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INTRODUCING ODYSSEUS: FORCE, RESISTANCE AND *NOSTOS* IN THE  
FORMATION OF ODYSSEUS' CHARACTER

by

HALEY GATES RYAN

A master's thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Classics in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, The City University of New York

2021

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Classics in  
satisfaction of the thesis requirement for the degree of Master of Arts.

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## ABSTRACT

### INTRODUCING ODYSSEUS: FORCE, RESISTANCE AND *NOSTOS* IN THE FORMATION OF ODYSSEUS' CHARACTER

by

Haley Gates Ryan

Advisor: David Schur

This thesis explores the ways in which Odysseus' self-introductions to other characters in the *Odyssey* reveal the complexities of his character with regard to homecoming and his apparent resistance to it. In examining these introductions, the thesis argues that Odysseus that the language Odysseus uses when he introduces himself is often filled with allusions to force and resistance, indicating that he is perhaps more ambivalent about completing his journey home than would be expected of him. The manifestations of this ambivalence in his behavior upon arriving at Ithaka is also explored in the final chapters.

## Acknowledgements

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I would also be remiss not to thank my past teachers and professors who contributed so much to my thinking on the *Odyssey*: to Mr. Ken Deluca, who first taught me to read Greek through Homer as a high school student, and to Prof. Curtis Dozier of Vassar College, who in his 2018 class gave me my first real taste of what it's like to be a Homeric scholar. Finally, I would especially like to thank Prof. Rachel Friedman of Vassar College, without whom I never would have discovered my love for the *Odyssey*.

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## Introduction

One of the central themes of Lin-Manuel Miranda's musical *Hamilton* is, as the final song on the soundtrack puts it, that one does not have control over "Who Lives, Who Dies, Who Tells Your Story."<sup>1</sup> This concept is true, to a point, especially after one's death – legacy is not something one can actively control. But what about the instances when we tell our own story? In this thesis, I ask this question of the *Odyssey*, focusing specifically on the points in the narrative when Odysseus introduces himself and shapes his own character in relation to his fated homecoming. I argue that Odysseus uses these chances to tell his story and craft his own identity to resist forces, both within the narrative and on a metanarrative level, that are driving him toward his fated *nostos*. At times it is easy to see the different forces acting against Odysseus, driving him both toward and from his homecoming – monsters, witches, and even the ocean itself all want to prevent him from reaching his homeland at times. There is also a greater force at play: that of the narrative itself and the ideas and concepts it consistently brings up. Throughout this thesis I use the term "narrative force" to refer to the fact that the narrative by nature pushes Odysseus forward; he is both fated to reach Ithaka according to the gods and, because of the nature of the poem as a completed work, must inevitably arrive there. His *nostos* is continually referenced, and indeed homecoming is one of the major themes of the poem. Nevertheless, Odysseus' actions, and the ways he tells his own story, introduce ideas contrary to the idea of a smooth homecoming and reintegration at Ithaka.

After establishing his character as the poem introduces it subsequently in this introduction chapter, I establish in my first chapter the nature of the forces against Odysseus, using a close reading of passages from book 5 to illustrate a concrete way in which Odysseus

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<sup>1</sup> Miranda, Lin Manuel. *Hamilton: An American Musical*. Atlantic Records, 2015, MP3.

pushes back against narrative force, as well as to bring to light the nature of the moment as a rebirth from the Iliadic world to the Odyssean world. This is still an introduction of sorts, though not one that Odysseus gives himself. It is an important display of Odysseus' longing for his old life whilst being physically forced and metaphorically reborn into a new stage of existence, in which *Iliadic* values do not have as much inherent meaning to others. Even during this metaphorical rebirth, Odysseus shows signs of resistance as he proclaims his longing for *kleos* via death on the battlefield at Troy – the irony being, however, that the significance of *kleos* is questioned more critically in the *Odyssean* world he is transitioning into.

We can take each of the subsequent interactions and introductions I examine as variations of the events of book 5. The explicit force of the storm forcing Odysseus into his new life becomes more implicit, manifesting in the interactions and reactions of others who meet Odysseus. The resistance on Odysseus' part, in turn, takes on a different form as well: it manifests in the ways he portrays himself as he tells others of himself and his story. The close readings of Odysseus' self-introductions in chapters 2 through 8 contain the crux of my argument that Odysseus shapes his own character in ways that resist forces acting upon him. In each of the selected passages, Odysseus shapes his own identity to suit whatever situation he is in as well as his resistance, both overt and subtle, to the literal and metaphorical forces at play in his environment. When he meets Nausikaa, for instance, he portrays himself primarily as a wanderer in need of help. The lack of mention of war and military life is only shocking to a reader who has read the remainder of the poem and has seen the many instances where Odysseus introduces himself as an Achaean coming home from the war at Troy. With this knowledge, the reader can clearly see that Odysseus' introduction here serves a different purpose than elsewhere in the narrative. He is in a state of complete helplessness, and his vulnerability drives him to shape a

character that will meet his immediate goal of finding shelter and clothing, as well as the eventual goal of homecoming. However, elements of his warrior background still manifest in the way he shapes his narrative and indicate that despite everything he still formulates his identity and reads situations as a soldier.

Books 9 through 12 are, obviously, the most poignant instance of Odysseus' telling his own story. It is here that we receive his story in the greatest detail, and it is this account that, unlike the stories he tells at Ithaca, that we generally assume to be "true." When Odysseus introduces himself to Alkinous officially and by name, he once again selectively describes his identity and story in a way that will help him reach home. There are, however, elements of resistance in this introduction: the use of the word *kleos* (9.20) is marked, bringing up connotations of war unexpected in the introduction of a wanderer. When Odysseus begins to fully tell the story of his adventures, beginning with the pillaging of the Ciconians, we see that he is perhaps not as fully committed to *nostos* as he tells Alkinous at first. The brevity with which he describes the brutal killing of an entire people and the theft of their possessions is shocking, and the fact that it occurred not during wartime, but on his journey home, makes the actions all the more displaced.

This is not the last instance of displaced war behavior, either; in the exchange with the Cyclops, Odysseus once again brags about and even displays war behavior in a context in which it is wildly inappropriate to do so. Odysseus shows no signs of acknowledgment that he is in a foreign context, first boasting of his and his men's reputation as warriors and then acting in a violent and arrogant manner when this reputation is not favorably received. In a similar way, Odysseus' attempt to defeat the enormous monster Scylla using war tactics is comically displaced, as he once again does not properly assess his situation and surroundings before acting

as a soldier, even though Circe has explicitly told him not to. There is a consistent pattern of behavior in Odysseus' actions, indicating that he is either unwilling or unable to shake his warrior mentality. His attraction to the song of the Sirens is also evidence of this; it is certainly no coincidence that the song purported to be divinely irresistible consists of tales of the Trojan War. Odysseus' behavior in the different stages of his journey is consistent in that he always incorporates elements of war into his actions, either implicitly or explicitly, and in doing so demonstrates that *nostos*, which is theoretically the opposite of war and *kleos*, will not be a straightforward process for him due to his attachment to the past.

Upon arriving back at Ithaka, Odysseus' attitude toward *nostos*, wandering and war becomes even more apparent. Before he recognizes where he is in book 13, he fixates on his gifts from the Phaeacians and implicitly longs to continue his journey in doing so. The symbolism of Odysseus being home but longing to travel, even though he does not realize where he is, is poignant and indicative of the complicated nature of homecoming after a long time away. It begins to be clear at this point that Odysseus' readjustment to life at home will not be straightforward for a number of reasons; we have seen his longing for war, which continues to manifest as he tries to reintegrate and exact his revenge on the suitors, but now we also see him drawn to the lure of travel and wandering as the poem questions his ability to move on from this aspect of his past as well.

It is at this point in the narrative that Odysseus begins once again to tell his story – various versions of it, with questionable truthfulness, over the course of the second half of the poem. The stories he tells are essentially condensed versions of books 9 through 12, but often with different details and emphases – and, of course, with the assumption of a different name and identity. When he introduces himself to Athena in book 13, he includes many characteristics

indicative of his past as a soldier. The fictional but nonetheless shocking killing of Orsilochus is framed in such a way that it sounds like a soldier striking an enemy. The inclusion of such behavior in a fictional identity indicates a desire to be identified by others as a soldier, a theme that continues as Odysseus creates more and more false identities with the individuals he reencounters in his homeland.

My final chapter centers on Odysseus' revenge, the ultimate display of displaced warrior behavior. The larger context is a feast in his own home – hardly the place for the graphic massacre that ensues. It is perhaps Odysseus' lack of remorse for the murders he carries out, as evidenced in his actions in the hall where the feast is going on and with his description of the massacre to Laertes later on, that most strongly highlights the displaced nature of his actions. Odysseus has arrived home, reunited with Penelope, and achieved his *nostos*. On the surface of the poem, this should be enough, if *nostos* is the ultimate goal. But even if we do take *nostos* to be the point of Odysseus' journey, the fact that he does not stop acting like a warrior, and, at times, a wanderer, indicate a resistance on his part to a clean reintegration and a tension between the desire to return home to his life pre-Troy and to hold on to aspects of his experiences away.

The composition of the poem is a useful way to think about the concepts of force and resistance within it. The work of Parry and Lord has been instrumental in establishing that it was oral traditions and compositions that led to the existence of the coherent text that survives to the modern day.<sup>2</sup> The role of the bard as the creator and mover of the narrative can be assessed even in our surviving version of the *Odyssey*, and is especially important when we consider the many instances at which Odysseus himself acts as a bard, telling his own story and shaping it in

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<sup>2</sup> Parry, Milman. "Studies in the Epic Technique of Oral Verse-Making. I. Homer and Homeric Style." *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 41 (1930): 73-147.

Lord, Albert Bates. 1960. *The singer of tales*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.

relation – and often in opposition – to the greater narrative. We can thus position Odysseus’ introductions, the times in the poem where he tells others who he is and tells his story, as the compositions of an “anti-bard,” who on the one hand acts within the confines of the greater narrative as set out by the bard-narrator, but on the other hand pushes back against this overall narrative by creating micronarratives of his own. Thus, as the greater narrative insists upon an inevitable *nostos*, Odysseus resists by implicitly questioning the significance and highlighting the complications of homecoming.

To begin, let us look at the beginning of Odysseus’ story: *Od.* 1.1-13. Much of the initial formation of Odysseus’ character occurs in these lines despite the fact that the audience does not actually meet him until much later, in book 5. Until that point, we only experience him through the lens of the bard-narrator and, in the Telemacheia, through the characters at Ithaca, a stark contrast to the many instances later in the poem in which he introduces himself and shapes his identity as the narrator of his own story. The analysis I perform in this introduction lays the groundwork for the deeper analyses in subsequent chapters.

The first two lines of the poem display two distinct sides of Odysseus’ character, who at this point remains unnamed and known only as an ἄνδρoς about whom the bard-narrator has requested a song from the Muse (*Od.* 1.1). An informed audience knows, of course, that this ἄνδρoς is Odysseus, and the character-shaping thus begins before he is even explicitly named. The poem, in other words, is giving a thorough introduction of who others perceive Odysseus to be, but not who Odysseus shapes his own character to be later on. We find out first that he is πολύτροπος, a word with many translations and interpretations. Odysseus’ character is filled with ambiguity from the very first adjective; there is, of course, no easy way to translate the adjective into English and preserve the essence of the Greek, an apt metaphor for Odysseus’ multifaceted

character. His identity is made up of multiple and often conflicting characteristics which frequently lead him to act in ways that are incongruous with the situations he finds himself in over the course of the poem. In this introductory passage, though, we see only a preliminary breakdown of his character and identity, moving through the different facets of it so that as an audience we are primed to recognize the places in the poem where they intersect.

Πολύτροπος is immediately followed by a relative clause delving even deeper into the multifaceted nature of Odysseus' character. We learn that the man in question has been “made to wander very much,” μάλα πολλὰ πλάγθη, a reference to the winding journey he takes to make it home to Ithaka after fighting at Troy (*Od.* 1.1-2).<sup>3</sup> The verb πλάγθη does more than just reference Odysseus' wandering, however. The passive voice indicates that Odysseus perhaps does not wander voluntarily; rather, he is forced to do so, although the origin of the force in question has yet to be exposed. Regardless, πλάγθη opens up room from the very beginning to question the circumstances surrounding Odysseus' wandering. How does the journey – and the *nostos* he will achieve – play into his identity, both perceived and self-defined?<sup>4</sup> There is no single answer to this question, just as there is no single way to define Odysseus' character. The ambiguities of his character become more evident as the poem continues, but here the possibility of ambiguous or even conflicting perceptions of wandering is opened up by the poem for consideration as the audience hears the rest of the story.

By the time we reach line 2, unnamed Odysseus has already been definitively characterized as a wanderer, and by the end of the line Odysseus' wanderer identity is paralleled with another significant aspect of his character: his warrior identity. Odysseus is “made to

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<sup>3</sup> All translations are my own unless otherwise specified.

<sup>4</sup> We learn at lines 1.16-18 that the gods intend that Odysseus make it back to Ithaka, and at 1.21-22 that he eventually does.

wander” only after he “sacked the holy city of Troy,” *ἱερὸν πτολίεθρον ἔπερσε* (1.2). The mention of Troy is an unmistakable connection to the *Iliad*, and all that comes with it: the honor of going to war and fighting alongside heroes like Achilles and Agamemnon, and the prospect of earning *kleos* for one’s deeds in battle. The verb *ἔπερσε*, “sacked,” is active, in contrast with the passive *πλάγθη*, indicating agency and connoting violence on the part of Odysseus. Odysseus may be “made to wander,” but he was certainly not “made” to be a warrior. With the juxtaposition of these two important identity-revealing verbs, the poem allows the audience to consider how each of the two aspects of his character affect his interactions with other characters in the poem.

Up to this point, “warrior” and “wanderer” have been established as two overarching aspects of Odysseus’ identity. Line 3 elaborates on the results of Odysseus’ wandering: he “both saw cities of many men and knew [their] minds” (*πολλῶν δ’ ἀνθρώπων ἴδεν ἄστεα καὶ νόον ἔγνω*, 1.3). The relationship between wandering and learning or knowing no doubt contributes to the trope of the wandering wise man in later Greek literature as intellectuals increasingly developed the reputation as wanderers, and the link between firsthand sight and knowledge is enforced here.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, a bard-narrator is able to subtly reference himself with this line, being an itinerant storyteller and wanderer in his own right. Once Odysseus arrives at Ithaka, the significance of the intersection between knowledge gained through travel and his role at home becomes clearer. This is discussed in my analyses of books 13-24.

The warrior aspect of Odysseus’ identity is also deepened and nuanced at 1.5-9, where we find out that none of Odysseus’ comrades, those he was in command of post-Troy, has made it home. In other words, Odysseus as a military leader has failed at a major task inherent to his

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<sup>5</sup> Garland, 167.

position: he has failed to keep his men alive and safe. The poem justifies this at lines 1.8-9, when the comrades are referred to as νήπιοι, “fools,” who have sealed their own fate by eating the cattle of the sun, οἱ κατὰ βοῦς Ὑπερίονος Ἡελίοιο / ἤσθιον, but nevertheless, Odysseus is assigned some responsibility for their actions by nature of being their leader. Until this point, we have seen Odysseus defined by arguably successful action, much of which is achieved through deep suffering and endurance. He has wandered (πλάγθη, 1.2), he has sacked (ἔπερσε, 1.2), he has seen (ἶδεν, 1.3) and he has learned (ἔγνω, 1.3). At lines 1.5-9, however, we see a different aspect of the story: something Odysseus failed to do, a time when he failed to act adequately: ἀρνύμενος ἦν τε ψυχὴν καὶ νόστον ἑταίρων / ἀλλ’ οὐδ’ ὧς ἑτάρους ἐρρύσατο, ἰέμενός περ (“trying to win the soul and *nostos* of his companions / but he did not save the companions, although eager to” 1.5-6). Despite his desire to save his comrades (ἰέμενός περ), Odysseus is unable to (οὐδ’ ὧς ἑτάρους ἐρρύσατο). This, on the surface, is their own fault: it was they who took initiative and ate the cattle of the sun (αὐτῶν γὰρ σφετέρησιν ἀτασθαλίησιν ὄλοντο, 1.7). Odysseus is the general, embracing his warrior identity, and he has, despite all effort, lost his men. His own survival, however, is a triumph, as evidenced in the language of suffering combined with his overcoming of the challenges he faces.

