Telemachus' Recognition of Odysseus

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WHAT FUNCTION the Telemachy performs in the plot of the *Odyssey* has been the subject of a considerable amount of scholarship. The first two books of the poem establish that there is a crisis on Ithaca that can only be resolved happily by the return of Odysseus. But why does Telemachus then go on a journey to the mainland to find news of his father in the following two books? The audience hears exactly where Odysseus is in the fifth book. What is the purpose of narrating Telemachus' fact-finding mission when we are to learn his whereabouts immediately afterward in any case? Two compatible answers have been found for this question. First, Telemachus is motivated to assist Odysseus on his return by learning about his *kleos* from his father's peers, important figures like Nestor and Menelaus.[1] Second, Telemachus receives an education (*paideusis*, Porph. ap. schol. DH *Od.* 1.284a Pontani) that prepares him to work productively with his father. By travelling to the mainland and interacting with the households of Nestor and Menelaus, Telemachus comes of age and is consequently an asset for Odysseus on his return to Ithaca.[2]

I argue that there are, in addition, two further functions of

[1] H. W. Clarke, "Telemachus and the *Telemacheia*," *AJP* 84 (1963) 132–134; G. P. Rose, "The Quest of Telemachus," *TAPA* 98 (1967) 391–398; N. Austin, "Telemachos Polymechanos," *CSCA* 2 (1969) 45–63; P. V. Jones, "The ΚΛΕΟΣ of Telemachus: *Odyssey* 1.95," *AJP* 109 (1988) 496–506; J. C. B. Petropoulos, *Kleos in a Minor Key: The Homeric Education of a Little Prince* (Washington 2011) 9–14.

[2] J. Heath, *The Talking Greeks: Speech, Animals, and the Other in Homer, Aeschylus, and Plato* (Cambridge 2005) 92, with bibliography in n.34; Petropoulos, *Kleos* 105–128. Not everyone agrees; see especially S. D. Olson, *Blood and Iron: Stories and Storytelling in Homer's Odyssey* (Leiden 1995) 65–90.

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Telemachus' journey that have not been explored fully. On the mainland, Telemachus obtains two pieces of information that will enable him to recognize Odysseus and that will win Telemachus to his father's side. For the visits that Telemachus makes allow him to acquire critical information about his father that will factor heavily in the moment when Odysseus reveals himself to his son. From Nestor, Telemachus learns that Athena has in the past been Odysseus' special protector (*Od.* 3.218–224), a fact that adds new significance to Athena's current attendance on Telemachus himself. From Helen, he hears that Odysseus once disguised himself as a beggar and infiltrated Troy (4.244–258). While both of these facts may seem minor or even banal at the time of their delivery, Athena's support and Odysseus' disguise turn out to be the two most significant means by which Odysseus manages to take vengeance on the suitors. They are also directly relevant to the two observations Odysseus makes during his recognition (*anagnōrisis*) scene with Telemachus.[3] Telemachus initially refuses to believe that the transformed beggar is Odysseus (16.194–200). In response, Odysseus observes that his change in form is the work of Athena and that this has happened in the past (202–212), and Telemachus accepts him (213–19). Odysseus' rebuttal in this passage has universally been seen to be lacking in persuasive content and to be effective only because Odysseus essentially forces Telemachus to accept him.[4] However, I argue that the two items offered in Odysseus'

[3] On recognition in the *Odyssey* see S. Murnaghan, *Disguise and Recognition in the Odyssey*[2] (Lanham 2011); P. Pucci, *Odysseus Polutropos: Intertextual Readings in the Odyssey and the Iliad* (Ithaca 1987) 83–97; S. Goldhill, "Reading Differences: The *Odyssey* and Juxtaposition," *Ramus* 17 (1988) 19–24; P. Gainsford, "Formal Analysis of Recognition Scenes in the *Odyssey*," *JHS* 123 (2003) 41–59; E. Cook, "Epiphany in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* and the *Odyssey*," *Papers of the Langford Latin Seminar* 15 (2012) 53–111. For Aristotelian *anagnōrisis* (*Poet.* 1452a and 1454b–55a) see N. J. Richardson, "Recognition Scenes in the *Odyssey*," *Papers of the Liverpool Latin Seminar* 4 (1983) 219–235; J. Macfarlane, "Aristotle's Definition of *Anagnorisis*," *AJP* 121 (2000) 367–383, with bibliography.

[4] W. J. Woodhouse, *The Composition of Homer's Odyssey* (Oxford 1930) 76–78;

rejoinder, namely that Athena is behind his change of appearance and that he is frequently disguised, actually are persuasive for Telemachus in light of the fact that he learns about them specifically on his journey to the mainland.

