

Odyssey ~ Book 1

RECAPITULATION:

- 1-25 O.'s present condition
- 26-79 Council of gods: Zeus decides on O.'s safe return
- 80-96 Ath. goes in disguise to Ithaca
- 97-155 O.'s palace: the suitors
- 156-320 Ath. tells Tel. to prepare to make a journey for news of O.
- 328-364 Pen. enters to find Tel. with new strength & willpower
- 365-420 Tel. rebukes the suitors & their reply
- 421-end Tel. goes to bed & thinks about Ath.'s advice.

POINTS TO NOTE:

1-25 Introduction ('PROEM') - its MORAL use: O. was not responsible for his companions' deaths. He is the last of the heroes to return from Troy: Poseidon is his main enemy. The *Odyssey* opens with O. about to return home after 10 years of wandering after the end of the war.

29-95 Meeting of the Gods: note the mention of Agamemnon's murder on his return at hands of his wife & her lover & his son's vengeance of this murder: should Tel. seek similar vengeance & how significant to the theme of the Od. is this story? Unlike suitors, who should be punished for their uncontrolled behaviour, O. is held up as a model of respect for the gods (66-7). Ath.'s arrival in the palace gives Homer the excuse to provide an update of the sit. there.

96-324 Athene meets Telemachus: note the imp. theme of XENIA (see intro. notes on Od.) Contrast Tel.'s treatment of Ath./Mentes with that of the suitors, who ignore her. Tel. is despondent & young but maturing rapidly: he knows how to treat a xenos. The suitors almost never acknowledge the gods in their feasting with the customary libations, etc. Ath. ominously advises Tel. to kill them if all else fails (295-6). O. does not appear until Bk 5 but he dominates Tel.'s thoughts: we are given an idea of his greatness & importance & the need for him to return. Ath. speaks of remarr. of Pen. but why does she suggest Tel. kills suitors after the marr.? - to stir him to act by presenting horrible scenarios to him?

325-444 Telemachus and Penelope: "Tel.'s emergence into manhood brings about a confrontation with the suitors & an abrupt change in his relationship with his mother. To them he is now a menace: to her he is suddenly the man of the house. & as such, something of a surprise." (G.S. Kirk)

Note the common pattern of PEN.'s ENTRANCES: appears veiled & with servants (328-35); makes a complaint (326-44); is rebuked (us. by Tel. - 345-59); retires, causing a fuss (360-6).

Note TENSION between Pen. & Tel. (e.g. 249-51); he often seems to go out of his way to rebuke/embarrass her in public. Pen. is continually trying to intervene in Tel.'s & the suitors' world, but is always frustrated. The veil & servants suggest her modesty & chastity

TELEMACHUS: his new behaviour becomes full of confidence. At 358-9 he asserts his mastery over the house. At 397-8 he states that he will fill O.'s shoes. Notice his guile & trickery (both features of O.) in replying to Eurymachus at 412ff.

The introduction of the more loyal nurse, EURYCLEIA at 429ff is a brief character sketch & desc. of Tel.'s bedtime - good example of H.'s attention to detail & his celebration of ordinary/everyday life.

Why does Homer start the story where he does? i.e. after O. has been wandering for 10 yrs., by concentrating on Tel., not O., for the first 5bks.....

- he can show the plight of his kingdom, palace, family & how much they long for his return: it also shows the challenges he faces if he returns

- the sit. in Ithaca is made more complicated/interesting by the tension between Tel. & Pen., & Pen. with the suitors. Bks 1-4 give H. the opportunity to build on the charac. of Tel. into a son worthy of O. - hence his travels & meetings with old heroes in Bks 2-4. This will bring him face to face with his own potential

- the scene is set for O. to stop in the land of the Phaeacians in Bk 6 &, as their xenos, to relate the story of his travels (Bks 9-12) in the 1st person (I...), making them more personal & interesting.

Odyssey ~ Book 2

RECAPITULATION:

1-79 Tel. at the assembly of suitors which he summoned to voice his complaints
80-128 Antinous blames Pen.
129-207 After Tel. speaks, Zeus sends an omen: the suitors ridicule its interpretation
208-59 Tel. demands a ship; assembly dismissed
260-97 Ath. appears to Tel. & offers support
298-381 Tel. rebukes Antinous & has Eurycleia prepare provisions for his journey in secret
382-434 Tel. sails for Pylos in one of Ath.'s ships

POINTS TO NOTE:

1-259 The assembly of suitors fulfils Ath.'s words of 269-92, but fails to move the dispute into the PUBLIC sphere: it remains a matter between Tel. & the suitors.

