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**Polyphemos**

By EGBERT J. BAKKER

ODYSSEUS’ ENCOUNTER with the Cyclops continues to attract much of the attention of readers of the *Odyssey*. Its riches extend in many dimensions and many critical paradigms find in it welcome food for interpretation, seeing in it, among other things, a noticeable instantiation of a well-known folktale motif, a shaman’s encounter with a Master of Animals, or the prime manifestation of the *Odyssey*’s self-reflexive poetics.¹ The famous *outis/mētis* naming trick binds most approaches together, as the trickster who wins out over the monster by guile finds his counterpart in the elusive hero who regains his identity by renouncing it. The *Odyssey* construes its protagonist, through the words of the narrator and the characters alike, as a no-man whose name is problematic and cannot be freely mentioned, and the Cyclops episode is often characterized as merely the most overt moment at which this naming and un-naming is enacted.

Given this preoccupation with names and naming in the scene, and in the poem as a whole, it is remarkable that no careful attention has been paid to the name of Odysseus’ antagonist in the Cave. The word *poluphēmos* is a collocation of the prefix *polu-* with an adjusted form of *phēmē*, derived from *phē-*, one of the verbal roots for speech. The meaning of this composite adjective is glossed in Liddell and Scott–Jones as “abounding in songs and legends,” “many-voiced, wordy” (these two senses applying to the use of the adjective as an epithet in Homer, on which see below), and “much spoken of, famous.” Of these three senses, the third one has been most consistently, though not exclusively, applied to the Cyclops, which would give us a “much-famed” monster, who owes his fame, and name, to the fame of the story.² But the standard term for “fame” in the Homeric poems is not *phēmē*

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¹ The translation of the first quoted extract (*Od. 9.106-15*) is Lattimore’s. All other translations are the author’s.

² Burkert (1979) 153 n.11; Bergren (1983) 49, 69 n.27 (with a survey of *φημή and φήμις in Homer*); Cook (1995) 94 ("Much-Fame," but allowing for a “transitive” understanding on the grounds that the Cyclops gives Odysseus κλοῖος); Higbie (1995) 12; Louden (1995) 41-43 ("Having many utterances," following Higbie); Ahl and Roisman (1996) 109 ("'The One Who Speaks Much,' or, perhaps, 'The One Much Spoken

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but *kleos*, and the fact that Virgil uses *fama* to translate the latter term\(^3\) should not induce us to treat *phēmé* and *kleos* as mere synonyms without further ado. Moreover, “fame” is never unproblematic in the *Odyssey*, where language, fame’s basic substance, is treated in devious ways, and where the poem’s protagonist and narrator are vying with each other in verbal astuteness. And no less importantly, the Cyclops shares the prefix of his name, *polu-*, with the common element of Odysseus himself in his many epithets.\(^4\) So it may be worth exploring the Cyclops’ name beyond the limits of a quick gloss.

Odysseus presents the Cyclopes to his audience as the complete “Other,” negatively related to Greek society by two polar contrasts:

> [We] reached the country of the lawless outrageous Cyclopes who, putting all their trust in the immortal gods, *neither plow with their hands nor plant anything*, but all grows for them without seed planting, without cultivation, wheat and barley and also the grapevines, which yield for them wine of strength, and it is Zeus’ rain that waters it for them. These people have *no institutions, no meetings for counsels*, rather they make their habitations in caverns hollowed among the peaks of the high mountains, and each one is the law for his own wives and children, and cares nothing about the others.

The Cyclopes do not know agriculture (*ou'te phuteuousin . . . ou'te aroôsin*); nor do they have assemblies or laws (*ou'te agorai boulêphoroi oute themistēs*). This double negative characterization may hold true for Greek
Perhaps Odysseus has more in common with the Cyclops than he polis?

Cyclopes making the law for their wives and children, is a striking detail: Cyclopes in this way. In particular, the lack of culture in general, but insofar as that culture in the poem is represented by Odysseus, who has left the confines of ordinary Greek civilization and who has to be reintegrated into it, it becomes ironic for him to introduce the Cyclopes to the polis? Perhaps Odysseus has more in common with the Cyclops than he believes or wants his audience to believe.

If Odysseus’ actions at Ithaka later in the poem fall short of being behavior fitting to an agora, the principal Cyclops’ name, conversely, is used as an epithet precisely of the agora of Ithaka (agorēn poluphēmon, 2.150, glossed as “many-voiced, wordy” in Liddell and Scott, as noted earlier). Yet the epithet is not ornamental, and appears to have been carefully prepared. At the beginning of Book 2, Telemachos summons the assembly, an important initiative of his, and a significant event for the community. The first speaker is Aiguptios—we may wonder about the significance of his name—the father of Antiphos, one of Odysseus’ companions. The text tells us: “the wild Cyclops had killed him, in his hollow cave, and he had prepared him as the last for his meal” (2.19-20). Aiguptios remarks that this is the first assembly since Odysseus left for Troy (2.26-27), and wonders who it is that convened the meeting and for what purpose:

\[
\text{έοθλός μοι δοκεὶ εἶναι, ὄνημενος. εἶδε οἱ αὐτῷ}
\text{Zeüs áγαθὸν τελέσειεν, ὃ τι φρεσκὴν ἦσα μενοινά.}
\]

\[(Od. 2.33-34)\]

A worthy man he seems to me, may he be blessed. Yes, that Zeus gives him what is well, whatever he wishes in his mind.

