

# The Amnesty at the End of the *Odyssey*

*Edwin Carawan*

**T**O QUELL the insurrection at Ithaca Zeus anticipates a resolution that is often read like a fairy-tale ending: Odysseus shall be king ever after, the two sides shall be friends as before in peace and prosperity, and, to that end, the gods shall erase all memory of the killing (*Od.* 24.483–486):

“ὄρκια πιστὰ ταμόντες ὁ μὲν βασιλευέτω αἰεὶ,  
ἡμεῖς δ’ αὖ παίδων τε κασιγνήτων τε φόνοιο  
ἔκκλησιν θέωμεν τοὶ δ’ ἀλλήλους φιλεόντων  
ὡς τὸ πάρος, πλοῦτος δὲ καὶ εἰρήνη ἄλις ἔστω.”

Translators and commentators have described it with various images but mostly with the same understanding: the ἔκκλησις that gods provide is a spell of amnesia that makes it impossible to recall the killing. Fitzgerald’s rendering is representative (emphasis added): “let [Odysseus] be king by a sworn pact forever and we, for our part, *will blot out the memory* of sons and brothers slain.” In the same vein Cook translated φόνοιο ἔκκλησιν θέωμεν, “let us bring about *oblivion* for the murder”; Fagles has “let us *purge their memories* of the bloody slaughter.”<sup>1</sup> And the fixity of this received opinion, that the ἔκκλησις in question is an “oblivion” or purging of the memory, is reflected even in Loney’s critical analysis of the revenge theme in the *Odyssey*, where it makes for

<sup>1</sup> Robert Fitzgerald, *Homer, The Odyssey* (Garden City 1963) 460; Albert Cook, *Homer, The Odyssey* (New York 1974) 334; Robert Fagles, *Homer, The Odyssey* (New York 1996) 483. For the sense of erasing or obliterating the memory cf. J. H. Voss, *Homers Odyssee* (Vienna 1816) 338 (emphasis added), “Wir dann wollen der Söhn’ und leiblichen Brüder Ermordung *Tilgen aus aller Geist.*” For French variations see below with nn.14–15, 18.

an awkward conclusion: “The poem can only end once the gods institute a radical amnesia.”<sup>2</sup>

This interpretation, however standard, is problematic in several ways, both in terms of lexicography and in view of the historical process in which this text emerged. The term ἐκλησις is not found again in ancient Greek, and the record of comparable usage for ἐκλανθάνειν makes the sense of “oblivion” rather doubtful. The abrupt cancellation of reciprocal vengeance seems at odds with major threads of the plot. And, if we suppose that those plot lines converge upon rituals that shaped the early city-state, this picture of a community that survived only by a spell of amnesia seems all the more unlikely; for it ignores the working assumptions of an oath-bound settlement as the Archaic audience would understand it. To be sure, such confusion only confirms the judgment that some scholars have rendered, condemning the last book and a half of the *Odyssey* as a haphazard “Continuation.” But, whoever the author, he would probably be reluctant to venture far from what his audience would comprehend. Comparable usage suggests that ἐκλησις would be readily understood as a practical resolution to the crisis at hand, one that might have singular importance for an audience of, say, the sixth century in Athens.<sup>3</sup> This is not to suggest that the ending is as artful as what went before it, only that we understand it in the context of its original reception.

To that end, let us first review how “oblivion” (vel sim.)

<sup>2</sup> Alexander C. Loney, *The Ethics of Revenge and the Meanings of the Odyssey* (Oxford 2019) 193.

<sup>3</sup> On the awkward ending or “Continuation” (from 23.297 to the end of 24), see esp. Carroll Moulton, “The End of the *Odyssey*,” *GRBS* 15 (1974) 153–169; cf. D. L. Page, *The Homeric Odyssey* (Oxford 1955) 101–136; Reinhold Merkelbach, *Untersuchungen zur Odyssee*<sup>2</sup> (Munich 1969) 142–155. Richard Seaford, *Reciprocity and Ritual: Homer and Tragedy in the Developing City-state* (Oxford 1994) 38–42, concluded that the Continuation was most probably a work of the sixth century, perhaps fixed in the Peisistratean recension. I proceed warily in line with Seaford in §4, though the model of amnesty should work as well for a much older *Odyssey*.

emerged as a standard translation for the singular term ἔκλησις, then consider the evidence for what ἔκλησις ought to mean in view of how ἐκλανθάνειν is used in Archaic material and how it might describe an oath-bound reconciliation. In the conclusion we explore how that more practical “amnesty” would serve to complete the plot of the *Odyssey* and seems to be assumed in traditional sequels.

