III THE *ODYSSEY*[1]

1. Must a sequel be inferior?[2]

Although it is theoretically possible (and has been asserted) that the *Iliad* followed the *Odyssey*, or that the two poems were composed quite independently, with no influence from one to the other,[3] majority opinion ancient and modern puts the *Odyssey* later, and assumes it to be in important respects a successor, even a sequel, to the *Iliad*. This position can be maintained in two main forms: those who believe in a single master-poet as the creator of both epics may assign the *Iliad* to Homer's youth, the *Odyssey* to his riper years (a position memorably expressed by Longinus); those who follow the ancient separatists can regard the *Odyssey* as a rival work, composed by a poet who immensely admired the *Iliad* but whose own poetic and moral concerns lay elsewhere. This view is now much more common. It may be difficult, however, in a tradition which involved so much use of conventional themes and formulaic material, to decide firmly in favour of common or separate authorship. Whichever view one prefers, the important point seems

[1] The standard commentary for scholars is now Heubeck et al. (originally published with a text, and in a more attractive format, in Italian (6 vols, 1981–6); now translated and published in 3 vols by Oxford University Press (Heubeck et al. 1988; Heubeck and Hoekstra 1990; Russo 1992). The first volume is the most valuable, with important introductory essays. See also Jones 1991, for Books 1 and 2; more advanced, Garvie 1994 on Books 6–8; D. Steiner 2010 on Books 17 and 18; R. B. Rutherford 1992 on Books 19 and 20. Jones 1988 is an unpretentious and informative guide to the poem aimed at readers of Lattimore's translations. For book-length studies see Clarke 1967; Thornton 1970; Eisenberger 1973; N. Austin 1975; Griffin 1987; Hölscher 1989; Tracy 1990 (rather elementary); Thalmann 1998; Louden 1999; and especially Saïd 2011. Dimock 1989 is a book-by-book reading, sometimes rather disappointing: see R. B. Rutherford 1991. Page 1973a is an enjoyable essay on the adventures of Books 9–12 (cf. Page 1955: ch. 1). Hölscher 1939 and especially Fenik 1974 are indispensable on the thematic structure. A good deal of the material in part 1 of M. L. Edwards 1987a concerns both epics.

[2] For a fuller treatment of the topics covered in this section see R. B. Rutherford 1991–3; also Heubeck 1954; Burkert 1960; Griffin 1987: 63–70; and (most fully) Usener 1990 (reviewed in Griffin 1991).

[3] Sen. *De brev. vit.* 13.2 refers to the argument over priority as one of the pointless debates of Greek scholarship. The narrator of Lucian's parodic *True History* meets Homer's ghost in Hades, and the bard denies having written the *Odyssey* before the *Iliad* (*Ver. hist.* 2.20); this at least implies a continuing controversy. Page 1955: 149–59 argued for complete independence, but has not generally been followed.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S001738351200040X Published online by Cambridge University Press

to be that the *Odyssey* is later, and that it is conceived as a poem on the same scale as the *Iliad*, but differing strikingly in content and ethos.

Some of the arguments for that conclusion are based on detailed allusion and apparent verbal reminiscences, which cannot be reviewed here, and which some scholars, doubtful of the possibility of allusion in an oral poetic tradition, would not accept. More substantial points include the following. (1) The scale of the epics seems to mark them out as unusual in the early period; the Cyclic poems, to judge by the figures that have come down to us, were much shorter. (2) The *Odyssey* adopts a similar technique to the *Iliad* in selecting a limited period from a much longer tale, while using digressions, recapitulation, and prophecy to bring more of that tale within its scope. Most obviously, Odysseus narrates his previous wanderings to the Phaeacians; Nestor, Menelaus, and Helen also recount some of the hero's earlier exploits. (3) The *Odyssey* looks like a sequel, in that many of the cast of characters of the *Iliad* reappear and act in characteristic fashion: Achilles is disillusioned and bitter, Nestor garrulous, Helen enchanting yet rather enigmatic. Moreover, a very efficient job is done of filling in the background, giving the audience at least in summary form some account of the events since the close of the *Iliad* (Longinus 9.12 makes this point, describing the *Odyssey* as the 'epilogue' to the *Iliad*). (4) A number of parallels in theme and structure can be detected: in particular, the culmination in the hero's long-delayed but bloodthirsty revenge against his enemy (Hector, the suitors), followed by scenes involving gentler emotions and resolution of tensions (in the *Iliad*, the funeral games and the encounter with Priam; in the *Odyssey*, the reunion with Penelope, and perhaps the coming of peace in Ithaca).[4] Other parallels which have been suggested include: (a) the absence of the hero from his proper sphere, and the difficulties this causes for his comrades or family; (b) the hero's rejection of an easier option, choosing instead a life which will fulfil his human potential (Achilles in the end rejects a long but inglorious life; Odysseus rejects immortality with Calypso); (c) the importance of family ties, and especially the father–son relationship, in both epics.

The relationship of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* can also be seen as an opposition. The former is a poem of warfare and death; the latter describes the aftermath of that war, and presents a society in peacetime,

[4] For the problems of the conclusion of the *Odyssey*, see pp. 97–102 below.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S001738351200040X Published online by Cambridge University Press

though disrupted by abnormal circumstances. The scene of the *Iliad* is deliberately restricted; the *Odyssey* is a poem of wide horizons (1.3, 'many were the cities of men that he saw, and he learned their minds'). The *Iliad* ends tragically, with the threat of death hanging over both Achilles and the people of Priam; in the *Odyssey*, the prospects are brighter, with the reunion of husband and wife and the restoration of order to the community of Ithaca. Above all, there is a strong contrast between the heroes of the two epics. On the one hand, the youthful, outspoken, quick-tempered, and glory-hungry Achilles, the supreme fighter; on the other, the older, cannier Odysseus, devious and subtle, skilled orator and cunning trickster. Many of the differences between the poems arise from the nature of the heroes. It is interesting that they are already seen in the *Iliad* as potential opposites, even antagonists (note esp. 9.312–3).[5]

There is a tendency, already evident in ancient criticism, to devalue the *Odyssey* in comparison with the *Iliad*.[6] Socrates in Plato refers to this kind of judgement: 'I have heard your father say that the *Iliad* is a finer poem than the *Odyssey* by as much as Achilles is a better man than Odysseus' (*Hp. mi.* 363b). Longinus notoriously thought it showed signs of an old man's weakening powers (9.13–15). But, given the differences already described, it should be clear that it is dangerous to judge the two poems by the same criteria. If the *Odyssey* follows on from the *Iliad* while also seeking to achieve something different, if indeed it represents a challenge or a transformation of Iliadic themes, then differences are what we would expect. We do not criticize a comedy because it does not live up to the criteria required of a tragedy. Happily, recent criticism has been much more sensitive to the special qualities of the *Odyssey* – its subtlety of characterization, the skill with which narrative situations are developed, the extensive use of irony and double meanings. The fascination of the travel books, full of magic, monsters, and mystery, has always captured the imagination. The *Odyssey* combines what we may call folk tales (not only scenes such as the adventures with a one-eyed giant, but the disguise of Odysseus and the test of the bow) with heroic mythology, and integrates both within a firm and explicit moral framework. The

[5] On Odysseus in the *Iliad*, see further Stanford 1963: chs. 2–5.

[6] The scholiastic tradition of commentary on the *Odyssey* is much thinner than that on the *Iliad*, and there are far fewer manuscripts and papyri. Nevertheless, F. Cairns 1990: ch. 8 attempts to argue that the *Odyssey* had a higher status in some periods of antiquity than the *Iliad*.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S001738351200040X Published online by Cambridge University Press

combination is more elaborate than that of the *Iliad*, where the fixed setting and wartime conditions impose a greater uniformity. Yet, in spite of the complex structure and diverse materials, the poem presents the reader with a vivid and coherent picture of an imagined world.

