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Odysseus' Murderous Project

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the
Degree of Bachelor of Arts with Honors
in Classics

WILLIAMS COLLEGE

Williamstown, Massachusetts

4 March 2013

I would like to thank Edan Dekel, the Classics department, and my family for the education, guidance, and indulgence they have provided me.

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Introduction

Odysseus' return is anticipated from the very first lines of the *Odyssey*, and it is not long before this homecoming becomes conflated with the vengeance the returned Odysseus will wreak upon the overweening suitors (*Od.* 1.252). But it is a slow build. Odysseus reaches Ithaka in Book 13, and it is not until he slaughters the suitors in Book 22 that he has revealed his identity to any but his dearest friends and family. In Book 23, he is reunited with Penelope; and in Book 24, he is reunited with his father.

But the slaughter of the suitors is a brutal, messy affair. For all their arrogance, the suitors were—en masse, at least—never guilty of much more than being bad guests. For this, though, they are killed. Every last one of these “best of the Achaeans” is killed in Odysseus' dining room. The description lingers over the gory details: the jet of blood out the man's nostrils, the table kicked over in a last paroxysm of pain, the arrow piercing the breast near the nipple, and so on. The suitors are unarmed, at least initially. The doors are locked. There is no possibility of escape.

And yet it is in this context that Odysseus both finally reveals himself, reclaiming his heroic persona and the social status accompanying it; that Odysseus wins his homecoming; and that Odysseus distinguishes his homecoming from the successful homecomings of Nestor and Menelaus, besides the unsuccessful homecoming of Agamemnon. This scene separates him from the rest, and makes him the best of the Achaeans.

In this thesis, I explore three issues relevant to coming to a judgment about the heroism of Odysseus' actions. In the first chapter, “Appropriations of heroic context,” I argue that Odysseus' project to win *kleos* (Homeric fame/glory) from the slaughter of the

suitors is enabled by the character of his own *kleos*, which is self-constructed. Specifically, Odysseus is able to appropriate in large part the heroic context of the *Iliad* and compel the admittedly unwilling suitors to take part. Thus his project succeeds by his authoritative control over his *kleos*, his ability to write it himself in his words and deeds.

In the second chapter, “Murder motives,” I examine the possible moral justification for Odysseus’ slaughter. After all, for the exercise to be glorious, it must be, if not just, then not unjust. I conclude that Odysseus’ actions are considered acceptable within the framework of the heroic society of which he is a part because the suitors, in taking away his physical goods under a premise damaging to Odysseus’ *kleos*, harmed his *kleos*. And a *kleos*-injury requires a drastic response, a new revelation of *kleos*.

In the third chapter, “Sign language,” I pick up on this idea, the revelation of identity. I examine the ways in which Odysseus reveals his identity, and how this revelation amounts to an explication of the character of his *kleos*.

In total, my focus is how the slaughter of the suitors bears on the *kleos* of Odysseus, how the one-sided murder serves to both reveal the character of Odysseus’ *kleos* and create it in turn; or, in short, the result of Odysseus’ murderous project.

1. Appropriations of heroic context

§1. Notions of *kleos*

In the *Iliad*, Achilles rejects *nostos* (homecoming) in favor of *kleos* (fame, glory), and so establishes for the *Iliad* an adversative relationship between *kleos* and *nostos*.¹ The word *kleos* is the noun formed from *kluô* (hear), and so has as its basic meaning, “thing heard,”² and as a technical meaning, the fame conferred by Homeric epic, or even the content of the epic itself.³ The *Iliad* forms the *kleos* of its many heroic personae, but it is overwhelmingly concerned with assigning *kleos* to Achilles; in the same way, the *Odyssey* is more concerned with Odysseus’ *kleos*.⁴ Inasmuch as the *Odyssey* is the story of Odysseus’ homecoming, so Odysseus’ *nostos* is inextricable from his *kleos*. The *Odyssey*, then, far from embracing the *Iliad*’s adversative *kleos-nostos* calculus, equates the two. This equation is evident in Telemachus’ comment to the disguised Athena that, had

¹ See, for example, Gregory Nagy, *The Best of the Achaeans: Concepts of the Hero in Archaic Greek Poetry* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 35-41. Nagy explores the different attitudes of the two poems toward relationship of *kleos* and *nostos*. Given this adversative relationship, “If Achilles has no **nóstos** in the *Iliad*, does it follow that Odysseus has no **kléos** in the *Odyssey*?” (36). Nagy concludes, “Unlike Achilles, who won **kléos** but lost **nóstos** (IX 413), Odysseus is a double winner. He has won both **kléos** and **nóstos**” (39).

² Gregory Nagy, *Comparative Studies in Greek and Indic Meter* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), 244.

³ Id., 250: “The word κλέος was the Singer’s own word for what he sings in praise of gods and men.... *The actions of gods and heroes gain fame through the medium of the Singer, and the Singer calls his medium κλέος.*” In the case of Homeric epic, the situation is somewhat simpler: “In the language of Epic... the cause and effect of song and fame respectively are so intertwined that the mention of song alone may imply fame.... The Epic is called κλέος by the Singer himself” (251-252).

⁴ Nagy, *Best of the Achaeans*, 29: “The *Iliad* belongs to Achilles. It is to Achilles that the Iliadic tradition assigns the **kléos** that will never perish.” Also id., 35: “In contrast to the *Iliad*, it is an overall theme of the *Odyssey* that Odysseus is indeed **áristos Akhaiôn** ‘best of the Achaeans’.

Odysseus died in Troy, he would have won *kleos*, but he has instead died ingloriously upon the sea.

τῶ κέν οἱ τύμβον μὲν ἐποίησαν Παναχαιοί,
ἦδέ κε καὶ ᾧ παιδί μέγα κλέος ἦρατ' ὀπίσσω—
νῦν δέ μιν ἀκλειῶς ἄρπυιαι ἀνηρεύσαντο. (*Od.* 1.239-41)

in that case all the Achaeans would have made a grave-mound for him and he would have carried off great glory for his son, too, for time to come—but now stormwinds have snatched him up without glory.⁵

These lines are an explication of the two poems' notions of *kleos*. On the one hand (*men*) we have *kleos* consistent with Achilles' Iliadic variety. Had Odysseus died in Troy, and so lost his *nostos*, he would have “carried off” great *kleos*, like Achilles. But, on the other hand (*de*), since Odysseus implicitly survived the war, the only way to safeguard his future *kleos* (and his son's) is to return home: death upon the sea would happen “without glory” (*akleiôs*). Just as Odysseus would be “snatched up,” so would his glory, as the parallel and assonant middle aorists *êrat'* and *anêreipsanto* imply. Thus Odysseus' *kleos* depends crucially on his *nostos*, unlike Achilles': while Achilles' *kleos* was to come at the expense of his *nostos*, this passage makes clear that Odysseus' future *kleos* is bound up in the winning of his *nostos*. The *Odyssey* must then construct a *kleos* for Odysseus wholly different from that of the *Iliad*'s Achilles.

And this it does. Unlike Achillean *kleos*, Odyssean *kleos* is self-constructed, as Charles Segal demonstrates in his essay, “*Kleos* and Its Ironies in the *Odyssey*.”⁶ Segal notes that Odysseus wins *kleos* not just through his deeds, but through his “long, bard-

⁵ All translations from Greek are my own unless otherwise noted.

⁶ Charles Segal, “*Kleos* and Its Ironies in the *Odyssey*,” in *Reading the Odyssey: Selected Interpretive Essays*, ed. Seth L. Schein (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 201-221. While Achilles may sing the *klea andrôn* in *Il.* 9, Odysseus is unique in that he speaks of his own *kleos* (202-3).

like narrative” before the Phaeacians.⁷ Segal then reads the slaughter of the suitors as a similar bardic performance of his own *kleos*, now performed to the accompaniment of the bow, identified by the poet as lyre-like.

Segal argues his point from the position that Odysseus’ *kleos* is fundamentally ambivalent because of its identification with *doloi*: “A woman can be expected to use *doloi* for her *kleos*, but a hero should win his *kleos* in a fair fight on the battlefield.” The case is more complex, though—Segal notes that there are some *doloi* that lead to good *kleos* (Penelope’s, Odysseus’), and some that lead to bad (Clytemnestra’s).⁸ These *doloi* that constitute Odysseus’ *kleos* are enumerated in his narrative before the Phaeacians; thus Odysseus creates his own *kleos* through song. But, Segal argues, the poem subordinates Odysseus’ self-constructed *kleos* to the *kleos* won through a “heroic battle” by “subordinating song to action (for in book 21 [when, at the moment of stringing the bow, Odysseus is compared to a bard stringing a lyre] the bardic associations are figurative only).”⁹ Segal reads the slaughter, that is, as a literal enactment of Odysseus’ *kleos* from Troy,¹⁰ which is privileged over the word-based *kleos* associated with Odysseus’ *doloi*.

Segal continues to argue that even this battle-won, quasi-Iliadic *kleos* is ambivalent, like the heroic status of so many of Odysseus’ other exploits, for the suitors (in Book 24) will see it as won through guile. Segal even goes so far as to suggest that the poem’s position is that the slaughter is not as heroic as all that (“The slaughter of the

⁷ Id., 204-5.

⁸ Id., 208.

⁹ Id., 218-19.

¹⁰ Id., 212-13. “Now, at the brink of heroic battle once more, the hero uses a bardic metaphor not merely to state in words, but to enact in deeds, what it meant to win *kleos* at Troy.”

Suitors has, to be sure, some of the appurtenances of heroic battle... yet this deed is hardly a heroic exploit on the Iliadic scale”).¹¹ By his account, this kind of *kleos* is simply of lower quality than any won “on the Iliadic scale.” So, upon examination, we find ourselves committed to the view that, since the slaughter of the suitors is “Odysseus’ reassertion of his heroic persona and his restoration to wife, house, and kingship,” Odysseus’ heroic persona is inferior to any simply Iliadic hero’s.

I must disagree with this result of Segal’s argument because I have already revealed my commitment to Nagy’s claim that one project of the *Odyssey* is making Odysseus the best of the Achaeans.¹² I find that Segal errs in his central claim—that Odysseus’ murderous performance of his *kleos* to the suitors amounts to a reenactment of his Iliadic *kleos*—because the slaughter is not simply Iliadic. Put simply, the slaughter appropriates a largely Iliadic context to the end of creating *kleos* for Odysseus, but it is in this way that Odysseus’ *kleos* is different, that he has the ability to create the heroic context and the heroic deed. To the end of elaborating and justifying this view, this chapter is an examination of the character of Odysseus’ *kleos* that is enacted in the slaughter of the suitors. As the context for this examination, I am motivated by the first part of Segal’s argument: Odysseus’ slaughter of the suitors is a performance of his own *kleos*. Let us turn our attention to the opening of Book 22, where Odysseus, after winning the contest of the bow, stands on the verge of murder.

¹¹ Id., 220.

¹² Nagy, *Best of the Achaeans*, 35.

§2. Odysseus' Iliadic pronouncement

The slaughter of the suitors opens with Odysseus' self-exposure (though he does not explicitly announce himself until 34 lines later).¹³

Αὐτὰρ ὁ γυμνώθη ῥακέων πολύμητις Ὀδυσσεύς,
 ἄλτο δ' ἐπὶ μέγαν οὐδόν, ἔχων βιὸν ἠδὲ φαρέτρην
 ἰῶν ἐμπλείην, ταχέας δ' ἐκχεύατ' οἴστους
 αὐτοῦ πρόσθε ποδῶν, μετὰ δὲ μνηστῆρσιν ἔειπεν:
 “οὔτος μὲν δὴ ἄεθλος ἀάατος ἐκτετέλεσται:
 νῦν αὖτε σκοπὸν ἄλλον, ὃν οὐ πῶ τις βάλεν ἀνὴρ,
 εἴσομαι, αἶ κε τύχωμι, πόρῃ δέ μοι εὖχος Ἀπόλλων.” (Od. 22.1-7)

Then he was stripped of his rags, Odysseus of many devices,
 and leapt onto the great threshold, holding the bow and quiver
 full of arrows, and poured out the swift shafts
 at his feet, and addressed the suitors:
 “This unimpeachable deed has been accomplished.
 But now I shall acquaint myself with a new target, which I think no man has ever
 struck,
 should I hit my mark, and Apollo give me glory.”

We might expect the most substantial scene of armed combat of the *Odyssey* to feature an Iliadic hero. Instead, the diction is hardly Iliadic, which is surprising, given the necessity of vocabulary for the implements of war. (On the whole, the diction is not characteristic of *either* poem. But if we were committed to e.g. Segal's view we would expect this Iliadic *kleos* to bear significant similarities of diction to the *Iliad*.) The phrase *bion êde pharetrên* appears only once in the *Iliad* (Il. 10.260), and once more in the *Odyssey* (Od. 21.233). In neither poem is the quiver ever *iôn empleiên*, and *takhus* is only once used with *oistos* in the *Iliad* (Il. 21.492, *takhees*). The word *hallomai* is Iliadic—there are three instances in the *Odyssey*, but some twenty-five in the *Iliad*—and, as such, lends an Iliadic flavor to the

¹³ See Chapter 3, which is concerned with issues of identity and revelation.

scene, but its significance is clearer with a better understanding of the only Iliadic word from Odysseus' mouth, *eukhos*.

The exact meaning of *eukhos* in the *Iliad* is reasonably straightforward.¹⁴ It appears eighteen times in the *Iliad*, often in battlefield taunts¹⁵ and exhortations¹⁶. The *eukhos* is either explicitly granted by a god (eight times) or taken from a defeated enemy (ten times). From these usages, we might tentatively propose that *eukhos* means, “glory competitively won, often divinely sanctioned.” But the character of *eukhos* differs substantially from *timê* or *kleos*. Exchanges of *eukhos* must be violent. In every instance but one *eukhos* is won violently, and the exception proves the rule. Consider Artemis' rebuke to Apollo for yielding to Poseidon in a dispute instead of fighting him, which is notable as the only use of *eukhos* outside of battle:

φεύγεις δὴ ἐκάργε, Ποσειδάωνι δὲ νίκην
 πᾶσαν ἐπέτρεψας, μέλεον δέ οἱ εὖχος ἔδωκας. (*Il.* 21.472-73)

You flee, you who work from afar? The whole victory
 you yielded to Poseidon, and gave him empty glory.

