

THE AUTHORESS OF THE ODYSSEY

Samuel Butler



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The Authoress of the Odyssey,
where and when she wrote, who she was, the use she made
of the *Iliad*, and how the poem grew under her hands,
by Samuel Butler

First published 1897

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“There is no single fact to justify a conviction,” said Mr. Cock: whereon the Solicitor General replied that he did not rely upon any single fact, but upon a chain of facts, which taken all together left no possible means of escape.

Times, Leader, Nov 16, 1894.

(The prisoner was convicted.)

Al Professore

Cav. Biagio Ingroia,

Prezioso Alleato

L'autore Riconoscente



Nausicaa (See Preface).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Samuel Butler, grandson of the scholar and Bishop Samuel Butler, was born December 4th, 1835, and died June 18th, 1902. He is not only the author of two well-known and influential novels, *Erewhon* and *The Way of All Flesh*, but also of a great number of works dealing with religion, biology, philosophy, history, art and literature, and he also tried his hand at sheep-farming in New Zealand, painting and musical composition. Always the intellectual outsider, heretic and iconoclast, he was critical both towards Christianity and Darwinism — “I have never written on any subject unless I believed that the authorities on it were hopelessly wrong,” he stated.

Butler’s translations of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, which date from 1898 and 1900, are eminently readable. He tells the story faithfully, though without tormenting the reader with hexameter verses or other vain attempts at getting close to the “feel” of the Greek original. What is lost in linguistic authenticity, or rather the semblance of it, is more than made up for in clarity and in the ease with which we can follow the flow of the tale.

ABOUT THIS BOOK

Butler's theory that the *Odyssey* was written by a female author, by a young Sicilian woman, has not been received favorably. At his time the idea that a woman could have written one of the most revered works in the history of literature seemed absurd and hardly worthy of further discussion — that Butler had no academic standing did, of course, not help. Most of today's feminist classic literary scholars are not primarily interested in the gender of the author of the *Odyssey*, but rather chide Butler for what they perceive as a condescending attitude, which they find expressed in sentences such as “surely if the *Odyssey* has charmed us as a man's work, its charm and wonder are infinitely increased when we see it as a woman's.” An interesting overview is given by Mary Ebbott in her essay *Butler's Authoress of the Odyssey: Gendered Readings of Homer, Then and Now* (Classics@ Journal Vol. 3, <https://classics-at.chs.harvard.edu/classics3-mary-ebott-butlers-authoress-of-the-odyssey-gendered-readings-of-homer-then-and-now/>).

In Homeric studies Butler's *Authoress* is at best noted as a curiosity, but has never been seriously discussed. I am very far from being a classic scholar, and I do not even know a word of Ancient Greek beyond what has become part of our modern languages, so I am not at all qualified to assess the plausibility of Butler's theory. As a layperson, though, I find it interesting, and, to my limited understanding, compelling, and I must also admit that I like the idea, as much as I like the *Odyssey* itself. And I also like it how Butler addresses the process of writing fiction, and how when he discusses minor flaws in the narration

he does it sympathetically, and shows us that little imperfections do not diminish the quality of a great work of art, but may even be part of its lasting appeal.

In the time that has passed since Butler wrote the *Authoress* our historial knowledge has grown, and today it is generally assumed that the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were written at much later dates than Butler believed. While this makes some of his deliberations obsolete, it does not invalidate the overall argument.

You may find chapters 12 to 14 less interesting to read than the other parts of this book, because of their historical inaccuracies and the somewhat tedious discussion of details. Most of Chapter 14 has been omitted here because you would have to know Ancient Greek to be able to read it. If you skip these three chapters you will not have missed too much.

Butler wrote for an audience which he assumed to know Greek. This edition does not offer translations of Greek words or quotes, but you will still be able to follow Butler's arguments without them.

Butler frequently refers to chapter and verse numbers in the *Odyssey* — you will need a line by line translation in verses (unless you can read the original) to look them up, but you're excused if you don't.

~

The British author Robert Graves, best known for *I, Claudius*, wrote a novel based on Butler's "authoress" theory, *Homer's Daughter* (1955). It makes for a nice reading, but while I liked the beginning, I do not like the end. The *Odyssey* is a fantasy story, but instead of showing us how his protagonist creates art out of fictionalizing events in her own life, towards the end Graves lets these events happen to her for real as described in the *Odyssey*, utterly implausible and excessively violent as

they are. Thus turning a story about the creation of a fantasy story into a remake of that story, he misses the opportunity to talk about a writer's creative process — something that Butler himself repeatedly does, and for which alone *The Authoress* is worth reading.

ABOUT THIS EDITION

This is an abridged edition. Chapter 2 has been omitted, in which Butler gives a lengthy synopsis of the *Odyssey* — this was written before his translation of the *Odyssey*, which makes the synopsis redundant.

Also omitted are the Index, large parts of Chapter 14 which mostly consist of quotes from the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* in Ancient Greek, some of the illustrations that are of poor quality and/or do little to enlighten the reader, a few footnotes referring to omitted illustrations, and a few references in the text to the omitted synopsis.

In the present edition *shew* has been changed to *show*, Epic Cycle is written with upper case initials, Æ and Œ ligatures have been resolved to Ae and Oe, and chapter numbers are written in Arabic instead of Roman numerals. Book numbers of the *Odyssey* that Butler consistently wrote as lower case Roman numbers are here, entirely on my whim, written in small caps. *Iliad* book numbers were mostly written as upper case Roman numbers, a few in lower case — I have made them consistently upper case.

Numbered footnotes are Butler's, footnotes with asterisks are mine.
[R.S.]

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PREFACE

The following work consists in some measure of matter already published in England and Italy during the last six years. The original publications were in the *Athenaeum*, Jan. 30 and Feb. 20, 1892, and in the *Eagle* for the Lent Term, 1892, and for the October Term, 1892. Both these last two articles were re-published by Messrs. Metcalfe & Co. of Cambridge, with prefaces, in the second case of considerable length. I have also drawn from sundry letters and articles that appeared in *Il Lambruschini*, a journal published at Trapani and edited by Prof. Giacalone-Patti, in 1892 and succeeding years, as also from two articles that appeared in the *Rassegna della Letteratura Siciliana*, published at Acireale in the autumn of 1893 and of 1894, and from some articles published in the *Italian Gazette* (then edited by Miss Helen Zimmern) in the spring of 1895.

Each of the publications above referred to contained some matter which did not appear in the others, and by the help of local students in Sicily, among whom I would name the late Signor E. Biaggini of Trapani, Signor Sugameli of Trapani, and Cavaliere Professore Ingroia of Calatafimi, I have been able to correct some errors and become possessed of new matter bearing on my subject. I have now entirely re-cast and re-stated the whole argument, adding much that has not appeared hitherto, and dealing for the first time fully with the question of the writer's sex.

No reply appeared to either of my letters to the *Athenaeum* nor to my Italian pamphlets. It is idle to suppose that the leading Iliadic and

Odyssean scholars in England and the continent do not know what I have said. I have taken ample care that they should be informed concerning it. It is equally idle to suppose that not one of them should have brought forward a serious argument against me, if there were any such argument to bring. Had they brought one it must have reached me, and I should have welcomed it with great pleasure; for, as I have said in my concluding Chapter, I do not care whether the *Odyssey* was written by man or by woman, nor yet where the poet or poetess lived who wrote it; all I care about is the knowing as much as I can about the poem; and I believe that scholars both in England and on the continent would have helped me to fuller understanding if they had seen their way to doing so.

A new edition, for example, of Professor Jebb's* *Introduction to Homer* was published some six weeks after the first and more important of my letters to the *Athenaeum* had appeared. It was advertised as "this day" in the *Athenaeum* of March 12, 1892; so that if Professor Jebb had wished to say anything against what had appeared in the *Athenaeum*, he had ample time to do so by way of postscript. I know very well what I should have thought it incumbent upon me to do had I been in his place, and found his silence more eloquent on my behalf than any words would have been which he is at all likely to have written, or, I may add, to write.

I repeat that nothing deserving serious answer has reached me from any source during the six years, or so, that my Odyssean theories have been before the public. The principal notices of them that have appeared so far will be found in the *Spectator*, April 23, 1892; the *Cambridge Observer*, May 31, 1892; the *Classical Review* for November,

* Sir Richard Claverhouse Jebb (1841–1905). [R.S.]

1892, June, 1893, and February, 1895, and *Longman's Magazine* (see *At the Sign of the Ship*) for June, 1892.

My frontispiece is taken by the kind permission of the Messrs. Alinari of Florence, from their photograph of a work in the museum at Cortona called *La Musa Polinnia*. It is on slate and burnt, is a little more than half life size, and is believed to be Greek, presumably of about the Christian era, but no more precise date can be assigned to it. I was assured at Cortona that it was found by a man who was ploughing his field, and who happened to be a baker. The size being suitable he used it for some time as a door for his oven, whence it was happily rescued and placed in the museum where it now rests.

As regards the Greek text from which I have taken my abridged translation, I have borne in mind throughout the admirable canons laid down by Mr. Gladstone in his *Studies in Homer*, Oxford University Press, 1858, Vol. I., p. 43. He holds: —

1. That we should adopt the text itself as the basis of all Homeric enquiry, and not any preconceived theory nor any arbitrary standard of criticism, referable to particular periods, schools, or persons.
2. That as we proceed in any work of construction drawn from the text, we should avoid the temptation to solve difficulties that lie in our way by denouncing particular portions of it as corrupt or interpolated; should never set it aside except on the closest examination of the particular passage questioned; should use sparingly the liberty of even arraying presumptions against it; and should always let the reader understand both when and why it is questioned.

The only emendation I have ventured to make in the text is to read *Νηρίτω* instead of *Νηίω* in I. 186 and *ὑπονηρίτου* for *ὑπονηίου* in III. 81. A more speculative emendation in IV. 606, 607 I forbear even to

suggest. I know of none others that I have any wish to make. As for interpolations I have called attention to three or four which I believe to have been made at a later period by the writer herself, but have seen no passage which I have been tempted to regard as the work of another hand.

I have followed Mr. Gladstone, Lord Derby, Colonel Mure, and I may add the late Professor Kennedy and the Rev. Richard Shilleto, men who taught me what little Greek I know, in retaining the usual Latin renderings of Greek proper names. What was good enough for the scholars whom I have named is good enough for me, and I should think also for the greater number of my readers. The public whom I am addressing know the *Odyssey* chiefly through Pope's translation, and will not, I believe, take kindly to Odysseus for Ulysses, Aias for Ajax, and Polydeukes for Pollux. Neither do I think that Hekabe will supersede Hecuba, till

“What's Hecuba to him or he to Hecuba?”

is out of date.

I infer that the authorities of the British Museum are with me in this matter, for on looking out “Odysseus” in the catalogue of the library I find “See Ulysses.”

Moreover the authors of this new nomenclature are not consistent. Why not call Penelope Penelopeia? She is never called anything else in the *Odyssey*. Why not Achilleus? Why not Bellerophontes? Why Hades, when *Αἰδης* has no aspirate? Why Helios instead of Eēlios? Why insist on Achaians and Aitolians, but never on Aithiopians? Why not Athenaeans rather than Athenians? Why not Apollon? Why not either Odusseus, or else Odysseys? and why not call him Oduseus or Odysseys whenever the *Odyssey* does so?

Admitting that the Greek names for gods and heroes may one day become as familiar as the Latin ones, they have not become so yet, nor shall I believe that they have done so, till I have seen Odysseus supplant Ulysses on railway engines, steam tugs, and boats or ships. Jove, Mercury, Minerva, Juno, and Venus convey a sufficiently accurate idea to people who would have no ready-made idea in connection with Zeus, Hermes, Athene, Here, and Aphrodite. The personalities of the Latin gods do not differ so much from those of the Greek, as, for example, the Athene of the *Iliad* does from the Athene of the *Odyssey*. The personality of every god varies more or less with that of every writer, and what little difference may exist between Greek and Roman ideas of Jove, Juno, &c., is not sufficient to warrant the disturbance of a nomenclature that has long since taken an established place in literature.

Furthermore, the people who are most shocked by the use of Latin names for Greek gods and heroes, and who most insist on the many small innovations which any one who opens a volume of the *Classical Review* may discover for himself, are the very ones who have done most to foist Wolf and German criticism upon us, and who are most tainted with the affectation of higher critical taste and insight, which men of the world distrust, and which has brought the word “academic” into use as expressive of everything which sensible people will avoid. I dare not, therefore, follow these men till time has shown whether they are faddists or no. Nevertheless, if I find the opinion of those whom I respect goes against me in this matter, I shall adopt the Greek names in any new edition of my book that may be asked for. I need hardly say that I have consulted many excellent scholars as to which course I should take, and have found them generally, though not

always, approve of my keeping to the names with which Pope and others have already familiarized the public.

Since Chapter xxv. was beyond reach of modification, I have asked the authorities of the British to accept a copy of the *Odyssey* with all the Iliadic passages underlined and referred to in MS. I have every reason to believe that this will very shortly be indexed under my name, and (I regret to say) also under that of Homer. It is my intention within the next few weeks to offer the Museum an *Iliad* with all passages borrowed by the writer of the *Odyssey* underlined — reference being given to the Odyssean passage in which they occur.

Lastly, I would express my great obligations to my friend Mr. H. Festing Jones, who in two successive years has verified all topographical details on the ground itself, and to whom I have referred throughout my work whenever I have been in doubt or difficulty.

September 27th, 1897.

CHAPTER I

Importance of the enquiry — The steps whereby I was led to my conclusions — The multitude of early Greek poetesses removes any *à priori* difficulty — The muses and Minerva as heads of literature — Man, rather than woman, the interloper.

If the questions whether the *Odyssey* was written by a man or a woman, and whether or no it is of exclusively Sicilian origin, were pregnant with no larger issues than the determination of the sex and abode of the writer, it might be enough merely to suggest the answers and refer the reader to the work itself. Obviously, however, they have an important bearing on the whole Homeric controversy; for if we find a woman's hand omnipresent throughout the *Odyssey*, and if we also find so large a number of local details, taken so exclusively and so faithfully from a single Sicilian town as to warrant the belief that the writer must have lived and written there, the presumption seems irresistible that the poem was written by a single person. For there can hardly have been more than one woman in the same place able to write such — and such homogeneous — poetry as we find throughout the *Odyssey*.

Many questions will become thus simplified. Among others we can limit the date of the poem to the lifetime of a single person, and if we find, as I believe we shall, that this person in all probability flourished roughly between 1050 and 1000 B.C., if, moreover, we can show, as we assuredly can, that she had the *Iliad* before her much as we have it now, quoting, consciously or unconsciously, as freely from the most suspected parts as from those that are admittedly Homer's, we shall

have done much towards settling the question whether the *Iliad* also is by one hand or by many.

Not that this question ought to want much settling. The theory that the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were written each of them by various hands, and pieced together in various centuries by various editors, is not one which it is easy to treat respectfully. It does not rest on the well established case of any other poem so constructed; literature furnishes us with no poem whose genesis is known to have been such as that which we are asked to foist upon the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. The theory is founded on a supposition as to the date when writing became possible, which has long since been shown to be untenable; not only does it rest on no external evidence, but it flies in the face of what little external evidence we have. Based on a base that has been cut from under it, it has been sustained by arguments which have never succeeded in leading two scholars to the same conclusions, and which are of that character which will lead any one to any conclusion however preposterous, which he may have made up his mind to consider himself as having established. A writer in the *Spectator* of Jan. 2, 1892, whose name I do not know, concluded an article by saying,

That the finest poem of the world was created out of the contributions of a multitude of poets revolts all our literary instincts.

Of course it does, but the Wolfian heresy, more or less modified, is still so generally accepted both on the continent and in England that it will not be easy to exterminate it.

Easy or no this is a task well worth attempting, for Wolf's theory has been pregnant of harm in more ways than are immediately apparent. Who would have thought of attacking Shakespeare's existence — for if Shakespeare did not write his plays he is no longer

Shakespeare — unless men's minds had been unsettled by Wolf's virtual denial of Homer's? Who would have reinscribed picture after picture in half the galleries of Europe, often wantonly, and sometimes in defiance of the clearest evidence, if the unsettling of questions concerning authorship had not been found to be an easy road to reputation as a critic? Nor does there appear to be any end to it, for each succeeding generation seems bent on trying to surpass the recklessness of its predecessor.

And more than this, the following pages will read a lesson of another kind, which I will leave the reader to guess at, to men whom I will not name, but some of whom he may perhaps know, for there are many of them. Indeed I have sometimes thought that the sharpness of this lesson may be a more useful service than either the establishment of the points which I have set myself to prove, or the dispelling of the nightmares of Homeric extravagance which German professors have evolved out of their own inner consciousness.

Such language may be held to come ill from one who is setting himself to maintain two such seeming paradoxes as the feminine authorship, and Sicilian origin, of the *Odyssey*. One such shock would be bad enough, but two, and each so far-reaching, are intolerable. I feel this, and am oppressed by it. When I look back on the record of Iliadic and Odyssean controversy for nearly 2500 years, and reflect that it is, I may say, dead against me; when I reflect also upon the complexity of academic interests, not to mention the commercial interests vested in well-known school books and so-called education — how can I be other than dismayed at the magnitude, presumption, and indeed utter hopelessness, of the task I have undertaken?

How can I expect Homeric scholars to tolerate theories so subversive of all that most of them have been insisting on for so many

years? It is a matter of Homeric (for my theory affects Iliadic questions nearly as much as it does the *Odyssey*) life and death for them or for myself. If I am right they have invested their reputation for sagacity in a worthless stock. What becomes, for example, of a great part of Professor Jebb's well-known *Introduction to Homer* — to quote his shorter title — if the *Odyssey* was written all of it at Trapani, all of it by one hand, and that hand a woman's? Either my own work is rubbish, in which case it should not be hard to prove it so without using discourteous language, or not a little of theirs is not worth the paper on which it is written. They will be more than human, therefore, if they do not handle me somewhat roughly.

As for the *Odyssey* having been written by a woman, they will tell me that I have not even established a *primâ facie* case for my opinion. Of course I have not. It was Bentley* who did this, when he said that the *Iliad* was written for men, and the *Odyssey* for women.¹ The history of literature furnishes us with no case in which a man has written a great masterpiece for women rather than men. If an anonymous book strikes so able a critic as having been written for women, a *primâ facie* case is established for thinking that it was probably written by a woman. I deny, however, that the *Odyssey* was written for women; it was written for any one who would listen to it. What Bentley meant was that in the *Odyssey* things were looked at from a woman's point of view rather than a man's, and in uttering this obvious truth, I repeat, he established once for all a strong *primâ facie* case for thinking that it was written by a woman.

If my opponents can fasten a cavil on to the ninth part of a line of

* Richard Bentley (1662–1742), English classical scholar, critic, and theologian, considered to have been the “founder of historical philology.” [R.S.]

¹ See Introduction to the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, by R. C. Jebb, 1888, p. 106.

my argument, they will take no heed of, and make no reference to, the eight parts on which they dared not fasten a misrepresentation however gross. They will declare it fatal to my theory that there were no Greek-speaking people at Trapani when the *Odyssey* was written. Having fished up this assertion from the depths of their ignorance of what Thucydides, let alone Virgil, has told us — or if they set these writers on one side, out of their still profounder ignorance of what there was or was not at Trapani in the eleventh century before Christ — they will refuse to look at the internal evidence furnished by the *Odyssey* itself. They will ignore the fact that Thucydides tells us that “Phocians of those from Troy,” which as I will show (see Chapter 12) can only mean Phocaeans, settled at Mount Eryx, and ask me how I can place Phocaeans on Mount Eryx when Thucydides says it was Phocians who settled there? They will ignore the fact that even though Thucydides had said “Phocians” without qualifying his words by adding “of those from Troy,” or “of the Trojan branch,” he still places Greek-speaking people within five miles of Trapani.

As for the points of correspondence between both Ithaca and Scheria, and Trapani, they will remind me that Captain Fluelen found resemblances between Monmouth and Macedon, as also Bernardino Caimi did between Jerusalem and Varallo-Sesia; they will say that if mere topographical resemblances are to be considered, the Channel Islands are far more like the Ionian group as described in the *Odyssey* than those off Trapani are, while Balacava presents us with the whole Scherian combination so far more plausibly than Trapani as to leave no doubt which site should be preferred. I have not looked at the map of Balacava to see whether this is so or no, nor yet at other equally promising sites which have been offered me, but am limiting myself to giving examples of criticisms which have been repeatedly passed upon

my theory during the last six years, and which I do not doubt will be repeatedly passed upon it in the future.

On the other hand I may comfort myself by reflecting that however much I may deserve stoning there is no one who can stone me with a clear conscience. Those who hold, as most people now do, that the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* belong to ages separated from one another by some generations, must be haunted by the reflection that though the diversity of authorship was prominently insisted on by many people more than two thousand years ago, not a single Homeric student from those days to the end of the last century could be brought to acknowledge what we now deem self-evident. Professor Jebb, writing of Bentley,² says

He had not felt what is now so generally admitted, that the *Odyssey* bears the marks of a later time than the *Iliad*.

How came so great a man as Bentley not to see what is so obvious? Truly, as has been said by Mr. Gladstone, if Homer is old, the systematic and comprehensive study of him is still young.³

I shall not argue the question whether the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are by the same person, inasmuch as if I convince the reader that the *Odyssey* was written by a woman and in Sicily, it will go without saying that it was not written by Homer; for there can be no doubt about the sex of the writer of the *Iliad*. The same canons which will compel us to ascribe the *Odyssey* to a woman forbid any other conclusion than that the *Iliad* was written by a man. I shall therefore proceed at once to the question whether the *Odyssey* was written by a man or by a woman.

It is an old saying that no man can do better for another than he can

² *Bentley*, Macmillan, 1892, p. 148.

³ *Homer*, Macmillan, 1878, p. 2.

for himself, I may perhaps therefore best succeed in convincing the reader if I retrace the steps by which I arrived at the conclusions I ask him to adopt.

I was led to take up the *Odyssey* by having written the libretto and much of the music for a secular oratorio, *Ulysses*, on which my friend Mr. H. Festing Jones and I had been for some time engaged. Having reached this point it occurred to me that I had better, after all, see what the *Odyssey* said, and finding no readable prose translation, was driven to the original, to which I had not given so much as a thought for some five and thirty years.

The Greek being easy, I had little difficulty in understanding what I read, and I had the great advantage of coming to the poem with fresh eyes. Also, I read it all through from end to end, as I have since many times done.

Fascinated, however, as I at once was by its amazing interest and beauty, I had an ever-present sense of a something wrong, of a something that was eluding me, and of a riddle which I could not read. The more I reflected upon the words, so luminous and so transparent, the more I felt a darkness behind them that I must pierce before I could see the heart of the writer — and this was what I wanted; for art is only interesting in so far as it reveals an artist.

In the hope of getting to understand the poem better I set about translating it into plain prose, with the same benevolent leaning, say, towards Tottenham Court Road, that Messrs. Butcher and Lang have shown towards Wardour Street.* I admit, however, that Wardour Street

* Samuel Henry Butcher and Andrew Lang published their translation of the *Odyssey* in 1879. "Wardour Street English" describes the use of near-obsolete words for effect; this derives from the once great number of antique shops in the area. Tottenham Court Road was a shopping street offering plainer merchandise. [R.S.]

English has something to say for itself. “The Ancient Mariner,” for example, would have lost a good deal if it had been called “The Old Sailor,” but on the whole I take it that a tale so absolutely without any taint of affectation as the *Odyssey* will speed best being unaffectedly told.

When I came to the Phaeacian episode I felt sure that here at any rate the writer was drawing from life, and that Nausicaa, Queen Arete, and Alcinous were real people more or less travestied, and on turning to Colonel Mure’s work⁴ I saw that he was of the same opinion. Nevertheless I found myself continually aghast at the manner in which men were made to speak and act — especially, for example, during the games in honour of Ulysses described in Book VIII. Colonel Mure says (p. 407) that “the women engross the chief share of the small stock of common sense allotted to the community.” So they do, but it never occurred to me to ask myself whether men commonly write brilliant books in which the women are made more sensible than the men. Still dominated by the idea that the writer was a man, I conjectured that he might be some bard, perhaps blind, who lived among the servants much as the chaplain in a great house a couple of hundred years ago among ourselves. Such a bard, even though not blind, would only see great people from a distance, and would not mix with them intimately enough to know how they would speak and act among themselves. It never even crossed my mind that it might have been the commentators who were blind, and that they might have thus come to think that the poet must have been blind too.

The view that the writer might have lived more in the steward’s room than with the great people of the house served (I say it with

⁴ Language and Literature of Ancient Greece, Longman, 1850, Vol. I., p. 404.

shame) to quiet me for a time, but by and by it struck me that though the men often both said and did things that no man would say or do, the women were always ladies when the writer chose to make them so. How could it be that a servant's hall bard should so often go hopelessly wrong with his men, and yet be so exquisitely right with every single one of his women? But still I did not catch it. It was not till I got to *Circe* that it flashed upon me that I was reading the work, not of an old man, but of a young woman — and of one who knew not much more about what men can and cannot do than I had found her know about the milking of ewes in the cave of Polyphemus.

The more I think of it the more I wonder at my own stupidity, for I remember that when I was a boy at school I used to say the *Odyssey* was the *Iliad's* wife, and that it was written by a clergyman. But however this may be, as soon as the idea that the writer was a woman — and a young one — presented itself to me, I felt that here was the reading of the riddle that had so long baffled me. I tried to divest myself of it, but it would not go; as long as I kept to it, everything cohered and was in its right place, and when I set it aside all was wrong again; I did not seek my conclusion; I did not even know it by sight so as to look for it; it accosted me, introduced itself as my conclusion, and vowed that it would never leave me; whereon, being struck with its appearance, I let it stay with me on probation for a week or two during which I was charmed with the propriety of all it said or did, and then bade it take rank with the convictions to which I was most firmly wedded; but I need hardly say that it was a long time before I came to see that the poem was all of it written at Trapani, and that the writer had introduced herself into her work under the name of Nausicaa.

I will deal with these points later, but would point out that the

moment we refuse to attribute the *Odyssey* to the writer of the *Iliad* (whom we should alone call Homer) it becomes an anonymous work; and the first thing that a critic will set himself to do when he considers an anonymous work is to determine the sex of the writer. This, even when women are posing as men, is seldom difficult — indeed it is done almost invariably with success as often as an anonymous work is published — and when any one writes with the frankness and spontaneity which are such an irresistible charm in the *Odyssey*, it is not only not difficult but exceedingly easy; difficulty will only arise, if the critic is, as we have all been in this case, dominated by a deeply-rooted preconceived opinion, and if also there is some strong *à priori* improbability in the supposition that the writer was a woman.

It may be urged that it is extremely improbable that any woman in any age should write such a masterpiece as the *Odyssey*. But so it also is that any man should do so. In all the many hundreds of years since the *Odyssey* was written, no man has been able to write another that will compare with it. It was extremely improbable that the son of a Stratford wool-stapler should write Hamlet, or that a Bedfordshire tinker should produce such a masterpiece as Pilgrim's Progress. Phenomenal works imply a phenomenal workman, but there are phenomenal women as well as phenomenal men, and though there is much in the *Iliad* which no woman, however phenomenal, can be supposed at all likely to have written, there is not a line in the *Odyssey* which a woman might not perfectly well write, and there is much beauty which a man would be almost certain to neglect. Moreover there are many mistakes in the *Odyssey* which a young woman might easily make, but which a man could hardly fall into — for example, making the wind whistle over the waves at the end of Book II., thinking that a lamb could live on two pulls a day at a ewe that was already milked (IX. 244,

245, and 308, 309), believing a ship to have a rudder at both ends (ix. 483, 540), thinking that dry and well-seasoned timber can be cut from a growing tree (v. 240), making a hawk while still on the wing tear its prey — a thing that no hawk can do (xv. 527).

I see that Messrs. Butcher and Lang omit ix. 483 in which the rudder is placed in the bows of a ship, but it is found in the text, and is the last kind of statement a copyist would be inclined to intercalate. Yet I could have found it in my heart to conceive the text in fault, had I not also found the writer explaining in Book v. 255 that Ulysses gave his raft a rudder “in order that he might be able to steer it.” People whose ideas about rudders have become well defined will let the fact that a ship is steered by means of its rudder go without saying. Furthermore, not only does she explain that Ulysses would want a rudder to steer with, but later on (line 270) she tells us that he actually did use the rudder when he had made it, and, moreover, that he used it *τεχνέντως*, or skilfully.

Young women know that a horse goes before a cart, and being told that the rudder guides the ship, are apt — and I have more than once found them do so — to believe that it goes in front of the ship. Probably the writer of the *Odyssey* forgot for the moment at which end the rudder should be. She thought it all over yesterday, and was not going to think it all over again today, so she put the rudder at both ends, intending to remove it from the one that should prove to be the wrong one; later on she forgot, or did not think it worth while to trouble about so small a detail.

So with Calypso's axe (v. 234–36). No one who was used to handling an axe would describe it so fully and tell us that it “suited Ulysses' hands,” and was furnished with a handle. I have heard say that a celebrated female authoress was discovered to be a woman by her

having spoken of a two-foot ruler instead of a two-foot rule, but over-minuteness of description is deeper and stronger evidence of unfamiliarity than mistaken nomenclature is.

Such mistakes and self-betrayals as those above pointed out enhance rather than impair the charm of the *Odyssey*. Granted that the *Odyssey* is inferior to the *Iliad* in strength, robustness, and wealth of poetic imagery, I cannot think that it is inferior in its power of fascinating the reader. Indeed, if I had to sacrifice one or the other, I can hardly doubt that I should let the *Iliad* go rather than the *Odyssey* — just as if I had to sacrifice either Mont Blanc or Monte Rosa, I should sacrifice Mont Blanc, though I know it to be in many respects the grander mountain of the two.⁵

It should go, however, without saying that much which is charming in a woman's work would be ridiculous in a man's, and this is eminently exemplified in the *Odyssey*. If a woman wrote it, it is as lovely as the frontispiece of this volume, and becomes, if less vigorous, yet assuredly more wonderful than the *Iliad*; if, on the other hand, it is by a man, the half Bayeux tapestry, half Botticelli's Venus rising from the sea, or Primavera, feeling with which it impresses us gives place to astonishment how any man could have written it. What is a right manner for a woman is a wrong one for a man, and *vice versa*. Jane Austen's young men, for example, are seldom very interesting, but it is only those who are blind to the exquisite truth and delicacy of Jane Austen's work who will feel any wish to complain of her for not understanding young men as well as she did young women.

The writer of a *Times* leading article (Feb. 4th, 1897) says: —

⁵ Shakespeare, of course, is the whole chain of the Alps, comprising both Mont Blanc and Monte Rosa.

The sex difference is the profoundest and most far-reaching that exists among human beings. ... Women may or may not be the equals of men in intelligence; ... but women in the mass will act after the manner of women, which is not and never can be the manner of men.

And as they will act, so will they write. This, however, does not make their work any the less charming when it is good of its kind; on the contrary, it makes it more so.

Dismissing, therefore, the difficulty of supposing that any woman could write so wonderful a poem as the *Odyssey*, is there any *à priori* obstacle to our thinking that such a woman may have existed, say, B.C. 1000? I know of none. Greek literature does not begin to dawn upon us till about 600 B.C. Earlier than this date we have hardly anything except the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, and that charming writer Hesiod. When, however, we come to the earliest historic literature we find that famous poetesses abounded.

Those who turn to the article "Sappho" in Smith's *Dictionary of Classical Biography* will find Gorgo and Andromeda mentioned as her rivals. Among her fellows were Anactoria of Miletus, Gongyla of Colophon, Eunica of Salamis, Gyrinna, Atthis, and Mnasicida. "Those," says the writer, "who attained the highest celebrity for their works were Damophila, the Pamphylian, and Erinna of Telos." This last-named poetess wrote a long poem upon the distaff, which was considered equal to Homer himself — the *Odyssey* being probably intended.

Again, there was Baucis, whose Epitaph Erinna wrote. Turning to Muller's work upon the Dorians, I find reference made to the amatory poetesses of Lesbos. He tells us also of Corinna, who is said to have competed successfully with Pindar, and Myrto, who certainly com-

peted with him, but with what success we know not. Again, there was Diotima the Arcadian; and looking through Bergk's *Poetae Lyrici Graeci* I find other names of women, fragments of whose works have reached us through quotation by extant writers. Among the Hebrews there were Miriam, Deborah, and Hannah, all of them believed to be centuries older than the *Odyssey*.

If, then, poetesses were as abundant as we know them to have been in the earliest known ages of Greek literature over a wide area of Greece, Asia Minor, and the islands of the Aegean, there is no ground for refusing to admit the possibility that a Greek poetess lived in Sicily B.C. 1000, especially when we know from Thucydides that the particular part of Sicily where I suppose her to have lived was colonised from the North West corner of Asia Minor centuries before the close of the Homeric age. The civilisation depicted in the *Odyssey* is as advanced as any that is likely to have existed in Mitylene or Telos 600–500 B.C., while in both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* the status of women is represented as being much what it is at the present, and as incomparably higher than it was in the Athenian civilisation with which we are best acquainted. To imagine a great Greek poetess at Athens in the age of Pericles would be to violate probability, but I might almost say that in an age when women were as free as they are represented to us in the *Odyssey* it is a violation of probability to suppose that there were no poetesses.

We have no reason to think that men found the use of their tongue sooner than women did; why then should we suppose that women lagged behind men when the use of the pen had become familiar? If a woman could work pictures with her needle as Helen did,⁶ and as the

⁶ *Iliad*, iii. 126.

wife of William the Conqueror did in a very similar civilisation, she could write stories with her pen if she had a mind to do so.

The fact that the recognized heads of literature in the Homeric age were the nine Muses — for it is always these or “The Muse” that is involved, and never Apollo or Minerva — throws back the suggestion of female authorship to a very remote period, when, to be an author at all, was to be a poet, for prose writing is a comparatively late development. Both *Iliad* and *Odyssey* begin with an invocation addressed to a woman, who, as the head of literature, must be supposed to have been an authoress, though none of her works have come down to us. In an age, moreover, when men were chiefly occupied either with fighting or hunting, the arts of peace, and among them all kinds of literary accomplishment, would be more naturally left to women. If the truth were known, we might very likely find that it was man rather than woman who has been the interloper in the domain of literature. Nausicaa was more probably a survival than an interloper, but most probably of all she was in the height of the fashion.

CHAPTER 2

The story of the *Odyssey* [omitted]

[Butler gave here a lengthy and detailed synopsis of the *Odyssey*, because he found that “no readable prose translation” existed to which he could refer the reader. Since three years later, in 1900, Butler published his own translation, which today is freely available (for instance here at the Dunyazad Digital Library), this synopsis now feels redundant.

Consequently, some references to that synopsis have been omitted from the text.

R.S.]

CHAPTER 3

The preponderance of woman in the *Odyssey*.

Having in my first chapter met the only *à priori* objections to my views concerning the sex of the writer which have yet been presented to me, I now turn to the evidence of female authorship which is furnished by the story which I have just laid before the reader. [See note on the previous page. R.S.]

What, let me ask, is the most unerring test of female authorship? Surely a preponderance of female interest, and a fuller knowledge of those things which a woman generally has to deal with, than of those that fall more commonly within the province of man. People always write by preference of what they know best, and they know best what they most are, and have most to do with. This extends to ways of thought and to character, even more than to action. If man thinks the noblest study for mankind to be man, woman not less certainly believes it to be woman.

Hence if in any work the women are found to be well and sympathetically drawn, while the men are mechanical and by comparison perfunctorily treated, it is, I imagine, safe to infer that the writer is a woman; and the converse holds good with man. Man and woman never fully understand one another save, perhaps, during courtship and honeymoon, and as a man understands man more fully than a woman can do, so does a woman, woman. Granted, it is the delight of either sex to understand the other as fully as it can, and those who succeed most in this respect are the best and happiest

whether men or women; but do what we may the barriers can never be broken down completely, and each sex will dwell mainly, though not, of course, exclusively, within its own separate world. When, moreover, we come to think of it, it is not desirable that they should be broken down, for it is on their existence that much of the attraction of either sex to the other depends.

