

NARRATIVE REVENGE AND THE POETICS OF JUSTICE IN THE *ODYSSEY*: A STUDY ON *TISIS*

by

Alexander C. Loney

Department of Classical Studies  
Duke University

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Approved:

\_\_\_\_\_  
José M. González, Supervisor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Carla M. Antonaccio

\_\_\_\_\_  
Peter H. Burian

\_\_\_\_\_  
William A. Johnson

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of Doctor  
of Philosophy in the Department of  
Classical Studies in the Graduate School  
of Duke University

2010

ABSTRACT

NARRATIVE REVENGE AND THE POETICS OF JUSTICE IN THE *ODYSSEY*: A STUDY ON *TISIS*

by

Alexander C. Loney

Department of Classical Studies  
Duke University

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Approved:

\_\_\_\_\_  
José M. González, Supervisor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Carla M. Antonaccio

\_\_\_\_\_  
Peter H. Burian

\_\_\_\_\_  
William A. Johnson

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of Doctor  
of Philosophy in the Department of  
Classical Studies in the Graduate School  
of Duke University

2010

Copyright by  
Alexander C. Loney  
2010

## Abstract

This dissertation examines the interplay of ethics and poetic craft in the *Odyssey* through the lens of the theme of *tisis*, “retribution.” In this poem *tisis* serves two main purposes: it acts as a narrative template for the poem’s composition and makes actions and agents morally intelligible to audiences. My work shows that the system of justice that *tisis* denotes assumes a retaliatory symmetry of precise proportionality. I also examine aspects of the ideology and social effects of this system of justice for archaic Greek culture at large. Justice thus conceived is readily manipulable to the interests of the agent who controls the language of the narrative. In the end, I show that this system fails to secure communal harmony.

The project has three parts. In part one, I argue that earlier scholars have not sufficiently appreciated the narrative character of *tisis*. Following an inductive analysis of the poem’s paradigmatic example of Orestes’ *tisis*, I draw upon the methods of narratology to propose a new definition of *tisis* as a “narrative,” a certain conventional arrangement of a set of actions and roles that together constitute a narrative whole. This narrative acts as a compositional tool for a singer’s re-composition and performance of poetry, becoming a major organizing structure in the tradition of Homeric poetry. From this practice arises the *Odyssey*’s complex texture of several interwoven *tisis* narratives that dialectically carry out the poem’s moral program. Because Homeric ethics is a narrative ethics, a practice of placing one’s self and others in the stories that society tells,

*tisis* provides an ethical framework that renders experience morally intelligible and allows actors to evaluate the moral standing of themselves and others. *Tisis*, thus, is morally inflected: those who play the role of avenger receive commendation; those who play the victim, condemnation. And the great moral conflicts in the *Odyssey*—between Poseidon and Odysseus, between Odysseus and the suitors—are over the assignment and adoption of these narrative roles.

Against the other *tisis* narratives in the *Odyssey*, Odysseus' own, central narrative appears strikingly atypical. Unlike Aegisthus, the suitors have neither killed anyone nor corrupted Penelope—nonetheless, they face the same punishment. But through a creative interpretation of *ius talionis*, the singer makes a series of brilliant rhetorical moves to recast the acts of the suitors as accomplished murder and adultery. This allows Odysseus to play the part of just avenger *of himself*. Furthermore, it resolves in the person of Odysseus a latent tension between the narratives of *nostos* (which implies the happy return of a hero) and *tisis* (which implies the death of a hero and vengeance on his behalf).

In part two, I argue that the ideology of justice that *tisis* denotes—returning equivalent harm for harm—runs through the heart of archaic Greek culture, but it is always vulnerable to manipulation. Speakers—and poets especially—exploit the possibilities of ambiguity in the language of justice in order to fabricate a likeness between crimes and their punishments, thus justifying avengers. Similarly, speakers use poetic techniques to cement this ideology into more than a merely talionic retribution of

“like for like” and instead construct a justice that equates a crime and its punishment. Under this strengthened regime of equivalence, crimes merge with and become their own punishment. This ideology has political consequences: I take as a banner example Alcman’s *Partheneion*, in which the order of both the political community and the universe rests on *tisis*. I examine as well many other examples of a tight linkage between crime and punishment.

In part three, I return to the *Odyssey*, asking why the singer uses this rhetoric of synonymy of crime and punishment and why he has arranged the moral positions of the characters as he has. I conclude that this arrangement serves the narrator’s seemingly monologic, overt program of justifying Odysseus and his divine patrons. But at the same time the narrator has taken the symbolic reasoning of *ius talionis* to a rhetorical extreme, effectively making the suitors into cannibals. Likewise, the retributive claims of the suitors’ kin at the close of the poem disappear all too easily: hostilities are not so much resolved as obliterated in mass amnesia. Through such holes in the fabric of the justice of *tisis*, the audience perceives the workings of another program, a subversive program that calls into question the narrator’s overt program and the entire, corruptible system of retributive justice.

My project thus contributes to our understanding of the *Odyssey*’s subversive narrative integrity, the operation of justice in archaic Greece, and the nature of narratorial authority in poetic discourse. My conclusions should interest not only philologists and literary critics, but also scholars of ethics and political theory.

# Contents

Abstract .....	iv
List of Tables .....	ix
List of Figures .....	x
List of Abbreviations .....	xi
Acknowledgements .....	xix
1. Introduction .....	1
Part I. τίσις as Narrative .....	15
2. The Retribution of Orestes and the Semantics of τίσις .....	15
2.1 Orestes' Paradigmatic τίσις .....	15
2.2 Defining τίσις .....	30
3. Other Narratives of τίσις in the <i>Odyssey</i> .....	47
3.1 Divine Justice: The τίσις of Zeus .....	48
3.2 Retribution Disguised: Poseidon's Vindictive τίσις .....	61
3.3 Further Narratives of τίσις .....	79
4. Righteous Vengeance: Odysseus' Monumental τίσις .....	81
5. The Interaction of Narratives .....	109
5.1 Coalescence .....	110
5.2 τίσις as Plot .....	119
Excursus: Theme-Transference .....	128
5.3 νόστος as Narrative .....	130
5.4 τίσις vs. νόστος: Narratives in Conflict .....	144

5.5 The Rivalry of τίσις and νόστος Traditions.....	151
5.6 Reconciliation .....	163
Conclusion to Part I.....	166
Part II. The Poetics of Justice .....	169
6. The τίσις of the Tyndaridae and the Heracleidae.....	172
7. <i>Lex Talionis</i> .....	195
Conclusion to Part II .....	214
Part III. The Failure of τίσις.....	219
8. τίσις and the Program of the <i>Odyssey</i> .....	219
8.1 Reading the <i>Odyssey</i> Comparatively.....	220
8.2 Program and Narration.....	226
8.3 The Program of the <i>Odyssey</i> .....	231
8.4 The Outcome of the Program .....	253
9. The Subversive Program .....	266
9.1 The Alternatives to Slaughter.....	272
9.2 τίσις without End.....	286
Excursus: Subverting the Monologic Program: An Application of Bakhtin to the <i>Odyssey</i> .....	297
9.3 Subversions of τίσις.....	300
9.4 An Openended Conclusion .....	306
Conclusion.....	323
Bibliography .....	327
Biography.....	352



## List of Tables

Table 1: The “Oresteia” τίσις Sequence .....	34
Table 2: The Generic τίσις Sequence .....	35
Table 3: Zeus-Companions τίσις Sequence .....	60
Table 4: The Poseidon-Odysseus τίσις Sequence .....	78
Table 5: Hephaestus-Ares & Aphrodite τίσις Sequence.....	80
Table 6: Odysseus-Polyphemus τίσις Sequence.....	80
Table 7: Suitors’ kin-Odysseus τίσις Sequence.....	80
Table 8: Odysseus’ τίσις Sequence .....	108
Table 9: Actants of τίσις in the <i>Odyssey</i> .....	114
Table 10: τίσις sequences of Odysseus and Orestes compared .....	116
Table 11: The νόστος Sequence.....	137

## List of Figures

Figure 1: Greimas' <i>modèle actantial mythique</i> .....	111
Figure 2: Actantial model of Little Red Riding-Hood.....	112
Figure 3: Actantial model of τίσις .....	112
Figure 4: Actantial model of Orestes' τίσις .....	113
Figure 5: Actantial model of Odysseus τίσις .....	113, 164
Figure 6: Linear Scheme of τίσις .....	117
Figure 7: Linear Scheme of Odysseus' τίσις (A).....	117
Figure 8: Linear Scheme of Odysseus' τίσις (B).....	117
Figure 9: Actantial model of νόστος .....	138
Figure 10: Actantial model of Nestor's νόστος.....	138
Figure 11: Actantial model of Odysseus' νόστος .....	141
Figure 12: Actantial model of the "Telemachy" .....	164

# List of Abbreviations

## Ancient Sources:

Aelian (Ael.) NA	<i>de Natura Animalium</i>
Aeschylus (Aesch.) Ag. Cho. Eum. [Pr.]	<i>Agamemnon</i> <i>Choephoroe</i> <i>Eumenides</i> [ <i>Prometheus Vincetus</i> ]
Alcaeus (Alc.)	<i>Fragmenta</i>
Alcman (Alcm.)	<i>Fragmenta</i>
Apollodorus (Apollod.) Bibl. Epit.	<i>Bibliotheca</i> <i>Epitome</i>
Apollonius Dyscolus Adv.	<i>de Adverbiis</i>
Apollonius Paradoxographus Hist. Mir.	<i>Historiae Mirabiles</i>
Archilochus (Archil.)	<i>Fragmenta</i>
Aristotle (Arist.) [Ath. Pol.] Eth. Nic. Metaph. [Mag. mor.] Pol. Poet. Rh. [Rh. Al.]	<i>Ἀθηναίων πολιτεία</i> <i>Ethica Nicomachea</i> <i>Metaphysica</i> <i>Magna moralia</i> <i>Politica</i> <i>Poetica</i> <i>Rhetorica</i> <i>Rhetorica ad Alexandrum</i>
Athenaeus (Ath.)	<i>Deipnosophistae</i>

Bacchylides (Bacchyl.)	<i>Dithyrambi</i>
Callimachus (Call.) <i>Lav. Pall.</i>	<i>Lavacrum Palladis</i>
Catullus (Catull.)	<i>Carmina</i>
Clemens Alexandrinus (Clem. Al.) <i>Protr.</i>	<i>Protrepticus</i>
Dictys Cretensis (Dict. Cret.)	<i>Ephemeris belli Troiani</i>
Diodorus Siculus (Diod. Sic.)	<i>Bibliotheca historica</i>
Euripides (Eur.) <i>Cyc.</i> <i>El.</i> <i>Hec.</i> <i>HF</i> <i>Ion</i> <i>Phoen.</i>	<i>Cyclops</i> <i>Electra</i> <i>Hecuba</i> <i>Heracles furens</i> <i>Ion</i> <i>Phoenissae</i>
Heraclitus (Heraclit.)	<i>Fragmenta</i>
Herodotus (Hdt.)	<i>Historiae</i>
Hesiod (Hes.) <i>Op.</i> <i>[Sc.]</i> <i>Th.</i>	<i>Opera et Dies</i> <i>Scutum</i> <i>Theogony</i>
Homer (Hom.) <i>Il.</i> <i>Od.</i>	<i>Iliad</i> <i>Odyssey</i>
Hyginus (Hyg.) <i>Fab.</i>	<i>Fabulae</i>
<i>Hymnus Homericus (Hymn. Hom.)</i> <i>Cer.</i>	<i>ad Cererem</i>

<i>Merc.</i>	<i>ad Mercurium</i>
Iamblichus (Iambl.) <i>VP</i>	<i>Vita Pythagorae</i>
Lycophron (Lyc.)	<i>Alexandra</i>
Neophron (Neophr.)	<i>Fragmenta</i>
New Testament	
<i>Matt.</i>	<i>The Gospel According to Matthew</i>
<i>Luke</i>	<i>The Gospel According to Luke</i>
<i>John</i>	<i>The Gospel According to John</i>
<i>Rom.</i>	<i>The Epistle of Paul to the Romans</i>
Old Testament	
<i>Gen.</i>	<i>Genesis</i>
<i>Exod.</i>	<i>Exodus</i>
<i>Lev.</i>	<i>Leviticus</i>
<i>Num.</i>	<i>Numbers</i>
<i>Deut.</i>	<i>Deuteronomy</i>
<i>Prov.</i>	<i>Proverbs</i>
Oppian (Opp.) <i>Hal.</i>	<i>Halieutica</i>
Pausanias (Paus.)	<i>Graeciae descriptio</i>
Pindar (Pind.)	
<i>Isthm.</i>	<i>Isthmia</i>
<i>Nem.</i>	<i>Nemea</i>
<i>Ol.</i>	<i>Olympia</i>
<i>Pyth.</i>	<i>Pythia</i>
Plato (Pl.)	
<i>Ap.</i>	<i>Apologia</i>
<i>Grg.</i>	<i>Gorgias</i>
<i>Ion</i>	<i>Ion</i>
<i>Ly.</i>	<i>Lysis</i>
<i>Men.</i>	<i>Meno</i>
<i>Phdr.</i>	<i>Phaedrus</i>

<i>Resp.</i>	<i>Respublica</i>
<i>Soph.</i>	<i>Sophista</i>
<i>Symp.</i>	<i>Symposium</i>
<i>Prt.</i>	<i>Protagoras</i>
<i>Tht.</i>	<i>Theaetetus</i>
Plutarch (Plut.)	
<i>Quaest. Graec.</i>	<i>Quaestiones Graecae</i>
<i>Quomodo adul.</i>	<i>Quomodo adulescens poetas audire debeat</i>
<i>Ti. Gracch.</i>	<i>Tiberius Gracchus</i>
Porphyry (Porph.)	
<i>ad Il.</i>	<i>Quaestionum Homericarum ad Iliadem     pertinentium reliquiae</i>
<i>ad Od.</i>	<i>Quaestionum Homericarum ad Odysseam     pertinentium reliquiae</i>
Proclus (Procl.)	
<i>Chrestom.</i>	<i>Chrestomathia</i>
Quintus of Smyrna (Quint. Smyrn.)	<i>Posthomerica</i>
Servius (Serv.)	<i>In Vergilii carmina commentarii</i>
Simonides (Simon.)	<i>Fragmenta</i>
Solon (Sol.)	<i>Fragmenta</i>
Sophocles (Soph.)	
<i>OT</i>	<i>Oedipus Tyrannus</i>
<i>OC</i>	<i>Oedipus Coloneus</i>
<i>Phil.</i>	<i>Philoctetes</i>
Theocritus (Theoc.)	
<i>Id.</i>	<i>Idyllia</i>
Theognis (Thgn.)	<i>Theognidea</i>
Thucydides (Thuc.)	<i>Historiae</i>
Xenophanes (Xenoph.)	<i>Fragmenta</i>

## Modern Editions, Reference Works, and Commentaries:

- Ameis-Hentze-Cauer  
Ameis, Karl Friedrich, Karl Hentze, and Paul Cauer. 1908–1911. *Homers Odyssee*. Leipzig: B. G. Teubner.
- Asheri et al.  
Asheri, David, Alan B. Lloyd, Aldo Corcella, and Oswyn Murray. 2007. *A Commentary on Herodotus Books I–IV*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bérard  
Bérard, Victor. 1924. *L’Odyssée*. 3 vols. Paris: Les Belles Lettres.
- Crawford  
Crawford, Michael H. 1996. *Roman Statutes*. Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies Supplement 64. London: Institute of Classical Studies, School of Advanced Study, University of London.
- DELG  
Chantraine, P. B. A. and C. d. P. J. L. Lamberterie. 1999. *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque: Histoire des mots*. Paris: Klincksieck.
- Dindorf  
Dindorf, Wilhelm. 1855. *Scholias Graeca in Homeri Odysseam*. 2 vols. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ebeling  
Ebeling, Heinrich. 1963. *Lexicon Homericum*. Hildesheim: G. Olms.
- Erbse  
Erbse, Hartmut. 1969–1988. *Scholias Graeca in Homeri Iliadem*. 7 vols. Berlin: de Gruyter.
- Ernst  
Ernst, Nicola. 2006. “Die D-Scholien zur Odyssee: Kritische Ausgabe.” PhD diss., Universität zu Köln.
- Eust.  
Eustathius Thessalonicensis. 1825.

- Commentarii ad Homeri Odysseam*. 2 vols. Leipzig: Weigel.
- GEW Frisk, Hjalmar. 1960. *Griechisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*. Heidelberg: C. Winter.
- GH Chantraine, Pierre. 1942. *Grammaire homérique*. Collection de philologie classique, 1, 4. Paris: C. Klincksieck.
- Heubeck et al. Heubeck, Alfred, Stephanie West, J. B. Hainsworth, Arie Hoekstra, Joseph Russo, and Manuel Fernández-Galiano. 1988–1992. *A Commentary on Homer's Odyssey*. 3 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- IEW Pokorny, Julius. 1959. *Indogermanisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*. Bern: Francke.
- Kirk et al. Kirk, Geoffrey Stephen, Mark W. Edwards, Richard Janko, John Bryan Hainsworth, Nicholas James Richardson. 1985–1993. *The Iliad: A Commentary*. 6 vols. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- KR Kirk, G. S., J. E. Raven, and M. Schofield. 1957. *The Presocratic Philosophers: A Critical History with a Selection of Texts*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.
- Latacz et al. Latacz, Joachim, Fritz Graf, Irene de Jong, René Nünlist, Magdalene Stoevesandt, Rudolf Wachter, and Martin L. West. 2000–. *Homers Ilias: Gesamtkommentar*. München: K.G. Saur.
- LfgrE Snell, Bruno and Hans Joachim Mette. 1955–. *Lexikon des frühgriechischen Epos*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.



- LIMC Boardman, John et al. 1981–1999. 8 vols. *Lexicon iconographicum mythologiae classicae*. Zürich : Artemis Verlag.
- LIV Rix, Helmut, and Martin Kümmel. 2001. *Lexikon der indogermanischen Verben: die Wurzeln und ihre Primärstammbildungen*. Wiesbaden: Reichert.
- LSAG Jeffery, Lilian Hamilton and Alan W. Johnston. 1961. *The Local Scripts of Archaic Greece: A Study of the Origin of the Greek Alphabet and Its Development from the Eighth to the Fifth Centuries B.C.* Revised edition, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990.
- LSJ Liddell, Henry George and Robert Scott. 1843. *A Greek-English Lexicon*. 9<sup>th</sup> ed. With revised supplement, rev. by Henry Stuart Jones with the assistance of Roderick McKenzie, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996.
- Ludwich Ludwich, Arthur. 1888–1890. *Scholia in Homeri Odysseae A 1–309 auctiora et emendatiora*. Reprint, Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1966.
- Merry-Riddell Merry, Walter W. and James Riddell. 1886. *Homer's Odyssey*. 2 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Monro Monro, D. B. 1891. *A Grammar of the Homeric Dialect*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Monro, Od. Monro, D. B. 1901. *Homer's Odyssey: Books XIII–XXIV*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Page Page, D. L. 1972. *Aeschyli Septem Quae Supersunt Tragoedias*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

- Pontani Potani, Filippomaria. 2007. *Scholia Graeca in Odysseam*. Vol 1. Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura.
- PMG Page, D. L. 1962. *Poetae Melici Graeci*. Oxford: Clarendon.
- Scheer Scheer, Eduard. 1881–1908. *Lycophronis Alexandra*. 2 vols. 2nd ed. Berlin: Weidmann, 1958
- Schwyzler Schwyzler, Eduard. 1939–1971. *Griechische Grammatik*. 4 vols. München: C.H. Beck.
- Sihler Sihler, Andrew L. 1995. *New Comparative Grammar of Greek and Latin*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Stanford Stanford, W. B. 1947–1948. *Homer: Odyssey*. 2 vols. Reprint of 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., London: Bristol Classical Press, 1996.
- van Thiel van Thiel, Helmut. 1991. *Homeri Odyssea*. Hildesheim: Georg Olms.
- Zamb. Zambarbieri, Mario. 2002–2004. *L'Odyssea com'è: lettura critica*. 2 vols. Milano: LED, Edizioni Universitarie di lettere, economia, diritto.

## Acknowledgements

This project benefited enormously from the generous and thoughtful contributions of many minds. I cannot recall nor name them all, and my apologies to anyone whom I have overlooked. Above all, my diligent and gracious supervisor, José González, gave me a perfect balance of freedom and direction. This project would be much poorer without his guidance. My other committee members, Carla Antonaccio, Peter Burian, and William Johnson, have inspired and supported my work in my years at Duke, as has the entire Department of Classical Studies. Various parts of this project have had other patient readers and auditors: Diskin Clay, Casey Dué, Mary Ebbott, Douglas Olson, Jenny Strauss Clay, Ruth Scodel, Kirk Ormand, Gregory Nagy, Ornella Rossi, Irene Peirano, the members of the Kenan Graduate Colloquium in ethics (of 2008–2009) and the Franklin Humanities Institute Dissertation Working Group (of 2009–2010), Marcello Lippiello, and Dan Griffin. Special thanks are owed to H. Don Cameron for first spurring my love for the *Odyssey*.

My family and friends have been a constant source of support, especially my steadfast, loving wife, Emily. Without the faith they placed in me, I never would have completed this πόνος.

*Soli Deo Gloria.*

# 1. Introduction

*Ce châtement d'une rigueur géométrique, qui punit automatiquement l'abus de la force, fut l'objet premier de la méditation chez les Grecs. Il constitue l'âme de l'épopée.*

-Simone Weil<sup>1</sup>

Simone Weil's realization that retribution, *châtiment*, lies at the heart of the *Iliad* as a consequence of unrestrained force remains true, perhaps even truer, of the *Odyssey*. At its center is a narrative and thematic organization articulated by the Greek notion of *τίσις* (roughly, "vengeance"), which deals with the relationship between the foundational issues of retribution, suffering, and justice. From the opening paradigm of the *τίσις* of Orestes (1.32–43) to the settlement of the suitors' kin's claims to *τίσις* at the close of the poem, *τίσις* occupies the central thematic and ethical ground in the *Odyssey*. The present project arises out of this realization. Its object is to analyze *τίσις* in its poetic, social, and ethical aspects as it relates to the *Odyssey*, with the goal of providing a richer appreciation of the *Odyssey qua* poetry. This study, proceeding in three parts, should also help to illuminate some of the intellectual history and social customs regarding *τίσις* in the archaic society of the poem's setting and performance.

---

<sup>1</sup> Weil 1953, 22.

The first part of my task is to establish a proper, descriptive definition for τίσις, relying on an inductive analysis of how the term is used in context. This is the task that I undertake in part one of this project, “τίσις As Narrative.”

Much of previous scholarship on τίσις has focused narrowly on determining its proper etymology. τίσις is an action noun built on PIE root \*k<sup>w</sup>i-. There is an extensive group of words derived from this same root: τίνω, τίνυμαι, ἀποτίνω, ἀποτίνυμαι, τίσις, ἄτιτος, ἄντιτος, παλίντιτος, ποινή, ἄποινα, ἀνάποινον, and νήποινος.<sup>2</sup> As useful as etymology is for teasing out diachronic relationships among terms and ideas, it is less valuable for understanding how a speaker (or singer) uses terms synchronically. As often as not, when a singer uses a term with its etymology in view, he is drawing on a false or folk etymology, as a glance at Plato’s *Cratylus* makes clear.

When semantic analysis proceeds beyond etymology, too often it has gone only as far as determining the right translation for a term, as though semantic analysis has reached its end once it has found the proper gloss in another language that expresses the simplest reading of a term’s usage in as many contexts as possible. This is largely the

---

<sup>2</sup> On these derivations and their etymology, see *DELG* and *GEW* (s.vv.). Some scholars would include words connected with the verb τίω (“honor”), such as τιμή, but this is much disputed. In favor are Adkins 1960b (later disclaimed in 1972a, 15 n. 1); Pokorny (*IEW* 636–37); Frisk (*GEW*, s.v. τίω), citing further bibliography. Opposed are Schulze 1892, 355–56; Wackernagel 1916, 79 n. 1; Chantraine (*DELG*, s.v. τίω), who modifies Schulze’s original division of roots by reconstructing an original PIE root \*k<sup>w</sup>ehi- for the Greek verb τίω (and related words), replacing Schulze’s original -ē- and -ī- with underlyingly short vowels that underwent compensatory lengthening with the loss of a laryngeal; Benveniste 1969, II.50–55, who argues for Schulze’s division on semantic grounds; The *LIV* (377–80) gives 1.\*k<sup>w</sup>ei- and 3.\*k<sup>w</sup>ei- as separate roots for the verbs τίω and τίνω respectively, without laryngeals.

case for τίσις and related words.<sup>3</sup> While glosses for τίσις or its verbal form τίω such as “vengeance,” “[to] be punished,” “payer une prime,” “büßen,” or “restitutio” may be useful heuristics for getting an initial grasp on the concept at hand,<sup>4</sup> these translations may hinder achieving a fuller appreciation of the semantics of the concept. When using a gloss to study the semantics of a word there is a danger that one ends up describing what the English (or French or German or Latin) word means, rather than what the original itself in its own context means. Therefore, the present task must begin with an analysis of actual usage in its Odyssean context.

The basic assumption of this method is that usage determines meaning. From this, it follows that analysis of the contexts in which a term occurs provides the path to appreciating the meaning of the term.<sup>5</sup> This method begins by dispensing with established ideas of the meaning of the term and adopting a posture of (fictive) ignorance. Then it proceeds inductively, assembling the various terms in the discourse

---

<sup>3</sup> See the studies above on p. 2 n. 2, which, in addition to arguing for or against the connection of τίω and τίσις, represent most of the work done on the meaning of τίσις.

<sup>4</sup> Respectively the glosses of LSJ, s.v. τίσις, Adkins 1972a, 14, Benveniste 1969, II.53, Schulze 1892, 355, and Ebeling, s.v. τίσις.

<sup>5</sup> This follows the “contextual approach” to lexical semantics of D. A. Cruse 1986, 1: “semantic properties of a lexical item are fully reflected in appropriate aspects of the relations it contracts with actual or potential contexts.” Wittgenstein’s 1953, §43, famous aphorism expresses the premise: “the meaning of a word is its use in the language.” Leonard Muellner 2007, 9, without reference to this linguistic tradition, has expressed a similar principle in his analysis of Homeric vocabulary: “In fact there are times when everything that needs to be disclosed about a word, what has lain hidden about it since the tradition perished, is not its meaning at all but its contexts.” The application of this method to Homeric poetry is ancient: cf. Aristarchus’ principle (preserved by Porphyry) of “explicating Homer from Homer” (Ὁμηρον ἐξ Ὁμήρου σαφηνίζειν, Porph. *ad Il.* Schrader 297).

under analysis (in this case, the *Odyssey*) that are connected by both syntagmatic and associative relationships.<sup>6</sup> Then the contextual analysis extends outward to other discourses of progressively less proximity, to the *Iliad* and then to other Greek texts. However, part one mostly focuses on the *Odyssey* as its own context, since I maintain that the *Odyssey* represents a complex and highly developed system of diction, which has its own, deeply traditional conventions of meaning that developed in an institution for the performance of the poem (alongside other oral poems).<sup>7</sup>

From this analysis, I define τίσις as a narrative of retributive justice. Why I call it a “narrative” will emerge from the study, but suffice it to say for now that τίσις denotes

---

<sup>6</sup> I take “syntagmatic” relationships, following Jakobson 1960 and 1971, 49–74, and Saussure 1972 (original French publication in 1916), 121–25, as those that exist between terms that occur in the same immediate context, such as in a sentence. These are the relations on the “horizontal axis” of the discourse. Following Saussure *ibid.*, I take “associative” relationships as those that exist between terms that are related “by mental association” by virtue of “having something in common.” This is a more inclusive category than Jakobson’s model of “paradigmatic” relationships along a “vertical axis” of substitution. I consider words with a shared etymology, τίσις and τίνω, for instance, to have an associative relationship. Therefore, I use Saussure’s older term, “associative,” for this kind of relationship in place of Jakobson’s better known but narrower term, “paradigmatic.”

<sup>7</sup> The procedure I follow here is consistent with the approach that Leonard Muellner has applied to such terms as εὔχομαι (1976) and μῆνις (1996). He has recently outlined these methods (2007). His methods require “the benign fiction of emptying one’s mind of previous notions” and “defamiliarizing the epic world and its words” (*ibid.*, 3). Muellner (*ibid.*, 9) continues, “one of the main rewards or goals of this process is to re-present and recover the sense of familiar passages by rebuilding the web of associations and meanings that are embedded in them. Perhaps the most important and fruitful technique...is the inductive analysis of a word’s contexts.” His most succinct expression of his procedure is this (1996, 3): “To understand the function of a word within a given traditional theme is to discover the contextual consistency...that is built into its use by the poet and its apprehension by the audience.” Others have followed a similar model: e.g., Nagy 1979, *passim* on numerous concepts, Martin 1989, 12, *passim* on μῦθος and ἔπος, and Wilson 2002, 7–10, *passim* on ἄποινα and ποινή. The concept I introduce here of an “institution” for the performance of oral poetry draws on the ethical theory of Alasdair MacIntyre 1981, 222, in which an institution is “the bearer of a tradition of practice or practices.” For more on the application of MacIntyre to oral poetry, see pp. 43–45 below.

the retaliatory action that an avenger performs—especially killing—that at the same time implies an entire sequence of events that makes the act of killing (to use English terms) into “retribution” rather than “murder” or some other way of conceiving of killing. τίσις is not a single action, like striking a warrior with a sword; rather it is a whole set of actions that together modify the meaning of their component parts. Moreover, τίσις has particular moral salience, for it helps agents determine what is just and unjust and who is good and bad. Therefore it has far greater significance than almost all other sets of actions, for instance, those involved in landing a ship: finding a path to shore, beaching the ship, lowering the sails, and disembarking.<sup>8</sup> τίσις, in contrast, helps ground Homeric society.

The first, full statement of τίσις in the *Odyssey* is the best place for such an analysis. This analysis constitutes section 2.1. This instance suits me well because it is not directly connected to the principal actions or characters of the epic. It is a speech of Zeus concerning the “Oresteia” myth of Agamemnon’s murder and Orestes’ vengeance upon Aegisthus,<sup>9</sup> which, on account of its distinctness from the *Odyssey’s fabula*,<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> This is the typical sequence in the *Odyssey*: e.g., 9.140–50.

<sup>9</sup> For the sake of convenience, when discussing this narrative cycle I will use the short-hand name “Oresteia,” even though it was not universally known by this name in the archaic period. This follows the usage of De Jong 2001, 12, *passim*. D’Arms and Hulley 1946, *passim* use “Oresteia-story” and “Oresteia-motif”; Hölscher 1967 and 1989 *passim* uses “Atridensage”; Olson 1990, *passim* uses “Oresteia-theme” and “Oresteia-story.”

<sup>10</sup> On *fabula*, see p. 32 n. 42 below.



provides a simpler and more typical example of the term.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, with this initial speech of Zeus the narrator presents to his audience at the outset a working interpretive paradigm for all the action that follows. On a literary level, it is striking that the first event and speech in the epic has to do with this subordinate, parallel story.<sup>12</sup> The narrator reinforces the impression of the significance of this paradigm by revisiting it another eight times throughout the poem.<sup>13</sup> And on a global, structural level, this speech corresponds to the final speech by Zeus in which he promises to obliterate the claims of suitors' kin to τίσις (24.478–86).<sup>14</sup> Together, these two speeches form a frame around the poem's action. On a moral/theological level, I agree with Hugh Lloyd-Jones and E. R. Dodds that Zeus' opening remark that mortals are to blame for their own miseries,

---

<sup>11</sup> Thus Wilson 2002, 13–39, does not begin her study of ἄποινα and ποινή with what she calls the “monumental compensation theme” of Achilles' quarrel with Agamemnon, but instead considers more generic examples. Similarly, my study will not evaluate, at first, the “monumental theme” of Odysseus' τίσις against the suitors.

<sup>12</sup> As Olson 1995, 24, notes, “The story of the *Odyssey* begins, oddly enough, not with the hero himself but with Zeus' tale of Aigisthos and Orestes, just as the murdered king's own bitter description of his death and the contrast it proves with Odysseus' triumph virtually brings the epic to its close (24.95–97, 192–202; cf. 24.24–34).”

<sup>13</sup> *Od.* 1.28–43, 1.298–300, 3.193–312, 4.512–47, 11.385–464, 13.382–85, 24.19–34, 95–97, 199–202. The enumeration of these allusions as nine separate occurrences is somewhat arbitrary. Some scholars would combine as one the three I have listed from book 24; others would find multiple allusions in book three. The precise number is not important to the argument.

<sup>14</sup> As Hölscher 1967, 12, notes, “Fast programmatisch klingt am Schluss das letzte Wort des Zeus an seine plötzlich ratlose Tochter Athene, womit er nach dem Freiemord dem drohenden Bürgerkrieg ein Ende macht.” Hölscher's thesis is that the *Odyssey* is the first epic composed with a *Leitidee*, namely the “happy ending” (*glücklicher Ausgang*) of Odysseus and the Laertiads as mild and just kings over Ithaca. Hölscher sees the “Oresteia” story as an irremovable, contrasting theme to the main story of Odysseus' successful return and restoration. See also Olson's remarks in n. 12 above.

“[p]laced where it is, at the very beginning of the poem,...sounds...‘programmatic.’”<sup>15</sup>

How effective Zeus’ *apologia* turns out to be—or to put it another way, to what extent the singer’s emblematic paradigm ultimately succeeds in making the universe of the *Odyssey* just—is a matter I take up in part three. Suffice it to say for now that Dodds’ laconic verdict that “the programme is carried out” hardly does justice to complexities of the situation.<sup>16</sup> Surely it is significant the Zeus feels the need to *defend* divine justice. But at this point, the crucial matter is that the narrator *presents* this paradigm *as* definitive, as a touchstone for all later considerations of τίσις and justice.

The programmatic and paradigmatic nature of this initial presentation of the theme of τίσις is crucially important. This first instance prepares the audience for their interpretation of the theme as it appears throughout the rest of the poem. The authoritative voice of Zeus presents this version of τίσις as the model by which to understand why humans suffer and the gods are just. In addition, he uses it to condemn mortals like Aegisthus, who perpetrate the crimes of adultery and murder; at the same

---

<sup>15</sup> Lloyd-Jones 1971, 29, quoting Dodds 1951, 32. The first critics to note the programmatic aspects of this speech were Jaeger 1966, 75–99, (originally published in 1926) and Pfeiffer 1960, 17, 50, (originally published in 1928–29). See also Whitman 1958, 305, who notes “the moral design of the poem, the somewhat schematized view of poetic justice announced by Zeus in the exordium”; Rüter 1969, 64–82, esp. his critique of van der Valk at 71 n. 29; Kullmann 1985, 5–7; Friedrich 1987b, 375–76.

<sup>16</sup> Dodds *ibid.* Lloyd-Jones 1971, 29–30, is similarly sanguine about the justice of Zeus, who “sends men good or bad fortune...according to their deserts.”

time, it lauds mortals like Orestes, who successfully retaliate against such perpetrators. I return to this opening paradigm in part three.

Because of the centrality of this opening passage, I make detailed observations about the features in the passage most closely pertaining to the term, since they continue to reappear in later instances. But the accumulation of these features does not provide a sufficient definition for *τίσις*. In section 2.2, I argue that *τίσις* is a narrative, or what Lord called a “story-pattern” and others a “theme.” Thus *τίσις*, understood as a narrative, falls within a trio of well-studied techniques—the other two being the formula and the type-scene—that constitutes the singer’s compositional apparatus. That is to say, *τίσις* is a conventional form that many singers used in composing their epics. But narratives are also more than this: they are ethical structures that make experience morally intelligible for agents.

Since on my reading *τίσις* is a narrative, I proceed by using methods associated with narratology—in particular, the structural analysis of narrative forms.<sup>17</sup> I use three different structural models to represent narratives, using each as they are appropriate for the argument at hand. The first and main model is a sequential-stage framework that depends on the theories of Vladimir Propp. Propp’s own model for representing a

---

<sup>17</sup> Thus my analysis is indebted to the formalist/structuralist approaches of the aforementioned Saussure 1972 and Jakobson 1960, 1971, as well as Propp 1958, Barthes 1975 (= 1966), and Greimas 1966, 1970–1983, 1973 and 1987, and to the narratological methods of Bal 1985, which, in turn, along with Genette’s 1966–1999 discoveries, de Jong 1987 and 2001 adapted to the analysis of Homer.

narrative is a linear scheme, in which the selection of variations upon a set of 31 “functions” constitutes the essential structure of the narrative. I briefly use an adaptation of his method of representation as a third model for the analysis of narratives in the *Odyssey*. By using Propp’s linear diagram this once, I hope to help the reader better acquainted with this model grasp the structural transformations of the τίσις narrative that I am drawing out. But I rely more heavily on my own framework of sequential stages because it allows for the appreciation of finer narrative detail.

The sequential-stage model, then, provides the framework for my analysis of the major narratives of τίσις in the *Odyssey*. In chapter three I treat narratives of τίσις other than Odysseus’ monumental τίσις narrative, which I treat in chapter four. Odysseus’ τίσις narrative is peculiar in certain striking ways, and in the final chapter of part one, chapter five. I draw out how these peculiarities function from a structural standpoint and why these idiosyncrasies of structure matter. With the goal of teasing out these structural issues, I introduce a third scheme for analyzing narratives: the actantial model of A. J. Greimas. Greimas’ model is especially helpful at explicating how the narrative tensions in the *Odyssey* result from the contest among actors to fill actantial positions in different narratives. In particular, it focuses on the narrative tension between νόστος and τίσις. I draw out this tension with a corresponding structural analysis of νόστος, which demonstrates that, if the poem had strictly observed the natural forms of τίσις and νόστος narratives, Odysseus could not have achieved both successfully. The poem

raises the specter of a tragic end for Odysseus (a failed νόστος) and a triumphant revenge for Telemachus (an accomplished τίσις). The audience finds this possibility more plausible than we might expect because of the variety of ends for Odysseus' life that existed in myth and were available to the poem and its audience. As the poem draws out this tension between τίσις and νόστος and the two narratives threaten to overwhelm each other, the poem has an ultimate *rapprochement* in view. Drawing on a rigorous ideology of *ius talionis*, the poem makes a series of brilliant rhetorical moves to re-characterize the actions of the suitors as accomplished murder and adultery. As a result, it manages to synthesize two rival narratives into a single, master epic.

In part two I continue my study of τίσις by looking beyond the *Odyssey* to other early Greek examples. In chapter six I examine chiefly examples from Alcman, Herodotus, and Solon. The main focus of this chapter is to describe how these authors depict crimes as implying their punishments. In the ideology of τίσις, to will a crime is to will your own punishment. This is woven into the very fabric and organization of cosmos, as divine, mortal, and natural order are all connected to the cyclic principles of τίσις. In chapter seven I examine chiefly examples from Aristotle, his Pythagorean predecessors, Hesiod, Pindar, and Aeschylus. The main focus of this chapter is to pursue the Greek version of the *lex talionis*, which is part of the same conception of punishment as τίσις.

Part three returns to where I left off in part one. In chapter eight I argue that the poem's narrator is a subjective voice that has a decided bias in favor of Odysseus and his allies. The narrator's program is to present them as just and praiseworthy. He wields a great array of rhetorical resources to this end, but his primary means is drawing paradigmatic comparison between the exemplary narrative of *τίσις*, the "Oresteia," and his own narrative, the *Odyssey*. However, the narrator fails to achieve his aim, because the crimes that the suitors commit are ultimately not equivalent to Aegisthus'. I then argue in chapter nine that the narrator's failure to achieve his program reveals another, subversive message: *τίσις* is fatally inconclusive. Justice based on retribution cannot provide a satisfactory close to hostilities. The poem argues for this point by presenting its subsidiary *τίσις* narratives as open-ended, as well as presenting a conclusion to the *Odyssey* long felt unsatisfying. But, I argue, this non-closure is itself a key element of the poem's art.

At the outset, it is important that I clarify some issues of terminology and how I conceptualize the composition of the *Odyssey*. I use the term "narrator" to mean the textualized speaker of the epic.<sup>18</sup> This is an all-encompassing voice that speaks every word of the text and can be identified with the first-person of the occasional

---

<sup>18</sup> Bal's 1985, 120, definition of narrator identifies it with the voice that "utters" the text: "that agent which utters the linguistic signs which constitute the text." There is, thus, an implied performance in the role of the narrator.

“homodiegetic” passages (e.g., the  $\mu\omicron\iota$  of *Od.* 1.1).<sup>19</sup> This is what is commonly called the “external” narrator. Within the poem there are, of course, other, “internal” narrators, most notably Odysseus in his *apologoi*. Each of these internal narrators is at the same time given voice and framed by the external narrator. (Formulaic lines introducing or closing speeches emphasize this act of framing.) As I argue in more detail in chapter eight, this external narrator is itself a character, with his own interests and subjective point of view. The poem presents this narratorial character to its audience and asks the audience to evaluate it.

Needless to say, the question of how one or several singers composed the *Odyssey* is fraught. Rather than address this question directly, I have chosen instead to analyze the single, unified poem that the text we have presents. However, even though the *Odyssey* is manifestly unified and coherent, it was not composed *de novo*. The tradition of poetry that would eventually give rise to our *Odyssey* faced many influences over hundreds, probably thousands of years that shaped its composition. This history means that no one singer ever had absolute control over the poem. The interaction of countless singers and audiences spread through time and space has shaped our *Odyssey* and given it the meaning it has. Even if a single, monumental singer (or poet) produced our *Odyssey*, the tropes and myths he used (for instance, about the Atreidae) already

---

<sup>19</sup> On homodiegesis—i.e., first-person directed narration—see Genette 1980, 244–45.

came partially with the meanings (often multiple, competing meanings) that other singers had imparted to them. A singer working with this traditional material could rework it to some extent for his own ends; however, the history of prior uses would always leave its mark on his poem.

Regardless of how the poem came to have the form it does, my analysis of the text stands on its own terms. My own view of the *Odyssey's* composition is similar to the “evolutionary model” that Gregory Nagy has developed.<sup>20</sup> Nagy uses “Homer” as “a metonym for Homeric poetry.”<sup>21</sup> I have adopted a similar practice; only, I use “the singer,” since this anonymous form better captures the fact that we have no access to or reliable historical knowledge about any hypothetical singer who composed the *Odyssey*. One attraction of this model is that it shows in ways consistent with the practice of oral poetry how (substantially) the same poem could be the site of contestation, as different singers competed with variant versions of the story. Over time, these different versions came to crystallize into the one that has come down to us—what I call “our *Odyssey*”—preserved in the fairly uniform medieval manuscript tradition. But within this crystallized version, there remain echoes of discarded variant traditions, often incorporated precisely to mark them as inauthentic by presenting them as “lies.” And, as

---

<sup>20</sup> Nagy has presented and developed this model in a series of works. For a good statement of the model, see Nagy 1996b, 29–112.

<sup>21</sup> Nagy 2003, ix n. 1. Nagy’s adoption of “Homer,” on the other hand, does have the advantage of reflecting the ancient belief that Homer was “the culture hero of epic”: see Nagy 1996b, 20–22.



I shall show, there is even some external evidence, especially preserved by mythographers, to support the existence of alternative versions. Furthermore, there is no reason why singers working within a tradition could not have chosen to incorporate irony and critique within their songs. I would even suggest that the *Odyssey*, with its many internal acts and stories of deception, represents a tradition of deceitful poetry that lauds an aesthetic of irony and subversion—but this is a topic for future research.

If one were inclined to take a different perspective—for instance, that a monumental singer (or poet) wrote the *Odyssey* or dictated it to an amanuensis—my analysis would still stand. In this case, one would likewise need to acknowledge that such a singer would not have composed in a vacuum, but participated in a long tradition that contained variant ways of telling the epic of Odysseus. Likewise, this tradition contained deceitful, subjective narrators—like Odysseus himself—and this singer may well have chosen to give his external narrator some of the same characteristics.

## Part I. τίσις As Narrative

### 2. The Retribution of Orestes and the Semantics of τίσις

τίσις is the subject of the first speech of the *Odyssey*. This speech is rich in programmatic significance, as it presents τίσις as a model for interpreting the ethics of the epic narrative to follow. The paradigmatic and, in places, gnomic quality of this narrative of the τίσις that Aegisthus suffers makes the passage an ideal place to begin an inductive analysis of τίσις—in fact, the positioning of the passage at this prominent and determinative place in the poem arguably demands that the audience take it to be definitive.

#### 2.1 Orestes' Paradigmatic τίσις

After the proem's brief allusion to the punishment of Odysseus' companions for their eating Helios' cattle (1.7–9), Zeus presents the first full instance of τίσις in the poem in his opening, apologetic speech. In a divine council, he offers a defense of the gods' moral position against mortals' perennial complaint of divine injustice—i.e., the problem of theodicy (1.28–43):

τοῖσι δὲ μύθων ἦρχε πατήρ ἀνδρῶν τε θεῶν τε·  
μνήσατο γὰρ κατὰ θυμὸν ἀμύμονος Αἰγίσθιοιο,

τὸν ῥ' Ἀγαμεμνονίδης τηλεκλυτὸς ἔκταν' Ὀρέστης·  
 τοῦ ὃ γ' ἐπιμνησθεὶς ἔπε' ἀθανάτοισι μετηύδα·  
 “ὦ πόποι, οἷον δὴ νῦ θεοὺς βροτοὶ αἰτιόωνται.  
ἔξ ἡμέων γὰρ φασὶ κάκ' ἔμμεναι, οἱ δὲ καὶ αὐτοὶ  
σφῆσιν ἀτασθαλίησιν ὑπὲρ μόρον ἄλγε' ἔχουσιν,  
 ὡς καὶ νῦν Αἴγισθος· ὑπὲρ μόρον Ἀτρεΐδαο  
γῆμ' ἄλοχον μνηστήν, τὸν δ' ἔκτανε νοστήσαντα,  
εἰδὼς αἰπὺν ὄλεθρον, ἐπεὶ πρό οἱ εἶπομεν ἡμεῖς,  
 Ἑρμείαν πέμψαντες, εὐσκοπον ἀργεῖφόντην,  
μήτ' αὐτὸν κτείνειν μήτε μνάασθαι ἄκοιτιν·  
ἐκ γὰρ Ὀρέσταο τίσις ἔσσεται<sup>1</sup> Ἀτρεΐδαο,  
 ὀππότε' ἂν ἠβήσῃ τε καὶ ἤς ἰμείρεται αἴης.  
 ὡς ἔφαθ' Ἑρμείας, ἀλλ' οὐ φρένας Αἰγίσθοιο  
πεῖθ' ἀγαθὰ φρονέων· νῦν δ' ἀθρόα πάντ' ἀπέτισεν.”<sup>2</sup>

Among them the father of men and gods was the first to speak.  
 For he recalled in his heart flawless Aegisthus,  
 whom far-famed Orestes, son of Agamemnon, slew.  
 Remembering him, Zeus addressed the immortals:  
 “Alas, how indeed mortals now blame the gods!  
 From us, they say, there are evils, but they themselves  
 by their own recklessness, beyond fate, have woes,  
 just like even now Aegisthus. Beyond fate, he married  
 the wedded wife of the son of Atreus, whom, upon his return, he slew.  
 He well knew his sheer destruction, since we told him before,  
 sending Hermes, keen-sighted Argos-slayer, to warn that  
 he should not kill him nor woo his wife.  
 For from Orestes will be the retribution of the son of Atreus,  
 whenever he should come of age and long for his land.

---

<sup>1</sup> Apollonius Dyscolus *Adv.* Schneider page 199, quoting this passage, has ἔρχεται. This variant is paralleled by Soph. *OT* 228. The semantics of the variant verbs (ἔρχεται and ἔσσεται) are quite similar. As a general, cross-linguistic rule, verbs of the meaning “to go” can take on the semantics of futurity, e.g., English “going” has become grammaticalized as a future auxiliary in statements such as “I am going to buy that.” On the example of English “going,” see Hopper and Traugott 2003, 1–3; see also Mair 2003. In Attic prose, the verb εἶμι, “to go,” is a salient example: morphologically it has the features of present tense but functionally it is a future tense. Cf. also my discussion of ἐλεύσεται at 11.135 on pp. 125, 143 below.

<sup>2</sup> Unless otherwise noted, I use van Thiel’s 1991 text of the *Odyssey*.

So spoke Hermes, but he did not persuade the mind of Aegisthus,  
though he intended good. Now he has paid for everything all-together.”<sup>3</sup>

To aid in the analysis of this text, I have made bold the two instances of the term τίσις (and etymologically related words) and have underlined important associated words.

In the case of τίσις (40), it serves as the subject of an existential kernel with a future form of εἶμι, “to be.” Howard Jones and A. A. Long have noted that this kind of periphrasis, in which an abstract noun ending in -σις serves as the subject of a copula, substitutes for a finite form of the verb of its root. The effect of this formation is that, in the words of Long, the periphrasis “is more impersonal than the root-verb and concentrates attention on its process at the expense of the persons concerned.”<sup>4</sup>

The agent of the action of the verbal notion of τίσις appears as a prepositional phrase, ἐκ...Ὀρέσταιο (40): retribution will be “from Orestes.” The use of ἐκ to express agency in terms of origin is uncommon, but not unparalleled.<sup>5</sup> The most pertinent *comparandum* is on line 33 of this passage, “from us (ἐξ ἡμέων)...evils are.” The gods are said to be the agents who bring evils upon the Greeks. The phrase at the beginning of

---

<sup>3</sup> All translations are my own.

<sup>4</sup> Long 1968, 64. Jones 1973 has found four different classes of nouns ending in -σις in Homer. τίσις is a member of Jones’ A class, which are (26) “verbal abstracts whose sole function is to name the action of the root-verb in progress or conceived of as in progress.” Such nouns refer to the action impersonally, without reference to a subject, and therefore focus attention on the process of the act itself (27).

<sup>5</sup> Cf. *Od.* 11.444, 16.447; *Il.* 1.63, 2.197. ἐκ can also express agency in a passive construction in place of the more usual ὑπό: *Il.* 2.69–70, 668–69. See *GH* 2.99–100 (§140). On the contested case of *Od.* 11.134, see pp. 123–25 below.

line 40, ἐκ γὰρ Ὀρέσταιο, recalls the phrase in the same position occupying the first colon on line 33, ἐξ ἡμέων γὰρ φασὶ. Both use the explanatory particle γὰρ and the same prepositional expression of agency; in addition, both are adverbial modifiers to an existential kernel using the verb εἰμί. This similarity of diction invites the audience to compare the subjects of the sentences, “evils” (κάκ’, 33) and “retribution” (τίσις, 40)—more will be said on this below.

Another important feature to note about the agent of retribution is that he, Orestes, is the son of the victim of the crime that precipitated the act of retribution. The role of avenger is played by a son who was only a youth when the murder occurred and spent part of that youth away from his homeland, as is clear from the prophecy’s warning of a future when the son “will come of age” (ῆβήσῃ, 41) and “long for his own land” (ῆς ἰμείρεται αἴης, 41). The two personal states of having become an adult and having conceived a desire (for home) precede the act of retributive killing and are the first actions that the agent of retribution performs. In a vital sense, Orestes *becomes* an agent just prior to his pursuing retribution.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> Desire for one’s homeland can be a real, effective action: cf. Odysseus’ similar desire for Ithaca (1.58), which is the only expression of his will and ability available to him on Ogygia. The goddess Calypso has constrained him in every other way. A similar connection is made between desire and the act of τίσις in the *Symposium* (Pl. *Symp.* 179E): Phaedrus claims that desire (ἔρωζ) motivated Achilles’ revenge (τιμωρήσας) for Patroclus. Likewise, to become an adult (ῆβήσῃ) is to enter into one’s full identity and become an agent. George Dimock 1956, 52, in his influential article on the significance of Odysseus’ name as a sign of his identity as a “man of pain,” claims that a scholiast glossed ῆβήσας at 19.410 with ὀδυσοσάμενος. Dimock considers this to mean that “the scholiast means that for Odysseus to grow up, to achieve his full stature, will be for him to ‘odysseus.’” He repeated this claim many years later: 1989, 258. This scholiast’s Footnote cont. next pg.

The victim of the preceding crime, his father, Agamemnon (referred to by his patronymic, Ἀτρεΐδαι), appears as a genitive noun modifying τίσις,<sup>7</sup> best construed as an objective genitive.<sup>8</sup> The avenged person and notional beneficiary of retribution,<sup>9</sup> the murdered father, is the one to whom vengeance belongs.

τίσις, in this instance, is the direct consequence of murder and adultery. Hermes' warning makes clear that if Aegisthus murders Agamemnon he will suffer retribution, hence the connective particle γάρ, "for." The logic of the warning is that he should not kill Agamemnon and woo his wife (39), because [if he does] he will face retribution (40).

When Zeus mentions this precipitating crime earlier in his speech, he says Aegisthus performed it ὑπὲρ μόρον, "beyond fate" (35). This crime is just one specific event that is related to the general truth, as Zeus has just declared in the line before in gnomic language, that mortals "have woes beyond fate" (ὑπὲρ μόρον ἄλλγε ἔχουσιν, 34). The precise meaning of the adverbial phrase ὑπὲρ μόρον is unclear,<sup>10</sup> and in the

---

interpretation of the sense of ἠβάρω would support my interpretation of the meaning of the verb in this passage. However, I have been unable to corroborate Dimock's reading. I can find no attestation of this gloss in any printed edition of the *Odyssey* scholia, nor any reference to this reading by another scholar.

<sup>7</sup> Though one might be tempted to construe Ἀτρεΐδαι with Ὀρέσταο, it is simpler to take it with τίσις, since the use of a grandfather as a patronymic seems to be restricted to Achilles, as Merry-Riddell, ad loc., points out.

<sup>8</sup> Persons on behalf of whom vengeance is performed can be figured as objects of the verb τίνω, cf. *Il.* 17.34–35. See also Ameis-Hentze-Cauer, ad loc. Cf. also Thgn. 337.

<sup>9</sup> On the terminology of this role, see p. 114 below.

<sup>10</sup> See Heubeck et al., ad loc.

present context its functional meaning is hard to distinguish from the adverbial phrase σφῆσιν ἀτασθαλίησιν, “because of their own recklessness” (34), since in line 34 the two phrases appear immediately juxtaposed as adverbial modifiers of the same verb, “they have” (ἔχουσιν). μόρος (and the related μοῖρα) commonly means “destiny” or “fate.” But this entails something of a paradox: if fate is iron-bound and inescapable, as Hector tells Andromache in the *Iliad*,<sup>11</sup> how could anything happen “beyond” or “contrary to” it? But the Homeric view of μόρος is hardly uniform: in their deadly encounter with the Ciconians, Odysseus says that he and most of his companions “escaped death and fate,” (φύγομεν θάνατόν τε μόρον τε, 9.61).<sup>12</sup> As in this case, μόρος commonly implies death—that “deadly fate which no one born avoids” (μοῖρ’ ὀλοή, τὴν οὐ τις ἀλεύεται ὅς κε γένηται, 24.29).<sup>13</sup> So to “escape fate” might simply be to forestall the eventual and certain doom of death. But in the case of ὑπὲρ μόρον, forestalling death is not immediately relevant. Indeed, far from avoiding death by acting “beyond fate,” Aegisthus brought it upon himself.

---

<sup>11</sup> “Fate, I say, no one among men has escaped,” (μοῖραν δ’ οὐ τινὰ φημι πεφυγμένον ἔμμεναι ἀνδρῶν, *Il.* 6.488). Cf. also Hdt. 1.91.

<sup>12</sup> See also *Il.* 16.780. Morrison 1997 argues for multiple, mutually incoherent views on fate in the *Iliad*.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. *Od.* 1.166, 9.61, 11.409, 16.421, 20.241; *Il.* 3.357, 18.465, 19.421, 21.133, 22.280, 24.85. For an instance where death is not implied, see Heracles’ question to Odysseus in the first *nekuia*: “Wretched one, truly you also are enduring an evil fate such as I bore beneath the rays of the sun” (ἄ δειλ’, ἦ τινὰ καὶ σὺ κακὸν μόρον ἡγηλάζεις, ὃν περ ἐγὼν ὀχέεσκον ὑπ’ ἀυγὰς ἠελίοιο, *Od.* 11.618). Here, the “evil fate” that Heracles faced in life was his twelve labors set by Eurystheus. Odysseus’ presence in the underworld suggests to Heracles that Odysseus must be faced with a task as harsh as Heracles’ final labor of capturing Cerberus.

The case of ὑπὲρ μύροϋ in line 35 relies upon another meaning of μύροϋ. “Fate” in Homeric poetry is the objectified externalization of the gods’—especially Zeus’—settled plan of events, including its foreseen outcome. It is, on Hugh Lloyd-Jones’ reading, “in the last resort identical with the will of Zeus.”<sup>14</sup> Likewise, Cedric Whitman views fate as the inevitability that results from the fact of the “absoluteness of [the gods’] being,” which “since it is free of time, immortalizes the processes and actions of the world, and necessitates their final results before they take place.”<sup>15</sup> Actions exist, from the gods’ perspective, outside of time and each act thus contains at once its entire process, including its end. Thus, μύροϋ is the gods’ “transcendent foreknowledge of the end.”<sup>16</sup>

However, such an emphasis on the ineluctability of fate ignores the real instances where events do transpire “beyond fate” and are not simply counterfactual expressions of impossible courses of action.<sup>17</sup> Instead, the phrase expresses that some actions can occur in a space “outside” the will of the gods, where the gods may have an inclination

---

<sup>14</sup> Lloyd-Jones 1971, 5.

<sup>15</sup> Whitman 1958, 227–28.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 228. Even if Whitman’s rather philosophical view of Homeric fate is inappropriate for an archaic theology, the essential point remains that, at least in the views of some—e.g., Helen (*Il.* 6.357) and Hector (*Il.* 22.279–80)—μύροϋ, however conceived, comes from Zeus. It is the expression of his will. As I argue in the next paragraph, this is the crucial sense of μύροϋ in the expression of ὑπὲρ μύροϋ in line 35.

<sup>17</sup> For Whitman *ibid.* and Janko (in Kirk et al., 3.5–6) such expressions are either counterfactual (i.e., X would have happened “beyond fate,” had not Y happened) or merely “hyperbole.”



and offer advice but choose not to effect a certain outcome. Thus the gods' "inclination" — in this case, Hermes' "intending good" (ἀγαθὰ φρονέων)—is distinguished from their "fated plan" (μόρος) by the criterion of whether they take compelling action to enforce their intent, in which case it becomes their μόρος.<sup>18</sup> Attempts at persuasion like Hermes' are not compelling actions; divine interventions in the course of battle, like Aphrodite's breaking of Paris' chinstrap, are (*Il.* 3.374–76).

With this distinction in mind, the sense in which Aegisthus acted ὑπὲρ μόρον becomes clear and free of paradoxical implications. Aegisthus made a free and informed choice to commit evil, outside of any cause from the gods. The phrase ὑπὲρ μόρον, thus, has the rhetorical function in Zeus' speech of exculpating the gods from the evil death that Aegisthus suffered, because he murdered Agamemnon of his own free will, outside of but not contrary to what the gods willed.<sup>19</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup> The distinction is not always strictly observed. In the many cases where μόρος means "death" (often paired with θάνατος—see p. 20 n. 13 above) it has undergone "semantic bleaching" such that its original sense of "death determined by the plan of the gods" is simplified and broadened to merely "death." Thus, even though Agamemnon's murder occurred "beyond fate," it can still be said that in that event he faced "death and fate" (θάνατόν τε μόρον τε, 11.409).

<sup>19</sup> Thus this action was performed, so Zeus claims, without what Lesky 1961 calls "double motivation" — that is, the overdetermined causation and blame attributable to both god and men at the same time. For a more recent evaluation of the complexities of "fate" in Homeric ideology, see Hammer 1998. As has been recognized since Jaeger 1966, 83–85, Zeus' view in these lines has affinities with Solon's in fr. 4 W, where the city will not perish "by fate" (κατὰ... αἴσαν, Sol. fr. 4.1–2); rather, the citizens are set "to ruin their great city themselves by their own senselessness" (αὐτοὶ δὲ φθείρουσιν μεγάλην πόλιν ἀφραδίησιν, 5)—that is, the citizens are bringing on destruction of their own free will.

The exculpatory function of ὑπέρο μόρον is supported by its use in the preceding line (34), where Zeus says that a characteristic of the woes that mortals suffer is that they have them ὑπέρο μόρον; that is, mortals *obtain and suffer* woes outside the will of the gods because they *act* outside the will of the gods. This is the poem's first suggestion of a recurring motif about τίσις: in the economy of justice, there is a symmetry between deeds and deserts. Zeus figures τίσις, in terms of the narrative, as a consequence of an action performed ὑπέρο μόρον. Rhetorically, τίσις can thus serve as a warning to someone who might act ὑπέρο μόρον, and in this speech the contention that mortals (with Aegisthus as example) commit crimes ὑπέρο μόρον justifies the woes that mortals suffer on account of τίσις. This in turn serves the further rhetorical purpose of freeing the gods from blame for the evils mortals face in such cases—the ultimate forensic goal of Zeus' speech.<sup>20</sup> Zeus' claim, thus, is that τίσις does not come from the gods—but it hardly needs to be said that this claim is highly polemical. Frequently, characters do attribute τίσις to Zeus and the gods, even when mortals themselves are the vehicles for acts of τίσις. The view Zeus presents here is just one side of the matter.<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>20</sup> The concept of the goal of a speech in context is sometimes called its "argument function." See Andersen 1987, 4–5, who calls it also the "primary function," as opposed to the "secondary or key function" of a parallel narrative, which is the role the narrative plays for the external audience of the poem. See also de Jong 2001, xii and n. 5.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. 9.270, 479, 12.378–88, 17.51, 20.169; cf. also Alc. fr. 1.36; Thgn. 337; Sol. fr. 13.25, 75–76. Just as Zeus' *apologia* in this passage presupposes that there were in circulation such complaints attributing blame to the gods for the evil men suffer, the similar sentiments found in Solon excusing the gods for blame (frs. 4.1–8, 11) indicate a tradition that treats the gods—Zeus especially—as responsible for the woes men suffer. In Footnote cont. next pg.

“Recklessness,” ἀτασθαλία, is paired in line 34 with ὑπὲρ μέτρον, and its function in the speech, as I mentioned above, is similar. Mortals are said to suffer woes “because of their own recklessness” (σφῆσιν ἀτασθαλίησιν). The etymology of this word is disputed,<sup>22</sup> but its meaning is clear enough from other uses. It is a moral error, freely chosen, heedless of known destructive consequences.<sup>23</sup> The immediately preceding proem states that Odysseus’ companions “perished because of their own

---

addition, there are many passages in the *Odyssey* where a character attributes misfortune to “a god” or Zeus (e.g., 11.436–39). Scholars have tended to see in such sentiments the operation of “Jørgensen’s law”: characters (unlike the narrator) have limited perception of the narrative and they attribute the causes of events that they cannot know to “a god,” a δαίμων, or Zeus in a general way, without implying specific knowledge or blame. See Jørgensen 1904. (He applies this principle to all kinds of seemingly divine intervention, for good and ill.) I note, however, that Jørgensen’s law can only be effective as a narrative strategy because such utterances are both familiar and intelligible to the audience. Mortals’ blaming Zeus is a conventional motif. Friedrich 1987b, 385–89, notes the limitations this places on scholars’ drawing theological implications from such utterances.

<sup>22</sup> Heubeck et al., ad 1.356. Some argue it is connected with ἄτη, “infatuation, ruin”: see E. E. G. and Jevons 1903, 289; Schwyzer 1.452 n. 4. However, Chantraine *DELG*, s.v. ἀτάσθαλος, points out the difficulty of this derivation: the long  $\bar{\alpha}$  of ἄτη cannot be reconciled with the short initial  $\alpha$  of ἀτάσθαλος. Semantics as well argue against this derivation: Jaeger 1939, 143, rightly contrasts “inevitable” ἄτη, which is outside human volition, with the responsibility and will signified by ἀτασθαλία. See p. 25 n. 26 below.

<sup>23</sup> One might object to my definition of ἀτασθαλία by noting, with Adkins, that Homeric heroes did not distinguish between “moral error” and “mistake.” I accept much of Adkins’ ethical framework, and by “moral error” I mean an error that, no matter the agent’s intent, has moral consequences—that is, an action that leads to punishment. However, Adkins 1972a, 14–15, insists that “[p]unishment, in fact, as we know it, does not exist in Homeric society.” He claims that all that is at issue in situations where punishment *per se* appears to transpire (signified by τίνω) is economic recompense. But I am inclined to agree with Saunders 1994, 22–25, that, although τίνω may in some cases denote a transaction in an economy of τιμή, it can still signify painful punishment: Aegisthus’ “payment” for his crimes is sufficient compensation only because he died as miserably as Agamemnon. Destructive consequences for one’s self, household, and companions are regularly described in moral language as “evils” (κακά): cf. the phrase ἀτασθαλίησι κακῆσι (11.300, 24.458). Hence, recklessness that brings destruction is characterized as immoral. See Adkins 1960a, 30–60. On some readings of the heroic moral system, such as Adkins’, which is ultimately traceable to Polemarchus’ view in the *Republic* (Pl. *Resp.* 332D), “evils” are only immoral from the standpoint of the subject when they are applied to those close to him; when the same “evils” are suffered by an enemy, they are commended.

recklessness” (αὐτῶν...σφετέρησιν ἀτασθαλίησιν ὄλοντο, 1.7). The proem connects this with the curse and death they faced after they disregarded proper caution and slew the cattle of Helios (1.8–9). As Hermes warns Aegisthus of impending destruction, so Odysseus warns his companions that to slay the cattle would be to act with “evil recklessness” (ἀτασθαλίησι κακῆσι, 12.300), because, thereby, they would fulfill the prophetic warning of Circe (12.139–41) and cause their own demise.<sup>24</sup> In the event, Odysseus’ companions deliberately chose to slaughter the cattle, though they knew the consequences of the god’s retribution that would follow. Even if they were starving, as Eurylochus claimed (12.342),<sup>25</sup> they still knowingly condemned themselves by committing an act they knew would bring retribution. The essential element in ἀτασθαλία is knowledge of consequences. Circumstances and intent are irrelevant.<sup>26</sup>

---

<sup>24</sup> τίσις is also explicitly the result of the companions’ slaying the cattle: Helios prays that Zeus might bring vengeance (τίσαι) against them (*Od.* 12.378). See Greene 1944, 23–24. Hommel 1955, 238–39, and many others (see *ibid.* for bibliography) have long noted the role that the diction of ἀτασθαλία plays in connecting the fate of Odysseus’ companions with the fate of Aegisthus. See also pp. 55–56 below on this passage.

<sup>25</sup> There is some debate about whether Eurylochus’ claim that they were dying of starvation is truthful: see Friedrich 1987b, 391, who disputes the claim of Fenik 1974, 213 (with reference to earlier discussions), that the companions acted only out of the need to survive.

<sup>26</sup> Thus Jaeger 1939, 143, distinguishing ἄτη from ἀτασθαλία, notes, “The essential feature of the latter [ἀτασθαλία] is foreknowledge—evil action deliberately willed.” Greene’s 1944, 22, definition of ἀτασθαλία is similar: “the wickedness of a hardened character that perversely and perhaps deliberately sins against the light, against moral law” and “a deliberate choice of evil.” Greene, however, errs in considering “wickedness” and “sin” important elements of ἀτασθαλία. As Adkins 1960a, 30–60, esp. 49, has shown, a hero’s intent is unimportant in the attribution of blame and considerations of ἀτασθαλία, so that it would be irrelevant if companions slew the cattle in order to survive. As Gill 1994, 83–84, points out, Hector’s self-condemnation—“I destroyed my people through my recklessness” (ὤλεσα λαὸν ἀτασθαλίησιν ἐμῆσιν, *Il.* Footnote cont. next pg.

The fact that the companions' circumstances on Thrinacia were desperate merely makes their choice to eat the cattle tragic, not excusable.<sup>27</sup> In the case of Aegisthus, his *ἀτασθαλία* is manifest in the fact that, though warned by the embassy of Hermes that he would face *τίσις* should he commit the crime, he acted nonetheless, "though he knew sheer destruction" (*εἰδὼς αἰπὺν ὄλεθρον*, 37).<sup>28</sup> Zeus thus provided Aegisthus with the knowledge and conditions necessary to make a free choice whether or not to suffer the deadly consequences of murder; but Aegisthus chose destruction. On this reading, *ἀτασθαλία* precedes and effectively causes one to suffer *τίσις*.

The ideology of *ἀτασθαλία* thus supports Zeus' rhetorical purpose. In the Homeric conception of causality, men may plausibly blame the gods for the evils that they, in the limitations of human knowledge, could not foresee resulting from their, or

---

22.104)—is a product of his acknowledgement that he acted wrongly because Polydamus had warned him of the destructive consequences of his actions (*Il.* 18.249–313).

<sup>27</sup> I use "tragic" in the sense of MacIntyre 1981, 131–32, 143, esp. 223–25: a situation in which two incompatible goods ought to be sought. In the case of the companions, they ought both to respect the sacred cattle and to preserve their lives with food. But they cannot do both. Eurylochus presents the dilemma as a choice between dying a quick death at sea and a lingering death on the island (348–51)—though, he mistakenly presents this dilemma as secondary and unlikely to matter, since he claims they can appease Helios by promising to found a temple on Ithaca upon their return (346–48). This has connections with Hegel's formulation of characters representing the competing moral claims of society, of a thesis and antithesis. Such tragic conflicts often require divine intervention to reach a conclusion: see also p. 321 n. 76 below.

<sup>28</sup> Danek 1998a, ad 1.32–43, writes, "Aigisths *ἀτασθαλία* besteht nicht nur in seiner Tat, sondern auch darin, daß er sie wider besseres Wissen begeht." In fact, more than Danek admits, the semantic emphasis of *ἀτασθαλία* is the foreknowledge of the perpetrator.

other's, actions—that is, the evils of chance and contingency.<sup>29</sup> But when a mortal, such as Aegisthus, has full knowledge of the destructive consequences of his actions and still chooses to act, the gods cannot be imputed with blame.<sup>30</sup> And the present example adds a further layer of divine exculpation, for the gods themselves are the ones who provide Aegisthus with this information.<sup>31</sup>

The content of the “evils” (κάκ’, 33) that Aegisthus suffered comes in the narrative introduction to Zeus’ speech: Orestes “killed” (ἔκταν’, 30) him. Thus the goal of τίσις consists in the violent death of the perpetrator of the precipitating crime. The verb that signifies the killing itself (κτείνω) has an application loose enough to signify also the murder of the original victim of the precipitating crime, Agamemnon, (ἔκτανε, 36). This precise verbal correspondence points to a symmetry between the retributive act and the precipitating crime. Thus, just as with the previous correspondence of the notion

---

<sup>29</sup> See Dodds 1951, 13: “all departures from normal human behaviour whose cause are not immediately perceived...are ascribed to a supernatural agency, just as is any departure from the normal behaviour of the weather or the normal behavior of a bow-string.”

<sup>30</sup> Thus Clay 1983, 37, finds that the central function of ἀτασθαλία is apologetic: it “place[s] the blame for a destructive act on one party while absolving another.”

<sup>31</sup> Because the embassy of Hermes to Aegisthus does not appear in any other telling of the myth, scholars of an analytical or neoanalytical persuasion (e.g., Heubeck et al, ad loc.; Danek 1998a, ad 1.32–43) have tended to consider this event to be Homer’s *ad hoc* invention, an original creation and insertion into the traditional myth of Aegisthus’ crimes. Some (e.g., Düntzer) have gone so far as to consider lines 37–42 an interpolation. However, the passage follows a far more logical structure as it is, since, as just described, the ideology of ἀτασθαλία requires foreknowledge of the consequences one will suffer, in this case delivered by Hermes. Zeus’ speech would be ineffective without his being able to cite the warning he gave to Aegisthus. In addition, as Heubeck et al, ad loc., note, the mission of Hermes in this case parallels the mission on which he will be sent in 1.84–87.

of ὑπὲρ μόνον to both the deed and consequence of Aegisthus' crime (34, 35), here a similar verbal correspondence underscores a conception of justice as *ius talionis*.

Athena's response to Zeus' speech strengthens this impression that talionic justice is inherent to τίσις. She begins by affirming the justice of Zeus' paradigm (46):

καὶ λίην κεινός γε εὐικότι κείται ὀλέθρῳ...

Surely that man, at least, lies in a fitting destruction...

According to Athena, Aegisthus' death "fit" his circumstances. The term that Athena uses to describe how his death "fit" — εὐικότι, from the verb εὔικα and used as an adjective here — encodes an ideology of just deserts. In its most common usage, this verb denotes similarity: its subject "is like" its dative complement. For example, Odysseus describes the Laestrygonians as being "not like men, but like the Giants" (οὐκ ἄνδρεσσιν εὐικότες, ἀλλὰ Γίγασιν, 10.120).<sup>32</sup> εὔικα can also denote "appropriateness," but this notion derives from the first. The example where Nestor commends Telemachus' speech as "appropriate" — "For truly your speech is appropriate" (ἦ τοι γὰρ μῦθοί γε εὐικότες, 3.124) — provides a good illustration of how similarity leads to "appropriateness." Nestor is amazed at how much like his father Telemachus is (3.122–23). Telemachus' words are thus "appropriate" or "fitting" insofar as they are like the words of Odysseus. With this clarification in mind, the sense of why Aegisthus' death is

---

<sup>32</sup> Cf. similar uses at 5.51 (introducing a simile), 11.606, 608, 12.413, et al.

“fitting” becomes clear: because it is “like” his crime.<sup>33</sup> His own slaying at the hands of Orestes is “like” his slaying Agamemnon.

The second occurrence of *τίσις* (1.43) has the recipient of revenge as its grammatical subject and the agent of the action of retribution. This reinforces the sense of Aegisthus’ culpability, for just as he freely performed the precipitating crimes so, in this mode of expression, has he thus freely performed the act of retribution by actively receiving death. The force of *ἄθροα* and *πάντ’* reinforce one another: for every part of his crimes did Aegisthus pay back. Zeus stresses the totality of the crimes for which Aegisthus paid back in order to make clear the extent of Aegisthus’ guilt and thus the moral acceptability of his suffering the cruel fate of inglorious death.

The verb *ἄπέτισεν* is emphatic in its final position as the last word of the speech. The final clause, “Now he has paid for everything all-together” (*νῦν δ’ ἄθροα πάντ’ ἄπέτισεν*), and its final verb in particular serve to summarize the whole speech. In addition to having a prominent position in the line at its end, the verb is an aorist, whose perfective aspect provides a removed perspective, where the action is viewed as a whole in the eyes of the speaker. This is especially evident by the contrast in aspect offered by the preceding *πεῖθε*, an imperfect that presents the point of view of the events unfolding

---

<sup>33</sup> Thus a scholiast glosses *εὐκότι* as *ὁμοίω*: see Ernest ad 1.46b.



before the eyes of the speaker.<sup>34</sup> The adverb *vūn*, “the quintessential marker of speaker-oriented temporal deixis,”<sup>35</sup> supports this change of perspective, moving the point of view to a removed distance. From this vantage, the audience can view the action of *τίσις* in its totality, as opposed to the internal perspective of the foregoing narration of Hermes’ mission. This final, short statement by Zeus serves as a *précis* of his whole speech, epitomizing his message: Aegisthus suffered justly.

## 2.2 Defining *τίσις*

This inductive description of the initial, paradigmatic case of *τίσις* goes some of the way toward presenting a definition of the concept. But no one aspect of the case considered individually can be said to define the concept. The final, retributive act of killing might seem a reasonable aspect to use as the basis for defining *τίσις*. But, as I mentioned above, Aegisthus’ killing of Agamemnon is described with language identical to Orestes’ killing of him (in both cases, *ἔκταν(ε)*, 1.30, 36). The events themselves are, in all likelihood,<sup>36</sup> similar as well; in fact, in keeping with the principles

---

<sup>34</sup> On the contrasting meaning of imperfective aspect (of present and imperfect tenses) and perfective (of aorist tenses), see Bakker 1997a and 1997b.

