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Categories of Homeric Wordplay*

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Wordplays comprise a significant part of Homeric technique. The thematic Οὖτις / μῆτις associations in Odysseus' encounter with Polyphemos and the repeated linkage of his name and *ὀδύσσομαι are but two famous examples. While commentators have noted the frequency of wordplay and its importance in particular episodes,[1] we can establish broader patterns regarding its use. This essay presents a rough system of classification for the phenomenon. By "wordplay," a deliberately broad and neutral term (cf. pun, *calembour*, *paronomasia*, and the like), I mean the following: a connection between two similar-sounding words which invests the relationship between them with additional meaning. Although words of similar sound may be attracted to each other in the Homeric poems for a variety of reasons, such as the generative process of reformulating phrases and formulae,[2] the historical tendency of Archaic Greek to cluster together words from the same root, and even chance, I shall focus on how the poems make literary use of such wordplay, a central concern of Homeric compositional techniques. My emphasis is more on an empirical than theoretical analysis of the data. I do not claim particular explanatory power for the structure I present but hope to open a window onto some of the prevalent formations found in Homeric epic. Section I delineates three broad categories of wordplay. Section II shows how such classifications can provide an interpretive tool for individual passages, for characterization, and for larger thematic issues.

I.

Names in particular tend to generate or affect portions of the text around them through assonance, provoking words which through their meanings and/or

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[1] The most useful relevant studies are Sulzberger, Stanford 1939, and Rank. See also Deroy, Dimock 1956, Austin, Bright, Haywood, Peradotto, Higbie, and *obiter dicta* in the recent Homeric commentaries. On μῆτις/οὖτις and *ὀδύσσομαι in particular, see, among others, Rank 52-61, Stanford 1952, Podlecki, Brown, Schein, Mariani, and Casevitz.

[2] I distinguish wordplay from other patterned similarity of sounds such as the parallel formulae noted by Parry 72 ff., e.g., λαίλαπι τύπτων / λαίλαπι θύων, and Nagler 1, 44, 76. It is less likely that an audience would have in mind such parallel instances than the more closely related pairs discussed herein.

sounds evoke those names.[3] The converse holds as well: certain words, through their sounds and meanings, suggest associated proper names whether or not those names are enunciated at that point in the text. Peradotto notes the significance of names in Archaic epic: ". . . nowhere does Homeric and Hesiodic poetry, but especially the *Odyssey*, seem to be more self-conscious about language and its relation to things than when it comes to proper names" (94-5). For Homeric characters, names are closely associated with their identity, whether a warrior's fame, or wife's reputation.[4] Dimock, in discussing the meaning of the name Odysseus, suggests that "the whole problem of the *Odyssey* is for Odysseus to establish his identity" (1956: 106). Similar arguments could be made for other Homeric characters such as Akhilleus, Telemakhos and Penelope.

Homeric wordplay is concerned with various kinds of association and reciprocal meaning between two or more words. Most instances of wordplay in Homeric epic fall into three broad categories. Perhaps the largest involves a play upon the etymological meaning of a name, or *figura etymologica*. In its broadest use it need not involve names, e.g., Polyphemos' recollection of the prophecy predicting Odysseus' arrival (9.509-10):

> Τήλεμος Ευρυμίδης, ὃς μαντοσύνῃ ἐκέκαστο
> καὶ μαντευόμενος κατεγήρα Κυκλώπεσσιν·
>
> Telemos, son of Eurymides, who excelled in prophecy
> and as a prophet grew old among the Cyclopes.[5]

Though a monster, Polyphemos nonetheless juxtaposes different words from the same root, μαντοσύνῃ / μαντευόμενος, a figure favored throughout Homeric epic.[6]

The most intriguing instances of this figure involve proper names as the character making the association recognizes, and expects his audience to recognize, the assumed meaning of the name. As many names are transparently meaningful, the narrator or another character often makes associations between

[3] For a recent discussion to this effect, see Peradotto 102ff., though he does not specifically connect the phenomenon with assonance.

[4] On this topic in general see Higbie, *passim*.

[5] Homeric quotations herein are from Monroe and Allen's and Stanford's editions respectively. Homeric translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

[6] Polyphemos is a not-unsophisticated speaker as he employs several types of discourse including prayer, curse, and pun, as discussed below. On the implicit skill and selection behind examples of Homeric etymological figure, note Lowenstam's point (35) that Homer avoids certain instances thought to be clumsy.

a name and other words from the same root. Well-known examples occur in plays on Hektor's name, e.g., Sarpedon's challenge,

> Ἕκτορ, πῇ δή τοι μένος οἴχεται ὃ πρὶν ἔχεσκες;
> φῆς που ἄτερ λαῶν πόλιν ἐξέμεν ἠδ' ἐπικούρων
> οἷος.
>
> *Hektor* where has your strength gone, which you always *held* before?
> You said that you *would hold* the city without the host or allies
> alone. (*Il.* 5.472-3, cf. Sulzberger 398, Stanford 1939: 100)

Additional instances include the narrator's description of Hektor, ἀλλ' ἔχεν ἦ τὰ πρῶτα πύλας καὶ τεῖχος ἐσᾶλτο (13.679).[7] Both speakers assume, whether ironically or sincerely, that the name Hektor is meaningful as an agent noun derived from ἔχω, *The Holder*.[8] The derivation of Ὀδυσσεύς from *ὀδύσσομαι, claimed at *Od.* 19.407 (and implied at 1.62, 5.340, 19.275), falls into this category. The argued derivation is validated, the folk etymology meaningful, through its use by such wily speakers as Autolykos, Athene, and Leukothea (5.334).

While substantial characters such as Hektor or Odysseus generate patterns of such wordplay, some minor characters owe their entire existence to a *figura etymologica,* as in the narrator's following grim joke (*Il.* 12.183-6),

> δουρὶ βάλεν Δάμασον κυνέης διὰ χαλκοπαρῄου
> ... δάμασσε δέ μιν μεμαῶτα·
>
> With a spear he struck *Subduer* through the bronze-cheeked helmet
> ... and subdued him though he was eager.

Polypoites, subject of the verbs, bests Damasos, mentioned only here, through the verb δάμασσε. The character's name, Damasos, generated by the mechanism under discussion, exists solely for the sake of the wordplay (cf. Rank 43).

