

## THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE ODYSSEY

rursus quid virtus et quid sapientia possit  
utile proposuit nobis exemplar Ulixen,  
qui domitor Troiae multorum providus urbis  
et mores hominum inspexit, latumque per aequor,  
dum sibi, dum sociis reditum parat, aspera multa  
pertulit, adversis rerum immersabilis undis.  
Sirenum voces et Circae pocula nosti;  
quae si cum sociis stultus cupidusque bibisset,  
sub domina meretrice fuisset turpis et excors,  
vixisset canis immundus vel amica luto sus.  
nos numerus sumus et fruges consumere nati,  
sponsi Penelopae, nebulones, Alcinoique  
in cute curanda plus aequo operata iuventus,  
cui pulchrum fuit in medios dormire dies et  
ad strepitum citharae cessatum ducere curam.

(Horace, *Epistles* i 2.18–31)

So let us now turn from the vigour and combat of the *Iliad* to the *Odyssey* with its *ethos*. For that poem too is not altogether devoid of wisdom (ἄφιλοσόφητος).

([Heraclitus], *Homeric Allegories* 60)

THE ancient critics are well known—some might say notorious—for their readiness to read literature, and particularly Homer, through moral spectacles.<sup>1</sup> Their interpretations of Homeric epic are philosophical, not only in the more limited sense that they identified specific doctrines in the speeches of Homer's characters, making the poet or his heroes spokesmen for the views of Plato or Epicurus,<sup>2</sup> but also in a wider sense: the critics demand from Homer not merely entertainment but enlightenment on moral and religious questions, on good and evil, on this life and the after-life. When they fail to find what they seek, they follow Plato and find him wanting.<sup>3</sup>

In modern criticism of Homer this approach has not been altogether abandoned, but it has perhaps become less prominent. In the case of the *Odyssey*, the moralistic reading of Odysseus' character, well exemplified in the lines of Horace's poem quoted above, would probably be met with considerable scepticism today. Horace's reading of the *Odyssey*, it may fairly be said, is too limited and one-sided to do justice to the complex character of the hero, in whom we find not only wisdom, prudence and endurance, but also curiosity, vanity and above all a delight in crafty tricks and lies. Odyssean criticism seems not yet to have reconciled the poem's dominantly moral tone and the moral status of its hero. It is a commonplace that the *Odyssey* as a whole is, much more than the *Iliad*, a moral tale, in which, for example, the unjust man meets with the censure

A slightly shorter version of the text of this paper was read to a meeting of the Oxford Philological Society in January 1985. Since then I have attempted to take account of some of the criticisms and suggestions made by my audience. I am grateful to Nicholas Richardson and Oliver Taplin for more detailed advice.

<sup>1</sup> See further e.g. Pl. *Rep.* x 620, Antisth. *frr.* 51–62 Caizzi, Sen. *Const. Sap.* 2.1, Dio Chr. *Or.* lv, lvii, Plut. *de audiendis poetis*, M. Aur. xi 6, Max. Tyr. *Or.* xxvi Hobein, [Plut.] *de vita et poesi Homeri* 133–40, etc., [Heracl.] *Alleg. Hom.* 70 and *passim*. For the Stoics, see esp. P. de Lacy, *AJPh* lvi (1948) 241–71. For a very full and thorough history of such criticism see F. Buffière,

*Les mythes d'Homère et la pensée grecque* (Paris 1956), esp. 365–91; also W. B. Stanford, *The Ulysses theme*<sup>2</sup> (London 1963), esp. ch. ix; H. Rahner, *Greek myths and Christian mystery* (Eng. tr., London 1963), esp. ch. viii.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. esp. Sen. *Ep.* 88.5–8, with A. Stuckelberger's commentary; early instances cited by him include Anaxag. A1 D.-K., Pl. *Prt.* 316d.

<sup>3</sup> Pl. *Rep.* x 607b 'there is an ancient quarrel between poetry and philosophy'; and for Homer as the poet *par excellence* see 595b, 607d1, and *passim*. Further, see Plut. *aud. poet.* 15c, 16a–d, 17de, etc. (with E. Valgiglio's notes on 16a–b); [Heracl.] *Alleg. Hom.* 1 πάντα γὰρ ἠσέβησεν, εἰ μηδὲν ἠλληγόρησεν; [Longin.] 9.7 *int.*

and punishment of the gods, whereas the suppliant, the stranger and the guest-friend are under their protection.<sup>4</sup> But how far are these and other ethical principles adequately represented and championed by the hero of the poem? To put the question another way, is Odysseus too rich and complex a character for the poem to accommodate?

What is here being suggested is that, although moral interpretation of the *Odyssey* is familiar and even orthodox in modern critical writings, the insight of the ancients, that such morality must be embodied in or illustrated by the hero himself, has been lost. This parting of the ways is disturbing not only because critics such as Horace or Plutarch or the Stoic allegorists merit a hearing, nor even because of the influence which the concept of Odysseus as a moral example, a symbol of man's voyage through life and quest for wisdom, has had upon later times;<sup>5</sup> it is also hard to deny that the moral reading of Odysseus' character and adventures gains considerable support from the poem itself. It is neither frivolous nor fanciful to observe that Odysseus, in abandoning Calypso for Penelope, exchanging eternal pampered passivity for a real and active mortal existence, shows exceptional self-denial and devotion.<sup>6</sup> Allegory, one of the chief weapons of the ancient critic, also has its origins in poetry, not least that of Homer himself;<sup>7</sup> and it may be seen, just below the surface, in episodes such as the escape from the Lotus-Eaters and the Sirens, or in the transformation of Odysseus' men by Circe. The trials and labours of Odysseus, like those of Heracles, were seen by the ancients as both a moral training and a testing-ground for virtue;<sup>8</sup> though we may not wish to endorse the specific allegories which they detected, it remains true, I think, that they saw something fundamental to the poem, and as important for its design and structure as for its ethos. Furthermore, the poet often makes Odysseus himself voice moral warnings and describe the condition of man: many of the themes of the poem are summed up, for example, in the powerful speech in which he cautions the decent suitor Amphinomus (xviii 125 ff.). The hero is also the exemplar of the good king, who is a father to his people (ii 230 ff., cf. 47; iv 690 ff., v 7 ff., xix 365 ff.).<sup>9</sup> When he comes home, as one

<sup>4</sup> On the gods see esp. nn. 13–18 below. On the institution of ξενία, see M. I. Finley, *The world of Odysseus*<sup>2</sup> (London 1980) 95–103; see e.g. *Od.* iv 169 ff., ix 125 ff., 267–80, 477–9, xiv 56–9, 402–6. Guests and suppliants associated: e.g. viii 546 ἀντὶ κασιγνήτου ξείνος θ' ἰκέτης τε τέτυκται. On supplication in the *Odyssey*, see J. Gould, *JHS* xciii (1973) 74 ff., esp. 80, 90–4. The pattern of hospitality and generosity granted (as by Nestor, Menelaus, the Phaeacians and Eumaeus), denied (as by the Cyclopes, the Laestrygonians and the suitors), or offered on certain terms or after delay (Calypso, Circe) is as vital to the poem's structure as to its ethics.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Rahner (n. 1) *passim*; E. R. Dodds, *Pagan and Christian in an age of anxiety* (Cambridge 1965) 100–1.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. W. S. Anderson, in *Essays on the Odyssey*, ed. C. H. Taylor, Jr. (Indiana 1963) 73–86 on this episode; also J. Griffin, *Homer on life and death* (Oxford 1980) [hereafter Griffin] 59–60; B. Fenik, *Studies in the Odyssey*, *Hermes Einzelschr.* xxx (Wiesbaden 1974) 62.

The temptation to forget home and abandon oneself to a softer, less demanding existence is another recurrent challenge for Odysseus and his companions (the Lotus-eaters, life with Circe; the temptation of knowledge offered by the Sirens; Calypso, Nausicaa). On the Sirens see further Rahner (n. 1) 354 f.; E. Vermeule, *Aspects of death in early Greek art and poetry* (Berkeley and L.A. 1979) 201 ff. Vermeule 131 suggestively speaks of 'Lethe, . . . the key theme of the *Odyssey*'; cf. N. Austin, *Archery at the dark of the moon* (Berkeley and L.A. 1975) 138–9. Calypso, as her name implies, seeks to conceal Odysseus, to rob him of fame and memory (cf. i 235–

43); she beguiles him (i 55–6), trying to make him forget Ithaca (56 ἐπιλήσεται; cf. ix 97, 102, x 236, 472). In the *Odyssey*, importance also attaches to remembering or failing to recall the past: see, from various angles, iii 103 ff., iv 118 (contrast the drug-scene, 219 ff.), xiv 170, xix 118; also ii 233–4, xvi 424–447.

<sup>7</sup> E.g. Eris, Hypnos, Phobos, Thanatos, Kudoimos, Ate and the Litai. For stout denial of allegory's presence in Homeric poetry, see D. Page, *History and the Homeric Iliad* (Berkeley and L.A. 1959) 303; *contra*, see M. L. West's commentary on Hesiod's *Theogony* (Oxford 1966) 33–4; H. W. Clarke, *Homer's readers* (London and Toronto 1981) 64 ff.

<sup>8</sup> E.g. Sen. *Const. sap.* 2.1, *Tranq.* 16.4, Epict. i 6.32–6, iii 22.57 with Billerbeck's note; Dio Chr. *Or.* vii. 28–35; Max. Tyr. *Or.* xv 6, xxxviii 7; G. Galinsky, *The Heracles theme* (Oxford 1972) chs. v and ix; Buffière (n. 1) 377.

<sup>9</sup> The social dimension of the *Odyssey* means that we should not be concerned solely with Odysseus, but also with his people: see e.g. xiv 92 ff., xvi 360 ff., xx 105 ff., 209–25, xxi 68 ff. Further, H. D. F. Kitto, *Poiesis* (Berkeley and L.A. 1966) ch. iii, esp. 133–40. The suitors want not only Penelope, but the throne: cf. A. Thornton, *People and themes in Homer's Odyssey* (Otago 1970) ch. vi; H. Clarke, *The art of the Odyssey* (New Jersey 1967) 20–3; Finley (n. 4) 88–91, etc. For the passage from Book xix, see esp. West on Hes. *Op.* 225 ff.; also Aesch. *Supp.* 625 ff., *Eum.* 916 ff.; I. du Quesnay, *PLLS* i (Liverpool 1976) 61–6. E. A. Havelock, *The Greek concept of justice* (Cambridge, Mass. and London 1978) chs. viii–x also discusses these topics.

famous passage implies, the land will be restored to health and fertility, the crops will flourish once more; with the homecoming of the rightful king, prosperity will come again to Ithaca (see xix 107 ff.). In short, we can hardly claim that the character and experiences of Odysseus are not a central concern of the poet; and, as is proper and perhaps inevitable in serious poetry, they have a moral dimension.

