No Longer *Νήπιος*: The Maturation of Telemachos in Homer's *Odyssey*

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Abstract

This thesis explores the maturation process of young males in Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. Because Homer describes Telemachos's journey into manhood at such length and with such detail, this study focuses mainly on his development and describes the growth and rites of passage of other Homeric warriors mostly as points of comparison and to better understand the maturation process in Homeric society as a whole. This study begins by examining the naming of Homeric males. This chapter considers the names given to sons and investigates the varying expectations and pressures attached to those names. The second chapter discusses why Telemachos is correct to identify himself as just recently *νήπιος* (a child) and examines several different uses of the word in Homer. The third chapter describes Telemachos's speech in the assembly and his journey abroad to the Peloponnese as necessary rites of passage required for the Homeric male to enter manhood and seeks to prove this by comparing Telemachos's travels to those of his father and other young males on their paths to adulthood.

By exploring the development of Telemachos in the *Odyssey* and references to the maturation of other young males in Homer's epics and Hesiod's *Works and Days*, this study aims to provide a better understanding of rites of passage in Homeric society and the purpose of the *Telemacheia* in the *Odyssey*. This study concludes that the *Telemacheia* is indeed necessary and that Telemachos does mature greatly in the poem. In this thesis it is explained that Homer's poem, containing Theoklymenos's prophecy declaring the continued greatness of Odysseus's family and Odysseus's decision to leave

home once more, requires Telemachos to become a man. In order to give a proper ending to his audience, Homer must convince them that Telemachos is a worthy successor and ready to take control of his household when his father leaves again.

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Introduction

Telemachos is a unique character in the epics of Homer. We witness him mature from an unmotivated, helpless daydreamer into a young man who has spoken in assembly, traveled to foreign courts, and battled the suitors and their kin.[1] As the *Odyssey* begins, Telemachos is a *νήπιος* youth—an immature twenty-year-old, incapable of handling many of the challenges and responsibilities of manhood. When the *Odyssey* ends, Telemachos has become a worthy successor to his father. In this thesis, I will explore maturation in the Homeric epics. This will involve examining the varying pressures and expectations placed upon the sons of noble and heroic fathers. Concerning these pressures and expectations, I will pay particular attention to the rites of passage young males need to complete in order to enter into manhood. Because Telemachos alone provides a detailed look into the maturation process from *νήπιος* to young man, the majority of this essay will focus on his development. Telemachos proves an interesting character study. His situation is far from typical. With his father away from Ithaka since he was an infant, he has lacked a proper male role model. His mother and the suitors attempt to suppress his development and keep him forever a child. It is only through Athena, who takes on the role of his father, that we see the necessary steps he needs to take before he reaches adulthood.

In exploring the maturation of Telemachos, I will, of course, concentrate on the *Telemacheia*, the first four books of the *Odyssey*. The inclusion of the *Telemacheia* in the *Odyssey* can be puzzling. The *Odyssey* is the story of Odysseus. It tells of his homecoming from Troy after ten years of battle and ten years lost at sea. Why, then, in

[1] As Vidal-Naquet (2002) states: "*le seul personage que l'on voit entrer dans l'âge adulte pendant le temps du récit est Télémaque,*" 103.

an epic about Odysseus, does Homer focus the first four books on his son? In this thesis, I will discuss the purpose of the *Telemacheia*, its role in the narrative, and what Homer intends to show his audience by its inclusion and by the focus on Telemachos's development throughout the poem. By examining the *Telemacheia*, I also hope to better understand how Homeric society expected to mature young males into ideal men.[2]

In the first chapter of this thesis, I will discuss birth and the naming of males in Homeric society. Concerning the naming of sons, I will look at *Od*. 19.399-412, which offers a detailed naming scene. Homeric society placed tremendous pressures on the sons of noble fathers to succeed and become great in battle and in speech. These pressures begin as soon as the child is born. In this section, I will examine the names given to males in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. These names often reflect qualities parents desired in their sons. Names would often carry meanings reflecting leadership (Astyanax) or persuasive speaking (Peisistratos). Additionally, these names would often describe traits valued in the fathers. This places pressure on the young males both to live up to the qualities described in their names as well as to live up to the examples of their fathers. This is important for understanding the society in which Telemachos and other young males grew up. Before meeting Athena, Telemachos's name (he who fights from afar)

[2] In this paper, I use "Homeric society" to refer to the peoples, manners, and customs depicted in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. This society, however, would be familiar in many ways to Homer's audience. Edwards (1987) correctly states: "the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are works of art, not necessarily an accurate record of the ideals of a society… but the prime ideas and aims that underlie the actions and words of the epic characters continue to appear in later Greek literature and life, and may be considered fundamental principles of ancient Greek society," 149. In Homer's *Odyssey*, the poet depicts this society as a cohenrent, functioning, and thus believable society. Finley (1978) examines this society and determines that it is an essentially real society, placing it in the Dark Age in the centuries just before the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were preserved in writing. While current scholars continue to debate just what time period is reflected in Homer's epics, there is a general consensus that Finley was correct to see in Homeric society a reflection of a real and functional society. See Edwards (1987), Latacz (1996), Raaflaub (1997), and Osborne (2004) for more recent work discussing the society represented in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.

and the *κλέος* (reputation) of his father have placed considerable pressure on him to win his own *κλέος*—something he had failed to do up to that point.

In the second chapter, I will examine *Od*. 18.229. In this line, Telemachos points out that before meeting Athena and embarking on his trip to the Peloponnese, he was still *νήπιος*. Here, I will attempt to explain exactly what Telemachos means by *νήπιος*. First, I will explore the differing meanings of this word. At this time, I will also find examples in Homer where each of these uses of *νήπιος* exist. After I have decided upon a correct definition for Telemachos's use of *νήπιος*, I will discuss why Telemachos is correct to identify himself as *νήπιος*. Telemachos has a unique situation at home. He has no proper male role model. Both his mother and the suitors benefit from Telemachos's inability to reach manhood. Because of all this, Telemachos is very slow to develop. During the first four books of the *Oddyssey*, he often displays his lack of maturity.

In the third chapter, I will explore the ways in which young Telemachos can shed the label of *νήπιος*. The majority of this section will focus on Athena's attempts to build up his confidence, have him speak in assembly, and have him travel to the Peloponnese and act as the guest of Nestor and Menelaos. Telemachos's speech in assembly and his journey to the Peloponnese are clearly rites of passage. Homeric society would expect the son of Odysseus to become a confident and competent speaker and to have traveled abroad before he can ascend to manhood. In order to make the case that the journey abroad is a necessary rite of passage, I will compare Telemachos's voyage to the travels of other heroes when they were young. Homer includes many examples of males being sent abroad by their fathers and the village elders in order to complete similar tasks and develop the same skills. Finally, I will conclude this section by discussing the

importance for Telemachos of learning about his father and learning to become more like him. Here, I will show how Nestor and Menelaos advise Telemachos to learn to be more deceptive like his father and encourage him to handle his own problems.

In the conclusion, I will consider the arguments I have made concerning Telemachos's status as a *νήπιος* young adult and the varying rites of passage he must complete in order to become a man and use them to answer a series of questions: Why does Homer spend the first four books of his epic about the homecoming of *Odysseus* describing the maturation of Telemachos? What is the function of the *Telemacheia* in the plot of the poem? What is Homer attempting to show his audience by spending so much time describing Telemachos's journey to manhood? In order to do this, I must first answer an old question: does Telemachos even mature (and if so, how much)? Here, I will discuss both the different treatment Telemachos receives from the suitors and the servants and Telemachos's changed behavior in order to argue that Telemachos has indeed matured. Finally, I will show why Telemachos's development is necessary to the overall structure of the *Od*yssey and explain that Homer includes it to assure his audience that Odysseus will leave his house to a worthy successor and his family will continue to hold power on Ithaka.

Chapter 1: The Naming of Sons

Homeric society expects young, wellborn males to win reputation (*κλέος*) through speech (*μῦθος*) and deed (*ἔργον*).[3] This expectation is evident almost immediately after birth. Although the child is entering a stage of life Solon calls *νήπιος*[4] (Solon fr. 27 W), parents and grandparents in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, as well as Greeks of later centuries, often provided names for recently born male children that reflected desired qualities which they could only hope to achieve once they reached early manhood (*ἥβη*). Names, such as Patroklos (glory of the father) and Idomeneus (Strength of Ida), frequently conveyed meanings of leadership, strength in battle, or ability as a speaker.[5]

In Classical Athens, on the fifth day after birth, a ritualized festival officially incorporated the newly born child into the family. This festival, the *ἀμφιδρόμια*, involved the father carrying his child around the hearth.[6] On the tenth day after birth, the *δεκάτη*, the naming of the baby takes place.[7] Although the evidence for birth and naming rituals for Homer's time period falls far short of what is available for Classical Athens, the *Odyssey* does contain a child naming scene:

Αὐτόλυκος δ᾽ ἐλθὼν Ἰθάκης ἐς πίονα δῆμον
παῖδα νέον γεγαῶτα κιχήσατο θυγατέρος ἧς:

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[3] Thus the importance of Phoenix reminding Achilles that it was he who taught him to be a "speaker of words and a doer of deeds" (*Il*. 9.443).

[4] The word refers to a young child who has not yet matured, but warriors in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* frequently use it as an insult. Cunliffe (1963) defines *νήπιος* as "young," but also provides the meanings "foolish" and "senseless" to capture its more derogatory uses.

[5] *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 3d ed., contains a useful article (s.v. "names, personal, Greek") with both Homeric and Classical examples of names reflecting "notions of leadership and military prowess" as well as "strength" and "honor."

[6] Burkert (1985) 255. Kamen (2007) mentions the possibility of this ritual existing during the Archaic Period and that the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* (239-40) could be an "aetiological explanation for this rite," 89.

[7] Kamen (2007) 89.

τόν ῥά οἱ Εὐρύκλεια φίλοις ἐπὶ γούνασι θῆκε
παυομένῳ δόρποιο, ἔπος τ᾽ ἔφατ᾽ ἔκ τ᾽ ὀνόμαζεν:
“Αὐτόλυκ᾽, αὐτὸς νῦν ὄνομ᾽ εὕρεο ὅττι κε θῇαι
παιδὸς παιδὶ φίλῳ: πολυάρητος δέ τοί ἐστιν.”
τὴν δ᾽ αὖτ᾽ Αὐτόλυκος ἀπαμείβετο φώνησέν τε:
“γαμβρὸς ἐμὸς θυγάτηρ τε, τίθεσθ᾽ ὄνομ᾽ ὅττι κεν εἴπω:
πολλοῖσιν γὰρ ἐγώ γε ὀδυσσάμενος τόδ᾽ ἱκάνω,
ἀνδράσιν ἠδὲ γυναιξὶν ἀνὰ χθόνα πουλυβότειραν:
τῷ δ᾽ Ὀδυσεὺς ὄνομ᾽ ἔστω ἐπώνυμον: αὐτὰρ ἐγώ γε,
ὁππότ᾽ ἂν ἡβήσας μητρώϊον ἐς μέγα δῶμα
ἔλθῃ Παρνησόνδ᾽, ὅθι πού μοι κτήματ᾽ ἔασι,
τῶν οἵ ἐγὼ δώσω καί μιν χαίροντ᾽ ἀποπέμψω.”

Autolykos, having come into the rich land of Ithaka,
discovered a new child of his daughter had been born;
Eurykleia then placed him upon his very knees
as he finished his meal, and she spoke a word and called him by name:
“Autolykos, find the name now that you will place
on the dear child of your child, for he is much desired by you.”
Then Autolykos spoke and answered her:
“My son-in-law and daughter, give him the name that I say;
as I come to this place hateful to many,
men and women alike, upon the all nourishing earth;
let him be called by the name Odysseus; then,
when he has matured and comes to his mother’s great house
in Parnassos, where my possessions are,
of these, I will give to him and I will send him off rejoicing.” (*Od*. 19.399-412).

There are several interesting details in this Homeric naming scene. First, the nurse, Eurykleia, places the child in Autolykos’s lap and it is she who gives him the authority to name the child. Although one might expect that she was acting under the orders of Laertes, the poet gives no indication that this took place. More interesting are the points that can be compared and contrasted with the Classical Athenian ritual as well as the known customs of later Greeks. Although no festival or rituals are mentioned in detail like the *ἀμφιδρόμια* or the tenth day naming, the occasion occurs after an evening meal (*δόρπον*) and brings the child’s grandfather, Autolykos, to Ithaka. In addition, like the Athenian practice, the child is not named before birth or immediately after. It is not until

after Autolykos has arrived in Ithaka, discovered the baby, and has finished his meal that the baby is named. Finally, the grandfather promises gifts for the child when he has matured.

The fact that Autolykos names his grandson and the name he gives him do not deviate far from known Greek practices. The Greeks frequently named their sons (especially the firstborn) after their grandfathers. Usually, however, the paternal grandfather is preferred.[8] Autolykos does not give the child his name, but names the child after a quality he sees in himself, *ὀδυσσάμενος*.[9] Even though, strictly speaking, this naming scene has its differences from the known practices of later Greeks, there are enough similarities that it should have seemed recognizable and familiar to them: the child naming occurs after birth and after a meal/feast; the grandfather names the child after a characteristic of his own instead of the child taking the grandfather's name.

This naming scene, in addition to having some similarities to the naming customs of later Greeks, demonstrates a key feature of Homeric names. The son is frequently named after a trait of his father or, in this case, grandfather.[10] The people of Troy called Hektor's son Astyanax (lord of the city) and they did this because "Hektor alone protected Ilion." (*Il*. 6.402-3). Nestor is famed for his ability as a speaker: "his voice flows from his tongue sweeter than honey" (*τοῦ καὶ ἀπὸ γλώσσης μέλιτος γλυκίων ῥέεν αὐδή*) (*Il*. 1.249). He attempts to calm the strife between Achilles and Agamemnon (*Il*.

[8] *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 3d ed., s.v. "names, personal, Greek." Hardie (1923) points out a very similar custom among modern Greeks. The child is usually named after his grandparent, after the grandparent has given permission, in order that the "name may not die out," 249.

[9] The meaning of *ὀδυσσάμενος* has caused some problems. Stanford (1952) provides a brief summary of past arguments concerning whether the meaning is "anger" or "hateful" and whether or not the participle is formed from *ὀδύσσομαι* before debating whether or not the verb should be translated actively or passively.

[10] Nagy (1999) states: "the son is named after one of the father's primary heroic characteristics," 146.

1.247-84) and he later convinces Agamemnon to send gifts to Achilles in order to bring him back into the battle (*Il*. 9.96-113). Because of this, it is in no way surprising that his son, whom he sends to accompany Telemachos to Sparta, is named Peisistratos (he who persuades the army).[11] Sons who are born into less privileged circumstances than the sons of Hektor or Nestor are less likely to be given names meaning "lord of the city" or "he who persuades the army." Odysseus's treacherous and ill-mannered goatherd is named Melanthios.[12] The same is true for illegitimate sons. Menelaos names the son he has with a servant woman Megapenthes (great suffering) (*Od*. 4.11-2). This is because illegitimate children are normally treated as inferior in Homeric society; a fact which is made obvious when Odysseus, while in the guise of a beggar, concocts a false story of his past for Eumaios, claiming to have been the illegitimate child of a rich man and an *ὠνητή* (a bought woman). Odysseus feels he needs to emphasize that, even though his mother was a servant, his father "honored" (*ἐτίμα*) him as much as the legitimate children (*Od*. 14.202-204).

The name "Telemachos" follows the patterns typical of many Homeric names. The name means "he who fights from afar."[13] This suggests good skill with the bow—a skill celebrated in the contest of the bow (*Od*. 21). It also follows the convention of naming a son after a heroic trait of his father. Odysseus's expertise with the bow wins him the contest. After the suitors have failed, he successfully strings his bow (*Od*. 21.404-9) and shoots an arrow through all of the ax heads (*Od.* 21.419-23). The bow is

[11] Nagy (1999) 146.
[12] Powell (2004) translates this name as "Blackie," 142.
[13] Page (1973) argues against this translation of the name. He suggests that *Τηλέ*-- means "strong" rather than "distance." Page's reasoning for this translation is an unnecessary insistence that this name would carry negative, cowardly connotations, 36-7. Heubeck (1988) , Nagy (1999) 146, and Videl-Naquet (2002) 103 all prefer "he who fights from afar."

also the weapon Odysseus uses to rid his house of the suitors (*Od*. 22). Thus Telemachos grew up in Ithaka with a name that reflected the expectations of society and his family. In order to live up to his name, Telemachos would have to become a skilled archer. Because the name describes a skill of his father, it also assures that Telemachos was expected to follow in his father's footsteps and be a son not only worthy of Odysseus, but like Odysseus.[14] Giving children names that reflect desired qualities and characteristics valued in fathers with established reputations places great pressure on them to succeed. A child named "lord of the city" or "glory of the father" would be expected to lead his people or win honor; a child named "he who persuades the army" would be expected to be a strong speaker. The naming of a young male seems to have been the first step in guiding him towards an ideal manhood. When he reached that manhood, he was expected to win *κλέος* for himself and his family.

[14] I will explore the importance for young males to grow up like their fathers in Homeric society in greater detail later.

Chapter 2: Why Was Telemachos *Νήπιος*?

