

The Critical Element in the Embarkation Scenes of the *Odyssey*

Elizabeth S. Greene

TRAVEL TO OR FROM Odysseus' homeland in Ithaca and throughout the Mediterranean requires a sea journey. Scholars from W. Arend to S. Reece have identified departures, whether by land or sea, as examples of typical elements in Homeric poetry.¹ The nautical embarkation scenes in the *Odyssey* demonstrate the poetic dexterity of the Homeric author, as they provide an audience with the means to determine the outcome of an expedition from the moment that a crew of sailors sets out to sea. Within the motif of embarkation, the inclusion or elimination of elements from the extended formula allows an audience to predict the success or failure of a voyage. For the sake of this evaluation, successful journeys are defined as the safe arrival at a destination without loss of vessels or crew. Critical among the typical elements of each successful expedition is a libation, in which proper prayer and offerings are made to the gods; all unsuccessful journeys lack this element. This study presents a contribution to the oral poetics of the *Odyssey*, specifically the manipulation of an extended formula to enhance artistic communication.

Such formulaic scenes as arming, supplication, feasting, sacrifice, and departures—in addition to the embarkation motif—are common throughout the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, leading scholars to comment on the traditional nature of the Homeric works.² Recent scholarship, however, has focused on the divergence from convention, “where recognized traditional elements are brought into play but where we do *not* get quite what we expected, and what we do get seems to be specially

¹ W. Arend, *Die typischen Szenen bei Homer* (Berlin 1933) 79–91; S. Reece, *The Stranger's Welcome: Oral Theory and the Aesthetics of the Homeric Hospitality Scene* (Ann Arbor 1993) 37ff.

² For a compilation of the works of M. Parry, see A. Parry, ed., *The Making of Homeric Verse: The Collected Papers of Milman Parry* (Oxford 1971).

created for the occasion.”³ Significant literature describes the “arming scenes” in the *Iliad*, the preparations for battle made by Paris, Agamemnon, Patroclus, and Achilles.⁴ Although each hero follows an unvarying sequence of arming—he must put on or take up his greaves, corslet, sword, shield, helmet, and spear—the addition or subtraction of details to the formula personalizes each arming sequence.

The arming of Paris as he prepares for his duel with Menelaus, the first in the *Iliad*, sets up the arming motif by providing only the basic elements of the formula. Later, the arming of Agamemnon is three times longer than that of Paris; each piece of armor is described in detail as if to emphasize the glory of the king (Armstrong 344f). With the arming of Patroclus, the original formula returns with a single critical embellishment. Patroclus puts on the armor of Achilles, but cannot lift the spear of his mighty friend; his failure forbodes the ultimate impossibility of his deception (Armstrong 354). Finally, Achilles, filled with wrath and rage, takes up his arms. Seven vital lines separate the point at which Achilles takes up his shield and his helmet. Lines 19.374–79 describe the great shield of the warrior from which

τοῦ δ' ἀπάνευθε σέλας γένητ' ἠΰτε μῆνης.
ὡς δ' ὅτ' ἂν ἐκ πόντοιο σέλας ναύτησι φανήη
καιομένοιο πυρός, τό τε καίεται ὑπόθ' ὄρεσφι
σταθμῶ ἐν οιοπόλῳ· τοὺς δ' οὐκ ἐθέλοντας ἄελλαι
πόντον ἐπ' ἰχθυόεντα φίλων ἀπάνευθε φέρουσιν·
ὡς ἀπ' Ἀχιλλῆος σάκεος σέλας αἰθέρ' ἴκανε⁵

This glimmer or flash from the weapon, Krischer's *Waffen-*

³ J. A. Russo, “Homer against His Tradition,” *Arion* 7 (1968) 280.

⁴ *Il.* 3.330–38, 11.1–44, 16.131–44, and 19.369–91 respectively; G. Kirk, *The Iliad: A Commentary I* (Cambridge 1985) 313, tabulates the occurrence of the six stages of arming for each of the four heroes; detailed discussions of arming sequences in J. ARMSTRONG, “The Arming Motif in the *Iliad*,” *AJP* 79 (1958: hereafter ‘Armstrong’) 337–54; B. Fenik, *Typical Battle Scenes in the Iliad* (= *Hermes Einzelschrift* 21 [Wiesbaden 1968]); and Russo (*supra* n.3). See K. Stanley, *The Shield of Homer* (Princeton 1993) 372 n.4, 322f n.102 for further bibliography.