Men seem unable to draw women at all without either laughing at them or caricaturing them; and so, perhaps, a woman never draws a man so felicitously as when she is making him ridiculous. If she means to make him so she is certain to succeed; if she does not mean it she will succeed more surely still. Either sex, in fact, can caricature the other delightfully, and certainly no writer has ever shown more completely than the writer of the *Odyssey* has done that, next to the glorification of woman, she considers man's little ways and weaknesses to be the fittest theme on which her genius can be displayed. But I doubt whether any writer in the whole range of literature (excepting, I suppose, Shakespeare) has succeeded in drawing a full length, life-sized, serious portrait of a member of the sex opposite to the writer's own.

It is admitted on all hands that the preponderance of interest in the *Iliad* is on the side of man, and in the *Odyssey* on that of woman. Women in the *Iliad* are few in number and rarely occupy the stage. True, the goddesses play important parts, but they are never taken seriously.

Shelley, again, speaking of the "perpetually increasing magnificence of the last seven books" of the *Iliad*, says, "The *Odyssey* is sweet, but there is nothing like this."⁷ The writer of the *Odyssey* is fierce as

⁷ *Select Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, edited by Richard Garnett. Kegan Paul Trench & Co., 1882, p. 149.

a tigress at times, but the feeling of the poem is on the whole exactly what Shelley says it is. Strength is felt everywhere, even in the tenderest passages of the *Iliad*, but it is sweetness rather than strength that fascinates us throughout the *Odyssey*. It is the charm of a woman not of a man.

So, again, to quote a more recent authority, Mr. Gladstone in his work on Homer already referred to, says (p. 28): —

It is rarely in the *Iliad* that grandeur or force give way to allow the exhibition of domestic affection. Conversely, in the *Odyssey* the family life supplies the tissue into which is woven the thread of the poem.

Any one who is familiar with the two poems must know that what Mr. Gladstone has said is true; and he might have added, not less truly, that when there is any exhibition of domestic life and affection in the *Iliad* the men are dominant, and the women are under their protection, whereas throughout the *Odyssey* it is the women who are directing, counselling, and protecting the men.

Who are the women in the *Odyssey*? There is Minerva, omnipresent at the elbows of Ulysses and Telemachus to keep them straight and alternately scold and flatter them. In the *Iliad* she is a great warrior but she is no woman: in the *Odyssey* she is a great woman but no warrior; we have, of course, Penelope — masterful nearly to the last and tossed off to the wings almost from the moment that she has ceased to be so; Euryclea, the old servant, is quite a match for Telemachus, “do not find fault, child,” she says to him, “when there is no one to find fault with” (xx. 135). Who can doubt that Helen is master in the house of Menelaus — of whom all she can say in praise is that he is “not deficient either in person or understanding” (iv. 264)? Idothea in

Book iv. treats Menelaus *de haut en bas*, all through the Proteus episode. She is good to him and his men, but they must do exactly what she tells them, and she evidently enjoys “running” them — for I can think of no apter word. Calypso is the master mind, not Ulysses; and, be it noted, that neither she nor Circe seem to have a manservant on their premises. I was at an inn once and asked the stately landlady if I could see the landlord. She bridled up and answered, “We have no landlord, sir, in this house; I cannot see what use a man is in a hotel except to clean boots and windows.” There spoke Circe and Calypso, but neither of them seem to have made even this much exception in man’s favour.

Let the reader ask any single ladies of his acquaintance, who live in a house of their own, whether they prefer being waited upon by men or by women, and I shall be much surprised if he does not find that they generally avoid having a man about the house at all — gardeners of course excepted. But then the gardener generally has a wife, and a house of his own.

Take Nausicaa again, delightful as she is, it would not be wise to contradict her; she knows what is good for Ulysses, and all will go well with him so long as he obeys her, but she must be master and he man. I see I have passed over Ino in Book v. She is Idothea over again, just as Circe is Calypso, with very little variation. Who again is master — Queen Arete or King Alcinous? Nausicaa knows well enough how to answer this question. When giving her instructions to Ulysses she says: —

“Never mind my father, but go up to my mother and embrace her knees; if she is well disposed towards you there is some chance of your getting home to see your friends again” (vi. 310–315).

Throughout the Phaeacian episode Arete (whose name, by the way, I take to be one of the writer's tolerably transparent disguises, and to be intended to suggest Arēte, or "Goodness") is a more important person than Alcinous. I do not believe in her myself; I believe Penelope would have been made more amiable if Arete had been as nice a person as the writer says she was; leaving her, however, on one side, so much more important are wives than husbands in the eyes of the author of the *Odyssey* that when Ulysses makes his farewell speech to the Phaeacians, she makes him say that he hopes they may continue to give satisfaction to their wives and children (XIII. 44, 45), instead of hoping that their wives and children will continue to give satisfaction to them. A little lower down he wishes Queen Arete all happiness with her children, her people, and lastly with King Alcinous. As for King Alcinous, it does not matter whether he is happy or no, provided he gives satisfaction to Queen Arete; but he was bound to be happy as the husband of such an admirable woman.

So when the Duke of York was being married I heard women over and over again say they hoped the Princess May would be very happy with him, but I never heard one say that she hoped the Duke would be very happy with the Princess May. Men said they hoped the pair would be very happy, without naming one more than the other.

I have touched briefly on all the more prominent female characters of the *Odyssey*. The moral in every case seems to be that man knows very little, and cannot be trusted not to make a fool of himself even about the little that he does know, unless he has a woman at hand to tell him what he ought to do. There is not a single case in which a man comes to the rescue of female beauty in distress; it is invariably the other way about.

The only males who give Ulysses any help while he is on his

wanderings are Aeolus, who does him no real service and refuses to help him a second time, and Mercury, who gives him the herb Moly (x. 305) to protect him against the spells of Circe. In this last case, however, I do not doubt that the writer was tempted by the lovely passage of *Il.* XXIV., where Mercury meets Priam to conduct him to the Achaean camp; one pretty line, indeed (and rather more), of the Iliadic passage above referred to is taken bodily by the writer of the *Odyssey* to describe the youth and beauty of the god.⁸ With these exceptions, throughout the poem Andromeda rescues Perseus, not Perseus Andromeda — Christiana is guide and guardian to Mr. Greatheart, not Mr. Greatheart to Christiana.*

The case of Penelope may seem to be an exception. It may be urged that Ulysses came to her rescue, and that the whole poem turns on his doing so. But this is not true. Ulysses kills the suitors, firstly, because they had wasted his substance — this from the first to last is the main grievance; secondly, because they had violated the female servants of his house; and only, thirdly, because they had offered marriage to his wife while he was still alive (xxii. 36–38). Never yet was woman better able to hold her own when she chose, and I will show at full length shortly that when she did not hold it it was because she preferred not to do so.

I have dealt so far with the writer's attitude towards women when in the world of the living. Let us now see what her instinct prompts her to consider most interesting in the kingdom of the dead. When Ulysses has reached the abode of Hades, the first ghost he meets is that of his comrade Elpenor, who had got drunk and fallen off the roof of Circe's house just as Ulysses and his men were about to set sail. We are told

⁸ *Od.* x. 278, 299; cf. *Il.* XXIV. 347, 348.

* *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1687) by John Bunyan. [R.S.]

that he was a person of no importance, being remarkable neither for sense nor courage, so that it does not matter about killing him, and it is transparent that the accident is only allowed to happen in order to enable Ulysses to make his little joke when he greets the ghost in Hades to the effect that Elpenor has got there more quickly by land than Ulysses had done by water. Elpenor, therefore, does not count.

The order, however, in which the crowd of ghosts approach Ulysses, is noticeable. After the blood of the victims sacrificed by Ulysses had flowed into the trench which he had dug to receive it, the writer says: —

“The ghosts came trooping up from Erebus — brides, young bachelors, old men worn out with toil, maids who had been crossed in love, and brave men who had been killed in battle, with their armour still smirched with blood; they came from every quarter, and flitted round the trench with a strange kind of screaming sound that made me turn pale with fear” (xi. 36–43).

I do not think a male writer would have put the brides first, nor yet the young bachelors second. He would have begun with kings or great warriors or poets, nor do I believe he would make Ulysses turn pale with fear merely because the ghosts screamed a little; they would have had to menace him more seriously.

What does Bunyan do? When Christian tells Pliable what kind of company he will meet in Paradise, he says: —

“There we shall see elders with golden crowns; there we shall see holy virgins with their golden harps; there we shall see men that by the world were cut in pieces, burnt in flames, eaten of beasts, drowned in the seas, for the love they bore to the Lord of that

place; all well and cloathed with immortality as with a garment.”

Men present themselves to him instinctively in the first instance, and though he quits them for a moment, he returns to them immediately without even recognising the existence of women among the martyrs.

Moreover, when Christian and Hopeful have passed through the river of death and reached the eternal city, it is none but men who greet them.

True, after having taken Christian to the Eternal City, Bunyan conducts Christiana also, and her children, in his *Second Part*; but surely if he had been an inspired woman and not an inspired man, and if this woman had been writing as it was borne in upon her by her own instinct, neither aping man nor fearing him, she would have taken Christiana first, and Christian, if she took him at all, in her appendix.

Next to Elpenor the first ghost that Ulysses sees is that of his mother Anticlea, and he is sorely grieved that he may not, by Circe's instructions, speak to her till he has heard what the Theban prophet Tiresias had got to tell him. As soon as he has heard this, he enquires how he can make his mother recognise him, and converse with him. This point being answered there follows the incomparably beautiful scene between him and Anticlea, which occupies some seventy or eighty lines, and concludes by his mother's telling him to get home as fast as he can that he may tell of his adventures in Hades — to whom? To the world at large? To his kinsmen and countrymen? No: it is to his wife that he is to recount them and apparently to nobody else (xi. 223, 224). Very right and proper; but more characteristic of a female than of a male writer.

Who follow immediately on the departure of Anticlea? Proserpine sends up “all the wives and daughters of great princes” — Tyro,

daughter of Salmoneus, Antiope daughter of Asopus, Alcmena, Epicaste (better known as Jocasta), Chloris wife of Neleus, Leda, Iphimedeia, Phaedra, Procris, Ariadne, Maera, Clymene, and Eriphyle. Ulysses says that there were many more wives and daughters of heroes whom he conversed with, but that time would not allow him to detail them further; in deference, however, to the urgent request of King Alcinous, he goes on to say how he met Agamemnon, Achilles, and Ajax (who would not speak to him); he touches lightly also on Minos, Orion, Tityus, Tantalus, Sisyphus, and Hercules.

I have heard women say that nothing can be made out of the fact that the women in Hades are introduced before the men, inasmuch as they would themselves have been more likely to put the men before the women, and can understand that a male writer would be attracted in the first instance by the female shades. When women know what I am driving at, they generally tell me this, but when I have got another woman to sound them for me, or when I have stalked them warily I find that they would rather meet the Virgin Mary, Eve, Queen Elizabeth, Cleopatra, Sappho, Jane Austen, St. Elizabeth of Hungary, Helen of Troy, Zenobia, and other great women than even Homer and Shakespeare. One comfortable homely woman with whom I had taken great pains said she could not think what I meant by asking such questions, but if I wanted to know, she would as lief meet Mrs. Elizabeth Lazenby as Queen Elizabeth or any one of them. For my own part, had I to choose a number of shades whom I would meet, I should include Sappho, Jane Austen, and the authoress of the *Odyssey* in my list, but I should probably ask first for Homer, Shakespeare, Handel, Schubert, Arcangelo Corelli, Purcell, Giovanni Bellini, Rembrandt, Holbein, De Hooghe, Donatello, Jean de Wespín and many another man — yet the writer of the *Odyssey* interests me so

profoundly that I am not sure I should not ask to see her before any of the others.

I know of no other women writers who have sent their heroes down to Hades, but when men have done so they deal with men first and women afterwards. Let us turn to Dante. When Virgil tells him whom Christ first saved when he descended into Hell, we find that he first rescued Adam. Not a word is there about Eve. Then are rescued Abel, Noah, Abraham, David, Jacob and his sons — and lastly, just before the *et ceteri* — one woman, Rachel. When Virgil has finished, Dante begins meeting people on his own account. First come Homer, Horace, Ovid, and Lucan; when these have been disposed of we have Electra, Hector, Aeneas, Caesar, Camilla, Penthesilea, Latinus, Lavinia, Brutus, Cato's wife Marcia, Julia, Cornelia, Saladin, Socrates, Plato, Democritus, Diogenes, Heraclitus, Empedocles, Anaxagoras, Thales, Zeno, Dioscorides, Orpheus, Linus, Cicero, Seneca, Euclid, Ptolemy, Hippocrates, Galen, Avicenna, and Averroes. Seven women to twenty-six men. This list reminds me of Sir John Lubbock's hundred books, I shall therefore pursue Dante no further; I have given it in full because I do not like him. So far as I can see the Italians themselves are beginning to have their doubts about him; "Dante è un falso idolo," has been said to me more than once lately by highly competent critics.

Let us now look to the *Aeneid*. When Aeneas and the Sibyl approach the river Styx, we read: —

Huc omnis turba ad ripas effusa ruebat
Matres atque viri, defunctaque corpora vita
Magnanimum heroum, pueri, innuptaeque puellae,
Impositique rogis juvenes ante ora parentum.
(*Aen.* vi. 305–308.)

The women indeed come first, but the *i* in *viri* being short Virgil could not help himself, and the first persons whom he recognises as individuals are men — namely two of his captains who had been drowned, Leucaspis and Orontes — and Palinurus. After crossing the Styx he first passes through the region inhabited by those who have died as infants; then that by those who have been unjustly condemned to die; then that by suicides; then that of those who have died for love, where he sees several women, and among them Dido, who treats him as Ajax treated Ulysses. The rest of those whom Aeneas sees or converses with in Hades are all men.

Lucian is still more ungallant, for in his dialogues of the dead he does not introduce a single woman.

One other case alone occurs to me among the many that ought to do so; I refer to Fielding's *Journey to the next World*. The three first ghosts whom he speaks to in the coach are men. When he gets on his journey's end, after a short but most touching scene with his own little daughter who had died a mere child only a few months before Fielding wrote, and who is therefore nothing to the point, he continues: "The first spirit with whom I entered into discourse, was the famous Leonidas of Sparta." Of course; soldier will greet soldier first. In the next paragraph one line is given to Sappho, who we are told was singing to the accompaniment of Orpheus. Then we go on to Homer⁹, Virgil, Addison, Shakespeare, Betterton, Booth, and Milton.

⁹ Talking of Homer Fielding says, "I had the curiosity to ask him whether he had really writ that poem [the *Iliad*] in detached pieces and flung it about all over Greece, according to the report that went of him. He smiled at my question, and asked me whether there appeared any connection in the poem; for if there did he thought I might answer for myself." This was first published in 1743, and is no doubt intended as a reply to Bentley. See Jebb's *Introduction to Homer*, ed. 1888, note 1 on p. 106.

Defoe, again, being an elderly married man, and wanting to comfort Robinson Crusoe, can think of nothing better for him than the companionship of another man, whereon he sends him Friday. A woman would have sent him an amiable and good-looking white girl whom the cannibals had taken prisoner from some shipwrecked vessel. This she would have held as likely to be far more useful to him.

So much to show that the mind of man, unless when he is young and lovesick, turns more instinctively to man than to woman. And I am convinced, as indeed every one else is, whether he or she knows it or no, that with the above exception, woman is more interested in woman. This is how the Virgin Mary has come to be Queen of Heaven, and practically of more importance than the Trinity itself in the eyes of the common people in Roman Catholic countries. For the women support the theologians more than the men do. The male Jews, again, so I am told, have a prayer in which the men thank God that they were not born women, and the women, that they were not born men. Each sex believes most firmly in itself, nor till we have done away with individualism altogether can we find the smallest reason to complain of this arrangement. A woman if she attempts an Epic is almost compelled to have a man for her central figure, but she will minimise him, and will maximise his wife and daughters, drawing them with subtler hand. That the writer of the *Odyssey* has done this is obvious; and this fact alone should make us incline strongly towards thinking that we are in the hands not of a man but of a woman.

CHAPTER 4

Jealousy for the honour and dignity of woman — Severity against those who have disgraced their sex — Love of small religious observances — Of preaching — Of white lies and small play-acting — Of having things both ways — And of money.

Not only does the writer show a markedly greater both interest and knowledge when dealing with women, but she makes it plain that she is exceedingly jealous for the honour of her sex, and by consequence inexorable in her severity against those women who have disgraced it. Goddesses may do what they like, they are not to be judged by mortal codes; but a mortal woman who has fallen must die.

No woman throughout the *Odyssey* is ever laughed at. Women may be hanged but they must not be laughed at. Men may be laughed at, indeed Alcinous is hardly mentioned at all except to be made more or less ridiculous. One cannot say that Menelaus in Books iv. and xv. is being deliberately made ridiculous, but made ridiculous he certainly is, and he is treated as a person of far less interest and importance than his wife is. Indeed Ulysses, Alcinous, Menelaus, and Nestor are all so like one another that I do not doubt they were drawn from the same person, just as Ithaca and Scheria are from the same place. Who that person was we shall never know; nevertheless I would point out that unless a girl adores her father he is generally, to her, a mysterious powerful being whose ways are not as her ways. He is feared as a dark room is feared by children; and if his wife is at all given to laughing at

him, his daughter will not spare him, however much she may cajole and in a way love him.

But, as I have said, though men may be laughed at, the women are never taken other than quite seriously. Venus is, indeed, made a little ridiculous in one passage, but she was a goddess, so it does not matter; besides, the brunt of the ridicule was borne by Mars, and Venus was instantly re-adorned and comforted by the Graces. I cannot remember a single instance of a woman's being made to do anything which she could not do without loss of dignity — I except, of course, slaves, and am speaking of the higher social classes.

It has often been observed that the Messenger of the Gods in the *Iliad* is always Iris, while in the *Odyssey* he is no less invariably Mercury. I incline to attribute this to the author's dislike of the idea that so noble a lady as Iris should be made to fetch and carry for anybody. For it is evident Iris was still generally held to have been the messenger of the gods. This appears from the beginning of Book XVIII., where we are told that Irus's real name was Arnaeus, but that he was called Irus (which is nothing but Iris with a masculine termination) "because he used to carry messages when any one would send him." Writers do not fly in the face of current versions unless for some special reasons of their own.

If, however, a woman has misconducted herself she is to be shown no mercy. There are only three cases in point, and one of these hardly counts inasmuch as the punishment of the guilty woman, Clytemnestra, was not meted out to her by the authoress herself. The hold, however, which the story of Clytemnestra's guilt has upon her, the manner in which she repeatedly recurs to it, her horror at it, but at the same time her desire to remove as much of the blame as possible from Clytemnestra's shoulders, convinces me that she actually feels the

disgrace which Clytemnestra's treachery has inflicted upon all women "even on the good ones." Why should she be at such pains to tell us that Clytemnestra was a person of good natural disposition (III. 266), and was irreproachable until death had removed the bard under whose protection Agamemnon had placed her? When she was left alone — without either husband or guardian, and with an insidious wretch like Aegisthus beguiling her with his incessant flattery, she yielded, and there is no more to be said, except that it was very dreadful and she must be abandoned to her fate. I see Mr. Gladstone has wondered what should have induced Homer (whom he holds to have written the *Odyssey* as well as the *Iliad*) to tell us that Clytemnestra was a good woman to start with,¹⁰ but with all my respect for his great services to Homeric literature, I cannot think that he has hit upon the right explanation. It should not be forgotten, moreover, that this extenuation of Clytemnestra's guilt belongs to a part of the *Odyssey* that was engrafted on to the original design — a part in which, as I shall show later, there was another woman's guilt, which was only not extenuated because it was absolutely denied in the face of overwhelming evidence — I mean Penelope's.

The second case in point is that of the woman who stole Eumaeus when he was a child. A few days after she has done this, and has gone on board the ship with the Phoenician traders, she is killed by Diana, and thrown overboard to the seals and fishes (xv. 403–484).

The third case is that of the women of Ulysses' household who had misconducted themselves with the suitors during his absence. We are told that there were fifty women servants in the house, of whom twelve alone were guilty. It is curious that the number of servants should

¹⁰ *Studies on Homer and the Homeric age*. — Oxford University Press, 1858, Vol. I., p. 28.

be exactly the same as that of the maidservants in the house of king Alcinous, and it should be also noted that twelve is a very small number for the guilty servants, considering that there were over a hundred suitors, and that the maids seem to have been able to leave the house by night when they chose to do so (xx. 6–8) — true, we are elsewhere told that the women had been violated and only yielded under compulsion, but this makes it more wonderful that they should be so few — and I may add, more terribly severe to hang them. I think the laxity of prehistoric times would have prompted a writer who was not particularly jealous for the honour of women, to have said that there were thirty-eight, or even more, guilty, and only twelve innocent. We must bear in mind on the other hand that when Euryclea brought out the thirty-eight innocent women to see Ulysses after he had killed the suitors, Ulysses recognised them all (xxii. 501). The youngest of them therefore can hardly have been under forty, and some no doubt were older — for Ulysses had been gone twenty years.

Now how are the guilty ones treated? A man who was speaking of my theory that the *Odyssey* was written by a woman as a mere *mauvaise plaisanterie*, once told me it was absurd, for the first thing a woman would have thought of after the suitors had been killed was the dining room carpet. I said that *mutatis mutandis* this was the very thing she did think of.

As soon as Ulysses has satisfied himself that not a single suitor is left alive, he tells Euryclea to send him the guilty maidservants, and on their arrival he says to Telemachus, Eumaeus and Philoetius (xxii. 437–443): —

“Begin to bear away the corpses, and make the women help you. When you have done this, sponge down the seats and tables, till

you have set the whole house in order; then take the maids outside ... and thrust them through with your swords.”

These orders are faithfully obeyed; the maids help in the work of removing the bodies and they sponge the chairs and tables till they are clean — Ulysses standing over them and seeing that they lose no time. This done, Telemachus (whose mother, we are told (xxii. 426–427) had never yet permitted him to give orders to the female servants) takes them outside and hangs them (xxii. 462), as a more dishonourable death than the one his father had prescribed for them — perhaps also he may have thought he should have less blood to clean up than if he stabbed them. The writer tells us in a line which she borrows in great part from the *Iliad*,¹¹ that their feet move convulsively for a short time though not for very long, but her ideas of the way in which Telemachus hanged them are of the vaguest. No commentator has ever yet been able to understand it; the only explanation seems to be that the writer did not understand it herself, and did not care to do so. Let it suffice that the women were obviously hanged.

No man writing in pre-Christian times would have considered the guilt of the women to require so horrible a punishment. He might have ordered them to be killed, but he would not have carried his indignation to the point of making them first clean up the blood of their paramours. Fierce as the writer is against the suitors, she is far more so against the women. When the suitors are all killed, Euryclea begins to raise a cry of triumph over them, but Ulysses checks her. “Hold your tongue, woman,” he says, “it is ill bragging over the bodies of dead men” (xxii. 411). So also it is ill getting the most hideous service out of women up to the very moment when they are to be

¹¹ *Od.* xxii. 493, cf. *Il.* XIII. 573.

executed; but the writer seems to have no sense of this; where female honour has been violated by those of woman's own sex, no punishment is too bad for them.

The other chief characteristics of the *Odyssey* which incline me to ascribe it to a woman are a kind of art for arts sake love of a small lie, and a determination to have things both ways whenever it suits her purpose. This never seems to trouble her. There the story is, and the reader may take it or leave it. She loves flimsy disguises and mystifications that stultify themselves, and mystify nobody. To go no further than Book I. and III., Minerva in each of these tells plausible stories full of circumstantial details, about her being on her way to Temesa with a cargo of iron and how she meant to bring back copper (I. 184), and again how she was going to the Cauconians on the following morning to recover a large debt that had been long owing to her (III. 366), and then, before the lies she had been at such pains to concoct are well out of her mouth she reveals herself by flying into the air in the form of an eagle. This, by the way, she could not well do in either case if she was in a roofed hall, but might be conceived as doing if, as I suppose her to have been in both cases, she was in a roofed cloister that ran round an open court.

There is a flavour of consecutive fifths in these flights,¹² if indeed they are not downright octaves, and I cannot but think that the writer would have found a smoother progression open to her if she had cared to look for one; but letting this pass, the way in which white lies occur from the first book to the last, the punctiliousness, omnipresent, with which small religious observances are insisted upon, coupled with not a little unscrupulousness when these have been attended to, the respect

¹² I should explain to the non-musical reader that it is forbidden in music to have consecutive fifths or octaves between the same parts.

for gods and omens, and for the convenances generally — all these seem to me to be more characteristic of a woman's writing than a man's.

The seriousness, again, with which Telemachus is taken, the closeness with which he adheres to his programme, the precision with which he invariably does what his father, his mother, Minerva, or any responsible person tells him that he should do, except in one passage which is taken almost verbatim from the *Iliad*,¹³ the way in which Minerva beautifies him and preaches to him; the unobtrusive but exemplary manner in which he discharges all his religious, moral, and social duties — all seem to me to point in the direction of thinking that the writer is a woman and a young one.

How does Minerva preach to him? When he has washed his hands in the sea he prays that she will help him on his intended voyage in search of news concerning his father. The goddess then comes up to him disguised as Mentor, and speaks as follows: —

“Telemachus, if you are made of the same stuff as your father you will be neither fool or coward henceforward, for Ulysses never broke his word nor left his work half done. If, then, you take after him your voyage will not be fruitless, but unless you have the blood of Ulysses and Penelope in your veins I see no likelihood of your succeeding. Sons are seldom as good men as their fathers; they are generally worse not better; still, as you are not going to be either fool or coward henceforward, and are not entirely without some share of your father's wise discernment, I look with hope upon your undertaking” (II. 270–280).

¹³ *Od.* I. 356–359, cf. *Il.* VI. 490–493. The word “war” in the *Iliad* becomes “speech” in the *Odyssey*. There is no other change.

Hence the grandmotherly reputation which poor Mentor is never likely to lose. It was not Mentor but Minerva. The writer does not make Minerva say that daughters were rarely as good women as their mothers were. I had a very dear kind old aunt who when I was a boy used to talk to me just in this way. "Unstable as water," she would say, "thou shalt not excel." I almost heard her saying it (and more to the same effect) when I was translating the passage above given. My uncles did not talk to me at all in the same way.

I may add parenthetically here, but will deal with the subject more fully in a later chapter, that all the time Minerva was lecturing Telemachus she must have known that his going would be worse than useless, inasmuch as Ulysses was, by her own arrangements, on the very eve of his return; and indeed he was back again in Ithaca before Telemachus got home.

See, again, the manner in which Penelope scolds him in Book XVIII. 215, &c., for having let Ulysses and Irus fight. She says: —

"Telemachus, I fear you are no longer so discreet and well conducted as you used to be. When you were younger you had a greater sense of propriety; now, however, that you are grown up, though a stranger to look at you would take you for the son of a well-to-do father as far as size and good looks go, your conduct is by no means what it should have been. What is all this disturbance that has been going on, and how came you to allow a stranger to be so disgracefully ill-treated? What would have happened if he had suffered serious injury while a suppliant in our house? Surely this would have been very discreditable to you."

I do not believe any man could make a mother rebuke her son so femininely.

Again, the fidelity with which people go on crying incessantly for a son who has been lost to them for twenty years, though they have still three sons left,¹⁴ or for a brother whom they have never even seen,¹⁵ is part and parcel of that jealousy for the sanctity of domestic life, in respect of which women are apt to be more exacting than men.

And yet in spite of all this the writer makes Telemachus take no pains to hide the fact that his grievance is not so much the alleged ill-treatment of his mother, nor yet the death of his father, as the hole which the extravagance of the suitors is making in his own pocket. When demanding assistance from his fellow countrymen, he says, of the two great evils that have fallen upon his house: —

“The first of these is the loss of my excellent father, who was chief among all you here present and was like a father to every one of you. The second is much more serious, and ere long will be the utter ruin of my estate. The sons of all the chief men among you are pestering my mother to marry them against her will. They are afraid to go to her father Icarius, asking him to choose the one he likes best, and to provide marriage gifts for his daughter, but day after day they keep hanging about my father’s house, sacrificing our oxen, sheep, and fat goats for their banquets, and never giving so much as a thought to the quantity of wine they drink. No estate can stand such recklessness” (II. 46–58).

Moreover it is clear throughout Books III. and IV., in which Telemachus is trying to get news of his father, that what he really wants is evidence of his death, not of his being alive, though this may only be because he despairs of the second alternative. The indignation of

¹⁴ *Od.* II. 15–23.

¹⁵ *Od.* IV. 186–188.

Telemachus on the score of the extravagance of the suitors is noticeably shared by the writer all through the poem; she is furious about it; perhaps by reason of the waste she saw going on in her father's house. Under all she says on this head we seem to feel the rankling of a private grievance, and it often crosses my mind that in the suitors she also saw the neighbours who night after night came sponging on the reckless good nature of Alcinous, to the probable eventual ruin of his house.

Women, religion, and money are the three dominant ideas in the mind of the writer of the *Odyssey*. In the *Iliad* the *belli causa* is a woman, money is a detail, and man is most in evidence. In the *Odyssey* the *belli causa* is mainly money, and woman is most in evidence — often when she does not appear to be so — just as in the books of the *Iliad* in which the Trojans are supposed to be most triumphant over the Achaeans, it is the Trojans all the time whose slaughter is most dwelt upon.

It is strange that the *Odyssey*, in which money is so constantly present to the mind of the writer, should show not even the faintest signs of having been written from a business point of view, whereas the *Iliad*, in which money appears but little, abounds with evidence of its having been written to take with a certain audience whom the writer both disliked and despised — and hence of having been written with an eye to money.

I will now proceed to the question whether Penelope is being, if I may say so, whitewashed. Is the version of her conduct that is given us in the *Odyssey* the then current one, or is the writer manipulating a very different story, and putting another face on it — as all poets are apt to do with any story that they are re-telling? Tennyson, not to mention many earlier writers, has done this with the *Arthurian Legends*, the

original form of which takes us into a moral atmosphere as different as can well be conceived from the one we meet with in the *Idylls of the King*.

There is no improbability (for other instances will occur to the reader so readily that I need not quote them) in the supposition that the writer of the *Odyssey* might choose to recast a story which she deemed insulting to her sex, as well as disgusting in itself; the question is, has she done so or not? Do traces of an earlier picture show up through the one she has painted over it, so distinctly as to make it obvious what the original picture represented? If they do not, I will give up my case, but if they do, I shall hold it highly improbable that a man in the Homeric age would undertake the impossible task of making Penelope at the same time plausible and virtuous. I am afraid I think he would be likely to make her out blacker than the last poet who had treated the subject, rather than be at any pains to whiten her.

Least of all would Homer himself have been prompted to make Penelope out better than report says she was. He would not have cared whether she was better or worse. He is fond of women, but he is also fond of teasing them, and he shows not the slightest signs of any jealousy for female honour, or of a desire to exalt women generally. He shows no more sign of this than he does of the ferocity with which punishment is inflicted on the women of Ulysses' household — a ferocity which is in itself sufficient to make it inconceivable that the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* should be by the same person.

CHAPTER 5

On the question whether or no Penelope is being whitewashed.

It is known that scandalous versions of Penelope's conduct were current among the ancients; indeed they seem to have prevailed before the completion of the Epic Cycle,* for in the *Telegony*, which is believed to have come next in chronological order after the *Odyssey*, we find that when Ulysses had killed the suitors he did not go on living with Penelope, but settled in Thesprotia, and married Callidice, the queen of the country. He must, therefore, have divorced Penelope, and he could hardly have done this if he accepted the Odyssean version of her conduct. According to the author of the *Telegony*, Penelope and Telemachus go on living in Ithaca, where eventually Ulysses returns and is killed by Telegonus, a son who had been born to him by Circe. For further reference to ancient, though a good deal later, scandalous versions, see *Smith's Dictionary*** under "Penelope."

* The collection of 8 epic poems that tell the story of the Trojan War, the events that led to it, and its aftermaths. Many elements of the story are well known, from the Judgment of Paris and the abduction of Helen to the siege of Troy, the arrival of the Amazons, the death of Achilles, the Trojan horse, Laokoon, Cassandra, the fall of Troy, the murder of Agamemnon after his return home, and, of course, the adventures of Odysseus/Ulysses ... Only the two epics commonly ascribed to Homer, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, have survived, though, of the others we only have fragments and summaries from late antiquity and the Byzantine period. [R.S.]

** *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology* by Sir William Smith. "While the Homeric tradition describes Penelope as a most chaste and faithful wife, later writers charge her with the very opposite vices, and relate that by Hermes or by all the suitors together she became the mother of Pan." [R.S.]

Let us see what the *Odyssey* asks us to believe, or rather, swallow. We are told that more than a hundred young men fall violently in love, at the same time, with a supposed widow, who before the close of their suit can hardly have been under forty, and who had a grown up son — pestering her for several years with addresses that they know are most distasteful to her. They are so madly in love with her that they cannot think of proposing to any one else (II. 205–207) till she has made her choice. When she has done this they will go; till then, they will pay her out for her cruel treatment of them by eating her son Telemachus out of house and home. This therefore, they proceed to do, and Penelope, who is a model both wife and mother, suffers agonies of grief, partly because of the death of her husband, and partly because she cannot get the suitors out of the house.

One would have thought all she had to do was to bolt the doors as soon as the suitors had left for the night, and refuse to open them in the morning; for the suitors never sleep in the same house with Penelope. They sleep at various places in the town, in the middle of which Ulysses' house evidently stands, and if they were meek enough to let themselves be turned out, they would be meek enough to let themselves be kept out, if those inside showed anything of a firm front. Not one of them ever sees Penelope alone; when she comes into their presence she is attended by two respectable female servants who stand on either side of her, and she holds a screen or veil modestly before her face — true, she was forty, but neither she nor the poetess seem to bear this in mind, so we may take it as certain that it was modesty and nothing else that made her hold up the veil. The suitors were not men of scrupulous delicacy, and in spite of their devotion to Penelope lived on terms of improper intimacy with her women servants — none of whom appear to have been dismissed instantly on detection. It is a little

strange that not one of those suitors who came from a long distance should have insisted on being found in bed as well as board, and so much care is taken that not one breath of scandal should attach to Penelope, that we infer a sense on the writer's part that it was necessary to put this care well in evidence. I cannot think, for example, that Penelope would have been represented as nearly so incredulous about the return of Ulysses in Book XXIII., if she had been nearly as virtuous as the writer tries to make her out. The amount of caution with which she is credited is to some extent a gauge of the thickness of the coat of whitewash which the writer considers necessary. In all Penelope's devotion to her husband there is an ever present sense that the lady doth protest too much.

Still stranger, however, is the fact that these ardent passionate lovers never quarrel among themselves for the possession of their middle-aged paragon. The survival of the fittest does not seem to have had any place in their system. They show no signs of jealousy, but jog along cheek by jowl as a very happy family, aiming spears at a mark, playing draughts, flaying goats and singeing pigs in the yard, drinking an untold quantity of wine, and generally holding high feast. They insist that Penelope should marry somebody, but who the happy somebody is to be is a matter of no importance.¹⁶ No one seems to think it essential that she shall marry himself in particular. Not one of them ever finds out that his case is hopeless and takes his leave; and thus matters drift on year after year — during all which time Penelope is not getting any younger — the suitor's dying of love for Penelope, and Penelope dying only to be rid of them.

Granted that the suitors are not less in love with the good cheer

¹⁶ *Od.* II. 127–128 and 203–207.

they enjoy at Telemachus's expense, than they are with his mother; but this mixture of perfect lover and perfect sponger is so impossible that no one could have recourse to it unless aware that he (or she) was in extreme difficulty. If men are in love they will not sponge; if they sponge they are not in love; we may have it either way but not both; when, therefore, the writer of the *Odyssey* not only attributes such impossible conduct to the suitors, but asks us also to believe that a clever woman could not keep at any rate some few of her hundred lovers out of the house, although their presence had been for many years in a high degree distasteful to her, we may know that we are being hoodwinked as far as the writer can hoodwink us, and shall be very inclinable to believe that the suitors were not so black, nor Penelope so white, as we are being given to understand.