In Book Eighteen of the *Odyssey*, after Penelope has rebuked Telemachos for allowing the suitors to abuse a guest (the disguised Odysseus), he admits: "before now, I was still *νήπιος*" (*Od*. 18.229). His admission displays recognition that before meeting Athena and embarking on his journey to Pylos and Sparta, he was *νήπιος*. But what does Telemachos mean by *νήπιος*? As I have stated above, Cunliffe defines *νήπιος* as "young" and also provides derogatory meanings, such as "childish" and "foolish."[15] In addition to the meaning young (as opposed to "adult"), some scholars have made the argument that *νήπιος* more specifically refers to an infant.[16] This comes from the belief that *νήπιος* is equivalent to the Latin *infans* and refers to one lacking speech.

In both the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, there are instances where translating *νήπιος* as infant makes sense. In Book Six of the *Iliad*, Astyanax is referred to several times as *νήπιος*. On his way to visit with his wife and son, Hektor informs Helen that he cannot stay with her, but he must get back to his house so he can see "his dear wife and *νήπιος* child" (*Il*. 6.366). Andromache's attendant carries her "*νήπιος* child" when Hektor and Andromache meet (*Il*. 6.400). Andromache complains that Hektor feels no pity for his "dear wife and *νηπίαχος* child" (*Il*. 607-8). When Odysseus visits the underworld, the shade of Agamemnon refers to Telemachos as *νήπιος* in a context where "infant" is also an acceptable translation. He reminds Odysseus that when he left for Troy, Telemachos "was a *νήπιος* child at [Penelope's] breast" (*Od*. 11.448-9). Thus *νήπιος* could have originally referred to an infant, and, if so, Homer was likely aware of this use. He clearly

[15] See the fourth note in the previous section.
[16] See Heath (2005) 94 n.39 for a brief description of this argument. Lattimore (1967) translates *νήπιος* in *Od*. 18.229 "infant."

does use *νήπιος* when describing infant children. Even so, it is apparent that *νήπιος* has meanings other than "infant." When Solon divided the human life cycle into *ἑβδομάδες*, periods of seven years, he declared that the child in the first *ἑβδομάς* was *νήπιος* (Solon fr. 27 W). While "infant" and "speechless" would be appropriate for the child at the beginning of the first *ἑβδομάς*, they are certainly no longer appropriate for a child six-years-old approaching the end of this *ἑβδομάς*. When Telemachos, twenty-years-old and transitioning from the third *ἑβδομάς* to the fourth, says "before now, I was still *νήπιος*" (*Od*. 18.229), he does not mean that he was speechless or an infant.

Besides using *νήπιος* to refer to infants and children, Homer also uses *νήπιος* as an insult to criticize warriors in general or to criticize a particular speech or action. Homer calls Patroklos a "*μέγα νήπιος*" after he begs Achilles to allow him to rejoin the battle (*Il*. 16.46). When Hektor gloats over the dying Patroklos, he calls him *νήπιος* for thinking he could take Troy and overcome him (*Il*. 16.830-6). Odysseus's companions are called *νήπιοι* because they killed and ate the oxen of Helios (*Od*. 1.8). Finally, when Eteoneus commits the incredible blunder of asking whether or not Menelaos will admit Telemachos and Peisistratos as guests, a furious Menelaos responds "you were never *νήπιος* before… but now you utter *νήπια* like a child" (*Od*. 4.31-2). In these instances, *νήπιος* cannot mean "infant" or "speechless." Here, the sense is "foolish," "childish," or "senseless." When Menelaos accuses Eteoneus of speaking "like a child" (*πάϊς ὣς*), he is accusing him of not speaking like a mature and intelligent man.[17] When an adult in the

[17] Hohendahl-Zoetelief (1980) argues that *πάϊς ὣς* emphasizes the accuser's ability to do better and challenges the accused to "live up to his potential," but also attempts to minimize the severity of Menelaos's criticism because of Menelaos's "fear of senility" and because "he is fighting against his own inclination to send the strangers away," 48. On this latter point, I cannot agree. I believe *πάϊς ὣς* follows more closely to Heath's (2005) statement about criticizing warriors as *νήπιος*: "for a warrior to be

Iliad or *Odyssey* is called *νήπιος* in this sense, he often dies shortly after.[18] Thus calling an adult *νήπιος* is a serious insult. A Homeric warrior making a speech, performing an action, or making a decision that was *νήπιος* met with negative, often fatal consequences.

Telemachos's use of *νήπιος* at *Od*. 18.229 does not fit either of these meanings. He is not saying that he was just recently an "infant" or "speechless," but he is also not criticizing a particular decision or action of his as "foolish." In addition, Telemachos does not say that he used to be "foolish" or "senseless" with his use of *νήπιος*. His use of *νήπιος* relates more closely to Solon's. It describes his level of maturity. By stating that he is no longer *νήπιος*, Telmachos declares that he has entered the stage of early manhood (*ἥβη*). He feels that he has now reached the level of maturity where he can begin exerting some authority over his household and his possessions. In doing so, he recognizes his mother's right to criticize him for allowing the suitors to abuse his guest (*Od*. 18.227). A *νήπιος* child could not be expected to stand up to the suitors and take control of his house, but if Telemachos is entering manhood, he must defend the guest/host relationship.

If we believe Telmachos's use of *νήπιος* refers to his state of maturity, he is correct to admit that he was just recently *νήπιος*. When we first meet Telemachos, he is in a unique situation. Telemachos was still a baby when his father left for Troy (*Od*. 11.448-9). Laertes, his grandfather, no longer visits the city, but instead stays on his own land (*Od*. 1.189-90). Thus Telemachos has no proper male role model to advise him or help him mature properly. Suitors, attempting to court his mother, overrun his house and

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criticized as *νήπιος* is to have his worth challenged, his status as an adult male impugned, his decisions criticized," 94.

[18] Heath (2005) notes: "of the thirty-eight times it [*νήπιος*] applies to an adult in Homer, in twenty-seven cases that person will soon perish," 95.

waste his property (*Od*. 1.106-112). When the *Odyssey* begins, they appear to have the most authority in the household.[19] They treat Telemachos like a child.[20] They insult him in their conversations (*Od*. 2.322-3) and Eurymachos assures the men of Ithaka that if you rouse a young man like Telemachos, "he will not be able to do anything at any rate" (*πρῆξαι δ᾽ ἔμπης οὔ τι δυνήσεται εἵνεκα τῶνδε*) (*Od*. 2.191). It benefits the suitors for Telemachos to appear immature and unready to claim his manhood. If Telemachos still seems several years away from having the maturity level to take control of his house and property, the need for Penelope to remarry and for someone to take up Odysseus's position as leading *Βασιλεύς* on Ithaka appears more urgent. The island has lacked proper leadership for a long time; no one has called an assembly (*ἀγορή*) or communal meeting (*θόωκος*) since Odysseus left (*Od*. 2.26). Because of all of these impediments to Telemachos's maturation, he remains *νήπιος* even though he is twenty-years-old.[21] When Athena, visiting him disguised as Mentes, witnesses his lack of maturity for herself, she promptly tells him "you must not indulge yourself in childish behavior, since you are no longer at such an age to do so" (*οὐδέ τί σε χρὴ/ νηπιάας ὀχέειν, ἐπεὶ οὐκέτι τηλίκος ἐσσι*) (*Od*. 1.296-7).

Examples that confirm Telemachos is still *νήπιος* abound in the first four books of the *Odyssey*. Before meeting Athena, Telemachos is neither a "doer of deeds" nor a

[19] Page (1955) states: "at the beginning the Suitors are masters in the royal palace, confident and secure in their pleasures, free from impediment or fear of reprisal," 60. Schein (1984) asserts: "Penelope's suitors seem to think they can live like gods," 54.
[20] Vidal-Naquet (2002) observes: "*Les prétendants ont tendance à le traiter comme un gamin*," 103.
[21] Lateiner (1995) calls Telemachos "developmentally delayed," 143. Belmont (1969) says he is "still more a child than an adult," 110. It is not surprising that Telemachos is "developmentally delayed" considering his situation. Heatherington (1989) finds that the prolonged absence of the father can lead to difficulties in children developing their gender identities.

"speaker of words." He is, instead, a "passive daydreamer."[22] Rather than devising a way in which he could save himself from the suitors, he imagines his father returning, ridding his household of the suitors and taking control of his possessions (*Od*. 1.113-7). Telemachos does not consider how he could solve his own problems, but seems to rely on others. After he has welcomed the disguised Athena into his home and fed her, he repeats this daydream to her: "if only they were to see him coming back to Ithaka, they would all pray to be lighter of foot" (*εἰ κεῖνόν γ᾽ Ἰθάκηνδε ἰδοίατο νοστήσαντα,/ πάντες κ᾽ ἀρησαίατ᾽ ἐλαφρότεροι πόδας εἶναι*) (*Od*. 1.163-4).

When Athena meets Telemachos, he lacks confidence and is unsure of himself. He has yet to win any *κλέος* or establish any sort of name for himself.[23] He is "unsure of his manhood and unsure that Odysseus is really his father at all."[24] Because of this, Telemachos commits multiple blunders in his conversation with Athena. When she asks him if he is the son of Odysseus, he expresses his doubts: "Mother says I am his, but I do not know" (*μήτηρ μέν τέ μέ φησι τοῦ ἔμμεναι, αὐτὰρ ἐγώ γε/ οὐκ οἶδ᾽*) (*Od*. 1.215-6). Considering the importance of the father in Homeric society and the status of Odysseus on Ithaka, Athena could hardly be pleased by Telemachos's doubt. Then, in a continued display of self pity, hopelessness, and immaturity, Telemachos commits the even greater mistake of wishing he had a different father: "I should have been the son of some fortunate man, whom old age overtook among his possessions" (*ὡς δὴ ἐγώ γ᾽ ὄφελον μάκαρός νύ τευ ἔμμεναι υἱὸς/ ἀνέρος, ὃν κτεάτεσσιν ἐοῖς ἔπι γῆρας ἔτετμε*) (*Od*. 1.217-8). Athena, likely frustrated that Telemachos would not only doubt that Odysseus was his

[22] Austin (1969) 45.
[23] Lateiner (1995) points out that, before Telemachos travels abroad, he "has no heroic credentials," 67.
[24] Clarke (2004) 86.

father, but also wish for a different father entirely, decides the best course of action is to reassure Telemachos and boost his confidence: "the gods have not arranged for your family to go nameless hereafter, since Penelope gave birth to such a one as you" (*οὐ μέν τοι γενεήν γε θεοὶ νώνυμνον ὀπίσσω/ θῆκαν, ἐπεὶ σέ γε τοῖον ἐγείνατο Πηνελόπεια*) (*Od*. 1.222-3). Athena could have easily taken the same tone as Odysseus, when Telemachos doubts his father's identity after he has revealed himself: "Telemachos, it is not proper for you to gape excessively and wonder at your own father in his presence" (*Τηλέμαχ᾽, οὔ σε ἔοικε φίλον πατέρ ἔνδον ἐόντα/ οὔτε τι θαυμάζειν περιώσιον οὔτ᾽ ὀάασθαι*) (*Od*. 16.202-3).

Telemachos's immaturity and the circumstances in which he lives cause him to appear a child. Many have argued that Telemachos is too young to accept his responsibilities and prove himself a worthy son of Odysseus.[25] The women of Odysseus's house treat him as a child, which gives Telemachos the outward appearance of being a child. When Telemachos returns home from the Peloponnese, the old nurse, Eurykleia, makes a great fuss over him. She rushes over to him, bursting with tears. Seeing this, the other serving maids all hasten to his side and begin smothering him with kisses (*Od*. 17.31-5). Penelope, hearing the commotion, comes out of her chamber and begins crying at the sight of her son. She then hugs and kisses him and calls out: "you have come, Telemachos, sweet light. I imagined I would not see you again" (*ἦλθες, Τηλέμαχε, γλυκερὸν φάος. οὔ σ᾽ ἔτ᾽ ἐγώ γε/ ὄψεσθαι ἐφάμην*) (*Od*. 17.41-42). Although the women have good reason to be overjoyed and overcome with emotion at his return—

[25] Clarke (1963) calls Telemachos "unqualified" to take over his father's position on account of "inexperience" and "weakness of youth," 129. Latacz (1996) argues that Telemachos is neither a child nor a man, 143.

they were aware the suitors were plotting to ambush Telemachos—all the kissing, crying, and fussing over him causes embarrassment. He immediately attempts to calm his mother's behavior and demands: "Mother, do not cause wailing, nor excite the heart within my chest" (*μῆτερ ἐμή, μή μοι γόον ὄρνυθι μηδέ μοι ἦτορ/ ἐν στήθεσσιν ὄρινε*) (*Od*. 17.46-7). He then orders her away so that she can promise offerings to the gods in exchange for favors (*Od*. 17.48-51). Clearly Telemachos, who has just traveled abroad and was a guest in the palaces of Nestor and Menelaos, no longer wants the women fussing over him like a young child. He certainly cannot be thrilled with the quite visible emotional response or his mother's admission that she felt like she would never see him again. These responses to his return do not show confidence in him to look after his own safety or to succeed in situations with some degree of danger.

Penelope, like the suitors, has a good reason to hinder Telemachos's maturation. When Penelope asserts that Telemachos is "too young to pose a threat" to the suitors, Lateiner correctly adds "thus her enforcement of his extended adolescence."[26] As long as the suitors believe Telemachos is still *νήπιος*, they will not see him as an obstacle to reaching their ultimate goals. Thus, by babying Telemachos and slowing his development into a Homeric warrior like his father, she keeps him safe from the suitors. This ploy works for awhile. When Telemachos begins to assert himself and speak out strongly against the behavior of the suitors, they all become amazed (*θαύμαζον*) at his new found courage (*Od*. 1.382). It is not until Telemachos has called an assembly and left on his voyage to the Peloponnese that the suitors realize he has become a threat they must eliminate. Antinoos, while concocting the plot to ambush and kill Telemachos,

[26] Lateiner (1995) 244.

reveals that his extended childhood has protected him: "We did not think it would be achieved. Against the will of so many a young boy goes off as he pleases, having dragged down his ship and selected the best men in the country" (*φάμεν δέ οἱ οὐ τελέεσθαι./ ἐκ τοσσῶνδ᾽ ἀέκητι νέος πάϊς οἴχεται αὖτως/ νῆα ἐρυσσάμενος, κρίνας τ᾽ ἀνὰ δῆμον ἀρίστους*) (*Od*. 4.664-6). Because the suitors believed Telemachos was still *νήπιος*, they had not felt any pressing need to act against him. Antinoos and the suitors thought someone they identified as "*νέος πάϊς*" would never be capable of completing the journey Telemachos planned. Antinoos then makes clear that the suitors' biggest concern is that Telemachos fully matures: "if only Zeus would destroy his life before he reaches manhood" (*ἀλλά οἱ αὐτῷ/ Ζεὺς ὀλέσειε βίην, πρὶν ἥβης μέτρον ἱκέσθαι*) (*Od*.4.667-8).

Penelope attempts to extend Telemachos's childhood to protect him from the suitors. The suitors attempt to extend his childhood to force a marriage and minimize him as a threat. Behind all of this is an ageism in Homeric society. The "*νέος πάϊς*" was not expected to be able to accomplish anything on his own.[27] When Elpenor, a companion of Odysseus, drunkenly falls to his death from Circe's roof, Homer emphasizes that he was "the youngest, neither particularly valiant in war nor adept in thought" (*νεώτατος, οὔτε τι λίην/ ἄλκιμος ἐν πολέμῳ οὔτε φρεσὶν ᾗσιν ἀρηρώς*) (*Od.* 10.552-3). Youth and an inability to excel as a "speaker of words" and a "doer of deeds" go hand and hand in Homer. In the *Iliad*, Menelaos exclaims: "the minds of younger men

[27] Heath (2001) provides an accurate assessment of Homeric attitudes towards the young: "children clearly have no authority, but this impotency is connected not merely to their physical weakness and political subservience, but also closely to their lack of forceful speech and their inability to put words into actions," 132.

are always capricious" (*αἰεὶ δ᾽ ὁπλοτέρων ἀνδρῶν φρένες ἠερέθονται*) (*Il*. 3.108).[28] The Homeric attitude towards youth and Telemachos's restrained development rob him of the authority he should have in his household. As was discussed before, the suitors have control in the beginning of the *Odyssey*. When Odysseus left for Troy and Telemachos was still an infant, he left control of his palace to Penelope. Telemachos was supposed to take charge when he was "no longer a child and bearded" (*αὐτὰρ ἐπὴν δὴ παῖδα γενειήσαντα*) (*Od*. 18.266-70).[29] Telemachos, however, on the threshold of reaching an age Solon describes as a period where "men" (*ἄνδρες*) are at their physical peak, must overcome the hindering influences on his maturation and assert himself in order to reach manhood and have some authority in his household (Solon fr. 27 W).

Telemachos's slow development into manhood is especially troubling in Homeric society because of his famous father. The child of Odysseus should mature more quickly than low born males; he should be braver and stronger and, considering his father, he should be a strong speaker.[30] Because Telemachos has not yet excelled in those qualities which won Odysseus reputation, he is seen as a disappointment. When Eumaios, the swineherd, discusses Telemachos with the disguised Odysseus, he says "the gods made him grow large like a shoot and I thought he would not be inferior to his father among men" (*τὸν ἐπεὶ θρέψαν θεοὶ ἔρνεϊ ἶσον,/ καί μιν ἔφην ἔσσεσθαι ἐν ἀνδράσιν οὔ τι χέρηα/ πατρὸς ἑοῖο φίλοιο*) (*Od*. 14.175-7). Eumaios's description acknowledges that

[28] Heath (2001) adds that that Menelaos's point is met with "the approval of both Greeks and Trojans," 134. Certainly, neither side raises an objection, as they all are "joyful" in hope that the coming duel between Menelaos and Paris will bring an end to the war (*Il*. 3.111).