The last words of line 9, νόστιμον ἦμαρ, foreshadow the introduction of a third and final aspect of Odysseus’ identity at 1.11ff: his role as a husband and family man, the root of his desire for *nostos*, homecoming. We first find out that everyone who survived the war at Troy has made it home, except the ἄνδρος whom we know is Odysseus: ἔνθ’ ἄλλοι μὲν πάντες, ὅσοι φύγον αἰπὺν ὄλεθρον / οἴκοι ἔσαν (1.11-12). They have all achieved their day of *nostos*, which is understood to be the essential goal of all those who fought at Troy and lived. Furthermore, they have all “fled both war and the sea,” πόλεμόν τε πεφευγότες ἠδὲ θάλασσαν (1.12). This is an

obvious contrast to Odysseus, who we know from the beginning lines of the poem has endured both. Unlike his fellow soldiers, however, Odysseus has not endured the full course of suffering he is destined to, and as he remains far from Ithaka he is “longing for his *nostos* and his wife,” νόστου κεχρημένον ἠδὲ γυναικὸς (1.13). *Nostos* is thus established as a goal within the greater scope of the epic: Odysseus longs to achieve what his surviving warrior companions have. This concept remains relevant throughout the poem and, along with the other two aspects of Odysseus’ identity discussed above, creates tensions within Odysseus’ character, especially as he presents it to others.

“Warrior,” “wanderer,” and “husband” are all equally prominent aspects of Odysseus’ character as introduced in the beginning lines of the *Odyssey*. Throughout the poem, these three major identities coexist, intersect, and conflict within the character of Odysseus and are displayed through his actions and responses to situations and events throughout his journey as well as during and after his arrival home. They emerge in various ways as he presents himself to those he encounters along his journey and through the process of his reintegration at Ithaka. The self-introductions Odysseus gives, and the way he frames his own identity within them, are deeply tied to his resistance to external forces, both physical and of the narrative. I move now to a discussion of a passage telling of the forces at play in order to elucidate my definition of force in the *Odyssey*, as well as to examine the variations of it that Odysseus’ introductions respond to.

## 1. Resistance and Rebirth

The scenes at *Od.* 5.286-318 and at 5.453-457, the former in which Odysseus' raft is shipwrecked by Poseidon and the latter in which Odysseus finally washes up on the shores of Phaeacia, represent the beginning of a departure from the world of the *Iliad* and the values of warrior honor it projects, and an entrance into the world of the *Odyssey*, where being a warrior from Troy has a more dubious significance. Previous scholarship has discussed that the imagery of the scenes in question are evocative of childbirth, and thus represent Odysseus' rebirth into a new life.<sup>6</sup> A close reading of the passages reaffirms this point, but also indicates that Odysseus shows signs of resistance to this forceful metaphorical rebirth and discomfort with his new and unfamiliar situation. This, in turn, indicates nostalgia for his past life and experiences at Troy and the values associated with Iliadic warfare, as opposed to the more commonly exhibited nostalgia for his home and family at Ithaka. Within the greater scope of the *Odyssey*, this is indicative of a tension with the themes of the *Iliad* and represents a hesitation on the part of the poem to accept societal values away from war and the honor war brings to the individual.<sup>7</sup> While not a traditional self-introduction, the scene analyzed below sets a foundation in many ways for the instances at which Odysseus introduces himself and crafts his own story throughout the poem. It is in these subsequent introductions that his warrior identity clashes with his identity as a wanderer and a husband and father, indicating a resistance or perhaps inability on the part of his character to let go of his warrior mentality and fully embrace a world where the increased

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<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Erling B. Holtmark, "Spiritual Rebirth of the Hero: 'Odyssey' 5."

<sup>7</sup> Regardless of whether one claims a unitarian or separatist position, it is clear that the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* complement one another in ways that suggest some level of relation between them (See Rutherford 1993). My standpoint is that the *Odyssey* is indeed capable of referencing the *Iliad*, and that the themes, concepts, and storyline all have the potential for Iliadic resonances.

significance both of wandering and of family life is forced upon him by the greater narrative.

This, in turn, manifests in the ways Odysseus presents himself to those around him.

At *Od.* 5.286-90 Poseidon, in an enraged state, laments the fact that Odysseus is “nearby the land of the Phaeacians,”<sup>8</sup> since, according to fate, it is at this point that he will finally escape his miseries and, as the audience knows, begin the last steps of his journey home to Ithaka: καὶ δὴ Φαιήκων γαίης σχεδόν, ἔνθα οἱ αἴσα / ἐκφυγέειν μέγα πείραρ οἴζυος, ἢ μιν ἰκάνει (“and indeed [he is] nearby the land of the Phaeacians, where it is his destiny to escape the great crisis of misery, which comes to him,” 5.288-9). Already here we see a number of important themes coming into play. The “great crisis of misery” (μέγα πείραρ οἴζυος, 5.289) that Poseidon mentions no doubt refers to the arduous journey Odysseus has already completed and will subsequently describe in books 9 through 12, and the fact that he will escape it (ἐκφυγέειν, 5.289) is an indirect reference to Odysseus’ *nostos* that is yet to come. The word αἴσα, “destiny” (5.288), reinforces the concept of a fated homecoming for Odysseus, thus acknowledging that Odysseus will inevitably obtain a *nostos*, fulfilling the quintessential objective of the *Odyssey*.

From here, we move from Poseidon’s speech to his actions as he begins “to drive [Odysseus] to his fill of hardship” (ἀλλ’ ἔτι μὲν μὴν φημι ἄδην ἐλάαν κακότητος, 5.290). The verb ἐλάαν marks the beginning of a series of active verbs, highlighting the level of anger Poseidon has reached toward Odysseus and marking the significance of the textual moment with the intensity of the narrative shift that actively forces Odysseus out of the world of his past, i.e. the *Iliad*, and into the world of the *Odyssey*. In the three lines that follow, Poseidon continues to actively move the sea and the elements as he creates a storm to drive Odysseus to the fill of hardship he intends. He “drove together the clouds having seized his trident, (ὧς εἰπὼν σύναγεν

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<sup>8</sup> *Od.* 5.288

νεφέλας, ἐτάραξε δὲ πόντον / χερσὶ τρίαιναν ἐλών, 5.291-2). Here, the verbs σύναγεν and ἐτάραξε, as well as the participle ἐλών, all serve to reinforce the forcefulness of the situation. We see even more active verbs on the part of Poseidon as he “stirred up all the gusts of all sorts winds and hid the land and sea together with clouds” (πάσας δ’ ὀρόθουνεν ἀέλλας / παντοίων ἀνέμων, σὺν δὲ νεφέεσσι κάλυψε / γαῖαν ὁμοῦ καὶ πόντον, 5.292-4). Once again, the active verbs express the forceful movement inherent in Poseidon’s actions and hint at the shift occurring within the narrative.

Following Poseidon’s action comes a change in grammatical subject as nature converges upon Odysseus: “The night rushed down from heaven. The East and South Winds and the blustering West Wind and the air-borne North Wind rolling a giant wave rushed together” (ὀρώρει δ’ οὐρανόθεν νύξ, / σὺν δ’ Εὐϋρός τε Νότος τ’ ἔπεσον Ζέφυρός τε δυσαῆς / καὶ Βορέης αἰθρηγενέτης, μέγα κῶμα κυλίνδων, 5.294-6). Nature has now taken over and comes together from all directions to complete the forceful removal of Odysseus from his old Iliadic life and into his new Odyssean one. The intensity of the event is magnified by the careful mention of each of the four winds, implying that the natural world is coming together against Odysseus from all. The verbs and participles (ὀρώρει, ἔπεσον and κυλίνδων) remain in the active voice despite the subject change, continuing to emphasize the momentum of the coming change. ὀρώρει and ἔπεσον, both of which I translate with the English word “rush,” have a sense of urgency that emphasizes the force with which the winds are moving. Κυλίνδων, “rolling,” is a word clearly denoting motion as the North Wind “roll[s] a giant wave” toward Odysseus, again emphasizing the force of the natural phenomenon occurring.

It is at 5.297 that Odysseus’ initial reaction to the storm and its force, literal and metaphorical, is described: “Odysseus broke down with respect to his knees and dear heart”

(...Ὀδυσσεῖος λύτο γούνατα καὶ φίλον ἦτορ). Λύτο, from λύω, “to loosen” and in this case “to cause (the limbs, etc.) to give way or collapse,” signals the unraveling of Odysseus’ willpower in his current predicament, but also the unraveling of his old identity.<sup>9</sup> This is where the shift begins to occur. Odysseus is physically (γούνατα) and emotionally (φίλον ἦτορ) overwhelmed in the situation he has found himself in, which as the knowledgeable audience is aware is the aftermath of many arduous years of war and travel away from Ithaka. By physically and emotionally breaking down, Odysseus shows that he is succumbing to the force provided by the surrounding circumstances despite his clear and simultaneous resistance to it, as becomes evident later in the passage. This, in turn, signals that, regardless of whether he accepts a life away from Troy or not, he is being forced into a rebirth of values and thrown into a life very different from the one he has come from.

Odysseus acknowledges at 5.305, after lamenting the force of the storm (5.299-304), that “inevitable destruction is now upon me” (νῦν μοι σῶς αἰπὺς ὄλεθρος) thereby also acknowledging that there is a shift occurring. The word σῶς is significant here because of its multiple potential meanings. Cunliffe lists it as “free from harm,” “safe,” and “free from danger,” and only in the third entry does he list the translation “inevitable.” This reflects the double-sided nature of the “destruction” Odysseus experiences; leaving behind his old identity and the world as he knew it before is painful, but entering the new reality he is being metaphorically born into is, in a way, safe; it means that for those like Odysseus who have not achieved *kleos* through death on the battlefield, there is another way of life which is honorable in a different way.

Odysseus does not realize the idea of multiple ways of achieving *kleos*, though and begins a shocking 6-line statement at 5.306 that is indicative of his persistent attachment to

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<sup>9</sup> Cunliffe

Iliadic values and his resistance to the forceful change occurring. He remarks that “the Danaans who died at wide Troy bringing grace to the Atreidae were three and four times blessed”

(τρισμακάρες Δαναοὶ καὶ τετράκις οἱ τότε ὄλοντο / Τροίη ἐν εὐρείῃ, χάριν Ἀτρεΐδῃσι φέροντες, 5.306-7), a statement that would make much more sense in the Iliadic world where death at war signifies eternal glory. He continues on, saying that if he had also died at Troy, he would have had *kleos*, the epitome of Iliadic values earned only through valor, accomplishment and even death on the battlefield:

ὥς δὴ ἐγὼ γ' ὄφελον θανέειν καὶ πότμον ἐπισπεῖν  
 ἦματι τῷ ὅτε μοι πλεῖστοι χαλκήρεα δοῦρα  
 Τρῶες ἐπέριψαν περὶ Πηλείωνι θανόντι.  
 τῷ κ' ἔλαχον κτερέων, καὶ μευ κλέος ἦγον Ἀχαιοί·  
 νῦν δέ λευγαλέῳ θανάτῳ εἴμαρτο ἀλῶναι.

I ought indeed to have died thus and to have met my fate  
 on the day when the Trojans threw bronze-tipped spears upon me around the  
 dead son of Peleus.  
 Then I would have obtained funeral honors, and the Achaeans would have  
 conveyed my *kleos*;  
 but now it is decreed by fate that I be killed in a miserable death. (5.308-12)

Odysseus grapples here with conflicting fates; the death he wishes to have had is impossible, and the death he sees as impending is, seemingly, inevitable. Line 5.297 has already

signaled his vulnerability, and it is at this lowest point that Odysseus laments what he wants most in life: *kleos*. The word, of course, has Iliadic resonances and is the essential goal of a soldier at war. Odysseus' longing for it, then, is a clear indication of attachment to the world he has come from, where one earns merit through achievement as a warrior. The choice of words in this passage is also marked. ὄφελον, from ὀφέλλω, is a verb indicating that something is owed or due to a person.<sup>10</sup> Odysseus is not just wishing for *kleos* here; he is expressing a feeling that it is owed to him. On the same note, ἔλαχον, from λαγχάνω, has the connotation of obtaining by lot or destiny.<sup>11</sup> Odysseus is thus lamenting the *kleos* that he feels he *would* have had, not just that he *should* have had. Finally, ἀλῶναι, from ἀλίσκομαι, is frequently used with θανάτῳ to mean “seized by death,” but is also used twice as much in the *Iliad* as in the *Odyssey*; it thus has resonances of death at Troy in this context, with death at Troy being the ideal gateway to *kleos*. These three verbs serve to illustrate the depth of Odysseus' attachment to the life he had while at Troy and the values inherent in that life. This attachment is the very root of his resistance to the shift occurring in the present scene, away from a world where warrior *kleos* rules and into one where honor has a different means of achievement.

Immediately following Odysseus' lament wishing he had died at Troy and achieved *kleos*, the storm intensifies, and the raft Odysseus has been clinging to begins to break apart:

ὥς ἄρα μιν εἰπόντ' ἔλασεν μέγα κῦμα κατ' ἄκρης  
 δεινὸν ἐπεσσύμενον, περὶ δὲ σχεδίην ἐλέλιξε.  
 τῆλε δ' ἀπὸ σχεδίδης αὐτὸς πέσε, πηδάλιον δὲ  
 ἐκ χειρῶν προέηκε· μέσον δὲ οἱ ἴστον ἔαξε

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<sup>10</sup> Cunliffe

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

δεινὴ μισγομένων ἀνέμων ἐλθοῦσα θύελλα,  
 τηλοῦ δὲ σπεῖρον καὶ ἐπίκριον ἔμπεσε πόντῳ.

Then great wave drove him, speaking thus, with full force  
 and rushed terribly at him, and shook the raft around.  
 He himself fell from the raft, and he threw forth the oar  
 from his hands; a terrible storm of mixing winds coming up  
 broke his mast at the middle,  
 and the sail and yardarm fell far away into the sea. (5.313-8)

There is a number of active verbs and participles in this scene which, as at 5.294-6, emphasize the force of the event. ἔλασεν and ἐλέλιξε are verbs of motion, and the driving and shaking that they respectively describe emphasize the forced nature of the transition Odysseus is experiencing. The prepositional phrase κατ' ἄκρης, as Cunliffe notes, can be translated “with full force,” again indicating that the storm is actively moving Odysseus and his raft, representing the force with which the metaphorical shift is occurring as well. The phrase δεινὸν ἐπεσσύμενον, “having rushed terribly,” gives further emphasis to the intensity with which the storm is striking Odysseus and how actively he is being moved into a new phase of his post-Troy journey and of his life and identity.

Once Odysseus falls off the raft (5.315), it begins to break apart, and the “terrible storm of mixing winds having come” (δεινὴ μισγομένων ἀνέμων ἐλθοῦσα θύελλα, 5.317) breaks the mast (μέσον δὲ οἱ ἰστὸν ἔαξε, 5.316). Here again the action is described with an active verb, ἔαξε, “broke,” emphasizing the force with which the winds have converged, and with its aorist

tense also denoting the abruptness of the breaking. The raft, which Odysseus has built himself, has broken as a result of the force inflicted upon it, again described with the aorist active verb ἐλέλιξε, “spun” (5.314). In much the same way, Odysseus has already been broken at 5.297, when he falls to his knees and his heart metaphorically breaks. Now the product of his own hands, which has carried him out to sea once again, is physically breaking. The difference, however, is that while the raft gives way under the force of the storm, showing no signs of resistance, Odysseus has clearly resisted the shift occurring and has broken down only with outside force.

To fully illustrate the effect of the passage analyzed above, I include here an analysis of *Od.* 5.453-457, at which Odysseus washes up on the shore of Phaeacia, effectively ending the transformation he has experienced at sea. The scene, as earlier scholars have noted, graphically represents childbirth:

...ὁ δ' ἄρ' ἄμφω γούνατ' ἔκαμψε  
 χεῖράς τε στιβαράς· ἀλὶ γὰρ δέδμητο φίλον κῆρ.  
 ὤδεε δὲ χροῖα πάντα, θάλασσα δὲ κήκιε πολλή  
 ἄν στόμα τε ῥῖνάς θ'· ὁ δ' ἄρ' ἄπνευστος καὶ ἄναυδος  
 κεῖτ' ὀλιγηπελέων, κάματος δέ μιν αἰνὸς ἵκανεν.

...he bent both his knees

and strong hands with weariness, for his dear heart had been broken  
 by the sea.

His whole body was swollen, and much sea gushed forth

in both his mouth and nose. Out of breath and speechless,  
he lay weak, and horrible weariness overtook him. (5.453-457)

As Holtsmark notes, “Odysseus, his skin swollen from the ordeal, has endured the exhausting labors of his birth and he appears on the shore naked as an infant, bespattered with the unsightly dross that still clings to him from his watery womb.” It is at this point that the forced transition, painful and exhausting as it was, is complete: Odysseus has been reborn, into a new world with a new set of values.<sup>12</sup> The childbirth imagery here illustrates in a semi-literal way Odysseus’ metaphorical rebirth and transition here. His journey and life as a soldier have come to an end, and the process of his *nostos* is beginning, as represented by his washing up on Phaeacia in the manner of a newborn entering the world. This is, in essence, the beginning of his new life post-Troy, as he will receive assistance from the Phaeacians in finally getting home to Ithaka.

