

Why Odysseus Strings His Bow

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PREVIOUS SCHOLARSHIP has shown that the significance of the archery contest in *Odyssey* 21 extends beyond Odysseus' winning back his wife, Penelope. Stephanie Jamison, for one, uses Indic parallels to demonstrate that the ritualistic handling of the bow by various parties during the contest reinvests Odysseus with his kingly power.¹ In this article, I focus on the precise moment in which Odysseus strings his bow and consider the additional benefits that accrue to Odysseus when he does so. I first suggest that he thereby brings back into a working state an item that helps ensure his participation in two economies that sustain his household. One economy is embedded in his relationships of *xenia*, and the other is related to his position as paramount *basileus*. Second, I argue that the simile likening Odysseus when he strings his bow to a singer repairing his lyre (21.405–409) confirms this reading.

The Bow

After Penelope decides to marry the suitor who can string Odysseus' bow and shoot an arrow through twelve axes, the

¹ S. W. Jamison, "Penelope and the Pigs: Indic Perspectives on the *Odyssey*," *ClAnt* 18 (1999) 227–272, at 258–264. Cf. J. Russo, "Odysseus' Trial of the Bow as Symbolic Performance," in A. Bierl et al. (eds.), *Antike Literatur in neuer Deutung* (Leipzig 2004) 95–101. A lengthy examination of the archery contest from a different perspective is offered by W. G. Thalmann, *The Swineherd and the Bow: Representations of Class in the "Odyssey"* (Ithaca 1998) ch. 4, who demonstrates how the contest lays bare the competition and rivalry between men that is at the heart of the honor-based society portrayed in the Homeric poems.

narrator digresses to provide a detailed history of the weapon (*Od.* 21.15–41). Odysseus received it in a gift exchange with Iphitos, a transaction that marked “the beginning of a relationship of close friendship” (ξεινοσύνης προσκηδέος, 35).² The bow is a prized possession, having once belonged to Eurytos (32–33), a renowned archer who even fatefully challenged Apollo to a contest (8.223–238). Odysseus did not use the bow in war (21.38–40). Instead, he left it in his palace as a “token of the memory of/mechanism for remembering his dear friend” (μνήμα ξείνοιο φίλοιο, 40), and he “used to carry it in his own land” (φόρει δέ μιν ἦς ἐπὶ γαίης, 41).³

I draw attention to that final statement with which the narrator ends the digression: Odysseus “used to carry it [the bow] in his own land [i.e., Ithaka].”⁴ How one dresses, accessorizes, and generally comports oneself are all necessarily types of performance and forceful assertions of identity,⁵ but verse 41 provides a dictional cue to that effect. This line suggests that Odysseus wishes his bow to be seen because the verb *phorein* points toward a conspicuous display. In a simile, the *Iliad*’s narrator says of a cheek piece for a horse, “many horsemen wish to carry (*φορέειν*) it but it is stored as a treasure for a king to be both an adornment for the horse and a source of glory for the driver” (4.143–145). The career of the scepter is even more

² Quotations from the Homeric poems come from H. van Thiel, *Homeri Odyssea* (Hildesheim 1991) and *Homeri Ilias* (Hildesheim 1996). Translations are my own unless otherwise specified.

³ Astute discussions of this digression can be found in J. S. Clay, *The Wrath of Athena: Gods and Men in the Odyssey* (Princeton 1983) 89–96, and Thalmann, *The Swineherd* 174–180.

⁴ Ithaka is the referent of ἦς ... γαίης: cf. e.g. ἦν γαίαν at *Od.* 1.21.

⁵ See e.g. W. R. Connor, “The Ionian Era of Athenian Civic Identity,” *PAPS* 137 (1993) 194–206, at 198–199; C. Antonaccio, “Hybridity and the Cultures within Greek Culture,” in C. Dougherty and L. Kurke (eds.), *The Cultures within Ancient Greek Culture: Contact, Conflict, Collaboration* (Cambridge 2003) 57–74, at 62–65; and H. van Wees, *Greek Warfare: Myths and Realities* (London 2004) 52–54.

illustrative: “but Thyestes in turn left it to Agamemnon to carry (*φορῆναι*), to rule many islands and all Argos” (*Il.* 2.107–108). The resonance of *phorein* urges one to ask what Odysseus accomplishes by displaying the bow on Ithaka.

I begin from the long-noticed fact that the bow represents the importance that Odysseus places on guest-friendships.⁶ In building on that observation, I shall first detail the profits that accrue to participants in *xenia* (the practice of guest-friendship) and then explore how by displaying and telling about his bow Odysseus makes new guest-friends and thereby contributes to the maintenance of his household.

The economy embedded in *xenia* brings wealth into the households of the practitioners in two ways. First, guest-friends exchange gifts. The receiver’s household benefits from gaining an object that maintains or adds to its store of valuables.⁷ Second (and this point requires lengthier exposition), the fact of the relationship itself ultimately aids both parties in amassing more goods. Besides exchanging gifts, guest-friends exchange the right to consider one another a notionally everlasting contact. Each participant adds another member to his social network. Oineus and Bellerophontes can claim one another as guest-friends (*Il.* 6.214–220), as can Kinyras and Agamemnon (*Il.* 11.20–23) and Mentès and Odysseus (*Od.* 1.187). Just as it does today, participation in a large social network pays dividends in the Homeric world. In particular, it brings with it resources

⁶ See S. Murnaghan, *Disguise and Recognition in the Odyssey* (Princeton 1987) 115–116. Of the ample literature on *xenia*, I have found the following especially useful: W. Donlan, “Reciprocities in Homer,” *CW* 75 (1982) 135–175, esp. 151 and 170; Thalmann, *The Swineherd* 264–266; C. Dougherty, *The Raft of Odysseus: The Ethnographic Imagination of Homer’s Odyssey* (New York 2001) 44–45; and R. Scodel, *Epic Facework: Self-presentation and Social Interaction in Homer* (Swansea 2008) 33–36.

⁷ It is more prudent to speak of receiver and giver than of guest and host because, although a host often gives and a guest often receives, both parties can exchange gifts simultaneously: Diomedes recounts that when Oineus hosted Bellerophontes, both men gave each other gifts (*Il.* 6.216–220).

and benefits that one can direct toward acquiring material wealth.⁸

One benefit, for example, is the ability to mobilize a group of people to help with a given project.⁹ Agamemnon and Menelaos rely on the leaders of Akhaia (see *Il.* 1.158–160, 7.406–407, *Od.* 4.170) to help them besiege and eventually take Troy, a venture that not only returns Helen to Menelaos but also brings the Atreidai much spoil.¹⁰ Another benefit is the opportunity to invoke one’s connections. Nestor declares that Akhilleus and Agamemnon should heed his advice because heroes of old did (*Il.* 1.260–274). At the same time, Nestor is implicitly asserting that because he interacted with famous individuals in the first place his present-day comrades should follow his council. This subtext also underlies Nestor’s initial reference, when he rouses the Akhaians to accept Hektor’s challenge to a duel, to a conversation he had with Peleus (7.125–128). Nestor presents himself as a man to whom others should listen on account of his contact with someone of such prominence.¹¹ Pointing to his extensive social network is a tactic in his rhetorical arsenal. What is more, he may not persuade his audience in Book 1,

⁸ The social scientist’s concept of social capital informs my discussion. I have borrowed from H. Esser, “The Two Meanings of Social Capital,” in D. Castiglione et al. (eds.), *The Handbook of Social Capital* (Oxford 2008) 22–49, esp. 23: “Social capital is understood then to mean all those resources that an actor can mobilize and/or profit from because of his embeddedness in a *network* of *relations* with other actors” (emphasis in original); and 44: “The various concrete resources and benefits that constitute social capital.”

