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A Bibliographical Guide to Teaching the Homeric Epics in College Courses

Kostas Myrsiades

West Chester University of Pennsylvania, kmyrsiades@wcupa.edu

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This guide has been prepared especially, although not exclusively, for those who teach the Homeric epics in colleges and universities but are not specialists in classical languages and literatures. It represents a wide spectrum of important scholarly and critical materials. For expediency in reference and utilization, these materials have been divided into three categories—with selected bibliographies of Homeric criticism since 1970 added to the last two categories:

I. \textit{Translations}: Homer composed oral poetry which was recited in Greek. Since most of our efforts to teach his works in this country are in English, it is necessary to know something about the variety and efficacy of Homeric translations. At least fifty translations of \textit{The Odyssey} and as many of \textit{The Iliad} have appeared in English since the Renaissance.

II. \textit{Criticism}: Since the Homeric epics are basic to Western Culture, studies concerning them are legion. It would be impossible, as well as unnecessary for our purposes, to attempt anything like a complete listing of even the first and second level of sources. The intent here is to present only that criticism which focuses on the most pedagogically relevant aspects of the epics—criticism which, moreover, stands above the general run of studies and which is readily available to the non-specialist. Specialized criticism and scholarship for which a knowledge of classical Greek is required and works of too technical and pedantic a nature to interest the non-specialist have been omitted as beyond our purpose.

III. \textit{Background Material}: Homer cannot be fully appreciated without an understanding of the nature of the oral tradition and the nature of the period that formed the context of his art.

I Translations

How does one translate a poem which was composed for oral recitation in Greek 3000 years ago? This is the question that has plagued English translators since 1616 when Chapman first decided to turn Homer into English by expanding the original epics and occasionally glossing them with moralizing comments.
One major difficulty in translating from Homer's archaic Greek is the meter, dactylic hexameter (lines of six feet, each foot of three syllables the first of which is long the following two short \( _{-\text{v}}v \)). Within this line Homer may vary the final foot by omitting a syllable or replacing a dactyl with a spondee \( (---) \); he sometimes substitutes dactyls for spondees in the body of his verse for various rhythmic effects. When in 1911 Cotterrill undertook a translation of The Odyssey in English hexameter, the translator discovered that in order to represent Homer's meter in English he had to invent compound words where they did not exist in the original and to pad his lines with numerous "the's" and "that's" to make them conform to the chosen meter. Other translators (Philip Stanhoe Worsley, William Cowper, William Cullen Bryant, Richmond Lattimore, Robert Fitzgerald) have experimented with meters suited to the English language with equally frustrating results.

A second difficulty lies in the sound and syntax of Homeric Greek which has its own phonetic intensives, triggering the meaning of a line or verse through its sound before denotative meanings of its formal language can even be considered. The word order of Homeric Greek, its pauses and emphases, present an equally challenging problem for the English language translator, for the syntax of English does not fairly represent the characteristic fluidity of Greek, a language in which word order can be manipulated in manifold ways. Finally, the morphology of written Greek and its disposition on the page creates an aesthetic meaning tied to the pictograms and ideograms of the ancient near east, an aesthetic meaning which the Latin alphabet can not approach in complexity and symbolic beauty.

The teacher must weigh the translator's problems before he can settle on a translation for use in his classroom. Working with two languages, the good translator lives in fear of creating a third artificial language which stands halfway between two worlds. He is torn between meaning, on the one hand, and the demands of rhythm, sound, and tone on the other. In the case of verse his dilemma is intensified, for tone is inseparable from meter and one cannot be sacrificed without a concomitant sacrifice in the other. And because tone is really the gestural or interpretive aspect of denotative meaning, the translator finds himself in an Odyssean bind, between a linguistic Scylla and Charybdis.