Through the analysis of these two passages, the significance of the force and resistance imagery surrounding Odysseus in this section of book 5 becomes clear. The many verbs of force describing the storm create a sense of power and forward movement that Odysseus resists, as evidenced by his nostalgic reference to and lament over his experience and lack of honorable death as a soldier at Troy. The emotional resistance he feels is no match, however, for the literal and metaphorical force that compels him out of his old life and toward Phaeacia, symbolically a rebirth into a new life away from war. This symbolic rebirth marks the beginning of Odysseus’ new life post-Troy, and his lament about the *kleos* he never earned makes evident a feeling of nostalgia for warrior life and values, and a desire to remain in a world where such values are

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<sup>12</sup> Holtsmark, 209.

kept. From here, Odysseus gets the chance to tell his story and introduce his character in ways that question what *nostos* means to him, and, once he has reached Ithaka, the issue of readjustment to his old life.

## 2. Anonymous Introductions: Odysseus at Phaeacia

Odysseus washes up on Phaeacia exhausted, as a metaphorical newborn with no clothes, possessions or life and identity that anyone knows of. He takes advantage of the anonymity inherent in being in an unfamiliar place with unfamiliar people to craft his identity in his own image, choosing to recount some details of his past but not all. In this way, Odysseus is able to emphasize specific aspects of his identity and expose only those parts of his character that are advantageous to him in the given situation.

The first person Odysseus converses with on Phaeacia - and the only person in book 6 - is Nausicaa. When Odysseus encounters her, he is in a position of vulnerability and desperation being naked and lost. When he introduces himself, he creates a picture of his identity that is markedly different from other self-introductions in the poem: he makes no mention of his involvement at Troy. Instead, he characterizes himself entirely as a wanderer, with a strong emphasis on the suffering he has experienced. He begins by flattering Nausicaa, admiring her unprecedented beauty in a lengthy speech (6.149-185) in which he compares her to a young shoot he saw at Delos on his journey (162-169). Odysseus reveals no details about himself in the beginning. Indeed, it would be futile to do so: in order to survive he must gain Nausicaa's trust so that she might give him clothes and lead him into the city, and to do this he uses excessive praise. In the middle of his attempts to flatter her by comparing her to a date-palm shoot, though, he hints at his past:

οὐ γάρ πω τοιοῦτον ἐγὼ ἴδον ὀφθαλμοῖσιν,  
οὔτ' ἄνδρ' οὔτε γυναῖκα·σέβας μ' ἔχει εἰσορόωντα.  
Δήλω δὴ ποτε τοῖον Ἀπόλλωνος παρὰ βωμῶ

φοίνικος νέον ἔρνος ἀνερχόμενον ἐνόησα·  
 ἦλθον γὰρ καὶ κείσε, πολὺς δέ μοι ἔσπετο λαὸς  
 τὴν ὁδὸν ἧ δὴ μέλλεν ἐμοὶ κακὰ κήδε' ἔσεσθαι.

For I have never seen such a person with my eyes,  
 neither man nor woman; wonder holds me looking at you.  
 Indeed once, next to the altar of Apollo at Delos,  
 I noticed a young date-palm shoot coming up;  
 For I went there, and a large crew followed me  
 on the journey on which indeed there was about to be awful sorrows  
 for me. (6.160-5)

Odysseus subtly weaves a significant detail about his past into his speech to Nausicaa: he acknowledges that he is a wanderer and, furthermore, a wanderer who has suffered on his journey. He also acknowledges that he once had a crew (πολὺς δέ μοι ἔσπετο λαὸς), though he elaborates no further on why this crew accompanied him. These small and vague details are the first ones Odysseus gives as he presents himself to Nausicaa, and are thus an indication of the identity he wishes to convey in this particular situation. He makes no mention of Troy, downplaying his warrior past almost to the point of nonexistence, and instead focuses on presenting himself as a suffering wanderer. This is significant in that it clearly displays a choice on the part of Odysseus to emphasize only certain aspects of his identity given the position of vulnerability he is in, and the identity of the person he is talking to. Instead of presenting himself as a strong, accomplished warrior who fought alongside Agamemnon at Troy, as he does

elsewhere in the poem, he reduces himself to a wandering man who has suffered greatly, thus incurring the sympathy of Nausicaa and accomplishing his goal of getting into the city and resuming his journey.

Just four lines later, Odysseus elaborates more fully on his wanderings, attributing his “arduous grief” to them and expressing his belief that there is still more wandering-related suffering to come:

...χαλεπὸν δέ με πένθος ἰκάνει.

χθιζὸς ἔεικοστῷ φύγον ἤματι οἴνοπα πόντον·  
 τόφρα δέ μ' αἰεὶ κῦμ' ἐφόρει κραιπναί τε θύελλαι  
 νήσου ἀπ' Ὀγυγίης· νῦν δ' ἐνθάδε κάββαλε δαίμων,  
 ὄφρα τί που καὶ τῆδε πάθω κακόν· οὐ γὰρ οἶω  
 παύσεσθ', ἀλλ' ἔτι πολλὰ θεοὶ τελέουσι πάροιθεν.  
 ἀλλά, ἄνασσ', ἐλέαιρε· σὲ γὰρ κακὰ πολλὰ μογήσας  
 ἐς πρώτην ἰκόμην, τῶν δ' ἄλλων οὐ τινα οἶδα  
 ἀνθρώπων, οἳ τήνδε πόλιν καὶ γαῖαν ἔχουσιν.

Arduous grief has come upon me.

I escaped the wine-colored sea yesterday, on the twentieth day;

The waves and swift gusts carried me continuously for so long

from the island of Ogygia; and now a divine power has thrown me down

in this place, perhaps so that I might suffer some evil here as well; for I do

not believe it will stop, but rather that the gods still will fulfill many things

beforehand. But, queen, have compassion: for having suffered many awful things I come to you first, since I know none of the other men who inhabit this city and land. (6.169-77)

This section of Odysseus' speech indicates a firm desire to convey his own identity as that of a wanderer, and to continue the emphasis on suffering that has occurred as a result. He is telling his own story, or at least a version of it, and the phrase *ἔεικοστῶ...ἡματι* recalls not only the twenty days he has spent at sea, but the twenty years he has spent away from Ithaka fighting and then wandering.<sup>13</sup> The addition of the adjective *χαλεπὸς* (6.169) highlights Odysseus' own view of his suffering, and how affected he is by the arduousness of it. He is not merely feeling grief - he is feeling *arduous* grief that runs deep, and is directly linked to his journey here. In this single passage, furthermore, Odysseus emphasizes suffering in the past, present, and future: he describes his fleeing of the sea the day before (*χθιζὸς*), and with the repetition of the verb *πάθω* at lines 174-5, first in the present tense, indicating present suffering, and then in the future (*παύσεσθ'*), indicating an anticipation that he will continue to suffer until the gods have had their fill (*ἀλλ' ἔτι πολλὰ θεοὶ τελέουσι πάροιθεν*). In attempting to gain the sympathy of Nausicaa, he emphasizes his sufferings and wanderings as a core part of his story and identity.

In many ways, Odysseus is the epitome of the wandering man: he has come to a new land, knowing no one and entirely dependent on the only person present when he arrives. Lines 6.176-7, at which he speaks about not knowing the anyone inhabiting the island of the Phaeacians, is reminiscent of the many encounters he has with foreigners on his journey described in books 9 through 12. Odysseus establishes his point of origin in this section of the

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<sup>13</sup> See Chapter 7 for Odysseus' reintroduction to his father Laertes, where he also references his time away using the number 20.

speech, at least regarding this leg of his journey, as Ogygia, allowing Nausicaa to gain further and more concrete insight into the experiences of the wandering stranger she has just encountered, as well as allowing the audience a glimpse of his own perception of the ordeal he has experienced to get to Phaeacia (6.171-2). Odysseus also admits no agency in his wanderings and sufferings in this passage, but rather attributes everything to divine forces, namely a *daimon* (6.172) and subsequently the gods (6.174). Both the suffering and the journey are, according to Odysseus, instigated by the divine, or at least by external forces. Even the sea (οἴνοπα πόντον) is implied to be an opposing force here, as the object of the verb φύγον (1.170). Odysseus flees the sea as if it were an enemy pursuing him and intending to harm him. Where he resists but ultimately succumbs to the force at 5.286-318, he submits to it here - or at least describes his doing so. He is the victim of suffering, according to his own account, of no fault of his own, and presents himself as a suffering wanderer to gain the alliance of Nausicaa so that he might finally escape the forces causing him to wander and to suffer and make it home to Ithaka.

The structure of Odysseus' account here has undertones of war imagery as well: deeply buried in the story he tells is evidence of his background as a soldier. This is revealed in the framework of the narrative: he suffers at the hands of external forces, painting the sea as an enemy that he had to flee (6.170) and nature and the divine (6.171-2) as forces inflicting suffering upon him. While the emphasis of the passage is undoubtedly on his suffering through wandering, the dichotomous framework Odysseus uses of himself versus nature is akin to a narrative of war, in which two sides are pitted against one another. His warrior persona persists, but in this particular situation the suffering wanderer persona is what allows him to reach his end goal. The language in this passage is thus a demonstration of a choice on Odysseus' part to prioritize one aspect of his identity over the others, indicating that while these aspects certainly

coexist, they can be expressed to his advantage and allow him to gain an edge in a situation requiring it. In using select aspects of his identity to tell his story, Odysseus is able to acquire the help he needs and to manipulate the situation to his own advantage.

### 3. Revelations and Rampages: Odysseus Introduces Himself to Alkinous

This chapter focuses on *Od.* 9.19-42, where Odysseus finally reveals his name and identity to Alkinous, and subsequently describes his sack of Ismarus. The passage is an introduction in the literal sense, as Alkinous and the members of his court finally find out who their strange guest is, but it is also an introduction to the story Odysseus is about to tell. As the proem introduces the *Odyssey* as a whole, this passage introduces Odysseus' account of his adventures in books 9 through 12. As in his self-introduction to Nausicaa, Odysseus is careful here to reveal the aspects of his multifaceted identity that best serve his end goal: getting home to Ithaka. With Nausicaa, he portrayed himself foremost as a suffering wanderer. Here, though, he presents himself as a citizen and family man who has been away from his beloved home for too long and desires nothing more than to return. This presentation is not maintained for long, though, as Odysseus immediately diverges into a concise description of the pillaging of the Ciconians, an example of distinctly warlike behavior. The juxtaposition of the two reinforces the idea that Odysseus chooses to emphasize one aspect of his identity over others as situation requires, crafting his own narrative in response to the real and perceived forces around him.

The very first words of this introduction are loaded with meaning and significance: εἴμι Ὀδυσσεύς, "I am Odysseus," (9.19) is a statement representing ownership of the identity associated with a name. Odysseus does not say "my name is;" he uses the verb "to be" instead. This signifies possession of everything that comes along with a name: one's identity, characteristics, and past. Odysseus also includes Λαερτιάδης, "son of Laertes," in this opening statement, something which is both expected by and informative for those he is speaking to; in establishing his lineage by including the name of his father, he indicates that he is indeed a part of a family and attached by ties of blood to a particular group of people. Of course, these initial

words are much more meaningful to the poem's audience than they are to Alkinous and his court; the audience knows the weight of the announcement, which has been put off for much time at this point, because they know Odysseus' character already after experiencing the poem's first eight books. For Alkinous, though, more explanation is needed than just "I am Odysseus."

Odysseus is hardly humble in the initial lines of his introduction. He describes himself as the man ...ὄς πᾶσι δόλοισιν / ἀνθρώποισι μέλω, καί μευ κλέος οὐρανὸν ἵκει ("[I] who am a care for people because of all my tricks, and my *kleos* reaches heaven" (9.19-20). There are two elements to be explored in this sentence. Odysseus is a self-professed trickster, a quality which he displays consistently throughout the poem. He uses his trickery in times of war, in his wanderings, and at home. This trickery is a core element of Odysseus' character that he brings to the forefront, and that he wishes to convey to Alkinous here in order to convince Alkinous that helping him get home will be of benefit to him as well, as Odysseus is a well-known individual and Alkinous has an opportunity to gain some level of recognition for helping him. This concept ties into Odysseus' subsequent proclamation that his "*kleos* reaches heaven;" the arrogance is palpable here as Odysseus tells Alkinous that he is famous and renowned throughout the world and perhaps beyond. This, again, serves the purpose of encouraging Alkinous that Odysseus is worth helping, that he is important enough to deserve whatever aid Alkinous has to give. It also reveals Odysseus' lack of humility when it comes to his own reputation. The word *kleos* must not be overlooked here. It is an obvious reference to war, and Odysseus invokes it here assuming that the glory and honor earned by being a warrior will earn the same respectability among the values of the Phaeacians. A glimpse of Odysseus' warrior identity comes through as a result - but with what motivation? Clearly he assumes that the Phaeacians will respect his warrior accomplishments, but at the same time fails to fully realize that he has departed from the world

of the *Iliad* where warriors are highly respected and honored. This is not to say that warriors are not respected in the world of the *Odyssey*, but rather that the concept of *kleos* and honor in general takes on a different and perhaps more unexpected form than in the *Iliad*. This is a subtle instance of Odysseus' warrior identity showing itself in a displaced manner, something which occurs multiple times and with varying intensity throughout the remainder of the poem. The mention of *kleos* signals a pushing back on the idea of a life post-war that has no connection to past military experience.

Odysseus quickly moves away from the brief glimpse of warrior values evident in his mention of *kleos* and embarks on a seven-line digression on the beauty of Ithaka and his love for his homeland. The digression demonstrates that Ithaka and the idea of home in general is at the forefront of Odysseus' mind, and his description of Ithaka highlights both his deep attachment to his homeland and the importance of it with regard to his personal identity. Having introduced himself by name already, it seems the obvious next step to tell his hosts where he comes from: *ναιετάω δ' Ἰθάκην εὐδείελλον* ("I live at clear Ithaka," 9.21), but he does not stop there. He describes the geographical location and features of the island in great detail:

...ἐν δ' ὄρος αὐτῆ,

Νήριτον εἰνοσίφυλλον ἀριπρεπές· ἀμφὶ δὲ νῆσοι  
πολλαὶ ναιετάουσι μάλα σχεδὸν ἀλλήλησι,  
Δοθλίχιόν τε Σάμη τε καὶ ὑλήεσσα Ζάκυνθος.  
αὐτὴ δὲ χθαμαλὴ πανυπερτάτη εἰν ἀλὶ κεῖται  
πρὸς ζόφον, αἶ δέ τ' ἄνευθε πρὸς ἠῶ τ' ἠέλιόν τε,  
τρηχεῖ', ἀλλ' ἀγαθὴ κουροτρόφος· οὐ τοι ἐγὼ γε

ἢς γαίης δύναμαι γλυκερώτερον ἄλλο ιδέσθαι.

On [Ithaka] there is a mountain

Neriton with shaking foliage; around it many islands

lie, very close to one another,

Doulixion and Sami and wooded Zakynthos.

Ithaka lies low and furthest out in the sea

toward the western darkness - the other islands lie toward the dawn

and sun -

Ithaka is rugged, but a good nourisher of youth;

I indeed cannot imagine anything sweeter than this land (9.21-8)

Odysseus speaks of Ithaka, its location, its geographical features and the surrounding islands in a way that makes clear he is a native to the region; he knows every part of his homeland and relishes the chance to describe it in such detail. In this description Ithaka is presented as a sort of fairytale land - it is the furthest west of all the islands in the region, and while rugged, is simultaneously flourishing both with mountain foliage and as a “nourisher of youth.” He finishes his description of Ithaka with the statement, “I indeed cannot see anything sweeter than this land,” clearly spelling out his feelings and deep attachment to Ithaka that was only implied in the previous lines. Even if Odysseus may be seeing his home through the rose-tinted lens of nostalgia here, he describes Ithaka in such a way that Alkinous will appreciate it as a core part of who Odysseus is - or at least who he presents himself to be - and be willing to help Odysseus return.

In the five lines following his description of Ithaka, Odysseus changes the trajectory of his speech and tells of the two times on his journey when goddesses detained him, desiring him as a husband, and thereby explains his prolonged absence from Ithaka since the end of the war:

ἦ μὲν μ' αὐτόθ' ἔρυκε Καλυψώ, δῖα θεάων,  
 ἐν σπέσσι γλαφυροῖσι, λιλαιομένη πόσιν εἶναι·  
 ὣς δ' αὐτῶς Κίρκη κατερήτυεν ἐν μεγάροισιν  
 Αἰαίη δολόεσσα, λιλαιομένη πόσιν εἶναι.  
 ἀλλ' ἐμὸν οὐ ποτε θυμὸν ἐνὶ στήθεσσιν ἔπειθεν.

But Calypso, divine one of goddesses,  
 held me captive there in her cave desiring that I be her husband;  
 likewise Circe detained me in her hall,  
 tricky Aegean, desiring that I be her husband;  
 But she did not ever persuade the heart in my chest. (9.29-33)

Odysseus has many reasons to bring up these specific pieces of his journey here. Perhaps he wishes to convey a sort of high status to Alkinous, as someone who has been intimately acquainted with goddesses. Even if this is part of his goal, though, Odysseus conveys loud and clear that he could have had goddesses as wives - he has had not one, but two chances to do so. Calypso, the reader knows, even promised him immortality.<sup>14</sup> In both instances, Odysseus has resisted, unable to be persuaded. The underlying point conveyed here is that Odysseus has been

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<sup>14</sup> 5.206-13

and is so intent upon getting home to Ithaka (and, one assumes, to Penelope) that even a goddess and promises of immortality cannot tempt him to abandon his quest for *nostos*. Even in the years he spent with the goddesses, Odysseus apparently never forgot home, according to his words at 9.34-6:

ὥς οὐδὲν γλύκιον ἤς πατρίδος οὐδὲ τοκῆων  
 γίγνεται, εἴ περ καί τις ἀπόπροθι πίονα οἶκον  
 γαίη ἐν ἀλλοδαπῇ ναίει ἀπάνευθε τοκῆων.