In some ways the *Odyssey* is a more self-consciously 'literary' poem than the *Iliad*.[7] Although the *Iliad* includes invocations of the Muse, Helen's weaving (a figure for the artist at work?), Achilles' solitary singing of the 'glorious deeds of men', and the magnificent description of the shield, the *Odyssey* goes further, including poets among the cast of characters (Phemius in Ithaca, Demodocus at Alcinous' court). In the final book, Agamemnon's ghost remarks that the virtue of Penelope will be acclaimed through the ages, while the treacherous Clytemnestra will be remembered with ignominy. This passage comes very close to self-reference (24.196–202). Moreover, there is storytelling elsewhere, as the heroes reminisce about the Trojan War or recount their experiences to the admiring Telemachus.[8] Odysseus himself is on several occasions compared to a bard (17.518–21; 21.404–9), and once a comparison of this kind includes a reference to the lying tales of strangers (11.364–9); although this is used as a contrast with Odysseus' narrative, it is a two-edged comment, since we see the hero spinning fictitious tales about himself with equal fluency.[9] Some ancient readers even seem to have taken the 'authentic' travel narrative, with which Odysseus entertains the Phaeacians, as another lying tale invented by the hero himself,[10] though Homer gives us no justification for this.[11]

More specifically, the songs of Demodocus described in Book 8 can be read as each contributing to an allusive commentary on the *Iliad*.[12] The first song refers to a quarrel between two Greek heroes, Achilles and Odysseus, at which Agamemnon rejoices (8.72–82). He reacts in this unexpected way, it seems, because he sees their quarrel as fulfilling a prophecy; but in fact the prophecy referred to his own much deadlier

[7] Cf. Goldhill 1991: 1–68; R. B. Rutherford 1991–3: 48–9; Segal 1995: chs. 6–8.

[8] See further Olson 1995.

[9] On Odysseus' lies, see Emlyn-Jones 1986; Most 1989; Goldhill 1991: 36–48; R. B. Rutherford 1992: 69–73; Kelly 2008c.

[10] Juv. 15.13–26; Luc. *Ver. hist.* 1. 3; Dio Chrys. 11.34; cf. Goldhill 1991: 47–8.

[11] Indeed, the narrative itself contradicts this interpretation as far as the Cyclops tale is concerned: see esp. 1.20–1 with 68–75; 5.282–90. That the hero may give us a slanted or self-glorifying view of these episodes remains a possibility: see pp. 122–3 below.

[12] See Marg 1956; Macleod 1982: 1–8, 1983; Danek 1998: 142–59; differently Nagy 1979: 42–58.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S001738351200040X Published online by Cambridge University Press

conflict with Achilles, still in the future. The motifs of Agamemnon's error, delusive prophecy, and the will of Zeus all recall important themes of the *Iliad*. The second song describes the love affair of Ares and Aphrodite and Hephaestus' successful trapping of the adulterous pair: Hephaestus pretends to go away on a journey but lays a snare and returns to find Ares and Aphrodite naked and entrammelled (8.266–366). The sensuous, immoral behaviour of the gods remind us of the love scene of Zeus and Hera on Ida (*Il.* 14.292–353), and more generally of the conduct of the gods in the *Iliad*. Moreover, looking beyond the song itself, we can see analogies between the plotting Hephaestus, who deceives others and unexpectedly returns, and the role of Odysseus later in the poem. Yet the contrast between divine and human worlds is equally important: Aphrodite is no Penelope, and the immortal Ares cannot be punished by death but only by ineffectual bargains over compensation.[13] The third song of Demodocus (8.499–520) describes the sack of Troy, so often anticipated in the last part of the *Iliad*. Here Odysseus breaks down and weeps over the past: the simile which describes his reaction compares him to a wife bereaved of her husband and dragged away by callous soldiers. This passage reminds us of the sympathetic treatment in the *Iliad* of the women of Troy, above all the widowed Andromache, and of the cruelty that accompanies the sack of a city. All of these scenes play a part in the overall movement of the Phaeacian episode, which helps restore the storm-tossed hero to his full heroic stature;[14] but they also suggest new perspectives from which to regard the world of the *Iliad*.[15]

All of this presupposes an audience alert to such ingenious allusiveness. Whatever sceptics may maintain for the *Iliad*, it is hard to deny that the *Odyssey* is composed with an eye to its predecessors – including the *Iliad* itself. Misdirection and deviation from predictable story-lines are even more evident than in the earlier poem, and it seems likely that the poet knew other versions of the main plot (perhaps even his own). A tantalizing reference in some manuscripts to a prospective journey by Telemachus to see Idomeneus in Crete is one such indication (1.93a). More significant are the suggestions of versions in which Penelope may have recognized her husband (as Amphimedon wrongly

[13] See further Burkert 1960; Braswell 1982; and the notes in Garvie 1994.
[14] Mattes 1958, esp. 129 ff.; reservations in Fenik 1974: 13–18. See also Garvie 1994: 26–30.
[15] Cf. G. Steiner 1967: 221: 'it reminds one of the performance of an air from "The Marriage of Figaro" in the last act of "Don Giovanni"'.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S001738351200040X Published online by Cambridge University Press

assumes in 24.127 and 147–9). Georg Danek has produced a lengthy and impressive book on this whole area, which through the detail and range of his examples demonstrates the sophistication of the poet and his audience.[16] It used to be maintained that *arte allusiva* was a phenomenon of the Hellenistic era, but more recently 'Alexandrian' allusiveness has been traced back as far as Euripides, even to Pindar; perhaps we shall find that Homer was the founding father here as in so much else.[17]

2. Themes, structure, ethos

The construction of the *Odyssey* illuminates the character and general interpretation of the poem. First, there is the delay in introducing the hero. Whereas Achilles was named in the first line of the *Iliad*, was described as summoning the assembly at line 54, and dominated much of the first book, in the proem to the *Odyssey* the hero is not named[18] but only periphrastically described; he does not appear until well into Book 5. Before that we are introduced to most of the other principal characters of the poem, and hear much about the hero's past prowess; the scenes in Ithaca also make clear the urgent need for his return.

Secondly, the poem falls easily into two halves, the first half ending at 13.92, where the Phaeacian ship speeds across the waves towards Ithaca, carrying the sleeping Odysseus: he is there described in lines which seem to echo the proem of Book 1. At this point we move from seagoing adventures to land; the wanderings are coming to an end, and the remainder of the poem will be principally concerned with the kingdom of Ithaca. The poet is consciously marking the half-way point of his tale. In particular, there are numerous points in which Odysseus' arrival and experiences in Phaeacia anticipate and prepare for the homecoming to Ithaca.[19]

[16] Danek 1998: see e.g. 106–111 on the tales of Helen and Menelaus in Book 4; 255–7 on the Argo reference at 12.55–72; 247–50 on Heracles in Hades; 293–6 on Theoclymenus' introduction at 15.223–56. See also the same author's shorter treatment in Danek 2002. More generally on the audience, see Scodel 2002 (more briefly in Scodel 2004).

[17] *Arte allusiva*: Pasquali 1942. Euripides: Dover 1971: lxvii. Pindar: N. J. Richardson 1985, and much subsequent work. Currie 2006 is a valuable survey of the issues.

[18] On the importance of naming and anonymity in the *Odyssey*, see N. Austin 1972; Fenik 1974: 5–60; Goldhill 1991: 24–36; de Jong 1993.

[19] Rüter 1969: 228–46; Rutherford 1985; Garvie 1994: introduction.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S001738351200040X Published online by Cambridge University Press

Thirdly, the poem's narrative technique is throughout more complex than that of the *Iliad*, especially as regards scene-changing.[20] The poet has constructed parallel narratives, supposedly beginning at the same point: Athena is sent to Ithaca to despatch Telemachus on his travels in search of his father, and Hermes is to be sent to Calypso's isle, to instruct the nymph to launch Odysseus on his journey home. In fact, the second part of the proposed plan seems to be delayed, and a further divine exchange is required in Book 5 before Hermes sets off. Later, there is a similar blurring of the time-scale when Odysseus is back in Ithaca and Athena needs to bring Telemachus home from Sparta.[21] The poet is attempting something more elaborate than we find in the *Iliad*,[22] involving the simultaneous development of events on two fronts; indeed, the return of the narrative to Ithaca during Telemachus' absence introduces a third (4.624–847). Here, as in the lengthy narratives of past events, a technique which can be found on a smaller scale in the earlier epic is extended so ambitiously as to alter its nature.

