

ODYSSEUS AND THE SONG OF ARES AND APHRODITE:  
*MĒTIS* AND *MOICHEIA* ON OLYMPUS AND ON EARTH

by

Tanisha Chakma

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Arts

at

Dalhousie University  
Halifax, Nova Scotia  
August 2016

© Copyright by Tanisha Chakma, 2016

For Gordon and Jupiter, my constant companions.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iv
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED.....	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	vi
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER 2. THE HERO OF <i>MĒTIS</i> .....	7
a. Odysseus as a figure of <i>mētis</i> .....	9
b. Phaeacian unfriendliness.....	11
c. The first song: <i>mētis-biā</i> antithesis.....	12
d. Odysseus and Euryalus.....	16
e. The song of Ares and Aphrodite.....	17
f. The third song: victory of Odysseus' <i>mētis</i> .....	21
g. Odyssean heroism: guile and violence.....	24
CHAPTER 3. WOMEN IN THE <i>ODYSSEY</i> .....	29
a. Female slaves.....	29
b. Wives of heroes.....	30
c. Immortal goddesses.....	40
d. Language of sexual misconduct: <i>moicheia</i> and <i>moichos</i> .....	42
e. Discrepancy of punishment for <i>moicheia</i> between human and divine.....	47
CHAPTER 4. JUSTIFYING THE <i>MNĒSTĒROPHONIA</i> .....	50
a. The <i>mnēstēroponia</i> and the song of Ares and Aphrodite.....	51
b. The suitors as <i>moichoi</i> .....	53
c. Internal justifications for the <i>mnēstēroponia</i> .....	57
CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION.....	61
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	65

## ABSTRACT

Since antiquity, Hephaestus in the song of Ares and Aphrodite has been seen as a paradigm for Odysseus. Similarities have been noted between Odysseus' dispute with Euryalus and Hephaestus' capture of Ares, while the violence of the *mnēstērophonia* sequence has also been justified using the circumstances depicted in Demodocus' song. This thesis examines these connections and finds that although Odysseus and Hephaestus are both figures of *mētis*, each episode that establishes Odysseus' intellect also highlights his *biā*. While there are no lasting ramifications for adultery on Olympus, the *Odyssey* repeatedly emphasises the threat that unfaithful women pose in the realm of mortals, necessitating severe punishment for *moicheia*. The same offence that can be resolved through laughter on Olympus leads to the bloodshed of the *mnēstērophonia* in the world of Odysseus. The song of Ares and Aphrodite in this way highlights the sharp divide that exists between human and divine experiences.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED

<i>Aen.</i>	Virgil, <i>Aeneid</i>
<i>Deip.</i>	Athenaeus, <i>Deipnosophistae</i>
<i>Il.</i>	Homer, <i>Iliad</i>
<i>Od.</i>	Homer, <i>Odyssey</i>

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The completion of this thesis would not be possible without Dr. Leona MacLeod's infinite patience and invaluable guidance at a time when the deadline seemed impossible to meet. I would also like to express my gratitude towards Dr. Peter O'Brien and Dr. Emily Varto for their prompt reviews and helpful comments.

I am enormously indebted to Ms. Donna Edwards for her kindness and encouragements; without her, our world would fall apart.

## CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

While Odysseus is at the court of Alcinous, the Phaeacian bard Demodocus sings the song of Ares and Aphrodite (*Od.* 8.267-366). Divine adultery and its repercussions are the subjects of the song: the crippled god Hephaestus, who is married to the beautiful Aphrodite, learns of his wife's infidelity and traps Ares and Aphrodite in bed together using ingeniously wrought, near-invisible chains. Hephaestus then summons all the gods to look upon the adulterous pair. Laughter breaks out among the gods at the sight of the trapped lovers; it is decided that Ares must pay compensation to Hephaestus in the form of *moichagria* (μοιχάγρια, "fine imposed on adulterers") (*Od.* 8.332).<sup>1</sup>

The song of Ares and Aphrodite is performed in between two other songs (*Od.* 8.73-82, 8.499-520) from Demodocus' repertoire. Both of these songs are on the theme of the Trojan war, and both feature Odysseus as a character. In contrast, the scene in the song of Ares and Aphrodite is far removed from human suffering; its setting is Olympus, its characters immortal, and its tone comical. The content of this song, so vastly different from both the preceding and the following song by Demodocus, has always made it problematic. Since antiquity, there have been those who take issue with the song's immoral subject matter; Xenophanes is most likely alluding to this episode when he accuses Homer of attributing to the gods the reproachable traits of κλέπτειν μοιχεύειν τε καὶ ἀλλήλους ἀπατεύειν ("committing theft and adultery, and seducing each other").<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Homer, *Homeri Opera: Odysseae Libros*, ed. T. W. Allen, Vol. III & IV, Oxford Classical Texts (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1908). All translations are my own unless otherwise stated.

<sup>2</sup> 21 [11] B 11. H. Diels and W. Kranz, *Die Fragmente Der Vorsokratiker, Griechisch und Deutsch*, Vol. I (Berlin: Weidmann, 1951), 132.

Plato too censures the episode in the *Republic* as a display of immoderate sexual passion in the gods (3.390b-c).<sup>3</sup> In more recent years, W. E. Gladstone and J. M. Campbell have passed similar moralistic judgements on the song.<sup>4</sup>

The Alexandrians took a moralising stance on the passage as well, but they did not athetise it entirely.<sup>5</sup> The sole evidence for a full athetesis comes from a scholion to Aristophanes' *Peace* instead, where it is hinted that some editors chose to remove the episode of Ares' and Aphrodite's adultery.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, scholars in the early twentieth century, following the example of their predominantly German predecessors, were still arguing that Demodocus' song of Ares and Aphrodite was an interpolation.<sup>7</sup> Those who took a less drastic approach called instead for the composition to be seen as the work of the last editor.<sup>8</sup>

Modern scholarship on the song of Ares and Aphrodite has ceased to cast doubt on the authenticity of the episode. W. Burkert's article in 1960 demonstrates how the song "... setzt die Ilias voraus";<sup>9</sup> F. R. Bliss' article follows in 1969 and asserts the unity

---

<sup>3</sup> Plato, *Platonis Opera*, ed. J. Burnet, Vol. IV, Oxford Classical Texts (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962).

<sup>4</sup> W. E. Gladstone, *Studies on Homer and the Homeric Age*, Vol. II (Oxford: University Press, 1858), 461-4; J. M. Campbell, "Homer and Chastity," *PQ* 28 (1949): 350-1.

<sup>5</sup> The scholion at 8.333 mentions the existence of copies only without lines 8.333-42.

<sup>6</sup> Ad 788, σημειοῦται δὲ ταῦτα ὁ μόχθος πρὸς τοὺς ἀθετοῦντας τὴν ἐν Ὀδυσσεΐᾳ Ἄρεως καὶ Ἀφροδίτης μοιχείαν ("[Apion] Mochthos shows these lines to those who athetise the adultery of Ares and Aphrodite in the Odyssey.") F. Dübner, *Scholia Graeca in Aristophanem: Cum Prolegomenis Grammaticorum* (Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1969), 195.

<sup>7</sup> The following scholars consider the entire episode to have been interpolated: F. Blass, *Die Interpolationen in Der Odyssee* (Halle: Niemeyer, 1904), 269-71; G. Finsler, *Homer*, Vol. II (Leipzig: Teubner, 1908), 315; U. v. Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Die Heimkehr Des Odysseus* (Berlin, 1927), 25. G. M. Bolling, *The External Evidence for Interpolation in Homer*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925), 239-40, following the scholion at 8.333, proposes the athetesis of lines 8.334-43 instead. The authenticity of these lines is defended by M. J. Apthorp, *The Manuscript Evidence for Interpolation in Homer* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1980), 87-91.

<sup>8</sup> Homer, *Die Homerische Odyssee*, ed. A. Kirchhoff (Berlin, 1879), 213 ad 267ff; V. Bérard, *Introduction à l'Odyssee*, Vol. II (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1924), 67-70.

<sup>9</sup> W. Burkert, "Das Lied von Ares und Aphrodite: Zum Verhältnis von Odyssee und Ilias," *RhM* 103 (1960): 139.



of *Odyssey* 8.<sup>10</sup> However, until fairly recently, scholars who did not reject the song's authenticity outright were still treating it as a merely humorous episode, one that did not merit serious consideration. C. M. Bowra, for example, writes that the song was "... not intended to do anything more than amuse";<sup>11</sup> J. A. K. Thomson calls it a "mere interlude,"<sup>12</sup> while P. Friedländer maintains its reputation as a "Götterschwank" among German scholars.<sup>13</sup> Even Bliss, among the first staunch defenders of the song's inclusion in *Odyssey* 8, establishes his argument on the feeble premise that the song merely reflects the licentiousness and the "very vulgar pecuniary standards" of the Phaeacians.<sup>14</sup>

There is, however, a legitimate connection between Demodocus' song and its immediate context in Scheria, first hinted at by Burkert.<sup>15</sup> G. P. Rose's dissertation on the song of Ares and Aphrodite uncovers in detail the more sophisticated links the song shares with the events on Scheria. He counts eleven distinct motifs from the song that also appear in the scene of athletic contest among the Phaeacians.<sup>16</sup> In Odysseus' concession that his only weakness was in his legs (8.230-3), Rose sees a conscious effort on the poet's part to liken Odysseus to the lame Hephaestus.<sup>17</sup> Rose's dissertation thus

---

<sup>10</sup> F. R. Bliss, "Homer and the Critics: The Structural Unity of "Odyssey" Eight," *The Bucknell Review* 16 (1968): 53-73.

<sup>11</sup> C. M. Bowra, *Heroic Poetry* (London: Macmillan, 1952), 201.

<sup>12</sup> J. A. K. Thomson, *Studies in the Odyssey* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1914), 31.

<sup>13</sup> P. Friedländer, "Lachende Götter," *Die Antike* 10 (1934): 209.

<sup>14</sup> Bliss, "Homer and the Critics," 70. Others who think the song is appropriate due to the Phaeacians' love for revelry: Homer, *The Odyssey*, Vol. II, ed. W. B. Stanford (London: Macmillan, 1947), 339 "... very apt for a performance among the pleasure-loving Phaeacians"; C. H. Whitman, *Homer and the Heroic Tradition* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958), 242; H. W. Clarke, *The Art of the Odyssey* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1967), 55, "[The song] has a kind of languor and irreverence to it that are fully in keeping with the atmosphere of Phaeacia."

<sup>15</sup> Burkert, "Das Lied," 136 suggests that the tension created by the *agon* between Euryalus and Odysseus is resolved through the mirth in the song of Ares and Aphrodite.

<sup>16</sup> G. P. Rose, "The Song of Ares and Aphrodite: Recurrent Motifs in Homer's Odyssey" (PhD diss., Berkeley: University of California, 1969), 12-3.

<sup>17</sup> Rose, "Recurrent Motifs," 176.

initiates the current dominant view in scholarship on the song, that its function is to depict Odysseus as a Hephaestus figure. Following Rose, B. K. Braswell develops further parallels between Odysseus' behaviour at the Phaeacian games and Hephaestus' entrapment of Ares.<sup>18</sup> Directly preceding the performance of the Ares and Aphrodite song, Odysseus gets into a heated argument with a Phaeacian: Euryalus insults Odysseus by claiming that that the hero looked more like a merchant than an accomplished athlete (8.158-64). Odysseus counters, rather eloquently, that appearances can be deceiving; a man with an undistinguished appearance may have the gift of eloquence, yet a handsome man may turn out to be lacking in grace when it comes to words (8.165-77). The contrasts created here, Braswell notes, are the same contrasts that are highlighted in the song of Ares and Aphrodite; Hephaestus is ugly and malformed, yet his cleverness conquers the handsome but foolish Ares.<sup>19</sup> Naturally, in this analogy, Odysseus and his eloquence are aligned with Hephaestus and his intelligence.

The idea of Odysseus as a Hephaestus figure is not new; the link between the two has been noted since antiquity. Athenaeus writes in the *Deipnosophists* that the song of Ares and Aphrodite is meant to be taken as a hint to Odysseus for slaughtering the suitors in Ithaca; in the song even a cripple manages to win a contest against the god of war, thus Odysseus too, who is outnumbered, can hope to overcome his foes (5.192).<sup>20</sup> While some scholars have dismissed Athenaeus' views,<sup>21</sup> others have argued that the song is indeed

---

<sup>18</sup> B. K. Braswell, "The Song of Ares and Aphrodite: Theme and Relevance to Odyssey 8," *Hermes* 110 (1982): 129-37.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 131-4.

<sup>20</sup> Athenaeus, *The Deipnosophists: In Seven Volumes*, Vol. II, ed. C. B. Gulick, The Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967).

<sup>21</sup> Rose, "Recurrent Motifs," 20, Athenaeus "... went too far" in his claims; Braswell, "Theme and Relevance," 135, Athenaeus' claims are "overinterpretation."

central to our understanding of the *Odyssey*'s climax; there is, after all, an undeniable thematic connection between the explicit sexual content of the song and the *Odyssey*'s ever-present anxiety surrounding Penelope's fidelity. R. M. Newton, for example, likens Demodocus' Hephaestus to Odysseus in Ithaca, and even goes as far as to suggest Penelope as a counterpart of Aphrodite.<sup>22</sup> In his ability to combine *technē* (τέχνη, "craft") and *mētis* (μητις, "intellect, cunning"), Newton writes, Odysseus resembles the smith-god "not only physically, [due to his weak legs], but also intellectually."<sup>23</sup> If the central message of the song, as Burkert argues, is "... der Sieg der τέχνη, der Klugheit über die simple Natur,"<sup>24</sup> then Odysseus' victory over his adversaries can be seen as comparable to Hephaestus' triumph over Ares. Like Hephaestus, Odysseus is well-known for his superior craft and intellect; the ruse of the Trojan horse, for example, was an idea that sprang from Odysseus' brilliant mind.

However, as we will see, there are fundamental problems with equating Hephaestus and Odysseus, either in Scheria or in Ithaca. Although both are figures of *mētis*, each episode that establishes Odysseus' intellect also highlights his prowess as a warrior, and thus his violence. Demodocus' third song, for example, recounts the tale of the wooden horse and the siege of Troy in a celebration of Odysseus' *mētis*, yet it aligns him not with Hephaestus, but with his rival Ares (8.518). The excessively brutal *mnēstērophonia* episode cannot be seen as an imitation of Hephaestus' revenge either; while Ares and Aphrodite are released in exchange for *moichagria*, Odysseus kills every single suitor of Penelope although she has been faithful to him. The crime of Ares twice

---

<sup>22</sup> R. M. Newton, "Odysseus and Hephaestus in the "Odyssey,"" *CJ* 83 (1987): 13.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>24</sup> Burkert, "Das Lied," 142.

gives rise to laughter on Olympus (8.326, 8.343), but as the Trojan war and the death of Agamemnon suggest, adultery is no laughing matter among mortals.

In the following chapter, I will first consider the song of Ares and Aphrodite against its immediate context in Scheria; within the scope of Book 8, the function of this song, along with Demodocus' other two songs, is to facilitate the revelation of Odysseus' identity to the initially unfriendly Phaeacians. When the three songs are examined together, the differences between Hephaestan *mētis* and Odyssean *mētis* become evident; while the smith-god relies entirely on his cunning to capture his opponent, Odysseus' triumph is achieved through a combination of guile and violence. Next, Chapter 3 will begin by concentrating on the *Odyssey's* portrayal of female characters as inherently untrustworthy and sexually treacherous. Through recurring stories about marital infidelity in the absence of the husband, the poem creates anxiety around the issue of Penelope's fidelity, and hints at the potential danger Odysseus could face at home. The chapter will then investigate the origin of the term *moicheia* (μοιχεία, "adultery"), and explore the consequences a *moichos* might face. While *moicheia* on Olympus creates an occasion for laughter, brutality stemming from sexual transgressions among mortals forebodes further violence in Ithaca. Finally, Chapter 4 will assess the relationship between the song of Ares and Aphrodite and the *mnēstērophonia* episode. This chapter will also consider Penelope's suitors as *moichoi* and attempt to understand the violence of Odysseus' vengeance; Hephaestus' revenge, comprised of humiliation and extraction of payment from the *moichos*, is not sufficient justification for the massacre in Ithaca.