⁵ “the light glimmered far, as from the moon.

And as when from across water a light shines to mariners
from a blazing fire, when the fire is burning high in the mountains
in a desolate steading, as the mariners are carried unwilling
by storm winds over the fish-swarmling sea, far away from their loved ones;
so the light from the fair elaborate shield of Achilles
shot into the high air.” (Tr. Lattimore.)

glanz, foretells the fate of a warrior in battle⁶ and is the critical element in battle preparation that allows an audience to know how each hero will fare in combat. In the four scenes mentioned above, the arms of Achilles and Agamemnon give off flashes of radiant light before their victorious battles, while the weapons of fated Paris and Patroclus are heavy and powerful but lusterless.

Krischer studies the occurrence of the flash in other battle preparations that result in victory, including those of Diomedes, Hector, and Idomeneus.⁷ For Diomedes, Athena "made weariless fire blaze from his shield and helmet" (5.4, δαϊέ οἱ ἐκ κόρυθός τε καὶ ἀσπίδος ἀκάματον πῦρ); Hector's armor "glittered like the thunder-flash of aegis-bearing Zeus" (11.66, λάμψ' ὥς τε σπεροπὴ πατρὸς Διὸς αἰγιόχοιο); and the bronze armor of Idomeneus "flashes as a portent to men and the bright glints shine from it" (13.244, δεικνὺς σῆμα βροτοῖσιν· ἀρίζηλοι δέ οἱ αὐγαί). In each situation, the *Waffenglanz* foretells success in the battle at hand. By the subtle alteration of elements within the extended formula, each arming or battle preparation reflects the fate of the warrior it portrays.

Another instance of poetic manipulation of a typical scene occurs in the motif of supplication in which one character humbles himself and requests the favor of another.⁸ The first occurrence and classic example of this formula in the *Iliad* can be seen in Thetis' supplication to Zeus at 1.498–527. Before making her plea for aid to the Trojans, Thetis crouches before Zeus, touches his knees (λάβε γούνων) with her left hand, and takes his chin in her right.⁹ She makes her plea and clings fast to Zeus until the god nods his head to her request. The maintenance of physical contact until the granting of a request is the critical

⁶ T. Krischer, *Formale Konventionen der homerischen Epik* (=Zetemata 56 [Munich 1971]) 36.

⁷ Krischer (*supra* n.6) 36ff; the scenes at 5.1–8, 11.56–66, and 13.240–45. These additional scenes cannot properly be called "arming scenes" as they lack the six definitive elements of arming; each scene, however, gives a description of a warrior before his entrance into battle.

⁸ The supplication motif is examined by J. GOULD, "Hiketēia," *JHS* 93 (1973: hereafter 'Gould') 74–103; V. PEDRICK, "Supplication in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*," *TAPA* 112 (1982: 'Pedrick') 125–40, esp. 125 n.1, for more extensive bibliography.

⁹ A detailed description of these elements in Gould 75ff.

element in the fifteen instances of supplication in the *Iliad*.¹⁰ Gifts, ransom, or rewards may be offered by the suppliant to support his plea, but these have no bearing on the outcome of the event.

Of the fifteen scenes of varying length and narrative character (9.581–87, 10.454–57, 11.130–42, 16.573–80, 20.463–69, 22.338–43, 22.414–28), there are eight supplications accompanied by physical contact, specifically touching the knee, and seven supplications without physical contact. No suppliant who neglects to grasp his expected protector's knees meets with success. Of the eight supplicants who initiate physical contact with their supplicand, five (1.498–527, 9.451ff, 15.660–70, 18.457, 24.477–508) receive the desired favor. For the remaining three scenes in which physical contact is initiated within the supplication formula but without success of the plea, Gould offers an explanation: the knee-touching stands as the critical element of the supplication scenes.¹¹ In an epic based on the wrath and power of man, in which decisions are made by emotion rather than rational thought, the act of physical contact enforces the utter abjectivity of the suppliant and injects a sense of humanity into a tale of war and vengeance.¹²

¹⁰ Gould (80 n.39) lists thirty-five scenes of supplication in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Of those with clear outcomes, he finds that twenty-two are accepted, while ten meet with failure.

