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Title of extract: **Poetic Fieldwork**

Name of Author: **Taplin, O.**

Title/Author of book/edition (if applicable): **Homeric Soundings. Taplin, O.**

Name of Visual Creator or other acknowledgement (if applicable):

Journal details –title/Vol/Year (if applicable):

Publisher: **Clarendon Press**

Pages scanned: **46 - 81**

Course of Study (Module name and number): **Muses' Playground CLCS5001**

Name of Designated Person

authorising scanning: *E.L. Harris*

Date authorised: 05.04.17.

Moodle/Powerpoint

Poetic Fieldwork

2.1 Some keys to ethical questions

Τίς τ' ἄρ' αὖρ σφωε θεῶν ἔριδι ξυνέηκε μάχεσθαι;
 Λητοῦς καὶ Διὸς υἱός· ὁ γὰρ βασιλῆϊ χολωθεὶς
 νοῦσον ἀνὰ στρατὸν ὥρσε κακὴν, ὀλέκοντο δὲ λαοί, 10
 οὐνεκα τὸν Χρῦσιν ἠτίμασεν ἀρητῆρα
 Ἀτρεΐδης· ὁ γὰρ ἦλθε θεῶν ἐπὶ νῆας Ἀχαιῶν
 λυγρόμενός τε θύγατρα φέρων τ' ἀπερείσι' ἄποινα,
 στέμματα' ἔχων ἐν χερσὶν ἐκηβόλου Ἀπόλλωνος
 χρυσέωι ἀνὰ κήπτρῳ, καὶ λίσσεται πάντας Ἀχαιοὺς, 15
 Ἀτρεΐδᾳ δὲ μάλιστα δύω, κασμήτορε λαῶν·
 “Ἀτρεΐδαι τε καὶ ἄλλοι ἐϋκνήμιδες Ἀχαιοί,
 ὑμῖν μὲν θεοὶ δοῖεν Ὀλύμπια δώματ' ἔχοντες
 ἐκπέρσαι Πριάμοιο πόλιν, εὖ δ' οἴκαδ' ἰκέσθαι· 20
 παῖδα δ' ἐμοὶ λύσαιτε φίλην, τὰ δ' ἄποινα δέχεσθαι,
 ἄζόμενοι Διὸς υἱὸν ἐκηβόλον Ἀπόλλωνα.”
 “Ἐνθ' ἄλλοι μὲν πάντες ἐπευφήμησαν Ἀχαιοὶ
 αἰδεῖσθαι θ' ἱερῆα καὶ ἀγλαὰ δέχθαι ἄποινα·
 ἀλλ' οὐκ Ἀτρεΐδῃ Ἀγαμέμνονι ἤνδανε θυμῷ, 25
 ἀλλὰ κακῶς ἀφίει, κρατερὸν δ' ἐπὶ μῦθον ἔτελλε·
 “μή σε, γέρον, κοίλῃσιν ἐγὼ παρὰ νηυσὶ κιχείω
 ἢ νῦν δηθύνοντ' ἢ ὕστερον αὖτις ἰόντα,
 μή νύ τοι οὐ χραίσμῃ κήπτρον καὶ στέμμα θεοῖο·
 τὴν δ' ἐγὼ οὐ λύσω· πρὶν μιν καὶ γῆρας ἔπεισιν 30
 ἡμετέρῳ ἐνὶ οἴκῳ, ἐν Ἀργεῖ, τηλόθι πάτρης,
 ἰστὸν ἐποιχομένην καὶ ἐμὸν λέχος ἀντιόωσαν·
 ἀλλ' ἴθι, μή μ' ἐρέθιζε, σαώτερος ὥς κε νέηαι.”
 “Ὡς ἔφατ', εἰδὲκεν δ' ὁ γέρων καὶ ἐπέειθε μῦθον·

Which of the gods was it who set these two to their fighting? It was the son of Zeus and Leto. In anger at the king he raised a vile plague throughout the army, and the people were dying, because the son of Atreus had dishonoured Chryses, his priest. Chryses had come to the fast ships of the Achaians to gain release for his daughter, bringing with him

unlimited ransom, and holding in his hands the sacred woollen bands of Apollo the far-shooter, wreathed on a golden staff. He began to entreat the whole body of the Achaians, but especially the two sons of Atreus, the marshals of the army. ‘Sons of Atreus, and you other well-greaved Achaians, may the gods who live on Olympos grant you the sacking of Priam’s city and a safe return to your homes. But release my dear child to me, and accept this ransom, in reverence for the son of Zeus, Apollo the far-shooter.’

Then all the other Achaians shouted their agreement, to respect the priest’s claim and take the splendid ransom. But this was not the pleasure of Agamemnon’s heart, the son of Atreus. He sent him shamefully on his way, with harsh words of command: ‘Old man, let me never find you by our hollow ships, either dallying here now or coming back again in future—or you will have no protection from your god’s staff and sacred bands. As for the girl, I shall not release her. Before that, old age will come upon her in our house, in Argos, far from her own country, where she will work at the loom and serve my bed. No, away with you: do not provoke me, if you want to return in safety.’

So he spoke, and the old man was afraid and did as he was ordered. (1. 8–33)

This translation—like most, if not all, modern translations—takes *basilḗi* (*basilēi*) in line 9 as ‘the king’; and this clearly refers to Agamemnon. But ‘one of the chiefs’ might be closer to Homer (whose Greek has no definite or indefinite articles). Whatever Agamemnon’s status may be, he is not ‘the *basileus*’, since it is clear from plenty of passages in the *Iliad* that there are many *basilēes* at Troy, with Agamemnon and Achilles two among them. It is not clear quite how a man qualified for this status, but the existence of the comparative *basileύτερος* (‘more *basileus*’) and superlative *basileύτατος* (‘most *basileus*’) suggest that it was a matter of degree rather than rank.¹ Even if the context of line 9 has narrowed the possible reference of *basilēi* down to one of only two men, it is not yet clear which it refers to. Indeed, the whole run of the wording holds up the identification until the enjambement after line 11: *Ἀτρεΐδης* (the son of Atreus). Those who have heard or read the poem before ‘know’ which *basilēi* refers to, but the

¹ See Taplin, ‘Agamemnon’, 62–70, esp. p. 63 on the famous ‘one king’ passage at 2. 203–6. To the works cited there (Drews, Geddes, Rihll) add Schadewaldt, *IS* 37–9; F. Gschnitzer in *Innsbrucker Beitr. zur Kulturwiss.* 11 (1965), 99ff.; J. Halverson, *Hermes*, 113 (1985), 129ff. (on *Od.*); P. Carlier, *La Royauté en Grèce* (Strasbourg, 1984), 136ff.; S. West on *Od.* 1. 386–7; Collins, 64ff.; H. van Wees, *CQ* n.s. 38 (1988), 1ff., esp. 18–22; Morris, 98–9.

narrative still flows in a single direction, and Ἀτρεΐδης comes as a confirmation charged with narrative energy.

The assimilation of *basileus* to the monarch, and the assumption of Agamemnon to this sovereignty, goes back at least to the era of the Hellenistic kings, the first age of professional Homeric scholarship.² It may well have been to the advantage of the reception of Homer in the long run that many aspects of his mental and social structures, his 'anthropology' so to speak, have proved open to anachronistic assimilation by later ages. His adaptability to the institutions of kingship is a good illustration.³ On the other hand, when any such anachronism is exposed as such by historical research or philology or archaeology, it is no longer possible to indulge in it unreservedly—it is time to move on. The decline of the institutions of monarchy world-wide and the questioning of absolute authority leads to a reassessment of the politics and internal anthropology of the *Iliad*. It also restores Homer more to his own time, a period when the institutions and communal bondings of society were under review, and going through momentous transition (see § 1.5).

Any venture of poetic fieldwork—that is of attempting to work out the mental and social structures of the *Iliad* by accumulating and comparing the evidence from within the poem—will find that the indications are too sparse or thin to clarify some aspects of the anthropology. On the other hand, there are many important areas where they add up to a picture, a picture which is often remarkably consistent. There may be internal contradictions, but more often there is a significant imprecision, a lack of definitive statute. It is this that leaves room for dispute, for the interplay of different views, especially of personal and political ethics, which is, I shall

² The scholia fall into giving βασιλεύς the definite article, e.g. in ΣΑ on 29, which protests, particularly absurdly, that Chryses should not have complained about his daughter bedding τῷ βασιλεῖ (with the king) (see Taplin, 'Agamemnon', 81). For Hellenistic assimilation of Homeric anthropology, see (for instance) O. Murray, 'Philodemus on the Good King according to Homer', *JRS* 55 (1965), 161 ff.

³ I do not share the fashionable admiration for the aesthetic value or authority of the ancient scholia on Homer, voiced most persuasively by N. J. Richardson in *CQ* n.s. 30 (1980), 265 ff. and most zealously by M. Heath, *Unity in Greek Poetics* (Oxford, 1989), Ch. 8. On the whole the scholia show little sense of cultural relativity, and are often shamelessly anachronistic. A comparison of the visual arts of 200 BC with those of 700 BC makes the point that we are dealing with radically different aesthetic eras.

argue, one of the perennial strengths of the poem. Thus, Agamemnon's position, while it has an anthropological rationale, falls crucially short of final definition or official hierarchy. I explore this on pp. 57–60. If the *basileus* of line 9 were 'the king', then the issue between him and Achilles would be far less powerful and interesting.

The consistency of Homeric anthropology should not lead to the assumption that it directly reflects the historical reality of Homer's own day, or, even less plausibly, of some earlier age. Poetic traditions can establish their own coherent worlds. An influential but flawed methodology has used Homer selectively as a starting-point for building up a historical world; once this has been filled out by archaeological and comparative material from outside the poem, it is then reimposed on it, often at the cost of serious distortion.⁴ At the same time it would be a no less distorting over-reaction to deny any connection with the realities of history and anthropology, leaving a purely invented world.⁵ I do not feel competent, in the face of the ever-increasing body of archaeological material, to attempt much on the complex interaction between poem and reality, the creative transformation of the lives and experience of its audience. I do not doubt, however, that there is interesting work to be done, and I hope my textual work will help it.

The word λαοί (*lāoi*) in line 10 is an illustration of my point that internal Homeric anthropology should resist presuppositions imported from elsewhere. This word (singular or plural) is often interpreted as meaning the masses, the rank and file, the people who don't matter. But fieldwork reveals no such downgrading of *lāoi* or *lāos*:⁶ they are the people as a whole, the host. This does

⁴ The outstanding example is Finley in the *World of Odysseus*. Recently Morris, in 'The Use and Abuse of Homer', after a full and sophisticated discussion of the problems, suddenly turns, in his final section (123 ff.), to argue that the *Iliad* is, in effect, propaganda in favour of traditional *basilees*. Yet the poem, if taken as poetry, is constantly questioning the authority of *basilees*, especially that of Agamemnon. His bold assertion that 'throughout the poems, the *basileis* are glorified, and the *demos* ignored to the point of total exclusion' is simply not true. Thalmann, 115–16, enlisting comparative support from Finnegan, 242–3, makes the important point that, just because oral poetry is traditional, that does not necessarily make it politically conservative.

⁵ Not even J. R. R. Tolkien or Ursula LeGuin can achieve that—or would wish to. On this subject see Morris, *passim*.

⁶ Contrast the distinction at 2. 188, 198 between βασιλῆα καὶ ἔξοχον ἄνδρα (a king or a man of importance) and δήμου ἄνδρα (a commoner); or between ἔξοχος, μέγας,

not seem to be exclusive even of the *basilēes*,⁷ though as soon as one or some or all of them are picked out, then they are necessarily no longer part of the collective *lāoi*.