Thus there is nothing sweeter than one's fatherland more than one's  
 parents,  
 if indeed someone dwells even in a plentiful house  
 in a far-off foreign land far away from their parents. (9.34-6)

This statement is directly connected to Odysseus' short account of his time with Calypso and Circe printed above by way of the word ὥς, and should therefore be taken as a direct consequence of Odysseus' assertion that his heart could not be persuaded to stay with either goddess. Even while he is in these (and other) "far-off foreign lands," far away from his parents and family, he remains of the opinion that nothing is sweeter to him than his homeland. There is an emphasis on distance here - the words ἀπόπροθι and ἀλλοδαπός both reinforce the notion that Odysseus was far from home and the familiar when he was with Calypso, Circe, and on his wanderings in general. This distance from home that Odysseus has experienced does not appear to have dulled his desire to return to Ithaka, at least not that he lets Alkinous see. The repetition

of τοκήων, “parents,” emphasizes the familial connection associated with one’s homeland, which in turn strengthens Odysseus’ persuasiveness as he speaks to Alkinous of his desire to return home. Odysseus uses these examples from his wanderings in order to reinforce his message that *nostos* is his end goal, and to elicit both sympathy and aid from Alkinous and his court.

Odysseus begins to tell Alkinous of his wanderings in the next two lines, using the verb ἐνίσπω, from ἐνέπω, to begin his story just as the bard narrator does at *Od.* 1.1: εἰ δ’ ἄγε τοι καὶ νόστον ἐμὸν πολυκηδέ’ ἐνίσπω / ὄν μοι Ζεὺς ἐφέηκεν ἀπὸ Τροίηθεν ἰόντι (“but come, let me tell you even about my very sorrowful homecoming, which Zeus sent to me going away from Troy” 9.37-8). These lines are significant for a number of reasons: first, there is the evocation of the proem, indicating that Odysseus is about to entertain Alkinous and the court with a story in the same way a bard speaks to his audience. Second, there is the use of the word *nostos*. The knowledgeable reader should be somewhat perplexed here, as Odysseus at this point in the overall narrative has not actually achieved his *nostos* and arrived home at Ithaka. The use of the word here evokes the proem, as does ἐνίσπω, but it takes a meaning different from “homecoming” and one closer to “arrival,” as used at 5.344-5.<sup>15</sup> It is possible that Odysseus’ definition of *nostos* as a word and concept is different from that of the overall narrative, and that a tension between the two equally valid definitions is being acknowledged here. Odysseus thus outlines the story for his audience just as the bard outlines the story of the poem for the audience in the proem.<sup>16</sup> As with all of his self-introductions, Odysseus takes ownership of his own story, and is thus telling it the way he wants to. This is an important point to keep in mind as we

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<sup>15</sup> ἀτὰρ χεῖρεςσι νέων ἐτιμαίεο νόστου / γαίης Φαιήκων...; Autenreith cites this line as an example of *nostos* meaning “arrival at a specific place.”

<sup>16</sup> See introduction for discussion of the proem.

examine the choices Odysseus makes in the remaining books to emphasize different aspects of his identity to meet various end goals.

The very first encounter in his wanderings that Odysseus describes is at Ismarus, where he briefly meets the Ciconians. The description of the beginning stage of his wanderings that follows the above description of Ithaka and Odysseus' professed feelings about the concept of homeland in general is perplexing given the dramatic change in direction from talk of love for family and homeland to talk of plunder:

Ἰλιόθεν με φέρων ἄνεμος Κικόνεσσι πέλασσεν,  
 Ἰσμάρω· ἔνθα δ' ἐγὼ πόλιν ἔπραθον, ὄλεσα δ' αὐτούς·  
 ἐκ πόλιος δ' ἀλόχους καὶ κτήματα πολλὰ λαβόντες  
 δασσάμεθ', ὡς μή τις μοι ἀτεμβόμενος κίοι ἴσης.

The wind, carrying me from Troy, brought me to the Ciconians -  
 to Ismarus. There I both sacked their city and I killed them:  
 Seizing both their wives and many of their possessions from the city,  
 we distributed them amongst ourselves, so that no one would be  
 cheated  
 of an equal portion by me. (9.39-42)

The brevity with which Odysseus describes the sack of Ismarus is alarming to the modern reader; he treats it as if it were his military duty rather than an unsolicited attack on an innocent

group of people.<sup>17</sup> We must keep in mind that Odysseus is under no obligation to attack anyone – his only explicit goal is to return home. Though he does go into some detail at 9.47-61, lines 9.39-42 are the crux of the situation, the most emphatic and the most jarring. The juxtaposition of this passage with Odysseus' description of Ithaka highlights the conflicting aspects of his identity in an extremely poignant way. Up to this point in his introduction and narration in Alkinous' court we have seen Odysseus primarily as a citizen and man of Ithaka, longing for his homeland and professing his love for it, and secondarily as a wanderer who has encountered and resisted lustful goddesses on his journey.<sup>18</sup> Now, though, we see Odysseus' warrior identity at the forefront, made all the more emphatic by the displaced nature of his warlike behavior. From an outside perspective, the audience knows that in this context - namely the beginning of his voyage - Odysseus is a wanderer and expected to behave as such. The fact that, instead of acting as a wanderer is expected to act he embraces a warrior mentality that would have been appropriate at Troy is a manifestation of an aspect of his identity that has served him well as a soldier but that, seemingly unbeknownst to Odysseus, is entirely inappropriate here. Where Odysseus should be making his way home, he ravages instead, revealing that his warrior instincts are very much a part of him beyond the war at Troy. His placement of this story towards the beginning of the narration of his journey in turn emphasizes his identity as a soldier as supremely important to his character as he wishes others to perceive it.

The passages analyzed above reveal above the complexity of Odysseus' character and the very different ways he selectively portrays it. With his words, he creates depictions of himself that suit whatever scenario he happens to be in, and in this case reveals his identity to Alkinous

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<sup>17</sup> A modern reader, of course, would have different notions of ethics here and while she may be shocked to read the sack of Ismarus episode, should also keep in mind that modern ethical ideas do not necessarily apply in the ancient world or the world of the *Odyssey*.

<sup>18</sup> It is certainly notable that Odysseus does not mention that he slept with both Circe and Calypso for years.

in a way that clearly shows intention to garner sympathy and encourage the Phaeacians to help him reach Ithaka. He depicts himself as a wanderer, having suffered much, and makes little mention of Troy until he describes the sack of Ismarus. This shows a clear turn toward a warrior mentality that in the Iliadic world would be respectable, but in the Odyssean world is displaced. When faced with the force of the narrative driving him toward his fated *nostos*, Odysseus resists by behaving like and shaping his character to be a warrior. When faced with a situation that has the potential to keep him from home even longer, though, as arriving at the unfamiliar court of Alcinous where he cannot be certain he will find sympathizers, Odysseus resists forces that would keep him from his *nostos* by emphasizing his identity as a wanderer in need of assistance. The complexity of Odysseus' character thus allows him to fit in and use certain situations to his advantage but can also be detrimental - or at the very least confusing - when aspects of his identity show through in situations where they are not appropriate.

#### 4. The Conflicted Identity of Nobody: Odysseus and the Cyclops

Odysseus' encounter with Polyphemus the Cyclops is the first lengthy encounter of the adventures he describes in books 9 through 12. It is also the most unique encounter when compared with those that occur both before and after it. It becomes clear almost immediately that the Cyclopes are too different from Odysseus, too far removed from his culture, practices and customs, to be able to participate in the kind of guest-host exchange Odysseus both wants and expects from Polyphemus. Once it is proven that Odysseus will gain nothing from being himself in this encounter, he chooses to be "Nobody," in an exchange that both exhibits his cunning and masks his identity that he is, in other encounters, proud to announce to whomever is listening.

There is a sense of force present in the lines examined in this chapter, much like the imagery present at 5.286-318.<sup>19</sup> Just as in that scene, here we see the notion that Odysseus and his men were forced to wander both as a result of natural and of divine force. They were "driven" by "all sorts of winds over the great gulf of the sea," with the words ἀνέμοισιν and θαλάσσης being examples of natural imagery and thereby calling nature's forcefulness to mind. Furthermore, Odysseus acknowledges that these forced wanderings were devised by Zeus (9.262), paralleling his introduction to Alkinous at 9.37-8, in which he also blames Zeus for the journey he has been forced to endure. This recalls his introduction to Nausicaa at 6.169-77 as well: in a very similar way, he describes his wanderings as something not voluntarily embarked upon, but rather as a circumstance forced upon him by various forces and entities. A pattern is formed by these similar introductions in terms of how Odysseus habitually introduces himself and his background: he is a wanderer, forced to travel by nature and divinity, and, implicitly, by narrative force, who has come from Troy and whose destination is Ithaka. Odysseus uses these

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<sup>19</sup> For analysis of this see my introductory chapter

introductions in part to garner sympathy from those he encounters, though this is not always successful. They serve a dual and seemingly contradictory purpose: on the surface, they are meant to facilitate his journey home, but they also express resistance to the forces driving him in the first place.

Odysseus describes the events in the land of the Cyclopes, as with all the encounters on his journey, in hindsight, and with full knowledge of the monstrous behavior of the Cyclops. However, he clearly also assumes before even meeting Polyphemus that he was monstrous, as evident when he tells Alkinous:

τοῦ φέρον ἐμπλήσας ἀσκὸν μέγαν, ἐν δὲ καὶ ἦα  
 κωρύκῳ· αὐτίκα γάρ μοι οἶσατο θυμὸς ἀγήνωρ  
 ἄνδρ' ἐπελεύσεσθαι μεγάλην ἐπιειμένον ἀλκὴν,  
 ἄγριον, οὔτε δίκας εὔειδότα οὔτε θέμιστας.

Having filled a large bottle of [wine] I brought it, and even provisions in a leather sack; for indeed my noble heart believed that I would come upon a great man clothed in might, savage, knowing neither justice nor customs. (9.212-15)

Odysseus' description of the Cyclops here could just as well be describing himself, considering the way he behaves in the encounter with Polyphemus to come. This highlights Odysseus' displaced behavior even further: he says that Polyphemus is "savage," that he does not know "justice" or "customs," but indeed Odysseus is just as helpless as Polyphemus is in this situation,

and therefore not as different from Polyphemus as he might think. While he is familiar with the customs of his own people, which he seems to expect Polyphemus to recognize as well, he is unfamiliar with the ways of the Cyclopes. His ignorance of and indifference to the way Polyphemus lives is what largely contributes to his downfall here; when he asserts his identity based on his values, Polyphemus understandably does not react as expected.

Odysseus begins his self-introduction to Polyphemus with an assertion very telling of his own character and identity:

ἡμεῖς τοι Τροίηθεν ἀποπλαγχθέντες Ἀχαιοὶ  
 παντοίοις ἀνέμοισιν ὑπὲρ μέγα λαῖτμα θαλάσσης,  
 οἴκαδε ἰέμενοι, ἄλλην ὁδὸν ἄλλα κέλευθα  
 ἦλθομεν· οὕτω που Ζεὺς ἤθελε μητίσασθαι.

We are Achaeans driven from Troy  
 by all sorts of winds over the great gulf of the sea,  
 hastening home, on various roads and paths  
 we came: Zeus desired to contrive it thus. (9.259-62)

The first striking aspect of this assertion is the use of Τροίηθεν and Ἀχαιοὶ at line 259, which introduces Odysseus and his men in a manner closely associated with the *Iliad* and the values inherent in such an association. Τροίηθεν establishes Troy as a point of origin, an obvious link between the *Iliad* and the present events in the *Odyssey*. Ἀχαιοὶ, furthermore, is a word with extremely poignant Iliadic connotations: while it occurs in various forms in 120 different

instances in the *Odyssey*, it occurs 605 times in the *Iliad*.<sup>20</sup> Given the frequency of the word in the latter, it recalls the *Iliad* wherever it is used in the *Odyssey*, including here at 9.259.

Odysseus clearly takes pride in his background as a warrior at Troy, as evident in his identification of himself and his men as Ἀχαιοὶ, and highlighted even further when he continues his introduction:

λαοὶ δ' Ἀτρεΐδew Ἀγαμέμνωνος εὐχόμεθ' εἶναι,  
 τοῦ δὴ νῦν γε μέγιστον ὑπουράνιον κλέος ἐστί·  
 τόσσην γὰρ διέπερσε πόλιν καὶ ἀπώλεσε λαοὺς  
 πολλοὺς.

We boast to be men of Agamemnon Atreides  
 whose glory indeed now is the greatest under heaven,  
 for he destroyed such a large city and killed  
 many men. (9.263-6)

This is essentially an instance of name dropping - albeit a displaced one. Odysseus assumes that Polyphemus has any knowledge of the events of the *Iliad* in bringing up Agamemnon, and furthermore assumes that, even if he did know of him, he would care. The verb εὐχόμεθ', "we boast," is marked here, since it unequivocally asserts the pride Odysseus feels in being a soldier who fought under Agamemnon. We know from both previous and subsequent descriptions of events in book 9 that Polyphemus is entirely disconnected from the events, customs and

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<sup>20</sup> These figures obtained from the online *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*.

priorities of Odysseus' world, and that the name Agamemnon, even though Odysseus clarifies the reasons for his fame at 9.235-6, means nothing to him. The most obvious *Iliadic* reference in this passage is, of course, the word κλέος, also used by Odysseus under the assumption that Polyphemus will understand its significance and connotation and in turn react positively to Odysseus and his men. The displaced nature of Odysseus' warrior values here is indicative of an attachment to the Trojan War and the Iliadic world that pervades his character even when it is to his disadvantage. It is therefore also a testament to the difficulty of the transition Odysseus is going through, and an instance of his resistance to the narrative force guiding him along his journey home.

The remaining lines of this selected passage further expose Odysseus' lack of understanding when it comes to Polyphemus' priorities, as well as his willingness to expose his own vulnerabilities in order to reach an end goal. The expectation of *xenia*<sup>21</sup> is paramount, reinforcing both of these points:

...ἡμεῖς δ' αὖτε κιχανόμενοι τὰ σὰ γούνα  
 ἰκόμεθ', εἴ τι πόροις ξεινήϊον ἢ καὶ ἄλλως  
 δοίης δωτήνην, ἣ τε ξείνων θέμις ἐστίν.  
 ἀλλ' αἰδεῖο, φέριστε, θεοῦς· ἰκέται δέ τοί εἰμεν.  
 Ζεὺς δ' ἐπιτιμήτωρ ἰκετάων τε ξείνων τε,  
 ξείνιος, ὃς ξείνοισιν ἅμ' αἰδοίοισιν ὀπηδεῖ.

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<sup>21</sup> *Xenia* is defined by the Oxford Classical Dictionary as, "friendship, ritualized (or guest-friendship), a bond of trust, imitating kinship and reinforced by rituals, generating affection and obligations between individuals belonging to separate social units."

Now we have come on our knees,  
 in case you might give a hospitality gift or  
 you might otherwise give us a gift, which is the custom of guest-  
 friends.

But respect the gods, brave one: for we are suppliants,  
 And Zeus is the protector of both suppliants and guest-friends,  
 Zeus the hospitable, who accompanies revered guest-friends.

(9.266-71)

In Odysseus' world, it is expected that a wanderer or traveler be accommodated in the house of a stranger, given guest gifts, and made to feel comfortable. In his limited scope, Odysseus assumes that Polyphemus adheres to the very same customs, even though, as we know from Odysseus' previous description of the Cyclopes, Polyphemus is clearly from a different world and operates under different social expectations. Odysseus clearly expresses vulnerability when he says that he and his men come on their knees as suppliants, but the statements that follow make evident that his expectation is to be met with *zenia*. Derivations of *xenia* are used a total of five times in these selected lines: ξεινήιον (9.267), ξείνων (9.268), ξείνων (9.270), ξείνιος and ξείνοισιν (9.271). The numerous instances of words referring to guest-friendship as well as the invocation of Zeus the protector highlight how strong Odysseus' expectations are, and set up an extreme contrast between the expectation of *zenia* and Polyphemus' refusal to partake in or even acknowledge the practice. Further reinforcing this is the use of the phrase θέμις ἐστίν (9.268), which expresses that Odysseus expects nothing less than hospitality from Polyphemus, and that

the concept that the cyclops might violate Odysseus and his men's custom of *zenia* is assumed to be impossible.