WHY do people in general not take a stand on the destruction of O.'s house/kingdom? cf 239-41

Suitors' character(s) given more depth: undeniably selfish/evil; violent (198-207); arrogant (244-51); ruthless. People often come across them playing, drinking or eating e.g. 1.106-112

299-300: H.'s implication is that they deserve their bloody fate.

Note the OMEN at 146ff - first of a number indicative of O.'s return (often with violent birds in them).

Development of Telemachus over Bks 1&2: the Greek word for 'reputation' is KLEOS (lit. 'What people say of you') It represented your legacy after death & was of great importance. As **Bk 1** opens, Tel. is despairing & despondent (1.114-8), cannot bring himself to believe that he is O.'s son (1.215-220) & wishes that he had been son of a diff. prosperous father or one who had died gloriously in battle (1.234-243). Ath. helps him in this 'identity crisis' by telling him how like his father he is (1.207ff), telling him to abandon childhood (1.296-7) & pointing out how Orestes, Agamemnon's son, had taken revenge on Ag.'s killers (1.291-302). **In Bk 2**, Ath. glorifies Tel. & he makes his first public address confidently (to start with) - but then he admits he doesn't have the strength/authority to expel the suitors (60-79) & finishes in tears & a tantrum. Halitherses interprets Zeus' omen in his favour & Tel. announces his decision to travel. He still has some way to go in establishing his authority & kleos.

Penelope's Character: we see that she is more clever than many heroines of the past (115-22) & cunning (the shroud, 93ff). Note that O. was famous for being cunning. She is not just the timid little stay-at-home she may have seemed in Bk 1.

260-434 Telemachus prepares to travel: what precisely is the suitors' aim now? Merely for one of them to marry Pen.? Note their talk of dividing the property up between them if Tel. dies at sea (335); hence the advice of Eurycleia to stay at home & guard his property (367). Tel. seems to know his own mind: he rejects Antinous' suggestion quite forthrightly at 309ff & prepares to DECEIVE (O.'s favourite word) Pen. about travelling without her consent. Ath. has urged him to be like his father (270ff) & to seek kleos through WORDS & DEEDS (272). Tel. may finally be realising his potential BUT note the contrast between youth & inexperience & adult potential. From 382-434 observe his apparent authority - with ATH.'s GUIDANCE e.g. she leads & he follows at 405 & 416. However, divine help often enhances a hero - & so Tel. is WORTHY of Ath.'s support.

Questions to ponder...

- If the suitors were so ruthless, why didn't they kill Tel. & seize O.'s property at once?
- Why does Ath. encourage Tel. to travel when she knows all along that O. is about to return? Zeus said so explicitly, in the divine assembly (1.76-7).

Odyssey ~ Book 5

RECAPITULATION:

- 1-20 Ath. at 2nd Council of gods asks about O. again
- 21-42 Zeus sends Hermes to order CALYPSO to send O. from her island (Ogygia)
- 43-115 Hermes flies to Ogygia & delivers his message
- 116-191 Cal. reluctantly submits & tells O. to build raft. reassuring him against trickery
- 192-227 Cal. & O. spend their last eve. tog.
- 228-270 O. builds 'boat' & departs
- 271-332 Before reaching land his boat is destroyed by Pos.' storm
- 333-375 Sea-goddess Ino/Leucothoe saves him with her scarf
- 376-493 Pos. calms storm; O. finally reaches the coast, enters mouth of a river & falls asleep

POINTS TO NOTE:

Change of location right from start: the 'real' world of Ithaca ... the gods ... the 'fabulous' world of O.'s travels. BUT note how Homer blends the human & divine/supernatural worlds without difficulty eg 192ff ("With these words...") - O. is living with the semi-divine Cal., although the diff. bet. mortals & immortals is stressed at 209.

Second Proem at lines 1-20 (cf 1.1-21): no real need for 2nd meeting of gods (Ath. has already suggested that Hermes advise Cal. to free O. at 1.84). However this divine 'recap.' helps emph. the concern for O. from (some of) gods & also allows oral poet to remind listener of general plot outline & what is to come (at 25-42). [Some argue for this being the beginning of a version which did not contain Bks 1-4]

Odysseus: our first sight of the hero confirms Proteus' desc. of him at 4.556 - helpless, tearful, trapped & mistrustful eg 171-9 on Cal.'s island; despite this he continues to sleep with Cal., albeit 'unwillingly'! His GOAL remains Ithaca, no matter what (219-24): note that a man's loyalty to his household is unaffected by affairs with foreigners/slaves (women do not enjoy the same ideal/privilege).