There is, indeed, a significant relationship between a *basileus* and his *lāoi*, one that is very relevant to line 10. They support him, and in return he is responsible for them: it is a failure for him to bring about or fail to prevent harm to his *lāoi*. Above all, Hektor feels obliged to stand and fight Achilles by the prospect of the reproach “*Ἐκτωρ ἦφι βίηφι πιθήσας ὤλεσε λαόν*” (‘Hektor trusted in his own strength and destroyed his people’) (22. 107). Even Agamemnon, though he never openly admits any fault in his treatment of Chryses, agrees to give Chryseis back, because “*βούλομ’ ἐγὼ λαὸν σὼν ἔμμεναι ἢ ἀπολέσθαι*” (‘I wish my people to be saved, not to die’) (1. 117). Later he will admit defeat in the Trojan expedition altogether, first in feigned despair (2. 115) and then in truth (9. 22): “*πολὺν ὤλεσα λαόν*” (‘I have lost many of my people’).

ἡτίμασεν (‘dishonoured’) in line 11 brings in one of the few notions which is universally recognized to be central to Homeric values. While conventionally translated ‘honour’, poetic fieldwork shows that *τιμή* (*tīmē*) and its cognates cover the area of what is *due* to a person—recognized value, esteem, satisfaction. Every god, goddess, man, and woman wishes to have their due *tīmē*, and feels outraged to be denied it, to be *ἄτιμος* (*atimos*). This amounts to a kind of ‘code’.

Everyone agrees this much; but that is the beginning not the end of problems. *Tīmē* entails questions that are in the broadest sense ‘ethical’. What does some particular one deserve *tīmē* for, and how much? Who should grant it? What form should it take? Much of the *Iliad* is, in my view, spent on disputing just such questions as these, issues of just deserts, approval, disapproval, credit, and blame. This classic assertion could, then, hardly be further from the truth:⁸ ‘The heroic code was complete and unambiguous, so much so that neither the poet nor his characters ever had occasion to debate it.’ The characters are forever debating

and *χερσίτερος* (outstanding, middle-ranking, and lesser men) at 12. 269–70. Cf. Geddes, 21–2.

⁷ For instance at 13. 105 ff. Poseidon includes in the phrase *μεθημοσύνησι τε λαῶν* (‘through the reluctance of his people’) (108) those *ἄριστοι* (leading men) (117), such as Teukros and Antilochos, whom he is addressing.

⁸ Finley, 113.

ethical issues, especially when one character’s estimate of his due *tīmē* is not agreed by another. That is what the audience encounters straight away in the confrontation of Agamemnon and Chryses.

So, while it is never disputed that *tīmē* should be given where it is due (and denied where it is not), there is much debate between the characters over the application of this in practice. It is true that the poet does not explicitly state, let alone debate, ethical issues in his own voice, but he is the poet not the commentator.⁹ Even such well-known phrases as *αἰκέα μῆδετο ἔργα* (he devised shameful treatment) should be seen as evaluations for the characters within the narrative, not as comments from outside. ‘The evil is for the victim, not the doer.’¹⁰ Thus in line 25 *κακῶς ἀφίει* (he sent him shamefully on his way) is not a condemnation by the narrator: it conveys the effect of Agamemnon’s behaviour within the narrative—it is humiliating for Chryses. In Schiller’s terms the *Iliad* is ‘naïve’ as opposed to ‘sentimental’; in narratological terms, there is no moral judgement by the primary narrator-focalizer.¹¹

An outstanding test-case is provided by the passage where Menelaos is seriously considering the sparing of Adrestos, and Agamemnon rebukes him with ruthless sentiments (6. 55 ff.—see further pp. 162–3). These lines follow:

Ὡς εἰπὼν ἔτρεψεν ἀδελφείου φρένας ἥρως,
αἵσιμα παρειπὼν· ὁ δ’ ἀπὸ ἔθεν ὤσατο χεὶρὶ
ἥρω’ Ἀδρηστον· τὸν δὲ κρείων Ἀγαμέμνων
οὔτα κατὰ λαπάρην·

With these words the hero turned his brother’s mind, winning him with right advice. Menelaos pushed the hero Adrestos away from him with his hand, and lord Agamemnon stabbed him in the side. (6. 61–4)

I maintain that it is Menelaos, not the poet-narrator, who accepts Agamemnon’s call for blood as *αἵσιμα* (right). Two other passages support this, which is not the usual interpretation. In the only

⁹ This is less true, perhaps, of the *Odyssey*. I have in mind particularly the explicit attribution of blame in *Od.* 20. 394 *πρότεροι γὰρ αἰκέα μηχανόωντο* (because they had been the aggressors in evil deeds)—see further pp. 98–9.

¹⁰ Griffin, *HLD* 85, n. 9; cf. id. ‘Words’ (1986), 36 ff.

¹¹ See de Jong, *passim*, esp. 136 ff., a generally valuable discussion, though I take issue with her surprisingly perfunctory dismissal (205) of 6. 62. F. Frontisi-Ducroux, *La Cithare d’Achille: Essai sur la poétique de l’Iliade* (Rome, 1986) is also largely concerned with narratological perspectives; but see the review by H. Foley in *CPh* 84 (1989), 252–5.

other occurrence of αἶψα παρειπών, at 7. 121, Agamemnon persuades Menelaos not to take on the duel with Hector: clearly his words strike Menelaos as 'to the point'.¹² Even more clearly at *Od.* 22. 45 ff. Eurymachos concedes to Odysseus "ταῦτα μὲν αἶψα εἶπας" ('all you have said is right'), but still pleads that Antinoös was the guilty instigator. αἶψα conveys not moral approval, but the recognition that a good case has been made. The narrator does not issue moral directives.

The party which is missing from Finley's assertion is the audience. If it is conceded that the characters within the poem dispute ethical issues, then there must necessarily be room for the audience to consider the questions and to come to assessments independently of the characters. I would go farther and claim that a significant element in the perennial power of Homer is the challenges of evaluation which he sets his audience. That is why the poem begins with two scenes which provocatively demand ethical opinion without explicitly supplying it: Agamemnon's treatment of Chryses, and his great dispute with Achilles. It is important that the moral is *not* spelled out. Every generation, or rather every reader and hearer, has to make up their own mind. I, for one, find it impossible to remain neutral (as will emerge); yet I have to recognize that others have seen the issues in other lights.

Yet despite the lack of direct intervention by the primary narrator-focalizer, the *Iliad* is far from objective or impersonal; it is full of *implicit* colourings or 'focalizing'.¹³ It is the different and changing perceptions of these that open up the various interpretations. For instance, those who do not condemn Agamemnon for his treatment of Chryses have to interpret the implicit colouring of lines 22–3 quite differently from me. All the other Achaians support Chryses' plea, and urge respect for the priest and acceptance of the ransom (22–3). The evaluation of this will depend on how you see Agamemnon's status in relation to all the other Achaians¹⁴ (see further § 2.2), your sense of the importance of αἰδώς (*aidōs*), and your assessment of its applicability to this case.

¹² This is also indicated by the *παρ*- prefix, as in *παρπέπεισεν* in 7. 120. See P. Chantraine, *Grammaire homérique*, ii (Paris, 1953), 120 for *παρ*- of persuading or tricking.

¹³ This is the thesis of de Jong. See also S. Scully in *Arethusa*, 19 (1986), 135 ff.

¹⁴ Note πάντες ('all'). There is no further dissent when everyone approves of Diomedes at 7. 403, 9. 50, and of Hektor at 8. 542, 18. 310.

In Homeric anthropology *aidōs* is a central concept.¹⁵ It is essentially a sense or compunction which inhibits people from behaving badly, which is to say in a way that will attract disapproval. Or as Gould puts it of the appropriateness of *aidōs* towards suppliants:¹⁶ 'it is characteristically of the emotional *rejection* of some line of (usually aggressive) behaviour, possible under other circumstances to another agent, that αἰδώς words are used'. It is, so far as I can see, universally assumed in Homer that *aidōs* should be felt and heeded in appropriate circumstances; and that it is a fault to lack it or to override it.

The ἄποινα (*apoina*) offered by Chryses, described as ἀπερείσια (unlimited) and ἀγλαά (splendid) (13, 20, 23, etc.), is evidently assessed as more than adequate. There are scattered references throughout to the lucrative institution by which prisoners, male or female (like the mother of Andromache at 6. 425 ff.), might be sold off as slaves or ransomed to their kin—Priam speaks of both fates for his sons captured by Achilles (22. 44–51). The *aidōs*, however, is attached to Chryses' priesthood rather than his ransom. He has the outward symbols (14–15) and emphasizes his status at the end of his speech (21). Agamemnon makes it quite clear in line 28 that he does not care about Chryses' priesthood. His language throughout relishes his humiliation of Chryses, with its elaboration of his daughter's future subjection and disqualification from having a husband or legitimate children.¹⁷

However the listener may interpret the personal or religious ethics so far, the narrative has left it unclear as yet how far Agamemnon is politically entitled to settle the issue (assuming, that is, that I am right that *basilēi* in 9 does not establish him as *the* sovereign). Much has yet to be revealed, including the fact that Chryseïs is his γέρας (*geras*)—see further pp. 60–2. It is, however, emphasized that Chryses makes his plea to all the Achaians (15, 17, 22); so it is significant both that not one of them speaks out against Agamemnon, and that Chryses prays for punishment not just on Agamemnon but on all the Achaians (42, cf. 10, 51, 53, 56). As the narrative unfolds, it is clear that Apollo, whose

¹⁵ See S. West on *Od.* 2. 64–6 with refs., esp. Redfield, *NCI* 115–19.

¹⁶ *JHS* 93 (1973), 170.

¹⁷ This implicit colouring has been revealingly neglected by modern critics, perhaps in awe of the monarchy. A notable exception is J. Kakridis, *H. Rev.* 125 ff. esp. 130–1.

response is immediate and unchallenged on Olympos, regards all the Achaians as bound up with the offence of Agamemnon.

The brief but vivid Chryses episode is a kind of miniature 'rehearsal' for the great conflict which is to follow and to shape the poem.¹⁸ Insult over a captured woman *geras* (Chryseïs/Briseïs) leads to anger, which leads to a successful plea to an Olympian for vengeance on Agamemnon and all the Achaians. The great differences come later. Chryses' retribution is tidily called off after reparation is made: that between Achilles and Agamemnon will prove harder to undo, and by the time Briseïs is returned to Achilles a chain of events will have been started that leads to his own death and to the fall of Troy.

The sequence from offence to plague is very clear in the narrative. Is it clear to the characters involved? Nobody says so explicitly before Kalchas, at 93 ff., but there may be some encouragement to detect signs of an unspoken awareness before that. If so, it would be an index of the possible subtlety of Homeric narrative technique and of the indications given to the listener beneath the explicit text. Note first that it is Achilles, not Agamemnon, who has to summon the *ἀγορή* (*agorē*) (54 ff.), and that he addresses himself to Agamemnon at once. He takes it for granted that everyone knows that the plague is the result of an offence against Apollo, but he makes out that he is ignorant of the nature of the offence (62–7). Is he posing a question to which everyone can supply the answer? An open question perhaps at this stage. I suggest, however, that there is complicity near the surface when Kalchas turns to Achilles for protection:

“ἦ γὰρ ὄτομαι ἄνδρα χολωσέμεν, ὃς μέγα πάντων
Ἀργείων κρατέει καὶ οἱ πείθονται Ἀχαιοί.”

‘I think that I shall anger a man who holds great power over all the Argives and command among the Achaians.’ (1. 78–9)

Achilleus knows well whom he is referring to:

“οὐ τις ἐμεῦ ζώντος καὶ ἐπὶ χθονὶ δερκομένοιο
κοὶ κοίλῃς παρὰ νηυσὶ βαρείας χεῖρας ἐποίει
σμπάντων Δαναῶν, οὐδ’ ἦν Ἀγαμέμνονα εἴπηις,
ὃς νῦν πολλὸν ἄριστος Ἀχαιῶν εὖχεται εἶναι.”

