

THE *ODYSSEY* AND THE *NALOPĀKHYĀNA*

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I

My purpose in this paper is to call attention to the close similarities in story construction between the *Odyssey* and the *Nalopākhyāna*, a subordinate story in the *Mahābhārata*. Recently Denys Page has noted the similarities between the bow contest in the *Odyssey* and certain passages in the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyana*.¹ I hope to show that the similarities between the *Odyssey* and the *Nalopākhyāna* are far more extensive and that the two works are in fact essentially the same story. As far as I am aware, this parallel, though briefly noted, has never thus far been examined.² This paper is presented in two parts; Part I is designed to show the parallel story correspondences between the two works, while Part II attempts to draw some conclusions from these correspondences, especially in regard to the composition of the *Odyssey*.

¹Denys Page, *Folktales in Homer's Odyssey* (Cambridge, Mass. 1973) 108. Page notes (106 and note 26) that he was preceded in his general conclusions by the French scholar Gabriel Germain. Germain's book, *Genèse de l'Odyssée* (Paris 1954), has a handy conspectus (p. 26) of the similarities between the *Odyssey* and the two Indic epics in the matter of the bow contest.

The *Nalopākhyāna* comprises adhyāyas 50–78 of the *Āraṇyakaparvan*, pt. 1 (Poona 1942) which is volume three of *The Mahābhārata* (Poona 1933–1959) ed., Vishnu S. Sukthankar. The metrical unit of Indian epic is the śloka, a distich of four octosyllabic verses (*pādas* ad); thus the citation *Mhb* 3. 50.6ab would refer to the first line of the sixth śloka of the fiftieth adhyāya (chapter) of the third book of the *Mahābhārata*. For brevity I shall refer to such a citation as *Nal.* 50.6ab.

For a recent translation of the Nala story see J. A. B. van Buitenen, *The Mahabharata II* (Chicago 1975) 322–64. I would like here to thank Professor Gregory Nagy for his helpful suggestions in the preparation of this paper.

²The general similarity is mentioned by Oldenberg (*Das Mahābhārata* [Göttingen 1922] 63) but without further detail. Walter Ruben, *Die homerischen und altindischen Epen* (=Sitzb. Akad. Wiss. der DDR, No. 24 [Berlin 1975] 9–10, remarks: "In der Tat sind diese beiden Szenen [i.e., of Nala and Damayantī and Odysseus and Penelope] genetisch verwandt, gehören sie doch beide zum alten Märchentyp des heimkehrenden Gatten." He does not, however, pursue this line of analysis further.

In brief summary, the *Nalopākhyāna* is a story about the prince of Nishadha, Nala, who is chosen by the princess Damayantī as her husband at her *svayamvara* (lit., “self-choice,” a ceremony where the girl chooses her own husband). The couple thereafter incur the wrath of a certain minor deity Kali who possesses Nala causing him to lose his kingdom to his brother Puṣkara in a game of dice. Dispossessed of home and country the couple wander in the forest. Nala soon abandons his wife while she is asleep. After many misadventures Damayanti is restored to the kingdom of her father, King Bhīma. From there Damayanti institutes a search for the absent Nala who is at this time disguised as the charioteer Bāhuka at the court of King Rtuparṇa. This king is induced to go to Vidarbha, Bhīma’s kingdom, by the news that Damayanti is holding a second *svayamvara*. After some initial difficulties the couple are happily reunited. Freed now of the evil Kali and possessed of the magic control of dice Nala returns and wins back his kingdom.

A brief summary such as this, however, cannot reveal the important narrative correspondences between the Greek and Sanskrit poems. For this we must examine the underlying plot or narrative structure. This skeletal structure of a tale type apparently varies little, though transmitted through different cultures over many years.³ The flesh or filling that goes into the key narrative positions or structure-slots of the tale—the particular development of a scene, the gemination or expansion of a theme, the narrator’s own coloring of a theme—these factors apparently may vary considerably from tale to tale in the same narrative type. In particular, for most structure-slots there is usually a group of similar motifs or themes that are exchangeable one with another. These narrative characteristics explain the fact that on the surface the *Odyssey* and the *Nalopākhyāna* seem considerably different; a comparison of their underlying structures, however, will reveal their close similarity.⁴

In comparing the story structure of the two narratives I will use as the basis of comparison what I assume to be the linear storyline. No other

³See Stith Thompson, “The Star Husband Type,” in *The Study of Folklore*, ed., Alan Dundes (Englewood Cliffs, N. J. 1965) 458–59, who, in speaking of this tale type, says: “Language frontiers or even boundaries of linguistic families have played little or no role in retarding or facilitating the spread of this tale . . . The versions we have are in all stages of structural development from a bare outline or a bald account by an unskillful teller to an elaborate performance by a master of the narrative art. Yet the plot outline usually shows itself clearly and seems little influenced by activities of the individual raconteurs. The best of them preserve the tradition most faithfully and seem to elaborate certain details but not to change anything basically.”

⁴See Albert B. Lord, *Singer of Tales* (1960; rpt New York 1971) 119–20, 123, for similar observations on the actual performance of narrators, especially what he calls “the substitution

method can highlight in the same way the similarities and differences at the various structure-slots. Proceeding in this way the main narrative correspondences (Items 1–14) are as follows:

1. Hero wins hand of princess

This folktale motif is the initial theme of the *Nalopākhyāna*, comprising adhyāyas 50–54; it is one of its more interesting and dramatic parts. Briefly, King Bhīma seeing his daughter is of marriageable age decides to hold her *svayamvara*; kings and gods come to win her hand. By the magic help of swans she decides to choose Nala. Knowing this, the gods assume the form of Nala. Damayantī cleverly thwarts this ploy; the couple are married, and the gods give Nala several boons. This theme is apparently not found in the *Odyssey* at all, not at least at this structure-slot. I shall have more to say of this, however, in Part II.

2. Hero's troubles stem from an angry deity

This structure-slot is clear and simple in the Nala story. A minor deity Kali, along with Dvāpara, blights the happiness of the young couple simply from pique at not winning her himself (*Nal.* 55.6, 12–13). This theme is present in the *Odyssey* but its use is not clear. We learn early in the poem (*Od.* 1.19–21) of Poseidon's enmity, but in the actual narrative order this is quite late (9.528–36). Woodhouse concludes that our *Odyssey* has in all

of one multiform of a theme for another." Folklorists have a handy term "allomotif" for such substitutions.

It is precisely to emphasize this sort of situation in a narrative that I use the term "structure-slot." For example, the canonical Orpheus myth has a position in the narrative where a tabu motif is required. This slot in the structure of the myth type may be filled with any one of a variety of tabu motifs (Looking tabu, Touching tabu, Eating tabu etc.). From the point of view of the narrative structure it makes little difference which tabu motif is used. But it is necessary in the proper analysis of narrative to keep the concepts of motif and structure-slot separate. It is obvious to anyone who reads many versions of any one tale type that motifs may become displaced from their proper position or slot, or, for whatever reason, omitted altogether (e.g., the Swallow motif in some versions of the Red Ridinghood tale).