The second category, comprising the broadest classification of wordplay, involves non-etymological collocations of words sharing several common sounds, usually a similar sounding root.[9] Examples which do not involve names

[7] Cf. *Il.*8.355-6: ὁ δὲ μαίνεται οὐκέτ' ἀνεκτῶς / Ἕκτωρ in Macleod 52, also Andromakhe's lament, *Il.* 24.728-30, in Stanford 1939: 100.

[8] Cf. *Il.* 6.402-3: τόν ῥ' Ἕκτωρ καλέεσκε Σκαμάνδριον, αὐτὰρ οἱ ἄλλοι / Ἀστυάνακτ'· οἷος γὰρ ἐρύετο Ἴλιον Ἕκτωρ.

[9] Hermog. *Inv.* 4.7.1 used παρήχησις for this phenomenon. See Stanford's discussions of the term 1939: 26 n. 1, 34, 37, 100, and 1965: vol. 1, xxiii.

include τῷ δ' ἄρα πέμπτῳ πέμπ' ἀπὸ νήσου δῖα Καλυψώ (*Od.* 5.263). Unlike the *figura etymologica*, the speaker here does not suggest that πέμπτω, "fifth," and πέμπε, "send," are derivatives of each other, but enjoys associating their similar sounds (cf. Stanford 1939: 103).

Upon returning to Ithaka, Odysseus has difficulty convincing Telemakhos that he is Odysseus. The hero highlights the difference, οὔ τίς τοι θεός εἰμι . . . ἀλλὰ πατὴρ τεός εἰμι ("*I am* not a *god* . . . but *I am your* father," *Od.* 16.187-8, cf. Dimock 1989: 211, Goldhill 10). The two phrases, similar in sound and rhythm, occupy the same position in the line. In Demodokos' song about Hephaistos, Aphrodite, and Ares, anger seizes the inventor god as he declares that Aphrodite dishonors him because he is lame, χόλος δέ μιν ἄγριος ἧρει . . . ὡς ἐμὲ χωλὸν ἐόντα ("And a savage *anger* seized him . . . while I am *lame*," *Od.* 8.304-8: the word play is untranslatable). These instances involve words which echo the sounds of associated words; no etymological connection is suggested. Consider Odysseus' description of Elpenor's undoing, ψύχεος ἱμείρων, κατελέξατο οἰνοβαρείων . . . ψυχὴ δ' Ἄϊδόσδε κατῆλθεν ("Desiring *cool air,* he lay down, heavy with wine . . . and his *soul* went down to Hades," *Od.* 10.555-60). In seeking the former, ψῦχος, Elpenor loses the latter, ψυχή, the sound play emphasizing his grave error.[10]

A celebrated example involving names occurs in the story of Bellerophon at *Il.* 6.201, ἤτοι ὁ καὶ πεδίον τὸ Ἀλήϊον οἷος ἀλᾶτο. Another well known instance, involving multiple word play, describes the lineage of Akhilleus' spear (*Il.* 16.141-4),

> τὸ μὲν οὐ δύνατ' ἄλλος Ἀχαιῶν
> πάλλειν, ἀλλά μιν οἷος ἐπίστατο πῆλαι Ἀχιλλεύς,
> Πηλιάδα μελίην, τὴν πατρὶ φίλῳ πόρε Χείρων
> Πηλίου ἐκ κορυφῆς . . .
>
> No other Achaean
> could *wield* it, but Akhilleus alone knew how to *wield* it,
> the *Pelian* ash, which Cheiron gave to his dear father
> from the peak of *Pelion* . . .

The different forms of the verb, especially the infinitive, πῆλαι, play off the name of the spear and its origin. Moreover, the series also evokes a name not occurring here, Πηλεύς, the giver of the spear (Rank 37-8, 65, 93-4).

[10] If they are unrelated (Chantraine 1296), the association is an instance of non-etymological collocation. For other associations, cf. Ἐπειὸς ἐποίησεν, *Od.* 8.493; λᾶας and λαός, *Il.* 24.611; Hesiod frag. 234 (Merkelbach and West, Oxford 1967); Pindar *Ol.* 9, 41-6; Francis 77.

Demetrius offers a further example from *Il.* 16.358, Αἴας δ' ὁ μέγας αἰὲν ἐφ' Ἕκτορι χαλκοκορυστῇ / ἵετ' ἀκοντίσσαι ("But *Aias* the great was *always* trying to strike spear-marshalling Hektor," Demetr. *Eloc.* 48 and 105, cf. Rank 35).

There is a degree of overlap between the two categories. The same pun can sometimes be classified both ways. The *Iliad* offers an ambiguous example in the embassy to Akhilleus, κούρην δ' οὐ γαμέω Ἀγαμέμνονος Ἀτρεΐδαο ("And I *will not marry* the daughter of *Agam*emnon, son of Atreus," *Il.* 9.388). Akhilleus makes a non-etymological collocation on his commander's name, the wordplay emphatically underscoring his refusal to marry Agamemnon's daughter.[11] From the composer's perspective, however, given that the traditional audience is well aware that Agamemnon is involved in a disastrous marriage, the name could be taken as a *figura etymologica* on a folk etymology stressing the fatal marriage. In a further possibility, Akhilleus' remark could also be regarded as a partial instance of our next (and last) category.

The third category, deformation, involves a speaker forming a compound that negates or worsens the force of a name or noun, and, in Stanford's words, "rejects the connotation of a word, accepting only its denotation,"[12] a rough opposite to etymological figure. Examples in the *Iliad* include Hektor's description of his brother Paris, whom he renames Δύσπαρις (3.39 = 13.769). The *Odyssey* offers a parallel in Penelope's renaming of Ilion as Κακοΐλιον, οἴχετ' ἐποψόμενος Κακοΐλιον οὐκ ὀνομαστήν ("he went off to see *Evil-ilium*, not to be named," 19.260 = 19.597 = 23.19). Russo has described such instances as "the deliberate distortion of familiar names as a sarcastic expression of hostility" (52). Others have suggested that the device is primarily an instance of name taboo, avoidance of an ill-omened word (Brown 199). The speaker of the coined compound has it both ways. The mocked or detested name, *Paris* or *Ilion*, is now refashioned, placed more firmly under the speaker's control, with irony and/or sarcasm added. I argue with Russo that deformation marks the wielder's power over his (or more often her[13]) subject matter.