It can still be asked, however, how important and coherent is the moral picture of Odysseus which is presented in the poem. My purpose in this paper is to chart the development of Odysseus, and to suggest some of the ways in which the changes in his behaviour and responses serve to illustrate and develop important themes of the poem. For the conception of a character developing is not anachronistic or inappropriate in the study of ancient literature, despite what some critics have maintained.<sup>10</sup> This is not to say that we should read the Homeric poems as psychological novels, but that Odysseus, like Achilles, reacts to and is changed or affected by circumstances and experience.<sup>11</sup> Odysseus too, though not a tragic hero, learns and develops through suffering: he undergoes 'an enlargement of experience and comprehension'.<sup>12</sup> In the course of this paper, I shall attempt to trace the main stages in this process of enlargement; I shall try also to show that the ethical framework, the 'philosophy', of the *Odyssey*, is less clear-cut and more realistic than is sometimes implied; and that Odysseus, though a complicated and not always virtuous character, is none the less a coherent one, and a proper vehicle for that philosophy.

Inasmuch as Homeric morality is upheld, however capriciously, by the gods, they naturally feature from time to time in this paper; but I do not propose to linger on the thorny questions of Homeric theology, or to treat in full such questions as the similarity or differences between Iliadic and Odyssean religion,<sup>13</sup> the programmatic remarks of Zeus in Book i of the *Odyssey*,<sup>14</sup> or the relationship of the divine pantheon in either poem to contemporary belief or cult.<sup>15</sup> It is hardly possible, however, to avoid offering a few preliminary comments, which I hope will be relatively uncontroversial.

In general, I take for granted the presentation of the Iliadic gods in a number of recent works, perhaps most conspicuously in the last two chapters of Jasper Griffin's eloquent study *Homer on life and death* (Oxford 1980). The gods of the *Iliad* are beings of terrible power and majesty, yet also often frivolous, selfish, vindictive, and above all able to abandon or ignore their human

<sup>10</sup> On this issue see most recently the thoughtful paper by C. Gill, *CQ* xxxiii (1983) 469–87. Tacitus' account of Tiberius (esp. *Ann.* vi 51) is usually prominent in such discussions, but vi 48 (Arruntius' comment) shows that a more developmental model of character was available to Tacitus; conversely, modern accounts of personality also stress the emergence of potential and the development of already existing tendencies (which is what I essentially argue for Odysseus: cf. n. 41). The debates of the sophists (Pl. *Meno* 70a, with Thompson's n.; *Clitopho* 407b; Eur. *El.* 367 ff., *I.A.* 558–62, *Antiph.* B. 62, etc.) reveal a keen interest in the relative importance of φύσις, ἄσκησις, and διδασχῆ: cf. W. K. C. Guthrie, *Hist. of Greek philosophy* iii (Cambridge 1969), esp. 250 ff.; K. J. Dover, *Greek popular morality* (Oxford 1974) 85–95.

We may distinguish between the development of a young man's character (scholars have long recognised the *Telemachy* as the ancestor of the *Bildungsroman*; cf. the case of Neoptolemus in Sophocles' *Philoctetes*), and the rarer but not unknown phenomenon of character changing once the personality is adult and mature. In early literature, besides the case of Achilles, see esp. Croesus in *Hdt.* i 207, iii 36 (another case of 'learning through suffering': i 207.1); Croesus advances in understanding sufficiently to assume himself the role of

'wise adviser' which Solon had played to him, i 30–33. (For a different view, see H. P. Stahl, *YCS* xxiv [1974] 19–36.) Note also Adrastus in Eur. *Supp.* (n. 62); Soph. *O.C.* 7–8 (significant even if disproved by events, cf. 854–5, 954). And in Euripides the corruption of individuals through hardship or ill-treatment is a recurring theme (esp. *Med.*, *Hec.*, *El.*, *Or.*). In comic vein, compare Ar. *Vesp.* 1457 f., *Men. Dysc.* 708–47 with Handley's n.; Ter. *Ad.* 855–81.

<sup>11</sup> For the debate on Achilles see e.g. Griffin 50 n. 1; P. C. Wilson, *TAPhA* lxix (1938) 557–74; F. Hirsch, *Der Charakter Achills und die Einheit der Ilias* (diss. Innsbruck 1965).

<sup>12</sup> C. W. Macleod, *Homer: Iliad xxiv* (Cambridge 1982) 23, speaking of Achilles.

<sup>13</sup> See e.g. E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the irrational* (Berkeley and L.A. 1951) 10–11, 29–35; Griffin 164–5.

<sup>14</sup> See esp. Dodds (n. 13) 31–3.

<sup>15</sup> Wilamowitz, *Der Glaube der Hellenen*<sup>3</sup> i (Basel and Stuttgart 1959) 311–34; G. Murray, *Rise of the Greek epic*<sup>4</sup> (Oxford 1934) 145, 265; G. M. Calhoun, in *A companion to Homer*, edd. A. B. Wace and F. W. Stubbings (London 1962) 442–50; W. Burkert, *Griechische Religion der archaische und klassische Epoche* (Stuttgart 1977) 191–6 (=Eng. tr., 1985, 119–25).

protégés, to turn their eyes away from mortal suffering.<sup>16</sup> In the *Odyssey*, the picture is obviously rather different; the problem is to decide precisely how different. We may observe that the gods appear less frequently, and that fewer of them are actually involved in the action. There are divine councils only at the openings of Books i and v; Athene and Poseidon, though for different reasons deeply concerned with the destiny of Odysseus, seem prepared to forget about him for several years; and of all the gods in the *Odyssey*, only Athene has anything of the fullness of characterisation which we find in the divinities of the *Iliad*. The gods are, then, less well known to us; and their purposes are obscure to the characters of the poem.<sup>17</sup> They move in disguise among men (esp. xvii 482–7). Although they are said, and sometimes seem, to uphold justice, there are disturbing exceptions (in particular, the punishment of the Phaeacians by Poseidon, endorsed or at least condoned by Zeus himself, hardly corresponds to any human canons of justice);<sup>18</sup> and although in her plea to Zeus on Odysseus' behalf Athene praises the hero's piety (i 60–2, cf. 65–6), her own affection for him is based on their similarity of character (xiii 330–1).<sup>19</sup> In other words, the successful return and revenge of Odysseus is a special privilege, not a general law. Men should be pious, but piety does not automatically win rewards. Similarly, the gods may warn men, and (as we shall see) such warnings can never safely be ignored, but obedience may be impossible (as in the case of the starving companions of Odysseus in Book xii), and virtue and generosity, such as the Phaeacians show to Odysseus, cannot always save the unfortunate mortal from the anger of the offended god. The actions of Poseidon and Helios in the *Odyssey* recall the ruthlessness of the gods of the *Iliad* when they act in defence of their honour.<sup>20</sup> The divine background of the *Odyssey* shows little change: the gods, like human kings and overseers,<sup>21</sup> may show favour to certain selected mortals, and may at times even feel under some ill-defined obligation to step in and exercise their authority in support of the just cause, but that is not their normal or perennial preoccupation.

It is time now to return to Odysseus and his function within the moral structure of the poem. We have seen that ancient writers, including Horace, often saw him as a philosopher, a moral authority, even a *sapiens*. As has already been indicated, this picture needs refining: the difficulty is to reconcile it with his deviousness, his greed and appetite, his ingenious spinning of lies, his almost comical pleasure in his own cleverness. On the one hand we have Odysseus the πολύτλας, the man of sorrows, who suffers yet finds the inner strength and wisdom to endure

<sup>16</sup> I allude particularly to *Iliad* xiii 1–9, cf. Griffin 131. Contrast *Il.* xvi 388 and context, or Hes. *Op.* 248–55, passages which imply that the gods maintain a constant surveillance over the doings of mankind. In the *Odyssey*, note esp. the contrast at vii 78–81 (the departure of Athene to Athens and her place of honour), juxtaposed with αὐτὰρ Ὀδυσσεύς . . . (81), as the all-too-human hero prepares to enter a new and unfamiliar society. Contrast also v 478 ff. with vi 41 ff. (C. W. Macleod, marginalia). For Virgilian developments of this vital contrast, see e.g. *Aen.* v. 859–61 (the falling, dying Palinurus contrasted with the effortless flight of the god); x 464–73 (developing the passage of *Iliad* xiii); xii 875–884.

<sup>17</sup> Note esp. the tactics of disguise and deception that Athene adopts in relation to Telemachus and Odysseus (contrast her openness with Diomedes in *Iliad* v). See also vii 199–203: the gods' practice with the fairy-tale Phaeacians, who are akin to them (v 35, vii 56 ff., xix 279) offers a contrast to their behaviour with ordinary men. Further, H. J. Rose, *HTHR* xlix (1956) 63–72.

<sup>18</sup> Note esp. that the Phaeacians are seafarers, protégés of Poseidon (and their king is his descendant, see vii 56–63).

<sup>19</sup> So too in the *Iliad* Aphrodite favours Paris, whose view of life and whose amorous gifts are like her own: cause and effect are inseparable (cf. *Il.* iii 39, 64–6, 391–4).

The 'piety' of Odysseus is embodied in his sacrifices; compare the praise of Hector in *Il.* xxiv 34, 69–70 (cf. xxii 170, etc.; Griffin 185 f.; *h.Dem.* 311–2 and Richardson's n.). It thus remains ambiguous, and deliberately so, how far the gods favour mortals for their virtue and how much they are swayed by personal motives and consideration of their own τιμή. In the last book of the *Iliad* the poet seems to bring this question—whom and for what reasons will the gods support?—sharply into focus: cf. Macleod (n. 12) on xxiv 33–76 and add xviii 356–68. Cf. nn. 43–4.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. esp. *Il.* vii 442–63 (Poseidon protests at the building of the Achaean wall). Here κλέος, human and divine, is the issue (451, 458): Poseidon is jealous of the Greek achievement. Cf. *Od.* xiii 128 f. οὐκετ' ἐγὼ . . . | τιμήεις ἔσομαι, ὅτε με βροτοὶ οὐ τι τίουσιν, 141 οὐ τι σ' ἀτιμάζουσι θεοὶ (140 = *Il.* vii 455).

