

THE SWINEHERD AND THE BEGGAR

GILBERT P. ROSE

IF THE CRITIC approaches the Homeric epics with the assumption that each incident should contribute significantly to the advancement of the plot, he is bound to find much that is disappointing, perhaps even tedious. Telemachus' visits with Nestor and Menelaus, nearly the entire Phaeacian episode, long stretches of the second half of the *Odyssey*—in all of these the action comes to a virtual standstill. In interpreting these passages we should direct our efforts even more than usually to the exploration of character and the relationships between characters.

One such episode, largely ignored by critics, is that in which the disguised Odysseus enjoys the hospitality and leisurely conversation of his slave, Eumaeus. With the following instructions Athena sets in motion this first stage of Odysseus' re-entry into the social world of Ithaca (13.404, 411):

αὐτὸς δὲ πρῶτιστα συβώτην εἰσαφικέσθαι . . .
ἔνθα μένειν καὶ πάντα παρήμενος ἐξερέεσθαι.

But what, in fact, does the hero accomplish by sitting at his swineherd's side and interrogating him? He already knows from Athena (and from his visit to the shades in Book 11) the salient realities of his family's plight; Eumaeus merely underscores them and adds a few details. If, alternatively, Odysseus is supposed to examine his slave's loyalty, this can hardly be central to our query or of primary interest in the episode, since Athena herself testifies immediately to Eumaeus' continuing devotion (405–407). Further, Odysseus does not and cannot seek to enlist Eumaeus' aid in the planning for revenge until he reveals his identity, and that occurs much later. Perhaps then we should be content with Athena's own words—that Odysseus should remain in the swineherd's hut until she fetches Telemachus (411–415)—with the implication that this will be the site of a father-son reunion. Yet Telemachus does not reach the hut until Book 16, after nearly a book and a half have been lavished upon Odysseus' conversations with Eumaeus. Does Odysseus accomplish nothing in the interim?

The question can be answered adequately only within the framework of a broad interpretation of Odysseus' task upon his return: "not merely the expulsion of usurpers but the re-creation of an original order that had existed in Ithaca. He must excavate, as it were, down to the almost

obliterated foundation and then reconstruct on that old edifice.”¹ Eumaeus has a major and fascinating role to play in this reconstruction. As the first step in the restoration of normality and the reestablishment of himself as *anax* and *basileus*, Odysseus must not merely test Eumaeus’ loyalty, which is easily done, but must be tested in turn. He must win the affection and respect of one who is, on the one hand, his steadfastly loyal slave, but also a flawless host and a stern judge of the suitors and other slaves—in short, a moral paradigm. And he cannot simply reveal himself, for that would be no test, but must win Eumaeus over while in the disguise of one who stands low on the social ladder. Like Eumaeus himself, Odysseus will demonstrate his worth unaided by the automatic esteem that an aristocrat could expect. That, incidentally, constitutes the ultimate answer to why the poet neither allows Eumaeus himself to recognize the beggar’s identity nor permits the beggar to reveal it at this time.²

Austin claims that in his interaction with the swineherd, as with others on Ithaca, “Odysseus re-creates the psychological bond that had existed before.”³ The mutual affection that marks the prior relationship is made readily apparent by Eumaeus—*πὲρι γὰρ μ’ ἐφίλει* (14.146)—and by Athena—*ὅς τοι ὤν ἐπίουρος, ὁμῶς δέ τοι ἦπια οἶδε* (13.405).⁴ To judge

¹N. Austin, *Archery at the Dark of the Moon* (Berkeley 1975) 168. He also shows how Eumaeus’ stading is itself a model of order in contrast to the present anarchy in Odysseus’ palace (164–166). It may be added that the stading and Eumaeus are close to nature, while at the same time embodying the civilized world that Eumaeus’ craftsmanship represents. The hut is thus paradigmatic for the synthesis of nature and culture that Odysseus must reestablish in the palace. On the last point A. Parry, “Landscape in Greek Poetry,” *YCS* 15 (1957) 21, has this to say: “His putting things once more in harmony with natural laws will be marvelously symbolized by the tree, of which we have heard nothing hitherto, out of which Odysseus’ and Penelope’s bedstead and the whole Ithacan palace grow.”

²There are other, subordinate answers as well. In her supreme caution, shared by Odysseus, Athena returns him to disguise after the recognition with Telemachus, “lest the swineherd recognize him and report the news to Penelope” (16.457–459). She is clearly unconfident that anyone except Telemachus has the self-control of Odysseus, not even Penelope and, hence, not Eumaeus either. We may, of course, doubt whether Penelope or Eumaeus would have proved unreliable.