Artemis draws an implicit distinction between the substance of Poseidon's imminent victory and the insubstantial glory (*meleon eukhos*) he stands to gain. The *eukhos* is insubstantial, it appears, precisely because Apollo flees, avoiding physical confrontation. Evidently, then, *eukhos* can only be obtained by actual violence, and, furthermore, *nikê* does not necessarily secure *eukhos*.

¹⁴ Cunliffe: “Subject of exultation or triumph, triumph, glory.” LSJ: Noun from *eukhomai*. Thus “thing prayed for, object of prayer,” and also “boast, vaunt.”

¹⁵ *Il.* 5.285, 5.654 = 11.445

¹⁶ *Il.* 12.328, 13.327, 16.725, 21.297, 22.130

So much for *eukhos* in the *Iliad*. In the *Odyssey*, *eukhos* appears only three times, including in the passage above. It first appears in the cave of the Cyclops, when Odysseus ponders bloody revenge, which use is consistent with the definition above. It then appears in two closely related passages: when Penelope intervenes with the suitors to let Odysseus have a try at the contest of the bow, she equates success with winning *eukhos*; and when Odysseus makes a similar equation (post-contest) here. This use requires some attention, because it is not an obviously violent context. Penelope calls the glory of winning the contest of the bow *eukhos*:

ὦδε γὰρ ἐξερέω, τὸ δὲ καὶ τετελεσμένον ἔσται:
 εἴ κέ μιν ἐντανύσῃ, δώῃ δέ οἱ εὖχος Ἀπόλλων,
 ἔσσω μιν χλαῖνάν τε χιτῶνά τε, εἴματα καλά,
 δώσω δ' ὄξυν ἄκοντα, κυνῶν ἀλκτῆρα καὶ ἀνδρῶν,
 καὶ ξίφος ἄμφηκες. (*Od.* 21.337-41)

For I speak this word, and it will be something accomplished:
 If he strings the bow, and Apollo gives him glory,
 I will give him a mantle and a tunic, beautiful clothing,
 and I will give him a sharp javelin as a protection against dogs and men,
 and a double-edged sword.

Clearly this *eukhos* is won in a competitive context (an actual competition). But is this *eukhos* won by violence? Obviously there is latent violence in the preparation of the weapon for battle, i.e. the stringing of the bow, so in a way this is a competitive and violent enough context that the audience (the suitors) could understand *eukhos* at face value. But, more important, this use of *eukhos* is not independent of Odysseus' use before the suitors in that it directly anticipates Odysseus' speech to the suitors. The speeches resemble each other in theme and grammatical form. In both speeches there is a perfect formed from *teleô*; and in both there is the same conditional structure with *eukhos* from Apollo. Furthermore, the apodosis here anticipates Odysseus' literal and figurative

rehabilitation, as well as his armament. The use of *eukhos* is more appropriate to this anticipatory context, where violence, victory, and spoils are all at stake.

To complete our section on *eukhos*, it behooves us to refer to Pietro Pucci's treatment of the subject.¹⁷ Pucci claims that the original meaning of *eukhos* is "boast or scream of triumph." Thus *eukhos*, though it came to be not just the boast or scream, but the triumph itself, is fundamentally a species of utterance; Pucci says, "its meaning is contained within the semantic field of *kleos*, *logos*, *muthos*."¹⁸ Pucci draws no particular conclusion about the relationship of the two, but observes that the two are often used interchangeably. Any difference between the two, he suggests, stem from the fact that, as a scream of victory, *eukhos* is confined temporally, while *kleos* is not.¹⁹

Now we turn back to Odysseus' first pronouncement. When Odysseus proclaims that he will try at a different target for the sake of winning *eukhos*, he is referring to the kind of glory that is won by killing other warriors. But whereas substantial *eukhos* is properly won in a competitive arena (cf. *Il.* 21.472-73), Odysseus proposes to win *eukhos* by executing Antinoös (as opposed to facing him in combat), and, moreover, takes steps to prevent the establishment of any kind of competitive arena. On that basis, his announcement that *eukhos* is at stake is not a verbal declaration that an Iliadic battle is taking place so much as an Odyssean appropriation of the idea of an Iliadic battle, in which *eukhos* can be won through violence.

¹⁷ Pietro Pucci, *The Song of the Sirens* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998), 60-62.

¹⁸ *Id.*, 62.

¹⁹ Pucci speculates: "The *eukhos* in the battlefield might be prolonged in the *kleos* that immortalizes the hero" (62).

Odysseus needs *eukhos*. His stated motive is revenge²⁰, and winning *eukhos* constitutes his revenge, as the example of Antinoös illustrates. Antinoös, while living, did not learn of Odysseus' return, and so Odysseus' retribution was not contingent on Antinoös' realization of his own earlier sins. Odysseus' revenge instead lay in his deadly victory. From the moment of his pronouncement, *eukhos* was at stake, and it is this (*eukhos*) that Odysseus gets from Antinoös' murder. Just so, Odysseus gains from the murder of the other suitors, even though they are hardly more able to defend themselves than Antinoös.

§3. Odysseus' authoritative power

Though I claim the slaughter of the suitors is not simply an epilogue to the *Iliad*, the scene doubtless has some Iliadic coloring, just as the battle requires some amount of Iliadic heroism. In the first seven lines of the scene, the only Iliadic coloring (beyond *eukhos*) is given by the verb *halto*, from *hallomai*. Its usage is significant here because it is the symbolically laden action of stepping over the threshold, the metonymy for Odysseus' homecoming and the obvious topic of the *Odyssey*. But, more generally, the usage of *hallomai* seems to be associated with the willful, authoritative appropriation of the *Iliad*. The word only appears twice more in the *Odyssey*, and in both circumstances it serves this function. In *Od.* 21.388, where the oxherd Philoitios springs to close the door during

²⁰ He refuses Eurymachus' offer of material compensation with these words:

οὐδέ κεν ὄσ' ἔτι χεῖρας ἐμὰς λήξαιμι φόνοιο
πρὶν πάσαν μνηστῆρας ὑπερβασίην ἀποτίσαι. (*Od.* 22.63-64)

nor yet will I stay my hands from the slaughter
until I take revenge on the entire transgression of the suitors.

See also Chapter 2.

the contest of the bow, *halto* coincides with the transformation of Philoitios from oxherd to heroic companion and moreover anticipates the battle to come (even perhaps Odysseus' own leap near the door at *Od.* 22.2). This heroic leap (no mean feat for a humble oxherd) coincides with the closing the doors of the courtyard (*Od.* 21.389), which I argue below is critical to the success of Odysseus' *kleos*-getting enterprise. Thus the leap coincides with Philoitios' complicity in the creation of Odysseus' *kleos*. Furthermore, the means by which Philoitios fastens the doors is a ship's cable (*Od.* 390-91). In taking up this cable and securing the doors (and so Odysseus' *kleos*; see below), Philoitios has taken up the trappings of Odysseus' sailor-warrior companions. This transformation is all contained in the leaping action that begins the sequence.²¹ Upon returning to his chair, he looks toward Odysseus, presumably awaiting a signal (*Od.* 21.393), which visual communication is characteristic of Odysseus with his companions and Telemachus.

A similar but more important usage of *hallomai* is *Od.* 22.80. After Odysseus refuses his offer of compensation, Eurymachus realizes he must either fight or flee. When he decides to stand and fight, he *springs* to attack Odysseus (*halto d'epi autôî*). Here the leap is the fulfillment of the conscious choice to fight and his example of the object of his exhortation. The leap is the manifestation of his decision to fight an Iliadic battle and exhortation to the suitors to do the same, in the same way that Philoitios' leap transforms the oxherd into a warrior.

Since Eurymachus has now succeeded the late Antinoös as the leader and spokesperson of the suitors, his agreement to frame the scene as an Iliadic battle would

²¹ Immediately prior to this, Eumaeus, Philoitios' humble double, had been abused by the suitors. Even Telemachus' response emphasizes their different stations. So when Philoitios takes up the heroic tasks enumerated above, it is a true transformation.

seem to amount to the suitors' complicity in Odysseus' quasi-Iliadic enterprise. I argue that Eurymachus is compelled by Odysseus to fight in this way, so the suitors' complicity is unwilling. Consider Eurymachus' exhortation to his comrades. His offer of repayment spurned by Odysseus (*Od.* 22.61-67), Eurymachus turns to his companions with a plan:

ὦ φίλοι, οὐ γὰρ σχήσει ἀνὴρ ὄδε χεῖρας ἀάπτους,
 ἀλλ' ἐπεὶ ἔλλαβε τόξον εὖζοον ἠδὲ φαρέτρην,
 οὐδοῦ ἀπο ζεστοῦ τοξάσσειται, εἰς ὃ κε πάντας
 ἄμμε κατακτείνῃ: ἀλλὰ μνησώμεθα χάρμης:
 φάσγανά τε σπάσασθε καὶ ἀντίσχεσθε τραπέζας
 ἰῶν ὠκυμόρων: ἐπὶ δ' αὐτῷ πάντες ἔχωμεν
 ἀθρόοι, εἴ κέ μιν οὐδοῦ ἀπώσομεν ἠδὲ θυράων,
 ἔλθωμεν δ' ἀνὰ ἄστν, βοῆ δ' ὄκιστα γένοιτο. (*Od.* 22.70-77)

O friends, clearly this man will not restrain his irresistible hands,
 but since he took hold of the well-crafted bow and quiver,
 he will shoot from the polished threshold until
 he kills us all. No, let us remember our fighting spirit.
 Draw your swords and hold the tables against
 the arrows of swift death. Let us all have at him
 in a bunch. If we were to shove him away from the threshold and doors,
 and go up the town, then would the cry be heard as quickly as possible.

In pieces, the exhortation is Iliadic. The main substance of the exhortation, namely the semantic turn *mnêsômetha kharmês*, has an Iliadic tone: this is the only instance in the *Odyssey* of *kharmês*, whereas there are 22 in the *Iliad*, seven with a form of *mimnêskô*, and two in exhortations with *mnêsômetha* as above. In contexts such as this, *kharmês* means approximately, “fighting spirit,” “desire for battle,” or even “how to fight.”²² After this, Iliadic and non-Iliadic formulae/realia alternate throughout. The word *trapezas* stands out as distinctly inappropriate to a battle-context, but here the battle appropriates the

²² Cunliffe: “(1) Fighting, battle. (2) A fight in progress. (3) Spirit, stomach, ardour for the fight, one’s spirit of fight. (4) The art of war, war, fighting.” Cunliffe suggests (3) for usage with *mimnêskô*, and suggests (4) for the lone usage *eidote kharmês*. But I claim the two cases are not so distinct, and with a hortatory subjunctive *mnêsômetha* the meaning is likely similar to an imperative *eidote*. Hence e.g. Lattimore’s frequent gloss, “warcraft.”

tables. The Iliadic formula *iôn ôkumorôn* follows. The diction of the rest of 74 is not Iliadic—*spassasthe* is unknown to the *Iliad*, for instance—but sandwiched as it is between two Iliadic formulae (*mnêsômetha kharmês* and *iôn ôkumorôn*), even the least Iliadic aspect (*trapezas*) is overwhelmed. The dining room is transformed into a battlefield; Eurymachus asks his comrades to fight an Iliadic battle. The irony is that, in claiming the non-Iliadic for the Iliadic, the suitors are simultaneously participating in Odysseus' *Odyssean* project to contest *kleos*.

Although Eurymachus is willing to exhort his comrades to become, in a sense, Iliadic warriors (*mnêsômetha kharmês*), and to repurpose dining implements as quasi-Iliadic armament, he is unwilling to take the fight on Odysseus' terms. Rather, he hopes to rouse the town and thus defy Odysseus' authoritative project. How fitting, then, that Odysseus has ordered the doors be secured with a bolt (*klêisai klêidi*, *Od.* 21.236, 241), in words nearly identical to *kleos*.²³ Put differently, Odysseus has ordered the doors be secured with a bolt in *kleos*-sounding terms. Though he is unwilling, then, Eurymachus is compelled by Odysseus' *klêidi* to participate in the enactment of Odysseus' *kleos*. Here is a demonstration of Odysseus' willful power as the author of his own *kleos*. At the same time he compels the unwilling Eurymachus (and the rest of the suitors) to participate in his *kleos*-project, he actively prevents their word, perspective, and (implicitly) report of heroic values to be heard or seen—in short, he suppresses their *kleos* by way of securing his own.

²³ Segal (219-220) comments on the irony of Odysseus concealing the slaughter of the suitors, i.e. his *kleos*.

There is an additional resonance if we return to the centrality of *eukhos* in Odysseus' project. As a boast of victory, *eukhos* is precisely what Odysseus seeks to win from the slaughter of the suitors (*Od.* 22.7), and precisely what he denies Eurycleia once the slaughter is finished. Indeed, his injunction is specifically against the verbal form of *eukhos* (οὐχ ὀσίη καταμένοιισιν ἐπ' ἀνδράσιν εὐχετάσθαι = "it is not right to boast over men who have been killed," *Od.* 22.407).²⁴ It is no coincidence that, immediately upon the opening of the doors, boasting is disallowed. While the doors are closed, Odysseus is the author of his *kleos*; he controls the context with his word and deed. Once the doors are open, the *kleos* can be seen and heard around the town and world; unlike the dining room, the entire world is not the domain of performance, and Odysseus does not have the authoritative control he has in the closed interior space of his hall.

The suitors' do eventually get their voices heard, but only in Hades. How do the suitors see their glorious destruction? Rarely does one of the suitors describe Odysseus' *kleos* from his own perspective. In Hades (*Od.* 24.184-185), the suitor Amphimedon's account of Odysseus' homecoming includes some of the mistreatment he suffered at Odysseus' hands. But, thoroughly unrepentant, he describes the scene with the same self-pitying sense of grievance with which Agamemnon describes his own death. Many of the details are similar. For instance, Amphimedon describes how, during the slaughter, the blood steamed (*thuen*) from the floor and the victims shouted terribly (*stonos ornut' aeikês*). Compare Agamemnon's account: the blood steamed (*thuen*), and Cassandra's screaming was worst of all (*oiktrotatên d' êkousa opa... Kassandrês*). Segal notes

²⁴ The import of ὀσίη is strong. It is only used once more in Homer, by Penelope of Antinoos' plot to murder Telemachus (οὐδ' ὀσίη κακὰ ῥάπτειν ἀλλήλοισιν, *Od.* 16.423).