[11] Martin 221 notes that D. Packard suggested this pun in a lecture at Princeton, November 20, 1984. See also Hainsworth 114 and Edwards 59. As further support, note that the names of Agamemnon's daughters, which Akhilleus hears shortly before at 9.287 and the audience has also heard a second time at 9.145, are themselves *etymologized names*, Χρυσόθεμις, Λαοδίκη, and Ἰφιάνασσα.

[12] Stanford 1939: 32 refers to the phenomonen as "reversal of etymology." Cf. Higbie's description of "un-naming," 16.

[13] As noted below, deformation is more often used by female speakers.

Deformation, like most Homeric wordplay, is not usually humorous. However, one comic example involves the beggar, Iros. As many have pointed out, the name Iros itself is already a joke, a sarcastic pun on the resident beggar's possible velocity and aptitude for errands.[14] An unnamed suitor, however, renames Iros when he assumes that the disguised Odysseus will defeat him ἦ τάχα Ἶρος Ἄϊρος ("Truly, Iros, soon Un-iros," 18.73).

Closely related are similarly formed noun compounds, in the *Iliad* but more often in the *Odyssey*, also used at moments of anger and/or sarcasm. Penelope describes the coming dawn as δυσώνυμος, "ill-named," for it will take her away from the palace, ἥδε δὴ ἠὼς εἶσι δυσώνυμος, ἥ μ' Ὀδυσῆος / οἴκου ἀποσχήσει (19.571-2).[15] See also Telemakhos chastizing his mother when she remains aloof from Odysseus after he has disclosed his identity, μῆτηρ ἐμή, δύσμητηρ, ἀπηνέα θυμὸν ἔχουσα ("Mother mine, ill-mother, that has a harsh heart," *Od.* 23.97).[16]

Through deformation Homeric speakers assert more control over hostile elements of a personal, intimate nature. Most instances involve family matters, Hektor of a brother, Andromakhe of her father (*Il.* 22.480), Telemakhos of his mother, Penelope of Telemakhos, and of Odysseus' circumstances.[17] Hektor, fully aware of Paris' responsibility for starting the war and his less than exemplary martial example, expresses his ambivalence toward his brother through deformation, the first words addressed to Paris in the poem, Δύσπαρι, εἶδος ἄριστε, γυναιμανές, ἠπεροπευτά (3.39). The designation forcefully establishes Paris' negative role as a theme; in the rest of book three, his abortive duel with Menelaos and its aftermath emphatically portray him as Δύσπαρις to family and city. Hektor's second use of Δύσπαρι (13.769) occurs shortly after the poem underscores Paris' fundamental hypocrisy, when he, with great irony, is upset over the death of a ξεῖνος (13.661). As Janko notes ad loc., "the criticism of his morality is muted but unmistakable." Higbie sums up the phenomenon: "This play with names, in the attachment of negative prefixes, may suggest the power of 'un-naming' to Homer and to Homeric figures. If naming has power . . . then its reverse, un-naming or deformation

[14] See Russo 47. Cf. the irony in the implicit distance between the meaning of the dog's name Ἄργος and his present capacity for running. See Peradotto's discussion, 112-3.

[15] The line is also an instance of *parechesis*. On δυσώνυμος, see Griffin 42 and Higbie 16.

[16] Cf. *Il.*: κακομηχάνου (6.344), κακότεχνος, ἀμήχανε, σὸς δόλος (15.14), δυσαριστοτόκεια (18.54); *Od.*: κακομήχανε (16.418), κακοξεινώτερος (20.376).

[17] Cf. the force of δαιμόνιος, -η, used by Odysseus and Penelope of each other (*Od.* 23.166, 174, 264), by Hektor of Paris (*Il.* 6.326, 521) and by Andromakhe of Hektor (*Il.* 6.407). Griffin 41-2 notes that many instances of related phenomena are spoken by females: Penelope, Thetis, Andromakhe, usually with reference to the speaker.

of a name, may be equally forceful and may remove power from a person or place" (15).

II.

So common are such phenomena that they have arguably exerted influence on the narratives and myths themselves.[18] Palmer's proposed etymology for the name Akhilleus, for instance, from ἄχος and λαός, appears to be validated by repeated wordplays on the hero's name.[19] The *Iliad* closely associates Akhilleus' name with ἄχος and related verb forms. Among many such instances, the following three passages illustrate three different relations between the protagonist and the pain expressed by the root.

In her discussion with Hektor, Andromakhe laments that were he to perish she would have only grief, ἄχεα, for Akhilleus has killed her father (6.411-4),

> οὐ γὰρ ἔτ' ἄλλη
> ἔσται θαλπωρή . . .
> ἀλλ' ἄχε'· οὐδέ μοι ἔστι πατὴρ καὶ πότνια μήτηρ.
> ἦτοι γὰρ πατέρ' ἀμὸν ἀπέκτανε δῖος Ἀχιλλεύς.
>
> Nor is there other consolation . . .
> but heart*aches*; nor do I have a father and honored mother.
> For Godlike *Akhi*lleus killed my father.

In this instance Akhilleus inflicts ἄχος on an opponent's λαός and its relatives. When Patroklos later approaches Akhilleus, however, he notes what suffering has come upon the Akhaians as a result of Akhilleus' inactivity, ὦ Ἀχιλεῦ, Πηλῆος υἱέ, μέγα φέρτατ' Ἀχαιῶν, / μὴ νεμέσα· τοῖον γὰρ ἄχος βεβίηκεν Ἀχαιούς (16.21-2). The suggested association between Ἀχιλεῦ and ἄχος verbalizes for the audience Akhilleus' actual responsibility for the ἄχος afflicting *his own* λαός, more explicitly than Patroklos declares. The wordplay here extends to "Akhaians" as well, whether seen as *figura etymologica* or non-etymological collocation on ἄχος and Akhilleus. Further, we see here how a formula (16.21 = 10.145) gains added resonance in particular contexts when placed in collocation with key words and names.