I make a further distinction between the terms "motif" and "theme." As I use them, a motif is a narrative unit typically found in myths or folktales; it is usually traditional and has a wide distribution—Items 1, 2, 6, 7, and 11 that follow in this paper are clear examples. I use theme to designate a motif-like narrative unit that is more properly found in literary narrative of the sort that the Greek and Sanskrit poems are. Such themes are more individualistic, less traditional; they tend to betray the hand of a self-conscious author—Items 10, 12, 13, and 14 are examples. Any folktale motif, of course, may be used by a literary author, but even here he usually adapts and reworks the simple motif in such a way that it is useful to designate the result by a distinguishing term.

three wraths (i.e., those of Athena, Poseidon, and Helios).⁵ In Part II I shall suggest a compositional reason for the confusion in Homer.

3. Hero and wife are separated after the birth of a child

This theme is found in both epics and is comparatively simple, especially in the *Odyssey*. Odysseus goes off to war when Telemachus is about one year old (*Od.* 1.215–16; 4.144). In the *Nalopākhyāna* the time-lag is much greater, twelve years (*Nal.* 56.2). But, for one thing, there are two children, and, for another, nothing happens in the narrative in these years. Kali merely waits for Nala to commit a ritual fault so that he can possess him. The impression given elsewhere in the story (57.18a, 21cd; 66.18b, *bālakau*, “the two children”) is that the children are quite young. It is my feeling that these twelve years, otherwise unnoticed, exist only to put Nala in a good light. It takes that long for the perfect Nala to commit a fault, even inadvertently.

4. Someone is sent to find absent hero

In the *Odyssey* this is the main theme of the Telemachy. It is suggested early in the story (*Od.* 1.281–92). It disappears from Books 5 to 14 but reappears in Book 15 and continues until Odysseus discovers himself to Telemachus at 16.188. In the *Odyssey* this theme is the basis of considerable development, providing the germ for the whole Telemachy and its skillful employment within the whole story.

The use of this theme in the *Nalopākhyāna* is far less developed. The theme occurs first at *Nal.* 62.35cd where we are told by the mother of the king of the Cedis that a search will be made for Nala. But nothing is done at this point. Later, after her return to her father’s kingdom, Damayantī gets her father to send out the holy brahmans to look for Nala (67.6). The result is that the charioteer of King Ṛtuparṇa, a deformed man going under the name Bāhuka, is for various reasons suspected of being Nala, as he in fact is. At this point Damayantī makes the clever and bold decision, on her own initiative, to send word to Ṛtuparṇa that, since Nala will apparently never return, she will hold a second *svayamvara*. The design of course is to discover Nala. I will return in Part II to the important question of what relation this part of the Nala story has to Penelope’s actions in the later part of the *Odyssey*.

⁵W. J. Woodhouse, *The Composition of the Odyssey* (1930; rpt Oxford 1969); see ch. iv, “The Wrath of the Gods.” Since I shall have occasion to refer to Woodhouse’s book a number of times, further citation will be by the author’s name only.

5. Hero's return arranged by friendly king

Both works have this theme at this structure-slot, but the use of the theme is somewhat different. There is nothing in the *Nalopākhyāna* to compare with the elaborate and leisured scenes of Odysseus among the Phaeacians. Alcinous sends Odysseus off in full knowledge of what he is doing; R̥tuparna is cleverly tricked to get his charioteer to take him to Vidarbha where Damayantī is. This item is a good example of how surface features can be very different but the basic theme and structure elements the same.

6. Hero returns magically from a great distance in a short time

This theme, shared by both works at the same structure-slot, is undoubtedly a folktale motif of unknown origin that both use. Odysseus returns home asleep on the magic ship of the Phaeacians (*Od.* 13.78–95). Nala returns to Vidarbha in one day driving a magic chariot through the air.⁶ The distance covered is said to be a hundred *yojanas* (*Nal.* 71.24c).⁷

7. Hero returns in disguise

This common folktale motif is found as a theme in both works, though their structure-slots vary slightly. Nala's appearance is changed by Karkoṭaka, the serpent-king (*Nal.* 63.11cd). His appearance is changed "that men may not know you" (*Nal.* 63.13d, *na tvā vidyur janā iti*; cf. *Od.* 13.397, ἀλλ' ἄγε σ' ἄγνωστον τεύξω πάντεσσι βροτοῖσι). Nala's appearance is altered before he becomes R̥tuparna's charioteer. Odysseus' appearance is changed just after his arrival in Ithaca (*Od.* 13.429–38). In both poems, particularly in the *Nalopākhyāna*, the supernatural gives the mortal advice and promises help in the hero's future troubles (*Nal.* 63.16–24b; cf. *Od.* 13.393–96) and then departs (*Nal.* 63.24cd; cf. *Od.* 13.439–40).

8. Hero's animal is the first to recognize him

Both works have this theme at the identical structure-slot. In the *Odyssey* it is developed into a charming, if sentimental, scene (*Od.* 17.290–327) in which Odysseus' old dog Argos recognizes his master and dies. In the

⁶*Nal.* 69.2c, *ekāhnā*, "in one day;" 21c v.l., *samutpetur athākāśām*, "they (the horses) then flew up in the air." Cf. 70.37ab.

⁷A *yojana* (lit., "yoking") is the distance between one yoking of a team and the next, i.e., a *stathmos*. I might note in both the *Odyssey* and the Nala story that, while the outward journey is of long duration, the homeward leg is miraculously swift. This is a wide-spread folktale motif found, for instance, in the Gilgamesh epic, in Book 6 of the *Aeneid*, in Plato's Myth of Er, and in American Indian myth (e.g., see Stith Thompson, *Tales of the North American Indians* [1929; rpt 1966 Bloomington, Ind.] 6, 7, 144).

Nalopākhyāna (71.3) Nala's horses recognize their master from the sound of the chariot as he drives into the city and they are overjoyed (*samahr̥ṣyanta*).

9. Wife suspects disguised stranger is her husband

This theme is quite overtly present in the *Nalopākhyāna*. When at sunset Nala arrives in Kuṇḍiṇa, the city of Bhīma, his horses somehow know it is Nala from the sound of the chariot as he drives it. Damayantī hears the sound too and suspects it is Nala. These suspicions are buoyed and dashed by a series of events which culminate in the scene (*Nal.* 74.7–75.21) where the two are brought together face-to-face for the first time since Nala abandoned his wife in the forest.

The situation in the *Odyssey* is much more complex and will be treated in Part II of this paper. For the present suffice it to say that, though it is a matter of much dispute what Penelope's thoughts are concerning the beggar in her house, yet, structurally in the narrative, there are identification signs or tests which do culminate in a face-to-face encounter in which Odysseus' identity is finally revealed.

10. Wife interviews stranger who is her disguised husband

This theme is found in both works at nearly the same structure-slot. As usual, the situation in the *Nalopākhyāna* is much simpler. In the Nala story the First Interview (*Nal.* 72.6–29) is carried out by Damayanti's maid Keśinī. Among other queries she tries to find out if Bāhuka has news of Nala. Like Odysseus (*Od.* 19.209–12), Nala(Bāhuka) at first represses his feelings (*Nal.* 72.24a) but later, unlike Odysseus, he breaks down. The Second Interview (*Nal.* 74.7–75.21) is a long scene in which Damayanti begins by summoning Bāhuka to her presence, since, in spite of many signs that Bāhuka is Nala, she is still uncertain (74.2d). It is his appearance that remains the sole point of doubt (74.3cd, *rupe me samśayastvekaḥ svayam icchāmi veditum*, "His appearance is my only doubt. I want to look at him myself"). Midway in the interview Nala discloses himself by suddenly in remorse making an apology for his desertion of Damayanti (*Nal.* 74.16). He thereupon magically resumes his form and the couple are united in an embrace.