As for her being overawed by the suitors, she talks very plainly to them at times, as for example in XVIII. 274–280, and again in XIX. 322 where she speaks as though she were perfectly able to get rid of any suitor who was obnoxious to her.

Over and above this we may infer that the writer who can tell such a story with a grave face cannot have even the faintest conception of the way in which a man feels towards a woman he is in love with, nor yet much (so far as I may venture to form an opinion) of what women commonly feel towards the man of their choice; I conclude, therefore, that she was still very young, and unmarried. At any rate the story told above cannot have been written by Homer; if it is by a man at all it must be by some prehistoric Fra Angelico, who had known less in his youth, or forgotten more in his old age, than the writer of the *Iliad* is at all likely to have done. If he had still known enough to be able to write the *Odyssey*, he would have remembered more than the writer of the *Odyssey* shows any signs of having ever known.

A man, if he had taken it into his head (as the late Lord Tennyson might very conceivably have done) to represent Penelope as virtuous in spite of current scandalous stories to the contrary — a man, would not have made the suitors a band of lovers at all. He would have seen at once that this was out of the question, and would have made them mere marauders, who overawed Penelope by their threats, and were only held in check by her mother wit and by, say, some three or four covert allies among the suitors themselves. Do what he might he could not make the permanent daily presence of the suitors plausible, but it would be possible; whereas the combination of perfect sponger and perfect lover which is offered us by the writer of the *Odyssey* is grotesquely impossible, nor do I imagine that she would have asked us to accept it, but for her desire to exalt her sex by showing how a clever woman can bring any number of men to her feet, hoodwink them, spoil them, and in the end destroy them. This, however, is surely a woman's theme rather than a man's — at least I know of no male writer who has attempted anything like it.

We have now seen the story as told from Penelope's point of view; let us proceed to hear it from that of the suitors. We find this at the beginning of Book II., and I will give Antinous's speech at fuller length than I have done in my abridgement. After saying that Penelope had for years been encouraging every single suitor by sending him flattering messages (in which, by the way, Minerva fully corroborates him in Book XIII. 379–381) he continues: —

“And then there was that other trick she played us. She set up a great tambour frame in her room, and began to work on an enormous piece of fine needlework. ‘Sweethearts,’ said she, ‘Ulysses is indeed dead, still, do not press me to marry again immediately;

wait — for I would not have my skill in needlework perish unrecorded — till I have completed a pall for the hero Laertes, to be ready against the time when death shall take him. He is very rich, and the women of the place will talk if he is laid out without a pall.’

“This was what she said, and we assented; whereon we could see her, working on her great web all day, but at night she would unpick the stitches again by torchlight. She fooled us in this way for three years and we never found her out, but as time wore on and she was now in her fourth year, one of her maids, who knew what she was doing, told us, and we caught her in the act of undoing her work; so she had to finish it, whether she would or no.

“The suitors, therefore, make you this answer, that both you and the Achaeans may understand: ‘Send your mother away, and bid her marry the man of her own and her father’s choice,’ for I do not know what will happen if she goes on plaguing us much longer with the airs she gives herself on the score of the accomplishments Minerva has taught her, and because she is so clever. We never yet heard of such a woman. We know all about Tyro, Alcmena, Mycene, and the famous women of old, but they were nothing to your mother any one of them. It was not fair of her to treat us in that way, and as long as she continues in the mind with which heaven has now endowed her, so long shall we go on eating up your estate; and I do not see why she should change, for it is she who gets the honour and glory, and it is you, not she, who lose all this substance. We however, will not go about our business, nor anywhere else, till she has made her choice and married some one or other of us” (II. 93–128).

Roughly, then, the authoress's version is that Penelope is an injured innocent, and the suitors', that she is an artful heartless flirt who prefers having a hundred admirers rather than one husband. Which comes nearest, not to the truth — for we may be sure the suitors could have said a great deal more than the writer chooses to say they said — but to the original story which she was sophisticating, and retelling in a way that was more to her liking? The reader will have noted that on this occasion the suitors seem to have been in the house after nightfall.

We cannot forget that when Telemachus first told Minerva about the suitors, he admitted that his mother had not point blank said that she would not marry again. "She does not," he says, "refuse the hateful marriage, nor yet does she bring matters to an end" (I. 249, 250). Apparently not; but if not, why not? Not to refuse at once is to court courtship, and if she had not meant to court it she seems to have been adept enough in the art of hoodwinking men to have found some means of "bringing the matter to an end."

Sending pretty little messages to her admirers was not exactly the way to get rid of them. Did she ever try snubbing? Nothing of the kind is placed on record. Did she ever say, "Well, Antinous, whoever else I may marry, you may make your mind easy that it will not be you." Then there was boring — did she ever try that? Did she ever read them any of her grandfather's letters? Did she sing them her own songs, or play them music of her own composition? I have always found these courses successful when I wanted to get rid of people. There are indeed signs that something had been done in this direction, for the suitors say that they cannot stand her high art nonsense and aesthetic rhodomontade any longer, but it is more likely she had been trying to attract than to repel. Did she set them by the ears by repeating with embellishments what they had said to her about one another?

Did she ask Antinous or Eurymachus to sit to her for her web — give them a good stiff pose, make them stick to it, and talk to them all the time? Did she find errands for them to run, and then scold them, and say she did not want them? or make them do commissions for her and forget to pay them, or keep on sending them back to the shop to change things, and they had given ever so much too much money and she wished she had gone and done it herself? Did she insist on their attending family worship? In a word, did she do a single one of the thousand things so astute a matron would have been at no loss to hit upon if she had been in earnest about not wishing to be courted? With one touch of common sense the whole fabric crumbles into dust.

Telemachus in his rejoinder to the suitors does not deny a single one of their facts. He does not deny that his mother had been in the habit of sending them encouraging messages, nor does he attempt to explain her conduct about the web. This, then, being admitted, and it being also transparent that Penelope had used no due diligence in sending her lovers to the right about, can we avoid suspecting that there is a screw loose somewhere, and that a story of very different character is being manipulated to meet the exigencies of the writer? And shall we go very far wrong if we conclude that according to the original version, Penelope picked out her web, not so much in order to delay a hateful marriage, as to prolong a very agreeable courtship?

It was no doubt because Laertes saw what was going on that he went to live in the country and left off coming into the town (I. 189, 190), and Penelope probably chose the particular form her work assumed in order to ensure that he should not come near her. Why could she not set about making a pall for somebody else? Was Laertes likely to continue calling, when every time he did so he knew that Euryclea would only tell him her mistress was upstairs working at his

pall, but she would be down directly? Do let the reader try and think it out a little for himself.

As for Laertes being so badly off as Anticlea says he was in Book XI., there is not one grain of truth in that story. The writer had to make him out poor in order to explain his not having interfered to protect Penelope, but Penelope's excuse for making her web was that he was a man of large property. It is the same with the suitors. When it is desired to explain Telemachus's not having tried in some way to recover from them, they are so poor that it would be a waste of money to sue them; when, on the other hand, the writer wants Penelope to air her woman's wit by getting presents out of them (XVIII. 274-280), just before Ulysses kills them, they have any amount of money. One day more, and she would have been too late. The writer knew that very well, but she was not going to let Penelope lose her presents. She evidently looks upon man as fair game, which male writers are much less apt to do. Of course the first present she receives is a new dress.

Returning to Laertes, he must have had money, or how could Ulysses be so rich? Where did Ulysses' money come from? He could hardly have made much before he went to Troy, and he does not appear to have sent anything home thence. Nothing has been heard from him, and in Book x.,¹⁷ he appears to be bringing back his share of plunder with him — in which case it was lost in the shipwreck off the coast of the Thrinacian island. He seems to have had a dowry of some kind with Penelope, for Telemachus says that if he sends his mother away he shall have to refund it to his grandfather Icarius, and urges this fact as one of the reasons for not sending her (II. 132, 133); the greater part, however, of Ulysses' enormous wealth must have come to him

¹⁷ *Od.* x. 40.

from Laertes, who we may be sure kept more for himself than he gave to his son. What, then, had become of all this money — for Laertes seems to have been a man of very frugal habits? The answer is that it was still in Laertes' hands, and the reason for his never coming to town now was partly, no doubt, the pall; partly the scandalous life which his daughter was leading; but mainly the writer's inability to explain his non-interference unless she got him out of the way.

The account, again, which Ulysses' mother gives him in Hades (xi. 180, &c.) of what is going on in Ithaca shows a sense that there is something to conceal. She says not one word about the suitors. All she says is that Telemachus has to see a good deal of company, which is only reasonable seeing that he is a magistrate and is asked out everywhere himself (xi. 185–187). Nothing can be more coldly euphemistic, nor show a fuller sense that there was a good deal more going on than the speaker chose to say. If Anticlea had believed her daughter-in-law to be innocent, she would have laid the whole situation before Ulysses.

It may be maintained that the suitors were not yet come to Ithaca in force, for the visit to Hades occurs early in the wanderings of Ulysses, and before his seven years' sojourn with Calypso, so that Anticlea may really have known nothing about the suitors; but the writer has forgotten this, and has represented Telemachus as already arrived at man's estate. In truth, at this point Telemachus was at the utmost only twelve or thirteen years old, and a children's party was all the entertainment he need either receive or give. The writer has made a slip in her chronology, for throughout the poem Telemachus is represented as only just arriving at man's estate in the twentieth year of Ulysses' absence. It is evident that in describing the interview with Anticlea the writer has in her mind the state of things existing just before Ulysses'

return, when the suitors were in full riot. This, indeed, appears still more plainly lower down, when Agamemnon, also in Hades, says that Telemachus was a baby in arms when the Trojan war broke out, and that he must now be grown up (xi. 448, 449).

The silence therefore of Ulysses' mother is wilful so far as the writer is concerned. She must have conceived of Anticlea as knowing all about the suitors perfectly well — for she did not die till Telemachus was, by her own account, old enough to be a magistrate. The explanation I believe to be, that at the time Book xi. was written, the writer had as yet no intention of adding Books i. – iv., and from line 187 of Book xiii. to Book xxiv. but proposed to ignore the current scandalous stories about Penelope, and to say as little as possible about her. I will deal with this more fully when I come to the genesis and development of the poem, but may as well say at once that the difficulty above pointed out will have to remain unexplained except as a slip in chronology on the part of a young writer who was piecing new work on to old. Any one but the writer herself would have seen it and avoided it; indeed it is quite possible that she came to see it, and did not think it worth her while to be at the trouble of altering it. If this is so I, for one, shall think none the worse of her.

CHAPTER 6

Further considerations regarding the character of Penelope — The journey of Telemachus to Lacedaemon.

The question whether or no the writer of the *Odyssey* is putting her own construction on grosser versions of Penelope's conduct current among her countrymen, has such an important bearing on that of the writer's sex, that I shall bring further evidence to show how impossible she finds it to conceal the fact that those who knew Penelope best had no confidence in her.

Minerva with quick womanly instinct took in the situation at a glance, and went straight to the point. On learning from Telemachus that Penelope did not at once say she would not marry again, she wastes no words, but says promptly, "If your mother's mind is set on marrying again" (and surely this implies that the speaker had no doubts that it was so set) "let her go back to her father" (1. 276). From this we may infer that Minerva had not only formed her own opinion about Penelope's intentions, but saw also that she meant taking her time about the courtship, and was not likely to be brought to the point by any measures less decisive than sending her back to her father's house.

We know, moreover, what Minerva thought of Penelope from another source. Minerva appears to Telemachus in a dream when he is staying with King Menelaus, and gives him to understand that his mother is on the point of marrying Eurymachus, one of the suitors (xv. 1–42). This was (so at least we are intended to suppose) a wanton

falsehood on Minerva's part. Nevertheless if the matter had ended there, nothing probably would have pleased Telemachus better; for in spite of his calling the marriage "hateful," there can be no question that he would have been only too thankful to get his mother out of the house, if she would go of her own free will. Penelope says he was continually urging her to marry and go, on the score of the expense he was being put to by the protracted attentions of the suitors (XIX. 530–534). Penelope indeed seems to have been such an adept at lying that it is very difficult to know when to believe her, but Telemachus says enough elsewhere to leave no doubt that, in spite of a certain decent show of reluctance, he would have been glad that his mother should go.

Unfortunately Minerva's story does not end with saying that Penelope means marrying Eurymachus; she adds that in this case she will probably steal some of Telemachus's property. She says to him: —

"You know what women are; they always want to do the best they can for the man who is married to them at the moment. They forget all about their first husband and the children that they have had by him. Go home, therefore, at once, and put everything in charge of the most respectable housekeeper you can find, until it shall please heaven to send you a wife of your own" (XV. 20–26).

This passage not only betrays a want of confidence in Penelope which is out of keeping with her ostensible antecedents, but it goes far to show that Minerva had read the *Cypria**, in which poem (now lost) we are told that Helen did exactly what is here represented as likely to be done by Penelope; but leaving this, surely if Penelope's antecedents

* The first part of the Epic Cycle, preceding the story of the *Iliad*, though written later. It tells the origins of the Trojan War (Judgment of Paris, Helen, etc.).

had been such as the writer wishes us to accept, Telemachus would have made a very different answer to the one he actually made. He would have said, “My dear Minerva, what a word has escaped the boundary of your teeth. My mother steal my property and go off with an unprincipled scoundrel like Eurymachus? No one can know better than yourself that she is the last woman in the world to be capable of such conduct.” And then he would have awoke as from a hideous dream.

What, however, happens in reality? Telemachus does indeed wake up (xv. 43) in great distress, but it is about his property, not about his mother. “Who steals my mother steals trash, but whoso filches from me my family heirlooms,” &c. He kicks poor Pisistratus to wake him, and says they must harness the horses and be off home at once. Pisistratus rejoins that it is pitch dark; come what may they must really wait till morning. Besides, they ought to say good bye to Menelaus, and get a present out of him; he will be sure to give them one, if Telemachus will not be in such an unreasonable hurry. Can anything show more clearly what was the inner mind both of Minerva and Telemachus about Penelope — and also what kind of ideas the audience had formed about her?

How differently, again, do Minerva and Telemachus regard the stealing. Telemachus feels it acutely and at once. Minerva takes it as a matter of course — but then the property was not hers. The authoress of the *Odyssey* is never severe about theft. Minerva evidently thinks it not nice of Penelope to want to marry again before it is known for certain that Ulysses is dead, but she explains that Eurymachus has been exceeding all the other suitors in the magnificence of his presents, and has lately increased them (xv. 17, 18). After all, Penelope had a right to please herself, and as long as she was going to be *bonâ fide*

married, she might steal as much as she could, without loss of dignity or character. The writer put this view into Minerva's mouth as a reasonable one for a woman to take. So perhaps it was, but it is not a man's view.

Here I will close my case — as much of it, that is to say, as I have been able to give in the space at my disposal — for the view that the writer of the *Odyssey* was whitewashing Penelope. As, however, we happen to be at Lacedaemon let me say what more occurs to me in connection with the visit of Telemachus to King Menelaus that bears on the question whether the writer is a man or a woman.

When Telemachus and Nestor's son Pisistratus reached Lacedaemon at the beginning of Book iv., Menelaus was celebrating the double marriage of his son Megapenthes and of his daughter Hermione. The writer says: —

... they reached the low lying city of Lacedaemon, where they drove straight to the abode of Menelaus, [and found him in his own house feasting with his many clansmen in honour of the wedding of his son, and also that of his daughter whom he was giving in marriage to the son of that valiant warrior Achilles. He had given his consent and promised her to him while he was still at Troy, and now the gods were bringing the marriage about, so he was sending her with chariots and horses to the city of the Myrmidons over whom Achilles' son was reigning. For his only son he had found a bride from Sparta, the daughter of Alector. This son, Megapenthes, was born to him of a bondwoman, for heaven had vouchsafed Helen no more children after she had borne Hermione who was fair as golden Venus herself (iv. 1–14).]

I have enclosed part of the above quotation in brackets not because

I have any doubt that the whole of it is by the same hand as the rest of the poem, but because I am convinced that the bracketed lines were interpolated by the writer after her work had been completed, or at any rate after Books iv. and xv. had assumed their present shape. The reason for the interpolation I take to be that she could not forgive herself for having said nothing about Hermione, whose non-appearance in Book xv. and in the rest of Book iv. she now attempts to explain by interpolating the passage above quoted, and thus making her quit Lacedaemon for good and all at the very beginning of this last named book. But whatever the cause of the interpolation may have been, an interpolation it certainly is, for nothing can be plainer from the rest of Book iv. than that there were no festivities going on, and that the only guests were uninvited ones — to wit Telemachus and Pisistratus.

True, the writer tried to cobble the matter by introducing lines 621–624, which in our texts are always enclosed in brackets as suspected — I suppose because Aristarchus marked them with *obeli*,* though he did not venture to exclude them. The cobble, however, only makes things worse, for it is obviously inadequate, and its abruptness puzzles the reader.

Accepting, then, lines 2–19 and 621–624 of Book iv. as by the writer of the rest of the poem, the reader will note how far more interesting she finds the marriage of Hermione than that of Megapenthes — of whose bride, by the way, there is no trace in Book xv. The marriage of the son is indeed mentioned in the first instance before that of the

* Aristarchus of Samothrace (ca. 220–143 BCE), head librarian of the Library of Alexandria, considered to be the most influential scholar of Homeric poetry. Obeli were marks used in ancient manuscripts to mark a word or passage as spurious, corrupt or doubtful. [R.S.]

daughter; but surely this is only because *νίεος ἥδὲ θυγατρὸς* lends itself more readily to a hexameter verse than any transposition of the nouns would do. Having mentioned that both son and daughter are to be married, the writer at once turns to Hermione, and appears only to marry Megapenthes because, as his sister is being married, he may as well be married too. A male writer would have married Megapenthes first and Hermione afterwards; nor would he have thought it worth while to make a very awkward interpolation in his poem merely in order to bring Hermione into it, for by this time she must have been over thirty, and it would have been easy to suppose that she had been married years ago during Menelaus's absence.

As regards the second and shorter interpolation (iv. 621–624), it refers to the day after the pretended marriages, and runs as follows: —

Thus did they converse [and guests kept coming to the king's house. They brought sheep and wine, while their wives had put up bread for them to take with them. So they were busy cooking their dinners in the courts.]

Passing over the fact that on such a great occasion as the marriage of his son and daughter, Menelaus would hardly expect his guests to bring their own provisions with them (though he might expect them, as Alcinous did,¹⁸ to do their own cooking) I would ask the reader to note that the writer cannot keep the women out even from a mere cobble. A man might have told us that the guests brought meat and wine and bread, but his mind would not instinctively turn to the guests' wives putting up the bread for them.

¹⁸ *Od.* viii. 38–40, cf. also 61. It would seem that Alcinous found the provisions which the poorer guests cooked for themselves and ate outside in the court yards. The magnates ate in the covered cloister, and were no doubt cooked for.

I say nothing about the discrepancy between the chronology of Telemachus's visit to Sparta, and of Ulysses' journey from the island of Calypso to Ithaca where he arrives one day before Telemachus does. The reader will find it dwelt on in Colonel Mure's *Language and Literature of Ancient Greece*, Vol. I., pp. 439, 440. I regard it as nothing more than a slip on the part of a writer who felt that such slips are matters of very small importance; but I will call attention to the manner in which the gorgeousness of Menelaus's establishment as described in Book iv. has collapsed by the time we reach Book xv., though as far as I can determine the length of Telemachus's stay with Menelaus, the interval between the two books should not exceed one entire day.

When Telemachus has informed Menelaus that he must go home at once, Menelaus presses his guests to stay and have something to eat before they start; this, he tells them, will be not only more proper and more comfortable for them, but also cheaper.

We know from *Il.* VII. 470–475 that Menelaus used to sell wine when he was before Troy, as also did Agamemnon, but there is a frank *bourgeoisie* about this invitation which a male writer would have avoided. Still franker, however, is the offer of Menelaus to take them on a personally conducted tour round the Peloponesus. It will be very profitable, for no one will send them away empty handed; every one will give them either a bronze tripod or a cauldron, or two mules, or a gold chalice (xv. 75–85). As for the refreshments which they are to have immediately, the king explains that they will have to take potluck, but says he will tell the women to see that there is enough for them, of what there might happen to be in the house.

That is just like Menelaus's usual fussiness. Why could he not have left it all to Helen? After reading the *Odyssey* I am not surprised at her having run away with Paris; the only wonder is that a second great war

did not become necessary very shortly after the Trojan matter had been ended. Surely the fact that two young bachelors were going to stay and dine was not such a frightful discord but that it might have been taken unprepared, or at any rate without the monarch's personal interference. "Of what there may be in the house" indeed. We can see that the dinner is not going to be profusely sumptuous. If there did not happen to be anything good in the house — and I suspect this to have been the case — Menelaus should have trusted Helen to send out and get something. But there should have been no sending out about it; Menelaus and Helen ought never to have had a meal without every conceivable delicacy.

What a come down, again, is there not as regards the butler Eteoneus. He was not a real butler at all — he was only a kind of char-butler; he did not sleep in the house (xv. 96), and for aught we know may have combined a shop round the corner with his position in Menelaus' household. Worse than this, he had no footman, not even a boy, under him, for Menelaus tells him to light the fire and set about cooking dinner (xv. 97, 98), which he proceeds to do without one syllable of remonstrance. What has become of Asphalion? Where are the men servants who attended to Telemachus and Pisistratus on their arrival? They have to yoke their own horses now. The upper and under women servants who appear at all Odyssean meals are here as usual, but we hear nothing more of Adraste, Alcippe, and Phyllo. It seems as though after describing the splendour of Menelaus's house in Book iv. the writer's nerve has failed her, and by Book xv. her instinctive thrift has reasserted itself.

And now let me return, as I said in Chapter 4 that I intended doing, to the very singular — for I do not like to say feminine — nature of the

arrangements made by Minerva for her protege in the matter of his voyage to Pylos and Lacedaemon.

When Minerva first suggested it to him, she knew that Ulysses was on the point of starting from Calypso's island for Scheria, and would be back in Ithaca almost immediately. Yet she must needs choose this particular moment, of all others, for sending Telemachus on a perilous voyage in quest of news concerning him. We have seen how she preached to him; but surely if Telemachus had known that she was all the time doing her very utmost to make his voyage useless, he might have retorted with some justice that whether he was going to be a fool henceforward or no, he should not make such a fool of any young friend of his own as she was now making of himself. Besides, he was to be away, if necessary, for twelve months; yet here before he had been gone more than four or five days, Minerva fills him with an agony of apprehension about his property and sends him post haste back to Ithaca again.

The authoress seems to have felt the force of this, for in XIII. 416–419 she makes Ulysses remonstrate with Minerva in this very sense, and ask: —

“Why did you not tell him, for you knew all about it? Did you want him, too, to go sailing about amid all kinds of hardships when others were eating up his estate?”

Minerva answered, “Do not trouble yourself about him. I sent him that he might be well spoken about for having gone. He is in no sort of difficulty, but is staying comfortably with Menelaus, and is surrounded with abundance of every kind. The suitors have put out to sea and are on the watch for him, for they mean to kill him before he can get home.

I do not much think they will succeed, but rather that some of those who are now eating up your estate will first find a grave themselves.”

What she ought to have said was: —

“You stupid man, can you not understand that my poetess had set her heart on bringing Helen of Troy into her poem, and could not see her way to this without sending Telemachus to Sparta? I assure you that as soon as ever he had interviewed Helen and Menelaus, I took — or will take, for my poetess’s chronology puzzles my poor head dreadfully — steps to bring him back at once.”

At the end of Book iv. Penelope shows a like tendency to complain of the manner in which she is kept in the dark about information that might easily have been vouchsafed to her.

Minerva has sent her a vision in the likeness of her sister Iphthime. This vision comes to Penelope’s bedside and tells her that her son shall come safely home again. She immediately says: —

“If, then, you are a goddess, or have heard news from Heaven tell me about that other unhappy one. Is he still alive, or is he dead and in the house of Hades?”

And the vision answered, “I shall not tell you for certain whether he is alive or dead, and there is no use in idle conversation.”

On this it vanished through the thong-hole of the door.

I may add that I never quite understood the fastening of the Odyssean bedroom door, till I found my bedroom at the Hotel Centrale, Trapani, fastened in the Odyssean manner.

CHAPTER 7

Further indications that the writer is a woman — young, headstrong, and unmarried.

I will now touch briefly on the principal passages, over and above large general considerations and the details to which I have already called attention, which seem to me to suggest a woman's hand rather than a man's. I shall omit countless more doubtful instances, many of which the reader will have noted, or easily discover.

At the very outset of the poem (l. 13) the writer represents Ulysses as longing to get back to his wife. He had stayed a whole year with Circe, and but for the remonstrances of his men would have stayed no one can say how much longer. He had stayed seven years with Calypso, and seems to have remained on excellent terms with her until the exigencies of the poem made it necessary to send him back to Ithaca. Surely a man of his sagacity might have subtracted Calypso's axe and auger, cut down the trees at the far end of the island, and made his raft years ago without her finding out anything about it; for she can hardly have wanted either axe or auger very often.

As for the provisions, if Ulysses was not capable of accumulating a private hoard, his cunning has been much overrated. If he had seriously wanted to get back to Penelope his little cunning that is put in evidence would have been exercised in this direction. I am convinced, therefore, that though the authoress chooses to pretend that Ulysses was dying to get back to Penelope, she knew perfectly well that he was in no great hurry to do so; she was not, however, going to admit

anything so derogatory to the sanctity of married life, or at any rate to the power which a wife has over her husband.

An older woman might have been at less pains to conceal the fact that Penelope's hold on Ulysses was in reality very slight, but the writer of the *Odyssey* is nothing if she is not young, self-willed, and unmarried. No matron would set herself down to write the *Odyssey* at all. She would have too much sense, and too little daring. She would have gained too much — and lost too greatly in the gaining. The poem is such a *tour de force* as none but a high-spirited, headstrong girl who had been accustomed to have her own way would have attempted, much less carried to such a brilliantly successful conclusion; I cannot, therefore, conceive the writer as older than the original of the frontispiece at the beginning of this book — if indeed she was so old.

The very beautiful lines in which the old nurse Euryclea lights Telemachus to bed, and folds up his clothes for him (I. 428–442), suggest a woman's hand rather than a man's. So also does the emphasising Laertes' respect for his wife's feelings (I. 430–433). This jealousy for a wife's rights suggests a writer who was bent on purifying her age, and upholding a higher ideal as regards the relations between husband and wife than a man in the Homeric age would be likely to insist on.

The price paid for Euryclea (I. 431) is, I do not doubt, a rejoinder to the Iliadic insults of XXIII. 262–264, in which a woman and a tripod are put up in one lot as a prize, and also of XXIII. 702–705, in which a tripod is represented as worth twelve oxen, and a good serviceable maid of all work only four oxen. A matron would have let Homer's passage severely alone, and a man would not have resented it so strongly as to make him write at it by declaring Euryclea to have been bought for twenty oxen.

An Iliadic passage of some length is interrupted (III. 448–455) for the purpose of bringing in Nestor's wife and daughters, and describing their delight at seeing a heifer killed; the Iliadic passage is then resumed. A man, or older woman, once launched on an Iliadic passage would have stuck to it till it failed them. They would not have cared whether the ladies of Nestor's household liked seeing the heifer killed or no.

When Helen mixes Nepenthe* with the wine which was to be handed round to Menelaus, Telemachus, and Pisistratus, we learn its virtues to be so powerful that a man could not weep during all the day on which he had drunk it, not even though he had lost both his father and his mother, or had seen a brother or a son cut to pieces before his eyes (IV. 220–226). From the order in which these relationships present themselves to the writer's mind I opine that her father and mother were the most important persons in her world, and hence that she was still young and unmarried.

A little lower we find Helen more or less penitent for having run away with Paris. Helen was Jove's own daughter, and therefore had a right to do pretty much as she chose; still it was held better to redeem her as far as possible, by making her more or less contrite. The contrition, however, is of a very curious kind. It was Venus, it seems, who ought to be penitent for having done Helen so great a wrong. It is the wrong that has been done to her that she laments, rather than any misdoing of her own.

Is a man, or matron, likely to have conceived the idea of making Helen walk round the wooden horse, pat it, call out the names of the heroes who were inside, and mimic the voices of their wives (IV. 274–

* A (fictional?) ancient Greek medicine against sorrow, drug of forgetfulness. [R.S.]

279)? Ulysses must have told her that the horse was coming, and what it would contain, when he entered Troy in disguise and talked with her. A man might have made Helen walk round the horse, pat it, and even call out the names of the heroes, but he would never have thought of making her mimic their wives.

The writer finds the smell of fish intolerable, and thinks it necessary to relieve Menelaus and his three men from a distressing situation, by getting Idothea to put some scent under each man's nostrils (iv. 441-446). There is, however, an *arrière pensée** here to which I will call attention later (see Chapter 12 near the end). Very daughterly also is the pleasure which Idothea evidently feels in playing a trick upon her father. Fathers are fair game — at all events for young goddesses.

The whole of iv. 625-847 is strongly suggestive of a woman's writing, but I cannot expect any one to admit this without reading either the original or some complete translation.

Calypso's jealousy of Penelope (v. 203, &c.) is too prettily done for a man. A man would be sure to overdo it.

Book vi. is perhaps the loveliest in the whole poem, but I can hardly doubt that if it were given to a *Times* critic of today as an anonymous work, and he was told to determine the sex of the writer he would ascribe it to a young unmarried woman without a moment's hesitation. Let the reader note how Nausicaa has to keep her father up to having a clean shirt on when he ought to have one (vi. 60), whereas her younger brothers appear to keep her up to having one for them when they want one. These little touches suggest drawing from life by a female member of Alcinous' own family who knew his little ways

* An ulterior motive. [R.S.]

from behind the scenes.

Take, again, the scene in which Ulysses first meets Nausicaa. A girl, such a girl as Nausicaa herself, young, unmarried, unattached, and without knowledge of what men commonly feel on such points, having by a cruel freak of fortune got her hero into such an awkward predicament, might conceivably imagine that he would argue as the writer of the *Odyssey* has made Ulysses do, but no man, except such a woman's tailor as could never have written the *Odyssey*, would have got his hero into such an undignified position at all, much less have made him talk as Ulysses is made to talk.

How characteristic, again, of the man-hatress is Nausicaa's attempt to make out that in Ulysses she had found a man to whom she really might become attached — if there were no obstacle to their union.

I find it hard to pass over Book VII., especially line 230, &c., where Arete wants to know how Ulysses came by his clothes, and 294, in which it is said that young people are apt to be thoughtless. Surely this is a girl giving a rap on the knuckles to older people by echoing what she is accustomed to hear them say.

In Book VIII. the games, which are no doubt suggested by those in *Il.* XXIII. are merely labelled "sports," not a single detail being given except that Ulysses' disc made a sound of some sort as it went through the air (VIII. 190), which I do not believe it would do. In the *Iliad* details are given of every contest, and the games do not take place as they do in the *Odyssey* immediately after a heavy meal, from which we can hardly suppose that the competitors would be excluded.

I say nothing about the modesty of the female goddesses in not coming to see Mars and Venus caught in the toils of Vulcan (VIII. 324), nor yet about the lovely new dress with which the Graces consoled

Venus when she had been liberated (VIII. 366), for I have omitted the whole of this episode in my abridgement.

The love of her own home and parents which is so obvious throughout the poem is never more apparent than in the speech of Ulysses (IX. 34–36). He says that however fine a house a man may have in a foreign land, he can never be really happy away from his father and mother. How different this from the saying which Aristophanes puts into the mouth of Mercury (*Plut.* 1151) to the effect that a man's fatherland is any place in which he is making money; or again from Euripides, who in a fragment of *Phaethon* says that a man's fatherland is any land that will feed him. It is only a young and affectionate girl who could have made Ulysses (who is not much given to sentiment) speak so warmly. Middle-aged people, whether men or women, are too much spotted with the world to be able to say such things. They think as Aristophanes and Euripides do.

In lines 120, 121 of Book IX. the writer tells us that huntsmen as a general rule will face all sorts of hardship in forest and on mountain top. This is quite true, but it is not the way in which men speak of chamois-hunters.

As for the Cyclops incident, delightful as it is, it is impossible as a man or matron's writing. It was very kind of Polyphemus, drunk though he was, to stay without moving a muscle, till Ulysses and his men had quite finished boring out his eye with a burning beam that was big enough for a ship's mast, but Baron Munchausen is the only male writer who could offer us anything of the kind, and his is not a case in point. Neither, after all, is Book IX. of the *Odyssey*, for the writer is not taking Polyphemus seriously.

The distress which Polyphemus caused to Ulysses and his men by flinging down a bundle of firewood is too graphic a touch not to have

been drawn from life. I have often fancied that the whole Cyclops incident may have been suggested by one of those *merende*, or pic-nics which Italians and Sicilians are still so fond of, and that the writer of the *Odyssey* went with her friends to Pizzolungo and the cave where the scene is laid, which was then really much what an *alpe* is now — an abode of shepherds who made cheese in the cave itself. I like to fancy (for I know that it is nothing more than fancy) that the writer of the *Odyssey* was delighted with all she saw, but that as she was looking at the milk dishes some huge unkempt shepherd came in with a load of firewood on his back, and gave a sudden shock to her nervous system by flinging it down too violently. Him she transformed into the local giant that exists on Mt. Eryx now under the name of Conturrano.¹⁹

It is very hard to say what the authoress thought that Polyphemus did in the matter of his ewes and lambs. The lambs were in the yards all day, for Ulysses' men saw them there and wanted to steal them (ix. 226, 227). Besides, Polyphemus could not have got any milk from the ewes if their lambs had been with them in the day-time. Having driven the ewes into his cave (I omit the she-goats for brevity) he milked them, and then put their lambs with them (ix. 245). The question is, did he take them away again after they had got what they could from a milked ewe, or did he leave them with their mothers all night?

On the one hand we have no hint of their removal, which would be a long and troublesome task; on the other we are told in line 309 that he milked the ewes in the morning, and again gave each one of them her lamb; on the evening of the same day he repeats this process (line 342), and he could hardly give the ewes their lambs unless he had first removed them.

¹⁹ See Chapter 10.

The difficulty is that if he removed them they would certainly die in a very few days of such diet as Polyphemus allows them, for whatever he did was *κατὰ μοῖραν*, according to his usual practice; while if he did not remove them, he could not have got any milk. Whatever he did, we may be sure that the writer of the *Odyssey* had got it wrong, and there is not much to be gained by trying to find out what she thought, for it is obvious that she did not think.

I asked my friend, Sig. Giuseppe Pagoto of Mt. Eryx, what was the practice of Sicilian shepherds now, and received the following answer: —

In Sicily they do not milk ewes that have lately lambed; they keep the lambs shut up and take the ewes to feed. In the evening they let the lambs suck, and then shut them up again. During the night the ewes make a great deal of milk, and this is again sucked by the lambs in the morning, and not milked. Our shepherds do not take any of the milk until the lamb has been killed. Perhaps in those days the pastures were so abundant that the ewes gave milk enough to nourish the lambs, and still have some for milking. This is the only way in which what Polyphemus did can be explained.

I believe the true explanation to be that the shepherd from whose *alpe* the scene was in part drawn, drove in a number of ewes some of which had lambs, while the lambs of others had been already killed and eaten. The authoress saw the shepherd milk a number of ewes, and then bring in a number of lambs, but she did not understand that the ewes which had been milked had got no lambs, while those that had lambs still living had not been milked. I think she knew she was hazy about it, otherwise she would not have cut her version short with a *πάντα κατὰ μοῖραν* — “all in due course.”

It being evident that Circe is quite as capable a prophet as Tiresias,

why should poor Ulysses be sent down to Hades? Obviously because the writer had set her heart on introducing colloquies with the dead. Granted; but a writer who was less desirous of making out that women know as much as men would not have made Circe know quite so much. Why, as soon as Ulysses has returned from Hades, repeat to him the warning about the cattle of the Sun which Tiresias had given him in the same words, and add a great deal more of her own? Why, again, did she not tell Ulysses to be particularly careful to ask Tiresias about the Wandering Cliffs, in respect of which she had confessed that her information was deficient? Ulysses does not appear to have said anything, but he must have thought a good deal. Young people are impatient of such small considerations. Who, indeed, can let fancy, naivete, and the charm of spontaneity have free and graceful play, if he or she is to be troubled at every touch and turn by the suggestions of common sense? The young disdain precision too contemptuously; while older people are apt to think of nothing else.