<sup>35</sup> Bakker 1997a, 20.

<sup>36</sup> There are no descriptive narrations of Orestes’ killing Aegisthus in Homer. The details of the event can only be inferred from later versions.

of the *ius talionis*, killing the original perpetrator succeeds at achieving retribution to the extent that the second killing resembles the first. If either of these two killings were omitted, τίσις would not exist.

Rather than being defined simply as a single event, τίσις consists of a combination of events in a particular sequence. The occurrence of only a portion of these events or other arrangements of them would not produce the same effect and would not be called τίσις. The killing of Aegisthus without reference to Aegisthus' own killing of Agamemnon could not be called τίσις; it would be murder.<sup>37</sup> τίσις, then, is a particular set of events.<sup>38</sup> This set of events has a particular shape, a "morphology," to use Propp's term,<sup>39</sup> where each event fits into a certain pattern sequentially ordered in a certain way.

For the most part, the sequence exhibits a chronological order when it is narrated,

---

<sup>37</sup> Thus the final, retributive killing, which epitomizes the whole sequence of τίσις and thus can itself be called τίσις by synecdoche, "implicates," as Greimas puts it, all the preceding events in the sequence. Greimas 1987, 76, writes, "the presence of the last link in the chain of implications is enough to permit, given the intention to reconstruct the narrative unit, a catalysis that will reestablish it in its integral form." Thus, in Greimas' model, τίσις is a "chain of implications." There are situations in which characters speak of τίσις before the final killing has occurred: Hermes' warning or Helios' prayer that the gods would avenge (τίσαι, 12.378) the cattle Odysseus' companions slew, for instance. In these situations, the characters are demanding, hoping, foretelling, or otherwise envisioning a hypothetical future in which τίσις has been accomplished.

<sup>38</sup> Barthes 1975, 253–54, following Bremond, notes that "sequence," which he defines as "a logical string of nuclei, linked together by a solidarity relation," is an essential characteristic of narrative. In Barthes' terms, a single τίσις narrative is a closed sequence: it is a sequence of "consecutive functions" which lack neither antecedent nor consequent "kin" functions. That is to say, the sequence is bound together under the overarching principle (what he calls "solidarity relation") of "retribution," and no action (or "function") logically precedes nor follows after this sequence. It is a unified whole. Matters become more complex when other perspectives (other "subjects") and narratives interact with a basic τίσις narrative.

<sup>39</sup> Propp 1958. Cf. Harry Keyishian's 1995 analysis of Elizabethan revenge tragedy, *The Shapes of Revenge*.

although this is not a necessary attribute of its realization, as certain exceptions make clear. Aegisthus' seduction of Clytemnestra (i.e., the consummation of his wooing) fills the same logical position in the sequence as the murder of Agamemnon. They both occupy the single position of precipitating crime. However, as this narrative develops, Aegisthus wins over Clytemnestra *before* he ambushes and murders Agamemnon. One might also imagine a sequence in which the warning about the crime follows it or interrupts the preparation for it—and in fact it does in Odysseus' τίσις sequence, as I discuss later.<sup>40</sup> Thus, chronological ordering is not a feature of the deep structure of the sequence, even though it is a common feature of the surface appearance or realization in narrative of the sequence.<sup>41</sup>

In other words, τίσις is a narrative—or in the French structuralist tradition, an *histoire*—a “series of logically or chronologically related events that are caused or experienced by actors.”<sup>42</sup> The action of τίσις is the combination of a certain set of events

---

<sup>40</sup> See pp. 83–87 below.

<sup>41</sup> My view here on chronology follows Barthes 1975, 251–52, and the majority of his contemporaries in contrast to Bal, 1985, 5, Ricoeur 1984–1985, 2.29–60, and Propp 1958, 24, who, understandably, considered the progression of time to be so essential an aspect of human experience that it had to be an element of narrative structure. Nonetheless, the evidence of the variations in narrative time in which elements appear in the actual performance of a single, underlying story-pattern suggests that chronology is a secondary feature. As Barthes *ibid.*, puts it, “The goal [of narrative analysis] is to give structural description to the chronological illusion; it is up to the narrative logic to account for narrative time.” The issue remains in dispute among narrative structuralists.

<sup>42</sup> Bal 1985, 5. She uses the term “fabula” (ultimately from the Russian formalist tradition) in the sense in which the term narrative is used here. The “fabula” is the underlying structure of the narrative in its proper  
Footnote cont. next pg.

organized in a certain narrative pattern, with a particular focus on the event of killing the perpetrator.

The basic narrative pattern of this initial example of *τίσις*, which will provisionally serve to demonstrate the general outline of the concept, follows a logical and roughly chronological sequence, as table 1 represents. While Zeus' telling the "Oresteia" narrative touches upon each of these seven stages of the *τίσις* narrative, the narrator gives portions of this sequence in more detail later in the poem. I have fleshed out the table accordingly, with references in the notes.

---

logical sequence as opposed to the way that the narrative is actually told, the "story" (*syuzhet*), in which events may appear out of order or be retold. See de Jong 2001, *viv*, xviii.

**Table 1: The “Oresteia” τίσις Sequence**

Order	Event/State
1	Orestes and Agamemnon have left Mycenae, leaving behind Clytemnestra and Aegisthus. <sup>43</sup>
2	Zeus sends Hermes to warn Aegisthus. He is not persuaded. <sup>44</sup>
3	Wooing of Clytemnestra. <sup>45</sup> Plotting Agamemnon’s murder (setting an ambush). <sup>46</sup>
4	Adultery with Clytemnestra. <sup>47</sup> Murder of Agamemnon. <sup>48</sup>
5	Orestes returns to Mycenae. <sup>49</sup>
6	Orestes kills Aegisthus and Clytemnestra. <sup>50</sup>
7	Aegisthus has repaid in full. <sup>51</sup>

The sequence of events outlined here that are specific to the “Oresteia” narrative of τίσις, illustrate a more generic pattern of τίσις, as outlined in table 2.

---

<sup>43</sup> 3.262–64 and implied by the many references to Agamemnon’s return, e.g., 11.430–32.

<sup>44</sup> The unnamed singer who was watching over Clytemnestra and helping her maintain her “good sense” (φρεσι...ἀγαθησι, 3.266) in fending off the seductions of Aegisthus might have functioned as a warning figure for Clytemnestra. The poem leaves unstated the way in which the singer “guarded” (ἔρυσσασθαι) her. However, since a minstrel (αἰοιδός) fills a similar social function as a seer (μάντις)—both are among the δημοεργοί (cf. 17.383–86)—and both use verbal art to instruct their audience, it is plausible that the minstrel in this case acted like the seers Telamus, Theoclymenus, and Leiodes, who warned the perpetrators in advance of their crimes.

<sup>45</sup> 3.264–26.

<sup>46</sup> 3.194, 249–50, 261, 303–5, 4.524–33, 11.409–11, 428–30, 24.199. There is a network of thematic diction at this stage centered on the terms related to δόλος and μῆτις. Aegisthus and Clytemnestra share this with Odysseus: see pp. 70–71 below.

<sup>47</sup> 3.272, 303.

<sup>48</sup> 1.300, 3.198, 3.234–35, 252, 4.534–37, 11.388–89, 409–15, 419–24, 453, 24.21–22, 96–97, 200.

<sup>49</sup> 3.306–7.

<sup>50</sup> 1.298–300, 3.203–4, 307–9, 4.546–47.

<sup>51</sup> 3.195.

**Table 2: The Generic *τίσις* Sequence**

Order	Event/State
1	Background conditions
2	Warning
3	Preparation I
4	Precipitating crime
5	Preparation II
6	Retribution
7	New conditions

Such a sequence of “chronologically and logically related events” constitutes, as mentioned above, a narrative. I have made the initial and final stages of the pattern (“background conditions” and “new conditions”) part of this sequence, though they are normally only an implicit part of a *τίσις* narrative and are not narrated as such.<sup>52</sup> The phrases *νοστήσαντα* (“having returned,” 36) and *ἧς ἰμείρεται αἰῆς* (“desired his homeland,” 41) imply but do not narrate the leave-taking and absence of Agamemnon and Orestes. Zeus’ final phrase, “Now he has paid for everything all-together” (*νῦν δ’ ἀθρόα πάντ’ ἀπέτισεν*, 43), suggests the existence of a new set of conditions—the transition to a new state—in addition to summarizing the *τίσις* narrative. Because the elements of this sequence appear in the poem both as “states” and “events” depending

---

<sup>52</sup> A possible objection to including these two stages is that these are not “events” but actually “states.” According to Bal 1985, 5, 13–15, “events” are “transition[s] from one state to another state.” They involve “change.” But as she points out, an “event” may have the linguistic form of a state in its articulation in an actual narrative text. In this example, the state of Agamemnon’s absence (stage 1) has come about because of the event of his departure. Similarly Propp 1958, 24, acknowledges that the “initial situation” is an important element, even if it does not constitute a “function” in the sequence.

on the point of view at the moment, I encompass both by using the term “stages” to describe these sequentially ordered elements.<sup>53</sup>

In the tradition of Homeric scholarship, there is another well-established way to understand a smaller, generic narrative pattern that occurs within the larger narrative of the epic: what Albert Lord calls a “story-pattern.”<sup>54</sup> John Miles Foley has given the concept of story-pattern its fullest treatment as it applies to the *Odyssey*. He adduces a story-pattern that, following Lord, he calls the “Return Song,” known also in the South Slavic tradition.<sup>55</sup> In the tradition of ancient Greek epic this story-pattern was called the νόστος. The most commonly used term for this kind of pattern is “theme,”<sup>56</sup> which I have adopted interchangeably with “narrative” for this analysis. Theme is similar to the better-known formal pattern of the “type-scene,” in that it is made up of “typical, constitutive events” that reoccur in each use of the pattern.<sup>57</sup> It is also adaptable to different contexts and subject to the same process of elaboration and deviation.

---

<sup>53</sup> Propp 1958, 19–20, 24, *passim* uses the term “function” to denote largely the same analytical concept for which I am using “stage.” However, his analysis of Russian folktales provides no clear analogue for the narrative of τίσις.

<sup>54</sup> Lord 1995, 11–12; 1960, 158–97.

<sup>55</sup> Foley 1999, 115–67; Lord 1960, 242–59. Lord 1960, 186–97, and Nagler 1974, 131–66, among others, have also applied the typology of story-pattern to the *Iliad*, finding an underlying pattern of withdrawal-devastation-return.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Wilson 2002, 14–15; Edwards 1992, 286. Maronitis 2004, 1–2, uses the term “megatheme” to distinguish larger themes “homecoming” or “war” from such minor themes as “sleep” or “dream”—the latter kind he connects with “type-scenes.”

<sup>57</sup> Foley 1999, 118.

Scholars, however, have not given nearly as much study to theme as to the similar structure of the type-scene.<sup>58</sup> The interpretive model of the type-scene is not a perfect match for the narrative pattern of τίσις, but it does address elements of Homeric discourse that are similar enough to warrant a brief look at how type-scenes work and how they can be usefully compared to the narrative pattern of τίσις.

A type-scene is a regular pattern of discrete narrative (or descriptive) elements that reoccurs in the poem, having a similar “deep structure” of generic elements while the precise details of any individual element in any iteration may vary from any other.<sup>59</sup> This kind of unit of poetic composition “operates on the principle of variation within limits, allowing for compositional flexibility at the same time that it delivers a resonant context that frames each of its occurrences.”<sup>60</sup> A type-scene has a basic form, in which all the generic elements are arranged in a certain pattern. Within limits, deviations from this pattern and elaborations upon selected elements of it are possible and, indeed,

---

<sup>58</sup> Parry 1971, 451–52; Lord 1960, 68–98; Arend 1933. Scholarship on “type scenes” is extensive. After its beginnings in the work of Arend and Lord (who was building on the work of Parry 1971, 26–40, 48–49), further work has been done by Armstrong 1958 (calling this feature a “motif”), Patzer 1972, 26–40, Fenik 1974, 153–71, Nagler, 1974, 64–111, Edwards 1992—a fairly comprehensive grammar of important type-scenes, citing his and others’ earlier works on the subject—Heubeck et al., 3.430–47, and Foley 1999, 169–99. For a more recent application of type-scene analysis to conversation, see Beck 2005; to divine council scenes, see Marks 2008, 159–66; to sacrifice, see Hitch 2009.

<sup>59</sup> Nagler 1967 has shown how the theories of generative linguistics and notions of “deep structure” and preverbal “Gestalt” can be usefully applied to discussions of formulas and type-scenes in Homeric poetry.

<sup>60</sup> Foley 1999, 170.



meaningful. Some of the most widely studied type-scenes are arrival, feasting, journey, arming, bathing, lament, sleep, assembly, prayer and oath.

As an example, the type-scene of feasting, according to Foley, consists of five basic elements or features: a host and guest(s), seating of guests, preparation and service of feast (washing, setting a table, provision of food, provision of wine), eating and satisfaction of guests, and a mediation.<sup>61</sup> A singer fills out this generic outline with the particular content of a given situation, such as the details of Athena's arrival in Ithaca and feasting with Telemachus in the guise of Mentos (1.113–324, especially 130–51). Deviations from this basic pattern are full of implication. Thus, in the final feast-scene of the *Iliad*, in which Priam comes to supplicate Achilles for his son's body and Achilles offers him a meal, Priam at first rejects Achilles' offer of a seat in favor of first getting his son's body returned to him (*Il.* 24.553). This break in the typical pattern is significant: it threatens to undermine the course of the narrative in progress, precluding the final mediation that results from a properly enacted feast-scene—in this case, Achilles' releasing Hector's body.

The type-scene of feasting and the other previously mentioned type-scenes consist of a certain block of narrative. They routinely occupy a set of continuous lines,

---

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 171. See also Saïd 1979 on the feast considered as a type-scene, the poem's use of which she compares to an "art de la fugue" (11).

sometimes with content repeated verbatim, only in a different context.<sup>62</sup> This makes them different from the kind of narrative pattern that *τίσις* exemplifies. Like the type-scene, the theme of *τίσις* consists of a certain regular set of elements that follow a certain sequence; but unlike the type-scene, this theme can expand to the length of an entire poem, as is the case in the *Odyssey*, where the *τίσις* of Odysseus encompasses the whole epic. At the same time, because this theme reoccurs with many of the same regular features, deviations from, and elaborations upon, the pattern are significant in the same way that they are with type-scenes. The principles of stereotyped repetition and variation within formal constraints unite these two kinds of patterns.

One might object that the typology of theme is inapposite for *τίσις*, since in the case of the allusion to Aegisthus' death it occupies a much smaller position in the structure of the poem, running a mere sixteen lines, and does not encompass the story of a whole epic. Lord's terminology of "story-pattern" (instead of "theme") may suggest that this narrative structure must encompass the entire epic; however, such large-scale narration is not necessary. All that is required is a coherent, complete narrative sequence, told at any length. Zeus' allusion to the "Oresteia" is a succinct version of the theme of *τίσις*, retelling the "Oresteia" myth in its essentials as a pattern of *τίσις*. A singer could greatly elaborate a theme such as this, even to the scale of an entire epic,

---

<sup>62</sup> E.g., the preparing of the feast at *Od.* 1.136–40, 1.172–76, 4.52–56, 10.368–72, 15.135–39, and 17.91–95.

and there is evidence to suggest that the “Oresteia” myth had its own epic tradition in which this theme played a central role<sup>63</sup>. As another example of the different scales possible for a theme, the νόστος, “Return Song,” theme appears in the *Odyssey* in much smaller iterations, such as the brief story of Ajax’s ill-fated νόστος (4.499–511).<sup>64</sup> This succinct example exists within the over-arching epic-scale version of Odysseus’ νόστος that the poem itself typifies. It is not my intention by drawing attention to the theme of τίσις to suggest that this theme should supplant νόστος in the analysis of the poem; rather, both are major themes that serve as organizational structures for the poem. They have been combined in the *Odyssey*, as I argue later, in a particular, meaningful way.

The meaning of these structures of type-scene and theme can be considered on two levels. On one level, these structures are compositional units of poetry. They have their effectiveness through their traditional character in the practice of oral poetry. For a singer, these structures are inherited tools that he can employ in the process of verse-crafting; for an audience, they are units of “reading,” patterns of expectation that

---

<sup>63</sup> There are two kinds of evidence for an epic “Oresteia” tradition. Firstly, there are internal references within the *Odyssey* to the epic “fame” (κλέος) of Orestes, which circulates among men, even among “those yet to be” (ἔσσομένοισι, 3.204). Since in Homer κλέος signifies the fame conferred by poetry (Nagy 1979, 16), the diction of this passage (and of 1.298) connotes heroic poetry about Orestes’ accomplishments. Secondly, there is also external evidence to suggest that an epic tradition about Orestes’ vengeance flourished: e.g., Proclus’ summary of the *Returns* (attributed to Agias of Troezen) includes the story of the “vengeance” (τιμωρία) of Orestes and Pylades (Procl. *Chrestom.* 301–3); see also Gantz 1993, 676–86, esp. 677. See also pp. 293–95 below.

<sup>64</sup> Bonifazi 2009, 488, similarly notes that Nestor recites his own “micro nostos tale” embedded within the “macro nostos tale” of the *Odyssey* itself.

provide a way to understand a sequence of events. Each type-scene and theme is its own sub-genre within the master-genre of epic. Homeric scholarship, by and large, stops here with regard to interpreting the meaning of type-scenes and themes.

But on another level, type-scenes and themes influence the actions and reasoning of the characters of the epic within the story itself. As they relate to the characters of the epic, type-scenes and themes could be defined as basic, inherited narrative patterns that participants and observers employ to make situations morally intelligible. In the midst of what Erving Goffman has called a “strip of activity,”<sup>65</sup> an undifferentiated set of events, characters perform the complex act of comprehending the meaning of the their situation by using these patterns to frame events that have transpired, states currently in existence, and expected outcomes. The Homeric hero shows a self-awareness about his role in a story, as the numerous prospective allusions to his future position in a poetic tradition indicate.<sup>66</sup> It is natural that poetic devices such as these affect the internal motivations, decisions, and even identities of characters, not only because of the way that characters use them but also because their content is rooted in the material

---

<sup>65</sup> Goffman 1974, 10, 83.

<sup>66</sup> E.g., the kin of the suitors that Odysseus killed claim that they must act to take revenge (τίσις) upon him, otherwise “we will be shamed forever, since these events are a disgrace for future men to hear” (ἦ καὶ ἔπειτα κατηφέες ἐσσόμεθ’ αἰεὶ. λώβη γὰρ τάδε γ’ ἐστὶ καὶ ἐσσομένοισι πυθέσθαι, 24.432–33). λώβη is a term for a poetic tradition of ridicule: see Nagy 1979, 255–57, where he notes λώβη is synonymous with αἴσχος, which also signals a tradition of blame poetry, esp. at 24.192–202. On this passage and the tradition of blame poetry, see *ibid.*, 37–39, and Tsagalis 2008, 30–43.

conditions of the actual society of the epic's singer and audience. When a character prepares for battle and dons his armor in a certain, stereotyped way, this pattern is effective and lasts in the poetic tradition because it reflects a reality in the external society. Although when compared to contemporary society some type-scenes in the epic are atavistic, the extent of such anachronism has been overstated.<sup>67</sup>

How one puts on armor is, perhaps, a trivial example, though even this type-scene has more ethical significance than might at first be assumed. The armor of a Homeric hero is one of his chief material expressions of status. The ritualistic act of donning it emphasizes the status and role of the hero that wears it and the privileges and duties belonging to him in that role. *A fortiori*, the τίσις theme has an expressly ethical function: the narrative form provides a *schema* with which an agent can comprehend the meaning of his circumstances and what actions he ought to perform. Orestes succeeded and is commended in the poetic tradition because, firstly, he recognized that he inhabited a τίσις theme,<sup>68</sup> and, secondly, he enacted the events that the story prescribed. Characters thus use themes in two ways. They can use them as *ex*

---

<sup>67</sup> See Morris 2001.

<sup>68</sup> Orestes' act of recognition goes unstated in the *Odyssey*, but it is perhaps implied at 1.41, where Orestes is said to "long for his homeland." Presumably he had the option of remaining in Athens (or Phocis, as the tradition behind Aeschylus' *Oresteia* has it, to which a variant reading known to Zenodotus also attests: see Dindorf ad 3.307). It might be better to say that he recognized that he inhabited a *potential* τίσις theme: as with Telemachus' option of having Penelope remarry, there are different paths that the story might take, but only one path for the theme of τίσις.

*post facto* explanations of the meaning of events, an example of this being Zeus' narrative of Aegisthus' demise, which on his telling takes on the meaning of a deserved evil outcome. Characters can also use themes in the midst of action as ways to ascertain, or, more forcefully, to determine in what story they are participating. The goal of the latter usage is that a character know what story to enact. Telemachus' and Orestes' stories of revenge, from their own, internal points of view, are examples of this latter usage.

This analysis of theme and type-scene is largely consistent with the narrative ethics of Alasdair MacIntyre, especially with regard to the way in which the characters of epic embody and enact the conventions of epic poetry.<sup>69</sup> MacIntyre's work, however, has received surprisingly little attention from Homeric scholars.<sup>70</sup> His central concern with the Homeric epics is how they act as pedagogic tools, "moral scriptures" for classical Athens, rather than how they function as moral texts in the earlier, contemporary society of their composition. In classical Athens, "the chief means of moral education is the telling of stories," and the Homeric epics served this purpose.<sup>71</sup> But, as

---

<sup>69</sup> MacIntyre 1981, 124: "It is not just that poems and sagas narrate what happens to men and women, but in their narrative form poems and sagas capture a form that was already present in the lives which they relate." And *ibid.*, 125: "what epic and saga then portray is a society which already embodies the form of epic or saga."

<sup>70</sup> To my knowledge, only Gill 1996, esp. 60–78 and (briefly) Hammer 2002a, 229–30, have used MacIntyre's theories in the analysis of Homeric poetry.

<sup>71</sup> MacIntyre 1981, 121: "The understanding of Heroic society...is thus a necessary part of the understanding of classical society and of its successors."

MacIntyre fails to remark, already within the epics themselves characters receive moral education through narration of mythological traditions, most notably the “Oresteia.”

Historical concerns aside, the most relevant aspect of MacIntyre’s work for my study is his conception of a narrative morality, in which “particular actions derive their character as parts of larger wholes”; that is, actions become intelligible as they fit into a narrative.<sup>72</sup> “Human action” is seen as “enacted narrative.”<sup>73</sup> The narrative that an individual enacts follows from the role he has in his community, and this community sustains and conveys such narratives as befit social roles through institutions such as epic poetry.<sup>74</sup> Narratives and roles are not morally neutral. They have conventional meanings, moral implications that are just as much a part of the tradition as the form of the narrative itself.<sup>75</sup> In the case of *τίσις*, it is a narrative form that characters enact, playing the role of avenger, avenged, or recipient. If a hero occupies the role of avenger, he thereby assumes a positive moral position; if he occupies the role of recipient, his moral position is negative. While the meaning of any narrative in the abstract is universally agreed upon within the community, individuals may contest its application

---

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 204.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 211.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 221–23.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 121–27. The “roles” that individuals play and that bear conventional moral meanings are on my reading identical to what MacIntyre calls “characters”: “those social roles which provide a culture with its moral definitions.” (ibid., 31).

in a particular situation. Thus, while the meaning of a narrative is objective, its application is subjective. Through this ethical structure, the pattern of action that constitutes *τίσις* has its meaning as part of a traditional system of typical narratives.

*τίσις*, then, is best regarded as a traditional narrative pattern, a “theme,” consisting of a sequence of actions or states: the background conditions that provide the opportunity and motivation for the initial crime, the warning to the perpetrator, the preparations for the initial crime, the initial crime, the avenger’s taking on his role and preparing for his retribution, the retributive act, and, lastly, the new set of conditions of retribution achieved. This narrative has three important, distinct roles: avenger, avenged, and recipient of revenge. This narrative pattern together with its roles provides an interpretive pattern for understanding the morality of events in the Homeric world that involve murder, revenge, and honor. Furthermore, it provides a “script” of actions for an agent to perform in such a situation in order to achieve a position of moral commendation or, by failing to perform it, receive censure.<sup>76</sup> In short, *τίσις* is one among

---

<sup>76</sup> On the concept of “script,” see Farenga 2006, 7–8, who defines it as “a fixed, stereotypical representation of knowledge incorporating a sequence of actions, speech acts and situations.” See also Minchin 2001 and 1992, *passim*. The terminology of “script” ultimately depends on Schank and Abelson 1977. As Farenga, *ibid.*, acknowledges, scholars working in cognitive science—especially during the 1970’s—developed various terms for the patterns of interpretation that individuals use in their interaction with the world: “scripts,” “frames” (Goffman 1974 and Bateson 1972, 177–93), “*schemata*” (Anderson 1977), “plans” and “goals” (also Schank and Abelson 1977), even “metaphor” (Lakoff and Johnson 1980). See also more recently Taylor 1989, 3–24, who uses the term “frameworks.” While these terminologies each have their advantages in certain respects, ultimately they devalue the fundamental role of narrative in the production of meaning. Especially in the Homeric world as expressed through the narrative mode of epic poetry, the structure of “story” or “narrative” is the primary form of knowledge and interpretation in the lives of the Homeric heroes and of

Footnote cont. next pg.



several ethical narratives (others such as the guest-host narrative of ξενία or the supplication narrative of ἱκετεία are beyond the scope of this study)<sup>77</sup> that structure the moral lives of Homeric heroes.

---

the audience of the epics. Cf. N. T. Wright 1992, 47–80, for similar conclusions about the interpretation of the gospels of the New Testament.

<sup>77</sup> On ξενία in the *Odyssey*, see Reece 1993, who also treats it as a typical narrative pattern. On ἱκετεία, see Gould 1973; Crotty 1994.

### 3. Other Narratives of τίσις in the *Odyssey*

In chapter two I established how Orestes' τίσις functions as a paradigmatic example of the narrative of "retribution." The poem uses this narrative several more times in the *Odyssey*. These other occurrences conform to the same basic pattern, though some interesting differences present themselves. No realization of the theme in words takes a form identical to another in all its particulars. To put it in Saussurean terms, every occurrence of τίσις has a unique expression in the *parole* of the poem, as opposed to its unexpressed form in the poem's *langue*. This is inevitable where the precise context of a narrative's articulation is never the same twice. The poem shows itself attuned to the implications of context, the space in which each line, each phrase lives. Thus it deploys the formal tool of the τίσις theme with some variety, highlighting or minimizing certain elements for artistic effect as suits the context. But I stress that this variety is entirely traditional, not the stamp of "the poet's originality," over and "against" his tradition.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> My view here is consistent with Foley's 1990 and 1999 and Edwards' 1980, esp. 1, interpretation of Homeric technique. I oppose this view to notions such as Russo's 1968 that the singer showed his skill in so far as he worked "against his tradition." My view is that it is much more consistent with the realities of oral-poetic performance that singers worked through their tradition, which already contained the practice of manipulating formal features.

Among the dozen or so occurrences of the theme in the poem, the central, organizing *τίσις* narrative is Odysseus' plot of retribution against the suitors. Though this plot is crucial to the program of the poem, I argue that it is atypical in certain striking ways. But before I argue this point further, I need to extend the analysis I began in the last chapter of the contours of *τίσις* to an investigation of how the theme functions in its other iterations in the poem. Most prominent in my analysis is a set of major *τίσις* narratives that have the poem's protagonists—Odysseus, his companions, and their allies—as recipients of retribution. Far from being merely background to my study of Odysseus' *τίσις* against the suitors, my analysis of these other narratives begins to explicate some of the main aspects of the ideology of *τίσις* in the poem: a rigorous observance of symbolic, talionic justice, the ease with which those in control of the language of a narrative—in particular the narrator of the *Odyssey*—can manipulate such a system in favor of their own biases, and the ultimate failures of a system of justice thus conceived to bring about a harmonious order. I take up these issues in more detail in part three.

### ***3.1 Divine Justice: The *τίσις* of Zeus***

Though Odysseus' *τίσις* dominates the plot of the poem, the first intimations of the theme of retribution come in the proem and center on another agent (1.6–9):

ἀλλ' οὐδ' ὧς ἐτάρους ἐρρύσατο, ἰέμενός περ·

αὐτῶν γὰρ σφετέρῃσιν ἀτασθαλίῃσιν ὄλοντο,  
νήπιοι, οἱ κατὰ βοῦς Ὑπερίονος Ἥελίοιο  
ἦσθιον· αὐτὰρ ὁ τοῖσιν ἀφείλετο νόστιμον ἡμᾶρ.

But even so he could not save his companions, though he longed to.  
For they perished by their own recklessness—  
fools—who ate the cattle of Hyperion Helios.  
He took from them the day of their return.

As the paradigmatic example of Orestes' τίσις theme shows a few lines later, this language is part of the traditional diction of the τίσις theme. These few lines present succinctly the narrative of τίσις: Odysseus' companions, though forewarned (as ἀτασθαλίῃσιν denotes),<sup>2</sup> commit a crime that elicits a retributive response. They thus die as the avenger has brought about a new, "just" arrangement.

The elements of the background to this theme (stage 1) appear in Circe's warning to Odysseus (12.127–36). Two nymphs, Lampetie and Phaethusa, the daughters of Helios, watch over the herds of immortal cattle and sheep. Their mother, Neaera, has stationed them on the island, "far off" (τηλόθι, 135), which implies the absence of their parents, as does Lampetie's later mission to inform Helios of the crimes that transpire (374–75). This arrangement provides the opportunity for Odysseus' companions to commit their transgression and conforms to the established pattern for τίσις. The poem's interest in keeping to this thematic pattern—in particular, the motif of the master's

---

<sup>2</sup> See pp. 24–27 above.

unwitting absence while the crime is plotted—requires that it limit Helios’ perception in this episode, contrary to his depiction elsewhere as all-perceiving.<sup>3</sup>

ἄτασθαλία denotes reckless indifference in the face of a warning of impending retribution (stage 2). Odysseus’ companions ignore his clear, thrice-repeated command not to eat the cattle (12.271–76, 297–302, 320–23), based on the warnings he had received from Teiresias and Circe (11.105–17, 12.127–41). These repetitions highlight the moral element of the theme in this iteration, underlining the culpability of the companions in their own demise, just as Zeus emphasizes Aegisthus’ acting with ἄτασθαλία and “beyond fate” in order to highlight that perpetrator’s blameworthiness (1.34–35).<sup>4</sup>

Words on the stem ἄτασθαλ- are part of what Irene de Jong has called “character-language”;<sup>5</sup> that is, they are terms of moral censure restricted in usage to direct speech.

De Jong notes two exceptions to this rule out of thirty occurrences for the stem

ἄτασθαλ-: one is in “embedded focalization” (21.146) and the other is the one in the

proem. The narrator has made a specific point in this proem of subjectively condemning

---

<sup>3</sup> Cf. 11.109, 12.323, where Helios is said to “see all things and hear all things” (πάντ’ ἐφορᾷ καὶ πάντ’ ἐπακούει; cf. πάντ’ ἐφορᾷ καὶ πάντ’ ἐπακούεις, *Il.* 3.277). This characterization comes meaningfully in Teiresias’ and Odysseus’ warnings against eating Helios’ cattle, which imply that Helios is sure to know it if they kill the cattle. Cf. the scholium (in Dindorf) ad 12.374: ἐναντίον τοῦτο τῶ “Ἡέλιος δ’ ὅς πάντ’ ἐφορᾷ καὶ πάντ’ ἐπακούεις.” Cf. also *Il.* 14.344–45, where Zeus says that Helios’s “light is the keenest at perceiving” (καὶ ὀξύτατον πέλεται φάος εἰσοράασθαι).

<sup>4</sup> The connection between the companions’ ignoring these warnings and their justified death on account of their ἄτασθαλία has been well established at least since Rothe 1914, 103. The tripling of warnings is a conventional feature: see p. 81 n. 1 below.

<sup>5</sup> De Jong 2001, xii, 12. See also Griffin 1986.

the actions of the companions.<sup>6</sup> Odysseus will also use this language of moral censure

for ἀτασθαλία in his warning to them not to eat Helios' cattle (12.298–302):

ἀλλ' ἄγε νῦν μοι πάντες ὀμόσσατε καρτερὸν ὄρκον·  
εἴ κέ τιν' ἠὲ βοῶν ἀγέλην ἢ πῶϋ μέγ' οἰῶν  
εὔρωμεν, μὴ πού τις ἀτασθαλίησι κακῆσιν  
ἢ βοῦν ἢ ἔ τι μῆλον ἀποκτάνῃ· ἀλλὰ ἔκηλοι  
ἔσθίετε βρώμην, τὴν ἀθανάτη πόρε Κίρκη.

But, come, now all of you swear a strong oath for me:  
if ever we find any herd of cattle or great flock of sheep,  
let no one with evil recklessness  
kill a cow or any sheep; rather, at your ease  
eat the food that immortal Circe provided.

In this case, Odysseus' use of the phrase ἀτασθαλίησι κακῆσιν is laced with irony, since it is only through the warning he is at that moment in the act of giving that his companions acquire the knowledge of the doom that is certain to fall on them should they eat the cattle. Odysseus' warning, in its various iterations, cautions that on Thrinacia "is a most terrible evil for us" (αἰνότατον κακὸν ἔμμεναι ἄμμιν, 12.275) and that they should not eat the cattle, "lest something befall us" (μὴ τι πάθωμεν, 12.321). These admonitions provide the condition for the emergence of the companions' ἀτασθαλία; that is, the foreknowledge of the consequences of their actions that makes them blameworthy. Thus with an ironic circularity it is Odysseus' warnings, which he gives in order to protect his companions, that require Zeus to submit to Helios' plea for

---

<sup>6</sup> In part three I discuss the relationship between the poem's artistic ends and the proem's subjective moral posture regarding the actions of characters.

retribution if he is to keep to the principles of justice he articulated in his opening speech. In effect, Odysseus' attempt to save his companions causes their destruction.<sup>7</sup>

This illustrates as well a more general point about ἀτασθαλία: it can only exist as an intelligible concept within the context of a larger narrative—the narrative of τίσις—that provides a logical sequence of events to frame the actions of the agents involved. In other words, ἀτασθαλία only exists as a retrospective judgment on the character of agents once the results of their actions are known. This *ex post facto* aspect of the application of the concept of ἀτασθαλία is evident, among other places, in the proem (1.7) and in Zeus' condemnation of Aegisthus (1.34–35), where both the narrator and Zeus ascribe this trait after their respective narratives have finished. But in his warning to Eurylochus and his companions, Odysseus ascribes this trait to a hypothetical violator before any crime has been committed. The audience—both the narrator's and Odysseus'—knows full well that this threatened doom will occur: the proem proclaims as much to the auditors at the outset, as does Odysseus' state as a solitary wanderer to the Phaeacians. Likewise, even at the moment he is admonishing

---

<sup>7</sup> The close juxtaposition in the proem of Odysseus' desire and attempt to save his companions (1.5–6) with their death by their ἀτασθαλία (7) hints at the narrative and causal connections between the two. Buchan 2004, 134, makes the provocative claim that Odysseus has a repressed desire to kill his companions. In the Thrinacia episode, Buchan *ibid.*, 155–61, draws out what he sees as malicious negligence on Odysseus' part, who gives his companions “every opportunity to show their infamous *atasthalia*” (157). Others have remarked on what they see as various shortcomings of Odysseus' warnings: Fenik 1974, 212 n. 126; Schadewaldt 1960. But no one, as far as I can tell, has noted the ironic, justifying circularity to which I have drawn attention.

his companions, Odysseus himself knows that ignoring his warning will ensure death. Properly speaking, a mortal should not be able to know this and escape the bounds of the poem's linear narrative. But Odysseus has stepped outside the limits normally imposed on humans by traveling into Hades and learning from Teiresias the secret truths of the course of his life and the outcome for the companions should they eat Helios' cattle. And thus, from this privileged position of knowledge, Odysseus can warn his companions in terms of ἀτασθαλία. As the paradigmatic example of the τίσις of Orestes also demonstrates, when the gods exercised their superior knowledge to make a similar warning to Aegisthus, supernatural knowledge, such as prophecy, regularly serves as the foundation for the warnings that occupy stage 2 of the τίσις sequence. Other examples of the theme that I discuss later point to this fact as well.

Odysseus' companions prepare for their crime (stage 3), chiefly by engaging in "hateful speech" (στρυγερω̄...μύθω, 12.278) and "evil counsel" (κακῆς...βουλής, 339). Just as Aegisthus persuades Clytemnestra to break her obligations to marital fidelity (3.263–64), Eurylochus manages to convince the others to break the oath they gave Odysseus (298–302) and join in the crime (294, 352). Also important to their preparation is Odysseus' falling asleep and his consequent inability to counter the destructive influence of Eurylochus as he had previously done (10.244–73, 10.429–48). Odysseus parallels in this situation the anonymous singer that Agamemnon had set as a guard over his wife and whom Aegisthus removed to a desert isle (3.267–71). Both could speak



with authority to dissuade the co-conspirators from participating, and with both out of the way the crime could commence.

When the companions perform their criminal slaughter of the cattle (stage 4), they follow the typical pattern of an animal sacrifice, only at every stage of the ritual they pervert the details, substituting profane elements for sacred (12.353–65, 394–98). Their meal becomes, as Jean-Pierre Vernant has put it, “une dérision, une subversion du sacrifice.”<sup>8</sup> A significant but unappreciated detail underscores the significance of the companions’ transgression: outside the narration of sacrifice, the slaying of the cattle is referred to as “killing,” using the verb (ἀπο)κτείνω (ἐκτείναν, 379), which is typically constrained in its application to the killing of humans.<sup>9</sup> The poem could have avoided the diction of “killing” – the slaughter of animals typically employs verbs such as “cut down” (ἐπικόπτω, 3.443, 449) or simply “do” (ἔρδω, 7.202; 11.132; et al.; ῥέζω, 1.61; 3.5; 5.102; 9.553; 10.523; et al.). But it emphasizes instead the violent, transgressive aspect of this slaughter through the use of this anthropomorphizing language. If, as Vernant argues, the impropriety of brutally slaughtering and feasting on the cattle stems from

---

<sup>8</sup> Vernant 1979, 243, who describes the perverse substitutions the companions make in the rite. See also Vidal-Naquet 1970, 1289: “La façon même dont le sacrifice est conduit en fait donc un anti-sacrifice.” Nagler 1990, 339–40, makes the same point, calling the meal a “grotesque inversion or...inversion of sacrifice,” though oddly without reference to these earlier studies.

<sup>9</sup> As far as I can tell, this fact has gone unnoticed. Besides references to the “killing” (κτείνω/ἀποκτείνω) of Helios’ cattle (12.301, 375, 379, 19.276), the only other uses in the *Odyssey* (out of a total of 74) which refer to the killing of animals instead of humans are at 19.543 (in Penelope’s dream, in which the slain birds signify the suitors) and 1.108 (suitors’ killing Odysseus’ cattle, which, like the slaying of the Helios’ cattle, takes on a moral significance and is thus characterized by the particular violence of κτείνω).

their special divine status,<sup>10</sup> then the language of homicide encodes their particular value and ensures the brutality of the companions' "fitting" punishment.<sup>11</sup>

Besides Lampetie's informing Helios of the companions' infractions, the main part of the preparation for retribution (stage 5) is Helios' petition for Zeus' vengeance (12.377–83):

“Ζεῦ πάτερ ἦδ’ ἄλλοι μάκαρες θεοὶ αἰὲν ἐόντες,  
τῖσαι δὴ ἐτάρους Λαερτιάδεω Ὀδυσῆος,  
οἳ μιν βοῦς ἔκτειναν ὑπέρβιον, ἦσιν ἐγὼ γε  
χαίρεσκον μὲν ἰὼν εἰς οὐρανὸν ἀστερόεντα,  
ἦδ’ ὅπότε ἄψ ἐπὶ γαῖαν ἀπ’ οὐρανόθεν προτραποίμην.  
εἰ δέ μοι οὐ τίσουσι βοῶν ἐπιεικέ’ ἀμοιβήν,  
δύσομαι εἰς Αἴδαο καὶ ἐν νεκύεσσι φαείνω.”

“Father Zeus and you other blessed gods who are eternal,  
take vengeance on the companions of Odysseus son of Laertes,  
who violently slew my cattle in which I  
used to take delight as I went into the starry sky  
and when I turned back to the earth from the sky.  
If they will not repay me a fitting requital for the cattle,  
I will descend into Hades and shine among the dead.”

The content of Helios' demand is that the companions “pay a fitting requital for the cattle” (τίσουσι βοῶν ἐπιεικέ’ ἀμοιβήν, 382). ἀμοιβή is not a typical Homeric word for retribution. Its associations are with reciprocal giving (cf. 1.318, 3.58) or, more generally,

---

<sup>10</sup> Vernant 1979, 240.

<sup>11</sup> Vernant 1979 pairs this episode with the story of Cambyses' sending spies to learn about the Table of the Sun (Hdt. 3.17–26). He concludes from these two stories that they both describe a great confusion of categories in which the distinctions between human and animal break down, so that Odysseus' companions die “comme des bêtes” (248).

with exchange (14.521).<sup>12</sup> Helios thus casts his demand in economic terms, with particular stress on the need that his recompense be a “fitting” exchange for his cattle. As an economic transaction, a “fitting” exchange would be a counter-gift matching the value of the first gift.<sup>13</sup> Some manner of payment for the loss of cattle would seem appropriate, and the metonymic use of the single word βοῶν in place of a full description for how the cattle are killed would suggest just such a transaction: payment in exchange for the loss (by theft or purchase) of cattle. As it is, Helios does receive his “fitting” requital—only, since he (and the characters who issued warnings) has cast the loss of his cattle as a “killing” (ἐκτείναν, 380), the payment that fits this loss is death. The same symmetry between Aegisthus’ killing of Agamemnon and Orestes’ killing of Aegisthus obtains in this case as well: Zeus kills the companions just as they killed the cattle.

Zeus is the avenging agent in the retributive act (stage 6) of this instance of the theme. The form of Helios’ prayer casts Zeus as the subject of the imperative τῖσαι. Zeus, not Helios, nor any of the other gods, takes upon himself the role of avenger by stirring

---

<sup>12</sup> Hesiod does use the term to describe the divine retribution that comes upon an impious man: “Against this man, Zeus himself is surely angry, and in the end he will make a harsh requital for his unjust deeds” (τῶ δ’ ἦ τοι Ζεὺς αὐτὸς ἀγαίεται, ἐς δὲ τελευτῆν ἔργων ἀντ’ ἀδίκων χαλεπὴν ἐπέθηκεν ἀμοιβήν, *Op.* 333–34). This passage emphasizes the final position of the act of retribution. It comes “in the end,” as a final, retrospective part of a narrative sequence. Cf. *Od.* 1.43.

<sup>13</sup> On the economy of gift exchange, see Finley 1954, 60–63; Donlan 1982; 1993; and, for more recent work, Wagner-Hasel 2006.

up a storm and destroying Odysseus' ship with a lightning bolt (403–419; 5.131–33).<sup>14</sup>

The poem emphasizes the particular agency of Zeus in this act of retribution by having Odysseus report the conversation of Zeus and Helios in a near violation of Jørgensen's law—that is, Odysseus, being mortal and limited in his knowledge about divine matters, ought not to know anything about this conversation.<sup>15</sup> But the narrator is at pains to make clear that, when Odysseus tells of the destruction of his ship and attributes it to Zeus (12.399, 415–17), he is not referring to Zeus in the general way that mortals do when they attribute unexplained events to “a god” or “Zeus” when they have no real knowledge of the agent behind the action. The narrator has Odysseus comment that he heard about the conversation from Calypso, who heard it from Hermes (12.389–90). The poem has not only made the unusual choice of having a mortal narrate a divine council, but it has even drawn attention to the uniqueness of this act by having Odysseus offer an explanation for how he came to know what happened. (The apparent oddness of this passage has led numerous scholars since antiquity to excise it.<sup>16</sup>) This has the effect of making Odysseus' narration of the destruction of his ship 25 lines later true even at the level of the particular identification of Zeus as the divine agent behind it, where

---

<sup>14</sup> Marks 2008, 41, 145, notes this fact, although for him its significance lies in the way it signifies Zeus' control over the narrative possibilities of the epic. See also Cook 1995, 121–27.

<sup>15</sup> See p. 23 n. 21 above.

<sup>16</sup> Aristarchus athetized 12.374–90.

normally a mortal's narrative of such an event would exclude the possibility of such a secure identification.

Zeus' manner of taking τίσις parallels Poseidon's wrath against Odysseus, insofar as Poseidon similarly stirs up a storm against Odysseus that nearly kills him in retribution for Polyphemus' blinding (5.282–464). Before setting out from Ogygia on his raft, Odysseus affirms he that will persevere even "if again some one of the gods smite me upon the wine-dark sea" (5.221), implicitly connecting the destructive storm he faced at the hands of Zeus that landed him on the island with the possibility of new divinely wrought woes on the sea, which, in fact, will soon commence. Furthermore, Odysseus recognizes Zeus' role in the destruction of his ship when he narrates his journeys to Penelope, saying his ship's loss came at the hands of Zeus (23.329–32). He also affirms Zeus' part when, disguised, he tells her his lying tale that comes rather close to the truth of his plight—that he lost his ship and companions because "Zeus and Helios pained him" (ὀδύσαντο γὰρ αὐτῷ Ζεὺς τε καὶ Ἥλιος, 19.275) on account of the companions' killing the cattle. Only in one place in the poem does anyone claim that Helios is the sole or even primary agent of retribution for the eating of his cattle: the proem.

In the proem the narrator states that Helios "took from them the day of their return" (αὐτὰρ ὁ τοῖσιν ἀφείλετο νόστιμον ἡμᾶρ, 1.9). Though the proem attributes the action to Helios by way of the anaphoric pronoun ὁ, the figure of Zeus lurks in the

background.<sup>17</sup> As Jim Marks has argued, Zeus is conspicuously absent from the proem, just as Odysseus is only allusively signified by the mere, anonymous “man” (ἄνδρα, 1.1).<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, the resonance of the phrase ἀφείλετο νόστιμον ἦμαρ hints at Zeus. When Eurycleia bemoans the fate of Odysseus, she claims Zeus “hated” (ἤχθηρε, 19.364) him and imagines he “took away the day of his return” (ἀφείλετο νόστιμον ἦμαρ, 369). On her interpretation of events, Zeus must be responsible if Odysseus has perished. Her viewpoint serves to further the audience’s developing interpretation of the role that Zeus plays in the *Odyssey*—in particular, his role as avenger.<sup>19</sup> Thus, the proem’s attribution of the death of the companions to Helios is tendentious, if not suspect. There is no theological reason Helios could not have acted as the agent of revenge, but his powers are curiously restrained in this episode.<sup>20</sup> The poem has done this in order to maintain and strengthen its structure of three distinct roles of avenger,

---

<sup>17</sup> Note as well that several scholiasts considered this pronoun vague enough that they needed to provide a gloss for it of ὁ Ἥλιος (Pontani, ad loc.).

<sup>18</sup> Marks 2008, 3–4. He does not, however, note the difference in the purported agent of retribution against the companions, which would strengthen his case.

<sup>19</sup> On Zeus’ dominant role in the plot of *Odyssey*, read as a device to “conceptualize Panhellenic narrative paths,” see Marks 2008, 5, passim. See also pp. 159–60 below.

<sup>20</sup> See p. 50 and n. 3 above. It is worth adding that, according to some other traditions, Helios is perfectly capable of exacting violent revenge under his own power: in a myth Aelian, *NA* 14.28 preserves, Helios out of νέμεισις against Nerites (an ἐρώμενος of Poseidon’s) changed him into a “spiral-shelled fish” (κόχλος). Retributive metamorphosis is not foreign to the *Odyssey*: cf. Poseidon’s petrification of the Phaeacian’s ship (13.159–64).

avenged, and recipient. Indeed, this design is crucial for its narrative goals, as I show later.

The result of this theme (stage 7) is that Zeus preserves his conception of δίκη, the proper cosmological and moral order of the universe: Helios remains in the land of the living and transgressions stemming from ἀτασθαλία against divine regulations are punished.

The sequence of events constituting Zeus' τίσις forms this schema:

**Table 3: Zeus-Companions τίσις Sequence**

<b>Order</b>	<b>Event/State</b>
1	Helios has left his herd on Thrinacia.
2	Companions ignore warnings from Teiresias, Circe, and Odysseus.
3	Eurylochus' plotting. Odysseus' falling asleep.
4	The slaughter and eating of the cattle.
5	Lampetie informs Helios of the slaughter. Helios pleads with Zeus.
6	Zeus sends a storm and destroys the ship.
7	Companions have atoned. Helios remains in the land of the living.

### 3.2 Retribution Disguised: Poseidon's Vindictive *τίσις*

As several scholars have noted,<sup>21</sup> the revenge that Poseidon takes upon Odysseus for his blinding of Polyphemus and the retribution that Helios demands upon the companions are strikingly similar. Though several unitarian and neoanalytic critics have argued persuasively for the artistic merit of the coexistence of both figures in the poem,<sup>22</sup> they have done so without recognizing a key distinction between them. As I argued in the last section, the agent of retribution in the Thrinacia episode is Zeus. Helios is a mere petitioner. In contrast, the agent of retribution for the blinding of Polyphemus is

---

<sup>21</sup> Kirchhoff 1879, 292–314; Pfeiffer 1928, 2361–62; Von der Mühl 1940, 731; Schadewaldt 1960, 861; et al. See Schadewaldt 1960, 861 n. 1, for further bibliography. The analytic view is that Poseidon and Helios are redundant doublets, the latter derivate of the former.

<sup>22</sup> A representative and necessarily selective list would include, among unitarians, Fenik 1974, 208–30, (with some reservations); Segal 1994, 195–227; and among neoanalysts, Heubeck 1954, 72–78, and Heubeck et al., ad 11.104–15. Teiresias directly connects these two plots of *τίσις* in his prophecy of Odysseus' fate (11.100–37). The curse brought down on Odysseus for his blinding of Polyphemus works itself out through the companions' impious slaughter of Helios' cattle and their subsequent punishment. This results in Odysseus' losing his ship and its crew, which are his means of getting home in good time and in a good condition. Teiresias repeats the final two lines of Polyphemus' curse verbatim, save only that he has adapted it from a third person wish to a second-person apodosis of a conditional (9.534–35, 11.114–15). In Polyphemus' mouth, this fate is the effect of Odysseus' blinding him; in Teiresias', it is the (immediate) effect of the companions' eating the cattle. I note in this connection also that in lying tale Odysseus tells Eumaeus, the presence of "companions that stand ready, who will send him to his homeland" (*ἔπαρτέας ἔμμεν ἑταίρους, οἳ δὴ μιν πέμψουσι φίλην ἐς πατρίδα γαίαν*, 14.332–33) is the final necessary condition for his (supposed) return. Cf. also 4.558–59, where Proteus tells Menelaus that Odysseus cannot make it home from Ogygia precisely because he has no companions (in addition to being held there by Calypso). My reading here is consistent with Rüter's 1969, 81, way of linking the two episodes: "Die Schuld, durch die Odysseus sein vorbestimmtes Schicksal auf sich zieht, ist die Blendung Polyphemus. ...Den Gefährten wird nicht vorhergesagt, es werde niemand von ihnen heimkehren; ihr Untergang ist Teil des Schicksal und der Strafe des Odysseus. So sieht Odysseus in den Ereignissen der Irrfahrten das Wirken einer göttlichen, schicksalhaften Kraft, die ihn in Unheil verstrickt und seinen Gefährten den Untergang bereitet (9.52–53, 550–55, 12.370–90, 19.273–76)."



Poseidon himself. Even when Poseidon petitions Zeus in his anger against Odysseus, as when he comes before Zeus and demands that the Phaeacians must be punished for their aid to Odysseus (13.128–38), he alone executes his violent revenge (13.159–184). Though Poseidon feels slighted and evinces personal animosity toward Odysseus,<sup>23</sup> he, like Orestes and Zeus, is still performing retribution on behalf of another, namely Polyphemus. The strict parallel between the two narratives with respect to the roles of avenger-avenged-recipient is Zeus-Helios-companions and Poseidon-Polyphemus-Odysseus.

Claude Calame's most recent study of the episode represents the most elaborate attempt at a structural analysis of its narrative.<sup>24</sup> Following Greimas' methods,<sup>25</sup> Calame considers the Odyssean episode as a version of a common folktale known in many other European and non-European versions (he studies seven examples in detail). Through a comparative analysis he achieves some useful insights into what elements in the Odyssean version of the folktale are highlighted—e.g., the implied contest between nature and culture.<sup>26</sup> In contrast, my analysis follows Aristarchus' exegetical methods

---

<sup>23</sup> For Poseidon's choleric attitude towards Odysseus, cf. 1.68–79, 5.282–90, 13.125–38.

<sup>24</sup> Calame 1995, 139–73. See also his two earlier studies: 1977a and 1977b. This line of folkloristic study for the "Cyclops story" has as its founder Wilhelm Grimm, who in his 1857 study *Die Sage von Polyphem* sought to uncover the "original" form of the story. Hackman 1904 catalogued a full 221 versions of this story. For further bibliography, see Zamb. 1.676–77.

<sup>25</sup> Greimas 1970–1983.

<sup>26</sup> Calame 1995, 171.

and uses the body of the Homeric text as the source for parallel structures with which to analyze any one example.<sup>27</sup> Specifically, I contrast this narrative against the other narratives of τίσις in the poem, taking them all to have a single, manipulable, but recognizably consistent structure. This method has the advantage of bringing greater attention to the function of this episode within the poem composed as a whole, artistic work, rather than as a collection of *Märchen*, as some analytic-minded scholars are wont to do.<sup>28</sup>

One objection to placing this narrative of retribution alongside the other instances of the τίσις theme confronts my analysis at its outset. As Charles Segal has pointed out, “Poseidon never mentions justice.” Segal claims that Poseidon is not

---

<sup>27</sup> See p. 3 n. 5 above. Even within the *Odyssey* there is another story, Menelaus’ encounter with Proteus, that, while not strictly a “Cyclops story,” exhibits many of the same features as the story of the encounter with Polyphemus: Menelaus encounters a “shepherd” — the simile comparing Proteus to “a shepherd in the middle of his flocks of sheep” (ἐν μέσσησι νομεὺς ὧς πάεσι μῆλων, 4.413) reveals the simpler, realistic form of the story; the protagonist’s motive is a desire for knowledge and escape (468–70); he physically defeats a stronger god(-like) being (454–61) in an ambush (441) by means of a “trick” (437) of posing as one of the “shepherd’s sheep” beneath a skin (440), which allows the protagonists to escape the “shepherd’s” count of his “flock” (411–13, 451–53). These similarities have gone largely unnoticed; but see Powell 1970, 429; Block 1985, 3; Dué and Ebbott 2009 (in print).

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Page’s 1955, 1–20, discussion of this “Cyclops story,” in which he states, “The *Odyssey*, then, is composed of folk-tales having little or nothing in common with each other except the fact that they are folk-tales and that they are here concentrated on the same person, Odysseus.” See also Hölscher 1989 for the most exhaustive attempt at this kind of criticism of the poem, esp. 214–15, on the “Niemand-Märchen,” although his conclusions are more unitarian. In fairness to Calame 1995, 164, he does think that some of the elements of the story owe their character to the story’s place within the epic — the semantics of “guest-gifts,” hospitality, and nature/culture. He also argues that Polyphemus’ curse owes its existence to reintegrating the story “into the sequence of Odysseus’ adventures.” These are, however, the limits of Calame’s integration of his analysis of this story’s structure into the larger concerns of the epic.

motivated by a sense of a higher moral order, which Segal interprets as *τίσις* or *δίκη*.<sup>29</sup> In a similar fashion, Bernard Fenik has characterized both Helios' and Poseidon's anger as manifestations of the common motif of "the more or less arbitrary persecution of a mortal by an angry deity," inconsistent with the moralizing paradigm of human suffering that Zeus establishes in the proem (1.32–43).<sup>30</sup> Fenik's "more or less," however, covers a wide range of possible responsibility. While by some reckonings Poseidon's wrath may be excessive, it is hardly without motive. Zeus, in his opening council with Athena, connects Poseidon's animosity directly with Odysseus' blinding of Polyphemus, stating that Poseidon "is angry because of the Cyclops, whose eye [Odysseus] blinded" (*Κύκλωπος κεχόλωται, ὃν ὀφθαλμοῦ ἀλάωσεν*, 1.69); likewise, Teiresias tells Odysseus in Hades that Poseidon "is angry because you blinded his son" (*χωόμενος ὅτι οἱ υἱὸν φίλον ἐξάλαωσας*, 11.103).<sup>31</sup>

Poseidon's wrath, thus, is neither unintelligible nor arbitrary. Yet Segal's claim remains true: *τίσις per se* is never mentioned in connection with Poseidon's persecution of Odysseus. But this is not due to an objective evaluation of the merits of the case

---

<sup>29</sup> Segal 1994, 217–18, 20.

<sup>30</sup> Fenik 1974, 216. He writes, "It is impossible to justify Odysseus' suffering at the hands of Poseidon in terms of Zeus' explanation of guilt and punishment in the prologue" (211).

<sup>31</sup> Cf. also Athena's verbatim repetition of the claim at 13.343. See also pp. 69, 71–74 below.

against Odysseus, as Segal implies.<sup>32</sup> Rather, this results from a choice on the part of the speakers who tell of Poseidon's revenge to eschew the readily available narrative pattern of *τίσις*, which, if used, would reckon the woes and tribulations of Odysseus' lengthy voyage home as just punishment. Indeed, Athena, Odysseus, and the narrator cite Poseidon's anger in ways that exculpate Odysseus in contrast to those who suffer fittingly, such as Odysseus' companions. As I discuss in more detail in part two, this practice is in keeping with the poem's overt program of presenting Odysseus as a sympathetic, model figure. And yet, though the poem has granted Odysseus a privileged moral position as protagonist of the epic,<sup>33</sup> the plot of his encounter with Polyphemus and its aftermath does exhibit aspects that can be construed as a *τίσις* narrative. Tendentiously, the speakers favorably disposed to Odysseus never use this narrative pattern. Even Poseidon—as the narrator portrays him, it must be noted—avoids the diction of *τίσις*. And if, as I argue, the set of events neatly matches the pattern expected of a *τίσις* narrative, the avoidance of an explicit mention of the theme is conspicuous. In many places it lurks just beneath the surface, barely hidden and ready

---

<sup>32</sup> Segal 1994, 217–19, writes, “Odysseus had committed no crime in punishing the Cyclops, and the god is merely holding a bitter grudge,” acting out of “anthropomorphic, personal animosity.” In contrast, Helios' wrath is “carefully motivated,” and “has a moral structure.”

<sup>33</sup> De Jong 2001, ad 1.32–43, calls this “selective moralism,” which is “one of the strategies [the narrator] uses to make Odysseus' bloody revenge on suitors acceptable.” See *ibid.*, ad 1.224–29 and 12 n. 25, for further bibliography.

for detection by an audience whose perception of patterns of justice has been prepared by the paradigm of Orestes' τίσις.

The present τίσις narrative is set in motion by Odysseus' choice to travel from "Goat Island" to the land of Cyclopes (9.166–76), which coincides with Polyphemus' absence from his cave (stage 1). He, like Agamemnon, has left his home (216–17), which now lies open for strangers to occupy.

Against the wishes of his companions, Odysseus wants to remain, see the Cyclops for himself, and receive "guest-gifts" (ξείνια, 229; cf. 266–68). His companions attempt to dissuade him of this plan (224–27), in effect, warning him (stage 2). In Odysseus' recounting of events, he does not frame their advice as a clear warning, like the one he would give them about eating Helios' cattle. To do so would imply he is responsible for the wandering that results from the encounter. Rather, he casts their advice simply as an alternative course of action, and he presents the consequences of rejecting their advice in understated terms: to heed his companions "would have been much more profitable" (ἂν πολὺ κέρδιον ἦεν, 228), because Polyphemus "was not going to be desirable to the companions, when he appeared" (οὐδ' ἄρ' ἔμελλ' ἑτάροισι φανεῖς ἐρατεινὸς ἔσεσθαι, 230). While in retrospect recognizing the soundness of his companions' advice, he justifies his rejection of it at the time: he wished, he claims, to establish a civilized guest-friendship (ξείνια) that would morally elevate their

appropriation of the Cyclops' goods from mere piracy to benevolent reciprocity.<sup>34</sup> Nonetheless, the diction of his refusal betrays a formal and ethical similarity to Aegisthus' rejection of Hermes' advice, both signified by the contrastive adverb ἀλλά introducing the failure of persuasion (οὐ πείθειν). Odysseus states, "but I did not heed [them]" (ἀλλ' ἐγὼ οὐ πιθόμην, 228), just as Zeus claims of Hermes, "but he did not persuade the mind of Aegisthus" (ἀλλ' οὐ φρένας Αἰγίσθοιο πείθ', 1.42–43). Odysseus admits that he knew that the inhabitants of this land were as likely to be "violent, wild, and unjust" as "guest-loving and god-fearing" (ἦ ῥ' οἳ γ' ὕβρισταί τε καὶ ἄγριοι οὐδὲ δίκαιοι, ἦε φιλόξενοι, καὶ σφιν νόος ἐστὶ θεουδής, 175–76). Establishing ξενία with these unknown natives was chancy at best, and Odysseus' attempt proved reckless.

Such a rejection of good advice forms the basis of ἀτασθαλία, though Odysseus never admits to it. But he can only repress moral condemnation of his recklessness so far. It falls to Eurylochus to give voice to this negative interpretation of Odysseus' actions, when he fears a similar misfortune at the hands of Circe as the one suffered from Polyphemus (10.435–37):

ὥς περ Κύκλωψ ἔρξ', ὅτε οἱ μέσσαυλον ἴκοντο  
 ἡμέτεροι ἔταροι, σὺν δ' ὁ θρασὺς εἶπετ' Ὀδυσσεύς·  
τούτου γὰρ καὶ κείνοι ἀτασθαλίησιν ὄλοντο.

---

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Odysseus' stated desire to acquire "guest-gifts" (ξείνια, 229) from the Cyclops, a transaction which would entail the inception of ξενία. Underlying this episode is a conflict of nature vs. culture, on which the classic study is Kirk 1970, 162–71. See also Zamb. 1.678–79, for further bibliography.

So indeed did the Cyclops shut them in when our companions came  
to his courtyard. With them followed this audacious Odysseus,  
through whose recklessness they too perished.

Eurylochus attributes ἀτασθαλία to Odysseus and claims that it is precisely on account  
of this moral error that Odysseus is responsible for the death of his companions. The  
final line of Eurylochus' complaint is a striking adaptation of the formulaic line  
attributing blame for the companions' demise in the proem (1.7):<sup>35</sup>

αὐτῶν γὰρ σφετέρησιν ἀτασθαλίησιν ὄλοντο...

For by their own reckless did they perish...

Whereas in the proem the poem attributes the companions' deaths to their own  
ἀτασθαλία, here, the same, thematically weighty words lay the companions' deaths at  
the feet of Odysseus. In contrast to the events on Thrinacia where the companions act  
against the expressed will of Odysseus, Odysseus directs every action in their encounter  
with Polyphemus. And there can be no argument with Eurylochus' accusation.  
Odysseus has no response save the threat of death, checked only by the other  
companions (10.438–48). But this indictment of Odysseus is studiously circumscribed:  
the poem gives it voice doubly mediated (via Odysseus' version of Eurylochus' version  
of events) in the mouth of a character it repeatedly portrays unfavorably (cf. 10.264–74,  
12.278–352). And whereas the proem's attribution of blame for the companions' deaths

---

<sup>35</sup> Cf. also *Il.* 4.409.

extrapolates by synecdoche from the single ship lost at Thrinacia to include all of Odysseus' companions who perished since they departed from Troy,<sup>36</sup> the poem restricts Eurylochus' charge to Odysseus' liability for only the six who died in Polyphemus' cave. Yet, as both Teiresias (11.100–37) and Athena (13.339–43) make clear, Odysseus' blinding of Polyphemus is the ultimate cause of the loss of "all" (πάντας) the companions—at least since the Cyclops' prayer for revenge.<sup>37</sup> Despite all the calculated constraints the poem places on the scope of Odysseus' culpability, the accusation nonetheless comes through. This is significant. Alongside the prevailing, glorious story of the returning hero's defeat of his evil enemies, the poem is telling a gloomier narrative as well. A morally ambiguous anti-hero justly suffers for his transgressions and loses his companions—or I might even say *causes* their loss, which is to say, *kills* them, to draw out the dark ambiguity in the phrase, ὀλέσας ἅπο πάντας ἐταίρους.<sup>38</sup> For the charge that Odysseus is at fault in the death of the companions does not die with Eurylochus. It reappears in the end, when Eupheithes, father of Antinous, making none of the careful

---

<sup>36</sup> See p. 73 n. 46 below.

<sup>37</sup> On Odysseus' blinding of Polyphemus as the cause of his punishment, see p. 64 above and pp. 71–74 below. Athena's remark in its context conveys her confidence and delight in Odysseus' safe arrival at Ithaca; however, she is also saying that the death of the companions was an inevitable condition of Odysseus' return. He could only come home *after* he had lost them.

<sup>38</sup> 11.114, 13.340. The verb ὀλλυμι in the active voice has both the sense of "lose" and the more active sense of "destroy, kill." For the latter, cf. *Il.* 8.498, where Hector declares his desire to defeat the Achaean force: "having destroyed all the Achaeans and their ships," (νῆάς τ' ὀλέσας καὶ πάντας Ἀχαιοὺς); and cf. esp. *Od.* 2.330, where the suitors are worried that Telemachus will poison them and "kill us all" (ἡμέας πάντας ὀλέσσει).



distinctions implicit in Eurylochus' charge, views Odysseus' part in the death of his companions (the Ithacans' kin) as grounds for retribution (τισόμεθ', 24.421–38).

Odysseus' preparation for blinding Polyphemos (stage 3) consists of an extended sequence of scheming that integrates his actions with the poem's "cunning versus force" (δόλος vs. βίη) theme (299–367).<sup>39</sup> The poem uses a set of resonant terms to bring out this theme and connect it with other instances of cunning in the poem. The most prominent of such terms in this episode is μῆτις, "craft, trickery," and its cognates. The wordplay on μῆτις/μή τις/Οὔτις at 406–14 highlights its significance in this narrative context. This culminates with Odysseus' summarizing his success in blinding Polyphemos and escaping harm by saying his μῆτις deceived Polyphemos (414). I need not rehearse the details of Odysseus' cunning in this encounter,<sup>40</sup> except to note that the diction of trickery and craftiness that Odysseus claims for himself in his telling of the encounter parallels the earlier descriptions of Aegisthus' murderous, vengeance-incurring actions. Aegisthus has the epithet δολόμητις (1.300, 3.198, 250, 308, 4.525), which corresponds with Odysseus' common epithet of πολύμητις. He "plots" the murder of Agamemnon (ἐμήσατο, 3.194, cf. 3.261), as Odysseus "broods over evil" (κακὰ βυσσοδομεύων, 9.316)

---

<sup>39</sup> On this theme's significance in the poem (cf. esp. 9.406–8), see de Jong 2001, ad 8.266–366 and 9.100–566. The singer (and his tradition) also expresses this opposition as μῆτις vs. βίη. For an extended reading of μῆτις vs. βίη as "culture vs. nature," see Cook 1995.

<sup>40</sup> Many others have analyzed Odysseus' cunning in this passage in detail. See *inter alios* Podlecki 1961; Schein 1970; Peradotto 1990, 47: "It is *mētis* at its best: a story about *mētis*, achieved by *mētis*."

against Polyphemus. He devises a “devious trick” (δολίην...τέχνην, 4.529), an ambush, as Odysseus uses trickery (δόλος/μητις, 9.406, 8, 22) to ambush Polyphemus as he sleeps and escape (immediate) reprisal. Additionally, there are other significant parallels that are apparent on a thematic level. Aegisthus uses words to deceive and corrupt Clytemnestra (3.263); Odysseus tricks Polyphemus with wordplay. Aegisthus breaks the code of ξενία by attacking Agamemnon in a feast (4.530–35, cf. 11.409–34); Odysseus attacks Polyphemus after his dinner. All told, the characterization of Odysseus’ actions in this passage fits within an established verbal and thematic framework of deceitful, criminal behavior. While certainly Odysseus can use the tropes of guile to augment his own glory,<sup>41</sup> his actions do carry a darker resonance.

The crime that Odysseus commits within this τίσις narrative is his act of blinding Polyphemus (stage 4). Notwithstanding the prevailing view since Reinhardt that Odysseus’ fault in the episode—if he has any—lies in his boasting,<sup>42</sup> the poem is explicit elsewhere that the cause of Poseidon’s anger is the blinding of his son Polyphemus (1.68–75, 11.101–3, 13.339–43).<sup>43</sup> And the act of blinding is not *necessarily* amoral and

---

<sup>41</sup> See Segal 1994, 90–98.

<sup>42</sup> Reinhardt 1960, 64–69; Bradley 1968; Grau 1973–74; Fenik 1974, 216; Friedrich 1987a; Segal 1994, 96, 201. Brown 1996, 21–22, 28–29, agrees that Odysseus’ boasting is a principal reason for his incurring the wrath of Poseidon, but he characterizes this as “an error of judgment” (like a ἀμαρτία) rather than as ὕβρις. For further bibliography, see *ibid.*, 6 n. 11 and n. 12.

<sup>43</sup> On this point I agree with Heubeck’s 1954, 85, statement: “Der Frevel des Odysseus liegt allein in der Tat der Blendung...” But see the next note.

merely the product of the exigencies of Odysseus' situation (i.e., self-defense).<sup>44</sup> The crucial point is that Poseidon, Polyphemus, and Eurylochus can interpret Odysseus' actions as immoral within the context of a certain *τίσις* narrative that casts Odysseus as aggressor. Because they (especially Poseidon) can apply this narrative to these events, Odysseus suffers for his actions. At play in this episode is a conflict of moral narratives: Odysseus, just like Polyphemus, can tell these events as a narrative of *τίσις* (*τισαίμην*, 317; *τίσατο*, 479), in which he is exacting retribution for the violence Polyphemus has done to his companions. All of its elements are present, including even a warning by a seer, Telamus, that serves only to establish Polyphemus' *ἀτασθαλία* (506–16). This allusion has no other purpose except to situate this narrative among other, parallel *τίσις* narratives that feature disregarded seers. Neither the poem's external narrator nor Odysseus is impartial: on their telling, Odysseus' revenge is explicitly a narrative of *τίσις*; Poseidon's is only implicitly so.<sup>45</sup>

But why does the poem present this single act of blinding as the source of Poseidon's anger? These causal statements are succinct and selective—a single line with reference to a single act excluding the other possible reasons for his anger from the encounter, such as Odysseus' boasts, the theft of sheep and stores, and the practice of

---

<sup>44</sup> *Pace* Heubeck *ibid.*; Lloyd-Jones 1971, 29; Fenik 1974, 210–11.

<sup>45</sup> On Odysseus' *τίσις* narrative on behalf of his slain companions in this episode, see also p. 80.

deceit. But just as the proem presents a single act as the cause of the companions' deaths—their eating of Helios' cattle—when in the course of the narrative many different causes exist for their deaths,<sup>46</sup> so also does the poem (through a variety of voices) fix upon this one cause for Poseidon's anger.

This focus has a particular purpose: it establishes a symmetry between the crime Odysseus committed and its symbolically equivalent punishment. Poseidon's conception of punishment trades on a paronomasia between the verbs ἀλάομαι ("I wander") and (ἐξ)αλαόω ("I blind").<sup>47</sup> Odysseus's blinding Polyphemus (ἀλάωσεν, 1.69) has its "natural" punishment in Poseidon's demand that Odysseus "wander" (ἀλόω, 5.377). And when Odysseus reaches to Ithaca he will continue to suffer as a "wanderer" (ἀλήτης, 17.483, et al.) in his own home.<sup>48</sup> Polyphemus presented Poseidon

---

<sup>46</sup> Mark Buchan 2004, 3, wittily calls this "a particularly violent synecdoche." The selectivity of this statement is an ancient *zetema*: see the scholia (Pontani ad 1.7). More generally on the apparently inordinate significance given to this one episode, see especially Rüter 1969, 49–52. See also Cook 1995, 16–18, and Walsh 1995, 385–86 nn. 1–5, for further bibliography.

<sup>47</sup> I believe no scholar has noticed this paronomasia, save for a passing reference Buchan 2004, 242 n. 33, makes in an endnote, although he only connects the blinding to Polyphemus' disposition as a "wanderer" after the act and not to Odysseus' punishment of wandering.

<sup>48</sup> The similarity between these verbs is even closer if a reconstructed active form of ἀλάομαι "I wander" is posited as \*ἀλάω, "I cause to wander," beside the active form of ἀλαόω, "I cause to be blind." Ultimately, both derive from a nearly identical ἀλα-. While some regard the root of ἀλαόω as \*λα- with an alpha-privative, i.e., ἀ-λα (GEW s.v. ἀλαός, but with some doubts), this derivation is far from certain: *LfggrE* s.v. ἀλαός ultimately regards the etymology as "obscure." According to Chantraine, the obscurity of this etymology may be due to a tendency for taboo replacement of words denoting physical infirmities. See *DELG* s.vv. ἀλάομαι and ἀλαός. I suggest that the root ἀλα-, "blind," has nothing to do with a root of \*λα-, but comes by way of taboo replacement from the root ἀλ-, "wander." The second alpha in ἀλάομαι may be due to the intensive -α- attached to the root. (Chantraine, *ibid.*, compares ποτάομαι.) Whether or not taboo replacement is involved ἀλαός can derive from ἀλάομαι by a secondary derivation. In short, the adjective

Footnote cont. next pg.

with two options for Odysseus' punishment: Odysseus should either perish and not reach Ithaca (530–31) or, failing that, arrive late and in a bad state (532–36). Whatever the reason for Poseidon's choice of the lesser lesser retribution—whether compelled by Zeus and fate or freely choosing this punishment—his selection maintains a symbolic symmetry between the crime of blinding and the punishment of wandering. This symmetry follows the pattern that Zeus establishes in his opening paradigmatic example of Orestes' τίσις. Orestes dealt to Aegisthus (and Clytemnestra) a precise equivalent of the crime he committed against Agamemnon—death. Poetic diction enforces this equivalence by rendering both acts with the same word: ἔκταν(ε) (1.30, 36). My claim that diction “enforces” this symmetry (rather than simply “captures” it) emphasizes that a speaker's rhetorical move to describe the two violent actions with the same word inscribes the events in a τίσις narrative where retribution is just. The underlying ideology of punishment is the retributive principle of the *ius talionis*: an injury suffered incurs a like injury in return.

---

ἀλάος may mean, in its literal sense, “wandering.” And as I am arguing, the disposition of wandering is associated with disposition of being blind. An objection may be leveled against my argument: in order to solve the metrically difficult verse 10.493, which begins in most manuscripts μάντιος ἀλαοῦ, Beekes 1973, 244, has proposed an older form \*μάντηος φαλαοι(ο). The reconstructed verb of \*φαλαόω would not have a root of ἀλα-, but this reconstruction with an initial digamma is not certain. There is no other evidence in Homer for the observance of this digamma (or, admittedly, for its neglect). Whether or not this etymology is accurate, however, is ultimately immaterial to the poetic effect of paronomasia, which depends on likeness of sound, not etymological relation.

The device of paronomasia has more widely accepted parallels in the poem: e.g., the μή τις / μῆτις pun (9.405–14) and the several puns on the name of Odysseus (ὠδύσαο, 1.62; ὠδύσατ', 5.340; ὀδῶδυσται, 5.423; ὀδυρόμενος, 16.145; ὀδύσαντο, 19.275; ὀδυσσάμενος, 19.407).<sup>49</sup> These two puns meet in the trick that Odysseus plays upon Polyphemus, when he uses the paronomasia of Οὐ̄τις in order to escape the retribution of the other Cyclopes (9.364–414). However, Odysseus will not escape without woe. Poseidon in his anger “gives him pain,” (ὠδύσατ', 5.340, cf. 423). He uses Odysseus' name against him, thus symmetrically returning the same violence against him that he had used against Polyphemus. This phonetic correspondence signifies a deeper correspondence of tit-for-tat violence.

