

friend, Zeus sends a 'mixed message' about the opposition between Achilles and Agamemnon, however one chooses to interpret that opposition.¹⁸

Instead of asking ourselves what does this text, with its patterns and symmetries, *mean*? as though the meaning of the poem is mirrored in an immanent design that precedes and stands apart from the narrative's articulation, I would substitute the question, what is the poet *doing*? In answering this question, we can see the *Iliad* more clearly as a form of *social practice*, as an intervention in the world of ideas that seeks to address conflicts and issues that are rooted in the material conditions of Homer's times, to produce, in the words of Lévi-Strauss, an imaginary resolution to a real social contradiction. The *Iliad* does not represent social conflict from some privileged perspective outside of that conflict, but is an attempt to construct a resolution in the realm of ideology itself. There has been lengthy and inconclusive discussion about whether Homer is for or against Achilles, whether he is conservative or progressive, whether he is a toady of the ruling class or a radical reformer. What can be said with more confidence is that the *Iliad* is a poem divided against itself. Homer, as we say, is in two minds about his hero Achilles, a sense confirmed in Book 8 with its series of statements and revisions that finally generates with difficulty and ambiguity a plot trajectory, the 'will of Zeus', with its twisted and devious plan to give glory to Achilles by way of the Patrokleia.

To focus on symmetries and patterns for an image of 'the meaning' of the *Iliad* is like taking the poet at his word when he claims his work is a divinely inspired *mimesis* of the truth. But Homer is neither an unconscious automaton, incapable of original thinking; nor is he a transcendent figure, capable of escaping completely the constraints of his own tradition and his own cultural context. If we assume that the *Iliad* is the work not of gods but of humans, then we can be sure it will bear the traces of their labour as symptoms of their conflicts, their doubts and their ambivalence.

¹⁸ See P. Rose (1992: 43-91).

CHAPTER FOUR

ODYSSEUS' EVASIVENESS AND THE AUDIENCE OF THE *ODYSSEY*

Ruth Scodel

One of the most celebrated narrative problems in the *Odyssey* is Odysseus' failure to name himself for so long among the Phaiakians. His evasiveness is truly remarkable. First, in the presence of all the Phaiakian leaders, Alkinoos has suggested that the stranger may be a god in disguise (7.199-206). Such a remark invites self-identification, as Nausikaa responds to Odysseus' question about whether she is god or mortal (6.149) by providing her patronymic (6.196-97). Because the guest has not yet eaten, if Alkinoos were to ask his identity directly, he would be violating the rules of hospitality.¹ Odysseus thus has an excellent excuse not to answer, beyond stating that he is mortal, and his reply appropriately stresses the closely linked themes of hunger and mortality (7.102-221). Yet he still does not answer when Arete formally inquires who he is, after he has eaten and the other guests have left:

τίς πόθεν εἰς ἀνδρῶν; τίς τοι τάδε εἵματ' ἔδωκεν;
οὐ δὴ φῆς ἐπὶ πόντον ἀλώμενος ἐνθάδ' ἰκέσθαι; (7.238-9)

Who are you and where are you from? Who gave you these clothes?
Aren't you claiming that you reached here by wandering over the sea?²

Odysseus' reply discusses the clothes and his wandering, but does not say who he is or where he is from, even though he has twice asked to be conveyed to the homeland he has refused to name. This is surely peculiar. It is certainly true, as Webber argues, that Arete's question is unusual in replacing the standard second half of the question, *πόθι τοι*

¹ Reece (1993: 104).

² The tradition shows variation between the present and the imperfect φῆς. Odysseus has not said anything about coming by sea, but the inference would be natural (especially since Arete knows the clothes were taken to the shore), and the poet sometimes extends audience knowledge to characters: see J. B. Hainsworth *ad loc.* in Heubeck (1988-92).

πόλις ἢδὲ τοκῆς; with her inquiry about the clothes.³ Nonetheless, even though Odysseus has not been asked his identity in precisely standard form, the use of the general formula at the moment at which it is socially appropriate for a guest to identify himself surely creates an expectation that he will provide his patronymic and homeland, and probably his name. The unusual form of Arete's question mitigates the impropriety of Odysseus' failure to identify himself, but Odysseus defies the social expectations of the characters in the poem, and the narrative expectations of the external audience.⁴

Nowhere else except in the recognition with Laertes, is Odysseus' (or another character's) lying or evasiveness left unmotivated. The difficulty lies solely in this absence of motivation within the story; the poet has excellent reasons for delaying Odysseus' self-identification. B. Fenik has shown that the scene corresponds closely to a pattern of delayed naming throughout the *Odyssey*.⁵ In Ithaka, clearly, the hero has practical reasons to conceal his name, and from this basis in the plot his silence about his name is thematically developed. It certainly also seems to be the case, as Fenik argues, that the theme moves out of the Ithakan sections to permeate the poem, so that even the identification of Telemachos in Sparta, for instance, takes an unusual form: when Menelaos says that all his wealth cannot make him happy because of sorrow for his friends, and particularly Odysseus, Telemachos weeps. Menelaos is still uncertain how to respond when Helen enters and identifies Telemachos (4.78-202). Odysseus puts off giving even false names. The habit of delay allows poet and audience to enjoy the favourite Odyssean device whereby a new arrival finds that those to whom he comes are very much concerned with exactly what is closest to his heart, as the Phaiakians listen to Demodokos' song about Odysseus.⁶ The Odyssean narrative repeatedly develops and plays with the significance of disguise and recognition, naming and concealment.⁷

Scholars have also realised that the Phaiakian episode as a whole is influenced by the folktale type of the stranger who proves himself in

³ Webber (1989: 1-14).