<sup>21</sup> For the parallel between gods and kings cf. Griffin 186.

despite all his trials; on the other, the πολυμήχανος, the crafty schemer.<sup>22</sup> In imitation and interpretation of the *Odyssey* we generally find that one side or the other is adapted or emphasised: already in classical times, later authors prefer to choose between the philosopher and the crook.<sup>23</sup> In Sophocles, for example, we find the Odysseus of the *Ajax* to be a sombre and compassionate statesman, whereas in the same author's *Philoctetes* it is the other side of the Homeric portrait which is stressed, and Odysseus emerges as an arch-sophist, a time-serving and scheming politician.<sup>24</sup>

Homer himself, however, combines both these aspects, the liar and braggart and the moral avenger, within the same poem. It seems plausible that the earlier tradition had stressed the more disreputable, unheroic aspects of the character. In the *Iliad*, his capacity for deception is treated with veiled allusion by Achilles (ix 308–314) and open insult by Agamemnon (iv 339). His very appearance is unconventional and deceptive (iii 209–224, cf. *Od.* viii 159–64). He deceives Dolon without a qualm (*Il.* x 383); his successes in the funeral games are not quite innocently won (xxiii 725 ff.); his retreat from the battlefield in the eighth book of the *Iliad*, ignoring Diomedes' appeal and Nestor's plight, was the occasion of considerable debate among the scholiasts (viii 97 with ΣBT).<sup>25</sup> In the *Iliad*, he is a fine speaker and a quick thinker (as shown especially by his presence of mind in Book ii, when he saves Agamemnon from disgrace); but we are obviously meant to see him as a lesser hero and a less noble figure than Achilles. It is striking that what moralising Odysseus does offer in the earlier poem, in Book xix, is, and seems meant to appear, trite and insensitive (*Il.* xix 160 ff., 216 ff., esp. 225).<sup>26</sup> In the *Odyssey*, we hear of his relationship with the arch-thief and oathbreaker Autolycus (xix 393–412), and in the first book we are also told of his use of poisoned arrows (i 257–64), though for dramatic as well as moral reasons the poet does not admit their use in the actual slaughter.<sup>27</sup> We may also observe that his womanising overseas with glamorous goddesses has been discreetly kept to a minimum, though not entirely bowdlerised. (There is some evidence that in other tales Odysseus' fidelity to Penelope was less uncompromising, his sexual morals more lax.<sup>28</sup>) All in all, the poet has not chosen a hero who can readily become the vehicle or the spokesman of ethical teachings.

Traditional analysis might see the wily trickster and the moral hero as originally two different treatments or traditions lying behind the tale of Odysseus, unhappily stitched together to create a patchwork.<sup>29</sup> More plausibly, refined analysis might deduce from the evidence so far given that the poet of the *Odyssey* imposed a moralising picture on recalcitrant material, in an effort to transform folk-tale or fable into a narrative with greater ethical and religious significance.<sup>30</sup> Naïve unitarianism might reply by simply appealing to human nature: people are complicated, characters in fiction as in real life possess many qualities and these may often be inconsistent; the character of Odysseus and the poem itself are the richer for this variety, which reflects the hero's chameleon-like versatility. Such a defence, superficially attractive, will seem less so if we believe that most classical literature characteristically imposes pattern and integrates

<sup>22</sup> The epithets of Odysseus are studied by Austin (n. 6) 40–53; W. Whallon, *Formula, character and context* (Washington 1969) 6–9, 87–91.

<sup>23</sup> See esp. Stanford's absorbing study (n. 1), not entirely superseding a series of earlier articles by the same author.

<sup>24</sup> On Odysseus in Sophocles see Stanford (n. 1) 104–11.

<sup>25</sup> N. J. Richardson, *CQ* xxx (1980) 273. On Odysseus in the *Iliad* see Stanford (n. 1) 12–21, 25–9; Griffin 15–16; J. D. Folzenlogen, *Cl. Bull.* xli (1965) 33–5.

<sup>26</sup> Contrast the deeper humanity and sensitivity of Achilles' words to Priam in Book xxiv, where again persuasion to eat is in question. So also in *Iliad* ix, Odysseus' highly rhetorical and calculated speech employs the arguments which would convince *himself*:

gifts, glory and gain, with added touches of flattery.

<sup>27</sup> See S. West's commentary *ad loc.*; G. Murray (n. 15) 129–30.

<sup>28</sup> R. Lattimore in *Classical studies presented to B. E. Perry* (Illinois 1969) 101 n. 41. I owe my knowledge of this essay to the late T. C. W. Stinton.

<sup>29</sup> See further the surveys by A. Lesky, *Homeros* (repr. from *RE Suppl.* xi, [1968]) coll. 108–23; A. Heubeck, *Die homerische Frage* (Darmstadt 1974) 87–130; H. W. Clarke (n. 7) esp. ch. iv. For speculation on the pre-Homeric Odysseus see Stanford (n. 1) ch. ii; P. Philippson, *MH* iv (1947) 8–22.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. W. Schadewaldt, *HSCPh* lxiii (1958) 15–32, *Studi in onore di L. Castiglioni* (Florence 1960) 861–76, both reprinted in his *Hellas und Hesperien* 1 (Zurich-Stuttgart 1960). For comment, see Fenik (n. 6) 208 ff.; Clarke (n. 7) 182–6.

contradictions within an artistic and formally structured whole. It is not usual for ancient authors to present their readers with loose ends, random juxtapositions or unrelated elements. Their preference is to include contrasting and conflicting scenes or viewpoints within a carefully organised, unified structure.<sup>31</sup>

In the rest of this paper I shall attempt to offer a more refined version of the unitarian position, based on the assumption that Odysseus' character does change or develop, and that this development is not simply of psychological interest, but serves to reinforce, to convey more vividly and more thoughtfully, the moral lessons of the *Odyssey*.

When we first meet Odysseus in the *Odyssey*, on the island of Calypso in Book v, his wanderings are of course well advanced. He has been stripped by ill fortune and divine persecution of ships, comrades, treasure, all that once was his. Part of the point of structuring the poem in this way is in order to introduce us to the hero at the very nadir of his fortunes, just as in geographical terms he is at the outer limits of the known world. But it will be more convenient to go through Odysseus' adventures chronologically, and this means moving directly to the opening of the hero's narrative to the Phaeacians, in Book ix.

There is a certain difficulty here, given that these stories are told by Odysseus himself at a later date.<sup>32</sup> There are indeed some touches of bravado and the occasional reference to his own foresight or achievements, for instance at x 156 ff., the episode in which he kills a mighty stag. It seems deliberate, and amusing, that he dwells so long on the episode, even repeating, in a matter of ten lines, the formula which emphasises the beast's enormous size (x 171 = 180 μάλα γὰρ μέγα θηρίον ἦεν); similarly, he takes the trouble to mention how long his followers spent gazing at the dead animal in wonder. But in spite of these boastful passages in the first-person narrative,<sup>33</sup> it remains the case that Odysseus does tell us a fair amount, sometimes ruefully and grimly, about his own errors as well as his companions' misdeeds.

From Troy, Odysseus sailed to the land of the Cicones. Here again, his narrative betrays a breezy heroic bravado: 'there I sacked their city and killed the people' (ix 40; cf. e.g. *Il.* ix 326–9, 594–5). But a sterner note is heard when the men go on looting, despite Odysseus' warnings (ix 44 τοὶ δὲ νῆπιοι οὐκ ἐπίθοντο). This disobedience sets the keynote of Odysseus' difficult relations with his followers. As a result, the neighbouring allies spring a counter-attack, and six men from each ship are lost before the rest can make their escape.

The second mishap is Odysseus' doing: indeed, the whole débâcle of the Cyclops episode is due, as he himself admits, to his insatiable curiosity, and to his eagerness to win friends and acquire gifts. Particularly noteworthy are his retrospective comments at ix 224 ff., in which he recalls the moment when he and his men had entered the Cyclops' cave. 'There my companions begged me to let them take away some of the cheeses and depart, driving kids and lambs out of their pens and aboard our swift ship, and setting out once more over the salt sea. But I did not heed them<sup>34</sup>—better, far better, if I had! I was still eager to see the owner of the place and find out if he would give me a guest-gift. But it was no kind host that my companions were to meet

<sup>31</sup> These generalisations are doubtless questionable, and I would admit e.g. Euripides as a notable and influential exception; but a full defence of the assertion in the text would require at least an article of its own; I hope to return to the topic elsewhere. For ancient concepts of unity and diversity see esp. Brink on *Hor. Ars* 1 ff. (*Horace on Poetry* ii, 77–85); for unity of character, esp. Arist. *Poet.* xv. 1454a 22–36, *Hor. Ars* 125–7. For an interesting modern discussion, see A. Dihle, *Studien zur Griechischen Biographie* (Göttingen 1956) 69–81.

<sup>32</sup> Further, see *Od.* xi 364 ff. (Alcinous' complimentary remarks nevertheless associate Odysseus—and poetry—with lies: cf. *Hes. Th.* 27, *Solon fr.* 29 West,

etc.); *Juv.* 15.16, with Courtney's notes; *Lucian VH* i 3. See also W. Suerbaum, 'Die Ich-Erzählungen des Odysseus', *Poetica* ii (1968) 150–77.

<sup>33</sup> For further possible touches of bravado and boastfulness in the first-person narrative see ix 19–20, 160, 213–5 (this foresight seems somewhat implausible, cf. D. Page, *The Homeric Odyssey* [Cambridge 1955] 8), 442–5, 550–1, x 447 (?), xi 512, 524, xii 208–212 (contrast the humility of Aeneas in Virgil's imitation of the last passage, *Aen.* i 198–208). I would also include in this category xi 565 f. (*contra* Page, *op. cit.* 26–7).

<sup>34</sup> 228 ἄλλ' ἐγὼ οὐ πιθόμην echoes 44 οὐκ ἐπίθοντο (of the companions); cf. also 500.

there . . .'. The rest of the story needs no summary here. Odysseus succeeded in getting some of his companions out of this predicament, but only after having got them into it. Furthermore, he cannot resist the temptation to mock the Cyclops from the apparent safety of his ship, taunting him in the fashion of an Iliadic warrior.<sup>35</sup> This is almost disastrous when Polyphemus hurls boulders at them; still worse, Odysseus has to exult in his own personal success, revealing his own identity and so making it possible for the Cyclops to harm him through his prayer to Poseidon. Here again, the companions desperately try to restrain Odysseus, but he pays no attention (ix 492 ff.).

In the episode of the bag of winds (x 1–79), the situation is more complicated, for it seems that both Odysseus and his men are at fault: Odysseus for his characteristic lack of trust, never telling his men more than is absolutely necessary, always taking delight in his superior knowledge. Understandably, they do not trust *him*, and proceed to loot their captain's luggage (x 44 f.). As a result, when actually within sight of Ithaca, they are driven off course by the battling winds. Odysseus is filled with unequalled misery at this fresh setback: he considers hurling himself into the sea (50–2), but instead, as he puts it, 'I endured (53 ἔτηλην) and remained; veiling my head, I lay in the ship'. This moment of self-control and restraint of his emotions (we are not told that Odysseus weeps, though the companions certainly do, 49) points the way forward to Odysseus' later endurance and patience in adversity. But it has yet to become the dominant, controlling force in his character. In these early adventures he is still something of a dashing buccaneer; he has yet to become the brooding, deep-thinking planner and almost Stoic moralist whom we see in the making during the Phaeacian books and in action in the second half of the epic.<sup>36</sup>

These episodes help to explain the general tension between Odysseus and his companions, particularly Eurylochus, in subsequent adventures, notably the Circe episode. They admire, fear and even care about him, but they also distrust him. This emerges from x 198–202, 244–73, and especially the splendid scene at 428 ff., when Odysseus returns from his encounter with Circe, to tell his waiting friends that all is well. At this point Eurylochus makes a panicky speech which culminates in an accusation of Odysseus: he says (in essence) 'where are you off to, you fools? She'll turn you all into pigs or wolves or lions; it'll be just like the Cyclops affair all over again, when our friends died because of *his* rash folly (x 437 τούτου γὰρ καὶ κείνοι ἀτασθαλίησιν ὄλοντο)'.<sup>37</sup> Although Odysseus draws his sword in fury and has to be restrained by his more timid friends (x 443, 'No, descendant of Zeus, let's leave him here, if you bid us do so . . .'), we may well feel that there is some truth in what the rebellious Eurylochus says.

