

SHORTER NOTES

EURYKLEIA AND ODYSSEUS' SCAR: *ODYSSEY* 19.393–466

In this article I shall argue for an interpretation of *Odyssey* 19.393–466 as a flash-back taking place in the mind of Eurykleia at the moment she recognises Odysseus' scar. That Eurykleia somehow forms the connection between main story and digression has been suggested before,¹ but so far other interpretations have been defended with more fervour.

Most famous of these interpretations is the one given by E. Auerbach in the first chapter of his *Mimesis*.² He had chosen 19.393–466 to illustrate his thesis that in Homer everything is 'fully externalized' and that there is no background, only a 'uniformly illuminated' foreground. According to Auerbach the digression on the scar stands in complete isolation to its context. It is meant to 'relax the tension', to make the hearer/reader 'forget what had just taken place during the footwashing', and although it might have been presented as a recollection of Odysseus (by inserting the story 'two verses earlier, at the first mention of the word scar'), this 'subjectivistic-perspectivistic procedure, creating a foreground and background' was not chosen, being 'entirely foreign to the Homeric style'.

Some twenty years later this interpretation was challenged by A. Köhnken,³ who, however, stuck to the idea that the digression is not told from the restricted perspective of one of the characters but from the perspective of the omniscient narrator; he claims that foreground and background are marked as such through a difference in narrative style: 'berichtende Erzählung' for the digression itself and 'szenische Darstellung' for the context. I disagree with both points. To begin with the latter, the digression is presented just as 'scenically' (direct speech being included) as the context. As to the first point, I suggest that the digression is presented in connection with one of the characters: not Odysseus, but Eurykleia.

The point of departure for this interpretation is the repeated (ἐ)γνώ (both times with the scar as object), which introduces (392) and caps (468) the passage 19.393–466: this position of the digression, wedged in between two references to mental activity by Eurykleia suggests that we interpret it as *her* recollection triggered off by the recognition of the scar. The next step, of course, must be to explain how Eurykleia can have at her disposal the information contained in the digression. In line 401 we are explicitly informed that she was present at the starting point of the whole episode, the arrival of Autolykos in Ithaca. She even played an active role, handing over the child 'Odysseus' to his grandfather and asking him to give it a name. At this important moment she takes the place of Odysseus' parents, whose presence only becomes clear at the moment Autolykos gives his answer and addresses them, instead of Eurykleia (406). On the basis of these verses 401–4 and other passages⁴ we can safely infer that

¹ H. Sauter, *Die Beschreibungen Homers und ihre dichterische Funktion* (diss. Tübingen, 1953), pp. 42ff. and F. Müller, *Darstellung und poetische Funktion der Gegenstände in der Odyssee* (diss. Marburg, 1968), pp. 33–4. Müller refers to Sauter for arguments. Sauter, however, only explains why it is Eurykleia (and not Antikleia or Laertes) who recognises the scar.

² Engl. translation Princeton, 1953, 3–23.

³ *Antike und Abendland* 22 (1976), 101–14. He convincingly shows that the digression serves an important function within the whole recognition-scene (pp. 102–8), is placed effectively after the recognition, but before its effect (108), and does not stand in isolation from its context (109–12).

⁴ For Eurykleia's position of high honour in Laertes' household see 1.432: ἴσα δέ μιν κεδνῇ ἀλόχῳ τίειν (Laertes) ἐν μεγάροισιν. She had taken care of Odysseus and nurtured him right after his birth (19.354–5) and considered him 'her own child' (19.363, 474: τέκνον, 492 τέκνον ἐμόν). Confirmed by Odysseus: 19.482–3.

Eurykleia was also present at the end of the episode, viz. Odysseus' return to Ithaca (462–6), although here only the parents are mentioned.

These same lines 462–6 explain her detailed knowledge of what happened between the beginning and end of the episode, Odysseus' adventures abroad. The young hero is asked about everything (ἐξερέεινον ἅπαντα) and he gives a detailed report (εὖ κατέλεξεν).⁵ Comparable explanations of how a character can narrate something he has not witnessed himself are *Odyssey* 10.249–60 (these lines explain how Odysseus can narrate to Alkinoos the things reported in 10.210–43; compare 10.249 ἐξερέοντες and 250 κατέλεξεν with the similar expressions in 19.463 and 464) and 12.389–90 (these lines explain how Odysseus can narrate to Alkinoos (374–88) the conversation between Helios and Zeus).

On the other hand, if the digression on the scar is supposed to be told from the perspective of the (omniscient) narrator, as Auerbach and Köhnken suggest, such details as given in 401 and 463–4 are superfluous (the observation that 465–6 form a ring-composition with 393–4 does not in itself explain the preceding verses 463–4). Again, the mention of the joy at Odysseus' return home (463) also indicates a personal point of view. With *Odyssey* 19.393–466 we are dealing with one of the rare long passages where the point of view of a character is represented in the narrative instead of being expressed directly by the character in the form of a speech.⁶ The reason for this exceptional case can be found easily in the context: Penelope is not supposed to notice what goes on between Odysseus and Eurykleia and the story of the scar must therefore be presented as a *mental* flash-back, not as a speech. Compare 24.331–5, where the origin of the scar is told again, this time in direct speech by a character: Odysseus himself.

I submit that this interpretation of 19.393–466, together with the arguments given by Köhnken (see my note 3), forms a convincing refutation of Auerbach's thesis concerning Homeric narration.

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⁵ The importance of these verses is overlooked by C. Whitman, *Homer and the Heroic Tradition* (Harvard, 1958), 119: 'Homer simply dramatizes her (*sc.* Eurykleia's) mental image, complete with speeches and even the boar-hunt, *which incidentally she could not have witnessed*' (my italics) and Köhnken, *op. cit.*, p. 113, n. 48: 'Odysseus und Eurykleia haben jeder nur einen Teil des in Exkurs Berichteten direkt miterlebt, der Erzähler braucht für seine Zwecke die Erinnerung beider *zusammengenommen*'.

⁶ I am preparing a monograph where cases like these are analysed in terms of modern semiotical narratology. I have already made an extended study of a group of cases in *Fokalisation und die Homerischen Gleichnisse*, to appear in *Mnemosyne* 1985.

AN UNNOTICED MS OF ORPHIC HYMNS 76–7

Because of an incomplete description of its contents,¹ it has escaped notice that the fifteenth-century vellum MS Parisinus graecus 2833 contains Orphic Hymns 76 and

¹ In H. Omont, *Inventaire sommaire des manuscrits grecs de la Bibliothèque Nationale* (Paris, 1886–98). The contents are Theocritus, *Id. cum schol.*; the *Homeric Hymns*; Moschus, *Love the Runaway*; Musaeus, *Hero and Leander*; <Orpheus>, *Hymns 76–7*; 'Proclus', *Prolegomena to Hesiod* (fol. 92 recto); Hesiod, *Works and Days*, *Shield*, *Theogony*; Dionysius Periegetes; Theognis; (pseudo-)Phocylides. F. Càssola, *Inni omerici* (Milan, 1975), 606 n. 2 remarks that MS 2833 is in the same hand as Ambrosianus 734 (S 31 sup.) and Laurentianus 32.4, a hand formerly identified as that of John Rhodus, but not in fact his (R. Pfeiffer, *Callimachus* [Oxford, 1953], ii. 1xiv). It is in fact that of Demetrios Damilas (later 15th to early 16th century), since