## CHAPTER 2. THE HERO OF *MĒTIS*

During his stay among the Phaeacians, Odysseus hears three songs from Demodocus the bard. The singer is brought in at the beginning of festivities at Alcinous' palace, where he sings his first song (*Od.* 8.73-82): this song sees Odysseus pitted against Achilles in an unknown feud, the outcome of which is uncertain. Odysseus begins to weep during the performance, unnoticed by all but Alcinous (8.86-94). To put the guest in better humour, the king orders games where the Phaeacians show off their accomplishments at various athletic feats. When Odysseus refuses to participate in the games, he gets into an argument with a young Phaeacian named Euryalus (8.158-85). Shortly after, Demodocus is again brought in to entertain the court with the light-hearted song of Ares and Aphrodite (8.266-366). Following the song, the Phaeacians offer Odysseus various gifts, and Euryalus and Odysseus are reconciled. Finally, in his third performance, Demodocus sings of Odysseus' most famous exploit, that of the Trojan horse (8.499-520). The hero again begins to weep, leading Alcinous to press for the stranger's identity.

Critics have often linked Odysseus in Scheria with Hephaestus in the song of Ares and Aphrodite. Many have commented on the similarities between Odysseus' dispute with Euryalus and Hephaestus' capture of Ares.<sup>25</sup> Both episodes feature a rivalry between a strong, handsome character and a clever, unattractive character; whereas Odysseus and Hephaestus both rely heavily on their intellect, their opponents make use of their superior

---

<sup>25</sup> See notes 15-19.

physical strength. Both Odysseus and Hephaestus are figures associated with *mētis*; Hephaestus traps and humiliates the physically superior Ares by using his craft and cunning, while Odysseus subdues Euryalus after delivering an eloquent speech.

Critics have also interpreted the song of Ares and Aphrodite in terms of its relationship to the other two songs of Demodocus.<sup>26</sup> The frivolous nature of the divine song throws Demodocus' Trojan songs into sharp contrast. Whereas the divine song tells of the adulterous affair of Ares and Aphrodite, the Trojan songs depict war and destruction in the realm of mortals. While the Trojan songs paint a certain picture of Odysseus at war, at first glance it is unclear how the song of Ares and Aphrodite relates to the hero. Unlike the Trojan songs, this song is the cause of mirth in Odysseus (8.368). Nevertheless, scholars have attempted to connect the three songs by presenting them as episodes that all celebrate the victory of *mētis*.<sup>27</sup> Demodocus' first and third songs demonstrate Odysseus' *mētis* at Troy, while the second song depicts the triumph of Hephaestus' *mētis*. Scholarship has, in this way, sought to strengthen the association between Odysseus and Hephaestus.

I do not dispute that all three songs of Demodocus must be considered together in order to fully understand the place and significance of the song of Ares and Aphrodite. However, there are differences between how Odysseus and Hephaestus each employ their intellect. Unlike Hephaestus, Odysseus is not dependent wholly on his craft in order to succeed against his opponents. The Trojan songs reveal violent aspects of Odyssean

---

<sup>26</sup> Ø. Andersen, "Odysseus and the Wooden Horse," *Symb Oslo* 52 (1977): 5-18; Braswell, "Theme and Relevance," 129-37; J. S. Clay, *The Wrath of Athena: Gods and Men in the Odyssey* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983), 107; C. Broeniman, "Demodocus, Odysseus, and the Trojan War in "Odyssey" 8," *CW* 90 (1996): 3-13.

<sup>27</sup> Andersen, "Wooden Horse," 13; Broeniman, "Demodocus," 12.

heroism that are not immediately discernible if Odysseus is seen solely as the hero who embodies *mētis*.

In what follows, I will first examine Odysseus' reputation as a hero of *mētis*. The three songs of Demodocus will then be considered as products of their Phaeacian environment. Against the backdrop of subtle and overt hostilities in Scheria, the three songs facilitate Odysseus' revelation of his identity among the Phaeacians. While the first song sets up an opposition between *mētis* and *biā*, the second and third songs offer two different solutions to the problem; the song of Ares and Aphrodite shows its protagonist solely employing his cunning against his rival, whereas the song of the Trojan horse depicts its hero succeeding through a combination of intellect and force. When Odysseus reveals his identity, he aligns himself with the famous hero of the Trojan war from Demodocus' songs: a hero of *mētis*, but one who employs force with equal conviction.

#### **a. Odysseus as a figure of *mētis***

Tradition overwhelmingly depicts Odysseus as a hero defined by his *mētis*. Πολύτροπος (“turning many ways,” and thus, “wily”) is an epithet in Homeric poetry applied exclusively to Odysseus, highlighting the hero's devious tactics and association with artifice. In the *Iliad*, for example, Odysseus is chosen as a key negotiator in the embassy sent to Achilles (*Il.* 9.180-1),<sup>28</sup> while in Book 10 he is picked to take part in the nighttime raid. In the *Odyssey*, his intelligence is all the more prominent; in the Cyclops episode, for example, Odysseus' craft and his cunning are crucial to defeating the

---

<sup>28</sup> Homer, *Homeri Opera: Iliadis Libros*, eds. D. B. Monro and T. W. Allen, Vol. I & II, Oxford Classical Texts (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1902).

monster. Odysseus cleverly protects his identity from Polyphemus, giving Οὔτις (“Nobody”) as his name (*Od.* 9.366). Using a sharpened olive-stake that he himself has fashioned, Odysseus then blinds the Cyclops, an act which is described using the language of shipbuilding and metalworking (9.384-6, 9.391-3). Against a creature who is far superior in terms of sheer strength (βίηφι δὲ φέρτεροι) (6.6), Odysseus thus employs the tools of civilisation and human intelligence.<sup>29</sup>

Polyphemus, rendered powerless by Odysseus’ clever inventions, cries for help from his neighbours:

ὦ φίλοι, Οὔτις με κτείνει δόλω οὐδὲ βίηφιν.

Friends, Nobody is killing me with deceit, and not with force.  
(*Od.* 9.408)

The response that he receives reveals the extent to which Odysseus’ ruse has been successful:

Εἰ μὲν δὴ μή τις σε βιάζεται οἶον ἔοντα...

If you are indeed alone and no one is forcing you...  
(*Od.* 9.410)

Μή τις, of course, means “no one,” but it is also a homophonic pun alluding to *mētis*.<sup>30</sup>

Thus, to the audience, the response of Polyphemus’ neighbours can also mean “if cunning is overpowering you...” This episode establishes Odysseus’ reputation as a hero of *mētis* in the *Odyssey*.

---

<sup>29</sup> C. P. Segal, “The Phaeacians and the Symbolism of Odysseus’ Return,” *Arion* 1 (1962): 34.

<sup>30</sup> A. J. Podlecki, “Guest-Gifts and Nobodies in “Odyssey 9”” *Phoenix* 15 (1961): 130.



## b. Phaeacian unfriendliness

When a naked and salt-encrusted Odysseus washes up on the shores of Scheria, he is grateful to make the acquaintance of Nausicaa, who offers him clothes and hospitality.

The young girl's friendliness seems to answer the nervous questions Odysseus asked himself moments earlier:

ὦ μοι ἐγὼ, τέων αὖτε βροτῶν ἐς γαῖαν ἰκάνω;  
ἦ ῥ' οἳ γ' ὑβρισταί τε καὶ ἄγριοι οὐδὲ δίκαιοι,  
ἦε φιλόξενοι καὶ σφιν νόος ἐστὶ θεοῦδής;

Ah me, who are the people at whose land I have arrived again?  
Are they violent and savage, and in no way just?  
Or are they hospitable, with a mind that reveres the gods?  
(*Od.* 6.119-21)

To his relief, Nausicaa recognises Odysseus' position as a suppliant (6.193) and reassures him that he will not be lacking in anything in her city (6.191-2). She and her people are not violent, savage, or unjust, as Odysseus had feared they might be.

However, as Odysseus quickly learns, the Phaeacians are an odd sort; despite their outward adherence to familiar Achaean customs, they are not exactly φιλόξενοι ("guest-loving") (6.121). Due to Scheria's remote location, they do not receive a lot of visitors (6.204-5), but they do enjoy an unusual proximity to the gods (6.203), and are even accustomed to entertaining undisguised gods among themselves (7.199-206). Yet they are inexperienced when it comes to the standard customs of hospitality; an old man has to remind Alcinous of the rights of the guest (7.159-66) when Odysseus first arrives at the court. Alcinous' incompetence as a host is also evident from his repeated prodding after Odysseus' identity, even before the guest has finished eating (7.199-206). Athena too warns Odysseus of Phaeacian xenophobia (7.30-3).

Although clearly human, the Phaeacians are still situated “partly within the magical realm of phantasy and imagination,”<sup>31</sup> belonging neither to the violent-savage group nor to the guest-loving groups mentioned in line 6.120-1. Their strange behaviour creates an uncertain and hostile atmosphere for Odysseus, who must rely on their kindness to achieve his *nostos* (“homecoming”). Their affinity with the race of Cyclopes (7.206), who are unfriendly hosts to say the least, naturally must give cause for additional anxiety in Odysseus. That is not to say that the Phaeacians are inherently like the Cyclopes, but the association between the two peoples certainly generates tension that prevents Odysseus from immediately revealing his identity to the Phaeacians.<sup>32</sup> Since his encounter with Polyphemus initiated his years of suffering at sea<sup>33</sup> and brought him to the Phaeacians in the first place, he must ascertain that his hosts are not untrustworthy before divulging his name. When he first arrives at the court of Alcinous, he is incognito.

### c. The first song: *mētis-biā* antithesis

Demodocus’ first song (*Od.* 8.73-82) recounts an alleged argument that breaks out between Achilles and Odysseus during the Trojan war. While the subject matter is reminiscent of the *Iliad*’s famous dispute between Achilles and Agamemnon,<sup>34</sup> a similar dispute between Achilles and Odysseus is not attested elsewhere and may be a Homeric invention.<sup>35</sup> The obscurity of the song is curious, particularly because we hear that:

---

<sup>31</sup> Segal, “Symbolism of Odysseus’ Return,” 24.

<sup>32</sup> G. P. Rose, “The Unfriendly Phaeacians.” *TAPhA* 100 (1969): 393.

<sup>33</sup> After blinding the Cyclops, Odysseus boasts prematurely and declares his name (*Od.* 9.502-5), allowing Polyphemus to curse him (*Od.* 9.528-36).

<sup>34</sup> K. Rüter, *Odysseeinterpretationen: Untersuchungen zum Ersten Buch und zur Phaiakis* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1969), 247-54; Clay, *The Wrath of Athena*, 103-4;

<sup>35</sup> M. Finkelberg, “The First Song of Demodocus,” *Mnemosyne* 40 (1987): 128-32.

Μοῦσ' ἄρ' ἀοιδὸν ἀνήκεν ἀειδέμεναι κλέα ἀνδρῶν,  
οἴμης τῆς τότ' ἄρα κλέος οὐρανὸν εὐρὺν ἴκανε...

The muse urged the singer to sing the famous deeds of men,  
the fame of which song reached the high heavens...  
(*Od.* 8.74)

If the song is indeed as well-known as the poet claims it to be, it is odd that the story of Achilles' rivalry with Odysseus is not mentioned anywhere else. However, a skewed version of our *Iliad* may not be so out of place among Phaeacians;<sup>36</sup> after all, Phaeacian customs are but a strange mimicry of Achaean customs.

Although the cause of the strife mentioned in the song is not explained, by pitting Odysseus against the quintessential Iliadic hero of *biā*, the song inadvertently highlights his *kleos* (κλέος, “fame”) as a hero of *mētis*. That there may be grounds for an existing tension between Achilles and Odysseus is hinted at in other places. In the *Iliad*'s embassy scene, for example, the first speech is delivered by Odysseus in order to persuade Achilles to return to the fighting (*Il.* 9.225-306). However, he does not report Agamemnon's message in its entirety; he omits details that might be objectionable to Achilles (*Il.* 9.160-1). His shrewd judgement falters in this case, as after his speech, Achilles is all the more resolved not to make a return. Achilles says, perhaps with Odysseus in mind:<sup>37</sup>

Ἐχθρὸς γάρ μοι κεῖνος ὁμῶς Αἴδαο πύλησιν  
ὅς χ' ἕτερον μὲν κεύθη ἐνὶ φρεσίν, ἄλλο δὲ εἶπη.

Hateful to me like the gates of Hades is that man  
who conceals one thing in his mind, but says another.  
(*Il.* 9.312-3)

---

<sup>36</sup> Broeniman, “Demodocus,” 12.

<sup>37</sup> Clay, *Wrath of Athena*, 104. For an argument to the contrary, see R. Friedrich, “Odysseus and Achilleus in the “Iliad”: Hidden Hermeneutic Horror in Readings of the “Presbeia,”” *Hermes* 139 (2011): 271-90.

Odysseus has done just that; he has masked his true intentions by manipulating his speech. In fact, the use of falsehood is a celebrated heroic trait in the *Odyssey*; its eponymous hero relies heavily on his wit. He uses a false name through his captivity in Polyphemus' cave, and uses deceit to overcome the Cyclops. When he returns to Ithaca, he spins many fictitious tales to guard his true identity (*Od.* 13.253-86, 14.191-359, 19.107-348). These maneuvers would not be compatible with the Iliadic heroism that Achilles embodies.

The first *nekylia* in the *Odyssey* also features an encounter between Odysseus and Achilles that hints at the two heroes' rivalry. When Odysseus visits the underworld to consult Tiresias in Book 11, the shade of Achilles approaches him and questions him regarding his decision to come to the land of the dead (11.473-6). After explaining his reason, Odysseus showers praise on Achilles:

... Σεῖο δ', Ἀχιλλεῦ,  
οὐ τις ἀνὴρ προπάρειθε μακάρτατος οὔτ' ἄρ' ὀπίσσω.  
πρὶν μὲν γάρ σε ζῶν ἐτίομεν ἴσα θεοῖσιν  
Ἀργεῖοι, νῦν αὖτε μέγα κρατέεις νεκύεσσιν  
ἐνθάδ' ἑών· τῷ μὴ τι θανὼν ἀκαχίζεω, Ἀχιλλεῦ.

... More than you, Achilles,  
no man will ever be blessed, nor has ever been in the past.  
Before, we Argives honoured you like a god when you were  
still living, and now in your greatness you hold sway among the dead  
here: do not be grieving even in death, Achilles.  
(*Od.* 11.482-6)

However, Achilles' response reveals that his existence in Hades is anything but μακάρτατος ("most blessed") (11.483):

Μὴ δὴ μοι θάνατόν γε παραύδα, φαίδιμ' Ὀδυσσεῦ.  
βουλοίμην κ' ἐπάρουρος ἐὼν θητευέμεν ἄλλω,  
ἀνδρὶ παρ' ἀκλήρω, ᾧ μὴ βίωτος πολὺς εἶη,

ἢ πᾶσιν νεκύεσσι καταφθιμένοισιν ἀνάσσειν.