The next episode involving a warning that is not heeded occurs in Book xii, with the warnings of Circe when Odysseus finally leaves her island. She tells him privately of the dangers of the Sirens, but, knowing that he will not be able to resist listening to their song, she gives him instructions how to do so in safety.<sup>38</sup> These he follows to the letter: the story illustrates once again his curiosity, his fascination with new experiences, but it also indicates his greater prudence in comparison with earlier episodes in which he took unnecessary risks or forced his companions to do so. But Circe also warns him of the danger from Scylla and Charybdis: here he cannot

<sup>35</sup> See e.g. B. Fenik, *Typical battle scenes in the Iliad*, *Hermes Einzelschr.* xxi (Wiesbaden 1968) 222.

The episode is also disquieting because of Odysseus' possible blasphemy in 525, which already worried ancient critics: see *Antisth. fr.* 54 Caizzi, *Arist. fr.* 174 Rose, Buffière (n. 1) 370–1. Readers may differ as to whether this does constitute blasphemy, but if it does, the ancient excuses are certainly not sufficient to palliate it.

<sup>36</sup> For this interpretation see further K. Reinhardt, *Tradition und Geist* (Göttingen 1960) 47–124, esp. 65 ff.; also Fenik, *Studies* (n. 6) 161.

<sup>37</sup> For ἀτασθαλία cf. *Il.* iv 409, xxii 104 (only); *Od.* i 7, 34, xxii 437, xxiii 67, etc. (normally used of the suitors). Note that Odysseus does later attribute ἀτάσθαλα to himself (below, p. 156 on xviii 139)—again an indication of his greater insight and his increased capacity for self-criticism.

<sup>38</sup> There is a pointed discrepancy between Odysseus' account to his men (xii 160 οἶον ἔμ' ἠνώγει ὄπ' ἀκουέμεν) and Circe's actual words (49 αἶ κ' ἔθελησθα)! Circe suspects that Odysseus himself will not be able to resist listening.

avoid losing some men, and must be content if the ship itself is saved. At this point the heroic spirit of Odysseus the sacker of cities reasserts itself, and he asks if there is no way to make a stand against Scylla. The enchantress replies:

Self-willed man (σχήτλιε), is your mind still set on war-like deeds, on struggle and toil? Will you not bow to the deathless gods themselves? Scylla is not of mortal kind; she is an immortal monster.  
(xii 116–8)

Odysseus needs to learn that the old heroic code of facing your foe in head-on defiance, kill or be killed, cannot always work.<sup>39</sup>

In what follows, Odysseus shows that these lessons are only partially learnt. He retails the warnings to his companions, but with typical caution tells them only part: 'Of Scylla I did not speak, that inexorable horror, for fear the crew in panic might cease from rowing and huddle themselves below in the hold' (xii 223–5). But he himself forgets Circe's warning—the familiar story-pattern once again makes its appearance—dons his armour and tries to threaten Scylla, to no avail (xii 226 ff.). Six of his comrades are lost, in one of the most spine-chilling scenes of the *Odyssey*, and one which speaks clearly in the language and images of men's nightmares.

. . . I saw only their feet and hands as they were lifted up; they were calling out to me in their heart's anguish, crying out my name for the last time . . . Scylla swung my writhing companions up to the rocks, and there at the entrance to her cave, she began to devour them as they shrieked and held out their hands to me in the extremes of agony. Of all the things I saw with my eyes, of all the trials I underwent in my quests of the paths of the sea, that was the most pitiful.

(xii 248–59)<sup>40</sup>

The next trial that Odysseus and his crew have to undergo is the episode of the Oxen of the Sun. Both Tiresias and Circe had been particularly insistent in warning Odysseus about this (xi 104 ff., xii 127–41). If Odysseus lands on Thrinacia, he must not harm these animals, or his homecoming will be late and hard, and before that he must lose all his comrades (xi 114 = xii 141). In Tiresias' speech of warning one line in particular stands out for its thematic importance, extending beyond this episode to the poem as a whole: 'If you are prepared to restrain your desire, and that of your comrades', (xi 105 αἴ κ' ἐθέλῃς σὸν θυμὸν ἐρυκακέειν καὶ ἑταίρων . . .). Self-restraint and self-denial remain important themes throughout the rest of Odysseus' career, not just during the wanderings.<sup>41</sup>

Odysseus himself would have preferred to steer past the island altogether, but again it is Eurylochus who protests, rebelling against their leader's strictness (xii 271–302), and Odysseus is forced to yield, though not without insisting that his companions swear an oath not to touch the beasts. Needless to say, in the end, with the winds unfavourable and starvation looming, the companions, urged on by Eurylochus, forget their oath and embark upon the fateful meal (xii

<sup>39</sup> Cf. J. Griffin, *Homer* (Past Master series, Oxford 1980) 57.

<sup>40</sup> On these lines see further H. Fränkel, *Early Greek poetry and philosophy*, Eng. tr. (Oxford 1975) 49; C. Moulton, *Similes in the Homeric poems* (Göttingen 1977) 104, 119. Note the reversal in xxii 383 ff., where Odysseus is the fisherman viewing his dying catch. So too xxii 388 (τῶν μὲν τ' ἠέλιος φαέθων ἐξείλετο θυμὸν) recalls the wrath and vengeance of Helios in Book xii; now Odysseus fills a comparable role (cf. nn. 73–4 below).

<sup>41</sup> Telemachus too has to learn to conceal his emotions (as he fails to do in book ii) and to contain his wrath: see esp. xvi 274–7, xvii 484–91, xxi 128–9. This is one of many ways in which the development and adventures of Telemachus parallel those of his father: cf. n. 10, and *PCPhS* n.s. xxxi (1985) 138–9. Notice also, of Odysseus himself, xi 84–9, xvii 238, 284, xviii 90–4, xx

9–30. In xix 479 ff. (esp. 481 ἐρύσσατο), Odysseus restrains Euryycleia, as also in book xxii, when the nurse is about to utter a cry of exultation over the dead suitors (cf. n. 79).

Odysseus' self-restraint is not altogether a new thing: see Menelaus' narrative, iv 269–89, esp. 270–1 (271 ἔτλη), 284 κατέρυκε καὶ ἔσχεθεν ἰεμένω περ, and compare the description of him as ταλασίφρων in 241, 270. Both Menelaus' and Helen's tales prefigure later events of the poem (thus S. West on iv 244, comparing xix 386 ff.); either we must see Odysseus' endurance here as a thematic reflection of a major motif of the poem, or we may suppose that self-restraint of this kind, in a martial context, is exceptional but less demanding, more conventional, than Odysseus' later ordeals (for heroic 'endurance' see Macleod (n. 12) 22 n. 2; and for the qualities required of a hero in an ambush, *Il.* xiii 275–86).



339 ff.). On this occasion they are clearly the offenders, but Odysseus' own position is ambiguous, since he had left them alone when he went away to pray and fell asleep, as he had before in the episode of the bag of winds. He tells the Phaeacians that the gods sent this disastrous sleep on him (xii 338, cf. 370 ff., esp. 372 ἄτην).<sup>42</sup> A convenient excuse, as in Agamemnon's famous 'apology' (*Il.* xix 86 ff.),<sup>43</sup> or a malicious deity at work, or a more complex theological paradox, by which the gods, like Jehovah in the Old Testament, lead their human victims into sin?<sup>44</sup> At all events, the companions perish while Odysseus is saved, but he too is to be punished, still dogged by the curse of Poseidon, now reinforced by the anger of Helios. As Tiresias warned him:

εἰ δέ κε σίνηαι, τότε τοι τεκμαίρομ' ὄλεθρον  
 νηϊ τε καὶ ἐτάροισ'. αὐτὸς δ' εἴ πέρ κεν ἀλύξης,  
 ὀψὲ κακῶς νεῖαι, ὀλέσας ἄπο πάντας ἐταίρους,  
 νηὸς ἐπ' ἄλλοτρίας· δῆεις δ' ἐν πτήματα οἴκω . . .

If you harm them, I foretell destruction for your ship and your companions; and if you yourself escape, you will come home late and hard, after losing all your companions, a passenger on another's ship; and you will find troubles in your house . . .

(xi 112-5)

This story pattern is an important part of Homer's legacy to tragedy: the omens ignored, the warning inadequate, defied or recalled too late.<sup>45</sup> We may remember the case of Creon in the *Antigone*, of Pentheus and Hippolytus, of the doomed Polynices in the *Oedipus Coloneus*. Like many characters in Greek tragedy, like Orestes and Oedipus, for example, the companions of Odysseus seem trapped by a problem that has no solution.<sup>46</sup> Precautions and warnings are not always enough. The travel books of the *Odyssey* do not offer us a simple, black and white fable in which Odysseus is always right and the companions always wrong or wicked. Eurylochus is not a hubristic figure or a *theomachos*. A more realistic and thoughtful pattern seems to emerge: Odysseus survives not because he is pious or guiltless or devoid of vices, nor even because he does not make mistakes, but because he is able to learn from them, to adapt, to use what help he can get from others and stay on top. He learns, slowly and painfully, to curb both his heroic impulses (the instinctive desire to taunt an enemy, to fight on even when it is hopeless), and his more dangerous, more idiosyncratic quality, his curiosity. Moreover, we see him growing into a more sombre figure, isolated from his own kind after the deaths of his remaining friends, turned in upon himself and absorbed in his own loneliness and grief, suspicious even of those who offer help and support.

Here we turn back to Book v, in which our first glimpse of Odysseus is as he sits weeping on the shore of Ogygia (151-8), and in which, after many years of captivity, he is finally told by Calypso that he can go. His suspicious response is striking: in surly fashion, he replies: 'you have something else in mind, goddess, you have no thought of sending me home, you who now bid

<sup>42</sup> On ἄτη see Dodds (n. 13) 5 f.; Barrett on Eur. *Hipp.* 241.

<sup>43</sup> *Contra* Dodds (n. 13) 1-6, 13-16. This passage, like Priam's words to Helen in *Il.* iii 164-5, has perhaps been too readily treated as central in discussions of Homeric theology and psychology. Dodds himself observes (*ibid.* 11) that we must distinguish between the poet's statements and the words of his characters (cf. Arist. *frr.* 146, 163 Rose); in the passages in question, Agamemnon seeks a portentous formulation which will appease his opponent without putting himself in a bad light; and Priam's generosity to the guilt-ridden Helen exemplifies his typical kindness to her (cf. xxiv 770). This principle also affects the view we take of the gods' concern for justice in the *Iliad*: the Greeks, believing themselves in the right, sometimes declare that the gods

must think likewise (esp. as regards the breaking of the truce): cf. iv 157 ff., 235 ff., vii 350 ff; xiii 623-32. But the scenes on Olympus which the poet allows us to witness do not generally bear this out. See also Hutchinson on Aesch. *Sept.* 4-9.

