Achilles’ panoply beyond the point determined by the loan-agreement and thus neglected the conventions of the loan-system, which permits him to use the borrowed object only temporarily and for a particular purpose. His incomplete authority over the armour he borrowed obliges him to return it to the lender, after the fulfilment of the purpose that necessitated its loan and forbids him from exchanging it further. On the other hand, when Agamemnon confiscated Briseis from Achilles in Bk 1, he disregarded the conventions of the distribution mechanism according to which she was legitimately
unconventional elements of the process by which Achilles’ arms end up in Hector’s hands inhibit the validity of the despoiling exchange-mechanism and prevent the Trojan hero from becoming the new owner of the arms.

Hector took Achilles’ arms, yet his acquisition is not accompanied by proprietary authority. He could assert his ownership over them retrospectively by exercising known rights of an owner over his possessions. Putting them to the proper use in the battlefield portrays Hector immediately exploiting their inherent use value as well as their symbolic value. The spoils’ symbolic merit emerges and increases from both their public display and subsequent exchange. Besides displaying the arms on the battlefield, Hector also attempts to take advantage of their exchange value. In his words of encouragement to the allies, he promises half of his own spoils to anyone who drags Patroclus’ corpse to the Trojan side.

“ὅς δὲ καὶ Πατροκλον καὶ τεθηνῶτά περ ἐμὴς
Τρώας ἐστὶ ποιοδόμους ἐρύσῃ, εἴῃ δὲ οἱ Αἴας,
ἡμιοῦ τῷ ἐνάρων ἀποδάσσομαι, ἡμιοῦ δὲ αὐτὸς
ἐξω ἐγώ· τὸ δὲ οἱ κλέος ἐσσεται δόσον ἐμοὶ περ.  (II. 17.229-232)41

“That man of you who drags Patroclus, dead as he is, back among Trojans, breakers of horses, and Ajax gives way before him, I will give him half the spoils for his portion, and keep half for myself, and his glory shall be as great as mine is.”

Although he says that he would share both his personal spoils and his glory with the individual who would successfully complete the proposed task, Hector would be the ultimate winner from such a transaction. Positioning himself as the rightful distributor of the weapons, he not only affirms his entitlement to transfer them, but also lays claim to the superior status and power that an act of public distribution bestows on Homeric

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awarded to Achilles as his geras. Agamemnon’s transgression results in his lack of ownership rights over the captive woman.

41 Cf. II. 18.91-93.
heroes. While donning the arms he stripped from dead Patroclus, Hector demonstrates use rights, display rights, and exchange rights over what essentially still belongs to Achilles. His multileveled initiative exhibits an absolute appropriation of both the material and symbolic aspects of the arms in the eyes of the heroes who surround him on the field of battle.

Hector’s treatment of the arms seals his current possession of them in public and veils the memory of Achilles’ present connection to them. This overwhelming assertion of authority over the arms that seemingly legitimates their acquisition by the Trojan hero also suggests Achilles’ defeat by him thus reconfirming Hector’s heroic identity at the expense of Achilles. The decision of the Trojan prince to use the latter’s arms then has implications for the heroic status of both warriors. It becomes his more convincing argument that he is capable of defeating Achilles himself, which is intended to inspire courage to his friends and cause hesitancy to the enemies. In this sense, Hector’s seizure of the arms that Patroclus wears becomes an act of “aspirational” despoiling; that is, despoiling not as an accurate measure of past or present victories, but as a key heralding to future victories.

Hector’s attempt to establish his ownership over the arms is systematically challenged in the Iliad. As commentators have remarked, the description of Hector

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43 Hector’s alleged ownership over the arms is also confirmed by his thoughts and words before his duel with Achilles. Even when he contemplates taking them off in order to supplicate Achilles, promising the return of Helen and her possessions along with more Trojan gifts, he does not mention a possible return of the weapons to their proper owner. He concludes that he should not strip himself from his armour, because Achilles would kill him “naked” (II. 22.111-125). In addition, when he finally faces the Myrmidon, he tries to strike an agreement between them, proposing that whoever of the two kills his opponent should strip the armour from the corpse, but give the body to the companions of the fallen hero for burial (II. 22.256-259).

44 Whether he believes it or not, Hector expresses the idea that he may be capable to kill Achilles himself several times after he kills Patroclus (II. 16.860-861, 22.129-130, 250-259).
wearing Achilles’ panoply is not like other arming scenes in the poem. The narrator does not describe him putting on the arms piece by piece. On the contrary, the actual arming scene consists of only a general comment that Hector dons Achilles’ immortal arms (Il. 17.194). The brief reference to Hector arming himself is expanded by information on the quality and the origin of the arms.

στάς δ’ ἀπάνευθε μάχης πολυδακρύον ἐντε’ ἀμείβεν· ὦτοι δὲ μὲν τὰ δὲ δῶθη φέρειν προτὶ Ἰλιον ἱρὴν Τροσὶ φιλοπολέμοιοιν, δ’ ἀμβροτα τεῦχεα δῦνε Πηλείδως Ἀχιλής, ὁ θεὸς Οὐρανίωνες πατρί φίλῳ ἔτορον· δ’ ἄρα ὡδ παιδὶ ὀπάσει γνηρᾶς. (Il. 17.192-197)

He stood apart from the sorrowful fighting, and changed his armour, and gave what he had worn to the fighting Trojans to carry to sacred Ilion, and himself put on that armour immortal of Peleid Achilles, which the Uranian gods had given to his loved father; and he in turn grown old had given it to his son;

This is the first time in the Iliad that the audience hears that these arms are immortal and were initially offered as a gift of the gods to Peleus. Peleus, in turn, when he grew old, passed them to his son. The special quality of the arms associated with Achilles’ own semi-divine lineage and their transference to him in the form of inheritance underscore their inalienable connection to the hero. Before this flashback, the audience knew only of the two transfers of the arms from Achilles to Patroclus (Il. 16.129-138) and from Patroclus, after his death, to Hector (Il. 17.122, 125, 130-131, and 188-211), which take place during the present time of the Iliad. It is notable that the narrator explains their inalienable attributes in relation to Achilles only at a point when they have slipped into the wrong hands.

45 For this remark and for more details on the structure of typical arming scenes in the Iliad, such as Paris’ (Il. 3.330-338), Agamemnon’s (Il. 11.15-46), Patroclus’ (Il. 16.130-154), and Achilles’ (Il. 19.356-424), see Edwards 1991:13-14, 80.
46 Also see Il. 17.199, 202, 208, 214. The full story of the arms’ origin as the gods’ wedding gift to Peleus is told later in the poem by Achilles himself, when he tells his mother that Hector killed Patroclus and took the arms (Il. 18.82-85).
As discussed in the previous chapter, information on the origin of the arms was omitted when Patroclus wore them (Il. 16.130-144). Details were given only on the background of Achilles’ ash spear, which was the only piece that Patroclus did not take with him. The fact that the divine origin of the rest of the arms was withheld in Patroclus’ arming scene, combined with the fact that Achilles himself lent them to his friend, made Patroclus a legitimate temporary carrier of them. This legitimacy, however, was contingent on very strict rules, stipulating their prompt return to the owner after the defence of the Achaean ships. Patroclus’ transgression of the rules terminated his legitimate and hence safe use of the arms and revealed the weakness of his own nature. As a mortal, he was not qualified to use divine arms according to his own will. Attempting it, he was punished with the loss of both the arms and his life.