Do not console me about death, glorious Odysseus.  
I would rather be a serf and serve another man,  
a poorly man, who does not have sufficient means of living,  
than be a lord over all the decaying dead.  
(*Od.* 11.488-91)

Achilles' sentiment here regarding his death brings to mind the choice he is called upon to make in the *Iliad*. Achilles can either stay at Troy and fight beside the Achaeans, or return home (*Il.* 9.410-6). If he returns home, Achilles will live a long life in anonymity; if, instead, he chooses to stay, he will certainly die, but gain everlasting *kleos* in return (κλέος ἄφθιτον, "imperishable glory") (9.413).

Achilles' choice is clear in the *Iliad*. He chooses *kleos* over obscurity, and death over the promise of a long life. However, lines 11.488-91 in the *Odyssey* suggests that Achilles now regrets his decision. Even the lowliest of lives now seems more appealing to Achilles than the death that has brought him eternal fame.<sup>38</sup> Achilles' only recourse to gaining *kleos* is a heroic death at Troy; the choice presented to him does not allow for any alternative means. Odysseus' *kleos*, on the other hand, can be fashioned out of his successful *nostos* and long life. He will be remembered "in endurance and survival and on the accomplishment of the Return through the aid of *metis*."<sup>39</sup>

The ancient commentators were aware of these dichotomies between the heroic natures of Achilles and Odysseus, which is reflected in their interpretation of Demodocus' first song. The scholion at line *Od.* 8.75 suggests that the source of the feud in the first song is a disagreement between the two heroes over how Troy should be

---

<sup>38</sup> Clay, *Wrath of Athena*, 109.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 111.

taken; Achilles advises the use of force (βιάζεσθαι παρήνει), while Odysseus suggests taking Troy through a trick (δόλω μετελθεῖν).<sup>40</sup> Such conjecture, even if baseless, is certainly in line with how the two heroes are sometimes portrayed: Achilles as the hero of *biā*, and Odysseus the hero of *mētis*.<sup>41</sup>

*Mētis* is arguably the antithesis to *biā*; read this way, the first song sets up Odyssean heroism in opposition to Illiadic heroism. At the same time, by reinforcing Odysseus' association with *mētis*, the song also brings the Phaeacians closer to the knowledge of the identity of the man they are hosting. Alcinous notices him weeping (8.94-5) after Demodocus has finished singing. Odysseus will weep once more in Book 8, which will prompt Alcinous to ask directly his name and lineage (8.521-56). While he does not identify himself to the Phaeacians until after the song of the Trojan horse, this first Trojan song lays the groundwork for the climax of Book 8;<sup>42</sup> his tearful reaction to the Trojan songs provides Alcinous with a visual cue that the stranger in their midst may have personally experienced the tragedy of the Trojan war.

#### **d. Odysseus and Euryalus**

Alcinous, noticing that Odysseus is clearly distressed after hearing Demodocus' first song, calls for games to entertain the guest in what is surely a strange move.<sup>43</sup> Tensions escalate when Euryalus is openly hostile towards Odysseus during the games.

---

<sup>40</sup> Ad 75, W. Dindorf, *Scholia Graeca in Homeri Odysseam: Ex Codicibus Aucta Et Emendata*, Vol. I (Oxford: Academic Press, 1855), 361.

<sup>41</sup> See Gregory Nagy, *The Best of the Achaeans: Concepts of the Hero in Archaic Greek Poetry* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1979), 42ff; R. Dunkle, "Nestor, Odysseus, and the MĒTIS: BIĒ Antithesis: The Funeral Games, Iliad 23," *CW* 81 (1987): 1-17.

<sup>42</sup> Finkelberg, "The First Song," 129.

<sup>43</sup> Broeniman, "Demodocus," 7, games are "the last thing on Odysseus' mind."

Odysseus had expressly said that he was not in the mood for participating in the athletic contests because more pressing concerns were on his mind (8.152-7), but Euryalus insists that the guest take part. The brawny Phaeacian mocks Odysseus' non-athletic appearance, saying that Odysseus looks more like a merchant (8.158-64) and suggesting that perhaps the guest would not take up the challenge due to his physical weakness. In his response (8.165-185), Odysseus contrasts the man whose outwardly appearance is unremarkable but who is eloquent, with the man who appears handsome but whose words convey no grace (χάρις). Here Odysseus rebukes Euryalus for having spoken poorly, suggesting at the same time that his good looks are not equalled by his use of coarse words. Simultaneously, Odysseus implies that his own ragged appearance is more than compensated for by his rhetoric skills; his speech to Euryalus is itself evidence. He then proves his strength by throwing the discus, outstripping the marks of all other Phaeacians (8.186-9). It is at this point that Demodocus is invited to sing again.

#### e. The song of Ares and Aphrodite

The song of Ares and Aphrodite, which directly follows the altercation between Odysseus and Euryalus, resolves the tension created by it.<sup>44</sup> It is a light-hearted divine burlesque, depicting the gods in a compromising fashion. Nevertheless, it too presents friction between a character of *biā* (Ares) and a character of *mētis* (Hephaestus):

Αὐτὰρ ὁ φορμίζων ἀνεβάλλετο καλὸν ἀεΐδειν  
 ἄμφ' Ἄρεος φιλότητος εὐστεφάνου τ' Ἀφροδίτης,  
 ὡς τὰ πρῶτα μίγησαν ἐν Ἥφαιστοιο δόμοισι  
 λάθρη· πολλὰ δ' ἔδωκε, λέχος δ' ἥσχυνε καὶ εὐνήν  
 Ἥφαιστοιο ἄνακτος· ἄφαρ δέ οἱ ἄγγελος ἦλθεν

<sup>44</sup> Burkert, "Das Lied," 136; Rose, "Unfriendly Phaeacians," 403; Segal, "Symbolism of Odysseus' Return," 27.

Ἥλιος, ὃ σφ' ἐνόησε μιγαζομένους φιλότητι.

Then he struck up the lyre and began to sing beautifully about the love of Ares and well-crowned Aphrodite, how they first had intercourse in the house of Hephaestus secretly, how he gave her many things and shamed the marriage bed of lord Hephaestus. Straightaway to him [Hephaestus] as a messenger came Helios, who had noticed them lying in love. (*Od.* 8.266-71)

Hephaestus, learning about his wife's unfaithfulness, begins to plot his revenge. Using superfine chains that he himself has fashioned, the smith-god lays out a trap on his marriage bed, and then leaves his house on the pretext of going to Lemnos. When Ares and Aphrodite lie with each other in Hephaestus' feigned absence, the unsuspecting lovers are caught in his chains. Seizing the moment, Hephaestus summons all the gods to display the adulterers he has captured (8.272-305). He is then heard complaining to the gods about his physical imperfection and his lack of good looks. Aphrodite, Hephaestus claims, prefers the company of Ares due to his handsome appearance:

Ὡς ἐμὲ χολὸν ἐόντα Διὸς θυγάτηρ Ἀφροδίτη  
αἰὲν ἀτιμάζει, φιλέει δ' αἰδήλον Ἄρηα,  
οὔνεχ' ὁ μὲν καλός τε καὶ ἀρτίπος, αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ γε  
ἠπεδανὸς γενόμην·

... how Zeus' daughter Aphrodite always dishonours me for my lameness, but loves deadly Ares, for he is handsome and swift-footed, whereas I was born malformed. (*Od.* 8.308-11)

Braswell sees in these portions an echo of the recent rivalry between Euryalus and Odysseus.<sup>45</sup> In Euryalus' physical attractiveness, to which Odysseus refers, Braswell notices a reflection of the handsome Ares.<sup>46</sup> Shortly before the argument takes place,

---

<sup>45</sup> Braswell, "Theme and Relevance," 131-3.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.



Euryalus is even directly compared by the poet to Ares at line 8.115. Similarly, master craftsman Hephaestus who bemoans his lack of good looks is reminiscent of Odysseus in his lacklustre appearance and professed mastery over words.<sup>47</sup> When Odysseus boasts of his athletic skills, he excuses himself from claiming superiority in the foot race, because years of seafaring has left his legs weak (8.230-3). Some scholars see this as an even clearer indication that a connection is to be made between the characters of Odysseus and Hephaestus, whose weakness is also in his legs.<sup>48</sup> The theme of the song of Ares and Aphrodite, Braswell claims, reflects on a divine level the actions in the realm of mortals;<sup>49</sup> just as Odysseus humiliates Euryalus, so too Hephaestus, lame but clever, overpowers the strong, handsome Ares and humiliates him in front of all the gods. In this sense, the argument between Euryalus and Odysseus can be seen as another manifestation of the opposition created in the first song between *biā* and *mētis*.

Using his *mētis*, the physically disadvantaged Hephaestus takes on a superior opponent in Ares. In the song, the smith-god's association with *technē* and *dolos* (δόλος, "trick") is emphasised again and again: he is called κλυτοτέχνης ("famous for his craft") (8.286), and his chains are described as τεχνίεντες ("cunningly wrought") (8.297). He is also said by the gods to have captured Ares using his *technē* (8.332). Hephaestus' indestructible chains are referred to as his *dolos* repeatedly: once he has finished making them and again when he pours them over the bedpost, they are called his *dolos* (8.276, 8.282). The chains cannot be easily detected because they have been fashioned to be

---

<sup>47</sup> Braswell, "Theme and Relevance," 134.

<sup>48</sup> Rose, "Recurrent Motifs," 176; Braswell, "Theme and Relevance," 134-5; Newton, "Odysseus and Hephaestus," 13.

<sup>49</sup> Braswell, "Theme and Relevance," 133.

δολόεντα (“deceitfully made”) (8.281). Hephaestus himself refers to the chains as *dolos*, when he boasts that

... Σφωε δόλος καὶ δεσμὸς ἐρύξει ...

... My trick and my binding will restrain the two of them ...  
(*Od.* 8.317)

“Δόλος καὶ δεσμὸς” function here as a compound subject of the singular verb “ἐρύξει.”

Thus Hephaestus’ trick and his binding, through *hendiadys*, both refer to the *dolos* of his chains. The poet leaves no doubt in this episode that Hephaestus’ capture of the god of war is accomplished through his intellect; the gods, who have gathered to look upon Hephaestus’ handiwork, take note of the smith-god’s ingenuity in putting Ares out of countenance:

Οὐκ ἀρετᾶ κακὰ ἔργα· κίχάνει τοι βραδὺς ὠκύν,  
ὥς καὶ νῦν Ἥφαιστος ἐὼν βραδὺς εἶλεν Ἄρηα,  
ὠκύτατόν περ ἐόντα θεῶν οἷ Ὀλυμπον ἔχουσιν  
χωλὸς ἐὼν τέχνησι: τὸ καὶ μοιγάγρι’ ὀφέλλει.

Nothing virtuous in immoral deeds: the slow overtakes the swift  
as now Hephaestus who is slow, by craft has captured Ares,  
the swiftest of all gods who live on Olympus,  
although Hephaestus is a cripple: Ares now owes him compensation.  
(*Od.* 8.329-32)

Hephaestus’ superior intelligence allows him to outsmart Ares, even though he is of superior strength. Thus Burkert terms the song of Ares and Aphrodite “der Sieg der τέχνη.”<sup>50</sup> If we read lines 8.329-32 as the gods’ celebration of Hephaestus’ cunning,<sup>51</sup> Hephaestus’ triumph over Ares affirms Odysseus, who had also championed the excellence of intellect, as the victor of his confrontation with Euryalus. At the same time,

---

<sup>50</sup> Burkert, “Das Lied,” 142.

<sup>51</sup> As does Braswell, “Theme and Relevance,” 132.

while the first song of Demodocus does not disclose the outcome of the feud between Achilles and Odysseus, the song of Ares and Aphrodite provides a suggestion: if Hephaestus can overcome Ares, perhaps Odysseus (*mētis*) too will triumph over Achilles (*biā*).

The song is successful at settling the dispute between the two men in Scheria; Odysseus seems no longer to be angry, and in fact is rather pleased to hear the song (8.368). Like the humiliated god of war in the song who must pay compensation to the smith-god he has offended, Euryalus pays compensation to Odysseus in the form of a gift (8.400-5). The young Phaeacian even apologises to him for having behaved improperly (8.406-11). Odysseus accepts both gift and apology (8.412-5), and all is forgiven. The hostile situation is resolved and the tension is diffused; the Phaeacians confirm themselves as allies of Odysseus, bringing him closer to the revelation of his identity.

**f. The third song: victory of Odysseus' *mētis***

Demodocus' third song (8.499-520) features what is arguably Odysseus' greatest claim to fame: the trick of the Trojan horse. While the song of Ares and Aphrodite may function as possible encouragement for Odysseus to want to reveal *his* own victory of *mētis* to match Hephaestus' triumph, it is the first song of Demodocus that directly creates the opportunity for Odysseus to present the saga of the wooden horse; the accuracy of the first song, claims Odysseus, prompts him to request the bard to perform another song on a Trojan theme. The first two songs of Demodocus thus anticipate his

third song. Odysseus, “[i]n a display of quite unparalleled rudeness,”<sup>52</sup> assumes the position of host and himself cuts a piece of meat for the bard. He then invites him to sing of the wooden horse that brought upon Troy’s downfall:

Δημόδοκ’, ἔξοχα δὴ σε βροτῶν αἰνίζομ’ ἀπάντων·  
ἢ σέ γε μοῦσ’ ἐδίδαξε, Διὸς πάϊς, ἢ σέ γ’ Ἀπόλλων.  
λίην γὰρ κατὰ κόσμον Ἀχαιῶν οἶτον αἰεῖδεις,  
ὄσσ’ ἔρξαν τ’ ἔπαθόν τε καὶ ὄσσ’ ἐμόγησαν Ἀχαιοί,  
ὥς τέ που ἢ αὐτὸς παρεὼν ἢ ἄλλου ἀκούσας.  
ἀλλ’ ἄγε δὴ μετάβηθι καὶ ἵππου κόσμον ἄεισον  
δουρατέου, τὸν Ἐπειὸς ἐποίησεν σὺν Ἀθήνῃ...

Demodocus, above all mortals I praise you.  
Either the muse, daughter of Zeus, has taught you, or Apollo:  
duly do you sing the doom of the Achaeans,  
and all that the Achaeans did, experienced, and suffered,  
as if you yourself were there or heard it from someone who was.  
But come and change to another topic, and sing  
of the wooden horse, which Epeios made with Athena’s help...  
(*Od.* 8.487-93)

Odysseus’ speculation that Demodocus may himself have been present at Troy is of course not sincere; as he already knows, Demodocus clearly was not part of the Trojan war. What his comments demonstrate, however, is that he himself has experienced the Trojan war first-hand; in fact, he has once already alluded to his involvement in the Trojan war in his boast to Euryalus (8.220). He therefore has the authority to commend Demodocus on the faithfulness of his account. He even feeds false information to the bard, as if to trick him into making a mistake:<sup>53</sup>

... Ὅν ποτ’ ἐς ἀκρόπολιν δόλον ἤγαγε δῖος Ὀδυσσεὺς,  
ἀνδρῶν ἐμπλήσας οἳ ῥ’ Ἴλιον ἐξαλάπαξαν.  
αἶ κεν δὴ μοι ταῦτα κατὰ μοῖραν καταλέξις,  
αὐτίκ’ ἐγὼ πᾶσιν μυθήσομαι ἀνθρώποισιν,  
ὥς ἄρα τοι πρόφρων θεὸς ὤπασε θέσπιν ἀοιδίην.

<sup>52</sup> E. L. Harrison, “Odysseus and Demodocus: Homer, *Odyssey* 9 492f,” *Hermes* 99 (1971): 378.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 379.

... The artifice which godlike Odysseus once led to the citadel  
having filled it with men who then sacked Troy.  
If you can recount to me these things as they happened,  
I will at once tell all men,  
how the god of his free will has granted you divine song.  
(*Od.* 8.494-8)

While the horse is genuinely a *dolos* devised by Odysseus (8.494), he was not the one to have led the horse to Troy's citadel. Nor was it Odysseus who merely filled up the horse with men; he was, in fact, one of the men inside the horse, as corroborated by Menelaus' account of the episode (*Od.* 4.265-89). Menelaus' story is told from the perspective of the warriors who are hiding inside the device. In his version, Helen tries to entice the Achaeans by calling out the names of each hero, mimicking the voices of their wives. Odysseus, who is also hiding inside the horse, resists her charms and prevents the other warriors from responding and thus betraying their position.

