

## ACHILLES THE ALLY<sup>1</sup>

WALTER DONLAN

**R**eturning from the Trojan War, Odysseus suffers one final blow from the gods when, in sight of the land of the Phaeacians, Poseidon sends a storm that swamps his raft. Odysseus laments that he had not died along with the Danaans who perished in Troy, χάριν Ἀτρεΐδῃσι φέροντες, “doing a favor for the sons of Atreus” (*Od.* 5.307). With that phrase, Odysseus defines the nature of the Danaans’ relationship with Agamemnon and Menelaus. They are allies; they were asked, and they consented, to gather followers and fight for the brothers. I emphasize this obvious fact because we (I include myself) usually store it in the background and proceed to treat the Achaeans as a single political entity when we analyze the politics of power.

Any consideration of the hostile ἔρις between Achilles and Agamemnon for status and power (τιμή) must acknowledge at the outset that Achilles and his Myrmidons stand in the same formal relationship to Agamemnon as Sarpedon and his Lycians to Hector. For a coalition of separate units has its own internal norms of rights and responsibilities, which, however much they parallel those of a single territory and people (δῆμος), are not the same.<sup>2</sup> I assume in this paper that eighth-century

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2 Greenhalgh 1972 emphatically distinguishes between the Panachaeian coalition and a “single state” situation to explain the lack of “patriotic duty and community obligation” in the former. Taplin 1990 and 1992 examines the social and political ramifications of the total independence of the Achaean chiefs from the “summoner,” and, importantly, shows that breach of the χάρις agreement is the main tension point in the leader-ally relationship (1992.59–68). Our views differ, however, concerning Agamemnon’s normative authority, which he sees as almost nonexistent, and the depth of Achilles’ moral obligation to his

auditors regarded the Achaean political drama as being played out under the rules of an alliance. Those protocols, I suggest, would elicit expectations and judgments different from the ones they would have if Achilles and the other leaders were understood to be permanent βασιλεῖς in Agamemnon's own chiefdom. So I shall try to put the Achaean political crisis in the context of a military alliance, giving particular attention to the dynamic features that most differentiate the two types of social organization: the relations of power and the sense of community.

Yet the Achaean narrative, even as it follows the practical and ethical trajectory of a coalition community, also blends in elements that fit the context of a single δῆμος on campaign. It is an easy task for the narrator to conflate the two types of community, since an alliance army will replicate the institutions of the regional/ethnic contingents that make it up: apical leader, βουλή of chiefs, and ἀγορή of all the warriors (Greenhalgh 1972.533). The internal political relations of an alliance and of a single army also bear certain similarities. The other βασιλεῖς of a δῆμος who follow the paramount βασιλεύς to war enjoy a degree of independence by virtue of their local control and their own retinues of followers (though, of course, nothing like the independence of a foreign ally). Furthermore, friction between a paramount βασιλεύς and a strong sub-chief over matters of respect and obedience, as with Achilles and Agamemnon, would not be uncommon.

Besides these structural analogies, there are other, rather broad, hints that serve to undercut the image of an alliance and give the impression that the context is a single δῆμος. The Greek allies are never referred to as ἐπίκουροι as are the allies of the Trojans, but are given shared ethnic identifiers (Achaioi, Danaoi, Argeioi), all used to designate the collective λαοί.<sup>3</sup> And, although the text is careful to mention the individual homelands of the allies, Argos is often made their collective home (e.g., 2.287, 2.348, 9.246, 13.227, etc.; cf. 1.254, 3.75, 9.141). More qualitatively, as we shall see, the rhetoric used to describe Agamemnon's normative authority as the alliance leader sounds more fitting for the leader of a single people.

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fellow allies, which he understates. MacLachlan 1993.13–20 also identifies Agamemnon's lack of χάρις reciprocity as the focal point of the quarrel and links χάρις and τιμή together, though she does not locate the quarrel in the alliance situation.

- 3 Taplin 1992.58 suggests that the term ἐπίκουροι was restricted to defensive alliances. But it is used once in Homer of offensive allies (4.376–81) and generally so later (e.g., Archilochus fr. 15, West). I read the omission as a significant marker to audiences that the political context is left open. It is only the term Παναχαϊοί (9x) that may suggest an alliance, though not necessarily.

The confusion cannot be accidental (there are no similar signs in the Trojan alliance), and I propose that the *Iliad* constructs an alternate social context, inviting the audience to experience a sort of double focus, viewing the situation from the vantage point of both types of community. The fused image confronts listeners with the problem of communal strife while allowing them to contemplate it from the comfortable distance of a legendary alliance. Only in light of this kind of indeterminacy, as I maintain at the end of my paper, may what happens from Book 16 on appear plausible and palatable to Homer's audiences. Let us turn, then, to that unique form of political community, the military confederacy, keeping in mind the possibility of a more open interpretation through the device of the double lens.