Unlike Patroclus, Hector does not obtain the arms from their rightful owner. In addition, the story of the origin of the arms unfolds at the same time as he is putting them on. Suppression of the past history of the arms enabled Patroclus to wear them and use them under Achilles’ instructions. Revelation of their divine origin and familial connection to Achilles during Hector’s arming scene, on the other hand, marks the hero’s ineligibility to put them on. He lacks a relationship with the divine and therefore he is as inadequate as Patroclus to assume the initiative in handling immoral arms. Yet, he is not aware of it. Because he acquired them improperly, he is not even permitted a limited use of them with impunity. The inalienable bond of the arms to Achilles, manifested by their divine origin and parental bequest to him, unbalances Hector’s exchange. Moreover,

47 Heath 1992:387-400. For a discussion and bibliography on humans being insufficient to handle divine gifts, see Chapter Two.
48 In Il. 18.254-283, Poullydamas advises Hector and the Trojans to withdraw in the city walls, because Achilles will join the war again. This instruction, however, occurs long after Hector wears Achilles’ arms and it is not associated with them.
it brings out additional issues associated with their previous transfer to Patroclus that further complicate Hector’s current possession of them. Hector follows the rules of despoiling, but the problem is that these are not just regular arms and they are not Patroclus’ arms. Part of Hector’s mistake is to be negligent of the true nature of the arms he has confiscated; that is in turn explained by the mismatch between the arms and their previous bearer. The other part of his mistake is to take them from the one who wears them and not from the one who owns them. In the end, Hector is entangled in a paradox, where it might be less that he has won the arms in the wrong way than that he has won the wrong arms of the wrong person in the right way. If so, there is something tragic (in the Greek sense) in his error, a kind of *hamartia*.

Zeus, as an authoritative speaker, recapitulates Hector’s erroneous treatment of the arms and confirms the hero’s illegitimate acquisition of them that the narrator indicated in a more implicit manner. He emphasises that the arms are immortal, that they belong to the formidable Achilles, and that Hector obtained them improperly (οὐ κατὰ κόσμον) by killing and stripping Patroclus.⁴⁹

> “ἄ δείλ’ οὐδὲ τί τοι θάνατος καταβύσιν έστιν
d' ἂν τοι σχεδόν εἶσιν: οὔ δ' ἀμβροτα τεύχεα δύνεις
ἀνδρός ἄριστος, τὸν τε προκέουσι καὶ ἄλλοις
τοῦ δὴ έταιρόν έπεφυς ἐνήεν τε κρατερόν τε,
tεύχεα δ’ οὐ κατὰ κόσμον ἀπὸ κρατός τε καὶ ὀψιῶν
eἰλευ: ἀτάρ τοι νῦν γε μέγα κράτος ἐγγυαλίζω,
tῶν ποιήν δ’ τοι ὃ τοι μάχης ἐκ νοστήσαντι
δέξεται ἀνδρομάχη κλυτα τεύχεα Πηλείωνος.” (II. 17.201-208)

> “Ah, poor wretch!
There is no thought of death in your mind now, and yet death stands close beside you as you put on the immortal armour of a surpassing man. There are others who tremble before him.
Now you have killed this man’s dear friend, who was strong and gentle, and taken the armour, as you should not have done, from his shoulders.

⁴⁹ Allan (2005:7-9 and nn.30, 31) also remarks that the phrase οὐ κατὰ κόσμον shows that Zeus notes that Hector does not receive the arms from Achilles, who is their owner, but from Patroclus. Allan maintains that Zeus’ words criticize Hector for appropriating a symbol of a false victory over the real owner of the arms.
and head. Still for the present I will invest you with great strength
to make up for it that you will not come home out of the fighting,
nor Andromache take from your hands the glorious arms of Achilles.”

From the moment that Hector wears Achilles’ arms, he exceeds the limitations of his human nature and violates the principles of exchange mechanisms that operate in the *Iliad* ---not so much the general principles that regulate despoiling an enemy in battle, but the more specific principles that relate to inalienable objects of exchange and interconnected exchanges. Zeus will see that the Trojan warrior pays the penalty for his erroneous exchange.  

In fact, Zeus is deeply involved in the circulation of the arms. As was argued in the previous chapter, his promise to Thetis to assist the Trojans and his implication in putting a stop to Patroclus’ excessive use of the arms result in granting victory to Hector and enabling him to take hold of Achilles’ panoply. But Patroclus’ own flawed exchange of his friend’s inalienable possession distorts its consequent transference and affects whoever obtains it from him. Accordingly, Hector’s acquisition of the arms from Patroclus predisposes him to a problematic exchange and its consequences. Already in the scene of Patroclus’ disarming by Apollo, Zeus made Hector part of a bad omen by granting him the, now defiled, helmet of Achilles, and the narrator commented that the hero’s death was approaching (*Il*. 16.799-800). Hector’s later systematic attempt to overstate his possession and ownership of Achilles’ arms emphasises his own responsibility for conducting a transgressive exchange and harmonises his behaviour with the plan of Zeus regarding his death.

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50 Redfield (1994:126-129, 142,145-150, 155, 158) agrees that Hector is responsible for his destruction, but presents a different concept of the hero’s error. He does not trace Hector’s error to his choices that transgress special principles of exchange in the *Iliad*, but to his choice to isolate himself from his community.
Hector’s initiative to assert his ownership over Achilles’ panoply becomes, indeed, especially ominous for himself. Appropriation of the arms condemns him to appropriation of the fate of Achilles, which is attached to them.\(^51\) Moments after he puts the arms on, the narrator talks very explicitly about Achilles’ premature death.

\[\text{άλλης υἱὸς ἐν ἔντεσαι πατρὸς ἐγήρᾳ. (II. 17.197)}\]

but a son who never grew old in his father’s armour.

As was discussed in the third chapter, the history of the arms, as a wedding gift to Peleus for his marriage with Thetis, promotes an integral connection between them and Achilles’ birth and destiny.\(^52\) The fate of early death, which Hector unwittingly imposes on himself, is reflected in Zeus’ words that Hector will not return home and Andromache will not receive from him the arms of Achilles (\textit{II.} 17.207-208).\(^53\) The fact that Zeus nods and fits the arms to the body of the Trojan warrior seals for Hector this short-living fate in which he “dressed” himself (\textit{II.} 17.209-210).\(^54\) Just like Achilles, he is not destined to grow old, after he improperly takes and wears the arms of Peleus.

The ominous connotations of Hector appropriating the immortal arms also extend to his family. Chapter Three indicated that the arms, as a gift for the wedding of Achilles’

\(^{51}\) If Aristarchus’ suggestion in \textit{II.} 17.214 is right, then the idea of Hector “resembling” Achilles, as he shone in Achilles’ battle gear, would intensify the similarity in their fates.

\(^{52}\) Cf. \textit{II.} 18.84-90. For Achilles’ fate and forthcoming death, see Burgess 2009:43-55.

\(^{53}\) Early death seems to be an intrinsic feature of the Iliadic economy of war. Although young heroes are described as dying prematurely, their deaths appear to be “on schedule” in a way. But the glimpses of everyday life, provided by similes and vignettes, such as Simoeisius’ birth while his mother was visiting her parents on Mount Ida, create a contrast between peace and war and call the war-norm of dying young into question. In the meeting of Hector and Andromache in Bk 6, the couple talks about the former’s death and the latter’s future life in captivity. Nevertheless contrary to Achilles, Hector is never certain of his coming death, as Zeus notices in \textit{II.} 17.201-202. In his words to the dying Patroclus, Hector not only debates the issue of his death, but even speaks of the possibility of killing Achilles (\textit{II.} 16.859-861). He is, however, among the characters who are called “brief-lived” (μικρὴ ζῶσα), just like Achilles. Cf. \textit{II.} 1.352, 15.612-613, 21.84. For Homer’s attitude toward death and the death and birth of Simoeisius, see Schein 1984:72-76. For the frailty of human life and the “brief-lived” characters in the \textit{Iliad,} see Burgess 2009:54.