There are two driving, narrative forces in the third and fourth books of the Odyssey. The first is a mystery. Where is Odysseus? The second is 'discrepant awareness', which refers to "the exploitable gaps or discrepancies among the awareness of participants and between the awareness of participants and audience."[5] There is a difference between what Telemachus knows, what Nestor, Menelaus, and Helen know, what Athena knows, what the audience knows, and finally what the narrator knows. The discrepancy between these several points of view fuels the story and creates tension. The advantage of considering discrepant awareness is that is forces us to become aware of how the differences between the knowledge of the various participants and the audience are exploited to advance the plot and create tension. And, on a more basic level, it enables us to focus more clearly on what exactly these parties know. In the case of

J. T. Kakridis, *Homer Revisited* (Lund 1971) 159; N. Austin, *Archery at the Dark of the Moon* (Berkeley 1975) 204; Pucci, *Odysseus Polutropos* 94–97; I. J. F. de Jong, *A Narratological Commentary on the Odyssey* (Cambridge 2001) 23–24; D. Beck, *Homeric Conversation* (Cambridge 2005) 74. W. E. Stanford, *The Odyssey of Homer* (London 1958) II 271: Telemachus is "young and impressionable." C. Dougherty, "Nobody's Home: *Mētis*, Improvisation and the Instability of Return in Homer's *Odyssey*," *Ramus* 44 (2015) 131, argues that Odysseus convinces Telemachus because he paraphrases the proem to the *Odyssey* (1.4, 16.205–206). There is no doubt that the reunion between Telemachus and Odysseus is in every respect a recognition scene: Gainsford, *JHS* 123 (2003) 46.

[5] B. Evans, *Shakespeare's Comedies* (Oxford 1960) 1; see also M. Pfister, *The Theory and Analysis of Drama* (Cambridge 1988) 49–57. In classical studies, discrepant awareness is most prominently used to analyze tragedy (I. J. F. de Jong, *Narrative in Drama: The Art of the Euripidean Messenger-Speech* [Leiden 1991] 57–60), although A. Rengakos, "Zur narrativen Funktion der Telemachie," in A. Hurst and F. Létoublon (eds.), *La mythologie et l'Odyssée* (Geneva 2002) 87–98, assumes that his readership is familiar with the concept in his discussion of dramatic irony in the Telemachy.

the Telemachy, this consideration is crucial because the arc of the journey is based upon Telemachus' more profound journey from ignorance to knowledge. In order for us to appreciate the results of this journey in terms of Telemachus' discovery of Athena's relationship with Odysseus and Odysseus' capacity for disguise, we must first establish what Telemachus knows and does not know at the beginning of the poem. Only then can we appreciate where Telemachus' journey has taken him. We must also ascertain what traditional knowledge the audience may have—as difficult as such an exercise is with an oral-derived text—so as to gauge the discrepancy between this and what Telemachus knows.[6] This comparison is necessary because the audience is affected by its implicit understanding of the discrepancy between the knowledge of the various participants and its own knowledge. It is only when this understanding has become explicit that we can untangle individual perspectives and the manner in which the poet exploits them.

As I will argue, Telemachus begins the poem knowing less than is usually assumed, and certainly less than an early audience would have been familiar with. In particular, he does not know about Odysseus' close relationship with Athena. There are two reasons for Telemachus' ignorance in this regard. First, Athena is apparently little on the mind of the denizens of Ithaca, which, to the audience, stands in stark contrast with her current physical presence and her strong prior connection to the house of Odysseus. Penelope discourages mention of Odysseus at home (1.328–344), confining her own remarks about him to laments about what she lost when he went to Troy (4.725–728,

[6] When listening to poetry as prominent as the *Odyssey*, the audience could be expected to be familiar with the poem's traditional referentiality, even if they did not know how the story would play out in all its particulars. On traditional referentiality see J.-M. Foley, *Homer's Traditional Art* (University Park 1999) 13–34; G. Danek, "Traditional Referentiality and Homeric Intertextuality," in F. Montanari and D. Asheri (eds.), *Omero tremila anni dopo* (Rome 2002); A. Kelly, "Hypertexting with Homer: Tlepolemus and Sarpedon on Heracles (*Il.* 5.628–698)," *Trends in Classics* 2 (2010) 259–276.

815–816, 18.177–181, 19.124–128). There is no mention of the kind of support Athena was wont to offer Odysseus, an omission that is especially notable when Leiocritus the suitor mistakenly claims that Odysseus, should he return, would be helpless in the face of overwhelming numbers (2.246–251). He apparently does not remember that Athena could support Odysseus, as she has in the past, and that such support could be decisive, as Telemachus later acknowledges (16.240–265).[7] And the suitor Antinous refers to her generically as the deity who has made Penelope superlatively remarkable as a woman (2.116–118).[8] In fact, the only vague news to which Telemachus has access would discourage any impression of cooperation between Athena and Odysseus. Phemius the bard sings of Athena's central role in the disastrous homecoming (νόστον … / λυγρόν) of the Achaeans (1.326–327). There is no scholarly agreement on the extent to which any account of Odysseus can be understood to be implied here, but, if there can, it is possible that the wrath of Athena at Odysseus and other Achaeans for the theft of the Palladium and the rape of Cassandra lies under the surface.[9] Certainly, such a

[7] It is even possible that, as is suggested by A. Gottesman, "The Authority of Telemachus," *ClAnt* 33 (2014) 36–37, the suitors do not even particularly remember Odysseus himself, since they were rather young when he left for Troy (*Od.* 16.442–444).

[8] De Jong, *Narratological Commentary* 51: "when a person is said to have received a skill or instrument from the gods, or to have been 'instructed' or 'loved' by the gods, this means that the person is extraordinarily good at something," comparing *Il.* 1.72, *Od.* 6.233–234, 8.63–64, 480–481, 488.