The equivalence of blindness and wandering also rests upon cultural correspondences between the two states.<sup>50</sup> To blind someone is to render him helpless and lost. Polymestor in Euripides' *Hecuba* appears on stage blinded by Hecuba and decries his loss of direction and spatial sense: “Woe is me! Where will I go? / Where will

---

<sup>49</sup> The story of Autolycus' naming Odysseus confirms the intentionality of the paronomasia at 19.407. This one secure example validates the extension of this interpretive approach to the other listed instances. The literature on the name of Odysseus is extensive. Important are Stanford 1952; Dimock 1956; Clay 1983, 54–64; Peradotto 1990, passim, esp. 143–70. Ahl and Roisman 1996, 28, (following Steinrück) detect a play also on the name of Zeus at 1.62, 65. On the figure of paronomasia in general in the *Odyssey*, see Louden 1995. In a recent article, M. D. Usher 2009, 211, has drawn attention to the technique of “homophonic substitution” in oral poetry, in particular in the performance of Cynic χροῖαι. He draws on the analyses of composition by analogous “punning” that Parry 1971, 72–74, first noted, and Nagler 1974, 1–26, developed at length.

<sup>50</sup> Much of this discussion of Greek attitudes to blindness is dependent on Bernidaki-Aldous 1990, 33–47, who summarizes the attitude connecting blindness with helplessness thus: “the condition of blindness and the physical limitation of the blind captured Greek imagination and stirred the Greek heart” (41).

I stay? Where will I land?" (ὦμοι ἐγὼ, πᾶ βῶ, / πᾶ στῶ, πᾶ κέλω; Eur. *Hec.* 1056–57). His whole speech centers on his loss of orientation, using interrogative adverbs of location ten times and a recurrent metaphor of a ship wandering at sea. In a similar fashion—but humorously—Polyphemus in Eurpides’ *Cyclops* appears after his blinding to wander about the stage in desperate search for Odysseus and his men, relying on the chorus for directions (Eur. *Cyc.* 682–89). Likewise, this depiction of Polyphemus holds true in the *Odyssey*, though it is less pronounced: he is lost, enfeebled, and must resort to “groping with his hands” (χερσὶ ψηλαφόων, 9.416) to make it about his cave.<sup>51</sup> The figure of myth who most typifies the connection of blindness and wandering is Oedipus, who, in Sophocles’ depiction, blinds himself and becomes an outcast wandering among the mountains (Soph. *OT* 1451, 1518), without any human contact (1436–37).<sup>52</sup> Deborah Steiner has argued that blindness and invisibility are in many contexts interchangeable in the Greek mind, hence the double meaning of τυφλός as both “hard of seeing” and “hard to see.”<sup>53</sup> With this in mind, the sense Odysseus’ “disappearance” (his becoming ἄιστον, 1.235) on his voyage home takes on a new layer of meaning: causing Odysseus

---

<sup>51</sup> Buchan 2004, 34–35, writes of Polyphemus, “His blindness leads to a wandering, as he frantically searches both for those responsible for his loss and for allies to help him recover his loss.”

<sup>52</sup> Blindness and exile are connected in several other myths: e.g., the case of Phoenix (Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.175).

<sup>53</sup> Steiner 1995, 207, 10–11. I add ἀβλεψία as another word with the double meaning of “unseeing” and “unable to be seen.” See LSJ s.v.

to wander, Poseidon has dealt him a form of “blindness” by making him invisible to the world.<sup>54</sup>

Just as Helios prayed to Zeus to set the stage for Zeus’ retribution against the companions, so does Polyphemos pray to Poseidon that Odysseus “return suffering evils and late” (ὄψε̄ κακῶς ἔλθοι, 9.534).<sup>55</sup> This constitutes the second preparation stage of the theme (stage 5).

Poseidon’s making Odysseus wander and suffer further woes in the course of his travels is the retributive action of his τίσις narrative (stage 6). A further aspect of Poseidon’s retribution is the destruction of the rest of the companions, which has as its proximate cause the companions’ slaughter of Helios’ cattle—though the ultimate cause is Polyphemos’ curse, as Teiresias’ prophecy makes clear.<sup>56</sup> Since the companions are Odysseus’ means for making a timely return, their deaths result in his wandering. Their loss has a parallel symmetry in Polyphemos’ loss of his flock of sheep, which are the nearest approximation to a community for Polyphemos. The common Homeric metaphor that makes a leader the “shepherd” of his men, along with Polyphemos’

---

<sup>54</sup> I could advance further connections between Odysseus’ wandering and blindness. Like Odysseus’ wandering, blindness frequently results from the anger of a god: e.g. Lycurgus (*Il.* 6.138–40), Teiresias (Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.69–72; Call. *Lav. Pall.* 53–130), Thamyris (Apollod. *Bibl.* 1.17), Stesichorus (Pl. *Phdr.* 243a), etc. Blindness appears as the penalty for crimes such as theft of our earliest evidence: a 7<sup>th</sup> century BC inscription from Cumae on an aryballos records, “I am the *lekkythos* of Tattaie, whoever steals me will be blind.” (Ταταίεις ἐμὶ λέκκυθος· ἠὸς δ’ ἄν με κλέψῃ, θυφλὸς ἔσται, *LSAG* 236, 240.3, pl. 47.3).

<sup>55</sup> On the parallels between this prayer and Teiresias’ prophecy, see p. 61 n. 22 above.

<sup>56</sup> See p. 61 n. 22 above.



pathetic and personal address to his best ram (446–59), suggests a correspondence between the Cyclops’ flock and Odysseus’ men. Thus as Odysseus and his men steal the sheep, Polyphemus loses his pseudo-companions, which he vainly wished could have helped him in his incapacitated state (456–60). Accordingly, Odysseus faces a fitting punishment. As a result, a new, “just” set of conditions come about (stage 7), in which Poseidon has upheld his authority as a god by blocking Odysseus’ return and making him vanish from mortal life.

In summary, Poseidon’s τίσις narrative consists of the following sequence:

**Table 4: The Poseidon-Odysseus τίσις Sequence**

Order	Event/State
1	Polyphemus is absent from his cave. Odysseus enters.
2	Companions advise fleeing. Odysseus is not persuaded.
3	Odysseus plots and prepares to deceive and blind Polyphemus.
4	Odysseus and companions blind Polyphemus.
5	Polyphemus prays to Poseidon.
6	Poseidon makes Odysseus wander. Companions perish.
7	Odysseus is lost and kept from returning.

There is one further note to make about the narrative effects of the episode on Thrinacia and of the encounter with Polyphemus. As a result of the companions’ deaths and the destruction of Odysseus’ ship, Odysseus will spend another seven years away from Ithaca. Since the suitors’ siege upon his household begins only three years before his eventual return, he would have avoided his τίσις narrative entirely had Zeus not meted out destruction after Thrinacia. The poem might have arranged events differently,

having the suitors' siege begin earlier, for instance. But as the poem has arranged matters, it is on account of the errors of the protagonists—Odysseus' blinding of Polyphemus and the companions' eating Helios' cattle (as I argued above the poem presents these events as inextricable)—that Odysseus will become the hero of his own, greatest *τίσις* narrative.

### ***3.3 Further Narratives of τίσις***

There are three other significant *τίσις* narratives in the poem: Hephaestus' vengeance on Ares and Aphrodite for their adultery (8.234–384);<sup>57</sup> Odysseus' on Polyphemus for eating six of his companions (9.105–566); the suitors' kin on Odysseus and his allies for the loss of the suitors (24.412–548). While a full discussion of these episodes would certainly reap interpretive rewards, it is not necessary for my project. For the sake of brevity I simply list the narratives here in schematic form.

---

<sup>57</sup> On this narrative, see pp. 278–82, 304–5 below.

**Table 5: Hephaestus-Ares & Aphrodite τίσις Sequence**

Order	Event/State
1	Hephaestus is absent from his home.
2	None stated. (Implicit in Aphrodite's character?)
3	Ares woos Aphrodite. They secretly meet in Hephaestus' home.
4	Adultery.
5	Hephaestus devises trap, leaves.
6	Ares and Aphrodite spring trap and are mocked. Poseidon vouches for restitution.
7	Ambiguous. Ares and Aphrodite released. Hephaestus paid?

**Table 6: Odysseus-Polyphemus τίσις Sequence**

Order	Event/State
1	N.A.
2	Polyphemus warned by seer Telamus, threatened by Odysseus. He mistakes the former, ignores the latter.
3	Polyphemus inquires after their ship and their origins.
4	Polyphemus kills and eats six men.
5	Odysseus plots his tricks.
6	Blinding of Polyphemus.
7	Odysseus and companions have escaped.

**Table 7: Suitors' kin-Odysseus τίσις Sequence**

Order	Event/State
1	Suitors leave their homes and occupy Odysseus'.
2	Halitherses' prophecy before Odysseus leaves for Troy. Odysseus not persuaded to stay.
3	Odysseus plots his way home. He plots his revenge against the suitors.
4	Odysseus loses his companions. Kills suitors.
5	Assembly of Ithacans.
6	Suitors' kin (try to) kill Odysseus and allies. (They fail.)
7	Odysseus remains king.

## 4. Righteous Vengeance: Odysseus' Monumental τίσις

Odysseus' τίσις is the monumental example of the theme in the epic. It occupies the foreground or background of every moment of the narrative, and the poem makes specific citation of it dozens of times. Though Odysseus' τίσις occupies the center of the network of the theme's iterations in the poem, I argue that, considered against the background of this network of other examples, Odysseus' τίσις is atypical in one striking way: the poem has conflated two elements of the theme, the suitors' preparations for their crimes (stage 3) and the crimes themselves (stage 4), and has made Odysseus play at once two normally distinct roles, avenger and avenged. The poem has manipulated the form of the τίσις theme in this way in order to combine two stories into one: a story of a successful, happy return and a story of retribution.

Before Odysseus ever appears "on stage" in the poem and long before he actually executes his vengeance in the *Mnesteroiphonia*, the poem prepares its audience from the outset for the climactic violence that will eventually ensue. It does this through numerous proleptic allusions to Odysseus' return and vengeance, especially in the first four books.<sup>1</sup> It would be otiose to analyze in detail every example in the poem of the

---

<sup>1</sup> Jones 1941 shows how three triadic sets of allusions to Odysseus' "revenge motif" in the first two books prepare the audience for the long wait until the plot of his vengeance begins in earnest in book 13. On triadic structures, see de Jong 2001, xix, with bibliography.

motifs of his return and vengeance. On that account, my use of illustrative material will be necessarily selective. I often use examples from the first book, since it is here that the poem establishes the basic contours of the τίσις theme which will unfold as the poem develops. In this way, I pay particular attention to the first succinct citation of Odysseus' τίσις: Telemachus' vision at 1.113–17.

The situation that has set the whole plot in motion is Odysseus' absence from his home, owing to his departure for the Trojan War 20 years before the action of the poem commences (stage 1). He has left behind his wife and his entire household, as well as the men (many of them only children then) who would become Penelope's suitors. Several characters make reference to his absence in the context of a citation of the τίσις theme. For example, after the disguised Athena has let Telemachus know her outrage at the behavior of the suitors (1.227–29), she recognizes that Odysseus' absence has created the opportunity for the suitors to commit their crimes: “Truly you have great need for absent Odysseus” (πολλὸν ἀποιχομένου Ὀδυσῆος δεύη, 253–54). The fact that he is gone (ἀποιχομένου) has set in motion the narrative of τίσις, and the poem regularly reminds the audience of this fact: Menelaus comments on “how long he has been gone,” (ὅπως δὴ δηρὸν ἀποιχεται, 4.109; cf. 1.135, 3.77); the poem uses the phrase, “absent lord” (ἀποιχομένοιο ἄνακτος, 14.7, 450, 17.296, 21.395), in several places to describe Odysseus, especially in view of the dire situation on Ithaca; when Penelope proposes the bow-contest, she makes a direct connection between Odysseus' absence and the suitors'

devastation of her home (21.68–70). In addition to these statements about the current fact of Odysseus' absence, the poem alludes at various points to some of the details of his departure: he received a prophecy from Halitherses (2.171–76); he put Mentor in charge of his household (2.225–27); he had recently wed Penelope and Telemachus was recently born (11.447–49); he gave Penelope instructions as he left (18.256–71); Penelope prepared his gear for the journey (19.255–57). I could say much more about the circumstances and effects of Odysseus' departure,<sup>2</sup> but suffice it for the present purpose to say that the situation resulting from his leaving Ithaca sets the stage for Odysseus' *τίσις* narrative.

In the course of the poem, the suitors receive numerous prophetic warnings (stage 2), which by their very number underline the suitors' culpability. But in order to narrate directly as much of the *τίσις* narrative as possible, the poem has made the warnings come *after* the suitors have already entered Odysseus' home and begun to woo Penelope. This inverts the chronology of a typical *τίσις* narrative, this is achronological: Hermes warns Aegisthus before he woos Clytemnestra; Odysseus' men warn him before he invades Polyphemus' cave; Odysseus warns his men before they reach Thrinacia. Insofar as the suitors' warnings come after their logical place in the story, they are analeptic; but in so far as they foretell the consequences of Odysseus' return and revenge, they are at the same time proleptic.

---

<sup>2</sup> On the complicated political and domestic situation on Ithaca before Odysseus' restoration as ruler, see *inter alios* Finley 1954, 71–108; Katz 1991, 35–41; Olson 1995, 184–204.

To take one example, one form of warning that the suitors receive are omens that signal their destruction.<sup>3</sup> The first of these is the appearance of the two eagles during the Ithacan assembly before Telemachus' departure (2.143–207). Omens require interpretation, and in this case Halitherses, an old man particularly skilled at reading bird-signs, provides the meaning: Odysseus' return is imminent, and it will be devastating for the suitors (2.160–76):

ὁ σφιν ἐὺ φρονέων ἀγορήσατο καὶ μετέειπε·  
 “κέκλυτε δὴ νῦν μευ, Ἰθακήσιοι, ὅττι κεν εἴπω·  
 μνηστῆρσιν δὲ μάλιστα πιφασκόμενος τάδε εἶρω·  
τοῖσιν γὰρ μέγα πῆμα κυλίνδεται· οὐ γὰρ Ὀδυσσεὺς  
δὴν ἀπάνευθε φίλων ὧν ἔσσεται, ἀλλὰ που ἤδη  
 ἐγγὺς ἐὼν τοῖσδεσσι φόνον καὶ κῆρα φυτεύει  
 πάντεσσιν· πολέσιν δὲ καὶ ἄλλοισιν κακὸν ἔσται,  
 οἱ νεμόμεσθ' Ἰθάκην ἐυδείελον. ἀλλὰ πολὺ πρὶν  
 φραζώμεσθ', ὥς κεν καταπαύσομεν· οἱ δὲ καὶ αὐτοὶ  
 παυέσθων· καὶ γὰρ σφιν ἄφαρ τόδε Λωίων ἔστιν.  
 οὐ γὰρ ἀπίρητος μαντεύομαι, ἀλλ' ἐὺ εἰδώς·  
 καὶ γὰρ κείνῳ φημὶ τελευτηθῆναι ἅπαντα,  
 ὥς οἱ ἐμυθεόμην, ὅτε Ἴλιον εἰσανέβαινον  
 Ἀργεῖοι, μετὰ δὲ σφιν ἔβη πολύμητις Ὀδυσσεύς.  
 φῆν κακὰ πολλὰ παθόντ', ὀλέσαντ' ἄπο πάντας ἐταίρους,  
 ἄγνωστον πάντεσσιν ἐεικοστῶ ἐνιαυτῶ  
 οἴκαδ' ἐλεύσεσθαι· τὰ δὲ δὴ νῦν πάντα τελεῖται.

Intending good, he addressed the assembly and spoke among them:

“Listen to me now, Ithacans, to whatever I say.

For the suitors especially I proclaim and tell these things.

For against them a great woe is rolling. For Odysseus will not long  
 be away from his own people, but, I suppose, being already

---

<sup>3</sup> On omen scenes, see Stockinger 1959; Podlecki 1967; Thornton 1970, 52–57; Edwards 1975, 56; de Jong 2001, ad 2.143–207.

near, is sowing killing and death for these men,  
 all of them. And he will be an evil thing also for many others  
 of us who dwell on clear-seen Ithaca. But much sooner  
 let us consider how we make stop this—or let them  
 stop this themselves, for this is absolutely better for them.  
 For I prophesy not as one inexperienced, but understanding well.  
 For I declare that all things have come to pass for that man,  
 just as I was telling him when the Argives embarked for Ilium,  
 and with them went Odysseus of many wiles. I said that,  
 having suffered many evils and having lost all his companions,  
 he would come home in the twentieth year, unknown to all.  
 And now indeed all these things are coming to pass.

Halitherses stresses the imminence of the suitors' destruction. "A great woe is rolling" (163) against them, he proclaims, using the imagery of a storm-tossed sea.<sup>4</sup> Their demise has "already" (164) begun since Odysseus will "not long" (163–64) be away. Odysseus "is sowing killing and death," (165; cf. 15.178)—that is, the "seeds" of their death are in the ground and will soon sprout. Halitherses has, in effect, taken on the singer's vantage point, perceiving how the plot will unfold. Just as Hermes, "intending good" (*ἀγαθὰ φρονέων*, 1.43), advised Aegisthus to refrain from murder and adultery, so does Halitherses, "intending good" (*ἐὺ φρονέων*, 160), advise what is "better" (169) for the suitors: desist in ruining Odysseus' home. But like Aegisthus, the suitors are not persuaded. In answer to Halitherses, Eurymachus declares, "We do not heed your prophecy" (*οὔτε θεοπροπίης ἐμπαζόμεθ'*, 201). Thus he seals his doom.

---

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Odysseus' suffering *τίσις* on the sea at the hands of Poseidon, when "a great wave rolls" against him, (*μέγα κύμα κυλίνδων*, 5.296).



Several other omens and prophecies (the two modes of prediction are not neatly distinguished)<sup>5</sup> appear in the narrative functioning as warnings for the suitors: 20.240–47, 345–70, 21.144–74, 413–15.<sup>6</sup> The poem narrates three of these in detail, each time proclaimed by a soothsayer: Halitherses’ prophecy in the Ithacan assembly, Theoclymenus’ vision of a bloody feast, and Leiodes’ advice to stop the bow contest. This tripling of warnings forms a “triadic structure,”<sup>7</sup> and parallels in its three-fold cumulative significance the three warnings Odysseus gives his companions in the Thrinacia episode. Another significant warning is Eumaeus’ prayer that Odysseus might return and avenge the insults and disobedience of Melanthius. This prayer has the function of a warning for the bad herdsmen (17.240–46). Finally, when Odysseus comes in disguise to his home he warns the suitors himself, again in a triadic set of encounters. He warns Antinous by way of a paradigmatic, false autobiography that presents a moral lesson: the rich and proud can be undone by their ὑβρις (17.414–61).<sup>8</sup> He makes a similar warning to Eurymachus, again by reference to his assumed identity (18.365–86).

---

<sup>5</sup> The act of interpreting an omen and proclaiming its meaning shares some terminology with prophecy: e.g., the verb *μαντεύομαι* signifies both (1.200 for unprompted prophetic speech; 15.172 for an interpretation of bird-signs).

<sup>6</sup> There are yet other omens and prophecies about Odysseus’ return and retribution which have different predictive functions and audiences: e.g., Helen’s interpretation of the bird-sign on Telemachus’ departure for Ithaca (15.160–78).

<sup>7</sup> See p. 81 n. 1 above.

<sup>8</sup> On the moral function of this tale, see Emlyn-Jones 1986, 7–8.

Between these two he attempts to persuade Amphinomus and has some success (Amphinomus responds by wandering the halls, troubled). But the narrator reports that his repentance and survival was not to be. Athena had determined that his fate was to die (18.119–57).

This abundance of warnings—eight given to the suitors either collectively or individually, plus one for the bad herdsmen—magnifies the suitors’ and their allies’ culpability. They persist in their destructive behavior despite specific warnings, and hence acquire *ἄτασθαλία*, rendering Odysseus’ eventual bloody retribution just. Characters in the poem attribute *ἄτασθαλία* to the suitors far more than to any other character or sets of characters.<sup>9</sup> Yet their *ἄτασθαλία* is peculiar in so far as it consists in *persisting* in their crimes, whereas for all other characters it consists in *committing* their crimes. Typically the warning that forms the background for *ἄτασθαλία* comes before the crime. In this case, however, the warnings have come in the midst of the crime. The reason for this is two-fold: firstly, as mentioned above, the poem has made these warnings analeptic to dramatize and underline the suitors’ guilt within the poem’s narrative; secondly, as I make clear in what follows, the poem has made the preparation stage (stage 3), with which typically the warning is closely associated, into the equivalence of the crime.

---

<sup>9</sup> 18 of 26 times: 3.207, 16.86, 93, 17.588, 18.57, 139, 143, 19.88, 20.170, 370, 21.146, 22.47, 314, 416, 23.67, 24.282, 352, 458. (Some of these are indirect attributions.)

The suitors do not heed these warnings;<sup>10</sup> instead, they prepare for their crimes (stage 3). They plot against Telemachus (2.367–68, 4.658–74, 16.342–406, 20.241–42): “their best men lie in an ambush” (ἀριστῆες λοχόωσιν, 15.28) for him, just as Aegisthus “set his best men in an ambush” (φῶτας ἀρίστους εἶσε λόχον, 4.530–31) against Agamemnon. They woo Penelope in the hope of marrying her (thereby committing adultery), just as Aegisthus woos Clytemnestra before eventually winning her over (3.265–72). By custom, the suitors’ feasting at Penelope’s home is an element of their wooing and their role as guests.<sup>11</sup> But this element of their feasting and revelry in Penelope’s and Odysseus’ home takes on greater significance in this τίσις theme.

From the very first scenes on Ithaca, the poem depicts the suitors’ feasting as an immoral depredation against Odysseus’ household and person. In fact, I argue that the character of their feasting has far more sinister overtones than has been previously recognized. As the scene on Ithaca opens, Telemachus welcomes a guest, the disguised Athena, and apologizes for the disorder in his home that the suitors have brought about (1.158–59). This line of thought elicits from Telemachus the first characterization in the poem of the abuses of the suitors as a crime precipitating an act of requital, and by virtue of its initial position, this characterization carries special significance. Telemachus says

---

<sup>10</sup> There is the single exception of Amphinomus’ warning not to murder Telemachus (20.244–47). The suitors heed this narrow suggestion on this one occasion.

<sup>11</sup> See Heubeck et al., 1.55–60; see esp. 59 n. 17 on the marital customs depicted in the poem.

that they “eat another’s livelihood without recompense” (ἀλλότριον βίοτον νήποινον ἔδουσιν, 160). The adjective νήποινον derives ultimately from the same root as τίσις, and means “un-avenged.”<sup>12</sup> It modifies only three things in the *Odyssey*: βίος (1.160, 377, 2.142, 14.377, 18.280), men as they die (1.380, 2.145), and κάματος (“labor,” 14.417). In each of these cases there is a sense that someone or something is lost (the governing verb in the clause for each is either ὀλλυμι or ἔδω) and that no repayment for that loss has been made. In the case of Telemachus’ apology, the suitors have eaten up Odysseus’ stores without repayment (cf. 1.250–51). The sense of repayment or recompense is intentionally ambiguous here. It at once connotes the suitors’ consumption of Odysseus’ stores without making any kind of economic payment (in the form of a counter-gift) and at the same time suggests that Odysseus’ stores have been, as it were, “murdered,” since the most common beneficiaries of “vengeance” (τίσις) are murdered people.)

βίος has a similar ambiguity that supports the idea of the suitors’ figurative “murder” of Odysseus’ stores. Often βίος means simply “life” (cf. 1.287, 5.394, 12.328, et al.). The semantic range of this word results from the conditions of the poem’s competitive, heroic society, centered on the unit of the autonomous οἶκος. Foodstuffs and the other basic constituents of one’s household symbolize one’s τιμή, and secure

---

<sup>12</sup> νήποινος, originally \*nē-k<sup>w</sup>oinos (o-grade), which shares the same root in PIE with τίσις, originally \*k<sup>w</sup>itis (zero-grade): \*k<sup>w</sup>(e/o)i-.

one's life.<sup>13</sup> The fact that νήποινον βίοτον also appears as the object of the verb ὄλλυμι, which regularly signifies the death of men (cf. the two instances of men "dying" (ὄλοισθε) "unrequited" (νήποινοι): 1.380, 2.145), strengthens the sense that consuming a man's βίοτος is tantamount to murder.<sup>14</sup> This connection between βίοτος/βίος and (κατ)ἔδω/ἔσθίω—the idea of "eating one's livelihood"—is significant. While the poem uses this motif eleven times to describe the feasting of the suitors (1.160, 2.123, 11.116, 13.396, 419, 428, 14.377, 15.32, 17.378, 18.280, 19.159), it appears nowhere else in the extant corpus of Greek literature with only a two exceptions: in a passage in Quintus, perhaps modeled on the *Odyssey* (Quint. Smyrn. 3.456)<sup>15</sup> and in Luke's version of the story of the prodigal son (15:30).<sup>16</sup> The particularity of this expression suggests that it possesses especially evocative power. An audience would not miss its murderous connotations.

For Telemachus, the grief he feels at the disappearance and seeming death of Odysseus is the same as the grief he feels for the suitors' wooing of Penelope and the "wearing out" (τρύχουσι, 1.248) of his οἶκος (243–44, 250–51):

---

<sup>13</sup> Adkins 1960b, esp. 28–32. Adkins believes the elements of the οἶκος literally *are* the Homeric hero's τιμή.

<sup>14</sup> Of course, the connection between eating the "lives" of men and facing τίσις as a result is most apparent in Odysseus' encounter with Polyphemus (though there is no mention of βίοτος in this context).

<sup>15</sup> Quintus' use of the verb φθίσει, "will waste," in this context makes it reminiscent of *Od.* 1.250–51.

<sup>16</sup> Plutarch (*Quomodo adul.*, 22.D–E) notes the multiple senses of οἶκος and βίοτος at work in these passages. They are examples "of words meaning several things" (τῶν πολλαχῶς λεγομένων), though Plutarch seems to think that only one meaning is operative at a time in these passages.

οὐδέ τι κείνον ὀδυρόμενος στεναχίζω  
οἶον, ἐπεὶ νύ μοι ἄλλα θεοὶ κακὰ κήδε' ἔτευξαν.

...

τοὶ δὲ φθινύθουσιν ἔδοντες  
οἶκον ἐμόν.

And not for that man alone do I, lamenting, groan,  
since now the gods have fashioned for me other painful woes.

...

They [the suitors], by their eating, waste  
my house.

The same death-laden cry of lament—ὀδυρόμενος στεναχίζω—signifies grief both for the loss of Odysseus and for the loss of his οἶκος. The syntactic ambiguity of what verb governs οἶκον ἐμόν—it could be either φθινύθουσιν or ἔδοντες or both—further strengthens the sense that murder through a kind of cannibalism is implicit in the crimes of the suitors.<sup>17</sup> They literally “eat” the home and life of Odysseus, whose οἶκος they thus “cause to perish” (φθινύθουσιν), a fate more commonly associated with men in the poem.<sup>18</sup> Later, in Mentor’s speech before the assembled Ithacans, he make the suitors’ consumption of Odysseus’ house explicit: “They violently eat up the household of

---

<sup>17</sup> On the undercurrents of cannibalism in the poem, see Buchan 2001 and 2004, 136–55, Levaniouk 2000, 111–14, (who draws attention to possible ritual connections), and Cook 1999, 166–67. See also Nagy 1979, 224–26, who makes a similar connection between the characterization of unjustified blame (in this context called φθόνος) and cannibalism: “**phthonos** entails the ‘devouring’ of a good hero” (225 n. 3). None of these scholars, however, note the imagery of cannibalism in this passage. De Jong 2001, ad 1.24–51, notes the recurring motif of the suitors’ “wasting” and “consuming” Odysseus’ property, though, again, not the latent sense of cannibalism.

<sup>18</sup> φθινύθω commonly describes the death of men: e.g., *Il.* 6..327, 21.466. The verb’s root, φθι-, denotes “decay” and “withering,” and is frequently associated with human mortality: see Vernant 1991, 40; Nagy 1979, 175–89.

Odysseus” (κατέδουσι βιαίως οἶκον Ὀδυσσῆος, 2.237–38). Theoclymenus’ frightful vision, in which he sees the suitors feasting on “blood-defiled meat” (αἰμοφόρυκτα...κρέα, 20.348), deepens the feeling that the suitors are engaged in form of cannibalism.<sup>19</sup> The imagery of this vision is closely connected with the gruesome images surrounding Antinous’ later death, where the humanness of the blood—αἵματος ἀνδρομέοιο—is made explicit (22.19), so that the blood on the suitors’ lips also suggests their own blood.<sup>20</sup> The poem, thus, raises the crimes of the suitors to a peak of depravity, what James Redfield has called “[t]he most perfect injustice” —cannibalism.<sup>21</sup>

Telemachus fears that soon it will be his fate too to die by violent dismemberment: “Soon they will destroy me too” (τάχα δὴ με διαρραίσουσι καὶ αὐτόν, 251).<sup>22</sup> The implications of the verb διαρραίω are of “rending” and “dashing to pieces,” as might happen to a ship destroyed in a storm (12.290); or, significantly, as Polyphemus hopes he might “dash” the brains of Odysseus against the floor of his cave (9.459).<sup>23</sup>

Telemachus’ fears are justified. Soon, Antinous in the assembly scene of book two

---

<sup>19</sup> On κρέα αἰμοφόρυκτα, see Levaniouk 2000, 112, who calls this “a detail clearly reminiscent of raw meat and thus of the Cyclops’ both raw and cannibalistic meal.”

<sup>20</sup> On this scene, see pp. 102–4 below.

<sup>21</sup> Redfield 1975, 197.

<sup>22</sup> Saïd 1979, 10, notes the connected diction here between the violence threatened against Telemachus and that done against Odysseus’ household.

<sup>23</sup> The latter example is of ῥαίω without the intensifying prefix δια-. Beyond this example, the verb appears in the *Odyssey* only to denote ships or rafts destroyed on rocks or splintered by winds: 5.221, 6.326, 8.569, 13.151, 173.

recasts Odysseus' household as Telemachus' and threatens Telemachus' βίωτος: as long as Penelope remains unwed, he says, the suitors will "eat your livelihood and possessions" (βίωτόν τε τεὸν καὶ κτήματ' ἔδονται, 2.123; cf. 13.419, 19.159). The suitors, it becomes clear, are slowly eating him alive.

Although the suitors' feasting, wooing of Penelope, and plotting against Telemachus occupy stage 3 in the theme—the preparation for their crimes—the poem simultaneously presents these acts as crimes in and of themselves. Odysseus announces a programmatic indictment of the suitors' crimes that explicates his view of the justice of the punitive retribution he is about to exact from them (22.35–41):<sup>24</sup>

ὦ κύνες, οὐ μ' ἔτ' ἐφάσκεθ' ὑπότροπον οἴκαδ' ἰκέσθαι  
δήμου ἄπο Τρώων, ὅτι μοι κατεκείρετε οἶκον,  
δμῶησίν τε γυναιξὶ παρευνάζεσθε βιαίως,  
αὐτοῦ τε ζῶοντος ὑπεμνάσθε γυναῖκα,<sup>25</sup>  
οὔτε θεοὺς δείσαντες, οἳ οὐρανὸν εὐρὺν ἔχουσιν,  
οὔτε τιν' ἀνθρώπων νέμεσιν κατόπισθεν ἔσεσθαι·  
νῦν ὑμῖν καὶ πᾶσιν ὀλέθρου πείρατ' ἐφήπται.

O dogs! You were denying that I would yet turn back and return  
from the land of Troy, seeing that you were wasting my home,  
slept with my servant-women by force,  
and wooed my wife while I was living.  
You had no fear of the gods who hold the wide heaven,  
nor that some indignation of men would pursue you.  
Now on you, all of you, have the bonds of death fastened.

---

<sup>24</sup> On this passage, see Yamagata 1994, 28–31.

<sup>25</sup> Lines 37 and 38 are interchanged in some manuscripts.



Odysseus levels three charges here: they devastated his home; they slept with his servant-women; they wooed his wife.<sup>26</sup> On Odysseus' reckoning, these acts constitute stage 4 of a τίσις theme: they are the grounds for his revenge.

Despite the poem's presentation of these acts as the suitors' "crimes" (stage 4), I argue that, on the basis of a comparison to other τίσις narratives, the suitors' actions fit more naturally stage 3 in the theme. Their wooing of Penelope is, so far, unconsummated. Their suit, on one view, is quite reasonable: nearly everyone believes Odysseus to be dead and only seven years after he should have returned did they begin to pursue her.<sup>27</sup> Even when Odysseus finally returns, none of them has yet to win her over and "wed" her as Aegisthus had done to Clytemnestra (1.36). In this lies a difference between the manifestation of the theme of τίσις in the "Oresteia" myth and in *Odyssey's* central τίσις narrative. In the case of the former, the crimes constituting stage 4 are Aegisthus' "marrying" Clytemnestra and murdering Agamemnon. In Zeus' opening speech the winning over of Clytemnestra and the murdering of Agamemnon twice

---

<sup>26</sup> I follow de Jong 2001, ad loc., in my reading of Odysseus' enumeration of charges here. *Pace* Yamagata 1994, 29–30, who sees in 39–40, a reference to their disrespect of guests. I read these two lines as similar to the sentiment of 35–36: they foolishly disregarded the retaliatory consequences that men or gods would exact for their crimes. This interpretation finds support in the way that Eurymachus responds: he concedes that Odysseus' indictment is apt (46) and characterizes their crimes as "reckless deeds" (ἀτάσθαλα, 47)—in other words, acts that disregarded the promise of retaliation.

<sup>27</sup> This seems to be the timing implied at 2.89–90, although it seems at least conceivable on my reading that this was only when Penelope began her weaving ruse and that the suitors may have already been pursuing her by that time.

occupy a single line and appear as twin elements of the action performed ὑπὲρ μόνον that precipitates Orestes' τίσις (1.36, 39). However, exact parallels do not occur in Odysseus' τίσις theme. The suitors neither win over Penelope nor murder Odysseus. The parallels are rather that they woo her and despoil his home.

I have already discussed how despoiling Odysseus' home symbolizes murder. As for the suitors' wooing of Penelope, this is only an offense because Odysseus is still alive. The poem has assimilated their suit of her to the more typical version of the theme in which the adulterer pursues a woman he knows to have a living husband (e.g., Ares' seduction of Aphrodite, Aegisthus' of Clytemnestra, and Paris' of Helen). Lurking beneath the plot motif of their wooing is the possibility that in an alternative version of the epic Penelope could have been unfaithful. In a version of the myth known to Apollodorus, Penelope was seduced by Antinous and then divorced by Odysseus upon his return. Later, she had a liaison with Hermes and bore Pan (Apollod. *Epit.* 7.38). Or, in some more grotesque versions, she bore Pan by *all* the suitors while Odysseus was away.<sup>28</sup> In yet another version preserved by Apollodorus, Odysseus himself kills Penelope because Amphinomus seduced her (*Epit.* 7.39). In addition, the poem itself holds forth the possibility at several points that Penelope could be won over by the

---

<sup>28</sup> See the scholia to Lycophron (Sheer ad 772ter); Servius *Commentarii* ad 2.44.

suitors and become unfaithful, as Marilyn Katz has demonstrated.<sup>29</sup> This, of course, does not occur in our *Odyssey*—though a general sentiment that *as a rule* women are untrustworthy pervades the poem. (Cf. the examples of Clytemnestra, Helen, and Aphrodite, and especially Agamemnon’s comments at 11.456—Penelope and Eurycleia are the exceptions that prove the rule.)

Anxiety about Penelope’s faithfulness is palpable, just beneath the surface of the poem. Several scholars have noted the similarities between Penelope and her female servants and argued that the servants are thus the site upon which the unexpressed anxieties about Penelope’s fidelity are displaced.<sup>30</sup> This is especially the case with the servant Melantho, who functions as a contrastive doublet for Penelope: she abuses the disguised Odysseus (18.327–36, 19.65–69)—in contrast to Penelope’s kindness—and she sleeps with a leader of the suitors, Eurymachus, (18.325)—in contrast to Penelope’s

---

<sup>29</sup> Katz 1991, 54–63. For instance, at 13.333–38 Athena attributes Odysseus’ wariness to go immediately to his home after arriving on Ithaca to his doubts about Penelope’s faithfulness. Moreover, Fulkerson 2002, 345, and Zeitlin 1995, 19–52, argue that Penelope’s fidelity is never actually proven.

<sup>30</sup> See Fulkerson 2002, 344: “Based on many similarities between Penelope and Melantho and the maids,...the question of Penelope’s fidelity is almost entirely displaced onto her servants.” See also Levine 1987; Olson 1989, 140: “The serving-girls who slept with [the suitors] are executed as well, doomed by their uncomfortably close association with, but radical dissimilarity to their mistress.” Katz 1991, 132: the comparison implied between Melantho and Penelope “displaces the question of sexual misconduct from Penelope on the faithless serving-woman and thus functions to absolve Penelope from the suspicion of wrong-doing”; Felson-Rubin 1994, 87; Doherty 1995, 154–55.

chastity. Accordingly, the suitors' violation of the female servants, who "stand as metonyms for Penelope,"<sup>31</sup> enacts by proxy a violation of Penelope.<sup>32</sup>

The middle charge in Odysseus' indictment, that the suitors' slept with Odysseus' female servants, suggests that the suitors are liable for an offense *like* adultery. The grisly execution of these women parallels the execution of an unfaithful wife,<sup>33</sup> especially seeing as they hold a similar position in the household, both being potential mothers of legitimate heirs.<sup>34</sup> In this connection, Eurymachus' response to Odysseus' three charges is telling, for he mentions only eating up Odysseus' household and wooing Penelope. This suggests that the crime of seducing the maids is so closely connected with the crime of wooing Penelope that Eurymachus need not even mention the maids.

In short, Odysseus executes the suitors in punishment for adultery and murder, even though, strictly speaking, they are innocent of these charges. The mere fact that they may have desired and intended to commit such crimes does not render them liable

---

<sup>31</sup> Felson-Rubin 1994, 87.

<sup>32</sup> Fulkerson 2002, 344–45, writes, "Once we realize that Penelope's faithfulness is displaced onto her serving women (some of whom are loyal and some not), we can see the issue of chastity as preemptively closed to discussion by the hanging of the unfaithful servants. ...With the maids' death, the issue of loyalty raised by their behavior has now been resolved, and the comparison to Penelope is abruptly ended. ...The women servants are scapegoats and 'deserve' such a death because they are the female counterparts to the suitors as well as the stand-ins for all of the unfaithful or potentially unfaithful women of the poem."

<sup>33</sup> Fulkerson 2002, 341–43. See also p. 150 below on the punishment of the female servants.

<sup>34</sup> See Yamagata 1994, 28–29, who notes Megapenthes, heir to Menelaus, was his son by a servant.

either, since under the Homeric system of morality “intent” as such is immaterial. It is the act that matters.<sup>35</sup> Therefore, they must *commit* a crime, even if it is performed symbolically.

I must acknowledge here that the question of what constitutes Odysseus’ justification for slaying the suitors has its own, vexed literature. I address this topic in more detail later in chapter nine.<sup>36</sup> Suffice it to say for now that I find alternative explanations wanting, chiefly because the benchmark crimes that the poem presents in Zeus’ opening paradigm of Aegisthus are concisely and clearly named as murder and adultery.

It thus becomes clear that the suitors’ actions of wooing and feasting, which constitute the earlier, preparation stage (stage 3) of the τίσις narrative, take on the characteristics of the actual crime stage (stage 4) in the theme. This proleptic characterization is a result of the poem’s construction, which makes Odysseus his own avenger. Had the suitors killed Odysseus and married off Penelope, then he could not himself have exacted revenge and reunited with his wife. The role of avenger would have fallen to Telemachus, and the epic would turn out to be a “Telemachy” — an epic of

---

<sup>35</sup> See p. 25 n. 26 above.

<sup>36</sup> See pp. 255–65 below.

a son's revenge along the lines of the oft-repeated "Oresteia" myth. I discuss this in more depth in the chapter five.

I need not rehearse the details of Odysseus' preparation for his retribution (stage 5), as others have usefully treated the careful plotting and organization of the execution of his revenge.<sup>37</sup> But I note two things of relevance to my analysis. Firstly, his guileful scheming forms a parallel to other revenge-takers: e.g., Hephaestus (and likely Orestes, at least in the tradition that Aeschylus draws on for the *Choephoroe*). This parallel trades on the "cunning versus force" motif. There seem to be two different kinds of traditions about how Odysseus executed his revenge: "openly" (i.e., with "force") or "with a trick" (i.e., by "cunning"). The poem we have follows the "cunning" narrative of slow, careful scheming after Athena's disguising Odysseus upon his landing in Ithaca. Then, in a reversal, after his self-revelation in bow-contest Odysseus defeats the suitors with naked force. But over a third of the poem follows the "cunning" narrative, so that the poem characterizes Odysseus as revenge-taker in manner of Hephaestus.<sup>38</sup>

---

<sup>37</sup> De Jong 1993, 30–38; 2001, ad 13.372–439.

<sup>38</sup> Teiresias' prophecy at 11.120 alludes to these narrative possibilities (cf. 1.296, 14.330, 19.299). See Danek 1998a, ad 1.255–66. Marks 2008, 8, 90–92, sees our *Odyssey* as following only the "cunning" path in opposition to an alternative path of open warfare. For Marks the "open" path necessarily includes an open landing in Ithaca at the head of an army, such as the return entailed in the "lying story" Odysseus tells Eumaeus (14.327–33). I, however, maintain with Danek that the conduct of the *Mnesteroiphonia* is consistent with the second, "force" path in most respects. A strictly "cunning" path would have involved a less heroic form of attack, such as the alternative Danek detects of fighting from a distance with poisoned arrows. See pp. 272–76 below.

Secondly, in several places the poem has made the theme of Odysseus' return into an aspect of this fifth preparation stage in the *τίσις* theme. For example, when Telemachus first appears in the poem, the poem presents him imagining Odysseus' *τίσις* against the suitors. The first part of this imaginary *τίσις* before the ensuing retribution is Odysseus' "coming from somewhere" (*ποθεν ἐλθὼν*, 1.115; cf. 256, et al.). Athena affirms this narrative order, when, in the guise of Mentis, she hypothesizes that Odysseus "having returned, will take revenge," (*νοστήσας ἀποτίσεται*, 1.258). She subordinates *νόστος* to *τίσις*, making his return into a precondition for his revenge. On the relationship of *νόστος* and *τίσις*, see chapter five.

When Odysseus does finally unleash his violent retribution (stage 6), the poem has prepared the audience with a series of proleptic allusions to the event. For instance, in Telemachus' early vision of Odysseus' return and revenge, he sees Odysseus "mak[ing] a scattering of the suitors through his halls" (*μνηστήρων τῶν μὲν σκέδασιν κατὰ δώματα θεΐη*, 1.116). The periphrasis of *σκέδασιν...θεΐη* calls to mind the periphrasis of Orestes' retribution (*τίσις ἔσσεται*, 1.40). Both use a periphrasis with a verbal noun in *-σις* to render an action vivid, which is, from the internal perspective of the story, retrojected from the future (prolepsis).<sup>39</sup> Just as Zeus' depiction of Orestes'

---

<sup>39</sup> Jones 1973, 12, when considering the similar diction of 20.225 (*ἀνδρῶν μνηστήρων σκέδασιν κατὰ δώματα θεΐη*), writes, "The effect of the *-σις* abstract here is to present the action of the root-verb...in a particularly vivid way; it suggests that...the swineherd [has] allow[ed] his imagination to run wild, and that he is for the moment actually living in his mind the scene which he so much desires to witness in reality." Footnote cont. next pg.

retributive killing elides the violence of the event itself, so here too the poem—perhaps reflecting the way Telemachus envisions the event<sup>40</sup>—replaces an explicit mention of killing with the circumlocution of “scattering the suitors.” This is, however, only a slight circumlocution<sup>41</sup>—the imagery of dispersal quickly collapses into the imagery of death. On the battlefield of Troy, Nestor proclaims, “Keen Ares scattered...the dark blood of many Achaeans” (Ἀχαιοί, τῶν νῦν αἶμα κελαινὸν...ἐσκεδάσ’ ὄξυς Ἄρης, *Il.* 7.328–30). The blood of victims scattered on the ground is a salient image in Agamemnon’s pathetic recounting of his own murder (*Od.* 11.418–20):

ἀλλά κε κείνα μάλιστα ἰδὼν ὀλοφύραο θυμῶ,  
 ὡς ἀμφὶ κρητῆρα τραπέζας τε πληθούσας  
 κείμεθ’ ἐνὶ μεγάρω, δάπεδον δ’ ἅπαν αἶματι θῦεν.

But in your heart you would have felt great pity at seeing this,  
 how we lay about the mixing-bowl and full tables  
 in the hall, and the whole floor ran with blood.

---

Incidentally, Bérard, ad loc. regarded 20.225 as the model for a supposed interpolation of 1.116. Perhaps Jones followed Bérard in excising the verse, since σκεδάσιν in 1.116 goes unnoticed in his analysis.

<sup>40</sup> The representation of events from the point of view of Telemachus uses what de Jong 2001, xiii calls “embedded focalization,” following Bal 1985, 100–18, —though de Jong does not specifically note the use of this technique in this passage.

<sup>41</sup> Persons—especially considered as collectives, such as fleets of sailors or armies—are often the object of the verb σκεδάννυμι. In addition to inanimate “mist” or “air” (*Il.* 17.649, 20.341; *Od.* 13.352), “embankments” (*Il.* 5.88), and “cares” (*Od.* 8.149), people can serve as objects as well: *Il.* 15.657, 17.285; *Od.* 3.131, 13.307, 14.242, et al.



In Homeric diction, to “scatter” men is to slay at least a great number of them.<sup>42</sup>

Telemachus does not have in mind an orderly dispersal of the suitors.<sup>43</sup> A certain restraint regarding the bloody details of Odysseus’ revenge characterizes such prolepses.<sup>44</sup> This allows the poem to build a case against the suitors slowly before confronting the audience with the brutal facts of their punishment.

The suitors’ punishment, like Aegisthus’ and that of the other recipients of τίσις in the narrative, has a sense of symmetry. Their punishment “fits” their crime. I discuss the narrative effects of this conception of punishment in more detail in later chapters. Here, I only mention a few examples of how this elaborate system of symmetrical punishments works. To put one case in its simplest form, the suitors have figuratively murdered Odysseus through their destruction of his home, as argued above. In consequence, they face a symmetrical punishment of death. The very manner of death can indicate a kind of symmetry: Odysseus achieves a double symmetry when he shoots Antinous with an arrow through his throat while he was drinking wine (22.8–21). Firstly, he strikes the main instrument by which Antinous had organized the suitors in their crimes—his voice. Secondly, he kills him while he was in the midst of the very act

---

<sup>42</sup> Note that the same hemistich that describes the blood on the floor in the aftermath of the slaying of Agamemnon (δάπεδον δ’ ἅπαν αἵματι θύεν), will also characterize the suitors’ deaths (22.309).

<sup>43</sup> Pace Danek 1998a, ad loc.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. also Nestor’s even more periphrastic description of Telemachus’ hypothetical revenge as the suitors’ “forgetting marriage” (ἐκλελάθοιτο γάμοιο, 3.224).

that precipitates his demise—that is, “killing” Odysseus through consuming his βίोटος in the form of wine. The imagery of blood spouting from Antinous’ nose is marked and unusual (18–19),<sup>45</sup> and it suggests a symmetrical reversal: the wine Antinous was in the midst of drinking, which signifies Odysseus himself, is now replaced by Antinous’ own expelled (vomited?) blood. Antinous’ punishment for his symbolic ingestion of Odysseus’s blood in the form of wine is now replaced by his ingestion and expulsion of his own blood.

Furthermore, when Antinous kicked the table over as he dies, “the bread and cooked meat were defiled,” (σιτός τε κρέα τ’ ὀπτὰ φορύνετο, 21). On the surface, this may mean simply that his feast was spoiled by falling on the floor. However, it resonates with Theoclymenus’ vision of the suitors eating “blood-defiled meat,” (αίμοφόρικτα...κρέα, 20.348). The verb φορύνω and its cognate φύρω only refer to defilement by blood (9.397, 18.21) or tears (17.130, 18.173, 19.596; *Il.* 24.162). Antinous’ blood shooting out his nose reinforces the sense that “human” blood has defiled the meal. That this is a man’s blood is noted emphatically: it is αἵματος ἀνδρομέοιο (19). Suzanne Saïd notes that the only other place the adjective ἀνδρόμεος occurs is as a description of the Polyphemus’ meal of “human meat” (ἀνδρόμεα κρε’, 9.297; cf. 347,

---

<sup>45</sup> The passage stretches the meaning of αὐλός significantly. It normally denotes pipes or tubes and, hence, the musical instrument. See Ebeling, s.v. Its application to the blood that Antinous expels from his nose is unusual: see Heubeck et al., ad loc.

374).<sup>46</sup> She thus sees a “rapprochement entre des images où éclate le caractère abominable des festins des prétendants et le festin du Cyclope, qui se gorge de vin et de chairs humaines.”<sup>47</sup> The symmetrical implication of the suitors’ own blood defiling their feast is that the suitors’ meal, which used to be Odysseus’ self, has now become their own selves. The suitors have moved from cannibalism to self-destructive autophagy.

After Odysseus has strung his bow and made his shot through the handle hole of the axe blades, he makes a programmatic statement before launching into his attack upon the suitors: “But now it is the hour even for the feast to be prepared for the Achaeans” (νῦν δ’ ὥρη καὶ δόρπον Ἀχαιοῖσιν τετυκέσθαι, 21.428). Odysseus addresses these words to Telemachus, for whom they have one, deadly intended meaning, conveyed through ambiguity because of the need for discretion. But Odysseus also speaks this before all the assembled suitors, for whom he intends his words to have another meaning.<sup>48</sup> While the suitors think it is time to celebrate a proper wedding “feast” and that they are the “Achaeans” for whom the meal is to be prepared,<sup>49</sup> an ironic meaning comes through as well: the “feast” will be the slaying of the suitors

---

<sup>46</sup> Saïd 1979, 40.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 40–41.

<sup>48</sup> That the suitors could hear these words is clear from Odysseus’ need to give a secretive, non-verbal sign to Telemachus (21.431).

<sup>49</sup> See p. 106 n. 52 below.

themselves, who will die enclosed in the house like cattle for the slaughter,<sup>50</sup> and the “Achaean” for whom this meal is to be prepared are Odysseus and his allies. Thus, a programmatic ambiguity at the outset of the feast heightens the sense of symmetrical exchange of crime and punishment.

As the battle grows bloodier and more gruesome, Odysseus and his allies come as close as they can to punishing their foes with their own symmetrical act of cannibalism without actually crossing over the line into savagery when they kill

Melanthius, the disloyal shepherd (22.475–77):

τοῦ δ' ἀπὸ μὲν ῥῖνάς τε καὶ οὐρα νηλεῖ χαλκῷ  
τάμνον, μήδεά τ' ἐξέρυσαν, κυσὶν ὠμὰ δάσασθαι,  
χειρῶν τ' ἠδὲ πόδας κόπτον κεκοτηότι θυμῷ.

They cut off his nose and ears with merciless bronze,  
and they tore out his genitals as raw flesh for dogs to eat,  
and they cut off his hands and feet with an angry heart.

To make his body a meal for a domesticated dog is to use the “intermediate between man and beast,” as James Redfield calls dogs, to engage in “vicarious cannibalism.”<sup>51</sup>

---

<sup>50</sup> The simile at 22.299–301 compares the suitors to cattle. Also, the image of a “hideous groan” (στόνος...ἀεκιῆς, 308) arising “with their heads being struck” (κράτων τυπτομένων, 309) seems more appropriate for the slaughter of cattle. See Buchan 2004, 259 n. 50, though there seems to be an error in the citation here. He must have meant 22.299 instead of 22.229.

<sup>51</sup> Redfield 1975, 193, 199: “To feed one’s enemies to the dogs is vicarious cannibalism.” See also Saïd 1979, 27, who sees in this act transgression from cannibalism as “simple métaphore” to “une triste réalité.” Only, the horror of this act of revenge is kept at a safe distance by a “double médiation,” whereby Melanthius stands in for the suitors and the dogs for Odysseus’ party.

Another example of the suitors' symmetrical punishment is implicit in Athena's statement that the suitors will be ὠκύμοροι and πικρόγαμοι (1.266). The phrase is euphemistic and ambiguous. The first compound adjective simply means "soon to die," but the latter establishes a metaphoric connection between marriage and death. As several scholars noted,<sup>52</sup> the suitors' deaths in book 22 comes at the point in the narrative when the suitors expect a wedding. The sequence of events in these final books, including contests, feasts, and an eventual consummation, parallels the traditional form of a wedding. This narrative metaphor serves to render the suitors' deaths into a form of symmetrical punishment for their crime of wooing Odysseus' wife. The punishment they face for their attempts at making a marriage that Penelope would regard as "loathsome" (στυγερός γάμος, 1.249, 18.272) is that they, instead, experience a marriage that turns out "bitter" for them. Through a kind of hypallage, Odysseus' (re-)marriage to Penelope redounds upon the suitors so that they too become "wed" at Odysseus and Penelope's reuniting. Only, for them the wedding amounts to their death. The "bitter" exchange of death for marriage, of funeral for wedding comes through in Telemachus'

---

<sup>52</sup> Seaford 1994, 30–73; Clay 1994 argues that the *Mnesteroiphonia* follows the pattern of a δαίς, with the suitors dying in order of importance, reflecting the way they would be seated at a feast. This arrangement underscores my argument for the symmetrical nature of the suitors' punishment. As Clay observes, "The *dais* of death that Odysseus serves up to the suitors is the appropriate revenge for their depredations" (36).

threatening words to Eurymachus that he would face a “funeral” in place of a “wedding” (20.307).<sup>53</sup>

The result of Odysseus’ *τίσις* (stage 7) is that his home is restored to its former order, and he will live a blessed, long life (11.134–37). However, as I discuss in more detail in later chapters, this “happy ending” will not be quite so straightforward for Odysseus. But the poem already signals the expectation of a happy conclusion in its opening scenes. The final element of Telemachus’ vision of Odysseus’ return is that he will again “possess his honor” (*τιμὴν δ’ αὐτὸς ἔχοι*, 1.117), which the suitors had taken from him by despoiling his home, mistreating his wife and son, and dishonoring his person in his guise as a beggar (14.163–64, 21.98–100, 23.27–28, et al.). Telemachus also foresees that he “will rule over his possessions” (*κτήμασιν οἴσιν ἀνάσσοι*, 117). This second clause is an epexegetis of the first clause of the line: Odysseus’ regained *τιμὴ* consists, primarily, in the goods of his household which symbolically connote his position in society.<sup>54</sup>

---

<sup>53</sup> Reece 1993, 178–81, has found a similar kind of “reciprocation” in the way in which Odysseus executes his revenge. Reece connects this with the custom of reciprocity involved in *ξενία*, so that the suitors receive the same sort of hospitality that they showed others.

<sup>54</sup> On *τιμὴ*, see p. 90 n. 13 above. *κτήματα*, as I take it, encompasses all manner of chattels, including slaves and dependents. Cf. 22.231, which expresses the totality of Odysseus’ *οἶκος* in a periphrastic doublet: “When you [Odysseus] have come to your home [i.e., the physical building] and possessions” (*ὅτε σὸν γε δόμον καὶ κτήμαθ’ ἰκάνεις*). This is a common form of Homeric additive expression, what Russo 1994, 373–78, calls a “trope of extension,” in which a second word or phrase is added to a related first. Russo finds three kinds of “tropes of extension”: “appositional,” “explanatory,” and “metonymic.” I take the phrase *καὶ κτήμασιν οἴσιν ἀνάσσοι* as “explanatory,” i.e., epexegetical (following the terminology of, among others, Footnote cont. next pg.

The theme forms a schematic as follows:

**Table 8: Odysseus' τίσις Sequence**

Order	Event/State
1	Odysseus has left Ithaca, leaving behind Penelope and the men who would become her suitors.
2	Warnings from several sources. The suitors are not persuaded.
3	Wooing of Penelope. The suitors plot against Telemachus.
4	The devastation to Odysseus' home. Wooing of Penelope.
5	Odysseus returns Ithaca. Plots his ambush of the suitors.
6	Killing of suitors and faithless servants.
7	Odysseus restored as lord of his house and Ithaca.

---

Stanford 1.lxxxi–lxxxii ). As is common in the paratactic style of Homeric diction, the conjunction *καί* introduces the epexegetis. I take the phrase *δόμον καὶ κτήμαθ'* of 22.231 as an example of Russo's "appositional" type. However, Russo does not distinguish between appositional doublets that are essentially redundant (e.g., his example of *Od.* 4.370: *ἡ δέ... ἔπος φάτο φώνησέν τε*, "she...spoke a speech and addressed me") and doublets that are a hendiadys, expressing a complete concept through its constitutive parts. See Monro, *Od.*, ad 15.175, where he calls this latter trope a "kind of hendiadys formed by two nearly synonymous words. ...The two meanings are fused, as it were, into a single more complete conception." That 22.231 is a hendiadys rather than strict apposition is supported by the distinct meanings of *δόμος* and *κτήματα* (cf. 15.19: *μή νύ τι σεῦ ἀέκητι δόμων ἐκ κτήμα φέροηται*, "lest now she carry some piece of your property out of your home against your will").

## 5. The Interaction of Narratives

The various narratives of *τίσις* in the poem interact with one another paradigmatically. Thus far, I have drawn out some of these interactions, in particular, the ways in which the initial paradigm of Aegisthus' crimes and Orestes' just *τίσις* influences the audience's interpretation of the other *τίσις* narratives, as well as the ways in which the same stages or elements in each narrative compare with one another (e.g., Odysseus' warning of his companions compared with the three seers' warnings of the suitors). In addition, these paradigmatic comparisons facilitate my analysis of the interaction between narratives at another level. Narratives of *τίσις* interact with different kinds of narratives as well, and attention to the internal structure of *τίσις* shows just how such an interaction works at what might be called a global level—that is, on the scale of the poem's entire plot.

As the foregoing analysis of *τίσις* patterns illustrates, typically, the theme has seven of what I have been calling “stages.” Here it is helpful to introduce another complementary, formal description of the theme: it has three distinct, important roles, or, in narratological terminology, “actants.”<sup>1</sup> This second category of analysis draws

---

<sup>1</sup> An “actant” is different from an “actor” (or “acteur”). The former is the role or narrative function that an agent occupies in a story; the latter is the concrete embodiment of the function, usually a character. On this distinction, see Bal 1985, 13, 25–31; Greimas 1966, 183–85, and 1987, 106. Hawkes 2003, 70–71, has helpfully

Footnote cont. next pg.



upon the theory of A. J. Greimas' grammar of narrative.<sup>2</sup> After applying his model to τίσις, I will return to my first category of analysis, narrative "stages," and show how both of these models help to make clear the peculiarities of Odysseus' monumental τίσις theme. Specifically, I will elucidate what sort of structural transformation to the basic thematic pattern the poem has made for artistic purposes. Ultimately, attention to these formal details results in interesting implications about the interplay between the narratives of νόστος and τίσις.

## 5.1 Coalescence

Greimas proposed a model for understanding the "deep structure," or grammar, of a narrative in terms of six actants in a set of relationships with one another. This model does not exhaust the meaning of a narrative, but it does serve as a powerful tool

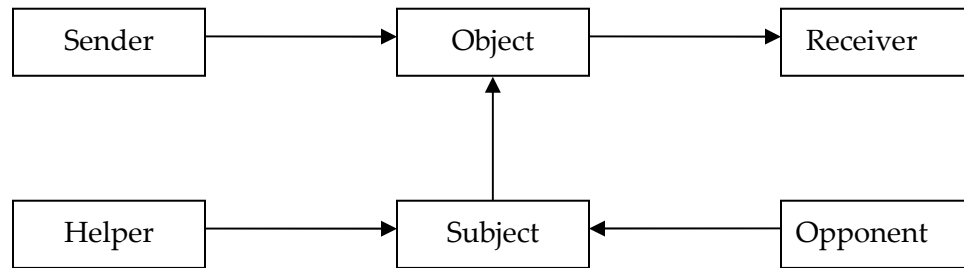
---

applied the respective linguistic concepts of phonemic and phonetic realities to describe the difference between the two.

<sup>2</sup> See especially Greimas 1966 and 1987. Only a few scholars have applied Greimas' methods to Homer: Calame 1977a and 1995, 139–73; de Jong's narratological studies, as she recounts in 1991, 5–6, draw indirectly on Greimas, via Genette 1966–1999 and Bal 1985. Bergren 1983 similarly draws on Genette, but only in so far as it relates to the temporal sequencing of the poem and not its deeper structures. A few others—above all Calame—have applied these theories to other aspects of Greek culture: literature (Aéliou 1987 on tragedy; Calame 1996 on Pindar, Herodotus, Callimachus, and Apollonius), history (Calame 1996 on the foundation of Cyrene), and philosophy (Belfiore 2000 on Aristotle's *Poetics*). Greimas' theories have had wider reception in New Testament studies, especially in the works of Crossan 1975 and Wright 1992.

to capture several of the most salient aspects of a narrative. Greimas represents this graphically as follows:<sup>3</sup>

**Figure 1: Greimas' *modèle actantial mythique***

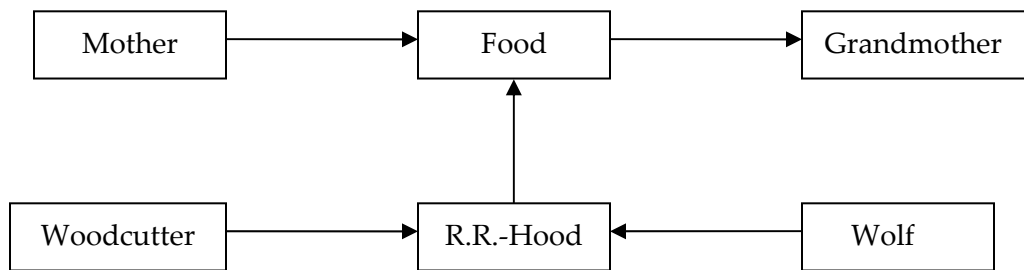


The three axes connecting the actants represent the three kinds of relationships that obtain between them: “desire,” “communication,” and “ordeal.” The subject desires the object. The sender communicates, or sends, the object to the receiver. And since most narratives have an element of difficulty for the subject, of “ordeal,” the third pair of actants is usually present: the opponent hinders the subject in achieving his desire while the helper aids him. As an example, the folktale of Little Red Riding-Hood occupies this structure, or “invests” it, as follows:

---

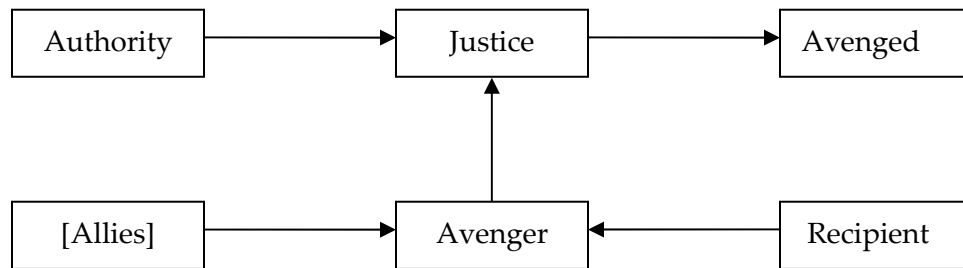
<sup>3</sup> This schematization is based on Greimas' 1966, 180, “modèle actantiel mythique.” See also chapter 6, “Actants, Actors, and Figures,” of his 1987, 106–20, which is a translation of his 1973, 161–76. I have translated his original classification of actants thus: “subject” for *sujet*, “object” for *objet*, “sender” for *destinateur*, “receiver” for *destinataire*, “helper” for *adjuvant*, and “opponent” for *opposant*. See also Barthes 1975, 257–58.

**Figure 2: Actantial model of Little Red Riding-Hood**



To turn to the *Odyssey*, a *τίσις* narrative invests the structure thus:<sup>4</sup>

**Figure 3: Actantial model of *τίσις***



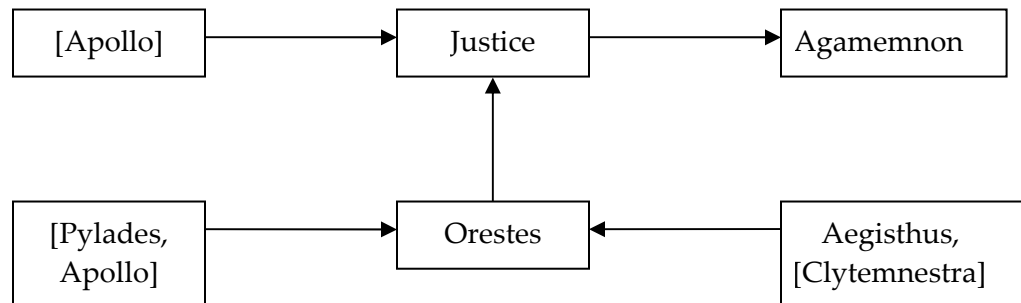
The avenger desires justice, which an authority (usually a god) has commissioned and enabled him to provide to the avenged. Frequently, he has allies (mortal and divine) who aid him, while his victim, whom he must kill to achieve justice, is his opponent. Only one actant in this model of a *τίσις* narrative has a fixed value: “justice” for the object. The other actantial positions exhibit different actors in each iteration of the narrative (e.g.: in one, Agamemnon is the avenged or receiver; in another, Helios fills that position).

---

<sup>4</sup> Greimas 1966, 181, notes that “haine, désir de vengeance” is a principal thematic force in many narratives.

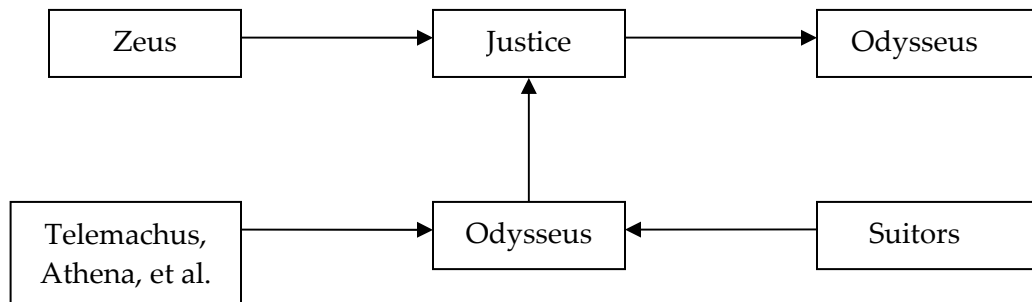
The example of Orestes' τίσις narrative invests this structure thus:

**Figure 4: Actantial model of Orestes' τίσις<sup>5</sup>**



Odysseus' τίσις invests the structure thus:

**Figure 5: Actantial model of Odysseus' τίσις**



Of course, there are further structural facts that this model, with only its three axes of relationships, fails to capture, such as the fact that the object (justice) is exacted from the opponent (e.g., Odysseus take revenge upon the suitors). Any structural model excludes

---

<sup>5</sup> The helper and sender actants in Orestes' narrative are left empty in the *Odyssey*, but I have filled this position from Aeschylus' and other versions of the myth, and if a poem told this narrative at length it would have filled these positions accordingly. Aéliou 1987, 235–52, has applied Greimas' method to the narratives of vengeance in Aeschylus' *Libation-Bearers* and *Agamemnon*, Euripides' *Electra*, *Heracles*, *Hecuba*, and Sophocles' *Electra*.

some of the facts about the objects it seeks to describe. But without claiming that this model is an exhaustive description, I do find aspects of it to have explanatory power for understanding how *τίσις* narratives operate in the *Odyssey*. In particular, three of these actants and their relationships concern the present analysis: the avenger, the recipient (or perpetrator of original crime), and the avenged (or beneficiary),<sup>6</sup> or in Greimas' terms, the subject, object, and receiver. The actors that occupy these actantial roles in the major *τίσις* narratives of the *Odyssey* are as follows (in the order in which I introduced them above):

**Table 9: Actants of *τίσις* in the *Odyssey***

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Avenger/Subject</b>	<b>Avenged/Receiver</b>	<b>Recipient/Opponent</b>
1	Orestes	Agamemnon	Aegisthus (& Clytemnestra)
2	Zeus	Helios	Companions
3	Poseidon	Polyphemus	Odysseus
4	Hephaestus	Hephaestus	Ares & Aphrodite
5	Odysseus	Companions	Polyphemus
6	Suitor's kin	Suitors	Odysseus & Allies
7	Odysseus	Odysseus	Suitors

The crucial observation I draw here is that Odysseus occupies both the avenger and the avenged actants in his narrative of *τίσις*, theme 7. As a general rule of narrative, this

---

<sup>6</sup> Greimas 1966, 130, considers but rejects the classification "beneficiary" for this actant; however, it does have certain advantages. To use the analogy of sentence-level grammar as Greimas frequently does, the receiver actant occupies the position typically grammaticalized by a dative noun: on the axis of communication, the receiver is the indirect object in so far as the sender (=subject) gives (=verb) the object (=direct object) to the receiver; on the axis of desire, the subject (=subject) desires (=verb) the object (=direct object) for the benefit of the receiver (=dative of advantage).

“coalescence of two actants into one actor” is common for the subject and receiver actants.<sup>7</sup> However, as this chart above shows, this is not the normal pattern in a τίσις narrative. Typically, the receiver is a φίλος (especially a family member) of the subject. But in Odysseus’ narrative he is his own receiver of his action. This pattern is observed even in the case of Zeus’ vengeance on behalf of Helios, where it would have been simpler to have Helios exact revenge for himself. But due to the force of this narrative pattern, the poem has Zeus act as avenger—that is, the poem has kept the subject and receiver actants distinct. After Odysseus’ τίσις, the only other exception to this pattern is the case of Hephaestus’ τίσις. But this is the least grave example, as the humorous cast of Demodocus’ song underlines. And death—either of the avenged or of the recipient—is out of the question in this scenario, since it involves only immortals. The ludicrous inconsequence of the episode forms a pathetic counterpoint to the gravity of τίσις narratives that involve mortals, who are desperately fragile under the threat of vengeance.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> Bal 1985, 28–29, cites the example of a romantic narrative, where the male subject both desires and receives the female object. Greimas 1987, 107, speaks of the possibility of “just one actor...being able to constitute a syncretism of several actants.” See also Greimas 1966, 177–78.

<sup>8</sup> This pathetic difference between mortal and divine is especially evident in the *Iliad*, where heroes struggle to be god-like all the while being subject to death—a fate which has no hold on “the gods who live at ease” (θεοὶ ῥεῖα ζῶοντες, *Il.* 6.138). See Griffin 1980, 82–85, 130–31, 167–70. I cannot agree with all of Griffin’s assumptions regarding the nature of Homeric poetry. But his conclusions on the pathos arising from the difference between gods and men are stimulating and surely right. Clay 1983, 140, similarly remarks on “[t]he sublime frivolity of the gods” with particular attention to Demodocus’ song. See also Rinon 2008, 116–20, on the “tragic” aspects of the analogy between this episode and the main τίσις narrative of the *Odyssey*.

Another key distinction between Odysseus' *τίσις* and the others not captured in this representation of the theme's actantial structure is that the suitors have not committed the typical crimes of a *τίσις* narrative when Odysseus kills them. They have not murdered Odysseus, nor have they corrupted Penelope. But they have plotted and prepared to do these acts. In terms of my sequential framework of seven stages, there has occurred a conflation of two positions, or "coalescence," as Bal puts it, between the two stages of the preparation for the crime (3) and the committing of the crime itself (4). This conflation of narrative stages is akin to the conflation of actants mentioned above. Placing *Odyssey's* *τίσις* sequence beside Orestes' in a graphic representation helps to clarify this point:

**Table 10: *τίσις* sequences of Odysseus and Orestes compared**

Generic stage	Orestes' sequence	Odysseus' sequence
1. Background (absence)	Absence of Agam. and Or.	Absence of Odys.
2. Unheeded warning	Aegisth. warned but not persuaded	Suitors warned but not persuaded
3. Prep. for crime	Aegisth. woos Clyt., sets ambush	Suitors woo Pen., devastate house
4. Crime	Aegisth. seduces Clyt., murders Agam.	
5. Prep. for retribution	Or. returns	Odys. returns
6. Retributive killing	Or. kills Aegisth. & Clyt.	Odys. kills suitors and faithless servants
7. New conditions (just order restored)	Aegisth. has repaid	Suitors have repaid, Odys. restored as ruler

A more conventional (if less clear) method to represent a narrative sequence is the linear scheme, a technique most closely associated with Propp. Such a method would render the typical *τίσις* sequence thus:

**Figure 6: Linear Scheme of *τίσις*<sup>9</sup>**

$A \rightarrow W(u) \rightarrow P(c) \rightarrow C \rightarrow P(rk) \rightarrow RK \rightarrow JO$

Odysseus' version is the same, save that it appears to lack the C element:

**Figure 7: Linear Scheme of Odysseus' *τίσις* (A)**

$A \rightarrow W(u) \rightarrow P(c) \rightarrow P(rk) \rightarrow RK \rightarrow JO$

With the empty fourth position the logic of the narrative's structure demands that some element fill the position, else all elements of the sequence after P(c) would have no logical motivation and could not occur. How could Odysseus take revenge without any crime being committed? A narrative, like nature, *abhorret a vacuo*. The position must be filled in order for narrative order to persist. The result in this case is that the content of the P(c) element extends to fill two positions, which I render thus:

**Figure 8: Linear Scheme of Odysseus' *τίσις* (B)**

$A \rightarrow W(u) \rightarrow P(c) \rightarrow P(c)/C \rightarrow P(rk) \rightarrow RK \rightarrow JO$

Whereas Aegisthus first plots to seduce Clytemnestra and ambush Agamemnon before committing his crimes, the same actions by the suitors fill both positions in the sequence.

---

<sup>9</sup> The abbreviations I used are as follows: absence (A), warning (unheeded) (W(u)), preparations for the crime (P(c)), crime (C), preparations for retributive killing (P(rk)), retributive killing (RK), just order (JO).



Orestes' retributive killing follows upon acts of murder and adultery, Odysseus' upon the preparations for those crimes.

These three models for representing the structure of Odysseus' *τίσις* narrative all point to the same atypical transformation—coalescence. Whether viewed in terms of actions or actants, the poem has made two normally distinct elements of the narrative coalesce into one.

The reason for this idiosyncrasy—I will not call it a flaw—of coalescence in Odysseus' *τίσις* narrative is that the poem has combined a narrative of retribution, *τίσις*, with a narrative of homecoming, *νόστος*. These two narratives lie in tension, pulling toward different conclusions of the poem's plot: joyful return or tragic death and revenge. This is not to say, as a long tradition of analysts going back to Kirchhoff have, that two independent poems existed at a previous stage, one of Odysseus' eventful wanderings, arrival at Ithaca, and reunion with Penelope, and another of his secretive plotting and execution of revenge against the suitors.<sup>10</sup> Rather, two traditional *forms* of epic narrative—not poems—lie behind the *Odyssey* as we have it. These traditional narratives or themes, as I argued earlier, are forms comparable to type-scenes in that they exhibit a defined structure which a singer invests with the specifics that suit the

---

<sup>10</sup> Kirchhoff 1879, and his followers, Fick 1883, Wilamowitz 1884, Bethe 1922, and Merkelbach 1951, posit a *τίσις* poem or *Rachegedicht*, consisting of various portions of the last 12 books of the *Odyssey*. For instance, Kirchhoff posited a *τίσις* poem of 13.185–14, 16–23.296 (excluding book 15).

performative situation. But unlike type-scenes, which are smaller in scale and restricted to segments of poems, narratives thus conceived can function as the basis for the plots (or *fabulae*) of poems. But a set of questions present themselves. What kind of plot do narratives of *τίσις* and *νόστος* provide for a poem? And what are the logical implications of the typical plots of *τίσις* and *νόστος* for Odysseus?