The same desire to exalt the capabilities of woman appears in making the Sun leave his sheep and cattle in the sole charge of the two nymphs Lampetie and Phaethusa (xii. 132) who, by the way, proved quite unable to protect them. But then the Sun was a man, and capable of any folly.

The comparison of Ulysses to a hungry magistrate (xii. 439, 440), which is obviously humorous, is neither a man's nor a matron's simile for such a thrilling situation. To me it suggests the hand of a magistrate's daughter who had often seen her father come home tired and cross at having been detained in court.

The present from Helen to Telemachus of a wedding dress (xv. 125-129) was more likely to occur to a young woman than to a man. I think also that a male writer would have given something to poor

Pisistratus, who has been very good and amiable all through. It does not appear that Telemachus tipped Eteoneus or any other of Menelaus' servants, though from xx. 296, 297 it is plain that it was quite usual for visitors to give something to the servants of a house at which they were staying. He is very rude about not saying good-bye to Nestor (xv. 199–201), and he never says good-bye to Pisistratus as he ought.

Ulysses, again, seems to have no sense of obligation whatever to Circe or Calypso. He has no other idea than that of taking as much and giving as little as he can. So in Hades he does not begin by asking how Penelope is, but how she is behaving, and whether she is protecting his estate (xi. 177, &c.).

In Book xvii. 495 the old nurse and housekeeper, who has hitherto always been Euryclea, suddenly becomes Eurynome, a name which we have not yet had. Eurynome from this point is frequently mentioned, though the context always suggests, and sometimes compels, the belief that Euryclea is intended. In Book xx. 4, for example, we are told that Eurynome threw a cloak over Ulysses after he had lain down to rest, but in line 143 of the same Book, Euryclea says she threw the cloak over him herself — for surely this is intended, though the plural according to very common custom is used instead of the singular. The alternation of the two names becomes very baffling, till finally in Book xxiii. 289–293 both Eurynome and Euryclea appear on the scene together, which cobbles the difficulty, but does not make a good job of it — for one woman would have been quite enough to do all that there was to do.

What happened, I take it, was this. In the first line where we meet with Eurynome, the name Euryclea could not be made to scan very easily, and the writer, thinking she would alter it later, wrote Eurynome. Having done so once, she used the names Eurynome and Euryclea

according as metrical convenience inspired her. This went on for some time, till in the end she found it would be a great deal of trouble to re-write all the passages in which Eurynome had appeared; she therefore determined to brazen it out, and pretend that she had all along meant Euryclea and Eurynome to be two people. To put their separate existence beyond question, she brings them both on together. I do not say that this is feminine, but I can find nothing like it in the *Iliad*. I have sometimes thought the last six or seven Books, though they contain some of the most exquisite passages in the whole poem, were written in greater haste than the earlier ones, while the last hundred lines or so of Book XXIV. suggest that the writer was determined to end her work without much caring how. I have also wondered whether the husband who in Book VI. was yet to find may not have been found before Book XXIV. was written; but I have nothing to urge in support of this speculation.

Argus (XVII. 292) is not a very good name for a dog. It is the stock epithet for hounds in both *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, and means "fleet." The whole scene between Ulysses and Argus is perhaps the most disappointing in the *Odyssey*. If the dog was too old or feeble to come to Ulysses, Ulysses should have gone up to him and hugged him — fleas or no fleas; and Argus should not have been allowed to die till this had been put in evidence. True, Ulysses does wipe away one tear, but he should have broken utterly down — and then to ask Eumaeus whether Argus was any use, or whether he was only a show dog — this will not do even as acting. The scene is well conceived but badly executed; it betrays the harder side of the writer's nature, and has little of the pathos which Homer would have infused into it.

When Eumaeus says what kind of man he would be likely to ask to the house if he was free to choose, he puts a divine first, a physician

next, then a carpenter, and then a bard (xvii. 384). The only wonder is that the writer did not put the bard before the carpenter, and doubtless she would have done so had she not wanted to give the bard a whole line to himself. A woman, writing at the present day would be apt to consider the clergyman, and the doctor, as the first people who should be invited, but a man in the Homeric age would hardly have chosen as Eumaeus is made to do.

I do not believe that any man living could wash Ulysses' feet and upset the bath so delightfully as Euryclea does (xix. 386, &c.), and at the same time make Penelope sit by and observe nothing of what was going on. He could not rise to the audacity of saying that Minerva had directed Penelope's attention elsewhere, notwithstanding the noise which Ulysses' leg made, and the upsetting of a bath full of water, which must have run over all that part of the cloister. A man would have made Penelope desire suddenly to leave the cloister, just before the accident happened, and lie down upon that couch which she had never ceased to water with her tears, &c.; she could then have come back, remembering that she had forgotten something, after the foot-bath had been refilled and the mess cleaned up. But he could not have done it at all.

It will be observed that the stronger the indications become that Ulysses is on the point of returning, the more imperative Penelope finds it to marry one of the suitors without a day's delay. She has heard about the hawk tearing the dove; she has heard Telemachus sneeze; she has been assured that Ulysses was among the Thesprotians, quite near, and would be in Ithaca immediately; she has had a dream which would have made any one wait, say, for at least a week longer, unless determined to take the gloomiest possible view of the situation; but no; on the following day she must marry and leave the house. Her words

seem to me like those of a woman gloating over the luxury of woe, as drawn by another woman who has never known real trouble. Nothing can better show the hollowness of Penelope's distress from first to last. A woman who felt herself really drowning would have clutched at any one of the straws above mentioned, and made it buoy her up for weeks or months; and any writer who had known real sorrow would also know how certain she would be to do this. A man could only so draw his heroine if he was laughing at her in his sleeve; whereas the writer of the *Odyssey* is doing her very utmost to take herself seriously.

Penelope seems firmly convinced that she is keeping excellent guard over her son's estate all the time, and that if she were to leave the house everything would go to rack and ruin. She implies this to Ulysses when he is disguised as a beggar (xix. 524). One wonders how Ulysses could restrain himself from saying, "Well, Madam, if you cannot prove more successful as a guardian than you have been doing this many years past, the sooner you leave the house the better for Telemachus."

No great poet would compare his hero to a paunch full of blood and fat, cooking before the fire (xx. 24–28).^{*} The humour, for of

^{*} In his *Preface to the Second Edition* of *The Authoress* Henry Festing Jones writes: "This passage is not given in the abridged *Story of the Odyssey* at the beginning of the book, but in Butler's Translation it occurs in these words: 'Thus he chided with his heart, and checked it into endurance, but he tossed about as one who turns a paunch full of blood and fat in front of a hot fire, doing it first on one side then on the other, that he may get it cooked as soon as possible; even so did he turn himself about from side to side, thinking all the time how, single-handed as he was, he should contrive to kill so large a body of men as the wicked suitors.' "It looks as though in the interval between the publication of *The Authoress* (1897) and of the Translation (1900) Butler had changed his mind; for in the first case the comparison is between Ulysses and a paunch full, etc., and in the second it is between Ulysses and a man who turns a paunch full, etc. The second comparison is perhaps one which a great poet might make."

course it is humorously intended, is not man's humour, unless he is writing burlesque. This the writer of the *Odyssey* is not doing here, though she has intentionally approached it very nearly in a great part of the Phaeacian episode.

The only other two points which suggest a female hand in Book xx. — I mean with especial force — are the sympathy which the writer betrays with the poor weakly woman who could not finish her task (105, &c.), and the speech of Telemachus about his mother being too apt to make much of second rate people (129–133).

The twelve axes set up in Book xxi. remain in the court during the whole time that the suitors are being killed. How, I wonder, is it that not one of the suitors picked up a single axe? A dozen men with a dozen axes should have made short work of Ulysses and his men. True, by my own hypothesis the heads had been taken off the handles, but they must have been wedged, or bound, either on to the handles or to some other like pieces of wood, so as to raise them high enough for anyone to shoot through the handle-holes. It should have been an easy matter either to fix the heads on to the handles again, or to extemporise new ones. If the writer had not forgotten all about the axes in her desire to begin with the shooting, she would have trumped up a difficulty of some kind. Perhaps she thought that the audience, hearing nothing more about them, would forget all about the axes too — and she was not far wrong.

The instinctive house-wifely thrift of the writer is nowhere more marked than near the beginning of Book xxii., where amid the death-throes of Antinous and Eurymachus she cannot forget the good meat and wine that were spoiled by the upsetting of the tables at which the suitors had been sitting.

The killing of the suitors is aggressive in its want of plausibility.

If Melanthius could go to the store-room, no matter how, the other suitors could have followed him and attacked Ulysses from behind; for there is evidently a passage from the store-room to the place where Ulysses is standing.

Again, the outer yard was open to the suitors all the time. Surely with the axes still at command they could have cut the Byblus-fibre rope that was the only fastening of the main gate; some of them at any rate might have got out. The first ninety lines of the book are as fine as the *Iliad*, but from line (say) 100 to line 330 the writer is out of her depth, and knows it. The most palpably feminine part is where Minerva comes to help Ulysses disguised as Mentor (xxii. 205–240). The suitors menace her, and in a rage she scolds not them but Ulysses, whom she rates roundly. Having done this, she flies away and sits on a rafter like a swallow.

All readers will help poets, playwrights, and novelists, by making believe a good deal, but we like to know whether we are in the hands of one who will flog us uphill, or who will make as little demand upon us as possible. In this portion of Book xxii. the writer is flogging us uphill. She does not care how much she may afflict the reader in his efforts to believe her — the only thing she really cares for is her revenge. She must have every one of the suitors killed stone dead, and all the guilty women hanged, and Melanthius first horribly tortured and then cut in pieces. Provided these objects are attained, it is not necessary that the reader should be able to believe, or even follow, all the ins and outs of the processes that lead up to them.

I will therefore not pursue the absurdities with which the killing of the suitors abounds. I would, however, point out that in Book xvi. 281, &c., where the taking away of the armour from the cloister walls was first mooted, it was proposed that enough to arm Ulysses and

Telemachus should be left accessible, so that they might snatch it up in a moment without having to go all the way down into the store-room after it, at the risk of Telemachus's forgetting to shut the door — as young people so often do. I suppose Ulysses forgot all about this sensible precaution, when he and Telemachus were hiding the armour at the beginning of Book XIX. Or shall we suppose that the idea of catching Melanthius in the store-room had not occurred to the poetess when she was writing Book XVI., but had struck her before she reached Book XIX., and that she either forgot or did not think it worth while, or found it inconvenient, to cancel lines 295, 296 of Book XVI.? From what I have seen of the authoress I incline to this last opinion, and hold that she made Ulysses omit to leave a little of the armour accessible to himself and Telemachus, because she had by this time determined to string Melanthius up in the store-room, and did not see how to get him inside it unless she made Telemachus go there first and leave the door open; and, again, did not see how to get Telemachus down to the store-room if she left armour near at hand, for him to snatch up.

As for Telemachus bringing up four helmets, four shields, eight spears, he was already fully armed when the fight began (XXI. 434), so three helmets, three shields and six spears should have done. Four helmets, four shields, and eight spears is a heavy load; but Melanthius carried twelve shields, twelve helmets, and twelve spears apparently all at one time.

We are in an atmosphere of transpontine melodrama,^{*} but the only wonder is that the absurdities are not even grosser than they are, seeing

^{*} Transpontine (across the bridge) melodrama refers to the type of crude and extravagantly sensational plays staged in the mid-19th century in London theatres "across the bridges," on the southern side of the Thames in London. [R.S.]

that the writer was a young woman with a strong will of her own. Woman she must have been; no male writer could have resisted the temptation to kill Eumaeus. It is the faithful servant's role to be mortally wounded on occasions of this sort. There are very few more suitors to be killed, and Minerva is going to raise her aegis immediately, so that he could be perfectly well spared; possibly the writer felt that she should be shorthanded with the cleaning up of the blood and the removal of the dead bodies, but more probably she hated the suitors so bitterly that she would not let them score a single point.

How evidently relieved she feels when she has got the killing over, and can return to ground on which she is strong, such as the saving of Phemius and Medon, and the cleaning down of the house.

What are we to say of making Penelope, whose room looked out upon the cloister, sleep soundly all through the killing of the suitors? What of her remarks to Euryclea when she has been waked? What, again, of her interview with Ulysses, and the dance which Ulysses presently advises? what, indeed, of the whole Book? Surely it is all perfectly right as coming from some such person as the one portrayed in my frontispiece, but who can conceive the kind of man or matron who could write it? The same applies to Book xxiv. What man or middle-aged woman could have written the ineffably lovely scene between Ulysses and Laertes in the garden? or have made Ulysses eat along with Dolius, whose son and daughter he had killed on the preceding day? A man would have been certain to make Ulysses tell Dolius that he was very sorry, but there had been nothing for it but to hang his daughter and to cut his son's nose and ears off, draw out his vitals, and then cut off his hands and feet. Probably, however, he would have kept Dolius and his sons out of the Book altogether.

When Ulysses and Penelope are in bed (xxiii. 300-343) and are

telling their stories to one another, Penelope tells hers first. I believe a male writer would have made Ulysses' story come first and Penelope's second.

CHAPTER 8

That Ithaca and Scheria are both of them drawn from Trapani and its immediate neighbourhood.

I have now given, though far more briefly than the subject requires, some of my reasons for believing that from the first Book of the *Odyssey* to the last we are in the hands of a young woman. Who, then, was she? Where did she live and write? She was of flesh and blood, lived in time and place, looked on sea and sky, came and went somewhither and somewhen — but where? and when? and above all, who? It will be my object to throw what light I can upon these subjects in the following chapters.

I will follow the same course that I have taken earlier, and retrace the steps whereby I was led to my conclusions.

By the time I had finished Book x. I was satisfied that the *Odyssey* was not a man's work, but I had seen nothing to make me think that it was written rather at one place than at another. When, however, I reached XIII. 159–164, in which passage Neptune turns the Phaeacian ship into a rock at the entrance of the Scherian harbour, I felt sure that an actual feature was being drawn from, and made a note that no place, however much it might lie between two harbours, would do for Scheria, unless at the end of one of them there was a small half sunken rock. Presently I set myself to consider what combination of natural features I ought to look for on the supposition that Scheria was a real place, and made a list of them as follows: —

1. The town must be placed on a point of land jutting out as a land's end into the sea between two harbours, or bays in which ships could ride (vi. 263); it must be connected with the mainland by a narrow neck of land, and as I have just said, must have a half sunken formidable rock at the entrance of one of the harbours.

2. There must be no river running into either harbour, or Nausicaa would not have had to go so far to wash her clothes. The river when reached might be nothing but a lagoon with a spring or two of fresh water running into it, for the clothes were not, so it would seem, washed in a river; they were washed in public washing cisterns (*Od.* vi. 40, 86, 92) which a small spring would keep full enough of water "to wash clothes even though they were very dirty." The scene is laid close on the sea shore, for the clothes are put out to dry on a high bank of shingle which the sea had raised, and Nausicaa's maidens fly from Ulysses along the beach and spits that run into the sea.

3. There must be a notable mountain at no great distance from the town so as to give point to Neptune's threat that he would bury it under a high mountain. Furthermore, the whole combination above described must lie greatly further west of Euboea than Ithaca was, and hence greatly west of Ithaca (vii. 321). Surely, if a real place is being drawn from, these indications are ample to ensure its being easily found.

Men of science, so far as I have observed them, are apt in their fear of jumping to a conclusion to forget that there is such a thing as jumping away from one, and Homeric scholars seem to have taken a leaf out of their book in this respect. How many striking points of correspondence, I wonder, between an actual place and one described in a novel, would be enough to create a reasonable assurance that the place in which they were combined was the one that was drawn from?

I should say four well marked ones would be sufficient to make it extremely improbable that a like combination could be found elsewhere; make it five and unless we find something to outweigh the considerations which so close a correspondence between the actual place and the one described in the novel would suggest, or unless by some strange coincidence the same combination in all its details can be shown to occur in some other and more probable locality, we may be sure that the novel was drawn from the place; for every fresh detail in the combination required decreases the probability of error in geometrical ratio if it be duly complied with.

Let us suppose that a policeman is told to look out for an elderly gentleman of about sixty; he is a foreigner, speaks a little English but not much, is lame in his left foot, has blue eyes, a bottle nose, and is about 5 ft. 10 in. high. How many of these features will the policeman require before he feels pretty sure that he has found his man? If he sees any foreigner he will look at him. If he sees one who is about 5 ft. 10 in. high he will note his age, if this proves to be about sixty years, and further, if the man limps on his left foot, he will probably feel safe in stopping him. If, as he is sure to do, he finds he has a bottle nose, he will leave the blue eyes and broken English alone, and will bring the man before the magistrate.

If it is then found that the man's eyes are hazel, and that he either speaks English fluently or does not speak it at all — is the magistrate likely to discharge the prisoner on account of these small discrepancies between him and the description given of him, when so many other of the required characteristics are found present? Will he not rather require the prisoner to bring forward very convincing proof that it is a case of mistaken identity?

Or to take another illustration, which is perhaps more strictly to the

point as involving comparison between an actual place and one described in a novel. Here is an extract from a novel: —

Grammerton, like other fair cities, was built on a hill. The highest point was the fine old Elizabethan School, then, and now, of European reputation. Opposite it was the old shattered and ruined castle, overlooking the bubbling and boiling shallows of the broad and rapid river Saber. ... From the hill the town sloped rapidly down on every side towards the river, which made it a peninsula studded with habitations. (*The Beauclercs, Father and Son*, by Charles Clarke, Chapman and Hall. Vol. 1. p. 28.)

Is there any man of ordinary intelligence and acquainted with Shrewsbury who will doubt that Shrewsbury was the place that Mr. Clarke was drawing from?

When I have urged the much more numerous and weightier points of agreement between Scheria as described in the *Odyssey*, and Trapani as it still exists, eminent Homeric scholars have told me, not once nor twice — and not meekly, but with an air as though they were crushing me — that my case rests in the main on geographical features that are not unknown to other parts of the coast, and upon legends which also belong to other places.

Grammerton, they argue — to return to my illustration — must not be held as Shrewsbury, for at Harrow as well as Shrewsbury the School is on the highest part of the town. There is a river, again, at Eton, so that Eton may very well have been the place intended. It is highly fanciful to suppose that the name Saber may have been a mere literary travesty of Sabrina. At Nottingham there is a castle which was in ruins but a few years since, and from which one can see the Trent.

Nottingham, therefore, is quite as likely to be the original of Grammerton as Shrewsbury is.

And so on *ad infinitum*. This line of argument consists in ignoring that the force of the one opposed to it lies in the demonstrable existence of a highly complex combination, the component items of which are potent when they are all found in the same place, but impotent unless combined. It is a line which eminent Homeric scholars almost invariably take when discussing my Odyssean theory, but it is not one which will satisfy those before whom even the most eminent of Homeric scholars must in the end bow — I mean, men of ordinary common sense. These last will know that Grammerton can only be dislodged from Shrewsbury on proof either that the features of Shrewsbury do not in reality correspond with those of Grammerton, or else that there is another town in England which offers the same combination, and is otherwise more acceptable.

So with Trapani and Scheria. Eminent Homeric scholars must show that I have exaggerated the points of correspondence between the two places — which in the face of Admiralty charts and of the *Odyssey* they will hardly venture; or they must bring forward some other place in which the same points of correspondence are found combined — which they will not attempt; or they must show reason for thinking that the very numerous and precise correspondences between Trapani and all Scherian and Ithacan scenes are referable to mere accident — and this will satisfy those only who will believe that a man has held thirteen trumps in his hand three deals running, without having tampered with the cards. I need not discuss this last supposition, and as for the other two, I can only assure the reader that no attempt has been made to establish either of them during the close on six years since my theory was first put before the public.

Neither will it ever be made. For Scheria should be looked for on some West coast to the West of Greece, and there are no such West coasts except those of Italy and Sicily, both of which I know well enough to be sure that if the Scherian combination could be found elsewhere than at Trapani I should long since have found it. Even could such a place be found with its rock Malconsiglio, legend and all, before it could compete with Trapani in claiming the *Odyssey* it would have to offer the Ithacan combination as well as the Scherian; for surely a place which provides us with both Ithacan and Scherian topography would have a greater right to be considered as that from which the *Odyssey* was drawn, than one which could only offer the details of Scheria.

Furthermore, could they find another place with all both Scherian and Ithacan features, my opponents would be only half way through their troubles; for Trapani could still hold its own against it, unless it also had four islands (neither more nor fewer) lying off it, one of them long and narrow, and all of them corresponding with the inaccurate Odyssean description of the Ionian islands. Nor would it even then begin to be on equal terms with Trapani, till it was shown that the effective part of the voyages of Ulysses begins and ends with it. When all this has been done, but not before, it will be time to weigh the comparative claims to the two sites.

For I rest my case on the harmonious concurrence of four lines of argument, each requiring the fulfilment of many and very rigorous conditions, and each by itself sufficient to raise a strong presumption that Trapani was the place which was most prominent in the mind of the writer of the *Odyssey*. They are: —

1. That Scheria is drawn from Trapani. This I will substantiate by bringing forward a much stronger combination of correspondences

than exists between Grammerton and Shrewsbury.

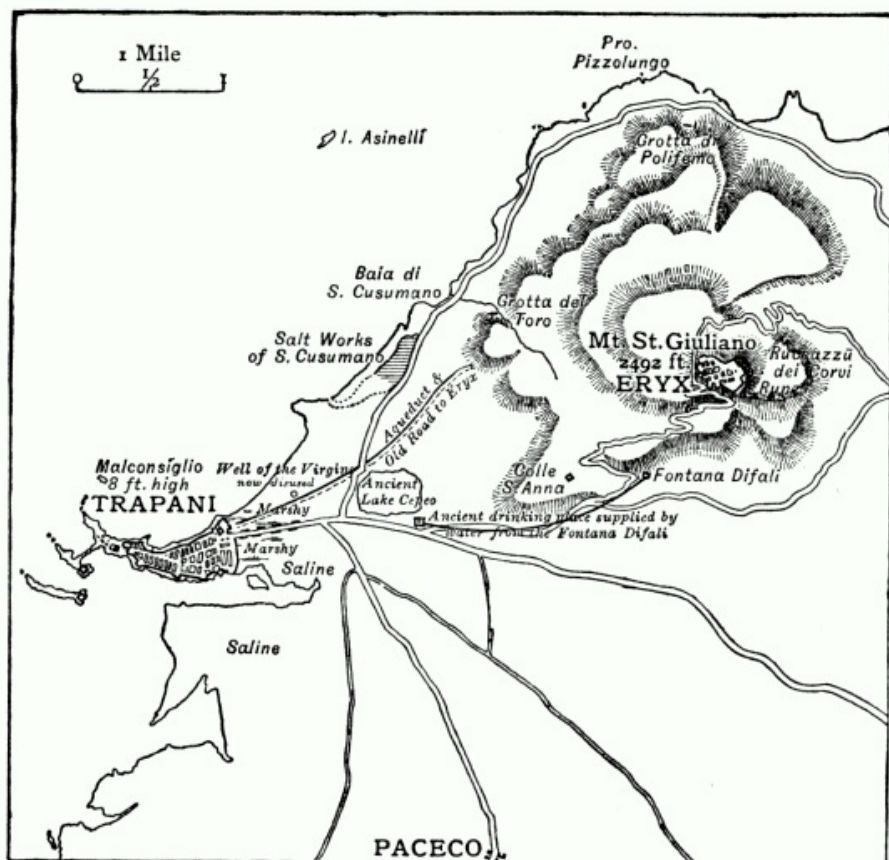
2. That Ithaca also is drawn from Trapani and its immediate neighbourhood. My case for this will be found even stronger if possible than that by which I established that Scheria was Trapani.

3. That the Ionian islands as described in the *Odyssey* cannot have been drawn from the actual Ionian islands, nor from any others but those off Trapani; and that the writer sinned against her own knowledge in order to force these islands into her narrative.

4. That the voyages of Ulysses practically resolve themselves into a voyage from Troy to the neighbourhood of Sicily, and thenceforward into a sail round Sicily, beginning with Trapani and ending with the same place.

It will be necessary that no argument adduced in support of any of these propositions should clash with those in support of any other, but all the four lines of argument must corroborate each other, so that they fit into one another as the pieces of a child's puzzle. It is inconceivable that anything but a true theory should comply with conditions so exacting. I will now proceed to show that Scheria is Trapani, and will return to the steps by which I arrived at this conclusion.

Armed with the list of points I had to find in combination, as given at the beginning of this chapter, I went down to the map room of the British Museum intending to search the Mediterranean from the Troad to Gibraltar if necessary; but remembering that I ought to look (for reasons already given) some distance West of Greece, and also that the writer of the *Odyssey* appeared to have lived on a coast that looked West not East, I resolved to search the West coasts first. I knew that Colonel Mure and a respectable weight of ancient testimony had placed the Cyclopes on Mt. Eryx, and it seemed to me that the island where Ulysses hunted the goats, and the whole Cyclopes incident



TRAPANI AND MT. ERYX

Walker & Boutall sc.

suggested drawing from life more vividly than any other part of the voyages. I knew, moreover, that the writer was a young woman who was little likely to have travelled, and hence felt sure that if one place could be found, none of the others would be long in finding; I asked, therefore, for the map of the Lilybaean promontory, as the West coast West of Greece that offered the greatest prospect of success, and hardly had I got it in my hand before I found the combination I wanted

for Scheria lying right under Mt. Eryx. The land's end jutting into the sea — the two harbours one on either side of it — the narrow entrance between two marshes — the high mountain hard by — the rock at the entrance of one of the harbours — the absence of any river — will be found in the map here given, which Messrs. Walker & Boutall have made for me from the Italian Government survey, and from our own Admiralty chart.

But this was not all. Not only was the rock of the right height, and so turned as to give the idea of a ship coming into port, but it bore the strange name of Malconsiglio, or "Evil counsel." I was so much struck with this that I wrote to Trapani enquiring whether there existed any local tradition in connection with the rock, and was told that there were two — the one absurd, and the other to the effect that the rock had been a ship of Turkish Pirates who were coming to attack Trapani, but were turned into stone at the entrance of the harbour by the Madonna di Trapani. I did not doubt that the name and the legend between them preserved the Odyssean version, in a Christianised form — the legend recording the fact of a ship's having been turned into stone as it was entering harbour, and the name telling us the other fact that this had been brought about in consequence of an evil counsel.

I believe the above sufficient for reasonable assurance that Scheria was drawn from Trapani, and will, therefore, proceed to establish that the Ithaca scenes are drawn also from the same place and its immediate neighbourhood.

To this end it will be incumbent upon me to find that near Trapani, though not actually at the town, there exists, or can be shown to have in all reasonable probability existed, a harbour which has, or had, a current in it, and which lies hard by the foot of a mountain. This harbour should have a shelving bottom, for the Phaeacian crew which

brought Ulysses to Ithaca ran half the ship's length on shore before the way was off it. At no great distance there must be two caves near together (XIII. 103-112 and 347-349). One of them must have two entrances — one turned towards the North, by which people can go down into the cave, and the other towards the South, by which the gods alone can enter. It must have water in it, and also prehistoric implements should be found there. From near it one must be able to see harbours (in the plural), and it should be on the side of a mountain. Here Ulysses hid the treasures that the Phaeacians had given him. The other cave need present no special features.

A man ascending the mountain from these caves, and keeping along the top of it should come to a place on ground commanding an extensive prospect, where there is a spring and a rock that is called Raven. This site must be bitterly cold in winter, and must be about two hours' walk from Trapani; the path to the town must be so rugged that a man in ordinary vigour would not like to take it without having a stick; and lastly, it must pass a notable mound or hill much nearer Trapani than the high ground above alluded to, and commanding a full view of the city and harbour. The reader who turns to the Books XIII., XIV., XV., XVI. and XVII. will find that all these points are necessary.

They all of them exist at this day, even to the calling of the rock "Raven," except one — I mean the mouth of the harbour where the Phaeacians entered; this is now silted up, like the harbour of Selinunte,²⁰ which I might almost call on the same coast. The inner part of the harbour is still full of sea water, but has been converted into Salt Works²¹ which are slightly below the level of the sea. The bed of

²⁰ A few years ago the stone work at the entrance to the harbour of Selinunte was excavated, but it was silted over again in a single winter.

²¹ Shown in the plan as the Salt Works of S. Cusumano.

the old exit is clearly seen, and there are still rushes in it though it is quite dry: it is very narrow, is often full in winter, and is marked with dotted lines in the Italian Ordnance Map, but not so in our Admiralty Chart.

The existence of this bed was pointed out to me by Signor Sugameli, of Trapani. He assured me that till 1848 when the Salt Works were made, the whole space covered by them was an open mere where his father used to go to shoot wild ducks. One great difficulty in making the Salt Works was the abundance of fresh water springs, which made it necessary to cement the salt pans in order to keep the fresh water from mixing with the salt. It was perhaps from some of these springs that the plynai, or washing cisterns, of VI. 40 were supplied — unless indeed Nausicaa washed the clothes in sea water as I have seen women in the island of Pantellaria still do.

Given a mass of water, nearly a mile long and a quarter of a mile broad, with a narrow exit, and the tide, which here has a rise and fall of from two to three feet, would cause a current that at times would be strong, and justify its being described as a river and also as a harbour with a current in it; returning for a moment to Scheria, I suppose this to be the river at the mouth of which Ulysses landed, and the river's staying his flow (v. 451), I take to mean that he arrived there just at the turn of the tide. I may also say that this harbour is used five times in the *Odyssey*: —

1. As the “flowing harbour, in the country beyond the town, under Mt. Neritum” — reading, as explained earlier, *Nḡpítw* for *Nḡíw* — where Minerva said she left her ship, when she was talking with Telemachus i. 185, 186. 2. As the place where Ulysses landed in Scheria and where Nausicaa washed her clothes. 3. As the place where Ulysses landed in Ithaca. 4. As the place where Telemachus landed in Ithaca on

his return from Pylos (xv. 495, &c.). 5. As the spot pointed to by Ulysses as the one where his ship was lying “in the country beyond the town” (xxiv. 308).

I will now return to the two caves which ought to be found at no great distance from the head of this harbour. It is clear from the text that there were two not one, but some one has enclosed in brackets the two lines in which the second cave is mentioned, I presume because he found himself puzzled by having a second cave sprung upon him when up to this point he has been only told of one.

I venture to think that if he had known the ground he would not have been puzzled, for there are two caves, distant about 80 or 100 yards from one another, at the place marked in the map as the *grotta del toro*. The one is conspicuous, but without special feature; the other, which is not very easily seen, and which is called by the peasants the *grotta del toro*, looks due North, and is universally believed to contain a treasure, which a bull who lives in its recesses is continually grinding, but which can only be found by a virgin, who will eat a whole pomegranate without spilling a single pip. I suspect the *toro* to be a children’s corruption of *tesoro*. The bull having thus got into the cave has never got out again, and as the treasure is also confidently known to exist — well — what can the bull be there for but to turn a mill and grind the treasure?

The cave runs due South into the rock by a passage so rough and narrow that no one is likely to go more than a very few feet with it. No one, therefore, can enter the cavern from the South — it is only the gods who can do so.

In August, 1894, I visited the ground with some Sicilian friends, and we discoursed with the *contadino* who had charge of the farm on which the caves are found. While we were talking there came up a nice

intelligent lad on a donkey, and he seemed much interested in our conversation.

“Is there,” we asked, pointing to the *grotta del toro*, “a treasure in the cave?”

“Certainly,” was the immediate answer. Here the boy broke in. He was quite sure there was one. Everybody knew it. It could not be doubted.

“Is there a treasure in the other cave?”

“Oh, no.”

“Which of the two caves is called the *grotta del toro*?”

“That one” — from both peasant and boy, who pointed at once to the cave that corresponded with the *Odyssey*.

“You are quite sure that the other cave is not called ‘la grotta del toro’?”

“Quite.”

“Where does the *grotta del toro* go to?”

“It gets narrow and goes far into the rock.”

“Has any one ever been to the end of it?”

“No, no; no one knows where it ends. There was a cattle driver who went in once to explore it, but he never came back, and they say that after this there was a wall built to stop any one from going further.”

“Have you ever been inside the cave yourself?”

“Yes.”

“Have you been as far as the wall?”

“No.”

“How far did you go?”

“Not very far; I was afraid.”

“Then you have no idea how far the cave goes?”

“No.”

“Is there water in the cave at all times?”

“Yes.”

“Have you seen it?”

“I was there in May last, and there was water then.”

“Is there water there now?”

“I should think so, but cannot be certain.”

“Can you take us to it?”

“No; the key of the ground is at Trapani.”

“They say there is a bull in the further recesses of the cavern?”

“They say so, but we have never seen him; all we know for certain is that there is a treasure.”

Here the boy again brightened up, and said that this was certain.

When we had finished our questions the *contadino* took one of our party aside, and said, confidentially, “Be sure of me, for I have a strong stomach” (*i.e.*, I can keep a secret). “When you come to remove the treasure, which I can see that you intend to do, you must take me with you and give me my share. If you come by night the dogs will bark, and I shall know that you are there. I will then come down and help you, but you must give me my share.”

I wrote the above conversation down, in Italian, immediately on my return to Trapani, and my Sicilian friends signed it, at my request, as a correct report. It occurs to me to add that there is no other cave near Trapani to which any story of a hidden treasure attaches.

Last year (May, 1896) I visited the cave again, this time with my friend Mr. H. Festing Jones, who has gone over the whole of the ground described in this book, to make sure that I have not overstated my case. We were accompanied by Signor Sugameli of Trapani, to whom I owe the correction of my error in believing the more conspicuous of the two caves to be called the *grotta del toro* — for so,

on my first visit to Trapani in 1892, my friends in the town had assured me, not knowing the existence of the one which really bears the name. Jones and Signor Sugameli scrambled into the interior of the cavern, but I, being elderly and somewhat lame, did not venture. They found the cave end, after about thirty feet, in a mass of solid rock; but few who have gone above ten or twelve feet will be likely to go any further, and I can well believe that the writer of the *Odyssey*, like the peasants of today, believed that no one could get to the end of it. My friends found water.

The cave is full of bees' nests in summer, as are all the caves hereabouts. They are small, solitary, of red clay, and about the size of the cup of an acorn. All the caves in the neighbourhood of Mt. Eryx abound in remains of stone-age man, some fine examples of which may be seen in the museum at Palermo. These remains would doubtless be more common and more striking three thousand years or so ago than they are at present, and I find no difficulty in thinking that the poetic imagination of the writer of the *Odyssey* ascribed them to the nymphs and naiads.

From hard by both the caves one can see, of course, the precipices of Mt. Eryx, which I suppose to be Neritum in the mind of the writer (XIII. 351), the straight paths on the cultivated land some couple of hundred feet below, the harbour of the old merman Phorcys, and also the harbours of Trapani, all which are requisite by lines XIII. 195, 196, and 345-351.

The reader will note that while more than one Scherian detail is given casually and perhaps unintentionally, as for example the harbour where Ulysses landed in Scheria, and the harbours, which I do not doubt are the two harbours of Trapani, there is no Ithacan detail given so far which conflicts with any feature in the description of Scheria.

The number and value of the points of correspondence between the cave in which Ulysses hid his treasure, and the *grotta del toro* greatly exceed those between Grammerton and Shrewsbury. Nevertheless it will be well to see whether his movements on leaving the cave confirm my view or make against it.

I suppose him to have ascended the steep, and then, doubtless, wooded slopes of Mt. Eryx and to have passed along its high and nearly level summit (*δι ἄκριας*, XIV. 2) to the other end of the mountain, where the Norman Castle stands now 2500 feet above the sea level. Here he descended some two or three hundred feet to the spot now called *i runzi*, where there is a spring near a precipice which is still called *il ruccazzu dei corvi*, i.e. "the rock of the ravens," it being on this part of the mountain that these birds breed most freely. This walk would take him about two hours, more or less.