### 1. *How “oblivion” prevailed*

ἔκλησις is a rare and puzzling word. It is not found again until Eustathius’ commentary, and the scholia make no reference to the problematic lines where it is found (484–485). That might be because those lines were not in the text at hand,<sup>4</sup> but it is most probably because the settlement that Zeus and Athena foresaw was understood in conventional terms and needed no explanation. Thus in the synopsis introducing the scholia to Book 24 the outcome is described simply as a treaty or “covenants,” συνθήκαι. Understood in that way, ἔκλησις ought to describe something like the commitments to “forgive and forget” that often concluded historical settlements.<sup>5</sup>

In the absence of any earlier reference, the translation of ἔκλησις as “oblivion” (vel sim.) seems ultimately based on the interpretation that Eustathius gave it in the twelfth century.<sup>6</sup> But even he may not have envisioned the sort of amnesia that later

<sup>4</sup> As noted in Allen’s apparatus: 484 *omisit q* (11 MSS., mostly of the 15<sup>th</sup> cent.); both lines 484–485 are missing in *Vat.gr.* 24.

<sup>5</sup> As in Samuel Butler’s translation (n.32 below). See also Edwin Carawan, *The Athenian Amnesty and Reconstructing the Law* (Oxford 2013) 40, 64.

<sup>6</sup> The excerpts here and in the following notes are taken from J. G. Stallbaum, *Commentarii ad Homerii Odysseam* II (Leipzig 1826) 331. A new edition with translation by Eric Cullhed and S. Douglas Olson, *Eustathius of Thessalonica, Commentary on the Odyssey* (Leiden 2022–) is scheduled for completion by 2030; in the meantime I am obliged to Olson for guidance from the work in progress. In the present study translations are mine, except where noted, and any errors are my own. On Eustathius’ moralizing scope, see now Baukje van den Berg, “Twelfth-Century Scholars on the Moral Exemplarity of Ancient Poetry,” *GRBS* 63 (2023) 115–127.

translators have found.<sup>7</sup> In his discussion of this passage he seems to understand ἔκλησις as an effect of the oath ritual, not a spell that allows the settlement to proceed in ignorance.<sup>8</sup> He reads the prefix ἐκ- as emphatic<sup>9</sup> and deduces *extreme* forgetting (ἄγαν λήθη) from that clue.<sup>10</sup> But his other comments do not suggest a permanent oblivion.

To illustrate god-given ἔκλησις, Eustathius cites the prayer in Euripides' *Orestes* 213–216: “O mistress Lethe (Forgetting) of evils, how clever you are / goddess responding to the prayers of those who meet misfortune.” Orestes goes on to ask how he arrived at his predicament: “I have no recollection, bereft of the wits (I had) before.”<sup>11</sup> Shortly thereafter (255) his memory and torment return, but it is that moment when the madman awakens and embraces his blissful ignorance that has shaped the modern understanding of ἔκλησις in the *Odyssey*. Alexander Pope's rendering to that effect is perhaps the most influential in English, but before we turn to that version, we should consider

<sup>7</sup> After positing the basic sense of Zeus' plan and commenting on the disjointed syntax, Eustathius explains: ἔκλησις δὲ ἢ ἄγαν λήθη κατ' ἐπίτασιν προθέσεως [“*with emphasis from the prefix*”], καθὰ καὶ ἐκσίγησις Πυθαγορικῶς ἢ ἄκρα σιγή.

<sup>8</sup> E.g. II 331.16 Stallbaum, just preceding the gloss on ἔκλησις (previous note), ὄρκια πιστὰ γενέσθαι, δι' ὧν λήθη μὲν ἔσται τῶν γενομένων φόνων, φιλία δ' ἐπὶ τοῖς ἐξῆς.

<sup>9</sup> By contrast, there seems to be a cumulative effect in the prefix ἐπί- in ἐπίλασις in Pindar's *Pythian* 1.46, as forgetting of troubles comes with continued prosperity; cf. Helen's moment of solace in Eur. *Orestes* 66, when reunited with her child, ἐπιλήθεται κακῶν.

<sup>10</sup> On Pythagorean ἐκ-σίγησις see Walter Burkert, *Lore and Science in Ancient Pythagoreanism* (Cambridge [Mass.] 1972) 178–179.