[9] J. S. Clay, *The Wrath of Athena* (Princeton 1983) 42–53, 208–212, famously saw the wrath of Athena as underlying Phemius' song and other passages in the *Odyssey*; so Murnaghan, *Disguise and Recognition* 47–48. For a different reading see P. Wathelet, "Athéna chez Homère," *Kernos* 8 (1995) 180–181. For the history of the interpretation of Phemius' song see Z. Biles, "Perils of Song in Homer's *Odyssey*," *Phoenix* 57 (2003) 194–197; O. Thomas, "Phemius' Suite," *JHS* 134 (2014) 93–97. K. Rüter, *Odysseeinterpretationen: Untersuchungen zum 1. Buch und zur Phaiakis* (Göttingen 1969) 204, remains essentially correct that 1.326–327 is evocative of a proem.

story would be likely to please the suitors.[10] In any case, Phemius' song can only discourage Telemachus with respect to the relationship between Athena and Odysseus. Thus, Telemachus has either heard little on Ithaca about Odysseus' relationship with Athena, or he has heard that she is angry with him.

The second reason Telemachus does not know about Odysseus' close relationship with Athena is that she does not tell him about it when they meet. Telemachus recognizes Athena (1.420), but he has no way of ascertaining the true significance of her visit because she gives him mixed signals about it. On the one hand, she prophesies that Odysseus will soon return (1.200–205). On the other hand, she discourages excessive hope in this eventuality, saying that the matter ultimately lies on the knees of the gods (1.265–270). While Athena probably keeps Telemachus in suspense in order to motivate him to take action for himself,[11] he must think she is toying with him. As a goddess, she presumably has the ability to tell Telemachus what the audience knows, that his father will return and that, with their aid, he will take back his house and slay the suitors.[12] This can only seem cruelly ironic to Telemachus in light of the fact that he later recognizes her as the Olympian god she is, and we cannot be surprised later on when Telemachus refuses to take Odysseus at face value—he could be a god come to torment him (again) (16.194–195). Indeed, Athena plays the role of the 'benevolent practiser' in this context. Although she possesses knowledge superior to Telemachus', she maintains his state of ignorance for

[10] Cf. Eumaeus' remark that the suitors must know about Odysseus' disastrous destruction (λυγρὸν ὄλεθρον), which explains why they remain in his house and woo his wife (14.89–92).

[11] Rüter, *Odysseeinterpretationen* 157–158; F. Klingner, "The Fight for Justice and Departure of Telemachus," in G. M. Wright and P. V. Jones (eds.), *Homer: German Scholarship in Translation* (Oxford 1997) 209–211.

[12] Olson, *Blood and Iron* 41–42, and Rengakos, in *La mythologie et l'Odyssée* 87–98, demonstrate how the narrator toys with the audience's expectations throughout the *Telemachy* in order to create tension. It is assumed in the present paper that the audience is nonetheless familiar with how the story will proceed.

his benefit.[13] In order to motivate him to embark on his mainland journey, she keeps him guessing about the significance of her visit and whether Odysseus will return. Telemachus is to learn about his father, including his relationship with Athena, from this journey.

It is only when Telemachus goes to meet Nestor that the kind of relationship Odysseus has had with Athena becomes evident to the young man (3.218–224):[14]

> εἰ γάρ σ' ὣς ἐθέλοι φιλέειν γλαυκῶπις Ἀθήνη,
> ὡς τότ' Ὀδυσσῆος περικήδετο κυδαλίμοιο
> δήμῳ ἔνι Τρώων, ὅθι πάσχομεν ἄλγε' Ἀχαιοί –
> οὐ γάρ πω ἴδον ὧδε θεοὺς ἀναφανδὰ φιλεῦντας,
> ὡς κείνῳ ἀναφανδὰ παρίστατο Παλλὰς Ἀθήνη –
> εἴ σ' οὕτως ἐθέλοι φιλέειν κήδοιτό τε θυμῷ,
> τῶ κέν τις κείνων γε καὶ ἐκλελάθοιτο γάμοιο.
>
> Ah, would that flashing-eyed Athena might choose to love you even as then she cared for glorious Odysseus in the land of the Trojans, where we Achaeans suffered woes. For never yet have I seen the gods so manifestly showing love, as Pallas Athena did to him, standing manifest by his side. If she would be pleased to love you in such fashion and would care for you at heart, then might one or another of them utterly forget marriage.

The stress on the openness (ἀναφανδά) of Athena's historical support for Odysseus in the presence of a disguised Athena is dramatically ironic, even if we assume that Telemachus continues to be aware of her continued proximity in a new disguise.[15] The openness of Athena's support of Odysseus as

[13] Evans, *Shakespeare's Comedies* 4.

[14] Translations of the *Odyssey* are taken from the revised Loeb. All other translations are my own.

