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Achilles and The Batman on the Plane of Immanence: Deconstructing Heroic Models

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Abstract

Achilles and The Batman on the Plane of Immanence: Deconstructing Heroic Models attempts to reposition the way the reader views literary heroism. By defining heroism as a reaction to forces within and external to his society, heroism becomes a function of Michel Foucault's concept of Otherness. Using Deleuze and Guattari's notions of the Nomad, striated and unstriated space and schizoanalysis, as well as Foucault's basic concepts of power and its two-way, invisible flow, one will find that heroism develops and functions in strikingly similar manners no matter what time or culture germinates it. The universal problems the hero creates for the culture in which he or she operates are further explicated, including the reasons that the hero often becomes as much a danger to his society as the threat he or she rises to combat.

The analysis begins with Achilieus of *The Illiad*, a character who, in the opening line of the text, is described not as bringing death to his enemies but pains on his own people. The text address Odysseus' problematic, but uniquely successful, metamorphosis from king to hero and back to king and the unsuccessful attempt by Beowulf to make a similar transition.

The analysis ends with an exploration of the uniquely 20th century hero: the comic book super-hero. Explicating the Batman text, *Arkham Asylum,* by Grant Morrison, shows that trope as it is affected by the 20th century concepts of the metropolitan and urban identity. The secret identity of the comic book hero is an important, modern, perhaps even postmodern answer to the problems the unchanging hero most often encounters within his own society.

Achilles and The Batman on the Plane of Immanence:
Deconstructing Heroic Models

by

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Introduction:

Where does the hero exist? It is possible for a person to behave heroically, and for us to recognize that heroic action even as we experience it, but what about heroic identity? What is the difference between a hero, an individual whose self is defined solely by the heroic, and the individual who performs a heroic action? Is there a difference? I would argue there is a significant difference between heroic action and heroic identity, and that difference is as fundamental as to be grounded in the a priori of Kant's subject/object formula of consciousness- a difference at the very genesis of consciousness and being. Delving into the soft underbelly of being, however, requires tools for the not-so-delicate work of analysis so that we do not deconstruct the very concept we're discussing. It is not my intention to write a book about Kant or Deleuze and Guattari, but they offer an understanding of the way consciousness forms that is very useful. To discuss the way the hero versus the individual who performs a heroic action interacts with his or her society, the work of Alfred North Whitehead offers interesting insight, and Foucault's work will help explicate why the limitation of text is fundamental to a better understanding of the heroic.

With the hope that my *use* of some of these concepts might be the best way to explicate them, I would still like to introduce some basic concepts and the understanding of them that best explicates the creation of heroism as an identity. At the forefront of this understanding is the Subject/Object dichotomy that is so important to the creation of consciousness as explicated by Kant. The Subject is the Internal and the Object is the external. Without both of

these we cannot experience Space (as a placement of the Subject in relation to Objects) or Time (the placement of the Subject in relation to changes in the Subject itself). Time and Space lead to perception and memory of perception leads to consciousness. The a priori, the thing before, is the causality creating awareness, while the a posteriori, the thing after, is our creation of awareness, self and consciousness.

One can imagine the metaphor of constant falling into the next moment. The a priori is the precipice, constantly dragging the Subject to the next moment, defining both Time and Space as the Subject moves externally and internally. The awareness of this: "I was here, now I'm there" is a hastily created surface under the foot of the Subject as it steps off that precipice. Hastily created, but absolutely created: we cannot stop awareness of time *and* space without stopping awareness altogether. Even should one fall of the precipice---there's still awareness of it.

Deleuze and Guattari stretch the a priori relationship past the moment into a plane of infinite possibility. They use the terms multiplicity and plane of immanence. The plane is the infinite stretch of possibility offered to the a priori causality as it moves and interacts with Objects and itself. Many of those Objects are Subjects unto themselves, each moving within its own plane of causality created awareness. They meet where the planes interact, Subjects to themselves and Objects to Others. As this movement is creating awareness and consciousness, the plane is immanent: in the process of Becoming. Nothing effectively exists for the Subject until it can be perceived and become part of the consciousness.

On the plane, heroic action occurs, but where it occurs in the creation of self is the difference between heroic action and heroic identity. It is important, I think, not to marginalize

or belittle heroic action. People do heroic things all the time, and some even enter the text of history as heroes from those heroic actions. Within the confines of the textual history, the individual may become identified as a hero, but more often than not, that heroic action is followed by a further blossoming of identity as the subject moves to a new point of expression (as a subject) and perception (as an object). The heroic action is followed by life; that person's identity changes to those who perceive the individual and the heroic identity is lost. The hero as an individual cannot control how he or she is perceived because of his or her status as object to the subjects around him.

What of those who do not perceive the hero *moving* across the plane of immanence though? What of those whose only encounter with the hero is the expression of the singular heroic action? When we limit the nature of the perception of the hero, we can begin to see the identity of the heroic forming. If we view, not an individual, but an individual's actions, then the heroic may appear. If we expand our awareness (or, more realistically, our awareness is expanded without any action on our part) of the individual who behaves heroically, he or she becomes just that: not a hero, but an individual who behaved heroically. This does not devalue the nature of that person's heroic actions; one might even argue that it renders them that much more valuable in their rarity. The heroic action eventually gets lost in the context of his or her identity as an individual. The firefighter who rushes into a burning building is no less heroic because of the childhood that led him to his career, or the life he leads in, around, and after that event. The actions, even the heroic, become *part* of the identity, but the individual cannot hinder the blossoming of that identity past the simple, unified definition of heroic. A subject is

not defined by one point; it is molar; it is aggregate; it is in a constant state of Becoming as it

moves from one point to the next on that Plane of Immanence.

Most objects are not defined by one point either, unless perception of that object is

limited somehow. Should the Subject perceive the Object only once (a rarity), then that Object

is nothing other than that one point to the Subject. This limitation *can* occur within the *text*, as

the perception is a carefully constructed mimesis. We find the hero is not a hero because of the

fullness of the explication of that character, but because of the lack of depth. Note: I am

discussing heroes, not protagonists.

The hero exists in and is a part of the multiplicity and discourse that is a society, but to

create a hero, and to *retain* that heroic identity, we have to move fully into the text. We have to

be able to surround the hero temporally and isolate him so that he cannot BECOME other-than-

hero. Foucault uses the Author as the primary limiting factor OF the text; the creation of the

text must occur within the temporal and cultural boundaries available to the author. The text

can change the reader, as the Subject-reader interacts with the Object-text, but it is the Subject

who is changing, not the text. The understanding of the text may change, and therefore *mean*

more to the Subject, but the text is the same Object over and over again. Even the fact of the

repetition itself can start to attribute meaning to the text. The second reading of a text is

significant in the repetition. The hundredth reading is different than the 99th because of the

changes in the subject in the interim. If the repeated interaction with the text offers the same

limited perception of the hero over and over again, the identity is recapitulated and reinforced

without diluting the heroic identity with non-heroic activity (to a point). This relationship

between the static object and the dynamic subject also resonates within Whitehead's constructions of society.

Whitehead is going to show that for a society to exist it must have the static and dynamic, that which changes and that which remains the same, the organic and the inorganic. This defines our interactions with texts. A book requires reading for meaning to take place, the textual equivalent to life. The reader brings change and interpretation to the inorganic text, and thus meaning. The text, however needs its inorganic nature. If the text becomes an organic thing, if it is mutable, then there becomes the danger of proliferation of meaning to the point where the text is unreadable. Foucault posits many ways we limit the text, the author as a set of cultural temporal rules being the most prevalent. He also shows us that once we have pinned the text down and rendered it inorganic, we can approach it archaeologically, i.e. we can attempt the find the meaning that is supplied by the text rather than the meaning brought to the text by the reader. The thing which we call text is an object, but the meaning produced in the union of organic and inorganic is a subject Becoming: a superject.

This relationship is going to resonate into our discussion of both hero and society. The text is a superject because it is an artifact-Becoming. My favorite metaphor for this is the difference between a noun and the subject of a sentence. A noun without a verb, a sense of action and becoming is just a noun, but pair that noun with a verb and suddenly we have more-than-noun; we have the subject of a sentence, a noun-verbing…a noun in action. A city without organicity is not a city…it is ruins or whatnot; a crowd of people without the static is not a society; they are just a crowd. The text without a reader's thoughts is an artifact; the reader's thoughts without the text with which to limit it is not interpretation; it is thought. The event of

the interpretation is a union of the dynamic and the static; it is a micro-representation of society. With this framework, we may isolate the hero archeologically and bereft of cultural ties to see how the hero behaves on a subject/object level. I intend to show that the heroic identity is a matter of intensity created as much by absence and desire as anything and is, thus, in the limited textual reality an a priori function.

This archaeological analysis is not possible anywhere other than the text because of the same plane of immanence problems posed by the always-becoming hero. Once we are in a discourse, it is impossible to perceive the discourse without affecting the discourse. We are, perhaps, in the box *with* Schroedinger's Cat.

Foucault intentionally leaves his definition of the text vague, but he does give us a few basic principles we can use to discuss each discourse: reversal, discontinuity, specificity, and exteriority. Reversal demands a basic understanding of Foucauldian power-theories:

- there is no center to discourse

- power and the flow of power is invisible

- discourses may appear to be but are not concentric circles of lesser degrees of marginalization

- exterior positions to a given discourse are not visible (by definition) to the interior of the discourse but are bounded by that which is defined as Other

Reversal, one of Foucault's "principles of rarefaction" (Foucault *1972:* 229) denies the assumption that "we think we recognize the source of a discourse, the principles behind its flourishing and continuity in those roles which seem to play a positive role, such as the author discipline" (Foucault *1972:* 229). Instead we must "recognize the negative activity of the

cutting-out and rarefaction of discourse" (Foucault *1972:* 229). The implication here is not only

that we assume a cause and effect relationship in matters of authority, but that we assume an

intuitive grasp of the flow of the power in that relationship. The students are in the classroom

because the professor is there at that time. Instead we might need to see that professor is

there because the students are present. The reality, though, were we able to rarefy the

relationship to the point where we could see ALL of the relationships at work, is that the

professor is there because the university assigned that time, and the university is there because

of a demand on the part of the students who are being acted upon by an entirely different set

of market demands.

Even in this limited metaphor, the flow of power quickly becomes untraceable. All one

can do is problematize the assumed flow and the assumed source, and then only on a very

limited artifact that we can simplify to the point of being able to see it from a distance.

Foucault's principle of discontinuity separates discourses from a system of discourse.

Foucault does not want the fact that he has created a system of rarefaction of discourse to

imply an additive subsumptive system for all discourses.

> The existence of systems of rarefaction does not imply that, over and beyond
> them lie great vistas of limitless discourse, continuous and silent, repressed and
> driven back by them, making it our task to abolish them and at last to restore it
> to speech (Foucault *1972:* 229).

Foucault, while explicating systems, is cautious of systems. As we approach a given discourse, it

is going to be important for us to limit our interpretation of that discourse to the facts held

within that discourse. It is and will be impossible not to systematize, but Foucault's principles warn us not to bring prior systems or assumptions about systems into the interpretation of a given archeology. The rules for one system are not necessarily the rules for all systems.

This brings us to the principle of specificity. We must imagine that the rules we bring to a discourse are a domination of that discourse for those rules are not necessarily the rules of the discourse we are studying.

> A particular discourse cannot be resolved by a prior system of significations...we must conceive as a violence we do to things, or, at all events, as a practice we impose upon them; it is in this practice that the events of discourse find the principle in their regularity (Foucault 1972: 229).

The traditional American system of readings of a given text is perhaps the most violent of systems, for, in its openness towards interpretation it both creates meaning, and violates the text. The meaning it creates is obviously something different from the text at hand, and while interesting in a Lonerganian manner, one must question whether it is actually important. The political ground of the interpreter becomes as much a question as does the text at hand. The meaning being created is not an explication of the text but a view of the text through a personal lens. It is no wonder that Kristeva uses the fecund term necrophilia to describe the obsession with secondary sources.

The fourth principle is going to be the most important to pull Foucault and Whitehead together. The principle of exteriority reverses the intuitive nature of interpretation and denies us the center of the discourse as the starting point for interpretation. The center of the

discourse (should there exist one) is a point like any other. There *can* be a center of discourse, or there might not be. The move Foucault makes is to deprioritize and demythologize the center of a given discourse. The rules that bind a discourse with regularity do not radiate out from a center. The rules, instead, are created on the edges of a discourse by the outer edge of extreme marginalization, and, when seen from a position of exteriority, Otherness.

This definition by negativity does not discount the existence of a center, but it does remove the center as a point of importance. Instead, it is the outer edge of a given discourse that defines that discourse. An ocean is not defined by its centermost point, but instead by the shoreline at which point(s) the ocean ceases and the land begins. The shore defines the boundaries and existence of an ocean. This metaphor does not flow seamlessly into a metaphor of text, but it does resonate into discussion of society both spatially and temporally. The Holy Roman Empire, or any state that existed but has ceased to be, must be defined two ways: where it was and when it was. Both exterior boundaries of existence are artificial and mutable, but this does not make them less important.

> On a logical level this is how we define things, in terms of their opposites,
> through negation. On the level of interpersonal relations, this is how we deal
> with other people, reducing them to qualities which we then expropriate,
> thereby denying them full existence (MacCary 1982: 23).

We are going to see that this mutability is in fact the organic nature of societies at work and is a necessary function of a society. The text does not have this mutable boundary; it is a static entity. It is inorganic. This static nature makes the text something that can be interpreted[1]. We create static representations of the mutable functions when we set the boundaries of a society

with the text/machine of history[1]. We turn society into text so that we can practice the

principle of rarefaction of exteriority because we need to have an outer edge, a boundary, a

definition.

> We are not to burrow to the hidden core of a discourse, to the heart of the
> thought or meaning manifested in it; instead, taking the discourse itself, its
> appearance and its regularity, that we should look for its external conditions of
> existence for that which gives rise to the change series of these events and fixes
> its limits (Foucault *1972:* 229).

To continue my metaphor, we will be more likely to find out which ocean we are facing

by determining the boundaries that are the shore than we will be should we find ourselves

floating in the middle of said ocean. This principle of rarefaction simply implies that it is almost

impossible to examine a discourse from the interior, which, Foucault posits, is exactly why we

create boundaries around such things as history.

To examine this issue of heroism, we are going to need a bounded, static object on

which to concentrate. We cannot examine a subject: it is in a constant state of Becoming AND

for us to experience the subject (albeit objectively) we by definition must be within the

discourse that said subject occupies. Even the superject, linked and limited to a verb as it is, is a

tricky prospect. The hero must be an Object, and retain his identity even when not in action.

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[1] I might argue that its lack of organic elements create a gap that requires interpretation as a function of Desire. Foucault explains this as a way of moving history out of an existence of continuity (230). History, then, becomes a kind of murder. By isolating an epoch from the continuous stream that is history, we are removing the dynamic mutable nature that defines an organic thing and turning it into the inorganic thing we define as text.

The hero exists within the text, and it is within the society created by the boundaries of the text that the hero's actions become definable as organic or inorganic, but we need that boundary, that shore, to differentiate that which is static and dynamic.

Whitehead

What limits heroism within a society? Not all of the actions of heroes are heroic, and not all those who perform heroic actions are heroes. If we start to define in an attributive method, then we begin to create meaning, so instead it might prove fruitful to define by means of exclusion. What is it that the hero lacks that makes him or her a hero?[2]

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[2] I am using the term hero gender inclusively. While we will find that most of our heroes are male, that is a function of the various societies in which the hero has been created, not a function of the hero itself. I would further posit that the creation of the heroic identity occurs at such an early point in the creation of consciousness that it may even *precede* the creation of gender identity. A biologically female character could experience the same loss of domestic ties that biologically male character could and enter into the same dynamic, marginalized, Nomadic structure that said male character could. The society around that character would react differently to this character, perhaps radically so depending on the nature of the society, but the creation process and the nature of the heroic role would not necessarily change. We have eight Batman movies to the one Wonder Woman movie released in 2017, but the creation process of the hero is the same: she separates herself from her culture, falls in love, loses her love, finds her true power and wins.

We might also argue the same caveat with issues of race and class. The secret identity circumvents many issues of both topics. The Batman does not have to be rich (though it helps). Peter Parker is poor, but Spiderman is heroic, and in one universe is a young man of color named Michael Morales. The industry is still struggling: The Falcon in The Avengers movies was originally Black Falcon, and Black Panther is still *Black* Panther, though under his costume he could be any race. Black Lightning is still Black Lightning, but in DC Comics defense, they do seem to love color descriptors: Green Lantern, Green Arrow, Blue Beetle, Red Tornado… I'm tempted towards optimism at to their attitudes about race.

This will also circumvent the extremely loaded term *heroine*, as that trope is a different function entirely and better left to someone else's more adroit thoughts.

Alfred North Whitehead posits the idea that successful societies are created of both inorganic and organic creations; there must be the static and the dynamic in play at any given moment if the society is to survive. To be fruitful, the society has to match its intensity with a desire to survive. This is not a simple binary though, for within a given society, there are multiple levels of both static and dynamic functions. Survival and intensity circle each other in both the micro and macro levels, and what is intensity on the personal level, well may become a static feature on a level that can claim exteriority to that personal level. We must have the exteriority of text to begin to differentiate those levels, and even then it is arguable as to whether we ever achieve true exteriority as we are part of the organic/inorganic multiplicity that is the encounter with the text.

The hero, as we shall see, is a creature of intensity, leading a lifestyle of intensity to the exclusion of the functions that define a well-rounded, unproblematic member of the given society. The hero is a continually problematic character, and he is problematic a priori. The problem that is the hero is necessary in a Kantian notion, for he is the inorganic, the static and the intense. The hero, as an individual may not be necessary, but the problem is; the static is; the inorganic is; the intense is. This intensity is also in a constant state of reversal and that status as intense is created in an invisible flow of power in and out of the hero. We will find, repeatedly, that heroic action is not motivated by action, but authorized and enabled by loss. At times, the hero will act intensely in an additive function: he will create an intense action, but at times the hero will become intense in a deductive function as that-which-is-not-intense is taken away from him rendering him intense ipso facto.

At times this relationship may seem counter-intuitive because the hero is an agent of change. The hero's actions change the society around him as he fulfils his role of protector; this protection always causes change in the society around him though, as the society is defined and redefined by the constantly changing threats that bound the margins of the society. If one changes those boundaries, one changes the society. The hero, as static protector, can sometimes radically alter the system he protects. Should the threat, real or imagined to which the hero is reacting come from within a point in the society that is defined by the aggregate as a center, then the boundary could radically alter to the point of total disruption. It is change that defines society as the domestic roles, the rules of the society, though, constantly mutate; by protecting society, the hero is enacting change. The hero, then, can become a threat should he become an agent of too much change, or should his perception of the boundaries of society be different than that of an individual or set of individuals within the society.

The hero however, as an individual, is in the mix, the aggregate, and while he may at times occupy a border that allows for Deleuzian sorcery, he is interior to his discourse, and therefore often unaware of the role he fulfills when he is fulfilling it. The hero as a character, a representation of a being is portrayed as being in a state of becoming, as all subjects are. His heroism is a function of his action—becoming hero. This definition of self can and does change. Only immortal heroes remain heroes forever, and that is not circular logic or an attempt to be poetic, but the very real drive behind much heroic action. Immortality is not super-organicity; it is inorganicity. It is the individual nature of the hero, and his inorganicity that limits my research to the textual hero. It is only from our position of exteriority that we can begin to see the pieces forming the aggregate. The structure of greatest importance to me is the multiplicitous binary

of domesticity/intensity and the one-sidedness of the heroic existence, but there are certainly other structures always at work. It is impossible, however, to see those structures at work from the interior, so the only place available to us is the unified, finished space of the text. The structures are the thing, though, and we have no reality other than perception, so if we are able to perceive the hero only in the text, it may be that that is the only space in which he exists.

So, we already have a couple of ideas with which to frame our discussion:

- the hero is an intensity (as negatively defined by domesticity of society)

- the hero is necessary (as an inorganic structure in the multiplicity of society)

- the hero acts upon his society and is acted upon (as a member albeit a static one, of an organic function)

- the hero is limited to a textual existence (as per the necessary limiting of existence to a bounded perceivable function).

Whitehead refers to the various entities, both individuals and larger structures as nexi. I like this term; it works well with Foucault's thought of decentering our perception of the structure of a given discourse.

> A living society involves nexus which are 'inorganic,' and nexus which are inorganic do not need the protection of the whole 'living' society for their survival in a changing eternal environment. Such nexus are societies. But 'entirely living' nexus do require such protection, if they are to survive. According to the conjectural theory, an 'entirely living' nexus is not a 'society.' This is the theory of the animal body, including a unicellular body as a particular instance. A complex inorganic system of interaction is built up for the protection of the 'entirely living' nexus, and the originative actions of the living elements are protective of the whole system. On the other hand, the reactions of the whole

system provide the intimate environment required by the 'entirely living' nexus. We do not know of any living society devoid of its subservient apparatus of inorganic societies. (Whitehead 1978: 103).

The hero is not an entirely living cell within a living nexus. He is a creature of intensity. Within the society and perhaps to the individuals within a society, he is a superject, a subject acting heroically, for it is only within the realm of intense action that we can define the heroic. Once we achieve exteriority to the discourse and the hero becomes an object, we can see that the actions of the hero do not necessarily define him. The entirely living nexus is only part of the equation of the living society. One must also account for the organic: the structured yet changing politics of the domestic. The entirely living and the inorganic are both within a state of constant flux and interaction with each other, creating, destroying in a pattern of mutual reliance, the organic.

A structured society consists of in the patterned intertwining of various nexus with markedly diverse defining characteristics. Some of these nexus are of lower types than others, and some will be or markedly higher types. There will be 'subservient' nexus and the 'regnant' nexus within the same structured society (Whitehead 1978: 103).

We should not begin to equate domesticity and intensity with the static or dynamic yet, though because their identity among the nexus is only definable from the exterior. What might appear to be the dynamic function of intensity and heroism, on a larger scale is going to become, in actuality, a sense of the static. It will be too easy to see the hero as a subject, a person, but he is

not and cannot be, for if we allow him that sense of Becoming, then we have created a subject, not a hero. Heroism, I think we are going to find, is a static feature, an inorganic feature. Over our texts, we are going to see domestic relationships change, but the heroic is always the same intensity dealing with the same problems, circling endlessly around the dynamic amorphous domestic relationships it simultaneously protects and disrupts. It is in this ability to change that we find the definition of the organic. It is the hero's static nature and inability to change that is going to plague him. Should the hero change, he is no longer a hero—another seeming circular argument. It is the hero's inability to change that is going to make him a hero. It is the ability not to change, to remain static while the organic world changes.

> It must be remembered that an integral living society, as we know it, not only
> includes the subservient inorganic apparatus, but also includes many living
> nexus, at least one for each 'cell' (Whitehead 1978: 103).

The staticity and dynamics of the heroic/domestic relationship will be best explicated in the mortality of our heroes. It is possible for the domestic to act heroically; it is within the amorphous nature of domesticity to allow for such shifts, but it is the incursion of the domestic, a disruption of the absolute staticity of the hero's intensity and that relationship to the hero's mortality that most distinctly separates the hero from the rest of society. As an inorganic function, the hero is going to accomplish feats outside the abilities of those creatures who rely on the aggregation of the organic and the inorganic. Should the hero begin to act as if he were an aggregate, then the hero is allowing for the possibility of the entrance of the organic into his life, i.e. death. Life and death define each other mutually; to allow one is to necessitate the

other. Death is the shore that defines the boundaries of life. The hero is going to face all

manner of threats to his life, but these are part of his existence, validations and preconditions

of his existence. The true danger to the hero is the alteration of this existence into an

aggregate; the true danger is domestication, the entrance of change and the possibility of the

binary the defines the organic.

> That extensive continuity is a special condition arising from the society of
> creatures which constitute our immediate epoch. But atomism does not exclude
> complexity and universal relativity. Each atom is a system of all things.
> Whitehead 1978: 36).

The hero is a system operating within a system that will eventually fail and, in its decay, lead to

another system. The difference between the hero and the system in which he operates, though,

is that the hero resurfaces performing the same functions within his new system, whereas the

aging system is subsumed by the successor system. The hero that rises may be a new inorganic

structure, but his existence and function are the same; organic aggregates necessitate the

existence of the static and inorganic.

> But there is not any perfect attainment of an ideal order whereby the indefinite
> endurance of a society is secured. A society arises from disorder, where
> 'disorder' is defined by reference to the ideal for that society; the favourable
> background of a larger environment either itself decays, or ceases to favour the
> persistence of the society after some stage of growth: the society then ceases to
> reproduce its members, and finally after a stage of decay passes out of
> existence. Thus a system of 'laws' determining reproduction in some portion of

the universe gradually rises into dominance; it has its stage of endurance, and
passes out of existence with the decay of the society from which it emanates
(Whitehead 1978: 91).

So, at the risk of paradox, the hero is part of the disorder that will help with the downfall of the system in which he operates. He is the inorganic that allows for the mutability of the organic versus the staticity of the *wholly* organic. At the same time, however, he is a function of the static, in that he is always the static inorganic that acts as a force of chaos; he is always internalized as a slightly marginalized structure. The hero, as a marginal structure is aware in ways different than those of the other members of his society. He sees the threats to the society (both internal and external) that the society is not always capable of seeing. The effective hero (and there are ineffective ones) is aware of the boundaries of his society (as he often walks and approaches) and thus is aware of the other destructive force ripping away at the successful society:

> Beyond these societies is disorder, where 'disorder' is a relative term expressing
> the lack of importance possessed by the defining characteristics of the societies
> in question beyond their own bounds. When those societies decay, it will not
> mean that their defining characteristics cease to exist (Whitehead 1978: 92).

This external disorder is a boundary. The disorder to which Whitehead refers is not necessarily chaos but rather the discourse-that-is-Other. The external society may be chaotic, or it may be harshly regimented. The society is bounded on all sides by societies. Why are they not *one* society? The rules that define one do not necessarily apply to all (they don't necessarily *not*

apply either) and so that which is exterior is not-ordered-the-same. Rules, domestic ties different from those we understand, may appear as any number of things when we view them from within our own discourse, but what matters is that they are different, and in many cases difference appears to be chaos. Again, we must not look to personal examples of this…we are in discourse(s) and the difference to which we are referring is really beyond our personal immediate perception. If we look out of our own little sphere of perception and see something that we imagine to be different, we are still really only seeing our margins; the thing that is different is still relying on our sense of the same for that differentiation. True otherness is not perceivable to the organic member of a society. Once it is perceived it is not truly Other, just marginal.

Even the villain in our stories is going to be defined by how he breaks the laws of his society. True difference is a much greater leap than breaking the rules. We are going to devise a lot of names for this difference: the most common is monster.

The Iliad

The Iliad is problematic as a text in form as well as in content.

As war stories go, *The Iliad* is a story of domesticities. It is a story of domesticities gone wrong, of domesticities ripped apart to allow for and create intensities.

Menelaos' loss of Helen to Paris

Helen, the legendary beauty whose face launched a thousand ships, could be cited as the cause of the war, but it was not her face, the metonymic symbol of her presence, that launched the ships; it was the loss of her that started the war, or at least it was the loss of her that was cited as the discursively acceptable reason for starting the war.

Without the loss of Helen, the war would not have started. This is our first note of the theme that is going to play throughout our heroic texts: loss and the natural evolution of that loss into Desire, a motivating force of the subject.

The non-canonical Oath of Tyndareus is interesting because, whether is functioning as a motivating factor in the actions of the Greeks, or if it was added to the amalgam story post eventum as a way to explain sometimes troubling or illogical actions on the part of the Greeks, it serves the same theoretical function. The existing oath between Helen's father and the prior-suitors is a domestic tie that binds the heroes together into a coherent group; The Oath of Tyndareus functions to keep heroism limited within a single system. In the non-canonical oath, Tyndareus forced Helen's potentially problematic suitors to pledge that they would defend her

and her marriage. This served several functions. The suitors were all potential intensities, and were thus dangerous to their societies should their tribal identities as Ithacan, Spartan or whatnot override their guest/host ties to Tyndareus. One can easily imagine the story of Odysseus stealing Helen away when he is not chosen as her husband. The loss of Helen as a potential bride is exactly the kind of loss that will spark intense action and heroism, most famously in *The Iliad*, but repeated through heroic literatures. Helen is perhaps, the first princess locked in the tower, never mind that she put herself there. Tyndareus prevented that Becoming-Hero by wrapping the individuals in domesticity, by creating a rule, an oath that bound them, or, if the Oath is post eventum, the cloud of contributors to the Iliadic created a narrative that similarly bound the characters.The static function that was Helen was not the spark necessary to create an environment of intensity, the environment wherein heroism is possible. It was the removal, the relocation of the static (the wife/lover/family) that created the possibility of intensity. Tyndareus knows that by rewarding one potential suitor with Helen, he is also removing her from many. Tyndareus saw the lopsided equation he had on his hands. Helen's marriage is a happy ending for one of the suitors, but it is the potential beginning to a thousand heroic stories of the hero-who lost stealing Helen away for himself. That group of suitors, depending on the source, included many of the major players on the Achaian side of the war.

Tyndareus, however, could not anticipate the loss of the Helen to Paris, a suitor who was not bound by the oath.

The static can become dynamic within a system, as domestic ties are created and destroyed. Helen creates new bonds of permanence within the Trojan world. She marries; she

acknowledges her status as daughter-in-law to Priam; she takes royal status. She creates

domestic meaning for herself by becoming identified as family. She is not a dynamic function in

the Trojan world; she is a static, known, understood quantity. Redfield addresses Helen's

limited options for identity: "In Homer's world a woman's social position is defined by her

relations with men. There are two kinds: consanguinial and affinial; more concretely she has a

father and can have a husband" (Redfield 1994: 122). He further states that "a woman cannot

be a hero, but she can be the mother of heoes. Her participation in combat is thereby vicarious"

(Redfield 1994: 120). This position seems a statement of Redfield's interpretation of Homer's

position, and hopefully not Redfield's. There are no examples of mortal female warriors in the

Iliad, but Athena's existence definitely problematizes any sexist assumptions that it isn't

possible. It is not Helen's position in Trojan society that creates heroes; it is her movement

FROM the Achaean world that defines her as dynamic within that culture. She is not the

motivating factor; her ABSENCE is the motivating factor. The hero is not a dynamic feature,

remember, but a static product of change (often of loss). The intensity is not a thing unto itself,

but a gap, a break and a fissure. It is a function of Desire, and that Desire is really only possible

with change and loss. We must have the thing before we can recognize the loss of that thing

and we must have the loss of the thing to have the gap that then must be filled, i.e. Desire. The

hero does not exist until there is a gap in which he can exist. As a static function, he further

imitates a function of Desire in that Desire is never fulfilled: Desire is a static function whose

cessation is equivalent to a cessation of being. Desire is a function of Becoming; it is the gap on

the plane of immanence into which one is always falling and thus Becoming That gap and

Becoming is gender inclusive.

Even as the aggregated portions of this operating system cry foul and cite the insult of the breaking of the host/guest code, they are unaware of the system in which they are operating and the flow of power around them. While they cite the loss of Helen, and the insult to Menelaos, they also cite the drive for glory as the reason they fight for the Atreidai. Even as the Greeks react to the loss of Helen and the fissure in their society, they try to create social bonds within the new smaller group.

At this point, it is probably important to make some distinction in the use of "hero" because the characters in The Iliad use the term, and the scholars discussing the characters use the term. For Clarke "The Homeric hero is defined as such by one thing alone: his membership of a specific generation or race of men, belonging at a particular point along the scale of human history" (Clarke 2004: 79). So, this definition would have all of the players on both sides defined as hero. That is not specific enough for our usage. Redfield's nomenclature of "warrior" works more clearly. The Achaians and Trojans are at war, so they are warriors (with the potential and desire to become heroes). He defines the social aspects of the characters and states that "Heroism is for Homer a definite social task, and the heroes are a definite social stratum" (Redfield 1994: 99). Once the characters start creating this stratum, they become a society with its own set of rules. "As the warriors become a class or a caste, the advantages--and more important, the prestige--of the warrior become in themselves desirable (Redfield 1994: 100). The social aspect of warrior-ism creates a domestic band with hierarchies and therefore inclusive and exclusive memberships. There are definite recognized differences in skill and ability within this society, and there are definite margins. Redfield acknowledges these hierarchies: "Heroism is for Homer a definite social task, and the heroes are a definite social

stratum (Redfield 1994: 99), and the margins with their difficulties: "the Homeric community consists in effect, of those who are ready to die for one another; the perimeter of each community is a potential battlefield" (Redfield 1994: 99).

This is an important theme: the disruption of society by loss, gap and fissure and the constant recapitulation of society in the creation of new societies in the fractured remains of the old. The hero becomes a necessity as line of demarcation of the boundary between the IN and the OUT, the US and the THEM. He stands as a defender of the margin not because he moves to the threat, but because he is the first responder as a marginalized entity.

We cannot view this as a simple cause and effect relationship, but rather as an invisible, two-way flow of power. The hero does not exist because of the moment of ruined domesticity; the moment of ruined domesticity is a necessary disruption created out of the need for the intensity and the function of the hero. The hero exists statically, always the same: a function of intensity. It is the domestic, the amorphous and dynamic that gets changed to allow for the existence of that function. The hero is shaped by the fissure. The danger of the hero is his potential as a Deleuzian War Machine, a function of total disruption and rewriting of society, wherein the hero, in occupying disruption continues and exacerbates disruption. We must be careful though to note that while the War Machine is dangerous to a society, it is a necessary function of society. Without the defining note of change within a society, we begin to approach the inorganic.

The Iliad is even more specific, though, in its disruption of domesticity; its disruptions are layered one atop the other leading us directly to the anger of Achilleus. This layering is a

constant process of removal and limitation, and is emblematic of what we are going to see in heroic literature throughout this exploration.

The first, but perhaps most subtle limitation we have to deal with is the limitation on the text itself. The self-declared thesis of the epic is not the war, but the anger of Achilleus. My classics mentor, Dr. Leon Golden, posited in his courses that *The Iliad* had to be taken at face value, in the sense that one had to approach it as a contained work and only use the material within the text to interpret the text. The mythological backdrop of the story, the Oath of Tyndareus, is not included in the 24 books of *The Iliad*, therefore is should not be an interpretive factor. On the far side of the text, the works that occur textually after *The Iliad* (specifically the killing of Achilleus by Paris) should not be accounted for in our views of *The Iliad* itself. The most famous story of the Trojan war, the Trojan horse, does not occur in *The Iliad*.

Is this view valid? Perhaps, but we have to escape that binary and claim our exteriority. Once exterior to the argument, then the important factor becomes that the text is limited, and it is only in this limited world that the hero can exist at all. We narrow our perception of the character to the intense to the exclusion of the domestic; the hero becomes intense in presentation. In the text, this limited presentation is our reality, thus the reality of the hero is the non-domestic intensity. Redfield does not use the same language as Foucault, but his words resonate similarly;

> The characters in a poem are as the poet made them, and he made them as he would have them for the needs of his work. When we think of the poem as a

made thing, a construct, we abandon the point of view of the characters and

take our stand with the poet (Redfield 1994: 23).

The Iliad then is a limited presentation of a larger story: limited to the intensity of war.

The entirety of the Trojan war would offer us too much presentation of the character of

Achilleus for us to allot him heroic status. Perhaps the story of his upbringing, with centaurs and

cross-dressing would not influence the reader's view of Achilleus, but it might. The Iliad is a

story of intensity and heroism, and Homer wisely focuses the reader on the creation and

development of that heroism.

The entirety of the Iliadic cycle stretches between two epics, half a dozen tragedies, and

a large body of mythologies. *The Iliad* is famous within that body of work because it is the

clearest presentation of heroism; we are seeing Achilleus at the moment of his heroism, not his

semi-divine origin, his education at the hands of military geniuses, or his fall at the hands of the

foppish Paris[3]. Those other texts, and other iterations of the character do exist, so we must

practice some of these Foucaldian limitations and exteriorize ourselves from the full cycle and

see the text as a thing unto itself. This does not mean we should not acknowledge that the

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[3] Paris is in fact one of my favorite characters of *The Iliad* both as reader and from a strictly theoretical point because he is such a curious blend of the foppish and the effective. His wounding of second-greatest-Greek Diomedes with an arrow to the foot is not an accident; it is a calculated shot to a vulnerable area of a well-armored foe. It is also an intentional foreshadowing of Achilleus' death. While he does not deserve the disdain he receives from his fellow Trojans, or from some modern scholars, he is certainly not heroic. His domestic partner, Helen, who represents both marital ties, romantic ties, and divine ties often keep him from the battlefield. It is also important to note that Paris is a survivor.

other interpretations of the text exist, but gives us the opportunity to dip our foot in the running river of the text multiple times[4].

The Odyssey owes its fame to its presentation of one of the only characters to avoid the fatality of the heroic formula. Within the limited presentation of The Iliad, domesticity is systematically disrupted for specific characters both subtly and overtly. There is so much domesticity, so many ties, though, that the disruption necessary to bring Achilleus to intensity takes almost fifteen chapters. Heroism is not a simple state to achieve and it is not based on some equation that should one eliminate domestic ties heroism will erupt. Again, this is not a cause and effect: we are dealing with a multiplicity, an infinite number of possibilities, but one a priori cause.

Disruptions

The Achaians go to war because of the loss of Helen, but the army that they form is another form of domesticity; it is a function of survival as individuals band together into an aggregate of static and dynamic. The aggregate, society, is only possible as a multiplicity of static and dynamic, so even on the intensity-fraught plane of war, the static must exist as some nacreous substance onto which the dynamic can adhere and/or destroy. This aggregate is created as the dynamic domestic function of the army is based on the static existence of the soldiers/heroes who make up the army. Within this military structure, there are the sub-structures of individual tribal affiliations. Within those individual tribal affiliations there are

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[4] The idea of multiple presentations of the same character is going to explode in our discussion of The Batman, who will, in one issue, have multiple creative hands on his creation: writers, artists, pencillers, colorists, letterers and editors (not to mention market forces).

familial ties between warriors, love ties between warriors and ties between warriors and their captured slaves. A disruption of one level of domesticity resonates into other levels to infuse a dynamic element into that static function.

It is this kind of disruption on the part of Agamemnon that almost costs him his war, his life and gives us the stated thesis of *The Iliad*: the anger of Achilleus. In the first book of *The Iliad* the Achaians determine that the illness ravaging their soldiers is a punishment from Apollo for the mistreatment of Apollo's priest, Chryses. Agamemnon should accept the ransom for the priest's daughter, and not threaten someone with ties to divinity. In an effort to appease the god, the priest's daughter is returned to him, leaving Agamemnon claiming he has fewer war-prizes than some of his captains. In an effort to recapitulate his domestic power, Agamemnon decides to take Briseis from Achilleus. This movement sends ripples across several layers of domesticity, though. Agamemnon states:

> 'Forever quarrelling is dear to your heart, and wars and battles; and if you are very strong indeed, that is a god's gift. Go home then with your own ships and your own companions, be king over the Myrmidons. I care nothing about you. I take no account of your anger. But here is my threat to you. Even as Phoibos Apollo is taking away my Chryseis, I shall convey her back in my own ship, with my own followers; but I shall take the fair-cheeked Briseis, your prize, I myself going to your shelter, that you may learn well how much greater I am than you, and another man may shrink back from likening himself to me and contending against me' (The Iliad Bk 1 Ln 177-187).

