

Discuss the ways the
poet develops the
character phoenix.
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Running head: PHOENIX IN THE ILIAD Phoenix in the Iliad: Achilles' Past, Future, and Present PHOENIX IN THE ILIAD 2 Phoenix in the Iliad: Achilles' Past, Future, and Present Phoenix's character is developed through his speech in book 9, recounting scenes that serve as a portrayal of human emotions, foreshadowing, and reflection --- all that could be alluded to Achilles' past, future, and present. First, Phoenix is described to be crying while giving his passionate speech (9. 526) as he reminisces how he helped raise Achilles in the past. Second, he provides a very vital foreshadowing of events in his narration of the Meleager episode (9. 646-729). Third, he narrates his relationship with Achilles as a child (9. 587-600), and then links his own story of running away from home (9. 543-80) as similar to Achilles' current plight. Although Phoenix is never discussed in the epic "Iliad" save for that time when an embassy is sent to Achilles to urge him to fight along with Agamemnon's armies against the Trojans, his character serves as a brief yet insightful look into the great warrior Achilles' disposition, not as a warrior this time, but as a human being with a past, a future, and a present. Phoenix's speech is filled with the Greek "eleos" or what can be termed in English as "compassionate grief" --- an emotion that does not go well for a great warrior such as Achilles. Homer shows Phoenix as appealing more towards his father-and-son relationship with Achilles, which is a refreshing characteristic amidst this story filled with greatness and lack of the "softer" emotions of the great warriors. Phoenix says: "And I made you what you are --- strong as the gods, Achilles --- / I loved you from the heart" (9. 587-8), and "Oh I had my share of troubles for you, Achilles... / great godlike

Achilles --- I made you my son, I tried," (9. 595-9). Notice that Phoenix refers to his past father-and-son relationship with Achilles as he tries to evoke emotions in the great warrior's heart. He also refers to his closeness to the young Achilles, saying, " You'd eat your fill, I'd hold the cup to your lips / and all too often you soaked the shirt on my chest," (9. 592-3). Whatever impact these words may have on Achilles, Phoenix's speech provided readers with a deeper knowledge on Achilles' past. PHOENIX IN THE ILIAD 2 Phoenix's character is also a tool in foreshadowing Achilles' fate by the vivid descriptions of scenes in the past that depict a path similar to what Achilles is taking. Phoenix says " But then, when the wrath / came sweeping over the man, the same anger that swells / the chest of others, for all their care and self-control --- " (9. 673-5), and then narrates how Meleager receives several supplications from people dear to him, yet he refuses to defend his people, until his wife Cleopatra " begged him, streaming tears, recounting all the griefs / that fall to people whose city's seized and plundered" (9. 719-20). Meleager is narrated to finally decide to fight for his people, yet it was too late, and despite winning the battle, the honor he received is not as great (9. 723-9). While none of these have something to do with Phoenix directly, this particular scene used in his speech predicts the great hero's destiny. Phoenix's character is also used as a means of reflection on Achilles' current situation. Phoenix background is developed by narrations of his past, how he ran away from home when he was young and agile like Achilles. He says " As fresh as I was that time I first set out" (9. 543) to provide Achilles a greater reason to relate to Phoenix's past, since Achilles is also " running away" from

home (Achaean). Phoenix also narrates how he wanted to kill his father during that time, saying " So I, I took it into my head to lay him low / with sharp bronze! (9. 558-9), which serves as an allusion to Achilles' current desire to see Agamemnon surrender to the Trojans' might. The feelings that Phoenix had then and the ones Achilles has now may be similar, but one should understand that the situation is entirely different. Achilles merely lost his woman, while Phoenix was rendered sterile. Still, this is Achilles' current situation --- a thing that Phoenix wants to fix by citing experiences he had in the past to save Achilles' present, and possibly, future. PHOENIX IN THE ILIAD 3 References Fagles, R. (n. d.). The Iliad. Retrieved from <http://www.scribd.com/doc/52280194/The-Iliad-R-Fagles-Translation>