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Odysseus' Scar once more: Repetition, tradition and fiction in the story of Odysseus' hunting in the mountains of Parnassus*

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The study of the episode of the scar in book 19 of the *Odyssey* shows an interesting textual repetition. We will compare the lines 392-396

αὐτίκα δ' ἔγνω
οὐλήν, τὴν ποτὲ μιν σῦς ἤλασε λευκῷ ὀδόντι
Παρνησόνδ' ἐλθόντα μετ' Αὐτόλυκόν τε καὶ υἴας,
μητρὸς ἐῆς πατέρ' ἐσθλόν, ὃς ἀνθρώπους ἐκέκαστο
κλεπτοσύνη θ' ὄρκῳ τε·

She knew at once
The scar, that a boar inflicted on him with his white tooth
When he'd gone to Parnassus to Autolycus and his sons,
The good father of his mother, who surpassed all men
In thievishness and in oaths.

and 463-466:

Χαῖρον νοστήσαντι καὶ ἐξερέεινον ἕκαστα,
οὐλήν, ὅτι πάθοι· ὁ δ' ἄρα σφίσι εὖ κατέλεξεν
ὡς μιν θηρεύοντ' ἔλασεν σῦς λευκῷ ὀδόντι
Παρνησόνδ' ἐλθόντα μετ' Αὐτόλυκόν τε καὶ υἴας,

[They] rejoiced at his return and asked him all about it,
about the wound he'd suffered. He recounted it fully for them,
how a boar had struck him with his white tooth as he hunted,
When he'd gone to Parnassus to Autolycus and his sons, (Fagles' translation slightly modified).

Only lines 394 and 466 are strictly identical, but we have the impression of a repeated set of lines. The theory of the formula is based on a formulaic phrase or at most on a repeated complete line, not a set of several lines. This is why we are here building on Joseph Russo's analysis of several verses describing the hiding place of Odysseus in a bush in book 5, that of a wild boar in book 19, with a variation that he justifies by the duo tradition form / (poetic) innovation, that we'll comment on later.

We'll try to justify the repetition by a narratological device of collective memory, from the analysis of the composition of the passage, then approach the scar itself as a visible and tangible proof of the successful ephebic test, and eventually tradition, fiction and lying.

* I wish to express my gratitude to the organizers of the conference, especially Deborah Beck and the University of Austin team, as well as for the editing task, and to Stephen Rojcewicz for his kind and accurate help in correcting my English. I am much indebted to the anonymous referee for this publication. My title intends to suggest that the story of the scar was often repeated after the first performance by Odysseus himself, which I'll try to argue.

1. *The composition of the passage by interlocking*

To highlight the central place of the hunting story, and thus justify its presence in the text, we must first explain the subtle composition of the entire book 19 of the *Odyssey*.¹

The book begins with a scene between Odysseus as beggar and Telemachus, who will hide the weapons that were previously in the megaron, to prevent the suitors from using them (v. 1-52). Penelope descends from her room and wants to question the beggar after an altercation between him and the maid Melantho (v. 53-95). Then begins the *conversation* between Penelope and the beggar² which occupies the rest of the song, with, among other details, the story of the trick of the weaving, which lasted three years but was then foiled by the complicity of the servants with the suitors (v. 96-316). Penelope orders the bath for the beggar who had explicitly asked for an elderly servant (v. 317-384).

The scene of recognition is inserted here, in the middle of the conversation between Penelope and the beggar. This is the interaction between Eurycleia and the beggar, until the sudden recognition of the scar (see 392-393: ἀντίκα δ' ἔγνω / οὐλήν), which leads to the flashback of the hunt (393-396)³, which is itself prefaced by an account of the past concerning the way in which Autolycos gave his name to his daughter's baby (399-412). The story of the journey of Odysseus as a teenager to his grandfather and the hunt on Parnassus then resumes (v. 412-466) including details of his wound (v. 449-451), the care given to him, his return to Ithaca, and the rich gifts received, but especially the story of the victorious hunt that he told to his family. The rest of the bathing scene then takes place (v. 467-508) and the conversation with Penelope resumes (v. 509-599) with the queen's comparison of herself to "Pandareüs' daughter" and the episode of the dream.⁴

We can schematize this construction in a table that highlights four levels of the story, observing of course that levels 1 and 2 occur in the same time period, but with different characters, while the other two occur in previous times, the hunting and wounding at the time of Odysseus' youth, and Autolycos' choice of Odysseus' name some time after his birth. So time passes normally throughout the scene with Penelope, then Eurycleia and again Penelope, while two stories occur during a previous level, the time of the hunt and the injury, with a second flashback to the narrative of Autolycos and the name of Odysseus.⁵

The vertical symbol ↓ shows the flow of time (levels 1 and 2), and the reverse symbol ↑ shows the flashbacks on two different levels.

↓ level 1 (time of the *Odyssey*)
Odysseus -Telemachus
Odysseus as beggar -Melantho
Odysseus as beggar - Penelope
↓ level 2 Odysseus as beggar - Eurycleia

¹ See Rutherford 1992, 182-4.

² D. Beck 2005, O. Levaniouk 2011.

³ Russo in the *Commentary* (1992, 2004), de Jong 1985, Goff 1991.

⁴ Our analysis of the inserted narration into book 19 may show some parallels with Kelly's analysis of book 23, with the recognition scene between Penelope and Odysseus, and its 'interruption', as a "specifically 'orally-derived' strategy" (2012, 4).