By offering to verify whether Demodocus' version of this story is *κατὰ μοῖραν* or not (8.496), Odysseus once again hints at his involvement in the sacking of Troy. Demodocus obliges. The bard's song corrects the inaccurate details the hero had provided when he made his request; Odysseus is found inside the horse with his comrades (8.502-3), and the horse is dragged into the city by the Trojans themselves (8.504). And so Odysseus weeps, confirming the veracity of Demodocus' third song.

Thus the third song suggests yet another answer to the problem that was left unresolved in Demodocus' first song; Odysseus appears to be the winner of the feud he had with Achilles.<sup>54</sup> Achilles does not live to see the fall of Troy, while Odysseus is at the

---

<sup>54</sup> Clay, *Wrath of Athena*, 101.

forefront of efforts to bring about the city's demise. Troy is indeed breached by Odysseus' *mētis*, instead of Achilles' *biā*.

### **g. Odyssean heroism: guile and violence**

Demodocus' masterful rendition of the tale of the wooden horse provides the perfect vehicle for Odysseus to reveal his name and identify himself as the victorious hero of Troy. His tears cause Alcinous to demand that he now speak the truth regarding his identity. Odysseus needs very little introduction to present himself:

εἴμ' Ὀδυσσεὺς Λαερτιάδης, ὃς πᾶσι δόλοισιν  
ἀνθρώποισι μέλω, καί μευ κλέος οὐρανὸν ἵκει.

I am Odysseus, son of Laertes, well-known to mankind  
for all kinds of tricks, and my fame goes up to the heavens.  
(*Od.* 9.19-20)

Odysseus' *kleos* is indeed widespread; the Phaeacians have just now heard two songs about his Trojan exploits, and an additional divine song featuring the kind of cunning that the hero is well-known for. The man of the songs now reveals himself in the flesh among the Phaeacians. The three songs, therefore, facilitate Odysseus' revelation of his identity as the hero known for πᾶσι δόλοισιν ("all kinds of tricks") (9.19). J. S. Clay views all three songs as a "victory of Odyssean *metis*,"<sup>55</sup> while to Ø. Andersen, all three songs depict the triumph of Odysseus.<sup>56</sup> Odysseus' traditional association with *mētis* in the Trojan songs therefore gives rise to his comparison with Hephaestus in the song of Ares and Aphrodite.

---

<sup>55</sup> Clay, *Wrath of Athena*, 107.

<sup>56</sup> Andersen, "Odysseus and the Wooden Horse," 13.

It is here that we run into problems; for although Odysseus' cunning portrays him as a Hephaestus character, Odysseus' conspicuous association with violence throughout Book 8 is undeniable. The first song of Demodocus has Odysseus vie with Achilles as one of the ἄριστοι Ἀχαιῶν ("best of the Achaeans") (8.78). The two contend with each other using ἐκπάγλοις ἐπέεσσιν ("violent words") (8.77). Odysseus' status as one of the best of the Achaeans alongside Achilles is testament to Odysseus' martial capacities. Unlike Ares and Hephaestus, Achilles and Odysseus are well-matched rivals in warfare. Achilles and Odysseus are excellent candidates for the feud precisely because the outcome cannot easily be guessed.

In his disagreement with Euryalus, although Odysseus extols the virtues of eloquence in his speech, he settles their argument by a show of athletic prowess.<sup>57</sup> Braswell makes the baffling claim that athletic skills too are a part of the intelligence Odysseus has just laid claims on,<sup>58</sup> but Odysseus' discus throw that surpasses the marks of all other Phaeacians cannot be considered an instance of rhetorical skills. At lines 8.178-85, Odysseus boasts about his former physical prowess and his participation in wars. Again at lines 8.202-29, Odysseus advertises his strength and his superiority at various physical exploits: boxing, wrestling, archery, and javelin. He extends his challenge in these feats to all Phaeacians except his host Laodamas (8.204-7), presumably because he is confident that he can defeat them all. Hephaestus, on the other hand, cannot hope to defeat his robust opponent in any physical contest.

---

<sup>57</sup> R. Scodel, "Bardic Performance and Oral Tradition in Homer," *AJP* 119 (1998): 188.

<sup>58</sup> Braswell, "Theme and Relevance," 132.

Nor is Odysseus, unlike Hephaestus, actually unattractive. In Book 6, with Athena's help, Odysseus appears handsome after his bath (6.229-37), and Nausicaa indirectly compliments Odysseus on his good looks (καλός τε μέγας/ τε ξεῖνος, “a stranger both handsome and large”) (6.276-7). Nausicaa admires his appearance again after Odysseus has had a bath in Book 8, shortly after the song of Ares and Aphrodite has concluded:

θαύμαζεν δ' Ὀδυσῆα ἐν ὀφθαλμοῖσιν ὀρῶσα...

Seeing Odysseus, she marvelled at him...  
(*Od.* 8.459)

Odysseus appears handsome also when he reveals himself to Penelope in Book 23, signalling their imminent reunion; once again, Athena tends to Odysseus' physical beauty after he has had a bath (23.156-63). Conversely, Aphrodite's desire for Ares stems from her disgust at her husband's appearance (8.308-11). Hephaestus has a permanent deformity, whereas Odysseus is merely caught in an unflattering angle by Euryalus.

The song of the Trojan horse that ultimately establishes the superiority of Odyssean *mētis* is also full of violent and destructive imagery. The song's focus is actually not on *mētis*, but on military prowess.<sup>59</sup> While the trick of the wooden horse grants the Achaeans access to the city, Troy's destruction is brought about through brute force:

Ἦειδεν δ' ὡς ἄστυ διέπραθον υἷες Ἀχαιῶν  
ἰππόθεν ἐκχύμενοι, κοῖλον λόχον ἐκπρολιπόντες,  
ἄλλον δ' ἄλλη ἄειδε πόλιν κεραϊζέμεν αἰπήν,  
αὐτὰρ Ὀδυσσῆα προτὶ δώματα Διὶφόβοιο  
βήμεναι, ἦύτ' Ἄρηα σὺν ἀντιθέῳ Μενελάῳ.  
κεῖθι δὴ αἰνότατον πόλεμον φάτο τολμήσαντα

---

<sup>59</sup> S. D. Olson, ““Odyssey” 8: Guile, Force and the Subversive Poetics of Desire,” *Arethusa* 22 (1989): 137.



νικῆσαι καὶ ἔπειτα διὰ μέγαθυμον Ἀθήνην.

He sang how the sons of the Achaeans lay waste to the city  
after they streamed out of the horse, leaving behind their hollow ambush.  
He sang how they slaughtered one another in the lofty city,  
but how Odysseus moved towards Deiphobus' house  
like Ares, with godlike Menelaus.  
He said Odysseus endured the grimmest battle there  
and then won, with the help of great-hearted Athena.  
(*Od.* 8.514-20)

Not only is Odysseus involved in the plundering of the city, but he also leads the charge from the front. The most intense battle takes place at Deiphobus' house, likely because after Paris' death, it is Deiphobus whom Helen has married. Since the abduction of Helen was the cause for war, the retrieval of Helen would also be a primary concern to the Achaeans in order to end it. Paris' guilt has presumably passed on to Deiphobus as Helen's husband;<sup>60</sup> Menelaus, against whom the original offense was committed, is therefore present here. Accompanying Menelaus is Odysseus, ensuring victory for the Achaeans. Only his excellence in battle explains Odysseus' presence alongside Menelaus; he is certainly not a Hephaestus figure in this fight. In fact, he is compared to Hephaestus' rival from Demodocus' song; Odysseus moves towards the scene of the final battle ἡὐτ' Ἄρηα ("like Ares") (8.518).

Moreover, Odysseus begins to weep when the song ends, we are told, like a woman whose city has been sacked by enemies. While the song portrays the glory of war, its horror is shown in the harrowing simile;<sup>61</sup> the woman's husband has fallen in war, and she clings to his corpse as she is led away to slavery by the conquerors (8.523-30). Linking Odysseus to a simile that shows the reality of war undermines his victory. If this

---

<sup>60</sup> M. J. Alden, "The Resonances of the Song of Ares and Aphrodite," *Mnemosyne* 50 (1997): 520.

<sup>61</sup> Bliss, "Homer and the Critics," 72, n. 26.

song is truly meant to be a victory of Odyssean *mētis*, then its success is questionable.

The song shows us an ambiguous solution at most to the *biā-mētis* dichotomy; it remains uncertain whether *mētis* has decisively triumphed over *biā*. Even if it is the case, Odysseus' tears raise the suspicion whether that triumph has even been "worthwhile."<sup>62</sup>

The three songs of Demodocus, therefore, contrary to the claims of Clay and Andersen, do not depict an absolute triumph of *mētis*, nor do the songs characterise Odysseus as a Hephaestus figure, as many scholars believe. The element of violence displayed by Odysseus in the Trojan songs is entirely absent from Hephaestus' triumph over Ares; the smith-god's approach against adulterers in his household involves complete reliance on *mētis* without resorting to *biā*. Crucially, the same offence of marital infidelity that calls for bloodshed in Troy is a cause for laughter on Olympus (8.326); the song of Ares and Aphrodite thus highlights the sharp divide that exists between human and divine experiences.<sup>63</sup>

---

<sup>62</sup> Olson, "Subversive Poetics," 137.

<sup>63</sup> Burkert, "Das Lied," 140.

### CHAPTER 3. WOMEN IN THE *ODYSSEY*

The song of Ares and Aphrodite is a part of a series of recurring stories in the *Odyssey* featuring promiscuous women, which establish the poem's views on female nature. Female characters in the *Odyssey* are, more often than not, defined through their relationship to their male counterparts in the poem.<sup>64</sup> Women are presented predominantly in their roles as mothers, daughters, or wives of male characters. Thus, for example, when Odysseus encounters the parade of women in the underworld, they are described as “wives and daughters of the best men” (ἀριστήων ἄλοχοι ἔσαν ἠδὲ θύγατρεις) (*Od.* 11.227), and are given recognition for their child-bearing capacities as mothers of heroes. While female identities generally do not exist independently of the male, heroic identities, unrestrained female agency is a constant source of anxiety in the *Odyssey*. The poem's general mistrust of women is visible in its portrayal of a wide range of female characters, from household slaves, to wives of heroes, to even goddesses.

#### **a. Female slaves**

Women's disloyalty in the *Odyssey* primarily takes the form of sexual treachery. Accordingly, the poem's trustworthy female servants are decidedly asexual; Eurycleia and Eurynome are both older, sexually inactive women. Eurycleia, we are told, was purchased by Laertes in her youth, yet Laertes never slept with her, being careful not to incur the anger of his wife (1.430–3). Apart from Athena, she is Odysseus' only female

---

<sup>64</sup> C. Franco, “Women in Homer,” in *A Companion to Women in the Ancient World*, eds. S. L. James and S. Dillon (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 60.

confidante in his quest for vengeance against the suitors. In contrast, disloyal female servants portrayed in the poem are also sexually promiscuous. In Odysseus' own household, the twelve serving maids identified by Eurycleia fall in this category; not only have they been disobedient, but they have also been sleeping with Penelope's suitors (22.424-5). There is also the case of Eumaeus' Phoenician nurse; through her treachery, Odysseus' loyal swineherd is sold into slavery from a life of luxury in his childhood. The nurse is seduced by a Phoenician merchant while washing her clothes on the beach:<sup>65</sup>

Πλουούση τις πρῶτα μίγη κοίλῃ παρὰ νηῖ  
εὐνή καὶ φιλότητι, τὰ τε φρένας ἠπεροπεύει  
θηλυτέρησι γυναῖξι, καὶ ἢ κ' εὐεργὸς ἔησιν.

First, while she had gone to do laundry, one of them lay with her  
in love by the hollow ship, as these things beguile the minds  
of all women, even if she be upright.  
(*Od.* 15.420-22)

Sexual union between the nurse and the merchant provides additional support to the idea that perfidy and promiscuity of women go hand in hand in the *Odyssey*. It also hints at another widespread assumption in the poem regarding feminine nature: a woman cannot resist the lure of sex, no matter what her moral character may be.

## **b. Wives of heroes**

Especially prevalent in the *Odyssey* is the theme of the wife who gives in to sexual temptation in the absence of her husband. The story of Clytemnestra's betrayal is the first to be introduced in the poem in a series of adulterous episodes that perpetuate this idea: while Agamemnon is away at Troy, his wife Clytemnestra has an affair with

---

<sup>65</sup> This scene is reminiscent of Nausicaa and Odysseus meeting by the shore where she had gone to do her laundry.

Aegisthus, who later murders Agamemnon at his homecoming (1.32-43).<sup>66</sup> In Nestor's version of the story (3.255-312), we hear that Agamemnon had left Clytemnestra under the protection of a faithful bard. Only when the bard is removed is Aegisthus able to seduce her. It is nevertheless a time-consuming feat for him; she could not be wooed easily because she "had good sense" (φρεσὶ γὰρ κέχρητ' ἀγαθῆσι) (3.266). In the end, however, she succumbs to the malice of the gods:

Ἄλλ' ὅτε δὴ μιν μοῖρα θεῶν ἐπέδησε δαμῆναι,  
δὴ τότε τὸν μὲν ἀοιδὸν ἄγων ἐς νῆσον ἐρήμην  
κάλλιπεν οἰωνοῖσιν ἔλωρ καὶ κύρμα γενέσθαι,  
τὴν δ' ἐθέλων ἐθέλουσαν ἀνήγαγεν ὄνδε δόμονδε.

But when divine providence bound her into submission,  
he took the singer to a deserted island and  
left him there to become prey and spoil to the birds,  
and he, who was willing, took her to his house, as she too was willing.  
(*Od.* 3.269-72)

That a bard was employed to be Clytemnestra's guardian hints at Agamemnon's awareness of his wife's vulnerability in his absence. Despite practising good sense under the custody of the bard, her will is susceptible to manipulation as soon as the bard's male authority is removed. The fickleness of Clytemnestra is one indication, among many in the *Odyssey*, that a wife cannot be trusted to maintain her chastity when the husband is not present.

In fact, Agamemnon uses the example of Clytemnestra to make a sweeping generalisation of all women when Odysseus encounters his soul in the first *nekylia*. At first, Odysseus is surprised to see Agamemnon in the underworld and questions him

---

<sup>66</sup> The story appears in fourteen other instances: 1.298-302, 3.193-8, 3.234-5, 3.255-312, 4.90-2, 4.512-37, 4.546-7, 11.387-9, 11.409-34, 11.452-3, 13.383-4, 24.19-22, 24.96-7, 24.199-200.

about the events of his death. In response, Agamemnon provides him with grisly details of his murder. Regarding Clytemnestra's collusion, he has the following to say:

... Ἡ δ' ἔξοχα λυγρὰ ἰδυῖα  
οἷ τε κατ' αἰσχρος ἔχευε καὶ ἐσσομένησιν ὀπίσσω  
θηλυτέρησι γυναιξί, καὶ ἢ κ' ἔυεργὸς ἔησιν.

She, versed in especially malevolent thoughts,  
poured shame on herself and on all women to come  
hereafter, even if she be upright.  
(*Od.* 11.432-4)

Agamemnon's scathing denunciation of his wife seeks to malign even virtuous women, just as Eumaeus attempts to do in his echo of line 11.434 at 15.422. A few lines later, Agamemnon again expresses his general mistrust of women when he instructs Odysseus to go to Ithaca in secret:

Ἄλλο δέ τοι ἐρέω, σὺ δ' ἐνὶ φρεσὶ βάλλεο σῆσι·  
κρύβδην, μηδ' ἀναφανδά, φίλην ἐς πατρίδα γαῖαν  
νῆα κατισχέμεναι· ἐπεὶ οὐκέτι πιστὰ γυναιξίν.

