

passes and subsumes the world in which the *Iliad*'s plot takes place.

Making use of what spotty evidence they have, scholars have attempted to reconstruct earlier versions of the stories or types of stories told in the *Iliad*, in order to show how they have been adapted to the *Iliad*'s distinctive purposes. Other versions of the Meleager story told by Phoenix in Book 9 allow us to see that there it has been reworked to provide a pointed parallel to the story of Achilles. Some critics have speculated that there may have been many traditional accounts of powerful heroes who felt dishonored and withdrew from their armies until their honor was restored, but that the surprising development of Achilles' continued withdrawal even after Agamemnon's embassy may have been unique to the *Iliad*. Our evidence suggests that other poems in the tradition out of which the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* emerged contained many more supernatural and miraculous elements, including the achievement of immortality by the most successful heroes. By contrast, the Homeric epics seem distinctive in their unrelenting insistence on the constraints of mortal existence and the inescapability of death.

In making this translation, Stanley Lombardo has located Homer in the performer or performers through whom the *Iliad* existed primarily as a spoken work, even after it was written down. Lombardo's version highlights the living connection that the poet builds between himself and his audience and his evocation of the spontaneous and idiosyncratic accents of the individual speakers whom he impersonates. In doing so, Lombardo brings out yet another way in which the concerns of the poet intersect with those of his characters, for in his recreation of heroic warfare, Homer has made it a realm not only of forceful action, but also of powerful speaking. The characters of the *Iliad* use speech constantly, to further their competitions through insults, to confer honor on one another through praise, to reflect on what they are doing, to bring the traditions of the past to bear on their present dilemmas, to lament their dead. In this way they fulfill the vision of heroism that Phoenix instilled in Achilles on the instructions of his father, Peleus: "To be a speaker of words and a doer of deeds" (9.455).

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ILIAD 1

RAGE:

Sing, Goddess, Achilles' rage,
Black and murderous, that cost the Greeks
Incalculable pain, pitched countless souls
Of heroes into Hades' dark,
And left their bodies to rot as feasts
For dogs and birds, as Zeus' will was done.

Begin with the clash between Agamemnon—
The Greek warlord—and godlike Achilles.

Which of the immortals set these two
At each other's throats?

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Apollo,
Zeus' son and Leto's, offended
By the warlord. Agamemnon had dishonored
Chryses, Apollo's priest, so the god
Struck the Greek camp with plague,
And the soldiers were dying of it.

Chryses

Had come to the Greek beachhead camp
Hauling a fortune for his daughter's ransom.
Displaying Apollo's sacral ribbons
On a golden staff, he made a formal plea
To the entire Greek army, but especially
The commanders, Atreus' two sons:

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