⁵ M. Alden analyzes the whole passage among *para-narratives*, presenting "crucial stages in Odysseus' growing up" (Alden 2017, 184, under the interesting subtitle "growing up unchronologically"). Without building on *Rites of passage* and Van Gennep as we do, she insists on the importance of ἡβήσας in 19.410 (Alden 2017, 190-91). See Rutherford 1992, ad loc., 186.

↑level 3 hunting and injury
↑↑level 4 Autolycos and the name of Odysseus
↑level 3 hunting and injury

↯ level 2 Odysseus as beggar - Eurycleia
↯ level 1 Odysseus beggar - Penelope

It seems to me that this complexity can be interpreted by the fact that the two levels 3 and 4, inserted in the bathing scene in which Odysseus and Eurycleia are away from Penelope, both take place in the consciousness of Eurycleia.⁶ Or at least that interpretation is one possibility; we will return to this point.

2. *The scar, the trace of the injury and the test*

Few scholars have thought of looking at the composition of the story and its content from the point of view of ‘rites of passage’ analyzed by Arnold Van Gennep.⁷ I have already examined various ways of reading and interpreting this strange phenomenon in several settings.⁸ There are various traits which appear to be characteristic of the rites of passage.

The age of Odysseus at the time of the hunt is almost the same as that of Telemachus at the time of the story of the *Odyssey*,¹⁰ it seems, rather close to the ephebia of the Classical period studied by Vidal-Naquet,¹¹ which is very much in keeping with Van Gennep's framework under the term of “rites of puberty”. One thinks of the words of Autolycus at the moment when he names Odysseus, and in particular to his use of ὀππὸτ' ἄν ἠβήσας in v. 410.¹² A study of the occurrences of ἠβη based on the analysis of all Homeric usages shows that this term designating an age of life implies that it is conceived symmetrically to old age, γέρας, as a threshold, a specific point in the life stage: the idiomatic expressions in Homer's case mean “touching the term of the *hebe*” and “reaching the threshold of old age”, with a metaphorical value of the word designating the threshold, ἐπὶ γήραος οὐδόν. In other words, youth and old age were metaphorically conceived as thresholds and linked to rites of passage.¹³

⁶ For Auerbach, Odysseus' memory is concerned. De Jong defines the passage as “Eurycleia's embedded focalization” (2001, 477) and thinks that suspense comes from retardation (“Homeric tendency to create *suspense through retardation”, *ibid.*).

⁷ See however Rubin Felson and Merritt Sale 1983 and Dowden 1999: we'll come back later to his interpretation. In *The Black Hunter*, Pierre Vidal-Naquet took into account other hunting scenes much less well-known and hunters much less illustrious than Odysseus, and neither Vernant nor Vidal-Naquet, in their analyses of the *Odyssey*, discussed this scene and its background.

⁸ Létoublon 1986, Alaux – Létoublon 2005.

¹⁰ See Dowden 1999, particularly 230: “The identity of Odysseus is not just a question that happens to be asked or raised because he travels a lot in countries where, for realistic reasons, he is not recognized; it is also about establishing what that identity is, how it impacts on others, and how it matters.” Then 231: “His identity and how he proves that identity is a constant question. One striking proof is the scar gained on a plainly initiatory boar hunt, recognized by the nurse responsible for the childhood from which he was then exiting.”

¹¹ Vidal-Naquet 1981, 2004³.

¹² For the age of Telemachus at the beginning of the *Odyssey*, there are several parallels in a formulaic variation situation: *Od.* 18.217 νῦν δ', ὅτε δὴ μέγας ἔσσι καὶ ἠβης μέτρον ἰκάνεις and 19.532 νῦν δ' ὅτε δὴ μέγας ἔστι καὶ ἠβης μέτρον ἰκάνει, and, specifically evoking the time when the beard comes to the chin, 18.269 αὐτὰρ ἐπὶν δὴ παῖδα γενειήσαντα ἴδῃαι. See Létoublon 2010.

¹³ Létoublon 1992, 95-99.

In the story, the family context of the hunt seems to be crucial, especially the roles of the maternal grandfather and uncles. It is known that maternal uncles had an important role in the initiatory rites of young men in several Indo-European societies.¹⁴ This role could refer to a very old parallel; the linguistic data are in accord with certain mythological stories showing the importance of the maternal relatives, especially uncles, in the training of young men. Note that according to the story of the *Odyssey*, Odysseus is invited to this hunt by his maternal grandfather,¹⁵ but that he physically participates with his uncles, the grandfather being then, probably, too old to accompany them.

The geographical setting of the hunt is the mountainous and wild region of Parnassus: an example of what Van Gennep called the ‘margin stage’.¹⁶ It is a space outside the normal society in which the young man lives – Ithaca for Odysseus in this case. The region of Parnassus is a wild space where events do not occur in accordance with the usual laws of society.¹⁷ He goes first to his maternal grandfather, where a sumptuous party takes place, then to the nearby mountain with his uncles.¹⁸

The hunted animal, a wild boar, is to be compared with another monstrous Homeric boar, that of Calydon, and thus with the heroic characters of Meleager in book 9 of the *Iliad*, and the huntress Atalanta, not mentioned in Homer but already present in the legend during the Archaic period, according to the testimony of the François vase,¹⁹ where we see clearly in the first ranks of hunters a woman, characterized as such by her clothes, and identified by the name written near the character's head, ΑΤΑΛΑΤΗ (Atala[n]te). Much later, Ovid will develop in the *Metamorphoses* the theme of this huntress, but this vase found in an Etruscan tomb shows the popularity of the motif in the archaic period, indicating the existence since the archaic period of oral traditions or written texts that have not been preserved.²⁰ The Homeric era possibly already knew these versions.

