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DOSSIÊ ESPECIAL

THE REVOLUTIONARY POWER OF BECOMING-ANIMAL: ACHILLES AS *POSTHUMANIST* HERO

EL PODER REVOLUCIONARIO DEL DEVENIR ANIMAL: AQUILES COMO HÉROE POSTHUMANISTA

O PODER REVOLUCIONÁRIO DO DEVIR-ANIMAL:AQUILES COMO HERÓI PÓS-HUMANISTA

Stefan Dolgert Brock University, St. Catharines, ON, Canada

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Abstract
Recent works in political theory (e.g., Nussbaum, Donaldson & Kymlicka) have stressed that animals should be considered as parties to the social contract, but while animal rights advocates have a rich theoretical repertoire on which to draw, their political achievements remain notably limited to date. In this essay, I argue for the utility of the concept of "becoming-animal" (Deleuze and Guattari) as a means of remedying this efficacy gap. I do so by outlining a notion of "posthuman courage" drawn from the portrayal of Achilles in the *Iliad*, and argue that social movements like animal rights neglect the darker hues of the human ethical palette at their peril. By exploring the bestial transformation of Achilles in Homer's text, we gain a more capacious appreciation of the world-disturbing potential for animal advocates, and uncover a distinctly inhuman strain in one of the core texts of Western humanism.

Keywords
Posthumanism; Deleuze and Guattari; critical animal studies; ancient political theory; social movements.

Resumen
Trabajos recientes en teoría política (por ejemplo, Nussbaum, Donaldson y Kymlicka) han enfatizado que los animales deben ser considerados como partes del contrato social, pero mientras que los defensores de los derechos de los animales tienen un rico repertorio teórico al que recurrir, sus logros políticos siguen siendo notablemente limitados hasta la fecha. En este ensayo defiendo la utilidad del concepto de "devenir-animal" (Deleuze y Guattari) como un medio para remediar esta brecha de eficacia. Lo hago esbozando una noción de "coraje posthumano" extraída de la representación de Aquiles en la Ilíada y sostengo que los movimientos sociales como los derechos de los animales descuidan los tonos más oscuros de la paleta ética humana por su cuenta y riesgo. Al explorar la transformación bestial de Aquiles en el texto de Homero, obtenemos una apreciación más amplia del potencial perturbador del mundo para los defensores de los animales y descubrimos una tensión claramente inhumana en uno de los textos centrales del humanismo occidental.

Palavras clave
Posthumanismo; Deleuze y Guattari; estudios críticos con animales; teoría política antigua; movimientos sociales.

Resumo
Trabalhos recentes em teoria política (por exemplo, Nussbaum, Donaldson & Kymlicka) enfatizaram que os animais devem ser considerados como partes do contrato social, mas, embora os defensores dos direitos dos animais tenham um rico repertório teórico para se basear, suas realizações políticas permanecem notavelmente limitadas até o momento. Neste ensaio, defendo a utilidade do conceito de "devir-animal" (Deleuze e Guattari) como meio de remediar essa lacuna de eficácia. Faço isso delineando uma noção de "coragem pós-humana" extraída do retrato de Aquiles na Ilíada e argumento que movimentos sociais como os direitos dos animais negligenciam os tons mais escuros da paleta ética humana por sua conta e risco. Ao explorar a transformação bestial de Aquiles no texto de Homero, obtemos uma apreciação mais ampla do potencial perturbador do mundo para os defensores dos animais e descobrimos uma tensão distintamente desumana em um dos textos centrais do humanismo ocidental.

Palavras-chave
Pós-humanismo; Deleuze e Guattari; estudos críticos de animais; teoria política antiga; movimentos sociais.

Stefan Dolgert is a democratic theorist who studies political inclusion and exclusion, and writes on posthumanism, nonhuman animal citizenship, ancient Greek philosophy, populism, and Right-wing extremism.

Introduction: outside the walls

They stand in the cold, a small band of protesters on a November day, outside the fence surrounding a large gray building in the industrial zone of Toronto. A line of police officers stands between them and the building, though the protesters make no effort to rush the building – instead, their goal is to block trucks from entering the building with their cargo. For two hours, the protest line remains unbroken, as the trucks make no effort to push forward. At 10 a.m., a truck begins to back up, and when the protesters do not move, the police intervene and drag the disobedients away. Seven are arrested. The objects of the protest, the cows on board the trucks destined for slaughter at Toronto Quality Meats, are taken into the plant as planned. According to the plant manager in a subsequent interview, the protest did not disrupt the normal operations of the plant, which would mean that six hundred cows were killed on that day, November 6, 2014. The protesters begin and end the day on the outside of the building, and they do not return the next day.[1]

For those who consider the industrial production of meat as analogous to mass murder, protests like this are somewhat Janus-faced. On the one hand, they are a welcome tonic, since they pose a direct challenge against the material reality of the animal killing industry, a business that kills upwards of 70,000,000,000 nonhuman animals every year. But on the other hand these protests, however earnestly motivated, have all the hallmarks of the very weakness of the global animal rights movement: 50 protesters spend two hours in the cold in Toronto, and though local newspapers cover the event (surely the intended effect by the protesters), nothing much changes in the order of business of the targeted slaughterhouse (and certainly nothing happens at the countless other slaughterhouses). The protesters remain outside the walls, not just the walls of the killing ground but also the walls of political power.

This incident prompts me to ask a general question: how does a social movement like AR[2] go from outside to inside, from weakness to strength? There are interesting empirical questions to ponder on the causes of successful campaigns for social justice, but here I would like to sketch out a different argument, inspired by a thought from Nietzsche's cynical middle period. In *Human, All Too Human,* Nietzsche writes an aphorism entitled "Honour transferred from the person to the thing":

> Acts of love and self-sacrifice for the good of one's neighbour are generally held in honour in whatever circumstances they may be performed. In this way one augments the value of the things which are loved in this fashion or for which someone sacrifices himself: even though in themselves they may perhaps not be worth very much. A brave army is a convincing argument for the cause for which it fights.[3]

[1] Behal, *Animal rights activists target Toronto slaughterhouse*.
[2] The shorthand for "animal rights".
[3] Nietzsche, *Human, all too human*, p.46. Nietzsche here is perhaps too much enamored of the world-weariness of his inspiration, La Rochefoucauld, though the recalcitrance of the world makes such a disposition more than a little appealing.

Nietzsche's point, that displays of bravery are taken by the spectators as a warrant for the truth-claims of the cause asseverated, is one that might be fruitfully connected with animal advocacy. While there are many reasons to take a long-view approach to the effectiveness of AR protests and not give in to desperation,[4] there is also reason to wonder whether alternative displays by AR protesters, especially more overtly risky ones that would evince the bravery of which Nietzsche speaks, might prove a more "convincing argument" for the viewing public than current practices. But for such displays of uncommon valor, we might need alternative models for posthuman virtue, and here I think we can profitably, and surprisingly, draw on resources from the tradition of Greek antiquity that seem otherwise alien to the AR cause.[5]

In what follows, I will consider the paradoxical weakness of "the best of the Achaeans", Homer's Achilles, in an effort to link the power of his weakness to the potential power of these dissident Torontonians. I will use a text that is far removed from Toronto 2014 in almost every regard, Homer's *Iliad*, in order to outline a path from weakness to power, which in the case of both the protesters and the "hero" of the *Iliad*, Achilles,[6] means moving from standing outside the walls to (potentially) crashing *through* them.[7] I shall argue, in short, that animal rights protesters can learn something from Achilles, which I will call "posthuman courage" both to mark it as distinct from more common notions of human courage by its proximity to "bestial" acts, as well as to foreground the possible utility of thinking of Achilles' practice through the cultivation of something like (though very different from) one of the classical humanist virtues for creating a new zoopolis.[8]

