

THE SPEECH OF PHOENIX: *ILIAD* 9.434-605¹

JUDITH A. ROSNER

THE NINTH BOOK of the *Iliad* has long been the object of critical debate. In this book, the speech of Phoenix has attracted particular attention; its position, meaning and authenticity within the book and the epic have often been discussed. Walter Leaf, for example, recognized significant Hesiodic elements in the text.² In addition, he criticizes the entire Meleager episode as a "distinct Epic ballad . . . not very skillfully grafted into this already long speech."³ Margarete Noé terms the entire allegory of the Litai Hesiodic and parallels it to the personification of *Dike* and *Horkos* at *Erga* 219 ff.⁴ Denys Page finds Phoenix' entire philosophical outlook post-Homeric: "This poet has at least partly turned Epic into Tragedy; he has inserted a layer of guilt-culture into the fabric of shame-culture."⁵ G. S. Kirk, basing his argument on the dual forms which describe the activity of the ambassadors, agrees with Page that the Phoenix segment comprises a later layer of composition superimposed on an earlier embassy consisting of Odysseus and Ajax alone.⁶ In general, then, the analysts have condemned the speech of Phoenix as un-Homeric, a later interpolation into the original fabric of the *Iliad*.

Several scholars, on the other hand, have noted thematic parallels between the speech of Phoenix, the Ninth Book and, indeed, the epic as a whole.⁷ This paper will attempt to give a more complete analysis of the thematic and verbal connections between Phoenix' speech and the rest of the *Iliad*. A careful study of these parallels may help to remove at least some of the doubts about the authenticity of the speech and its function as an integral and indispensable element of the *Iliad*.

Phoenix' speech may be divided into three panels: the Peleus or Auto-

¹To Professors Wallace E. McLeod and Richard J. Tarrant of the Department of Classics in the University of Toronto my thanks. All references are to the OCT of Monro and Allen (3rd. ed., Oxford 1920).

²Walter Leaf, ed., *The Iliad* (London 1900) ad 9.557.

³*Ibid.*, ad 9.523.

⁴Margarete Noé, *Phoinix, Ilias und Homer: Untersuchungen zum neunten Gesang der Ilias* (Preisschriften, gekrönt und herausgegeben von der Fürstlich Jablonowskischen Gesellschaft zu Leipzig, 1940) 34.

⁵Denys Page, *History and the Homeric Iliad* (Berkeley 1959) 303; see in general 297-315.

⁶G. S. Kirk, *The Songs of Homer* (Cambridge 1962) 217; Page (above note 5) 297.

⁷See, for example, Samuel Eliot Bassett, *The Poetry of Homer* (Berkeley 1938) 199-200; Henry Ebel, *After Dionysus: An Essay on Where We Are Now* (Cranbury, N. J. 1972) 87-104; Johannes Th. Kakridis, *Homeric Researches* (Lund 1949) 11-16; John A. Scott, "Phoenix in the *Iliad*," *AJP* 33 (1912) 68-77.

biography Panel (438–497); the Allegory of the Litai (497–526); and the Parable of Meleager (527–605). These divisions are not rigidly balanced or symmetrical. Rather, they represent three different lines of argument or appeal. Each panel, however, contains parallels, though sometimes imperfect, to the life of Achilles, the Trojan War and the rest of the *Iliad*. Each repeats words which are thematically central to the book and to the epic. Each concludes with a reminder of the embassy's purpose.

The first panel, that of autobiography, contains several points of contact with the preceding action and sets up a number of parallels between the lives of Phoenix and of Achilles. The panel is introduced by a direct reference to Achilles' last words in response to Odysseus' appeal.⁸ Achilles has asked Phoenix to remain behind with him (427–9). Phoenix' answer is quite direct (434–7):

εἰ μὲν δὴ νόστον γε μετὰ φρεσί, φαίδιμ' Ἀχιλλεῦ,
βάλλεαι, οὐδέ τι πάμπαν ἀμύνειν νηυσὶ θοῇσι
πῦρ ἐθέλεις ἀτθελον, ἐπεὶ χόλος ἔμπεσε θυμῷ,
πῶς ἂν ἔπειτ' ἀπὸ σείο, φίλον τέκος, αὔθι λιποίμην
οἶος;

Of importance here is the reference to Achilles as φίλον τέκος, "dear child." This phrase introduces the main motif of the Peleus panel—that of paternal love and duty. The word φίλος, and its derivatives, are of pivotal importance to the book and to the speech and will be continually repeated. It might be noted that both the motif and the word itself are in sharp contrast with, and thus emphasize, Agamemnon's rather unfriendly treatment of Achilles. Further, the use of φίλος picks up Achilles' own initial greeting of the embassy upon its arrival at his tent (197–198).

