THE CHARACTER OF HECTOR IN THE *ILIAD*

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Many scholars have recognized that Hector is the most sympathetic and interesting character in the *Iliad*. John Scott called him 'the moral hero of the poem',¹ and pointed out that he was the only character to be mentioned in every book of the *Iliad*.² Wilhelm Schmid called him 'ein wundervoller Charakter'.³ Wolfgang Schadowaldt said that he was the character 'dem wirklich die besondere Liebe des Dichters gehört'.⁴ According to Richmond Lattimore, Hector 'is still the hero who forever captures the affection of the modern reader, far more strongly than his conqueror has ever done.'⁵ Samuel Bassett also noted how much more sympathetic Hector is than Achilles: 'The genius of Homer has presented Hector and his fate so poignantly that for most readers he overshadows the hero of the poem.'⁶ This fact is resented by partisans of Achilles such as Cedric Whitman who complained, 'Hector possesses such sympathetic charm . . . (he is) so immediately understandable, . . . (he has) unjustly drawn sympathy away from Achilles'. Finally, James Redfield in a recent book bases his study of the *Iliad* around the tragedy of Hector.⁷

Many reasons for Hector's appeal have been adduced. Primary among these is the fact that he is the only major character in the *Iliad* who is portrayed in relationship with his family. Indeed, Homer expends all his art in depicting the deep and tender emotional ties that bind Hector to his wife, son, parents and sister-in-law, Helen. These relationships not only make Hector very sympathetic, but also greatly increase the tragedy of his death.⁸ Also, there are the facts that Hector is defending a cause which he knows is doomed, that his death always hangs over him, and that his greatest heroic achievements are merely the

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2. Ibid., 218.
result of Zeus' plan to bring Achilles back into battle. I agree that all these factors contribute to capturing the reader's sympathy for Hector. But I believe that the first factor is so powerfully effective for a reason that never has been fully explained. It is that Hector is by nature a peaceful, home-loving, gentle, family man who is trapped by circumstances into the role of the heroic defender of Troy. And, although he tries desperately, he is incapable of fulfilling that role. Throughout the Iliad there is a constant contradiction between Hector's awesome reputation as a warrior and his very mediocre, and often cowardly, performance when he opposes the major Greek heroes. This contradiction is heightened by the fact that not only do other characters overrate Hector's fighting ability, but Hector himself, in his attempt to live up to his role and reputation, has a strong tendency to overvalue his own martial ability. This is evident in his frequent boasting and repeated attempts to do more than he is able to.

I realize that the thesis that there are cases of Homer having different values from his characters is very bold and that many readers might want a discussion and demonstration of it at this point. However, my proof is the character of

10. The death that always hangs over Hector is discussed by Owen (ibid., 120) and at length by Schadewaldt ('Hektor in der Ilias', W.S. LXIX, 1956, 14–17). Hector's use as an instrument of Zeus' plan is discussed by Redfield (above, note 8, 139). Part of this theme is Hector's misunderstanding of the limited nature of the promises of victory that the gods give him. (Karl Reinhardt, Die Ilias und Ihr Dichter, Göttingen, 1961, 301; Fernand Robert, Homère, Paris, 1950, 250; and H. Gundert, 'Character und Schicksal homerischer Helden', N.J.A.B., 1940, 225–237).

11. The truly terrible responsibility of a warrior in Homer's society is described by Arthur Adkins (Merit and Responsibility, Oxford, 1960, 30–48). Even if one accepts the criticisms advanced by A. Lord ('Morals and Values in Homer', J.H.S. XC, 1970, 121–139), still in most instances the protection of one's oxkòs rested completely on the chieftain and it was results, not intentions, that counted. In Hector's case the responsibility was greatly increased by the fact that he was responsible for defending not only his oxkòs but his pàlìs as well. This has been noted by most scholars who have written about Homer. It is demonstrated systematically by P. Greenhalgh ('Patriotism in the Homeric World', Historia, XXI, 1971, 528–9, 533–4). However, one important consideration must be kept in mind. As Adkins himself points out ('Homeric Values and Homeric Society', J.H.S., XCI, 1971, 4–5) it is specifically in battles that the result-oriented value system operates most completely. But although warfare may have been the main concern of Homer's characters, it was not Homer's. As Pearl Wilson points out ('Battle Scenes in the Iliad', CL, XLVII, 1952, 269–74; 299–300) even in a book such as book V, which is ostensibly devoted to the description of a battle, only a small number of lines actually describe fighting per se. Indeed, if the thesis of this article is correct, then Homer judged his characters by different criteria from the ones that they themselves used. He was able to see the pathos and tragedy of a character like Hector, whose achievements fall very far short of his intentions, even though none of his characters, including Hector himself, might have been able to see this clearly.

12. It is true that Hector kills more of the enemy than any other warrior on either side (C. Armstrong, 'The Casualty Lists in the Trojan War', G & R XVI, 1969, 30–31). But he is the one who is present in the most fighting, and most of his kills are simply lists of names. The truly memorable mortal events in which he engages are the single combats with the Greek warriors; and it is in these that he falls so horribly short of the estimate that he and everyone else has of his capability.

13. Of course, as Adkins demonstrates ('Euchomai. Euchôle, and Euchês in Homer', C.Q., XIX, 1969, 20–33), in Homeric society there was nothing wrong with boasting, only with boasting without justification.
Hector itself. If this article succeeds in proving that Homer deliberately made Hector weak and that his only possible purpose for doing that was to create sympathy for him, then it will have shown that in regard to at least one major character, Homer’s values were different from those of his characters.

Now I will demonstrate these qualities of Hector by analyzing his appearances in the Iliad. In the first five books he is only a minor character, but he is portrayed in the same way as in the later books.

Hector is first mentioned in book I, lines 242–243, where Achilles warns Agamemnon that if he withdraws from battle, ‘Many will fall, having been killed by man-slaughtering Hector.’ So Hector is first introduced as a terribly formidable hero, whom only Achilles can restrain. Hector appears in book II in lines 802–818 as the leader and defender of Troy. In book III Hector engages in two activities which further the impression of him as the leader of the Trojan army. First, he rebukes Paris for retreating from Menelaus. Then he handles the preliminaries of the duel along with Odysseus. Book IV, line 505, contains the first mention of Hector in battle. It is characteristic: ‘Hector and the foremost (Trojans) retreated’. Book V is the first battle book of the Iliad. Hector is not mentioned in the first half of it. Instead, it is Aeneas who takes the initiative and shows great courage, not only in going to oppose Diomedes as he rages furiously, but also in the way he tries to protect the corpse of Pandarus. Hector, on the other hand, does not enter the battle until he is rebuked by Sarpedon, who contrasts his former boasts with his present performance (470–492). When Hector joins the fighting, Diomedes reacts as if he is a mighty warrior (596–606) and Hector kills several unimportant Greeks.