Amphimedon's emphasis on the deceit of his murderers.²⁵ Similarly Agamemnon claims that his wife "devised" (*mêsato*, 428) his death.

Amphimedon's account, by being unwarlike and filled with Odysseus' treachery, stands in opposition to Odysseus' *kleos*-building project, but, ironically, serves to illustrate its success. For Amphimedon stars in the battle's most Iliadic moment, when the assembled factions throw spears at each other, and Athena makes vain the suitors' throws. Amphimedon strikes Telemachus even in this circumstance. The scene has several precedents in the *Iliad*, of gods influencing the cast of missiles.²⁶ Amphimedon has played the role of so many unfortunate Greek men, of being on the wrong side of an *aristeia*. In the context of the *Iliad*, there is nothing more typical. The presence of such a scene here, in which Amphimedon stars, belies his claim that the slaughter was treacherous and unwarlike. Thus his testimony is discredited by the poem's narrative, the literal author of Odysseus' *kleos*, and Odysseus' project is successful.

§4. *Poly-Odysseus, Poly-Achilles?*

Eurymachus has other difficulties in making sense of the scene, which stem from Odysseus' obscure identity and authoritative power. Eurymachus' exhortation follows his attempt to reason with Odysseus, where he is skeptical of Odysseus' identity: "If indeed you are Ithakan Odysseus come back..." he begins (*εἰ μὲν δὴ Ὀδυσσεὺς Ἰθακῆσιος εἰλήλουθας*, *Od.* 22.45). He addresses *Oduseus Ithakêsios*, a man familiar to him, perhaps, but not to the epic. Only once more is *Oduseus Ithakêsios* mentioned, in a similar context.

²⁵ Segal, 220.

²⁶ Irene de Jong, *A Narratological Commentary on the Odyssey* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 536.

Leokritos, a suitor, tells the assembled Ithakans that, even if Ithakan Odysseus were to return home, he would be killed by the suitors (opening with εἴ περ γάρ κ' Ὀδυσσεὺς Ἴθακήσιος αὐτὸς ἐπελθὼν, *Od.* 2.246). In some sense Eurymachus and Leokritos are speaking to the wrong Odysseus; this is not a man integrated into society, but a man who locks society out (cf. *Od.* 22.77-78).²⁷ The other line (εἰ μὲν δὴ Ὀδυσσεὺς Ἴθακήσιος εἰλήλουθας) seems out of place in the epic, with the spondaic fifth foot. This disruption to the line's rhythm hints at hesitation, as if Eurymachus is truly skeptical of this man's identity.²⁸ So, when *polumêtis Odusseus* refuses his offer (*Od.* 22.60, cf. 22.1), Eurymachus responds with *hode anêr* (*Od.* 22.70), as if he does not know to whom he is speaking. This is not simply wishful thinking—we have just seen how the suitors confidently anticipate the arrival of just such an Ithakan Odysseus²⁹—but true ignorance. Though Eurymachus' skepticism is an instance of the suitors' insistent disbelief in Odysseus' return, his confusion about Odysseus' identity is pardonable (since Odysseus' identity is intimately related to his propensity for disguise; see Chapter 3). Instead, starting from the deictic *hode*, he describes what he sees.

Of course, *polumêtis Odusseus* is familiar to the epic's audience: *polumêtis* is the epithet most characteristic of and associated with Odysseus.³⁰ So when Eurymachus cannot recognize *hode anêr*, he fails to recognize the Odysseus of epic, the hero of the

²⁷ Joseph Russo, Manuel Fernández-Galliano, and Alfred Heubeck, *A Commentary on Homer's Odyssey, Volume III* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), *ad loc.*, claim the opposite, that the usage of *Ithakêsios* is significant here because “Odysseus has regained his full rights as a citizen.” The authors apparently believe the bow has this enfranchising power.

²⁸ Russo, *Commentary*, *ad loc.*: The spondaic fifth foot emphasizes “the sense of something finally and forever consummated.”

²⁹ *Pace* Russo, *Commentary*, again: *hode anêr* “represents a last and childish half-hearted attempt... to deny the evidence of the hero's identity.”

³⁰ See e.g. Nagy, *Best of the Achaeans*, 47.

Iliad and *Odyssey*. But he describes him. He sees a man with “irresistible³¹ hands” (*kheiras aaptous*). The deployment of this formulaic line ending is significant here. While the epithet is relatively common in the *Iliad*, appearing some eleven times, it is uncommon in the *Odyssey*, appearing only three times. This usage is marked, and all the more for its particular uses in the *Odyssey*. One of the other instances is nearly identical to this one, spoken by Agelaos in another exhortation to the suitors,³² and the other is in a speech of Achilles himself.

When Odysseus travels to the underworld, he interviews many of the heroes of the *Iliad*, now dead. When he encounters the dead Achilles, the shade asks about his father, Peleus. By way of framing his question, Achilles imagines his father’s fate, which resembles that of Odysseus’ household. Peleus and Laertes, for instance, are both victims of a permanent old age, and the notion of forceful dishonor at home recalls Odysseus’ situation with the suitors. Achilles then describes his vengeance on his hypothetical enemies upon the homecoming of his force and invincible hands:

εἰπέ δέ μοι Πηλῆος ἀμύμονος εἴ τι πέπυσσαι,
ἢ ἔτ’ ἔχει τιμὴν πολέσιν μετὰ Μυρμιδόνεσσιν,
ἢ μιν ἀτιμάζουσιν ἀν’ Ἑλλάδα τε Φθίην τε,
οὐνεκά μιν κατὰ γῆρας ἔχει χεῖράς τε πόδας τε.
εἰ γὰρ ἐγὼν ἐπαρωγὸς ὑπ’ αὐγὰς ἡελίοιο,
τοῖος ἐὼν οἴός ποτ’ ἐνὶ Τροίῃ εὐρείῃ
πέφνον λαὸν ἄριστον, ἀμύνων Ἀργείοισιν, —
εἰ τοιόσδ’ ἔλθοιμι μίννθ’ ἀπερ ἐς πατέρος δῶ,
τῶ κέ τεω στύξαιμι μένος καὶ χεῖρας ἀάπτους,
οἳ κείνων βιόωνται ἐέργουσίν τ’ ἀπὸ τιμῆς. (*Od.* 11.496-503)

³¹ Literally, “untouchable,” if *aaptos* is indeed formed as a privative derivative of *haptô*. The sense is that the hands cannot be restrained by other hands, so *aaptos* is often translated, “invincible.” I find “irresistible” more literal, so I use that.

³² ὦ φίλοι, ἤδη σχήσει ἀνήρ ὄδε χεῖρας ἀάπτους (*Od.* 22.248)

O friends, now this man will restrain his irresistible hands

But for the exchange of *êdê* for *ou gar* and the corresponding reversal of meaning, the lines are identical.

And tell me of blameless Peleus, if you have heard anything,
 whether he still holds office among the Myrmidon horde,
 or they disrespect him throughout Hellas and Phthia,
 because old age binds his hands and feet.
 If only I were a helper under the light of the sun,
 such as I was when in wide Troy
 I killed the best people, fighting for the Argives—
 I wish for just a little while I could come like that to my father's home.
 Then I would make my strength and irresistible hands bitter
 to they who use violence on him and deprive him of his station.

The usage of *kheiras aaptous* is neatly parallel to Eurymachus'. Eurymachus (Agelaos subsequently) perceives Odysseus' slaughtering hands in the same way that Achilles imagines his own. Eurymachus and Agelaos see a man coming among them with *kheires aaptoi*; Achilles imagines himself appearing among the men dishonoring his father with the same *kheires aaptoi*.

But Achilles' sympathetic words do not constitute an Iliadic endorsement of Odysseus' unstoppable project, because of their distinctly Odyssean character. Achilles' words question the unity of his identity. Achilles hearkens back to his days in Troy (*pot' eni Troiêi eureiêi...*) to identify the appropriate Achilles to set things right at home. The clarification (*toios ên hoios...*), which is used several times in speaking of Odysseus (disguised Athena in book 1, Menelaos in book 4, Penelope in book 20), is unnecessary, even inappropriate, in discussing Achilles. Achilles' Iliadic *kleos* depends on his eternal identity as the best fighter of the Achaeans. In fact, Achilles uses the same phrase *toios ên hoios* of himself in the *Iliad*, where the purpose is not to discriminate not between different sorts of Achilles, but between him and different men.³³ But there is irony in that

³³ τοῖος ἐών, οἷος οὔ τις Ἀχαιῶν χαλκοχιτώνων,
 ἐν πολέμῳ, ἀγορῇ δέ τ' ἀμείνονές εἶσι καὶ ἄλλοι (Il. 18.105-106)

Achilles' particular invocation of his past Iliadic glory threatens that same glory. By wishing to come to the house of his father in the guise of the Iliadic hero, Achilles explicitly threatens his entire *kleos*, contradicting his famous words rejecting (Odysseus', among others') embassy:

ὄλετο μὲν μοι νόστος, ἀτὰρ κλέος ἄφθιτον ἔσται. (*Il.* 9.413)

My homecoming is lost, but there will be immortal *kleos* for me.

Iliad-Achilles destroys his own *nostos* in favor of (note the strongly adversative *men... atar*) *kleos aphthiton*, but *Odyssey*-Achilles wishes for the *nostos* of an explicitly Iliadic Achilles. The two positions on *kleos*—and thus on the nature of heroism—are entirely incompatible. This passage (*Od.* 11.496-503) is at the crux of a large amount of scholarship,³⁴ but my interests are narrow. From what I have argued, it is clear that *Odyssey*-Achilles' endorsement is not an Iliadic endorsement of *Od.* 11.502-503, nor an endorsement of the slaughter of the suitors; *Odyssey*-Achilles is sufficiently different from *Iliad*-Achilles in terms of the most fundamental heroic values that it would be a fallacy to read his endorsement of Odysseus' project as compatible with the values of *Iliad*-Achilles.

Such as I am, none of the bronze-clad Achaeans
is greater in war, though others are better in speech

³⁴ Nothing less than relationship between the two poems is at stake. Thus the meaning of Achilles' various troubling comments in *Od.* 11 is a matter of considerable dispute. The debate mostly centers on Achilles' remark of *Od.* 11.488-491, that he would rather be a living thrall than dead lord. Robert Schmiel, "Achilles in Hades," *Classical Philology* 82 (1987): 35-37 summarizes some mainstream positions: namely (1) *Odyssey*-Achilles = *Iliad*-Achilles; (2) *Odyssey*-Achilles is upset; (3) *Odyssey*-Achilles contradicts *Iliad*-Achilles because the poems are different; (4) *Odyssey*-Achilles destroys *Iliad*-Achilles' heroism; and (4a) thus the passage is spurious. Schmiel himself cites *Od.* 11.502-503, the passage I discuss, in support of the claim that Achilles feels no remorse for his Iliadic enterprise: "If [Achilles] regretted his choice of honor at the cost of a short life, he could not express the wish that he might return to Phthia," etc. As far as I can tell, this claim is a non sequitur, as I have shown above.

The repetition of *kheiras aaptous* thus has a different significance. The double reappearance of the formulaic *kheiras aaptous* in *Od.* 22 is due to the return of the theme of Iliadic appropriation that is made explicit in Achilles' exchange with Odysseus in *Od.* 11. Furthermore *Od.* 22 is the final moment of Odyssean appropriation of Iliadic values. The emphasis on *kheiras aaptous* can be attributed to its link to *Od.* 11 as well as its significant use in the *Iliad*.

The case for the centrality of *kheires aaptoi* stands as follows. In the *Iliad*, *kheiras aaptous* is a formulaic phrase. Nothing but *kheires* are ever *aaptoi*. The phrase appears eleven times in the *Iliad*,³⁵ and in each case connotes divine ordinance. The definitive usage is established in *Il.* 1.567 and 8.450. In both of these cases Zeus addresses another god, to the effect that his will is inviolable. In the first instance, Zeus promises Thetis that he will accomplish all she asks, but is spied by Hera, who questions him, and so he finally defends himself:

εἰ δ' οὕτω τοῦτ' ἐστίν, ἐμοὶ μέλλει φίλον εἶναι.
 ἀλλ' ἀκέουσα κάθησο, ἐμῶ δ' ἐπιπέθεο μύθῳ,
 μή νύ τοι οὐ χραίσμωσιν, ὅσοι θεοὶ εἰς' ἐν Ὀλύμπῳ,
 ἄσσον ἰόνθ', ὅτε κέν τοι ἀάπτους χεῖρας ἐφείω.³⁶ (*Il.* 1.564-67)

And if it is as you say, then it is surely dear to me.
 But sit down in silence, and yield to my word,

³⁵ All accusative except as marked (wielder of hands indicated in parentheses): *Il.* 1.567 (Zeus), 7.309 (Aias), 8.450 (nom.; Zeus), 11.169 (Agamemnon), 12.166 (Asios), 13.49 (Trojans), 13.77 (nom., Aias), 13.318 (Aiantes, Teukros), 16.244 (nom., Patroclus), 17.638 (Hector), 20.503 (Achilles). No two lines are the same. *Il.* 7.309, 8.450 (nom.), 12.166, 13.318, and 17.638 have *menos kai kh. a.*, like *Od.* 11.502.

³⁶ Compare

πάντως, οἶον ἐμόν γε μένος καὶ χεῖρες ἄαπτοι,
 οὐκ ἄν με τρέψειαν, ὅσοι θεοὶ εἰς' ἐν Ὀλύμπῳ. (*Il.* 8.450-451)

Such are *my* strength and irresistible hands
 that, all together, they could not turn me, as many gods as are on Olympus.

lest the gods, as many as are on Olympus, are useless
when I come near, when I lay my irresistible hands on you.