The first four books of the *Odyssey* are conventionally known as the 'Telemachy', a title which highlights the special role of Odysseus' son in the poem.[23] In essence, Athena stirs him from his inertia, forces him to confront the real danger of his situation, and sends him to Pylos and Sparta not because he will find his father there (though he does learn of his present situation), but to 'win glory' and learn from his father's peers. The ancient description of the Telemachy as the 'education' of Telemachus is suggestive, though not universally accepted by moderns.[24] By the time Odysseus is back in Ithaca, Telemachus is behaving as a king's son and heir should do, and will be a worthy ally in the final crisis; at the contest of the bow, he shows himself his father's true son by being *about* to bend the bow successfully, but then holding himself back (21.124–9). The Odyssean qualities of self-discipline and concealment are transferred to Telemachus.

From another viewpoint, the wanderings of Telemachus make it possible for the poet to introduce some of the heroes of the Trojan

[20] See further Hölscher 1939: 37–50; Heubeck 1954.

[21] Apthorp 1980b; Hoekstra in Heubeck and Hoesktra 1990 on 15.1–3.

[22] Scenes such as *Il.* 15.142–261 provide a partial precedent, but on a much shorter time-scale. See Zielinski 1901; Krischer 1971: 131 ff.; Whitman and Scodel 1981; Janko 1992 on *Il.*14.1–152.

[23] Odysseus' self-description on two occasions in the *Iliad* as 'the father of Telemachus' is abnormal procedure in that epic, and seems to imply that this relationship was already important in earlier poetry (*Il.* 2.260; 4.354). It is probably relevant that Telemachus is the only son of an only son (*Od.* 16.118–20).

[24] Schol. 1.93 and 284. For doubts, see S. West 1988: 54–5.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S001738351200040X Published online by Cambridge University Press

War, and to show their present situation: Nestor secure and prosperous, though still grieving for his son Antilochus, who died saving his father's life; Menelaus also settled in his kingdom, but still saddened by the loss of so many comrades in the war, and enjoying a somewhat ambiguous and puzzling relationship with the still-beautiful Helen. Although Odysseus is still missing, and his household increasingly fear that he must be dead, we anticipate that he will return at last, later than all the other heroes, and win a greater victory, a more successful homecoming, than any of the others. Here the comparison between Odysseus' household and that of Agamemnon is particularly important:[25] Agamemnon returned openly, and his rash confidence laid him open to the assassin Aegisthus; his queen was unfaithful, seduced by her lover during his long absence; his son Orestes has had to take revenge. The disastrous history of Agamemnon shows what might have happened in Ithaca, if Odysseus were less prudent and Penelope less faithful.[26]

The punishment of Aegisthus, mentioned in the first divine scene of the poem, sets the moral tone for the epic. In this poem the gods oversee human morality more consistently and austerely than in the *Iliad*. In general, the Olympians seem more remote from the activities of mankind: there are few scenes in which Zeus and the other gods hold counsel, and several deities prominent in the *Iliad* never appear (especially Hera, Apollo, and, less surprisingly, Thetis; Aphrodite appears only in Demodocus' song). The main plot really requires only Athena, Odysseus' constant supporter,[27] Poseidon, his persecutor, and Zeus, who arbitrates between them. Other deities such as Hermes occasionally figure, but the general effect is very different. The Trojan War was a major event which aroused the passionate partisanship of many divinities; Odysseus, a single hero though a pious man, is of little concern to the gods other than his patroness and his arch-enemy.

Nevertheless, the gods are of central importance in that the *Odyssey* shows us a world governed by an ethical code which the gods endorse. Wrongdoing will be punished; callous and impious deeds do not prosper. Zeus watches over beggars, suppliants, and others in distress; those who mistreat a guest under their roof can expect to suffer for it. These moral principles are commonly cited by the characters, and, in one of

[25] Note also the fate of the lesser Ajax, described at 4.499–511. See further Klingner 1944.
[26] S. West 1988: 56–7, 60; Olson 1990.
[27] Müller 1966.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S001738351200040X Published online by Cambridge University Press

the most striking speeches of the poem, Odysseus draws the moral from his success over the suitors, though forbidding the nurse to cry aloud in exultation over the dead:

> It is not holy to crow over dead men. These men were destroyed by the gods' dispensation and by their own wicked deeds, for they honoured none of the men on the earth, neither bad nor good, who came amongst them. So it is that they have met an ugly end through their own rash folly. (22. 412–15)[28]

Here Odysseus speaks as an instrument of divine retribution, rather than as a vengeful hero reclaiming his own property from upstarts. It has been claimed that passages like this show the *Odyssey* to be the product of a more advanced ethical or religious outlook than the *Iliad*, but these arguments must be viewed with caution.[29] The poet of the *Iliad* knows about gods concerned with justice (see p. 70), and the *Odyssey* shows a strongly Iliadic divinity in Poseidon, fierce in anger and conscious of his own status. Moreover, although Athena praises Odysseus before Zeus for his piety, she herself loves him for his lies and his deviousness (1.60–2 vs. 13.291–9 and 330–8).[30] The different emphasis in the *Odyssey*'s presentation of the gods may well result from the different type of story that the later poem has to tell. Both poems use the gods selectively and appropriately.

But the Olympian gods do not exhaust the supernatural elements of the poem. The *Odyssey* includes cannibal monsters, the bag of winds, the mysterious lotus-flower with its amnesiac effects, the Cyclops, the cattle of the sun, and a visit to the underworld.[31] Most of these magical or monstrous features occur in the narrative of Odysseus, which we have already seen to be less realistic than the other parts of the *Odyssey*. It is also important that they take place far away, beyond the familiar geography of the Greek mainland and Ionia: Odysseus leaves the known world behind as early as 9.80,

[28] For the novelty of the sentiments expressed see Finley 1979: 140–1. More generally on the morality of the *Odyssey*, see Redfield 1983, esp. 239–44; R. B. Rutherford 1986: 156.

[29] Dodds 1951: 28–37; contrast Fenik 1974: 208–30. For other views, see bibliography in S. West 1988 on 1.32 ff.; Kullmann 1985; Erbse 1986: 237–41; R. Friedrich 1987; Winterbottom 1989; Hankey 1990; Segal 1992; Allan 2006.

[30] Clay 1983 perversely argues that Odysseus' misfortunes are the result of Athena's anger with her protégé. This has not been generally accepted, but her book contains many good observations on Homer's gods.

[31] On most of these episodes, see Radermacher 1915; Page 1973a; also the works cited in n. 39 below.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S001738351200040X Published online by Cambridge University Press

and attempts to trace his wanderings on the map are inevitably doomed to failure.[32]

Given that the Telemachy and the Ithacan narrative are rooted more deeply in heroic society, it is natural to ask how successfully the poet has integrated the more magical adventures with the rest of Odysseus' experience. Perhaps the most striking point is the way in which this very difference of tone is exploited: Odysseus is presented as a man who must gradually learn to cope with unfamiliar challenges, which conventional heroic behaviour cannot overcome.[33] The claim to be conqueror of Troy cuts little ice with the Cyclops, and to kill the monster while he lies slumbering would be fatal, since Odysseus and his men have not the strength to shift the stone blocking the cave's mouth. Later, open defiance is useless against the immortal Scylla: Odysseus arms himself in vain, and the loss of six of his comrades to the monstrous creature is described as the most pitiful sight he has witnessed in all his wanderings (12.244–59, see p. 123 below). Odysseus, the untypical hero, must use his wits and cunning; he has the adaptability to deal with these otherworldly horrors. Among other things, he learns to conceal his identity, to observe and wait before risking self-exposure. The trick with the pseudonym 'No-man' is the first instance, but this clever stroke is thrown away when Odysseus reveals his identity to the Cyclops once safely out of the cave. In the second half of the poem he will further cultivate anonymity and false identities.

The eleventh book illuminates Odysseus' character and the meaning of the poem through the encounter with Odysseus' past. Homer uses the supernatural setting of the underworld for other purposes beyond the ostensible motive of seeking directions from Tiresias. Besides the moving exchange between the hero and his dead mother, a memorable scene introduces the ghosts of three heroes who perished at Troy or after returning from the war – Agamemnon, Achilles, and Ajax.[34] In ways none the less important for being implicit, these three men are contrasted with the living Odysseus, the survivor, who will go on to find his way home and reclaim wife, family, and kingdom. Particularly effective in this episode is the dialogue with Achilles:

[32] As already remarked by Eratosthenes ap. Strabo 1.2.15–7. See further Walbank 1979 on Polyb. 34.2–4; Luce in Stanford and Luce 1974: 118–38; Wolf and Wolf 1968; and see Haller 2011.