An important detail in the narrative is the symmetry between the two adversaries, the wild boar and Odysseus who injure each other, v. 449-454

ὁ δὲ μιν φθάμενος ἔλασεν σῶς
 γουνὸς ὕπερ, πολλὸν δὲ διήφυσε σαρκὸς ὀδόντι
 λικριφίς ἀΐξας, οὐδ' ὀστέον ἵκετο φωτός.
 τὸν δ' Ὀδυσσεὺς οὔτησε τυχῶν κατὰ δεξιὸν ὄμιον,
 ἀντικρὺ δὲ διήλθε φαεινοῦ δουρὸς ἀκωκή·
 κὰδ δ' ἔπεσ' ἐν κόνιησι μακῶν, ἀπὸ δ' ἔπατο θυμός.

¹⁴ The maternal family seems to have played a major role in Indo-European societies: see on this point Benveniste 1969, 223-31, available in English as *Dictionary of Indo-European Concepts and Society*, 2016. See also Jan Bremmer, 1983.

¹⁵ See the evocation of the grandfather's words: ὀπιότ' ἄν ἠβήσας (line 410) already noted.

¹⁶ Van Gennep does not cite hunting among the rites of passage, but the theme is well documented from the point of view of anthropology. Bertrand Hell 1994 shows in particular the link between hunting and war and the importance of blood in hunting. For ancient Indo-European societies, see the Hittite account of Aqhat's death (Husser 2008). In Greece itself, Brelich was hardly interested in the archaic period in *Paidēs e parthenoi* (1969), but the studies of Vidal-Naquet on various characters and institutions (the Jason of *Pythian IV*, Melanthes and Melanion, mythology and rituals, Orestes, the Apatouries, see Alaux 2010), have amply demonstrated the existence of the role of hunting as a rite of passage in mythology and rituals. The discussion of Vidal-Naquet's thesis by Barringer 2001 calls into question the date of certain ephemeral rituals in Attica but does not seem to compromise the entire *Black Hunter*. See also Pellizer 1981 and Pellizer 2011.

¹⁷ See Charpentier ed. 2004, and Charpentier 2015; Mauduit 2006 deals more specifically with Homer. The context of the Calydon Hunt in book 9 of the *Iliad* unfortunately lacks any description.

¹⁸ See the references above (n. 14).

¹⁹ A black-figure crater, dating from 570 BC. signed by the potter Ergotimos and the painter Clitias, kept in Florence, Arch. Museum, see François Lissarague 1999: 10-21.

²⁰ These legends were conveyed in part by the Epic Cycle, of which we have only a few fragments, but which influenced in particular the tragedians of the classical period. See Fantuzzi & Tsagalis 2015.

But the boar was quicker, and struck him
 Above the knee, tearing far through his flesh with a tooth,
 Jerking sideways, but he didn't reach the man's bone.
 Odysseus wounded him, striking down on his right shoulder,
 And the shiny spear's point went straight on through him.
 He fell down squealing in the dust, and his spirit flew away.

Note particularly that the line dedicated to the death of the wild boar uses an expression that is usually applied to humans.²¹ This is to show that the young Odysseus faces a formidable opponent and that Odysseus is victorious. Another feature of this symmetry between Odysseus and wild boar has recently been shown by Alex Purves after Joseph Russo: the wild boar is lurking in a dense thicket, similar to that in which Odysseus hides on arrival, after the terrible storm he suffered, on the shore of the Phaeacians.²² The account of the hunt in Parnassus, which is prefaced by details about Autolycos and the story of Odysseus' naming, shows the ordeal that made Odysseus a man; it is therefore at the heart of song 19, which is essential to its epic character.²³

In verses 395 to 412 note the relation to the identity and the theme of the naming of Odysseus, with a folk etymology, but given as an actual explanation, connecting it to the disagreeable nature of Autolycus:

ὄς ἀνθρώπους ἐκέκαστο
 κλεπτοσύνη θ' ὄρκω τε· θεὸς δέ οἱ αὐτὸς ἔδωκεν
 Ἑρμείας· τῷ γὰρ κεχαρισμένα μηρία καῖεν
 ἀρνῶν ἢ δ' ἐρίφων· ὁ δέ οἱ πρόφρων ἄμ' ὀπήδει.
 Αὐτόλυκος δ' ἔλθων Ἰθάκης ἐς πῖονα δῆμον
 παῖδα νέον γεγαῶτα κιχήσατο θυγατέρος ἧς·
 τὸν ρά οἱ Εὐρύκλεια φίλοισ' ἐπὶ γούνασι θῆκε
 παυομένῳ δόρποιο, ἔπος τ' ἔφατ' ἔκ τ' ὀνόμαζεν·
 "Αὐτόλυκ', αὐτὸς νῦν ὄνομ' εὖρεο, ὅττι κε θεῖο
 παιδὸς παιδὶ φίλῳ· πολυάρητος δέ τοί ἐστι."
 τὴν δ' αὖτ' Αὐτόλυκος ἀπαμείβετο φώνησέν τε·
 "γαμβρὸς ἐμὸς θυγατέρ τε, τίθεσθ' ὄνομ', ὅττι κεν εἴπω·
 πολλοῖσιν γὰρ ἐγὼ γε ὀδυσσάμενος τόδ' ἰκάνω,

²¹ καὶ δ' ἔπεσ' ἐν κονίησι μακόν, ἀπὸ δ' ἔπατο θυμός· *Il.* 16.469, *Od.* 10.163, 18.95 for the whole line. See also a variation in *Il.* 14.418, ὡς ἔπεσ' Ἐκτορος ὄκα χαμαὶ ἐν κονίησι.