By taking Briseis, Agamemnon is exerting and displaying his control over Achilleus, but he is doing it in such a way as to disrupt Achilleus' domestic bonds within his smaller domestic circles, as well as within the very private circle of his tent. The lack of domesticity allows for the possible creation of intensity; Agamemnon is creating a fissure in the static and thus a space for intensity. He is not creating an intensity, but by disrupting the static plane of immanence, he is creating space for the intense in the form of the dynamic. Under normal circumstances, the static would recapitulate itself and fill the gap offered by this new dynamic function. Achilleus would react politically as a lesser-ranking noble, thus reifying the system itself. Power is invisible; one can only see the shadows and eddies of its presence. Achilleus' reaction to Agamemnon is the only sign of his power, and Achilleus is left with the decision to reaffirm the domestic relationships between them or disrupt those relationships. With Achilleus there is in that breach the room for the potential intensity. As external readers, we are privy to the moment of potential intensity:

> And the anger came upon Peleus' son (Achilleus), and within his shaggy breast
> the heart was divided in two ways, pondering whether to draw from beside his
> thigh the sharp sword, driving away all those who stood between and kill the son
> of Atreus (Agamemnon),or else to check the spleen within and keep down his
> anger. Now as he weighed in his mind and spirit these two courses and was
> drawing from its scabbard the great sword, Athene descended from the sky (Bk 1
> Ln 188-195).
> Luckily for Agamemnon, other modes of domesticity are still in play so that the moment

of anger/intensity does not come to fruition. As Achilleus vows to leave the fighting until his prize is returned to him, he is in effect creating a new domestic bond that negates the

possibility of intensity. By entering into a cause and effect agreement with Agamemnon (even if it is unsolicited), Achilleus is creating a buffer of domesticity between himself and the intensity of the heroic. The vow is another domesticity, and a society within the society that prevents the lack/fissure from occurring; it is an alternative to intensity that renders intensity unnecessary. It is also a great, if lengthy, insult:

> 'You wine sack, with a dog's eyes, with a deer's heart. Never once have you taken courage in your heart to arm with your people for battle, or go in to ambuscade with the best of the Achaians. No, for in such things you see death. Far better to your mind is it, all along the widespread host of the Achaians to take away the gifts of any man who speaks up against you. King who feed on your people, since you rule nonentities; otherwise, son of Atreus, this were your last outrage. But I will tell you this and swear a great oath upon it: in the name of this sceptre, which never again will bear leaf nor branch, not that is has left behind the cut stump in the mountains, nor shall it ever blossom again, since the bronze blade stripped bark and leafage, and now at last the sons of the Achaians carry it in their hands in state when they administer the justice of Zeus. And this shall be a great oath before you: some day longing for Achilleus will come to the sons of the Achaians, all of them. Then stricken at heart though you be, you will be able to do nothing, when in their numbers before man-slaughtering Hektor they drop and die.' (*The Iliad* BK 1 Ln 225-243).

Achilleus vows upon the scepter, an unliving thing and a sign of domestic, judicial, royal and religious power. It is a club with which he beats home the issue of domesticity. This symbol of domesticity represents him resolving firmly to remain un-intense and absent from the battlefield, the plane of immanence on which he is eventually going to behave intensely.

"Achilles is caught between a father who has sent him away and a king who wants to take him over and use him. He can think of nothing better to do, for the moment than to take a stand on the margin of events. (Redfield 17). When faced with fissure and gap, the society returns to a sense of the status quo instead of the alternative of further disruption. Achilleus leaving the fighting via an oath might be odd, but it is still understandable and well within the rules of the society wherein he functions. The intense alternative, the slaying of Agamemnon, is also within the realm of the understandable but would lead to further disruption and potential gaps to fill within the Achaian society.

The Intensity Of Achilleus

The anger of Achilleus is one of the driving factors of the epic poem, and when that anger is in full blush, Achilleus is a dangerous force of intensity. When he is angry at Agamemnon for taking Briseis away from him, Achilleus is stubborn, almost inorganically so. Agamemnon decides to bribe Achilleus back into his good graces and expects that Achilleus will be moved by the gifts that he offers, but this expectation is based on the presumption that Achilleus will behave organically. He attempts to recapitulate his relationship with Achilleus: " by offering seven towns and his daughter, Agamemnon is not offering to make himself in the poor; he is offering to include Achilles within his own sphere as his son-in-law and subordinate" (Redfield 1994: 16). Domesticity changes; intensity does not. Agamemnon states: "Let him give way. For Hades gives not way, and it is pitiless, and therefore he among all the gods is most hateful to mortals" (The Iliad Bk 9 Ln 158-159). This will not be the last time that Achilleus is likened to death itself, and it is not coincidence that Achilleus is seen as a force of anti-life, for

his heroic identity is problematic to domestic construction. This is a common problem with the

hero:

> The men of the heroic race command wonder because of their strength, their
> fierceness, in their superhuman force, in some cases there heightened wisdom
> or in the arts of speech: to that extent they are models to be imitated by young
> men especially by soldiers… Such excellence is liable to push the hero to
> dangerous extremes of anger, passion and recklessness so that his exalted status
> makes his deeply problematic if one tries to take him as a model of moral
> excellence (Clarke 2004: 79-80).

The oath therefore acts as a force of the static; it is this with which Achilleus fills the gap

created in his domestic identity, but we are shown that even within his own society, Achilleus'

potential for inorganic existence (death) is recognized.

Within the same book of the epic, Phoinix, Achilleus' surrogate father chides him. "Then,

Achilleus, beat down your great anger. It is not yours to have a pitiless heart. The very

immortals can be moved; their virtue and honour and strength are greater than yours are" (The

Iliad Bk 9 Ln 496-498). Achilleus' virtue, honor and strength may not be a match for the

immortals, but his stubbornness exceeds theirs. The gods, in their immortality, are part of the

aggregate that creates a living society, for, in their immortality, they are defining the margin of

mortality. They are not living things in that they do not carry with them the one trait that is

common to all living things: the inevitability of death. They are wholly organic, living yet

unmoved by death. The gods do not grow up, age or die at the hands of mortals.In the simple

binary of organic versus inorganic, they are forces of organic power, but they are still part of the

binary and define death as much in their denial of mortality as does the death of any given mortal[5].

Achilleus stands out from either group, though, in his a-mortality. He is likened to the gods in his intensity because he is in denial of the organic dynamic nature of his mortality and therefore does not fit the category "mortal". Achilleus is not immortal, though. He knows he is fated to die. His acceptance of his fated death gives him a perspective on the finitude of his life that the other heroes do not have, because, even though they may realize that they are going to die, their mortality has not been proven in their own deaths. They have the hope of life; death is an abstract to them. Achilleus is aware of the circumstances of his death, and is even given a clause by which he can avoid that circumstance in favor of a less glorious life. He says:

> I carry two sorts of destiny toward the day of my death. Either, if I stay here and fight beside the city of the Trojans, my return home is gone, but my glory shall be everlasting; but if I return home to the beloved land of my fathers, the excellence of my glory is gone, but there will be a long life left for me, and my end in death will not come to me as quickly (*The Iliad* Bk 9 Ln 411-416).

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5 The gods also behave like members of a society. Their internal hierarchy is familial and tribal, and fraught with struggle and conflict. They behave like mortals without the fear of death. Their power is feared by the mortals, but it is their capricious, human nature that truly baffles the mortals over whom they hold sway. "'Wretched girl, do not tease me lest in anger I forsake you and grow to hate you as much as now I terribly love you'". It seems confusing to the mortals who deal with the aggregate of the organic and the inorganic to see the same chaos that drives them driving the purely organic gods. It is perhaps this difference in expectation that makes the actions of the gods seem inscrutable as much as the actions themselves.

Achilleus has clearly stated the same decision that all Iliadic warriors have to face on a more

subtle level. Achilleus is not given the choice between mortality and immortality in the sense of

an infinite extension to his organic life, but he is given the opportunity to accept immortality in

the manner of his death. "The hero, we said, test the limits of life and experiences the

contradiction of life with heightened awareness. For Achilles this heightened awareness entails

the rejection of community and culture, the rejection of life itself" (Redfield 1994: 109). For the

Greeks, the idea of immortality is an issue of remembrance and glory. The only way to achieve

that glory is to kill or be killed. This system is an economy of glory; a system of trading, investing

and acquiring glory.

No one was more aware of his own status as a hero than the Iliadic warrior: Greek or

Trojan. The Iliadic warrior recognized the immortality of the text, and the battlefield was a

space on which one did not just win or lose, but upon which one performed deeds that would

be remembered. On the battlefield, Sarpedon comments to Glaukos[6]:

> 'Man, supposing you and I, escaping this battle, would be able to live on forever,
> ageless, immortal, so neither would I myself go on fighting in the foremost nor
> would I urge you into the fighting where men win glory. But now, seeing that the
> spirits of death stand close about us in their thousands, no man can turn aside,
> nor escape them, let us go on and win glory for ourselves, or yield it to others'
> (*The Iliad* Bk 12 Ln 322-328).

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[6] This is the quote that I use to explain why I like *The Iliad* and as a simple summing-up of the Heroic
Code.

The realization of these warriors is that the spirit of death is everywhere. One can just as easily slip in the bathtub (especially in a culture that used olive oil as a cleaning agent…) and crack one's skull as die in battle. The possibility for an all-too-organic end surrounds the hero, but for the hero there is another option: immortality.

The prize was to have one's feats remembered by the poets and thus gain immortality. "The hallmark of the heroic society is the code demanding death in the battle when the warrior is at his best" (MacCary 1982: 196). It is important to note that this desire for textualization occurs within a text, so that the text is, in a way, self-authorizing. The textualization of this immortality gives us our economy of glory and a way to escape the binary of life and death. The warriors are not bolstering each other's courage by giving the false impression that to enter the battlefield is an assurance of life (though we might find that within the textual world this is often the case). What we have here is a break from the binary of life and death, the break allowed by heroism. Glaukos and Sarpedon are offered the disruptive choice: immortality via remembrance and text, and to the Iliadic warrior this supersedes life, especially a life unremembered.

This economy of glory is a brilliant rationalization of life and death on the battlefield and motivation for fighting. Heroism does not exist in a vacuum; it does need a cause. This economy states that should a warrior win a battle, that warrior will be remembered for his victory. Not all warriors win, however, so how does one deal with the fear of losing, of entering the battlefield and facing a better warrior and being killed? The economy of glory works not unlike karma or the American system of financial credit. It does not matter that one has good or bad karma, or credits or debits. To have an identity on either side of the binary is to have an position within the system. Within the economy of glory, it does not matter whether one wins or loses; to

participate supposes remembrance and the payoff of immortality. Sarpedon says: "let us go on and win glory for ourselves, or yield it to others." Victory or defeat is meaningless; it is the attempt and presence within the system that matters. MacCary states that "The hero of the Iliad does not exist as such if he cannot kill" (MacCary 1982:133), but this is one sided. The hero of the Iliad does not exist if he cannot kill or be killed. The gods, with their immortality are not heroes, nor is the bystander. The hero, however, who faces Achilleus cannot kill, but he certainly can, and will BE killed.

This is not some abstract articulation of courage. Sarpedon is not saying that one will be remembered for one's courage, but that one will be remembered FOR dying. One, therefore, could stand against Achilleus and lose, but one will then be remembered as one of the people killed by this named-warrior. *The Iliad* is a running tally of the people killed by Achilleus, and all of them have achieved their desired goal within the economy; they are remembered. One need not be the named warrior in order to achieve immorality; one can be the fuel with which that warrior achieves his named status and still achieve immortality. The successful warrior becomes a vehicle for both himself and those he kills. As long as one is part of the system, as long as the system exists, the immortality exists.

The Obituaries

The Iliad recognizes the existence of the aggregate of intensity and domesticity in the telling of the obituaries. That aggregate is realized and defined with the existence of death. While we do not receive domestic histories of the characters who live, when minor characters die, their domestic histories are related in sometimes beautiful and poignant poetic language. It could be

argued that this is a refutation of the heroic lifestyle, but the limited scope of the presentation

of the histories to the dead and dying problematizes that refutation. We do not hear of

Achilleus' home life as a viable alternative to his heroic life[6]. What we are actually receiving are

examples of what occurs when the domestic attempts to behave intensely.

> There Telemonian Aias struck down the son of Anthemion Simoeisios in his
> stripling's beauty, whom once his mother descending from Ida bore beside the
> banks of Simoeis when she had followed her father and mother to tend the
> sheepflocks. Therefore they called him Simoeisios; but he could not render again
> the care of his dear parents; he was short lived, beaten down beneath the spear
> of the high-hearted Aias, who struck him as he first came forward beside the
> nipple of the right breast, and the bronze spearhead drove clean through the
> shoulder.
> He dropped then to the ground in the dust, like some black poplar, which in the
> land low-lying about a great marsh grows smooth trimmed yet with branches
> growing at the uttermost tree-top: one whom a man, a maker of fine chariots,
> fells with shining iron (*The Iliad* Bk 4 Ln 473-486).

Simoeis' death is recounted to us because it is the defining moment of his existence within the

Iliadic discourse. We are not expected to care about the support this character rendered to his

parents, until that possibility of care is disrupted by his death. Simoeis's immortality, though

comes from his death; he is now part of the inorganic function of his system's existence; the

textualization of the hero and the economy of glory as seen in the glorification of Ajax, a named

warrior.

> There he killed these two (Xanthos and Thoon) and took away the dear life from
> them both, leaving to their father lamentation and sorrowful affliction, since he

was not to welcome them home from the fighting alive still; and remoter

kinsmen shared his possessions (*The Iliad* Bk 5 Ln 155-158).

He spoke and let fly another shaft from the bowstring, straight for Hektor, and all

his heart was straining to hit him; but missed his man, and struck down instead a

strong son of Priam, Gorgythion the blameless, hit in the chest by an arrow:

Gorgythion whose mother was lovely Kastianeira, Priam's bride from Aisyme,

with the form of a goddess. He bent drooping his head to one side, as a garden

poppy bends beneath the weight of its yield and the rains of springtime; so his

head bent slack to one side beneath the helm's weight (*The Iliad* Bk 8 Ln 300-

308).

The Gorgythion obituary is particularly interesting, because he is killed by accident. Teukros is

actually aiming for Hektor but instead kills one of his brothers. The important factor is that

Gorgythion was on the field taking the chance at being killed; he was allowing for the possibility

of his death, and therefore was given the chance at immortality, and according the rules of this

particular discourse, he is granted that immortality.

From the perspective of a modern reader, these obituaries might appear to show the

tragedy of war and nothing else, but we have to place the actions in the system wherein they

are occurring. If we do a Foucauldian reversal of the flow of power in the creation of these

textual instances, then the economy of glory becomes apparent again. *The Iliad* does not

present us with the history of characters who live. We are not privy to these intimate details for

our named characters. Instead, these intimate details are crafted to structure identity for

characters who would have no identity other than their death at another named-warrior's

hands. The identities crafted then are not for the benefit of the dead, but for the benefit and

glory of those who kill them. Those warriors would not **be** named-warriors if there were not

this list of characters, each with at least a minor history. While the obituaries may **tell** of the

horror of war, they are **doing** the glorification of war. Without the material of the obituaries,

there would be no textual immortality for the heroes and therefore no motivating force. The

system reaffirms itself in the telling of the stories and the obituaries. A warrior-to-be hears the

recounting of the obituaries and experiences the fulfillment of the promises of the discourse.

Gorgythion is immortal according to his own belief system. Warrior–to-be does not have to see

Hades or some abstract otherworldly externality: he remembers Gorgythion, therefore

Gorgythion is immortal; should he be remembered, he will be immortal too.

The obituaries also place the characters within the system by bringing into textual existence the

life and domestic ties that the character is consciously denying in favor of the dangerous life of

the intense. The heroic code, with its necessary process of death, does not feed on the death of

those who are concerned with the domestic. The Iliadic heroic life is cannibalistic; heroes feed

on the deaths of one another to fuel their own immortality.[7]

Achilleus Returns

   The Iliad begins by defining itself as the tale of the pain Achilleus heaps upon the

Greeks; this definition structures *The Iliad* as a tale of absence. Achilles' anger removes him

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[7] What of the villain, though? *The Iliad* does not have a clear-cut protagonist as most modern heroic literature does. The reader is allowed to take sides with either the Greek or the Trojan armies and heroes. Who is the aggressor? Is it better to root for the defenders? This choice is not so available in many modern heroic literatures because of the presence of the villain, a creature/individual who represents an intensity-as-disruption. It is interesting to note, though, that even as we simplify our relationship to the hero by creating a marginalized villain who we can use as a moral backdrop against which we can discern the actions of the not-necessarily moral hero, the ambiguous moral standing of the hero reasserts itself in a curious impossibility called the anti-hero.

from the fighting. He solidifies his position as absent-hero with his oath, a reification of his

domestic bond He then recapitulates his social position by physically removing himself from the

war and the Achaian camp by isolating himself within his own Myrmidon camp. Achilleus'

domestic identity denies him the possibility of the intensity of heroic action.

Even by Book Sixteen, better than halfway through the epic, Achilleus is still bitter about

Agamemnon's treatment of him, and the loss of the slave girl Briseis. When his companion

Patroklos questions Achileus' continued absence from the fighting, Achilleus answers:

> When a man tries to foul one who is his equal, to take back a prize of honour,
>
> because he goes in greater authority. This is a bitter thought to me; my desire
>
> has been dealt with roughly. The girl the sons of the Achaians chose out for my
>
> honour, and I won her with my own spear, and stormed a strong-fenced city, is
>
> taken back out of my hands by powerful Agamemnon, the son of Atreus, as if I
>
> were some dishonoured vagabond (*The Iliad* Bk 10 Ln 52-59).

Achilleus is most worried that Agamemnon has called his domestic identity into question. By

forcing Achilleus to question that identity, he brings it into presence, thus disrupting Achilleus'

heroic/intense identity. The questioning of the identity, the need to resolve the issues of the

identity make it impossible for Achilleus to escape the identity and move toward the intense.

The war is not going well for the Greeks by this point, though. Zeus has recalled all of the gods

off the field of battle for his own personal goals (all of them domestic, even if immortal), and

Hektor has led the Trojans almost all the way to the Greek encampments.

Achilleus is well aware of the status of the Greeks, and can watch the ebb and flow of battle

from his own ships. His oath keeps him out of battle for as long as his own ships are not

threatened. The threat to the ships is the most pressing danger to the Greeks. The ships are to

the Greeks what Troy is to the Trojans. The Greeks sustained their war against Troy by a voyage

to the war-site that was half traveling, and half raiding the towns along the way.[8] Without the

ships, the Greeks are trapped in hostile territory years away from their respective homelands.

Achilleus is willing to let his friends among the Greeks die, but he is not willing to let his own

Myrmidons, those to whom he is tribally affiliated, be stranded on enemy shores.

Achilleus muddies the boundaries between domestic and heroic as well as issues of identity

when he relents and compromises by allowing Patroklos to enter the battle disguised as

Achilleus. Patroklos asks:

> Give me your armor to wear on my shoulders into the fighting; so perhaps the
> Trojans might think I am you, and give way from their attack, and the fighting
> sons of the Achaians get wind again after hard work. There is little breathing
> space in the fighting. We unwearied might with a mere cry pile men wearied
> back upon their city, and away from the ships and the shelters (*The Iliad* Bk 16 Ln
> 40-45).

Greek and Trojan armor acted as a form of heraldry. Once armed and armored, a warrior's

identity was obscured by helmet and armor. Patroklos in Achilleus' armor would be easily

mistaken for Achilleus himself. This assumption of identity allows for organicity, though. The

move that Patroklos makes is a move based on domestic ties. He assumes Achilleus' identity in

an effort to save his friends. He is not entering the battlefield as an intensity; he is not in the

quest for glory because any glory he would win while armored as Achilleus would be attributed

to Achilleus. He is attempting to save those with whom he has domestic ties.

This is muddy water theoretically. We are going to see ample opportunity for the hero to act in response to a change in domestic ties, but those domestic ties are defined in terms of gap and absence and therefore as a kind of Desire. Patroklos is reacting to domesticity as presence and therefore is allowing, if not demanding, his death. Patroklos' concern with death allows for the possibility of death.

Furthermore, Patroklos is entering the battlefield AS Achilleus. The loaning of the armor and the assumption of identity is a clear sign of the close domestic ties between Achilleus and Patroklos. As Achilleus' favored companion, Patroklos is able to ask favors of him that no other warrior could; he is allowed to borrow Achilleus' basic identity and enter the field of battle where Achilleus would normally be making a name for himself. This is as close a tie as I can imagine two warriors having. We will see, in fact, that the loss of the armor of Achilleus is a source of utmost concern to the Achaian warriors. The loss of the armor and the subsequent assumption of new identity by Hektor shows the importance of name and identity on the battlefield.

Achilleus' loaning of the armor does not come without a warning, though. Achilleus seems aware of the danger facing Patroklos. He warns his companion not to extend himself beyond the task at hand. Specifically he warns Patroklos not to drive too far for glory under this assumed identity.

> You must not, in the pride and fury of fighting, go on slaughtering all the Trojans,
> and lead the way against Ilion, for fear some one of the everlasting gods on
> Olympos might crush you…You must turn back once you bring the light of
> salvation to the ships, and let others go on fighting in the flat land…if 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 (*The Iliad* Bk 16 Ln 91-94, 95-96, 97-100).

Achilleus does not want Patroklos to let the drive for intensity overtake him; he does not want

him to fall into the gap of Desire and continue too far into the fighting. He does not

acknowledge that a mortal man could kill Patroklos, but he does not discount the possibility of

an immortal striking down his companion. Achilleus is not directly denigrating Patroklos' skill as

a warrior, but he seems aware of the danger of what they are doing. He has to be cognizant of

the attention that Patroklos will be attracting by appearing to be Achilleus. Patroklos will be

entering an economy where his death as Achilleus is worth much more than his death as

Patroklos would be. Trojans will be facing him expecting to fight at Achilleus' level, not

Patroklos'.

The subterfuge works and the Greeks are given a respite from the fighting. The Trojans

react as is expected of them.

They (the Myrmidons) fell upon the Trojans in a pack, and about them the ships

echoed terribly to the roaring Achaians. But the Trojans, when they saw the

powerful son of Menoitios himself and his henchmen with him in the glare of

their war gear, the heart was stirred in all of them, the battalions were shaken in

the expectation that by the ships swift-footed Peleion had thrown away his

anger and chosen the way of friendship. Then each man looked about him for a

way to escape the sheer death (*The Iliad* Bk 16 Ln 276-283).

Patroklos' first action in battle is to kill Pyraichmes, one of the Trojan leaders, and, as the battle rages, Patroklos does very well for himself, as Achilleus. The obituaries within this battle, though, have a hint of irony about them: while these men are dying within the system of the economy of glory and their deaths are furthering the fame and glory of another fighter within the system, that glory is being misattributed, or at least being attributed in a very second-hand manner. Even strong fighters like Sarpedon fall to Patroklos-as-Achilleus. Sarpedon dies but one has to wonder whether he dies thinking he has made a name for himself by facing Achilleus or Patroklos. There is a sense of dishonesty and impurity about this battle. These men died thinking they were facing Achilleus and that their immortality was assured, but, instead, they will be remembered as having been tricked. They are still remembered, however.

Patroklos accomplishes his task and routs the Trojans:

In Hektor first of all he put a temper that was without strength. He climbed to his chariot and turned to flight, and called to the other Trojans to run, for he saw the way of Zeus' sacred balance (*The Iliad* Bk 16 Ln 655-658).

The rout starts with the decision on Hektor's part to leave the battlefield. Here we see a good warrior, and Hektor is certainly a named-warrior, leaving battle. In a way, this retreat is an economic decision, and in this case, a sound economic decision. Hektor is a problematic character, for he is one of most admirable heroes. He fights for what many of us would see as the more honorable reasons: he is protecting his family and his home, but he also is within the same economy of glory as the rest of the heroes. Hektor has the added disadvantage of an audience about whom he is aware, an audience made up of his subjects and his family. In this

case, though, Hektor decides not face Achilleus, which is wise, since his opponent is not

Achilleus. It would cheapen Hektor's brand, so to speak, to fall before Patroklos.

Patroklos has accomplished his given task, and has given the Greeks the room they

need, but the drive for glory overtakes him:

> But Patroklos, with a shout to Automedon and his horses, went after the Trojans
> and Lykians in a huge blind fury. Besotted: had he only kept the command of
> Peleiades he might have got clear away from the evil spirit of black death (*The
> Iliad* Bk 16 Ln 684-687).

Patroklos tries to take the city of Troy:

> There the sons of the Achaians might have taken gate-towering Ilion under the
> hands of Patroklos, who raged with the spear far before them, had not Phoibos
> Apollo taken his stand on the strong built tower…Three time Patroklos tried to
> mount the angle of the towering wall, and three times Phoibos Apollo battered
> him backward with the immortal hands beating back the bright shield. As
> Patroklos for the fourth time, like something more than a man, came at him he
> called aloud, and spoke winged words in the voice of danger: 'Give way,
> illustrious Patroklos…' and Patroklos gave ground before him a great way,
> avoiding the anger of him who strikes from afar (*The Iliad* Bk 16 Ln 698-701, 702-
> 707, 710-711-486).

Apollo calls Patroklos by his real name and thus identifies him, if to no one else, to Patroklos

himself. Patroklos-as-Achilleus is reminded of his real identity, and is suddenly NOT Achilleus on

the rage, but a lesser warrior separated from his companions and facing the god Apollo. One of

Apollo's spheres of influence is truth and the light associated with it. That light of truth cuts through the "besotted" nature of Patroklos' rage in battle and brings him to a sense of presence.

Patroklos is no longer Achilleus on the battlefield. He is not Achilleus Becoming-intense; he is Patroklos Becoming Achilleus. He is not performing the action of the heroic, but being a Myrmidon protecting his domestic ties by imitating the actions of another warrior and taking that warrior's name. While the subject may exist at a level that is a priori, the superject is molecular and therefore modifiable. Patroklos, the subject, has not changed, what is occurring is a change in the superject as the subject appears to modify its identity. The subject has not changed; it has merely modified the verb it is performing. By becoming a superject based on domestic ties, the subject is allowing for organicity, and to allow for organicity is to allow for death.

Apollo strikes Patroklos, but does not kill him. Apollo's blow does not even draw blood, but instead seems to occur on a mental plane. The blow has physical effect, but the effect on Patroklos' demeanor is more important and telling. The imagery of the final moments of Patroklos' life are not filled with descriptions of blood or physicality, but rather of Patroklos' mental state and the revelation of his identity.

> (Apollo) struck his back and his broad shoulders with a flat stroke of the hand so
> that his eyes spun. Phoibos Apollo now struck away from his head the
> helmet…Disaster caught his wits, and his shining body went nerveless. He stood
> stupidly, and from close behind his back a Dardanian man hit him between the
> shoulders with a sharp javelin…Now Patroklos, broken by the spear and the

god's blow, tried to shun death and shrink back into the swarm of his own

companions (*The Iliad* Bk 16 Ln 791-793, 805-807, 816-817-486).

Patroklos' change in identity requires a change in demeanor. As Achilleus, he was without fear.

The real Achilleus feels no fear when dealing the intensity of battle because he approaches that

intensity at a level that approaches the a priori; Patroklos' assumption of Achilleus' identity

allows for the veneer of this same mentality, but the veneer is easily stripped. Underneath the

armor, Patroklos behaves like a person; he has faults and insecurities. His destiny is uncertain;

Achilleus' has only two destinies ahead of him and he knows he has the opportunity to choose

between them.

Achilleus is a character in a larger story, and he is aware of that position as shown in his

discussion of greater destinies. While Achilleus is a representation of a person, he is able to act

like a self-aware textual entity. He knows how his story is going to end. While he is a subject, he

is aware of his predestined position as object. This negation of possibility changes the way

Achilleus Becomes. His possibilities are not limitless. His existence is a representation of a life

not unlike that of character in a text. This is not some Platonic mimesis of mimesis, though. It is

not art trying to mimic life trying to mimic ideal form; it is the representation of life becoming

text.

Patroklos is killed, eventually, by Hektor, who chooses not to run once it is revealed that

the warrior killing Trojans left and right is not Achilleus. Patroklos is not so quick to let Hektor

add him to the Trojan's list of victories. Patroklos cheapens Hektor's victory by pointing out that

Hektor was only the third warrior to strike him and therefore not deserving of all of the glory.

Now is your time for big words, Hektor. Yours is the victory given by Kronos' son,

Zeus, and Apollo, who have subdued me easily, since they themselves stripped

the arms from my shoulders...No deadly destiny, with the son of Leto, has killed

me, and of men it was Euphorbos; you are only my third slayer (*The Iliad* Bk 16

Ln 844-846, 849-850).

This taint of ambiguity surrounding the death of Patroklos is indicative of his

motivations for entering the battle in the first place. Patroklos did not take the field out of a

desire for glory, so it only seems reasonable that the warrior killing him does not receive full

credit for that victory.

The Loss Of Identity-The Loss Of The Armor

Patroklos' death, while offering a respite for the Greek warriors, quickly turns into a

fight over both his body and Achilleus' armor. The armor becomes a lost cause as Hektor

assumes control of it, but several of the other Greek warriors go to great lengths to protect

Patroklos' corpse. It is interesting to note the order in which the warriors place their priorities.

Menelaos lets the reader into his inner turmoil:

'Ah, me; if I abandon here the magnificent armor, and Patroklos, who has fallen

here for the sake of my honour, shall not some of the Danaans, seeing it, hold it

against me? Yet if I fight on, alone as I am, the Trojans and Hektor, for shame,

shall they not close in, many against one about me? Hektor of the shining helm

leads all of the Trojans here. Then why does my own heart within me debate

this?' (*The Iliad* Bk 17 Ln 91-97).

The armor of Achilleus seems to be more important to the Greek warriors than does the body of their friend. Perhaps this is because the body is of less importance to the Trojans. When Hektor and his troops chase Menelaos away, Hektor assumes control of the armor, but Menelaos, with the help of Aias is able to retrieve the naked body of Patroklos for Achilleus. This is not to imply that the body of Patroklos was not important to the Trojans. Hektor has gruesome plans for it.

> Hektor, when he had stripped from Patroklos the glorious armor, dragged at
> him, meaning to cut from his head from his shoulders with the sharp bronze, to
> haul off the body and give it to the dogs of Troy (*The Iliad* Bk 17 Ln 125-127).

The priority is the armor, though, for all involved. Each warrior supplied his own armor, so its loss was a tremendous burden, and the acquisition of better armor was a tremendous boon. In this case, it's also a tremendously useful plot device.

This entire episode is predicated by the domestic ties that motivate Patroklos; the economy of glory that normally affects the heroes is not as strong a factor as it usually is. Menelaos' speech is predicated not on glory, but on shame. He is worried that if his actions are not a match for Patroklos' then he will look bad in front of the others to whom he is tied domestically. The priorities of the warriors changes with the addition of the domestic goals, and the motivations become less clear for all involved. The Greeks are torn between two priorities, and thus do not function as smoothly as they would if they were solely seeking glory. This is an additive function; the concerns are predicated on the act of acquisition rather than fissure. Menelaos' concerns all revolve around the events that will happen once they acquire the armor

or the body. In a purely intense battle, Menelaos would either be dead or victorious so there would be no room for interpretation, but by worrying about shame, a kind of anti-glory that could cloud others' memory of him for all of eternity, Menelaos problematizes his own actions.

When the combined forces of Aias and Menelaos are able to recover the body of Patroklos, they are likened to lions protecting their young. Aias covered Menelaos "like a lion over his young, when the lion is leading his little ones along" (*The Iliad* Bk 17 Ln 133-134). The metaphor cements the domestic ties at place within the passage. The warriors are fighting a defensive fight wherein their priority is not self, and therefore subject, but another, and therefore object. They are incapable of intensity.

The loss of the armor is a serious blow to Achilleus on several levels. While its loss implies an inability on Achilleus' part to return to the fighting, this loss seems mitigated by the fact that Achilleus has no desire to return to the fighting. He was, prior to these events, without motive for needing the armor. Hektor has seemingly acquired something that is of no use to the passive Achilleus. The armor, though, blossoms in its symbolism at the moment of its loss. Contextually, the armor becomes symbolic to Achilleus in its association to the loss of Patroklos. The armor becomes the reification of Hektor's assumption of glory over Patroklos' death. It is symbolic of a double loss, the armor itself, and Achilleus' favorite companion. Hektor, by taking possession of the armor, is taking full blame for Patroklos death, even though Patroklos himself was unwilling to give Hektor full credit for his death. It will quickly become apparent that this was not the most economically sound decision on Hektor's part. While wearing the armor, Hektor is making perhaps the boldest statement a warrior can make: the public assumption of the identity as the hero-who-killed-X-hero. In this case, it would seem that

Hektor got a bargain. He is one of the team who killed Patroklos, but he acquires the armor that represents defeat of Patroklos/Achilleus all to himself. As a bonus, he is able to wear that badge without fear: even Achilleus will not assume the battlefield unprotected.

From our standpoint as external, though, we can see the other functions of the armor. The loss of the armor offers motivation. It is Desire which moves the subject across the plane of immanence, and, unlike Patroklos, the armor is a re-acquirable.

The Re-Invention of Achilleus

The metamorphosis that Achilleus undergoes after the death of Patroklos is my model for the activation of heroic identity. The process is complex and molar, but revolves around one basic concept: the loss of domestic ties. Achilleus is going to become a creature of intensity, but not in an additive creative fashion, but in a negative eliminative way made necessary by the overlapping losses of domestic identity. Achilleus' move into the intense and away from the domestic is going to take him outside the inclusive boundaries of not only his tribe, but from his mortality as well.

The death of Patroklos and the loss of his armor are emotionally devastating to Achilleus and move him beyond his domestic concerns in relation to Agamemnon, the Trojans, and his position within the mortal world. When he is told of the death of Patroklos, he reacts:

> He spoke, and the black cloud of sorrow closed on Achilleus. In both hands he
> caught up the grimy dust, and poured it over his head and face, and fouled his
> handsome countenance, and the black ashes were scattered over his immortal

tunic. And he himself, mightily in his might, in the dust lay at length, and took

and tore at his hair with his hands and defiled it (*The Iliad* Bk 18 Ln 22-27).

He mourns the loss of his friend, and that loss becomes the center of his identity. His grief leads

him to find solace from his immortal mother, and Achilleus starts cutting his domestic ties.

> [I] sit here beside my ships, a useless weight on the good land, I who am such as
>
> no other of the bronze-armoured Achaians in battle, though there are others
>
> also better in council— why, I wish that strife would vanish away from among
>
> gods and mortals, and gall, which makes a man grow angry for all his great mind,
>
> that gall of anger that swarms like smoke inside of a man's heart and becomes a
>
> thing sweeter to him by far than the dripping of honey. So it was here that the
>
> lord of men Agamemnon angered me. Still, we will let all this be a thing of the
>
> past (*The Iliad* Bk 18 Ln 10-112).

There is little need for Achilleus to reconcile with Agamemnon. Once he does enter the fighting,

Achilleus does not need the other warriors. If my thesis is correct, and intensity is an absence of

domesticity, then it would seem to make more sense for Achilleus to continue the process

begun with the death of Patroklos and divest himself of all domestic ties. So, why this

reconciliation with Agamemnon?

This is a case where externality is a necessity. The reality of this reconciliation is that it IS

unnecessary and the domestic ties that are created are pointless and in no way shape or form

interfere with Achilleus' move toward the battlefield and intensity. What IS necessary,

however, is to divest himself of the limiting domestic tie of his oath to refrain from battle.

Achilleus returns to his domestic status quo in order to negate the more powerful and recent

domestic tie of his oath against Agamemnon and the Achaians. Once Achilleus returns to the field, the story is going to narrow to the point where we no longer see the actions of the other Achaians; the text is going to focus our experience to the exploits of the intense Achilleus.

The movement on Agamemnon's part to re-(a)filliate himself to Achilleus is a natural, organic movement. Agamemnon is the state and "States have always appropriated the war machine in the form of national armies that strictly limit the becomings of the warrior" (Deleuze and Guattari *1987:* 248). The attempt to reaffirm domestic ties to Achilleus is a protective maneuver on Agamemnon's part. He is worried about his state. At this point, Achilleus is more of a threat to Agamemnon's domestic identity than the Trojans. They at least fight by the same organic rules as do the Greeks. The war machine approaches Other. "The war machine is seen to be of another species, of another nature, of another origin. One would have to say it is located between the two heads of state...The State has no war machine of its own" (Deleuze and Guattari *1987:* 354). Agamemnon is never fully in control of Achilleus and this is problematic. "The code of the warrior, however, in the absence of a higher authority to which both sides can appeal cannot be institutionalized and remains somehow arbitrary and unsubstantiated" (Redfield 1994: 183). The epic starts with the break in domestic ties between them and ends with Achilleus wielding a different kind of domestic power. "The war machine indeed comes from without, it is extrinsic to the State, which treats the warrior as an anomalous power" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 247). Achilleus as warrior is an outsider, so he must recapitulate himself as a member or the group.

The Achaians will return to a place of importance in Achilleus' mind, but not until he has fulfilled his role on the battlefield. Until the often misunderstood funeral games and the

reconciliation with Priam, though, Achilleus' return to the tribal interior is a means to an end. On the microscopic level, Achilleus' actions a reaffirmation of domesticity, but, on the macroscopic level, he is denying a self-imposed but limiting domestic restriction.

Achilleus not only removes himself from his compatriots, but from humanity as well. The loss of his armor, a gift from the gods to one of his ancestors, precipitates the creation of a new suit of armor. This suit of armor is not representative of a domestic tie between Achilleus and his paternal (mortal) family, but of the domestic ties between him and his maternal (divine) family. The armor, specifically the shield created by Hephaestus for Achilleus, is problematic in a number of ways.

The Armor and Shield

The armor and shield are a gift, not to Achilleus, but to Thetis. In making the armor, Hephaestus is returning a favor to Thetis, Achilleus' mother, not Achilleus himself. The ties are kept to a minimum, even though it is Thetis' intervention on her son's part in Book 1 that drives a significant portion of the story.

The shield created for Achilleus is a bit of an anomaly, though. It is the most obviously immortal piece of equipment that Hephaestus makes for Achilleus, yet it is festooned with images of daily life, domestic life. Homer spends 130 lines of the epic describing the images that Hephaestus places on the concentric rings of this new shield. Images of farming, weddings, soldiers gathering for war, shepherds, vineyards, children dancing and hunters hunting mix in an unbelievable pattern on the shield. The shield is, not surprisingly, larger and stronger than

the standard shield available to mortal warriors, but the ornate decoration makes the shield unique.

After the shield is given to Achilleus, the decorations are no longer mentioned. Achilleus is not interested in the artistry of the shield, nor is he at the time of the presentation of the shield interested in that which the shield represents. He sees the shield and armor as the equipment of killing. Why load the shield with the reassuring images of home and domestic life, though? Even though it is a gift to Thetis, Hephaistos knows the purpose of the shield and armor; one would think that Hephaistos would want the shield to be as frightening as possible.

In its own way, that is exactly what the shield is, though. Its frightening aspect is not the same as Athene's aegis, the full force of war and terror reified, but the symbolism of Achilleus himself. As Achilleus takes the field, the Trojans are going to be afraid. Even Zeus is going to take efforts to counteract the terrible force of Achilleus' presence. There is no mortal image that Hephaistos could place on the shield of Achilleus that would be more terrifying than Achilleus himself, so instead of trying to add, Hephaistos designed an image based on gap and absence. The shield imagery starts with the sun and ends with a circle bounded around its edge by the oceans, and *outside* that world-view is Achilleus ready and desirous to TAKE that world from anyone foolish enough to view the images by getting close enough to engage in combat with him. As Achilleus fights, we will see less and less of his fellow Greeks to the point where one almost gets the impression of Achilleus on the field alone against the Trojan army, an army that is outnumbered and outgunned.