[29] Telemachos's first beard was supposed to mark the time when Penelope was free to marry and when he could ascend into manhood and take control over the palace and possessions of Odysseus.

[30] M. I. Finley (1978) points out that: "maturity was more than chronological; a twenty-year-old of such lineage and class was expected to grow faster and further, and to respond sooner to circumstances requiring adult behavior," 73. Athena demonstrates the same thinking in *Od*. 2.270-80, when she assures Telemachos that he will be wise and strong on account of who his father is.

Telemachos has matured well physically, but he has not yet equaled the swineherd's high expectations. Eumaios then proceeds to inform Odysseus of Telemachos's trip to Pylos and of the suitor's planned ambush. Of these, Eumaios adds "one of the immortals or some man harmed the mind within him*"* (*τὸν δέ τις ἀθανάτων βλάψε φρένας ἔνδον ἐΐσας/ ἠέ τις ἀνθρώπων*) (*Od*. 14.178-9). Eumaios, like Penelope and Eurykleia, does not have confidence in Telemachos's ability to succeed in this mission. He still considers Telemachos too immature to make such a journey and believes that his mind must have been "upset" by someone else for him to have set out. He believes Telemachos will only survive if he has Zeus as a protector (*Od*. 14.184).

Thus Telemachos has matured physically, as expected, into a big and strong young male, looking every bit like he is ready to transition into manhood. Athena, like Eumaios, confirms that this is true (*Od*. 1.207). It is the delayed mental and behavioral development of Telemachos that disappoints Eumaios in Book Fourteen and Athena in Book One. When Telemachos admits that he was just recently "*νήπιος*" in Book Eighteen, he recognizes that, until now, he had not yet reached the state of mental development and maturity that would identify him as a man by the standards of Homeric society. In order for Telemachos to reach manhood, he needs to overcome the challenge of not having a proper male role model—a father who could challenge him and teach him how to win *κλέος*. He also must avoid allowing his mother and the suitors to continue to repress his maturation process. To achieve this, Telemachos must exert himself. He needs to engage in the practices of adult males and win a reputation as a "speaker of words" and a "doer of deeds." When he has accomplished this, he will then become a

son worthy of his father.

Chapter 3: Rites of Passage and the Maturation Process

Telemachos lacks confidence and motivation when the *Odyssey* begins. As mentioned above, he is a daydreamer who envisions his father coming home and solving the problem of the suitors for him. David Belmont correctly points out that, in order for Telemachos to transition into manhood, he needs "a type of catalytic agent to bring about this change."[31] For Telemachos, this catalyst is the goddess Athena. Until Telemachos meets with his real father in Book Sixteen, Athena functions as the father figure he never had during the first twenty years of his life.[32] Telemachos himself, after Athena has given him encouragement and sound advice, compares her to a father advising a son: "guest, giving consideration to your dear words, you speak as a father to his son, and I shall never forget them" (*ξεῖν᾽, ἦ τοι μὲν ταῦτα φίλα φρονέων ἀγορεύεις,/ὡς τε πατὴρ ᾧ παιδί, καὶ οὔποτε λήσομαι αὐτῶν*) (*Od*. 1.307-8). As a father figure to Telemachos, Athena will need to introduce Telemachos to the world of heroes outside of Ithaka. It will be her duty to make sure Telemachos matures from a "*νήπιος*" youth into a man strong in words and actions.

Athena first reveals her plans for helping Telemachos mature properly in the Book One council of the gods. Addressing Zeus, she announces:

> *αὐτὰρ ἐγὼν Ἰθάκηνδ᾽ ἐσελεύσομαι, ὄφρα οἱ υἱὸν*
> *μᾶλλον ἐποτρύνω καί οἱ μένος ἐν φρεσὶ θείω,*
> *εἰς ἀγορὴν καλέσαντα κάρη κομόωντας Ἀχαιούς*

[31] Belmont (1967) 3. In this study, Belmont compares the maturation of both Telemachos and Nausicaa and points out that both characters need this "catalytic agent" in order to fully develop.

[32] Thalmann (1998) mentions Athena in the role of the father, 221. Belmont (1969) notices more specifically that Athena, while taking on the role of the father to guide Telemachos, "makes herself as much like Odysseus as possible by means of features prominently associated with him: wisdom, mental agility, the sea and (to put it charitably) distortion of truth," 111. Powell (2004), however, calls Athena a "puppet master," 140. While Telemachos is generally obedient to Athena, this minimizes Athena's more accepted (and I believe more correct) role as surrogate father.

πᾶσι μνηστήρεσσιν ἀπειπέμεν, οἵ τέ οἱ αἰεὶ
μῆλ᾽ ἀδινὰ σφάζουσι καὶ εἰλίποδας ἕλικας βοῦς.
πέμψω δ᾽ ἐς Σπάρτην τε καὶ ἐς Πύλον ἠμαθόεντα
νόστον πευσόμενον πατρὸς φίλου, ἤν που ἀκούσῃ,
ἠδ᾽ ἵνα μιν κλέος ἐσθλὸν ἐν ἀνθρώποισιν ἔχῃσιν.

I, however, shall go to Ithaka, so that I may rouse his son
and so that I may place courage in his heart,
after having called the long haired Achaeans into the assembly
he will address all the suitors, who always
slaughter his crowding sheep and lumbering, twisted horned cattle.
I shall send him into Sparta and into sandy Pylos
so that he can seek news of his dear father, if he could hear something,
and so that he can have a good reputation among men (Od. 1.88-95).

Thus, in order to make Telemachos a man, Athena feels she must help him acquire two important attributes: "confidence" (*μένος*) and "reputation" (*κλέος*).[33] In order to gain the latter, Athena must supply him with the former. When Telemachos has enough "confidence" he can win "reputation" by engaging in speech and deed. Athena's plan requires Telemachos to speak in front of the assembly, stand up to the suitors, learn to function as a guest in the courts of some of Odysseus's fellow warriors, and learn of his father. All of these tasks play a vital role in helping Telemachos shed the label "*νήπιος*."

Athena's first responsibility is to bolster Telemachos's confidence. To achieve this, Athena disguises herself as a Taphian leader named Mentes (*Od* .1.105). This disguise is perfectly suited to Athena's purpose. As Mentes, Athena claims to be a "guest-friend by heredity" (*ξένος πατρώιος*), known by both Odysseus and Laertes (*Od.* 1.187-9). This assures that Telemachos will show her proper hospitality, have an interest in engaging her in conversation, and will take her seriously when she speaks of his father.

[33] Cunliffe (1963) defines *μένος* as "passion," "spirit," "fury," and "courage." Here, I translate *μένος* as "confidence" because the "passion," "spirit," and "courage" Athena instills in Telemachos is for the purpose of giving him drive and confidence so that he can complete necessary tasks on his voyage to manhood.

Athena's disguise is also well connected to the sea. She describes herself as "leader of the oar-loving Taphians" (*Ταφίοισι φιληρέτμοισιν ἀνάσσω*) and as one who is on a long voyage carrying cargo (*Od*. 1.181-6). As leader of a people connected to the sea, Telemachos will be more likely to be persuaded when she suggests he makes his own voyage. As one who sails great distances across the sea, Telemachos will find it more likely that she has heard news of his father.

Athena's first attempt to make Telemachos confident in himself involves telling him that his father is alive but "savage men" prevent his homecoming (*Od*. 1.196-9). She then proceeds to predict his father's return (*Od*. 1.200-5). The mention of Odysseus leads Athena directly to one of her major strategies for boosting Telemachos's confidence: complimenting his masculine features and likening them to Odysseus's. She asks him "[tell me] if you are the child of that very Odysseus, big as you are. Strangely you are like him about the head and handsome eyes" (*εἰ δὴ ἐξ αὐτοῖο τόσος πάϊς εἰς Ὀδυσῆος./ αἰνῶς μὲν κεφαλήν τε καὶ ὄμματα καλὰ ἔοικας*) (*Od*. 1.207-8). Although the immature and self-pitying Telemachos initially resists this tactic, doubting whether or not Odysseus really is his father, Athena employs this same strategy again later: "and you, dear, for I see you are noble and great, be brave also" (*καὶ σύ, φίλος, μάλα γάρ σ᾽ ὁρόω καλόν τε μέγαν τε,/ ἄλκιμος ἔσσο*) (*Od*. 1.301-2). Here, Athena's goal seems obvious: if she is going to convince Telemachos to act like a man, she must convince him that, physically, he is a man.

Athena must also help Telemachos overcome his habit of relying on others. She does this by emphasizing his ability to capture reputation for himself and by suggesting actions he can take to improve his situation. Even as Telemachos is having doubts about

whether or not Odysseus is his father and wishing he had been born to a father under different circumstances, Athena suggests he will be able to carry on the fame of his family's name (*Od*. 1.221-2). Later, still addressing Telemachos, she makes it clear that he should handle his own problems instead of imagining Odysseus returning and solving everything: "I bid you to consider how you will drive the suitors from your hall" (*σὲ δὲ φράζεσθαι ὄνωγα,/ ὅππως κε μνηστῆρας ἀπώσεαι ἐκ μεγάροιο*) (*Od*. 1.269-70). She follows this by dictating a list of tasks he must complete. These tasks include a speech to the assembly demanding the suitors leave and a trip to Sparta and Pylos to ask about his father (*Od*. 1.271-86). Here, Athena's purpose is to get Telemachos to work for himself—to become a "doer of deeds." He needs to begin standing up to the suitors and must attempt to get them to flee the palace himself. In addition, the tasks Athena assigns force Telemachos to act for himself. He can no longer sit idly by and daydream; to become a man requires action.

In order to make Telemachos more confident, Athena provides him with a role model. This role model is Orestes, the son of Agamemnon, who avenged his father's death by killing his murderers—Aigisthos and Klytemnestra, his own mother. The story of Orestes first appears during the council of the gods (*Od*. 1.28-43).[34] In this instance, Athena makes it clear to Zeus that she fully approves of Orestes' actions: "he [Aigisthos] lies in deserved death" (*καὶ λίην κεῖνός γε ἐοικότι κεῖται ὀλέθρῳ*) (*Od*. 1.46). The close relation of the Orestes story to the *Odyssey* is emphasized here when Athena effortlessly changes the subject from the actions of Orestes to the plight of Odysseus (*Od*. 1.48). Because of the similarities between Orestes and Telemachos, the story becomes an

[34] This story is repeated numerous times throughout the *Odyssey*: 1.28-43, 1.298-300, 3.193-98, 3.234-312, 4.91-2, 4.514-37, etc. In Books 1-4, its role is usually as a useful paradigm for Telemachos.

effective paradigm for Telemachos. Orestes, like Telemachos, went through his childhood while his dad was away fighting in the Trojan War. Because of this and Agamemnon's subsequent murder, both youths had to mature without the guidance of their fathers. Although both are logical successors to their fathers' kingships, both are initially blocked from claiming this power: Telemachos by Penelope and the suitors; Orestes by Klytemnestra and Aigisthos. While Penelope and the suitors attempt to prolong Telemachos's childhood, Aigisthos and Klytemnestra simply send Orestes out of the kingdom.[35] Knowing what an appropriate model Orestes is for Telemachos, Athena attempts to encourage Telemachos to make a stand by reminding him of Orestes' fame. After telling Telemachos that he is no longer a proper age to act like a child, she asks: "did you not hear of the sort of fame Orestes captured among all mankind when he killed the murderer of his father, crafty Aigisthos" (*ἦ οὐκ ἀΐεις οἷον κλέος ἔλλαβε δῖος Ὀρέστης/ πάντας ἐπ᾽ ἀνθρώπους, ἐπεὶ ἔκτανε πατροφονῆα,/ Αἴγισθον δολόμητιν*) (*Od*. 1.298-300). She then suggests that Telemachos too should show bravery so that posterity will also praise him (*Od*. 1.301-2). Here, Athena has called Telemachos's attention to a young man around the same age and in a comparable situation. This young man was able to win "*κλέος*" for himself. Orestes did not sit daydreaming and feeling sorry for himself; he took action. Athena hopes to raise Telemachos's confidence so that he can see that he is not much different than Orestes—he too can take action on his own behalf and win "*κλέος*."[36]

[35] Although there are varying traditions concerning Orestes, Homer clearly demonstrates he is aware of a tradition where Orestes has long been absent from the Mycenaean court. At *Od* 3.306-7, Nestor informs Telemachos that Orestes traveled back to Mycenae to exact his revenge in the eighth year of Aigisthos's reign.

[36] Olson (1995) offers a differing view on the function of the Orestes' tale in the *Odyssey*. Unlike the more common view that the Orestes story can serve as a paradigm for Telemachos or as a "foil" for the story of

Athena's attempts at giving Telemachos *μένος* in Book One appear to have a positive and immediate effect on Telemachos. After Penelope has asked the bard Phemios not to sing about the warriors returning from Troy, Telemachos orders the bard to continue the song and orders his mother back to her room. He then declares that "the power in the household is his" (*τοῦ γὰρ κράτος ἔστ᾽ ἐνὶ οἴκῳ*) (*Od*. 1.345-59). Penelope obeys Telemachos and heads back to her quarters "amazed" (*θαμβήσασα*) (*Od*. 1.360). When the suitors continue to make noise during Phemios's song, he addresses them even more harshly. He announces that he will hold an assembly where he will make a speech, telling them: "go away from my halls, and seek your meals elsewhere" (*ἐξιέναι μεγάρων: ἄλλας δ᾽ ἀλεγύνετε δαῖτας*), and if they do not listen, he will pray to the gods that "you may perish inside this house unavenged" (*νήποινοί κεν ἔπειτα δόμων ἔντοσθεν ὄλοισθε*) (*Od*. 1.365-80). The suitors, too, are "amazed" (*θαύμαζον*) when Telemachos speaks out against them. Clearly, before meeting Athena, Telemachos was unaccustomed to speaking to his mother and the suitors in this fashion. Because Athena has succeeded in her first task, increasing Telemachos's self-confidence, he is now speaking up for himself and planning to take actions for his own benefit for the first time.

After Athena has given Telemachos some needed confidence, her next goal is to help him win *κλέος*.[37] She will attempt to accomplish this by having Telemachos speak

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the *Odyssey* as a whole, Olson suggests that the Orestes story creates added suspense. This works by supposing that Homer's audience, while being constantly reminded how Agamemnon's *νόστος* ended, would worry that a similar fate could befall Odysseus and that "they cannot predict what he will tell them next." There are problems with this interpretation, as Olson admits "[Homer's audience] may well know how the story of Odysseus 'ought to end' and thus how it should both resemble and differ from the course of events in Mycenae," 41-2. I believe it is most useful to see the Orestes tale as a paradigm for Telemachos in the first four books. As a paradigm, the Orestes tale functions well at advancing the narrative and encouraging Telemachos to action.

[37] The word *κλέος*, in connection with Telemachos's actions in the first four books, has given trouble to scholars. This has come from a view that the *κλέος* Telemachos wins cannot be compared to the *κλέος*

before the assembly and travel abroad to Pylos and Sparta (*Od*. 1.271-86). In Homeric society, there are two main avenues to winning *κλέος*: speech and deed. One way for a Homeric warrior to win *κλέος* is to die bravely on the battlefield. In the *Iliad*, Achilles has the choice between dying in battle and winning "undying" (*ἄφθιτος*) *κλέος* or returning home without winning any *κλέος* (*Il*. 9.410-6). Telemachos tells Athena that his father would have won great *κλέος* for himself and for his family had he perished fighting at Troy, but instead he "ingloriously" (*ἀκλειῶς*) suffered a less heroic fate (*Od*. 1.236-43). For Telemachos, there is no Trojan War for him to win great *κλέος* in. Thus, he must first build his reputation by speech. Athena's choice to have him begin his quest for reputation by holding an assembly is a wise one. Here he can both learn to debate and speak in front of crowds as well as gain experience speaking publicly about his grievances before meeting with Nestor and Menelaos. The experience Telemachos gains by speaking in the assembly and the skills Athena is helping him acquire should not be looked at as dramatically inferior to the experience and skills gained on the battle field. Homeric warriors valued both speaking and performing heroic deeds: "skill in debate is as important for the hero as superiority in battle." [38]

In addition to gaining *κλέος* through speaking in the assembly, Telemachos is still gaining confidence as well. Upon waking up, Telemachos clothes himself and gives orders to the Heralds to call the assembly. Only after the masses are assembled does Telemachos arm himself and head to the assembly (*Od*. 2.1-11). Here, Telemachos

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Achilles receives for dying on the battlefield. However, Jones (1988) 499, Olson (1995) 2, and Nagy (1999) 99, all agree that *κλέος* means that which is heard or a spoken account. Hesiod, like Homer, sees the Muses as bearers of *κλέος* (*Op*. 1). If *κλέος* refers to "what is heard"—one's reputation—then it is easy enough to believe, in a society where story traveled orally and where the ability to speak was highly valued, that Telemachos could win *κλέος* for himself by speaking well in assembly and by visiting Menelaos and Nestor in search of news about his father.