Another answer is that the disguise allows the poet opportunities for dramatic irony, “eine starke Spannung zwischen dem Gegenwärtigen und dem Entferntgeglauten” (U. Hölscher, *Untersuchungen zur Form der Odyssee*, *Hermes Einzelschriften* 6 [Berlin 1939] 60; see also 65–66), and for “a consciously ironic interplay of falsehood and truth” (C. P. Segal, “The Phaeacians and the Symbolism of Odysseus’ Return,” *Arion* 1 [1962] 59, n. 13).

³(Above, note 1) 203. Cf. Segal (above, note 2) 49.

⁴See W. B. Stanford, *The Odyssey of Homer*² (London 1965), concerning scholarly disagreement over how to take *ὁμῶς* and *τοι*. He does not, however, mention what seems the easiest answer. In the first place, the same or a similar formula, used also of Eumaeus, at 15.39 and 15.557 makes it nearly certain that *τοι* belongs to the verbal phrase and

from other remarks made by Eumaeus, his own affection was based mainly upon Odysseus' outstanding kindness as a master (14.61–67, 137–141, 169–170).

In one particularly vexing passage (14.144–147), however, he uses a word, ἡθελός, that seems to imply more.⁵ Scholars are divided over whether it essentially signifies respect or intimacy. The former would be more appropriate for a slave speaking of his master, but its root (which generates the suffix -ήθης, ἥθος, and εἶθθα) favours the notion of constant companionship, hence intimacy. Any translation like "lord" should, therefore, be rejected. Most importantly, however, its use elsewhere in Homer strongly suggests a particular combination of intimacy and respect, for with one exception the word is always applied by a younger brother to an older one.⁶ In this one especially emotional moment, then, Eumaeus reveals a dimension to the earlier relationship that goes deeper than that of master and slave. Eumaeus was, after all, raised in the palace with Odysseus' younger sister (15.363–365) and was in that attenuated sense his younger brother.⁷

Beyond this the poet gives us no more details about the nature of the pre-existing bond. In any case, what we will see gradually developing between them is certainly more intricate than the tie between master and slave, a component which turns out to be of significance only on the level of dramatic irony.

The growth in rapport between the swineherd and the beggar proceeds by subtle, almost imperceptible stages but is totally achieved by the end

not to ὁμῶς—thus "he is kindly disposed to you." As for ὁμῶς itself, it can have the weak sense "also" and probably does here, implying "along with being your swineherd."

⁵The major puzzle concerning the passage is why Eumaeus has waited so long to name Odysseus and only does so here with misgivings. B. Fenik, *Studies in the Odyssey* (Wiesbaden 1974) 29–30, explains that the name-giving convention is cleverly postponed and inverted for dramatic effect and irony. N. Austin, "Name Magic in the *Odyssey*," *CSCA* 5 (1972) 8–9, however, says, "it is a dramatic postponement of the name, but drama is not Eumaios's purpose;" "Odysseus's name is a tangible reality which Eumaios goes to remarkable lengths to circumvent . . . In his world malevolent powers can manipulate a mere word to destroy a man, even if the man were a thousand miles away." See S. E. Bassett, "On *Odyssey* xiv.138–47," *CJ* 14 (1919) 385–386, for a different, less satisfactory interpretation.

⁶*Iliad* 6.518 (Paris to Hector), 10.37 (Menelaus to Agamemnon), 22.229, 239 (Athena-Deiphobus to Hector); cf. Hesiod *Scutum* 103, for a slight extension to nephew-uncle. The exception is *Iliad* 23.94 (modifying κεφαλή), where Achilles speaks to Patroclus' ψυχή in a dream. The other instances suggest that, like Eumaeus, Achilles, at least at this moment, feels himself to be like a younger brother (cf. 11.787 for "younger").

⁷Eumaeus' contemporaneity with Ctimene is the one incontrovertible bit of evidence that he is younger than Odysseus. A. Séveryns, "L'âge d'Eumée, porcher d'Ulysse," *Revue Belge de philologie et d'histoire* 8 (1929) 853–855, mentions this but adds three other signs, all of which are debatable.

of Book 15. These stages and, in particular, the accumulating signs of Eumaeus' increasing respect for the beggar have not, to my knowledge, been systematically examined. We shall proceed in narrative sequence, looking for such details as the terms with which they address each other, changes in the nature of Eumaeus' hospitality, and, most centrally, Odysseus' gradual effacement of Eumaeus' conviction that his master either is dead or in any case will never return. The last both reveals the depth of psychological insight that marks the *Odyssey* generally and represents the most telling evidence for Eumaeus' trust in and admiration for his unknown guest.⁸

After rescuing the beggar from his dogs, Eumaeus first addresses him as γέρον (14.37), which he uses, together with the synonymous γεραίέ, many times but only in Book 14. Odysseus, in turn, first uses the impersonal ξείνε (53), but only this once. He also expresses his gratitude with a wish that Zeus grant his host whatever he most would like; of course, he has a good idea of what Eumaeus most wishes—his own return and revenge.

