

## Covering, Uncovering, and Recovering Some Body in the *Iliad*

‘The clothes make the man’ even in wartime, when, however, the *armor* makes the *hero*—his shield and more intimately body armor consisting of helmet, cuirass, and greaves—or *a despoiled slain enemy’s*.

“Re-Covering” adds *double entendre* pertaining to climactic events from Book 16 onward. Naked corpses of slain and despoiled Patroclus and Hector are objects, respectively, of potential or perpetrated atrocious abuse. That verbalization looks pointedly toward the *telos* of our poem. *Iliad’s* sublime *denouement* overrides most of what has preceded, albeit only for one late night’s moments of humanity. Peacetime attire is much more important in *Odyssey*; including disguise the title-giving hero assume, fully armed as a warrior only in Book 24 and preceding flashbacks. However, the older poem opens and closes with un-armored “civilians” who come with abject vulnerability of suppliants. They arrive offering *quid*—ransoms—*pro quo*—helpless beloved persons: Chryses to get back his sex-enslaved daughter Chryseïs from Agamemnon, Priam to fetch his son Hector’s remains from Achilles.

Head-trunk-leg *teukhea* are theme-setting. (Shields, borne not worn, are a concurrent theme that can be treated separately.)

The *helmets* of Hector and Achilles play cameo roles. Hector’s, a (wedding?) gift from Apollo, terrifies baby Astyanax, who cannot recognize his *koruthaiolos* Daddy until he takes it off, yet it deflects Diomedes’ spear and saves Hector’ life a couple of days and five books later. Achilles’ *korus*, divine fabric from Hephaestus’ own hands, suffers removals from successive wearers—from Achilles, who lends it to Patroclus; subsequently Apollo knocks it and other armor off Patroclus to render him naked, killable; finally its original owner Thetis’ son,

recovering all that Hephaestian metalwork, certainly takes this, too, from Hector who now wears neither Apollo's nor Achilles' helmet. Achilles will drag his *bare* head over rough ground around Ilium for many days.

A *woman's* head can also have noteworthy covering. Andromache, suddenly finding herself widowed, casts onto the floor Aphrodite's wedding gift of elaborate head-dress that *had* declared her Mrs Hector. Now she's bare headed too. So much for gifts of god to mortals.

A fallen foeman's *teukea* ensemble stripped from him glorifies his slayer and can protect him who thereafter wears and flaunts it—think of Hector, to be stripped of it himself the next day. *He* will remain naked for many days, not just vulnerable minutes while changing from Apollonian armor to Achillean. Many Achaeans poke his corpse with their spears who feared sight of him approach while he lived and fought *and Apollo protected him*. Back in Book 6, however, an extended, misevaluated battlefield incident briefly suspends this deadly zero-sum game of mortal warriors' life and death. It culminates in “gold-for-bronze” exchange of armor between Diomedes and Trojan ally Glaucus while battle rages around them. Or does everybody stop and watch? While they are exchanging, each is briefly vulnerable. Thereafter Tydeus' son acquires golden arms (worth 100 oxen), Sarpedon's cousin departs “only” with bronze (worth a mere nine) *but also with his life*. Leveling *xeniē* inherited from their grandfathers (who had exchanged gold for (probably) dyed leather!—'from each according to his ability') saves him, not overmatched martial *aretē*. Without that Diomedes would have killed him and had both sets of arms. The Lycian falls at Troy, the Argive has no happy homecoming. Both nevertheless gain everlasting honors in our thoughtful assessment and, more importantly, by Zeus *Xenios'* criterion.

In *Iliad* 24 Priam delivers, Achilles accepts precious textile, what Agamemnon quite likely had rejected as part of Chryses' *poina* in Book 1, what in a uniquely fine gown implacable Athena spurns in Book 6 (made especially hateful by its association with Paris and Helen). Priam, even if cleaned up and royally dressed, is un-armed and has no bodyguard in ancient herald Idaeus. Achilles is not dressed for battle; in fact, when the scene is vase-painted, though he often has a knife to cut meat, his sword and/or other pieces of his recovered Peleian armament very often hangs on an invisible wall beyond the two men or, in one case, behind Achilles' couch on the floor. The ransom-bearing suppliant *gerōn* becomes his young recent bitter enemy's dinner guest! Mortal Peleïades, *xenos*, receives mortal Dardanides, *xenos*. Achilles provides Priam with food, bed, and protection but also grants even more deeply hated Hector pre-funeral bath and anointing and, for *xeneïon*, garments that his killer explicitly has deducted from the ransom: to cover his naked *nekys* and to initiate his obsequies with his bereaved father's Priam's little funeral cortège. Achilles doesn't just materially, physically assist Hector's ritual honors by lifting him onto a bier on the wagon-hearse and placing royal Trojan cloak(s) and tunic as shroud, but by guaranteeing that the Priamid's glorific under-taking can proceed on grandest scale. What ends Achilles' and Hector's poem.