Another thing I will say to you, take it to heart:  
bring in your ship to your dear fatherland secretly,  
and not in plain sight: since no one faithful is left among womankind.  
(*Od.* 11.454-6)

Clytemnestra's betrayal of Agamemnon prompts him to deliver this warning to Odysseus, thereby once again associating chastity with the amount of trust a woman can command: no woman can be trusted (οὐκέτι πιστὰ γυναιξίν) anymore because no woman can be trusted to remain sexually pure. These verses establish infidelity as the norm among womankind, and especially among wives of heroes who have been away from home.

Along with the recurring motif of Clytemnestra's treachery, Helen provides another example of an unfaithful wife in the *Odyssey*. Her presence in the poem serves as

a constant reminder to the audience of the serious consequences that can follow from an adulterous act; she is identified as the cause of the war numerous times by other characters.<sup>67</sup> Although the story of her elopement is not given much prominence in the *Odyssey*, it is impossible to consider the characterisation of Helen in Homeric poetry without considering her illicit affair with Paris. As in Clytemnestra's case, Helen's adultery seemingly also takes place in the absence of her husband; Proclus' summary of the *Cypria* suggests that Paris seduces her while Menelaus is travelling to Crete.<sup>68</sup> The *Odyssey* depicts her in Sparta, living in supposed marital bliss with Menelaus again (4.120). She is even compared to the chaste Artemis when she first makes her entrance (4.122), distancing herself from the more seductive Aphrodite with whom she is traditionally associated. Nevertheless, Helen's sexual past is difficult to overlook against a setting where many are still going through experiences of loss in the aftermath of the Trojan war. Thus, even though the *Odyssey* never directly treats the story of Helen's betrayal of Menelaus, her adultery is still very much a part of the fabric of the poem.

As the most famous instance of adultery in epic poetry, Helen's story provides the *de facto* background to all other tales of infidelity in the *Odyssey*. Therefore, unsurprisingly, Helen is juxtaposed with Clytemnestra, when Odysseus learns of Agamemnon's fate in the underworld:

ὦ πόποι, ἦ μάλα δὴ γόνον Ἀτρέος εὐρύοπα Ζεὺς  
 ἐκπάγλως ἔχθαιρε γυναικείας διὰ βουλάς  
 ἐξ ἀρχῆς· Ἑλένης μὲν ἀπωλόμεθ' εἵνεκα πολλοί,  
 σοὶ δὲ Κλυταμνήστρη δόλον ἤρτυε τηλόθ' ἔοντι.

For shame! Surely far-sounding Zeus from the beginning

<sup>67</sup> By Odysseus 11.438; by Eumaeus 14.67-71; by Telemachus 17.118-9; by Athena 22.227-8.

<sup>68</sup> M. L. West, ed., *Greek Epic Fragments from the Seventh to the Fifth Centuries BC*, The Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 69.

cursed terribly the race of Atreus through womanly wiles;  
many of us died for the sake of Helen,  
and while you were gone, Clytemnestra devised for you a cunning plan.  
(*Od.* 11.436-9)

The sons of Atreus, Odysseus says, are unfortunate in their choice of wives; while Helen has been the cause for destructive war, her sister Clytemnestra has been instrumental in the murder of her husband who had returned alive from Troy. The two women are related not only by blood, but also in action; both pose a threat to their husbands through their extramarital relations. Although Helen continues to live with Menelaus in apparent peace, her previous act of infidelity allows Odysseus to group her with the same type of women who, like Clytemnestra, murder their husbands through deception.

Helen's duplicitous nature is also evident from the conflicting stories she and Menelaus tell Telemachus about Odysseus' exploits in Troy. In her story (4.245-64), Odysseus infiltrates Troy dressed as a beggar, but his disguise fails to deceive her, who alone recognises him. He has her swear a binding oath that she will not reveal his identity, after which he confides in her the secrets of the Greek army. According to Helen, she keeps her word and only divulges information regarding the raid once Odysseus has safely returned to the Greek camp. Before making his escape, he slaughters many a Trojan; she does not grieve their deaths, because by then she is remorseful and desires to return home to her husband and child. Menelaus' story (4.274-90), however, paints an altogether different image of Helen: when the Achaeans are hiding inside the wooden horse and waiting for their ambush, Helen comes out to inspect it. She, accompanied by Deiphobus, circles the wooden horse three times while calling out each Achaean hero by



name, attempting to get them to reveal their presence. The Achaeans are tempted to respond, but are prevented from doing so by Odysseus, who does not fall for the trick.

While Helen's story claims that her allegiance had long been to the Achaean cause in the war, Menelaus depicts her endeavouring to sabotage the Achaeans' ambush. As is obvious from Menelaus' story, even on the last night of the war she had shown her support for the Trojans.<sup>69</sup> Helen's account of herself shows her rejoicing at the death of the Trojans and missing her home, blaming Aphrodite for having led her away from her bed and husband (4.259-65). Menelaus' Helen, however, appears outside the horse along with her second Trojan lover. A deity (δαίμων) is blamed again for having led Helen astray (4.275). Nevertheless, it is difficult to ignore that her ambivalence nearly jeopardised the Achaeans' success and endangered the life of her husband.<sup>70</sup>

Wives, through their potential for sexual treachery, are thus presented as a threat to the security of their husbands, regardless of, or in spite of, the women's supposed strength of character. Helen and Clytemnestra function as paradigms of the stereotypically unfaithful wife of Homeric poetry, whose act of infidelity is either caused by a man's seduction or by divine interference, which are forces she cannot resist.<sup>71</sup> The wife's initial moral objections if any, stemming either from prudence or from remorse, can be overpowered, and her consent can be acquired. Thus Clytemnestra, although of good nature, caves under the decrees of providence (μοῖρα θεῶν) (3.269), while Helen is a victim of divine malice (4.275) despite her guilty conscience. The stereotype of the

---

<sup>69</sup> S. D. Olson, "The Stories of Helen and Menelaus (*Odyssey* 4.240-89) and the Return of Odysseus," *AJP* 110 (1989): 390.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> E. Cantarella, "Gender, Sexuality, and Law," in *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Greek Law*, eds. M. Gagarin and D. Cohen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 238.

unfaithful wife therefore hints at dangerous possibilities in Ithaca; the long-enduring Penelope faces a situation not unlike Clytemnestra's or Helen's. Her husband has been absent for twenty years, and she is beset by numerous suitors. Although Penelope's behaviour in Odysseus' absence will be found to be above criticism, she is certainly not above suspicion given the *Odyssey's* usual portrayal of women of her station.

Nestor's unusual remark on the universally-condemned Clytemnestra's good character (φρεσὶ γὰρ κέχρητ' ἀγαθῆσι, "[Clytemnestra] had good sense") (3.266) takes on new meaning if we consider Clytemnestra as a foil for Penelope; the comment can be seen as an allusion to Penelope's predicament.<sup>72</sup> Elsewhere Agamemnon describes Penelope using similar terms:<sup>73</sup>

Ὡς ἀγαθαὶ φρένες ἦσαν ἀμύμονι Πηνελοπείη...

What good sense the noble Penelope had...  
(*Od.* 24.194)

Despite Penelope's virtuous nature, Clytemnestra's example presents the possibility that Penelope too might eventually succumb to the constant pursuit of the suitors. As Clytemnestra had initially done, Penelope is resisting her suitors out of good sense. But as Clytemnestra gave in to temptation in the end, Nestor's remark suggests that Penelope too presents the same danger.

Agamemnon also reveals his mistrust of Penelope when he recommends that Odysseus should not divulge the details of his plan to her:

Τῷ νῦν μή ποτε καὶ σὺ γυναικί περ ἥπιος εἶναι·  
μή οἱ μῦθον ἅπαντα πιφασκέμεν, ὅν κ' εὖ εἰδῆς,  
ἀλλὰ τὸ μὲν φάσθαι, τὸ δὲ καὶ κεκρυμμένον εἶναι.

---

<sup>72</sup> S. D. Olson, "The Stories of Agamemnon in Homer's *Odyssey*." *TAPhA* 120 (1990): 66.

<sup>73</sup> M. A. Katz, *Penelope's Renown: Meaning and Indeterminacy in the Odyssey* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), 45.

Now therefore never be kindly to even your own wife,  
nor reveal to her the whole story, which you know well,  
but rather tell her some of it, and the rest of it must remain secret.  
(*Od.* 11.441-3)

He does not openly implicate her in plotting against her husband or in adultery; in fact, he acknowledges that Odysseus will never be murdered by his wife, who is wise and prudent by nature (περίφρων) (11.445-6). Even so, his praise of Penelope's moral character is interposed between his various condemnations of the entire female sex (11.432-4, 11.454-6). His reassurance that Odysseus need not fear treachery from his wife therefore rings hollow.

Odysseus does indeed follow Agamemnon's advice and returns home anonymously. His furtiveness would suggest that he finds Agamemnon's warnings compelling. When he first arrives in Ithaca, Athena informs him of the suitors' overbearance, and their boldness in giving gifts to Penelope (13.375-8). The goddess tells him expressly that Penelope has been faithful to him, and that she has been misleading the suitors to buy herself more time:

Ἡ δὲ σὸν αἰεὶ νόστον ὀδυρομένη κατὰ θυμὸν  
πάντας μὲν ἔλπει καὶ ὑπίσχεται ἀνδρὶ ἐκάστῳ,  
ἀγγελίας προῖεῖσα, νόος δέ οἱ ἄλλα μενοινᾷ.

And she, always bewailing your homecoming in her heart,  
keeps giving them hope and makes promises to each man,  
sending them messages, while in her mind intending something else.  
(*Od.* 13.379-81)

Despite Athena's confirmation of Penelope's constancy, Odysseus compares his situation to the plight of Clytemnestra's cuckolded husband; he replies that had it not been for the goddess' warning, he too would have met an end similar to Agamemnon's (13.383-4).

Odysseus recognises the genuine threat that his position as a long-absent husband poses to him, with its worst possible outcome manifest in the stories of Agamemnon's return. Although Penelope has been true to him, the *Odyssey's* various unfaithful wives give legitimacy to his secrecy and suspicions.

Penelope herself compares her own circumstances to Helen's at the crucial moment of her acceptance of Odysseus as her husband; she defends her earlier excessive cautiousness using the example of the Spartan queen. Out of fear that in his stead she would be accepting an impostor, she had hesitated to recognise Odysseus sooner:

Αἰεὶ γάρ μοι θυμὸς ἐνὶ στήθεσσι φίλοισιν  
ἐρρίγει μή τίς με βροτῶν ἀπάφοιτο ἔπεσσιν  
ἐλθῶν· πολλοὶ γὰρ κακὰ κέρδεα βουλεύουσιν.  
οὐδέ κεν Ἀργεῖη Ἑλένη, Διὸς ἐκγεγαυῖα,  
ἀνδρὶ παρ' ἄλλοδαπῷ ἐμίγη φιλότητι καὶ εὐνῇ,  
εἰ ἤδη ὁ μιν αὖτις ἀρήϊοι υἴες Ἀχαιῶν  
ἄξέμεναι οἰκόνδε φίλην ἐς πατρίδ' ἔμελλον.

Always the spirit inside my dear heart  
shuddered at the thought that one of the mortals would come and deceive  
me with words: for there are many who devise depraved tricks.  
Nor would have Argive Helen, born of Zeus,  
lain in love and had intercourse with a foreign man,  
if she had known that the braver sons of the Achaeans  
were going to bring her back home to her dear fatherland.  
(*Od.* 23.215-21)

At first, it is difficult to see how there can be any grounds for comparison between Helen and Penelope, one an infamous adulteress and the other a paragon of sexual fidelity.<sup>74</sup>

However, Penelope's curious claim that Helen would not have eloped with Paris had she known that she would be brought back to Sparta seems like an attempt at absolving Helen

---

<sup>74</sup> In fact, Aristarchus removes these lines. N. Felson-Rubin, *Regarding Penelope: From Character to Poetics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 158 n.62 provides the following explanation: "Penelope argues a fortiori... Her point seems to be, 'I almost committed a far less severe breach of faith than Helen actually did commit; if she is absolved from blame, should I not be absolved all the more?'"

of her guilt. Curiously, she blames a god for influencing Helen's decision, echoing Helen (4.261) and Menelaus (4.275):

Τὴν δ' ἦ τοι ῥέξαι θεὸς ὄρορεν ἔργον ἀεικές...

A god incited her to do the shameful deed...  
(*Od.* 23.222)

Penelope's interest lies in exonerating herself through the exoneration of Helen.<sup>75</sup>

Through her speech, she "emphasizes her own chastity through implicit contrast with another's adultery."<sup>76</sup> If she had taken another man to her bed, even under deception, she

too would have committed an ἔργον ἀεικές ("shameful deed") like Helen (23.222).<sup>77</sup>

However, Penelope realises that the disgrace of such an act cannot be mitigated even when divine intervention is its cause.<sup>78</sup> Although she withstood the wooing of the suitors,

by comparing herself to a notoriously unfaithful woman she allows the audience to see how dangerously close she too came to committing Helen's crime.<sup>79</sup> What Helen actually

did and what Penelope was about to do by accepting a false Odysseus would have

amounted to the same betrayal of their husbands. Penelope's caution, S. Murnaghan

writes, "stems from fear ... that she might not, after all, be distinguishable from Helen

and Clytemnestra."<sup>80</sup> Her speech thus reveals her awareness of her own potential for

sexual treachery, whether by deception or through the influence of a malevolent deity. At

---

<sup>75</sup> Felson-Rubin, *Regarding Penelope*, 40.

<sup>76</sup> H. C. Fredricksmeier, "Penelope Polutropos: The Crux at *Odyssey* 23.218-24," *AJP* 118 (1997): 489.

<sup>77</sup> K. Morgan, "Odyssey 23.218-24: Adultery, Shame, and Marriage," *AJP* 112 (1991): 3.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> Felson-Rubin, *Regarding Penelope*, 39-40.

<sup>80</sup> S. Murnaghan, *Disguise and Recognition in the Odyssey* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 142.

the same time, it normalises marital infidelity in situations such as hers, reinforcing the *Odyssey's* view of wives as powerless when faced with sexual temptation.

Anxiety regarding Penelope's loyalty is instigated by divinity as well; when Athena appears to Telemachus in his sleep (15.9-42), the goddess cautions him against delaying too much in Sparta. Eurymachus, she says, has offered Penelope the most gifts in a bid to persuade her to accept his offer of remarriage; if by chance Penelope consents to the match before Telemachus arrives, he risks losing his paternal inheritance. Athena then comments on the capricious nature of a woman's mind:

Οἴσθα γὰρ οἷος θυμὸς ἐνὶ στήθεσσι γυναικός·  
κείνου βούλεται οἶκον ὀφέλλειν ὅς κεν ὀπίη,  
παίδων δὲ προτέρων καὶ κουριδίῳ φίλοιῳ  
οὐκέτι μέμνηται τεθνηότος οὐδὲ μεταλλά.

You know what the heart of a woman is like in her breast:  
she wishes to grow the household of the man who marries her,  
while her previous children or dear husband  
she no longer remembers, nor does she ask after him when he is dead.  
(*Od.* 15.20-3)

Athena's depiction of women as fickle and impulsive creatures is in line with the view of women presented in the rest of the poem. The sentiment might seem uncharacteristic, coming from a goddess who has already confirmed Penelope's loyalty to Odysseus (13.379-81). However, the untrustworthiness of the majority of female characters in the *Odyssey* necessitates that even the most exemplary woman be subjected to scrutiny.