¹¹ 6.45–65 (Adrastus to Menelaus), 21.64–119 (Lycaon to Achilles), 22.239–42 (Priam and Hecuba to Deiphobus, as impersonated by Athena). Gould (80) points out that the supplication of Adrastus has persuaded Menelaus to spare him, but that he is killed by Agamemnon, to whom he has made no plea. Lycaon releases the knee of Achilles before he is granted mercy. The final case, not mentioned by Gould, describes the supplication of Hecuba and Priam to Deiphobus, given to Hector by Athena in the guise of his brother. Athena states falsely (22.239–42):

ἦθει' ἦ μὲν πολλὰ πατήρ καὶ πότνια μήτηρ
 λίσσωνθ' ἔξειγς γουνούμενοι, ἀμφὶ δ' ἑταῖροι
 αὐθι μένειν· τοῖον γάρ ὑποτρομέουσιν ἅπαντες
 ἄλλ' ἐμός ἐνδοθι θυμὸς ἐτείρετο πένθει λυγρῶ.

The wise goddess designs this statement to lead Hector to his death against Achilles. Pedrick (139) disagrees with Gould's explanations, citing the cases of Adrastus and Lycaon: "It makes no difference [in the *Iliad*] whether a correct ritual of supplication accompanies a plea." In my view, Gould's comments seem valid and the critical element of supplication in the *Iliad* remains the knee-touching gesture.

¹² Pedrick (129) notes: "For the heroes of the *Iliad* supplication operates strictly on a human level, commanding respect only so far as custom and human sanctions compel." To this end Pedrick argues that the supplication ceremony "exercises no binding force." It seems, however, that the act of physical contact specifically appeals to the humanity of the supplicand.

No such obvious critical element for supplication occurs in the *Odyssey*. Supplicants, strangers, and guests are tacitly granted protection under the aegis of Zeus ἱκετήσιος. No longer are bribes or ransom offered to strengthen the plea. The knee-touching becomes an optional element, included, excluded, or mentioned as a consideration with the verbs γουνάζεσθαι or γουνεῖσθαι when the physical act is impossible (Pedrick 126). Instead of appealing to the humanity of the supplicand through physical contact, the supplicant in the *Odyssey* presents himself as a ἱκέτης, with an appeal to the protection of Zeus implicit and vital to every successful scene.¹³

An explicit invocation to the gods serves as the critical element in the scenes of embarkation in the *Odyssey*. Embarkation scenes precede virtually all instances of seaborne travel and describe the necessary preparation for a voyage. Common details include boarding and rigging of the vessel, sitting down to oars, and receiving a favorable breeze from the gods. The success or failure of the voyage at hand depends upon the inclusion of a sacrifice. As in the case of the arming and supplication scenes of the *Iliad*, the degree of descriptive detail may vary, but the critical element must be included.

There are fifteen embarkation scenes in the *Odyssey*, involving Odysseus (10), Telemachus (2), Penelope's suitors (1), Nestor (1), and Menelaus (1).¹⁴ The scenes may occur in Homer's narrative or be reported in the speeches of various characters.

¹³ Scenes of supplication in the *Odyssey*, identified by use of λίσσομαι and often ἱκέτης, include: 3.92-101=4.322-31; 5.545-50; 6.146-85; 7.142-52; 9.259-71; 10.264-69; 13.231-35; 14.276-84; 15.277f; 22.310-19, 343-54, 365-70. Of these cases, the only examples of rejected supplication are the pleas of Odysseus to Polyphemus, and Leodes to Odysseus. In both cases the supplicant has already violated the rules of guest-friendship and does not have the right to protection under Zeus ἱκετήσιος. In the case of Odysseus' supplication to Polyphemus, Pedrick (133) notes that the inhuman Cyclops is not constrained by fear of the gods.