My return to Achilles takes an unconventional route, in that I argue for taking him at his *worst* as the crucial step to appropriating him for a posthumanist practice. Achilles is, to put it bluntly, a nightmare to both his friends and enemies: he slaughters captured prisoners (even horses and dogs), desecrates the body of his enemy, sends his friend Patroklos into combat in his stead, leading to Patroklos' death, and refuses to help his comrades in their time of greatest danger. He is brutal and utterly without mercy, and seems like a self-evidently terrible role model for anyone (today) with any kind of moral conscience. For those who think of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Mohandas Gandhi as the avatars of contemporary civil disobedience (as do the protesters at Toronto Quality Meats, I would wager), Achilles must appear as an odd choice for emulation. He is, however, one of the first figurations in the Western imagination of a human whose virtues are painted in distinctly nonhuman ways, and so I shall ponder whether it is by imaginatively inhabiting the liminal zone he occupies that posthumanists today may be able to

[4] LaVeck, *Let's not give up before we even get started.*

[5] Which is not to say that looking closer afield is not also important – *The Monkey Wrench Gang* (Abbey, 1975) being one obvious example.

[6] There are compelling readings of the *Iliad* that see Hektor as the true subject and hero of the epic (Redfield, *Nature and culture in the Iliad*), and though I argue here for Achilles as the primary character, my emphasis on Achilles is as much rhetorical as anything. There is much to learn from Hektor's tragedy, as Redfield claims, though such lessons are not so germane for my purposes.

[7] Achilles does not crash through the walls of course, but Homer's description of why he does not, as I describe later in the essay, is instructive.

[8] Donaldson; Kymlicka, *Zoopolis*.

alter the face of industrial agriculture.[9] In order to make this argument, I will make use of the notion of "becoming-animal" developed in Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus*, since their concept allows us to see not only what Achilles becomes, but why his animality is linked with his power. First, however, I need to situate my reading of Achilles in the context of contemporary efforts to understand his importance. That done, the bulk of this essay will then articulate connections between the concluding scenes of the *Iliad*, in which Achilles' excellence and monstrousness are most on display, and the idea of "becoming-animal." Homer is no humanist, and his Achilles is a monster, but for posthumanists on the battle line today, he may be a hopeful one.

Listening to Achilles

Interpretations of the *Iliad* are legion, but most commentators in the last half-century have tended to see Achilles as a flawed hero whose failings present object lessons.[10] I want to set my reading of Achilles against two such interpretations, those of Simone Weil and Jonathan Shay, since both Weil and Shay couple their critique of Achilles' actions with a concern for the political salience of the text.

In "The *Iliad*, Or The Poem of Force" Weil urges readers to attend to the ambient violence of the text rather than the purportedly heroic deeds of its characters. While the "playing fields of Eton" in the early 20th century may have nurtured an identification of Achilles with beauty, strength, and nobility[11], Weil instead argues:

> The true hero, the true subject, the center of the *Iliad* is force. Force employed by man, force that enslaves man, force before which man's flesh shrinks away. In this work, at all times, the human spirit is shown as modified by its relations with force, as swept away, blinded by the very force it imagined it could handle, as deformed by the weight of the force it submits to... To define force – it is that x that turns anybody subjected to it into a thing.[12]

War's miasma traps Achilles and the others, Greek and Trojan alike, as they are constantly turned into "things" through their deaths – even Achilles, who dies through the sacrificial substitution of his double, Patroklos.[13]

Weil shows us that the *Iliad*'s heroes are not to be celebrated and emulated but pitied, since it is not simply by their deaths that they are turned into things – rather, the entire structure of human life in war is radically truncated. Warfare reduces human possibility by fundamentally altering the psyche of those enmeshed in it, since it rewards not the rational actor but the brutal thug:

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[9] Wolfe, *What is Posthumanism?*; Braidotti, *The Posthuman*. AR writers like Zipporah Weisberg (*The Trouble with Posthumanism*) would bristle as this label, since for her posthumanism actually saps the strength of animal advocates by broadening the scope of the moral community to include bacteria, thereby rendering moral outrage inoperative. As the rest of this essay testifies, I think posthumanism useful for precisely the opposite reason (though I would concede that she is correctly critical of particular posthumanist authors).

[10] Bernadete, *Achilles and the Iliad*; Bespaloff, *On the Iliad*; Nagy, *The Best of the Achaeans*; Nagy, *The Ancient Greek Hero in 24 Hours*. Whitman (*Homer and the Heroic Tradition*) is a notable exception, as I will discuss later.

[11] See Elizabeth Vandiver's *Stand in the Trench, Achilles: Classical Receptions in the British Poetry of the Great War* for a description of the influence of classical Greek imagery on English "public school" education.

[12] Weil, *The Iliad, or The Poem of Force*, p. 5.

[13] Leclerc, *The Strange Death of Patroklos*; Nagy, *The Ancient Greek Hero in 24 Hours*.

> It is not the planning man, the man of strategy, the man acting on the resolution taken, who wins or loses a battle; battles are fought and decided by men deprived of these faculties, men who have undergone a transformation, who have dropped either to the level of inert matter, which is pure passivity, or to the level of blind force, which is pure momentum. Here in lies the last secret of war, a secret revealed by the *Iliad* in its similes, which liken the warriors either to fire, flood, wind, wild beasts, or God knows what blind cause of disaster.[14]

In Weil's reading, the famous Homeric similes likening warriors to lions or wolves are not merely indications of Greek masculinity,[15] for instance, but are instead the signs of the fundamental self-immolation of human culture. War's toll on the living is in some ways greater than on the dead, in this view, since at least the dead are turned into things in the most basic sense possible. For the living, it is worse since they are turned into things before their deaths – blind forces of nature, ravening animals – and their loss of humanity proves the main tragedy for Weil. For her, a statement like Chris Hedges' "war is a force that gives us meaning" is simply nonsensical, since war is precisely that which robs us of the ability to make meaningful sense of anything.[16]

In the post-Vietnam era, America Weil's reading of the *Iliad* has now become plausible, even popular, outside the circles of classical scholars. Americans now tend (with notable exceptions)[17] to read Homeric heroes as defined more by their vulnerability than by power or virtue – Achilles International is a popular charity dedicated to working with the physically disabled,[18] Lisa Peterson and Denis O'Hare's 2012 one-man play "An Iliad" concentrates on the suffering of the ordinary soldiers,[19] and the Philoctetes Project (named after a Greek soldier wounded and abandoned during the Trojan War) works with those returning American veterans damaged by the physical or emotional traumas of warfare.[20] But Achilles is more than simply a figure of suffering to Jonathan Shay, a practicing psychiatrist who follows Weil in taking Achilles to be emblematic of the terrible cost of warfare on the psyche of the warrior. For Shay, who has treated numerous Vietnam veterans for symptoms associated with PTSD, Achilles suffers from "combat stress" and goes into a "berserker" state in the final books of the *Iliad*, after his beloved Patroklos is killed. Shay claims that the *Iliad* is a precise documentation of the psychological toll exacted by warfare, in particular when those in combat must fight in the frenzied state of the *berserkir*, the Old Norse term for bloodthirsty bearskin-wearing warriors. According to Shay, Homer's heroes possess this furious disposition in their finest moments (*aristeia*):

> *Aristeia*, as it has been used to describe the episodes in the *Iliad*, applies to the whole spectrum of epic, noteworthy valor, from clearly nonberserk to berserk. The *aristeia* of Achilles (Books 19-22) is his epic moment. Since ancient times Achilles has been the prototype of heroes. Yet his *aristeia* coincides exactly with his period as a berserker. The *Iliad* charts the

[14] Weil, *The Iliad, or The Poem of Force*, p. 22.
[15] Lonsdale, *Creatures of Speech*.
[16] Hedges, *War is a Force that Gives Us Meaning*. Chris Hedges does not endorse this statement, of course, though his title is meant to give voice to the sentiments underlying the enduring, almost addictive appeal of combat.
[17] See Harvey Mansfield's *Manliness* for a defense of Achilles as the hero of self-assertion par excellence.
[18] http://www.achillesinternational.org
[19] KAPLAN, *Denis O'Hare talks about one-man show An Iliad*.
[20] Haberman, *Like War Itself, Effects of War Are Hell*.

