

The Trees of Laertes: an Epic Environment of *Nóstos*.

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Τὰς Βάτνας δὲ ἐώρων πεδίον λάσιον ἄλση κυπαρίττων ἔχον νέων (καὶ ἦν ἐν ταύταις οὐδὲν γεράνδρυν οὐδὲ σαπρόν, ἀλλὰ ἐξίσης ἅπαντα θάλλοντα τῇ κόμῃ) καὶ τὰ βασιλεία πολυτελῆ μὲν ἦκιστα (πηλοῦ γὰρ ἦν μόνον καὶ ζύλων, οὐδὲν ποικίλον ἔχοντα), κῆπον δὲ τοῦ μὲν Ἀλκινόου καταδεέστερον, παραπλήσιον δὲ τῷ Λαέρτου, καὶ ἐν αὐτῷ μικρὸν ἄλσος πάνυ, κυπαρίττων μεστόν, καὶ τῷ τριγίῳ δὲ πολλὰ τοιαῦτα παραπεφυτευμένα δένδρα στίχῳ καὶ ἐφεξῆς· εἶτα τὸ μέσον πρασιαί, καὶ ἐν ταύταις λάχανα καὶ δένδρα παντοίαν ὀπώραν φέροντα.

Batnae I saw to be a thickly wooded plain containing groves of young cypresses; and among these there was no old or decaying trunk, but all alike were in vigorous leafage. The imperial lodging was by no means sumptuous, for it was made only of clay and logs and had no decorations; but his garden, though inferior to that of Alcinous, was comparable to the garden of Laertes. In it was a quite small grove full of cypresses and along the wall many trees of this sort have been planted in a row one after the other. Then in the middle were beds, and in these, vegetables and trees bearing fruits of all sorts.

Flavius Claudius Julianus Imperator, *Epistulae* 58. 48-57

ΑΣΠΑΣΙΟΙ ΛΕΚΤΡΟΙΟ ΠΑΛΑΙΟΥ ΘΕΣΜΟΝ ΙΚΟΝΤΟ
INTRODUCTION

Our Odyssey thematically ends with the accomplished *nóstos* and restoration of the king. Indeed, in the wake of Aristarchus and Aristophanes, we may be tempted to regard *Od.* xxiii 296, the point of the marital reunion between Odysseus and Penelope sharing their olive tree bed, as a plausible end of the narration strictly concerning the vicissitudes of the *anér polútropos* whom we first meet in person, through Calypso's introduction, sitting, and weeping, on the seashore of Ogygia.¹ But, as scholars have pointed out, the poem can be usefully interpreted as a series of parallel journeys involving growth, learning and rebirth². From this exegetical angle, the final rejuvenation of king³ Laertes can be viewed as the accomplishment of a most significant *nóstos*. Moreover, as the final lines of scroll xxiv approach, we, 'the audience', are contemporarily presented with as much as three successful *nóstoi* (or *Nóstoi*⁴), all of them granted by Athena's beneficial intervention: Laertes, rejuvenated and reborn to a civic (and even warrior) role, Odysseus, lastly back home from Troy, saved from the sea and from the anger of Poseidon, and Telemachus, who smoothly eluded the nautical ambush of the suitors, returned and is finally restored in the line of succession.

Our Odyssey, the 'final' product of a complex and non linear evolution, is a *polútropón*⁵ being in itself, "the most privileged multiform among countless others" (Filos 2012: § 1), fully aware of a multilayered set of alternatives: alternative versions of Odysseus' homecoming, alternative audiences - both external and internal - involved in different forms of reception, alternative plots, alternative stories, alternative worlds⁶. This kind of epic 'organism' is capable of rendering that "ego tunnel perspective" which the German philosopher Thomas Metzinger⁷ has chosen as key metaphor of his consciousness model and explanation of subjectivity. Unlike this very model, stressing the inaccessibility of the brain processes that create subjective experience, our Odyssey keeps trace of the dynamics of its coming into being as an epic articulated singularity and experience. The monumental outcome of the Pan-Ionian evolution and expansion, and of the Pan-

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¹ "This poem of self-discovery begins then with Odysseus' son and ends with his father, the two parameters, so to speak, of his existence. Moreover, since a controlling motif of the story has been the journey in search of identity, Odysseus can scarcely be completely himself until he identifies himself to his father and resume the roles of son and father (Tracy 1990: 140)."

² Cf. Tracy 1990: 57.

³ On Laertes' kingship and his role on succession much has been written: among others, see Finley 2002: 84-86; Halverson 1986: 127. For a different perspective, cf. Finkelberg 1991: 306-307.

⁴ For the meaning of *Nóstos* as returning hero see Malkin 1998: 1-3.

⁵ Cf. Tsagalis 2008.

⁶ Cf. Van Nortwick 2008.

⁷ Cf. Metzinger 2009.

Athenaic fixation⁸ constitutes a highly integrated entity, aware of earlier, alternative, or even concurrent traditions and evoking them while constructing an interactive “narrative in collaboration with [its] audience[s] (Haller 2013: 265).”

Such a system produces an image about itself and ‘senses’ itself by its own classes of proprioceptors. Taking the cue from John Henderson, I will explore the role of trees and woods, *órchatoi*, *témenoí* and *álsē* as a class of Odysseus’s “determinant proprioceptors” (Henderson 1997: 97). If we assume the internal point of view of the Odysseus as an involving experience, which goes beyond the functional and theoretical boundaries between poetry, performer and audience, the trees, as living and symbolic landmarks, can display their kinesthetic and narratological role, and suggest us how to orientate⁹ within *nóstos*, a word “expressing at once a spatial dimension and the human undertakings” (Malkin 1998: 2), also in relation with the formative evolution of the Homeric poem(s).

As an example, the ‘renowned’ olive tree bed I cited above is undoubtedly an iconic benchmark in all research devoted to disguise and recognition strategies and plot development in the Odysseus: it may also be taken as a standpoint in a sort of triangulation aimed at establishing possible focuses of formation, evolution and crystallization of the poem itself, especially in relationship with the figure of Athena Polias and, more properly, with her statue of olive wood, physically epitomizing the “religious festivals of Athena”, connected to “the ritual year of the olive” (Håland 2012: 257).

Similarly, the eponymous trees of this essay, the trees of Laertes, and the slope upon they are skillfully planted can serve as a symbolic watershed between epichoric variants of the Odysseus and a format best suited for a pan-Hellenic audience, as well as representing a peculiar class of signs referred to an Arkesiad (and pan-Athenaic) Odysseus in opposition to the Autolycean scar of a ‘regional’ hero and his local tradition.

As Alex C. Purves has beautifully expressed, the recounting of the trees at the end of our Odysseus also reflects “the self-conscious practice of mnemonics as *téchnē*” (Purves 2010: 222). By cataloguing the trees, by their number and species, by their continuity in space, memory and time, Odysseus persuades Laertes to accept his true identity and seals his *nóstos*: the trees of Laertes are also the ultimate memory device of self representation of the Odysseus itself, along with their multiple and echoing resonations within the narration and the capacity of stretching their arms ‘before’ and ‘outside’ the poem, although fixed in a so strong rooted, internal ‘soil’ perspective.

The intricate and mysterious articulation of mental, vegetal and skin carved signs by which the sound of the poem fades away, being the identity of the *anér polútropos* seemingly ascertained and finally captured for ever and ever, goes far beyond a sophisticated mechanism of recognition and a most elegant closure strategy. The sign(s) of the trees, and the trees themselves, might function as fleeting, and meanwhile deep, quite secret allusions to the incipient and proceeding ‘textualization’¹⁰ of the epic performance.

⁸ Cf. Nagy 2010: 70-73.

⁹ Cf. Longo et alii 2003: 166-167.

¹⁰ Cf. Nagy 1996: 40-43.

KAKON MEΓA ΠΑΣI ΦΥΤΕΥΣΑΙ
SOWING THE SEEDS OF EVIL FOR ALL

The Kuklopes οὔτε φυτεύουσιν χερσὶν φυτὸν οὔτ' ἀρόωσιν (*Od.* ix 108): they “neither plant with their hands nor plough”, but “enjoy the bounty of vegetal nature, trust the plants, surreptitiously learn from them, and subsist on them without putting any effort into their cultivation” (Marder 2013: 147). The two verbs φυτεύω and ἀρόω belong to the core vocabulary of agriculture and plant cultivation. In particular, the verb φυτεύω in the Homeric (and later) usage expresses the notion of planting living things (seeds or trees) so that they will grow: the ‘internal’ object φυτὸν of ix 108 represents both the most general and the most appropriate object.

But, within the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad* only two out of twelve occurrences of φυτεύω deal with ‘real’ agriculture, being the object of the verb, that is the things to be planted, trees or plants. Otherwise, the verb is used in a metaphorical sense, with the meaning of devising evil plans (death plots specifically), or bringing about, causing evil. This last signification is expressed by the words of Athena regarding Ares’ vengeful intentions at *Il.* XV 134 (τοῖς ἄλλοισι κακὸν μέγα πᾶσι φυτεῦσαι), which is the only *Iliadic* line where we encounter the verb. As far as *Odyssey* is concerned, the other context containing φυτεύω in proper, agricultural meaning, beside the line cited above and describing the Kuklopes’ behavior, is at xviii 359, in the famous battle-of-work passage¹¹: Eurumakhos sarcastically offer to Odysseus to work on far-off land planting tall trees and gathering the wall stones (αἰμασιάς τε λέγων καὶ δένδρεα μακρὰ φυτεύων).

In the remaining occurrences, all formulaic, the verb expresses the idea of planting/sowing (the seeds of) evil within one’s *nóos* and against one’s enemies¹²: in six of them we learn about Odysseus planting evils (death) for his enemies, the suitors - or their substitutes in the Cretan ‘false’ tale to Eumaeus -, two times it is Telemachus *adversus* the suitors again, and finally we have a key instance regarding Poseidon committing himself to the persecution of Odysseus.¹³ Three times the evil doomed to (and planted for) the suitors is connected with omen birds and omen interpretation by Halitherses, Helen and Theoklumenos.¹⁴

In his recent book *Plant-Thinking: A Philosophy of Vegetal Life* Michael Marder¹⁵ focuses on the margins of philosophy, populated by non-animal living beings, including plants. In his formulation, “plant-thinking” is the non-cognitive and non-imagistic mode of thinking proper to plants (as well as the process of bringing human thought itself back to its roots and rendering it plantlike). This fascinating perspective can be usefully borrowed in order to deconstruct the cluster of metaphors developing all along the borders of the implicit parallelism *nóos-ἀγρός* and *κακά-δένδρεα*. I will follow here Odysseus’ and Telemachus’ mental processes, as sketched in the related

¹¹ Even Odysseus’ answer shows the technical vocabulary of agricultural practice. See line 374 for the mention of ἄροτρον.

¹² Within the *Odyssey* there are five formulaic patterns expressing this concept. The verb localizing always in the 10b position, the formula spans the second half of the line (from position 6a) or two thirds of it (from position 4): 1): τοῖσδεσσι φόνον καὶ κῆρα φυτεύει (ii 165) / τούτοισι φόνον καὶ κῆρα φυτεύσω (xvii 82); 2): μνηστῆρσι κακὸν πάντεσσι φυτεύει (xv 178; xvii 159); 3): κακὰ δὲ μνηστῆρσι φύτευεν (xiv 110; xvii 27); 4): κακὰ δυσμενέεσσι φυτεύων (xiv 218); 5): ὅτι τοι κακὰ πολλὰ φυτεύει (v 340).

¹³ Odysseus: ii 165; xiv 110. 218; xv 178; xvii 159. Telemachus: xvii 82; xvii 27. Poseidon: v 340.

¹⁴ Eagles: ii 146; xv 161. Sea-hawk: xvii 160 (cf. xv 526).

¹⁵ Cf. Marder 2013.

passages: in their hatred of the suitors, they silently, un-reflectively and quite automatically let the seeds of evil planted, growing and flourishing in their consciousness. The typical situation is that of Telemachus at xvii 27:

ὣς φάτο, Τηλέμαχος δὲ διέκ σταθμοῖο βεβήκει,
κραιπνὰ ποσὶ προβιβιάς, **κακὰ δὲ μνηστῆρσι φύτευεν.**

So (Odysseus) spoke. Telemachus went through the farmyard,
going quickly on his feet, he sowed seeds of evil for the suitors.

Od. xvii 26-27

“Human movement unfolds with varying degrees of consciousness. For example, when walking we can choose to deliberately put one foot before another [...], but may then walk without any awareness of what we are doing” (Holme, 2009: 34). This is the case of Telemachus, who, is not only walking without awareness of his precise movements, but he is planting evils against the suitors in a kind of non-cognitive way. Κακὰ are planted and growing inside his *nóos* and *they* themselves are thinking in their “plant-thinking” way, in a fixed temporality. The same pattern (and formula) is operating at xiv 110 when Odysseus, finally arrived at Eumaeus’ house, eats and drinks silently¹⁶, and plan(t)s harm to the suitors:

ὣς φάθ’· ὁ δ’ ἐνδυκέως κρέα τ’ ἤσθιε πῖνέ τε οἶνον,
ἀρπαλέως ἀκέων, **κακὰ δὲ μνηστῆρσι φύτευεν.**

So (Eumaeus) spoke. He (Odysseus) eagerly ate the flesh and drank the wine
greedily, in silence, he was sowing the seeds of evil for the suitors.

Od. xiv 109-110

One can argue that the metaphorical use of φυτεύω is developed from the farmer’s attitude in planting a *phutón* and tending it toward the goal of make it bearing fruit, more than drawn from the analogy between vegetative life and this process of semi-conscious or semi-reflexive “thinking”. Admittedly, this development appears to be determinant in shaping the trajectory between the source and the target domain of the metaphor itself¹⁷. Indeed, I think it is necessary to focus on the process which generates taking root, flourishing and fructifying of what is planted, regardless of its ontology (be apple trees or revenge plans), in order to understand the parallel role of real and virtual *phutá* in the plot of the Odyssey.

It is remarkable that all the occurrences of metaphorical φυτεύειν occurring in the Odyssey are directly or indirectly related to the possibility of an accomplished *nóstos* (or to thwarting or delaying it, as in the case of Poseidon) and are joined to the setting of Ithaca as the venue of the

¹⁶ See Montiglio 2000 for a detailed investigation into silence as a meaningful phenomenon in archaic Greece and within epic poetry in particular. Montiglio analyzes a passage (p. 271) containing a slightly different realization of the metaphor recurring at *Od.* xvii 491: the formula is constructed with βυσσοδομεύω in place of φυτεύω at the end of the line. Given the meaning of βυσσοδομεύω (LSJ: “build in the deep”: hence, *brood over* a thing *in the depth of one’s soul, ponder deeply*) the whole expression depicts a more active and reflexive process. Anyway, this formula (κακὰ βυσσοδομεύων) occurs in Homeric poetry only within the Odyssey and always in bad sense (cf. iv 676; xvii 66). Notably, only positive characters related to the denouement of the Ithacan plot (the clan of Odysseus and, as divine antagonist, Poseidon) “plant (φυτεύειν) evils”, whereas the suitors “brood over (βυσσοδομεύειν)” κακὰ.

¹⁷ See Dimock 1989: 257.296 for a different emphasis and interpretation connected to the name of Odysseus.

mnesterophonía, the slaughter of the suitors intended as the appropriate revenge of Odysseus. No instances of (or references to) “planting evils” by Odysseus or other characters involved in the revenge plot occur along the Phaeacian section of the poem (landing on Scheria, the so-called *apólogoι*, return to Ithaca on the Phaeacian ship). If, on the one hand, this is an obvious result of the non-linear narrative progression, nevertheless it is important to notice that from v 340 (Ino speaking about Poseidon’s attitude toward Odysseus)¹⁸ we do not encounter the metaphor up until xiv 110, in the context adduced above. It is clear to me that the referential land where the metaphorical *phutá* belong (paralleling their wooden, agricultural analogues) is Ithacan soil and that the *nóos* in which the trees of harm are planted and tended is a *nóstos*-oriented one, envisaged in a positive or negative effort and posture¹⁹.

Assuming this peculiar point of view, we can fully and precisely appreciate the irony behind Eurumakhos’ words at xviii 357-364:

“ξείν’, ἢ ἄρ κ’ ἐθέλοις θητευέμεν, εἴ σ’ ἀνελοίμην,
 ἀγροῦ ἐπ’ ἐσχατιῆς, —μισθὸς δέ τοι ἄρκιος ἔσται, —
 αἵμασιός τε λέγων καὶ δένδρεα μακρὰ φυτεύων;
 ἔνθα κ’ ἐγὼ σῆτον μὲν ἐπηετανὸν παρέχοιμι,
 εἵματα δ’ ἀμφιέσαιμι ποσὶν θ’ ὑποδήματα δοίην [...].”

“Stranger! You know, if you want to work for hire, I could take you on
 in the outermost fields, - your pay will be steady, -
 gathering stones for walls and planting tall trees.
 There I would provide you with food all year round,
 and I would give you some clothes and sandals for your feet [...].”

Od. xviii 357-361

This is not the sting of Eurumakhos’ irony but of Odysseus’: we are intended to understand exactly which ‘species’ of trees Odysseus is going to plant on behalf of the nobleman and manipulative suitor; we can also easily track forward the mention of the far-off land and of the wall-stones up to Laerte’s estate, which ultimately represents the environmental antonym to Eurumakhos’ land, as well the conceptual and projectual negation of a dystopian Ithacan society with the returned king hired as a farm worker and paid on daily basis, paternalistically provided with food and clothes. Following closely the *κακά-δένδρεα* parallelism allows us to activate that “centripetal perspective” (Van Nortwick 2008: 11) whose pole of attraction is Ithaca, and Laertes’ orchard in particular: *nóstos* will manifest itself as a narrative course charted and determined by a magnetic force located in the roots of the trees infiltrating and grasping Ithacan soil.

ΚΑΙ ΕΜΠΕΔΑ ΠΑΝΤΑ ΦΥΛΑΣΣΕΙ KEEPING ALL THINGS STEADY

The adjective *ἔμπεδος*, showing a built-in metaphor of being rooted in the ground, is quite naturally connectable with the steadiness of trees, and, thereby, in the perspective of this study, it

¹⁸ “κάμμορε, τίπτε τοι ὦδε Ποσειδάων ἐνοσίχθων
 ὠδύσατ’ ἐκπάγλως, ὅτι τοι κακὰ πολλὰ φυτεύει;”
 “Poor man, why is Poseidon the earth-shaker
 so terribly angry with you that he devises so many evils against you?”
Od. v 339-340.

¹⁹ For the argument about the common i.e. root for *nóos* and *nóstos* cf. Frame 1978.

will also appear to be a determinant qualification along the developing dynamics connected to *nóstos*.²⁰ In the basic meaning of “in the ground, firm-set (“*in solo stans*”, “*fixus*” in the latin translation of Stephanus)” the genetic relation of the word ἔμπεδος with πέδον is transparent, as well the latter’s derivation from πούς, the ancient Greek word given by the Indo-European root *pod- for “foot”. At *Il.* XII 9.12 the adjective is used to describe the Achaean wall: the wall is almost ‘rooted’, fixed in the earth²¹. This Iliadic artifact is marked by the same lasting fixity of the Odyssean olive tree bed, literally rooted in Ithacan soil²². The olive tree living bedpost is “planted in the ground to help orient our space and mark our time”, it “is what always precedes and orients the journey away from home, away from Ithaca” (Naas 2003: 39). As Henderson noted, the trees in Laertes’ orchard are, in their ultimate role of *sémata*, also intended to be ἔμπεδα²³, steady, fully reliable and valid. Furthermore, these trees, with their magnetic uprightness, symbolize that enduring stability and vitality toward other (vegetal) signs in the poem point to, orientating Odysseus’ constant strive for homecoming.

While the olive tree bed of Odysseus must remain ἔμπεδος, he himself has to show his vigor and his strength are still ἔμπεδος, primarily in order to carry out the *mnesterophonía* and approach the final episodes of his *nóstos*. Amid the fighting in the hall, Athena-Mentor harshly rebukes²⁴ Odysseus, recalling the warrior’s fundamental requirements:

²⁰ For an insightful and detailed discussion about the word ἔμπεδος as able to convey both the connotations of standing steadfastly fixed (being *statically* ἔμπεδος) and remaining steadfastly in motion (being *kinetically* ἔμπεδος), in particular within the frame of Odyssean *nóstos*, see Filos 2012: §§ 4-5.

