

**Sheila Murnaghan (Alfred Reginald Allen Memorial Professor of Greek,
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Heroic Identity in Homer and Sophocles***

In the Homeric epics, boasting has a close, if uncertain relationship to the poetic tradition, as individual heroes seek to inaugurate an authoritative spoken record of their achievements despite relentless competition and shifting fortunes. It is notable, then, that at a pivotal moment in Sophocles' *Ajax*, a play in close dialogue with the *Iliad*, Ajax voices a claim to unique greatness that contradicts his well established traditional identity as the next best Achaean warrior (418-27). This paper will consider how Ajax' boast positions him in relation to both Iliadic and non-Iliadic traditions.