⁴ Throughout this paper, 'audience' refers to the implied audience of the *Odyssey*. The poet must have constructed this audience on the basis of his experience with real contemporary audiences.

⁵ Fenik (1974).

⁶ Hölscher (1939: 65-68).

⁷ See Goldhill (1991: 1-36).

difficult tests and marries the princess.⁸ Since this pattern is also active in the Ithakan books, and the Phaiakian episode obviously resonates with the later narrative, it is tempting to attribute as many of its peculiarities as possible simply to this thematic effect. Odysseus' silence is probably crucial to the development of this theme, since the moment Odysseus names himself, there can really be no further question of his marrying Nausikaa—his introduction to the Apologos shows how closely 'Odysseus' is linked with Ithaka (9.19-28). From the narrator's perspective, Odysseus must avoid telling his name in order to provide the opportunity for the development of the marriage-theme, the songs of Demodokos, and the other narrative pleasures of the episode, including the climactic effect of the Apologos itself.

Narratological studies have shown that Odysseus' evasive answer belongs to an exceptionally twisting narrative sequence. Both Nausikaa and Athene prepare the audience for Arete to serve an important role in accepting Odysseus as a suppliant, yet she says nothing when he supplicates her; this too is a famous narrative problem. Fenik has shown that the sequence places great emphasis on Odysseus' success in explaining the clothes: his tact in handling the sexual suspicion surrounding his meeting with Nausikaa is central to the episode. Arete questions Odysseus as she does because she recognises the clothes (7.234-35). Hölscher adds a further twist to this argument by pointing out that Arete must have recognised the clothes immediately when Odysseus arrived.⁹ She has not responded, because the clothes make Odysseus' meeting with Nausikaa a delicate matter, not to be discussed in public. Odysseus' adroitness in explaining his possession of the clothes is the first test he undergoes within the folktale pattern, and although it is perhaps no life-or-death struggle, it is not unimportant. Arete's goodwill, deepened by her pleasure in his tale, provides Odysseus with extra gifts.¹⁰ The narrator manipulates the audience: the hearer is surprised by Arete's failure to speak, until she speaks; then the adroit listener may infer why she did not speak before. Such creation of false expectations in the audience is a normal narrative technique in both *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.¹¹ In this instance,

⁸ Woodhouse (1930: 54-65).

⁹ Hölscher (1960: 257-65).

¹⁰ To be sure, Arete's suggestion is only effective when the males confirm it; see Doherty (1995: 77).

¹¹ See, for the *Iliad*, Morrison (1992); for the *Odyssey*, Olson (1995: 28-42, 140-47); see also Sternberg (1978: 56-89).

it also represents a variation in the usual action-perception-response pattern.¹² The technique does not, by itself, prove that the audience does not know what is supposed to happen, since it is possible to generate narrative suspense even when audiences know the outcome. It does prove, however, that the Homeric narrator seeks to avoid leading his audience along a predictable and familiar path.

This feature is important, because it shows that the poet can tease as well as sustain audience expectations: it extends our understanding of how a narrative based on tradition can function. That Odysseus then does not say who he is until the beginning of Book 9 could also belong to this pattern of narrative surprises and delayed motivations. Odysseus' evasiveness could work like Arete's unresponsiveness, as a tease—if the audience expects him to have a reason for it, and is suitably engaged by the minor mystery. Yet oral narratives generally privilege theme over such internal motivation. Odysseus' silence can only engage the audience if the audience expects to be able to understand why Odysseus acts as he does. The issue is thus truly interesting, because it touches on central questions for an oral poetics: to what extent does composition by theme and by analogy make ordinary motivation and verisimilitude irrelevant? Many excellent scholars would argue that oral poets and audiences do not care about them very much, and that they are not appropriate criteria for judging oral-derived narrative.¹³ From this perspective, only the poet's thematic motives are important; we do not need to provide a motive for the character Odysseus. Suppose, however, we do ask about the characters as imagined, possible people within their own world: within what parameters should we work? If we are seeking to understand Homeric epic on its own terms, to what extent are we interpreting appropriately in basing our interpretations on the assumption that Homeric characters may be psychologically complex, and possess motives that the poet does not make explicit?¹⁴ Finally, the oralist inter-

¹² de Jong (1995: 136-68).

¹³ Foley (1991: 46-48).

¹⁴ A vigorous argument for "opacity and complexity" appears in Griffin (1980: 57-67, 78-80); but Griffin seems to believe that he must reject an oralist approach in order to preserve the possibility of complexity, and thus is not very helpful theoretically. He also does not distinguish between gods and mortals as characters, while I would suggest that even the omniscient epic poet does not pretend fully to understand the plans of the gods.

preter needs to consider how far the poet relies on the prior familiarity of the audience with the story.¹⁵

Generally speaking, the answer to the last question, for the *Odyssey*, is clear: not very specifically. The proem's delay in naming the hero surely assumes an audience able to guess it, and so familiar with Odysseus himself. The audience seems to be expected to have a basic knowledge of the Trojan saga. The poet's failure to mention that the *Kyklops* has only one eye probably means that this detail could be taken for granted; the popularity of the episode in the earliest vase-paintings of epic may perhaps be extended backwards, to bolster the guess that it was already among the best-known parts of the story, even before our *Odyssey* existed.¹⁶ Some of the mild confusions of the *Kirke* story could be attributed to a storyteller who knows that the audience knows. These are also the two stories to which the narrator casually alludes before actually narrating them: he says that the *Kyklops* ate Antiphos during his last meal (2.19-20) and that *Kirke* taught Odysseus a special knot (8.447-48).¹⁷ Since these are details Odysseus' own narrative does not mention, they give the impression that these characters, at least, may already be familiar. Elsewhere, however, the poet provides adequate exposition, even for audiences quite unfamiliar with the story.