It is in book VI that Hector first steps into the foreground of the action. It is significant that the first time that he dominates the reader’s attention is when he has left the battlefield and interacts with various members of his family. This is the first indication that his natural place is at home with his family, not on the battlefield. Also, Hector appears in a very favourable light in book VI. He is shown to be loving, warm and courteous to people whose respect and affection he has won. His strengths in his domestic life are in sharp contrast to the weaknesses that he constantly displays in the fighting.

Book VI culminates in Hector’s conversation with Andromache, which is certainly one of the most memorable episodes of the entire Iliad. It is arguable that in this scene Homer furthers the impression that Hector is essentially a peaceful, unwarlike person who is forced into a heroic role against his natural inclinations. Towards the end of Andromache’s speech (431–432) she appeals to Hector to take pity on her and their son by remaining on the wall. It is with this plea that Hector begins his answer. As Ernst Howald observes, this offers Hector a great opportunity for a high sounding answer.14 But instead his speech is very subdued in tone. In the first three lines (441–3) he says that he has indeed been tempted to stay at home, but is driven into battle by the most powerful

14. Above, note 8, 149.
force in Homeric society: ἄνδρος. He then states: Μάθον ἐμπέμενε ἐσθηλός. The interpretation of this clause is very difficult because it is so brief and the word ‘learn’ had a different range of meaning in ancient Greek than in English. Schadewaldt asserts that this means that he learned this as a child and ‘Was einst Vorschritt und Beispiel war, ist ihm durch Zucht längst zur zweiten Natur geworden. Keine Fiber seines Inneren regt sich dagegen.’ But there is no evidence to support the assertions that Hector learned to be brave as a child and that it now is second nature to him. Even if one does accept these assumptions; nevertheless, as Redfield, who accepts them, points out ‘the most significant fact about Hector’s speech is that he makes it about himself. He perceives his own acts as conditioned by his history and thus does not say, “I love what I do”, or “I do what must be done” … he is aware that others are different and that he could have been different.’ Redfield proceeds to observe that doubt and conflict are characteristic of Hector throughout the Iliad.

Hector’s concluding statements (448–465), that he is more disturbed by the prospect of Andromache’s being a slave than of Troy’s being destroyed and that he wishes he would die before that happens, shows a set of priorities that are more domestic than heroic.

Even if Hector’s speech does not prove that he is pacifist by nature, the opposite view that ‘Aus Hektor spricht das männliche Heldenwesen … Sein Bereich ist draussen der Kampfplatz’ seems to be completely untenable. The very fact that he first enters prominence at home, not on the battlefield, is an indication that his true sphere is inside the walls of Troy.

However, Hector’s prayer for his son in lines 479 to 481 certainly shows a militaristic outlook. But this prayer is incongruous for two reasons. First, it is quite out of character for Andromache that she should rejoice at her son’s martial achievements. Second, it contradicts the statement that Hector has just made (447 ff.) that he knows with full certainty that Troy and the Trojan race will be destroyed and Andromache enslaved. In fact, it is nearly certain that Homer introduced this prayer for Astyanax’s future greatness and Andromache’s pride in it precisely because the audience knew what would happen to them.

15. Above, note 4, 220. Other examples of the same view are quoted by Redfield (above, note 8, 244–245).
16. Ibid. Lattimore states that these lines indicate that Hector is ‘not bloodthirsty enough to be a natural warrior, he fights finely from a sense of duty and a respect for the opinions of others’ (above, note 5, 46). Renata von Schellha (Patioklos, Basel, 1943, 221) makes the same distinction: that Hector fights not so much from ‘Kampflust’ as from ἄνδρος.
17. Schadewaldt, above, note 4, 218.
18. The three times that Andromache mentions Hector’s valour or military accomplishments (VI, 407, XXII, 457 and XXIV 734–739) she regrets them. (She, like all the other characters in the Iliad, refers to Hector as if he were a great warrior.)
19. Andromache’s prediction that Astyanax would be thrown from the wall in XXIV, lines 734 to 735, makes it nearly positive that Homer and his audience knew of this story. In fact, the imminent and total destruction of Troy has been mentioned twice before in book VI (57–60 and 311) and Hector’s expected death is mentioned later (501–502). Hector predicts military success for Astyanax because for him and the other characters in the Iliad that is the highest type of attainment. But, as I have noted, Homer did not necessarily share his character’s views.
That produces a horribly tragic irony, which increases the sympathy felt for Hector and Andromache. In his desire to achieve this effect, Homer ignored the incongruities mentioned above. So this prayer can not be viewed as dependable evidence for Hector’s character.

The single combat in book VII is the first important military event in which Hector is a major participant. It clearly shows the disparity between his reputation and his actual performance. Before the duel begins it is universally assumed that Hector is so formidable that none of the Greeks has a chance against him. At first (92–93) they lack the courage to answer his challenge. When Menelaus is so stung by the disgrace of the situation that he volunteers, Homer states (104–106) that he surely would have been killed by Hector had he not been stopped. Then Agamemnon says that he must be out of his mind to meet Hector. He says that even Achilles shuddered to oppose Hector (109–114). But as soon as Ajax goes out to meet Hector, there is no doubt that he is by far the superior warrior and that Hector will be lucky to survive the encounter. After the awesomely impressive description of Ajax striding forward to battle (208–213), Homer implies that Hector was so frightened that he would have withdrawn in trembling had he not committed himself by making the challenge. The fight itself (244–272) consists of three parts: spear throws, spear thrusts, and stone throws. In each part Ajax is vastly superior. Hector is very fortunate that the battle is ended when it is. Homer tells us (307–308) that the Trojans ‘rejoiced when they saw him coming towards them alive and whole’. As for Ajax, he was (312) ‘happy at his victory’.

In book VIII Homer has the Greeks lose badly. That is necessary in order to motivate the action in book IX. One would expect that this necessity of the plot should provide Hector with a great deal of glory since he is the pre-eminently Trojan warrior and consequently should be the primary agent of the Greeks’ defeat. In part this is what happens, but only in part. Hector has nothing to do with the initial rout of the Greeks. Instead, it is caused by Zeus’ thunder and lightning (75–77). After Diomedes kills Hector’s charioteer, Homer states: ‘Then destruction and unmanageable deeds would have happened, and they would have been penned in Ilios like lambs’ (130–131), had not Zeus sent thunder and lightning. Even after Nestor tells Diomedes that this is a sign from Zeus, Diomedes is reluctant to retreat because Hector will boast about how he drove him away. This is exactly what Hector does in lines 161 to 166. Diomedes withdraws only after Zeus sends three thunder-claps. The implication definitely is that Hector was powerless to stop him.

