

Name Omitted

Professor Garrison

Humanities 101.01

Due Date Goes Here

Midterm Exam

Through a detailed analysis of how Achilles and Hector respond to similar situations in The Iliad it should be possible to accurately compare and contrast the two men's character. We will compare by looking at how the two men respond to pressure from others. Also looking at how these responses reveal their motivations for fighting.

Achilles is a complex character displaying an interesting dual personality. In the scene where Agamemnon refuses to take the ransom for Chryses, some of Achilles' core traits are revealed. Achilles first responds and first trait that is revealed is his legendary temper. He accuses Agamemnon of being a glory hound and trying to take more than his fair share. During the exchange between the two men Achilles has both an internal and external dialogue in which he shows rage as well as good sense. He makes a genuine appeal to Agamemnon to use a lighter touch and to recognize that the men fighting for him deserve a fair share, and that taking from them, what is rightfully theirs, makes him no better than the Trojans. When this fails to change Agamemnon's mind Hera is forced to send Athena to soothe Achilles' temper and prevent him from killing Agamemnon. This is when Achilles swears a formal oath to not come back to fight for Agamemnon, also making a remark about "...upholding Zeus' laws..." very likely a not so subtle hint that somebody here is breaking them. Later Achilles shows his bimodal motivations for fighting when the

embassy to Achilles tries to convince him to return to battle. While talking with Phoenix he makes a series of sound arguments of why he cannot return to battle in the service of Agamemnon. The arguments take the form of stories notably a one about the archer goddess and a remarkably similar story about a kidnapped daughter and the bad things that happened to those involved. But probably the most telling passage from this encounter is something Achilles says right before he invites Phoenix to spend the night and think over what has been said:

“I don’t need that kind of honor, Phoenix. My honor comes from Zeus, and I will have it. Among these beaked ships as long as my breaths still remains and my knees still move.” (Iliad IX,624)

Basically coming right out and saying that he cares not for honor of the physical kind, money and other spoils of war, but he instead draws greater personal reward from upholding the laws of Zeus. Achilles is always aware of the role in life he has been handed, he is also aware of his responsibilities in given situations. It is implied earlier by Achilles that if the Trojans were to commit offenses such as ruining his farmlands or stealing his cattle, he would have an independent motivation for fighting other than simply supporting Agamemnon. It is not a large jump to say that killing your best friend is motivation enough for fighting. Not only is it allowed in such a cause but the honor code would require vengeance. So while Achilles’ return to battle as well as the death of Hector is a result of Achilles’ temper it is as a result to a strict interpolation of an honor code and his acceptance of his role in life. Even his disrespectful treatment of Hector’s body is overlooked by the gods, the body being preserved from harm.

Hector is a mirror image of Achilles both men are driven by an essential stubbornness. Hector in opposition to Achilles is at home during the war, he can see his wife and children when he is not needed on the front. In book six one such meeting takes place when Hector returns his wife tries to convince him that it would be foolish to return to battle. She points out that by holding a weak section of wall, a sort of choke point it should be rounded into and killed, any military strategist in history would consider this wise. Hector sees it as a personal act of weakness and shame not to be out in the front lines. He even accepts his fate of dying and the possible demise of the subjects of Priam. He attempts to comfort to his wife, to whom he has all but promised to widow, is that when he dies people will speak of his greatness and how brave he was. This shows one of Hector's most telling traits, his ego, how he cannot stand the idea of not making the history books. His ego shows up again seconds before his death at the hand of Achilles in a conversation with his father Priam. Priam begs Hector to come back in, saying that he will be killed by Achilles pointing out the support that Achilles has from the gods. Then Hector's mother begins to beg him to come inside as well. In spite of the fact that his entire family, including his father who is king have asked him to come inside and not face Achilles in a one on one. Now having battled Achilles and the Greek forces for the better part of a Decade and the battle having been a virtual stalemate for that entire time a creature of ego such as Hector would want to know who the better ham is. In a short speech to himself he questions how to handle to rapid approach of a vengeful Achilles finally deciding that it is: "Better to lock up in mortal combat As soon as possible and see to whom God on Olympus grants victory" (Iliad, XXII, 146).

To invoke the gods to keep score in this little match means that it should be something of note, Hector sets himself up to be remembered by for his exploits. After missing his first spear throw at Achilles, Hector pretty much gives up on the fight stating that he hears the gods calling him to his death and that he will not go without leaving something for future generations to remember.

Now two key points are seen that differentiate Hector and Achilles. First the subtle difference of how they face their deaths. Hector had the option of prolonging his life only, the city was encircled and bargaining wasn't working. In contrast Achilles could have sailed home and not been in danger from the forces of Troy. While both men meet the same fate in the end both are making subtly different choices. The manner in which they accept that fate is different and is the second point. That being the difference in enthusiasm that they display while meeting their fate. Achilles likes the role that he has been given and is passionate about the way he plays it. In contrast look at Hector, he seems like a bored soap opera actor, in the way that he nonchalantly addresses his wife's, children's and even his own death. Yes he is concerned for his name in history but more image for image's sake than a genuine concern. The idea of duty to self and family and duty to a higher ideal is nothing new, concepts which are respected. The idea that these two traits could be seen in two different characters is virtually a foreign concept.

Name Withheld

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In ancient Greece, poets are the teachers as well as the entertainers. They tell people about the gods, how to behave, about great warriors, and about past prophecies. Poets were also needed for great warriors who wanted to be famous. Therefore, poets should be treated with respect and dignity, and they should be listened to. Bad things happened to people in Greek society who didn't treat the poet well. The Odyssey shows a clear picture of how a person's outcome in life is determined by how that person treats poets. Just consider how the suitors and Penelope treat Odysseus's poet Phemios as opposed to how the Phaeacians and Odysseus treat the poet Demodocus.