[15] Not everyone does. U. Hölscher, *Untersuchungen zur Form der Odyssee: Szenenwechsel und gleichzeitige Handlungen* (Berlin 1939) 60 and 67, for example, compares passages like 13.219–220 and 19.208–209, where characters ironically mourn the absence of someone or something that is actually close by. I would argue that, while Nestor mourns Athena's absence in this passage, Telemachus might still be allowed to know who she is (cf. 1.420). In any case, they will both be aware of her presence soon enough (3.371–380).

described by Nestor is in stark contrast with her concealed interaction with Telemachus and Odysseus before their return to Ithaca. But Nestor raises the possibility for the first time that Athena could enable Odysseus to handle the suitors, and the audience has probably been waiting to hear this, since Athena's particular concern for Odysseus was traditional. It has been objected that "Nestor's view of a unique relationship between Athena and Odysseus is not entirely borne out by the *Iliad*, where Odysseus is certainly no more favoured than Diomedes,"[16] but, despite the favour Athena famously shows Diomedes in the *Iliad*, she is only ever said to love (*phileein*) Odysseus, or Odysseus and Diomedes, even by none other than Diomedes himself (*Il.* 10.245 and 552).[17] Athena's special fondness for Odysseus was also more than likely broadly traditional because of their obvious affinity, an affinity which Athena herself comments upon in the *Odyssey* (13.330–332).[18] The audience cannot be terribly surprised by Nestor's statement about Athena and Odysseus, then, but it can enjoy the dramatic irony of the situation, an irony that is enabled by the superior knowledge of Athena and the audience as compared to Telemachus, who is gradually being brought up to speed. He now knows about the special relationship between Athena and Odysseus.

Telemachus also begins the poem largely unaware of Odysseus' cunning. Odysseus himself celebrates it when he can (9.19–20), and an audience conversant with the *Iliad* and much of the rest of the epic tradition must be familiar with Odysseus the trickster. But this characteristic is little talked about on Ithaca. Athena brings out this side of Odysseus to some extent, describing him as *polumēchanos* ("resourceful," 1.205) and referring to the *mētis Odussēos* ("cunning of Odysseus," 2.279). And the

[16] M. L. West, in A. Heubeck and A. Hoeckstra, *A Commentary on Homer's Odyssey* I (Oxford 1990) 173; cf. Wathelet, *Kernos 8* (1995) 167–175.

[17] Cf. *Od.* 7.14–15, Ἀθήνη / … φίλα φρονέουσ' Ὀδυσῆι.

[18] Of all the Greeks, she chooses Odysseus to stop them from fleeing Troy (*Il.* 2.169–181). Cf. *Il.Parv.* arg. Bernabé, where Odysseus obtains the armour of Achilles in accordance with Athena's will.

prophet Halitherses, who has special, divinely-inspired insight, calls him *polumētis* ("full of cunning," 2.173). Athena also tells a story about his acquisition of poisoned arrows (1.260–264), which indicates a certain ruthlessness, or at least pragmatism. But overwhelmingly more generic depictions of Odysseus prevail on Ithaca.[19] Penelope makes reference to Odysseus' fame (*kleos*) and to how much she has lost by his disappearance, but she does not specify what it is about him that she misses or that has contributed to his fame (4.725–728, 815–816, 18.177–181, 19.124–128).[20] And the swineherd Eumaeus, who, as Roisman has demonstrated, is aware of Odysseus' cunning, exclusively describes him as his gentle master and as a benevolent ruler of Ithaca (14.62–63, 138–141).[21] So, before Athena's appearance, Telemachus appears to have received only generic reports about his father. He has not heard about precisely that quality which will be instrumental in his return and revenge: cunning. Athena makes a beginning of Telemachus' education in this regard, but he does not learn the specifics before his mainland journey.

In Sparta, Telemachus receives from Helen a more particular idea of what Odysseus' ingenuity and methods involve in practice. Nestor, like Athena, alludes to Odysseus' superb cunning (*mētis*, 3.120) and wise council (*epiphrōn boulē*, 128), but it is Helen who finally provides Telemachus with an object lesson that pertains to the apparently insurmountable problem of the

[19] He is described as *amumōn* ("illustrious," 2.225), *diogenēs* ("sprung from Zeus," 2.352, 366), *dios* ("glorious," 1.196, 298, 396, etc.), *esthlos* ("worthy," 2.70), *theios* ("divine," 2.233, 259), *Ithakēsios* ("Ithacan," 2.246). *Talasiphrōn* ("stouthearted"), which refers to Odysseus' psychological and physical endurance, is only used by the narrative voice (1.129). On descriptions of Odysseus the trickster see Pucci, *Odysseus Polutropos* 56–62.

[20] Cf. C. Segal, *Singers, Heroes, and Gods in the Odyssey* (Ithaca/London 1994) 91: "viewing Odysseus nostalgically from the needy perspective of Ithaca, Penelope endows him with the traditional heroic *aretai* (virtues) and the traditional wide-spreading *kleos*."