In the battle from lines 212 to 249 Hector completely fulfils his role as the great epic hero and defender of Troy. Especially valuable is his wounding of

20. The exact connotation of this statement is debated (D. Munro, The Iliad, Volume I, 5th ed., Oxford, 1899, ad loc; opposed by F. Cornbellack, ‘Homer and Hector’, A.J.P. LXV, 3, 1944, 212, note 8). In my opinion the most probable interpretation is advanced by Owen (above, note 9, 76, note 1): that it is merely something said by Agamemnon to make an honourable withdrawal easier for Menelaus.
Teucer. The day’s success makes him so elated and over-confident that his only fear is that the Greeks will sneak away at night without more suffering (510–516). Then he predicts a fight between himself and Diomedes on the next day in which the latter will be beaten (532–537).

The embassy to Achilles in book IX is given its urgency by the assumption that only Achilles is capable of restraining Hector, and therefore if Achilles refuses to return to battle the Greeks will be slaughtered by Hector on the next day. So Hector is regarded in the same way as he was in book I, lines 242 and 243, when Achilles first mentioned him. In IX, lines 237 to 238, Odysseus tells Achilles that ‘Hector exulting greatly in his strength rages wildly’. He proceeds to say that he fears that tomorrow Hector will burn their ships and kill them (240–246). Then Achilles states that Agamemnon has not succeeded in warding off Hector without him (351–2). Now in his last speech Achilles says that he will not return to battle until Hector comes to the Myrmidons’ ships with fire (650–5), implying that no-one else is capable of stopping him. The same view of Hector as the awesome warrior is continued in book X, lines 47 to 52.

Book XI begins the next day of battle. In this battle it is necessary that the Greeks be utterly defeated in order to motivate Patroclus’ entry into the fight and make his entry Achilles’ responsibility. Homer prepares for the Greek defeat by having Agamemnon, Diomedes and Odysseus wounded in book XI. After all the talk about Hector the previous night, one might expect that at least one, if not all, of these heroes would be wounded by Hector. Amazingly, none of them is. Instead, Agamemnon and Odysseus are wounded by characters who otherwise have absolutely no existence, and Diomedes is wounded by Paris. Possibly it might be argued that Homer introduced these minor Trojans because he had a pro-Greek bias and wanted to protect Agamemnon’s and Odysseus’ reputation by having them revenge themselves immediately on their assailants. In the case of Diomedes, his reputation was protected by having him wounded at a distance. But even assuming that the Iliad does have a pro-Greek bias; nevertheless, as Schadewaldt points out, if Homer wanted Agamemnon and Odysseus wounded, it would be best for their prestige if they had been wounded by the great hero Hector rather than by two completely unknown characters even if they do avenge themselves immediately. After all, Homer was not so solicitous about their reputations that he has not had it stated and implied several times in the previous night that they are not nearly Hector’s equal. So it would not have further lessened their fame if they had been wounded by Hector.

The introduction of Coon, Paris and Socus to wound Agamemnon, Diomedes and Odysseus seems much more reasonable and natural if one views it from the point of view of its effect on the portrayal of Hector’s character rather than the men wounded. It is Homer’s procedure in book XI and throughout the Iliad to confine Hector’s triumphs to general observations and victories over unimportant Greeks, and to present him as an incompetent or a

coward in his meetings with major Greek heroes. Thus Hector constantly fails to match the expectations that the audience and the other characters have for him and that he has for himself. In book XI, Hector’s first appearance is in lines 62 to 66 where he is described in a very impressive way as he marshals the Trojans for battle. In lines 91 to 162 Agamemnon rampages through the Trojans, who are powerless to stop him. Hector is not mentioned in the fighting until lines 163 and 164, where his ignominious flight from Agamemnon is described. Then, Zeus sends Iris to tell Hector to refrain from battle until Agamemnon is wounded. Then Zeus will grant Hector strength ‘to keep on killing until you come to the well-berthed ships’ (207–208). So a different Trojan, Iphidamus, bravely advances to meet Agamemnon and is slain (218–247). Then Coon wounds Agamemnon and is himself killed (248–261). After Agamemnon leaves the battle, the audience naturally expects that Hector will begin to win the victories Zeus has promised. Initially that seems to be what is happening. Hector is described as ‘equal to Ares, the destruction of men... he fell upon the battle like powerfully-blowing storm wind, which leaping down stirs up the violet coloured sea’ (295–297). Then he slays nine unimportant Greeks and kills others with the force of a storm wind (301–309). As Schadewaldt points out, this narration of Hector’s successes is somewhat of an outline. It does not come to life, as did, for instance, Agamemnon’s aristeia earlier in the book. The audience assumes that it is merely a preface for greater deeds to come.

Then Odysseus and Diomedes oppose Hector. When he sees them, he rushes at them. Diomedes shudders and says to Odysseus ‘Against the two of us is this destruction rolling’ (347). The audience assumes that now Hector’s promised triumphs will begin in earnest. However, as soon as Diomedes acts, he proves himself to be greatly superior to Hector as a warrior. For, although his spear throw does not penetrate Hector’s helmet; nevertheless, it is so powerful that Hector ‘ran back with great speed and mixed with his ranks’ (354) and then fainted. He revives while Diomedes is looking for his spear; then jumps into his chariot and drives away. Homer says that by doing this he escapes death (357–360). Immediately afterwards, Paris wounds Diomedes with an arrow. In this encounter with Diomedes, Hector not only falls miserably short of his reputation but also of the boastful prediction he had made the previous evening about what he would do to Diomedes when he met him again the next day (VIII, 532–537).