Alliances, by their nature, are unstable political entities, and the most volatile is the one-mission military alliance, the sort represented in Homer. The communities of the Achaean and the Trojan alliances are artificial, meant to dissolve and disappear once the war is over. The allies fight in a cause that is not theirs: the Achaeans to avenge the honor of the Atreidae, the Trojan supporters to save Troy from the avengers. The asymmetry of incentive is compounded by the weak loyalty of the allies to the leader and the leader's weak ability to control them. As they are presented, the βασιλεῖς of the allied contingents on both sides are powerful, independent chiefs whose only obligation to the leader lies in their agreement to help.<sup>4</sup> Yet they are also required to cede a portion of their accustomed authority. Difficulties arise from ambiguities in the power relationships. Agamemnon and Hector, the alliance leaders, formally possess the same rights and responsibilities of command over the collective warrior band (λαός) as they do over their own λαός. Yet clearly they do not wield as much authority and power over the allied chiefs as do the latter over their own sub-chiefs. The authority of the alliance leaders to rule and the privileges and perquisites that go with command are lent to them as a favor. This is an uneasy position. Equally so is the role of the allied βασιλεῖς, who, accustomed

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4 Taplin 1990.68–69 correctly dismisses the oath to Tyndareus as the binding force; he mentions “past duties and obligations” (1992.57–58), though none is specifically cited in the text. On the Trojan side, however, there are frequent references to kinship and ξενίη obligations: e.g., 11.221–30, 13.660–61, 15.545–55, 16.716–19, 17.150–51, 583–84. In the narrative, at least, the Achaean chiefs' obligations began when they promised, individually and collectively, to serve Agamemnon and Menelaus (2.286–88, 2.339–41, 4.265–67). I would see the omission of other bonds as a requisite for creating a split vision; e.g., any reference to a distant ξενίη would preclude viewing the Achaeans as a single δῆμος.

to being obeyed, are now in the position of subordinates owing obedience to a superior βασιλεύς. In a culture where honor and rank count for everything, the uncertainty built into these power arrangements affects every political decision during the lifetime of the alliance: who obeys whom? In the moments of tension between leader and ally selected by the poem, we observe the peaks in an ongoing pattern of uneasy and uncertain exchanges of power.

To compensate for the deficit in loyalty to leader and cause, and to lessen the strains inherent in the ambiguity of the power relationship, both parties must practice the strictest reciprocity, the terms of which are worked out at the very beginning, in the negotiations. This recruitment stage of the relationship is crucial because agreement imposes heavy mutual obligations. The favor giver and the favor receiver make promises to each other to be kept for the duration only: the ally promises that he will fight faithfully for the leader, the leader that his thanks (χάρις) will properly reciprocate the favor (χάρις). If the relationship is not to fall apart and the combined endeavor fail, the reciprocity must be, and remain, strictly balanced as per the initial agreement.<sup>5</sup>

The epics provide some information about the recruitment of allies on both sides. The favor seeker must offer attractive terms. When Agamemnon and Menelaus visit Ithaca to persuade Odysseus to join the war, they stay not with him but at the house of an Ithacan chief named Melaneus who is a ξεῖνος (guest-friend) of Agamemnon. That they diplomatically chose to stay with a third party reveals the delicacy of asking and granting such a large favor. In fact, the negotiations were protracted—the mission consumed an entire month—and difficult; it was only with effort (σπουδῇ) that they persuaded Odysseus (*Od.* 24.115–19).<sup>6</sup> We are not told what they discussed, but we can be pretty sure that the rules for the distribution of spoils—the chief incentive for joining up—was a major topic. Though the picture is somewhat murky, it appears that Agamemnon is in overall charge of the

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5 Taplin 1992.59 n. 26 rightly chides me for not taking this key political/moral concept into my consideration of Homeric reciprocity. I follow MacLachlan 1993 in placing greater emphasis on the personal, emotional aspect of χάρις.

6 Achilles and Patroclus, by contrast, leap at the chance when asked by Nestor and Odysseus on their recruiting tour around central Greece (11.765–82). That the eager young Achilles was not worth a personal visit suggests that he was not on the brothers' A-list; Agamemnon and Achilles seem to have been strangers until the gathering of the army.

distribution (*Il.* 9.330–34), receives the leader’s reward (γέρας), and can lay claim to a cut of the booty won by contingents marauding on their own.<sup>7</sup>

Negotiating a χάρις compact within a defensive alliance is even more delicate than for an aggressive alliance. As the defenders, the Trojan allies could not expect to forage and raid around Troia; their opportunities for amassing booty were limited to spoils from the battlefield and honorific gifts promised for valuable service (e.g., 4.93–99, 10.303–07, 17.229–32. Achaeans: 8.287–91, 10.211–17). Their help in protecting the wives and babies of the Trojans is expensive, as Hector tells his allied chiefs. “I am wearing down my people with gifts and food, to increase the spirit of each one of you” (17.220–26; cf. 9.401–03, 18.288–92, 18.300–02). Still, without the incentive of plundered riches, the allies’ enthusiasm for fighting is bound to be less than that of the Trojan defenders. According to Dolon, the reason why the allies leave the job of guard duty to the Trojans is that “their own children do not lie close by, nor their wives” (10.420–22). The unavoidably low level of communal feeling thus puts a great burden on the binding force of the χάρις agreement. The chief allies on both sides, Achilles and Glaucus, threaten to go home, and each cites violation of the χάρις agreement as his justification. The failure, or perceived failure, on the part of the leader to demonstrate proper gratitude is taken as an assault on their τιμή, their value and worth (Taplin 1992.58–59, Zanker 1994.77–81; cf. Martin 1989.213–14).