The theme of paternal love, already present in Phoenix' introduction in the Peleus panel, recalls the one point in Odysseus' speech which comes closest to any idea of friendship (252–258). But the emphasis has shifted. Odysseus has stressed, on the one hand, Peleus' imagined exhortation of Achilles to check his anger and thus win honor; Phoenix, on the other hand, concentrates on Peleus' hospitality. The shift is away from the materialistic outlook of Odysseus/Agamemnon into the humanity and *xenia* of Peleus/Achilles. The parallel to be drawn in this particular case is quite obvious. As Peleus extended hospitality to all comers—both Phoenix and Patroclus were recipients of his kindness—So Achilles, too, is noted for the grace with which he had received the embassy. There is also a correspondence between Achilles' welcome of the embassy here and his humane reception of Priam in Book 24 (508–551). One might also observe a marked contrast between Achilles' hospitable actions and Aga-

⁸Bassett (above, n. 7) 124.

memnon's turning away of Chryses in Book 1 (26–32) and his need to be reminded by Nestor at the beginning of Book 9 (70) to offer the princes food and drink. Further, in the theme of paternal love there is some inkling of the friendship Achilles seeks and alludes to in his own initial address to the embassy. Since father's love and friend's love are quite different things, however, Achilles is at least somewhat disappointed. Phoenix, therefore, is turned down, but less sharply than is Odysseus.

Of further importance in Phoenix' introduction is his mention of *χόλος*—another word which is central to the book and to the *Iliad*. Like *φίλος* it expresses an aspect of Achilles' nature. In addition *χόλος*—or its synonym *μῆνις*—must be regarded as the very theme of the epic. In his brief introductory statement, then, Phoenix, in mentioning *φίλος* and *χόλος* and in pointing ahead to the theme of paternal love, has established several points of contact between his own oration, the rest of the *Iliad*, and the overall characterization of Achilles.

Phoenix begins his autobiographical narrative with a detailed account of the events leading to his exile from his fatherland. There are several parallels here.⁹ Just as Achilles' self-imposed exile is caused by a dispute with Agamemnon over a maiden, so is Phoenix exiled by his father for a similar reason. The parallel is, however, not exact. It is Phoenix who “steals” his father's mistress. He thus reverses the roles played in the parallel incident in *Iliad* 1 where it is clearly Agamemnon who is guilty of “theft.” We may presume that in setting up this parallel, Phoenix is accepting at least part of the guilt. In shifting some of the blame for his argument with his father upon himself, he may be reminding Achilles that he, too, must accept a share of responsibility in the disagreement with Agamemnon, albeit a minor one. That it is Agamemnon who must take the major share of guilt is indicated by what follows in Phoenix' account. Phoenix, in taking his father's mistress, acted in response to his mother's plea and a desire to preserve her honor, whereas Agamemnon acted in defiance of a father's (Chryses') plea. Unlike Phoenix, Agamemnon can offer no justification whatever for his misdeeds and has caused rather than avoided dishonor. It is relevant in establishing a parallel between Chryses and Phoenix' mother that both parents are referred to in much the same terms: Chryses (1.15) *λίσσετο πάντας Ἀχαιοὺς*; Phoenix' mother (9.451) *ἐμὲ λισσέσκειτο*. Of greatest significance here is the use of *λίσσομαι*. Like *φίλος* and *χόλος*, *λίσσομαι* is a key word which is repeated throughout the Phoenix speech.¹⁰ In addition, both Amyntor and Agamemnon have

⁹Ebel ([above, n. 7] 86–89) has pointed out several of the parallels which are to follow. His comments will be distinguished from my own observations on the chart below (319).

¹⁰The entire speech of Achilles' elder mentor is held together by several key words or concepts which recur again and again throughout it. Among them are “anger” (436, 449, 459, 463, 523, 525, 534, 538, 553, 555, 565, 566), “supplication” (451, 465, 501, 502, 511,

dishonored another parental figure: Agamemnon, according to Calchas (1.94) ἀλλ' ἔνεκ' ἀρητῆρος, δν ἡτίμησ' Ἀγαμέμνων; Amyntor (450–451) ἀτιμάζεσκε δ' ἄκοιτιν, / μητέρ' ἐμήν. A verbal link may thus be established between Chryses and Phoenix' mother, between Amyntor and Agamemnon.