After Odysseus is wounded and leaves the fighting, the only major warrior

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22. As Schadewaldt observes (ibid., 10, note 1) the nearest parallel to the description of Hector shining like a star in 62–65 is the description of Diomedes in the beginning of book V. There Diomedes goes on to perform tremendous feats of valour.
23. Ibid., 10.
left is Ajax. In lines 489 to 503, Homer states that Ajax brings great destruction among the Trojans, but Hector is away in another part of the battle-field slaughtering anonymous Greeks. Then Cebriones tells Hector that they must go to where Ajax is driving the Trojans in rout. When they get there Hector again performs impressively against the Greek army in general, ‘but he avoided battle with Ajax, son of Telamon’ (542).²⁵ When Ajax does retreat, Hector is not mentioned as a cause. In fact, Homer’s description (544–574) emphasizes that the Trojans drive Ajax back by force of numbers, but he is vastly superior to any individual among them.²⁶

Book XII records Hector’s greatest accomplishment so far: forcing entry into the Greeks’ wall. The descriptions of his military prowess and accomplishments in lines 37 to 50 and especially 437 to 471 are extremely impressive. Nevertheless, despite the statement that ‘no one encountering him would have restrained him except the gods’ (465–6), the fact is that his victory is not won over the resistance of any major opponent. Instead, it is Sarpedon who meets Ajax (404–412) and, although he is driven back by Ajax’s spear thrust, yet he reacts much more bravely and tenaciously than Hector usually does when facing a major Greek warrior. In fact, much more of book XII is devoted to Sarpedon’s accomplishments than to Hector’s, and its most memorable section is his rational defence of heroism in lines 310 to 328. Homer states explicitly that Hector and the Trojans would not have broken through the wall had it not been for Sarpedon (290–3). Book XII also contains Hector’s first overconfident and gratuitously insulting rejection of advice of Polydamas (231–250).

The breaching of the wall in the end of book XII begins the high point of Hector’s glory. As Karl Reinhardt observes: ‘Hektors grosse Ariste ist die im Kampf um Mauer und Schiffe, nicht die in der Patroklie. Je mehr Hektors Grösse in seinem Triumph über Patroklos in Zweifel gezogen wird, ins Zwieltigte gerät, als um so grösseren Helden bewahrt er sich im Kampf um Mauer und Schiffe. Es ist, as würde eins zur Kompensation des anderen.’²⁷ Yet even here his victories are of the same limited and qualified type as in the rest of the Iliad.

In lines 136 to 154 of book XIII Hector is described in an impressive manner as he leads the Trojans. But in lines 193 to 194 he retreats before Ajax. The central part of book XIII takes place on another part of the battlefield. The

²⁵. Line 543 states categorically that Ajax was the better fighter. But it is found in no manuscript, papyrus, or scholast’s comment. I think that its appearance in Aristotle’s Rhet, and Plutarch’s De aud. poet. and De vita et poesi Hom. has been explained convincingly by Ulrich von Williamowicz-Moellendorff (Die Ilias und Homer, 2nd ed., 1920; rpt. Berlin, 1966, 192, note 1).

²⁶. Schadewaldt argues (ibid., 16–17) that the expectation for Hector’s glorious victories that is aroused but constantly disappointed in book XI is fulfilled during the rest of that day’s battle. He admits that even after book XI Hector’s ‘Siegeslauf’ does not run smoothly. He says that Hector suffers two major setbacks, but these are more than balanced by three major victories. He considers the greatest of these victories to be the slaying of Patroclus. But, as I will demonstrate, Homer deliberately deprives Hector of the honour of killing Patroclus. The fact is that Hector never achieves the powerful and glorious victories that the audience has been led to expect.

²⁷. Above, note 10, 299

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fighting in which Hector takes part, in the end of the book, is indecisive.

In lines 44 to 47 of book XIV Agamemnon says that he is afraid that Hector will burn their ships and kill them. But then in lines 402 to 420 Hector encounters Ajax. Hector throws his spear first at Ajax. It is an ineffectual throw and Hector withdraws back into the Trojan ranks. But Ajax knocks Hector unconscious with a thrown stone whose force is described in detail. Hector is carried away by his comrades. He is hurt so severely that when they revive him by pouring water on him, he vomits blood and then loses consciousness again (435–439).

When Zeus wakes up in the beginning of book XV, the first thing that he sees is the Trojans running in panic and Hector lying on the plain gasping and vomiting blood. Then Apollo revives Hector and ‘breathed great might’ into him (262). In lines 328 to 351 Hector, along with other Trojans, kills several Greeks, and then drives his men forward.

The last half of book XV and the first part of XVI continue to present Hector as a very brave and effective warrior. It also contains one of the few instances of Hector performing creditably in an encounter with a major Greek warrior. In book XV, line 415, ‘Hector charged straight at glorious Ajax’. In the next three lines Homer says Hector and Ajax were equally matched and therefore Hector was incapable of advancing and Ajax incapable of thrusting him back. Through the rest of book XV Hector is at the head of the Trojans and Ajax of the Greeks, but they never actually fight each other. When Ajax retreats (727), Homer explains ‘for he was overpowered by missiles’. In other words, he was driven back by the entire Trojan army, although Hector must be given the credit for leading the Trojans forward by his exhortation and example. In lines 102 to 104 of book XVI Ajax is again described as withdrawing before the missiles of the masses of Trojan soldiers. But then, in lines 114 to 116 Hector knocks off the point of his spear. This is the only instance where Hector is explicitly described as successfully engaging in actual physical contact with a major Greek hero.

When Patroclus enters the fighting the Trojans run in panic. In lines 384 to 392 of book XVI, Homer compares the roaring of Hector’s horses as they carry him away in flight to the roaring of storm swollen rivers. After Hector flees, Patroclus cuts off ‘the foremost lines’ of Trojans and confines them back against the ships (394–395). Hector, who has run away before the others, is not among them. In this crisis it is Sarpedon who takes action. He rallies the Lycians and then goes to meet Patroclus. When Sarpedon is mortally wounded his dying words urge Glaucus to rouse the Lycians to defend his body (492–501). Glaucus is suffering from a wound in his arm, but he prays to Apollo to heal the wound so that he can lead the Lycians (514–526). Meanwhile Hector, who is completely able bodied, is away doing nothing until Glaucus rouses him (538–543). Only then does Hector lead the charge against the Greeks (552–553). Then Hector fights bravely along with the other Trojan leaders. But Hector is the one who is the first to flee back to Troy. Homer says that Zeus ‘aroused cowardly flight in Hector first of all’ (656). In lines 698 to 709 Homer states that the Greeks would
have captured Troy had not Apollo intervened directly. The implication is that Hector is powerless to stop them. Hector only returns to battle when he is roused by Apollo in disguise (721–725). In line 732 he drives straight at Patroclus. In lines 755 to 764 Hector fights bravely against Patroclus.