Telemachos, upon hearing the speech, is “pleased with the phēmē” (khaire de phēmēi, 2.35). After his subsequent public exchange with Antinoos, leader of the Suitors, Zeus sends a portent: two eagles approaching side by side, and then suddenly attacking each other over the middle of the marketplace, which is called, at this precise moment, agorēn poluphēmon. Is “many-voiced” the right characterization for this place, “rich in phēmē,” where the father of one of the victims of Polyphemos has just uttered a phēmē?

What does phēmē mean? Aiguptios ends his speech with a wish that will come true, as readers of the Odyssey know. Zeus will indeed accomplish the
“good thing” that Telemachos “wishes in his mind.” Aiguptios’ utterance so acquires with hindsight the force of a prophecy of which he himself is unaware. Moreover, the two eagles are also a sign pointing to the future, as yet not understood by everyone. A similar sense applies to the only other utterance in the Odyssey that is explicitly called a phēmē (there are no occurrences of the word in the Iliad). Just before the final massacre of the Suitors, Odysseus prays to Zeus, asking for concrete signs of the god’s presence and goodwill:

φήμην τίς μοι φάσθω ἐγειρομένων ἀνθρώπων ἑυδοθεν, ἐκτοσθεν δὲ Δίος τέρας ἄλλο φανήτω.

(Od. 20.100-01)

Let someone of the people waking up utter me a phēmē from within the house, and outside let another portent of Zeus appear.

Immediately, thunder, a portent, is heard, and “from the house a woman who works at the com-grinding machine put forth a phēmē”:

φήμην δ’ εξ οἴκοιο γυνή προέηκεν ἐλετρίς

(Od. 20.105)

which is called a “sēma ‘sign’ to her master.” She acknowledges Zeus’ presence in the supernatural burst of thunder, and prays that this be the Suitors’ last meal:

ἡ βα μύλην στήσασα ἐπος φάτο, σῆμα ἄνακτι
Zeusing the mill, you who rule over gods and men,

Zeux πάτερ, ὡς τε θεόι και ἀνθρώποισιν ἄνακτι,
Zeus father, as to gods and men,

ἡ μεγάλ’ ἐβρόντσας ἀπ’ ὄρανον ἀστερόεντος,
she with a loud thundered from the starry sky,

οὔδε τοθι νέροσ εἰσι τέρας ν’ ὑπ’ ἄυτο τόδε φαίνεις,
no thunder is heard, the divine presence,

κρήνου νῦν καὶ ἔμει δείλῃ ἐπος, ὡτ’ κεν ἐπ’ ὅμησις
the mill is heard, you be calm,

πυματὸν τε καὶ ύστατον ἠματι τόδε ἐν μεγάρισι
the sign is there, in the hall,

Οὐδεσθος ἔλοιατο δαίτ ἐρηπεῖν.,
nothing was heard,

οἱ δ’ ἔμει οἱ κομάτοα δυμαλγεῖ γούνατ ἐλυσαν
the mill is heard, the cloud is raised.

Ἄλφιτα τευχούσῃ νῦν ύστατα δειπνήσειαν.
the mill is heard, the mill is heard as it prepares the meal.

(Od. 20.111-19)

She then stopped the mill and uttered an epos, a sign to her master:

Father Zeus, you who rule over gods and men,

greatly you thundered from the starry sky,

and nowhere is there a cloud to see; this here is a portent that you reveal.

Make happen now for me, wretched woman, what I will utter:

May the Suitors on this same day for the very last time

in Odysseus’ hall take their desirable meal,

they who loosened my knees with heart-afflicting fatigue.

grinding their corn; may this be their last feast!
The grinding woman utters a prayer of whose status as a phêmê she herself is as unaware as is Aiguptios of his prayer; she is a mere instrument of Zeus' prophetic intentions. Odysseus' joy in hearing the woman's prayer, a phêmê which he recognizes as a sêma, is different from that of his son in Book 2, in that the latter was not able to recognize the utterance as such (narratologically, the term at 2.35 is used between the narrator and the audience). But both times the phêmê, expressed as a wish by means of optatives, is a correct articulation of future events. And both times it is accompanied by a portent sent by Zeus.