The shield completes the image of Achilleus in the most frightening of ways. It shows the world; it shows all that one has to lose when facing the foe holding that shield. "The inner

two rings portray nature and culture as meaningful structure; the outer two portray culture and nature as pure act or pure purpose. The shield moves from nature to culture to productivity" (Redfield 1994: 188). The shield is a reminder to the enemy, a reminder of the domestic and therefore one of the most powerful weapons at Achilleus disposal: that which is both intense and dynamic is organic, and that which is organic is necessarily mortal. Achilleus carries a signifier of mortality.

Achilleus' domesticity is outside himself. He carries it as something external to him and as something that he cannot view. His perception and his being do not allow recognition of the domestic in his existence; he is Other to it. The shield and Achilleus are separate because he has stepped away from one half of his "two-fold destiny" and put the quiet domestic opportunity behind him. Even as his distances himself from that identity, though, Achilleus uses the recognition of identity as a weapon: he is shows his enemies what he will take away. The shield is a representation of fissure-to-be.

The other Greeks recognize the armor for what it is and see its symbolism. They are afraid of its divine nature and the reminder of domesticity that it is. When Achilleus is behind the shield, separate from his domesticity, he is also separate from the domesticity that binds him to the Greeks.

Achilleus' perception, like his being, is limited to the task at hand. His perceptions are of a more nomadic nature, in the Deleuzian sense. He is no longer thinking in terms of striated spaces, of state territories, but has become fixated on point to point movement. He is going to ignore the metric nature of space and move in a vectorless manner towards his goal.

His goal is the death of Hektor.

Thetis states:

> 'Accept rather from me the glorious arms of Hephaistos, so splendid, and such as no man has ever worn on his shoulders.'
>
> The goddess spoke so, and set down the armour on the ground before Achilleus, and all its elaborations clashed loudly. Trembling took hold of all the Myrmidons. None had the courage to look straight at it. They were afraid of it. Only Achilleus looked, and as he looked the anger came harder upon him and his eyes glittered terribly under his lids like sunflare (*The Iliad* Bk 19 Ln 10-18).

The Greeks recognize the origin of the armor, and the ties that the armor implies, whereas Achilleus sees only the vehicle by which he can return to the battlefield. Even as the armor frightens the Greeks because of its divine craftsmanship and of the (divine) domestic ties that made it possible, it also reminds them that should Achilleus become TOO marginalized, he will be as great as threat to them as he is to the Trojans[8].

So enrapt is Achilleus in the idea of returning to the battlefield, that he slowly slips further and further out of the realm of the mortal, expecting at times for his fellow warriors to do the same. Despite their weakened state and fatigue from having fought over his mortal

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[8] What of the villain, though? *The Iliad* does not have a clear-cut protagonist as most modern heroic literature does. The reader is allowed to take sides with either the Greek or the Trojan armies and heroes. Who is the aggressor? Is it better to root for the defenders? This choice is not so available in many modern heroic literatures because of the presence of the villain, a creature/individual who represents an intensity-as-disruption. It is interesting to note, though, that even as we simplify our relationship to the hero by creating a marginalized villain who we can use as a moral backdrop against which we can discern the actions of the not-necessarily moral hero, the ambiguous moral standing of the hero reasserts itself in a curious impossibility called the anti-hero.

armor and the body of his friend, Achilleus wants all of the Greeks to return to the fighting immediately. While Patroklos was alive, Achilleus recognized their weariness, but with the removal of the mitigating factor of Patroklos, he becomes disinterested in their well-being; he is moving away from mortal concerns and simply does not see them. "On the battlefield Achilles appears not as a leader of men but as an isolated destroy or life in a kind of natural force, like fire or flood" (Redfield 1994: 107).

Achilleus and Agamemnon discuss, in passing, their reconciliation, but Achilleus is obviously eager to get past the discussion and on to the killing.

> 'Son of Atreus, most lordly and king of men, Agamemnon, the gifts are yours to give if you wish, and as it is proper, or to keep with yourself. But now let us remember our joy in warcraft, immediately, for it is not fitting to stay here and waste time nor delay, since there is still a big work to be done. So can a man see once more Achilleus among the front fighters with the bronze spear wrecking the Trojan battalions. Therefore let each of you remember this and fight his antagonist.
>
> Then in answer to him spoke resourceful Odysseus: 'Not that way, good fighter that you are, godlike Achilleus. Do not drive the sons of the Achaians on Ilion when they are hungry' (*The Iliad* Bk 19 Ln 146-156).

Achilleus seems unaware that the Greeks have just come from a narrow defeat. The reason Patroklos entered the battle in the first place was to give the Greeks a respite and to keep the Trojans from taking the ships. Achilleus' consciousness is becoming focused to the point where his existence is becoming a singularity and he is beginning to escape the boundaries and necessities of not just the average non-heroic individual, but of humans in general. Achilleus'

perception is becoming limited to the point where he no longer acknowledges his own mortality, or his own status as an organic being. He is certainly unconcerned about the welfare of those to whom he is supposedly domestically linked. "A war machine that no longer had anything but war as its object would rather annihilate its own servants than stop the destruction. All the dangers of the other lines pale by comparison" (Deleuze and Guattari *1987:* 231).

The metamorphosis continues:

'Neither drink nor food shall go down my very throat, since my companion has perished and lies inside my shelter torn about the with cutting bronze, and turned against the forecourt while my companions mourn about him. Food and drink mean nothing to my heart but blood does, and slaughter, and the groaning of men in the hard work.' (*The Iliad* Bk 19 Ln 209-214).

Achilleus refuses food, one of the most basic needs, in favor of fighting, and, even after a stern rebuke by Odysseus (perhaps one of the few characters who could safely rebuke him), goes to sleep without eating.

Achilleus does not return to the field unfed, though. Athene pays him a visit in the middle of the night and "dropped the delicate ambrosia and the nectar inside the breast of Achilleus softly, so that no sad weakness of hunger would come on his knees" (*The Iliad* Bk 119 Ln 352-354). The ambrosia and nectar that Athene feeds Achilleus is the sustenance of the gods, immortal food, not the mundane foodstuff of the mortals. Achilleus does not eat it, but, rather, it is delivered to him without the necessity of the mortal process as it is simply placed within him. Achilleus

has slipped outside the boundaries of mortality. He has not become immortal, though, for that

definition implies a completely different set of domestic ties: ties to other gods, the familial

structure of Olympus, even the ties to worshippers. Achilleus is in the process of becoming

something completely different. As Achilleus slips away from his own status as mortal, he

denies the immediate binary of mortal/immortal as presented by the possibilities within the

text. He begins to become aberrant, marginal and Other.

This movement is a paradigmatic break: Achilleus is offering the reader a third option in

relationship to the assumed structure of mortality, but he is also offering a fourth and a

seventh. Once we have escaped the binary, we have escaped the binary absolutely. His

attention is not centered on the internal features of the discourse in which he has been

operating. He tersely dismisses his concerns about Agamemnon and the other Greeks as quickly

and succinctly as he dismisses the need for something as distracting and mortal as food.

This is not an additive property, but a divestment. As the hero Achilleus divests himself

of more domestic, which combine to form aggregate, organic properties, he becomes more

effectively a hero by becoming more clearly intense. Achilleus is not becoming a hero due to

something that he is adding to his being, but because of that which is being removed: the

mutable domestic properties of the domestic/organic.

We must view the cause of and effect relationships with some suspicion, though, for not all

beings bereft of organic ties are heroic, but all heroes are intense[9]. The individual who breaks

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[9] Again, I would like to draw the line firmly between hero and heroic action. A moment of intensity does not make a hero, but a moment of domestic concern within a heroic lifestyle can reiterate the possibility of an organic being in the most fatal of ways.

all domestic ties for the sake of breaking domestic ties does so with knowledge of the ties he is breaking. While his life may approach a kind of intensity, his actions are predicated still on the binary within which he exists; conscious denial of one side of the binary is not the same thing as separation from the binary itself. Loss of the organic is Becoming-intense; conscious divestment is Becoming-less-organic. This is similar to Otherness. Once one identifies the Other, it is no longer Other. Acknowledgement and recognition denies Otherness, creating, perhaps, extreme marginalization, but the invisibility of Otherness is gone. Asceticism is not the same this as heroism: one who consciously denies something is still aware of that something.

Achilleus denies his domestic ties as a means to an end, not as an end unto itself. He is becoming focused on his desire, but as that desire, the death of Hektor, is not about acquisition, but rather about negation, the desire starts to read as Desire. Achilleus's desire is a centered around a problematic goal. While he may be able to kill Hector, he cannot obtain that death as an object. The simple one-time act of killing Hector is not going to satisfy Achilleus, and he has moved so close to the margin of his discourse with his denial of all ties to his discourse that the potential disappointment is dangerous to his discourse. Most heroes, even when they desire the death of the villain/monster, approach that desire as a moment of Becoming preceding a return to a lost or broken domestic tie: the death of the villain/monster will return the damsel in distress, the stolen artifact, of the safety of the town.

Achilleus' desire approaches Desire as it is fed by a constant negation of domesticity. The desire is becoming Desire because of the unquenchable nature of gap/chasm that moves the subject across the plane of immanence. Achilleus' being begins to problematize the nature of subjectivity/objectivity as he overbalances the humane/organic mix of static/dynamic and

domestic/intense. He is no longer an object experiencing the sense-able realization of Desire

momentarily quenched as temporal/spatial desire while being dragged across the plane of

immanence by the subject constantly falling into the unfillable void of Desire. Instead, he is an

object consumed by a desire that is a negation, an unfillable void, that, as such, approaches

Desire itself. His intensity allows, if not forces, him to skip a step in the ontological formula and

leaves us with something baffling in its proximity to the a priori.

The Immortals

As Achilleus divests himself of mortal concerns, he does not become immortal. As we

have heard him state already, he is well aware of the necessity of his own death, but instead of

facing his mortality, or assuming godhood (a real option within the Achaian discourse) he seems

to reach a state of Amortality. He denies the binary and refuses to allow the knowledge of his

own death affect his d(D)esire[10].

The ramifications of this change are felt far beyond the open plain before Troy. The gods

themselves feel the ripple caused by the change in Achilleus. While the gods interact with

mortal affairs, their interaction is not unlike that of chess players moving pieces around a

board. If the mortals in question are not direct descendants of a particular god, the gods move

them around without thought or concern for their well-being. Zeus' comments on human

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[10] I think it interesting to note that Achilleus already a little different than the rest of humanity in that he KNOWS that should he enter an intense lifestyle, he will die young, where most mortals live with the doubt and fear of the mystery of the time of their death. It is, perhaps, Achilleus' belief in the veracity of his fate that allows him to deny it. He does not have the burden of making the decision and factoring in the multiple possibilities of his existence.

existence give us a good idea of the divine attitude toward the mortal. He laments for the immortal horses given to Achilleus' father:

> 'Poor wretches, why then did we ever give you to the lord Peleus, a mortal man, and you yourselves are immortal and ageless? Only so that among unhappy men you also might be grieved? Since among all creatures that breathe on earth and crawl on it there is not anywhere a thing more dismal than man is.' (*The Iliad* Bk 17 Ln 442-447).

Zeus is more concerned with the feelings of his immortal horses than he is about the death of Patroklos. A god-like horse is more valuable than a heroic mortal.

The gods trade whole cities as if they were markers for divine debts, and a god's enmity can cause him or her to destroy entire populations. That hatred is likened to the unquenchable desire we will see from Achilleus. Zeus berates Hera; "if you could walk through the gates and through the towering ramparts and eat Priam and the children of Priam raw, and the other Trojans, then only, then might you glut at last your anger" (*The Iliad* Bk 4 Ln 34-36). Hera, the mother goddess, protector of marriage, has the most ravenous appetite for revenge imaginable. To glut this desire, the gods up the ante and trade in whole civilizations.

> Whenever I in turn am eager to lay waste some city, as I please, one in which are dwelling men who are dear to you, you shall not stand in the way of my anger, but let me do it, since I was willing to grant you this with my heart unwilling. For of all the cities beneath the sun and the starry heaven dwelt in by men who live upon earth, there has never been one honored nearer my heart than sacred Ilion (*The Iliad* Bk 4 Ln 40-46).

Hera answers:

> 'Of all cities there are three that are dearest to my own heart: Argos, and Sparta
> and Mykenai of the wide ways. All these, whenever they become hateful to your
> heart, sack utterly. I will not stand up for these against you, nor yet begrudge
> you. Yet if even so I bear malice and would not have you destroy them (*The Iliad*
> Bk 4 Ln 51-55).

Perhaps since these are gods, not mortals, divine desire is closer to mortal Desire. The
rules might not be the same for immortal Becoming. The gods are willing to trade the cities
nearest and dearest to them over insults real or implied. Troy is one of Zeus' favorites, though
that favoritism may be due to Hera's interest in destroying it. That interest on Hera's part
becomes a valuable commodity to solve personal conflicts between the philandering Zeus and
his jealous wife.

This casual attitude about the lives of mortals, though, disappears when Achilleus'
presence on the battlefield becomes a possibility. Zeus becomes concerned perhaps because
Achilleus represents something outside the boundaries of his sphere of control. In Zeus'
cosmology, mortals are insignificant creatures because, on an individual level, they are limited
to a mortal existence; no mortal, no matter how important, is outside the boundaries of the
life/death equation, an equation that does not limit or concern the gods.

Achilleus, though is approaching amortality, and the prophecy under which Achilleus
was born has to be a source of concern. Thetis, Achilleus' divine mother, was prophesied to

bear a son who would be greater than his father. To avoid another war on Olympus, Thetis was married to a mortal man. The logic used was that if Thetis had a son by a mortal, even the most powerful and heroic of mortals ever, her son would still, as a mortal, be of no threat to the gods. Were Thetis to have a son by a god, any god, the upper limit of that child's power could be dangerous. The possibility that the child could be stronger than *a* god implied that the child might be stronger than *any* god. Zeus, of course, lusted after Thetis, but could not allow for the possibility of an heir stronger than himself considering the nature of his own patricidal rise to power on Olympus[11].

The question, though, becomes how MUCH greater is Achilleus than Peleus, a legendary hero, and companion to the deified Hercules? The prophecy surrounding Achilleus is bounded on one end: he *must* be greater than the father, but the other end is that of a ray: it has no necessary endpoint. With no upper limit to Achilleus' greatness, Achilleus' potential is problematic when he starts disrupting mortality.

Zeus becomes concerned enough about Achilleus' presence that he calls a conference of every divine being in existence to discuss the outcome of the Trojan war.

> Zeus, from the many-folded peaks of Olympos, told Themis to summon all the
> gods into assembly. She went everywhere, and told them to make their way to
> Zeus' house. There was no river who was not there, except only Ocean, there
> was not any one of the nymphs who live in the lovely groves and the springs of
> rivers and grass of the meadows, who came not...(*The Iliad* Bk 20 Ln 4-9).

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[11] Again we are left wondering what is canonical and what is not.

Zeus announces to the divine assembly that he is lifting the prohibition against divine interference in the war:

> All you others go down, wherever you may go among the Achaians and the Trojans and give help to either side, as your own pleasure directs you. For if we leave Achilleus alone to fight with the Trojans they will not even for a little hold off the swift-footed Pelion. For even now they would tremble whenever they saw him, and now, when his heart is grieved and angered for his companion's death, I fear against destiny he may storm their fortress.' (*The Iliad* Bk 20 Ln 22-30).

Zeus' fear "against destiny" shows just how powerful he is afraid Achilleus has become. Even the gods are limited in their actions by the decree of the Fates. Achilleus' presence on the battlefield represents a world out of order; Achilleus' intensity is a disruption, so Zeus attempts to balance the playing field by allowing the domestic ties of the gods to buttress the domestic/intense relationship that is necessary for this model of the world to exist. Divine as they are, the gods are still more organic and stabilizing to the organism/society than is Achilleus; they are still part of the system that respects the boundaries of Fate. Achilleus, in his anger over the loss of Patroklos and his drive for revenge against Hektor, may supersede the ordained fall of Troy and conquer the city on his own. The gods are a State; they are limited in sphere of influence and territorialized by each other in that they identify and differentiate each other as individuals. Each represents a kind of divine genre. They are infinite beings limiting each other to finite roles and individuality.

This is a buttressing of the system itself and not just of the city of Troy. The gods array themselves on either side of the battle, and both sides receive aid from major players. Ares, Apollo, Artemis and Aphrodite join the Trojans, but Hephaistos, Hera, Athene, Poseidon and Hermes join the Greeks. It appears, at first, that the Greeks have a stronger set of divine allies than do the Trojans. The purpose of the gods' presence is not to balance the field, though, but to make sure there still IS a field after Achilleus makes his presence known. "The concern of the State is to conserve (Deleuze and Guattari *1000 Plateaus* 357). Achilleus is a potential disruption to the entirety of the system, a Deleuzian war-machine threatening to bring this war to a close long before its fated end, thus disrupting the control Fate is supposed to have over the entire system, State included.

> One of the fundamental tasks of the State is to striate the space over which it reigns, or to utilize smooth spaces as a means of communication in the service of striated space. It is a vital concern of every state not only to vanquish nomadism, but to control migrations (185).

The gods are a buttressing of the striations of the space with their mere presence. As deifications of the ideals of the society, they also act as reifications of these ideals. By taking both sides in the conflict, the gods solidify the rules of the war (there have to be two sides to a fight) as they are lending their strength individually to the opposing aggregates. By strengthening the idea of the society itself, the war between the two parts of the society, and forcing Achilleus to continue playing by the rules of the society, the society is safe from

restriation. The war can go on; the society can change and grow through the death of organic

parts but the molar entity is safe from complete annihilation/smoothness.

> But the Trojans were taken every man in the knees with trembling and terror, as
> they looked on the swift-footed son of Peleus shining in all his armour, a man
> like a murderous war god. But after the Olympians merged in the men's
> company strong Hatred, defender of peoples, burst out and Athene bellowed
> standing now beside the ditch dug at the wall's outside and now again at the
> thundering sea's edge gave out her great cry, while on the other side Ares in the
> likeness of a dark stormcloud bellowed, now from the peak of the citadel urging
> the Trojans sharply on, now running beside the sweet banks of Simoeis.
>
> So the blessed gods stirring on the opponents drove them together, and
> broke out among themselves in the weight of their quarrel (*The Iliad* Bk 20 Ln 44-
> 55).

Achilleus is disruptive because he is negating any sense of the organic and the domestic.

He has cut all ties within the Greek society, and his desire, as it approaches Desire is not based

on the filial nature of the war, but on his need to end the existence of Hektor. He is concerned

only with death, not with war, glory or victory, and it is in war, glory and victory, that

domesticity resides. Achilleus is not interested in the economy of glory, or victory for the state.

He is concerned with cessation.

By the time he enters the battlefield, Achilleus is almost entirely intense in his lack of

the domestic; he is static in his lack of the dynamic, and he is deathless in his abjuration of the

organic. The presence of the gods is necessary to counter this disruption. The divinities,

specifically Zeus, who seems to see a larger picture, are not concerned with the final outcome

of the war, or the lives and deaths of the individual players. How could they be? Their

immortality renders the rise and fall of men or even individual cities meaningless. Even their

concern for their half-divine children is passing and more what one would expect of the care

one renders a pet than a child. They are concerned about the sanctity of the system and the

sanctity of the concept of Fate. Achilleus is dangerous as a threat, not to Troy, but to the

discourse that Troy is part of organically.

The Trojans fear Achilleus on the micro and macro level. On the individual level, he

represents death, but he also represents death to their city and to their way of life. It is hatred,

not valor that bellows and supersedes the fear of Achilleus. Athene's war-cry from the Greek

camp helps solidify both Greek and Trojan resolve because hers is a cry understood by all

participants. The Trojans will face the Greeks on the open field because the Greeks are an

understood foe. Achilleus, in his divine armor, fighting for Desire, is a stranger to the reality to

which they are accustomed. This shift in Achilleus' nature, and the danger it causes is not

unique.

> The war machine is of a different origin, is a different assemblage than the State
> apparatus. It is of nomadic origin and is directed against the state apparatus.
> One of the fundamental problems of the State is to appropriate this war machine
> that is foreign to it and make it a piece in its apparatus in the form of a stable
> military institution (Deleuze and Guattari *1987:* 230).

Achilleus certainly does not meet the definition of a stable military apparatus. He does not

move the way the State moves. He is not concerned about the city of Troy, a striated space: he

is focused on a point and therefore does not pay attention to the striations that the State

creates. He moves nomadically. Achilleus' perception of reality is definitely different than that

of the other warriors: he does not want to destroy a city and restructure one State into

another. He wants one individual to cease existing.

It takes trickery by Apollo to convince the first Trojan to confront Achilleus. Apollo

attempts to cajole Aineias to face Achilleus. The hero answers simply that "it is not any man to

fight with Achilleus. There is always some one of the gods with him to beat death from him"

(*The Iliad* Bk 20 Ln 97-98). Aineias does not understand Achilleus' status as amortal; he posits

Achilleus' invulnerability in terms he can understand: Achilleus is unbeatable because the gods

protect him. As a mortal, he is unaware of the necessity on Zeus' part to allow the gods on the

battlefield to counteract the disruptive force of Achilleus, but the final effect is much the same.

He knows he cannot best Achilleus. To Aineias, that invulnerability is aberrant, so in his limited

understanding, that aberration must be due to the divine, the only acknowledged aberration

perceivable to him.

The gods, though, convince Aineias otherwise. There will be no war if no one will face

Achilleus. There will be no economy of glory if no one will die, so the warriors must try, even

against one who is not interested in the glory. They must fuel the machine. Their deaths, and

their contributions to the economy of glory perpetuate the system. The mortals may not see

the dangers to the system and the need to bolster the normalcy of fighting for glory, but, the

gods, or at least Zeus, seem to. Achilleus, at this point, does not consciously disavow the

system, because to disavow would be to acknowledge. He is not reacting to it while killing

individuals and perpetuating the system[12]; he is completely outside of any concern for the system. He is acting intensely and with a private motivation so strong as to deny all domestic ties; ontologically he is completely alone, and the text will soon narrow its focus to that singularity.

The first encounter with Achilleus is dramatic. After sinking his spear into Achilleus' shield only to have it lodged in the divine instrument, Aineias faces Achilleus' weapon, the ponderous spear of Peleus, a weapon so great that Patroklos left it behind when impersonating Achilleus because only Achilleus can hope to wield it. Achilleus' spear crashes through Aineias' shield and "Aineias, free of the long spear , stood still, and around his eyes gathered the enormous emotion and fear that the weapon had fixed so close to him" (The Iliad Book 20 Ln 281-283). Luckily for Aineias, he is a favorite of Poseidon, who, in an almost-comical salvation, grabs Aineias by the foot and flings him off the battlefield and then admonishes the warrior for facing Achilleus. The elder god chides his descendant for succumbing to the trickery of Apollo and daring to face Achilleus.

Slaying of Supplicants

Achilleus' advance towards Troy is a descent out of humanity. As the warrior moves across the battlefield, he ignores the rules of etiquette so that he seems less a warrior, and more a killer. His single-mindedness causes him to dismiss the standard policy of taking supplicants and ransoming them to their families. The obituaries do not cease; Homer still

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[12] He is not the American Marxist buying books on the end of capitalism with his American Express card.

includes the background information on those who fall before Achilleus, but the killing itself becomes darker and more brutal.

He kills Iphition: "Great Achilleus struck him with the spear as he came in fury in the middle of the head, and all the head broke into two pieces."(*The Iliad* Bk 20 Ln 386-387). Only lines later, Achilleus kills Demeleon. He "stabbed him in the temple through the brazen sides of the of the helmet, and the brazen helmet could not hold, but the bronze spearhead driven on through smashed the bone apart, and the inward brain was spattered forth" (*The Iliad* Bk 20 Ln 397-400). The effectiveness of the Achilleus' killing should not be ignored. He is extremely good at what he does. The first two warriors he kills, he kills with head-shots. Achilleus is a master of his craft.

Achilleus may be too good a killer, though. The Achaians and the Trojans have rules for how to fight a war. The definition of war itself seems to presuppose a set of restrictions on actions. We can devise a few general rules for what constitutes a war. A war needs more than one side. Even an internal conflict within a single nation still supposes some kind of national subdivision. A war has a beginning and an end, therefore, as a temporally defined event it seems to fall into the realm of the domestic; there is an agreement between the two sides to enter into conflict. Even if there seem to be no rules, no limitations to what said conflict will entail, there is still the agreement that the conflict will exist, and at its furthest extrapolation, the conflict has the necessity of ending with the cessation of existence by one or both sides. Wars end with the cessation of existence, with gap and fissure. Wars have, in their definition, the desire for the acquisition of victory. It is probably not a simplistic assumption to imagine that the most civilized of war is the war with the least amount of loss.

This domestic nature of war resonates within the individual sides within any given conflict. "Discipline is the characteristic required of armies after the State has appropriated them" (Deleuze and Guattari *1987:* 358). It should be no surprise that the military machinery, a tool created by the possibility of war, is often governed by the most carefully regimented of domestic rules, but even the most basic military concept like the uniform is still based on the necessity for the delineation of allegiances. In a Foucauldian reversal, one can see the uniform as a signifier of who one is *NOT* allowed to kill, not a signifier of who one IS allowed to kill. If that were the case, no one would wear uniforms. It is not disruptive to hesitate or refrain from killing a member of the opposition. There are numerous circumstances in which that denial would be acceptable if not required. The killing of a member of one's own army, as denoted by the officiality of the uniform, is necessarily disruptive[13]. Killing within the boundaries of one's own domestic ties is murder and incites the workings of a completely different set of organizational rules within the military structure. The uniform is a kind of safety device within the boundaries of the military structure; it is a limitation, creating a boundary around the possibility of infinite killing.

Even within the allowed theatre of killing, there are rules of behavior, and Achilleus denies some of these rules. He does not break the rules; he denies they exist. A breaking of the

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[13] This is not to imply that it does not occur. During the Vietnam War, the semi-official term for the killing of a military comrade was FRAGGING, a slang term derived from the common use of the fragmentary grenade. The grenade was the perfect weapon in its egalitarian approach to destruction and its convenient self-immolation. It left little of the victim, and little of itself to be used as evidence. The most common victim of this phenomenon was the over-zealous, usually rookie officer. Lieutenants were a favorite target.

rules implies a recognition of them. Achilleus gives us no such recognition. The restriction he most blatantly denies is the safety of the supplicant.

Both the Achaians and the Trojans followed the practice of ransoming fallen warriors back to their families. This may seem counterproductive in the economy of glory, but, in actuality, it is a brilliant subsidizing of the system. Should a warrior fall in a less-than-glorious fight, the loser can supplicate and survive to fight another day, potentially winning glory for himself AND whomever he will fight in the future conflict. As we have determined, the victory or defeat does not determine the possibility of immortality; it is the accumulation of glory. The killing of a nameless, untested warrior was not worthy of literary immortality, so sometimes the supplicant was allowed to survive to accumulate more glory before being returned to the market of the battlefield. The supplicant would have the opportunity to fight in other battles and gain or give glory. Odysseus killing an anonymous warrior would not help him, would not help the dead warrior, and would do nothing to perpetuate the system. Should that anonymous warrior be allowed to flourish and make a name for himself (by killing named-warriors) however, Odysseus has stocked the pond for future battles, and revitalized the system as a whole. This system is hidden within the secondary economy of the ransoming of the warrior to the family and acquiring wealth, but it is the larger system that benefits more from the survival factor than any one warrior does from the gifts of gold and treasure entailed in the ransoming exchange.

Achilleus, as a point of intensity, as an appropriated war machine, is not worried about the system, or about personal glory. He is a danger to the system as a whole and a danger to

those who would supplicate. He kills Tros before the young warrior can offer himself for

ransom:

> Now, Tros, Alastor's son: he had come up against Achilleus' knees, to catch them
> and be spared and his life given to him if Achillies might take pity upon his youth
> and not kill him; fool, and did not see there would be no way to persuade him,
> since, this was a man with no sweetness in his heart, and not kindly but in a
> strong fury; now Tros with his hands was reaching for the knees, bent on
> supplication, but he (Achilleus) stabbed with his sword at the liver so that the
> liver was torn form its place and the black blood drenched the fold of his tunic
> and his eyes were shrouded in the darkness as the life went (*The Iliad* Bk 20 Ln
> 463-472).

The killing of Lykaon further exemplifies Achilleus' complete disregard for the societal rules that

the other warriors follow, and that he has followed in the past. Achilleus is at first mystified at

the appearance of Lykaon, who he had sold into slavery at some earlier point in the war, but

who had escaped that fate and returned to Troy and to the war. This may rate as perhaps the

worst bit of luck to appear in *The Iliad*, facing Achilleus, not once, but twice, the second time in

his fury at the death of Patroklos. Achilleus is almost joking in his decision to kill Lykaon, who is

not attacking him, but resting, unarmored after a narrow escape from the river Skamandros[14].

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[14] The narrow escape was from Achilleus who actually early in this passage spares twelve young unnamed warriors from immediate death. This sparing is merely a delay, however, for the twelve slaves are destined for sacrifice at Patroklos' funeral.

'Can this be? Here is a strange thing that my eyes look on. Now the great-
hearted Trojans, even those I have killed already, will stand and rise up again out
of the gloom and the darkness as this man has come back and escaped the day
without pity though he was sold into sacred Lemnos; but the main of the grey
sea could not hold him, though it holds back many who are unwilling. But come
now, he must be given a taste of our spearhead so that I may know inside my
heart and make certain whether he will come back even from there, or the
prospering earth will hold him, she who holds back even the strong man' (*The
Iliad* Bk 21 Ln 54-63).

Lykaon's supplicates himself to Achilleus, ducking under his spear-cast and throwing one arm
around his knees. He tells Achilleus of the great ransom that was given to release him, perhaps
in an effort to convince Achilleus that a similar ransom could be his. Even within his begging,
though, there is the realization on Lykaon's part that the attempt is futile. Lykaon has already
seen Achilleus kill his brother, Polydoros. His final plea shows the intimacy of the two armies,
however: "'Still, put away in your heart this other thing I say to you. Do not kill me. I am not
from the same womb as Hektor, he who killed your powerful and kindly companion.'" (*The Iliad*
Bk 21 Ln 94-96). Lykaon is well aware of Achilleus' fury, and the reasons for it. Achilleus' answer
is without pity:

'Poor fool, no longer speak to me of ransom, nor argue it. In the time before
Patroklos came to the day of his destiny then it was the way of my heart's choice
to be sparing of the Trojrans, and many I took alive and disposed of them. Now
there is not one who can escape death, if the gods send him against my hands in
front of Ilion, not one of all the Trojans and beyond others the children of Priam.
So, friend, you die also'...So he spoke, and in the other the knees and the inward

heart went slack. He let go of the spear and sat back, spreading wide both hands;
but Achilleus drawing his sharp sword, struck him beside the neck at the collar-
bone, and the double edged sword plunged full length inside. He dropped to the
ground, face downward, and lay at length, and the black blood flowed, and the
ground was soaked with it (*The Iliad* Bk 21 Ln 99-106,114-119).

Unsatisfied with killing Lykaon, Achilleus throws the body into the river Skamandros with a
taunt: "Die on all; till we come to the city of sacred Ilion" (*The Iliad* Bk 21 Ln 128).

Achilleus is anomalous in his divine armor, and that anomaly is more than symbolic.
Achilleus' killing is not based on uniform(ity). His new armor is a signifier of his new identity.
The heraldry of the helmet and the shield sets Achilleus apart from both his opponents and his
allies. He is no longer a natural creature. His nomadic existence is based on an existence of
points, and destinations. The point defining his current existence as war machine is Hektor. This
point-to-point existence ignores the standard boundaries of society, of armies, and of the
assumed relationship between man and his environment. Achilleus' behavior, the scope of his
killing offends the natural world itself, so that Skamandros, the river, rises to stop Achilleus
from continuing to clog its waters with more bodies. "I am congested with the dead mean you
kill so brutally. Let me alone, then; lord of the people, I am confounded" (*The Iliad* Bk 21 Ln 220-
221) the river cries, but Achilleus refuses to stop killing until he has killed Hektor or died trying.
It takes divine intervention to end the battle between the man and the river.

Achilleus is danger to the world around him, be it the natural world, or the other
Achaians. Once he enters the field, the book centers around his activities. We are no longer
shown the actions of the other heroes. Achilleus, as an intensity, becomes a textual singularity

and all matter(s) swirl around him. The Trojans contemplate fighting him, run from him, or die

trying. The gods change their actions based on his presence, and nature itself is forced to react

to his presence. All of this activity is based on the intensification of Achilleus caused by the

removal of organic domestic ties. The intensity left is based on the singular desire for the death

of Hektor, a Desire for non-existence.

The Killing of Hektor

There is considerable debate as to Hektor's status as hero within *The Iliad*. He is

certainly one of the most likeable characters within the epic and that problematizes his true

role: fuel for Achilleus' glory. The very nature of *The Iliad* as an epic is the killing of one great

man at the hands of another. Homer tells us from the beginning that this is a tale of the fury of

Achilleus.

It is necessary for the economy of glory that Hektor should be great, that he should be

fearsome, and Homer certainly portrays Hektor as a warrior of merit. The Greeks are afraid of

him, and he is often referred to as manslaughtering Hektor. Agamemnon warns Menelaos:

> you are mad; you have no need to take leave of your senses thus. Hold fast,
> though it hurts you, nor long in your pride to fight with a man who is better than
> you are, with Hektor, Priam's son. There are others who shudder before him.
> Even Achilleus, in the fighting where men win glory, trembles to meet this man,
> and he is far better than you are (*The Iliad* Bk 7 Ln 109-114).

It seems that Agamemnon is certainly wary of Hektor, even if it is simply a case of his

awareness that Menelaos cannot beat him. We see no evidence later in the epic that Achilleus

is in fact frightened of Hektor. Hektor has earned the respect of the Greeks, and in book seven

he duels with Aias, one of the most powerful of the Achaian warriors, and fights him to a

standstill.

Hektor is a very different character than Achilleus, though; Hektor is likable. While we

may feel some sense of sympathy for Achilleus, his transformation is such that it is difficult to

empathize with him. Hektor, however, is characterized in such a way as to become more

human, even as Achilleus escapes the boundaries of humanity, and, in some respects, the

connection to the reader. After the duel with Aias, Hektor suggests:

> let us give each other glorious presents, so that any of the Achaians or Trojans
>
> may say of us: "These two fought each other in heart-consuming hate, then
>
> joined with each other in close friendship, before they were parted" (*The Iliad* Bk
>
> 7 Ln 299-302).

These moments of characterization almost all center around Hektor's domestic identity.

That Hektor's domestic existence would be more fully realized than the other warriors

should come as no surprise; the entirety of this war is based on the attack on his domestic

existence. He is defending his oath-breaking, wife-stealing, host-defiling brother Alexandros,

whose overt disregard for domestic ties led to the war in the first place. He is defending his city,

the city ruled by his father, but patriarchally destined to become his. Within the city are his

wife, his son, his aging father and mother, as well as a nation of people looking to him as their

defender. Hektor's very existence is based on the life and death of Troy, and as such, he is

destined to die. He cannot hope to match the intensity of Achilleus. The dynamic must fade to the static.

He is not going to die, however, before the reader is shown a fully developed character. This characterization of Hektor problematizes what the reader might think of Achilleus as a person, but it does not affect Achilleus' status as a hero. "It is also true that the poem would not move us if Achilles destroyed nothing of value to ourselves" (Redfield 1994:28).

Hektor is a man trapped in the domestic. One can almost begin to imagine that he is aware of his own domestic limitations. Within the city walls of Troy, Hektor visits with his family, giving the reader a portrait of the man very unlike that of Achilleus. His interactions with his son are endearing and funny.

> Glorious Hektor held out his arms to his baby, who shrank back to his fair-girdled
> nurse's bosom screaming, frightened at the aspect of his own father, terrified as
> he saw the bronze and the crest with its horse hair nodding dreadfully, as he
> thought, from the peak of the helmet. Then his beloved father laughed out, and
> his honoured mother , and at once, glorious Hektor lifted from his head the
> helmet and laid it in all its shining upon the ground. Then, taking up his dear son
> he tossed him about in his arms, and kissed him, and lifted his voice in prayer to
> Zeus and the other immortals: Zeus, and you other immortals, grant that this
> boy, who is my son, may be as I am, pre-eminent among the Trojans, great in
> strength, as I am, and rule strongly over Ilion; and some day, let them say of him:
> "He is better by far than his father" (The Iliad Bk 6 Ln 575-584).

Hektor's desires for his son are understandable. He wants Astyanax to be greater than he is. This, of course, is a continuation of the desire for immortality, but it is also the sign of a father's

love. We also cannot ignore the resonance of the prophecy surrounding Thetis. While Zeus fears Thetis' potential child, Hector desires that his son be greater than he is. In a domestic, striated space, this evolution is benevolent and desirable. The son's superseding on the father is to the benefit of the entire State as success for one part of the molar aggregate increases the molarity. Astyanax is safely bounded on all sides by domestic ties and filial associations; his future greatness is not dangerous.

That the young prince would be frightened of his father's helmet is probably one of the few moments in *The Iliad* that could be described as *cute*, and Hektor's willingness and lack of hesitation to drop the helmet "in all its shining glory on the ground" is a clear sign of Hektor's prioritizing his son's comfort and peace of mind over the symbolic value of the helmet, even though his actions as a warrior are going to doom his son and all of his family. While his parents laugh at the child's fear of the helmet, it is perhaps the child who has the wisest response: he does not see his father; he sees the warrior, the destruction of all of his filial relations.

The relationship with his son is further developed in the lofty description of the boy. He is "a little child, only a baby, Hektor's son, the admired, beautiful as a star shining whom Hektor called Skamandrios, but all of the others Astyanax—lord of the city" (The Iliad Bk 6 Ln 400-403). The baby is admired for his beauty, as all babies seemingly are, but the nickname is a further filiation and nacreous layer of domesticity on the child's identity. He is named by his father twice, a kind of doubly affectionate identity. We are, as readers/spectators, supposed to like this child. There are few moments when we might chuckle at Achilleus in the same way we do about Hector.

Not all of Hektor's home life is so touching, but all of it goes to characterize the hero in ways that few others, Greek or Trojan are characterized. While Achilleus is separating himself from domestic affairs, Hektor is firmly entrenched in them and cannot escape them. His wife expresses her concerns clearly and gives him sound military advice. Her concern for herself is centered in her concern for Hektor and all that he represents to her. She cites all of the ways that Hektor is bound to her domestically, calling him father, brother and mother as well as husband. He is all the family that she has, as all of her other domestic relationships have been ruined, in one way or another by Achilleus.

> It was brilliant Achilleus who slew my father, Eetion...but did not strip his armour for his heart respected the dead man...And they who were my seven brothers in the great house all went upon a single day down into the house of the death god, for swift-footed brilliant Achilleus slaughtered all of them as they were tending their white sheep and lumbering oxen; and when he had led my mother, who was queen under wooded Plakos, here, along with all his other possessions, Achilleus released her again, accepting ransom beyond count, but Artemis of the showering arrows struck her down in the halls of her father. Hektor, thus you are father to me, and my honoured mother, you are my brother, and you it is who are my young husband (The Iliad Bk 6 Ln 414, 417 and 421-430).

Andromache is not just complaining, though. With this poignant and forceful reminder to Hektor that he is not responsible solely for himself, Andromache also gives Hektor an alternative to open-field warfare. She tells him to:

Please take pity on me, stay here on the rampart, that you may not leave your

child and orphan, your wife a widow, but draw your people up by the fig tree,

there where the city is openest to attack, and where the wall may be mounted.

