Angrily Misunderstood

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Polyphemus' Righteousness

Polyphemus, a Cyclops, is murdered by Odysseus, who portrays him as a brutish and inhospitable figure. The poet gives no information as to how Polyphemus were to act if Odysseus and his crew had not broken into his home. Since Odysseus is the one retelling the story, Homer glides over the fact that there was a possibility that his imprudent invasion of Polyphemus' home may have incurred the wrath of Polyphemus. Homer writes "Our party [Odysseus and some of his crew] quickly made its way to his cave but we failed to find our host [Polyphemus] himself inside...There we built a fire, set our hands on the cheeses, offered some to the gods and ate the bulk ourselves...." (Book 9 Line 240-260). Homer narrates Odysseus's revenge as a righteous quest to avenge his fallen comrades. This use of prose paints Polyphemus as a criminal. He is left in a pitiful state, permanently blinded. Polyphemus faces further humiliation when he tries to call for help. As a result of Odysseus telling Polyphemus­­­ that his name is "Nobody," when Polyphemus called for help, his explanation for who caused his injuries was nobody. This leads to the other Cyclopes to leave Polyphemus alone, thinking that it is a plague sent by Zeus. In the following sonnet, I re-imagine Polyphemus as an average man who is a Greek Cyclops that just wanted to defend his own home and property, but faced horrible injuries and humiliation at the hands of intruders who called this an act of retribution. Therefore, Polyphemus was a Cyclops who faced a fate he did not deserve.

What in the Underworld?

I Polyphemus, think I have no guilt  
Like an ant swarms in to defend its home,   
The trespassers steal in the hill it built  
One of them escapes and is left to roam

[The trespasser comes back with something redolent  
Fool of an ant is seduced by this wile ]  
Eye stabbed out, such a shaming detriment  
Not knowing what brute did this deed, so vile.

So I lay, full of great remorse and blind   
Embarrassed, not knowing that thief's true name.  
I do not deserve this hate from mankind.  
Why to the intruders I am to blame?

Why am I to be the child of failure?  
This game of life, I'm no more a player.