There is more to it than that. Akhilleus himself, described at the beginning of the scene as leader of the λαός, ποιμένι λαῶν (16.2), arguably triggers the wordplay for he uses the verb ἀκαχοίμεθα (16.16) five lines earlier,

[18] On relationships between characters' names and mythic structure, see Peradotto chaps. 4-6, Frame *passim*, and Nagy 69 ff.

[19] Palmer 37-8, cf. Nagy's discussion, 69-70. For a more recent revised etymology of Akhilleus, see Holland.

making three associations within seven lines. Akhilleus uses ἀκαχοίμεθα, however, not to refer to his and Patroklos' possible emotions for the army, but for hypothetical suffering they could have felt for their own fathers. Patroklos in a sense corrects Akhilleus by implying that the ἄχος afflicting the λαός affects them as well. They must feel not only for their fathers, but for their comrades. From this perspective, the discussion is quite ironic, for Patroklos redirects the course of ἄχος against himself by subsequently volunteering to enter the fray and explicitly act as a member of the λαός, ἀλλ' ἐμέ περ πρόες ὦχ', ἅμα δ' ἄλλον λαὸν ὄπασσον / Μυρμιδόνων (16.38).

When the ἄχος which Akhilleus has desired for the Akhaians reaches its climax, claiming the life of Patroklos, Akhilleus now bears a different relation to the suffering. Shortly thereafter, Akhilleus and the Myrmidons perform the burial rituals, ὄπιθεν δὲ κάρη ἔχε δῖος Ἀχιλλεὺς / ἀχνύμενος· ἔταρον γὰρ ἀμύμονα πέμπ' Ἄϊδόσδε (23.136-7). The narrator now makes explicit the direct connection between Akhilleus and the ἄχος he has brought to his people and to himself. These passages, and others,[20] are partial instances of *figura etymologica* bearing out the meaning of Akhilleus' name as ἄχος brought upon his own λαός.

The *Odyssey* sustains more frequent wordplays on the name of its protagonist. While commentators acknowledge the connection between *ὀδύσσομαι and Odysseus, an instance of *figura etymologica*, there are additional plays on the protagonist's name through non-etymological collocation. Many plays occur between the name Ὀδυσσεύς and words containing the sounds δυσ- and ὀδυ-. Athene suggests such connections in the same speech in which she first connects *ὀδύσσομαι with Ὀδυσσεύς, the poem's first speech about Odysseus,

> ἀλλά μοι ἀμφ' Ὀδυσῆϊ δαίφρονι δαίεται ἦτορ,
> δυσμόρῳ, ὃς δὴ δηθὰ φίλων ἄπο πήματα πάσχει . . .
> τοῦ θυγάτηρ δύστηνον ὀδυρόμενον κατερύκει.
> αἰεὶ δὲ μαλακοῖσι καὶ αἰμυλίοισι λόγοισι
> θέλγει, ὅπως Ἰθάκης ἐπιλήσεται· αὐτὰρ Ὀδυσσεύς
> ἱέμενος καὶ καπνὸν ἀποθρῴσκοντα νοῆσαι
> ἧς γαίης, θανέειν ἱμείρεται . . . οὔ νύ τ' Ὀδυσσεὺς
> Ἀργείων παρὰ νηυσὶ χαρίζετο ἱερὰ ῥέζων
> Τροίῃ ἐν εὐρείῃ; τί νύ οἱ τόσον ὠδύσαο, Ζεῦ;
> (1.48-9, 55-9, 60-2)

[20] Cf. *Il.* 1.240-1, 19.55-7, 20.282-3, etc. The *Od.* maintains the same association, τῷ μή τι θανὼν ἀκαχίζευ, Ἀχιλλεῦ (11.486); cf. Rank 42.

What is generally recognized as a pun in the concluding verb, *ὀδυσσομαι, is actually the capping element of a series of plays on his name as underlined: Ὀδυσῆϊ, δυσμόρῳ, δύστηνον, ὀδυρόμενον, Ὀδυσσεύς and ὠδύσαο.[21] The text suggests a similar relation between Odysseus' name and these words and the well known association with *ὀδύσσομαι. Like that verb, δύστηνος, δύσμορος, ὀδυρόμενος, and words such as ὀϊζύσας (with the likely pronunciation of ζ as [zd], ὀϊζύς again sounds the syllable -δυς) and ὀδύνας echo his name. Though his name is nowhere claimed explicitly as an eponym of these words, as it is of *ὀδύσσομαι, they are closely involved with a delineation of his nature and circumstances. They not only echo the sound of his name, they tell us what he is like and how he affects others, that he is δύστηνος, δύσμορος, and ὀϊζύσας, causing people to ὀδυρέσθαι, and giving them ὀδύνας. Such associations offer support for Dimock's contention that the meaning of the name Odysseus is "man of pain," pain suffered passively and actively inflicted on others.[22]

Δύσμορος and δύστηνος are closely applied to Odysseus throughout the epic. Of the five occurrences of δύσμορος in the *Odyssey*, four modify Odysseus; the fifth describes Laertes as he mourns for Odysseus.[23] All instances thus closely focus on the protagonist. A similar ratio holds for Athene's other adjective, δύστηνος. Of its seventeen occurrences, fifteen modify Odysseus.[24] These two adjectives are thus almost exclusively associated with Odysseus. I suggest they may be regarded as instances of non-etymological collocations on his name.

In book 23, after husband and wife are reunited, Odysseus gives Penelope a summary of his wanderings, which the narrator introduces (23.306-8),

> αὐταρ ὁ διογενὴς Ὀδυσεὺς ὅσα κήδε' ἔθηκεν
> ἀνθρώποις ὅσα τ' αυτὸς ὀϊζύσας ἐμόγησε
> πάντ' ἔλεγ'·

The passage remarks on the meaning of his wanderings, which he goes on to summarize, sufferings he actively caused and passively endured. Earlier, when

[21] Rank 51-2, discusses many of the ὀδύρομαι passages. The repetitions of δαίφρονι δαίεται and δὴ δηθὰ (1.48-9) offer further evidence of patterned sounds in this speech (Packard 244).

[22] Dimock 1956 and 1989 *passim*. Dimock 1989: 230 also notes ὀδύνη and ὀϊζύς.

[23] 1.49, 7.270, 20.194, 24.311 modify Odysseus; 16.139 describes Laertes.

