commander, Agamemnon is obligated to provide feasts (he also offers a banquet at 7.313ff. after the duel between Hector and Ajax, and gives a special piece of meat to Ajax), while by partaking in his feast the Achaeans acknowledge his leadership. Achilles likewise serves meat, bread, and wine to the Embassy (9.201–23), and Odysseus opens his speech by simultaneously reminding Achilles of Agamemnon's feasts in which he has shared, acknowledging that Achilles does not need Agamemnon in order to feast (225–8), and using the pleasure of the feast as foil for the danger of the Achaeans (228–30).

Ordinarily, the leader redistributes the surplus of the community in the feast. When the feast takes place in its usual contexts of sacrifice, guest-entertainment, and the ratification of order, the availability of food and wine is usually taken for granted, although the Suitors' consumption of Odysseus' stock is a reminder that even great wealth is not unlimited. The performance of the feast becomes a way of evaluating how well individuals are fulfilling their ideal kingly roles. In the extreme situation of the *Apologos*, however, the ability to provide meat is not the function of wealth and generosity it is for Alcinous or Agamemnon, but is reduced, almost demystified. The significance of the hunt appears only gradually. On the Goat Island, Odysseus' men are not yet in serious need, and the hunt is both sport and a way of obtaining meat. When Odysseus kills the stag, he still has food for his followers, but the fresh meat is clearly needed to raise morale and re-establish the solidarity of the group. Only when both supplies and hunting fail does the crucial role of these feasts become clear. The leader retains his position only as long as he has food for his followers. On Aeaea, he can provide the essential meat only by finding, killing, and transporting it himself.

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ODYSSEY 22.474–7: MURDER OR MUTILATION?*

ἐκ δὲ Μελάνθιον ἦγον ἀνὰ πρόθυρόν τε καὶ αὐλήν·
τοῦ δ' ἀπὸ μὲν ῥῖνάς τε καὶ οὔατα νηλέϊ χαλκῷι
τάμνον μηδεά τ' ἐξέρυσαν, κυσὶν ὠμὰ δάσασθαι,
χεῖράς τ' ἠδὲ πόδας κόπτον κεκοτηότι θυμῷι.

The treatment of the goatherd Melanthius in these lines received remarkably little animadversion from earlier commentators (who may have been inhibited by the very brutality of the actions described). In contrast, the late Manuel Fernandez-Galiano devoted an extremely full note to the passage.[1] One may wonder, however, whether he was right to base it on the automatic assumption that what we have depicted here is an act of *murder*.[2] He himself admits that we are not 'told exactly at what moment the unfortunate Melanthius dies'. (This observation goes back as far as Eustathius'

* I am grateful to Dr Ursula Dronke for advice and for bibliography over and above that quoted in her book referred to below (n. 5).

[1] As part of the commentary on the *Odyssey* published first in Italian (1986), then in English (Oxford, 1992).

[2] On 474–7: 'the goatherd's unpleasant death' and 'execution' (cf. on 479: 'the two executions'). On 478: 'slaughter', etc. A swift survey of recent studies of the poem seems to confirm that the murder interpretation is usually taken for granted: e.g. H. Eisenberger, *Studien zur Odyssee* (*Palingenesia* 7 [1973]), p. 243 n. 21: 'sowohl Iros wie Melanthios sollen erst durch die Verstümmelung sterben'; Uvo Hölscher, *Die Odyssee, Epos Zwischen Märchen und Roman* (Munich, 1988), p. 259: 'der Martertod des Melanthios'. For a (problematic) exception see below n. 9.

commentary *ad loc.* (1934.43f.): *ἀπότομος αὕτη καὶ δεινοτάτη ποινή, ἐξ ἧς εἰκὸς καὶ θανεῖν τὸν Μελάνθιον, εἰ καὶ ὁ ποιητὴς καὶ αὐτὸ σιγᾶι.*). Such lack of specificness would be most unlike Homer, and the removal of hands, feet, ears, nose and genitalia would be a remarkably laborious and uneconomical mode of instantly killing someone.[3] Since we are not told that Melanthius dies I infer that he did not, any more than Eurytion did at *Od.* 21.300–2, in similarly trying circumstances: 'they cut off his ears and nostrils with the sharp brass; but he, injured in his feelings, went about, enduring that calamity with a frantic mind', to quote the translation by Buckley for which Housman was so grateful.[4]