Again, usually the narrator tells the audience what the characters' motives are, or these motives can readily be inferred. By the comparative standards of oral epic, the *Odyssey* is careful and naturalistic in characterisation and motivation. Obviously, there are exceptions, some of them important, such as Penelope's decision to hold the bow-contest and Odysseus' testing of his father. I would suggest that whenever we find such difficulties in the *Odyssey*, it is not mistaken to look for a motive for the character, even when the poet's thematic needs have clearly driven the action. In considering the motives of Homeric characters, however, we should always be mindful that the competent audience's methods of constructing characters and motives are not likely to be identical to those of the readers of modern novels, but to be based on the procedures of traditional referentiality.

¹⁵ There is strong polemic on this point in Mattes (1958: 123-30).

¹⁶ On early illustrations of the scene, see Touchefeu-Meynier (1968: 10-21); Fittschen (1969: 193).

¹⁷ Richardson (1990: 100). Cf. Garvie (1994: 325-26 [on 8.447-48]).

πόλις ἠδὲ τοκῆς; with her inquiry about the clothes.³ Nonetheless, even though Odysseus has not been asked his identity in precisely standard form, the use of the general formula at the moment at which it is socially appropriate for a guest to identify himself surely creates an expectation that he will provide his patronymic and homeland, and probably his name. The unusual form of Arete's question mitigates the impropriety of Odysseus' failure to identify himself, but Odysseus defies the social expectations of the characters in the poem, and the narrative expectations of the external audience.⁴

Nowhere else except in the recognition with Laertes, is Odysseus' (or another character's) lying or evasiveness left unmotivated. The difficulty lies solely in this absence of motivation within the story; the poet has excellent reasons for delaying Odysseus' self-identification. B. Fenik has shown that the scene corresponds closely to a pattern of delayed naming throughout the *Odyssey*.⁵ In Ithaka, clearly, the hero has practical reasons to conceal his name, and from this basis in the plot his silence about his name is thematically developed. It certainly also seems to be the case, as Fenik argues, that the theme moves out of the Ithakan sections to permeate the poem, so that even the identification of Telemachos in Sparta, for instance, takes an unusual form: when Menelaos says that all his wealth cannot make him happy because of sorrow for his friends, and particularly Odysseus, Telemachos weeps. Menelaos is still uncertain how to respond when Helen enters and identifies Telemachos (4.78-202). Odysseus puts off giving even false names. The habit of delay allows poet and audience to enjoy the favourite Odyssean device whereby a new arrival finds that those to whom he comes are very much concerned with exactly what is closest to his heart, as the Phaiakians listen to Demodokos' song about Odysseus.⁶ The Odyssean narrative repeatedly develops and plays with the significance of disguise and recognition, naming and concealment.⁷

Scholars have also realised that the Phaiakian episode as a whole is influenced by the folktale type of the stranger who proves himself in

³ Webber (1989: 1-14).

⁴ Throughout this paper, 'audience' refers to the implied audience of the *Odyssey*. The poet must have constructed this audience on the basis of his experience with real contemporary audiences.

⁵ Fenik (1974).

⁶ Hölscher (1939: 65-68).

⁷ See Goldhill (1991: 1-36).

difficult tests and marries the princess.⁸ Since this pattern is also active in the Ithakan books, and the Phaiakian episode obviously resonates with the later narrative, it is tempting to attribute as many of its peculiarities as possible simply to this thematic effect. Odysseus' silence is probably crucial to the development of this theme, since the moment Odysseus names himself, there can really be no further question of his marrying Nausikaa—his introduction to the Apologos shows how closely 'Odysseus' is linked with Ithaka (9.19-28). From the narrator's perspective, Odysseus must avoid telling his name in order to provide the opportunity for the development of the marriage-theme, the songs of Demodokos, and the other narrative pleasures of the episode, including the climactic effect of the Apologos itself.

Narratological studies have shown that Odysseus' evasive answer belongs to an exceptionally twisting narrative sequence. Both Nausikaa and Athene prepare the audience for Arete to serve an important role in accepting Odysseus as a suppliant, yet she says nothing when he supplicates her; this too is a famous narrative problem. Fenik has shown that the sequence places great emphasis on Odysseus' success in explaining the clothes: his tact in handling the sexual suspicion surrounding his meeting with Nausikaa is central to the episode. Arete questions Odysseus as she does because she recognises the clothes (7.234-35). Hölscher adds a further twist to this argument by pointing out that Arete must have recognised the clothes immediately when Odysseus arrived.⁹ She has not responded, because the clothes make Odysseus' meeting with Nausikaa a delicate matter, not to be discussed in public. Odysseus' adroitness in explaining his possession of the clothes is the first test he undergoes within the folktale pattern, and although it is perhaps no life-or-death struggle, it is not unimportant. Arete's goodwill, deepened by her pleasure in his tale, provides Odysseus with extra gifts.¹⁰ The narrator manipulates the audience: the hearer is surprised by Arete's failure to speak, until she speaks; then the adroit listener may infer why she did not speak before. Such creation of false expectations in the audience is a normal narrative technique in both *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.¹¹ In this instance,

⁸ Woodhouse (1930: 54-65).

