

Suspiciously Intertextual: Homer's "Double Cup" between the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*

This paper applies recent theories of Homeric allusion and referentiality to investigate a suspiciously intertextual appearance of the δέπας ἀμφικύπελλον or "double cup" in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. I propose both literary and oral performative scenarios in which audiences familiar with *Iliad* 23 could understand the *Odyssey*'s "double cup" as an engagement with Iliadic tradition, but not necessarily a textualized *Iliad* (cf. Bakker 2013 vs. Currie 2016; Arft 2021).

The "double" drinking vessel is part of Homer's typology for ritual offerings, but a closer look at its 15 instances reveals specific and limited uses. Drink offerings in the *Odyssey* mark the close of hospitality (Reece 1993), and on Scheria they are associated with Odysseus's plea for *nostos* (e.g. *Od.* 7.179-81). More specifically, this cup signals the closure of feasting and song. Odysseus's tears at Demodocus's first song are much discussed, but few have noticed his iterative taking up of the double cup as an accompanying plea for closure (*Od.* 8.88-89). Later, when Odysseus is about to leave Scheria and Alkinoos begins another feast, Odysseus takes the double cup and hands it directly to Arete as he crosses the threshold and departs, marking an important transitional closure to the Phaeacian episode itself (*Od.* 13.57). Overall, the double cup in the *Odyssey* can be taken as a sign of hospitality's end and the promise of *nostos*, thus *kleos*.

In the *Iliad*, the cup is sometimes used in contexts of closure, but it more markedly appears four times in quick succession as the prize offered to Euryalus, the loser of the boxing match (*Il.* 23.656, 663, 667, 699). Removed from festival/sympotic context, the material object becomes a marker of heroic achievement (Grethlein 2008). As with several prizes in *Iliad* 23, the δέπας ἀμφικύπελλον offered by Achilles also represents a restoration of a fractured honor system (Scott 1997), with *Iliad* 23 placing Achilles atop a hierarchy in which other heroes, Odysseus

included, are co-equals in honor.

Nagy (2012) has argued that *Odyssey* 8 not only reflects agonism between Achilles and Odysseus traditions but is also stylized as a competitive arena where the *Odyssey* competes against a “pre-regular” story of Troy. With this inter-epic agonism in mind, the context of the *Iliad*’s δέπας ἀμφικύπελλον could explain a quirk in Alkinoos’s response to Odysseus’s blatant cue for closure of song. In short, Alkinoos responds to the cup as an idealized Iliadic audience, explaining his “misreading” of the sign—rather than close the festival, he immediately hastens its continuation by summoning competitions much like those in *Iliad* 23. For an actual audience, the same expectation could be raised: the structured and catalogue-like style of games in *Iliad* 23 make them liable to be encountered as relatively set performance pieces (Arft 2017), and the specific prizes could bring to mind contest narratives as such.

Overall, the δέπας ἀμφικύπελλον recalls memorable scenes and themes from the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* traditions, allowing for audiences to cross reference their implications. If the *Iliad*’s double cup is taken as a metonym for Iliadic competition, Alkinoos effectively revises Odysseus’s use of the sign and shifts the *Odyssey*’s discourse of *nostos* back to martial epic. As a result, Odysseus the suppliant is coaxed into competition (by a different Euryalus) and must prove that he surpasses not just the Phaeacians, but Trojan War heroes before him (as he does in the *nekuia*), Achilles included. As such, the competitive arenas of *Odyssey* 8 and *Iliad* 23 allow for sophisticated interformular linkages resulting not from texts but from oral re-performances in a rhapsodic era that not only saw the gradual fixation of Homeric epics but began to conceive of them as poetic memorials for either Achilles or Odysseus.

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