²¹ [...] τὸ καὶ οὐ τι πολὺν χρόνον ἔμπεδον ἦεν.
ὄφρα μὲν Ἑκτώρ ζωὸς ἔην καὶ μῆνι Ἀχιλλεύς
καὶ Πριάμοιο ἄνακτος ἀπόρρητος πόλις ἔπλεν,
τόφρα δὲ καὶ μέγα τεῖχος Ἀχαιῶν ἔμπεδον ἦεν.
[...] the wall could not endure for long,
while Hector lived and Achilles raged
and the city of Priam was still unpillaged,
the great wall of the Greeks stood firm.
Il. XII 9-12.
Cf. Elmer (2013: 115-116).

²² “[...] οὐδέ τι οἶδα,
ἢ μοι ἔτ’ ἔμπεδόν ἐστι, γύναι, λέχος, ἢ τίς ἤδη
ἀνδρῶν ἄλλοσε θῆκε, ταμῶν ὑπο πυθμέν’ ἐλαίης.”
“[...] But I do not know at all,
woman, whether my bedstead is firmly standing, or now someone
has cut from beneath the trunk of the olive and set the bedstead someplace else.”
Od. xxiii 203-204.

²³ Henderson 1997: 89. The *stéle* of *Il.* XVII 43 is mentioned as a typical ἔμπεδος object in the context of the simile concerning Achilles’ horses reluctant to return to war; it is an example of upright, static steadiness and continuity in time, and a valid sign:

[...] ἀλλ’ ὥς τε στήλη μένει ἔμπεδον, ἢ τ’ ἐπὶ τύμβῳ
ἀνέρος ἐστήκη τεθνηότος ἢ ἐ γυναικός,
ὥς μένον ἀσφαλέως περικαλλέα δίφρον ἔχοντες
οὐδεὶ ἐνισκίμψαντε καρῆατα [...]
[...] but still as stands a grave monument which is set over
the mounded tomb of a dead man or lady, they stood there
holding motionless in its place the fair-wrought chariot,
leaning their heads along the ground [...]
Il. XVII 434-437.
Cf. Redfield 1994: 180

²⁴ Cf. Filos 2012: § 3.4.

“οὐκέτι σοί γ’, Ὀδυσσεῦ, μένος ἔμπεδον οὐδέ τις ἀλκή,
οἷη ὄτ’ ἀμφ’ Ἑλένη λευκωλένῳ εὐπατερεῖη
εἰνάετες Τρώεσσιν ἐμάρναο νωλεμῆς αἰεῖ,
πολλοὺς δ’ ἀνδρας ἐπεφνες ἐν αἰνῇ δηϊοτήτι,
σῆ δ’ ἦλω βουλῇ Πριάμου πόλις εὐρυάγυια [...]”

“Apparently, Odysseus, your steady strength and your bravery are no longer the same as when you fought for the sake of high-born Helen of the white arms against the Trojans without an end for nine years, you killed many men then, in the dread contendings, and it was through a plan of yours that the broad-wayed city of Priam was taken [...]”

Od. xxii 226-31

A successful *nóstos* from Troy to Ithaca is to be accomplished by the returning warrior only if the fixity of the olive tree bed will parallel the stability of his strength. F. L. Zeitlin conveniently underscored that *ἔμπεδος* “as an adjective is a highly prized trait of human behavior”²⁵, especially in the world of warriors, where it can characterize both the moral and the physical steadiness of the hero. As Odysseus asks whether his bed is still fast and anchored where it was twenty years earlier, or whether the olive-tree has been cut or uprooted, fearing that the fidelity of his wife and the continuity of his rule might have fatally collapsed, so Athena questions the stability of Odysseus’ strength and resolve which are essential prerequisites for the regaining of his public role. Considering this parallelism, we can understand in what ways *ἔμπεδος* explains space and time, describing synchronicity and diachronicity, indicating steadiness “of a particular moment in time”²⁶ and continuity across time²⁷ as well: the stabilizing, deep penetrating roots of trees (the olive tree bed and the trees of Laertes) and the steadiness of personal *éthos* are not restricted or limited to a particular section of the house, spot of land or mental space, but can reach down to precedent, and distant, spatial and temporal dimensions, guaranteeing a singular token for (self-)preservation and orientation all along *nóstos*.

As a telling example, in the Sirens episode²⁸, when Odysseus most needs to stand firm (physically and morally) and hold fast to his long-lasting commitment toward *nóstos*, he quite ‘transubstantiates’ in the wood of the mast²⁹ and takes up its upright position and steadiness:

“[...] ἀλλά με δεσμῶ
δήσατ’ ἐν ἀργαλέῳ, ὄφρ’ ἔμπεδον αὐτόθι μίμνω,
ὀρθὸν ἐν ἰστοπέδῃ, ἐκ δ’ αὐτοῦ πείρατ’ ἀνήφθω.”

“[...] But you must bind me
in tight bonds so that I remain fast where I am,
upright in the hole for the mast.”

²⁵ Cf. Zeitlin 1995: 126

²⁶ Naas 2003: 51

²⁷ For a particular usage of *ἔμπεδος* indicating a ‘negative’ continuity see v, 259 (ἔνθα μὲν ἐπτάετες μένον ἔμπεδον): Odysseus is held on custody by Calypso and the homecoming is blocked. Anyway, the adjective operates within a context related to *nóstos*, or rather to the temporary (and continuing) impracticability of *nóstos*.

²⁸ Cf. Filos 2012: § 5.1.

²⁹ Cf. Nagler 1996: 154.

Od. xii 160-162

Even the articulated connection between (regained or continuing) social and familial stability, household property and homecoming is implemented by the meaning of ἔμπεδος and visually signified by the imagery of rooted steadiness evoked by it. At scroll xi, within the the frame of the last question about Ithaca Odysseus asks his mother Antikleia, the semantic field of the adjective shapes the most delicate issue at stake: stability at home, that is Penelope's fidelity and continuity in property. This concept is pivoted on the sense of ἔμπεδον that occurs in the second half of line 178 in a highly significant formulaic expression:

“εἰπέ δέ μοι μνηστῆς ἀλόχου βουλὴν τε νόον τε,
ἥ ἐ μένει παρὰ παιδί καὶ ἔμπεδα πάντα φυλάσσει,
ἢ ἤδη μιν ἔγημεν Ἀχαιῶν ὅς τις ἄριστος.”

“Tell me of the plans and intentions of my wedded wife,
does she stay beside her child and keep all things steady?
Or has someone already married her, whoever is the best of the Achaeans?”

Od. xi 177-179

Penelope herself will ask (and, for the time being, implicitly answer by the bare fact of her bodily presence) the question again at xix 525, resorting to the same formulaic pattern and expanding the theme by the explicit mention of her husband's bed, properties and (implicitly) kingly attributes:

“[...] ἥ ἐ μένω παρὰ παιδί καὶ ἔμπεδα πάντα φυλάσσω,
κτῆσιν ἐμήν, δμῶάς τε καὶ ὑπερέφες μέγα δῶμα,
εὐνήν τ' αἰδομένη πόσιος δήμοιό τε φῆμιν,
ἢ ἤδη ἄμ' ἔπωμαι, Ἀχαιῶν ὅς τις ἄριστος
μνάται ἐνὶ μεγάροισι, πορῶν ἀπερείσια ἔδνα.”

“[...]whether I should stay with my son and keep all things steady,
my property, the slaves, and the great high-roofed house,
respecting the bed of my husband and my reputation among the people,
or whether I should follow whoever is best of the Achaeans in his suit,
and has offered countless wedding-gifts.”

Od. xix 525-529

It is not a case that the pattern was introduced at *Od.* ii 227, when Mentor's role and task concerning the preservation of the *oikos* is explained in detail:

[...] τοῖσι δ' ἀνέστη
Μέντωρ, ὅς ῥ' Ὀδυσῆος ἀμύμονος ἦεν ἑταῖρος,
καὶ οἱ ἰὼν ἐν νηυσὶν ἐπέτρεπεν οἶκον ἅπαντα,
πείθεσθαί τε γέροντι καὶ ἔμπεδα πάντα φυλάσσειν.³⁰

³⁰ The formulaic pattern resonates also at v 208 through the verb φυλάσσω closing the line in position 10b (ἐνθάδε κ' αὖθι μένων σὺν ἐμοὶ τόδε δῶμα φυλάσσοις) where both the point of view on *nostos* and the concept of continuity are reversed: Calypso asks Odysseus to remain at her side, deathless and out of time, and take care of a shared household. But the only household Odysseus will take care of is that one where all things remained – hopefully – ἔμπεδα like his own will and determination to come back.

Mentor, a companion to noble Odysseus, stood up among them.
When he left for Troy, Odysseus turned over his household to him,
saying all should obey this old man, who would keep everything steady.

Od. ii 224-227

The role of Mentor constitutes here also a foil³¹ to the unnamed singer to whom Agamemnon left the custody of Klutaimestra³². Thus, a clear line is drawn between a late but successful *nóstos* and a prompt but tragic one: none of Agamemnon's properties, wife included, remained ἔμπεδον and his *nóstos* basically failed even if it was spatially accomplished. No strong roots were left behind to reach down sufficiently enough to guarantee stability. Furthermore, we, as the ancient Homeric audiences, are very well informed about whom Mentor stands for. The roots of the olive tree bed are best defended and upheld by their divine protector and institutor: Athena.

In the poem, as it is well known, Athena's protection and assistance to Odysseus is often operated or signified through olive trees or olive wood products: the thematic relevance of the olive tree in the bedroom of Odysseus and the close relationship between the olive bedpost and the *Morios* at the Pandroseion is amply discussed by Cook³³ who remarks that "the position of the tree at the epicenter of Odysseus' house corresponds to his axial function in cult" (Cook 1995: 162). I would add that this function is also active in the narrative structuration, if only we consider that one 'possible' end of the poem is staged upon this very olive tree bed during a night extended by Athena for the purpose of love and epic performance. The ἔμπεδον tree, as an archetypical image of the celestial spin axis, about which all visible constellations³⁴ keep rotating, certainly means a lot to the

³¹ The house of Atreus as a whole serves always as a negative foil to Odysseus' *oikos*. See Cook 1995: 162 for an opportune opposition between Penelope, as ἔμπεδος wife, and Helen, a 'movable' one. Penelope, fixed in the center of the house like and near her marital bed, contrasts also the conceptualization of women as quintessentially movable goods. As long as the olive tree (bed) will not be uprooted, Penelope will remain physically attached to it and will preserve the household: she will not follow any of the suitors, she will not be moved or displaced as the olive tree will not as well.

³² Cf. *Od.* iii 264-71. On the role of the singer in Agamemnon's household as a man of relevant rank in the society depicted in Homeric poems see Tandy 1997: 171-175.

³³ Cf. Cook 1995: 161f.

³⁴ In the proem of Aratus' *Phaenomena* we read:

Αὐτὸς γὰρ τὰ γε σήματ' ἐν οὐρανῷ ἐστήριξεν
ἄστρα διακρίνας, ἐσκέψατο δ' εἰς ἐνιαυτὸν
ἀστέρας οἱ κε μάλιστα τετυγμένα σημαίνουσιν
ἀνδράσιν ὥραων, ὄφρ' ἔμπεδα πάντα φύωνται.
For himself it was who set the signs in heaven,
and marked out the constellations, and for the year devised
what stars chiefly should give to men right signs of the seasons,
to the end that all things might grow unfailingly.
Phaen. 10-13.

At the beginning we have an hymn to Zeus. He, as beneficent father-god, tells when the seasons are right both for planting trees and for sowing seed, and designed the constellations and organized stars in order to give clearly defined signs of the seasonal round, "so that everything may grow ἔμπεδα." The adjective ἔμπεδος is directly connected with the healthy development of plants, planted at the right time and tended the right way.

sailor Odysseus, as well the virtual continuation of the axis³⁵ down to the underworld does. Antikleia's epiphany in the first *nékyia* and her assurances about the stability of property at home, the news about Penelope who ἔμπεδα πάντα φυλάσσει and her steady spirit, all allude to the symbolic position of the olive tree, whose vegetal presence is replaced in Antikleia's words by Laertes' vineyard and by his leaves bed³⁶. Notably, no olive tree appears in the recounting of the trees of Laertes: he planted olive trees too, as they are actually cited by Odysseus among the plants so well tended by his father³⁷, but he did not gift any of them to his son. As we will see in more detail, the olive tree which is fundamental for Odysseus' Return is rooted *only* in his bedroom, where Athena displays fully at once, even if implicitly³⁸, her (and only hers) positive role in the construction and accomplishment of *nóstos* as a typical 'Athenian' artifact and product. As I will discuss later, the role of Athena as favoring goddess will be clearly outlined in the last section of the poem by the extension of her protective shield and power through various trees' crowns and foliage³⁹ until the climactic rejuvenation of Laertes.

ΤΑ ΟΙ ΕΜΠΕΔΑ ΠΕΦΡΑΔ' ΟΔΥΣΣΕΥΣ
TELLING CLEAR SIGNS

Two Pylos tablets of the E-series (all texts related to landholding), namely Er 312 and Er 880, among other similar features, present, respectively, the words *sa-ra-pe-da* (Er 312.1) and *sa-ra-pe-do* (Er 880.2). Although the exact translation of these words is still to be determined, "it is likely that each has the element -πεδον, '(flat) ground, earth', *sa-ra-pe-da*⁴⁰ being the plural of *sa-ra-pe-do* (Lane 2012: 71)." The text of Er 880, after mentioning a portion of the land that is *áktiton*, "uncultivated", indicates the portion of it that is vineyard or orchard: *sa-ra-pedon phephuteménon* (planted). In this part of the *ktiménon*⁴¹ there are 1100 fig trees and 1000 vines. According to

³⁵ "The trees which marked certain shrines – the oak of Zeus at Dodona, the willow of Hera at Samos, the olive of Athene at Athens – are likely to have been seen as the local axis, linking the mundane world with the celestial world, just as the *omphalos* linked the mundane world with the hidden riches and terrors of the underworld (Jones and Pennick 2013: 19)." These sacred trees are, according to Pausanias (8.23.5), the oldest living healthy trees in Greece. Cf. Aratus' *Phaen.* 21-23 for the image of a fixed celestial axis around which the constellations turn. For an interesting adverbial usage of ἔμπεδα in relationship with the steadiness of the roots of the sacred oak(s) of Zeus at Dodona cf. Crinagoras, *Anth. Graec.* IX, 291 (οὐτως καὶ ἱερὰι Ζηνὸς δρῦες ἔμπεδα ῥίζαις // (5) ἐστᾶσιν, φύλλων δ' αὖα χέουσ' ἄνεμοι).

³⁶ *Od.* xi, 192-194.

³⁷ Cf. *Od.* xxiv 246-247:

οὐ φυτόν, οὐ συκῆ, οὐκ ἄμπελος, οὐ μὲν **ἐλαίη**
οὐκ ὄγχνη, οὐ πρασιή [...]
Not any plant, not a fig, a vine, an olive
a pear tree, nor any garden-plot [...]

³⁸ "The normative influence exerted by the Panhellenic audience of Homeric poetry would have tended to remove specific references to local cult from the poem, thus leaving us with generic [but clear] parallels such as these (Cook 1995: 161)."

³⁹ For trees as symbols of the favoring goddess see Levy 1948.

⁴⁰ Dimitri Nakassis in his recent study *Individuals and Society in Mycenaean Pylos* (Nakassis 2013) interprets *sa-ra-pe-do* as a place name, but it is not attested elsewhere as such in the linear B corpus and it is not in the typical rubric position (cf. Lane, 2012:71 and the close analysis of de Fidio: 1982).

⁴¹ For the exact meaning and translation of *ki-ti-me-na* see the discussion in Lane 2012: 64-65.

Nakassis⁴², Er 880 lists the extensive landholdings of *e-ke-ra-wo*, an individual of high status, in the village of *pa-ki-ja-ne*.

The landholder Laertes, besides thirteen pear trees and ten apple trees, gifted his son forty figs and fifty vines belonging to his orchard, which was likely planted with a larger number of plants of these species, even if it seems unlikely that Laertes' land could reach the dimension of *e-ke-ra-wo*'s plot. Anyway, the *numbers* and the *trees* are the ἔμπεδα signs (along with the scar) revealed by Odysseus to his father as an unmistakable token of his non-fictional identity and are displayed as legitimate claim to inherit (again) the household while resuming a public role.

Concerning this very special portion of Ithaca's *agrós*, the *euktiméné*⁴³ land tended by Laertes, his orchard, can be considered the object of a most important archival list recorded in the poem for the particular purpose of preserving the continuity of property, and of memory and identity as well.

If fiscality is the issue that demands the utmost arithmetical precision in the records of Pylos listing taxable⁴⁴ quantities and (equivalent) items within specified areas ("precise calculation appears to be an obsession of the scribes in nearly all their work" [Lane 2012: 66]), the identity of the hero finally accomplishing his *nóstos* is what the precise recounting fixed in the Ithaca 'tablet' is aimed to prove. The core information contained in lines 340-342⁴⁵ is *numbers* and *trees*⁴⁶: syntactical and rhythmical structure encapsulating the list seems to be, in this purpose, secondary. Arithmetical textualization of trees may symbolize the operating memory of the poem, containing the data about spatial references, like latitudes and longitudes, programmed for the last and decisive section of Odysseus' *nóstos*. These moderate (but precise) vegetal amounts can be viewed as the final lines of the code generating the overall route of homecoming.

The trees of Laertes share the status of ἔμπεδα signs with the scar. As J. Jaynes wrote, "writing proceeds from *pictures of visual events* to *symbols of phonetic events* [...] Writing of the latter type, as on the present page, is meant to tell a reader something he does not know. But the closer writing is to the former, the more it is primarily a mnemonic device to release information which the reader already has."⁴⁷ Odysseus' scar can be considered an ideogram of this sort; it also generates and resumes in itself a fundamental micro-narrative, the primal recognition tale of the 'Autolycaean' hero, a tale shared by the memory of all individuals belonging to Odysseus' clan,

⁴² Nakassis 2013: 243.

⁴³ "εἰ δ' ἄγε τοι καὶ δένδρε' εὐκτιμένην κατ' ἀλωήνεϊπῶ,
ἅ μοι ποτ' ἔδωκας [...]"
"And come, I will tell you the trees in the well-ordered garden,
the trees which once you gave to me [...]"
Od. xxiv 336-337.

⁴⁴ Cf. Lane 2012: 67.

⁴⁵ "ὄγγυας μοι δῶκας τρεῖσκαίδεκα καὶ δέκα μηλέας,
συκέας τεσσαράκοντ' ὄρχους δέ μοι ὄδ' ὀνόμηνας
δώσειν πενήτηκοντα, διατρύγιος δὲ ἕκαστος [...]"
"You gave me thirteen pear trees and ten apple trees,
and forty fig trees. And you promised to give me
fifty rows of vines that ripen at different times [...]"
Od. xxiv 340-342.

⁴⁶ Cf. Pucci 1996: 21: "...mere names, mere numbers, and no *metis*; or, as we would say no connotations, no rhetoric, no fiction. Almost no poem."

⁴⁷ Jaynes 2000: 176. Italics of the author.

regardless of masculine and feminine gender and without strict restriction to kinship⁴⁸, in contrast with the sign of the trees. As Ahuvia Kahane pointed out, the scar is “a condensed narrative, an ideogram almost of the boar hunt on Mount Parnassus.”⁴⁹ Odysseus is the authorized ‘performer’ of the scar sign and he chooses (or tries not) to show it to competent interpreters. Both the scar and the trees of Laertes are *émpeda sémata*, fixed, planted and depicted in memory, earth and skin, intended to be substantially unaffected by the passing time and to maintain their whole meaning and significance.

Thus, the relationship between the recounting of the trees and the showing of the scar is built both on a performance level and by a semiotic presence. The signs are articulated in the memory and impressed in the substance of characters, land and poem, as far as Odysseus is the one to produce and ‘perform’ evidence by unmistakable *sémata* proving his identity and sanctioning the eventually attained *nóstos*. In this perspective, the history and chronology of *nóstos* started long before the departure of Odysseus from Troy, and even before the Troy expedition itself, by-passing and apparently demarcating the Iliadic tradition as an epic *intermezzo*. In that distant itinerary across the orchard, which, in turn, encourages us to take one of Eco’s “inferential walks”⁵⁰, Odysseus as a child received the precise information he is about to record in the text of the poem by his own enumerative performance, recalling the list back from the archive of his memory and punctually connecting it with the concrete ἔμπεδα trees still upright and planted in the ground, thereby asserting his own ‘continuing’ identity as only legitimate heir in landholding. Similarly, the scar sign can be deciphered as an *aínos* written in skin and flesh, and understandable in its visual meaning only by the qualified ‘audience’ of those who are able to understand the inner and diachronical signification of the tale condensed in the boar hunt ‘ideogram’.