### **c. Immortal goddesses**

The *Odyssey's* widespread suspicion of female nature extends to goddesses as well. Tellingly, Odysseus' divine ally is the eternally virginal Athena who is associated

with traditionally masculine domains, such as warfare. Circe and Calypso, the goddesses who pose the greatest threat to the hero's *nostos*, however, are both sexually alluring. Here too, sexuality is coupled with a hint of treachery: Circe, for example, uses her sex appeal to lure men into her abode where she transforms them into swine. Odysseus is protected against her charms through the herb *moly* offered to him by Hermes (10.305), but nevertheless, before accepting her offer of sex, he must extract a promise of no harm from her, as per Hermes' instructions (10.342-45). Odysseus is unable to trust Calypso as well; despite spending seven years together in a quasi-conjugal relationship, when she offers to send him across the ocean, his first fear is that the goddess will work against him to ensure his death. She too must swear an unbreakable oath that she means no harm before he will trust her (5.173-9).

Aphrodite is the only other goddess who features prominently in the *Odyssey*. Although Odysseus does not have a personal encounter with her, she appears in Demodocus' second song which is performed in the presence of the hero. The song of Ares and Aphrodite casts the goddess of love in the mould of the stereotypically unfaithful wife; as in the stories of Helen and Clytemnestra, Demodocus' song too has the elements of an absent husband and an eager suitor. It is a familiar tale of marital infidelity: while Hephaestus is away from home, Ares seduces Aphrodite by showering her with gifts and the two consummate their love.

Hephaestus attacks the moral character of his wife while placing no blame with Ares; he describes Ares simply as handsome and sound-footed (καλός τε καὶ ἀρτίπους) (8.310) whereas Aphrodite, although beautiful (καλή), he calls a *kunōpis korē* (κυνῶπις

κόρη, “bitch-eyed<sup>81</sup> girl”) (8.319-20). *Kunōpis*, used figuratively, usually means “shameless,” and does not necessarily come with connotations of sexual misconduct.<sup>82</sup> Nevertheless, both Clytemnestra and Helen are also called *kunōpis* in the context of their betrayal of their husbands. The term is used most memorably by the poet for Helen: in the *teichoscopia* episode of the *Iliad*, Helen becomes the only Homeric character to slander herself when she refers to herself as *kunōpis* (*Il.* 3.180). Again in the *Odyssey*, Helen rebukes herself using the same term (*Od.* 4.145). Clytemnestra is described as *kunōpis* by Agamemnon when he recounts the role his wife played in his murder (11.424). Similar dog imagery is used to castigate Melantho, the servant girl who sleeps with Eurymachus (18.338, 19.91). Hephaestus’ insult of *kunōpis korē* thus places the goddess of love in the league of other sexually promiscuous female characters.

However, the outcome of Aphrodite’s adultery is novel; unlike in the other instances of marital infidelity, her cuckolded husband lays out a trap and captures the lovers in the act in order to humiliate them. This story has another element not seen in the previous adulterous episodes of the *Odyssey*; it introduces the concept of compensation in lieu of retribution for an act of adultery.

#### **d. Language of sexual misconduct: *moicheia* and *moichos***

While the *Iliad* takes place against the backdrop of a war stemming from an act of marital infidelity, the *Odyssey*, with its repeated imagery of the unfaithful wife and disloyal servants, is arguably far more concerned with sexual morality within a marriage

---

<sup>81</sup> R. Lattimore’s translation.

<sup>82</sup> For a more detailed discussion, see M. Graver, “Dog-Helen and Homeric Insult,” *CLAnt* 14 (1995): 41-61.



and without. Nevertheless, the poet is remarkably reticent in his language when it comes to acts of adultery. In lieu of specific terms to denote adultery or fidelity in a marriage, the poet instead uses euphemisms and symbols. A common approach to denoting adulterous behaviour is to reference the state of the marriage bed; one can either be shaming the marriage bed or honouring it.<sup>83</sup> Aphrodite is said to have shamed the marriage bed of Hephaestus (λέχος δ' ἥσχυνε καὶ εὐνήν/ Ἥφαιστοιο ἄνακτος) by accepting Ares as her lover (8.269-70). In contrast, when Telemachus, and later Penelope, discuss the two choices in front of her, respecting the bed of her husband (εὐνήν τ' αἰδομένη πόσιος) is presented as the alternative to marrying one of the suitors (16.75, 19.527). When Odysseus meets the shade of his mother in the first *nekya*, Anticleia implies Penelope's loyalty through the fact that she has remained at her husband's house with their son and has guarded his property (11.177-86). Elsewhere, Clytemnestra's betrayal of her husband is described as a "shameful deed" (ἔργον ἀεικέες) (3.265). Penelope later uses the same phrase to describe Helen's actions (23.222). The only instance in the *Odyssey* where adultery is explicitly on show is the song of Ares and Aphrodite. Here the lovers are displayed in an indisputably illicit embrace. As penalty, Hephaestus, the scorned husband, calls for the payment of *moichagria* from Ares.

*Moichagria*, which is a *hapax legomenon*, seems to be a fine imposed on one apprehended while committing an act of *moicheia*, generally translated as "adultery." However, the word *moicheia* or its compounds appear nowhere else in the Homeric corpus, despite the prominence of adultery as a topic in these poems. *Moichagria* itself is

---

<sup>83</sup> F. I. Zeitlin, "Figuring Fidelity in Homer's *Odyssey*," in *The Distaff Side: Representing the Female in Homer's Odyssey*, ed. Beth Cohen (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 125.

one of the earliest appearances of *moicheia* in any form. The scarcity of the word in Greek literature until much later adds to the difficulty of its interpretation in the context of Homeric poetry.

Later usage of the term is better documented; *moicheia* began to be used, in late fifth century, to refer to the actions of a *moichos*, a word that first made its appearance in a sixth century fragment by Hipponax.<sup>84</sup> In Lysias' speech *On the Murder of Eratosthenes*, he cites a law sanctioned by the court of the Areopagus which states that a man cannot be convicted of murder for avenging himself on a *moichos* (31).<sup>85</sup> Euphiletus, for whom the speech is composed, claims to have learnt of his wife's infidelity from his maid-servant (18-9), and then to have captured Eratosthenes *in flagrante* in the presence of several witnesses (23-4). Eratosthenes, the aforementioned *moichos*, attempts to persuade the cuckolded husband not to kill him in return for a sum of money (25), but his pleas are rejected. Euphiletus murders him, and that too, legally, according to his interpretation of the law. We do not know the outcome of the trial, and the very existence of the speech points at controversy surrounding the murder of Eratosthenes. In any case, this case presents *moicheia* as illicit sex with another man's woman, a crime which in classical Athens may well be punishable by death.

The law that Lysias' speech refers to is Solon's code of justifiable homicide quoted in Demosthenes' *Against Aristocrates*. It excuses the murder of a man found "ἐπι

---

<sup>84</sup> C. Patterson, *The Family in Greek History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 121. The fragment in question states: οὐ μοι δικάϊως μοιχὸς ἀλῶναι δοκεῖ/ Κριτίας ὁ Χίος... ("To me, it does not seem that Critias the Chian was justly apprehended as a *moichos*...") D. E. Gerber, ed., *Greek Iambic Poetry: From the Seventh to the Fifth Centuries BC*, The Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), fragment 30.

<sup>85</sup> Lysias, *Lysias*, ed. W. R. M. Lamb, The Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976).

δάμαρτι ἢ ἐπὶ μητρὶ ἢ ἐπ’ ἀδελφῇ ἢ ἐπὶ θυγατρὶ, ἢ ἐπὶ παλλακῇ... ” (53).<sup>86</sup> The use of the preposition *epi* is ambiguous, but this line is generally taken to mean “in sexual intercourse with one’s wife, mother, sister, daughter, or concubine.” Nowhere in this statute do the words *moicheia* or *moichos* appear. It is Lysias who associates Solon’s code of justifiable homicide with the actions of the *moichos*.<sup>87</sup> A man may kill with impunity another man whom, says Lysias citing the law, he has captured as a *moichos* of his wife (ἐπὶ δάμαρτι), or even of his concubines (ἐπὶ ταῖς παλλακαῖς) who are of a lesser status in society (31). Lysias employs similar formulation to Demosthenes’, using the preposition *epi*, but inserting the word *moichos* in his rhetoric.

The *moichos* is thus painted as a man who commits the crime of *moicheia* against another man, by slipping into his house stealthily and having sex with one of the women inside. The woman involved in the sexual act is merely presented as a passive object, whose consent or lack thereof is not taken into account by the law.<sup>88</sup> Since *moicheia* is an inherently masculine act, the female partner can be any woman in the household, not just the wedded wife of its patriarch.<sup>89</sup> Nevertheless, the punishment inflicted on such a woman in fifth century Athens was still substantial and humiliating; her husband was legally bound to divorce her, and the woman, like foreigners and prostitutes, was barred from offering public sacrifice.<sup>90</sup>

---

<sup>86</sup> Demosthenes, *Demosthenes against Meidias, Androtion, Aristocrates, Timocrates, Aristogeiton*, ed. J. H. Vince, Vol. III, The Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1964).

<sup>87</sup> Patterson, *The Family*, 117-9.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 117-24.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.

<sup>90</sup> S. Blundell, *Women in Ancient Greece* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 125.

But to what extent are the definitions of *moicheia* and *moichos* in classical Athens relevant to the study of sexual morality in Homeric poetry? Epics cannot confidently be said to reflect the realities of the Early Iron or Archaic ages, nor can they be used as a direct source for social history. However, given the prominent status of Homeric poetry in Greek life, it is possible to view them as a source for “history of cultural conceptions”: they are influential in expressing the ideologies and traditions of their audience.<sup>91</sup> From this perspective, one can detect the possible role of Homeric poetry in developing the meaning of *moicheia* in Athens; the laws of Athens represent the continuation of ideas that are codified in its foundational literature. The *Odyssey* portrays the song of Ares and Aphrodite as an archetypal episode of Athenian *moicheia*. As in the real-life court case of Euphiletus, Hephaestus captures Ares and Aphrodite *in flagrante* and produces a multitude of witnesses to strengthen his suit. The payment that Eratosthenes attempts to make is reminiscent of the fine that Ares incurs. While the poet never calls Ares a *moichos*, the *moichagria* reflects in its name the crime of the war-god. Hephaestus even demands that Aphrodite’s ἔεδνα (“bride-price”) be returned to him by Zeus (8.316-7), essentially threatening the goddess with divorce, a practice that becomes the norm in Athens for adulterous women. Although the poet never directly uses the word *moicheia* to denote any of the various breaches of sexual morality depicted in the *Odyssey*, the idea of it, as conceptualised in classical Athens, certainly exists in the poem.

---

<sup>91</sup> Franco, “Women in Homer,” 57.

**e. Discrepancy of punishment for *moicheia* between human and divine**

Hephaestus is a figure of mockery in the *Iliad*; there, the sight of him bustling about in his limping gait gives rise to unquenchable laughter (ἄσβεστος γέλως) among the gods (*Il.* 1.599). In the *Odyssey* too, Hephaestus struggles to be taken seriously. The sight of Aphrodite trapped in the embrace of Ares, who is cast as a *moichos*, elicits laughter among the gods. Apollo and Hermes even share a joke at Hephaestus' expense (*Od.* 8.333-42). When asked by Apollo whether he would be willing to trade places with the trapped Ares, Hermes' answer is resolutely affirmative; Hermes would be willing to sleep with Aphrodite even if Hephaestus' fetters were three times stronger, and even if both the gods *and* the goddesses looked on.<sup>92</sup> The gods burst out into laughter again at this response (8.343).

Although Hephaestus vows to never release the lovers until he has received satisfaction, the humiliating ordeal does not last very long for Ares and Aphrodite. Despite Poseidon agreeing to provide surety on behalf of Ares (8.355-6), the *moichagria* never materialises within the content of the song. Nothing is mentioned of the *eedna* either, and thus the state of his marriage remains uncertain. When the lovers are released, they go off to their beloved sanctuaries. Aphrodite takes shelter at Paphos, and her sexual allures and charms are renewed when the Graces bathe and anoint her (8.359-66). Ares' *moicheia* is thus resolved through laughter and an insubstantial promise of payment.

However, in the world of mortals, sexual crimes are punished much more severely than on Olympus. After Agamemnon's murder, Aegisthus rules Mycenae in his stead, and

---

<sup>92</sup> Only the gods came to look upon the trapped Ares and Hephaestus; the goddesses remained home: θηλύτεραι δὲ θεαὶ μένον αἰδοῖ οἴκοι ἐκάστη (“The female goddesses each remained home out of shame”) (8.324).

lords over his subjects (3.304-5). Nevertheless, as early as Book 1, it is established that Aegisthus deserves to be punished with death for his transgressions:

Ἦ πόποι, οἷον δὴ νῦ θεοὺς βροτοὶ αἰτιόωνται.  
ἐξ ἡμέων γάρ φασι κάκ' ἔμμεναι· οἱ δὲ καὶ αὐτοὶ  
σφῆσιν ἀτασθαλίησιν ὑπὲρ μόρον ἄλγε' ἔχουσιν,  
ὥς καὶ νῦν Αἴγισθος ὑπὲρ μόρον Ἀτρεΐδαο  
γῆμ' ἄλοχον μνηστήν, τὸν δ' ἔκτανε νοστήσαντα,  
εἰδὼς αἰπὺν ὄλεθρον· ἐπεὶ πρό οἱ εἶπομεν ἡμεῖς,  
Ἑρμείαν πέμψαντες, εὐσκοπον ἀργειφόντην,  
μήτ' αὐτὸν κτείνειν μήτε μνάσθαι ἄκοιτιν·  
ἐκ γὰρ Ὀρέστιαο τίσις ἔσσεται Ἀτρεΐδαο,  
ὀππότε' ἂν ἠβήσῃ καὶ ἦς ἰμείρεται αἴης.  
ὥς ἔφαθ' Ἑρμείας, ἀλλ' οὐ φρένας Αἰγίσθοιο  
πεῖθ' ἀγαθὰ φρονέων· νῦν δ' ἀθρόα πάντ' ἀπέτισε.

For shame, how the mortals hold us gods responsible now!  
For they say that troubles come from us, when they themselves  
through their own recklessness suffer beyond what it allotted to them,  
as now Aegisthus too, beyond what is allotted to him,  
has married the wedded wife of Atreus' son, and killed him on his return,  
knowing it was utter destruction, because already once we told him,  
sending Hermes, the watchful slayer of Argus,  
to not kill that man, nor to court his wife:  
for there will be vengeance for Atreus' son through Orestes,  
when he reaches adulthood, and longs for his homeland.  
Hermes said thus, intending good things, but did not persuade  
the mind of Aegisthus: now he has repaid all at once.  
(*Od.* 1.32-43)

It is some time before Orestes comes of age; Agamemnon and Clytemnestra are allowed to live without penalty for seven years. In the eighth year, Orestes returns and extracts revenge (3.306-7). Although Homer does not dwell on the matricide,<sup>93</sup> Orestes kills both Aegisthus and Clytemnestra as retribution, as is evident from the grave mounds raised (3.309-10).

---

<sup>93</sup> By avoiding mention of the matricide and concentrating on the murder of Aegisthus, the poet can present Orestes as an example for Telemachus to follow.