In one of the more famous Odyssean scenes in popular culture, Odysseus tells Polyphemus that his name is “Nobody,” thereby tricking him by assuming a false, even nonexistent identity:

Κύκλωψ, εἰρωτᾶς μ' ὄνομα κλυτόν; αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ τοι  
 ἐξερέω· σὺ δέ μοι δὸς ξείνιον, ὥς περ ὑπέστης.  
 Οὔτις ἔμοί γ' ὄνομα· Οὔτιν δέ με κικλήσκουσι  
 μήτηρ ἠδὲ πατήρ ἠδ' ἄλλοι πάντες ἑταῖροι.

Cyclops, you ask me for my famous name? Then I  
 will tell you: but you, give me my guest gift, which you just  
 promised.

Nobody is my name; and they all call me Nobody,  
 My mother and my father and all my other companions. (9.364-7)

In tricking Polyphemus through wordplay, Odysseus demonstrates the cunning he is so well known for and saves his remaining men as a result. The actual word “Nobody,” though, is an erasure of identity. Odysseus' name would mean nothing to Polyphemus, as we now know because he has failed to act within expectations according to Odysseus' own words (οὐ κατὰ μοῖραν ἔρεξας, “you did not act properly,” 9.352). Instead of insisting on naming himself as he has insisted on asserting his warrior background, Odysseus chooses to display his cunning with

words and eliminate a large part of his identity in order to escape. The erasure does not last long, however, and the end of the Cyclops episode indicates an apparent lack of control or desire on Odysseus' part to hide his identity any further, regardless of the potential effects or consequences. As Odysseus and the surviving men of his crew make their way back to the open sea and away from the island of the Cyclopes, he reveals his real name to the wounded

Polyphemus:

Κύκλωψ, αἴ κέν τις σε καταθνητῶν ἀνθρώπων  
ὀφθαλμοῦ εἴρηται ἀεικελίην ἀλαωτύν,  
φάσθαι Ὀδυσσεῖα πτολιπόρθιον ἐξαλαῶσαι,  
υἶὸν Λαέρτεω, Ἰθάκῃ ἐνὶ οἰκίᾳ ἔχοντα.

Cyclops, if anyone of mortal men should  
ask you about the shameful blinding of your eye,  
say that Odysseus the sacker of cities completely blinded you,  
Laertes' son, who has a home in Ithaka. (9.502-5)

In many ways this is a traditional self-introduction. Odysseus establishes both his homeland and his patrilineage, as is expected. What differentiates this introduction from others is the aggression present in Odysseus' words. He calls the blinding of Polyphemus' eye *ἀεικελίην*, a word I translate here as "shameful" but also has connotations of unseemliness and disfigurement. With this one word Odysseus is physically insulting the cyclops before taking full credit for making him appear that way. The most marked word in terms of Odysseus' identity in this

passage is the epithet *πολιπόρθιον*, a word with very obvious connotations of war. Odysseus embraces his warrior identity here, and although at first he presents himself in the manner of a wanderer, he now acts as a warrior is expected to and completely disregards any expectations of *xenia*, even as his own men beg him to let go of his pride: Σκέτλιε, τίπτ' ἐθέλεις ἐρεθιζέμεν ἄγριον ἄνδρα; / ὅς καὶ νῦν πόντονδε βαλὼν βέλος ἤγαγε νῆα / αὖτις ἐς ἤπειρον, καὶ δὴ φάμεν αὐτόθ' ὀλέσθαι. (“Wicked man, why do you wish to rouse this wild man to fight? He who even now throwing a weapon seaward led our ship back again to land, and we thought indeed that we would die then and there?” 9.494-6). The words of Odysseus’ companions indicate their frustration with their leader, who insists on behaving in a warlike manner even when it might harm both them and himself. They see that Odysseus’ resistance to letting go of his identity as a warrior is illogical and could affect them; to address their captain as Σκέτλιε is a serious accusation, and their deep fear is evident when they state that they expected to die there. Even with his companions trying to force him away from his warlike behavior, though, Odysseus persists and continues to act in a manner that would be much more appropriate in an Iliadic setting.

The encounter and interactions with Polyphemus demonstrate resistance on the part of Odysseus to the wandering lifestyle he is being forced into on his journey. Despite being in a situation clearly warranting action according to the unspoken laws of *xenia*, and even expecting that he will be received in accordance with the very same laws, Odysseus cannot resist the pull to act the way a warrior would. He demonstrates a significant lack of understanding of how he is expected to act – by Polyphemus and by his men – in this encounter, and refuses to let go of his warrior past and the behavior associated with it even when asked to. His attachment to his life at Troy makes Odysseus’ unable to fully engage in the present, and causes him to act in ways that

demonstrate a resistance to the new life he is being forced to start post-war. Even when he verbally introduces and positions himself as a wanderer, the pull of warrior life still manifests in his actions.

## 5. Recognition

Up to this point I have, via Odysseus' self-introductions, examined the force that the poem's narrative provides on his journey, forcing him toward a *nostos* when he exhibits signs that he is perhaps not ready for one, and that he would rather be at Troy embracing his warrior identity. Once he has arrived at Ithaka, however, we begin to see a different side of Odysseus: one who longs not only for life at Troy, but for the journey he has taken to get to where he is and the different people and places he encountered along the way. This, again, manifests partially in the ways he introduces himself to others, anonymously or otherwise. Odysseus' resistance to the narrative force now includes signs that he wishes his journey were still ongoing.

Given the narrative buildup to it, Odysseus' arrival at Ithaka after twenty years away is anticlimactic at best. In another sense, though, it is where the implicit conflict between nostalgia and *nostos* comes to a head. Odysseus is not even conscious when he reaches his homeland, but rather wakes up in a haze and cannot recognize it: *ὁ δ' ἔγρετο δῖος Ὀδυσσεὺς / εὔδων ἐν γαίῃ πατρῶϊ, οὐδέ μιν ἔγνω, / ἤδη δὴν ἀπεών·* ("then godlike Odysseus woke up from slumber on the shores of his ancestors, but he did not recognize it: he had, by this time, been away for a long time," 13.187-9). That Odysseus is unable to recognize his homeland because he has been away for so long is an obvious idea, but one with perhaps unanticipated complexity. The narrative explores the deeper significance beneath the lack of recognition in the lines that follow, attributing it implicitly to Odysseus' own transformation as a result of his journey as well as to the changes that have occurred at Ithaka in his twenty-year absence.

After Odysseus wakes up, Athena immediately disguises him so that no one will recognize him, and, additionally, makes Ithaka unrecognizable to him:<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> This parallelism is also reflected in the etymological correspondence of *ἔγνω* (13.188) and *ἄγνωστον* (13.191), as Odysseus is simultaneously unable to recognize his homeland and to be recognized within it.

περὶ γὰρ θεὸς ἠέρα χεῦε

Παλλὰς Ἀθηναίη, κόρυη Διός, ὄφρα μιν αὐτὸν  
 ἄγνωστον τεύξειεν ἕκαστά τε μυθήσαιο,  
 μή μιν πρὶν ἄλοχος γνοίη ἀστοί τε φίλοι τε,  
 πρὶν πᾶσαν μνηστῆρας ὑπερβασίην ἀποτίσαι.  
 τοῦνεκ' ἄρ' ἄλλοειδέα φαινέσκετο πάντα ἄνακτι,  
 ἀτραπιτοί τε διηνεκέες λιμένες τε πάνορμοι  
 πέτραι τ' ἠλίβατοι καὶ δένδρεα τηλεθάοντα.

Pallas Athena daughter of Zeus, poured a cloud of mist around

him,

so that she could render him unrecognizable and tell him

everything,

and so that his wife, friends and townspeople would not recognize

him too soon

before he could punish all the suitors for their crimes.

She therefore made everything appear different to Lord Odysseus,

the long paths and the convenient harbors

and the steep rocks and blooming trees. (13.189-96)

Athena's actions and their results can be taken metaphorically here, as representations of the complications of returning home after an extended absence. She first disguises Odysseus, making

him unrecognizable to his own family and those who have awaited his arrival for so long. This, in turn, questions whether Odysseus has changed in his absence, and, further, whether reintegration is possible given the changes he has gone through as a result of his experiences away. Conversely, Athena's disguising of Ithaka and the fact that she makes it unrecognizable to Odysseus calls into question the inevitable changes that have gone on in his absence – a reminder that life at Ithaka has not paused just because Odysseus has been away. The description of the landscape at 13.195-6 recalls Odysseus' own description of his beloved homeland at 9.21-8,<sup>23</sup> emphasizing the familiarity he had with it in the past, as well as highlighting the gravity of Athena's actions with the reminder that Odysseus has a very deep love for his homeland as he remembers it from before he left. In the quote above, the poem challenges the audience's potential preconceptions of what homecoming means; Odysseus does not recognize Ithaka, and the people of Ithaka cannot recognize Odysseus.

Odysseus' immediate reaction, not recognizing that he has in fact arrived home at last, is to assume that he has landed at yet another stop on his seemingly eternal journey, exclaiming aloud much the same thing he has said on the other legs of his journey: 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 θεουδής; (“Oh dear me, which mortals' land have I arrived in? are they insolent and savage or are they just, and friendly to guests, and with godlike minds?” 13.200-202). The key difference here, though, is that the audience knows Odysseus is in fact home at Ithaka, as the poem reminds us again at 13.197: στῆ δ' ἄρ' ἀναΐξας καὶ ῥ' ἔσιδε πατρίδα γαῖαν (“and springing up he stood, and gazed upon his fatherland”). This complicates the tension between the achievement of *nostos* as the narrative's ultimate goal and Odysseus' more implicit desire to

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<sup>23</sup> See chapter 3 for analysis of this passage

return to the ways he has lived and existed in the past, whether it be his journey or the war at Troy.

This implicit desire manifests symbolically in the lines that follow. What is, on the surface, a shocking display of materialism is also a deeper metaphor: Odysseus is fixated on his treasures, acquired from the Phaeacians, to such a degree that he loses interest in his surroundings. Interspersed among his outbursts of obsession with physical objects are comments about his anger at the Phaeacians for bringing him to a land he believes is unknown. He first laments his current predicament, wishing he had stayed with the Phaeacians and reached another king to help him get home, and expressing anxiety over where he might hide his possessions so that they are not stolen:

πῆ δὴ χρήματα πολλὰ φέρω τάδε; πῆ δὲ καὶ αὐτὸς  
 πλάζομαι; αἴθ' ὄφελον μεῖναι παρὰ Φαιήκεσσιν  
 αὐτοῦ· ἐγὼ δέ κεν ἄλλον ὑπερμενέων βασιλῆων  
 ἐξικόμην, ὅς κέν μ' ἐφίλει καὶ ἔπεμπε νέεσθαι.  
 νῦν δ' οὔτ' ἄρ' ἐπιθέσθαι ἐπίσταμαι, οὐδὲ μὲν αὐτοῦ  
 καλλείψω, μή πῶς μοι ἔλωρ ἄλλοισι γένηται.

Where, then, should I bring all these treasures? And where  
 have I been driven myself? I should have remained among the  
 Phaeacians  
 in their land; I'd have found another very mighty king,  
 who would have entertained me as a guest and sent me off on my

way.

Instead now I don't know where to place these treasures, nor will I leave them here, lest perhaps my spoils are taken by someone else.

13.203-8

The treasures Odysseus is so concerned about are souvenirs of sorts, representing one of many legs of his journey, and by extension the people and places he has encountered and the things he has learned. If we take the treasures as a physical representation of the journey, as they were acquired from people he encountered along the way, we are able to see Odysseus' attitude toward *nostos* in a different light. With all the narrative buildup in the first half of the poem, one would expect that Odysseus' homecoming be the climax of the story, and that he act in a way that reflects his accomplishment of the long-awaited goal. His obsession about what to do with his treasures, and his worry that they might be taken from him, indicates that he might not be ready to return home; he is still clinging to the journey and desires to travel and learn more. Even though he is unaware that he is at Ithaca, his preoccupation with the objects he has acquired on his journey signifies a longing for travel, and to continue on in his newfound post-Troy wanderer lifestyle.

Odysseus now moves to a criticism of the Phaeacians, whom he wrongly thinks have sent him to yet another foreign land:

ὦ πόποι, οὐκ ἄρα πάντα νοήμονες οὐδὲ δίκαιοι  
ἦσαν Φαιήκων ἡγήτορες ἠδὲ μέδοντες,  
οἳ μ' εἰς ἄλλην γαῖαν ἀπήγαγον· ἦ τέ μ' ἔφαντο

ἄξειν εἰς Ἰθάκην εὐδείελον, οὐδ' ἐτέλεσσαν.

Ζεὺς σφεας τίσαιτο ἰκετήσιος, ὅς τε καὶ ἄλλους

ἀνθρώπους ἐφορᾷ καὶ τίνυται ὅς τις ἀμάρτη.

Good grief, all those Phaeacian leaders and rulers weren't very

intelligent or just,

they carried me off to another foreign land; and they told me

that they would lead me to clear Ithaka, but they didn't do that.

May Zeus, protector of suppliants, punish them, he who

oversees even other people and punishes anyone guilty of wrong.

13.209-214

The exclamation ὦ πόποι highlights Odysseus' frustration and even misery at not being home, and his call to Zeus to punish the Phaeacians highlights his anger in *still* not having achieved his *nostos*. This anger at the Phaeacians, rooted in the fact that he thinks they have sent him to the wrong land and extended his journey home even more, would seem to counteract my argument about Odysseus' resistance to homecoming throughout much of the poem. Indeed, it does point to a certain level of impatience with the length of the journey and a frustration with not being home at the very moment he is speaking. However, Odysseus' alternation between displaying his anger at the Phaeacians and his attachment to his possessions demonstrates a strong indecisiveness between *nostos* and the journey. His mind moves back and forth here between a frustrating desire for his long-awaited homecoming and the alluring prospect of traveling exhibited through a nostalgic obsession with representative material objects.

Odysseus subsequently returns to his hyper-focus on these objects and seems to enter a state of sheer paranoia as the scene progresses. He first expresses his strong distrust for the Phaeacians, who he thinks may have stolen some of his treasures (13.215-16), and then takes to counting them himself to make sure none are missing:

ὥς εἰπὼν τρίποδας περικαλλέας ἠδὲ λέβητας  
 ἠρίθμει καὶ χρυσὸν ὑφαντά τε εἴματα καλά.  
 τῶν μὲν ἄρ' οὐ τι πόθει· ὁ δ' ὀδύρετο πατρίδα γαῖαν  
 ἐρπύζων παρὰ θῖνα πολυφλοίσβοιο θαλάσσης,  
 πόλλ' ὀλοφυρόμενος...

Thus speaking, he counted his gorgeous tripods and cauldrons  
 and his gold and his beautiful woven garments.  
 The good news was that he wasn't missing any of it, but  
 nevertheless he grieved for his fatherland  
 crawling near the shores of the much-roaring sea,  
 mourning intensely... (13.217-221)

Odysseus, in a moment of striking and even unflattering behavior, counts each object as the narrative names them. The depth of Odysseus' attachment is displayed here, and the fact that he counts them individually indicates an almost desperate longing for the journey in this case. Even within these lines, though, we see Odysseus' strong sense of grief and misery at not being home. The obvious evidence of this is the vocabulary of mourning and grief: ὀδύρετο, "he grieved,"

and ὀλοφουρόμενος, “mourning” both signify strong feelings of misery when missing Ithaka. Even ἐπύζων, “crawling,” comes with a sense of desperation about it, as if Odysseus cannot even walk upright under the weight of such grief. The most significant part of this passage in terms of Odysseus’ conflicted feelings about travel and *nostos*, however, is also the smallest: the μὲν...δὲ construction at line 219 grammatically links the two sides of Odysseus’ longings and desires together. On the one hand, (μὲν) all of his treasures are there; he has his souvenirs from his travels, and can take comfort in memories of his transformative journey. On the other hand (δὲ), he grieves for his homeland. This grammatical connection is the essence of my interpretation of the scene: Odysseus simultaneously feels two kinds of longing, one for the journey and one for his home. The poem explicitly links these two longings together with these small and easily overlooked particles, giving the sense that Odysseus’ conflicted feelings exist alongside each other despite naturally conflicting with one another as well.

I turn now to Odysseus’ encounter with Athena, who approaches him on the beach in the lines following the passage quoted above. This is the first encounter Odysseus has upon his arrival home, and the first self-introduction he gives after finding out where he is. Athena reveals to him that he is not at some strange, unknown land but is in fact at Ithaka, as the Phaeacians had promised he would be. Given his lament just before the encounter (13.219-21), Odysseus’ reaction to this revelation is unexpected and anticlimactic, just as his reaction in the very beginning of the scene when he awakens on the beach. While in his first reaction to his arrival he turns to his possessions, symbolic of the journey, to cope with being in this new place he has not realized is his home yet, in this second reaction Odysseus turns to telling stories of his glorious days at Troy upon finding out that he is home at Ithaka. This, in turn, represents a longing for life

at war that manifests alongside the realization that he has finally arrived at Ithaka and completed his journey.