> ambiguous borderline between heroism and a blood-crazed, berserk state in which abuse after abuse is committed.[21]

Imagining Achilles as induced into a berserker-state through a combination of direct combat stress coupled with ethical violations by his commander (Agamemnon), Shay constructs a powerful narrative that articulates the linkages between Troy and Vietnam, and gives counsel to clinicians as well as family members and fellow citizens in order to help heal the wounds inflicted on the survivors of combat.

One thing that makes this healing more difficult is the loss of humanity Shay sees in his patients, which reflects a similar loss depicted in the *Iliad*:

> Homer compares attacking warriors to wild animals dozens of times. This was clearly a conventional metaphor used to praise warrior ferocity...However, when veterans and Achilles refer to themselves as animals they are not using conventional metaphors of strength and ferocity. Unlike Homer's narrator, who uses these as terms as praise, when soldiers speak of themselves this way they are speaking of a loss of human restraint...Animals are imagined to lack all mental, ethical, and social restraint; by their nature they are thought incapable of it. Presumed to be incapable, animals are beneath humanity.[22]

According to Shay, those who need to think of themselves as predatory animals in order to fight and survive lose their human capacity for empathy – they become lions and wolves not just to their enemies in combat, but also to their wives, children, and fellow citizens once they return from the war. Shay summarizes his years of practice thusly: "On the basis of my work with Vietnam veterans, I conclude that the berserk state is ruinous, leading to the soldier's maiming or death in battle, which is the most frequent outcome, and to life-long psychological and physiological injury if he survives."[23] In this conclusion Shay can find support in the Homeric scholarship on the costs of Achilles' transformation (see Nagy, just below), though I also want to mark here the beginning of my disagreement with Shay and Weil – both of them assume, without argument, that human/animal comparisons serve to denigrate the human so compared, and involve some kind of necessary (and corresponding) loss on their part. While I think the damage described by Shay is certainly very real, we may be misunderstanding Homer (and the effect he describes) if we only think of the transformation in terms of loss and degradation.

Returning to the Homeric scholarship both supports and troubles Shay's argument. Achilles, "in his climactic moments of rage, is described as *isos Arei*, 'equal to Ares'" and Ares is the god of "*martial fury,*" so we cannot understand Homer's animal similes as simply intended to show a sub-human disposition, since divinity is simultaneously predicated of Achilles in battle.[24] Classicist Gregory Nagy goes on to elaborate on the connection between the beastly and the divine:

> The Greek word for martial fury is lussa, meaning 'wolfish rage'... To experience such a martial rage or warp spasm or distortion is to be beside oneself, and to be beside oneself is to be

[21] Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam*, p. 77.
[22] Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam*, pp. 83-84.
[23] Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam*, p. 98.
[24] Nagy, *The Ancient Greek Hero in 24 Hours*, p. 161.

> possessed – possessed by Ares... Achilles himself is possessed by lussa in his most intense moments of martial rage in the Iliad (XX 542).[25]

Now Nagy too, like Shay (unsurprisingly, since Shay learned much of his Homer from Nagy), is unwilling to equate Achilles' precise excellence (*arete*) with this transformation into werewolf (this is my rendition of *lussa*-infused Achilles). Nagy maintains that the archetypal Greek hero is "'extreme' both positively, and, on special occasions, negatively" and that werewolf-Achilles is extreme in the latter, "negative" sense.[26] There are certainly prudent reasons for wanting to establish a firm cleavage between positive and negative extremes in the hero – think of Shay's berserking American G.I.s as they indiscriminately kill civilians, children, captured soldiers – but there is no clear theoretical ground for doing so in Homer. While Nagy may want to believe that we can talk of Achilles' as "extreme" in a "positive" sense when thinking of him as 'best of the Achaeans', it is far from clear how extreme Achilles would be, what 'best' would even mean, if he were not also, simultaneously, the best at shape-shifting into a wolf when it comes time for battle.

Weil, Shay, and Nagy rightly worry about the transformations wrought upon warriors by war, and subtly attend to the ways in which Homer's text deconstructs any simple valorization of the virtues of the "heroic tradition." I do not want to lose sight of Weil's revelatory reading, and readers of Homer ought to, indeed must, ponder the My Lai Massacre[27] (to name but one atrocity of many) as they read of the "best of the Achaeans." But I am concerned that an exclusive focus on the atrocities and trauma in the *Iliad*, and the corresponding transformation of Achilles into a mere sacrificial victim in our assessment,[28] eclipses a genuinely Homeric insight. Achilles is awful (in the colloquial sense), but he is also awe-inspiring, and his capacity to generate awe through his wolfish acts is something that Homer forces his readers to see. In particular, Homer sees that Achilles' *lussa* has cosmic ramifications – Achilles the werewolf is not just a threat to Troy, or to his friends, but to fate itself.[29] This power and its attendant danger, which I will detail in the two subsequent sections, is not something Weil or Shay can see, and so I must now turn to the philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari in order to make the case for Achilles' relevance to posthumanist politics.

Becoming-Achilles

Deleuze and Guattari (as well as Donna Haraway and Rosi Braidotti)[30] present something of a challenge to conventional animal advocacy in that they do not lend themselves easily to rights-based discourses,[31] but in making the connection between Achilles and the Toronto protest, I hope to mark the utility of posthumanism for AR and the discipline of "critical animal studies." I do not claim to

[25] Nagy, *The Ancient Greek Hero in 24 Hours,* pp.161-162.
[26] Nagy, *The Ancient Greek Hero in 24 Hours*, p. 162.
[27] The village in Vietnam where, on March 16, 1968, the soldiers of the American 23rd Infantry Division murdered 504 civilians. Cosgrove, *American Atrocity*.
[28] Nagy, *The Ancient Greek Hero in 24 Hours.*
[29] Homer, *The Iliad of Homer,* XX, 26-30.
[30] Haraway, *When Species Meet*; Braidotti, *The Posthuman.*
[31] Weisberg, *The Trouble with Posthumanism*; Steiner, *Animals and the Limits of Postmodernism.*

unite these discourses in any way that involves purported essences – the essence of the animal deserving rights, or the essence of the human defined by some kind of pacifist creed – but instead I hope to bring them together to jointly produce something, perhaps fortuitously and certainly uneasily. Deleuze and Guattari can be used for many things, and certainly might be used in a way opposite to that I am suggesting – but concepts do not possess singular, univocal essences, and there is no royal road from ontology to politics.[32] Concepts are tools for making things, and that means that they sometimes, unpredictably, help to create things both beautiful and ugly.[33]

Though Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari explicitly cite Achilles as an example of "becoming" in their tenth plateau, "1730: Becoming-Intense, Becoming-Animal, Becoming-Imperceptible…",[34] oddly enough, they do so without reference to any of the animal similes that dominate the *Iliad*. In two or three offhand remarks in that chapter, they mention Achilles and his relationship with the Amazon queen Penthesilea (which occurs outside the narrative of the *Iliad*), noting Achilles' "becoming-woman" and her "becoming-dog" by way of exploring the writing of Heinrich von Kleist.[35] I am inclined to say that they do not elaborate on the Achillean aspects of "becoming-animal" more generally because, as I think the following explication will show, they probably thought that the point was too obvious to make. Becoming-Animal, such as they conceive it, is basically a more developed synonym for the "wolfish rage" (*lussa*) that transforms Achilles in the midst of his *aristeia*.

