

Dusting off the Classics: Homer's *Iliad*

Richard Sacks – Spring 2022

Handout for session #3 (3/29/22)

1: The embassy to Achilles in book 9: Entreaties by Odysseus, Phoinix & Aias and Achilles' replies

1A1: Odysseus' speech (9.225-306):

Note that lines 264-299 are virtually identical (line-by-line) to those spoken by Agamemnon at 9.122-157, after which Odysseus continues at 9.300:

9.300 But if Atreus's son still leaves too much hatred in your heart,
9.301 both himself and his gifts, yet pity the rest of the Achaians,
9.302 hard pressed throughout their ranks, men who'll hold you in honor
9.303 like a god, for you could win great glory in their eyes...

1A2: Achilles' reply to Odysseus (9.308-429):

9.312 for hateful to me as the gates of Hādēs is that man
9.313 who hides one thought in his mind but speaks another

9.318 Equal the lot of the skulker and the bravest fighter;
9.319 courage and cowardice rank the same in honor;
9.320 death comes alike to the idler and to the hardest worker.

9.357 tomorrow I'll offer sacrifice to Zeus and all other gods,
9.358 then haul my ships down to the sea and load them up,
9.359 and you'll see—if you want to, if it concerns you at all—
9.360 at first light, sailing over the teeming Hellespont,
9.361 my flotilla, its rowers all eagerly plying their oars...

9.388 Nor would I marry a daughter of Atreus's son Agamemnon,
9.389 not even if her beauty outshone golden Aphrodītē's
9.390 and her handiwork was a match for grey-eyed Athēnē's. No,
9.391 not even so but I wed her! Let him choose another Achaian,
9.392 one who suits him better, who's more kingly [*basileuteros* = 9.160]...

9.407 ... but to bring
9.408 a man's life back neither raiding nor victories suffice
9.409 once it has fled beyond the barrier of his teeth.
9.410 My mother, silver-footed Thetis the goddess, tells me
9.411 that two contrary spirits go with me until the end that's death.
9.412 If I stay here, and fight around the Trojans' city
9.413 I'll lose my homecoming [*nostos*], but gain imperishable renown [*kleos*].
9.414 On the other hand, if I return to my own dear country
9.415 my fine renown [*kleos*] will have perished, but my life will long endure

1B1: Phoinix's speech (9.434-605):

Note that most of Phoinix's speech consists of: 1) the story he tells of why he first came to Peleus' house where he helped raise Achilles (9.447-494); and 2) the "mini-epic" [klea andrōn in 9.524 and = 9.189] of Meleagros (9.524-599, for more on which see page 2 of this handout); Phoinix's speech then ends:

9.600 So please, don't harbor such thoughts, don't let some maleficent
9.601 spirit turn you that way! Indeed, it would be too hard
9.602 to save ships already on fire. Come now, while gifts are still
9.603 there to be had—the Achaians will honor you like a god.
9.604 But if giftless you enter this murderous war, you will not
9.605 enjoy the same honor, ward off war's perils though you may.

1B2: Achilles' reply to Phoinix (9.607-619):

9.607 ...of this honor I have no need.
9.608 Enough that I have been honored by Zeus' ordinance...
9.612 Don't confuse my mind with lamentation and sorrow [*< akhos root*]...
9.618 ... tomorrow at daybreak
9.619 we'll make our decision: whether to go back home or stay.

1C1: Aias' speech (9.624-642):

Note that Aias' brief speech essentially contrasts Achilles' unrelenting "savage fury" (9.629) and indifference to the "affection [...of] his comrades" [philotētos hetairōn, 9.630, plus phil- root superlatives at 9.198, 204, 586] to the Greek cultural tradition of the blood price, the accepting of "recompense / even from his brother's or his own son's murderer" [9.632ff.].

1C2: Achilles' reply to Aias (9.644-655):

9.645 All that you say seems in line with my own thinking;
9.646 but my heart swells with rage whenever I remember
9.647 this one fact: the vile treatment I got among the Argives
9.648 from Atreus's son, as though I were some unhonored refugee.
9.649 So you can go now, and announce my message: I shall not
9.650 consider taking part in the bloody business of battle
9.651 till the son of Priam the prudent, noble Hektōr
9.652 reaches the huts and ships of the Myrmidons, as he
9.653 slaughters the Argives, and burns their vessels with fire!