In other words, we have here a description not of a *killing* but of a *punishment* by maiming and mutilation. Melanthius, bereft of his extremities, is to be left 'a living corpse, legless and armless, ... an injury commonly considered worse than death. Such maiming is a demonstration of absolute mastery and also of the absolute humiliation of the victim'. These words, which constitute the most apt commentary on our passage known to me, come, in fact, from Ursula Dronke's observations[5] on stanza 24 of the Nordic poem *Hamðismál* or 'The Lay of Hamthir' where (to cite her own translation) the speaker Hamðir says to his enemies 'You see your feet – | You see your hands, | ... flung | Into the hot fire', and Dronke deduces that 'it may have been in Hamðir's mind to leave' his foe 'as a *heimnár*, a living corpse' etc. '*Heimnár*' literally means 'home-corpse' and, as Dr Dronke points out to me, the very term may be an index of how well-known the custom was in Northern Europe.[6]

In the *Odyssey* itself, the punishments meted out to the various groups who have exploited the hero's long absence seem very precisely and appropriately graded. The actual suitors who, whatever their faults, were at least nobles and princes, are for the most part struck down in the hall, in heroic combat with Odysseus and his allies. Next Leodes the priest, who passively supported the suitors in their depredations, is beheaded by Odysseus in the act of supplicating. The serving-maids, who slept with the suitors, are explicitly (and on Odysseus' explicit orders) awarded a humiliating mode of death by Telemachus, who arranges a mass hanging for them. Finally and

[3] Reinhold Merkelbach, *Untersuchungen zur Odyssee*[2] (*Zetemata* 2 [1969]), p. 130 and n. 3, seems to suppose that Melanthius is already dead at the start of the passage. The mutilation is therefore performed upon a *corpse* and is comparable in aim with the notorious act of *μασχαλισμός* (on which see Kurt Sier's commentary on Aesch. *Cho.* 439) intended to prevent retaliation on the part of the victim's ghost. But with this interpretation the poet's failure to specify when Melanthius dies is even more bizarre.

[4] See Housman, *CR* 14 (1900), 232 = *Classical Papers* 2.517. Admittedly the punishment here is not quite so extreme. But see n. 6.

[5] In *The Poetic Edda*, vol. 1, *Heroic Poems* (Oxford, 1969), p. 173. For the relevant text of stanza 24 (with facing translation) see ibid. p. 166.

[6] For parallels Dronke (sup. cit. [n. 5] p. 173 and n. 2) cites Adam of Bremen, *Gesta* 3.51 (the punishment of a Christian bishop in 1066 who refuses to disown his faith: *truncatis manibus ac pedibus in platea corpus eius proiectum est, caput vero eius desectum.* Note that this is intended as a *joke* (as the Latin text has it *ad ludibrium*). Dronke says the idea is 'to kill a man by inches... to have cut off the head too soon would have curtailed their amusement') and (n. 4) two fragments from the Old Norwegian Laws (for an English translation see L. M. Larson, *The Earliest Norwegian Laws* (Columbia, 1935)). It is interesting that as Dronke observes *hendr* and *fœtr* in these two passages probably signify not 'hands' and 'feet' but 'arms' and 'legs'. Likewise in the Odyssean passage *χεῖρες* and *πόδες*, usually taken as the former, could convey the latter). For further discussion cf. Karl von Amira, *Die germanischen Todestraffen* (*Abh. Bay. Akad. d. Wiss.* 31 [1922]) and *Germanisches Recht*[4] (rev. Eckhardt: Berlin 1960–7); Folke Ström, *The Sacral Origins of the Germanic Death Penalties* (Stockholm, 1942). For more general folk-tale analogies see Lutz Röhrich, *Märchen und Wirklichkeit*[3] (Stuttgart, 1979), pp. 147ff. ≙ *Folktales and Reality*, pp. 129ff.