While my focus in this essay is on "becoming-animal," this term forms only a middle point in the train of becomings described by Deleuze and Guattari: "becoming-woman" precedes "becoming-animal," which is then succeeded by "becoming-imperceptible." Though there is no strict hierarchy in this sequence, Deleuze and Guattari tend to see the latter term, "becoming-imperceptible," as the non-telic telos of the process, which seeks to intensify affect as part of the dissolution of identity. For them, the goal is to escape the politics and psychology attendant upon "molar" identities (e.g., "human" defined as a rational, autonomous agent) by breaking the presumably unitary subject into multiple, conflictual, heterogeneous yet linked elements. For these transformations, they are not interested in domesticated animals (pets, especially) or "typical" animals (animals defined by species norms), but instead look to a third kind of animal: "demonic animals, pack or affect animals that form a multiplicity, a becoming, a population, a tale".[36] The connection between the "pack" animal and the "war machine" is central to their understanding of becoming-animal, so I will allow them to elaborate at some length:

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[32] Rorty, *Thugs and Theorists*.

[33] I would note from the outset that my interpretation of Deleuze and Guattari is explicitly appropriative, playful, and instrumental (rather than strictly faithful), though I see this deviation as itself inspired by their philosophy of immanence and the idea of philosophy as a kind of "insane creation of concepts" (as Deleuze says in *Difference and Repetition*, p. xx) where philosophy is more like a tool for producing than a procedure for discovering truth. My interpretation also follows in the tradition of "anachronism" in political theory, where the role of the theorist is to use concepts from past thinkers in service of present-day political needs (rather than interpreting thinkers according to the complex intentionality of their historical context, *pace* Quentin Skinner), as Gramsci used Machiavelli's notion of "prince" for distinctly modern purposes (see Margaret Leslie's *In Defence of Anachronism*).

[34] Deleuze; Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 268.

[35] They are especially interested in Kleist's 1808 tragedy, *Penthesilea*.

[36] Deleuze; Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 241.

> The origin of packs is entirely different from that of families and States; they continually work them from within and trouble them from without, with other forms of content, other forms of expression. The pack is simultaneously an animal reality, and the reality of the becoming-animal of the human being; contagion is simultaneously an animal peopling, and the propagation of the animal peopling of the human being. The hunting machine, the war machine, the crime machine, entail all kinds of becomings-animal that are not articulated in myth, still less in totemism. Dumezil showed that becomings of this kind pertain essentially to the man of war, but only insofar as he is external to families and States, insofar as he upsets filiations and classifications. The war machine is always exterior to the State, even when the State uses it, appropriates it. The man of war has an entire becoming that implies multiplicity, celerity, ubiquity, metamorphosis, and treason, the power of affect. Wolf-men, bear-men, wildcat-men, men of every animality, secret brotherhoods, animate the battlefields. But so do the animal packs used by men in battle, or which trail the battles and take advantage of them. And together they spread contagion. There is a complex aggregate: the becoming-animal of men, packs of animals, elephants and rats, winds and tempests, bacteria sowing contagion. A single Furor. War contained zoological sequences before it became bacteriological. It is in war, famine, and epidemic that vampires and werewolves proliferate."[37]

We have already seen the evidence for Achilles as one of these "wolf-men" (Nagy's *lussa*) or "bear-men" (Shay's "berserker," recall means "bear-man"), and we shall soon see much more in the following section. We also know that Achilles' men, the Myrmidons, are described as a pack of ravening wolves vomiting up clots of blood,[38] though it would not be difficult to argue that the entire Greek army is more like a wolf pack than a modern army. We know that Achilles' violence is like a force of nature,[39] and we know that this violence spreads so far as to bring the Olympian gods into direct combat with one another,[40] like the contagion of which Deleuze and Guattari speak. And finally, we know that like the "war machine" that is external to the State, Achilles and his men maintain their own camp, apart from the main Greek host, and that Achilles withdraws from battle in a betrayal of his obligations to his comrades.

Achilles leads a multiplicitous wolf pack, but his leadership role also aligns with the relation Deleuze and Guattari set out between the multiplicity and what they term "the anomalous":

> wherever there is multiplicity, you will also find an exceptional individual, and it is with that individual that an alliance must be made in order to become-animal...there is a leader of the pack...In short, every Animal has its Anomalous... The anomalous is neither an individual nor a species; it has only affects, it has neither familiar or subjectified feelings, nor specific or significant characteristics. Human tenderness is as foreign to it as human classifications. Lovecraft applies the term "Outsider" to this thing or entity, the Thing, which arrives and passes at the edge, which is linear yet multiple, "teeming, seething, swelling, foaming, spreading like an infectious disease, this nameless horror".[41]

What is Achilles on the plains of Troy, fighting Trojans, horses, and even rivers in a blazing tornado, if not this avatar of nameless, viral might? Priam watches

[37] Deleuze; Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, pp. 242-243.
[38] Homer, *The Iliad oh Homer,* XVI. 200-210.
[39] Weil, *The Iliad, or The Poem of Force.*
[40] Homer, *The Iliad oh Homer,* XX. 26-30.
[41] Deleuze; Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, pp. 243, 244-245.

him, "a single point of light on Troy's dusty plain. *Sirius rises late in the dark, liquid sky/ On summer nights, star of stars/ Orion's dog they call it, brightest/ Of all, but an evil portent, bringing heat/ And fevers to suffering humanity/* Achilles' bronze gleamed like this as he ran".[42] Note the linkage in Homer, following Greek mythological tradition, between plagues and the star specifically associated with the wolf's domestic cousin.

As Deleuze and Guattari note, however, all becomings are not necessarily created equal, and "the State" represents a particular danger in that it stops the dissolution of identity in the becoming, capturing it and re-purposing its power for its (rather than the war machine's) purposes:

> The politics of becoming-animal remains, of course, extremely ambiguous. For societies, even primitive societies, have always appropriated these becomings in order to break them, reduce them to relations of totemic or symbolic correspondence. States have always appropriated the war machine in the form of national armies that strictly limit the becomings of the warrior.[43]

With Achilles, this danger is realized, since his defection from the Greek army is short-lived, and even his death will only reinforce Agamemnon's ability to achieve the conquest of Troy.

We see, however, an intimation of the direction Achilles' becoming-animal is moving before it is captured, and when he laments: "why, I wish that strife (*eris*) 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 to him sweeter by far than the dripping of honey."[44] In his yearning for strife's passing from the world he comes close to the becoming- imperceptible pole sketched out in *A Thousand Plateaus*, where plant-becoming supplants animal-becoming as the metaphor of choice: "One is like grass: one has made the world, everybody/everything, into a becoming, because one has made a necessarily communicating world, because one has suppressed in oneself everything that prevents us from slipping between things and growing in the midst of things."[45] This, for me, is why Achilles' story has the capacity to augment the actions of the Toronto protesters: when he looks beyond the strife that sets him apart from his fellow creatures, when he is no longer a self defined in opposition to other selves, but rather moves into the space between things and tries to learn anew what "growing" means among other living beings. I will return to this becoming-imperceptible at the conclusion of the essay, and I now turn to a fuller explication of the becoming-animal of Achilles.