⁹ Hölscher (1960: 257-65).

¹⁰ To be sure, Arete's suggestion is only effective when the males confirm it; see Doherty (1995: 77).

¹¹ See, for the *Iliad*, Morrison (1992); for the *Odyssey*, Olson (1995: 28-42, 140-47); see also Sternberg (1978: 56-89).

it also represents a variation in the usual action-perception-response pattern.¹² The technique does not, by itself, prove that the audience does not know what is supposed to happen, since it is possible to generate narrative suspense even when audiences know the outcome. It does prove, however, that the Homeric narrator seeks to avoid leading his audience along a predictable and familiar path.

This feature is important, because it shows that the poet can tease as well as sustain audience expectations: it extends our understanding of how a narrative based on tradition can function. That Odysseus then does not say who he is until the beginning of Book 9 could also belong to this pattern of narrative surprises and delayed motivations. Odysseus' evasiveness could work like Arete's unresponsiveness, as a tease—if the audience expects him to have a reason for it, and is suitably engaged by the minor mystery. Yet oral narratives generally privilege theme over such internal motivation. Odysseus' silence can only engage the audience if the audience expects to be able to understand why Odysseus acts as he does. The issue is thus truly interesting, because it touches on central questions for an oral poetics: to what extent does composition by theme and by analogy make ordinary motivation and verisimilitude irrelevant? Many excellent scholars would argue that oral poets and audiences do not care about them very much, and that they are not appropriate criteria for judging oral-derived narrative.¹³ From this perspective, only the poet's thematic motives are important; we do not need to provide a motive for the character Odysseus. Suppose, however, we do ask about the characters as imagined, possible people within their own world: within what parameters should we work? If we are seeking to understand Homeric epic on its own terms, to what extent are we interpreting appropriately in basing our interpretations on the assumption that Homeric characters may be psychologically complex, and possess motives that the poet does not make explicit?¹⁴ Finally, the oralist inter-

¹² de Jong (1995: 136-68).

¹³ Foley (1991: 46-48).

¹⁴ A vigorous argument for "opacity and complexity" appears in Griffin (1980: 57-67, 78-80); but Griffin seems to believe that he must reject an oralist approach in order to preserve the possibility of complexity, and thus is not very helpful theoretically. He also does not distinguish between gods and mortals as characters, while I would suggest that even the omniscient epic poet does not pretend fully to understand the plans of the gods.

preter needs to consider how far the poet relies on the prior familiarity of the audience with the story.¹⁵

Generally speaking, the answer to the last question, for the *Odyssey*, is clear: not very specifically. The proem's delay in naming the hero surely assumes an audience able to guess it, and so familiar with Odysseus himself. The audience seems to be expected to have a basic knowledge of the Trojan saga. The poet's failure to mention that the Kyklops has only one eye probably means that this detail could be taken for granted; the popularity of the episode in the earliest vase-paintings of epic may perhaps be extended backwards, to bolster the guess that it was already among the best-known parts of the story, even before our *Odyssey* existed.¹⁶ Some of the mild confusions of the Kirke story could be attributed to a storyteller who knows that the audience knows. These are also the two stories to which the narrator casually alludes before actually narrating them: he says that the Kyklops ate Antiphos during his last meal (2.19-20) and that Kirke taught Odysseus a special knot (8.447-48).¹⁷ Since these are details Odysseus' own narrative does not mention, they give the impression that these characters, at least, may already be familiar. Elsewhere, however, the poet provides adequate exposition, even for audiences quite unfamiliar with the story.

Again, usually the narrator tells the audience what the characters' motives are, or these motives can readily be inferred. By the comparative standards of oral epic, the *Odyssey* is careful and naturalistic in characterisation and motivation. Obviously, there are exceptions, some of them important, such as Penelope's decision to hold the bow-contest and Odysseus' testing of his father. I would suggest that whenever we find such difficulties in the *Odyssey*, it is not mistaken to look for a motive for the character, even when the poet's thematic needs have clearly driven the action. In considering the motives of Homeric characters, however, we should always be mindful that the competent audience's methods of constructing characters and motives are not likely to be identical to those of the readers of modern novels, but to be based on the procedures of traditional referentiality.

¹⁵ There is strong polemic on this point in Mattes (1958: 123-30).

¹⁶ On early illustrations of the scene, see Touchefeu-Meynier (1968: 10-21); Fittschen (1969: 193).

¹⁷ Richardson (1990: 100). Cf. Garvie (1994: 325-26 [on 8.447-48]).

For example, because Odysseus is a consistently manipulative character in a wide variety of stories, we can safely assume that the audience is always prepared for him to lie or to avoid telling truths that would be unhelpful to him. Odysseus notoriously omits Agamemnon's claim to be 'more kingly' than Achilles (*Il.* 9.160-61) when he conveys Agamemnon's offer of recompense to Achilles; he is a tactful man. In his self-introduction at the beginning of the Apologos, he claims to be famed precisely for his *doloi* (*Od.* 9.19-20). That does not mean that the audience would not ask why he lies on any occasion; on the contrary, since he generally pursues some practical, usually obvious goal, his traditional character allows the audience immediately to ask what his goal might be in a particular situation. If he did not have this well-established character, the audience might have to consider the possibilities that he is not lying but mistaken, or that the poet is confused. At *Od.* 6.66-67, in contrast, the narrator explains Nausikaa's mild lie about her motives—the audience does not have the preparation to understand it without help, and perplexing the audience with an unmotivated and unexplained action would have no narrative advantages. With Odysseus, the first question, when he lies or evades, is the practical goal he seeks.