There are two interviews in the *Odyssey*, the long First Interview (*Od.* 19.103–360, 509–99) and the short but decisive Second Interview (23.166–230). As in the *Nalopākhyāna*, it is the appearance of Odysseus that is the last obstacle to full recognition (23.115–16). Of course, there is no longer any *logical* reason for Penelope's refusal to recognize Odysseus at the beginning of the Second Interview. His original appearance has been restored and enhanced by Athena (23.155–58); Penelope's use of *eēstha*

(175) confesses as much. But Homer cannot resist one last dramatic test—illogical though it is. We shall see in Part II that this practice is typical of Homer.

11. Recognition signs/tests

This is another general folktale motif incorporated into both works. In the *Nalopākhyāna* there is a series of at least six recognition signs or tests, which in itself indicates the long drawn-out, indecisive process of Damayanti's discovery of her husband. Enumerated these signs are: (1) the chariot sound (*Nal.* 71.5cd); (2) Nala's weeping when questioned by Keśinī (72.29cd); (3) the various wonders Nala performs (73.9–17);⁸ (4) Damayanti's tasting food Bāhuka has prepared (73.22cd; cf. 54.31a); (5) the disguised Nala's breaking down when presented with his children (73.25d); (6) Nala's returning magically to his proper form (75.17d).

As I count them the *Odyssey* has four signs or tests: (1) the Scar; (2) the Bow; (3) Odysseus' proper form; (4) the Bed Test. In Part II of this paper I will try to show how Homer may have altered the original significance of this theme.

12. United couple tell each other their stories

This theme (=Second Flashback) is found at this structure-slot in the *Nalopākhyāna* but with only brief mention: "Then the two, reunited in joy, passed the night telling each other all their long wanderings in the forest" (75.24, *tatas tau sahītau rātrim kathayantau purātanam / vane vicaritam sarvam ūsatu muditau . . .*).

The *Odyssey*, on the other hand, makes a good deal more of this theme. There is a brief passage (*Od.* 23.300–09), substantially the same as the passage in the *Nalopākhyāna*. Then there follows abruptly a full catalogue (the Second Flashback) of the events from the Cicones to Odysseus' return (310–43). There is further a separate passage prefixed to these passages telling of Tiresias' prophecy concerning Odysseus' future (267–84). Formally as well as thematically the third passage (the Second Flashback) seems an obvious expansion of the short second passage.

13. Day following reunion with wife hero visits his father/father-in-law

Both works contain this theme (*Nal.* 75.23 bd, 76.1–4; *Od.* 24.205–534). Although the episodic make-up of this theme is completely different in the two poems, in each case the theme is introduced immediately after the night of reunion (*Nal.* 76.1c, *kālyam*, "at daybreak;" *Od.* 23.371, ἦδη μὲν φάος

⁸The gods had given Nala among other boons power over water and fire (*Nal.* 54.30ab, 31cd).

ἦεν), that is, at the identical structure-slot. The more complex *Odyssey* mentions the theme at the end of Book 23 but does not actually introduce it until after the Second Nekyia in Book 24.

14. Anticlimactic close of story

This can hardly qualify as a bona fide theme, but it is a definite structure-slot in the two works. It is perhaps a structure-slot made up of various themes intended to tidy up the end of the story. Before speaking of the anticlimactic (or postclimactic) close of the two poems we should perhaps determine what point in each narrative is the climax. In the *Nalopākhyāna* there can be little doubt that the climax comes at 75.21, where husband and wife finally unite in an embrace. There is a parallel climax in the *Odyssey* at 23.232, not far from Aristophanes' and Aristarchus' famous *telos* to the *Odyssey* at line 296.⁹ One might argue that the *Odyssey* actually has two climaxes—which I think is true—the killing of the suitors and the reunion of husband and wife. I shall argue later that there are good compositional reasons for this. Both works, however, have some tidying up to do after their climaxes. Without going into much detail, the *Nalopākhyāna* in its linear telling of the story shows us Nala returning to his own kingdom, now possessed of the magical control of dice given to him by King Ṛtuparna. Nala challenges his miscreant brother Puṣkara to a rematch; and, though a single combat is threatened (*Nal.* 77.8cd), nothing comes of this and Nala wins back his kingdom. One might suppose that Puṣkara would be punished or even killed; but, so far from anything of this sort happening, he is forgiven and sent home laden with wealth (77.29ab). It is interesting that both the Greek and the Sanskrit works end with a message of peace and a threatened fight that does not materialize. The *Odyssey* exhibits much less homogeneity than the *Nalopākhyāna*. Odysseus' visit to his father in Book 24 is an expansion of the theme (Item 13) mentioned at 23.359. The Second Nekyia intervenes at this point.

II

In Part I of this paper my main purpose was to list the theme and structure correspondences shared by the *Odyssey* and the *Nalopākhyāna*

⁹See W. B. Stanford, ed., *The Odyssey of Homer* (London 1959²) *ad loc.*, who gives a concise summary of critics and opinions. See further C. Moulton, "The End of the Odyssey," *GRBS* 15 (1974) 153–69, who argues, as does Stanford, against the analyst position. I would only add that the *Nalopākhyāna* also indicates that a lessening of the poetic and dramatic level is a feature of the final structure-slot. Further, since the story part of the *Odyssey* is essentially a romance, the Hellenistic critics quite naturally felt that the "And so to bed" ending was the only correct one.

section of the *Mahābhārata*, restricting myself to what seemed necessary comment on the narrative development, especially in the Nala story. In Part II of this paper I intend to examine several compositional problems of the *Odyssey* in the light of the new evidence provided by the *Nalopākhyāna*. First, however, a more exact determination should perhaps be attempted of the relation between the *Odyssey* and the *Nalopākhyāna*. Folklorists are, of course, familiar with the fact that two or more tales from different cultures and times may present striking resemblances to each other; this is known as the problem of convergence. In general, most attempts to account for the phenomenon of convergence fall under three categories: (1) borrowing, (2) polygenesis (i.e., like conditions producing like results), or (3) cognation (genetic inheritance, transmission, diffusion). These mechanisms of correspondence are not confined to folklore materials but are the same, for instance, for linguistic correspondences. Folklore has not, however, developed as yet any commonly accepted procedure for handling the problem of convergence with anything like the rigor found in linguistics.¹⁰

In the case of the *Odyssey* and the *Nalopākhyāna*, the nature of the correspondences and other obvious factors would seem to rule out direct borrowing as the mechanism here. This leaves us with polygenesis or cognation. In general, folklorists have more recently tended toward cognation as the more likely explanation in cases such as the present one where there are structured sets of parallel correspondences. We should not forget that the stories of Odysseus and Nala are folktales, embodied to be sure in epic poetry, but still at bottom folktales. Among folktales there are many remarkable cases of convergence. The earliest example, for instance, of the Cinderella type (Type 510) is found in China; Anna Birgitta Rooth traces the origin of this type back to the Middle East from where it traveled both to Asia and Europe.¹¹ The eminent folklorist von Sydow asserts that the Indo-European folktale *The Two Brothers* (Type 303), after a

¹⁰Cf. Germain (above, note 1) 2: “. . . on ne doit tenir pour indice valable d'une parenté entre deux légendes qu'un *parallélisme suivi*, dans lequel les éléments caractéristique des thèmes comparés se présentent enchaînés de la même façon.” In his book, *Literature among the Primitives* (Hatboro, Pa. 1964), the anthropologist John Greenway, among other observations on oral literature, has some excellent remarks on this problem; see especially his assessment of polygenesis and diffusion (191–202). For an attempt to correlate the mechanisms of correspondence in linguistics with those in folklore see my “Linguistics and Myth Theory,” in *Western Folklore* 28.3 (1969) 153–62.