The suitors are not kind to Phemios. In the Book I of the Odyssey the suitors force Phemios to sing. In what scenarios do the suitors call on the bard, "when they'd put aside desire for food and drink the suitors set their minds other pleasures, song and dancing" (Odyssey, I, 175-177). To the suitors the bard is merely for entertainment. They don't really listen to the historical significance and lessons in the story. Homer illustrates this by mostly referring to Phemios as "the bard" and mentioning the stories "the bard" tells. Homer does not even use names of heroes and stories to illustrate how little the suitors pay attention to Phemios.

It is mostly because of their ignorance that they come to a bloody and grizzly end. The suitors' ignorance makes them fail to recognize Odysseus when he returns to Ithaca despite the numerous hints Odysseus gives them about his true identity. For example,

he mentions that he too lived in a lofty house the to Antinous the first time he goes around begging to all the suitors, which is a strange thing for an ordinary beggar who is getting food to claim. Odysseus also shows how he has a massive build and fighting skills when he battles the beggar Irus in front them. The build and fighting skills of a warrior is hardly things that an ordinary beggar would have. The suitors also show ignorance by not knowing how to properly treat a guest that brings Odysseus's wrath down on them. Antinous hits beggar Odysseus with a stool the first time those two meet, and Eurymachus makes fun of him by calling him lazy, unwilling to perform honest work. Because of the ignorance the suitors show, Odysseus must become the suitor's poet and educate them the hard way. Once Odysseus faces the suitors alone with a bow in his hands he becomes a poet, " like an expert singer skilled at lyre and song With his virtuoso ease Odysseus strung his mighty bow" (Odyssey, XXII, 453-455). Once he has his bow strung he educates them on how great a warrior Odysseus is by giving them firsthand experience in the battle skills of Odysseus. None of the suitors survive the lesson and that is the end of them.

Penelope also misuses the bard Phemios. In Book I Penelope stifles the bard to keep him from singing as the muse guides him, presumably because it rends the heart inside her. But she may not want the suitors to hear what her sneaky husband is like. What Penelope hoped would happen when she stifled bard did come true.

Odysseus came back unrecognized by the suitors and kills them all, but what befalls Penelope after that? The first thing Odysseus does is tell her he has to go off on another long journey. Now once again she has to stand in for Odysseus and rule Ithaca, but this time she has to do this without any men to defend it. Thanks to Odysseus losing his crew

and killing all the suitors the only males left on the island are old men and boys. Thanks to Penelope's stifling of the bard, Ithaca now has a lack of men to defend it. Ithaca and Penelope are probably doomed.

The Phaeacians treat their poet Demodocus with a lot of respect: Demodocus has a herald who guides him and sits him down in silver studded chairs, puts tables with baskets of bread and cups of wine in front of him, and brings him his ringing lyre. Alcinous the Phaeacian King refers to Demodocus as the inspired bard when having Demodocus brought to him and even says, "God has given the man the gift of song to him beyond all others, the power to please, however the spirit stirs him on to sing" (Odyssey, VIII, 50-53) which shows that even the king respects the bard. The book stating that the Phaeacian lords revel in Demodocus's tales and the Phaeacians claiming to be the world's best dancers reflect how well they listen to Demodocus. Another thing that shows how well Phaeacians listen to Demodocus is that Alcinous remembers a prophecy Poseidon would be vexed at them for always sailing people home and would one day crush one of their ships on its way home and build up mountains around their ports that will be very important to the Phaeacians before the end of the Odyssey. Homer also shows how well the Phaeacians treat Demodocus by mentioning how he is gifted by the muse and by letting the reader hear Demodocus's tales instead of just mentioning them. An example of a Demodocus tale would be the one about the lovers Ares and Aphrodite and how Hephaestus caught them with golden chains.

Even though in the later half of the Odyssey the Phaeacians have trouble and hardship, they are able to hold off worse hardship having treated Demodocus well. When the Phaeacians saw one of their ships heading home turned to stone they were able to remember the prophecy about Poseidon. Once they remembered the prophecy

they were able to put a name to the god who caused the ship to turn to stone and know who to pray and sacrifice to. This action kept mountains from springing up around their port which would have seriously cramped their lifestyle.

Odysseus is a man who knows how to treat a bard. He has Demodocus's herald bring Demodocus a choice piece of meat, a loin rich and crisp with fat, after that song and dance about the gods Aphrodite and Ares. He also compliments Demodocus quite thoroughly a few times in the *Odyssey*. For example right after giving Demodocus the meat he says, I respect you, Demodocus, more than any man alive. Surely the Muse has taught you, Zeus's daughter, or god Apollo himself' (*Odyssey*, VIII, 456-458). Another example of Odysseus's flattery would be just before he launches into his tale before the Phaeacian court. he says" ... what a fine thing it is to listen to such a bard as we have here, the man sings like a god" (*Odyssey*, IX, 3-4). Odysseus also treats the *Odyssey's* other bard, Phemios, as well as can be expected by Jetting Phemios live after the other suitors.

The outcome of the *Odyssey* is pretty much everything that Odysseus hoped for, thanks to how he treated the bards in the *Odyssey*. Odysseus manages to finally get home, despite his roundabout way of doing so, kill all the suitors, and get his wife back. Because Odysseus spared the bard Phemios, Odysseus was able to have the bard play like it was a wedding after Odysseus slaughtered the suitors to the family of the suitors think there was a marriage happening at Odysseus's house. This gave Odysseus time to talk to his wife and go see his father, Laertes, before the suitor's avengers finally caught up to him. By treating the bards well Odysseus got the one thing he probably wanted the most, fame that has kept the memory of his "great" deeds that has lasted into modern times at least.