

Comparison of ransom by david malouf with the iliad essay sample

[Health & Medicine](#), [Body](#)



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Introduction:

David Malouf's book interestingly revisits 'The Iliad' by Homer and although there are certain liberties taken with the text and although these may depart from the original, they still make interesting reading in their own right.

Homer's Iliad is a magnificent text and the story does have moments of supreme glory in it as well as parts when it does appear to reach heroic heights. The main height of the book is when Achilles agrees to give Hector's body to Priam which is treated a bit differently by Malouf when compared to Homer.

In The Iliad, Homer recounts that:

"Achilles then went back into the tent and took his place on the richly inlaid seat from which he had risen, by the wall that was at right angles to the one against which Priam was sitting. "Sir," he said, "your son is now laid upon his bier and is ransomed according to desire; you shall look upon him when you him away at daybreak; for the present let us prepare our supper".

Malouf treats this episode differently as he does not describe how Hector is actually laid upon the brier and he does not bring the women into the picture

either. Malouf is much more concerned with the heroic aspect of Hector and his relationship with Achilles than with the Priam-Achilles axis and this is intrinsically brought out in the story. While Homer seems to be much more focused on the emotion of the scene when Achilles agrees to hand the body over to King Priam, Malouf seems to be much more focused on the exploits of Hector who consistently rises to great occasions when faced with adversity and even ends up giving his life for his cause. However, Malouf's prose does fade into some insignificance when compared to Homer's who creates a dramatic sense of occasion and nobility with his description of the laying out of Hector's body.

Another episode as recounted by Homer goes thus:

" Then Achilles said laughingly to Priam, " Dear sir, you shall lie outside, lest some counsellor of those who in due course keep coming to advise with me should see you here in the darkness of the flying night, and tell it to Agamemnon. This might cause delay in the delivery of the body. And now tell me and tell me true, for how many days would you celebrate the funeral rites of noble Hector? Tell me, that I may hold aloof from war and restrain the host."

Here again, Malouf's account in ransom differs substantially as he does not include this type of banter which is so succinct and clear in Homer's account. Of course, Homer was writing with the Greek populace in mind and Malouf is obviously more modern oriented yet still the subtle differences are striking. Again, Malouf focuses largely on the exploits of Hector and brings in the concept of ransom for Hector's body which is something that is not in any

way hinted at by Homer. Obviously this can be described as the most significant departure from the original text but Malouf is also very descriptive in the manner with which the actual battles are recounted and where Hector's prowess is amply demonstrated.

The way Hector's body is eventually tied to a chariot and dragged around the city is also wholly original to the Malouf story *Ransom* and even in its title the concept of ransom is wholly absent from Achilles' conversations with King Priam. Even towards the end of the *Iliad*, the emphasis is more on the unrestrained grief experienced by everyone at the death of such a great hero.

Again the relationship between Priam and Achilles is nobly put in the last lines of *The Iliad*. This is Priam speaking to Achilles on the eventual way forward after the burial of Hector's body:

" Since, then, you suffer me to bury my noble son with all due rites, do thus, Achilles, and I shall be grateful".

The sense of respect which is present in this statement is also palpable and is rather different from the one which Malouf attempts to portray. In the latter, Hector is quite a savage and in a sense even the way he meets his end is appropriate throughout. Not so in *The Iliad* where Homer treats Hector with deference.

One cannot but sense the intensity of respect between both individuals which appears to be quite palpable in every way. In '*Ransom*', Malouf is rather more circumspect and direct in his approach as he sees the body of Hector was a way to make money or some sort of gain for the great warrior Achilles with nobility quite absent. Both stories are recounting the same

things, yet they are substantially different in the way these are eventually described. I would say that Malouf succeeds in sensationalizing things yet Homer's Iliad remains the classic text for this story.