In his reply Eumaeus indicates that in protecting the beggar he was doing no more than he would for any stranger. This should be taken at face value. Nevertheless, the swineherd's thoughts, like Telemachus' in Book 1, seem to drift readily to Odysseus, for he shortly declares ἀλλ' ὀλεθ' (68), a clear expression of that despair which Odysseus will strive to soften. Eumaeus prepares the first meal (δεῖπνον) for his guest—two small, ordinary pigs, such as the slaves themselves eat, in contrast to the suitors (80–81). As he will do numerous times, he calls the beggar ξείνε (80).

After eating, Odysseus begins to question him about his master, introducing his speech with φίλε (115, to be repeated at 149), a signal that Eumaeus has moved up a notch in Odysseus' estimation. He suggests, too, that he may have encountered this still unnamed master in his wanderings, to which Eumaeus reacts gruffly. No one could persuade the family of this, he declares, although many liars have tried. Since his master is dead, the beggar must be angling for some decent clothes (122–137). But the conversation is riveting his thoughts to his lost master, and so he gives vent to his longing, during which he at last mentions the name Odysseus. In spite of his statements to the contrary (68, 130–137), Eumaeus has never been confident that Odysseus is dead, only that even if alive, he will never return. For as early as 42–44 he says, "that one is wandering . . . if in fact he is still alive," and, as Austin argues, his extreme reluctance to name his master makes sense only if

⁸H. Eisenberger, *Studien zur Odyssee* (Wiesbaden 1973) 16, claims that Odysseus is concerned to persuade him that Odysseus will return, "um der Vorbereitung der Tisis willen." This is minor at best, for what is one more slave against 108 suitors?

he harbours at least a shred of hope.⁹ This will give Odysseus an opening to apply his considerable persuasive force.

The beggar now takes an oath voluntarily that Odysseus will shortly arrive, and he stipulates that any gift of clothing shall be an *εὐαγγέλιον* and thus contingent upon that event (155–164); he thereby attempts to undercut Eumaeus' suspicion of an ulterior motive. But at first sight at least, his efforts are wasted, as the swineherd firmly avers οὐτ' Ὀδυσσεὺς ἐτι οἶκον ἐλεύσεται (167).¹⁰ Such scepticism over good news is clearly an aspect of intelligence in the *Odyssey*, which we find also in Odysseus, Penelope, and Telemachus. A mere four lines later, however, Eumaeus says αὐτὰρ Ὀδυσσεὺς / ἔλθοι, the initial sign that the beggar is beginning to have an effect upon him.¹¹ This will not be the only juxtaposition of his continued rejection of the beggar's claim with some evidence that he is weakening. Still, ἔλθοι is but an optative of wish, nothing stronger.

Odysseus' false autobiography, which we shall not examine, since that can be done only in the light of all the other false tales, has a pronounced impact upon Eumaeus.¹² The most direct proof occurs later, when the swineherd dilates to Penelope upon how the beggar bewitched him (ἔθελε) like an *αἰοιδός* (17.513–521). He has clearly been affected by the manner in which the beggar narrated as much as by the content. Within the present context, however, we can see unmistakable clues not only to Eumaeus' pity for his guest but, more crucially, to his enhanced admiration as well.

His first words following the tale reveal a new empathy (361–362), based on the bond he sees that they share, for both have endured long wandering or permanent exile; as a young child Eumaeus was kidnapped, taken far from home, and finally sold to Laertes (15.415–484).¹³ The

⁹(Above, note 5) 8–13.

¹⁰Penelope will utter the same words when the beggar takes the same oath (19.313). The following earlier passages, however, indicate that by this time Penelope is considerably more hopeful than Eumaeus was at the corresponding moment (i.e., the moment of the oath): 17.163–165, 509–511, 539–547; 19.127–128. Her words of protest, then, at 19.253–260 and 313 are best understood in terms of the prudent fear of disappointment that her hopefulness generates.