The site is seen from far and wide, it is bitterly cold in winter, and is connected with Trapani by a rough mountain path which Ulysses may well have been afraid to travel without a stick (XVII. 195).²² The path passes close to the round-topped *Colle di Sta Anna* which answers perfectly to the *Ἑρμαιοῦς λόφος* of XVI. 471. The time it takes to walk from the *runzi* to Trapani corresponds with all the indications furnished us in the *Odyssey* concerning the distance between Eumaeus's hut and the town of Ithaca — which seems roughly to have been a winter's day walk there and back.

The reader will see, therefore, that we have the whole road taken by Ulysses from his landing in the harbour of Phorcys to the cave (with all its complex requirements) in which he hid his presents, up

²² Of recent years an excellent carriage road has been made from Trapani to the town on the top of Mt. Eryx, but pedestrians still use the old path, which in places is very rough.

Mt. Neritum, along its long top to the spring and the Raven Rock, and finally the path passing the hill of Mercury down to Ithaca, as accurately presented to us by the road from the *saline di S. Cusumano* to the *grotta del toro*, Mt. Eryx, the fountain, the Raven Rock, and the road to Trapani, as though the *Odyssey* had been written yesterday. When the reader can find me in all literature, ancient or modern, any like chain of correspondences between an actual place and one described in a work of fiction as an effect of mere chance, I will accept the coincidences to which I have called attention as possibly accidental only; but I am convinced that no such case nor anything approaching it can be adduced.

I, therefore, claim that Ithaca, like Scheria, must be taken as drawn from Trapani. There is, however, this important point to be remembered, that though the writer, when she has to consider Ithaca *ab extra*, as an island and nothing more, pictures it to herself as the high and striking island of Marettimo some 22 miles off Trapani, when she wants details she takes them from her own immediate neighbourhood on the mainland.

Young people when transferring familiar stories to their own neighbourhood, as almost all young people do, never stick at inconsistencies. They are like eminent Homeric scholars, and when they mean to have things in any given way they will not let the native hue of resolution be balked by thought, and will find it equally easy to have an Ithaca in one place and also in another, and to see the voyages of Columbus to the tropics in their own sliding over a frozen pool. So Lord Selborne writes: —

As we grew, the faculty of imagination increased in power. It coloured all our childish pleasures; it accompanied us on the ice and

into the woods; it mixed the dreams of the supernatural with the most ordinary things. Our resting-places when sliding over a frozen pool were the islands discovered by Columbus or Cook, in whose voyages we delighted.

(*Memorials, &c.*, by Roundell Palmer, Earl of Selborne, Macmillan, 1896, pt. I. p. 66.)

Before I leave the Ithaca scenes I ought to show that there may well have existed at Trapani a sheet of water which cattle would be likely to cross in a boat, as described in *Od.* xx. 186–188. The land on the East side of Trapani was artificially raised in 1860, till which time the two seas on either side the town were often joined in winter after a continuance of Northerly Winds. Several people have assured me that they remember having to be carted over the water between Trapani and the mainland. I was at first tempted to believe that Philoetius had come to the town when the narrow entrance to it was flooded; but a few lines above we find that Eumaeus had also come to the town with three pigs, and Melanthius with some goats. These men had both unquestionably come from Mt. Eryx, and the text seems to forbid the idea that they too had had to cross the water. There is nothing, however, to imply that Philoetius had come from Mt. Eryx; indeed, it is more likely that his cattle would feed on the flat land south of the harbour, which he had crossed by boat to save the long *détour* which would have been otherwise necessary. If the water had been that of any such river as is to be found in Asia Minor, Greece, or Sicily, one man would probably have been enough, whereas there seem to have been several plying for hire, as in a port or harbour.

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The fact that Scheria and Ithaca would be perfectly well-known by the audience as drawn from their own neighbourhood explains another difficulty. "How," some hypercritical listener might ask, "could so sagacious and experienced a mariner as Ulysses have failed to note that he was only travelling two miles, or even less, from Scheria to Ithaca? And how again could he fail to recognise the place at which he landed as the one where he had met Nausicaa a few days previously?"

The writer of the *Odyssey* admits with some *naïveté* that the Phaeacian mariners were already acquainted with the harbour in which they left Ulysses. They probably would be. But how prevent Ulysses from remonstrating both during the voyage and on being landed? It is not easy to see what better course the writer could take than the one she actually did take, *i.e.*, put Ulysses to sleep as soon as ever he was on board, and not wake him till after the sailors were gone. A sleep, therefore, is prepared for him (VII. 318, and VIII. 445) and he falls into it apparently before even leaving the harbour; it is so profound that it is more like death than sleep (XIII. 80). Nothing, not even the men lifting him off the ship next morning, laying all his treasures hard by him and going away, can disturb him till the Phaeacian sailors are beyond all reach of question. Then, of course, the sooner he wakes up the better.

As for the other difficulty of his not seeing that he was only at the spot where he had met Nausicaa two days earlier, this was got over by making it a misty morning, and muddling Ulysses generally so that he does not even recognise the place as Ithaca, much less as Scheria, till Minerva meets him and has a long talk with him, in the course of which the audience slides into the situation, and accepts the neighbourhood of Trapani for that of Ithaca without more demur.

CHAPTER 9

The Ionian and the Aegadean islands — The voyages of Ulysses shown to be practically a sail round Sicily from Trapani.

In a later chapter I propose to show that the writer of the *Odyssey* had the *Iliad* before her in the state in which we have it now, unimportant copyists' errors alone excepted. I shall show that those Books on which most doubt has been cast by eminent Homeric scholars both on the Continent and in England, are just as fully and freely quoted from as those that are admitted to have been by Homer. I have seen no sufficient reason alleged for doubting that the Catalogues of *Il.* II. 484–877 formed part of the poem as Homer left it, though it is quite likely that he may have got some one with greater knowledge of Greece to help him. I intend returning to this question, but for the present will ask the reader to accept my assumption that the writer of the *Odyssey* knew the Catalogues above referred to. The group of the Echinades and the Ionian islands are described as follows in the Catalogue of the Achæan forces: —

And they of Dulichium, with the sacred Echinean islands, who dwelt beyond the sea off Elis — these were led by Meges, peer of Mars, the son of Phyleus, who had erewhile migrated to Dulichium in consequence of a quarrel with his father. And with him there came forty ships.

Ulysses led the brave Cephallenians, who held Ithaca, wooded Neritum, Crocylea, rugged Aegilips, Zacynthus, and Samos, with

the mainland also that is over against the islands. These were led by Ulysses, peer of gods in counsel, and with him came twelve ships (*Il.* II. 625–637).



The reader will note that Dulichium, which means “Long Island,” does not belong to the Ionian islands, but to the neighbouring group of the Echinades. Let us now see how the islands in the neighbourhood of Ithaca are described in the *Odyssey*. Ulysses says (IX. 21–26): —

“I dwell in Ithaca, an island which contains a high mountain called Neritum. In its neighbourhood there are other islands near to one another, Dulichium, Same and Zacynthus. It lies on the horizon all

highest up in the sea towards the west, while the other islands lie away from it to the east.”

In the *Odyssey* there are never more than three islands besides Ithaca. When mentioned all together they are always named in the order given above — probably for reasons of scansion — but Dulichium is the most important in the eyes of the writer, being more frequently mentioned separately, and sending fifty-two suitors as against twenty-four from Same, twenty from Zacynthus, and twelve from Ithaca itself (xvi. 247–251).*

A glance at the map given above will show that there is no island in the neighbourhood of Ithaca which can with poetical propriety be held to have sent nearly as many suitors as the other three put together. Least of all could Dulichium be so held. It seems, then, that it was the name, and not the island, that the writer wanted; and further that she wanted this so badly as to lay violent hands upon it and raid it from another group.

Why should she strain so considerable a point in order to get hold of it? The Iliadic catalogue omits three or four but leaves us six Ionian islands. After suppressing the small islands of Crocylea and Aegilips, there remained four, which it seems was the exact number that the writer of the *Odyssey* meant to introduce; why, then, should not Neritum have been good enough for her? It evidently did not answer her purpose, or she would not, in the face of the catalogue, have stowed it away inside Ithaca and gone further afield for her dominant

* Note that Samos or Same is today's Kefalonia, not the Aegean island Samos! Whatever island Butler identified with Dulichium, its identity remains disputed (“a place noted by numerous ancient writers that was either a city on, or an island off, the Ionian Sea coast of Acarnania, Greece”). As a modern reader you have of course the advantage that you can look up all the islands on Internet maps. [R.S.]

island. These things are never done without a reason, and in this case a reason is particularly necessary, for it would have been more easy and also suitable, considering the insignificance of the real Dulichium, to make the fifty-two suitors come from the very considerable island of Neritum.

All difficulty is removed by supposing that the writer lived at Trapani and was drawing the Ionian islands from the, to her, familiar Aegadean group. A glance at the foregoing map will show that she cannot have been drawing from the real Ionian islands. Ithaca cannot be tortured into lying "all highest up in the sea towards the West." It is completely covered by Samos. Nor do the other islands lie away from it to the East. It is clear, then, that the Ionian islands were not those present to the mind of the writer, but we may infer in passing, firstly, that her audience lived at a sufficient distance from Greece to make the infraction of topographical accuracy a matter of no importance, and secondly, that the islands from which she was in reality drawing lay, like the true Ionian group, off a West coast.

I will now give a map of the islands off Trapani. I see that Professor Freeman, in his map of the West coast of Sicily, as he supposes it to have been in ancient times, has joined the Isola Grande to the neighbouring main land, but he gives no authority for doing so. I can find none in ancient writers, and having examined the ground see nothing to indicate any change in the distribution of land and water, as having taken place within measurable distance of our own times.

The lofty and rugged island of Marettimo did duty in the writer's mind for Ithaca, though, as I have said, when details are wanted they are taken from Trapani and Mt. Eryx. The long island, now the Isola Grande — low lying and wheat growing — was her Dulichium; this must have been far the most important of the four as regards Trapani,



being accessible in all weathers, and probably already pregnant with the subsequently famous city of Motya, of which hardly anything remains, but which stood on the Southernmost of the two islands that lie between Isola Grande and the mainland. The other two islands stood for Same and Zacynthus, but which was which I have not been able to determine. Marettimo can hardly be seen from Trapani, being almost entirely hidden by Levanzo. From the heights, however, of Mt. Eryx, with which, for other reasons, I suppose the writer to have been familiar, it is seen “on the horizon, all highest up in the sea towards the West.” I do not doubt the poetess was describing it as she knew it from the top of Mt. Eryx, and as the reader may still see it. The rough sketch on the following page will explain *πανυπερτάτη εἰν ἄλλι* better than words can do; the two small islands shown just over Trapani are the Formiche, which I take to be the second rock thrown by Polyphemus.

If what I have said above is not enough to satisfy the reader that the writer of the *Odyssey* was drawing the Ionian islands from the Aegadean, nothing that I can add is likely to convince him. I will therefore now go on to my fourth point, namely, that the voyages of

Ulysses are, as nearly as the writer could make them, a voyage round Sicily, from Trapani by the North coast, through the straits of Messina, to the island of Pantellaria, and so back to Trapani, beyond which we need not go, for Ithaca and Scheria are, both of them, Trapani, as I have already shown.



Trapani from Mt. Eryx. Showing Marettimo all highest up in the sea.
Od. ix. 25. The Isola Grande (Dulichium) could not be got into the picture.

The main episodes of the voyage occur in the following order. 1. The Cicons. 2. The Lotus-eaters, arrived at after passing the island of Cythera. 3. The island where Ulysses and his men hunted the goats, and the adventure with Polyphemos. 4. The island of Aeolus, and a ten days' sail towards the East with a fair wind all the time, till Ithaca is well in sight, followed by an immediate return to the island from which Ulysses had started. This sail to Ithaca over the toe of Italy and the island of Samos* has no topographical significance except as showing that the writer conceived of the island of Aeolus as lying a long way West of Ithaca. The episode is introduced merely for the purpose of bringing the cup close to Ulysses' lips and then dashing it from them. 5. The Laestrygonians. 6. The island of Circe and the journey to Hades, which last is again without topographical significance, being

* To repeat: Kefalonia, not today's island of Samos in the Aegean Sea. [R.S.]

nothing but a peg on which to hang colloquies with the dead, and bringing us back to the island of Circe. 7. The Sirens. 8. Scylla and Charybdis. 9. The cattle of the Sun. 10. The island of Calypso. 11. Scheria and Ithaca.

There is no difference of opinion among scholars as to the sites of the Cicons, the island of Cythera, and the Lotus-eaters; the reader will, therefore, see that we are taken without waste of time to a point at no great distance from Sicily — the contrary winds off Cape Malea (ix. 81) being apparently raised on purpose to take us away from Greece. It is not quite easy to see why the Cicons were introduced unless it was that Ulysses might become possessed of the wondrous wine of Ismarus with which he intoxicated Polyphemus. The wine of this neighbourhood was famous many centuries after the *Odyssey* was written, and presumably was so in the time of the *Odyssey* itself. A gasconading story of this wine may well have existed among the people of Trapani which might prompt the writer to introduce it, poke fun at it and make Polyphemus drunk with it.

Or again, knowing as we do from Thucydides (vi. 2) that the original Sican inhabitants of this part of Sicily received an influx of fugitives from the neighbourhood of Troy after the fall of that city, it is possible that traditions may have existed among the writer's audience to the effect that some of them were of Cicon origin, and she may have wished to flatter them by telling them that they had repulsed Ulysses. Nothing can be said with any confidence upon this head; all we may note is that the country is quite featureless, and hence does not suggest drawing from personal knowledge, any more than does the land of the Lotus-eaters.

On leaving the land of the Lotus-eaters the full consent which has accompanied us so far fails us; nevertheless a considerable weight of

authority, ancient, medieval, and modern, carries us to the island of Favognana, anciently called Aegusa or Goat Island, as the one on which Ulysses and his men hunted the goats. Indeed this incident seems introduced as though purposely to suggest the Aegadean or “goat” islands to the audience, as also does the line iv. 606 in which Ithaca — that is to say, in reality, the island of Marettimo — is said to be an island fit for goats.²³

A very considerable consent accompanies us also to Mt. Eryx as the site of the adventure with Polyphemus. Here, and with the island on which the goats were hunted, the local colour is stronger than anywhere else in Ulysses’ voyages, as indeed might be reasonably expected from a writer whom I have shown to have been so intimately acquainted with the neighbourhood of Trapani.

Even partial consent, however, now fails us. The island of Aeolus and the country of the Laestrygonians have been placed in almost as many sites as there have been writers upon the *Odyssey*. I shall return to these on a later page, as also to the island of Favognana and the Cyclopes. My present object is to show how much of the voyage we may consider as known, how much as supported by considerable authority, and how much we have yet to find.

The partial consent which we lost at the cave of Polyphemus returns to us with the island of Circe, the Sirens and the Wandering Cliffs, which are generally considered to have been the Lipari islands, and universal consent rejoins us for Scylla and Charybdis. I can hardly say that consent is universal for placing the cattle of the Sun on the East coast of Sicily, somewhere about Tauromenium now Taormina;

²³ The name Favognana is derived from Favonius, this wind blowing on to Trapani from off the island. It is, however, also and perhaps most frequently called Favignana.

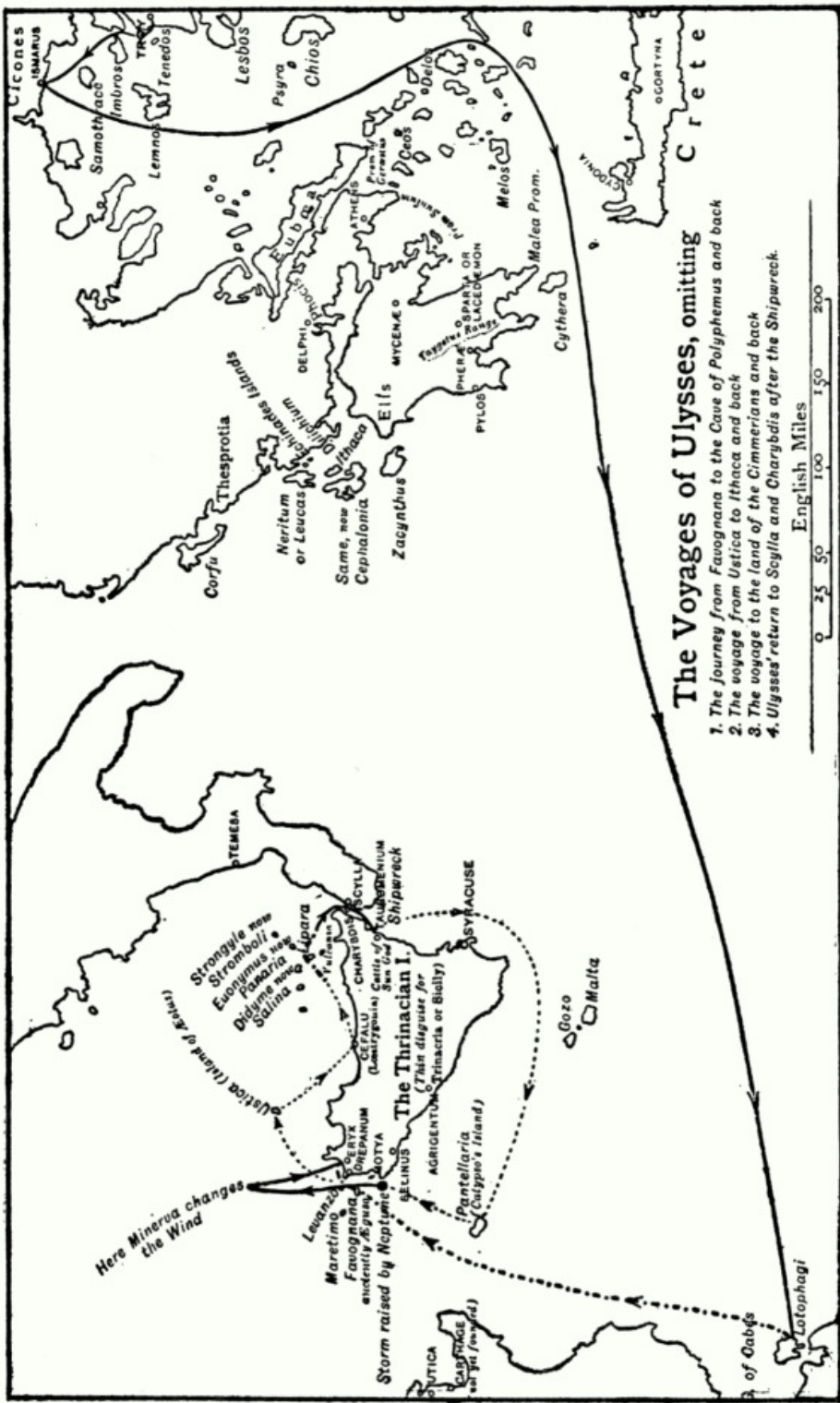
but it is very general, and is so obviously well founded that I shall claim this point as certain; for the name of the island sufficiently indicates Sicily, the winds that detain Ulysses show him to have been on an East coast, and the South wind that blew him back to Charybdis in a night shows that he was supposed to be at no great distance South of the Straits of Messina.

The island of Calypso has been generally held to be Malta, but on no foundation either internal or external to the *Odyssey*, I shall, therefore, consider Calypso's island as yet to find.

I have no consent for Scheria being Trapani, but after what I have written above shall claim this point too as certain. The map, therefore, which I here give* will show the reader how we stand as regards assent and otherwise ascertained points. I have used strong lines for the parts of the voyage that may be claimed as certain, interrupted lines for the parts that are backed by considerable authority, and dotted lines for those which I would supply. I have made Ulysses approach Trapani from the South, on the strength of Calypso's directions to him that he was to sail towards the Great Bear, keeping it on his left hand (v. 276, 277).²⁴ This indicates certainly a Northerly, and one would say a N.N. Easterly, course; at any rate such a course would in no way conflict with Calypso's instructions. Perhaps I had better give the words of the poem which run: —

* See next page [R.S.]

²⁴ Gr. *Τὴν γὰρ δὴ μιν ἄνωγε Καλυψὼ δῖα θεάων ποντοπορευόμεναι ἐπ' ἀριστερὰ χειρὸς ἔχοντα.*



He sat keeping his eyes upon the Pleiades,²⁵ late setting Bootes, and on the Bear, also called the Wain, which turns round and round facing Orion, and alone never sinks beneath the sea — for Calypso had bidden him steer by this, keeping it on his left hand.

(v. 272–277).

All the places in Ulysses' voyage have been generally referred to some actual locality, which was present to the writer's mind either under its own or a fictitious name; and when we have once got into Sicilian waters, all those about which there is any considerable amount of consent, or which we may now, with or without consent, claim as ascertained — I mean Circe's island, the Sirens, Scylla and Charybdis, the Thrinacian island, Scheria and Ithaca — are on, or hard by, the coast of Sicily. Is not the temptation irresistible to think that the three unknown sites — the island of Aeolus, the Land of the Laestrygonians and the island of Calypso — are also real places however fictitious the names may be, and to hold that they should be looked for on, or near, the coast of Sicily in the same order as that in which we find them described?

If, on the hypothesis that Favognana and Mt. Eryx are the true sites of the island on which Ulysses and his men hunted the goats, and of the cave of Polyphemus, we are immediately led to others, in due order

²⁵ We may neglect the Pleiades, as introduced simply because they are in the Iliadic passage (xviii. 486–489) which the writer of the *Odyssey* is adopting with no other change than taking out the Hyades and Orion, and substituting Boötes. This she was bound to do, for she could not make Ulysses steer towards both the Bear and Orion, when she is just going to tell us, as the *Iliad* does, that Orion is on the other side of the sky. The Pleiades she has allowed to stand — which of us knows in what quarter of the heavens (let alone the Precession of the Equinoxes) they are to be looked for? — and it is made quite clear that the Bear is the constellation by which Ulysses is steering.

of sequence, which commend themselves as being those of the island of Aeolus, the Land of the Laestrygonians, Circe's island, the other established sites, and lastly Calypso's island, should we not conclude, at any rate provisionally, that the hypothesis is a true one?

I will so conclude, and proceed to look for the island of Aeolus in some island, apparently solitary, a good way to the West of the Lipari islands, and at no great distance from Mt. Eryx.

I should first correct a very general misapprehension. The word *πλωτῆ* (x. 3) has been unduly pressed into meaning that the island floated about, and thus changed its place. But if so singular a phenomenon were intended more would have been made of it. It would not have been dealt with in a single word, admitting easy explanation as mere metaphor. No one presses the "swiftly moving" islands of xv. 299 into meaning that the islands actually moved. All that is meant is that they "seemed to move" as the ship flew past them, and so with the island of Aeolus — "it seemed to float on the horizon." It shows no signs of having moved during the month that Ulysses stayed on it, and when he returns to it after an absence of three weeks, we have no hint given of its having changed its place.²⁶ I conclude, therefore, that it was as fixed as any other island, and proceed to look for it.

This is no hard matter, for the island of Ustica offers itself at once. In clear weather it can be faintly seen from Mt. Eryx, and would naturally have impressed itself on the mind of a writer to whom Eryx and its neighbourhood was all in all. It is in the quarter from which the winds blow most fiercely on Trapani during the winter months, and may fitly have been selected by a Trapanese writer as the home of the

²⁶ At Messina a few months since I saw a printed handbill about the hours when the boat would start for Reggio, in which Italy was called "Terra firma," as though a sense of instability attached itself to any island.

winds. The distance, a long way West of the Lipari islands, and a greatly longer distance West of Ithaca, is all as it should be. I accept it, therefore, and go on to look for the land of the Laestrygonians, and their city Telepylus, at some point on the North coast of Sicily between Ustica and the Lipari islands.

The name of the Laestrygonians or Workers in Stone,²⁷ like all names of places or people inside Sicily, is fictitious. If there had ever been any people really so called in Sicily Thucydides would have been able to find out some little, at any rate, about them; whereas he declares (vi. 2) that he cannot do so, and subrisively refers his readers to the poets, or whatever other source of information they can command. Clearly he does not believe in them except as poetical fictions concerning the most ancient inhabitants of Sicily — of whom none are known to him as more ancient than the Sicans.

But why should not the writer of the *Odyssey* be referring under names of her own coinage to these same Sicans, for both the Cyclopes and the Laestrygonians? The name of the Laestrygonian city, Telepylus, is certainly fictitious. It means “with gates far asunder,” which can only be an ex post facto name: a city receives its name long before it is known what it will prove to be in the matter of growth. All that we can gather from the name is that the writer of the *Odyssey* intended her audience to understand that the city was large.

Its inhabitants, like the Cyclopes, are giants and ogres. They being giants, we should look for remains of megalithic buildings, and being

²⁷ The name seems derived from *λάας*, *τρογάω*, and *αἶα*, Oenotria is from *οἶνος*, *τρογάω*, and *αἶα*. I have read, but forget where, that Oenotria is only a Greek rendering of Italia, which is derived from *vites*, *alo*, and some Latin equivalent for *αἶα*. The modern Italian word *lastricare*, “to pave roads with stone,” is probably derived from the same roots as *Laestrygonian*.

ogres we should suspect identity of race between them and the Cyclopes whom they so closely resemble. The writer hates them both, and looks down upon the Cyclopes much as the Normans looked down upon the Saxons for some generations after the Conquest.

The Cyclopes appear to have been subdued and outlawed; not so the Laestrygonians. These last are a flourishing and very industrious people, who work by night as well as by day (x. 84–86). There is a poor little prehistoric joke about them, to the effect that in their country a man could earn double wages if he could only do without sleep. Moreover they were so wealthy and luxurious that they used to have relays of fresh milk (x. 82, 83), instead of being contented with a morning supply, as Sicilian towns generally are even at the present day. More than this I cannot collect about them from the *Odyssey*.

Can we, then, find a place answering to the description of Telepylus, on the North coast of Sicily between Ustica and the island of Lipari? I have no hesitation in saying that Cefalù will give us all we want. It has two fine examples of megalithic work. They must both of them be centuries earlier than the *Odyssey*. They are about three quarters of a mile apart, one, a wall rising from the sea, the other a building on the hill, behind the town, in part polygonal, and very rude, and in part of much later and singularly exquisite work — the later work being generally held to be of the Mycenaean age.

The city, therefore, must have been for those days extensive. The whole modern town is called among the common people Portazza, *i.e.*, *portaccia*, or “wide gate,” which is too like a corrupt mistranslation of Telepylus to allow of my passing it over.

There can, I think, be no doubt that Eryx and Cefalù were built in a very remote age by people of the same race. I have seen no other megalithic remains in Sicily than at the two places just named; I have

seen remains of ancient buildings at Collesano about fifteen miles S.W. of Cefalù, which are commonly called Cyclopean, but they are very doubtful, and Dr. Orsi suspects them, I have little doubt correctly, to be Byzantine. I have also seen a few, neither striking nor yet certain ones, at Capo Schiso near Taormina. What little is left of the walls of Segesta is of a greatly later age, and I find it very difficult to think that Segesta was in existence when the *Odyssey* was being written.²⁸ I have heard of the remains of a Cyclopean acropolis behind Termini, a monograph about which by Sigr. Luigi Mauzeri will be found in the British Museum. At Isnello two hours inland from Collesano a very early necropolis has been discovered not long since, and the efforts of local archaeologists will, I doubt not, lead to the finding of others at or near many of the little known mountain sites in the North of Sicily; Dr. Orsi, indeed, has recently discovered the remains of a megalithic house at Pantalica some forty miles inland from Syracuse. No megalithic work, however, that has yet been found will compare in importance with the remains at Eryx and Cefalù, nor does it seem likely that any other such remains will be discovered.

Bearing in mind, then, the situation of Cefalù both as regards Ustica and Lipari, the affinity between its founders and those of Eryx as evidenced by existing remains, its great extent, and the name it still bears among the common people, I do not hesitate to accept it as the city of the Laestrygonians, nor does it affect me that the details of the harbour as given in the *Odyssey* have no correspondence with the place itself. I may mention that when my friend, Mr. H. F. Jones, and myself were at Cefalù in the spring of 1896, we met a flock of goats coming into the town to be milked about five in the afternoon, and on our

²⁸ Segesta would have been seen from the top of Mt. Eryx gleaming in the summer sunset, and I think there would have been some kind of allusion to it.

return from a walk we met another flock coming out after having been just milked. These two flocks must have met, and the shepherds must have saluted one another as in x. 82, 83, but unfortunately we did not happen to be at their point of meeting.

On enquiry we found that relays of fresh milk come into the town from six till eight in the morning, and from five till seven in the afternoon, and were told that there was no other town known to our informant which had more than a morning supply. At Trapani, a town with 30,000 inhabitants, there is no evening supply, and though I have no doubt that fresh milk can be had in the evening at Palermo, Catania, and Syracuse, it is not easily procurable even in these large towns, while in smaller ones, so far as I know them, it is not to be had at all. At Rome I asked the landlord of my hotel whether the goats came to be milked in the evening as in the morning, and he said it would be only in exceptional cases that they would do so.

I have now only to find the island of Calypso, which in the *Odyssey* is called the “navel” of the sea (I. 50), a metaphor absolutely impossible of application to any but a solitary island, and prohibitive of either Gozo or Malta, or of the other two small islands of the same group. Calypso lives by herself and is cut off from every one else — Ulysses cannot be supposed to have other islands in sight as he sits on the sea shore weeping and looking out upon the waves. Moreover, Scheria being fixed at Trapani, Ulysses could never get there from either Gozo or Malta if he followed the directions of Calypso and steered towards the Great Bear, keeping it on his left hand. We are, therefore, compelled to look for some other island, which shall be more solitary and more S.S.W. of Trapani.

The island of Pantellaria fulfils both these conditions; true, in clear weather the coast of Africa can sometimes be just made out — I have

seen it from Pantellaria, but it is not sufficiently near or sufficiently often seen to have obtruded itself on Ulysses' notice; still less so is Mt. Eryx, which can also be seen sometimes, but very rarely. No doubt the island is represented as being a good deal further off Scheria than it really was, but the liberty taken in this respect is not greater than is generally conceded in poetry.

As, therefore, the writer begins the voyage, when Ulysses is once clear of Trapani, with an island interesting to herself and her audience as being well within their ken, so she ends it with another island which has like claims on her and their attention.

CHAPTER 10

Further details regarding the voyages of Ulysses, to confirm the view that they were mainly a sail round Sicily, beginning and ending with Mt. Eryx and Trapani.

What I have said in the preceding chapter should be enough to establish that the course taken by Ulysses was the one indicated in my map, but I have remarks to make on the Cyclopes, the wall round the island of Aeolus, the Sirens, the Wandering Cliffs, and other matters connected with the voyages which I have reserved in order to keep the general view more broad and simple.

The habitat of the Cyclopes on Mt. Eryx is the point which it is most incumbent on me to establish, for if this be conceded, and both Scylla and Charybdis, and Scheria be taken as found, all the other places fall so spontaneously on to the sites I have marked for them, that I fear no dispute concerning them. Let us turn, then, to Favognana and accept it for the moment as the island on which Ulysses hunted the goats.

Why, I wonder, was the author so careful to invoke a thick darkness, so pompous and circumstantial, and to pilot Ulysses into the harbour of this island by divine assistance, rather than permit him to look about him and see the land, which was “not very far” off.

The answer is “not very far” to seek. If Ulysses had seen the main land of Sicily as he approached it from that of the Lotus-eaters, he would have been sure to have followed it up, and in this case he would have been taken straight into Trapani harbour. Now, though the writer,

as all the audience would know, had already dealt with Trapani, as the last point in all Ulysses' voyages, Ulysses himself ought not to know anything about it till he comes to it in due course.

The cave of Polyphemus — still called among the peasants *la grotta di Polifemo* — was some six or seven miles North of Trapani; Ulysses had got to be taken there, and if possible, without unsettling either his own mind or that of the audience by showing him a city which eight years later he was to know as Scheria. He could, with the help of a little mist, be just supposed to go from the island of Favognana to the promontory of Pizzolungo and the cave of Polyphemus, without seeing the city of the Phaeacians if he did not look particularly hard in that direction, but even Ulysses would have been compelled to take note of Scheria if he had been allowed to go on till he reached its harbour. It was better, therefore, that some god should take him to the island without letting him see any other land at all, and hence the intense darkness which the writer has been so careful to describe. We shall see that later on (as regards the supposed time, though earlier in the structure of her poem) she invokes a darkness which makes it impossible for Ulysses to form any idea of his whereabouts, in exactly the same place, and for the same reasons (v. 291–294) — for here too it is necessary to get Ulysses from a point South of Trapani, to another on the North side of it without seeing the town.

My map of the Aegadean islands (p. 120) combined with that of Trapani and Mt. Eryx (p. 104) will show the course Ulysses would make from Favognana to the *Grotta di Polifemo* — which is by far the largest cave near Trapani, and is still used as a place in which to keep a large flock of sheep by night. The two rocks which Polyphemus threw

should be seen, the first as the Asinelli,²⁹ and the second as the two small islands called Formiche, which, being close together, are taken as one.

I find, therefore, in the care taken to prevent Ulysses from seeing Trapani, a considerable argument for the belief that Favognana was the island where Ulysses hunted the goats, and that the cave of Polyphemus was on Mt. Eryx.

Another indication, though one of no great strength, seems to suggest that the Cyclopes were still near neighbours of the Phaeacians.

At the beginning of Book vi. we learn that the Phaeacians used to live at a place called Hypereia, "near the lawless Cyclopes," but had of late years been moved to Scheria, which, as I have said, means Jutland.* In a passage which I have not given in my abridgement Alcinous says casually (vii. 205, 206) that the Phaeacians are as closely related to the gods as the Cyclopes and the giants are. Passing over the fact that Alcinous, being grandson to Neptune, was half nephew to Polyphemus, the spontaneousness with which the Cyclopes rise to his mind suggests that though less near than they had been, they were still about the nearest neighbours that he had.

The giants are only the Cyclopes over again, and are doubtless the descendants of the people who built the noble megalithic walls of Eryx. Hypereia, or Upper-town, was probably at the Eastern end of the top of Mt. Eryx on a site where a very ancient wall, of totally different character to those of the Sican city at the West end of the

²⁹ The Asinelli is a single islet much in the shape of a ship heading straight for Favognana. There is nothing plural about it, and one does not see why it should have a plural name. Who were the "asses" or "fools"?

* In his *Preface to the Second Edition* of *The Authoress* Henry Festing Jones writes: Butler afterwards found that Jutland means the land of the Jutes, and has nothing to do with jutting. [R.S.]

mountain, may yet be traced. The remains of this wall are just above the *Ruccazzu dei Corvi*, in Count Pepoli's grounds, and were first shown me by the Count. A stranger is little likely to find them unless conducted by one who has seen them.

As regards Hypereia I would repeat that all the names of places in Sicily with one partial exception are fictitious, even Trinacria, which Thucydides tells us was the most ancient name of Sicily, becoming "the Thrinacian," or "three-pointed," island; whereas as soon as we are outside Sicily the names are real. This affords ground for thinking that the writer was drawing real people as well as real places, and travestying them under flimsy disguises that she knew her audience would see through. Once only is the mask dropped for a moment, when Ulysses says that he had just come from Sicania (xxiv. 307), but this does not count, for Ulysses is supposed to be lying.

The name Cyclopes, for example, or "round faces" — for there is nothing in the word to show that it means anything else than this, and I see from Liddell & Scott* that Parmenides calls the moon Cyclops — is merely an author's nick name. If *μήλωψ* means "apple-faced," *κύκλωψ* should mean "circle-faced." As there is nothing in the word, so neither is there in the *Odyssey*, to suggest that the Cyclopes were a people with only one round eye in the middle of their foreheads. Such a marked feature does not go without saying,³⁰ and that it did not

* *A Greek-English Lexicon* by Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, which to this day has served as the basis for all later lexicographical work on the ancient Greek language. Liddell, by the way, was the father of Alice Liddell of *Alice in Wonderland* fame. [R.S.]