¹⁴ Two embarkation scenes are described in the *Iliad*. At 1.308-17 Agamemnon draws his ship down to the water and boards with Chryseis, twenty rowers, and a hecatomb for the gods. After setting out to sea, the sailors sacrifice bulls and goats to Apollo. Another passage, 1.430-83, describes the voyage of Agamemnon and Odysseus back to the camp of the Achaeans after returning Chryseis to her father. The night before embarking on their journey, the Achaeans anchor their ship in the harbor of Chryse and make sacrifice to Apollo. At the break of dawn, they receive a favorable wind from Apollo, raise the mast and sails of their vessel, and head back to camp. No shipwreck scenes occur in the *Iliad*, but the connection between sailing and sacrifice may be suggested here as well.

Generally, the narrated events are more detailed than the reports, but all involve typical elements to be defined below (see TABLE 1, 226f *infra*). Embarkation scenes occur in Telemachus' journey to Pylos; Nestor's return from Troy; Menelaus' journey home from Egypt; the suitors' attempted ambush of Telemachus at Asteris between Ithaca and Samos; Odysseus' escape from Calypso's island and arrival at Scheria; his storm-filled journey from Troy to Ismarus, to the home of the Lotus-Eaters, to the land of the Cyclopes; his voyage from Aeolus' island and back; his escape from Polyphemus' island; his voyage from Circe's island to Hades and back; his terrible journey past the Sirens and Scylla and Charybdis to the island of Helios; his storm-ridden, all-destroying departure from Helios' island; his trip home to Ithaca organized by the Phaeacians; his fictional sailing from Crete to Egypt and from Phoenicia to Libya; and Telemachus' return from Pylos to Ithaca.

Both of Telemachus' adventures are successful: he sets out to Pylos to find news of his father, safely arrives at the palace of Nestor, and returns home with ship and crew intact. While in the Peloponnese, Telemachus hears of the expeditions home from Troy by Nestor and Menelaus. The suitors of Penelope, who attempt to sabotage Telemachus' return, do not achieve their mission, but do return safely to Ithaca. Odysseus, however, is perpetually overcome by shipwreck. More than half the voyages undertaken by Odysseus result in storms, shipwreck, or loss of crew.

The first example of a typical embarkation scene occurs in the description of Telemachus' voyage to Pylos to visit the palace of Nestor. Telemachus reaches Pylos with his vessel and crew intact and finds generous hospitality there. The embarkation scene sets forth the basic elements of the formula (2.416-33):

- | | | |
|---|---|-----|
| A | ἂ δ' ἄρα Τηλέμαχος νηὸς βαῖν', ἄρχε δ' Ἀθήνη,
νηὶ δ' ἐνὶ πρύμνῃ κατ' ἄρ' ἔζετο· ἄγχι δ' ἄρ' αὐτῆς | |
| B | ἔζετο Τηλέμαχος· τοὶ δὲ πρυμνήσι' ἔλυσαν, | |
| C | ἂν δὲ καὶ αὐτοὶ βάντες ἐπὶ κληῖσι καθίζον.
τοῖσιν δ' ἵκμενον οὖρον ἴει γλαυκῶπις Ἀθήνη, | 420 |
| D | ἄκραν Ζέφυρον, κελάδοντ' ἐπὶ οἴνοπα πόντον.
Τηλέμαχος δ' ἐτάροισιν ἐποτρύννας ἐκέλευσεν
ὄπλων ἄπτεσθαι· τοὶ δ' ὀτρύνοντος ἄκουσαν.
ἰστὸν δ' εἰλάτινον κοίλης ἔντοσθε μεσόδμης
στήσαν ἀείραντες, κατὰ δὲ προτόνοισιν ἔδησαν, | 425 |
| | ἔλκον δ' ἰστία λευκὰ εὐστρέπτοισι βοεῦσιν.
ἔπρησεν δ' ἄμενος μέσον ἰστίον, ἀμφὶ δὲ κῦμα | |

στείρη πορφύρεον μεγάλη ἴαχε νηὸς ἰούσης·
 ἢ δ' ἔθειεν κατὰ κύμα διαπρήσσουσα κέλευθον.
 E δησάμενοι δ' ἄρα ὄπλα θοὴν ἀνά νῆα μέλαινον 430
 F στήσαντο κρητῆρας ἐπιστεφέας οἴνοιο,
 λείβον δ' ἀθανάτοισι θεοῖς αἰεὶ γενέτησιν,
 ἐκ πάντων δὲ μάλιστα Διὸς γλαυκῶπιδι κούρη.¹⁵