Here the irresistible hands guarantee, against the might of all the gods, what Zeus says *emoi mellei philon einai* (similarly *Il.* 8.450-451). But what to Zeus *mellei philon einai* is simply a periphrasis for *boulê Dios*, or the entire action of the *Iliad*.³⁷ Compare his promise to Thetis: *emoi de ke tauta melêsetai, ophra telessô* (But these things will be of concern to me, that I will accomplish them; *Il.* 1.523), and *Dios d'eteleiêto boulê* (and the will of Zeus was accomplished; *Il.* 1.5). Thus, as the enforcer of what Zeus says *emoi mellei philon einai*, *kheires aaptoi* drive the entire plot of the *Iliad*. Perhaps it is also significant that this is the sole usage where the phrase is not at the end of the line.

Every other instance of the phrase refers more or less explicitly to the fact that *kheiras aaptous* are guaranteed by Zeus. I include two more representative examples. The deployment is particularly striking in the case of Achilles' prayer for Patroclus' hands, where there is a clear difference between invincibility and the fulfillment of Zeus' will (*Il.* 16.244); and in the case of Poseidon's dismissal of the danger posed by the Trojans and their irresistible hands, where this apparent paradox is resolved by the fact that the Trojans are fulfilling Zeus' will as well (*Il.* 13.49).

Given this evidence, that in the *Iliad* *kheires aaptoi* fulfill the will of Zeus, i.e. drive the Iliadic project, the use of *kheires aaptoi* is the most substantial Odyssean appropriation of an Iliadic motif, and might be said to stand in for the transformation of Iliadic elements into Odyssean ones.

³⁷ Nagy, *Best of the Achaeans*, 81: the *boulê Dios* is "the self-proclaimed 'plot' of our *Iliad*."

With this result in hand, we turn back to the murder of the suitors. Eurymachus describes *hode anêr*, the unrecognizable man before him:

ὦ φίλοι, οὐ γὰρ στήσει ἀνὴρ ὄδε χεῖρας ἀάπτους,
ἀλλ' ἐπεὶ ἔλλαβε τόξον εὖξοον ἠδὲ φαρέτρην,
οὐδοῦ ἄπο ξεστοῦ τοξάσεται. (*Od.* 22.70-72)

O friends, clearly this man will not restrain his irresistible hands,
but since he took hold of the well-crafted bow and quiver,
he will shoot from the polished threshold.

Having disabused himself of a notion of an *Ithakêsios* Odysseus, he instead responds to *polumetis* Odysseus in terms reminiscent of Odysseus' self-exposure of *Od.* 22.1-7,³⁸ with the line ending *kheiras aaptous* functioning, as I have shown, as the symbol of the Odyssean appropriation of the *Iliad*. This appropriation corresponds to the establishment of a heroic context in which *kleos* and *eukhos* can be won. The appropriation is effected by both Odysseus' words—his pronouncement that *eukhos* was at stake—and his actions—the transformative Iliadic leap. This appropriation/contextualization in turn compels Eurymachus to be complicit in the project. In short, Eurymachus sees a hero whose speech and action define and enact his own *kleos*.

§5. Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that, through his words (e.g. his use of *eukhos*) and deeds (e.g. the Iliadic leap), Odysseus establishes the slaughter of the suitors in a heroic context, which enables him to win *kleos* in his dining room. Though the appropriation is of heroic values/context from the *Iliad*, the *kleos* Odysseus wins is not Iliadic. It depends

³⁸ ἔλλαβε τόξον εὖξοον ἠδὲ φαρέτρην ≈ ἔχων βιὸν ἠδὲ φαρέτρην, repetition of οὐδόν/οὐδοῦ, ἀάπτους ≈ ἀάατος, repetition of action of shooting

on the aural and visible isolation of his act, as well as the very fact of appropriation in general. This is the self-composed, performative character of Odysseus *kleos*.

2. Murder motives

§1. Introduction: Crime or crimes?

Odysseus' murder of the suitors is often considered in moral terms, where the murder is justified by their crimes against him.³⁹ Indeed, it is so considered by Odysseus himself. Thus he recounts their crimes at the beginning of the slaughter:

ὦ κύνες, οὐ μ' ἔτ' ἐφάσκεθ' ὑπότροπον οἴκαδ' ἰκέσθαι
 δήμου ἄπο Τρώων, ὅτι μοι κατεκείρετε οἶκον,
 δμωῆσιν δὲ γυναιξὶ παρεννάξεσθε βιαίως,
 αὐτοῦ τε ζώοντος ὑπεμνάεσθε γυναῖκα,
 οὔτε θεοὺς δείσαντες, οἳ οὐρανὸν εὐρὺν ἔχουσιν,
 οὔτε τιw' ἀνθρώπων νέμεσιν κατόπισθεν ἔσεσθαι:
 νῦν ὑμῖν καὶ πᾶσιν ὀλέθρου πείρατ' ἐφήπται. (*Od.* 22.35-41)

O you dogs, you never expected me to come back home
 from the land of the Trojans, and on that basis you devoured my household,
 forcibly bed my serving-women,
 and surreptitiously wooed my wife with me still living,
 fearing neither the gods who hold the wide sky,
 nor any judgment of men to be hereafter.⁴⁰
 And now the bonds of destruction are fastened on you all.

The largely paratactic structure of this indictment might suggest we examine the accusation in its parts. First, the suitors thought Odysseus was dead. As evidence, Odysseus catalogs three material crimes: the suitors devoured Odysseus' household, forcibly debauched the serving-women, and wooed Odysseus' wife while he was alive.⁴¹

³⁹ See e.g. Hugh Lloyd-Jones, *The Justice of Zeus* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), 29: “[Odysseus] fulfills the requirements of heroic virtue... and with consistent good sense he has avoided overstepping the bounds which the gods set to human action. The conduct of the suitors, like that of Aegisthus, has been the opposite, and so they pay the penalty.” In general, Lloyd-Jones notes, “the *Odyssey* is a poem in which Zeus and Justice play an important, and indeed a preponderating part” (28).

⁴⁰ This line taken almost directly from Stanford, *Odyssey, ad loc.* (I substitute “judgment” for Stanford’s “retribution” for reasons investigated later; see §3.)

⁴¹ For the claim that the material crimes are evidence of their expectation of Odysseus' death, see Stanford *ad loc.* on *hoti*, which he glosses “as is shown by the fact that, since.”

Throughout, the suitors' attitude was blasphemous and recklessly confident. On the ends are an indictment of the suitors' expectation, while the middle is a catalog material crimes. Though there is a paratactic sequence of four second person plural verbs denoting the suitors' outrages, the accusation tends toward unity: besides the loose ring (thought–injury–thought), the final *oute deisantes* denotes a state of mind constant throughout. In other words, though it is possible to enumerate the suitors' crimes,⁴² Odysseus' accusation is essentially monolithic, depending on the unity of the suitors' expectations and actions.

Eurymachus, in his reply to Odysseus following this indictment, accuses Antinoös of some other crimes: the attempted murder of Telemachus and a plan to usurp the throne of Ithaca. Eurymachus then says that Antinoös “has been killed according to his due share” (*νῦν δ' ὁ μὲν ἐν μοίρῃ πέφαται*),⁴³ and offers to repay the physical damage done to Odysseus and more. Eurymachus is willing to allow death as the penalty for the crimes of which he accuses Antinoös. But Eurymachus is confident that the crimes of property, as cataloged by Odysseus, can be settled by the due return of property:

*ἀτὰρ ἄμμες ὄπισθεν ἀρεσσάμενοι κατὰ δῆμον,
ὄσσα τοι ἐκπέπεται καὶ ἐδήδοται ἐν μεγάροισι,
τιμὴν ἀμφὶς ἄγοντες ἑικοσάβοιον ἕκαστος,
χαλκὸν τε χρυσὸν τ' ἀποδώσομεν, εἰς ὃ κε σὸν κῆρ
ἰανθῆ: πρὶν δ' οὔ τι νεμεσητὸν κεχολῶσθαι. (Od. 22.55-59)*

But, as later we publicly reconcile ourselves,
just as much as we ate and drank up in your palace,

⁴² For such an enumeration, see Naoko Yamagata, *Homeric Morality* (New York: E.J. Brill, 1994): 28-30. Yamagata does not mention the first (*οὐ μ' ἔτ' ἐφάσκεθ' ὑπότροπον οἴκαδ' ἰκέσθαι / δῆμον ἄπο Τρώων*), and reads the last participle (*οὔτε θεοὺς δείσαντες... ἔσεσθαι*) as a specific reference to the suitors' various crimes against hospitality (30).

Taking Odysseus' accusation in parts like this obfuscates the crimes' dependence on the suitors' expectation of Odysseus' death and lack of fear of the gods and human *nemesis*.

⁴³ Cf. Stanford *ad loc.* (Od. 22.54). I use his gloss of *en moirêi* as “within his portion,” or “deservedly.”

each leading in addition a tribute of twenty oxen,
we will give away gold and bronze, until the point when it pleases
your heart. And until then it is impossible to fault you for being angry.

By Eurymachus' admission, the crime is one of concrete property, and can be nullified by concrete property in return.⁴⁴ But this separation of crime from expectation/context is inappropriate and leads him to suggest insufficient compensation. Put differently, even if his offer is financially generous enough to cover Odysseus' losses and pay back the crimes of bedding the serving-women and wooing Odysseus' wife besides, he is mistaken in separating the material crime from the mental context that produced it, as Odysseus' refusal makes clear:

Εὐρυμαχ', οὐδ' εἴ μοι πατρώϊα πάντ' ἀποδοίτε,
ὅσσα τε νῦν ὑμῖν ἐστὶ καὶ εἴ ποθεν ἄλλ' ἐπιθεῖτε,
οὐδέ κεν ὥς ἔτι χεῖρας ἐμὰς λήξαιμι φόνιοιο
πρὶν πᾶσαν μνηστῆρας ὑπερβασίην ἀποτίσαι. (*Od.* 22.61-64)

Eurymachus, not if you gave away to me all your fathers' wealth,
as much as you have now and any else that you might ever add to it,
not even then would I stay my hands from the slaughter
until the suitors pay for their whole offense.

Odysseus thus declares that Eurymachus' offer of repayment is not insufficient quantitatively so much as qualitatively: Eurymachus' offer does not address the "whole offense" (*pasan hyperbasiên*). Thus the emphasis of *pasan* is not on "all the offenses," but on the (single) offense's entirety.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Cf. Stanford on *Od.* 22.57. Drawing from specific passages in the *Iliad*, he notes that oxen were considered valuable and could be exchanged for both material goods, ransom, and female slaves.

⁴⁵ Besides the usage above, it is used of Melanthius, whose crimes are many. Eumaeus asks Odysseus what his instructions are regarding Melanthius:

ἢ μιν ἀποκτείνω, αἶ κε κρείσσων γε γένωμαι,
ἦέ σοι ἐνθάδ' ἄγω, ἵν' ὑπερβασίας ἀποτίσῃ
πολλάς, ὅσσας οὗτος ἐμήσατο σῶ ἐνὶ οἴκῳ. (*Od.* 22.167-69)

In the final accounting, then, Odysseus sees the suitors' wrongdoing, rather than as a collection of specific grievances, as a single crime encompassing both actual misdeeds and the suitors' expectation. This expectation is not simply incidental to the material crimes—it is not another offense to be attached to the rest—but it is rather inextricable from them, as Odysseus' reply to Eurymachus' offer of material compensation indicates.

§2. The moral responsibility of the suitors

Given that the suitors' crime is a combination of their expectations/misdeeds, there remains the question of the crime's moral status. This section seeks to address two questions. First, how can moral responsibility exist in Homer, where Zeus or the Fates spin out destinies for men? Their spinning would seem to divest humans of free will and thus moral responsibility. Second, how morally responsible are the suitors for their misdeeds? The answer to this question is important to our understanding of the justice of Odysseus' action against the suitors.

I am aided in my project by a wealth of secondary literature on the subject of Homeric morality. Much of this scholarship is indebted to Hugh Lloyd-Jones' *Justice of Zeus* and A.W.H. Adkins' *Merit and Responsibility*, but the most exhaustive account of morality in Homer (and the most relevant work to this paper) is to be found in Naoko Yamagata's *Homeric Morality*.

whether I should kill him, if I am indeed stronger,
or lead him here, that he may pay back his many
offenses, as many as he devised in your house.

Melanthius' crimes are qualitatively and quantitatively different from the suitors', and so is his punishment, which comes in two installations: torture and mutilation/humiliation.

Our interest in justice leads us first to Lloyd-Jones' *Justice of Zeus*, a study of the source of justice in Greek literature, history, and philosophy, beginning with Homer and ending with Socrates and the Sophists. Lloyd-Jones bases his account on the premise that justice is central to the *Odyssey*'s plot ("the *Odyssey* is a poem in which Zeus and Justice play an important, and indeed a preponderating part"),⁴⁶ and strives to demonstrate that the character of justice in the *Odyssey* is to some extent determined by convenience for the plot. He notes that the attitude of Zeus toward the dispensation of justice differs between the two epics. In his words, Zeus' attitude toward men in the *Odyssey* is "radically different": while *Iliad*-Zeus gives men good and bad thoughts in their mind, *Odyssey*-Zeus "denies that the gods put evil ideas into the minds of men."⁴⁷ This is an artifact of the different morality necessary for each work: in the *Iliad*, no man is right in any absolute sense, but it is convenient for the plot of the *Odyssey* that Odysseus be simply good and the suitors simply bad.⁴⁸

Lloyd-Jones' work bears directly on our first question, of the status of moral responsibility in a world that admits omnipotent gods. By his account, mortals, though possibly deceived by Zeus, are to be considered morally responsible for their actions. For Zeus' opening speech, which gives responsibility to men for their evil actions, is essentially programmatic for the poem's view of justice as well as the plot as a whole.

⁴⁶ Lloyd-Jones, *Justice*, 28.

⁴⁷ Id. And yet this radical difference is not so great, in practical terms: "Since in the *Iliad*, the human agent must always be held fully responsible for his action, even though a god has caused him to perform it, the Odyssean modification of the doctrine... is of strictly limited significance" (Lloyd-Jones, *Justice*, 31-2).