The discovery of what Phoenix had done leads to his father's dreadful curse and Phoenix' attempt on his father's life. As Phoenix' violence is caused directly by harsh words, so Achilles' attempt on Agamemnon's life is also immediately preceded and motivated by Agamemnon's angry threat to remove Briseis (1.184–185). Both heroes are stopped by divine intervention. Again, verbal parallels may be cited: Achilles (1.192) χόλον παύσειεν ἔρητύσειε τε θυμόν; Phoenix (459) παύσεν χόλον and (462) ἐρητύει' . . . θυμός.¹¹

The murder attempt is followed by Phoenix' incarceration. Achilles, too, is "locked away" from the rest of the Greeks. The "imprisonments" of the two men are somewhat parallel. For example, both are caused by anger. But there are important differences. First, Phoenix' imprisonment is caused by others directly while Achilles has locked himself up and can escape at will. Second, Phoenix is closely guarded while Achilles is not guarded at all. Third, the atmosphere of Phoenix' prison differs markedly from that of Achilles' tent. Phoenix is surrounded by kinsmen who make noisy and repeated sacrifice and who watch him so closely that they even sleep beside him and never extinguish their fires (464–473). Achilles' tent is notable for its quiet and loneliness. When first we meet him in Book 9, we find him φρένα τερπόμενον φόρμιγγι λιγείῃ (186) while Patroclus sits apart and in silence (190). The picture of Achilles plucking his lyre and enjoying its music separates and distinguishes him from the other Greek heroes. It is difficult to imagine, for example, Ajax or Diomedes engaged in such activity. In fact, Achilles' ethics, his moral code, his actions throughout the *Iliad* act to set him apart and alone. The contrast between the settings of the two "prisons" helps to solidify the image of the lonely hero.

After his escape¹² Phoenix eventually comes to Phthia and there

520, 574, 581, 585, 591), "dear" or "love" (437, 444, 450, 455, 485, 486, 522, 528, 555, 601), and "gift" (515, 526, 576, 598, 602, 604). Interesting, though not surprising, is that these selfsame words are central to the working of the book as a whole and to the epic.

¹¹Given the formulaic nature of Homeric composition, it is difficult to know how important verbal repetitions are. What is relevant is not the empty repetition of a single phrase, but rather a whole cluster of iterated phrases and situations occurring in the same order in Phoenix' speech and elsewhere in the poem.

¹²Ebel ([above, n. 7] 87–88) points out that just as Phoenix escapes on the tenth day, so Achilles will fight in the tenth year. This, however, seems hardly significant given Homer's fondness for nines and tens.

receives material possessions from Peleus. This is a significant reminder of the embassy's purpose: it is their hope that Achilles too will come back to Agamemnon and receive gifts. Quite suddenly and unexpectedly Phoenix has recast Agamemnon as Peleus, bestower of gifts upon his adopted son, Phoenix.

In the Peleus panel, Agamemnon has been represented by two distinct paternal images—Amyntor and Peleus. In the first role or parallel, as Amyntor, he is clearly portrayed as the villain of the set. Amyntor, like the Agamemnon of Book 1, is hardly an admirable character. In his role as father, he fails dismally. So, too, Agamemnon hardly acts towards Achilles in a fatherly manner. There is, in addition, little love lost between Phoenix and Amyntor nor is there any doubt where most of the blame lies. The parallel thus easily justifies and explains Achilles' initial animosity towards the king. But in recasting Agamemnon as Peleus and specifically as a Peleus who receives Phoenix as a son and generously bestows countless gifts upon him, the aged mentor is trying to show Agamemnon in a kinder light. And in portraying the king thus, he is encouraging Achilles to accept Agamemnon's (father's) offer as he, Phoenix, accepted that of his adopted father, Peleus.

The panel is completed by a final reference to the motif of paternal love. Here, however, it is Phoenix who acts in the role of substitute father—and mother—to the young Achilles. As Peleus received and loved Phoenix as his own son (481), so Phoenix "adopted" Achilles (494–495). And as Phoenix (father) has suffered much on Achilles' (son's) behalf (485–492), so Achilles (son) has suffered reciprocally much on Agamemnon's (father's) behalf. In recalling his own role as surrogate father to Achilles, in urging Achilles' obedience to him because of that role, Phoenix is encouraging Achilles' obedience to the father figure of the analogy which the Peleus panel presented—Agamemnon. This reminder is immediately followed by a plea for Achilles to put down his anger—the real purpose of the embassy—and it is here that the panel ends. The key elements of the panel and the points of contact between it and the rest of the *Iliad* are summarized in the chart opposite.¹³

The Peleus Panel's concluding request is followed by a transitional *exemplum* which leads into the Allegory of the Litai (497–501): even the gods are moved by prayers and sacrifices. The lesson to be learned here is that Achilles should follow the gods' example and be swayed by Agamemnon's embassy.

The Allegory of the Litai has suffered perhaps the harshest criticism and censure.¹⁴ What the critics have failed to consider is that the Litai

¹³Ebel's comments are marked (E); observations which I question are followed by (?).

¹⁴See above, notes 2–6.