¹⁸ Cf. Reinhardt, *ID* 42 ff., and, recently, Rabel (this is an important contribution, even though too much concerned, for my liking, with Achilles' psychology). For the notion of 'miniature' narratives see further pp. 87, 109, 257.

‘... while I live and see the light upon earth, no man will lay violent hands on you by our hollow ships, no man among the whole number of the Danaans, even if you speak of Agamemnon, who now claims to be far the best of the Achaians.’ (1. 88–91)

As often in Homer's narrative technique, a seed in the form of a passing hint or subtle implication grows, as the poem progresses, into a full-blown and explicit issue or theme.

2.2 When the understanding breaks down

Τὸν δ’ ἄρ’ ὑπόδρα ἰδὼν προσέφη πόδας ὠκὺς Ἀχιλλεύς·
“ὦ μοι, ἀναιδείην ἐπιεμένε, κερδαλέοφρον,
πῶς τίς τοι πρόφρων ἔπεσιν πείθεται Ἀχαιῶν 150
ἢ ὁδὸν ἐλθέμεναι ἢ ἀνδράσιν ἴφι μάχεσθαι;
οὐ γὰρ ἐγὼ Τρώων ἔνεκ’ ἤλυθον αἰχμητάων
δεῦρο μαχησόμενος, ἐπεὶ οὐ τί μοι αἰτιοί εἰσιν·
οὐ γὰρ πῶ ποτ’ ἐμὰς βοῦς ἤλασαν οὐδὲ μὲν ἵππους,
οὐδέ ποτ’ ἐν Φθίῃ ἐριβόλακι βωτιανείρῃ 155
καρπὸν ἐδηλήσαντ’, ἐπεὶ ἡ μάλα πολλὰ μεταξὺ
οὐρεά τε κσιόεντα θάλασσά τε ἠχήμεναι·
ἀλλὰ κοί, ὦ μέγ’ ἀναιδές, ἄμ’ ἐσπόμεθ’, ὅφρα σὺ χαίρηις,
τιμὴν ἀρνύμενοι Μενελάω κοί τε, κυνώπα,
πρὸς Τρώων· τῶν οὐ τι μετατρέπηι οὐδ’ ἀλεγίζεις· 160
καὶ δὴ μοι γέρας αὐτὸς ἀφαιρήσεσθαι ἀπειλεῖς,
ὣ ἐπὶ πολλὰ μόγησα, δόσαν δέ μοι νῆες Ἀχαιῶν.
οὐ μὲν κοί ποτε ἴσον ἔχω γέρας, ὅππότε’ Ἀχαιοὶ
Τρώων ἐκπέρωσ’ εὐ ναϊόμενον πτολίεθρον·
ἀλλὰ τὸ μὲν πλεῖον πολυαῖκος πολέμοιο 165
χεῖρες ἐμαὶ διέπουσ’· ἀτὰρ ἦν ποτε δασμὸς ἴκηται,
κοὶ τὸ γέρας πολὺ μεῖζον, ἐγὼ δ’ ὀλίγον τε φίλον τε
ἔρχομαι· ἔχων ἐπὶ νῆας, ἐπεὶ κε κάμω πολεμίζων.
νῦν δ’ εἵμι Φθίηνδ’, ἐπεὶ ἡ πολὺ φέρτερόν ἐστιν
οἴκαδ’ ἵμεν σὺν νηυσὶ κορωνίσιν, οὐδέ σ’ οὔω 170
ἐνθάδ’ ἄτμος ἐὼν ἄφενος καὶ πλοῦτον ἀφύζειν.”

Then swift-footed Achilles scowled at him and said: ‘Oh you, your thoughts are always set on gain, and shamelessness is your very clothing! How can any of the Achaians willingly follow your orders, to go on expeditions or fight an enemy with all their strength? It was not the spearmen of Troy who caused me to come here and fight—I have no quarrel with them. They have never rustled my cows or horses, or ravaged the crops in fertile Phthia, nurse of men: because between us there lie

many shadowing mountains and the roar of the sea. No, it was you, you great shameless creature, you we came with, to give you satisfaction and win requital from the Trojans for Menelaos and for you, dog-face. You have no thought or regard for this. And now you even threaten to take away my prize yourself—I laboured hard for it, and it was awarded me by the sons of the Achaians. I never have a prize equal to yours, whenever the Achaians sack some well-founded Trojan town. My hands bear the brunt of the battle's fury. But when the division comes, your prize is by far the larger, and I come back to the ships with something small but precious, when I have worn myself out in the fighting. Now I shall leave for Phthia. It is a far better thing for me to return home with my beaked ships, and I have no mind to stay here heaping up riches and treasure for you and receiving no honour myself.' (1. 148–71)

The opening scene, I have argued, has usually been received since Antiquity in the light of anachronistic models of monarchy which diminish its power and openness. In very much the same way, the confrontation between Achilles and Agamemnon is much debilitated by the notions of military hierarchy and of patriotic service which have been assumed.

Most interpreters have supposed that there is a simple and authoritative reply to Achilles' opening question in 150–1: why should he—why should *any* Achaian—bother to help Agamemnon at Troy? But no such response is given by Agamemnon or anyone else; and those possible replies put by Achilles in 152 ff. are raised only to be rejected.¹⁹ Above all, there is no claim here, nor anywhere else in the *Iliad*, that we are dealing with a Panhellenic war, undertaken under the unifying banner of patriotism against the oriental foe. This version of the Trojan war became standard in the fifth century BC, and may indeed have been invented in the wake of the Persian invasions.²⁰ It has usually been taken for granted ever since, not least by the ancient scholia.

Hand in hand with this Greek crusade against the barbarians goes the assumption that Agamemnon the king is the commander-in-chief of a military hierarchy. Both are alien to Homeric anthropology. Men who live in the territorial domains of Agamemnon are subject to a direct obligation;²¹ but there is no suggestion of

¹⁹ The γάρ ('for'—not in the translation) in 152 explains 150–1, but omits a stage in the argument: 'once I have posed this question, you cannot fob me off with any standard reason, because . . .'.

²⁰ This is the thesis of Hall's excellent book, esp. Ch. 1.

²¹ Cf. 13. 613 ff., 23. 296 ff., and Taplin, 'Agamemnon', 68.

any social structure according to which Achilles or any other *basileus* might be accused of mutiny or treason. There is no suggestion that Achilles should be put on trial or sent home or communally humiliated or lynched. Whatever his relationship to Agamemnon, it is not that he is fighting for king and country.

In the later Greek tradition the sanction of the unity of the expedition was the oath to Tyndareus taken by the suitors of Helen. The three allusions that there are in the *Iliad* to some sort of oath are low-key and indistinct.²² If the story of the suitors' oath, including or not including Achilles, predated the *Iliad*, it is not brought to bear. The plot could scarcely stand up if there were any such definitive and clear-cut arrangement.

The *Iliad* raises basic questions about the coherence of human society. Achilles' question here exposes, and hence disturbs, the very basis of the politico-military system which holds them all at Troy. Because it opens up the possibility of the disintegration of the enterprise, the question normally lies deeply suppressed. So, why fight for Agamemnon?

Achilles passes over the motive of simple, unprovoked acquisition of loot by implying (interestingly) that he would only attack those who are in some way *αἰτιοί* (*aitioi*). And he personally has no grudge against the Trojans. He sees the answer to his own question as posed in 150–1 as straightforward; and the assumptions of 158 ff. are in keeping with the evidence elsewhere for Homeric anthropology. He and his fellow *basilēes* are all at Troy to help two of their number, to help restore the damaged family *tīmē* of Menelaos and his brother—for *them* the Trojans are *aitioi*.

I suggest that the 'political' institution behind this is the gathering of a host, and that this can be coherently reconstructed by poetic fieldwork.²³ Either the 'summoners' themselves—like Agamemnon and Menelaos with Odysseus (*Od.* 24. 115 ff.)—or their agents—like Nestor and Odysseus with Achilles and Patroklos (11. 767 ff., cf. 7. 124 ff., 9. 252 ff.)—go about recruiting. The verbs used are *ἀγείρειν*, *κελεύειν*, and *ὀτρύνειν* ('gather', 'urge', 'stir up'), most often with *λαόν* (*lāon*) as the object. The 'summoned' may in response be ready and willing (as at 11. 782) or may need a lot of persuasion (as at *Od.* 24. 118–19). It would be in keeping

²² Cf. Taplin, 'Agamemnon', 68–9.

²³ Ibid. 67–70. It is often said that Agamemnon is *primus inter pares*: I do not understand what that means.

with Homeric anthropology for the summoners to appeal to past duties and obligations, and to make assurances for the future. However formal or informal the agreement might be (there is no good evidence), the summoner would, in a nutshell, offer proper honour, due esteem, *tīmē*.

Once the war is engaged, the summoned *basilēes* are committed to the supervision of the summoner, who acts as a co-ordinator and spokesman. At the same time they retain substantial independence, both off the field, where they can, for instance, call together an *agorē* or *boulē*, and on, where they lead their own men. There is a largely similar situation on the Trojan side also, where Priam is the 'summoner', though Hektor takes over on the battlefield. The term *ἐπίκουροι* (*epikouroi*) seems to be restricted to those aiding a defensive rather than offensive war; but, like the Achaeans, the Trojan *ἐπίκουροι* have been prevailed on by past obligations and by promises for the future. Thus, for example, Sarpedon complains (rather like Achilles) that he fights better than the Trojans even though he does not have possessions or relatives inside the city (5. 483–4).

This arrangement, by which one *basileus* fights for and obeys another in return for proper *tīmē*, is fine as long as it is working well. But there is bound to be within it an unclarity over when and whether it has broken down, and when and whether it should be overridden. There are circumstances when the obligation may be permissibly broken. The clearest illustration is the case of Glaukos and Diomedes. Glaukos has advanced bravely on Diomedes, who is at his most dangerous (cf. 6. 96–101); yet after Glaukos' fine speech offering the fragility of human life as all the more reason for standing out in front,²⁴ Diomedes' spear is fixed in the soil instead of in Glaukos' flesh (6. 212–14, contrast 20. 153). They are *ξείνοι πατρώιοι* (ancestral guest-friends). Diomedes concludes with lines which, under more familiar national and military systems, might seem treacherous:

“ἔγχεα δ’ ἀλλήλων ἀλεώμεθα καὶ δι’ ὀμίλου·
πολλοὶ μὲν γὰρ ἐμοὶ Τρῶες κλειτοὶ τ’ ἐπίκουροι,
κτείνειν δὲν κε θεός γε πόρῃ καὶ ποσσὶ κιχέλω,
πολλοὶ δ’ αὖ τοὶ Ἀχαιοὶ ἐναιρέμεν δὲν κε δύνῃται.”

'Let us keep away from each other's spears, even in the thick of the fighting. There are many of the Trojans and their famous allies for me

²⁴ See Macleod, 11–13.

to kill, any of them that god sets in my way and my legs can catch: and again many Achaians for you to cut down, all those you can.' (6. 226–9)

The point is that their mutual bond of *ξενία* (guest-friendship) is stronger than the obligation which either has towards his summoner. It is important that a Trojan ought not to have behaved like Glaukos, nor ought Agamemnon or Menelaos to have behaved like Diomedes—as has just been seen in the scene with Adrestos (6. 37ff., see further p. 163).

There is, however, the constant underlying possibility of a far more drastic breakdown: when a summoned *basileus* declares that the summoner has somehow reneged on the original agreement. As it happens, the Lycian *epikouros* Glaukos illustrates this also. In book 17, unaware that the body of Sarpedon has been supernaturally rescued, Glaukos reproaches Hektor with not really trying to save him:

“φράζεο νῦν ὅπως κε πόλιν καὶ ἄστυ σωῶσης
οἶος σὺν λαοῖς τοῖς Ἰλίοις ἐγγεγάσιν·
οὐ γάρ τις Λυκίων γε μαχηόμενος Δαναοῖσιν
εἴσι περὶ πτόλιος, ἐπεὶ οὐκ ἄρα τις χάρις ἦεν
μάρνασθαι δῆτοισιν ἐπ’ ἀνδράσι νωλεμές αἰεὶ.”