[24] 1.55, 4.182, 5.436, 6.206, 7.223, 7.248, 10.281, 11.93, 13.331, 17.10, 17.483, 17.501, 19.354, 20.224, 24.289 modify Odysseus; 11.76 and 11.80 modify Elpenor.

Telemakhos discusses his father with Athene/Mentes, he notes that Odysseus' lengthy absence has caused him pain (1.242-4),

> οἴχετ' ἄϊστος, ἄπυστος, ἐμοὶ δ' ὀδύνας τε γόους τε
> κάλλιπεν· οὐδ' ἔτι κεῖνον ὀδυρόμενος στεναχίζω
> οἷον. . .

The passage evidences multiple wordplay, in the *homoeoarchon* of ἄϊστος, ἄπυστος, and in ὀδύνας and ὀδυρόμενος, collocations on the name Odysseus, which Telemakhos does not utter.

Even more revealing is the collateral evidence offered by a central thematic tendency in the poem, the suppression of the name Odysseus. In the last example, although Telemakhos never pronounces his father's name in his initial conversations with Mentes (though Mentes pronounces the name), at 1.242-3 he makes non-etymological collocations on the name, ὀδύνας and ὀδυρόμενος. The *Odyssey* maintains a pattern of non-etymological collocations evoking Odysseus' (on those occasions) unpronounced name. While Homerists have noted the thematic occurrence of denomination in the *Odyssey*,[25] it has escaped notice that it is often tied to instances of non-etymological collocation. Furthermore, such associations between his name and δυς-, ὀδυ- words often occur at moments when the status of his identity is at issue.

When Odysseus gives the Phaiakians his first brief account of who he is, without disclosing his name, he uses words which characteristically delineate his identity and suggest his name (7.269-71),

> . . . γήθησε δέ μοι φίλον ἦτορ
> δυσμόρῳ· ἦ γὰρ μέλλον ἔτι ξυνέσεσθαι ὀϊζυῖ
> πολλῇ. . .
>
> . . . and the dear heart rejoiced
> in *unlucky* me; for I was yet going to meet with much
> *woe*. . .

Δύσμορος, in its distribution in the *Odyssey*, identifies μοι (269) as Ὀδυσσεύς, and with ὀϊζύς suggests the sound of his name. Consider again Telemakhos' remark above. In conversation with Athene/Mentes, Telemakhos never speaks his father's name, though Mentes mentions it several times, and Odysseus is the central topic.

[25] See de Jong, though she does not consider instances of wordplay; cf. Austin 5-10.

Hermes makes only three speeches in the *Odyssey*, all with Odysseus as their topic, but in none does Hermes utter Odysseus' name. In two of the speeches, however, he evokes the name through non-etymological collocation (10.281), Πῇ δὴ αὖτ', ὦ δύστηνε, δι' ἄκριας ἔρχεαι οἶος, "Where, then, are you going, ill-fated one, alone through the hilltops?" Following the particle ὦ, δύστηνε not only identifies Odysseus through its almost exclusive modification of him in the poem, but the non-etymological collocation virtually pronounces his otherwise unspoken name in direct address to him. In book five, when Hermes comes to Kalypso with Zeus' decree to release Odysseus, he does not name him but specifies him with the superlative of ὀϊζύς, ὀϊζυρώτατον (5.105).

Book 24 offers a definitive instance when Laertes unknowingly addresses his son, describing the "absent" Odysseus with words forming non-etymological collocations on his name, ὅτε ξείνισσας ἐκεῖνον / σὸν ξεῖνον δύστηνον, ἐμὸν παῖδ', εἴ ποτ' ἔην γε, / δύσμορον ("when you entertained him, your unlucky guest, my child, if ever he was, / ill-starred," 24.288-90). Similar is Philoitios' inquiry as to the identity of the mysterious stranger, in which he ironically describes Odysseus himself, δύσμορος . . . ἀλλὰ θεοὶ . . . ἐπικλώσωνται ὀϊζύν (20.194-6, cf. 17.563-7). Such collocations increase the already abundant irony for which the second half of the poem is famous.[26] Not only is Odysseus often present as family and loyal servants mourn his absence, but his name is virtually pronounced as he stands, unrecognized, before them.[27]

"Odysseus" is not the only name in the *Odyssey* subject to wordplay. The poem features frequent instances of *figura etymologica* on the name Telemakhos. Athene several times plays on the first component of the name, τῆλε, "from a distance." When accompanying him to Pylos as Mentor, she hears Telemakhos doubt that the gods would openly show him favor as once his father. She responds with a mild rebuke of his disbelief, Τηλέμαχε, ποῖόν σε ἔπος φύγεν ἕρκος ὀδόντων; / ῥεῖα θεός γ' ἐθέλων καὶ τηλόθεν ἄνδρα σαώσαι ("*Tele*makhos . . . easily a god, when he wishes, can save a man, even *from a distance*," 3.230-1). Her response is quite playful as her humorous irony corrects his cynical view.[28] Moreover, καὶ τηλόθεν ἄνδρα σαώσαι aptly describes both her overall agenda for Odysseus, "to save a man even from a distance," and her present and future plans for Telemakhos, ensuring his safety on his own quest.

[26] Stanford 1939: 98 notes that the *Od.* has more ambiguity and more intricate examples of such collocations than the *Il.* due to the nature of its plot.

[27] Cf. οὓς ὑπ' Ὀδυσσεὺς / δύσετ' (5.481-2) and Ὀδυσεὺς . . . δυσπονέος (5.491-3).

[28] Note that the rest of 3.230, ποῖόν σε ἔπος φύγεν ἕρκος ὀδόντων, is elsewhere humorous or playful as well, e. g., 1.64. Cf. Kahane 67.

