

1) Sisyphus and the rock (11.597-8):

ἄκρον ὑπερβαλέειν, τότε ἀποστρέψασκε Κραταίης
αὐτίς ἔπειτα πέδονδε κυλίνδετο λάας ἀναιδής. **fl** cool line

2) On what is *philos*, 'dear'.

from <http://www.tribute.ca/news/022401.htm>

Despite reports that they had patched up their differences, it is now being reported that Russell Crowe dumped actress Meg Ryan for a herd of cows and his dog. Crowe says that his desire to get back home to his ranch in Australia was too strong to keep him in Los Angeles with Meg. He says: "The bottom line is, I have a big life here (in Australia). When I'm off the hook with schedules, I have to come home. I can't sustain myself through the course of a year without filling up on home and Meg needs the same. It's rough being away from your dog for six months. That's rough stuff, man."

That's why Argos is so far up on the ascending scale of affection; Russell Crowe **is** Odysseus.

2) Odysseus on the hunt: remember, he wants three things: home (*nostos*), knowledge (*noos*) and justice (*dikê*). Disguises self as beggar; whumps the stuffing out of the boxer Irus; and then (when Amphinomos shows a bit of kindness towards him), tips his hand about his mission:

Consider the infamy of what these suitors are doing; see how they are wasting the estate, and doing dishonor to the wife, of one who is certain to return some day, and that, too, not long hence. Nay, he will be here soon; may a *daimôn* send you home quietly first that you may not meet with him in the day of his coming [*nostos*], for once he is here the suitors and he will not part bloodlessly." [18.151] With these words he made a drink-offering, and when he had drunk he put the gold cup again into the hands of Amphinomus, who walked away serious and bowing his head, for he foreboded evil.

3) Odysseus is always on the prowl for *noos*. Penelope rebukes the suitors: You suitors are not wooing me after the custom [*dikê*] of my country. When men are courting a woman who they think will be a good wife to them and who is of noble birth, and when they are each trying to win her for himself, they usually bring oxen and sheep to feast the friends of the lady, and they make her magnificent presents, instead of eating up other people's property without paying for it." [18.281] This was what she said, and Odysseus was glad when he heard her trying to get presents out of the suitors, and flattering them with fair words which he knew she did not mean in her mind [*noos*]. [284] Then Antinoos said

Odysseus understands P.'s *noos*; Anti-noos doesn't. [No surprise there.]

4) Penelope has definitely been employing her *noos* while Odysseus was out gallivanting. 19.123: I said to them "Sweethearts, Odysseus is indeed dead, still, do not press me to marry

again immediately; wait—for I would not have my skill in needlework perish unrecorded—till I have finished making a shroud for the hero Laertes, to be ready against the time when death shall take him. He is very rich, and the women of the district [*dêmos*] will talk if he is laid out without a shroud.’ This was what I said, and they assented; whereon I used to keep working at my great web all day long, but at night I would unpick the stitches again by torch light. I fooled them in this way for three years without their finding it out, but as time [*hōra*] wore on and I was now in my fourth year, in the waning of moons, and many days had been accomplished, those good-for-nothing hussies my maids betrayed me to the suitors, who broke in upon me and caught me

a) Penelope as trickster (as tricky as her husband!) b) loaded use of *hōra*, a woman foiled by ‘time’ or ‘season’. What is the right ‘season’ to (re)marry? Will Odysseus make it back in *hōra*?

5) Odysseus also on the prowl for *dikê*: [19.106] "Lady," answered Odysseus, "who on the face of the whole earth can dare to chide with you? Your fame [*kleos*] reaches the firmament of heaven itself; you are like some blameless king, who upholds righteousness [= good *dikê*], as the monarch over a great and valiant nation: the earth yields its wheat and barley, the trees are loaded with fruit, the ewes bring forth lambs, and the sea abounds with fish by reason of his virtues, and his people do good deeds under him.

Metaphors of *dikê*: 1) straight or 2) perfectly fertile. Opposite = *hubris* (cf. 16.409).
Metaphors = 1) crooked or 2) desert/overgrowth. Here, the metaphor employed perfectly illustrates what happens when a king rules with good *dikê*.

6) Odysseus tells P. another Cretan lie (one again involving Odysseus); P. recognizes the Odysseus within the *micronarrative* by his ‘signs’, *sêmata* (brooch and shirt). (An important point to remember when we start juggling other signs at the end of the epic. Another physical ‘sign’, *sêma*, of Odysseus: the scar, 23.69.)

7) One of the weirdest moments in Greek literature: Penelope’s dream of the geese (19.509). Listen, then, to a dream that I have had and interpret it for me if you can. I have twenty geese about the house that eat mash out of a trough, and of which I am exceedingly fond. I dreamed that a great eagle came swooping down from a mountain, and dug his curved beak into the neck of each of them till he had killed them all. Presently he soared off into the sky, and left them lying dead about the yard; whereon I wept in my room till all my maids gathered round me, so piteously was I grieving because the eagle had killed my geese. Then he came back again, and perching on a projecting rafter spoke to me with human voice, and told me to leave off crying. ‘Be of good courage,’ he said, ‘daughter of Ikarios; this is no dream, but a vision of good omen that shall surely come to pass. The geese are the suitors, and I am no longer an eagle, but your own husband, who am come back to you, and who will bring these suitors to a disgraceful end.’ On this I woke, and when I looked out I saw my geese at the trough eating their mash as usual.”

This passage breaks all sorts of rules: metaphors should *not* explain themselves! [Otherwise, what’s the point?] Odysseus says, oh, well that’s obvious, the eagle = Odysseus. [But then why does Penelope weep over the suitors? An open question....!]