The lion in mourning

Homer shows us the fluid border between human and animal, most especially in the character of Achilles, though this transgressive quality is by no

[42] Homer, *The Iliad oh Homer*, 22.32-38. This is Lombardo's (1997) translation.
[43] Deleuze; Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, pp.247-248.
[44] Homer, *The Iliad oh Homer*, XVII.107-110.
[45] Deleuze; Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 280.

means unique to Achilles. But more than simply an aspect of his character, my claim is that the narrative of the *Iliad* as a whole receives much of its momentum from the "beastly" elements in the character of Achilles, which is why I think it is better described as a posthumanist work than a humanist one. It is not simply that Achilles and his anger are animal-like in one way or another, but that "the anger of Achilles" understood as the theme of the *Iliad* is inseparable from Achilles' preeminent ability to transform himself into a predatory beast – his "becoming-animal."[46] This capacity has profound implications, for as we shall see, even the Iliadic gods live in fear of the cosmic potential of Achillean anger. It is to these cosmic ramifications that I shall have recourse to later, as they explain both the power of Achilles' becoming as well as its contemporary relevance. Achilles calls himself "untimely" (*panaorios*) in his colloquy with Priam in XXIV (540), and while he is referring primarily to his fated early death, there is a sense in which he is untimely in the larger sense - that his presence and activity in the *Iliad* are fundamentally out of joint with the fabric of the cosmos.[47] That Achilles' untimeliness occurs in the midst of the Trojan War, in the middle of a war where the *arete* of the Greek hero is most appropriate, should lead us to some perplexity. If this hero of all heroes is most untimely in the arena in which he is most suited, what does this say about the stability of the heroic ethic? The wrath of Achilles, Homer's stated theme, then becomes not just one trope among many upon which to frame an epic tale, but a picture of a culture and a world in crisis. The heroic world is shaken to its core by the animal in Achilles, and this becoming-animal begins with Achilles' capacity to suffer rather than his power to act.

Achilles is grief-stricken almost beyond endurance over the death of his beloved companion, and he is marked by a peculiar capacity to suffer that oddly complements his violent power. Indeed, it does not go too far to say that Achilles' capacity for suffering sets him apart from the normal Greek hero almost as much as his puissance at arms, and it will only be in and through his intense suffering for the loss of Patroklos that he will finally breach the perimeter that sets apart human from non-human. The grief for Patroklos will provide the energy that launches Achilles into his rage-filled *aristeia*, and his ultimate triumph over Hektor is inseparable from the transfiguration of his human *arete* into something wholly interpenetrated by bestial and divine elements. If the *Iliad* is the story of Achilles, we would do well to understand exactly who or what Achilles becomes in these final battle scenes.

Before Achilles can return to battle, he will undergo an intense period of mourning. His grief is so all-consuming that Antilochus, the son of Nestor, fears even that Achilles will kill himself in his pride and sadness:

> 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.[48]

[46] Which enables both his capacities to act and to suffer, as will be argued later.
[47] This connects with Whitman's (1963) argument, discussed later, on Achilles' quest for "the impossible."
[48] Homer, *The Iliad of Homer*, XVIII, 22-7.

Achilles cries out to his mother, who responds to the distress of her mortal son by trying to console him as best she can, though ultimately she knows it will be to no avail. Achilles mourns not only for the simple loss of Patroklos, whom he loved "beyond all other companions, as well as [his] own life",[49] but also because he understands himself responsible in some sense for the death of his friend. This responsibility comes not so much from his sense that he is blameworthy for orchestrating the "shaming" of the other Achaean heroes[50] after his dishonor by Agamemnon, as we might be inclined to point to, but instead from his feeling of worthlessness at the death of Patroklos. He, as the warrior par excellence, should more than anyone have been a "light of safety to Patroklos".[51] Achilles knows that his *arete* stems not from his skill in council, where he acknowledges the superiority of others, but from his prowess in combat, and for him to fail his friend in this brings him to the peak of despair. It leads, one may say, to the most philosophical utterance we find in the *Iliad*, on the ending of strife, which I have already alluded to in the prior section. We have been prepared for this statement by Achilles' earlier questioning of the heroic ethic in the Embassy Scene (in Book IX), but from the depths of his sorrow, here comes a challenge that goes beyond the ethics of the human condition and reaches to the order of the cosmos. He says rather simply: "why, I wish that strife (*eris*) 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 to him sweeter by far than the dripping of honey".[52] If it was striking in Book IX to hear Achilles criticize the basis of the warrior ethic, surely this longing of his must come as an even greater surprise – how can Achilles, whose *arete* is ineluctably linked with the instantiation of cosmic strife in the human world, *polemos*, hope for a world in which strife itself disappears? Or is it perhaps that *only* someone of Achilles' stature, as "best of the Achaeans" and also as one outside the merely human order, could find his way to ask such a profound question?

We will return to Achilles and the potential challenge to cosmic order somewhat later; Achilles himself does not linger on the thought but immediately moves on to ponder his revenge on Hektor. His sorrow and grief now take over as he leads the Myrmidons in their lamentations over Patroklos, and for the first time in the poem, we see his mind revealed by an extended lion simile:

> As some great bearded lion when some man, a deer hunter, has stolen his cubs away from him out of the close wood; the lion comes back too late, and is anguished, and turns into many valleys quartering after the man's trail on the chance of finding him, and taken with bitter anger; so he, groaning heavily, spoke out to the Myrmidons.[53]

We should note the combination of grief and restless energy that the simile suggests. Importantly, the grief of the father lion is not described in any manner that would limit its application to some kind of merely animal (as opposed to human) suffering. The verb *akhnumai* comes from the root *akhos*, but the pain or grief so

[49] Homer, *The Iliad of Homer*, XVIII, 81-2.
[50] Homer, *The Iliad of Homer*, XVIII, 76.
[51] Homer, *The Iliad of Homer*, XVIII, 102.
[52] Homer, *The Iliad of Homer*, XVIII, 107-110.
[53] Homer, *The Iliad of Homer*, XVIII, 317-23.

described is typically of the mental kind, the kind that also causes resentment and leads to quarrels among humans.[54] To this extent, we can see Homer breaking down the conventional human/animal boundary from both sides of the dichotomy – I have already discussed the basics of the transformation of the human warrior into the beast of prey – and now we see that the animals within the similes are not simply described in conventional "animal" terms. Lacking speech, as the typical animal of the Greek world does, how could a lion suffer such mental anguish? His acute suffering causes him to range back and forth in a futile search for his stolen cubs, and his failure to find the hunter or his children serves to bring on the "bitter anger" – *drimus kholos* – where the term for bitterness is also the term for a piercing pang of childbirth.[55] Following Nagy, we can also see the added complexity to the father lion's grief in his relation to both Achilles and the Achaeans. If indeed Nagy is correct in asserting that both names originate from the root *akhos*, and thus that the Achaeans are the ones who must suffer pain, and that Achilles is the one who brings pain to the *laos*, the host of the Achaeans, then the pain of the father lion is intimately linked with the overall structure of the *Iliad* narrative.[56] Achilles is indeed the aggrieved father lion, but he is himself gripped by the pains that wrack the Achaeans as a whole and drive the poem from beginning to end.

This simile is the lead-in to Achilles' lament to the Myrmidons over his "empty words" to Menoitios on the safe return of Patroklos, but in the course of this speech, we also see the emergence of the full-blown rage of Achilles that will be consummated on the battlefield. He knows that he himself will never return to Phthia to see his father, and in what may seem an almost nihilistic urge to destruction, he promises not only to bring back the armor and head of Hektor to Patroklos' pyre, but also twelve Trojan children to behead. He evinces precisely the indifference to the pain of others that Weil and Shay so fear, but also, in giving up on life's future, he slips toward the imperceptibility of a Deleuzean becoming.