As Rank (69) notes, she repeats a variation of this wordplay in book fifteen, warning him that he has spent enough time away from home (15.10), Τηλέμαχ', οὐκετι καλὰ δόμων ἄπο τῆλ' ἀλάλησαι ("*Tele*makhos, no longer is it good to wander *far* from home"). As before, the declaration conveys a mild rebuke. The phrase also suggests a more negative meaning possible in Telemakhos' name. An unnamed suitor makes the same associations (cf. Dimock 1989: 35-6), when, learning of Telemakhos' voyage, he hopes for his death, even as he assumes Odysseus has already died (2.332-3),

> τίς δ' οἶδ' εἴ κε καὶ αὐτὸς ἰὼν κοίλης ἐπὶ νηὸς
> τῆλε φίλων ἀπόληται ἀλώμενος ὥς περ 'Οδυσσεύς;
>
> But who knows if he (Telemakhos) himself going on his hollow ship
> might perish wandering far from his family, just as Odysseus?

The suitor plays on the meaning of Telemakhos' name and the characteristic of Odysseus which it signifies: the name allows for the possibility of *dying far from home.*

Melanthios makes a similar etymological play. Having struck the disguised Odysseus in the nymphs' grove, and then hearing Eumaios pray that a returning Odysseus might avenge the wrongdoing, the goatherd utters his own prayer/curse (17.251-3),

> αἴ γὰρ Τηλέμαχον βάλοι ἀργυρότοξος 'Απόλλων
> σήμερον ἐν μεγάροις, ἢ ὑπὸ μνηστῆρσι δαμείη,
> ὡς 'Οδυσῆϊ γε τηλοῦ ἀπώλετο νόστιμον ἦμαρ.
>
> For if only silver-bowed Apollo might strike *Tele*makhos
> down, today in the palace, or he were subdued by the suitors,
> just as the day of homecoming is lost for *far off* Odysseus.

Both members of the suitors' party assert that Telemakhos' name could ironically describe not his father's heroic capabilities but his failure and distant death (cf. Dimock 1989: 220-1). As such, however, the remarks conform to a persistant pattern whereby a suitor's words ironically backfire, making an intended clever, biting remark into a greater but unintended irony, of which the suitor is unaware but which the audience comprehends.[29]

[29] Further wordplays on Telemakhos' name include 2.363ff. (by Eurykleia), 19.86ff. (by Odysseus), and 1.297 (discussed below). On the suitors as unable to control their own irony, see below.

That Athene makes wordplays is a consistent part of her characterization. She is the first character in the *Odyssey* to associate *ὀδύσσομαι with the name Odysseus (1.62), the capping instance of a series of wordplays (1.47-62). Her plays on Telemakhos' name include a further instance, again conveying a tone of mild rebuke, when, in her first visit, she suggests it is time for him to grow up, οὐκέτι τηλίκος ἐσσί (1.297), a non-etymological collocation. Rank (38) notes a further instance when she offers Odysseus encouragement during the *Mnesterophonia*, ἄντα μνηστήρων ὀλοφύρεαι ἄλκιμος εἶναι; . . . ὄφρα ἰδῇς οἷός . . . Μέντωρ Ἀλκιμίδης εὐεργεσίας ἀποτίνειν (22.232-5).

Punning is most visibly part of Odysseus' characterization, in the *Odyssey* and in the *Iliad*. Martin (64) notes a pun on Aulis in Odysseus' remarks to Akhilleus, ἐγγὺς γὰρ νηῶν καὶ τείχεος αὖλιν ἔθεντο (*Il.* 9.232), a non-etymological collocation. When Agamemnon addresses Odysseus with some provocation, Odysseus responds with a partial *figura etymologica*, ὄψεαι, ἢν ἐθέλῃσθα καὶ αἴ κέν τοι τὰ μεμήλῃ, / Τηλεμάχοιο φίλον πατέρα προμάχοισι μιγέντα ("you will see, if you should wish and if such things are important to you, Telemakhos' own father mixing with the front-fighters," 4.354-5; Martin 70). Much like Athene in the *Odyssey*, Odysseus finds possibility for rebuke in a play on his son's name.[30] Martin (123) adduces Odysseus' opening boast to Sokos, ὦ Σῶχ', Ἱππάσου υἱὲ δαΐφρονος ἱπποδάμοιο (11.450), a *figura etymologica*. Given the broad distribution of wordplays he makes in both epics, we can assert that such capacity is either traditionally part of his characterization or is at least consistently part of his Homeric conception, whether as wily schemer or as one whose verbal powers parallel those of the poet himself.

In accord with the *Odyssey*'s tendency to celebrate the complementarity of Odysseus and Penelope, punning is a consistent component in Penelope's characterization. Both characters are subtle speakers who use a full array of verbal devices. Penelope's wordplay is very specific: she is perhaps the most frequent wielder of deformation in Homeric epic. We earlier noted her repeated deformation, οἴχετ' ἐποψόμενος Κακοΐλιον οὐκ ὀνομαστήν (19.260 = 19.597 = 23.19), and her similar noun compound, ἥδε δὴ ἠὼς εἶσι δυσώνυμος, ἥ μ' Ὀδυσῆος (19.571). Penelope is on the receiving end of deformation when Telemakhos rebukes her for remaining aloof from Odysseus, μῆτηρ ἐμή, δύσμητηρ (23.97).[31] She repeatedly uses negated noun

[30] See Higbie 159, on the unique paedonymic here and at *Il.* 2.260; cf. Rank 69.

[31] Rank 66 suggests an additional wordplay, ἀπηνέα playing on Penelope; if so, another deformation. Cf. Penelope's own use of ἀπηνής, 19.329.

compounds,[32] her speech about the gates of dreams containing a notable cluster of non-etymological collocation and negative compounds,

> ξεῖν', ἦ τοι μὲν ὄνειροι ἀμήχανοι ἀκριτόμυθοι
> γίγνοντ', οὐδέ τι πάντα τελείεται ἀνθρώποισι.
> δοιαὶ γάρ τε πύλαι ἀμενηνῶν εἰσὶν ὀνείρων·
> αἱ μὲν γὰρ κεράεσσι τετεύχαται, αἱ δ' ἐλέφαντι·
> τῶν οἳ μέν κ' ἔλθωσι διὰ πριστοῦ ἐλέφαντος,
> οἵ ῥ' ἐλεφαίρονται, ἔπε' ἀκράαντα φέροντες . . .
> ἥδε δὴ ἠὼς εἶσι δυσώνυμος, ἥ μ' Ὀδυσῆος
> οἴκου ἀποσχήσει. . . . (19.560-5, 571-2)

In one of the densest such concatenations in Homeric epic,[33] she fashions a non-etymological collocation on ἐλέφαντι / ἐλέφαντος and ἐλεφαίρονται, and δυσώνυμος, while an instance of deformation also functions as a non-etymological collocation with Ὀδυσῆος.[34] The interview between Penelope and Odysseus features a most complex interweaving of intricate narrative techniques, wordplay among them.