[21] H. M. Roisman, "Eumaeus and Odysseus: Covert Recognition and Self-Revelation," *ICS* 15 (1990) 229–231.

suitors' overwhelming number (4.244–258):

> αὐτόν μιν πληγῇσιν ἀεικελίῃσι δαμάσσας,
> σπεῖρα κάκ' ἀμφ' ὤμοισι βαλών, οἰκῇ ἐοικώς,
> ἀνδρῶν δυσμενέων κατέδυ πόλιν εὐρυάγυιαν·
> ἄλλῳ δ' αὐτὸν φωτὶ κατακρύπτων ἤσκε,
> δέκτῃ, ὃς οὐδὲν τοῖος ἔην ἐπὶ νηυσὶν Ἀχαιῶν.
> τῷ ἴκελος κατέδυ Τρώων πόλιν, οἱ δ' ἀβάκησαν
> πάντες· ἐγὼ δέ μιν οἴη ἀνέγνων τοῖον ἐόντα,
> καί μιν ἀνηρώτων· ὁ δὲ κερδοσύνῃ ἀλέεινεν.
> ἀλλ' ὅτε δή μιν ἐγὼ λόεον καὶ χρῖον ἐλαίῳ,
> ἀμφὶ δὲ εἵματα ἕσσα καὶ ὤμοσα καρτερὸν ὅρκον
> μὴ μὲν πρὶν Ὀδυσῆα μετὰ Τρώεσσ' ἀναφῆναι,
> πρίν γε τὸν ἐς νῆάς τε θοὰς κλισίας τ' ἀφικέσθαι,
> καὶ τότε δή μοι πάντα νόον κατέλεξεν Ἀχαιῶν.
> πολλοὺς δὲ Τρώων κτείνας ταναήκεϊ χαλκῷ
> ἦλθε μετ' Ἀργείους, κατὰ δὲ φρόνιν ἤγαγε πολλήν.
>
> Marring his own body with cruel blows, and flinging a wretched garment about his shoulders, in the fashion of a slave he entered the broad-wayed city of the foe, and he hid himself under the likeness of another, a beggar, he who was not at all such at the ships of the Achaeans. In this likeness he entered the city of the Trojans, and all of them were deceived. I alone recognized him in this disguise, and questioned him, but he in his cunning sought to avoid me. But when I was bathing him and anointing him with oil, and had put clothes upon him, and sworn a mighty oath not to make him known among the Trojans as Odysseus before he reached the swift ships and the huts, then at last he told me all the purpose of the Achaeans. And when he had slain many of the Trojans with the long sword, he returned to the company of the Argives and brought back plentiful tidings.

Helen tells Telemachus a story about Odysseus in which he beats himself up, puts on shabby clothes, and sneaks into Troy as someone beneath notice. He then kills many Trojans and returns to the Achaean camp with information. In response, Menelaus tells a tale in which only Odysseus, of all the heroes in the Trojan Horse, had the self-control to withstand the temptation offered by Helen when she impersonated their various wives (4.266–289). Here, for the first time, Telemachus hears

explicitly about Odysseus' cunning, how he was able to disguise himself, sneak into Troy, kill many Trojans, and escape the city alive. That Odysseus has the capacity for this sort of action bodes well for Telemachus. While the overall scenario will be very different on his return to Ithaca, Odysseus will need to be disguised, gain entry into his own household, kill many suitors, and live to see another day. Should he be alive, Odysseus is well equipped to deal with the situation on Ithaca. Although Telemachus will continue to express doubt as to whether Odysseus is still alive (15.266–270), he now knows how, should he be able to return, his vengeful fantasy (1.114–117) could become reality.

Erbse says of the Odyssean stories of Helen and Menelaus that the audience cannot fail to remember them when Odysseus returns to Ithaca and is forced to show a similar facility with disguise and self-control in the presence of the suitors.[22] However, it is likely that the audience is already familiar with Odysseus' capacity for infiltration and even with Helen's story in particular.[23] Proclus' argumentum of the *Little Iliad* includes a very similar account just prior to the sack of Troy (*Il.Parv.* arg. 1 Bernabé).[24] And a scholion to Lycophron provides a different

[22] H. Erbse, *Beiträge zum Verständnis der Odyssee* (Berlin 1972) 96–97; similarly Ø. Andersen, "Odysseus and the Wooden Horse," *SymbOslo* 52 (1977) 9–15; Goldhill, *Ramus* 17 (1988) 20–21; S. D. Olson, "The Stories of Helen and Menelaus (*Odyssey* 4.240–89) and the Return of Odysseus," *AJP* 110 (1989) 388–91; de Jong, *Narratological Commentary* 101–102. Cf. Pucci, *Odysseus Polutropos* 86–87, who refers to this phenomenon as "retroactivation."

[23] In addition to what follows, Clay, *Wrath of Athena* 77, argues convincingly that Odysseus' boar-tusk helmet (*Il.* 10.260–271) is a disguise; cf. Murnaghan, *Disguise and Recognition* 2: Odysseus' "capacity for disguise distinguishes him from the other great Achaean warriors."

[24] Ὀδυσσεύς τε αἰκισάμενος ἑαυτὸν κατάσκοπος εἰς Ἴλιον παραγίνεται, καὶ ἀναγνωρισθεὶς ὑφ' Ἑλένης περὶ τῆς ἁλώσεως τῆς πόλεως συντίθεται κτείνας τέ τινας τῶν Τρώων ἐπὶ τὰς ναῦς ἀφικνεῖται, "And Odysseus beats himself up and enters Troy as a spy. He is recognized by Helen and comes to an agreement with her about the taking of the city, and he kills some of the Trojans and arrives back at the ships." The tale seems to have been well known later: e.g. Ion *TrGF* I 19 FF 43a–49a, Eur. *Hec.* 239–241 with schol. M *Hec.* 240 Schwartz, [Eur.] *Rhes.* 503–507, 715–721, Apollod. *Epit.* 5.13. The

version, according to which it is Thoas who wounds Odysseus when they go up to Troy (schol. ANm Lyc. 780 Leone = *Il.Parv.* fr.7 Bernabé). Presumably this, like the Homeric passage, refers to a scouting mission (perhaps having to do with the Palladium), in advance of the Trojan Horse gambit.