Scholars have offered various explanations for why the character Odysseus avoids identifying himself. None is quite satisfactory. The simplest explanation that has so far been offered is that Odysseus fears being disbelieved. As a shipwrecked beggar he can hardly announce himself as the famous hero.¹⁸ Yet even as a shipwrecked beggar, he has made his hosts wonder whether he might not be a god (7.199-206); why then should he hesitate to identify himself as a great hero? Without a name, he is almost immediately accepted as a potential son-in-law by Alkinoos (7.312-315). Critics, from Aristarchos onward, have found Alkinoos' behaviour difficult to accept.¹⁹ Yet not only is the marriage theme central to this entire segment of the poem; Alkinoos' offer marks Odysseus' astonishing charisma.

Mattes has argued, and convinced many readers, that Odysseus does not feel himself to be the famous hero, that he is psychologically incapable of presenting himself as Odysseus until his experiences among the

¹⁸ Besslich (1966: 61-66): "The spontaneous reaction of the hearer would be: anybody can say that."

¹⁹ Kilb (1973: 61-74), rightly emphasises the Phaiakians' astonishment at Odysseus' sudden appearance, which leads to the speculation that he might be a god.

Phaiakians gradually restore his sense of self.²⁰ This argument, obviously, relies on the assumption that Homeric heroes have sensibilities of this kind; it is psychologising. Yet there are objections to it that do not depend on the interpreter's opinion of what psychology is possible in Homer. Odysseus does not appear to be less than fully himself anywhere in the Phaiakian episodes; his only weakness, physical or psychological, is his doubt whether he can run faster than any Phaiakian (8.230-33). Odysseus answers the parts of Arete's question he does answer with considerable cunning, telling the story of how he was saved by Kalypso and then held against his will as a parallel to his experience with Nausikaa, of which Arete is suspicious.²¹ Besslich has shown especially that Odysseus' partial answer disguises itself as a full one. Yet the more adroit Odysseus seems to be, the less likely it is that he is suffering from any inner loss of self, for this adroitness is precisely the most characteristically Odyssean quality of Odysseus. When the naked Odysseus meets Nausikaa on the beach, he manages not only to flatter her adroitly, but to make it clear that he is a person of high social status, who previously had many followers (6.164-65). He is at his most careful throughout the episode. He lies fluently to Alkinoos and Arete, telling them that Nausikaa urged him to accompany her to the city, and that he had refused (here, again, the audience must infer his motives).

If we consider the story as a whole, Odysseus has reason to be cautious about his name.²² It is not just that caution in identifying himself may generally be wise; there are prophecies about him. Twice already he has encountered characters who have heard about him before, Polyphemos and Kirke. Both had prophecies specifically of Odysseus' name, and both prophecies are reported to Odysseus and to the audience only after their fulfilment. After Odysseus (foolishly) identifies himself to the Kyklops, Polyphemos delivers a full recognition speech:

ὦ πόποι, ἦ μάλα δὴ με παλαίφατα θέσφαθ' ἰκάνει.
 ἔσκε τις ἐνθάδε μάντις ἀνήρ ἧς τε μέγας τε,
 Τήλεμος Εὐρυμίδης, ὃς μαντοσύνη ἐκέκαστο
 καὶ μαντευόμενος κατεγήρα Κυκλώπεσσιν·
 ὅς μοι ἔφη τάδε πάντα τελευτήσεσθαι ὀπίσσω,
 χειρῶν ἐξ Ὀδυσῆος ἀμαρτήσεσθαι ὀπωπῆς.

²⁰ Mattes (1958: 123-42).

²¹ Besslich (1966: 65-66).

²² Brown (1966: 200) comments "His excessive caution here seems to be a reaction against his earlier foolhardiness in giving his name to the Cyclops."

ἀλλ' αἰεὶ τινα φῶτα μέγαν καὶ καλὸν ἐδέγμην
 ἐνθάδ' ἐλεύσεσθαι, μεγάλην ἐπιειμένον ἀλκὴν·
 νῦν δέ μ' ἐὼν ὀλίγος τε καὶ οὐτιδανὸς καὶ ἄκικος
 ὀφθαλμοῦ ἀλάωσεν, ἐπεὶ μ' ἔδαμάσσατο οἴνω. (9.507-16)

Alas, truly the ancient oracles come upon me. There was a prophet here, noble and big, Telemos son of Eurymos, who was exceptional in prophecy, and practising as a prophet grew old among the *Kyklopes*. He told me that all these things would happen in the future—that I would lose my sight at the hand of Odysseus. But I always expected that a big, fine man would come here, clothed in great valour. As it is, a little worthless wimp blinded me of my eyes, when he had overcome me with wine.