To consider Penelope's wordplays, we must take their larger context into account. The wordplays (19.560-72) occur in a speech about possible meaning embedded in dreams. Her previous speech (19.509-53), recounting the dream itself, makes use of similar wordplays and negative compounds, ἀμέτρητον (512), ὀδυρομένη (513), ὀδυρομένην (517), ἀηδὼν . . . ἀείδῃσιν (518-9), ἀπερείσια (529), and χαλίφρων (530). Puns figure prominently earlier in the interview. Penelope first uses the deformation, Κακοΐλιον (19.260), after the stranger passes her test about Odysseus' clothing. She repeats it immediately after proposing the contest with the bow (19.597). The final two instances of *ὀδύσσομαι both occur shortly before Penelope's two speeches. In Odysseus' report to Penelope, he declares that Odysseus was delayed, ὀδύσαντο γὰρ αὐτῳ / Ζεύς τε καὶ Ἥλιος, "for both Zeus and Helios *hated* him"(19.275-6).[35]

The intervening bathing scene with Eurykleia (19.317-507) involves further wordplay, perhaps the most significant in the poem. When Penelope notes that Eurykleia used to care for Odysseus when young, she refers to him

[32] Cf. her extraordinary couplet: . . . ἄφρονα ποιῆσαι καὶ ἐπίφρονά περ μάλ' ἐόντα, / καί τε χαλιφρονέοντα σαοφροσύνης ἐπέβησαν (23.12-3).

[33] The closest parallel is Athene's speech (*Od.* 1.45-62) discussed above. Cf. Martin's list (65) of puns and assonances in *Il.* 19.321-37, also in Macleod 51-2. Rank 106 notes a further play I have partially obscured, κεράεσσι (563), ἀκράαντα (565), and κραίνουσι (567).

[34] An additional *parechesis* is suggested in ἠὼς and -ῆος, by which Ὀδυσῆος repeats δὺς ἠώς, Rank 60-1. The closest discussion of most of these words remains Amory, esp. 16-33, see also Felson-Rubin 32, Bergren 1983b.

[35] Near ὀδύσαντο (275) are also ὀδύρεται (265), Ὀδυσῆ' (267) and Ὀδυσῆος (270).

as δύστηνον (19.354). As she then recognizes the scar, only here does the composer make explicit, in Autolykos' motivation in the name, the connections between the four previous instances of *ὀδύσσομαι and the name Odysseus in the word's final occurrence in the poem (19.407-9).

As book 19 presents us with the climactic wordplay on the name Odysseus, so Penelope, in a thematic parallel, exhibits her own penchant for wordplay. As Odysseus himself and the inset digression about Autolykos both pun on the name Odysseus while Odysseus himself is before her, so Penelope responds with plays on his name and her own complex of deformations. Reflecting on her dream's possible reality, Penelope employs *figura etymologica* or non-etymological collocation, τῶν οἳ μέν κ' ἔλθωσι διὰ πριστοῦ ἐλέφαντος, / οἵ ῥ' ἐλεφαίρονται, ἔπε' ἀκράαντα φέροντες (19.564-5). The dream is true and will be effected, but for Penelope, as it remains enigmatic, she improvises, ironically helping effect the true dream. We know too that the coming dawn *is* linked to Odysseus, as her wordplay suggests, ἥδε δὴ ἠὼς εἶσι δυσώνυμος, ἥ μ' Ὀδυσῆος / οἴκου ἀποσχήσει. Unable to see the larger picture, Penelope wields power in the way that is available to her, verbally negating what she cannot control, refashioning a hostile environment. Her deformations also instantiate the *Odyssey*'s thematic tendency to suppress names. Through deformation speakers, as earlier noted, have it both ways: they utter and refuse to utter the hated name (οὐκ ὀνομαστήν). In her persistent wordplay and deformation, Penelope reveals a powerfully creative presence, sharing narrative powers which the *Odyssey* most often centers in Athene and Odysseus.

I conclude by applying the three classifications to the Polyphemos episode. The name Polyphemos may itself be a pun, an ironic instance of *figura etymologica*, with plays on its literal meaning occurring throughout the episode. "Having many utterances" with some accuracy describes the being who through a curse will wield so much power over Odysseus.[36] It further describes the Kyklops' role in the episode, since for a monster Polyphemos is rather articulate, capable of many varieties of discourse. He asks questions (9.252-5, 355-6). He offers insults (460: οὐτιδανός is discussed below). He is capable of irony, Οὖτιν ἐγὼ πύματον ἕδομαι . . . τὸ δέ τοι ξεινήϊον ἔσται (369-70). His voice itself is terrifying, δεισάντων φθόγγον τε βαρὺν (9.257). He can forcefully say nothing, ὁ δέ μ' οὐδὲν ἀμείβετο νηλέϊ θυμῷ (9.287). A

[36] On "having many utterances" as the likely meaning, see Bergren 1983a 49, 69 n. 27, and Higbie 12.

formula introducing two of his speeches underscores his general power of speech through brief *figura etymologica*, προσέφη κρατερὸς Πολύφημος (9.407, 446).

A context in which an opponent is named "Having many utterances" is naturally appropriate for wordplay. I thus suggest that the name Polyphemos itself helps trigger Odysseus' own famous wordplay, Οὖτις, an extreme instance of deformation.[37] That Odysseus will use puns and that negating his own identity will be necessary for survival are themes carefully developed before Odysseus declares his name as Οὖτις. When Polyphemos asks the location of his ship, Odysseus responds with a falsehood, denying the existence of the ship. He describes this lie in his own speech introduction as δολίοις ἐπέεσσι (9.282), a unique expression in Homeric epic. In addition to introducing the theme of negative and false information as necessary to survival, δολίοις ἐπέεσσι helps establish punning as a theme in the episode. In effect Odysseus is labelling his own tricky mode of discourse with the Kyklops as δόλια ἔπεα, misleading speech. Odysseus claims that Poseidon wrecked their ship,[38] thematically foregrounding the later hostility of the god, and perhaps revealing that his use of language will bring him trouble as well. The wordplay in the encounter is closely tied to the curse. The opposing deities in the *Odyssey*, Athene and Poseidon, evidence their different relations with Odysseus in their opposite manipulations of his name. Poseidon, once Polyphemos is in possession of the name Odysseus, effects the curse, brought about only through use of the name. Athene, however, as we have seen, manipulates the same name in wordplay (1.62).