<sup>44</sup> See esp. *Exodus* vii-ix, x 1 (cf. Hdt. vii 12 ff., ix 109.2, etc.); A. Dihle, *The theory of will in classical antiquity* (Berkeley and L.A. 1981) 75 f., 198 n. 31. In the *Odyssey*, note especially the way in which Athene leads the suitors on into further crime: xvii 360-4, xviii 155-6, 346-8 = xx 284-6 (*contra* H. Lloyd-Jones, *The justice of Zeus* [Berkeley and L.A. 1971] 29, 31 f., 44).

<sup>45</sup> Cf. *JHS* cii (1982) 149, esp. n. 21, adding Aesch. *Septem* 778, *Ag.* 709, and esp. Fenik, *Studies* (n. 6) 158 ff.

<sup>46</sup> Fenik (n. 6) 208-232.

me traverse the vast gulf of the sea on a raft . . . ' (v 173–4). Nor is this a unique case: he reacts similarly to the overtures of the sea-nymph Ino, who offers him help when his raft has been shattered (v 333 ff., esp. his speech at 356–59). This is a negative and unprofitable suspicion; it appears again when he wakes up on the shores of Ithaca and immediately supposes, against all probability, that the Phaeacians have betrayed him (xiii 203–14). Their actual fate, as presented in the preceding scene, makes still clearer the unfairness of this suspicion and creates a poignant irony (esp. lines 213–4). It reappears once more when he will not believe Athene's assurance that he is at last home, even after she has revealed her identity (xiii 312 ff., esp. 324–8). Suspicion is one aspect of the gloomy pessimism which possesses Odysseus in the early books, especially v–viii. Tossed by fate and abandoned, perhaps even hated (x 73–5) by the gods,<sup>47</sup> he is now preoccupied with his own miseries, and loses no opportunity to comment on them to others. Thus in Book v, when Calypso warns him that there are further troubles in store for him when he reaches his home, he replies in words which prefigure, and perhaps provide the model for, Aeneas' speech of *praemeditatio* in response to the parallel warning of the Sibyl in the sixth book of Virgil's *Aeneid* (103–5):<sup>48</sup>

Even so, my desire and longing day by day is still to reach my own home and to see the day of my return. And if this or that deity should shatter my craft on the wine-dark sea, I will bear it (τλήσομαι), and keep a heart within me that can endure sorrow. For now indeed I have suffered and toiled long on the waves and in war; let new tribulations now join the old.

(*Od.*v 219–24)

This gloomy yet stoical fatalism appears further in the Phaeacian books, for instance in Odysseus' appeal to Nausicaa: ' . . . and now some deity has cast me here, I suppose so that I can suffer some further misfortune. For I don't suppose it is at an end; no, the gods have further things in store for me . . . ' (vi 172–4). Nausicaa's reply produces the standard fatalistic thinking of early Greek literature, though we may here also suspect that the poet, as so often in the *Phaeacis*,<sup>49</sup> is having a little fun with his creations. Her words are: 'Stranger, since you do not seem to me a bad or foolish man, remember that Zeus himself, the Olympian, dispenses blessings to mankind, to good men and also to bad, to each as he chooses. This fate he has, we may be sure, given to you, and it is for you to endure it' (vi 187–90; τετλάμεν again).<sup>50</sup> These remarks are doubtless very true and salutary; they come close, in fact, to Odysseus' own words to Calypso in the fifth book; but there is a gentle humour in Odysseus' hard-won insights being echoed thus by Nausicaa's sententious naïveté.

In the Phaeacian books we find further pessimistic remarks and unhappy speeches by Odysseus even after he has been hospitably received (vi 325, vii 208 ff.); and in general in Book viii he remains apart, brooding and weeping, reluctant or unable as yet to reveal himself and partake in their frivolous and peaceful existence (further, see viii 154–5, 182–3, 231–2, 478, ix 12 ff.). It is a commonplace, which I would endorse, that Phaeacia is a 'transitional' episode, a half-way stage between the magical, other-worldly fairyland of Odysseus' earlier adventures and the familiar Greek geography and society of Ithaca.<sup>51</sup> The Phaeacian books also prepare for and include events which foreshadow Odysseus' later experiences in Ithaca.<sup>52</sup> Most important,

<sup>47</sup> Cf. J. E. B. Mayor's comm. (London 1873) on *Od.* ix and part of x, on x 72, citing e.g. xiv 366, xix 275, 363 f.

<sup>48</sup> On Aeneas' *praemeditatio* here (glossed by Sen. *Ep.* 77. 33 ff.), cf. Norden on 103–5; further, Nisbet-Hubbard on Hor. *Odes* ii 10.14; P. Rabbow, *Seelenführung* (Munich 1954) 160 ff., 182 ff., 344 ff.

<sup>49</sup> Note esp. the skilful use of repetition at viii 166 (Odysseus' retort ἀτασθαλίῳ ἀνδρὶ ξοικᾶς snubs Euryalus and caps his sneer at 164 οὐδ' ἀθλητῆρι ξοικᾶς). See also Alcinous' embarrassed speech at viii 236–55 (esp. 248–9; in 251–3 he has to revise his claims for his people, using the same phrasing as in 101–3!). As Plutarch observed, the tale of Ares and Aphrodite is

appropriate to the pleasure-loving Phaeacians (*aud. poet.* 18F, 19F–20A). See further Lattimore (n. 28).

<sup>50</sup> On these *topoi*, see further Richardson on *h.Dem.* 147 f.

<sup>51</sup> C. Segal, *Arion* i 4 (1962) 17–63, *PP* cxvi (1967) 321–42; Fenik (n. 6) 54–5; P. Vidal-Naquet, in *Myth, religion and society*, ed. R. Gordon (Cambridge 1981) 90–4, 248 n. 58.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. *PCPhS* n.s. xxxi (1985) 140–143. I should also have mentioned there that from this perspective the notorious 'recapitulation' of Odysseus' adventures to Penelope (xxiii 306–343) corresponds to the full narrative to the Phaeacians in the first half of the poem.

Phaeacia provides a suitable environment for Odysseus to recover from his adventures beyond the known world. He is able to mix with human beings again, to experience their compassion, their hospitality and finally their wonder and admiration. He regains some of his old self-confidence in the course of Book viii; he also realises with delight that his old ally Athene has returned to aid him (viii 199–200). In short, he begins to emerge from his shell of self-pity and self-centred despair; for the *Odyssey* no less than the *Iliad* is concerned with the role of man in society, with the preservation or the destruction of the bonds, social, emotional and moral, between a man and his fellows.<sup>53</sup>

No episode of the Phaeacian books is as moving and suggestive in charting the progress of Odysseus as the concluding scene of Book viii, the account of the third song by Demodocus and its aftermath.<sup>54</sup> Full of food and drink and pleased with himself, Odysseus asks Demodocus to change his song, turning to the fall of Troy. Tell us, he says, of the Wooden Horse, 'which Odysseus had brought into the citadel as a ruse' (viii 494). Demodocus obliges with a detailed account of the sack of Troy highlighting Odysseus and his struggles. We expect the disguised hero to be pleased and flattered. But instead he weeps, and his tears are described in one of Homer's most moving similes, in which he is compared with a woman who weeps over the body of her husband, who fell protecting his city and their children, while she is left alive to be dragged off into slavery (viii 521–31). Not precisely Andromache (for the woman in the simile reaches her husband's body before he draws his last breath), the wife in the simile stands for all the widowed women of Troy, all those who suffered in the sack, and suffered at Odysseus' hands. Now the victor and the victim are united in suffering and grief: ll. 530–1 beautifully bring this out by the verbal echo:

τῆς δ' ἔλλεινοτάτῳ ἄχεϊ φθινύθουσι παρειαί·  
ὥς Ὀδυσσεὺς ἔλλεινὸν ὑπ' ὀφρύσι δάκρυον εἶβεν.

Here we see Homer contrasting different ideas of what poetry does and what it is for. What Odysseus expects is, in effect, a panegyric of his own strategic and military successes. There seems no reason to doubt that in the aristocratic society of early Greece and Ionia, such poems would be common, as in many other oral traditions, and familiar to Homer (*cf.* Hes. *Th.* 80–93).<sup>55</sup> But what Odysseus actually gets is something deeper and more characteristically Homeric: not a partisan version, but one that sees both sides, Trojan and Greek. For when we look back at the summary of Demodocus' song, we find that it dwells on the delusion and the cruel destiny of the Trojans (511 αἴσα γὰρ ἦν ἀπολέσθαι, κ.τ.λ.; *cf.* Virg. *Aen.* ii 54), and how near they came to destroying the horse. The situation and the chain of events would be familiar to Odysseus, who had himself been inside the horse (iv 271–88), and we might expect him to remember this crisis with satisfaction and relief. It needs the eloquence and the compassion of a Homeric poet to open the springs of pity in Odysseus and to make him see that the victory he won all those years ago has become a matter for history and poetry; that the profits which he gained have slipped through his fingers; and above all that his own sufferings and his own separation from wife, child and home are not *more* important than the sufferings of the Trojans, but mirror-images of them (as is brought out by the marital theme in the simile).<sup>56</sup>

<sup>53</sup> *Cf.* the suggestive comments of Buffière (n. 1) 384; also Colin Macleod's review of Griffin, *Homer on life and death*, in *London Review of Books* 6–14 Aug. 1981, p. 21: 'If the *Iliad* is "the poem of death" . . . the *Odyssey* might be called the poem of social existence, or, to use the more eloquent Latin word, of *humanitas*.'

<sup>54</sup> See esp. C. W. Macleod, *Collected essays* (Oxford 1983) ch. i.

<sup>55</sup> See R. Finnegan, *Oral poetry* (Cambridge 1977) 188–92, 226–7. In later Greece, we may compare the 'court poetry' of Simonides, Bacchylides and Pindar, though the Homeric influence enriches their encomia

with an awareness of the temporary and fragile quality of their addressees' achievements.

<sup>56</sup> There is a somewhat similar progression in the third book of the *Aeneid*. In l. 273 the Trojan refugees pass Ithaca, and curse the 'terram altricem saevi . . . Ulixii' (*cf.* ii 762, etc.). Later in the book, the pathetic Achaemenides (an honest version of Sinon) supplicates them, presenting himself as 'comes *infelicitis* Ulixii' (613). After hearing his tale and escaping from the perils which Ulysses had endured before him, Aeneas himself finds it possible to use the same epithet when speaking of Ulysses (691).