[38] Edwards (1987) 265.

demonstrates his newfound confidence and maturity. The assembly he called is the first since Odysseus left for Troy (*Od*. 2.26-7). By calling such an assembly and arriving after the people have assembled, Telemachos is exerting power. Because of Telemachos's efforts to call such an assembly, and considerably more so because of his parentage, Telemachos is treated with great respect at the assembly—at least by the elders: "he sat in his father's seat and the elders made way" (*ἕζετο δ᾽ ἐν πατρὸς θώκῳ, εἶξαν δὲ γέροντες*) (*Od*. 2.14). He also commands the attention of all those present: "all the people gazed at him moving forward" (*τὸν δ᾽ ἄρα πάντες λαοὶ ἐπερχόμενον θηεῦντο*) (*Od*. 2.13). Telemachos now can see that if he takes responsibility and acts like the son of Odysseus, the people and elders will treat him like the son of Odysseus.[39] Certainly, before even speaking a word, Telemachos has accomplished much in the way of improving his self image and increasing his confidence in his own abilities. The mere fact that he was able to call an assembly, which has not been done in twenty years, and have the community attend proves that he can be taken seriously. His ability to sit in his father's chair and the village elders making way for him display the deference Ithakans still show him on account of his father. For Telemachos, even though he had not yet spoken, his path to winning *κλέος* had become clearer.

During the course of the assembly, Telemachos must accomplish multiple objectives. The first and most obvious of these objectives is to demonstrate skill as an orator and persuasive speaker in some way reminiscent of his father. Telemachos, however, is speaking in front of the assembly for the first time. Therefore it is equally important for him to gain experience and comfort speaking publicly. Although he is

[39] Haubold (2000) suggests "Telemachos not only commands their admiration and respect but also unites an otherwise sporadic social world," 111.

inexperienced, he begins his speech wisely. He does not immediately demand the suitors out of his house and launch into a direct attack against them, but instead he appeals to the people (*λαοί*).[40] He reminds them of his father and how he "was kind like a father to you" (*πατὴρ δ᾽ ὡς ἤπιος ἦεν*) (*Od* 2.47). When he begins mentioning the suitors, it is to point out that they are not observing the usual customs in Homeric society. Instead of bringing gifts to Penelope's father and attempting to win him over, they invade Telemachos's household and waste his property (*Od*. 2.55-8). His overall strategy for winning over the people involves reminding them of the greatness and fairness of his father, pointing out the suitors' lack of respect for traditions and for the property of Odysseus, and shaming them for not acting on his behalf (*Od*. 2.40-79). When the suitor Antinoos attempts to blame Telemachos's situation on his mother (*Od*. 2.87-8), Telemachos cleverly casts himself as the dutiful son: "Antinoos, I cannot drive my unwilling mother from our home, who bore me and raised me" (*Ἀντίνο᾽, οὔ πως ἔστι δόμων ἀέκουσαν ἀπῶσαι/ ἥ μ᾽ ἔτεχ᾽, ἥ μ᾽ ἔθρεψε*) *(Od*. 2.130-1). Zeus, approving of Telemachos's words, sends a bird sign (*Od*. 2.146-54). An old warrior named Halitherses interprets this to mean Odysseus will come home and rid his house of the suitors (*Od*. 2.161-76).

As Telemachos finishes his opening remarks to the assembly, he lets loose an outburst of emotion: "thus he spoke angered, and, bursting with tears, he thrust the scepter to the ground" (*ὣς φάτο χωόμενος, ποτὶ δὲ σκῆπτρον βάλε γαίῃ/ δάκρυ᾽ ἀναπρήσας*) (*Od*. 2.80-1). In the past, many scholars have mistakenly seen this as a sign

[40] Olson (1995) 1.

of weakness in Telemachos—a clear display that he is still *νήπιος*.[41] Olson correctly points out that "[if Telemachos's] tears as he finishes it [his speech] have struck some modern readers as odd and childish, they have no such effect on the assembly."[42] In fact, the reaction of the assembled Ithakans is quite the opposite: "pity gripped all the people. All others present were silent; no one dared engage Telemachos in harsh words" (*οἶκτος δ᾽ ἕλε λαὸν ἅπαντα./ἔνθ᾽ ἄλλοι μὲν πάντες ἀκὴν ἔσαν, οὐδέ τις ἔτλη/ Τηλέμαχον μύθοισιν ἀμείψασθαι χαλεποῖσιν*) (*Od*. 2.81-3). It is obvious the assembly is taking the speech of Telemachos seriously. Nothing even remotely suggests that the people think his words are childish—the speech silences them. If Telemachos's purpose is to win the people to his side, it has some effect. He evokes "pity" (*οἶκτος*) from his audience. To view Telemachos's tears as childish is anachronistic. Modern western cultures consider weeping unmanly. The same, however, is not true of Homeric society. Indeed crying, provided that the emotional circumstances called for it, is common among Homeric males. When Menelaos recalls Odysseus during Telemachos's trip to Sparta, he, Telemachos, Helen, and Peisistratos all cry together (*Od*. 4.183-6).[43] After the Phaiakian bard Demodokos has finished singing the tale of the Trojan War, Odysseus weeps uncontrollably (*Od*. 8.521-3). Achilles cries when Agamemnon has taken away his captive, Briseis, from him (*Il*. 1.357). Surely the reader is not expected to find Odysseus, Achilles, Menelaos, and Peisistratos all childish. Furthermore, if tears could be expected in situations like the examples above, Telemachos surely crosses no line shedding tears

[41] Of these, Clarke (1963) is the harshest: "book II does little to convince us that Telemachos has profited by Athena's encouragement… whatever faint effect it [his speech] might have had on their consciences is dissipated when he concludes his words with a sudden burst of tears," 131-2. See also West in Heubeck (1988).
[42] (1995) 79.
[43] Nagy (1999) refers to this as "communal weeping" and makes no comment to suggest he sees anything "unmanly" about it, 99.

while delivering a persuasive speech about his long lost father and the suitors harassing his mother and squandering his resources. Telemachos's tears are likely more helpful to his speech than harmful.

Although Telemachos's tears do not render his speech entirely ineffective, he fails to rally the people against the suitors.[44] After Telemachos has concluded his arguments and sat down, Mentor becomes frustrated by the lack of popular support received by Telemachos. Mentor, like Telemachos before him, reminds the people that Odysseus was "kind as a father" (*πατὴρ δ᾽ ὡς ἤπιος ἦεν*) (*Od*. 2.234). He does not direct his anger at the suitors, but rather at the people who remain silent and do not "put an end to the few suitors though you are many" (*παύρους μνηστῆρας καταπαύετε πολλοὶ ἐόντες*) (*Od.* 2.239-41). Mentor also fails to shame the people into taking action against the suitors. Readers of the *Odyssey* have given multiple reasons for Telemachos's inability to win over the people.[45] The reason, however, appears in the *Odyssey* itself, directly after Mentor has finished speaking. Leokritos, a suitor, calls Mentor "crazed in your mind" (*φρένας ἠλεέ*) for suggesting that the people should speak out against the suitors (*Od*. 2.243). He points out that they would have a hard time stopping the suitors "with even more men" (*ἀνδράσι καὶ πλεόνεσσι*) (*Od*. 2.245). He even suggests that Odysseus himself would fail to overcome them (*Od*. 2.246-51). He then puts an end to the meeting when he bids everyone to go home (*Od*. 2.252) and they all obey (*Od*. 2.257-9). Telemachos fails to win the support of the people because they fear the suitors. They stay silent for the

[44] M. I. Finley (1978) points out that Telemachos "clearly failed" to win over the people against the suitors but then adds "we are never told what the *demos* of Ithaca really thought about the whole affair," 91-3.
[45] See note 40 for scholars who believe Telemachos's speech loses its effectiveness because of his tears. Malkin (1998) thinks Telemachos fails because he tries to bring the assembly, which he believes only acts to serve the community, into a private matter, 271. M. I. Finley (1978) adds "throughout the meeting Telemachus never once addressed the people," (91).

duration of the assembly, and when a suitor orders them to return home, they do what they are told. They see the truth in Leokritos's words: removing the suitors would be a difficult task.

Even though Telemachos fails to win over the people, to see the entire endeavor as a failure or a waste of time is to miss the point. As mentioned above, Athena's main purpose is for Telemachos to gain *μένος* and win *κλέος*. He succeeds at both of these tasks in the assembly. Because of the *μένος* Athena instilled in him, he was able to stand up to the suitors and call an assembly. Taking his father's seat and being shown respect by the elders gave further boost to his self-confidence. In addition, the experience he gained speaking publicly before the assembly will benefit him during his later travels. Telemachos also wins *κλέος* for himself during the assembly. He accomplishes this by describing his intended voyage. After he has declared himself finished arguing with the suitors, he proclaims:

> *ἀλλ᾽ ἄγε μοι δότε νῆα θοὴν καὶ εἴκοσ᾽ ἑταίρους,*
> *οἵ κέ μοι ἔνθα καὶ ἔνθα διαπρήσσωσι κέλευθον.*
> *εἶμι γὰρ ἐς Σπάρτην τε καὶ ἐς Πύλον ἠμαθόεντα*
> *νόστον πευσόμενος πατρὸς δὴν οἰχομένοιο*
>
> come, give to me a swift ship and twenty companions,
> who would complete a journey from here to there.
> For I am going to Sparta and sandy Pylos
> to learn about the return of my long absent father (*Od*. 2.212-215).

Telemachos then uses the word "*κλέος*" to describe the purpose of his journey (*Od*. 2.217). Here, Telemachos's use of *κλέος* refers to the "news" or "rumors" he will seek out concerning his father's absence. This portion of his speech creates "news" and "rumors" about himself as well. Immediately after the assembly, *κλέος* (rumors) about Telemachos spreads amongst the suitors. One suitor says to another:

ἦ μάλα Τηλέμαχος φόνον ἡμῖν μερμηρίζει.
ἤ τινας ἐκ Πύλου ἄξει ἀμύντορας ἡμαθόεντος
ἠ ὅ γε καὶ Σπάρτηθεν, ἐπεί νύ περ ἵεται αἰνῶς:
ἠὲ καὶ εἰς Ἐφύρην ἐθέλει, πίειραν ἄρουραν,
ἐλθεῖν, ὄφρ᾽ ἔνθεν θυμοφθόρα φάρμακ᾽ ἐνείκῃ,
ἐν δὲ βάλῃ κρητῆρι καὶ ἡμέας πάντας ὀλέσσῃ

surely Telemachos is devising murder for us.
He will either bring some help from Sandy Pylos
or even from Sparta, since he hastens along now so dreadfully;
or he even wishes to go to Ephyre, fertile land,
so that he can bring back some poisonous drug
and cast it into our wine bowl and destroy us all. (*Od*. 2.325-30).

Other suitors express a wish for Telemachos to become lost at sea like his father and thus have an easier path to his property and his mother (*Od*. 2.332-6). When the suitors discover Telemachos has indeed gone ahead with his voyage, the *κλέος* surrounding him increases. It is then that Antinoos expresses a fear that Telemachos will reach "manhood" (*ἥβη*) and decides the suitors must ambush him on his return home (*Od*. 4.665-72). This *κλέος* of Telemachos cannot be kept from Penelope either (*Od*. 4.675-702). It even spreads to the countryside as well, as a herald is sent to Laertes (*Od*. 4.738) and Eumaios, the swineherd, knows the details when he meets with the disguised Odysseus (*Od*.14.174-84). Thus, by speaking with confidence in the assembly and revealing his intended trip, Telemachos has created *κλέος* (news) about himself that travels about the palace and throughout the Ithakan countryside as well.

Once Telemachos has gained *κλέος* at home by holding an assembly and announcing his journey to Pylos and Sparta, it is time for him to win *κλέος* abroad. The purpose of Telemachos's journey has long been a problem for readers of the *Odyssey*. In Book Fourteen, Odysseus himself puts the question directly to Athena: "why did you not tell him [that I was alive], knowing all in your mind? Was it so he too, journeying over

the barren seas, could suffer pains, while others ate away his livelihood?" (*τίπτε τ᾽ ἄρ᾽ οὗ οἱ ἔειπες, ἐνὶ φρεσὶ πάντα ἰδυῖα;/ ἦ ἵνα που καὶ κεῖνος ἀλώμενος ἄλγεα πάσχῃ/ πόντον ἐπ᾽ ἀτρύγετον: βίοτον δέ οἱ ἄλλοι ἔδουσι;*) (*Od*. 13.417-9). Because Athena could have told Telemachos the truth about his father herself, some have attempted to minimize the importance of Telemachos's journey.[46] Others have offered suggestions that are not properly supported by the *Odyssey* itself.[47] Most, however, focus on one or two important purposes of the journey while leaving off others.[48] Athena provides one of the major reasons for Telemachos's trip when she answers Odysseus: "I myself escorted him so that he could seize a good reputation by going there" (*αὐτή μιν πόμπευον, ἵνα κλέος ἐσθλὸν ἄροιτο/ κεῖσ᾽ ἐλθών*) (*Od*. 13.421-3). It is also true that it is important for Telemachos to hear about his father from those who traveled to Troy with him. Telemachos, too, must learn how to properly behave in Homeric society and he especially needs to understand how to function as a guest in the court of another. What is often missed, however, is the journey's role as a rite of passage for Telemachos—a necessary adventure he must take on his voyage into adulthood.

When Athena sends Telemachos off to visit Pylos and Sparta, she is continuing to fulfill her role as Telemachos's absent father. In Homeric society, the father or village

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[46] Lateiner (1995) says Athena sends Telemachos "on a safe wild-goose chase (books 1-4), away from home, his tearful mother, and the joshing suitors," 151. West in Heubeck (1988) suggests the journey lacks proper motivation and that "the poet was clearly more interested in the venture itself," 53.

[47] Van Nortwick (2009) argues that "the adventures of Telemachos in books 2-4 are necessary in order to get him ready to help his father," 7. What skill does Telemachos learn by speaking in the assembly or visiting with Nestor and Menelaos that offers any help to Odysseus during the slaughter of the suitors? Rose (1967) and Austin (1969) believe the main reason for the journey is to learn about Odysseus, 391. Latacz (1996) thinks he needs to discover his identity, 149. While Rose, Austin, and Latacz are not entirely incorrect, learning about his father does play a role in his journey, it is neither the only nor most important reason for the journey. If so, Odysseus's question (why did you not tell him) is a very good one.

[48] Clarke (1963) 133, and Jones (1988) 496-596 both focus on *κλέος*. Tracy (1990) suggests the journey is about "growth," 16. Finally Clarke (1967) 34, Griffin (1987) 91, and Powell (2004) 118 all emphasize learning the ropes in Homeric society.

elders often send maturing young males abroad as a rite of passage. The belief is, forcing the young male to complete a masculine and adult task away from his home, he will be compelled to learn the proper ways to speak and behave and thus acquire skills necessary for manhood. In both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, fathers send their sons far from home so that they can be the best and that they can display their superiority in front of others.[49] In order that young males learn to use the weapons and tools of a man and then display their proficiency with these weapons to others, fathers send sons away from their homes to participate in hunts, raids, and even wars. In order that they acquire the ability of public speaking, fathers send their sons to speak in assemblies and to perform the duties of an ambassador in foreign courts. Finally, so that the young male can learn to behave as a proper guest and can form and strengthen guest-host relationships, fathers send their sons off to stay in the palace of a friendly host.

Both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* abound with references to these rites of passage. In the *Odyssey*, the most interesting of these are the stray references to the travels of a young Odysseus before the Trojan War. One of these references is triggered when Odysseus's old nurse, Eurykleia, recognizes a scar he received as a young man (*Od*. 19.392-3). Odysseus was wounded when he traveled to visit his grandfather, Autolykos, in Parnassos to receive gifts celebrating his maturation (*Od*. 19.413-4). During the morning after his arrival, he joined Autolykos's sons in a boar hunt. Homer emphasizes that Odysseus was first upon the boar (*Od*. 19.447) and, after being wounded, landed the killing strike (*Od*. 19.449-54). This recollection brings Homer's audience to a time when

[49] Edwards (1987) refers to this as the "heroic code," 150.

the young Odysseus declared himself a man.[50] During the course of the boar hunt, Odysseus proved himself brave by leading the way into the boar's domain and being the first to engage him. He displayed strength and determination, so valuable in warfare, by shaking off the wound and continuing to attack the boar. Finally, he proved his ability to handle weapons by killing the boar. Because of all this, he also appears superior to his companions, the sons of Autolykos, who lag behind and fail to land the fatal blow themselves.

