

In this paper I will seek to interpret Agamemnon's recitation of the "gifts" he will give or promise Achilles in his attempt at reconciliation in the ninth book of the *Iliad*. I will begin with a formal analysis of the speech as a list or catalogue, and I will focus primarily on the way in which Agamemnon seeks to exploit (or abuse) the rhetorical potential of this recognized Homeric form. Brief comparison with other lists of ransom or *xeinia* in Homer (*Il.* 24.228-37, *Od.* 24.273-79) will show that Agamemnon's catalogue of gifts breaks through the conventional boundaries of the typical list. Examination of its increasingly elaborate entries will further show how Agamemnon succeeds in transforming this apparently simple and objective style of speech into a vehicle for narrative, allusion and paradigm. In particular, by making some of the gifts conditional on victory over Troy and a safe homecoming, Agamemnon not only dramatizes Achilles' reintegration into Achaean society but also maps a narrative of Achilles' future that stands in strong contrast to the story of the *Iliad* itself. Indeed, in presenting through his gifts a synopsis of the ideal heroic career, the king weighs in on some of the central questions of the *Iliad*: What is the proper course for a heroic life, what are its proper rewards, and can it be brought to an end both happy and glorious?

I will then move on to the larger issues of *Iliad* 9, in which recent research has shifted from interpretation of Achilles' rejection of the gifts to a reevaluation of the offer itself. Against the conventional and still popular view that Agamemnon's offer of recompense is impeccable according to the norms of heroic society and hence that Achilles' rejection of it signals either a new spiritual development in the hero (e.g., Whitman 1958, A. Parry *TAPA* 87, W. Sale *Arion* 2, J. Griffin *Iliad IX*) or simply a moral error (e.g., Bowra 1930, Owen 1947, H. van Wees *Status Warriors*), it has recently been argued that the offer is unacceptable from the start, either because its extreme generosity is aggressive and domineering (W. Donlan *Colby Quarterly* 29) or because it is offered in a way that perverts Homeric society's rules of exchange (D. Wilson *Ransom, Revenge, and Heroic Identity in the Iliad*). I will argue, however, that the most obvious defect of the offer corresponds exactly to its rhetorical brilliance -- namely, the conditionality of the most generous gifts on future events that Achilles knows he will not live to see if he remains at Troy. Since Achilles' knowledge of his alternative fates would appear to largely negate the impressive abundance of the gifts, the adequacy of the gifts in themselves remains uncertain. Yet, a brief analysis of Achilles' actual refusal (308-429) should make clear that instead of simply undercutting Agamemnon's rhetorical tactic by revealing his alternative fates at the outset, Achilles accepts the plenitude of the gifts as a given and attacks the offer as both catalogue and narrative, thus refuting Agamemnon's gesture as a false representation of epic *kleos*.