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2: The Meleagros story (9.529-599) within Phoinix's speech to Achilles in the embassy of book 9

2A: The embassy to Meleagros in Phoinix's book 9 speech

9.529 The Kourētes and the Aitōlians, tough warriors, were fighting
9.530 over the city of Kalydōn, and killing one another,
9.531 the Aitōlians in defense of beautiful Kalydōn...

9.549 ... Now so long as
9.551 Meleagros, that keen warrior, was in the battle,
9.552 all that time the Kourētes got nowhere, could not even
9.553 hold firm ground outside the wall, despite their numbers.
9.554 But when wrath possessed Meleagros—wrath that distorts
9.555 the good sense in the breasts of even careful thinkers—
9.556 he then, irate at heart with Althaiē, his own mother,
9.557 was lying with his wedded wife, the lovely Kleopatra—

9.565 —By her Meleagros lay now, brooding over his bitter rage,
9.566 rage induced by his mother's curses...

9.573 soon from around the gates there came an uproar, the sound
9.574 of men battering at the ramparts. **The Aitōlian elders**
9.575 besought him—sending the best... [cf. Nestor singling out *Odys.* at 9.180]

9.581 Urgently did **the old horseman Oineus entreat him,**
9.582 standing there at his high-roofed chamber's threshold,
9.583 shaking its bolted doors, while **supplicating his son;**
9.584 urgently, too, did his sisters and his lady mother implore him...

9.585 ... as did **his comrades** [*hetairoi*, with *phil-* "dear" root at 9.630]
9.586 **those who were closest and dearest** [*philtatoi*] **to him of all,**
9.587 yet not even so could they move the heart in his breast,
9.588 till his room was being fiercely battered, while the Kourētes
9.589 were mounting the ramparts and setting fire to the great city.
9.590 **It was only now that his fine-sashed bedfellow, weeping,**
9.591 **pleaded with Meleagros,** reminding him of all
9.592 the griefs that befall a people when their city is captured—
9.593 the menfolk slaughtered, the city destroyed by fire,
9.594 their children and deep-sashed wives led captive by strangers.
9.595 His heart was stirred then, hearing about these horrors:
9.596 he got up to go, put on his bright body-armor.
9.597 Thus he saved the Aitōlians from their day of evil...

2B: Mythic "context(s)" for Meleagros (Apollodorus' *Library*, 1.8.2-3):

^{1.8.2}Althaea [daughter of Thestius] had also a son Meleager, by Oeneus, though they say that he was begotten by Ares. It is said that, when he was seven days old, the Fates came and declared that Meleager should die when the brand burning on the hearth was burnt out. On hearing that, Althaea snatched up the brand and deposited it in a chest. Meleager grew up to be an invulnerable and gallant man, but came by his end in the following way. In sacrificing the first fruits of the annual crops of the country to all the gods Oeneus forgot Artemis alone. But she in her wrath sent a boar of extraordinary size and strength, which prevented the land from being sown and destroyed the cattle and the people that fell in with it. To attack this boar Oeneus called together all the noblest men of Greece, and promised that to him who should kill the beast he would give the skin as a prize.... With them came also the sons of Thestius. And when they were assembled, Oeneus entertained them for nine days; but on the tenth, when ... some ... disdained to go hunting with a woman, Meleager compelled them to follow the chase with her, for he desired to have a child also by Atalanta, though he had to wife Cleopatra, daughter of Idas and Marpessa. When they surrounded the boar, ... Atalanta was the first to shoot the boar in the back with an arrow, and Amphiarus was the next to shoot it in the eye; but Meleager killed it by a stab in the flank, and on receiving the skin gave it to Atalanta. Nevertheless the sons of Thestius, thinking scorn that a woman should get the prize in the face of men, took the skin from her, alleging that it belonged to them by right of birth if Meleager did not choose to take it. ^{1.8.3}But Meleager in a rage slew the sons of Thestius and gave the skin to Atalanta. However, from grief at the slaughter of her brothers Althaea kindled the brand, and Meleager immediately expired. **But some say that Meleager did not die in that way, but that when the sons of Thestius claimed the skin on the ground that Iphiclus had been the first to hit the boar, war broke out between the Curetes and the Calydonians; and when Meleager had sallied out and slain some of the sons of Thestius, Althaea cursed him, and he in a rage remained at home; however, when the enemy approached the walls, and the citizens supplicated him to come to the rescue, he yielded reluctantly to his wife and sallied forth, and having killed the rest of the sons of Thestius, he himself fell fighting.** After the death of Meleager, Althaea and Cleopatra hanged themselves, and the women who mourned the dead man were turned into birds.