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**And So to Bed: Lektronde in the *Odyssey***

As matrimonial beds are a significant part of the physical architecture of the Homeric household, so are the beds of Odysseus significant to the narrative architecture of the epic. This paper traces the path of Odysseus as a trajectory from wrongly chosen bed to unsuitable couch until his ultimate arrival at the Ithakan bedstead that will be his appropriate resting place.

The *Odyssey's* type-scenes, such as the numerous baths and baths refused, are tightly arranged, framing one another in intricate layers. Other domestic scenes such as feasts are also carefully sited. Beds, too, are important, and their placement and functions correspondingly significant for the structure of the narrative as a whole.

The shared beds of Odysseus are both loci of vulnerability. The couches of Kirke and Kalypso are luxurious places of delay, unwholesome dalliance and genuine danger. A divine reflection of these beds is the couch of Aphrodite (*Od.* 8.264-365), also exquisite, illicit, and perilous.

Solitary sleeping places represent desolation, if not death itself. Odysseus' nest of leaves on the Phaiakian shore (*Od.* 5.474-93) a central paradigm for the work, is analogous to a grave. Odysseus rises in the morning as if reborn (Segal 1994), yet during the night he has been in real danger of death. Penelope's olivewood marital bed, a bounteous source of life, is a powerful counterpart for Odysseus' Phaiakian den.

When Odysseus is a guest, his solitary beds are for the most part in liminal places. In the palace of Alkinoos, he sleeps under the portico, alone. Tellingly, Book 7 closes not with the image of Odysseus asleep out on his porch, but rather with that of Arete and Alkinoos in their own proper bed in the house's most private chamber (*Od.* 7.346-7).

A guest in Eumaios' hut, Odysseus accepts the best the swineherd has to offer. Although the hero sleeps near the young men, his humble host spends the night outdoors, and thus leaves Odysseus symbolically alone. Yet he is glad, for the absence of the Eumaios signifies that he is taking proper care of his pigs, which are part of the hero's own household wealth (*Od.* 14.523-27).

Odysseus' penultimate bed is also liminal, under the portico of his own house. Here, he reenacts his reception at the Phaiakian court. Once more he sleeps outside of the house proper, while longing for a matrimonial bed within. Once again a temporary bed for Odysseus is paired with Penelope's permanent bed. At the close of Book 19, Penelope weeps until Athena allows her to sleep (*Od.* 19.603-5). In that same night, the hero lies awake, tossing and turning with anger and anticipation until Athena appears to him, rebukes him, and makes him sleep (*Od.* 20.54). The parallelism is striking.

Because the journeys of Odysseus have traced a path from to bed to bed, each unsatisfactory, all places of sorrow, powerlessness, or even actual danger, a bed is

fittingly the key to his homecoming and the token of his identity. He has emerged from the entanglements of the Nymphs, from the lair of a beast, and from the lonely porticos which have symbolized his status as an outsider. Every bed has been false, for none has been the bed of Penelope.