## 5.2 *τίσις* as Plot

That *τίσις* can serve as the basis of the plot of a poem is hardly a new insight.<sup>11</sup> While the discoveries of Parry, Lord, and their oralist followers have rendered untenable the traditional analytic view (first and best articulated by Kirchhoff) that the *Odyssey* we have is a redaction of set of fixed, written poems, they did intuit correctly that *τίσις* (most often translated *Rache*) might constitute on its own a narrative or theme which shapes an epic plot.<sup>12</sup> Likewise they recognized, correctly, that the theme of *νόστος* might serve as the basis of an epic plot, independent of considerations of revenge. Many analysts of the *Odyssey* also posited a third major constituent, the “Telemachy,” although

---

<sup>11</sup> “Revenge” as a plot-structure (often thematized by *τίσις*) is especially common in the genre of Athenian tragedy, and several scholars have written extensively on the topic: Aélion 1987; Kerrigan 2001; Burnett 1998; McHardy 2008; et al.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. for example Suerbaum 1968, 175–76: “Außerdem ist es evident, daß die Tisis, die Rache...stofflich einen zweiten, mehr oder weniger selbständigen Themekreis bildet.”

the case for the independent existence of the first four books of the *Odyssey* in a form approaching anything like the one we have has always been the weakest.<sup>13</sup> With this framework of three principal narratives did Kirchhoff set the terms on which all later analyses of the *Odyssey* would proceed.<sup>14</sup> But he recognized something further about the relationship of these parts often overlooked by his followers: the theme of revenge against the suitors is closely connected to the “Telemachy.”<sup>15</sup>

I take Kirchhoff’s initial insight further and argue in what follows that the revenge theme, according to the narrative logic of τίσις evident in the poem as I have laid it out, ought to belong to Telemachus, not Odysseus. Vengeance belongs to a φίλος, usually a close family member, of the dishonored figure, not to the victim of the original crime himself, and the natural, logical organization of the τίσις theme requires that

---

<sup>13</sup> Among the numerous critics of Kirchhoff’s view of the “Telemachy,” Klingner 1944 has convincingly demonstrated how closely the themes of the “Telemachy” interact with and lay the groundwork for the rest of the *Odyssey*; Parry 1971, 454, has succinctly shown that the “Telemachy” as it stands could never have been an independent poem, lacking as it does any independent plot that would be on its own interesting to the audience of a traditional epic. Dodds 1954, 32 n. 23, points out that this critique of an independent “Telemachy” goes back as early as Niese 1882, 143–52. See more recently Patzer’s 1991, 35, unitarian critique: “Die Reise des Telemach ist notwendiger Teil des Rachekampfes gegen die Freier, der Odysseus nach seiner Heimkehr von den Irrfahrten im eigenen Haus noch auferlegt ist...”

<sup>14</sup> Despite the complexities of such analytical schemata of the development of the poem as Wilamowitz’ and Merkelbach’s, all analyses tend to distinguish, in the main, Odysseus’ wanderings (usually thought to be especially dependent on folklore, or *Märchen*), his conquest over the suitors, and the Telemachus-focused narrative (including book 15 along with most of the first four books). Page 1955, 53, summarizes this viewpoint well, including the obligatory disdain for the final *Bearbeiter*: “Here then are three episodes which are, as a matter of fact, narrated separately; and many have been led by their study of the evidence to believe that all three were originally composed separately, later conjoined into the continuous narrative which we read today by a hand which is relatively late and absolutely incompetent.”

<sup>15</sup> Kirchhoff 1879, vii-xii, outlines his theory in his preface. On the relationship of the “Telemachy” to the theme of the suitors’ insolence, see *ibid.*, 238–74.

Odysseus die before his φίλος takes vengeance for his sake. The only logical character whom the poem presents as able to take on this role of avenger is Odysseus' son Telemachus—a possibility the poem explicitly signals in several places (1.294–302, 2.205–7, et al.).<sup>16</sup> Therefore, the close association of Telemachus with the theme of τίσις that Kirchoff and others have detected suggests a different narrative path—the death of Odysseus followed by Telemachus' revenge on his behalf.

Did such a poem ever exist? Which is to say, did a singer ever “invest” a τίσις theme in the text of a performance with the particular actors I am suggesting here? This is hard to say. On the face of it, it would be difficult to believe singers of the poem that we have could have sung on a different occasion a story of the death of Odysseus at the hands of the suitors. But it is important to note that such a poem would no longer be an *Odyssey*, but rather a “Telemachy,” in which the death of Odysseus was only an intermediate stage (to be precise, stage 4 in the sequence I have laid out) in an epic that ends not with the returning hero's death but with Telemachus' victorious revenge, on the model of the “Oresteia” narrative to which the *Odyssey* often alludes. Seeing as Greek mythic and epic tradition does preserve side-by-side glorifying depictions of

---

<sup>16</sup> There may be other versions of the *Odyssey* in which Laertes plays a more important role and like Telemachus aids in Odysseus' revenge against the suitors (see Danek 1998a, ad 16.14–21). Fathers can play the part of avenger of their sons, cf. Eupieithes and Poseidon. In extra-Homeric tradition, Palamedes' father Nauplius seeks revenge against the returning Achaean fleet (Apollod. *Epit.* 6.7–11; Dict. Cret. 6.1). But our *Odyssey* holds forth only Telemachus as a potential avenger in place of Odysseus.

Orestes and Agamemnon (not only in poetry but also in hero-cult and art),<sup>17</sup> it is reasonable to believe that Telemachus could have had a famed position in myth alongside, and to a degree in tension with, Odysseus.

The possibility of an alternative history for Odysseus is not as far-fetched as it might at first seem. A survey of the various stories preserved about what happened after the narrative of our *Odyssey* leaves off indicates that his fate was far from a settled fact in mythic tradition.

One such story comes already within our *Odyssey*. The poem includes proleptic references to a second departure from Ithaca for Odysseus, an expedition to perform a ritual sacrifice for Poseidon far from the sea (11.119–34, 23.263–81). This prolepsis presupposes that this “sequel” already existed in the mythic-poetic tradition, as Alain Ballabriga has argued.<sup>18</sup>

Proclus’ summary of the *Telegony* (Procl. *Chrestom.* 306–30)—the final Cyclic epic, which Proclus attributes to Eugammon of Cyrene—is consistent with Teiresias’ prophecy to a great extent. This may owe something to Proclus’ preconception, generally shared by Greeks after the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC, that these epics were part of a

---

<sup>17</sup> On the “Oresteia” tradition in archaic Greek poetry see Prag 1985, 68–84; in art, see *ibid.*, *passim*; on hero-cult of Agamemnon, see Farnell 1921, 321–22; on hero cult of Orestes, see Malkin 2003, 26–28, who treats the famous transportation of Orestes’ bones to Sparta mentioned by Herodotus (1.67–68) and argues that this did institute a cult.

<sup>18</sup> Ballabriga 1989.

unified “cycle,” with the result that he chose to fashion his necessarily selective summary of the *Telegony* accordingly.<sup>19</sup> But even Proclus’ summary shows some differences from the version of events that Teiresias foretells in the *Odyssey*. A few details about the summary are worth attention. Firstly, as a general observation, I will note that the plot is a complex extrapolation from the story of the *Odyssey*. It opens with Odysseus traveling first to Elis to inspect his herds and visit Polyxenus, and then back to Ithaca, and then Thesprotis, where he marries a queen, Callidice, and fights in a war in which the gods participate as well. He fathers another son with his new wife, and finally returns again to Ithaca where his son by Circe, Telegonus, kills him by mistake. The poem ends with Telegonus transporting Telemachus and Penelope to Circe and having them made immortal. This complex plot belies the quiet, simple life that Teiresias foretells for Odysseus, even if it does not contradict it in particulars. It makes use of a common reinterpretation of Teiresias’ prophecy that Odysseus’ “death will come from the sea” (θάνατος δέ τοι ἐξ ἄλός...ἐλεύσεται, 11.134–35). In the context of Teiresias’ speech the phrase ἐξ ἄλός most readily appears to mean “away from the sea” — that is,

---

<sup>19</sup> Proclus introduces the *Telegony* in such a way as to highlight its relationship to the *Odyssey*: “After these things [the *Nostoi*] is the *Odyssey* of Homer, and then in two books the *Telegony* of Eugammon of Cyrene, which contains the following...” (Μετὰ ταῦτά ἐστιν Ὅμηρου Ὀδύσσεια· ἔπειτα Τηλεγονίας βιβλία δύο Εὐγάμμωνος Κυρηναίου περιέχοντα τὰδε, Procl. *Chrestom.* 306–7). It may be giving too much credit to Proclus (or pseudo-Proclus) to ascribe to him this degree of freedom. The depth of his acquaintance with the cyclic epics is disputed (see Davies 1989, 6–8). He may already have been working from summaries. The Cyclic poems articulate mythic traditions that antedate later efforts (in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC) to fix these poems in a cycle around the Homeric epics. See Burgess 2001, esp. 12–33.

Odysseus will die off the sea and on dry land, in contrast to his many companions and the many Achaeans who perished at sea on their voyage home.<sup>20</sup> This sense would conform with the way Teiresias characterizes his death, as “easy” (ἀβληχρός, 135) and generally fit the dramatic situation of the *apologoi* with its anxieties about perishing at sea. Other interpretations of ἐξ ἁλός which imply a violent death would contradict this characterization.

If one construes this prepositional phrase as adverbial rather than adjectival— that is, if it modifies ἐλεύσεται rather than θανατός— then other interpretations are more natural. One alternative interpretation of ἐξ ἁλός fits naturally with a verb of motion like ἐλεύσεται: “death will come *out from* the sea.” This interpretation is implicit in the story of Telegonus’ arrival at Ithaca, in which he, “having disembarked onto Ithaca” (ἀποβάς εἰς τὴν Ἰθάκην, Procl. *Chrestom.* 325), in effect brings death out from the sea. On this interpretation, ἐξ has an ablative sense.<sup>21</sup> Another interpretation of ἐξ

---

<sup>20</sup> Thus Heubeck et al., ad loc. They cite 15.272 and 16.288 as parallel uses of ἐξ/ἐκ. Likewise one scholiast (Dindorf, ad 11.134), implicitly arguing against other interpretations of this phrase dependent on other mythic traditions of Odysseus’ death, glosses the phrase as ἐξω τῆς ἁλός, “outside of the sea,” on the grounds that Homer did not know of the Telegony: οὐ γὰρ οἶδεν ὁ ποιητὴς τὰ κατὰ τὸν Τηλέγονον καὶ τὰ κατὰ τὸ κέντρον τῆς τρυγόνος.

<sup>21</sup> See *GH* 2.98–99 (§139); Monro §223. According to one scholiast, some ancient readers interpreted this phrase with a slightly different sense, which he glosses as ἀπὸ θαλάσσης and compares to 5.421–42. It is still ablative, but according to these critics it is not Telegonus that comes out of the sea, but rather his weapon: “Hephaestus at the pleading of Circe fashioned for Telegonus a spear *out of the sea-going sting-ray*, which Phorcys killed [lit. “took up”] when it was eating the fish in the Phorcidian pool,” (ἐντεύξει τῆς Κίρκης Ἥφαιστος κατεσκεύασε Τηλεγόνῳ δόρυ ἐκ τρυγόνος θαλασσίας, ἣν Φόρκυς ἀνεῖλεν ἐσθίουσαν τοὺς ἐν τῇ Φορκίδι λίμνῃ ἰχθῦς, Dindorf, ad 11.134). The notion here is that the instrument of Odysseus’ death has come out of the sea. This interpretation stretches the sense of the phrase quite a bit. The parallel

Footnote cont. next pg.

άλος is also adverbial: “death will come by the sea.” It depends on a causal sense of ἐξ: the sea is the agent Odysseus’ death.<sup>22</sup> This interpretation fits with the same story of the *Telegony*, only, a different fact about Odysseus’ death is salient. In some versions of the myth of Telegonus, he kills Odysseus with spear tipped with a sting-ray’s barb (δόρατι...<τρουγόνοσ> κέντρον τὴν αἰχμὴν ἔχοντι, Apollod. *Epit.* 7.36).<sup>23</sup> The sting-ray’s barb thus metonymically signifies the sea. Now interpretation has come full circle, so that no longer are Teiresias’ words a consolation that Odysseus will be free of the dangers of the sea but actually indicate that, though he may escape Poseidon’s and the sea’s threats for a time, they will still slay him in the end. Odysseus’ fate is inextricably bound up with the sea.<sup>24</sup>

---

the scholiast adduces of 5.421–42, which speaks of a god sending a monster out from the sea against Odysseus (τί μοι καὶ κῆτος ἐπισσεύη μέγα δαίμων ἐξ ἄλος), is much more appropriate for Telegonus; that is, Telegonus, like the κῆτος in this passage, comes out of the sea and brings death to Odysseus.

<sup>22</sup> See *GH* 2.100 (§140); *Monro* §223.

<sup>23</sup> τρουγόνοσ, “sting-ray,” does not appear in our manuscripts of Apollodorus. Bücheler supplied it from other texts that tell this myth (e.g., *Opp. Hal.* 2.505; *Hyg. Fab.* 127). It is reported also in a peculiar hypothesis of the *Odyssey* (Dindorf, 6). This story of Odysseus’ death also appears in the *Alexandra* (Lyc. 789–96); see also its scholia (Scheer ad 795, 796). See Dräger 2005, 688. There is some evidence that this interpretation was prominent in Classical Attic tragedy: Aeschylus’ *Psychagogoi* has Teiresias telling Odysseus that “a thorn from the cattle of the sea will waste your aged and hair-losing skin” (ἐκ τοῦδ’ ἄκανθα ποντίου βοσκήματος σήψει παλαιὸν δέρμα καὶ τριχορροῦέσ, fr. 275.3–4 R). The language of a “thorn” (ἄκανθα is used routinely for the spine of animal: see *LSJ* s.v., A.6) from the sea (note ἐκ) indicates that Aeschylus, with some deliberately enigmatic phraseology, was drawing on the same tradition of Odysseus’ death by a sting-ray’s barb reflected by Apollodorus. There is also attested a play by Sophocles of the title *Odysseus Acanthoplex*.

<sup>24</sup> The different possible interpretations of ἐξ are further dependent on different interpretations of the verb ἐλεύσεται, which functions either as an existential verb, equivalent to ἔσσεται (see above p. 16 n. 1) or as a verb of motion. The former sense of the verb supports an interpretation of ἐξ ἄλος as adjectival with θάνατοσ; the latter as adverbial. Also, one scholiast (*Ernst*, ad 11.134b) suggests that the difference between

Footnote cont. next pg.



This is only a representative sample of the varied traditions regarding the career of Odysseus after the events of our *Odyssey*.<sup>25</sup> These stories indicate, among other things, that Odysseus' death was a site of contestation, where different interpretations of his legacy converged.<sup>26</sup> The range of such stories—most first attested rather late<sup>27</sup>—indicates that some degree of flexibility was possible in the narration of this crucial stage in Odysseus' life. In some cases, his death, coming in ignorance at the hands of his own son, had a tragic character. In other cases, even events covered by the *Odyssey* itself were open to dispute: Penelope could be unfaithful; Odysseus could return to Ithaca at the head of an army; he could face exile from Ithaca instead of reconciliation with the suitors' kin. If this is true even at this late stage in the development of the tradition, when the part of Odysseus' career told in the Homeric epics had achieved essentially

---

whether one reads ἐξ ἄλλοις or ἐξ ἄλλοις (i.e., whether it is a prepositional phrase or a single, compound adjective) indicates its meaning. In the former case, argues the scholiast, the meaning is consistent with a causal interpretation of ἐξ and an allusion to Odysseus' death by the sting-ray barbed spear; in the latter, it means simply that he died away from the sea. No modern editor that I am aware of has followed the alternative reading and written the phrase as a single adjective.

<sup>25</sup> For more on the various traditions, see Malkin 1998, 120–54, and Hartmann 1917.

<sup>26</sup> Famously, Odysseus took on an anti-heroic character in several classical Athenian depictions. See Stanford 1954, 90–117. I thank Casey Dué for pointing me towards some of these variations on the events after the end of the *Odyssey* during a seminar at the Center for Hellenic Studies in 2005.

<sup>27</sup> There is one archaic reference, though its authenticity is sometimes disputed: Hes. *Th.* 1011–18, which makes reference to Odysseus' other children and is usually read as a reference to an Italian journey. See Phillips 1953, 55–56; Malkin 1998, 180–91. But on my reading, the text need not require Odysseus to have visited Italy, only that his offspring end up there, perhaps after a journey of their own. The one or two extant fragments that are possibly of Eugammon's *Telegony* provide no specific information about Odysseus' post-Odyssean life, save that he ate well (see p. 143 n. 58 below). Most other textual evidence is much later, but see p. 125 n. 23 above on classical tragedy.

universal acceptance, then *a fortiori* the tradition of Odysseus' death at earlier stages was even more flexible.<sup>28</sup> It would be rash to speculate too far on whether variation in the tradition might go so far as to include the death of Odysseus within a heroic narrative on Telemachus. There is, truth be told, little positive evidence for Telemachus playing a larger role. Yet the audience of this poem could not miss the fact that Telemachus occupies an already greatly expanded role in the narrative, such that the poem highlights the son's part as a potential avenger of Odysseus.<sup>29</sup> In any case, I have shown that the tradition is open to greater multiformity concerning Odysseus' death than one might at first assume.

But the question of the reality of such an alternative version of Odysseus' narrative need not be answered in order for the logic of the narrative structure of τίσις

---

<sup>28</sup> This line of reasoning relies on an evolutionary model for the development of the Homeric poems. I accept the general framework of Nagy in this respect, especially as pertinent to the argument here: the mythic tradition in which the poems participated was in earlier stages characterized by more multiformity, with more epichoric alternatives. In later stages, as Greek culture became increasing Panhellenic, these multiforms tended to be "screened out" in favor of more widely acceptable and, eventually, canonical versions. See Nagy 1990, 54, 70–79; Nagy 1996b, 40–41; on the *Odyssey*, Levaniouk 2000, 13–30. One need not adopt a strong stance on the question of the authorship of the extant Homeric poems for this approach to be valid: whether the text of the poems is substantially the work of a single singer in one place and time or the crystallization of a tradition of re-composition in performance, it is still true that the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* we have are only one *version* of these myths. Even critics of Nagy's model acknowledge that the mythic traditions represented by the Homeric poems were diverse and interact with each other. (See recently André Malta's 2009 review of Marks 2008.) On the variety of contemporary νόστοι traditions in circulation, see Malkin 1998, 33–55: "the Greeks had the *nostoi* in their heads" (33). Some of the elements of these alternative stories about Odysseus are quite ancient, even if their attribution to Odysseus is more recent: e.g., the sting-ray tipped spear that Telegonus uses to kill Odysseus is a Neolithic weapon. See Burkert 1983, 159.

<sup>29</sup> Several scholars have pointed out the outsized role Telemachus occupies, in the end becoming a co-protagonist in the execution of the revenge plot: Rose 1967; Rood 2006.

to have an effect upon the poem's audience. For, as the first four books of the *Odyssey* slowly and methodically progress with the son of an endangered hero as their protagonist, a narrative pattern of τίσις inevitably presents itself to the mind of the Homeric audience. Thus, the mere suggestion that Telemachus himself might exact revenge upon the suitors (cf. 1.294–302, 2.205–7, et al.) makes the audience imagine the rest of the narrative, including the implied necessary death of Odysseus, so that they, in effect, compose a "Telemachy," even if a singer never performed such a poem.

This "Telemachy," even if it is only hypothetical and imaginary for the audience, is the logical form that a narrative of τίσις for Odysseus would take. Because in the first four books the poem slowly builds up the theme of τίσις against the suitors on Odysseus' behalf while Odysseus is entirely absent from the action, it presents the audience with a dilemma: how can this poem turn out to be an *Odyssey* instead of a "Telemachy"? The poem has promised to tell the story of τίσις on behalf of Odysseus. Can Odysseus survive?

### ***Excursus: Theme-Transference***

The view I have advanced here is that abstract and empty *forms* of narrative have developed and come together in this poem. This is consistent with the advances that oral theory has made on earlier, text-dependent versions of neoanalytical theories. Since more recent theories posit a process of continual re-adaptation of inherited poetic

*traditions*, rather than textualized poems, the model I have proposed is plausible: a traditional poetic form—τίσις, in this case—can develop and take a certain artistic shape without being attached to the epic hero—in this case, Odysseus—who ultimately comes to be the subject of the theme’s monumental articulation—that is, the *Odyssey*.

The process I am describing is similar to the system of motif-transference that Jonathan Burgess has expounded.<sup>30</sup> But whereas Burgess describes a method whereby smaller motifs, such as Thetis’ weeping, can move from one poetic tradition to another, the process that I am proposing for the composition of our *Odyssey* is a larger theme-transference. A singer transfers the thematic structure of τίσις from other poetic traditions where it evolved with other heroes as its subject (e.g., Orestes) to the epic of Odysseus. Though the “Oresteia” tradition provides the best example of a τίσις theme—and the *Odyssey* cites it as particularly exemplary—it is not the only one. Each of these instances in various traditions develops the shape and immanent meaning of the theme, which exists independent of any one particular use. A theme widely attested in a range of poems, such as τίσις or νόστος, is a poetic tool available to a commensurately wide range of singers. At some point (to be more precise would be speculative), a singer of the *Odyssey*—that is, one of the many who composed and sang the story of Odysseus—chose to use this theme in his version of the *Odyssey*, and we have inherited an *Odyssey*

---

<sup>30</sup> Burgess 2006. Burgess’ work builds on the discoveries of both oralist scholars and neoanalysts, above all Kullmann 1960; 1984; 1992, 100–39.

dependent upon this move. In principle, the same history of thematic development is applicable to the theme of νόστος. Neither τίσις nor νόστος is necessarily more primary. But both developed and existed independently prior to their joining in the *Odyssey*.

It remains, then, to elucidate the form of the narrative of νόστος, before analyzing the interaction between τίσις and νόστος.

### 5.3 νόστος as Narrative

The theme of νόστος has received much more attention from scholars than the theme of τίσις, but even this interest has focused more on the *fact* of Odysseus' safe return and its significance as an example of heroic homecoming than as a narrated process. Douglas Frame's analysis of the mythic meaning of νόστος, ultimately dependent on a PIE root of \*nes-, traces the significance of its root meaning to "returning to light and life."<sup>31</sup> Gregory Nagy has argued that νόστος signifies the theme of "safe return home," which the battle-field hero, epitomized by Achilles, must renounce if he is to obtain the opposed theme of κλέος ἄφθιτον, "undying glory"; Odysseus, on the other hand, will find his κλέος through his successful νόστος.<sup>32</sup> Nagy further argues

---

<sup>31</sup> Frame 1978, 54, *passim*. Maronitis 2004, 74, has found similarly that the *Odyssey* preserves a close connection between death and νόστος that was already present in the *Iliad*.

<sup>32</sup> Nagy 1979, 34–41. Summarized on 39: "unlike Achilles, who won κλέος but lost νόστος (IX 413), Odysseus is a double winner. He has won both κλέος and νόστος." But *pace* Nagy, the meaning "safe return home" for Footnote cont. next pg.

that νόστος, like κλέος, signifies the tradition of heroic epic itself, specifically in the case of νόστος the genre of “return” epic, though he does not analyze the narrative pattern entailed in the νόστος theme.<sup>33</sup> Others have studied the significance of νόστος as a pregnant term that intimates a network of associations,<sup>34</sup> or as connoting the ritual of the hero’s passing through trials, crossing thresholds, and gradual reintegration into society.<sup>35</sup>

Fewer scholars have explicitly discussed νόστος as a narrative form, as a pattern of events, although awareness of the narrative logic of νόστος is implicit in the earliest analytic work on the *Odyssey*. Kirchhoff and his followers almost uniformly believed an epic of return was the oldest (and hence, according to analytic aesthetics, best) strand of the *Odyssey* (e.g., Wilamowitz’ monograph *Die Heimkehr des Odysseus*).<sup>36</sup> These scholars

---

νόστος is only one sense of the word. The poem also calls the tragic, unsuccessful return stories of Ajax and Agamemnon νόστοι, as is implied at 1.326–27; also, Proteus tells Menelaus that they “perished during [note: not “before”] their return” (ἐν νόστῳ ἀπόλοντο, 4.497), indicating that νόστος is a process of journeying home which may or may not be “safe.” Cf. the pathetic association of λύγρος with νόστος: 1.326–27, 3.132, 24.96. Achilles has lost his νόστος (*Il.* 9.413) precisely because he never sets out for home, not because he fails to reach home safely.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 97: “Thus the word **νόστος** here [*Od.* 1.326–27] designates not only the homecoming of the Achaeans but also the epic tradition that told about their homecoming.” See also Nagy 2005, 79–80, where he does list telegraphically six types of return story.

<sup>34</sup> For νόστος as a pregnant term, see Kahane 1994, 68. He comes to similar results about the latent complex of associations in terms such as νόστος as Foley 1991 does in his study of “immanence” in Homeric diction.

<sup>35</sup> Goldhill 1988, 10, who follows Bergen 1983. On the ritual elements of Odysseus’ return, see also Segal 1994, 12–84.

<sup>36</sup> The only notable exception to this *communis opinio* is Merkelbach 1951, who believed the revenge-epic was oldest and by the same poet as the *Iliad*. But he too thought that an epic of Odysseus’ return was one of the oldest, coherent parts, following the revenge-epic by only a generation of so.

usually have the return epic begin with Odysseus' captivity on Ogygia and culminate in his safe arrival on Ithaca, plus some of the recognition scenes.<sup>37</sup> However, they do not consider how νόστος might constitute a traditional narrative *form* along the lines I have been arguing for τίσις—indeed they could not, since this concept of inherited patterns which successive singers adapted and re-performed stems from the research into oral poetry by Parry and Lord.<sup>38</sup> Nancy Felson-Rubin has taken a more useful approach, laying out the ways that the νόστος theme takes on variations through different characters' "focalizing" the theme.<sup>39</sup>

The nearest thing to my approach to the theme is Lord's analysis, which Foley has extended, of what he calls the "return song," evident in the Serbo-Croatian analogue.<sup>40</sup> Lord acknowledged the distinctness of the *Odyssey's* version of a return song

---

<sup>37</sup> E.g. Kirchoff's "alte Nostos des Odysseus" begins, after an introduction of 1.1–87, at 5.28 with Zeus address to Hermes. It ends at 13.184 with Poseidon's punishment of the Phaeacians, with the addition of some of Odysseus' encounters with Penelope.

<sup>38</sup> A striking exception to this rule is Arend's 1933 work on typical scenes. See also Parry's 1971, 404–7, review of Arend. Hölscher 1978, 53, summarizes German analytic scholarship's belief in developed poems as the building-blocks of the *Odyssey* instead of traditional forms thus [emphasis mine]: "the epic songs are seen as pieces, shaped by the singers, of a mass of basic material. It is rare for questions to be asked as to the *form* or the consequences resulting from its motifs." I distinguish my approach to thematic form from Hölscher's to this small degree: I am interested in the formal structure, what he calls the "simple story," or *einfache Form* after Jolles 1930, of a tradition of epic poems which I see as the singer's source for this poem (see also Danek 2002—a good summary of the method he uses in 1998a), whereas Hölscher looks to folklore for the traditional form, where it first appeared in prose.

<sup>39</sup> Felson-Rubin 1994, vii–ix. See also 145 n. 6, where, following the methods of Greimas (whom, however, she does not acknowledge), she relates "focalizing" characters to actors investing generic actants.

<sup>40</sup> Lord lays out the pattern 1960, 158–85; Foley 1990, 359–87.

in two ways that interest me. First of all, the allusion to other return songs within the main narrative of Odysseus' return is unparalleled.<sup>41</sup> This suggests the poem's particular interest in the interaction between stories, both between unconnected stories like Agamemnon's and Odysseus' respective returns and between the different narrative structures which these stories articulate. Secondly, Lord notes that in Serbo-Croatian return songs the figure of the son rarely appears, and when he does it is as a rescuer of his father *not* as revenge-taker.<sup>42</sup> There is no hint in Greek tradition of Telemachus' and Orestes' playing the former role; the latter, however, is central. Likewise, after reviewing folklore comparanda for the father-son elements of the plot of the *Odyssey*, especially Serbo-Croatian sources, M. J. Alden finds no parallel story in which "the hero's son assists his father in taking his vengeance."<sup>43</sup> As helpful as the Serbo-Croatian analogue is, it is more useful to describe the contours of the theme of νόστος in its Homeric

---

<sup>41</sup> Lord 1960, 159, on the opening allusion to the "Oresteia" story at 1.28–43, writes, "Such a reference to another tale is highly sophisticated and unusual for oral epic. In the Yugoslav tradition stories are kept separate and, to best of my knowledge, singers never refer in one song to the events of another."

<sup>42</sup> Lord 1960, 160–61. On these differences see also Slatkin 1996, who comes to a conclusion similar to mine: "the *Odyssey* has combined two distinct (though overlapping) structural arrangements into one" (227). As Slatkin sees it, the *Odyssey* combines the son's rescue of the father story-pattern with the son's revenge on behalf of the father story-pattern. She does not acknowledge, however, that the major obstacle for having the son's revenge story-pattern incorporated in the poem is the requirement that his father must die for him to exact revenge on his behalf.

<sup>43</sup> Alden 1987, 133.



context, since we do have parallel examples to the tradition of Odysseus' return within the *Odyssey* and other archaic Greek traditions.<sup>44</sup>

νόστος, under my analysis of it as a theme, consists of three principal stages (plus a preparatory stage to set the background): the state in which the goal of the prior expedition has been achieved (stage i), departure (stage 1), voyage (stage 2), and arrival (stage 3). A singer can expand (primarily by introducing further subdivisions) or contract (by ignoring subdivisions) each of these stages as suits his purposes. Nestor's telling of his νόστος (3.130–83) serves as a useful paradigmatic expression of the theme, not least of all because he stands in the tradition as the exemplar of the returning hero. He is literally the “home-comer” or “he who brings home.”<sup>45</sup> Nestor's reminiscences move from his experiences during the war to his νόστος when, following a disjunctive αὐτὰρ, he makes a temporal statement to locate the outset of his νόστος-narrative: “But after we sacked the high city of Priam...” (αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ Πριάμοιο πόλιν διεπέρσαμεν αἰπήν, 3.130). Such a statements serves to establish the background conditions of the

---

<sup>44</sup> Other useful studies that discuss νόστος as a narrative theme, though not in the structural terms I am employing, include Klingner 1944, 74–79, who expands on Wilamowitz's 1927, 118, remark that the νόστοι of the other returning heroes form a “Folie für die Leiden des Odysseus” and shows how the narratives of the other returning Achaeans cited in the first four books prepares the audience for the commencement of Odysseus' return at the beginning of the fifth book; Hölscher 1989, 94–102, who sees the *Odyssey* as departing from strict pattern of a νόστος story by beginning near the end of the journey; Maronitis 1973, 124–40; 2004 64–74; Katz 1991, 20–23, 54–55, 72–76; Kullmann 1991, 446–49; Lange 2003, passim and esp. 24–25, who sees the νόστος story-pattern as plot-type for several Euripidean tragedies inherited from the *Odyssey*; Heitman 2005, 11–14; Marks 2008, 126–30.

<sup>45</sup> See Frame 1978, 82, 92–92, on the etymology of Nestor and the dispute whether the name rests upon a transitive or intransitive meaning of the verbal root \*nes-.

narrative that the poem will present (stage i). Nestor's departure stage (stage 1) includes several other elements: a double conflict—a god angry with mortal(s) and strife between men—(3.131–35, 145–47, 152, 160–61), an assembly scene (137–50), preparations—including sleep—(151), and the launching of the expedition (153–54). (In other νόστος narratives that have simpler departure stages, an ablative prepositional phrase commonly signifies this stage: cf. ἐκ Τροίης, 1.327.)<sup>46</sup> Nestor's second stage, his voyage (stage 2), is simple. He experiences only a few incidents along the way: an encounter with another homeward-bound hero (168–69), an argument with his companions about their journey (169–72), a divine sign (173–75), and a storm (176). Other figures undergo much more extensive, adventure-filled νόστοι—Odysseus, of course, being the exemplar of that kind of νόστος. Nestor's arrival (stage 3) is also simple: it consists in the concise statement that he reached Pylos and it ends at the moment of his arrival. A νόστος narrative is thus complete at the moment the hero reaches his home, and includes nothing of what happens in his home.

One might object that the events that transpire in the hero's home after he has arrived are truly a part of his νόστος—that is, the welcome or lack of welcome the hero

---

<sup>46</sup> Maronitis 2004, 64, has shown how such prepositional phrases signal the beginning of the νόστος theme in the *Iliad*.

receives.<sup>47</sup> But in the *Odyssey* at least, the three main successful νόστοι—excluding for the sake of argument Odysseus’—end precisely with the arrival of the hero at his home and nothing more: Nestor’s νόστος ends, “But I held on to Pylos, and the wind was never quenched since the god first set it to blow” (αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ γε Πύλονδ’ ἔχον, οὐδέ ποτ’ ἔσβη οὐρος, ἐπεὶ δὴ πρῶτα θεὸς προέηκεν ἀῆναι, 3.182–83); Diomedes’ νόστος, as Nestor tells it, concludes, “in Argos the companions of horse-taming Diomedes, son of Tydeus, stopped their even ships” (ὅτ’ ἐν Ἀργεῖ νῆας εἴσας Τυδεΐδεω ἕταροι Διομήδεος ἵπποδάμοιο ἴστασαν, 3.180–82); Menelaus’ recounting of his own νόστος ends, “Having done these things I returned. The immortals gave me fair wind and swiftly send me to my native land” (ταῦτα τελευτήσας νεόμην, ἔδοσαν δέ μοι οὐρον ἀθάνατοι, τοί μ’ ὤκα φίλην ἐς πατρίδ’ ἔπεμψαν, 4.585–86). Demetrios Maronitis has found much the same to be characteristic of νόστοι narratives in the *Iliad*, where phrases such as ἐς πατρίδα, οἴκαδε, ἐς δόμον, εἰς ἄστν, and κεῖσε signal their close.<sup>48</sup> One might also object that Agamemnon’s tragic νόστος shows that a νόστος is incomplete until the hero successfully reintegrates himself into his household: Proteus tells Menelaus that Agamemnon perished “during his return” (ἐν νόστῳ, 4.497). But I would point out that, in the *Odyssey*’s version of events, Agamemnon never reaches his palace in Mycenae (in

---

<sup>47</sup> Cf., *inter alios*, Schadewalt’s 1958, 23, influential conception of Odysseus’ “innere Heimkehr” after he arrives on Ithaca in book 13.

<sup>48</sup> Maronitis 2004, 64.

contrast to Aeschylus' version). Aegisthus murders him in his own land first, as the second *nekuia* makes clear when it describes the murder as taking place “in the house of Aegisthus” (οἶκῳ ἐν Αἰγίσθοιο, 24.22).<sup>49</sup> Furthermore, as I explain in more detail below, Teiresias' prophecy about Odysseus' νόστος presupposes that the normal conclusion of a νόστος is simply arrival at one's home.<sup>50</sup> In addition, at several places in the poem a so

As with τίσις, I can represent νόστος graphically as a sequence of actions:

**Table 11: The νόστος Sequence**

Order	Event/State
i	Goal of prior expedition accomplished (e.g., sack of Troy).
1	Departure.
2	Voyage.
3	Arrival.

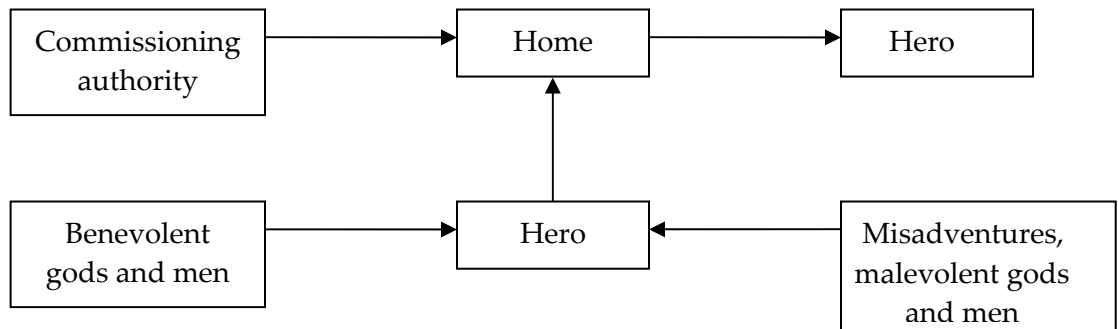
---

<sup>49</sup> Other details of the murder in each of the accounts confirm that this is its setting. See Gantz 1993, 665–67.

<sup>50</sup> It is also worth noting that in several places the poem provides a brief epexegetis for νόστος that defines it succinctly in terms of travel and arrival: “...his return, how he may come” (νόστον, ὅπως ἔλθῃσι, 1.77); “the return of stout-hearted Odysseus, that he may come home” (νόστον Ὀδυσσῆος ταλασίφρονος, ὡς κε νέηται, 87). See Stanford ad 1.87. On epexegetical phrases, see p. 107 n. 54 above.

Greimas' actantial model fits a νόστος narrative thus:<sup>51</sup>

**Figure 9: Actantial model of νόστος**



In narratological terms, the victorious hero desires to attribute his home to himself, and some commissioning authority provides him with the opportunity to reach his goal.

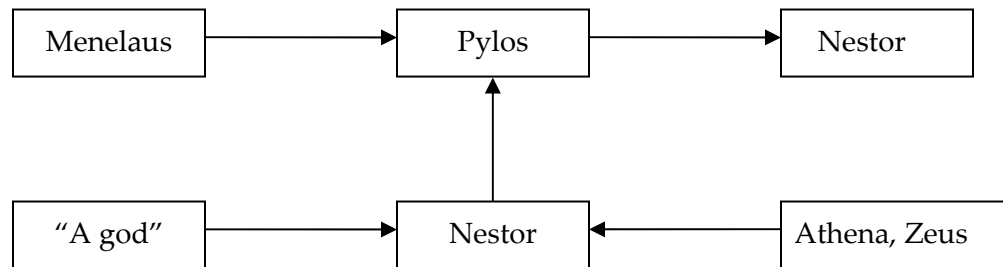
Commonly in a νόστος narrative, the helper and opponent actants are the most complex and split among several actors: every obstacle along the way is an opponent and every beneficial agent a helper. Some actors can even play both actants. In the case of Odysseus' νόστος, Circe moves from being an opponent to a helper; his companions at times help and at other times oppose his return.

---

<sup>51</sup> The νόστος narrative shares much with folktales in which the protagonist desires to escape a foe and return home, such as the Tom Thumb story, which Bal 1986, 27–31, uses as one of her examples.

The example of Nestor's νόστος invests this model thus:

**Figure 10: Actantial model of Nestor's νόστος**



With Menelaus directing the Achaeans to leave (3.141–42), Nestor seeks to return home, and despite the opposition of Athena and Zeus (131–35, 145–47, 152, 160–61) manages to make it to Pylos with the aid of "a god" who shows their band the best way (173–75). And generally speaking, the same structure is perceptible in other νόστοι-narratives.

Odysseus' νόστος fits this pattern; however, as Odysseus narrates it himself, it shows certain peculiarities that stem from the exigencies of his narration. Demodocus has already told much of the background to his tale (8.499–521), which Odysseus appropriates when he acknowledges his identity (9.19–20). Odysseus starts with a simple locative statement of the origin of his voyage and his departure (9.38–39) (stages i and 1). He then launches into the voyage stage of his νόστος (stage 2), which proves extensive, covering four books—so extensive that it expands beyond confines of Odysseus' narration and breaks in upon the present of the performative situation, open-ended and incomplete. Odysseus leaves off by telling how he came to Ogygia (12.447–50) and then, ceasing abruptly mid-line, he claims that it would be pointless to continue

his story. Not only has he already told Alcinous of his time on Ogygia and journey from there to Phaeacia (7.240–97) as he claims (12.250–53), but he also knows he cannot continue—the narrative of the past is merging with the present, but still it has no end. Odysseus and his audience are left in the middle of an incomplete narrative of a νόστος. A masterful story-teller, Odysseus has left his audience enraptured: twice the poem says that the Phaeacians “were held by a spell” (κηληθμῶ δ’ ἔσχοντο, 11.334; 13.2). The noun κηληθμός is a *hapax*, but it comes from the verb κηλέω, which means to enchant with words, especially song.<sup>52</sup> Odysseus has transfixed his audience, in effect, enchanting them in order to elicit from them a desire to complete his νόστος;<sup>53</sup> that is, Odysseus entices the Phaeacians with what Peter Brooks calls “narrative desire,” the desire to see a narrative end.<sup>54</sup> This can only happen in this case by the Phaeacians’ sending him home, by their own casting of themselves in the helper actant of his νόστος narrative. They thus set into motion the final, arrival stage (stage 3) of Odysseus’

---

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Archil. fr. 253W; Heraclit. fr. 92; Eur. *Alc.* 359; Pl. *Ly.* 206b; *Prt.* 315a; *Phdr.* 267d. On the *Odyssey*’s depiction of poetry as enchantment, see Maehler 1963, 29–30.

<sup>53</sup> See Bierl 2008, 177: “In den Geschichten wird die Thematik der Verzauberung, gerade auch durch den Gesang, mehrmals aufgegriffen. Intern stellt diese Versuchung die Gefahr des Untergangs im Selbstvergessen dar. Jetzt bewirkt er selbst das Verzücken bei seinem Publikum, das daraufhin Geschenke und Geleit als Lohn verspricht und seine negativen Reflexe gegenüber dem Fremdling aufgibt.” Odysseus’ success in part owes to the general ability of song to bring pleasure: see Macleod 1983, 8.

<sup>54</sup> Brooks, 1984, 37–61, esp. 52: “If the motor of narrative is desire, totalizing, building ever-larger units of meaning, the ultimate determinants of meaning lie *at the end*, and narrative desire is ultimately, inexorably, desire *for the end*.”

νόστος, which they accomplish by setting him with their gifts at the cave of the Nymphs on shore of Ithaca (13.89–125).

In line with the typical pattern of νόστοι-narratives in the *Odyssey*, Odysseus thus completes his νόστος when he reaches Ithaca and *before* he reveals himself to Penelope or the suitors and takes his revenge. This is consistent with the implications of Teiresias' prophecy which proclaims *first* that Odysseus "will return late and in a bad way" (ὀψὲ κακῶς νεῖαι, 11.114). Teiresias makes clear what the "bad" conditions of his νόστος are in the immediately following, dependent participial clause, "having lost all your companions, on another's ship" (ὀλέσας ἄπο πάντας ἐταίρους, νηὸς ἐπ' ἄλλοτρῆς, 114–15). Only *after* this will he find his home in distress and have to take revenge upon the suitors (115–18). Note that the better alternative that Teiresias holds forth, what would happen if the companions were not to harm the cattle, concerns only the fate of Odysseus' crew as a whole: "You, though suffering evils, would reach Ithaca" (καί κεν ἔτ' εἰς Ἰθάκην κακὰ περ πάσχοντες ἴκοισθε, 110–11). Teiresias says nothing here of what would happen after their arrival.<sup>55</sup>

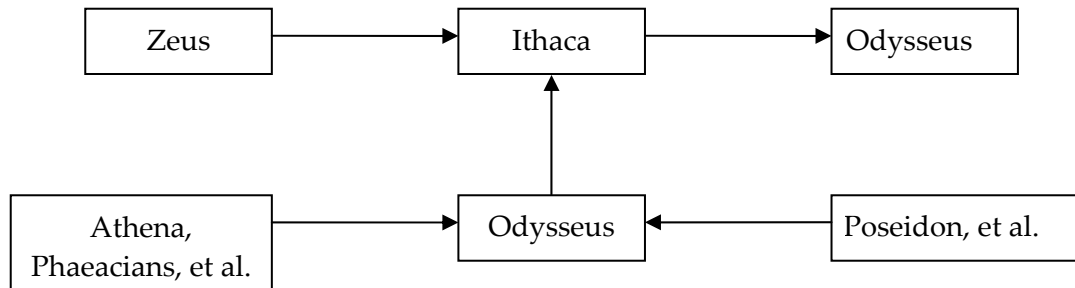
---

<sup>55</sup> My reading that the νόστος narrative concludes at this point is similar to Katz's 1991, 54–55, 72, view that "by the beginning of book 16," the narrative of νόστος has ended and become a narrative of ξενία. (She sees books 13–15 as transitional between the narrative paradigms of νόστος and ξενία.) Instead of ξενία, in my analysis the central narrative of the latter half of the poem is τίσις. Also, to the extent that I see Odysseus' arrival on Ithaca as the natural end of a νόστος narrative, my view is consistent with the basic intuition of Kirchhoff and his followers (see p. 118 n. 10 above) regarding distinction of the plot of the first half of the poem from the second. In a similar fashion, Clay 1983, 190, has called this "the pivotal moment of the *Odyssey*," noting that lines 89–91 are almost a second proem.



Odysseus' νόστος invests Greimas' model thus:

**Figure 11: Actantial model of Odysseus' νόστος**



Odysseus desires to return to Ithaca, and, after Athena persuades Zeus in the initial divine council, he sends Odysseus on his journey.<sup>56</sup> Odysseus' helpers and opponents are as many and varied as his adventures, but the chief two are Athena and Poseidon.

Variations on the νόστος theme exist, but they are essentially of two kinds only: successful and unsuccessful. Protagonists of the former kind of νόστος are Diomedes, Philoctetes, Idomeneus, Neoptolemus, Menelaus, and Nestor; of the latter, Ajax and Agamemnon.<sup>57</sup> The criterion for success is reaching home: this alone constitutes a successful νόστος. If a hero succeeds in his νόστος and reaches home, a reward awaits him: a happy, long life, such as Menelaus will enjoy with his eventual migration to the Elysian plain (4.561–69). Teiresias holds forth as much to Odysseus (11.134–37):

---

<sup>56</sup> Before this initial council, Menelaus, and then Agamemnon, serve as the sender actant for Odysseus.

<sup>57</sup> See Felson-Rubin 1994, viii–ix, who compares the different νόστοι, though I differ from her in my strictly binary classification of narratives. In general, extra-Homeric traditions present many more difficulties for these heroes than the *Odyssey* does. See Gantz 1993, 662–717.

θάνατος δέ τοι ἐξ ἀλὸς αὐτῶ  
ἀβληχρὸς μάλα τοῖος ἐλεύσεται, ὅς κέ σε πέφνη  
γῆρα ὑπο λιπαρῶ ἀρημένον· ἀμφὶ δὲ λαοὶ  
ὄλβιοι ἔσσονται. τὰ δέ τοι νημερτέα εἶρω.

And death will come to you away from the sea,  
a very easy one, which will strike you down  
when you overcome under comfortable old-age, and around you  
your people will be blessed. I tell you this truly.

The logical result of a hero's νόστος narrative is the happy ending of a blessed, long, and easy life for himself and his people.<sup>58</sup> The significance of this blessed *telos* for Odysseus comes through when in his recognition by, and reunion with, Penelope he closes his conversation by repeating Teiresias' words (23.281–84), to which Penelope adds (23.286–87):

εἰ μὲν δὴ γῆράς γε θεοὶ τελέουσιν ἄρειον,  
ἐλπωρή τοι ἔπειτα κακῶν ὑπάλυξιν ἔσσεσθαι.

If the gods will bring about a better old-age,  
then there is hope for you that you will escape evil.

Penelope's words have a similar prophetic tone as Teiresias', both using abstract nouns (θάνατος and ὑπάλυξιν) that are subjects of future existential verbs (ἐλεύσεται and ἔσσεσθαι).

---

<sup>58</sup> Athenaeus preserves the tradition of Odysseus' pleasant old-age in a fragment which Diels (and, after him, Bernabé and West) attributes to the *Telegony*: "And when he [Odysseus] was an old man, 'he was consuming eagerly abundant meat and sweet wine'" (καὶ γέρων ὦν ἦσθιεν ἀρπαλέως κρέα τ' ἄσπετα καὶ μέθυ ἡδύ, Athen. 412d = fr. 1). Athenaeus cites this verse as evidence for Odysseus' gluttony, claiming that he was λαίμαργον and πολύφαγον—the second a clever pun on Odysseus' πολυ- epithets. However, this verse in the context of the *Telegony* is not likely to carry such overtones. It is rather similar to *Od.* 9.162 and 14.109–10, where the text does not carry such negative characterization.

As Penelope and Teiresias state, the normal epilogue to a successful νόστος is a long, prosperous life, without hint of the evils of war, wandering, infidelity, and murder.

#### **5.4 τίσις vs. νόστος: Narratives in Conflict**

Penelope's and Teiresias' prophetic claims of a peaceful, long life for Odysseus use the same kind of diction that forms the core of Hermes' prophetic warning to Aegisthus: "There will be a retribution..." (τίσις ἔσσεται, 1.40). The similarity in form between this prophecy of doom and Teiresias' and Penelope's words of hope underline the opposition between the narratives of νόστος and τίσις. These narratives have very different results. In Penelope's vision of the future, the hero will "escape evil" (κακῶν ὑπάλυξι, 23.287), while in Hermes' warning the τίσις he foresees will bring "evil" (κακά, 1.33) upon his addressee, as Zeus explains. Thus the audience feels the tension between τίσις and νόστος most of all in the irreconcilable opposition between the triumphant, happy fate that stretches before the hero of a successful νόστος and the tragic, pitiful death of the hero-to-be-avenged in a τίσις narrative. Whereas the κλέος of νόστος lies in a "rich" (ὄλβιοι, 11.137),<sup>59</sup> "comfortable" (λιπαρῶ, 136) life,<sup>60</sup> where death,

---

<sup>59</sup> Strictly speaking ὄλβιοι applies only to Odysseus' λαοί. However, there is no reason to doubt that this epithet characterizes his life as well.

when it finally comes, will be “easy” (ἀβληχρὸς, 135), the κλέος of τίσις is the possession of the avenger, obtained after the murder of his φίλος and his retribution upon that murderer (cf. Orestes’ κλέος: 3.203–4). The *Odyssey* dramatizes this narrative conflict between the mutually incompatible narrative logics of νόστος and τίσις: one requiring that the hero live long and happily, the other that he die pitifully and be replaced by a new protagonist, his avenging φίλος.

Odysseus, however, is the protagonist of both narratives—how can this be? This is where attention to the idiosyncrasies of Odysseus’ τίσις narrative pays off. The poem adapted the traditional form of the τίσις narrative so that it would not preclude the returning hero’s triumph. By making the suitors’ actions count as murder and adultery while nonetheless having Odysseus survive and Penelope remain faithful, singers can interweave a triumphant νόστος with a successful τίσις. The poem accomplishes this by an elaborate set of rhetorical moves that re-characterize the actions of the suitors as actual, vengeance-inspiring crimes. Feasting becomes murder; wooing becomes adultery.

In the *Odyssey* there is an often unstated but nevertheless rigorous ideology of *ius talionis*, in which the content and character of the original crime determines the

---

<sup>60</sup> On the meaning of λιπαρῶ, see Heubeck et al., ad loc., where they note that with γῆρας it has “almost...the meaning of ‘rich, wealthy.’”

punishment which the avenging agent exacts.<sup>61</sup> The performance of justice is not only, not even primarily, a physical action. It is first of all a rhetorical, poetic performance, in which agents seek to articulate precise linguistic equivalents between crime and punishment. The paradigmatic example of Orestes' revenge upon Aegisthus demonstrates this process. The poem has Zeus use diction (ἔκτανε, 1.36) to describe the initial murder of Agamemnon that's identical to the one the narrator (as focalized by Zeus) had used for the retributive killing of Aegisthus (ἔκταν(ε), 1.30). In the speech of Zeus, the entirety of the actions of Aegisthus, including his motives and circumstances, becomes ἔκτανε and γῆμ' (1.36). After a character performs such an analysis, his symmetrical response becomes clear. Killing will match killing. The rigorous application of a linguistic form of the *lex talionis* more frequently occurs where formulaic diction plays an important role. But the poetic logic of this form of justice extends to other verbal phenomena, such as the series of puns on blindness and Odysseus' name to which I drew attention earlier. As Odysseus "blinded" (ἀλάωσεν, 1.69) Polyphemus, so does Poseidon make Odysseus "wander" (ἀλόω, 5.377); as Odysseus used a play on his name in a trick against Polyphemus, so does Poseidon use a play on Odysseus' name against him, "paining" him (ὠδύσατ', 5.340). I explore further this relationship between poetic diction and justice in part two, but suffice it to say for now that the observance of

---

<sup>61</sup> This is the notion that Weil 2003, 15, (=1940–41, 571) was getting at when she spoke of the *rigueur géométrique* of retribution.

the *lex talionis* is not exclusive to the *Odyssey*, even if the symbolic character of punishment is deeply significant in the poem, as the punishments administered in Hades illustrate. It pervades early Greek thought.<sup>62</sup>

Because of this ideology of strict symmetry between crime and retribution, retributive killing typically comes as a response to an earlier killing—hence Orestes’ killing of Aegisthus. But in the case of the suitors, for all their apparent depravity they do not, of course, kill anyone. The analogy between them and Aegisthus, which Athena hints at in her opening conversation with Zeus and which comes to the fore at other points in the text, is inapposite in this respect. Nonetheless, the poem, following the strict requirements of the model of symmetrical justice it set down at its outset, characterizes the suitors’ depredations against Odysseus household as murder, or more precisely cannibalism. As I argued earlier, when the suitors despoil Odysseus’ home and “consume his livelihood unrequited” (βίοτον νήποινον ἔδουσιν, 1.160; cf. 2.123, 11.116, 13.396, 419, 428, 14.377, 15.32, 17.378, 18.280, 19.159), they in effect murder him. Trading on the ambiguity of βίωτος, which can mean either the material that supports life or life itself, the poem gives the suitors’ acts of rudeness the overtones of feasting on Odysseus’ and Telemachus’ bloody flesh—an analogy driven home by Theoclymenus’ horrific vision (20.347–58). And in several places, the poem has the suitors themselves use this

---

<sup>62</sup> See Nussbaum’s 1999, 154–83, take on τίσις as opposed to “mercy” (ἐπιείκεια). On her reading, Aristotle comes off the hero of mercy, as opposed to the tradition of retributivists from Anaximander to Plato.

language to describe their actions, ironically admitting to their guilt (2.123, et al.), even though they believed they were only enjoying entertainment proper to suitors of an elite bride.<sup>63</sup> Compounding this language of murder are similar statements attributing an equivalence between Odysseus' life and his household.<sup>64</sup> At one point, Athena makes manifest the link between the suitors' feasting and the punishment that they will suffer in a gruesome juxtaposition (13.394–96):

καί τιν' οἴω  
αἵματί τ' ἐγκεφάλω τε παλαξέμεν ἄσπετον οὔδας  
ἀνδρῶν μνηστήρων, οἳ τοι βίοτον κατέδουσιν.

And I think that anyone<sup>65</sup>  
of the suitors who consume your livelihood  
will splatter the unspeakable floor with blood and brains.

The suggestion here is that the brutal, bloody killing of the suitors (394–95) derives from their actions (396). But only two simple facts characterize the recipients of this retributive violence: they eat Odysseus' livelihood and they are wooers of his wife (μνηστήρων). Once again the paradigm of Orestes is instructive. The twin aspects of his crime are placed together in one verse: "He married his wooed wife and slew him on his return" (γῆμ' ἄλοχον μνηστήν, τὸν δ' ἔκτανε νοστήσαντα, 1.36; cf. 39). Likewise,

---

<sup>63</sup> Alden 1987, 130.

<sup>64</sup> See pp. 89–92 above.

<sup>65</sup> The sense of *τινα* here is not strictly just "anyone," as though only one of the suitors will face the punishment. Such a threatening statement is a synecdoche directed at the whole group. See de Jong 1987b.

Athena counts the suitors as just recipients of retribution in virtue of two facts about their conduct she regards as equivalent: their eating and wooing.

This second element of their crimes, their “wooing” of Penelope, as is the case with their “murder” of Odysseus, is in point of fact not an accomplished act at all. They never get so far as to commit actual adultery with her. And seeing as the suitors, like every other mortal, were ignorant of Odysseus’ true condition and the likelihood of his eventual return, they might be excused for pursuing a woman whom they could reasonably believe to be a widow. But as I argued above, in the poem’s reigning moral vision, the suitors’ corruption of the household slaves renders them guilty of a crime *like* adultery, as does their wooing of woman whose husband was yet alive, though they believed her a widow. In the end, their desire to wed Penelope is reciprocated with a “hateful” and “bitter” inversion of wedding—their slaughter at the (re)wedding feast of Penelope and Odysseus. The suitors thought this wedding would finally give them the object of their desire but it turned out to give them destruction. Thus, in a grand reversal, the suitors face retaliation in kind: by way of the irony of the bow-contest, Penelope gives them the marriage they tried to force upon her. The poetic virtue of not having adultery occur is that this allows Penelope to remain faithful and have Odysseus’ νόστος remain ultimately happy and successful. As I mentioned earlier,<sup>66</sup> in certain

---

<sup>66</sup> See pp. 95–96 above.



alternative versions of the myth, Penelope turns out to be unfaithful, and Odysseus punishes her with divorce or even death. Though this does not occur in our *Odyssey*, a refraction of this is seen in the execution of the faithless servant-women, whose deaths atone by substitution for the anxieties about Penelope's fidelity. The servant women's execution by hanging—a “not...clean death” (μη...καθαρῶ θανάτῳ, 22.462)—is traditionally a “fitting” punishment for adultery. To hang a woman is to close off and strangle her στόμα (“mouth”)—a word that can also denote female genitals. Thus hanging is symbolically a punishment against the especially offending part of the adulteress' body.<sup>67</sup>

One effect that the poem accomplishes through all these rhetorical moves is the preparation of the audience's sympathies for the violence of the *Mnesteroiphonia*. Just as Zeus' telling of the “Oresteia” myth serves as an apologia for the evils (κακά) that Aegisthus and other such men suffer, so does the *Odyssey* myth on the singer's telling serve to excuse the brutalities that the suitors and their allies endure. This, however, does leave open the question of the ultimate success of the poem's program. I address this in part three.

---

<sup>67</sup> For an in depth argument of the punitive symbolism and logic of hanging women, see Fulkerson 2002, 341–43. She cites relevant usages of στόμα as genitals. See also LSJ s.v. A.II.2. On hanging as a “fitting” punishment for adultery, see the description of punishments for adulterous women in the *Apocalypse of Peter* 7, on which see Fiensey 1983, 256.

## 5.5 *The Rivalry of τίσις and νόστος Traditions*

As I have been arguing, these idiosyncrasies in the τίσις theme—in particular what constitutes precipitating crimes and the identity of the avenger and the avenged—are products of a natural tension between the narratives of τίσις and νόστος. The *Odyssey's* main τίσις narrative poses a threat to its main νόστος narrative in its demand that the returning hero perish and his wife turn against him—events that would fatally undermine a successful νόστος. In other words, the poem has captured into a single poem two rival poetic traditions, and the struggle between them plays out in the course of the poem. My analysis of this rivalry between traditions follows a line of reasoning similar to Gregory Nagy's regarding the way in which certain genres of poetry are traditional rivals. Perhaps the most profound and significant rivalry in early Greek epic is the one between the heroic poetry of κλέος obtained through valor on the battlefield and the poetry of νόστος, of return.<sup>68</sup> Whereas these two traditions stand opposed to one another in the *Iliad*,<sup>69</sup> the *Odyssey* shows how they might reconcile through a redefinition

---

<sup>68</sup> Nagy 1979, 34–41, 97–98.

<sup>69</sup> The *locus classicus* for the antithesis is *Il.* 9.410–16, where Achilles recounts his choice between κλέος, won by his death on the battlefield of Troy, and νόστος, a return home to safe longevity.

of κλέος, so that Odysseus can win his κλέος precisely by surviving and successfully achieving his νόστος.<sup>70</sup>

The monumental τίσις narrative in the *Odyssey* ought to belong to Telemachus. That is to say, a “Telemachy” is the inherent and latent poem that is the logical expression of the central τίσις theme of the *Odyssey*. The tension between τίσις and νόστος, inherent in their very narrative logic, is such that the “Telemachy” threatens to overwhelm the epic of Odysseus, the *Odyssey*, and present its own hero, his avenging son. For example, Telemachus learns from Nestor that Aegisthus slowly corrupted Clytemnestra, once obstacles such as Agamemnon and the unnamed singer-guardian were out of the way (3.265–75). Nestor appends to his story the advice to Telemachus not to stay long away from home, lest his home be ruined and his journey vain (3.313–16). The implied message for Telemachus is that Penelope might yet be seduced and his home destroyed while he is away. The narrative of Menelaus’ wanderings suggests a still more troubling possibility: Odysseus, like Agamemnon, might return home to be ambushed while Telemachus, like Menelaus, is away.<sup>71</sup> Thus, should Telemachus prolong his journey and, in poetic terms, his narrative, he will endanger Odysseus’ safe

---

<sup>70</sup> Nagy 1979, 39: “Odysseus is a double winner. He has won both **kléos** and **nóstos**.” Achilles presents in the *Odyssey* his doubts about the virtues of being dead and having great κλέος, in contrast to the ideology of κλέος in the *Iliad* (*Od.* 11.488–91). See *ibid.*, 35. On the *Odyssey*’s reinterpretation of κλέος, see Segal 1994, 85–109, and, with a slightly different take, Pucci 1987, 216–19. On rival poetic traditions generally, see Burgess 2006, 164, with further bibliography.

<sup>71</sup> Olson 1995, 34–35.

return. Nestor's warning signals to the audience that so long as Telemachus remains in the heroic position as the poem's apparent protagonist and focus of attention, Odysseus cannot have his safe return. Accordingly, Telemachus must end his journey and narrative and give way to his father: Odysseus must become the hero of the epic. Had Telemachus not yielded his place as protagonist and instead enacted a complete "Telemachy," the poem would have taken a much different course. For, as the many allusions in the *Odyssey* to the revenge of Orestes indicate, the logic of a "Telemachy" would be the same as the "Oresteia," and inevitably the suitors would murder Odysseus, impelling Telemachus to a plot of *τίσις*.<sup>72</sup>

In this contest between Odysseus' narrative of *νόστος* and Telemachus' of *τίσις*, each narrative becomes emblemized by its protagonist, who comes by metonymy to signify his respective tradition. This is a regular poetic strategy in early Greek poetry.<sup>73</sup>

---

<sup>72</sup> Olson 1995, 38, observes that the uncertainty surrounding the exact nature of the analogy between the "Oresteia" and the *Odyssey* regularly presents to the audience the possibility that Telemachus will become and Orestes-figure: "This *Odyssey*, after all, has already become in large part a Telemacheia, in the same way that Agamemnon's tale became, unbeknownst to him, an Oresteia."

<sup>73</sup> On protagonists emblemizing poems and narrative traditions, see Tsagalis 2008, xv, who sees female figures in Homer, in particular Clytemnestra and Penelope, as "intertextual pathways." On Tsagalis' reading, "Penelope emerges in a metapoetic cloth, becoming the emblem for the poetics of Odyssean κλέος" (40). Tsagalis draws special attention to Agamemnon's apostrophe to Odysseus in the second *nekuia* (24.192–202), which functions as an encomium of Penelope. This speech has occasioned critics such as Finley 1978, 3, and Murnaghan 1987, 124, to note that the praise of Penelope goes almost so far as to re-characterize the poem as a "Penelopeia." Martin 1989, 231–39, surveying comparative epics, notes that it is common for a poet or singer to identify closely with his protagonist. Drawing on this particular connection with his protagonist, the singer of the *Iliad* "turns Achilles into the 'focalizer' of narration" (235). See also Burgess 2006, 164 n. 41; Wyatt 1989, 247–50; Macleod 1983, 8.

The poetic rivalry in this case takes symbolic form as an inter-generational conflict between father and son. While on the face of it Telemachus and Odysseus cooperate brilliantly to bring off their plot against the suitors and restore the Laertiad family to primacy over Ithaca, a submerged, Oedipal conflict lies beneath this surface harmony. I am not claiming that this conflict is an actualized part of the poem we have, but only that a thread of father-son rivalry pervades it, and another poem on a different occasion might have drawn it out. It is, thus, not simply a latent feature of our *Odyssey*, but also—and in some cases much more prominently—a theme of the mythic tradition of Odysseus.

Telemachus is reasonably suspicious of his father. He, it is safe to assume, has no memory of the man who, when the poem begins, had begotten him 20 years earlier. He has known his father only by story, rumor, the goods of his household, and his family,<sup>74</sup> and all of these are dwindling—save possibly Penelope, but even she is running out of delaying tactics and will soon institute the bow-contest which will make her vulnerable to remarriage. The emptiness of his experience of his father turns into doubts about his paternity (1.215–16), and these doubts quickly turn even into a desire for a different

---

<sup>74</sup> Alden 1987, 135, notes how, in contrast to all other members of Odysseus' household who, at length, recognize him upon his return, Telemachus has no memory of his father by which to confirm his identity. Alden takes this as Telemachus' lacking a token by which to know his father, but I stress simply memory. Tokens are not essential for recognition: Odysseus' dog, Argus, recognizes his master instinctively. Nor, as Alden claims, must one have first-hand experience of someone in order to recognize him by a token: the very utility of a σύμβολον lies in its portability.

father all-together (1.217–18). In his father’s absence, Telemachus begins to assume his position as the poem unfolds. He assumes charge of the household, ordering the servants (e.g., 2.337–60), showing anxiety over its substance (e.g., 1.248–51), even authority over his mother (e.g., 1.356–59). In the public realm as well, Telemachus takes the seat of his father in the Ithacan proto-assembly (2.14), where he speaks as Odysseus used to. As he travels abroad he is routinely and favorably compared to his father (e.g., 3.122–24).

Even when Telemachus comes to cooperate with his father later in the poem, tensions lie just beneath the surface. In their final battle against the suitors’ kin, Telemachus bridles at Odysseus’ instruction that he must be admonished to live up to the glory of his ancestors (24.505–15). Odysseus numbers himself among the ancestors who “excelled over the whole earth in strength and manhood,” (ἀλκῆ τ’ ἠνορέη τε κεκάσμεθα πᾶσαν ἐπ’ αἴαν, 509), but is evidently in some doubt as to whether Telemachus will not “shame” him (καταισχύνειν, 508). Laertes calls this an occasion to rejoice because his descendants are waging a “contest over virtue” (δῆρις περὶ ἀρετῆς, 24.515). δῆρις is a rare word, but it can signify destructive conflict among foes (*Il.* 17.158, *Hes. Sc.* 241) as easily as competition among peers (*Hes. Sc.* 307). To be clear, Laertes offers his remark in a spirit of joy over this “contest” —but friendly competition may

soon become dangerous strife.<sup>75</sup> Laertes' words have an ironic implication, and the subtext of the moment is tense.<sup>76</sup> In addition, when earlier Telemachus understandably doubts that the newly revealed Odysseus is really his father, Odysseus upbraids him (16.192–212).<sup>77</sup>

All this aside, the most pivotal aspect of their rivalry is contained in the instruction Odysseus left Penelope: when Telemachus has grown a beard—that is, come of age—she should marry another (18.269–70). The poem, by using Telemachus as the pivot has made Telemachus' continued existence and growth a threat to Odysseus' achievement of a proper νόστος. Telemachus will become the cause of Penelope's unfaithfulness, and she knows this result is imminent. She completes her recitation of Odysseus' instruction with words of apparent resignation: “Now all these things are being accomplished” (τὰ δὴ νῦν πάντα τελεῖται, 271). Penelope functions as a site of Oedipal contestation between father and son. Again, when Telemachus is about to win the bow contest and, as he claims, supplant his father as master of the household and send Penelope away (21.114–17), Odysseus has to check him (129). But the tensions run

---

<sup>75</sup> Cf. the “games” (ἄεθλοι) of the Phaeacians (8.110–255), in which the competition between Euryalus and Odysseus escalates until, as de Jong 2001, ad loc. (following Holoka 1983, 16), puts it, “...frustration, shame, and shock are nearing the combustion point.”

<sup>76</sup> Murnaghan 2002, 136.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 136–37.

even deeper here. Peter Rose has pointed out that “a fascinating ambiguity” is at play in these four lines and has scandalized readers (21.114–17):

εἰ δέ κεν ἐντανύσω διοϊστεύσω τε σιδήρου,  
οὐδέ κέ μοι ἀχνυμένῳ τάδε δώματα πότνια μήτηρ  
λείποι ἄμ' ἄλλῳ ἰοῦς', ὅτ' ἐγὼ κατοπίσθε λιποίμην  
οἴος τ' ἤδη πατρὸς ἀέθλια κάλ' ἀνελέσθαι.

If I string the bow and shoot throw the iron,  
then would my revered mother, going with another man,  
not leave these halls with me grieving, since I would thereafter remain  
already able to take up the good prizes of my father.

On one reading, if he should win the contest, then Telemachus might find solace—i.e., “not be grieved” (οὐ...ἀχνυμένῳ)—by taking up the good ἀέθλια of his father when his mother has to leave. But on another reading, if he can win the contest, Telemachus might win his mother for himself—i.e., his mother “would not leave him” (οὐδέ...λείποι)—because he could take up his father’s “good prize” of his own mother.<sup>78</sup>

Lastly, as I discussed earlier, certain variations of the *Odyssey* tradition make the motif of father-son rivalry all the more prominent: in the *Telegony*, Odysseus will die at the hands of Telegonus, his own son by Circe. In Dictys’ (6.14–15) and Hyginus’ (*Fab.* 127) telling, Odysseus receives an oracle or dream that tells him his son will kill him. As a result, he banishes Telemachus to Cephalonia as a precaution against the “treachery of his son” (*insidiis filii*, Dict. Cret. 6.14). But Telegonus comes to Ithaca and kills Odysseus

---

<sup>78</sup> Rose 1992, 132. Rose *ibid.*, 122–34, provides a cogent Oedipal reading of the latent contest between Odysseus and Telemachus over Penelope, especially prevalent in bow-contest.



in ignorance. He then transports Penelope to Ogygia and marries her.<sup>79</sup> This myth encodes an anxiety that Odysseus' son might kill him and marry Penelope. Telegonus, as such, effectively functions as a double for Telemachus (as Odysseus' mistaking the one for the other makes clear), and the representative of a latent motif of father-son rivalry.<sup>80</sup> In another tradition preserved by Hyginus (*Fab.* 95), Palamedes visited Odysseus to muster him for the Trojan expedition, but Odysseus feigned madness to avoid leaving Ithaca. Palamedes then set the infant Telemachus in front of Odysseus as he was plowing his field. Odysseus swerved to save his son and revealed his sanity, compelling him to join the expedition.<sup>81</sup> Odysseus could have killed his son to avoid the war and all it entailed—sufferings, wanderings, and the suit of his wife—but the preservation of Telemachus' life required him to hazard his own.

All these examples go to illustrate my argument that, through their narrative motifs of intergenerational conflict between Odysseus and his son(s), these mythic

---

<sup>79</sup> These details also appear in a scholiast's hypothesis (Dindorf 6). Dictys' account ends before the marriage of Penelope and Telegonus. This detail appears in Apollodorus (7.37).

<sup>80</sup> Other scholars who have seen suggestions of destructive father-son conflict in the relationship of Telemachus and Odysseus include Rose 1992, 122–34; Murnaghan 2002. Opposing my reading, several scholars have read the relationship as exemplary of positive competition and/or cooperation: Roisman 1994; Wöhrle 1999, 117–44, and Felson-Rubin 1999; from a psychoanalytic perspective, Kohut 1982 and Triebel and Lücking 1998. But Felson-Rubin 1999, 38–39, acknowledges that Telemachus' "participation in a contest for the hand of his father's wife has a powerful Oedipal ring," even though Odysseus resolves the tension as "an idealized father" would.

<sup>81</sup> There is a variation of this myth that has Palamedes draw a sword on Telemachus and directly threaten him: see Apollod. *Epit.* 3.6–7.

traditions symbolize a generic rivalry between narratives of *τίσις* and *νόστος*. The former has the figure of the son as its emblem and the latter the father.

The latent conflict of Odysseus' *νόστος* and Telemachus' *τίσις* is only the most prominent way in which the poem dramatizes the opposition between these narrative forms. The audience feels the tension already in the first lines of the poem when the narrator proclaims that, though Odysseus "was striving to secure his own life and his companions' homecoming" (*ἀρνύμενος ἦν τε ψυχὴν καὶ νόστον ἐταίρων*, 1.5), they perished because Helios "took from them the day of their return" (*τοῖσιν ἀφείλετο νόστιμον ἦμαρ*, 9). In the *τίσις* narrative epitomized in these few lines and narrated at length in book twelve, an agent of *τίσις* cuts short the companions' narrative of *νόστος*. The narrator is announcing a program: *τίσις* threatens *νόστος*. The formal importance the narrator gives to this program within the proem marks its thematic significance for the rest of the poem. Fully half of the proem (five of ten lines) deals with the loss of the companions' *νόστος* to *τίσις*.<sup>82</sup> And these lines are striking as well because of their specificity (they cite the one, particular episode on Thrinacia), as opposed to the mostly generic quality of rest of the proem. As I argued earlier, Zeus is the real agent in the

---

<sup>82</sup> Clay 1983, 34–35, drawing on a long debate in analytical scholarship, calls attention to the particular, apparently inordinate focus that lines 6–9 have upon the companions. I would add line 5, which foreshadows the struggle, or almost "contest" (*ἀρνύμενος*; cf. *Il.* 22.160), that Odysseus will face to save his companions' "homecoming" (*νόστον*). I find no compelling reason why a division between lines 5 and 6 is any more natural than a division between lines 4 and 5 or especially 6 and 7: *ἰεμένους περ* could have been the end of the narrative summary, just as *ἰεμένουσ περ* is at 16.430.

companions' death. Hence, their loss of νόστος is a part of the will of Zeus—a concept thematized in the epic tradition by Διὸς βουλή.<sup>83</sup> This “plan of Zeus” controls the action of the poem. From Zeus' initial authorization of Athena's wish that Odysseus return to his final establishment of a settlement between the suitors' kin and Odysseus and his allies, enforced by his amnesty, lightning, and threat of anger, the plot of the epic is the manifestation of his will. Therefore, Zeus' will is coextensive with the epic's program and focalizes the poem's own thematic plan.<sup>84</sup> Therefore, when the proem tells the audience that an avenging Helios—standing in for Zeus—“took away the day of their return,” the narrator is signaling what outcome the audience should expect of a narrative of τίσις in his program: the loss of νόστος.<sup>85</sup>

In Greimas' model, the companions occupy the opponent actant in a τίσις narrative, and it is by virtue of this position that they perish and lose their νόστος. Similarly, when Odysseus faces the wrath of Poseidon, he is occupying the opponent

---

<sup>83</sup> Διὸς βουλή *ipsissima verba* do not appear in the *Odyssey*, but Marks 2008, 4, shows that it is “a traditional, and prominent, theme in early Greek epic” and a surreptitious, “unifying principle of the Odyssean narrative.”

<sup>84</sup> On “the plan of Zeus” as the poems' program—a poetic device especially pronounced in the *Iliad*—see Marks *ibid.*, 8–13, 132–46, *passim* and Nagy 1979, 81. Whitman 1958, 228, reaches similar conclusions about Homeric “fate” when he calls μόρος “the poet's scenario.” Wilson's 2007 recent study on the use of the motif in the *Iliad* put the matter thus: for Homer, Διὸς βουλή is “not merely the plot of his epic, but a mechanism for the poet to enter into the story.” For more bibliography on the motif of Διὸς βουλή in general, see Latacz *et al.*, ad 1.5.