Homer describes a second rite of passage completed by Odysseus when he gives the history of his bow and his quiver of arrows, gifts of guest-friendship he received from Iphitos, whom he met in Lakedaimon (*Od*. 21.13-41). On this occasion, Laertes and the village elders sent Odysseus abroad as part of his maturation process and so that he could take on a responsibility befitting an adult male: "on account of this, Odysseus went a great distance on an embassy though still a child; for his father and the other elders sent him forth" (*τῶν ἕνεκ᾽ ἐξεσίην πολλὴν ὁδὸν ἦλθεν Ὀδυσσεύς/ παιδνὸς ἐών: πρὸ γὰρ ἦκε πατὴρ ἄλλοι τε γέροντες*) (*Od*. 21.20-1). Although Odysseus is young, the embassy he is sent on is no small matter. Homer describes it as a mission "the whole community had a stake in" (*τό ῥά οἱ πᾶς δῆμος ὄφελλε*) (*Od*. 21.17). Odysseus must travel abroad and speak on behalf of Ithaka regarding a large-scale theft of livestock and men from his land: "for men from Messene in three hundred ships of many oarlocks seized sheep and shepherds from Ithaka" (*μῆλα γὰρ ἐξ Ἰθάκης Μεσσήνιοι ἄνδρες ἄειραν/ νηυσὶ πολυκλήϊσι τριηκόσι᾽ ἠδὲ νομῆας*) (*Od*. 21.18-29). A raid, such as the one perpetrated by Messene

[50] Segal (1994) correctly points out that: "[the hunt]… serves as the trial or test marking the hero's successful passage to maturity, and it validates the heroic inheritance that the grandfather confers in the act of naming," 7.

against Ithaka, could result in a small war fought between the two communities or a series of raids and counter raids. It is interesting to note that this rite of passage for Odysseus appears to be as important to the community of Ithaka as the embassy itself. Not only Laertes, but also the elders, the "*γέροντες*," involve themselves in the decision to send Odysseus.[51] They expect Odysseus to claim his manhood by succeeding in this task. Also, by gaining experience in these types of situations, the elders hope they can develop a young male capable of effectively serving his community in the future. This is precisely the type of experience Telemachos needs in order to shed his status as "*νήπιος*." But, with his father missing and no assembly being called in the last twenty years, no one has sent Telemachos on such a rite of passage.

In the *Iliad*, the most obvious rite of passage for young males is participating in war. Countless numbers of young men participate in the Trojan War in order to capture "*κλέος*," display their skills in speaking and warfare, and make their families proud. Both the Achaean Peleus and the Trojan Hippolochos send their sons (Achilles and Glaukos respectively) off to Troy with the same message: "always be the best and distinguished beyond others" (*αἰὲν ἀριστεύειν καὶ ὑπείροχον ἔμμεναι ἄλλων*) (*Il*. 11.784, 6.208). Achilles, like Odysseus when he was sent on an embassy to Messene, was still *νήπιος* when Peleus sent him off to war (*Il*. 9.440).[52] During the Book Nine embassy, Phoinix reminds Achilles of just how young and inexperienced he was before the Trojan War:

[51] The elders were treated with great respect and appear to be involved in major decisions in Homeric society. In Book Two, they make way for Telemachos to sit in his father's seat (14) and one of them is granted the honor of speaking first in assembly (15-6). Olson (1995) points out their power in Ithaka and notes that they "certainly take a special part in governing the island" and that they "have special seats in the marketplace… at least in part for use in their capacity as judges," 192.

[52] Unlike the passage concerning Odysseus, we are informed of adults sent along with Achilles: Phoinix and Patroklos. Some readers of the *Iliad* have considered Patroklos and Phoinix surrogate fathers to Achilles, much as Athena is to Telemachos during the first four books. Finlay (1980) sees Patroklos as a "representative of and spokesman for patriarchal and communal values that Achilles rejects in refusing to aid the Achaians," 226. See Heiden (2008) for Phoinix's role as surrogate father, 149-51).

"you did not know yet of war or assembly, where men achieve distinction" (*οὔπω εἰδόθ᾽ ὁμοιΐου πολέμοιο/ οὐδ᾽ ἀγορέων, ἵνα τ᾽ ἄνδρες ἀριπρεπέες τελέθουσι*) (*Il*. 9.440-1). Thus, as the embassy to Messene served as a rite of passage and initiation into manhood for Odysseus, the same is true of the Trojan War for Achilles. Achilles will win his *κλέος* and claim his entry into adulthood on the Trojan battlefield. In Troy, with Phoinix as his guide, Achilles will learn to be a "speaker of words and a doer of deeds" (*μύθων τε ῥητῆρ᾽ ἔμεναι πρηκτῆρά τε ἔργων*) (*Il*. 9.443).

In addition to Achilles and Odysseus, even the aged Nestor recollects a rite of passage he completed as a young man. Like Odysseus in Messene, Nestor's rite of passage involves a cattle raid. Nestor remembers he was young at the time—so young that his father, Neleus, forbade him to arm himself for combat (*Il*. 11.669, 716-8). Nestor takes pride in recalling two of his accomplishments during this cattle raid. First, he describes his skill in combat: "I killed Itymoneus… and his field-dwelling people trembled around him" (*ἐγὼ κτάνον Ἴτυμονῆα… λαοὶ δὲ περίτρεσαν ἀγροιῶται*) (*Il*. 11.672-6). Then he boasts about the spoils he took for Pylos, which included a very large number of oxen, horses, sheep, and pigs (*Il*. 11.676-80). Nestor also emphasizes the pride Neleus felt in him: "Neleus rejoiced in his heart that much had come about for me still young for going to war" (*γεγήθει δὲ φρένα Νηλεύς,/ οὕνεκά μοι τύχε πολλὰ νέῳ πόλεμον δὲ κιόντι*) (*Il*. 11.682-3).[53] Thus, by killing an enemy and succeeding at raiding so large a prize, Nestor shows his father that he can handle a dangerous situation reserved for the adult male. The completion of Nestor's challenge, as Odysseus's tale of the boar hunt or Achilles' *κλέος*, brings pride to his father.

[53] Finlay (1980) correctly points out that "the pride and concern that his father Neleus felt for him as a youthful warrior" is a "major theme of his tale," 269.

For Telemachos, who has no Trojan War to participate in and who is incapable of fighting off the suitors himself, the journey in search of news of his father serves as a rite of passage.[54] Much as Phoinix served as the surrogate father for Achilles, Athena will do the same for Telemachos. She sends him on this journey and she will assist him. Her assistance will be heaviest in the beginning and will decrease as Telemachos gains confidence. After she has encouraged Telemachos to make a speech in the assembly and declare his intentions to travel to Pylos and Sparta, Athena, disguised as Telemachos, procures a ship and enlists able bodied men to serve as Telemachos's companions (*Od*. 2.382-7). Athena then disguises herself as Mentor and speeds Telemachos along to the ship and his assembled crew. Because Athena has increased Telemachos's confidence and supplied him with a willing crew for the voyage, he is heartened and able to competently address his companions and give commands to them once they have set out (*Od*. 2.410-2, 422-6).

During this rite of passage, Athena expects Telemachos to begin shedding some of the flaws that identify him as *νήπιος*. However, for all of Telemachos's faults, he has learned how to act as a proper host during his twenty years in Odysseus's household. Understanding the importance of the guest-host relationship, Telemachos is horrified and embarrassed when one of his daydreams has allowed a guest to go unwelcomed: "he was ashamed in his heart that a guest should stand for a long time at his door" (*νεμεσσήθη δ᾽ ἐνὶ θυμῷ/ ξεῖνον δηθὰ θύρῃσιν ἐφεστάμεν*)(*Od*. 1.119-20). Telemachos also understands that a good host must entertain and feed his guests after they arrive (*Od*. 1.122-4). Telemachos's dedication to providing his guests with good entertainment is evidenced in

[54] Telemachos admits his inability to deal with the suitors himself in the assembly (*Od*. 2.60-2).

the first book. When a tearful Penelope asks Phemios not to sing about the heroes returning from Troy, Telemachos sends her away because the song is new, popular, and pleasing to his guests (*Od*. 1.346-52).[55] Telemachos, well aware of the manners of Homeric society, does not ask his guest questions until after he has been fed and entertained (*Od*. 1.150-77).[56] Finally, Telemachos offers his guest a bath, lodging, and a gift of friendship (*Od*. 1.309-13). It is clear that the years growing up, sheltered on Ithaka without a proper adult male to take up the responsibilities of head of the house, have forced Telemachos to learn how to behave as a proper host himself.[57] This is a very important skill for a young male to learn in Homeric society and in Archaic Greece.[58] Hesiod believes the lack of unity between host and guest is one of the great evils of his time (*Op*. 183). Thus learning how to be an effective host will not be an important part of Telemachos's rite of passage. Although he will visit exemplary hosts, Nestor and Menelaos, there are other skills he must acquire during his travels to the Peloponnese.

Although Telemachos proves to be a competent host, he does not understand how to behave as a guest.[59] Unlike Odysseus, Telemachos did not have his father or the village elders to send him on an embassy or to stay with a friendly host and learn the proper manners of a guest. Because of this, it becomes obvious that Telemachos has no idea how to act when visiting a foreign palace. The reader can sense Telemachos's

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[55] Powell (2004) also points out not only that the Homeric host must provide a bard who knew the newest and most popular songs, but also, for the bard, "it is important be up with the times, to know the latest song," 37.

[56] West in Lactacz (2008) states the importance of this custom: "*der Besucher muss etwas zu essen erhalten und sich allgemein wohlfühlen, bevor Fragen an ihn gestellt werden*," 142.

[57] Lateiner (1995) points out how well Telemachos operates as a host, 35. Austin (1969) says that Telemachos's unique situation requires him to be the adult at home, 46.

[58] M. I. Finley (1978) identifies the gift giving process as among the most important rituals in Homeric society: "no single detail in the lives of heroes receives so much attention in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* as gift-giving," 62.

[59] See Clarke (1963) 135 and Beck (1998-1999) 127. Both authors contrast Telemachos's ability to serve as a host with his inability to behave properly as a guest.

discomfort almost immediately after he arrives in Pylos. He is clearly nervous when he asks Athena, disguised as Mentor: "Mentor, how shall I approach him? How shall I address him? I have never engaged in close speech before; a young man must reverently question his elder" (*Μέντορ, πῶς τ᾽ ἄρ᾽ ἴω; πῶς τ᾽ ἂρ προσπτύξομαι αὐτόν;/ οὐδέ τί πω μύθοισι πεπείρημαι πυκινοῖσιν:/ αἰδὼς δ᾽ αὖ νέον ἄνδρα γεραίτερον ἐξερέεσθαι*) (*Od*. 3.21-3). In his question, Telemachos admits he has never been in this role before and that he does not know what to do. Furthermore, Telemachos expresses embarrassment and a feeling of inadequacy about approaching an elder like Nestor—a man Athena has described as "having wisdom in his breast" (*μῆτιν ἐνὶ στήθεσσι*) and as "thoughtful" (*πεπνυμένος*) (*Od*. 3.18, 20). The thought of approaching such a man in his first journey abroad of this nature overwhelms him. His nerves begin to chip away at the confidence Athena has built up in him. In an attempt to calm him down, Athena tries to convince him that the gods will help him out: "Telemachos, some you will perceive in your mind, a divinity will place the rest in there. I do not think you could have been born and raised against the will of the gods" (*Τηλέμαχ᾽, ἄλλα μὲν αὐτὸς ἐνὶ φρεσὶ σῇσι νοήσεις,/ ἄλλα δὲ καὶ δαίμων ὑποθήσεται: οὐ γὰρ ὀίω/ οὔ σε θεῶν ἀέκητι γενέσθαι τε τραφέμεν τε*) (*Od*. 3.26-8).

Even with Telemachos's nervous behavior and admission of a lack of experience, S. Douglas Olson resists the temptation to see a need for Telemachos to develop as a guest or to mature at all as a result of the trip. Olson makes the strong, and I believe inaccurate claim that Telemachos does not develop at all during the first four books.[60] He

[60] Olson (1995) 65. He claims "Most contemporary critics insist Telemachos develops in the course of Book i-iv. In fact, he does not, in part because he is already who and what he needs to be, but also

believes Telemachos already understands "proper behavior in Achaian society" because of his knowledge of the duties of a host. In addition, he argues that the importance of Odysseus's absence is often "overstated" because Telemachos has the suitors and Eumaios to learn from.[61] This argument, however, is hardly convincing. As was discussed above, the suitors benefit from keeping Telemachos in a perpetual state of childhood. As long as Telemachos is *νήπιος*, he poses little threat to their occupation of his house and ambition with his mother. In fact, it was only when the suitors perceived Telemachos as nearing manhood that they felt a need to ambush him. The suitors, abusing their host's guests and displaying a complete lack of manners, do not offer an exemplary model of behavior for Telemachos either. Eumaios, likewise proves a poor choice for surrogate father and male role model as well. Even though Eumaios claims to have been the son of a king (*Od*. 15.413-4), he was very young when he came to be the servant of Laertes (*Od*. 15.364-5, 381-2). The suitors verbally abuse him and, when they give him an order, he obeys (*Od*. 21.362-7). He also fears and obeys Telemachos (*Od*. 17.188-9, 21.369-79). Finally, Telemachos very rarely visits the swineherd, but spends most of his time with the suitors, whom Eumaios fears (*Od*. 16.25-9). How could Eumaios be a proper role model for Telemachos when Telemachos rarely sees him except when in the suitors' presence and when Eumaios fears and obeys both Telemachos and the suitors? Whatever validity there is to Eumaios's story of noble birth, it is clear that he has long since been nothing more than an obedient servant. Eumaios certainly has not taught Telemachos how to stand up to the suitors. It is not until the visit of Athena that Telemachos has been sent on a rite of passage or has spoken up for himself and taken

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because his utter inadequacy for the task which has been set him transforms him into a model auditor of tales like this one."

[61] Olson (1995) 66-7.

charge of his own life. Furthermore, Olson's position ignores Telemachos's obvious inability to function as a proper guest (his nervousness and his many mistakes) and the growth he displays and accomplishments he makes only after her encouragement.

After Athena has encouraged Telemachos by assuring him of the gods' help, the two proceed to the palace of Nestor. Throughout Telemachos's visit to Pylos, Homer emphasizes Telemachos's nervousness and inexperience through his behavior and mistakes. On their way to greet Nestor, Telemachos does not lead, but rather "he walked in the footsteps of the goddess" (*ὁ δ᾽ ἔπειτα μετ᾽ ἴχνια βαῖνε θεοῖο*) (*Od* 3.30). As Athena and Telemachos approach the palace, they come upon Nestor and his sons celebrating the festival of Poseidon. At this point Peisistratos, a son of Nestor, greets them and asks them to make a prayer to Poseidon (*Od*. 3.36-43). He hands Athena a goblet and bids her to offer prayers before Telemachos, because she is older. She proceeds to pray for glory to come to Nestor and his sons, for Poseidon to favor the Pylians, and for herself and Telemachos to successfully complete their voyage (*Od*. 3.48-61). When she has finished, Telemachos once again "follows in the god's footsteps." Still feeling nervous and having a lack of confidence due to his inexperience, Telemachos copies Athena's prayer: "she gave the two-handled cup to Telemachos, and the dear son of Odysseus prayed in the same way" (*δῶκε δὲ Τηλεμάχῳ καλὸν δέπας ἀμφικύπελλον:/ ὣς δ᾽ αὔτως ἠρᾶτο Ὀδυσσῆος φίλος υἱός*) (*Od*. 3.63-4). During this first portion of Telemachos's visit to Pylos, he feels inadequate and incapable of following the proper protocol of a guest. The early stages of this rite of passage are clearly a learning process and Athena, like Phoinix to Achilles, is the teacher. Early on, Telemachos learns by observing and mimicking

Athena's behavior.[62]

During the course of the visit, both Athena and Nestor take turns encouraging, criticizing, and guiding Telemachos on his course to adulthood. After his guests have finished feasting, Nestor, the proper and conscientious host, questions them. Here, Homer makes it clear that Telemachos needed Athena's encouragement in order to complete his task in Pylos and that his true purpose is to win *κλέος*: "for Athena herself had placed courage in his heart so that he might ask about his absent father and so that he would have a good reputation among men" (*αὐτὴ γὰρ ἐνὶ φρεσὶ θάρσος Ἀθήνη/ θῆχ', ἵνα μιν περὶ πατρὸς ἀποιχομένοιο ἔροιτο/ ἠδ' ἵνα μιν κλέος ἐσθλὸν ἐν ἀνθρώποισιν ἔχῃσιν*) (*Od*. 3.76-8). When Nestor has heard Telemachos's situation, he reminds him of Orestes and uses the story as a paradigm in much the same way Athena had before. Because a son has the ability to avenge the death of a father, Nestor emphasizes that "thus it is good for a deceased man to leave behind a son " (*ὡς ἀγαθὸν καὶ παῖδα καταφθιμένοιο λιπέσθαι/ ἀνδρός*) (*Od*. 3.196). Then, using the same exact wording as Athena, Nestor attempts to boost Telemachos's confidence by suggesting he too can be like Orestes: "and you dear, for you are big and handsome, be brave so that men of future generations will speak well of you" (*καὶ σὺ φίλος, μάλα γάρ σ' ὁρόω καλόν τε μέγαν τε,/ ἄλκιμος ἔσσ', ἵνα τίς σε καὶ ὀψιγόνων εὖ εἴπῃ*)(*Od*. 3.199-200). Telemachos, however, still nervous and lacking confidence, portrays himself as helpless and calls the Orestes tale "*κλέος*" the Achaians will spread far and wide (*Od*. 3.202-9). Nestor, dismayed by the son of Odysseus's reluctance to seek revenge, asks him directly: "are you willingly oppressed? Do the people of your country, following a god's voice, hate you" (*ἦέ ἑκὼν ὑποδάμνασαι, ἦ σέ*

[62] As Lateiner (1995) observes, he quite literally follows "in Athena's footsteps," 74.