\(^{54}\) For the idea that all the three warriors (Achilles, Patroclus, and Hector), who put on the divine arms, share an untimely death and a subsequent loss of nostos, see Wilson 1974:385-386; Edwards 1990:316; Heath 1992:388-393, 398-400; Wilson 2002:114.
parents, marked the beginning as well as the end of Peleus’ family. All three members of this family suffer from grief, seclusion, and solitude caused by the knowledge or the anticipation of Achilles’ unfulfilled nostos.55 But none of them is able to comfort one another. Peleus grieves alone and helpless in Phthia. Even Achilles and Thetis, who meet and mourn together in the field of Troy, suffer individually.56 Their grief originates from different causes; Achilles mourns for his dead friend and his father, while Thetis prematurely laments for her child.57 The result of their exceptional communication is that Thetis mourns for her son’s death during his lifetime and in his presence, while Achilles, though unable to help her, becomes the witness of his mother’s lamentation for himself. Taking the divine arms from dead Patroclus, Hector unconsciously allots to himself the dowry of Thetis and involves his own family in a chain of troubles comparable, yet not identical, with those of the unhappy marriage sealed by this gift. His acquisition will cost him his nostos and will end his marriage to Andromache, leaving her and his son in desertion and grief.58 He will only return to Troy dead and only after Achilles will have taken back from him the arms of Peleus.59 The benefit that he derives from his contact

55 Heath 1992:389-395, 399. For Thetis deserting Peleus and constantly grieving, knowing that her son will never go back home, see II. 18.35-37, 65-69; 18.53, 88, 430; 18.59-60 = 18.440-441. For Peleus growing old in his halls alone and waiting in sorrow to hear about his son’s death, see II. 18.434-435; 19.323-324, 334-337, 24.538-541; also see Od. 11.494-503. For Achilles feeling deserted after the death of Patroclus and grieving for both his friend and his father, while knowing that he will never return home, see II. 18.22-35, 80-82, 316-323, 19.304, 307, 312-314, 366-367, 24.507, 511-512; 18.89-90, 101, 330-332.

56 For Thetis’ inability to console Achilles in his grief, see Schein 1984:92-93.

57 See Kakrides 1949:65-75. The “funeral” scene in II. 18.35-77 has furnished extensive discussions in scholarship. For a list of bibliography, see Burgess 2009:83, 151 n.31. For more details on how the Iliad alludes to the death of Achilles, see Burgess 2001:74-75, 81, 2009:83-87, 90-92, 151-152.


59 Kakrides (1966:21-23), comparing Sappho fr. 44 on the wedding of Hector and Andromache and II. 24.228-237 on the ransom that Priam offers to Achilles in return for Hector’s body, concludes that part of the ransom consists of Andromache’s dowry for her wedding with Hector. This argument creates an interesting juxtaposition: Hector killing Patroclus appropriated Thetis’ dowry, while Achilles killing Hector appropriated Andromache’s dowry. The fact that these two dowries were circulated to other people outside the respective families, as war spoils and ransom accordingly, signifies the disintegration of each marriage and its ensuing abandonment of the one spouse by the other. In addition, Andromache’s headband, also a wedding gift from Aphrodite, falls from her hair, when she sees Hector killed in front of Troy’s walls (II.
with the arms is a glorious death at the hands of their rightful owner and, similarly to Achilles, the privilege to hear his parents mourning for him from the city wall, while he is still alive, but unable to help them.\footnote{Cf. \textit{Il.} 22.33-91. Andromache and her handmaidens also mourned Hector in \textit{Il.} 6.495-502, long before he acquired the armour. At that point, however, Hector had already left his halls and did not witness their lamentation for him.}

Besides his fateful connection with Achilles’ destiny and his family history, Hector’s treatment of the divine panoply subjects him to familiar negative associations of standard Iliadic warfare. More specifically in order to wear Achilles’ arms, Hector takes off his own weapons, and gives them to his companions to take them to the city.

\begin{quote}
\begin{center}
\textit{
στάς δ’ ἀπάνευθε μάχης πολυδακρώς έντε’ ἀμείβεν:
ήτοι δ’ μὲν τὰ ἀ δώκε φέρειν προτ’ ἰλιον ἤρην
Τροισὶ φιλοπολέμουσιν, δ’ ἀμβροτα τέφεα δόνε
Πηλείδεω Ἀχιλῆος… (\textit{Il.}17.192-195)
}
\end{center}
\end{quote}

He stood apart from the sorrowful fighting, and changed his armour, and gave what he had worn to the fighting Trojans to carry to sacred Ilion, and himself put on that armour immortal of Peleid Achilles…

Normally warriors do not take off armour on the battlefield. Disarming is the norm for defeated warriors who are alive, but are begging for their life.\footnote{The encounter of Glaucus and Diomedes might, at first glance, seem like an exception to this rule. Although they do not fight, they exchange armour on the battlefield (\textit{Il.} 6.232-236). Their exchange, however, is “unequal.” Diomedes taking Glaucus’ armour, which is far better than his own, implies that, despite the fact that the actual duel was avoided, Diomedes defeated and stripped Glaucus. For this idea and for an analysis of the exchange between Glaucus and Diomedes, see Calder 1984:31-35; Donlan 1989:1-15, who employs the term “unequal” to describe the exchange between the two heroes.} It also occurs normally for the dead, when they are despoiled. Hector’s disarming on the battlefield thus puts him in the role of the defeated warrior.\footnote{Hector is fully aware of the connotations of disarming on the battlefield, but chooses to neglect them at the moment. His current image of removing his weapons ironically looks forward to \textit{Il.} 22.99-130 when, chased by Achilles in the Trojan plain, he ponders disarming himself and proposing his opponent the return of Helen and her possessions along with half of the wealth of Troy. In that scene, the anticipation of his defeat by Achilles makes him to consider taking off his armour, in order to plead for his life. As Richardson (1993:119) points out, Hector’s hypothetical supplication is reminiscent of Lycaon’s actual, but unsuccessful, supplication of Achilles in \textit{Il.} 21.34-135.} Furthermore, the fact that his companions carry his...
own arms to the city foreshadows that he will soon be carried to Troy dead. Hector’s decision to wear Achilles’ arms visually demonstrates his defeat in them, before he even has a chance to fight with them.

In sum, when Hector kills Patroclus and seizes the arms of Achilles from the dead body, he disturbs the exchange equilibrium of the Iliad. The narrator and Zeus at once intervene to invalidate Hector’s transaction by noting its underlying irregularities. Zeus, in particular, also proceeds to reverse the crisis that the hero created in the framework of Iliadic exchange. Being among the Olympians who enforced the terms of the loan-agreement of the arms to Patroclus, the king of the gods continues to watch over the next stage of the circulation of the arms, following the death of Achilles’ friend. His preconceived plan for the death of Hector overlaps with Hector’s punishment for transgressing the principles that stipulate acquisition of someone’s arms on the battlefield, after the defeat of their owner. It appears as though Zeus upholds the overarching exchange system of the poem, as one of the mechanisms of cosmic order. The flawed premises of Hector’s acquisition and treatment of Achilles’ arms cause a breakdown in the symbolic logic of his exchange and alter its impact. Spoils normally signify gain, victory, and superiority for the one who takes them. The spoils that Hector takes from Patroclus, however, prefigure his forthcoming loss of them, as well as his defeat and inferiority to Achilles. Ironically then, the symbolic impact of Hector’ despoiling Patroclus coincides with his own future despoilment by Achilles. His notional and actual despoilment soon to follow is the result of the synergy between the narrator, Zeus, and the internal exchange system of the poem. They all become co-operative forces
that drive the plot in the same direction. That is, towards a restoration of the symbolic norms of exchange in the *Iliad*.