<sup>85</sup> I take up these programmatic issues in more detail in part two. But I will note here that Zeus as the author of τίσις is a motif in early Greek poetry beyond Homer: e.g., Sol. fr. 13.25, Thgn. 337.

actant. The threat that Poseidon's τίσις holds for Odysseus' νόστος comes through most clearly in Polyphemus' demand for retribution: "Grant that Odysseus, the sacker of cities, not reach his home" (δὸς μὴ Ὀδυσσῆα πτολιπόρθιον οἴκαδ' ἰκέσθαι, 9.530). Poseidon answers his prayer, though he executes Polyphemus' second option of an attenuated punishment that has Odysseus return late and poorly (9.534; 11.114). Even in this weaker form, the effect of the narrative of τίσις on the opponent actant is such that it hinders the accomplishment of his narrative of νόστος. In addition, in the wider Cyclic tradition Athena's wrath on account of the rape of Cassandra, directed at the returning Achaeans in general and at Locrian Ajax in particular, endangers the νόστος of all of the returning heroes and directly causes Ajax to perish in the midst of his νόστος.<sup>86</sup> In each of these cases, a narrative of τίσις endangers the νόστος of a hero filling the opponent actant.<sup>87</sup>

---

<sup>86</sup> The *Odyssey* references the hardships of the Achaeans' returns, always with Athena's ill-will as a major (and hence traditional) component (1.325–27, 3.130–83, 4.495–511, 5.108–11), although the poem never mentions the cause of her anger. Extra-Homeric mythic traditions make it clear that the rape of Cassandra is the cause of Athena's wrath: Proc. *Chrestom.* 239; Apollod. *Epit.* 5.22–23, 6.6; et al. Note also the rape of Cassandra in artistic depictions from an early period (see LIMC s.v. Cassandra 1). But see also Clay 1983, 46–53, 186–88, who argues that, at least in Odysseus' case, "Homer was not interested in the traditional causes of the goddess' wrath" (187). Instead, she is angry with Odysseus because he "is too clever; his intelligence calls into question the superiority of the gods themselves" (209). I note a caveat to analyzing this theme as a τίσις narrative: in these brief allusions to Athena's punishment of the Achaeans, the term τίσις does not appear; her wrath is always called simply μῆνις.

<sup>87</sup> A fourth such case in extra-Homeric tradition involves Agamemnon's failed νόστος. Although the *Odyssey* never gives Aegisthus and Clytemnestra any just reason for their murder of Agamemnon, other "Oresteia" traditions—notably the tradition on which Aeschylus draws—give the conspirators at least the pretext of τίσις for the death of Iphigenia and the dishonor done Thyestes.

There is a second way in which the narratives of τίσις and νόστος come into conflict: a subject's pursuit of τίσις endangers his own νόστος. After an assembly in which Eupheithes makes the case against Odysseus and persuades a number of the suitors' kin to seek vengeance (24.421–37, 464–66), they set off with Eupheithes at their head to exact τίσις upon Odysseus (469–71):

τοῖσιν δ' Εὐπείθης ἠγήσατο νηπιέησι·  
φῆ δ' ὅ γε **τεῖσεσθαι** παιδὸς φόνον, οὐδ' ἄρ' ἔμελλεν  
ἄψ ἀπονοστήσειν, ἀλλ' αὐτοῦ πότμον ἐφέψειν.

Eupheithes led them in his folly.  
He said that he would avenge the murder of his son, but he was not going to return again. Rather, he was going to meet his doom there.

This proleptic statement is unnecessary for the development of the plot, but it draws out the tension between νόστος and τίσις. For, Eupheithes' narrative of τίσις (τεῖσεσθαι) will preclude his narrative of νόστος (οὐδ' ἄρ' ἔμελλεν ἄψ ἀπονοστήσειν). Before the end of the poem, he perishes by the spear of Laertes (516–25), and, were it not for Athena's sudden intervention, he would have led all his allies who also were pursuing τίσις to become "return-less" (ἀνόστους, 528); that is, to lose their own narratives of νόστος. In terms of Greimas' model, Eupheithes' and his allies' attempt to occupy the subject actant of both a νόστος and τίσις narrative fails.

There is yet a third way in which the narratives τίσις and νόστος oppose one another. As I discussed earlier, Orestes' τίσις narrative is dependent upon the failure of Agamemnon's νόστος narrative. And likewise, the τίσις narrative in which Telemachus

alone acts as Odysseus' avenger presupposes the death of Odysseus and his loss of his νόστος. In terms of Greimas' model, the same actor (Agamemnon and Odysseus) cannot normally occupy both the receiver actant in a τίσις narrative (that is, be the avenged) and the subject actant in a completed νόστος narrative (that is, be the one returning).

Narratives of τίσις and νόστος, thus, are fundamentally at conflict. The poem expresses this tension through competing logics that require the hero, on the hand, to die in order to be avenged and, on the other hand, to live a long, happy life. These tensions between the narratives are symbolized by their respective emblems, Telemachus and Odysseus, whose own latent rivalry embodies the central narrative dilemma of the poem.

## ***5.6 Reconciliation***

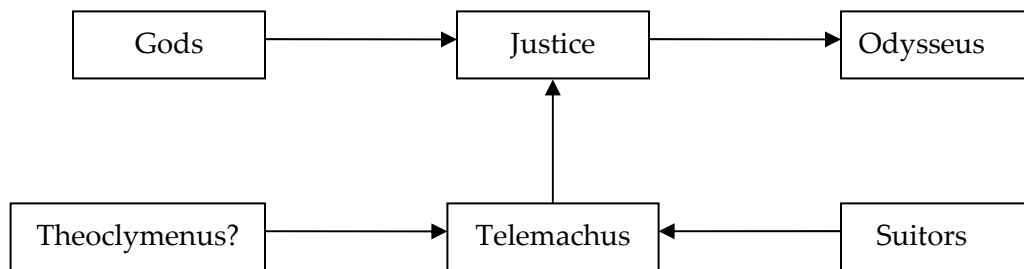
The poem's program does not end with this tension, however. The very same conflict in actantial syntax I examined above shows how the poem resolves this narrative conflict. The last two kinds of actantial tension—namely a subject's pursuit of τίσις threatening his own νόστος and τίσις sought for another precluding that other's successful νόστος—point to this reconciliation in the figure of Odysseus. The poem has Odysseus occupy the actants of *both* receiver *and* subject in his τίσις narrative.

Agamemnon and the hypothetical, murdered Odysseus of the "Telemachy" occupy *only* the receiver actant in their τίσις narratives. They do not take vengeance for themselves

and thus lose their νόστοι as a narrative precondition for the τίσις of their sons on their behalf. Eupheithes occupies *only* the subject actant in his τίσις narrative and loses his νόστος. Odysseus succeeds because he combines these normally distinct actants.

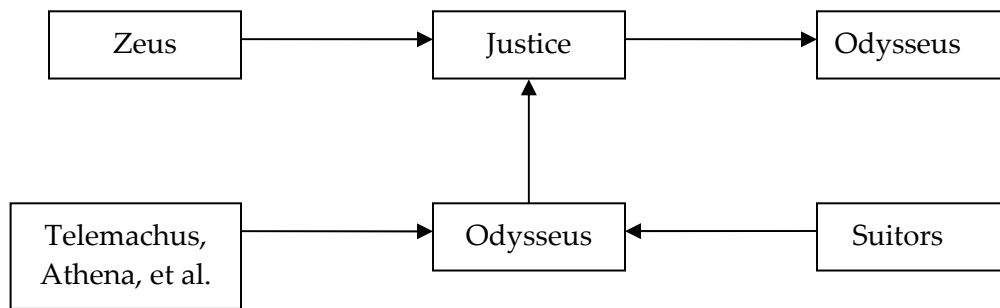
In order for Odysseus to survive his τίσις narrative, the narrative has to undergo a transformation of its actantial syntax from the hypothetical “Telemachy” version to the final, successful *Odyssey* version. In the “Telemachy” Telemachus occupies the subject actant and Odysseus only the receiver:

**Figure 12: Actantial model of the “Telemachy”**



But Odysseus’ successful combination of τίσις and νόστος depends upon his displacing Telemachus from the subject actant and relegating him to the helper actant:

**Figure 5: Actantial model of Odysseus' τίσις**



The poem signals this combination of Odysseus as narrative subject of both τίσις and νόστος by making him (and no one else) the grammatical subject of both thematic terms in a series of juxtapositions (νοστήσας ἀποτείσεται, 1.268; νοστήσει καὶ τείσεται, 14.163, 15.177; et al.). This reorganization of actantial syntax is unusual, and it leads the poem to redefine the crimes and guilt of the suitors as I discussed earlier. But it has the effect of felicitously reconciling two dominant and opposed narratives into a single master epic, focalized by the character of Odysseus.<sup>88</sup>

---

<sup>88</sup> Clay 1983, 236, likewise concludes that the “poem embraces both the Wanderings of Odysseus and the Revenge to form a unity.”



## Conclusion to Part I

Our *Odyssey* ends with Odysseus finding both vindication and a happy, long life. Odysseus emblemizes in his character the formal, artistic process of the poem's weaving together the two, opposed narratives of *τίσις* and *νόστος*. As has long been understood, Odysseus is a complicated mixture of contradictions. In him dwell the oppositions of *δόλος* and *βίη*, of the Autolycean trickster who delights in being "a care to all men" (9.19–20) and the Iliadic warrior who defeats his enemies with open force.<sup>1</sup> On my reading, the poem extends this conception of Odysseus' double nature by having him become both an avenger of family honor on the model of Orestes and a successful returning warrior-hero on the model of Nestor. By thus reconciling in the figure of its protagonist these opposing narrative tendencies, the poem has shown its mastery over two traditions. The *Odyssey* thus represents a totalizing artistic achievement in which contradictions are integrated into a single, univocal epic. Our *Odyssey* ends with Odysseus finding both vindication and a happy, long life.

This movement towards what Bakhtin calls the "monologic" quality of epic has an ideological function as well.<sup>2</sup> The poem has taken a variety of voices and organized

---

<sup>1</sup> See Cook 1995, 9, who includes further bibliography.

<sup>2</sup> See Bakhtin 1981, 3–40; Peradotto 1990, 53–58, 63; 2002. Some recent scholars have disputed Bakhtin's characterization of Homeric epic as monologic: Kahane 2005; Scodel 2002, 15–16.

them around a single vision of Odysseus as a triumphant hero. In so doing, it dramatizes how poetry falls into the service of justice, or more precisely, justification. Different speakers use τίσις as an established moral narrative to legitimate their violent actions. No one suffers more from the use of τίσις as a rhetorical and moralizing device than the suitors. At the same time, Odysseus escapes culpability because the poem has made Poseidon studiously avoid the language of τίσις, while distinguishing his companions for special condemnation. But precisely because the audience can draw such comparisons, can place, for instance, the narrative of Poseidon's revenge alongside Odysseus', the poem encodes doubts about its own program. Ultimately, the entire system of retributive justice is fraught by the manipulability of τίσις. This is especially true in the case of Odysseus' τίσις. The way the *Odyssey* has promoted the moral condemnation of the suitors, despite the tenuousness of the case against them, calls into question the very system that has allowed this outcome.

This political end is served by the poem's tying νόστος with τίσις. νόστος entails a happy end in which absent members of the πόλις rejoin and build a flourishing, long life together. Within this vision of blessings, τίσις appears as the proper form of justice. But the tensions between τίσις and νόστος inherent in their opposing narrative logics are never fully resolved. The narrative "flaws" that come about by making the two into a single poem have a particular artistic end: they disclose a similarly flawed political structure based on a system of retributive justice. Hence, these "flaws" are not flaws at

all in the conventional sense; rather, the perceptibility of these poetic shortcomings has a political purpose. The final scenes of the poem, in which the gods pitilessly eliminate the claims of the suitors' kin to τίσις and institute an apparently blessed new settlement, betray the ultimate irreconcilability of the tensions of peace and retribution. For it is only by divine intervention that the community can be reconciled and the poem can end.

But this is only the beginning of my discussion of the political implications of the narrative of τίσις, the subject of my final chapter.

## Part II. The Poetics of Justice

*And they lay wait for their own blood; they lurk privily for their own lives.*

-Proverbs 1:18

The *Odyssey's* use of the theme of *τίσις* participates in a wider cultural discourse in ancient Greece about retributive justice. Greeks used retribution in their legal and political structures, inter-state relations, theology, cosmology, visual arts, and, especially, in their literary productions. As was the case in my analysis of the *Odyssey*, a synoptic reading of these texts shows that their composers mobilize the resources of ambiguity and creative, associative reasoning to make justice. Justice based on retribution relies on finding connections between crimes and punishments. As I showed in part one, the *Odyssey* uses syntactical and semantic ambiguities to re-characterize the suitors' crimes as a form of murder; consequently, they receive a like punishment of death. Likewise, the poem depicts Poseidon basing his punishment of Odysseus for his blinding Polyphemus on an association between wandering and blinding. This is what I mean by "creative, associative reasoning": agents use their skill at making associations to find a "fitting" punishment. In this sense, justice is something created or made. Agents create it when they reckon events and persons just. Justice has a *ποίησις*, hence the title of this part of my project, "The Poetics of Justice."

In this part two of my project, building upon the analysis I presented in part one on Homeric *τίσις*, I lay out some of the most significant passages exemplifying this

discourse of retaliation in early Greek thought. These examples all arise from and re-proclaim a theory of *ius talionis*, what Kant, its ablest defender, called *das Wiedervergeltungsrecht*.<sup>1</sup> Far from being unique to the *Odyssey*, this ideology that promotes a system of justice based upon the principle of returning equivalent harm for harm runs through the heart of archaic Greek culture, and, it hardly needs to be added, is a central part of many other conceptions of justice across the ancient world.<sup>2</sup> The several different formulations of this *ius* of retaliation articulate a *lex talionis*, an oral law of precise retaliation in kind, chiefly an exchange of killing for killing. Invoking and applying this law is a poetic act—in the sense of *ποίησις* mentioned above—that serves to further wider cultural ideologies about the conquest and subjugation of states, the legitimacy of ruling regimes, the just order of the natural world, the “immanent” nature of actions,<sup>3</sup> and the meaning of ethical agency.

---

<sup>1</sup> Kant 1998, 156.

<sup>2</sup> The principle of “an eye for an eye,” as the Judeo-Christian tradition records it, has a central place in much of ancient legal thought and practice. This is evident in numerous preserved ancient legal sources: *inter alia* in the law codes of Hammurabi (esp. laws 1–12, 21–25, 129, 153, 157, 192–210, 228–53), Mosaic law and other Judeo-Christian traditions (*Gen.* 4:1–26, 9:1–7; *Exod.* 21:12–27; *Lev.* 24:10–23; *Num.* 35:16–32; *Deut.* 19:19–21; *Matt.* 5:38–42; *Rom.* 12:9–21; see also Fiensy 1983 on intertestamental and apocryphal literature), the Twelve Tables (esp. Crawford n. 40, I.13: “If someone break a limb, unless he make peace with him, let there be retaliation,” *si membrum rupit, ni cum eo pacit, talio esto*), and Germanic codes of Wergild (see Oliver 2006), to name a few. An exhaustive discussion of the tradition of the *lex talionis* is beyond the scope of the present analysis. For a comparative study across the ancient Near East, see Barmash 2005, esp. 154–77; for general studies with contemporary relevance see Waldron 1992; Murphy 2003; Miller 2006.

<sup>3</sup> On “immanent” actions, see pp. 190–92 below.

Firstly, I adduce as a banner example a passage from Alcman's *Partheneion* that illustrates many of the points I will make about *ius talionis* in other lyric poetry, Herodotus, early philosophical thought, and drama. Secondly, I look more closely at the form and use of the *lex talionis* itself. I conclude by arguing that, far from being an objective standard of justice, the *ius talionis* is ultimately manipulable to the interests of the agent rendering the judgment. As I already argued in part one, this has implications for how justice is done in the *Odyssey*, and I develop this point in more detail in part three.

## Chapter 6. The τίσις of the Tyndaridae and the Heracleidae

The epic model of τίσις has parallels in lyric poetry, especially in passages that recall the mythic traditions narrated in epic. Though lyric often uses epichoric myths to speak to more local concerns, it does so in ways that draw on the rich resources of epic diction and theme. Alcman's *Partheneion* provides a striking example of this poetic practice. As has long been recognized, the poem has inflections of epic diction and subject matter: e.g., the catalogue of slain heroes (1–11), collectively called “the best” (τῶς ἀρίστως, 11; cf. *Il.* 2.577, et al.). The catalogue includes reference to “the outworn [dead]” (καμοῦσιν, 2; cf. *Od.* 11.476, 24.14, et al.), a “swift-footed” (ποδώκη, 3; cf. *Il.* 8.474, et al.) and a “helmeted” (κορυστὰν, 5; cf. *Il.* 13.201, et al.) hero, and a hero that is “outstanding among the demigods” (ἔξοχον ἡμισίων, 7).<sup>1</sup> A passage that has especially interesting affinities with epic tradition comes at the pivot in the poem between the mythological reflections of the first few stanzas (1–35) and the more present-oriented stanzas that follow (36–101). The preserved text of the poem begins partway through a catalogue of the Hippocoontidae whom Tyndareus, his sons, and (very likely) Heracles killed because they usurped and drove out the Tyndaridae and killed Heracles' cousin

---

<sup>1</sup> On the ἔξοχον ἡμισίων, cf. ἔξοχον ἡρώων, “outstanding among heroes,” (*Il.* 18.56, 437) and cf. ἡμιθέων γένος ἀνδρῶν, “the race of demigod men,” (*Il.* 12.23), ἀνδρῶν ἡρώων θεῖον γένος, οἱ καλέονται ἡμίθεοι, “the divine race of heroes, who are called demigods,” (*Hes. Op.* 160), and ἡμιθέων ὠκύμορον γενεή[ν], “the race of swift-fated demigods,” (*Simon.* 11.18 W). See Clay 1996. Hutchinson 2001, 80–82, has identified further epic resonances in these lines.

Oeonus.<sup>2</sup> This mythological *exemplum* concludes with a gnomic moral lesson: no one should “fly to heaven” (ἐς ὤρανὸν ποτήσθω, 16) nor “try to wed Aphrodite...or the daughter of Porcus” ([πη]ρήτω γαμῆν τὰν Ἀφροδίταν... παῖδα Πόρκω, 17–19). A second passage of mythological material occupies the next stanza. Its subject is less clear and much disputed. It might resume the myth of the defeat of the Hippocoontidae or it might introduce another *exemplum*.<sup>3</sup> This stanza culminates with another gnomic utterance (34–35) on the deadly fate of men who do wrong, and the next stanza continues the line of thought with reference to the divine pattern of τίσις, from which the blessed man is exempt (34–39):

]πον· ἄλαστα δὲ  
φέργα πάσον κακὰ μῆσαμένοι.

ἔστι τις σιῶν τίσις·  
ὁ δ' ὄλβιος, ὅστις εὐφρων  
ἀμέραν [δι]απλέκει  
ἄκλαυτος.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> The details of the myth appear in other sources (e.g., Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.10.5). See Davison 1938, 441–43 and Page 1951, 26–33. Heracles' role is not clear in the preserved text, but in light of Sosibius comment (apparently on this poem) that the Hippocoontidae wounded Heracles (Clem. Al. *Protr.* 2.36), it is likely he played a part in Alcman's version. It is also possible that the refusal of the Hippocoontidae to cleanse Heracles of his killing of Iphitus lay behind his anger (Paus. 3.15.3).

<sup>3</sup> Diels 1896, 347, believed this passage concerned the battle of the gods and the giants, and many have followed his suggestion. On the various reconstructions, see Ferrari 2008, 28–29. In my discussion, I assume that the gnomic lines of 1.34–39 reflect especially upon the conflict of the Hippocoontidae and the Tyndaridae. If another myth appeared in this passage, the substance of my analysis on the syntax of 34–35 would remain true.

<sup>4</sup> I use the text and supplements of Page 1951.



] Unforgettably  
did those who plotted evil suffer.<sup>5</sup>

There is a retribution of the gods.  
But he is blessed, whoever meaning well<sup>6</sup>  
weaves his day to the end  
without weeping.

The sentence of lines 34–35, ἄλαστα δὲ φέργα πάσον κακὰ μισαμένοι, is rich in Homeric resonances, particularly in the context of narratives of τίσις. Alcman has brought together and deployed these Homeric-inflected phrases to striking effect here by creating a web of ambiguous interpretations. The audience could construe the syntax and meaning of the sentence in different ways, and this ambiguity articulates a conception of the close connection between a wrong and its punishment.

Word order presents one possible interpretation as the simplest or most straightforward, and nearly every translator has taken it this way. Taken in linear order, ἄλαστα would modify φέργα, which would be the object of πάσον, while κακὰ would

---

<sup>5</sup> The translation I provide here of lines 34–35 is only one possible way to construe the sentence, as I discuss in detail below.

<sup>6</sup> Campbell 1967, 201, takes εὐφρων as “in wisdom,” presumably on the model of εὐφρονέων (cf. *Od.* 2.160) or Plato’s remark τὸ δὲ σωφρονεῖν λέγεις εὐφρονεῖν (*Prt.* 333D). (See also Page 1951, 83–84; Calame 1983, 323). This interpretation would make the sense of the passage even more moralizing. If εὐφρων has the sense of simply “happy,” it is nearly synonymous with ἄκλαυτος and indicates that a man is counted as blessed if he completes his life free of misfortune; that is, if as a patient in the events of his life nothing evil happens to him. This is the same sentiment that Solon expresses to Croesus: a man is judged happy only once it is certain (after he has died) that no misfortune has happened to him (*Hdt.* 1.32). On the other hand, if εὐφρων has the sense of “in wisdom” or, better, “meaning well,” then the man’s life is counted as happy, at least in part, because of his good will as a subject. Certainly the latter, moralizing meaning fits with the sentiment of 34–35; but the former, with its connections to Ionian ethical thought, cannot be dismissed out of hand.

be the object of μῆσαμμένοι. Construed this way, the sentence reads, “The evil-plotting men suffered unforgettable works.” There is some support for this interpretation in parallel texts.<sup>7</sup>

Despite the immediate appeal of construing the sentence this way in line with the linear process of the audience’s listening, on closer inspection the sentence reveals a level of semantic dissonance with this syntax. φέρω is an obtrusive object for the verb πάσχω. To “suffer” (πάσχω) is a passive activity. It is the experience of being acted upon, of having something happen to the subject. Consider the prominent example from the *Odyssey’s* proem: Odysseus “suffered many woes upon the sea” (πολλὰ δ’ ὅ γ’ ἐν πόντῳ πάθεν ἄλγεα, 1.4). πάθεν ἄλγεα denotes Odysseus’ passive experience of actions against him from the opponents of his return.<sup>8</sup> In contrast, ἔργον is an active notion. The normal relationship between it and a subject is an active one: the subject is the agent that performs the ἔργον.<sup>9</sup> The etymologically related verb ἔρδω signifies a similar, active notion. It even appears juxtaposed with πάσχω as an explicitly

---

<sup>7</sup> For ἔργον πάσχω, cf. *Il.* 18.77; Pind. *Isthm.* 2.24. For κακὰ μῆδομαι, cf. *Il.* 6.157, 7.478, 10.52, 14.253, 21.19, 21.413; *Od.* 3.166, 12.295, 14.243, 24.199; Aesch. *Ag.* 1102; Soph. *Phil.* 1139; Eur. *HF* 1076.

<sup>8</sup> Note also that the typical objects of πάσχω all denote the subject’s experience of actions rather than his active performance of them: ἄλγεα, *Il.* 9.321, *Od.* 1.4; πήματα, *Il.* 5.886; *Od.* 1.49, 190; Thgn. 361; Aesch. *Pr.* 472, κήδεα, *Od.* 17.555, or the idiom τι/τί παθεῖν, *Il.* 11.404; *Od.* 5.465, 12.321, 17.596. As I explain below, there are also many examples of κακόν and κακά as objects of πάσχω.

<sup>9</sup> Typically, ἔργον is the object of verbs that denote (in the active voice) the agency of the subject in accomplishing some “deed”: (ἐπι)τίθημι, *Il.* 3.321; *Od.* 8.245; πειράω, *Od.* 18.369; (ἐκ)τελέω, *Il.* 7.465; Hes. *Sc.* 38; ῥέζω, *Il.* 10.51; *Od.* 24.458; Hes. *Th.* 210–11.

contrastive concept where the two verbs together express the totality of a subject's experience, the entirety of what he actively does and passively suffers. For instance, when Demodocus sings of the fate of Achaeans, he tells of "how many things they did and suffered" (ὄσσ' ἔρξαν τ' ἔπαθόν τε, *Od.* 8.490).<sup>10</sup> As this last example suggests, it is a rhetorical trope to oppose the ideas of πάσχω and ἔργον (and related words). To consider another example, in his *Fourth Nemean Ode* Pindar concludes his brief allusion to Telamon's slaying of Alcyoneus with a gnome: "It befits one doing something also to suffer" (ῥέζοντά τι καὶ παθεῖν ἔοικεν, 32). Here again the two different poles of experience of an action—the active and the passive—are juxtaposed by way of the verbs ῥέζω (related to ἔργον) and πάσχω.<sup>11</sup>

Now, as I mentioned earlier, there are parallel texts where ἔργον is the object of πάσχω; however, in all extant texts down through the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC I have been able to find only two such instances.<sup>12</sup> It is much more common to "plot" (μήδομαι) ἔργα than to "suffer" (πάσχω) them.<sup>13</sup> On the other hand, it is very common to have κακὰ as the

---

<sup>10</sup> Cf. also Pind. *Nem.* 4.32; Hdt. 5.89.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. also the juxtapositions at Hdt. 5.89; Eur. *Hec.* 252–53.

<sup>12</sup> *Il.* 18.77; Pind. *Isthm.* 2.24.

<sup>13</sup> I have found 21 instances of ἔργον acting as the object of μήδομαι: *Il.* 2.38, 10.289, 21.19, 22.395, 23.24, 176; *Od.* 3.261, 11.429, 474, 24.199, 426, 444; *Hymn. Hom. Cer.* 351; *Hymn. Hom. Merc.* 46; Hes. *Th.* 166, 172; Hes. *Sc.* 34; Hes. fr. 195.24 MW, 204.96 MW; Pind. *Nem.* 10.64; Soph. fr. 10c R.

object of *πάσχω*, to “suffer evils”;<sup>14</sup> though it is also relatively common to have *κακὰ* as the object of *μήδομαι*, to “plot evils.”<sup>15</sup> Another way to put this is to say that while “plotting deeds” is an established formulaic phrase in Homeric diction that later authors also pick up, “suffering deeds” is not.

The conclusion I draw from this is that the linear flow of the sentence is in conflict with its normal semantics. This dissonance suggests to the audience that there might be an alternative way of understanding this sentence. To this end, I note that *ἔργα* and *κακὰ* frequently come together as a single phrase, “evil deeds.”<sup>16</sup> Two examples of this from Homer are especially relevant.<sup>17</sup> The first is used of Achilles as he enters the river Xanthus (*Il.* 21.19) and before he lights Patroclus’ pyre (23.176). The second is used of Clytemnestra in reference to her conspiracy with Aegisthus (*Od.* 24.199)—an act, it should be noted, that, like the crimes of the Hippocoontidae, precipitates *τίσις*:

κακὰ δὲ φρεσὶ μήδετο ἔργα

He was plotting evil deeds in his mind. (*Il.* 21.19, 23.176)

---

<sup>14</sup> Examples are too numerous to catalog. Phrases such as *κακά περ πάσχοντες* (*Od.* 10.189, et al.) and *κακὰ πολλὰ παθῶν* (*Od.* 3.116, et al.) are formulaic in Homer.

<sup>15</sup> See p. 175 n. 7 above.

<sup>16</sup> Hom. *Il.* 9.595, 15.97; *Od.* 2.67, 8.329, 9.477, 14.284, 16.380, 17.158, 226, 18.362, 20.16, 23.64, 24.326; Thgn. 1150; Neophr. fr. 3.3.

<sup>17</sup> Commentators (Campbell 1967, 201; Calame 1983, 322; Hutchinson 2001, 84) have noted the second of these parallels in passing, but have not drawn out the implications of taking Alcman’s sentence in line with it as I do here.

ὥς Τυνδαρέου κούρη κακὰ μήσατο ἔργα

As the daughter of Tyndareus plotted evil deeds... (*Od.* 24.199)

In these phrases, κακὰ and ἔργα together form the object of the verb μῆδομαι, even though they are separated by their verb. These phrases thus demonstrate two things that apply to the syntax of Alcman's sentence. Firstly, φέργα and κακὰ may serve as a single constituent even though they are separated by the verb that takes them as its object. Thus, in Alcman's sentence φέργα and κακὰ may together serve as the object of the intervening verb, πάσον. Secondly, in contrast, these Homeric phrases show that the well-attested natural pair of φέργα...κακὰ may serve together as an object of a different verb, since in these phrases they are objects of μῆδομαι. Likewise, in Alcman's sentence they may naturally act as the object of the participle μησαμένοι, an inflection of the same verb. These Homeric examples thus indicate that each of these ways of construing φέργα...κακὰ is possible. Furthermore, because the most common pairing among the four words in line 35 is κακὰ with πάσον,<sup>18</sup> the appeal of construing these together is strong; in contrast, the least common pairing is φέργα with πάσον and the appeal of construing these words together is weaker, despite word order.<sup>19</sup> This tension between word order and semantics leads the audience to perceive the pair φέργα...κακὰ as

---

<sup>18</sup> See p. 177 n. 14 above.

<sup>19</sup> There are only two known instances of this pairing: see p. 176 n. 12 above.

serving simultaneously as the object for both the verb and the participle. To summarize my argument, the phrase ἄλαστα...φέργα...κακὰ serves through a figure of zeugma as the object of both πάσον and μῆσαμένοι: “Plotting unforgettable evil deeds, they suffered them.” On this reading, the reference of ἄλαστα...φέργα...κακὰ is ambiguous: it is both the crimes of the Hippocoontidae and their punishment at the hands of Heracles and the Tyndaridae.

The effect of this ambiguity is to draw a close, nearly synonymous connection between evil done and evil suffered. The two are one and the same, two sides of a single action.<sup>20</sup> In normal experience, humans cannot experience this synonymy personally. It is split between the agent and the patient of the act. For instance, according to one version of the tradition that lies behind Alcman’s poem, Hippocoon and his sons did evil by killing Oeonus.<sup>21</sup> The Hippocoontidae thus experienced the agent’s aspect of the act of killing, whereas Oeonus faced the patient side of the act—and died. The act of killing is thus separated into two perspectives: the active and the passive, killer and killed. But it remains a single action. If an actor who once was on the active side of the action later experiences the passive side, it must necessarily be a different action and cannot be

---

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Socrates’ argument that an action has a single, objective character, regardless of the differences of how an agent and a patient experience it. If it is just for an agent to punish someone, it is just for that person to suffer the punishment, because the quality of justice inheres in the action itself (Pl. *Grg.* 476). The argument is similar to that at *Resp.* 438. A. E. Taylor 1926, 114, has called this synonymy of agent/patient experience “the interconnexion between the modalities of correlates.”

<sup>21</sup> Diod. Sic. 4.33.5; Apollod. *Bibl.* 2.7.3; Paus. 3.15.4–6.

identical to the action he first performed, because the circumstances of the event have changed. When the Hippocoontidae face the revenge of Heracles and experience the passive side of the act of killing, it is at a different time and place and at another's hand. Their death is symmetrical, talionic in so far as it expresses an exchange of like for like, of homicide for homicide. But the events are distinct. They happen in different contexts to different actors.

In Alcman's summary of the myth, matters are different. The distance between action and symmetrical reaction, as well as between agent and patient, disappears. Through the poetic effect of syntactical ambiguity, the Hippocoontidae plot and suffer the same "evil deeds" (Ἔργα...κακὰ). Notionally, from a synchronic perspective, they are the objects of their own destructive action and so, in effect, commit retributive suicide. As I discuss in more detail below, this sentence is a finely-crafted example of a proverb widely known in early Greek thought that connects the experiences of suffering and doing into a single, double-sided whole.<sup>22</sup> In Alcman's poem this proverbial justice of reciprocity rules the universe as divine law: "A retribution of the gods exists" (ἔστι τις σιῶν τίσις, 36). Calvert Watkins has reconstructed a proto-Greek form of this gnome as a palindrome: *\*esti k<sup>w</sup>is t<sup>h</sup>eôn k<sup>w</sup>itis* or, with a phonetic resegmentation, *\*es tik<sup>w</sup>is t<sup>h</sup>eôn*

---

<sup>22</sup> See chapter 7, in which I discuss the ideology of the *lex talionis*.

*k<sup>w</sup>itis*, which he calls “an icon of the reciprocal nature of ‘the vengeance.’”<sup>23</sup> As with the preceding lines 34–35, poetic effects (here phonetic) reflect and support semantics.

Vengeance is a single, double-sided action.

In contrast to this picture of *τίσις* as a simultaneity of crime and punishment, the normal logic of *τίσις* is that, in the fullness of time, the evil doings of an actor will come to redound upon his own head in the form of symmetrical justice. On this understanding, *τίσις* is a narrative, a sequence of actions experienced by actors, which rules the universe as a divine law, the “vengeance of the gods” (36). Though this law “exists” in the universe apart from human agency, it is realized diachronically through the ordered, sequential narratives of human actions. Thus, as Alcman recounts in the successive lines of a catalog of the dead Hippocoontidae who fall one after the other in battle, *τίσις* works itself out through the narrative sequence of the retribution of Heracles and the Tyndaridae. This law of *τίσις* reverses the subject’s experience of violence so that he becomes its object, only the exchange of agent/patient position is delayed in accordance with the regular order of the cosmos. This gradual progress of justice through time is a key element of the conventions of *τίσις* in Greek thought.

Likewise, Alcman also gives time an important role in the administration of “positive” justice (i.e., the distribution of benefits) for those who do well. In contrast to

---

<sup>23</sup> Watkins 1995, 103–4.



the ill fate of the Hippocoontidae, Alcman presents a beatitude: that man is “happy” (ὄλβιος) who “weaves his day to the end without weeping” (ἀμέραν [δι]απλέκει ἄκλαυτος, 37–39).<sup>24</sup> Just as those who do evil face the deserts of their deeds in the end, those who do well (the εὐφρονες)<sup>25</sup> achieve the state of blessedness. But it is only after completing the fabric of one’s life, “weaving” it “to the end,” that “happiness” can be found. Time’s progression brings about the harmonious, proper order of “the proportion between welfare and well-doing,” as Kant put it.<sup>26</sup> This sequential picture of justice stands in contrast to the view encoded in the gnomic lines of 34–36, where Alcman has de-chronologized the narrative of justice. In those lines, Alcman strips away what Roland Barthes has called the “chronological illusion” of the narrative in order to put on display the essential unitary logic of τίσις.<sup>27</sup> Alcman has combined in this poem both perspectives on the time of justice in order to capture, at once, both the bounded, temporal experience of justice and its underlying, singular logic.

Famously, Solon finds the implication of time’s progression on the development of τίσις to be that no one should call a man ὄλβιος before he has died (Hdt. 1.32.7). Soon

---

<sup>24</sup> The weaving metaphor is common, though this particular use of ἡμέρα as its object to signify a span of time is unusual. See Page 1951, 84. In the terms of I. A. Richards 1936, 96, ἡμέρα is the vehicle and “the time-span of life” the tenor. Cf. also *Od.* 3.208.

<sup>25</sup> See p. 174 n. 6 above.

<sup>26</sup> Kant 1956, 40.

<sup>27</sup> Barthes 1975, 251.

after Solon shares this deduction with Croesus—a man who, from his own temporally limited point of view, believed himself to be happy—Croesus’ life begins to turn toward the worse with the accidental death of his son. This misfortune is the first event in the long-delayed *τίσις* that the Delphic oracle had foretold long before would come:

“Vengeance will come for the Heraclidae upon the fifth generation of Gyges”

(*Ἡρακλείδησι τίσις ἦξει ἐς τὸν πέμπτον ἀπόγονον Γύγεω*, 1.13.2). When Croesus consults the Delphic oracle for an explanation of why his downfall came, he learns that he, as the fifth generation descended from Gyges, “fulfilled the crime of his fifth ancestor” (*πέμπτου γονέος ἀμαρτάδα ἐξέπλησε*, 1.91.1).

To “fulfill a crime” is an unusual phrase: nowhere else in the extant corpus of Greek literature does *ἀμαρτάς* (or *ἀμαρτία*) serve as the object of *ἐκπίμπλημι*. It is unique to this context. The verb *ἐκπίμπλημι* commonly appears in prophetic statements. This meaning derives from an etymological sense of “completing” or “filling up,” as in filling to the brim a *krater* with wine (e.g., *Eur. Ion* 1194–95). In Herodotus, the things which one “fulfills” are different in character from a “crime.” Adrastus fulfilled “the message of [Croesus’] dream” (*τοῦ ὀνείρου τὴν φήμην*, 1.43.3) that Croesus’ son Atys would die by the blow of an iron spear (1.34.2). Polycrates fulfilled “his fate” (*μοῖραν τὴν ἑωυτοῦ*, 3.142.3) by dying at the hands of Oroetes, a fate that his seers and daughter had foreseen and warned him about (3.124–25). Likewise, Arcesilaus fulfilled “his fate” (*μοῖραν τὴν ἑωυτοῦ*, 4.164.4) by burning the tower in which his enemies had

fled after his return to Cyrene, an act that he realized too late the oracle of Delphi had warned him against (4.163.2–3). Babylonian women have fulfilled “the custom” (τὸν νόμον, 1.199.5) if they have had intercourse with one stranger in exchange for money at the temple of Mylitta during the course of their life. Likewise, Sauromatian women have fulfilled “the custom” (τὸν νόμον, 4.117) if they have killed an enemy man and thus become marriageable. Outside Herodotus, the ἐκπίμπλημι denotes the fulfillment of similar concepts: e.g., “prayers” (ἀράς, Eur. *Phoen.* 1426), “destined fate of murder” (πεπρωμένην...μοῖραν...φόνου, Eur. *El.* 1290), “destined lot” (πεπρωμέν[α]ν αἴσαν, Bacchyl. 3.26–27). In a later context, πίμπλημι (without the prefix ἐκ-) is well-known for its use in the New Testament in prophetic contexts (cf. *Luke* 1:20). A telling example is Luke’s use of the verb to describe the arrival of the time of John the Baptist’s birth: “The time was fulfilled for Elizabeth to give birth and she bore a son” (τῇ δὲ Ἐλισάβετ ἐπλήσθη ὁ χρόνος τοῦ τεκεῖν αὐτήν, καὶ ἐγέννησεν υἱόν, *Luke* 1:57). Here, pregnancy is “fulfilled” when it results in its expected outcome, the birth of a child.

All these examples indicate that “fulfilling” something means completing a pattern that was set down earlier and reaching an expected goal. With νόμοι, societies have established laws or customs that present persons with expected courses of action that they can “complete.” Babylonian women fulfill a νόμος when they temporarily act as prostitutes. This νόμος, in essence, anticipates (as well as demands) the course of action that Babylonian women must follow; it reveals this expected course of action to a

woman before she does it, and by doing as it directs she “fulfills” it. Prayers similarly present a course of action that at the moment of their utterance is unaccomplished, but they contain an expectation, or at least hope, that the pattern they present will come to pass. Of these examples, μοῖρα perhaps fits best within this semantic field. The course of actions it entails is ineluctable, “even for a god” (καὶ θεῶν, Hdt. 1.91.1). One aspect of Croesus’ μοῖρα was that his son Atys would die by an iron spear. Croesus learned of this fate in the form of a “message of a dream” (τοῦ ὄνειρου τὴν φήμην, 1.43.3). This φήμη set down an expected course of events that Croesus would fulfill by sending his son on a boar hunt with Adrastus, who would accidentally kill Atys with his spear. In these cases the metaphoric conception of a prophetic statement or a νόμος is that, like an empty *krater*, it lacks some natural component. At a later point a person can “fill” that empty space or void in narrative expectations.

On the face of it, these examples seem different from ἀμαρτίας. How can a “crime” or “mistake” be like a νόμος, φήμη, ἀρά, or μοῖρα, which contain a set of expectations for how events will unfold? How can someone “fulfill” a ἀμαρτίας?<sup>28</sup>

Amongst the many discussions of prophecy and the λόγος of Croesus scholars have not

---

<sup>28</sup> Some scholars have gotten around this difficulty by translating ἐξέπλησε as “expiated” (e.g., Goldhill 2002, 25), but this is a form of special pleading, translating the idea this word seems to convey in this context but ignoring its normal semantics elsewhere.

addressed this question.<sup>29</sup> But the answer suggests something important about the nature of *τίσις*. The crime of Gyges—murdering Candaules and taking his wife and kingdom—already contains and implies the eventual downfall of the Mermnadae. The result of this is that to commit a *ἀμαρτάς* is to will not only the initial crime but also the punishment that one faces as a result. The perpetrator chooses to suffer for what he did in the act of doing it.<sup>30</sup>

Like a νόμος, Gyges' *ἀμαρτάς* sets forth expectations for how events will proceed, in this case the commonly understood narrative pattern of *τίσις*, now played out at the macro-historical scale over generations. The Heraclidae's *τίσις* on the Mermnadae follows the narrative pattern I established for *τίσις* in the *Odyssey* in part one, with a few slight variations. Candaules did not leave his home, but he did prove dangerously imprudent in giving his wife cause and opportunity to murder him (stage 1). The criminal, Gyges, conspires (under compulsion) with Candaules' wife (stage 3) and murders him, taking over his wife and kingdom (stage 4). He receives a prophecy (in this case, after the fact) that warns of the retribution to come, and they take no

---

<sup>29</sup> For instance, Asheri et al., ad 1.43.2, discuss the meaning of “fulfill” but ignore the ways in which this usage is unusual.

<sup>30</sup> This is the basis upon which Hegel 1896, 97 (§100), justifies punishment: “The injury which the criminal experiences is inherently just because it expresses his own inherent will, is a visible proof of his freedom and is his right. But more than that, the injury is a right of the criminal himself, and is implied in his realized will or act. In his act, the act of a rational being, is involved a universal element, which by the act is set up as a law. This law he has recognized in his act, and has consented to be placed under it as under his right.”

account of it (stage 2). With the rise of Cyrus and Croesus' own recklessness, the act of retribution is prepared (stage 5). When Sardis falls and Croesus loses his kingdom, vengeance is done (stage 6) so that a new order of things is established with a new political regime in control (stage 7). The largest exception to the pattern is the position of the prophetic warning. Most other examples in Herodotus of prophetic warnings precede the event. In this case it comes after the deed, and this is so that Herodotus can add an element of tragic compulsion to Gyges' crime. Herodotus makes Gyges as innocent as possible: he must choose to kill Candaules or die himself. The motive of his murder was only that he might continue to live, "persist" (περιεῖναι, 1.11.4). No hint of warning is present that might make him accountable for the consequences to his descendants for his crime. Gyges is perhaps in this regard the best illustration of the man who, in Solon's remarkable phrase, is pure chance (συμφορή, 1.32.4).

In this respect, Croesus is rather more culpable, since he received plenty of warnings—oracles, dreams, advice of wise visitors—that he did not heed.<sup>31</sup> In Homeric terms, he is the justifiable victim of τίσις for his ἀτασθαλία—though Herodotus never uses the term this way. The fact that his ἀτασθαλία consists of errors of interpretation and reasoning does not preclude the kind of moral culpability Penelope's suitors have. Although the suitors disregarded several direct warnings, including those from

---

<sup>31</sup> On Croesus' guilt, see Sewell-Rutter 2007, 10.

Odysseus in disguise (*Od.* 17.414–611, 8.119–571, 8.365–86), their recklessness consists also in their mistaken interpretation of signs. For example, Eurymachus discounts Halitherses’ interpretation of the sight of two eagles fighting and, using prophetic language,<sup>32</sup> offers instead his own prediction that foretells ill for Halitherses and Telemachus. Croesus’ reckless mistakes make him repay for the “error” (ἀμαρτάς) of Gyges through a series of his and others’ “errors.” In a clever play on the different meanings of ἀμαρτάνω, Herodotus has Adrastus “miss” (ἀμαρτάνει) the boar he aims for and hit and kill Croesus’ son Atys (1.43.2). Atys, thus, “having being struck by the spear fulfilled the prophecy of Croesus’ dream” that his son would die (βληθεὶς τῇ αἰχμῇ ἐξέπλησε τοῦ ὀνειύρου τὴν φήμην, 1.43.3). Later Croesus “misunderstands” (ἀμαρτών, 1.71.1; cf. τὴν ἀμαρτάδα, 1.91.6) the prophecy of the Delphic oracle and so leads his kingdom to lose its war with Cyrus.<sup>33</sup> Herodotus’ narration of the story of Croesus culminates with the final response of the Delphic oracle, which is framed by reference to ἀμαρτάδες. The oracle begins with a declaration that the ἀμαρτάς that was foretold to Croesus’ ancestors has now been fulfilled, before rebuking Croesus (1.91.1).

---

<sup>32</sup> His statement, “This will come to pass” (τὸ δὲ καὶ τετελεσμένον ἔσται, 2.187), responds to Halitherses’, “And now indeed all these things are coming to pass” (τὰ δὲ δὴ νῦν πάντα τελεῖται, 176).

<sup>33</sup> Herodotus uses this motif once more in the story mentioned earlier of Arcesilaus’ error of burning the tower he had been warned not to by the Delphic oracle. Thus, “having mistaken the prophecy, he fulfilled his fate” (ἀμαρτών τοῦ χρησμοῦ ἐξέπλησε μοῖραν τὴν ἑωυτοῦ, 4.164.4).

Croesus' response to the oracle closes the story (1.91.6), as he recognizes that it was his own ἀμαρτάς that led him to disaster and to fulfill the ἀμαρτάς of Gyges.

Where five generations earlier Gyges reaped benefits from his ἀμαρτάς, now Croesus finds punishment through his own ἀμαρτάδες; Gyges gained his kingdom through his ἀμαρτάς, while Croesus loses it through his. τίσις, thus, brings about a cyclic return so that the Mermnadae become the victims of their own transgressions. As François Hartog observes, the story of Croesus' downfall is a programmatic *exemplum* of the cyclic wax and wane of all human endeavors.<sup>34</sup> In Herodotus' conception, the most visible of human projects to grow and decline over the course of history are cities (ἄστυα), but these are only instances of a more universal claim: "Human happiness never remains in the same place" (τὴν ἀνθρώπινην ὦν...εὐδαιμονίην οὐδαμὰ ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ μένουσαν, 1.5.4). On Herodotus' view, the mutability of fortune contains what Christopher Pelling has called a "temporal element."<sup>35</sup> τίσις comes about only after some length of time, but as the oracle of Delphi portrays the ἀμαρτάς of Gyges, the original crime itself is already pregnant: it contains a certain "lack" that will naturally be filled. Gyges' ἀμαρτάς, thus, is not simply a mistake alone, but also the consequences of that error. It is at one and the same time synchronic and diachronic. It is a singular,

---

<sup>34</sup> Hartog 199, 191. In 2006 three major articles appeared on the role of the story of Croesus and his consultation of oracles within Herodotus' larger program: Kindt 2006; Pelling 2006; Barker 2006. See also Kurke 2009, 417–18, 37–38.

<sup>35</sup> Pelling 2006, 146.



momentary action or decision that an agent takes within his immediate context; but it is also the developing effects that the agent's action has upon the flow of history.

Because, on this view, *τίσις* has a natural form, perceptive agents can predict the course of the pattern before it has become fully formed. To use the wool-working metaphor common in archaic discussions of fate and justice, the first lines of the pattern in the fabric of justice foretell how the rest of the fabric will be woven. Those who know how the pattern tends to develop, as Greeks schooled in Homeric and Hesiodic poetry do, can predict the final form of the garment. Or, consider Solon's extended elegy on *τίσις*, with its similes that compare *τίσις* with a fire or spring wind that have meager beginnings yet lead inevitably to destruction and clearing away (Sol. fr. 13.14–25; cf. 9.1–4; 12).<sup>36</sup> With these analogies, Solon makes *τίσις* a part of the natural, orderly world where consequences always follow actions, where cause and effect are intimately bound together, each implying the other in a single, united whole. Werner Jaeger has insightfully called this view “die immanente Gerechtigkeit.”<sup>37</sup> Because justice—the movement of circumstances from wrong to right—is naturally and immanently present in all of human endeavors, its ultimate effects are ineluctable. Thus Solon asserts,

---

<sup>36</sup> On these similes, see Noussia 2006, 140–46. On the notion of a natural law in these examples that connects the necessary sequence of cause and effect in the nature with a similar pattern of cause and effect in social life, see Jaeger 1939, 142; 1966, 90–93. As Jaeger rightly sees Solonian justice, crimes against the natural order contain their own punishment.

<sup>37</sup> Jaeger 1960, 329.

“Justice”—the natural, customary, and proper order of things—“surely comes later” (πάντως ὕστερον ἦλθε δίκη, 13.8; cf. “Justice... surely comes in time to avenge” (Δίκης..., ἦ... τῷ δὲ χρόνῳ πάντως ἦλθ’ ἀποτεισομένη, 4.14–16; 36.3).<sup>38</sup> Nothing separates the natural realm from the political, so that the same kind of orderliness holds for a state when it is well-governed: cf. “Lawfulness reveals all well-ordered and fitting things” (Εὐνομία δ’ εὐκόσμη καὶ ἄρτια πάντ’ ἀποφαίνει, 4.32). Solon opposes this justice to the disorderliness of unjust actions: wealth acquired through violence comes not in accordance with good order (οὐ κατὰ κόσμον ἔρχεται, 13.12–13) but through “unjust deeds” (ἀδίκους ἔργασι, 13.13, cf. 4.11).

The pattern of *τίσις* exists in the cosmos apart from the present state of affairs as the *telos* toward which events trend. Thus Solon can say of Zeus, the ultimate guarantor of justice, that he “looks to the end of all things” (Ζεὺς πάντων ἐφορᾷ τέλος, 13.17). Humans are finite and bounded by the limitations of their present experience in which they, unlike Zeus, cannot objectively view the full pattern of justice. They can only extrapolate.<sup>39</sup> *τίσις*, therefore, often appears prophetic, a vision of reality from another time breaking in upon the present. As I discussed earlier, *τίσις* signifies an entire

---

<sup>38</sup> See also Blaise 2006, 119, on the nature of Solonian justice, which she characterizes as “the implacable logic of a natural process that cannot be avoided once it has begun.”

<sup>39</sup> Compare Herodotus’ depiction of this Solonian wisdom when he has Solon tell Croesus “it is necessary to look at the conclusion of every matter, how it will end” (σκοπέειν δὲ χρὴ παντός χρημάτων τὴν τελευτὴν κτὴ ἀποβήσεται, 1.32.9). In this case, Solon is imagining an external, *ex post facto* perspective, precisely the kind of position that is unavailable to a mortal while events are unfolding.

narrative whole, and any reference to it must invoke some retrospective view of a completed narrative.<sup>40</sup> But when *τίσις* breaks in upon the discourse of the present, speakers and audiences are invoking an imagined, displaced standpoint in the future from which to view the totality of present events. In effect, such speakers are positioning themselves outside of the limitations of the progress of time so that they can perceive the effects that time will have. Solon, however, is skeptical of the ability, or at least willingness, of most men to understand how *τίσις* will unfold for them (13.65–66). But a few, wise men—seers, singers, and the like (and Solon assuredly numbers himself among them)—can perceive “evil that is coming from far off” (*κακὸν τηλόθεν ἐρχόμενον*, 13.54).

Solon’s political take on *τίσις* links the just order of nature with the just order of human communities. Solon’s application of this logic to Athenian political life has a Spartan parallel in the politics of Alcman’s *Partheneion*. Gloria Ferrari has recently argued that the *Partheneion* was one of the rituals at Sparta that “had the function of linking the orderly workings of the cosmos to the well-ordered city.”<sup>41</sup> The most essential element of this cosmic order is the regular, diachronic progression of the

---

<sup>40</sup> See pp. 31–33 above.

<sup>41</sup> Ferrari 2008, 107. See also 106–18. Her interpretation is controversial, particularly on the point of the identification of the chorus with astral bodies: see Podlecki 2009; Eckerman 2009. Nonetheless, my reading of 34–39 is consistent with her interpretation, especially as it supports her view that the poem connects the regular progression of time and the seasons with political order.

heavenly bodies, whose cyclic motions (embodied, Ferrari suggests, in the dancing of the poem's chorus) reflect the cycles of community order. As the heavens turn, the seasons progress and the times of planting and harvest return.<sup>42</sup> On my reading, the vision of cosmic order expressed in this poem is a cycle of return back to the point of origin. In social order this means the subject of an act of violence comes full circle back to that act again—only on his return as the object of the act. But this return is gradual, leaving wrong-doers very often blind to the truth of their crimes: that they are as much victims as their intended targets. Alcman's poetic move in 1.34–35 serves as a warning, for it discloses the true unity of crime and punishment normally separated and hidden by the slow progress of time. This is why he underscores that their "evil deeds" (φέρογα...κακὰ) are "unforgotten" (ἄλαστα): their crimes are unaffected by the passage of time and become their punishment.

There are some important general points to make regarding the ideology of τίσις expressed in Alcman, Herodotus, and Solon. The message encoded in the gnomic lines 34–39 of the *Partheneion* presents one regime's rule—the reinstated Tyndaridae's—as the just arrangement of a natural order: one regime suffers and another replaces it as the natural cycle of violence matching violence demands. Therefore, one purpose that a

---

<sup>42</sup> Ferrari, 2008, 106–8, 128–35, connects the *Partheneion* with the celebration of the Karneia and the onset of winter. In this connection, Anaximander's portrayal of the transaction of τίσις and δίκη in the cosmic, diachronic drama of creation (γένεσις) and destruction (φθορά) makes the same connection between the cycles of celestial order and the cycles of political life (fr. 1). See Jaeger 1939, 158–61.

narrative of τίσις can serve is to explain why a ruling regime holds the place it does. As I discuss in the final chapter, this political role of τίσις is crucial in the final scene of *Odyssey*.

The justice maintained by retribution is part of the intrinsic fabric of the universe in which wrong-doers experience the very same crime they committed. Thus, the Hippocoontidae who overthrew Tyndareus and the Mermnadae who overthrew the Heracleidae are themselves overthrown. Because of the natural cycle of justice, where all evil-doers eventually come to evil ends, every crime implies its punishment. In an important sense, an act of rebellion already contains within it the later subjection of its actor. The words “already” and “later” are significant here. The orderliness of retributive justice is realized through time, so that what appears to be disordered and unjust at any one moment from a finite, mortal perspective is ultimately orderly and just from a diachronic point of view. From the external position that, for instance, singers and audiences (authors and readers) can have, the full picture of the cyclic nature of justice is visible: political regimes, cities, and empires rise and then fall, like the seasons. Justice is thus complete.

## Chapter 7. *Lex Talionis*

Alcman's gnomic *sententia*, "Unforgettably did those who plot evil suffer," is only one instance of a whole family of utterances that attest to a commonplace law of reciprocal exchange of harm for harm. This law represents the use of the narrative of *τίσις* in legal structures. Commonly called the *lex talionis*, it extends well beyond Greek culture and is something of a universal principle.<sup>1</sup> In this chapter, I aim to outline some of the major characteristics of this law, tracing important instances of it in early Greek texts. As is generally the case in archaic Greece, our best textual evidence comes in the form of poetry, and I shall discuss a representative but partial sampling of such utterances.

There are several key aspects of the *lex talionis* in early Greek culture to which I draw attention in this chapter. Firstly, it constitutes an unwritten, adaptable law that speakers can call upon and reproduce in a form that suits the moment. Applying this law constitutes a linguistic performance. Secondly, on the recognized authority of this claim (often divinely sanctioned) speakers can justify a violent action by characterizing it as reciprocation for an antecedent, equivalent act of violence. This correspondence of crime and punishment occurs at the linguistic level, where the use of the same terms in

---

<sup>1</sup> See p. 170 n. 2 above.

the description of the punishment for a crime as in the description of the crime itself is common. This linguistic correspondence extends even as far as using grammatical ambiguity to represent a crime and its punishment by a single instance of a term, as I already illustrated with Alcman 1.36. Thirdly, speakers tie crime and punishment so closely together that they represent as synchronous the naturally diachronic process of justice.

Before turning to the *lex talionis* in poetry, I begin with Aristotle, who, as often in the study of Greek culture, provides a good touchstone.

In the fifth book of his *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle is concerned with justice as a virtue (δικαιοσύνη or τὸ δίκαιον). In this context he distinguishes between “distributive” justice (ἐν ταῖς διανομαῖς) and “corrective” justice (διορθωτικόν). He further subdivides the latter into “voluntary transactions” (συναλλάγματα ἐκούσια)—market transactions in which both parties consent (e.g., buying, selling, lending, etc.)—and “involuntary transactions” (συναλλάγματα ἀκούσια)—criminal transactions in which one of the parties does not give consent (e.g., theft, adultery, murder, etc.) (5.2.12–13, 1130b30–1131a9).

The last category, corrective justice in involuntary transactions, is how Aristotle thinks punishment for crimes ought to be conceptualized. He distinguishes this conception of punishment and his other forms of justice from the principle of *ius talionis*. Retaliatory justice, he says, “does not fit” (οὐκ ἐφαρμόττει) either distributive or

corrective justice. According to Aristotle, the Pythagoreans espoused this form of justice, which Aristotle calls “suffering in return” (τὸ ἀντιπεπονθός), or “suffering in return for another” (τὸ ἀντιπεπονθός ἄλλῳ) (5.5.1–3, 1132b20–25).

Not much survives of the Pythagorean view of punitive justice. This brief passage from Aristotle is the clearest extant statement. Some Pythagoreans seemed to have believed that they would face judgment by Persephone in the afterlife. She would judge whether or not they had paid the appropriate penalty for their sins (paid through suffering in Hades or, perhaps, already paid on earth).<sup>2</sup> In a dialogue on immortality, Plato preserves a fragment of a poem by Pindar that is usually assumed to have been composed for a Pythagorean patron (Pl. *Men.* 81B). Pindar here reflects the Pythagorean view of a post-mortem judgment: Persephone “accepts their payment for the ancient grief” (Φερσεφόνα ποινὰν παλαιοῦ πένθεος δέξεται, fr. 133.1–2). However, the character of their ποινὰν, “punishment,” – whether it be the graphic punishment of those like Tantalus whom Odysseus encounters in Hades in the *Odyssey* or some other form of penalty – is left unstated. The only description we have is Aristotle’s brief allusion which attributes the observance of *ius talionis* to the Pythagoreans.

---

<sup>2</sup> See Pindar *Ol.* 2.56–77 and fr. 133 (= KR 284, 410). It is usually assumed that Pindar’s patrons for these songs were Pythagorean. See Saunders 1991, 55–61, who thinks the punishment occurs in earthly life, though he admits fr. 133 may indicate a punishment in Hades.



There is at least one other piece of evidence that might speak to a Pythagorean principle of *ius talionis*. In his *Historiae Mirabiles*, Apollonius the paradoxographer records an interesting anecdote about Pythagoras, which he says he drew from Aristotle (*Hist. Mir.* 6):

Ἀριστοτέλης γράφων περὶ αὐτοῦ πολλά μὲν καὶ ἄλλα λέγει, καὶ τὸν ἐν Τυρρηνίᾳ, φησὶν, δάκνοντα θανάσιμον ὄφιν αὐτὸς δάκνων ἀπέκτεινεν.

Aristotle says much else about him in his writings, also that “In Tyrrenia,” he says, “he killed a deadly snake that was biting him by biting it himself.”

Even though this anecdote comes down to us from a relatively late source (even if it goes back to Aristotle, it is still 200 years or so after the historical floruit of Pythagoras), it at least reflects the Pythagorean tradition that continued through the classical period. And it is this later tradition’s view of retaliatory justice with which Aristotle is engaging (hence, his reference to “the Pythagoreans” (οἱ Πυθαγόρειοι, 5.5.1, 1132b22)). The anecdote Aristotle relates here has several telling internal symmetries. A snake’s own weapon (its bite) is turned against itself—the repetition of the participle “biting” (δάκνοντα, δάκνων) underlines this reversion of harm. The effect of Pythagoras’ bite is to “kill” (ἀπέκτεινεν) the snake, which recalls the snake’s attribute of being “death-causing” (θανάσιμον) and turns it back upon the snake itself. This anecdote thus records a demonstration of a principle of talionic punishment. On this reading, the

snake's "crime" is that it bit a man, quite possibly killing him, in return for which, according to Pythagorean logic, it must suffer in return and die in the same way.<sup>3</sup>

When Aristotle refers to Pythagorean retaliatory justice in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, he also notes that some invoke "the justice of Rhadamanthys" (τὸ Ῥαδαμάνθου δίκαιον, v.3). He illustrates this view with a line of hexameter, which an anonymous commentator attributed to the lost Hesiodic poem *The Great Works*. The commentator added the preceding line (Hes. fr. 286 MW):

εἰ κακά τις σπείραι, κακὰ κέρδεά <κ'> ἀμήσειεν·  
εἴ κε πάθοι, τὰ τ' ἔρξε, δίκη κ' ἰθεῖα γένοιτο.

If ever one should sow evils, he would reap evil profits.  
If ever one should suffer what he has done, straight justice would be done.<sup>4</sup>

Both of these lines illustrate the logic of *ius talionis* through poetic effects. With its repetition of κακά, the first line makes crime and punishment equivalent in sound and sense, though only after the passage of time. "Sowing" indicates a delay is expected, and while the seeds lie underneath the soil there is no visible sign that they will sprout crops.

Thus also, as I have discussed earlier, the cycle of τίσις may require the interposition of

---

<sup>3</sup> Behind this anecdote may lie an assumption that the snake is a reincarnated ψυχή, although this complicates Pythagoras' action in this anecdote. Elsewhere he is depicted as reticent to harm animals on the grounds that they may be human in their essence, in their ψυχή. Hence, another famous anecdote has him demanding a man stop beating a dog because it bears (or simply "is") the ψυχή of a friend (Xenoph. fr. 7). This does not exclude that the ψυχή of the snake might be evil and deserved the punishment it received from Pythagoras.

<sup>4</sup> Or "...the judgment would be straight."

some length of time where no sign of justice can be seen: five generations passed before Candaules was avenged. A similar metaphor is at work here. To plant a seed was to send one generation of a plant beneath the soil to death so that the next—the crops that would sprout from the seeds—could be born.<sup>5</sup> This line, already once a metaphor (sowing seeds = setting events into motion), has a second metaphorical meaning: the misdeeds of one generation will be repaid by the next. The myth of the return of the Heracleidae (which I mentioned earlier in the context of Alcman's *Partheneion*),<sup>6</sup> provides an example of this kind of metaphorical equivalence between a harvest and a generation. Hyllus, the son of Heracles, was eager to return to the Peloponnesus and reclaim the inheritance of the Heracleidae. He inquired of the Delphic oracle how best to do so and received the reply that they should return “after waiting for the third crop” (περιμείναντας τὸν τρίτον καρπὸν, Apollod. 2.8.2). Hyllus mistook the oracle to mean three actual crops of plants—i.e., three harvests or years—when it actually meant three crops of men—i.e., three generations. Whatever the content of Hesiod's poem might be (for us, this is quite obscure), this metaphor has affinities with the kind of intergenerational strife that characterizes the *Theogony*. One generation sows evil; another reaps it.

---

<sup>5</sup> There is perhaps a reflection of this metaphor in *John* 12:24.

<sup>6</sup> See pp. 172–73, 79–82 above.

The second line of the quotation, the line preserved by Aristotle (5.5.3, 1132b27), continues the same thought. In this case the punishment, the suffering of evils, is mentioned before the doing. This forms a chiasmus with the line before, where the order was reversed. The effect of fronting the consequences of evil action is to reverse the natural order of punishment *following* crime. Hesiod has here inverted the normal temporal and logical sequence.<sup>7</sup> This makes the line similar to Alcman 1.35, where *πάσον* preceded *μησαμένοι*. This line has another affinity with Alcman. The object of *πάθοι* in this sentence is identical to the object of *ἔρεξε*. *τὰ* is the epic form of the relative pronoun, and thus its clause is the direct object of the verb *πάθοι*. Like Alcman's Hippocoontidae, who suffered the very same evil deeds they plotted, here Hesiod's anonymous agent also suffers "those things which" he did.

In the scheme Hesiod presents here this exact retaliation is "straight justice" (*δίκη...ἰθεῖα*). As Michael Gagarin has pointed out, "straight justice" in Hesiod describes proper judicial procedure. In particular, the adjective "straight" (*εὐθύς*) refers specifically to speech, to the pleas of litigants or judges.<sup>8</sup> In early Greek legal practice, *δίκη* is a verbal performance, a speech act, which judicial actors compose in order to

---

<sup>7</sup> It is more common in this proverbial *sententia*, "the doer should suffer," that doing precedes suffering. The further examples I give below support this observation. It is worth noting that, typically, archaic laws follow this pattern, with the protasis first naming a crime and then the apodosis its punishment. See Gagarin 1992, 73.

<sup>8</sup> Gagarin 1986, 47–48, esp. n. 83. Cf. esp. Hes. *Op.* 219–26, where "straight" justice is opposed to "crooked" (*σκολιῆς*). Cf. also *Th.* 87; Hom. *Il.* 18.508.

render justice. This activity is closely aligned with poetic composition and performance. Gagarin observes that the introductory hymn to the Muses in the *Theogony* makes the Muses the inspirers of both the kings who render δίκαι and the singers who compose poetry.<sup>9</sup> On my reading, in this fragment Hesiod commends the performative practice of observing and applying an oral *lex talionis*.

However, along with Gagarin, one might object to my reading that this passage commends the *lex talionis*: Gagarin (along with Eric Havelock) argues that as a result of the unwritten and ad hoc arrangements of early Greek legal structures there was no substantive law, no “legal rules,” only judicial procedures to settle disputes.<sup>10</sup> However, it is difficult to conceive of a communal arrangement for dispute settlement in which there are only procedures for conducting debate but no recognized principles to which participants can appeal. Dean Hammer’s critique of Gagarin’s and Havelock’s conception is to the point: “Without substance, we have procedures for debate with

---

<sup>9</sup> Gagarin 1992, esp. 64: “[J]ustice for Hesiod is a speech act, inspired by the Muses, which bears a close resemblance to the speech act of poetry.” Cf. Farenga 2006, 114, who describes rendering δίκαι “as a performance orchestrating a suite of speech genres to articulate the shifting cognitive and ontological perspectives necessary to produce a nonviolent solution acceptable to all.”

<sup>10</sup> Gagarin 1986, 2–12, esp. 8. He holds the same position in his most recent statement on the subject (2008, 13–38, esp. 36). Havelock 1978, 130–36, holds a similar position, claiming justice in the Homeric world was entirely procedural, lacking any content: “a *process* achieved through oral persuasion and oral conviction” (emphasis mine).

nothing to argue about.”<sup>11</sup> There are actors and venues for decision-making, but no grounds upon which to make any settlement.

To make his point, Gagarin looks to representations of early dispute settlement. He finds that all such cases involve two disputants voluntarily submitting their dispute in a public forum before one or more judges who try to find a mutually acceptable compromise between the claims of both sides.<sup>12</sup> Consider the *locus classicus* of early dispute settlement, the trial scene on the shield of Achilles (*Il.* 18.497–508). Gagarin argues that the justice envisioned here is a compromise between the two positions, proposed by an ἵστωρ, and recognized by the community and both litigants as acceptable.<sup>13</sup> This may well be true, though many of the details of the scene are unclear and disputed.<sup>14</sup> However, in any dispute there are always substantive issues at stake and each side has its own reasons or rules why it thinks its claim valid. In order for a disputant to recognize a settlement as being in any way acceptable, the settlement must negotiate with the grounds upon which each disputant is basing his claim. The singer does not tell what the resolution of the dispute on the shield is, but he does make it clear that it involves a substantive legal rule, namely the custom of ποιινή: “Two men were

---

<sup>11</sup> Hammer 2002b, 125.

<sup>12</sup> Gagarin 1986, 19–50, summarized at 42–43.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 32–33.

<sup>14</sup> For the various interpretations see *ibid.*, 27–32; Kirk et al., *ad loc.*

disputing about the penalty for a man who had died” (δύο δ’ ἄνδρες ἐνεΐκεον εἴνεκα ποινῆς ἀνδρὸς ἀποφθιμένου, 18.498–99).

It is true, as Gagarin points out, that there is limited evidence for substantive law in Greece before the invention of writing, at least in the particular style of “conditional sentences written in condensed prose” in which it appears in later, written codes.<sup>15</sup> There is, however, plenty of evidence for proverbial *gnomae*: e.g., Hes. *Op.* 707–13.<sup>16</sup> These statements share some of the stylistic features of early written law, most notably the conditional form.<sup>17</sup> One objection to calling such proverbial maxims “laws” is that they do not appear to have the “force of law,” which is to say they are not general, enforced rules. They appear more like wise advice than universal prescriptions.<sup>18</sup> However, the speakers of such statements intend for these rules to be universally applicable. For instance, when the chorus of the *Choephoroe* uses a version of this law—“the doer must suffer” (δράσαντα παθεῖν, Aesch. *Choe.* 313)—it means to apply the rule to Aegisthus and Clytemnestra, demanding their deaths in retaliation for their murder of Agamemnon. The citation of this law permits Orestes to kill them justly, for it makes anyone an instrument of justice who can claim to be punishing an offender with a harm

---

<sup>15</sup> Gagarin 1986, 26.

<sup>16</sup> André Lardinois (1995; 1997) has shown how extensive these forms of speech are in early Greek poetry. He collected in his dissertation a comprehensive survey of early *gnomae* (1995, 278–353).

<sup>17</sup> Roth 1976, 335–36.

<sup>18</sup> Gagarin 1986, 11–12.

equivalent to the crime. In the *Oresteia* Aeschylus is dramatizing a time when such instruments of justice—i.e., enforcement mechanisms—did not exist as formal institutions; rather, the enforcement of this law occurred through self-help. Moreover, the appearance and application of this principle in a variety of contexts shows it was generally recognized as valid. The variation in the form of the law is in keeping with oral traditions in general, where the “same” poem or speech or even “word” can change from one context to the next and still remain the “same.” In short, this maxim, in its several forms, constitutes a generally recognized oral law that individual agents both apply and enforce.

The existence of a substantive law does not invalidate Gagarin’s cogent argument for the adaptable and impromptu nature of Greek proto-legal practice. In fact, the Hesiodic fragment is telling in this regard, for it suggests the form that a good judicial plea, a δίκη ἰθεῖα, ought to take: it ought to make the perpetrator suffer the same as his victim. The performance of a δίκη took place before a whole community: “all the people look upon” the βασιλεύς as he makes his judgments (οἱ δὲ νῦ λαοὶ πάντες ἐς αὐτόν ὀρῶσι, Hes. *Th.* 85–86). Likewise, the trial scene on the shield of Achilles shows the agonistic nature of legal dispute (*Il.* 18.497–508), where two gold talents are awarded to the one who “speaks the straightest judgment” (δίκην ἰθύντατα εἶποι, 508). As



Gagarin argues, legal performance in this context is like poetic performance.<sup>19</sup> A judicial actor resembles a singer, composing a speech-act using his received tradition to address the needs of his performative situation. In Gagarin's analysis, the βασιλεύς is the judicial actor engaged in dispute-settlement. His δίκη ἰθεῖα was a settlement acceptable to both sides in a dispute. But I add that, in addition to disputes brought before semi-formal arbitration, there are also many conflicts where agents adopt a legal-performative role where there is no neutral arbiter. Whenever an agent calls upon and articulates a traditional law to justify his punitive course of action, he is performing this role of arbiter himself. When, for example, the characters in the *Oresteia* cite the *lex talionis* or Odysseus invokes the narrative of τίσις against the suitors, they are re-composing and adapting a traditional model of moral and judicial reasoning to the circumstances at hand.

The *lex talionis* is preserved elsewhere in other forms that show affinity with its Hesiodic formulation. No other version is exactly identical. This is to be expected in the context of orally-transmitted legal traditions. Just as singers recompose oral poems and the precise words of any iteration are typically different, this law appears in several different but related forms. I have given some context where appropriate and underlined the significant portions:

---

<sup>19</sup> Gagarin 1992, 61–64.

1. εἴ κε πάθοι, τά τ' ἔρεξε, δίκη κ' ἰθεῖα γένοιτο.

If ever one should suffer what he has done, straight justice would be done.

(Hes. fr. 286.2 MW)

2. ῥέζοντά τι καὶ παθεῖν ἔοικεν.

It is right for the one doing something to suffer also. (Pind. *Nem.* 4.32)

3. τὸν δρῶντα γάρ τι καὶ παθεῖν ὀφείλεται.

For the doer of something ought to suffer also. (Soph. fr. 223b R)

4. ΧΟ. ἄντιτον<sup>20</sup> ἔτι σὲ χοῖ στερομένην φίλων  
τύμμα τύμματι τεῖσαι.

ΚΛ. καὶ τήνδ' ἀκούεις ὀρκίων ἐμῶν θέμιν.

Chor. In requital, bereft of friends you must still  
pay blow with blow.

Clyt. You are hearing also this lawfulness of my oaths.  
(Aesch. *Ag.* 1429–31)

5. ἄξια δράσας ἄξια πάσχων<sup>21</sup>  
μηδὲν ἐν Ἄϊδου μεγαλαυχεῖτω  
ξιφοδηλήτω θανάτῳ τεῖσας ἄπερ ἔρξεν.<sup>22</sup>

---

<sup>20</sup> Most mss. read ἀτίετον, but I follow Fraenkel 1950, ad loc. With ἄντιτον in initial position and τεῖσαι in final, the words of the chorus form a nice balance. Unless otherwise noted, I use Page's 1972 text of the *Oresteia*.

<sup>21</sup> The mss. read ἀνάξια δράσας ἄξια πάσχων. With recent editors, I follow Hermann's correction here.

<sup>22</sup> I am sympathetic to Fraenkel's 1950, ad loc., argument for the correction ἔρξεν on the grounds that this is closer to the language of such passages as 1564; however, all the mss. read ἤρξεν, and the sentiment of "what he began" is not nearly so at odds with the context as Fraenkel says. If ἤρξεν is correct, then Clytemnestra is attempting to blame Agamemnon on the basis of a claim to the priority and originality of his crime of killing Iphigeneia. She thus makes an arbitrary selection of his act as the beginning of the

Footnote cont. next pg.

The one having done worthy things and suffering worthy things—  
let him not vaunt in Hades,  
having paid by a sword-destroying death for what he did.  
(Aesch. Ag. 1527–29)

6. ὄνειδος ἦκει τόδ' ἀντ' ὀνειδούς.  
δύσμαχα δ' ἔστι κρῖναι.  
φέρει φέροντ', ἐκτίνει δ' ὁ καίνων.  
μίμνει δὲ μίμνοντος ἐν θρόνῳ Διὸς  
παθεῖν τὸν ἔρξαντα· θέσμιον γάρ.

Reproach has come here in return for reproach.  
Hard is it to decide.  
One plunders the one plundering and the killer pays in full.  
It remains while Zeus remains on his throne  
that the doer should suffer, for that is lawful. (Aesch. Ag. 1560–64)

7. ἀλλ' ὦ μεγάλοι Μοῖραι, Διόθεν  
τῆδε τελευτᾶν,  
ἧ τὸ δίκαιον μεταβαίνει.  
“ἀντὶ μὲν ἐχθρᾶς γλώσσης ἐχθρὰ  
γλώσσα τελείσθω” τοῦφειλόμενον  
πράσσοῦσα Δίκη μέγ' ἀυτεῖ  
“ἀντὶ δὲ πληγῆς φονίας φονίαν  
πληγὴν τινέτω. δράσαντι παθεῖν,”  
τριγέρων μῦθος τάδε φωνεῖ.