¹¹For the folktale type designations see Aarne and Thompson, *Types of the Folk-Tale* (Helsinki 1961); for motif designations see Stith Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature* (6 vols., Copenhagen/Bloomington, Ind. 1955–1958). For the diffusion of Type 510 see Eberhard, *Folktales of China* (Chicago 1965) 235, where he cites Rooth.

development of perhaps thousands of years among the *satem* group of Indo-European speakers, somehow made its way to Egypt where it was set down on papyrus about 1300 B.C.; “and this is not more preposterous in the least than the clear fact that the tale has survived in oral tradition for more than 3000 years without undergoing any appreciable alterations.”¹² Thompson traces Type 950 (Rhampsinitus), an example of which appears in the twelfth-century Sanskrit collection *Kathāsaritsāgara*, back to Herodotus.¹³ As Greenway has said,¹⁴ “The truth of diffusion is stranger than the fiction of polygenesis.”

If this judgment is true of cultures vastly different from each other (e.g., the case of Cinderella) it should apply *a fortiori* where the respective languages, culture, and meters even show many cases of inherited close correspondence.¹⁵ Admittedly, however, until all the possible variants and the distribution of a tale type are known it is an open question whether the correspondences of any two tales are best explained as cognate or merely typological.¹⁶ My use of the terms “original story” or “archetype” is meant

¹²See C. W. von Sydow, *Selected Papers on Folklore* (Copenhagen 1948) 32–33.

¹³Stith Thompson, *The Folktale* (1946; rpt Berkeley 1977) 171. Motifs are much more likely to be cases of polygenesis than types are, of course. But of Motif D672 Obstacle Flight Thompson (*ibid.* 349) says: “we find the same motif in [borrowed] European tales and in [American Indian] aboriginal tales of the same tribe . . . so that the motif has made a complete circuit of the globe.”

¹⁴Above, note 10, 200.

¹⁵The cognate relation of Greek and Sanskrit need hardly be mentioned. In the new comparative Indo-European mythology the chief name is no doubt that of Georges Dumézil, but he has largely ignored Greek comparative evidence. Vian (*Gnomon* 42 [1970] 53–58) in his review of Dumézil’s *Mythe et épopée* I has suggested (p. 55) some Greek parallels. Recently in an interesting book (*Comparative Studies in Greek and Indic Meter* [Cambridge, Mass. 1974]) Gregory Nagy has maintained that not only are Greek and Indic meters related—Meillet had maintained this earlier—but that there is good reason as well for thinking that Greek and Sanskrit share related poetic formulas embedded in these meters; and, in fact, that the related meters are themselves the product of such related formulas (see pp. 1, 18, 22, 37, 49–50, 57–58, 98, 140–49, 173, 227).

¹⁶In particular, more research is needed on the whole body of Indo-European tale types and their mutual relations. For instance, I do not know that the question has ever been raised as to what type the tale (not the poem) of the *Odyssey* is. It has some affinities with Types 810, 400, 900, and others. Albert Lord (above, note 4, 159) classifies the *Odyssey* as “one of the many return songs told in the time of Homer” and he reads the composition of the story largely from “the multiforms operative in its own structure” (169), that is, by a process of internal reconstruction. But he says (97), speaking of the *Odyssey*, that “The Yugoslav return songs have the same grouping of elements.” He speaks further (98) of “a strong force that keeps certain themes together. It is deeply embedded in the tradition.” Presumably the basis of comparison is a commonly inherited tradition. In any case, it is interesting that Lord’s Yugoslav tradition provides another parallel to certain structure-slots in Part I of this paper.

in the sense it would be used at the beginning of a study of what are assumed to be variants of a tale type. In this sense too the study is comparative. It may turn out eventually to demonstrate inherited or typological relationships or some combination of both.

The *Nalopākhyāna* begins with the theme, Hero wins hand of princess (Item 1, Part I). Considering the strong emphasis on husband and wife and their separation and reunion, this tale type must have begun with this theme. It is not found in this position in the *Odyssey*. But, for one thing, the foreshortened narrative time of the *Odyssey* precluded its use initially in the story and, for another, this theme may have otherwise been incorporated into the story. Woodhouse (60–63) has astutely pointed to the scene in Book 8 as that of a typical marriage contest: there is a king, Alcinous, his only daughter, Nausicaa, and competitors in athletic events. He points out further that the song of Demodocus here, the Love of Ares and Aphrodite, is quite apposite for such an occasion. From the point of view of our Indic tale it makes simple sense to suppose that originally the princess here was none other than Penelope herself in younger years, without, of course, the rest of the Phaeacian episode. It may be added that the theme of Odysseus winning Penelope in a footrace set by her father is reported by Pausanias (3.12.1).¹⁷ We see in this instance a compositional practice of Homer to shift and reemploy a theme rather than throw anything away.

For instance, Lord says (178), “The order of recognition in the Yugoslav songs . . . gives support to the placing of the recognition by the parent after that by the wife.” And he says (161), “The evidence of traditional patterns . . . points in the direction of a story of the return of Odysseus in which Telemachus played no vital role as son, even though he might be present.”

Interesting too in view of Item 14 Part I is Lord’s statement (17) that “the end of a song is sung less often by the singer.” This is a matter rather of performance than story but it is possibly a part of bardic tradition that had an effect on the story structure itself. Lord further remarks (100) that “we might be led to think that the singer needs only ‘a story,’ which he then retells in the language of verse. But now we know that the story itself must have the particular form which it has only when it is told in verse.” If Nagy is correct (above, note 15) that Greek and Indic meters are the reflex of common poetic phraseology then the same situation would seem to be implied in the case of Slavic meters which are also Indo-European in origin (see Nagy 2 for authorities).

¹⁷A fragment of the same general tradition may be found in Hyginus. He tells us that Helen chose her husband by putting a crown on his head: . . . *arbitrio Helenae posuit* (sc. Tyndareus) *ut cui vellet nubere coronam imponeret* (*Fab.* 78.2). This is the way Damayanti signalled her choice of Nala: *skandhadēṣe śrjaccāśya srajam* (*Nal.* 54.26cd), lit., “She placed a garland on the region of his shoulder,” i.e., on his neck. See J. Przyluski, “Le Prologue-cadre des Mille et une Nuits et le thème du *svayaṃvara*,” *Journal Asiatique* 205 (1924) 109, 111, 116–17, 119, for the wide distribution of this custom, from the Near East to SE Asia. He concludes that it is non-Indo-European in origin.