⁹ Cf. Esser, in *Social Capital* 23: “Examples of social capital include an individual’s capacity to mobilize help.”

¹⁰ Other characters comment on how much wealth Agamemnon amasses as a result of the conflict: Akhilleus at *Il.* 1.163–167 and 9.325–334 (cf. 1.127–129) and Thersites at 2.226–233.

¹¹ The narrator alludes not just to Nestor’s age but also to the extent of his social relations when he introduces him: “Already in his time two generations of men had died, they who were before raised along with him and they who had been born in holy Pylos, and he was ruler over the third generation” (*Il.* 1.250–252).

but he does in Book 7, and so the tactic emerges as one that assists him in speaking successfully. In turn, Nestor's accomplishments in this arena of heroic competition earn him material rewards: after the sack of Tenedos, the Akhaians give him Hekamede as a prize "because he was the best of all in council" (*οὐνεκα βουλῆ ἀριστεύεσκεν ἀπάντων*, 11.627). Put briefly, then, one of the goals toward which Nestor directs a benefit of being networked (the ability to point to one's connections) is obtaining goods.

Similarly, Odysseus namedrops throughout his *Apologoi*. He tells the Phaiakians of his extended interactions with the divine Kirke and Kalypso. He speaks of his network's inclusion of Maron (*Od.* 9.201–205) and Aiolos (10.19) and then brings in an outside voice to verify the number of his guest-friends. His men, he says, firmly believed that Aiolos had given him gold and silver (10.35–36). To their minds, this is how Odysseus operates: "This man is dear (*φίλος*) to all and honored by men, whenever he comes to anyone's city and land," they are made to claim (10.38–39). Odysseus emphasizes the extent of his rare and valued social relations. In doing so, he advertises his heroic credentials (he keeps the company of goddesses) and his aristocratic credentials (he keeps the company of other elites). This tactic supports his larger goal of showing the Phaiakians that, far from being, in Alkinoos' words, "a deceiver and thief" who "fashion[s] false tales" (11.364, 366), he is in fact an elite hero whose "fame reaches the sky" (9.20). By proving himself a man of such stature, Odysseus procures gifts from the Phaiakians.¹² Note Arete's judgment on Odysseus when she commands the Phaiakians to give him presents: "Phaiakians, how does this

¹² Dougherty, *Raft* 55–56, observes that Odysseus stops at a crucial juncture in his *Apologoi* (he has not yet made it back from the underworld), and only after Arete and Alkinoos tell their people to gather gifts for Odysseus does he accede to Alkinoos' request to continue his tale (11.326–384). Just as Dougherty picks up on the economic goals behind the telling of the tale, I focus on the economic goals behind elements of the tale's content. For more on Dougherty's discussion of this episode, see below.

man appear to be to you as regards his beauty and build and the balanced mind within? (εἶδος τε μέγεθος τε ἰδὲ φρένας ἔνδον εἴσας) And he is to be sure my guest, but each of you has a share in honoring him” (11.336–338). Odysseus, she contends in verse 337, exhibits both physical and mental gifts.¹³ That this combination represents the elite ideal emerges in Odysseus’ reproach of Euryalos. The Phaiakian noble (see 8.115–117) embodies the principle that “the gods do not give pleasing things to all men, neither stature nor mind nor eloquence” (οὔτε φυὴν οὔτ’ ἄρ φρένας οὔτ’ ἀγορητύν, 8.167–168). It is the rare aristocrat, Odysseus asserts, who is possessed of both physical and mental excellences.¹⁴ One may also detect a kinship between Arete’s statement in 11.337 and Phoenix’ declaration of the heroic ideal: “to be a speaker of words and doer of deeds” (*Il.* 9.443). In short, the actions of the Atreidai, Nestor, and Odysseus reveal that one possessed of a large social network has opportunities for acquisition. Guest-friendships increase one’s network and therefore contribute to the garnering of wealth.

Having outlined the two advantages that guest-friends bring, I return to Odysseus’ bow. For the hearer/reader who is the audience for the digression at *Od.* 21.15–41, the weapon instantiates Odysseus’ ability to add to his household’s wealth through the economy embedded in relationships of *xenia*. I suggest, however, that the character himself puts the bow to work. Odysseus displays his bow so as to declare and continue his participation in the practice of *xenia*. The narrator comments that the bow is a “token of the memory of/mechanism

¹³ Eurymakhos offers the same complement to Penelope (*Od.* 18.249).

¹⁴ Arete may also acknowledge Odysseus’ status in a more precise manner with her rhetorical question. In another passage, Odysseus claims that Laertes has the beauty and build (εἶδος καὶ μέγεθος) not of a slave but of a *basileus* (24.252–253). Odysseus links praise of Laertes’ physique to the assertion that Laertes resembles a leader. Arete may be deploying a similar logic: she praises Odysseus’ “beauty and build” so as to acknowledge his position as a leader.

for remembering his dear friend” (*μνήμα ξείνοιο φίλοιο*, *Od.* 21.40). The jar Akhilleus gives Nestor is to be a *μνήμα* of Patroklos’ funeral (*Il.* 23.619), and the robe Helen gives Telemakhos is to be a *μνήμα* “of the hands of Helen” (*Od.* 15.126). In all three cases, the object will function for the recipient as a prompt to retelling the tale of its acquisition,¹⁵ as shown by the connection of the related verb *mimnēskō* to storytelling. Phoinix begins his tale of Meleagros, “I remember (*μέμνημαι*) this deed from long ago” (*Il.* 9.527). Telemakhos urges Nestor to speak about Odysseus: “remember these things for me and tell me exactly” (*τῶν νῦν μοι μνήσαι καί μοι νημερτές ἐνίσπες*, *Od.* 3.101 = 4.331). Menelaos remembers (*μεμνημένος*) and talks of (*μυθεόμην*) “how many things that one [Odysseus] suffered and toiled over for me” (*Od.* 4.151–152).¹⁶ It is to be understood, then, that Odysseus tells a story about the guest-friendship that resulted in the bow’s acquisition.

Odysseus may seek merely to entertain with this anecdote.¹⁷ Such a prosaic conclusion, however, does little justice to a character who always seems to have ulterior motives for his tale-telling. Furthermore, his performance on Skheria encourages

¹⁵ See Scodel, *Epic Facework* 34.