But, great Fates, by Zeus  
accomplish in the way  
that justice traverses.  
“Let there be paid hateful tongue  
for hateful tongue.” Doing what is owed,  
Justice cries aloud:  
“Let him pay murderous stroke

---

sequence of vengeance and at the same time seems to imply that her act of vengeance is its conclusion—of course, the rest of the *Oresteia* will prove otherwise, as the Chorus has already hinted (Aesch. Ag. 1429–30).

for murderous stroke. The doer must suffer.”  
Such things does the triply old story pronounce.  
(Aesch. *Choe.* 306–14)

8. ἔκτανες ὄν οὐ χρῆν, καὶ τὸ μὴ χρεῶν πάθει.

You killed whom you ought not, so suffer what you ought not.  
(Aesch. *Choe.* 930)

These examples share several features: (1) an agent “acts” (δράω, ῥέζω, or καίνω); (2) the same agent “suffers” (πάσχω); (3) if an object of the agent’s action appears, it has a close connection to the object of his suffering; (4) usually, the correlation of doing and suffering has some kind of validation.

The agent’s action (1) is usually expressed by a participle (unless it occupies its own clause, as in exx. 1, 4, and 8); whereas the agent’s experience of suffering (2) is usually expressed by a command, an imperative, an infinitive, or the modal noun χρεή. The objects of the agent’s action and suffering (3) are generally equivalent. As I discussed earlier, the relative pronoun in ex. 1 that serves as the object of the agent’s suffering has as its antecedent the object of the agent’s action. Exx. 2 and 3 both use the indefinite pronoun τι as the object of the agent’s action and both examples follow this with καὶ παθεῖν. Although in these cases the object of παθεῖν is unstated, the effect is to make the suffering parallel to their doing. The context of the Sophoclean fragment (ex.

2), which comes from a satyr play about Heracles,<sup>23</sup> cannot be known. The line from Pindar (ex. 3) comes in the context of a narration of Heracles' battle alongside Telamon against Alcyoneus. On one reading, in their attack, their "doing something" (ῥέζοντά τι), Heracles and his allies also suffered (καὶ παθεῖν): Alcyoneus killed 24 heroes before Heracles and his allies could kill him. The gnomic message that Pindar offers is that, in a great struggle, this mutual harm "is fitting" (ἔουκεν)—i.e., to be expected. Scholars since Bundy have generally read the passage this way, with Heracles and his allies as the subject of the participle and infinitive, hearing in this sentiment a consolation for the victor, Timasarchus, whose toils in obtaining his victory (πόνων κεκρυμένων, 1) have left him worn out (4–5). Heracles and Telamon stand in for Timasarchus, and Alcyoneus for Timasarchus' defeated opponents.<sup>24</sup> This interpretation, however, construes the line differently than the other, similar *gnomae* here read. In these other examples, "suffering" (now denoted by παθεῖν) is always a punishment for an earlier misdeed. This earlier misdeed is regularly called "doing" (in this example, ῥέζοντά τι, cf. ex. 6). This means that if this *gnome* followed the typical pattern, the suffering denoted by παθεῖν should

---

<sup>23</sup> Either the *Heracleiscus* or the *Heracles*. Orion ascribes it to the first (*Anthologion* 6.6); but editors have doubted the existence of this play and placed this fragment in the *Heracles*. See Walker 1921, 15.

<sup>24</sup> *Inter alios* Willcock 1978, 9–10. Even before Bundy's 1962 shift of focus to the encomiastic function of Pindaric odes, some earlier scholars did see in this allusion an analogy to the victor's situation. For example, Farnell 1932, 265–66, thinks the line cannot mean anything like the similar *gnomae* I cited above. Instead, "it only expresses the fact that if one goes in for adventures one must expect knocks: 'one cannot make an omelet without breaking eggs'."

be punitive, not merely the result of exertion. Alcyoneus would be the subject of both the participle and the infinitive, since he is the one who faces the punishment of death at the hands of praiseworthy heroes.<sup>25</sup> Whether the subject is Alcyoneus or Heracles and his allies, it does capture the sense of reciprocal harm that exists in battle. Perhaps the line is even intentionally ambiguous, referring to the doing and suffering on both sides of the battle. As Pindar describes the battle in his *Sixth Isthmian Ode*, Heracles killed Alcyoneus with his bow (*Isthm.* 6.31–35); in a similar fashion, Alcyoneus killed Heracles' allies by throwing boulders (*Nem.* 4.28–29). This mutual exchange of missiles constitutes an equivalence between harm done and harm suffered.

This equivalence of harm comes through in the other examples from the *Oresteia* (exx. 4–8) as well. In ex. 4, the chorus claims that Clytemnestra will face a punishment of “blow” (τύμμα) for the “blow” (τύμματι) of murder she dealt Agamemnon. In ex. 5, the chorus observes that Agamemnon suffered the same thing that he himself did and emphasizes this by repetition of the same object, “worthy things” (ἄξια). His death matches his sacrifice of Iphigenia. Likewise, the chorus' commentary on these events (ex. 6) and on the plot to murder Clytemnestra and Aegisthus (ex. 7) finds a series of matching crimes: “reproach” (ὄνειδος) matches “reproach”; plunder (φέρει) matches plunder (φέροντ’); “hateful tongue” (ἐχθρᾶς γλώσσης) matches “hateful tongue”;

---

<sup>25</sup> This seems to be the way Bowra 1964, 286, reads this passage.

“murderous stroke” (πληγῆς φονίας) matches “murderous stroke.” Similarly in ex. 8, Orestes characterizes Clytemnestra’s punishment as an exchange of actions that “ought not” (οὐ χρῆν / μὴ χρεῶν) to be done. Orestes’ claim to the equivalence between his punishment of Clytemnestra and her own deeds reaches its logical extreme in his statement to her, “You, not I, will kill yourself” (σύ τοι σεαυτήν, οὐκ ἐγώ, κατακτενεῖς, *Choe.* 923). Orestes here is attempting to reach the ideal of retributive justice, that the very same violent act (and not some similar re-performance of it) punishes the perpetrator. Clytemnestra’s murder of Agamemnon becomes her murder of herself. As in Alcman’s *Partheneion*, this statement de-chronologizes the sequence of events that lead to her own murder and replaces them with the unitary, synchronic logic of the *lex talionis*.

Finally, in every case these citations of the *lex talionis* adduce some kind of external validation that authorizes their force. As I already discussed, the Hesiodic example (ex. 1) claims that this principle constitutes δίκη ἰθεῖα. In other cases, speakers attach some kind of impersonal affirmation of the appropriateness of this justice: “it is fitting” (ἔοικε, ex. 2) or “it ought to be” (ὀφείλεται, ex. 3; cf. ex. 6, 310). Also a speaker may call upon a divinity as an authority: Zeus (ex. 6), the Fates (ex. 7), or Justice personified (ex. 8). In the two examples from the *Oresteia* that use the concise phrase “the doer must suffer” (παθεῖν τὸν ἔρξαντα / δρᾶσαντι παθεῖν), the speakers present this law as existing independently of their present speech and as having a place in the

eternal structure of the universe. In ex. 6 the law is θέσμιον, literally “that which is laid down,” and “endures” (μίμνει) just as Zeus “endures” (μίμνοντος). Likewise, in ex. 4 Clytemnestra immediately follows the chorus’ rendition of the law with her declaration that, on the basis of that law, her oaths must be regarded as consistent with “lawfulness” (θέμιον).<sup>26</sup> In other words, the law has the force of θέμις. In ex. 7 this law constitutes the very words of Justice herself who “cries” the law aloud; likewise, the law itself “pronounces” (φωνεῖ) as a μῦθος. The lines in Alcman’s *Partheneion* discussed earlier also depict this law of retaliation as resting upon divine authority: it is “the retribution of the gods” (σιῶν τίσις, Alcman. 1.36).

These foregoing examples have illustrated several traditional aspects of the *lex talionis*: the linguistic similarity, even unity of crime and punishment, the adaptability of its application, and its temporal reframing of the operations of justice. As my analysis of the *Odyssey* has shown, this ideology of punishment is thematically central in epic as well.

---

<sup>26</sup> On this line see Zeitlin 1965, 476: “In other words, the chorus has spoken of the law of retribution for the first time in a formal manner. It is precisely this law of retribution which motivated her to kill Agamemnon and she tells the chorus that by their formulation of it they understand the righteousness or justice of her oaths.”



## Conclusion to Part II

I began this second part of my project with an example from Alcman's *Partheneion* of a syntactical ambiguity that signaled a parallel ambiguity in the ethics of the poem. The Hippocoontidae *both* plot *and* suffer the very same "evil deeds" (Ἔργα...κακὰ). Through the poetic device of syntactical ambiguity, Alcman has made two distinct actions—a crime and its punishment—to be one and the same thing. Poetry thus creates in its representation of the world a condition that cannot exist in the world, making a single phrase stand in for two different things. It restructures the audience's perception of events in a way that cannot be physically acted, only spoken. For one act of violence can never be two different acts: a murderer cannot punish himself by the very killing of his victim. But a poet or singer equipped with the linguistic tool of ambiguity can represent it so. The *Partheneion* is just one example of this ethical use of linguistic ambiguity: when Hesiod elides the antecedent to the relative clause that expresses the punishment of a wrong-doer, he makes a single word, τὰ, represent both the act that constitutes the crime and the act that constitutes the punishment (fr. 286.2 MW).

Such poetic expressions capture in both syntax and semantics something fundamental about the nature of human ethical experience often missed in modern thought: life is characterized by ambiguous intersubjectivity. Simone de Beauvoir

articulated this truth best in *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, when she called this fact of human nature “the fundamental ambiguity of the human condition”: a person is always simultaneously both “a sovereign and unique subject” and “an object for others.”<sup>1</sup> This is the ethical vision that Alcman has captured and presented to the Spartan πόλις, which it in turn performs in its ritual celebrations. All human actions are both done and suffered; every person is both an agent and a patient. The justice of τίσις is finally ambiguous.

Another aspect of the poetic effects of *ius talionis* is that it makes the speaker, the agent who controls the language of the discourse, the one who can determine what constitute the “likeness,” the *talio*, that is at the heart of this mode of justice. On this model, rendering justice is a verbal performance, like the one the βασιλεῖς perform, whose judicial speech-acts constitute δίκαι ἰθεῖαι.<sup>2</sup> The different actors in the *Oresteia* demonstrate well just how such a judicial performance works. Consider for instance the exchange Clytemnestra has with the chorus after her slaying of Agamemnon. She characterizes her slaying of him as a sacrifice like the one he made of Iphigenia.<sup>3</sup> Despite Clytemnestra’s attempt to justify her killing on these grounds, the chorus remains

---

<sup>1</sup> Beauvoir 1948, 7, 118. She writes (7), “[Man] asserts himself as a pure internality against which no external power can take hold, and he also experiences himself as a thing crushed the by the dark weight of other things.”

<sup>2</sup> See pp. 201, 205–6 above.

<sup>3</sup> Zeitlin 1965, 472–74. See esp. Ag. 1371–98, 1412–25, 1431–33, 1500–4.

horrified and condemns her actions. They form a different judgment—Clytemnestra calls them “a hard judge” (δικαστῆς τραχὺς, *Ag.* 1421; cf. 1412)—and they count her as an accursed murderer, tainted by blood-guilt (1428). The chorus then claims Clytemnestra will face the punishment of the *lex talionis*: “You must...pay blow with blow” (σὲ χοῖ...τύμμα τύμματι τεῖσαι, 1429–30). Thus, they agree with Clytemnestra on validity of the law, only they try to apply it differently.<sup>4</sup> This introduces the element of selection. The chorus here chooses to count Clytemnestra’s murder as the crime that requires requital, while Clytemnestra, using the same talionic principle, chooses to claim that Agamemnon suffered “worthy things” (ἄξια) for his “worthy deeds” (ἄξια, 1527), that he “has paid for what he did” (τείσας ἄπερ ἔρξεν, 1529).

But such an exchange raises the question of whether punishments are “like” or equivalent to their crimes, or even whether any punishment can ever be precisely equivalent to its crime. The circumstances of every action are always different. As the chorus of the *Agamemnon* describes the sacrifice of Iphigenia, Agamemnon was compelled by “the yoke-strap of necessity” (ἀνάγκας...λέπαδνον, 217), lest the assembled fleet waste away in the face of contrary winds. Clytemnestra thinks that a father’s killing of his daughter merits and is equivalent to the killing of the father, but she has to ignore some circumstantial differences and seize only on other similarities.

---

<sup>4</sup> See pp. 211–12, 213 n. 26 above.

The claim of an equivalence is always a fiction. It is something that an agent constructs through narration. And in the *Choephoroe* Orestes will construct his own narrative that makes his killing of Clytemnestra equivalent to her killing of Agamemnon. The assumption that underlies *ius talionis* is that violence is fungible.<sup>5</sup>

It is sometimes claimed that strict retribution is the only just form of punishment. Kant, most notably, argued for the categorical imperative that “the undeserved evil which anyone commits on another is to be regarded as perpetrated on himself.”<sup>6</sup> Famously, he found that the observation of this principle protected against “the serpent-windings of utilitarianism.”<sup>7</sup> But Kant also realized that someone had to decide what constituted an equivalence, because the circumstances of reality might make neat one-for-one substitutions untenable. Differences in social or economic position of the criminal and victim matter. For instance, a rich man might easily bear a pecuniary penalty for theft, whereas the poor man from whom he stole would be much more grievously burdened by the loss of the same amount of goods. Perhaps then the pecuniary penalty in such a case ought to reflect the *relative* value that the stolen goods have for the poor man. Thus the equivalence in this case would be the portion of the

---

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Burnett’s 1998, xvi, description of Greek revenge ideology: “The negative exchange of evil for evil, like the exchange of coin, was a mode of behavior recognized, regulated, and sometimes implemented, by an orderly city.”

<sup>6</sup> Kant 1887, 196.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 195.

criminal's and the victim's goods. This is how Aristotle envisions corrective justice ought to work.

In any case, finding this equivalence would be a judgment, and all judgments require a judge. And so Kant, valuing reason's role in the administration of justice as highly as Aristotle, concludes, "The equalization of punishment with crime is therefore only possible by the cognition of the judge."<sup>8</sup> This only raises the question of who gets to be the judge and exercise his "cognition." For Kant this was clear enough: the state and the judges it appoints. But without state structures, in the Homeric world, where self-help was the main (if not the only) mode of enforcement, it is up to individual agents to decide how to apply this law. It is not hard to see how, even with Kant's disinterested judge, the act of applying the law would be based on subjective judgments. The result is that hero who is attempting to apply this law to his own situation will always coordinate the likeness of crime and punishment in a way that benefits him. There are also serpentine paths of justification in retribution.

I have already shown in part one how Homeric characters deploy rhetorical devices to make equivalences that ultimately justify them within narratives of *τίσις*. This is especially the case with the way Odysseus and his allies characterize the crimes of the suitors. It is to the questions raised by this narrative that I return in part three.

---

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 198.

## Part III. The Failure of τίσις

### 8. τίσις and the Program of the *Odyssey*

In the conclusion to part one I introduced my thesis that the moral condemnation of the suitors and Odysseus' other enemies lies in tension with the model of justice that resides at the moral center of the poem. This model of justice in the *Odyssey* has the form of the narrative of τίσις. Using this narrative, agents perform the moral work of making themselves and others intelligibly good or evil. In this model, the hero of a τίσις narrative is vindicated as just and good; the victim condemned as unjust and evil. A τίσις narrative involves a whole sequence of actions, and at its center lies an equivalence between precipitating crime and resulting punishment. The paradigmatic example of this model of justice, the myth of Orestes' τίσις, follows this sequence and observes the equivalence of crime and punishment in a linguistically precise manner: Agamemnon's prior "killing" (ἐκτανε, 1.36) equals Aegisthus' later "killing" (ἐκταν', 1.30). The poem presents this paradigmatic myth as a model for its own mythic narrative, both through implicit juxtapositions of Orestes' τίσις with Odysseus' and by having characters draw explicit comparisons between the two myths. The audience of the poem is thus presented with an invitation to read the events of the *Odyssey* in light of the events of the "Oresteia." The comparison of these two myths seeks to equate the suitors with

Aegisthus and Odysseus with Orestes, with implications for the morality of Odysseus and the suitors. But this analogy cannot stand up under scrutiny. The suitors cannot be blameworthy like Aegisthus: they have not completed and committed the crimes of adultery and murder, the same crimes for which Orestes executed Aegisthus. But the singer has depicted them *as* murderers and adulterers nonetheless. The audience, thus, can perceive an inconcinnity in the framework of retributive justice advanced by the poem. In this way, the poem contains within it a critique of the very model of justice it seems to promote.

To make this argument, I shall seek to answer several questions. How do comparisons between narratives work in the *Odyssey*? Does the poem promote a posture with regard to the morality of its content? If so, whose posture is it? Do any points of view besides the narrator's come through? Is there any room for irony?

### ***8.1 Reading the Odyssey Comparatively***

I argued in part one that τίσις is a narrative, a pattern of actions that agents perform and experience, much like a theme or type-scene, such as sacrifice or supplication. Over the course of the epic, τίσις appears several times, and the occurrence of these multiple, often modulated versions of the same, essential narrative pattern induces the audience to compare them with one another, just as an audience would

compare the various kinds of type-scenes with one another.<sup>9</sup> I am calling this way of interpreting the poem a “comparative reading.” Under “reading” I include the audience’s aural reception and interpretation of the text. At times, the effort the audience exerts in making comparative interpretations may be minimal. The process may be analogous to an auditor’s comprehension of a language: much of the basic work of distinguishing morphemes and processing the syntax of sentences happens at an unconscious level, so that an auditor is normally unaware of his parsing the grammar of language; he is only aware of the meaning that results from the process. The process is much the same with Homeric type-scenes. They use a grammar shared by singer and audience which is an unexpressed part of poetic *langue*.<sup>10</sup> In part, *τίσις* narratives function at this unconscious, grammatical level, where they have the underlying structure that I analyzed and outlined in part one: seven sequential stages of action and six distinct actants, three of which—the avenger, avenged, and recipient—are especially significant. Whenever a *τίσις* narrative contains variations upon this basic structure—e.g., the reordering of stages or the coalescence of actants—it has significant implications, as I have shown for Odysseus’ *τίσις* narrative.

---

<sup>9</sup> See pp. 37–38 above on the interaction and comparison between typical scenes.

<sup>10</sup> The notion of abstract *langue* as the system of language, as opposed to *parole*, or language as it is used in actual speech, comes from de Saussure 1972, esp. 13–14. For a grammar of type-scenes, see Edwards 1992.



However, not only does the fact of the juxtaposition of the different narratives of *τίσις* within a single, over-arching epic narrative cause the audience to draw such comparisons unconsciously at the level of the grammar of the narrative, but even the characters themselves explicitly compare the different narratives of *τίσις*. Interpretive comparison of *τίσις* narratives happens at this higher, conscious level as well. After hearing Nestor recount Orestes' *τίσις*, which includes Orestes' vengeance on the killers of his father, Telemachus utters a wish (3.205–6):

αἶ γὰρ ἐμοὶ τοσσήνδε θεοὶ δύναμιν περιθεῖεν,  
τίσασθαι μνηστήρας ὑπερβασίης ἀλεγεινῆς...

Would that the gods put about me such strength  
that I might take vengeance on the suitors for their painful  
transgression...

Telemachus establishes an analogy with Orestes by comparing himself to that other avenger-son directly. The word *τοσσήνδε* makes the comparison explicit: Telemachus longs to have strength *as great as* Orestes' and inhabit the model that he represents. He connects his own situation and possible *τίσις* narrative with Orestes' and hopes that the two narratives would turn out to be alike.

Alternatively, characters may take notice of an apparent or proposed similarity between narratives only to argue for their actual dissimilarity. Athena responds to Zeus' reference to the "Oresteia" tradition and the culpability of the figure of Aegisthus by disclaiming its similarity to Odysseus' situation (1.46–48):

καὶ λίην κείνός γε εἰκότι κεῖται ὀλέθρῳ,

ὥς<sup>11</sup> ἀπόλοιτο καὶ ἄλλος ὅτις τοιαῦτά γε ῥέζοι.  
ἀλλὰ μοι ἀμφ' Ὀδυσῆϊ δαΐφροني δαίεται ἦτορ...

Yes, truly that man lies low in a destruction that is his due;  
so, too, would anyone else also perish who should do such deeds.  
But my heart is torn for wise Odysseus...

Athena claims that any comparison between their situations must conclude that Odysseus and Aegisthus have not acted similarly, are not alike, and therefore must be regarded differently.

When characters make such comparisons of one *τίσις* narrative with another, they invite the audience to draw other similar comparisons between *τίσις* narratives, even if the characters of the poem do not themselves explicitly make them. In cases like the examples above, characters demonstrate a hermeneutic of paradigmatic reasoning.<sup>12</sup> They read myths for their meaning in their own, contemporary situation. In the case of Telemachus, he is drawing on a story, a myth that is already in wide circulation, even though from the perspective of main actors in the poem its events are rather recent. This “Oresteia” is known not only on earth to Nestor (3.193–200, 253–312), but also on the

---

<sup>11</sup> The mss. have ὥς here, though I prefer to read ὅς. With ὥς, the clause would be a wish: “Would that anyone else perish who does such things!” Some scholiasts do record ὅς in their lemmata (see Ludwig ad loc.; Dindorf ad loc.). Also, according to Plutarch (or at least our manuscripts of Plutarch), Scipio Africanus quoted this line on the death of Tiberius Gracchus using ὅς (*Ti. Gracch.* 21.7). Stanford, ad loc., also argues for ὅς. The earliest transcriptions likely did not note accentuation. In this context, where Athena is making a generalizing comparison from the specific example of Aegisthus, adverbial ὅς makes more sense. (See p. 263 below for further on ὅς.) Ultimately, whether one reads ὅς or ὥς, my interpretation still stands.

<sup>12</sup> I use “hermeneutic” in the particular sense of a method of interpretation that draws out the meaning of a text—its application—for the audience in its own context.

distant island of Pharos (4.512–47), on Olympus (1.28–43), and in Hades (11.385–464, 24.19–34, 95–97)—though in the last case with the conclusion of Orestes’ triumph conspicuously lacking. Similarly, within the action of the poem itself, the *fabula*, characters compare earlier narratives to the present moment. Eurylochus, afraid to go with Odysseus to Circe’s home, compares the companions’ journey to visit her with their earlier disastrous visit to Polyphemus’ cave (10.429–37).

Thus induced to draw such comparisons by the example of characters in the poem, the audience sees the similarities and differences that exist between the various narratives. From this vantage point the question of what these similarities and differences mean presents itself. I explored some aspects of their significance in part one. For instance, I examined how the narrator carefully constructs and makes abundantly clear the blameworthiness of Odysseus’ companions for their slaughter of and feast on Helios’ cattle. This in turn raises a deeper question. Why should some characters come off manifestly guilty, and others innocent and praiseworthy? Or, to put it another way, why does the narrator arrange the morality of the poem as he does? Why does the narrator seem to want his audience to take Athena’s posture toward the paradigm of Aegisthus and regard the suitors as the moral equivalents of Aegisthus and not Odysseus? One might object that the facts of the epic story, its *fabula*, require the audience to take the morality of the poem Athena’s way: for instance, it is a fact of the story that Odysseus takes no part whatsoever in the slaughter and eating of Helios’

cattle and so should not suffer for this crime. This objection sounds unanswerable, until one recognizes that all the “facts” of the plot are always transmitted by a narrator in precisely the way he wishes. As I shall argue, when the narrator and other characters cite this episode they exclude some contextual factors that make Odysseus’ role much more ambiguous. And must literary analysis end with the audience and the critic adopting the narrator’s posture toward his story? Literary critics have long recognized that a narrator might be “unreliable,” to use the terminology of Wayne Booth,<sup>13</sup> but few scholars of Homer have really taken this line of reasoning as far as it might go, despite the fact, of course, that the *Odyssey* is full of deceptions, lying stories, and untrustworthy narrators.

My analysis of the *Odyssey* focuses on the poem’s narrator. That there is one hardly needs stating, but the implications of this fact are underappreciated. As I discuss in the next section, the narrator is a subjective character with his own posture and desires. It is from this subjective position that he addresses and tries to affect his audience.<sup>14</sup> But communication is a two-way street, so that the audience also exercises some freedom in their response to the narrator’s story. It is in the dynamic encounter between narrator and audience that meaning emerges.

---

<sup>13</sup> Booth 1961, 158–59.

<sup>14</sup> See Barthes 1975, esp. 260–61.

But before I turn to how the audience might respond to the poem, I need to address what the narrator of the *Odyssey* is trying to do.

## 8.2 *Program and Narration*

In addressing the question of why the narrator is telling the story of the *Odyssey*, the issue of the “program” of the poem presents itself. Classical scholars often discuss what they call a poem’s or author’s “program” or “programmatically” statements; however, this terminology is much less common outside the discipline.<sup>15</sup> That is not to say that literary scholars in other fields do not address the issues that classicists do when classicists speak about poetic programs: questions of how authors frame their narratives and how they present their act of storytelling arise in critical discussions of a wide variety of texts. For instance, many have read the prologue to the *Canterbury Tales* and the work’s internal narrators as illustrative of Chaucer’s own poetic practice. These features of the text speak to what their author, Chaucer, is attempting to do by composing the poem.<sup>16</sup> Likewise, the narrator’s famous statement of his purpose in Milton’s *Paradise Lost*—“assert Eternal Providence / And justify the wayes of God to

---

<sup>15</sup> Batstone 2007, 235.

<sup>16</sup> See, *inter alios*, Jordan 1987; Koff 1988.

men” — has been the starting-point for generations of debate about Milton’s aims.<sup>17</sup> But, typically, the critical language of “program” belongs to classicists.

Among classicists, William Batstone has produced influential studies on Roman programmatic poetry. According to his analysis, programmatic poetry is self-reflexive poetry: “poems or passages where poets, either directly or indirectly, speak of their poetry.” Such passages speak about the “aesthetic[s]” of poetry, offer a “general defense of a genre” and the poem’s place in it, outline the “contents, themes, and subjects” of the poem, and reflect more generally on “poetic goals, literary approach, and stylistic preferences.”<sup>18</sup> Programmatic passages are the singer’s “formal statements,” located in “specific generic contexts,” about “the general poetic project.”<sup>19</sup> Under Batstone’s analysis, poets make such assertions through “metaphorical or figurative” language, where the particular imagery of the moment has a more general, allegorical meaning. A prime example is the first poem of the Catullan corpus, where the text addresses the aesthetic qualities of Neoteric poetry—e.g., that it be “new” (*novum*, Catull. 1.1) and “polished” (*expolitum*, 1.2)—via the trope of a dedication to an addressee, Cornelius Nepos. Thus, the text presents one surface message and form (a traditional dedication of a well-made *libellum*), while at the same time commenting on the aesthetic practice that

---

<sup>17</sup> See, *inter alios*, Fish 1967.

<sup>18</sup> Batstone 2007, 235.

<sup>19</sup> Batstone 1998, 126 n. 5.

the poet will follow through the corpus. When a reader of the scroll containing Catullus' poetry reads the first lines of the first poem, he sees the narrator asserting evaluations of the scroll with respect to both its form and content: the narrator tells Nepos that the scroll is "pleasant" (*lepidum*, 1.1), and Nepos is meant to feel this both in the scroll's immediate, physical form in his hands and in its more enduring, far-reaching contents—Catullus' poetry. But Nepos, like Catullus' other readers, has the evidence before him—the scroll and its poetry—to judge for himself whether the narrator's self-description is true.

Or to consider a Greek example, the goatherd in Theocritus' *Idyll* 1 praises Thyrsis' song, calling it "sweeter" (ἄδιον) than "the resounding water that falls down from the rock above" (τὸ καταχῆς τῆν' ἀπὸ τᾶς πέτρας καταλείβεται ὑψόθεν ὕδωρ, Theoc. *Id.* 1.7–8). This natural imagery bears a programmatic meaning: Theocritus is presenting his genre of bucolic poetry as a superior heir to the genre of epic. The image of "water" that "falls down from the rock above" in these lines alludes to the spring at which Odysseus and Eumaeus encounter the goatherd Melanthius (*Od.* 17.204–53), where "cool water flowed down from the rock above" (κατὰ δὲ ψυχρὸν ῥέεν ὕδωρ ὑψόθεν ἐκ πέτρας, 17.209–10). When the goatherd in Theocritus' poem says Thyrsis' song is "sweeter" even than this, he is insinuating that Theocritus' own bucolic songs,

like the shepherd's of the idyll, are superior to Homeric epics.<sup>20</sup> But as with Catullus' poem, it remains for Theocritus' audience to determine whether they agree with the goatherd's evaluation. For soon the audience will hear Thyrsis' song—his song on the death of Daphnis (1.65–145)—and be able themselves to evaluate Thyrsis' poetry—which is ultimately Theocritus'.

These two famous examples share with other instances of programmatic poetry their concern for presenting the wider text of which they are a part with the aim of shaping how their audience is to understand it. Such passages are thus attempts by the text to control its own interpretation. Milton's claim that his epic will "assert Eternal Providence" acts to foreclose any debate about what the poem is doing. The message of the poem's prologue is unequivocal: God is just and wills good for mankind. But this assertion is hardly unquestionable: for hundreds of years readers of Milton have doubted that the God of the poem actually comes off as just. The text appears open to more interpretations than the stated program allows. One suspects that, if there were a single, undeniable interpretation of the text, no programmatic statement would be necessary. This is an important point to which I will return later. For now I simply add that the presence of an overt, articulated program makes any single interpretation of the poem *less* secure, not more. For whenever a narrator describes his own act of narration,

---

<sup>20</sup> Hunter 1999, 72–73.



he draws attention to the fact that the poem is mediated and not an unfiltered reflection of an external reality. The narrator's program reveals that the poem cannot speak for itself and that, in fact, there are different and contested ways of interpreting it. This is all the more true in the case of a traditional poetry, where numerous poets (or singers) appropriate a shared poem (like the *Odyssey*) and compose their own versions of it. An audience confronted with a narrator's program will evaluate the presentation of the story on the terms the narrator provides, including asking whether or not the narrator's characterization is appropriate.

The essential element in a programmatic passage, what I take to be its defining characteristic, is that it has the goal of controlling how the poem's audience is going to interpret the larger text, the poem as a whole. As I shall discuss below, it can do this in a number of ways. It can outline the plot and contents of the poem, thereby selecting certain events as central and ignoring others as peripheral. It can position itself within a genre, thereby demanding that its audience understand the poem as following and conversing with earlier examples of the genre. It can extol certain aesthetic or stylistic values and disparage others, thus presenting the audience with the terms by which it should be evaluated. It can even offer a moral evaluation of its own contents before its audience ever has a chance to make its own determinations. However, audiences are not obliged to follow the urgings of such passages. The program of a poem is only one interpretation of its contents, and audiences who exercise their faculty of reading can, if

able enough, overcome the program's hermeneutic walls: Percy Shelley could read in *Paradise Lost* that "Milton's Devil as a moral being is...far superior to his God."<sup>21</sup>

To put it another way, programmatic passages are parts of the text that address the poem's program. And a poem's program is the main aim the narrator wants to achieve with the poem. This main aim might be aesthetic or encomiastic or something else, as fits the moment and the needs of the singer. In the case of the *Odyssey*, its program is centrally about ethics. It is about who is "good" and just and who is "bad" and unjust and where justice is to be found.

### ***8.3 The Program of the Odyssey***

One traditional way of thinking about the Homeric narrator is to view his stance as "objective," especially as opposed to more the "subjective" forms of narration in lyric poetry or novelistic fiction. This view can already been seen in one interpretation of Aristotle's praise of Homeric style: Homer is an excellent epic poet because he follows the rule that "the poet ought to say very little himself" (αὐτὸν γὰρ δεῖ τὸν ποιητὴν ἐλάχιστα λέγειν, *Poet.* 1460a7). Instead, a poet ought to be a "representer" (μιμητής) of his story. On one interpretation, Aristotle is here praising Homer for removing his own

---

<sup>21</sup> Shelley 1845, 10.

perspective from his narration and letting events “tell themselves.”<sup>22</sup> Perhaps the most influential modern statement of the Homeric narrator’s supposed objectivity comes from Friedrich Schiller’s famous essay “Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung,” in which, according to Schiller, Homer exemplifies “naive” poets who remove themselves from their narratives. Homeric epic has no mediation; it is, in effect, pure story with no discernable hand or voice of an intervening poet. Schiller pithily says of Homer, “Er ist das Werk, und das Werk ist er.”<sup>23</sup> This “objective” view of Homeric style has had other noteworthy proponents, especially in the German scholarly tradition.<sup>24</sup>

---

<sup>22</sup> On the idea that in Homer events “seem to tell themselves,” see de Jong 1987aa, 15 and 251 n. 45. De Jong concludes that the Homeric narrator is not “objective”; however, she does read Aristotle as an advocate of an “impersonal and objective” interpretation of Homeric narration (ibid., 8). See also de Jong 2005, where she offers slight modifications but the same conclusion (*pace* Halliwell) that Aristotle sees Homer as an objective narrator because only in few places (especially the proem) does he speak as himself. Among other proponents of the “invisible” Homeric narrator, de Jong cites Beye 1966, 75, whose comment represents this view well: “[Homer] disappears, [becoming] simply a vehicle through whom the marvelously wrought tale is transmitted.”

<sup>23</sup> Schiller 1999, 3. Originally published in 1795–96 in *Die Horen*.

<sup>24</sup> See, *inter alios*, Auerbach 1953, 7, who notes that Homeric style “knows only...a uniformly objective present.” Fränkel 1962, 41, likewise speaks of Homer’s “verhaltenen Sachlichkeit.”

This view has come under increasing attack.<sup>25</sup> The ideal of objectivity that the Romantics and their intellectual descendants saw and praised in Homer is just that—an unrealizable ideal. Any act of putting a story into words, of moving from unarticulated *fabula* to voiced discourse, will be necessarily subjective. Whenever a narrator tells a narrative certain things must happen in order for it to be told. First of all, there is an element of selection. No narrator will tell a story using every possible detail. To do so would be impossible, for human experience of even the simplest events presents potential narrators with an *embarras de richesses*. Odysseus speaks to this inevitable fact of narration when he breaks off his description of his encounters with the wives of heroes in the underworld, acknowledging that there is not enough time in the night to mention everyone he met (11.328–30). The narrator of the *Odyssey* devotes 51 lines to the description of Alcinous' palace, which, in the internal chronology of the story, happens in the instant when Odysseus first comes upon and marvels at the sight (7.82–132). Likewise, Odysseus uses 26 lines to describe the island next to the land of the Cyclopes,

---

<sup>25</sup> Advocates of a “subjective” interpretation of the Homeric narrator are several. Among the most noteworthy are Booth and de Jong. For Booth 1961, 3–6, Homer, along with the author of *Job*, is illustrative of a tendency widespread in early narration towards “authoritative ‘telling’”—that is, a narrator who tells his audience all manner of information it would be impossible to know for certain in real life, such as internal motives, thoughts, and expectations and especially the morality of events and characters. Moreover, the narrator’s point of view is privileged, “authoritative,” and presented as uncontested. He contrasts this with the restricted “showing” of most modern fiction. De Jong 1987a, 14–28, provides a thorough analysis of how the Homeric narrator makes subjective claims. She offers ten categories of subjective intervention. For the most recent attack on the “objective” Homeric narrator, see Zerba 2009, who argues that rhetoric—i.e., persuasive appeal—is a vital element of Homeric narration.

where nothing of consequence to the story happens (9.116–41). Contrast that with Odysseus' description of the city of the Cicones, which merits only a single word—its name, Ismarus (9.40). Each narrator has reasons to include and exclude details, and these reasons undermine any claim to objectivity. In this case, Odysseus' laconic description of the Ciconian city serves to keep them at a distance from his audience, leaving them vague and undefined, which serves to make his aggressive assault on the Cicones less troublesome. Selection, thus, is one of the key ways that Odyssean narrators reveal their subjective partiality. The narrator explicitly acknowledges the requirements of selection when he asks the Muse to begin the narrative “from some point” (ἀμύθεν). He thus acknowledges that other ways of telling this story could have selected a different point from which to start.<sup>26</sup>

It is important to recognize as a first step in this analysis that the narrator of the *Odyssey* is subjective, and from this point of departure I can show what inclinations and partialities this subjective posture promotes. What purpose does the narrator have in telling the story of the epic as he does? That is to say, what is his program? As I have been arguing, he is not neutral with respect to his story. Events do not “tell themselves”—indeed, this is impossible: all stories consist of language, all language must be voiced (even if it is only the voice in a reader's head during his silent reading),

---

<sup>26</sup> Walsh 1995, 401, writes, “[T]he poet must exercise his prerogative to select what is to be πρῶτος. It seems that, through selection, the poets had the ability to seek variation within the traditional style.”

and all voices belong to a speaker.<sup>27</sup> Even the so-called limited point of view form of narration that Henry James above all other authors used in his fiction ultimately has a narratorial voice, however retiring it may be.

As I stated earlier, I consider the program of the *Odyssey's* narrator to render his protagonist, Odysseus, just and glorious, along with his allies, chief among them Athena and Zeus. Correlated with this goal, the narrator also aims to render the antagonists unjust and inglorious. How does he go about this program? Irene de Jong has done a great service in cataloguing the “subjective elements” of narration in the *Iliad*.<sup>28</sup> Much of her analysis holds true for the *Odyssey*, and I will draw on her categories of analysis in what follows. But there is a difference between passages that reveal narratorial subjectivity and those that reveal the narrator’s program. They often coincide, but not always. The best way to go about discerning the narrator’s program is to look at a few key passages from the beginning of the poem that carry programmatic implications. This is, perhaps, to presuppose what I am attempting to prove. But I trust that the passages I select will themselves make plain the narrator’s program. To put it another way, I am advancing the hypothesis that the passages below speak to the program of the poem. If,

---

<sup>27</sup> Bal 1985, 100–1, sorts out some of the confusion here by distinguishing between narration—how events are “told”—versus focalization—how events are “seen.”

<sup>28</sup> De Jong, 1987, 18–20.

as I read these passages in this way, my interpretation proves persuasive, then I shall have shown how the narrator encodes his program in the poem.

The clearest place that the narrator reveals his posture is in the passages in the text where he directly addresses the poem as a whole. In the *Odyssey*, the only place where the narrator makes such direct commentary on the poem as a whole is in its opening 21 lines, which I call the prologue. (I call only the first ten lines the proem.)<sup>29</sup> By any reckoning of what constitutes a programmatic passage, this passage ought to qualify. The use of an opening passage of a work to address programmatic concerns is a commonplace in ancient literature and the *Odyssey* is no exception (1.1–21):

ἄνδρα μοι ἔννεπε, Μοῦσα, πολύτροπον, ὃς μάλα πολλὰ  
πλάγχθη, ἐπεὶ Τροίης ἱερὸν πτολίεθρον ἔπερσε·  
πολλῶν δ' ἀνθρώπων ἴδεν ἄστεα καὶ νόον ἔγνω,  
πολλὰ δ' ὃ γ' ἐν πόντῳ πάθεν ἄλγεα ὃν κατὰ θυμόν,  
ἀρνύμενος ἦν τε ψυχὴν καὶ νόστον ἐταίρων.  
ἀλλ' οὐδ' ὧς ἐτάρους ἐρρῦσατο, ἰέμενός περ·  
αὐτῶν γὰρ σφετέρησιν ἀτασθαλίησιν ὄλοντο,  
νήπιοι, οἳ κατὰ βοῦς Ὑπερίονος Ἥελίοιο  
ἦσθιον· αὐτὰρ ὁ τοῖσιν ἀφείλετο νόστιμον ἦμαρ.  
τῶν ἀμόθεν γε, θεά, θύγατερ Διός, εἰπέ καὶ ἡμῖν.  
ἔνθ' ἄλλοι μὲν πάντες, ὅσοι φύγον αἰπὺν ὄλεθρον,  
οἴκοι ἔσαν, πόλεμόν τε πεφευγότες ἠδὲ θάλασσαν·  
τὸν δ' οἶον, νόστου κεχρημένον ἠδὲ γυναικός,  
νύμφη πότνι' ἔρυκε Καλυψώ, διὰ θεάων,  
ἐν σπέσσι γλαφυροῖσι, λιλαιομένη πόσιν εἶναι.  
ἀλλ' ὅτε δὴ ἔτος ἦλθε περιπλομένων ἐνιαυτῶν,

---

<sup>29</sup> There is some variance among scholars over what to call the different portions of the beginning of the poem. My practice follows Cook 1995, 1–2 n. 3. Rüter 1969 calls all of 1–21 the proem (“das Proömium”) and 22–95 the prologue (“der Prolog”).

τῶ οἱ ἐπεκλώσαντο θεοὶ οἰκόνδε νέεσθαι  
εἰς Ἰθάκην—οὐδ' ἔνθα πεφυγμένος ἦεν ἀέθλων  
καὶ μετὰ οἴσι φίλοισι—θεοὶ δ' ἐλέαιρον ἅπαντες  
νόσφι Ποσειδάωνος· ὁ δ' ἀσπερχὲς μενέαινε  
ἀντιθέω Ὀδυσῆϊ πάρος ἦν γαῖαν ἰκέσθαι.

Tell me, Muse, of the man of many turns, who  
was driven far after he sacked the sacred citadel of Troy.  
Many men he saw and learned of the minds.  
Many pains he suffered in his heart upon the sea,  
striving to save his life and the homecoming of his companions.  
But even so he could not protect his companions, though he longed to.  
For they perished by their own recklessness—  
fools—who ate the cattle of Hyperion Helios.  
So he took from them the day of their return.  
Of these things, from some point at least, goddess, daughter of Zeus,  
speak also to us.

Then, all the others, as many as had escaped sheer destruction,  
were at home, having escaped war and the sea.  
But him alone, who longed for his homecoming and wife,  
was the nymph queen Calypso, divine of the goddesses, detaining  
in hollow caves, desiring that he be her husband.  
But when indeed the year came, as the seasons revolved,  
in which the gods spun out for him to return home  
to Ithaca—not even there did he escape ordeals  
even among his own people—all the gods pitied him,  
save Poseidon. He was ceaselessly angry  
with god-matched Odysseus until he should reach his own land.

As was recognized already in antiquity, the very first word of the poem has  
special significance.<sup>30</sup> As best as I and other modern scholars can tell from the limited  
evidence available, other early epics began with a word that signaled the main theme of

---

<sup>30</sup> For instance, see the scholium in Ludwich, ad loc., which notes a four-fold, programmatic sense to ἄνδρα:  
“by nature” (φύσει), “as a husband” (γῆμαντα), as “manly” (ἀνδρεῖον), and “as an adult” (ἀνδρὸς ἡλικίαν  
ἔχοντα).



the poem: for example, the *Iliad* begins with μῆνις—the “wrath” of Achilles that will drive the plot of epic to its conclusion; the *Little Iliad* (in one version) begins with the word Ἴλιον, and tells the story of how the Achaeans prepare and set their ambush in the wooden horse to defeat Troy (Bernabé fr. 28.1). This is well-trodden ground,<sup>31</sup> but it is worth noting that already, from the first moment in the poem, the narrator is delimiting what the central object of the poem will be and, by omission, what will be made secondary to this subject. Foremost, before νόστος or τίσις or any of the gods, is Odysseus—“the man” (ἄνδρα). The narrator demands that the audience pay attention to this character. The central drama of the epic explains how Odysseus fits within the moral and narrative world, as the narrator makes clear in the next line, of the events after the fall of Troy.

To put it another way, the *Odyssey*’s proem presents in its first word the single idea from which the entire poem flows. The rest of the poem is, as it were, an apposition to its first term. It is an explication of the meaning of “the man,” Odysseus. The narrator makes the first word of paramount significance and creates the expectation of elaboration by making it seem at once specific and vague. It refers specifically to *this* one “man” and no other—i.e., to the subject of the clauses follow. At the same time his identity is vague: though in the poem’s performance context there was no uncertainty

---

<sup>31</sup> See *inter alios* Rüter 1969, 28–34; Kahane 1992; see Walsh 1995, 395 n. 48, for reference to other examples of significant first words in Greek poetry.

who he was going to be, he is at first anonymous—only the “man,” not “Odysseus.” This anonymity is especially pronounced when set against the first lines of other epics, which prominently feature proper names: e.g., Πηληϊάδεω Ἀχιλῆος in the *Iliad* and Ἴλιον...Δαρδανίην in the *Little Iliad* (Bernabé fr. 28.1). The *Odyssey*'s first word demands further definition that the rest of the poem provides.<sup>32</sup> Indeed, the proem is the first presentation of the recurring theme of Odysseus' disguised and complex identity. “The man” presents a kind of puzzle for the audience to solve. Thus, Aristotle calls the *Odyssey* “ethical” (ἠθικὴ, 1459b15), with its focus on a character, as opposed to the *Iliad*, which he calls “pathetic” (παθητικόν), with its focus on the experience of actions and emotions—hence the thematic first words of ἄνδρα (a character) versus μῆνιν (an emotion that leads to violent action). The audience's evaluation of the poem begins with the character of Odysseus.

The narrator's focus remains on Odysseus for the first six lines. He summarizes Odysseus' life with reference to his wandering (1–2), his sack of Troy (2), his experience with the ways of other men (3), his sufferings on the sea (4), and efforts to save his life and companions (5–6). A distinctive feature of these lines is that they present the events that the narrator will later portray with Odysseus as the agent of the story. Thus, they

---

<sup>32</sup> Rüter 1969, 47, notes that instead of naming Odysseus directly, “vielmehr ersetzt die Odyssee den Namen des Odysseus geradezu durch eine ‚definition‘ des Helden.” Pucci 1998, 22, observes that this “hints at the *Odyssey*'s concern for characterization.” He also notes that scholarly discussion of this “vagueness” of ἄνδρα goes back to Bekker 1863.

privilege his point of view. This focalization is strongly marked. *πλάγχθη* is in the passive voice: the narrator describes the wandering from Odysseus' perspective as the one "driven" and not from the gods' perspective, the ones who "drive" him (cf. 1.75, et al.). The verbs of seeing and knowing (*ἴδεν...ἔγνω*, 3) have Odysseus as their subject, and such verbs of perception are one of the primary ways that the narrator focalizes his narrative so that he makes the audience perceive the narrative in through this character's eyes.<sup>33</sup> The narrator focuses on Odysseus' pains from the perspective of Odysseus, not from the perspective of those who caused him pain (e.g., Poseidon), nor does he address the pain Odysseus caused others (cf. 23.306–7). He emphasizes the interior focus of this experience with the phrase "in his heart" (*κατὰ θυμόν*, 4). Later, when the narrator describes Odysseus' disposition at the opening of the poem, he describes his absence from his home first by noting his "longing" (*κεχρημένον*, 13) for his home and wife. Again, the narrator stresses the interior, subjective state of Odysseus (in line 13) at this stage before he introduces the exterior agents (Calypso) and places (her hollow caves) then acting upon him (in lines 14–15).

All of this has the effect of creating from the beginning of the poem a sympathetic perspective on Odysseus through the identification of his perspective on events with the audience's own perspective. To the same end, the narrator mentions

---

<sup>33</sup> See de Jong 1987a, 21–40; Bal 1985, 100–18.

none of Odysseus' errors and has circumscribed Odysseus' acts of violence to a unelaborated reference to his sack of Troy (antecedent to the wanderings narrative) and the multivalent epithet "of many turns" (πολύτροπον, 1). πολύτροπον is famously ambiguous: it may refer to either Odysseus' wandering or his mental agility, used for ill or good.<sup>34</sup> Arguably, the cunning and more duplicitous aspects of Odysseus' polytropic, multivalent character were more prominent in older traditions.<sup>35</sup> An audience confronted with πολύτροπον might expect these darker traits to be highlighted. But just as soon as the epithet suggests guile and violence, the narrator seems to restrict its signification to the more passive meaning of wandering with the immediately following expegetical relative clause. Others have noted the effect of this relative clause as disambiguating the meaning of the epithet,<sup>36</sup> but I suggest that this restriction on the meaning of the epithet is an aspect of the narrator's rhetorical strategy to present a more sanitized view of Odysseus right from the opening of the poem. The narrator thus positions his version of Odysseus in contrast to other another tradition the highlighted Odysseus' more troubling aspects.

---

<sup>34</sup> See Clay 1983, 25–34, esp. 29–30 nn. 44 and 45 for further bibliography.

<sup>35</sup> Danek 2002a, esp. 24–25. See also Russo 1997 on Odysseus as an example of the Jungian trickster archetype.

<sup>36</sup> See *inter alios* Pucci 1998, 25, who writes that the relative clause "seems added in order to explain the epithet and to limit the meaning of *polutropos* to its literal sense."

The narrator makes no allusion to Odysseus' bloody slaughter of the suitors, beyond the vague statement that once he got to Ithaca, "not even there did he escape toils" (οὐδ' ἔνθα πεφυγμένος ἦεν ἀέθλων, 18). Moreover, the formal similarity between these opening lines and the opening lines of the *Iliad* presents a contrast between Odysseus and Achilles. As Pietro Pucci puts it, "the proem initiates...the apology of Odysseus in contrast to Achilles."<sup>37</sup> Whereas Achilles is a source of ruin to his own men, bringing "countless...pains" (μυρί'...ἄλγε', *Il.* 1.2) upon them, Odysseus brings "pains" (ἄλγεα, *Od.* 1.4) upon himself in his attempt to save his own men.<sup>38</sup> Pucci also points out that, in another revision of Cyclic myth, the proem attributes the sack of Troy to Odysseus alone, which "betrays the poet's bias in favor of Odysseus."<sup>39</sup>

In contrast to the narrator's positive introduction of Odysseus, his companions come off as negative examples of men who deserved their ill fate. I discussed this earlier in chapter five. I wish to recall that the selection of this one episode, especially over and against the parallel episode with Polyphemus, indicates a profound effort to stress the one episode where Odysseus is least to blame in the death of his companions. Indeed, the episode with Polyphemus leads to and even causes their encounter with the cattle of Helios. Without Poseidon's persecution that resulted from blinding Polyphemus they

---

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 12. See also Clay 1983, 38.

<sup>38</sup> Pucci 1998, 13.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

never would have faced the dangers of Thrinacia.<sup>40</sup> The narrator's choice to exclude the earlier episode and stress the later one highlights one interpretation of the causes and effects that underlie the plot of the epic and excludes others. I only wish to add here, following Clay,<sup>41</sup> that an effect of attaching blame to the companions for their own demise is to exculpate Odysseus from any blame in their deaths. As Eurylochus and Eupheithes demonstrate (10.435–37; 24.421–38), it is not impossible to narrate events in such a way that Odysseus receives blame. But the narrator, who presents the audience with the first, and thus privileged, interpretation of the morality of the poem, has exonerated Odysseus in advance before he narrates any of the actual losses of companions. Moreover, in a rare direct apostrophe he characterizes the companions as “fools” (νήπιοι, 8).<sup>42</sup> The narrator's citation of the companions' slaughter of the cattle of Helios and their consequent deaths, emphasized by its prominent position in the proem, presents their action as an exemplary crime. Just as Zeus will argue in his opening speech, the narrator is presenting an argument in defense of a retributive mode of justice that those who suffer harm are the merited recipients of punitive killing. The moral weakness of the companions stands in contrast to the virtue of Odysseus, who is

---

<sup>40</sup> See p. 61 n. 22 above.

<sup>41</sup> Clay 1983, 37.

<sup>42</sup> De Jong 2001, ad 22.12–14; Yamagata 1989.

“striving to save...the homecoming of his companions” (ἀρνύμενος...νόστον ἐταίρων, 5) and “longing” (ἰέμενος, 6) to protect them.

I also wish to stress that the narrator’s attribution of the companions’ deaths to the agency of Helios is highly tendentious. Helios’s participation in retribution against the companions is limited to his petitioning Zeus. As Odysseus narrates the incident in book 12, it is Zeus who executes the punishment. Furthermore, as I discussed earlier,<sup>43</sup> Zeus is conspicuously absent from the *Odyssey*’s proem, in contrast to the *Iliad*’s. In the *Iliad*, the destruction that befalls the Achaeans comes about ultimately through Zeus’ design—“And the plan of Zeus was being accomplished” (Διὸς δ’ ἐτελείετο βουλή, *Il.* 1.5); but in the *Odyssey* the narrator has removed Zeus from his summary of the action and background of the poem. He has disguised Zeus’ ultimate power over events—including the evils that befell men like Odysseus’ companions. By attributing the companions’ demise to their own recklessness, the narrator absolves not only Odysseus of any blame but Zeus as well.<sup>44</sup> Just as Zeus’ speech in 1.32–43 will exculpate him from responsibility in the harm that befalls mortals, the narrator’s proem makes Zeus just as blameless as Odysseus.

---

<sup>43</sup> See pp. 58–60 above.

<sup>44</sup> See Pucci 1998, 19 n. 19, where he makes an important correction to Clay’s limitation of the force of αὐτῶν...σφετέρησιν ἀτασθαλίησιν (1.7) to the exculpation of Odysseus.

Like the companions, Poseidon appears in a negative light, standing apart from the other gods in his lone hatred of Odysseus (19–21). The exclusion of hatred like Poseidon's from all the other gods removes it from the moral center of the poem: Olympus. Poseidon is set apart, physically removed to Ethiopia and metrically enjambed in the next line.<sup>45</sup> In addition, as I discussed earlier,<sup>46</sup> the narrator denies Poseidon the language of just punishment, of *τίσις*. Instead, the narrator says, "he hated unceasingly" (*ὁ δ' ἀσπερχές μινέαινε*, 20). In contrast to Poseidon, "all" (*ἅπαντες*, 19) the other gods have a sympathetic relationship with the protagonist: they "pity" (*ἐλέαινον*) him.

To summarize, the prologue has the function of setting the audience's expectations and conditioning their responses to the narrative that will follow.<sup>47</sup> The prologue achieves several effects toward this end. It defines as the central object of interest the meaning of the character of Odysseus. Through the extensive use of focalization, it places the audience's primary identification and sympathy with Odysseus. It also excludes Odysseus and Zeus from any blame, placing it firmly upon men (the companions as synecdoche for all such men) who themselves deserve

---

<sup>45</sup> Segal 1994, 196–97, calls this the "bracketing of the less moral, more 'primitive' divine behavior" characteristic of Poseidon.

<sup>46</sup> See pp. 63–66 above.

<sup>47</sup> When I speak of the "function" of the prologue, I mean the purpose for which the narrator speaks these lines.



vengeance, while, on the other hand, it makes Odysseus' enemies (Poseidon) appear unjust. Hence, the narrator reveals a pro-Odysseus bias. Jenny Strauss Clay's description of the narrator of the proem as "Homerus philodysseus" is apt.<sup>48</sup>

Study of the prologue reveals that the programmatic remarks in these lines are an odd fit for the content of the rest of the poem. On first consideration, the episode at Thrinacia does not seem worthy of its special prominence. The absence of Zeus from these lines is atypical. The absence of any reference to the violence of Odysseus—especially his confrontation with the suitors—is perplexing. These are problems that have plagued unitarians and provided analysts with endless grounds for speculation.<sup>49</sup> But, as I will argue later, these oddities are a part of the opening, programmatic passage because they draw attention to their own bias.

The second programmatic passage in the poem follows directly upon the first. Once the narrator has established the main points of his prologue, indicating how his narration of Odysseus' epic is to begin, he sets the scene of the first action of the poem. Poseidon, the one god left who hates Odysseus, has left Olympus to visit the Ethiopians. This allows Athena an unchecked opportunity to approach Zeus and plead Odysseus'

---

<sup>48</sup> Clay 1983, 38, after Eustathius.

<sup>49</sup> Note that Bekker, Fick, Duentzer, Scotland, Kirchhoff, Bernhardt, Koechly, and Nauck all condemned some portion of 1.1–9 (and rarely the same portion) in large part owing to these problems. For further on the issues, which are sometime called the "problem of the proem," see Rüter 1969, 42–52; Walsh 1995, esp. nn. 2–8 for further bibliography.

case. But it is Zeus who opens the scene with the complaint that mortals blame the gods for their own suffering (1.32–34). This leads Zeus to reflect on the paradigm of Aegisthus, a man who deserves his ill fate (35–43). Athena agrees (44–47), but contrasts Odysseus with Aegisthus as one who ought not to suffer (48–62). Zeus responds that it is Poseidon’s fault alone that Odysseus suffers (68–75), but he now will oppose Poseidon’s persecution and help bring Odysseus home (76–79). Athena is pleased with this response and makes plans to have Hermes go to Ogygia to get Calypso to release Odysseus (80–87), while she goes to Ithaca to encourage Telemachus and set him on a journey to learn about his father (88–95). This scene thus sets in motion all the action of the first half of the poem until Odysseus arrives on Ithaca.

I have already discussed Zeus’ opening speech in detail in chapter 2. Here I merely intend to emphasize the programmatic aspects of the scene. There are several reasons why this scene has programmatic importance. It is significant that it provides the first action in the poem and that the first direct speech comes in the voice of Zeus. As I stressed earlier, several scholars have drawn attention to the prominent placement of Zeus’ speech at the outset of the poem.<sup>50</sup> This scene is the first of a pair of divine councils that frame the whole poem, the second being the one at which Zeus and Athena establish the final settlement between Odysseus and the kin of the suitors (24.472–88).

---

<sup>50</sup> Dodds 1951, 32, is the most influential English-language scholar to note this. See p. 7 and n. 15 above.

This final scene is similarly programmatic and, like the first, serves as a commentary on the plot. I present a fuller analysis of this and other final scenes later, but it suffices for now to recognize Zeus' authoritative role as common to both. Zeus holds a special position in the Homeric divine order as the figure in ultimate control over worldly events, or, from the perspective of the construction of the poem's narrative, the poem's plot. Most recently, Jim Marks has developed this connection between Zeus' goals and the poem's program. This connection is clearest in a divine council scene, which "represents a thematic reflex of the narrative plan as a *Dios boulē*."<sup>51</sup> Because of the uniquely authoritative place that Zeus and his "plan" hold in the poem, Zeus' speech has programmatic weight.

One strikingly programmatic element of Zeus' speech is his first line (1.32):

“ὦ πόποι, οἷον δὴ νῦ θεοὺς βροτοὶ αἰτιόωνται.”

“Alas, how indeed mortals now blame the gods!”

This general complaint about “mortals” who blame the gods is the first line in the poem directed to an internal addressee.<sup>52</sup> The narrator addresses all prior 31 lines to the poem's external audience and only here adopts the role of an internal speaker addressing an internal audience. Since the programmatic elements of the episode move

---

<sup>51</sup> Marks 2008, 160.

<sup>52</sup> Lardinois 1995, 149 n. 130, 287, identifies the line as a gnome.

the external audience to reflect on its larger implications for their understanding of the narrator's aims and the poem as a whole, the external audience may feel that here Zeus is also addressing them. The "mortals" who "now blame the gods" are in the singer's external audience. This interpretation becomes more convincing when one recognizes that Zeus' complaint is anaphoric: it assumes and refers to an accusation that mortals have made against the gods. Yet within the opening of the poem there is no such accusation to be found. Perhaps the reference is proleptic and Zeus' complaint is directed against someone in Aegisthus' circle who blamed the gods for his death. But this is unlikely: there is no such accusation by a mortal in Zeus' telling of Aegisthus' death. Zeus is not refuting a specific accusation arising from Aegisthus' suffering, else he would likely have mentioned the accuser; rather, Zeus' statement is exophoric.<sup>53</sup> Mortals made such complaints outside the text but within the experience of both Zeus (notionally) and the poem's audience. Such complaints are found within the extant presentations of early Greek theology, including later passages in the *Odyssey*.<sup>54</sup> The *Iliad* also contains such sentiments.<sup>55</sup> The conclusion, then, is that Zeus directs his rebuke not

---

<sup>53</sup> By "exophoric" I mean that the line points outside the text, as opposed to an "endophoric" reference, which points inside the text. On this terminology, see Halliday and Hasan 1976, 31–37.

<sup>54</sup> See p. 23 n. 21 above.

<sup>55</sup> Some have argued that the *Iliad* presents a very different view of divine justice, in which all evils do in fact originate from the gods: see Rüter 1969, 65–67. Rüter thus observes that, in Zeus' speech, the *Odyssey* "korrigiert...Vorstellungen, die der Ilias geläufig sind" (64).

at any specific view in the *Odyssey*, but at a more general view in the wider culture expressed in such external passages. Zeus, thus, is in an argument with the poem's audience, or at least the part of it that subscribes to such views. Zeus and the narrator together present a programmatic argument to both the internal and external audience in defense of divine justice.

The main content of Zeus' speech is his recounting of the "Oresteia" as a paradigmatic way to explain why the gods are not to blame for all the evils that men endure. I have already discussed at length the interaction of the "Oresteia" narrative and the *Odyssey's* main narrative. I only wish to draw attention here to the programmatic effect of establishing a paradigmatic parallel narrative. It is a common programmatic move for a singer or poet to make a comparison within his own poem between it and an external work. (For example, Virgil famously draws a comparison between his *Aeneid* and both Homeric epics in the first two words of his poem, *arma virumque*.) Indeed, artists of almost every discipline and medium may make this kind of artistic maneuver. The *Odyssey* incorporates and regularly refers to this other narrative of the "Oresteia," which existed as its own oral epic. And it is not only the simple juxtaposition (or rather, enmeshment) of these two narratives that lends Zeus' telling of the "Oresteia" a programmatic character. The very form of Zeus' speech is paradigmatic: his rendition of

the “Oresteia” is a *paradeigma* in the rhetorical sense.<sup>56</sup> The result is that the “Oresteia” paradigm stands not only as an interpretive model for the present situation of mortal’s generic complaints against perceived divine injustice, but also as a model for the entire poem. In fact, Athena’s response to Zeus’ speech invites the audience to make this comparison. She accepts the validity of the model and applies it to the case of Odysseus only to distinguish him from the model. As the poem proceeds, the narrator invites the audience, already confronted from the outset with the paradigm of the “Oresteia,” to keep that model in mind. Zeus, Athena, and the narrator have presented their one, univocal take on the comparison of the *Odyssey* and the “Oresteia.” It remains for the audience to evaluate their stance.

---

<sup>56</sup> Rhetorical theorists, especially Aristotle, systematized the rhetorical meaning of *παράδειγμα* as one of the methods for proving one’s argument. The *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum* classifies *παράδειγμα* as a kind of “proof” (*πίστις*, 1428a). For Aristotle, the *παράδειγμα* is rhetoric’s equivalent to dialectic’s induction (*ἐπαγωγή*), both of which he defines as “the demonstration from many similar cases that [the subject] is such” (*τὸ ἐπὶ πολλῶν καὶ ὁμοίων δείκνυσθαι ὅτι οὕτως ἔχει*, *Rh.* 1.2.9). Just as dialectic induction argues from several particular examples for a general rule, so rhetorical *παράδειγμα* takes one or more particular examples and argues that another, similar case shares in the same outcome. The argument moves from an acknowledgement of certain, given similarities between cases to the supposition that other, unstated similarities are also present between them: cases X and Y are alike in ways A and B; case Z is like X and Y in way A; therefore, case Z is also like X and Y in way B. To use an example Aristotle offers, the Persian kings Darius (X) and then Xerxes (Y) both captured Egypt (A) before invading Greece (B). If the present king of Persia (Z) captures Egypt (A), he will invade Greece (B). In this instance, the present king would be like Darius and Xerxes in that all three captured Egypt (A). It is surmised, then, that they are also alike in that all three will invade Greece (B) (2.20.3). Since the *παράδειγμα* is part of rhetoric, and rhetoric’s function is always to persuade its audience (1.2.1), a speaker’s goal in making such an argument is to advocate for a course of action. Specifically, a speaker urges his audience either to encourage or to discourage an agent’s emulation of the paradigmatic example. In Aristotle’s treatment, the conclusion is that the audience (presumably Greek citizens in an assembly) should not allow the Persian king to become like his predecessors who invaded Greece, and they can do this by preventing him from capturing Egypt.

Apart from these new programmatic elements in the divine council scene, several of the programmatic elements first touched upon in the prologue find new emphasis in the words of Zeus and Athena, so that by the end of the opening scene the audience has the distinct impression of unanimity between Athena, Zeus, and the narrator. ἀτασθαλία reappears (34), linking the moral evaluations of Zeus with the narrator's; likewise, the fate of "sheer destruction" (αἰπὺν ὄλεθρον, 37; cf. 11) faces those who condemn themselves to a deserved death. Odysseus' subjective woes are emphasized: e.g., he "suffers pains apart from his friends on a sea-girt island" (φίλων ἄπο πῆματα πάσχει νήσῳ ἐν ἀμφιρύτῃ, 49–50; cf. πολλὰ δ' ὅ γ' ἐν πόντῳ πάθεν ἄλγεα, 4). Likewise, his intellectual virtues find further elaboration: "he is beyond mortals in his mind" (περὶ μὲν νόον ἐστὶ βροτῶν, 66; cf. πολύτροπον, 1; perhaps a hint of πολλῶν δ' ἀνθρώπων ἴδεν ἄστεα καὶ νόον ἔγνω, 3?). Poseidon again is characterized as uniquely and endlessly angry: he is "ever obstinately angry" (ἀσκελὲς αἰεὶ...κεχόλωται, 68–69; cf. ἀσπερχὲς μενέαινε, 20). The joint partiality of Zeus, Athena, and the narrator in favor of Odysseus is well-established before the action moves to Ithaca. The audience knows that these gods will be collaborating with the narrator to present Odysseus as just and good.

In summary, the narrator reveals his ethical program at the very outset. He establishes an ethical paradigm (in the "Oresteia" story) according to which those who suffer do so deservedly and those who, like "far-famed" (τηλεκλυτὸς) Orestes, take

vengeance upon wrong-doers are accorded just renown. At the same time, the narrator, Zeus, and Athena all show their bias toward Odysseus and, in effect, presuppose before the narrative even begins in earnest that he will turn out to be one of those justly accorded renown. The narrator's plan is clear and set. Now the ethical drama of the epic will unfold. Will Odysseus turn out to be who he has been promised to be?

#### ***8.4 The Outcome of the Program***

The *Odyssey* presents its audience with a privileged interpretation of itself. The poem's narrator, his protagonist, and the protagonist's allies all try to fix the meaning of the epic. They do this even before the narrative begins in earnest, as my analysis of the prologue and opening scenes of the poem has shown. This program they offer, their authoritative interpretation, confronts the poem's audience with a question: is it legitimate? As I remarked earlier, Zeus' complaint about mortals blaming the gods for the woes they suffer addresses the external audience along with the internal one. Does the poem's audience in the end feel that Zeus has been vindicated? And Zeus can only be vindicated if the conclusion of the plot—the companions' deaths, Odysseus' happy return, the suitors' and faithless servants' horrible demise, and the dismissal of the claims that suitors' kin and Poseidon have against Odysseus—comes out to be just. For it is Zeus' (and the narrator's) claim that justice does in the end win out; the harms that come upon men are not arbitrary but part of a larger scheme of cosmic justice.



The crux of the issue is the suitors' fate. From their first presentation on Ithaca as "haughty suitors" (μνηστῆρας ἀγήνορας, 1.106) who despoil Odysseus' home, the narrator depicts them negatively. In order for the audience to view Odysseus' slaughter of them favorably, the narrator has to construct their guilt meticulously. Their deaths cannot seem arbitrary: Zeus has promised that such sufferings are merited. But their guilt is necessarily a construction of the poem: they are, after all, only poetic figures whose lives and morality lie entirely in the mouths of singers and ears of audiences. It is on this point that one of the central tensions of the poem lies. The suitors' guilt is at once an artificial, poetic construction and at the same time a seemingly organic, integral part of the world within the poem. But how well does this world cohere? In particular, how well-built is the narrator's case against the suitors? Is it, as Cedric Whitman sees it, only "a house of cards, carefully piled up to be knocked down, with the appearance of justice, at the appointed time"?<sup>57</sup> After thousands of lines preparing the audience for the event, the suitors' slaying unfolds in the goriest and most violently detailed scene in the Homeric corpus, "an orgy of blood vengeance."<sup>58</sup> The visceral impact of the scene is inescapable and begs the question, is it justified? Is such violence consistent with a just cosmic order?

---

<sup>57</sup> Whitman 1958, 305.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 306.

Readers of the poem have proposed a number of explanations for why this climax of violence is just in the context of Homeric society: the suitors' breaking the code of ξενία,<sup>59</sup> their (attempted) adultery and murder,<sup>60</sup> their ὕβρις,<sup>61</sup> their breach of the standard of "appropriateness,"<sup>62</sup> Odysseus' self-defense,<sup>63</sup> or the suitors' devastation of Odysseus' οἶκος.<sup>64</sup> Several of these explanations have some value, as they point to the problems that the suitors pose for Odysseus and his household. However, as should be clear, I find the last reason to be the nearest to the way in which the poem presents the matter, though the crime is far richer in symbolic significance than critics have previously appreciated.

---

<sup>59</sup> See pp. 257–61 below. Some important advocates of this position include Saïd 1979; Reece 1993, 165–87; Yamagata 1994, 29–30, who thinks that in 22.39–40, 414–15, and 23.65–66 Odysseus and Penelope condemn them for dishonoring guests (though Yamagata ultimately thinks self-defense is the true grounds for their slaying).

<sup>60</sup> See Allen 1939, esp. 112–13. From the suitors' point of view, they might conceive of their plot to kill Telemachus as an act of self-defense, seeing as Telemachus has openly threatened them with death (1.379–80; 2.316, 325). This seems to be the reason they imagine his death at 2.325–36. But more to the point, intent *per se* is not an important part of Homeric morality: see p. 25 n. 26 above.

<sup>61</sup> See Jones 1941; Fisher 1992, 162–76. ὕβρις and related terms do appear in passages condemning the suitors: e.g., 1.227, et al. ὕβρις is "the serious assault on the honor of another, which is likely to cause shame, and lead to anger and attempts at revenge" (ibid., 1). It condemns the suitors for their attacks on Odysseus and his household. Since the form of their attack is their reckless, excessive feasting, condemning the suitors on the charge of ὕβρις is entirely consistent with my analysis.

<sup>62</sup> See Long 1970, 135–39. According to Long, the suitors' crimes consist in "a flagrant breach of appropriate social conduct" (139).

<sup>63</sup> Yamagata 1994, 30–31.

<sup>64</sup> Adkins 1960a, 54–55: the suitors have made "a declaration of war on the house of Odysseus"; Halverson 1985, on which see pp. 256–57 below.

This wide-ranging inquiry into the suitors' guilt and the various conclusions to which scholars have arrived point to a more fundamental truth: a suitable justification for their death is hard to find. John Halverson has formulated this critique well, and it is worth quoting his reading at some length:

What is the crime of the suitors that is so utterly irredeemable? They kill or injure no one. They do not actually molest either Telemachos or Penelope; she indeed is treated with great respect. They do not appropriate Odysseus' estate, or try to, though they talk about it several times. The plot to ambush Telemachos might be seen to justify Odysseus' extreme revenge, but the destruction of the suitors seems to be determined well before that plot is hatched (1.293–96). The nature of their crimes, their "transgression," is summarized succinctly by Odysseus when he finally confronts them: you hacked away at my household (κατεκείρετε οἶκον), you lay with my slave women by coercion (βιάίως), and though I was alive you courted my wife behind my back (22.36–38). He does not even mention the plots against Telemachos. On the face of it these do not seem overwhelming charges, nor do they seem altogether just, except for the first. After all, everyone thought Odysseus was dead, and their courtship of Penelope was hardly clandestine. Some of the servant women did indeed sleep with the suitors, but elsewhere there is no hint of coercion (18.325; 20.6–8), rather the contrary, which makes better sense of their punishment. In that rather repellent scene, the twelve offending women are brought out of the house and brutally garroted, after which the arrogant goatherd Melanthios is mutilated and killed. The crime of the slaves is evidently disloyalty, not even to Odysseus *per se*, but to his household. One of Odysseus' main efforts when he returns in disguise to Ithaca is to test and determine the loyalties of his servants. The offenders have failed to preserve the integrity of the household. The suitors have attacked it; that is their crime. Everything centers on the οἶκος. The ferocity of Odysseus' revenge is an index of the supreme value placed on the household. Eating up its food, seducing a few of its servants, and courting its widowed mistress do not seem like such great enormities—offensive, yes, but beyond compensation? It would appear,

however, that in the context of the *Odyssey*, an assault on the integrity of the οἶκος and even minor collaboration with its attackers are high crimes.<sup>65</sup>

Halverson's point is that all the various aspects of the supposed crimes of the suitors come down to an assault on Odysseus' household. In large part, I agree with his conclusion. However, I would extend it: as I argued earlier, the attack on Odysseus' household takes on the language and imagery of murder, so that to wreck his οἶκος and βίωτος is, symbolically, to kill him.

However, the charge that the suitors merit death for their offenses against ξενία requires some further explanation, for this is perhaps the most popular view among scholars. Doubtless ξενία is an important custom underlying the meaning of the suitors' conduct.<sup>66</sup> But if they violate this custom, it is important to establish in what respect they do so. It is my view that any violation they commit consists not in disrespecting guests—though they may long to supplant Odysseus and become master of his οἶκος, they are not in fact hosts in another's home. The disrespect they show Odysseus when he is disguised as a beggar adds to their wickedness precisely because Odysseus is in fact not another guest but secretly their host. If they are blameworthy, their crime lies instead in disrespecting their host and his οἶκος—which in important respects is the same thing.

---

<sup>65</sup> Halverson 1985, 142.

<sup>66</sup> See Reece 1993, 165–87. On his view, Odysseus plays the role of “a guardian of society” who punishes “those who have subverted the basic institutions of society,” in particular, the institution of ξενία (182).

This they do through their designs on Penelope and especially by their excessive feasting. The feast, after all, “is the primary locus for participation in *xenia*”; hence, its observance has greater moral importance than any other element of *ξενία*.<sup>67</sup>

One of the problems that the suitors present for Odysseus’ οἶκος is that, in contrast to the obligations facing a host, the obligations that the conventions of *ξενία* impose on a guest during his stay are few—at least in the Homeric model.<sup>68</sup> Once a host has accepted a guest into his home, the guest’s obligation is simply to accept his host’s hospitality. (The narrator never says who acted as host and allowed the suitors’ entry. It is left unclear. Perhaps Telemachus acted as host, as he did with the disguised Athena in book one.<sup>69</sup> But the suitors act as though there is no proper host while they feast in Odysseus’ home.) In the custom of *ξενία*, all the important obligations a guest has lie in the future, in the promise to reciprocate the hospitality his host has shown him. The one formal obligation upon a guest during his stay is to reveal his identity—but the true effect of this act lies in the future, since it provides a way for the host one day to call

---

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>68</sup> Again, Reece’s *ibid.*, esp. 5–46, analysis outlines the narrative elements and obligations of the actors.

<sup>69</sup> Though the suitors’ entrance is never described, Heubeck et al., 1.57, argue, “it is scarcely possible to imagine that they could have established themselves in the first place without an invitation.” She adduces other archaic examples of suitors pursuing a woman *en masse*, usually at the invitation of her κύριος.

upon his guest to show him similar hospitality.<sup>70</sup> In point of fact, then, a guest's revealing his identity is a sign of a future obligation, not a present one. The suitors do not intend to fulfill their obligation: they assume their host is dead and cannot ask for reciprocation. This results in excessive feasting, for they imagine never having to repay what they have consumed—they can be parasites. The suitors, thus, exploit a gap in the rules of ξενία in order to fatten themselves on the livelihood of another. Or, to put it in terms of the cannibalistic imagery of their crimes, they are committing a kind of necrophagy, glutting themselves on a dead man, as in the common Homeric image of scavenging dogs or birds eating the bodies of the unburied dead (cf. *Il.* 1.4–5, 2.393, et al.). In this way, the suitors have not so much violated ξενία as exploited and perverted it, reaping its benefits without paying its costs. The key point here for my argument is that the suitors' exploitation of ξενία results in an attack on Odysseus' οἶκος and βίωτος through their excessive feasting.