¹¹L. A. Stella, *Il Poema d'Ulisse* (Florence 1955) 363, observes the mutually contradictory tenor of 133–134 and 171–173 (ἔλθοι), attributing it to “una irragionevole speranza” (which Eumaeus has evidently felt all along), which results in an “umanissima contraddizione.” She does not, however, mention any of the later signs of weakening in Eumaeus, nor does she here give any credit to the beggar's influence.

¹²In the final line of the false tale, Odysseus compliments his host, saying that he has come to the hut of an *ἀνδρὸς ἐπισταμένου*. Eumaeus will return the compliment in kind at 17.273, calling him οὐδὲ . . . ἀνοήμων. While not vocatives, these function like the vocatives in demarcating stages in the relationship between the two men.

¹³Evidence for Eumaeus' perception of this bond occurs at 15.398–401. Eumaeus' immediate reaction to the beggar's tale of woe contrasts dramatically, though not

vocatives ἄ δειλὲ ξείνων and the following γέρον πολυπενθές (386) stand out conspicuously among the repeated instances of the colorless γέρον and ξείνε.¹⁴ On the other hand, while Eumaeus accepts as true the beggar's autobiography, he again rejects, or claims to reject, the part of the tale that concerns the whereabouts of the real Odysseus (363–365): “you will not persuade me in talking about Odysseus; why should someone like yourself tell useless lies?” Notice, however, the passing indication of growing respect, τοῖον ἔοντα. Still, the swineherd goes on to compare the beggar with an Aetolian who once deceived him about having seen Odysseus, and concludes by saying that his hospitality will rest not upon such deceptive claims but upon his fear of Zeus ξένιος and his pity for the beggar.

Undeterred from the goal of eliciting Eumaeus' trust, the beggar takes the dramatic step of offering to place a wager upon Odysseus' arrival. If he wins, he must be given clothing, which he thus once again treats specifically as an εὐαγγέλιον; if he loses, Eumaeus is to hurl him from a cliff (393–400). The swineherd cannot, of course, accept the wager, for if he won (that is, if Odysseus failed to arrive), he would be obliged to violate his own principles of hospitality in the worst way possible (402–406).¹⁵

While this reason in itself is sufficient to justify not wagering, it has the added advantage of enabling him to avoid declaring whether he now believes the beggar's prophecy. In fact, he then proceeds, involuntarily perhaps, to give three telling signs that his scepticism has been further shaken. First, since it is time for the second meal (δόρπον), he orders an animal to be brought in for slaughter; but this is no ordinary animal—ὕων τὸν ἄριστον (414). The contrast with the earlier meal (80–81) is plain: he presents the beggar with a fine, full-grown pig—μάλα πίονα πενταέτηρον (419)—such as is normally reserved for the demanding suitors. The poet, moreover, suggests the importance of this meal by giving a more elaborated description than he had of the first. Second—and of the three signs this one is the most direct—as he sacrifices, Eumaeus prays “to all the

surprisingly, with Antinous' (17.446). U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Die Heimkehr des Odysseus* (Berlin 1927) 15, remarks that because the tale has convinced Eumaeus that the beggar is actually a prince and basically innocent, “Eumaios behandelt ihn von da ab mit Auszeichnung.”

¹⁴The phrase ἄ δειλὲ ξείνων occurs once more at 21.288, where Antinous uses it to open a diatribe in which he compares the beggar with the drunken Centaur, Eurytion. Just as he perverts the application of the mythical paradigm (which, in fact, applies best to himself), so he perverts this vocative. E. Brunius-Nilsson, ΔΑΙΜΟΝΙΕ. *An Inquiry into a Mode of Apostrophe in Old Greek Literature* (Uppsala 1955) 18, oddly claims that the words γέρον πολυπενθές “are spoken in a threatening tone, which is at the same time ironical and derisory, sharp and condescending.”

¹⁵Wilamowitz (above, note 13) 16, notes that this reply shows Eumaeus' piety.

gods" for Odysseus' return (423–424), a declaration of hope that surpasses the earlier *ἐλθοι* (171–172).¹⁶ Finally, the swineherd honours his guest with the choicest cut of meat, just as Odysseus himself had done to mark his special regard for Demodocus (8.474–481).¹⁷ Even though Eumaeus will speak one more time of his master's death, the three signs demonstrate that Odysseus has already achieved a large measure of success in chipping away at his humanly understandable, indeed prudent, resistance to entertaining hope.¹⁸