<sup>11</sup> ὦ πόντια λήθη τῶν κακῶν, ὡς εἶ σοφὴ / καὶ τοῖσι δυστυχοῦσιν εὐκταία θεός. / πόθεν ποτ' ἦλθον δεῦρο; πῶς δ' ἀφικόμην; / ἀμνημονῶ γάρ, τῶν πρὶν ἀπολειφθεῖς φρενῶν. Cf. C. W. Willink, *Euripides Orestes* (Oxford 1986) ad loc. For temporary abeyance of grief when something else takes its place cf. Soph. *Phil.* 877–878, τοῦδε τοῦ κακοῦ δοκεῖ / λήθη τις εἶναι κἀνάπαυλα δῆ; and Helen's spell upon the party at Sparta, κακῶν ἐπιλήθον ἀπάντων (*Od.* 4.220–221), with Eustathius' commentary, I 161 Stallbaum = Cullhed and Olson I 746–749.

what preceded it.

“Oblivion” made its way into the early modern versions by way of Latin *oblivio*. In the ending, as often elsewhere, George Chapman’s *Odyssey* (1615) made good use of Spondanus’ Latin translation.<sup>12</sup> Of course, *oblivio* might mean “oblivion” or simply forgetting, but it was also the standard gloss for ἀμνηστία (e.g. Nepos *Thrasymb.* 3.2). Chapman’s version seems to follow that implication: it strongly suggests that solace will come from the settlement and its cumulative effect:<sup>13</sup>

“...when Ulysses’ hand  
Hath reacht full wreake, his then renown’d command  
Shall reigne for ever, faithfull Truces strooke  
‘Twixt him and all, for every man shall brooke  
His Sons’ and Brothers’ slaughters by our meane  
To send Oblivion in, expugning cleane  
The Character of enmity in all,  
As in best Leagues before...” (649–656)

An enduring treaty requires that “every man shall brooke” (or bear) the loss of his kinsmen, and to that end god-sent oblivion serves to vanquish the enmity, not to erase all memory.

By contrast, Eustathius’ reading had a pervasive influence through the prose version and “remarques” by Anne Dacier. Here Zeus assures Athena that the gods will inspire the kinsmen to forget all about the slaying of their sons and brothers (emphasis added):<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Johannes Spondanus (Jean de Sponde), *Homeri quae extant omnia, Ilias, Odyssea, Batrachomyomachia, Hymni* (Geneva 1606) II 338: “Postquam iam procos punivit divus Ulysses, / Foederibus fidis percussis, hic quidem regnet semper. / Nos autem rursus filiorum fratrumque caedis / Oblivionem inducamus...” On Chapman’s use of Spondanus see George deF. Lord, *Homeric Renaissance. The Odyssey of George Chapman* (London 1956) 24–25.

<sup>13</sup> Text: Allardyce Nicoll, *Chapman’s Homer II The Odyssey*<sup>2</sup> (Princeton 1967) 419. For Pope’s passages that seem to follow Chapman, Ogilby, et al., see Maynard Mack, *Poems of Alexander Pope X* (New Haven 1967) Appendix F, esp. 508.

<sup>14</sup> *L’Odyssée d’Homère, traduite en François III* (Paris 1716) 593, with notes at

“Puisqu’ Ulysse a puni ces Princes & qu’il est satisfait, qu’on mette bas les armes, qu’on fasse la paix, & qu’on la confirme par des sermens: qu’Ulysse & sa postérité regnent à jamais dans Ithaque, & nous de nostre costé inspirons un oubli general du meurtre des fils & des freres; que l’amitié & l’union soient restablies comme auparavant, & que l’abondance & la paix consolent de toutes les miseres passées.”

In her notes she acknowledges Eustathius’ ἄγων λήθη and the example of Orestes’ prayer. As for the oath-bound treaty, she explains that the gods must inspire men to fulfill the vows they have made; their covenants are otherwise futile.<sup>15</sup>

Pope’s translation of the *Odyssey* appeared soon after an odd disagreement arose between him and Mme. Dacier over his handling of the *Iliad*. Pope had described Homer as an artist of boundless invention whose work was a “wild paradise”; Dacier emphasized the constraints of tradition.<sup>16</sup> Both versions treat the ἐκλησις as a general or complete forgetting, but there is a marked disparity in regard to the oath ritual. The crucial lines (in italics) should be read with some context:

“Yet hear the issue: Since Ulysses’ hand  
Has slain the suitors, Heaven shall bless the land.  
*None now the kindred of the unjust shall own;  
Forgot the slaughter’d brother and the son:*  
Each future day increase of wealth shall bring,

628–629 (spelling and punctuation as in the original) [<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k123075s/f636.item>].

<sup>15</sup> Dacier, *L’Odyssée* 628–629: “Les hommes ont beau convenir d’oublier le passé, si les Dieux n’inspirent cet oubli, le souvenir n’est jamais effacé” (in later editions rephrased as *conviennant en vain d’oublier*).

