

The Name of Clytemnestra in the *Odyssey*

1. Instances of the Oresteia myth in the *Odyssey* (identified in Olson 1990)

1.35-43, 1.298-300; 3.193-8, 3.234-5, 3.255-312; 4.90-2, 4.512-37, 4.546-7; 11.387-9, **11.409-34**, 11.452-3; 13.383-4; 24.19-22, 24.96-7, **24.199-202**

2. Non-etymological evidence for Clytemnestra's mental acuity (*Odyssey*)

δόλω... ἀλόχοιο (3.235, 4.92) “by the trickery of his... wife”

φρεσὶ... κέχρητ' ἀγαθῆσι (3.266) “she had noble wits”

λυγρὰ ἰδυῖα (11.432) “thinking baneful things”

Κλυταιμνήστρη δόλον ἤρτυε (11.439) “Clytemnestra spread a snare”

3. Categories of Homeric wordplay (Louden 1995)

Wordplay: “a connection between two similar-sounding words which invests the relationship between them with additional meaning” (Louden 1995: 27)

a. *Figura etymologica*: the “play upon the etymological meaning of a name” (Louden 1995: 28). *Od.* 19.407-9:

πολλοῖσιν γὰρ ἐγὼ γε ὀδυσσάμενος τόδ' ἰκάνω,
ἀνδράσιν ἠδὲ γυναιξίν ἀνὰ χθόνα πουλυβότειραν·
τῷ δ' Ὀδυσσεὺς ὄνομα ἔστω ἐπώνυμον.

Inasmuch as I have come here as one that is hateful to many,
both men and women, over the fruitful earth,
therefore let the name by which the child is named be Odysseus.

b. Parechysis: “the non-etymological collocations of words sharing several common sounds, usually a similar sounding root” (Louden 1995: 29). *Il.* 16.141-4:

... τὸ μὲν οὐ δύνατ' ἄλλος Ἀχαιῶν
πάλλειν, ἀλλὰ μιν οἶος ἐπίστατο πῆλαι Ἀχιλλεύς,
Πηλιάδα μελίην, τὴν πατρὶ φίλω πόρε Χείρων
Πηλίου ἐκ κορυφῆς...

... this no other of the Achaeans could
wield, but Achilles alone was skilled to wield it,
the Pelian spear of ash, that Cheiron had given to his dear father
from the peak of Pelion...

4. Examples of reverse-order soundplay on proper names

Peleus (*Il.* 5.668-70): Τλη-πόλεμον... πολέμοιο... τλήμονα

Nestor (*Il.* 10.157): ἀνέγειρε Γερ-ήνιος ἱππότη Νέστωρ

Antenor (*Il.* 14.471-3): ἀνήρ Προθοήνορος ἀντί... Ἀντ-ήνορος

Achilles (*Il.* 23.155-6): Ἀχι-λλεύς... λαὸς Ἀχαιῶν

Odysseus (*Od.* 19. 571): ἦδε δὴ ἠὼς εἶσι δυσώνυμος, ἦ μ' Ὀδυσ-ῆος

Eurycleia (*Od.* 21.380-2): Εὐρύ-κλεια... κληῖσαι μέγαροιο θύρας πυκινῶς ἀραρυίας

5. Etymological evidence for *Clytemestra* (κλυτός, “renowned” + μήδομαι, “to contrive”)

a. *Odyssey* 1.298-300 (*figura etymologica*)

ἢ οὐκ αἴεις οἶον κλέος ἔλλαβε δῖος Ὀρέστης
πάντας ἐπ’ ἀνθρώπους, ἐπεὶ ἔκτανε πατροφονῆα,
Αἴγισθον **δολόμητιν**, ὃ οἱ πατέρα **κλυτὸν** ἔκτα; 300

Or have you not heard what fame the noble Orestes won
among all mankind when he slew his father’s murderer,
the **guileful** Aegisthus, because he slew his **glorious** father?

b. *Odyssey* 3.193-8 (*figura etymologica*)

Ἄτρεΐδην δὲ καὶ αὐτοὶ ἀκούετε, νόσφιν ἐόντες,
ὥς τ’ ἦλθ’, ὥς τ’ Αἴγισθος ἐμήσατο λυγρὸν ὄλεθρον.
ἀλλ’ ἦ τοι κεῖνος μὲν ἐπισμυγεῶς ἀπέτισεν· 195
ὥς ἀγαθὸν καὶ παῖδα καταφθιμένοιο λιπέσθαι
ἀνδρός, ἐπεὶ καὶ κεῖνος ἐτίσατο πατροφονῆα,
Αἴγισθον **δολόμητιν**, ὃ οἱ πατέρα **κλυτὸν** ἔκτα.