²² Purves 2014 connects *Od.* 19.428-443 with *Od.* 5.483-493, with the use of the adjective πυκνός, πυκνός in particular. This allows her to characterize the description as *thick*, 'dense,' and vigorously challenge Auerbach's 'flatness': "Auerbach's invitation to think about Homeric style in terms of surface, flatness and depth, therefore, opens the door to a consideration of what we might call 'thin' vs. 'thick' poetics, and in particular how the combined spatio-temporal texture of πυκνός applies to oral poetics and its many formal features, such as the laying on of description and epithet, the extensive embedding of similes, digressions, and inset narratives within the main narrative, and the practice of stacking and circling by means of ring composition." For a critique of Auerbach's analysis, see also Lentini 2015, 384: "[...] Omero è in grado, *pace* Auerbach, di rappresentare uno sviluppo (il 'divenire') dei suoi personaggi: che altro se non un processo di maturazione caratteriale è suggerito dal contrasto tra l'imprudente e giovane Odisseo sul Parnaso e il cauto e astuto eroe che ritorna dopo tanti anni nel suo palazzo spacciandosi per un mendicante?"

²³ On the hypothesis of interpolation, see Abramowiczowna 1980 who sees Aristotle's allusion to the wound received in Parnassus (*Poet.* 1451a 23 πλεγγῆναι μὲν ἐν Παρνάσσῳ) as implying that the tale of the hunt existed in the *Odyssey*.

ἀνδράσιν ἠδὲ γυναιξὶν ἀνὰ χθόνα βωτιάειραν
τῷ δ' Ὀδυσσευς ὄνομ' ἔστω ἐπώνυμον

who surpassed all men
in thievishness and in oaths. The god Hermes himself
had given them to him, for he'd burned the thighs
of kids and lambs to him, and Hermes graciously favored him.
Autolycus had come to the rich kingdom of Ithaca
And met his daughter's new-born son.
Eurycleia laid him on his dear knees,
When he was finishing supper, spoke his name, and said:
“Autolycus, you yourself now find a name that you can give
to the child of your child. He's surely long prayed for.”
Autolycus in turn replied to her and said:
“My son-in-law and daughter, give him whatever name I say.
Since I come to this as one who's been angry with many
Men and women throughout the earth that feeds many,
Therefore let Odysseus be the name he's named by.”

It does not matter to our eyes whether this etymology of Ὀδυσσεύς from ὀδυσσάμενος (note the middle voice involving reciprocity) is linguistically accurate or not; what matters is that the symbolic name²⁴ is given by the maternal grandfather, who summons his grandson, when he is a teenager, for the initiatory ordeal which he will undergo in his grandfather's region.²⁵ The sequence of the narrative thus shows the extent to which the hero's identity is associated with his lineage and name, and to this hunt.²⁶

Regarding the maternal lineage of Odysseus, Autolycos is a troublesome character, linked by his name to the wolf.²⁷ William B. Stanford has rightly insisted on this disturbing personality, which perhaps explains some troubling aspects of the character of Odysseus himself, often referred to as a *trickster*.²⁹

Let us come to the scar itself, which the Greek designates by the word οὐλή.³⁰ the physical trace on the skin of the hero of the wound made by the boar, according to the implicit context

²⁴ Dimock, 1965; Rutherford 1992, 183; Russo 1993; Alden 2017, p. 185-8.

²⁵ Russo 1993, 55: “On the level of narrative and of social ritual, he is completing the invitation offered by Autolykos at his birth to formally mark his emerging adulthood by receiving gifts and undergoing the rite of passage into the world of adult men who know how to kill. On the level of name symbolism, as Dimock noted, he is acting out the reciprocal dimension of the middle voice of the verb *odyssasthai*: he is both giving and getting pain, stirring up the anger of the boar and matching it with his own anger. The trip to Parnassos represents the completion of a process of growing up whose very beginning was shown in the baptismal act of giving the child a name. The full meaning of that name must be acquired, and lived up to, by performance of an action that is simultaneously the first ‘odysseusing’ and a paradigm example of what it means to ‘odysseus’.”

²⁶ On the (proper) names in Greek and their relationship to the person, see Salvatore 1987, on this passage of the *Odyssey* in particular, 15-24. In French and English, the proper name is distinguished from the common name as a particular name, but ancient Greek distinguishes etymologically only the names of persons, toponyms, and other proper names, constantly designated as *onomata*; that is, the Greek name is first a proper name, and only very secondarily what we call a ‘common’ name.

²⁷ *Auto-lycos* (composed of αὐτο-λύκος) seems to mean ‘wolf himself’.

²⁹ Stanford dedicates to the “grandson of Autolykos” the second chapter of his book, *The Ulysses Theme. A Study in the Adaptability of a Traditional Hero*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1968².