The entire episode becomes an object-lesson in the value of concealing identity. Odysseus replies truthfully and appropriately when Polyphemos asks who he and his men are; they are, he replies, Achaians returning from Troy, followers of Agamemnon (9.259-271).²³ Later, after sampling the wine, Polyphemos asks Odysseus' own name, at 355-56, with the promise of a guest-gift. Odysseus, however, first brings him more wine three times, and waits until he is drunk, before he answers with his false name. Otherwise, presumably, even a stupid giant might consider 'Nobody' a peculiar name. Odysseus does not say at this point why he avoided giving his name, or thought it prudent to call himself 'Nobody.' The trick turns out to be useful only because the other *Kyklopes* phrase their question to the afflicted Polyphemos in just the right way. Probably the usual auditor of the story would not notice that Odysseus' trick is more lucky than clever, because even a hearer who has never heard this particular story has heard stories of this kind, and can guess approximately how events will turn out. If Odysseus lies here without good reason, however, the good sense of the lie is abundantly vindicated. When he reveals his identity, not only does he make it possible for Polyphemos to curse him by foolishly revealing his name, but he learns that he would have died, had he revealed his name sooner. As Carolyn Higbie has pointed out, the Phaiakian episode and the Polyphemos episode echo each other, for the Phaiakians ask Odysseus' identity three times, as Odysseus tells his to the *Kyklops* thrice.²⁴

And that lesson is repeated again less emphatically later. After Kirke has seen her magic fail with Odysseus, she first asks his name: τίς

²³ His original answer to Polyphemos was not evasive, since the personal name is not essential in this situation; cf. Webber (1989: 8).

²⁴ Higbie (1995: 164-65).

πόθεν εἰς ἀνδρῶν; πόθι τοι πόλις ἦδὲ τοκῆς; (10.325). But then she answers her own question:

ἦ σὺ γ' Ὀδυσσεύς ἐσσι πολύτροπος, ὃν τέ μοι αἰεὶ
 φάσκεν ἐλεύσεσθαι χρυσόρραπις Ἀργεῖφόντης,
 ἐκ Τροίης ἀνιόντα θοῆ σὺν νηϊ μελαίνῃ. (10.330-2)

You are surely many-turning Odysseus, whom Hermes, he of the golden wand, always told me would come, as he sailed away from Troy with his swift black ship.

Her prophecy, like Polyphemos', refers to Odysseus only by his name, and Kirke can guess at Odysseus' name only because he has already fulfilled the prophecy. She would, presumably, have been a more formidable opponent for Odysseus had the prophecy warned her more effectively.

So Odysseus could have a legitimate concern that his hosts may have a negative prophecy about him. Both prophecies have mentioned him by name, and it is only his name that Odysseus so vigorously conceals. When he boasts of his athletic skills, he reveals that he was the second-best archer in the Achaian army—a detail that might identify him, if Demodokos' songs happened to mention it.²⁵ The loss of control in anger is also characteristic of Odysseus, as Demodokos' first song, about a quarrel with Achilles, and the end of the *Kyklops* episode show (the narrator also exploits this feature of his character in the recognition with Penelope). Yet even in his anger he avoids the critical details of patronymic, homeland, and name (8.202-233)—details he foolishly revealed when boasting to Polyphemos.

Of course, the Phaiakians do have a prophecy. However, it is distinctly different from the other two. First, it does not name Odysseus:

ἀλλὰ τόδ' ὡς ποτε πατὴρ ἐγὼν εἰπόντος ἄκουσα
 Ναυσιθέου, ὃς ἔφασκε Ποσειδάων' ἀγάσασθαι
 ἡμῖν, σὺνεκα πομποὶ ἀπήμονές εἰμεν ἀπάντων·
 φῆ ποτε Φαιήκων ἀνδρῶν περικαλλέα νῆα
 ἐκ πομπῆς ἀνιούσαν ἐν ἠεροειδέϊ πόντῳ
 ῥαϊσμέναι, μέγα δ' ἦμιν ὄρος πόλει ἀμφικαλύψειν.

²⁵ Kirk (1962: 290) argues that Odysseus-the-archer of the *Odyssey* belongs to a different strand of tradition from the spearman of the *Iliad*. The narrator here is perhaps mindful that none of Odysseus' memorable deeds at Troy relies on the bow; hence the boast does not announce his identity—indeed, perhaps the Phaiakians are temporarily deceived into thinking their guest is Teukros or Meriones!

ὡς ἀγόρευ' ὁ γέρων· τὰ δέ κεν θεὸς ἢ τελέσειεν,
ἢ κ' ἀτέλεστ' εἴη, ὡς οἱ φίλον ἔπλετο θυμῷ. (8.564-71)

But this is how I once heard my father Nausithoos talking, who said that Poseidon would be angry with us, because we provide painless conveyance to all. He said that someday Poseidon would smash a well-made ship of the Phaiakians on the misty sea, as it was returning from conveying someone, and throw a great mountain around our city. So the old man spoke. But the god might accomplish these things, or they may be unfulfilled, as his heart wishes.

Second, of course, it is unlike the others because it is narrated before being fulfilled. These two differences obviously go together in the narrative economy: such a prophecy could not appear before Odysseus' return if his name appeared in it. Significantly, this prophecy is told in the speech in which Alkinoos finally asks Odysseus his identity in a way that cannot be evaded; learning the relevant prophecy and being forced to speak go together. Odysseus thus has double reassurance before he speaks. On the one hand, they are familiar with his name from Demodokos' performance, and on the other, it has no bad associations. The Phaiakians apparently do not recognise any specific connection linking their long-established practice of providing safe homecoming for strangers, Poseidon's possible anger, and this particular stranger.