'So you must think now how to save your city and settlement by yourself, with the people whose homeland is Ilios. No Lycian now will go out to fight the Danaans for your city, since it appears there is no thanks if a man fights the enemy relentlessly on and on.' (17. 144–8)²⁵

This brings in the important notion of *χάρις* (*charis*),²⁶ which underlies many Homeric social bonds, including that of 'summoner and summoned'. Achilles may be glancing at this with the cognate *χαίρη* ('to give you satisfaction') in 1. 158.

Glaukos makes his threat in the heat of battle and does not act upon it. Achilles, on the other hand, is in the official and public setting of the *agorē*. In 1. 149ff. he deploys cogent rhetoric to strip down the politics of Agamemnon's war to the level of the initial *charis* agreement, a level that is usually regarded as too basic to be reopened. Achilles' claim is that that agreement is off: his

²⁵ On 9. 316–17 (= 17. 147–8) see further p. 68.

²⁶ See Hoekstra on *Od.* 15. 139. On the fundamental importance of reciprocity in Homeric anthropology see Donlan, *passim* (though he does not pay particular attention to *χάρις*). The parallels between Achilles in 9 and Glaukos in 17 are pointed out by C. Moulton in *Hermes*, 109 (1981), 5–8.

rightful expectation of *tīmē* has been so far disappointed that he is left *atīmos*. So there is no good reason to obey Agamemnon or to fight or even to stay at Troy.

It takes a drastic breach of *charis*, such as Hektor's alleged failure to fight for Sarpedon's body, to bring things to this threat of breakdown. Part of the great challenge to the audience in this scene is to come to some assessments of its rights and wrongs. I suggest that the issue is more complicated and more 'political' than merely, as it is usually represented, an affront to personal honour. The dispute is not private and is not 'only' over a captive woman. Achilles' immediate complaint is that Agamemnon is threatening to take away another leader's *γέρας* (*geras*). This particular institution, central to the whole quarrel, has not received proper attention.

A *geras* is far more than an item of booty. In addition to the general distribution of spoils when they have been taken, there is a special *geras* for some distinguished individuals, though it never emerges how they are chosen. It seems that there are *gera* whenever there has been a major haul: that is the only way to make sense of Achilles' lines 163–8 and of the closely related passage in book 9:

“δώδεκα δὴ σὺν νηυσὶ πόλεις ἀλάπαξ’ ἀνθρώπων,
 πεζὸς δ’ ἑνδεκά φημι κατὰ Τροίην ἐρίβωλον·
 τῶν ἐκ πασέων κειμήλια πολλὰ καὶ ἐσθλὰ
 ἐξελόμην, καὶ πάντα φέρων Ἀγαμέμνονι δόσκον
 Ἀτρεΐδῃ· ὁ δ’ ὅπισθε μένων παρὰ νηυσὶ θοῇσι
 δεξάμενος διὰ παῦρα δαδάσκετο, πολλὰ δ’ ἔχεσκεν.
 ἄλλα δ’ ἀριστήεσσι δίδου γέρα καὶ βασιλεῦσι,
 τοῖσι μὲν ἔμπεδα κείται, ἐμεῦ δ’ ἀπὸ μούνου Ἀχαιῶν
 εἴλετ’, ἔχει δ’ ἄλοχον θυμαρέα.”

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‘I have sacked twelve of men's cities from my ships, and I claim eleven more by land across the fertile Troad. From all of these I took many fine treasures, and every time I brought them all and gave them to Agamemnon son of Atreus: and every time, back there by the fast ships he had never left, he would take them in, share out a few, and keep the most for himself. All the other prizes he gave to the kings and leading men stay safe with their owners. I am the only Achaian he has robbed. He has taken my wife, my heart's love—’ (9. 328–36)

Two passages early in the poem which seem to imply that each leader has received only one *geras* during nine years of campaign

should probably be seen as the product of rhetoric. When Agamemnon complains

“αὐτὰρ ἐμοὶ γέρας αὐτίχ’ ἐτοιμάσατ’, ὄφρα μὴ οἶος
 Ἀργείων ἀγέραστος ἔω, ἐπεὶ οὐδὲ ἔοικε·
 λεύσσετε γὰρ τό γε πάντες, ὃ μοι γέρας ἔρχεται ἄλλῃ.”

‘But you must produce another prize for me without delay, so that I am not the only one of the Argives without a prize, as that would not be right—you can all see for yourselves that my own prize is leaving my hands.’ (1. 118–20)

he exaggeratedly speaks as though Chryseis were his only *geras*. Similarly his glossing of Briseis as τὸ σὸν γέρας (that prize of yours) at 185 emphasizes his determination to chastise Achilles by taking the *geras* that means most to him (hence τό (that)).

A *geras* is bestowed by the whole host; it is a communally ratified distinction. That is clear everywhere except in two passages in Achilles' great speech to Odysseus. In 9. 334, just quoted above, δίδου implies that Agamemnon gave out the *gera*; and some later lines are explicit:

“γέρας δέ μοι, ὅς περ ἔδωκεν
 αὐτὶς ἐφυβρίζων ἔλετο κρείων Ἀγαμέμνων
 Ἀτρεΐδης.”

‘But my prize of honour—he gave it, and he, lord Agamemnon, son of Atreus, has taken it back to my insult.’ (9. 367–8)

These may simply be inconsistencies; but, in view of institutions clearly set up in book 1, I am more inclined to see them as a rhetorical device to insinuate that Agamemnon uses his power arbitrarily.

Achilles emphasizes from the start that it is the Achaian host as a whole which distributes *gera*:

“Ἀτρεΐδῃ κύδιστε, φιλοκτεανώτατε πάντων,
 πῶς γάρ τοι δώσουσι γέρας μεγάθυμοι Ἀχαιοί;
 οὐδέ τί που ἴδμεν ξυνήϊα κείμενα πολλά·
 ἀλλὰ τὰ μὲν πολίων ἐξεπράθομεν, τὰ δέδασται,
 λαοὺς δ’ οὐκ ἐπέοικε παλίλλογα ταῦτ’ ἐπαγεῖρειν.”

‘Glorious son of Atreus, most acquisitive of all men, how are the great-hearted Achaians to give you a prize? We do not know of any stores of common treasure piled anywhere. What we took at the sacking of cities

has all been divided, and it is not right that the army should gather it back again.' (I. 122-6)²⁷

Agamemnon acknowledges this fact:

“ἀλλ’ εἰ μὲν δώσουσι γέρας μεγάθυμοι Ἀχαιοί,
ἄρσαντες κατὰ θυμόν, ὅπως ἀντάξιον ἔσται
εἰ δέ κε μὴ δώωσιν,”

‘No, if the great-hearted Achaians will give me a prize, suiting it to my heart’s liking, to be of equal value—then so be it. But if they will not . . .’ (I. 135-7)

Achilleus reiterates in 161-2 the complaint that Agamemnon is threatening to take, on his own authority, the gift bestowed by all the Achaians; and Nestor independently confirms this in his attempt to tell them that they are both wrong—and both right:

“μήτε σὺ τόνδ’ ἀγαθὸς περ ἔων ἀποαίρεο κόρην,
ἀλλ’ ἔα, ὥς οἱ πρῶτα δόσαν γέρας νῆες Ἀχαιῶν.”

‘You, great man though you are, do not take the girl from him, but let her be, as the sons of the Achaians gave her to him in the beginning as his prize.’ (I. 275-6)²⁸

In the opening scene with Chryses it was left open whether Agamemnon was within his rights to answer in such personal terms (note ἐγώ (‘I’) in lines 26 and 29), despite the views of all the other Achaians. Once it emerges in 118 onwards that Chryseïs is his *geras*, it becomes even more questionable whether he should have retained the gift of the host against its will. Achilleus, it seems, applies the converse of this principle: that since the whole host, by raising no objections, goes along with Agamemnon’s seizure of Briseïs, the whole host is taking her back. That is the point of the plural verb in his assurance in 298-9 that he will not fight with anyone for her “ἐπεὶ μὲν ἀφέλεσθέ γε δόντες” (‘you [plural] gave her, and you have taken her away’). It is often held against Achilleus that his vindictiveness against *all* the Achaians for Agamemnon’s offence is selfish pride; but it is far from arbitrary. He regards them all, by their silence, as involved in the humiliating retraction of his *geras*. This is the explanation of his insults in

²⁷ οὐκ ἐπέοικε (‘it is not right’) in 126 answers Agamemnon’s οὐδὲ ἔοικε (‘that would not be right’) in 119. My argument is not seriously affected if λαοὺς in 126 should mean [‘taken’] from the army’.

²⁸ The point is still being made by Achilleus at 16. 56 and Thetis at 18. 444.

“δημοβόρος βασιλεύς, ἐπεὶ οὐτιδανοῖσιν ἀνάσσει·
ἦ γὰρ ἄν, Ἀτρεΐδῃ, νῦν ὕστατα λωβήσαιο.”

‘. . . king who feeds fat on his people, with mere ciphers for subjects: otherwise, son of Atreus, this would now be your last outrage.’ (I. 231-2)

And in his great oath enjambement emphasizes that everyone, not just Agamemnon, will miss him:

“ἦ ποτ’ Ἀχιλλῆος ποθὴ ἵξεται νῆας Ἀχαιῶν
σύμπαντας.”

‘I swear now that there will come a time when the loss of Achilleus will be felt by the whole number of the sons of the Achaians.’ (240-1)

So the request that he asks Thetis to take to Zeus for him is that the Achaians should suffer heavy casualties ἵνα πάντες ἐπαύρωνται βασιλῆος (so that all may have enjoyment of their king) (410).²⁹ They have in effect submitted themselves to a single *basileus*, and now they must pay for his *ἄτη* (*ātē*). Just as the host as a whole suffered for Agamemnon’s maltreatment of Chryses, so they are caught up in his offence against Achilleus.

Most interpreters over the centuries have condemned Achilleus’ behaviour as egotistical and insubordinate. This is to underrate the political dimension to his case and to overrate the hierarchical standing of Agamemnon. The late eighth and early seventh century BC was not a time of unquestioned authority and social structures—such questions were open. Epic was a way of exploring political development by setting up difficult questions, questions which in real life might be intolerably confused and explosive.

At the same time, Homer subtly supplies a personal level to this dispute, implying a backlog of resentment between the two leaders ‘before the poem began’ so to speak. After the complicity of Achilleus and Kalchas (see above, p. 54), a long-smouldering resentment breaks into flame in the speech at 163 ff. That is the effect of “οὐ μὲν σοὶ ποτε . . . ὁππότε . . . ἀτὰρ ἤν ποτε” (‘I never . . . whenever . . . but when . . .’), and of the verb of protracted labour ἀφύζειν (‘heaping up’). Again in 226 ff.—(οὐτε ποτέ . . . (‘never’))

²⁹ Compare the way that in the Ithakan *agorē* Mentor blames the citizens for not doing anything to stop the suitors: “νῦν δ’ ἄλλωι δῆμωι νεμεσίζομαι, οἷον ἅπαντες ἦσθ’ ἄνεωι, ἀτὰρ οὐ τι καθαπτόμενοι ἐπέεσσιν παύρους μνηστῆρας κατερύκετε πολλοὶ ἔδοντες.” (‘But I am indignant with the rest of the people, for the way you sit in silence; and you do nothing to complain about the suitors, even though you are many and they are few, and you could restrain them.’) (*Od.* 2. 239-42).

and resumed in book 9, especially 321 ff.—the implication is that not just now but for nine years Agamemnon has been acquisitively inactive, while Achilles has done all the work for inadequate reward. A long-standing feud is also suggested by Agamemnon's reply in

“ἔχθιστος δέ μοι ἔσσι διοτρεφέων βασιλῆων
αἰεὶ γάρ τοι ἔρις τε φίλη πόλεμοι τε μάχαι τε.”