³⁰ Although Chantraine's *Etymological Dictionary of the Greek Language* (s.v.) states that this is a “healed wound”, it seems to me that the Greek does not distinguish the fresh, bloody wound from the healed wound, the trace on the skin. Chantraine seeks to remove the parallel of the Latin *uolnus* ‘injury’ which “is difficult”, but it seems to me that we should not give up studying the coherence of οὐλή. See also the *Chronicle of Greek*

of the passage, is the physical sign (σῆμα) of the successful passage in the initiatory trial of the young man in the mountain far from his father's home. What, in fact, is a scar, if not an indelible sign of identity, and thus a part of the 'personal sphere' of an individual, in addition to their name and ancestry? The skin (Gr. χρώς or δέρμα) is fragile,³¹ unlike metal armor, which functions precisely to protect it in battle.³²

Odysseus' scar, which is first recognized by Eurykleia, then recognized by Eumaios and Philoitios (21.217-221),³³ is a physical trace of the ephebic test experienced at the age of passage into adulthood in the mountains of Parnassus, visible evidence that he successfully faced a wild animal. Despite the skepticism of Alain Schnapp on this point,³⁴ we think, like Nancy Felson Rubin and William M. Sale³⁵ and like Ken Dowden,³⁶ that hunting in these episodes, and especially killing a wild animal, constitutes an initiatory trial. Therefore the scar, at the return from Parnassus, was a proof of the success in the hunt test, which could be shown, or even exhibited as such.

3. Repetition, tradition, and fiction

Let us go back to the repetition of lines 393-95 and 464-66 mentioned above. Since the theory of the formula concerns at most a whole repeated line, not a set of several lines, we return to Joseph Russo's analysis of the similarity between the lines describing Odysseus' hiding in a thicket in book 5 and those describing the boar in hiding in book 19, with a variation he justifies with the duo formulaic tradition / poetic innovation. Russo shows that the description of the thicket in which the wild boar is hidden at the time of the attack literally reproduces, aside from the mention of the olive tree, the passage of book 5 describing the bush in which Odysseus is hidden. The similarity between both "protective enclave(s)" appears building a "network of renewal-symbolism", drawing the question of this "womb-like enclosure" applied in book 19 "not to the hero but to his adversary the boar". The author answers with a close analysis of the "transference of attributes between Odysseus and the boar", who as said above "exchange wounds": "Odysseus has met his "animal other", killed him, and taken on the animal power of the boar as a constituent element of his next manhood."³⁷ Thus the repetition of the thicket as a hiding place for the hero and the boar, and the difference between these episodes is a feature of Homer's subtle use of tradition and of his creativity.³⁸

Returning to our instance of repetition in book 19, let us note that the introduction of the set is different: the *touch* by Eurykleia draws the recognition (ἔγνω) in the first

Etymology, art. signed by C. de Lamberterie, 1339-1340. "Ἐλκος refers more specifically to a "festering wound, sore, ulcer" (L.S.J.).

³¹ *Il.* 4.510 explains it clearly: ἐπεὶ οὐ σφι λίθος χρώς οὐδὲ σίδηρος, "because their skin is neither stone nor iron."

³² Sauzeau and Van Compernelle 2007.

³³ Anghelina 2014.

³⁴ Schnapp 1997.

³⁵ Felson Rubin and Sale 1983.

³⁶ Dowden 1999, 230, quoted above n.10. See also Goff 1991, 262: "While the scar proves Odysseus' identity to Eurykleia (and later on, to the swineherd and drover and to Laërtes), the episode that produced the scar helped to establish that identity in the first place. In saying this I do not mean only that the story is bound up with the way in which Autolykos named Odysseus (19.406), but also that it brings into play the important figure of the hunt."

³⁷ Russo 1993, 58. Having thus explained why the bush is the same in book 5 and 19, he notes that the olive-trees convenient for Odysseus in the first case disappear for the boar in the second.

³⁸ Russo 1993, 58-9: "his creativity and sense of realism lead him to transform the enclave into a hiding place for the boar, i.e. to transform the λέχος into the distantly related λόχη. And once it is the boar who is protected and not Odysseus, Homer quietly suppresses the presence of the olive: this thicket is πυκινὴ (19, 439) as the bushes of the earlier scene were πυκνοί (5, 480), but we are not told what kind of bush grows there to create such density."

occurrence,³⁹ while Odysseus' parents' questions (ἐξερέεινον, 19.463) elicit the mention of the scar in the second. The phrase which follows in the first occurrence, οὐλήν, τήν ποτέ μιν σῦς ἤλασε λευκῷ ὀδόντι is replaced in the second occurrence by the indirect question (οὐλήν, ὅτι πάθοι) that completes ἐξερέεινον. In the first, the relative clause after οὐλήν explains the origin of the scar, whereas in the second, Odysseus' response to his parents' interrogation is recorded in indirect discourse, introduced by ὥς. In both 394 and 465, σῦς is the subject and μιν the object of the same verb, (ἤλασε, 394; ἔλασεν, 465), albeit with an inversion of word order: μιν σῦς ἤλασε (394), μιν θηρεύοντ' ἔλασεν σῦς (465). The verse ending λευκῷ ὀδόντι is identical in both passages, preparing the identical line that follows. In the second occurrence, the introduction of Odysseus' ambiguous maternal grandfather is not repeated since here it is unnecessary.