Helen's tale in the *Odyssey*, Proclus' account in the argumentum of the *Little Iliad*, and the version attested in the scholion to Lycophron most likely refer to different versions of the same tradition. Homer and what Proclus reports are not incompatible. Helen does not include the detail that she came to an agreement with Odysseus about the capture of the city, but Menelaus' response to her story (4.266–289) suggests that Odysseus must have told her about it. How else could she have known that there were Greeks inside the Horse? Helen should be understood as editing the story to her own benefit, with Menelaus providing a corrective supplement.[25] The scholion to Lycophron includes Thoas, who beats Odysseus up and joins him in sneaking into Troy. This is a departure from Homer and what is attested in Proclus, but to associate Thoas closely with Odysseus is not problematic. Aetolian Thoas follows Odysseus in the Catalogue of Ships (*Il.* 2.631–644) and in the list of Helen's suitors in the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women* (fr.198 M.-W.). They also appear together at *Il.* 7.168, and Thoas renders Odysseus aid in the Odyssean beggar's cloak tale (14.494–501).[26] To include Thoas in the story of Odysseus' infiltration of Troy would not have been a difficulty, therefore, and we can conclude in

tragedy called the Πτωχεία by Aristotle (*Poet.* 1459b6) was probably about similar events, although the relevant passage of the *Poetics* is problematic. Hdt. 3.153–158 is clearly much indebted to the tradition: cf. D. Asheri et al., *A Commentary on Herodotus: Books I–VI* (Oxford 2007) 523–524, with further examples.

[25] Goldhill, *Ramus* 17 (1988) 21–4, who relates the differences between the two speeches to the "openness of meaning" he evokes in the *Odyssey*; de Jong, *Narratological Commentary* 101–102; Heath, *The Talking Greeks* 73–74.

[26] On the close association of Thoas with Odysseus see J. Marks, "Alternative Odysseys: The Case of Thoas and Odysseus," *TAPA* 133 (2003) 209–226.

general that some version of Helen's story would likely have been familiar to much of the bard's audience.

Thus it is Telemachus, and not the audience, who learns about Odysseus from Helen's tale, just as he and not the audience is informed by Nestor's account of Odysseus' favoured status in Athena's eyes. From the audience's point of view, Helen's tale is an anticipatory doublet, "a simple, straightforward rendition of a narrative pattern … followed by a more complex or elaborate version of the same."[27] Helen's account of Odysseus' infiltration of Troy anticipates the much more lengthy narrative of his stealthy return to his own *oikos*. The bard's audience is aware of this anticipation, but Telemachus cannot be. Odysseus has not yet returned to Ithaca. The discrepancy between the awareness of the audience and of Telemachus creates a tension that needs to be resolved. Telemachus is aware that he has just learned about Odysseus' cunning and endurance from Helen and Menelaus, but he cannot know just how closely Helen's story resembles the arc of the second half of the *Odyssey*. The audience must wait in anticipation for Telemachus' awareness to catch up to its own.

The moment the audience is waiting for, I would argue, occurs when Odysseus finally meets Telemachus face-to-face. At first, Odysseus maintains his beggar's disguise, but, when they are left alone, Athena removes the disguise, and father and son are united at last (16.164–191). Understandably, however, Telemachus rejects Odysseus' claim to be his father, saying that he is rather some god come to make him suffer all the more (194–200). After all, Telemachus has just been visited by Athena, who took various forms and toyed with the poor young man's expectations.[28] But Odysseus' response ties everything together

[27] B. Sammons, *Device and Composition in the Greek Epic Cycle* (Oxford 2017) 102–103, with a review of the literature. He suggests the term 'narrative doublet' when the repetition of narrative patterns is involved. Sammons' specificity is welcome here because we are dealing with the similarity between narrative motifs and not the use of language.

[28] It is a truism in early Greek literature that the gods cannot be detected

(16.202–212):

> Τηλέμαχ', οὔ σε ἔοικε φίλον πατέρ' ἔνδον ἐόντα
> οὔτε τι θαυμάζειν περιώσιον οὔτ' ἀγάασθαι.
> οὐ μὲν γάρ τοι ἔτ' ἄλλος ἐλεύσεται ἐνθάδ' Ὀδυσσεύς,
> ἀλλ' ὅδ' ἐγὼ τοιόσδε, παθὼν κακά, πολλὰ δ' ἀληθείς,
> ἤλυθον εἰκοστῷ ἔτεϊ ἐς πατρίδα γαῖαν.
> αὐτάρ τοι τόδε ἔργον Ἀθηναίης ἀγελείης,
> ἥ τέ με τοῖον ἔθηκεν ὅπως ἐθέλει, δύναται γάρ,
> ἄλλοτε μὲν πτωχῷ ἐναλίγκιον, ἄλλοτε δ' αὖτε
> ἀνδρὶ νέῳ καὶ καλὰ περὶ χροῒ εἵματ' ἔχοντι.
> ῥηίδιον δὲ θεοῖσι, τοὶ οὐρανὸν εὐρὺν ἔχουσιν,
> ἠμὲν κυδῆναι θνητὸν βροτὸν ἠδὲ κακῶσαι.
>
> Telemachus, it does not beseem you to wonder too greatly that your father is in the house, or to be amazed. For you may be sure no other Odysseus will ever come here; but I here, I, just as you see me, after sufferings and many wanderings, have come in the twentieth year to my native land. But this, you must know, is the work of Athena, leader of the host, who made me such as I am, as she wishes—for she has the power—at one time like a beggar, and at still another time like a young man, and one wearing clothes about his body. Easy it is for the gods, who hold broad heaven, both to glorify a mortal man and to abase him.