Athena comes to Odysseus disguised (13.222), so that he assumes she is a native of the seemingly unknown land he has found himself in. When he asks what land it is (13.233), she responds with a description of Ithaka that echoes, and in some ways outshines, the previous descriptions we have examined thus far.<sup>24</sup> She begins with a description typical of Ithaka, that it is “rugged and unfit for horses” (...τρηγεῖα καὶ οὐχ ἱππῆλατός ἐστιν, 13.242), but then continues to describe it in the same idealized way that Odysseus does in book 9:

ἐν μὲν γάρ οἱ σῖτος ἀθῆσφατος, ἐν δέ τε οἶνος  
 γίγνεται· αἰεὶ δ' ὄμβρος ἔχει τεθαλυῖά τ' ἐέρση·  
 αἰγίβοτος δ' ἀγαθὴ καὶ βούβοτος· ἔστι μὲν ὕλη  
 παντοίη, ἐν δ' ἀρδμοὶ ἐπηετανοὶ παρέασι.  
 τῷ τοι, ξεῖν', Ἰθάκης γε καὶ ἐς Τροίην ὄνομ' ἵκει,  
 τήν περ τηλοῦ φασὶν Ἀχαιῖδος ἔμμεναι αἴης.

For there is [in this land] an immense quantity of grain, as well as wine. There is always rain and abundant dew.

It is perfect for raising goats and cattle. There is both forest of every kind, and tons of watering holes.

Therefore, stranger, the name ‘Ithaka’ reaches all the way to Troy, Even though, as they say, it is far away from the land of the

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<sup>24</sup> I examine Odysseus’ idealization of Ithaka at lines 13.195-6 in this chapter, and at lines 9.21-8 in chapter 3..

## Achaean. (13.244-249)

Athena's description of Ithaka emphasizes its abundance of resources, portraying it as a land pleasant to inhabit and call home and appealing directly to Odysseus' own self-professed idea of Ithaka shown earlier in the poem.<sup>25</sup> Athena thus hints at the prospect of a happy homecoming experience in a romanticized land, contributing to the narrative's overall portrayal of the idea of *nostos* as something to look forward to, a fairytale ending of sorts. What Odysseus is about to experience, though, is anything but.

Athena tells Odysseus that he is home at Ithaka in way consistent with the other anticlimactic aspects of his arrival there. She nonchalantly drops it into her description, in the genitive case (as opposed to making it the emphatic subject of the sentence), after praising the natural resources of the land. She takes at least part of the emphasis off of Ithaka itself here and transfers it to Troy, bringing up the very place Odysseus originated from, in a sense the polar opposite of his home but a place he strongly identifies with nonetheless. Athena's mention of Troy here is also no accident. Knowing Odysseus, she must also be aware of the pride he takes in having fought at Troy. Coming to him disguised as a stranger, she furtively appeals to the side of him that still thinks of Troy often and shows signs of wanting to be in an Iliadic world.

Odysseus' response to Athena, whom he thinks is a stranger, is telling of his conflicted mindset as well. He now knows that he has arrived at Ithaka, and does react happily to the news, albeit internally: ...γήθησεν δὲ πολύτλας δῖος Ὀδυσσεύς, / χαίρων ἢ γαίῃ πατρῴῃ, ὥς οἱ ἔειπε / Παλλὰς Ἀθηναίη, κούρη Διὸς, αἰγιόχοιο· (“godlike Odysseus, prone to suffering, rejoiced, and

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<sup>25</sup> The idealized language here mimics previous descriptions of Ithaka, as well as other descriptions of lands of abundance in the poem – take, for example, the land of the Cyclopes, in which everything grows lavishly without being cultivated (9.117-24).

was glad in his fatherland, as Pallas Athena, daughter of aegis-bearing Zeus, spoke to him,” (13.250-2). When he responds, he reveals an identity to her that is not his own, but rather a false one, crafted with his cunning mind (13.254-5). He admits that he has heard of Ithaca (13.256), and then describes the fictional killing of Orsilochus. He first explains the reason for the conflict between them:

οὐνεκά με στερέσαι τῆς ληϊδος ἤθελε πάσης  
 Τρωϊάδος, τῆς εἶνεκ' ἐγὼ πάθον ἄλγεα θυμῷ,  
 ἀνδρῶν τε πολέμους ἀλεγεινά τε κύματα πείρων  
 οὔνεκ' ἄρ' οὐχ ᾗ πατρὶ χαριζόμενος θεράπευον  
 δῆμῳ ἔνι Τρώων, ἀλλ' ἄλλων ἄρχον ἐταίρων.

For he [Orsilochus] wished to deprive me of all the spoils from  
 Troy, the ones that I suffered miseries in my heart for,  
 plowing through wars of men as well as pain-causing waves,  
 for I was ungracious to his father in not serving alongside his men  
 in the land of Troy, but instead led my own comrades there.

(13.262-6).

The mention of Troy here alludes to Odysseus' true past, and the very notion of his new identity being a warrior, which he really was, indicates that he sees it as an integral part of his character; why else would he include such details in his newly crafted life story? Furthermore, he describes his character as choosing not to obediently follow as part of an army, but to go to Troy as a

leader himself. Odysseus thus prioritizes warrior values in crafting his false identity, emphasizing how important they are to his true character as well.

Odysseus also continues to show signs in this scene of obsession over his treasures from the Phaeacians. He first mentions them at 13.258, when he notes that he (i.e., his false identity) left half of them behind with his children. This would seem to be a fixation not only on the treasures themselves, but on the quantity of them as also displayed when he counts them at 13.217-221. In the passage above, Odysseus notes that the spoils are part of the reason he murdered Orsilochus (13.262-3), and he briefly mentions them again in describing how his false character got to Ithaca (13.283-4). The fixation on possessions here serves the practical purpose of explaining to Athena their presence on Ithaca with him, but also implicitly reinforces their representation of Odysseus' past as well – not just of the journey, but of Troy.

Odysseus describes the killing of Orsilochus in detail at 13.267-270, at which point the warfare imagery in the story reaches its peak:

τὸν μὲν ἐγὼ κατιόντα βάλλον χαλκήρεϊ δουρὶ  
 ἀγρόθεν, ἐγγὺς ὁδοῖο λοχησάμενος σὺν ἑταίρῳ·  
 νύξ δὲ μάλα δνοφερὴ κάτεχ' οὐρανόν, οὐδέ τις ἡμέας  
 ἀνθρώπων ἐνόησε, λάθον δὲ ἔθυμὸν ἀπούρας.

I hit him with my bronze spear as he approached  
 from the fields, after waiting for him on the side of the road with a  
 comrade;  
 the very dark night obscured the sky, and no one

perceived us there, and I escaped notice as I robbed him of his  
life.

(13.267-70)

What Odysseus describes here is, in essence, a strategic and premeditated plot to kill Orsilochus akin to something a soldier might do in times of war. The secrecy of the action is emphasized with the imagery of the obscured sky and dark night, as well as the description of Odysseus' character's lying in wait for his victim. It is a brutal murder, described concisely and unapologetically, and indicating that this sort of killing is something Odysseus considers acceptable – a mentality that certainly doesn't fit with the expected behavior of a man at home. The killing of Orsilochus also involves a preservation of honor, as Odysseus' character preserves both his ability to lead as a general and his ownership of the possessions that represent honor at Troy to him.

Odysseus moves from his concise and shocking story of murder seamlessly into a description of travel, explaining how his false character arrived at Ithaka and in shifting topics transitions from an Iliadic theme to a more Odyssean theme, focused more so on the journey and homecoming than on violence and the preservation of honor, although those concepts do, of course, complicate the meaning of homecoming in Odysseus' case. In a story incorporating elements of what his true experience has been, Odysseus describes the manner in which he came to be on the shores of Ithaka with help not from the Phaeacians, but from the Phoenicians. He asks them to take him to Pylos or Elis, but instead, is forced by winds to wander and eventually land at Ithaka, a land unknown to his character: ἀλλ' ἣ τοί σφρας κείθεν ἀπόσατο ἰς ἀνέμοιο / πόλλ' ἀεκαζομένους, οὐδ' ἤθελον ἐξαπατῆσαι. / κείθεν δὲ πλαγχθέντες ικάνομεν ἐνθάδε νυκτός

(“but the force of the wind pushed [the Phoenicians] back from there entirely against their will, and they did not wish to deceive me. However, being driven from their destination, we arrived here during the night,” 13.276-8). In this abbreviated account of Odysseus’ false journey, the word *πλαγχθέντες* is perhaps the most significant. Echoing the proem (ὄς μάλα πολλά / *πλάγχθη*, 1.1-2), the use of the word recalls Odysseus’ journey as the poet-narrator describes it in the opening of the poem. The appearance of *πλαγχθέντες* here encourages the audience to consider the similarities in Odysseus’ true and false journeys, and to see that just as being a soldier is a part of his identity that he prioritizes even in lying, so too is wandering and travel.

The introduction to Athena in disguise examined here is the first of many false identities Odysseus is to craft over the course of his slow and turbulent reintegration at Ithaka. Here and in the passages about his possessions, Odysseus and the narrative in general sways back and forth between the idea of travel and the idea of home, indicating that reintegration after being away for so long is anything but straightforward and complicating the idea of a fairy-tale ending to Odysseus’ journey. In the next chapter, I explore more of these introductions, and examine more fully what they say about Odysseus’ character as he attempts – and, at times, even resists – to reintegrate into his old life.

## 6. Reintroduction and Reunification

In this chapter I examine Odysseus' false introductions to Eumaeus and Penelope in books 14 and 19, respectively, and his reunification with his father in book 24. All three encounters allow the audience to examine the multiple possible outcomes of Odysseus' *nostos* as the process of reintegration and everything that goes along with it is questioned and complicated. The interactions with these important people at Ithaka bring up uncertainties about whether Odysseus will ever be able to resume life as it was pre-Troy, since the false identities he crafts are markedly different from the ways he introduces himself on his journey.

Odysseus' self-introduction to Eumaeus in book 14 (14.192-359) is extremely lengthy and incredibly detailed, a story that calls into question the status of everything he tells Alkinous in books 9 through 12. Odysseus lies here with such ease that the audience might wonder whether the story he tells at Phaeacia is also just an elaborate lie. I examine below a few selected passages from the story, all of which display Odysseus' ambivalence toward homecoming and his nostalgic longing the past.

Odysseus shapes his nameless false character with a strong emphasis on both his suffering as well as his virtue and strength. He begins his story with the former, telling Eumaeus that if he were to set out a proper dinner for the two of them, Odysseus would be able to tell his of his troubles and sufferings for a full year without finishing (ῥηϊδίως κεν ἔπειτα καὶ εἰς ἐνιαυτὸν ἅπαντα / οὐ τι διαπρήξαιμι λέγων ἐμὰ κήδεα θυμοῦ, / ὅσσα γε δὴ ζύμπαντα θεῶν ἰότητι μόγησα, 14.196-8). The instance of hyperbole here indicates the level of Odysseus' suffering; he even mentions his beard as evidence of the miseries he constantly endures: ἀλλ' ἔμπης καλάμην γέ σ' οἶομαι εἰσορόωντα / γινώσκειν· ἦ γάρ με δύη ἔχει ἦλιθα πολλή ("but still I think you can see and know by my stubble, for indeed very much anguish holds me," 14.214-5). Finally,

Odysseus emphasizes his false identity's moral character at 2.211-13, when he explains that he married into a wealthy family εἵνεκ' ἐμῆς ἀρετῆς, ἐπεὶ οὐκ ἀποφώλιος ἦα / οὐδὲ φυγοπτόλεμος... (“on account of my virtue, since I was neither empty-headed nor the type to flee from war,” 14.212-3). The use of ἀρετῆ here in addition to φυγοπτόλεμος bring up connotations of war, since, as Debra Hawkee (2002) notes, “*Aretē* was associated with the goodness, courage, and prowess of a warrior...Conceptually, *aretē* was tightly bound with *agathos* (good), *kleos* (glory), *timē* (honor) and *philotimia* (love of honor).”<sup>26</sup> The combination of ἀρετῆ with φυγοπτόλεμος, which literally contains the word “war,” presents a clear message: Odysseus is creating a character who is by no means inexperienced or ill-equipped for battle. This complicates the concept of homecoming and resuming life at Ithaka as it implies that Odysseus might not be ready to resume life as it was at Ithaka pre-Troy.

In the lines that follow, Odysseus continues to build upon the new identity's warrior characteristics that he has already introduced. He describes war experiences more explicitly now:

ἦ μὲν δὴ θάρσος μοι Ἄρης τ' ἔδοσαν καὶ Ἀθήνη  
καὶ ῥηξηνορίην· ὁπότε κρίνοιμι λόχονδε  
ἄνδρας ἀριστιῆας, κακὰ δυσμενέεσσι φυτεύων,  
οὐ ποτέ μοι θάνατον προτιόσσετο θυμὸς ἀγῆνωρ,  
ἀλλὰ πολὺ πρῶτιστος ἐπάλμενος ἔγχει ἔλεσκον  
ἀνδρῶν δυσμενέων ὃ τέ μοι εἶξειε πόδεσσι.

Indeed, both Ares and Athena gave me courage

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<sup>26</sup> Hawkee 187.

as well as the might to break through enemy ranks; whenever I  
 selected for an ambush  
 my best men, and was plotting evil things for the enemy,  
 my manly heart did not once forebode death for me;  
 instead I was first by far in springing upon and hitting with my spear  
 whichever of the enemy men was inferior to me on foot. (14.216-221)

Odysseus crafts his false character to be the ideal warrior: brave, strong, cunning and successful, and, of course, assisted by both Ares and Athena, the gods of warfare and battle strategy. He uses a multitude of warrior “buzz words” to illustrate this: the gods have given him θάρσος, courage, and ῥηξηνορία, might. He is a leader who selects the best men for whatever mission he has embarked upon (217-8), and plots ambushes and κακὰ, “evil things,” for his enemies, demonstrating the type of cunning intelligence that the real Odysseus is known for.

The most relevant part of Odysseus’ story to my argument comes at 14.222-8, when he explicitly rejects the quintessential life of a man at home in favor of war:

τοῖος ἔα ἐν πολέμῳ· ἔργον δέ μοι οὐ φίλον ἔσκεν  
 οὐδ’ οἰκωφελίη, ἢ τε τρέφει ἀγλαὰ τέκνα,  
 ἀλλά μοι αἰεὶ νῆες ἐπήρετμοι φίλαι ἦσαν  
 καὶ πόλεμοι καὶ ἄκοντες ἐϋξέστοι καὶ οἴστοί,  
 λυγρά, τὰ τ’ ἄλλοισὶν γε καταριγηλὰ πέλονται.  
 αὐτὰρ ἐμοὶ τὰ φίλ’ ἔσκε τὰ που θεὸς ἐν φρεσὶ θῆκεν·  
 ἄλλος γάρ τ’ ἄλλοισιν ἀνὴρ ἐπιτέρπεται ἔργοις.

I was this way in war; but manual labor was never dear to me  
 nor was housekeeping, which brings splendid children;  
 to me instead ships furnished with oars were dear,  
 and wars and well-polished weapons and arrows,  
 things wretched to other people, causing them to shudder.  
 To me, though, these things were dear, and I suppose a god placed  
 them in my heart;  
 For different men can take pleasure in different things. (14.222-8)

Although he says it of a character not entirely himself, this is the first time in the poem that Odysseus explicitly expresses a desire to be at war instead of at home. He presents an interesting dichotomy here, as if there is no middle ground between life at home and life at war. Acknowledging that “different men can take pleasure in different things,” he places himself squarely in the category of men who enjoy war and everything associated with it, weapons as well as ships, which connote traveling as well. Emphasizing his position in the matter even further is his use of frequentative verb forms both times he tells Eumaeus that his false character prefers war: ἔσκεν (222) and ἔσκε (227) indicate that this preference was, and suggest that it may even still be, an ongoing one, something Odysseus’ false identity is perpetually accustomed to.

The importance of the above quote must not be underestimated. While, of course, Odysseus is not describing his own preferences, he is crafting an identity that he wishes to be known and disguised by. In this sense, the audience can take the values he assigns to this new identity as ones he considers at least appropriate to the given circumstances, if not generally ideal

or beneficial. Odysseus has already shown a pattern of behavior throughout the narrative that indicates an affinity for the life of a warrior, and the fact that he crafts a new character that so strongly identifies with them indicates that he, on some level, is also more comfortable in a warrior's shoes than in a father's or farmer's. He continues to tell Eumaeus false war stories, from 14.229-242, at which point he describes his character's homecoming, offering the audience a window into his own thoughts on what *nostos* might mean for him at Ithaka. He tells Eumaeus at 14.240-2 that ἔνθα μὲν εἰνάετες πολεμίζομεν υἷες Ἀχαιῶν, / τῷ δεκάτῳ δὲ πόλιν Πριάμου πέρσαντες ἔβημεν / οἴκαδε σὺν νήεσσι, θεὸς δ' ἐκέδασσεν Ἀχαιοῦς (“We sons of the Achaeans were at war there [at Troy] for nine years, and once we’d sacked Priam’s city in the tenth year of war we sailed for home with our ships, but then a god dispersed the Achaeans”). This is, essentially, the true story of Odysseus’ experience at Troy, fighting for ten years and then setting sail for Ithaka only to have a god prevent a swift and easy homecoming. In this version, Odysseus’ false identity arrives home safely, but does not stay long:

μῆνα γὰρ οἶον ἔμεινα τεταρπόμενος τεκέεσσι  
 κουριδίη τ' ἀλόχῳ καὶ κτήμασιν· αὐτὰρ ἔπειτα  
 Αἴγυπτόνδε με θυμὸς ἀνώγει ναυτίλλεσθαι,  
 νῆας ἐὸ στεῖλαντα, σὺν ἀντιθέοις ἐτάροισιν.  
 ἐννέα νῆας στεῖλα, θεῶς δ' ἐσαγείρατο λαός.