Gratified by his host's tribute, Odysseus once again wishes him the favour of Zeus, addressing him for the first time not as *ξείνε* or even *φίλε*, but as *Εὔμαιε* (440). By using his name from now on with but one exception, Odysseus betokens his complete approval of and affection for Eumaeus.¹⁹ In reply, however, the swineherd appears to reject the beggar's wish for him (444–445): "a god will grant one thing but let another pass, whatever he is willing in his heart; for he is able to do everything." That is to say, since a god can give or withhold as he likes, he can freely disregard the prayers of mortals. Nausicaa treats in a similar vein Odysseus' friendly wish that the gods grant her a husband and harmony with him (6.180–189); yet her statement is most likely apotropaic of the gods' envy, since in her naiveté she earnestly hopes that, in

¹⁶Eisenberger (above, note 8) 22, agrees that Eumaeus' offer of his best animal plus this prayer reveal that "das heisse Bemühen des Bettlers doch nicht ganz wirkungslos geblieben ist."

¹⁷Cf. also *Iliad* 7.321, where Agamemnon pays the same honour to Ajax for the single combat against Hector.

¹⁸The critics who have given some thought to the subject tend either to underrate or to ignore totally the numerous signs of weakening in Book 14, taking literally the (increasingly superficial) rejections of the beggar's prophecies. E.g., Hölscher (above, note 2) 70–72, compares Book 14 with two others (3.195–248 and Book 19) and identifies a sequence of "Verheissung—Zweifel—leidenschaftliche Beteuerung—Unglaube—endliches Abbiegen zu einem neuen Gegenstande" (72). What he correctly sees occurring on the surface of conversation is the precise reverse of the psychological sequence. K. Rüter, *Odysseeinterpretationen* (Göttingen 1969) 144–146, comparing this scene with that of Telemachus and Athena in Book 1, concludes, "je bestimmter der Blick auf das Schicksal des Odysseus gelenkt wird, um so weiter treten vage Hoffnungen zurück (145). Eisenberger (above, note 8) 21, believes that the poet uses these rejections to bring out Eumaeus' "Seelenadel," since Eumaeus regards the prophecies as ploys to gain hospitable treatment or as repayments for such. Fenik (above, note 5) 155–157, views Eumaeus' rejection after the false tale as an *amplificatio* of that before the tale: "The theme . . . is, in accordance with the *Odyssey's* fondness for *Steigerung*, given increased intensity on its second appearance both in the conviction of Odysseus' promise and in the firmness of Eumaios' rejection" (156).

¹⁹Brunius-Nilsson (above, note 14) 17, says more tentatively that the first occurrence of *Εὔμαιε* "might be interpreted as a sign that the relationship between them has become more intimate." The one exception later on is *συφορβέ* (21.193), which is of little significance, since it merely balances *βουκόλε* (Philoetius) in the same line.

fact, she has already found such a husband in the stranger. Eumaeus' remark can and probably should be viewed as such a gesture.

Book 14 ends with the beggar receiving a cloak to ward off the cold of the night. That this too represents a sign of Eumaeus' growing affection and probably of his belief in the prophecies as well can be shown by a comparison with his earlier suspicion that the beggar was about to fashion a tale about Odysseus in order to obtain *χλαῖνάν τε χιτῶνά τε* (131–132). Now he not only parts willingly with his own, but assures him that when Telemachus returns, *αὐτός τοι χλαῖνάν τε χιτῶνά τε εἴματα δώσει* (516). As with the two meals, the poet has manipulated the elements of hospitality to reveal changes in the swineherd's attitude. His use of clothing as the specific instrument of this revelation accords with its equally significant functions elsewhere, as, for example, in Books 5 and 6.

Subsequent books provide additional evidence for Eumaeus' respect and affection for the beggar and his growing expectation of Odysseus' homecoming. Since Odysseus has in the main aroused these feelings within Book 14, the later details will require less scrutiny. In Book 15 Eumaeus employs duals for the first time, in a context which highlights the sense of shared sufferings and mutual understanding (398–400). When in Book 17 Melanthius provokes Eumaeus' outrage and protectiveness by abusing the beggar, the swineherd prays to the local nymphs that a *δαίμων* may bring his master home (240–246). In addition to being another sign of the swineherd's hopefulness, the prayer reveals the concord which has come to flourish between him and the beggar. For while Odysseus reacts inwardly to the abuse, evidently believing that any overt action might give him away prematurely, Eumaeus provides the outward reaction, one totally in accord with Odysseus' feelings. Shortly afterwards, he shows yet another facet of his respect, this time almost as if he were treating the beggar as his own *anax*: Eumaeus pointedly leaves to him the decision as to who should enter the palace first (17.274–279). To be sure, not a great deal hangs on the decision, but the deference involved remains significant.²⁰