at the lowest level of the social scale, for Melanthius the goatherd, the man who served wine to the suitors (*Od.* 20.255), kicked and insulted the disguised Odysseus (*Od.* 17.233, 20.172ff.), and later almost ruined Odysseus' assault by sneaking out armour for the suitors from the store-room (*Od.* 22.135ff.), is aptly reserved the most ghastly and humiliating punishment of all, to be, for general ridicule,[7] a limbless, living[8] corpse in the halls he had abused.[9] It may be relevant that as the degradation of the punishment increases so too does its distance from Odysseus, who is directly responsible for the deaths of the suitors and Leodes, whereas Telemachus supervises the hanging of the maids, and the identity of the assailants of Melanthius is not even revealed (any more than is the idea's originator), as if he were too despicable for giving such details to be justified.[10] At any rate the passage, standing as it does in a climactic position, is a useful antidote against the still common assumption that the *Odyssey* is invariably more 'ethically advanced' than the *Iliad*.

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[7] See above n. 6. The fates of *all* of Odysseus' victims are deliberately presented in a way that is lacking in sympathy: see W. Kullmann, *Homerische Motive* (Stuttgart, 1992), p. 288.

[8] This is not to deny that someone who has undergone the indignities that Melanthius has is likely to die sooner than the norm from e.g. exhaustion, malnutrition, gangrene or the like. But the immediate aim of the punishment will have been humiliation rather than death (cf. Dronke as cited in n. 6 on killing a man 'by inches'), and that a victim can survive such torment is explicitly attested by, for instance, the English law of *c.* A.D. 1210 (*Willelmi Articuli Londoniis Retractati* §17: *eruantur oculi et abscidantur pedes vel testiculi vel manus ita quod truncus remaneat vivus in signum prodicionsis et nequicie sue*) whereby the criminal is to have his 'eyes gouged out and his feet cut off or his testicles or hands, so that the trunk remain alive as a sign of his treachery and villainy': translation from A. S. Diamond, *Primitive Law, Past and Present* (London, 1971), p. 99 (see too his Index s.v. 'mutilatio'). For the Latin text see F. Liebermann, *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen* (Halle, 1903), i.491.

[9] Fernandez-Galiano's further idea that the four lines in question are interpolated is unattractive. 'Blood-thirsty' interpolations may occur in Greek tragedy (see my note on Soph. *Trach.* 781–2) but the present passage is perfectly appropriate, once we recognise the primitive custom that underlies it. Likewise, H. van Thiel, *Odysseen* (Basel, 1988), p. 262 takes the passage to be a foreign body of sorts largely because Melanthius is not said to die ('die sich überschlagende Metzelei an Melanthios, der daran nicht einmal stirbt'). Again, accept the practice implied, and the objection ceases to have any force.

[10] This may be compared with a (somewhat different) technique of folk-tale (discussed by Röhrich, sup. cit. [n. 6], p. 156 = p. 133), which brings out 'the narrator's desire to clear the hero of responsibility for the punishment's severity' to 'emphasise that the hero himself would not stoop to such practices'.

DON'T TAKE IT LITERALLY: THEMISTOCLES AND THE CASE OF THE INEDIBLE VICTUALS

There is a standard tradition in the ancient sources, which makes its first appearance at Thucydides 1.138.5, that, when Themistocles had fled into exile and been given the equivalent of political asylum by the Persian King Artaxerxes,[1] he was 'given' the three Asiatic Greek cities of Magnesia, Myus and Lampsacus. There has been a fair amount of scholarly controversy[2] over how the King could 'give' Themistocles Lampsacus, a city of great strategic importance on the Hellespont, which, by the mid-

[1] Thucydides, 1.137.3, Plutarch, *Themistocles* 27.1.

[2] See e.g. F. J. Frost, *Plutarch's Themistocles* (1980), pp. 220–3, A. W. Gomme, *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides* I, p. 292.