For I remained only one month delighting in my children  
 and my wedded wife and my possessions; then, however,  
 my heart commanded me to sail to Egypt,

whenever I had prepared ships well with godlike companions.

I got nine ships ready, and my men swiftly collected into them.

(14.244-8)

Odysseus says very little about his false character's homecoming, which is perhaps surprising given the general thematic focus on *nostos* as a concept through the entirety of the poem. He is also very quick to announce his departure, but not before he mentions the things that, to him, sum up what life at home consists of: his children, his wife, and his possessions. Odysseus does acknowledge that his character took pleasure in being together with his wife and children again and mentions his possessions alongside them, as if he gives just as much importance to the material objects that represent home as he does to the people that make up his family.<sup>27</sup> The striking part of this quote comes at 14.246, though, when Odysseus abruptly turns from describing his return to life at home to telling Eumaeus that his character's "heart commanded" him to leave again. This brings up a question explored at earlier times in the poem, but in a way that catches the audience's attention more explicitly now: what is to happen to Odysseus once he achieves his *nostos*? There is a narrative buildup to homecoming and a glorification of *nostos*, but there has not been much explicit discussion of the aftermath, nor of reintegration.<sup>28</sup> Odysseus' false identity is not content with staying home, only lasting a month before setting off on another voyage. This suggests that Odysseus is thinking about what he will do next and introduces to the audience the idea that Ithaca is not Odysseus' definitive final destination.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> We know from his arrival scene at Ithaca in book 13 that Odysseus fixates easily on possessions, especially those that have significant sentimental or representative value to him.

<sup>28</sup> A notable exception to this would be the repeated mention of the story of Agamemnon's homecoming (1.32-43; 3.253-312; 4.512-37; 11.404-434; 24.95-7), which suggests that *nostos* might not be as smooth a process as it seems on the surface.

<sup>29</sup> This point is further enforced by Teiresias' prophecy in book 11, in which he tells Odysseus that, once he arrives home and takes revenge on the suitors, he should take a winnowing fan inland as far as he can, until he reaches

I move now to Odysseus' reintroduction to Penelope in book 19, at which point he tells yet another story of false identity that also reinforces the themes in his conversation with Eumaeus. Having already once refused to talk about his background at 19.115-17,<sup>30</sup> Odysseus acts reluctant to tell Penelope his history at first, saying it only augments his misery, but proceeds to identify himself as a wanderer from Crete:

ὦ γύναι αἰδοίη Λαερτιάδεω Ὀδυσῆος,  
οὐκέτ' ἀπολλήξεις τὸν ἐμὸν γόνον ἐξερέουσα;  
ἀλλ' ἔκ τοι ἐρέω· ἦ μὲν μ' ἀχέεσσι γε δώσεις  
πλείοσιν ἢ ἔχομαι· ἢ γὰρ δίκη, ὅπποτε πάτρης  
ἧς ἀπέησιν ἀνὴρ τόσσον χρόνον ὅσσον ἐγὼ νῦν,  
πολλὰ βροτῶν ἐπὶ ἄστε' ἀλώμενος, ἄλγεα πάσχων·

O honored wife of Odysseus, the son of Laertes,  
will you not cease asking about my origin?  
But I will tell it to you. Indeed, you offer me to sorrows  
more than I am already consumed by; for this is expected,  
whenever  
a man has been away from the land of his father for such a long  
time as I am now,

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people who have no knowledge of the sea or ships (11.119-25); this suggests that Odysseus' travels will not be complete even when he has achieved his *nostos*.

<sup>30</sup> τῷ ἐμὲ νῦν τὰ μὲν ἄλλα μετάλλα σὺ ἐνὶ οἴκῳ, / μηδ' ἐμὸν ἐξερέεινε γένος καὶ πατρίδα γαῖαν, / μη μοι μᾶλλον θυμὸν ἐνιπλήσης ὀδυνάων ("Oh, inquire now about other things from me in your own house, but to not ask me about my family or fatherland, lest you fill my heart with more miseries," 19.115-17).

wandering to many cities of mortal people, suffering miseries.

(19.165-70)

In this first formal introduction to Penelope, Odysseus establishes another new identity apparently on the basis of his true identity as already established in the narrative. There is a clear thematic link to the proem: Odysseus stresses that his character has suffered much, has been away from home for a long time, and has wandered. The phrase *πολλὰ βροτῶν ἐπὶ ἄστε'* *ἀλώμενος* (19.170) clearly echoes line 1.3, *πολλῶν δ' ἀνθρώπων ἴδεν ἄστεα καὶ νόον ἔγνω* ("he both saw cities of many men and knew [their] minds"), and the phrase *ἄλγεα πάσχων* (19.170) echoes 1.4, *πάθεν ἄλγεα ὃν κατὰ θυμόν* ("he suffered sorrows in his heart"), indicating to the audience that core aspects of Odysseus' own character are in question. In emphasizing these things, Odysseus puts forth a character that relates to his own identity in a different way than his previous two false identities; where he emphasizes warfare in the other two, he emphasizes wandering here, and the suffering that goes along with it.

The unique thing about this false introduction in comparison with Odysseus' previous ones is the mention of his own name, as well as the subsequent deferral of the subject matter to a false story about Odysseus instead of a description of the false identity itself. While he introduces himself as Aethon (19.183), having again chosen Crete as his character's place of origin (19.172), he tells Penelope a story about an apparently fictitious episode of Odysseus' wandering, this time pre-Troy: *ἔνθ' Ὀδυσῆα ἐγὼν ἰδόμην καὶ ξείνια δῶκα. / καὶ γὰρ τὸν Κρήτηνδε κατήγαγεν Ἴς ἀνέμοιο, / ἰέμενον Τροίηνδε παραπλάγξασα Μαλειῶν.* ("I saw Odysseus there [at Crete] and gave him gifts of guest friendship, for the force of a wind drove him down to

Crete, while he was hastening to Troy, causing him to wander past Maleia” 19.185-7).<sup>31</sup> The emphasis on wandering continues here as Odysseus is described as being forced off course by winds. There is a strong similarity to Odysseus’ experience leaving Calypso’s island, where he also has been trapped (albeit for other reasons) and upon leaving which the winds, sent by Poseidon, blow him off course as he tries to sail home and bring him, in the end, to the Phaeacia.<sup>32</sup> The word *παραπλάγξασα* picks up the proem once more, as a variation of the same verb used in the phrase describing Odysseus at 1.1-2, *ὄς μάλα πολλὰ / πλάγχθη* (“[the man] who has been made to wander very much”).

The false story ends with an explanation for why Odysseus had stayed in the home of Aethon for twelve days, only leaving on the thirteenth:

ἔνθα δώδεκα μὲν μένον ἦματα δῖοι Ἀχαιοί·  
 εἴλει γὰρ Βορέης ἄνεμος μέγας οὐδ’ ἐπὶ γαίῃ  
 εἶα ἴστασθαι, χαλεπὸς δέ τις ὄρορε δαίμων·  
 τῇ τρισκαιδεκάτῃ δ’ ἄνεμος πέσε, τοὶ δ’ ἀνάγοντο.

Then the divine Achaeans remained there for twelve days;  
 for the great North Wind held them, and did not  
 permit them even to stand on land, as some divine entity had  
 roused it.

But on the thirteenth day the wind subsided, and they set sail.

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<sup>31</sup> We know Odysseus is lying because the narrative tells us so: after he finishes speaking, the poem alerts the audience that *ἴσκει ψεύδεα πολλὰ λέγων ἐτύμοισιν ὁμοῖα* (“he said many false things, speaking them as equal to truth,” 19.203).

<sup>32</sup> 5.328-332, 381-6

(19.199-202)

Odysseus continues to use aspects of his own journey in forming his story here. The theme of being subject to the winds, as well as inadvertently getting stuck in a foreign place against one's will, is not new to the poem here. While I emphasize the connection to the story of Odysseus' leaving Calypso's island here, there are many other places in the narrative where the winds play a role in Odysseus' wandering as well.<sup>33</sup> Odysseus is, in crafting the story this way, conveying the importance of travel and wandering in relation to his own identity and experience, and concealing this idea within a story that disguises this very identity.

Following this initial formation of a new false identity, Odysseus and Penelope proceed to test one another, slowly revealing their intensely connected bond. I do not include an analysis of these passages here because they do not offer examples of Odysseus' conveyance of his own identity, thoughts and values, but rather primarily question the meaning of reconnection in a marriage after so many years apart as Odysseus' identity is slowly revealed to his wife.

I turn now to the final introduction Odysseus makes in the poem, to his father Laertes. This introduction comes in the final moments of the epic, complete with yet another story of false identity. Odysseus comes upon his father gardening, taking care of his land through labor and thus displaying the quintessential behavior of a man's life at home. He introduces himself as Eperitus, a friend of the Odysseus who has come to Ithaka to search for him (24.302ff). Laertes outwardly displays his pain at hearing the story Odysseus tells, pouring dust on his head, an action reminiscent of burial imagery, igniting feelings of sympathy in Odysseus:

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<sup>33</sup> See my introductory chapter for an analysis of one such passage in book 5. Another notable occurrence of wind as an agent in wandering is the gift of Aeolus at the beginning of book 10.

ὥς φάτο, τὸν δ' ἄχεος νεφέλη ἐκάλυψε μέλαινα·  
 ἀμφοτέρησι δὲ χερσὶν ἔλων κόνιν αἰθαλόεσσαν  
 χεύατο κακ κεφαλῆς πολιῆς, ἀδινὰ στεναχίζων.  
 τοῦ δ' ὠρίνετο θυμός, ἀνὰ ῥῖνας δέ οἱ ἦδη  
 δριμύ μένος προὔτυψε φίλον πατέρ' εἰσορόωντι.  
 κύσσε δέ μιν περιφὺς ἐπιάλμενος...

Thus [Odysseus] spoke, and a dark cloud of anguish came over

[Laertes];

grabbing sooty dust in both hands

he poured it down over his grey head, groaning dolefully.

[Odysseus'] heart was stirred, and through his nose now

a sharp impulse forced itself as he looked at his father.

He kissed [his father] and jumped toward him, clinging on...

(24.315-20)

Odysseus' reaction to Laertes' response is very different from the other occasions at which he crafts false identities and stories about himself, perhaps because it seems his father is aged and vulnerable to the point of being near death. Indeed, Laertes' physical appearance, described before he and Odysseus begin talking, indicates this as well; Laertes wears tattered clothes (24.227-8) and is described as γήραϊ τειρόμενον, μέγα δὲ φρεσὶ πένθος ἔχοντα ("worn out by old age, holding great grief in his heart," 24.233). It is worth noting also that line 24.315 appears

twice in the *Iliad*, both at scenes of death as well.<sup>34</sup> Odysseus' very physical response to seeing Laertes in pain at his supposed absence indicates the depth of his sense of duty and affection toward his father; it is as if his mental rigidity and control and the cunning mind that he is known for are overpowered by the bond between father and son, leaving Odysseus unable to maintain his guise any longer. He reveals himself, not failing either to mention the massacre that he has just carried out:

κεῖνος μὲν τοι ὄδ' αὐτὸς ἐγὼ, πάτερ, ὄν σὺ μεταλλάξ,  
 ἤλυθον εἰκοστῷ ἔτει ἐς πατρίδα γαῖαν.  
 ἀλλ' ἴσχεο κλαυθμοῖο γόοιό τε δακρυόεντος.  
 ἐκ γάρ τοι ἐρέω· μάλα δὲ χρὴ σπευδέμεν ἔμπης·  
 μνηστῆρας κατέπεφνον ἐν ἡμετέροισι δόμοισι,  
 λῶβην τινύμενος θυμαλγέα καὶ κακὰ ἔργα.

That man you speak of is this one here, I myself, father, whom you  
 inquire about,  
 I have come to my fatherland in the twentieth year [since I left].  
 But hold back your weeping and tearful crying.  
 For I will tell you everything; but even so it is most necessary that  
 we hasten;  
 I have slain the suitors in our home,  
 Making them pay for their distressing disgrace and horrible deeds.

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<sup>34</sup> *Il.* 17.591; 18.22

(24.321-6)<sup>35</sup>

Odysseus' self-identification can be analyzed in two parts here. After identifying himself, once again without his name, he speaks about his *nostos*, his having arrived home in the twentieth year since he left for Troy (24.322). *Nostos* must, then, be considered an integral part of his identity, or at least his identity as he presents it to others, as he acknowledges it first and foremost in a statement of who he is. In the second part of this identity-revelation, Odysseus jumps abruptly to telling Laertes of the massacre that he has just carried out (24.325-6), something which again must be taken as fundamental to his identity. Odysseus thus conveys his identity to Laertes in a manner that is, on the one hand, focused on *nostos* and his return home after a long absence, and on the other hand focused on the violence he has perpetrated against the suitors and the preservation his own honor he feels he has accomplished in slaying them. Odysseus communicates his own character with the combination of these two important aspects of it, and in doing so reaffirms his values and priorities to the audience as well as to Laertes – and, perhaps, to himself as well.

As a final analysis of this scene, it must be acknowledged also that the fact that Odysseus does not reveal himself outright, even with his revenge completed, further complicates the meaning of *nostos* as presented by the poem. As with the suitors, where the audience might expect a grand revelation of identity and emotional reunion, Odysseus manages to reveal himself slowly and anticlimactically first by lying about who he is and then by leaving out his own name as he finally does admit to being Odysseus. The analyses of these scenes demonstrate that *nostos* is a more complicated concept than it appears at first, and that Odysseus himself shows signs of

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<sup>35</sup> See chapter 7 for analysis of the massacre of the suitors

resistance to it by revealing himself in unexpected and anticlimactic ways, eliminating the possibility of an emotional or shocking moment of revelation and instead reintegrating slowly, carefully and, perhaps, resistantly back into the life he left behind when he went to Troy.

I have chosen to explore the passages cited above because they represent Odysseus' values in a way that is significant to his willingness to resume life at Ithaka as it was before he left for Troy, and explore the idea that reintegration will not be as straightforward as the audience might expect. Odysseus is given multiple chances to craft his own narrative; his response is to portray his character as attached to both war and wandering in the absence of the greater narrative force that drives him toward Ithaka and reintegration in the poem. This, in turn, indicates to the audience his resistance to reintegration as a result of his strong attachments, which are forces in and of themselves.

## 7. Revenge

I turn now to Odysseus' revenge on the suitors, a scene that is both jarring in its violence and unusual in its portrayal of *nostos* given the expectation of it that the narrative encourages up to this point.

Book 21 consists largely of the competition among the suitors, who do not realize that Odysseus is in their midst, to win the hand of Penelope by successfully shooting an arrow with Odysseus' famed bow. Only Odysseus has the capability to string the bow and shoot successfully, and it thus serves as a mechanism for outing his identity to the suitors. It is an important symbol as well, for since Odysseus uses a weapon of war to announce his return and introduce his true identity to the court, he also embraces war as a part of his identity. The test of the bow is a test of martial prowess, and Odysseus' choice to introduce himself in this way acknowledges that the Iliadic mentality has not left him, and that he continues to identify as a warrior.

The force of Odysseus' introduction via the bow is illuminated by remarks made by the suitors while they still think Odysseus is an itinerant beggar. Antinous, for example, is boisterous in his insults of Odysseus, first saying that he stands no chance at stringing the bow and eventually telling him, in essence, to be quiet and step back from what is happening: ...ἀλλὰ ἔκηλος / πῖνέ τε, μηδ' ἐρίδαινε μετ' ἀνδράσι κουροτέροισι ("just drink undisturbed, and don't quarrel with younger men" 21.309-10). When Penelope chastises Antinous for this comment (21.311-19), the suitor Eurymachus responds with a comment that is indicative of the suitors' mindset as a whole:

κούρη Ἰκαρίοιο, περίφρον Πηνελόπεια,

οὐ τί σε τόνδ' ἄξεσθαι οἴομεθ'· οὐδὲ ἔοικεν·  
 ἀλλ' αἰσχυνόμενοι φάτιν ἀνδρῶν ἠδὲ γυναικῶν,  
 μή ποτέ τις εἴπησι κακώτερος ἄλλος Ἀχαιῶν  
 ἢ πολὺ χεῖρονες ἄνδρες ἀμύμονος ἀνδρὸς ἄκοιτιν  
 μῶνται, οὐδέ τι τόξον ἐΰξοον ἐντανύουσιν·  
 ἀλλ' ἄλλος τις πτωχὸς ἀνήρ ἀλαλήμενος ἐλθὼν  
 ῥηϊδίως ἐτάνυσσε βίον, διὰ δ' ἤκε σιδήρου.  
 ὣς ἐρέουσ', ἡμῖν δ' ἂν ἐλέγχεα ταῦτα γένοιτο.