**The Arms and the Spoils of Achilles**

In Book 19, Thetis presents her son with a new set of armour from Hephaestus. Commentators point out that the description of Achilles donning his armour is the most elaborate arming scene in the poem.\(^{63}\) Compared to all other Iliadic accounts of individuals putting on their armour, this particular scene shares the most lines with the description of Patroclus’ arming.\(^{64}\) Such dictional similarity underscores the special connection between the two warriors on the basis of their close friendship and the immortal sets of armour that they both wear.\(^{65}\) Despite the similarities between the two arming scenes, Achilles’ second immortal panoply is projected as exceptionally splendid, because: 1) it is Achilles himself who dons it, 2) the precious metals from which it is

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\(^{63}\) Edwards (1991:276-285) offers a detailed analysis of Achilles’ arming scene. He remarks that it presents certain elements, included in all major arming scenes in the *Iliad*, but is more expanded than the rest of them. He notes in particular the unique introduction of “Achilles’ raging desire for war” (II. 19.365-368), the extensive simile on the shield (II. 19.373-380), the comment on Hephaestus’ craftsmanship of the helmet (II. 19.380-383), the history of Peleus’ spear (II. 19.387-391), and the remark on the good fit and the elevating impact of the armour (II. 19.384-6). According to him, the preparation of the chariot and the dialogue with the horse Xanthos (II. 19.392-424) should also be considered among the features that expand the description of Achilles’ arming himself.

\(^{64}\) Certain differences between these two arming scenes mainly involve expansions on particular weapons and not on the general description of the two individuals wearing them. Patroclus’ arming scene differs from that of Achilles in that it includes: 1) a brief expansion on the elaborate corselet, reminding us that it belongs to Achilles, 2) an additional mortal horse and a digression on its origin, 3) Patroclus’ own two spears. Yet, Peleus’ spear is also discussed in the same way as in the account of Achilles’ arming himself, but the difference is that Patroclus left that spear behind, while Achilles took it to battle. Achilles’ arming scene, on the other hand, differs from that of Patroclus in that it includes: 1) an expansion on the shield, 2) a different description of the helmet, regarding Hephaestus’ workmanship, 3) an expansion on the immortal horses. But the most distinct difference is the description of Achilles’ psychological state when he wears the arms, something that is absent from Patroclus’ arming scene.

\(^{65}\) Hephaestus is also supposed to have forged the first set of Achilles’ armour. See Edwards 1991:140-141, 156. According to the *Cypria* fr. 3 (Bernabé), Hephaestus also assembled the ash spear that Cheiron gave to Peleus. Chapter Four, however, suggested that, aside from Hephaestus’ contribution in the spear’s assemblage, the centaur himself was responsible at large for the craftsmanship of this particular weapon.
made supply it with a special shine,\textsuperscript{66} 3) the forging of its shield is extensively described in an extraordinary \textit{ekphrasis},\textsuperscript{67} and 4) it also includes the famous spear of Peleus.

The lines that refer to the quality of the spear, the unique ability of Achilles to wield it, and the spear’s origin are identical in both arming scenes of Patroclus and Achilles:

\begin{quote}
\textldots βριθθι µέγα στιβαρόν· τὸ µὲν οὐ δύνατ’ ἄλλος Ἀχαῖων πάλλειν, ἀλλὰ µίν οἶος ἐπίστατο πῆλαι Ἀχιλλεύς:
Πηλίαδα µελίνην, τὴν πατρὶ φίλῳ πόρε Χείρων
Πηλίου ἐκ κορυφῆς φόνων ἐμμεναι ἓρωσιν· \textit{(II. 19.388-391 = 16.141-144)}
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
...huge, heavy, thick, which no one else of all the Achaeans could handle, but Achilles alone knew how to wield it, the Pelian ash spear which Cheiron had brought to his father from high on Pelion, to be death for fighters in battle.
\end{quote}

The common description of the spear in these two scenes is not simply a matter of typology, attributed to the oral nature of the poem’s composition.\textsuperscript{68} Instead, it emphasises that this weapon with which Achilles now arms himself (ἐκ δ’ ἀρα σύριγγος πατρώιον ἑσπάσατ’ ἕγχος; “next he pulled out from its standing place the spear of his father,” \textit{II. 19.387}) is the same one that Patroclus, unable to handle, left behind (ἕγχος δ’ οὐχ ἔλετ’ οίου ἄμυμονος Αἰακίδαο; “only he did not take the spear of blameless Aiakides,” \textit{II. 16.140}). The use of the same diction then creates a sharp contrast with the difference in military skill and equipment between the two friends. It is significant that the main offensive weapon, which completes Achilles’ new panoply, is part of his old set of armour, now lost to Hector. The fact that this spear is now available to Achilles reminds the audience that this weapon is currently missing from Hector’s equipment.

\textsuperscript{67} \textit{II. 18.478-608.}
It was previously mentioned that the arming scene of Hector was brief and focused more on the origin of the arms than on the hero putting them on piece by piece. The absence of a typical arming scene, where a warrior is described donning his weapons step by step, covers the lack of a spear in the armour that Hector took from Patroclus. Patroclus’ own spear was broken into pieces by Apollo (Il. 16.801-2). That would leave Hector in need of a spear, when he wore Achilles’ arms. Although it is not explicitly stated in the Iliad, Hector would have to complete the immortal set of armour with a mortal spear, as Patroclus did.\(^{69}\) After he has changed into the immortal panoply, Hector is actually described wielding a spear, but the references to it are casual and do not point to a distinction from the rest of his arms.\(^{70}\) The absence of details on the origin of Hector’s spear temporarily conceals the weakness of his arming equipment in comparison to that of Achilles. This weakness will be highlighted during the individual encounter of the two heroes later. Nevertheless, Peleus’ ash spear in the hand of Achilles (Il. 19.387-391) forebodes Hector’s deficiency and offers a proleptic glimpse of what will follow.

As was noted earlier in this chapter, Hector taking Achilles’ arms from Patroclus on the battlefield would be figuratively equal to defeating and despoiling Achilles. But Hector has not completed the despoiling of Achilles, because he lacks Peleus’ spear. Even though he uses the arms, Hector does not sufficiently assert his ownership over them. Simply put, he does not have the complete set at his disposal. Achilles, on the other

\(^{69}\) In his arming scene, Patroclus is said to have taken two spears in the place of Peleus’ spear that he is unable to wield. In his duel with Hector, however, he appears to have only one spear, which Apollo shatters. As the scholia (ad loc.) and Richardson (1993:135) remark, Hector is usually fighting with two spears (e.g. Il. 5.495, 6.104, 11.212, 12.464-465), but in his duel with Achilles he only has one. When he hurls it against Achilles, he does not have a spare one to use. Richardson adds that in the formal duels of Bks 3 and 7 each warrior carries a single spear.

\(^{70}\) For instance, he is reported to fight with a spear against Automedon (Il. 17.525-529) and Idomeneus (Il. 17.608-609), and to kill Coiranus, the charioteer of Meriones (Il. 17.610-619).
hand, has not completely lost his attachment and his ownership rights over his previous panoply. He still keeps and will soon use the main offensive weapon of his first set of armour. The spear given to his father “to be death of fighters” will soon fulfil its purpose in the only hands that can wield it. Hector will die from the weapon that is missing from the panoply he wears.