⁴⁸ Id., 29.

Lloyd-Jones falls short, however, in giving an account of the character of justice in the *Odyssey*. It is implied that the character of justice is determined by the necessity of the plot; the *Odyssey* requires a certain type of justice for the sake of glorifying Odysseus' slaughter of the suitors. But this threatens to be unilluminating: we find ourselves claiming that Odysseus' slaughter of the suitors is just because the narrative requires it. Thus justice is in a sense defined by Odysseus' actions.

We can rescue moral responsibility if we turn to A.W.H. Adkins' *Merit and Responsibility*. Adkins agrees with Lloyd-Jones that, even though Zeus and the Fates have a hand in human affairs, human actors are nevertheless morally responsible for their actions, or, in his words, "the belief in non-human causation of human action has practically no effects on the ascription of responsibility."⁴⁹ In the chapter, "Homer: Mistake and Moral Error," Adkins argues for his main point, that Homeric morality is all but indistinguishable from Homeric societal values. These values, he claims, can be separated into competitive virtues and "quiet" ones, e.g. military prowess vs. prudence.⁵⁰ Adkins argues from the presumed military necessities of Homeric society that results are prized above all else, i.e., competitive virtues above "quiet" ones: "When the protection of the self and one's associates is in question, moral error and mistake are not and cannot be distinguished in many cases, while competitive excellences completely override the quieter moral virtues in cases where they can."⁵¹ In other words, because of the extreme

⁴⁹ A.W.H. Adkins, *Merit and Responsibility: A Study in Greek Values* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960), 25.

⁵⁰ Adkins, *Merit and Responsibility*, 30-57.

⁵¹ Id. 56-57.

challenges of Homeric society to long-term human survival, intentions are irrelevant for moral judgments, while prowess is prized above all else.

Adkins' work is relevant to this paper in that his concern is Homeric morality. His general principle, that Homeric morality is little more than a report of Homeric society's decidedly amoral values, is essentially sound, and we will see how it has particular resonance with the language Odysseus uses to indict the suitors.⁵²

We approach the morality of the slaughter of the suitors directly in *Homeric Morality*, in which Naoko Yamagata explores various Homeric moral concepts and quandaries. According to Yamagata, while Odysseus may believe that “the suitors were punished by the gods for their wantonness,” the whole affair—crime, punishment, victory—was effected by Athena, who was “not as interested in the ‘punishment’ of the suitors... as in giving Odysseus and his son great glory.”⁵³ Yamagata furthermore implies that the specific and individual nature of the attention afforded Odysseus by his status as Athena's favorite, which brings about the whole episode, forces us to view the episode not as a moral exercise, but rather its opposite. In other words, there is no generalizing principle: “Odysseus is too special, and so is Athena's love for him, to ensure that this

⁵² See particularly §3 below on *nemesis*.

⁵³ Yamagata, *Homeric Morality*, 39. Note disagreement from Lloyd-Jones: “Great stress is laid on Zeus' protection of strangers and suppliants.... The suitors fail to respect strangers, suppliants or heralds, and so they perish” (Lloyd-Jones, *Justice*, 30). But Yamagata's claim is more compelling, based as it is upon a notion of what justice actually is. In further disagreement, Yamagata notes that Zeus' statement on the status of man's moral responsibility (“programmatically,” according to Lloyd-Jones) distances Zeus from the execution of justice: Zeus' presentation of Orestes as an independent actor who killed the “out of control” Aegisthus “is a striking denial of Zeus' interest in punishing men directly or even sending his ‘agent’ to do so” (Yamagata, *Homeric Morality*, 33).

divine aid is available to all righteous men in the world, or that ‘anybody who does such things’ as the suitors will be punished in the same manner.”⁵⁴

Yamagata’s conclusion, that the exercise is not moral, stems from an analysis of the crimes of the suitors. Though Yamagata hints at deeper resonance for these crimes—the debauchery of the serving women is, besides an “obvious insult to the queen,” “an intrusion into [Odysseus’] patriarchal right and a threat to his lineage”;⁵⁵ she deems the crimes of the suitors, singly and together, as insufficient to merit the death penalty.⁵⁶ She runs through a variety of explanations. She first suggests that Odysseus is justified in killing the suitors as “inevitable self-defence,” but acknowledges that the murder is illegal. The gods disapprove of the suitors’ behavior, which could be another explanation, but Zeus has taken “a detached attitude towards human affairs,” and never is Odysseus claimed by a god to be their agent of justice (though Odysseus, Penelope, Laertes, and Amphinomus / all the suitors seem to interpret the slaughter that way).⁵⁷ The best reading, according to Yamagata, is that Athena arranges the crimes as well as the punishment “out of her friendship,” in service to Odysseus’ glory.⁵⁸

While Yamagata’s account is useful in its thoroughness, it obfuscates the essential issue of motivation. She concludes that the slaughter of the suitors is not a moral action as much as a glory-winning exercise crafted for Odysseus by his loyal and capable friend Athena. But if Athena sets up the slaughter of the suitors—effects the crime and prepares

⁵⁴ Yamagata, *Homeric Morality*, 39.

⁵⁵ Id. 29-30.

⁵⁶ Id. 28-30. Yamagata and I both agree on this point: the crimes of the suitors against Odysseus’ property are, as crimes against property, insufficient to merit death. At the end, though, we disagree about the crimes and the punishment; see §3.

⁵⁷ Id. 31-33.

⁵⁸ Id. 38-39.

the punishment—why then are the crimes insufficient and the slaughter ingloriously unwarlike? Furthermore, the action can only be glorious if it is motivated by necessity. In other words, if the slaughter is to put Odysseus in his best light, it would stand to reason that Odysseus' actions be motivated by necessity, whether the serving of justice (i.e. a moral obligation) or self-defense (i.e. a morally sound act of a different kind of necessity).⁵⁹ While there are heroic contexts in which a glorious act can be undertaken without necessity (e.g. Achilles' presence at Troy was unnecessary, but glorious), the ambush of the unarmed suitors at their dinner is, in itself, in no such heroic context.⁶⁰ Giving the responsibility to Athena for the slaughter of the suitors does not rid the issue of its crucial dependence on the act's justice, or at least acceptability in Homeric society's scheme of heroic values. Besides, even with Yamagata's explanation, the question remains of how and why Odysseus (and the rest of the mortal cast) sees his act as just.

In total, then, we must hold Odysseus and the suitors responsible for their actions. If we accept the argument of Yamagata, then we agree that Odysseus' actions, which are repeatedly claimed as just retribution, are in fact immune to moral judgment; his actions

⁵⁹ Self-defense is no excuse, either. I do not find Yamagata's concern for the legality of Odysseus' act (though Odysseus clearly acts in self-defense, "there is unfortunately no legal transaction to cancel out the murder committed by Odysseus by the 'intention' of the suitors to kill him"; Yamagata, *Homeric Morality*, 31) compelling. First, legality is not the same as morality (and, in fact, Odysseus' actions could be construed as legal in, say, Montana or Florida; we have little to no knowledge of Homeric society, if such a thing even existed, and so the legality of anyone's actions is obscure). Second, Odysseus would then be justified in the murder of all the suitors' families, because then he would be acting in self-defense; but this further murder lacks the stamp of divine approval.

⁶⁰ See Chapter 1 on the establishment of heroic context. I argue that Odysseus, as the author of his own *kleos*, transforms the slaughter into a heroic exercise. This strengthens my point here: at the outset—without Odysseus' peculiar authoritative power—the slaughter of the suitors is not a heroic exercise.

are not just, but they have the endorsement of Athena and Zeus.⁶¹ The suitors did not do enough wrong to deserve death; but they were evil enough—and would do enough wrong in the future, such as the murder of Odysseus or Telemachus—that their death was acceptable to Athena and Zeus, even though such bad behavior does not generally merit death.⁶²

§3. Nemesis

The work of Yamagata and Adkins suggests that the moral question is not to be disentangled from the social one; to some extent, a moral action is an acceptable action. Moreover, that Odysseus' actions be acceptable within the context of Homeric society, i.e., can win *kleos*, is more important than that they be moral.

The phrase *ou ti nemessêton* is common to many passages regarding repayment, and it is helpful for our understanding of this exchange between Odysseus and Eurymachus.⁶³ Happily, *nemesis* has been the subject of a fair amount of scholarship and so is fairly well understood. As it turns out, the concept of *nemesis* is relevant to Odysseus' motivations for murdering the suitors because his repayment is *not nemesis*.

⁶¹ Pace Lloyd-Jones, *Justice*, ix, which essentially equates what is just with what Zeus approves.

⁶² By “acceptable” here I mean that it is neither obligatory nor condemnable. See *Od.* 24.478-481, which appears to be typical of Zeus' attitude. Zeus implies that Athena was responsible for much of the action of the poem, and particularly the punishment of the suitors. He seems generally disinterested; he advises Athena, but makes no command to her. His later intervention (*Od.* 24.539) suggests he has feelings about human behavior, but he does nothing to stop Odysseus directly. Instead Athena interprets the sign and directs Odysseus accordingly.

⁶³ See §4 and *Il.* 9.519-523 below.

Nemesis and *aidôs* are generally understood to be opposites.⁶⁴ Cunliffe glosses *nemesis* as *righteous indignation or vexation, blame, censure, reproach*, and *aidôs* as *reverence, respect, regard*. Following this, we might conclude that *aidôs* is essentially fear of *nemesis*. Mary Scott, however, in her article, “Aidos and Nemesis in the Works of Homer and Their Relevance to Social or Co-operative Values,” argues that *aidôs* and *nemesis* are characterized by a different relationship: “*Aidos* is felt by the prospective or actual doer of the deed, and *nemesis* by the onlooker, whether directly or indirectly affected by the deed.”⁶⁵ The two are emotional reactions to behavior considered socially proper or improper towards “other *agathoi*, suppliants and guests.”⁶⁶ *Aidôs* and *nemesis*, however, are not the product of a “moral conscience,” but are rather emotional responses to perceived adherence to a well-understood code of social conduct. The more general claim, that feelings in modernity ascribed to a moral faculty are in fact due to an awareness of a strict code governing social propriety, is the argument of A. A. Long and, to the extent that they agree, Adkins.⁶⁷ Long gives a similar account of *nemesis* and *aidôs*:

⁶⁴ Besides Yamagata, a representative position is explicit in Mary Scott, “Aidos and Nemesis in the Works of Homer and Their Relevance to Social or Co-operative Values,” *Acta Classica* 23 (1980): 13-35.

⁶⁵ Scott, “Aidos and Nemesis,” 14; see particularly 26-35 on *nemesis*. This view is more or less paraphrased in Charles Fuqua, “Proper Behavior in the *Odyssey*,” *Illinois Classical Studies* 16 (1991): 49-58.

⁶⁶ Scott, “Aidos and Nemesis,” 35.

⁶⁷ See also the book against which Long argues, namely A. W. H. Adkins, *Merit and Responsibility*, and Adkins’ response, A. W. H. Adkins, “Homeric Values and Homeric Society,” *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 91 (1971): 1-14. Their dispute is not entirely relevant to my argument, having more to do with the existence and character of Homeric society (and its relevance to the question at hand). The essential point of disagreement (cited as well in Adkins, “Homeric Values,” 2) is Long’s claim, “We should interpret Homer’s ethics primarily by means of the internal logic of the poems. We are not entitled to say that certain words must take their sense and strength from the facts of Homeric life” (A. A. Long, “Morals and Values in Homer,” *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 90

“To act appropriately is to show *aidôs*, to be sensitive to *nemesis* or 'what people will say'.”⁶⁸ Thus, for instance, Odysseus' following accusation of the suitors is a perfect parallel regarding the human and divine:

οὔτε θεοὺς δείσαντες, οἳ οὐρανὸν εὐρὺν ἔχουσιν,
οὔτε τιν' ἀνθρώπων νέμεσιν κατόπισθεν ἔσεσθαι.

neither fearing the gods who hold the wide sky,
nor any judgment of men to be hereafter.⁶⁹

Following Scott, *nemesis* does not amount to an act (e.g., slaughter), but an emotional reaction. We might paraphrase the accusation as one of disregard for the gods and the opinion of men. In Eurymachus' response, then, the phrase *ou ti nemessêton* is a judgment about what is considered socially acceptable.

This phrase appears in the famous dispute between Achilles and Agamemnon in various capacities. Because the situation strongly resembles Odysseus' (Agamemnon wrongs Achilles; Achilles refuses material repayment), the repetition is particularly interesting. In one case, Odysseus uses the phrase. When Agamemnon and Achilles are eventually reconciled, Odysseus suggests Agamemnon offer a generous apology to Achilles once again and offers some general advice:

Ἄτρεΐδη, σὺ δ' ἔπειτα δικαιότερος καὶ ἐπ' ἄλλῳ
ἔσσειαι: οὐ μὲν γάρ τι νεμεσσητὸν βασιλῆα
ἄνδρ' ἀπαρέσασθαι, ὅτε τις πρότερος χαλεπήνη. (Il. 19.181-3)

Atrides, after this you should be more courteous

(1970): 122). Adkins generally espouses the view that Homeric values can be divided into competitive and cooperative values; Long denies this distinction. Both would be satisfied with Scott's somewhat looser claim that Homeric *nemesis* and *aidôs* are rooted in strict social expectations.

⁶⁸ Long, “Morals and Values in Homer,” 137.

⁶⁹ This line taken almost directly from Stanford, *Odyssey, ad loc.* (I substitute *judgment* for *retribution*.)

to other men, too. For it is impossible to fault a king
for reconciling with a man, when he first made the outrage.⁷⁰

Here the concern is not what will make Achilles return to the fighting, i.e., what is fair and compensatory, but what will rehabilitate Agamemnon. Odysseus suggests Agamemnon appease (*aparessasthai*) aggrieved parties out of an interest to be more just and avoid *nemesis*.⁷¹ Here the impersonal verbal adjective is appropriate; Odysseus is describing a general fact pertaining to a situation in which he plays no part. Eurymachus, by distancing himself from Antinoös, uses this phrase *ou ti nemessêton* in a similar attempt to cast himself in this light, as a disinterested observer advising a king on his behavior, though here the specificity of the advice limits the generalizing force the phrase would otherwise have. Furthermore, the course he advises threatens to rehabilitate the suitors, and so threatens Odysseus' entire project.