Thus phêmê designates, in the Odyssey, an utterance with prophetic properties of which the speaker is unaware. The prophetic sense may be seen as a specialization of the broader sense of disclosure, the revelation of something unsaid and therefore unknown. The verb phasthai in particular (of which phêmê is the internal object in Odysseus' prayer to Zeus just quoted) may convey, beyond the obvious and unmarked sense of "speaking," the sense of "unhiding what is hidden," "revealing what is covered." The thing hidden and to be revealed is in the Odyssey most typically a name, as in the following extract. Alkinoos, king of the Phaeacians, at last presses his mysterious guest to reveal his name, using phasthai "utter" as equivalent to mē keuthein "not hide":

\[
\text{τὸν ὑπὲρ ἑαυτῆς φήμι καὶ τὸν ἀνθρώπινον προβαλλόμενον,}
\]

\[
\text{ὅτι καὶ οὕτως ἐπὶ φάσομαι φάσομαι δὲ σε κάλλιον ἔστιν.}
\]

\[
\text{ἐπὶ δυναμένε, ὅτι ἐὰν ἐγκυβεῖν κάλλεον μὴν τε πατήρ τε.}
\]

(Od. 8.548-50)

So now stop hiding in your gainseeking thoughts what I ask you about: it is better to say it aloud. Tell me your name, whatever it was that out there your mother and father called you.

Names are not names unless they are uttered, enacted, and Alkinoos' request is an important Odyssean moment, prefiguring, even though it occurs later in narrated time, another occasion which will concern us later on.

The act of phasthai as a disclosure of what is hidden, however, may also acquire another sense, for which, in Homer, the separate noun phêmis is

6. The supreme god acts in fact as Zeus Φήμιος, one of his cult titles in 5th c. BCE Erythrae (IE 201c47); see Graf (1985) 203-04 with more references on φῆμι as prophetic utterance.

7. In Herodotus, φήμη frequently applies to the covert meaning of dreams or mantic utterances that is understood only at the moment of fulfillment: 1.43.3; 3.153.2; 5.72.2; 9.100-01. Notice in this connection Φῆμιονόη, the traditional name of the first Pythia who "invented" the hexameter: Paus. 10.5.7, Εὐσθατ. 1.5.17.

8. Other significant instances of φάσθαι in the sense of "unhiding" include Od. 11.443 (Agamemnon's ghost advising Odysseus not to unhide too much, even to his wife) and 21.194 (Odysseus wondering whether he shall unhide or keep hidden his credentials to the swineherd Eumaios and the cowherd Philoitios).
reserved, which is derived from the same verbal root as phêmê. The noun phêmis consistently carries the negative sense of unwanted openness, undesired publicity. Phêmis, somewhat more common in Homer than phêmê (once in the Iliad and six times in the Odyssey⁹), is the speech of the dêmos, and as such it is closely associated with the principal place for speech in a Homeric community, the agora. In one occurrence (dêmoio te phêmîn, 15.468) it is even glossed by a scholiast as ekkîsîan, sunhedrion, that is, the assembly itself. Speech of the dêmos can easily become “the talk of the town,” the mentioning of a name to the detriment of its bearer. Nausikaa says to Odysseus when they enter the city of the Phaeacians together: “Of them [sc., the young men of Scheria] I avoid the bitter phêmîs, lest someone later on blame me” (6.273). Penelope is said at various moments to be conscious of her reputation in the community (dêmoio te phêmîn, 16.75, 19.527). And Odysseus, in one of his liar stories in which he presents himself as a Cretan, says that he and Idomeneus had to go to the Trojan war, since “the difficult phêmis of the dêmos was upon us” (khalepê d’ekhe démou phêmîs, 14.239).

The adjective khalepos, in fact, is the typifying epithet of phêmis as a state to be avoided: one is being talked about, one’s name is mentioned. Hesiod talks about this state in the following way in much quoted words (note that the Hesiodic vocabulary, unlike the Homeric one, does not distinguish between phêmê and phêmîs):

οῦτε ἔρειν δεινὴν δὴ βροτῶν ὑπαλεύει φήμην
φήμη γὰρ τε κακῆ πέλεται κούφη μὲν ἄειραι
ῥέα μάλ’. ἄργαλεν δὲ φέρειν, χαλεπὴ δ’ ἀποθέοθαι.
φήμη δ’ οὐ τις πάμπαυν ἀπόλλυται, ἤντινα πολλοί
λαοὶ φημίζοσιν θέος νῦ τίς ἔστι καὶ αὐτή.

(Hes. W&D 760-64)

Act as follows: avoid mortals’ fearsome phêmê: for phêmê is a bad thing, light to lift up in the air, (that is easily done), but a heavy thing to bear, and difficult to get rid ef. Phêmê does not die off at all if many people propagate it: she too is some kind of god.

Phêmê, as Hesiod tells us, does not die easily; it clings to you, is difficult to support or bear, and should be avoided at all cost if you want your life to be livable at all.¹⁰ Its tenacious nature brings kleos to mind, the glory that results from being heard about, and that typically continues beyond a person’s death.

⁹. Iliad 10.207, Od. 6.273; 14.239; 15.468; 16.75; 19.527; 24.201.
¹⁰. This use of φήμη is not confined to Hesiod; cf. Aesch., Ag. 938; Aeschin. In Tim. 48; De Falsa Legatione 144 (citing Hesiod; cf. Dem. De Falsa Legatione 243); Plut. Ap. 18C1. Post-epic Greek also can use phêmê in a positive sense (e.g., Hdt. 1.31.4; Pind. Ol. 7.10 φήμαι... ἀγαθαι), but that does not seem to be relevant for the situation in Homer.
Kleos can even compensate for physical death in the form of poetic immortality, in which case epic, famously, calls it apthiton or asbeston, or it will simply say that someone’s kleos “will never die” (oupot’ oleitai). Hesiod’s ou . . . apollutai as a characteristic of phême reads as an ironic citation of the latter expression, turning phême into some kind of debased kleos. Not all people may have the heroic qualities that enable them to be heard about, but anyone can and should try to avoid being talked about.