The attention drawn to the history of the spear and to Achilles keeping it in his possession foreshadows its prominent role in the fight between the two heroes. What is less expected, however, is the important, yet subtle, part that it plays in the deceit of Hector by Athena. The goddess in the form of Deiphobus encourages Hector to stand and fight his enemy:

"νῦν δ’ ἰδὼς μεμασώτε μαχώμεθα, μὴ δὲ τι δοὺρων ἔστω φειδωλή, ἵνα εἴδομεν εἰ κεν Ἀχιλλεὺς νὕτι κατακτείνας ἔναρα βροτόντα φέρηται νῆσα ἐπὶ γλαφυράς, ὃ κεν σῷ δουρὶ δαμήν.” (Il. 22.243-246)

“But now let us go straight on and fight hard, let there be no sparing of our spears, so that we can find out whether Achilles will kill us both and carry our bloody war spoils back to the hollow ships, or will himself go down under your spear.”

The narrator comments that she spoke in beguilement (Il. 22.247). Richardson notes that “here begins the first stage in the process of Hector’s fatal deception by Athene.” But what is the goddess’ deception at this early point? Scholars tend to focus on her transformation, misleading Hector to believe that he has his brother’s support to fight Achilles while in truth Deiphobus is inside the city and Hector is alone on the battlefield. Athena as Deiphobus, however, does not exactly promise to fight at the side of Hector. She simply says that Achilles could kill both brothers or himself could be killed by Hector’s spear. Hence, Deiphobus would share the distress of a possible defeat and

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71 See Richardson 1993:130. The second and final stage of Athena’s deception will be during the actual encounter of Hector and Achilles, where the goddess actively helps the latter.
subsequent death, but would not participate in the fight and weaken a possible victory. Therefore, her encouragement for “no sparing of spears” applies only to the two main competitors, Achilles and Hector. Hector, however, in need of help at the time, would be inclined to believe that his brother would offer him active assistance in the combat. But Athena’s ultimate deceit against Hector is her advice to face Achilles with his own spear (II. 22.243-244 and 246). She sets Hector up to fight with his mortal spear against Achilles’ immortal one. Contrary to her words to the Trojan hero, such a combat will have a certain outcome. Hector does not have any chance to prove victorious against Achilles wielding Peleus’ lethal spear.

During the duel between Hector and Achilles, Achilles hurls his spear, but Hector avoids it (II. 22.273-276). What follows is the second part of Athena’s deceit. The spear sticks in the ground and Athena, unseen by the Trojan prince, returns it to Achilles. On the other hand, Hector’s spear rebounds on Achilles’ shield. When he calls on his brother, asking him for another spear, he realises that Deiphobus has disappeared and that Athena has deceived him.

Before the decisive moment of the duel, the narrator describes briefly both rivals. In particular, he remarks on Achilles’ war fury and the splendour of the armour he wears (II. 22.312-321). There is a striking similarity to his preceding arming scene, where the hero was portrayed as raging for war, while he was putting on his arms (II. 19.365-391).

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72 When he was being pursued by Achilles earlier, Hector unsuccessfully tried to approach Troy’s towers, in the hope that his friends would defend him by throwing missiles from the walls (II. 22.194-198). Under the pressure of the current situation, Hector expects from Deiphobus the aid that he sought before, but failed to receive from the Trojans in the city. This will become very clear during the duel with Achilles, when Hector looks for active help from his brother.


74 Before Achilles’ second attack against Hector and the latter’s wounding, the narrator describes the image of the arms on Achilles, except for the corselet and the greaves.
This quasi-arming scene of Achilles on the battlefield recalls the divine quality of his arms, but more importantly it pays special attention to his spear.\footnote{75} An elaborate simile visualises the overwhelming image of the spear whose shine is likened to the Hesper:\footnote{76}

\begin{center}
οίος δ’ ἀστήρ εἶς μετ’ ἀστράσι υπερτός ἀμολγῷ ἐσπερος, ὃς κάλλιστος ἐν ōυρανῷ ἱσταται ἀστήρ, ὣς αἰχμής ἀπελαμμ’ εὐήκεος, ἤν ἁρ’ Ἀχιλλεὺς πάλλειν δεξιτερή φρονέων κακῶν Ἔκτορι δίω... \textit{(II. 22.317-320)}
\end{center}

And as a star moves among stars in the night's darkening, Hesper, who is the fairest star who stands in the sky, such was the shining from the pointed spear Achilles was shaking in his right hand with evil intention toward brilliant Hector.

Considering that Hector’s armour is also immortal, the spear is what makes Achilles’ equipment exceptional. The fact that the narrator makes it a point to remind the audience of the formidable weapon that the Myrmidon carries with him, emphasises its absence from the panoply of the Trojan hero and indicates the inferiority of Hector’s armour in relation to Achilles’.

In contrast, Hector’s description during the duel is not an account of his image in his armour. Instead, it consists of Achilles’ impression of Hector, as the former scans his opponent’s body, pondering where to strike him:

\begin{center}
τοῦ δὲ καὶ ἀλλο τόσον μὲν ἔχε χρόα χάλκεα τεῦχεα, καλά, τὰ Πατρόκλοιο βιῆν ενάριει κατακτάς... \textit{(II. 22.322-323)}
\end{center}

but all the rest of the skin was held in the armour, brazen and splendid, he stripped when he cut down the strength of Patroclus;

This sight of Hector in the arms he took from Patroclus reminds Achilles the death of his friend. Interestingly, the portrayal of Hector rendered from Achilles’ viewpoint coincides...
with the image that the Trojan hero wanted the public to have of himself. In an attempt to prove his merit as warrior, he said to his friends earlier:

“…διφρ’ ἀν ἐγὼν Ἀχιλής ἀμύσινος έντεα δῶ
καλά, τὰ Πατρόκλοι βίην ἐνάριξα κατακτάς.” (Il. 17.186-187)

“…while I am putting on the beautiful armour of blameless Achilles, which I stripped from Patroclus the strong when I killed him.”

The narrator’s description of Hector at this point of the duel not only reflects how he is perceived by both himself and Achilles, but it also delineates the cause that drove the Iliadic plot to the close combat between the two heroes. It alludes to the erroneous exchange that Hector conducted on the battlefield, when he killed and despoiled Patroclus. In this manner, it offers a more complex explanation of what it is to follow, besides Achilles’ obvious desire for revenge. Moreover, the description of Hector wearing the arms that he took from Patroclus is an accurate account of him at present. The Trojan warrior has just lost his own mortal spear and thus he only carries the arms that he took from Achilles’ friend. Patroclus’ own spear was shattered by Apollo, and Hector presumably seized the rest of his arms. The immortal spear of Peleus that Patroclus, and subsequently Hector, did not take has been described a few lines above shining like a star in Achilles’ right hand. Therefore, the portrayal of Hector before his death harmonises the individual perspectives of the characters with the internal socio-economic system of the poem and crucial elements of the plot.

The fact that Achilles is currently armed with his father’s ash spear emphasises its exceptional attachment to him. This weapon cannot be transferred to or appropriated by anyone else, as it has its own protective mechanism against unrightful circulation. It is accompanied by a skill, which cannot be transferred. The spear cannot be wielded by anyone else but Achilles. Furthermore, even when it misses its target and leaves Achilles’
hand, it is divinely restored to him. It is the most Achillean of all Achilles’ arms, and it completes any panoply that the hero wears. There are two sets of immortal armour, but only one immortal spear. Still owned and used by Achilles, it is his connection to his first set of armour, and his means to restore it. Hector receives his fatal stroke by this spear, which originally constituted a part of the armour he now wears (II. 22.326-330). When he kills Hector, Achilles recovers his first set of armour by stripping it from Hector’s body.

\[ν\] \(\text{":}\) \(\text{"πανοπλίαν τείχες ἔσυλα σιματόευτε:} \) (II. 22.367-369)

He spoke, and pulled the brazen spear from the body, and laid it on one side, and stripped away from the shoulders the bloody armour.