I might note further that if the original story began with a marriage and, except for the postclimactic close, ended with a reenactment of this theme, then the story proper began and ended in the same place with a repetition of its beginning theme. In addition, it was stated in Part I (Item 2) that the Wrath theme seems out of place in the *Odyssey* or otherwise confused. If, as in the Nala story, the Wrath theme immediately, as is natural, followed the Hero wins princess theme, then, when this theme was shifted, it created a problem of what to do with the Wrath theme. The result is the confused situation we see in Homer. The Homeric etymology of Odysseus' name indicates how integral to the story the Wrath theme was.¹⁸

Comparing the storyline of the *Nalopākhyāna* we can say that some parts of the *Odyssey* that have in the past been designated as additions appear rather to be expansions of an original theme. An obvious case is the Telemachy. It appears to be a considerable expansion of Item 4, Someone is sent to find the absent hero. In keeping with Homer's non-linear telling of the story this theme has been further incorporated into the storyline outside its original structure-slot. Why Homer chose to expand this theme so greatly is no doubt a speculative question. But this expansion may have been only one of several interrelated changes. Telemachus is apparently about twenty-one years old. We have been told repeatedly that Odysseus returns in the twentieth year of his absence. Homer knows, apparently from another tradition, that the Trojan War lasted ten years. It is commonly held,¹⁹ and seems on the surface quite patent, that the Calypso episode was constructed very nearly out of whole cloth by the poet himself—his own truly original story. Now Odysseus spent seven years with Calypso, an incredible slice out of his homecoming time. If we subtract the time of the Trojan War as not original to the story and the seven years with Calypso, we are left with just three years (plus part of a fourth uncompleted) that Odysseus was away from home. This agrees exactly with the length of time the suitors were courting Penelope (*Od.* 2.89; 13.377). This, as well, is the length of time that Nala was separated from Damayanti.²⁰ This must have been originally the time of separation of

¹⁸See Stanford (above, note 9) *ad* 1.62 and references cited.

¹⁹See Woodhouse, ch. vi, "Kirke and Kalypso," and Wilamowitz, *Homerische Untersuchungen* (Berlin 1884) ch. vi, "Kirke und Kalypso," especially 138–39: "Es [the Calypso episode] ist von Anfang bis Ende freie Erfindung seines Dichters. Nur die allgemeinen mythischen Züge übernahm er, die Handlung, die Verbindung der Personen, und die Hauptperson, Kalypso, erfand er." Wilamowitz's analysis here is a good example of the internal reconstruction method.

²⁰*Nal.* 75.12cd, *sākṣiṇo raksiṇaścāsyā vāyam trin parivatsarān*, "We [supernatural agency] were her watchers and protectors for three years;" and 75.25ab, *sa caturthe tato varṣe*

the hero from his wife.²¹ Whenever it was that the saga of Troy and one of its heroes, Odysseus,²² was brought into the story of the returning hero, it was this addition of ten years perhaps that suggested to Homer the idea of having a grown-up son. A fourteen year old son, however, would obviously be an awkward age in this narrative. Homer then added the seven years with Calypso. If this is the way it was done it all dovetailed very neatly: the Trojan War could be used as background and constant thematic support, especially in the Apologue; a nearly mature son is a good choice to fill out the theme of someone sent to find the hero (as in the *Trachiniae*), and the sub-theme of maturing son versus bullying suitors could be given full play.

In its overall structure the *Nalopākhyāna* is clearly tripartite: the first section comprises the courtship and marriage with its immediate consequences; the second section takes up the forest adventures of husband and wife, at first together then apart; the third section finds the couple back home (her father's), at first apart then together. There is also an end-piece section used to resolve matters still left unresolved. The general make-up of

saṃgamyā saha bhāryayā . . ., "He (Nala) then coming together with his wife in the fourth year . . ." Both works have the time fixed as in the fourth year after the completion of three years.

My conclusions on the time of absence of the hero were anticipated by Woodhouse in his ch. xxiv, "Kalypso the Concealer." With his typical perspicacity Woodhouse saw that it is the role of Telemachus that was the prime factor in this elaborate meshing of themes. It is a happy circumstance that evidence of the *Nalopākhyāna* corroborates his inferences so well.

²¹Our *Odyssey* places considerable emphasis on the supernatural disguising of Odysseus. But, if Odysseus was actually gone twenty years, suffering through ten years of war and ten more traveling about, much of the time on the sea, it would be a wonder if anyone, even his wife, were able to recognize him at sight; *αἴψα γὰρ ἐν κακότητι βροτοὶ καταγηράσκουσι* (19.360), he tells Penelope. No disguise, of course, is needed in the case of the suitors who were mere boys when Odysseus left.

In this connection I might note the theme, played for all it is worth in our *Odyssey*, that Telemachus was at the time of the poem, or very shortly before, *nēpios*, but has suddenly come to manhood (cf. *Od.* 1.296, 361; 2.313; 18.217, 229; 20.310; 21.132, 354; 22.426). It is surely a reasonable question to ask whether all these indications of the recently *nēpios* Telemachus may not be the reflexes of the originally younger Telemachus.

²²Why Odysseus? Woodhouse (249) suggests that it was because of all the surviving Trojan warriors only Odysseus had a son. Munro (*Homer's Odyssey* 13–24 [Oxford 1901] 291) suggests it is "the political qualities of Ulysses, the wisdom and eloquence." Perhaps, or it may have been his resourcefulness as in the Doloneia and elsewhere. But I am inclined to think the reason is simpler than that—that is, the name. We have seen the theme of a god's wrath was apparently in the archetype. Nala can certainly in the same sense as Odysseus be called "the man of wrath." It was the supposed etymology of his name that brought Odysseus into the *Odyssey* story. It is interesting, further, that the first word of the *Iliad* is "wrath," and the first word of the *Odyssey* is "man," i.e., man of wrath.

the *Odyssey* is also tripartite: Telemachy, Phaeacians, and the Return and Vengeance themes. Here we have an end section as well used to resolve matters left suspended in the main narrative, especially the situation of the hero's father and peace with the suitors' kin. In the two works it is obvious that it is the middle section in each that lends itself most easily to theme substitutions, additions, and the like.²³ Here Homer scored a real dramatic coup. By leaving out the canonical beginning of the story—or otherwise incorporating it—and by bringing in the Trojan War as background, especially the homecoming theme, Homer was not, as was the poet of the *Nalopākhyāna*, closely restricted in what he could include in the First Flashback (the Apologue). He could give his poetic fancy free reign, which is, apparently, exactly what he did. Although the occasion for the Apologue was provided by the structure-slot of the First Flashback, and though originally it may have been of no greater importance than the Second Flashback (*Od.* 23.310–43), yet this became Homer's single greatest expansion.

A reading of the middle sections of the *Odyssey* (Books 6–12) and the *Nalopākhyāna* (adhy. 59–66) reveals little the two stories have in common; this is particularly true of the flashbacks or recapitulations in each case. There is no adventure or theme they share. The Odyssean flashback here is also enormously longer. Yet, interestingly, the two works share the same general framework for this part of the two poems—with, however, a curious difference. In the *Nalopākhyāna* it is the heroine Damayantī, not the hero Nala, who dramatically dominates this section.²⁴

The correspondences between the two poems that function as a setting or framework for the retelling of the hero's or heroine's adventures are the following:

1. After many fearful adventures Odysseus arrives naked in Scheria, the land of the Phaeacians.

After many fearful adventures and abandoned by her husband Damayantī arrives nearly naked (62.18c, *vastrārdhakartasaṃvītā*,

²³Cf. Woodhouse (41): "The most casual inspection shows that the *Odyssey* falls into three great Sections . . . of these, the second Section . . . does in fact seem to be characterized by a kind of separateness that really suggests a quondam independence of the rest of the story. And this is true—of the individual stories, though not of the totality constituted by their present juxtaposition in the *Odyssey*."