‘Of all the kings whom Zeus sustains you are the most hateful to me—always your delight is in quarrelling and wars and battle.’ (I. 176–7)³⁰

So the political and ethical dispute is given personal colouring and plausibility. Furthermore it is dynamic not static, developing with the narrative as each adds further provocation. A more magnanimous leader than Agamemnon might have acknowledged that the interests of the gods are unpredictable and have accepted that Apollo has taken away his *geras* (cf. 182). He would then not have got angry with Kalchas (though the predictability of that may also have an unspoken past—see further p. 86). And he would not have added the fatal rider to the return of Chryseis.

“αὐτὰρ ἐμοὶ γέρας αὐτίχ’ ἐτοιμάσατ’, ὄφρα μὴ οἶος
Ἀργείων ἀγέρατος ἔω, ἐπεὶ οὐδὲ ἔοικε.
λεύσσετε γὰρ τό γε πάντες, ὃ μοι γέρας ἔρχεται ἄλλῃ.”

‘But you must produce another prize for me without delay, so that I am not the only one of the Argives without a prize, as that would not be right—you can all see for yourselves that my own prize is leaving my hands.’ (I. 118–20)

Whatever the ethical rights and wrongs of this claim. Agamemnon is put in a completely new situation by Achilles' response in 149–71. He is driven into a corner where the only way for him to salvage his standing is to tell Achilles that he can do without him: let him go home and rule his relatively obscure kingdom. After Achilles' challenge to his very credibility as the ‘summoner’, he resorts to his other sanction, the last resort, bare force. Provoked by Achilles' suggestion that he might deserve *ἱσον γέρας* (an equal prize) (163), Agamemnon concludes with a defiance which, however ill-advised it turns out to be, is politically and personally plausible:

³⁰ Unless Aristarchos was right to reject 177 as an inapposite parallel drawn from 5. 891? Why should Agamemnon object to Achilles' warcraft?

“ἐγὼ δέ κ’ ἄγω Βρισηΐδα καλλιπάρηιον
αὐτὸς ἰὼν κλισίῃνδε, τὸ δὲ γέρας, ὄφρ’ εὖ εἰδῆς
ὅσσον φέρτερός εἰμι σέθεν, στυγέη δὲ καὶ ἄλλος
ἱσον ἐμοὶ φάσθαι καὶ ὁμοιωθῆμεναι ἄντην.”

‘... so I shall take the beautiful Briseis, your prize, going myself to fetch her from your hut, so that you can fully realise how much I am your superior, and others too can shrink from speaking on a level with me and openly claiming equality.’ (I. 184–7)

Agamemnon's assertion that he is *φέρτερος* (superior) (cf. also 324–5) is confirmed by Nestor, who produces it as his only good reason for Achilles to be reconciled:

“εἰ δὲ σὺ καρτερός ἔσσι, θεὰ δὲ σε γείνατο μήτηρ,
ἀλλ’ ὃ γε φέρτερός ἐστιν, ἐπεὶ πλεόνεσσιν ἀνάσσει.”

‘You may be a man of strength, with a goddess for your mother, but he is the more powerful, because his rule is wider.’ (I. 280–1)

Agamemnon thus reminds those who stay with him at Troy that, if an issue is ever reduced to a trial of strength, then he will win. When Achilles seriously considers attempting to assassinate Agamemnon, at 188–91, he too faces the brute truth that in the last resort, when social bonds fail, things come down to force.

And it *seems* to be the pragmatics of physical strength which win the day in the *agorē*. In 297 ff. Achilles concedes that, since all the Achaeans have implicitly supported Agamemnon, he will not resist the seizure of Briseis. By then, however, the audience knows better, and so does Achilles—but no one else, not even Nestor. Contrary to the apparent triumph of Agamemnon, Achilles has the reassurance of Athene that he will eventually get the better of the dispute. He has even had the satisfaction of hearing her confirm his description of Agamemnon's behaviour as *ὑβρις* (arrogance). His true position of strength is soon confirmed by the further intervention of Thetis.

Again, as in the scene with Chryses, Agamemnon is deluded in his self-assertion. Again he is unaware, in his apparent success, of the future trouble that he has set in motion.³¹ In spurning Achilles, Agamemnon takes comfort from the belief that Zeus esteems him (cf. Nestor at 277–9):

³¹ This fits well with the case made by Rabel (‘Chryses and the Opening of the *Iliad*’) for seeing the initial Chryses scene as a kind of premonitory miniature of the main quarrel.

“πάρ’ ἔμοιγε καὶ ἄλλοι
οἳ κέ με τιμήσουσι, μάλιστα δὲ μητίετα Ζεύς.”

‘I have others with me who will show me honour, and chief among them Zeus the counsellor himself.’ (1. 174–5)

He is mistaken, however. By the time of book 9, Zeus will have tipped things against him so far that Nestor speaks plainly:

“ὦ δὲ σῶι μεγαλήτορι θυμῶι
εἷξας ἄνδρα φέρινον, ὃν ἄθάνατοί περ ἔτεισαν,
ἡτίμησας· ἐλὼν γὰρ ἔχεις γέρας.”

‘But you gave in to your heart’s high passion and brought dishonour on the greatest of men, a man whom the very immortals have honoured—you have taken his prize and keep it for yourself.’ (9. 109–11)

And Agamemnon himself concedes

“ὦ γέρον, οὗ τι ψεῦδος ἐμὰς ἄτας κατέλεξας·
ἁσάμην, οὐδ’ αὐτὸς ἀναίνομαι. ἀντί νυ πολλῶν
λαῶν ἐστὶν ἀνὴρ ὃν τε Ζεὺς κῆρι φιλήσῃ,
ὥς νῦν τοῦτον ἔτεισε, δάμασσε δὲ λαὸν Ἀχαιῶν.
ἀλλ’ ἐπεὶ ἁσάμην φρεσὶ λευγαλέῃσι πιθήσας,”

‘Old man, your talk of my blindness is no lie: I was blinded, I do not deny it myself. A man loved from the heart by Zeus is worth many armies—just as now Zeus has honoured this man, and broken the army of the Achaeans. But since I was blinded and listened to my heart’s wretched persuasion . . .’ (9. 115–19)

So Achilles can say with some justification, when he rejects the human *timē* offered by Phoinix

“Φοῖνιξ, ἄττα γεραιέ, διοτρεφές, οὗ τί με ταύτης
χρεὼ τιμῆς· φρονέω δὲ τετιμῆσθαι Διὸς αἵσῃ.”

‘Phoinix, old father, my lord, I have no need of that honour. I think I am already held in honour by the will of Zeus.’ (9. 607–8)

2.3 Paying back outrage

“γέρας δέ μοι, ὅς περ ἔδωκεν
αὐτὶς ἐφυβρίζων ἔλετο κρείων Ἀγαμέμνων
Ἀτρεΐδης· τῶι πάντ’ ἀγορευέμεν, ὥς ἐπιτέλλω,
ἀμφοδόν, ὅφρα καὶ ἄλλοι ἐπισκύζωνται Ἀχαιοί,
εἴ τινά που Δαναῶν ἔτι ἔλπεται ἐξαπατήσιν,”

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αἶεν ἀναιδείην ἐπιειμένος· οὐδ’ ἂν ἔμοιγε
τετλαίη κύνεός περ ἐὼν εἰς ὦπα ἰδέσθαι·
οὐδέ τί οἱ βουλὰς κυμφράσσομαι, οὐδὲ μὲν ἔργον·
ἐκ γὰρ δὴ μ’ ἀπάτησε καὶ ἥλιτεν· οὐδ’ ἂν ἔτ’ αὐτὶς
ἐξαπάφουτ’ ἐπέεσσιν· ἄλις δέ οἱ· ἀλλὰ ἔκηλος
ἐρρέτω· ἐκ γάρ εὐ φρένας εἴλετο μητίετα Ζεύς.
ἐχθρὰ δέ μοι τοῦ δῶρα, τίω δέ μιν ἐν καρὸς αἵσῃ.
οὐδ’ εἴ μοι δεκάκις τε καὶ εἰκοσάκις τόσα δοίη
ὄσσα τέ οἱ νῦν ἔστι, καὶ εἴ ποθεν ἄλλα γένοιτο,
οὐδ’ ὅς ἐς Ὀρχομένον ποτινίσσεται, οὐδ’ ὅσα Θήβας
Αἰγυπτίας, ὅθι πλείστα δόμοις ἐν κτήματα κείται,
αἷ θ’ ἐκατόμυλοι εἰσι, διηκόσιοι δ’ ἂν’ ἐκάστας
ἄνερες ἐξοιχνεύσι σὺν ἵπποισιν καὶ ὄχρεσφιν·
οὐδ’ εἴ μοι τόσα δοίη ὅσα ψάμαθός τε κόνις τε,
οὐδέ κεν ὥς ἔτι θυμὸν ἐμὸν πείσει· Ἀγαμέμνων,
πρὶν γ’ ἀπὸ πᾶσαν ἐμοὶ δόμεναι θυμαλγέα λῶβην.”

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‘But my prize of honour—he gave it, and he, lord Agamemnon, son of Atreus, has taken it back to my insult. Tell him all that I say, and openly, so that the rest of the Achaeans can feel anger too, if he is hoping still to cheat some other Danaan, clothed as ever in shamelessness—yet, dog that he is, he would not dare to look me in the face. I will not join him in plan or in action. He has cheated me and wronged me. He will not work his cheating tongue on me again. Enough already. No, he can take himself to ruin at his own pace—Zeus the counsellor has robbed his wits. I abominate his gifts, I care not a splinter for the man. Not even if he offered me ten times or twenty times all he possesses now, and others’ wealth besides, not even all the riches that pour into Orchomenos, or Thebes in Egypt, where the houses are piled high with treasure, and the city has a hundred gates, and through each gate two hundred men drive out with horses and chariots: not even if he offered me gifts unnumbered like the sand or dust—not even so could Agamemnon yet turn my mind, until he pays me the full price for all this wrong that pains my heart.’ (9. 367–87)

The next ‘confrontation’ between Agamemnon and Achilles will take place in private not public, and Agamemnon will be represented by his delegation. The complexity of ethical considerations has again left room for a wide range of responses and assessments. Achilles’ rejection of the embassy has been seen as everything from unheroic egocentricity to a magnificent stand for human integrity. If the fieldwork arising from book 1 is at all along the

right lines, then some interpretations of book 9 will emerge as doing far more justice than others to the poem as it is shaped.³²

First, there is no disputing that Agamemnon more than fulfils Athene's prediction of 1.212-14: he is offering back Briseïs, untouched, and a huge quantity of gifts which he catalogues in detail, to be accurately recorded by Odysseus (9.122-57 virtually=264-99). Yet Achilles' response is to spell out more fully and vividly the same resentments as he began to formulate in book 1.

“οὐτ’ ἔμεγ’ Ἀτρεΐδην Ἀγαμέμνονα πεισέμεν οἶω
οὐτ’ ἄλλους Δαναούς, ἐπεὶ οὐκ ἄρα τις χάρις ἦεν
μάρνασθαι δῆϊοισιν ἐπ’ ἀνδράσι νωλεμές αἰεῖ.”

‘I do not think that Agamemnon son of Atreus will win me over, nor the rest of the Danaans, since it now appears that there is no thanks if a man fights the enemy relentlessly on and on.’ (9.315-17)

He goes on (lines 328-36 are quoted above on p. 60) to complain, as before, that he has done all the fighting, while Agamemnon has taken the lion's share of the rewards. Yet he has, as the final ingratitude, taken his *geras*, his *ἄλοχον θυμαρέα* (‘my wife, my heart's love’) (see further § 8.2).