The repeated dragging of Hector’s corpse around the Trojan field that follows his death suggests that Achilles’ furious desire for revenge is not satisfied.\(^{77}\) But if Achilles does not derive satisfaction from his deed of vengeance and does not acquire spoils that belong to his opponent, what are the gains from killing and despoiling Troy’s bravest warrior?

At first glance, the defeat of Hector restores Achilles’ first set of armour to him and thus makes the hero the only person in the poem to repossess something, after it has been lost to him. But the gifts that Priam extends to Achilles in return for the corpse of his son also constitute a form of spoils, originating in his military achievement.\(^{78}\) Technically speaking, the release of Hector’s dead body to his family in exchange for gifts conforms to the past practice of ransoming captives to their families mentioned in

\(^{77}\) Also see Bowra 1930:20-22.

\(^{78}\) II. 24.228-237.
On the other hand, it is an exception in terms that it is the only case where gifts are offered for the recovery of a corpse. In addition, it is the only reported instance on which Achilles accepts a donation in the dramatic time of the poem. In fact, he rejects a proposal of material goods from Hector himself, when the Trojan prince, fatally wounded, pleads for the return of his body for a proper burial in Troy (II. 22.340-354).

The riches that the king of Troy in person offers to Achilles bear an association with Troy’s public wealth and have implications for the city’s vitality and existence as a socio-political entity. Their exceptional quantity and quality repeatedly emphasised by both the narrator and the two exchangers corresponds to the very high status of the dead warrior to be ransomed, his captor, as well as the donor of the gifts. Achilles has killed Hector who, according to the Trojans, was the sole protector and saviour of the city (II.

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79 Wilson (2002:31) notes that all material offers proposed by defeated warriors in exchange for their return to their families have been notably rejected by the captors in Iliadic present.

80 For an example in the Iliadic past, see, for instance, the “countless gifts” he received in order to release Andromache’s mother, captured at the sack of Thebe (II. 6.425-428). For previous unsuccessful attempts to offer gifts to Achilles, see Agamemnon’s proposed donation to the hero through the embassy in exchange for his return to the battlefield (II. 9.120, 135-140, 164, 261, 277-282, 301, 378, 515, 602, 679, 699). Half of Agamemnon’s promised gifts, however, would be spoils from Troy and this presupposes that Achilles would outlive the fall of the city. Moreover before the beginning of their duel, Achilles refused Hector’s request to take a mutual oath that the winner would strip the arms from the defeated warrior, but would return his corpse to his people (II. 22.250-267).

81 Wilson (2002:22-23, 28-29, 35, 121, 189 n.41; 191 nn.70, 75; 205 n.38) investigates the theme of ἀπόλοια offered by warrior-suppliants from the private property of their families. On p.121, she concludes that Hector’s offer for the release of his corpse to his family “conforms in form and vocabulary to offers of ἀπόλοια that warriors who have been defeated on the battlefield make.”

82 van Wees (1992:281-282) argues that personal wealth and resources are the foundation of royal power in Homeric society. Wilson (2002:129-130, 207 n.62) notes that Priam’s supplication of Achilles demonstrates the former as a king, a father, and an individual in an inferior position. Furthermore, if the Idaeus, who escorts the king to the Achaean camp, is the primary herald of Troy, Priam’s undertaking is charged with additional public authority. See Campbell 1982:274. Page (1955:70) disagrees that this Idaeus is the renowned Trojan herald.

83 Cf. II. 24.228-236, 276, 447, 502, 555-556, 579, 594, 685. Wilson (2002:127, 206 n.55) underscores the frequency of collective references to the gifts comprising Hector’s ransom, besides their itemized description. For the ransom of Hector, confirming “the greatness of Hector, the oikos of Priam, and Achilles,” see Donlan 1981:107-108. Also Brown (1998:171) points out that the gifts that Priam offers to Achilles attest to his “stature,” which qualifies him to face Achilles “on an equal footing, and contribute to the great moment of mutual admiration at II.24.629-32.”
The gifts that Priam consigns to the Achaean hero, in order to ransom the body of his son, earn Achilles direct access to the resources of the Trojan palace. Achilles is not destined to outlive Troy. But his victory over Hector figuratively compensates him for that. Although conducted at the micro-level of a fight between two warriors, Achilles’ military exploit has the large scale impact of a terminal, collective military triumph. Elimination of the city’s defence accompanied with acquisition of its royal treasure signals the outcome of the whole war, that is the sack and subsequent plundering of Troy. The image of Priam in all his royal authority and lustre, kneeling in front of the Myrmidon hero and supplicating him in the manner of a defeated warrior, symbolically attests to the defeat of the city.

Therefore, although the Achaeans will not take Troy during Achilles’ lifetime, the hero is granted material rewards and glory measuring up to such a triumph, while he is still alive. In this sense, Priam’s offer achieves the unachievable. It restores Achilles’

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84 Nagy (1999:145-146 and n.5) remarks the connection of Hector’s and his son’s names with the former’s quality as Troy’s protector. Hector’s name derives “from the verb ἐκhō in the sense of ‘protect,’” while Astyanax’s name derives from “the father’s function of protecting the ἀστύ ‘city.’” In addition, Hermes, visiting Priam in the form of Polyctor’s son, comments on the distinct bravery of Hector among the Trojans (II. 24.384-385, 390-394). Also see Sarpedon’s words about Hector’s alleged confidence that he can protect the city alone without help from other warriors and allies (Il. 5.473-474). For the death of Hector, signifying the destruction of Troy, see Schein 1984:24-25, 168-169, 176-177, 189-191. Also see Anderson 1997:27.

85 In fact, Hermes disguised as Polyctor’s son asks Priam whether he is trying to hide his most precious treasures among foreign men, in order to keep them safe (II. 24.381-382).

86 For ransoming captives, foreshadowing final defeat as a cause of financial bleeding that reduces the Trojan’s ability to keep their allies, see Brown 1998:168 n.28, 171. But as is seen in Il. 17.225-226, the responsibility for retaining allies is attached to the royal family of Troy. The financial decline of the royal household created by the extravagant ransom of Hector signifies a decline of its power and symbolizes the gradual fall of the city. Cf. Il. 18.288-292. For Hector’s killing prefiguring the fall of Troy, also see Redfield 1994:124-125. Wilson 2002:113-114 agrees that the Iliad foreshadows the sack of Troy, but she does not connect it with Hector’s death and Achilles’ gain from it.

87 Cf. Il. 24.477, 543-545, 633-634.


89 Trojan captive women are the only type of spoil from the real sack of Troy that is missing from Priam’s offer to Achilles at the end of the Iliad. This gap allows for the non-Homeric epic tradition to complete the
wounded honour, which the *Iliad* has carefully and persistently constructed as irrecoverable.\(^9^0\) This is why Zeus, through Thetis, instructs the hero to accept the king’s gifts in return for Hector’s corpse. Acceptance of them in Book 24 realises the great honour that Zeus promised Thetis to bestow on her son in Book 1.

It has been extensively discussed in scholarship that the *Iliad* alludes to Achilles’ death, although it does not describe it in its narrative boundaries.\(^9^1\) Similarly, it prefigures the destruction of Troy, which it does not include in its poetic action.\(^9^2\) The temporal precedence of Achilles’ death in a linear narrative of the myth of Troy realistically excludes the hero from reaching the end of the war. The symbolic allusiveness of the *Iliad*, however, reverses the temporal order of these two incidents and entitles Achilles (and with him its audience) to an early insight of the fall of Troy during his poetic lifetime. In the end, Achilles’ defeat of Hector does not supply him with the limited possessions that the fallen warrior had with him at the time of their duel, but instead gains him “countless” precious spoils from the royal treasury of the figuratively fallen city.