¹⁶ Note the following passage as well. In urging the beggar to talk about (*μεμνώμεθα*, *Od.* 14.168) something other than the possibility of Odysseus’ homecoming, Eumaios suggests that the beggar present his story: “tell me about your sorrows” (*τὰ σ’ αὐτοῦ κήδε’ ἐνίσπες*, 14.185). Finally, we can reconsider Akhilleus’ statement to Agamemnon that “the Akhaians will remember for a long time my and your strife” (*Ἀχαιοὺς δηρὸν ἐμῆς καὶ σῆς ἔριδος μνήσεσθαι*, *Il.* 19.63–64). Nagy sees the verse pointing “to the future generations of Hellenic listeners who will ask to hear the story of the *Iliad*” (G. Nagy, *The Best of the Achaeans: Concepts of the Hero in Archaic Greek Poetry*² [Baltimore 1999] 312). Given the connection reviewed above between memory and storytelling, Akhilleus could just as well be saying that those who do the remembering also do the telling, that is, that they are not dependent on a poet. On the importance and meaning of *mimnēskō* and *mnēmosunē* for the poet, see Nagy 17 (esp. section 3 n.2) and 95–97.

¹⁷ For stories as a source of “delight” see e.g. *Il.* 15.393 (*ἔτερπε*) and *Od.* 23.301 (*τερπέσθη*).

us to imagine a scenario for his story about the bow. As noted above, Odysseus works in his *Apologoi* to position himself as a man with many guest-friends. This bit of characterization aids Odysseus in representing himself as an elite with whom the Phaiakians should form a guest-friendship. In turn, that episode suggests a possible audience for and point behind Odysseus' story about the guest-friendship that brought him the bow. In telling this tale to elites who come to visit him, Odysseus shows that he himself is an elite who traffics in prestige goods and is possessed of rare social contacts, that he is, in other words, one with whom a visitor should seek to forge a guest-friendship. More guest-friends mean continued participation in the economy embedded in *xenia*, and, as traced above, the transactions undertaken in that economy benefit one's household.

Odysseus also displays his bow so as to send a message about his position as *basileus* (leader).¹⁸ Here, I ask what meaning Odysseus' bow may have for his own people as they see him roaming Ithaka with it conspicuously in hand.¹⁹ Toward the end of the poem, Odysseus alludes to two exchanges that are conducted by Homeric leaders. He tells Penelope that he will replenish the household's livestock not only by raiding (*ληίσσομαι*) but also by taking from his people: "the Akhaians will give (*δώσουσ'*) other things as well until they fill the folds" (*Od.*

¹⁸ For bibliography on the popular metaphors of the "big-man or chief" used by scholars to figure the political structures evident in the Homeric poems, see D. Hammer, *The Iliad as Politics: The Performance of Political Thought* (Norman 2002) 233 n.5; his ch. 6 proposes some alterations to that model. To avoid becoming unnecessarily entangled in this debate, I speak of the *basileus* simply as a leader.

¹⁹ On a ruler's peregrinations as essential to his maintaining power, see Geertz's discussion of Moroccan kingship: "The mobility of the king was thus a central element in his power; the realm was unified—to the very partial degree that it was unified and was a realm—by a restless searching-out of contact, mostly agonistic, with literally hundreds of lesser centers of power within it": C. Geertz, *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretative Anthropology* (New York 1983) 138.

23.357–358).²⁰ That is, a Homeric leader gets goods both in return for exhibitions of martial prowess and as a result of threatening his people. The bow helps advertise and ensure Odysseus' engagement in this economy of Homeric leadership so integral to the maintenance of his household.

Although this bow is not itself used in battle, it points toward Odysseus' martial prowess. Among the Phaiakians, he boasts of his skill with a bow in combat (8.215–218):

εὖ μὲν τόξον οἶδα εὐξοον ἀμφαφάασθαι·
 πρῶτός κ' ἄνδρα βάλοιμι ὀιστεύσας ἐν ὀμίλῳ
 ἀνδρῶν δυσμενέων, εἰ καὶ μάλα πολλοὶ ἑταῖροι
 ἄγχι παρασταῖεν καὶ τοξαζοῖατο φωτῶν.

I know well how to handle the polished bow, and would be first to strike my man with an arrow aimed at a company of hostile men, even though many companions were standing close beside me, and all shooting with bows at the enemies.

The passage provides the best evidence for Odysseus as a skilled archer in combat.²¹ We also know that Odysseus is understood to be an accomplished combatant even before he goes to Troy: that is one reason why he is paramount *basileus*²² and why Agamemnon and Menelaos will insist that Odysseus join the expedition against Troy (24.115–119). Accordingly, in so far as Odysseus can fight with a bow and in so far as he is, as it were, a decorated warrior, the bow he received from Iphitos can stand metonymically for those martial feats. When he carries it around with him on Ithaka, then, he asserts his mar-

²⁰ For this latter practice see also *Od.* 2.76–78, 13.14–15, and 22.55. Cf. Thalmann, *The Swineherd* 297–298.

²¹ See also *Od.* 1.260–264 and *Il.* 10.260. In preparing to confront Kirke, Odysseus arms himself with a sword and a bow (*Od.* 10.261–262). S. West, in A. Heubeck et al., *A Commentary on Homer's Odyssey I* (Oxford 1988) 91 ad 1.113, understands the name Telemakhos, “Far-Fighter,” to “reflect his father’s characteristic method of fighting.” Cf. Nagy, *Best* 146 n.2.

²² See e.g. *Od.* 2.230–234. On a *basileus* achieving his position in part through success in battle, see Hammer, *The Iliad as Politics* 82 and 147–148.

tial prowess. Odysseus' choice of symbol should not surprise us. I continue from where I left off in his speech on archery to the Phaiakians (*Od.* 8.219–224):

οἶος δὴ με Φιλοκτήτης ἀπεκαίνυτο τόξῳ
 δῆμῳ ἐνὶ Τρώων, ὅτε τοξαζοίμεθ' Ἀχαιοί·
 τῶν δ' ἄλλων ἐμὲ φημὶ πολὺ προφερέστερον εἶναι,
 ὅσοι νῦν βροτοὶ εἰσιν ἐπὶ χθονὶ σῖτον ἔδοντες.
 ἀνδράσι δὲ προτέροισιν ἐρίζεμεν οὐκ ἔθελήσω,
 οὔθ' Ἡρακλῆι οὔτ' Εὐρύτῳ Οἰχαλιῆι.

There was Philoktetes alone who surpassed me in archery
 when we Achaians shot with bows in the Trojan country.
 But I will say that I stand far out ahead of all others
 such as are living mortals now and feed on the earth. Only
 I will not set myself against men of the generations
 before, not with Herakles nor Eurytos of Oichalia.²³

That the bow is central to the martial success of other fighters bolsters Odysseus' use of his own bow as an indicator of his successes in battle.

I stress this point because, although interpreters often concentrate on the denigration of archers in the *Iliad* (and the broader Greek imaginary),²⁴ there remains ample evidence that

²³ This and the previous translation from R. Lattimore, *The Odyssey of Homer* (New York 1965) 126–127.