[33] Reinhardt 1948.

[34] For the importance of Agamemnon see p. 83 above; for the silent departure of Ajax see p. 121 below.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S001738351200040X Published online by Cambridge University Press

nowhere else in Homer is the contrast between their characters clearer, and yet here Achilles has moved closer to the viewpoint of Odysseus, for whom heroic achievement is not the only precious thing in life. For all the disillusionment expressed in Book 24 of the *Iliad*, Achilles' bitterness at his present state sounds a note of realism unheard in the earlier poem.[35] Book 11 is also of great importance in that it makes clear, through Tiresias' prophecy, that Odysseus' wanderings will not be ended when he reaches Ithaca: he has 'immeasurable toil, long and hard' still to come (23.248–50; cf. 11.119–37). The end of the *Odyssey* does not leave the couple to live 'happily ever after'.[36]

Another aspect of the wanderings may be described in cultural or anthropological terms.[37] The different beings and communities among whom Odysseus finds himself are characterized by strange practices and behaviour in comparison with 'normal' human society. The Laestrygonians do not farm (10.98); Calypso's island is wooded, and has a vine, but is not cultivated (5.63–74). The lotus-eaters do not have to farm or work, and they do not cook or eat bread, only the lotus-flower; the food they offer Odysseus' companions deprives them of an essential aspect of their humanity, memory (9.84, 94–7). The Cyclopes, as Odysseus explicitly comments, have no assembly place or laws and do not combine as a community (9.112, with context). In Polyphemus' cave other divergences from human social and ethical codes become manifest. Instead of feeding his guests, he eats them, and his offer of a 'guest-gift' is a grotesque parody of the institution: he will eat Odysseus last. Odysseus' wanderings are not just a series of randomly combined adventures but are subordinate to an overall conception, whether fully articulated or not, of the nature of human life; through his encounters with superhuman and subhuman creatures and their *mores*, Odysseus defines the limits and nature of the human condition. On this argument it is appropriate that the Phaeacians should represent his final port of call before his homecoming. They are human, but not wholly of our world: isolated from humankind, they enjoy an existence close to the gods, and sail magical ships. But

[35] See e.g. Jacoby 1933; Rüter 1969: 251 ff.; Wender 1978: 41–4; Griffin 1980: 100–1; Clay 1983: 108 ff.; Goldhill 1991: 104–6. Some aspects of the differences of outlook between the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad* are discussed further in R. B. Rutherford 1991–3.

[36] On the question of Odysseus' death (violent or peaceful?), see Hartmann 1917; Stanford 1963: 86–9; Heubeck in Heubeck and Hoekstra 1990 on 11.134b–7. An ingenious solution is offered by M. L. West in his commentary on the Epic Cycle, 2013: 307–15.

[37] For what follows see esp. Vidal-Naquet 1981.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S001738351200040X Published online by Cambridge University Press

in other respects they seem less than fully human, for their society is protected from war and they enjoy a carefree, hedonistic existence.[38]

The folk-tale element is not confined to Books 9–12, however. The themes of the wanderer's return and the woman perpetually weaving are both found in folklore; the contest of the bow has been paralleled in Indian epic.[39] As for the supernatural aspect, Menelaus in Book 4 describes how, near Egypt, he was obliged to ambush and capture the shape-changing prophet, Proteus; again, the remote and exotic setting makes this kind of tale more acceptable. Even in Ithaca Odysseus is magically transformed by Athena ('I shall make you unrecognizable to all men', 13.397), though the nature and degree of his transformation remain ambiguous.[40] This seems to be an example of a general tendency in the *Odyssey*: comparison with parallel versions suggests that Homer has somewhat reduced or underplayed the magical aspects, in order to preserve the sense that this is above all a human drama. Thus in Book 10 the magical plant *moly*, introduced as a protective charm against Circe's enchantment, is forgotten after Odysseus has received it from Hermes, and it is Odysseus' own strength of will that frustrates Circe (10.327, 329).[41]

Some reference has already been made to the importance of disguise and concealment,[42] and many of the *Odyssey*'s most striking episodes depend on a contrast between appearance and actuality. This has two major aspects: the failure to recognize a stranger or new arrival, and the concealment or suppression of one's true feelings, whether out of caution or to delay a moment of emotional outpouring. The first book already introduces this type of effect: Athena comes to visit Telemachus in disguise as a mortal trader; only gradually does she reveal some (false) information about herself; and only on her miraculous departure does he realize that she must be a divinity. Thereafter he must conceal this insight and her advice, revealing nothing to the suitors about his plans and new hopes. The poet is fascinated by the notion of the unrecognized stranger, the disguised guest whose identity

[38] Cf. Segal 1962, 1967; Fenik 1974: 54–5; Garvie 1994: 22–5. For the hedonism see esp. 8.246–9; Dickie 1983.

[39] Crooke 1898, 1908; Calhoun 1939; Page 1955, 18 n. 1; S. Thompson 1955–8: N681, H331; Zhirmunsky 1966; Hansen 2002: 201–11; S. West 2012b. For different analogies, see Burkert 1973.

[40] See R. B. Rutherford 1992 on 19.380–1 on the question whether Odysseus is recognizable or not.

[41] See further Radermacher 1915; Page 1973a: 55, 69, etc.

[42] See Fenik 1974: 5–60; Stewart 1976; Murnaghan 1987.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S001738351200040X Published online by Cambridge University Press

is relevant, even crucial to the conversation going on around him. This typical Odyssean situation is used with Telemachus at Sparta, with Odysseus in Alcinous' court, in the hut of the swineherd, and above all in his own palace. Multiple ironies result: while Athena in disguise talks with Telemachus of his father's return, Phemius has been singing to the suitors of the homecoming of the Greeks from Troy, and of the part which Athena played in that voyage. In the palace of Menelaus, the subject of Odysseus comes up even before Telemachus has been identified as the hero's son, and the young man is overcome by emotion: recognition soon follows. While Odysseus sits unrecognized in the halls of the Phaeacians, the minstrel sings of the quarrel between Achilles and Odysseus. In Eumaeus' hut, he hears talk of himself and his estates. Delayed recognition and ironic double meanings are typical of the *Odyssey*, and especially of its second half, once Odysseus is back among his own people.

Other aspects of these scenes are of equal interest. We see a king in beggar's clothes, kindly treated by poorer folk but spurned and mocked by the aristocrats of the kingdom, who should respect him. The sympathetic treatment of humbler and less heroic characters is another point in which the *Odyssey* offers something new and different from the *Iliad* (though it is true that common people and their lives do figure in similes and on Achilles' shield). The poet of the *Odyssey* does not confine himself to the situation in the royal household; he clearly takes pleasure in portraying his hero spending time in a simple rural settlement, sharing the life of his own herdsmen.[43] He also hints at the unhappiness and resentment of the Ithacan population. Eumaeus complains of the reduction of his master's property (14.91–108); Philoetius is so discontented that he is considering emigrating (20.209–25). Most touching of all is the little episode in which Odysseus, lying awake in the palace just before dawn, hears one of the women of the house, 'the weakest of them', struggling to finish her stint of grinding corn and cursing the suitors ('may this very day be the last and final time that the suitors eat their sumptuous meal in Odysseus' halls, those men who have worn my knees away with the wretched drudgery of this grinding!'). Odysseus rejoices at the prayer as a good omen; the passage makes clear that his victory will be a victory for the Ithacan people as well (20.110–21).

[43] Steiner's commentary (2010) on Books 17 and 18 includes much useful comment on this aspect of the poem.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S001738351200040X Published online by Cambridge University Press

The disguised Odysseus is in a position of unsuspected superiority over those around him: he can question and test them, sounding them out about their feelings towards himself and the prospect of his return. This testing procedure is applied not only to Eumaeus and the suitors, but to Penelope herself. It is in the scenes with her (as earlier, before he reveals himself to Telemachus) that he must work hardest to govern his own feelings.