Three times their bravest came that way, and fought there to storm it about the

two Aiantes and renowned Idomeneus, about the two Atreidai and the fighting

son of Tydeus. Either some man well skilled in prophetic arts had spoken or the

very spirit within themselves had stirred them to the onslaught (The Iliad Bk 6 Ln

431-439).

Andromache is not asking Hektor for anything unreasonable here. Her advice is sound: defend

the city where the Greeks are most likely to attack it. She is aware, not only of the attacks on

this particular part of the wall, but the individual warriors who have been leading the attacks.

This shows both the close ties between the Greeks and the Trojans, but also Andromache's

awareness of the battle and the major players. Her advice is informed and militarily sound, and

Hektor does not dismiss it on either grounds, though he does dismiss it.

'All these things are in my mind also, lady; yet I would feel deep shame before

the Trojans, and the Trojan women with trailing garments if like a coward I were

to shrink aside from the fighting; and the spirit will not let me, since I have

learned to be valiant and to fight always among the foremost ranks of the

Trojans, winning for my own self great glory' (The Iliad Bk 6 Ln 440-446).

Hektor is unwilling to take the safer course because of pride. He does not want to show fear

before the Trojans, either those on the field, or those watching from the city. He wants to win

glory for himself, and protecting the city, his wife, and his child come second to that. "Hector is

both king and warrior; he must be cautious and reckless at once" (Redfield 124). This is a

dangerous splitting of identities, and leads to his doom. Hektor is trying to be two things, hero

and filiated-member of society. It, of course, does not end well.

These concerns do not affect Hektor's brother, Paris Alexandros in the same way, but

the fact that they do not affect Paris affects Hektor. Paris is a source of trouble for Troy in

general, but he is a much more personal problem for Hektor . While Hektor is worried about

what the Trojans will think of him, Paris shrinks from battle, forgets his own armor and has to

borrow from one of his other siblings, and forgets errands and gets distracted by the possibility

of spending time with his wife, Helen. While Paris is a fascinating character in his own right, it is

interesting to see how Hektor deals with his troublesome brother. Hektor does not understand

Paris: the younger man certainly does not seem to be driven by the same desires and

motivations as the other heroes. After a long description of Paris' trip through the city, wherein

he is likened to a horse "sure of his glorious strength" (The Iliad Bk 6 Ln 510) Paris apologizes to

Hektor for his tardiness. Hektor responds:

> 'Strange man! There is no way that one, giving judgement in fairness, could
> dishonour your work in battle, since you are a strong man. But of your own
> accord you hang back, unwilling. And my heart is grieved in its thought, when I
> hear shameful things spoken about you by the Trojans, who undergo hard
> fighting for your sake' (The Iliad Bk 6 Ln 521-525).

Hektor gives him brother credit where credit is due; no one can claim that when Alexandros

fights he does not fight well, but he often refuses to fight, or worse, simply seems to forget that

he is supposed to be fighting. We are seeing two paradoxes: a father/king/son questioning his role as a hero and a fop/coward/shirker being praised as a hero.

So, in Hektor, we have a multiplicitous foil to Achilleus. While Achilleus is presented as escaping the boundaries of mortality and divesting himself of all domestic ties, Hektor's domestic ties are layered one on top of the other, or arrayed around him at every angle, pulling him in every different direction, diverting him from the singular, point to point movement that characterize the singularly minded Achilleus. We might assume that these reasons give Hektor something to protect and a reason to fight more intensely, but textually they divide Hektor and include within his ontology the recognition of death and organicity. Achilleus has no such division; his intensity is not an adjective describing his actions, but, instead an absolute. He does not behave intensely; he is intense.

While Achilleus is driven by one goal: the destruction of Hektor, Hektor is in an untenable situation. He must protect a city and the lives within it. This goal alone is impossible, but the impossibility is compounded by Hektor's personal desire for glory. He could potentially drive off the Achaians in a war of attrition, but the economy of glory presupposes the death of the hero; it is based on the immortality of the hero as achievable through a glorious death. Hektor's death is not merely his attainment of personal immortality, though; it is also the death of his city and the violation of those to whom he is domestically linked. One cannot desire immortality while mired in the concerns of the mortal, the preoccupation on the lives of the mortals within Troy. On the battlefield, immortality is achieved through a disregard, a marginalization of mortality, an Othering of mortality. Organic existence is decentered, or deprioritized.

In the most theoretical realization of the economy of glory, the supposed absolute line between mortality and other-than-mortal is blurred. The supposition of immortality deprioritizes death as an endpoint and makes it a vehicle rather than a destination allowing for nomadic, point-to-point movement rather than territorial boundary-based movement. It is this negation of death that allows for Achilleus' unique existence.

Achilleus forgets death; he seeks his goal, the destruction of Hektor, with the realization that Hektor will achieve heroic immortality if they fight. Achilleus is offering Hektor the chance to be remembered and live forever because to fight Achilleus is to achieve glory, win or lose. Achilleus' intensity removes him from the economy of glory, and all of the relevant social ties, though. Achilleus is not concerned with the *death* of Hektor, but with the *removal* and *netation* of Hektor. He wants to achieve gap and fissure, and in doing so is Desiring Desire rather than being moved by it in the form of desire. He is not a subject existing immediately following the a priori moment of existence on the plane of immancence. His entire Becoming is based on absence rather than acquisition.

Hektor is, by necessity of his goals, preoccupied with death. His desire to save his city and the lives of the people inside is impossible. He cannot keep mortal beings alive infinitely. Were Hektor to think of those to whom he is domestically tied as part of the economy of glory, and potentially immortal creatures, he might be able to decenter death as a priority, but he is incapable of that. They are not part of that network of relationships. They are not part of that Organ without Bodies/Molarity.

As an organic being, Hektor is trapped within a conundrum of survival versus intensity. He has within him the desire for an immortal existence, but also the natural desire for survival

for his family and himself. Before he faces Achilleus, he considers his own actions, and those

considerations are muddled:

> Deeply troubled he spoke to his own great-hearted spirit: 'Ah me! If I go now
> inside the wall and the gateway, Poulydamas will be first to put a reproach upon
> me, since he tried to make me lead the Trojans inside the city on that accursed
> night when brilliant Achilleus rose up, and I would not obey him, but that would
> have been far better. Now, since by my own recklessness I have ruined my
> people, I feel shame before the Trojans and the Trojan women with trailing
> robes that someone who is less of a many than I will say of me: "Hektor believed
> in his own strength and ruined his people" (The Iliad Bk 22 Ln 98-107).

Hektor does not see the battle with Achilleus as two men facing each other, gaining glory or

yielding it to another. His potential moment for glory is mired in a web of political, social and

domestic considerations. This will be the death of Hektor, but also, worse, the humiliation of

Hektor. Hektor allows domestic considerations into his consciousness, and thus questions, and

calls into question, his own status as hero. Hektor contemplates surrender, a logical, domestic

reconciliation between the two warring factions. Were he facing Agamemnon, it is probable

that the reconciliation would work. Agamemnon would welcome the acquisition of glory and

wealth without the need to endanger himself. Instead, he is facing Achilleus, who is no longer

concerned with domestic ties. Achilleus' singularity of purpose does not allow for any deviance.

His movement is nomadic, point to point, and he will not be moved or affected by the striations

of the space under him or around him. Troy could surrender to Agamemnon at this point, and

the change in politics would not affect Achilleus' drive towards the destruction of Hektor.

Hektor considers surrender:

> If again I set down my shield massive in the middle and my ponderous helm, and
>
> lean my spear up against the rampart and go out as I am to meet Achilleus the
>
> blameless and promise to give back Helen, and with all her possessions, all those
>
> things that once in the hollow ships Alexandros brought back to Troy, and these
>
> were the beginnings of the quarrel; to give these to Atreus' sons to take away,
>
> and for the Achaians also to divide up all that is hidden within the city, and to
>
> take an oath thereafter for the Trojans in conclave not to hide anything away,
>
> but to distribute all of it, as much as the lovely citadel keeps guarded within it;
>
> yet still, why does the heart within me debate on these things? (The Iliad Bk 22
>
> Ln 111-122).

Hektor is willing to give Helen back to the Greeks, as well as all of the riches in the city. He

dismisses the idea, not because he thinks it would be unfair to his people, or because it might

dishonor him or his city, but because he is convinced that Achilleus is beyond any reasoning. He

knows Achilleus will not listen to him, so the act of surrendering is pointless. So concerned is

Hektor about his own survival, that when he sees Achilleus approaching him with armor and

weapons shining so brightly they are likened to fire and the sun, that Hektor turns and flees

without any hesitation, preamble or concern for personal glory: "And the shivers took hold of

Hektor when he saw him, and he could no longer stand his ground there, but left the gates

behind, and fled, frightened...they ran besides these, one escaping, the other after him. It was a

great man who fled, but far better he who pursued him" (The Iliad Bk 22 Ln 136-137, 157-158).

Achilleus chases Hektor around the city of Troy for all of the Trojans to see, yet this does not

seem to be a point of importance to either character. Hektor is no longer concerned about the

opinion of Poulydamas (a domestic concern) when faced with the immanence of the intense.

Throughout their battle, which is remarkably short, Hektor constantly attempts to

invoke the power to oath, almost as if he wants to domesticate Achilleus and remind him of

domesticity. He wants to striate the space in which Achilleus exists and domesticate the War

Machine. Achilleus rejects the possibility of any oath or agreement between them, maintaining

instead his status as intense and un-bound by any allegiance. Hektor attempts his first oath

with Achilleus before the battle:

> Come then, shall we swear before the gods? For these are the highest who shall
> be witnesses and watch over our agreements. Brutal as you are I will not defile
> you, if Zeus grants to me that I can wear you out, and take the life from you. But
> after I have stripped your glorious armour, Achilleus, I will give your corpse back
> the to the Achaians. Do you do likewise.
> Then looking darkly at him swift-footed Achilleus answered: 'Hektor,
> argue me no agreements. I cannot forgive you. As there are no trustworthy
> oaths between men and lions, nor wolves and lambs have spirit that can be
> brought to agreement but forever these hold feelings of hate for each other, so
> there can be no love between you and me, nor shall there be oaths between us,
> but one or the other must fall before then to glut with his blood Ares (The Iliad
> Bk 22 Ln 254-267).

The battlefield oath is not unheard of in *The Iliad*. Apart from the supplication of a fallen

warrior, there are other examples of warriors reinstating a sense of the domestic or the

ordered on the battlefield, even within the heat of fighting. Glaukos and Diomedes trade armor

on the battlefield. Diomedes confronts Glaukos, an apparent stranger to him[15] and asks his

lineage. Glaukos launches into a long narrative about his family history and the two warriors

realize that their ancestors, if not friends, were certainly at least guests in each others' homes.

> He spoke, and Diomedes of the great war cry was gladdened. He drove his spear
> deep into the prospering earth, and in winning words of friendliness he spoke to
> the shepherd of the people: 'See now, you are my guest friend from far in the
> times of our fathers...these two (the fathers) gave each other fine gifts in token
> of friendship...(and these gifts) I left behind in my house when I came on my
> journey...Therefore I am your friend and host in the heart of Argos; you are mine
> in Lykia, when I come to your country. Let us avoid each other's spears, even in
> the close fighting. There are plenty of Trojans and famed companions in battle
> for me to kill, whom the god sends me, or those I run down with my swift feet,
> many Achaians for you to slaughter, if you can do it. But let us exchange our
> armor, so that these others may know how we claim to be guests and friends
> from the days of our fathers.'
>
> So they spoke, and both springing down from behind their horses gripped
> each other's hands and exchanged the promise of friendship (The Iliad Bk 6 Ln
> 212-215, 218-221, 224-233).

Unlike Hektor's attempts at oaths, Diomedes has little ulterior motive to domesticate

Glaukos[16]. Diomedes is second among the Greeks and has little to fear from Glaukos. Instead it

seems, as a systematized-warrior rather than a War Machine, Diomedes reiterates the

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[15] Once again we are reminded of the close familial and political ties between these warring nations.
[16] The only possible advantage there might be to Diomedes to switch armor is that Glaukos' armor is more expensive and nicer than his, but this seems unlikely to be the motivation to such an odd battlefield encounter.

domestic codes and reestablishes the nature of domesticity on the battlefield. The encounter

and the trading of the armor acts as a reminder to both sides of the war that there are

domestic ties between the individuals of the war and that the domestic ties supersede the

intensity of battle. These people are not always at war with each other. They have to exist in

each others' worlds when there is not any fighting.

In another respect, this encounter shows the depth of Paris' betrayal of the guest-host

relationship. Diomedes and Glaukos respect a generation-old resonance of that relationship

and openly express that respect. That Glaukos, who is defending Troy, Troy's possession of

Helen, and the problematic Paris, would also so publicly display his respect for the tradition that

is the cause of the war, is, in fact a sign of the vast political and domestic forces at work. On the

individual level, Glaukos' actions seem to portray him as potentially critical of the actions of

Paris, but the existing political alliances between Troy and the Lykians, between Sarpedon and

Priam, and between Sarpedon and Glaukos[17] work and twist together to support and reify the

system even as Paris breaks the rules. Paris' breaking of the guest host relationship is a

momentary aberration of the rules of his society, but the following war is then a reaffirmation ,

a display of the consequences of aberration. Whether one supports Paris or not, participation in

the war is a buttressing of the system in its acknowledgement of the necessity of aberration as

a defining principle. There is a reason for this war.

Hektor's attempts at oath and Achilleus' denial are signifiers of the two warriors'

positions within the society, and their mental states in relationship to that society. Hektor is

concerned with the safety of his city, whereas Achilleus is fixated on destruction. Hektor is

concerned with the sanctity of his body after his death, for he acknowledges the possibility of

losing the battle, but Achilleus is singular in his thought; he does not acknowledge his own mortality. His mortality is Other.

Achilleus refuses the connection inherent in an oath, and even metaphorically claims status as a non-human; he denies any resemblance to Hektor. Oaths exist between human beings, human beings who share a method of communicating, and who share a similar belief system. Achilleus, however, is a lion, and worse for Hektor, a war machine. The danger that Achilleus represents is greater than just what he represents to Hektor, though. Achilleus' unwillingness to enter the domestic relationship with Hektor is seemingly total. Achilleus is denying all domesticity. We have the precedence of oaths on the battlefield functioning as a way of affirming the rules of the society, but Achilleus refuses anything other than the destruction of Hektor. Achilleus is not interested in the war; the war has rules. Achilleus is interested in destruction, and, as such, he represents a threat to the system itself, as war-machines do.

The battle between Hektor and Achilleus is surprisingly short given that the entirety of the epic functions as a preamble to the fight. After taking stock of Hektor's weaknesses, a process that only serves to infuriate Achilleus as he is spotting the weaknesses in his own armor, stolen by Hektor and stripped off the body of Patroklos, Achilleus spots an open area near the throat and attacks.

> Brilliant Achilleus drove the spear as he come on in fury, and clean through the
> soft part of the neck the spearpoint was driven. Yet the ash spear heavy with
> bronze did not sever the windpipe, so that Hektor could still make exchange of
> words spoken (The Iliad Bk 22 Ln 326-329).

Achilleus kills Hektor with one stroke, though Hektor remains alive long enough for Achilleus to taunt him, and for Hektor to ask for one more domestic concession: a return to his people. Achilleus denies the request, and, in doing so, denies him one of the basic structures of textual heroism: the return to the domestic.

> 'Hektor, surely you thought as you killed Patroklos you would be safe, and since I
> was far away you thought nothing of me, o fool, for an avenger was left, far
> greater than he was, behind him and away by the hollow ships. And it was I; and
> I have broken your strength; on you the dogs and the vultures shall feed and
> foully rip you; the Achaians will bury Patroklos.' (The Iliad Bk 22 Ln 331-336).

The most threatening thing Achilleus can say to Hektor is that he is going to feed Hektor to the scavengers rather than be buried and formally mourned. This is terrifying to Hektor on several levels. As a heroic warrior, a funeral is a way of formally acknowledging his death and the immortality that follows. To have his body destroyed by scavengers problematizes whether he will be remembered or not, and how he will be remembered. The possibility exists that the ignominy of his destruction could supersede the heroism of his actions in the memories of those in whom his immortality is trusted.

The funeral also signifies for Hektor his final domestic action. The funeral and the destruction of his body by ritual fire ends his existence via a domestic rite. The scavenging of his body by dogs and vultures is a much more natural end to his existence, but, as it is bereft of any of the cultural denials of nature, it places Hektor, not as a hero attaining immortality, but as a piece of meat. Achilleus' denial of Hektor's desire to be buried is his final denial of domesticity.

This move on Achilleus' part is mitigated by his own acknowledgement that he and his Achaians will bury Patroklos. This is an important distinction, though, for it signifies that Achilleus is not ignorant of domestic ties, but is now aware of them and the power of denying them to someone who desires them. Active denial of a system is still systematic. Achilleus is denying Hektor the peace of knowing he will be remembered, and is threatening him with the possibility that his family will live with the memory of his desecration rather than his heroism. He is therefore stripping him of the domestication of intensity via the cultural cues of heroic identity. Achilleus is focused on Hektor's destruction, not just his death. The immortality the warrior seeks is an organicity, a combination of the static and the dynamic; Achilleus denies Hektor the function of memory.

Hektor pleads and is answered by Achilleus:

I entreat you, by your life, by your knees, by your parents, do not let the dogs
feed on me by the ships of the Achaians, but take yourself the bronze and gold
that are there in abundance, those gifts that my father and the lady my mother
will give you, and give my body to be taken home again, so that the Trojans and
the wives of the Trojans may give me in death my right of burning.'
    But looking darkly at him swift-footed Achilleus answered: 'No more
entreating of me, you dog, by knees or parents. I wish only that my spirit and
fury would drive me to hack the meat away and eat it raw for the things you
have done to me. So there is no one who can hold the dogs off from your head,
not if they bring here and set before me ten times and twenty times the ransom,
and promise more in addition, not if Priam son of Dardanos should offer to
weigh out you bulk in gold; not even so shall the lady your mother who herself

bore you lay you on the death-bed and mourn you: no but the dogs and the birds

will have you all for their feasting.' (The Iliad Bk 22 Ln 338-354).

This speech on Achilleus' part resonates with the same caustic acidity as did Zeus' claim

that Hera wanted to eat the children of Priam raw when he is making the deal to trade the

destruction of one city for another. At this moment, Achilleus is beyond all mortal

considerations; he is aberrant and so his actions and desires are likened in praxis to that which

they most resemble: no longer is he man, or even the lion he was. He is Becoming god in

respect to basic cultural boundaries. Just as incest is practiced by some groups of royalty as a

way of defining themselves as unconcerned with accepted rules, Achilleus is aberrant to the

point where cannibalism is beginning to appear the appropriate signifier of his rage.

As he approaches the satisfaction of his desire, however, a change occurs. By denying the

potential remembrance of Hektor by his people, Achilleus does himself a potential disservice as

well. By detracting from Hektor's reputation, he is reducing his own potential glory as he

devalues the worth of having killed Hektor. By proxy, he also lessens the value of Patroklos'

death as well. This resurgence of domestic awareness on Achilleus' part is due to a

paradigmatic shift of the importance of Hektor and his value and identity to Achilleus.

While focused on the death of Hektor, the destruction of Hektor, Achilleus approaches a state

of Desire unmitigated by the reality of fulfillment and the immanence of Desire. Once he has

achieved the goal, though, Achilleus is left with a PRODUCT: he has the body of Hektor. The

model of desire for fissure ends. Desire cannot be sated; desire can.

The body of Hektor becomes representative of mortality. Achilleus has achieved his goal

and destroyed Hektor, but nature rushes to fill that vacuum and leaves Achilleus with a body on

which to inscribe his anger. Once achieved however, this inscription becomes attributive rather than eliminative. Hektor, instead of ceasing to exist, starts to mean something. Achilleus can approach Desire, but cannot achieve it. He cannot achieve absence. This is the nature of Desire. And we have the creation of the model that the majority of heroic tales are going to follow: the inrush of domesticity after the moment of intensity and the immediate restriation of space made smooth by the action of the war machine. The static is not allowed to exist but momentarily before the dynamic erupts.

In Achilleus' case, the body of Hektor is immediately surrounded by the rest of the Achaians, all of whom inscribe the body with cuts of their own. Realistically, one does not imagine that the Greeks and Trojans ceased to exist, or even stopped fighting while Hektor and Achilleus fought. Within non-textual perspective, the individual heroic, exemplified by the moment of intensity might approach imperceptibility within the larger amorphous scope of a society, but once we limit our perception with the text, heroism becomes evident, if only for a moment. Once we have the product and an attribution of meaning, immanence resumes, driven by Desire.

The body of Hektor signifies the death of his companion, Patroklos, so his domestic ties are reborn, and he undergoes a (RE)transformation.

The Domestication of Achilleus

Achilleus is not a good human being. This is not to imply that he is evil. Achilleus is simply not very good at being human. The epic lives up to its claims of being about the fury of Achilleus. It is about just that: the initiation, the repercussions, and the resolution of his fury.

We are shown the initial fury that keeps Achilleus out of the war with the Trojans, but then see that fury subsumed in a greater fury that leads him into and past the war into a realm of violence unlike that of any of his peer-warriors. That Achilleus is difficult to like is symptomatic of his displaced domestic identity. Achilleus goes one step further, though, for it is difficult to empathize with him because he moves beyond what we *like* in a person to question what we *know* as a person. Achilleus is aberrant to the point where we question his identity as a member of our collected mortal existence.

The final two books of *The Iliad*, thus, strike many readers as jarring and discontinuous. This disparity is not caused by a fracture within the last two books, but because of the almost-absolute shift in identity on the part of Achilleus. Achilleus is a creature of absolutes, and the somewhat awkward transition of the twenty-third and twenty-fourth books of the epic owe more to Achilleus' absolute descent into excellence than to any aberration within the books. It is a kind of brilliance on Homer's part that the reader's perception is so carefully limited to the intense and the static that it is the domestic and dynamic that appears unbelievable and at odds with reality.

This is a necessary transition, though, for one cannot survive wholly and exclusively as intense. Intensity is NOT survival because it problematizes the boundaries of mortality. To survive is to imply the necessity of death. Achilleus must overcome his own intensity, allow for his own mortality and return to a less marginalized position within society. His momentary aberration is necessary, but necessarily momentary. We will see this model recur. It is a rare text that leaves us at the point of intensity. Rather the hero will almost always be reinserted into the domesticity of his society. Most of these insertions occur more smoothly than does

Achilleus', but his intensity is more defined than most, therefore the stress between the two functions is all the more glaring.

Achilleus' last words to Hektor are "'Die: and I will take my own death at whatever time Zeus and the rest of the immortals choose to accomplish it'" (The Iliad Bk 22 Ln 365-366). Once he has acknowledged his own status as mortal, he is free to act as a member of a society complete with domestic ties. He acknowledges his subservience to fate, and the gods breathe a collective sigh of relief. He plays with the product of his actions and ties the body of Hektor behind his chariot and drags it by its ankles around the city of Troy.

Once Achilleus has glutted his anger, he becomes a different person. It might be safer to say that he simply becomes a person. His first order of business is to bury Patroklos, and he and his Myrmidons perform the burial rite, complete with the sacrifice of the twelve Trojans Achilleus saved from the earlier battle. This is no longer an Achilleus acting alone, but a functional leader. "Hektor dead, Achilles cannot live on, because the heroes only exist as a pair, shaping and defining one another through performance, much as Diomedes and Glaukos determine each other's heroic worth in consort, by exchange. Like detective and homicide, the opposed heroes come to resemble each other more than the rest of the world" (Martin 131). Achilleus becomes kingly.

The games that follow Patroklos' funeral are an offshoot of the economy of glory. The games offer a non-fatal way of accumulating glory for the participating Greeks, and a way to exhibit excellence within their own society. The prizes given by Achilleus become signifiers of that glory that get passed from generation to generation as remembrances of the winner's glorious accomplishments. These individual instances of glory, and the memories associated

with them, however are also designed to further the glory of Patroklos, for each instance and memory occurs within the boundaries of Patroklos' funeral. To remember the game that won one the bronze cup is to remember the funeral where the games occurred and therefore the man who was being celebrated. The bronze cup can pass from generation to generation, a physical signifier of Patroklos.

The Achilleus who oversees the games is aware of politics and domestic ties on an uncanny level. He is a master diplomat and anticipates and solves problems before they even fully develop. He does not allow Agamemnon to participate in one game:

> 'Son of Atreus, for we know how much you surpass all others, by how much you
> are greatest for strength among the spear-throwers, therefore take this prize
> and keep it and go back to your hollow ships, but let us give the spear to the
> hero Meriones; if your own heart would have it this way, for so I invite you.'
>> He spoke, nor did Agamemnon lord of men disobey him (The Iliad Bk 23
> Ln 890-895).

Achilleus finesses his king out of competing in a competition he might lose. Achilleus knows as well as anyone the strength of Agamemnon's pride, but instead of confronting the king, he appeals to that troublesome pride, strokes his ego and forestalls any potential bickering, or ill-will from Agamemnon to the other Achaians. Had Agamemnon entered the contest and lost, Achilleus would have to deal with the same kind of political nightmare that he faced with the loss of Briseis, for, while Achilleus may have changed, Agamemnon has not.

In addition to being politically savvy, Achilleus shows honest tenderness to his companions. Nestor, the oldest of the Achaian warriors, and one of Achilleus' favorites, is too

old to complete in the competitions with the younger warrior, so Achilleus offers Nestor a memorable prize without forcing the old man to work for it. He does not break the structure of rewarding glory, but uses Nestor's past glories as the reason for the gifts.

> But the fifth prize, the two-handled jar, was left. Achilleus carried it through the assembly of the Argives, and gave it to Nestor, and stood by and spoke to him: 'This aged sir, is yours to lay away as a treasure in memory of the burial of Patroklos; since never again will you see him among the Argives. I give you this prize for the giving, since never again will you fight with your fists nor wrestle, nor enter again the field for the spear-throwing, nor race on your feet, since now the hardship of old age is upon you.'
>
> He spoke, and put it in the hands of Nestor, who took it joyfully (The Iliad Bk 23-615-625).

This gift sparks Nestor to recount (not-so-briefly) some of his past accomplishments. The lengthy and boring account of glories past is a stark contrast to the tersely structured narrative of Achilleus' battle with Hektor. The narrative is tolerated, if not appreciated, by the Greeks as a sign of and affirmation of domesticity in the face of Achilleus' previous, almost inhuman, disturbing behavior.

The event that truly marks the change in Achilleus and his return to his society is his reaction to Priam and the final resolution of his anger: the return of Hektor's body, the signifier of his rage. Priam sneaks into the Greek camp with the help of Hermes and supplicates himself much like a warrior on the battlefield would.

Tall Priam came in unseen by the other men and stood close beside him and caught the knees of Achilleus in his arms, and kissed the hands that were dangerous and manslaughtering and had killed so many of his sons...so Achilleus wondered as he looked on Priam, a godlike man and the rest of them wondered also, and looked at each other. But now Priam spoke to him in the words of a suppliant: 'Achilleus like the gods, remember your father, one who is of years like mine, and on the door-sill of sorrowful old age...Honour then the gods, Achilleus, and take pity on me remembering your father, yet I am still more pitiful; I have gone through what no other mortal on earth has gone through; I put my lips to the hand of the man who has killed my children (The Iliad Bk 24 Ln 476-480, 483-487, 503-506).

Priam confronts Achilleus with a kind of intensity. Priam acts on an intense level, helped by divine aid to achieve the return of his son's body, but he quickly reminds Achilleus of the mutual domestic bonds they have in common: the bond between father and son. Achilleus, who is in the midst of grieving the loss of Patroklos, is easily swayed by the thought of his own father, and the grief his own death will inevitably bring to Peleus. Priam elicits empathy from Achilleus.

So he spoke, and stirred in the other a passion of grieving for his own father. He took the old man's hand and pushed him gently away, and the two remembered, as Priam sat huddled at the feet of Achilleus and wept close for manslaughtering Hektor, and Achilleus wept now for his own father, now again for Patroklos...then when great Achilleus had taken full satisfaction in sorrow and the passion for it had gone from his mind and body, thereafter he rose from his chair, and took the old man by the hand, and set him on his feet again in pity (The Iliad Bk 24 Ln 507-512, 512-516).

The contrast between the domestic Achilleus and the intense Achilleus continues to deepen as he decides to return the body of Hektor to Priam. The simple exchange, a commonplace kind of agreement on the battlefield, evokes a presentation of Achilleus that shows him thoughtful and emotional. Achilleus moves into his domestic role slowly, but aware of his own potentially dangerous temper. He chides Priam to stop the emotional plea for fear that Priam might elicit an emotional response from him and that once Achilleus starts feeling any kind of intense feeling, he will not be able to restrain himself. Achilleus insists that Priam must have some kind of divine help to have entered the camp unharmed, and Achilleus does not want to offend the gods by killing Priam. This is a new kind of concern for Achilleus, and a reassertion of filial ties.

Achilleus and his companions empty the wagon that Priam brings of the ransom for Hektor's body, but there are subtle clues to Achilleus' nature in his behavior.

> The son of Peleus bounded to the door of the house like a lion, nor went
> alone...these two now set free from under the yoke the mules and the horses,
> and led inside the herald, the old king's crier, and gave him a chair to sit in, then
> from the smooth-polished mule wagon lifted out the innumerable spoils for the
> head of Hektor, but left inside it two great cloaks and a finespun tunic to shroud
> the corpse in when they carried him home. Then Achilleus called out to his
> serving maids to wash the body and anoint it all over; but take it first aside, since
> otherwise Priam might see his son and in the heart's sorrow not hold in his anger
> at the sight, and the deep heart of Achilleus be shaken to anger; that he might
> not kill Priam and be guilty before the god's orders. Then when the serving-
> maids had washed the corpse and anointed it with olive oil, they threw a fair
> great cloak and a tunic about him, and Achilleus himself lifted him and laid him
> on a litter, and his friends helped him lift it to the smooth polished mule wagon
> (The Iliad Bk 24 Ln 572-573, 575-591).

As he (re)places himself in domestic existence, Achilleus becomes mindful of not just the grander issues of ransom and exchange, but also the subtleties of politeness and kindness. He makes sure that Priam's old herald has a chair in which to sit while all of these activities take place around him. This is a far cry from the Achilleus who killed the supplicants on the battlefield. In addition, Achilleus leaves a cloak and a tunic on the wagon with which to cover the body, so that Priam will not see the dead body of his son and lose his temper, and, in return, cause Achilleus to lose his temper.

Priam makes a sound psychological move playing on Achilleus' love of his father; this seems to be the one domestic relationship that Achilleus doesn't completely abandon, though that may be merely circumstantial. By portraying himself as a father, not as a hero, or a king, Priam becomes an acceptable domestic tie to Achilleus. After they have dealt with the exchange, Achilleus voices concerns for the old man that resemble the concerns the Greek leaders had before Achilleus' return to the battlefield. He becomes the voice of reason to Priam, the voice of survival. He insists that Priam eat: "'Come then, we also, aged magnificent sir, must remember to eat, and afterwards you may take your beloved son back to Ilion, and mourn for him'" (The Iliad Bk 24 Ln 618-620). The possession of Hektor's body reifies the concept of death for Achilleus, therefore he becomes an organic being, a juxtaposition of the domestic and the intense, and grows concerned for the organic welfare of Priam. The creation of society, the expansion of domestic ties spreads from entity to entity via contact rather than design; Hektor's organic natures spreads to Achilleus.

These relationships act and move contagiously from one to another, based on the perception of domesticity and societal ties. "Propagation by epidemic, contagion, has nothing

to do with filiation by heredity, even if the two themes intermingle and require each other"
(Deleuze and Guattari *1987:* 241). Domesticity, as the dynamic function of an organic society,
breeds and spreads without the need for filiation; it supersedes filiation even as it exists
alongside filial relationships. Filiation is not *necessary* in a Kantian sense. Achilleus creates a
bond with Priam that defies all real filiation; their alliance is based on the absence and death of
those to whom they are actually filiated so that their domestic ties are existing ties based on
memories of filiation-lost. Priam appeals to Achilleus on the basis of the hero's absent father
for the sake of gaining the body of his dead son: "contagion, epidemic involves terms that are
entirely heterogeneous" (Deleuze and Guattari *1987:* 242).

    At this point, Priam is able to make this connection to Achilleus because Priam holds a
marginal place within the society in which he is functioning. Protected by the gods, Priam's
position in the Achaian camp is aberrant; logically it should not be possible for him to be there.
He did not follow the state-authorized vectors to achieve entry into the camp. Instead, he
moves nomadically from point to point. Achilleus recognizes this aberration due to his own
status as anomalous and marginal. Deleuze would name him sorcerer: "Sorcerers have always
held the anomalous position, the edge of the fields or woods. They haunt the fringes, They are
at the borderline of the village or between villages" (Deleuze and Guattari *1987:* 246). As a
sorcerer, the anomalous but marginal, versus the wholly aberrant, Achilleus is aware of that-
which-is-outside the state. While Priam is not Other in a Foucauldian sense, it is Achilleus who
recognizes that his mode of entry into camp is not wholly mortal. Priam is mortal, but his
presence amongst the Greeks is the work of the aberrant, the divine. Achilleus, as aberrant-
becoming domestic, is marginalized and aware of what is happening on the boundaries of his

society. He is aware of the work of divinity in ways the other Greeks would not be, for, while

the other Greeks are aware of the divine, Achilleus interacts with it much more openly than the

average Greek. His marginalized status makes him more aware of the outside forces working on

him and his cohort. What another Achaian might brush off as odd, Achilleus sees for what it is[17].

Priam claims his own status as marginal in his position of extreme loss. No man, he

insists has lost so many sons as I have. This is, of course, only possible because Priam has so

many children; he claims to have had fifty sons. Most of those children were lost to war, Hektor

being one of the last we will see. He does not mention Paris Alexandros, or his daughters. Priam

is anomalous because of the divine intervention that places him in the Greek camp, but he is

only worth of divine intervention because of the magnitude of his loss. It is his loss, the absence

of his domestic ties, his sons, that brings him into the perception of the divine, and it is the

recovery of his son's body, the symbolic recovery that moves him from his position of extreme

grief into a balanced static/dynamic equation; he follows the same basic pattern as does

Achilleus.

Once Achilleus convinces Priam to eat, a relationship made possible only by Achilleus'

decision to enter the domestic relationship of ransoming the body, Priam leaves the protection

of the gods, an aberrant position for a mortal and becomes fully organic himself. The two feed

each other's living, human natures. Achilleus offers the old man food, insists that he eat,

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[17] This resonates with the argument about the nature of the gods in the epic: are they real forces or metaphors for human activity and thought? One wonders if the characters interacting with gods suffered the same cognitive dissonance? A Greek warrior sees Athena toss one of is compatriots off the battlefield; does he acknowledge the act of a god acting directly on a mortal, or does his human brain try to concoct a mortal reason for the tossing, just as we are perhaps denying the gods their existence as the readers by citing them as metaphor.

identifying his organic, mortal nature, and clarifying Achilleus' similar identity, both in his desire

for food, and in his recognition that others are mortal and require sustenance. Again, this is

quite different from the Achilleus who wanted to drive the weary and beaten Achaians back

onto the field after their near-defeat and the loss of Patroklos.

After the meal, the two anomalous individuals further bond in an innocuous, from a

narrative perspective, moment of recognition and mutual admiration.

> But when they had put aside their desire for eating and drinking, Priam, son of
> Dardanos, gazed upon Achilleus, wondering at his size and beauty, for he
> seemed like an outright vision of gods. Achilleus in turned gazed on Dardanian
> Priam and wondered, as he saw his brave looks and listened to him talking (The
> Iliad Bk 24 Ln 628-632).

They sit, both anomalous, recognizing the anomaly until finally sleep overcomes Priam, who

claims not to have slept since the death of Hektor. No longer fixated on gap and fissure, his

organic needs take over and he is rendered fully mortal again. Achilleus promises the old king

the necessary time to bury Hektor by pledging to hold off attacking Troy for twelve days. He

does this without consulting Agamemnon, but:

> He took the aged king by the right hand at the wrist, so that his heart might have
> no fear. Then these two, Priam and the herald, who were both men of close
> counsel, slept in the place outside the house, in the porch's shelter; but Achilleus
> slept in the inward corner of the strong built shelter, and at his side lay Briseis of
> the fair colouring (The Iliad Bk 24 Ln 671-676).

Achilleus, infected by Priam, becomes organic again too, his intensity lost with the possession

of Hektor. That organic identity is cemented by the reacquisition of Briseis, who represents not

just the domestic ties between master and slave and lovers, but also the re-clarified

relationship with the Greeks, specifically Agamemnon.

The funeral of Hektor is presented as the last we see of *The Iliad*, but, despite glorifying Hektor, the funeral really glorifies his death, and thus, by proxy through the economy of glory, Achilleus. We must remember Hektor for the greater glory of Achilleus.

The epic can now fade to black, and we could, were we so inclined, insert an "and they lived happily ever after" but that would be misleading. The intentional limitations of the text leave Achilleus immortal to us; he does not die within the boundaries of this universe, but the creation of Achilleus-as-organic necessitates his eventual death; we merely lack the presentation in THIS text. 'And they lived happily ever after' really needs to be elucidated to 'and they lived happily ever after until they died'. The affirmation of domesticity is also the recognition of mortality. We may be shown the possibility of immortality through children, but from a textual perspective, that immortality is a subcategory of remembrance.

The unified experience of *The Iliad* leaves us with an immortal Achilleus, as it is meant to. The supporting documents and mythology have Paris Alexandros killing Achilleus with a well-placed arrow to his heel[18]. Just as a lack of domestic ties, the absence of domesticity, defines someone as intense, the reversal of that, the attribution of domestic relationships defines one as mortal. Achilleus reaffirms those domestic roles at the end of *The Iliad*; his story, as a hero, is over.

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[18] This is foreshadowed by Paris' wounding of Diomedes in Book 11. This is an obvious allusion to the later killing of Achilleus, but also an interesting commentary on Paris. Diomedes is wounded on the flat of his foot while stripping the armor off a fallen Trojan. If one imagines a fully armored warrior bending, crouching of a body, one can see how the bottom a shoe/sandal would separate from the foot, leaving several inches of flesh exposes. Paris' arrow is not an accident but rather an exemplary shot. The shot is problematic because it is so unlikely; Paris is such a fop, and it is non-lethal. Paris does not kill now, but he will kill, and everyone reading The Iliad would have known it was Paris who would eventually kill Achilleus, but only after Achilleus has fulfilled his intense identity.

Heroism on the Plane of Immanence

While I am going to cite Achilleus as a model for heroism, he is an inclusive model, not an exclusive model. Achilleus is a model for heroism in his intensity, his static identity within the amorphous boundaries of his state, but his domestic identity is not unimportant. If we extrapolate what happens to a subject encountering intensity on the Plane of Immanence, all intensity starts to look the same, and it is domesticity that changes in color, shape and size and allows us to differentiate one hero from another.

As the subject moves across the Plane of Immanence, he recognizes, attributes and creates meaning as he moves, via Desire, to the next moment of Becoming. Within the fluid existence of domesticity, this requires a constant updating and reacquisition of domestic identities and rules. The encounter with the static, the intense, though, is a repetition. It is a repetition in that the subject has encountered this function before and may have attributed meaning to it, or the subject may encounter the meaning attributed to the intensity by another object. This attributed meaning may occur as assumption, history, or even expectation: present, past, and future. An entity's definition of heroism, whatever that definition may be, is proof of encounter and recognition of the existence of the intense.