THE PELEUS PANEL: AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Phoenix	Achilles	Comments
Peleus' hospitality (445–481)	Achilles' hospitality (197–221)	Peleus::Achilles
Phoenix' life:	Achilles' life	
1. Hated by his father because of a woman (447)	1. Hated by Agamemnon because of a woman (<i>Iliad</i> 1)	Phoenix::Achilles Amyntor::Agamemnon
2. Argument caused by father's curse (454)	2. Argument caused by Agamemnon's harsh words (1.173)	Amyntor::Agamemnon
3. Desires to kill his father; stopped by a god (457) (E)	3. Desires to kill Agamemnon; stopped by a god (1.197) (E)	Phoenix::Achilles Amyntor::Agamemnon
4. Because of his anger he's locked up (461) (E)	4. Because of his anger he's restricted to his tent (E)	Phoenix::Achilles
5. Escapes on the 10th day (474) (E) (?)	5. Will fight in the 10th year (E) (?)	Phoenix::Achilles
6. Came to Phthia where he received gifts from Peleus (father) (478 ff.)	6. Will come back to Agamemnon (father) and receive gifts	Phoenix::Achilles Peleus::Agamemnon
7. Peleus loved him as a son (481)	7. Phoenix loves him as a son (494)	Phoenix::Achilles Peleus::Phoenix
8. He suffered much on Achilles' account (father-son) (485 ff.)	8. He suffered much on Agamemnon's account (son-father)	Phoenix::Achilles Achilles::Agamemnon

represent the argument between Agamemnon and Achilles and warn of the consequences should Achilles fail to yield to the king's will.

In broad outline, the allegory (502–514) informs us that the Litai are the daughters of Zeus, that they are wrinkled and lame, that they follow behind Ate who is swift and causes men to err. But the Litai *ἐξα- κέονται ὀπίσω* (507). He who respects the Litai is helped by them; he who denies them suffers the consequences: the Litai ask Zeus to send Ate to follow the transgressor.

The picture seems at first glance somewhat puzzling. Why are the Litai represented as lame and wrinkled? Why is Ate swift? If the Litai follow Ate, how can they cause Ate to return to the man who has ignored them? If we examine the actions of the protagonists in the tale of Achilles' anger, some answers may present themselves.

Phoenix has, quite obviously, drawn a parallel between Agamemnon's embassy and the Litai. That the Litai are presented as wrinkled and lame and Ate as swift, may well be a value judgement made by Phoenix on the events which have preceded the sending of the embassy. Both Achilles and Agamemnon have been swift to anger (= Ate). Agamemnon even admits that he has gravely erred in treating Achilles as he did. Twice, at the beginning of Book 9, he confesses *ἁσάμην* (116 and 119). Achilles, too, refers to Agamemnon's actions as *ate* (1.412). It may be noted here as well that in the true reconciliation scene, Agamemnon once again mentions Ate and blames it for his disagreement with Achilles (19.88). In contrast to the swiftness Agamemnon has displayed in erring, he is slow in sending supplication and must be urged to do so by Nestor (112–113):

*φραζώμεσθ' ὥς κέν μιν ἀρεσσάμενοι πεπύθωμεν
δῶροισιν τ' ἀγανοῖσιν ἔπεσσί τε μελιχίουςι.*

The swiftness of Ate and the slowness of the Litai may thus be explained as can the fact that Litai come only after Ate.

If we examine Nestor's advice to Agamemnon, we note that he had urged the king to appeal to Achilles with gifts and sweet words. As others have observed,¹⁵ Agamemnon's charge to Odysseus is especially important because of the absence of anything resembling sweet words or words of friendship. In fact, he ends his speech—a speech which he expects to be delivered verbatim—with the volatile and insulting *βασιλεύτερός εἰμι* (160). That Agamemnon's embassy is hardly conciliatory, that Achilles reacts as he would to a bribe, has been pointed out by others as well.¹⁶ That Nestor himself immediately recognized the potential failure of the mission because of its lack of formal apology, may readily be seen in his response to the long list of gifts promised the hero by the king (162–163). No mention is made of sweet words here. That Phoenix refers to the Litai as ugly and wrinkled may be indicative of his own judgement of the embassy's true value—or lack of it—as far as Achilles is concerned. His recognition of the ugliness of the embassy, however, does not prevent him from reminding Achilles of the possible consequences of denying a king's requests and ignoring his superior power, no matter how unattractive that may be. Prayers denied are followed by further Ate and suffering. And in Achilles' case, that Ate will manifest itself in the death of his beloved Patroclus.¹⁷

¹⁵See, for example, Bassett (above, n. 7) 196; David E. Eichholz, "The Propitiation of Achilles," *AJP* 74 (1953) 144; J. T. Sheppard, *The Pattern of the Iliad* (London 1922) 69–70.

¹⁶Cedric Whitman, *Homer and the Heroic Tradition* (New York 1958) 193.