Why does the narrator repeat οὐλήν and the lines on the wild boar coming out of its thicket to wound young Odysseus? It seems to me that the answer is clear: Odysseus' hunt in the mountains of Parnassus is part of the *tradition* concerning Odysseus, like the episodes of the stories told to the Phaeacians, the way he escapes the Cyclops Polyphemus or the contest of the bow for the recovery of Penelope.⁴⁰

We can go a little further by returning to the link between the sequence ἐξερέεινον - κατέλεξεν in relation to the composition of the book. The repeated couplet intervenes at the moment of Eurycleia's outburst and at the end of the hunting narrative, just before the resumption of the main narrative describing Eurycleia's recognition of Odysseus, thus framing this story in a very subtle manner.⁴¹ The second occurrence tells precisely how this story originated in the tradition: on his return from the expedition to Parnassus, Odysseus' relatives asked him about his scar - at that time better visible than on the later occasion of the bath. Odysseus told in detail⁴² the whole episode to answer their explicit questions.⁴³ He is therefore considered the *first author-narrator* of this tradition, the *first performer* of the story to use Bakker's terminology.⁴⁴ And the verse that summarizes it serves as a transition to the rest of the story.

This remark may resonate with another question: who is talking or thinking about this story of the scar? It seems to me that, once again, the answer is clear: from the detailed account that Odysseus made of the hunting episode when he returned to Ithaca, an oral tradition was created about how he acquired the scar that characterizes him, and it is the narrative from this tradition that entails the repetition of the word οὐλήν in verses 393 and 395. It is therefore not the memory of Odysseus that is here in question, as suggested by Auerbach, nor that of

³⁹ I noticed the importance of ἔγνω and of verbs of touching before reading Montiglio's 2018 paper: it was a pleasure to see the convergence of our analyses. However we don't agree on the interpretation of ἐπιμασσομένη: for me from ἐπιμάσσω, for her from ἐπιμαίομαι. My interpretation insists on the sense of touching, see also ἄπτομαι in the context. On the importance of the sense of touch, see also Mueller 2016.

⁴⁰ Kelly 2012, 5: "An important factor in the process was the fact that Homer's audience was not composed of first-timers: they knew that Odysseus would be recognised by Penelope, and they were –to varying degrees– familiar with the theme of recognition itself as a traditional narrative sequence."

⁴¹ It is a very complicated instance of "Ringkomposition" mixed with flashback. On this notion as a whole see *Thinking in Circles*, the last book by Mary Douglas (2007), and on Greek literature Van Otterlo 1944, 1948, Minchin 1995, Nimis 1999. In Minchin's terms, the passage could be analyzed as introduction, proleptic summary, recapitulation and return to the context. Nimis' dynamic view of ring-composition as a feature of orality sees the poem in construction, bearing "traces of [human] labor as symptoms of their conflicts, their doubts and their ambivalence." (Nimis 1999: 78). See also Arft 2017, 13.

⁴² On the meaning of κατέλεξεν in relation to κατάλογος 'enumeration', see Krischer 1971, 146-148.

⁴³ In a paper published in *Orality & Literacy* 5, Elizabeth Minchin (2004) shows how important questions and answers are in the *Odyssey* as well as in other oral texts. This passage reflects this importance, all the more so that, whereas her demonstration dwells with direct discourse, we are here in a narration, therefore in indirect discourse.

⁴⁴ Bakker 2009.

Eurycleia only as the composition of the book could imply,⁴⁵ but the *collective memory* shared by the audience of the *Odyssey*.⁴⁶ There is no reason to suppose an interpolation as suggested by some commentators:⁴⁷ on the contrary, the scar of Odysseus is ‘justified’ by this story, preparing the way for other subsequent recognitions.⁴⁸ The passage is focalized through Eurycleia, but her memory is not of the incident itself, nor of Odysseus’ narration of the incident, but of an anonymized ‘traditional’ version of Odysseus’ narration.

Anchored in the nurse’s memory as the composition of the passage implies, this narrative is not an individual memory, but what John Foley called the “traditional referentiality” of an “immanent art”.⁴⁹ The general idea is that there is in oral and oral-derived epics more meaning than the words literally imply: “As firsthand experience with the oral traditional epic of the South Slavs will show, any single performance merely instances an unexpressed, and inexpressible, whole, a larger story that will forever remain beyond the reach of acoustically recorded, oral-dictated, or even written textualization. In that instancing, however, each performance also summons its traditional referent according to the contract that governs the generation of meaning in this art form, so that the necessarily partial reflection of the larger story is actually never incomplete. Even in the case of the ancient Greek and Anglo-Saxon epics, [...] the whole tradition is still manifestly prominent.”⁵⁰ Foley gives several interesting examples in the *Iliad*: Hektor is called “Hektor of the glancing helm” (κορυθαίολος) even when dying (22.355): the phrase “serves as a cognitive channel for the creation of the Trojan champion’s mythic identity via the metonymic dynamics [...]”⁵¹ Later, the phrase φάος ἠελίοιο, occurring six times in the *Iliad*, [in three of them] “performs a particular metonymic service: it emphasizes the depth of sorrow experienced by certain characters and points toward suspension of that sorrow so that some crucial and ameliorative step can be taken.”⁵² The phrase πυκινὸν ἔπος is usually used to express a message of great importance, but in the case of Andromache who longs for such a word from her husband, it takes on a tragic value: “In this traditional context of expectancy engendered by the inherent, immanent meaning of this phrase, Andromache’s mournful complaint that her dead husband did not and cannot leave her a *pykinon epos* reverberates that much more poignantly.”⁵³ And again in the conclusion of the book, when in the Teichoscopy Helen looks for her brothers among the Achaean heroes: “thus she spoke, but the *life-producing earth* (φυσίζοος αἴα) already held them fast”: the phrase means “the earth as both beginning and end”.⁵⁴ “Traditional phrases like ‘the life-producing earth’ do echo against their most immediate surroundings, acting as firm anchors for their rapidly shifting action they help to rationalize. But they do so because Homer has manipulated his diction in a literary manner, managing one clever irony after the next.”⁵⁵

⁴⁵ See de Jong 1985, Goff 1991.