Some discussion of the concept of χάρις is in order at this point. All social relationships in Homer are based on reciprocity. A χάρις agreement among allies institutes a particular kind of reciprocity. The overt competition that characterizes many gift relationships must not appear to be

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7 Take, for example, the disposition of the women whom Achilles captured on raids with his men. Chryses was awarded to Agamemnon as a γέρας by the λαός (1.366–69). The λαός and Agamemnon gave Briseis to Achilles as a γέρας (1.161–62, 9.367–68). Agamemnon “chose out” for himself seven Lesbian women, whom he later offered back to Achilles as part of the reparation package (9.128–31). Diomedes (presumably captured in the raid on Lesbos) and Iphis from Skuros (whom he then gave to Patroclus) were either Achilles’ to keep outright or were awarded as prizes (9.663–68). Even though the allotment system allows the leader to have the most and the choicest of whatever is captured by anyone (2.225–34), Achilles has done quite well (9.364–67; cf. also the funeral and games for Patroclus in Book 23). And, despite his resentment towards Agamemnon for being greedy in the matter of spoils (as he sees it), he has stayed. His “destructive wrath” (μῆνις οὐλομένη, 1.1–2) begins with Agamemnon’s outrageous insult (λώβη) of demanding back a γέρας. For a parallel in a single-δῆμος situation, see *Od.* 13.256–70.

part of the χάρις relationship of an alliance. The ideal is balance. To bring or convey χάρις (χάριν φέρειν) morally obliges the receiver to know χάρις (χάριν εἰδέναι). The value of the thanks must equal the value of the service. And whereas gift relationships are punctuated by occasions of giving, receiving, and exchanging, the χάρις relationship between a leader and an ally necessitates an ongoing series of reciprocities. Yet merely adhering to the norms of reciprocity is not sufficient in an alliance. What is required is a sort of reciprocity plus: a spirit of accommodation that imposes something more than calculated obligations. Χάρις connotes just such a feeling. Χάρις and its related words are derived from an Indo-European root \*gher, signifying “pleasure”: the Greek words retain the essential notion of “pleasingness.” Personified Charis sheds her charm over all occasions of mutual pleasure: feasting, singing and dancing, lovemaking, storytelling—wherever there should be good cheer and friendly feelings (εὐφροσύνη).<sup>8</sup>

Both the calculated favor/thanks and the spirit of accommodation are set out explicitly in Hera’s recruitment of Sleep (Hypnos) as an ally in her seduction of Zeus (14.233–82). Put Zeus to sleep, she tells Hypnos, “and I will know χάρις for you all my days,” promising him gifts: a golden θρόνος and footstool made by Hephaestus. When Sleep demurs, fearing Zeus’s wrath, Hera negotiates; she will also give him one of the youthful Charites for a wife. Though vastly inferior in rank, Hypnos has the advantage in the negotiations. Pleased (χῆρατο, 14.270), he agrees to the trick, but makes Hera swear a sacred oath, with the ancestor gods as witnesses, that she will really give him Pasithea whom he has always longed after. Hera’s return χάρις, Charis forever, more than matches Hypnos’s risky χάρις favor. But then Hypnos will be bound all his days to please Hera.

This “bifocal” aspect of χάρις (MacLachlan 1993.15 n. 5), which looks both to giving and to receiving pleasure, is, I suggest, basic to preserving an equilibrium in the uneasy exchange of power between the leader and an ally. The ambiguity of the power relations requires that, for the sake of the alliance, both parties exhibit an active desire to make the other

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8 Nagy 1979.37, 91, 258, Levine 1985.193–94. MacLachlan 1993 closely examines the contractual and affective aspects of χαρ- words in epic and later poetry. We can say that all instances of χάρις gestures in Homer are instrumental: e.g., the χαρίζομαι formula in ransom situations (*Il.* 6.49, 10.380, 11.134), or the effect of Odysseus’s χάρις charm on Nausicaa (*Od.* 6.229–57; cf. 8.18–23, 23.156–65). Parker 1998.109 describes the χάρις relationship as an “unceasing interchange of delightful gifts and services, a kind of charm war.”

feel satisfied in the relationship. When tensions arise, as they inevitably will, they can be smoothed over by mutual shows of *χάρις*—which, in the politics of alliances, comes down to publicly manifesting the proper respect due the other's rank and accomplishments. Whether the desire to please in this way is genuinely heartfelt or not is immaterial. What matters is the show, and it is as obligatory as the practical terms of the *χάρις* agreement. This posture is akin to what the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, speaking of gift exchange, calls misrecognition. "If the system is to work, the agents must not be entirely unaware of the truth of their exchanges . . . while at the same time they must refuse to know and above all to recognize it" (1977.6; cf. Parker 1998.124–25, Braund 1998.161). This sort of necessary "sincere fiction of a disinterested exchange," wherein the reality of self-interest is veiled, keeps leader and ally on their moral toes, so to speak. Graciousness in regard to the other's *τιμή* is normative in the social context of an alliance. Thus an ally's accusation of "no *χάρις*" is a powerful performative utterance that frees him from his *χάρις* obligation and—obliquely—from blame for leaving his fellow allies in the lurch.

The disagreements between the Lycian leaders and Hector provides a counterpoint to the much more divisive quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon. Although there are numerous allies, the spotlight shines almost solely on the Lycians, making them appear as the generic ally. In the two formulas of address for the Trojan army, Lycians and *epikouroi* are interchangeable: Τρῶες καὶ Δάρδανοι ἢ δ' ἐπίκουροι (4x); Τρῶες καὶ Λύκιοι καὶ Δάρδανοι (6x; cf. 6.78, 6.111, 15.424–25). Likewise, Sarpedon and Glaucus are the most prominent allied warriors, and Sarpedon acts as their leader in battle (12.101). For the Lycians to depart would be even more calamitous for the Trojans than the loss of the Myrmidons is to the Achaean alliance. They do not, thanks to successful crisis management by both ally and leader.