¹⁷*ἄτη* and various forms of *ἁάω* occur some 29 times in the *Iliad*. Of these, ten appear

The relationship of the Litai to Ate may be termed cyclic: Litai follow Ate which follows the request of the Litai until such time as man, by obeying and honoring the Litai, breaks the chain. In Achilles' case, the chain will be broken only after the death of Patroclus.

There is further significance in Phoenix' decision to personify the Litai. Although it is quite true that the abstract noun *λιτή* occurs nowhere else in the *Iliad*, the verbs *λίσσομαι* and *λιτανεύω* occur repeatedly throughout the epic and are found remarkably often in connection with Achilles.¹⁸ Further, on several occasions in which the verbs occur, the same cyclic pattern—Litai follow Ate and, when refused, give rise to Ate again—manifests itself. It may be useful to look at one or two examples.

We may see this cycle for the first time in the *Iliad* in the Chryses-Agamemnon encounter. Agamemnon has taken Chryseis (= Ate). Her father begs Agamemnon to return his daughter (1.15–16; = Litai). Agamemnon refuses and disaster in the form of a plague follows after a request is made of the god by a priest (Litai cause further Ate). Agamemnon breaks this particular chain by sending Chryseis back. However, in so doing, he begins another cycle—the main cycle which the allegory is meant to represent—by angering Achilles.

Another example of the cycle is found in Achilles' actions after the death of Patroclus. After the death of his henchman, Achilles participates in a series of events which involve supplication. The Ate of Patroclus' death leads to the mad rampage of Achilles which culminates in the slaying of Hector and the burning of the Trojan youths on Patroclus' pyre. Cedric Whitman and Charles Segal have both discussed the

either in the Allegory of the Litai in Book 9 or in Agamemnon's Ate allegory and parable in Book 19 (91–133). There is one occurrence of *ate* in a simile (24.480) which compares the amazement of Priam and Achilles with each other's appearance to a man smitten by *ate*. Of the references which occur in the narrative itself, the great majority involve Agamemnon. Agamemnon's *ate* in insulting Achilles is attended by disaster to the Greeks. The king also accuses both Achilles and Ajax of *ate* in drawing up their ships (8.237), an action which leads to disaster for the Greeks. Of the others, Patroclus' *ate* is linked directly to his death (16.685–687: καὶ μέγ' ἀάσθη/νήπιος· εἰ δὲ ἔπος Πηληϊάδαο φύλαξεν,/ῆ τ' ἄν ὑπέκφυγε κῆρα κακὴν μέλανος θανάτοιο; and 16.805–807: τὸν δ' ἄτη φρένας εἶλε, λύθεν δ' ὑπὸ φαίδιμα γυῖα,/στῇ δὲ ταφών· ὄπιθεν δὲ μετὰφρενον ὀξέϊ δουρὶ/ῶμων μωσσηγὺς σχεδόθεν βάλε Δάρδανος ἀνὴρ . . .). Similarly, the *ate* of Paris and Helen is inexorably linked with the tragedy of the war (6.356 and 24.28), Dolon's capture is caused by *ate* (10.391), and Agastrophos is killed because he was deluded (11.340). *Ate*, then, in the narrative sections of the *Iliad*, involves both error or delusion and the disaster which attends it in an inseparable link.

¹⁸Of the 46 occurrences of *λίσσομαι* and *λιτανεύω* seven occur in repeated expressions. Of these seven, five involve the gods, two Chryses. There are nine occurrences in Book 9 itself; eight of these are to be found in the Phoenix-speech and involve parallel events elsewhere in the *Iliad*. Of the remaining uses, 19 involve Achilles, mainly as the object of the prayer—that is, the one prayed to. In addition, two of the repeated expressions involve Thetis praying to Zeus on behalf of Achilles.

dehumanizing effect of Achilles' actions in Books 19–23.¹⁹ Of interest to us at this point is that several of the men killed by Achilles on his rampage are described as begging or supplicating Achilles for their lives (e.g. 20.469; 21.71, 98). Included among the Trojan suppliants is Hector himself (22.338). In each instance Achilles refuses supplication and thus increases his inhumanity. Each of Achilles' inhuman acts (= Ate) is succeeded by a prayer or supplication (= Litai) which, when refused, is followed by further inhumanity and Ate. The cycle is broken when Achilles *accepts* the supplication of Priam (24.485 ff.) and becomes "human" again.

It is also important that Achilles is concerned with true supplication. The key to his attitude rests with a remark made by Agamemnon at the heat of their argument (1.173–174): οὐδέ σ' ἔγωγε/λίσσομαι. Achilles will not budge until he realizes authentic contrition from Agamemnon or until circumstances, tragic circumstances, force his hand. That Phoenix regards the embassy as some form of supplication, albeit somewhat crooked and ugly, is exemplified in the Allegory of the Litai and in several references within the Peleus and Meleager panels. That Achilles does *not* recognize the spirit of supplication in the embassy is reflected in his rejection of the ambassadors. That Achilles seeks true supplication is confirmed by his own statement at 11.609 and by his acceptance of Priam's sincere plea on behalf of Hector in 24.