ΟΘΙ ΔΕΝΔΡΕΑ ΜΑΚΡΑ ΠΕΦΥΚΕΙ *WHERE TALL TREES GROW*

In the first part of scroll five of the *Odyssey*, the surrounding natural element of the lush *úlē* growing in Ogygia is framed by two significant cultural activities: Calypso’s skill in weaving and Odysseus’ capability as *téhton* of wood in naval carpentry. As is well known, all females, goddesses, nymphs and mortals, associated with Odysseus are highly skilled weavers⁵¹: let alone the ever-present Moirai, from Athena, the official patroness of weaving, through Calypso, Circe and Arete, to Helen, Antikleia and Penelope, almost all of Odysseus’ *nóstos* is ‘spun’ and ‘woven’, attached and connected to woven products, textiles, and characters depicted in weaving-related scenes and themes.

⁴⁸ In fact, anyone who can adequately interpret the sign of the scar but does not share with Odysseus blood kinship, is absorbed into Odysseus’ family as well: Eurukleia as his putative mother and Eumaeus and Philoetius as brothers to Telemachus. Eurukleia is virtually identified with Odysseus’ mother at the precise moment of the accounting of how Odysseus himself got his scar. Cf. Murnaghan 2011: 29-30.87.

⁴⁹ Cf. Kahane 2005: 103-105.

⁵⁰ Cf. Eco 1984: 214 f.. Henderson 1997: 87 introduced this topic in the discussion of the recounting of the trees at *Od.* xxiv 340-342.

⁵¹ Weaving was a core female activity in ancient Greece. Cf. Edmunds 2012: “The Homeric poems portray weaving as heroic, magnificent, clever, valuable, the womanly counterpart to warfare. It was the work of elite women: Helen, Andromache, Penelope, Arete, as well as goddesses. Circe and Calypso wove, to say nothing of Athene herself, warrior and weaver both. They wove patterned cloth which, in the case of the first three, expressed their own qualities, as well as their relationship to particular men. Helen weaves the story of the Trojan War, Andromache weaves flowery love charms, not knowing that Hector is dead, and Penelope weaves a stratagem to forestall betrayal of Odysseus.”

At lines 63-65 *euplókamos*⁵² Calypso weaving and singing⁵³ within her cave is directly juxtaposed to the epiphany of the verdant forest that will supply the “tall trees” for the raft of Odysseus. At dawn, the nymph herself (after putting on a lovely woven *phâros*⁵⁴) gives Odysseus a bronze double axe with an olive wood handle by which the hero is to cut down timber in order to build his raft. The role of olive trees and olive wood tools or manufactured objects in the *Odyssey* has been extensively and closely studied and analyzed, as well the special relationship of Athena with them⁵⁵; here I will only stress the textual opposition between the ‘cultural’ olive wood of the handle of the double-bladed axe and the well-seasoned timber of alder, poplar, and fir⁵⁶, doomed to fall under the blows of Odysseus. Whenever olive wood is mentioned, substantial progress on the way of *nóstos* is to be expected and particular stages of it are to be identified. In the present case, the olive wood handled axe serves as technical instrument to transform landscape elements into artfully joined parts of a wooden conveyance: *tékton*⁵⁷ Odysseus not only materially assembles the means of transport that is necessary to restart his *nóstos*, but notionally orientates it toward the olive bush growing in the *úlē* near the shore⁵⁸ of Scheria, the “border realm”⁵⁹ where, before the Phaeacian selected audience, the previous stages of *nóstos* itself will be performed as *kléos* for the first time, by the hero as *tékton* of words.

⁵² The epithet occurring in Homeric poetry, referred to both goddesses and women, means “with goodly locks”, “fair-haired” and, as a compound whose second element is a nominal derivative (with vocalism *o*) from the root *plek- of πλέκω, is etymologically related to the plaiting of tresses. For the relevance of the uses of πλέκω “plait” and ὑφαίνω “weave” as metaphors of poetic composition see Woodard 2014: 187-194.

⁵³ As Snyder 1981: 194-195 notes, Homer draws weaving and singing together in his description of Calypso and Circe’s weaving activities. Cf. Woodard 2014: 231.

⁵⁴ Later Calypso will bring *phárea* to Odysseus to be used as sails for his raft:

τόφρα δὲ φάρε’ ἔνεικε Καλυψώ, δία θεάων,
ἰστία ποιήσασθαι [...]

In the meanwhile Calypso, the beautiful goddess, brought cloth
to make a sail [...]

Od. v 258-259.

⁵⁵ Cf. Cook 1995: Chapters 3. 5 and related bibliography.

⁵⁶ The first half of line v 239 (κλήθηρ τ’ αἴγειρός τ’, ἐλάτη τ’ ἦν οὐρανομήκης) is identical with the first half of v 64 (κλήθηρ τ’ αἴγειρός τε καὶ εὐώδης κυπάρισσος): indeed, “fragrant cypress” is substituted by “fir rose to the sky”. Describing the lush *úlē* of Ogygia the poet underscores the ‘elysian’ attributes of the place, among them the fragrant scent of cypress which pairs that of cedar and juniper wood burning within the cave, which spreads across the island, (πῦρ μὲν ἐπ’ ἐσχαρόφιν μέγα καίετο, τηλόσε δ’ ὀδμη // κέδρου τ’ εὐκεάτοιο θύου τ’ ἀνὰ νῆσον ὀδῶδει /δαιομένων· [...]) *Od.* v 59-61); when tall trees are needed for building the raft, height is emphasized and timber more suited to naval carpentry, like fir, is required (cf. Theophrastus, *Historia Plantarum* V 7.1). The word ἐλάτη is used also for “oar” (in dative plural form) at *Od.* xii 172, and, in later authors, metonymically for ship.

⁵⁷ Cf. Skt. *tákṣan-* “carpenter”, *tákṣati*, *tāṣṭi* “form by cutting, plane, chisel, chop”, Lett. *test*, *tēst* “hew, plane”, etc.: cf. τέχνη (LSJ s.v. τέκτων). “Together with its numerous cognates, τέκτονες (*tektones*) points to an Indo-European etymon *teks- meaning “to weave; to fabricate”. Among descendant forms are latin *texō* “to weave, to plait, to embroider; to fabricate”; *textor* “weaver”; *textum* “woven fabric; interlaced timbers”; *textus* “style of weaving; woven fabric; the product of joining words (to produce a text)” [...] Pindar’s τέκτονες (*tektones*) are poetic craftsmen who by their skillfully joined words bring enduring fame to heroes (Woodard 2014: 229-230) [...]” Among the names of the Phaeacians, all symbolizing their special relationship to ships and seafaring we remind at viii 114 one *Tékton* (shipbuilder). Cf. Dougherty 2001: 114.

⁵⁸ Cf. *Od.* v 474-476.

⁵⁹ Cook 2004: 47.

The twenty tall trees⁶⁰ cut down by Odysseus grew in “the fringes of the island” (νήσου ἐπ’ ἐσχατιήν, ὅθι δένδρεα μακρὰ πεφύκει: *Od.* v 238): this topographic detail parallels both the location of Eumaeus’ home⁶¹ (where Odysseus starts reentering the Ithacan society) and the planted orchard of Laertes, growing in the family farm situated in far-off land⁶² on Ithaca. Given these reference points, we can also envision the ‘nautical’ *nóstos* as a completed route, a maritime itinerary from a luxuriant island’s end supplying timber for a raft, to another arborescent island whose extreme fringe of land juts into the sea and is marked by an isolated olive tree, a route proceeding through the liminality of Scheria and its commingled wild and tame olive shoots beside the beach and the river⁶³, divine helper of flailing Odysseus.

It takes about twenty lines and four days to fashion a raft whose features resemble in most technical solutions and manufacturing process those of ancient wooden ships.⁶⁴ At first light on the fifth day Calypso sends Odysseus away, giving him plenty of food, beverage and clothing. Textiles as parting gifts are standard protocol for female hosts⁶⁵; nevertheless, on the one hand, the *eímata* woven by Calypso parallel the raft as a product of skill and intelligence, on the other, they counterbalance in a negative way the orientation provided to *nóstos* by the olive wood handle axe: Odysseus will have to left them behind at sea (and substitute them with the *krédemnon* of Ino) in order to survive the storm sent by Poseidon – the trees of Ogygia too, cut by the axe and skillfully joined together, are unfastened by the force of the wind and the waves, and regain the status of non-cultural objects absorbed by a natural element, the sea. Because no sheep husbandry is mentioned regarding Ogygia and the nymph Calypso shares her abode and her island (except for Odysseus) apparently only with maid-servants and birds, the fabric of her textiles is to be intended as constituted by vegetal fibers, flax (for linen) perhaps. As a result, we are induced to draw a line of demarcation between wood and plants ‘native’ to Ogygia and the olive tree wood, not indigenous and belonging to a technical tool probably not engineered on the island. If olive wood is clearly and

⁶⁰ This detail recalls the traditional motif of the ‘twentieth year’ as the year of *nóstos*. For the Odyssean tradition as the ‘twenty-year’ epic see Tsagalis 2008: 135-149.

⁶¹ [...] ἀγροῦ ἐπ’ ἐσχατιήν, ὅθι δόματα ναῖε συβώτης.
[...] to the outskirts of the land, to where the pig herder lived.
Od. xxiv 150. Cf. *Od.* iv 517; v 489.

⁶² Cf. *Od.* i 189-190:
[...] Λαέρτην ἦρωα, τὸν οὐκέτι φασὶ πόλινδε
ἔρχεσθ’, ἀλλ’ ἀπάνευθεν ἐπ’ ἀγροῦ πήματα πάσχειν [...].
[...] the warrior Laertes, they say that he no longer comes to the city,
but that he suffers pains far off in the fields [...]
At scroll xviii 158-159 tall trees and the island’s far ends are newly connected:
ἀγροῦ ἐπ’ ἐσχατιῆς, —μισθὸς δέ τοι ἄρκιος ἔσται, —
αἵμασιός τε λέγων καὶ δένδρεα μακρὰ φυτεύων [...]
in the outermost fields, - your pay will be steady, -
gathering stones for walls and planting tall trees [...]

⁶³ βῆ ῥ’ ἴμεν εἰς ὕλην· τὴν δὲ σχεδὸν ὕδατος εὔρεν
ἐν περιφαινομένῳ. δοιοὺς δ’ ἄρ’ ὑπήλυθε θάμνους
ἐξ ὁμόθεν πεφυῶτας· ὁ μὲν φυλῆς, ὁ δ’ ἐλαίης.
He went to the woods. They were near the water,
on an open rise. He found two olive bushes there,
one wild, one planted, grown from the same spot.
Od. v 475-477.

⁶⁴ Cf. Casson 1971: 212-219.

⁶⁵ Cf. Mueller 2010: 6.

always ‘centripetal’, other types of wood and timber are not, even if they are parts of an artifact devised to advance *nóstos*. In the same perspective, if Odysseus *mētis* and skill as *tékton* contribute to homecoming and to acquiring *kléos*, the nymph’s own ability and intelligence do not.

The ‘archetypical’ product masterminded by Odysseus as *tékton* is obviously the wooden horse. As Miriam Riverlea points out, once in Scheria the hero, “having once engineered the horse’s physical construction”, “[...] facilitates its reconstruction through the medium of song (Riverlea: 2007: 5)”, calling on the bard Demodocus (Odysseus’ ‘competitor’ in performance) to sing the *kósmos* of the wooden horse which Epeios made under the guidance of Athena⁶⁶. In her article, Riverlea stresses the fact that the term *kósmos* refers to the physical shape of the construction as well as to the order of the narrative, and argues that the physical construction undertaken by Odysseus has a close relationship with the poetic creative process. Although the horse as wooden artifact made of joined parts parallels the raft, it is worth noting that when Demodocus responds to Odysseus’ request and starts singing, he avoids describing the process and the specifics of the horse’s construction: his account starts with the horse already built. Conversely, Vergil’s Aeneid, the most comprehensive source of the myth, draws attention to the horse’s material composition⁶⁷ and uses four words to describe its wood (*abies, acernus, robur, pineus*)⁶⁸: olive wood as raw material is absent from this list but it is indirectly alluded to by the presence of *Pallas*. Here, as in the construction of the raft, the olive tree is not regarded as useful timber, but plays a definite role at the engineering and constructing level, both in a mental and material horizon.

In Vermeule’s words⁶⁹ the poet is “like a carpenter using timbers and pegs to make a hall or ship”: these words can be usefully recollected in envisaging the type of carpentry mastered by Odysseus, who, not surprisingly, is skilled even in the art of ‘weaving’, not only metaphorically⁷⁰ (scheming, planning, finding cunning solutions), but in the literal sense of plaiting vegetal fibers, as we can witness at scroll x when he “plucked twigs and osiers (λύγους), and weaving (πλεξάμενος)”⁷¹

⁶⁶ “ἀλλ’ ἄγε δὴ μετάβηθι καὶ ἵππου κόσμον ἄεισον
δουρατέου, τὸν Ἐπειὸς ἐποίησεν σὺν Ἀθήνῃ,
ὄν ποτ’ ἐς ἀκρόπολιν δόλον ἤγαγε δῖος Ὀδυσσεὺς
ἀνδρῶν ἐμπλήσας, οἳ Ἴλιον ἐξάλπαξαν.”

“But come now, change your theme and sing of the building of the wooden horse
that Epeios made with Athena’s help,
that godlike Odysseus once dragged up to the acropolis
having filled it with men who sacked Ilion.”
Od. viii 492-495.

⁶⁷ Cf. *Aen.* 2, 15-16:

Instar montis equum divina Palladis arte
aedificant sectaque intexunt abiete costas [...]
(The kings of Greece) build a mountain size horse, by Pallas’ divine skill divine,
and plank the sides with timbered fir [...]

⁶⁸ For a recapitulation on this most debated problem in Vergilian scholarship see Hexter 1990.

⁶⁹ Vermeule 1986: 86-87.

⁷⁰ Cf. Mueller 2010: 3.

⁷¹ For the use of *πλέκω* and the semantic relationship with *ὑφαίνω* see Nagy 2002: 78. For the momentous word *λύγος* in the context of metaphoric plaiting (of words) see Woodard: 2014, 200-202.

a rope⁷² tied the legs of a stag he had killed, or at scroll ix, when, in the cave of the Cyclops, bound together blinded Polyphemus' rams by three "with well-plaited withes" to escape from the cave⁷³. As it is known, both carpentry and weaving are metaphoric expressions of (oral) poetic composition⁷⁴ of Indo-European ascendance: Odysseus seems to recapitulate in himself all the different semantic fields active in these metaphors. He can craft ships joining wooden parts, he can 'weave' (e. g. *dóloi* by his *mêtis*) as well he is capable of firmly plaiting withes in order to make ropes and bindings, and he is a thoroughly skilled performer who artfully joins themes and weaves words.

So, the character of Odysseus resembles a quite ideal and 'complete' *tékton*, because on the one hand "the construction of Odysseus' raft [...] corresponds to the techniques of producing oral poetry (Dougherty 2001: 31)", on the other "an even more interesting connection between poetics and seafaring is not articulated directly but rather triangulated with the process of textile production (Dougherty 2001: 35)." The raft, a wooden artifact, the rope and the bindings, vegetal textiles, all objects crafted by the technical skills of the hero, permit the *nóstos* to proceed and *kléos* to be spread: the raft will convey Odysseus near the shores of Scheria, where he himself will sing the *kléa* of the *anér polútropos*, as well the plaited withes will serve both to elude Polyphemus and to carry food needed for survival in life and tradition.

⁷² αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ σπασάμην ῥῶπας τε λύγους τε,
 πείσμα δ' ὅσον τ' ὄργυιαν ἐϋστρεφὲς ἀμφοτέρωθεν
 πλεξάμενος συνέδησα πόδας δεινοῖο πελώρου [...]
 I plucked out twigs and osiers,
 weaving a rope about a fathom long,
 I bound the feet of the monstrous beast [...]
Od. x 166-168.

⁷³ At *Od.* ix 420-429 Odysseus' metaphorical weaving elicits literal weaving as an apt technique to save himself and his surviving companions:

αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ βούλευον, ὅπως ὄχ' ἄριστα γένοιτο,
 εἴ τιν' ἐταίροισιν θανάτου λύσιν ἦδ' ἐμοὶ αὐτῷ
 εὐροίμην· πάντας δὲ **δόλους** καὶ **μήτιν ὕφαινον**,
 ὡς τε περὶ ψυχῆς· μέγα γὰρ κακὸν ἐγγύθεν ἦεν.
 ἦδε δέ μοι κατὰ θυμὸν ἀρίστη φαίνετο βουλή·
 ἄρσενες οἴες ἦσαν ἐϋτρεφεὲς δασύμαλλοι,
 καλοὶ τε μεγάλοι τε, ἰοδνεφὲς εἶρος ἔχοντες·
 τοὺς ἀκέων **συνέεργον ἐϋστρεφέεσσι λύγοισι**,
 τῆσ' ἔπι Κύκλωψ εὐδε πέλωρ, ἀθεμίστια εἰδώς,
 σύντρεις αἰνύμενος·
 But I considered what would be the best plan
 to devise a sure escape for my companions and for myself.
 I wove all sorts of wiles and plans,
 as is usual in matters of life and death. A great evil was near.
 Now this seemed to me to be the best plan:
 here are his well-fed rams with thick wool,
 handsome and large, with fleece dark as violet.
 I bound these together, quietly, using some willow withes,
 on which the huge Cyclops, who knows no laws, used to sleep.
 I grouped them in three.

⁷⁴ See Nagy 1979: 297-298. Woodard 2014: 115.

ΚΑΙ ΤΟΙ ΚΛΥΤΟΝ ΑΛΣΟΣ ΙΚΟΝΤΟ ΙΠΟΝ ΑΘΗΝΑΙΗΣ
COMING TO THE SACRED GROVE OF ATHENA

The sacred grove of Athena⁷⁵ on Scheria, where Odysseus awaits the return of Nausikaa to her father's palace, at first sight reminds us of the classic *locus amoenus*, an idyllic setting "rich in stock and conventional elements (Haller 2007: 148)". Indeed, as a natural extra-urban sanctuary, here the sacred grove serves its most widespread and traditional function, that of *asylum*⁷⁶, offering to Odysseus (and, indirectly, to Nausikaa) shelter from prying eyes. That the sacred grove is dedicated to Athena is a good omen for Odysseus and a clear indication of its functional significance in relation to the progress of *nóstos*.⁷⁷ If, in the first place, the presence into the grove of a *krénē* (a built fountain with a spout and basin, rather than a simple spring⁷⁸), poplars and a meadow represents the standard in the *loca amoena* of the *Odyssey*⁷⁹, more definitely these three elements compose the characteristic triad of spring cave and vegetation⁸⁰ (especially poplar trees) typically used to describe the groves sacred to nymphs and the surroundings of their abodes.

The triad is active in the description of the woods of Ogygia, where a grove and water sources stand outside of the cave, it is also present in the abode of the nymphs on the Goat Island, at

⁷⁵ δῆομεν ἀγλαὸν ἄλσος Ἀθήνης ἄγχι κελεύθου
αἰγείρων, ἐν δὲ κρήνη νάει, ἀμφὶ δὲ λειμῶν·
ἔνθα δὲ πατρὸς ἐμοῦ τέμενος τεθαλυῖα τ' ἀλωή,
τόσσον ἀπὸ πτόλιος, ὅσσον τε γέγωνε βοήσας.
ἔνθα καθεζόμενος μείναι χρόνον, εἰς ὃ κεν ἡμεῖς
ἄστυδε ἔλθωμεν καὶ ἰκώμεθα δώματα πατρὸς.
You will find a grove of Athena near the road,
a grove of poplars, in it a spring well up, and around it is a meadow.
There is my father's land, and a blooming vineyard,
as far from the city as a man's voice carries when he shouts.
Sit down there and wait awhile,
until we come into the city and arrive at the palace of my father.
Od. vi 291-296.