This passage has long been a source of dissatisfaction to the Homeric scholar. For example, Beck argues that Odysseus and Telemachus "accept each other not by exchanging or recognizing *sēmata* ('signs'), as in other scenes of recognition between Odysseus and his household, but because Odysseus repeatedly

by mortals against their will: O. Jörgensen, "Das Auftreten der Götter in den Buechern ι–μ der Odyssee," *Hermes* 39 (1904) 352–382; Clay, *The Wrath of Athena* 1–4; A. Bierl, " 'Turn on the light!' Epiphany, the God-Like Hero Odysseus, and the Golden Lamp of Athena in Homer's *Odyssey*," *ICS* 29 (2004) 47–48; Murnaghan, *Disguise and Recognition* 49–53; cf. *Il.* 20.131, *Od.* 13.312–313, 16.161, *Hom.Hymn.Dem.* 111. And, in the second half of the *Odyssey*, Odysseus himself is, in a manner of speaking, playing the role of a god who disguises himself in order to test mortals: E. Kearns, "The Return of Odysseus: A Homeric Theoxeny," *CQ* 32 (1982) 2–8; de Jong, *Narratological Commentary* 332; Bierl 50–52; Cook, *Papers of the Langford Latin Seminar* 15 (2012) 53–111, with bibliography on 53–55. Telemachus is wise to be cautious.

states his identity and essentially forces Telemachus to accept him. Between Odysseus and Telemachus, indeed, there are no *sēmata* because as yet there has been no relationship between them."[29] The claim is essentially that Telemachus accepts Odysseus' rejoinder to his initial rejection based solely on Odysseus' assertion of his authority. And indeed there is no explicit indication that Odysseus gives Telemachus a token to recognize him by, or that Telemachus recognizes such a thing, as occurs later with Penelope (σήματ' ἀναγνούσῃ, 23.206) or Laertes (σήματ' ἀναγνόντος, 24.346).[30] More generally, the content of Odysseus' rejoinder is simply not thought to be sufficiently persuasive for Telemachus.

However, I would argue that, while Odysseus may not provide Telemachus with *sēmata* for him to recognize, his rejoinder is no less persuasive than the signs he offers to Penelope and Laertes.[31] My claim is perhaps best illustrated if we contrast this reunion with the two prototypical reunion scenes, namely those with Penelope and Laertes. As has already been noted, these two scenes do contain the phrase *sēmat' anagignōskein*. In Penelope's case, the only *sēma* that she will accept in the end is the immovable olive-tree bed that Odysseus fashioned himself (23.174–206). And Laertes accepts a combination of Odysseus'

[29] Beck, *Homeric Conversation* 74; cf. n.4 above. The category of *sēmata* in the *Odyssey* is well-studied: Foley, *Homer's Traditional Art* 278 n.2.

[30] Erbse, *Beiträge* 106–107, contends that Telemachus cannot recognize ((*ana*)*gignōskein*) Odysseus because he has not met him since infancy. It is worth noting, however, that Aristotle (*Poet.* 1455a1–5) characterizes Alcinous' reaction to Odysseus' weeping (*Od.* 8.533–534) as recognition (*anagnōrisis*), even though the two have never met before. Telemachus also recognizes (ἔγνω, 1.420) Athena, and he does not appear to have met her any more recently than he has Odysseus.

[31] Foley would likely have argued that Odysseus' change in appearance is, in fact, a *sēma* (*Homer's Traditional Art* 259–260). If this is the case, then Odysseus' rejoinder is required to provide Telemachus with the correct interpretation of the *sēma*: Pucci, *Odysseus Polutropos* 95.

scar and the naming of the trees in their orchard (24.331–346).[32] These two scenes correspond to Aristotle's first type of recognition (*anagnōrisis*), ἡ ἀτεχνοτάτη καὶ ᾗ πλείστῃ χρῶνται δι' ἀπορίαν, ἡ διὰ τῶν σημείων, "the least skillful and the one people use the most because of a lack of ingenuity, namely recognition through signs." Aristotle goes on to divide this category into two further categories, a better (βελτίους) and a less skillful (ἀτεχνότεραι), using Odysseus' scar as an illustration. The recognition of Odysseus' scar by the swineherds (*Od.* 21.217–222) is inferior because Odysseus shows it to them for the sake of proving (πίστεως ἕνεκα) his identity. The accidental recognition of the scar by Eurycleia (19.386–475), however, is superior because it happens from a reversal (ἐκ περιπετείας, *Poet.* 1454b19–30).[33]