²⁴ See e.g. E. Cook, *The Odyssey in Athens: Myths of Cultural Origins* (Ithaca 1995) 149; H. Mackie, *Talking Trojan: Speech and Community in the Iliad* (Lanham 1996) 50–53; Thalmann, *The Swineherd* 219 n.92. For Lissarrague, the archer is a persistent foil to the hoplite: F. Lissarrague, *L'autre guerrier: archers, peltastes, cavaliers dans l'imagerie attique* (Paris 1990). On the declining status of archers in Greek vase painting from the Geometric period to the end of the Archaic age, see van Wees, *Greek Warfare* 166–167, 170, 175. Mackie's analysis is more attuned to the different ways the *Iliad* portrays archers: C. J. Mackie, *Rivers of Fire: Mythic Themes in Homer's Iliad* (Washington 2008) 94–134. He argues that among the Akhaians only lower-ranked fighters are bowmen and that, although Teukros kills ten Trojans, no Akhaian archer changes the course of the fight. Among the Trojans, however, high-status elites fight with bows and arrows, and Paris has a profound effect on the

one who fights with a bow can be a productive and renowned warrior. To begin with the Homeric poems, Odysseus is not the only character to valorize the bow. Agamemnon praises Teukros when he sees him “destroying the ranks of Trojans with his strong bow” (*Il.* 8.279). He urges him on by suggesting that Teukros’ success will bring glory to his father: “Bring him [i.e. your father] even though he is far off to a position of glory” (*εὐκλείης ἐπίβησον*, 285). When Athena tricks Pandaros into breaking the truce fashioned in *Iliad* 3 by shooting an arrow at Menelaos, she tells him that a successful shot will earn him great repute (4.93–103).²⁵ In order to convince Pandaros, Athena must offer a plausible argument, and Agamemnon’s reaction to Menelaos’ wounding confirms that she has: whoever made this shot, Agamemnon says, has covered himself in glory (*κλέος*, 196–197). Pandaros is “senseless” (*ἄφρονι*, 104) because he thinks the shot will be fatal, not because he thinks a fatal shot will bring him fame. Even as exacting a critic as Hektor acknowledges that Paris can be praised for his accomplishments in war, which must, given Paris’ prominent association with the bow, include successes with that weapon: “No one, who should be right thinking, would disparage your work in battle because you are courageous” (*ἄλκιμός*, 6.521–522).

As we learn in Odysseus’ speech, non-Homeric figures also perform great deeds in battle with the bow. In the *Ehoiai*, Herakles kills Periklymenos with a shot from his bow and then is able to sack Pylos (frs. 33a and 35 M.-W.). Herakles also takes Troy with the aid of his bow, as indicated most dramatically on the east pediment of the temple of Aphaia on Aigina.²⁶ Pindar has Teiresias speak of Herakles’ integral role in the gods’ defeat of the giants: “beneath a volley of his arrows (*βελέων ὑπὸ*

battle. These points of contrast are intended to distinguish the Akhaians from the Trojans.

²⁵ See esp. *κῆδος* “glory of victory” at *Il.* 4.95; for this meaning of *κῆδος*, Nagy, *Best* 63–64.

²⁶ *LIMC* V.1 112 s.v. “Herakles” no. 2792.

ῥιπαῖσι κείνου) their bright hair would be fouled with earth” (*Nem.* 1.68).²⁷ As for Philoktetes, Proklos’ summary of the *Little Iliad* reports that the Akhaians needed him to take Troy,²⁸ and Bakkhylides confirms that he was required as the wielder of Herakles’ bow.²⁹ Proklos then goes on to record that Philoktetes kills Paris in single combat, and in the tradition of archaic epic represented by the *Little Iliad*, these two contenders surely fought one another with bows.³⁰ Philoktetes killed other Trojans as well: one of the *tabulae iliaca*e that shows numerous duels between Akhaians and Trojans depicts Philoktetes felling Diopieithes with a bowshot.³¹ In short, a warrior who fights with a bow can be an accomplished fighter and famed for those accomplishments. This backdrop strengthens the equation that Odysseus offers between his bow and his feats in combat.

Now, it is in return for leading his people in successful raids and battles that a *basileus* acquires a larger share of the captured spoils (e.g. *Od.* 10.40–42, 14.230–234, *Il.* 9.332–333) or especially fruitful pieces of land (e.g. *Il.* 12.310–313).³² In so far as

²⁷ Text and transl. W. H. Race, *Pindar* II (Loeb 1997). Artists’ representations from the Archaic and Classical periods of Herakles in this battle are surveyed in T. Gantz, *Early Greek Myth* (Baltimore 1993) I 450–452; *LIMC* IV.1 216 ff. s.v. “Gigantes,” e.g. nos. 114, 120, 311. Stesikhoros (fr. S 15 Campbell, *Greek Lyric* III [Loeb 1991]) speaks of Herakles shooting poisoned-tipped arrows at Geryon when Herakles attempts to rustle his cattle, a typical heroic enterprise; for the artists’ depictions of this episode see Gantz I 402–403 and *LIMC* V.1 74 ff. s.v. “Herakles” nos. 2462–2475.

²⁸ T. W. Allen, *Homeri Opera* V (Oxford 1912) 106; cf. *Il.* 2.724–725.

²⁹ H. Maehler, *Bacchylides carmina cum fragmentis*¹¹ (Munich 2003) 71, ad no. 23.

³⁰ See Gantz, *Early Greek Myth* II 637–638. For possible representations of this duel, *LIMC* I.1 520 s.v. “Alexandros” nos. 103, 104.

³¹ *LIMC* VI.1 451 s.v. “Memnon” no. 12; I.1 179 s.v. “Achilleus” no. 845.

³² On allotting spoils, see H. van Wees, *Status Warriors: War, Violence and Society in Homer and History* (Amsterdam 1992) 304. On the reciprocity between a *basileus* and his people, see Donlan, *CW* 75 (1982) 159–160 and 167, as well as his “Political Reciprocity in Dark Age Greece: Odysseus and

Odysseus' bow serves as a reminder of his martial success, it also serves as a reminder of what is due him in return for that service and therefore helps to ensure that he will continue to receive such bountiful rewards. Odysseus must perform well in future battles, but a campaign of preemptive messaging lays the groundwork for further acquisitions.

The bow can also symbolize Odysseus' coercion of the island's people. I start from Michael Nagler's observation that the bow

stands for violence used to control one's own community ... Most of the time this violence is symbolic, held in reserve (as a good Machiavellian will appreciate); what we see in the climax of the epic is what must occasionally happen and *what the symbol always means*: the disguise drops and the violence suddenly becomes real.³³

A leader like Odysseus maintains his position and keeps goods flowing into his *oikos* not only by virtue of his charisma and success in raiding but also through more or less explicit forms of intimidation.³⁴ It may be literally true that "[t]here is no hint in Homer that what anthropologists call 'chiefly dues' were excessive or were extorted by threats of violence,"³⁵ and I wish neither to overstate the *basileus*' coercive power³⁶ nor to down-

his *hetairoi*," in C. Gill et al. (eds.), *Reciprocity in Ancient Greece* (Oxford 1998) 51–71, esp. 55–56, 60–63.