Notwithstanding Sarpedon's and Hector's preexisting *χάρις* relationship as *ξεῖνοι*, the natural leader-ally friction over mutual appreciation surfaces. Sarpedon goes after Hector (*μάλ' α νείκεσεν*) during the first battle (5.471–92). Addressing what he sees as an asymmetry of favor and thanks, he accuses Hector's brothers and brothers-in-law of hiding: "Cringing like dogs around a lion; and we are the ones fighting, who are the allies among you" (5.475–77).<sup>9</sup> What gives the rebuke its sting is, as Sarpedon says,

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9 All translations are my own.

“though there is nothing of my own here that the Achaeans might take or drive off,” he is exerting greater effort to save the Trojan wives than the Trojan men, even while his wife and baby and possessions may be in danger back in Lycia (5.478–89). The rebuke is an admonition to Hector that he right the imbalance between their worth and his valuation of it (5.490–92; Zanker 1994.26). Hector heeds the alliance leader’s obligation and urges on the army to fight harder.

But a χάρις compact requires continuous renegotiation. After Sarpedon is slain by Patroclus, Glaucus, intent on saving the corpse from being stripped and mutilated, airs his fears that an ally’s body may not receive equal treatment. “Hector, now you have completely forgotten your allies, who for your sake, far away from their φίλοι and their native land, are wasting away their life spirit; and you do not want to protect them” (16.538–40).<sup>10</sup> The repetition of the topos of 5.477–86 strikes much closer to home here. Once more, what Glaucus wants is for the Trojans to show χάρις: “stand by him, feel shame (νεμεσσήθητε) in your heart” (16.544). Remorseful over the loyal warrior who had been “the bulwark of their polis, though he was a foreigner,” Hector leads the army in a fierce struggle over the corpse (16.548–665). That is χάρις. But, in the end, the Lycians are not pleased, for, at the height of the struggle, Hector and his Trojans turn tail and flee; the Lycians are forced to withdraw, and the Achaeans strip off Sarpedon’s armor (16.656–65).

The relationship comes close to breaking up altogether when Hector retreats from the corpse of Patroclus (17.125–31). Insulting Hector as a coward (17.142–43, 166–68), Glaucus warns him: “Take thought now, how you may save the citadel and town all by yourself, with just the λαοί who were born in Ilion, for no man of the Lycians will go to fight for your polis against the Danaans, *since after all there never was any χάρις* (ἐπεὶ οὐκ ἄρα τις χάρις ἦεν) for battling ceaselessly against the enemy” (17.144–48).

Glaucus’s reasoning is that of the dishonored ally. The Lycians had not, nor would they ever, receive back from Hector and the Trojans their due respect. How, Glaucus asks, would Hector save a Lycian of lesser rank, when he had abandoned Sarpedon “both his guest-friend and companion” (ἄμα ξεῖνον καὶ ἐταῖρον) who had done so much for Troy (17.149–53)?

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10 Rebukes by other allies to Hector are all milder than those of the Lycian leaders: e.g., 5.464–69, 16.721–25, 17.75–81, 586–90.

“Therefore,” he says, “if any of the Lycian men will obey me, we will go home, and for Troy there will appear sheer destruction” (17.154–55). The crisis, however, is easily resolved; for, as we see (17.156–65), his threat is intended to make the Trojans resume the fight for Patroclus’s body so that they can trade it for Sarpedon’s body and armor. Glaucus is renegotiating the compact: so far you have shown us no χάρις; do this χάρις and we will stay. It works. Though angered at the charges of cowardice, Hector is again conciliatory, and he rallies the army to capture Patroclus (17.170–85). The tension between the Lycians and Hector is of the sort that is typical in military alliances. Sarpedon and Glaucus are touchy about their honor and dignity, keenly alert to the slightest hint that the leader may not be returning their χάρις and calling him on this at every turn. It is up to Hector to show that he wants to please them, and he does.

This brings us to Achilles and Agamemnon. The Lycian example shows how low a threshold needs be overstepped before an ally is ready formally to renounce his χάρις compact. The affair is to a large extent political histrionics; nevertheless, Glaucus’s perception that the leader was devaluing Sarpedon and his entire λαός was deemed sufficient cause to quit the alliance. By this standard, Achilles’ withdrawal is ethically unassailable. Achilles describes his own situation as the humiliated ally in the same way. He feels extreme grief (αἰνὸν ἄχος), as he tells Patroclus, “when a man wants to rob (ἁμέρσαι) one who is his equal (ὁμοῖος) and take away his γέρας, since he surpasses him in power (κράτος)” (16.52–54). As ruler of an independent chiefdom, Achilles is the same as Agamemnon. Yet because Agamemnon has the greater κράτος—by virtue of his higher rank as alliance leader and his larger following—Achilles has been compelled to endure his insults. (Achilles’ grievance within the context of a single δῆμος would have had a different and more violent outcome.) But, as an ally, the only course of action available to him is to leave.