How, in view of all the compensation plus Briseïs, can Achilles still maintain that the *charis*-compact remains spoiled or unsatisfied? Although his rhetoric is full of disconcertingly unpredictable jumps, it would be quite wrong to dismiss it as incoherent rant. Let me, for now, pull out one thread, a new and insistent complaint against Agamemnon: that he has in some sense *deceived* him, and, having done so once, he will not have the chance to do it again.

“νῦν δ’ ἐπεὶ ἐκ χειρῶν γέρας εἴλετο καί μ’ ἀπάτησε,
μή μιν πειράτω εὖ εἰδότες οὐδέ με πείσει.”

‘Now that he has taken my prize from my hands and cheated me, let him not try me. I know him well now—he will not persuade me.’ (344-5)³³

³² The bibliography on Achilles in book 9 is immense. Among the most helpful contributions I have found: Owen, 94ff.; Reinhardt, *ID* 212ff.; D. E. Eichholz, *AYP* 74 (1953), 137ff.; Whitman, Ch. 9 (181ff.); Motzkus, *passim*; Lohmann, Ch. 5 (213ff.); D. B. Claus, *TAPA* 105 (1975), 13ff.; Redfield, *NCI* 3ff.; Schein, 104ff.; S. Nimis, *CW* 79 (1985-6), 217ff.; Edwards, *HPI* 214ff.

³³ *μή μιν πειράτω* (‘let him not try me’) suggests an awareness of Nestor's strategy—cf. *πειρᾶν* (‘make every effort’) in 9.181.

He returns to this in 367-78. The warning to his fellow Achaians that Agamemnon is still *ἀναιδείην ἐπιειμένος* (clothed as ever in shamelessness) (372, cf. 1.149) leads into the rush of staccato, enjambed clauses which are stylistically the most extraordinary passage of his virtuoso speech.³⁴

“οὐδ’ ἂν ἔτ’ αὖτις ἐξαπάφοιτ’ ἐπέεσσιν” (‘he will not work his cheating tongue on me again’). There is no suggestion of any deceit about the material gifts: it is verbal. I suggest that the prelude to the embassy gives substance to Achilles' complaint. When Nestor first proposed the mission he said

“ἀλλ’ ἔτι καὶ νῦν
φραζώμεσθ’ ὥς κέν μιν ἀρεσκάμενοι πεπύθωμεν
δώροισιν τ’ ἀγανοῖσιν ἐπεσσι τε μιλίχοισι.”

‘But even at this late day let us consider how we may appease him and win him over with soothing gifts and kind persuasion.’ (9.111-13)

Agamemnon's response is strong on gifts,³⁵ but contains nothing whatsoever about the words to be offered to Achilles. He avoids even naming Achilles, and the four lines with which he concludes are hardly *ἔπεα μιλίχια* (kind persuasion):

“δηθήτω—Ἄϊδος τοι ἀμείλιχος ἦδ’ ἀδάμαστος·
τοῦνεκα καὶ τε βροτοῖσι θεῶν ἔχθιστος ἀπάντων—
καί μοι ὑποστήτω, ὅσσον βασιλεύτερός εἰμι
ἦδ’ ὅσσον γενεῇ προγενέστερος εὖχομαι εἶναι.”

‘Let him yield—Hades is the one who never pities or yields, and for that he is of all gods the most hated by men—and let him submit to me, in that I am the greater king and can claim to be his senior in age.’ (9.158-61)

In Nestor's reply

“δῶρα μὲν οὐκέτ’ ὀνοστόα διδοῖς Ἀχιλλῆϊ ἄνακτι·
ἀλλ’ ἄγετε, κλητοὺς δρύνομεν, οἳ κε τάχιστα”

‘... no-one can now find fault with the gifts you offer to lord Achilles. Come then, let us pick men . . .’ (9.164-5)

³⁴ For something remotely comparable, see Telemachos' words of restrained anger against Antimachos at *Od.* 17.400.

³⁵ Note the quantity of women: seven from Lesbos plus Briseïs herself, a choice of twenty Trojans (barring only Helen), and one of his own daughters as well. Is this *too* many to be diplomatic? In 19.242ff. all except Briseïs and the seven from Lesbos are quietly forgotten.

the phrasing of δῶρα μὲν . . . ἀλλά . . . ('... the gifts . . . Come then . . .') makes the point that he is having to organize the verbal and diplomatic side, since Agamemnon has failed to cover that.

The opening lines of Achilles' reply to Odysseus go straight to this flaw:

“διογενὲς Λαερτιάδη, πολυμήχαν’ Ὀδυσσεύ,
 χρὴ μὲν δὴ τὸν μῦθον ἀπηλεγέως ἀποιπεῖν,
 ἦι περ δὴ φρονέω τε καὶ ὥς τετελεσμένον ἔσται, 310
 ὥς μὴ μοι τρύζῃτε παρήμενοι ἄλλοθεν ἄλλος.
 ἐχθρὸς γάρ μοι κείνος ὁμῶς Αἰῖδαο πύλῃσιν
 ὅς χ’ ἕτερον μὲν κεύθῃ ἐνὶ φρεσίν, ἄλλο δὲ εἴπηι·
 αὐτὰρ ἐγὼν ἐρέω ὥς μοι δοκεῖ εἶναι ἄριστα·
 οὔτ’ ἔμεγ’ Ἀτρεΐδην Ἀγαμέμνονα πεισέμεν οἶω 315
 οὔτ’ ἄλλους Δαναούς, ἐπεὶ οὐκ ἄρα τις χάρις ἦεν
 μάρνασθαι δηϊοῖσιν ἐπ’ ἀνδράσι νωλεμέσιν αἰεὶ.”

'Royal son of Laertes, resourceful Odysseus, what I say I must say outright, and tell you bluntly how I think and what will happen, so that you do not sit here and coo your blandishments at me one after another. I hate like the gates of Hades the man who hides one thing in his mind and speaks another. But I will tell you what seems right to me. I do not think that Agamemnon son of Atreus will win me over, nor the rest of the Danaans, since it now appears that there is no thanks if a man fights the enemy relentlessly on and on.' (9. 308–17)

In a sense the superb couplet 312–13 refers to Achilles himself, with γάρ ('for') explaining the general sentiment: he will exemplify his own ethics. But in another sense κείνος ('that man') has evident reference to Odysseus, i.e. γάρ explains the ἄλλοθεν ἄλλος ('one after another') of 311, and αὐτὰρ ἐγὼν ('but I . . .') is in contrast with κείνος ('that man'). So Achilles senses a deception.

For an alert listener there is even a reference to the four lines of Agamemnon (158–61) which Odysseus has been careful to suppress. Hades is ἐχθιστος (most hated) of the gods, and the deceiver is as ἐχθρός (hated) as the gates of Hades. Later, even more strikingly, Achilles' βασιλεύτερος ('higher king') in 392 will contemptuously 'pick up' Agamemnon's use of the word in 160.³⁶ Taken in its whole context the couplet may even have a third level of submerged application as a parenthetical explanation referring

³⁶ For the narrative device of characters' 'knowing' something that they have not, strictly speaking, heard, see further p. 150.

to Agamemnon.³⁷ His failure of *charis* (316) has to do with the lack of correspondence between what his ambassador says and what he hides in his heart.

This emphasis on verbal deceit, on the failure of words to match φρένες (mind), supports the interpretation of Achilles' case as resting on a rejection of any simple or direct equation between *tīmē* and material goods. Achilles is 'coming off the gold standard'. This rejection of merely material rating is often described by the catch-phrase 'breaking the heroic code'. If this implies that Achilles puts himself clearly in the wrong, or outside the pale of his community, then I think that is mistaken. We have already seen Nestor indirectly anticipating his response; and Odysseus' speech is far from purely materialist. For 35 lines he stresses the danger posed by Hektor to the whole Achaian camp and reminds Achilles of paternal advice, before he comes to Agamemnon's offer. He is also careful to add a dissociating coda after that:

“εἰ δέ τοι Ἀτρεΐδης μὲν ἀπήχθετο κηρόθι μᾶλλον,
 αὐτὸς καὶ τοῦ δῶρα, σὺ δ’ ἄλλους περ Παναχαιοὺς
 τειρομένους ἐλέαιρε κατὰ στρατόν, οἳ σε θεὸν ὥς
 τεύουσ’· ἦ γάρ κέ σφι μάλα μέγα κῦδος ἄροιο.
 νῦν γάρ χ’ Ἔκτορ’ ἔλοισι, ἐπεὶ ἂν μάλα τοι σχεδὸν ἔλθοι
 λύσσαν ἔχων ὀλοήν, ἐπεὶ οὐ τίνα φησιν ὁμοῖον
 οἷ’ ἔμεναι Δαναῶν, οὐς ἐνθάδε νῆες ἔνεικαν.”

'But if hatred for the son of Atreus has grown too strong in your heart, for the man and for his gifts, then still have pity on all the other Achaians of the army in their affliction, and they will honour you like a god. You could win the very greatest glory in their eyes, because now you could kill Hektor. With this fatal madness on him he would come up close to face you, since he thinks there is no match for him among all the Danaans carried here in our ships.' (9. 300–6)

Odysseus, for all his diplomacy, is too closely associated with Agamemnon to persuade Achilles with these distinctions. Phoenix approaches him from a completely different relationship. He still, however, applies his *Litai* (Prayers) parable to the gifts of Agamemnon (515 ff.), and he draws a lesson (600 ff.) from the Meleagros story in terms of material *tīmē*. Aias, in by far the briefest and bluntest speech of the three, is the only one not to

³⁷ If Leaf is right that ἔμεγε ('me') is the object of both οὔτε ('neither') clauses in 315 f., then this is also suggested by the way that ἄλλους Δαναούς ('other Danaans') in 316 resumes ἄλλοθεν ἄλλος ('one after another') in 311.

mention Agamemnon. He also makes a shrewd hit when he appeals to private rather than public bonds, reminding Achilles of his undeniable warmth and hospitality towards them (narrated with full formulaic ceremony in 196 ff.)

“cὺ δ’ ἴλαον ἔνθεο θυμόν,
αἰδέσσαι δὲ μέλαθρον· ὑπωρόφιοι δέ τοι εἶμεν
πληθύς ἐκ Δαναῶν, μέμαμεν δέ τοι ἔξοχον ἄλλων
κῆδιστοί τ’ ἔμεναι καὶ φίλτατοι, ὅσσοι Ἀχαιοί.”

‘Then turn your heart to kindness, remember the welcome owed by your house: we are under your roof, we have come from the whole body of the Danaans, and we trust we are beyond all others the closest and dearest to you of all the Achaians.’ (9. 639–42)

He should himself be true to his *φρένες* (mind) without deceit.

So I do not believe that Achilles is maintaining a view which no one else in the heroic world could understand or approve of. And even if it were true that ‘the heroic code was complete and unambiguous’, and even if Achilles’ attitude found no echo in any other character, this would still not necessarily alienate Homer’s *audience*. I conclude that Homer’s audience must have found the whole question of the ‘gold standard’ at the least challenging and intriguing.

The question that Homer raises for the audience, without letting Achilles answer it too directly, is: what *would* have satisfied him? Was there any way that Agamemnon could have supplied the kind of ‘true’ non-material *tīmē* that Achilles apparently demands? For a start, as Nestor implies, conciliatory words as well as material gestures would have shown good will, if not remorse.³⁸ Even more, he might have come in person instead of delegating to others. This prospect is momentarily evoked by Achilles’ taunt that Agamemnon could not look him in the face (373). Of course Agamemnon never considers the possibility—it would be beneath his dignity, out of character. This is the point.