³⁰ Virgil does not let it pass unnoticed. He writes: —

“Cernimus adstantes nequidquam lumine torvo
Aetnaeos fratres,”

Aen. III. 677, 678.

go with the earliest Greek artists appears from the fact that they always gave Polyphemus two eyes. It is not till later times that he becomes monophthalmic, and the *Odyssey* gives him eyebrows in the plural (ix. 389), which involve eyes in the plural also. True, the writer only blinds one eye, but she could trust to the sympathetic inflammation which so serious an injury would excite in the other eye, and would consider that she had sufficiently blinded both by roasting one of them. One eye alone was blinded, not because Polyphemus had not got two, but because his pole had not got two prongs, and the writer saw neither how to get a bifurcated instrument into the cave, nor how to wield it now that so many of the men had been eaten.

“Cyclopes,” therefore, we may be sure, means nothing more than “moon-faced.” The name Polyphemus is found as that of a hero in the *Iliad*, and is perhaps a pseudonym for the local giant (if there was one) taken from that poem. Whatever his name may have been, and whether he was a pre-Odyssean giant, or whether the writer of the *Odyssey* called him into being, he exists now under the name of Conturràno. I have sometimes wondered whether this name may have any connection with the Greek words *κόντος* and *ὀβρανός*, and may indicate that the giant was so tall as to be able to knock a hole in the sky with his staff. Should this be so, his name as likely as not was Conturràno, or something near it, in the days of the *Odyssey*, and it was with the *κόντος** commemorated in his own name that Ulysses blinded him. The giant has grown greatly since the *Odyssey* was written, and large as the *grotta di Polifemo* is, he could never get inside it; for he rests his feet on the plain while he props his stomach on the top of Mt. Eryx, and bending forward plunges his huge hands into the sea between

He calls the Cyclopes “Aetnaean” because he places them on Mt. Etna.

* Pole, pike, goad. [R.S.]

Bonagia and Cofano, to catch tunnies. When disturbed he tears great rocks from the top of Mt. Eryx, and dashes them at all who interrupt him.

To repeat and to sum up, for I will argue this point no further; I take the Cyclopes to be the conquered remnant of the old Sican inhabitants of Mt. Eryx. They owe their gigantic stature to the huge size of the stones with which the walls of their city on Mt. Eryx were built. These stones show few or no signs of having been worked with a tool of hardened bronze or iron, save in so far as the Phoenicians may have trimmed them here and there when they rebuilt the walls, in part, *de novo*, with stones some of which bear quarry-men's marks in Phoenician characters. The old Sican work, a good deal of which has been allowed to stand, belongs to the true megalithic age, when it was cheaper to carry than to cut; later generations, failing to consider the revolution which the introduction of improved methods of cutting had effected, argued that the men who built with such large stones must have been large men, whereas in reality they were only economical men.

As soon as it became cheaper to cut than to carry, the huge unwieldy blocks that we see at Eryx, at Cefalù, and at Segni, Arpino, Allatri, and many another city in Southern Italy, became obsolete, but it was still long before all irregularity in the courses was abandoned for that perfect regularity which we find at Syracuse, Selinunte, the temple of Segesta, and nearly all the Greek and Roman architecture of historic times. Indeed I know many buildings as late as the tenth century after Christ, in which the courses are far from regular; nevertheless the tendency, almost immediately after cutting had become cheaper, was towards greater regularity of courses and the use of smaller stones, until there arose another megalithicism, of a kind di-

ametrically opposed to that of the earlier builders — I mean the megalithicism of display.

There are stones at Selinunte, used in buildings of the fifth century before Christ, that are larger than the largest at Eryx or Cefalù; there are columns thirteen feet in diameter at the base, and in a flute of which my friend Mr. H. F. Jones could stand; but they are written all over in clear though invisible characters with the word “Glory,” whereas the stones at Eryx bear not less clearly the word “Economy.” I do not think that any true megalithic polygonal walls not worked with metal can be dated much earlier than 2000 B.C. By the time we reach such buildings as the Treasury of Atreus at Mycene, or the Iliadic wall of Hissarlik (which, however, is built in far less regular courses), cutting, whether with chisels of hardened bronze, or more probably by that time with iron, has ceased to be troublesome; nevertheless as late as Hesiod, who is not generally dated earlier than 1000 B.C.,* the memory of an age when “as yet swart iron was not,” had not been lost. (*Works and Days*, 148–151.)

Furthermore, I would ask the reader to remark how closely the description of the Cyclopes in the *Odyssey* tallies with that of the modern Sicilian brigands published in the *Times* of September 24th, 1892.

The writer — Mr. Stigand — says: —

S. Mauro, the headquarters of the brigands, is a town on the top of a mountain 3000 feet high, and in sight of Geraci Siculo, another town of about the same height, and of Pollina, also on the summit of another mountain. The roads among the mountains, connecting

* Today, like Homer, he is assumed to have been active between 750 and 650 BCE. [R.S.]

these towns, are mere mule paths. The mountains abound in caves known only to the brigands and shepherds.

The *Odyssey* says of the Cyclopes: —

They have neither places of assembly nor laws, but live in caves on the tops of high mountains; each one of them rules over his own wife and children, and they take no account of any one else (IX. 112–115).

I saw several families of cave-dwellers at a place called *le grotte degli Scurati* on Cofano about fifteen miles North of Trapani. There was, however, nothing of the Cyclops about them. Their caves were most beautifully clean and as comfortable as the best class of English cottages. The people, who were most kind and hospitable, were more fair than dark, and might very well have passed for English. They provided us with snow white table cloths and napkins for the lunch which we had brought from Trapani, and they gave us any quantity of almonds fried in a little salt and butter; most unexpected of all, the salt they brought us was mixed with chervil seed. There was an atrocious case of brigandage on Cofano about a fortnight later than our pic-nic. A Palermo merchant was kept a whole month on the mountain till he was ransomed, but I am sure that our cave-dwellers had nothing to do with it. The caves bore traces of prehistoric man by way of ancient meals now petrified.

It is noticeable that forms of the word *σπέος* or *ἄντρον* (cave) appear forty-five times in the *Odyssey* as against only six in the *Iliad*, which, allowing for the greater length of the last named poem, is about in the proportion of 10:1. We may surmise, therefore, that the *Odyssey* hails from a district in which caves abounded.

As regards “the wall of bronze” which the writer of the *Odyssey* tells us ran round the island of Aeolus, it is hard to say whether it was purely fiction or no. We may be sure that it was no more made of bronze than Aeolus was king of the winds, but all round the island of Marettimo, wherever the cliffs do not protect it naturally, there existed a wall of long pre-Odyssean construction, traces of which were shown me by Sigr. Tedesco and Professor Spadaro, without whose assistance I should not have observed them. I have sometimes wondered whether the writer may not have transferred this wall to Ustica, as we shall see later that she transferred the hump on Thersites’ back to that of Eurybates; but no traces of any such wall exist so far as I know on Ustica, nor yet on the islands of Favognana or Levanzo. The ancient name of Marettimo was Hiera, and about 1900 feet above the sea I was shown ruins (not striking) of exceedingly ancient walls on a small plateau which the inhabitants dare not cross by night, and which is believed to have been the site of the cult that gave its name to the island.

What I have to say about Circe’s island is so speculative that I write it in fear and trembling. I see that Circe’s house is, like Eumaeus’s pig farm, “in a place that can be seen from far” (x. 211), and I see also that Ulysses approaches it “over the top of the mountain” (x. 281), as he does Eumaeus’s hut (xiv. 2). I remember the pigs, and I cannot refrain from thinking that though the writer tells us in the first instance that the island was a low one (x. 196), her inability to get away from her own surroundings is too much for her, and she is drifting on to the top of Mt. Eryx and Eumaeus’s pig farm. She does not mean to have pigs at first — the men whom Circe bewitched on previous occasions were turned into wolves and lions — but the force of association is too strong for her, and Ulysses’ men are turned into pigs after all.

The fall of Elpenor from the top of Circe's house is a very singular way of killing him. If he had been at Eumaeus's hut she could not have killed him more naturally than by letting him tumble off the precipice that overhangs it, and on the top of which the temple of Venus stood in later ages. I suspect not without shame, that the wall of Circe's house is made to do duty for this precipice.

On the island of Panaria, anciently Enonymus, among the Lipari group, there is a small bay called La Caletta dei Zummari, which suggests a corruption of Cimmerii, but I have already explained that no attempt should be made to localise the journey to Hades.

The two Sirens can be placed with, I should say, confidence, on the island of Salina, anciently called Didyme from the two high mountains, each about 3000 feet high, of which it consists. Sudden cat's paws of very violent wind descend at times from all high points near the sea in this part of the Mediterranean, as from Cofano near Trapani, where there is a saying among the fishermen "ware Cofano." My friend, Signor E. Biaggini, whose loss I have to deplore within the last twelve months, and who has furnished me over and over again with local details, told me that he once was all but capsized by a gust from Cofano, that came down on his boat in perfectly calm weather, and lasted hardly more than a few seconds. I take it that the two Sirens — who are always winged in the earlier Greek representations of them — were, as indeed their name suggests, the whistling gusts or avalanches of air that descended without the slightest warning from the two mountains of Didyme. The story turned from poetry into prose means, "Woe to him who draws near the two treacherous mountains of Didyme; the coast is strewn with wreckage, and if he hears the wind from off them shriek in his rigging his bones will whiten the shore." The reader will remember that the Sirens' island is very near Circe's.

Speaking of the Aeolian islands Admiral Smyth says: —

Whether from the heat of the water by volcanic springs, the steam of Vulcanella, the incessant hot injections from Stromboli, or all of them added to the general temperature, it is certain that there are more frequent atmospherical changes among this group than in the neighbourhood (*The Mediterranean*, Parker, 1854, p. 250).

Speaking, again, of the Straits of Messina, he says: —

Precautions should also be taken against the heavy gusts, which at times, from the mountainous nature of the coasts, rush down the Fuimare, and are dangerous to small vessels. I have twice, with grief, seen the neglect of them prove fatal (*Sicily and its Islands*, Murray, 1824, p. 111).

The reason why the poetess found herself in such difficulties about the Wandering Cliffs, is because the story, as Buttmann has said, does not refer to any two islands in particular, but is derived from traveller's tales about the difficulties of navigating the Lipari islands as a whole. "They close in upon you," it was said, "so quickly one after another that a bird can hardly get through them." The "hurricanes of fire," moreover (xii. 68), suggest an allusion to the volcanic nature of the Aeolian islands generally. Still more so does the dark cloud that never leaves the top of Scylla's rock (xii. 74) neither in summer nor winter.

The terrors of Scylla and Charybdis are exaggerated in the same poetic vein as the Sirens and the Wandering Cliffs. Instead of its being possible to shoot an arrow from the one to the other, they are about eight miles apart. We ought not look for the accuracy of one of Mr. Murray's handbooks in a narrative that tells us of a monster with six heads and three rows of teeth in each. It is enough if there are a few

grains of truth, and these there are: for Scylla is a high rock looking West, and Charybdis is (for those days) a formidable whirlpool, on the other side the Straits, off lower ground, and hard by the approach to a three pointed island. According to Admiral Smyth it is just outside Messina harbour, and is now called Galofaro. Admiral Smyth says of it: —

To the undecked boats of the Rhegians, Locrians, Zancleans, and Greeks, it must have been formidable; for even in the present day small craft are sometimes endangered by it, and I have seen several men-of-war, and even a seventy-four-gun ship, whirled round on its surface; but by using due caution there is generally very little danger or inconvenience to be apprehended (*Sicily and its Islands*, Murray, 1824, p. 123).

I do not doubt that the Galofaro is the nucleus round which the story of Charybdis gathered, but I have seen considerable disturbance in the sea all through the Straits of Messina. Very much depends upon the state of the winds, which sometimes bank the water up in the angle between the toe of Italy and the North coast of Sicily, on which a current and strong eddies occur in the Straits of Messina. At other times there is hardly anything noticeable.

Passing over the nine days drifting in the sea, which take Ulysses from Charybdis to the island of Calypso, *i.e.* Pantellaria — and we may be sure he would have been made to take longer time if the writer had dared to keep him longer without food and water — it only remains for me to deal at somewhat fuller length than yet I have done with the voyage from Pantellaria to Trapani. On the eighteenth day after Ulysses had left Pantellaria, steering towards the Great Bear, but keeping it on the left, he saw the long low line of the Lilybaean coast rising on the

horizon. He does not appear to have seen the island of Favognana, which must have been quite near, and it was perhaps as well that he did not, for he could hardly have failed to recognise it as the one on which he had hunted the goats some eight or nine years previously, and this might have puzzled him.

But though he is allowed to see the land he must not be permitted to follow it up, or, as I have explained already, he would have gone straight into the harbour of Scheria, whereas he is particularly wanted to meet Nausicaa on the North side of the town, and to know nothing about Scheria till she brings him to it. Neptune, therefore, is made to catch sight of him at this moment and to raise a frightful hurricane; sea and sky become obscured in clouds, with a darkness as dense as night (v. 291–294), and thus Ulysses is carried a long distance apparently to the North, for when he has been taken far enough, Minerva blows him two days and two nights before a North wind, and hence Southwards, till he reaches the harbour near which Nausicaa can meet him.

There are no other such noticeable darknesses in the *Odyssey*, as this and the one of Book IX. 144, alluded to on p. 133. They both occur in the same place, and for the same reason — to keep the town of Scheria in reserve.

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I have now shown that all the Ithacan scenes of the *Odyssey* are drawn with singular fidelity from Trapani and its neighbourhood, as also all the Scherian; moreover, I have shown that the Ionian islands are in reality drawn from the Aegadean group off Trapani; lastly I have shown that the voyage of Ulysses in effect begins with Trapani and ends with Trapani again. I need not deal with Pylos and Lacedaemon

beyond showing that they were far removed from the knowledge of either writer or audience.

There is not a single natural feature mentioned in either case. The impossible journey of Telemachus and Pisistratus from Pherae to Lacedaemon in a chariot and pair over the lofty, and even now roadless, ranges of Mt. Taygetus, causes no uneasiness to the writer. She gives no hint of any mountain to be crossed — from which we may infer, either that she knew nothing of the country between Pylos and Lacedaemon, or that at any rate her audience would not do so. It may, however, be remarked that the West wind which Minerva provided in order to take Telemachus from Ithaca to Pylos, was more suitable for taking him from Sicily. A North wind would have been better for him if he had been coming from the real Ithaca, but Minerva manages things so strangely that I would not press this point.

CHAPTER 11

Who was the writer?

I believe the reader will by this time feel no doubt, from my earlier Chapters that the *Odyssey* was written by one woman, and from my later ones that this woman knew no other neighbourhood than that of Trapani, and therefore must be held to have lived and written there.

Who, then, was she?

I cannot answer this question with the confidence that I have felt hitherto. So far I have been able to demonstrate the main points of my argument; on this, the most interesting question of all, I can offer nothing stronger than presumption.

We have to find a woman of Trapani, young, fearless, self-willed, and exceedingly jealous of the honour of her sex. She seems to have moved in the best society of her age and country, for we can imagine none more polished on the West coast of Sicily in Odyssean times than the one with which the writer shows herself familiar. She must have had leisure, or she could not have carried through so great a work. She puts up with men when they are necessary or illustrious, but she is never enthusiastic about them, and likes them best when she is laughing at them; but she is cordially interested in fair and famous women.

I think she should be looked for in the household of the person whom she is travestying under the name of King Alcinous. The care with which his pedigree and that of his wife Arete is explained (vii. 54–77), and the warmth of affectionate admiration with which

Arete is always treated, have the same genuine flavour that has led scholars to see true history and personal interest in the pedigree of Aeneas given in *Il.* XX. 200–241. Moreover, she must be a sufficiently intimate member of the household to be able to laugh at its head as much as she chose. No pedigree of any of the other *dramatis personae* of the *Odyssey* is given save that of Theoclymenus, whose presence in the poem at all requires more explanation than I can give. I can only note that he was of august descent, more than sub-clerical, and of a different stamp from any other character to whom we are introduced.

The fact that the writer should be looked for in a member of King Alcinous' household seems further supported by the zest with which this household and garden are described (vii. 81–132), despite the obviously subrisive exaggeration which pervades the telling. There is no such zest in the description of any other household, and the evident pleasure which the writer takes in it is more like that of a person drawing her own home, than either describing some one else's or creating an imaginary scene. See how having begun in the past tense she slides involuntarily into the present as soon as she comes to the women of the house and to the garden. She never does this in any other of her descriptions.

Lastly, she must be looked for in one to whom the girl described as Nausicaa was all in all. No one else is drawn with like livingness and enthusiasm, and no other episode is written with the same, or nearly the same, buoyancy of spirits and resiliency of pulse and movement, or brings the scene before us with anything approaching the same freshness, as that in which Nausicaa takes the family linen to the washing cisterns. The whole of Book vi. can only have been written by one who was throwing herself into it heart and soul.

All the three last paragraphs are based on the supposition that the

writer was drawing real people. That she was drawing a real place, lived at that place, and knew no other, does not admit of further question; we can pin the writer down here by reason of the closeness with which she has kept to natural features that remain much as they were when she portrayed them; but no traces of Alcinous's house and garden, nor of the inmates of his household will be even looked for by any sane person; it is open, therefore, to an objector to contend that though the writer does indeed appear to have drawn permanent features from life, we have no evidence that she drew houses and gardens and men and women from anything but her own imagination.

Granted; but surely, in the first place, if we find her keeping to her own neighbourhood as closely as she can whenever the permanency of the feature described enables us to be certain of what she did, there is a presumption that she was doing the same thing in cases where the evidence has been too fleeting to allow of our bringing her to book. And secondly, we have abundant evidence that the writer did not like inventing.

Richly endowed with that highest kind of imagination which consists in wise selection and judicious application of materials derived from life, she fails, as she was sure to do, when cut off from a base of operation in her own surroundings. This appears most plainly in the three books which tell of the adventures of Ulysses after he has left Mt. Eryx and the Cyclopes. There is no local detail in the places described; nothing, in fact, but a general itinerary such as she could easily get from the mariners of her native town. With this she manages to rub along, helping herself out with fragments taken from nearer home, but there is no approach to such plausible invention as we find in *Gulliver's Travels*, *Robinson Crusoe*, or *Pilgrim's Progress*; and when she puts a description of the land of Hades into the mouth of Circe

(x. 508–515) — which she is aware must be something unlike anything she had ever witnessed — she breaks down and gives us a scene which carries no conviction. Fortunately not much detail is necessary here; in Ithaca, however, a great deal is wanted, and feeling invention beyond her strength she does not even attempt it, but has recourse with the utmost frankness to places with which she is familiar.

Not only does she shirk invention as much as possible in respect of natural features, but she does so also as regards incident. She can vilipend her neighbours on Mt. Eryx as the people at Trapani continue doing to this day, for there is no love lost between the men of Trapani and those of Mte. S. Giuliano, as Eryx is now called. She knows Ustica: the wind comes thence, and she can make something out of that; then there is the other great Sicilian city of Cefalù — a point can be made here; but with the Lipari islands her material is running short. She has ten years to kill, for which, however, eight or eight-and-a-half may be made to pass. She cannot have killed more than three months before she lands her hero on Circe's island; here, then, in pity's name let him stay for at any rate twelve months — which he accordingly does.

She soon runs through her resources for the Sirens' island, and Scylla and Charybdis; she knows that there is nothing to interest her on the East coast of Sicily below Taormina — for Syracuse (to which I will return) was still a small pre-Corinthian settlement, while on the South coast we have no reason to believe that there was any pre-Hellenic city. What, she asked herself, could she do but shut Ulysses up in the most lonely island she could think of — the one from which he would have the least chance of escaping — for the remainder of his term? She chose, therefore, the island which the modern Italian Government has chosen, for exactly the same reasons, as the one in

which to confine those who cannot be left at large — the island of Pantellaria;* but she was not going to burden Calypso for seven long years with all Ulysses' men, so his ship had better be wrecked.

This way out of the difficulty does not indicate a writer of fecund or mature invention. She knew the existence of Sardinia, for Ulysses smiles a grim Sardinian smile (xx. 302). Why not send him there, and describe it with details taken not from the North side of Trapani but from the South? Or she need not have given details at all — she might have sent him very long journeys extending over ever so many years in half a page. If she had been of an inventive turn there were abundant means of keeping him occupied without having recourse to the cheap and undignified expedient of shutting him up first for a year in one island, and then for seven in another. Having made herself so noble a peg on which to hang more travel and adventure, she would have hung more upon it, had either strength or inclination pointed in that direction. It is one of the commonplaces of Homeric scholars to speak of the voyages of Ulysses as “a story of adventurous travel.” So in a way they are, but one can see all through that the writer is trying to reduce the adventurous travel to a minimum.

See how hard put to it she is when she is away from her own actual surroundings. She does not repeat her incidents so long as she is at home, for she has plenty of material to draw from; when she is away from home, do what she may, she cannot realise things so easily, and has a tendency to fall back on something she has already done. Thus, at Pylos, she repeats the miraculous flight of Minerva (iii. 372) which she had used i. 320. On reaching the land of the Laestrygonians Ulysses climbs a high rock to reconnoitre, and sees no sign of in-

* Pantellaria was used as a penal colony from mid-18th century until World War II.

habitants save only smoke rising from the ground — at the very next place he comes to he again climbs a high rock to reconnoitre, and apparently sees no sign of inhabitants but only the smoke of Circe's house rising from the middle of a wood. He is conducted to the house of Alcinous by a girl who had come out of the town to fetch a pitcher of water (vii. 20); this is repeated (x. 105) when Ulysses' men are conducted to the house of the Laestrygonian Antiphates, by a girl who had come out of the town to fetch a pitcher of water. The writer has invented a sleep to ruin Ulysses just as he was well in sight of Ithaca (x. 31, &c.). This is not good invention, for such a moment is the very last in which Ulysses would be likely to feel sleepy — but the effort of inventing something else to ruin him when his men are hankering after the cattle of the Sun is quite too much for her, and she repeats (xii. 338) the sleep which had proved so effectual already. So, as I have said above, she repeats the darkness on each occasion when Ulysses seems likely to stumble upon Trapani. Calypso, having been invented once, must do duty again as Circe — or vice versa, for Book x. was probably written before Book v.

Such frequent examples of what I can only call consecutive octaves indicate a writer to whom invention does not come easily, and who is not likely to have recourse to it more than she can help. Having shown this as regards both places and incidents, it only remains to point out that the writer's dislike of invention extends to the invention of people as well as places. The principal characters in the *Odyssey* are all of them Scherian. Nestor, Ulysses, Menelaus and Alcinous are every one of them the same person playing other parts, and the greater zest with which Alcinous is drawn suggests, as I have said in an earlier Chapter, that the original from whom they are all taken was better known to the writer in the part of Alcinous than in that of any of the other three.

Penelope, Helen, and Arete are only one person, and I always suspect Penelope to be truer to the original than either of the other two. Idothea and Ino are both of them Nausicaa; so also are Circe and Calypso, only made up a little older, and doing as the writer thinks Nausicaa would do if she were a goddess and had an establishment of her own. I am more doubtful about these last two, for they both seem somewhat more free from that man-hatred which Nausicaa hardly attempts to conceal. Still, Nausicaa contemplates marrying as soon as she can find the right person, and, as we have seen, neither Circe nor Calypso had a single man-servant of their own, while Circe was in the habit of turning all men who came near her into pigs or wild beasts. Calypso, moreover, is only made a little angry by being compelled to send Ulysses away. She does not seem to have been broken-hearted about it. Neither of them, therefore, must be held to be more fond of men than the convenience of the poem dictated. Even the common people of Ithaca are Scherians, and make exactly the same fault-finding ill-natured remarks about Penelope (xxiii. 149–151) as the Phaeacians did about Nausicaa in Book vi. 273–288.

If, then, we observe that where the writer's invention is more laboured she is describing places foreign to her own neighbourhood, while when she carries conviction she is at or near her own home, the presumption becomes very strong that the more spontaneous scenes are not so much invention as a rendering of the writer's environment, to which it is plain that she is passionately attached, however much she may sometimes gird at it. I, therefore, dismiss the supposition of my supposed objector that the writer was not drawing Alcinous' household and garden from life, and am confirmed in this opinion by remembering that the house of Ulysses corresponds perfectly with that

of Alcinous — even to the number of the women servants kept in each establishment.

Being limited to a young woman who was an intimate member of Alcinous' household, we have only to choose between some dependant who idolised Nausicaa and wished to celebrate her with all her surroundings, or Nausicaa (whatever her real name may have been) herself. Or again, it may be urged that the poem was written by some bosom friend of Nausicaa's who was very intimate with the family, as for example Captain Dymas's daughter.

The intimate friend theory may be dismissed at once. High spirited girls, brilliant enough to write the *Odyssey* are not so self effacing as to keep themselves entirely out of sight. If a friend had written the washing day episode, the friend would have come a washing too — especially after having said she would in Nausicaa's dream.

If, again, a dependant had written it, Nausicaa would neither have had the heart nor the power to suppress her altogether; for if she tried to do so the dependant — so daring and self-willed as the writer proves herself to be — would have been more than a match for her mistress. We may be sure that there were not two such spirits in Trapani, as we must suppose if we make Nausicaa able to bow the will of the authoress of the *Odyssey*. The fact that in the washing day episode, so far as possible, we find Nausicaa, all Nausicaa, and nothing but Nausicaa, among the female *dramatis personae*, indicates that she was herself the young woman of Trapani, a member of the household of King Alcinous, whom we have got to find, and that she was giving herself the little niche in her work which a girl who was writing such a work was sure to give herself.

A dependant would not have dared to laugh at Alcinous with such playful malice as the writer has done. Again she would have made more

of Nausicaa herself in the scenes that follow. At present she is left rather as a ragged edge, and says good bye to Ulysses in Book VIII. 460, &c., with much less detail, both as regards her own speech and that of Ulysses in reply, than a courtier-like dependant would have permitted. She does not hear Ulysses' account of his adventures — which she might perfectly well have done under her mother's wing. She does not appear to take her meals with the rest of the family at all. When she returns from washing, Eurymedusa brings her supper into her own room. She is not present at any of Alcinous' banquets, nor yet at the games, and her absence from the farewell scene in Book XIII. is too marked to be anything but intentional. It seems as though she wished the reader to understand that she lived apart, and however much she might enjoy an outing with her maids, would have nothing to do with the men who came night after night drinking her father's best wine, and making havoc of his estate. She almost calls these people scoundrels to their faces by saying that they always made the final drink offering of the evening not to Jove but to Mercury, the god of thieves (VII. 137). In passing, I may say that the strangeness of the manner in which Nausicaa says good bye to Ulysses is one of the many things which convince me that the *Odyssey* has never been recast by a later hand. A person recasting the work would have been tolerably sure to have transferred the leave-taking to Book XIII.

Nausicaa, again, would have been more than human if she had permitted any one but herself to put into her mouth the ill-natured talk about her which she alleges to pass current among the Phaeacians. She would not mind saying it herself when her audience, private or public, would know that she was doing so, but a dependant would have been requested to be less pungent.

I admit as I have already done that these arguments are not

absolutely demonstrative, but it being, I may say, demonstrated that we must choose between Nausicaa and some other young woman of Trapani who lived in, or was very closely intimate with, the household of King Alcinous, I have no hesitation in saying that I think Nausicaa herself more likely than this other unknown young woman to have been the writer we are seeking.

Let the reader look at my frontispiece and say whether he would find the smallest difficulty in crediting the original of the portrait with being able to write the *Odyssey*. Would he refuse so to credit her merely because all he happened to know about her for certain was that she once went out washing clothes with her attendants? Nausicaa enjoyed a jaunt on a fine spring morning and helped her maids at the washing cisterns; therefore it is absurd to suppose that she could have written the *Odyssey*. I venture to think that this argument will carry little weight outside the rank and file of our Homerists — greatly as I dislike connecting this word however remotely with the *Odyssey*.

No artist can reach an ideal higher than his own best actual environment. Trying to materially improve upon that with which he or she is fairly familiar invariably ends in failure. It is only adjuncts that may be arranged and varied — the essence may be taken or left, but it must not be bettered. The attempt to take nature and be content with her save in respect of details which after all are unimportant, leads to Donatello, Giovanni Bellini, Holbein, Rembrandt, and De Hooghe — the attempt to improve upon her leads straight to Michael Angelo and the *barocco*, to Turner and the modern drop scene. There is not a trace of the *barocco* in my frontispiece; we may be confident, therefore, that such women, though doubtless comparatively rare, yet existed, as they exist in Italy now, in considerable numbers. Is it a very great stretch of imagination to suppose that one among them may have shown to

equal advantage whether as driver, washerwoman, or poetess? At the same time I think it highly probable that the writer of the *Odyssey* was both short and plain, and was laughing at herself, and intending to make her audience laugh also, by describing herself as tall and beautiful. She may have been either plain or beautiful without its affecting the argument.

I wish I could find some one who would give me any serious reason why Nausicaa should not have written the *Odyssey*. For the last five years I have pestered every scholar with whom I have been able to scrape acquaintance, by asking him to explain why the *Odyssey* should not have been written by a young woman. One or two have said that they could see none whatever, but should not like to commit themselves to a definite opinion without looking at the work again. One well-known and very able writer said that when he had first heard of the question as being mooted, he had supposed it to be some paradox of my own, but on taking up the *Odyssey* he had hardly read a hundred lines before he found himself saying "Why of course it is." The greater number, however, gave me to understand that they should not find it a difficult matter to expose the absurdity of my contention if they were not otherwise employed, but that for the present they must wish me a very good morning. They gave me nothing, but to do them justice before I had talked with them for five minutes I saw that they had nothing to give with which I was not already familiar. The *Odyssey* is far too easy, simple, and straightforward for the understanding of scholars — as I said in my *Life of Dr. Butler of Shrewsbury*, if it had been harder to understand, it would have been sooner understood — and yet I do not know; the *Iliad* is indeed much harder to understand, but scholars seem to have been very sufficiently able to misunderstand it.

Every scholar has read a Book or two of the *Odyssey* here and

there; some have read the whole; a few have read it through more than once; but none that I have asked have so much as been able to tell me whether Ulysses had a sister or no — much less what her name was. Not one of those whom I have as yet had the good fortune to meet in England — for I have met with such in Sicily — have saturated themselves with the poem, and that, too, unhampered by a single preconceived idea in connection with it. Nothing short of this is of the smallest use.

CHAPTER 12

The date of the poem, and a comparison of the state of the North Western part of Sicily as revealed to us in the *Odyssey*, with the account given by Thucydides of the same territory in the earliest known times.

The view that the *Odyssey* was written at Trapani will throw unexpected light upon the date of the poem. We can never date it within a hundred years or so, but I shall attempt to show that we must place it very little, if at all, later than 1050, and not earlier than 1150 B.C.*

I see that I may claim Professor Jebb's authority as to some extent, at any rate, supporting the later of these two dates. He writes: —

With regard to the age of the *Odyssey*, we may suppose that the original "Return" was composed in Greece Proper as early as the Eleventh Century B.C., and that the first enlargement had been made before 850 B.C.³¹

I have shown why I cannot admit that any part of the *Odyssey* was written in Greece Proper, and while admitting that the poem has been obviously enlarged by the addition of Books I.–IV. and line 187 of

* As I've said in a footnote in Chapter 10, early Greek authors like Hesiod and Homer today are assumed to have lived centuries later than was generally held true in Butler's time, though the date of the founding of Syracuse given by Butler is still valid. The modern dating of Homer (and thus the *Iliad*), if it is correct, renders Butler's dating of the fall of Troy and the writing of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, and thus most of this chapter, obsolete. [R.S.]

³¹ *Introduction to Homer*, ed. 1888, pp. 172, 193.

Book XIII.–XXIV., with which I will deal fully in a later Chapter — I cannot think that the enlargement was by another hand than that of the authoress of the poem in its original form. Nevertheless I am glad to claim Professor Jebb's support as far as it goes, for dating the inception of the *Odyssey* as in the eleventh century B.C.

I will begin by giving my reasons for thinking that the *Odyssey* must at any rate be earlier than 734 B.C.

When Eumaeus is telling the story of his childhood to Ulysses (xv. 403, &c.), he says that he was born in the Syrian island over against Ortygia, and I have rendered "the Syrian island" "the island of Syra," guided by the analogy of the "Psyrian island" (III. 171), which unquestionably means the island of Psyra.

The connection of an island Syra with a land Ortygia suggests Syracuse, in spite of the fact that in reality Ortygia was an island, and Syracuse both on the island and on the adjacent mainland — for as I have already too often said all Sicilian places in the *Odyssey* are travestied, however thinly.

The impression that Syracuse³² is being alluded to is deepened by our going on to read that "the turnings of the sun" are "there" — which I presume may be extended so as to mean "thereabouts." Now what are "the turnings of the sun"? I looked in Liddell and Scott, for whose work no one can feel a more cordial admiration, nor deeper sense of gratitude, and found that the turnings of the sun are "the solstices, or tropics, *i.e.*, the turning points of midsummer and midwinter." This may do very well as regards time, but not as regards place. In reference to the Odyssean passage, I read that "the turning of the sun denotes a point in the heavens probably to the Westward."

³² On its earlier coins Syracuse not unfrequently appears as Syra.

But we want the sun to turn not at a point in the heavens, but in the neighbourhood of Syra and Ortygia, and to do so here in a way that he does not do elsewhere. The simplest way of attaining this end will be to suppose that the writer of the *Odyssey* was adopting a form of speech which we often use on a railway journey, when we say that the sun has turned and is coming in at the other window — meaning that the line has taken a sharp turn, and that we are going in a new direction. Surely I am not wrong in thinking that the author meant nothing more recondite than that near the two places named the land turns sharply round, so that sailors who follow it will find the sun on the other side of their ship from what it has hitherto been.

A glance at the map will show that the site which the combination of Syra and Ortygia has suggested is confirmed by the fact that shortly South of it the coast of Sicily turns abruptly round, and continues thenceforward in a new direction. Indeed it begins to turn sharply with the promontory of Plemmyrium itself. Eumaeus, therefore, should be taken as indicating that he was born at the place which we know as Syracuse, and which was then, so he says, an aggregate of two small towns, without many inhabitants. It seems to have been a quite easy-going little place, where every one had enough to eat and drink, and nobody died except of sheer old age, diseases of all kinds being unknown. Business must have been carried on in a very leisurely fashion, for it took the Phoenicians a twelvemonth to freight their vessel, and the largest ship of those times cannot have been very large.

This is not the description of a busy newly founded settlement, as Syracuse would be in 734 B.C. Still less will it apply to any later Syracusan age. The writer modernises when dealing with an earlier age as frankly as Shakspeare: I have never detected a trace in her of any archaeological instinct. I believe, therefore, that she was telling what

little she knew of the Syracuse of her own day, and that that day was one prior to the arrival of the Corinthian Colony. I think it likely also that she made Eumaeus come from Syracuse because she felt that she rather ought to have done something at Syracuse during the voyage of Ulysses, but could not well, under the circumstances, break his journey between Charybdis and Calypso's Island. She, therefore, took some other way of bringing Syracuse into her story.

It may be urged that we have no other evidence of any considerable civilisation as having existed at Syracuse before the one founded by the Corinthians, and as regards written evidence this is true, so far at least as I know; but we have unwritten evidence of an even more conclusive kind. The remains of pottery and implements found at, or in the near neighbourhood of, Syracuse go back in an unbroken line from post-Roman times to the age of stone, while commerce with the Peloponnese, at any rate from the Mycenaean age, is shown by the forms and materials of the objects discovered in countless tombs. I had the advantage of being shown over the Museum at Syracuse by Dr. Orsi, than whom there can be no more cautious and capable guide on all matters connected with the earliest history of Sicily, and he repeatedly insisted on the remoteness of the age at which commerce must have existed between the South East, and indeed all the East, coast of Sicily, and the Peloponnese. The notion, therefore, too generally held in the very face of Thucydides himself, that there were no people living at or near Syracuse till the arrival of the Corinthians must be abandoned, and I believe we may feel confident that in the story of Eumaeus we have a peep into its condition in pre-Corinthian times.