Six steps comprise an ideal embarkation scene: (A) boarding the vessel with crew, belongings, and supplies; (B) hauling the ship down to sea, casting off from shore, or releasing the anchor;¹⁶ (C) setting out to sea (receiving a favorable breeze from the gods or beginning the journey with rowing); (D) rigging the vessel (stepping and fastening the mast and raising the sails); (E) making fast the rigging; (F) offering libation to the gods. Although the first five elements generally occur in a set order, sacrifice and prayers may be offered at any point in the process.¹⁷ TABLE 1 lists the fifteen embarkation scenes and their

- ¹⁵ A Telemachos went aboard the ship, but Athene went first and took her place in the stern of the ship, and close beside her
 B Telemachos took his place. The men cast off the stern cables
 C and themselves also went aboard and sat to the oarlocks.
 The goddess grey-eyed Athene sent them a favoring stern wind, strong Zephyros, who murmured over the wine-blue water.
 D Telemachos then gave the sign and urged his companions to lay hold of the tackle, and they listened to his urging and, raising the mast pole made of fir, they set it upright in the hollow hole in the box, and made it fast with forestays, and with halyards strongly twisted with leather pulled the white sails.
 The wind blew into the middle of the sail, and at the cutwater a blue wave rose and sang strongly as the ship went onward. She ran swiftly, cutting across the swell of her pathway.
 E When they had made fast the running gear all along the black ship,
 F then they set up mixing bowls, filling them brimful with wine, and poured to the gods immortal and everlasting but beyond all other gods they poured to Zeus' grey-eyed daughter. (Tr. Lattimore.)

¹⁶ If the ship is not already anchored or moored in a harbor, it must be carried down to sea. The order of steps A and B is interchangeable, depending on the original location of the vessel.

¹⁷ In scene 9, Odysseus' round-trip to Hades from Circe's island, sacrifice occurs in Hades. Circe provides Odysseus with a ram and a black ewe (10.572) and orders him to sacrifice them to Persephone and Hades in the Underworld. Within the embarkation scene (11.4), reference is made to the loading of the two sheep for future sacrifice. The animals serve a dual purpose as a sailing sacrifice and a bribe to the spirits of the Underworld. This single sacrifice is sufficient for both legs of the voyage. Sailors in scenes 4, 11, and 12 offer

inclusion of typical elements. Analysis of the table demonstrates that the sixth element, the making of proper libation, is vital to the success of the voyage.

Successful expeditions are nos. 1–4, 7, 9, 12–13, 15, while attempts that result in storms, shipwreck, or loss of crew are nos. 5–6, 8, 10–11, 14. Each embarkation includes at least two identifying elements: boarding the vessel (A) and setting out to sea (C). As seen in TABLE 1, the inclusion of steps B, D, and E is optional; the poet may include these elements as he desires with no visible effect on the outcome of the expedition. Embarkations resulting in successful voyages may include as few as two (13) or three (2, 7, 12) of the first five elements, as long as the final element is not omitted. Only two of the embarkations (1, 9) include all six steps.

The critical element of the embarkation formula, sacrifice or the invocation of an immortal, occurs in various forms. The length of the scene, the type of dedication, and the god or goddess to whom the prayer is directed all are subject to poetic manipulation. Telemachus and his companions pour wine to all the gods, but focus their attention on Athena who recently offered aid to the son of Odysseus (2.431ff):

στήσαντο κρητήρας ἐπιστεφέας οἴνοιο,
 λείβον δ' ἄθανάτοισι θεοῖς αἰειγενέτησιν,
 ἐκ πάντων δὲ μάλιστα Διὸς γλαυκῶπιδι κούρη.