Phêmè (phêmis) and kleos are contrasted in Agamemnon’s eulogy of Odysseus, pronounced upon the arrival of the ghosts of the Suitors in Hades:

δῶλει λαέρταο παί, πολυμήχαν’ Ὀδυσσεῦ, ή ἄρα σὺν μεγάλῃ ἄρετῇ ἐκτῆσαι ἄκοιτιν· ὡς ἀγαθαὶ φρένες ἦσαν ἀμύμων Πινελοπείᾳ, κοὐρή ἵκαριον, ὡς εὐ μέμητ’ Ὀδυσσηός, ἀνδρὸς κουριδίου. τῷ οἱ κλέος οὐ ποτ’ ἀλείται ἡς ἄρετῆς, τεῦξου δ’ ἑπιχθονίους αἰοίδην ἄθανατοι χαρίσαν ἔχερφοι Πινελοπείᾳ, οὐχ ὡς Τυνδάρεου κοὐρή κακὰ μήσατο ἔργα, κουριδίου κτείνασα πόσιν, στυγερῆ δ’ τ’ αἰοίδη ἔσεστ’ ἐπ’ ἀνθρώπων, χαλεπὴν δ’ τ’ φῆμιν ὑπάσσει θηλυτέρησαι γυναιξί, καὶ ή κ’ εὐεργός ἔσιν.

(Od. 24.192-202)

Blessed son of Laertes, resourceful Odysseus, great was the virtue of the wife that you won: how good was the heart of blameless Penelope, daughter of Ikarinos, how well she remembered Odysseus, her lawful husband. Therefore the kleos will never perish of her virtue, and they will make a lovely song, the immortals, for thoughtful Penelope. Nor did she plot evil works as Tyndareus’ daughter did, who killed her lawful husband, and a hateful song will there be among humans, and it gives an evil reputation to all womankind, even if someone is good at work.

Agamemnon’s perspective on Odysseus’ successful nostos understandably concentrates on the latter’s faithful wife, in contrast with his own. Penelope’s aretē matches the aretē of her returning husband himself; her song will be full of grace and charm, and made by the immortals themselves, and her kleos will never die. By contrast, Agamemnon’s own wife, instead of remembering her husband, killed him; she will be the subject of a hateful song (stugere . . . aoidè, 24.200), which brings a bad phêmis to womankind in general (khalepën de te phêmìn opassei, 24.201). The good wife is heard

11. κλέος ἀφθιτον, notably II. 9.413; κλέος ἀοβετον: Od. 4.584 (Agamemnon’s cenotaph erected by Menelaos); Od. 7.333; κλέος οὐποτ’ ἀλλητai. II. 2.325; 7.91 (Hector about the tomb of a warrior slain by him, cf. Bakker [1997b] 33); Od. 24.196 (see below). On the difference between Iliadic and Odyssean κλέος, see Bakker (1999).
about, the bad one talked about, and the *phēmis* that clings to her is beyond control: it touches all women, even the innocent.

The notion of *phēmis* as unwanted publicity, rather then fame, sheds light on the status of a minor but significant character in the poem: Odysseus’ court poet, whose name is Phemios. In the *Odyssey*, where, as we saw, a strict lexical distinction is made between *phēmê* and *phēmis*, this means that Phemios through his name partakes not only of the form but also of the semantics of the latter: *phēmis*-man.12 His only claim to fame, apart from his name, is that he sings for the Suitors by compulsion (1.154; 22.330). The only one of these forced songs about which we know anything occurs in the beginning of the tale, when Phemios sings of the “baleful return” (*noston*... *lugron*) of the Achaeans. The song is stopped short by Penelope, who experiences it as *lugrê* itself, as it intensifies her grief over “the man whose fame (*kleos*) stretches widely over Hellas and Argos” (1.344). Has Phemios been forced to make up a song about Odysseus’ death?13 We are not told, but Penelope’s reaction, in which she stresses the wide *kleos* of the anêr whose name she withholds, suggests that something has been sung that departs from ascertained fact and established poetic tradition. Did Phemios’ song about the return of the Achaeans contain an unsubstantiated *phēmis* about Odysseus, an unheroic rumor that runs counter to his official heroic *kleos* as “City-Sacker”?