³³ M. N. Nagler, "Penelope's Male Hand: Gender and Violence in the *Odyssey*," *Colby Quarterly* 29 (1993) 241–257, at 250–251 (emphasis added). Thalmann, *The Swineherd* 178, also quotes these sentences by Nagler.

³⁴ On charismatic authority, see W. Donlan, "The Relations of Power in the Pre-State and Early State Polities," in L. G. Mitchell and P. J. Rhodes (eds.), *The Development of the Polis in Archaic Greece* (London 1997) 39–48, at 42–43. More generally, see Geertz, *Local Knowledge* 121–146.

³⁵ Donlan, in *Development* 42. Differently, van Wees, *Status Warriors* 86.

³⁶ See Donlan, *CW* 75 (1982) 161–162, 166, and in *Development* 41–42; Hammer, *The Iliad as Politics* 146.

play the people's power.³⁷ Indeed, Odysseus is repeatedly said to be a kind ruler.³⁸ Nonetheless, as Hans van Wees shows, there are numerous indications that a *basileus* was feared.³⁹

A *basileus* was urged to rule "by might" (*ἰφί*),⁴⁰ and several passages reveal the fear provoked by a leader. Eurylokhos feared (*ἔδδεισεν*) Odysseus' reproach (*Od.* 10.447–448). Odysseus' Cretan became "feared (*δεινός*) and revered" (14.233–234). Kalkhas says that a lesser (*χέρη*) man cannot hope to withstand the anger of a *basileus* (*Il.* 1.80–83).⁴¹ Agamemnon threatens to take Briseis himself, "in order that you [Akhilleus] may know well how much stronger I am than you, and another may hesitate (*στυγέη*) to say that he is equal to me and to vie with me face to face" (1.185–187).⁴² In still other passages, leaders physically threaten their people, surely in the belief that their people fear them. With the scepter, Odysseus drives back to the meeting place those who are rushing to the ships (2.199).⁴³ Nestor threatens with death any Akhaian who tries to leave Troy (2.357–359). Hektor promises to kill any Trojan who does not attack the Akhaian ships (15.346–351).⁴⁴ It would

³⁷ See Donlan, in *Reciprocity* esp. 59, 66–70; Hammer, *The Iliad as Politics* esp. ch. 5 and 6.

³⁸ E.g. *Od.* 2.47, 5.7–12.

³⁹ On leaders transacting in violence, coercion, and fear, see van Wees, *Status Warriors* 76–77, 83–89, 118–120, 154–157.

⁴⁰ *Od.* 11.284, 17.443; Hes. fr.141.16 M.-W.; cf. *Il.* 6.478. Cf. D. Launderville, *Piety and Politics: The Dynamics of Royal Authority in Homeric Greece, Biblical Israel, and Old Babylonian Mesopotamia* (Grand Rapids 2003) 73.

⁴¹ Cf. van Wees, *Status Warriors* 88.

⁴² Cf. Hammer, *The Iliad as Politics* 83, 85, 131, on Agamemnon's insistence on might as a governing principle.

⁴³ See van Wees, *Status Warriors* 83–84; and Hammer, *The Iliad as Politics* 88, "what holds the political field together now is not people acting together, but force."

⁴⁴ Donlan, in *Development* 42, continues (see 145 and n.35 above), "[F]or an individual or *oikos* to refuse to give to a chief was a violation of custom, and the use of force by the *basileus* might well be justified in the eyes of the

seem unnecessary to discount fear as a motive compelling people to obey and provide for their leaders.

The end of the *Odyssey* reaffirms this proposition's validity when it comes to Odysseus. There, the hero demonstrates in pitched battle that his martial talents and those of the forces he can muster render him physically superior to the Ithakans. Odysseus sees an assertion of his superiority as the goal of the final confrontation. He urges Telemakhos to live up to the feats of his "line of fathers, we who even before have excelled in strength and manliness over the whole earth" (*πατέρων γένος, οἷ τὸ πάρος περ ἀλκῆ τ' ἠγορέη τε κεκάσμεθα*, 24.508–509). That is, Odysseus and Laertes can be counted on to exhibit yet again these same surpassing qualities, and it is time for Telemakhos to do so as well.⁴⁵ The gods seem to agree that this battle provides Odysseus with an opportunity to show off his might because they let it play out for some time. Athena moves to stop the fighting only after Laertes, Odysseus, and Telemakhos make clear their dominance over the suitors' relatives: "They would now have killed them all and denied them a return home" (*καί νύ κε δὴ πάντας ὄλεσαν καὶ ἔθηκαν ἀνόστους*, 24.528).⁴⁶ Zeus does not bring the hostilities to a close until Odysseus has "pounced hemming them in like a high-flying eagle" (*οἴμησεν δὲ ἀλεῖς ὥς τ' αἰετὸς ὑπιπετήεις*, 538). That the same simile describes Hektor as he launches himself at

other *oikoi*." After such an encounter the subordinate presumably fears the *basileus*.

⁴⁵ *ἀλκή* "in one aspect is the most potent of physical strengths" (D. Collins, *Immortal Armor: The Concept of Alkē in Archaic Greek Poetry* [Lanham 1998] 124). On *ἠγορέη* as a "manliness" that is most valued when its possessor works for the benefit of the group, see B. Graziosi and J. Haubold, "Homeric Masculinity: ΗΝΟΡΕΗ and ΑΓΗΝΟΡΗΗ," *JHS* 123 (2003) 60–76, at e.g. 63. Their comment on *Od.* 24.508–509 supports the argument I make at the end of the paragraph: "The masculine solidarity embedded in the concept of *ἠγορέη* is appropriated here for the purpose of reinstating Odysseus' rule within the family and in Ithaca" (73).

⁴⁶ A fact noted by E. T. E. Barker, *Entering the Agon: Dissent and Authority in Homer, Historiography and Tragedy* (Oxford 2009) 132 with n.145.

Akhilleus (*Il.* 22.308) suggests the degree of martial fury possessing Odysseus.⁴⁷ Why, then, this public display of strength on Odysseus' part? Zeus had earlier claimed that the punishment of the suitors was sufficient bloodshed: "let them cut trustworthy oaths and let him [Odysseus] rule always" (ὄρκια πιστὰ ταμόντες ὃ μὲν βασιλευέτω αἰεὶ, *Od.* 24.483). Yet this arrangement only takes effect after another fight. Only after reminding the Ithakans how far he outstrips them can Odysseus return to his position as paramount *basileus*. This scene makes plain that Odysseus' position not only will rest but also always has rested in part on the threat of violence. Odysseus' people yield to his wishes partly out of fear.

The bow, of course, functions as a reminder of Odysseus' superior physical might: Eurymakhos echoes the narrator (*Od.* 21.185) when he decries the possibility that the suitors are so lacking in strength (βίης ἐπιδευέες) when compared to Odysseus that they cannot string his bow (21.253–255).⁴⁸ When Odysseus carries his bow around Ithaka, then, he bears a concrete symbol of not only his martial skill but also his coercive power. He reminds his people of his transaction in fear with them and at the same time insists on continuing that exchange.