The public role in the determination of *nemesis* also endangers Odysseus' project. The three passages quoted at the beginning of this chapter—Odysseus' indictment (*Od.* 22.35-41), Eurymachus' response (55-59), and Odysseus' refusal (61-67)—each addresses the others with immediacy, but they are more concerned with establishing the appropriate heroic context for what is to follow. In one sense, this is the source of Eurymachus' misunderstanding of Odysseus' accusation: each man is attempting to tell the other not just how it will be, but how it has been and now is. Thus Eurymachus, but

⁷⁰ I leave the identity of the the first offender ambiguous. There is no grammatical hint as to who it should be. While *dikaioteros* could be “more just”—in which case the offender must be the king—it may have the vaguer sense of “more polite” (see Cunliffe; see also under *dikê*) or some such term of commendable social behavior, in which case the ambiguity is appropriate.

⁷¹ Note that *aparessasthai* is *hapax legomenon* in Homer (but we have *aressamenoï* in *Od.* 22.55).

for a brief acknowledgement that what Odysseus has said is accurate (46-47), makes no direct admission of guilt. Hence *ekpepotai, edêdotai* in place of Odysseus' *katekeirete*; the suitors did no more than eat and drink. There is no reference to the serving maids. The wooing of Penelope is implicitly blamed on Antinoös' lust for power. Instead, Eurymachus picks up on Odysseus' use of *nemesis*. It is not a shame (*ou nemessêton*) for Odysseus to be angry, says Eurymachus, implying that Odysseus' extenuating circumstances redeem his otherwise shameful behavior. This repetition functions as an attempt to wrest control from Odysseus as the dispenser of *nemesis*. As I argued in Chapter 1, it is important for Odysseus' project that it be immune to public scrutiny. When the public does get involved, total war threatens, and the gods intervene. So Odysseus locks the doors, and keeps the slaughter hidden from public judgment.

§4. Crimes against *kleos*

The discrepancy between the assessments of Eurymachus and Odysseus is, as I have hinted, due to a misunderstanding on Eurymachus' part of the indictment against him. Eurymachus believes the suitors are on trial for their crimes against Odysseus' property. But Odysseus claims the crimes against his property are but evidence for a greater crime against him: the suitors thought that Odysseus would not return home from Troy. In this next section, I will explain how this crime of expectation is a crucial challenge not just to Odysseus' life, but, more important, his *kleos*. In other words, the impossibility of Odysseus' accepting Eurymachus' offer is rooted in his consideration, or rather calculation, of the injury to his *kleos*.

It is worthwhile to consider briefly the embassy scene to Achilles, which in many ways runs parallel to this confrontation with the suitors. Besides the similarities of context (one man wrongs another; the other refuses compensation), there is a notable similarity of diction: the phrase *nemessêton kekholôsthai*. Phoenix attempts to persuade Achilles to rejoin the fighting:

νῦν δ' ἄμα τ' ἀντίκα πολλὰ διδοί, τὰ δ' ὄπισθεν ὑπέστη,
 ἄνδρας δὲ λίσσεσθαι ἐπιπροέηκεν ἀρίστους
 κρινάμενος κατὰ λαὸν Ἀχαικόν, οἳ τε σοὶ ἀντῶ
 φίλτατοι Ἀργείων: τῶν μὴ σύ γε μῦθον ἐλέγξης
 μηδὲ πόδας: πρὶν δ' οὐ τι νεμεσσητὸν κεχολώσθαι. (*Il.* 9.519-523)

But now, he [Agamemnon] is giving many things, and promises others in the future, and he has sent the best men picked among the Achaean horde to entreat you, who are dearest to you among the Argives. Do not make futile their speech nor steps; before it was impossible to reproach you for being angry.

The obvious similarity is the repetition of five and a half feet in *Il.* 9.523 and *Od.* 22.59.

Just as Phoenix tries to persuade Achilles that his anger is understandable, but can be mollified with gifts, so does Eurymachus try to persuade Odysseus. Both are unsuccessful.

In the case of Achilles' anger, the problem is that Agamemnon harmed Achilles' *kleos* by depriving him of his *timê*. Achilles presents his two fates as justification for refusing

Agamemnon's offer:

εἰ μὲν κ' αὖθι μένων Τρώων πόλιν ἀμφιμάχωμαι,
 ὄλετο μὲν μοι νόστος, ἀτὰρ κλέος ἀφθιτον ἔσται:
 εἰ δέ κεν οἴκαδ' ἴκωμι φίλην ἐς πατρίδα γαῖαν,
 ὄλετό μοι κλέος ἐσθλόν, ἐπὶ δὴρὸν δέ μοι αἰὼν. (*Il.* 9.412-415)

If, on the one hand, remaining here, I do battle around the city of the Trojans, my homecoming is lost, but there will be unperishing fame for me; if, on the other hand, I return homewards to my father land, my excellent fame is lost, but there will be a long life for me.

Achilles rejects Agamemnon's offer of repayment, i.e., restitution in *timê*, saying that, since these are his possible fates, he must return home or wait until Hektor has reached the ships of the Achaeans.⁷² Whether his stated intention to return home is a bluff or not, suffice it to say that Achilles considers his options to be limited to returning home and waiting for Hektor's attack on the ships—only these does he entertain as compatible with his sense of acceptable behavior. The language here is precise: *kleos* is the relevant good, and it is the centerpiece of the claim Achilles is advancing. The corresponding repetition of the impersonal *ôleto* coordinates with the personal decisions *amphimakhômai* and *hikômi*. Thus does Achilles see entering the battle with Hektor upon the Achaean ships to be his only means of winning *kleos apthiton*, given that he had been deprived of *timê* by Agamemnon.

The actual injury to Achilles' *kleos* was the loss of *timê*. Thus Nestor gently accuses Agamemnon of "dishonoring" Achilles, and Agamemnon agrees (*êtimêsas*, *Il.* 9.111ff). But more *timê*, not even the extravagant material apology offered by Agamemnon, fails to mollify Achilles precisely because new *timê*, no matter how substantial, is unable to restore Achilles' lost *kleos*. In other words, *kleos* seems to have the property that an injury to *kleos* through loss of *timê* cannot be repaired by the return of *timê* in any quantity. Instead, *kleos* must be won besides; Achilles must show himself stronger than the assembled Achaeans.

⁷² First, Achilles says he will leave the following day (*Il.* 9.421-9). After Phoenix' embassy, Achilles says he will deliberate (*Il.* 9.617-9). Finally, Achilles announces his intention to wait to rejoin the fighting until Hektor is upon the Achaean ships (*Il.* 9.649-55). Odysseus then announces to the Achaean chieftains that Achilles will not relinquish his anger, and has furthermore "threatened" (*êpeilêsen*) to sail homewards (*Il.* 9.677-87), but Diomedes correctly apprehends that Achilles is not going anywhere (*Il.* 9.702-3).

Achilles' response to Phoenix is similar to Odysseus' response to Eurymachus, in refusing not just the wealth offered, but any future wealth:

οὐδ' εἴ μοι δεκάκις τε καὶ εἰκοσάκις τόσα δοίη
 ὅσά τέ οἱ νῦν ἔστι, καὶ εἴ ποθεν ἄλλα γένοιτο,
 ...
 οὐδέ κεν ὧς ἔτι θυμὸν ἐμὸν πείσει' Ἀγαμέμνων
 πρὶν γ' ἀπὸ πᾶσαν ἐμοὶ δόμεναι θυμαλγέα λώβην. (Il. 9.379-387)

Not if he gave me ten times and twenty more
 than he has now, and more came from somewhere else,
 ...
 still would Agamemnon not win over my heart
 before paying back the whole heartrending outrage.

The similarity between these two scenes—in their form and details of context and diction—encourages us to read the crime of the suitors (to which they are oblivious) as, like Agamemnon's slight of Achilles, an injury to Odysseus' *kleos*. One similarity is vexing, however. In both cases, the aggrieved man claims to await repayment (*apodomenai/apotisai*) for the “entire” (*pasan*) offense, all the while refusing extravagant offers of repayment. We have already seen that the *pasan huperbasiên* of the suitors is qualitatively different from the sum of their crimes, but our concern now is the *how*.

Yamagata's analysis of *tisis* is relevant here.⁷³ Generally, writes Yamagata, the verb *tinesthai*, while not cognate with *timê*, often takes *timê* as its object, and can be translated, following Adkins, “to get *timê* back for oneself.”⁷⁴ But, in the case of settlement between two enemies, the wronged party will seek an emotional compensation beyond straight repayment:

If one's brother is killed, what one loses is not simply *τιμῆ*, and therefore one will surely view revenge as being different from the retrieval of stolen property or lost

⁷³ Yamagata on *tisis* and its cognates: Yamagata, *Homeric Morality*, 139-144.

⁷⁴ Yamagata, *Homeric Morality*, 139.

honour. What one tends to seek is punishment of the offender through his suffering, rather than recovering one's particular losses.⁷⁵

Paraphrasing Odysseus, she writes that “even the whole of [the suitors’] property is not enough payment for what they have done to him and his household,” so he kills them and takes on the risk of vengeance in return. He seeks “emotional satisfaction,” and risks his *nostos*, which Yamagata admits is not the work of a “sober accountant.” Yamagata’s argument is weaker still in dealing with Odysseus’ emotions as presented to us. Odysseus does not show his joy—when joy is the sole object of his project—and tells Eurycleia to suppress hers, because he is “pious enough to check his tongue.” She places the murder of the suitors in the same category as the desecration of Hector’s body by Achilles and the mutilation and torture of Melanthius—two instances where death was insufficient vengeance—and then emphasizes that it is the suitors’ death, “and it only,” that is repayment.⁷⁶

Yamagata’s explanation of *tisis*, etc., is particularly unsatisfying because it is not, say, Odysseus’ brother that is killed, but his property that is ravaged (and similarly in the case of Achilles’ loss of Briseis). We should not expect from Odysseus the brutal, animal response of Achilles to Patroclus’ death. There is illumination in Odysseus’ words to

Eurymachus:

Εὐρυμαχ', οὐδ' εἴ μοι πατρώϊα πάντ' ἀποδοίτε,
 ὅσσα τε νῦν ὑμῖν ἔστι καὶ εἴ ποθεν ἄλλ' ἐπιθείτε,
 οὐδέ κεν ὥς ἔτι χεῖρας ἐμὰς λήξαιμι φόνοιο
 πρὶν πάσαν μνηστῆρας ὑπερβασίην ἀποτίσαι. (*Od.* 22.61-64)

Eurymachus, not if you gave away to me all your fathers’ wealth,
 as much as you have now and any else that you might ever add to it,

⁷⁵ Yamagata, *Homeric Morality*, 140.

⁷⁶ Yamagata, *Homeric Morality*, 141-2.

not even then would I stay my hands from the slaughter
until the suitors pay for their whole crime.

The most important phrase is the last (22.64), which clarifies Odysseus' refusal. There is no amount of wealth that Odysseus would accept because, it is implied, wealth cannot repay (*apotisai*) the *entire* transgression (*pasan huperbasiên*) of the suitors. Evidently death is the repayment of the crimes against Odysseus' *kleos*, and evidently this is the difference between the suitors' material crimes and the unity of thought/expectation and material injury that constitutes the suitor's "whole" crime. If Yamagata's gloss of *tinesthai*, "to get *timê* back for oneself," is correct, then Odysseus is saying that there is no return of *timê* that is sufficient. This forces us to take conclude that intentions and actions together, and not actions alone, are relevant to Odysseus' accounting. Certainly the thought crime is not enough on its own—then Penelope, Telemachus, and Odysseus' loyal comrades would be equally guilty. Instead, the unity of thought and action is the crime of the suitors: they never expected Odysseus to return, and, *because of that (hoti)*, they perpetrated various crimes of property. At the risk of stating the obvious, there is no more damaging thought-crime against Odysseus' *kleos* than the expectation that he had died on the sea; as we have seen, a death on the sea would result in the total loss of Odysseus' *kleos*.

Why this injury to Odysseus' *kleos* must be paid back with death is perhaps less obvious. To some extent this is because an injury to *kleos* is a curious thing: *kleos* evidently has the property that any good *kleos* can be taken away by morally suspect acts or the whims of fate, even unrelated ones. Thus, for instance, even though Agamemnon was killed at the hands of a treacherous man and woman, he can lose his *kleos* won

through his prowess in the Trojan War. Similarly, had Odysseus been killed by some misfortune on the ocean, his *kleos* would have disappeared as well, even though seamanship is not part of his excellence as a warrior.⁷⁷ Similarly, the cure for a *kleos* injury is not straightforward. Though Orestes can win good *kleos* for killing his father's murderers, Achilles cannot regain his lost *kleos* by the simple return of Briseis. His *kleos*-injury, like Odysseus', is given its force by both act and intent. Agamemnon declares the significance of his act thus:

ἐγὼ δέ κ' ἄγω Βρισηίδα καλλιπάρηον
 αὐτὸς ἰὼν κλισίηνδε, τὸ σὸν γέρας, ὄφρ' εὖ εἰδῆς
 ὅσσον φέρτερός εἰμι σέθεν, στυγῆ δὲ καὶ ἄλλος
 ἴσον ἐμοὶ φάσθαι καὶ ὁμοιωθῆμεναι ἄντην. (*Il.* 1.184-8)

but I will lead Briseis with the beautiful cheeks
 to my own tent, your special prize, so that you may know well
 how much better I am than you, and so that you and any other may shrink
 from boasting equal to me and likening himself opposite.

And, though Achilles recognizes it is Agamemnon's prerogative as commander of the Achaeans to take away his girl (*Il.* 1.298-301), the injury remains because of the intent behind the act. Suffice it to say that Odysseus' refusal of repayment and insistence on the performance of his *kleos* is not without precedent.