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\(^9^0\) Nagy (1999:82) points out that in *Il*. 2.3-5 the narrator identifies the restoration of Achilles’ honour with the plan of Zeus. Brown (1998:170) argues that Priam’s gifts do not resolve Achilles’ anger and social alienation, but they independently confirm the formal requirements of the honorific system of Homeric society. Wilson (2002:127, 129) remarks that Hector’s ransom reinstates Achilles to the honour-based system and through it to his society.


\(^9^2\) Zeus’s prophesy in *Il*. 15.49-77 goes as far in the future as the destruction of Troy, but suppresses the death of Achilles, which happens before that. Also see Nagy 1999:24; Wilson 2002:113-114.
Conclusion

In conclusion, the death of Hector ends the circulation of Achilles’ arms, for as long as he is alive. When Achilles dies in a post-Iliadic time, his arms will cause the famous dispute between Ajax and Odysseus and will be involved in a new circulation-process.\(^93\) In the *Iliad*, however, Achilles inherits his first set of arms from his father and lends them to Patroclus with the exception of his spear. The death of Patroclus illegitimately provides Hector with Achilles’ weapons. In an attempt to establish his ownership over them, the Trojan hero decides to put them to use. The public spectacle of Hector wearing Achilles’ arms cannot compensate for the improper exchange through which he obtained them. Hector’s attempt to validate his acquisition of the arms fails on three levels: 1) Hector is inadequate to assume immortal attributes, 2) he is figuratively defeated before he even uses the arms, and 3) he never possesses them completely. The arms belong to Achilles for as long as Hector has them at his disposal. Proof of Achilles’ continuing rights of ownership over the arms is his spear. It never leaves Achilles’ possession; it can only be used properly under Achilles’ authority. After the rest of the weapons are taken from him, it is the spear, which ultimately reunites him with them. It is this spear that kills Hector, restores the rest of the arms to where they legitimately belong, and entitles Achilles to an advanced share of the Trojan War spoils during his lifetime.

\(^{93}\) For the dispute between Ajax and Odysseus over the arms of Achilles after his death, see Proclus’ summary of the *Aethiopis* (Bernabé); *Odyssey* 11.543-564; Sophocles’ *Ajax*. For Odysseus passing Achilles’ arms on to Neoptolemus, see *Little Iliad*, fr. 5 (Bernabé). For a discussion on the possibility of Achilles leaving behind two sets of arms to be distributed after his death, see Janko 1992:310-311.
CONCLUSION

This study focused on the re-exchange of Achilles’ first set of arms in the *Iliad*. The complex circulation-process of the arms starts in the Iliadic past and continues in the dramatic time of the poem. Their origin and multiple transfers from the gods to Peleus, next to Achilles, then to Patroclus, afterwards to Hector, and finally back to Achilles again involve a number of distinct mechanisms of exchange. Certain principles of these mechanisms are overlooked by the transactors, yet they have immediate consequences for them. In addition, the stakes from these neglected principles are carried over to the next exchange stage of the arms and affect the new exchangers. The result is that the individual transitions of the arms cannot be evaluated independently, but only in light of their preceding, successful or unsuccessful, exchanges. The correlation of their consecutive exchanges illuminates the distinction between legitimate acquisition and unrightful appropriation of the arms and determines the rights that accompany the former and the consequences that follow the latter. This distinction regulates and determines the degree of authority of each transactor over the arms and justifies the fact that, despite their long and complex circulation, Achilles maintains a continuing bond to them and is the only hero who obtains them twice.

The return of the arms to their rightful owner confirms their inalienability, which is systematically built in the poem by meaningful flashbacks to their exchange history. As a wedding gift to his father, the arms, on the one hand, facilitated his parents’ wedding and Achilles’ own birth. The spear, on the other hand, as a gift to Peleus by Cheiron, Achilles’ future pedagogue, anticipates the hero’s later birth, but most
importantly symbolises his peculiar awareness of his coming death. The immortal quality
of both the arms and the spear and their intrinsic role in Achilles’ existence inevitably
connect them to the hero’s semi-divine nature and the fate of death prescribed to him
from his birth.¹

The Trojan battlefield on which Achilles fights with his immortal arms provides a
suitable arena for the hero to fulfill his destiny of a glorious yet short life. But
Agamemnon’s confiscation of Briseis from him in the beginning of the *Iliad* leads to
Achilles’ withdrawal from fighting and thus creates a dead-end in both the progress of
the war and the hero’s own destiny. The outcome of the war becomes ambivalent, putting
the development of the Iliadic plot on hold, and Achilles’ fate seems undetermined, as he
neither returns home from Troy nor fights on the battlefield.

Curiously, this crisis in the plot of the poem is resolved through a new crisis in
the logic of exchange that is responsible for the cohesive organisation of the Iliadic
communities, both Greek and Trojan. The transgressive use of the borrowed arms by
Patroclus and their subsequent unrightful appropriation by Hector, when seen against the
backdrop of Homeric exchange, have an anomalous and egregious character. Although
these acts destabilise the entire exchange system, underlying the structure of the society
represented in the poem, nevertheless they restart the previously stalled plot. In effect, the
break-down in the heroic ideology that they create and the resulting upheaval in the
heroic society, supply the story of the *Iliad* with new and unsuspected developments. The
losses in human life and material possessions and the disruption of normative war
hierarchy caused by Patroclus’ and then Hector’s illegitimate treatment of the immortal

¹ Achilles informs the members of the embassy about his two fates in *Il.* 9.410-416. For a discussion of the
fates that Achilles claims he has in Bk 9, see Burgess 2009:50-53.
arms necessitate Achilles’ return to the battlefield. Finally, the death of Hector, as the objective for which Achilles rejoins the fighting, resolves at the same time both the crisis of exchange and the crisis in the hero’s destiny that occurred in the beginning of the poem. On the one hand, by killing Troy’s bravest warrior, Achilles repossesses his arms. On the other hand, he achieves the κλέος that Zeus promised to Thetis in Book 1, but he also approaches his early death, which, as his mother told him, will happen soon after the death of Hector.

In the end, the re-exchange of the arms provides the ideal narrative topography for an intersection of Homeric economics, Homeric society, and Homeric poetics. Material loss or gain, achieved through the exchange of the arms on the battlefield, corresponds to a greater proportion of respective symbolic loss or gain of prestige among the social group to which someone belongs. Loss in human life, however, signifies both loss and gain in social terms. It might decrease the intimate social circle of the individual, but at the same time it broadens the social support that the individual receives from the entire community. The death of Patroclus in particular deprives Achilles of his best friend, but reintegrates him into the community of the Achaeans, who come to support him. Interestingly, however, both the economic and the more complicated social stakes entailed in the circulation of the arms are translated into valuable poetical capital. This is because, together material and immaterial losses and gains of the Iliadic heroes become objects of poetic exchange and benefit the plot of the poem. In this sense, the re-exchange of the arms signifies only gains in terms of Homeric poetics.