⁷⁶ Cf. Bonnechere 2007: 28: "In general, divine protection was afforded, from the time of epic, to those who resided in sacred groves. Thus the priest Maron, who lived in an *alsos* of Apollo, was respected by Odysseus, who received in exchange the wine that later allowed him to escape death in the Cyclops's lair."

⁷⁷ Cf. Haller 2007 149: "Both the olive and Athena's grove provided shelter – the former from elemental, the latter from political threats. Both these locales are thus essentially human spaces of sanctuary and refuge at varying degrees of proximity to the political space of Alcinous' palace and city – the olive being located on the most distant fringes of Alcinous' kingdom, the grove, at a midway point between the isolated shore and the city."

⁷⁸ Cf. Larson 2001: 26.

⁷⁹ Cf. Garvie 1994: 291-293. Poplars: v 64; vi 292; ix 141; x 510; xvii 208. Springs: v 70; vi 292; ix,141; xvii 205. Meadow: v 72; vi 292; ix 132; xxiv 13.

⁸⁰ Another triad for a sanctuary in nature is that of shrine and *krénē* located within an *alsos*, as we can see in the Homeric hymn to Apollo where the god constructs an altar to himself in an *alsos* by a *krénē*:

καὶ βωμὸν ποιήσατ' ἐν ἄλσει δεινδρήεντι
ἄγχι μάλα κρήνης καλλιρρόου·
And he made himself an altar in a wooded grove
close to the fair-flowing spring.
Hymni Homerici, In Apollinem, 384-385.

In Ithaca Apollo has a shady *alsos* where citizens gather and make offerings in the context of a ritual banquet (cf. *Od.* xx, 278).

Phorcys Bay and in the other cult place of Ithacan nymphs near the town. The quasi-metonymic connection between nymphs, water and trees (poplars in particular⁸¹) in such descriptions is traditional and related to the topography of places of actual cult, reappearing significantly and vastly in later literature⁸². In the venue of Scheria, the fundamental role of nymphs as mythic providers of fresh water and shelter implicitly overlaps that of Athena as favoring goddess: Nausikaa with her companions (compared at the beginning of scroll v to Artemis and her nymphs), after making Odysseus refreshed and washed, indicates to the hero the sacred grove of Athena as the adequate place to start securely and properly his entrance in the city of Alcinous. The foliage of poplars is here sacred to Athena as, conversely, near the cave of the nymphs at Phorcys Bay an olive tree grows, which, for its part, is a transparent symbol of the presence and benevolent influence of the goddess at the beginning of the last stage of *nóstos*.

The adjective used to characterize Athena's grove⁸³, ἀγλαός⁸⁴, accompanies in poetry shining and bright objects, in particular flowing water as at *Od.* ix 140 (αὐτὰρ ἐπὶ κρατὸς λιμένος ῥέει ἀγλαὸν ὕδωρ), a line describing the sacred place of the nymphs on the Goat Island, where poplars grow too.⁸⁵ The same adjective distinguishes the *pháros* woven by Penelope at xxiv 145 (ἀγλαὸν ἰστόν): this connection helps us to triangulate a relationship between poplars, weaving (and its patroness: Athena) and nymphs. At vii 106 the constant movements of the hands of Phaeacian women turning their distaffs is compared to the leaves of a tall poplar⁸⁶ and the woven cloth appears to be softened with olive oil (καιρουσσέων δ' ὀθονέων ἀπολείβεται ὑγρὸν ἔλαιον⁸⁷): the activity of weaving is specified as an intellectual gift of Athena. We can also make reference to Calypso, weaving at her loom within a cave surrounded by poplars, and to the nymphs “of the flowing water”

⁸¹ Cf. *Callim. Hymn* 6.36-38:

ἔς δὲ τὸ τὰς Δάματρος ἀναιδέες ἔδραμον ἄλσος.
 ἦς δὲ τις αἴγειρος, μέγα δένδρον αἰθέρι κῦρον,
 τῷ ἔπι ταὶ νύμφαι ποτὶ τῶνδιον ἐψιόωντο·
 They rushed shameless into the grove of Demeter.
 Now there was a poplar, a great tree reaching to the sky,
 and thereby the nymphs amused themselves at noon.

⁸² Cf. Larson 2001: 6-11.

⁸³ The adjective can be here intended as “splendid”, or can be more precisely related to the shimmering light reflected on and through the moving foliage of the trees.

⁸⁴ Cf. *Il.* II 506: Ὀγχιστόν θ' ἱερὸν Ποσιδήϊον ἀγλαὸν ἄλσος. *Hymni Homerici, In Apollinem*, 230: Ὀγχιστόν δ' ἴξες Ποσιδήϊον ἀγλαὸν ἄλσος.

⁸⁵ The formula αὐτὰρ ἐπὶ κρατὸς λιμένος not casually resurfaces at xiii 102 when the poet is describing the environs of the cave of the nymphs at Phorcys Bay. The poplars themselves are closely related to water, as shown by the adjective ὑδατοτρεφής at xvii 208.

⁸⁶ αἱ δ' ἰστοὺς ὑφώσι καὶ ἠλάκατα στρωφῶσιν
 ἦμεναι, οἷά τε φύλλα μακεδνῆς αἰγείροιο·
 Others wove on looms and, sitting down,
 spun yarn, like the leaves of a tall poplar tree.
Od. vii 105-106.

⁸⁷ *Od.* vii 107.

(νύμφαι Νηϊάδες⁸⁸) at Phorcys Bay weaving on stone looms in their cave near the olive tree at the extreme point of Ithacan land on the head of the harbor⁸⁹.

The Phaeacians leave Odysseus (while he is sleeping) and his gifted treasures by the olive tree, where Athena will make her epiphany and speak to him. In this context, the positive role of Athena in progressing *nóstos* is stressed two times, the first time by the narrator, who underscores the positive influence of the goddess on the Phaeacians' attitude toward Odysseus⁹⁰, the second by the words of Athena herself, who reveals her true identity and reiterates the importance of her saving presence all along the Return:

“[...] οὐδὲ σύ γ' ἔγνωσ
Παλλάδ' Ἀθηναίην, κούρην Διός, ἣ τέ τοι αἰεὶ
ἐν πάντεσσι πόνοισι παρίσταμαι ἠδὲ φυλάσσω,
καὶ δέ σε Φαιήκεσσι φίλον πάντεσσιν ἔθηκα.”

“[...] And yet you
did not recognize Pallas Athena, daughter of Zeus,
I who stand beside you in all your troubles and watch over you,
and made you welcome to all the Phaeacians.”

Od. xiii 299-302.

The words of Athena contrast here with those of the hero, who, uttering his prayer in Athena's sacred grove on Scheria, does not put forward past instances of offerings to the goddess or the goddess' past favors, but emphasizes her failure to respond to prior prayers⁹¹. In fact, Athena made no undisguised epiphanies to Odysseus since the Trojan war⁹², and we have to wait, to

⁸⁸ The word is a derivative from the same root of *νάω*: “flow” of water. Cf. *Od.* vi 292: ἐν δὲ κρήνῃ νάει, regarding the spring (or the fountain) within the sacred grove of Athena. *Νάω* [ᾶ] is from i.e. **snāw-w*: Cf. Skt. *snaúti* (pf. part. Pass. *snutás*) “drip”, Mlr. *snuadh* “river” (LSJ).

⁸⁹ αὐτὰρ ἐπὶ κρατὸς λιμένος τανύφυλλος ἐλαίη,
ἀγχόθι δ' αὐτῆς ἄντρον ἐπήρατον ἠεροειδές,
ἶρον Νυμφάων, αἱ Νηϊάδες καλέονται.
ἐν δὲ κρητῆρές τε καὶ ἀμφοροῆες ἔασι
λάϊνοι· ἐνθα δ' ἔπειτα τιθαιβώσσουσι μέλισσαι.
ἐν δ' ἴστοι λίθιοι περιμήκεες, ἐνθα τε Νύμφαι
φάρε' ὑφαίνουσιν ἀλιπόρφυρα, θαῦμα ἰδέσθαι·
At the head of the harbor there is an olive tree with long leaves,
and near to it a lovely cave where vapors linger.
The cave is sacred to the nymphs, who are called Naiads.
In the cave are mixing bowls and stone jars with two handles.
The bees store their honey there.
There are stone looms, where the Nymphs weave cloaks
dyed with the purple of the sea, a marvel to behold.
Od. xiii 102-108

⁹⁰ ἐκ δὲ κτήματ' ἄειραν, ἃ οἱ Φαίηκες ἀγαυοὶ
ᾔπασαν οἴκαδ' ἰόντι διὰ μεγάθυμον Ἀθήνην.
They lifted out the goods, that the noble Phaeacians
gave him for his journey home, thanks to the effort of great-hearted Athena.
Od. xiii 120-121.

⁹¹ Cf. Haller 2007: 150.

⁹² Cf. *Od.* xiii 326-329. On the negative aspects of the relationship between Athena and Odysseus see Nagy 2013: 337-340.

witness her appear face to face (ἐναντίη: *Od.* vi 329) with Odysseus, until the foliage of the sacred poplars is substituted by the ‘canonical’ “long-pointed leaves” of the olive tree. Under a specular perspective, it’s Athena who, by Phorcys Bay’s olive tree, recalls Odysseus past hecatombs to the Nereids Nymphs, who will aptly preserve the treasures collected from the Phaeacians in their natural cave.

Before the tripods, cauldrons and other wealth are relocated with the help of Athena from under the tree and hidden into the innermost part of the Nymphs’ cave⁹³, Odysseus utters a prayer to them promising to make renewed offerings if the favor of Athena grants him to survive the future struggle with the suitors and to see his dear son grown-up: a direct prayer to the Nymphs contain an indirect prayer to Athena who is standing before and listening, while, in the sacred grove in Scheria, a direct prayer to Athena took place in a venue close resembling a natural sanctuary of nymphs. The association of Athena and the nymphs in Odysseus prayer reflects indeed an historical reality, given the traditional and cultural link between the goddess as a *parthenos* and female choruses, as shown by Claude Calame⁹⁴. Furthermore, Sicily and Magna Graecia afford several examples of minor cultic links between the nymphs and major Olympian goddesses, as Hera, Artemis and Athena, with the nymphs as attendants upon the major goddess, as well the reverse course, for the cults of major deities are to be found in rupestral sanctuaries with springs⁹⁵. Considering also the role of nymphs as guardian and divine keepers of herds, we have to keep in mind that Athena at first approaches Odysseus on Ithaca in the form of a young man, a shepherd or a herdsman (nymphs were among the favorite deities of herdsmen⁹⁶: Eumaeus does not forget to make offerings to them⁹⁷).

If the olive tree at Phorcys Bay on Ithaca is “away from the path (ἐκτὸς ὁδοῦ: *Od.* xiii, 123)”, the sacred grove of Athena on Scheria is a roadside cluster of poplars, it is “near the path (ἄγχι κελεύθου: *Od.* vi, 291)”: both the locations, however, are apt to offer temporary shelter to the hero awaiting to re-enter the civilized world, and both are under the patronage of Athena. The sacred grove is symbolically placed near the path where Odysseus enters a crucial stage of his *nóstos*, approaching the city of the Phaeacians who will offer him the final convey; the secluded olive tree at Phorcys Bay will guarantee first a safe dwelling to the sleeping Odysseus and his treasures, then the privacy needed for planning and scheming his return to the palace and the

⁹³ For a broad discussion about the possible relations between the cave of the nymphs in the Homeric text and the archeological finds in Polis Bay at Ithaca in a cultic perspective involving Odysseus, Athena and the nymphs see Malkin 1998: 99-107. See also Currie 2006: 51-52. For the combination of the sleeper, tree and storage motifs and for related similarities within *Odyssey* and *Mahābhārata* see Allen 2001: 377 ff.

⁹⁴ Cf. Calame 2001: 130: “Athena like Artemis is a virgin; Callimachus tells us that she too is associated with the nymphs.” Recalling the bathing of Pallas described by Callimachus in his hymn to the goddess, Gloria Ferrari (Ferrari 2002: 49) writes that: “Athena bathes together with nymphs and destroys Tiresias’ sight because she has seen her. That the bath is of some symbolic importance is shown by the fact that three of the four goddesses who are represented bathing in myth – Artemis, Athena, and Hera – also receive cult that involves the ritual bathing of an ancient statue”. For a connection between Athena’s bathing and *krénai* within the frame of the judgment of Paris see Ferrari 2002: 51.

⁹⁵ Cf. Larson 2001: 212.

⁹⁶ Cf. Larson 2001: 78.

⁹⁷ καὶ τὰ μὲν ἑπταχὰ πάντα διεμοιρᾶτο δαΐζων·
τὴν μὲν ἴαν Νύμφησι καὶ Ἑρμῇ, Μαιάδος υἱί,
θῆκεν ἐπευξάμενος, τὰς δ’ ἄλλας νεῖμεν ἐκάστω·
Cutting up the meat, he divided it into seven portions.

The one part he set aside with a prayer for the nymphs and for Hermes, the son of Maia, and the others he distributed to each.
Od. xiv 434-436.

mnesterophonía with Athena. The grove on Scheria, displaying its protective function as an *álsos*⁹⁸, point also to the ‘orientative’ and more active function of the goddess from this point on by its expressed patronage, its placement and vegetal composition.

Alcinous’ *témenos* and *alōé* are close to (“in the very same area of” ἔνθα: *Od.* vi 293) the *álsos*, so that they too cannot notionally escape the beaming looks of Athena and her virtual protection. The goddess herself, in the form of a young girl (παρθενικῆ εἰκυῖα νεήνιδι: *Od.* vii 20), will lead Odysseus to Alcinous’ palace and fenced garden.

ΕΝΘΑ ΔΕ ΔΕΝΔΡΕΑ ΜΑΚΡΑ ΠΕΦΥΚΑΣΙ
TALL TREES GROWING WITHIN

Alcinous’ *témenos* is situated in the part of the *agrós* adjacent to the city and surrounded the roadside grove of Athena⁹⁹. His *órchatos* is located “on the outside of the courtyard and next to the doors (ἔκτοσθεν δ’ αὐλῆς μέγας ὄρχατος ἄγχι θυράων: *Od.* vii 112)” of his palace¹⁰⁰. The estate, with an orchard, vineyard and vegetable beds, resembles “a large farm more than a palatial residence”¹⁰¹: in fact, the focal points of the long and accurate description spanning twenty three lines of the seventh book resonate clearly and profoundly with elements of other Odyssean passages dealing with clusters of (fruit) trees, vineyards and orchards, first of all the one picturing the *alōé* and *órchatos* of Laertes, as well also previous and forthcoming ‘vegetal’ narratives, as the luxuriant forest on Ogygia and the trees of Tantalus in Hades.

If we consider the planting of vineyards and orchards as an antithesis of nomadic life, showing an intention of taking up permanent abode¹⁰², this element of sedentary¹⁰³ and agricultural civilization can be traced just from the start of the description, as the poet catalogues the tall trees supplying the palace with fresh fruits and oil: pear, pomegranate, apple, fig and olive trees. The formulaic δένδρεα μακρὰ of Alcinous’ garden both resonate in the wild grove of Ogygia, from which Odysseus cut down timber for his raft, and hint to Ithaca’s agricultural landscape, precisely to Eurumakhos’ rural estate¹⁰⁴, where Odysseus (as a hired worker) should plant tall trees and gather wall-stones, and, finally, to the trees of Laertes. The intersection of artifice and nature in the description of Alcinous’ garden has been pointed out by scholars, in order to stress the transitional

⁹⁸ Cf. Bonnechere 2007: 26: “A sacred grove is a place where a significant and divine modification of the normal landscape appears. In a forest, the *alsos* would therefore distinguish itself by a changed atmosphere, a peculiar location, or a distinctive natural or cultural element.”

⁹⁹ Cf. Donlan 1989: 130.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Cook 2004: 53-54.

¹⁰¹ Carroll-Spillecke 1992: 84.

¹⁰² Cf. Galloway Keller 1913: 41.

¹⁰³ This aspect is emphasized by the use of the verb *ρίζω at *Od.* vii 122: ἔνθα δέ οἱ πολύκαρπος ἀλωή ἐρρίζωται, regarding the vineyard, which represents the central cultivation in Alcinous’ estate. The fixed immovability expressed by the root of the verb recurs when the poet describes the Phaeacian ship transformed into stone and fixed to the sea bottom by Poseidon (Cf. *Od.* xiii 163: ὃς μιν λαῶν ἔθηκε καὶ ἐρρίζωσεν ἔνερθε).

¹⁰⁴ The adjective τετράγυος (of four measures) which specifies the extension of Alcinous’ garden reappears in Homeric poetry only at *Od.* xviii 374, when Odysseus challenges Eurumakhos in a heroic plowing “of four measures .”

nature of Phaeacian society and to parallel this nature with the advance of *nóstos*¹⁰⁵: Odysseus is progressively reentering the world of civilization and turning his back to the environment of untamed nature¹⁰⁶. Simultaneously, the presence of Athena tends to become personalized and the goddess manifests herself and her support not only in olive tree made saving devices¹⁰⁷ and olive tree shelters¹⁰⁸ anymore, but by a disguised epiphany and, even more directly, through a place of cult such a sacred grove - where the actual presence of the goddess was presupposed - which is of strategic relevance for the *kseínos páter* Odysseus¹⁰⁹.

The description of Alcinous' garden affords within itself also a relevant instance of catalogic poetry: the tripartite structure and the articulated syntactical construction match with mere enumerative and informative passages (although densely rhetorically qualified¹¹⁰).

The first properly catalogic lines we encounter in the description are *Od.* vii 115-116:

ὄγγυαι καὶ ῥοιαὶ καὶ μηλέαι ἀγλαόκαρποι
συκέαι τε γλυκεραὶ καὶ ἐλαῖαι τηλεθώσσαι.

pear trees and pomegranates and apple trees with shiny fruit
sweet figs and luxuriant olives.

These lines are duplicated at *Od.* xi 589-590, referring to the fruit trees that remain unreachable for Tantalus in Hades, where the μακρά of 114 is substituted by ὑπιπέτηλα of 588, a

¹⁰⁵ The moderate mixture of natural and cultivated elements in the garden of Alcinous could suggest a correlation with the typology of the Bronze Age palace gardens of Minoan Crete gardens. According to Maria Shaw (Cf. Shaw 1993), the Aegean garden seems to have consisted of a natural landscape modified through cultivations and other 'artificial' means, as we can deduce from fresco paintings and from (mediocre) topographical and archaeological evidence. More convincingly, Erwin Cook argues that the *Odyssey* drew on near eastern sources knowledgeable about Assyrian palace gardens in particular. Cf. Cook 2004: 70.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Haller 2007: 157-158.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. *Od.* v 234-236; ix 319-320. For the fig tree also as a saving device cf. *Od.* xii 103; 432. It is Circe that suggests to Odysseus the presence of the wild fig tree, grabbing whose trunk he will save his life from Charybdis. For the association of the fig or the olive tree with a female deity in Minoan-Mycenaean art see Kourou 2001: 34. For the 'technical' role of olive tree and its association with Athena and with Odysseus *mētis* and ability as *tékton* see Cook 1995: 104-109. The words of Odysseus at xii 433-434 stress the lack of stability for his feet and the need of a handhold ([...] οὐδέ πη εἶχον // οὔτε στηρίζαι ποσὶν ἔμπεδον οὔτ' ἐπιβῆναι): the mention of the roots of the fig tree, which are ἐκάς (xii 435), could also allude to the fact that Odysseus has reached the notional farthest point from the spot of Laertes, the venue where *nóstos* will be fully attained, and where are the roots of the cultivated fig trees are implanted. Odysseus plunges directly from the trunk of the wild fig into the sea, close to the wooden wreckage of his ship come back from Charybdis' engulfment: from the 'vertical' salvation of the fig he reaches for the 'horizontal' support of the περιμήκεια δοῦρα (xii 443).

¹⁰⁸ Cf. *Od.* v 476-77; xiii 122-124.

¹⁰⁹ τὸν δ' αὖτε προσέειπε θεὰ γλαυκῶπις Ἀθήνη·
“τοιγὰρ ἐγὼ τοι, ξεῖνε πάτερ, δόμον, ὃν με κελεύεις,
δείξω, ἐπεὶ μοι πατρὸς ἀμύμονος ἐγγύθι ναίει.”
The goddess, flashing-eyed Athena, then answered him:
Well, I will show you the house that you ask about, sir stranger,
for he lives near my own noble father's house.”
Od. vii 27-29.