The two communities of which Eumaeus tells us were probably, one, on the promontory of Plemmyrium, and the other, at a place between three and four miles distant, now called Cozzo Pantano, on

each of which sites Dr. Orsi has discovered the burying ground of an extensive village or town (borgo) to which he had assigned the date XII.–XI. centuries B.C. before his attention had been called to the existence of a reference to prehistoric Syracuse in the *Odyssey*. Many examples of implements found on these two sites may be seen in the museum at Syracuse. I did not gather that any other prehistoric burying grounds had been found at or in close proximity to Syracuse.

Whether the people whose burying grounds have been found at the above named places were Greeks, who were displaced later by Sicels, as the Sicels in their turn were displaced by the Corinthians, or whether they were Sicels of an earlier unrecorded immigration, I must leave Dr. Orsi and others to determine, but the name of the sea which washes the East coast of Sicily points to the existence at one time of extensive Ionian settlements on East Sicilian shores. The name, again, Aci, which is found in *Aci reale*, *Aci Castello*, and *Aci trezza*, and which among the common people is now always sounded Iaci, suggests a remote Ionian origin — for we may assume that there was no Ionian migration later than 734 B.C. of sufficient importance to give the name Ionian to Sicilian waters, towns, and islands. The reader will be reminded in the following Chapter that *Ἰακός* means Ionian.

Eumaeus was so young when he was carried off that even though Greek was not his native language, he would have become Grecised in a few years; I incline to think, however, that the writer of the *Odyssey* would have said something about his being a Sicel if she had so conceived of him in her own mind. She seems to think of him as a Greek by birth.

The Sicels, however, also probably spoke Greek. The inhabitants of Temesa, on the toe of Italy, do not indeed seem to have done so (*Od.* I. 183); but we do not know that they were Sicels. No writing has

been found at Plemmirio nor yet at Cozzo Pantano; we have therefore very little to go upon.

But postulating that we may accept Thucydides — whose accuracy as regards Syracusan details proves that even though he had not been at Syracuse himself, he had at any rate means of informing himself on Sicilian history — who is evidently taking pains, and whose reputation is surpassed by that of no other historian — postulating that we may accept his statement (vi. 2) that the great irruption of Sicels which changed the name of the country from Sicania to Sicelia took place about 300 years before B.C. 734, I think we may safely put back the date of the *Odyssey* to a time before B.C. 1000.

For the *Odyssey* conveys no impression as though Sicily at large had been lately subdued and overrun by Sicels. Locally, indeed, the city at the top of Mt. Eryx had, as we have seen (*Od.* vii. 60), been conquered and overthrown; but I shall bring Thucydides, as well as other evidence, to show that in this case the victors are more likely to have been Asiatic Greeks than Sicels. The poem indicates a time of profound present peace and freedom from apprehension, and on the one occasion in which the writer speaks of Sicily under its own name, she calls it by its pre-Sicelian name of Sicania.³³ The old Sicel woman who waited on Laertes (xxiv. 211 and elsewhere) is not spoken of as though there were any ill-will on the part of the writer towards the Sicels, or as though they were a dominant race. Lastly, one of the suitors (xx. 382) advises Telemachus to ship Theoclymenus and Ulysses off to the Sicels. Now if the writer had the real Ithaca in her

³³ The fact that *Σικανίης* (xxiv. 307) should not have got corrupted into *Σικελίης* — which would scan just as well — during the many centuries that the island was called *Σικελία*, suggests a written original, though I need hardly say that I should not rely on so small a matter if it rested by itself.

mind, the Sicels could only have been reached by sea, whether they were in Italy or Sicily; but I have already shown that she never pictured to herself any other Ithaca than the one she had created at Trapani; the fact, therefore, that Theoclymenus and Ulysses were to be put on board ship before they could reach the Sicels, shows that she imagined these last as (except for an occasional emigrant) outside the limits of her own island.

If the foregoing reasoning is admitted, 1050 B.C. will be about as late as it is safe to place the date of the *Odyssey*; but a few years later is possible, though hardly, I think, probable. Unfortunately this date will compel us to remove the fall of Troy to a time very considerably earlier than the received date. For a hundred years is, one would think, the shortest interval that can be allowed between the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad*. The development of myth and of the Epic Cycle, of which we find abundant traces in the *Odyssey*, is too considerable to render any shorter period probable. I therefore conclude that 1150 B.C. is the latest date to which we should assign the *Iliad*.

The usually received date for the fall of Troy is 1184 B.C.* This is arrived at from a passage in Thucydides (1. 12) which says that sixty years after the fall of Troy, the Boeotians were driven from Arne and settled in what was originally called Cadmeis, but subsequently Boeotia. Twenty years later, he tells us, the Dorians and the Heraclidae became masters of the Peloponnese; but as he does not fix this last date, probably because he could not, so neither does he fix that of the fall of Troy.

* Today the *Iliad* is assumed to have been written in the 8th century BCE, based on much older oral traditions. How much historical truth there is to be found in the *Iliad* is disputed, but the events described as the fall of Troy are still assumed to have happened in the 12th century, during the Bronze Age collapse. [R.S.]

The date commonly accepted for the return of the Heraclidae and their conquest of the Peloponnese is 1104,³⁴ but those who turn to Müller's *History of the Doric Race*,³⁵ Vol. I., p. 53, will see that there is no authority for this date which is worth a moment's consideration; and with the failure of authority here, we are left absolutely without authority for 1184 B.C. as the date of the fall of Troy.

Admitting for the moment 1150 B.C. as the latest date to which we should assign the *Iliad*, the question arises: How much later than the fall of Troy did Homer write? Mr. Gladstone has argued very ably in support of the view that he wrote only some forty or fifty years after the events he is recording, in which case it would seem that he must date the *Iliad* hardly at all later than the latest date to which I would assign it, for he does not appear to dispute the received date for the fall of Troy, though he does not say that he accepts it. I should only be too glad to find that I can claim Mr. Gladstone's support so far, but farther I cannot expect to do so; for the impression left upon me by the *Iliad* is that Homer was writing of a time that was to him much what the middle ages are to ourselves.

If he had lived as near the Trojan War as Mr. Gladstone supposes, he would surely have given us some hint of the manner in which Troy fell, whereas he shows no signs of knowing more than the bare fact that the city had fallen. He repeatedly tells us this much, but always more curtly and dryly than we should expect him to do, and his absolute silence as to the way in which the capture of the city was effected, goes

³⁴ See Prof. Jebb's *Introduction to Homer*, ed. 1888, Note 1 on p. 43.

³⁵ Murray, 1830.

* Today the fall of Troy (if indeed there is any historicity to the *Iliad*) is assumed to have happened in the 12th century, Homer to have lived (if indeed there was such a person) in the 8th or 7th century. [R.S.]

far to prove either that all record of the *modus in quo* had perished — which would point to a very considerable lapse of time — or else to suggest a fact which, though I have often thought it possible, I hardly dare to write — I mean that Troy never fell at all, or at any rate that it did not fall with the close of the Trojan War, and that Homer knew this perfectly well.

The infinite subtlety of the *Iliad* is almost as unfathomable as the simplicity of the *Odyssey* has so far proved itself to be, and its author, writing for a Greek audience whom he obviously despised, and whom he was fooling to the top of their bent though always sailing far enough off the wind to avoid disaster, would take very good care to tell them that — if I may be allowed the anachronism — Napoleon won the battle of Waterloo, though he very well knew that it was won by Wellington. It is certain that no even tolerably plausible account of the fall of Troy existed among the Greeks themselves; all plausibility ends with their burning their tents and sailing away baffled (*Od.* viii. 500, 501) — see also the epitome of the *Little Iliad*, given in the fragment of Proclus. The wild story of the wooden horse only emphasises the fact that nothing more reasonable was known.

But let us suppose that Troy fell, and that Homer's silence was dictated by the loss of all record as to the manner of its falling. In this case one would think that two, or even three, hundred years must have passed between the fall of Troy and the writing of the *Iliad*. Let us make it the same distance of time as that between the Parliamentary Wars and the present day. This would throw back the Trojan War to about 1400 B.C., and if we accept Homer's statement that the wall of Troy (*i.e.* that which Dr. Dorpfeld excavated in 1893 — for that this is the Iliadic wall may be taken as certain) was built in the time of Priam's father Laomedon, we should date the wall roughly as 1450 B.C. I may

add, that it seems to me to be of somewhat earlier date than the so-called Treasury of Atreus at Mycene, and hence still earlier than that which bears the name of Clytemnestra.

I see by the latest work on the subject³⁶ that Dr. Dorpfeld dates it as between 1500 and 1000 B.C. I know how perilous it is to date a wall by the analogy of other walls in distant countries, which walls are themselves undateable with anything like precision, but having seen the Iliadic wall as also those of Tiryns and Mycene, as well as most of the so-called Pelasgic walls that remain in the Latin and Volscian cities, I should say that the wall of Troy was much later than those of the megalithic ages, but still not by any means free from the traditions of megalithic builders. I should date it roughly at not later than 1300 B.C. and hardly earlier than 1500 B.C.

I will, however, date the Iliadic wall as 1400 B.C. The Trojan war will then be supposed to have taken place from 1360–1350 B.C.; the writing of the *Iliad* will be about 1150; and that of the *Odyssey* about 1050 B.C. This is a tight fit, and I should be glad to throw the Iliadic wall back to the earlier of the two dates between which Dr. Dorpfeld has placed it, but precision is out of the question; 1400 B.C. will be as near the truth as anything that we are likely to get, and will bring the archaeological evidence as derivable from the wall of Troy, the internal evidence of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, the statement of Thucydides that the last and greatest inroad of the Sicels occurred about 1030 B.C., and our conclusion that the *Odyssey* was written before that date, into line with one another.

The date 1050 B.C. will explain the absence of all allusion in the *Odyssey* to Utica, the land near which, on certain rare days, can be seen

³⁶ *The Mycenaean Age*, by Dr. Chrestos Tsountas and Dr. J. Irving Manatt, Macmillan, 1897, p. 369.

from Mt. Eryx. The Phoenicians are known in the *Odyssey*, disliked and distrusted, but they do not seem to be feared as they would surely be if so powerful a maritime nation were already established so near the writer's own abode. She does not seem to know much about the Phoenicians after all, for in iv. 83 she makes Menelaus say that he had gone to Cyprus, Phoenicia, and the Egyptians, and in the next line she adds that he had also been to the Ethiopians and the Sidonians, as though she was not aware that Sidon was a Phoenician city.

The absence of all allusion to Olympia when Telemachus was on his return from Pylos is most naturally explained by supposing that Olympia was not yet famous. The principal hero at Athens appears to be the earliest known object of the national cult, I mean Erechtheus (vii. 81); the later, though still very early, cult of Theseus is not alluded to. There is no allusion, however vague, to any event known as having happened in Greek history later than 1100 B.C., and though the absence of reference to any particular event may be explained by indifference or forgetfulness, the absence of all reference to any event whatever suggests, I should say strongly, that none of the events to one or other of which reference might be expected had as yet happened.

While, however, placing 1050 B.C. as the latest limit for the *Odyssey* I do not see how we can place it earlier than 1150 without throwing the date of the Iliadic wall farther back than we can venture to do, for we can hardly date it earlier than 1500 B.C., and 350 years is as short an interval as we can well allow between the building of that wall and the writing of the *Odyssey*.

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Let us now compare the history of the N.W. corner of Sicily as revealed to us in the *Odyssey* — always assuming that the pedigree of

Alcinous and Arete in Book VII. is in its main facts historic — with the account given by Thucydides concerning the earliest history of the same district.

In the *Odyssey* we have seen the Sicans (whom I think that I have sufficiently identified) as originally in possession of Mt. Eryx under a king whose Odyssean name is Eurymedon. He, it seems, was overthrown, and the power of his people was broken, by enemies whose name is not given, about a hundred years before the writing of the *Odyssey*, as nearly as we can gather from the fact of his having been Nausicaa's great great grandfather.

The writer of the *Odyssey* wrote in a language mainly Ionian, but containing a considerable Aeolian element. It must be inferred, therefore, that her family and audience — that is to say the Phaeacians — spoke a dialect in which these characteristics are to be found. The place of all others where such a dialect might be looked for is Phocaea, a little South of the Troad; for Phocaea was an Ionian city entirely surrounded on its land sides by Aeolian territory. I see from Professor Jebb's *Introduction to Homer*³⁷ that Aristarchus when editing the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, and settling the text to all intents and purposes as we now have it, by comparison of the best copies known, made most frequent use of the civic edition of Marseilles which contained both *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. It will be remembered that Marseilles was a Phocaean colony.

The name Phaeacians is not unsuggestive of a thin disguise for Phocaeans; lines IV. 441–443, moreover, will gain greatly in point, if we imagine that the seals, or Phocae, with their disgusting smell, are meant for the writer's countrymen whom she evidently dislikes, and that the words, “who, indeed, would go to bed with a sea monster if he could

³⁷ Ed. 1888, note on p. 91.

help it?" are her rejoinder to the alleged complaint of the young Phaeacians that she would marry none of them (vi. 276 &c.). Apart, therefore, from any external evidence, I should suspect the Phaeacians to have been Phocaeans, who had settled on this part of the island.³⁸ From the fact that the Phaeacians in the time of the *Odyssey* were evidently dominant on Mt. Eryx as well as at Trapani, I conclude that they must have had, to say the least of it, a considerable share in the overthrow of Eurymedon and of the Sican power in that part of the island. If they had allies with them, these allies seem to have gone on to other sites on which Elymite cities are known to have existed, for we find no reference in the *Odyssey* to any other people as sharing Hypereia and Scheria with the Phaeacians.

Though the power of the Sicans at Eryx was broken, and the Phaeacians were established at Hypereia, also on the top of Mt. Eryx and less than a mile from the Sican city, the Sicans were still troublesome neighbours; there seems, however, to have been a marriage between some chief man among the Phaeacians and Periboea, youngest daughter of the old king Eurymedon, and this no doubt would lead to some approach to fusion between the two peoples. The offspring of this marriage, Nausithous, is said in the poem to have been by Neptune, from which I infer that the marriage may have been of a more or less irregular kind, but there can be no doubt that Nausithous came of a Phaeacian father and would speak the Phaeacian dialect, which the Sicans, though in all probability a Greek-speaking race, cannot be

³⁸ Herodotus tells us (I. 163) that the Phocaeans were the first people to undertake long voyages, exploring the Tuscan sea, and going as far as Cadiz. He says that their ships were not the round ones commonly used for commerce, but long vessels with fifty oarsmen. The reader will recollect that this feature of Phocaean navigation is found also among the Phaeacians, who sent Ulysses to the place that we are to take as Ithaca, in a vessel that had fifty oarsmen.

supposed to have done. Nausithous seems to have been a capable man; finding the continued raids of semi-outlawed Sicans still harassing, perhaps, also, induced by the fact that the promontory on which Trapani stands was better suited to a race of mariners than the lofty and inhospitable top of Mt. Eryx, he moved his people down to the seaside and founded the city that now bears the name of Trapani — retaining, however, the site of Hypereia as his own property on which his pigs and goats would feed, and to which also his family would resort, as the people of Trapani still do, during the excessive heat of summer.

The reader will have noted that Eumaeus, who we must never forget is drawn not from Ithaca but from Mt. Eryx, when watching over his pigs by night thought it necessary to be fully armed (xiv. 526). He seems also from xvi. 9, to have had neighbours, from which we may infer that the old Sican city of Eryx was not yet entirely abandoned; nevertheless, Eumaeus would not be there at all unless the fusion between the Sicans and the Phocaeans had been fairly complete. The Sicans appear in the *Odyssey* under the names of Cyclopes and Laestrygonians, and the Sicels are not yet come. This is all that we can collect from the *Odyssey*.

We will now see what support the sketch given above will derive from Thucydides (vi. 2). According to him the Laestrygonians and the Cyclopes, mentioned as the earliest inhabitants of Sicily, are mere poetical fictions. This, however, does not preclude their having had their prototype in some real Sicilian people who bore another name; and at any rate, however fictitious they may be, he locates them in Sicily.

He continues that the oldest historic inhabitants of the island were the Sicans, who by their own account had been there from time im-

memorial. This he denies, for he says they were Iberians, and he says it as though he had satisfied himself after due inquiry, but since he gives no hint as to the date of their arrival, he does not impugn their statement that their settlement in the island dated from a remote time. It is most likely that he is right about the Sicans having come from Spain; and indeed at Tarragona, some fifty or sixty miles North of the mouth of the river Iberus, there are megalithic walls that bear, so far as I can judge from photographs, a very considerable analogy with those of Eryx. In Thucydides' own times there were still Sicans in the Western part of Sicily.

He then goes on to say that after the fall of Troy, but he does not say how much after, some of the Trojans who had escaped the Greeks migrated to Sicily. They settled in the neighbourhood of the Sicans and were all together called Elymi, their cities being Eryx and Segesta. There were also settled with them — but whether at the same date, or earlier or later, and if so, how much, Thucydides does not say — certain Phocians of the Trojan branch, *i.e.*, Phocaeans — Phocaea having been founded by Phocians from the gulf of Corinth under the leadership of the Athenian chiefs Philogenes and Damon (*Strab.* xiv. 633; *Pausan.* VII. 3, §5; cf. *Herod.* I. 146).^{*} These Phocaeans had been carried first by a tempest to Libya,³⁹ and thence to Sicily.

We need not follow him to the arrival of the Sicels, for I have already, I hope, satisfied the reader that the *Odyssey* belongs to a pre-Sicilian age, and I am only dealing with the period which the *Odyssey* and Thucydides cover in common.

^{*} Strabo, Pausanias, Herodotus. [R.S.]

³⁹ One cannot help wondering whether the episode of the Lotus-eaters may not be due to the existence of tradition among the Phaeacians that their ancestors had made some stay in Libya before reaching Sicily.

I should perhaps put it beyond doubt that Thucydides means Phocaeans and not Phocians. In the first place it is difficult to understand how Phocians, who were on the Achaean side (*Il.* II. 518), should amalgamate with Trojans; and in the next Thucydides' words cannot be made to bear the meaning that is generally put upon them, as though the Phocians in question were on their way back from Troy to Phocis. His words are *Φωκέων τινες τῶν ἀπὸ Τροίας*, and this cannot be construed as though he had said *Φωκέων τινες τῶν ἀνερχομένων ἐν νόστῳ ἀπὸ Τροίας*. If *ἀπὸ* is to imply motion from, it should have a verb or participle involving motion before it; without this it is a common way of expressing residence in a place. For example, *Ὀρέστης ἦλυθεν ... ἀπ' Ἀθηναίων* (*III.* 307) means Orestes came from Athens, whereas *Ὀρέστης ὁ ἀπ' Ἀθηναίων* would mean "Orestes the Athenian, or quasi-Athenian," as *Λακεδαιμόνιοι οἱ ἀπὸ Σπάρτης* means "the Lacedaemonians who live at Sparta," Neither of these last two passages can be made to bear the meaning "Orestes, who was on his way from Athens," or "the Lacedaemonians, who were on their way from Sparta." The reader who looks out *ἀπὸ* in Liddell & Scott will find plenty of examples. To Thucydides, Phocaeans in Asia Minor and Phocians on the gulf of Corinth would be alike Phocians in virtue of common descent, but to avoid misapprehension he calls the Phocaeans "Phocians of the Trojan stock," by "Trojan" meaning not very far from Troy. It should be noted that the Phocians of the gulf of Corinth are called *Φωκῆες*, not *Φωκέες* in *Il.* II. 517, XV. 516, XVII. 307. I see that Dobree (*Adversaria in Thucyd.*) is suspicious of the reading *Φωκέων* in the passage of Thucydides which we are now considering. He evidently considers that *Φωκέων* must mean Phocians from the gulf of Corinth, and so it would, if it were not qualified by the words *τῶν ἀπὸ Τροίας* which negative the possibility of European Phocians being

intended.

Thucydides says nothing about any invasion of Sicily by a people called Elymi. He does not see the Elymi as anything more than the combined Asiatic and Sican peoples, who came to be called Elymi. If he had believed in the Elymi as a distinct batch of immigrants he would have given us a line or two more about them.

It is just possible that the known connection between Phocians and Phocaeans may explain why Ulysses' maternal grandfather should have been made to live on Mt. Parnassus,⁴⁰ which is in Phocis. Ulysses, to the writer of the *Odyssey*, was a naturalised Phaeacian, for her native town had become in her eyes both Scheria and Ithaca. It would not be unnatural, therefore, that she should wish to connect his ancestry with Phocis, the ancestral seat of the Phocaeans.

Returning to Thucydides, the only point in which he varies the Odyssean version is that he makes other Trojans migrate to Eryx as well as the Phocaeans, whereas the writer of the *Odyssey* mentions only the Phaeacians without saying anything about their having been of Phocaean descent. She has, however, betrayed herself very sufficiently. Thucydides again does not tell us that the Phocaeans re-settled themselves at Drepanum, but a man who is giving a mere outline of events which happened some seven hundred years before he was writing, can hardly be expected to give so small a detail as this. The wonder is that the *Odyssey* should bear him out and confirm his accuracy in so striking a way as it does. We now, therefore, see that instead of there being any cause for surprise at finding an Ionic-Aeolian poem written near Mt. Eryx, this is the very neighbourhood in which we might expect to find one.

⁴⁰ *Od.* XIX. 410, 432.

Finally, let us turn to Virgil. His authority as a historian is worthless, but we cannot suppose that he would make Aeneas apparently found Drepanum, if he held the presence of a Greek-speaking people at Drepanum even before the age of Homer to be so absurd as it appears to our eminent Homeric scholars. I say “apparently found Drepanum,” for it is not quite easy to fix the site of the city founded by Aeneas (*Aen.* V. 755–761), for at the close of *Aen.* III. Anchises dies at Drepanum, as though this city was already in existence. But whether the city founded by Aeneas was actually Drepanum, or another city hard by it, it is clear that Virgil places Greek-speaking people at Drepanum, or close to it, immediately after the fall of Troy. He would hardly do this unless Drepanum was believed in his time to be a city of very great antiquity, and founded by Greek-speaking people. That the Trojan language was Greek will not be disputed.*

* It is disputed today. [R.S.]

CHAPTER 13

Further evidence in support of an early Ionian settlement at or close to Trapani.

I am often asked how I explain the fact that we find no trace in ancient authors of any tradition to the effect that the *Odyssey* was written at Drepanum or that the writer was a woman. This difficulty is laid before me as one that is almost fatal. I confess, however, that I find it small in comparison with that of explaining how both these facts should have failed of being long since rediscovered. Neptune indeed did not overwhelm Scheria under Mt. Eryx, but he, or some not less spiteful god, seems to have buried both it and its great poetess under another mountain which I fear may be found even more irremovable — I mean a huge quasi-geological formation of academic erudition.

The objection is without sufficient foundation in its implied facts; for that the Phaeacians were a real people who lived at a place bearing the name of Drepane (which is near enough to Drepanum for all practical purposes),⁴¹ has never been lost sight of at all — except by those who find it convenient to lose sight of it. Thucydides (1. 25) tells us that the inhabitants of Corfu were the descendants of the Phaeacians, and the rock into which their ship was turned as it was entering the harbour after having escorted Ulysses to Ithaca is still shown at Corfu — as an island 58 feet high with a monastery on the top of it. But the older name of Corfu was Drepane,⁴² and when the

⁴¹ Drepanum means a curved sword or scimitar. Drepane is a sickle.

⁴² See Smith's *Dictionary of Classical Geography*, under Corcyra, where full references will be found.

Carthaginians had established themselves at the Sicilian Drepanum, it would be an easy matter for the inhabitants of the Corfu Drepane to claim Phaeacian descent, and — as they proceeded to do — to call their island Scheria, in spite of its offering no single point of correspondence with the description given in the *Odyssey*.

I grant that no explicit tradition exists to the effect that the *Odyssey* as a whole was written at or in Corfu, but the Phaeacian episode is the eye of the poem. I submit, then, that tradition both long has, and still does, by implication connect it with a place of which the earliest known name was to all intents and purposes the same as that of the town where I contend that it was written.

The Athenian writers, Thucydides included, would be biassed in favour of any site which brought Homer, as they ignorantly called the writer of the *Odyssey*, nearer their own doors. The people, moreover, of Eryx and Segesta, and hence also of Drepanum, were held to be barbarians, and are so called by Thucydides himself (VI. 2); in his eyes it would be little less than sacrilege to hesitate between the Corfu Drepane and the Sicilian Drepanum, did any tradition, however vague, support Corfu. But it is not likely that Thucydides was unaware of the Sicilian claim not only to the Phaeacian episode, but to the entire poem, for as late as 430 B.C., only a little before the date of his own work, there were still people on or near Mt. Eryx who present every appearance of having claimed it, as I will almost immediately show.

As for losing sight of its having been written by a woman, the people who could lose sight of the impossibility of its having been written by Homer could lose sight of anything. A people who could not only do this, but who could effectually snuff out those who pointed out their error, were not likely to know more about the difference

underlying the two poems than the average English layman does about those between the synoptic gospels and that of St. John.

I will now return to my assertion that in the time of Thucydides there seem to have been not a few who knew of, and shared in, the claim of Drepanum to the authorship of the *Odyssey*.

The British Museum possesses a unique example of a small bronze coin which is classed with full confidence among those of Eryx and Segesta. It is of the very finest period of the numismatic art, and is dated by the museum authorities as about 430 B.C.



A COIN BEARING ON THE OBVERSE THE LEGEND *IAKIN*, AND ON
THE REVERSE A REPRESENTATION OF THE BROOCH DESCRIBED BY ULYSSES
Enlarged to about double the actual diameter

The reader will see that the obverse bears the legend *IAKIN*, and the reverse a representation of the brooch described by Ulysses (*Od.* xix. 225–231).

The cross line of the A is not visible in the original, but no doubt is felt at the Museum about its having existed.

There seems, however, to be more doubt whether the legend should

be *IAKIN*, or *PIAKIN* — *I* being the older form of *Π*. Possibly from a desire to be right in either case, the Museum catalogue gives it as *IAKIN* in the illustration, and *PIAKIN* in the descriptive letterpress. The one reading will do nearly as well as the other for my argument, which only requires that the coin should belong to the Eryx and Segesta group and be dated about 430 B.C. — neither of which points are doubted. I will, however, give the reasons that convince me that *IAKIN* is the true reading.

Firstly, neither I nor some artist friends of mine whose opinion is infinitely better worth having than my own, can find any trace of a *I* between the lowermost boss and the neck. I am aware that some experts of the highest competence profess to be able to detect such traces, but the artist who figured the coin in the Museum Catalogue evidently could not do so, and the experts do not seem to have had such confidence in their own opinion as to make him alter his drawing.

Secondly, the composition is obviously and intentionally symmetrical. It would be abhorrent to the instincts of the man who could design so exquisite a coin to destroy its balance by crowding a *I* into the place which must be assigned to it if it exists at all.

Thirdly, Piacus, to which town the coin had been ascribed by the dealer from whom the Museum bought it, is mentioned very briefly by Stephanus Byzantinus, but by no other writer, as a Sicilian city, and he expressly states that its citizens were called *PIAKHNOI*; so that the coin, if it was one of theirs, should bear the legend *PIAKHN* instead of the alleged *PIAKIN*. Stephanus Byzantinus did not write till about 500 A.D., and in the absence of any statement from him to the effect that Piacus was an old city, it argues some recklessness to conclude that it had existed for at least a thousand years when he mentioned it; there is no evidence from any quarter to support such a conclusion, and a safer

one will be that the dealer above referred to, not knowing where the coin came from, and looking for a city in Stephanus Byzantinus, found he could get nothing nearer than Piacus — whereon he saw a Γ as the smallest thing he could do in *IT*'s, into his coin, and sold it to the British Museum probably for a song as compared with the value which it now proves to have. Thus the Museum authorities having got it into part of their notes (for they seem to have got *IAKIN* into another part) that the legend was *ΓΙΑΚΗΝ*, have very naturally been led to see more on the coin than those who have no notes will quite bear them out in seeing. But I will add no more. The legend is obviously *IAKIN*.

This is an abbreviation for *IAKINΩΝ*, as *EPYKIN* and *KENTOPIIIN* are for *EPYKINΩΝ* and *KENTOPIIINΩ*, not to quote further examples. It means that the people who struck it were called *IAKINEΣ*, and though we cannot determine the precise name of their city we may infer with confidence that it was some derivative of *IAKOΣ*, which is given in Liddell & Scott as meaning Ionian. The name may very likely have been *IAE* though I cannot find any authority for the existence of such a town.

I hold, therefore, that as late as B.C. 430 there was near Trapani a town still more or less autonomous, which claimed Ionian descent and which also claimed to be in some special way connected with the *Odyssey*; for I am assured that nothing would be allowed on a coin except what had an important bearing on the anterior history of those who struck it. Admitting that the reverse of the coin in question must be taken as a reproduction of Ulysses' brooch — and I found no difference of opinion among the numismatists at the Museum on this head — it is hard to see what more apposite means of saying *Odyssey* upon a coin can be suggested than to stamp it with the subject which invites numismatic treatment more than any other in the whole poem.

It seems to me, then, that though the theory that there was an Ionian city in the neighbourhood of Eryx which could claim connection with the *Odyssey* will stand perfectly well without the coin, the coin cannot stand without involving the existence of an Ionian city near Eryx which claimed connection with the *Odyssey*. Happily, though the coin is unique, there is no question as to its genuineness.

To those, therefore, who ask me for monuments, ruins of buildings, historical documents to support a Sicano-Ionian civilisation near Eryx in times heretofore prehistoric, I reply that as late as 430 B.C. all these things appear to have existed. Letting alone the testimony of Thucydides, surely an Ionian coin is no small historical document in support of an Ionian city. A coin will say more in fewer words and more authoritatively than anything else will. The coin in question cannot belong to an Ionian colony on Mt. Eryx or thereabouts recently established in 430 B.C. We should have heard of such a colony; how inconceivable again is the bringing in of the *Odyssey* on this supposition. If the city existed at all it can only have done so as a survival of the Phocaean settlement of which Thucydides tells us.

I want no evidence for the survival of such a settlement in later times; it is not incumbent upon me to show whether it survived or no; the abundant, I might almost say superabundant, coincidences between all both Scherian and Ithacan scenes in the *Odyssey*, and Trapani with its immediate neighbourhood, is enough to demonstrate the Trapanese origin of the poem. Its pre-Syracusan and pre-Sicilian indications fix it as not later than about 1050 B.C., its dialect, Ionic-Aeolian, connects it with the Phocaeans above referred to. It does not concern me to show what became of these Phocaeans after the *Odyssey* had been written; what I have said about the coin *IAKIN* is said more in the interests of the coin than of the *Odyssey*, which is a more potent and irrefragable

proof of its own *provenance* and date than any coin struck some 600 years later can conceivably be. Still, the coin being there, I use it to answer those who demand some evidence external to the *Odyssey* itself. When they ask me where are my monuments, I answer that they are within the coin, circumscribed by the small cincture of an inch and a half at most. For a coin is a city in little; he who looks on one beholds a people, an evidence of title, a whole civilisation with its buildings of every kind. Destroy these, but so long as a single one of its coins remains, the city though dead is yet alive, and the fact of its having had buildings that could become ruinous is as palpable as though the ruins themselves had come down to us.

The exact situation of this city Iax, Iacus, or Iace, cannot be determined, but I incline to place it about a mile or a mile and a half East of Trapani at or near a place called Argenteria. This place is said to have yielded silver, but no one believes that it ever did so. It is a quarry and by no means a large one, just at the beginning of the rise to Mt. Eryx. Some say that Argenteria is a corruption of Cetaria and refers to a monster fish that was killed here, though how it got so far from the sea is not apparent; I think it much more likely, however, that it is a corruption of Iacinteria and that Iax, or Iace, was a quasi-autonomous suburb of Drepanum to which the Greek inhabitants were permitted to retire when the Carthaginians took possession of the parts of the town bordering on the harbour.

My friend Signor Sugameli of Trapani, whose zeal in this matter so far outstrips even my own, that I would gladly moderate it if I knew how to do so, assures me that in his younger days he used to employ a stone in building that the mason told him came from a quarry at the foot of Mt. Eryx called Dacinoi or D'Acinoi. This was years before any one thought of bringing Ionians to Trapani. Signor Sugameli suggested

that possibly the name might be a corruption of D'Alcinoo — but we may be sure that whatever else Alcinous's name may have been it was not Alcinous. I asked Signor Sugameli to produce the mason, but he could neither find him nor hear of the quarry Dacinoi. Nevertheless I feel sure that he was told what he said he was, and as the quarry cannot have been far from the Argenteria, I think it probable that its name was a corruption of *degli Iacinoi*.

Whether this is sound or not, I do not doubt that the Iacenses who figure so largely in Sicilian history during the Eleventh Century of our own era are to be connected with the Ionian settlement that produced the *Odyssey*. The Iacenses were then settled chiefly about forty miles East of Trapani, but the interval of some 1400 years and more between the date of the coin Iakin and the conquest of Sicily by the Normans will leave plenty of time for them to have spread or migrated.

CHAPTER 14

That the *Iliad* which the writer of the *Odyssey* knew was the same as what we now have.

It remains for me to show that the writer of the *Odyssey* had the *Iliad* before her to all intents and purposes as we now have it, and to deal with the manner in which the poem grew under her hands.

[Editor's Note:

Most of this chapter is omitted here, because Butler presents his examples of words from the *Iliad* which can almost identically be found in the *Odyssey* in Greek. For readers not fluent in Ancient Greek this has little to offer — we have to take Butler's word for it.

R.S.]

I will again assure the reader that all the Books of the *Iliad* seem drawn from with the same freedom as that shown in those which I have now dealt with in detail, and also that I can find no part of the *Odyssey* which borrows any less freely from the *Iliad* than the rest of the poem; here and there difference of subject leads the writer to go three or four pages without a single Iliadic cento, but this is rare. One or two, or even sometimes three or four, Iliadic passages in a page is nearer the average, but of these some will be what may be called common form.

Their frequency raises no suggestion of plagiarism any more than

the Biblical quotations in *Pilgrim's Progress* would do if the references were cut out. They are so built into the context as to be structural, not ornamental; and to preclude the idea of their having been added by copyists or editors. They seem to be the spontaneous outcome of the fullness of the writer's knowledge of the *Iliad*. It is also evident that she is not making a resumé of other people's works; she is telling the story *de novo* from the point of view of herself, her home, her countrymen, and the whole island of Sicily. Other peoples and places may be tolerated, but they raise no enthusiasm in her mind.

Nevertheless, a certain similarity of style and feeling between the *Odyssey* and all the poems of the Epic Cycle is certain to have existed, and indeed can be proved to have existed from the fragments of the lost poems that still remain. In all art, whether literary, pictorial, musical, or architectural, a certain character will be common to a certain age and country. Every age has its stock subjects for artistic treatment; the reason for this is that it is convenient for the reader, spectator, or listener, to be familiar with the main outlines of the story. Written literature is freer in this respect than painting or sculpture, for it can explain and prepare the reader better for what is coming. Literature which, though written, is intended mainly for recitation before an audience few of whom can read, exists only on condition of its appealing instantly to the understanding, and will, therefore, deal only with what the hearer is supposed already to know in outline. The writer may take any part of the stock national subjects that he or she likes, and within reasonable limits may treat it according to his or her fancy, but it must hitch on to the old familiar story, and hence will arise a certain similarity of style between all poems of the same class that belong to the same age, language, and people. This holds just as good

for the medieval Italian painters as it does for the Epic Cycle. They offer us a similarity in dissimilarity and a dissimilarity in similarity.

When we remember, however, that the style of the *Odyssey* must not only perforce gravitate towards that of all the other then existing epic poems, but also that the writer's mind is as strongly leavened with the mind of Homer, let alone the other Cyclic poets, as we have seen it to be, it is not surprising that the veneer of virility thus given to a woman's work should have concealed the less patent, but far more conclusive, evidence that the writer was not of the same sex as the man, or men, from whom she was borrowing.

At the same time, in spite of the use she makes of Homer, I think she was angry with him, and perhaps jealous; on which head I will say more in my next Chapter. Possibly the way he laughs at women and teases them, not because he dislikes them, but because he enjoys playing with them, irritates her; she was not disposed to play on such a serious subject. We have seen how she retorts on him for having made a tripod worth three times as much as a good serviceable woman of all work. His utter contempt, again, for the gods, which he is at no pains to conceal, would be offensive to a writer who never permits herself to go beyond the occasional mild irreverence of the Vicar's daughter. Therefore, she treats Homer, as it seems to me, not without a certain hardness; and this is the only serious fault I have to find with her.