> With these words he kissed his son, and shed a tear that fell down his cheeks and to the ground; until that moment he had held the tear back always. (16.190–1)

> As for Odysseus, his heart went out to his weeping wife, but beneath his eyelids his eyes kept as firm as horn or iron; he still dissembled, and showed no tears. (19.209–12)

Once Odysseus has identified himself to Telemachus, the young man must show the same self-control and avoid any outbursts of rage at the way the suitors treat his father. The fidelity and caution of Penelope, who will hardly believe that her husband is really home even after the slaughter, show that she too has the self-discipline appropriate to the wife of Odysseus.

In the *Iliad*, 'recognition scenes' are not needed: the heroes generally seem to have no difficulty identifying one another, and, if uncertainty exists, an enquiry swiftly yields a frank answer (as with Glaucus and Diomedes). Men in the *Iliad* deal with one another openly and in full awareness of each other's status and strength: even in the dubious *Doloneia*, Odysseus and Diomedes have no need to ask the spy who he is, but know him already (*Il.* 10.447). It is the gods who deceive, as when Athena tempts Pandarus to break the truce, or Zeus sends a lying dream to Agamemnon. In the *Odyssey*, where the mortals do not deal so honestly with one another, the characters dwell in a state of uncertainty. The suitors speak hypocritically to Penelope and Telemachus, and plan an ambush against the latter; Telemachus deceives his mother and steals away by night; Eumaeus was abducted by his nurse and sold into slavery; Troy was taken by a treacherous device, the Wooden Horse, to which the *Iliad* never refers. So too with the gods: even Athena normally disguises herself when visiting Telemachus or Odysseus, and in Book 13 she tests the hero's prowess before revealing herself. The world of the *Odyssey* has a devious and deceptive atmosphere which matches the wily personality of the hero, and with which he is uniquely suited to cope. We come to relish his deceptions and his fluent lying, to delight in the irony as he extracts

https://doi.org/10.1017/S001738351200040X Published online by Cambridge University Press

praise of himself from the wretched Eumaeus or provokes the hubristic suitors on to further crimes.

After deception, recognition.[44] Telemachus is recognized by Helen in Book 4; she also recalls how she once identified Odysseus when he entered Troy in disguise during the siege (4.240–56), an episode that seems to anticipate the scene in Book 19 with Eurycleia and the scar. In Phaeacia Odysseus finally reveals his identity at the opening of Book 9. But it is in the second half that the motif becomes more frequent: after the encounter with Athena in Book 13, there are recognition scenes with Telemachus, the dog Argus, Eurycleia, Eumaeus and Philoetius together, the revelation scene with the suitors, and the climactic scene in which Odysseus and Penelope are re-united, followed by a final pendant in Book 24, the encounter with his father. These episodes are not randomly distributed. There is a clear contrast between the scenes in which the hero deliberately reveals his identity (e.g. to Telemachus), and those in which he is accidentally exposed (especially with Eurycleia). On the one hand we see and share the hero's superior knowledge; on the other we feel that he is not infallible, but can make mistakes.

There is also a significant relationship between the scene in Book 13, in which Athena tries to make Odysseus give himself away, but unsuccessfully, and the later scene in which Penelope succeeds in upsetting and exposing her husband. Athena, though she deceived Odysseus, was unable to make him lower his guard. Only in Book 23, in the second encounter with his wife, is the hero finally and incontrovertibly out-tested and outwitted. Here it is Penelope, in her uncertainty and doubt, who conceives a test to see whether Odysseus is truly her husband (23.108–110, 113–14). Once before, in Book 19, she had attempted to do so (19.215), but Odysseus had side-stepped. In Book 23 we see the tables turned, the biter bit, when Penelope asks the old nurse to bring out their marital bed for Odysseus to sleep in that night. 'Thus she spoke, testing her husband' (23.181). At the thought of anyone having tampered with the immovable bed, around which he had built the palace, Odysseus bursts out with open indignation: his famous caution and self-control vanish. The scene thus trumps all Odysseus' previous testing and reverses Penelope's earlier failure. Her success surpasses even the wiles of Athena, the only other female who matches the hero in cleverness and guile.

[44] N. J. Richardson 1983; Cave 1988 (a superb survey); Gainsford 2003; Kelly 2012a.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S001738351200040X Published online by Cambridge University Press

Finally, the medium of recognition is appropriate in most cases. The scar is apt for Eurycleia and the other servants, since they were present when Odysseus came home with that wound; it represents their ties with Odysseus' youth. With Laertes, Odysseus appeals not only to the evidence of the scar but also to his patrimony, the trees in the orchard where they stand (24.336–44). With Penelope, it is fitting and symbolic that the crucial sign, the proof of Odysseus' return, should be his knowledge of their bed, a shared secret: like their marriage, it is deep-rooted, immovably set, unchanged by time.[45]

Although the *Odyssey* also has a public dimension, in its presentation of Odysseus as the ideal king and of Ithaca as a society disrupted because of his absence,[46] it is arguable that the central family relationships are more important, and that the sensitive presentation of human feelings, both masculine and feminine, goes beyond anything we find in the *Iliad*. This is one reason why many readers have found it an astonishingly modern work, a distant ancestor of the novel.[47]

3. Men, women, and goddesses[48]

One of the most notorious pronouncements in Homeric studies was the suggestion by Samuel Butler that the *Odyssey* was composed by a woman.[49] Whatever one thinks of the theory itself, it is certainly obvious that female characters are more prominent in the *Odyssey* than in the *Iliad*, where they figure principally as victims of the war, often passive and unspeaking. Chryseis has no opportunity to speak for herself, and Briseis speaks only once, and among her fellow captives, when she mourns the dead Patroclus, unheeded by Achilles

[45] See further Whitman 1958: 300–5; Wender 1978: 60–2. For a semiotic reading of Odysseus' bed, see Zeitlin 1995.

[46] Thornton 1970: ch. 6; N. Austin 1975: 162–71. This aspect seems to me understated by S. West 1988: 59–60; contrast R. B. Rutherford 1992: 13–15.

[47] Cf. Stanford 1963: note especially the well-known claim by Joyce that Odysseus was a truly rounded character, more so even than Hamlet or Faust (quoted in Ellmann 1982: 435–6; see also Ellmann 1974; Kenner 1980).

[48] The fertile field of classical scholarship on women cannot be sifted here: see e.g. G. Clark 1989; Peradotto and Sullivan 1984; and Helen King in *OCD* s.v. 'women'. On the Odyssean women, see Doherty 1995; also n. 59 below on Penelope.

[49] Butler 1897; see also Graves 1955. Butler's outlook is discussed satirically from a modern standpoint by Winkler 1990: 129 ff. Another enjoyable essay is Whitmarsh 2002.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S001738351200040X Published online by Cambridge University Press

(*Il.* 19.282–300).[50] It is of course true that the goddesses of the poem play a more active part: it would seem that the gulf between mortal and immortal is more important than that between man and woman – though we may ask whether this is equally the case in both epics. But in the *Odyssey* female characters are numerous among both mortals and immortals, and are important in both worlds. In some cases, indeed, the women are cleverer and more effective agents than the men: Helen is shrewder than Menelaus and quicker at recognizing Telemachus; Arete is in some ways more influential in Scheria than Alcinous (6.303–15; 7.53–77). Even on the divine level, Athena's quick-witted appeal to Zeus frustrates her absent uncle Poseidon.[51]

Special interest attaches to Odysseus' dealings and relationships with women. Two of these are divine, Circe and Calypso.[52] It seems that the poet has done his best to differentiate these. Circe, probably the older figure, is a sorceress and a mysterious being, who cannot be fully trusted and with whom the hero forms no real attachment in a year's sojourn. She turns swiftly from threatening witch to generous hostess, but when Odysseus declares that he must leave she raises no objection. Calypso is a more sympathetic and affectionate figure, devoted to Odysseus and anxious to keep him with her. Her emotions are more human: outrage at the import of Hermes' message, pique at Odysseus' preference for a mortal woman. The scene in which she tries for the last time to prevail on him to stay and accept a life of immortal ease is important in establishing Odysseus' heroic status, but is also a touching and delicate interchange, rich in understated pathos.[53] The gulf between humanity and divinity, tragically exploited in the *Iliad* (especially in the relationship of Achilles and Thetis), here becomes a source of personal sadness, as Calypso accepts abandonment with reluctance but nevertheless gives Odysseus the help he must have to depart. It is a pleasing touch that she does not reveal to him the command of Zeus, but leaves him to suppose that she has decided to let him go of her own accord. The theme of dissimulation, ubiquitous in the *Odyssey*, here enables Calypso to preserve her dignity.