Helen's infidelity also brings devastating consequences; the most serious ramifications of her extramarital affair with Paris are the Trojan war and its enormous human cost. The duel between Menelaus and Paris in the *Iliad* (3.328-382) acknowledges Helen's adultery as the cause of the war, as Menelaus attempts to directly avenge the insult to his marriage against its original perpetrator. The *Odyssey* reenacts a similar fight between Menelaus and Helen's paramour in Demodocus' third song; this time, it is Deiphobus instead of Paris. Later tradition depicts the son of Priam horribly mutilated as a result of the fierce battle that takes place on the last night of the war (*Aen.* 6.494-7).<sup>94</sup>

Even Eumaeus' nurse, whose appetite for sex corrupts her moral character, faces divine judgement when Artemis strikes her dead (*Od.* 15.477-9). All instances of sexual disloyalty thus lead to violence in the *Odyssey*, unless the setting is Olympus. While the poem's general mistrust of female nature prepares the audience for the possibility of *moicheia* in Ithaca, the tales of violent retribution for sexual misdeeds hint at further bloodshed.

---

<sup>94</sup> Virgil, *P Vergili Maronis Opera*, ed. R. A. B. Mynors, Oxford Classical Texts (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969).

## CHAPTER 4. JUSTIFYING THE *MNĒSTĒROPHONIA*

There is a marked growth in the maturity of Odysseus' character over time if events of the *Odyssey* are examined chronologically according to the poem's internal timeline. In the Cyclops episode (*Od.* 9.170-555), Odysseus needlessly endangers his own life and the life of his crew when he reveals his name in an untimely manner. In contrast, the Odysseus we meet in Scheria, as has been discussed in Chapter 2, does not identify himself until a favourable atmosphere has been created by Demodocus' songs. After a long absence fraught with numerous tribulations and adventures, Odysseus finally finds himself back in Ithaca in Book 13. Here too, he initially displays wise caution; he withholds information regarding his true identity from all but a few, and enters the palace wearing a disguise. He is also better at anger management, and suppresses his warrior spirit although provoked on several occasions.<sup>95</sup> Compared to the Odysseus in the *apologoi*, not only is this version of the hero older in age, but he also appears to be more discreet, more deceptive, and more watchful. Odysseus seems to be an embodiment of *mētis* in these segments.

This image of the character is thoroughly challenged in the *mnēstēroponia* sequence in Book 22. Cedric H. Whitman describes the scene as “an orgy of blood vengeance”;<sup>96</sup> not a single suitor of Penelope is shown mercy. When Eurymachus offers compensation in exchange for the suitors' lives, Odysseus promptly refuses (22.54-67). Even the moderate Amphinomus, who had earlier vetoed the plan to murder Telemachus

---

<sup>95</sup> Odysseus checks his temper when Antinous hurls a stool at him 17.465 and when Melanthius insults him 17.233-8, 20.184.

<sup>96</sup> Cedric H. Whitman, *Homer and the Heroic Tradition* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958), 306.



and even offered food to the disguised Odysseus (16.400-5, 18.118-21), is killed by Telemachus as the doomed man makes a dash for the doors (22.89-93). Another suitor, Leodes, makes a failed supplication while Odysseus kills him mid-speech (22.310-29). Only two individuals present in the hall are spared their lives: Phemius the bard and Medon the herald. The indiscriminate slaughter of the suitors displays Odysseus' use of *biā* against his enemies; the excessive nature of the vengeance in the *mnēstērophonia* episode, like the violence in Demodocus' Trojan songs, once again asserts Odysseus' identity as a hero who combines *mētis* with *biā*.

Odysseus' vengeance extends even to the servants who were partial to the suitors: the serving maids who had sexual relationships with the suitors are executed by Telemachus by Odysseus' command, but not before they are made to carry out all the dead bodies and clean the gore in the hall (22.446-72). Melanthius the disloyal goatherd has his body mutilated, and his private parts fed to the dogs (22.473-6). Thus, at first glance, Odysseus' solution to the suitor problem might seem uncharacteristically and disproportionately harsh. The violence of the *mnēstērophonia* leads Hartmut Erbse to ask: "läuft Odysseus nicht Gefahr, ein Unrecht zu begehen?"<sup>97</sup> Indeed, what can justify such excessive violence?

#### **a. The *mnēstērophonia* and the song of Ares and Aphrodite**

One approach to understanding the violence of Odysseus in Ithaca has been through its relationship with Demodocus' song of Ares and Aphrodite. Parallels have

---

<sup>97</sup> Hartmut Erbse, *Beiträge zum Verständnis der Odyssee* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1972), 113.

long been observed between the song and Odysseus' vengeance on the suitors. Athenaeus was the earliest author to connect the two together. When he writes that the song suggests the *mnēstērophonia* to Odysseus (εις τὴν μνηστηροφονίαν ὑποθηκῶν ὑποτιθεμένων τῷ Ὀδυσσεῖ), Athenaeus particularly has in mind how Hephaestus, despite being lame-footed, overpowers the strongest god (*Deip.* 5.192). The underlying implication of Athenaeus' comment is that Odysseus, who is significantly at a disadvantage against the numerous suitors, should be equated with Hephaestus.

Although Rose rejects the view that Demodocus' song functions as an explicit hint to Odysseus to slaughter the suitors, he still notices a relationship between the song and the *mnēstērophonia*. He points out that Teiresias and Athena can more directly inform Odysseus that he must kill the suitors once he arrives home (11.119-20, 13.373-6, 394-6),<sup>98</sup> eliminating the need for oblique hints. Nevertheless, Rose sees seventeen motifs that the song of Ares and Aphrodite has in common with the Ithacan situation.<sup>99</sup> He finds similarities between the offenses committed in the two episodes, and also between the characteristics of the two protagonists and their methods of revenge.<sup>100</sup> Using some of the seventeen motifs,<sup>101</sup> Rose sees parallels between Hephaestus and Odysseus in Ithaca, and also between Ares and the suitors.

However, in Ithaca, Odysseus never finds himself in Hephaestus' position; Penelope, unlike Aphrodite, is faithful to her husband. Also, Rose's comparison between Hephaestus's capture of Ares and Odysseus' revenge on the suitors is primarily based on

---

<sup>98</sup> Rose, "Recurrent Motifs," 20.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>101</sup> These are: foolishness or mental blindness of the antagonist, physical weakness and cleverness of the protagonist, and the protagonist's reliance on *dolos* for revenge.

the protagonists' reliance on cleverness and *dolos*, and perceived physical weakness.<sup>102</sup>

As we have seen in Chapter 2, creating unambiguous parallels between Odysseus and Hephaestus using these common traits is problematic. These parallels could not be

sustained in the Phaeacian episode; the Ithacan episode likewise cannot sustain them.

Even after taking into consideration the divine assistance of Athena and the help of a few allies, the slaughter of one hundred and eight suitors is a display of exceptional valour for Odysseus. He kills each and every suitor of his wife, despite their suit never having been successful. The use of his *dolos* is no doubt an important part of Odysseus' strategy against the suitors. Nevertheless, the carnage caused by him in Book 22 cannot be overlooked; the *mnēstērophonia* episode aligns Odysseus more with Ares than with Hephaestus.

#### **b. The suitors as *moichoi***

M. J. Alden offers a different solution to the problem of the *mnēstērophonia*: the song of Ares and Aphrodite, she suggests, provides hints “of the reason for and justification of [the suitors’] fate” by encouraging the audience to think about *moicheia*.<sup>103</sup> By producing an explicit scene of *moicheia* in the song of Ares and Aphrodite where the *moichos* secretly enters the house of Hephaestus and threatens his marriage, the poet puts it in the mind of the audience to identify the Ithacan suitors as *moichoi*, since they too are unwelcome intruders in Odysseus' house where they court his wedded wife. Although the suitors and Penelope do not share a sexual relationship, the

---

<sup>102</sup> Rose, “Recurrent Motifs,” 8-9.

<sup>103</sup> Alden, “Resonances,” 516.

broad and yet ambiguous parameters of *moicheia* still allow for the suitors' offences to be constituted as a sexual crime. Even simply because of their unauthorised presence in the house, they can be seen as posing a threat to the chastity of the women within.<sup>104</sup>

Although Penelope is blameless, there is, however, sexual misconduct in Odysseus' household; twelve of his maidservants leave the house at night to share the beds of the suitors. While Odysseus does not have sex with his serving maids, men of his station often do have sexual relations with their female slaves, which is not considered a violation of social norms. For example, Laertes' abstinence with Eurycleia is treated as an exceptional case.<sup>105</sup> In a sense, it is the master who exercises control over the sexuality of the female slaves. The twelve serving maids who sleep with the suitors are treacherous precisely because they exert control over their own sexualities. While their sexual misconduct cannot directly dishonour Odysseus the way a blemish on Penelope's reputation can, their free control over their own sexuality removes Odysseus' prerogative while bestowing it on Odysseus' rivals. Their offence thus resembles what would occur if Penelope were to marry one of her suitors while Odysseus was still alive.<sup>106</sup> Belligerency surrounding sexual rights over a female slave is not unheard of in Homeric poetry, after all; two influential men contend for their honour over ownership of Briseis in the *Iliad*.

As has been discussed in Chapter 3,<sup>107</sup> the definition of *moicheia* may encompass illicit sex not only with another man's wife, but with any woman who comes under that man's guardianship. *Moicheia* is an act perpetrated by a man against another man,<sup>108</sup> and

---

<sup>104</sup> Alden, "Resonances," 516.

<sup>105</sup> Thalmann, "Female Slaves in the Odyssey," 29.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>107</sup> See pages 42-5.

<sup>108</sup> Patterson, *The Family*, 124-5.

thus the female accomplice of the *moichos* need not necessarily be the mistress of the house. In Ithaca, the suitors' sexual activity with the maidservants can still be considered an affront to Odysseus' authority, for which punishment can be meted out with full force. W. G. Thalmann calls the suitors' liaison with the maids an instance of "sexual appropriation," which can be seen as an act of infringement on Odysseus' property.<sup>109</sup> Since the house and household too can be viewed as victims in an act of *moicheia*,<sup>110</sup> the suitors' violation of the modesty of the maids, who are *de facto* properties of Odysseus, further cements his right to punish them as *moichoi*.

Of particular interest is the serving maid Melantho. She is the female counterpart, or perhaps a sister, of the disloyal goatherd Melanthius. Of the twelve unfaithful maidservants, she is the only one who is named and the only one who speaks in the poem. Her abusive remarks towards the disguised Odysseus (18.327-36, 19.65) "[displace] the question of sexual misconduct from Penelope onto her faithless serving-woman and thus [function] to absolve Penelope from the suspicion of wrongdoing."<sup>111</sup> Melantho, as the poet informs us, was raised by Penelope who treated her like a daughter (18.322-3). Her lack of sympathy for Penelope (18.324) is thus all the more shocking. Melantho further defies Penelope by taking as her lover Eurymachus, the suitor who earlier has been identified by Athena as Penelope's favourite (15.16-8). In this way, Melantho serves as a surrogate for Penelope, and commits the crime of accepting sexually the husband's primary rival.

---

<sup>109</sup> W. G. Thalmann, "Female Slaves in the Odyssey," in *Women and Slaves in Greco-Roman Culture: Differential Equations*, eds. S. Murnaghan and S. R. Joshel (London: Routledge, 1998), 30.

<sup>110</sup> Patterson, *The Family*, 124.

<sup>111</sup> Katz, *Penelope's Renown*, 132.

The suitors are thus guilty of Ares' crime, but Alden suggests that Hephaestus functions as an "exemplum negativum" for Odysseus.<sup>112</sup> Eurymachus attempts to offer compensation to Odysseus so that the hero would spare their lives at the *mnēstērophonia*; each man would offer Odysseus, Eurymachus says, a hefty amount in gold and bronze in the equivalent sum of twenty oxen (22.55-9). Unlike Hephaestus, Odysseus strictly refuses to come to a compromise and entertain the idea of monetary compensation in lieu of retribution. All of Eurymachus' father's possessions and even more, says Odysseus, will not be enough to sway him from his determination to enact vengeance on the suitors for their transgressions (22.60-4). Hephaestus' readiness to accept a payment of *moichagria*, Alden argues, incurs the mockery of the other gods; his preoccupation with financial issues, at a time for more serious concerns, gives rise to hilarity. Odysseus must therefore reject compensation in order to avoid the risk of being made ridiculous, and dole out the most severe form of punishment.<sup>113</sup>

However, Alden overlooks the fact that one need not rely solely on the nature of Hephaestus' disgrace in order to justify the slaughter of the suitors. There is no indication that the compensation offered by Eurymachus is to be taken as *moichagria*; instead, the payment is meant to cover the cost incurred by the suitors for all they have drunk and eaten in the halls (ὄσσα τοι ἐκπέποται καὶ ἐδήδοται ἐν μεγάροισι) (22.56). The suitors can also be identified as *moichoi* through the various iterations of the story of Agamemnon's murder or through the stories of Helen's elopement; these stories, having taken place in Odysseus' world, are much more relevant and realistic examples of *moicheia* on which

---

<sup>112</sup> Alden, "Resonances," 529.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 528-9.

the audience can build their expectations for the situation in Ithaca. The song of Ares and Aphrodite, which is set on Olympus, does not have any direct consequences in the realm of mortals; its distinct lack of violence and seriousness in dealing with marital infidelity rules it out as a suitable paradigm for Odysseus' vengeance on the suitors.

### c. Internal justifications for the *mnēstērophonia*

Independent of the Ares and Aphrodite episode, the *mnēstērophonia* is thoroughly justified within the poem. After all, the suitors have been plundering the resources of Odysseus' household in his absence and courting his wife for quite some time.<sup>114</sup>

Antinous, by far the most egregious of the suitors, even leads a campaign to murder Telemachus once he returns from his Peloponnesian tour (16.355-86). The suitors are also in severe violation of the law of hospitality, upheld by Zeus himself. Not only are they unwelcome guests, but they are also bad hosts; they feast on Odysseus' food and wine while they ignore strangers at the gate and mistreat beggars (1.118-20, 17.365-79).

That the suitors deserve punishment for their recklessness would also seem to be confirmed by the divine assembly in Book 1 (1.32-43). The fate of Aegisthus is presented as paradigmatic for the suitors who, like Aegisthus, ignore the various warnings they receive over the course of the poem.<sup>115</sup> When Athena, disguised as Mentès, appears to Telemachus in Book 1, she uses the example of Orestes' vengeance to encourage him to kill the suitors:

Ἦ οὐκ αἰεὶς οἶον κλέος ἔλλαβε δῖος Ὀρέστης  
πάντας ἐπ' ἀνθρώπους, ἐπεὶ ἔκτανε πατροφονῆα,

<sup>114</sup> The suitors have been exerting pressure on Penelope to remarry starting from the sixteenth year of Odysseus' departure. Alden, "Resonances," 521.

<sup>115</sup> From Telemachus 1.372-80; 2.138-45; from Halitherses 2.161-76; from Theoclymenus 20.350-7.

Αἴγισθον δολόμητιν, ὃ οἱ πατέρα κλυτὸν ἔκτα;  
καὶ σύ, φίλος, μάλα γάρ σ' ὀρόω καλὸν τε μέγαν τε,  
ἄλκιμος ἔσσι', ἵνα τίς σε καὶ ὀψιγόνων ἐν εἴπῃ.

Or have you not heard what great fame god-like Orestes seized for himself among all men, when he killed his father's murderer, the treacherous Aegisthus, who killed his famous father? You too, my friend, for I see that you are handsome and big, be brave, so that someone younger may speak well of you. (*Od.* 1.298-302)

The goddess' reference to the death of Aegisthus suggests that Penelope's suitors too are just as guilty as him, and thus they too deserve death as punishment for their transgressions.<sup>116</sup>

It is made explicitly clear on several occasions throughout the *Odyssey* that the suitors will pay for their offences with blood. Menelaus seems to know that when Odysseus returns, he will kill the suitors (4.335-46). Tiresias too predicts their doom (11.118-20). When Athena encounters Odysseus in Eumaeus' hut, she signals that the plight of the suitors will end in death, and that she herself will be present at the killing (16.167-71). Following encouragement from Athena, Odysseus and Telemachus plan how the suitors should die (16.233-9). When Telemachus expresses his doubt concerning the likelihood of their plan being successful, Odysseus tells him that the two of them will have divine support; Athena and even Zeus will aid them in slaying the suitors (16.258.62). Lastly, Theoclymenus gives a lengthy prophecy regarding the fate of the suitors as well (20.350-72).