The ethical question, which does not need to be addressed in the Trojan alliance, is not Achilles’ defection from the Atreidae but from his fellow allies: not just his desertion of them, but his active decision to make them suffer. A complicating factor is the βουλή of senior βασιλεῖς, who have their own agenda, the essential goal of which is to preserve the alliance and keep the war going. To accomplish this, they must affirm and sustain the normative authority of the leader. But by their orthodox decision to uphold Agamemnon, they come to be perceived as adversaries in the eyes of Achilles. The upshot is that, in the space of a single assembly (1.54–303),

Achilles ceases to be the ideal ally, the mainstay of the expedition, and becomes a liminal figure, estranged from the other Achaeans, whom he calls φίλοι and ἑταῖροι.

It is clear from the outset that there has long existed an unfriendly rivalry between Achilles and Agamemnon over which of them is truly the “very best of the Achaeans” (1.91, 2.82; Nagy 1979.26–32, Zanker 1994.75–77). An epic audience, whether focusing on an alliance or on a δῆμος army, would perceive their struggle for personal honor as also a public contest for dominance within the communal group, since, in the agonistic culture of the poem, to be honored as *the* best is to have power, whether it is rationalized or not. All this is established immediately (1.53–129). Achilles seizes the command position, summoning the assembly, prompting Calchas to reveal Agamemnon’s responsibility for the plague, and swearing to protect the seer by force against Agamemnon, “who now claims to be far the best of the Achaeans” (1.85–91). And when Agamemnon declares that by rights (οὐδὲ ἔοικε, 1.119) the Achaeans must give him another γέρας in lieu of Chryseis, Achilles stops him dead with a tart reminder that all the spoils have already been distributed and by rights (οὐκ ἐπέοικε, 1.126) cannot be subject to reallocation. There is, however, even now, an opportunity for χάρις. Achilles offers to renegotiate the terms of the distribution with Agamemnon. In return for relinquishing Chryseis now, he promises that when Troy is sacked, “we Achaeans will pay you back (ἀποτείσομεν) threefold and fourfold” (1.127–29). In other words, do this χάρις for us and we will be pleased to restore and enlarge the τιμή you are temporarily surrendering by giving you three or four Trojan women out of our future shares. Χάρις for χάρις.

The other βασιλεῖς and the λαοί, we may be sure, welcomed Achilles’ proposal as both fair to them and, at the same time, as preserving the privileged status of the leader. Instead of showing pleasure, however, Agamemnon receives the offer as a deliberate effort to diminish rather than enhance his τιμή, which is validated by both obedience to his commands and the conferring of valuable gifts on his own terms. And now Achilles is challenging Agamemnon’s will and shaming him in front of everyone (1.133–34). Agamemnon’s ultimatum—unless the Achaeans give him an equal γέρας, “I myself will take either yours or Aias’s or Odysseus’s”—appears startling as a declaration that this is something he can legitimately do (1.135–39). The general reaction is that it far overreaches a leader’s perquisite of immediate and equal compensation for loss (e.g., 1.229–30, 1.275–76, 2.235–40; cf. *Od.* 13.256–66). As with Glaucus, the only way Achilles can possibly respond to this direct assault on his τιμή—his worth in

the eyes of the Achaeans—is to declare himself free from his χάρις favor. His rhetoric is that of the devalued ally. He has no cause against the Trojans (152–57), he tells Agamemnon (1.158–71):

But we followed you here, you big disgrace, *in order to please you* (ὄφρα σὺ χαίρης), to win back from the Trojans τιμή for Menelaus and for you, face of a dog, but for this you take no heed nor do you care. And now you threaten that you yourself will take away from me my γέρας that I worked hard for, and the sons of the Achaeans gave to me. Never do I have a γέρας equal to yours . . . But my hands carry the weight of violent battle, yet whenever the distribution comes up, your γέρας is much bigger, and I go to my ship with a little one (though my own), when I am worn out from the fighting. And now I am going to Phthia . . . and I don't intend to stay here without honor (ἄτιμος) to pile up wealth and riches for you.<sup>11</sup>

Achilles naturally focuses on the allocation of γέρας as proof of the leader's ingratitude, since these are the measure of the leader's χάρις in an aggressive alliance. Nevertheless, he is being somewhat disingenuous here. In the epic world, the leader of a military party always gets extra shares of the spoils, a protocol that carries over to alliances (see note 7). If there were any question about this being a condition of the χάρις compact, it would have been clarified before the first spear was thrown. Achilles' expectation that he should receive the same τιμή as the leader is anomalous; no other allied chief takes this view (2.254–56). Thus, Achilles' demand for an equal γέρας feeds Agamemnon's insecurity in his leadership role. The reason Agamemnon gives for taking back Briseis is, "so that you may know how much superior (φέρτερος) I am than you, and so that any other man may hate to say that he is equal (ἴσος) to me and to make himself the same as me to my face" (1.185–87; cf. 1.230).

Nestor's attempt at compromise (1.275–81), while equitable on its face, clearly reveals his (and the other chiefs') bias towards the orthodox view of the power relationship between leader and subordinate. He tells

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11 These points comprise Achilles' mantra throughout the quarrel (e.g., 1.225–32, 1.240–44, 1.352–56, 9.321–39, 16.83–86) and are echoed by others (e.g., 2.239–42, 9.106–10, 13.111–14, 16.269–74).