Much later, Phemios will utter his only words which the poem records as such: he pleads for his life after the massacre of the Suitors in the *megaron* of Odysseus’ palace. Telemachus intercedes and urges his father to spare the poet’s life, as well as that of Medon the herald (another wordmonger) who is crouching under the throne. Odysseus agrees and tells Medon to leave the *megaron* and go to the external court: “yourself and that poet rich in *phēmis*” (*su te kai poluhphemos aoidos*, 22.376). The epithet has given rise to LSJ’s first gloss of *poluphemos* as “abounding in songs and legends,”14 but it seems more rewarding to consider the possibility that *phēmis*-man is here contemptuously addressed by his returning master as “market poet,” an ironical pun on the man’s name which by itself already characterized his unfortunate function in the Ithakian community in the king’s absence.15

12. The name is a derivation of φῆμις rather than φῆμη (Chantraine, *Dictionnaire étymologique*, s.v. φῆμη) Outside Homer, however, the distinction between φῆμη and φῆμις is much less clear-cut, so that Phemios can partake of the positive sense of prophecy of φῆμη; cf. note 6 above.
15. Note that Phemios’ patronymic Terpiades (22.330) is non-ironic and draws on τέρπως as one of the fundamental aspects of poetry.
Nor is this mere contempt on Odysseus’ part; the poetry that contains him is interested in exploring the link between poetry and gossip, *kleos* and *phēmis*, as Odysseus himself has learned the hard way, during his famous encounter with the Cyclops.

**Polyphemos partakes** of the complex semantic field we have just explored, in which the verbal root *phē*- can either be construed, markedly, as an unhiding of what is hidden—typically as a prophetic revelation—or as a saying of what is better left unsaid. And *polu-* multiplies and strengthens it all. Let us first observe that the name “Polyphemos” is used with almost as much circumspection by Odysseus as is the name “Odysseus” itself by the narrator and the characters in the poem. Odysseus always says *Kuklōps* when he speaks to the Cyclops, never addressing the Cyclops by his name. For a long time the monster remains a generic *kuklōps*, just as Odysseus himself remains a generic *anēr*. The name is out only when the Cyclops’ neighbors call at him in the night:

\[
tīπτε τόσον, Πολυφήμε, ἀρημένος δὴ ἔβοης νύκτα δι’ ἄμβροσίην καὶ ἀδύνατος ἀμμὲ τίθησα; ἢ μὴ τίς σιω μηλὰ βροτῶν δέκοντος ἔλαυνε; ἢ μὴ τίς σ’ αὐτὸν κτείνει δόλῳ ἢ βίαφι;
\]

*(Od. 9.403-06)*

Why, Polyphemos, are you screaming so much in your affliction all through the immortal night, and why did you put us out of sleep? Surely no one is driving away your sheep against your will? Surely no one is killing yourself with guile or force?

This address takes place, it is known, when Polyphemos, blinded, is to implement his visitor’s famous ruse by answering his neighbors. It is only at this point that Odysseus himself, as narrator, begins to use the name Polyphemos, ironically introducing the Cyclops’ speech now in good heroic fashion, noun-epithet formula following a verb of address:

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17. *Od.* 9.347, 364, 475, 502. It is therefore difficult to accept Ahl and Roisman’s suggestion (1996) 109-10 that the name Polyphemos has been coined by Odysseus himself to stress his own heroic feat. Note also that the name had already been used beyond Odysseus’ control by the narrator (1.70), when he explains why Odysseus is held up in the otherworld: Poseidon holds a rancorous grudge against him because he has blinded the eye of the Cyclops, *ἀντιθέου Πολυφήμου*. Cf. 2.19 (see above); 20.19.
19. Note that Odysseus will repeat once more the noun-epithet formula κρατέρους Πολυφήμου as part of a speech introduction, when the Cyclops, duped for a second time, addresses the ram under whose belly Odysseus is reaching safety (9.446). This time the phrase, irrespective of the meaning of the name, seems to have a mock-epic effect. Louden (1995) 42 notes the brief *figura etymologica* in προσέξετε Ἰπποδρόμιον... Πολυφήμου...
Polyphemus, as we saw, is beyond the control of the bearer of the name. Polyphemus gets his name only when he unwittingly seals Odysseus’ vanishing trick, uttering the “famous” name Outis, “No-One,” “No-name,” and “citing” his neighbors’ doloi and biēphi in a self-destructive way which profoundly changes their sense. For the trick to work, the no-name had to be reversed. Odysseus, does what Alkinoos will ask Odysseus to do in narrated time: reveal a name so as to enact a presence. His one-line speech can be named a phēmis, but it is a remarkable phēmis indeed. Usually, phēmis, as we saw, is beyond the control of the bearer of the name mentioned, but here the latter is fully in control: the disclosure hides a hiding, a nothingness, and so its utterance is to the detriment of the sayer, not the bearer. The Cyclops poluphēmos, not so much “rich in fame” as the one “of the rich phēmis,” is fully the victim of Odysseus polumētis, who is here, as nowhere else in the story, not only the one “rich in ruse (mētis)” but also “the one who is intensely no-one (mē tis),” according to Frederick Ahl’s and Hanna Roisman’s brilliant gloss of the epithet.