The last 80 lines of book XVI are devoted to the death of Patroclus. In the plot that Homer wanted, it was absolutely necessary that Hector kill Patroclus because that redirects Achilles’ anger against Hector, and that is the theme of the last third of the Iliad. So there was no way of avoiding giving Hector this one great victory over a major Greek hero. But Homer contrives to deprive Hector of as much glory as possible. First he describes in vivid detail (791–806) the results of Apollo’s blow: Patroclus’ eyes whirled, his helmet, spear and baldric fell to the ground, his spear broke and he fell into a daze and lost control of his limbs. The nature of divine intervention in the Iliad and its relation to human responsibility is a very complex subject. But in this episode I think that the observation made by D. Bury is obviously correct: ‘Si l’on compare... à la mort de Patrocle avec celle d’Hector... nous y voyons... une immense différence: Athena... si elle trompe Hector, elle ne lui enlève pourtant pas la possibilité de combattre Achille; Apollon, lui, désarme Patrocle de sorte qu’Hector ne pourra à bon droit, se glorifier de l’avoir tué; sans doute Homère n’a-t-il pas voulu lui donner cette trop grande gloire’.

A strong indication that Apollo’s action is meant to reduce Hector’s achievement is that Homer has Patroclus say that explicitly in lines 844 to 849.

It is not enough for Homer that Patroclus should be dazed and unarmed when Hector kills him, he also has Patroclus seriously wounded by another Trojan, Euphorbus. A tremendous amount of scholarly ingenuity has been expended on explaining the presence of Euphorbus. Von Scheliha states that in the description of Patroclus’ death there are ‘einige Züge unverständlich’, especially with reference to Euphorbus’ role. She speculates that he might have been brought in because he was a cult hero who was closely related to Apollo and so when Apollo entered the action, he did also. She also argues that the example of Apollo working with a son of Priam to slay Achilles was probably transferred by Homer to the death of Patroclus. This explanation is also supported by Johannes Kakridis. He argues that Apollo’s help is much better suited to Paris than Hector and that the way Hector kills Patroclus is ‘incompatible with the noble character of Hector’. Mülder thinks that the purpose of the introduction of Euphorbus is to make it possible for Menelaus to do a service for Achilles by killing Euphorbus, and this softens the harshness of Achilles’ reconciliation with the Atreidae. There are two main objections to these hypotheses. First,
there is no evidence to support them. So they are merely ingenious guesses. Second, they assume that Homer would not mind completely warping the effect of one of the most crucial and memorable turning points of the Iliad. In fact, the first two explanations suppose that Homer did this for no deliberate purpose. Ernst Howald, on the other hand, does try to explain Euphorbus' role by its effect on the passage in which it occurs. He argues that it is motivated by Homer's pro-Greek bias. He avoids disgrace to Patroclus and satisfies his audience's desire for revenge by having Patroclus' initial attacker soon slain. But this argument is untenable for two reasons. First, Hector himself is killed in retribution for Patroclus' death in a scene in which his terror, Helplessness and disgrace are emphasized. So there is no need to introduce another Trojan in order for him to be punished also. Second, it would have been better for Patroclus' reputation if the only Trojan to harm him was Hector and not a lesser warrior in addition. E. T. Owen offers an explanation that is closer to the truth. He quotes most of the passage that describes Patroclus' death, culminating in Hector killing a dazed, wounded, unarmed man. He states that Homer 'deliberately takes away from Hector the glory that would naturally redound to him as the conqueror of Patroclus'. However, Owen believes that Homer's main purpose is 'motivating the terrific fury and grief of Achilles. We sympathize much better with the extravagance of his feelings because we too have resented the manner of Patroclus' slaying.' But there is not the slightest evidence for this interpretation. In the later books the slaying of Patroclus is generally discussed as if it were a notable achievement of Hector's. Only twice is it said that it was mainly Apollo's work. One of those times this is said to Achilles (XIX, 413-414), but it produces absolutely no emotional reaction in him.

However, the presence of Euphorbus is explained easily if one simply assumes that Homer's intention was to produce the effect which everyone recognizes: removing all glory from Hector's one great victory over a major Greek hero. This is completely consistent with the way Homer has handled Hector throughout the Iliad.

It is also typical of Hector in the Iliad that he should boast so arrogantly afterwards (830-842). The absurdity of this boast is immediately emphasized by

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33. The only possible proof that the manner of Patroclus' death is caused by transference from other myths is Kakriki's argument that it creates a situation that is inconsistent with Hector's character and is better suited to a different story or character. However, as I am attempting to demonstrate in this article, it is Homer's constant practice to deprive Hector of glory. As for Müller's hypothesis, Menelaus' killing of Euphorbus is never mentioned again in the Iliad.
34. Above, note 8, 52-53.
35. It is possible that the reason why Euphorbus (and Coon and Socrates in book XI) is killed soon after he performs his great deed is that originally he did not exist in the tradition but was introduced precisely in order to diminish Hector's accomplishments. Since there were no traditional stories about him, he was eliminated after he had served his purpose.
36. Above, note 9, 162-163.
37. The other instance is XVIII, 454-456.
Patroclus' answer (844–850). It has often been noted that Hector's empty boasting compares very unfavourably with the modesty of Achilles in XXII, 270–271, where he says 'Athena will subdue you with my spear'. However, Athena helps Achilles far less than Apollo helps Hector.

Another significant phenomenon is that before the death of Patroclus it is twice predicted that Hector will kill him.38 Both these predictions mention no-one else. So the natural inference is that he will prove superior to Patroclus in a fair fight. Then after his death it is generally discussed as if that is exactly what Hector had done. It is even said that he stripped the armour from Patroclus' body,39 even though in lines 793 to 804 of book XVI Homer describes in detail how Patroclus' armour fell off him as a result of Apollo's blow. Naturally, Analysts have seized on this to prove the existence of various types of compilations. Other scholars have tried to show that they can be reconciled.40 But the important point is that, as is typical, the expectations of what Hector will accomplish and his reputation are vastly superior to what he actually does.