But of the son of Atreus you have yourselves heard, far off though
you are,
how he came, and how Aegisthus devised for him a woeful doom.
Yet truly he paid the reckoning for it in terrible fashion,
so good a thing it is that a son be left behind a man at his death,
since that son took vengeance on his father’s slayer,
the **guileful** Aegisthus, because he slew his **glorious** father.

c. *Odyssey* 11.421-30 (*figura etymologica*)

οἰκτροτάτην δ’ ἤκουσα ὅπα Πριάμοιο θυγατρὸς,
Κασσάνδρης, τὴν κτεῖνε Κλυταιμνήστρη **δολόμητις**
ἀμφ’ ἐμοί, αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ ποτὶ γαίῃ χειρᾶς ἀείρων
βάλλον ἀποθνήσκων περὶ φασγάνῳ· ἡ δὲ κυνῶπις
νοσφίσατ’, οὐδέ μοι ἔτλη ἰόντι περ εἰς Αἴδαο 425
χερσὶ κατ’ ὀφθαλμοὺς ἐλέειν σὺν τε στόμ’ ἐρεῖσαι.
ὥς οὐκ αἰνότερον καὶ κύντερον ἄλλο γυναικός,
ἢ τις δὴ τοιαῦτα μετὰ φρεσὶν ἔργα βάλῃται·
οἶον δὴ καὶ κείνη **ἐμήσατο** ἔργον ἀεικές,
κουριδίῳ τεύξασα πόσει φόνον. 430

But the most piteous cry that I heard was that of the daughter of
Priam, Cassandra, whom **guileful** Clytemnestra slew as she clung to
me. And I, lying on the ground, trying to raise my arms,
tossed dying upon Aegisthus’ sword. But she, bitch that she was,
turned away, and did not deign, though I was going to the house of
Hades,
either to draw down my eyelids with her fingers or to close my
mouth.
So true is it that there is nothing more frightful or more shameless
than a woman who puts into her heart such deeds like the ugly thing
she **plotted**, contriving her wedded husband’s murder.

d. *Odyssey* 24.199-202 (*figura etymologica* and parechesis)

οὐχ ὡς Τυνδαρέου **κοῦρη κακὰ μῆσατο** ἔργα,
κουρίδιον κτείνασα πόσιν, στυγερὴ δέ τ’ αἰοιδῆ 200
ἔσσειτ’ ἐπ’ ἀνθρώπους, χαλεπὴν δέ τε φῆμιν ὀπάσσει
θηλυτέρησι γυναιξί, καὶ ἢ κ’ εὐεργὸς ἔησιν.

Not in this manner did the daughter of Tyndareus **devise** evil deeds
and kill her wedded husband, and hateful shall her song
be among men, and evil repute does she bring
upon all womankind, even upon her who does rightly.

cf. *Iliad* 3.43: ἦ που **καγχαλόωσι** **κάρη κομόωντες** Ἄχαιοὶ (“I think the long-haired Achaeans will laugh aloud,” trans. Murray).

6. Etymological evidence for *Clytemnestra* (κλυτός “renowned” + μνηστεύω, “to woo”)

a. *Odyssey* 1.32-43 (*figura etymologica*)

ὣ πόποι, οἷον δὴ νῦ θεοὺς βροτοὶ αἰτιόωνται·
ἐξ ἡμέων γάρ φασι κάκ' ἔμμεναι, οἱ δὲ καὶ αὐτοὶ
σφῆσιν ἀτασθαλίησιν ὑπὲρ μόρον ἄλγε' ἔχουσιν,
ὡς καὶ νῦν Αἴγισθος ὑπὲρ μόρον Ἀτρεΐδαο 35
γῆμ' ἄλοχον **μνηστήν**, τὸν δ' ἔκτανε νοστήσαντα,
εἰδὼς αἰπὺν ὄλεθρον, ἐπεὶ πρό οἱ εἶπομεν ἡμεῖς,
Ἑρμείαν πέμψαντες, εὐσκοπον ἀργεῖφόντην,
μήτ' αὐτὸν κτείνειν μήτε **μνάσθαι** ἄκοιτιν·
ἐκ γὰρ Ὀρέστιαο τίσις ἔσσεται Ἀτρεΐδαο, 40
ὀππότε' ἂν ἠβήσῃ τε καὶ ἦς ἰμείρεται αἴης.
ὡς ἔφαθ' Ἑρμείας, ἀλλ' οὐ φρένας Αἰγίσθοιο
πεῖθ' ἀγαθὰ φρονέων· νῦν δ' ἀθρόα πάντ' ἀπέτισεν.