My position here is consistent with Suzanne Saïd's definitive presentation of the argument that the suitors' crimes lie in their offense against ξενία in her classic 1979 article, "Les crimes des prétendants, la maison d'Ulysse et les festins de *l'Odyssee*." Her argument is that the suitors break the rules of ξενία by perverting the core element of

---

<sup>70</sup> This holds true even in the inversion of ξενία in the Cyclops episode, where Odysseus does reveal his name to Polyphemus who then is able to reciprocate the violence shown to him in the form of his curse upon Odysseus.

this social ritual—the feast. In her analysis, the Homeric feast is much more than a meal. It is an integral part of the central Homeric institution, the οἶκος. She sees a deep connection between the suitors’ criminal actions, the proper observance of the rules of the feast, and the integrity of Odysseus’ οἶκος. Therefore, she writes, “Les crimes des prétendants sont inseparables de la maison d’Ulysse...”<sup>71</sup> The suitors engage in all manner of harm against the property and persons of Odysseus’ οἶκος, so that his household is not only the site of all their crimes: “la maison d’Ulysse est *l’unique victime* des prétendants...”<sup>72</sup> Their breaking “la loi du festin,” their excessive, never-to-be-requited consumption, results in the destruction of constituent, essential parts of Odysseus’ οἶκος, especially his cattle.<sup>73</sup> Moreover, Saïd shows how their banquet comes to resemble a distribution of plunder, as they share out Odysseus’ possessions as though they had killed him in battle.<sup>74</sup> In other words, Saïd identifies the suitors’ offenses against ξενία with the destruction of his person and household through their feasting. She summarizes her interpretation of their crimes thus: “Tous les crimes des prétendants se résument donc à un seul, la destruction de la maison d’Ulysse.”<sup>75</sup>

---

<sup>71</sup> Saïd 1979, 9.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 10, emphasis added.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 10–11.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 23–24.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 10. She adduces in her support here Vickers 1973, 232–33. On Saïd’s interpretation, see also pp. 103–5 above.

In my interpretation, the suitors' offenses against ξενία are real; only, like Saïd, I argue that they consist in particular in breaking codes of feasting, which the narrator and various characters equate with the murder of Odysseus. In this way, these offenses are elevated to the status of murder.

This is the reason why Odysseus kills the suitors. But why this reason constitutes just grounds for killing them is a further question. Some scholars have made arguments based on the reconstruction of Homeric society, and their points have value.<sup>76</sup> But I propose instead to look at how the program of the poem itself presents the suitors' deaths as just. I have shown the many ways in which the narrator emphasizes Odysseus' justice and his foes' injustice. But in particular, with regard to the act of his slaying the suitors, there is one central way, beyond all others, that the narrator uses to make Odysseus just: the narrative of τίσις and its paradigmatic expression in the "Oresteia" story. This is the answer to the question of justice that the narrator proposes; τίσις is his moral calculus.

In terms of the specific version of the model that the narrator offers, the "Oresteia" paradigm, agents are just in executing revenge to the extent they are like Orestes. Likewise, agents are the just recipients of death to the extent they are like Aegisthus. The latter equation is what matters most for the question at hand. Athena

---

<sup>76</sup> *Inter alios* Finley 1954, 127; Adkins 1960a, 53–57; Saïd 1979.



affirms this idea of the applicability of the model in her response to the speech in which

Zeus outlines this moral paradigm (1.46–47):

καὶ λίην κείνός γε εὐκότι κείται ὀλέθρῳ,  
ὥς ἀπόλοιτο καὶ ἄλλος, ὅτις τοιαῦτά γε ῥέζοι.

Surely, that man, at least, lies in a fitting destruction,  
so, too, would anyone else perish who should do *such* deeds.

Athena calls Aegisthus' punishment "fitting" and explicitly says that this paradigm of just deserts should be applied to ethical judgments about other similar agents. The most important term here is τοιαῦτα. With this term Athena shows that the ethical calculation lies in judging that an agent has done actions *like the actions* of Aegisthus: whoever does such actions stands condemned as the recipient of a fitting death. Athena emphasizes τοιαῦτα with the particle γε (just as she does κείνος in 46) in order to specify that it is precisely by doing similar actions that an offender deserves death. And, implicitly, the limiting force of γε emphasizes that such a death is not deserved by anyone doing dissimilar things.

At other points speakers make similar moral judgments, taking the actions of an individual exemplar and claiming that anyone who does similar things is worthy of similar praise or condemnation. For instance, after Agamemnon recounts to Odysseus in Hades how Clytemnestra conspired with Aegisthus to kill him, he says (11.427–28):

ὥς οὐκ αἰνότερον καὶ κύντερον ἄλλο γυναικός,  
ἢ τις δὴ τοιαῦτα μετὰ φρεσὶν ἔργα βάλῃται.

So there is nothing more terrible nor more dog-like than a woman

who indeed plots *such deeds* in her heart.

As is typical, the adverb ὥς indicates the introduction of a general conclusion from a paradigmatic narrative.<sup>77</sup> I emphasize again the noun τοιαῦτα, which makes explicit the criterion that the deeds of a woman condemned as αἰνότερον καὶ κύντερον than anything must be similar to the deeds of Clytemnestra.

As it happens, Zeus and the others who cite the example of Aegisthus are explicit and concise about what those deeds are that merit destruction. In Zeus' speech, he twice names Aegisthus' crimes in precise terms:

1) He wooed Agamemnon's wife:

γῆμ' ἄλοχον μνηστήν (1.36)  
μνάσθαι ἄκοιτιν (1.39)

2) He killed Agamemnon:

τὸν δ' ἔκτανε (1.36)  
αὐτὸν κτείνειν (1.39)

In both cases Zeus names these two crimes together, as if a single unit. (Thus their order is interchangeable: in line 36, Aegisthus woos then kills; in 39, he kills then woos.) In other places, speakers cite Aegisthus' crimes in much the same way. For instance, in three places the same line recurs as a reference to Aegisthus and his crimes. Each time a preceding line references Orestes' vengeance and ends with the epithet πατροφονῆα ("father-slayer") as its last word (filling the last metrical colon in line after the bucolic

---

<sup>77</sup> See *GH* §375. This is similar to the function of ὥς in similes, where it links the illustrative "vehicle" back to its "tenor."

diaeresis). This word always signals that the same formulaic line will follow (1.299–300; 3.197–8, 307–8):

...πατροφονῆα,  
Αἴγισθον δολόμητιν, ὃ οἱ πατέρα κλυτὸν ἔκτα.

...the father-slayer,  
Aegisthus the guileful, who killed his famous father.

The usage of this line in three different contexts indicates that this is an established way in Homeric diction to refer to Aegisthus, and moreover that Aegisthus is conventionally connected with his murder of Agamemnon.

The point I am emphasizing here is that Aegisthus' crimes are unambiguously two precise actions: the murder of Agamemnon and the seduction of Clytemnestra. The ethical calculation that the narrator presents his audience with is that the suitors are, in point of fact, *like* Aegisthus. But did they do the *τοιᾶῦτα* that Aegisthus did? To put it plainly, did they seduce and commit adultery with the wife of an absent master and kill him?

Somewhat surprisingly, the answer is no. They neither succeed in killing anyone, let alone Odysseus, nor in seducing Penelope.<sup>78</sup> I argued in my fifth chapter one reason why this must be so: Odysseus must be the hero of both a *τίσις* narrative and a *νόστος* narrative. But this is not the only reason. The effect of the suitors not being in point of

---

<sup>78</sup> Olson 1989, 140, notes that the suitors have a “conspicuous lack of success.”

fact murderers and adulterers is that they cannot stand justly condemned on the same grounds as Aegisthus. But the entire narrative program turns on this point, as I argued above.<sup>79</sup> The narrator offers his audience the standard of the “Oresteia” narrative by which they are to judge the morality of retributive killing. But *by that very standard* they cannot stand condemned. To put it more starkly, ultimately the narrator cannot achieve his program of rendering Odysseus and his allies just. And as I reveal in my final chapter below, the poem itself and some of its ancient readers betray an uneasiness with Odysseus’ status and the apparent resolution of tensions at the end of the *Mnesterophonia*.

---

<sup>79</sup> See section 8.3 above.

## 9. The Subversive Program

If the narrator's stated program arguably fails to vindicate the justice of Odysseus and his allies, the poem leaves the audience in an awkward position. The authoritative, monologic voice that tells the story of the epic, which is "constantly at our elbow, controlling rigorously our beliefs, our interests, and our sympathies,"<sup>1</sup> has brought its audience to a troubling point. Their sympathies are aligned with the heroes of the poem, as the narrator has assiduously labored to ensure. He has led them to want to approve of Odysseus' revenge, but there is a perceptible gap in the argument: the narrator has only made the suitors *appear* to merit their demise by equating their crimes of excessive feasting and wooing with accomplished murder and adultery—though in fact they have done neither. Through rhetorical manipulations and linguistic puns, the narrator has made the suitors' punishment (death) and the maids' (hanging) match their crime. He has used a kind of *hysteron proteron* logic to make their crimes fit their punishment. For from the first book of the *Odyssey*, the suitors' gruesome end is in view. The narrator's task is to construct the suitors' criminal character over the course of the poem in such a way that they deserve that fate. This is a tall order, since the punitive logic underlying the poem is the *ius talionis*, which, at first blush, ought to ensure the

---

<sup>1</sup> Booth 1961, 5.

observance of a precisely proportional penalty.<sup>2</sup> And ultimately the narrator fails on the facts: eating is not murder; wooing is not adultery. But this failure is instructive.

Throughout the poem, the audience has seen several instances of the logic of *ius talionis* in operation upholding the regime of τίσις as justice. The “Oresteia” story offers the clearest, simplest case: Aegisthus’ “killing” (ἔκτανε, 1.36) Agamemnon equals Orestes’ “killing” (ἔκταν’, 1.30) Aegisthus; a crime done “beyond fate” (ὑπὲρ μόρον, 34) results in a punishment suffered “beyond fate” (ὑπὲρ μόρον, 35). The other cases of τίσις follow suit: Odysseus’ “blinding” (ἀλάωσεν, 1.69) Polyphemos and tricking him with his name equals his punishment of “wandering” (ἀλόω, 5.377) and “pains” (ὠδύσατ’, 5.340); the companions’ “killing” (ἔκτειναν, 379) the cattle of Helios is matched by their own deaths. Moreover, as I argued in chapter six, each of these incidents fits within the larger cosmic and social scheme of talionic justice that permeates early Greek society.

In these cases, the *hysteron proteron* logic of *ius talionis* is apparent, even at the level of linear thought and speech. For instance, when Zeus begins his speech citing the “Oresteia” story, the narrator has Zeus first recall the *punishment* Aegisthus faced (1.30) before describing the crime he committed that merited it (1.36). Zeus also notes first the suffering that mortals face ὑπὲρ μόρον (1.34), before moving to their actions performed

---

<sup>2</sup> As I mentioned earlier, for some theorists of punishment, the *ius talionis* is the answer to the dangers of utilitarian theories of punishment: see p. 217 above.

ὑπὲρ μόρον (1.35) that brought that suffering upon them. This is less obviously the case in the Zeus and Poseidon τίσις narratives; however, because Odysseus is recounting these stories after the fact, the end result of Odysseus' being a lone "wanderer" (ἀλώμενος, 8.28), bereft of companions, is already in view. One of the main functions of his *apologoi* narrative is to offer a defense for how he lost his men and ended up a wanderer. This is a risky undertaking. The Phaeacians have good reason to fear aiding anyone hated by Poseidon, since they received oracles of Poseidon's anger against them (13.171–86). Moreover, they have to provide the men to transport Odysseus to Ithaca (8.34–36). If Odysseus lost his previous band of sailors, could he not lose a new one? And as it turns out, even greater caution on their part was warranted, since Poseidon's anger did result in the loss of this new band of sailors. Thus, Odysseus has to navigate his story carefully and provide a justification for his present circumstances.

These speakers model one of the ways that τίσις is susceptible to manipulation. When a speaker tells a narrative of τίσις he may use it in the attempt to find or even invent in the recipient's actions a quality similar to the punishment that has already occurred. This is clearly the case in Zeus' citation of the "Oresteia" story, for the whole purpose of his describing the crimes of Aegisthus is to find a suitable reason why Aegisthus should have died.

Just as the audience has seen episodes where speakers have employed the rhetoric of τίσις to justify their actions, they have also seen speakers deny this rhetoric to

others. The case of Poseidon's anger is complex. Odysseus in his account cannot call Poseidon's anger against him justified (τίσις), lest he face even greater scrutiny from the Phaeacians. On the other hand, the facts of the matter—his acts of trickery and blinding and subsequent pains and wandering—which are ultimately controlled by the singer, make clear that Poseidon is executing a symmetrical punishment against Odysseus. Both Odysseus and the poem's narrator collaborate to exclude Poseidon from the model of justified violence encoded in τίσις.

In the ethical logic of the poem, if τίσις exists, then punishment is just; if it is absent, then punishment (or, more precisely, mere violence) is unjustified. At the heart of this system lies language. For, as I have been arguing, τίσις is the construal of events and actors in a certain way—a narrative. And the primary way an agent forms a narrative is in words. Thus, whoever controls language can control justice, for, if skilled enough at rhetoric, he can construe events into a narrative that plots out justice as he wishes. Language is full of ambiguities and indeterminacies. A clever speaker can exploit these holes in order to manipulate τίσις to his advantage.

But though one speaker might manipulate the resources of language, he can never have complete control over it. As Bakhtin has taught, all language is dialogic.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> Bakhtin 1984, 40: "Dialogic relationships are a much broader phenomenon than mere rejoinders in a dialogue laid out compositionally in the text; they are an almost universal phenomenon, permeating all human speech and all relationships and manifestations of human life—in general, everything that has meaning and significance."



This means that the audience of the *Odyssey*, as a partner with the singer in the act of communication represented by the poem, can exercise its own capacity to perceive the meaning of words and stories. The result is that, in just the way that I have been analyzing the text, the audience can perceive the manipulations of the narrators of *τίσις*—foremost among them, the poem’s main narrator.

I could leave my argument here, with the audience as the ultimate arbiter of meaning in a reader-response interpretation of the poem. However, I want argue that the elaborate scheme of *τίσις* narratives subject to endless rhetorical manipulations is actually an element of the poetic tradition. The singer presents a narratorial persona that dramatizes the manipulation of *τίσις*. Thus, the Odyssean tradition, above and outside the narrator and his overt program, contains a subversive program that rests on the failure of the poem’s narrator. (This ironic mode of poetry is likely itself traditional).<sup>4</sup> The aim of the *Odyssey*’s subversive program is to show how faulty and manipulable the system of *τίσις* is, and the singer does this by setting his narrator (and protagonists) up for failure. They will not succeed in making their world just. But the brilliance of the poem is that it leads the audience along to sympathize with the narrator and protagonists who ultimately fail in their program. And this will prove unsettling: as I argue in the final section of the chapter, the audience’s expectations of a conclusive, final

---

<sup>4</sup> See pp. 324–25 below.

ending are frustrated by the poem's stubborn openendedness. This (non-)conclusion dramatizes the failure of τίσις to achieve a lasting, stable, and conclusive peace.

But I must first consider why the *Odyssey* we have concludes its main τίσις narrative in the final three books the way it does. The plot that the poem follows in these books brings to the foreground some of the troublesome aspects of the ideology of τίσις.

I have mentioned earlier that our *Odyssey*, in which Odysseus returns home in disguise, reveals himself to the suitors as he kills all of them indiscriminately, then reunites with Penelope, and finally finds reconciliation with the kin of the suitors, is not the only version of the myth of Odysseus' return and vengeance that circulated in ancient Greece.<sup>5</sup> The *Odyssey* that has come down to us, first through oral tradition and then through the transmission of manuscripts, represents just one path that the story of Odysseus might have taken. Attempts to reconstruct detailed alternatives and their historical relationship with our *Odyssey* are speculative. However, the poem itself and the testimony of parallel mythological sources do reveal in broad outline the existence of alternative versions of the plot, and the choice of plot peculiar to our *Odyssey* has definite implications for the troubling meaning of τίσις in the poem.

There are two especially significant choices that the poem makes involving its last three books. 1) Odysseus' confrontation with the suitors turns out to be a general

---

<sup>5</sup> See pp. 95–96, 122–27, 157–58 above.

slaughter, with no discrimination or exceptions. This could have resolved differently. 2)

The poem continues after the slaying of the suitors and the reunion of Odysseus and Penelope, finally ending with a confrontation and settlement with the kin of the suitors.

As I will argue, this second plot choice is especially significant: it leads directly to the final scene (and the final section of my argument) in which the singer dramatizes the problems of the openendedness of τίσις.

### *9.1 The Alternatives to Slaughter*

The poem itself contains allusions to other possible ways Odysseus might confront the suitors. Teiresias' prophecy of Odysseus' homeward journey contains two alternate ways that his revenge might unfold (11.118–20):

ἀλλ' ἦ τοι κείνων γε βίας ἀποτίσειαι ἐλθών.  
αὐτὰρ ἐπὴν μνηστῆρας ἐνὶ μεγάροισι τεοῖσι  
κτείνης ἢ ἐ δόλω ἢ ἀμφαδὸν ὄξει χαλκῶ...

Surely you will come and take revenge upon the violence of those men.  
But after you have killed the suitors in your halls  
either by a trick of openly with sharp bronze...

Odysseus may take his vengeance deceitfully (δόλω), using disguise, trickery and secret kinds of lethal measures, or he may do it with an open attack on the suitors, as though meeting them on a battlefield, before the eyes of all (ἀμφαδὸν). The same pair of alternate ways appears elsewhere (cf. 1.296, 19.299). In the lying story that Odysseus in his Cretan guise tells Eumaeus, he claims he learned about Odysseus from the

Thesprotians who said he was visiting the oracle in Dodona to learn whether he should return “openly or secretly” (ἦ ἀμφαδὸν ἦε κρυφηδόν, 14.330). As it turns out, the poem appears to be headed down the path of δόλος and κρυφηδόν: Odysseus acquires a physical disguise from Athena upon landing on Ithaca (13.397–403); he assumes several false identities while trying to insinuate himself into his home;<sup>6</sup> he plots and sets a trap—barring the doors of his house to enclose the suitors within it and hiding their weapons in his storeroom—to catch the suitors unprepared and vulnerable to attack (19.1–13; 21.235–41); he begins his assault with a surprise first-strike, shooting the lead suitor, Antinous, unawares. The use of the bow in particular is connected with a darker, less heroic mode of attack. The disguised Athena tells a story of how Odysseus came to Ilus to get poison to smear on his arrows (1.257–64). Athena then utters a wish: “Would that Odysseus, being such a man, come among the suitors” (τοῖος ἐὼν μνηστῆρσιν ὀμιλήσειεν Ὀδυσσεύς, 265). Of course, ironically Athena well knows that Odysseus will in fact return: she and Zeus have determined that this is their plan (νημερτέα βουλήν, 1.87). But the details are yet to be worked out. When she makes this wish, she is saying that she hopes that *this sort* (τοῖος) of Odysseus—namely, the secretive and treacherous Odysseus of some mythic traditions—would return. The singer has yet to make clear what kind of return Odysseus will have, and even what kind of Odysseus he will be. In

---

<sup>6</sup> See Odysseus’ lying tales: 13.253–86; 14.192–359; 17.415–44; 19.165–299.

effect, Athena is hoping that the more devious Odysseus—the “heimtückische Odysseus,” to use Georg Danek’s terminology—will become the protagonist of this poem and use especially treacherous means to kill the suitors.<sup>7</sup>

But in the climactic scene of *Mnestrophonia*, Odysseus becomes an open, Iliadic warrior. He suddenly reveals his identity by stripping off his rags. The phrase here would actually seem to mean making himself naked (γυμνώθη ῥακέων, 22.1).<sup>8</sup> The implication, or at least the metonymic suggestion,<sup>9</sup> is that Odysseus has completely stripped himself of all pretense. He is now fully himself and will assault the suitors in the open with naked force. After Odysseus launches his first-strike against Antinous, the suitors threaten him with “sheer destruction” (αἰπὺς ὄλεθρος, 28). Odysseus responds with an indictment against the suitors in which he claims his identity as the long-absent, now-retuned lord of the house whom they have wronged (34–41).

---

<sup>7</sup> Danek 1998a, ad loc., ad 13.389–96. See also Danek 2002a on the alternative tradition of a more sinister Odysseus.

<sup>8</sup> However, Eurycleia’s comments at 22.485–89 that Odysseus should not stand in his hall with his shoulders wrapped in rags might mean he left some of his rags on: thus Stanford ad 22.1 and the scholiast to the line (see Ernst, ad loc.). Or, perhaps this is just Eurycleia’s way of being discrete? Elsewhere in the *Odyssey* the verb γυμνώω emphatically means naked: cf. 6.222, 10.341.

<sup>9</sup> There is a common Homeric association between clothing and identity: Fenik 1974, 61–63; Block 1985; Yamagata 2005.

One variation on the “open force” narrative path has Odysseus returning not alone, but at the head of band of men.<sup>10</sup> There are two allusions to this alternative in the *Odyssey*. First, when Nestor tries to encourage Telemachus by presenting the possibility that Odysseus might yet return, he tells him no one knows whether Odysseus might return (3.216). If he comes, he might be “alone” (μοῦνος) or “all the Achaeans” (σύμπαντες Ἀχαιοί, 3.217) might come too. Second, when Eumaeus and Odysseus in his Cretan guise are exchanging stories about Odysseus, Eumaeus tells of how an Aetolian once visited him and told him a lie about Odysseus’ imminent return. The Aetolian claimed he saw Odysseus on Crete, preparing to return with much treasure and “god-matched companions” (ἀντιθέοις ἑτάροισι, 14.385). Eumaeus also says that Ithacans paid close attention to such stories of Odysseus’ imminent return or, conversely, of his continued absence: the loyal Ithacans were eager for their master to resume his authority; the suitors and their supporters were afraid of his revenge (14.375–77). In both of these cases there is an allusion to the possibility that Odysseus could return home with an allied force consisting of either “all the Achaeans” or “god-matched companions.”

This strict bifurcation between the “cunning” and the “open force” paths of revenge is a bit overly schematized as I present it here. Though these are different kinds

---

<sup>10</sup> On this alternative narrative in which Odysseus could have returned “as the leader of an invasion force,” see Marks 2008, 8, 90–92.

of action, our *Odyssey* does overlay them, so that Odysseus' success in his open combat is in great part due to his cunning preparations. This combination of modes and ethics of retributive success is one of the great accomplishments of our *Odyssey*.

Within either an "open force" or "cunning" version of Odysseus' revenge upon the suitors, there is one alternative resolution to the crisis in Odysseus' home to which the singer not only alludes, but even has another character present in detail as a viable option for the characters in the poem to follow.<sup>11</sup> After Odysseus shoots and kills Antinous, the suitors' ringleader, and reveals himself before the rest of the suitors with his indictment (22.34–41), Eurymachus, the second most prominent suitor, tries to stop Odysseus' vengeance by offering an *apologia* (44–59):

Εὐρύμαχος δέ μιν οἶος ἀμειβόμενος προσέειπεν·  
“εἰ μὲν δὴ Ὀδυσσεὺς Ἰθακήσιος εἰλήλουθας,  
ταῦτα μὲν αἰσιμα εἶπας, ὅσα ῥέζεσκον Ἀχαιοί,  
πολλὰ μὲν ἐν μεγάροισιν ἀτάσθαλα, πολλὰ δ' ἐπ' ἀγροῦ.  
ἀλλ' ὁ μὲν ἤδη κεῖται ὡς αἴτιος ἔπλετο πάντων,  
Ἀντίνοος· οὗτος γὰρ ἐπίηλεν τάδε ἔργα,  
οὔ τι γάμου τόσσον κεχρημένος οὐδὲ χατίζων,  
ἀλλ' ἄλλα φρονέων, τὰ οἱ οὐκ ἐτέλεσσε Κρονίων,  
ὄφρ' Ἰθάκης κατὰ δῆμον εὐκτιμένης βασιλεύοι  
αὐτός, ἀτὰρ σὸν παῖδα κατακτείνειε λοχίσας.  
νῦν δ' ὁ μὲν ἐν μοίῳ πέφαται, σὺ δὲ φεῖδες λαῶν  
σῶν· ἀτὰρ ἄμμες ὀπισθεν ἀρεσσάμενοι κατὰ δῆμον,  
ὅσσα τοι ἐκπέποται καὶ ἐδήδοται ἐν μεγάροισι,  
τιμὴν ἀμφὶς ἄγοντες ἑικοσάβοιον ἕκαστος,  
χαλκὸν τε χρυσὸν τ' ἀποδώσομεν, εἰς ὃ κε σὸν κῆρ  
ἰανθῆ· πρὶν δ' οὔ τι νεμεσητὸν κεχολῶσθαι.”

---

<sup>11</sup> See Marks 2008, 65–67; Danek 1998a, ad 22.54–59.

Eurymachus alone addressed him in answer:  
 “If truly you are Odysseus the Ithacan, come home,  
 you said these things justly, how many things the Achaeans were doing—  
 many reckless acts in the halls and many in the field.  
 But he now lies dead who was to blame for everything,  
 Antinous. For he brought these deeds to pass,  
 not so much needing or longing for marriage,  
 but intending other things, which the son of Cronos did not accomplish  
     for him,  
 that he might himself be king in the land of well-built Ithaca  
 and ambush and kill your son.  
 Now he has been slain in accordance with fate, but spare your own  
     people.  
 Hereafter we will seek to make amends from the land  
 for all of yours that has been eaten and drunk in the halls.  
 Gathering the worth of twenty cattle, each of us separately,  
 we will pay you back in bronze and gold until your heart  
 is soothed. Before this, it is not wrong to be angry.”

Eurymachus admits the justice of Odysseus’ accusations (literally they are “fateful [words],” αἴσιμα, 46): they did in fact commit “many acts of recklessness” (πολλὰ...ἀτάσθαλα, 47). But Eurymachus denies responsibility: Antinous is “to blame for everything” (αἴτιος...πάντων, 48), but he was struck down “in accordance with fate” (ἐν μοίῳ, 54)<sup>12</sup>—his slaying was part of the just order of things, since Zeus did not want him to succeed anyway (51). Eurymachus then suggests that with him dead, Odysseus ought to spare the rest of them. They would collect from the land and “pay back” (ἀποδώσομεν, 58) for “all of yours that has been eaten and drunk in the halls”

---

<sup>12</sup> On the meaning of ἐν μοίῳ, see Heubeck et al., ad loc.



(ὅσσα τοι ἐκπέπεται καὶ ἐδήδοται ἐν μεγάροισι, 57). Eurymachus offers here an alternative to the climax of general slaughter that Odysseus threatens and that the poem will follow: Odysseus can kill a single, representative suitor (conveniently already dead) and dismiss the rest of them unharmed; they will in turn make restitution.

The singer has already presented the possibility of a solution through restitution instead of bloodshed in a similar conflict in the conclusion of the so-called “Lay of Ares and Aphrodite.” In book 8, Demodocus sings a song for the Phaeacians and their guest, Odysseus (8.234–384),<sup>13</sup> in which Hephaestus pursues τίσις against Ares for his adultery with Aphrodite, Hephaestus’ wife—though the story unfolds as a kind of divine burlesque of a τίσις narrative.<sup>14</sup> Hephaestus’ wife, Aphrodite, is carrying on a secret affair with Ares. Hephaestus devises a scheme to trap them so that he can exact a retributive penalty. He succeeds, but the whole story is cast in a humorous frame. Hephaestus entreats the other gods to look upon Ares’ and Aphrodite’s “laughable deeds” (ἔργα γελαστὰ, 8.307), presenting their shameful position as ridiculous.<sup>15</sup> And

---

<sup>13</sup> Following Anton Bierl, I include the framing sections, 234–65 and 367–84, instead of the usual citation of only 266–366. The following analysis is indebted at various points to the paper Bierl delivered on October 24, 2009 at Duke University.

<sup>14</sup> On the burlesque aspects of the lay, see Burkert 1982.

<sup>15</sup> This phrase could equally be read as ἔργ’ ἀγέλαστα, “un-laughable deeds,” with Apollonius Sophistes and the scholiast: see Dindorf, ad loc. However, given the overall humorous tone of the song, the suggestion that these deeds are no laughing matter illustrates equally well that the rest of the gods may regard the compromising position of Ares and Aphrodite as risible. The difference between the readings is whether Hephaestus joins in on the laughter or not. On Hephaestus’ goal of exacting revenge through the shame of ἄσβεστος γέλως, see Brown 1989, 284: “the ἄσβεστος γέλως of the gods is laughter of a serious sort, Footnote cont. next pg.

the gods, upon seeing the two trapped in the bed, let loose “unquenchable laughter,” (ἄσβεστος...γέλως, 326). Hermes provides further comedic commentary, declaring he would endure three times the bonds now holding Ares, even with the goddesses looking on, to lie with Aphrodite (338–42). This elicits further laughter (343). Though the story has a comic character, Hephaestus’ complaints and pattern of action are consistent with a τίσις narrative. Because Aphrodite “dishonors” (ἀτιμάζει, 309) him, he seeks recompense, first, by having his “bride-price” (ἔεδνα, 318) returned, and, secondly, by exacting “the entire allotted payment” (τίσειν αἴσιμα πάντα, 348) or “adultery-price” (μοιχάγοι, 332) from Ares.<sup>16</sup> Poseidon offers to “pay” (τάδε τίσω, 356) in his stead, should he default and flee. The story appears to end peacefully, with Hephaestus accepting the arrangement brokered by Poseidon, and Ares and Aphrodite set free.

In addition to these explicitly stated features of τίσις, there are numerous parallelisms between this song and the patterns of τίσις in the plots of the “Oresteia” story and the situation on Ithaca apparent to the audience of the *Odyssey*—though ironically not apparent to the Phaeacians nor Odysseus.<sup>17</sup> The affair happens “secretly”

---

and...this laughter is clearly the response desired by Hephaestus. The gods direct their laughter at the adulterous pair in mockery...” Brown cites the relevant earlier scholarship at 284 n. 5.

<sup>16</sup> The word μοιχάγοια is a *hapax legomenon*, formed *ad hoc* after ζωάγοια (*Il.* 18.407; *Od.* 8.462), as Heubeck et al., *ad loc.* point out.

<sup>17</sup> On the parallelisms between the situation on Ithaca, as well as other plots of τίσις for adultery (attempted or accomplished), see Newton 1987; Olson 1989; Alden 1997; de Jong 2001, *ad* 8.266–366; Rinon 2008, 116–18.

(λάθρη, 269) in Hephaestus' own home (268).<sup>18</sup> A messenger provides a warning (270)—but this time to the cuckold after the fact rather than to the perpetrators before the crime (cf. 1.37–41, 2.146–76, et al.).<sup>19</sup> In response, Hephaestus “plots evils” (κακὰ φρεσὶ βυσσοδομεύων, 273; cf. 20.184, et al.) against them, devising a “trap” (δόλον, 276; cf. 1.296, 19.137). The “trap” is his and Aphrodite's bed, which contrasts with the test that Penelope makes of her and Odysseus' bed (23.173–81), which Odysseus, like Hephaestus, had assiduously constructed himself (23.188–204). With the belief that Hephaestus would be away in a distant land (286; cf. Odysseus' and Agamemnon's absence), Ares goes to woo Aphrodite by suggesting that her husband's absence provides them with an ideal opportunity (293–94). Ares' seduction is thus portrayed analeptically, as though occurring for the first time, in order to heighten the similarities between this story and the plots of Aegisthus' and the suitors' attempts and successes at wooing the wives of absent men. A similar effect is created when, at the moment that Hephaestus' trap succeeds in capturing the lovers and rendering them motionless (298), they are said proleptically to recognize that there is no escape (299), even though in the course of the plot they are still asleep and unaware (316–17). This prolepsis of

---

<sup>18</sup> For λάθρη, cf.: 4.92 where λάθρη appears in the position describing Aegisthus' murder of Agamemnon; 17.80 where λάθρη again appears in the same position describing the suitors' potential murder of Telemachus; 22.445 where λάθρη appears in final position describing the sexual improprieties of Odysseus' servant-women who mingled with the suitors.

<sup>19</sup> Thus Helios' warning to Hephaestus is perhaps a weak reflection of the 2<sup>nd</sup> stage in a typical τίσις narrative, the unheeded warning (ἀτασθαλία).

recognition, like the analepsis of the seduction scene, serves to present a comparison with the moment of the suitors' realization that Odysseus is about to accomplish his *τίσις*. Thus, the singer has Demodocus perform the song with a few deviations from the normal course of the plot in order to make the comparison with the *Odyssey's* story stronger. The trap of the bed captures Ares and Aphrodite so that "they could not move nor raise their limbs at all" (οὐδέ τι κινήσαι μελέων ἦν οὐδ' ἀναεῖραι, 298), which coincides with the moment of their recognition of Hephaestus' victory. Likewise, the realization that Odysseus will exact his revenge upon the suitors causes "their knees and hearts" to "loosen" (τῶν δ' αὐτοῦ λύτο γούνατα καὶ φίλον ἦτορ, 22.68), leaving them equally unable to move.<sup>20</sup> Hephaestus offers a prayer that his retribution might be accomplished—in his case simply by entreating the gods "to come and see the laughable and unbearable deeds" (δεῦθ', ἵνα ἔργα γελαστὰ καὶ οὐκ ἐπιεικτὰ ἴδησθε, 294) signified by the trapped lovers. Prayers for an agent's accomplishing his *τίσις* are common (cf. 4.341–46, 20.226–39), as are descriptions of the crime to be avenged as a "great deed" (μέγα ἔργον, 3.261, 3.275, 24.426), which in Hephaestus' complaint is humorously recast as a *ἔργα γελαστὰ καὶ οὐκ ἐπιεικτὰ* (307). All together, these many parallels in action and diction between the narrative of Hephaestus' revenge and the

---

<sup>20</sup> The line ὡς φάτο, τῶν δ' αὐτοῦ λύτο γούνατα καὶ φίλον ἦτορ (23.68) is a recurring formula, but, among other usages, it does regularly signal the moment of a character's recognition of a revealed identity. In addition to the present example, it characterizes Penelope's recognition of Odysseus (23.205) as well as Laertes' recognition of him (24.345).

narratives of the “Oresteia” and Odysseus’ revenge strengthen the impression that this lay of adultery, return, and retribution is a plot of τίσις along the same lines of these other narratives.

Despite the many similarities between Hephaestus’ τίσις and Odysseus’, there is a significant departure in its resolution. In the song Hephaestus tries several different ways to get his revenge: shaming the lovers before the eyes of the other gods (306–7), having Zeus return his bride-price (318), exacting from Ares a fine (332, 348)—there is even the possibility that he may yet fail and the laughter turn against him: he might find that Ares and Aphrodite flee without paying upon being released (353). In the end Hephaestus agrees to accept a payment in requital, with Poseidon pledging to cover it should Ares shirk his obligation (354–58). In this way, the conflict appears to end peacefully enough, without bloodshed. This presents a different path to the resolution of a τίσις narrative. Once an avenger has captured the offender in his trap and has him at his mercy, he can accept a payment rather than execute violent retaliation. This is precisely the alternative that Eurymachus offers Odysseus. But at this decisive moment, the narratives diverge. Hephaestus accepts the offer of payment and lets the offenders go. (He does not seem to have much choice in the matter, as he cannot deny Poseidon’s offer (8.358)).

In contrast, Odysseus refuses the payment that Eurymachus offers. And Eurymachus' offer is extravagant: the value of 2140 cattle in bronze and gold.<sup>21</sup> However, making such a large offer is dangerous. The explicit logic of the restitution, as Eurymachus says, is that the repayment would cover "as much of yours as has been eaten and drunk in the halls" (ὅσσα τοι ἐκπέποται καὶ ἐδήδοται ἐν μεγάροισι, 57). But by offering the value of 20 cattle for each man, Eurymachus admits that the suitors actually performed depredations against Odysseus' household amounting to this great sum.<sup>22</sup> The magnitude of their crimes becomes plain. In spite of this grand offer, or perhaps because of it, Odysseus rejects Eurymachus' plea. In fact, he rejects any possible offer of restitution. Even if the suitors gave to Odysseus all they owned and could obtain from the land—i.e., all that they possibly could—still he would not relent (61–64). Odysseus not only rejects their offer, but rejects even the concept of material compensation: even if the suitors were to "give back all their patrimony" (πατρῶϊα πάντ' ἀποδοῖτε, 61), it would not be enough; they must instead "suffer revenge for their entire transgression" (πᾶσαν...ὕπερβασίην ἀποτιῶσαι, 65). This choice is critical for the meaning of τίσις and the shape of the plot of the poem. I will return to it presently.

---

<sup>21</sup> Eurymachus says each suitor (now numbering 107, after the death of Antinous) would pay the value of 20 cattle.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. the catalogue of the resources that go to the suitors' feasts at 14.105–6.

But first I should re-emphasize that another aspect of such an alternative narrative path is the possibility that the death of a single suitor might have sufficed, especially if he can be labeled as solely responsible for the crimes.<sup>23</sup> This is the path Eurymachus is suggesting Odysseus take when Eurymachus claims, “There now lies the man who was to blame for everything—Antinous” (ἀλλ’ ὁ μὲν ἤδη κεῖται ὡς αἴτιος ἔπλετο πάντων, Ἀντίνοος, 48).<sup>24</sup> The *Odyssey* does ultimately conclude with elements of this kind of resolution. As a kind of sequel to Odysseus’ opening shot in the *Mnesteroiphonia*, only now among the members of an earlier generation, Laertes, Odysseus’ father, strikes and kills Eupheides, Antinous’ father, with a spear at the outset of the battle between Odysseus’ allies and the suitors’ kin (24.520–25). However, this time the battle will be different. Though Athena encouraged Laertes in this attack, she and Zeus bring the fight to a conclusion with this single death. Both factions reach a settlement.

In our *Odyssey*, the singer follows none of these alternatives. The actual choice is dramatized within the action of the poem: Odysseus, its protagonist, faces the choice between accepting a single death and pursuing the path of general slaughter. Odysseus chooses slaughter and decides how his narrative will conclude.

---

<sup>23</sup> See Danek 1998a, ad 22.48–53.

<sup>24</sup> Danek *ibid.*, ad 24.54–59, writes, “Damit greift er die im Text schon mehrmals angedeutete Möglichkeit auf, daß die Freier nicht als Kollektiv, sondern nur in Abwägung ihres Anteils an der Schuld bestraft wurden.”

It is worth asking why Odysseus rejects Eurymachus' offer. He does not refute Eurymachus' claim that Antinous was the cause of all their crimes, though he well might. This is immaterial to his central grievance that the suitors have been consuming his βίος. Eurymachus has admitted that all the suitors are guilty of this crime. (He could not deny what Odysseus has seen go on with his own eyes.) If the suitors' crimes were only part of a political struggle over the rule of Ithaca, then the death of the ring-leader and provocateur might have sufficed. But as it is they have all participated in the crime of the feast. Still, Odysseus could have accepted recompense for what they ate, but, as I remarked above, he has rejected the entire concept of material compensation. Odysseus has chosen to regard the excessive feasting of the suitors as going beyond the mere consumption of food and wine. If their criminal feasts were simply the consumption of his goods, then Odysseus could not claim that no amount of material compensation would "repay" (ἀποτιῆσαι) for their "transgression" (ὑπερβασίην, 64) against his household.

But the equation of household goods with life might point in both directions: Eurymachus' offer, in theory, could have "bought" their own lives back. Certainly Odysseus' hypothetical greater version of their offer comes rather close to meaning their livelihood—"all their patrimony" (πατρῴϊα πάντα, 61). But when Odysseus rejects this offer, he undermines this equation of goods and life—or at least the objectivity of the equation. Because Odysseus is the one in control of both the language of τίσις and the



physical force undergirding it, he can determine what constitutes a fair exchange. When it comes to the substance of his household, he says it demands the suitors' lives. But the suitors' substance, he says, is not equivalent to their lives.

The actions that then unfold in the *Mnesteroiphonia* serve to show the extremity of violence that an offense against the household can demand. But more troublingly, it demonstrates the results that can come from the manipulation of *τίσις*. The singer has used this extreme situation to sharpen the question of justice. And Odysseus' indictment, with its selective equivalencies, has dramatized the failures of *τίσις* as a mode of justice.

## 9.2 *τίσις without End*

One of the most well-known scholia to the *Odyssey* preserves a judgment of Aristarchus and Aristophanes about the location of the "end" of the poem. At line 23.296 several manuscripts preserve two versions of this scholium:<sup>25</sup>

Ἀριστοφάνης δὲ καὶ Ἀρίσταρχος πέρασ τῆς Ὀδυσσεΐας τοῦτο ποιοῦνται.

Aristophanes and Aristarchus consider this the end of the *Odyssey*.

τοῦτο τέλος τῆς Ὀδυσσεΐας φησὶν Ἀρίσταρχος καὶ Ἀριστοφάνης.

---

<sup>25</sup> See Dindorf, ad loc. and Ernst, ad loc.

Aristarchus and Aristophanes say this is the conclusion of the *Odyssey*.

I have translated πέρας and τέλος as “end” and “conclusion,” but the meaning of these words and the editorial implications of their application to this line are part of the controversy about the “authentic” end of the *Odyssey*.<sup>26</sup> At least as early as Eustathius, some scholars have interpreted these comments to mean that Aristophanes and Aristarchus believed the true end of the poem was at 23.296, and that all that followed was an interpolated, inauthentic addition by the hand of a later and lesser poet.<sup>27</sup> Modern scholars have lined up for and against the authenticity of the so-called “Continuation” (23.297–24.548). I do not presume to resolve this dispute here, though I do find the straight-forward analytic arguments against its authenticity unpersuasive. There is no manuscript evidence—beyond the brief scholia cited above—to indicate that there was an edition of the poem that ended at (or near) 23.296. In fact, the scholia preserve evidence that Aristarchus athetized portions of the poem after 23.296.<sup>28</sup> Therefore, he must have had at least *an* edition of the poem that continued past 23.296.

---

<sup>26</sup> For a good survey of the controversy, see Heubeck et al., ad loc., who take a unitarian position. West 1989, 113–14 and nn. 1–9, also covers the history of the dispute, taking an analytical position. For the most thorough-going defense of the integrity of the final scenes, see Erbse 1972, 166–228; see Page 1955, 101–36, for a classic analytical position.

<sup>27</sup> Eustathius thus interprets the remarks of Aristarchus and Aristophanes to mean, “The following up to the end of the book is spurious” (τὰ ἐφεξῆς ἕως τέλους τοῦ βιβλίου νοθεύοντες, Eust., p. 308).

<sup>28</sup> E.g., see Ernst ad 24.1a. Aristarchus athetized the second Nekyia for a range of reasons: see West 1989, 122.

Moreover, why would Aristarchus athetize any later portion of the poem (and, by implication, authorize the rest) if he had already condemned the entire “Continuation”?

All these considerations have led to different interpretations of the scholia to 23.296. Hartmut Erbse has argued that both *πέρας* and *τέλος* do not in this case mean “end,” as in “final”; rather, they are terms of rhetorical criticism meaning the “goal” (*Ziel*) of the plot of the poem.<sup>29</sup> On this interpretation, the Aristophanes and Aristarchus mean that the *Odyssey* has its “climax,” we might even say “consummation,” with the reunion of Odysseus and Penelope. On the other hand, the plots of many folktales (*Märchen*) not only have their climax with a marriage, but their end as well.<sup>30</sup> Odysseus’ and Penelope’s reunion culminates with the singer’s discrete statement that their maid, with torch in hand, led them to their bedchamber, where “they then joyfully came to the site [or institution, custom]<sup>31</sup> of their bed of old” (οἱ μὲν ἔπειτα ἀσπάσιοι λέκτροιο παλαιοῦ θεσμὸν ἴκοντο, 23.295–96). The imagery of marriage is pronounced here,<sup>32</sup> and the plot of the second half of the poem, with all the uncertainty about Penelope’s remarriage, Odysseus’ victory in the bow-contest, and the grotesque marriage-feast of

---

<sup>29</sup> Erbse 1972, 166–77, esp. 173.

<sup>30</sup> See Hölscher 1989, 115–19, who draws out the wedding motifs in the folktale behind Odysseus’ encounter with Nausicaa; *ibid.*, 291–93.

<sup>31</sup> *θεσμὸν* is a *hapax* in Homer. Its meaning is unclear here, but it seems to come from the root *θε-*, the same as the verb *τίθημι*. Seaford 1994, 37, thinks “*θεσμός* here may connote wedding ritual.”

<sup>32</sup> The sequence is rather like a wedding procession: see Seaford *ibid.*, 36–37.

the suitors' deaths, moves toward this τέλος. With Odysseus' household back in order, the suitors killed, and his marriage reaffirmed, all conflict seems resolved. As John Peradotto argues, here, "with the dream of desire fulfilled, [is] where the folktale would have ended,...in the nuptial embrace of Odysseus and Penelope."<sup>33</sup>

The poem could have ended here,<sup>34</sup> and the controversy surrounding the "Continuation" attests to this. Some modern scholars evaluate the aesthetic and literary quality of the "Continuation" in stridently negative terms: for P. V. Jones, "the end of the *Odyssey* does look like a botch"; for Denys Page, it "rushes spasmodically and deviously to its lame conclusion"; Stephanie West observes "the pervasive abnormality of this headlong narrative style, so often teetering perilously on the verge of mock-heroic, and the generally admitted deterioration of poetic quality...in the last section."<sup>35</sup> These views are understandable, insofar as the "Continuation" does frustrate the audience's (or the critic's) desire for a simple, clean ending. In this respect, I am extending the analysis of Peradotto, who identifies the "narrative of desire accomplished" with *Märchen* and the

---

<sup>33</sup> Peradotto 1990, 85–86.

<sup>34</sup> However, it almost certainly could not have ended after 23.296 in our text the way it is. For instance, several unitarian scholars have pointed out the syntactical difficulties of ending it here: the μὲν in 295 would be incomplete without 297 and following: see Erbse 1972, 171. The wedding ritual could have provided a satisfactory ending to a version of the *Odyssey*, but that version, being its own, complete performance, would have had other differences besides the simple excision of the lines after 23.296.

<sup>35</sup> Jones 1997, 39; Page 1955, West 1989, 130.

“narrative of desire frustrated” with myth.<sup>36</sup> And, as I shall argue below, this desire to see the poem achieve a neat, decisive, and conclusive ending is as much a desire that the text produces in its audience, as it is a desire that the audience brings to the poem.

But the poem we have does not conclude with the marriage bed. It could have followed the path of *Märchen*—the *Telegony*, for instance, ends with a pair of weddings: Telemachus to Circe and Telegonus to Penelope (Procl. *Chrestom.* 329–30)—but our *Odyssey* ends otherwise. Why? What effect does extending this poem produce?

I suggest that the continuation of the *Odyssey* beyond the τέλος of the marriage bed belies the claims of its narrator and other speakers within the poem that τίσις provides conclusive and final justice. As I remarked above, the typical pattern of a τίσις narrative, which serves as the interpretive framework for the poem, suggests an uncomplicated end: after the act of vengeance (stage 6 in my analysis of the narrative), the end of the sequence is a new, stable, and just arrangement (stage 7). The narrative of τίσις would seem to produce no expectations beyond this final position—quite the opposite: it directs the audience to expect that there will be no further developments. This is the simple, surface meaning of the narrative when any one instance of a τίσις narrative is considered in isolation. But because all the τίσις narratives in the poem—Orestes’, Zeus’, Odysseus’, etc.—are juxtaposed together and even compete with one

---

<sup>36</sup> Peradotto 1990, 49.

another, as well as with the alternative traditions in wider mythic discourse,<sup>37</sup> no single narrative can ever provide the final, definitive interpretation of events. To tell a narrative of *τίσις* is a rhetorical act, for when a speaker uses it he aims to persuade one's auditors of one interpretation of events through the exclusion of conflicting elements, such as prior motivations, histories, and later repercussions. Thus, the sense of closure a narrative *τίσις* can provide is profoundly tendentious. And an audience informed by wider epic tradition, as well as the different narrative threads in the poem itself, can perceive the underlying ironies and openended implications of *τίσις*.

The paradigmatic example of *τίσις* that Zeus offers in the "Oresteia" story has a markedly conclusive ending. Zeus concludes his narrative with this hemistich as a summary: "Now he [Aegisthus] has paid for everything all-together" (*νῦν δ' ἄθροά πάντ' ἀπέτισεν*, 1.43). Quite literally, Aegisthus' act of requital, his "paying back," is the last word in the narrative. Zeus emphasizes the comprehensive finality of this repayment with two terms: *ἄθροά πάντ'*. The return to a proper state of affairs secured by Aegisthus' death is the conclusion of the narrative. In none of the other times when a character tells the "Oresteia" narrative does he include anything that happened after Aegisthus' death. This way of telling the *τίσις* narrative of Orestes

---

<sup>37</sup> In this connection, Danek's 1998a, 42, *passim*, notion of *die Grunddaten des Mythos* and Burgess' 2006, 166, model of "intertextuality between a poem (or its performance tradition) and mythological traditions variously expressed in different media and notionally known throughout the culture" are apt.

There is no reason why the singer *had* to have all the characters conclude their tellings of the “Oresteia” story that way, but it does serve a purpose. Putting the emphasis on the finality of Aegisthus’ death excludes the more troubling aspects of Clytemnestra’s death. Our *Odyssey* is famously laconic about her demise. Whenever any character tells of Orestes’ revenge, the only one Orestes kills is Aegisthus (1.30, 40–43, 299–300, 3.308–9). The only reference to Clytemnestra’s death comes in Nestor’s version of the events after Orestes kills Aegisthus (3.309–10):

ἦ τοι ὁ τὸν κτείνας δαίνυ τάφον Ἀργείοισιν  
μητρὸς τε στυγερῆς καὶ ἀνάλκιδος Αἰγίσθιοιο·

Truly he, having killed him, was making a funeral feast for the Argives  
over his hateful mother and the cowardly Aegisthus.

Thus Clytemnestra did die when Orestes returned and killed Aegisthus. The manner of her death, however, is left deliberately opaque. In later traditions—Aeschylus’ *Oresteia* most prominently—Orestes kills her along with Aegisthus. There is no *explicit* statement of this in the *Odyssey*, though it is likely implied at 3.309–10. There are various possible explanations for this silence. The two characters who narrate in detail the vengeance of Orestes (Nestor and Menelaus) may not be interested in drawing attention to the unsavory aspects of Orestes’ relationship with his mother. Nestor is reticent here because one of the functions of his speech is to compare Clytemnestra with Penelope and thus warn Telemachus not to stay long from home, lest a suitor corrupt his mother, absent his protective influence. Nestor would thus be hesitant to confront too directly

the matricidal aspects of Orestes' character for fear of offending Telemachus. Agamemnon, on the other hand, seems hardly reluctant to draw out the more heinous aspects of Clytemnestra' character when it suits the plot: his recounting his own murder (twice) focuses on the evil of Clytemnestra, whose evil eclipses Aegisthus' in Agamemnon's eyes (11.421–34; 24.199–202). The only reason that Agamemnon does not mention Orestes' exploits, including his killing of Clytemnestra, is because, from the standpoint of the internal chronology of the poem, he has not done them yet. At least this is the case in the first *Nekuia*; in the second, the reasons are more complex, as I shall explain later.

There is extra-Homeric evidence that Orestes' slaying of Clytemnestra was a part of mythic tradition from an early stage. A papyrus fragment attributed to the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women* includes the earliest known statement of Orestes' killing Clytemnestra (fr. 23a.27–30 MW, supplements from Merkelbach and West):

λοῖσθον δ' ἐν μεγά[ροισι Κλυτ]αιμήστρη κυανῶπις  
 γείναθ' ὑποδηθηθ[εῖσ' Ἀγαμέμν]ον[ιδί]ον Ὀρέ[στην,  
 ὅς ῥα καὶ ἠβήσας ἀπε[τείσατο πα]τροφο[ν]ῆα,  
 κτεῖνε δὲ μητέρα [ῆν ὑπερήν]ορα νηλεί [χαλκῶι.

Last in the [halls, dark-eyed Clytemnestra,  
 [subdued under Agamemnon,] bore [divine Orestes,]  
 who then, coming of age, [took vengeance on the father-slayer.]  
 He killed his [arrogant] mother with pitiless bronze.

While there is some doubt about how to supplement some of the lacunae here (especially the epithet for Clytemnestra in line 30), there is little doubt that the fragment



describes Orestes' killing Clytemnestra. The preceding context and the fragments of names make it clear who is involved, and the first half of line 30 is unambiguous: "he killed his mother" (κτεῖνε δὲ μητέρα). These lines show some affinities between the way they describe Orestes' killing Clytemnestra and the way the *Odyssey* depicts his killing Aegisthus: ἠβήσας, 29; cf. ἠβήση, *Od.* 1.41; π]ατροφο[ν]ῆα, 29;<sup>38</sup> κτεῖνε, 30; cf. *Od.* ἔκταν', 1.30, et al.

Other early literary evidence supports the assumption that Orestes' killing his mother was part of the earliest traditions. Proclus' summary of the *Nostoi* is not of much help: he mentions Orestes' "vengeance" (τιμωρία, 302) upon Clytemnestra and Aegisthus but does not say how he executed it. Stesichorus' *Oresteia* probably included Orestes' matricide, since one fragment of commentary found in a papyrus says that Euripides got from Stesichorus the idea to include a gift of a bow "to defend against the goddesses [i.e., the Furies]" (ἐξαμύ[νασ]θαί [θ]εάς, *PMG* 217.20–21). The most logical explanation for the Furies' persecution of Orestes is that he killed Clytemnestra, as is the case with Aeschylus' *Oresteia* and Euripides' *Orestes*. Pindar's version of the myth includes Orestes' matricide—"He slew his mother" (πέφνεν τε μητέρα, *Pyth.* 11.37)—though he makes no mention of the Furies. Perhaps, like Nestor, he does not want to

---

<sup>38</sup> See pp. 263–64 above. The line following this epithet in this example (30), has to be different than the Homeric examples since here the singer applies it to Clytemnestra. This is the only other extant use of this epithet.

draw attention to the more unsavory aspects of the exemplum and have these traits characterize his addressee.

All this means that the narrator of the *Odyssey's* conclusive and neatly demarcated "Oresteia" is tendentious. But why does this paradigmatic example have a tidy, simple resolution in the *Odyssey's* version? I am arguing that the poetic tradition of the *Odyssey* is setting up a model of simple and conclusive *τίσις* that it will then powerfully undermine. When *τίσις* is considered in isolation, it provides a sure and uncontested interpretation of events. But when viewed in the context of other narratives, its finality and conclusiveness becomes fraught. Part of the brilliance of the poem is its presentation (often at the level of subtext and irony) of multiple perspectives on events. These differing perspectives show how *τίσις* does not have a single, uncontested meaning, despite the intentions of individual speakers to make it seem so. While, on the surface, all the examples of *τίσις* appear conclusive, in view of their wider context, they simultaneously threaten openendedness.

The first example of *τίσις* (the "Oresteia") is the most straightforward and apparently conclusive because it is paradigmatic. Nonetheless, the *Odyssey* does preserve hints of greater complexity underlying the "Oresteia" narrative. As mentioned above, the singer does acknowledge Clytemnestra's death, though he leaves its source unstated (3.309–10). The somewhat odd procedure here of holding a *τάφος* for the murderers of one's father does indicate an attempt to soften the gruesomeness of

Orestes' revenge. Nestor also describes an alternative kind of revenge that Menelaus could have exacted, had he been able to return before Orestes. This unrealized version has more of the gruesome details that characterize Odysseus' eventual revenge against the suitors: Menelaus kills Aegisthus and leaves him unburied for dogs and birds to feast upon (3.255–60), just as Odysseus will leave the suitors unburied and feed parts of Melanthius' body to dogs (22.474–77). Nestor does not mention Clytemnestra in this hypothetical scenario (again, perhaps, out of respect for his auditor), and this lacuna would seem to leave open the question of her fate. However, the *Odyssey* points to just one fitting fate for a faithless woman: the “not...clean death” (μη...καθαρῶ θανάτῳ, 22.462) of hanging that the faithless servant women suffer. The poem's silence about Clytemnestra's death is striking. The one place in the poem where the audience would have most likely expected some mention of Orestes' killing Clytemnestra is also silent on the issue: at the time of second Nekyia, unlike the first, Orestes has already completed his vengeance. It seems likely Agamemnon's ψυχή would have heard about it from some other recently deceased ψυχή, even perhaps from Aegisthus' ψυχή, just as he heard of Odysseus' vengeance from the suitors' ψυχαί. Achilles' ψυχή even broaches the topic of Orestes' κλέος (24.32–34), but not in terms of the κλέος he obtained for himself, only in terms of the κλέος Agamemnon could have won for him.<sup>39</sup>

---

<sup>39</sup> West 1989, 123, points out, following Monro, that this meeting of Achilles and Agamemnon is also  
Footnote cont. next pg.

The *Odyssey* is overtly silent about how Clytemnestra died. Instead of incorporating the traditional problems of matricide, including the Furies' persecution of Orestes, it leaves the τίσις of Orestes neatly tied up. Despite this overt presentation, the tradition includes a subversive and inconclusive ending to this story, however muted and distant from the immediate presentation. These subversive elements give an ironic character to Orestes' τίσις. This ironic interpretation of Orestes' τίσις is illustrative of the openended implications of τίσις.

### *Excursus: Subverting the Monologic Program: An Application of Bakhtin to the Odyssey*

My argument that the narrator of the *Odyssey* poses an authoritative voice and perspective on the epic, against which a covert, questioning voice can sometimes be heard, falls in line with terms of analysis of Mikhail Bakhtin. I introduced these ideas at the end of part one in my discussion on the manipulation of the application of τίσις to narratives, but some further elaboration is useful here. Bakhtin argues that epic as a genre is characteristically "monologic," as opposed especially to the novel, which he sees as "dialogic." Monologic discourse is characterized by a single, authoritative voice

---

unusual since it transpires as though it were their first meeting, right after Agamemnon's death, three years before the death of the suitors.

that brings meanings and points of view into its one mode of expression.<sup>40</sup> Bakhtin calls this the “centripetal” force of language, that “serve[s] to unify and centralize the verbal-ideological world.”<sup>41</sup> By contrast, dialogic discourse is characterized by multiple meanings and points of view, “an indeterminacy, a certain semantic openedness [sic].”<sup>42</sup> He calls this the “centrifugal” force of language toward “decentralization and disunification.”<sup>43</sup>

Some readers of Homer and Bakhtin have disputed Bakhtin’s contention that the Homeric epics are monologic.<sup>44</sup> In their critique, they tend to stress the dialogic elements of the epics, and sometimes these elements coincide with those parts identified as “novelistic” or reflecting *Märchen*. I agree with this critique in part. Certainly Bakhtin’s contention that “[t]here is no place in the epic world for any openedness, indecision, indeterminacy” is too limiting.<sup>45</sup> On the other hand, Bakhtin’s view that epic privileges a dominant, monologic discourse is correct. I identify this centripetal, monologic tendency with the voice of the narrator. This controlling, authoritative voice presents the overt program of the poem in the traditional, structured frame of Homeric diction and tries to

---

<sup>40</sup> Bakhtin 1981, esp. 13–17.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 270.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 272.

<sup>44</sup> See p. 166 n. 2 above for different views on the application of Bakhtin’s methods to the *Odyssey*.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

present the world of the poem as just and orderly. Beneath this dominant voice lies the centrifugal aspects of the poem that call into question the message of the narrator's monologic voice. This centrifugal discourse, however, is always covert in the *Odyssey*. Moments of dialogism are always bracketed and (seemingly) contained by the monologic voice of the narrator. (E.g. the burlesque "Lay of Ares and Aphrodite" is both framed by the external narrator of the *Odyssey*—who frames the lay with descriptions of its performance setting and Demodocus' activity: 8.234–65, 367–84—and seems to uphold the conventional morality of marital fidelity.<sup>46</sup>) But the audience can sense the presence of this centrifugal force in the poem, and its questioning message constitutes the subversive program of the poem.

The various narratives of τίσις in the *Odyssey* argue for both of these programs, the overt/monologic/centripetal and the subversive/dialogic/centrifugal. The surface and dominant meaning of the narrative is always the monologic one—this is one of the defining features of epic, as Bakhtin is right to point out. The poem's overt narrator and protagonists all serve this end, all speak in one voice, as it were. But apart from these monologic voices stands the singer of the epic who appropriates these authoritative voices in order to achieve his ultimately subversive end. In particular, I draw attention to the dialogic characteristic of "openendedness." τίσις narratives persistently threaten

---

<sup>46</sup> Peradotto 1990, 56–58, stresses the dialogic elements of the song. Also see pp. 304–5 below.

to remain open and frustrate the authoritative narrator's attempts to give his narrative a conclusive and determinative ending. And without a clear and defined ending to a narrative, its meaning remains unstable. Herodotus' Solon understood well the implications of "openendedness" when he said that that no one could be counted happy until dead: the meaning of the story one's life was indeterminate until its conclusion was known.<sup>47</sup>

### *9.3 Subversions of τίσις*

The τίσις narratives I analyzed in chapter three contain ironies about the kind of justice that τίσις produces. Whereas the claim of an agent using a narrative of τίσις is that the conclusion of his story constitutes the conclusion to questions about justice, the role that these narratives play in the actual context of the poem has far more complex ramifications.

For instance, when Zeus takes vengeance upon the companions for their slaughter of Helios' cattle, the explicit result is that the blame-worthy companions died as a "fitting requital" (ἐπιεικέ' ἀμοιβήν, 12.382) for their crime. Helios is satisfied and

---

<sup>47</sup> See pp. 182–83 above. Aristotle extended this idea so that the evaluation of a person's life might remain unstable and openended even after he dies, since the fate of his descendants might determine his legacy: (This is more reasonable than it might at first seem: consider how it might take a generation or two before the legacy of a president is secure, in great part because his actions and policies (like a person's children) may take that long to show their worth.)

the world returns to a just order. This is the message the narrator presents in the proem, when he says the companions died “by their own recklessness” (αὐτῶν...σφετέρησιν ἀτασθαλίησιν, 1.7). The guilty received their just punishment.

This moral lesson makes sense when the story is put in these terms, abstracted from its wider context. However, the singer has linked this episode to others in the poem in such a way that its meaning is more complex. As I argued earlier,<sup>48</sup> the companions’ deaths are the working out of Poseidon’s revenge against Odysseus. It is the death of Odysseus’ final group of companions and the destruction of his ship that result in his further wandering for seven more years and give the suitors the opportunity to besiege his home. Zeus’ vengeance aimed against the companions has the effect of harming Odysseus. This fact belies Zeus’ claim to be observing the strict justice of desert that he propounds in his opening speech (1.32–43). Perhaps Athena knows this when she complains that Odysseus suffers unjustly on Ogygia (48–59). Considering the fact that Zeus is, at least, partly responsible for landing Odysseus on that island, Athena’s accusation that Zeus “willed [Odysseus] so much pain” (τόσον ὠδύσαο, 62) is not as hyperbolic as it may at first seem. Zeus’ defense against her accusation is highly selective: Helios’ cattle and Zeus’ response go unmentioned and Odysseus’ fate is all Poseidon’s doing, who is endlessly vindictive anyway (68–69). In

---

<sup>48</sup> See p. 61 n. 22 above.



other words, the consequences of Zeus' τίσις against the companions extends beyond its narrowly targeted and narrated bounds. Even after he returns to Ithaca, Odysseus personally faces the consequences of Zeus' act: without the support of his companions, who could have offered military aid, he has to plot a duplicitous and risky strategy to regain his household; even after he defeats the suitors, angry foes bring up the fact that Odysseus lost all his companions as grounds for their own act of τίσις (24.428).

The episode in Polyphemus' cave and the resulting vengeance of Poseidon illustrate again the subversive openendedness of Homeric τίσις. One way this is apparent is through the coexistence of another narrative τίσις alongside Poseidon's. As I outlined earlier,<sup>49</sup> Odysseus executes a plot of τίσις against Polyphemus for the Cyclops' eating of his men. But just as Odysseus can perform and narrate this narrative and thereby justify his blinding Polyphemus, Poseidon can take the same actions and construe them in a different narrative of τίσις. The result is that τίσις is unbounded: one τίσις narrative might incorporate some of the events of another, competing τίσις narrative while also adding events antecedent or subsequent to the other narrative.

Moreover, the *Odyssey* contains allusions to the incompleteness of Odysseus' wanderings. The prophecy he receives from Teiresias and repeats to Penelope tells how he will have to leave Ithaca again to propitiate Poseidon (11.119–37; 23.246–87). This

---

<sup>49</sup> See pp. 72, 80 above.

action does not occur within the *fabula* of the poem, but is only foretold. John Peradotto has pointed out that the syntax of Teiresias' prediction here leaves open whether or not Odysseus will accomplish his mission (9.121–22):<sup>50</sup>

ἔρχεσθαι δὴ ἔπειτα λαβὼν ἐυῆρες ἐρετμόν,  
εἰς ὃ κε τοὺς ἀφίκηαι οἳ οὐκ ἴσασι θάλασσαν...

Then leave, having taken a well-fitted oar,  
until you reach men who do not know the sea...

The “until” clause allows for uncertainty in the outcome. Will Odysseus find these men ignorant of the sea and found the cult of Poseidon, securing for himself a happy, long life? Or will Poseidon kill him before he can achieve this? Even the fact that Odysseus has to leave the safety of land on Ithaca to journey over the sea (as is, of course, inevitable on any journey from that island) means that the threat of Poseidon's wrath has not passed. Even though within the *fabula* of the poem he escaped the dangers of the sea when the Phaeacians deposited him on Ithaca, the poem contains this centrifugal, openended gesture that belies the apparent peaceful conclusion at the poem's end.<sup>51</sup>

---

<sup>50</sup> Peradotto 1990, 59–93, esp. 69–73.

<sup>51</sup> Peradotto 1990, 75–77, points out that this journey to propitiate Poseidon could have occurred during Odysseus' wanderings back to Ithaca. The lying tale he tells Eumaeus about the supposed return of Odysseus, which includes a journey inland to Dodona before sailing to Ithaca (14.321–33, shows how such a narrative might have occurred. In fact, completing an ἄεθλος such as founding a cult is very often in myth a condition for the successful achievement of a goal, not something that can be postponed until after the hero reaches his goal. The funeral of Elpenor might be a reflection of this ἄεθλος. Elpenor's ψυχή meets Odysseus in Hades and asks him to perform funeral rites for his body, including fixing an oar upon his burial mound (11.51–80). The reason Elpenor gives to Odysseus for why he ought to do this is “so that I might not become a source of the gods' anger against you (μή τοί τι θεῶν μήνιμα γένωμαι, 73). Thus, Footnote cont. next pg.

The “Lay of Ares and Aphrodite” (8.234–384) contains similar anxieties about the conclusion of a τίσις theme. After Hephaestus has captured Ares and Aphrodite *in flagrante delicto* and brought the rest of the (male) gods to his home, he tries to exact a penalty for adultery (μοιχάγρια, 332) from Ares. However, the narrative, as Demodocus presents it, ends inconclusively. Hephaestus receives no payment, in so many words, only Poseidon’s promise to pay if Ares should default (355–56). The next thing that happens is that Hephaestus releases Ares and Aphrodite, who “immediately spring up” (αὐτίκ’ ἀνάϊξαντε, 361) and flee to their traditional haunts (361–66). If any payment has been made, the narrator has elided it, and, as Hephaestus recognizes (352), he could not hold Poseidon captive despite whatever promises he has made. Thus Hephaestus’ triumph is ambiguous. The lay leaves open the question of whether he actually accomplished his τίσις, intimating that success in a narrative of retribution is difficult and complex. Moreover, even if Ares has paid to Hephaestus some kind of penalty, do matters really stand resolved in the end? After all, Hephaestus complained that Aphrodite was “always dishonoring” (αἰὲν ἀτιμάζει, 309) him. If Aphrodite is preternaturally “without self-control” (οὐκ ἐχέθυμος, 320), why should she behave differently now?

---

Elpenor’s funeral, with its oar set as sign and its function of propitiating (potential) divine anger, has several similarities with Odysseus’ eventual inland mission.

In addition, the morality of the lay would appear to support traditional values: “Evil deeds do not prosper; the slow catches the swift” (οὐκ ἀρετᾶ κακὰ ἔργα· κιχάνει τοι βραδὺς ὤκύν, 329); Poseidon seems to recognize the validity of Hephaestus’ claim and ultimately promises to ensure payment before the lovers are released. But in the midst of these conventions, Hermes jokes that he would happily endure three times the punishment now afflicting Ares of being trapped in the bed with Aphrodite (338–42). On one level, the joke ridicules the punishment of entrapping adulterers together in precisely the situation that is so dishonoring to the husband. On another level, it suggests that the very practice of adultery condemned by conventional morality remains alluring. And as Demodocus, the internal narrator, makes clear, the audience of the gods laughs in assent (342).<sup>52</sup> The result is that the very practice for which Odysseus will condemn to death the suitors and his faithless servant-women is made morally ambiguous in this song.<sup>53</sup>

In all of these accounts, there are hints of darker and openended meanings that speak through the seemingly monologic epic narrative. The centrifugal implications of

---

<sup>52</sup> Olson 1989, 142, argues that 367–69 portray the audience of the Phaeacians similarly reacting with laughter. I think this is not made clear in these lines, but I agree with Olson that the story would have induced a light-hearted response in its audience, including the external audience.

<sup>53</sup> For a thorough reading of the moral ambiguities of the lay and its relationship to the main story of Odysseus’ *τίσις*, see Olson *ibid.*, 139: “The love-song of Ares and Aphrodite, on its surface morally and poetically simple, is thus in fact complex, and...marked by ambiguity...” Peradotto 1993, 178–80, reads Hermes’ outburst as a moment of dialogism within a larger context of monologism. (This is an elaboration of his argument in 1990, 56–58.)

each of these narratives prepares the audience for the ultimate irony and openendedness in the main τίσις narrative of the poem, Odysseus' revenge upon the suitors.

#### ***9.4 An Openended Conclusion***

As I mentioned in the last section, our *Odyssey* contains a prolepsis of future adventures for Odysseus. After the climax of the *Mnesterophonía* and Odysseus' reunion with Penelope, he tells her, "We have not yet come to the end of all the trials" (οὐ γάρ πω πάντων ἐπὶ πείρατ' ἀέθλων ἤλθομεν, 23.248–49). The πείρα of Odysseus' story that he here forecasts is rather different from the πέρας that Aristarchus and Aristophanes saw a few lines later. Odysseus must hazard another journey inland to found a cult to Poseidon and only then will he have completed his toils. Despite all appearances of peace and resolution at this point in the poem, both Odysseus and Penelope know that there is even now only "the hope" that "there will be an escape from evils" (ἐλπωρή...κακῶν ὑπάλυξιεν ἔσσεσθαι, 287). Even if the poem ended at 23.297, it would still contain this sign of its own incompleteness, undermining the sufficiency of the conclusion that the poem offers. The prologue informs the audience that after Odysseus makes it back to Ithaca he will still not have escaped "trials" (ἀέθλων) among his own people (1.18–19). One implication of this statement is that once he has defeated the suitors and their allies he will finally be safe and free of all trials. Likewise, the prologue says that Poseidon will be angry with Odysseus "until he should

reach his homeland” (πάρος ἦν γαῖαν ἰκέσθαι, 21). Again, the implication is that Poseidon’s anger will end once Odysseus reaches Ithaca. But Teiresias’ prophecy, which, significantly, is recalled and emphasized in the reunion scene, belies the promise of the prologue. Poseidon’s anger still haunts Odysseus, and he has more trials ahead.

Whatever the reasons continuing after 23.296, the poem does not deal with the problem of Poseidon’s anger. It could have: the wider Cyclic tradition does treat Odysseus’ journey to found the cult of Poseidon and propitiate his wrath.<sup>54</sup> The continuation, however, does include the threat of further “evils.” The suitors’ kin demand τίσις from Odysseus for the massacre in the *Mnesterophonia*, and Odysseus and his allies once again must fight. The poem finally comes to a close once this conflict is resolved—though, as I will argue, this resolution is suspiciously artificial. The poem includes its final scene in order to deal with the unresolved tensions in the main τίσις narrative. Even though the agents and narrators of a τίσις narrative present it as finite and conclusive, it remains openended, frustrating the desire for finality and ultimate moral meaning. The *Odyssey* continues after Odysseus’ triumph over the suitors in order to articulate a subversive vision of τίσις that questions its conclusiveness.

I am not addressing in this section the three other episodes that constitute the “Continuation”: the Penelope episode (23.298–372), the second Nekyia (24.1–204), and

---

<sup>54</sup> See p. 122–23 above.

the Laertes section (24.205–412).<sup>55</sup> Others have defended these episodes and argued for their integrity to the poem.<sup>56</sup> I address only the final and, in my view, most important episode (24.413–548). It is worth discussing here a few arguments already advanced about the importance of the final episode. Hartmut Erbse has argued that the final episode is thematically necessary because it ensures that the suitors die “unavenged” (νήπιοινοι, 1.380; cf. 2.145).<sup>57</sup> Dorothea Wender makes a similar argument, calling the 1.380 and 2.145, as well as 20.41–43 and 23.111–40, “plants” that prepare the audience for the final reconciliation.<sup>58</sup> I agree that the final episode is in the poem in order to address the question of vengeance. That being said, the objection to this argument is that even if the *Odyssey* did not portray the failure of the suitors’ kin to get vengeance, the assumption must be that there would be no successful retaliation against Odysseus. The singer chose not merely to have the suitors die “unavenged” but to dramatize their kin’s

---

<sup>55</sup> I adopt here the titles that Wender 1978, 10, gives the episodes.

<sup>56</sup> In the Laertes episode, I note that Laertes’ recognition of his son leads him to affirm the existence of the gods: “Father Zeus, truly then you gods are still on tall Olympus, if indeed the suitors paid for their reckless violence” (Ζεῦ πάτερ, ἦ ῥα ἔτ’ ἔστε θεοὶ κατὰ μακρὸν Ὀλυμπον, εἰ ἔτεόν μνηστήρες ἀτάσθαλον ὕβριν ἔτισαν, 24.351–52). Dimock 1989, 330, calls this a response to the questions posed about divine justice at 19.363–69 and 20.201–3. I would add that it responds to many other questions about divine justice, even from the outset of the poem. Laertes’ words here have the effect of programmatically connecting the successful outcome of Odysseus’ plot with proof of the gods’ justice. In the second Nekyia, strong arguments have been made for the effectiveness of the final comparison that Agamemnon there draws between the “*Oresteia*” and the *Odyssey*: see Hölscher 1967, 11–12; Tsagalis 2008, 30–43.

<sup>57</sup> Erbse 1972, 113–42, esp. 138–42.

<sup>58</sup> Wender 1978, 65.

attempt and failure to get revenge in order to make a larger point about the nature of *τίσις* itself.

Alfred Heubeck has made some convincing observations about the structural parallels between the final episode and the opening of the poem. The assembly at 24.413–71 is parallel to the assembly at 2.1–259; the divine council of 24.472–88 is parallel to the one at 1.26–95.<sup>59</sup> He makes a convincing case for the relationship between these framing scenes; however, while this may strengthen the case for the final episode's integrity, it does not address its thematic function in the poem.

Lastly, Stephanie West and Richard Seaford have argued that the "Continuation" is a sixth century addition to the poem because its concern with the public sphere suits that period better than a putative 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> century date of composition for rest of the poem.<sup>60</sup> For Seaford, the wedding ritual concluding at 23.297 did provide an ending to an earlier version, but once the city-state grew in importance the question of a political settlement could not be avoided: "The triumph of private revenge in restoring a household becomes less satisfactory."<sup>61</sup> I agree with Seaford's argument in part: an ending at 23.297 would have provided one kind of conclusion to the poem—an idealized, conclusive ending. But whereas Seaford implies that *τίσις* is only a problem in

---

<sup>59</sup> Heubeck et al., ad 24.413. See also pp. 317–18 below.