Yet this is not the end of the signification of the Cyclops’ name. Phēmis will soon turn into phēmē, and the roles of agent and victim/instrument will be reversed. Odysseus polumētis will mistake phēmis for kleos and so will enable Polyphemos to utter a destructive phēmē. Let us backtrack and see what happens at the entrance to the Cave, before the arrival of the Cyclops. Odysseus’ companions plead that they merely plunder the Cave, and make off to the ship with cheese and sheep (9.224-27). But Odysseus wants more; not only does he wish to see the occupant of this abode, he also hopes to receive kseinia “gifts of hospitality” from him (9.229). Odysseus does not yet realize that he is behaving according to the wrong code, that he is in his own poem rather than in some kind of sequel to the Iliad. His decision to enter the Cave is not in the interest of nostos, and tangible tokens of heroic achievement and status are not what he needs at this point. In fact, entering someone else’s house uninvited and helping oneself to the food available is

20. At 9.364, Odysseus announces his “name” as ἄνω ταῖριν, an irony worthy of the verbal sophistication of the scene; see also Pucci (1998) 126.
worse than a misguided attempt at *kleos*: it is an act that is curiously reminiscent of the behavior of the Suitors.\textsuperscript{22}

Odysseus’ error persists till after his completely successful linguistic vanishing trick. When everything is over, or so it seems, and when he and his men are in the relative safety of their boat, Odysseus reveals his true motives. The man that has to be prompted to reveal (*phasthai*) his name and to come out of hiding now abandons this habit and unhides himself, prompting his interlocutor to disclose (*phasthai*) the name of Odysseus as the principal trait of the episode:

\begin{quote}

Κύκλωσεν αἰὲ κεν τίς κατασβητῶν ἀνθρώπων ἀκατέργατον, 
καὶ ἄνωθεν, ἀναβαλλόμενον ξένον 
ὑπὸ οἴκον ἑτοίμης θανάτωσαι, 
υὸν Λαέρτεω, ἵδεν ἔνι οἷκι ἔχοντα.

\end{quote}

(Order 9.502-05)

It is easy enough to understand Odysseus’ intentions in uttering these words. The request of a speaker to an interlocutor to tell others about him, or the promise to tell others about the interlocutor, is a standard procedure in the oral culture of *kleos*. It is the boasting of the self-assured speaker, which is equivalent to the praise promised to a valued interlocutor. Odysseus himself will promise the blind poet Demodokos at Alkinos’ court to tell “all humans” that the god gave him the gift of “divine song” (8.496-98). And the poet of the Homeric Apollo Hymn asks the Delian Maidens to “remember” him, whenever anyone of the “earthly humans” coming to Delos as a guest asks about him (*hom. h. Ap. 166-75*). Odysseus is taking care of his own *kleos*.\textsuperscript{23}

Yet in setting up the Cyclops, so far a helpless victim, as an instrument for *kleos*. Odysseus fails to see that in this new poem heroic exposure as an Iliadic commodity can only turn from desirable fame into unwanted notoriety, from *kleos* into *phemis*. Odysseus wants to be heard about, but achieves only that he is talked about. Odysseus wants to be known as “Sacker of a City” (*ptoliporthion*); the champion of hiding and *metis*, who had presented his no-name as “very famous” (9.364), now uses without irony

\begin{quote}

• 22. On Odysseus’ violation of rules of hospitality, see Pucci (1998) 116; the links between the Cyclops scene and the μηνιάτηροφοσία are discussed in Bakker (unpub.), and Alden (1993), an article the title of whose abstract in modern Greek needs to be mentioned: Πολύήπων ό Πολυάρθρος;


an epithet that has no future and cannot provide a claim to *kleos*. The title “Sacker of a City” is quite irrelevant and useless at this juncture. In fact, the Cyclops had previously completely ignored Odysseus’ Iliadic affiliation, when the latter told him that he and his companions were “men of Agamemnon, whose *kleos* is now the greatest under the sky” (9.263-65). Worse still is that Odysseus unwittingly sets up his own name as object of *phasthai*, and so makes a disclosure of what should remain hidden. The *kleos* he aspires to cannot be attained in this poem; Polyphemos, instead of being an instrument of *kleos*, becomes an agent of *phêmís*, *poluphêmós* indeed. Instead of waiting for a “mortal human” to arrive and ask him about his blinded eye, Polyphemos, now fully into his name, actively seeks an audience, and engages in verbal behavior that is completely beyond Odysseus’ control.

Speaking not to any of the “mortal humans” but praying to his immortal father Poseidon, Polyphemos makes a linguistic quantum leap and has the better of his opponent. His prayer contains one of the most ironic quotations in literature: the appellation *Odussêa* *ptoliporthion*, syntactically and metrically identical to Odysseus’ previous usage, is semantically completely changed:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{kúthi, Poseíðasōn gaíaōche kuanoxaítas,} \\
\text{ei eiteōn ge oós eimai, patípèr d' émos euχei eiwai,} \\
\text{dós μή 'Odusseía ptoliptórbhos oikad' iēsóthai,} \\
\text{uióν Λαέρτεω, 'Īthákē éni oiki' ἔχουτα.}
\end{align*}
\]

(Od. 9.528-31)

Hear me, Poseidon, who holds the earth, dark-haired:
If truly I am your son, and you proclaim yourself to be my father,
give that "Odysseus, sacker of a city, will not come home,
"son of Laertes, having his home in Ithaka."