What is important, then, with regard to the Allegory of the Litai is not that the allegory seems at first chaotic but that upon careful examination it fits the story quite admirably.

The Allegory of the Litai ends with another appeal to Achilles to put down his anger: another reminder of the embassy's mission. Again a brief *exemplum* acts as a transition between the allegory and the Meleager-Parable (523–525): heroes of old were persuaded by gifts and words.

The Meleager-Parable is at once the most difficult and compelling of Phoenix' arguments. It is, clearly enough, a didactic *exemplum* which ultimately returns to the purpose of Agamemnon's embassy to Achilles. In addition, there are several parallels and points of contact between the parable of Meleager, the life of Achilles and the entire *Iliad*.²⁰

Both the *Iliad* and the Meleager-Parable have as their theme the wrath of a hero. The contexts within which this theme functions are identical in both cases: the Curetes and Aetolians are at war as are the Greeks and Trojans. Both wars are initially caused by a slight to the gods:

¹⁹Whitman (above, n. 16) 203–207; Charles Segal, *The Theme of the Mutilation of the Corpse in the Iliad* (Leiden 1971) 18 ff.

²⁰Again, some of what follows has been pointed out by Ebel ([above, n. 7] 89–102). I do not agree with all of his proposed parallels and have added several of my own. The chart below (325) will distinguish Ebel's comments from my own.

the Aetolian war by an insult to Artemis over Oeneus' failure to sacrifice to her; the Trojan war by Paris' infamous judgement. In addition, just as Artemis is angered by Oeneus (534 *χωσαμένη*, 538 *χολωσαμένη*) and sends the boar (533 *κακὸν*. . . *ῶρσε*) so Apollo is angry with Agamemnon (1.44 *χώμενος*) and sends the plague (1.10 *ῶρσε κακὴν*).

The backdrop of war leads smoothly into an exposition of the parable's main theme, the wrath of Meleager. Just as Meleager's prowess keeps the Curetes at bay, so Achilles' heroism had checked the Trojans. The description of the Aetolian war while Meleager is involved has caused some difficulty.²¹ While the Curetes were being hard pressed by Meleager, they could not remain *τείχεος ἔκτοσθεν* (552). In the legend as it appears in Homer, this seems unintelligible. The Curetes were attacking Calydon and were therefore outside the walls all the time. The phrase is perfectly suitable to the Trojans, however, who had to remain within the walls as long as Achilles was in action. The verbal parallel between Achilles' description of his own value in the war and Phoenix' description of Meleager's role is striking: Achilles (352): *ᾧφρα δ' ἐγὼ μετ' Ἀχαιοῖσιν πολέμιζον/οὐκ ἐθέλεσκε μάχην ἀπὸ τείχεος ὀρνύμεν*; Phoenix of Meleager (550–552): *ᾧφρα μὲν οὖν Μελέαγρος . . . πολέμιζε/. . . οὐδ' ἐδύναντο/τείχεος ἔκτοσθεν μίμνειν. τείχεος ἔκτοσθεν*, then, seems to have invaded the Aetolian myth from its parallel Trojan equivalent. Further, just as war breaks out between the initially allied Curetes and Aetolians over the boar's hide, so Achilles and Agamemnon, allies in the Greek cause, do battle over Briseis. Both heroes withdraw from battle in anger: Meleager (555–556) *χώμενος κῆρ/κείμετο παρὰ . . . Κλεοπάτρῃ*; Achilles (2.688–689) *κείμετο . . . ἐν νήεσσι . . . / . . . χώμενος*. As Meleager withdraws to Cleopatra, so Achilles withdraws to Patroclus.²² The withdrawal of each hero leads to serious setbacks for his allies. Both heroes brood: Meleager (565) *χόλον θυμαλγέα πέσσω*; Achilles (4.513) *χόλον θυμαλγέα πέσσει*.

²¹M. M. Willcock, "Mythological Paradeigma in the *Iliad*," *CQ*² 14 (1964) 149–150, summarizes the problem and the solutions offered in the past. His conclusion is that the poet is simply guilty of careless composition. See also Leaf and Bayfield, *The Iliad of Homer* 1 (London 1968) ad 552 and M. M. Willcock, *A Companion to the Iliad* (Chicago 1976) 106–110.