§5. Conclusion

In this chapter we have found that Homeric ideas about morality are often reducible to issues of acceptable social behavior within the framework of a certain heroic code. For Odysseus, the crime of the suitors was a crime against his *kleos*, a number of

⁷⁷ Note Telemachus' complaining of his father's presumed death on the sea, *Od.* 1.239-41, in which he notes that such a death would be *akleios*.

individual material crimes committed due to an expectation that damaged his *kleos*.

Arguing from comparison with the qualitatively similar injury of Achilles' *kleos* in the *Iliad*, it is evident that the response to such a *kleos*-injury does not strive towards justice or even retribution. The remedy is a display or performance of the *kleos*.

3. Sign language

§1. Introduction

Issues of identity are closely related to *kleos*. Since from the last chapter we know that Odysseus requires a display of his *kleos* (i.e. heroic identity, for the purposes of this chapter) it is natural to consider how he indeed performs such a display. Since Odysseus shall reveal his identity, a good place to begin is with recognition.

§2. The recognition of Odysseus

The recognition of Odysseus is a motif that recurs throughout *Odyssey*.⁷⁸ Some scenes of recognition are formulaic, but the treatment of the theme is diverse.⁷⁹ Often the recognition is delayed. According to Fenik, for instance, “most important identifications in the *Odyssey* unfold slowly after elaborate preparations, delays, hints, ironical foreshadowing and unexpected detours.”⁸⁰ Though there are also instantaneous recognitions—for instance, the recognition of Odysseus by the Sirens and by the dog Argus—it remains that the recognition of Odysseus is fundamentally delayed. For it is delayed not just by the emergencies of a particular scene, but by the entire poem, which is

⁷⁸ The observation was Aristotle’s first: ἡ δὲ Ὀδύσσεια πεπλεγμένον (ἀναγνώρισις γὰρ διόλου) καὶ ἡθικὴ (Aristotle, *Poetics* 1459b: “The *Odyssey* is many-threaded—recognition runs through the whole—and concerned with character”).

⁷⁹ For the analysis of the formulaic recognition scene, see Peter Gainsford, “Formal Analysis of Recognition Scenes in the *Odyssey*,” *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 123 (2003): 41-59. By his own admission, Gainsford’s analysis is intentionally limited, only examining the recognition of Odysseus by his closest intimates (Eumaeus, Penelope, etc.) in the second half of the poem.

⁸⁰ Bernard Fenik, *Studies in the Odyssey* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag GmbH, 1974): 29. This view is well established besides; see de Jong *ad* 16.4-219 on the “‘delayed recognition’ story-pattern” (Irene de Jong, *A Narratological Commentary on the Odyssey* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001): 386).

the story of Odysseus' delayed return. Recognition too has a deep thematic resonance in the poem: the process of recognition is the process of Odysseus' rehabilitation, the recovery of his *timê* as king of Ithaka, husband of Penelope, father of Telemachus, and master of Eumaeus, Philoitos, and Euryycleia.⁸¹ As a process of social rehabilitation, recognition is a social transaction, which takes on a specific form. Odysseus reveals his identity to someone, whose recognition of that identity renders it legitimate.⁸² In other words, Odysseus' revelation of his identity is a request for a specific honor, i.e., *timê*, and recognition is the rendering of that *timê*. Thus it is not surprising that the suitors, who fail to recognize Odysseus upon the removal of his disguise, fail to honor Odysseus as king of Ithaka, husband of Penelope, master of the household.

Our interest in the recognition of Odysseus is rooted in two questions inextricable from the Odysseus-recognition process: how Odysseus reveals his identity and the nature of the revealed identity. Ultimately our goal is to understand how the slaughter of the suitors serves to reveal Odysseus' identity. As we will see, the revelation of identity in Homer is often effected by the disclosure and recognition of a *sêma* ("distinguishing mark"), which in turn brings about the recognition of Odysseus' identity. In the case of the slaughter of the suitors, the revelation is effected through the removal of Odysseus' disguise, which is paradoxically entangled with Odysseus' identity. After this revelation of identity, though, there is no recognition: Antinoos is killed unawares, with no knowledge

⁸¹ De Jong, *Narratological Commentary*, 387: "The series of recognitions of Odysseus punctuate the process of his internal return, the legitimation and reintegration of 'the man' of the poem as father, master, king, husband, and son."

⁸² "When Odysseus identifies himself, he stakes a claim to a certain status, and those who recognize him acquiesce in that claim." (Sheila Murnaghan, *Disguise and Recognition in the Odyssey* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987): 23.)

of his murderer (*Od.* 22.8-21), and Eurymachus subsequently voices skepticism that Odysseus is who he implicitly claims to be (*Od.* 22.45). Thus we must finally grapple with the question of the significance of this self-revelation that lacks recognition.

§3. *Sêma* and recognition

As Eurycleia bathes the disguised Odysseus, she recognizes (*egnô*, repeated twice) him by his scar (*Od.* 19.386-479). Historically, this has been viewed as the paradigmatic recognition by *sêma*.⁸³ The scar is intimately related to the most solid of Odysseus' characteristics, his name: it is during the digression occasioned by Eurycleia's recognition of the scar that we learn how Odysseus got both the scar and his name. Though this scene is unusual for this very digression, the scene otherwise shares a number of features with the other recognitions of Odysseus in the second half of the poem.⁸⁴ In particular, the

⁸³ Aristotle, in his classification of recognitions in *Poetics* 1454b-1455a, holds up the washing scene as the best kind of recognition by *sêmata* (*ἀναγνωρίσις... διὰ τῶν σημείων*). (There is no difference between *sêmeion* and *sêma* in Greek prose, though *sêmeion* never appears in Homer. See LSJ *ad loc.*) Aristotle's other categories of recognition are "the ones fabricated by the poet" (*αἱ πεποιημέναι ὑπὸ τοῦ ποιητοῦ*), those "through remembrance" (*διὰ μνήμης*), those "out of inference" (*ἐκ συλλογισμοῦ*), and, best of all, those "from the things themselves" (*ἢ ἐξ αὐτῶν τῶν πραγμάτων*). But when I say that every recognition in the *Odyssey* is through signs (*sêmata*), I am not arguing that each recognition falls into Aristotle's first category. (See B. Perrin, "Recognition Scenes in Greek Literature," *The American Journal of Philology* 30 (1909): 371-404, which classifies scenes according to Aristotle's scheme.) I instead follow Gregory Nagy, "Sema and Noesis: Some Illustrations," *Arethusa* 16 (1983): 35-55, in taking a broader view of *sêmata*; see below.

⁸⁴ I mean specifically the straightforward scenes of recognition of Odysseus by Telemachus, Eumaeus, Philoitos, the dog Argos, Euryclea, Penelope, and Laertes, but, following de Jong (*Narratological Commentary*, 386), I also include the subtler renditions of this "story-pattern," such as the delayed recognition of Odysseus by the suitors and the story of the disguised Odysseus to Penelope, in which he claims to have encountered Odysseus on his way to Troy. For the specific features of a recognition scene, see de Jong, *Narratological Commentary*, 386-7, which is approximately the same as Chris Emlyn-

actual process of recognition in each of these scenes is effected by the recognition of a *sêma*. An examination of other recognition scenes (e.g., the recognition by Penelope) makes it clear that this is the necessary and sufficient condition.⁸⁵

In Homer the *sêma* has a broad range of meanings, from a distinguishing mark (as on a horse at *Il.* 23.455), to a nonverbal signal (*Od.* 21.231), to a divine portent (*Od.* 21.413), to a grave-marker (*Od.* 1.291 and many more), among others.⁸⁶ According to Gregory Nagy, these various *sêmata* are unified by their intimate relation to mental processes (*gnô-* and *no-*words). At its core “the recognition of the *sêma* requires an act of *interpretation*,” and the relevant “faculty of recognition and interpretation is *noos*.”⁸⁷ A mark, then, is not a *sêma* without *noos*. In other words, it “will not, of and by itself, explicitly declare or command;” instead, it requires *noos*, the recognition-faculty.⁸⁸ Thus it is no surprise that Odysseus is noticed among the Phaeacians by *Alkinoos*, and steadfastly ignored by the suitors, whose leader is *Antinoos*.⁸⁹

Nagy’s interest in the *sêma* is broader than mine; I am only concerned with the *sêma* as a key to recognition. In that case, I argue that the necessary act of interpretation

Jones, “The Reunion of Penelope and Odysseus,” *Greece and Rome* 31: 6-7. Gainsford, “Recognition Scenes,” 42-43, proposes a similar structure, but his treatment is rather more fine-grained and does not approach many of the scenes we are interested in.

⁸⁵ Emlyn-Jones, “Reunion,” 6-7, enumerates the steps of the general process. “4. Odysseus reveals himself. 5. The other refuses to believe. 6. Odysseus gives a sign (*σημα*) as a proof of identity. 7. Final recognition.” See also Nagy, “Sema and Noesis,” 36: “Homeric diction deploys *sêma* as the conventional word for the signs that lead to the recognition of Odysseus by his *philoî*. . . . The narrative features the recognition of the *sêma* ‘sign’ as the crucial prerequisite for the recognition of Odysseus himself.” See also Gainsford, “Recognition Scenes,” 43.

⁸⁶ These examples taken from Cunliffe, *ad loc.*

⁸⁷ Nagy, “Sema and Noesis,” 35-55; 36.

⁸⁸ *Id.*, 40.

⁸⁹ *Id.*, 37-38.

depends on the revelation of Odysseus' heroic identity.⁹⁰ To this end, it is instructive to examine a *sêma* that does not reveal Odysseus' identity. Among the Phaeacians, Alkinoos notices Odysseus' tears (*Od.* 8.94 = 8.533), and his *aretê* (*Od.* 8.237, 239), but does not learn Odysseus' identity. In the case of the discus, the performance is denoted by a *sêma* (mark) and the disguised Athena praises it. Her remarks have a resonance with the story of Odysseus' return that is understandably obscure to the Phaeacians:⁹¹

καί κ' ἀλαός τοι, ξεῖνε, διακρίνειε τὸ σῆμα
 ἀμφαφόων, ἐπεὶ οὔ τι μεμυγμένον ἐστὶν ὁμίλῳ,
 ἀλλὰ πολὺ πρῶτον. σὺ δὲ θάρσει τόνδε γ' ἄεθλον.
 οὔ τις Φαιήκων τόν γ' ἴξεται οὐδ' ὑπερήσει. (*Od.* 8.195-98)

Even a blind man, I tell you, could distinguish your *sêma*, stranger,
 by feeling, since it is not at all mixed with the rest,
 but by far the first. Take heart, at least regarding this contest.
 No one among the Phaeacians will approach or surpass it.

This speech hints at the blinding of Polyphemus (*alaos*) and the trick of No-one (*ou tis Phaiêkôn* = no one / No-one among the Phaeacians). There is also the method of distinguishing a *sêma* by touch, anticipating the Cyclops' blind feeling around (*Od.* 9.415-19),⁹² and, to some extent, Odysseus' escape on the most notable ram (*Od.* 9.431-32, 447-

⁹⁰ The process of recognition, then, is not simply done through the presentation of an indisputable *sêma*, as in the washing-scene. The *sêma* must be accompanied by a revelation of identity. Note that in the washing-scene, the scar (*sêma*) is intricately related to Odysseus' name (identity). See below on the recognition of Odysseus by Alkinoos; the *sêma* hints at possibilities for Odysseus' identity, but Alkinoos, for all his powers of *noos*, does not discern Odysseus' identity by noticing the *sêma*.

⁹¹ The choice of this episode, the contests among the Phaeacians, is

⁹² And, in the similarity of diction, it anticipates the recognition of Odysseus by Eurycleia:
 ἦ μάλ' Ὀδυσσεύς ἐσσι, φίλον τέκος: οὐδέ σ' ἐγώ γε
 πρὶν ἔγνω, πρὶν πάντα ἄνακτ' ἐμὸν ἀμφαφάασθαι. (*Od.* 19.474-75)

You are really Odysseus, dear child! I did not
 recognize (*egnôn*) you before, before I felt (*amphaphaasthai*) all my lord.

52).⁹³ Thus the *sêma* is the effect of Odysseus' notable performance (throwing the discus) and characteristic of his heroic identity. In other words, the *sêma* marking the throw of the discus is not just a distinguished mark, but a distinguishing mark. But the interpretation of the *sêma* is still obscure to Alkinoos because he lacks the knowledge of Odysseus' identity that will come from the subsequent narrative. There is no irony in Athena's statement that "even a blind man could distinguish the mark," because Alkinoos does distinguish the mark. He does not, however, recognize Odysseus; not until Odysseus' narrative will the resonance of this particular *sêma* be clear. Thus the interpretation of the *sêma* requires an explanation via the revelation of identity.

§4. The revelation of identity

As far as one's identity is what distinguishes one from others, a large part of Odysseus' identity is his propensity for disguise, the willingness to suppress his heroic identity.⁹⁴ In other words, Odysseus' identity is defined by disguise. Indeed, by the time

⁹³ The ram is *μήλων ὄχ' ἄριστος ἀπάντων* (*Od.* 9.432). This is soon elaborated by the Cyclops; the ram, like Odysseus' mark, is "first by far":

*οὐ τι πάρος γε λελειμμένος ἔρχεται οἴων,
ἀλλὰ πολὺ πρῶτος νέμει τέρειν' ἄνθεα ποίης
μακρὰ βιβίας, πρῶτος δὲ ῥοὰς ποταμῶν ἀφικάνεις,
πρῶτος δὲ σταθμόνδε λιλαίει ἀπονέεσθαι
ἔσπεριος. (*Od.* 9.448-53)*

Never before did you go about, left behind by the sheep,
but first by far you grazed on the full bloom of the grass,
taking long strides, first you came to flowing rivers,
and in the evening you came back first to the steading
from pasturing.

