

Peter Gainsford: articles in

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Family

(*Homer Encyclopedia*, i.285-286)

The present article treats family as a literary construct. For family as an anthropological and/or economic construct, see HOUSEHOLD, KINSHIP, and MARRIAGE.

Family is symbolically and thematically important in both the *ILIAD* and *ODYSSEY*, though in slightly different ways. Family relationships involve both sorrow and affection; they can be celebrated, but can also be competitive. A healthy family may stand united against outside threats, but can also be divided by betrayal. The most important family unit is a nuclear family, consisting of a married couple and CHILDREN, but also often including one or both of the husband's parents; as in Classical Greece, males are under an obligation to care for aged parents (see OLD AGE). Homer has no word that refers specifically to a "family" in the sense of a nuclear family; relatives within the nuclear family are demarcated from the extended family by which household they inhabit.

One theme associated with family in both epics is that of obligation and dependence: a hero has responsibilities to his family, and the family depends on him. For example, in the *Iliad*, HECTOR's bonds with members of his family are central to the portrayal of his character. He is repeatedly torn between his preoccupation with his own reputation and his family's requests for him to preserve his life: both Hektor's parents implore him to "take pity" on them by saving his own life (22.33-92); his wife ANDROMACHE explicitly states her complete dependence on Hector now that her father and brothers are dead ("Hector, now you are my father, my lady mother and brother; and you are my beloved bedmate," *Il.* 6. 429-430) and imagines the unpleasant fate that awaits their son ASTYANAX as a result of Hector's death (22.482-507; cf. 24.723-746). In the *Odyssey*, ODYSSEUS' absence from his family is a dystopian state that is represented by misery and loss for all members of his family: his mother ANTIKLEIA dies of grief, and his father LAERTES retires to a degraded lifestyle away from other people (*Od.* 11.170-203); his wife's fidelity is compromised when Odysseus is not there to safeguard it; and his son TELEMACHOS has his patrimony threatened by the SUITORS' continuous depredations (1.245-251, etc.).

The flipside of the obligations built into family relationships is that families are regularly characterized by affection and loyalty. AGAMEMNON's reaction when MENELAOS is wounded (*Il.* 4.148-182) shows fear and sorrow, but also an attempt to comfort his brother: the vengeance he promises is not a matter of mere duty, but a fierce desire. Elsewhere, conversations between husbands and wives show a degree of intimate knowledge of one another that may well exceed that of many modern couples (Hector and Andromache, *Il.* 6.392-502, Odysseus and PENELOPE, *Od.* 23.85-343). Parents grieve for children that have died, but living children are celebrated and receive affection (Hector and Andromache with Astyanax, *Il.* 6.466-481; Menelaos and HELEN with HERMIONE, *Od.* 4.3-19).

Relationships between fathers and living sons can be more problematic under some circumstances. Generally a father sets an educational example for his son to emulate (Crotty 1994, 24-41), but the *Odyssey* shows some tension in the relationship between Odysseus and Telemachos. The narrative lays repeated stress on the importance of Telemachos being capable to inherit his

father's status if Odysseus is dead, but at the same time Telemachos cannot actually inherit this status. As a result, when Telemachos sets up the bow contest and himself takes part (21.101-139), he is genuinely competing; but against his father, not the Suitors (Thalmann 1998, 206-223). This tension vanishes in the last book, when father and son stand side by side and Laertes rejoices to see his descendants competing against one another in valor (24.504-515).

In the *Iliad* the *topos* of grief over lost family members arises in several other contexts as well, and enables family to be used as a tool for persuasion and SUPPLICATION. Many DEATH scenes in battle are marked by a digression that describes the grief of the dying warrior's parents, who do not yet realise that their son is dead, who will be unable to bury the son's body in his homeland, or whom the son will no longer be able to look after (*Il.* 4.473-479, 5.20-24, 5.152-158, etc.). In a similar vein, attempts to supplicate ACHILLES often draw on his desire to prevent his own father PELEUS from suffering this same grief: Odysseus' and PHOINIX' appeals to Achilles in the EMBASSY of *Iliad* 9 both refer to Peleus (9.251-259, 438-441, 478-485), and so does PRIAM's at the end of the epic (24.486-506).

Family is still more central in the *Odyssey*. At one level it represents one side of a divide between the HOUSEHOLD and SOCIETY at large; Penelope's Suitors break down this barrier by invading the household (Thalmann 1998, 115-170).