Agamemnon his duty as leader—leave Achilles’ duly awarded γέρας alone—and Achilles his duty as follower, “and don’t you, son of Peleus, wish to compete (ἐριζέμεναι) face to face with the βασιλεύς, since never does a scepter-bearing βασιλεύς, to whom Zeus gives κῦδος, have the same share of honor (ὁμοίης τιμῆς). And if you are mighty (καρτερός), and a goddess mother bore you, yet he is superior (φέρτερος), since he rules over more men” (1.275–81).<sup>12</sup> But the plea is ineffectual. Agamemnon openly declares his fears for his own authority. Achilles “wants to be above everyone else (περὶ πάντων ἄλλων), to hold power (κρατέειν) over everyone, rule (ἀνάσσειν) everyone, and give the orders (σημαίνειν) to everyone; and there is one man, I think, who will not obey (πείσεσθαι) him” (1.287–89). Achilles, who believes that his value to the Achaeans does give him equal status, retorts, “Tell others to do these things, but don’t order (σῆμαιν’) me, for I think I will not obey (πείσεσθαι) you anymore” (1.293–96).

The chiefs must make a choice. To do the right thing, Agamemnon would have to withdraw his just-stated right to commandeer another’s γέρας and also offer Achilles the compensatory gift and apology customary in insult situations (Donlan 1989.5–6, 1993.161–63). The only way the chiefs could force Agamemnon to suffer such a loss of face would be to threaten to go home too, a dangerous strategy, given their leader’s pessimism about final victory. So they do nothing. To Achilles their tacit acquiescence makes them accomplices in Agamemnon’s hubris; he will not fight for Briseis, he tells Agamemnon, “neither with you nor with anyone else, since *you* (plural) *take from me what you gave me*,” ἐπεὶ μ’ ἀφέλεσθέ γε δόντες (1.298–99; cf. 11.609–10, 16.17–18. See Taplin 1992.62–63, Edwards 1987.233–34). Because in pleasing Agamemnon they dishonor him, he wants the rest of the Achaeans to pay also, killed at their ships, “so that they may all get their profit out of the βασιλεύς, and the son of Atreus, wide-ruling Agamemnon, may realize his madness (ᾄτη), that he honored the best of the Achaeans not at all” (1.410–12). And Zeus will accede to this terrible means of paying back Agamemnon in full (1.505–27, 1.558–64, 2.3–4, 9.387, 13.347–50, 15.61–64).

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12 Here, as elsewhere (e.g., 2.204–06), the emphasis on Agamemnon’s divinely sanctioned authority to command other βασιλεῖς, though it is suitable for the paramount βασιλεύς of a single δῆμος, exceeds that of an alliance leader. Compare the symbolic capital bestowed on Agamemnon by his ancestral σκῆπτρον (2.46, 100–08), which is a potent source of legitimate rule in his own chieftdom, though purely emblematic in the context of an alliance; cf. Wilson 1999.134 n.15. What does fit the alliance context is that Agamemnon’s power really stems from having the most followers (e.g., 2.576–80, 9.43–44, 73, 97–99).

The main reason why the chiefs stay loyal to Agamemnon and prop up his authority is, of course, the κῦδος, κλέος, and κειμήλια they will take home as victors, τιμή for themselves and their families.<sup>13</sup> But there are ethical constraints as well, matters of personal honor (αἰδώς). First the χάρις compact itself: not fulfilling a sworn promise incurs disgrace. There is also the obligation to remain loyal to fellow warriors who, for the duration of the alliance, form a single community of φίλοι and ἑταῖροι. Nestor and Odysseus, the masterminds of the βουλή, use these motivations in their appeals to the Achaeans to stay at Troy and to Achilles to rejoin the army. For the army, they stress loot and their promises; for Achilles, φιλότης and κῦδος. Odysseus speaks first to the χάρις agreement (after the debacle of the “test” in Book 2): “Now, son of Atreus, ἄναξ, the Achaeans want to make you the most contemptible of all mortal men, and do not fulfill the promise they made to you” (2.284–88). He then shifts his appeal to self-interest. He acknowledges their war-weariness, “But all the same,” he tells them, “it is a shameful thing (αἰσχρόν), to stay a long time and then return empty-handed” (2.291–300). Nestor, too, stresses first the solemnity of the bonds that tie them to the leader and to one another until the end. “Where will our compacts (συνθεσίσαι) and our oaths (ὄρκια) end up? In the fire, then, let our counsels (βουλαί) be, and the war-plans (μήδεα), and the libations (σπονδαί) of unmixed wine and the handclasps (δεξιαί) with which we had made our pledges” (2.339–41; cf. 4.265–67). Affirming once again Agamemnon’s sole leadership, with a swipe at would-be deserters (2.344–47), Nestor returns, as did Odysseus, to the main motive: “So, let no man be in a rush to go home until he has lain down with the wife of a Trojan and has got payback (τείσασθαι) for the exertions and sufferings over Helen” (2.354–56).