²⁴In folktales it often happens (e.g., Types 425, 510, 870, 884 etc.) that it is the heroine, not the hero, who must search for her beloved, often in disguise as a menial. She is frequently required to pass tests; there are recognition tokens, but finally she is united, or reunited, with the hero, often just in the nick of time. In Type 425A (Cupid and Psyche) it is the heroine who must perform arduous and dangerous labors.

“covered with a half piece of garment”) in the city of King Subāhu, the king of the Cedis.

2. Soon after his arrival in Scheria Odysseus is in danger of harrassment by the local folk (*Od.* 7.16–17).

Damayantī faces a similar danger (*Nal.* 62.20–22a). In neither case does the danger materialize.

3. Odysseus is received by the king and queen, but mainly by the queen, Arete. In fact, Nausicaa has told him to go straight to her (*Od.* 6.304–05; cf. 7.53, 142; 11.338).

Damayantī is first seen by the queen-mother and is brought to the palace. Though we hear of the king, her son, he is never in evidence.

4. Arete is the first to ask Odysseus who he is and where he is from. The queen-mother asks Damayantī who she is and about her family (62.23d).

5. At first encounter Alcinous suggests that Odysseus may be a god (*Od.* 7.199). Odysseus quickly disclaims this (7.208–10), and, rather, likens himself to the most wretched of mortals.

Similarly, the queen-mother likens Damayantī to an immortal (62.24a), which Damayantī quickly disallows (62.25c) adding that she is only a servant handmaiden living wherever fancy takes her (62.26ab), though she is nobly born.

6. Though asked we may say point-blank who he is by Arete, Odysseus does not reply to this question. He does, however, reveal his identity at *Od.* 9.19.

Though asked who she is by the queen-mother, Damayantī does not reply to this question. Her identity, however, is revealed to the queen-mother later by Sudeva, one of the brahmans sent to look for the lost couple.

7. During his stay with the Phaeacians there is the First Flashback (the Apologue, Books 9–12) in which Odysseus recapitulates all that has happened to him up to this point.

In her conversation with the queen-mother Damayantī recapitulates, though in a selective way, what has happened to her up to this point (62.28–33). The difference in length of the flashbacks in the two works is remarkable. But this sort of expansion is not unusual in the *Odyssey*. The poet of the *Nalopākhyāna* uses only a few lines (62.18–23) to get Damayantī from her entrance to this kingdom to her conversation with the queen-mother. Homer uses the whole of the sixth book and part of the seventh to do the equivalent for Odysseus. Homer, further, gains dramatic effect by placing the flashback immediately after the revelation of identity and not before it as in the *Nalopākhyāna*.

An odd and unaccountable similarity in this section of both works is the long, unmotivated concealment of the identities of Odysseus and

Damayanti. In the *Odyssey* this concealment is used, in Homer's manner, for suspense, delay, and then the dramatic *éclat* of Odysseus' self-revelation and the dramatic lead-in to his tales. This is Homer's dramatic technique, but Odysseus' concealment of who he is is nonetheless unmotivated in terms of the action. Similarly, there seems to be no good reason why Damayanti should not have told the queen-mother right off who she is. In this regard it is perhaps worth pointing to a structural parallelism in both poems. Though he is not strictly in disguise among the Phaeacians yet Odysseus' role as unknown stranger parallels his later situation on returning home. Also, Damayanti's concealment of her identity in this section parallels Nala's disguise later at her father's home. We have thus two situations of concealment in both works which parallel each other in being placed in the same structure-slots.

8. As Odysseus dines with the Phaeacians on his last night among them the song of Demodocus about the Wooden Horse starts him to weeping. It is this weeping that leads to the discovery of his identity (*Od.* 8.522, 533).

It is because of Damayanti's weeping on hearing news from home that the queen-mother finds out who she is (*Nal.* 65.31–32).

9. Odysseus asks for and receives escort home from Alcinous. Damayanti also asks for and receives escort home from the queen-mother (66.19–22b).

In evaluating these parallels the conclusion seems warranted that the archetype had a framework for the telling by the hero or heroine of his or her adventures. The present collection of tales in Books 9–12 of the *Odyssey*, however, must have displaced an earlier and doubtless much smaller number of adventures. This must have taken place after the theme of homecoming, disguised husband was conflated with that of homecoming Trojan warrior, a homecoming like that of Menelaus. The Phaeacian episode, however, is very complex. It provides the framework for the Apologue and has further incorporated, apparently, the initial theme (Item 1) of the archetype. Furthermore this episode contains certain Otherworld or Paradise motifs not original to the archetype. Each tale of the Apologue, moreover, must be examined in and for itself, since these tales apparently do not form an integral part of the archetype.

Our *Odyssey*, however, is obviously something much more than its basic story or the sum of its parts. Though not properly a subject for this paper, there was another component of our *Odyssey* whose effect on the general tone, view and scope of the poem was so great that it deserves at least brief mention in any attempt to reconstruct the archetype. The *Odyssey* has always presented a curious hybrid appearance; in its serious tone, its view of, and comment on, man's life, the *Odyssey* is quite properly classified as

heroic epic. Its story, however, is basically a romance, and a fairly simple one at that. It is important to see that the unique contribution of the *Odyssey*, its importance to Western culture and thought, does not lie in its story, good as it is, nor even in the excellence of its poetry, great as that is, but is to be found rather in the new concept of man as embodied in Odysseus. This feature of the *Odyssey* does not come from the romance element in the poem—though this certainly contributed by humanizing the hero and by providing the storyline for the epic—nor does the main cultural importance of the *Odyssey* come from the contribution by itself of the Trojan saga; neither Achilles nor Ajax could have been the sort of hero needed. This achievement of the *Odyssey*, embodying our first really humanistic hero, came about due to influences from the older, more advanced civilizations of the Near East. The result is something more than just a good story.²⁵

As we have repeatedly seen, the shorter *Nalopākhyāna* is generally much simpler in its narrative structure than the more complex *Odyssey*. This is particularly true in the narrative handling of Items 9–11. These themes are closely related and intricately interwoven in both poems; but the *Nalopākhyāna* presents a relatively straightforward account, as indicated under each Item in Part I. The narrative development of the *Odyssey*, though, is far from simple.

Within the whole context of these themes I will look first at the Niptra scene (*Od.* 19.386–507) as an example of Homer's handling of these themes. We have here, as in the similar scene in the *Nalopākhyāna* (adhy. 72–73), a wife, a servant (Eurycleia), a recognition sign (the Scar), and a disguised husband. The obvious and clear intent of these recognition signs is the discovery of the husband. But what a devious use Homer makes of this! First of all, as Woodhouse (75) puts it, “. . . why should the poet make Odysseus himself virtually ask to be washed by Eurykleia?”—especially, as he goes on to say, when Eurycleia is the one person who must certainly know of the scar? Furthermore, Homer in effect cuts Penelope out of the scene by intruding Athena in a *deus ex machina* fashion, after which the interview goes on as if nothing had happened. The original dramatic function of the scene, to further arouse the wife's suspicions, was thus completely nullified. The scene is fine in its own way, as often in Homer, but forms no integral part of the whole action. We do, however, get a good indication of what Homer is up to, further suspense and delay.