The *Odyssey* also uses different kinds of families to represent a continuum between utopian and dystopian extremes (see also UTOPIAS). One aspect of Odysseus' goal of *nostos*, "return home," is reintegration with his family; without him, the family is a dystopian mess, as described above. Reintegration is enacted through RECOGNITION-SCENES between Odysseus and members of the household. This reintegration extends even beyond the nuclear family into other appendages to the household: Odysseus is also reunited with his patron goddess ATHENE and with household slaves (EURYKLEIA, EUMAIOS, and PHILOITIOS) through recognition-scenes. Indeed in the recognition-scene with Eumaios and Philoitios, Odysseus promises to make them full members of his family ("to me, you will be companions and brothers of Telemachos," 21.215-216). The recognition of Odysseus by his dog ARGOS (17.290-327) is also an emotive moment, though not a recognition-scene in the sense of a formal TYPE-SCENE.

Other families represent intermediate stages along this continuum, and are repeatedly juxtaposed with Odysseus' family as PARADIGMS to live up to or to avoid. The family of Agamemnon is especially heavily used in this respect: the adultery of KLYTAIMNESTRA and the murder of Agamemnon are repeatedly juxtaposed with Odysseus' family as a paradigm of a bad homecoming (beginning from *Od.* 1.29-47 and continuing until 24.191-202), while ORESTES' vengeance is a paradigm for Telemachos to follow (1.298-302, etc.) (see further Olson 1995, 24-42). Other families serve similar functions. Books 3 and 4 open with tableaux of happy families engaged in healthy activities, those of NESTOR and Menelaos engaged in SACRIFICE and marriage respectively, as promises of what Odysseus' family will look like once Odysseus returns. The Catalogue of Heroines in the *NEKYIA* (11.225-327) depicts a diverse range of families, showing an even fuller spectrum of storylines that a family can follow.

Suggested readings: Lacey 1968, 33-50, and Patterson 1998, 44-69, give semi-ethnographic descriptions of the family as represented in Homer. Among more literary discussions, Thalmann 1998, 115-237, is invaluable; see also Arthur 1981, Crotty 1994, Felson 1994, Heitman 2005.

Kinship

(*Homer Encyclopedia*, ii.438-440)

Kinship refers to FAMILY relationships as distinct from FRIENDSHIP. However, there is a terminological indistinctness in Greek: both kinds of relationship belong to the general category of *philia*, which refers to any inalienable amicable relationship. Some terms (Donlan 1985) are sufficiently vague (*hetairos* “companion”, *ethnos* “race”) or obscure (*phrêtrê*) to have been interpreted both as kin and non-kin terms; others (*genos* “stock, descent,” *phulon* “family group”) are controversial in that they have sometimes been interpreted as types of clans or tribes. In the Homeric kinship system, descent and inheritance are generally patrilineal, and MARRIAGE is generally exogamous and patrilocal. There is no consistent distinction between ACHAIAN and TROJAN kinship systems in the *ILLIAD*.

1. *Kinship terminology*. For an anthropological survey of kinship terminology generally, see, e.g., Dzielbel (2007) (see also ANTHROPOLOGY). The most thorough analysis of Homeric kinship terminology is Gates (1971), who interprets it as an Omaha system (i.e., a nuclear family, with descriptive terminology for paternal kin, but relatively general classificatory terminology for maternal kin).

The most important terms are those within the nuclear family. Homer has more terms for these relations than exist in later Greek: e.g., alongside *gunê* “woman, wife” we find *alochos*, *damar*, and *oar* for “wife,” with no clear distinction in meaning; (*par*)*akoitis* appears not to be a kin term but to refer to a personal relationship: “lover/bedfellow” rather than “spouse.”

Beyond the nuclear family the patrilineal character of Homeric kinship becomes evident: no terms are attested for maternal relatives. Judging by word frequency the most important relation for a male is the *gambros* “daughter’s/sister’s husband” (16×). The reciprocal term *pentheros* “wife’s father” (2×) is the only term certainly attested for a male’s affinal relative. For a female, her husband’s siblings are the most important (*daêr* “husband’s brother” 6×; *galoôs* “husband’s sister” 5×). Nephews and nieces are never mentioned. Some terms have either a general or obscure meaning: *gnôtos/-ê* is general, and can be used of both siblings and cousins; *etês* and *pêos* refer to male kin outside the nuclear family, but it is unclear how specific they are; *einateres* may mean “husband’s brothers’ wives,” but we have only Hesychius’ word for this.