Odysseus’ *phasthai . . . exalaosai* becomes a metrically equivalent *dos mè . . . oikad’ hikesthai* “give that will not . . . come home,” and the name *Odussêa* *ptoliporthion* is turned from the proud focus of Odysseus’ request into a metrical island, in limbo within the verse. It reflects the isolation that

24. The information structure of the sentence requires us to construe the heroic name Ὄδυσσηᾶ ἡ πτολιπόρθων, rather than the infinitival complement as a whole (“Odysseus has blinded”) as “focus,” since the blinding was already present in the previous clause.
25. Note that the OCT follows a minority of mss. in reading πτολιπόρθων, the usual Homeric form of the City-Sacker epithet (e.g., *Od. 8.3*, 14.447, etc.). We might want to suppose that Polyphemos, in using the canonical form of the epithet, has an interest in presenting Odysseus as even more epic, that is, Iliadic, than Odysseus presents himself (note that Eustathius, 1.361, considers the possibility of irony as an intention on Polyphemos’ part). But it seems easier to suppose that Polyphemos follows Odysseus in adapting the epithet to the metrical circumstances: longum at word end (here to be justified by the awareness of a digamma in ὧκαβ) before the bucolic diaeresis tends to be avoided. Moreover, the reading quoted here was known to the Scholiast (ad *Od. 6.327*).
Odysseus, "Sacker of a City," will endure on Calypso's island, barred from all epic connections. The immortal life which Calypso will promise him ironically reverses the epic ideal of *kleos apthiton*, since the unbearably heavy price for being physically *apthitos* is poetic death. *Kleos* will be unattainable as long as *phémis* obtains, and the word spread by Polyphemos will cling to Odysseus for many difficult years. He will be out of sight through this exposure to one god's rancorous wrath. 26

But Polyphemos seems to realize that such a total victory may in the end not last forever. He adds:

\[
\text{all' e'i o muoi' esti philous t' idein kai ikéthai
oikou ektoimouen kai éin es patrida xaiàn,}
\text{ophi kakos lthos, oléous ép to pántas étairous,}
\text{nòs ép' allotríhês, eúroi ð' en pímatà oíkow.}
\]

(Od. 9.532-35)

but, if it is given to him to see his own people,
and come back to his strong-founded house and to his own fatherland,
may be come home late, in bad shape, having lost all his companions,
on board a foreign ship, and may be find sorrow in his house.

The disclosure of Odysseus' name had reminded Polyphemos of an old prophecy made to him by the seer Telemos the son of Euruimos, who foretold him Odysseus' visit and the blinding (9.507-12). If Odysseus' present feat was preordained, Polyphemos seems to reason, then more of his guest's biography may already be fixed, and so he portentously introduces the notion of *moira*, one's "share" of life. The mention of *moira* is phrased as a hypothetical clause which is introduced, with the particle *alla*, as a new start in Polyphemos' prayer, and so constitutes the basis for a reorientation of his utterance. In changing direction, he weakens the force of his prayer as *phémis*, but takes it to the entirely different level of *phémê*.

*Moira* as a poetic term denotes essentially a negative concept. A constraint rather than a predetermined event, it specifies what cannot happen to a given hero in his tradition (not returning home for Odysseus, returning home for Achilles), without necessarily specifying what will actually happen. 27 Polyphemos' use of the term is consistent with this usage: even a preordained *nostos*, if it exists, does not preclude alternative possibilities in its fulfillment. And so there is room for suggestions. From an angry request to his immortal father, Polyphemos' utterance turns into a wish. The

26. Note also the irony that Odysseus, lying to the Cyclops, had at 9.283-85 said that it was Poseidon who destroyed his ship.

27. E.g., ll. 7.52; 20.336. Poets are not free to change stories as they please, and an "untraditional" turn in a story (such as Aeneas being killed at Troy) can be called ὑπὲρ μοῖρας "beyond fate." See Nagy (1979) 134-35, 265-68; Bakker (1997a) 167 n.24; (1997b) 32.
confident imperative dos mē “give that not” turns into the wishing optatives that we have already seen uttered by Aiguptios and the slave woman iā Odysseus’ house: wishes with a prophetic force of which the speaker is unaware. Polyphemos’ wish will indeed come true, and in more than a merely factual sense. The late and miserable return, the loss of the companions, the foreign ship, and the disaster found by the hero in his home: these words are nothing less than a script for the Odyssey itself, uttered at a moment when its principal hero has misguided Iliadic aspirations that might prevent the present poem from going where it is supposed to go.