<sup>16</sup> In Pope’s correspondence with his collaborators Dacier’s version and her notes on Eustathius are treated with some concern: see esp. the letters to William Broome from 1724 to Jan. 1726, in George Sherburn, *The Correspondence of Alexander Pope* (Oxford 1956) II 265, 339, and 363. In the last of these Pope calls for Broome to acknowledge his reliance on Dacier’s notes, and Broome complies in the long last note to the *Odyssey*: Mack, *Poems of Alexander Pope* X 378. On the timing of the dispute see Howard D. Weinbrot, “Alexander Pope and Madame Dacier’s Homer,” *Huntington Library Quarterly* 62 (1999) 1–23.

*And o'er the past Oblivion stretch her wing,  
 Long shall Ulysses in his empire rest,  
 His people blessing, by his people bless'd.  
 Let all be peace.*"—He said, and gave the nod  
 That binds the Fates...

Pope does not even mention the oath-bound settlement until the next-to-last line of the poem, where Athena "In Mentor's form, confirm'd the full accord." Rather than rely upon the effect of the oath-taking, this oblivion seems to precede and prepare for it; amnesia is immediate and complete. Henceforth none of the kinsmen shall even remember their ties to the suitors. Pope may have drawn some features of this forgetting from his English predecessors,<sup>17</sup> but the scope of it seems based on Dacier's "oubli general" and her notes on Eustathius.

## 2. "Cause to forget"

The closest comparanda suggest that the Archaic audience would understand *ἐκλήσις* as, indeed, inspired by the gods, but prompted more by fears than prayers. In this section we consider comparable language; in the next section, the oath ritual.

In regular usage the verb *ἐκ-λανθάνειν* describes a familiar mechanism: forgetting comes when one urgent concern drives out another. What is forgotten is not obliterated but seems simply overshadowed by a more compelling matter.<sup>18</sup> Thus, sitting down to dinner with the Phaeacians, Odysseus insists on postponing his story, for urgent need compels a man to eat and drink and so obscures his sorrows: the belly "makes me forget all that I have suffered," *ἐκ δέ με πάντων / ληθάνει, ὅσσ' ἔπαθον* (*Od.* 7.220–221). That model of competing passions seems to operate

<sup>17</sup> Among the most influential (see n.13 above), John Ogilby has "They shall forget their Dear Relations slain": *Homer, His Odysseys Translated, Adorn'd with Sculpture and Illustrated with Annotations* (London 1665) 364. But Ogilby does not mention "oblivion" and at least acknowledges a treaty, as the Ithacans "in blessed Union joyn."

<sup>18</sup> For "overturning" one claim with another, cf. Victor Bérard, *L'Odyssee*<sup>6</sup> (Paris 1963 [1924]) III 189: "aux frères et fils de ceux qui sont tombés, nous verserions l'oubli, et, l'ancienne amitié les unissant entre eux."

at all levels.

Thus Aphrodite distracted even the mind of Zeus (*Hymn to Aphrodite* 38–40):

καί τε τοῦ εὖτε θέλοι πυκινὰς φρένας ἔξαπαφοῦσα  
 ῥηϊδίως συνέμιξε καταθνητῆσι γυναιξίν  
 Ἥρης ἐκλελαθοῦσα κασιγνήτης ἀλόχου τε.

The last line is easily misconstrued. Evelyn-White translated, “she beguiles even his wise heart whensoever she pleases, and mates him with mortal women, *unknown to Hera*, his sister and his wife.”<sup>19</sup> But that “unknown” misses the point of Ἥρης ἐκλελαθοῦσα: Zeus is the direct object implied (as of συνέμιξε), and the genitive Ἥρης ... κασιγνήτης ἀλόχου τε identifies what Aphrodite causes him to forget,<sup>20</sup> despite his deep obligation. Parsed in this way, the passage celebrates the power of Aphrodite all the more unreservedly: it is not Hera who ignores the many liaisons of Zeus, but he who is driven to forget her when Aphrodite prevails.

Among the forces overpowering memory, most compelling is imminent death or the fear of it: thus, in dealing with the slave-women who consorted with the suitors, Odysseus advises Telemachus to kill them by the sword, “take their lives and *let them forget* all about Aphrodite,” ψυχὰς ἔξαφέλησθε καὶ ἐκλελόθωντ’ Ἀφροδίτης (22.444). In this and similar expressions there is a grim irony, but it should not obscure the conventional understanding of how forgetting comes about: death puts an end to all such desires, but true forgetting requires at least a moment when the victims would have remembered, were it not for the imminent threat.

Perhaps the most revealing passage, suggesting something like the ἔκκλησις that Zeus envisions, comes amid the travels of Telemachus (3.223–224): Nestor assures him that if Athena should

<sup>19</sup> Hugh G. Evelyn-White, *Hesiod, The Homeric Hymns and Homeric*<sup>2</sup> (Cambridge [Mass.] 1964 [1914]) 409.