In book XVII Hector does not re-enter the fighting until Apollo tells him that while he has been chasing Achilles' horses Euphorbus has been killed (75–81). When Hector leads the Trojans forward, Menelaus is afraid of being surrounded and so retreats to summon Ajax. In lines 108 to 110 he is compared to a lion driven back by dogs and men. This implies that he is superior to any of his adversaries alone. When Ajax comes, 'Hector withdrew into the throng of his comrades, and jumped into his chariot.' (129–130). But again Glaucus rebukes Hector for his cowardice and inactivity. Then Hector encourages the Trojans and their allies to fight bravely (184–187). Then he leaves the battle to put on Achilles' armour. When he returns, the first thing he does is to criticize the allies for not fighting bravely (220–226). G. S. Kirk considers this to be an inconsistency caused either by 'difficulties of organizing a mass of material', or an expansion or adaptation.41 But actually it is typical behaviour for Hector. In lines 242 to 244 Ajax speaks of Hector with awe, as a man whom he fears. But in line 316, Homer says, 'The foremost fighters and glorious Hector retreated'. Then, in 319 to 323, he states, 'Then again the Trojans would have been driven by the Greeks dear to Ares into Troy, conquered by their cowardice ... had not Apollo himself aroused Aeneas.' Then Aeneas chides Hector into action

38. XV, 67, XVI, 649–650. There was also a third prediction at XVI, 93, if one accepts the T schol. as preserving Zenodotus' reading, and accepts Zenodotus' reliability. This is argued by Wiłamowicz (above, note 25, 12), George Bolling (The External Evidence for Interpolation in Homer, Oxford, 1925, 160–161, Paul Mazon (avec P. Chantraine et P. Collart) Introduction a L'Iliade, Paris, 1959, 204, note 2). It is opposed by M. van der Valk (Researches on the Text and Scholia of the Iliad, II, Leiden, 1964, 21–22) who claims that it is typical of Zenodotus to change readings in order to save the gods from what he regarded as improper conduct. But recently Zenodotus' reliability has been defended cogently by Rudolf Pfeiffer (History of Classical Scholarship, I, Oxford, 1968, 108–114).

39. XVII 125, 187, 205–206; XXII 323.


41. The Songs of Homer, Cambridge, 1962, 221.
(335–341) and 'leaping far out in front of the foremost fighters took his stand' (342). But in lines 533 and 534 Hector and Aeneas are described as 'feeling terror before them (the Ajaxes) they withdrew back again'. In lines 586 to 590 Apollo rebukes Hector for being frightened by Menelaus, who previously had been a weak warrior. After that Hector fights bravely for the rest of the book.

In line 165 of book XVIII, Homer says that Hector would have succeeded in taking Patroclus' body from the Ajaxes if Achilles had not intervened. Then in lines 285 to 309 is Hector's final, lethal act of overconfidence. He rejects Polydamus' cautious advice and guarantees that he will oppose Achilles face to face.42

Hector does not appear in book XIX, but twice reference is made to his mighty military accomplishments (134–135 and 203–204).

Hector has only a small part in books XX and XXI. In lines 364 to 372 of book XX he encourages the Trojans and promises that he will fight Achilles face to face. But then Apollo tells Hector not to stand out in front of the Trojan ranks, but to withdraw into the army for safety, and this Hector does, 'in fear' (375–80). But when Hector sees his brother Polydorus dying, he advances to meet Achilles (419–444). In his encounter with Achilles, Hector is described as 'not fearing', and he says to Achilles 'I know that I am a much inferior (warrior) to you', but that does not stop him (430–5). However, despite Hector's admirable bravery in this episode, three other Trojans have more impressive encounters with Achilles in books XX and XXI. They are Aeneas (XX, 158–291), Asteropaeus (XXI, 144–183) and Agenor (XXI, 545–598). They are as courageous as Hector. In lines 164 to 174 of book XX, Homer compares Achilles rushing at Aeneas to a 'ravening lion...his mouth wide open, around his teeth comes foam, in his heart his brave spirit groans...with glaring eyes he is carried straight ahead by fury'. But Aeneas is not shaken. He stands his ground and speaks boldly to Achilles. The same courage is displayed by Asteropaeus and Agenor. But Homer has made them more impressive than Hector in their encounters with Achilles in three ways. First, their episodes are longer and so more likely to capture the audience's attention and remain in their memory. Second, they are far more effectual than Hector. The actual combat between Hector and Achilles takes only seven lines (XX, 438–444). Athena blows Hector's spear back so that it lands at his feet; and then when Achilles charges, Apollo snatches him up. By contrast, Aeneas' spear thrust causes Achilles to fear that it would go through his shield.43 It does not because of the shield's divine origin (259–272). Achilles' spear throw penetrates Aeneas' shield,

42. The scholiast (B(T)) noting that at 293–294 Hector claims all the glory for himself, states that he takes everything to himself in a 'barbarous and boastful manner'. Hector's tendency to inordinate boasting and self-assertion is discussed by H. van der Valk, 'Homer's Nationalistic Attitude', A.C. 22, 1953, 5–7.

43. In this article I have avoided as much as possible the complicated topic of divine intervention. Of course Athena could have blown Aeneas' spear back easily. But the fact is that Homer has her make Hector's spear throw ineffectual, not Aeneas'.
terrifying him. Nevertheless when 'Achilles, having drawn his sword, leapt at
him furiously, shouting horribly' (283–285), Aeneas picks up a huge rock to
protect himself. Only then does Poseidon rescue him. As for Asteropaeus, one
of his spears actually grazes Achilles' arm, drawing blood (XXI, 167). Achilles' 
spear throw misses him. But then Achilles kills him with a spear strike.
Agenor's spear throw, 'hit the lower leg below the knee, nor did it miss' (591),
but Achilles' divine armour protects him again. The third factor that makes
these three Trojans more impressive than Hector is that much less should be
expected from them. Hector is constantly spoken of as the greatest Trojan
warrior. Again in book XXI, line 279 Achilles describes him as 'the best man
bred here'. Also as crown prince he has the most privileges and therefore the
greatest responsibility.

The combat between Achilles and Hector in book XXII is certainly one of the
high points of the Iliad. It is the climactic event for which Homer has been
keeping his audience waiting since it was first predicted by Patroclus in book
XVI, lines 853 and 854. Indeed, in the Iliad as a whole it is the last and ultimate
battle. It brings together the two men who had been described as the best on their
sides from the beginning. The description of it is longer by far than any other
duel, and, as G. S. Kirk observes, it and the combat between Hector and
Patroclus in book XVI are not only unusually long, but 'unusually complex . . .
in emotion'.

As has also been observed by many scholars, most of the sections of this long episode are presented with great power and sensitivity. Furthermore, this powerful episode is experienced from Hector's point of view and the audience's interest and sympathy is focused on him. So books XXII and VI are the two most memorable books describing Hector. It is in these two books that Homer does the most to bring Hector's character to the audience's attention and impress it on their memory. His character is consistent in both books. Book VI introduces Hector as a gentle, domestic man in his proper surroundings: at home with his family, especially his wife. In book XXII we see the same gentle, domestic man trapped by his role and reputation as the great hero and defender, a role and reputation that, despite his desperate attempts, he is unable to fulfill.