To review: Odysseus displays his bow because it aids him in guaranteeing the continued operation of two economies—one embedded in his interactions with other elites and one related to his position as paramount *basileus*—that allow his household to thrive. That is, the bow becomes itself a mechanism for perpetuating his *oikos*. It is only fitting, then, that these economies collapse in the twenty-year period during which Odysseus does not go around Ithaka with his bow and the weapon is stored away in a remote (ἔσχατον) room (21.9). As Penelope says, the house no longer receives guests (19.314–316):⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Cf. E. Cook, "'Active' and 'Passive' Heroics in the *Odyssey*," *CW* 93 (1999) 149–167, at 166.

⁴⁸ Thalmann, *The Swineherd* 179–180, ponders a connection between βιός (bow) and βίη.

⁴⁹ Cf. Telemakhos at 1.175–177.

ἐπεὶ οὐ τοῖοι σημάτωντορές εἰς ἐνὶ οἴκῳ
οἶος Ὀδυσσεὺς ἔσκε μετ' ἀνδράσιν, εἴ ποτ' ἔην γε,
ξείνους αἰδοίους ἀποπεμπέμεν ἠδὲ δέχεσθαι.

because there are no masters of the sort in the house
such as Odysseus was among men, if he ever was,
to send off in style honored guests and to receive them.

Telemakhos even contemplates refusing to entertain Theoklymenos when they arrive in Ithaka: “we have no desire for guests” (*ξενίων*, 15.514). The economy at the heart of Homeric leadership has collapsed as well. The suitors continue to decimate the flocks and by extension all the resources of Odysseus’ *oikos* (e.g. 2.55–64, 4.686–687). Everything is going out, nothing is coming in.⁵⁰ The need for Odysseus to string his bow becomes clear. Odysseus brings back into a functioning state an item that bolsters his participation in two economies that sustain his household.⁵¹ In other words, he strings his bow as an important step toward resurrecting his economic self and saving his *oikos*.

The Simile about the Bow

I propose that the simile used of Odysseus when he first picks up his old weapon confirms the reading offered above. For the simile aligns him with another figure whom the *Odyssey* also carefully constructs as a participant in networks of exchange—the singer—and it directs our attention to Odysseus as one who preserves something.

Odysseus casts a critical eye over his bow and then strings it with ease (21.405–409):

⁵⁰ “In the Ithacan situation wealth flows only one way—out of the *oikos* (*Od.* 14.13–20, 85–95)”: Donlan, *CW* 75 (1982) 153.

⁵¹ On Odysseus as an “economic hero” see J. Redfield, “The Economic Man,” in C. A. Rubino and C. W. Shelmerdine (eds.), *Approaches to Homer* (Austin 1983) 218–247, quotation at 230, and note his conclusion: “At the beginning of the poem Odysseus’ household—his proper economic area—is in disarray ... [H]e puts the whole institution back together. In the process he displays the virtues proper to the economic man” (244–245).

αὐτίκ' ἐπεὶ μέγα τόξον ἐβάστασε καὶ ἴδε πάντη,
 ὡς ὅτ' ἀνὴρ φόρμιγγος ἐπιστάμενος καὶ αἰοιδῆς
 ῥηιδίως ἐτάνυσσε νέω περὶ κόλλοπι⁵² χορδὴν,
 ἄψας ἀμφοτέρωθεν ἐυστροφὲς ἔντερον οἴος,
 ὡς ἄρ' ἄτερ σπουδῆς τάνυσεν μέγα τόξον Ὀδυσσεύς.

once he had taken up the great bow and looked it all over,
 as when a man knowledgeable of the lyre and singing,
 easily, holding it on either side, pulls the strongly twisted
 cord of sheep's gut, so as to slip it over a new peg,
 so, without any strain, Odysseus strung the great bow.⁵³

As he reacquaints himself with an item that enables his participation in two economies that perpetuate his household, Odysseus is compared to one who engages in exchange. On the one hand, a poet ensconced in a particular court, such as Demodokos on Skheria, “enjoys a long-term, mutually beneficial relationship with his audience. He receives food, lodging, and a place of honor in the community; the audience, in turn, gains a flexible poetic tradition that celebrates and validates its way of life.”⁵⁴ On the other hand, “the *Odyssey* makes room for a quite different model of poet as well—one not permanently attached to a court, but who travels from place to place singing songs and collecting goods in return.”⁵⁵ Either way, the poem

⁵² A κόλλοψ may not be a peg but rather a strip of hide wound around the yoke of the lyre to hold the string in place: P. Chantraine, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque*² (Paris 1999) s.v. κόλλοψ, and cf. M. L. West, *Ancient Greek Music* (Cambridge 1992) 61–62.

⁵³ Translation adapted from Lattimore, *The Odyssey* 319.

⁵⁴ Dougherty, *Raft* 52.

⁵⁵ Dougherty, *Raft* 52, with reference esp. to *Od.* 17.383–386. Dougherty (52–60) contends that Odysseus fits into this second category as one who “trades in songs as commodities” (52). It must be observed that “he is not actually a bard” (C. Segal, *Singers, Heroes, and Gods in the Odyssey* [Ithaca 1994] 159), but Dougherty’s overall argument remains sound. On the “commodification of song” in the *Odyssey*, see also S. von Reden, *Exchange in Ancient Greece* (London 1995) 70–74.

attends to the bard's economic activities. The reference to the bard as "knowledgeable" (*ἐπιστάμενος*) may serve as a dic-tional cue to remind us of this feature of his characterization. First, the knowledgeable bard appears in another passage in-formed by the dynamics of exchange. Alkinoos praises Odys-seus' story-telling: "you went through your story expertly⁵⁶ like a singer" (*μῦθον δ' ὡς ὅτ' ἀοιδὸς ἐπισταμένως κατέλεξας*, 11.368). In order to declare that Odysseus has offered fitting recompense for the hospitality he has received among the Phaiakians, Alkinoos likens him to a knowledgeable singer (the adverb modifies the second-person verb, but both words are to be applied to the singer as well).⁵⁷ The comparison rests in part on an understanding of the transactions engaged in by a bard.⁵⁸ Second, forms of the verb *ἐπίσταμαι* appear in other contexts involving exchange. A craftsman, who offers his expertise in return for compensation, made the threshold to Odysseus' palace "knowledgeably" (*ἐπισταμένως*, 17.340–341).⁵⁹ Similarly, Harmonides, the builder of Paris' ships, "knew (*ἐπίστατο*) how to fashion with his hands all intricate things" (*Il.* 5.60–61).⁶⁰ I point in addition to the descriptions of

⁵⁶ M. Finkelberg, *The Birth of Literary Fiction in Ancient Greece* (Oxford 1998) 51, offers "expertly" for the adverb *ἐπισταμένως*. A. Ford, *Homer: The Poetry of the Past* (Ithaca 1992) 36–37, suggests "capably."

⁵⁷ For *καταλέγειν* used of a singer, see *Od.* 4.496.

⁵⁸ I here review but also alter Dougherty's formulation: "From Odysseus, however, he [Alkinoos] feels that he got good poetic value for his hospitality since Odysseus' songs pleased and satisfied him" (*Raft* 53). Again, Odysseus is a non-professional storyteller, not a trained singer of tales.