As I noted earlier under Item 9 in Part I, it is quite clear that Damayanti suspects that Bāhuka is her husband Nala in disguise. This suspicion lasts

²⁵For further discussion of this aspect of the *Odyssey* see my “The Gilgamesh Epic and Homer,” *CJ* 70.4 (1975) 1–18.

until the denouement of their face-to-face encounter at *Nal.* 74.7–75.21, which is the second and decisive interview. One of the main problems of the later books of the *Odyssey* is whether or not Penelope knows (or suspects) that the beggar is Odysseus. Philip Harsh and Anne Amory have argued that Penelope knows or suspects that the beggar is Odysseus; Combella has examined the same evidence and emphatically denies this contention.²⁶ Moulton sums up the crux of the problem: “Penelope has more reason at this time than ever before to believe that her husband will return, and yet she proceeds to arrange a contest that will lead directly to marriage with the victorious suitor.”²⁷ Woodhouse (87–88) is so bothered by this that he concludes that Homer saw no way—no logical way—out of his plot impasse and decided to have Athena nakedly interfere and force a solution by having Penelope bring about the Bow Contest. One would rather, if possible, not resort to such a *Verzweiflungsausweg*. In brief, Harsh and Amory, though their positions are not completely identical, agree that Penelope suspects the stranger is Odysseus and decides to test him by suggesting the Bow Contest. If he is not Odysseus he can presumably decline or ignore the suggestion. His concurrence is a sign that it really is Odysseus. But Combella (37–38) objects:

There are two reasons for rejecting it [the Harsh-Amory theory], either of which would be fatal alone. In the first place, the theory requires us to assume that Homer, regularly the most straightforward and lucid of poets, has chosen to wrap an important feature of his story in a mystery . . . The second objection to the theory is contained in Homer’s picture of Penelope at the beginning of the next book. After her talk with the beggar, Penelope goes up to her room and weeps for Odysseus until Athena puts her to sleep . . . Penelope wakes up. She . . . calls upon Artemis to kill her at once, *autika nun* . . . All this fits perfectly with the Penelope whom Homer has just described, resolved to choose a second husband tomorrow, but hating the thought of it. But Penelope’s words are completely incompatible with the Harsh-Amory woman who knows that Odysseus is asleep downstairs.

To answer these objections *hysteron proteron*, the *Nalopākhyāna* shows us not a wife who *knows*, but only one who *suspects*, that the stranger is her

²⁶Philip W. Harsh, “Penelope and Odysseus in *Odyssey* XIX,” *AJP* 71 (1950) 1–21; Anne Amory, “The Reunion of Odysseus and Penelope,” in *Essays on the Odyssey*, ed., C. H. Taylor, Jr. (Bloomington 1963) 100–21; 130–36; Frederick M. Combella, “Wise Penelope and the Contest of the Bow,” No. 2 of “Three Odyssean Problems,” in *CSCA* 6 (1973) 32–40. Also cf. Wilamowitz (above, note 19) ch. iii, “Odysseus vor Penelope,” and Woodhouse, ch. x, “Penelopeia’s Collapse.”

²⁷Above, note 9, 162 and cf. Woodhouse 81–83.

husband; and this is Amory's position. Combellack is nevertheless right that it is not reasonable for a wife to wish for death if she knows or even suspects that her husband has returned. Yet, interestingly enough, immediately after her initial feeling that Nala may have returned Damayantī threatens suicide (*Nal.* 71.9–12) if she does not see and embrace him forthwith, though she has just said, "This is Nala" (71.8d). In view of the close parallelism of structural facts here, it would be rash to speculate what the virtual person Penelope must feel and think.

Combellack's first objection is obviously more difficult to deal with; it asks us to divine what the author's intentions were. Without reviewing all the pertinent passages in the *Odyssey*, there are a great many details in the poem, as Combellack admits (36), that support the Harsh-Amory theory, even without comparative evidence. But Combellack is correct again in saying that Homer here is uncommonly obscure. A reading of the Greek and Sanskrit poems side by side, however, makes it all clear. The author of the Nala story is not obscure at all; we know at every step the wife's thoughts and feelings. The result of this, though, is that when we come to the scene of the husband's discovery we are prepared for the final climax. The scene is interesting and moving, but it lacks that final *éclat* Homer manages to achieve through one last, unexpected test (the Bed Test). That is, this is another case, as in the Phaeacian episode, of a lengthy build-up of suspense leading to a moment of startling dramatic effect. Besides, there are actually two climaxes in the *Odyssey*, the killing of the suitors and the wife's discovery of her husband. Homer apparently did not want to upstage himself by anticipating his second and more important climax until he had disposed of the lesser climax first.

This is, however, only the beginning of the complexities in this part of the *Odyssey*. The comparative evidence of the *Nalopākhyāna* can be especially helpful here by keeping before us a simpler storyline and a clearer view of the real motivation involved. In particular, we should not lose sight of the fact that in both works it is the wife's decision to institute what amounts to a second wedding that is the key factor above all else leading to a denouement. It is in fact just this action on Penelope's part that is thought to be so inexplicable and so unmotivated. But this is basically because Homer has deceived us—and perhaps himself as well—by focusing all the attention on a contest *for suitors*, whereas the original story intended something different. I have tried to show that Homer shifted the real intent of the Scar sign but left traces of this shift in the Niptra scene. I hope to demonstrate in a moment that this is what he did likewise with the Bow. But he could not in the end shift the real purpose of all these signs or tests since that was too inherent in the story structure. Thus the very last one, the Bed Test, is, as in the *Nalopākhyāna*, a face-to-face encounter of husband and

wife (Item 10) where the final obstacle to full recognition turns on the husband's appearance (*Od.* 23.115–16). In both poems the restoration of the hero's form is brought about by magic means (*Od.* 23.153–58; *Nal.* 75.17). The magical aspects of this motif are typically played down in the *Odyssey*, being a mere adjunct to the elaborate bath (154–63), whereas the magical aspects are given full play in the Indic work—a typical difference between the two poems. Conversely, the bath, found in the *Nalopākhyāna* as well (75.23b), is there little more than a religious ablution. In this scene in the two poems the structure is basically the same, the emphasis and handling different. The larger point I am making, though, is that this must have been the purpose of all these tests, to discover the hero.

The original purpose of the Bow then must have been a test for Odysseus, not a contest for suitors, though it probably wore that guise.²⁸ Leaving comparative evidence aside for the moment, there is much in the *Odyssey* itself to suggest this. It is of course his own bow, which he unaccountably, but conveniently, left behind when he went to Troy (*Od.* 21.38–41). The ostensible contest is the very one he used to practice at in his halls (19.73–74). She announces it to him first (19.572), and she deliberately intervenes, when the bow is being passed around, to see that he gets it (21.336). Any reader of the *Odyssey*, however, finds it hard to believe that the Bow is a test for the husband and not a contest for suitors. That is because since the first book we have had the suitors before our eyes and they seem to us an absolutely indispensable part of the tale. But if we look, for one thing, at their number we can see some evidence of tampering with the original story. Where the count of the suitors is given at *Od.* 16.247–51 they come to

²⁸There is no marriage contest, let alone a bow contest, in the *Nalopākhyāna*; Damayanti simply announces (falsely) that she is holding a second *svayamvara*. The scene in the *Odyssey* is much closer to the scene in the *Mahābhārata* (1.174–85) where Arjuna wins Draupadī. Here we have a disguised suitor (Arjuna), a bow impossible to string by anyone except Arjuna, an exhibition-shot, a crowd of hostile suitors and one (Karna) who comes within a whisker of stringing the bow. Yet this marriage contest is called a *svayamvara* (*Mhb.* 1.174.8d), though obviously it is not. The father Drupada sets the task knowing only Arjuna can accomplish it. Here too the bow is an identification test rather than a contest; see Page (above, note 1) 107–08; Germain (above, note 1) 16, 23; and J. A. B. van Buitenen, trans. and ed., *The Mahabharata* I (Chicago 1973) 344–64.