Obviously, we cannot be certain that Odysseus is evasive because he is anxious about possible prophecies. The motive is a plausible one, however. In order to imagine that Odysseus is evasive for this reason, we do not need to posit any particular psychological complexity: the motive is a practical one, typical of Odysseus. The poet's language would have presented no difficulty in expressing it; there is nothing un-homeric about the reasoning. In assuming that Odysseus is evasive for this reason, the interpreter in no way diminishes the thematic significance of naming. Indeed, this assumption supports the thematic development, as more psychological interpretations of Odysseus' behaviour do not, since the prophecies develop a significant aspect of the naming theme: crafty Odysseus is dangerous to those who do not recognise him. Nor, as the earlier examples have shown, is it un-homeric that the poet does not explain Odysseus' reasoning; the narrator sometimes leaves some motives to be inferred by the audience. It is, however, difficult for the audience to infer this particular motive, because the prophecies, though they are in the past of the story, are still ahead in the narrative.

Odysseus has experienced them, but the audience has not heard about them yet.

Hence, probably because there is no clear and simple way for the narrator to indicate it, the connection between Odysseus' evasiveness and the prophecies is never indicated explicitly. Arete's reason for not responding to Odysseus' initial plea is likewise implicit, but at the moment she finally speaks, the narrator does have a convenient moment to explain that she recognises the clothes. The narrator is thereby able to invite the audience, however briefly, to consider her motives, both for not speaking before, and for speaking as she does when she questions Odysseus. By the time Odysseus mentions the prophecies, however, his silence among the Phaiakians is no longer important in the narrative.

An Analyst would assume that a *Bearbeiter* has clumsily rearranged material from an earlier version that followed chronological order. It is, of course, possible that the narrator has slipped, forgetting that the audience does not know everything he knows. On the other hand, if we could assume that the poet expects the audience already to know about the prophecies from other performances (whether of an alternative *Odyssey* or of single episodes) Odysseus' evasiveness, though not explained, would not really be opaque: the audience could supply his motive. But can we make such an assumption? If any of these prophecies were essential to the plot of its episode, the case for prior knowledge by the audience would be much stronger, since Polyphemos and Kirke seem very likely to be old stories. All these prophecies, though, are inorganic—the stories would work perfectly well without them. So it is worth stopping to ask what function they serve.

The prophecy to Polyphemos is weakly connected to the rest of its episode. If the *Kyklopes* do not care about Zeus or the gods, as Polyphemos elsewhere claims (9.275-76), it is hard to imagine the context for prophetic activity; if they enjoy the Golden-Age conditions implied by the ethnographic introduction for the episode (9.107-11), a working prophet would hardly seem necessary. Prophecy is, in Greek thinking, an advanced skill, an odd one to find among the primitives. The prophecy, then, seems to be added to a story that is complete without it. It provides an epic colouring in the folkloric story, and serves to confirm Odysseus' wisdom in concealing his name.²⁶

²⁶ Cf. Heubeck on 10.330 in Heubeck (1988-92: Vol II, 62): "Such references to oracles (familiar enough in the world of men but not found in the traditional folk-tale) bring

Kirke's prediction is more complex, although again her prior knowledge of Odysseus' coming is not very important to the tale. It confirms Odysseus' victory over her, but the victory is independent of it. Her prophecy comes from Hermes, and this connection invites attention to the role of Hermes in warning Odysseus against her earlier and in providing him with *moly*. In this story, Hermes appears on both sides: he warns Kirke that Odysseus will be invulnerable to her magic, and himself guarantees that invulnerability. Hermes' help to Odysseus is a problem, since elsewhere in the Adventures the gods do not openly intervene to help him, and since Hermes does not act as Odysseus' patron elsewhere in the *Odyssey*, or provide any explanation for his intervention; nor is Hermes' prominence determined by any importance he has in the *Odyssey* as a whole. Odysseus notoriously does not explain how he recognises Hermes, probably because the poet briefly lost control of the difficult management of first-person narration.²⁷ Whatever its cause, the naming of Hermes, in a narrative that generally avoids naming gods, implies that the identity of the god is important, and perhaps that his role as a helper in this story or related stories was familiar enough that the poet took it for granted.

Hermes' intervention marks a profound shift in the nature of Odysseus' adventures, since from this point on he is consistently provided with prior information about the dangers he will encounter. Not only does Hermes tell him how to escape Kirke's enchantment; he also knows in advance what to do in the Underworld, how to save his ship from the Sirens, what will happen when he goes past Skylla's cave, and what danger awaits on Thrinakia. He also knows about the danger posed at home, by the suitors. Odysseus has no prior information about any of his earlier adventures. The double intervention of Hermes in this episode thus marks a pivot in the narrative, from adventures in which Odysseus knows nothing of what is before him, through an adventure in which both actors have information from Hermes, through those for which he shares the knowledge others have. He recognises the Sirens, even as they recognise him. Both halves of the Adventures are fated, but Odysseus shares in prophetic knowledge only in the final group.

the story closer to the heroic world."

²⁷ This does not mean, as analyst or neoanalyst critics believe, that "this episode has been carelessly transferred from a third-person narrative to a first-person narrative" (Page [1973: 56]), only that the poet has less experience generally with first-person than with omniscient third-person narrative. Cf. Jørgenson (1904: 372-74).