The plan of the senior βασιλεῖς to win Achilles back is for Agamemnon to return Briseis along with “kindly gifts and gentle words” (9.96–113). But when Agamemnon makes it clear to the council that he will not apologize in person, the essential requirement for placating Achilles (9.157–61; cf. 9.369–73), Nestor selects the envoys (9.165–67) and primes them for the delicate mission of reporting the promised gifts and supplying their own “gentle words” (9.179–81). Their main appeal, as announced by Odysseus,

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13 Diomedes in the ἀγορή (9.26–49) and Odysseus in βουλή (14.74–102) adamantly reject Agamemnon’s command to quit the fight. By Book 9, the allied chiefs are in charge of policy.

will be to Achilles' obligation to save his endangered φίλοι (Donlan 1993.164–67; cf. Roisman 1984.5–22, Taplin 1992.72–73). From them he will receive the τιμή and κῦδος denied by the leader (9.300–06; cf. 9.601–05). Yet Achilles not only formally renounces his χάρις obligation to Agamemnon, he also rejects each plea to have pity on his φίλοι. To Odysseus he says: “The son of Atreus, Agamemnon, will not persuade me, I think, nor will the rest of the Danaans, *since after all there never was any χάρις* (ἐπεὶ οὐκ ἄρα τις χάρις) for battling ceaselessly against the enemy” (9.315–17; cf. 9.421–26). By including the Danaans with Agamemnon in the charge of “no χάρις,” Achilles appears to exclude them as well from his friendship obligation. He reaffirms his outsider stance in his response to the pleadings of Phoenix.<sup>14</sup> “Don’t confuse my heart with your lamenting and grieving, doing a favor (φέρων χάριν) for the warrior, son of Atreus. You must not love that man, to avoid becoming hated by me who loves you. It is good for you, with me, to hurt the man who is hurting me” (9.612–15). The message, intended for the chiefs, is clear. You can’t do Agamemnon’s pleasure and still remain φίλοι to me. Even when Aias makes the ultimate case, connecting φιλότης and τιμή—“Hard man, nor does he care about the φιλότης of his ἑταῖροι, with which we honored him (ἐτίομεν) above all others among the ships” (9.630–32; cf. 9.640–42)—Achilles chooses exclusion, comparing himself to a migrant without honor or value (ἀτίμητος μετανάστης) among the Argives (9.648 = 16.59). Achilles is ensnared in the contradictory claims of reciprocity in an honor-shame culture. To pay back Agamemnon, he has found himself denying the other imperative of the code, to help his friends. It is this failure to reciprocate φιλότης that makes Achilles culpable in their eyes, and his excuse of their complicity in Agamemnon’s lack of χάρις becomes less and less tenable in the face of the mounting casualties and the next day’s battle for their very survival. Thus even as he rejects the envoys’ appeals, Achilles moves towards the pole of loyalty.<sup>15</sup>

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14 On Phoenix’s warning to Achilles that up to now his withdrawal has not been subject to blame (οὐ νευεσσητόν, 9.523), see Zanker 1994.10, 88, 91. The admonitory tale of Meleager (9.527–99) recasts Achilles’ obligation to the allies as one to his family, kin, and townsmen.

15 On the nexus of the competitive value of τιμή and the cooperative value of φιλότης, see Zanker 1994.21–22, 35–37, 90. Yet even as he relents (16.60–100), Achilles’ impulse to separate the community from his personal honor surfaces again in his wish-prayer that every Trojan and every Achaean be killed, leaving only him and Patroclus alive to take the citadel of Troy (16.97–100).

With the death of Patroclus, the discord that was tearing the community apart instantly disappears. Achilles renounces his anger against Agamemnon and is immediately rehabilitated: he moves from being the outsider, the bad ally, to the savior of the army. Agamemnon returns Briseis to him, along with the promised gifts, and makes a public apology (of sorts). Achilles goes on to lead the army in the final battle (in place of the conveniently wounded Agamemnon) and wins immortal glory and fame, driving the Trojans back to the city and killing Hector. Thus for both the internal and external audiences, Achilles emerges as the clear victor in his competition with Agamemnon for τιμή (Donlan 1993.168–70).

Let us return briefly to my earlier suggestion of a double focus. An audience might easily locate this contest for honor between an ambitious young subordinate and a jealous, insecure leader in a δῆμος army on campaign. They would understand, however, the dissimilarities between the two types of military community. The contrast would be most apparent in the aspects we have concentrated on: the structured relations of power and loyalty among the components of the community. By those norms, even in the unreal, distanced world of heroic poetry, where almost anything can happen magically, Achilles' vindication and glorification is credible and acceptable only in the political space of an allied coalition. This becomes clear if we contextualize the political situation in a single political community—let us call them the “Mycenaeans” (2.569, 9.44)—keeping the same cast of characters but making Achilles and the other βασιλεῖς sub-chiefs within Agamemnon's populous regional chiefdom (2.569–80). To begin with, the superior-subordinate relationship would be more clearly defined. Unlike the alliance leader, who has no real control over his independent allies, Agamemnon the leader of the Mycenaeans would possess considerably greater capacity, both actual and symbolic, to dominate the discourse of power within his δῆμος, even though other βασιλεῖς might be powerful men in their own right.

The leader of a fixed territory and people has the sanction of tradition; he belongs to them and they to him; he descends from the chiefly line. Agamemnon's one-man rule would be authenticated by the honor that the Mycenaeans paid to his father and his father's father (see note 12). The duty of a district βασιλεύς like Achilles to obey his chief would be rooted in the cultural heritage of the Mycenaean people. This Achilles would have followed Agamemnon for the same reasons that compelled his own subordinates to follow him, not to confer a fleeting χάρις but out of a long-standing

obligation.<sup>16</sup> Within a δῆμος, the leader-subordinate tie is often one of close kinship or of dependency, as in the case of a matrilocal son-in-law or a suppliant refugee.<sup>17</sup> Paramount βασιλεῖς are also able to command men of high status within their own realms to follow them (13.663–70, 23.293–99, 24.396–400). And, in the few glimpses we are granted of the dynamics of power within an individual army, the authority of the paramount βασιλεύς over his chiefs and men is strictly observed, and nowhere, indeed, more strongly than among the Myrmidons (e.g., 11.647–50, 16.199–211, 24.394–95, 24.433–36; cf. 12.310–21, 12.211–15, 12.248–50).