The lion rampant

Achilles has not finished his mourning when he dons his god-made armor and re-enters the fighting – he is merely holding it in abeyance for the time being, until he can return to Patroklos' corpse with the head of Hektor and twelve live Trojan boys to sacrifice. But as if Hephaistos' gifts to him were not enough to signal to us that something momentous is about to occur, we are given several other clues to focus our attention: this new round of bloodletting will not be quotidian. First, as Book XIX comes to a close, Achilles is addressed by his immortal horse Xanthus on his impending doom.[57] Second, and immediately following this at the beginning of Book XX, Homer speaks directly to Achilles (in one of the rare moments where he uses the second-person): "So these now, the Achaians, beside the cured ships were arming around you, son of Peleus, insatiate of battle, while on the other side at the break of the plain the Trojans armed",[58] as if only by speaking directly to his hero

[54] See Cunliffe, *A Lexicon of the Homeric Dialect*.
[55] Homer, *The Iliad of Homer*, XI, 270.
[56] Nagy, *The Best of the Achaeans*, pp. 69-93.
[57] This instance of animal speech in the Iliad is noteworthy, but I will not comment on it here.
[58] Homer, *The Iliad of Homer*, XX, 1-4.

can he tell us the real import of what is about to happen. All this is for you, he tells Achilles – all the Achaians and Trojans will coalesce and fight around *him*. But this leads to the third way that Homer signals the transcending importance of this day: the calling of the assembly of the gods by Zeus.

This is the final sign, and by far the most important, for through it most especially can we see the overwhelming significance of Achilles' becoming – not simply in regards to the battle for Troy, but even more so for the cosmos itself. It is Themis whom Zeus orders to summon the gods – she who protects the cosmic order – indicating that this is no mere casual gathering of the immortals. Themis is used as a herald here because of the stakes of Achilles' reappearance upon the field of battle, as Zeus explains:

> For if we leave Achilleus alone to fight with the Trojans they will not even for a little hold off swift-footed Peleion. For even before 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 (*huper moron*) he may storm their fortress.[59]

This statement immediately reminds us of Patroklos' earlier success in Book XVI, when he and the Achaians pushed the Trojans back "beyond what was fated (*huper aisan*)"[60] immediately prior to Apollo's intervention and Patroklos' death.[61] Here, in XX, it is not simply a minor victory on the battlefield that brings the gods into play, but a fundamental threat to the cosmos: Achilles' grief and anger may prove the undoing of destiny itself.

By linking it with both grief and anger Zeus' statement shows us that both boundary- crossing moments we have already noted *vis-à-vis* Achilles are connected with the central dilemma now facing Zeus. Zeus, who, contrary to the mortals in the *Iliad,* is able to accomplish that which he purposes because of his awesome power, is actually gripped by *fear* at the prospect of Achilles taking Troy. How can the ruler of the Olympian deities be so distraught by the actions of a mortal? We should not be distracted by the fact that subsequently the gods will enter the fray on both sides – this tends to obscure the fact that it is Achilles and the danger he represents that brings on this necessity. Of course, the gods themselves get carried away by their own battle-lust, and whether we see Hera routing Artemis, or Apollo and Poseidon dodging a duel by only a hair's breadth, we see that the entry of Achilles into battle pits not just Achaean against Trojan, but immortal versus immortal:

> But upon the other gods descended the wearisome burden of hatred, and the wind of their fury blew from division, and they collided with a grand crash, the broad earth echoing and the huge sky sounded as with trumpets. Zeus heard it from where he sat on Olympos, and was amused in his deep heart for pleasure, as he watched the gods' collision in conflict (*eridi*, from *eris*).[62]

[59] Homer, *The Iliad of Homer*, XX, 26-30.
[60] Homer, *The Iliad of Homer*, XVI, 780.
[61] This event too redounds to Achilles' power, since Patroklos is a ritual substitute (therapon) for Achilles (Nagy, *The ancient Greek hero in 24 hours*).
[62] Homer, *The Iliad of Homer*, XXI, 385-90.

Achilles' becoming-animal threatens to catapult him, inexplicably but ineluctably, outside the boundaries of the order presided over by the Olympians; or, in other words: the "war machine" is a danger to the State.

This threat to the Olympians will be beaten back, however, and Achilles will have to content himself with (merely?) killing the killer of his friend. But before Achilles can consummate his defining encounter with Hektor, he will meet a number of other foes, and his conflict with Aeneas in Book XX sets the stage for his finale against Hektor by highlighting the role of his transcendence of human boundaries in achieving his distinctive *arete*. It is against Aeneas and not Hektor that we see the "monumental lion simile"[63] of Achilles, and it is in the colloquy between Achilles and Aeneas on the meaning of speech that the terms are set for the later battle and exchange with Hektor. First, then, let us see what occurs to Achilles in his encounter with Aeneas:

> From the other side the son of Peleus rose like a lion against him, the baleful (sintês) beast, when men have been straining to kill him, the country all in the hunt, and he at the first pays them no attention but goes his way, only when some one of the impetuous young men has hit him with the spear he whirls, jaws open, over his teeth foam breaks out, and in the depth of his chest the powerful heart groans; he lashes his own ribs with his tail and the flanks on both sides as he rouses himself to fury for the fight, eyes glaring, and hurls himself straight onward on the chance of killing some one of the men, or else being killed himself in the first onrush.[64]

Here, as before in the model simile of Diomedes' *aristeia* in Book V, we see the hero cast explicitly in the role of marauding beast in direct opposition to a human opponent. Compared with Achilles, Aeneas is the human, albeit an "impetuous young" one, while Achilles at the height of his prowess has become a ravening lion.

The initial description of the lion in the simile might at first strike us as inapposite to Achilles, and we may think that part of the simile is merely formulaic, since while he is "baleful", he is also unconcerned with the hunters who are straining to kill him. This is not so surprising, however, given that Achilles is determined to find and kill Hektor rather than Aeneas, and just so the simile tells us that the lion pays no attention to those who directly pursue him (Aeneas in this case) but "goes his own way" until confronted by the "impetuous" youth (again, Aeneas). This is borne out in the sections of the narrative immediately bracketing the simile, as it is Aeneas who stands forth initially to challenge Achilles, and Achilles then addresses Aeneas to warn him to give way. Why Achilles does so is not exactly clear, though his basic message seems to be twofold: first, that even were Aeneas to kill him it would not justify the risk that Aeneas is taking, since he would still not surpass Priam's own sons in the esteem of Troy and its king;[65] second, that killing Achilles is particularly unlikely given that Aeneas was already routed previously by Achilles, and was only saved by divine intervention. While Aeneas mocks this advice, as we shall see a little more clearly in a moment, Homer shows us an Achilles who is far from a mere automaton of force, as Simone Weil's argument would seem to suggest. We do see an Achilles who "rouses himself to fury" once the fight is inevitable with Aeneas, but he is far from overcome by his *menis* (anger) at this point – he wants Hektor and

[63] Lonsdale, *Creatures of Speech*.
[64] Homer, *The Iliad oh Homer*, XX.163-73.
[65] And this of course echoes Achilles' own words to Odysseus in the Embassy scene.

not Aeneas, and his rational clarity of purpose is not divorced from his "possession" by the lion-like qualities that we see in the simile.