²²E. Howald ("Meleager und Achill", *Rhein.Mus.* 73 [1924] 411; *Der Dichter Der Ilias* [Zurich 1946] 132) was the first to show that by reversing the two main elements of Kleo-patra, we come up with something very close to Patro-klos. Ebel ([above, n. 7] 90–92) argues that Patroclus and Cleopatra are to be assigned similar functions within the homes of the two heroes. He argues that where Patroclus is concerned, there is a transference of sexual functions: that is, Patroclus assumes a feminine role within Achilles' tent. Towards both theories I must express some reservation. Homer mentions Cleopatra's name in the Meleager-Parable only once. It seems that were a pun intended, the name would have been more heavily emphasized. (On this particular point see Kakridis [above, n. 7] 29). That Homer takes some pains to eliminate any implication of a sexual relationship between Achilles and Patroclus may be deduced from 9.663–668.

It should be noted that the parallels cited thus far roughly correspond to events which occurred prior to the embassy and primarily in Book 1. With the sending of an embassy to Meleager and its rejection we find ourselves in Book 9. Parallels appear here as well. Both heroes are offered supplication and at first refuse it. The suppliants are roughly parallel: in the elders with their offering of gifts, we may see the offer of Agamemnon/Odysseus; in Meleager's family, we may see Phoenix; in Meleager's friends, Ajax.

Further parallels draw us into other parts of the *Iliad*. Both heroes are eventually moved by the tears of a loved one: Meleager by Cleopatra, Achilles by Patroclus. In both cases a crisis ensues before the hero can be persuaded to return to battle. In both cases as well, the crisis involves fire: the Curetes set fire to Calydon (589); the Trojans fire the Greek ships (16.122-124). When Meleager rejoins the fight he is denied the gifts originally offered; when Achilles comes back into the battle he is indifferent to them although the offer still stands.

The Meleager-Parable, like the two which have preceded it, ends with a reminder as to the embassy's purpose. In this case the reminder takes the form of a negative *exemplum*:²³ don't be like Meleager who lost his gifts because he entered the battle too late. Put down your anger, Achilles, and receive Agamemnon's gifts (599-605).

The key elements of comparison and points of contact are summarized in the diagram opposite.²⁴

Although the parable is not as organized as the summary and chart opposite would suggest, its main elements are clear enough: the war, the wrath, the rejection of the embassy, the final agreement to fight under crisis even without recompense. This interpretation resolves some of the apparent difficulties of Phoenix' speech. Others may now be discussed in order to further illustrate the analysis advanced above.

First, the Meleager-myth used in Phoenix' speech differs greatly from the more common tale in which the hero's life is controlled by a magic brand.²⁵ Homer deletes this magical element which probably belonged to an older version of the myth, based on folk-legend.²⁶ It is significant that Homer chooses to tell the story as he does since his version aligns the life of Meleager more closely with that of Achilles.

Second, Ebel has suggested a parallel between Marpessa's grief over

²³See Werner W. Jaeger, *Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture* 1 (New York 1963) 27 for a lucid explanation of the didactic elements in the Meleager-Parable.

²⁴Ebel's comments are marked (E); observations which I question are followed by (?).

²⁵For an account of Meleager and the magic brand, see for example, Bacchylides 5 and Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 8.445 ff.

²⁶Kakridis (above, n. 7) 11-18.

THE MELEAGER PARABLE: DIDACTIC *Exemplum*

Meleager (Phoenix)	Achilles	Iliad
<hr/>		
I <i>Backdrop</i> :		I <i>Backdrop</i> :
War: Curetes and Aetolians		War: Greeks and Trojans
War's cause: slight to a goddess (533 ff.)		War's cause: slight to two goddesses
Calydonian boar, Artemis (E)		Plague, Apollo (1.10 ff.) (E)
<hr/>		
II MAIN THEME:	II MAIN THEME:	II MAIN THEME:
Meleager's wrath (E)	Achilles' wrath (E)	Achilles' wrath
Fight over the boar's hide: Curetes and Aetolians	Fight over Briseis: Achilles and Agamemnon	
Meleager's prowess kept Curetes at bay (E); they can't remain <i>τείχεος ἔκτοσθεν</i> (552)	Achilles' prowess kept Trojans at bay (E);	Trojans can't remain <i>τείχεος ἔκτοσθεν</i>
Wrath: withdrawal to Cleopatra (E)	Wrath: withdrawal to Patroclus (E) (?)	
Sorrow over Cleopatra/Alcyone	Sorrow over Patroclus (E) (?) Over Briseis (?)	
<hr/>		
III WAR: Crisis		III WAR: Crisis (8)
Supplication (573 ff.) (E)	Embassy (<i>Iliad</i> 9) (E)	
1. elders and priests; gifts offered	1. Odysseus; gifts offered	1. Agamemnon; gifts offered
2. Family: father, mother, sisters	2. Phoenix: family—father, mother	
3. Friends	3. Ajax: friendship	
Supplication refused (E)	Embassy refused (E)	
Fire to the city: CRISIS (589)	Fire to the ships: CRISIS (16.122–4)	<i>Patrokleia</i> (16)
Cleopatra's plea, tearful (590 ff.) (E)	Patroclus' plea, tearful (16.3 ff.) (E)	Trojan women: Andromache's vision (24–725 ff.) (E); Hector's vision (6.448 ff.)
Meleager fights (595) (E)	Achilles fights (E)	Patroclus' death
Meleager receives no gifts (598 f.) (E)	Achilles receives gifts (E) but they are meaningless (19)	
<hr/>		