⁵⁹ A craftsman also "knowledgeably" built the threshold to the palace's storeroom (*Od.* 21.43–44).

⁶⁰ For the clause applying to Harmonides, not his son Phereklos, see G. S. Kirk, *The Iliad: A Commentary II* (Cambridge 1990) ad 5.59–64. The other passage that refers to knowledgeable craftsmen is at *Il.* 10.265: the boar's tusk helmet that Odysseus dons was made "well and knowledgeably" (*εὖ καὶ ἐπισταμένως*). Note as well that the description of the dancers with their

warriors as, for example, “knowing how to fight” (*ἐπιστάμενοι πολεμίζειν*, *Il.* 2.611) or “knowledgeable with the spear” (*ἐπιστάμενος μὲν ἄκοντι*, 15.282).⁶¹ A warrior offers this knowledge in exchange for the opportunity to acquire spoils both during and after a battle.⁶² In sum, as Odysseus sets about reactivating a device that helps him pursue his engagement in transactions that increase his wealth and so support his household, the simile at the end of Book 21 aligns Odysseus with an economically minded individual.

At the same time, as the vehicle portion of the simile unfolds,⁶³ it turns out that it presents us not with a bard singing songs but with one repairing his lyre. Most interpreters overlook the activity in which the singer is engaged, but it should be observed that the simile compares Odysseus as he strings his bow to one repairing something.

First, the simile differs from those with which it is usually joined. Two other times in the poem characters liken Odysseus to a singer. We noted that Alkinoos praises Odysseus as he tells the Phaiakians of his adventures: “you went through your story expertly like a singer” (*ὡς ὄτ’ αἰιδός*, 11.368). For his part, Eumaios expresses to Penelope his amazement at the bewitching quality of Odysseus’ stories: “But as when a man looks at a singer (*αἰιδόν*), who from the gods sings knowing lovely words to mortals, and they are insatiably eager to hear him, whenever he sings: so that one enchanted me” (17.518–521). The simile in Book 21 is often seen as a third example of this motif: “the poet once again, for the third and last time, fuses

“knowledgeable feet” (*ἐπισταμένοισι πόδεσσι*, *Il.* 18.599) on Akhilleus’ shield is elucidated by a simile about a potter (600–601).

⁶¹ See also *Il.* 13.223, 13.238, 16.142 = 19.389, 16.243, *Od.* 9.49–50.

⁶² On spoils as compensation see J. L. Ready, “Toil and Trouble: The Acquisition of Spoils in the *Iliad*,” *TAPA* 137 (2007) 3–43.

⁶³ In the simile “Diomedes is like a lion that devours a calf,” “Diomedes” is the tenor, “lion” is the vehicle, and the whole clause “a lion that devours a calf” is the vehicle portion of the simile.

with his hero.”⁶⁴ Expectedly, critics read this simile as if it depicts a singer telling a tale. Charles Segal argues for the thematic relevance of the simile to Odysseus’ return: “he will use it [the bow] as a bard uses a lyre, to create the ‘harmony’ of order on Ithaca and to reveal and assert the truth and vitality of the past”; “[t]he aesthetic and social order implied by song once more approximates the moral and political order re-established by the return of the king.”⁶⁵ William Thalmann sees the simile as marking Odysseus’ abilities in the realm of *muthos* and claims that the poem willfully neglects the “incongruity” in its line of argument: “Song and battle should properly be kept distinct.”⁶⁶ Sheila Murnaghan understands the simile as a final embodiment of Odysseus’ “disguise as a poet”; he must now move beyond mere “speech” to action.⁶⁷ The simile in 21, however, is not about the verbal content of songs as these readings imply.⁶⁸

We need rather to tease out the implications for these three similes of Margalit Finkelberg’s study of the poet as a performer. She argues convincingly that the Homeric poems distinguish between “[1] the technical skill of playing the lyre and [2] competence in a range of epic subjects and their basic plots”⁶⁹ as well as [3] the poet’s ability, “guaranteed by the

⁶⁴ P. W. Rose, *Sons of the Gods, Children of Earth: Ideology and Literary Form in Ancient Greece* (Ithaca 1992) 118. Cf. W. G. Thalmann, *Conventions of Form and Thought in Early Greek Epic Poetry* (Baltimore 1984) 171–176, esp. “All the earlier portrayals of his poetlike talents stand behind these lines” (176).

⁶⁵ Segal, *Singers* 55 and 98–99.

⁶⁶ Thalmann, *Conventions* 176.

⁶⁷ Murnaghan, *Disguise* 169.

⁶⁸ Note also the slippage in Ø. Andersen, “Agamemnon’s Singer (*Od.* 3.262–272),” *SymbOslo* 67 (1992) 5–26, “Here the wielding of the bow by Odysseus preparing for action coalesces with a bard’s wielding of the lyre as he makes himself ready to sing. Odysseus does his deed, the singer makes the song” (21, emphasis added). In this passage, Odysseus is not compared to a singer making, that is, performing, a song.

⁶⁹ Finkelberg, *Birth* 57.

‘gift’ of the Muses” and “manifested in the poet’s improvisation at the time of performance,” “to elaborate an elementary sequence of events within a given story into a developed and detailed narrative, that is, to transform a given plot into an epic poem.”⁷⁰ Each of the three similes corresponds to one of these elements of the poet’s craft. When Alkinoos praises Odysseus, he refers to the singer’s “mastery” of “the proper sequence of events within a given story,”⁷¹ that is, to what I labeled [2] above. Eumaios points to how the divinely inspired poet generates a tale in performance, that is, to [3] above. Finally, the simile in *Odyssey* 21 has to do with the singer’s ability to play the lyre, that is, to [1] above. The vehicle portions of the three similes are about a poet, but they do not offer the same argument. They each address a distinct component of his presentation. So the question emerges, why a reference to a singer as a lyre-player instead of as a tale-teller at the end of *Odyssey* 21? More specifically, why a reference to a singer repairing his lyre?

The activity in which the singer engages is important. In support of the notion that when Odysseus strings his bow he sets about resuscitating his economic self and saving his *oikos*, the poet compares him at that very instant to someone repairing something. The fragility of its strings makes the lyre an appropriate symbol for that which needs to be repaired or preserved. Lucian tells of a citharode who “struck up a discordant, jarring prelude (ἀναρμωστόν τι καὶ ἀσύντακτον), breaking (ἀπορρήγνυσι) three strings at once by coming down upon the lyre more vehemently (σφοδρότερον) than he ought.”⁷² Hermes perhaps warns against this mishap when he tells Apollo not to strike the lyre violently (ἐπιζαφελῶς): “then she will utter useless, discordant rubbish” (μὰψ αὐτως κεν ἔπειτα μετήορά τε θρυλίζοι).⁷³

⁷⁰ Finkelberg, *Birth* 57 and 52.

⁷¹ Finkelberg, *Birth* 51.

⁷² *Ind.* 9; text and adapted transl. A. M. Harmon, *Lucian III* (Loeb 1947) 186–187. See also Strab. 6.1.9. Both of these references come from West, *Music* 68 n.88.