¹¹⁰ See the reduplicated polyptota at *Od.* vii 120-121:
ὄγγυη ἐπ' ὄγγυη γηράσκει, μῆλον δ' ἐπὶ μήλω,
αὐτὰρ ἐπὶ σταφυλῇ σταφυλή, σῦκον δ' ἐπὶ σύκῳ.
Pear ripens on pear, apple on apple,
grape on grape, fig on fig.

switch that underscores the fact that the trees are abundantly fruitful. The first four feet of each hexameter, up to position 8b and 8 respectively, are constituted by coordinate enumeration, the final two feet, from position 9, by adjectives related to the final object (in this case a species of tree) of the enumeration itself. If we consider the composed adjective ἀγλαό-καρπος we cannot miss the resonance generated by its first element in the context of scroll vii with the ἀγλαός *álsos* of Athena and with the ἀγλαὰ δῶρα gifted by the gods to Alcinous¹¹¹. Likewise, the τηλεθόωσαι olive trees of line 116 ‘rhyme’ with the τηλεθάοντα tall trees of 114¹¹². Further below, the enumeration of lines 120-121:

ὄγχνη ἐπ’ ὄγχνη γηράσκει, μήλον δ’ ἐπὶ μήλῳ,
αὐτὰρ ἐπὶ σταφυλῇ σταφυλή, σῦκον δ’ ἐπὶ σύκῳ.

Pear ripens on pear, apple on apple,
grape on grape, fig on fig.

recalls *Od.* xxiv 246-247, where Odysseus praises his father for the care devoted to his orchard (before rebuking him for lack of personal care):

οὐ φυτόν, οὐ συκῆ, οὐκ ἄμπελος, οὐ μὲν ἐλαίη,
οὐκ ὄγχνη, οὐ πρασιή τοι ἄνευ κοιμιδῆς κατὰ κῆπον.

Not any plant, not a fig, a vine, an olive
a pear tree, nor any garden-plot in the orchard.

It’s tempting to connect as a subtext the verb γηράσκει at line 120, very unusually referred to fruits, to the γῆρας λυγρὸν of Laertes. Moreover, the two lines of scroll 24 could represent a compressed example of the ‘catalogue of trees theme’ expanded at its utmost in the description of Alcinous’ garden. The word πρασιή, for instance, recurs in Homeric poetry only here and at vii 127,¹¹³ meanwhile the passage dedicated to the *órchatos* on Scheria present a couple of *hapax* in Homer, ἐπετήσιος at line 118 and ὑποπερκάζουσιν at line 126. Another composed adjective with the second element -καρπος expressing the fruitfulness of trees, πολύκαρπος, appears at line 122 referred to the vineyard: the same recurs, in the same metrical position, at xxiv 221¹¹⁴.

¹¹¹ Cf. *Od.* vii 133: τοῖ’ ἄρ’ ἐν Ἀλκινόοιο θεῶν ἔσαν ἀγλαὰ δῶρα.

¹¹² ἔνθα δὲ δένδρεα μακρὰ πεφύκασι τηλεθάοντα,
ὄγχναι καὶ ροιαὶ καὶ μηλέαι ἀγλαόκαρποι
συκέαι τε γλυκεραὶ καὶ ἐλαῖαι τηλεθόωσαι.
Within, tall trees grew blooming,
pear trees and pomegranates and apple trees with shiny fruit
sweet figs and luxuriant olives.
Od. vii, 114-116.

The τηλεθάοντα trees are an important (although temporarily negative, in that case) token of recognition for Ithaca at *Od.* xiii 196 (πέτραι τ’ ἠλίβατοι καὶ δένδρεα τηλεθάοντα). Athena, eventually revealing Ithaca to Odysseus, will say that the island is recognizable also for its ὕλη παντοίη (xiii, 246-247): this last expression recalls the σταφυλαὶ παντοῖαι of Laertes at xxiv 343, which, in turn, also seems to resume all the dynamics of Alcinous’ vineyard. On this last relationship see Heubeck 1981: 379.

¹¹³ Consider also ἀγλαόκαρπος, only at vii 115 = xi 589.

¹¹⁴ Cf *Od.* vii 122: ἔνθα δέ οἱ πολύκαρπος ἀλωή ἐρρίζωται and *Od.* xxii 221: ἄσσον Ἴεν πολυκάρπου ἀλωῆς πειρητίζων.

In his study of catalogue poetry Benjamin Sammons states the importance of catalogues to the epic poet, among other things, as technical media for developing his own themes¹¹⁵. Beside precious objects, the trees are the most catalogued ‘commodities’ in the *Odyssey*: trees, clustered in forests, (sacred) woods and orchards recur quite rhythmically in the narration in the form of lists. Otherwise, they are isolated in significant elements of landscape, as I will show presently. Hence, the trees may play also the role of helping audiences to maintain a stable orientation in the context of multitextual diction, in following and anticipating the possibilities of *nóstos* within an intratextual system of resonance, in the frame of continuous interaction of text and subtext.

As an example, *Od.* xi 588-590:

δένδρεα δ’ ὑψιπέτηλα κατὰ κρήθην χέε καρπόν,
ὄγχναι καὶ ροιαὶ καὶ μηλέαι ἀγλαόκαρποι
συκέαι τε γλυκεραὶ καὶ ἐλαῖαι τηλεθώσσαι.

High leafy trees poured down fruit above his head,
pear trees and pomegranates and apple trees with shiny fruit
sweet figs and luxuriant olives.

not only reiterates Alcinous’ garden vegetal catalogue, but reminds us (or compensate the absence of) the trees Odysseus should have encountered on the shores of the kingdom of Persephone according to Circe’s information¹¹⁶:

“ἔνθ’ ἀκτὴ τε λάχεια καὶ ἄλσεα Περσεφονείης
μακρὰ τ’ αἴγειροι καὶ ἰτέαι ὠλεσίκαρποι.”

“There is a level beach and the groves of Persephone,
tall poplars and willows that shed their fruit before fully ripe.”

Od. x 508-509.

In this passage, we meet one more time a composed adjective with the second element -καρπος: ὠλεσί-καρπος is referred to the willows (ἰτέαι) and it means “shedding their fruits before ripening” (ὄλλυμι + καρπός). The adjective is the clear conceptual counterpart to πολύκαρπος of vii 122, a word that stresses the fruitfulness and the perennial, all year round vitality of Alcinous’ orchard and trees producing in every season, in a repeating *hōra* of ripeness, that also evokes the automatic agricultural production of the golden age. The fruit-laden branches of trees hanging near Tantalus’ shoulders symbolize the torment of starving surrounded by plenty of sweet, edible, but not reachable, goods: the presence of olive trees is a conventional element of the catalogue signaling abundance, given that in the Homeric poems, the olive oil (referred to as “liquid gold”) is used exclusively for cleaning and personal hygiene¹¹⁷, and nowhere olives are explicitly said to be used

¹¹⁵ Cf. Sammons 2010: 106.

¹¹⁶ Odysseus, narrating to the Phaeacians the actual landing on these shores at *Od.* xi 20-22, will not mention any trees indeed, although repeating the adverb ἔνθα contained in the lines describing the place where the crew should beach the ship near the Okeanos’ flow. Instead of the trees, Odysseus recall the Kummerian people, whom Circe did not mention at all. For the discussion of this topic, see Heubeck 1983: 253.

¹¹⁷ Cf. Zanni 2008.

as food¹¹⁸. The trees of Ithaca ‘tantalize’ Odysseus in a similar way: at *Od.* x 28-30¹¹⁹ the land of the fathers comes in his sight, but he is able to spot only the watch-fires, not the ὕλη παντοίη, before falling asleep and eliciting disastrous results. The word ἄρουρα appearing at line 29 means indeed tilled or arable land, fields without trees. Odysseus himself, revealing his identity and his homeland to the Phaeacians, insists on the rustling leaves of Neriton as a token of identity for Ithaca¹²⁰. It is not a truism asserting that *nóstos* cannot be (and is not) completed unless the trees of Ithaca are clearly recognized and the hero finds himself again among them: different attempts and outcomes are not authorized by tradition and shortcuts, like the one granted by the help of Aiolos, are doomed to be aborted or, in other words, not received in our Odyssey.

Under this perspective, all trees catalogues in the Odyssey point to the last and ‘definitive’ one, that of the orchard of Laertes, where the father himself ‘programmed’ the mind of Odysseus in his early childhood and, through his bequest “inscribed upon his son’s memory precisely the story of his *nóstos* (Sammons 2010: 105)”, with the Ithacan trees drawing home the hero like compass (and narratological) magnets. This kind of narrative dynamics interact obviously also between singer and audiences, helping memory and structuring performances, composition and reception: in this way, catalogues of trees can inform the environment and the (relative) chronology of *nóstos*, establishing a vegetal topography articulated within the boundaries of oral tradition(s), and also comprised between expectations and recompositions.

One last glance at Alcinous’ garden permits us to envision the catalogued trees properly as a list of precious commodities, whose property, location and competences are to be remembered: for such a list epic diction and hexameter are tantamount to clay for Mycenaean palatial records of trees planted in rural estates¹²¹ on linear B tablets, or to Assyrian inscriptions boasting the marvels of palace gardens. The king’s estate, planted with tall fruit trees, gains model status in the memory of Homeric audiences, symbolizing the concrete gifts granted by the gods to the just ruler¹²². Odysseus himself will be identified as one concrete realization of the ideal king, both inside and outside the boundaries of the narration of our Odyssey, thus revealing the multiple shadow role of Alcinous, the

¹¹⁸ Cf. Garvie 1994: 187-188. I owe this reference to Haller.

¹¹⁹ “ἐννῆμαρ μὲν ὁμῶς πλέομεν νύκτας τε καὶ ἦμαρ,
τῆ δεκάτῃ δ’ ἤδη ἀνεφαίνετο πατρὶς ἄρουρα,
καὶ δὴ πυρπολέοντας ἐλεύσσομεν ἐγγὺς ἐόντας.”
“We sailed on for nine days without stopping either night or day,
and on the tenth day we caught sight of our native land.
We were so close that we saw men tending the watch fires.”
Od. x 28-30

¹²⁰ Cf. *Od.* ix 21-22:
“ναιετάω δ’ Ἰθάκην εὐδείελον· ἐν δ’ ὄρος αὐτῆ,
Νήριτον εἰνοσίφυλλον, ἀριπρεπές [...]”
“I live in clear-seen Ithaca. There is a mountain there,
Neriton covered with forest, conspicuous [...]”

¹²¹ Cf. Chadwick 1976: 117.

¹²² Cf. *Od.* xix 109-114.

Phaeacian people and their civilized nature, which Athena leaves only to enter the palace of Erechtheus¹²³.

ΚΑΙ ΤΟΤΕ ΔΗ ΓΑΙΗ ΠΗΞΑΣ ΕΥΗΡΕΣ ΕΡΕΤΜΟΝ
PLANTING WELL-FITTED OARS

As Gregory Nagy has demonstrated, death leads to the transformation of Odysseus into a cult hero: in this future status, he will be worshipped as a just king who rules over a fertile and prosperous land¹²⁴, inhabited by ‘blessed’ (ὄλβιοι) citizens¹²⁵. According to such an interpretation, the last words¹²⁶ of the prophecy of Teiresias in the first *nékuia* are to be intended in the sense that, once completed his life and become a cult hero, the corpse of Odysseus will give fertility and prosperity to the people who cultivate the earth that contains that corpse. In fact, Teiresias envisages a new departure and a second, definitive *nóstos* for Odysseus: he will complete a ritual and sacrifices to Poseidon, before homecoming for good. The ritual act will consist in sticking an oar into the ground where and when the oar is no longer recognized as an oar, but as a winnowing shovel:

“σῆμα δέ τοι ἐρέω μάλ’ ἀριφραδέες, οὐδέ σε λήσει·
ὀπότε κεν δὴ τοι ξυμβλήμενος ἄλλος ὀδίτης
φήη ἀθηρηλοιογὸν ἔχειν ἀνὰ φαιδίμῳ ὤμῳ,
καὶ τότε δὴ γαίῃ πῆξας εὐήρες ἐρετμόν,
ἔρξας ἱερὰ καλὰ Ποσειδάωνι ἀνακτι [...].”

“I will tell you a sign that is very clear and cannot escape you:
when another wayfarer who meets you
says that is a winnowing-shovel on your strong shoulder,

¹²³ ὡς ἄρα φωνήσασ’ ἀπέβη γλαυκῶπις Ἀθήνη
πόντον ἐπ’ ἀτρύγετον, λίπε δὲ Σχερίην ἐρατεινήν,
ἵκετο δ’ ἐς Μαραθῶνα καὶ εὐρυάγυιαν Ἀθήνην,
δῦνε δ’ Ἐρεχθῆος πυκινὸν δόμον. αὐτὰρ Ὀδυσσεὺς
Ἀλκινόου πρὸς δώματ’ ἔε κλυτά [...]
After speaking so, flashing-eyed Athena left lovely Scheria,
and went away, across the restless sea.
She came to Marathon and to wide-eyed Athens,
where she went into the sturdy house of Erechtheus.
Odysseus went to the glorious house of Alcinous[...].”
Od. vii 78-82.

Underscoring a plurality of parallelisms the poet model (even at a metrical level) the line expressing the entering of Odysseus into Alcinous’ palace with that Athena in the house of Erechtheus (δῦνε δ’ Ἐρεχθῆος πυκινὸν δόμον // Ἀλκινόου πρὸς δώματ’ ἔε κλυτά). The use of the adjective πυκινὸν, although frequently related to houses, indicating the stability of the joined parts, is significant as far the same adjective qualifies the immovable olive tree bed of Odysseus and Penelope (cf. *Od.* xxiii 177. 179. 291).

¹²⁴ Cf. Nagy 2013: 346-347.

¹²⁵ Cf. Nagy 2013: 341.

¹²⁶ “[...] θάνατος δέ τοι ἐξ ἀλὸς αὐτῷ
ἀβληχρὸς μάλ’ αὖτις ἐλεύσεται, ὅς κέ σε πέφνη
γῆρα ὑπο λιπαρῷ ἀρημένον· ἀμφὶ δὲ λαοὶ
ὄλβιοι ἔσονται. τὰ δὲ τοι νημερτέα εἶρω.”
“[...] For you a very gentle death will come from the sea.
It will kill you when you are overcome with spruce old age.
Your people will live in happiness around you. Now I have told you the truth.”
Od. xi 134-137.

then plant your well-fitted oar in the ground,
make a generous sacrifice to Poseidon the king [...]"

Od. xi 124-128

The σῆμα ἀριφραδές mentioned by Teiresias, evoking secondarily also the tomb of Odysseus, as the request of the dead Elpenor (σῆμά τέ μοι χεῦναι πολιῆς ἐπὶ θινὶ θαλάσσης [...] πῆξαι τ' ἐπὶ τύμβῳ ἔρετμόν: *Od.* xi 75.77)¹²⁷ helps us to figure out, deals with a wood made object, an oar: wood for new oars came from younger trees, straight in their growth¹²⁸, malleable and easily workable. If the oar in itself, as a wooden object related to naval carpentry, represents a factual, necessary addition to the parts already joined together by τέκτον Odysseus for constructing his raft, it is also the ideal symbol of the seafarer and of his travels and adventures (past and futures). The transformation of the oar into a winnowing shovel and its planting into the earth makes a further, significant shift in the symbolism: as Thomas Falkner has noted¹²⁹, the oar eventually shares the metaphorical significance of the olive tree bed and of the trees of Laertes, pointing for its part to Odysseus' resumption of an 'agricultural' destiny in the stabilized horizon of accomplished *nóstos*. It is interesting that in Greek folklore minor legends, later attached to this Odyssean version of the story of the Sailor and the Oar¹³⁰, related that the oar planted by Odysseus took root and eventually grew into a tree. If the last journey of Odysseus, and his second *nóstos*, as they are envisioned by Teiresias in scroll xi (and reported to Penelope by Odysseus in scroll xxiii¹³¹) exceed by themselves the boundaries of the poem, in the sense that they are only foretold, not actually narrated within its plot¹³², the oar in its final, upright fixity into the ground, and as transforming element that equates to a σῆμα ἀριφραδές, resonates intratextually with planted and fixed trees intended as ἔμπεδα σήματα as well.

A closer look to line 129 (καὶ τότε δὴ γαίῃ πῆξας εὐῆρες ἔρετμόν) will help us to focalize both the 'stabilized' dimension of the oar planted into the earth and the ramifications of the related verbal usage into the semantic field of carpentry. The verb πῆγνυμι¹³³ is used four times in the *Odyssey*¹³⁴ to describe the action of sticking into the ground an oar that will never again be utilized as such and will only fulfill a symbolic (or semiotic) function. The connection of the verb with

¹²⁷ "Heap up a tomb on the shore of the gray sea [...] fix on the tomb (my) oar."

¹²⁸ Cf. Beye 2005: 76.

¹²⁹ Cf. Falkner 1989: 52-53.

¹³⁰ Cf. Hansen 1990.

¹³¹ *Od.* xi, 121-137. xxiii, 267-284. The expression at line 267 (ἐπεὶ μάλα πολλὰ βροτῶν ἐπὶ ἄστε' ἄνωγεν / ἐλθεῖν) echoes the proem's assertion and a few other passages all encompassed within the Cretan false tales. For an exhaustive discussion on this topic see Tsagalis 2012: 314 and n. 20. It is a matter of fact that the proem's assertion corresponds to 'alternative' narratives rather than to the 'canonical' *Odyssey*. Cf. Tsagalis 2008: 70-73.

¹³² Cf. Purves 2006: 1.

¹³³ For an interesting analysis of the Indo-European root(s) * pāk-/pāg- and its development see Porzio Gernia 1992: 276: "La massima gamma di sviluppi si condensa nel gr. πῆγνυμι "pianto" "fisso" "costruisco" "condenso" che estende la sua area semantica pure a valori simbolici con il senso "pattuisco"."

¹³⁴ *Od.* xi 77.129. xii 15. xxiii 276.

objects fixed or entered into the earth and remained standing is recurrent in Homeric poetry¹³⁵, typical for arrows and spears. Πήγνυμι recurs in the sense of “put together, build (into), join firmly” at *Od.* v 163 (ἴκρια πῆξαι ἐπ’ αὐτῆς) when Odysseus is instructed by Calypso on how to build a log raft and furnish it with a half-deck¹³⁶. The verb is used in a context of naval carpentry also in the context of the Catalogue of Ships at *Il.* II 664 (αἶψα δὲ νῆας ἔπηξε) about the vessels quickly built by Tlepolemos in order to flee by sea after the homicide of Likumnios¹³⁷. In the same meaning, it recurs in Herodotus *Hist.* 5.83 (νέας τε πηξάμενοι) about the Aeginetans who began to build ships and eventually revolted from the Epidaurians¹³⁸. The adjective εὐῆρες, in Homeric poetry an exclusively Odyssean epithet of oars in the meaning of “well fitted”, “well balanced”, shares the same root of the verb ἀραρίσκω (reduplicated form of root *ar: “join”, “fit together”), the original active meaning of which is “fasten”, “fit together”, “construct”. The verb, used intransitively without an object, indicates being joined closely together of parts, or even steadfastness or fixity of mind. It is remarkable that in overall the occurrences¹³⁹ the epithet accompanies oars that are no longer in use and (or) are not recognized as such or not known at all (the oar Odysseus will bear on his shoulder, the oars that the inland people don’t know), and oars which acquire a primarily symbolic meaning and function (Elpenor’s oar and, again, the oar of Odysseus as σῆμα of his place of cult as a cult hero¹⁴⁰). As a matter of fact, by this formulaic junction the *Odyssey* only mentions well-fitted oars that are no (more) oars, but wooden symbols.

¹³⁵ Cf. *Il.* X 374. XXII 276.

¹³⁶ “ἀλλ’ ἄγε δούρατα μακρὰ ταμὼν ἀρμόζεο χαλκῶ
εὐρεῖαν σχεδίην· ἀτὰρ ἴκρια πῆξαι ἐπ’ αὐτῆς
ὑψοῦ, ὡς σε φέρησιν ἐπ’ ἠεροειδέα πόντον.”
“Come now, cut long beams with an ax
and build a broad raft. Fasten on it cross-planks
above so that it might carry you over the misty sea.”
Od. v 162-164.