As Hector waits outside the wall, Priam and Hecabe make moving appeals to
him to retreat. It is typical for Hector, that at a moment of crisis he should be
presented in relationship with members of his family, not comrades in arms. For
his close ties are with his family, not other warriors. Then, in lines 93 to 95 Hector
is compared to a 'mountain snake in his hole, who has eaten bad herbs and
waits for a man. Horrible anger entered him and he gave a terrible look, coiling

44. 'The Search for The Real Homer', G. & R. XX, 1973, 132.
45. Schadewaldt, above, note 4, 296; and Owen, above, note 9, 215 and 218.
46. There are several echoes of book VI in XXII. His motive for fighting is the same (VI, 442 = XXII, 105). In both books he resists appeals from members of his family not to fight. The word ópíç, which appears so strikingly in XXII, 127, is used elsewhere in Homer only in
VI, 516.
himself into a spiral in his hole’. Then in line 96 Homer states, ‘Just so Hector having unquenchable courage did not retreat’. It is possible that Schadewaldt is correct and that we should consider this simile as being a very effective expression of Hector’s resolution and compressed energy at this point. But it is an odd simile in its context and not completely flattering, as Schadewaldt seems to think it is. G. S. Kirk observes that Hector’s taking off his shield in line 97 is incongruous as is his being presented as a mighty, resolute hero just before the soliloquy in lines 99 to 130. So he speculates that this is an example of the fact that ‘Occasional looseness in the combination of phrases is endemic in oral poetry’. If he is correct, these lines cannot be taken seriously.

However, there is no doubt that the soliloquy that follows illustrates Hector’s desperation. In lines 99 to 107 he says that he cannot withdraw because he destroyed the army by rejecting Polydama’s advice. So his final downfall is caused by the fact that he cannot live up to the boasts and decisions that were prompted by his attempt to fulfill his role and reputation. In lines 111 to 121 he considers offering Helen and half of all the Trojans’ possessions to Achilles. This is obviously impossible in the present situation. It shows Hector’s nearly insane desperation, and certainly does not reflect well on his courage or concern for Troy. On the other two occasions when the Trojans considered buying off the Greeks (III, 71 ff. and VII, 350 ff.) no mention was made of half of the entire Trojan wealth although those offers were made for the sake of the entire city. In book XXII Hector considers giving away half of Troy’s possessions to save his own life; thereupon he resolves to stand and face Achilles.

Then Hector breaks and runs. Homer describes his flight in detail in lines 136 to 166 and 188 to 208, and vividly evokes the horror of his situation. There are two similes which further the impression of Hector’s timorous helplessness. In lines 139 to 141 Homer says that Achilles charges ‘like a falcon in the mountains . . . lightly swoops after a trembling dove which is driven in terror from it’. Then, in 189 to 191, Achilles is ‘as when . . . a dog having roused a fawn from its lair chases it through valleys and glens, even if it hides having cowered under a bush . . .’ Schadewaldt claims that this chase adds dramatic tension. That may be true, but Homer could have had it without making Hector such a coward. Vergil’s description of the fight between Turnus and Aeneas (Aeneid XII, 710–929) is clearly modelled on book XXII of the Iliad in its general outline and many of its particulars. It also has a pursuit at its centre. But first Turnus fights with Aeneas in a very impressive way (711–730). He only runs when his sword breaks and he stops as soon as he is given another. This does not detract from Turnus’ heroism. By contrast, Hector does not have the courage to face Achilles until he thinks he has the assistance of Deiphobus.

Schadewaldt further tries to justify Hector’s conduct by claiming that it was

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47. Above, note 4, 300
48. Above, note 44, 137.
49. Above, note 4, 303.
not as disgraceful to run from an enemy in the *Iliad* as it became in later Greek warfare. First he mentions four examples in which the possibility of retreat is considered. But in all these instances retreat is rejected. Then he mentions four cases in which a character shudders in fear: V, 596 ff.; VII, 215 ff.; XI, 254 ff.; XI, 345 ff. But in only the first of these instances does it result in a retreat, and in the last two the character involved reacts very bravely. Finally, Schadewaldt mentions actual retreats. He says that there are three causes: wounding, the overpowering strength of an enemy and the opposition of a god. As for the first cause it need not be discussed since it goes without saying that a wounded man should withdraw from battle. Of the other two he provides the following examples: V, 571 ff.; V. 626 ff.; XV, 727 ff.; XV, 585 ff.; XVII 91 ff.; XI, 544 ff.; XVI, 119 ff.; XVI, 656 ff.; XVII, 176 ff.; XVI, 70 ff. Of these the next to last must be a misprint. In only two of the others is anything said about the actual retreat itself: XI, 544 ff. and XV, 585 ff. In the first Ajax is compared in a simile to a lion driven back by dogs and men. In the second Antilochus shrinks back like a beast who has killed a dog or herdsman. Both similes give the impression of strength and ferocity. There is nothing that in any way parallels the detailed description of Hector’s frenzied, terror-stricken flight three times up and down in front of the walls of Troy as both entire armies watch. Hector’s cowardice is especially striking in view of his reputation and his own boasting about how he would face Achilles. Furthermore, it follows after three other Trojans bravely oppose Achilles in books XX and XXI. Indeed, the contrast between the last of them, Agenor, and Hector is definitely impressed on the audience’s attention. It occurs less than 150 lines before Hector begins his flight. Also, as Schadewaldt points out, Agenor and Hector both first engage in soliloquies in which they first consider avoiding the fight. This parallelism further underscores Hector’s cowardice in contrast with Agenor’s actions after his soliloquy.

Hector does not make a stand until he thinks that his brother, Deiphobus, is going to help him. But when he discovers that he has been tricked, he does meet his death very bravely. There follow the speeches of his parents and wife. From Hecabe’s speech we can probably infer that she had taken pride in Hector’s reputation and role as a great hero. That is probably at least a part of his having been a μέγα κύκλος (435). But Priam regrets that he died a soldier’s death on the battlefield instead of in Troy (426). And Andromache calls his bravery ἀλεγεινής (XXII, 457). So they loved and respected Hector for his non-military virtues.