Siblings are more problematic than Gates appreciated. Homer has two overlapping terms for siblings: *kasignêtos/-ê*, a general term for any sibling, and *adelpheos*, a male ego’s brother. Gates did not notice that *adelpheos* is specific to male egos: *kasignêtos* and compounds appear in Homer with male ego 53×, with female ego 11×; *adelpheos* 20×, always with male ego. The proportions do not change substantially if metrical formulae are excluded. The earliest attestation of *adelph(e)os* with female ego is Aeschylus *Septem* 1029. Neither term is specific to uterine siblings; indeed the traditional derivation of *adelpheos* from *delphus* “womb” is difficult in Homer, since wherever it refers to a half-brother in Homer, the brothers are agnatic (i.e., share a father, not a mother: *Il.* 8.318, 13.695, 15.334). Brothers are either *adelpheoi* or *kasignêtoi* but not both: AGAMEMNON and MENELAOS are *adelpheoi*, except for one vocative, while AJAX and TEUCER are *kasignêtoi*. The latter are half-brothers, but that cannot be the primary distinction: HECTOR and PARIS are *adelpheoi*, while Hector and HELENOS are *kasignêtoi*, and both these pairs are full brothers. In Archaic hexameter outside Homer, *kasignêtos* is the only term used. In later Greek *adelpheos* supplanted *kasignêtos* and became the standard term for all siblings.

These overlapping sibling terms are a problem: they are cognitively costly. In a similar situation among the Fanti in Ghana, Kronenfeld (1974, 500-501) explained the coexistence of a general sibling term and a term for male ego's sister on the basis of matrilineal inheritance from ego to the sister's children. It is tempting to see a similar, but patrilineal, mechanism in Homer. However, there are no clear examples of inheritance to a brother's son in Homer, and the Greek term for "nephew," *adelphideos*, is not in Homer and appears only once in the Archaic Period (in Alcman). The reciprocal term "father's brother" appears in Homer (3×), but in such a way as to exclude inheritance: it always refers to a god (POSEIDON), and appears with ego of either gender.

An alternative possibility is that the distinction has something to do with division of patrimony. In *Iliad* 15.187 *adelphheos* is used reciprocally for Poseidon, ZEUS, and HADES, in connection with the division of their patrimony. However, the case of Hector and Paris suggests that division of patrimony is not the primary characteristic of the *adelphheos* relationship.

2. *Patriliney, marriage, and kin groups.* Succession is patrilineal; hence the shortage of terms for a male's maternal and affinal relatives. When TELEMACHOS mentions that PENELOPE's parents and brothers are putting pressure on her to remarry (*Od.* 2.130-137; cf. 19.159), there is no suggestion that Telemachos can call on them for aid. He owes them the duty of providing for Penelope, but they are not obligated to him. By contrast, it is normal for a female to associate with her husband's female relatives (γαλόω τε καὶ εἰνατέρεις, 4× *Il.*).

Marriage is generally patrilocal: the wife moves into the husband's HOUSEHOLD. Some attempts to find traces of a prehistoric matriarchal system in Homer (e.g., Miller 1953; Hirvonen 1968; cf. Thomas 1973) have suffered from a tendency to conflate matriarchy, matriliney, and matrilocal marriage. The evidence for traces of a matriarchal system in Homer is slim; the only hint of matriliney is the inheritance of the rule of Lycia to SARPEDON, via his mother, rather than to GLAUKOS (*Il.* 6.196-210). There may be hints at matrilocality in (1) Menelaos' rule of SPARTA by his marriage to Helen; (2) the possibility that Penelope's marriage to one of her SUITORS may also confer possession of ODYSSEUS' household. Halverson (1986) has powerfully argued that the latter is a misreading, however. (PRIAM's family offers mixed evidence: his married sons live in or near his palace, but so do his married daughters: *Il.* 6.242-250; cf. 313-317.)

Marriage is exogamous: a *BASILEUS* is typically married to a woman from a different geographical region. In *Odyssey* 6, Odysseus' status as a visiting guest (*xeimos*) is enough to raise the prospect of marriage with NAUSICAA. Endogamous marriages are rare: except for the case of IPHIDAMAS (aunt-nephew marriage, *Il.* 11.221-226), we find them among the gods (Zeus-HERA, Hades-PERSEPHONE) or in the realm of fantasy (uncle-niece marriage in ALKINOOS' family, *Od.* 7.56-68; sibling marriage in AIOLOS' family, *Od.* 10.1-12).