Kirke provides much of this information herself, and tells Odysseus how to obtain the rest, from Teiresias. The transformation of Kirke from threat to helper (though a not entirely unambiguous one, since the stay with her delays Odysseus' return) is critical to the narrative. One function of the prophecy is perhaps to help motivate this change by suggesting that it was fated. Even if Kirke had clear motives, Odysseus, as a mortal, would not be in a good position to inform his audience about them. The prophecy also emphasises the role of Hermes in this adventure. Since the adventure with Kirke serves as a prelude to the Nekyia, he presumably helps Odysseus in his role as Psychopomp, as he helps Priamos reach Achilles' hut in *Iliad* 24, in another quasi-Nekyia.²⁸ Yet the prophecy apparently uses the epithet *πολύτροπος* of Odysseus (10.330-32)—at any rate, Kirke uses it in referring to the prophecy—which otherwise is used three times only in extant archaic poetry, once of Odysseus in the first line of the *Odyssey*, twice of Hermes (*H. Hermes* 13.439). This link, as well as the association between Hermes and Odysseus' name-bestowing grandfather, Autolykos (*Od.* 19.394-412), suggests a rich traditional association between Odysseus and Hermes, an association the *Odyssey* does not elsewhere exploit.²⁹ Hermes also serves as the messenger who delivers Odysseus from Kirke's doublet Kalypso, and Odysseus claims that Hermes told Kalypso about Helios' complaint to Zeus after the Companions killed Helios' cattle (12.289-90). If Hermes is important for the meeting of Kirke and Odysseus, a prediction is a simple, local way of manifesting that link, since Hermes elsewhere serves as intermediary between the Olympian gods and lesser powers. That is, Kirke's foreknowledge of Odysseus' coming may evoke traditional associations, but need not itself be 'traditional', already an expected part of the story.

The Phaiakians' prophecy is strangest. Ordinarily, characters in Greek narratives do not regard prophecies and omens casually. They may seek to avoid fulfilling them, like Oidipous; they may try to avert negative signs by prayer or sacrifice (as Klytemnestra does in *Libation Bearers*); they may try to force the gods to modify what they have said, like Herodotos' Themistokles; they may misunderstand them, like Herodotos' Kroisos; or they may deny their validity, as Hektor does to Poulydamas (*Iliad* 12.234-40). Alkinoos, though, speaks fatalistically.

²⁸ See Crane (1988: 31-40).

²⁹ Cf. Pucci (1987: 23-25).

Either the event will happen, or it will not, but he does not consider changing his people's custom of providing secure returns to strangers. Even odder, of course, is the fulfilment of the prophecy. Poseidon does not, as predicted, smash the Phaiakian ship, but instead, on Zeus' advice, turns it to stone (13.156-57, 163-64); the poet shows the Phaiakians trying to propitiate Poseidon so that he does not cover their city with a mountain, but does not inform the audience whether they succeed (13.184-87), though certainly there are no Phaiakians in the poet's own world.

It is not unusual for authoritative predictions to be slightly imprecise, even as they are always substantially true.³⁰ Such imprecise predictions keep the audience prepared for what is to come, without removing all suspense; and since the characters do not modify their actions in response to imprecise predictions, minor inconsistencies do not matter. For the poet to include such predictions in the narrative must be a traditional practice, but it is surely very unlikely that the tradition would maintain an inconcinnity between prediction and outcome through repeated performances. In this instance, exceptionally, the poet motivates Poseidon's slight change of plan, and so makes the audience notice that the fulfilment does not exactly correspond to the prediction. The connection of the Phaiakian ship to an actual rock is a surprise that the poet does not want to pass unmarked.

The three prophecies obviously belong together: they bind the Adventures to the Phaiakis, giving an Odysseus who is fated to cause trouble to those he meets.³¹ They seem, therefore, firmly placed in *this* particular *Odyssey*, where they mean far more than they would in performances of individual episodes. Whether or not they are 'traditional' in the sense that the poet heard them from another performer before including them in his own performer, they do not appear to be 'traditional' in the strongest sense, that the poet expects his audience to be familiar with them already. If, however, the audience does not know that Odysseus needs to be worried about prophecies when Odysseus evades Arete's question, his behaviour is genuinely opaque, and evidently has remained so. The narrator may well have in mind a perfectly satisfactory reason for Odysseus to behave as he does, but the audience cannot guess that

³⁰ The 'insufficiency principle' of Schadewaldt (1966: 110, 140).
³¹ So Eisenberg (1973: 155-56).

reason until a point in the narrative when it is no longer interested in the question.

If the audience does not know Odysseus' specific motives, its members must be expected to tolerate narrative that is not immediately transparent. In the Ithakan books, the narrator is extremely cagey, not revealing much of Odysseus' exact plans even while regularly reporting his thoughts, as though the manipulateness of the character extends to the author.³² In the case of Odysseus, we may guess that the audience will take a motive for evasive behaviour on faith for a long time, because everyone knows that Odysseus usually has a reason for his actions, and that it may not be an obvious one. Traditional referentiality is at work, then, but the reference is not to specific details that would explain the narrative at hand, but to the essential features of a traditional character.

Sometimes we assume too easily that traditional narrative must be fully transparent to all members of the audience, all the time.³³ It may in fact be an important traditional technique for narrators to engage in small-scale mystifications. In performances of the kind represented within the epic, narrators could often create interest by failing to explain particular elements immediately, but the tension thus created would be resolved quickly. In the *Odyssey*, the enlargement of scale requires far more tolerance from the audience, which needs skill in receiving narrative more than precise knowledge of individual stories.

³² See Olson (1995: 140-47).

³³ Not atypical is Wyatt (1965), especially n. 10: "Had there been any lack of comprehension among his hearers, Homer would have known of it and would either have changed the phrasing of his remarks, or provided more introduction to them, or have later offered an explanation of the confusion. He simply was not in a position to allow perplexity in an audience which would have denied him payment if themselves denied of comprehension and thus satisfaction."