Nestor too describes a general sacrifice (3.159, ἐρέξαμεν ἱρὰ θεοῖσιν), which is later directed more specifically towards Poseidon (3.178f). The dedication that allows Menelaus to return to Sparta is described only briefly (4.582, καὶ ἔρεζα τεληέσσας ἑκατόμβας); afterwards Menelaus receives a favorable wind from the gods.¹⁸

prayer or sacrifice some time before they actually embark on their voyage. In each case, however, mention of the upcoming journey is included in the invocation to the gods. Antinous (4.667–72), as he arranges for the fast ship and twenty companions who will accompany him into ambush, asks Zeus for assistance in destroying Telemachus. The crew of Odysseus on the island of Helios and the Phaeacians, while their loaded ships wait in the harbor, combine sacrifice with a dinner feast on the night before they plan to leave.

¹⁸ The description of the sacrifice is brief, but follows a longer passage (4.472–80) in which Proteus details the ritual that Menelaus should follow. See 229 *infra* for further details.

Similarly abbreviated descriptions of sacrifice occur in scenes 7, 12-13, and 15. On the island of Polyphemos, Odysseus burns the thighs of a ram to Zeus (9.551ff, τὸν δ' ἐπὶ θινὶ Ζηνὶ κελαινεφεΐ Κρονίδῃ, ὃς πᾶσιν ἀνάσσει, ῥέξας μηρὶ ἕκαιον). The dark-clouded son of Cronus receives the burned thigh pieces of an ox as sacrifice from Alcinoos before the Phaeacians carry Odysseus home to Ithaca (13.24f, τοῖσι δὲ βοῶν ἱέρουσ' ἱερὸν μένος Ἀλκινόοιο Ζηνὶ κελαινεφεΐ Κρονίδῃ, ὃς πᾶσιν ἀνάσσει). Later, Odysseus recounts to Eumaeus a fictional journey from Crete to Egypt. After readying nine ships, Odysseus provides his sailors with a six-day banquet and many victims for sacrifice to the gods (14.250f, αὐτὰρ ἐγὼν ἱερῆϊα πολλὰ παρεῖχον θεοῖσιν). On the seventh day, he sets forth with a favorable North wind. Before leaving Pylos, Telemachus and his crew board their vessel to begin the preparation for sailing. As Telemachus makes his prayers to Athena (15.222f, ἧ τοι ὁ μὲν τὰ πονεῖτο καὶ εὐχετο, θυε δ' Ἀθήνῃ νηὶ παρά πρύμνῃ), he is approached by Theoclymenus who pleads for passage to Ithaca. No strict formula directs these sacrifices or invocations. The descriptions are quite short and do not detail the ritual.

By far the longest description of a departure sacrifice occurs in scene 11, Odysseus' embarkation from the island of Helios. From the formulaic elements in TABLE 1, the scene seems ideal. After a combined feast and sacrifice, Odysseus and his crew take advantage of a calm day for sailing; they board their vessel, set out to sea, raise the mast, and hoist the sails. The description of the sacrifice, however, is clearly improper. The unusual length and detail of the sacrificial passage emphasize the impropriety of the act (12.353-65):

- αὐτίκα δ' Ἡελίοιο βοῶν ἐλάσαντες ἀρίστας
 ἐγγύθεν· οὐ γὰρ τῆλε νεὸς κυανοπρόριο
 355 βοσκέσκονθ' ἔλικες καλαὶ βόες εὐρυμέτωποι·
 τὰς δὲ περιστήσαντο καὶ εὐχετόνωτο θεοῖσι,
 φύλλα δρεψάμενοι τέρενα δρυὸς ὑψικόμοιο·
 οὐ γὰρ ἔχον κρῖ λευκὸν εὐσσέλμου ἐπὶ νηὸς.
 αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ ῥ' εὐξάντο καὶ ἔσφαξαν καὶ ἔδειραν
 360 μηρούς τ' ἐξέταμον κατὰ τε κνίσῃ ἐκάλυψαν