The Argos episode gives us the final glimpse of Eumaeus' vestigial resistance to accepting the idea of Odysseus' imminent return, but he will again undercut his own insistence. He says of Argos (17.312), "this is indeed the dog of the man who died far away." Moments later, however, Penelope asks Eumaeus for an interview with the beggar, in order to discover whether he has by chance seen Odysseus or heard some news about him (508–511). The swineherd's reply, in which he lavishly compliments the beggar's story-telling ability, embodies no sceptical warning

²⁰M. N. Nagler, *Spontaneity and Tradition* (Berkeley 1974) 110, argues that following his own slave into the palace shows that Odysseus has not yet resumed his rightful position at home.

about what the beggar will say about Odysseus. Nor while relaying Penelope's invitation does he warn the beggar against fabricating news. He uses, in fact, a conditional sentence with the subjunctive (not optative) which embodies a recognition that the beggar's claims about Odysseus in Book 14 may well have been trustworthy:

εἰ δέ κέ σε γνώη νημερτέα πάντ' ἐνέποντα,
ἔσσει σε χλαῖνάν τε χιτῶνά τε.²¹ (17.556-557)

This stands in sharp contrast to both his recent claim that Odysseus is dead and his immediate reaction to the beggar's false tale.

Once again, too, clothing is linked with the beggar's rising status. He was first accused of trying to worm some clothes out of Eumaeus, then readily given a *χλαῖνα* but only for the night, promised a *χλαῖνα* and *χιτῶν* from Telemachus, and now from Penelope. As he thus ascends the ladder of respectability and acceptance, it is significantly the lowly slave who is there to deliver the clothing or the promises. Eumaeus' female counterpart, Eurycleia, will make Odysseus a final offer of clothing, when he has vanquished the suitors (22.487), but Odysseus, who always knows the right moment, demands fire instead in order to cleanse the *megaron*. He will once and for all replace his beggar's rags with proper, clean clothes only in preparation for the reunion with his wife (23.155).

On his way out of the palace, Eumaeus stops to advise Telemachus to watch over affairs there and to be wary of the suitors, while he himself goes to watch over the pigs, *σὸν καὶ ἐμὸν βίοντον* (17.593-596). This phrase and the symmetry of their two tasks, reinforced by *ἐγὼ μὲν . . . σοὶ δ'*, suggest that Eumaeus already regards himself as a full partner in the present and imminent events. He ends his speech with a prayer referring to the suitors: *τοὺς Ζεὺς ἐξολέσειε πρὶν ἡμῖν πῆμα γενέσθαι* (597). While it is true that Eumaeus has been a privileged witness to Telemachus' ominous sneeze and Penelope's favorable interpretation (541-550), his receptiveness to the omen is ultimately the result of the beggar's persuasion.

After he returns to the palace in Book 20, Eumaeus will function primarily as one of a pair of allies. As an individual, although he has easily passed a series of tests of his hospitality and sensitivity, he has served more importantly as himself the first test of Odysseus' worthiness to resume his proper position. With words alone the disguised Odysseus has gradually transformed Eumaeus' attitude of suspicion, regardless of his impeccable hospitality, to one of suspicion mingled with pity, to pity mingled with admiration and a sense of closeness. Punctuating and most accurately marking this sequence has been a slowly mounting trust in

²¹Although Eumaeus is simply repeating Penelope's words (549-550), the poet, if he had wished, could easily have allowed him to indicate a doubt that the beggar would tell the truth.

the beggar's predictions of Odysseus' homecoming. When Odysseus finally reveals himself in Book 21, Eumaeus accepts him instantly, for he has already come to regard this stranger as worthy to be Odysseus, the Odysseus whom he once knew and fondly remembers.

The swineherd's role in relation to Odysseus is reinforced in Book 20 by a second slave, the cowherd Philoetius, who is a minor doublet for Eumaeus and will be his partner. He speaks and acts either in actual concert with Eumaeus or at least in symmetry. Fenik presents the major evidence: in his first words to the beggar he reveals an abiding loyalty to Odysseus; the entrances of the two loyal herdsmen into the palace bracket that of Melanthius; together they capture Melanthius in the storeroom; their parts in the slaughter of the suitors parallel each other.²²