Implicitly, then, Agamemnon as paramount βασιλεύς comes off as an even weaker leader than Agamemnon the coalition commander whose powers are contractually limited; and the antics of Achilles pose an even greater threat to the λαός. His rebellion against the one man to whom “Zeus has handed the σκήπτρον and θέμιστες” (9.98–99; cf. 2.204–06), which is his right as an ally, could only be read as an attempt to replace him as the leader. That is precisely, we have seen, what Agamemnon accuses him of, even though, in an alliance, Achilles could not possibly claim the position of leader. In a δῆμος, however, where an ineffectual chief is prey to being overthrown, Agamemnon’s fears would be well founded. Indeed, such a showdown almost takes place in 1.188–221, when Achilles comes close to killing Agamemnon. An audience focusing on the single δῆμος would foresee the outcome of the murder had it occurred: civil strife then and there between the followers of Agamemnon, led by his brother, and Achilles and his followers, with the rest of the chiefs choosing sides. But even according to the scenario in the text, where Achilles forgoes violence and yields to the legitimate power of the paramount chief, the dread specter of πόλεμος ἐπιδῆμιος (war within the δῆμος), foreseen by Nestor (9.63–64), would still hang over the Mycenaeans. Nestor’s words, totally inappropriate for a coalition, forecast what would most probably occur in a single community

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16 The requesting and granting of specific χάρις favors between leader and subordinate may occur within a δῆμος, too, of course (*Il.* 15.448–49, 743–44; *Od.* 13.265–66), as well as appeals to the affect of χάρις (*Od.* 4.694–95, 22.318–19). I emphasize, however, that unlike in an alliance, the relationship of paramount and sub-chief is not *founded* on a χάρις contract, however much χάρις may be an aspect of it.

17 Among the ἡγεμόνες of the Myrmidons: Phoenix (9.447–84), Patroclus (23.85–90), Menesthius (16.173–78), Epeigeus (16.570–76). See also 6.191–95, 13.171–76, 13.363–69, 14.119–24; *Od.* 7.311–15. To Achilles, the most distasteful of Agamemnon’s gifts is the offer to make him his son-in-law (γαμβρός), and thus a dependent (9.141–56). Such an arrangement, of course, makes sense only in the context of a single δῆμος; cf. 9.388–97.

when the army returned home. For the reconciliation merely patches over the quarrel for the time being; the politics of power have not changed one bit.

What of Achilles' relationships with the other chiefs and the army? We have seen how offended the βασιλεις were when Achilles rejected their appeal to his friendship obligation, even though they were his ἑταῖροι only for the duration of the campaign. Viewed from the perspective of a single political community, Achilles' abandonment of his own countrymen in mortal danger could not have been as easily forgiven. Nor, had he lived to return home as a sub-chief, accompanied by his own ἑταῖροι, would it have been in triumph, for there is no heroism in having caused the deaths of so many men who were the sons of his neighbors. He would be a bad citizen. Achilles' uncompromising adherence to the prime rule of the manly code, to avenge dishonor, however much havoc it causes, does not affect the integrity of the alliance. In the split vision, however, his estrangement from everyone in the δῆμος except his own followers is extremely destabilizing.

The *Iliad* engages the audience in an evolving political and moral crisis, the threat of which is ever present in a political system where several power centers coexist within an ideology of competition to be first. In the verdict of the *Iliad*, the rebellious sub-chief has humbled the paramount chief. An audience imagining the context as a δῆμος army would construe this outcome as a portent of continuing social dysfunction. In an alliance setting, however, because it has no past or future, the resolution is satisfying. Achilles and Agamemnon can reconcile without rancor, with Achilles reintegrated into the community without blame and Agamemnon tacitly admitting Achilles' superiority. Audiences would accept the *Iliad's* win-win solution to the power struggle where Achilles outscores Agamemnon in τιμή, yet Agamemnon retains the ultimate τιμή, the position of leader.

I end on a historical note. The political problem addressed by the *Iliad* was, in fact, the most insistent internal problem confronting both the pre-state societies and the early city-states of Greece: how to have good order within the community when the ruler-group, the ἄγαθοί, are conditioned to compete viciously among themselves for primacy. The *Iliad* invited its auditors to mull over the hard questions of power and right, the sort of "questions," as Oliver Taplin puts it, "which in real life might be intolerably confused and explosive" (1992.63). I have tried to show that, by providing a double focus, the narrator draws audiences into the incendiary contradictions of honor-driven politics, yet with the comforting certainty that these contradictions would be resolved at the end.

The happy ending of the *Odyssey* likewise reflects and satisfies the deep yearning among the δῆμος for harmony. Without, however, the credibility that an alternative context lends, this poem has to rely solely on epic distancing to achieve its effect. As war among the ἀγαθοί for power and honor in the community breaks out, Zeus ends it and forestalls a vendetta by decree. Odysseus will be paramount βασιλεύς forever, the suitors' kin will forget the slaughter of their sons and brothers and will be his φίλοι as before, and there will always be peace and plenty in the δῆμος (*Od.* 24.481–86, 24.546–48; cf. 24.412–71). I think we would have to say that the *Iliad*'s way of serving up political discord while voiding its consequences is the more subtle and effective.

*University of California, Irvine*