

Passages for Third CSAIR Session on Homer's *Odyssey*"

Richard Sacks, Columbia University – Item numbers refer to sections on the "Update" handout

#1 (<Item 1A): O's 2nd lie to Penelope in book 19: 19.261ff

'O respected wife of Odysseus, son of Laertes,
no longer waste your beautiful skin nor eat your heart out
in lamentation for your husband. Yet I do not blame you.
For any woman mourns when she loses her wedded husband,
with whom she has lain in love and borne children, even a lesser
man than Odysseus. They say that he was like the immortals.
But now give over your lamentation, and mark what I tell you,
for I say to you without deception, without concealment,
that I have heard of the present homecoming of Odysseus.
He is near, in the rich land of the men of Thesprotia,
and alive, and bringing many treasures back to his household.
He collects this about the district. His eager companions
were lost to him, with his hollow ship, on the wine-blue water
as he left the island of Thrinakia, for Zeus and Helios
hated him, since his companions killed the cattle of Helios.
So they all perished in the wash of the great sea; only
Odysseus, riding the keel, was cast ashore by the sea swell
on the land of the Phaiakians, who are near the immortals;
and they honored him in their hearts as if he had been a divinity,
and gave him much, and they themselves were willing to carry him
home without harm. So Odysseus would have been home a long time
before this, but in his mind he thought it more profitable
to go about and visit much country, collecting possessions.
For Odysseus knew profitable ways beyond all other
men who are mortal, no other man could rival him at it.
So Pheidon, king of the Thesprotians, told me the story;
and he swore to me in my presence, as he poured out a libation
in his house, that the ship was drawn down to the sea, and the crew
were ready
to carry Odysseus back again to his own dear country....

#2 (<Item 1B): the simile Penelope tells O in book 19: 19.512ff

. . . The divinity gave me grief beyond measure.
The day times I indulge in lamentation, mourning
as I look to my own tasks and those of my maids in the palace.
But after the night comes and sleep has taken all others,
I lie on my bed, and the sharp anxieties swarming
thick and fast on my beating heart torment my sorrowing
self. As when Pandareos' daughter, the greenwood nightingale,
perching in the deep of the forest foliage sings out
her lovely song, when springtime has just begun; she, varying
the manifold strains of her voice, pours out the melody, mourning
Itylos, son of the Lord Zethos, her own beloved
child, whom she once killed with the bronze when the madness was
on her;
so my mind is divided and starts one way, then another.
Shall I stay here by my son and keep all in order,
my property, my serving maids, and my great high-roofed house,
keep faith with my husband's bed and regard the voice of the
people,
or go away at last with the best of all those Achaians
who court me here in the palace, with endless gifts to win me?

#3 (<Item 1B): the dream Penelope tells O in book 19: 19.535ff

But come, listen to a dream of mine and interpret it for me.
I have twenty geese here about the house, and they feed on
grains of wheat from the water trough. I love to watch them.

But a great eagle with crooked beak came down from the mountain,
and broke the necks of them all and killed them. So the whole twenty
lay dead about the house, but he soared high in the bright air.
Then I began to weep—that was in my dream—and cried out
aloud, and around me gathered the fair-haired Achaian women
as I cried out sorrowing for my geese killed by the eagle.
But he came back again and perched on the jut of the gabled
roof. He now had a human voice and spoke aloud to me:
"Do not fear, O daughter of far-famed Ikarios.
This is no dream, but a blessing real as day. You will see it
done. The geese are the suitors, and I, the eagle, have been
a bird of portent, but now I am your own husband, come home,
and I shall inflict shameless destruction on all the suitors."
So he spoke; and then the honey-sweet sleep released me,
and I looked about and saw the geese in my palace, feeding
on their grains of wheat from the water trough, just as they had been.

#4 (<Item 2A): Penelope's post-trick-of-the-bed speech: 23.209ff

Do not be angry with me, Odysseus, since, beyond other men,
you have the most understanding. The gods granted us misery,
in jealousy over the thought that we two, always together,
should enjoy our youth, and then come to the threshold of old age.
Then do not now be angry with me nor blame me, because
I did not greet you, as I do now, at first when I saw you.
For always the spirit deep in my very heart was fearful
that some one of mortal men would come my way and deceive me
with words. For there are many who scheme for wicked advantage.
For neither would the daughter born to Zeus, Helen of Argos,
have lain in love with an outlander from another country,
if she had known that the warlike sons of the Achaians would
bring her
home again to the beloved land of her fathers.
It was a god who stirred her to do the shameful thing she
did, and never before had she had in her heart this terrible
wildness, out of which came suffering to us also.
But now, since you have given me accurate proof describing
our bed, which no other mortal man beside has ever seen,
but only you and I, and there is one serving woman,
Aktor's daughter, whom my father gave me when I came here,
who used to guard the doors for us in our well-built chamber;
so you persuade my heart, though it has been very stubborn.

#5 (<Item 2B): the simile immediately after #5 above: 23.232ff

He wept as held his lovely wife, whose thoughts were virtuous.
And as when the land appears welcome to men who are swimming
after Poseidon has smashed their strong-built ship on the open
water, pounding it with the weight of wind and the heavy
seas, and only a few escape the gray water landward
by swimming, with a thick scurf of salt coated upon them,
and gladly they set foot upon the shore, escaping the evil;
so welcome was her husband to her as she looked upon him,
and she could not let him go from the embrace of her white arms.