Daughter of Ikarius, thoughtful Penelope,  
 we do not think this man could carry you off at all; it's unsuitable.  
 But we sit being ashamed of reports of men and women,  
 Lest some other, more malevolent Achaean should say,  
 'Indeed these much inferior men are courting the wife of  
 an excellent man, and they can't even string his polished bow,  
 but some other man, a beggar, having come here wandering,  
 strung the bow easily, and even shot through iron.'  
 When they say these things, it will be such a disgrace for us.

(21.321-29)

The fear of shame and being thought inferior is evident in Eurymachus' words, though he positions himself as confident in the suitor's ability to win Penelope, or at least in the certainty of the disguised Odysseus' inability to string the bow if the apparently mighty suitors also cannot.

Using words like αἰσχυνόμενοι (“ashamed”) and ἐλέγχεα (“disgrace”), Eurymachus expresses the deep concern of the suitors that they be seen as weak and inferior, unworthy of Penelope, even if he is only saying these things to mock Odysseus. On a larger level, this quote positions the narrative in a way that highlights Odysseus’ exposure of his true identity via the very same bow, and his eventual takedown of the suitors. Eurymachus ironically describes exactly what is about to happen, strengthening the force of the narrative in the scenes to come by positioning the audience to consider the repercussions of Odysseus’ revenge from the suitors’ perspective.

The repeated assertions of the suitors assuming that the newcomer in their midst will never be able to string Odysseus’ bow increase as the scene builds, leading up to Odysseus’ taking the bow in his hands. Unnamed suitors antagonize him, one saying that he must be some type of bow savant to be handling it in such a way, and another, described by the narrative as one of the νέων ὑπερηγορούντων (“haughty young men,” 21.401), says, αἶ γὰρ δὴ τοσσοῦτον ὀνήσιος ἀντιάσειεν / ὡς οὗτός ποτε τοῦτο δυνήσεται ἐντανύσασθαι (“For indeed if only this man might come face to face with luck so that he might somehow be able to stretch the bowstring tight,” 21.402-3), indicating that he thinks the only way Odysseus will successfully string the bow is by luck. Finally, Odysseus’ moment comes, as he proceeds to shoot the arrow with his famed bow:

εἶλετο δ’ ὠκὺν οἴστον, ὃ οἱ παρέκειτο τραπέζῃ  
 γυμνός· τοὶ δ’ ἄλλοι κοίλης ἔντοσθε φαρέτρης  
 κείατο, τῶν τάχ’ ἔμελλον Ἀχαιοὶ πειρήσεσθαι.  
 τὸν ῥ’ ἐπὶ πῆχει ἐλὼν ἔλκεν νευρὴν γλυφίδας τε,  
 αὐτόθεν ἐκ δίφροιο καθήμενος, ἦκε δ’ οἴστον

ἄντα τιτυσκόμενος, πελέκεων δ' οὐκ ἤμβροτε πάντων  
 πρώτης στείλειης, διὰ δ' ἀμπερὲς ἦλθε θύραζε  
 ἰὸς χαλκοβαρῆς·

Then he grabbed a swift arrow, which was on the table beside  
 him,  
 completely bare; The other arrows sat inside the hollow quiver,  
 those the Achaeans were just about to try out for themselves.  
 Taking this arrow, he placed it on the center of the bow and  
 placed the arrow's notch on the bowstring  
 and from there, from the stool he was sitting on, he shot the  
 arrow  
 aiming it straight forward, and didn't miss the holes of  
 any of the ax handles, and it went straight through and out,  
 the arrow weighted with bronze. (21.416-23)

The narrative clearly expands here, full of technical archery terminology, both to demonstrate Odysseus' mastery of the bow and to mark the significance of the moment within the greater story. Familiar terms like ὀϊστός, ἰὸς and φαρέτρα, along with more obscure terms like νευρή, γλυφίς, στείλειη and πέλεκυς serve to convey Odysseus' skill and familiarity with archery and with this bow in particular. These words, being that they describe a weapon, also serve to signal that a war scene is about to begin.<sup>36</sup> The significance of Odysseus' revealing his identity via a

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<sup>36</sup> δίφορος (21.420) may also be an example of war vocabulary, tracing its original meaning to war chariots rather than just seating (Autenreith).

war weapon is paramount here, and demonstrates a desire to be seen first and foremost as a warrior and subsequently as a returning husband.

This is also the point in the narrative at which there should be no doubt in the minds of the suitors that the newcomer in their midst, the man disguised as a beggar, is Odysseus, though this is not in fact the case. The suitors do not show any outward signs of recognition. Contrary to the way the narrative builds up *nostos*, both before Odysseus arrives at Ithaca and in the delay of the overall revealing of his identity for many books before it occurs, there is no moment at which the suitors react with surprise that Odysseus has returned home. This diffuses the force of Odysseus' arrival, which both he and the audience have awaited for much time. However, it opens up space for the narrative to create an even more dramatic scene, which begins after the abrupt end to book 21.

The scenes in book 22 erase any remaining notion that the *Odyssey* is a poem exclusively about homecoming and not about war. Odysseus, immediately after successfully stringing and shooting the bow, calls out to Apollo for help and begins his bloody massacre of the suitors. The fact that he calls out to Apollo specifically (...πόρῃ δέ μοι εὖχος Ἀπόλλων, "Apollo, give me glory," 22.7), is significant in that it signals Iliadic battle conventions. The word εὖχος, according to Autenreith, means "glory" in the sense of victory in war. Furthermore, Apollo is known in the first book of the *Iliad* for causing plague for the Achaeans with his arrows.<sup>37</sup> These narrative cues indicate that a battle is coming. The difference in this battle as opposed to those in the *Iliad* comes in the displaced nature of the behavior; Odysseus is in his own home, a place where up until this point only feasts and family conversations have taken place. This strengthens the force of Odysseus' actions, making the already disturbing scene of ruthless killing all the

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<sup>37</sup> See Chapter 1 footnote 2 for my stance on relating the *Odyssey* to the *Iliad*.

more shocking. The actual killing commences almost immediately after Odysseus calls to Apollo, and he chooses the suitor Antinous as his first victim in an alarming manner:

τὸν δ' Ὀδυσσεὺς κατὰ λαιμὸν ἐπισχόμενος βάλεν ἰῶ,  
 ἀντικρὺ δ' ἀπαλοῖο δι' ἀυχένος ἤλυθ' ἀκωκὴ.  
 ἐκλίνθη δ' ἑτέρωσε, δέπας δέ οἱ ἔκπεσε χειρὸς  
 βλημένου, αὐτίκα δ' αὐλὸς ἀνὰ ῥῖνας παχὺς ἤλθεν  
 αἵματος ἀνδρομέοιο· θοῶς δ' ἀπὸ εἴο τράπεζαν  
 ὤσε ποδὶ πλήξας, ἀπὸ δ' εἶδατα χεῦεν ἔραζε·

Then Odysseus, aiming his arrow, shot him in the throat,  
 and its point went right through his tender neck.

Antinous leaned sideways, and his drinking cup fell out of his hand  
 when he was struck, and at once a jet of human blood came swiftly  
 out through his nose; and he quickly pushed the table away from  
 himself

with his foot, terrified, and food poured off onto the ground.

(22.15-20)

The description of Antinous' murder is extremely graphic - unexpectedly so. The image of blood shooting forth from his nose after he has been stabbed in the neck is something one would not ordinarily expect to see in a setting such as this – Odysseus' palace is hardly the ideal backdrop for a scene of bloodshed. The significance of Odysseus' appeal to Apollo at 22.7 is even more

evident here. Antinous is, of course, the first of many victims Odysseus is about to kill, and, as the audience has already been prepared with the idea that a battle scene is coming, they are equipped to see each and every murder as an act of war, which when combined create a battle as violent and bloody as one from the *Iliad*.

If we rewind to the moment just before Odysseus shoots Antinous, Antinous' attitude provides perspective on Odysseus' actions. With the narrative already having established that Odysseus is acting as he would in war, Antinous' thoughts and actions in the moments leading up to his death highlight the displacement of war imagery in the scenes here. After Odysseus calls to Apollo, Antinous is described as feasting, enjoying himself free from any fear of murder:

ἦ τοι ὁ καλὸν ἄλεισον ἀναιρήσεσθαι ἔμελλε,  
 χρύσειον ἄμφωτον, καὶ δὴ μετὰ χερσὶν ἐνώμα,  
 ὄφρα πίῃ οἴνοιο· φόνοσ δέ οἱ οὐκ ἐνὶ θυμῷ  
 μέμβλετο· τίς κ' οἴοιτο μετ' ἀνδράσι δαιτυμόνεσσι  
 μοῦνον ἐνὶ πλεόνεσσι, καὶ εἰ μάλα καρτερός εἴη,  
 οἷ τεύξειν θάνατόν τε κακὸν καὶ κῆρα μέλαιναν;

Truly, [Antinous] was just about to pick up a beautiful goblet,  
 a gold one with two handles, and indeed he was holding it in his  
 hands,  
 so that he could drink the wine; and murder was far from his mind;  
 who would think, among men feasting,  
 that one among many, even if he were very strong,

would be plotting a dark, miserable death for him? (22.9-14)

Antinous is positioned as completely oblivious to Odysseus' intentions here, with the narrative even rhetorically asking if anyone might expect a fate such as his during a feast. There is much to be said about the suitors' greed and improper feasting in the poem, but in this argument Antinous' intentions are not necessarily relevant. Whether it is fitting or not, there is a feast occurring at this moment in the poem, and certain behaviors are expected given the parameters of the situation. Antinous' behaviors reinforce these parameters, highlighting the extreme nature of Odysseus' violent actions. The overall message here is presented in the differences in the two men's behaviors. Antinous is feasting, and Odysseus is battling. Neither one acts in accordance with the other's expectations based on their individual situations. This disconnect reflects the tension of the moment and highlights the displacement of Odysseus' behavior in a setting where violence tolerated in war is not in any way expected or condoned.

The other suitors, once Antinous has been killed, are quick to adapt to the change in behavioral expectations that Odysseus' actions have brought about. Their first instinct is not to run for safety, but rather, driven into a state of confused chaos, to seek out weapons (22.21-5). This, of course, is futile, since Odysseus and Telemachus have already prepared for this situation by stashing away the weapons where the suitors cannot get to them (16.282-97). At the same time as they, perhaps reflexively, adapt to war behavior, though, the suitors maintain their ignorance and do not realize that Odysseus has killed Antinous on purpose: ἴσκεν ἕκαστος ἀνὴρ, ἐπεὶ ἧ φάσαν οὐκ ἐθέλοντα / ἄνδρα κατακτεῖναι· τὸ δὲ νήπιοι οὐκ ἐνόησαν, / ὡς δὴ σφιν καὶ πᾶσιν ὀλέθρου πείρατ' ἐφῆπτο ("Each man was confused, since they indeed did not suppose that he had wished to kill the man; but the fools did not perceive how the limit of destruction was

impending for all of them.” 22.31-3). This naivety is rooted in the assumption that warfare has a specific setting, and that the brutal killing of a man as the one that has just occurred would not be appropriate in one’s home as opposed to on the battlefield. The suitors’ reaction thus signals, albeit subtly here, that Odysseus’ behavior is out of place.

It is at this point that Odysseus verbally affirms his identity, something he has yet to do publicly. In doing so, he also calls the suitors out on their crimes and makes clear his intentions to have his revenge on them:

ὦ κύνες, οὐ μ’ ἔτ’ ἐφάσκεθ’ ὑπότροπον οἶκαδ’ ἰκέσθαι  
 δήμου ἅπο Τρώων, ὅτι μοι κατεκείρετε οἶκον,  
 δμῶϊσιν δὲ γυναιξὶ παρευνάζεσθε βιαίως,  
 αὐτοῦ τε ζώοντος ὑπεμνάσθε γυναῖκα,  
 οὔτε θεοὺς δείσαντες, οἳ οὐρανὸν εὐρὺν ἔχουσιν,  
 οὔτε τιν’ ἀνθρώπων νέμεσιν κατόπισθεν ἔσεσθαι·  
 νῦν ὑμῖν καὶ πᾶσιν ὀλέθρου πείρατ’ ἐφήπται.

O dogs, you didn’t ever think that I would come back home again  
 from the land of the Trojans, and so you consumed my home,  
 you forcibly raped my maids and slave women,  
 and even though I was alive you courted my wife,  
 neither fearing the gods, who hold the vast universe  
 nor fearing that there would be any repercussions of men  
 afterward;

now the limit of destruction is impending over all of you.

(22.35-41)

There is certainly a disconnect within the narrative buildup to Odysseus' apparent identity reveal here. The bow scene of book 21 served as a physical revelation of his identity, proving it by performing the one action Odysseus alone is capable of. Here, where one might expect him to say outright that he is Odysseus, he focuses instead on the suitors and what they have done wrong, as well as the fact that he plans to hold them accountable. This is a stark contrast to instances at which Odysseus displays more arrogance surrounding his identity; he reveals his name to Polyphemus, for example, in a dramatic and pronounced way, even when his comrades beg him not to provoke the cyclops (9.494-9):

Κύκλωψ, αἴ κέν τις σε καταθνητῶν ἀνθρώπων  
ὄφθαλμοῦ εἴρηται ἀεικελίην ἀλαωτύν,  
φάσθαι Ὀδυσσεῖα πτολιπόρθιον ἐξαλαῶσαι,  
υἷὸν Λαέρτεω, Ἰθάκῃ ἐνὶ οἰκίᾳ ἔχοντα.

Cyclops, if anyone of mortal men should  
ask you about the shameful blinding of your eye,  
say that Odysseus the sacker of cities completely blinded you,  
Laertes' son, who has a home in Ithaka. (9.502-5)<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> For an analysis of the Cyclops episode of book 9, see chapter 3.

Facing the suitors, though, Odysseus displays more concern with them than with himself as he shifts the focus with his words almost entirely to their transgressions. He does not actually say his name, shifting the focus away from his own identity and onto the revenge he is pursuing. There is no moment of astonishment as Odysseus' arrival, no exuberant joy at being home, no tearful family reunion, and no explicit declaration of identity to the unsuspecting suitors in order to give force and power to his revenge. What we get instead is an almost seamless transition from life as a soldier in the Trojan War, to life as a soldier trying to get home, to the actual homecoming event at which the audience – the modern audience especially – is encouraged to expect a grand event and a satisfying ending to the narrative. Odysseus still gets his revenge, as the bloody and exceedingly violent passages to come indicate, but it does not come in the way the narrative encourages the concept of *nostos* to be viewed.

## Conclusion

I began this thesis with a quote from the musical *Hamilton*, asking my audience to consider the significance of telling one's own story as opposed to having it told by others. In this thesis I have explored, through a close reading approach, the manifestation of this concept in the *Odyssey*, with special attention to how Odysseus' formulations of his own story push back against the greater narrative and the forces within it. The bard-narrator is the largest force at play, and the forces described within the story play specific roles as well. There is a juxtaposition between the story of Odysseus as told by the bard-narrator and Odysseus' story as he tells it himself, which, although also told by the bard-narrator, pushes back against the narrative the bard-narrator is creating. The ironies of this are many – and perhaps the *Hamilton* analogy can be taken further here. Miranda's musical gives voice to its title character in many ways, the most significant of which is the songs that Alexander Hamilton sings himself. He tells his own story in doing so, but there are still other characters at play, and, crucially, the audience knows that Hamilton is fated to be shot in the duel that ends his life and the play. Here, too, we see a character given voice within a greater narrative, i.e., the play, with control over how his own story is told but not how it progresses overall. Odysseus' narrative is similar; he tells his own story, shaping his own character in a much more explicit way than Hamilton does, and also more explicitly resisting the course that the narrative inevitably must take. The result is a narrative that on the surface seems straightforward: Odysseus makes his journey home from Troy and arrives at Ithaka just in time to take revenge on the suitors who have been courting his wife in his absence. Upon closer inspection, the meaning of homecoming is complicated as Odysseus shows signs of resistance – or perhaps even unwillingness – to the *nostos* that he is fated to achieve.

Homecoming, like any big life change, is not a straightforward process. What I hope to have accomplished with this thesis is a complication of Odysseus' homecoming via close reading, which in turn opens up space for analysis of Odysseus' resistance to aspects of *nostos* despite the forces driving him toward it. By telling his own story in self-introductions, Odysseus is able to regain control on some level and shape his story the way best suited to him, his character, and the various situations he finds himself in. This thesis could certainly serve as a jumping off point for further examination of Odysseus' apparent resistance to *nostos*, especially as it relates to his assumption of a bard-like role. An important aspect of Odysseus' homecoming journey and process that has not been fully explored here is the connection to veterans' experiences and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, which could be an avenue for further exploration as well.

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