SCENE	A Board	B Haul ship to sea or cast off	C Set out to sea	D Rig boat	E Fasten rigging	F Prayer or sacrifice	OUTCOME
(1) 2.414-33 Telemachus leaves Ithaca	416f	418	419ff	422-28	430f	431ff	Arrival at Pylos
(2) 3.153-79 Nestor returns from Troy	153-57	153	157f, 176f	—	—	159, 178f	Return to Pylos
(3) 4.576-82 Menelaus returns from Egypt	579	577	579f	578	—	582	Return to Sparta
(4) 4.667f, 778-84, 842f Suitors go into ambush	778f	780	842f	781-84	—	667-72	Safe return to Ithaca
(5) 5.260-71 Odysseus leaves Calypso's island	263-67	—	268	260f	269f	— Odysseus has wine, water, and supplies, but does not sacrifice	Shipwreck
(6) 9.41-78 Odysseus and crew journey from Troy to the land of the Cyclopes (through Ismarus and the land of the Lotus Eaters)	60f	—	63	76f	78	— Odysseus and crew drink wine and slay sheep, but do not sacrifice	Storms and loss of fleet
(7) 9.469-72, 552-64 Odysseus and crew escape from the land of the Cyclopes	469ff, 561f	562	472f, 563f	—	—	550-53	Arrival at Aeolus' island

TABLE 1

Embarkation Scenes and Their Outcomes

(8) 10.19-27 Odysseus and crew leave Aeolus' island	23f	—	19-27	—	—	—	Released winds cause storm
(9) 11.1-12, 636-40 Odysseus and crew make round-trip voyage to Hades from Aeaea	4f, 636f	1f, 637	6ff, 638ff	3	9-12	4 loading of sheep for sacrifice 24-33 sacrifice in Hades	Successful voyage to and from Hades
(10) 12.144-53 Odysseus and crew travel from Circe's island to Helios' island	144ff	145	145-50	—	151ff	— Odysseus and crew feast until sunset, but do not sacri- fice	Scylla eats six crew members
(11) 12.353-404 Odysseus and crew make the fateful trip from Helios' island	401	401	399f	402	—	353-65 improper sacrifice	Shipwreck
(12) 13.18-46, 70-92 Odysseus returns to Ithaca with the Phaeacians	70-75	77	76-92	—	—	24-46	Return to Ithaca
(13) 14.248-54 Odysseus' fictional account of his trip from Crete and Egypt	252	—	252ff	—	—	251f	Arrival at Egypt
(14) 14.295-300 Odysseus' fictional journey with the Phoenicians	295	—	299f	—	—	—	Shipwreck
(15) 15.218-23, 283-94 Telemachus returns from Pylos	218-21	286	286-94	287-91	—	222f	Return to Ithaca

δίπτυχα ποιήσαντες ἐπ' αὐτῶν δ' ὠμοθέτησαν·
 οὐδ' εἶχον μέθῃ λείψαι ἐπ' αἰθομένοισι ἱεροῖσιν,
 ἀλλ' ὕδατι σπένδοντες ἐπώπτων ἔγκατα πάντα.
 αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ κατὰ μῆρ' ἑκάη καὶ σπλάγχνα πάσαντο,
 365 μίστυλλον τ' ἄρα τάλλα καὶ ἄμφ' ὄβελοῖσιν ἔπειραν.¹⁹

The starving crew of Odysseus sacrifice the sacred cattle of Helios, use oak leaves in place of barley meal, and pour libations of water rather than wine—all incorrect sacrificial elements. Upon arising from his slumber, Odysseus expresses horror at the hideous act committed by his crew (12.370–73).

The inappropriate sacrifice is separated from the actual embarkation by twenty-three lines (12.374–96) that detail Helios' chagrin at the slaughter of his cattle and his appeal to Zeus for vengeance. Zeus agrees to destroy with a thunderbolt Odysseus' ship and crew. Evil portents from the gods interrupt preparations for the feast (12.395f, ἔρπον μὲν ῥινοὶ, κρέα δ' ἄμφ' ὄβελοῖσι μεμύκει, ὄπταλέα τε καὶ ὠμά· βοῶν δ' ὡς γίγνετο φωνή). The improper embarkation sacrifice of Odysseus' men has not been accepted by the gods. As soon as the sailors lose sight of land, a stormy West wind greets their vessel with ruin.