We ordinarily do not think of a *svayamvara* in connection with Greek tales, but the clear implication of many passages in the *Odyssey* (e.g., 2.87–105; 4.770–71; 18.285–89; 19.524–29; 20.341–42) is that Penelope may, if she wishes, choose her own husband—that is, the ceremony will be a *svayamvara*, if it takes place. The *Odyssey* seems thus to have retained both traditions, that of the true *svayamvara* and the marriage contest consisting of the stringing of the bow and an exhibition-shot. In cases of this sort in comparative analysis it is obviously impossible to say which of the two is original to the story or whether, as seems likely, the variation predates the archetype.

one hundred and eight—an incredible number. There are only fifteen, I think, ever actually named. Stanford (above, note 9) *ad* 243 in reply to Munro and others says that this number is simply fiction. Yes, that is the point. Now, if we ask ourselves what purpose could Homer have had in so grossly exaggerating the number of suitors—and the impression one constantly gets from the unfolding of the narrative is that there are throngs of them (cf. 22.299–309)—the answer, I think, is more than Homer’s simply wanting to make Odysseus look good. After all, Athena was there to help the hero and ensure victory. No, the true reason is the canonical theme of the hero’s disguise. Homer could not, or chose not to, eliminate this theme. We have seen already his reluctance to throw anything away. But again, as with the Scar, he shifted its dramatic use away from the wife to the suitors. The bow contest as such may have been original (see note 28) and there were a few suitors. But this situation would not seem to present a seasoned veteran with any great problem, especially having the advantage of surprise, superior weapons, and terrain—and against greenhorns, moreover. It is not only that Homer constantly gives the impression of vast numbers of suitors but he likewise dwells on the hero’s fear of the coming encounter (cf. the scene at *Od.* 20.37–51 and 98–101), not altogether flattering to the hero of Troy but dramatically necessary to emphasize Odysseus’ need of disguise. Homer is so skillful we never question the motivation here; not even though, as I say, no single suitor would have recognized him had he bumped into Odysseus at his front gate. Odysseus tells Telemachus at 16.303 that Penelope must not be told he has returned. Homer does not expand on this; we are left to assume that Penelope, otherwise so “prudent,” being a woman, will somehow tell the secret or otherwise betray her husband. Yet, from the evidence of the *Nalopākhyāna* this is quite right; it is Penelope for whom the disguise exists.

Again, no reader of the *Odyssey* can well believe this. Why would Odysseus want to conceal his identity from his wife if there were no real threat from the suitors? In the *Nalopākhyāna* this is an important and well dramatized theme (the Chastity theme),²⁹ that is, the assurance the hero must receive that his wife has been pure and faithful all the time of his

²⁹The Chastity theme—that is, “home chastity” or the wife’s faithfulness—plays a considerable role in the *Nalopākhyāna*. At the scene of the initial *svayamvara* it was on the basis of her vow to be faithful that she adjured the gods to reveal Nala to her (54.18). This theme explains Nala’s long concealment. Just before he reveals himself he makes an impassioned speech against the immorality of her choosing a second husband (74.21–23). Finally, all doubts are resolved by supernatural testimony that his wife has been faithful during the years of his absence (75.11–14). As the husband’s appearance must be restored before the wife’s doubts can be resolved, so proof of the wife’s fidelity must be forthcoming before the husband can give up his disguise; this effected, they are reunited.

absence. We hear, of course, of Penelope's "virtues," as in Agamemnon's fine *laus Penelopes* (*Od.* 24.192–202), where we might have expected a rather more pointed contrast with his own wife—a matter Homer must well be aware of; but oddly Homer never raises the question of Penelope's virtue in this sense. With supposedly a hundred and eight hard-drinking, rowdy young men in her house, who do not otherwise hesitate to order Phemius and others of the household about, who, as we hear, insolently drag women about (*Od.* 16.108–09 = 20.318–19; 22.37–38; and cf. Woodhouse 153), is it totally inconceivable that not one of the suitors ever attempted what they all prayed for (18.213)? Yet, the question is never raised.

Still, this theme, so important in the *Nalopākhyāna*, may be present in the *Odyssey*, but, as in the case of other themes, shifted to a new position in the story. Every reader of the *Odyssey* is bothered by the Hanging of the Handmaids, the one truly unpleasant episode in the whole poem. In the first place, it is inexplicable that Odysseus would concern himself about the virtue of a few female slaves; yet he does: at the beginning of Book Twenty he thinks of killing them right there (20.11). In the scene where Leiodes clasps his knees in supplication and begs for his life, the first and really only plea Leiodes makes is that he had never in any way wronged the women of Odysseus' house (22.313–14). Odysseus' reply here is interesting; he apparently understands the vague "women" in the sense of Penelope, for he accuses Leiodes of praying to have children by Penelope and for this he must die (22.322–24). Nothing is said here of eating or drinking too much from Odysseus' stores. What I am suggesting is that there is enough evidence in the *Odyssey* itself to indicate that there was a Chastity or Faithful Wife theme in the tradition and that what we see is a shift of overemphasis on the handmaids coupled with an almost complete absence of any such reference to Penelope. This may be a further indication of Homer's well-known "puritanism."

To sum up: what we have now in our *Odyssey* is the result of a complex shifting of themes. Originally the husband returned in disguise because he thought his wife, the queen, was actually holding a second marriage contest. The hero's slaughter of the suitors (a dozen or less) was then for the actual or supposed dishonoring of his wife (the case of Leiodes).³⁰ Sometime during this series of events the wife began to suspect that one of the suitors was her husband; she then initiated a series of tests to discover

³⁰We should not look upon this Chastity theme as simply, or even primarily, a matter of sex, though it certainly wears that aspect in the *Nalopākhyāna*. It may have originally been more political than romantic; Antinous' interest in Penelope, Eurymachus says (*Od.* 22.50–53), was just that. Cf. E. A. S. Butterworth, *Some Traces of the Pre-Olympian World* (New York 1966) 11–12, on Thyestes' seduction of Aërope.

him. This is the only plausible motivation for Penelope's so suddenly deciding on a marriage contest. It is this decision in both works that finally unites husband and wife. Homer kept the Chastity theme but shifted it from the wife to the handmaids, where it did not belong. The killing of the suitors then involved their paramours in a like fate. Homer's shifting of various themes was evidently not for the purpose of producing a more logical, straightforward story, but was meant rather for dramatic effect. Pursuant to this, Homer (as author of the *Iliad*?) wanted to have one last, grand fight, the secondary climax of his story. To make this effective he had to build up the impression of many suitors. He could then shift the Disguise motif and give the latter part of his story greater complexity and suspense. This meant, however, that any suspicion of the wife's virtue (the original reason for the disguise) must be suppressed. Homer no doubt would have been better advised to throw out every trace of the Chastity theme. The fact that he did not, the fact that Homer retained the rather lame motivation that twelve (the original number of suitors?) women must be brutally murdered for dishonoring their master by lying with the suitors, this must indicate how strong in the tradition the Chastity theme was.