When Odysseus later declares his "name," he again uses a marked speech introduction, ἔπεσσι προσηύδων μειλιχίοισι (9.363), his phrase signaling the onset of the pun. Declaring himself Οὖτις, Odysseus extends his earlier tactic of providing Polyphemos with misleading, opposite information. A climactic instance of deformation, Οὖτις negates his whole heroic identity. Consider Higbie's analysis (163):

> With this statement . . . Odysseus makes himself unique among Homeric figures: he is the only human ever to lie about his identity. Gods and goddesses may . . . take on false identities, but Odysseus alone of men lies about himself . . . to the Cyclops he denies all identity, calling himself "No-one," which shows again to what extent he is willing to go in order to survive, even to the point of not existing at all.

[37] Οὖτις, while not literally an instance of deformation, clearly functions in much the same way, as discussed below.

[38] A rare instance of irony beyond Odysseus' control as Poseidon will shortly be as hostile to them as in Odysseus' lie. See Heubeck *ad* 9.283-6.

When Οὖτις becomes transformed into μή τις, courtesy of the neighboring Kyklopes (405-6), it becomes an instance of non-etymological collocation on μῆτις, both for the poem's audience and for Odysseus himself who, in noting the effect, repeats the collocation for emphasis, ὡς ὄνομ' ἐξαπάτησεν ἐμὸν καὶ μῆτις ἀμύμων (414). Again the wordplay is bound up with the later curse since the Kyklopes suggest that as μή τίς is harming Polyphemos, he should pray (εὔχεο) to his father Poseidon (410-2, cf. 526-7). Odysseus' climactic deformation thematically parallels Penelope's repeated use of the same figure (e.g., Κακοίλιον, δυσώνυμος), evidencing their *homophrosyne*.

It is not often observed that Polyphemos himself can wield a pun. Having received Odysseus' name as Οὖτις, and having used it several times (369, 408, 455, 460) he twice plays on the name, referring to Οὖτις as οὐτιδανὸς, τά μοι οὐτιδανὸς πόρεν Οὖτις (460), an instance of *figura etymologica*. This manipulation anticipates his later manipulation of the real name *Odysseus* in his curse. In both the *figura etymologica* in οὐτιδανός and the later curse, he tries to exert some control over his opponent by manipulating a name for his own purposes, much as Odysseus has done in concealing his true name. Οὐτιδανός, "of no account," is a confrontational, insulting word; its only other occurrence in the *Odyssey* is when Odysseus so describes Euryalos (8.209), another violator of hospitality.[39] In spite of his own verbal dexterity, however, Polyphemos is ironically inarticulate, victimized by Odysseus, when the οὖτις/μή τις/μῆτις pun reaches full flower. He nonetheless gets the last laugh on Odysseus when he articulates his name in his curse. His own name, Polyphemos, is thus clearly meaningful within the context of this myth, signifying both his own powers of speech, especially with regard to the curse, as well as his ironic defeat at the hands of a superior punster.[40]

Puns indicate manipulation by the speaker. As in flyting speeches and curses, when Homeric characters engage in wordplay, they similarly index their power, their ability to exert control over hostile opponents. Athene, Odysseus and Penelope, among others, use wordplays to their benefit. We

[39] All three instances in the *Iliad* are in highly confrontational scenes as well (1.231, 293, 11.390). Akhilleus refers to himself as οὐτιδανός when his own heroic identity is threatened with negation by Agamemnon, δημοβόρος βασιλεύς. The cannibalistic detail by which Akhilleus characterizes his commander offers a curious parallel with the οὐτιδανός Odysseus against the cannibal Cyclops.

[40] Polyphemos occurs once in the *Iliad* as a proper name (1.264), with possible wordplay, in Nestor's first mention in the poem. The context is rich in references to speaking: Nestor is described as ἡδυεπὴς . . . λιγὺς Πυλίων ἀγορητής, / τοῦ καὶ ἀπὸ γλώσσης μέλιτος γλυκίων ῥέεν αὐδή (1.248-9). The occurrence of the name in this passage may be the composer's sly aside at his character's prolixity.

might contrast the example of the suitors, who attempt to use the same devices but whose essential lack of power is instead revealed with great irony. At the moment when Theoklymenos lays bare their immediate doom in the most direct prophecy in the *Odyssey*, an unnamed suitor responds with a deformational compound, Τηλέμαχ', οὔ τις σεῖο κακοξεινώτερος ἄλλος ("Telemakhos, no one else is more unlucky in guests than you," 20.376). While the suitor assumes he is wittily putting Telemakhos in his place by mocking both his unsightly guest and the seemingly incredible prophet, Theoklymenos, the force of the word more accurately but ironically refers to the suitors' own fast-approaching doom. The ξεῖνος of Telemakhos will truly have an impact on them which anyone would characterize as κακός.[41] However, the suitors' attempts at limiting Odysseus' and Telemakhos' power reveal their own inability to interpret what is really before them. By contrast, for Odysseus and Penelope such compounds and negations are signs of power and comprehension, involved in heroic deeds.

While I have not covered all examples or even all types of Homeric puns, I have demonstrated their frequency in Homeric narrative and their concomitance with names. The sound play can perhaps be taken as additional evidence of the oral nature or background of the text, and would have been better appreciated by, and far more apparent to, a listening audience. The three classifications suggested here can provide a framework for investigation of other passages, instances of characterization, or additional issues.

[41] Cf. Amphimedon's retrospective description of their deaths by Odysseus as ἠμετέρου θανάτοιο κακὸν τέλος (24.124), Ὀδυσῆα κακός ποθεν ἤγαγε δαίμων (24.149), τὼ δὲ μνηστῆρσιν θάνατον κακὸν ἀρτύναντε (24.153).

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