It has often been remarked that Odysseus weeps *twice* at Demodocus' songs, the first time being earlier in the day when he sang of the quarrel between Odysseus and Achilles. We may expect a recognition then, but Alcinous' tact leads him to stop the singing and divert the stranger in other ways. The second weeping-scene caps the first, not only because it is more emotional and prolonged,<sup>57</sup> but also because of the subject of the song and the object of Odysseus' grief and pity. In the earlier scene, he wept for himself and his comrades; in the scene we have just considered, he realises, like Achilles, the common ground between friend and foe. This is the lesson of shared and common suffering, common not just to friends and allies, but to all mankind.<sup>58</sup>

In the later books of the *Odyssey*, this principle animates some of Odysseus' sternest and most serious speeches of warning to the suitors. Their offence has a broader moral significance because it ignores the humility and fragility of man. The suitors believe that they can live like gods, eternally feasting, unpunished (νήπιοινοι, a recurrent word: see i 377, 380, etc.).<sup>59</sup> Experience has taught Odysseus that such arrogant optimism is a delusion. As he says to Amphinomus, the one suitor who regularly has misgivings about what they are doing:

I have something to say to you, and do you listen, and store it in your heart. Of all things that breathe and move upon the earth, earth mothers nothing more frail than man. For as long as the gods grant him prosperity, as long as his limbs are swift, he thinks that he will suffer no misfortune in times to come. But when instead the Blessed Ones send him sorrow, that too he has to bear, under compulsion, with enduring heart. The father of gods and men makes one day unlike another day, and men on the earth must change their thoughts in accordance with this. I too once seemed marked out as a fortunate man; I did many reckless things (139 ἀτάσθαλ') to sate my desire for power and mastery, putting great faith in my father and brothers. And so I would have no man be lawless (ἄθεμιστος); rather, let each accept unquestioningly whatever gifts the gods grant him.

(xviii. 130–42)<sup>60</sup>

There is falsehood here, and the story bears affinities to Odysseus' large-scale lies;<sup>61</sup> but like them it contains elements of truth about his travels and his past; and it also involves moral truths and warnings which draw on the basic ethical framework of the *Odyssey*: rashness, boldness, overconfidence coming to grief; and, by contrast, the advocacy of generosity, mercy, gentleness (see above all Penelope's speech at xix 325 ff.).<sup>62</sup>

<sup>57</sup> So Fenik (n. 6) 102–4.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. *JHS* cii (1982) 158–60; add esp. J. Hornblower, *Hieronymus of Cardia* (Oxford 1981) 104–6.

<sup>59</sup> Compare and contrast the world of the gods: in the song of Demodocus, although Aphrodite is caught *in flagrante*, she may depart with impunity (cf. n. 72), though there is some talk of compensation and surety (esp. viii 348). But this is a very different thing from the 'payment' Odysseus will exact. Note that the suitors do try to offer compensation at xxii 55–67, but Odysseus rejects their pleas in words that seem to echo those of the impassioned Achilles (xxii 61–4, compared with *Il.* ix 379–87, xxii 349–54; on the general question whether the *Odyssey*-poet knew the *Iliad*, see n. 87).

That the suitors are aspiring to the condition of gods is further suggested by the close analogy between *Od.* xviii 401 ff. (cf. xvii 219–20, 446), and *Il.* i 575–6 (Hephaestus). Everlasting and contented feasting is godlike: cf. Pind. *Py.* 10.30 ff.

<sup>60</sup> The significance of this speech is also observed by Macleod (n. 54) 14, and treated from a more sociological standpoint in a thoughtful essay by J. M. Redfield, in *Approaches to Homer*, edd. C. A. Rubino and C. W. Shelmerdine (Austin, Texas 1983), esp. 239–44. For its legacy in tragedy see esp. Aesch. *Pers.* 588 ff., *Ag.* 1327–30, Eur. *Hclid.* 608 ff.; contrast the lighter, more

hedonistic attitude deduced from the same premisses by the buffoonish Heracles in Eur. *Alc.* 780–96 (see further Bond on Eur. *Her.* 503–5). See also n. 62.

<sup>61</sup> For instance, the father and brothers of xviii 140 can be related to the fuller version in xiv 199–210 (cf. xix 178–81); the 'me quoque' structure (138 καὶ γὰρ ἐγὼ) and the reference to past prosperity are analogous to xvii 419–24 and xix 75–80, and so on. For other aspects of this and parallel speeches, see Fenik (n. 6) 185.

<sup>62</sup> See further Odysseus' speeches at xvii 414 ff., xix 71 ff., Eurycleia's at xix 370 ff., Philoetius' at xx 194 ff., 205 ff., all of which reinforce these themes.

In tragedy, a further parallel is provided by Euripides' *Supplikes*, in which we should note the fresh authority with which Adrastus, enlightened by experience, breaks his long silence at 734 (in a speech which echoes that of Theseus earlier, 549 ff.): see Collard *ad loc.* and on 634–777 in general. Acknowledgement of past folly and error leads the ὀψιμαθής to a clearer view of human rashness and of morality in general. Now Adrastus is to *teach* the young Athenians (842–3). Note also Soph. *O.C.* 607 ff.: Theseus is wise and compassionate (562 ff.), but idealistic; the insight that Oedipus has gained through age and suffering means that he can see further than the young king.

If Phaeacia prepares Odysseus for the role that he must play in Ithaca and the second part of the poem, it is the scene with Athene in Book xiii, on the beach in Ithaca itself, which provides the pivot and completes the change in Odysseus' condition.<sup>63</sup> With Book xiii we move from predominantly sea-going adventures to land, and from more magical and supernatural countries to a familiar part of Greece. The reunion with Athene marks the new upward turn in Odysseus' fortunes. From now on, instead of being the victim of the gods and the child of ill fortune,<sup>63a</sup> he will be in control; instead of receiving warnings, he will give them; instead of being a passive figure who merely endures, he will become the active strategist and avenger; instead of indulging in self-pity and brooding on the past, instead of carrying grief or vanity or boastfulness to extremes, he learns the crucial lesson of self-restraint and self-control.

This is shown first when in Book xvi he beholds his son after their long separation (xvi 1 ff.). The point is skilfully made through the use of a simile describing a father welcoming his son, the simile being applied not, as would be natural, to Odysseus, but to Eumaeus.<sup>64</sup> Eumaeus plays the role of a surrogate father to Telemachus (who calls him ἄττα, e.g. xvi 31), and the spontaneous joy and openness of the swineherd's greeting to his young master (23 ἦλθες, Τηλέμαχε, γλυκερὸν φάος) provide a perfect foil to the silent presence of the disguised Odysseus in the background. The poet keeps Odysseus silent, and refrains from describing his emotions for some time; he does not break this silence until xvi 90, when he is his usual collected self, and it is only later, after the recognition between father and son has taken place, that Homer gives some hint, however delicately, of the hero's feelings. Now we again see a father kissing and shedding tears; but what was only a simile before is now reality.

ὥς ἄρα φωνήσας υἱὸν κύσει, κὰδ δὲ παρειῶν  
δάκρυον ἦκε χαμαῖζε· πάρος δ' ἔχε νωλεμῆς αἰεὶ

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.<sup>65</sup>

(xvi 190-1)

<sup>63</sup> On the scene, see the admirable discussion in Fenik (n. 6) 30-7; also H. Erbse, *Beiträge zum Verständnis der Odyssee* (Berlin 1972) 143-65. Athene's practical motives are explained in xiii 189-93, which have been unjustly attacked by analytic criticism. Moreover, like Odysseus himself, she enjoys deception and partial or gradual revelation: cf. esp. xviii 160-2 (crassly handled by Page [n. 33] 124 f.); here, as in *ibid.* 191, the motives described are Athene's, not Penelope's (cf. C. Emlyn-Jones, *G&R* xxxi [1984] 9-12). On divine deception cf. n. 71. In Book xiii, notice the subtle ironies of 219-20, 230 (Athene really *is* a goddess; contrast the successful flattery of vi 149-52); 234 (εὐδείλειος is elsewhere used only of Ithaca); and especially the mischievous delaying tactics of Athene in 237 ff. The phrases she uses there to describe Ithaca, before actually naming it, echo more explicit descriptions of their homeland by Telemachus and Odysseus himself (iv 605 ff., ix 25 ff.)—yet another self-conscious and creative use of formulaic language.

<sup>63a</sup> For Odysseus' name and interpretations thereof, see i 55, 60-2, v 340, 423, in contrast with the explicit etymologising at xix 407-9. In the first four cases Odysseus is the victim and sufferer, and the etymological play presents him as persecuted by the gods. In xix 407 ἄδυσσάμενος may be middle or passive; if middle, and active in sense, this again brings out the reversal of fortunes in the second half of the poem. Odysseus, who was dogged by ill fortune, now becomes the persecutor and punisher. See further L. P. Rank, *Etymologisierung en verwante Verschijnselen bij Homerus* (diss. Utrecht 1951) 52-60, who seems also to prefer the active sense here, as preparation for the slaughter. See also W. B.

Stanford, *CPh* xlvii (1952) 209-13. G. E. Dimock, 'The name of Odysseus', *The Hudson Review* ix (1956) 52-70, reprinted in various collections, is also suggestive, though some of his interpretations are wild. In general on significant names of this kind in Homer and elsewhere, see Rank, *op. cit.*; R. Pfeiffer, *History of classical scholarship* i (Oxford 1968) 4-5; Fraenkel on Aesch. *Ag.* 687, Collard on Eur. *Supp.* 497, M. Griffith, *HSCPh* lxxxii (1978) 83-6; and the brilliant discussion of Oedipus' name by B. Knox, *Oedipus at Thebes* (New Haven and London 1957) 127 f. (esp. *O. T.* 397).

<sup>64</sup> Further, Moulton (n. 40) 132-3. Cf. xvi 25 and 60, in which Eumaeus calls the boy τέκος and τέκνον. The swineherd greets Telemachus *as though* he has been parted from him for ten years; Odysseus really *has* been separated from him for twice that time. The simile speaks of an *only* son, μούνον; compare the actual circumstances of Odysseus' house (xvi 118-20).

<sup>65</sup> A further simile at xvi 213-9 marks the moment of acceptance and recognition by Telemachus and 'caps' the simile used of Eumaeus. By drawing a parallel with the *loss* of children, the poet stresses what might have been (Telemachus has just escaped the suitors' ambush). But the comparison with birds of prey reminds us of what is in store, revenge and punishment (for warriors compared with birds see e.g. *Il.* xiii 531, xvi 428, *Od.* xxiv 538; Moulton [n. 40] 35). Thus the similes are complementary; but whereas the first seemed to mark a conclusion, with the long-lost son happily home, the second looks ahead to new and destructive action. The sinister implications of the comparison are intensified in Aeschylus' imitations (*Ag.* 49-59, *Cho.* 246-9).

The self-discipline of Odysseus receives its severest trial in the encounter with Penelope in Book xix.<sup>66</sup> Here too he must mask his emotions and hold back his tears, even when he is forced to watch Penelope weep at the very words he himself utters; and here again, the poetic device of contrasting similes vividly communicates the lesson which Odysseus has now learned:

ἴσκε ψεύδεα πολλὰ λέγων ἐτύμοισιν ὁμοῖα·  
 τῆς δ' ἄρ' ἀκουούσης ῥέε δάκρυα, τήκετο δὲ χρῶς.  
 ὡς δὲ χιῶν κατατήκετ' ἐν ἀκροπόλοισιν ὄρεσσι,  
 ἦν τ' εὖρος κατέτηξεν, ἐπὴν ζέφυρος καταχεύῃ,  
 τηκομένης δ' ἄρα τῆς ποταμοὶ πλήθουσι ῥέοντες·  
 ὡς τῆς τήκετο καλὰ παρήϊα δάκρυ χεούσης,  
 κλαιούσης ἐὼν ἄνδρα παρήμενον.<sup>67</sup> αὐτὰρ Ὀδυσσεὺς  
 θυμῷ μὲν γοόωσαν ἔην ἑλέαιρε γυναῖκα,  
 ὀφθαλμοὶ δ' ὡς εἰ κέρα ἔστασαν ἠὲ σίδηρος  
 ἀτρέμας ἐν βλεφάροισι· δόλω δ' ὁ γε δάκρυα κεῦθεν.