The intense in this state of encounter, ancillary encounter and primary and secondary attribution grows meaningful within the boundaries of the amorphous domestic existence. As a static function, this meaning can develop, coat and envelope like a nacreous covering adding meaning to meaning to the point where the history and weight of the attribution supersedes the original and the point of intensity approaches singularity as an unbreachable point of over-attribution. Like God, Love, Art, or the Sublime the concept of heroism can break the Plane of

Immanence, creating a swirling depth on the plane, attracting analysis but circumventing definition. The metaphor of the black hole is obvious, but not without merit. Whatever matter resides at the bottom of the black hole, all black holes are black in their gravitational inescapability. All a cosmologist can do is toss energy in the hole's general direction and watch it veer and/or disappear. Any matter sent in that direction will only accumulate at the bottom of the hole increasing the overall mass of the point of singularity. The same is true of defining a singularity on the Plane of Immanence; all one is doing when one attempts to define one of those points of singularity is attribute more meaning, more weight to that point. The point itself is not better explicated because the prior definitions do not cease. Hegel only complicated truth. Kant only complicated the sublime, and Derrida only complicated the text.

Within textual theory there is an escape, however. While matter travelling across space does not have a choice in its reaction to gravity, there is, within the subject, the possibility of conscious limitation, or perhaps the limitation of consciousness. We have a limited presentation within the text creating the possibility of heroism; we can further limit that encounter with the text. The modern reader can limit perception. The modern reader can deconstruct.

Models, assumptions and Derridean Metaphysics of Presence create shortcuts and fly-overs across these problematic points. We do not have to consider God every time we consider God. This, of course, saves us from staring blankly into the cosmos wondering about meaning and existence. The option is there to stare, but it is not a necessity. We can limit perception of meaning. We can use these heavy concepts without having to consider them. We are increasing their mass, but escaping their pull.

And this is what we must do if we desire to understand the nature of heroism. We have to limit perception of it, but consciously and with the realization that we are not trying to create sameness; we are trying to discover it. I am not implying that all heroes are the same, but rather that they are created by the same function: denial/fissure/separation from the domestic. What makes one hero different from another is the shape of that fissure[19]. What will distinguish one hero from another, and thus make him fascinating to us, are his points of departure from the domestic, and the ways in which the domestic problematizes his existence. The hero does not have a thousand faces—he has a thousand costumes, or perhaps, by the twentieth century, a thousand masks, but his is a single face. That single face's expression is merely altered by the cultural contexts affecting him. Like a ray, the point of departure is firmly anchored in the unchanging nature of heroic action, but it moves through the multiplicitous and infinite in its reactionary flight through the chaos of domesticity. With his Deleuzian sorcery, the hero is not just heroic for his actions but also for his perceptions of the aberrant. This perception is necessary for heroic action not just for the obvious necessity of perception for action, but for the marginalization of the hero.

> The finely built warrior is indeed the honour and glory of his particular nation;
> but he is a physical or corporeal individuality in which are sunk out of sight the
> expanse and the seriousness of meaning, and the inner character of the spirit
> which underlies the particular mode of life, the peculiar positions, the needs and
> the customs of his nation. In relinquishing all this for complete corporeal

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[19] This is then affected by the shape and boundaries of the cultural contexts of the domesticity from which the hero is separating.

embodiment, spirit has laid aside the particular impressions, the special tones and chords of that nature which it, as the actual spirit of the nation, includes. Its nation, therefore, is no longer conscious in this spirit of it special particular character, but rather of having laid this aside, and of the universality of its human existence. (Hegel 1967: 730).

Our model for heroism circles loss, orbits the singularity of fissure as the domestic ties that make a person a member of his society are stripped away leaving the possibility of heroism. This model takes innumerable forms. We understand the rage Achilleus feels at the loss of Patroklos, or the resonance of that model in innumerable modern movies wherein the normally by-the-book police officer is forced to step outside the law due to the death of his family/partner. One has to be careful, however of issues of timing, and the literary desire for characterization; this model not only works with poorly developed characters, but can often be seen as the *cause* of poorly developed characterization. The cliché loner who acts heroically without seeming motivation, is not without motivation; it is his lack of domestic ties (characterization) that motivates and empowers him. Heroes are not necessarily poorly developed characters, but if we encounter them *after* the fissure we might assume that domestic characterization never occurred. Exterior to the discourse as we are, we are able to see the absence that is propelling the character across the plane. Perhaps as readers we desire to see the domestic ties before they are taken away, but whether we are presented with a character after the removal of domestic ties, or we are presented with a character without any domestic, we are still faced with the same model: a character whose motivation is Desire. Not all texts are going to present five chapters of domestic ties to transform into fissure; the Iliadic model in the modern heroic story is distilled to the longing glance at a photo of a long dead

wife, or a silent moment at a grave. The heroic model exists and functions identically in both the worthwhile and the forgettable.

The Hero and the King

Perhaps we need to discuss what constitutes functioning, however. While the heroic model allows the hero an escape from the normal limitations of mortality, the hero can also doom himself should he allow domestic influences back within his existence. Two epics specifically show the dangers of this by repositioning the hero within that most domestic of positions: kingship.

The Odyssey

The Odyssey is a convenient bridge from *The Iliad* into other literatures. It also functions to answer some of the questions left open by Achilleus' actions. Like *The Iliad*, *The Odyssey* shows the reader how things should work, but unlike *The Iliad*, *The Odyssey* functions as a finale. *The Iliad* presents the actions of the hero; *The Odyssey* presents the manner in which one can leave the heroic lifestyle without having to die[20].

The Odyssey is the tale of Odysseus' return to Ithaca after the destruction of Troy. All of Odysseus' actions throughout the epic are based on his distance and separation from his wife, Penelope, his son, Telemachus, and his kingdom, Ithaca. As a heroic narrative based on Desire, Odysseus' actions face some of the same problems as do Achilleus'. He is not always what the modern reader would consider a moral man, as is attested by the scant number of his companions who arrive safely at their own homes. Odysseus, prior to his arrival home, is just

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[20] Though this is still a cessation of heroic identity.

Achilleus with a different face. While Achilleus' viciousness is physical, Odysseus' is mental.

Both, however, are equally brutally effective, and, frankly, frightening[21].

      While *The Iliad* offers a mildly problematic return to the domestic on Achilleus' part, *The Odyssey* revolves around that return. All of Odysseus' journey is predicated on his arrival at Ithaca, his return to the throne and his reunion with Penelope, but Odysseus' heroism, his intensity is still based on fissure and loss. The difference in this text is that the gap is fillable.

      Odysseus' return, however, is the equivalent not to Achilleus' meeting with Priam, but his meeting with Hektor. The re-assumption of the domestic role for Odysseus is the acquisition that will transform him from hero to non-hero and reintegrate him into his society as an organic being. This is a dangerous move, though, as organic is synonymous with possibly-dead.

      This is not an impossible feat: the cessation of the heroic role. The hero can return to domestic life, beat his sword into a plow and become organic. That model exists in numerous texts. In a way, that model represents a symbolic death of the hero. The hero must Become—but Become something other than hero before he can undergo the organic process of death. Odysseus is not going to have it quite so easy, for there is a one last challenge standing between him and his desired domestic position: the Suitors.

      The gap presented by Odysseus' absence, and the potential prize of Penelope and the throne of Ithaca, attract a group of pretend-heroes who vie for her attention and a domestic link to her. The Suitors are problematic to Penelope and to Telemachus in that they are a drain on the household and a threat to Penelope and Telemachus' desired domestic state. The Suitors are an overabundance of domestic ties: men to whom Penelope must be polite, but

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[21] Though some of Odysseus' most brutal moments are the manipulations he uses on others.

who are detrimental to the kingdom. All of them wish to rewrite the domestic ties surrounding

and binding Penelope. Penelope, however, is convinced that Odysseus will return, even though

he has been gone for twenty years.   The presence of the Suitors is the same kind of domestic

layering that problematizes Achilleus' presence within the Achaian camp. While Odysseus was

willing to ally himself with the Achaians in the war against Troy, he is as willing to slaughter

them as Achilleus is to kill Agamemnon when the Suitors present a threat to Odysseus and his

kingdom. The guest/host relationship is problematized, but reaffirmed by their presence.

Because they are guests, they are protected, but because they are bad guests, and have broken

the rules of civility, they are expendable. The guest-host relationship and military loyalty are

subject to the economy of glory: Odysseus will kill the Suitors, Achilleus will consider killing

Agamemnon, Ajax will imagine killing all of the Achaians when the question of personal glory

supersedes the negative ramifications of breaking a domestic tie.

Penelope, as acting monarch, juggles the domestic relationships with consummate

grace. She matches domestic obligation against domestic obligation for nearly a decade in an

effort to keep herself, her son and her island safe. She is forced by custom and situational

necessity to provide for the guests in her home, but those guests abuse her hospitality and

goodwill. She cannot be rude to them due to their power and status. The foreign warriors who

inhabit her home are a drain on her resources and provide nothing in return.[22] It is a broken

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[22] This relationship is similar to the chivalric relationship of the overly-specialized warrior and his king.
The chivalric warrior was so highly specialized a fighter that he did not provide anything to his king when
he was not actively fighting. The training necessary to ride a trained, aggressive warhorse, while wearing
one's own weight in restrictive armor and manipulating weapons designed to injure foot soldiers who

relationship, and a way to vilify the Achaians; they overstep the boundaries of courtesy on Ithaca and therefore deserve the fate awaiting them upon Odysseus' return.

Odysseus is characterized as the most intelligent of heroes[23], and so it should not be surprising that he recognizes the danger presented to him by the Suitors. Should he return to Ithaca as Penelope's long-lost husband, Telemachus' father and Ithaca's king, he immediately faces a small band of Greek warriors, all of whom benefit from his now-verifiable death. Faced with the ambiguity of his return, Penelope is authorized to hold the Suitors at bay. Once Odysseus is dead, however, even by their own hands, Penelope and the kingdom are fair game for the Suitors. Odysseus' ambiguous state leaves Penelope sort-of-married and Telemachus a prince rather than a king who needs to be killed. Penelope hides on the margins not to be sent back to her father's household leaving Telemachus a young, potentially unprepared, new king.

Odysseus the king, the father, the husband cannot face this heroic challenge. The challenge of the Suitors requires Odysseus-the-Hero, but to return to his rightful position is, by necessity, a cessation of his fissured domestic role; other functions of his identity will supersede

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were attempting to unhorse and kill one did not leave much time for that warrior to learn other domestically useful skills. In the chivalric system, the Penelope resonance is also a problem, and so we see the creation of vast codes of behavior for the chivalric warrior as a way to deter the bored warrior from off-field victories with the king's wife, daughter and/or staff. The Crusades could be viewed as much as a way of saving the women of Europe as an attempt to regain the Holy Land.

[23] " For Odysseus knew profitable ways beyond all other men who are mortal, no other man could rival him at it" (Odyssey Bk. 19, Ln 285–86).

or detract from his heroic identity. A revelation of who he is could create a multiplicitous

identity, and thus an organic molarity.

Odysseus, therefore, manipulates his own identity.

Upon his return to Ithaka, Odysseus masks his true identity and poses as a beggar within

his own household. This disguise is perhaps more believable than the Shakespearean trope of

masking someone and rendering the individual unknown to his or her most intimate associates.

Odysseus has been absent for twenty years. He tells Telemachus:

> I shall look like a dismal vagabond, and an old man. But if they maltreat me
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> within the house, then let the dear heart in you even endure it, though I suffer
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> outrage, even if they drag me by the feet through the palace to throw me out of
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> it, or pelt me with missiles; you must still look on and endure it; though indeed
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> you may speak with soft words and entreat them to give over their mad
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> behavior, but still they will never listen to you, for the day of their destiny stands
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> near them. When Athene, lady of many counsels, puts it into my mind, I will nod
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> my head to you, and when you perceive it, take all the warlike weapons which
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> are stored in the great hall, and carry them off and store them away in the
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> inward corner of the high chamber (*The Odyssey* Bk 16 Ln 273-286).

The disguise serves several purposes. Odysseus has plans for the Suitors, so the ability to move

around them is useful as reconnaissance, both on their behavior, but also on the actions of his

household servants.

By adopting a third identity: Odysseus as king; Odysseus as hero; now Odysseus as

beggar, Odysseus puts the dichotomy between being king or hero on hold; he is able to delay

the moment of Becoming. This is a dangerous position, however, as the beggar, a domestic

identity, is still subject to issues of mortality. The beggar, however, flirts with Otherness.

Instead of the conquerable Odysseus the hero, Odysseus becomes the barely-noticeable

beggar, beneath the contempt of the aggressive and territorial Suitors and therefore safe as

pariah. How many of us notice the homeless as individuals?

Odysseus' disguise works well, fooling everyone. The only character to notice the beggar

and see him for what he is Argos, Odysseus' long-suffering dog.

> Now as these two were conversing thus with each other, a dog who was lying
> there raised his head and ears. This was Argos, patient-hearted Odysseus' dog,
> whom he himself had raised...Now as he perceived that Odysseus had come back
> to him, he wagged his tail, and laid back both his ears; only he now no longer had
> the strength to move any closer to his master, who, watching him from a
> distance, without Eumaios noticing secretly wiped a tear away...but the doom of
> the dark death now closed over the dog, Argos, when, after nineteen years had
> gone by, he had seen Odysseus (*The Odyssey* Bk 17 Ln 290-327).).

The dog notices and recognizes Odysseus from the dung heap where he lies, unable to move.

His status as discarded matches the level of marginalization of Odysseus' adopted identity[24].

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[24] The dog will remain a symbol of loyalty and faithfulness throughout our heroic literatures. When faced

with both Superman and his evil doppelganger, one of the most evident differences between the two is

the way each treats Krypto, Superman's dog. While Ultraman is shown booting the dog in a disturbingly

graphic panel, entire issues of the comic are devoted to Superman's love of the animal. The dog, as a

symbol of faith is similar to the Hegelian master-slave relationship. In the Hegelian model, the master is

defined by his position in relationship to his slaves; one is not a master unless one has slaves with which

The dog also acts as a symbol of absolute fidelity, so that while others might not recognize Odysseus, the faithful do. The dog's happy-death after his pseudo-reunion with his master represents the danger of Odysseus. To recognize the returned-king is to invite death; Odysseus' disguise protects not just himself, but those around him[25]. By marginalizing himself as an unattached beggar, a non-member of this society, Odysseus does not endanger anyone to whom he IS domestically linked, therefore he does not have the distraction of that danger mitigating his identity when he reasserts his heroic role. He does not have the distractions that plague Hektor.

When his identity comes into question, Odysseus is quick to warn those who discover him of the danger present. Upon discovering a tell-tale scar, his old nurse recognizes the beggar for who he is, but he warns:

> Odysseus groped for her, and took her by the throat with his right hand, while with the other he pulled her closer to him, and said to her: "Nurse, why are you trying to kill me? You yourself suckled me at your own breast; now at last after suffering much, I have come, in the twentieth year back to my own country. But

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to define oneself as a master. Similarly, one proves one's own faithfulness with the returned faithfulness of the dog. The dog, however is a problematic animal, because the dog demands filiation and domestic alliance. Cats, however, don't care.

[25] This will become one of our most important tropes in modern heroism. As we raise some of our heroes to godlike stature, their only weakness will be the weakness of those around them; their domestic ties.

now that you have learned who I am, and the god put it into your mind, hush, let

nobody else in the palace know of it (*The Odyssey* Bk 19 Ln 482-486).

Odysseus is aware that his identity as king puts him in mortal jeopardy. His position as beggar

places him outside both of his problematic identities and allows him to move freely within the

domestic circles without facing the dangers of the domestic life. It should be no surprise that

Odysseus is the Achaian chosen to lead the surreptitious mission into the Trojan camp in *The*

Iliad. He *is* sneaky.

The Challenge

Penelope helps Odysseus return to his rightful place by creating a set of challenges for

her Suitors. The challenges she designs are based on heroic action, not domestic actions. She

has Telemachus set up twelve axe heads and offers her hand in marriage to the man who can

shoot an arrow through the round ends of the axe-heads where the handle of the axe would

normally fit. This is an interesting challenge because Penelope is demanding heroic action and

offering a domestic reward; a miniature model of the heroic model we've created. Good The

heroic narrative traditionally ends with the beginning of the domestic relationship. Here

Penelope has reified that model into one contest. In doing so, Penelope has offered Odysseus

exactly the chance he needs both on the practical and theoretical level.

The challenge allows Odysseus the moment to reassert his heroic identity, but it also

leaves him within the great chamber armed with his weapon of choice vastly outnumbered, but

facing unarmed foes.

The challenge is a textual trope. Why is the martial display the deciding factor in a domestic decision? This kind of challenge is certainly not unique in literature; it's almost cliche. The recurring nature of this motif should act as a flag that some sort of system is functioning. Perhaps the illogical nature of the trope requires that we reverse the cause and effect relationship.

The challenge, specifically the damsel-in-distress challenge, problematizes and eventually eliminates heroic identity. By placing the prize, a domestic association, elsewhere, as something to be won, that relationship becomes that-which-is-not. The heroic identity, therefore once again becomes the Desire for gap and fissure. The challenge creates a potential heroic identity, but it is predicated on the presence of domesticity-to-be. The challenge is further problematized by the fact that the relationship itself is contractual, a social event. This may explain why many of the challenges are non-lethal games; they are imitations.

The imitation serves, though, to eliminate heroism by providing the setting for heroic action and allowing that heroic action to come to its fruition. The domestic relationship is then granted the advantages of the heroic prize: immortality through memory. The problematic heroic existence has been eliminated. The system allows for heroism, cultivates it under controlled circumstances, and then eliminates it through the attribution of domestic ties. The Becoming hero is quickly cultivated by a controlled evolution into a domestic figure.

Penelope creates a contract between herself and the Suitors, and it is a well-negotiated contract. By setting Odysseus' accomplishments as the benchmark by which she will choose her husband, she appeals to the Suitors' sense of logic, pride and history. The contract is beneficial to her, however, because it is two challenges in one. The real challenge is not the seemingly

impossible shot through the axe-heads, but the stringing of Odysseus' massive bow, a feat none

of the Suitors can accomplish. When Odysseus, the beggar, is allowed to take part in the

contest, it is seen as joke by the Suitors, but the challenge is an opportunity for Odysseus; he

transforms the game into reality. Odysseus' heroic existence leaves him in a similar position to

that of Achilleus: he slays all of the Suitors sparing only two, both of whom were coerced into

being Suitors by the other men.

Resourceful Odysseus, once he had taken up the great bow and looked it all
over, as when a man, who well understands the lyre and singing, easily, holding
it on either side, pulls the strongly twisted cord of sheep's gut, so as to slip it
over a new peg, so without any strain, Odysseus strung the great bow. Then
plucking it in his right hand he tested the bowstring, and it gave him back an
excellent sound like the voice of a swallow. A great sorrow fell upon the Suitors,
and all their color was changed, and Zeus showing forth his portents thundered
mightily. Hearing this, long-suffering great Odysseus was happy that the son of
devious-devising Kronos sent him a portent. He chose out a swift arrow that lay
beside him uncovered on the table, but the others were still stored up inside the
hollow quiver, and presently the Achaians must learn their nature. Taking the
string and the head grooves he drew to the middle grip, and from the very chair
where he sat, bending the bow before him, let the arrow fly, nor missed any axes
from the first handle on, but the bronze-weighted arrow passed through all, and
out the other end. He spoke to Telemachos: "Telemachos, your guest that sits in
your halls does not then fail you; I missed not part of the mark, nor have I made
much work of stringing the bow; the strength is still sound within me, and not as
the Suitors said in their scorn, making little of me" (*The Odyssey* Bk 21 Ln 395-
427).

Odysseus-as-beggar accomplishes the heroic task without any effort, and with minimal

boasting. The ease with which he accomplishes the tasks is juxtaposed with the flourish with

which he reveals his identity to the Suitors.

> Now resourceful Odysseus stripped his rags from him, and sprang up atop the
> great threshold, holding his bow and the quiver filled with arrows, and scattered
> out shafts before him on the ground next to his feet, and spoke his word to the
> Suitors: 'Here is the task that has been achieved, without any deception. Now I
> shall shoot at another mark, one that no man yet has struck, if I can hit it and
> Apollo grant me the glory.'
>
> He spoke, and steered a bitter arrow against Antinoös (*The Odyssey* Bk 22
> Ln 1-8).).

It is at this point that Telemachus can begin acting heroically as well. His identity becomes less

muddled by Odysseus' presence, and he can step into a heroic role.

Odysseus and Telemachus slay all of the Suitors in a decisive, almost methodical

manner; the heroic action itself is not all that different from Achilleus killing on the field, or any

of our heroic actions. What makes the killing interesting is that it is Odysseus' last heroic action.

Once he has completed the heroic task, first on the playful game level, then on the very serious

warfare level, he immediately switches to a domestic role. He then has to deal with domestic

challenges

The important factor in this switch is that he **stays** in this new domestic role; Odysseus is

resourceful Odysseus.

Upon killing the Suitors, Odysseus immediately cleans house. He calls in his nurse, the one faithful female servant in his household, chides her for rejoicing over the dead bodies she sees and has her oversee the cleaning of the house. After he has had his disloyal household servants clean up the gore and mess of the slaughter. He cleans house by killing the disloyal female servants; their most grievous sin was their sexual relationships to the Suitors.

> 'Do not awaken her (Penelope) yet, but tell those women who have been shameful in their devisings to come here to my presence.'...First they (the women) carried away the bodies of all the dead men, and laid them under the portico of the well-built courtyard, stacking them on each other. Odysseus himself directed them and hurried them on. They carried the bodies out. They had to. Then, after they had done this, the women washed the beautiful chairs and tables clean, with water and porous sponges. After this, Telemachos, the oxherd and the swineherd, scraped out the floor of the strongly constructed house, with shovels, and the women carried the scrapings way, and piled them outside (*The Odyssey* Bk 22 Ln 431-456).

This image, I think, stands out as symbolic of Odysseus' personality and being more than the manner in which he fights. The maids, whose crime is sleeping with the Suitors, are forced to clean their lovers' blood off the furniture and then carry the scrapings, the bits and pieces of their dead lovers, out of the house because "They had to." Odysseus' actions, at this point, are based entirely on domestic concerns. He does not slay the maids as a hero, but has them executed as a king. He distances himself from the killing by having Telemachos perform the hanging. He has his son and his loyal servants kill Melanthios, the disloyal servant who kicked Odysseus the beggar: "They cut off, with the pitiless bronze, his nose and ears, tore off his

private parts, and gave them to the dogs to feed on raw, and lopped off his hands and feet, in

fury of anger" (*The Odyssey* Bk 22 Ln 474-476).). Melanthios' death is as graphic and violent as

any of the deaths in *The Iliad*, but it is not a heroic death; it is an execution ordered by a king

and carried out by his lawfully ordained heir. There is no economy of glory at work here.

Melanthios is a criminal being put to death, not a warrior facing another warrior.

The challenges Odysseus faces at this point are different. Odysseus is at a point where

he is Becoming King; he is no longer behaving heroically. He has to face the challenges of

Penelope, but her challenges all verify his identity as husband/father/king. Winkler brings up

the interesting point that Penelope's distrust of her own senses and the obvious evidence that

Odysseus is who he says he is completely understandable when one brings in the possibility

that vagabond in front of her is not just a clever imposter, but a disguised god: "But this man,

shrewd and cognizant as his obviously was, might still have been an imposter—or even a god"

(Winkler 1990: 159)[26].

She attempts to trick Odysseus by offering to move his bed outside; neither

acknowledges this as a challenge, but the immovable nature of Odysseus' bed, and Odysseus'

knowledge of the bed is the final proof of his identity.[27] Odysseus laments the confusion of

which bed is his, and, by identifying that the bed in question could not be his, verifies for her

that he is, in fact, Odysseus.

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[26] It embarrasses me that I never saw Penelope's supernatural concerns. She is quite clear about them, but as I read her suspicion, knowing that it was Odysseus standing in front of her, I only saw Odysseus, not the possibility of a god masquerading as Odysseus. This only goes to prove that she, like Odysseus, is smarter than I am.

[27] Odysseus' bed is part of a living olive tree. He built his bedchamber around the tree and then carved

the trunk of the tree into the form of the bed.

There is a lot more happening in this passage, though. Penelope's wholehearted acceptance that only Odysseus could know about the bed in their private chambers verifies for Odysseus Penelope's status as faithful to him as he is expected by her to be the only one with knowledge of the design or their bedchamber: no one else has had access to Penelope's bedchamber. The passage also shows Penelope's own resourcefulness and subtlety by creating the hidden test.

Finality:

Just as *The Iliad* ends with Achilleus behaving domestically, *The Odyssey* ends with Odysseus retaking the reins of his kingdom. This is the death of the hero, though not the death of the man. The hero does not die; he simply ceases to exist. Heroes do not die; mortal men die. To die is to become something-that-is-not-hero: corpse/victim. Death for the hero is a two-part function. First the hero ceases to be, then the organic being dies. Death is change, and the hero is a function of the static.

Odysseus Becomes King/Statesman/Father/Lover/Husband, and ceases to be hero, and, in this way, averts disaster, for to become not-hero, but still behave heroically is fatal.[28] Odysseus, resourceful, fox-witted Odysseus is one of the few pre-modern beings who sees this pattern. He compartmentalizes his heroic identity and his domestic identity, or at least times the shifts between the two functions in such a way as to survive past the end of the text. In doing so, Odysseus creates the model that is going to allow for the truly confusing models of

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[28] Thus the scarcity of heroes outside the textual.

identity that will become available to the hero in the urban, capitalist world of the twentieth and twenty-first century.

Beowulf

If Odysseus is a model of the successful shift from the heroic to the domestic, then Beowulf is the archetype for what can happen should a hero shift roles unsuccessfully. The first two parts of *Beowulf* are relatively uneventful for our purposes. Beowulf's killing of Grendel and Grendel's mother are interesting, but not necessarily novel examples of heroic prowess and martial strength. He, like Achilleus, is seeking fame and glory (and loot). It is Beowulf's actions after he takes the mantle of king that help define heroism by elimination.

After his heroic adventures abroad, Beowulf returns to his homeland and becomes king. This appears to be the end of his heroic identity and a time of prosperity for his people. The (re)appearance of a dragon in his kingdom, however, motivates Beowulf to reassume his heroic identity and face the monster.

The dragon as a force of evil is fraught with symbolism, but that symbolism is reducible. The dragon is a liminal creature, marginalized by its very existence as non-human. It is not a being that must become marginal by its actions; its awakening and presence makes it marginal. It is not a human behaving inhumanely or breaking the laws of the society; this is a monster.

The contrast of Hrothgar's (in)actions against Grendel and Beowulf's actions against the dragon show the difference between the king and the hero-become-king. Hrothgar recognized his place within his society, and while he lamented the damage Grendel was doing to his kingdom, he avoided personal attempts to fight the monster. This is a decidedly non-heroic stance; it is the kingly response. Hrothgar recognizes a larger reality than does King Beowulf.

Hrothgar attempts to enlighten Beowulf, as he sees the young warrior as a potential future

king.

> "A protector of his people, pledged to uphold truth and justice and to respect
> tradition, is entitled to affirm that this man was born to distinction. Beowulf, my
> friend, your fame has gone far and wide, you are known everywhere, in all things
> you are even-tempered, prudent and resolute. So I stand firm by the promise of
> friendship we exchanged before, Forever you will be your people's mainstay and
> your own warriors' helping hand" (Beowulf 1700-1708).

Beowulf, though, does not see his new identity once he becomes king; he does not see his place

and his necessity to his kingdom.

Once aware of the presence of the dragon, Beowulf immediately reverts to his heroic

identity and decides to face the dragon on his own. This is the heroic response; the kingly

response would be to send a young, capable warrior to face the dragon, to re-invest in the

system and give another individual a chance to Become heroic.

> "I risked my life often when I was young. Now I am old, but as king of the people
> I shall pursue this fight for the glory of winning, if the evil one will only abandon
> his earth-fort and face me in the open.
> Then he addressed each dear companion one final time, those fighters in their
> helmets resolute and high-born: "I would rather not use a weapon if I knew
> another way to grapple with the dragon and make good my boast as I did against
> Grendel in days gone by. But I shall be meeting molten venom in the fire he
> breathes, so I go forth in mail-shirt and shield. I won't shift a foot when I meet
> the cave-guard: what occurs on the will between the two of us will turn out as

> fate, overseer of men, decides. I am resolved. I scorn further words against this
> sky borne foe.
> "Men at arms, remain here on the barrow, safe in your armour, to see which of
> us is better in the end at bearing wounds in a deadly fray. This fight is not yours,
> nor is it up to any man except me (Beowulf: 2511-2533).

Beowulf is thinking and bragging like a hero, but he does not see the long-term danger of his actions. While he rids the kingdom of the danger of the dragon, he places it in even worse danger by depriving the nation of a king. There are dangers *within* the system, dragons, and then there are dangers *to* the system, heroic kings.

Like Grendel, the dragon represents a threat, but less of a threat than domestic upheaval. Grendel and the dragon represent the death of members of the society, but the death of the king threatens the society itself. Wiglaf predicts this after reporting the death of Beowulf: "'Now war is looming over our nation, soon it will be known to Franks and Frisians, far and wide, that the king is gone'" (Beowulf: 2911-2914). Wiglaf makes an uncharacteristic criticism of the dead king.

> "Often when one man follows his own will many are hurt. This happened to us.
> Nothing we advised could ever convince the prince we loved, our land's
> guardian, not to vex the custodian of the gold, let him lie where he was long
> accustomed, lurk there under the earth until the end of the world. He held to his
> high destiny. The hoard is laid bare, but at a grave cost" (Beowulf: 3077-3085).

While discourses are not defined by a center radiating out, the discourse can be disrupted should the center and the margin become confused. The hero is aware of the margin because

of his own marginal position, but the king is sheltered from that margin by the very structure of

his society. The society does not necessarily build up around the king; sometimes the society

places the king in the center whether he wants the position or not. The king's awareness and

interaction with the margin affect the society as a whole, thus the society often mandates with

whom the king can interact. The hero acts as a societal buffer between the king and the margin;

to juxtapose those positions is disruptive.[29]

      Beowulf, by not creating a barrier between the multiplicity of identity, dooms his

society. As a king, he should have been made aware of the monster, a marginalized creature,

but he should not have faced it. The center and the margin should not meet at a focused point

of conflict. By reverting to his heroic role, he succeeds in attaining the heroic goal, immortality,

but his kingly identity is a tangle of domestic relationships that are compromised by his heroic

actions. When Beowulf, the hero, is set upon his pyre, in addition to mourning his passing, his

subjects lament the disruption to the system his passing represents.

      A Geat woman too sang out in grief; with hair bound up, she unburdened herself
      of her worst fears, a wild litany of nightmare and lament: her nation invaded,
      enemies on the rampage, bodies in piles, slavery and abasement. Heaven
      swallowed up by the smoke (Beowulf: 3150-3155).

This unnamed woman is the representative of the domestic life of the Geats that has been

disrupted by the heroic actions of a king, and sounds strikingly similar to the concerns

Andromache had about Hektor facing Achilleus. Like Hektor, Beowulf dies, heroically, but his

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[29] If it is not disruptive, then we may not have a case of extreme marginalization.

heroism is tainted by the disruption to the discourse to which he was politically aligned. The king, as a domestic function of his society, has his death signified differently than does the hero. The heroic death is resignified as glorious to un-domesticate it, to remove the potential domestic ties that might distract the hero from his intense action, but also to protect the system from disruption caused by the death of a character who is, by definition, placing his life in jeopardy. The king's identity is resignified domestically to over-attribute domestic identity to it. The king is a king, but also a father to his country. If not a god, he is divinely authorized. Metonymically, the king is the head of the country, thus signifying him as irreplaceable. The hero is infinitely interchangeable.

Problems/Solutions

The solution to the shift in identity from hero to king revolves around death, or at least the cessation of existence. Odysseus shows us that one can move from one identity to the other, but the shift requires careful compartmentalization of the identities and an absolute shift away from the one identity into the other. While Hektor is a hero/prince he is vulnerable, and while his death at the hands of a named warrior such as Achilleus is glorious, his domestic ties not only distract him and lead to his death, but they also mitigate his heroic ending by leaving the reader (who, by definition, must be domestically linked within his or her own existence) with mixed sympathies. Is the heroic death worth the disruption to the domestic ties? The confusion of identities places the hero/king in the worst of possible worlds; he is attempting intense actions without the safety of the de-emphasized, de-signified death.

Achilleus completely denies all domestic ties and performs as our model hero. His actions hurt no one besides his enemies (because he is bound to no one), and his success is

absolute. It is Achilleus' inaction that brings grief to the Greeks; he is dangerous when he is in a liminal state: being a bad hero and a domestic disruption. Odysseus subordinates his heroic identity until he is completely successful at removing any threat to his domestic existence; only after those threats are eliminated does he pick up his crown. The move from hero to king is a cessation of the heroic identity brought about by the accumulation of domestic ties. This is a necessary cessation; the accumulation of domestic ties is, by definition, a move away from the intensity of the heroic. The king CAN become heroic again, but only after he is stripped of domestic filiation. He must move away from kingship. Odysseus was able to become heroic, but only after he abandoned everything he loved and sailed to Troy. His quest was based on gap and desire; once he acquired, he was king.

The necessary stripping of domestic ties is a ruthless process. The hero/king/father cannot generally just set aside his roles and then resume them. Most often those roles are ended in death/tragedy. Filiation is tenacious.

These models, both the failures and the successes, re-emerge throughout the rest of western heroic literature. The individual actions of the heroes become repetitive and uninteresting. Heroic literature becomes characterized by moments of intense, sometimes super/inhuman actions surrounded by near-nonexistence. The western is only a western when there is a shoot-out, and James Bond is only interesting to us when there is a world-threatening conspiracy. The characters cannot have a life other than these moments of intensity because of their identity as hero. James Bond is allowed a wife, but she is dead; his romantic ties last one movie and the consummation of romance play as the cliche ending to each film. The Virginian is allowed his school-marm, but only after he denies their engagement, kills Trampas and then

reasserts his desire to be linked to her domestically. Lancelot helps destroy Camelot with his domestic ties to Guinevere. The nigh-indestructible Riggs ends the *Lethal Weapon* franchise by marrying his pregnant girlfriend moments before the birth of their child.[30] Schwarzenegger has very few love scenes[31].

Modern heroic literature gives us nothing new, however. The Grail-worthy Indiana Jones is really no different than the tip-stealing Porter in *Payback*. They are domestically bereft, emotionally isolated men performing acts of intensity and heroism. Both operate on different levels of marginalization and cultural authorization, but it is the same model.

Intensity is not going to change, and domesticity is unwaveringly amorphous. We cannot change the intense, and we cannot stop the ever-changing nature of the domestic. Modern literature, however does offer us a new interaction between the two functions, an interaction that escapes the fatality of the juxtaposition of cultural roles, but allows for a fully-realized heroic individual to exist within the system without disruption to the system or the death of the heroic individual. To accomplish this, the hero is going to have to play games with his own identity; games only available within the structures of advanced metropolitan capitalism.

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[30] She asserts at the last minute that she desires the commitment despite her earlier position as a hero herself. The movie ends with the domestic assertion that the characters are family. We will not see a Lethal Weapon V.

[31] The notable exceptions being *Last Action Hero* and *True Lies*, both of which are based on a demythologization of the heroic identity. Both movies also use domesticity and love-relationships as potential threats to heroic identity. It is important to note, I think, that *Last Action Hero* was not a commercial success.

It is here that we begin our discussion of The Batman.

Continuity and Crisis

One of the most unique and important issues within the genre of comic books is the concept of character history. The curious creation process and market of the modern comic book is unlike any form of literature in western history and is responsible for the lengthy and amorphous history of characters that have become iconic in American culture.

Were one to pick up any edition of *Detective Comics*, the flagship comic wherein The Batman exists, one would be dealing with over 600 prior issues of backstory subdivided into shorter story-arcs. *Detective Comics*, however, is not the only title in which The Batman exists. On a monthly basis, The Batman appears in *Detective Comics, The Batman, Gotham Knights, Nightwing, Robin, Batgirl, Birds of Prey, Catwoman. Worlds Finest, The Brave and the Bold* and *JLA*. In addition to these regular titles, the character is occasionally co-opted by other books within DC's stable.

Within these eleven regular titles and the numerous side-projects involving The Batman, there is a further wrinkle. Within a given story arc, one writer may have control over the story being presented[32] but there is no one writer responsible for the entirety of The Batman cycle. Add to *this* that within even one single issue story the tale is being told by a combination of a writer, a penciller, an inker, and a letterer, and one has one of the most convoluted creative processes regularly used within modern literature. The creative process behind one issue of a comic book is a multiplicity in itself.

The combination of this crushing weight of history, as well as the possibility that The Batman very well may be appearing in as many as eight or more places at one time leads to a

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[32] Note, I say story and not character.

curious problem referred to in the industry as continuity. Like The Batman himself, though, this

seemingly new issue is not all that new; it is merely the logical extrapolation of concept

problematized by modern extravagance and a market economy capitalizing on a popular

character.

> Continuity is an emergent phenomenon, at first recognized by, Gardner Fox,
> Julius Schwartz, and Stan Lee as a kind of imaginative real estate that would turn
> mere comic books into chronicles of alternate histories. DC's incoherent origins
> formed an archipelago of island concepts that were slowly bolted together to
> create a mega-continuity involving multiple parallel worlds they could not only
> makes sense of pre-caps Silver-Age versions of characters like the Flash, but also
> fit new acquisitions from defunct companies into a framework that made
> Marvel's look provincial (Morrison 2011: 114).

Let us return briefly to Achilleus. Who owns that character? This is really only a question

that can be asked in the capitalist market that has enfranchised authorial ownership and

created the concept of intellectual property. Achilleus himself is a multiplicity. To which

Achilleus does one refer when one says Achilleus? The Iliadic Achilleus is certainly the most

recognized Achilleus, but that recognition is circumstantial to one's encounter with the hero. Is

the Iliadic Achilleus the same character who is referenced in The *Odyssey*? A first time reader

might assume so, but only after the artifice of authorial ownership linking the two contextually

related epics to each other has been created. After all, the rookie might protest, they're both by

Homer, never understanding that Homer is a Artifact designed to bound the text, characters,

and stories. It takes only a cursory glance at Classical scholarship on the matter to problematize

the relationship between the two Achilleus[i] What of the Achilleus referenced in The *Aeneid*, or

the Greek tragedies? There are hundreds of years separating some of those works from each other. From our perspective, though, they blend into one unified character[33].

The same is true of The Batman, but with this character we have a regulatory body overseeing that uniformity, limiting the creative process, eliminating abnormality and maintaining the status quo, while allowing enough change to create a sense of growth. The Batman is a constant war of editor versus writer versus market.

The creative process behind The Batman is a constant stream of rupture and fissure limited by market presentation and editorial marginalization. A given writer creates a script complete with dialogue, description of setting, and even the textual representation of sound effects. This script is then reviewed by an editor. To be accepted for publication, the story must be exciting enough that the editor thinks the readers will purchase the story, and be interesting enough to further the character, but it cannot create too much rupture or fissure in the ongoing history of the character. The Batman must act like The Batman. The character is hugely weighty with history and changes happen subtly and slowly. The editor preserves this history by marginalizing any stories too disruptive, and, while the story continues to exist, it does not become real, i.e. published[34].

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[33] I struggled with this very concept as I wrote about Achilleus and his appearances in The *Iliad*. Does one bring in The Judgement of Paris, or the Oath of Tyndarus ,into the discussion of The Iliad? Did the Achilleus of The *Iliad* reach out for the sword as a child while dressed as a girl? The idea of a multiplicitous character is certainly nothing new. One could argue that Homer is a creation designed to limit our interactions with the character to offer some sort of grounding and uniformity.