For example, she takes the concluding lines of Hector's farewell to Andromache, a passage which one would have thought she would have shrunk from turning to common uses, and puts it into the mouth of Telemachus when he is simply telling his mother to take herself off. She does this in i. 356-359 and again in xxi. 350-353. This is not as it should be. Nor yet again is her taking the water that was heated to

wash the blood from the body of poor Patroclus (*Il.* XVIII. 344 &c.) and using it for Ulysses' bath (*Od.* VIII. 434–437). Surely the disrespect here is deeper than any that can be found in Homer towards the gods.

But, whatever the spirit may have been in which the writer of the *Odyssey* has treated the *Iliad*, I cannot doubt that she knew this poem exceedingly well in the shape in which we have it, and this is the point which I have thought it worth while to endeavour to substantiate at such length in the foregoing Chapter.

CHAPTER 15

The *Odyssey* in its relation to the other poems of the Trojan cycle, and its development in the hands of the authoress.

The writer of the *Odyssey* appears to have known most of those lost poems of the Epic cycle — eight in number — that relate to Troy, but as all we know about them is from the summaries given in the fragment of Proclus, and from a few lines here and there quoted in later authors, we can have no irrefragable certainty that she had the poems before her even when she alludes to incidents mentioned by Proclus as being dealt with in any given one of them. Nevertheless, passages in *Od.* I. and III. make it probable that she knew the *Nosti* or the Return of the Achaeans from Troy, and we may suppose that Nestor's long speeches (*Od.* III. 102–200 and 253–328) are derived mainly from this source, for they contain particulars that correspond closely with the epitome of the *Nosti* given by Proclus.

We can thus explain the correctness of the topography of the Aegaeon sea that is manifested in Nestor's speeches, but no where else in the poem beyond a bare knowledge of the existence of Apollo's shrine in Delos (*Od.* VI. 162) and an occasional mention of Crete. I see Professor Jebb says that the *Odyssey* “shows a familiar knowledge of Delos;”⁴³ but there is no warrant for this assertion from anything in the poem.

The writer of the *Odyssey* seems, in Book IV., to have also known

⁴³ *Introduction to Homer*, Macmillan, 1888, p. 172.

the *Cypria*, which dealt with the events that led up to the Trojan war.

Book xxiv. of the *Odyssey* (35–97) suggests a knowledge of the *Aethiopis*. So also does the mention of Memnon (*Od.* xi. 522).

Knowledge of the *Little Iliad* may be suspected from *Od.* iv. 271–283, where Helen seems to be now married to Deiphobus, and from xi. 543–562; as also from xi. 508, 509, where Ulysses says that he took Neoptolemus to Scyrus. Ulysses entering Troy as a spy (*Od.* iv. 242–256) is also given by Proclus as one of the incidents in the *Little Iliad*. I do not see, therefore, that there can be much doubt about the writer of the *Odyssey* having been acquainted with the *Little Iliad*, a poem which was apparently of no great length, being only in four Books.

From the two Books of the *Sack of Troy* we get the account of the council held by the Trojans over the wooden horse (*Od.* viii. 492–517).

We have seen how familiar the authoress of the *Odyssey* was with the *Iliad*; there only remains, therefore, one of the eight Trojan poems which she does not appear to have known — I mean the *Telegony*, which is generally, and one would say correctly, placed later than the *Odyssey*; but even though it were earlier we may be sure that the writer of the *Odyssey* would have ignored it, for it will hardly bear her out in the character she has given of Penelope.

In passing I may say that though Homer (meaning, of course, the writer of the *Iliad*) occasionally says things that suggest the *Cypria*, there is not a line that even suggests knowledge of a single one of the incidents given by Proclus as forming the subjects of the other Books of the Trojan cycle; the inference, therefore, would seem to be that none of them, except possibly, though very uncertainly, the *Cypria*, had appeared before he wrote. Nevertheless we cannot be sure that this was so.

The curious question now arises why the writer of the *Odyssey*

should have avoided referring to a single Iliadic incident, while showing no unwillingness to treat more or less fully of almost all those mentioned by Proclus as dealt with in the other poems of the Trojan cycle, and also while laying the *Iliad* under such frequent contributions.

I remember saying to a great publisher that a certain book was obviously much indebted to a certain other book to which no reference was made. "Has the writer," said the publisher in question, "referred to other modern books on the same subject?" I answered, "Certainly." "Then," said he, "let me tell you that it is our almost unvaried experience that when a writer mentions a number of other books, and omits one which he has evidently borrowed from, the omitted book is the one which has most largely suggested his own." His words seemed to explain my difficulty about the way in which the writer of the *Odyssey* lets the incidents of the *Iliad* so severely alone. It was the poem she was trying to rival, if not to supersede. She knew it to be far the finest of the Trojan cycle; she was so familiar with it that appropriate lines from it were continually suggesting themselves to her — and what is an appropriate line good for if it is not to be appropriated? She knew she could hold her own against the other poems, but she did not feel so sure about the *Iliad*, and she would not cover any of the ground which it had already occupied.

Of course there is always this other explanation possible, I mean that traditions about Homer's private life may have been known to the writer of the *Odyssey*, which displeased her. He may have beaten his wife, or run away with somebody else's, or both, or done a hundred things which made him not exactly the kind of person whom Arete would like her daughter to countenance more than was absolutely

necessary. I believe, however, that the explanation given in the preceding paragraph is the most reasonable.

And now let me explain what I consider to have been the development of the *Odyssey* in the hands of the poetess. I cannot think that she deliberately set herself to write an epic poem of great length. The work appears to have grown on her hands piecemeal from small beginnings, each additional effort opening the door for further development, till at last there the *Odyssey* was — a spontaneous growth rather than a thing done by observation. Had it come by observation, no doubt it would have been freer from the anomalies, inconsistencies, absurdities, and small slovenlinesses which are inseparable from the development of any long work, the plan of which has not been fully thought out beforehand. But surely in losing these it would have lost not a little of its charm.

From Professor Jebb's *Introduction to Homer*, Ed. 1888, p. 131, I see that he agrees with Kirchhoff in holding that the *Odyssey* contains "distinct strata of poetical material from different sources and periods," and also that the poem owes its present unity of form to one man; he continues: —

But under this unity of form there are perceptible traces of a process by which different compositions were adapted to one another.

In a note on the preceding page he tells us that Kirchhoff regards the first 87 verses of Book I. as having formed the exordium of the original Return of Ulysses.

My own conclusions, arrived at to the best of my belief before I had read a word of Professor Jebb's *Introduction*, agree in great part with the foregoing. I found the *Odyssey* to consist of two distinct

poems, with widely different aims, and united into a single work, not unskilfully, but still not so skilfully as to conceal a change of scheme. The two poems are: (1) The visit of Ulysses to the Phaeacians, with the story of his adventures as related by himself. (2) The story of Penelope and the suitors, with the episode of Telemachus's voyage to Pylos. Of these two, the first was written before the writer had any intention of dealing with the second, while the second in the end became more important than the first.

I cordially agree with Kirchhoff that the present exordium belongs to the earlier poem, but I would break it off at line 79, and not at 87. It is a perfect introduction to the Return of Ulysses, but it is no fit opening for the *Odyssey* as it stands. I had better perhaps give it more fully than I have done in my abridgement. It runs: —

Tell me, O Muse, of that ingenious hero who travelled far and wide after he had sacked the strong citadel of Troy. He saw many cities and learned the manners of many nations; moreover, he suffered much by sea while trying to save his own life and bring his men safely home; but do what he might he could not save his men, for they perished through their own sheer folly in eating the cattle of the Sun-God Hyperion; so the god prevented them from ever getting home. Tell me too about all these things, O daughter of Jove, from whatever source you may know them (I. 1–10).

Then follows the statement that Ulysses was with the nymph Calypso, unable to escape, and that his enemy, Neptune, had gone to the Ethiopians (I. 11–21). The gods meet in council and Jove makes a speech about the revenge taken by Orestes on Aegisthus (I. 26–43); Minerva checks him, turns the subject on to Ulysses, and upbraids Jove

with neglecting him (I. 44–62). Jove answers that he had not forgotten him, and continues: —

“Bear in mind that Neptune is still furious with Ulysses for having blinded an eye of Polyphemus, king of the Cyclopes. Polyphemus is son to Neptune by the nymph Thoosa, daughter to the sea-king Phorcys, but instead of killing him outright he torments him by preventing him from getting home. Still, let us lay our heads together and see how we can help him to return. Neptune will then be pacified, for if we are all of a mind he can hardly hold out against us unsupported” (I. 68–79).

Let us now omit the rest of Book I., Books II. III. and IV. and go on with line 28 of Book V., which follows after a very similar council to the one that now stands at the beginning of Book I. Continuing with line 28 of Book V. we read: —

When he had thus spoken he said to his son Mercury: “Mercury, you are our messenger, go therefore and tell Calypso we have decreed that poor Ulysses is to return home. He is to be conveyed neither by gods nor men, but after a perilous voyage of twenty days upon a raft he is to reach fertile Scheria, &c.” (V. 28–34).

From this point the poem continues with only one certain, and another doubtful, reference to the suitors and Penelope, until (according to Kirchoff) line 184 of Book XIII. I had thought that the point of juncture between the two poems was in the middle of line 187, and that the *ἔγχετο* in the second half of the line had perhaps been originally *εὐδεν*; but it must be somewhere close about this line, and I am quite ready to adopt Kirchhoff’s opinion now that I have come to see why Ulysses was made to sleep so profoundly on leaving Scheria.

Till I had got hold of the explanation given on page 115, I naturally thought that the strange sleep of Ulysses had been intended to lead up to something that was to happen in Ithaca, and which had been cancelled when the scheme was enlarged and altered; for without this explanation it is pointless as the poem now stands.

I do not now think that there was ever any account of what happened to Ulysses on his waking up in Ithaca, other than what we now have, but rather that the writer was led to adopt a new scheme at the very point where it became incumbent upon her to complete an old one. For at this point she would first find herself face to face with the difficulty of knowing what to do with Ulysses in Ithaca after she had got him there.

She could not ignore the suitors altogether; their existence and Penelope's profligacy were too notorious. She could not make Ulysses and Penelope meet happily while the suitors were still in his house; and even though he killed them, he could never condone Penelope's conduct — not as an epic hero. The writer of the *Odyssey* had evidently thought that she could find some way out of the difficulty, but when it came to the point she discovered that she must either make Ulysses kill his wife along with the suitors, or contend that from first to last she had been pure as new fallen snow. She chose the second alternative, as she would be sure to do, and brazened it out with her audience as best she could. At line 187, therefore, of Book XIII. or thereabouts, she broke up her "Return" camp and started on a new campaign.

To bring the two poems together she added lines XI. 115–137, in which Teiresias tells Ulysses about the suitors and his further wanderings when he shall have killed them. I suppose Teiresias' prophecy to have originally ended where Circe's does when she repeats his warning about the cattle of the Sun-god verbatim (XII. 137–140) with the line

The first line of the addition to Teiresias' original prophecy (XI. 115) is also found with a slight variant in IX. 535, but it merely states that Ulysses will find trouble in his house, without mentioning what the trouble is to be.

With the two exceptions above noted, there is not only nothing in the original poem (*i.e.*, Book I. 1-79 and v. 28 - XIII. 187 or thereabouts) to indicate any intention of dealing with the suitors, but there are omissions which make it plain that no such intention existed. In the poem the Muse is only asked to sing the Return of Ulysses. In the speech of Jove at the council of the gods (I. 32-43), he is not thinking about the suitors, as he would assuredly do if the writer had as yet meant to introduce them. In repeated speeches of the gods, and especially in Book v. which is Book I. of the original poem (see lines 36-42, 288, 289, and 345), it seems that Ulysses' most serious troubles were to end when he had reached Scheria. So again Calypso (v. 206-208) tries to deter him from leaving her by saying that he little knows what he will have to go through before he gets home again, but she does not enforce her argument by adding that when he had got to Ithaca the worst was yet to come. I have already dealt with the silence of Ulysses' mother in Hades.

Noting, therefore, that omission is a more telling indication of scheme than lines which, when a new subject is being grafted on to an old one, are certain to be inserted where necessary in order to unify the work, I have no hesitation in believing that Books I. 1-79 and v. 28 - XIII. 187 or thereabouts, formed as much as the authoress ever wrote of the original poem; I have the less hesitation in adopting this conclusion because, though I believe that I came to it independently as any

one must do who studies the *Odyssey* with due attention, I find myself in substantial agreement with Kirchhoff in spite of much difference of detail, for I cannot admit that the two poems are by two or more separate people.

The introduction of lines XI. 115–137 and of line IX. 535, with a writing of a new Council of the gods at the beginning of Book v. to take the place of the one that was removed to Book I. 1–79, were the only things that were done to give even a semblance of unity to the old scheme and the new, and to conceal the fact that the Muse after being asked to sing of one subject spends two thirds of her time in singing a very different one, with a climax for which no one had asked her. For, roughly, the Return occupies eight Books and Penelope and the suitors sixteen.

That lines XI. 115–137 were non-existent when Book XIII. was being written is demonstrated by the fact of Ulysses' saying to the Phaeacians that he hoped he should find his wife living with her friends in peace (XIII. 42, 43). He could not have said this if Teiresias had already told him that his house would be full of enemies who were eating up his estate, and whom he would have to kill. He could hardly forget such a prophecy after having found Teiresias quite correct about the cattle of the Sun-god. Indeed he tells Penelope about his visit to Hades and his interview with Teiresias (XXIII. 323), so it is plain he remembered it. It is plain, again (from XIII. 382, &c.), that Ulysses was then learning from Minerva about the suitors for the first time — which could not be if Teiresias' prophecy had been already written.

It is surprising, seeing what a little further modification would have put everything quite straight, that the writer should have been content to leave passages here and there which she must have known would betray the want of homogeneity in her work, but we should be very

thankful to her for not having tidied it up with greater care. We learn far more about her than we should do if she had made her work go more perfectly upon all fours, and it is herself that we value even more than her poem. She evidently preferred cobbling to cancelling, and small wonder, for if, as was very probably the case, the work was traced with a sharply pointed style of hardened bronze, or even steel,⁴⁴ on plates of lead, alteration would not be so easy as it is with us. Besides, we all cobble rather than cancel if we can. It is quite possible, but I need hardly say that it is not more than a mere possibility, that the abruptness of the interpolation in Book iv. lines 621–624, may be due simply to its having been possible to introduce four lines without cutting the MS. about very badly, when a longer passage would have necessitated a more radical interference with it.

We look, then, for the inception of the poem in Books i. 1–79 and v. 28 – xiii. 187 or thereabouts, or more roughly in Books v. – xii. inclusive. These Books, though they contain no discrepancies among themselves, except the twenty lines added to the prophecy of Teiresias above referred to, are not homogeneous in scope, though they are so in style and treatment. They split themselves into two groups of four, *i.e.*, v. – viii. and ix. – xii. The first group is written to bring Ulysses to Scheria and to exhibit the Phaeacians and the writer herself — the interest in Ulysses being subordinate; the second is written to describe a periplus of Sicily.

Book ix. – xii. appear to have been written before Books v. – viii. We may gather this from the total absence of Minerva. It is inconceivable that having introduced the Goddess so freely in Books v. – viii. the writer should allow her to drop out from the story when there was

⁴⁴ Cf. *Od.* ix. 391–393.

such abundant scope for her interference. These Books are certainly by the same hand as the rest of the poem. They show the same amount of Iliadic influence; nowhere does a woman's hand appear more plainly; nowhere is Sicily, and more particularly Trapani, more in evidence, direct or indirect. It is from the beginning of Book IX. that we get our conviction that the Ionian islands were drawn from the Aegæan, and the voyages of Ulysses, as I have already shown, begin effectively with Mt. Eryx and end with Trapani. We may, therefore, dismiss all idea that Books IX. – XII. are by another writer.

Not only is the absence of Minerva inexplicable except by supposing that at the time these Books were written it was no part of the writer's scheme to make her such a *dea ex machinâ* as she becomes later, but the writer shows herself aware that the absence of the goddess in Books IX. – XII. requires apology, and makes Ulysses upbraid her for having neglected him from the time he left Troy till she took him into the city of the Phæacians (XIII. 314–323). The goddess excuses herself by saying she had known all the time that he would get home quite safely, and had kept away because she did not want to quarrel with her uncle Neptune — an excuse which we also find at the end of Book VI., in which Book she has, nevertheless, been beautifying Ulysses and making herself otherwise useful to him. I suppose Neptune did not mind how much his niece helped Ulysses, provided she did not let him see her.

I know how my own books, especially the earlier ones, got cut about, rearranged, altered in scheme, and cobbled to hide alteration, so that I never fairly knew what my scheme was till the book was three-quarters done, and I credit young writers generally with a like tentativeness.

I have now, I believe, shown sufficient cause for thinking that Books

ix.-xii., i.e., the voyage of Ulysses round Sicily, were the part of the *Odyssey* that was written first. I am further confirmed in this opinion by finding Ulysses fasten his box with a knot that Circe had taught him (viii. 448) — as though the writer knew all about Circe, though the audience, of courses, could not yet do so. A knowledge of Book ix., moreover, is shown in Book ii. 19, here we learn how Antiphus had been eaten by Polyphemos; Book ix. is also presupposed in i. 68, which tells of the blinding of the Cyclops by Ulysses.

We may also confidently say that Books v. – viii. were written before i. – iv. and xiii. – xxiv. (roughly), but what the vicissitudes of Books v. – viii. were, and whether or no they drew upon earlier girlish sketches — as without one shred of evidence in support of my opinion I nevertheless incline to think — these are points which it would be a waste of time to even attempt to determine.

It is in Books v. – viii., and especially in the three last of these books, that the writer is most in her element. Few will differ from Col. Mure, who says of Scheria: —

There can be little doubt from the distinctive peculiarities with which the poet has invested its inhabitants, and the precision and force of the sarcasm displayed in his portrait of their character, that the episode is intended as a satire on the habits of some real people with whom he was familiar.

(*Language and Literature of Ancient Greece*, Vol. I., p. 404).

Speaking on the same page of the obviously humorous spirit in which the Phaeacian episode is conceived, Col. Mure says: —

This episode is, perhaps, the most brilliant specimen of the poet's combined talent for the delineation of character and for satirical

humour. While there is no portion of his works a right understanding of which is so indispensable to a full estimate of his genius, there is none, perhaps, which has been so little understood. Appeal may be made to the tenor of the most esteemed commentaries, still more, perhaps, to the text of the most popular translations, where the gay sarcastic tone of description and dialogue which seasons the whole adventure, is replaced by the tragic solemnity of the gravest scenes of the *Iliad*.

People find what they bring. Is it possible that eminent Homeric scholars have found so much seriousness in the more humorous parts of the *Odyssey* because they brought it there? To the serious all things are serious. Coleridge, so I learn from the notes at the end of Mr. Gollancz's *Temple Shakespeare*, saw no burlesque in the speeches of the players which are introduced into *Hamlet*. He says: —

The fancy that a burlesque was intended sinks below criticism; the lines, as epic narrative, are superb.

As Mr. Gollancz has given no reference, so neither can I. Mr. Gollancz continues that if Coleridge had read Act II. Scene 1. of *Dido and Aeneas* — a play left unfinished by Marlowe — he would have changed his mind, but I do not believe he would.

At the same time I take it that the writer was one half laughing and the other half serious, and would sometimes have been hard put to it to know whether she was more in the one vein than in the other. So those who know the cantata *Narcissus* will admit that there are people who are fully aware that there is no music in this world so great as Handel's, but who will still try to write music in the style of Handel, and when they have done it, hardly know whether they have been

more in jest or earnest, though while doing it they fully believed that they were only writing, so far as in them lay, the kind of music which Handel would have written for such words had he lived a hundred years or so later than he did.

We may note, without, however, being able to deduce anything from it as regards the dates at which the various parts of the poem were composed, that in the first four Books of the *Odyssey* the season appears to be summer rather than winter. In all the other Books (of course excluding those in which Ulysses tells his story) the season is unquestionably winter, or very early spring. It is noticeable also that snow, which appears so repeatedly in the *Iliad*, and of which Homer evidently felt the beauty very strongly, does not appear, and is hardly even mentioned, in the *Odyssey*. I should perhaps tell some readers that winter is long and severe in the Troad, while on the West coast of Sicily snow is almost unknown, and the winter is even milder than that of Algiers.

I ought also perhaps hardly to pass over the fact that amber, which is never mentioned in the *Iliad*, appears three times in the *Odyssey*.⁴⁵ This may be mere accident, nevertheless Sicily was an amber-producing country, and indeed still is so; a large collection of Sicilian amber exists in the museum of Castrogiovanni, the ancient Enna, and I have been assured on good authority, but have not verified my informant's statement, that some fine specimens may be seen in the South Kensington Museum. Speaking of Sicilian amber the Encyclopaedia Britannica says: —

The most beautiful specimens are, perhaps, those which are found

⁴⁵ IV. 93, XV. 460, XVIII. 296.

at Catania. They often possess a beautiful play of purple not to be observed in the product of other places.

I cannot make out whether the first four Books were written before the last twelve or after; probably they were written first, but there is something to be said also on the other side. I will not attempt to settle this point, and will only add that when we bear in mind how both the two main divisions of the *Odyssey* — the Phaeacian episode with the Return of Ulysses, and the story of Penelope and the suitors, show unmistakeable signs of having been written at one place, by a woman, by a woman who is evidently still very young, and that not a trace of difference in versification, style, or idiom can be found between the two divisions, the only conclusion we should come to is that the poem was written by one and the same woman from the first page to the last. I think we may also conclude in the absence of all evidence to the contrary — for assuredly none exists that deserves the name of evidence — that we have the poem to all intents and purposes in the shape which it had assumed in the hands of the authoress.

CHAPTER 16

Conclusion.

Before I quit my subject, I should perhaps answer a question which the reader has probably long since asked himself. I mean, how it is conceivable that considerations so obvious as those urged in the foregoing Chapters should have been overlooked by so many capable students for so many hundreds of years, if there were any truth in them. For they lie all of them upon the surface; they are a mere washing in the Jordan and being clean; they require nothing but that a person should read the *Odyssey* as he would any other book, noting the physical characters described in the Scherian and Ithacan scenes, and looking for them on some West coast of the Mediterranean to the West of Greece.

The answer is that the considerations which I have urged have been overlooked because, for very obvious reasons, it never occurred to any one to look for them. "Do you suppose, then," more than one eminent scholar has said to me directly or indirectly, "that no one has ever read the *Odyssey* except yourself?" I suppose nothing of the kind, and know that it was only possible for the truth when once lost (as it soon would be on the establishment of the Phoenicians at Drepanum) to be rediscovered, when people had become convinced that the *Odyssey* was not written by the writer of the *Iliad*. This idea has not yet been generally accepted for more than a hundred years,⁴⁶ if so long, but until

⁴⁶ I see that my grandfather, Dr. Butler, of Shrewsbury, accepts it in his *Antient Geography*, published in 1813, but I do not know where he got it from.

it was seized and held firmly, no one was likely to suspect that the *Odyssey* could have come from Sicily, much less that it could have been written by a woman, for there is not one line in the *Iliad* which even hints at the existence of Sicily, or makes the reader suspect the author to have been a woman, while there are any number of passages which seem absolutely prohibitive of any other opinion than that the writer was a man, and a very strong one.

Stolberg in the last century, and Colonel Mure in this, had the key in the lock when they visited Trapani, each of them with the full conviction that the Cyclops incident, and the hunting the goats, should be placed on Mt. Eryx and the island of Favognana — but they did not turn it. Professor Freeman, Schliemann, and Sir H. Layard, all of them visited Trapani and its immediate neighbourhood either as students or excavators, and failed to see that there was as splendid a prize to be unburied there without pick and shovel, outlay, or trouble of any kind, as those of Nineveh, Mycene, and Hissarlik — and why? Because they were still hampered by the long association of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* as the work of the same person. Knowing that the *Iliad* could hardly have been written elsewhere than in the Northern half of the West coast of Asia Minor, it would never occur to them to look for the *Odyssey* in a spot so remote as Trapani. They probably held it to be the work of some prehistoric Herodotus, who would go on from scene to scene without staying longer than he could help in any one place, instead of feeling sure, as I believe they should have done, that it was the work of one who was little likely to have travelled more than a very few miles from her own home. Moreover, Admiralty charts are things of comparatively recent date, and I do not think any one would have been likely to have run the *Odyssey* to ground without their help.

But however this may be, I do not doubt that the habit of ascribing

the *Odyssey* to Homer has been the main reason of the failure to see the obvious in connection with it. Surely it is time our eminent Iliadic and Odyssean scholars left off misleading themselves and other people by including the *Odyssey* in their “Introductions” to the work of “Homer.” It was permissible to do this till within recent years; anything else, indeed, would have been pedantic, but what would have been pedantic a hundred years ago, is slovenly and unscholarly now.

Turning from her commentators to the authoress herself, I am tempted to wonder whether she would be more pleased or angry could she know that she had been so long mistaken for a man — and that man Homer. It would afford her an excellent opportunity for laughing at the dullness of man. Angry, however, as she would no doubt be, she could hardly at the same time help being flattered, and would perhaps console herself by reflecting that poets as great as she was are bound to pay the penalty of greatness in being misunderstood.

Horace tells us that mediocrity in a poet is forbidden alike by gods, men, and publishers, but, whether forbidden or no, there are a good many mediocre poets who are doing fairly well. So far as I can see, indeed, gods, men, and more particularly publishers, will tolerate nothing in a poet except mediocrity, and if a true poet by some rare accident slips in among the others, it is because gods and publishers’ readers did not find him out until it was too late to stop him. Horace must have known perfectly well that he was talking nonsense.

And after all it is well that things are as they are; for the mediocre poet, though he may hang about for many years, does in the end die, or at any rate become such a mere literary Struldbrug* as to give plain

* From *Gulliver’s Travels* (1726) by Jonathan Swift — a small group of immortals who are legally declared dead at the age of 80 but continue to age and live on miserably in their dotage at state expense.

people no trouble, whereas the true poet will possess himself of us, and live on in us whether we will or no, and unless the numbers of such people were severely kept in check they would clog the wheels of the world. Half a dozen first-class poets in prose or verse are as many as the world can carry in any comfort; twenty Shakespeares, twenty Homers, twenty Nausicaas would make literature impossible, yet we may be sure that every country in every century could yield two or three first-class writers, if genius were to be known at once, and fostered by those who alone know how to foster it. Genius is an offence; like all other offences it must needs come, but woe to that man or woman through whom it comes, for he or she must pass through the Scylla and Charybdis of being either torn in pieces on the one hand, or so misunderstood on the other as to make the slipping through with life in virtue of such misrepresentation more mortifying than death itself.

Do what we may we cannot help it. Dead mind like dead body must, after a decent interval, be buried out of our sight if living mind is to have fair play, and it might perhaps not be a bad thing if our great educational establishments had more of the crematorium and less of the catacomb about them than they have at present. Our notions of intellectual sanitation are deplorably imperfect, and unless the living become more jealous of letting dead mind remain unconsumed in their system, a fit of intellectual gout must ere long supervene, which, if not fatal, will still be excruciatingly painful. Since, therefore, there are such insuperable difficulties in the way of eliminating geniuses when we have once absorbed them, and since also, do what we may, we can no more detect the one genius who may be born among a multitude of good average children, than Herod could detect the King of the Jews among the babes of Bethlehem, we have no course but to do much as

Herod did, and lay violent hands upon all young people till we have reduced every single one of them to such mediocrity as may be trusted to take itself off sooner or later. To this end we have established schools and schoolmen; nor is it easy to see how we could more effectually foster that self-sufficiency which does so much towards helping us through the world, and yet repress any exuberance of originality or independence of thought which may be prejudicial to its possessor during his own life, and burdensome to posterity when he is dead and gone.

Obviously wise, however, and necessary as our present system is, we nevertheless grumble at it. We would have any number of first-class geniuses in art, literature and music, and yet have plenty of elbow room for ourselves. Our children too; they cannot show too many signs of genius, but at the same time we blame them if they do not get on in the world and make money as genius next to never does. Like the authoress of the *Odyssey* we are always wanting to have things both ways; we would have others be forgotten, and yet not be forgotten ourselves; when we have shuffled off this mortal coil, we would fain shuffle on another that shall be at once less coil and less mortal, in the good thoughts of coming generations, but if this desire is so universal as to be called natural, it is one which the best and sanest of us will fight against rather than encourage; such people will do their work as well and cheerfully as they can, and make room for others with as little fuss as possible when they have had their day.

If, however, any man resents the common course of nature and sets himself to looking upon himself and cursing his fate that he was not born to be of the number of them that enter into life eternal even in this world, let him console himself by reflecting that until he is long dead, there is no certain knowing whether he is in life or no, and also

that though he prove to be an immortal after all, he cannot escape the treatment which he is the more sure to meet with according as he is the more immortal — let alone the untold misery which his works will inflict upon young people.

If ever a great classic could have been deterred from writing by a knowledge of how posterity would treat her, the writer of the *Odyssey* should have been so, for never has poem more easy to understand failed more completely of being understood. If she was as lovely as I should like to think her, was ever sleeping beauty hidden behind a more impenetrable hedge of scholasticism? How could it be otherwise? The *Odyssey*, like the *Iliad*, has been a school book for nearly 3000 years, and what more cruel revenge could dullness take on genius? What has the erudition of the last 2500 years done for the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* but to emend the letter in small things and to obscure the spirit in great ones?

There was indeed, as I said in my opening Chapter, a band of scholars a century or two before the birth of Christ who refused to see the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* as the work of the same person, but erudition snubbed them and snuffed them out so effectually that for some 2000 years they were held to have been finally refuted. Can there be any more scathing satire on the value of scholastic criticism? It seems as though Minerva had shed the same darkness over both the poems that she shed over Ulysses, that they might go in and out among eminent Homeric scholars from generation to generation, and none should see them.

The world does indeed know little of its greatest men and women, and bitterly has it been reproached for its want of penetration, but there are always two sides, and it should be remembered that its greatest men and women commonly know very little of the world in

its more conventional aspects. They are continually flying in the face of all that we expect of greatness, and they never tell us what they are; they do not even think that they are great; if they do we may be sure that they are mistaken; how then can we be expected to appreciate people correctly till we have had plenty of time to think them over?

And when we have thought them over, how little have our canons of criticism to do with the verdict which we in the end arrive at. Look at the *Odyssey*. Here is a poem in which the hero and heroine have been already married many years before it opens; from the first page to the last there is no young couple in love with one another, there is in fact nothing amatory in the poem, for though the suitors are supposed to be madly in love with Penelope, they never say or do anything that carries conviction as to their being so. We accept the fact, as we do the sagacity of Ulysses, because we are told it, not because we see it. The interest of the poem ostensibly turns mainly on the revenge taken by a bald middle-aged gentleman, whose little remaining hair is red, on a number of young men who have been eating him out of house and home, while courting his supposed widow.

Moreover, this subject, so initially faulty, is treated with a carelessness in respect of consistency and plausibility, an ignorance of commonly known details, and a disregard of ordinary canons which it would not be easy to surpass, and yet, such is the irony of art that it is not too much to say that there is only one poem which can be decisively placed above it. If the *Odyssey* enforces one artistic truth more than another, it is that living permanent work in literature (and the same holds good for art and music) can only be done by those who are either above, or below, conscious reference to any rules or canons whatsoever — and in spite of Shakespeare, Handel, and Rembrandt, I should say that on the whole it is more blessed to be below than

above. For after all it is not the outward and visible signs of what we read, see, or hear, in any work, that bring us to its feet in prostration of gratitude and affection; what really stirs us is the communion with the still living mind of the man or woman to whom we owe it, and the conviction that that mind is as we would have our own to be. All else is mere clothes and grammar.

As regards the mind of the writer of the *Odyssey* there is nothing in her work which impresses me more profoundly than the undercurrent of melancholy which I feel throughout it. I do not mean that the writer was always, or indeed generally, unhappy; she was often, at any rate let us hope so, supremely happy; nevertheless there is throughout her work a sense as though the world for all its joyousness was nevertheless out of joint — an inarticulate indefinable half pathos, half baffled fury, which even when lost sight of for a time soon re-asserts itself. If the *Odyssey* was not written without laughter, so neither was it without tears. Now that I know the writer to have been a woman, I am ashamed of myself for not having been guided to my conclusion by the exquisitely subtle sense of weakness as well as of strength that pervades the poem, rather than by the considerations that actually guided me.

The only approach to argument which I have seen brought forward to show that the *Odyssey* must have been written by a man, consists in maintaining that no woman could have written the scene in which Ulysses kills the suitors. I cannot see this; to me it seems rather that no man could have brought himself to disregard probability with so little compunction; moreover a woman can kill a man on paper as well as a man can, and with the exception of the delightful episode in which Ulysses spares the lives of Phemius and Medon, the scene, I confess, appears to me to be the most mechanical and least satisfactory in the

whole poem. The real obstacle to a general belief that the *Odyssey* was written by a woman is not anything that can be found in the poem, but lies, as I have already said, in the long prevalence of an opinion that it was written by the same person as the *Iliad* was. The age and respectability of this opinion, even though we have at length discarded it, will not allow us to go beyond ascribing the *Odyssey* to another man — we cannot jump all at once to the view that it was not by a man at all. A certain invincible scholasticism prevents us from being able to see what we should see at once if we would only read the poem slowly and without considering anything that critics have said concerning it.

This, however, is not an easy thing to do. I know very well that I should never have succeeded in doing it if I had not passed some five-and-thirty rebellious years during which I never gave the *Odyssey* so much as a thought. The poem is so august: it is hallowed by the veneration of so many ages; it is like my frontispiece, so mysterious, so imperfect, and yet so divinely beyond all perfection; it has been so long associated with the epic poem which stands supreme — for if the *Odyssey* be the Monte Rosa of literature, the *Iliad* must, I suppose, for ever remain as the Mont Blanc; who can lightly vivisection a work of such ineffable prestige as though it were an overlooked parvenu book picked up for a few pence at a second hand book stall? Lightly, no, but inexorably, yes, if its natural health and beauty are to be restored by doing so.

One of our most accomplished living scholars chided with me in this sense a year or two ago. He said I was ruthless. “I confess,” he said, “I do not give much heed to the details on which you lay so much stress: I read the poem not to theorise about it, but to revel in its amazing beauty.”

It would shock me to think that I have done anything to impair the

sense of that beauty which I trust I share in even measure with himself, but surely if the *Odyssey* has charmed us as a man's work, its charm and wonder are infinitely increased when we see it as a woman's. Still more must it charm us when we find the writer to be an old friend, and see no inconsiderable part of her work as a reflection of her own surroundings.

Have we, then, a right in sober seriousness so to find her? I have shown that in the earliest known ages of Greek literature poetesses abounded, and gained a high reputation. I have shown that by universal consent the domestic and female interest in the *Odyssey* predominates greatly over the male. I have shown that it was all written in one place, and if so — even were there no further reasons for thinking so — presumably by one hand: I have shown that the writer was extremely jealous for the honour of woman, so much so as to be daunted by no impossibilities when trying to get rid of a story that she held to be an insult to her sex. These things being so, is it too much to ask the reader to believe that the poem was not written, as Bentley held, by a man for women, but for both men and women, by one who was herself a woman?

And now as I take leave of the reader, I would say that if when I began this work I was oppressed with a sense of the hopelessness of getting Homeric scholars to take it seriously and consider it, I am even more oppressed and dismayed when I turn over its pages and see how certain they are to displease many whom I would far rather conciliate than offend. What can it matter to me where the *Odyssey* was written, or whether it was written by a man or a woman? From the bottom of my heart I can say truly that I do not care about the way in which these points are decided, but I do care, and very greatly, about knowing which way they are decided by sensible people who have considered

what I have urged in this book. I believe I have settled both points sufficiently, but come what may I know that my case in respect of them is amply strong enough to justify me in having stated it. And so I leave it.