Males are obsessively protective of their sexual control over both wives and slaves. Though marriage is mostly monogamous and has a degree of institutional recognition from society at large (*Il.* 18.490-493), sexual relations between a married male and concubines or slaves are apparently common. Even if a male does not have sexual relations with female slaves, he takes responsibility for their sexual behavior: Odysseus and Telemachos punish the sexual activity of the household's female slaves (*Od.* 22.417-472), and Odysseus is responsible for giving his male slaves a sexual partner (14.61-66). In the *Iliad*, this protectiveness is seen mainly in the competition between Agamemnon and ACHILLES over BRISEÏS, and between Menelaos and Paris over Helen.

Recently Gottschall (2008) has interpreted the Homeric depiction of male competition over women as a consequence of a shortage of females in the population in historical DARK AGE Greece.

This line of reasoning depends on what view is taken of the historical basis for the SOCIETY depicted in Homer. Many historians of the Dark Age work on the basis that the society represented is a historical one (e.g., Finley 1978 [1954]; Morris 1986; Sallares 1991), though exaggerated and distorted in some ways, and though there is no agreement over which period and geographical location are the basis for Homeric society. If one doubts, in particular, the principle that Homer represents a single, coherent society, it becomes difficult to use Homeric evidence for anything more than corroborative purposes.

The existence of larger kin groups than the nuclear family has been proposed at various times from Fustel de Coulanges onwards. Such a system would be based on clans rather than nuclear families; in such a system, for example, no firm distinction might be drawn between siblings and cousins, and clans may act corporately (like a Roman aristocratic *gens*). There is now a strong consensus against this idea (Finley 1978 [1954]; Sallares 1991, 197-198; Patterson 1998, 50-56, Donlan 1985 and 2007). The matter should not be oversimplified, however: many matters remain obscure, such as the connotations of terms like *genos* and *phrêtrê* in Homer. The meaning of the latter is unknown, but it is an important term: it is the only derivative of PIE **b^hrêh₂-tr-* “brother, brotherhood” in Greek, and a modified form of the word later came to refer to the Athenian phratry (see further Lambert 1993, 269-271 and PHRATRIES). It is also notable that division of patrimony is uncommon in Homer; where it appears, it goes hand-in-hand with significant migrations. Agamemnon and Menelaos arguably represent a divided patrimony; other divisions of patrimony are confined to GENEALOGIES and CATALOGUES (ASSARAKOS and ILOS (1), *Il.* 20.215-240; PELIAS and NELEUS, *Od.* 11.253-257; MELAMPOUS and BIAS, *Od.* 11.281-297 and 15.225-242). See Sallares (1991, 196-197 and 204) on division of patrimony in historical Dark Age Greece.

Recognition-scene

(*Homer Encyclopedia*, iii.733-735)

The term “recognition-scene” is used in one of two ways: (1) any scene where a character reveals his/her identity or acknowledges the identity of another; (2) a TYPE-SCENE, with recurring motifs that appear in a regular sequence, and which appears only in the second half of the *ODYSSEY* and enacts ODYSSEUS’ reunion with members of his family.

1. *Recognition in general.* Acknowledgment, revelation, disguise, and identity are prominent themes especially in the *Odyssey*’s narrative of Odysseus’ return. Odysseus’ identity as a successful returning hero is something that he controls and lays claim to: it is his choice to withhold his identity from, and later reveal it to, the PHAEACIANS, the CYCLOPS, the SUITORS, and his own family.

Revelation moments are therefore key turning-points. When Odysseus reveals his name to the Phaiakians, it is his first fully open contact with other mortals in years; when he reveals himself to the Cyclops, it leads directly to his prolonged absence from home. Conversely, his reputation for *dolos* “trickery” is reinforced by the control he exerts in withholding his identity, especially from Penelope in the late-night conversation of *Odyssey* 19. On two occasions only is recognition beyond any character’s control: when the faithful old dog ARGOS recognises his long-lost master at the door of the house (17.290-327), and when EURYKLEIA discovers his scar in the bath-scene (19.388-475)

(see SCAR OF ODYSSEUS). Later, however, Odysseus reasserts control over the scar and other symbols of his identity: he chooses when to use them in revealing himself to the herdsmen (21.221-225) and his father (24.330-344). On some occasions other characters use their control over signs to best him in *dolos*: ATHENE disguises the island of ITHACA to trick him (13.187-249) or exerts control over his appearance on his behalf (7.39-46, 13.397-403, 16.172-189), and Penelope extracts proof of his identity by using her control over the sign of the tree in their bedroom (23.173-206). On the power of signs in the *Odyssey* see further Stewart 1976; Murnaghan 1987; Goldhill 1991: 1-68; Henderson 1997; Vernant 1999.