⁷³ *Hymn.Hom.Merc.* 486-488; text and transl. M. L. West, *Homeric Hymns*,

I began this article by referring to Jamison's use of Indic materials to tease out the significance of the archery contest in *Odyssey* 21. Other interpreters, however, have turned to the ancient Near East for guidance when it comes to the scene,⁷⁴ and, in keeping with that trend, I shall end my analysis of the simile about the bow with a look at the Ugaritic epic *Aqhat*.⁷⁵ For it may offer some corroboration for the idea that the Homeric simile points to Odysseus as a "fixer." Preserved on a tablet from Late Bronze Age Ras Shamra in Syria, the poem tells of how the goddess Anat arranges the mortal Aqhat's death as punishment for his refusal to give her his divinely

Homeric Apocrypha, Lives of Homer (Loeb 2003) 150.

⁷⁴ For possible Egyptian antecedents of the task set for the suitors, see the bibliography reviewed by M. L. West, *The East Face of Helicon: West Asiatic Elements in Greek Poetry and Myth* (Oxford 1997) 432. The Hittite story of King Gurparanzahu intrigues. After distinguishing himself in a hunt, the hero is selected by the king Impakru to marry his daughter. Gurparanzahu wins an archery contest and then tries to go to bed with his new wife. She, however, refuses to consummate the marriage until she has obtained her dowry. (For a transcription, translation, and commentary, see F. Pecchioli Daddi, "From Akkad to Hattusa: The History of Gurparanzah and the River that Gave Him its Name," in P. Marrassini [ed.], *Semitic and Assyriological Studies Presented to Pelio Fronzaroli* [Wiesbaden 2003] 476–494.) When Haas speaks of how Gurparanzahu has to complete a task before he can marry and, more particularly, how the story tells "of an archery contest in the context of a feast and the wooing of a bride," one is tempted to follow him in seeing a quite pronounced parallel with the *Odyssey* (V. Haas, *Die hethitische Literatur: Texte, Stilistik, Motive* [Berlin 2006] 218). By contrast, West, although acknowledging the "obvious reminders of the *Odyssey*," is quick to note the differences in the two stories: "the text does not suggest that Gurparanzahu kills the kings and heroes, or that he has to *recover* his wife" (*East Face* 433, emphasis in original).

⁷⁵ For the ongoing debate as to whether the Ugaritic poems, such as *Aqhat*, are epics or not, see N. Wyatt, "Epic in Ugaritic Literature," in J. M. Foley (ed.), *A Companion to Ancient Epic* (Malden 2005) 246–254, who accords them the status of epic "on the basis of a minimalist view of epic as heroic and ideological narrative, generally poetic in form, which seeks to promote the identity, values, and concerns of a culture, and perhaps specifically of the ruling classes within a community" (246–247).

wrought bow. Aqhat is killed as he eats, but his bow is somehow broken. The editors of the standard volume of Ugaritic texts reconstruct the fragmentary portion immediately after Aqhat's murder as follows (1.19 I.5–8):⁷⁶

bilt . 'nt
tlb . x[xxxxx]ša
ilm . k mr xxx . ydh . k šr
k nr . *uṣb* '<t>h .

I quote the attempt of the most recent translator (Nicolas Wyatt) to make sense of the passage:⁷⁷

Virgin Anat [came back?]
 [the Beloved of the Powerful One] returned.
 She picked up the quiver
 [] in his hands,
 as a singer a lyre in his finge<rs>.

If there are other passages in ancient literature that use the

⁷⁶ M. Dietrich, O. Loretz, and J. Sanmartín, *The Cuneiform Alphabetic Texts from Ugarit, Ras Ibn Hani and Other Places* (Münster 1995) 56. Their transcription conventions are as follows (xi): italicized letters represent “undamaged or clearly legible signs,” upright roman letters “damaged or barely legible signs” (vi); x indicates an unclear sign, while [] indicates a “restored passage of damaged signs” and < > indicates a “missing sign” accidentally left out by the scribe and supplied by the editor.

⁷⁷ N. Wyatt, *Religious Texts from Ugarit: The Words of Ilmilku and his Colleagues*² (Sheffield 2002) 289–290. I hasten to acknowledge the tentative nature of Wyatt's reconstruction, but other Ugaritic scholars agree with Wyatt that (a) verses 7 and 8 present a singer with a lyre in the vehicle portion of a simile and (b) Anat is the tenor represented by the vehicle of the singer. See A. Cooper, “Two Exegetical Notes on *AQHT*,” *UgaritF* 20 (1988) 19–26, at 20; S. B. Parker, “Aqhat,” in S. B. Parker (ed.), *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry* (Atlanta 1997) 49–80, at 67; D. Pardee, “The 'Aqhatu Legend,” in W. W. Hallo and K. L. Younger, Jr. (eds.), *The Context of Scripture: Canonical Compositions from the Biblical World* (Leiden 1997) I 343–356, at 351 (although Pardee is not convinced of point [b]: 350 n.81 and 351 n.84). A very different reconstruction is offered by B. Margalit, *The Ugaritic Poem of AQHT* (Berlin 1989) 157; cf. D. P. Wright, *Ritual in Narrative: The Dynamics of Feasting, Mourning, and Retaliation Rites in the Ugaritic Tale of Aqhat* (Winona Lake 2001) 141–142.

figure of a singer with a lyre as the vehicle for a simile, I have yet to come across them. I note the appearance of the image of a singer with a lyre at the exact moment in which a character may be trying to repair or save something. Wyatt comments, “Anat delicately, fastidiously, lovingly picks up the pieces of bow and quiver.”⁷⁸ Reluctant, perhaps unnecessarily, to posit that the Ugaritic *Aqhat* was the ultimate source for the Homeric passage, I content myself for now with observing an instructive typological overlap.⁷⁹ Having seen Anat compared to a singer with a lyre when she endeavors to preserve something, we gain confidence in the proposition that the Homeric poet compares Odysseus to a singer with a lyre because he wants to point to Odysseus’ repairing something, in his case, his household.

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⁷⁸ Wyatt, *Religious Texts* 290. Wyatt is a bit overzealous: there is no mention of a bow in the Ugaritic text.

⁷⁹ For structural and thematic parallels between similes in Near Eastern materials and those in Homeric poetry, see West, *East Face* 217–219, 242–252; P. Damon, *Modes of Analogy in Ancient and Medieval Verse* (Berkeley 1961) 264–271; J. Puhvel, *Homer and Hittite* (Innsbruck 1991) 21–29; R. Rollinger, “Altorientalische Motivik in der frühgriechischen Literatur am Beispiel der homerischen Epen: Elemente des Kampfes in der Ilias und in der altorientalischen Literatur,” in C. Ulf (ed.), *Wege zur Genese griechischer Identität: Die Bedeutung der früharchaischen Zeit* (Berlin 1996) 156–210, at 166–171. For the value of reading Homeric and Ugaritic texts together, see B. Louden, *The Iliad: Structure, Myth, and Meaning* (Baltimore 2006); older bibliography in S. Morris, “Homer and the Near East,” in I. Morris and B. Powell (eds.), *A New Companion to Homer* (Leiden 1997) 599–623, at 623 n.86.