In lines 214 to 216 of book XXIV Hecabe speaks of how bravey Hector died,

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50. Ibid., 304.
52. Ibid, 304, note 5.
53. The only other description of the running of one character from another is also of Hector (XI, 166–169). The uniqueness of the narrative style of XXII, 131–207 is discussed perceptively by Samuel Basset in *The Pursuit of Hector*, *T.A.P.A.*, LXI, 1930, 130–149.
54. Ibid., 300–301.
‘not thinking of flight or escape’. Although this is technically true of the moment of Hector’s death, it is an odd statement for someone who has seen Hector running three times up and down in front of the walls before he had the nerve to take his stand. It is typical of the constant discrepancy between Hector’s actions and the way they are spoken of. In lines 242 to 244 Priam, too, refers to Hector’s martial ability. He calls him his ‘best son’ in relation to the defence of the city. Again this is in accordance with Hector’s reputation, not his actual accomplishments. The Iliad ends with eulogies of Hector. The first, by Andromache; she assumes that Hector was the great warrior of his reputation, but regrets it because it will increase the hostility of the Greeks against her son (734–739). She also deplores the fact that he died as a warrior on the battlefield, not in bed (742–745). Hecabe mentions her love for Hector, but gives no reason. But the last speaker of the Iliad, Helen, dwells on his gentleness and kindness. So just as Homer made Hector’s first major entry into the forefront of the action in book VI and showed there his virtues in interaction with his family, and the love and respect they showed him, so he ends the Iliad in the same way. It was Hector’s great tragedy that in the intervening period circumstances thrust him out of his home onto the battlefield where (despite his desperate efforts) he did not belong.

The significance of the discrepancy between Hector’s deeds and his reputation has never been appreciated. For the last fifty years the tendency has been to deny that such a discrepancy exists and to assert that Hector’s attractiveness to the reader is caused by his virtue both at home and on the battlefield. This tendency is caused largely because the inconsistency between Hector’s performance and his fame had been one of the main points of the Analysts. So the Unitarians sought to deny it. The desire to see Hector as a great warrior leads many scholars to make obviously erroneous judgements about individual episodes. For example, many have asserted that in the duel in book VII Hector and Ajax fight equally well.

However, as I just mentioned, the Analysts were fully aware of the gap between Hector’s supposed and real military ability. For example, John


56. Bowra, Tradition and Design, 96; Bowra, Homer, 71; Mulder, above, note 32, 1011; Schadewaldt, above, note 4, 226 (Hector shows himself ‘als grossen Streiter’); von Schelisha, above, note 16, 135. Ernst Howald (above, note 8, 40–41) states that in book VII the sympathy Hector won in book VI is strengthened by his valour and that he and Ajax ‘sind sich im Kampfe ebenbürtig’. But he qualifies this by admitting that Ajax is superior in the spear throw and rock throw. He attributes this to Homer’s pro-Greek bias.
Mahaffy talks about ‘the strongest and clearest inconsistency in the whole of our present Iliad—the character and position of Hector’. 57 Mahaffy, as most Analysts, attributes this discrepancy to the additions of pro-Greek bards. He states: ‘in the original plan of the Iliad, he (Hector) was58 a great hero . . . these perpetual defeats by Diomede and Ajax, this avoidance of Agamemnon, this swaggering and “hectoring” which we now find in him were introduced by the enlargers and interpolators in order to enhance the merits of their favourites at his expense’. 59 But a pro-Greek bias cannot explain these phenomena—for three reasons. First, as has already been pointed out, it would have been more to the credit of Agamemnon, Odysseus and Patroclus if they had been wounded by Hector and not by a less important warrior. Second, this supposed pro-Greek inclination does not detract from the valour and impressiveness of lesser Trojans and Trojan allies like Aeneas or Sarpedon, or even Agenor and Asteropaeus. Third, Hector’s cowardice often detracts from the glory of a Greek opponent. For example, in book XXII, Achilles’ victory would have been much more magnificent if Hector had opposed him more bravely and resolutely. Furthermore, all Analytic interpretations are untenable because the inconsistency between expectation and reality occur in individual episodes, such as the duel in book VII or book XI.60

John Scott also recognized the contradictions between Hector’s reputation and performance. He states: ‘the character of Hector, with his seeming boldness and reputation so out of proportion to his actual achievements, is at first sight extremely baffling’. 61 Scott’s explanation for this paradox is that when Homer invented Hector the manner of death of all the major Greek heroes had already been fixed in myth. So he compensated Hector by giving him ‘human and moral excellences’. He observes, ‘It is only as a man, a son and a father that Hector really wins respect’. 62 But Scott adds ‘Even so he must have some military glory, hence the poet created the character of Patroclus’. 63 However, if Scott is correct that Homer invented Hector, then he also invented his encounters with the various Greek heroes. Surely Hector could have performed more impressively against them than he does, without necessarily slaying

58. Italics are Mahaffy’s.
59. Ibid., 88. More recent expressions of the same view, but without such blatant Analytic language, are by van der Valk, above, note 42, 5–26, and Lattimore, above, note 5, 31–37. Other scholars (Howald, above, note 8, 23, 141–145; Murray, above, note 8, 41; and Reinhardt, above, note 10, 302–303) maintain that the original poem had a pro-Greek bias and that Hector was made more sympathetic. But they do not offer any different explanations of his martial failings.
60. I do not think that any Analyst would divide such individual episodes into earlier or later parts. Even such a super-Analyst as Wilamowitz (above, note 25, 182–197) considered the fighting section of book XI to be originally one single poem, although he thought that its end had been lost.
61. Above, note 1, 218; also ‘the great contradiction, namely the impression that the warrior who did so little was a mighty champion’. (Ibid., 233.)
62. Ibid., 233–234.
63. Ibid., 235.
them. Instead, as I have demonstrated, Homer deliberately deprives Hector of glory. This is nowhere more true than in the killing of Patroclus.

Similar objections to Scott’s explanation are raised by Samuel Bassett. He asserts that Homer deliberately makes Hector a mediocre warrior because he is merely an instrument of Zeus’ plan. But this clashes with the observation made by Bassett himself, that ‘The genius of Homer presented Hector and his fate so poignantly that for most readers he overshadows the hero of the poem (i.e. Achilles).’

Other critics have noted Hector’s martial deficiencies without attempting any explanations.

Only Lattimore glimpsed the effect of the discrepancies in Hector’s character. After explaining Hector’s martial deficiencies as being caused by Homer’s pro-Greek bias, he states: ‘Homer’s Hektor, who brags outrageously, who sometimes hangs back, . . . who bolts from Achilleus, is still the hero who forever captures the affection and admiration of the modern reader, far more strongly than his conqueror has ever done. Such are the accidental triumphs of Homer.’ However, there was nothing accidental about it. As I have attempted to demonstrate in this article, Homer very carefully and deliberately constructed Hector’s character to have exactly the effect it does. The contradictions between Hector’s domestic strengths and military weaknesses and between his reputation and achievements form a coherent, tragic character. His tragedy is that he is a peaceful, home-loving man who is forced by circumstances into the role of the great hero and defender of Troy. But despite his desperate efforts, he is unable to fulfil that role and live up to the expectations that everyone, including himself, has for him.

65. Ibid., 60; and above, note 6, 186–187.
66. Above, note 6, 187.
68. Above, note 5, 36–37.
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