The poet goes out of his way to provide even further justification for the *mnēstērophonia* after the resolution to slaughter the suitors has already been made. From

---

<sup>116</sup> Alden, "Resonances," 519.



Book 17 onwards leading to the massacre in Book 22, the suitors are divinely instigated to commit greater and greater offences against Odysseus. The poet makes a rare judgement on the character of the suitors before the bow contest begins;<sup>117</sup> he condones the murder of the suitors, because *πρότεροι γὰρ ἀεικέα μηχανόωντο* (“they started it”) (20.394). Suitors Antinous, Eurymachus, and Ctesippus are goaded by Athena into physically abusing the disguised Odysseus (17.460-5, 18.394-8, 20.299-300). Athena also stirs Odysseus to beg from the suitors and thereby judge their characters individually, even when she has no intention of sparing any of them (17.362-4). The suitors are deliberately provoked by the goddess to misbehave, so that

... Ἔτι μᾶλλον  
δύη ἄχος κραδίην Λαερτιάδεω Ὀδυσῆος.

... Still more  
misery would plunge into Odysseus’ heart.  
(*Od.* 18.348-9)<sup>118</sup>

Moreover, when Odysseus, in an attempt to save Amphinomus from the massacre, warns him to leave the hall, Athena makes sure that the suitor is unable to leave and escape his doom (18.154-6).

As is evident from these examples, the slaughter of the suitors is well-justified internally in the *Odyssey*. Thus, there is no need to resort to the circumstances depicted in the song of Ares and Aphrodite in order to make sense of Odysseus’ violence. In fact, before he launches his assault against the suitors, Odysseus cites his reasons for killing them: these are of wasting his resources, forcefully sleeping with the serving maids, and

---

<sup>117</sup> Homer, *Odyssey: Books XIX and XX*, ed. R. B. Rutherford (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 237.

<sup>118</sup> Another variation is presented at 20.285-86.

wooing his wife while he is still alive (22.36-8). These are all offences against the household and the family unit. As the crimes of Aegisthus and Paris lead to bloodshed in the realm of mortals, it seems fitting that the anxiety built up through the stories of various unfaithful women would come to a climax in the violent *mnēstērophonia* episode in Ithaca. The only lives spared from the slaughter in the hall are that of the bard and the herald. Phemius and Medon, presumably, may propagate the story of Odysseus' bravery and martial prowess against the suitors, which would in essence be a very different composition from Demodocus' song of Ares and Aphrodite. Hephaestus, who is happy to accept compensation for the slight to his marriage, could not have prefigured the brutal vengeance of Odysseus in Ithaca.

## CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION

Both in the Phaeacian episode and against the suitors in Ithaca, Odysseus' tactics reveal a sound rejection of Iliadic heroism which relies on sheer force for its excellence; in contrast, Odysseus' crowning glory is his *mētis*. However, the supremacy of Odysseus' *mētis* is achieved, in every instance, through an act of *biā*. In Troy, the deception of the horse allows him to shine as a powerful warrior. In Ithaca, he slaughters the suitors neither wholly by guile nor entirely by unconcealed violence. Rather, his vengeance combines his *mētis* with his *biā*, repeating his success in the siege of Troy; while he ensnares the suitors using *dolos*, he completes the task with unbridled force. Elsewhere in the poem, his encounter with Polyphemus also ends in blood and gore as he blinds the Cyclops in his only eye. This episode, as mentioned already, is used to establish his association with *mētis*,<sup>119</sup> and yet, the Cyclops' neighbours seem to recognise the brute force involved in the act:

Εἰ μὲν δὴ μή τις σε βιάζεται οἶον ἔοντα...

If you are indeed alone and no one is forcing you...  
(*Od.* 9.410)

Their choice of verb (βιάζεται) contrasts with the earlier claim of Polyphemus, that Odysseus (as Nobody) had overcome him through guile and not violence (δόλω οὐδὲ βίηφι) (9.408).

What sets Odysseus apart from other Homeric heroes, then, is his successful use of intellect in conjunction with force. The dominant view in scholarship thus sees him as

---

<sup>119</sup> See pages 9-10.

a Hephaestus figure, as the god too relies on intellect to overcome his adversaries.

However, while Odysseus' inventions enhance his martial triumph, Hephaestus' *technai* elicit laughter from the gods:

Ἄσβεστος δ' ἄρ' ἐνῶρτο γέλως μακάρεσσι θεοῖσι  
τέχνας εἰσορόωσι πολύφρονος Ἥφαιστοιο.

Unquenchable laughter arose among the blessed gods  
seeing the crafts of ingenious Hephaestus.  
(*Od.* 8.326-7)

In the commentary of the gods, that *κιχάνει τοι βραδὺς ὠκύν* (“the slow overtakes the swift”) (8.329), there is something of a comical incredulity. Hephaestus' triumph inspires jokes (8.333-42) instead of accolades. Moreover, the lovers that Hephaestus intends to humiliate, and thus displays tied up in bed together, ironically add to his own indignity. Rose observes that “... [for] the cuckold to display proudly his own disgrace, however understandable, is surely the height of ineptitude and ludicrousness.”<sup>120</sup> The association of Odysseus with Hephaestus, based on the smith-god's triumph of *mētis* over Ares, is thus misguided; Hephaestus' victory is not the “Sieg der τέχνη” that Burkert sees it as.<sup>121</sup> His unbreakable and insoluble chains (*δεσμός ἄρρηκτος ἄλυτος*) (8.274-5) are slipped off easily after some minor negotiations; the lovers simply leave their humiliation behind, ready to re-offend. The god's sole reliance on *mētis* fails to create long-term harmony in his marriage.

Odysseus, however, must re-establish his marriage with Penelope in order to secure his *nostos*, and thus his heroic *kleos*. In his world, women from different levels of society all have in common their potential for treachery, sexual or otherwise. Even

---

<sup>120</sup> Rose, “Recurrent Motifs,” 109.

<sup>121</sup> Burkert, “Das Lied,” 142.

goddesses cannot necessarily be trusted; Aphrodite will cheat on her husband without hesitation, Circe might turn Odysseus into swine, and Calypso might drown him at sea while promising a safe return home. Home is not safe either; a wife might turn against her husband in preference for her lover, while female slaves might betray their master by selling his child into slavery. Against this catalogue of untrustworthy women, Penelope's loyalty to Odysseus becomes all the more extraordinary.

While the idea exists of a harmonious marriage between well-matched husband and wife,<sup>122</sup> it is so rare in the *Odyssey* that even the most virtuous woman must be subjected to suspicion. Thus Odysseus does not confide in Penelope the details of his ambush on the suitors; she is also the last person in the household to learn of his true identity. He understands the perils of placing too much faith in one's wife; as he learns in the underworld, Agamemnon's *nostos* is jeopardised due to his foolishness in trusting his wife out of hand. Odysseus therefore has no choice but to take implications of *moicheia* extremely seriously in his household. As he has already demonstrated through Helen's retrieval in the Trojan songs of Demodocus, those who commit sexual offences meet a bloody end. The offenders in Ithaca should therefore expect a retribution no less violent. In the realm of mortals, *moicheia* is no laughing matter.

Odysseus' approach to *moichoi* in his household in this way highlights the dissonance between human suffering and divine nonchalance. The offence that creates mirth and comical discomfort in the divine realm is serious enough to cause a bloodbath in the world of mortals. Hephaestus and his revenge can therefore never provide a true

---

<sup>122</sup> Demonstrated in the union of Odysseus and Penelope, and Alcinous and Arete.

paradigm for Odysseus to follow in his pursuit of vengeance in Ithaca, despite both characters' association with *mētis*.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Texts & Translations of Homer:

- Homer. *Die Homerische Odyssee*. Edited by A. Kirchhoff. Berlin, 1879.
- . *Homeri Opera: Iliadis Libros*. Edited by D. B. Monro and T. W. Allen. Vol. I & II. Oxford Classical Texts. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1902.
- . *Homeri Opera: Odysseae Libros*. Edited by T. W. Allen. Vol. III & IV. Oxford Classical Texts. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1908.
- . *Odyssey: Books VI-VIII*. Edited by A. F. Garvie. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- . *Odyssey: Books XIX and XX*. Edited by R. B. Rutherford. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.
- . *The Iliad of Homer*. Translated by R. Lattimore. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951.
- . *The Odyssey of Homer*. Translated by R. Lattimore. New York: Harper & Row, 1967.
- . *The Odyssey*. Edited by W. B. Stanford. Vol. I. London: Macmillan, 1947.

### Other Ancient Sources:

- Athenaeus. *The Deipnosophists: In Seven Volumes*. Edited by C. B. Gulick. Vol. II. The Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967.
- Demosthenes. *Demosthenes against Meidias, Androtion, Aristocrates, Timocrates, Aristogeiton*. Edited by J. H. Vince. Vol. III. The Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1964.
- Diels, H., and W. Kranz. *Die Fragmente Der Vorsokratiker, Griechisch und Deutsch*. Vol. I. Berlin: Weidmann, 1951.
- Dindorf, W. *Scholia Graeca in Homeri Odysseam: Ex Codicibus Aucta Et Emendata*. Vol. I & II. Oxford: Academic Press, 1855.

- Dübner, F. *Scholia Graeca in Aristophanem: Cum Prolegomenis Grammaticorum*. Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1969.
- Gerber, D. E., ed. *Greek Iambic Poetry: From the Seventh to the Fifth Centuries BC*. The Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999.
- Lysias. *Lysias*. Edited by W. R. M. Lamb. The Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976.
- Plato. *Platonis Opera*. Edited by J. Burnet. Vol. IV. Oxford Classical Texts. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962.
- Virgil. *P Vergili Maronis Opera*. Edited by R. A. B. Mynors. Oxford Classical Texts. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969.
- West, M. L., ed. *Greek Epic Fragments from the Seventh to the Fifth Centuries BC*. The Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003.

### **Secondary Sources:**

- Alden, M. J. "The Resonances of the Song of Ares and Aphrodite." *Mnemosyne* 50 (1997): 513-29.
- Andersen, Ø. "Odysseus and the Wooden Horse." *Symb Oslo* 52 (1977): 5-18. Web.
- Apthorp, M. J. *The Manuscript Evidence for Interpolation in Homer*. Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1980.
- Bérard, V. *Introduction à l'Odysée*. Vol. II. Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1924.
- Blass, F. *Die Interpolationen in Der Odyssee*. Halle: Niemeyer, 1904.
- Bliss, F. R. "Homer and the Critics: The Structural Unity of "Odyssey" Eight." *The Bucknell Review* 16 (1968): 53-73.
- Blundell, S. *Women in Ancient Greece*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995.
- Bolling, G. M. *The External Evidence for Interpolation in Homer*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925.
- Bowra, C. M. *Heroic Poetry*. London: Macmillan, 1952.



- Braswell, B. K. "The Song of Ares and Aphrodite: Theme and Relevance to *Odyssey* 8." *Hermes* 110 (1982): 129-37.
- Broeniman, C. "Demodocus, Odysseus, and the Trojan War in "Odyssey" 8." *CW* 90 (1996): 3-13.
- Burkert, W. "Das Lied von Ares und Aphrodite: Zum Verhältnis von Odyssee und Ilias." *RhM* 103 (1960): 130-44.
- Campbell, J. M. "Homer and Chastity." *PQ* 28 (1949): 333-59.
- Cantarella, E. "Gender, Sexuality, and Law." In *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Greek Law*, edited by M. Gagarin and D. Cohen, 236-53. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- Clarke, H. W. *The Art of the Odyssey*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1967.
- Clay, J. S. *The Wrath of Athena: Gods and Men in the Odyssey*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983.
- Dunkle, R. "Nestor, Odysseus, and the MÊTIS: BIÊ Antithesis: The Funeral Games, Iliad 23." *CW* 81 (1987): 1-17.
- Erbse, H. *Beiträge zum Verständnis der Odyssee*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 1972.
- Felson-Rubin, N. *Regarding Penelope: From Character to Poetics*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994.
- Finkelberg, M. "The First Song of Demodocus." *Mnemosyne* 40 (1987): 128-32.
- Finsler, G. *Homer*. Vol. II. Leipzig: Teubner, 1908.
- Franco, C. "Women in Homer." In *A Companion to Women in the Ancient World*, edited by S. L. James and S. Dillon, 54-65. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012.
- Fredricksmeier, H. C. "Penelope Polutropos: The Crux at *Odyssey* 23.218-24." *AJP* 118 (1997): 487-97.
- Friedländer, P. "Lachende Götter." *Die Antike* 10 (1934): 209-26.
- Friedrich, R. "Odysseus and Achilleus in the "Iliad": Hidden Hermeneutic Horror in Readings of the "Presbeia."" *Hermes* 139 (2011): 271-90.
- Gladstone, W. E. *Studies on Homer and the Homeric Age*. Vol. II. Oxford: University Press, 1858.

- Graver, M. "Dog-Helen and Homeric Insult." *ClAnt* 14 (1995): 41-61.
- Harrison, E. L. "Odysseus and Demodocus: Homer, *Odyssey* 9 492f." *Hermes* 99 (1971): 378-79.
- Katz, M. A. *Penelope's Renown: Meaning and Indeterminacy in the Odyssey*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991.
- Morgan, K. "Odyssey 23.218-24: Adultery, Shame, and Marriage." *AJP* 112 (1991): 1-3.
- Murnaghan, S. *Disguise and Recognition in the Odyssey*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987.
- Nagy, G. *The Best of the Achaeans: Concepts of the Hero in Archaic Greek Poetry*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979.
- Newton, R. M. "Odysseus and Hephaestus in the "Odyssey."" *CJ* 83 (1987): 12-20.
- Olson, S. D. "'Odyssey' 8: Guile, Force and the Subversive Poetics of Desire." *Arethusa* 22 (1989): 135-45.
- . "The Stories of Helen and Menelaus (*Odyssey* 4.240-89) and the Return of Odysseus." *AJP* 110 (1989): 387-94.
- . "The Stories of Agamemnon in Homer's *Odyssey*." *TAPhA* 120 (1990): 57-71.
- Patterson, C. *The Family in Greek History*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998.
- Podlecki, A. J. "Guest-Gifts and Nobodies in "Odyssey 9"" *Phoenix* 15 (1961): 125-33.
- Rose, G. P. "The Song of Ares and Aphrodite: Recurrent Motifs in Homer's *Odyssey*." PhD diss., Berkeley: University of California, 1969.
- . "The Unfriendly Phaeacians." *TAPhA* 100 (1969): 387-406.
- Rüter, K. *Odysseeinterpretationen: Untersuchungen zum Ersten Buch und zur Phaiakis*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1969.
- Scodel, R. "Bardic Performance and Oral Tradition in Homer." *AJP* 119 (1998): 171-94.
- Segal, C. P. "The Phaeacians and the Symbolism of Odysseus' Return." *Arion* 1 (1962): 17-64.

- Thalman, W. G. "Female Slaves in the Odyssey." In *Women and Slaves in Greco-Roman Culture: Differential Equations*, edited by S. Murnaghan and S. R. Joshel, 22-34. London: Routledge, 1998.
- Thomson, J. A. K. *Studies in the Odyssey*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1914.
- Whitman, C. H. *Homer and the Heroic Tradition*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958.
- Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, U. v. *Die Heimkehr Des Odysseus*. Berlin, 1927.
- Zeitlin, F. I. "Figuring Fidelity in Homer's Odyssey." In *The Distaff Side: Representing the Female in Homer's Odyssey*, edited by Beth Cohen, 117-52. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.