We can see an important part of the function of the lion simile within the poem more generally by examining the details of the simile itself; as I shall argue, the simile in the poem performs the service that we see the lion reflexively enacting as he "rouses himself" to fight. What does the lion do to himself? First, notice that only after being struck is the lion inclined to fight the impetuous youth – his purpose is otherwise, and his intensity of focus initially precludes his taking note of the youth. After being hit with the spear, he foams at the mouth while his "powerful heart groans," but still, this is not enough to send him headlong into battle. Only when "he lashes his own ribs with his tail and the flanks on both sides" is he infuriated enough to fight, which entails a twofold commitment: first to attempt to kill the men who pursue him, but second, and more importantly, the willingness to be "killed himself in the first onrush" regardless of his success in taking any other lives. So the spear thrust is not sufficient, even as the lion is foaming and groaning; he must actively lash himself to reach the requisite peak of fury to commit to kill or be killed – he must "become-intense".[66]

The function of the lion simile in the *Iliad* serves a like purpose.[67] Without the similes, the combat scenes are similarly deficient in the potency needed to bring about such wholesale slaughter. Achilles does not kill without reason, though he kills in a rage, and just as the lion must enrage himself by the lash of his tail, so too must Homer show Achilles becoming enraged figuratively through the lashing in the simile. We find the final effects of the transformation of Achilles in Book XXII, when Hektor attempts to negotiate with Achilles over the fate of the loser's corpse. Achilles meets his request for moderation with derision, but curiously, Achilles resorts to a naturalistic simile to explain the reason for his scorn. Achilles tells him bluntly:

> 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.[68]

Between Hektor and Achilles, no agreement is possible because they stand to one another as do men and lions – in a relation of perennial hatred. Which one of them is the lion Achilles does not deign to remark, though Homer has compared his warriors to lions enough times by this point, and Achilles in particular, that we should not be in any doubt. As if to remove any possible misunderstanding, Achilles makes it clear while Hektor lies dying before him: "I wish only that my spirit and fury would drive me to hack your meat away and eat it raw for the things that you have

[66] Deleuze; Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 233

[67] The hunting and predation similes generally have this function, though here I am of course focused on Achilles and his lion-moment.

[68] Homer, *The Iliad of Homer*, XXII. 261-6. All translations refer to the edition of Richmond Lattimore (1951), unless Lombardo (1997) is specified. At times I will rely on my own translation, but those occasions will be so noted, and will be infrequent. In referring to Greek verbs in my text, I will use the first person singular form, unless the verb in that I am citing is in a different form, in which case I will use the actual word that Homer uses.

done to me."[69] Achilles longs to actually become the predatory lion so that he might feed off the still warm flesh of his opponent – indeed, Hektor has already been transformed into "meat," since Achilles uses the word *krea*, which typically refers to the flesh of the sacrificial victim to be eaten, or simply to "meat" in general. At his height, then, the Greek hero as exemplified by Achilles is the beast of prey – the one who can only speak to his opponent long enough to explain why speech between them is fruitless.

This speech of Achilles serves to articulate the paradigmatic relation between predator and prey, but it also serves to undercut its own logic. While he asserts the enmity that forever divides men from lions, his use of the simile form explicitly links men and lions. While men and lions may be at war with one another, so too are Achilles and Hektor at war – the conflict between men parallels the conflict between the species. And in that parallel, one of the men assumes the role of the lion *vis-à-vis* the other man, so his assertion of inter-species disharmony serves to bind humans to lions at the same time that it distinguishes and separates them. Not only does he merely wish for this transformation, but also, as the similes throughout try to tell us, he has in fact *become* a lion when in the midst of the battle. This metamorphosis is not limited to battle, however, and is capable of being articulated by the actors themselves. In Achilles' second speech, where he describes this longing to consume Hektor, Achilles uses a word whose subtlety is not conferred by most translations, since it relies on a distinction that Ionic Greek possesses but which English lacks. Both Richmond Lattimore and A. T. Murray translate *edmenai* as "eat it raw" (referring to the "meat" of Hektor), and this is suitable to convey the general mood of the passage. It brings to mind cannibalism, and that indeed is what Achilles is talking about, but what is missed is that Homer has Achilles use the verb specific to *animal* eating. Homer had a word at his disposal for "eating raw" – *homophago* – but chose not to use it.[70] While Homer has no general term for animal,[71] *edmenai* is typically reserved for non-human eating, and so marks a kind a boundary between animals and humans. But the boundary is porous, as we can see in this instance, since Achilles is able to use the term to refer to his own actions as well. Instead of using *esthio*, as he does when he describes a human or god who eats, Homer has Achilles speak from the place of the beast – Achilles becomes the instantiation of the predator who can finally speak, and who can call what he does by its proper name.

The reconciliation with Priam does not escape the effects wrought by this transfiguration, mitigating what might seem to be a diminution in his animal-becoming. After the butchering of the twelve Trojan boys in the wake of the deaths of Hektor and Patroklos, we see what appears to be a path upward from the carnage of the nine-year war. Priam's visit to Achilles to reclaim the body of Hektor seems a hopeful moment – how else to interpret the mutual recognition of humanity between these two enemies? Achilles weeps for his father when he weeps with Priam, seeing in the broken king a man who, like Peleus, will never see his son return from battle. And Priam, in weeping for all the sons who have died at Achilles'

[69] Homer, *The Iliad of Homer,* XXII. 346-8.

[70] See the entries for edmenai, esthlio, and homophago in Cunliffe's *A Lexicon of the Homeric Dialect* (1977).

[71] Homer knows "beasts" and "birds" and "fish," but "animal" (*zoon*) does not appear in Greek until the 5th century BCE (see Lonsdale, *Creatures of speech*; Cunliffe, *A Lexicon of the Homeric Dialect*).

hands, weeps in part for the great "untimely" warrior who stands before him. This mutuality is profound and heartwarming, and yet in the course of the narrative it stands out as an isolated seed that is without hope of longer issue. For while Achilles weeps with Priam, his wrath, and its transgressive potential, lie only barely beneath the surface. As he warns Priam, "No longer stir me up, old sir... Therefore you must not further make my spirit move in my sorrows, for fear, old sir, I might not let you alone in my shelter, suppliant as you are; and be guilty before the god's orders" and Homer adds, lest we forget what has gone before, "The son of Peleus bounded to the door of the house like a lion".[72] So even *after* they have cried together, Achilles can only just contain his rage – a rage that is linked with the sorrow for Patroklos, and which, as should be recalled, is also linked to the same animality that suffused Achilles in battle. But rage, of course is not the whole story in this becoming – or in any becoming – and in the brief moment of tenderness between them we also see an echo of Achilles' longing for strife to end, where he and Priam have achieved a grass-like state of "a necessarily communicating world" by slipping out of their prior identities.[73] The loosening of the fixed boundaries of the subject unleashes conflicting energies – toward becoming-animal as well as becoming-grass – and the contours of this concept of becoming require continuing practical and theoretical diligence. As Adorno might say, were he resurrected as a Deleuzean: the becoming does not go into its concept without remainder.

Conclusion: still outside the walls

Achilles will never enter Troy. He will die without ever conquering the city – on this point, Zeus and the other gods are adamant – and cosmic order is maintained in Homer's imagined world by his "untimely" death. But Achilles had never really been a part of the Achaean "city" either, sitting apart from the main host with his Myrmidons, and then, for most of the *Iliad*, withdrawing entirely from the Greek cause as he abstains from battle. Indeed, the secondary scholarship has highlighted Achilles' isolation from the Greeks, through the common practice of referring to the colloquy in Book IX, where Odysseus et al. attempt to convince Achilles to return to the fight, as the "Embassy Scene" – as if Achilles' camp were a foreign destination for the other Greeks. Achilles stands as the untimely, isolated, and bestial Other of the Achaeans, whose presence simultaneously offends against the Trojans, the Greeks, the gods, and *themis*...and yet this man/not-man is also "best of the Achaeans." What lessons can be gleaned from the "best" who is inseparably an outsider, and whose power lies in the becoming-animal that radicalizes his isolated status?