#6 (<Item 2C): O to P the morning after their reunion: 23.350ff

Dear wife, we both have had our full share of numerous trials
now; yours have been here as you cried over my much-longed-for
homecoming, while as for me, Zeus and the other gods held me
back from my own country, as I was striving to reach it.
But now that we have come to our desired bed together,

you look after my possessions which are in the palace,
but as for my flocks, which the overbearing suitors ruined,
many I shall restore by raiding, others the Achaians
shall give me, until they have filled up all of my sheepfolds.
But now I shall go to our estate with its many orchards,
to see my noble father who has grieved for me constantly.
But I tell you this, my wife, though you have your own
understanding.

Presently, when the sun rises, there will be a rumor
about the men who courted you, whom I killed in our palace.
Then go to the upper chamber with your attendant women,
and sit still, looking at no one, and do not ask any questions.

#7 (<Item 3A): O deciding how to approach his father: 24.232ff

Now when much-enduring great Odysseus observed him,
with great misery in his heart, and oppressed by old age,
he stood underneath a towering pear tree and shed tears for him,
and deliberated then in his heart and his spirit
whether to embrace his father and kiss him and tell him
everything, how he was come again to his own dear country,
or question him first about everything, and make trial of him.
In the division of his heart this way seemed best to him,
first to make trial of him and speak in words of mockery.

#8 (<Item 3B): the poem's final scene and lines: 24.472ff

Now Athene spoke a word to Zeus, son of Kronos:
'Son of Kronos, our father, O lordliest of the mighty,
tell me what I ask. What does your mind have hidden within it?
Will you first inflict evil fighting upon them, and terrible
strife, or will you establish friendship between the two factions?'
Then Zeus the gatherer of the clouds said to her in answer:
'My child, why do you ask and question me in these matters?
For was not this your own intention, as you have counseled it,
how Odysseus should make his way back, and punish those others?
Do as you will; but I will tell you how it is proper.
Now that noble Odysseus has punished the suitors, let them
make their oaths of faith and friendship, and let him be king
always; and let us make them forget the death of their brothers
and sons, and let them be friends with each other, as in the time past,
and let them have prosperity and peace in abundance.'
So he spoke, and stirred on Athene, who was eager before this,
and she went in a flash of speed down the pinnacles of Olympos.
When the men had put away their desire for delicious feasting,
much-enduring great Odysseus began speaking among them:
'Let someone go out now and see if they are approaching.'
He spoke, and Dolios' son went out, as Odysseus told him.
He went and stood on the threshold and saw them all drawing closer.
Now presently he spoke in winged words to Odysseus:
'Here they are, coming close to us, so let us arm quickly.'
So he spoke, and they sprang up and put on their armor,
Odysseus with his three, and the six sons of Dolios;
and with them Dolios and Laertes put on their armor,
gray though they were, but they were fighters perforce. And now,
when all of them in shining bronze had shrouded their bodies,
they opened the doors, and went outside, and Odysseus led them.
But now came their way the daughter of Zeus, Athene,

likening herself in appearance and voice to Mentor.
Seeing her, much-enduring great Odysseus was happy,
and presently he spoke to his dear son, Telemachos:
'Telemachos, now yourself being present, where men do battle,
and the bravest are singled out from the rest, you must be certain
not to shame the blood of your fathers, for we in time past
all across the world have surpassed in manhood and valor.'
Then the thoughtful Telemachos said to him in answer:
'You will see, dear father, if you wish, that as far as my will goes,
I will not shame my blood that comes from you, which you speak
of.'

So he spoke, and Laertes also rejoiced, and said to them:
'What day is this for me, dear gods? I am very happy.
My son and my son's son are contending over their courage.'
Then standing close beside him gray-eyed Athene said to him:
'Son of Arkeisios, far dearest of all my companions,
make your prayer to the gray-eyed girl and to Zeus her father,
then quickly balance your far-shadowing spear, and throw it.'
So Pallas Athene spoke, and breathed into him enormous
strength, and, making his prayer then to the daughter of great Zeus,
he quickly balanced his far-shadowing spear, and threw it,
and struck Eupheides on the brazen side of his helmet,
nor could the helm hold off the spear, but the bronze smashed clean
through.

He fell, thunderously, and his armor clattered upon him.
Odysseus and his glorious son fell upon their front fighters,
and began to strike with swords and stab with spears leaf-headed.
And now they would have killed them all, and given none of them
homecoming, had not Athene, daughter of Zeus of the aegis,
cried out in a great voice and held back all the company:
'Hold back, men of Ithaka, from the wearisome fighting,
so that most soon, and without blood, you can settle everything.'
So spoke Athene, and the green fear took hold of them,
and in their terror they let fall from their hands their weapons,
which fell all on the ground at the cry of the goddess speaking.
Striving to save their lives, they turned in flight toward the city.
With a terrible cry, much-enduring Odysseus, gathering
himself together, made a swoop, like a high-flown eagle.
But the son of Kronos then threw down a smoky thunderbolt,
which fell in front of the gray-eyed daughter of the great father.
Then the gray-eyed goddess Athene said to Odysseus:
'Son of Laertes and seed of Zeus, resourceful Odysseus,
hold hard, stop this quarrel in closing combat, for fear
Zeus of the wide brows, son of Kronos, may be angry with you.'
So spoke Athene, and with happy heart he obeyed her.
And pledges for the days to come, sworn to by both sides,
were settled by Pallas Athene, daughter of Zeus of the aegis,
who had likened herself in appearance and voice to Mentor.

#9: AN ODYSSEAN EPILOGUE

Od.24.303ff: Odysseus to his father in book 24, his final lie

See, I will accurately answer all that you ask me.
I am from Alybas, where I live in a famous dwelling,
and am the son of Apeidas, son of the lord Polypemon.
My own name is Eperitos.