He moulded all these falsehoods of his to resemble truth, and as the queen listened, her tears flowed and her cheeks grew wet. It was as when the snow melts on lofty mountains; the west wind brought it, the east wind melts it, and at its melting the rivers swell up to overflowing. So did her lovely cheeks grow wet as she shed tears and wept for the husband who sat so near her. 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.

(xix 203–212, tr. W. Shewring)

Clearly, the similes are antithetical: melting snow versus hard iron or horn; overflowing emotion versus containment and control.

The meeting between Odysseus and Athene in Book xiii is also important in other ways for the thematic design of the poem. Two aspects in particular require comment: delayed recognition and testing (πειράζειν and cognates are key words in the second half of the *Odyssey*).<sup>68</sup> Athene deceives Odysseus, disguising herself and concealing from him the fact that he is now back in Ithaca; thus she has the pleasure and satisfaction of making the revelation herself. There is a sophisticated and humorous psychological point here: Homer understands the superiority we feel when we are in a position to reassure or bring good news to others, how we are often willing to delay giving the news, hoping thus to enhance their suspense and our pleasure. This is the superiority that Odysseus himself enjoys throughout the second half of the poem. In almost all the recognition scenes it is he who chooses the moment of revelation (the exceptions are Argos, who does not really count, being a dog, and Eurycleia, where Odysseus has indeed slipped up, but remains in command of the situation and avoids further exposure). Athene, then, is showing him the way, but also demonstrating that she can play his game and deceive him. The scene is rich in witty ironies and double-bluffs.<sup>69</sup> Athene deceives Odysseus

<sup>66</sup> For a fine treatment of this scene, see C. Emllyn-Jones, *G&R* xxxi (1984) 1–14 (besides its positive merits, his article decisively refutes the mistaken view, held in various forms by different critics, that Penelope recognises Odysseus, whether subconsciously or otherwise, before the dénouement of Book xxiii). Judicious observations also in Fenik (n. 6) 39–46. Buffière (n. 1) 310 points out the contrast between Odysseus' self-discipline and the suitors' brash and emotional responses to Penelope's appearances.

<sup>67</sup> On the phrasing here see Macleod (n. 12) 41. On the stylistic devices of this passage see also J. D. Denniston, *Greek prose style* (Oxford 1952) 80. Note that the key word τήκετο was also used of Odysseus' weeping at the end of Book viii (522).

<sup>68</sup> On recognition in Homer and tragedy see esp.

Arist. *Poet.* xiv and xvi; also Satyrus, *vita Eur.*, fr. 39. vii Arrighetti. For modern studies see F. Solmsen, *Kl. Schriften* iii (Hildesheim 1982) 32–63; N. J. Richardson, *PLLS* iv (Liverpool 1983) 219–235.

For the testing-theme, see esp. *Od.* xi 442 ff., 454–6, xiii 336, xiv 459, xv 304, xvi 304–5, xvii 363, xix 45, 215, xxiii 108–10, 114 πειράζειν, 181, 188, 202, 206. Anticipations of the theme do appear in the first half, e.g. at ix 74; but there Odysseus' expedition is imprudent, and no effective test takes place. See further Thornton (n. 9) ch. iv; Havelock (n. 9) 163–76.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. n. 63. Note also how Odysseus' speech at 311 ff., after Athene has revealed herself, picks up and counters some of her phrasing: thus 312 ἀντιάσαντι echoes 292 καὶ εἰ θεὸς ἀντιάσειε; and each begins by praising the other and proceeds to criticize, Athene fondly and

successfully (he does not recognise who she is) and she makes her revelation (he is in Ithaca); but even in his moment of delight he does not give himself away. Instead of a spontaneous outburst of joy we find him responding with exquisite self-possession: 'Ah yes, Ithaca . . . yes, I've heard of that place, even far off in my home in Crete . . .' (xiii 256): these words form the prelude to one of his outrageous but splendidly circumstantial lies. In the end, Athene has to admit defeat and reveal her own identity (xiii 287–309, 330 ff.; note esp. 332–5, in which she praises his self-control).

Thus the poet prepares for the themes which will dominate subsequent books. Odysseus will move disguised among his household, *testing*, seeking out loyalty and treachery, good and evil.<sup>70</sup> Only when the test is passed will he reveal the truth. The scene in Book xiii is an ironic, touching but charming anticipation of the scenes of suspense, tension and drama which are to follow. As often, the gods of Homeric poetry are like mortals, their actions are analogous, but there are also crucial differences. Athene is like Odysseus, and that is why she loves him; but it is also why she tests his calibre and seeks to deceive and only later to undeceive him. Teasing and deception are characteristic of the gods, even when dealing with their favourites.<sup>71</sup> It is also often true that what is serious and even tragic for mortals is light-hearted and even unimportant for the gods, a point well illustrated by the *amour* of Ares and Aphrodite (viii 266–366).<sup>72</sup> So too here, Athene's deception and testing of Odysseus' mettle is amusing, for her and for us; but nothing depends on it for her. As a goddess, she can, if she wishes, play such games, with no fear of human retaliation, whereas in the later books the tests and deceptions which Odysseus practises are very different. Despite all the ingenuity and brazenness that he employs, we know that his life depends on his keeping his identity secret until the right moment.

The analogy between Athene's actions and those of Odysseus is also thematically important in another respect. It has been well observed that Odysseus himself, with his superior knowledge and power, is to some degree in the position of a Homeric god, avenging insults and defending his honour.<sup>73</sup> This analogy has also a moral dimension. Odysseus' seemingly lowly status, which in fact conceals terrible power and anger, is close to the stories, common in many cultures and found, for example, in the Old Testament, which tell of gods visiting men in disguise in order to test the hospitality they receive, and to find out whether their hosts are just and pious (*cf.* esp. xvii 482–7; Paul, *Hebrews* xiii 1 'be not forgetful to entertain strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares').<sup>74</sup> And if Odysseus is like a god in his testing of men's behaviour, he is also like one in the punishment that he exacts, which, like many actions of the gods, is both just and terrible. We may compare the ruthlessness with which Poseidon punishes the Phaeacians (xiii 125–87), or the punishment that Apollo and Artemis exacted (also with the bow) from the family of Niobe (*Il.* xxiv 605 ff.; Soph. *Niobe* fr. 441 Radt). This analogy has further implications for a number of scenes in the later books of the *Odyssey*.

First, as regards Penelope. When she awakens after the slaughter and hears the news that Eurycleia brings her, she cannot at first believe that it is truly Odysseus who accomplished it (her

humorously, Odysseus with genuine chagrin. Such responson between speeches is a frequent and highly-wrought Homeric technique: *cf.* Macleod (n. 12) 9–10, 52–3, and in the *Odyssey* compare especially xxiii 166–80 (n. 77 below).

<sup>70</sup> *Cf.* esp. xiv 459, xv 304, xvi 304 f., xix 215.

<sup>71</sup> See Fenik (n. 6) 38. On a grander and far from light-hearted scale in the *Iliad*, compare the deception or delusion of Hector, who is led on by Zeus to his disastrous end (*cf.* Griffin 41, 169). For deception of man by the gods see esp. *Il.* ii 1–83 (Agamemnon's dream sent by Zeus), iv 68–104 (Pandarus deceived by Athene with divine approval), xxii 214–299, esp. 247, 276 (Athene and Hector). Deception is again contemplated in *Il.* xxiv 24, but is ruled out by Zeus (71–2); in the end

Achilles is told outright what is to happen and why (xxiv 133–40), and Hermes deals kindly, if not altogether openly, with Priam.

<sup>72</sup> *Cf.* n. 59; and esp. the *laughter* of the gods in the tale: see viii 326, 343. Yet at the end of the story Aphrodite remains φιλομειδής (362); she is unashamed and unrepentant (*cf.* Griffin 200–1). The laughter of the gods is employed to similar effect in the *Iliad* (esp. i 595–6, 599; also in the theomachy, e.g. xxi 389, 408, 423, 434, 491, 508).

<sup>73</sup> See esp. E. Kearns, *CQ* xxxii (1982) 2–8.

<sup>74</sup> Further, *cf.* *Genesis* 18.1 ff., 19.2; Richardson on *h. Dem.* 93, 96; Hollis on *Ov. Met.* viii 611–724; Kearns, *art. cit.* esp. 6.

scepticism mirrors the earlier suspiciousness of her husband;<sup>75</sup> both Odysseus and Penelope need to learn that there is a time for trust and acceptance to supersede disbelief). Instead, Penelope supposes that it must be a god, who has come down from Olympus to punish the suitors for their villainy (xxiii 63 ff.). The scene which follows shows Penelope, in the midst of her confusion and doubt, formulating a plan to test the identity of the stranger (see esp. xxiii 108–110, 113–4). Once before, in Book xix, she had attempted to do so (see esp. 215 *νῦν μὲν δὴ σευ ξεῖνε γ' ὄϊω πειρήσεσθαι*), but there Odysseus had side-stepped.<sup>76</sup> Now we see the tables turned, the biter bit, in the famous counter-test of the bed (see esp. xxiii 181 *ὣς ἄρ' ἔφη πόσιος πειρωμένη*). Here Odysseus' celebrated caution and control vanish, and he bursts out with indignation. This scene not only trumps Odysseus' previous testing and Penelope's own failure in Book xix; Penelope here also goes one better than Athene in Book xiii, for even Athene, though she deceived Odysseus and he failed to recognise her, could not make him give himself away; *impasse*. Penelope is the only person who could outwit Odysseus in such a test, and this shows, like so many other details and parallelisms between them, how well matched husband and wife truly are.<sup>77</sup> Further, it is not just the test itself, Odysseus' knowledge of their secret, which makes Penelope believe in him, but his moment of angry passion, of uncontrolled emotion. As commentators have pointed out, a god could have known the truth, but no mortal in the Homeric poems can trick or deceive a god; and the automatic, unthinking surge of anger at the thought of *his* bed, his wonderful creation, being violated, is wholly human.<sup>78</sup> As often in Homer, the emotions of human relationships are more intense and more precious than those shared between god and man; in this sense too, the reunion between Odysseus and Penelope 'trumps', and has greater force or seriousness than, the encounter of Odysseus and Athene.