γε λαοὶ ἐχθαίρουσ᾽ ἀνὰ δῆμον, ἐπισπόμενοι θεοῦ ὀμφῇ) (*Od*. 3.214-5)? He then suggests that, if Athena looked after him the way she did Odysseus, the suitors would no longer be a problem (*Od*. 3.218-24). It is at this point that Telemachos makes his greatest verbal blunder. He responds to Nestor's advice by doubting the gods and continuing to portray himself as helpless: "elder, I do not think this word will be fulfilled; for you speak of excessively great things. Wonder holds me. What I hope for would not happen even if the gods were willing" (ὦ γέρον, οὔπω τοῦτο ἔπος τελέεσθαι ὀΐω:/ λίην γὰρ μέγα εἶπες: ἄγη μ᾽ ἔχει. οὐκ ἂν ἐμοί γε/ ἐλπομένῳ τὰ γένοιτ᾽, οὐδ᾽ εἰ θεοὶ ὣς ἐθέλοιεν) (*Od*. 3.226-8). It is at this point that Athena interjects and harshly rebukes Telemachos. She asks him "Telemachos, what word has escaped your fence of teeth" (*Τηλέμαχε, ποῖόν σε ἔπος φύγεν ἕρκος ὀδόντων*) and then criticizes him for doubting the gods (*Od*. 3.230-2). As surrogate father and mentor to Telemachos (in addition to being a goddess herself), she will in no way tolerate his disrespect for the gods.

Athena's strong words appear to have an effect on Telemachos. Although he still doubts his father's homecoming could be a reality, he becomes more receptive to the suggestions of Athena and Nestor (*Od*. 3.240-2). Here, he begins to show signs that he is learning how to act as a proper and respectful guest. Before questioning Nestor further, he first flatters his elder: "he appears an immortal for me to look upon" (ὥς τέ μοι ἀθάνατος ἀνδάλλεται εἰσοράασθαι) (*Od*. 3.246). Then he asks Nestor to take up the story of Orestes again: "Nestor, son of Neleus, speak the truth: how did the son of Atreus, wide-ruling Agamemnon, die" (ὦ Νέστορ Νηληϊάδη, σὺ δ᾽ ἀληθὲς ἐνίσπες: πῶς ἔθαν᾽ Ἀτρεΐδης εὐρὺ κρείων Ἀγαμέμνων) (*Od*. 3.247-8)? Nestor's previous efforts to spur the boy to action using Orestes as a role model failed. Because Telemachos seeks the story

again, he displays that he is now ready to accept Nestor's guidance. By using compliments and addressing Nestor by his patronymic, Telemachos shows good manners when questioning his host and elder.

Although Athena's fatherly reproach checked Telemachos's unseemly whining and he began behaving more like a proper guest, he continues to make mistakes during his visit on account of his inexperience. When evening is setting in and all have feasted and sacrificed, Telemachos begins to follow Athena back to their ship to sleep (*Od*. 3.342-4). That his guests should sleep on a boat and leave the palace without receiving the traditional gifts of guest-friendship is a huge insult to Nestor.[63] Nestor is truly horrified of how this would reflect on his reputation as a host:

> *Ζεὺς τό γ᾽ ἀλεξήσειε καὶ ἀθάνατοι θεοὶ ἄλλοι,*
> *ὡς ὑμεῖς παρ᾽ ἐμεῖο θοὴν ἐπὶ νῆα κίοιτε*
> *ὥς τέ τευ ἢ παρὰ πάμπαν ἀνείμονος ἠδὲ πενιχροῦ,*
> *ᾧ οὔ τι χλαῖναι καὶ ῥήγεα πόλλ᾽ ἐνὶ οἴκῳ,*
> *οὔτ᾽ αὐτῷ μαλακῶς οὔτε ξείνοισιν ἑνεύδειν*
>
> may Zeus turn aside and the other gods,
> that you should go from my home to your ship,
> as from some poor man, altogether without clothing,
> for whom there is neither much clothing nor many blankets in his house,
> for himself and his guests to sleep softly (*Od*. 3.346-50).

He then assures Telemachos that he would never allow "the dear son of Odysseus" (*ἀνδρὸς Ὀδυσσῆος φίλος υἱὸς*) to sleep "on the deck of a ship" (*νηὸς ἐπ᾽ ἰκριόφιν*) (*Od*. 3.352-3). Athena, realizing the mistake and knowing that the inexperienced and uncomfortable Telemachos would not know what to say, calms the situation down and

[63] Lateiner (1995) correctly describes Nestor as "appalled that Telemakhos in his haste nearly leaves Nestor's house before receiving gifts of carpets and blankets," 75.

reassures Nestor. She assures Nestor that he spoke well and that Telemachos should obey him (*Od*. 3.357-8). Athena's words are meant as much for her young tutee as for Nestor, as she wishes to make certain that Telemachos will acquiesce to Nestor's desires and not insult him further.

At this point in Telemachos's journey, Athena requests that Nestor provide Telemachos with a chariot and one of his sons as a companion (*Od*. 3.368-70). Nestor offers Peisistratos. Through Peisistratos, it is easy to see just how the absence of a father or proper male role model has hindered Telemachos's development. Peisistratos is Telemachos's age (*Od*. 3.49) and, like Telemachos, is still unmarried (*Od*. 3.401). Unlike Telemachos, however, Peisistratos has Nestor, an expert on manners in Homeric society, to guide him on his path to adulthood. For this reason, his maturity level and worldliness are well beyond Telemachos's.[64] Developmentally, Peisistratos is where Telemachos should be. Athena, trusting Telemachos has learned from his first experience as a guest abroad and having arranged for a good role model to travel to Sparta with him, decides she no longer needs to hold his hand through this rite of passage. At this point, she heads back to the ship and allows Telemachos and Peisistratos to travel together to Sparta.

During the visit to Sparta, it is obvious that Peisistratos is the more experienced traveler of the two-- the more properly educated in the customs of Homeric society. Although both Telemachos and Peisistratos marvel at the splendor of Menelaos's palace (*Od*. 4.43-8), Telemachos cannot contain his excitement and commits the blunder of comparing his mortal host's palace to Zeus's: "the hall of Zeus must be like this on the inside" (*Ζηνός που τοιήδε γ᾽ Ὀλυμπίου ἔνδοθεν αὐλή*) (*Od*. 4.74). Menelaos, overhearing

[64] Tracy (1990) notices that when Peisistratos first appears on the scene, unlike Telemachos, "he acts with complete self-assurance." Through his maturity and good manners, Tracy says he "provides by his example a paradigm for Telemachos," 17-8.

Telemachos's excited whispering, quickly and politely laughs off the comparison between himself and Zeus so that he does not offend the god. Then, likely on account of Telemachos's puerile whispering, he addresses his guests as "children" (*τέκνα*) (*Od*. 4.78). Here, Telemachos's mistake does not rival the mistake he made in Pylos. There he doubted the gods while refusing the encouragement of his elder host. Here, he merely makes a clumsy attempt to compliment his host. After the guests have been fed, Menelaos, unaware of their identities, mentions Odysseus (*Od.* 4.107). The mention of his father's name forces uncontrollable tears from Telemachos and Helen and Menelaos realize who he is (*Od*. 4.113-9, 137-54). This gives Telemachos the perfect opportunity to introduce himself, reveal his purpose, and ask for news of his father. The inexperienced young man, however, fails to speak up. The more mature Peisistratos understands the situation well and quickly covers for Telemachos: "son of Atreus, Menelaos, cherished by Zeus, leader of the people, this is the son of that man, as you say, but he is modest" (*Ἀτρεΐδη Μενέλαε διοτρεφές, ὄρχαμε λαῶν,/ κείνου μέν τοι ὅδ᾽ υἱὸς ἐτήτυμον, ὡς ἀγορεύεις:/ ἀλλὰ σαόφρων ἐστί*) (*Od*. 4.156-8). He proceeds to attribute Telemachos's silence to reverence for his host and then explains Telemachos's purpose in coming and his situation on Ithaka for him (*Od*. 4.159-67).

Throughout the young men's stay in Menelaos's palace, Peisistratos continues to make the better impression on their host. When all are weeping for Odysseus and other lost loved ones, he comments on mourning for the dead and the loss of his older brother, Antilochos (*Od*. 4.190-202). Menelaos, impressed by the sagacity of his words, pays him a grand compliment: "dear friend, since you have said as much as a thoughtful man could say and do, even one who is your elder; for you speak thoughtfully—the sort of things

your father would say " (*ὦ φίλ᾽, ἐπεὶ τόσα εἶπες, ὅσ᾽ ἂν πεπνυμένος ἀνὴρ/ εἴποι καὶ ῥέξειε, καὶ ὃς προγενέστερος εἴη:/ τοίου γὰρ καὶ πατρός, ὅ καὶ πεπνυμένα βάζεις*) (*Od*. 4.204-6). When Telemachos, advised by Athena, decides it is time to leave Sparta, Peisistratos prevents him from making another serious mistake and damaging the reputations of himself as a guest and Menelaos as a host. Telemachos wakes Peisistratos from his sleep and urges him to sneak out of Menelaos's palace in the middle of the night and head back to the ship in Pylos (*Od*. 15.46-7). Peisistratos advises him to wait until daylight and not to depart until they have received the gifts of Menelaos (*Od*. 15.49-53). He senses Telemachos has not learned his lesson from the incident at Pylos. Nestor was horrified when Telemachos was about to head back to his ship to sleep without receiving his gift and without an offer to sleep in the palace. The insult to Menelaos would be far greater if his guests slipped out in the middle of the night before saying their goodbyes and receiving their gifts. Dutifully embracing his role as the more experienced tutor, Peisistratos lectures Telemachos on the importance of the guest-friend relationship "a guest remembers for all days his host who provided him with hospitality" (*τοῦ γάρ τε ξεῖνος μιμνήσκεται ἤματα πάντα/ ἀνδρὸς ξεινοδόκου, ὅς κεν φιλότητα παράσχῃ*) (*Od*. 15.54-5).[65]

In Book Four, Peisistratos assumes Athena's role as Telemachos's guide on this rite of passage. Because of the similarities between the two young men of age and status, he is an effective role model. It is obvious, both from his ability to read the situation at Sparta and speak up for Telemachos when his tears reveal his identity and also by the

[65] Clarke (1967) calls this the "last scene of… the *Telemacheia*" and in his chapter, "Telemachus and the *Telemacheia*," he calls attention to this and other scenes where Peisistratos provides the example of "proper behavior" to Telemachos, 38, 42.

way he stresses the importance of honoring his host to him, that Peisistratos has traveled abroad to foreign courts before. As Laertes and the village elders had sent Odysseus abroad and Peleus had sent Achilles, Nestor also must have sent Peisistratos on such a rite of passage to learn proper behavior and the customs of Homeric society. The sharp contrast between the level of preparedness to act as a guest highlights the effect of the absence of Odysseus on Telemachos. If the situation on Ithaka had been more stable and Odysseus had still been present, Telemachos also would have traveled abroad and learned the importance of the guest-host relationship from the perspective of the guest. Instead, this becomes the most important lesson for Telemachos during the *Telemacheia*. He must follow the examples of both Athena and Peisistratos during this rite of passage and learn how to properly behave as an adult male when traveling away from home.

Although Telemachos continues to make the mistakes of inexperience throughout his journey to the Peloponnese, as his suggestion to sneak out of Sparta in the middle of night proves, he also shows signs of growth and learning from Athena and Peisistratos's tutelage.[66] After completing the trip to Pylos, he approaches the visit to the palace of Menelaos with more confidence.[67] He does not confess his nervousness to Peisistratos as he previously did with Athena. He no longer feels the need to question his companion about how to behave as he did in Pylos. Telemachos also displays greater patience revealing his purpose to Menelaos than he did in Pylos. There he tells Nestor his name and his reason for visiting almost immediately (*Od*. 3.79-101). In Sparta, Telemachos

[66] Beck (1998-1999), although not directly acknowledging the role of Peisistratos, admits "the young man does show real changes as a result of his own travels and the return of Odysseus," 134.
[67] Clarke (1963) notices the growth of Telemachos between his journey to Pylos and his visit in Sparta: "Telemachos is making progress; at the beginning of Book III the mere sight of a hero panicked him; here he seems quite sure of himself before Menelaos," 135.

does not give up that information until Menelaos asks him in the morning after both have slept (*Od*. 4.316-31).[68]

Telemachos's decision making also shows signs of improvement during his stay at the palace of Menelaos. After Menelaos has answered his questions, he tells Telemachos:

> *ἀλλ᾽ ἄγε νῦν ἐπίμεινον ἐνὶ μεγάροισιν ἐμοῖσιν,*
> *ὄφρα κεν ἑνδεκάτη τε δυωδεκάτη τε γένηται:*
> *καὶ τότε σ᾽ εὖ πέμψω, δώσω δέ τοι ἀγλαὰ δῶρα,*
> *τρεῖς ἵππους καὶ δίφρον ἐύξοον: αὐτὰρ ἔπειτα*
> *δώσω καλὸν ἄλεισον, ἵνα σπένδῃσθα θεοῖσιν*
> *ἀθανάτοις ἐμέθεν μεμνημένος ἤματα πάντα*
>
> come now, stay in my palace
> until the eleventh or twelfth day;
> and then I will send you off, and I will give to you glorious gifts:
> three splendid horses and a polished chariot; then
> I will give a handsome goblet, so that you could pour libation
> to the immortal gods recalling me for all days (*Od*. 4.587-92).

Telemachos reflects on all that Menelaos has offered. He considers his situation at home and his men waiting in Pylos and realizes he cannot stay. He politely mixes his refusal with flattery and thus does not cause offense to Menelaos:

> *Ἀτρεΐδη, μή δή με πολὺν χρόνον ἐνθάδ᾽ ἔρυκε.*
> *καὶ γάρ κ᾽ εἰς ἐνιαυτὸν ἐγὼ παρὰ σοί γ᾽ ἀνεχοίμην*
> *ἥμενος, οὐδέ κέ μ᾽ οἶκου ἔλοι πόθος οὐδὲ τοκήων:*
> *αἰνῶς γὰρ μύθοισιν ἔπεσσί τε σοῖσιν ἀκούων*
> *τέρπομαι…*
>
> son of Atreus, do not keep me here for a long time
> for I could hold up sitting by you for a year
> and not have longing for household or parents;
> for strangely I delight in hearing your stories and conversation (*Od*. 4.594-8).

[68] Van Nortwick (2009) interestingly views Telemachos's withholding of information as a sign of his maturation and that he is indeed becoming his father's son: "Telemachus' behavior in Sparta shows that he is already becoming his father's son. In Pylos he announced his name and agenda immediately; in Sparta he does not reveal his name or why he has come until Helen guesses who he is," 10.

(*Od*. 4.594-8). Telemachos then carefully considers the gifts Menelaos has proposed. He again, politely, tells Menelaos to keep the horses because "there are neither broad courses nor a meadow in Ithaka" (*ἐν δ᾽ Ἰθάκῃ οὔτ᾽ ἄρ δρόμοι εὐρέες οὔτε τι λειμών*) (*Od*. 4.605). He realizes the inappropriateness of the gift of horses; he understands they will be of little use to him at home and will only be problematic to transport back to the island. His response displays adult decisiveness and forethought, not the childish wonderment and lack of confidence he displayed in Pylos. Menelaos delights in Telemachos's polite and mature answer. He calls him "of noble blood" (*αἵματός εἰς ἀγαθοῖο*) and promises a more appropriate gift (*Od*. 4.611-9). Because of the maturity of Telemachos and Peisistratos, Menelaos no longer addresses them as "children" (*τέκνα*) when they leave, but "young men" (*κούρω*) (*Od*. 15.151).

Although Telemachos conducts himself more confidently during his stay in Sparta and shows that he has grown as a result of his trip to Pylos, he makes one final blunder before heading back to Ithaka. At the true end of the *Telemacheia*, when Telemachos approaches Pylos, he begs Peisistratos: "do not, cherished by Zeus, take me past my ship but leave me there, lest the elder, desiring to show affection, keeps me in his home unwilling" (*μή με παρὲξ ἄγε νῆα, διοτρεφές, ἀλλὰ λίπ᾽ αὐτοῦ,/μή μ᾽ ὁ γέρων ἀέκοντα κατάσχῃ ὥς ἐνὶ οἴκῳ/ ἱέμενος φιλέειν: ἐμὲ δὲ χρεὼ θᾶσσον ἱκέσθαι*) (*Od*. 15.199-201). Peisistratos ponders Telemachos's request. He understands that this is not the polite behavior society demands of guests. He informs Telemachos that Nestor will be "enraged" (*κεχολώσεται*), but urges him to "go aboard in haste" (*σπουδῇ νῦν ἀνάβαινε*) (*Od*. 15.209-14). Nestor indeed would not be happy that a guest-friend has returned to his country, with his son no less, and not stayed the night at his palace. However, even

though Telemachos's decision will upset a host and put his companion in an awkward situation, it should not be viewed as a sudden regression of maturity or manners. When Telemachos first came to Pylos, he did not understand the most basic requirements of palatial guests, including approaching elders and questioning hosts. Here, Telemachos fully realizes the severity of his actions. When Telemachos makes his request, he addresses Peisistratos in the politest of terms. He addresses him by his patronymic and reminds him of their strong bonds of guest-friendship: "we can boast to be constant guest-friends from the guest-friendship of our fathers and we are of the same age; this journey of ours will inspire us with harmony" (*ξεῖνοι δὲ διαμπερὲς εὐχόμεθ᾽ εἶναι/ ἐκ πατέρων φιλότητος, ἅτ᾽ ἀρ καὶ ὁμήλικές εἰμεν:/ ἥδε δ᾽ ὁδὸς καὶ μᾶλλον ὁμοφροσύνῃσιν ἐνήσει*) (*Od*. 15.195-8). This demonstrates that Telemachos not only realizes his abrupt departure will bring anger to his host, but also that he is beginning to understand the importance of guest-friendship from the perspective of a guest. In addition, Telemachos's haste is spurred on by the goddess Athena. She informs Telemachos that the suitors are dividing up his property and warns him that Penelope may soon marry Eurymachos (*Od*. 15.10-8). Telemachos's premature departure, therefore, is understandable. Moreover, his interaction with Peisistratos displays a maturity and understanding gained by experience which he did not possess when he began his voyage to the Peloponnese.