<sup>20</sup> As treated by Nicholas Richardson, *Three Homeric Hymns: To Apollo, Hermes, and Aphrodite* (Cambridge 2010) 229, citing *Il.* 2.600 for comparison.



befriend Telemachus, as she did his father, each of the suitors would forget all about marriage (ἐκλελάθοιτο γάμοιο). Implicit in Nestor's scenario is the imminent threat of death; the compelling motive is fear of god.<sup>21</sup>

It is that imperative that best explains how Zeus and Athena will establish ἔκκλησις through the oath ritual. After calling the gods to witness their settlement, the oath-takers will be haunted by fear of the gods' retribution. If they are ever inclined to recall their grievances, that fear will drive out the memory.

### 3. *The ritual drama*

That sort of ἔκκλησις, enforced by fear of god, is dramatized in the oath ritual signified by the formula ὄρκια πιστὰ ταμόντες. This "cutting trusty oath-offerings" refers to a pattern of action that links the oath-takers with the victims, vividly representing the finality of their oath and the fate of any who break it. We are given a glimpse of it in Book 3 of the *Iliad*, in the preparations for Alexander and Menelaus to resolve their claims by combat (67–110, 245–301). In response to Hector's challenge, Menelaus proposes a sacrifice of young rams, offered by both sides, and an agreement to be sworn by Priam for the Trojans and Agamemnon for the Greeks: the winner of the duel will take home Helen and all the goods she brought with her. The sacrificial animals are called ὄρκια πιστὰ (245, 269) and the linkage between them and the participants seems implicit in the prayers of those who share in the sacrifice. Agamemnon himself cuts hair from the rams' heads as tokens for the chiefs on both sides to hold (273–274); and then he cuts the throats of the animals, after calling on Zeus and Helios to witness the oath. Wine is spilled on the ground to mix with the blood, and many on both sides echo the sentiment: if any should violate the oaths that are symbolized in these victims, "let their brain matter flow on the ground" like the

<sup>21</sup> With a similar implication, Hesiod warns "bribe-devouring kings" to beware of Athena's retribution and "forget all about (rendering) crooked judgments," ἐπὶ πάγχυ λάθεσθε (*Op.* 263–264).

libation, ὄδ' ἐσφ' ἐγκέφαλος χαμάδις ῥέοι ὡς ὄδε οἶνος (300).<sup>22</sup>

In this sequence “cutting oath-offerings,” ὄρκια τάμνειν, refers to the ritual that seals the exchange with dramatic effect. The adjective πιστά seems proleptic, in the sense that the oath-offerings become “trusted” and compelling by the cutting. The human participants are tangibly linked to the victims, either standing in the blood or clutching a token. And, by implication, even the gods are involved in the “cutting”: thus, in *Od.* 24.483–485, ὄρκια ταμόντες includes them as guarantors of the agreement.<sup>23</sup>

The oath-taking at Ithaca would seal a lopsided agreement, erasing the losses on one side to meet the demands of the other.<sup>24</sup> Odysseus and Telemachus would claim as damages the deprivations that the suitors had done to the estate; the kinsmen, who failed to intervene at Telemachus’ insistence, would have to acknowledge that liability for costs. And somehow that liability would be weighed against the blood-price, the ποινή that they might otherwise demand for the killing of their sons and brothers. The complaint of Telemachus in the assembly of Book 2 seems to anticipate some such resolution.<sup>25</sup> To conclude that settlement they would swear to “forget” the grievances that were thereby resolved.<sup>26</sup> And if they are never mentioned, over time,

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion* (Cambridge [Mass.] 1985) 250–252.

<sup>23</sup> The syntax is surprising, but see the comment by A. Heubeck in *A Commentary on Homer’s Odyssey* III (Oxford 1992) 413, concluding that the “slight inconcinnity” emphasizes “the decisive role of the gods in the establishment of the new order” ending blood-feud.

<sup>24</sup> On Homeric justice see Michael Gagarin, *Early Greek Law* (Berkeley 1986) 26–33; cf. Edwin Carawan, *Rhetoric and the Law of Draco* (Oxford 1998) 51–58.

<sup>25</sup> Before calling on Zeus to assure that those who devour his estate without recompense (νήπιον) meet their death without payment (νήπινοι, *Od.* 2.141–145), Telemachus complained that if others, including kinsmen of the suitors, were directly responsible, he could go to their doors and demand restitution (2.74–78).