[34] I intentionally make a distinction between purchased and published. Sometimes stories get purchased, but do not make it to print. I speak from experience. I wrote a story for *Nightwing*, a one shot that was designed to fit into any slots in the publication schedule disrupted by writer/artist delays. It was accepted, purchased, and an artist penciled the pages. The then-writer for the series took offense

The process becomes even more bizarre should the story fit the narrow margins of acceptability. Once the editor has accepted a story, it is sent to an artist who interprets the text of the script and translates it to a visual representation[35]. Usually, the writer has little to no say in who is going to interpret his text visually[36]. This initial process, though, is only the first of several steps[37]. Once the penciled art is complete, it is further modified by a letterer who disrupts the visual panel by re-inserting the dialogue, the text over the image in neatly compartmentalized bubbles representing speech, thoughts, or diagetic sound[38]. These initial pencil drawings along with the text, are then inked[39], sometimes by another artist, then colored, again, sometimes by a new artist, often with each part of the process being

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at the idea that the editor thought he needed a backup plan, and the story was quietly put in the bottom of a drawer with apologies to me from the editor. I still have the penciled pages.

[35] This also creates another opportunity for interpretation by the reader and critic. One must do a close reading of the text, but also of the art of the panel. In the more complicated texts, there may even be disparity between the textual information and the visual information that necessitates further analysis on the part of the reader (viewer?) The moment Two-Face flips the coin in *Arkham Asylum* is a great example. The coin turns up scarred side facing, which, according to the text, means The Batman is to be killed. Harvey, however, lies and says it comes up un-scarred side facing. I will admit I read that moment incorrectly for years.

[36] There are, of course, exceptions to this rule: Grant Morrison and Frank Quietly seem to go hand in hand; Frank Miller both writes and pencils his own work. Morrison and Miller are both incredibly influential in the industry.

[37] Rhoades 2007 is extremely useful for rookies and interesting for spectators. I did not come across the text until after having been immersed in the field by being lucky enough to have an editor as a close personal friend.

[38] Imagine, if you will, the BIFF, SOCK and BLAM of Adam West- era Batman.

[39] Before the inking and coloring process, there are often all sorts of marginalized art within the accepted art. Pencillers and editors may use the areas that are destined for colors as notes, sketches, jokes and commentary knowing that these areas will be covered by the inking process. The backs of the blue-line sheets are often marked up with all sorts of attempts and rough drafts. The marginalized art can often be quite scandalous, though I believe much of that has quieted as artists have begun a secondary market of selling the original pages to collectors.

viewed and reviewed by an editor who verifies that the sanctity of the character is being

maintained.

The Batman may perform the physically impossible feat, but the symbol on his chest is

immutable, protected by a cadre of lawyers even a hero would be wise to fear.

The last lines of defense in the process are the reader and the market. Comic books

fans, sometimes referred to as fanboys (a somewhat derogatory name similar to Trekkie) are

viciously protective of their titles. A fanboy might allow for the most fantastic of premises in his

or her favorite comic book- colloquially known as a "title" despite the fact that the term might

be used to describe the character or the publisher[40], but the characters had better react to said

fantasy in a fashion indicative of that character. One can dismiss science, history and religion,

but Superman had best react like Superman when he meets an alien robot, finds out that

Abraham Lincoln was really an alien robot, or that God is, well, an alien robot. Should an editor

allow too much change to occur, fanboys will express their dissatisfaction in a large sub-

industry of fan magazines, websites, and electronic bulletin boards. Subtle ruptures are allowed

and the very fantastic nature offers a writer or editor innovative ways of fixing ruptures:

Superman did not react like Superman last issue? Perhaps he will be discovered next month to

be an alien robot. The title is safe in its continued marketability; the reader must, however, buy

next month's issue. The system, with all of its fantasy is safe as long as the organic nature of the

system is maintained. The system must have the static nature of the hero within the mutable

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[40] Individual series of comic books are referenced within the world of writers, readers and collectors as Titles ubiquitously and with a wide net as to the meaning. "How many titles do you collect? Well, I'm reading seven X-Men titles, three Bat-titles (yes, they would elide the term) and six Image titles". Within one explanation we've referenced a series, a character and a company identically. I suspect that the term Title achieved such acceptance in the jargon because the steadily older skewing demographic appreciated a term they could use other than comic book.

reality of the fantastic. The system must have the mutable reader and the immutable artifact of the text[41].

Continued unexplained rupture can result in loss of readership, and therefore economic failure. A title that undergoes no changes, however, may suffer the same fate. The downfall of an organic system is that it can die; it must have both the domestic and the static. If the system changes identity via too much rupture, the original system has ceased to exist; if it does not change, it enters a textual coma--stasis and nonexistence. The editor walks a thin line between change and rupture, aware of the economy that drives the system.

Continuity is not always maintained, and books do die. Series get cancelled; new series get created, and dead series are resurrected by new editors and/or new writers as the market is determined to sustain them. A particular character's popularity may lead to an offshoot series of its own, or even multiple series. Editors test the waters with limited series, small story arcs that, if successful might blossom into continuing projects. Some books weather storms better than others. It is doubtful *Detective Comics* or *Action Comics* will ever be retired by DC, or that Marvel will stop publishing *X-men* or *Spiderman*, but both companies have ended offshoot titles related to those series when they did not prove marketable.[42]

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[41] There is no rage like fanboy rage. The 1986 Judd Apatow, Bob Ouderkirk SNL sketch wherein William Shatner of Star Trek fame extorted fans to "Get a Life" exploded into such a trope that Shatner used the phrase as the title of his 1999 autobiography. While Shatner seems to rise on some sort of phoenix-cycle back into popular culture with a brilliant self-aware comedic arrogance, Leonard Nimoy was forced to backtrack textually after releasing his 1975 autobiography *I Am Not Spock* by titling the follow-up twenty years later *I Am Spock*. We will forgive both popular culture icons their albums.

[42] *Batman and the Outsiders*, *New Mutants* and *Venom* have all come and gone. *Supergirl* has come, gone and is back again with a new Supergirl who looks, surprisingly, like the old Supergirl only without a bare midriff.

Within the sixty years of history behind a character like The Batman or Superman, there have been changes in both the market and the editors watching that market. The history of both regulatory functions can collect and grow disruptive. Editors are people with views, loves, hates and preferences, so just as political winds can change and alter the shape and nature of comics in their production, public acceptance and storylines, so can one editor change the shape and direction of a title, a group of titles or an entire company. Those changes collect, gain momentum, slow progress, or cause any other number of changes on titles being published[43].

In 1985, DC comics published *Crisis on Infinite Earths*, a twelve part miniseries that effectively cleaned the editorial slate and allowed the company to reboot and recreate its own textual history. The solution was literary and cosmological, but the problem was theoretical and editorial. Prior to Crisis[44], an editor was forced to deal with the fact that characters like Superman had participated in activities in WWII, Korea, Vietnam, the Civil Rights movement, the counter-culture movement and just about every major social event of the past fifty years, but was still approximately the same age as when he first appeared, as were all of the characters around him. How was one to justify this against the necessity of continuity? One solution was the availability of alternate realities. Just as the textual world of the comic book

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[43] Rob Liefield is a classic example. His artistic style took over Marvel Comics in 1989, but his attitude about artistic ownership of characters was so disruptive that he and some similarly minded industry friends started their own comic company, Image in the early 1990's. The system righted itself in the face of so much chaos. I do not mind saying that I despise Liefield's visual style and storytelling. His male figures are anatomically impossible, appearing to live on a world where humans need 55 gallon drums for lungs and pins for heads. He also started a truly humorous trend of characters having pouches all over their costumes. He is partially responsible for the creation of the character of Deadpool, for which he must be given some credit.
[44] *Pre-Crisis* is a DC industry term these days.

was a mimesis, new worlds were created in an attempt to alleviate the growing continuity

problems.

This worked well until someone had the bright idea to sell books by having the

Superman of one reality meet the Superman of another. These "alternate earths," designated

Earth 1, Earth 2, etc. became popular as ways to double the publishing possibilities of certain

series. A writer could imagine what Super*man* would do in a given social climate, but at the

same time, imagine what a Super*boy* would do under the same circumstance. This textual

pressure valve was abused later by editors who allowed crossovers to occur. One Superman

was allowed to meet another Superman and the reader was forced to ask with which Superman

was he or she dealing within any given particular episode[45].

Other individual minor ruptures also occurred. Editorial decisions

often/sometimes/could allow changes that, while seeming within the continuity, became

disruptive when collected/viewed collectively. Superman, the *last* survivor of Krypton, prior to

Crisis was joined on Earth by Supergirl, as well as a dog, a cat, a monkey and a horse[46]. There

was a veritable menagerie of super-powered pets. The Batman was so entangled in domestic

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[45] Superman and Superboy meet in the 1950's in *Superboy* #47 "Superboy Meets Superman". They fight, realize who they are and then act heroically. Superman also meets other versions of himself rather than just younger or older versions The most commonly used other Superman is Ultraman, the evil Superman of Earth Two. He first appears in 1964 in the Justice League of America story "Crisis on Earth Three!" (Fox 1 1964) but most magnificently in Grant Morrison's 2000 *JLA: Earth 2.*

[46] I feel the need to clarify that I'm NOT making this up. Krypto the Superdog (Binder 1955), Streaky the Supercat (Seigel 1960), Beppo the Supermonkey (Seigel 1962), and Comet the Superhorse (Binder 1959) are all pre-Crisis characters, though, in his defense, Comet is not Kryptonian, but an ancient Greek centaur transformed into a shapeshifting man, horse, winged centaur. One begins to understand the issues with multiplicitous character creation. It is a subject for another text, though, that Krypto has managed to survive in almost every iteration and reboot of the DC Universe. He is also, frankly, one of my favorite characters.

history that there was a Batman Family [47]surrounding a character whose genesis was based on the death of his family and, thus, the complete denial of the domestic.

The overwhelming question in all of this was which alternate reality was *real*. The alternate Earths were all different discourses with different rules. Was a reader dealing with Superman, or Ultraman, his evil counterpart who was unaffected by Kryptonite? Each of the different Earths was a different discourse and there were simply too many for the readers to access or the editors to manipulate. The worlds had to undergo a process of elimination and rarefaction.

Crisis on Infinite Earths was a simple solution, and, frankly, a brilliant solution. The series brought all of the disparate alternate Earths together, allowed all of the different visions of the same characters to interact, albeit sometimes briefly, and then killed the least marketable versions of those characters. The series created a new discourse, an inclusive discourse in which all of the other discourses could operate, subsumed those discourses within its own rules, and then defined the margins. Superman and Batman were reinvented in their most modern states, while other characters were set within historical contexts, aged appropriately or eliminated altogether. The real world was no longer sixty years old. All history started as it was created post-Crisis. The sweeping grandness of an infinite number of divergent realities crashing together, the multi-verse facing annihilation, and beings capable of such destruction were not beyond the reality of the comic-book ontology. A middle-aged Robin was unacceptable[48].

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[47] The Batman Family was codified in 1975 into its own book *Batman Family* (Maggin 1975), and only ran twenty issues, but the trope of these Bat-People, just as we define Bat-modes later, recurs.
[48] This solution has been problematized by Hypertime, an odd step backwards in the post-Crisis, supposedly simplified DC universe. Hypertime existed outside of the Crisis solution.

The Batman was able to exist once again bereft of all but the barest domestic

relationships. The system was once again safe. All one had to do was undo and consolidate fifty

years of text[49]. The most important creation in all of this re-creation though, was a better sense

of editorial control. The editor was no longer responsible for 60 years of continuity, and, with a

diminished history pushing the discourse, the editor was now more capable of directing the

flow of the discourse by marginalizing the problematic. The editor was now able to maintain

the heroic identity as static. The editor was no longer responsible for the sixty years of subtle

editorial play in the identity of the static hero, though the character of The Batman still

possesses an identity that is:

> no longer inseparably tied to an individual author—as, say, Tarzan, Sherlock
> Holmes, Hamlet and Don Quixote are still—but exists somewhere above and
> between a multiplicity of varied and often contradictory incarnations, both old
> and recent, across a range of cultural forms (Brooker 2001: 9).

Continuing Problems

Hypertime allows for writers to take old stories and use them for their own narrative, or it allows readers to just forget the stories ever existed. With Hypertime, the only relevant parts of continuity are the ones that are immediately relevant to the writer at the time (Walker 208).

[49] Marvel Comics is quickly approaching a similar crisis (no caps). While only marginally younger than DC (DC started in 1935 and Marvel, as Timely Comics in 1939) some of its characters are getting a little long in the tooth. Marvel has attempted to combat this by creating alternate titles of its most marketable characters that ignore the burden of continuity and thus give the potential new reader a book he or she can read without having to know the thirty years of history behind some of its characters. Books like *Extreme X-men* and *Ultimate X-men* are based on the same characters as the mainstream continuity books, but are not part of the mainstream continuity. I predict that sometime in the foreseeable future, Marvel will have to take steps similar to those of DC in the eighties.

This is not to imply that problems with continuity do not still exist. The Batman still appears in eight titles a month regularly, and, while those titles are all under one editorial roof, rupture and fissure occurs. There are industry titans, writers whose market value is such that their position within the business discourse of the industry is allowed to empower them in the editorial discourse of the industry. Frank Miller reinvented the post-Crisis Batman with 1986's *Batman Year One*, and then reinvented the character again with *The Dark Knight Returns*. Both books were critical successes, but his sequel to *The Dark Knight Returns*, *The Dark Knight Strikes Again* was not, and *All Star Batman & Robin, the Boy Wonder* is best forgotten. His own vision of The Batman had grown; the discourse had moved The Batman away from his vision, not of The Batman, but of the world around The Batman and the way he functioned in that world. Miller's vision reasserted itself though, with the release of *Batman Begins*, and its sequel, *The Dark Knight Returns,* both of which rely heavily on the story and tone of *Batman Year One*. The sequel does not mirror the story of its namesake Miller text, but appropriates that text's cachet with the comic's fan base and the recently expanded interest in Frank Miller's work[50].

Often these ruptures occur in the accepted margins of the industry: graphic novels and one-shot series that have industry approval, but are not part of the continuing continuity of the real titles. There are numerous reasons for this marginalization. *The Dark Knight Returns* ruptures continuity by happening in the future. Obviously, this would not rupture modern continuity in that a flash-forward would be dependent on the past, but the past would still function without reference to the future. It was still marginalized. *Batman Child of Dreams* by

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[50] Miller is also responsible for *Sin City,* which was successful*,* and the re-envisioning of Will Eisner's *The Spirit*, which was not.

Kia Asamiya is completely a non-continuity book; it was an opportunity for the artist, famous

for his manga-style, to explore his take on The Batman. The story therein will never be

referenced within a continuity book. *Arkham Asylum*, on the other hand, occupies the marginal

space in that it is a graphic novel, but is still within the continuity. It was marginalized in its

production, but not it its textual context. There are several possible reasons for its

marginalization. *Arkham Asylum* is lengthy for one issue, but not lengthy enough for a series.

Stylistically and artistically, the book is also marginal in that instead of being created through

the aforementioned process, the book is painted and thus required both a different production

and editorial interaction. The book also approaches marginal as a Deleuzian Demon within its

pack; it presents one of the most frightening of worlds for The Batman to occupy.

The comic industry uses several unique fail-safes in addition to these marginal texts.

While the graphic novel exists as a possible venue for a marginal writer to explore a character

owned and managed by DC, the company also openly breaks its own continuity with *Elseworlds*

titles. Marvel Comics had a series titled, appropriately, *What If...* wherein alternate plot-lines

were explored without any continuity constraints. DC does not publish with that regularity, but

the concept is similar. Within the *Elseworlds* titles, continuity is intentionally dismissed, and

familiar characters are placed within unfamiliar boundaries. The *Elseworlds* titles are a

continuity safety valve[51]. Batman and Superman are favorite subjects as both are the most

continuity-affected characters within the DC album. The titles displace characters temporally

and/or spatially and then create an imaginary setting and extrapolate how the real characters

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[51] As of the editing of this, DC comics has started integrating the *Elseworlds* realities into its main
continuity, allowing for Elseworlds characters to interact with each other.

would react. The distinction between imaginary and real is a legal one; *Elseworlds* is not doing anything that fanboys have not been doing since the creation of comics: postulating which character could beat up which character, who is faster and what would happen if Batman had Superman's powers. *Elseworlds* is real because DC owns and has the legal rights to say it's real, but it's imaginary because DC marginalizes it with the title *Elseworlds*. This is an interesting exertion of control, for while DC is admitting that these mimeses exist, it is appropriating the rights to them. By taking these questions to extremes within the *Elseworlds* titles, DC ensures that those questions do not create disruption in its continuity books. *What if...* had a tendency to reposition continuity by assuring the reader that if things were any different the world would die in some sort of mimetic apocalypse. *Elseworlds* stories tend to take the characters from their marginal position and return them to as close a resemblance to their real (i.e. continuity mitigated) counterparts as possible, thus reassuring the reader that things are exactly as they should be, and that its characters, no matter how different their settings might be, would still be the same characters.

Another curious feature of the comic book is the continued return to origin. Aware of its own continuity problems, the industry, DC comics specifically, frequently uses the trope of the origin story, a return to a known genesis as a way of reaffirming that one is still firmly within the accepted continuity, but also as an acknowledgement of subtle changes. The origin story acts as a kind of control; the story exerts its control over the writer while allowing the writer minute amounts of play. This is a Miltonian device: the taking of a story the reader thinks he knows or should know and presenting it to him a new, but *acceptably* new form. It is a form of postmodern self-reflexivity authorized, if not expected in the comic discourse. The comic

industry is not going to present the reader with a new character every month; it is going to recapitulate and add meaning to existing characters.

Unlike the prequel phenomenon growing more popular in the popular cinema genre, these origin stories are not new insights into the character. These stories generally do not show the reader anything new, but rather show the reader the familiar story within the unfamiliarity of this writer and/or artist's style. It is a repositioning of the reader into the familiar, a textual reassurance of continuity in a post-Crisis world. Again, Frank Miller's *Batman Year One has* become such an industry standard that almost all of the major characters have undergone a "Year One" treatment. The movies follow the same path, so that when The Batman resurfaced on the big screen under a new vision, the old vision had to be purged (many fans would say thankfully) by a return to origin[52].

One might argue that the very fantastic nature of the comic world requires this constant reassurance. By continually emphasizing that the characters' personalities are the only mutable feature of the comic world, and by negating that mutability by restating the origin, extrapolating alternaten realities into an eventual return to status quo, citing potential rupture and eventual destruction and intentionally marginalizing alternate visions, the editorial function of the comic world creates a monolithic structure that reiterates its position and stifles questions about the reality of the discourse itself.

The Batman has not changed since his first appearance in Detective Comics in 1939, but the world around him has. The Batman is one of our most static of characters; his existence in

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[52] We have seen this, ad nauseam, in the recent wave of comic book movies. The most recent break from this trope would probably be *Guardians of the Galaxy*, wherein we see the creation of the group, but the individual origin stories are little more than short conversations between characters.

the 21st century grows ever-more interesting as the pace of information and technology

increases. It is only within the capitalist, industrial and metropolitan world of the 20th and 21st

century that The Batman could even exist, and it is only that world that would create him.

> Like jazz and rock 'n' roll, the superhero is a uniquely American creation. This
> glorification of strength, health, and simple morality seems born of a corn-fed,
> plain-talking, fair-minded midwestern sensibility. But superheroes are nothing if
> not adaptable, and as they grew and multiplied across the comic-book pages of
> the Free World, they happily took on the flavor of their surroundings, like milk
> left in the fridge with onions or bananas (Morrison *2011:* 49).

Having been created, though, he has become a part of the textual continuity of American

history, and as Booker further argues "has now reached a point where he could live on in the

cultural imagination, as myth, if that institution decided to cut him free" (Brooker 11). That The

Batman has lasted eighty years does not surprise me. That he was created so early in the

twentieth century does. Morrison attributes some of this longevity to capitalism: "Superman

began as a socialist, but Batman was the ultimate capitalist hero, which may help explain his

current popularity and Superman's relative loss of significance" (Morrison *Supergods* 26).

The Creation Myth

While this is not a history of The Batman, his genesis is important in its simplicity. As a

child, Bruce Wayne witnessed the execution of his mother and father by a mugger. When he

reaches adulthood, Wayne decides to combat crime anonymously. He sees a bat and decides

that he will use the innate fear of the superstitious within the criminal mind as a weapon against them; he adopts an identity complete with costume and becomes a bat.

This origin story has been told and retold. It is expressed within *Arkham Asylum* wherein it is told via a regression of The Batman's psyche through the psychological device of Rorschach blots. The Batman submits himself to this procedure only as a means of appeasing one of his enemies, but the ensuing word association games show not the narrative of the story of his parents' death, but The Batman's complete focus on that event.

Arkham Asylum is based on the principle of psychoanalysis. It is set within the confines of an asylum for the criminally insane, and the asylum itself is as much a character in the story as is The Batman. While Morrison firmly seats each of the iconic villains as a form of aberrant psychology, The Batman exceeds those boundaries and those definitions. It is not accidental that the only character who is able to hinder The Batman is a psychologist gone bad. Morrison explicitly sees The Batman as a psychological puzzle:

> The rest of Batman's rogue's gallery personified various psychiatric disorders too
> great of fact: Two-Face was schizophrenia. Catwoman was kleptomania. The
> Scarecrow was phobias of all kinds. By psychoanalyzing his enemies with his fists,
> Batman may have hoped to escape the probing gave gaze of the analyst himself,
> but it was not to be. There was, after all, something deeply mad about Batman
> (Morrison *2011:* 25).

It is psychology, in the form of the psychologist and The Batman's own doubts about his sanity that hinder him. Rarely do we see a hero deal with his own marginalization.

The Batman exceeds the psychological artifice placed on him, however. When faced with the psychological boundaries of sane/insane, The Batman chooses functionality over therapy, reasserts his identity and returns to his place on the margin.

This is perhaps only possible because of The Batman's reified duality.

The Bat Identity

While certain moments of violence and intensity stand out within the literature of The Batman and capture the imagination, the truly interesting points are the moments of rupture and conflict. The Batman has a nearly perfectly resolved heroic identity. His genesis is the removal of all filial ties: the death of his parents. This gap/fissure is then cited as the beginning of a drive, a personal quest.

> In order for Batman to be born, Bruce had to lose his parents. Children rely on their parents to make sense of their world, and when Bruce lost his parents suddenly, he had to make sense of it in his own way by creating Batman. If Bruce Wayne's father had been truly alive after all of this time, then the rage that fueled Bruce's mission becomes unnecessary (Walker 2014: 10).[53]

The Batman exists out of Desire, the desire for the cessation of crime. As an untenable quest based on an impossible negation, The Batman exists as an intensity.

This intensity is reified into a new form of heroic identity possible only within the environment of the late 20th century capitalist metropolis. The Batman exists as two separate

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[53] In this instance, Walker is addressing an instance wherein, in a break in continuity, Bruce Wayne's father is shown to be alive.

public entities; this would not have been possible in the close-knit communities of an agrarian

economy. The Batman needs the sprawling anonymity of metropolitan life in which to exist;

Gotham provides that with its size, complexity and darkness. One cannot dress in a big bat suit

within the confines of a community in which all of the residents are linked and not expect to be

recognized[54].

Privately, the entities that are separately The Batman and Bruce Wayne *could* exist

within the confines of a psyche as what would be understood as aberration, but the

actualization of the two beings as public identities is only allowable in the modern world[55].

This creation of identity is similar to the homosexual identity creation that D'Emilio cites

as possible within the same setting:

> I want to argue that gay men and lesbians have not always existed. Instead, they
> are a product of history, and have come into existence in a specific historical era.
> Their emergence is associated with the relations of capitalism; it has been the
> historical development of capitalism-- more specifically, its free labor system—
> that has allowed large numbers of men and women in the late twentieth century
> to call themselves gay, to see themselves as part of a community of similar men
> and women, and to organize politically on the basis of that identity (D'Emilio
> 1983:102).

The homosexual *action* is not defined historically but the homosexual *identity* is a public face.

The Batman's identity, a duality, has always existed as a possibility; the metropolis, though,

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[54] Unless, of course, one has been gone for 20 years, dresses in rags, pretends to be foreign and has the help of the wisdom of Athene…

[55] One has only to wander the streets of Manhattan to feel the sense of anonymity I reference. One could literally walk around in a bat-suit and go, if not unnoticed, certainly unmolested.

allows for the reification of that identity just as it allows for an identity based on gender preference. D'Emilio further defines the creation of this identity:

> By the 1920's, among white middle class, the ideology surrounding the family described it as the man's through which men and women formed satisfying, mutually enhancing relationships and created an environment that nurtured children. The family became the setting for a "personal life," sharply distinguished and disconnected from the public world of work and production (D'Emilio 1983: 103).

As the labor-economy grew, there grew a disparity between the family identity and the work identity. This translates to a change in the domestic identity. While work was still primarily a domestic/political affiliation, the fracture in the traditional identity allowed for multiplicities to appear publicly.

> By the second half of the nineteenth century, this situation was noticeably changing as the capitalist system of free labor took hold. Only when individuals began to make their living through wage labor, instead of as parts of a interdependent family unit, was it possible for homosexual desire to coalesce into a personal identity—an identity based on the ability to remain outside the heterosexual family and to construct a personal life based on attraction to one's own sex (D'Emilio 1983: 104-105).

What D'Emilio is describing here is nomadism, an existence wherein perception is based on the point to point movement across space, striated or not, as if it were smooth. D'Emilio's position is that this momentarily intense behavior (intense in that it is anti-domestic) quickly

becomes domestic as these nomads group together based on their own nomadism into communities and create striations all their own. This is only possible with the fracturing of the domestic/family existence created by industrialism and capitalism. D'Emilio acknowledges the change from homosexual behavior to homosexual identity; it is the change from point to striation. Homosexuality is no longer just a point to point movement or an action; it is a mode of being, a lifestyle that striates the space around the person with rules and culture.

> In divesting the household of its economic independence and fostering the separation of sexuality from procreation, capitalism has created conditions that allow some men and women to organize a personal life around their erotic/emotional attraction to their own sex. It has made possible the formation of urban communities of lesbians and gay men, and more recently, of a politics based on a sexual identity (D'Emilio 1983: 104).

This same formula works with the heroic activity of the comic book hero, and very specifically with The Batman. I will discuss The Batman as nomad more later, but the split identity as a community has been around since The Batman let Robin join him, or from the first issues of the *Justice League of America*, *The All Stars*, or *The Avengers*. The domestic grouping of heroes has been extrapolated both into the future and into the past: *The Legion of Super-Heroes* occurs in the 30th century, and *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* follows the same pattern of grouping pre-existing characters into unlikely little heroic communities. In *The League of*

Extraordinary Gentlemen, history is gently rewritten by using characters from 19th century British literature to create a new textual experience[56].

Of course, comic books do not offer the first grouping of heroes; the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are both about groups of heroes, and the stories of Jason and the Argonauts, Arthur's Round Table, and Robin Hood's Merry Men all group like-minded heroic individuals, but those associations are with whole (and thus organic) entities. The comics offer groups that are based on fractured identities wherein the individual's heroic identity associates with other similarly fractured identities but whose domestic identity is completely separate. The Batman fights crime with Superman, but Bruce Wayne and Clark Kent are rarely seen together socially in public, and larger groups of domestic identities are even more rare[57].

These heroes, like D'Emilio's model of the homosexual identity, model their existence on a separation from the traditional models of domestic interaction. Some are more notably nomadic in their existence than others. Captain America, for instance, is a state-sponsored hero, but his aberrance as super-soldier still places him outside the standard hierarchy implied by his "rank". The mask, the costume becomes a signifier of aberrance, a sign of intensity, but

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[56] Alan Moore's text represents another level of the issue of using a character created by someone else. In this particular case, it is probably the very marginality of the comic book that saves him from cries of heresy for the (re)use of Alan Quartermain, Captain Nemo and friends. If one, however, uses the trope of the super-hero group and the industry's willingness to let one character appear in several different places at one time, why then shouldn't literature, especially literature temptingly placed within the public domain, be fair game? We are once again left with curious questions of authorial ownership.

[57] This was recently put to the test by the marriage of Green Arrow and Black Canary. The filiation of these two characters (who have been flirting with each other textually for almost thirty years) created the very real in-text issue of whether guests would attend in costume or not. The secret identities became a real problem. If Superman showed up as Superman, but The Batman showed up as Bruce Wayne, questions would arise, especially if The Batman was not present. In an amusing bit of overlap with actual modern issues with identity, the concern about paparazzi also surfaced.

the trope has existed long enough now that communities have developed within this

aberrance, thus, in some cases, begging the question about the actual aberrance of those in

costume. *Top Ten*, another Alan Moore comic, creates a reality where everyone has powers and

wears a costume; the elite, the top ten, are those with useful powers/abilities who monitor and

police everyone else[58]. After seventy years of being told that wearing a costume, and hiding

one's identity is a signifier of the heroic, that which was aberrant simply isn't that aberrant

anymore. The Batman is different within this community of aberrance, however. His aberrance

appears on several levels, both as a placement within the writing, but also as a seemingly

conscious decision on the part of the character to remain aberrant and Other even within the

pseudo-society of his fellow costume-wearing aberrants.

I use the word aberration cautiously because of this logical link to the homosexual

identity I've already intentionally discussed. My use of the term is judgment-neutral. One must

acknowledge, however, that the homosexual identity has been viewed, at least within the time-

frame of comic history as aberrant[59]. The Batman is aberrant not just in his actions, but also in

his subjective creation. The Batman recognizes his own sense of aberration and capitalizes on it.

Criminals, he insists are a cowardly superstitious lot...so face them with aberration and they will

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[58] Moore's most biting commentary on the sometimes-silly comic industry is the existence in his comics of super-powered cats and mice whose antics play out in striking parody of some of the industry giant's most famous storylines.

[59] Nowhere has that Othering of the homosexual been more prevalent than in the comic industry itself. While gay characters were appearing in almost every other media, it has only been in the last twenty years that any openly gay characters have made it into the four-color world of comics, and they are still vastly outnumbered and marginalized. While we had homosexual characters headlining network television shows, the comic industry didn't effectively acknowledge a gay character until Northstar came out in *Alpha Flight* #102 in 1992, and then the character was not even one of the popular American characters: he was French-Canadian. It took another twenty years before he was married in *Astonishing X-Men* #51 in 2012.

react. While The Batman is a member of the Justice League of America, he is the aberrant member, the marginal member, the frightening member.

The Batman is aberrant in the confines of his own city, Gotham, a city he carefully monitors for both crime and the presence of other costumed heroes. Within the DC universe, The Batman is one of hundreds of costumed individuals fighting various societal ills. The Batman is somewhat aberrant in the larger environment, but Gotham is presented as almost-bereft of those individuals so that The Batman retains his extremity of marginalization. Even within this community of aberration, The Batman will maintain his marginal status. Some of this is internal to the text: The Batman frequently chases away costumed individuals citing their inexperience and the danger of Gotham. Characters also leave Gotham after training with The Batman, thus ending dangerous domestic entanglements. From our position of externality, though, any textual dissociation is obvious as a kind of rarefaction. The Batman is not alone because Dick Grayson outgrew being his sidekick and had to move to a new city, or because Barbara Gordon and her all-female crew of heroes had to relocate due to a compromised secret identity. No, those events are textual tropes designed to isolate the character of The Batman, who must remain alone, marginal and aberrant even within a group of aberrants.

So, as an object, the whole of the comic book industry has created a discourse in which dressing in big black bat suit is acceptable behavior. One might even say that the comic book without that trope is aberrant within the genre, but the more restricted the view of The Batman, the more obvious his aberration becomes. The function that creates this marginalization within his genre is his intensity and the singularity of that intensity within the dichotomy of a perfectly bifurcated public identity.

Who is The Batman?

This is a favorite question of the genre itself and is more than just an academic trope designed to discuss characterization. Within the bifurcated identity, which is the real one? Denny O'Neil addresses the issue in the Bat-Bible, an in-house DC publication designed to aid writers and artists. O'Neil discusses at length character's various physical abilities, but it is his assessment of the mental state of the character that is most enlightening.

> First let us agree that Wayne/Batman is not insane. There is a difference between obsession and insanity. Obsessed the man surely is, but he is in the fullest possession of his mental and moral faculties. <u>Everything</u> with the exception of his friends' welfare is bent to the task he knows he can never accomplish, the elimination of crime. It is this task which imposes meaning on an existence he would otherwise find intolerable (O'Neil 1999: 10).

O'Neil defines the character as obsessed, but not insane. He acknowledges that it is only the minor domestic interruptions that the character allows in his identity that distract him from his preoccupation with the elimination of the existence of crime. The character is defined by Desire, a desire acknowledged as Desire in its unattainability and impossibility. O'Neil defines this Desire as a totality: "Everything with the exception of his friends' welfare is bent to the task he knows he can never accomplish". The character is driven by Desire in the same manner that Achilleus is. He is attempting to achieve fissure and elimination, but, unlike Achilleus, the character's Desires are more abstract; he cannot achieve them and then return to an organic identity within his culture. There is *nothing* for the character to acquire.

This definition seems to place the character firmly in the realm of the heroic. He is

combating the marginal portions of society from a marginal position, bereft of domestic ties.

His marginalization is problematic both to his society and to those few domestic ties, but that is

nothing new to the heroic genre. The interesting feature of this character is the solution to the

domestic/intense relationship. O'Neil addresses this solution:

> BRUCE OR BATMAN?
> Which one is genuine, Bruce Wayne or Batman? Answer: Batman. Wayne has
> become part of his tool kit, an identity he finds useful. Wayne's wealth and social
> position give him entry into the city's center of power where he can acquire
> information. The Bruce Wayne he has created allows him to exist in civilization
> without being bothered by its obligations (O'Neil 1999:10).

Unfortunately, the answer O'Neil offers is not entirely correct. While it is safe to say that

The Batman is *not* simply Bruce Wayne wearing the cape and cowl of The Batman, one cannot

dismiss Bruce Wayne as a mask that The Batman wears, either. The issue of The Batman's

psychology often seems to revolve around which of the two identities is more important. The

answer to that is simple, but depends on where one positions the question. As a writer or

reader of the genre, one would immediately cite The Batman as the important identity as we

have found that the genre is based on the exploration of the intense. As such, O'Neil correctly

identifies Bruce Wayne as a tool, not a tool of The Batman's, but a tool of the writer. Bruce

Wayne acts to clarify for the reader that The Batman is bereft of domestic ties. Bruce Wayne is

the resting place of all of the uninteresting parts of the organic entity, and the obligations that

O'Neil references are not obligations on the part of the character, but the obligations on the

part of the writer to present the existence of the organic via rupture and fissure in the otherwise perfect dichotomy of the two identities.

Psychologically speaking, and lately the genre has been in love with in-text psychiatry, The Batman still reigns as the important character, but only in the manner in which the public identities have been created. The Batman is the most vocal portion of the character's obvious aberrance. Both characters are constructs, which is not aberrant, but that one of the constructs is so obviously aberrant within his society automatically makes it the more interesting from a psychological point of view. Within this view, however, we begin to get to the heart of the problem; The Batman **could** exist without Bruce Wayne, but ***would*** The Batman exist without Wayne? One could analyze The Batman identity and come to the simplistic psychoanalytical solution that The Batman identity is a reaction of Bruce Wayne against the crime that killed his parents. As such, The Batman is certainly worthy of analysis, but Bruce Wayne begins to become more than just a tool of The Batman; he is the genesis. The question of which personality is dominant is certainly important, but this seems to validate both identities as real.

To understand the bifurcation of the character, we must stop viewing the character as an object, and start analyzing him as a subject rendered an object by our externality to him. As a subject Becoming moves across the Plane of Immanence, the public face the subject acquires is important in that it changes the next moment of Becoming for the subject. While consciousness is the perception of the world rendered memory by the temporality of the subject and its constant forward motion as created by Desire, that Desire is going to shape the next moment of Becoming. As cited, the Desire this particular subject feels most prevalently is the cessation of crime mitigated by the needs of the domestic and those domestic obligations;

the manner in which the subject is perceived is secondary to the manner in which the subject perceives. This subject moves to points most heavy with meaning of importance to him. This is not the world of Bruce Wayne; this is the world of The Batman.

Both identities are necessary; they are superjects, subjects Becoming. The subject sometimes Becomes Bruce Wayne, but sometimes it Becomes The Batman; these distinctions manifest themselves in the action, in the verb. The subject behaving domestically is Bruce Wayne, and, even should he be considering intense action, the manifestation is that of the Bruce Wayne-Object (as seen by those external to him). Should the subject manifest intense action, The Batman manifest himself. Within a normal entity, these manifestations would occur smoothly, seamlessly, but within this fully-bifurcated split between the intense and the domestic, the subject maintains absolute separation between the two identities. Bruce Wayne is insipid and The Batman is anti-social. Bruce Wayne cannot be capable and be Bruce Wayne, and The Batman can't party. When disguised, The Batman is not Bruce Wayne pretending to be Matches Malone; he is The Batman pretending to be Matches Malone. At times, the expensive latex disguises are removed to reveal the cowl, ears and all underneath. While Booker was referring to the identity of the character within our history as an object, his statement that The Batman "exists somewhere above and between a multiplicity of varied and often contradictory incarnations" also describes the character's identity interior to his textuality. The identity of both The Batman and Bruce Wayne exists elsewhere, like a Platonic ideal, waiting for the verb to transform it from noun to subject or object.

The idea of the entirely-intense character is appealing within the genre, but, in the end, uninteresting. The genre itself determined this in the 1940's and gave The Batman the now-

familiar Robin as a sidekick only seven issues after The Batman's first appearance in Detective

Comics #31. The hero bereft of a domestic life is only interesting in that he is aberrant for being

intense. Eventually, the domestic-that-is-not-there must be referenced to show what is missing

to reinvigorate the interest in the character, but not so much that this becomes a Whole. There

is mother, rarely is there school, or friends. Robin problematizes, but he does not domesticate.

From a psychological and philosophical standpoint, both identities are necessary.

Without the Bruce Wayne identity, The Batman would not exist, and without The Batman,

Bruce Wayne would not exist as a literary figure. A comic book would not exist about Bruce

Wayne, at least not as he exists within the textuality of The Batman comics. I would like to

restate that Heroism as an identity only really works in the confines of a text. The domesticity

of Bruce Wayne is essential to The Batman because The Batman would not exist without the

rupture of Bruce Wayne's life; fissure does not exist on its own.

Bruce Wayne

While The Batman is a source of discussion both diagetically and non-diagetically within

comics, Bruce Wayne goes carefully unnoticed. While The Batman, and his very existence, are

debated within his textual world, Bruce Wayne remains hidden, Purloined-Letter-like within

plain sight, or rather, more than just in plain sight, in the spotlight of high-society. The Batman,

within his constructed and guarded status as urban legend, makes himself a topic of discussion

within the circles he wants to fear him: criminals. Within The Batman's world, criminals are a

culture all their own[60]; they recognize themselves as villains and band together in clubs and

packs, defining themselves against the heroes they endlessly combat. They do not exist

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[60] I'm not 100% sure this is not true of the real world as well.

nomadically from crime to crime, but striate the space around them, and create Injustice

Societies, Sinister Sixes, and Legions of Doom. Within these groups, The Batman is real, but a

mystery, and thus a source of debate and fear[61]. The Batman uses this mystery to his

advantage; he wants to be a known unknown to sow fear, dissent and confusion. The Batman

carefully avoids publicity and, even within his own pack/club of like-minded heroes, he avoids

being publicly acknowledged.