In addition to learning how to behave as a guest and completing a necessary rite of passage by traveling abroad, Telemachos must also learn about his father on his journey. Although I disagree with those who would consider this the main purpose of the

Telemacheia, it nevertheless is an important part of Telemachos's development.[69] Homeric and Archaic Greek society placed a tremendous value on the father-son relationship. Throughout the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, heroes identify themselves (and each other) by their patronymics. Hesiod complains that the morals of his time have collapsed because there is strife between father and son (*Op*. 182). The most rewarding thing for a father is to have his son grow up in his image. Hesiod states that in a just world: "women bear children like their parents" (*τίκτουσιν δὲ γυναῖκες ἐοικότα τέκνα γονεῦσιν*) (*Op*. 235). During Odysseus's conversation with Achilles in Hades, nothing is more important to Achilles than the development of his son, Neoptolemos. He begs Odysseus: "come now, tell me the story of my noble son: did he go to war as the foremost man or not?" (*ἀλλ᾽ ἄγε μοι τοῦ παιδὸς ἀγαυοῦ μῦθον ἐνίσπες,/ ἦ ἔπετ᾽ ἐς πόλεμον πρόμος ἔμμεναι, ἦε καὶ οὐκί*) (*Od.* 11.492-3). After Odysseus has told him about his son's heroics in Troy, Achilles walks away pleased because Neoptolemos became "famous" (*ἀριδείκετον*) (*Od*. 11.505-40). Achilles' main concern is whether or not his son fought bravely in the war. After Odysseus confirms this, Achilles rejoices in the fact that his son followed in his footsteps and carried on the reputation of his family. When Nestor realizes Athena is looking after Telemachos, he prays for *κλέος* for himself, his wife, and his children (*Od*. 3.380-1). If Athena is to turn Telemachos into his father's son, she must make him realize and appreciate his father's *κλέος*.[70] Thus, sending him to stay in the palaces of two men who fought with his father during the Trojan War and witnessed him displaying his excellence

[69] Rose (1967) emphasizes the importance of Telemachos learning about his dad and complains that other commentators all ignore his search for "news of Odysseus" when explaining the purpose of the *Telemacheia*, 391. Austin (1969) calls learning Odysseus's whereabouts "the most important reason for Telemachos's journey," 49. These positions, however, both minimize Telemachos's need to capture his own *κλέος*, as Athena clearly states as the purpose (*Od*. 1.95, 13.422), and his utter clumsiness as a guest and lack of confidence before the trip.

[70] Jones (1988) 497.

in speech as well as on the battlefield appears to be the best education for him. If Telemachos can mature properly as a result of this rite of passage and learn to become more like his father, he can display to his mother and the rest of his household that he is a worthy successor to his father.

As important as it is for Homeric fathers to produce sons who follow in their footsteps, it is equally important for young males to live up to their fathers. As the frequent use of patronymics suggests, the father determines much of the identity of the young male.[71] When Telemachos is preparing to set off on his journey to the Peloponnese, Athena confirms this. She tells him: "Telemachos, you will not be base or unintelligent in the future, if the strong courage of your father is placed in you" (*Τηλέμαχ', οὐδ' ὄπιθεν κακὸς ἔσσεαι οὐδ' ἀνοήμων,/ εἰ δή τοι σοῦ πατρὸς ἐνέστακται μένος ἡύ*) (*Od*. 2.271-2). She then warns him that were he not the son of Odysseus, he would be doomed to failure (*Od*. 2.274-5). Homeric society expects the sons of strong, noble males to succeed in difficult situations. The sons of poor men, however, with no *κλέος*, were not expected to amount to much. This is especially true, considering Athena's statement: "few children are equal to their father, the majority are worse, but few are the better of their father" (*παῦροι γάρ τοι παῖδες ὁμοῖοι πατρὶ πέλονται,/ οἱ πλέονες κακίους, παῦροι δέ τε πατρὸς ἀρείους*) (*Od*. 2.276-7). Because of this, the Greeks encouraged the sons of noble men to emulate their fathers. Stories of heroics on the battlefield and the reputations their fathers won induced young males to seek out *κλέος* for themselves.[72] Because of the way young males were expected to idolize their fathers,

[71] Tracy (1990) 4.

[72] Runciman (1998) points out that this was also true of the sons of Greek hoplites in later times: "the sons of men who had themselves served as hoplites grew up not only hearing historical as well as mythical

it is no surprise that they struggled to equal their fathers' accomplishments. It is also no surprise that comparing a young man to his father was considered a great compliment. Menelaos provides an example of this during the visit to Sparta. He tells Peisistratos that he speaks like Nestor and then he extends the compliment to all of Nestor's sons by suggesting they are all "clever" (*πινυτούς*) and "the best with spears" (*ἔγχεσιν εἶναι ἀρίστους*) (*Od*. 4.204-11). No flattery could more effectively boost the pride of a son of Nestor than suggesting they have an excellence in speaking like their dad.

Because Telemachos has grown up without a proper male role model, the understanding he has of his father is incomplete. The stories he has heard about Odysseus have come from his household—from Penelope, Laertes, and Odysseus's servants. If Athena is going to convince Telemachos to strive to equal his father, she must first give him an education about who his father really is. When Athena first visits Telemachos, she tells him of her intention to visit with Odysseus (*Od*. 1.194-5) and reminds him of his father's departure for Troy (*Od*. 1.210). After Telemachos has finished explaining the chaotic situation in his household, Athena employs a new strategy to inspire Telemachos. Here, she states Telemachos's need for Odysseus while emphasizing his ability to rid the house of the suitors himself (*Od*. 1.253-66). If Telemachos continues to hear the repeated refrain of how his father would take care of the suitors, perhaps he will be shamed into action. However, if Athena is going to properly educate Telemachos on the *κλέος* of his father, she must force him to interact with trusted men who know his father well and have seen him fight in battle and heard him speak in assembly.

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tales of bravery in battle but seeing in the behavior of their fathers [exemplary models to emulate]." He then points out the sight of their fathers' arms and the honor paid to the battle dead as means for encouraging young men into battle, 741.

After Athena, the assembled Ithakans are the first to give Telemachos a new and broader picture of his father. Halitherses, an aged Ithakan warrior, interprets a bird sign and the message in its meaning is similar to Athena's message earlier. He insists "great suffering" (*μέγα πῆμα*) is approaching the suitors and Odysseus is "close by" (*ἐγγύς*) (*Od*. 2.163, 165). The main thrust of his interpretation is to warn the suitors. They must change their ways and leave Odysseus's palace, or else he will slaughter them upon arriving home. Again, Telemachos is informed that were Odysseus home, he would take care of this himself. Odysseus, like Orestes, is a paradigm for Telemachos. When the male is no longer *νήπιος*, he handles his own problems.

The most important information Telemachos receives about his father comes from his voyage to the Peloponnese. Here, Telemachos has the chance to talk with men who fought alongside him in Troy. They are aware of details of Odysseus's life that Telemachos cannot learn merely by sitting in the palace and listening to his mother and the suitors. When Telemachos questions Nestor about his father, Nestor begins by attempting to inspire him by recounting the bravery of those who set out for Troy. He calls them "the irresistible sons of the Achaians" (*ἄσχετοι υἷες Ἀχαιῶν*) (*Od*. 3.104). Then he lists some of the heroes who died in the war including his son, Antilochos (*Od*. 3.109-12). He describes Odysseus as a brilliant tactician: "noble Odysseus outdid them all by far in all tricks" (*μάλα πολὺν ἐνίκα δῖος Ὀδυσσεὺς παντοίοισι δόλοισι*) (*Od*. 2.121-2). At this point, Nestor stops his narrative to pay an overly flattering compliment to Telemachos. He tells him "your words are like his" (*τοι γὰρ μῦθοί γε ἐοικότες*) and insists that it is a marvel that one so young could speak like Odysseus (*Od*. 2.124-5). Finally, Nestor emphasizes Odysseus's ability as a speaker in council and how he and

Odysseus never argued, but developed strategies together (*Od*. 2.126-9). Nestor's message to Telemachos is mainly one of encouragement. He provides role models, particularly Odysseus, for Telemachos to emulate. If Telemachos is to become his father, he too must become a master of strategy. Both by describing Odysseus's ability as a speaker and likening Telemachos to his father, he encourages the young man to speak with confidence.

In Telemachos's trip to Sparta, he speaks with Menelaos and his wife Helen. Like Nestor, both were in Troy with Odysseus during the war. Here Telemachos hears the most intimate recollection of his father. Without Telemachos identifying himself or mentioning his father, his host emotionally reflects on the plight of Odysseus. Even though his own brother was murdered by his wife, reflecting on the Achaians, Menelaos confesses:

> *τῶν πάντων οὐ τόσσον ὀδύρομαι, ἀχνύμενός περ,*
> *ὡς ἑνός, ὅς τέ μοι ὕπνον ἀπεχθαίρει καὶ ἐδωδὴν*
> *μνωομένῳ, ἐπεὶ οὔ τις Ἀχαιῶν τόσσ᾽ ἐμόγησεν,*
> *ὅσσ᾽ Ὀδυσεὺς ἐμόγησε καὶ ἤρατο…*
>
> for all these I do not grieve so greatly, though I mourn,
> as for one, who makes sleep and food hateful to me when
> I remember, since none of the Achaians toiled as much
> as Odysseus toiled and achieved… (*Od*. 4.104-7).

Because Menelaos's recollection came without any sort of prompting, it appears genuine. When Telemachos's tearful reaction to Menelaos's conversation reveals his identity, Menelaos and Helen speak of his strong physical resemblance to his father (*Od*. 4.140-54). Menelaos tells Telemachos that he is the "son of a man very dear to me" (*μάλα δὴ φίλου ἀνέρος υἱός)* and, had Odysseus returned home, he would have "made a city in Argos home for him" (*οἱ Ἄργεϊ νάσσα πόλιν*) (*Od*. 4.169-74). Here Telemachos is able to

see firsthand how great the *κλέος* of his father truly is. Far from the island of Ithaka, the memory of his father stirs such emotion in a famed warrior. Then, Menelaos and Helen tell Telemachos a story that highlights Odysseus's bravery and cunning. Helen describes when Odysseus disguised himself as a beggar and dared to sneak into Troy and slaughter Trojans (*Od*. 4.244-64). She tells Telemachos that only she recognized Odysseus, but because of his "cunning" (*κερδοσύνῃ*) he would not answer her questions until she had sworn to secrecy (*Od*. 4.250-1). Menelaos then recalls when he and other Achaians were in the Trojan horse and Helen, standing beside the horse, mimicked the voices of their wives so that when they responded, they would be discovered (*Od*. 4.266-89). Menelaos informs Telemachos that his father "saved all the Achaians" (*σάωσε δὲ πάντας Ἀχαιούς*) by preventing them from calling back in response (*Od*. 4.284-9). Finally, Menelaos, like Athena and Halitherses before him, tells Telemachos that if Odysseus returned, he would rid the house of the suitors himself (*Od*. 4.341-6). During his stay in Sparta, Telemachos hears personal accounts of his father's bravery, intelligence, and craftiness. He now realizes his father's *κλέος* spreads far beyond the island of Ithaka. The stories of Menelaos and Helen, like those of Nestor, are a useful paradigm for Telemachos. When Odysseus needed to overcome difficult odds, he relied on planning and deception to succeed. If he matures into his father's son, he too can strategize and rid his house of the suitors.

In a society where it is important for one to become his father's son, the information Telemachos receives about the father he has not seen since infancy is quite valuable. Even so, the most essential purpose of Telemachos's journey is to complete a necessary rite of passage and win *κλέος* for himself. When the *Odyssey* opens,

Telemachos is a sheltered, *νήπιος* youth with little experience or knowledge of the world beyond Ithaka. By completing this rite of passage, Telemachos learns how to behave as a guest in foreign palaces—a skill he clearly did not possess when he first approached Pylos. Furthermore, Telemachos is learning to venture out, speak up for himself, and do things on his own without the repressive influence of his mother and the suitors. Nevertheless, Telemachos completes an important part of the maturation process by hearing tales of his father. As the heroes of the Trojan War emphasize Odysseus's ability as a tactician, they are also instructing Telemachos on the skills he will need to overcome the suitors. When they continue to tell him that a returning Odysseus would rid the house of the suitors himself, much as how a returning Orestes ridded his house of his father's murderers, they are attempting to inspire action in the young man. Telemachos must be made to realize that when he is no longer *νήπιος*, he must take care of his personal problems himself. Finally, when Athena, Nestor, and Menelaos tell Telemachos how much he resembles his father in appearance and speech, they are encouraging him to become more like Odysseus. If Nestor can make Telemachos believe that he speaks like Odysseus (which he clearly does not in Pylos) and if they all can make him believe that he is like his father physically, perhaps they can convince him that he is ready to fill the shoes of his father and take control of his father's house.

Conclusion

Telemachos is a unique character in the Homeric epics. Readers witness him mature from a sheltered, daydreaming youth into a young man who can confidently claim that he is no longer *νήπιος*. Homer's focus on his journey to manhood, however, prompts several questions from readers: Why, in a poem about the homecoming of Odysseus, does Homer concentrate almost the entirety of the first four books on Telemachos completing rites of passage and developing as a speaker and as a guest? What effect does the *Telemacheia* have on the narrative as a whole? And, finally, what is Homer attempting to tell his audience by the inclusion of the *Telemacheia*? To what extent does Telemachos actually develop as a result of the first four books? Scholars have long attempted to provide an adequate answer to that final question. As mentioned above, some, such as Olson, have taken the extreme position that Telemachos does not develop at all.[73] Others see a middle ground, where Telemachos matures but does not fully reach manhood.[74] Finally, there are those who see a very strong change in the character of Telemachos.[75] In truth, in some ways Telemachos has already developed when the story begins. As discussed above, he understands the responsibilities of a host and acquits himself admirably in that role (especially considering his situation at home) when Athena visits in the first book. In some respects, Telemachos understands how to be the man of his house.[76] When Odysseus questions his mother in Hades about his son, she says:

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[73] Olson (1995) 65.

[74] Thalmann (1998) states: "I contend, therefore, that although the text depicts Telemakhos's maturation in process, it is not completed by the narrative's end," 209.

[75] Clarke (1963) 130 and Beck (1998-1999) 124 both see a definite change in the Telemachos of Book Sixteen contrasted with the Telemachos of Book One. Austin (1969) emphasizes his change from a "daydreamer" to an "intelligent" young man, 45. Hall (2008) describes Telemachos's change as from "a tearful adolescent to a confident speaker," 107. Hall, mistakenly, sees Telemachos's tears as "childish."

[76] Austin (1969) points out that this is by necessity, 46.

"Telemachos allots portions of land and divides equal feasts, duties which are fitting for a man who is judge to attend to" (*Τηλέμαχος τεμένεα νέμεται καὶ δαῖτας ἐίσας/ δαίνυται, ἃς ἐπέοικε δικασπόλον ἄνδρ᾽ ἀλεγύνειν*) (*Od*. 11.185-6). Nevertheless, although Telemachos may show maturity as a host, he is inept as a guest, incapable of speaking up for himself or taking action against the suitors, and inexperienced in speaking in the assembly and traveling abroad.