¹³⁷ Τληπόλεμος δ’ ἐπει οὖν τράφ’ ἐνὶ μεγάρῳ εὐπήκτῳ,
αὐτίκα πατρὸς ἐοῖο φίλον μήτρωα κατέκτα
ἤδη γηράσκοντα Λικύμνιον ὄζον Ἴαρος·
αἶψα δὲ νῆας ἔπηξε, πολὺν δ’ ὄγε λαὸν ἀγείρας
βῆ φεύγων ἐπὶ πόντον· ἀπειλήσαν γάρ οἱ ἄλλοι
υἰέες υἰωνοὶ τε βίης Ἡρακληείης.
Now when Tlepolemos was grown in the strong-built mansion,
he struck to death his own father’s beloved uncle,
Likumnios, scion of Ares, a man already aging.
At once he put ships together and assembled a host of people
and went fugitive over the sea, since the others threatened,
the rest of the sons and the grandsons of the strength of Herakles.
Il. II 661-666.

¹³⁸ Τοῦτον δ’ ἔτι τὸν χρόνον καὶ πρὸ τοῦ Αἰγινήται Ἐπιδαυρίων ἤκουον τά τε ἄλλα καὶ δίκας διαβαίνοντες ἐς
Ἐπίδαυρον ἐδίδοσαν τε καὶ ἐλάμβανον παρ’ ἀλλήλων οἱ Αἰγινήται· τὸ δὲ ἀπὸ τοῦδε νέας τε πηξάμενοι καὶ ἀγνωμοσύνη
χρησάμενοι ἀπέστησαν ἀπὸ τῶν Ἐπιδαυρίων.
Now at this time, as before it, the Aeginetans were in all matters still subject to the Epidaurians and even crossed to
Epidaurus for the hearing of their own private lawsuits. From this time, however, they began to build ships, and
stubbornly revolted from the Epidaurians.
Hist. 5.83.1

¹³⁹ Cf. *Od.* xi 121.125.129. xii 15. xxiii 268. 272.

¹⁴⁰ Cf. Nagy 2013: 335-336.

The oar, disconnected from the ship and from its proper technical usage, shifts from the horizontal position and from an inclined axis of movement to an upright and fixed immovability, stick into the ground, regaining its pristine status of slender tree trunk and of isolate element of landscape becoming finally a *σῆμα*. A kind of midpoint between these two conditions can be located and identified in the standing mast of Odysseus' ship (and raft), which, in turn, evokes the olive tree (bed) as axis of the *οἶκος*¹⁴¹ and the trees of Laertes as polar axis of *νόστος*: an uninterrupted link connects living trees to wooden artifacts designed primarily to exceed their material function in the narrative, becoming landmarks along (and beyond) the path of homecoming.

ΘΕΟΙΟ ΕΚ ΔΡΥΟΣ ΥΨΙΚΟΜΟΙΟ ΔΙΟΣ ΒΟΥΛΗΝ ΕΠΑΚΟΥΣΑΙ
 FROM THE OAK OF THE GOD

Our Odyssey twice directly mentions isolated sacred trees: the first time¹⁴² we encounter the date palm¹⁴³ (*Phoenix dactylifera*)¹⁴⁴ growing near the oracular altar of Apollo at Delos, the second time we are presented with the oak tree of Zeus at Dodona¹⁴⁵. In both passages a not yet recognized (or who has not yet presented himself) Odysseus is speaking about an Odysseus traveling far from home to oracular sites.

¹⁴¹ Cf. Nagler 1996: 154.

¹⁴² “Δήλω δὴ ποτε τοῖον Απόλλωνος παρὰ βωμῶ
 φοίνικος νέον ἔρνος ἀνερχόμενον ἐνόησα.”
 “In Delos once I saw such a sight,
 the young shoot of a palm springing up beside the altar of Apollo.”
Od. vi 162-163.

¹⁴³ On iconography and symbolism connected to the palm tree in the ancient Mediterranean world see Michel-Dansac and Caubet 2013, in particular p. 13 for isolated trees in Greek iconography: “Le palmier ou la palmeraie en vient à désigner, de façon récurrente, un espace culturel. En Égypte, le dattier est l’arbre sacré d’une série de localités [...] En Mésopotamie, des scènes de palmeraies saccagées par des guerriers assyriens lors de campagnes militaires en Basse Mésopotamie peuvent être interprétés non seulement comme le saccage de territoires ennemis, mais aussi comme la profanation de bosquets servant de lieux de culte [...] Plusieurs coupes métalliques chyro-phéniciennes et des céramiques chypriotes archaïques de la région d’Amathonte présentent une cérémonie culturelle sous un bosquet de dattiers, servant de cadre à la cérémonie et définissant ainsi un sanctuaire en plein air. Dans ce cas, la présence des bosquets sacrés est probablement à rapprocher du développement de ce thème dans le monde oriental et égyptien. En Grèce, le palmier, représenté sans fruit, – isolé, parfois associé à un autel – désigne un sanctuaire, le plus souvent consacré aux divinités Apollon et Artémis auxquelles il est étroitement lié, comme le sanctuaire de Délos [...]”

¹⁴⁴ Hainsworth in his commentary on the Odyssey recalls that the species is not native of the northern Mediterranean area and not often fructifies there: cf Hainsworth 1982: 204. Anyway, several linear B tablets record plants as *po-ni-ki-pi* (PY 714) or *po-ni-ki-yo* (PY 246): see Warren 1970 on the date palm as possible medical plant. Further discussion on *po-ni-ki-yo* and the dye-plants of Minoan Crete in Murray and Warren 1976.

¹⁴⁵ “τὸν δ’ ἐς Δωδώνην φάτο βήμεναι, ὄφρα θεοῖο
 ἐκ δρυὸς ὑψικόμοιο Διὸς βουλὴν ἐπακούσαι [...]”
 “(Odysseus), he said, had gone to Dodona
 to hear the advice of Zeus, from the high oak of the god [...]”
Od. xiv 327-328.

While Apollo's date palm constitutes the central image of the lines devoted to immortalize Nausikaa's slender figure¹⁴⁶ (Odysseus compares the awe that holds him looking at the princess with a similar sensation he experienced when he saw the palm sapling on Delos)¹⁴⁷, the oak of Dodona is mentioned within the 'false' Cretan tale narrated by Odysseus to the swineherd Eumaeus.

The date palm is introduced after the narrator and Odysseus in succession compared Nausikaa to Artemis¹⁴⁸, whose connection with this (type of) plant (support to mother Leto giving birth to her) and with Delos (her birthplace)¹⁴⁹ was (and is) quite automatic for a Homeric audience. Speaking of his visit to Delos, Odysseus seems to link this particular journey to the Troy expedition by allusion¹⁵⁰:

“ἤλθον γὰρ καὶ κεῖσε, πολὺς δέ μοι ἔσπετο λαός,
τὴν ὁδόν, ἧ δὴ μέλλεν ἔμοι κακὰ κήδε' ἔσεσθαι.”

“There too I went, and many people followed me
on that journey, which has been the source of evil pains for me.”

Od. vi, 164-165

¹⁴⁶ Cf. Michel-Dansac and Caubet 2013: 10: “[...] le palmier est de façon récurrente associé à la femme; soit dans une véritable assimilation, soit dans une démarche anthropomorphique, consistant à prêter des attributs ou des réactions humaines à l'arbre. Les particularités organiques et morphologiques du palmier sont à l'évidence à l'origine de cette association: le caractère dioïque du palmier (qui présente des fleurs mâles et des fleurs femelles sur des pieds séparés), les techniques de fécondation artificielle qui lui sont appliquées, ne peuvent que suggérer un fort anthropomorphisme. L'esthétique des représentations figurées du palmier a contribué à donner à cette plante une personnalité féminine. Sur ce point, la linguistique et les textes complètent très souvent la lecture des images. Le corps de la femme est, dans l'image, comparé au stipe de la plante:

« ... tu es élancée comme le palmier... »

Cantique des cantiques (VII, 8-9)

« Ton aspect me confond ! Un jour, à Délos, près de l'autel d'Apollon, j'ai aperçu même beauté :
le rejet d'un palmier qui montait vers le ciel »

L'Odyssée (VI, 162).”

¹⁴⁷ “οὐ γάρ πω τοιοῦτον ἴδον βροτὸν ὀφθαλμοῖσιν,
οὔτ' ἄνδρ' οὔτε γυναικα· σέβας μ' ἔχει εἰσορόωντα.
Δήλω δὴ ποτε τοῖον Ἀπόλλωνος παρὰ βωμῶ
φοίνικος νέον ἔρνος ἀνερχόμενον ἐνόησα [...]
ὡς δ' αὐτῶς καὶ κείνο ἰδὼν ἔτεθήπεα θυμῶ,
δὴν, ἐπεὶ οὐ πω τοῖον ἀνήλυθεν ἐκ δόρυ γαίης,
ὡς σέ, γύναι, ἄγαμαί τε τέθηπά τε, δεῖδία δ' αἰνῶς
γούνων ἄψασθαι [...]”

“For I have never yet beheld with my eyes such a mortal as you,
neither man or woman. I am amazed, looking at you.

In Delos once I saw such a sight,

the young shoot of a palm springing up beside the altar of Apollo [...]

Just so, when I saw that palm, I marveled long in my heart,
for never yet did such a shaft emerge from the earth.

In like manner, o lady, I do wonder at you and I am amazed
and I fear awfully to touch your knees [...]

Od. vi 160-164. 166-169

¹⁴⁸ Cf. *Od.* vi 102-109. 149-152.

¹⁴⁹ Cf. *Hymni Homeric, In Apollinem*, 115-118.

¹⁵⁰ Cf. Giuseppetti 2012: 194.

The expression καὶ κεῖσε of line 164, as it were, gives indication to Nausicaa, and to the audience, that *this* was only *one* among the large number of (undesired) travels Odysseus had endured since. The scholia¹⁵¹ explicate the text about the journey to Delos by referring to an episode involving Menelaus and the Greek contingent traveling to Delos in order to take advantage from the particular gift of the daughters of Anios, the *Oinotropoi*, who had the power of making nature's products appear at will, dispensing wine, cereals and olive oil¹⁵². This episode could be part of the cyclic *Cypria*¹⁵³ (or of another tradition). If this is the case, the mention of Apollo's date palm at Delos, pointing to cyclic (and/or epichoric) material, represents further evidence of the awareness of different oral traditions within the pan-Hellenic epos. Concerning the perspective of this study, the very words of Odysseus situate the palm tree of Delos outside the progress of the actual Odyssean *nóstos*; rather, the sapling represents a sort of counterpart (and counter-landmark) of the 'old' fruit trees tended by Laertes and gifted to Odysseus long before his departure towards Troy: as Odysseus saw the νέον ἔρνος¹⁵⁴ most part of his sufferings and hard times was yet to begin, as well his Odyssean characterization was still to come. In other words, the trajectory of his *nóstos*, with respect to the trunk of the young palm-tree, appears to be quite eccentric.

At scroll xiv, Odysseus/the son of Cretan Kastor recounts to Eumaeus how he knew during his stay in Thesprotia about Odysseus/the son of Ithacan Laertes being he too a guest of king Pheidon, and how the son of Laertes had gone hence to the oracle of Zeus at Dodona in order to get advice from the sacred oak on the way to accomplish the final stage of his *nóstos*, if openly or in secret (ἢ ἀμφοδὸν ἢ κρυφιδόν: *Od.* xiv, 330)¹⁵⁵. From the point of view of our, pan-Hellenic Odyssey here the performer Odysseus sings a "hypothetical and unrealized *nóstos*¹⁵⁶", that is an alternative one. The story is retold later¹⁵⁷ to Penelope: at scroll xix Odysseus/ the Cretan Aithon recapitulates the last stages of *nóstos* mixing 'true' and 'false'¹⁵⁸ things: in this second performance of the Thesprotian alternative, Aithon indicates explicitly that Odysseus chose to go by himself from Phaeacia to Thesprotia to amass riches and proceeded then to Dodona to consult the oracle. If the oak's answer had been *pro* κρυφιδόν, the audiences of the Thesprotian alternative could have been informed about the treasure of Odysseus been kept in Thesprotia instead of in the cave of the

¹⁵¹ λέγοι δ' ἂν πολὺν λαὸν οὐ τὸν ἴδιον στόλον, ἀλλὰ τὸν Ἑλληνικόν, ὅτ' ἀφηγούμενος εἰς Δῆλον ἦλθε Μενέλαος σὺν Ὀδυσσεὶ ἐπὶ τὰς Ἀνίου θυγατέρας, αἱ καὶ Οἰνότροποι ἐκαλοῦντο. ἡ δὲ ἱστορία καὶ παρὰ Σιμωνίδῃ ἐν ταῖς κατευχαῖς.

By a great army he refers not to his own fleet, but to the Greek one, when Menelaus, after taking up the command, went to Delos together with Odysseus in search for the daughters of Anios, who were called Oinotropoi. The story can be found also in Simonides' Kateuchai." E.P.Q. *Scholia* EPQ *Od.* 6.164, I p. 308.6-10 D.

¹⁵² Cf. Detienne 1977: 46.

¹⁵³ Cf. Giuseppetti 2012: 197 ff. Tsagalis 2008: 51-55.

¹⁵⁴ For an interesting discussion on the terms ἔρνος and θάλος in Homeric poetry see Stein 2013: 142-148.

¹⁵⁵ Cf. *Od.* xiv 327-330.

¹⁵⁶ Cf. Malkin 1998: 129.

¹⁵⁷ Cf. *Od.* xix 269-299.

¹⁵⁸ On a performative dimension of truth and falsehood see Tsagalis 2012: 320.334. At *Od.* xix, 203 the narrator comments on 'Aithon's' story of his meeting with Odysseus in Crete saying that the hero made the many falsehoods seem like the truth (ἴσκε ψεῦδεα πολλὰ λέγων ἐτύμοισιν ὁμοῖα). This line is traditionally linked with Hesiod, *Theog.* 27: ἴδμεν ψεῦδεα πολλὰ λέγειν ἐτύμοισιν ὁμοῖα.

nymphs, as in the ‘real’ story¹⁵⁹. As a ‘*post litteram*’ pan-Hellenic audience, we know that Odysseus actually just got detailed advice and divine collaboration about this critical aspect from his patroness, Athena daughter of Zeus, who manifested herself before him by her sacred tree, the isolated olive tree growing on the extreme fringe of Ithacan land, near the cave of the nymphs at Phorcys Bay.

Athena, in her undisguised epiphany, does not speak the oracular and ‘rustling’ language of the sacred oak’s leaves, but instructs “in order, rightly (κατὰ μοῖραν: *Od.* xiii, 385)” and analytically Odysseus about the correct and safe way to go through the end of the story¹⁶⁰. As Christos Tsagalis has convincingly showed, the oak of Zeus served a proto-pan-Hellenic tradition of a different *nóstos*, as well as the whole Thesprotian episode¹⁶¹; at the opposite, the ‘authorized’ *nóstos* of our Odyssey and the details of its final stage can only be suggested to the hero by the rational language of Athena and under the protective, evergreen foliage of the olive tree.

If we consider the olive tree at Phorcys as an isolated outpost of the goddess Athena, and a primal mark of recognition for Odysseus’ homeland, the *astè elaiá*¹⁶² on Ithaca is without a doubt the olive tree in Odysseus’ bedroom, around the trunk of which he built the walls of the room and which is the immovable post of his marriage bed. It has been noted that the olive tree bed is the only wooden object *tékton* Odysseus shapes yet leaves alive¹⁶³: the living tree is not only a *sêma* of the vitality of the marriage and of the continuity of the property¹⁶⁴, but a clear indication that the preserved vitality of the olive will in turn preserve the house constructed around it by the king: “an olive tree comes to represent the *moira* of the house of Odysseus, just as the olive tree in the Pandroseion is the *Morios* of Athens (Cook 1995: 162).”

On these premises, the olive tree in Odysseus’ bedroom is the Odyssean sacred tree *par excellence*, being the basis of a cult artifact shaped by the *mêtis* and the technical ability of an Athena’s *protégé* and becoming the saving device for the Ithacan community and society as a whole (despite the impending crisis with the suitors’ kin), which is dramatically restored in its guidance by the returned, legitimate king. This unique olive tree summarize in itself the features of the ancient wooden statue of Athena housed in the Erekhtheion and of the *Morios* in the Pandroseion¹⁶⁵, even for the apotropaic effects related with the ‘good health’ of the city and of the citizenship. If we

¹⁵⁹ Cf. Malkin 1998: 129.

¹⁶⁰ Cf. *Od.* xiii 303-310. 375-381. 383-385.

¹⁶¹ Cf. Tsagalis 2012: 338-344

¹⁶² Cf. Detienne 1970: 11: “En effet, l’olivier d’Athéna est appelé *aste elaiá*, “olivier de la cité”: non pas seulement l’arbre dressé dans l’*astu*, la ville, par opposition au plat pays, mais l’arbre de l’ensemble des *astoi*, l’arbre des tous le citoyens.”

¹⁶³ Cf. Nagler 1996: 154.

¹⁶⁴ Cf. Lombardo 2000: xiv.

¹⁶⁵ For Pandrosos “All-dew” and her relationship with the role of the Arrephoroi in Athenian ritual, see Håland 2012. For the importance of dew (and a Dew-Goddess) in the cultivation of the olive see Håland 2012: 273: “[...] dew falls mostly in late summer and early autumn. Summer, therefore, seems to be an important period within the agricultural cycle of the olive, and the olive and olive tree, the most Attic of all the crops, have a central place at Athena’s festivals [...] All the festivals dedicated to Athena were related to the olive, the third main crop of the Athenians, and that they were protected by her, as her festivals were celebrated in the crucial period of the olive crop, from the flowering of the olive tree (*Thargelion*), to the growing period of the fruit, until the harvest, when the *Chalkeia* was celebrated [...] It was no coincidence that Athena’s sacred olive tree enclosed on the Akropolis, grew in front of the Erekhtheion in the Pandroseion, the open-air sanctuary of the Dew-Goddess, Pandrosos, who was named for dew.”

assume early autumn¹⁶⁶ as the season of Odysseus' arrive in Ithaca, this chronological detail strengthen in my view the parallel between the 'timing' of the final, crucial stages of the Return and the critical months in the olive cultivation and of the 'ritual year' of Athena as well.

ΑΛΛ' ΑΓΕ ΤΟΙ ΔΕΙΞΩ ΙΘΑΚΗΣ ΕΔΟΣ ΟΦΡΑ ΠΕΠΟΘΗΣ
SO YOU WILL BELIEVE

In order to make Odysseus realize he is finally back in his homeland, Athena, dispelling the mist with which she had cloaked him, enumerates the unmistakable landmarks of Ithaca:

“Φόρκυνος μὲν ὄδ' ἐστὶ λιμὴν, ἀλίιοιο γέροντος,
ἦδε δ' ἐπὶ κρατὸς λιμένος τανύφυλλος ἐλαίη·
[ἀγχόθι δ' αὐτῆς ἄντρον ἐπήρατον ἠεροειδές,
ἱρὸν Νυμφάων, αἱ Νηϊάδες καλέονται.]¹⁶⁷
τοῦτο δέ τοι σπέος εὐρὺ κατηρεφές, ἔνθα σὺ πολλὰς
ἔρδεσκες Νύμφησι τεληέσσας ἑκατόμβας·
τοῦτο δὲ Νήριτόν ἐστιν ὄρος καταειμένον ὕλη.”

“This is the harbor of Phorcys, the Old Man of the Sea,
here is the long-leafed olive at the head of the harbor.
[Near it is the lovely misty cave,
sacred to the nymphs, who are called Naiads.]
This is a high-roofed cave where you were accustomed
to make acceptable hecatombs to the nymphs.
Over there is mount Neriton, clothed in forest.”

Od. xiii 345-351.

Of the three recognition tokens chosen by the goddess, all constituting elements of landscape related more or less directly with trees, mount Neriton happens to be the most conspicuous in the epic tradition¹⁶⁸, adduced as such at *Il.* II 632 and *Od.* ix 22 too:

Αὐτὰρ Ὀδυσσεὺς ἦγε Κεφαλλῆνας μεγαθύμους,
οἳ ῥ' Ἰθάκην εἶχον καὶ Νήριτον εἰνοσίφυλλον
καὶ Κροκύλει' ἐνέμοντο καὶ Αἰγίλιπα τρηχεῖαν,
οἳ τε Ζάκυνθον ἔχον ἠδ' οἳ Σάμον ἀμφενέμοντο,
οἳ τ' ἠπειρον ἔχον ἠδ' ἀντιπέραι' ἐνέμοντο·

But Odysseus led the high-hearted men of Kephallenia,
those who held Ithaca and leaf-trembling Neriton,
those who dwelt about Krokyleia and rigged Aigilips,
those who held Zakunthos and those who dwelt about Samos,
those who held the mainland and the places next to the crossing.