Bruce Wayne, on the other hand is completely lacking in mystery, and that is

intentional. This may be why O'Neil cites The Batman portion of the identity as real; it is more

interesting. The Batman identity is not more carefully crafted than the Bruce Wayne identity,

however. Both portions of the bifurcated identity are crafted to complement the other. The

Batman identity allows for the pursuit of Desire, but the Bruce Wayne identity is the hiding

place and repository of the domestic existence. Like Odysseus returning to Ithaka, The Batman

is aware of the necessity of the domestic existence, especially in continued intense endeavors.

Bruce Wayne's identity, therefore, is brilliant in its overwhelming domesticity.

The text creates this identity in the actions of the character, but as it is difficult for the

reader to separate the Bruce Wayne and The Batman identities, the text also fabricates for us

the reactions of the objects around Bruce Wayne so that we can see, according to their

responses to Wayne, just how boring he is. Those socializing with Wayne are not privy to the

information we as external readers have, so they only have the presentation of Wayne. In a

curious alteration of the distancing process of a Foucaldian externality, we, as the readers, are

offered a less-clarified view of the discourse than those supposedly in the discourse. This haze

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[61] It is telling, I think, that within these groups, the Joker is similarly feared.

is caused, of course, by our status within the discourse as the reader; our externality is compromised. When Wayne is being a bore, we are privy to his inner dialogue wherein he expresses his distaste for his own identity, his desire to be elsewhere other than the social gathering, or the 47 ways he knows to disable the person annoying him at the party. The split nature of the presentation, the text and the narrative might necessitate the coining of the term heroic irony: not an instance wherein we know the character is making a mistake that only we know about, but wherein the character resisting the urge to kill someone is only known to him and us.

Wayne is characterized as an inordinately wealthy, but aristocratically uninvolved businessman. He does all of the cliched things the rich do. He attends parties with models and debutantes, but rarely sees the same girl twice. He plays golf and tennis, but not well enough to warrant any attention. He appears in the paper, but usually just as a presence at a party. The text, aware of our aware status, reiterates how we **should** see, sometimes not-so-subtly:

Who is Bruce Wayne?
By Lola Charles
affluence
"I guess I'm just your average guy" says Bruce Wayne between bites of Lobster
Newburgh on the verandah of the Bristol Links Country Club.
Just your average multibillion-dollar hunk with the world at the tips of his
fingers.
I thought this was false modesty before I discovered the truth.
Let me warn any of you ladies who harbor a breathless crush on Mr. Bruce
Wayne esq. Not to read any further if you value your fantasy.

Bruce Wayne is an enigma to most Gothamites and even to his closest associates. He granted a rare interview after months of my calling his office and home. When I could get him on the phone, I was blown off by statements of, "I really have nothing interesting to say."

That only made me try all the harder.

How could the heir to the Wayne fortune and a first citizen of Gotham be anything but fascinating? From his reclusive habits to his reputation among the world's supermodels and actresses as the most eligible bachelor in the known universe, he is *news.* Baby.

And the source of his newsworthiness, aside from his mountains of cash, is that the guy is a wealth of contradictions,

He's a jillionaire: playboy but also a homebody. With rare exceptions he's never seen outside of Gotham city. Wayne is by all accounts the picture of the idle rich but doesn't go in for the usual toys of fast cars and yachts. He's most at home on the golf course where he is known as a duffer with "modest talents."

"It's definitely a case of passion exceeding skill," confides neighbor J. Devlin Davenport. "Bruce is *hopeless* in the long game." Wayne takes all of the ribbing he receives gracefully. There doesn't seem to be a touch of anger *in* the guy.

As a businessman he is legendary for his almost total lack of business sense. Happily for him; his assets are safe in the more than capable hands of financial wizard Lucius Fox. *W*ithout such guidance the Wayne fortune would have waned long ago.

So, who is the *real* Bruce Wayne?

It's hard to discount the effect of seeing his parents gunned down when he was still a child. One would imagine that Wayne has a concealed darker side as a result of this trauma, a stew of post-traumatic stress mixed with feelings of guilt over having inherited one of the world's great fortunes in so nightmarish a manner. This might explain his diffidence, his standoffishness, that air of only being an observer of the world and never a participant.

As I look across the table at him over our cafe lattes I try to see this "edge." What makes him tick? What is he passionate about besides the little white ball? There has to be more to him than this affable luncheon companion I've spent the past hour with. His demeanor is one of easy charm tinged with distraction bordering on indifference. And as I pry and poke and eventually *hammer* him with question, I finally discover the deep, hidden secret of Bruce Wayne.

He is an unmitigated *bore.*

To say that his personality is plastic is to insult the synthetics industry. His reclusive behavior and avoidance of any media coverage is because the man has all the charm of a paper clip.

I candidly admit that he is excruciatingly handsome and that, upon first meeting him, I blushed like a schoolgirl. But beneath those drop-dead looks beats the heart of a chartered accountant. The women who fawn over him after fifteen minutes in his company can only be thinking of his bank accounts, not his romantic attractions. Only someone as shallow as himself could find him alluring. And list that last statement among the painfully obvious, considering; the feminine company he keeps. From the latest runway sensation to the hottest Hollywood glamour-puss, the man is never seen with anyone of substance or depth...

Bruce Wayne is *styling* his way through life.

What followed my initial giddiness at sitting down with him was a hard-fought effort to find *something* interesting *to* say about him. From his less-than-riveting golf anecdotes to his theories on business culled from half-heartedly listening to talk radio to his monologues on California versus Australian wines I found it challenging to keep my eyes open. The most interesting moment in the entire meeting came when he accidentally spilled the Dijon sauce on himself (managing, in the process to spatter the blouse I had bought specifically for the occasion).

After all my diligent and tireless efforts to arrange this interview I was actually

relieved when he announced that he had a tee-off time with a former vice

president of the United States--and would I please excuse him?

I mumbled some thanks, and he evinced polite interest in reading the article

when it came out.

All I could think to myself was, "How the hell am I going to get two thousand

words out of *this* drone?"

Well. There's the mystery of Bruce Wayne. And the solution is that there *is* no

mystery. The guy is a sofa painting, a cream puff, a lightweight, the male

equivalent of a bimbo.

Sorry girls. (Beatty 1997: 29).

The facade of the interview reinforces the image of Bruce Wayne as the world is supposed to

see him, and is as effective a disguise as the efforts The Batman takes to make those in his

presence fear him. "Lola's" suppositions and assumptions about Bruce Wayne are created to

resonate to the reader who is aware of his dual identity; they show what Wayne is intentionally

hiding. "There is no mystery" she states, unaware that she is interviewing someone with

perhaps one of the biggest secrets. Wayne, she insists, "doesn't go in for the usual toys of fast

cars and yachts" but the reader is aware of the vast collection of vehicles, specifically fast cars,

that The Batman possesses, along with boats, planes and every imaginable technological toy

and gadget. This irony is repeated because, while The Batman's intensity is akin to the Achillean

anger that almost ruins the Achaians, the interviewer states "There doesn't seem to be a touch

of anger in the guy (Wayne)". The jokes about skills, mystery, how boring he is, and his

shallowness all reaffirm Wayne's status as object, but are also designed to remind the reader

how different these two public identities are. While affirming the identity of Bruce Wayne, this is an intentional affirmation of the possibility of a dual identity. It is also not without its humor.

Wayne is allowed his eccentric ways due to the public nature of the tragedy he suffered as a child. He is characterized as a victim, and therefore is given certain leniency in the public forum. The death of his parents is used as an excuse for his various social faults. It is interesting that Wayne is seen as mildly aberrant in his complete lack of intensity. This lack of intensity, read as shallowness by his domestic counterparts, is, in its own way, the most intense thing about Wayne. This eccentricity is just the level of aberration that Wayne needs in his identity to allow for the occasional juxtaposition of the Wayne and The Batman identities. No one expects to find Bruce Wayne partying late on a Friday night, but no one would suspect the real reason for his absence is The Batman identity. He is allowed, perhaps expected to be weird, but no one except perhaps the reader, is allowed to know just how weird he is.

Bruce Wayne objectifies women--not as sex objects, but as disguises (beards?). Wayne does not get involved, not intensely; that involvement would endanger his necessarily intense (bat) lifestyle. This abstinence is juxtaposed by the institutional expectation that Wayne should socialize. Within the modern era, it would be perfectly acceptable for Wayne to be gay, but a completely blank sexual identity is unacceptable. Bruce Wayne strives to remain at the idle gossip level of consciousness to those around him, so that no questions arise about him. He can allow them to gossip about whether he is gay or not, but he can't let them know he's not a real person.

Bruce Wayne wields his shallowness as a weapon against the creation of intensity within his life. One might initially assume that a completely domestic identity would automatically

create social ties and therefore relationships, but what it actually creates is an over-attribution

of political ties that are uniform in their shallowness. No one-political/domestic tie is allowed

supremacy over another, and therefore Wayne avoids any serious entanglements. Nowhere

does this play more prevalently than in Wayne's love-life. While Wayne is linked to women,

none play an important part in his life, and it is the Wayne identity that is used to destroy

blossoming ties, not The Batman identity. Wayne's eccentric behavior, his womanizing, and his

shallowness are weapons designed to kill any real interest someone might have in him

romantically. This enables Bruce Wayne and The Batman to avoid some of the pitfalls of the

dual-identity trope that other heroes cannot[62].

While other heroes create their secret heroic identities to protect the domestic ties that

exist in their public/domestic identities, they are in fact juxtaposing those identities in their

heroic concerns for their domestic relationships. Superman has probably saved Lois Lane more

than any other person in the history of the comic, but while he and other heroes like him are

constantly using their heroic identities to patch the holes in their domestic existences, The

Batman is not distracted by such concerns.

The dual identity is a common trope in the comic book; it is cited within too many books

to name as a way to protect those associated with the intensity of the hero. The reasoning is

that those linked to the hero are that hero's biggest vulnerability. Superman's real weakness is

not kryptonite, it's Lois Lane or Jimmy Olsen. As such, the discovery of the secret identity is one

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[62] The writer Gail Simone has addressed the unfortunate trope of male comic book hero's female love interests dying by coining the phrase "women in refrigerators" in reference to Green Lantern #54 (1999 Marz) wherein the hero finds his love interest killed, dismembered and shoved in a refrigerator. Clearly this is a textual tool to remove domestic ties from the hero to create intensity. Simone rightly points out, however, that it has become a blatantly sexist model.

of the greatest fears of the comic-book hero. There are exceptions to the dual-identity

reasoning. The Fantastic Four do not hide their identities, but as a family unit, each individual is

fully capable of taking care of himself or herself, so there is no need for the safety of the

domestic identity. This, of course, leads to all sorts of problems for the family, and it is domestic

ties that get the group into trouble as often as any villain. Their greatest threat is Victor Von

Doom, a.k.a. Dr. Doom, perhaps one of the greatest villains ever created, who hates Reed

Richards, not Mr. Fantastic, for an imagined wrong dating back to their days as college

colleagues. Aquaman is a king in his domestic identity and therefore does not hide his identity;

his kingdom, however is Atlantis, a mythical, marginalized place of Otherness that the average

individual does not have to allow into his perception.[63] Wonder Woman divested herself of any

secret identity, perhaps after she realized that her domestic ties were with Themiscyra (an

invisible island undetectable by modern man), the Justice League of America, and the gods of

the Greek pantheon.

The Batman really has no practical need for the dual-identity. Bruce Wayne, in his

perfect compartmentalization of the domestic and the intense, is incapable of functional

relationships. While this inability to hold any kind of serious relationship might be seen as a

public failing on the part of Bruce Wayne, it is, in fact, a sure sign that the Bruce Wayne identity

is as clearly defined and as important as The Batman identity. In fact, it is The Batman identity

who endangers its own intense existence with the proliferation of domestic ties. Like The

Fantastic Four, all of The Batman's domestic ties are to other similarly-intense individuals.

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[63] A now-deposed king as his super-heroics caused his kingdom of Atlantis too many problems. The
relatively uninteresting character is revitalized every few years, usually with the help of the troublesome
interplay of his role as hero and his role as king.

When a non-intense individual becomes linked to The Batman, or discovers his identity, one can be assured that the individual is going to die. The only necessity for the Bruce Wayne identity presented on the textual level is the extreme marginalization of The Batman identity. The Batman, as a figure of mystery, is sometimes not quite within the boundaries of the law; this reasoning is mitigated by the existence of a state-sponsored signaling device operated by the police to summon The Batman when they need him, and The Batman's pseudo-presence in the state-acknowledged Justice League of America. The reasons that the other heroes use to validate their split identities are valid, but only because their identities, even when bifurcated, are muddled; when Peter Parker is being Spiderman, he is still Peter Parker *being* Spiderman, worrying about Aunt May and Mary Jane, and that makes him interesting, but it makes him vulnerable as well. He is not completely intense. Bruce Wayne is the caretaker of all matters domestic in The Batman's existence so that he can function continuously on a Achillean level, rather than face the distractions and domesticity that killed Hektor.

The Batman, despite his nomadic, schizophrenic structure still operates within the Oedipal world, and still has uses for that world. He still must acquire, and his sense of justice will not let him steal, even from the criminals over whom he obsesses. The inability to acquire from the criminal keeps the Batman's desire pure and his movement nomadic. The Batman moves from point to point, aware but unconcerned about the striations of the society around him, from singularity to singularity, intensity to intensity. He sees the points/crimes, not opportunities to acquire, or distractions from the time Bruce Wayne could be using to acquire. Should he concern himself about the peripheral, or the striations over which he moves, he would lose his intensity, therefore he cannot concern himself with secondary matters (such as

acquisition--or family, or love). There cannot be a multiplicity of singularities within a nomadic movement. It is this ability to focus that separates the hero from the mundane; his focus on the intense allows him to lead an intense lifestyle, as if the intensity becomes an affect of survival. His entire existence becomes a product of intensity, and then intensity becomes his MODE of survival.

Bruce Wayne is not protected by the mask and cowl of the The Batman identity; The Batman is protected and enabled by Bruce Wayne; he is generated by Bruce Wayne's loss.

An Episode of Madness: *Arkham Asylum*

It seems only logical that the story of a man who dresses in a black rubber suit and cape (in public) and calls himself The Batman would be set in an insane asylum, but *Arkham Asylum* is not the standard comic book, and the Batman is not a model of insanity. Phillip Orr presents an interesting argument that "the Batman is representative of a sort of anoedipal multiplicity in relation to his male antagonists and himself" (Orr 1994: 178).

He furthers states: "Batman/Bruce Wayne is not a do-gooder; nor is he, like Superman, an embodiment of old fashioned American values. What he is, literally, is a split personality" (Orr: 1994:170). Orr places Bruce Wayne as the primary identity in this schism, and the Batman as a fractured portion of Bruce Wayne's scarred mind, but I think this is too simplistic a reading of the mythology of the Batman, and a misreading of the Deleuze and Guattari that Orr cites. In *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari explicate the way in which the Freudian model of psychoanalysis has insinuated itself into western thought. Under this model:

all thought is directly Oedipal, symbolic of Oedipal desires or imaginary, thus ALL
thought, if it is real, relates to Oedipus in some way. Everything takes place as if
Oedipus of itself had two poles: one pole characterized by imaginary figures that
lead them to a process of identification, and a second pole characterized by
symbolic functions that lend themselves to a process of differentiation. But in
any case we are oedipalized: if we don't have Oedipus as a crisis we have it as a
structure (Deleuze and Guattari *1983:* 82).

Deleuze and Guattari offer a line of flight from this model in the form of the schizophrenic. This

"schiz" is not the psychoanalytical model of someone with a fractured ego-id structure, but a

potential rupture from the Freudian model of thought, a disjunctive ontology, a new method of

analysis. The schiz is not a reaction to the Freudian model, as such would be a mirror of the

model and therefore still based on the model, but a new model of Becoming.

What does this mean for the Batman? There are several different tellings and re-tellings

of the early life of Bruce Wayne, but all of them revolve around the death of his parents at an

early age. Various small elements have been added to the basic story to suit the needs of the

writers, but the core of the story always remains. Bruce Wayne grows up alone in Wayne

Manor, raised by Alfred the Butler[64], bereft of a traditional family setting or childhood. He

grows up with one thought in mind: a desire for revenge on the criminal--not just the criminals

who killed his parents, but Criminals--crime itself. Upon seeing a bat fly through an open

window, the now-adult Wayne acknowledges its presence as an omen, and seeing criminals as

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[64] Alfred vacillates between convenient victim, ex-spy, man-with-a-past, and occasional super hero
depending the needs of the multiplicity creating the story.

a cowardly, superstitious lot, decides to become a bat. In *Arkham Asylum*, Morrison ends the book with the characters crafting self-characterizations. The Batman's reads:

> CRIMINALS. CRIMINALS ARE A TERROR. HEARTS OF THE NIGHT. I MUST DISGUISE MY. TERROR. CRIMINALS ARE COWARDLY. A SUPERSTITIOUS TERRIBLE OMEN. A COWARDLY LOT. MY DISGUISE MUST STRIKE TERROR. I MUST BE BLACK. TERRIBLE. CRIMINALS ARE. CRIMINALS ARE A SUPERSTITIOUS COWARDLY LOT. I MUST BE A CREATURE. I MUST BE A CREATURE OF THE NIGHT. MOMMY'S DEAD. DADDY'S DEAD. BRUCIE'S DEAD. <u>I SHALL BECOME A BAT</u> (Morrison *1989:* 138).

Instead of pushing Bruce Wayne into a Freudian model, it is much more effective to see the genesis of The Batman as the realization of a non-Freudian ontology. The Batman is a Becoming, a function of desire, and a war-machine. Bruce Wayne's/The Batman's primary desire is justice—***not*** mother. That obsession, that desire shapes him and allows him to structure a new identity, a new self: The Batman. The Batman's desire for justice is unquenchable, because he seeks rupture and absence. It is Desire, not desire. The quest for justice becomes apparent to The Batman as an absence; he sees crime as a lack of justice and is attempting to fill that absence with the lack of crime. He is striving for a negation, not a completion.[65]

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[65] I see resonances in two major conflicts in modern American history: the war on drugs and the war on terror. Instead of fighting "those guys over there" delineated by convenient uniforms and heraldry, we have moved even further into the abstract of our wars. While the Greeks and the Trojans knew each other by name and reputation, and the soldier of a hundred years ago looked across a battlefield at THEM, arrayed in symbolism of otherness, our modern wars are fought against abstracts, and the enemy might be the guy on the corner with the suspicious backpack, or sitting next to us on the bus, or in political office.

Within another story, The Batman is analyzed by a psychologist. This is of course, artifice; it is the writer expressing how one should view The Batman as expressed by a negative definition:

FROM THE DESK OF DR. DENNIS O'GOODWIN
(I must point out that I have been unable, for obvious reason, to conduct a direct examination of "Batman." My analysis relies primarily on news reports and interviews with Gotham law enforcement officials. As such, my conclusion must be regarded as speculative at best.)

Conclusion
The salient feature of "Batman's" persona is monomaniacal obsession, and the object of that obsession is violent death.

Analysis
At first glance, it might seem that even a tentative analysis is impossible given how little is known about the secretive "Batman" (hereafter referred to without quotes). And yet the one thing we do know is also the one thing we need to know; how he spends his time- from sundown to sunup, he patrols the streets, engaging in the sorts of activities we're all familiar with. We can also assume, given the well-documented routines of other world-class athletes, that be spends on the order of two to three hours a day on physical training. Add to this the experience of Gotham's detectives (who assure me that Batman routinely displays far more detailed and timely knowledge of specific criminals' activities than they themselves have access to), positing an hour or so per day for research, and we have accounted for practically all of his waking hours. Thus we can safely conclude that Batman has spent almost every waking moment of his

adult life *being* Batman. This degree of single-minded dedication is well within

the parameters of monomaniacal obsession.

And what is the object of this obsession? If we examine Batman's crimefighting

behavior from a purely methodological perspective, a clear pattern emerges.

Night after night, Batman seeks out the threat of violent death. From back-alley

muggings to the outlandish mass destruction of Gotham's "super-villains," the

one constant that which is *guaranteed* to elicit Batman's involvement, is the

imminent threat of mortal injury. And when he encounters this threat, invariably

his first course of action is to draw the danger upon himself. Time and again

Batman unhesitatingly places himself in seemingly suicidal situations *even* if the

life at stake is his opponent's. Some see this as supremely principled heroism,

but in fact it indicates that Batman's only true opponent, the true object of his

fascination and obsession isdeath itself.

This conclusion is underscored by the very fact of Batman's seemingly

superhuman skills. It is widely acknowledged that Batman is the most highly-

skilled fighter in the world, possibly the greatest human fighter the world has

ever known. To suppose that someone could master every aspect of violent

combat to an unheard-of degree without harboring a deep and abiding

fascination with said violence is psychologically implausible. One might just as

well say that Da Vinci wasn't fascinated with art (Puckett 1997: 64).

While this passage is filled with generic aggrandizement of The Batman, citing him as the

greatest human fighter who has ever lived, a point commonly reiterated within the comics, and

by Morrison himself, the reader is meant to be aware of that The Batman is not fascinated with

death, but the Desire to disrupt criminal activity, which is, itself, a reaction and product of the

rules and limits of justice. The Batman does not attack organized crime as a system because

that approaches the political; he, instead, moves from point of disruption to point of disruption nomadically. Were one to extrapolate The Batman's behavior to its logical end as the imaginary O'Goodwin seems to be doing, one would immediately have to ask about The Batman's use of violence, and his avoidance of lethal force. If The Batman has already marginalized himself and divested himself of societal rules, why obey the proscriptions against murder? Killing is certainly an acceptable practice among heroes, modern and ancient.

O'Neil addresses this issue from the editorial standpoint:

He is tough, but not brutal. He uses violence willingly and often, but never to excess, and never with pleasure. He does not enjoy it. And he never kills. Let's repeat that for the folks in the balcony: Batman never kills. The trauma which created his obsession also generated in him a reverence for that most basic of values, the sacredness of human life. If he was not consumed with the elimination of crime, he would not be the Batman. And if he did not consider human life inviolable, he would not be the Batman, either. (O'Neil 1999: 9).

Perhaps Dr. O'Goodwin is a Freudian.

It is interesting to note that this refusal to kill might originate in the textual origin of the character, but it was not a part of the character from the character's inception. "Even when the death of the wrongdoers was an accident, Batman had grimly approved this brand of rough justice" (Booker 2001: 57). The original model of The Batman was a gun-toting vigilante not unlike The Shadow or the noir detectives popularized in film and books. The decision to restrict The Batman's violence was an editorial move designed to quell the negative press DC's overly violent comics were getting, but by creating a solid, understandable moral code, yet another control was created, a platform on which one could stand and understand the actions of a

billionaire who dresses like a big bat. The proscription against killing is a subtle cultural cue,

vague enough not to limit the intensity of the hero, but powerful enough to reseat the actions

of the character within the boundaries of the acceptable. The Batman skirts the edges of the

marginal and the acceptable. Placing boundaries on his actions is an attempt to keep him on

the safe (and sellable) side of the edge. Rules denote a sense of control; complete lack of

control, while not in itself insane, allows for a potentially damaging layer of interpretation. The

Batman's unwillingness to take a life also, no doubt, enabled him to survive the comics purges

of the post-Wertham furor over violence and macabre in comics.

So, while The Batman/Bruce Wayne entity avoids the issue of sanity, the reality is that

Bruce Wayne is not broken; he is not in need of a cure. Bruce Wayne, freed of a standard

parental structure, does not become an executive, in love with his mother and intent on the

capitalist production for the sake of production to overcome his father. Schizophrenia is only a

problem when it is halted before it reaches its limit. Without the artificial structure of a family

to encumber him, Bruce Wayne's schiz is able to reach its limits and create (NOT fracture into)

two complete identities. Bruce Wayne leaves Bruce Wayne, the name given to him by his now-

absent parents, behind and forms a new identity based on a different desire: justice. Justice is a

desire; law is an institution;

> where one believed there was the law, there is in fact desire and desire alone.
> Justice is desire and not law. Everyone in fact is a functionary of justice (Delueze
> and Guattari 1986: 49).

Bruce Wayne is still *all about* Oedipal structures--but this too is a state of Becoming. Bruce

Wayne attains a level of awareness, through the genesis of the Batman identity that allows him

to see the structures of society, so he becomes the poor little rich kid/orphan; he fits the mold

to the point of near anonymity. The Batman identity offers him the distance necessary to

achieve Foucauldian Exteriority. Bruce Wayne appears to be a normal neurotic; everything he

does fits the Oedipal model for the Oedipal world in which he lives. While he does not even

appear in *Arkham Asylum*, Bruce Wayne is usually characterized as a shallow millionaire

playboy--and that is exactly what he is, a play-boy. The unobtrusive Wayne identity is crafted as

the perfect foil for the Batman identity. Bruce Wayne moves about the ultra-capitalist world of

the rich with consummate ease, and, when he bumps into the noted psychoanalyst at the posh

dinner party, that psychoanalyst can analyze him to his heart's content, seeing all of the

necessary neuroses one would expect to find of man raised as Wayne was. This is artifice,

though, crafted from the awareness available only to Batman/Bruce Wayne. This awareness is

only possible, per Foucault, if one is able to step outside the discourse and view it from a point

of exteriority. Bruce Wayne's non-standard upbringing and desire for justice give him that point

of exteriority. He can view the world from two distinct positions: the wholly domestic, and the

wholly intense.

The Batman is not Bruce Wayne imitating a bat. He is not a guy in a silly rubber suit. The

Batman is a new being, a Becoming. He has identified the anomalous and has identified,

sorcerer-like, with that anomalous. For Bruce Wayne, the realization of that anomalous was the

bat, a creature of the night, but this is representative of his encounter and recognition of the

anomalous aspect, crime, within the carefully striated society of Gotham City. The criminal is a

function of smooth space. Criminals act as nomads, crossing the carefully striated spaces of the state, war machines who deterritorialize space and leave it smooth, to be re-striated by other institutions, institutionalized crime, or the state. They move from point to point--crime to crime. Theirs is not a 40-hour work week with 2.5 kids and a minivan. Too many points of disruption destratify the society around them, perhaps even to the point where society recoils from the smoothing, dangerous space[66].

The Batman works in much the same way as the criminal. He has come to recognize their workings through his early encounter with the criminals who killed his parents. The nomadic structures of the criminals, and, and thus, the Batman are shown in the centering around crime sites. "The nomad has a territory; he follows customary paths; he goes from one point to another; he is not ignorant of points" (Deleuze and Guattari *1987:* 380).

The nomad thinks in terms of points, not in terms of the space he must cross to get to that point. The criminal recognizes the institution, but intentionally rejects its power over him; the criminal desires this institutional control-this state against which to rebel. The criminal's movement is characterized by his intentional moving from point of rejection/desire to point of rejection/desire. The criminal's mind moves from one crime to the next; it is not preoccupied with the space between those points; if it does, then this is the domestic portion of the criminal's identity. He may have to buy diapers for the baby, but that is the father thinking, not the criminal: the criminal thinks from score to score.

Should a part of the city become a locus of points of nomadic interest, then a form of smoothing occurs. Should the criminal element take over, that space loses the striations of the

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[66] The Waynes were killed in Crime Alley- a space stratified and named by crime itself.

institutional power. This smooth space is then open to striation by other state powers--the pseudo state of organized crime, criminal/nomads whose paths and territories are controlled by a centralized power to the point where they are no longer nomads, but nomads appropriated into war machines, or to re-striation by the State. One of the fundamental tasks of the State is to striate the space over which it reigns, or to utilize smooth spaces as a means of communication in the service of striated space. It is a vital concern of every State not only to vanquish nomadism, but to control migrations, and, more generally, to establish a zone of rights over an entire 'exterior,' over all of the flows transversing the phenomenon (Deleuze and Guattari *1987:* 385).

The Batman's movement, from his recognition of the anomalous criminals?? works in much the same way, but in a more dramatic fashion. The Batman does not actively reject the power of the institution. He is not drawn to the power in some sort of repressive Oedipal desire. Instead, the Batman does not recognize the power of the state, the Police of Gotham city, over him. He sees their power within their institution, but he ignores any power they think they have over him. The Batman moves from point to point as well. He is centered around point-to-point travel as he follows the pack of crime, but as a schiz he travels in non-standard modes. While the institution striates its space with its city blocks and the vertical and horizontal lines of the streets of Gotham, The Batman ignores these striations. More often than not, The Batman merely appears when needed, and then disappears when he has finished his task. When Batman's movement is acknowledged, he is shown swinging through the smooth air on a Bat-line, moving above the buildings, above the striations in unregulated free-air. The Batman appropriates technology and renames it for his own use. He does not drive a car, but has a

Batmobile[67]. The Batman never pays airfare; he just fires up the Bat Jet. All modes of transportation for the Batman are Bat-modes.

As a nomad/war machine, The Batman can be appropriated by the State. Commissioner Gordon can call The Batman, via the Batsignal, another appropriated technology, should the demon-criminal appear within the pack. The state's appropriation of the war machine implies the state's adoption of war as its object.

> It is at one and the same time that the State apparatus appropriates a war machine, that the war machine takes war as its object, and that war becomes subordinated to the aims of the State (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 418).

The state calls on Batman when the demon appears within the pack, when it becomes aware of the anomalous within the pack, and the danger of smoothing of its striated segments appears. The first appearance of The Batman in *Arkham Asylum* is in the form of the Batsignal, dark grey on a light grey sky, followed by a panel of the top of the Gotham skyline (Batman's area of movement) and then finally The Batman himself.

"Sorry I'm late Commissioner. Problems out of town. What's up?" (Morrison *1989:* 18). All of this occurs over four panels. No sense of time is given, but the short vertical nature of the layout gives the impression of mere moments. Gordon fills him in on the situation, a riot in Arkham Asylum, Gotham's asylum for the criminally insane, the depository for demons. The Batman is not impressed with such a minor crime.

"And?.." he asks.

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[67] The Batmobile was actually named by Robin. The Batman simply referred to it as "the car".

"They say there's only one final demand, Thank God. They've been waiting to

talk to you personally." Gordon tells him.

"I see." The Batman replies.

"It's the Joker." The Batman is next shown heading toward the phone intent on

communication with the demon (Morrison 1989: 19).

The Batman, when appropriated by the state, is working toward the same goal as the

state: Justice. When the state's war-goals match The Batman's he will allow himself to be

appropriated, and he will deterritorialize those spaces striated by criminal institutions. As a

Nomad, he will leave spaces smooth of criminal (read: undesired state) stratifications, and he

will leave them fertile for State stratification. As all war machines, however, The Batman is as

much a danger to the state as he is to any criminal organization (as that is just another state).

The Batman will oppose the state should the state stand in the way of justice. Sometimes

institutionalized law is capable of justice, but the two functions are completely different.

The Joker's demand that The Batman join them in Arkham Asylum further explicates The

Batman's curious identity. After accepting the Joker's demand, The Batman expresses his

concerns to Commissioner Gordon.

"You know, you don't have to go in there. Let me organize a swat team or

something." Commissioner Gordon says.

"No. This is something I do have to do."

"Listen. I can understand it if even you're afraid. I mean, Arkham has a

reputation..."

"Afraid?" The Batman asks. "Batman's not afraid of anything." The panel

switches to exclude Commissioner Gordon and center on The Batman. "It's me.

I'm afraid. I'm afraid that the Joker may be right about me. Sometimes I...question the rationality of my actions. And I'm afraid that when I walk through those asylum gates. When I walk into Arkham and the doors close behind me...It'll be just like coming home" (Morrison 1989: 23).

The Batman acknowledges that he leads two lives, but he does not acknowledge his dual identity as an illness. The Batman is not a clinical schizophrenic, a 'normal' man suffering from a secondary personality. The Batman is part of two carefully crafted identities. The 'me' to which The Batman refers is the integrated entity that is Batman *and* Bruce Wayne, the Superject. This entity, while whole, or perhaps because it is whole and sane, recognizes its own strangeness within the Freudian world. The Batman is also The Detective; there is no doubt that he recognizes that, within the Freudian world, those trapped within the world see him as this dangerous crazy man who runs around in a black rubber suit. The Batman even stands out amongst his peer super-heroes as a scary, dark figure. Just because he recognizes his own marginalization as a schiz in an Oedipal world does not mean that The Batman recognizes that he is operating under a non-Freudian ontology. The concern he voices is the concern of a sane man: what if I'm insane? "Is what I'm doing rational?" is not the question of an irrational man.

The Batman's concerns are the questions of a sane man who recognizes the differences in his thought patterns from those around him. When the only option he has is the binary of SANE/INSANE, his choice for his own position in society appears obvious. When The Batman finally takes his place among the inmates of Arkham, his identity is further reified. The opening panels showing the activities of the rioting inmates are a montage of Boschian nightmares overwritten with snippets of 'insane' text, the last bit which reads "...well..a...a boy's best friend

is his MOTHER" (Morrison 1989: 35). Arkham is a locus of the Freudian world; its inhabitants are models of Oedipal neuroses. They are carefully positioned within the text for The Batman to encounter and overcome/evade on his path towards freedom. The Batman, as a schiz, must face each of these Freudian nightmares for his own sense of self. It would be easier for The Batman to subdue the inmates through some example of Bat-cleverness, but as he says, the journey is something he must do. Morrison states that *Arkham Asylum* is "A story of the mad and excluded. A story not of the real world but the inside of a head--Batman's head, our collective head" (Morrison 2011: 225).

The Joker is Batman's most interesting foe because he is so at ease with his own psychosis and homicidal nature, and he's just *so* good at tweaking The Batman. As if aware of The Batman's own sense of self-doubt, he makes The Batman participate in the same psychoanalytical games the caretakers of Arkham make the inmates play. When faced with a Rorschak ink-blot, all The Batman can see is the form of a flying bat, though, when asked, he says he sees nothing (Morrison 1989: 33). It makes sense, however, that this is what The Batman would see. Bruce Wayne might see a thousand other images, but The Batman's most primal memory is that of his genesis, the bat flying through Bruce Wayne's window. The other inmates grow restless; they want to remove The Batman's mask.

> "I say we take off his mask. I want to see his real face," a shadowy figure in the
> background says.
> "Oh, don't be so predictable, for Christ's sake! That is his real face. And I want to
> go much deeper than that" the Joker replies (Morrison 1989: 33).

The Joker pursues the torment and word association games follow. The psychoanalyst begins with "Mother" to which Batman replies "Ah. Pearl." The image behind the words is that of both praying Madonna-figure and sultry whore, along with a string of pearls, an image from his parents' murder. She continues with "handle" which Batman counters with "revolver". The Waynes were killed with a pearl-handled revolver, but also a handle is a name, and identity and The Batman's changes; it revolves. "Gun" is followed by "Father", "Father" is followed by "Death"; "end" is followed by "Stop. Stop." and then the Joker's laughter (Morrison 1989: 36-37). The Batman appears dejected. His doubts seem verified; he has failed the psychoanalytical tests.

Naturally.

The Batman is different from the norm, and, therefore, under the Freudian model he is sick; it becomes a question of levels of sickness. Does the psychoanalyst ever cure anyone, or just bring the sickness down to an acceptable level (at $150 an hour)? The Joker's victory here came by getting The Batman to accept the Freudian model as having dominion over him; once he accomplished that, of course The Batman's sanity comes into question. Under the Freudian model, he is Bruce Wayne in a silly black rubber bat costume.

Under the schiz model, all of this imagery makes more sense. The Batman sees the bat in the ink blot and the images of his parent's death, because those are the images of his genesis, his earliest memories; he does not have the shady half-memories of the infant to be gleaned from Freudian analysis. The Batman, the becoming of bat, is a function of Bruce Wayne's awareness of the anomalous.

After weakening his defenses with the inkblot test, the word association games muddy the waters between The Batman and the Bruce Wayne identities. By juxtaposing the identities, even momentarily, we suddenly have Bruce Wayne (as exhibited by the Oedipal answers to the word games) in a big black bat suit. The Batman is a functional schiz; Bruce Wayne in a batsuit is a madman.

Using this new-found power, the Joker makes The Batman run the gauntlet of psychoses, each a test of The Batman at his weakest moment-in the midst of his questioning of his own ontology. He has to face each of the demons of the criminal pack, the demons that allow him to become, that give him existence. Clayface, whose touch means a rotting death is representative of sickness. He is rotten inside *and* out. His physicality, his rotten skin, is a symbol of his inner psychosis. The Batman reacts violently and does not let Clayface touch him. "I just want to share my disease" Clayface complains (Morrison 1989: 66).

Dr. Destiny's gaze causes the object of that gaze to cease being. His self-characterization at the end of the text reads "in dreams I walk with you" (Morrison 1989: 120). He is the dream world, the cessation of consciousness for the subconscious world. The Batman pushes him down the stairs, unseen from behind--perhaps the most real defeat. Even Glaukos and Sarpedon acknowledged that the spirits of death clustered about us, so it is only fitting that man who can unwrite reality suffers the ignominious death of falling down the stairs and breaking a hip[68].

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[68] I quote the Glaukos/Sarpedon conversation a lot, and paraphrase it to my friends that we can slip in the shower and crack our skulls at any moment. I may have to edit that to falling down the stairs in honor of Dr. Destiny.

The Scarecrow, a mad scientist who experiments with drugs that cause fear, is the form of phobia. He does not speak, and The Batman slips by him unnoticed (70). As he has already stated, The Batman is not afraid of anything. The Mad Hatter is a pedophile, but his interest in children is more than just sexual. He is also interested in their minds and he forces The Batman, via mirror imagery, to see the relationship between those in Arkham and himself. "Sometimes. Sometimes I think the asylum is a head. We're inside a huge head that dreams us all into being. Perhaps it's your head, Batman. Arkham is a looking glass. And WE are YOU" (Morrison 1989: 73).

Maxie Zeus' power is more insidious. He believes he is a god; electricity flows into him from the doctors' machines giving him an angelic glow. He has converted one of the guards, who now worships him. Under his arm is a bucket of his treasure. "There's power in it, you see. Electricity. Ahh. Gift of the body. Divine. Fertile" (Morrison 1989: 80). Maxie Zeus offers The Batman power, the gift of faith in him as he sits with the capitalist product: his own shit. Zeus is megalomania, anal retention, the product of electro-shock therapy.

Croc does not speak. He is bestial and communicates only in the language of violence- a language that The Batman speaks eloquently. While both are impaled on the same metal spike, it is The Batman who survives.

None of these paradigms of psychosis are any real threat to The Batman; he eludes all of them with ease. The only real threat to The Batman is Charles Cavendish, the man who runs Arkham Asylum and who is responsible for the inmates' incarceration *and* their newfound freedom. Dr. Cavendish represents the structure of the Freudian world. He is the highest tier in the psychoanalytical hierarchy. If Dr. Cavendish can get The Batman to accept his position in an

Oedipal world, and therefore the paradigm he represents, then The Batman is doomed to fall

into one of the two categories available to him in the Freudian world: sanity or insanity.

Cavendish, after reading the journals of Amadeus Arkham, the man who created Arkham

Asylum for the Criminally Insane, starts suffering from delusions. Arkham's journal relates an

encounter he had with a bat. He says "I see the thing that has haunted and tormented my poor

mother these long years. I see it. And it is a bat. A BAT!"(Morrison 1989: 95).

> Arkham then kills his mother, while saying:

> I understand now what my memory tried to keep from me. Madness is born in
> the blood. It is my birthright. My inheritance. My destiny. I shall contain the
> presences that roam these rooms and narrow stairways. I shall surround them
> with bars and walls and electrified fences and pray they never break free
> (Morrison 1989: 96-97).

Arkham only decides to turn his ancestral home into an asylum after his own madness comes to

the forefront of his mind. Cavendish is struck with a similar level of delusion.