I began this essay with a group of animal rights protesters standing outside the walls of a slaughterhouse. They stand in Achilles' stead, where Deleuze and Guattari place the "[s]orcerers [who] have always held the anomalous position, at the edge of the fields or woods. They haunt the fringes. They are at the borderline of the village, or *between* villages".[74] But they share more with Achilles than just the

[72] Homer, *The Iliad oh Homer*, XXIV. 560, 567-70, 572.
[73] Deleuze; Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 280.
[74] Deleuze; Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 246.

haunting of boundary-spaces. If Achilles is likened to a father lion, raging against the humans who have stolen his children, the protesters also cry out for the return of animal children, though in this case calves instead of lions. Like Achilles, they also long for an end to strife and anger, and yet they too are pushed to use their own anger in the service of this longing. And perhaps most importantly, in their opposition to animal agriculture, they stand against a foundational principle of the social order (i.e. that humans are persons and animals are things), just as Achilles' unleashed animality threatens the cosmos so much that the entire Olympian pantheon must descend to Troy to fight. Achilles struggles against a destiny that ordained he would never enter Troy, while the protesters struggle against a biopolitical order that premises the creation and maintenance of human life on the continuous destruction and processing of animal bodies into infinity.

And yet, raised as we are in the wake of the Civil Rights movement, it is difficult for the protesters to take the next step with Achilles, and give in to the becoming that their rage might call forth. Here, another parallel might be made with Achilles, taking up the connection Deleuze and Guattari suggest between becoming-animal and "becoming- imperceptible." Achilles may believe that he will obtain glory through killing Hektor, but when he finally returns to fight, all that he can think of is revenge for Patroklos. He no longer fights as an individual who wants either to preserve himself or to create a reputation that will outlast him, but instead seeks only to vent his rage on the one he believes has wronged him – his futurity and identity have been shorn from him, and there is no self beyond (or behind) his affective states. He no longer cares about himself in the way that he had previously, and it is just this kind of gestalt-switch that Deleuzeans Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri see as politically generative today:

> The revolutionary process of the abolition of identity, we should keep in mind, is monstrous, violent, and traumatic. Don't try to save yourself – in fact, your *self* has to be sacrificed! This does not mean that liberation casts us into an indifferent sea with no objects of identification, but rather the existing identities will no longer serve as anchors. Many will pull back from the brink and try to stay who they are rather than dive into the unknown waters of a world without race, gender, or other identity formations. Abolition also requires the destruction of all the institutions of the corruption of the common we spoke of earlier, such as the family, the corporation, and the nation. This involves an often violent battle against the ruling powers and also, since these institutions in part define who we now are, an operation surely more painful than bloodshed. Revolution is not for the faint of heart. It is for monsters. You have to lose who you are to discover what you can become.[75]

All that is missing from Hardt and Negri's formulation is to add species to the list of identity formations that must be given up. Learning "posthuman courage" from a monstrous Achilles would mean learning to let go of oneself, especially of one's certainties about the proprieties of political strategy. Berserkers are tragic figures, it is true, but they are also powerful ones. States certainly understand the benefits of harnessing the "war machine," and have understood this for a long time. Perhaps allowing ourselves to take the full measure of this tragic knowledge is also a part of posthuman courage.[76]

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[75] Hardt; Negri, *Commonwealth,* pp. 339-340.

[76] There are a host of practicalities that I am glossing over here, not least among them being the difficulties of counter-hegemonic action in an era when lawfully opposing fracking is enough to land one on a government watch-list.

Are there limits to my appropriation of Achilles? Certainly, I do not recommend an entire transformation into a werewolf for these animal rights activists. But by forsaking the *lussa* of Achilles too readily, I do fear that they (and we) are robbed of a power to augment the capacity to act.[77] I am aware of the irony in taking Achilles – the man who says there are no contracts between lions and men, who likens himself to a ravening predator – as an exemplar for a group of protesters trying to free cattle (who, after all, are preyed upon by lions).[78] Bad enough, Gary Steiner might say, to look to Deleuze and Guattari for any help with animals,[79] but even worse to make a monstrous coupling of postmodernism and berserker militarism! One way of rethinking the irony is to note (as I have above) that when Achilles makes these statements he is himself a bit of an ironist, since he inhabits the *lion's* position in the imagined lion/human contractual situation – he may say lions and men share nothing in common, but he says so while thinking himself into the lion's perspective. But the larger irony, of predatory- becomings invoked to bring an end to human predation, stems from a tension that I would not dismiss, but which I do not believe to be fatal either. It IS perhaps a problem if we take the protesters as representatives of a deontological AR tradition indebted to Kant and Rawls,[80] but if they are considered under the larger umbrella of posthumanism, as I would counsel, there is no reason to think the contradiction a fundamental one. If it isn't too precious to coin a term, I would say this is something like a "performative nontradiction" – what appears to be a contradiction in theory is shown to not be contradictory in practice. I have mentioned Abbey's "Monkey-Wrench Gang" already, where we can see a literary instantiation of this performative in Abbey's depiction of the former Green Beret berserker-turned-environmentalist George Hayduke. Another imagined character, this one from an anime film, comes even closer to my hybrid version of Achilles, in Hayao Miyazaki's *Princess Mononoke*. San, a human girl raised by wolves, wages a pitiless war against the humans who are destroying her forest in order to produce iron ore (like Achilles, she too is attempting to storm a city's walls, and like Achilles, she too largely fails). But there is no need to stay in the realm of fiction. Whether we think of the battles involving Greenpeace's ship Rainbow Warrior, or Dave Foreman's Earth First!, or the many other direct action campaigns on behalf of ecological justice or animal rights, we can see activists whose practice inhabits precisely the liminal zone occupied by Achilles.[81] I do not know if these actions are helping to pave the way to a better future, and I certainly do not say that more Gandhian methods are to be avoided. In thinking about the disposition necessary to continue the struggle, however, I think that a

[77] Braidotti, *The Posthuman.*

[78] The earlier version of me would have taken the irony all too seriously. I am now arguing against what I argued in my dissertation, where I focused almost entirely on Achilles as a negative exemplar of a kind of animality that is sacrificed in order to preserve political stability. While there were intimations of a more productive Achilles in that work, at the time I could not get past Achilles' brutality to see what to reclaim in him.

[79] Steiner, *Animals and the Limits of Postmodernism.*

[80] Regan, *The Case for Animal Rights.*

[81] I grant that these modern exemplars are far-removed from the particular context of Homer's world, but I do not see this as disqualifying their connection with the becomings I see enacted therein. Deleuze and Guattari themselves freely move back and forth across a wide variety of contexts, e.g. from the "leopard-man" warrior societies of ancient Africa to medieval Christian demonology to the music of Boulez to the novels of Virgina Woolf to the modern state apparatus and its "war machine" (see Deleuze; Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, fns. 11, 28, 84, 87).

reconsideration of the epic tradition – which was never the bastion of humanism some thought it to be – may yet serve us well.

I will leave the final words for a classicist of the older generation, Cedric Whitman, who says this of Achilles:

> The highest heroes are not men of delusion. They are men of clarity and purity, who will a good impossible in the world and eventually achieve it, through suffering, in their own spiritual terms. It is the will to the impossible which resembles delusion until the terms are found in which it is possible. In the end, Achilles and Patroclus do stand in the aura of isolated victory and immortal friendship which Achilles envisioned; but instead of being the ones to survive, they were the ones to die...The absolute and the human meet, but only after death... The absolute is the ability and right of the heroic individual to perceive – or better, to conceive – law for himself, and then prove his case by action.[82]

[82] Whitman, *Homer and the Heroic Tradition*, pp. 199-200, 213.

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