Il. II 631-635

¹⁶⁶ Cf. Papamarinopoulos et alii 2012.

¹⁶⁷ Lines 147-148 are omitted by several manuscripts and by p 28, 86. In spite of that, Malkin 2001: 21 calls for the cave of the Nymphs as fundamental and privileged among the landmarks pointed out by Athena and the one basically constituting recognition.

¹⁶⁸ Cf. Fowler 2013: II.556.

“εἴμ’ Ὀδυσσεὺς Λαερτιάδης, ὃς πᾶσι δόλοισιν
ἀνθρώποισι μέλω, καί μευ κλέος οὐρανὸν ἵκει.
ναιετάω δ’ Ἰθάκην εὐδείελον· ἐν δ’ ὄρος αὐτῆ,
Νήριτον εἰνοσίφυλλον, ἀριπρεπές· ἀμφὶ δὲ νῆσοι
πολλαὶ ναιετάουσι μάλα σχεδὸν ἀλλήλησι,
Δουλίχιόν τε Σάμη τε καὶ ὕληεσσα Ζάκυνθος.”

“I am Odysseus, the son of Laertes, known among men
for my many deceits, and my fame reaches to the sky.
I live in clear-seen Ithaca. There is a mountain there,
Neriton, its leaves rustling, conspicuous. round about
are many other islands close to one another,
Doullichion and Same and wooded Zakunthos.”

Od. ix 19-24.

The two contexts are particularly significant, insofar the former occurrence comes from the Catalogue of Ships, it is enforced by the authority of the narrator and, ultimately, of the Muses, who bestow inspiration and rightful knowledge, and the latter is comprised within Odysseus’ self-presentation to the Phaeacians. Mount Neriton is also evoked at *Od.* xvii 207, when the narrator refers to the fountain, near the altar sacred to the nymphs, built by the eponymous heroes (properly of the island, of the mountain and of a place called *Polyktóron*¹⁶⁹) and first colonists of Ithaca, Ithakos, Neritos and Polyktor.¹⁷⁰ The personal name Neritos (in the datival form *ne-ri-to*) appears for the first time in the Pylian tablets (PY 61): in her study about the personal Etruscan name *Niritalu*, Simona Marchesini recapitulates the scholarly discussion on Νήριτον/Νήριτος and supposes a derivation process starting from an adjectival form meaning ‘uncountable’ leading into the substantivation, first the “oronimo” and then the personal name possibly by metonymy¹⁷¹. In the context of my study, the formula νήριτος ὕλη of Hesiod’s *Op.* 511, the Homeric Νήριτον εἰνοσίφυλλον which is “covered by woods (καταειμένον ὕλη: *Od.* xiii 351)”, the ὕλη παντοίη (*Od.* xiii 246-247) which should make Ithaca easily recognizable, all converge in a semantic area where

¹⁶⁹ Cf. *Scholia in Homerum, Scholia in Odysseam (scholia vetera)*: (207.) Ἰθακος καὶ Νήριτος ἠδὲ Πολύκτωρ Πτερελάου παῖδες Ἰθακος καὶ Νήριτος ἀπὸ Διὸς ἔχοντες τὸ γένος ὄκουν τὴν Κεφαλληνίαν. ἀρέσαν δὲ αὐτοῖς τοῦτο καταλιπόντες τὰ σφέτερα ἤθη παραγίνονται εἰς τὴν Ἰθάκην [...] καὶ ἐκ μὲν τοῦ Ἰθακου ἡ νῆσος ἐπωνομάσθη Ἰθάκη, τὸ δὲ παρακείμενον ὄρος ἐκ τοῦ Νηρίτου Νήριτον. ἡ δὲ ἱστορία παρὰ Ἀκουσιλάω. V. οὗτοι Πτερελάου παῖδες καὶ Ἀμφιμέδης. καὶ ἀπὸ μὲν Ἰθακου Ἰθάκη, ἀπὸ δὲ Νηρίτου Νήριτον ὄρος, ἀπὸ δὲ Πολύκτορος Πολυκτόριον τόπος ἐν τῇ Ἰθάκῃ. B. Q.

The sons of Pterelaos, Ithakos and Neritos, descending from Zeus, lived in Kephallenia. It pleased them leaving their homeland and coming to Ithaca [...] And the island was named Ithaca after Ithakos, the adjacent mount Neriton after Neritos. The story can be found in Akousilaos. V. These were the sons of Pterelaos and Amphimede. And Ithaca was named after Ithakos, mount Neriton after Neritos, and the place called Poluktorion in Ithaca after Poluktorios. B. Q.

Cf. *Eustathius, Commentarii ad Homeri Odysseam*: (205.) Ὅτι κρήνη τις ἦν ἐν Ἰθάκῃ τυκτὴ, τουτέστι χειροποίητος, καλλίροος, ὅθεν ὑδρεύοντο πολῖται. ἀξία δὲ λόγου αὐτὴ τρεῖς ἔχουσα ἐπισκευαστάς· φησὶ γάρ· τὴν ποιήσεν Ἰθακος καὶ Νήριτος ἠδὲ Πολύκτωρ· ὧν ἐξ Ἰθακου μὲν ἡ Ἰθάκη, ἀπὸ δὲ Νηρίτου Νήριτον ὄρος ἐκεῖ, ἀπὸ δὲ Πολύκτορος τόπος αὐτόθι Πολυκτόριον. Πτερελάου δὲ παῖδες οὗτοι.

In Ithaca there was a “τυκτὴ” spring, that is “made by man’s hand”, beautifully flowing, from which the inhabitants of the city drew their water. This spring is worth mentioning as three men equipped it: Ithakos and Neritos and Poluktor made it. And, as they are concerned, Ithaca was named after Ithakos, mount Neriton over there after Neritos, and the place Poluktorion after Poluktor.

¹⁷⁰ Cf. *Od.* xvii 204-211.

¹⁷¹ Cf. Marchesini 1994: 274-276

the collective (ὄλη) and uncountable (νήριτος [Νήριτον]/ εἰνοσίφυλλον) aspects¹⁷² of the vegetal life of trees are envisioned: these specifications account for unequivocal proof of attained *nóstos*, certified ultimately by the divine words of Athena.

As a (negative) validation that leafed trees and woods are extremely significant as landmarks and tokens of recognition for Ithaca, as well as symbols of attained *nóstos*, we can adduce the description provided to Menelaus by Telemachus explaining why he has to refuse the horses gifted by the Spartan king: the island has no wide courses, no meadows:

“ἐν δ’ Ἰθάκῃ οὔτ’ ἄρ’ δρόμοι εὐρέες οὔτε τι λειμών·
αἰγίβοτος, καὶ μᾶλλον ἐπήρατος ἵπποβότοιο.
οὐ γάρ τις νήσων ἱππήλατος οὐδ’ εὐλείμων,
αἴ θ’ ἀλί κεκλίαται· Ἰθάκῃ δέ τε καὶ περὶ πασέων.”

“But in Ithaca there are neither wide-running courses nor meadowland.
It is pastureland for goats, more pleasant than one that nourishes horses.
Not one of the islands that slopes down to the sea is fit for horses
or rich in meadows, and in Ithaca least of all.”

Od. iv 605-608.

This brief description by Telemachus singles out those elements of landscape that do not characterize his homeland, which, conversely is connoted by havens, trails, impervious cliffs and luxuriant trees, as specified by the narrator describing the disorientation of just awoken Odysseus who still does not recognize his homeland:

τοῦνεκ’ ἄρ’ ἄλλοειδέα φαινέσκετο πάντα ἄνακτι,
ἀτραπιτοὶ τε διηνεκέες λιμένες τε πάνορμοι
πέτραι τ’ ἠλίβατοι καὶ δένδρεα τηλεθάοντα.

And so everything seemed strange to the king,
the unbroken paths and the harbors suitable for anchorage,
and the steep cliffs and the blooming trees.

Od. xiii 194-196.

On the other hand, the adjective αἰγίβοτος, well suited to Ithaca’s terrain and goat rearing vocation, is re-used in disguised Athena’s description, which by and large resonates (with the significant addition of the ὄλη παντοίη) with Telemachus’ words:

“ἢ τοι μὲν τρηχεῖα καὶ οὐχ ἱππήλατός ἐστιν
οὐδὲ λίην λυπρή, ἀτὰρ οὐδ’ εὐρεῖα τέτυκται.
ἐν μὲν γάρ οἱ σῖτος ἀθέσφατος, ἐν δέ τε οἶνος
γίνεται· αἰεὶ δ’ ὄμβρος ἔχει τεθαλυῖά τ’ ἐέρση.
αἰγίβοτος δ’ ἀγαθὴ καὶ βούβοτος· ἔστι μὲν ὄλη
παντοίη, ἐν δ’ ἄρδοι ἐπηετανοὶ παρέασι.”

“It is a rugged island not fit for raising horses
but not so poor, though it is narrow.
It grows prodigious quantities of wheat, and there is wine.
The rain never fails, nor the blooming dew.
It is a good land for pasturing goats and cattle.

¹⁷² For the leaves of trees as primal example of uncountable things and for the relationship between uncountable leaves and the trees recounted by Odysseus in the garden of Laertes, see Purves 2010: 225-227.

There is forest everywhere, and watering holes that last all year round.”

Od. xiii 242-247.

The description of Telemachus insists on the fact that Ithaca, as well as the surrounding Ionian islands, have no meadows (λειμών: 605) fitted for breeding horses (ἵπποβότοιο: 605; οὐ γάρ τις νήσων ἱπήλατος οὐδ’ εὐλείμων: 607). It is worth noting here that in the *Odyssey* the λειμών (as a moist¹⁷³, grassy place), apart from this particular occurrence and the significant one in the passage of scroll vi depicting Athena’s sacred grove, is nearly always associated with venues related to death or otherworld. As Bruce Louden pointed out, the λειμῶνες μαλακοὶ of Ogygia¹⁷⁴ “suggest further parallels with typical features of the underworld”¹⁷⁵, where in fact the typical vegetal landscape, as Odysseus himself reports to the Phaeacians, and as the narrator later restates the imagery, when describing the suitors’ *psuchai* upon their arrival in Hades, is that of the “asphodel meadow”¹⁷⁶. The Sirenes themselves are sitting¹⁷⁷ on a “blossoming meadow: λειμῶν’ ἀνθεμόεντα (*Od.* xii 159)” with heaps of human bones around them. Jean Puhvel explained the contradiction between the “asphodel meadow” (understood by the ancient commentators to mean “flowery”, “fragrant”, “fertile” and “lush”¹⁷⁸) and the dark, gloomy characterization of the Homeric Hades

¹⁷³ Cf. *Il.* II, 461.467 where a λειμών is located in the moist area near the stream of rivers and *Il.* XVI 151, as the λειμών beside the stream of Oceanus is cited, on which Podarge grazed when she conceived Xanthus and Balius to Zephyrus. The formula βοσκομένη λειμῶνι of XVI, 151 resurfaces at *Od.* xxi 49 (βοσκόμενος λειμῶνι) in a similitude paralleling the noise of the opening doors with a bull bellowing in a meadow. The root-meaning is shared with λιμήν and λίμνη.

¹⁷⁴ Cf. *Od.* v 72.

¹⁷⁵ Cf. Louden 2011: 132.

¹⁷⁶ “ὥς ἐφάμην, ψυχὴ δὲ ποδώκεος Αἰακίδαο
φοῖτα μακρὰ βιβᾶσα **κατ’ ἀσφοδελὸν λειμῶνα**,
γηθοσύνη, ὃ οἱ υἱὸν ἔφην ἀριδείκετον εἶναι.”
“So I spoke, and the breath-soul of Achilles, grandson of Aiaikos the fast runner,
went off, taking long strides across the field of asphodel,
thrilled because I said his son was preeminent.”
Od. xi 538-540.

“τὸν δὲ μέτ’ Ὀρίωνα πελώριον εἰσενόησα
θῆρας ὁμοῦ εἰλεῦντα **κατ’ ἀσφοδελὸν λειμῶνα**,
τοὺς αὐτὸς κατέπεφνεν ἐν οἰοπόλοισιν ὄρεσσι [...].”
“I saw huge Orion driving wild animals together
across the plain of asphodel,
ones that he had himself killed on the lonely mountains [...].”
Od. xi 572-574.

[...] αἴψα δ’ ἴκοντο **κατ’ ἀσφοδελὸν λειμῶνα**,
ἐνθα τε ναίουσι ψυχαί, εἴδωλα καμόντων.
Quickly they came to the meadow of asphodel,
where the breath-souls, the images of men who are done with their labor.”
Od. xxiv 13-14.

¹⁷⁷ “ἀλλὰ τε Σειρῆνες λιγυρῆ θέλγουσιν ἀοιδῆ,
ἦμεναι ἐν λειμῶνι: πολὺς δ’ ἄμφ’ ὀστεόφιν θίς
ἀνδρῶν πυθομένων, περὶ δὲ ῥίνοι μινύθουσιν.”
“For the sirens, sitting in a meadow, enchant all with their clear song.
Around them there is a great heap of the bones
of rotting men, and the skin shrivels up around those bones.”
Od. xii 44-46.

¹⁷⁸ For the intersection of the cognate conception of Ἥλύσιον πεδίων in Mediterranean eschatologies see Puhvel 1969: 67-68.

pointing to a less murky afterlife conception of Indo-European background, in which the meadow fields describe the pastureland of the departed, especially of royalty: the *λειμών ἀσφοδελός could be a “phraseological holdover” from this ancestral conception¹⁷⁹. Even the epithet of Hades κλυτόπωλος might indicate this sort of background, suggesting an otherworld grassy landscape, suited for horse sustenance.

Ithaca, according to the natural environment shaped by Telemachus’ words, seems to be the polar opposite from the grassy, flowery plains most suitable as pastures. Conversely, with the sole exception of the λειμών adjacent to Athena’s sacred grove - which will be right away explained as the exception that proves the rule – all meadows stretching out in the Odyssean *nóstos* landscape are far removed from its final stage and contrast the role of Ithacan trees in the pattern of recognition, also counterbalancing the magnetic attraction exerted by the trees of Laertes. If *nóstos* is to be intended as “return to life and light”¹⁸⁰, there is no place for such meadows in “clear-seen = shining Ithaca (Ἰθάκην εὐδείελον¹⁸¹: *Od.* ix 21).”

Within this polarity framework, and as a symbol of forgetting and being forgotten, of dramatically losing orientation towards *nóstos* and *kléos*, the “flowery meadow” inhabited by the Sirenes is characterized by the physical presence of death and decay, the mortal remains of unknown, un-narrated men passed away far from home: in this perspective the adjective ἀνθεμίεις of xii 159 can be paired with the ἄνθινον εἶδαρ (*Od.* ix 84), the “flowery food” of the Lotus-eaters, the dangerous source of forgetting and the primal contrary of (Odysseus’) *kléos áphiton*. *Kléos* as unwilling flower can be eventually reconciled with *nóstos*¹⁸² only at the heart of Laertes’ garden (which is also the garden of the heart and mind): the *témenos* of Laertes, unlike Alcinoos’, does not lie beside a λειμών, but, like Alcinoos’ garden, comprises a πρασιή¹⁸³, a bed of vegetables. It is the presence of Athena and of her poplars grove that makes the λειμών of Scheria a positive element of landscape, re-orienting its narratological role from the darkness of Hades and forgetfulness of Sirenes (and Lotus-eaters) toward the light and life of Ithaca and accomplished *nóstos*, through the positive mediation of nymphs. The horizontal dimension and unclear ‘earth-line’ of marshy meadows has to be ultimately replaced by the vertical rootedness and sharp skyline of implanted trees, as the symbolism of uncountable leaves gives way to the exact recounting of the trees.

¹⁷⁹ Cf. Puhvel 1969: 68. For a different, tentative interpretation of the formula and an explanation of the oxytone adjective see Amigues 2002; Reece 2007. Amigues 2002: 7-8, in the frame of her interpretation, points to another inherent contradiction between the intrinsic nature of a λειμών and the ἀσφοδελός, growing in arid fields, and to the unsuitability of asphodels as pasturage. Anyway, in a few IE traditions we find the idea that the dead abide in a wonderful meadow, possibly rich in horses, cf. Hitt. *wēllu-* “meadow (of the otherworld)”, Gr. Ἠλύσιον πεδῖον (*Wēlysiōn pedion* “Elysian (lit. meadowy) fields”. TochA *walu* “dead” may be also related, as well as ON *val-höll* “Valhalla”.

¹⁸⁰ Cf. Frame 1978: chapter 3.

¹⁸¹ According to Chantraine 1977: 271.286 “il est plausible que εὐδείελος et εὐδελός soient des composés de δειέλος”. The adjective “évoquerait la belle lumière de l’après-midi”, meaning “que se détache bien dans la lumière”.

¹⁸² Cf. *Il.* IX, 412-416.

¹⁸³ Cf. *Od.* vii, 127. xxiv, 247.

ΤΟΥ Δ' ΑΥΤΟΥ ΛΥΤΟ ΓΟΥΝΑΤΑ ΚΑΙ ΦΙΛΟΝ ΗΤΟΡ
LOOSENING KNEES AND MELTING HEART

After Odysseus performs the decisive recounting of the trees, giving his father ἔμπεδα σήματα of his identity, old Laertes collapses and faints; then, after a few moments, recovers his consciousness:

**ὧς φάτο, τοῦ δ' αὐτοῦ λύτο γούνατα καὶ φίλον ἦτορ,
σήματ' ἀναγνόντος, τὰ οἱ ἔμπεδα πέφραδ' Ὀδυσσεύς·**
ἀμφὶ δὲ παιδὶ φίλῳ βάλε πῆχθε· τὸν δὲ ποτὶ οἷ
εἶλεν ἀποψύχοντα πολύτλας δῖος Ὀδυσσεύς.
αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ ῥ' ἄμπνυτο καὶ ἐς φρένα θυμὸς ἀγέρθη,
ἐξαυτὶς μύθοισιν ἀμειβόμενος προσέειπε [...]

So he spoke, and Laertes' knees were loosened and his heart melted
when he recognized the sure signs that Odysseus had told him.
He threw his powerful arms around his dear son.
Godlike, much-enduring Odysseus caught him as he fainted.
But when he revived and his spirit was

Od. xxiv 345-350

Lines 345-346 reproduce xxxiii 205-206, describing Penelope overwhelmed by intense emotion after another recognition test involving ἔμπεδα σήματα, represented in that occasion by the (also) literally immovable marital bed of Odysseus (ἔμπεδόν [...] λέχος: *Od.* xxiii 203). Nonetheless, what follows in book xxiii is not at all a scene of collapsing or fainting anyway, but we witness Penelope who runs to Odysseus, hugs him, then fluently justifies her previous behavior and 'delayed' recognition:

**ὧς φάτο, τῆς δ' αὐτοῦ λύτο γούνατα καὶ φίλον ἦτορ,
σήματ' ἀναγνούση, τὰ οἱ ἔμπεδα πέφραδ' Ὀδυσσεύς·**
δακρύσασα δ' ἔπειτ' ἰθὺς κίεν, ἀμφὶ δὲ χεῖρας
δειρῆ βάλλ' Ὀδυσῆϊ, κάρη δ' ἔκυσ' ἠδὲ προσηύδα·
“μή μοι, Ὀδυσσεῦ, σκύζευ, ἐπεὶ τὰ περ ἄλλα μάλιστα
ἀνθρώπων πέπνυσο· θεοὶ δ' ὤπαζον οἷζύν,
οἷ νῶϊν ἀγάσαντο παρ' ἀλλήλοισι μένοντε
ἦβης ταρπῆναι καὶ γήραος οὐδὸν ἰκέσθαι.
αὐτὰρ μὴ νῦν μοι τόδε χῶεο μηδὲ νεμέσσα,
οὐνεκά σ' οὐ τὸ πρῶτον, ἐπεὶ ἴδον, ᾧδ' ἀγάπησα.”