In addition, Philoetius immediately inherits Eumaeus' frequent epithet, *ἄρχαμος ἀνδρῶν* (20.185, 254), and he vaunts over the suitor Ctesippus (22.285–291), as Eumaeus does over Melanthius (194–199). Moreover, his expressions of pity for the beggar, his laments over the absence of Odysseus and the state of affairs on Ithaca, and especially his readiness to participate in revenge (20.191–237) reflect point for point Eumaeus' own sentiments specifically at this moment in the action. Philoetius functions, in other words, as a mirror image not so much for Eumaeus' entire role with all the development that entails, but largely for his inner condition at the end of that development. Thus, when the beggar asks him how he would react if Odysseus returned, in stark contrast to Eumaeus in Book 14 Philoetius replies without hesitation or doubts about its likelihood:

αἶ γὰρ τοῦτο, ξεῖνε, ἔπος τελέσειε Κρονίων.
γνοίης χ' οὔη ἐμῇ δύναμει καὶ χεῖρες ἔπονται (236-237)

and Eumaeus echoes him.

One might ask why the cowherd is included at all, given that his role is so small and that everything he says or does but matches Eumaeus. Nagler argues at length and persuasively that his presence is demanded by the motif of attendance-by-two, a central feature of Homeric compositional technique.²³ Together, Eumaeus and Philoetius signal Odysseus' resumption of his proper heroic status.

One critical element has so far been lacking from our consideration of Eumaeus' function in the reestablishment of order—namely, a resolution of his own peculiar position, for in Odysseus' absence he has become a surrogate-father to Telemachus. Our first glimpse of this is the passage

²²(Above, note 5) 172–173.

²³As he explains (above, note 20) 109, "The herdsmen, then, are to be Odysseus's *ministri* in both of the needed areas, domestic and martial."

which first mentions the swineherd (4.638–640): “The suitors thought that he [Telemachus] had not gone to Neleus’ Pylos, but was at hand somewhere in the fields, whether by the sheep or with the swineherd.”²⁴ Evidently they regard Eumaeus as Telemachus’ refuge at least, and probably his confidant.

Early in his conversation with Odysseus, Eumaeus himself voices his pride in Telemachus and the intense pain he now feels over his voyage (14.174–184). He begins with the powerful words *νῦν αὖ παιδὸς ἄλαστον δδύρομαι, ὃν τέκ’ Ὀδυσσεύς*. As the line reads, if he had not appended the clause, “whom Odysseus fathered,” *παιδὸς* would naturally have meant “my son.” Perhaps for an instant this might have flickered in the audience’s mind. In any event, the passage is reminiscent of the pain that afflicts Telemachus’ actual parent, Penelope, when she discovers his absence (4.703–710, 817–823). Most expressive of their shared anguish is the thought that his very name may perish (4.710), or what comes to the same thing, his family’s name (14.181–182).

The most important and most obvious evidence for Eumaeus’ feelings is his reaction to the safe return of Telemachus. Odysseus and Eumaeus are in the hut, when Odysseus remarks that the dogs have apparently greeted an approaching friend. We then read

Οὐ πω πᾶν εἴρητο ἔπος, ὅτε οἱ φίλος υἱὸς
ἔστη ἐνὶ προθύροισι. ταφῶν δ’ ἀνόρουσε συβώτης. (16.11–12)

The person in the doorway is Odysseus’ (οἱ) own son, but Odysseus presumably does not know this. Eumaeus, however, leaps up to greet him and begins weeping for joy.²⁵ The ironic juxtaposition of father and surrogate-father continues with a simile (17–21): “As a father who is filled with affection greets his only son, who has returned from far away in the tenth year, and over whom he has suffered much pain, so the glorious swineherd then embraced and kissed godlike Telemachus all over, as if he had escaped from death.” The simile and perhaps even more the last words cited evoke the depth of Eumaeus’ prior anxiety and present relief, while making transparent his role as surrogate.²⁶

²⁴J. A. Scott, *The Unity of Homer* (Berkeley 1921) 168, cites this passage as an example of how the poet sometimes postpones an elaborate introduction of a character until he assumes a prominent position in the narrative. Inexplicably, however, he regards Eumaeus’ prominence as beginning after his autobiography in Book 15, which, according to Scott, constitutes his proper introduction.

²⁵D. J. Stewart, *The Disguised Guest* (Lewisburg and London 1976) 92, observes that “the scene makes it clear that Eumaeus is the nearest thing Telemachus has to a father.” He goes on, however, to claim that given Eumaeus’ social status, this is “another reminder of the collapse of the heroic consciousness,” a collapse central to his interpretation of the poem.