Polyphemos’ utterance, turning from phēmis into phēmē, is instrumental in the deployment of the plot of the Odyssey, an epic in the making. Both Polyphemos, praying to his father, looking ahead wishfully, and Odysseus, narrating to the Phaeacians, looking back knowingly, are agents in the process. And they are not alone. Polyphemos’ phēmē will soon be made explicit by a sure prediction. In the Underworld, Teiresias, a seer as blind as Polyphemos, informs Odysseus on the status of his nostos, telling him that the blinding of the Cyclops had angered Poseidon (11.100-03). He tells Odysseus that there is an important test ahead, the serious possibility of the violation of a fundamental food taboo. The herds of Helios that Odysseus will meet on his return are not to be touched. This warning, to be repeated by Circe (12.127-41), provides the basis for a further implementation of Polyphemos’ phēmē:

\[\text{Od. 11.112-17}\]

But if you hurt them, then I guarantee you destruction for your ship and your companions. Yourself, if you escape at all, you will come home late, in bad shape, having lost all your companions, on board a foreign ship, and you will find sorrow in your house, overbearing men, who deplete your resources, wooing your godlike wife and offering her presents.

Polyphemos’ intuitive supposition featuring moira, which acted as “frame” for his wish, has been replaced with the “prospective” subjunctive conditional clause ei de ke sinēai, which is an integral part of a sure
prediction.\textsuperscript{28} Harming the Sun’s cattle irrevocably determines the conditions of Odysseus’ \textit{nostos}. Accordingly, Polyphemos’ optatives have yielded to future tenses, while his wording remains intact, and his \textit{phēmē} has made a big step toward being fulfilled.\textsuperscript{29} In fact, it is becoming a \textit{phēmē} only now, in the future which it is in the process of shaping.

The telling of Polyphemos’ prayer and of Teiresias’ prediction, of course, takes place even farther in the future. Odysseus, as narrator, has already fully experienced the power of his victim’s prayer; so he is in a position to comment on it in traditional epic fashion, as a poet in the future whose knowledge exceeds that of the epic characters.\textsuperscript{30}

\[\text{ώς έφατ' εὐχόμενος, τοῦ δ' ἐκλευ κυνοχάιτης.} \text{(Od. 9.536)}\]

Thus he spoke praying, and the blue-haired one gave him a favorable hearing.

In fact, the very act of telling Polyphemos’ \textit{phēmē} increases its impact and speeds up its fulfillment. If its original utterance could be understood as a terrifying scenario, a possible poem one doesn’t want to be part of, then its reenactment can only confirm that that poem is in fact in the process of unfolding. Odysseus, who changed from victorious No-man into the helpless object of Polyphemos’ \textit{phēmis}, can now, under the spell of the latter’s \textit{phēmē}, regain his role as an agent. As narrator he actively contributes to the poem whose reality he now understands and accepts, a poem in which there is no place for the “Sacker of a City.”\textsuperscript{31} Re-uttering Polyphemos’ prayer before the Phaeacians, owners of “a foreign ship,” Odysseus draws his audience into the \textit{phēmē}, not only as listeners but also as agents in his \textit{nostos}, and so succeeds in using the prayer’s erstwhile destructive force to his advantage, in an important move toward the accomplishment of his own poem.\textsuperscript{32}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{28} The conditional clause complements the prediction in specifying the conditions under which it will occur; for the difference between the types of conditionals that Polyphemos and Teiresias use, see Bakker (1986) 20-22.
  \item \textsuperscript{29} Note that in the first half of Teiresias’ prediction (τὰς οἵ μὲν κ’ ἀσιν πρὸς νόστου τε μέθαι, \& καὶ νεν ἑτ’ τις ἱδείκην, κακὰ περ πάσοχοντες, ἱκονοθε [11.110-11]), the apodosis is phrased as a less certain potential optative, not a future.
  \item \textsuperscript{30} Other proleptic moments in the Cyclops tale include 9.230 and 9.553; cf. Bergren (1983) 45-50; on “poetic knowledge in the future,” see Bakker (1997b) 30-36.
  \item \textsuperscript{31} In the Proem, Odysseus’ κλέος as “City-Sacker” is mentioned merely as basis and starting point for the Wanderings, phrased as a subordinate ἀπὸ Τροίην ἱερὸν πύληθρον ἐπὶ παισίων: (1.2); likewise, the actual telling of the Wanderings takes off from Demodokos’ telling of the Wooden Horse and the Sack of Troy (8.499-520). On the specifically Odyssean conception of κλέος as opposed to the \textit{Iliad}, see further, e.g., Segal (1994) 85-106; Pucci (1998) 1-9; Bakker (1999).
  \item \textsuperscript{32} Ahl and Roisman (1996) 128 go as far as treating the story of the descent to the Underworld, with Teiresias’ prediction, as Odysseus’ own invention. On the manipulative aspects of Odysseus’ \textit{ἀπόλογοι}, see also Most (1989).
\end{itemize}
Polyphemos thus becomes a powerful instrument for the *Odyssey*’s self-reflexive poetics that pairs poetry with lying, hiding with presence, and *kleos* with *phêmis*. Sharing the first half of his name with Odysseus *polu-mêtis*, the bardlike hero, and the second half with Chari-phemos, one of the mythical forebears of Homer the blind bard,33 Polyphemos plays, after his blinding, a key poetic role. The *Odyssey*, it is fair to say, has more than just one *poluphêmos aoidos*.

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