

In book XIX of Homer's The Odyssey, Eurycleia recognizes Odysseus from the scar on his foot, the scar connects his changed appearance to his past; representing a man's past created a permanent identity like the scar does, setting through skin and flesh.

by his scar, but is silenced

tearing sideways, and did not reach the bone of the man. Now Odysseus stabbed at him, and hit him in the right shoulder, and straight on through him passed the point of the shining spearhead. He screamed and dropped in the dust, and the life spirit flittered from him.

The dear sons of Autolykos were busy to tend him, and understandingly they bound up the wound of stately godlike Odysseus, and singing incantations over it. He stayed the black blood, and soon came back to the house of their loving father. Then Autolykos and the sons of Autolykos, healing him well and giving him shining presents, sent him speedily back rejoicing to his own beloved country in Ithaka, and there his father and queenly mother were glad in his homecoming, and asked about all that had happened, and how he came by his wound, and he told well his story, how in the hunt the boar with his white tusk had wounded him as he went up to Parnassos with the sons of Autolykos.

The old woman, holding him in the palms of her hands, recognized this scar as she handled it. She let his foot go, so that his leg, which was in the basin, fell free, and the bronze echoed. The basin tipped over on one side, and the water spilled out on the floor. Pain and joy seized her at once, and both eyes filled with tears, and the springing voice was held within her. She took the beard of Odysseus in her hands and spoke to him: "Then, dear child, you are really Odysseus. I did not know you before; not until I had touched my lord all over."

She spoke, and turned her eyes toward Penelope, wishing to indicate to her her beloved husband's presence, but Penelope was not able to look that way, or perceive him, for she had turned aside her perception. Odysseus groped for her, and took her by the throat with his right hand, while with the other he pulled her closer to him, and said to her: "Nurse, why are you trying to kill me? You yourself suckled me at your own breast; and now at last after suffering much, I have come in the twentieth year, back to my own country. But now that you have learned who I am, and the god put it into your mind, let nobody else in the palace know of it. For so I tell you straight out, and it will be a thing accomplished. If you do, and by my hands the god beats down the arrogant

suits, nurse of mine though you are, I will not spare you when I kill the rest of the serving maids in my palace.

Then in turn circumspect Eurycleia said to him: "My child, what sort of word escaped your teeth's barrier? You know what strength is steady in me, and it will not give way at all, but I shall hold as stubborn as stone or iron."

And put away in your heart this other thing that I tell you, if by your hands the god beats down the arrogant suitors, then I will give you the list of those women who in your palace have been mutinous against you, and tell you which are innocent.

Then resourceful Odysseus spoke in turn and answered her: "Nurse, why should you tell me of them? There is no need to myself will properly study each and learn of each. Leave it to the gods and keep the story in silence."

So he spoke, and the old woman went back through the hall, to fetch another basin, for all the water that had been there formerly was spilled. When she had washed him and anointed him with oil, Odysseus drew his chair closer to the fire, trying to keep warm, but hid the scar under his ragged clothing. Circumspect Penelope then began their talking:

"Friend, I will stay here and talk to you, just for a little. To be sure, it will soon be the time for sweet rest, for one delicious sleep takes hold of, although he may be sorrowful. The divinity gave me grief beyond measure. The day times I indulge in lamentation, mourning as I look to my own tasks and those of my maids in the palace. But after the night comes and sleep has taken all others, I lie on my bed, and the sharp anxieties swarming thick and fast on my beating heart torment my sorrowing self. As when Pandareos' daughter, the greenwood nightingale, perching in the deep of the forest foliage sings out her lovely song, when springtime has just begun; she, varying the manifold strains of her voice, pours out the melody, mourning Itylos, son of the lord Zethos, her own beloved child, whom she once killed with the bronze when the madness was on her;

so my mind is divided and starts one way, then another. Shall I stay here by my son and keep all in order, my property, my serving maids, and my great high-roofed house,

display her loyalty for her King

"I will"

"I will"

Argos + old nurse

only ones to recognize the King through his disguise

can't speak

can't get up

Argos

King

490

495

500

505

510

520

525

last identity

connect

own past

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