In the course of the poem, as I have tried to show, Odysseus acquires greater severity and self-control, and wins a deeper understanding of human feelings and motives, perhaps even of the wider condition of man.<sup>79</sup> In this sense, and in his role as avenger and instrument of divine justice, he is a hero with special moral authority. This is not the whole story, however. The 'philosophic' Odysseus never totally displaces the older, wiler Odysseus; rather, the moral side coincides with and controls his instinctive sense of curiosity (as in the testing scenes), his greed (as in the scene in which the suitors offer Penelope gifts, and Odysseus inwardly rejoices (xviii 281–3)), and his vanity (as in the scenes in which he teases praise of himself from others). The moral task of testing and dealing out justice offer a suitable channel for Odysseus' native character and

<sup>75</sup> Elsewhere in the poem the same pattern of encouragement and good news being met with disbelief is used with Telemachus (esp. iii 218–21) and Eumaeus (xiv 121–32, an important passage; 166–7, 361–8). The encounter with Eumaeus and his refusal to accept Odysseus' assurances foreshadow the more emotional *ὁμιλία* with Penelope: cf. Fenik (n. 6) 155, 157, and compare esp. xiv 151 and 391 with xxiii 72.

<sup>76</sup> For seminal observations on the deceptive move here, see Arist. *Poet.* 24 1460a 18 ff., with Richardson (n. 68), esp. 221–3; Hor. *Ars* 150 'atque ita mentitur, sic veris falsa remiscet', with Brink's note.

<sup>77</sup> Further, compare above all the paired similes at v 394–9 and xxiii 231–40 (cf. Moulton [n. 40] 128 f.): these similes are complementary in their application and parallel in structure (note esp. the triple repetition of *ἀσπάρσιος* in both). Also parallel and equal in length are the probing speeches by Odysseus and Penelope before the latter's test (xxiii 166–72, 174–80): *δαίμονι* is answered by *δαίμονι*; both address the old nurse; both feign a concession while hoping for submission or revelation; both give instructions about a bed (171, 179). For further cases of affinity compare xxiii 168 with xiii 333–8 (Macleod, marg.); xix 325 ff. with 107 ff. (*κλέος*

in 108 echoed in 333); xx 87–8 with 93–4 (telepathy?). The praise grudgingly given to Penelope by Antinous (ii 116–22) emphasises her exceptional intelligence; and her character throughout the poem reveals her self-control and restraint. She is regularly *ἑχέφρων* (e.g. xxiv 294), as is Odysseus (xiii 332).

<sup>78</sup> Cf. Stanford (n. 1) 57–9 and the note in his commentary on xxiii 182.

<sup>79</sup> In xxii 409 Odysseus restrains the overjoyed Eurycleia (411–2 *ἐν θυμῷ, γρηῦ, χαῖρε . . . οὐχ ὅση κταμένοισιν ἐπ' ἀνδράσιν εὐχετάσθαι*). Contrast the typical behaviour of the Iliadic hero (cf. n. 35; A. W. H. Adkins, *CQ* xix (1969) 20 ff. on *εὐχομαι et sim.*). This again shows the authority and wisdom of Odysseus. It is not simply a matter of different rules for wartime and peace; the behaviour of Clytemnestra in Aeschylus (*Ag.* 1394 *ἐπεύχομαι*) or of Electra in Euripides (*El.* 900 ff.) makes plain the degree of callousness and pride which was conceivable, even if horrifying, in success. Note also xxiv 545, where Odysseus rejoices at Athene's command to make peace (*χαῖρε δὲ θυμῷ*, a phrase ridiculed by Page [n. 33] 114). Odysseus welcomes peace in Ithaca; to battle without cause, against his own people, would be folly indeed.



talents, as they were described by Athene (xiii 291–9, 306–310, and esp. 330–338). The older, craftier side of his personality is not dead (though it may seem so for a time in Phaeacia), but it is *controlled* in a way that it was not always before (most conspicuously not in the Cyclops episode). He still, for instance, enjoys making up the most detailed and persuasive lies about his background, using a different one for each new auditor (*cf.* xii 452–3).<sup>80</sup> But these lies now serve a necessary purpose, are suited to the addressee, and convey through their fictions a serious and consistent moral lesson.<sup>81</sup>

If these observations are correct, they may point the way to a better understanding of one of the most controversial scenes in the poem, the encounter of Odysseus with Laertes in Book xxiv, in which the hero conceals his own identity, describes a meeting with Odysseus long before, and generally leads his father to the grim conclusion that his son is lost to him forever.<sup>82</sup> It is important, not least in considering the question of the episode's authenticity, to observe that the scene continues the vocabulary of testing and recognition which we have seen to be recurrent throughout the second half of the poem (see xxiv 216, 238, 345–6). Here we come to the core of the problem with this scene. It has long been seen that there is no reason for Odysseus not to reveal himself at once and spare his father so much agony. Where is our 'moral' hero, or even moderately affectionate son, now? The curious form which the scene does in fact take has been explained as the work of a bungling and insensitive hack,<sup>83</sup> and as the conditioned reflex of an oral poet still working within the limits of a set theme, the 'testing' theme, which is no longer relevant to the actual situation.<sup>84</sup> Perhaps there is room for a further suggestion.

We may note first that Odysseus does hesitate when he sees his father's sorry condition. Having previously proposed to test him (216), he now ponders for some time whether to do so, or to reveal himself at once (235–40). In other words, he has some qualms, as he never had before. Why, then, does he proceed? Perhaps the conditioned reflex is not Homer's, but Odysseus': he has lived so long with danger and the need for concealment that it has become almost second nature. Or again, he may still be smarting at having been outwitted by Penelope; he hopes to execute one more triumphant deception along the usual pattern, with himself the bringer of unforeseen good news and un hoped-for pleasure to his father.<sup>85</sup> At all events, the poet presents Odysseus here in a more dubious light, though he is not incomprehensible or despicable. What was previously a necessity and a dangerous game of self-preservation becomes a more mischievous, almost malicious joke on Odysseus' part. The 'moral' aspect of the testing theme slips away with the victory won and safety restored; now, the hero has one more moment of self-indulgence, of 'playing God', following the example of Athene in Book xiii. There too, we should remember, the deception was unnecessary.<sup>86</sup>

But the scene in Book xxiv backfires when the trick hurts Laertes, and hence Odysseus himself, much more than the latter had expected. Laertes cannot cope and hit back with skilful

<sup>80</sup> On Odysseus' lies see further C. R. Tranham, *Phoenix* vi (1952) 31–43; P. Walcot, *Anc. Soc.* viii (1977) 1–19; Fenik (n. 6) 167–71.

<sup>81</sup> *Cf.* nn. 58, 60–2 above. Does *Od.* xiv 156 f. mischievously allude to the famous opening of Achilles' main speech in *Iliad* ix, lines in which he implicitly criticises Odysseus (308 ff.)?

<sup>82</sup> I am of course aware that the status of the so-called 'Continuation' of the *Odyssey* (xxiii 296–xxiv 548) is still very much *sub judice*, and it seems to me that there are good arguments on both sides. Those who are convinced of the spuriousness of the scene under discussion may be reassured to know that I intend to base no important conclusions on that scene alone. Arguments for excision, good and bad, are assembled by Page (n. 33) ch. v, esp. 111–2; contrast W. B. Stanford, *Hermathena* c (1965) 1–21; Erbse (n. 63) esp. 166–250; D. Wender, *The last scenes of the Odyssey*,

*Mnem. Suppl.* lii (1978); Fenik (n. 6) 47–53. C. Moulton, *GRBS* xv (1974) 153–69 is perhaps the most balanced short account.

<sup>83</sup> Page, *loc. cit.* (n. 82).

<sup>84</sup> Fenik, *loc. cit.* (n. 82); also, with some additional points, Richardson (n. 68) 227–9.

<sup>85</sup> It may be objected that to attribute complex motives of this kind to the hero without the support of comment from the author is to come dangerously close to the documentary fallacy. But Homer does sometimes leave the reader to draw his own conclusions or deductions (Griffin 51, 61–6), and if we reject authorial incompetence as an explanation, then the oddity of Odysseus' behaviour compels us to explore these possibilities.

<sup>86</sup> Fenik (n. 6) 48–9 also sees this scene as the closest analogy to the encounter with Laertes.

rhetoric and counter-play; he cannot control or contain his emotion as Odysseus did in Book xiii (where in any case the news was good). Instead he collapses in despair, whereupon Odysseus, filled with grief and dismay, pours out the truth with unprecedented suddenness and openness (xxiv 318 ff.). The episode shows Odysseus, and us, that self-protection through deception is not an end in itself: there is a time also for openness and trust. Here again, the analogy between god and man also highlights the contrasts: Odysseus cannot play games with his fellow-men and his family forever, but needs to learn to show himself to his father as he has, in each case after delay, to his son and his wife. Here again, as in those scenes and when he heard the song of Demodocus, others' grief and pain bring home his own emotion, his own *humanity*, more acutely. Since he lacks the detachment of a god, Odysseus' own distress (318–9) answers that of Laertes (as we have seen, the hero's moments of open, unsuppressed emotion form a significant sequence in the poem). Odysseus and Laertes share their feelings at last, as Odysseus and Penelope did in the preceding book and as Achilles (*mutatis mutandis*) finds common ground and speaks openly with Priam in *Il.* xxiv.<sup>87</sup> In short, the *Odyssey* no less than the *Iliad* offers a subtle and many-sided presentation of human behaviour and relationships; and the moral insight of the poet guides and stimulates the moral judgement of the reader in his assessment of the hero of the poem no less than the villains.

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<sup>87</sup> Perhaps not only an analogy but a direct imitation, as Mr E. L. Bowie suggests to me. Achilles weeps with and for a substitute father, his true father being far away, helpless and grief-stricken (*Il.* xxiv 538–42, imitated (?) at *Od.* xi 494–503). But Odysseus regains his real father, and is able to do for him and his family what Achilles longs to do (*Od.* xi 496, 501–3).

The comparison of Achilles' fate with Odysseus' is prominent at the beginning of *Od.* xxiv, as it was in the first Nekyia: cf. Wender (n. 82) 38–44. In particular, Agamemnon's words at xxiv 192 cap his words of greeting to Achilles earlier in the scene (36), and strikingly modify a standard formula. 7 times in the *Iliad* and 15 times in the *Odyssey*, Odysseus is addressed with the line *διογενές Λαερτιάδη, πολυμήχαν' Ὀδυσσεῦ*. Here alone the phrase is modified, and the line

begins *ὄλβιε Λαέρταο πάι . . .*, for only now could Odysseus be so described. Only Achilles and Odysseus are addressed as *ὄλβιε* in the whole poem, and it seems plausible to see the poet as measuring Odysseus against the great figures of the *Iliad*, and above all its hero. Already these characters are natural opposites: cf. further Pl. *Hipp. Min.* 365e; Hor. *Odes* iv 6.3–24. The *Odyssey* is often thought to be an attempt to rival the *Iliad* in scale (the Cyclic poems, to judge by the numbers of books recorded, were notably shorter); and, as [Longinus] 9.12 observed, it forms a fitting sequel, filling in the story since the tale of the *Iliad* with remarkable economy. For further argument, see nn. 59, 81; A. Heubeck, *Der Odyssee-Dichter und die Ilias* (Erlangen 1954) 39 (analogies between *Od.* ii and *Il.* ii); Macleod (n. 12) 1–4.