Revelation and recognition are also important in the context of divine epiphanies in both Homeric epics. These are occasions where a god visits a mortal in disguise; if the mortal recognises the god (usually on the god's departure) it is simultaneously a sign of divine favor and of the mortal's greatness. The more easily the mortal recognises the god, the greater the mortal: TELEMACHOS fails to perceive Athena in *Od.* 16.160-161, though he recognises her elsewhere; at the other extreme, DIOMEDES is empowered by Athene to perceive ARES and APHRODITE on the battlefield (*Il.* 5.124-132), and in a crowded setting only ACHILLES perceives Athene (*Il.* 1.192-222).

On recognition from the perspective of Aristotelian *anagnôrisis*, see ARISTOTLE AND HOMER; see also Richardson 1983.

2. *Recognition in type-scenes.* *Odyssey* Books 13-24 contain fifteen recognition type-scenes. Gainsford 2003 gives an analysis of the type-scene's motif structure; on the type-scene's integration into the reunion of Odysseus and Penelope, see Emlyn-Jones 1984, Gainsford 2001. In the type-scene, too, symbols are important: in particular, the type-scene itself acts as a symbol of Odysseus' progressive reunion with his family members, one by one.

The type-scene involves up to three "moves," or smaller sequences of motifs. These are: a testing; a deception; and either a foretelling of Odysseus' return, or a recognition that he has returned. The foretelling and recognition moves share several motifs: though they accomplish very different things in terms of the advancement of the plot, they are formally a multiform of one another. The motifs include events such as "the addressee expresses disbelief that Odysseus will return," "the addressee wishes it were true nonetheless," "the addressee asserts that Odysseus is dead," and so on. Sequences of motifs sometimes appear in pairs: the whole scene structure may be reiterated (e.g., the foretelling scenes with EUMAIOS in *Od.* 14.185-408 and 453-533, or with Penelope in 19.44-251 and 252-316), or a move may be reiterated within one scene (e.g., the doubled recognition move in the last scene with Penelope, 23.96-116 and 153-204, or the deception move in the scene with LAERTES, 24.235-279 and 303-313). In three scenes we find an addressee testing and/or deceiving Odysseus at the same time that he tests/deceives them: Athene in 13.187-371, Penelope in 19.213-251 and 23.85-246.

In the testing move, Odysseus manipulates the addressee to determine their moral fiber and especially their loyalty to the *OIKOS* during his absence, with a view to making them eligible to be reunited with him. This is why there is no recognition-scene with the Suitors: with them Odysseus seeks vengeance, not reunion. In this respect recognition-scenes differ subtly from the so-called THEOXENIES seen in the *Homeric Hymns* (Kearns 1982; García 2002): in those, the addressee often fails to come up to scratch. Conversely, a minor character like Eumaios requires considerable bolstering to make him important enough for a reunion: Odysseus tests him three times in Books 14-15 (see further Rose 1980).

Testing also explains the motivation for the deception move: a false story is a characteristic way for Odysseus to gauge the addressee's reactions. At times the testing appears overblown, as in the recognition-scene with Laertes, where Odysseus' needling of his aged father has seemed perverse and cruel to some readers (see, e.g., West 1989; Scodel 1998). His testing of Laertes is explained—though not morally excused—by the formulaic character of the type-scene. As Athene comments (13.330-336), it is deep-rooted in his nature to test carefully before exchanging information; similarly it is deep-rooted in the *Odyssey* NARRATIVE to enact reunion through the formal type-scene, which involves testing.

Odysseus often ascertains the addressee's moral character by observing their performance as host in a formal HOSPITALITY scene. The recognition-scenes in Books 14-15 repeatedly show Eumaios to be extremely skilled at hospitality; similarly with Penelope and Laertes in their scenes (19.96-105, 24.297-301). Again there is a contrast with the Suitors, whose abuse of the hospitality system shows their vileness and their ineligibility to be united with Odysseus' family.

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