> "You see now? You understand? You who've kept this place supplied with poor
> mad souls for years. You who've fed this hungry house. Do you see? You are the
> BAT!" Cavendish says while holding a scalpel against Ruth Adam's throat.
> "No" The Batman replies. "I... I'm just a man" (Morrison 1989: 98).

This is not a moment of weakness on The Batman's part; it is an affirmation of his self. The

Batman is not a bat--at his limit, he is a man becoming bat. He is not imitating the bat, but is

becoming something new in his realization of the criminal world.

Cavendish's madness becomes even stronger and he is finally able to wound The

Batman. After Ruth Adams- saves The Batman by killing Cavendish, with a scalpel, a tool of the

trade, The Batman takes Two-Face's coin from her.

> "You're going back in aren't you? You're going to undo all of my work... What **are**
> you?" She asks.
> "Stronger then them. Stronger than this place. I have to show them." The
> Batman replies.
> "That's insane."
> "Exactly. Arkham was right. Sometimes it's only the madness that makes us what
> we are. Or destiny perhaps" (Morrison 1989: 106).

The Batman returns to the collected inmates, but now his identity is intact. He has accepted

that, within the Freudian world view, he *is* insane. His status as a schiz places him outside the

narrow margins that the psychoanalyst recognizes as sane. So, while he accepts his status in the

Freudian world, his continued existence as The Batman, and his newly returned confidence

shows he has had his position outside the paradigm reaffirmed. In a psychoanalytical sense, The

Batman *is* insane, because that is the binary opposition under which that topology works. The

Batman, however, does not accept that method of thought, therefore he continues,

unhindered by either the sane or the insane.

Within in his own thoughts, during an origin story, the Batman states:

> I decided early that I would never take a life. Right around the time I decided
> that I wanted to live. It wasn't an arbitrary decision and it was more than moral.

It's about IDENTITY. As long as you can choose that, choose who you are in the

world...you can choose to call yourself sane (Grayson 1997: 24).

The Joker tries one last time to test The Batman. "Have you come to claim your kingly robe? Or

do you just want us to put you out of your misery, like the poor sick creature you are?"

(Morrison 108). The Joker offers Batman a binary; king of the insane, or pariah of the insane,

but The Batman rejects the offer in an ironic twist. He gives his life to the schizophrenic: Two-

face. While Two-face/Harvey Dent is a psychoanalytically diagnosed schizophrenic, he is the

closest thing to a pack-member that The Batman has; it is a recognition of his fractured identity.

The Batman and Domesticity

While not the more real of the two identities, The Batman is certainly the more

interesting of the two in his aberrance. Part of the fascination with the character is his intensity

and his particular mode of warfare. Just as Achilleus' arete has fascinated for centuries, the

inherent marginalization of The Batman's behavior is certainly part of his attractiveness as a

character. As a nomad, The Batman is not bound by the same rules as members of his

discourse, and, as a function of intensity, he is capable of actions beyond what one would

expect of a normal person.

The Batman is, in a way, the ultimate humanist. While other comic book heroes have

their definitions as human problematized by alien heritages, genetic mutations, interference by

gods or super-science, or the acquisition of magical/cosmic weapons, The Batman is wholly and

only human.

He is, however, an absolute; he is the pinnacle of what a human might be able to achieve, physically, mentally, and martially were he not limited by normal human concerns: the domestic.

He is probably the best martial artist alive, and one of the best gymnasts. He hones these physical workouts in the Batcave Gym.

He is strong and athletic. A 550 pound bench press would be no particular problem. He can run 20 miles in little over two hours, and swim an equivalent distance and time.

He eats sparingly and well. His is a balanced diet that an Olympic decathloner would approve of.

He is brilliant, with an IQ comfortably in the genius numbers.

He is trained. An autodidact. He has traveled all over the world auditing classes and speaking to men who have knowledge he needs. He has total recall, which means he remembers everything he's read, and he reads a lot; speed-reading is one of the first skills he acquired. His learning, however is limited. He is knowledge of the liberal arts is slight—only what he's picked up in passing— and his knowledge of the sciences is largely limited to the practical. So he knows very little about particle physics, but everything about ballistics. He probably cannot explain molecular bonding, but he knows how to test for every known poison. He's spent little time looking through a telescope and much time looking through a microscope. He is conversant with every theory of criminal behavior, but he might not be able to explain the differences between Freud and Jung (O'Neil 1999: 9-10).

The Batman's upper limits are untried and untested. While the other heroes approach divinity, the only power The Batman has is being one step ahead of everyone else around him. His power is the free will and spark of reason that positions man on the Great Chain of Being. As an absolute, however, The Batman muddles all equations into which he enters the same way zero or infinity plays tricks with math. The Batman can associate with these non-humans the same way that Achilleus can enter a battlefield stocked with divinities; he is amortal. Mortality in comic continuity lacks the permanence of the real world, or even of other textual traditions. Characters return from the dead so frequently within the tradition that the trope has become a running joke. Superman returned from the dead with a slightly hipper haircut; Green Lantern became the supernatural Spectre, dead but present, and has since returned from *that* death. Jean Grey took the name Phoenix because of her habit of returning from the dead. The Resurrection Man's powers should be self-explanatory. These characters, despite their godlike powers, are aware of death. Superman has to pause to consider his own mortality; he knows he can die. The Batman has no such concern; death in his perception is something that happens to others, but does not necessarily affect him. Bruce Wayne might die; The Batman does not.

One might question how a character whose genesis revolves around a moment of death is unaware of the possibility of death. The death of Bruce Wayne's parents is the impetus behind the creation on The Batman, but The Batman, as the intensity that he is, has no parents. Bruce Wayne must consider, fear, react to death, but The Batman was created specifically to avoid such entanglements. The Batman exists from the moment Bruce Wayne states that he shall become a bat. Once he Becomes The Batman via intense actions, a new entity in the form

of that superject has been born—non-oedipally, non-filially. As such, the entity that is The

Batman is almost more function than he is entity.

As the wholly intense, driven completely by negation and Desire, The Batman is amortal

in the same way Achilleus is on the battlefield, or Odysseus is in the Suitors' chamber, but his

amortality resonates differently than does any other hero's because of his disguise. The Batman

is not identified by his face; he has removed that sign through the use of the cowl. The cowl is

not the entirety of the identification, however, because anyone can buy a Bat-outfit. The cowl is

a part of the identity, a signifier; once matched with Bat-action, The Batman is recognized by

those positioned externally. There is an extra step in the process of recognizing the object-

Batman. One can see the cowl, but not recognize the action, or see the action without the cowl

(or chest emblem) and mistake the identity of the object, but the two together create the

recognition of the entity that is The Batman. Even those who know Bruce Wayne and The

Batman as one individual can be fooled by this disjointed identity. Bruce Wayne behaving

heroically is The Batman, or Becoming The Batman.

Having an identity based on the cowl, though, allows another level of separation from

the standard boundaries of mortality. While Bruce Wayne is going to die, the cowl need not. All

of The Batman's efforts to keep his identity secret work to distance himself from mortality. The

cowl, the identity of The Batman can be passed on to a successor[69]; The Batman escapes the

need for death by bifurcating his identity. Bruce Wayne is left with The Batman's mortality.

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[69] The Batman was briefly replaced the now-hero Azrael in the *Knight's Quest*, *Knightsend* series. The replacement Batman failed and Bruce Wayne resumed the role. One of the first things Azrael did was to change the iconic costume.

The Batman and Others

While Bruce Wayne is divesting himself of domestic relationships, The Batman is

creating them, but always within the boundaries of an intense existence. One will be hard

pressed to find images of Bruce Wayne kissing a woman, but The Batman has a list of lovers.

Bruce Wayne has few friends, but The Batman, while distant and difficult is part of one of the

most elite clubs in comic book literature, the JLA.[70] The Batman comments on the death of a

victim, a crime he is investigating:

> The Batman: "He was a friend. In that I have any."
> Alfred: "Indeed? And how would you categorize those other caped individuals
> with whom you associate on a regular basis?"
> Wayne: "There's a difference between friends and allies. Or family, in case you
> were wondering about yourself and the boys. "(Dini 2007: 9).

DC comics refers to the heroes surrounding The Batman as the "Batman Family" and the on-

again, off-again series *World's Finest* deals specifically with the interaction of The Batman and

Superman; this friendship was created by market forces as a means to sell more comic books by

juxtaposing two of DC's best-selling characters. The seeming disparity between these two

characters is sometimes analyzed, specifically in the *World's Finest* revival published in 2002-

2003[71].

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[70] The previously mentioned Justice League of America.

[71] And further explicated and explored in The Authority by Apollo and The Midnighter, an openly gay couple, who are also openly and blatantly a homage to DC's oddest couple.

Within the (super)heroic world, the differences between The Batman and Superman are striking; they seem to be polar opposites, but these differences are really only visible when rarefied within the particular boundaries of the discourse in question. While The Batman's dark costume is perhaps one of the best designs in comic book literature, and Superman's red speedo over bright blue spandex is one of the worst, the simple fact is they are both intentionally running around in Halloween costumes. It is only in the interior of the discourse that these differences are notable. As discussed earlier, the way the hero fights becomes boring quickly; the shock value and interest in Superman's ability to fly wears off about as quickly as the novelty of the myriad of ways Achilleus kills people. The list of failed comic books that hoped for sales based on the novelty of the character's super powers is long: a cool power does not a best-seller make. Wonder Woman has lasted most of a century with magic jewelry and a rope.

The success of The Batman as a character is rooted in the same functions that allow him to be friends with Superman. The aggregation of superheroes into units, a phenomenon common to almost all of the American brands of comics, is the domestication of a collection of intense individuals and the creation of new discourses with new discoursal rules, jargon and expectations. The Batman and Superman are friends because, within this new discourse, they are still marginal. The Batman deliberately maintains a marginal status by limiting his social interactions within the new discourse, and Superman is marginal because his powers approach the divine. Both characters are dangerous to the others within their discourse; both characters are bound to each other in their intensity within an intense community (if such a thing is possible.) The Batman and Superman share their own lack of mortality. The Batman is amortal

for the aforementioned reasons, while Superman's immortality is artificial; he dies and is

reborn via unexplainable Kryptonian science that might as well be the power of Osiris, a

burning bush, or transubstantiation. It makes sense that the ultimate humanist, the top of the

food chain on the Great Chain of Being would have a relationship with the semi-divine.[72] We

are left with concentric circles of marginalization and intensity. The presence of multiple people

with similar goals leads to the organic genesis of societies, but even within the world of the

elite superheroes, levels of intensity create fracture and schism in these new aggregates.

Batman's Love Life/Issues of Sexuality

The same features that create the friendship with Superman also allow for brief and

problematic romantic relationships. While Superman has Lois Lane to ground him

domestically[73], and thus maintain his mortality, The Batman's romantic relationships, and lack

thereof, problematize his status as mortal. Just as he associates with other superheroes, The

Batman also maintains romantic relationships with other intense individuals. Most recently, he

has been linked to Wonder Woman, but that relationship was cut short textually within *JLA* #90

The end of that relationship is an interesting function of the relationship between character,

writer and editor(s). *JLA* exists within a different editorial group within DC comics than do the

titles within the Batman group. There is little logic to these editorial groupings. *Green Lantern*

and *Green Arrow* both exist within the Batman group, but have little to do with The Batman as a

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[72] This relationship is further explicated within the series *The Authority*, wherein The Midnighter, a black leather-wearing Batman clone is the gay lover of Apollo, a solar powered demi-god. *The Authority* clarifies the relationship further by having Apollo dress almost exclusively in white so that the binary is complete.

[73] She loves both Clark Kent and Superman.

character. The Batman appears in *JLA*, but that book is within the Superman group. It was a writer's decision to link The Batman to Wonder Woman, and an editorial decision on the part of a Superman group editor to allow that romantic link. That decision, in turn, was ratified by The Batman group, but, once that departure from The Batman's intensity started to gain momentum, the *JLA* editors were forced to bring the possibility of a relationship between the two characters to an end. The apparently mutual decision on the part of the two characters was a rarefaction of The Batman's intensity both textually and editorially. The *JLA* editors were not allowed to modify a character that was not theirs.

The possibility of a romantic link between The Batman and Wonder Woman makes sense, because, like Superman, Wonder Woman flirts with divinity. It is natural and organic to imagine that, since The Batman is seemingly incapable of carrying on a relationship with a normal woman, he should date the divine. This returns us to my assertion that this level of heroism can only exist within the text wherein the organic can be avoided and the wholly intense can be maintained through artifice and fissure. It is the inorganic nature of the hero that creates the fantastic nature of these stories more than the heroes' abilities.

The artifice which limits The Batman's existence is, in a way, at odds with the organic nature of the reader, and, since The Batman is a series, a story constantly in process and in a state of Becoming, the forces of interpretation can come into play on the character in ways that they cannot on a text that can only be examined archeologically. One man has had more effect on the textual interpretation of comics books than anyone else, and his misreadings of The Batman series, as well as others, stem from his inability to see the distinction between the wholly intense and the organic, and his assumptions about what a non-domestic, inorganic

existence must mean. Any discussion about comic books must mention Dr. Frederick Wertham

and his book *The Seduction of the Innocent*, and any discussion of Wertham's analysis of The

Batman must ask the question: Just how gay IS The Batman?

> Several years ago a Californian psychiatrist pointed out that the Batman stories
> are psychologically homosexual. Our researches confirm this entirely. Only
> someone ignorant of the fundamentals of psychiatry and of the psychopathology
> of sex can fail to realize a subtle atmosphere of homoeroticism which pervades
> the adventures of the mature "Batman" and his young friend "Robin.' (Wertham
> 1954: 189-190).

Wertham's initial crusade against comic books was based on the violence Wertham saw

in the books, and, in the pre-Comic Code Authority[74] days the violence was more graphic than

what one might see in a modern comic (though it still pales in comparison to that of *The Iliad*).

One must question whether the literature of the comic was marginal because it was so violent

at the time, or whether it was violent because it was outside the homogenizing forces of

internality. The heroic is always going to appear marginal in its intensity, but Wertham made

the mistake of assuming a kind of continuity from one discourse to another. His assumptions

about the marginal were incorrect, in that he imagined congruence, a juxtaposition of

marginalities that does not exist.

Wertham saw a system of aberrance, so that where there was aberrance in one portion

of the discourse he was viewing, he automatically assumed aberrance existed elsewhere. The

aberrance he perceived was an offshoot of the aberrance of heroism; Wertham created a

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[74] The Comics Code was based, loosely, on the Hay's Code used by Hollywood.

possibility of homosexuality in the fissure that existed in The Batman's heroic identity, the lack of domesticity.

Once must first understand Wertham's crusading tone when discussing homosexuality; it was a different time. I am not discussing the concept of homosexuality here, but the cultural context with which Wertham's opinions were made, the archeology of his thoughts. Wertham, and many in his field, would have seen homosexuality as aberrant *and* negative. Today, we would deny the negativity of the definition, but keep the aberrance. In the case of The Batman, however, I think this would not be an improvement on Wertham's mistake.

Wertham's priorities are clear in the way identifies and prioritizes the levels of aberrance he sees within the comics. He summarizes his views on what he sees as obvious homosexual overtones, and, toward the end of the passage, comments on the violence of the characters, but neglects the aberrance of dressing up in a big leather Bat-suit.

> In the Batman type of comic book such a relationship is depicted to children before they can even read. Batman and Robin, the "dynamic duo," also known as the "daring duo," go into action in their special uniforms. They constantly rescue each other from violent attacks by an unending number of enemies. The feeling is conveyed that we men must stick together because there are so many villainous creatures who have to be exterminated. They lurk not only under every bed but also behind every star in the sky. Either Batman or his young boy friend or both are captured, threatened with every imaginable weapon, almost blown to bits, almost crushed to death, almost annihilated. Sometimes Batman ends up in bed injured and young Robin is shown sitting next to him. At home they lead an idyllic life. They are Bruce Wayne and 'Dick" Grayson. Bruce Wayne is described as a "socialite" and the official relationship is that Dick is Bruce's

ward. They live in sumptuous quarters, with beautiful flowers in large vases, and have a butler, Alfred. Batman is sometimes shown in a dressing gown. As they sit by the fireplace the young boy sometimes worries about his partner: "Something's wrong with Bruce. He hasn't been himself these past few days." It is like a wish dream of two homosexuals living together. Sometimes they are shown on a couch, Bruce reclining and Dick sitting next to him, jacket off collar open, and his hand on his friend's arm. Like the girls in other stories, Robin is sometimes held captive by the villains and Batman has to give in or "Robin gets? killed."

Robin is a handsome ephebic boy, usually shown in his uniform with bare legs. He is buoyant with energy and devoted to nothing on earth or in interplanetary space as much as to Bruce Wayne. He often stands with his legs spread, the genital region discreetly evident.

In these stories, there are practically no decent attractive women. A typical female character is the Catwoman, who is vicious and uses a whip. The atmosphere is homosexual and anti-feminine. If the girl is good-looking she is undoubtedly the villainess. If she is after Bruce Wayne, she will have no chance against Dick. For instance, Bruce and Dick go out one evening in dinner clothes, dressed exactly alike. The attractive girl makes up to Bruce while in successive pictures young Dick looks on smiling, sure of Bruce. Violence is not lacking in these stories (Wertham 1954: 190-191).

I am perhaps most amused in this passage by Wertham's careful quoting of "Dick" Grayson's name as a sure sign of the sexuality of the characters.

Wertham's mistake is the assumption of a binary. He does see aberrance, and rightly so; The Batman is sexually aberrant. His aberration though, is an aberration of gap, fissure and absence rather than the aberrance that Wertham cites: homosexuality, a function that Wertham definitely sees as negative. While The Batman denies sexuality in his Becoming

Intense, he is also denying domestic relationships in his drive towards heroic intensity.

Wertham's reliance on binaries, his Freudianism, does not allow for multiplicity. Sexual

aberrance with the close association of the male figure of Robin automatically equals

homosexuality to Wertham. He sees homosexuality wherever there is the absence of

heterosexuality. Perhaps we can cite Wertham as the first Queer Theorist. He does not allow

for the possibility of non-sexuality, of an entity denying the creation of filial relationships, but

instead spreading his intensity, contagiously, to Dick Grayson[75], who then must Become Robin.

Wertham's statement is that Bruce Wayne[76] is not interested in the beautiful women around

him, therefore he must be gay. "If the girl is good-looking she is undoubtedly the villainess"

however, leads us back to the inherent limitation of the heroic text. The necessity of the

separation of intense and the domestic in the hero is as much an issue of presentation as it is of

existence for the textual subject. *Detective* is not a romance comic. Its limited presentation of

The Batman's existence was particularly delineated in a time when romance comics were a

thriving genre. The Batman's intensity, like most heroes, is predicated on the impossibly limited

presentation of a textual object as a subject Becoming. One could easily make the argument

that while we do not see a blatant heterosexual relationship involving The Batman, neither do

we see a blatant homosexual one, either.

Morrison directly addresses the issue of homosexuality in The Batman:

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[75] It is interesting to wonder if any of this plays into the characterization of Dick Grayson as one of the premier sex-objects of the DC universe. In a universe populated by supermodels with truly reality-warping costumes, Dick Grayson is one of the most openly acknowledged pieces of male eye.

[76] And I'm not sure that Wertham sees the Bruce Wayne/Batman split in the same way that I have explicated.

For example, and Batman's living arrangements with ward dick Grayson (Robin) and Alfred the butler, the good doctor was certain that he discerned the "wish dream of two homosexuals living together. "Perhaps it was the Wet dream of homosexuals. Only those particular to homosexuals could tell us for certain….Perhaps there remains to be written the great gay Batman story where he and Robin, and potentially Alfred too, are going at it like a trip hammers between Batmobile cruising scenes, but the hollow specter of Dr. Wertham can take it from me that the young readers of Batman saw only a wish-dream of freedom and high-adventure. It is Wertham whose name belongs in the annals of perversity, not Batman's (Morrison *2011:* 55).[77]

The Batman is not entirely successful in his drive toward absolute intensity. He is still mired in domesticity even as he divides his identity in an effort to compartmentalize his dual identities, but he is interesting in his conscious desire to limit domestic ties. While Superman, with his one fatal weakness, very well may bear a passing resemblance to Achilleus[78], The Batman is undoubtedly the modern Odysseus, and Odysseus is definitely the more dangerous of the heroes. He is also the survivor.

Society, however, constantly reifies itself, and The Batman, as a war machine, is a constant danger to that society; it becomes of tantamount importance that The Batman *Become* domesticated. The split identity assures The Batman's freedom from standard, even

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[77] I was privileged to hear an apocryphal story from Bob Schreck who helmed the Batman group at DC comics from 1999-2009. Schreck is openly bisexual, and said he was immediately faced with multiple story proposals from his friends wherein Bruce and Dick's relationship became gay lovers. He was amused and chagrinned, and also firmly resolute that The Batman's identity was what it was.

[78] I would be remiss not to point out that while resembling Achilleus, Superman's "Achilles' Tendon" of kryptonite is not indicative of the Achilleus we see in the *Iliad*. It is, however, *likely* indicative of the Achilles to whom most Americans are (optimistically speaking) familiar. While I love *O' Brother Where Art Thou*, I have frequently described its plot as being written by someone who overheard the story of the *Odyssey* being to told to a third party…badly.

standardized aberrant ties, but The Batman portion of the identity still becomes mired in the domesticity of political/filial relationships with other heroes.

Why Is The Batman in the JLA?

The Justice League of America is a grouping of heroes, individual nomads who move from one point of heroic interest to another. As readers, we only really see them when there is a problem worthy of a story. Occasionally a character will bemoan a certain boredom, but this is usually just a device to show that boredom doesn't ever actually occur. The Batman's inclusion in this group seems contrary to his nature; it is a kind of domestication and a creation of filial ties.

The inclusion is a literary trope, however, that is used to show The Batman's continuing marginality within even the grouping of heroes. Hegel posits a certain positioning of heroes within a society:

> The middle term is the nation in its heroes, who are individual men like the minstrel, but only ideally presented, and thereby at the same time universal like the free extreme of universality, the gods (Hegel 1967: 733).

The individuals, even ideally presented, group together however, and then hierarchies develop[79].

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[79] The same kind of hierarchies develop among the pantheons, I might argue.

Achilles, as the principal figure in the national expedition of the Greeks against

Troy, does not stand at its head, but is subject to the Chief of Chiefs; he cannot

be made the leader without becoming a fantastic untenable conception (Hegel

1956: 224).

Achilleus would make a horrible leader for many of the same reasons The Batman would. Both

character's positions within the society of heroes are designed to be problematic. The Batman

is obviously aberrant within normal society, but he is also aberrant in the tight-wearing society

of superheroes as well.

The *JLA* storyline "Tower of Babel" revolved around The Batman's marginal position

within the society of heroes. Just as Achilleus considered destroying Agamemnon, the rest of

the heroes discovered that The Batman had scenarios scripted to destroy each of them in the

event that they became a threat to the society that he protected. The domestic betrayals this

entails are multifold, but are relatively meaningless to The Batman; he does not see the

grouping of heroes as a social circle, a support group, but as a set of resources by which better

to accomplish the protection of his city.

The JLA handles global threats, and sometimes those global threats infringe upon

Gotham city, so he needs the aid and resources available to him, just as the other heroes do.

The difference is that The Batman also sees these aids and resources as potential threats in

their own rights. He does not see filial ties to the heroes; he sees them as war machines to be

co-opted or feared. In *The Dark Knight Returns*, fanboys get their recurring question answered,

and The Batman defeats Superman through the use of synthesized kryptonite. Just as Achilleus

denies the Greeks, The Batman remains separate from the rest of the society of heroes; they

need him, but they fear him. He is Odysseus, but he is also Philoctetes, alone, isolated but frequently in possession of the one weapon the pseudo-gods need.

The heroes act as a baseline. As readers, we become used to the aberration of tights and capes; the wonder of a man flying dulls after almost seventy years. It becomes necessary to reposition The Batman. It is not enough to see The Batman scare the criminal. The criminal is, after all, a superstitious cowardly lot, but it sells books to see The Batman scare the other heroes as well.

Conclusion:

It was my original intention to leave any mention of Joseph Campbell to the end of my discussion because I found his models of the hero trapped in a psychoanalytical episteme that did little to explicate the foundations of heroism. Campbell created too many models and too much meaning.

If we use of Foucault's basic principles, however, specifically the concept of exteriority, even Campbell's models are deconstructable. We can examine Campbell's views epochally, and archeologically once we are able to sift away the silt of psychoanalysis. Once we do that, we find that Campbell was right; he just wasn't complete. He needed to take the next step and determine WHY there is so much correlation between so many heroes from so many diverse cultures.

Perhaps the biggest issue to resolve with Campbell is that of the cart and the horse. Campbell's theories of heroism sometimes have all the facts seemingly intact, but in the wrong order. The cause and effect is skewed: "It is not difficult for the modern intellectual to concede that the symbolism of mythology has a psychological significance" (Campbell 2008: 219). I cannot argue with this statement, but it is bereft of the necessary acknowledgement that the psychological significance to which Campbell refers is, in itself, a construct. As a modern intellectual, I will concede that the symbolism of mythology has a psychological significance-- in that it has **created** psychology. The significances to which Campbell refers are the bases of psychology. Campbell is effectively discovering the ground on which he stands. The similarities and differences between heroic tales are not interesting because they follow psychological

models; the psychological models are interesting because they are based on recurring heroic

motifs that most certainly allow us insight into the way the human mind works.

Campbell's ordering of things almost strikes one as an attempt to create a kind of a

priori:

> The symbols of mythology are not manufactured; they cannot be ordered,
> invented, or permanently suppressed. They are spontaneous productions of the
> psyche, and each bears within it, undamaged, the germ power of its source
> (Campbell 2008:1-2).

He is not accounting, however, for the objective nature of the psyche itself. The "germ

power" to which he refers warrants further discussion, but his reliance on symbolism is a

reliance on secondary, if not tertiary interpretations of the kernel of heroism he strives to

explicate. The "germ power" is quite possibly there behind an infinite array of symbolisms and

therefore an infinite array of interpretations. The symbols ARE manufactured. They are the

shadows on the cave walls. The psyche IS ordering and inventing them in a constant state of

Becoming. That's what the psyche *does* to create consciousness, experience, and meaning. The

psyche IS the subject becoming through an interaction with or as the heroic. The heroic does

not blossom forth from the psyche; the psyche Becomes because an action it sees or performs

is interpreted by itself as heroic, or is interpreted by another as heroic and that interpretation is

explained to the subject as heroism.

The "germ power" to which Campbell refers begins to sounds like intensity, only

Campbell has not separated it from domesticity. He has not broken apart the superject and he

certainly has not figured out which part of the equation is organic and mutable and inorganic and static. If we view Campbell's other theories with this limitation in mind, some of his views seem to become almost prophetic.

Campbell begins to explain the hero as an inorganic function: "The hero moves in a dream landscape of curiously fluid, ambiguous forms, where he must survive a succession of trials" (Campbell 2008:81). As an inorganic function, "The hero-deed is a continuous shattering of the crystallization of the moment" (Campbell 2008:289). Campbell sees the curious paradox of the heroic action as inorganic, but changing. The hero is the unrelenting agent of change. Campbell even recognizes the shift that can occur in the heroic when it is subsumed by the domestic: "The hero of yesterday becomes the tyrant of tomorrow, unless he crucifies *himself* today" (Campbell 2008:303). He dramatizes this shift, however. The tyrant is a pejorative form of the domestic. We could easily substitute the term father, husband or king for "tyrant". The crucifixion is just a culturally loaded term for death. The hero who does not die has the choice to remain hero, *or* become domestic. Rewrite this statement: the hero of yesterday becomes the non-hero of tomorrow unless he dies or ceases to exist. Campbell states "The hero, instead of conquering or conciliating the power of the threshold, is swallowed into the unknown, and would have appeared to have died" (Campbell 2008:74). The hero need not die; he just needs to remove himself from the known, the domestic into the unknown (the Other). Death is one kind of separation from the domestic world, the world of mortality, the organic world. The heroic ability sometimes to return from death is the ultimate denial of an organic identity. The hero can also be "swallowed into the unknown" by simply ceasing to do the heroic and fading into anonymity; no one will be interested in him once he is no longer heroic.

This Othering is not even necessarily an action on the part of the hero in relation to the society, but, rather, a perception on the part of the domestic society's failure/inability to recognize anything that is not domestic.

> But there is another way—in diametric opposition to that of social duty and the popular cult. From the standpoint of the way of duty, anyone in exile from the community is a nothing. From the other point of view, however, this exile is the first step of the quest (Campbell 2008:332).

Odysseus does not change his appearance all that much by adopting the guise of the beggar, but, instead, relies on the blindness of his society to the individuality and identity of the generalized beggar. The suitors do not dismiss Odysseus merely because he does not look like Odysseus, but because he looks like a beggar and they dismiss all beggars. The Batman disappears into the Otherness of night. Campbell acknowledges the relationship of the hero to these margins.

> The hero goes forward in his adventure until he comes to the "threshold guardian" at the entrance to the zone of magnified power…beyond them is darkness, the unknown and danger (Campbell 2008: 64).

I would again argue with Campbell's ordering of things. The hero's adventure does not continue from this point, but starts at this point. Now, it may be that, in the course of the text presented, we are given an exposition that leads to the point of heroic margin-crossing, but the story Becomes heroic at this point. Without that point, we may have any number of stories, but

nothing heroic. Oedipus' tale does not begin when he is born, or even when he leaves home, but when he kills the *real* guardian/monster on the margins of his society, his father. To the people of Thebes, his story might begin at the defeat of the Sphinx, but that was really the second monster he killed. That the timing of expositions in that story is skewed is what makes the otherwise heroic tale ironic and tragic. Oedipus is all about the timing of heroic actions juxtaposed against domestic concerns.

It is not an accident that Sophocles places the stories of the monster and the king so close together.

> Many monsters remaining from primeval times still lurk in the outlying regions, and through malice or desperation have set themselves against the human community. They have to be cleared away. Furthermore, tyrants of human breed, usurping to themselves the good of their neighbors, arise, and are the cause of widespread misery (Campbell 2008: 290).

Campbell's monsters litter the heroic tales: Grendel, Smaug, The Joker, The Sphinx, the monster under the bed are all examples of the past coming to threaten the present. The tyrant/king is similar to all of these creatures in his desire to stop change from occurring. Were we analyzing politics, we would call this consolidating power.

> For the mythological hero is the champion not of things become but of things becoming; the dragon to be slain by him is precisely the monster of status quo: Holdfast, the keeper of the past. From obscurity the hero emerges, but the enemy is great and conspicuous in the seat of power; he is enemy, dragon, tyrant because he turns to his own advantage the authority of his position. He is

Holdfast not because he keeps the *past* but because he *keeps* (Campbell 2008:

289).

The hero, however is the unrelenting agent of change. Campbell calls them: "eloquent, not of

present, disintegrating society and psyche, but of the unquenched source through which

society is reborn" (Campbell 2008: 14). The hero is a war machine, and, as such, must smooth

the spaces striated by the tyrant and inhabited by the monster. Campbell's very language is an

epochalization of the monster's time; he is primeval. The monster is defined as the past, and

the rules, politics, and social boundaries of that time. The monster, as a margin, defines the

boundaries of the now just as history defines those same boundaries. The tyrant (and, again,

I'm simply using Campbell's pejorative term) defines time in much the same way. The reigns of

kings are still used as lines of domestic and social demarcation in history books. The hero, as a

war machine, might de-striate the space he crosses, erase these lines by opposing the king and

the monster, but those spaces are re-striated, and a new epoch can begin with the rise of a new

king, or a new monster. Both represent lines that the hero crosses. The hero is the Nomad

dismissing or failing to recognize filial relationships; he does not care which king or monster is

currently in place. He does not care about the center or the margin. He is often an outsider:

"The place of the hero's birth, or the remote land of exile from which he returns to perform his

adult deeds among men, is the mid-point or navel of the world" (Campbell 2008: 287). The hero

is from elsewhere because to be from "here" problematizes the hero's non-filiation. Even when

present, the hero's land of adventure, that place where he Becomes hero is Other:

The two worlds, the divine and the human, can be pictured only as distinct from each other- different as life and death, day and night. The hero adventures out of the land we know into the darkness; there he accomplishes his adventure, or again is simply lost to us, imprisoned or in danger; and his return is described as coming back out of that yonder zone (Campbell 2008: 188).

The use of the divine, it seems, resonates with Wertham's use of homosexuality as the default aberration. That which is not homogenous must be *something*, and for lack of a better definition, we name it as the most marginalized function that still exists in our perception. Campbell recognizes the naming of the Other as Divine, just as we recognize Wertham's naming of Otherness in sexuality as homosexual, and in any individual case either might be true, but we must be careful to remain deductive in our reasoning and not make inductive leaps because eof the appearance of perceived aberrance.

Campbell, though, is just as stuck in the binary relationship of interiority and Otherness as Wertham. He does not allow for multiplicity or molarity.

Despite Campbell's sometimes seeming circular argumentation:

It has always been the prime function of mythology and rite to supply the symbols that carry the human spirit forward, in counteraction to those other constant human fantasies that tend to tie it back (Campbell 2008: 7).

It is his insight into the hero's relationship to the text and the text's relationship to the portrayal of the hero wherein Campbell is most interesting, and potentially even postmodern. Campbell acknowledges the difficulty of blending heroism and reality. "If the deeds of an actual historical

figure proclaim him to have been a hero, the builders of his legend will invent for him

appropriate adventures in depth (Campbell 2008: 276). Now, I would disagree that this is purely

an additive function as Campbell posits it. The elision of information is as important to the

consolidation of the hero as is the aggrandizing of the heroic actions, but Campbell seems to

address this as well. He states:

> In HIS life-form the individual is necessarily only a fraction and distortion of the
> total image of man. He is limited either as male or as female; at any given period
> of his life he is again limited as child, youth, mature adult, or ancient;
> furthermore, in his life-role he is necessarily specialized as craftsman,
> tradesman, servant, or thief, priest, leader, wife, nun, or harlot; he cannot be all.
> Hence, the totality—the fullness of man—is not in the separate member, but in
> the body of the society as a whole; the individual can be only an organ (Campbell
> 2008: 330).

Campbell seems to be acknowledging that if an individual is a part of society, then the

individual is limited by his or her position and identification within that society. The society is an

entity with the individuals acting as the organs of the body. This limitation, however, becomes

another layer of meaning that can be attributed to the hero. The hero is not just a hero, but a

"craftsman, tradesman, servant, or thief, priest, leader, wife, nun, or harlot". The difficulty with

that layer of identification is that it is an organic layer; craftsmen, tradesmen, servants, or

thieves, priests, leaders, wives, nuns, or harlots die. This is why the hero adventures in the land

of Other. By existing in the margin, the hero divests himself of domestic ties that necessitate

organicity and therefore mortality.

The historical figure to whom heroic identity is attributed is problematic in that he is probably organic, and therefore if one stays within the boundaries of the generic conventions of history, already dead, therefore, "the builders of his legend will invent for him appropriate adventures in depth" and those adventures occur in the marginal land of Other. The appropriate adventures, whether they occur on the/a frontier, or in the realm of the divine are not *just* an addition to the story and an enhancement of the story, but a limiting of the historical figure's ties to the society to which he was a part. So, while with the historical figure we have a beginning and an endpoint, we can fill in the blank spaces with adventure, but we must separate him from his society. Any time that is not accounted for can be subsumed by the heroic adventure whether it occurs in a lost year, on a divine plane, within a dream, or while on hermitage in the desert. The textualizing of these adventures is necessary because, like the fictive heroes, it is only within the limitations of the text that the hero is possible.

The seeming additive function of enhancing the historical figure's heroic exploits is, in the end, exactly the opposite. The individual within a society is a part of that society's organicity. He is identified. Often he is already marginalized, but he is still identified. He has domestic ties. By textualizing the heroic adventures, we are able to separate the hero from the society and shift his identity out of the domestic, remove him from the mortal world, and give him an identity that is fully heroic, if only temporary. If we do not remove the hero from society, then we can at least limit the presentation of the domestic. This is one of the functions of genre, and while biography has its generic codes:

> The last act in the biography of the hero is that of the death or the departure.
> Here the whole sense of life is epitomized. Needless to say, the hero would be
> no hero if death held for him any terror; the first condition is reconciliation with
> the grave (Campbell 2008: 306).

The hero becomes mythic with the simple removal of fear of death; the acknowledgement of organic nature.

The hero, even as he strives to return to the domestic, the barrier, frontier or the otherworldly, is identified as non-domestic and non-filiated by the quest for the domestic. This quest implies Desire, which, in turn, is predicated on absence. Campbell uses the "bridal bed" as one of the primary symbols of this quest.

> The motif of the difficult task as prerequisite to the bridal bed has spun the hero-
> deeds of all time and all the world…they (the tasks) seem to represent an
> absolute refusal, on the part of the parent-ogre, to permit life to go its way;
> nevertheless, when a fit candidate appears, no task in the world is beyond his
> skill (Campbell 2008: 295).

Here, we must see the textual nature of the heroic again. "No task in the world is beyond his skill" in the boundaries of the heroic text. Campbell addresses the textual aggrandizement of the historical figure, but does not seem to see the necessary cause and effect between the way the hero is created and the textual world in which he resides. If there *were* a task beyond his skill, would the story really be heroic? The hero is a superject, a hero becoming. We can have complicated heroic stories. We can have failure, loss, grief, even despair and doubt, but these are variations of the theme, a well-known, oft-used theme. The tale (or final tale in a series of

tales) ends with what some would call completion, the acquisition of the domestic identity: husband, father, king, or, as Campbell would put it, Tyrant. Or the hero becomes Other, through death, which is either the end of the story, or the start of an unfinished new one.

Campbell's theories are important in their juxtaposition of psychoanalysis and heroic literature. He does not seem to see that it was the thousands of years of literature that created the models on which psychoanalysis was created, not psychoanalysis that discovered these existing models. "There is no final system for the interpretation of myths, and there will never be any such thing" (Campbell 2008: 329) because it is the Desire to find meaning that moves those who seek such things to the next point. In our constant state of Becoming-critic, Becoming-interpreter we must move across the Plane of Immanence from point of absence of meaning to point of absence of meaning. Some seek to find meaning, while others create it. It is difficult, I think, to determine which mode of being is static and which is dynamic.

The hero, as a textual construct, is always going to be that static figure, with the social, filial world spinning around him dynamically. He is going to stand as the deathless figure over and apart from the society he might protect or destroy. Achilleus will never suffer the filiation of society making him a king, or anything that he is not. He is static, locked in the text. It is in that limitation that he is best protected.

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HON 200 Autobiography

Remedial English Tutor 2003
Honors Program Mentor 2003—Patrick Volz: Thesis: *American Graphic Literature*

Awards:
Teacher appreciation award: Zeta Tau Alpha Spring 1994

Teacher appreciation award: Pi Beta Phi Spring 1995
Academic Press: Editor-in-Chief: *HUM-POP- Journal of Modern Humanities and Popular Culture* 2000
Assistant Editor: *Composition Forum* 1997-1998
Publications:
Postmodern Theologies w/Terrence Tilley 2005
The Virtues of a Smart Dog: *Modern Dog* 2011

Conference Presentations:
Bifurcation of Identity in the American Graphic Novel: The International Association for Philosophy and Literature 28th Annual Conference
Foucauldian Analysis of the American Western: 21st Annual Film and Literature Conference
"I Shall Become a Bat." Schizoanalysis in Arkham Asylum: 24th Annual Film and Literature Conference

Honors: Undergraduate
Florida Honors Council 2nd Place prize for Research Paper 1993
Phi Kappa Phi
Phi Beta Kappa
Honors and Scholars Liberal Studies
Honors in the Major Program
Lambda Iota Tao— literary honor society