<sup>26</sup> In the fifth century and thereafter we find that closing in the form of a

those grievances resolved and forgiven may be truly or nearly forgotten. With that perspective, by some participants it may be understood as a vow of oblivion, but only in the sense that gods are invoked to punish those who prove false to their oath, and fear of god overwhelms any urge to revive what must be forgotten.

Agamemnon seems to recognize that enforcement mechanism when he offers settlement to Achilles in Book 19 of the *Iliad* (187–197): he promises that the women he has taken will be restored; Talthibius shall prepare a boar for sacrifice to Zeus and Helios as guarantors for the oath (ὄρκια πιστὰ τάμωμεν ... κάπρον ἐτοίμασάτω ταμέειν Δί τ' Ἡελίω τε, 191, 197). He insists that he will not be false to his oath before god, οὐδ' ἐπιορκήσω πρὸς δαίμονος (188), and, the ancient audience would probably understand, that is not just because he is a man of his word.

#### 4. Conclusion

On any interpretation the ending must deal with the tally of retribution that has been such a dominant theme in the *Odyssey*.<sup>27</sup> The received opinion (as illustrated in §1) requires a particularly abrupt break in that plotline: by divine *fiat* all memory of the suitors and their slaughter is simply erased from the minds of their kinsmen. And if we are inclined to read the concluding episodes (after 23.296) as the work of a later poet, less faithful to Homeric usage and tradition, it might seem tempting to explain the very end as a figment of that Continuation. That is not where our findings should lead us. If we set aside the ἄγαν λήθη that Eustathius introduced and interpret ἔκκλησις as epic usage of ἐκλανθάνειν would suggest (§2), then we arrive at a resolution of the claims on both sides that would better fit the expectations of an Archaic audience, Homer's or any successor's (§3): ἔκκλησις describes the willful forgetting that is required by the oath-bound agreement; the gods will punish any who violate their oath and

pledge “not to recall wrong” or reassert settled claims (μὴ μνησικακεῖν); see Carawan, *The Athenian Amnesty* 43–65.

<sup>27</sup> Thoroughly analyzed by Loney, *Ethics of Revenge*.

it is that fear that drives out any nagging remembrance. To be clear, in my view the Continuation is almost certainly the work of a later poet (or poets), but the final episode, hectic as it is, should not be explained away as a fantasy. To the contrary, an oath-bound reckoning seems anticipated throughout the poem and sets the stage for later tradition.

The odd phrase ἔκλησιν θέωμεν has been called “thoroughly unhomeric”<sup>28</sup> and, amid such incongruities, one might envision a surprise ending in oblivion with no basis in the traditional story. But Merkelbach argued for an Attic edition that included the Continuation and almost certainly goes back to an official recension of the sixth century.<sup>29</sup> In that era, when the content was substantially fixed, the audience at Athens would understand the Continuation on the same assumptions that they brought to the rest of the story.<sup>30</sup>

The vengeance that Telemachus invoked from Zeus is certainly fulfilled: those who devoured his estate without recompense are themselves destroyed without payment (1.376–380, 2.141–145). Ordinarily the ancient audience would expect some *ποιή* to seal a reconciliation; as Ajax reminded Achilles (*Il.* 9.632–636), even for the killing of a son or brother, one should accept payment and forego further vengeance. If the community is to survive, there must be no vendetta. That principle is reflected in the major fragment of Draco’s law (*IG I<sup>3</sup>* 104.10–20), where we find a series of provisions for reconciliation (*aidesis*) by family or phratry. But the usual arrangements would sometimes

<sup>28</sup> Page, *The Homeric Odyssey* 110–111. His findings on prosody and usage are aptly questioned by Moulton, *GRBS* 15 (1974) 157–161. And see Howard Jones, “Homeric Nouns in -sis,” *Glotta* 51 (1973) 12–13, finding a productive pattern of “naming the action ... *in progress*,” apt for setting “the tone of an edict.”

<sup>29</sup> Reinhold Merkelbach, “Die pisisstratische Redaktion der homerischen Gedichte,” *RhM* 95 (1952) 23–47.

<sup>30</sup> Merkelbach, however, *Untersuchungen* 142–155, saw the Continuation as prelude to the *Telegony*. Moulton, *GRBS* 15 (1974) 168, is surely right to reject any specific alignment.

prove dangerously inadequate: the killer(s) might claim justification, to cancel what they owed; and the victim's kin might refuse to take anything less than full price. That kind of dispute is reflected in the arbitration scene on Achilles' shield (*Il.* 18.497–508). When the two sides are at an impasse, some arbiter must be found; the parties must swear to abide by his judgment and forswear any further retribution. The poet has done what he could to make some such reconciliation inevitable.