⁴⁶ The notion of collective memory was discovered by Halbwachs 1925, see Halbwachs 1997 and Russell 2006, Ricœur 2004 and Barash 2006, Castagnoli and Ceccarelli 2019.

⁴⁷ See above n. 23.

⁴⁸ As Anghelina (2014, 150, n.13, referring to Köhnken) shows, the story of the scar must have been often repeated: “Thus in order to understand the basic elements told in the last episode, the audience had to be familiar with the whole story, that is, with the one given in Book19.” She does not invoke an oralist hypothesis.

⁴⁹ Foley 1991. Let us recall that the Homeric conception of memory deeply differs from ours: linked to μένος which stems from the same root **mne-h₁*, it has a strong physical content, far from the dichotomy between body and soul (Bakker 2008).

⁵⁰ Foley 1991, XV.XV

⁵¹ Foley 1991, 149.

⁵² Foley 1991, 151-2.

⁵³ Foley 1991, 156.

⁵⁴ Foley 1991, 251.

⁵⁵ Foley 1991, 252.

At this stage of my study, I think that we must go back to Auerbach and Cave, and even to Aristotle. In analyzing the reasons why it seems to him that recognition should be studied rather than mimesis, Cave notes that recognition is always associated with a retrospective narration, a step backwards,⁵⁶ which is emphasized by French *reconnaissance* or English *recognition*.⁵⁷ And among these retrospective narratives, many are misleading. This is why the mimesis naively seen as an imitation of reality can never be equanimous.⁵⁸ In the *Odyssey*, Odysseus' many lies⁵⁹ may suggest that he too can be a usurper. How to prove the truth after supporting so many lies? For Eurycleia, it is the role of the trace on the skin, but for Penelope, who is wary of impostors,⁶⁰ it will take another sign, more secret, more intimate still, that of the conjugal bed. Terence Cave analyzed this well.⁶¹

More importantly, is it not the Homeric narrative that provides us with pitfalls? Aristotle praises Homer for his art of “telling lies, that is to say, false reasonings” (*Poet.* 1460a, Δεδίδαχεν δὲ μάλιστα Ὅμηρος καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους ψευδῆ λέγειν ὡς δεῖ. ἐστὶ δὲ τοῦτο παραλογισμός). He says that Homer taught subsequent generations of poets how to lie, thus inventing fiction. In this perspective, the epic narrative, by its retrospective nature, leads to fiction, including the possibility of lying or at least of a recomposition of the truth.

Let us return to conclude with the scar, with respect to Lévi-Strauss' anthropological analysis of the mask.⁶² There is no parallelism between scar and mask, but perhaps there is an inverse relation? The scar is directly on the skin, as opposed to the mask that can hide it. The mask is

⁵⁶ Cave 1988, 22: “The first thing to notice is that recognition is repeatedly associated throughout the epic with retrospective narrative. The story of the wanderings is told by Odysseus as a consequence and corollary of his recognition by Alcinoüs; he recounts a fictional narrative to Penelope in order to sustain his disguise; and he retells his adventures to Penelope when she has finally let him into her bed. Recognition always reaches back analeptically to earlier narratives; and Odysseus, who –like Chariclea– is a master of deferred recognition, is also a masterly narrator of stories both true and false.”

⁵⁷ As well as ἀνα- in Greek, *wieder-* in German, and so on. Justin Arft interestingly noted in the discussion at the conference that the process of recognition in our passage is referred to by ἔγνω without ἀνα-. I thank him for this remark, which lead me to check the Homeric examples of ἔγνω (with some cases of first and second person): the compound ἀνέγνω is attested in the *Iliad* only once (13.374) whereas ἔγνω is frequently used with the meaning “recognize (a person already met, or sometimes an object)” (*Il.* 1.199, 1.333 = 8.446, 11.526, 13.66, 13.72, 14.154, 16.530, 16.639, 17.32, 17.84, 17.334, 20.20, 20.198, 22.10, 22.296, 23.453, 24.691, 24.698). In the *Odyssey*, ἀνέγνω occurs three times (1.216, 4.250, 21.205), once ἀνέγνων (4.250), but ἔγνω is used even more frequently with the same meaning as ἀνέγνω, as in the *Nekuia*, when Odysseus recognizes his mother's shade (11.153), or in book 7, when the Phaeacian queen recognizes Odysseus' clothing (7.234 ἔγνω γὰρ φᾶρός τε χιτῶνά τε). Of course, we do not forget that ἔγνω may be used, without prefix, to mean “know (somebody or something seen for the first time)”, as is the case in the proem of the *Odyssey*: 1.3 πολλῶν δ' ἀνθρώπων ἴδεν ἄστεα καὶ νόον ἔγνω. To conclude, it seems that ἔγνω predominantly means “recognize” in the *Iliad*, and still in the *Odyssey* though the compound verb is progressing. As it is well known that Homer often uses verbs without their usual preverb (Chantraine 1963: 85-7), which later closely attached to the verb, we can affirm that the simple verb usually meant “recognize”, whereas the use of the prefix was already increasing.