O.'s CHARACTERISTICS: stubborn endurance (151-8); self-reliance eg during the storm 324ff and he has to build 'boat' himself (234ff) altho. Cal. provides favourable wind (268); calm & rational - weighs up the alternatives eg 354.408.465: although various gods are on his side eg Ath. & Leucothoe, O. is unaware of this, so he has to rely on himself. He also experiences frustration that he can only prove his heroic status by performing glorious deeds in sight of his peers - hence his wish that he had obtained his KLEOS by dying at Troy (306-12). Note also how often O. has to CONCEAL his identity even when he reaches land: Nausicaa (Bk 6), Cyclops (Bk 9), in Ithaca (Bks 13-22). The new heroic quality we see Homer delivering here is SELF-CONTROL.

Calypso: from Greek 'kalupto', 'I conceal'. She has kept O. for 7 YEARS. This allows Tel. to grow up & be finding his real identity & kleos in Ithaca. Cal = daughter of Atlas (1.52) but is NOT an Olympian - in fact she resents the divine interference in her life (118ff). She seems v. affectionate towards O. & is persistent - her last appeal to him is in offering him immortality (hers to give?... 203).

Note the 'comedy of manners' bet. Hermes & Cal. - she omits proper XENIA by questioning him before offering food (86-90): her anxiety? It then takes Hermes 15 lines to deliver his message & even then he puts the responsibility on Zeus (112), but note his stern threat at 146-7. HERMES is a god of TRANSITION (Greek 'hermia' = 'boundary-marker') & of exchanges & transfers.

Leucothoe = Ino: Homer using myth creatively - mortal (Ino) was changed into sea-goddess (Leuc.) & so is sympathetic to O. bec. she was once mortal; BUT, as with Cal. (176ff), O. is suspicious (356ff). Note also the reappearance of ATH., helping her favourite (382ff) - reminder of the divine plan for O.

Style: note H.'s use of DOUBLETS in Bk 5. O. is wrecked by Pos. twice: has 2 monologues, two helpers, & climbs back onto his boat twice. Compare this with the two suitor-spokesmen Antinous & Eurymachus & compare Cal. with Nausicaa in Bk 6.

SIMILES - Iliadic technique of clustering round exciting scene: here, the storm (wind at 328 & 368, sickness at 394, octopus at 432, fire at 488).

Odyssey ~ Book 6

RECAPITULATION:

O. has reached Scheria, land of the Phaeacians.

1-47 Ath. visits the princess Nausicaa in a dream & tells her to go & wash clothes at the river

48-84 N. is given leave by her father, sets out in mule cart with attendants

85-109 They wash clothes, eat & play ball

110-48 They wake O.; he decides to ask for help

149-250 O. speaks to N.; she gives him clothes & food

251-315 N. asks O. not to accompany her back to city for fear of scandal, but to approach the Queen alone

316-331 When they reach the city, O. remains outside in Ath.'s grove.

POINTS TO NOTE:

Initially, it seems that O.'s troubles are over (Pos. has vowed to leave him alone 5.288-9). PHAEACIANS seem respectful of strangers (208); they revere the gods properly (12-18) despite being far away from civilisation (4, 8, 204ff) & their nation is unwarlike (202-3).

DANGERS? N.'s apparent attraction to O.: never defined by Homer, always vague (eg 239); stress on her marriageable age (25ff & 282-4); there are unpleasant gossips around (274) & people have connections with Pos. & Cyclops (5 & 267).

BALANCE: Ath. has a sacred grove there (291-2) & appears to N. (24ff) - Ath. is in control of events (110ff) altho. O. does not know this (326).

Odysseus : naked, begrimed, rugged hero of the Trojan War who has nothing but his wits to rely on to win the confidence of N. who is exposed & vulnerable (138ff). Contrast his relationship with the regal, bashful & endearing N. with the devious & stubborn Caypso: Cal. feeds O. (5.196), bathes him (5.264) & sleeps with him (5.226-7); N. orders the servants to bathe him (210), feed him (246) & merely admires him from afar (237). N. remains practical, folding clothes etc. in O.'s presence (252), but hints very strongly at 276ff that he would be pretty much her ideal husband! Book 6 gives ample illustrations of qualities O. now needs to survive (cf Iliadic skill in battle): tact, courtesy, careful handling of sits. (eg 118 & 141); his problem is that he is still an 'Homeric hero' & his concealment must be thrown off at some point to be his true self - but when?