Alcyone's rape (*sic*) and Achilles' grief over Patroclus' death.²⁷ There is serious difficulty here. First, Ebel's identification of the figures in the story does not appear to be tenable.²⁸ Second, the occasions for grief are completely different. Marpessa and Alcyone/Cleopatra are separated only briefly, if at all;²⁹ Achilles and Patroclus are separated forever. Third, since the first segment of the Meleager tale—the segment in which this strange myth occurs—corresponds to the events of Book 1, mourning for Patroclus at this point in the narrative is far too early. If a specific parallel is intended, I might suggest mourning over the “rape” of Briseis. There is no small portion of tears shed by Achilles at her removal (1.345–349). And the removal of Briseis fits more logically at this point in the narrative than would the death of Patroclus. Both theories have their faults and it might be worth-while to remember that it is the atmosphere of gloom that is really important in the telling of the Cleopatra myth.

The sequence of the embassy to Meleager has caused problems as well. Kakridis is troubled especially by the placing of the friends on a higher level in an ascending scale of affection than the level of the family.³⁰ A discussion of the folk element involved in an ascending scale of affection is not in order here. Further, a much simpler explanation readily presents itself. As has been observed above, the order of the supplication to Meleager is exactly parallel to that of the ambassadors to Achilles: the elders are equivalent to the “official” gift-offering segment of Odysseus/Agamemnon; the family is equivalent to Phoenix who referred to himself as Achilles' father and mother (486); the friends are equivalent to Ajax, who alone of the ambassadors offers Achilles some degree of the friendship he seeks.³¹ If Homer is again tampering with tradition, he is doing so with the specific purpose of equating it with the sequence of events he has created in the embassy scene as a whole. As Whitman so well ex-

²⁷Ebel (above, n. 7) 93–95.

²⁸Ebel ([above, n. 7] 90) contends, first, that Alcyone's name was changed to Cleopatra. Although the Greek is somewhat confusing, there is no indication that the name Cleopatra is an aetiological eponym. Ebel further argues (94) that it is Cleopatra/Alcyone who is raped by Apollo. Again, the Greek does not appear to confirm this contention. In recounting the myth, both Leaf (in Leaf and Bayfield [above, n. 21] *ad* 557) and Kakridis ([above, n. 7] 31) conclude, rightly, that it is Marpessa who is raped by Apollo. The only clue offered by the text is the epithet *καλλισφύρον* which is applied explicitly to Marpessa (557) and repeated when the object of Apollo's rape is mentioned, without any name, three lines later (560). The weight of the evidence, such as it is, would seem to disprove Ebel's parallel inasmuch as it rests on the necessity of Cleopatra as the victim of the rape. That does not appear to be the case.

²⁹It seems most likely that the rape occurred soon after the marriage of Marpessa to Idas since Marpessa is described as *νύμφη*, an unlikely word for a matron.

³⁰Kakridis (above, n. 7) 19; Ebel (above, n. 7) 98–99.

³¹See above, 324–325.

plained,³² Achilles' position with regard to the embassy slowly shifts: whereas he is adamant towards Odysseus, his position yields a bit in his response to Phoenix and still more in his answer to Ajax. In the actual embassy, the most important factor to Achilles is friendship. And this importance is reflected in the relative value of Meleager's suppliants. Further, the importance of friends on a scale of this sort is extremely significant in light of Achilles' greeting of the embassy as *φίλοι* and *φίλτατοι* (197-198).

In conclusion, I have tried to show that the speech of Phoenix in each of its three sections corresponds thematically, conceptually and often verbally to other sections of the *Iliad*. The speech of the elder statesman, the longest in the Book, forms a central panel in the Ninth *Iliad* and offers important clues to the character of Achilles. In it the life of the hero is summarized from his youth to his present and even future sorrow. In it there are didactic messages to the son of Peleus couched in terms of allegory and parable. As the Catalogue of the Ships adds scope and magnitude to the war, as the Shield of Achilles depicts the horrors of war and what is lost as its result, so the speech of Phoenix is a representation, at a critical point, of the life and nature of Achilles. As such it should be regarded as an integral and indispensable element of the epic as a whole.

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

³²Whitman (above note 16) 193-194.