It's astonishing how ready mortals are to blame the gods.
It is from us, they say, that evils come, but they even by themselves,
through their own blind folly, have sorrows beyond that which is
ordained.
Just as now Aegisthus, beyond that which was ordained,
took to himself the **wooed** wife of the son of Atreus, and slew him
on his return, though well he knew of sheer destruction, seeing that
we told him before,
sending Hermes, the keen-sighted Argeiphontes,
that he should neither slay the man nor **woo** his wife;
or from Orestes shall come vengeance for the son of Atreus
when once he has come to manhood and longs for his own land.
So Hermes spoke, but he did not prevail upon Aegisthus' heart;
for all his good intent, and now he has paid the full price for it all.

b. Etymology of “Agamemnon” as “admirable for remaining” (ἀγαμαι, “to marvel at” + μένω, “to remain”) in Plato's *Cratylus* (395a)

κινδυνεύει γὰρ τοιοῦτός τις εἶναι ὁ Ἄγαμέμνων, οἷος ἂ
δόξειεν αὐτῷ διαπονεῖσθαι καὶ καρτερεῖν τέλος ἐπιτιθεὶς τοῖς
δόξασι δι' ἀρετήν. σημεῖον δὲ αὐτοῦ ἢ ἐν Τροίᾳ **μονή** τοῦ
πάθους τε καὶ καρτερίας. ὅτι οὖν **ἀγαστός** κατὰ τὴν **ἐπιμονήν**
οὗτος ὁ ἀνήρ ἐνσημαίνει τὸ ὄνομα ὁ Ἄγαμέμνων.

Yes, for **Agamemnon** (admirable for remaining) is one who
would resolve to toil to the end and to endure, putting the finish
upon his resolution by virtue. And a proof of this is his long
retention of the host at Troy and his endurance. So the name
Agamemnon denotes that this man is **admirable** for **remaining**
(trans. Fowler).

7. The relevance of the Oresteia myth to the *Odyssey* (*Odyssey* 24.191-202)

ὄλβιε Λαέρταο πάϊ, πολυμήχαν' Ὀδυσσεῦ,
ἦ ἄρα σὺν μεγάλῃ ἀρετῇ ἐκτήσω ἄκοιτιν.
ὡς **ἀγαθαὶ** φρένες ἦσαν **ἀμύμονι** Πηνελοπεΐῃ,
κούρη Ἰκαρίου· ὡς εὖ **μέμνητ'** Ὀδυσῆος, 195
ἀνδρὸς κουριδίου· τῷ οἱ κλέος οὐ ποτ' ὀλεῖται
ἦς ἀρετῆς, τεύξουσι δ' ἐπιχθονίοισιν ἀοιδὴν
ἀθάνατοι χαρίεσσαν ἐχέφρονι Πηνελοπεΐῃ,
οὐχ ὡς Τυνδαρέου κούρη **κακὰ μῆσατο** ἔργα,
κουρίδιον κτείναςα πόσιν, στυγερὴ δέ τ' ἀοιδὴ 200
ἔσσει' ἐπ' ἀνθρώπους, χαλεπὴν δέ τε φῆμιν ὀπάσσει
θηλυτέρησι γυναιξί, καὶ ἦ κ' εὐεργὸς ἔησιν.

Happy son of Laertes, Odysseus of many devices,
truly full of all excellence was the wife you won.
How **good** of understanding was **flawless** Penelope,
daughter of Icarus! How well she **was mindful of** Odysseus
her wedded husband! Therefore the fame of her excellence shall
never perish,
but the immortals shall make among men on earth
a song full of delight in honor of constant Penelope.
Not in this manner did the **daughter** of Tyndareus **devise evil** deeds
and **kill her wedded** husband, and hateful shall her song
be among men, and evil repute does she bring
upon all womankind, even upon her who does rightly.

8. Structural parallelism of Penelope and Clytemnestra in *Odyssey* 24.191-202 (Tsagalis 2003: 50).

Penelope	Clytemnestra
1) κούρη Ἰκαρίου (195)	1) Τυνδαρέου κούρη (199)
2) εὖ μέμνητ' (195)	2) κακὰ μήσατο ἔργα (199)
3) ἀνδρὸς κουριδίου (196)	3) κουρίδιον... πόσιν (200)
4) οἱ κλέος οὐ ποτ' ὀλεῖται (196)	4) χαλεπὴν δέ τε φῆμιν (201)
5) χαρίεσσαν ἀοιδὴν (197-8)	5) στυγερὴ δέ τ' ἀοιδή (200)

All translations after Murray unless otherwise noted.

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