[50] The admiration of Taplin (which in most respects I endorse) for the *Iliad* goes much too far when he claims that the sympathetic treatment of women in that poem make it *more* likely than the *Odyssey* to be a woman's work (1992: 32).

[51] See further Detienne and Vernant 1974.

[52] See especially Crane 1988, with ample references to older discussions.

[53] See also Griffin 1980: 59–61, esp. 59 n. 17.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S001738351200040X Published online by Cambridge University Press

There remains Nausicaa, the only human female with whom Odysseus has the opportunity for dalliance (in fact he behaves with perfect propriety).[54] Here again the proximity of the *Odyssey* to 'folk tale' is evident: a wanderer appears in a strange land, excels in contests, impresses the people of the country, and wins the king's daughter.[55] Of course, Odysseus tactfully evades the offer of Nausicaa's hand, though the reader is left in no doubt that she is attracted to him (6.244–6; 7.311–16). Some critics regret that the poet has denied us so charming a romance, but an erotic encounter with Nausicaa would have been a shocking and culpable misdemeanour on Odysseus' part,[56] on quite a different plane from the infidelities with Circe and Calypso: it is rash to deny a deity who offers such favours. The *Odyssey* poet is prepared to hint that Calypso was not an altogether uncongenial companion in the early years, and we must grant that the epic, like later Greek society, accepts a double standard for the sexual behaviour of men and women, but the importance of fidelity and family ties in this poem have their effect on the hero's character. There is some evidence that Odysseus' *amours* were more numerous in other sources.[57]

The character of Penelope is essential to the plot of the *Odyssey*, and she is clearly the most intriguing female figure in the poem: older descriptions of her as 'a healthy well-nourished lady…without any gift of intellect or strength of character' now arouse incredulity and outrage.[58] More recent discussions have laid much more stress on her devotion to her husband, her intelligence, the intensity of her grief, pathetically described in many passages, her attempts to assert her authority, and particularly her satisfying success in outwitting her husband.[59] Recognizing the constraints on her behaviour, as a woman in a

[54] See Garvie 1994: 29–30.
[55] Woodhouse 1930, H. Petersmann 1981.
[56] See esp. Stanford 1963: 51–5, against the sentimentality of Woodhouse 1930: 64.
[57] E.g. with the queen of the Thesprotians in the Cyclic *Telegony*.
[58] Woodhouse 1930: 201.
[59] The secondary literature is enormous (see n. 48). In general on the mythical figure of Penelope, see Mactoux 1975. On her presentation in Homer, see Büchner 1940; Harsh 1950 (an enjoyable but misguided attempt to prove that Penelope did indeed recognize her husband on his return); Amory 1963 (important for moving the debate on to a more subtle psychological level); Vester 1968; N. Austin 1975: ch. 4; Emlyn-Jones 1984; Russo's introduction to the English edition of his commentary on *Odyssey* 17–20 (Russo 1992: 3–16); Winkler 1990; Katz 1991 (deconstructive reading); Felson-Rubin 1987, 1993 (combining psychology and narratology); Doherty 1995; Murnaghan 1995; Zeitlin 1995; Felson and Slatkin 2004. I had my say in R. B. Rutherford 1992: 27–38.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S001738351200040X Published online by Cambridge University Press

male-dominated society, some critics see her as manipulating the men she encounters, using what tools she has and exploiting her very limited range of choices.[60] She can even be seen as enduring in her own sphere sufferings such as heroes undergo: in a simile at 4.791–3, she is compared to a lion, a comparison normally confined to male characters.[61] Whereas the analysts complained that Penelope's behaviour was inconsistent or inexplicable, readers now admit greater subtleties and see some of the more puzzling scenes as 'provocatively enigmatic'.[62] A more sophisticated model of the poet's allusive technique also helps the interpreter: traditional analysis detected an unhappy conflation of a version in which Penelope did recognize her husband with one in which she did not, but it is perfectly possible that the poet is consistently following one version while playing on his audience's awareness of another. This seems plausible in Book 19, where the poet, having brought husband and wife together in a secluded spot at night, seems to be leading us to expect a recognition (as in previous versions of the tale?); but, although a recognition does take place in this scene, it is inadvertent, and involves not the queen but the old nurse Eurycleia.

Problematic scenes remain, which cannot be discussed in detail here. Particularly prominent in discussion are the scene in which Penelope extorts gifts from the suitors, the episode in which she converses with the beggar Odysseus but (as is now rightly accepted) fails to recognize her husband (Book 19), the passage in which she narrates a dream that foreshadows the doom of the suitors (19.535–58), the proposal to hold the contest of the bow, initiated by Penelope with Odysseus' encouragement (572–81), and the final sequence in which she is awakened by the nurse and after initial disbelief eventually accepts that Odysseus has indeed returned (Book 23). Other puzzling passages include the lines in which one suitor is said to be 'the one who appealed most to Penelope' (16.397–8) and the speech in which she compares herself, in opaque and elliptical terms, to Helen.[63] All of these shed light on Penelope's personality and emotions: although in some passages we may be surprised or forced to modify our earlier impressions, the fundamental premises of the story – that Penelope is a faithful wife

[60] Winkler 1990.
[61] See further H. Foley 1978 on 'reverse-sex similes'.
[62] Felson-Rubin 1987: 82.
[63] 23.218–24, defended by Heubeck in Russo 1992 ad loc. but by few others. See Fredericksmeyer 1997.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S001738351200040X Published online by Cambridge University Press

and will re-marry only with deep reluctance, in order to protect Telemachus and his patrimony – should not be questioned.[64] The homecoming of Odysseus would be hollow if that were not so: he has sacrificed even immortality in order to come home to his wife, one who is 'like-minded'. Odysseus himself describes the ideal, in a much earlier passage which sums up several of the poem's fundamental assumptions: 'there is nothing nobler, nothing better, than when man and wife dwell together with their thoughts in common: that brings much grief to their enemies, joy to their friends; and they themselves know it best of all' (6.182–5). Their eventual embrace is marked by a simile which is applied to both parties: it starts from Odysseus and finishes with Penelope, and describes their joy in terms of the experiences of a shipwrecked sailor finding his way at last to shore:

> These were her words, and she roused still more in him the desire to weep. He cried as he held his beloved wife close to him, that clever woman. As land is welcome when spotted by swimmers whose sturdy vessel Poseidon has wrecked at sea, driven by storm and solid waves – few of them have escaped the grey sea on to land by swimming, and much brine is encrusted on their skin; but gladly they climb on to the shore, escaping from suffering – so glad was the sight of her husband to Penelope, and she still would not release his neck from her white arms' embrace. (23.231–40)[65]

The linking of Penelope with Odysseus' sufferings stresses not only their reunion but also the parallels between their different ordeals and achievements – both alone, both enduring, planning, and hoping. Penelope's exceptional qualities are further shown by the calmness with which she accepts that Odysseus must undertake a further journey to placate Poseidon. Past suffering and future parting serve to set their present joy in sharper relief.

The other important female in Odysseus' life is of course the goddess Athena. Theirs was already regarded as a special relationship in the *Iliad* (see especially 23.782–3), but in that epic she also befriends other heroes (Achilles and Diomedes). In the *Odyssey* her attention is focused on a single favourite, and the poet expands this conception to create something almost unique: a close friendship between man and deity. Sometimes she aids him without his knowledge, sometimes more openly; on the whole her interventions become more frequent in

[64] The cynical view that Penelope was not faithful to Odysseus was already current in antiquity: see e.g. Hor. *Sat.* 2.5.78–83; Sen. *Ep.* 88.8 (the latter passage also refers to the debate about whether she recognized her husband or not).