⁵⁸ Cave 1988 compares the ‘true’ story of Martin Guerre with the *Odyssey* and the *Aithiopika*, which shows the difficulties of the return after a long absence: a usurper can take the place of the presumed deceased successfully for several years, including hiding the fact from his wife. Yet another character appears who also claims to be Martin Guerre, and the ensuing trial concludes that the second character is the real Martin Guerre.

⁵⁹ Emlyn-Jones 1986 (1998), Bowie 1993. See also Cave quoted above.

⁶⁰ Penelope says so to Odysseus during their recognition, 23.215-217:

αἰεὶ γὰρ μοι θυμὸς ἐνὶ στήθεσσι φίλοισιν
 ἔρριγει, μὴ τίς με βροτῶν ἀπάφοιτ' ἐπέεσσιν
 ἔλθῶν· πολλοὶ γὰρ κακὰ κέρδεα βουλευούσιν.
 For my heart in my chest ever shivered,
 lest any mortal come and beguile me with words,
 for many scheme for evil gains.

⁶¹ Cave 1988, 24.

⁶² *The Way of the Masks* (1982).

exhibited, the scar is hidden, but it can be revealed through the bath in the Homeric episode, from a ritual denudation in other cases. Perhaps it would be necessary to study precisely the parallels with rites of passage involving masks and scarifications? Admittedly, these are questions and hypotheses, not conclusions.

In this passage, arising from the sensation of the scar under the sensitive fingers of Eurycleia, we have seen the traditional story of the hunt and the traditional story of Odysseus' naming, as noted by Terence Cave and Joseph Russo from very different points of view.⁶³ It is the whole identity of Odysseus, his personal story from birth to adulthood, that comes to be tied together here, shortly before the end of the *Odyssey* by the contest of the bow, the massacre of the suitors and the unfaithful maids. The detail of Autolycus' troublesome personality and the choice of Odysseus' name resonates with the identity of Ulysses, storyteller and liar.

The strongest argument for our case might be the expression in the text of the question orally asked by Odysseus' relatives upon his return from Parnassus, and of the answer he gave to them (ἐξερέεινον- εἶ κατέλεξεν): transposed in indirect discourse, the oral process of answering curiosity is here explicitly told in the *Odyssey*. We see there the audience's eagerness to hear and to understand stories, and the reciprocal desire of satisfying this eagerness. The *traditional story* of the hunt emanated as told first by Odysseus himself, and then by the community around him in order to address the curiosity about the scar on his leg. This story was telling explicitly the expedition in the mountain with his uncles, the fight with the wild boar, the exchange of wounds and the heroic death of the enemy. While *performing* this story, Odysseus probably exhibited his wounded leg, with the scar proving the authenticity of the narrative. The story thus does not say explicitly that Odysseus' slaying of the boar functioned as a ritual test in entering manhood. But this meaning is implied in the repetition of οὐλήν, τὴν ποτέ μιν σὺς ἤλασε λευκῷ ὀδόντι / ...

οὐλήν, ... / ὥς μιν θηρεύοντι ἔλασεν σὺς λευκῷ ὀδόντι in a kind of "metonymic dynamics" as defined above by John Foley. In this circle, the repeated lines entail the hunting and slaying of the wild beast, another self whose lead to manhood the scar was a tangible proof of.⁶⁴

Another argument may be found in the last recognition scene of the *Odyssey*,⁶⁵ when his father Laertes asks for true signs of his identity:⁶⁶ displaying his scar, Odysseus once again tells the story from book 19:

οὐλήν μὲν πρῶτον τήνδε φράσαι ὀφθαλμοῖσι,
τὴν ἐν Παρνησῷ μ' ἔλασεν σὺς λευκῷ ὀδόντι
οἰχόμενον· σὺ δέ με προΐεις καὶ πότνια μήτηρ
ἔς πατέρ' Ἀυτόλυκον μητρὸς φίλον, ὄφρ' ἂν ἐλοίμην
δῶρα, τὰ δεῦρο μολῶν μοι ὑπέσχετο καὶ κατένευσεν. (24.331-335)

"First, look with your eyes at this scar here,
that a boar inflicted on me with a white tooth in Parnassus
when I went there. You and my lady mother sent me
to my mother's dear father, Autolycus, so I could get the gifts
that he promised and nodded yes to when he came here.

⁶³ Cave 1988, Russo 1993.

⁶⁴ Two other repetitions of the formula may be also noted: *Od.*21.219 in the scene of recognition with Eumaios οὐλήν τὴν ποτέ με σὺς ἤλασε λευκῷ ὀδόντι and 23.74 οὐλήν τὴν ποτέ μιν σὺς ἤλασε λευκῷ ὀδόντι in the scene with Penelope, see Anghelina 2014. I think that in all these passages the *collective memory* of Odysseus' first narrative may play an important role in the formula and its variations.

⁶⁵ On this last recognition, see Henderson 1997.

⁶⁶ *Od.*24. 328-329 "εἰ μὲν δὴ Ὀδυσσεύς γε, ἐμός πάϊς, ἐνθάδ' ἰκάνεις, σῆμά τί μοι νῦν εἰπέ ἀριφραδές, ὄφρα πεποιθῶ."

"If you've at last come back here as my son Odysseus, tell me some sign now, a very clear one, so that I can believe you."

Odysseus does not repeat here the precise words from book 19, rather he narrates the story he had told when, coming back from the Parnassus hunt, he explained how he suffered the wound that his relatives saw on his thigh. The *Odyssey* shows here a strong link between individual and collective memory.

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