Aristotle's judgment of *sēmata* as used to enable a recognition scene may be harsh when it comes to the *Odyssey*, but his observation is insightful nonetheless. The *sēmata* that Penelope and Laertes accept from Odysseus are not mentioned anywhere else in the poem, except when the scar is similarly used for the purpose of recognition, as we have seen. I take Aristotle's criticism to be that these tokens of identification are inferior means of recognition because they are contrived (πεποιημένων, 1455a20), and consequently poorly (or not at all) integrated into the story, with the device accordingly only having a superficial effect on the audience. One might readily disagree with Aristotle in particular cases, such as the olive-wood bed that Odysseus built. Despite the fact that it has never been mentioned before and only appears as a means for Penelope to accept Odysseus, it

[32] Odysseus' reunion with Laertes has often been thought to be problematic, but see now C. H. Stocking, *The Politics of Sacrifice in Early Greek Myth and Poetry* (Cambridge 2017) 143–146.

[33] To Aristotle (1452a32–3), recognition is best when it occurs along with a reversal; cf. Macfarlane, *AJP* 121 (2000) 377–378. But contrast Porphyry (*Quaest.Od.* 126–127 Schrader), who reports Aristotle as faulting Eurycleia's recognition of Odysseus as based on faulty reasoning: anyone with a scar is Odysseus? Cf. Richardson, *Papers of the Liverpool Latin Seminar* 4 (1983) 230–231.

nonetheless has powerful thematic resonances.[34] But Aristotle's point stands inasmuch as there is an advantage to supplying the audience with the particular means by which recognition is to be achieved in advance of the recognition scene itself. As we have seen, the audience is waiting for Telemachus to reach its level of awareness with respect to the relevance of Athena and Odysseus' capacity for infiltration to the requirements of the second half of Odysseus' return.

Telemachus' awareness begins to approach that of the audience during his meeting with Odysseus. This meeting probably corresponds to Aristotle's fourth type of recognition, which happens through inference (ἐκ συλλογισμοῦ, 1455a4). Telemachus recognizes (ἔγνω) that Athena has paid him a visit (*Od.* 1.420). She sends him on a journey during which, among other things, he learns about Odysseus' special relationship with Athena (3.218–224) and his capacity for disguise and infiltration (4.244–258). So, when a beggar appears on Ithaca, changes form, and claims that he is Odysseus, Telemachus not unreasonably assumes that some god has come to toy with him again (16.181–183, 194–195). Telemachus does not yet believe (οὐ … πω ἐπείθετο) that this is his father (192), but Odysseus is left with an opening. For he has, as Müller has shown, the power of Athena's name, which he quickly uses (207),[35] and now Telemachus is faced with an inevitable series of inferences. He has just been visited by Athena, who sent him to see Nestor, who in turn informed him about Athena's special relationship with Odysseus. It is beyond coincidence that, following this, a man should arrive on Ithaca the day before Telemachus himself returns and claim both that he is Odysseus and that his transformation is the

[34] See especially F. Zeitlin, *Playing the Other: Gender and Society in Classical Greek Literature* (Chicago 1996) 20–27. C. Anghelina, "Eumaios' Knowledge of the Scar," *GRBS* 54 (2014) 146–156, provides an excellent argument in favour of Odysseus' scar being well incorporated into the *Odyssey*.

[35] M. Müller, *Athene als göttliche Helferin in der Odyssee* (Heidelberg 1966) 110; similarly Kearns, *CQ* 32 (1982) 4–5; Cook, *Papers of the Langford Latin Seminar* 15 (2012) 98.

work of none other than Athena. The fact that this man also has the Athena-given capacity to assume the guise of a mean figure, allowing him to infiltrate hostile territory, only makes his claim the more persuasive.[36] Telemachus has been prepared for this conversation by his mainland journey.

Before Odysseus' rejoinder, Telemachus' insistence that he is a god come to torment him is reasonable. He believes that Athena has been doing just that. But Odysseus shows not only that Athena's actions, while apparently mischievous at times, have allowed Telemachus to identify his father, but also that he himself is that man. This recognition scene is unlike the other recognition scenes in the *Odyssey* because the audience has been prepared for it through Telemachus' journey. The other recognition scenes correspond to Aristotle's first type. Telemachus' recognition of Odysseus is more thoroughly worked into the poem. This dissimilarity is, in my view, the main reason why Homeric scholars have been hesitant to accept that Odysseus' rejoinder to Telemachus is persuasive. The basis of comparison has been other recognition scenes in the *Odyssey*, and they are not comparable.[37] They are based on *sēmata* that have not been introduced before, whereas Telemachus and the audience have long been prepared for his reunion with Odysseus.[38]

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[36] This last point was anticipated in antiquity: schol. H *Od.* 4.245c Pontani, who offers several more examples. See also E. Block, "Clothing Makes the Man: A Pattern in the *Odyssey*," *TAPA* 115 (1985) 1–11.

[37] Cf. Eustathius' observation (*Comm. Od.* II 214.9–10 Stallbaum) that Odysseus is recognized in unexpected and varying ways.

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