8) Penelope proposes an *athlos*, a ‘trial’: 19.559 Furthermore I say—and lay my saying to your heart—the coming dawn will usher in the ill-omened day that is to sever me from the house of Odysseus, for I am about to hold a tournament [*athlos*] of axes. My husband used to set up

twelve axes in the court, one in front of the other, like the stays upon which a ship is built; he would then go back from them and shoot an arrow through the whole twelve. I shall make the suitors try to perform the same feat [*athlos*] ...

Compare with the beginning of the epic: “even then, when he was among his own people, his trials [*athloi*] were not yet over....” [1.15].

Ring composition! We’re nearing the end.

9) Odysseus’ final *athlos* is a key ingredient of the return to his identity: the stringing of the bow can be done by him *alone* – to say nothing of the incredible feat of shooting an arrow through the axe-heads. When he strings the bow, Zeus produces a *sêma* in the sky (21.404): another ‘sign’ of Odysseus (this time, non-physical). Arrow flies *straight* through the axes: straight *dikê*! A neat speech: “Now it is time [*hôra*] for the Achaeans to prepare supper, and then otherwise disport themselves with song and dance, etc.” [21.431].

10) *Dikê* at the right *horâ* at the end of an *athlos* = identity. [22.1] Then Odysseus tore off his rags, and sprang on to the broad pavement with his bow and his quiver full of arrows. He shed the arrows on to the ground at his feet and said, “The mighty contest [*athlos*] is at an end. Odysseus is back! Anti-noos never finds out [gets shot in the throat]. Eurymakhos attempts some fast talking: “If you are Odysseus,” said he, “then what you have said is just. We have done much wrong on your lands and in your house. But Antinoos, who was the head and front of the guilty [*aitios*], lies low already. It was all his doing.” [22.44]

11) Huge, exciting slaughter follows. Odysseus, as hero, prepared to do ‘questionable things’: So saying he made a ship’s cable fast to one of the bearing-posts that supported the roof of the domed room, and secured it all around the building, at a good height, lest any of the women’s feet should touch the ground; and as thrushes or doves beat against a net that has been set for them in a thicket just as they were getting to their nest, and a terrible fate awaits them, even so did the women have to put their heads in nooses one after the other and die most miserably. Their feet moved convulsively for a while, but not for very long. [22.474] As for Melanthius, they took him through the hall into the inner court. There they cut off his nose and his ears; they drew out his vitals and gave them to the dogs raw, and then in their fury they cut off his hands and his feet.

This is disturbing stuff. Is this an admirable hero? Is this *dikê*? [TEJ’s answer: well, this is Odysseanic *dikê*. In an epic skewed towards ‘home’, anybody who messed with that home is as good as a murderer. The same sort of question was raised in the *Iliad* when Achilles slaughters the Trojans as a blood sacrifice to Patroklos. Makes ‘sense’ from the point of view of the epic.]

12) Famous, weird recognition scene of Penelope and Odysseus. Eurykleia says ‘hey, take a look at his scar (*sêma*)!’ Penelope: [23.104] Still, if he really is Odysseus come back to his own home again, we shall get to understand one another better by and by, for there are signs [*sêmata*] with which we two are alone acquainted, and which are hidden from all others.” Penelope isn’t interested in physical signs: wants something more Odysseanic. Mental signs.

13) Penelope attempts to trick Odysseus: turn-about is fair play. Asks the nurse to bring out the bed (a feat she knows is impossible). Odysseus 23.181: “There is no man living, however strong and in his prime, who could move it from its place. For it was wrought to be a great sign [*sêma*]; it is a marvelous curiosity which I made with my very own hands. ... So you see I know all about this sign [*sêma*], and I desire to learn whether it is still there, or whether any one has been removing it by cutting down the olive tree at its roots.” [205] When she heard the sure signs [*sêmata*] Odysseus now gave her, she fairly broke down.

The recognition has taken place on the level of *symbols*: after 20 years, the merely physical won't do. A reunion with one's *philos* that takes place on the emotional and mental level, not merely bodily.

14) A beautiful simile: 23.231. Then Odysseus in his turn melted, and wept as he clasped his dear and faithful wife to his bosom. As the sight of land is welcome to men who are swimming towards the shore, when Poseidon has wrecked their ship with the fury of his winds and waves—a few alone reach the land, and these, covered with brine, are thankful when they find themselves on firm ground and out of danger—even so was her husband welcome to her as she looked upon him, and she could not tear her two fair arms from about his neck. Indeed they would have gone on indulging their sorrow till rosy-fingered morn appeared, had not Athena determined otherwise, and held night back in the far west.

Tenor? Vehicle? Ground?

15) A marvelous example of epic compression: 23.310-344. I'll be damned if Odysseus doesn't retell the *entire* epic in 34 lines.

16) And this is where Aristotle's version ended. Where does *your* version end? Would you continue to book 24? A possible passage to consider: [10.244] “I see, sir,” said Odysseus, “that you are an excellent gardener—what pains you take with it, to be sure. There is not a single plant, not a fig tree, vine, olive, pear, nor flower bed, but bears the trace of your attention. I trust, however, that you will not be offended if I say that you take better care of your garden than of yourself.

The recognition scene:

[10.327] Furthermore I will point out to you the trees in the vineyard which you gave me, and I asked you all about them as I followed you round the garden. We went over them all, and you told me their names and what they all were. You gave me thirteen pear trees, ten apple trees, and forty fig trees; you also said you would give me fifty rows of vines; there was wheat planted between each row, and they yield grapes of every kind when the seasons [*hōrai*] of Zeus have been laid heavy upon them.”

[345] Laertes' strength failed him when he heard the convincing signs [*sêmata*] which his son had given him.