[65] For other parallels between husband and wife, see R. B. Rutherford 1986: 160 n. 77.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S001738351200040X Published online by Cambridge University Press

the second half. Her interaction with others, even with Telemachus, is more distant, often deceptive: thus in Book 15 she misleads Telemachus with tales of his mother's eagerness to marry, playing on the young man's fears. In Book 18 she puts an impulse in Penelope's mind, and the queen responds without really understanding what she is doing and why. But with Odysseus she is affectionate and reassuring, even teasing, as shown above all in Book 13, where the basis of their relationship is most explicitly defined. She cares for him because they are alike:

> 'But come, let us talk thus no longer; the two of us both know our tricks – you excel all mankind in stratagem and well-chosen words, while I am renowned among the gods for my wiles and wisdom. Nor did you yourself discern in me Pallas Athene, the daughter of Zeus, I who am always beside you and guard you in all your trials. It was I who endeared you to the Phaeacians; it is I again who am here now to weave a plan together with you...' (13.296–303)

Although there is doubtless an extra frisson to their relationship because they are male and female, the respect with which Odysseus always speaks to her and the traditional chastity of Athena reduce the significance of this factor: this is a partnership based on intellectual equality. We may contrast both the relationship between Aphrodite and Paris in the *Iliad*, where there is no common ground other than their sensual natures, and the moving portrayal of Hippolytus' devotion to Artemis in the *Hippolytus*, where there is no physical or even visual contact, and indeed no equality: favoured for a time, Hippolytus is left behind to die.[66]

It has sometimes been felt that the constant support and advice of Athena, especially in the second half of the poem, diminishes the triumph of the hero.[67] Even with her encouragement, however, he has still to execute his intentions, and it is notable that, although she promises her support against the suitors, she gives him no guidance as to how he should win a position of advantage over them. His fluent lying and clever coaxing of help or comforts out of Eumaeus and others need no divine backing. Moreover, in the actual slaughter she abstains from intervention until it is no longer needed: withdrawing from the battle, she observes it from the roof of the hall (22.236–8). In the end she

[66] See esp. Eur. *Hipp.* 85–6, 1389–1401, 1437–41 (Vernant 1965: ch. 14). Even the Odysseus–Athena relationship is given something of this chilly remoteness in the prologue to Sophocles' *Ajax*.

[67] See e.g. Kirk 1962: 365, 378–9.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S001738351200040X Published online by Cambridge University Press

holds up the aegis and sends the suitors running in panic, but by that point the hero and his allies have already gained the upper hand. This is consistent with the practice of the *Iliad* and with later Greek attitudes: the gods help those who are prepared to help themselves.[68]

In one notable respect Athena has the advantage over Penelope: as a goddess, she can take any form she wishes, and in masculine disguise as Mentes or Mentor can play a part in the affairs of Ithaca, organizing a ship for Telemachus and performing other tasks where a woman would be ignored or sent back to her home.[69] As in Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, the goddess who favours the male in all things restores order to a patriarchal society: 'the king's in his palace, all's right with the world'. The masculine personality of the warrior-goddess means that she is even at home in war. Although such qualities were attributed to the Amazons, who figured in the epic *Aethiopis*, the conventions of Greek family life make it impossible for Penelope to participate in the governing of Ithaca or in state affairs: the most that is possible is for her husband to *compare* her 'renown'[70] with that of a virtuous king whose land is prosperous and governed justly (19.108–14).[71] It is striking that the word *kleos*, so closely associated with heroic prowess, should be used to describe the passive and domestic virtue of Penelope; but her virtue is still assimilated to, and subordinate to, that of a man, ultimately her husband. Hence for Penelope to have her husband home and her long years of fidelity rewarded means the end of the story. Whether the passage in which husband and wife retire to bed together also marks the end of the epic will be discussed in the next section.

4. Endings

For the most part it has been assumed above that we are considering a poem which draws upon older sources and traditional material but which is itself shaped by a single mind, a 'monumental poet' who

[68] Cf. Fraenkel 1950, note on Aesch. *Agam.* 811; Mikalson 1983: ch. 2.

[69] For comparison between Athena and Penelope, see also Murnaghan 1995.

[70] 19.108, *kleos*; and cf. 19.128 = 18.255. See further H. Foley 1978; Segal 1983; A. T. Edwards 1985: 78–82; Goldhill 1991: 93–108, arguing for 'revisionist' use of the vocabulary of fame.

[71] That Arete does have some say in these matters is another oddity about the Phaeacian community; but it is notable that in fact she does little to justify her reputation, and that when she does initiate a proposal she is told firmly by Echeneus that 'On Alcinous here depends deed and word' (11.346; see also Finley 1979: 89; Garvie 1994 on 6.310–15).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S001738351200040X Published online by Cambridge University Press

may or may not also be the composer of the *Iliad*. Minor interpolations, sometimes identified by awkwardness or by poor manuscript attestation, do certainly occur, but these are normally a matter of a few lines at most. Far more significant and disquieting are the doubts which have overshadowed the conclusion of the *Odyssey*, from 23.297 to the end of Book 24, ever since antiquity.[72] This section embraces the conversation which husband and wife hold in bed together (including an account of his travels); the descent of the suitors to the underworld, where they find Agamemnon and Achilles in conversation, and where the scene ends with Agamemnon congratulating the absent Odysseus on his good fortune, and praising Penelope; the episode in which Odysseus visits his aged father Laertes, tests him in the by now familiar manner, and eventually reveals himself once Laertes is helpless with grief; and, finally, the brief and abortive attempt of the suitors' kinsmen to retaliate against Odysseus and his followers. In the last episode of the poem, in a strangely accelerated narrative, Athena and Zeus impose peace on Ithaca. A full review of the problems cannot be given here, but the main issues and their implications should be aired.

The Alexandrian scholars Aristophanes and Aristarchus judged 23.296 to be the 'end' (*telos*) or 'limit' (*peras*) of the *Odyssey*.[73] Arguments that they meant by this not the textual conclusion but the climax or 'goal' of the action are more persuasive with *telos* than with *peras*, and should probably be abandoned.[74] It is much less clear whether they judged the remainder of the poem spurious on textual or internal grounds.[75] Internal difficulties certainly exist, though one does sometimes wonder if modern scholarship would have pursued these with the same ruthlessness if the ancient testimonies had not given them this lead. Further complexities are introduced by modern critical studies of closure, the ways in which literary works reach their

[72] See Heubeck in Russo 1992 on 23.296 for basic arguments and bibliography. The modern assailants are best represented by Page 1955: ch. 5 (overstating his case, and with many purely rhetorical arguments); S. West 1989; Oswald 1993. Defenders include especially Heubeck in his commentary in Russo 1992; Erbse 1972: 97–109, 166–244; Moulton 1974; Stössel 1975; Wender 1978.

[73] Their views are quoted by the scholia and Eustathius; see e.g. S. West 1989: 118 for the relevant passages.

[74] So Pfeiffer 1968: 175; see now S. West 1989: 118–19.

[75] S. West 1989 argues that they did not even think it spurious, but saw it as a separate lay by the poet. This does not, however, much affect the modern debate.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S001738351200040X Published online by Cambridge University Press

conclusion.[76] Comparative study strongly suggests differences between ancient and modern taste in these matters; and we must also ask whether the same criteria should be applied to works intended for oral performance.[77]

The arguments for condemning the section are of different kinds. First there is linguistic usage: the last part of the poem contains many odd forms or unique and difficult expressions which cast doubt on its being authentic work of the main *Odyssey* poet. Page's exposition of these was severely criticized by Erbse, but Stephanie West, in an important study, has shown that some recalcitrant cases still lack justification and that certain phrases are hard even to understand. Secondly, there are arguments from religious belief, especially about the underworld and the afterlife. The debate here is closely related to discussion of Book 11, Odysseus' own visit to the land of the dead, which has itself been found controversial.[78] Are the dead conscious or not? Can they converse with one another? Can a dead man enter the underworld before being buried, as the suitors seem to? How coherent is Homer's picture of the afterlife? How consistent should we expect it to be, given that this is imaginative literature and that we find inconsistencies elsewhere in the religious 'system' of the epics? After over-rigid analyses in the past, the recent tendency has been to allow for much more variety and flexibility in Homer's conception of Hades,[79] but Sourvinou-Inwood has thoroughly re-examined the question and insists that the picture in Book 24 must derive from a later period than that of Book 11 and the rest of the *Odyssey*.[80] This conclusion may be contested, but her argument needs to be confronted. Some would no doubt wish to reply that inconsistency and vagueness of

[76] B. H. Smith 1968 is a classic treatment in English literature; for classicists, D. P. Fowler 1989 is seminal; see also D. P. Fowler 1997 and the other essays in Roberts et al. 1997, and S. West 2007.