So he spoke, and her knees were loosened and her heart melted,
for she recognized the sure signs that Odysseus had told her.
Weeping, she ran straight toward him, and she threw her arms
around the neck of Odysseus and she kissed his head and said:
“Don't be angry with me, Odysseus, for in all other things
you were the wisest of men. It is the gods
who gave us this sorrow, who didn't want us
enjoy our youth together and come to the threshold of old age.
So do not be angry with me for this, nor resent me,
because I did not welcome you, when I first saw you.”

Od. xxiii 205-214

Differently, in the scene of book xxiv the formulaic expression *λύτο γούνατα*¹⁸⁴ *καὶ φίλον ἦτορ*, describing the vital force suddenly leaving the nodal points of knees and heart, is deployed within the most traditional sequence pattern in which confusion, bewilderment and loss of steadiness are followed either by death at the hands of the opponent on the battlefield (i.e. Lukaon killed by Achilles¹⁸⁵), or by (nearly) losing one's consciousness as an outcome of a physical trauma (Aphrodite hit by Athena¹⁸⁶) or of an emotional blow (Penelope upon the news of the suitors' ambush against Telemachus¹⁸⁷). Analyzing Laertes' faint and return to consciousness, the recurrence of the formula *λύτο γούνατα καὶ φίλον ἦτορ* at *Od.* v 297 and 406 is particularly significant, in so far scroll v clearly describes the landing of exhausted Odysseus, who collapses (*ἄμφω γούνατ' ἔκαμψε*: v 453; *ἀλλὶ γὰρ δέδμητο φίλον κῆρ*: v 454), breaking down on the shore of Scheria, as a scene of symbolic death and rebirth¹⁸⁸:

[...] ὁ δ' ἄρ' ἄμφω γούνατ' ἔκαμψε
 χεῖράς τε στιβαράς· ἀλλὶ γὰρ δέδμητο φίλον κῆρ·
 ᾗδεε δὲ χροῖα πάντα, θάλασσα δὲ κήκιε πολλή
 ἂν στόμα τε ρῖνᾶς θ'· ὁ δ' ἄρ' ἄπνευστος καὶ ἄναυδος
κεῖτ' ὀλιγηπελέων, κάματος δέ μιν αἰνὸς ἵκανεν.
ἀλλ' ὅτε δὴ ῥ' ἄμπνυτο καὶ ἐς φρένα θυμὸς ἀγέρθη [...]

[...] Odysseus bent his two knees
 and his powerful hands. For his heart had been overcome by the sea.
 His flesh was swollen and torn. The sea water flowed
 abundantly from his mouth and nostrils. He lay breathless and speechless,
 with barely the strength to move, and a terrible weariness came over him.
 But when he had caught his breath and his spirit was gathered in his breast [...]

Od. v 453-458

The verb used to describe Odysseus' recovering consciousness is *ἄμπνυτο*, the same that appears at xxiv 349 concerning Laertes (*αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ ῥ' ἄμπνυτο καὶ ἐς φρένα θυμὸς ἀγέρθη*) in an entirely formulaic line. The verb (also as *ἔμπνυτο* and passive aorist *ἐμπνύθη*, *ἐμπνύθη*), which shares the same root of *πέπνυμαι* "to be conscious, in full possession of one's faculties", or "be alive", later "breathe (in the sense of being alive)"¹⁸⁹, recurs in Homeric poetry only when similar conditions have to be portrayed: at *Il.* V 697 Sarpedon comes to his senses again (*ἐμπνύθη*) after he blacked out in pain for Pelagon thrusting out a spear from his thigh; at XI 359 Hector "revived (*ἔμπνυτο*)" after being hit by Diomedes' spear; at XIV 436 Hector again recovering consciousness and vision (*ἀμπνύθη καὶ ἀνέδρακεν ὀφθαλμοῖσιν*); at XXII 475 Andromache recovers (*ἔμπνυτο*

¹⁸⁴ For the expression *λύειν γούνατα* meaning "kill" cf. *Od.* xxiv 381: *ἄνδρας μνηστῆρας· τῷ κέ σφρων γούνατ' ἔλυσσας*. If he had been strong enough to confront them the previous day like he is now, Laertes would have partaken in the killing of the suitors.

¹⁸⁵ Cf. *Il.* XXI 114-119.

¹⁸⁶ Cf. *Il.* XXI 425.

¹⁸⁷ Cf. *Od.* iv 703.

¹⁸⁸ Cf. Segal 1994: 82-84; Ondine Pache 2011: 113.

¹⁸⁹ The form *ἄμπνυτο* is not connected with *(ἀνα)πνέω*, although the confusion seems to be already operating within this Homeric passage, as shows the opposition with *ἄπνευστος* of line 456. Cf. *Il.* V 697-698 (*ἐμπνύθη/ἐπιπνεύουσα*).

καὶ ἐς φρένα θυμὸς ἀγέρθη) from fainting upon seeing the corpse of Hector dragged by Achilles' horses. In all these passages the recovering of consciousness is preceded (or even followed) by imagery of darkness¹⁹⁰ clearly paralleling the alternate conditions of consciousness and unconsciousness (and the transition between them) to the opposition life/death. An analogue dark imagery characterizes the inner condition of Laertes immediately before the recognition scene and his breakdown (τὸν δ' ἄχεος νεφέλη ἐκάλυψε μέλαινα: *Od.* xxiv, 315).

The request from Laertes to his son of a clear sign, in order to realize the truthfulness of Odysseus' *nóstos* (σῆμά τί μοι νῦν εἰπέ ἀριφραδέες, ὄφρα πεποιθῶ: *Od.* xxiv 329) recalls, in its final hexametric *colon*, the introductory phrase of Athena showing the landmarks of Ithaca to Odysseus (ὄφρα πεποιθήης: xiii 344); this resonance is able to link intratextually the enumeration of unmistakable *sémata* related to *nóstos* with another context alluding to death and rebirth: at scroll xiii Odysseus wakes up (ἔγρετο: xiii 187) on Ithaca after a sleep “most resemblant to death (θανάτῳ ἄγχιστα εὐοικῶς: xiii 80)” fell upon his eyelids aboard the Phaeacian ship. The imagery of darkness dimming one's sight and of vision fading to black is also signified at scroll xiii by the mist by which Athena cloaks Odysseus (περὶ γὰρ θεὸς ἠέρα χεῦε: xiii 189), thus preventing a prompt recognition of his homeland's landmarks by the hero.

If the deep meaning of *nóstos* is to be intended as ‘return to life and light’ and the word νόστος actually share the same root of νόος, as Frame demonstrated, it is of fundamental importance to notice firstly that scroll xxiv of *Odyssey* is centered around a scene of recovering one's consciousness, which seems to be the original meaning of the word νόος¹⁹¹. Furthermore, return from death is also alluded to by the means of the swift shift of the scene from Hades to Ithaca after the second *nékuia*: even if Odysseus this time does not make his physical appearance in Hades, his presence (as internal audience) is implied by the tradition, also transpiring through the form of, and the allusions in, the speeches of Achilles and Agamemnon¹⁹². In the narrative development of the second *nékuia*, the opening scene with Hermes and his golden staff is telling about the metaphorical starting point of the final segment of *nóstos* and about the role of transition in the following episodes:

Ἑρμῆς δὲ ψυχὰς Κυλλήνιος ἐξεκαλεῖτο
 ἀνδρῶν μνηστήρων· ἔχε δὲ ράβδον μετὰ χερσὶ
 καλὴν χρυσεῖην, τῇ τ' ἀνδρῶν ὄμματα θέλγει,
 ὃν ἐθέλει, τοὺς δ' αὖτε καὶ ὑπνῶοντας ἐγείρει·

In the meanwhile Kullenian Hermes called forth the breath-souls of the suitors. He had a wand in his hands, beautiful, golden, whit which he enchants the eyes of those he wishes, while he awakes others from their sleep, whomever he wishes.

Od. xxiv 1-4

Rejuvenation of Laertes constitutes the third example of physical and symbolic transition of scroll xxiv: we will see presently how the beneficial intervention of Athena during the bathing of Laertes and the standing line-up of the trees as stage for the collapsing old king, as well as the

¹⁹⁰ Cf. *Il.* V 696: τὸν δ' ἔλιπε ψυχὴ, κατὰ δ' ὀφθαλμῶν κέχυτ' ἀγλῦς; XI 356: [...] ἀμφὶ δὲ ὅσσε κελαινὴ νύξ ἐκάλυψεν; 360: ἐξέλασ' ἐς πληθύν, καὶ ἀλεύατο κῆρα μέλαιναν; XIV 438-439: [...] αὐτίς δ' ἐξοπίσω πλῆτο χθονί, τῷ δὲ οἱ ὅσσε / νύξ ἐκάλυψε μέλαινα [...]; XXII 466: τὴν δὲ κατ' ὀφθαλμῶν ἐρεβεννὴ νύξ ἐκάλυψεν.

¹⁹¹ Cf. Frame 1978.

¹⁹² Cf. Tsagalis 2008: 35.

support Odysseus' arms offer to him can be related. The core of the traditional bathing and transformation scene of scroll xxiv is constructed by formulaic *cola* which in previous books are all exploited to depict Odysseus and Penelope enhanced in strength and beauty by Athena within a ritual pattern:

[...] αὐτὰρ Ἀθήνη
 ἄγχι παρασταμένη μέλε' ἤλδανε ποιμένι λαῶν,
 μείζονα δ' ἢ ἐπάρως |' καὶ πάσσονα |" θῆκεν ιδέσθαι "'.

[...] And Athena
 standing nearby, filled out the limbs of the shepherd of the people,
 and she made him taller and stouter to look upon.

Od. xxiv 367-369

xxiv 367 = xviii 69

xxiv 368 = xviii 70

xxiv 369' " cf. vi 230' "; xxiv 369" = vi 230"; xxiv 369" "' = xviii 195" "' = viii 20' "'

In particular, the verb ἤλδανε is used in Homeric poetry only in these two occurrences of the same formulaic line with Athena as subject and Odysseus/Laertes as objects of the process of limb strengthening. Pierre Chantraine, *sub voce* ἀλδαίνω, singles out the verb root *al- meaning “grow” (the -d- is a verb suffix that leads to the form *al-d-)¹⁹³: both the occurrences of this verb appear in passages preceding a confrontation (Odysseus vs Iros and Odysseus' clan vs the suitors' kin) in which the king tends to restate his role, in the first place showing *le physique du rôle*, Odysseus shedding his beggar rags and revealing a broadened and muscular body, farmer Laertes getting back his fine figure and regaining the status of warrior (he will be the first to kill an enemy¹⁹⁴).

The narration of the bathing scene ends depicting the amazement of Odysseus standing in awe before his rejuvenated father:

ἐκ δ' ἀσαμίνθου βῆ· θαύμαζε δέ μιν φίλος υἱός,
 ὡς ἴδεν ἀθανάτοισι θεοῖσ' ἐναλίγκιον ἄντην,
 καὶ μιν φωνήσας ἔπεα πτερόεντα προσηύδα·
 “ὦ πάτερ, ἦ μάλα τίς σε θεῶν αἰγιγενετάων
 εἶδός τε μέγεθός τε ἀμείνονα θῆκεν ιδέσθαι.”

He got out of the bath. His son stared with amazement
 when he saw him up close, like the deathless gods,
 and he spoke words that went like arrows:
 “Father, surely someone of the gods that live forever
 have made you greater in size and stature to look upon.”

Od. xxiv 370-374

¹⁹³ Cf. Chantraine 1977: 55.

¹⁹⁴ Cf. *Od.* xxiv 520-524: Laertes kills Eupheithes with the help of Athena, after the goddess, disguised as Mentor and standing beside him (τὸν δὲ παρασταμένη: xxiv 516 – the presence of the goddess signified by this participial form is always effective), suggests to him that he should pray to Zeus and to herself (εὐξάμενος κούρη γλαυκώπιδι καὶ Διὶ πατρὶ: xxiv 518). Just before Laertes strikes down Eupheithes, Athena further strengthens him (ἐμπνευσε μένος μέγα Παλλὰς Ἀθήνη: xxiv 520). Mentor-Athena's words represent a divine speech-act, as the strengthening precedes the prayer itself (cf. xxiv 520-521).

The first part of line 370, representing a traditional hysteron proteron (with respect to 365-367) in bathing scenes in which clothing is represented before exiting the bathtub¹⁹⁵, introduces Odysseus' amazement (θαύμαζε). Odysseus' reactions and brief address to his father can be paralleled with Telemachus' own astonished attitude towards Odysseus who reenters in Eumaeus' hut after being beautified by Athena:

[...] **θάμβησε δέ μιν φίλος υἱός,**
ταρβήσας δ' ἐτέρωσε βάλ' ὄμματα, **μὴ θεὸς εἴη,**
καὶ μιν φωνήσας ἔπεα πτερόεντα προσηύδα·
“ἄλλοῖός μοι, ξεῖνε, φάνης νέον ἢ ἐπάροισεν,
ἄλλα δὲ εἶματ' ἔχεις καὶ τοι χρῶς οὐκέθ' ὁμοῖος.
ἦ μάλα **τις θεὸς ἔσσι,** τοὶ οὐρανὸν εὐρὺν ἔχουσιν.”

[...] His son was astonished to see him,
in fear he turned his eyes aside, thinking he was some god.
He spoke to Odysseus words that went like arrows:
“You seem different, stranger, than a while ago,
and you have different clothing on, and your skin is no longer the same.
You must be some god who hold the broad heaven.”

Od. xvi 178-183

As Alfred Heubeck noticed¹⁹⁶, line 375 (τὸν δ' αὖ Λαέρτης πεπνυμένος ἀντίον ἠῦδα) is entirely formulaic and recurs very often in the *Odyssey*, but always with Telemachus as a subject. This sequence of resonances might indeed suggest a different tradition in which a bathing scene served as a preamble to a recognition scene between Telemachus and Odysseus¹⁹⁷: anyway, Laertes, in his rejuvenation process, seems to be partially envisioned as a double of Odysseus himself. Other textual evidence can be gathered to connect the recognition scenes of scroll xvi and scroll xxiv. In both the passages the verb illustrating Odysseus' truthful *nóstos* “in the twentieth year”¹⁹⁸ is ἔρχομαι:

“κεῖνος μὲν δὴ ὄδ' αὐτὸς ἐγώ, πάτερ, ὄν σὺ μεταλλᾷς,
ἦλυθον εἰκοστῷ ἔτει ἐς πατρίδα γαῖαν [...]”
“εἰ μὲν δὴ Ὀδυσσεύς γε, ἐμὸς πάϊς, **εἰλήλουθας,**
σῆμά τί μοι νῦν εἰπὲ ἀριφραδές, ὄφρα πεποίθω.”

“That man, about whom you ask, father, is me,
in the twentieth year I have arrived in the land of my fathers [...]”
“If surely you have come as Odysseus, my son,
give me a clear sign so that I can be persuaded.”

Od. xxiv 321-322; 328-329.

“Τηλέμαχ', οὗ σε ἔοικε φίλον πατέρ' ἔνδον ἐόντα
οὔτε τι θαυμάζειν περιώσιον οὔτ' ἀγάσθαι·

¹⁹⁵ Cf. *Od.* iii 467-468; viii 455-456.

¹⁹⁶ Cf. Heubeck 1986: 382.

¹⁹⁷ Cf. *Od.* xxiii 153-165.

¹⁹⁸ As just pointed out, within the *Odyssean* tradition the mention (and the notion) itself of the “twentieth year” constitutes a hallmark of identification, authorization and ‘truthfulness’. Cf. Tsagalis 2008: xix.

οὐ μὲν γάρ τοι ἔτ' ἄλλος ἐλεύσεται ἐνθάδ' Ὀδυσσεύς,
ἀλλ' ὄδ' ἐγὼ τοιόσδε, παθὼν κακά, πολλὰ δ' ἀληθείς,
ἦλυθον εἰκοστῷ ἔτει ἐς πατρίδα γαῖαν.”

“Telemachus, you ought not to wonder too much
that your father is here in the house, nor be so amazed.
Be sure that no other Odysseus will ever come here.
I am that man, such as you see me, I have suffered evils, I have wandered many places,
in the twentieth year I have arrived in the land of my fathers.”

Od. xvi 202-206

Formulaic line xvi 206 = xxiv 322 is the traditional expression depicting Odysseus as “the ‘twenty-year’ hero of the ‘twenty-year’ epic (Tsagalis 2008: xix).” The verb ἔρχομαι links by its government Ithaca as endpoint of Odysseus’ homecoming, the diachronicity of *nóstos* and its *hóra*, that is the “twentieth year.” As Odysseus says to Telemachus, regarding his transformation: “This is the work of Athena (τόδε ἔργον Ἀθηναίης: xvi 207).”

Meanwhile the intervention of Athena is explicit in the transformation of Odysseus at scroll xvi and in the transition of Laertes from old age farmer to rejuvenated warrior, her notional presence can be only inferred in the passage narrating Laertes’ fainting and recovery of consciousness. The scene immediately follows the recounting of gifted the trees, among which, as I noticed above, there are no olive trees¹⁹⁹. This absence is undoubtedly remarkable, also given the fact that the olive tree is the only evergreen fruit tree mentioned in the *Odyssey*²⁰⁰, suggesting an undoubtable emphasis on stability and vital continuity. Notwithstanding the metonymical equivalence between ἐλαίη and Athena within the poem, the non-appearance of the olive tree as recounted tree, far from shading away the brilliance of the goddess’ eye from the reunion of father and son, implies the notional assimilation of other tree species by Athena’s influence as favoring goddess, and further indicates *ex silentio* where the olive tree absent from the list is to be found. We know that this tree is the *astè elaiá* growing in Odysseus’ bedroom, being an essential σῆμα ἀριφραδέξ in itself. Under this perspective, we may say that the recounting of the trees starts with the reunion of Odysseus and Penelope in the *oikos* and has to be concluded in Laertes’ *képos*, which is said Dolios tends also on behalf of Penelope²⁰¹.

We can conclude that Athena permeates with her presence all this narrative span of time and the mutation of place, equating the landscape of Ithacan inner city and countryside by the means of her sacred tree(s). Similarly, the pan-Hellenic tradition of *nóstos* seems to shape itself within an Athenian horizon, not only from the point of view of its performative crystallization and diffusion, but also considering the importance and assimilating power of the olive tree in the Odyssean vegetal landscape. Ancestral elements of Indo-European and Mycenaean tree cult, as well as the relevance of fruit trees cultivation in the frame of an anti-nomadic life and in palatial rural economy, possibly echoed in the early phases of oral tradition, could have been reutilized and re-oriented through an Athenian exegesis which made Athens the actual last stage of *nóstos* as of tradition itself, where concurrent *nóstoi* were to be silenced or variously incorporated in the authorized one.

¹⁹⁹ Laertes did plant olive trees too. Cf. *Od.* xxiv 246.

²⁰⁰ The date palm is not mentioned as a fruit tree in the *Odyssey* and do not play any significant role in subsistence farming and agriculture in ancient Greece or an economic function in trading. Cf. Michel-Dansac and Caubet 2013: 12.

²⁰¹ Cf. *Od.* iv 735-741.

One last, unspoken *phutón* is to be pinpointed in the garden of Laertes. As Henderson suggested²⁰², the pristine and most cherished tree Laertes planted is Odysseus himself, who lastly recuperates his proper place in the orchard. The firm arms of this *phutón* support the fainting Laertes and constitute the ultimate evidence of stability within family, property and tradition, from Archesios to Telemachus, to future sons and audiences. As Laertes is conscious again into Odysseus' arms, a multiple *nóstos* is attained.

²⁰² Cf. Henderson 1997: 99.

Bibliography

Texts, Translations, Transliterations and Concordances.

Passages from the Odyssey are quoted from von der Mühl 1962. Quotations from the Iliad follow Allen 1931. Translations of the Iliad are taken from Lattimore 1951, but I have consulted also Lombardo 1997. Translations of the Odyssey are taken from Powell 2014 and Lombardo 2000. I made minor changes to produce a translated text fully consistent with my argumentation. For the Homeric Hymns I have consulted West 2003; for Herodotus Godley 1922; for Callimachus A. W. Mair 1921; for Aratus G. R. Mair 1921. All other translations are my own. In transliterating proper names, I have adopted a ‘hybrid’ system, using Latinized forms for names that are largely familiar but otherwise adhering to a precise transliteration of the Greek. When using someone else’s translation, I revised the text for consistency with this system. I made use of the online TLG.

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