²⁶Cf. the treatments, different but complementary to the one offered here, by C. Moulton, *Similes in the Homeric Poems, Hypomnemata* 49 (Göttingen 1977) 132–133

His first utterance to Telemachus is also relevant:

ἦλθες, Τηλέμαχε, γλυκερόν φάος· οὐ σ' ἔτ' ἐγὼ γε
ὄψεσθαι ἐφάμην, ἐπεὶ οἴχοο νηῖ Πύλονδε. (23-24)

Penelope will greet Telemachus with precisely these words (17.41-42), a fact which complements the parallel observed earlier between her and Eumaeus' reactions to Telemachus' departure. In all of Homer, moreover, these are the only passages where the phrase γλυκερόν φάος appears, although φάος even by itself often carries the sense "salvation, deliverance."²⁷ For example, at *Iliad* 18.102 Achilles laments that he proved to be no φάος to Patroclus and the other dead Greeks. It is hardly surprising, in view of her relationship to Telemachus and her prior despair, that Penelope should welcome her son with such emotion. We might not have expected the same from Eumaeus too, had it not been for the earlier signs of his own despair and the simile immediately preceding.²⁸

Because Eumaeus is a slave, however, his bond with Telemachus is marred by a certain tension. To explain why he must finally escort Odysseus to the town despite his own wish not to, he says of Telemachus, "I fear that he will be angry with me, for the scoldings of masters are severe" (17.188-189). But even aside from this admixture of tension, the relationship represents, as indicated earlier, a distortion of normality which is due to Odysseus' absence.

Toward the end of the poem, Odysseus acknowledges the strength of

and by H. P. Foley, "'Reverse Similes' and Sex Roles in the *Odyssey*," *Arethusa* 11 (1978) 7-8. Foley says of this simile, "yet it is Odysseus, the real father who is present to observe this embrace, who has returned from travels of considerable length." She appears to be pointing to two substitutions—Eumaeus for Odysseus as the father in the simile and Telemachus for Odysseus as the traveler. Both may be present, although such phrases as "in the tenth year" are also indirectly appropriate to Telemachus himself as part of the overall treatment of his voyage as analogue, albeit in miniature, to his father's. Foley adds that such similes "seem to suggest both a sense of identity between people in different social and sexual roles and a loss of stability, an inversion of the normal." This seems fully applicable (except for "sexual") to the substitution of Eumaeus for Odysseus. Both Moulton and W. C. Scott, *The Oral Nature of the Homeric Simile* (Leiden 1974) 123, remind us of the poet's fondness for similes expressive of family relationships and of the ideas of loss and recovery of loved ones.

²⁷M. Puelma, "Die Selbstbeschreibung des Chores in Alkmans grossem Partheneion-Fragment," *MusHelv* 34 (1977) 14, n. 32, adds that in these two passages the phrase is used as a predicate with the verb, not as an appositive with the vocative.

²⁸Eumaeus and Telemachus then exchange affectionate vocatives—φίλον τέκος (16.25) and ἄττα (16.31 and *passim*). The latter is used only by Telemachus and of Eumaeus in the *Odyssey*; in the *Iliad* Achilles (9.607) and Menelaus (17.561) apply it to Phoenix. P. Chantraine, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque* (Paris 1968-1977) 135, calls it a "terme expressif . . . Le sens originel pourrait être 'père nourricier.'" He cites Eustathius 777.54, who correctly notes that it is used by young men addressing one who is, or is treated as, a foster-father.

the relationship, while simultaneously transforming it into something even better. As he reveals his identity to Eumaeus and Philoetius, he makes the following promise if he overcomes the suitors: Τηλεμάχου ἐτάρῳ τε κασιγνήτῳ τε ἔσεσθον (21.216).²⁹ If Eumaeus is to become Telemachus' *ἐταρος*, then the element of fear that occasionally strains their bond will be removed. And if he will become Telemachus' *κασίγνητος*, however figuratively, then no longer will he be his *πατήρ*, however figuratively. Now that Odysseus has returned and has reestablished all of his central relationships except that with Penelope, once again he becomes *pater familias*, which includes being Telemachus' father. Since a surrogate-father is no longer needed, the excellent Eumaeus is free to become Telemachus' equal.

Thus, even before the battle with the suitors, in which Eumaeus will prove his heroic mettle, we are assured that he will afterwards be accorded the one status in the family which his moral stature and his unique bonds with both Telemachus and Odysseus have merited. Furthermore, his participation in the battle proves to be merely the most obvious, least interesting facet of his role in the restoration of order in the palace and on Ithaca.

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²⁹That Philoetius is included does not imply that he too has been a surrogate-father; there is no evidence for this. As always, he is simply a relatively insignificant doublet, who, together with Eumaeus, is here accorded the reward for his loyalty. For Eumaeus, however, this reward has much more significance.

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