Athena-Mentor must prevail upon Odysseus to desist when the suitors' kinsmen have fled in panic. Their leader, Eupheithes, was struck down by Laertes as though by the hand of god. In the council scene that preceded that decisive combat, one faction seems to have followed the father of Antinous rashly, as others spoke against him. Now, without Eupheithes, the insurrection collapses and those who were eager for vengeance will welcome deliverance. Thus a diametrical reversal is brought about within a relatively short segment.<sup>31</sup> The avengers have met their match. They will find some escape from their trauma in the oath ritual. The state of mind in this ἔκκλησις is not a magical oblivion but obedience to the oath one has sworn as the blood and wine seep into the earth. This willful forgetting comes with fear of god in that moment and will be all the more effective over time.

This interpretation is not meant to suggest that ἔκκλησις was any less a god-given salvation, only that the amnesty anticipated by most of the ancient audience would require that the parties' swear in full knowledge of what they forgive.<sup>32</sup> That ending would seem especially significant at Athens in the aftermath of civil conflict in the sixth century. If the Continuation was, indeed, added or adapted in the Peisistratean recension or some

<sup>31</sup> Eustathius saw this as a “marvelous peripety” (II 333 Stallbaum), as Dacier noted, *L'Odyssée* 629.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Samuel Butler, *The Odyssey: rendered into English prose for those who cannot read the original* (London 1900): “Now that Ulysses is revenged, let them swear to a solemn covenant, in virtue of which he shall continue to rule, while we cause the others to forgive and forget the massacre of their sons and brothers.”

definitive Attic edition,<sup>33</sup> the author(s) would naturally appeal to recent history of peace-making.<sup>34</sup> That development would be in line with other adaptations leading to the *Odyssey* we have, translating customs of family obligation into rituals of the early city-state.<sup>35</sup> It would also play into the developing themes of local tradition and regional festival.<sup>36</sup>

The journey that Teiresias foretold (*Od.* 11.119–137) and Odysseus seems committed to fulfill (23.251–284) played out in such sequels.<sup>37</sup> An audience familiar with stories focusing on sons of the heroes would readily anticipate an outcome where Telemachus rules in his father's absence.<sup>38</sup> In later tradition we find at least a few indications of a settlement to set the stage for that aftermath. This is not to suggest that any particular sequel was presupposed, only that later audiences understood the end of the *Odyssey* as leading to a treaty that the parties affirmed in full knowledge of their loss.

The range of such sequels is shown by the final section in the

<sup>33</sup> Merkelbach's finding in this regard, *RhM* 95 (1952) 23–47, is strongly supported by Seaford, *Reciprocity and Ritual* 148–154.

<sup>34</sup> Solon's amnesty law (Plut. *Sol.* 19.4 = fr.22/1 Leão and Rhodes) probably required some such oath-taking by the citizen body, as did the restoration of rights in the 490s (Andoc. 1.107).

<sup>35</sup> As Seaford has reconstructed in *Reciprocity and Ritual*; e.g., the shift from family funeral to city-wide honors for war dead, and the codification of rules for avenging the killing of a family member.

<sup>36</sup> For stories evolving at Panionia and Panathenaia see Gregory Nagy, "Oral Traditions, Written Texts, and Questions of Authorship," in M. Fantuzzi et al. (eds.), *The Greek Epic Cycle and its Ancient Reception* (Cambridge 2015) 59–77, esp. 62–63.

<sup>37</sup> Notably the *Telegony* has Odysseus sail away after the suitors' burial (the opening episodes in Proclus' summary). Merkelbach argued that the second *Nekyia* was guided by the burial episode in *Telegony: Untersuchungen* 142–157. But see Moulton, *GRBS* 15 (1974) 168. Other sequels (see below) build on the same premise.

<sup>38</sup> On the role of sons of the heroes in building the Cycle see especially Benjamin Sammons, "The Space of the Epigone in Early Greek Epic," *Yearbook of Ancient Greek Epic* 3 (2019) 48–66.

*Epitome* of ps.-Apollodorus (7.40): among various endings for Odysseus, the last is that he chose Neoptolemus to arbitrate his quarrel with the suitors' kin, only to be exiled and die of old age in Aetolia.<sup>39</sup> That ending might seem to contradict a dictate of Zeus, βασιλεύετω αἰεῖ, but the later story-tellers felt compelled to treat the subject of it rather loosely: after all, Odysseus is bound to continue his journey for peace with Poseidon and, in his absence, “kingship ever after” falls to his successors.<sup>40</sup> That reading seems confirmed by a fragment of the “Constitution of the Ithakesians” preserved in Plutarch’s *Quaest. Graec.* (presumably going back to Aristotle, fr.507 Rose): Neoptolemus again serves as arbiter and the payment owed to Odysseus he assigns to his son.<sup>41</sup> This version concludes with the emancipation of Eumaeus and Philoetius to become ancestors of notable *genē* in Ithaca. Some such aftermath is perhaps foreshadowed in the *Odyssey* by the persistent formula Εὔμαιε σὺ βῶτα. Direct address suggests that the character was already well known to the ancient audience,<sup>42</sup> as we might expect the forefather of a neighboring clan to be respected at regional performances.