⁹⁴ Murnaghan, *Disguise and Recognition*, 4: "Capacity for disguise distinguishes him from the other great Achaean warriors."

that Odysseus dons his disguise in Ithaca, the beggar is familiar to the epic's audience—Helen discovered Odysseus' identity while he was disguised as a beggar in Troy (*Od.* 4.235-264). This seeming paradox, that Odysseus' heroic identity depends critically on its suppression, is most obvious in the episode with the Cyclops. We have already seen how Odysseus' identity and name are particularly inextricable from one another; the scar, which as a *sêma* guarantees his identity, is intimately connected to his name. But it is generally the case that the Homeric hero's name is a critical part of his identity.⁹⁵ Thus the simple suppression of the name Odysseus amounts to the suppression of his heroic identity. Odysseus must still reveal himself, however, and reclaim his heroic identity (epithet, lineage, and status):

Κύκλωψ, αἴ κέν τις σε καταθνητῶν ἀνθρώπων
ὀφθαλμοῦ εἴρηται ἀεικέλιην ἀλαωτύν,
φάσθαι Ὀδυσσῆα πτολιπόρθιον ἐξαλαῶσαι,
υἴὸν Λαέρτεω, Ἰθάκῃ ἐνὶ οἰκίᾳ ἔχοντα. (*Od.* 9.502-505)

Cyclops, if someone should ask you who among mortal men
gave you this unseemly blinding of the eye,
say that Odysseus the sacker of cities, the son of Laertes,
who rules in Ithaca, blinded you.

The Cyclops then responds, recognizing the name.

ὦ πόποι, ἦ μάλα δὴ με παλαίφατα θέσφαθ' ἰκάνει.
...
ὅς μοι ἔφη τάδε πάντα τελευτήσεσθαι ὀπίσσω,
χειρῶν ἐξ Ὀδυσῆος ἀμαρτήσεσθαι ὀπωπῆς.
ἀλλ' αἰεὶ τινα φῶτα μέγαν καὶ καλὸν ἐδέγμην
ἐνθάδ' ἐλεύσεσθαι, μεγάλην ἐπιειμένον ἀλκὴν·
νῦν δέ μ' ἔων ὀλίγος τε καὶ οὐτιδανὸς καὶ ἄκιυς
ὀφθαλμοῦ ἀλάωσεν, ἐπεὶ μ' ἔδαμάσσατο οἴνω.
ἀλλ' ἄγε δεῦρ', Ὀδυσσεῦ, ἵνα τοι πὰρ ξείνια θείω,
πομπῆν τ' ὀτρύνω δόμεναι κλυτὸν ἐννοσίγαιον.

⁹⁵ Murnaghan, *Disguise and Recognition*, 6: "An assertion of identity is not simply a statement of fact but is also a claim to a certain status. A name is not simply a name but a kind of title, and it carries with it a certain entitlement."

τοῦ γὰρ ἐγὼ πάϊς εἰμί, πατήρ δ' ἐμὸς εὔχεται εἶναι. (Od. 9.507-519)

Oh, how the old-spoken prophecies have reached me.

...

[The prophet Telemos] told me all these things would be accomplished in the future,

how I would lose my sight by Odysseus' hand.

But I always expected some great and handsome man
would come here, covered with great strength,
and now a sorry, little, feeble man has blinded
my eye, after he subdued me with wine.

But come now, Odysseus, that I might present you a guest-gift
and urge the famous earthshaker to give you conduct.

For I am his child, and he boasts to be my father.

Here the *sêma* for Odysseus' identity, guaranteed by the prophetic utterance, is Odysseus' act of blinding. It is remarkable that, unlike in the case of Odysseus' scar, the *sêma* does not reveal Odysseus' identity in itself, even though the action is so distinctive. According to the *thesphata*, Odysseus is precisely the man to blind Polyphemus, but it is not until Odysseus reveals his identity by the announcement of his name that Polyphemus recognizes him.

The revelation and recognition of Odysseus' identity, effected by the *sêma* of the blinding and the announcement of his name, ironically defines Odysseus' identity in return. The episode of the Cyclops is representative of Odysseus' character because of its reliance on *mêtis*,⁹⁶ which is closely linked to Odysseus' disguise by the *mêtis / ou tis* pun

⁹⁶ Cf. Gregory Nagy, *The Best of the Achaeans: Concepts of the Hero in Archaic Greek Poetry*, revised ed. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press), 47: "The word *mêtis*... characterizes Odysseus in particular: in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, only he is described by the epithets *polúmêtis* 'of many artifices' and *poikilómêtis* 'of manifold artifices'."

that runs through the scene.⁹⁷ Furthermore, the revelation/recognition directly produces the divine wrath of Poseidon, which is not just the impetus for the entire *Odyssey* (or at least, the entire Apologue and delayed arrival in Ithaka),⁹⁸ but also definitive for Odysseus' character insofar as the name (i.e., identity) *Odusseus* is identified with the verb *odussomai*, used of divine anger, particularly Poseidon's.⁹⁹ The capacity of the revelation of Odysseus' identity to reflexively define itself is thus inextricable from the story of Odysseus' return. Put simply, Odysseus' *kleos* is created in the process of his self-revelation, the removal of his disguise.

§5. *Sêma* and the contest of the bow

The disguise is removed in *Od.* 22.1, when Odysseus strips off his rags prior to the slaughter of the suitors. Before I discuss the relevance of *sêma* and the revelation of Odysseus' identity to the slaughter of the suitors, however, I note that there is no *sêma* preceding the moment of revelation. In particular, I argue that the contest of the bow is not a *sêma*.

It is tempting to read the contest of the bow as a test of identity, leading to the revelation of a *sêma*, since the bow is Odysseus' particular tool. But this view has no

⁹⁷ See e.g. Douglas Frame, *The Myth of the Return in Early Greek Epic* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978): 71-3. Frame identifies *mêtis* as replacing *noos* as the means of *nostos*.

⁹⁸ Cf. Polyphemus' prayer to Poseidon at *Od.* 9.528-35, which anticipates his late homecoming, the death of his companions, the loss of his ship, and (obliquely) the presence of the suitors. Poseidon hears the prayer (*Od.* 9.536).

⁹⁹ See Stanford *ad* 1.62: "From 19, 406-9 (cp. 5, 340 and 423) it is clear that H. connected *Ὀδυσσεύς* with this verb... meaning 'to be angry with, hate'. In 19, 406-9 we are told that O. received this *ὄνομα ἐπώνυμον* (*Significant Name*) because of his maternal grandfather's wrath, but here and in 5,340 and 423 it is shown (by *παρετυμολογία*) to be relevant also to the anger of the gods, especially Poseidon's, against him."

support from the poem, for it is suggested that others would be able to string the bow.¹⁰⁰

Instead, there is only one *sêma* immediately before the opening of Book 22, and it is given by Zeus to Odysseus:

Ζεὺς δὲ μεγάλ' ἔκτυπε σήματα φαίνων:
γῆθησέν τ' ἄρ' ἔπειτα πολύτλας δῖος Ὀδυσσεύς,
ὅττι ρά οἱ τέρας ἦκε Κρόνου πάϊς ἀγκυλομήτεω. (*Od.* 21.413-15)

Zeus thundered greatly, showing *sêmata*,
and then shining, much-enduring Odysseus rejoiced
because the child of Kronos of the crooked counsel had sent him an omen.

But in no way does this *sêma* reveal Odysseus' identity. The omen portends victory,¹⁰¹ and so Odysseus' interpretation, that it is cause for rejoicing, is correct. The suitors are oblivious, as usual, to the revelation of signs (as when they ignore Zeus' omen during the assembly at *Od.* 2.177-84), but the sign does not indicate that Odysseus has returned.

This claim may seem problematic in light of my earlier argument that Odysseus' discus-throw is a *sêma*. For certainly there are others whose strength is greater than Odysseus', and so the outstanding mark cannot identify him. But, as we have seen, *sêma* requires interpretation. And, while Athena's interpretation/explication of the discus-mark characterizes Odysseus' heroic identity and elevates it to the status of *sêma*, the contest of the bow is explicitly interpreted as a non-*sêma*. Thus, at the moment when Odysseus strips off his disguise, he has not offered any *sêma* to the suitors that could prove his identity.

¹⁰⁰ De Jong, *Narratological Commentary*, 508: "Penelope expects one of the Suitors to be able to [win]... and Telemachus would have done it, if Odysseus had not signalled him not to." The other reason she gives is incorrect—the fact that the suitors do not recognize him is no evidence, blind as they are to *sêmata*.

¹⁰¹ De Jong, *Narratological Commentary*, *ad loc.* She cites four similar passages in the *Iliad*.

§6. The slaughter of the suitors: Eukhos revisited

Odysseus removes his disguise and prepares to loose the first arrow:

Αὐτὰρ ὁ γυμνώθη ῥακέων πολύμητις Ὀδυσσεύς,
 ἄλτο δ' ἐπὶ μέγαν οὐδόν, ἔχων βιὸν ἠδὲ φαρέτρην
 ἰῶν ἐμπλείην, ταχέας δ' ἐκχέυατ' οἴστους
 αὐτοῦ πρόσθε ποδῶν, μετὰ δὲ μνηστῆρσιν ἔειπεν:
 “οὔτος μὲν δὴ ἀεθλος ἀάατος ἐκτετέλεσται:
 νῦν αὖτε σκοπὸν ἄλλον, ὃν οὐ πώ τις βάλεν ἀνὴρ,
 εἴσομαι, αἶ κε τύχωμι, πόρῃ δέ μοι εὖχος Ἀπόλλων.” (Od.22.1-7)

Then he stripped off his rags, Odysseus of many devices,
 and leapt onto the great threshold, holding the bow and quiver
 full of arrows, and poured out the swift shafts
 at his feet, and addressed the suitors:

“This unimpeachable deed has been accomplished.
 But now I shall acquaint myself with another target, which I think no man has yet
 struck,
 should I hit my mark, and Apollo give me glory.”

Because Odysseus' heroic identity is paradoxically associated with disguise, when Odysseus strips off his rags, he may present an unfamiliar body to his audience, but he has effectively revealed part of his heroic identity: he is the hero who goes in disguise. This revelation, like the revelation of his identity to Polyphemus, in turn creates his heroic identity, as his accompanying pronouncement indicates. In his address to the suitors, Odysseus sets as his task the *eukhos*-winning attempt on the target that “no man (*ou tis anêr*) has yet struck.” This task looks backwards, in the ironic use of *ou tis* as the agent, toward the heroic identity that has been established so far, but also looks forward, toward the winning of *eukhos*. The resonance with *ou tis* is fitting: Odysseus paradoxically reveals himself as the hero who goes disguised, and refers to an exemplary episode in which the suppression of his identity in turn created his identity. Indeed, here as there,

Odysseus' name is suppressed, and remains suppressed throughout the episode. In this context of identity-revelation and concurrent name-suppression, *eukhos* has particular resonance with the related verb *eukhomai*,¹⁰² the word for the hero's active claim to his name and identity.¹⁰³ In other words, Odysseus' announcement that he will win *eukhos* is effectively an announcement that he will gain the ability to claim a name and identity.

I have already argued that Odysseus indeed wins *eukhos* from killing the suitors,¹⁰⁴ and it is the measure of the success of his project that the *eukhos* won from the slaughter of the suitors becomes a *sêma* for Odysseus, like the *sêma* marking the throw of the discus. In the same way this distinguished mark too becomes a distinguishing mark: it is in the slaughter of the suitors that the *kleos* of Odysseus differs from that of Menelaus, whose *nostos* was also successful and filled with death-defying adventure. Thus the revelation of Odysseus' identity in turn creates the means for distinguishing it. It is unnecessary for the suitors to recognize Odysseus as he slaughters them. His goal is substantially larger—both *kleos* and *nostos*—and the slaughter of the suitors effects it.

¹⁰² See LSJ *ad eukhos* for *eukhos* as a noun formed from *eukhomai*.

¹⁰³ Murnaghan, *Disguise and Recognition*, 6.

¹⁰⁴ See Chapter 1.

Conclusion

The slaughter of the suitors is not an action concerned predominantly with justice or even revenge. Odysseus' project is instead the construction of his own *kleos*. At the outset it would seem these two are, if not inseparable, then at least tangled up in each other. After all, doing bad things should be bad for one's *kleos* as much as doing good things should be good for it. But the argument we can glean from the conclusions of Chapter 2 runs as follows. First, the notion of justice, and, for that matter, morality, was in fact a notion of social propriety. Moral questions were not as relevant as questions of opinion and communal judgment (e.g. *nemesis*). Thus it is best to think of the crimes of the suitors, not as a collection of moral crimes, but as a single crime against Odysseus' *kleos*, not unlike Agamemnon's injury to Achilles' *kleos*. In the case of a crime against *kleos*, we have the authority of the Achillean *kleos apthiton* that the only remedy is some sort of demonstration of that *kleos*. So, for Achilles, the best of the Achaeans, it was for him to singlehandedly push the Trojans back to their walls. For Odysseus, it took a revelation of his *kleos*.

When it comes to the character of Odysseus' *kleos*, we are now in the realm of Chapters 1 and 3. Since from Chapter 2 we know that the rehabilitation of Odysseus' *kleos* requires a display of it, we approach the slaughter of the suitors as such a demonstration. We are encouraged in this reading from independent sources. First, our two early propositions (from Chapter 1) were that Odyssean *kleos* is self-composed and the slaughter of the suitors is a performance of that *kleos*. Our other source of encouragement

is the fact that the slaughter of the suitors begins with a literal revelation of Odysseus: he strips himself naked / removes his disguise before the suitors

From Chapter 1, however, we have a claim on the quality of the *kleos* that is revealed. I argued that Odysseus is characterized by his ability to appropriate, well, the appropriate heroic context for the slaughter of the suitors, with the result that his project is not just heroic, but also indicative of the self-composed nature of his *kleos*.

I argued in Chapter 3, via a small study of the process by which Odysseus is recognized, or rather, by which his *Odyssey-kleos* (i.e. his *kleos* from the Apologue) is recognized, that Odysseus' propensity for disguise, which is roughly equivalent to Odysseus' prowess in *mêtis*, reflexively produces *kleos* upon the revelation of its own *kleos*. In specific terms, since Odysseus' *kleos* is identified with his many disguises (verbal and physical), the removal of his disguise reveals his *kleos* and further adds to it. I read the slaughter of the suitors as such a removal of disguise / revelation of *kleos* that serves to rehabilitate Odysseus (in that he reclaims his identity) and distinguish his *nostos* beyond all the others'.

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