It might be objected that Achilles himself rules out even a personal embassy as inadequate in 379–87. No quantity of compensation will suffice *πρὶν γ’ ἀπὸ πᾶσαν ἐμοὶ δόμηναι θυμαλγέα λώβην* (until he pays the full price for all this wrong that pains my heart).

³⁸ At 16. 72–3 Achilles says that he would be reconciled *εἴ μοι κρείων Ἀγαμέμνων ἥπια εἰδείη* (if lord Agamemnon would treat me kindly)—quite consistently with book 9, in my view.

It is usually supposed that this is a mere *adynaton*, a condition which it is utterly impossible to fulfil.³⁹ But the *Iliad* shows how even this apparently impossible compensation is humanly possible.

Priam comes to Achilles himself to deliver his own words. It is true that the gods tell him to go; but his first response was to want to go himself.⁴⁰ It is true that they reassure him against danger; but that does not stop the mission from being full of fear and effort in human terms—see further 9.2, 9.3. At 19. 208 Achilles proposes that the Achaians should not eat until the evening *ἐπὴν τεικαίμεθα λώβην* (when we have paid back our wrong). It is clear from his treatment of the corpse of Hektor that by the time of book 24 he still does not feel that the *λώβη* (wrong; outrage) has been paid off. While Priam does bring *apoina*, he does not enumerate these but emphasizes the human anguish he has undergone (see further pp. 269–70):

“ἀλλ’ αἰδεῖο θεούς, Ἀχιλεῦ, αὐτόν τ’ ἐλέησον,
μνησάμενος τοῦ πατρός· ἐγὼ δ’ ἐλεεινότερός περ,
ἔτλην δ’ οἷ’ οὐ πῶ τις ἐπιχθόνιος βροτὸς ἄλλος,
ἄνδρὸς παιδοφόνου ποτὶ στόμα χεῖρ’ ὀρέγεσθαι.”

‘Respect the gods, then, Achilles, and have pity on me, remembering your own father. But I am yet more pitiable than he. I have endured to do what no other mortal man on earth has done—I have brought to my lips the hands of the man who killed my child.’ (24. 503–6)

This works on Achilles, yet does not prove degrading for Priam, but ennobling rather.

Agamemnon does not do his own fighting, and he delegates all unpleasant business to others. He does not fetch Briseis; he does not return Chryseis; and he sends others to Achilles while not actually feeling any change of heart. When Achilles rejects the embassy it may not yet be clear to an audience that what he wants from Agamemnon is genuine personal regret and goodwill. By the end of the poem, however, they will have come to see the value of magnanimity and of personal suffering, which have brought Priam immortal *kleos*. In the meantime the great lord who refuses to put his heart into his own speeches, and who delegates their delivery, will have been virtually faded out of the poem.

³⁹ Especially since A. Parry’s seminal essay, ‘LA’ (1956).

⁴⁰ See further Macleod, 21–2.

2.4 Patroklos through recurrent scenes

- (a) τῷ δ' ἀέκοντε βάτην παρὰ θῖν' ἀλὸς ἀτρυγέτοιο,
 Μυρμιδόνων δ' ἐπὶ τε κλισίας καὶ νῆας ἰκέσθην.
 τὸν δ' εὖρον παρὰ τε κλισίῃ καὶ νηϊ μελαίνῃ
 ἦμενον· οὐδ' ἄρα τῷ γε ἰδὼν γήθησεν Ἀχιλλεύς. 330
 τῷ μὲν ταρβήσαντε καὶ αἰδομένῳ βασιλῆα
 στήτην, οὐδέ τί μιν προσεφώνεον οὐδ' ἐρέοντο·
 αὐτὰρ ὁ ἔγνω ἥϊον ἐνὶ φρεσὶ φώνησέν τε·
 "χαίρετε, κήρυκες, Διὸς ἄγγελοι ἧδὲ καὶ ἀνδρῶν,
 ἄσπον ἴτ'· οὐ τί μοι ὕμμες ἐπαίτιοι, ἀλλ' Ἀγαμέμνων, 335
 ὃ σφῶϊ προῖε Βρισηΐδος εἵνεκα κούρης.
 ἀλλ' ἄγε, διογενὲς Πατρόκλεες, ἔξαγε κούρην
 καὶ σφωῖν δὸς ἄγειν."

They went reluctantly along the shore of the harvestless sea, and came to the huts and the ships of the Myrmidons. They found him by his hut and his black ship, sitting idle: and Achilles had no joy in seeing them. They stood there silent, without word or question, in fear and respect for the king. But he understood their purpose in his mind, and spoke to them: 'Welcome, heralds, messengers of Zeus and of men. Come closer. It is not you I blame, but Agamemnon, who has sent you here for the girl Briseis. Come, lord Patroklos, bring the girl out and give her to them for the taking.' (1. 327–38)

- (b) Τῷ δὲ βάτην παρὰ θῖνα πολυφλοίσβοιο θαλάσσης
 πολλὰ μάλ' εὐχομένῳ γαιήχῳι ἐννοσιγαίῳι
 ῥηϊδίως πεπιθεῖν μεγάλας φρένας Αἰακίδαο.
 Μυρμιδόνων δ' ἐπὶ τε κλισίας καὶ νῆας ἰκέσθην, 185
 τὸν δ' εὖρον φρένα τερπόμενον φόρμιγγι λιγείῃ,
 καλῇ δαιδαλέῃ, ἐπὶ δ' ἀργύρεον ζυγὸν ἦεν,
 τὴν ἄρετ' ἐξ ἐνάρων πόλιν Ἥετιώνος δλέσσαι·
 τῇ ὃ γε θυμὸν ἔτερπεν, αἶδε δ' ἄρα κλέα ἀνδρῶν.
 Πάτροκλος δέ οἱ ὁλος ἐναντίος ἦστο σιωπῇ, 190
 δέγμενος Αἰακίδην, ὅποτε λήξειεν αἰείδων.

So they went along the shore of the sounding sea, praying long to Poseidon the encircler and shaker of the earth that it would be easy for them to win over the great heart of Achilles, of Aiaikos' stock. They came to the huts and the ships of the Myrmidons, and found Achilles giving pleasure to his heart with a clear-voiced lyre, a beautiful finely-worked thing with a cross-piece of silver, which he had won from the spoils when he destroyed Eëtion's city. He was delighting his heart with this, and singing tales of men's glory. Patroklos alone sat opposite him in silence, waiting for when Achilles would end his singing. (9. 182–91)

- (c) γέρων δ' ἰθὺς κίεν οἴκου,
 τῇ ῥ' Ἀχιλεὺς ἔζεσκε Διὶ φίλος· ἐν δέ μιν αὐτὸν
 εὖρ', ἔταροι δ' ἀπάνευθε καθήατο· τῷ δὲ δὴ οἶω,
 ἦρωσ Αὐτομέδων τε καὶ Ἀλκιμος, ὅζος Ἄρηος,
 ποίπνυν παρεόντε· νέον δ' ἀπέληγεν ἐδωδῆς 475
 ἔσθων καὶ πίνων· ἔτι καὶ παρέκειτο τράπεζα.
 τοὺς δ' ἔλαθ' εἰσελθὼν Πρίαμος μέγας, ἄγχι δ' ἄρα στὰς
 χερσὶν Ἀχιλλῆος λάβε γούνατα καὶ κύε χεῖρας
 δεινὰς ἀνδροφόνους, αἷ οἱ πολέας κτάνον υἱας.

The old man went straight for the house, where Achilles loved of Zeus was sitting. He found him inside, and his companions sitting apart from him. Two only, the hero Automedon and Alkimos, branch of Ares, were busy close by him—he had just now finished his meal and done with eating and drinking: the table was still there beside him. Huge Priam came in unseen, and moving close to him took Achilles' knees in his arms and kissed his hands, those terrible, murderous hands, which had killed many of his sons. (24. 471–9)

The 'visit-scene' is more common in the *Odyssey* than in the *Iliad*. At its most skeletal the sequence is: one party visits another on a mission, is received, responded to, and finally departs. Several more detailed elements recur quite often, and some lines or phrases are repeated, as in these three visits to Achilles 1. 329=9. 186 and is similar to 24. 472–3. These are good examples of a 'type-scene' or 'narrative pattern', a fundamental feature of Homer's narrative technique, derived no doubt from the oral tradition.⁴¹ The benefit is not so much the mnemonic aid as the way that the recurrent scene-shapes, taken in their sequence, supply a poetic framework on which significant similarities and differences can be fleshed out. Moreover these recurrent scenes often narrate significant social procedures or 'rituals', where a proper observation of—or, more important, a departure from—the norm carries further 'anthropological' meaning. The pattern, established in the mind of the audience by the tradition, thus opens up all sorts of possibilities which are not available to less structured, less conventionalized kinds of poetry.

⁴¹ Arend is always honoured as the founding father. More recently, useful work has been done by others, esp. Lohmann; Krischer, esp. 13 ff. on *aristeia*; Fenik, *TBS* and *SO*; Tsagarakis; B. Powell, *Composition by Theme in the Odyssey* (Meisenheim, 1977); Patzer, 26–40; Bannert, *passim*; and, not least, Edwards in a whole series of articles (cf. *HPI* 71 ff.), esp. 'Type-scenes'. For visit-scenes in particular see Arend, 54 ff.; Lohmann, 227–31; Edwards, 'Type-scenes', 62 ff.

Analysis of Four Visit-Scenes

	1 1. 12-43	2 1. 326-48	3 9. 173-668	4 24. 186-691
1 Agent	An old father Chryses	Two heralds	Two heralds, two leading men, and an old friend	An old father Priam, with one old herald (149, 178)
2	non-Achaian	Achaian	Achaian	non-Achaian
3	comes to the camp (journey not narrated)	come along the shore	come along the shore	come to the camp across the plain
4	on his own mission	for Agamemnon	for Agamemnon	on his own mission
5	by daylight	by daylight	at night	at night
6	under protection of Apollo		with prayers to Poseidon	at the command of the gods, with prayers and direct help of Hermes
7				(Priam leaves the herald outside)
8	to a public meeting.	to the tent of Achilleus	to the tent of Achilleus	to the tent of Achilleus
9 Mission	to ransom his daughter alive.	to fetch Briseis.	to offer conciliatory gifts.	to ransom his dead son.
10	He brings <i>apoina</i>			He brings <i>apoina</i>
11		They find A. sitting	They find A. singing poetry	he finds A. after his dinner
12		with Patroklos in attendance	with Patroklos listening	Automedon and Alkimos in waiting
13 Reception	the assembly listens	A. greets them coldly	A. welcomes them warmly	A. is amazed

Analysis of Four Visit-Scenes (continued)

	1 1. 12-43	2 1. 326-48	3 9. 173-668	4 24. 186-691
14	he addresses the assembly especially the two Atreidai.	they are silent	hospitality	Priam speaks at once
15			followed by the speeches.	followed by hospitality.
16 Response	Agamemnon rejects him	Achilleus acquiesces	Achilleus rejects them	Achilleus accepts him
17			Phoinix is bedded down	Priam and the herald are bedded down
18			Achilleus and Patroklos sleep with women	Achilleus sleeps with Briseis
19				Priam is woken by Hermes
20 Departure	he departs in fear and prays to Apollo.	they return with Briseis.	they return (without Phoinix) to Agamemnon and the rest.	they return with the body of Hektor.

Before trying to illustrate this from these three scenes I would add another scene which shares some narrative-shaping with Priam's visit-scene in 24: in book 1 there is another visit-scene in which a father comes to the enemy to ransom his child. This pair also share some formulae, notably 1. 12-13 and 24. 501-2.