<sup>39</sup> On the further travels see Irad Malkin, *The Returns of Odysseus: Colonization and Ethnicity* (Berkeley 1998), for sequels involving Neoptolemus on the mainland opposite Ithaca (120–155, esp. 127–138) and the rich tradition of Odysseus’ wanderings in Italy (178–209).

<sup>40</sup> As in Dacier’s rendering (136 above), “Ulysse & sa postérité regnent à jamais.”

<sup>41</sup> *Mor.* 294C–D: διαιτητῆς Νεοπτόλεμος ἐδικαίωσε τὸν μὲν Ὀδυσσεῖα μετανασθῆναι καὶ φεύγειν ... τοὺς δὲ τῶν μνηστήρων ἐταίρους καὶ οἰκίους ἀποφέρειν ποινήν Ὀδυσσεῖ τῶν εἰς τὸν οἶκον ἀδικημάτων καθ’ ἕκαστον ἐνιαυτόν. αὐτὸς μὲν οὖν εἰς Ἰταλίαν μετέστη· τὴν δὲ ποινήν τῷ υἱεὶ καθιερώσας ἀποφέρειν ἐκέλευσε τοὺς Ἰθακησίους ... τοὺς δὲ περὶ Εὔμαιον ἐλευθέρωσας ὁ Τηλέμαχος κατέμιξεν εἰς τοὺς πολίτας, καὶ τὸ γένος ἐστὶ Κολιαδῶν ἀπ’ Εὔμαιου...

<sup>42</sup> As A. Hoekstra notes, in *A Commentary on Homer’s Odyssey* II (Oxford 1989) 196, on *Od.* 14.55. Cf. J. Russo’s comment on *Od.* 17.272, in *Commentary* III 33, drawing upon Adam Parry, “Language and Characterization in Homer,” *HSCP* 76 (1972) 9–22, for the view that direct address (as with Patroclus and Menelaus in the *Iliad*) seems reserved for admirable characters in a particularly sympathetic role.

Thus the plan of Zeus, that the parties “cut trusty oath-offerings ... and [the gods] establish amnesty” (24.483–485), was probably received by the Archaic audience as the sort of settlement familiar from epic or their own recent history: an agreement to resolve the claims on both sides and allow no further retribution on those matters. That scenario may have had a particular resonance at Athens in the era of the Peisistratean recension, but it would have had a similar effect wherever stasis and quarrels among the elite had broken the peace and threatened the prosperity of the community. With gods to witness and enforce the agreement, a solution would be swift and certain.

In the very last lines of the *Odyssey*, we are told that Athena in the guise of Mentor arranged the oath ceremony (546–548), ὄρκια δ’ αὖ κατόπισθε ... ἔθηκε. Eustathius seems to have understood κατόπισθε as the scope of the ὄρκια<sup>43</sup> and scholars have often rendered it accordingly, as binding “for the future” (Cook) or “for all the years to come” (Fagles). But that phrase is another *hapax*.<sup>44</sup> The adverb κατόπισθε(ν) more aptly modifies the verb and, in Archaic usage, the prefix κατ- seems to emphasize the sequence, not duration: “*right* behind,” as of a chariot close behind the horses (*Il.* 23.505), or a fair wind behind a ship (*Od.* 11.6, 12.148). In that sense Athena-Mentor “set forth the oath ceremony thereafter,”<sup>45</sup> promptly after the warfare was halted. And the Archaic audience probably nodded in recognition, supposing that the will to forgive and forget would come from that pledge to the gods, not from a spell of amnesia.

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Springfield, Missouri  
ecarawan@missouristate.edu

<sup>43</sup> *Commentarii* II 333 Stallbaum: καὶ ὄρκια κατόπισθεν ἤγουν εἰς τὸ μέλλον. The ἤγουν (ἢ γε οὖν) introduces a gloss or equivalence.

<sup>44</sup> As noted by Heubeck, in *Commentary* III ad loc. He cites *Od.* 22.40, οὔτε ... νέμεσιν κατόπισθεν, for comparison: Odysseus condemns the suitors for fearing neither the gods nor the wrath of men κατόπισθεν, subsequent to their crime.

<sup>45</sup> Or, as Fitzgerald has it, “Both parties later swore to terms of peace.”