Homeric poetic technique compensates for the benefits to the Iliadic plot from the grief or success of the Homeric characters by providing them with glimpses of life
outside, or beyond, war going on in the poem. Such images are introduced in the narrative through multiple similes and through the *ekphrasis* of Achilles’ new shield forged by Hephaestus. The former simply draws parallels between nature or domestic life in peacetime to situations that the heroes experience during the war at Troy. The latter describes artistic images of societies both at peace and war and juxtaposes them, in order again to draw parallels to the society of the main poetic narrative that encompasses the *ekphrasis*. In this manner, the recollection of external reality or the view of an internal, artistic reality by the narrator or the characters inserts a non-war subcontext into the *Iliad*. In truth, however, the images of this subcontext do not constitute part of the everyday life of the Homeric heroes, but are drawn upon mainly to serve as a *comparandum*. The Trojan characters, in particular, since they still live in their own city and their personal abodes with their families, appear to have a degree of domestic life, which, nevertheless, is severely constrained, even plagued, by the everyday harsh reality of war. In Hector’s reunion with his family in Book 6, both he and Andromache suffer in advance the pain that war might inflict on one another; they part ways with Hector returning to the battle and his wife starting a lament among her handmaidens for her husband, while he is still alive. But even in such scenes of relatively peaceful social contexts included in the principal narrative, the protagonists are members of the same community, frequently of the same family, people who are accustomed to associate with each other, mingle with each other, and care about each other. Before the end of the *Iliad*, the most prominent scene entailing two enemies interacting in an amicable manner is the

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2 On similes and the *ekphrasis* of Achilles’ shield, mediating a perspective on the everyday human world in the *Iliad*, and their differences, see Schein 1984:140-142.
3 For examples of similes referring to parental relationships, see Schein 1984:107.
encounter between Glaucus and Diomedes in Book 6. Yet these two characters were ancestral guest-friends, who happened to meet in a war-setting; indeed, they were friends prior to becoming enemies. By virtue of their ancestral bond, they decide to renew and continue their guest-friendship. But, as was discussed in the introduction, their meeting on the battlefield and their mutual exchange of arms are not completely free from war ideology.

In contrast, the scene between Achilles and Priam in the former’s tent in Book 24 is the most pervasive image of two foes acting like friends. The encounter between them takes place in the dramatic time of the poem and is actually experienced by the characters. It is probably not accidental that this happens between Achilles and Priam, two notably humane characters, who have suffered the most incurable losses of a best friend and a best son respectively, and that both Patroclus and Hector, for whom they mourn, were individuals with equally kind personalities. Nevertheless, the scene has a surreal sentiment about it, which signifies it as a virtually unattainable reality in the middle of the hostile world of war. The two participants are not prior friends or just any foes; it is the king of the city, on the one side, and the best warrior, on the other. In fact, as Schein notes, at this point of the narrative Achilles’ insatiate desire to avenge the death of Patroclus has disconnected him from the humane aspects of his personality.

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6 Il. 6.212-236.
7 Il. 24.471-676.
9 For Achilles’ humane character regarding dead foes, captives, and suppliants, see Il. 6.414-419, 425-428, 24.158. For Patroclus’ sympathetic character to both the Achaeans for their casualties in the war during Achilles’ absence and Briseis for her misfortunes in captivity, see Il. 11.804-805, 16.7-45, 19.287-300. For Priam’s and Hector’s exceptional kindness to Helen, see Il. 3.161-165, 24.761-775. For Hector and Patroclus in comforting Helen and Briseis, respectively, in a foreign environment, see Suzuki 1989:28; Tsagalis 2004:162-164. For Patroclus’ and Hector’s gentleness as well as for Achilles’ compassionate character, see Schein 1984:27, 35, 97, 191.
own surprise, when he sees Priam in his tent, and his comment about the danger to the
Trojan king, if Agamemnon knew about his presence in the Achaean camp, show the
Myrmidon’s disbelief and emphasise the impossibility of such a meeting. Yet, the two
heroes are portrayed as sitting together, crying together, eating together, and sleeping
near one another. Their mutual understanding of the pain that each of them suffers makes
“the two virtually adopt one another as father and son;” Achilles’ acknowledgement of
Priam’s “even greater need for consolation and elemental human solidarity” finally
terminates the hero’s wrath, and also reconnects him with his humanity. The Iliad
compensates Achilles and Priam for the grief that the circulation-process of the arms and
the poem’s plot put them through, by an experience of a momentary, intra-communal
utopia. In this utopia, war relationships become domestic ones, and enemies interact with
each other in a manner in which they would normally interact with those whom they lost,
whether best friends or sons.

But war has not completely collapsed into peace. This otherwise inconceivable
social interchange is the result of the re-exchange of arms, primary tools of war. In
addition, its purpose is a war exchange in strict terms; the release of the body of a slain
enemy to his family in return for the treasure of the vanquished one. Furthermore, the
scene commences with Priam kneeling in front of Achilles, thus enacting a war hierarchy
that underlies military defeat and victory. It is obvious, then, that below the surface of
the peaceful social fantasy lurks the crude economics of war reality.

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11 Il. 24.480-484, 518-521, 650-655. Also see Hermes’ warning to Priam regarding Agamemnon in 24.683-
688.
12 The quotations are from Schein 1984:99; also see Schein 1984:103-104, 129, 159-163.
13 Moreover, as Achilles and Priam agree, on the twelfth day after the lamentation for Hector and his burial,
the two armies will fight again (Il. 24.664-667).
The extraordinary encounter between Achilles and Priam at the end of the *Iliad* is made possible by the circulation-process of the immortal arms recounted in the final books and the events associated with it. In light of this cause-and-effect sequence in the development of the plot, Homeric narrative seems to employ the poetics of re-exchange in order to outline the stakes of war, portray the misery ensuing from it, indicate its futility, and suggest an alternative. War and peace, realities normally located at opposite poles of the social spectrum, appear at the end of the poem, as, if not reconciled, at least somewhat closer to one another. But their approach only points out their great dissonance. The *Iliad* chooses to conclude by turning the poetics of the re-exchange of the arms, in essence the poetics of life, death, glory, and war, into the poetics of utopia. The unpleasant poetics of the end-of-war savagery is left to be supplemented by the brutal images of the sack of the city that are included in the epic tradition of the Trojan War, but to which the *Iliad* unmistakably alludes without actually narrating.\(^\text{14}\)

Strictly speaking, however, the Iliadic account of the circulation-process of the immortal arms finishes with their return to Achilles. Their restoration to the legitimate owner reinstates the standardised exchange dynamics of the *Iliad*, and also reinstates the poem in the established tradition of Achilles’ glorious but short life. In the process of building up to the reunion of the hero with his arms, the *Iliad* reaffirms the overarching system of exchange underpinning its internal society and structures its temporality, which belongs to a notional supra-Iliadic mythological context. By virtue of this broad context,

\(^{14}\) The works of Epic Cycle and other later compositions, which narrate the fall of Troy, describe the violence exhibited by the Achaean leaders, who invaded Priam’s stronghold. For instance, the *Little Iliad* (fr. 21 Bernabé) mentions the death of Astyanax; Proclus’ summary of *Iliou Persis* (Bernabé) reports the dragging of Cassandra, who is a suppliant, to the altar of Athena, the killing of Astyanax, and the slaughtering of Polyxena. Among later narratives, *Aeneid* 2.535-553 is famous for the graphic scenes of the killing of Polites and Priam, who is a suppliant at the altar of the Penates. For other accounts of the Trojan War, see Apollodorus (*Library*); Quintus of Smyrna; Philostratus (*Heroicus*); Dictys. For a discussion of these sources and their relationship with the Cyclic poems, see Burgess 2001:44-46.
the narrative of the re-exchange of the arms positions the plot of the *Iliad* in the larger trajectory of the Trojan War saga and Achilles’ character in the poem in the larger trajectory of his *fabula*. And it does so by alluding to, borrowing from, adopting, adapting, re-working, and complementing poetic tradition. In sum, the *Iliad* interacts with epic tradition by establishing an ongoing relationship of “reciprocal dependence”\(^\text{15}\) between them ---that is, by exchanging over and over.

\(^{15}\) As was mentioned in the Introduction, Gregory (1982:12) uses this phrase to describe the relationship between the participants in gift exchange.
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