It was on this recurrence above all that Karl Reinhardt based his principle of 'Umkehr' as an underlying law of large-scale narrative.⁴² Having established the pairing of these two ransom-scenes with great detail and subtlety, he actually argued that Chryses and his scene were a poetic invention (on the analogy of Briseis and her father Briseus from Brisa), created *after* Priam's

⁴² See Reinhardt, *ID* 466-9 with 413, n. 1.

great scene had become established as a closing scene of the whole poem.⁴³ While this must remain a speculation, its value, regardless of the truth of the matter, is that it opens eyes to the kind of way that the poetic process may well have worked. Reinhardt's approach assumes that the *Iliad* was created by long accumulation and refinement. Once a certain feature had become fixed and important, other parts of the poem, earlier in it as well as later, might be shaped—or even invented—to fit. Oral techniques will have encouraged and helped this process of composition.

The table draws up the family resemblances between the four scenes, and in the process signals their differences. Mechanical though it is in format, it makes a helpful start. It brings out, for example, some of the extraordinary features of the Priam scene (4) by comparison with the others—see further §§ 9.3, 9.4—for example that he is ransoming a child who is dead not alive, that the speeches are made before there is hospitality, and that the visitor stays the night before departing.

As a fuller illustration of the value of comparing recurrent scenes and of taking them in performed sequence, I shall take the role of *Patroklos* in scenes 2, 3, and 4, the three visits to Achilles.

By the time of the first scene, at 1. 326 ff, Patroklos has received only a passing mention by his patronymic, at 1. 307. Then Achilles tells him to bring Briseïs out to the heralds (337–8):

Ὡς φάτο, Πάτροκλος δὲ φίλῳ ἐπεπείθεθ' ἑταίρῳ,
ἐκ δ' ἄγαγε κλισίης Βρισηΐδα καλλιπάρημον,
δῶκε δ' ἄγειν· τῷ δ' αὖτις ἔτην παρὰ νῆας Ἀχαιῶν
ἢ δ' ἀέκον· ἅμα τοῖσι γυνὴ κίεν·

So he spoke, and Patroklos did as his dear friend told him. He brought the beautiful Briseïs out of the hut, and gave her to the heralds to take. They went back again to the ships of the Achaians, and the woman went with them, reluctant. (1. 345–8)

The more experienced the listener to the *Iliad*, the more attentively this moment will be stored up.

By the time of book 9 Patroklos has still not spoken. In fact the only intervening reference has been Zeus' almost callously terse prediction of the battle *περὶ Πατρόκλοιο θανόντος* (over dead Patroklos) (8. 476). His presence for the embassy scene is, however, noticed from the start. On arrival they find Achilles singing

⁴³ Ibid. 63–8.

poetry, and Patroklos listening (9. 190–1). Achilles tells him to arrange the hospitality, and, helped by Automedon (209), he does so with due courtesy (9. 201–20). The social 'ritual' is carried through flawlessly—hence Aias' appeal later (see pp. 71–2 above). Achilles later recalls him in this role, as he laments:

“ἦ ῥά νύ μοί ποτε καὶ σύ, δυσάμμορε, φίλταθ' ἑταίρων,
αὐτὸς ἐνὶ κλισίῃ λαρὸν παρὰ δεῖπνον ἔθηκας
αἶψα καὶ ὀτραλέως”

'Oh, there was a time when you, poor ill-fated man, dearest of my companions, you yourself would set out a pleasing meal in my hut, so quick and ready . . .' (19. 315–17)

At the end of the embassy scene, after he has seen to making up the bed for Phoinix (620–2, 658–61), Patroklos is himself bedded down with what might seem gratuitous detail:

αὐτὰρ Ἀχιλλεὺς εὐδὲ μυχῷ κλισίης εὐπήκτου·
τῷ δ' ἄρα παρκατέλεκτο γυνή, τὴν Λεσβόθεν ἦγε,
Φόρβαντος θυγάτηρ, Διομήδη καλλιπάρηος.
Πάτροκλος δ' ἐτέρωθεν ἐλέξατο· παρ δ' ἄρα καὶ τῷ
Ἴφικ ἐϋζωνος, τὴν οἱ πόρε δῖος Ἀχιλλεὺς
Σκύρον ἐλὼν αἰπείαν, Ἐνυῆος πτολίεθρον.

And Achilles slept in the interior of his well-built hut, and beside him lay a woman he had brought from Lesbos, Phorbas's daughter, beautiful Diomedes. Patroklos lay down on the opposite side. He too had a woman lying beside him, the fine-girdled Iphis—Achilles had given her to him when he took steep Skyros, the city of Enyeus. (9. 662–8)

Turning to book 24, as soon as Priam makes his astonishing entry into the tent of Achilles, there is the digression in 471–6 (quoted above). In 9, Automedon—the man who had to take over Achilles' horses in 17 (see further p. 190)—was Patroklos' helper, as Alkimos is his now. Now he has taken over the role of serving the feast; and so, even as Priam arrives, a frisson may be felt for the absence of Patroklos, thanks to the recurrent scene-shape.

At this early stage of the scene in 24, this might remain a merely subliminal reminder, even for the most seasoned member of Homer's audience. But, as the scene progresses, Patroklos' substitution—and hence his absence—becomes explicit:

οὐκ οἶος, ἅμα τῷ γε δῶυ θεράποντες ἔποντο,
ἦρως Ἀυτομέδων ἢ δ' Ἀλκιμος, οὓς ῥά μάλιστα
τί' Ἀχιλλεὺς ἐτάρων μετὰ Πάτροκλόν γε θανόντα

... not alone, but two lieutenants went with him, the hero Automedon and Alkimos, the two that Achilles honoured most of his companions, after Patroklos was dead. (24. 572–5)

When the hospitable meal is eventually served, after a unique alteration of the ritual, the absence of Patroklos, killed by Priam's son, can be deftly conveyed without being laboured:

Αὐτομέδων δ' ἄρα σῖτον ἑλὼν ἐπένειμε τραπέζῃ
καλοῖς ἐν κανέοισιν· ἀτὰρ κρέα νείμεν Ἀχιλλεύς·

Automedon took bread and set it out on the table in fine baskets, and Achilles served the meat. (24. 625–6)

This couplet is the same as 9. 216–17, but with Automedon instead of Patroklos, the second-best replacing the best.

As the scene draws to a close, a bed is made up for Priam, as it was for Phoinix in book 9; and there are in fact some close similarities between 24. 643–8 and 9. 658–61. Finally

οἱ μὲν ἄρ' ἐν προδόμῳ δόμου αὐτόθι κοιμήσαντο,
κῆρυξ καὶ Πρίαμος, πυκινὰ φρεσὶ μήδε' ἔχοντες,
αὐτὰρ Ἀχιλλεύς εὔδε μυχῷ κλισίης εὐπῆκτον·
τῷ δὲ Βρισηῖς παρελέξατο καλλιπάρηιος.

So they then lay down in the porch of the house, the herald and Priam, men with wise thoughts in their minds. And Achilles slept in the interior of his well-built hut, and the beautiful Briseïs lay beside him. (24. 673–6)

Briseïs the best replaces the second-best Diomedes—but at the price of Patroklos, who is now ashes in a golden urn. The dead cannot make love. Though Thetis can promise her son only short life, she urges him, in 24. 128ff., to live that life to the full—see further pp. 276–9. Achilles' last active participation in the *Iliad* is to assert life in the teeth of imminent death, despite even the loss of Patroklos.

The underlying framework of the recurrent scene-shape allows the unique variations to say a great deal without its being spelled out. In case it seems far-fetched to claim that the couplet of Achilles' reunion with Briseïs in 24. 675–6 should evoke the death of Patroklos, I should point to other links between the two of them. The only time that Patroklos and Briseïs are seen together is in the apparently perfunctory scene in book 1—see 1. 345–8,

quoted above.⁴⁴ There are no words, and the only colouring is ἀέκουσα ('reluctant') in 348—though even that might be seen as no more than the fear of those caught up in power-struggles, like the heralds ἀέκοντε ('reluctantly') at 1. 327.

When Briseïs eventually returns to the quarters of Achilles, the body of Patroklos is lying, as is proper, ἀνὰ πρόθυρον (turned towards the door) (19. 212). So they meet again in the very place where they last parted. When the cause of the initial quarrel laments for its unforeseen victim, the subliminal seed of ἀέκουσα ('reluctant') flowers with grief:

“Πάτροκλέ μοι δειλῇ πλείστον κεχαρισμένε θυμῷ,
ζῶν μὲν σε ἔλειπον ἐγὼ κλισίῃθην ἰοῦσα,
νῦν δέ σε τεθνηῶτα κιχάνομαι, ὄρχαμε λαῶν,
ἄψ' ἀνιούς· ὥς μοι δέχεται κακὸν ἐκ κακοῦ αἰεῖ.”

290

οὐδὲ μὲν οὐδέ μ' ἔασκες, ὅτ' ἀνδρ' ἐμὸν ὠκύς Ἀχιλλεύς
ἔκτεινεν, πέρσεν δὲ πόλιν θείοιο Μύνητος,
κλαίειν, ἀλλὰ μ' ἔφασκες Ἀχιλλῆος θείοιο
κουριδίην ἄλοχον θήσκειν, ἄξειν τ' ἐνὶ νηυσὶν
ἐς Φθίην, δαίσειν δὲ γάμον μετὰ Μυρμιδόνεσσιν.
τῷ σ' ἄμοτον κλαίω τεθνηῶτα, μείλιχον αἰεῖ.”

295
300

'Patroklos, more than any the pleasure of my poor heart, you were alive when I went away from the hut and left you, and now I come back, leader of your people, and find you dead. So it is always in my life, pain following pain ... But when swift Achilles killed my husband and sacked the city of godlike Mynes, you would not let me even weep, but you said you would make me godlike Achilles' wedded wife, and take me back in your ships to Phthia, and celebrate my marriage-feast among the Myrmidons. And so I weep endlessly for your death. You were always gentle.' (19. 287–90, 295–300)

However realistic or unrealistic her hopes (see further pp. 214–16), the death of Patroklos means Achilles' death at Troy. So he will never marry Briseïs—nor any other woman—in Phthia. Briseïs knew that Patroklos was the way to Achilles' heart; and the way to Patroklos' heart was through his gentleness and compassion. Nestor knows this also, all too well (see further pp. 175–7).

⁴⁴ As in the name-painting of the Briseïs Painter in the British Museum. She was a favourite with pottery painters: for this and other representations with Agamemnon's heralds, see *LIMC* iii. 158–61. She is often present in scenes of the ransom of Hektor, see *LIMC* iii. 162ff.

The recurrent rituals of a visit-scene overlap with those of a hospitality-scene. These are at their clearest in the peacetime setting of the *Odyssey*—the end of the first evening that Telemachos and Peisistratos spend at Sparta in *Od.* 4 is a good example. In the closing cadence of such scenes the host and his wife, after seeing that their guest(s) are properly looked after, go to bed together themselves. So in *Od.* 4. 304–5 we have

Ἀτρεΐδης δὲ καθεύδε μυχῷ δόμου ὑψηλοῖο,
παρ δ' Ἑλένη τανύπεπλος ἐλέξατο, δία γυναικῶν.⁴⁵

But the son of Atreus slept in the interior of his high house, and beside him lay long-robed Helen.

In *Iliad* 9 the women that Achilles and Patroklos go to bed with are explicitly concubines—these are wartime conditions. I suggest that in book 24 there is none the less an echo of the hospitality-scene at home, and that lines 675–6 are a distant and distorted echo of that wedding which Patroklos promised, the nearest that Achilles and Briseïs will ever come to it. So the implicit connections and accumulations of this kind of poetry can convey in two lines a whole tragic world in which potential future happiness is cut short.

⁴⁵ Cf. *Od.* 3. 402–3, 7. 346–7; for further parallels, see Hainsworth on *Od.* 7. 334–7. *Il.* 24. 636, 643–6, 673 = *mutatis mutandis Od.* 4. 295, 296–300, 302.