Nausicaa : portrayed sympathetically; practical (252-3), crafty/wheedling (56-65), has courage to stay to face naked man at 139 & also at 199ff, fun-loving (99ff), cautious (209-10), flattering (276-84), & commanding (tells O. to wait in Ath.'s grove 255ff).

Marriage is on her mind (239-45) - with O? (276-84) - but her instructions to O. to kneel before the Queen are with his eventual return home in mind (313-15).

Her speech at 57ff is a masterpiece of wheedling, appealing to the needs of her father & brothers, never once mentioning her dream of marriage; note also the closeness of father & daughter here.

The preparations for her washing trip (71ff) enable Homer to celebrate the ordinary (cf Tel. going to bed 1.451ff). Like Pen. (1.328-35), N.'s reputation & person are protected by maidservants & veils (100); protection will soon be removed when she is unveiled & servants flee at approach of O. (138).

Supplication : (142ff) Usually a Greek disarmed & threw himself upon the mercy of another by clinging to the supplicattee's knees - the position indicated complete surrender. O. decides against this method because it might be misunderstood as a potential threat to her. Hence his first words to her are tactful, reassuring (149-61) & emphasise the value of chastity.

Homeric Technique : note device of anticipating/preparing listener for what will happen shortly - see lines 25-40 (Ath. tells N. to wash clothes) & 112ff (Ath. arranges for O. to awake & see N.) cf 5.28ff & councils of gods. To help listener to keep grip on plot?

Simile: O. 'like a mountain lion' (130) - also used of warrior advancing in Iliad 12.299f & so amusingly out of context here (O. nakedly advancing on vulnerable females).

To ponder...

Why does N. play little part after this when it looks like it could develop into quite a romance?

Why the suggestion that O. approach Queen Arete, as if there is a crucial role she is to play in the proceedings (310) but in Bk. 7 she seems to play little or no part at all?

Odyssey ~ Book 7

RECAPITULATION:

- 1- 13 Nausicaa reaches home
- 14-77 O. is directed by Ath. to palace of Alcinous, King of Phaeacians
- 78-132 Palace & gardens described
- 133-66 O. begs for help from Queen Arete
- 167-227 He is hospitably received & promised convoy home
- 228-97 Arete questions O. & he describes how he came to Scheria
- 298-347 Alc. reassures O. of his goodwill before all retire for the night

POINTS TO NOTE:

Scheria

- DIVINE /MYSTERIOUS connections: 92-4, 199-206
- HOSTILITY TO STRANGERS: 16, 32
- LOVE OF SHIPS: 325-8
- KNOWLEDGE OF RIGHT & WRONG: 164-6, 315-8
- UTOPIAN IDEALS of palace: 81ff

Odysseus

Still cared for by Ath. (14, 40-2), continues to CONCEAL IDENTITY (helpless stranger, 22-6 & needy beggar, 215-21). He is complemented (226, 311-5) & accepted into palace. His self-presentation + Nausicaa's hinting in Bk 6 re. marriage cause Alc. to offer her in marr. to O. (though he doesn't insist!) The uncertainty of the sit. enables H. to develop theme of O.'s mastery of his circumstances.

Queen Arete

Name = 'prayed to' in Greek. At 6.310-5, she is suggested (by Naus.) as vital to O.'s welfare (& by Ath. at 7.47ff) but it is Alc. who takes over (155ff) after O. has supplicated her; she asks only 2 qns., one of which is 'Who are you?' and this remains unanswered & is not pursued. WHY? Is it evidence for multiple authorship of Odyssey? - further development of Arete in another version? Or is it more a qn. of O. having to remain incognito at pres. because he needs to know them better: would a people who apparently live so far from human soc. have even heard of him? He needs to be sure they would believe him too - & he is at pres. completely destitute. Arete delays questioning for the sake of xenia & allows him to eat: her role is small but part of the importance of their hospitality. she is approached by O. as one who is respected & admired for her good sense & ability to arbitrate in disputes (69ff).

Homeric Technique

Common feature of how heroes in need are helped by gods in disguise (18ff).

Ath. will also help O. with a mist at 13.187ff in Ithaca.

Note how women hold the key to O.'s survival in the early bks: Calypso, Ino, Naus., Arete, Circe, Ath. - unusual sit. for Iliadic hero.

O.'s version of events at 244ff shows how the oral poet can compress series of events (he omits Ino episode, noise of the girls who woke him & -wrongly- says Naus. bathed him).