In no other ill-fated expedition are sacrifice and prayer attempted. The crafty Phoenician merchant in scene 14 sets sail without a thought to the immortals. Interestingly, in all other scenes that introduce unsuccessful voyages, opportunity for sacrifice is apparent. When Odysseus leaves Ogygia, the poet gives a detailed description of the dark wine, water, and generous bag of provisions granted by Calypso (5.265ff), but Odysseus offers none of this to the gods. At Ismarus, Odysseus' crew drink wine and slay sheep and oxen (9.45f), but never

¹⁹ At once, culling out from near at hand the best of Helios' cattle; for the handsome broad-faced horn-curved oxen were pasturing there, not far from the dark-prowed ship; driving these, they stationed themselves around them, and made their prayers to the gods, pulling tender leaves from a deep-leaved oak tree; for they had no white barley left on the strong-benched vessel. When they had made their prayer and slaughtered the oxen and skinned them, they cut away the meat from the thighs and wrapped them in fat, making a double fold, and laid shreds of flesh upon them; and since they had no wine to pour on the burning offerings, they made a libation of water, and roasted all the entrails; but when they had burned the thigh pieces and tasted the vitals, they cut the remainder into pieces and spitted them.

donate their bounty to the gods. On Circe's island, Odysseus and his crew feast until sunset on meat and wine (12.29f), but neglect a sacrifice related to their expedition. Aeolus provides Odysseus with an entire month of entertainment (10.13-16) during which the hero recounts his days in Troy, but pays no homage to the immortals. In each case, the sailors are provided with time, opportunity, and materials for a proper sacrifice, but do not attempt the ritual.

If safe passage over the wine-dark sea is desired, proper offerings must be presented to the gods. Menelaus reports this maxim, as stated by Proteus in Book 4. After lingering without wind on the island called Pharos for twenty days, Menelaus captures the ancient servant of Poseidon to question him on his own fate. Proteus responds to Menelaus' query with the words (4.472-80):

ἀλλὰ μάλ' ὤφελλες Δί τ' ἄλλοισίν τε θεοῖσι
 ῥέξας ἱερὰ κάλ' ἀναβαινέμεν, ὄφρα τάχιστα
 σὴν ἐς πατρίδ' ἴκοιο πλέων ἐπὶ οἴνοπα πόντον.
 475 οὐ γάρ τοι πρὶν μοῖρα φίλους ιδέειν καὶ ἰκέσθαι
 οἶκον εὐκτίμενον καὶ σὴν ἐς πατρίδα γαίαν,
 πρὶν γ' ὅτ' ἂν Αἰγύπτιοιο, διπτεῖος ποταμοῖο,
 αὐτίς ὕδωρ ἔλθῃς ῥέξης θ' ἱερὰς ἑκατόμβας
 ἀθανάτοισι θεοῖσι, τοῖ οὐρανὸν εὐρὺν ἔχουσι.
 480 καὶ τότε δώσουσιν ὁδὸν θεοί, ἦν σὺ μενοινᾶς.²⁰

Proteus reminds the Spartan king that sacrifice to the immortals is mandatory for successful voyages. Menelaus heeds his warning and is enabled to return, having offered acceptable hecatombs. He recalls (4.585f), ταῦτα τελευτήσας νεόμην, δίδοσαν δέ μοι οὐρον ἀθάνατοι, τοί μ' ὦκα φίλην ἐς πατρίδ' ἔπεμψαν.

The inclusion of proper sacrifice and prayer within an embarkation scene foretells a successful journey; the omission of this element indicates the reverse. By reshaping standard elements in a formula, the poet introduces flexibility to the epic tradition. In both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, typical scenes can be person-

²⁰ But you should have made grand sacrifices to Zeus and the other immortal gods, and so gone no board, so most quickly to reach your own country, sailing over the wine-blue water. It is not your destiny now to see your people and come back to your strong-founded house and to the land of your fathers until you have gone back once again to the water of Egypt, the sky-fallen river, and there have accomplished holy hecatombs in honor of the immortal gods who hold wide heaven. Then the gods will grant you that journey you so long for.

alized in terms of length, detail, and the use of critical elements. The traditional nature of the Homeric works is defined by the inclusion of typical passages, but the poet demonstrates adaptability by clever manipulation of these very scenes. Within the traditional context of a formula, the type-scenes of embarkation, supplication, and arming are designed to let an audience know in advance whether each preparation will result in success or failure.²¹

TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY
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