[77] See Kelly 2007a, esp. 384–7 on the *Odyssey*. He argues that early epic characteristically concludes with a kind of diminuendo. One may still feel that the poet of the *Odyssey* might have achieved this effect more skilfully.

[78] See further Petzl 1969; Sourvinou-Inwood 1986; S. West 2012a.

[79] Older views e.g. in Rohde 1925: ch. 1; Page 1955: 21–7. More flexibility: e.g. Vermeule 1979: 29, 34–5, 218 n. 49 (cf. S. West 1989: 138 n. 51); see also M. Clarke 1999, esp. chs. 5 and 6.

[80] Sourvinou-Inwood 1995: ch. 2, esp. 94–107. In the first edition of this survey, fresh from a reading of her work, I endorsed this conclusion, but I am now inclined to treat it with more reserve. For more recent discussions, see M. Clarke 1999: 225–8; Albinus 2000: 67–86; Tsagarakis 2000: 110–19.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S001738351200040X Published online by Cambridge University Press

conception are what we would expect when the poet is dealing with the mysteries of life after death.

Thirdly, and perhaps most important for non-specialists, there is the question of poetic quality. Here of course there is much scope for disagreement. Most people would agree that the scene in the underworld (leaving aside the eschatological difficulties) is a valuable episode: it shows us Odysseus' fellow-heroes once more, and emphasizes their miserable state, whether their deaths were glorious (Achilles) or humiliating (Agamemnon): death is the same for all. Their misfortune is contrasted with Odysseus' triumph, now reunited with wife and son and victorious over his foes. The episode also enables Penelope to be given her due. As for the scene with Laertes, frequent references earlier in the poem have led us to expect an appearance of Odysseus' father,[81] and this is reinforced both by the importance of the father–son theme in the poem and by the potential contrast with the *Iliad*, in which Achilles will never again see his old father and must be content with the momentary union with Priam, an enemy but a mirror image of Peleus.[82] The way in which Odysseus tests and plays games with his wretched father has outraged many critics, but it should not surprise those who recognize that the hero is not simply a paragon of gentlemanly virtues.[83] By now deception has become second nature to him; nevertheless, as he observes Laertes from a distance he does hesitate, as he never has before, and considers a more open approach. It is consistent with both his character and the thematic tendencies of the poem that he should choose the more devious and potentially more painful option.[84]

The first and last of the four sections are the least satisfactory. Of these the first, in which Odysseus and Penelope recount their stories to one another, is a natural and fitting consequence of their reunion (and storytelling is, of course, one of the recurring activities of the poem), but the way in which it is narrated is somewhat banal.[85] Far

[81] S. West 1989 argues that these are all interpolated by the author of this section, but this is not the most persuasive part of her article.

[82] See Rutherford 1986: 162 n. 87.

[83] See Walcot 1977.

[84] Hence I do not agree with S. West 1989: 125, who writes that 'We should of course all like to avoid this conclusion' (i.e. that Odysseus is now habitually a deceiver).

[85] Wender 1978: 15–8 attempts to defend it, but succeeds only in some small details. S. West 1989: 121 points out that Odysseus' narrative here (24.310–43) is the longest piece of indirect speech in all of Homer (though see Dover 1968: 96 for the limited value of such arguments). In view of the almost universal modern dissatisfaction with this passage, it is amusing that Aristotle appears to have considered it a model of concise narration (*Rh.* 3.16.7).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S001738351200040X Published online by Cambridge University Press

more serious are the charges brought against the conclusion, in which the suitors' relatives summon an assembly, seeking to arouse the community to outrage over the slaughter. Medon and Halitherses warn them not to challenge Odysseus, and they proceed to battle despite this warning. A brief moment of tension is followed by the miraculous charge of Laertes, momentarily restored to youthful strength; in a few more lines the conflict comes to an end, much to Odysseus' satisfaction, and Athena brings harmony to the community. What is peculiar here is that all of the elements seem appropriate and potentially interesting: it is the cursory and over-hasty execution that fails to satisfy, particularly after so leisurely an episode at Laertes' farm. It is almost as though this last section, and in particular the last sixty lines, were a rough sketch which was awaiting further elaboration. Neither the supporters nor the opponents of the Continuation have adequately explained this strange unevenness of style.

Two passages earlier in the *Odyssey* seem to prepare for the events of Book 24, making reference to the danger from the suitors' kinsmen and the prospect of Odysseus visiting his father (20.41–3: 23.137–8). Those who see the Continuation as a later composition must argue that these lines too are interpolated, or that they refer to an earlier version which also contained these events. Defenders of the Continuation often claim that it picks up ideas or develops themes present in the earlier part of the epic, but analysts can dispose of this argument with ease, by maintaining that this is obviously what an imitator would do. Thus the scene in the Ithacan assembly clearly builds on Book 2 (where Halitherses also appeared), but that does not guarantee the authenticity of Book 24. Similarly, the second underworld scene develops themes of Book 11 (especially the superiority of Odysseus' career to that of Achilles), but that need not mean they are by the same hand.[86]

Perhaps the most substantial question arising from this debate is whether the *Odyssey* originally ended with Odysseus and Penelope in bed together, in which case the poet is treating the continuity of their marriage as all-important, or with the aftermath of the slaughter, with potential civil war in Ithaca averted – clearly a more public and political finale. The answer will be different depending on which passages the critic selects and emphasizes from the earlier stages of the poem. But it is hard to believe that nothing was said about the reclaiming of the

[86] Thus Sourvinou-Inwood 1995: 101.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S001738351200040X Published online by Cambridge University Press

kingdom, though some have maintained that epic values would not necessarily require an avenging hero to give any justification for his actions, and that it was only in the later stages of the tradition, when kingship was giving way to aristocratic government, that the need was felt to provide some statement of how the community of Ithaca reacted to the extermination of 110 suitors. In the past I have generally felt that the good parts of the Continuation outweighed the bad, but some of the recent discussions have made me feel that it is more likely to be the work of a later poet. Nevertheless, I continue to think that the tale is unlikely to have ended as Aristarchus and Aristophanes maintained, and that, since it is necessary to take their statement seriously, we should allow that something has gone wrong in the tradition and that an older conclusion has been either lost or reworked, perhaps abbreviated in its final stages. The exact process involved is of course beyond us, but there has clearly been some thought given to the integration of the ending, in view of the anticipatory passages already cited. Hence the tenth book of the *Iliad* is not truly parallel,[87] for the most striking fact about that book is that it can be removed with no adjustment to the surrounding text.

If the Continuation is rejected, then the 'authentic' *Odyssey* reaches its climax with the violent revenge of the hero, at his most Iliadic, upon his enemies and on those who have betrayed him;[88] it then proceeds to a conclusion in a gentler and more subtle style, with dialogue more significant than action, in the recognition and reunion of husband and wife. It thus shows Odysseus supreme in battle but also successful in peace. Although Penelope would be denied the words of commendation which she receives from Agamemnon in Book 24, the sequence of recognitions would end with hers, in which she emerges as the 'victor', and the poem would end with celebration of their marital union. Debate over the merits and status of the existing conclusion will no doubt continue, but 23.296 is an ending we may be able to learn to live with.

[87] See S. West 1989: 120. On the *Doloneia*, see p. 35 above.

[88] Modern readers are repelled by the mutilation of the disloyal Melanthius (on which see Davies 1994) and by the hanging of the maids. By contrast with the momentous significance which the *Iliad* attaches to the issue of mutilation (Segal 1971b), the *Odyssey* seems remarkably casual (cf. G. Murray 1934: 126–8, who surely misinterprets the tone of 22.473). Perhaps one simply has to accept that Homer's audience would have thought any punishment justifiable for such treachery within the household.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S001738351200040X Published online by Cambridge University Press