<sup>60</sup> West 1989, 133–34; Seaford 1994, 38–42.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.



the context of the public sphere, our *Odyssey* has already shown that even in private affairs a narrative *τίσις* does not end so simply and conclusively. The audience of the poem has already seen how Odysseus' vengeance against Polyphemus results in Odysseus' persecution by Polyphemus' father, Poseidon. Similarly, one of the central plot structures of the *Theogony* is the sequence first involving Cronos' and Gaia's *τίσις* against their father, Ouranos—"We would avenge the evil outrage of your father" (πατρός κε κακὴν τισαίμεθα λώβην, 165)—and then involving Zeus' and the Titans' *τίσις* against Cronos—"In the future there will be vengeance" (ἔπειτα τίσιν μετόπισθεν ἔσεσθαι, 210; cf. 472). Our *Odyssey*, rather than concluding with a wedding, fulfills its promise of an openended conclusion, already hinted at in the other *τίσις* narratives, by openly defying the audience's desire for a neat conclusion.

I discussed earlier, in the context of the varying traditions about Odysseus' death, the variety of narrative paths that the story of Odysseus took after the death of suitors.<sup>62</sup> Two variations preserved by later sources relate a similar alternative to the extant ending in the *Odyssey*. Plutarch preserves one version in a discussion of who the "Coliadae" of Ithaca are and the meaning of *φάγιλος* (*Quaest. Graec.* 14, 294c12–d6):

τῷ Ὀδυσσεῖ μετὰ τὴν μνηστηροφονίαν οἱ ἐπιτήδειοι τῶν τεθνηκότων ἐπανέστησαν, μεταπεμφθεὶς δ' ὑπ' ἀμφοτέρων διαιτητῆς Νεοπτόλεμος ἐδικαίωσε τὸν μὲν Ὀδυσσεῖα μεταναστῆναι καὶ φεύγειν ἐκ τῆς Κεφαλληνίας καὶ Ζακύνθου καὶ Ἰθάκης ἐφ' αἵματι, τοὺς δὲ τῶν

---

<sup>62</sup> See pp. 122–27 above.

μνηστήρων ἑταίρους καὶ οἰκείους ἀποφέρειν ποινὴν Ὀδυσσεῖ τῶν εἰς τὸν οἶκον ἀδικημάτων καθ' ἕκαστον ἐνιαυτόν. αὐτὸς μὲν οὖν εἰς Ἰταλίαν μετέστη· τὴν δὲ ποινὴν τῷ υἱεῖ καθιερώσας ἀποφέρειν ἐκέλευσε τοὺς Ἰθακησίους...

After the slaughter of the suitors, the friends of the dead revolted against Odysseus. Neoptolemus, having been summoned by both parties to act as arbiter, judged that Odysseus should leave and go into exile from Cephallenia, Zacynthus, and Ithaca on account of blood, while the companions and kin of the suitors should pay a penalty to Odysseus each year for the crimes committed against his household. Odysseus then left for Italy, but, having dedicated the penalty to his son, he ordered the Ithacans to pay it to him...

Apollodorus preserves the other version of this story in the very last lines of his *Epitome*

(7.40):

εἰσὶ δὲ οἱ λέγοντες ἐγκαλούμενον Ὀδυσσέα ὑπὸ τῶν οἰκείων ὑπὲρ τῶν ἀπολωλότων δικαστὴν Νεοπτόλεμον λαβεῖν τὸν βασιλεύοντα τῶν κατὰ τὴν Ἥπειρον νήσων, τοῦτον δέ, νομίσαντα ἐκποδῶν Ὀδυσσέως γενομένου Κεφαλληνίαν καθέξειν, κατακρῖναι φυγὴν αὐτοῦ, Ὀδυσσέα δὲ εἰς Αἰτωλίαν πρὸς Θόαντα τὸν Ἄνδραίμονος παραγενόμενον τὴν τούτου θυγατέρα γῆμαι, καὶ καταλιπόντα παιῖδα Λεοντοφόνον ἐκ ταύτης γηραιὸν τελευτῆσαι.

And there are some who say that Odysseus, having been accused by the kin on behalf of those who died, retained as arbiter Neoptolemus, the king of the islands by Epirus. This man, having expected that with Odysseus out of the way he would gain rule over Cephallenia, sentenced him to exile. Then Odysseus, having traveled to Aetolia, to Thoas, the son of Andraemon, married his daughter and died an old man, having left behind a son by her, Leontophonus.

Both these alternatives tell how, as in the *Odyssey*, the kin of the suitors rise up against Odysseus in order to exact revenge. But the resolution of this conflict is different in these cases. Either Odysseus alone (according to Apollodorus) or Odysseus and the kin

together (according to Plutarch) appoint Neoptolemus as “arbitrator” (δικαστήν). According to Apollodorus, Neoptolemus was not disinterested. He wanted to gain possession of Cephallenia and banished Odysseus, who then fled to Aetolia to live out the remainder of his days, presumably leaving Ithaca to Telemachus. Plutarch agrees that Neoptolemus exiled Odysseus, though not with any ulterior design, rather “on account of blood” (ἐφ’ αἵματι). Plutarch continues that Neoptolemus also required that the kin repay Odysseus a penalty (ποινὴν) for the crimes committed against his household. Odysseus fled to Italy but left Telemachus behind to rule and demanded the kin’s penalty be paid to him.

Exile for homicide does appear elsewhere in the *Odyssey*: Odysseus portrays himself in his lying tale to the disguised Athena as a Cretan that has fled his home for fear of retaliation after he killed a man plotting to steal his spoils from Troy (13.256–86); Theoclymenus supplicates Telemachus in Sparta, telling him he has fled the kin of a man he killed, and desires passage to Ithaca (15.271–78). Even Odysseus wonders about the possibility that he might have to flee if he is successful at killing the suitors.<sup>63</sup> He asks Athena how he could defeat the full band of suitors alone and follows with this question (20.41–43):

---

<sup>63</sup> Also cf. 23.111–40, where Odysseus and Telemachus consider the likelihood that the kin of the now slain suitors will seek vengeance; 24.430–37, where Eupheithes worries that Odysseus would flee Ithaca before they can exact their vengeance.

“πρὸς δ’ ἔτι καὶ τόδε μείζον ἐνὶ φρεσὶ μερμηρίζω  
εἴ περ γὰρ κτείναίμι Διός τε σέθεν τε ἔκητι,  
πῆ κεν ὑπεκπροφύγοιμι; τά σε φράζεσθαι ἄνωγα.”

“In addition, I ponder in my mind also this greater thing.  
If I should kill them by the will of Zeus and yourself,  
where would I flee? I urge you to consider these things.”

Athena does not answer his second question. She instead promises to fight with him and tells Odysseus that even if “fifty armed bands of mortal men” (πεντήκοντα λόχοι μερόπων ἀνθρώπων, 49) stood against them, they would still succeed. She thus promises victory not only over the suitors, a mere 108 men, but also over even a ten-fold greater force.<sup>64</sup> No force of retaliation could succeed against them. Athena is thus, in effect, already repudiating any outcome of the poem that would have Odysseus go into exile. This is the first indication of the radical closure to come at the end of book 24.

Before the poem introduces this radical solution, the issue of *τίσις* rises again. I discussed in chapter six the cyclic nature of *τίσις*. As action produces reaction, so crime produces its symmetrical punishment. In the final episode, a new *τίσις* narrative arises as the inverse of Odysseus’ *τίσις* against the suitors. At the close of the Laertes’ episode, Odysseus, Laertes, Dolius, and Dolius’ sons enjoy a feast in Odysseus’ halls (24.411); meanwhile, the suitors’ kin grieve outside over their loss and plot their revenge (412–38). This is an inversion of Odysseus’ plot of *τίσις*, in which the suitors occupied the

---

<sup>64</sup> If a *λόχος* was about 20 men (cf. Aegisthus’ ambush: 4.530–31), then 50 such bands would be a 1000 men, 10 times the number of suitors.

halls with their feast, while Odysseus schemed to gain entry and revenge. The pattern of inversion continues as Eupheithes summons an assembly of the Ithacans, which corresponds in several aspects of its structure to the assembly in book two.<sup>65</sup>

The singer has dramatized the way a new narrative of *τίσις* arises. “Rumor” (Ὀσσα, 413) spreads through the city and “tells of the hateful death and doom of the suitors” (στυγερόν θάνατον καὶ κῆρ’ ἐνέπουσα, 414). As the singer portrays it, this uncontrollable news—Odysseus did try to stop it from spreading and failed (24.111–40)—itself tells a story. (The verb ἐνέπω in several key places signals the performance of a narrative.<sup>66</sup>) This suggests that the call for revenge, articulated as a *τίσις* narrative, is the inevitable result of the violence of Odysseus’ *τίσις*. In a similar way, mourning gives rise to demands for revenge. The suitors’ kin conduct an ἐκφορά with “moans and groans” (μυχμῶ τε στοναχῆ τε, 416) and perform a funeral. There is a correspondence here with the final scene of the *Iliad*, which portrays a funeral procession for the defeated enemy Hector. Although the *Iliad* ends without an explicit call for vengeance upon Achilles, he will soon die before the walls of Troy; Odysseus, though facing the clear threat of revenge after his enemy’s funeral, will survive. From the grief of the funeral, Eupheithes convenes an assembly and persuades the better part of the assembled Ithacans

---

<sup>65</sup> Heubeck et al., ad 24.413.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. 1.1, 9.19–20.

to launch a retributive attack on Odysseus. The preparations for war and the brief scene of fighting have Iliadic overtones. A new war threatens, but this time it will be internecine.

As tension mounts after Eupheithes has mobilized his force, the scene move to Olympus (472–88):

αὐτὰρ Ἀθηναίη Ζῆνα Κρονίωνα προσηύδα·  
“ὦ πάτερ ἡμέτερε Κρονίδη, ὕπατε κρειόντων,  
εἰπέ μοι εἰρομένη· τί νύ τοι νόος ἔνδοθι κεύθει;  
ἢ προτέρω πόλεμόν τε κακὸν καὶ φύλοπιν αἰνὴν  
τεύξεις, ἢ φιλότητα μετ’ ἀμφοτέροισι τίθησθα;”  
τὴν δ’ ἀπαμειβόμενος προσέφη νεφεληγερέτα Ζεὺς·  
“τέκνον ἐμόν, τί με ταῦτα διείρεαι ἠδὲ μεταλλᾶς;  
οὐ γὰρ δὴ τοῦτον μὲν ἐβούλευσας νόον αὐτή,  
ὡς ἦ τοι κείνους Ὀδυσσεὺς ἀποτείσεται ἐλθών;  
ἔρξον ὅπως ἐθέλεις· ἐρέω δέ τοι ὡς ἐπέοικεν.  
ἐπεὶ δὴ μνηστήρας ἐτείσατο δῖος Ὀδυσσεύς,  
ὄρκια πιστὰ ταμόντες ὁ μὲν βασιλευέτω αἰεὶ,  
ἡμεῖς δ’ αὖ παιδῶν τε κασιγνήτων τε φόνοιο  
ἔκλησιν θέωμεν· τοὶ δ’ ἀλλήλους φιλεόντων  
ὡς τὸ πάρος, πλοῦτος δὲ καὶ εἰρήνη ἄλις ἔστω.”  
ὡς εἰπὼν ὤτρυνε πάρος μεμαυῖαν Ἀθήνην,  
βῆ δὲ κατ’ Οὐλύμποιο καρήνων ἀΐξασα.

Then Athena addressed Zeus, son of Cronos:  
“Our father, son of Cronos, highest of rulers,  
tell me who asks you, what now does your mind hide within?  
Are you going to make further evil war and fearsome din of battle,  
or will you establish friendship between both sides?”  
Cloud-gathering Zeus addressed her in answer:  
“My child, why do you ask and question me about this?  
Did you not yourself plot this plan,  
that Odysseus would indeed come and take vengeance on those men?  
Do as you wish, but I will tell you what is fitting.  
Since divine Odysseus took vengeance on the suitors,  
let them make sure oaths and let him rule forever.

Let us, in turn, establish a forgetting of the slaying  
of their sons and brothers. And let them love one another  
as before, and let there be wealth and peace in abundance.”  
Having thus spoken, he roused the already eager Athena,  
and she went, rushing down from the peaks of Olympus.

This short divine council parallels the opening council (1.26–95) and has similar programmatic importance.<sup>67</sup> Athena is concerned about the threat to her favorite, Odysseus, but even more about the effects of what amounts to civil war on Ithaca. In order for Odysseus to have a successful, happy life as ruler on Ithaca, his community must be whole and at peace: Teiresias’ prophecy for Odysseus’ good end includes the prediction that “around you, your people will be blessed” (ἀμφὶ δὲ λαοὶ ὄλβιοι ἔσσουνται, 11.136–37; cf. 23.283–84).<sup>68</sup> At issue at this juncture in the plot is how this end will come about; though, if the gods take no action the poem will end with war.

Athena, however, claims that either end will come as a result of Zeus’ will. Either he will “make” (τεύξει, 476) war or “establish” (τίθησθα, 476) peace. This set of alternatives before Zeus reflects the alternative narrative paths that lie before a singer of the Odyssean tradition.<sup>69</sup> Zeus’ choice of how to defuse the tensions on Ithaca is the dramatization of the singer’s choice of how to end the poem. Having already rejected the

---

<sup>67</sup> On the programmatic character of the speech see p. 6 and nn. 12, 14 above. On the parallels with the scene in book one, see Heubeck et al., ad 24.413 and pp. 317–18 below.

<sup>68</sup> Hölsher *ibid.* considers “das Thema des milden und gerechten Königtums” the “Leitidee” at the center of the poem’s design.

<sup>69</sup> Danek 1998a, ad 24.489–548.

simple conclusion of Penelope's and Odysseus' reunion, a new threat of violence erupts. The Odyssean tradition, represented by Athena, discounts a resolution of arbitration and exile as an unsatisfactory way to deal with the threat.<sup>70</sup> In keeping with the model of a successful νόστος, Odysseus must achieve a total victory—in contrast to the partial, tragic success of Achilles in the *Iliad*. According to Athena, two drastically different paths then lie before Zeus and the audience: communal friendship (φιλότις, 476) or eradication of opposition through warfare (φύλοπιν αἰνήν, 476). With Athena's support, there is little doubt how Odysseus and his allies would fare in a battle—Medon has just warned Eupheithes of as much (442–50)—but Ithaca would be devastated.

Paralleling the opening divine council, Zeus repudiates the terms of Athena's question (cf. 1.64). Just as in the opening she accused Zeus of planning Odysseus' ill fate (1.62), she here implies that Zeus planned a civil war for Ithaca. But just as Zeus countered in the opening that Poseidon was the one to blame (1.68–75), he here again puts the blame on another—Athena herself. This war is not his νόσ but hers. Especially revealing is the line that follows, in which he explains the content of her plan: she planned “that Odysseus would indeed come and take vengeance on those men” (480). This is what Athena had in mind from the outset of the poem, which she

---

<sup>70</sup> See p. 313 above.



programmatically announced in the opening council (1.83–95).<sup>71</sup> Zeus is claiming that her plot of *τίσις* naturally resulted in “further warfare.” The *τίσις* of Odysseus produces the *τίσις* of Eupheithes.

The implications of this claim are momentous. For this sequence of plots—from the suitors’ depredations to Odysseus’ vengeance to the suitors’ kin’s vengeance—presents itself as a new paradigm of *τίσις*. The old paradigm of Orestes made *τίσις* seem conclusive and complete (though the singer subtly made efforts to undermine this), but the new paradigm of Odysseus makes *τίσις* fraught and openended. One plot of *τίσις* bleeds into another. And there is no natural reason to assume that the cycle of *τίσις* would end with the kin’s attack. Odysseus has a supernatural guarantee of success from Athena, but absent this his meager band of youths and old men could easily lose and Odysseus be killed. But in this case another *τίσις* would result, as Telemachus or another survivor would doubtless demand requital. Odysseus’ allies did not accept the narrative that Eupheithes told in the assembly that cast the killing of the suitors as murder (24.422–38). Halitherses condemned the suitors for wasting Odysseus’ home and wooing his wife with “recklessness” (*ἀτασθαλία*, 458). He thus invalidated Eupheithes’ claim to *τίσις*. An entire sequence of denials of opponents’ claims to *τίσις* leads to a

---

<sup>71</sup> To be precise, she presents there a dual program: *νόστος* for Odysseus and dealing with the crisis on Ithaca for Telemachus. But as the first book proceeds, it becomes clear that Athena plans for these two programs to combine into a single *νόστος* with *τίσις* for Odysseus.

corollary sequence of agents' claims to their own τίσις: Euphithes (and his allies) deny Odysseus' claim, which leads to his own claim; but Halitherses (and the other allies of Odysseus) denies Euphithes' claim, which would just as surely lead to his own (or another ally's) claim if Euphithes succeeded. The whole cycle of vengeance has no natural end, and thus it exerts a centrifugal force on the poem toward openendedness.

Since there is no natural way out of this cycle of narratives, Athena offers two supernatural conclusions. One is warfare (φύλοπιν αἰνήν, 476), but this cannot be just any ordinary war. It must end not only in victory (this alone requires supernatural assistance) but also with the annihilation of opposition. After all, the persistence of allies of the slain suitors shows how new dangers will arise from mere victory. One motivation for Odysseus' indiscriminate slaughter of anyone willfully sympathetic to the suitors is his attempt to achieve just such a total victory. He can thus ensure that he will have the last word in his narrative of τίσις, since he has silenced all opposing viewpoints with death. But even this is unsuccessful, since the suitors' kin remain to avenge them. Athena could provide a total victory through annihilation, but, as I remarked earlier,<sup>72</sup> this will not bring Odysseus' promised happy ending.

The other conclusion Athena suggests is "friendship" (φιλότης, 476), but it is up to Zeus to determine how this would come about. So Zeus offers the only possible

---

<sup>72</sup> See p. 316 above.

solution: amnesia. Mortals will do their part: the Ithacans are to make oaths (presumably of obedience) and Odysseus will be their king forever (483). But there must be a divine element. The peculiar syntax of the two lines draws attention to divine agency. After the nominative participle ταμόντες there comes a contrastive μὲν clause: “Let them make sure oaths and let him rule forever” (ὄρκια πιστὰ ταμόντες ὁ μὲν βασιλευέτω αἰεὶ, 482). One would then expect a balanced, contrastive δὲ clause that picks the subject from the first half of the sentence. But instead the contrastive δὲ clause introduces a new subject—the gods: “Let us, in turn, bring about a forgetting of the slaying of their sons and brothers.” (ἡμεῖς δ’ αὖ παίδων τε κασιγνήτων τε φόνοιο ἔκλησιν θέωμεν, 484–85). This radical break in syntax mirrors the radical break in plot. The solution to the problems of τίσις must involve divine intervention and the literal obliteration of the memory of τίσις.<sup>73</sup> Moreover, this periphrasis with a verbal noun in -σις (in this case, *hapax*) recalls the periphrasis, τίσις ἔσσεται (“There will be a vengeance...,” 1.40) from the programmatic paradigm of Orestes, in which τίσις had achieved an immortality in song.<sup>74</sup> But now, with Odysseus’ eternal rule, ἔκλησις (“forgetting”) will replace τίσις.

Only with amnesia will there be “peace and wealth in abundance” (πλοῦτος δὲ καὶ εἰρήνη ἄλις, 486). After all, the cause of this strife is Euphithes’ ἄλαστον...πένθος

---

<sup>73</sup> Loraux 1998, 94, calls this an instance of the “archaic wish” for “oblivion of wrath.” She compares Alc. fr. 70 C.

<sup>74</sup> On -σις nouns see pp. 17, 100.

(423), which Nicole Loraux observes is simultaneously “mourning that cannot be forgotten” and “mourning that does not want to forget.”<sup>75</sup> Eupeithes cannot forget his son, and this power of memory to threaten a new round of τίσις can only be broken by the imposition of amnesia. This is a radical conclusion. The object of Eupeithes’ memory is, in the first place, his son—it is a παιδὸς...πένθος (423). τίσις flows out of this memory, which thus entails the erasure of even the memory that the suitors ever existed.

This conclusion is enacted just as abruptly. Once Zeus and Athena have made their decision, they interject themselves upon the battle already in its first stages. Athena imposes the god’s conclusion, with the help of signs from Zeus. But her settlement is arbitrary. She gives no reason to the suitors’ kin why their claims will be ignored. Her settlement is the first *dea ex machina* conclusion in Greek literature. As a divine power, she imposes an arbitrary decision to decide an ultimately irreconcilable dispute.<sup>76</sup>

---

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 94, 99–100.

<sup>76</sup> On the *deus ex machina* as solution to two mutually exclusive claims, see MacIntyre 1981, 132 (see also p. 26 n. 27 above), who sees in the *Philoctetes* an irresolvable conflict between the ethics of Odysseus’ cunning and Neoptolemus’ faithfulness: “Sophocles uses Odysseus and Neoptolemus to confront us with two incompatible conceptions of honorable conduct to rival standards for behavior. It is crucial to the structure of the tragedy that Sophocles offers us no resolution of this conflict; the action is interrupted, rather than completed by the intervention of the semi-divine Heracles, which rescues the characters from their impasse.... The intervention of a god in Greek tragedy—or at the very least an appeal to a god to intervene—often signals the disclosure of an incoherence in moral standards and vocabulary...” MacIntyre *ibid.*, 143, continues, “In the conflicts of Sophoclean tragedy therefore the attempt at resolution unsurprisingly invokes an appeal to and a verdict by some god. But the divine verdict always ends rather than resolves the conflict.”

Thus the poem ends with this extreme effort to provide closure. This is, in fact, the only *conclusion*, as such, it could have had. For our *Odyssey* has throughout shown that *τίσις* breeds endless further plots, making a *τίσις* epic fatally openended. Even the extreme violence of the general, indiscriminate slaughter of the suitors was not enough. To come to an end, the poem needed to obliterate even the very memory of their existence. The final scene in the poem tries to impose its conclusion on eternity, as Odysseus will “reign as king forever” (*βασιλευέτω αἰεὶ*, 483). Such a conclusion is only possible through divine fiat. The supernatural force of this ending and its radical disjunction with the rest of the plot provide the final and greatest subversion of the narrator’s program. If this is how a narrative of *τίσις* must end, how can the justice of men and gods rest on such a scheme?

## Conclusion

In part three of this project I studied the *Odyssey's* narrator, whom we know only as the textualized voice of the epic. I have shown that this voice represents a subjective, biased character—a partisan of his protagonists' regime of *τίσις*. The narrator aligns himself with the supreme powers of the epic's universe—Zeus, Athena, and even fate. But his favorite subject is Odysseus, whose justice he labors to vindicate by recourse to the narrative of *τίσις*. Yet, from the outset of the poem, the standard of *τίσις*, with its ideology of equivalence between crime and punishment, presents a problem: how can Odysseus be just in repaying with death the suitors and the unfaithful servant-women when their crimes against Odysseus' household amount to merely inappropriate behavior? The narrator's solution is to re-characterize these crimes as accomplished murder and adultery. This also allows this story of revenge (unlike the "Oresteia") to have the happy ending of a poem of *νόστος*, since its avenged hero need not die.

However, though the poem reaches a happy ending, the narrator's program of justifying Odysseus and his allies ultimately fails. For Odysseus' enemies are not, in fact, guilty as charged. The suitors murder no one. Penelope remains uncorrupted. By the very standard that the poem presents as authoritative—the precise proportionality of the *ius talionis*, programmatically exemplified by the "Oresteia"—the punishment of Odysseus' enemies is unjust. The narrator's skill at making Odysseus *seem* just dramatizes the shortcomings of justice based on *τίσις*: it is readily manipulable to the

interests of the agent who controls the language of the narrative, because speakers construct the equivalencies of the *ius talionis* through verbal resemblance and linguistic ambiguity. The poem, therefore, subverts its own overt program, showing Odysseus' justice to be only the product of a narrator. The questions my analysis raises about the operation of *ius talionis* and the manipulability of legal rules are topics for future research, especially as they relate to modern legal theory.<sup>1</sup>

Does the poem then contain a subtext, a covert message for its audience encoded in Odysseus' seemingly untroubled triumph? This kind of ironic, duplicitous poetry was likely valued by a tradition that esteemed deceitfulness and hidden messages. After all, the *Odyssey's* protagonist is praised for his ability to lie and speak secrets encoded in speeches with different surface meanings. For instance, the disguised Odysseus tells Eumaeus how once during the siege of Troy, while lying in wait in an ambush, he became cold (14.461–82). The Odysseus of this story lies to the Achaeans in the ambush party and claims that he learned in a dream that they need to send for reinforcements (491–98). Thoas darts off to take this message back to Agamemnon, but not before he drops his “cloak” (*χλαῖναν*, 500), which the disguised Odysseus says he took for himself to stay warm (499–506). Upon hearing this story, Eumaeus calls it a “blameless tale”

---

<sup>1</sup> For instance, useful comparisons could be drawn between the operation of Homeric justice and H. L. A. Hart's 1961, 124–36, conception of the “open texture” of the law, in which the application of a law incorporates the “creative activity” of judicial actors (204). See also Bix 1991.

(αἴνος...ἀμύμων, 508) and proceeds to give the disguised Odysseus a bedstead by the fire and “a great, thick cloak” (χλαῖναν...πυκνήν καὶ μεγάλην, 520–21). Eumaeus has understood this αἴνος well, this “allusive tale...containing an ulterior purpose.”<sup>2</sup> He grasped the story’s secret meaning beneath its surface—a request for a cloak.<sup>3</sup> Since the poem’s protagonist uses such secretive narratives to reveal hidden truths to his internal audience and is commended and rewarded for it by his allies, might not the poem’s singer be doing much the same? Might he not be adopting a fictive and unreliable narratorial persona (much like Odysseus’ Cretan disguise) in order to convey to his audience a second, secret meaning through his story? Certainly, there are many instances within the *Odyssey* of duplicitous speech that appear to be part of a tradition—reflected in texts such as the Homeric *Hymn to Hermes*—that values this kind of trickery.<sup>4</sup> Further study here would be fruitful.

As I argued in the last chapter, one of the most telling ways that the poem belies the overt claims of its narrator about the value of τίσις is by making the τίσις narratives subtly yet profoundly openended. Endings are always truncations: someone must

---

<sup>2</sup> This is Verdenius’ 1962, 389, definition of the αἴνος. He cites further bibliography. Nagy 1979, 240, expands on this, calling it “a code bearing one message to its intended audience; aside from those exclusive listeners ‘who can understand,’ it is apt to be misunderstood, garbled.” See also Pucci 1977, 76.

<sup>3</sup> On this αἴνος and how it conveys an ulterior meaning, see Thalmann 1984, 172; Emlyn-Jones 1986, 1; Marks 2003, esp. 216, *passim*.

<sup>4</sup> See Thalmann 1984, 172–73; Pucci 1987, 98–109; Pratt 1993, 55–94.



impose an arbitrary limit on the sequence of *τίσις* narratives. When the poem finally closes the narrative of Odysseus' *τίσις*, the gods' arbitration is what provides its final, arbitrary ending, as the claims of the suitors' kin are simply erased through forced amnesia, providing the only conclusion possible—a desperately radical break with the narrative that preceded. Though at the close of our *Odyssey* Ithaca would appear idyllic, a final irony and subversion underlies this conclusion. For in one respect Zeus and Athena are unsuccessful in their attempt to induce a general “forgetting of the slaying of the sons and brothers” (*παίδων τε κασιγνήτων τε φόνοιο ἔκλησιν θέωμεν*, 24.484–85): the event has been immortalized in epic. The mediation of the song allows the poem's audience to escape the spell of forgetting. Thus, Eupheithes' fear is realized: his son's death has become “a disgrace...for future men to hear” (*λῶβη...ἔσσομένοισι πυθέσθαι*, 24.432–33).<sup>5</sup> The suitors' deaths have achieved the greatest memorial of all, and the poem's very existence undermines the claim of its own conclusion.

In the last resort, is the *Odyssey* aporetic? With *τίσις* undermined as the model of justice is an alternative available? The collective amnesia hardly provides a satisfying conclusion. This is worth further study. But, by the poem's own logic, harmony on Ithaca is fleeting.

---

<sup>5</sup> These lines are representative of the several places where the poem calls attention to the afterlife of its own subjects in memory and song: cf. 8.579–80, 21.255, 24.191–202, et al.

## Bibliography

Note: The abbreviations used herein for journals and book series follow the conventions of the *American Journal of Archaeology* and *L'Année philologique*. Some bibliographical information is also contained in the section "Abbreviations."

Adkins, Arthur W. H. 1960a. *Merit and Responsibility: A Study in Greek Values*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

----- 1960b. "'Honour' and 'Punishment' in the Homeric Poems." *BICS* 7: 23–32.

----- 1972a. *Moral Values and Political Behaviour in Ancient Greece: From Homer to the End of the Fifth Century*. New York: Norton.

----- 1972b. "Homeric Gods and the Values of Homeric Society." *JHS* 92: 1–19.

----- 1982. "Values, Goals, and Emotions in the *Iliad*." *CP* 77.4: 292–326.

----- 1987. "Gagarin and the 'Morality' of Homer." *CP* 82.4: 311–22.

Aéliou, Rachel. 1987. "Système actantiel et structure narrative dans deux séries de tragédies grecques." *Lalies* 5: 215–54.

Ahl, Frederick and Hannah M. Roisman. 1996. *The Odyssey Re-Formed*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Alden, Maureen J. 1987. "The Role of Telemachus in the 'Odyssey.'" *Hermes* 115: 129–37.

----- 1997. "The Resonances of the Song of Ares and Aphrodite." *Mnemosyne* 50: 513–29.

Allen, Walter. 1939. "The Theme of the Suitors in the *Odyssey*." *TAPA* 70: 104–24.

Andersen, Øivind. 1987. "Myth, Paradigm and 'Spatial Form' in the *Iliad*." In *Homer, Beyond Oral Poetry: Recent Trends in Homeric Interpretation*, edited by Jan Maarten Bremer, Irene J. F. de Jong, and J. Kalff, 1–13. Amsterdam: B.R. Gruner.

Anderson, Richard C. 1977. "The notion of schemata and the educational enterprise: General discussion of the conference." In *Schooling and the Acquisition of Knowledge*, edited by Richard C. Anderson, Rand J. Spiro, and William E. Montague, 415–31. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

- Arend, Walter. 1933. *Die typischen Szenen bei Homer*. Berlin: Weidmann.
- Armstrong, James I. 1958. "The Arming Motif in the *Iliad*." *AJP* 79: 337–54.
- Auerbach, Erich. 1953. *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*. Translated by Willard R. Trask. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Bakhtin, Mikhail. 1981. *The Dialogic Imagination*. Edited by Michael Holquist. Translated by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- 1984. *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. Edited and translated by Caryl Emerson. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Bakker, Egbert J. 1997a. "Verbal Aspect and Mimetic Description in Thucydides." In *Grammar as Interpretation: Greek Literature in its Linguistic Contexts*, edited by Egbert J. Bakker, 7–54. Leiden: Brill.
- 1997b. "Storytelling in the Future: Truth, Time, and Tense in Homeric Epic." In *Written Voices, Spoken Signs: Tradition, Performance, and the Epic Text*, edited by Egbert J. Bakker and Ahuvia Kahane, 11–36. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Bal, Mieke. 1985. *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*. Translated by Christine van Boheemen. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Ballabriga, Alain. 1989. "La prophétie de Tirésias." *Mètis* 4: 291–304.
- Barker, Elton. 2006. "Paging the Oracle: Interpretation, Identity and Performance in Herodotus' *History*." *GaR* 53: 1–28.
- Barmash, Pamela. 2005. *Homicide in the Biblical World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Barthes, Roland. 1966. "Introduction a l'analyse structurale des recits." *Communications* 8: 1–26.
- 1975. "An Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative." Translated by Lionel Duisit. *New Literary History* 6: 237–72.
- Bateson, Gregory. 1972. *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*. Reprint, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.

- Batstone, William W. 1998. "Dry Pumice and the Programmatic Language of Catullus 1." *CP* 93: 125–35.
- , 2007. "Catullus and the Programmatic Poem: The Origins, Scope, and Utility of a Concept." In *A Companion to Catullus*, edited by Marilyn B. Skinner, 233–53. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Beauvoir, Simone de. 1948. *The Ethics of Ambiguity*. Translated by Bernard Frechtman. Secaucus, NJ: The Citadel Press.
- Beck, Deborah. 2005. *Homeric Conversation*. Washington, D.C.: Center for Hellenic Studies.
- Beekes, R. S. P. 1973. "The Greek i- and u-Stems and πόλις, -ηος." *Glotta* 51: 228–45.
- Belfiore, Elizabeth S. 2000. "Narratological Plots and Aristotle's Mythos." *Arethusa* 33: 37–70.
- Bekker, Immanuel. 1863. *Homerische Blätter*. Vol 1. Bonn: Adolph Marcus.
- Benveniste, Émile. 1969. *Le vocabulaire des institutions indo-européennes*. 2 vols. Paris: Éditions de Minuit.
- Bergren, Ann L. T. 1983. "Odyssean Temporality: Many (Re)Turns." In *Approaches to Homer*, edited by Carl A. Rubino and Cynthia W. Shelmerdine, 38–73. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Bernidaki-Aldous, Eleftheria A. 1990. *Blindness in a Culture of Light: Especially the Case of Oedipus at Colonus of Sophocles*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Bethe, Erich. 1922. *Homer: Dichtung und Sage*. Vol. 2. Leipzig: Teubner.
- Beye, Charles Rowan. 1966. *The Iliad, the Odyssey, and the Epic Tradition*. Garden City, NY: Anchor Books.
- Bierl, Anton. 2008. "Die Abenteuer des Odysseus." In *Homer: der Mythos von Troia in Dichtung und Kunst*, edited by Joachim Latacz et al. München: Hirmer Verlag.
- Bix, Brian. 1991. "H. L. A. Hart and the 'Open Texture' of Language." *Law and Philosophy* 10: 51–72.
- Blaise, Fabienne. 2006. "Poetics and Politics: Tradition Reworked in Solon's 'Eunomia'

- (Poem 4)." In *Solon of Athens: New Historical Approaches*, edited by Josine H. Blok and André P. M. H. Lardinois, 114–33. Leiden: Brill.
- Block, Elizabeth. 1985. "Clothing Makes the Man: A Pattern in the *Odyssey*." *TAPA* 115: 1–11.
- Bonifazi, Anna. 2009. "Inquiring into *Nostos* and Its Cognates." *AJP* 130: 481–510.
- Booth, Wayne C. 1961. *The Rhetoric of Fiction*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- . 1974. *A Rhetoric of Irony*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Bowra, C. M. 1936. *Greek Lyric Poetry: From Alcman to Simonides*. 2<sup>nd</sup> rev. ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961.
- . 1964. *Pindar*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Bradley, Edward M. 1968. "The Hybris of Odysseus." *Soundings* 51: 33–44.
- Brooks, Peter. 1984. *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative*. New York: A.A. Knopf.
- Brown, Christopher G. 1989. "Ares, Aphrodite, and the Laughter of the Gods." *Phoenix* 43: 283–93.
- . 1996. "In the Cyclop's Cave: Revenge and Justice in *Odyssey* 9." *Mnemosyne* 49: 1–29.
- Bühler, Karl. 1990. *Theory of Language: The Representational Function of Language*. Translated by Donald Fraser Goodwin. John Benjamins: Amsterdam.
- Buchan, Mark. 2001. "Food for Thought: Achilles and the Cyclops." In *Eating Their Words: Cannibalism and the Boundaries of Cultural Identity*, edited by Kristen Guest, 11–33. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- . 2004. *The Limits of Heroism: Homer and the Ethics of Reading*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Bundy, Elroy L. 1962. *Studia Pindarica*. Reprint, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986.
- Burgess, Jonathon S. 1995. "Achilles' Heel: The Death of Achilles in Ancient Myth." *ClAnt* 14.2: 217–43.

- 1997. "Beyond Neo-Analysis: Problems with the Vengeance Theory." *AJP* 118: 1–19.
- 2001. *The Tradition of the Trojan War in Homer and the Epic Cycle*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- 2006. "Neoanalysis, Orality, and Intertextuality: An Examination of Homeric Motif Transference." *Oral Tradition* 21: 148–89.
- Burkert, Walter. 1972. *Lore and Science in Ancient Pythagoreanism*. Translated by Edwin L. Minar Jr. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- 1982. "Götterspiel und Götterburleske in altorientalischen und griechischen Mythen." *Eranos* 51: 335–67.
- 1983. *Home Necans: The Anthropology of Ancient Greek Sacrificial Ritual and Myth*. Translated by Peter Bing. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Burnett, Anne. P. 1998. *Revenge in Attic and Later Tragedy*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Calame, Claude. 1977a. "Mythe grec et structures narratives: le mythe des Cyclopes dans l'*Odyssée*." In *Il mito greco*, edited by Bruno Gentili and Giuseppe Paioni, 369–391. Roma: Edizioni dell'Ateneo & Bizzarri.
- 1977b. "L'univers cyclopéen de l'*Odyssée* entre le carré et l'hexagone logiques." *ZivaAnt* 27: 315–28.
- 1983. *Alcman*. Roma: Edizioni dell'Ateneo.
- 1995. *The Craft of Poetic Speech in Ancient Greece*. Translated by Janice Orion. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- 1996. *Mythe et histoire dans l'antiquité grecque: La création symbolique d'une colonie*. Lausanne: Payot.
- Cameron, Alan. 2004. *Greek Mythography in the Roman World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Campbell, David A. 1967. *Greek Lyric Poetry: A Selection of Early Greek Lyric, Elegaic and Iambic Poetry*. Reprint, London: Bristol Classical Press, 1982.

- Carrier, Pierre. 1984. *La royauté en Grèce avant Alexandre*. Strasbourg: AECR.
- Clay, Jenny Strauss. 1983. *Wrath of Athena: God and Men in the Odyssey*. Princeton: Princeton University Press
- . 1994. "The Dais of Death." *TAPA* 124: 35–40.
- . 1996. "The New Simonides and Homer's *Hemitheoi*." *Arethusa* 29: 243–45.
- . 2001. Review of Georg Danek. *Epos und Zitat: Studien zu den Quellen der Odyssee*. *CW* 94: 407–8.
- Cook, Erwin. 1995. *The Odyssey in Athens: Myths of Cultural Origins*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- . 1999. "'Active' and 'Passive' Heroics in the *Odyssey*." *CW* 93: 149–67.
- Crossan, John Dominic. 1975. *The Dark Interval: Towards a Theology of Story*. Rev. ed. Sonoma: Polebridge Press, 1988.
- Crotty, Kevin M. 1994. *The Poetics of Supplication: Homer's Iliad and Odyssey*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Cruse, D. A. 1986. *Lexical Semantics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Danek, Georg. 1991. "Πολύμητις Οδυσσεύς und Tale budalina: Namensformeln bei Homer und im serbokroatischen Epos." *WS* 104: 23–47.
- . 1992. "'Literarische Qualität' bei Homer und im jugoslawischen Heldenlied." *WHB* 34: 16–32.
- . 1996. "Die Apologoi der Odyssee und 'Apologoi' im serbokroatischen Heimkehrerlied." *WS* 109: 5–30.
- . 1998a. *Epos und Zitat: Studien zu den Quellen der Odyssee*. Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften.
- . 1998b. "Darstellung verdeckter Handlung bei Homer und in der südslawischen Heldenlied-Tradition." *WS* 111: 67–88.
- . 2002a. "Odysseus between Scylla and Charybdis." In *La Mythologie et l'Odyssee*, edited by André Hurst and Françoise Létoublon, 15–25. Geneva: Droz.

- 2002b. "Traditional Referentiality and Homeric Intertextuality." In *Omero tremila anni dopo*, edited by France Montanari, 3–19. Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura.
- D'Arms, Edward F. and Karl K. Hulley. 1946. "The Oresteia-Story in the *Odyssey*." *TAPA* 77: 207–14.
- Davies, Malcolm. 1989. *The Epic Cycle*. Reprint, Bristol: Bristol Classical Press, 2001
- Davison, J. A. 1938. "Alcman's Partheneion." *Hermes* 73: 440–58.
- de Jong, Irene J. F. 1987a. *Narrators and Focalizers: The Presentation of the Story in the Iliad*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Bristol: Bristol Classical Press, 2004.
- 1987b. "The Voice of Anonymity: *tis*-Speech in the *Iliad*." *Eranos* 85: 69–84.
- 1991. "Narratology and Oral Poetry: The Case of Homer." *Poetics Today* 12: 405–23.
- 1993. "Between Word and Deed: Hidden Thoughts in the *Odyssey*." In *Modern Critical Theory and Classical Literature*, edited by Irene J. F. de Jong and John Patrick Sullivan, 27–50. Leiden: Brill.
- 2001. *A Narratological Commentary on the Odyssey*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- 2005. "Aristotle on the Homeric Narrator." *CQ* 55: 616–21.
- Diels, H. 1896. "Alkmans Partheneion." *Hermes* 31: 339–74.
- Dimock, George E. 1956. "The Name of Odysseus." *The Hudson Review* 9: 52–70.
- 1989. *The Unity of the Odyssey*. Reprint, Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1990.
- Dodds, E. R. 1951. *The Greeks and the Irrational*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- 1954. "Homer." In *Fifty Years of Classical Scholarship*, edited by Maurice Platnauer, 1–16. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Doherty, Lillian Eileen. 1995. *Siren Songs: Gender, Audiences, and Narrators in the Odyssey*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.



- Donlan, Walter. 1982. "The Politics of Generosity in Homer." *Helios* 9: 1–15.
- , 1993. "Duelling with Gifts in the *Iliad*: As the Audience Saw It." *Colby Quarterly* 29: 155–72.
- Du , Casey and Mary Ebbott. 2009. *Iliad 10 and the Poetics of Ambush: A Multitext Edition with Essays and Commentary*. Washington, DC: Center for Hellenic Studies.
- Dr ger, Paul. 2005. *Apollodor, Bibliothek: G tter- und Heldensagen*. D sseldorf: Artemis & Winkler Verlag.
- Eckerman, Chris. 2009. Review of Ferrari 2008. *CJ Online* 2009.07.05.  
<http://classicaljournal.org/CJ%20Eckerman%20on%20Ferrari.pdf> (accessed March 11, 2010).
- Edwards, Mark W. 1975. "Type-Scenes and Homeric Hospitality." *TAPA* 105: 51–72.
- , 1980. "Convention and Individuality in *Iliad* 1." *HSCP* 84: 1–28.
- , 1992. "Homer and Oral Tradition: The Type-Scene." *Oral Tradition* 7: 284–330.
- Emlyn-Jones, Chris. 1986. "True and lying tales in the *Odyssey*." *GaR* 33: 1–10.
- Erbse, Hartmut. 1972. *Beitr ge zum Verst ndnis der Odyssee*. Berlin: de Gruyter.
- Farenga, Vincent. 2006. *Citizen and Self in Ancient Greece: Individuals Performing Justice and the Law*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Farnell, Lewis Richard. 1921. *Greek Hero-Cults and Ideas of Immortality*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- , 1932. *The Works of Pindar*. Vol. 2. London: MacMillan.
- Felson-Rubin, Nancy. 1994. *Regarding Penelope: From Character to Poetics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- , 1999. "Paradigms of Paternity: Fathers, Sons, and Athletic/Sexual Prowess in Homer's *Odyssey*." In *Euphrosyne: Studies in Ancient Epic and Its Legacy in Honor of Dimitris N. Maronitis*, edited by John N. Kazazis and Antonios Rengakos, 89–98. Stuttgart: Steiner.

- Fenik, Bernard. 1974. *Studies in the Odyssey*. Hermes Einzelschriften 30. Wiesbaden: Steiner.
- Ferrari, Gloria. 2008. *Alcman and the Cosmos of Sparta*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Fick, August. 1883. *Die Homerische Odyssee*. Göttingen: Verlag von Robert Peppmüller.
- Fiensy, David. 1983. "Lex Talionis in the Apocalypse of Peter." *HTR* 76: 255–58.
- Finley, John H. 1978. *Homer's Odyssey*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Finley, Moses I. 1954. *The World of Odysseus*. Reprint of rev. ed. with new pagination, New York: New York Review Books, 2002.
- Fish, Stanley. 1967. *Surprised by Sin: The Reader in Paradise Lost*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Focke, Friedrich. 1943. *Die Odyssee*. Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer.
- Foley, John Miles. 1990. *Traditional Oral Epic: The Odyssey, Beowulf, and the Serbo-Croatian Return Song*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- . 1991. *Immanent Art: From Structure to Meaning in Traditional Oral Epic*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- . 1999. *Homer's Traditional Art*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press.
- . 2002. *How to Read an Oral Poem*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002
- Fränkel, Hermann. 1962. *Dichtung und Philosophie des frühen Griechentums: Eine Geschichte der griechischen Epik, Lyrik und Prosa bis zur Mitte des 5. Jahrhunderts*. München: C. H. Beck.
- . 1975. *Early Greek Poetry and Philosophy*. Translated by Moses Hadas and James Willis. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Frame, Douglas. 1978. *The Myth of Return in Early Greek Epic*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Fraenkel, Eduard. 1950. *Aeschylus: Agamemnon*. 3 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

- Friedrich, Rainer. 1987a. "Heroic Man and *Polymetis*: Odysseus in the *Cyclopeia*." *GRBS* 28: 121–33.
- . 1987b. "Thrinakia and Zeus' Ways to Men in the *Odyssey*." *GRBS* 28: 375–400.
- Fulkerson, Laurel. 2002. "Epic Ways of Killing a Woman: Gender and Transgression in *Odyssey* 22.465–72." *CJ* 97: 335–50.
- G., E. E. and Frank B. Jevons. 1903. *The Makers of Hellas: A Critical Inquiry Into the Philosophy and Religion of Ancient Greece*. London: C. Griffin and Co.
- Gagarin, Michael. 1986. *Early Greek Law*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- . 1992. "The Poetry of Justice: Hesiod and the Origins of Greek Law." *Ramus* 21: 61–78.
- . 2008. *Writing Greek Law*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gantz, Timothy. 1993. *Early Greek Myth: A Guide to Literary and Artistic Sources*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Genette, Gérard. 1966–1999. *Figures: Essais*. 4 vols. Paris: Seuil.
- . 1980. *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*. Ithaca : Cornell University Press.
- Gill, Christopher. 1996. *Personality in Greek Epic, Tragedy, and Philosophy: The Self in Dialogue*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Goffman, Erving. 1974. *Frame Analysis*. Reprint, Northeastern University Press: Boston, MA, 1986.
- Goldhill, Simon. 1988. "Reading Differences: The *Odyssey* and Juxtaposition." *Ramus* 17: 1–31.
- . 2002. *The Invention of Prose*. *Greece & Rome New Surveys in the Classics* 32. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gould, John. 1973. "HIKETEIA." *JHS* 93: 74–103.
- Grau, Phyllis. 1973–1974. "The curse of the Cyclops." *CB* 50: 31–32.
- Greene, William Chase. 1944. *Moirai*. New York: Harper & Row.

- Greimas, Algirdas Julien. 1966. *Sémantique structurale*. Paris: Seuil.
- 1970–1983. *Du sens: Essais sémiotiques*. 2 vols. Paris: Seuil.
- 1973. "Les actants, les acteurs, et les figures." In *Sémiotique narrative et textuelle*, edited by Claude Chabrol and Jean-Claude Coquet, 161–76. Paris: Larousse.
- 1987. *On Meaning: Selected Writings in Semiotic Theory*. Translated by Paul J. Perron and Frank H. Collins. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Griffin, Jasper. 1980. *Homer on Life and Death*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- 1986. "Homeric Words and Speakers." *JHS* 106: 36–57.
- Grimm, Wilhem. 1857. *Die Sage von Polyphem*. Berlin: Abhandlung der Königl. Akademie der Wissenschaften.
- Guthrie, W. K. C. 1962. *The Earlier Presocratics and the Pythagoreans*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hackman, Oskar. 1904. *Die Polyphemsage in der Volksüberlieferung*. Helsingfors: Frenckellska tryckeri-aktiebolaget.
- Halliday, M. A. K. and Ruqaiya Hasan. 1976. *Cohesion in English*. London: Longman.
- Halverson, John. 1985. "Social Order in the *Odyssey*." *Hermes* 113: 129–45.
- Hammer, Dean. 1998. "The Cultural Construction of Chance in the *Iliad*." *Arethusa* 31: 125–48.
- 2002a. "The *Iliad* as Ethical Thinking: Politics, Pity, and the Operation of Esteem." *Arethusa* 35: 203–35.
- 2002b. *The Iliad as Politics: The Performance of Political Thought*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Hart, H. L. A. 1961. *The Concept of Law*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- Hartmann, Albert. 1917. *Untersuchungen über die Sagen vom Tod des Odysseus*. Munich: Beck.

- Hartog, François. 1999. "Myth in *Logos*': The Case of Croesus, or the Historian at Work." In *From Myth to Reason? Studies in the Development of Greek Thought*, edited by Richard Buxton, 183–95. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Havelock, Eric. 1978. *The Greek Concept of Justice: From Its Shadow in Homer to Its Substance in Plato*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Hawkes, Terrence. 1977. *Structuralism and Semiotics*. Rev. ed. London: Routledge, 2003.
- Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. 1896. *Hegel's Philosophy of Right*. Translated by Samuel Walters Dyde. London: George Bell and Sons.
- Heubeck, Alfred. 1954. *Der Odyssee-Dichter und die Ilias*. Erlangen: Palm & Enke.
- . 1974. *Die homerische Frage*. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft.
- Hitch, Sarah. 2009. *King of Sacrifice: Ritual and Royal Authority in the Iliad*. Washington, D.C.: Center for Hellenic Studies.
- Hölscher, Uvo. 1967. "Die Atridensage in der Odyssee." In *Festschrift für Richard Alewyn*, edited by Herbert Singer, Benno von Wiese, and Richard Alewyn, 1–16. Köln: Böhlau.
- . 1978. "The Transformation from Folktale to Epic." In *Homer: Tradition and Invention*, edited by Bernard Fenik, 51–67. Leiden: Brill.
- . 1989. *Die Odyssee: Epos zwischen Märchen und Roman*. Munich: Beck.
- Holoka, James P. 1983. "'Looking Darkly' (ΥΠΙΟΔΡΑ ΙΔΩΝ): Reflections on Status and Decorum in Homer." *TAPA* 113: 1–16.
- Hommel, Hildebrecht. 1955. "Aigisthos und die Freier." *StudGen* 8: 237–45.
- Hopper, Paul J. and Elizabeth Closs Traugott. 2003. *Grammaticalization*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hunter, Richard Lawrence. 1999. *Theocritus: A Selection*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hutchinson, G. O. 2001. *Greek Lyric Poetry: A Commentary on Selected Larger Pieces*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Jakobson, Roman. 1960. "Closing Statement: Linguistics and Poetics." In *Style in Language*, edited by Thomas A. Sebeok, 350–77. Cambridge, MA: M.I.T. Press.
- . 1971. *Studies on Child Language and Aphasia*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
- Jaeger, Werner. 1926. "Solons Eunomia." *SPAW* 11: 69–85.
- . 1939. *Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture*. Vol. 1. Translated by Gilbert Highet. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1945.
- . 1960. *Scripta minora*. Vol. 1. Roma: Edizioni di storia e letteratura.
- . 1966. *Five Essays*. Translated by Adele M. Fiske. Montreal: M. Casalini.
- Jørgensen, Ove. 1904. "Das Auftreten der Goetter in den Buechern ι-μ der Odyssee." *Hermes* 39: 357–82.
- Jolles, André. 1930. *Einfache Formen: Legende, Sage, Mythe, Rätsel, Spruch, Kasus, Memorabile, Märchen, Witz*. Halle: Niemeyer.
- Jones, Howard. 1973. "Homeric Nouns in –sis," *Glotta* 51: 7–29.
- Jones, F. W. 1941. "The Formulation of the Revenge Motif in the *Odyssey*." *TAPA* 72: 195–202.
- Jones, P. V. 1997. "Introduction." In *Homer: German Scholarship in Translation*, translated by G. M. Wright and P. V. Jones, 1–46. Oxford: Clarendon.
- Jordan, Robert M. 1987. *Chaucer's Poetics and the Modern Reader*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Kahane, Ahuvia. 1992. "The First Word of the *Odyssey*." *TAPA* 122: 115–29.
- . 1994. *The Interpretation of Order: A Study in the Poetics of Homeric Repetition*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- . 2005. "Epic, Novel, Genre: Bakhtin and the Question of History." *Ancient Narrative Suppl.* 3: 51–73.
- Kant, Immanuel. 1887. *The Philosophy of Law*. Translated by W. Hastie. Edinburgh: T & T Clarke.

- 1956. *Critique of Practical Reason*. Translated by Lewis White Beck. New York: Bobbs-Merril.
- 1998. *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Rechtslehre*. Edited by Bernd Ludwig. Philosophische Bibliothek 360. Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag.
- Katz, Marilyn A. 1991. *Penelope's Renown: Meaning and Indeterminacy in the Odyssey*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Kerrigan, John. 2001. *Revenge Tragedy: Aeschylus to Armageddon*. Oxford: Clarendon.
- Keyishian, Harry. 1995. *The Shapes of Revenge: Victimization, Vengeance, and Vindictiveness in Shakespeare*. Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press.
- Kindt, Julia. 2006. "Delphic Oracle Stories and the Beginning of Historiography: Herodotus' *Croesus Logos*." *CP* 101: 34–51.
- Kirchhoff, Adolf. 1846. *Quaestionum Homericarum Particula*. Berlin: Typis Petschianis.
- 1879. *Die homerische Odyssee*. Berlin: Hertz.
- Kirk, Geoffrey S. 1960. "Objective Dating Criteria in Homer." *MusHelv* 17: 189–205.
- 1962. *The Songs of Homer*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- 1970. *Myth: Its Meaning and Functions in Ancient and Other Cultures*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Koff, Leonard Michael. 1988. *Chaucer and the Art of Storytelling*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Klingner, Friedrich. 1944. *Über die ersten vier Bücher der Odyssee*. Leipzig: Hirzel.
- Kullmann, Wolfgang. 1960. *Die Quellen der Ilias*. Wiesbaden: F. Steiner.
- 1984. "Oral Poetry Theory and Neoanalysis in Homeric Research." *GRBS* 25: 307–23.
- 1985. "Gods and Men in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*." *HSCP* 89: 1–23.
- 1991. "Ergebnisse der motivgeschichtlichen Forschung zu Homer (Neoanalyse)." In

- Zweihundert Jahre Homer-Forschung: Rückblick und Ausblick*, edited by Joachim Latacz, 425–55. Stuttgart: Teubner.
- Kurke, Leslie. 2009. "'Counterfeit Oracles' and 'Legal Tender': The Politics of Oracular Consultation in Herodotus." *CW* 102: 417–38.
- Lakoff, George and Mark Johnson. 1980. *Metaphors We Live By*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003.
- Lardinois, André. 1995. "Wisdom in Context: The Use of Gnomonic Statements in archaic Greek Poetry." PhD diss., Princeton University.
- . 1997. "Modern Paroemiology and the Use of Gnomai in Homer's *Iliad*." *CP* 92: 213–34.
- Latacz, Joachim. 1996. *Homer: His Art and His World*. Translated by James P. Holoka. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.
- Lesky, Albin. 1961. *Göttliche und menschliche Motivation im homerischen Epos*. Heidelberg: C. Winter.
- Levaniouk, Olga A. 2000. "Odyssean Usages of Local Traditions." PhD diss., Harvard University.
- Levine, Daniel B. 1987. "*Flens Matriona et Meretrices Gaudentes*: Penelope and Her Maids." *CW* 81: 23–27.
- Lloyd-Jones, Hugh. 1971. *The Justice of Zeus*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983.
- Long, A. A. 1968. *Language and Thought in Sophocles*. London: Athlone Press.
- . 1970. "Morals and Values in Homer." *JHS* 90: 121–39.
- Loroux, Nicole. 1998. *Mothers in Mourning*. Translated by Corrine Pache. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Lord, Albert B. 1960. *The Singer of Tales*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000.
- . 1995. *The Singer Resumes the Tale*. Edited by Mary Louise Lord. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.



- Louden, Bruce. 1995. "Categories of Homeric Wordplay." *TAPA* 125: 27–46.
- MacIntyre, Alasdair. 1981. *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984.
- Macleod, Colin W. 1983. "Homer on Poetry and the Poetry of Homer." In *Collected Essays*, edited by Oliver Taplin, 1–15. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Maehler, Herwig. 1963. *Die Auffassung des Dichterberufs im frühen Griechentum bis zur Zeit Pindars*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- Mair, Christian. 1997. "The spread of the going-to future in written English: a corpus-based investigation into language change in progress." In *Language History and Linguistic Modeling*, edited by Hans Lindquist and Christian Mair, 1537–44. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Malkin, Irad. 1998. *The Returns of Odysseus: Colonization and Ethnicity*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- 2003. *Myth and Territory in the Spartan Mediterranean*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Malta, André. 2009. Review of Marks 2008. *BMCR* 2009.5.36.  
<http://bmcr.brynmawr.edu/2009/2009-05-36.html> (accessed January 12, 2010).
- Marks, Jim. 2003. "Alternative Odysseys: The Case of Thoas and Odysseus." *TAPA* 113: 209–26.
- 2005. "The ongoing neikos: Thersites, Odysseus and Achilleus." *AJP* 126: 1–31.
- 2008. *Zeus in the Odyssey*. Washington, D.C.: Center for Hellenic Studies.
- Maronitis, D. N. 1973. *Αναζήτηση και νόστος του Όδυσσέα*. Athens: Ekdoseis Papazisi.
- 2004. *Homeric Megathemes: War–Homilia–Homecoming*. Translated by David Connolly. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.
- Martin, Richard. P. 1989. *The Language of Heroes: Speech and Performance in the Iliad*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- McHardy, Fiona. 2008. *Revenge in Athenian Culture*. London: Duckworth.

- Merkelbach, Reinhold. 1951. *Untersuchungen zur Odyssee*. München: C. H. Beck.
- Miller, William Ian. 2006. *Eye for an Eye*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Minchin, Elizabeth. 1992. "Scripts and Themes: Cognitive Research and the Homeric Epic." *ClAnt* 11: 229–41
- . 2001. *Homer and the Resources of Memory: Some Applications of Cognitive Theory to the Iliad and the Odyssey*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Morris, Ian. 2001. "The Use and Abuse of Homer." In *Oxford Readings in Homer's Iliad*, edited by Douglas Cairns, 57–91. Rev. ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Morrison, James V. 1997. "Kerostasia, The Dictates of Fate, and the Will of Zeus in the *Iliad*." *Arethusa* 30: 273–96.
- Muellner, Loenard. 1976. *The Meaning of Homeric εὔχομαι Through its Formulas*. Innsbruck: Beitrage zur Sprachwissenschaft.
- . 1996. *The Anger of Achilles: Mênis in Greek Epic*. Ithaca. Cornell University Press.
- . 2007. "Discovery Procedures and Principles for Homeric Research." In *The Homerizon: Conceptual Interrogations in Homeric Studies, Classics@ 3*. [http://chs.harvard.edu/chs/files/classics\\_issue3\\_muellner.pdf](http://chs.harvard.edu/chs/files/classics_issue3_muellner.pdf) (accessed December 11, 2008).
- Murphy, Jeffrie. 2003. *Getting Even: Forgiveness and Its Limits*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Murnaghan, Sheila. 1987. *Disguise and Recognition in the Odyssey*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- . 2002. "The Trials of Telemachus: Who Was the *Odyssey* Meant For?" *Arethusa* 35: 133–53
- Nagler, Michael. N. 1967. "Towards a Generative View of the Oral Formula." *TAPA* 98: 269–311.
- . 1974. *Spontaneity and Tradition*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Nagy, Gregory. 1979. *The Best of the Achaeans: Concepts of the Hero in Archaic Greek Poetry*.

- Rev. ed. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998.
- 1990. *Pindar's Homer*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- 1996a. *Poetry as Performance: Homer and Beyond*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- 1996b. *Homeric Questions*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- 1997. "Homeric Scholia." In *A New Companion to Homer*, edited by Ian Morris and Barry Powell, 101–22. Leiden: Brill.
- 2003. *Homeric Responses*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- 2005. "The Epic Hero." In *A Companion to Ancient Epic*, edited by John Miles Foley, 71–89. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Newton, Rick M. 1987. "Odysseus and Hephaestus in the *Odyssey*." *CJ* 83: 12–20.
- Niese, Benedikt. 1882. *Die Entwicklung der homerischen Poesie*. Berlin: Weidmann.
- Nitzsch, Gregor W. 1852. *Die Sagenpoesie der Griechen*. Braunschweig: C.A. Schwetschke & Sohn.
- Noussia, Maria. 2006. "Strategies of Persuasion in Solon's Elegies." In *Solon of Athens: New Historical Approaches*, edited by Josine H. Blok and André P. M. H. Lardinois, 134–56. Leiden: Brill.
- Nussbaum, Martha C. 1999. *Sex and Social Justice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Oliver, Lisi. 2006. "Lex Talionis in Barbarian Law." *JIES Monograph Series* 52: 197–218.
- Olson, S. Douglas. 1989. "Odyssey 8: Guile, Force and the Subversive Poetics of Desire." *Arethusa* 22: 135–45.
- 1990. "The Stories of Agamemnon in Homer's *Odyssey*." *TAPA* 120: 57–71.
- 1995. *Blood and Iron: Stories and Storytelling in Homer's Odyssey*. Leiden: Brill.
- Page, Denys Lionel. 1951. *Alcman: The Partheneion*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- 1955. *The Homeric Odyssey*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. Reprint, Westport, CT:

- Greenwood Press, 1976.
- Parry, Milman. 1971. *The Making of Homeric Verse: The Collected Papers of Milman Parry*. Edited by Adam Perry. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Patzer, Harald. 1972. *Dichterische Kunst und poetisches Handwerk im homerischen Epos*. Wiesbaden: Steiner.
- , 1991. "Die Reise des Telemach." *ICS* 16: 17–35.
- Payne, John and Rodney Huddleston. 2002. "Nouns and Noun Phrases." In *The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language*, edited by Rodney Huddleston and Geoffrey K. Pullum, 323–544. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Pelling, Christopher. 2006. "Educating Croesus: Talking and Learning in Herodotus' Lydian Logos." *ClAnt* 25: 147–77.
- Peradotto, John. 1990. *Man in the Middle Voice*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- , 1993. "The Social Control of Sexuality: Odyssean Dialogics." *Arethusa* 26: 173–82.
- , 2002. "Bakhtin, Milman Parry, and the Problem of Homeric Originality." In *Bakhtin and the Classics*, edited by R. Bracht Branham, 59–70. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.
- Pestalozzi, Heinrich. 1945. *Die Achilleis als Quelle der Ilias*. Erlangen: Rentsch.
- Pfeiffer, Rudolf. 1928. "Griechisch-Lateinische Literatur." *DLZ* 48: 2355–72.
- , 1960. *Ausgewählte Schriften Aufsätze und Vorträge zur griechischen Dichtung und zum Humanismus*. Edited by Winfried Bühler. München: Beck.
- Podlecki, A. J. 1961. "Guest-Gifts and Nobodies in *Odyssey* 9." *Phoenix* 15: 125–33.
- , 1967. "Omens in the *Odyssey*." *GaR* 14: 12–23.
- , 2009. Review of Ferrari 2008. *BMCR* 2009.10.59.  
<http://bmc.brynmawr.edu/2009/2009-10-59.html> (accessed March 11, 2010).
- Pollitt, J. J. 1974. *The Ancient View of Greek Art: Criticism, History, and Terminology*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

- Powell, Barry B. 1970. "Narrative Pattern in the Homeric Tale of Menelaus." *TAPA* 101: 419–31.
- , 1991. *Homer and the Origin of the Greek Alphabet*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Prag, A. J. N. W. 1985. *The Oresteia: Iconographic and Narrative Tradition*. Chicago: Bolchazy-Carducci.
- Pratt, Louise H. 1993. *Lying and Poetry from Homer to Pindar: Falsehood and Deception in Archaic Greek Poetics*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Propp, Vladimir. 1958. *The Morphology of the Folktale*. Translated by Lauerence Scott. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Research Center in Anthropology, Folklore and Linguistics.
- Pucci, Pietro. 1977. *Hesiod and the Language of Poetry*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- , 1987. *Odysseus Polutropos: Intertextual Readings in the Odyssey and the Iliad*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- , 1998. *The Song of the Sirens: Essays on Homer*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Redfield, James M. 1975. *Nature and Culture in the Iliad: The Tragedy of Hector*. Expanded ed., Durham: Duke University Press, 1994.
- Reece, Steve. 1993. *The Stranger's Welcome: Oral Theory and the Aesthetics of the Homeric Hospitality Scene*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- , 1994. "The Cretan *Odyssey*: A Lie Truer Than Truth." *AJP* 115: 157–73.
- Reinhardt, Karl. 1960. *Tradition und Geist*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- Richards, I. A. 1936. *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ricoeur, Paul. 1984–1985. *Time and Narrative*. 3 vols. Translated by Kathleen Blamey, David Pellauer, and Kathleen McLaughlin. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002.
- Rinon, Yoav. 2008. *Homer and the Dual Model of the Tragic*. Ann Arbor: University of

Michigan Press.

- Roisman, Hanna M. 1994. "Like father like son: Telemachus' κέρδεα." *RhM* 137: 1–22.
- Rood, Naomi. 2006. "Implied Vengeance in the Simile of Grieving Vultures (*Odyssey* 16.216–19)." *CQ* 56: 1–11.
- Rose, Gilbert P. 1967. "The Quest of Telemachus." *TAPA* 98: 391–98.
- Rose, Peter W. 1992. *Son of the Gods, Children of Earth*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Roth, Catharine P. 1976. "The Kings and the Muses in Hesiod's *Theogony*." *TAPA* 106: 331–38.
- Rothe, Carl. 1914. *Die Odyssee als Dichtung*. Paderborn: F. Schöningh.
- Rowe, Christopher and Sarah Broadie. 2002. *Aristotle: Nicomachean Ethics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Rüter, Klaus. 1969. *Odysseeinterpretationen: Untersuchungen zum ersten Buch und zur Phaiakis*. Hypomnemata 19. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- Russo, Joseph. 1968. "Homer against his Tradition." *Arion* 7: 275–95.
- 1994. "Homer's Style: Nonformulaic Features of an Oral Aesthetic." *Oral Tradition* 9: 371–89.
- 1997. "A Jungian Analysis of Homer's Odysseus." In *The Cambridge Companion to Jung*, edited by Polly Young-Eisendrath and Terence Dawson, 253–68. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008
- Saïd, Suzanne. 1979. "Les crimes des prétendants, la maison d'Ulysse et les festins de l'Odysée." *Études de littérature ancienne* 1: 9–49.
- Saunders, Trevor J. 1994. *Plato's Penal Code: Tradition, Controversy, and Reform in Greek Penology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Saussure, Ferdinand de. 1972. *Course in General Linguistics*. Translated by Roy Harris. Open Court: Chicago.
- Schadewaldt, Wolfgang. 1958. "Der Prolog der *Odyssee*." *HSCP* 63: 15–32.

- 1959. *Von Homers Welt und Werk: Aufsätze und Auslegungen zur Homerischen Frage*. Stuttgart: K.F. Koehler.
- 1960. "Der Helios-Zorn in der Odyssee." In *Studi in onore di L. Castiglioni*, edited by A. Rostagni, et al., 859–876. Firenze: Sansoni.
- Schank, Roger and Robert Abelson. 1977. *Scripts, Plans, Goals and Understanding: An Inquiry into Human Knowledge Structures*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Schein, Seth L. 1970. "Odysseus and Polyphemus in the *Odyssey*." *GRBS* 11: 73–83.
- Schiller, Friedrich. 1999. "Über naïve und sentimentalische Dichtung." In *Homer: Critical Assessments*, Vol. 4, edited by Irene J. F. de Jong, 3–5. Routledge: London.
- Schulze, Wilhelm. 1892. *Quaestiones Epicae*. Gueterslohiae: C. Bertelsmanni.
- Scodel, Ruth. 2002. *Listening to Homer: Narrative Tradition and Audience*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Scott, John A. 1921. *The Unity of Homer*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Seaford, Richard. 1994. *Reciprocity and Ritual: Homer and Tragedy in the Developing City-State*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Segal, Charles. 1994. *Singers, Heroes, and Gods in the Odyssey*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Sewell-Rutter, N. J. 2007. *Guilt by Descent: Moral Inheritance and Decision Making in Greek Tragedy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Shelley, Percy Bysshe. 1845. *Letters, Essays from Abroad*. London: Edward Moxon.
- Slatkin, Laura M. 1996. "Composition by Theme and the *Mētis* of the *Odyssey*." In *Reading the Odyssey*, edited by Seth L. Schein, 223–37. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Stanford, W. B. 1952. "The Homeric Etymology of the Name Odysseus." *CP* 47: 209–13.
- 1954. *The Ulysses Theme*. Rev. ed. Oxford: B. Blackwell, 1963.
- Steiner, Deborah T. 1995. "Stoning and Sight: A Structural Equivalence in Greek Mythology." *ClAnt* 14: 193–211.

- Stockinger, Hildebrand. 1959. *Die Vorzeichen im homerischen Epos: Ihre Typik und ihre Bedeutung*. St. Ottilien, Oberbayern: EOS Verlag.
- Suerbaum, Werner. 1968. "Die Ich-Erzählungen des Odysseus." *Poetica* 2:150–77.
- Taylor, A. E. 1926. *Plato: The Man and His Work*. Reprint of 4<sup>th</sup> ed., Mineola, NY: Dover, 2001.
- Taylor, Charles. 1989. *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Thalmann, William G. 1984. *Conventions of Form and Thought in Early Greek Epic Poetry*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Thornton, Agathe. 1970. *People and Themes in Homer's Odyssey*. Dunedin: University of Otago Press.
- Triebel, Axel and Irmgard Lücking. 1998. "Laius and/or Odysseus—Divergent Patterns of Intergenerational Conflicts." *International Forum of Psychoanalysis* 7: 19–23.
- Tsagalis, Christos. 2008. *The Oral Palimpsest: Exploring Intertextuality in the Homeric Epics*. Washington, DC: Center for Hellenic Studies.
- Usher, M. D. 2009. "Diogenes' Doggerel: *Chreia* and Quotation in Cynic Performance." *CJ* 104: 207–23.
- Verdenius, W. J. 1962. "ΑΙΝΟΣ." *Mnemosyne* 15: 389.
- Vernant, Jean-Pierre. 1979. "Manger aux pays du Soleil." In *La cuisine du sacrifice en pays grec*, edited by Marcel Detienne and Jean-Pierre Vernant, 239–49. Paris: Gallimard.
- , 1991. *Mortals and Immortals: Collected Essays*. Translated and edited by Froma I. Zeitlin, et al. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Vickers, Brian. 1973. *Towards Greek Tragedy: Drama, Myth, Society*. London: Longman.
- Vidal-Naquet, Pierre. 1970. "Valeurs religieuses et mythiques de la terre et du sacrifice dans l'Odyssee." *AnnÉconSocCiv* 25: 1278–97.
- Von der Mühl, Peter. 1940. "Odyssee." In *Realencyclopädie der Classischen*



- Altertumswissenschaft*, Suppl. 7, 696–768. Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler.
- Wackernagel, Jacob. 1916. *Sprachliche Untersuchungen zu Homer*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- Wagner-Hasel, Beate. 2006. "Gift Exchange: Modern Theories and Ancient Attitudes." In *Ancient Greece: From the Mycenaean Palaces to the Age of Homer*, edited by Irene S. Lemos, 257–70. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Waldron, Jeremy. 1992. "Lex Talionis." *Arizona Law Review* 34: 25–51.
- Walker, Richard Johnson. 1921. *Sophoclean Fragments*. London: Burns, Oates & Washbourne Ltd.
- Walsh, Thomas R. 1995. "Odyssey 1.6–9: A Little More than Kine." *Mnemosyne* 48: 385–410.
- Watkins, Calvert. 1995. *How to Kill a Dragon: Aspects of Indo-European Poetics*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Webster, T. B. L. 1958. *From Mycenae to Homer*. London: Methuen. Reprint, New York: Norton, 1964.
- Weil, Simone. 1953. *La source grecque*. Paris: Gallimard.
- Wender, Dorothea. 1978. *The Last Scenes of the Odyssey*. Leiden: Brill.
- West, M. L. 1982. *Greek Metre*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- West, Stephanie, 1989. "Laertes Revisted." *PCPS* 35: 113–43.
- Whitman, Cedric. 1958. *Homer and the Heroic Tradition*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, Ulrich. 1884. *Homerische Untersuchungen*. Berlin: Weidmann.
- . 1916. *Die Ilias und Homer*. Berlin: Weidmann.
- . 1927. *Die Heimkehr des Odysseus*. Berlin: Weidmann.
- Willcock, M. M. 1982. "Second Reading of Pindar: *The Fourth Nemean*." *GaR* 29: 1–10.

- Wilson, Donna F. 2002. *Ransom, Revenge, and Heroic Identity in the Iliad*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wilson, Joe. 2007. "Homer and the Will of Zeus." *College Literature* 34: 150–73.
- Wittgenstein, Ludwig. 1953. *Philosophical Investigations*. Translated by G. E. M. Anscombe. 3rd ed. Oxford: Blackwell, 2001.
- Wöhrle, Georg. 1999. *Telemachs Reise*. Göttingen: Vanderhoeck & Ruprecht.
- Wolf, Friedrich A. 1795. *Prolegomena ad Homerum*. Halle: Libraria Orphanotropei. Translated with introduction and notes by Anthony Grafton, Glenn W. Most, and James E. G. Zetzel as *Prolegomena to Homer* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985).
- Wright, N. T. 1992. *The New Testament and the People of God*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.
- Wyatt, William F. 1989. "The Intermezzo of *Odyssey* 11 and the Poets Homer and Odysseus." *SMEA* 27: 235–53.
- Yamagata, Naoko. 1989. "The Apostrophe in Homer as Part of the Oral Technique." *BICS* 36: 91–103.
- . 1994. *Homeric Morality*. Leiden: Brill.
- . 2005. "Clothing and Identity in Homer: The Case of Penelope's Web." *Mnemosyne* 58: 539–46.
- Zeitlin, Froma I. 1965. "The Motif of the Corrupted Sacrifice in Aeschylus' *Oresteia*." *TAPA* 96: 463–508.
- . 1996. *Playing the Other: Gender and Society in Classical Greek Literature*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Zerba, Michelle. 2009. "Odyssean Charisma and the Uses of Persuasion." *AJP* 130: 313–39.

## Biography

Alexander Carl Loney was born on March 7<sup>th</sup>, 1981 in Ann Arbor, Michigan. He attended the University of Michigan and received a Bachelor of Arts in Classical Language and Literature with Highest Honors on April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2004. He matriculated at Duke University in Durham, North Carolina in 2004. In 2007 he published the article, "Narrative Structure and Verbal Aspect Choice in *Luke*," in *Filología Neotestamentaria* 18 (2005), 3–31. In 2009 he published the article, "Victims of the Gods' Vengeance," in *First Drafts@Classics@*.

While at Duke, he has held a Graduate Fellowship in Classical Studies. He spent the summer of 2005 at the Center for Hellenic Studies in Washington, D. C. on a Graduate Fellowship. He also received three Conference Travel Fellowships to attend the annual meetings of CAMWS (2008), CAMWS-Southern Section (2008), and the APA (2010), at each of which he gave papers. From 2007–2008 he was a Preparing Future Faculty Fellow. He received a Lawler Scholarship to attend the American School of Classical Studies at Athens, Greece for the summer of 2008. During 2008–2009 he was the Kenan Graduate Instructor in Ethics, in which capacity he designed and conducted the course, "The Poetics and Ethics of Revenge," and participated in the Kenan Graduate Colloquium. For the summer of 2009 he held a Summer Research Fellowship. From 2009–2010 he was the Dissertation Working Group in the Franklin Humanities Institute.