Now that we have explored what makes Telemachos *νήπιος* and the *Telemacheia* as a rite of passage, we can consider whether or not Telemachos develops as a result and to what extent. When Telemachos arrives back in Ithaka after his trip to the Peloponnese, he certainly has not made a full transition into manhood. He still makes youthful (and serious) mistakes. After accepting the suppliant Theoklymenos, he informs him that he will not be able to accept him as a guest in his house (*Od*. 15.513-7). Then, to add to his blunder, he tells Theoklymenos that he intends to send him to stay in the house of one of the leading suitors, Eurymachos (*Od*. 15.518-24). Later, he repeats this mistake in front of his father. When Eumaios offers the disguised Odysseus to Telemachos as a suppliant, he refuses the guest: "Eumaios, this word you spoke is very distressing; for how shall I receive a guest in my house" (*Εὔμαι᾽, ἦ μάλα τοῦτο ἔπος θυμαλγὲς ἔειπες:/ πῶς γὰρ δὴ τὸν ξεῖνον ἐγὼν ὑποδέξομαι οἴκῳ*) (*Od*. 16.69-70)? Odysseus becomes enraged. He cannot believe his son would commit such an atrocity as to refuse a guest. He confesses "you devour my heart as I listen" (*ἦ μάλα μευ καταδάπτετ᾽ ἀκούοντος φίλον ἦτορ*) and he attempts to shame his son by stating "if only I were as young as I am in spirit, or a son of noble Odysseus were here" (*αἴ γάρ ἐγὼν οὕτω νέος εἴην τῷδ᾽ ἐπὶ θυμῷ,/ ἢ παῖς ἐξ Ὀδυσῆος ἀμύμονος ἠὲ καὶ αὐτός*), insinuating that a true son of Odysseus would stand up

to the suitors and solve the problem himself (*Od*. 16.92, 99-100). Telemachos, even with all of Athena's efforts, still lacks confidence. He refuses guests not because he has suddenly forgotten the importance of being a good host, but because he still feels too young and helpless to contend with the suitors: "I myself am young and I do not have any trust in my hands to defend a man when someone first becomes angry with him" (*αὐτὸς μὲν νέος εἰμὶ καὶ οὔπω χερσὶ πέποιθα/ ἄνδρ᾽ ἀπαμύνασθαι, ὅτε τις πρότερος χαλεπήνῃ*) (*Od*. 16.71-2).[77]

In addition to his lack of confidence, Telemachos also still has difficulty controlling his emotions. As Odysseus concocts his plan to disguise himself as a beggar, he realizes he will have to put up with a great deal of abuse in order to not blow his cover. He also realizes that if Telemachos should react too strongly when the suitors abuse him, his plan could also result in failure. Because of this, he instructs Telemachos to endure their abuses: "but if they dishonor me, let the dear heart in your chest endure it though I suffer wretchedly" (*εἰ δέ μ᾽ ἀτιμήσουσι δόμον κάτα, σὸν δὲ φίλον κῆρ/ τετλάτω ἐν στήθεσσι κακῶς πάσχοντος ἐμεῖο*) (*Od*. 16.274-5). When Antinoos abuses his father, Telemachos keeps his promise and endures it (*Od*. 17.399). After his mother complains about him not defending his guest, Telemachos explains that he sees the problem, but cannot always find the proper way to act (*Od*. 18.227-30). When Eurymachos throws a stool at Odysseus, however, Telemachos can no longer control his temper. He calls for the suitors' attention and orders them to their homes (*Od*. 18.406-9). Finally, after another suitor throws an object at Odysseus, anger gets the best of him. He tells the suitor he would have murdered him had his throw not missed its intended target (*Od*.

[77] Tracy (1990) points out that the rejection of guests, particularly sending Theoklymenos to stay with a suitor, "renounces his newly established position as leader of men," 92.

20.304-8). Unlike his earlier refusal of guests, Telemachos's inability to control his temper does not necessitate a regression or stumbling block in his maturation process as some scholars would suggest.[78] Telemachos's role in this deception is considerably different than Odysseus's. If Odysseus, disguised as a beggar, attempts to argue with the noble suitors, his plan would be doomed to failure. Either the suitors would plot to murder him for his insolence or they would suspect that he is not a member of the lowest class, but rather of the nobility like themselves. Telemachos, on the other hand, is a member of the nobility. Furthermore, Odysseus and the suitors are all guests in his house. The rules of Homeric society expect Telemachos to attempt to defend his guests. Even if Odysseus has instructed Telemachos to control his emotions, his outbursts are certainly more tolerable and less detrimental to Odysseus's plan than any outburst from a disguised beggar. Finally, Odysseus's responses, like Telemachos's, also increase in hostility.[79] Telemachos is merely acting like his father's son. In addition, he is properly defending his guest and standing up to the suitors, something he would not have done prior to Athena's visit.

Even though Telemachos is still subject to some youthful mistakes, there is a definite change in him as a direct result of his travels. This change is evident both in Telemachos's behavior and also the way he is perceived by others. After his return from the Peloponnese, the men and women occupying his household treat him and speak of him differently than before. The suitors no longer consider him *νήπιος*, but instead perceive him as a threat now that he is transitioning into manhood. Antinoos declares

[78] De Long (2009) argues that Telemachos's outbursts point out his "youthful and inexperienced temperament," 76.

[79] Although Odysseus cannot openly argue with and give orders to the suitors, Lateiner (1995) observes a similarity between the increase in intensity of the responses of Telemachos (at *Od*. 17.489, 18.406-9, 20.304-8) and Odysseus (at *Od*.17.446-62, 19.44-5, 66-71, 21.393-5).

that Telemachos is now "understanding in counsel and mind " (*ἐπιστήμων βουλῇ τε νόῳ τε*) and, because of this, he must be destroyed (*Od*. 16.370-3). Eurymachos too, although assuring Penelope that Telemachos's safety is important to him, secretly plans to murder him as well (*Od*. 16.435-49). When Telemachos returns to the palace, all eyes are upon him (*Od*.17.63-4). Many in the household perceive Telemachos's maturity. The suitors fear it. It commands the attention of others in the household. Because most in the palace now realize Telemachos is no longer *νήπιος*, Odysseus can confidently intimidate servants by threatening to describe their bad behavior to his son: "After I have gone to Telemachos, I will tell him how you spoke so that he will cut you to pieces" (*ἦ τάχα Τηλεμάχῳ ἐρέω, κύον, οἷ' ἀγορεύεις,/ κεῖσ' ἐλθών, ἵνα σ' αὖθι διὰ μελεϊστὶ τάμῃσιν*) (*Od*. 18.338-9). The servants clearly take this threat seriously, as "the knees of each loosened with fear" (*λύθεν δ' ὑπὸ γυῖα ἑκάστης ταρβοσύνῃ*) (*Od*. 18.341-2). Later, Odysseus tells the misbehaving female servant Melantho that Telemachos has grown up to such an extent that "no woman acting wickedly in his palace will escape his notice, since he is no longer of such an age " (*τὸν δ' οὔ τις ἐνὶ μεγάροισι γυναικῶν/ λήθει ἀτασθάλλουσ', ἐπεὶ οὐκέτι τηλίκος ἐστίν*) (*Od.* 19.87-8). The suitors and servants no longer consider Telemachos a helpless child. The suitors realize a mature Telemachos is a real threat to their attempts to marry Penelope and seize power on Ithaka. The servants now fear punishment from Telemachos and the mention of his name brings "fear" into their hearts.

Telemachos displays his maturation through his actions often both during and after his return from the Peloponnese. On his way back to Ithaka, a suppliant begs him for protection. Accepting the suppliant could be dangerous for Telemachos. The suppliant, Theoklymenos, explains that he has murdered a man with "many brothers and

kinsmen" (*πολλοὶ δὲ κασίγνητοί τε ἔται τε*) and he is a fugitive "avoiding death at their hands" (*τῶν ὑπαλευάμενος θάνατον*) (*Od*. 15.272-5). Bringing Theoklymenos aboard his ship shows both maturity and bravery.[80] He risks endangering himself and his crew by taking on a suppliant engaged in a blood feud. Telemachos, however, realizes it would be a bad omen to refuse a suppliant who has approached him in the middle of a prayer. In addition, Telemachos exercises his newfound power and maturity by giving orders in his household. He orders his mother back to her quarters on two occasions (*Od*. 17.49, 21.350). Telemachos wisely tells his companion Peiraios to hold onto Menelaos's gifts for safekeeping "for we do not know how these deeds will turn out-- if the arrogant suitors kill me in my palace and divide all my possessions" (*οὐ γάρ τ' ἴδμεν ὅπως ἔσται τάδε ἔργα./ εἴ κεν ἐμὲ μνηστῆρες ἀγήνορες ἐν μεγάροισι/ λάθρη κτείναντες πατρώϊα πάντα δάσωνται*) (*Od*. 17.78-80). He would rather his possessions be divided amongst his loyal companions should he fail than have the suitors take the gifts of Menelaos. Telemachos even acts with more confidence and maturity when dealing with the suitors. After he has seated his father, still disguised as a beggar, at a table, he announces "I myself will hold off from you the jeering and the violent hands of the suitors" (*κερτομίας δέ τοι αὐτὸς ἐγὼ καὶ χεῖρας ἀφέξω/ πάντων μνηστήρων*) (*Od*. 20.263-4). Then, after declaring the house the property of his father and himself, he threatens "an argument and a fight" (*ἔρις καὶ νεῖκος*) with anyone who strikes or insults his guest (*Od*. 20.264-7). The suitors, unaccustomed to a direct challenge from Telemachos, become "stunned" and remain silent (*θαύμαζον*) (*Od*. 20.268). Clearly, Telemachos has changed as a result of his

[80] Tracy (1990) overstates the importance of Telemachos's acceptance of the suppliant by suggesting that it "sets him apart as a full-fledged leader of men," but he is correct to identify the act as mature and courageous.

journey. It is more than just a perceived maturity that threatens suitors and frightens servants. He behaves with more confidence. His speeches are stronger and more direct. The helpless Telemachos of Book One likely would not have accepted a suppliant guilty of murder; he surely would never have directly challenged the suitors.

Perhaps the greatest sign of Telemachos's maturity is his ability to dissemble upon returning from the Peloponnese.[81] Homer says he is "conceiving wiles in his mind" (*κέρδεα νωμῶν*) (*Od*. 20.257). Once back in the palace, Telemachos displays quick wit and craftiness by tricking both the suitors and his mother in order to ensure that his father's plan succeeds. First, he dupes Penelope into believing that he wants her out of the palace (*Od*. 19.530-4). This deception is to prevent Penelope from learning what he truly knows about his father's homecoming and spoiling Odysseus's disguise. This attitude of Telemachos surely does not reflect his true feelings, knowing his father is under the same roof. Telemachos uses this same deception on the suitors. When Agelaos advises him to pick out a suitor for his mother to marry, Telemachos swears he "urges" (*κελεύω*) her to marry, but he is unwilling to drive her out of the palace (*Od*. 20.339-44). Telemachos's greatest show, however, comes during the contest of the bow. Here, he plays the complete buffoon. He openly refers to his "witlessness" (*ἄφρονα, ἄφρονι θυμῷ*) twice (*Od*. 21.102, 105). He laughs and speaks like an auctioneer: "but come now, suitors, since this is the prize before you, a woman of which there is not another like in the Achaian land" (*ἀλλ᾽ ἄγετε, μνηστῆρες, ἐπεὶ τόδε φαίνετ᾽ ἄεθλον, οἵη νῦν οὐκ ἔστι γυνὴ κατ᾽ Ἀχαιΐδα γαῖαν*) (*Od*. 21.106-9). Later, after he has set up the bow and axes, he attempts to string the bow himself. Here, Telemachos again displays

[81] See Austin (1969) 57, Tracy (1990) 125, Lateiner (1995) 160-5, Beck (1998-9) 133.

his newly found talent for acting. On his fourth try, he would have strung the bow except: "Odysseus nodded" and signaled Telemachos to stop (*ἀλλ᾽ Ὀδυσεὺς ἀνένευε*) (*Od*. 21.128-30). Telemachos then releases his hold of the bow and dupes the suitors into believing he legitimately failed. He curses himself and feigns disappointment: "alas, then I shall be wretched and a weakling" (*ὤ πόποι, ἦ καὶ ἔπειτα κακός τ᾽ ἔσομαι καὶ ἄκικυς*) (*Od*. 21.131). The suitors, fooled by Telemachos's act, proceed with the contest. These clever deceptions are a sure sign of Telemachos's approaching manhood. He now demonstrates that he is able to match wits with (and often outwit) adults. Furthermore, Telemachos's dissembling proves that he is becoming his father's child. His father is famed for his clever tricks and lies. During his trip to Sparta, Helen and Menelaos emphasized Odysseus's great ability for deception. Telemachos, obviously, proves a good listener and an excellent student. Here, at last, he takes the advice he received during his journey to the Peloponnese and begins to get the better of the suitors by deceit.

In addition to learning the art of deception, Telemachos also proves that he understands the importance of *κλέος* and loyal companionship. After Odysseus and Telemachos have slaughtered the suitors, they must decide what to do with the servants, many of whom have been corrupted by the chaotic situation of the palace during Odysseus's absence. They put to death the unfaithful servants (*Od*. 22.419-77). Faithful servants, like Eumaios and Philoitios are rewarded.[82] It is Telemachos's decision to show clemency to the herald and bard, however, that reveals his wit and maturity. Telemachos now realizes that the actions of a young male in Homeric society are driven "by a need

[82] See Raaflaub (1997) on the rewarding and punishing of servants, 631. Eumaios and Philoitios are promised wives, possessions, houses close to Odysseus, and to be treated like Telemachos's brothers at *Od*. 21.214-6.

for social validation: status, respect, honour in the eyes of other men."[83] He also understands that in order to obtain this "status" and "respect," others must sing his praises across the Homeric world. Who could better sing his praises and spread his *κλέος* to foreign courts than a bard and a herald? While the herald can spread stories of Telemachos's deeds when sent abroad, the bard could travel to foreign courts singing a heroic song about Telemachos and Odysseus ridding their home of the suitors and sparing his life. After Telemachos has finished telling his father to spare the herald and the singer, the herald, Medon, grabs Telemachos's knees instead of Odysseus's. He begs Telemachos to restrain his father from killing him (*Od*. 22.364-70). Medon's actions give Telemachos the authority in this situation. This confirms that the herald is aware of Telemachos's maturity and his position of power in the palace. His wishes should be respected and his suppliant's life should not be in the hands of another.

Once the contest of the bow has been completed and Odysseus has revealed himself, Telemachos completes the last portion of his education on the road to adulthood. Odysseus and Nestor, before becoming men, learned how to fight and handle themselves with a spear in addition to traveling abroad and learning how to act as a proper guest. Telemachos, thanks to Athena, has completed a rite of passage by traveling abroad and maintaining guest-friend relationships with his father's companions. He has, however, not yet been battle tested. He has yet to stand up to the suitors in a true physical confrontation. During the slaughter of the suitors, he finally proves himself in armed combat. In the battle, he shows himself to be quick thinking and good with a spear. When one of the suitors, armed with a sword, makes a rush at Odysseus, Telemachos hurls his spear through the suitor's chest and kills him (*Od*. 22.89-94). Athena herself

[83] Clarke (2004) 77.

joins in the battle disguised as Mentor, but she does not allow a quick and easy slaughter of the suitors. Instead, she wishes to test both Odysseus and Telemachos (*Od*. 22.237-8). Telemachos handles himself well and continues to strike down suitors beside his father. Thus, by the end of the *Odyssey*, Homer has shown that Telemachos is indeed ready to become a warrior. Telemachos fights admirably alongside his father. Athena, by not allowing their victory to come too easily, tests the young Telemachos in a true battle situation. This is one final rite of passage she forces him to complete. Telemachos does not panic, but acquits himself well during the battle, proving he is ready to transition into adulthood.

Homer includes the *Telemacheia* and occasionally emphasizes Telemachos's development after his return to Ithaka in order to assure his audience that Odysseus will leave behind a worthy successor. In both the contest of the bow and the slaughter of the suitors, it is clear that Telemachos has surpassed the suitors. During the contest of the bow, the suitors fail to string the bow, Eurymachos included, the best amongst them (*Od*. 21.245-55). Telemachos, however, would have strung the bow if not for his father's signal.[84] During the slaughter of the suitors, Telemachos and Odysseus take down all of the suitors even though they are heavily outnumbered. Even when Telemachos begins challenging the suitors directly, not one of the suitors accepts the challenge and fights him man to man. Instead, the suitors conspire against Telemachos secretly. The proof is even in a portent read by Theoklymenos, responding to Telemachos's claim of Eurymachos's preeminence among Ithakans: "[Telemachos], no other family shall be kinglier than yours in the country of Ithaka, but you shall have lordly power forever"

[84] Segal (1994) correctly believes the contest of the bow "foreshadows" Telemachos's successful succession.

(*Od*. 15.533-4). Telemachos has become a man. He is now a more capable (not to mention more fitting) successor to his father than any of the suitors. Although it is true that Telemachos "goes subordinate" in the contest of the bow, that does not mean that he does not enter manhood in the *Odyssey*.[85] The plot of the *Odyssey* demands that Telemachos grow up by the poem's end. In the beginning, Homer shows his audience a helpless, *νήπιος* male, dominated by suitors and his mother. Because this places the house of Odysseus in peril, it demands both Odysseus's homecoming and the Athena assisted maturation of Telemachos. As the *Odyssey* ends, Odysseus tells his wife that he must soon set out again and will meet his death at sea (*Od*. 23.264-84). This requires Telemachos to have matured. In order for Theoklymenos's portent to come true, Telemachos must be ready to step into his father's role as the leading *βασιλεύς* on Ithaka when his father leaves again. During the final battle against the kinsmen of the suitors, Odysseus warns Telemachos not to "dishonor" (*καταισχύνειν*) his ancestors (*Od*. 24.508). Telemachos confidently vows not to bring any shame to his lineage and Laertes rejoices in the fact that his son and grandson are "contending over their excellence" (*ἀρετῆς πέρι δῆριν ἔχουσιν*) (*Od*. 24.511-5). This scene recalls the passing of power from Laertes to Odysseus while also foreshadowing the worthy succession of Telemachos. Homer's intention is to let his audience know that Telemachos is ready. The future of Odysseus's house is no longer in jeopardy. Theoklymenos's interpretation of the bird sign is correct. Power will continue to be passed down through Odysseus's line. His family will retain preeminent status on Ithaka.

[85] Thalmann (1998) discusses Telemachos's obedience of Odysseus's command to fail at the contest of the bow. He concludes that Telemachos "is never fully allowed to grow up" in the *Odyssey*, 207-9.

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