Then there is the problem of age. Archaic Greek, charming and strangely familiar from the perspective of modern Greek, is merely unwieldy in translation. To update the language is to assume the equivalency of past and present; to translate into archaic English is to identify two vastly different cultures. Indeed, what kind of text does best serve the modern reader?
Today there exists a number of relatively successful translations in paperback of both *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*. One planning to teach the Homeric epics would do well to consult a few sources on translating Homer before committing oneself to any of these works. Perhaps the most informative essay, on translating *The Odyssey* in particular, is Clarke’s “Translation and Translations,” which appears in an appendix to his *The Art of The Odyssey* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1967). Clarke compares Greek with English verse and considers various translations of *The Odyssey*, pointing out the positive and negative points of each. He provides a summary discussion of Homer’s meter and suggests the numerous problems the translator must face in rendering his verse into English. Clarke’s analysis of translations of the Sirens’ song (*Odyssey* XII) is the high point of the essay. Conny Nelson in “Translations of *The Odyssey*: A Selected Bibliography” in *Homer’s Odyssey; A Critical Handbook*, edited by Nelson (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth, 1969) supplies an annotated list of twentieth-century translations of *The Odyssey*, commenting on the merits of each, and lists important translations of previous times. Robert Fitzgerald’s “Postscript to a Translation of *The Odyssey*” which first appeared in the Anchor edition of his translation of *The Odyssey*, only to be withdrawn from later editions, is a valuable guide to this translator’s art, which is considerable. Fitzgerald has translated both epics and remains one of the most popular translators of Homer. His 48-page essay, available in *The Craft and Context of Translation*, ed. William Arrowsmith and Roger Shattuck (New York: Doubleday, 1961), is as much a background on Homer and his work as it is on translation. Dealing largely with his impressions of *The Odyssey* while translating, Fitzgerald stresses that one’s frame of mind in approaching the Homeric world is as important as one’s knowledge of Homeric Greek. Guy Davenport’s review, “Another Odyssey,” of Richmond Lattimore’s translation of *The Odyssey* [*Arion*, 1 (Spring 1968), 135-153] provides illustrations of the great variety of meanings that can be extracted from the same line by different translators. Although not as complete as it could have been, Davenport’s essay offers a comparative study of particular passages and demonstrates the many ways in which translators use language to interpret rather than to reveal the original text.

Armed with these essays, the reader of Homer in translation can better select a paperback to serve his purpose. For college teaching, however, the most accurate verse translation of *The Odyssey* would have to be Lattimore’s (New York: Harper and Row, 1965) or Albert Cook’s (New York: W.W. Norton, 1967). Fitzgerald’s (New York: Doubleday, 1961), though an eloquently rendered work, remains more of an individual creation than a translation.
In spite of the fact that Homer's epics were recited as verse, both epics have been frequently translated into prose, perhaps as frequently as into verse. The best-selling prose translation remains E.V. Rieu's (Baltimore: Penguin, 1946) with its urbane and lucid language. Also popular is T.E. Shaw's (New York: Oxford University Press, 1935), the language of which is less Homer than Shaw. W.H.D. Rouse (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1937; a Mentor Classic), who translated The Odyssey as a novel, leaves an impression of the Anglo-Saxon rather than the Greek world of 3000 years ago. The unfortunate aspect of prose translations in general is their inability to convey clearly to the reader the peculiar qualities of oral poetry.

Two noteworthy verse translations of The Iliad have appeared in paperback—Lattimore's (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), generally accepted as the best in English, and Fitzgerald's new translation (New York: 1974), which follows the same tradition as that exemplified in his Odyssey. The best prose translations of The Iliad are those of E.V. Rieu (Baltimore: Penguin, 1950), in the same clear prose as his Odyssey, and W.H.D. Rouse (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1938; a Mentor Classic, 1960) the colloquial prose of which is intended to be appropriate to "the world's greatest war novel," as the Mentor Classic edition unabashedly claims. The version by Alston Hurd Chase and William G. Perry, Jr. (New York: Little, Brown, and Co., 1950; a Bantam Classic, 1960), according to the translators' preface, attempts to correct previous abuses with a translation which "shall neither lose Homeric rapidity through archaism nor sacrifice Homeric dignity to a slick colloquialism," a claim which results in a straightforward translation which does indeed avoid archaism and colloquialisms but which at the same time lacks any real color.

II. Criticism

Homer's scholarship in the twentieth century has been divided between two camps—the unitarians who believe the Homeric epics were written by one person or who at least see each of the epics as a complete whole written by a single author, and the separatists who view the Homeric epics as mere compilations of pre-existing stories or at best as works of a single mind to which other minds contributed before the works were set down in the form in which they now exist. This scholarship has been unduly preoccupied with the question of authorship, what has been referred to as the Homeric question. That the Homeric question is a significant one is undeniable, dredging up as it does the inconsistencies in language, equipment, religious practices, and social customs between the two epics; the possibility that these epics were based on pre-existent tales, songs, or lays, even, perhaps, on older epics; the diverse dating of materials from different periods which the inter-joining of the layers of the epics betrays; and the
problem of whether the Homeric epics were completed as written or oral compositions.

But lest the college teacher become too easily distracted, let him remem-
ber that both poems are in the same meter (dactylic hexameter); that they
are characteristically oral poetry transmitted by recitation (whether they
were set down in some symbolic form or not); that they were composed at
the dawn of western civilization when abstract thought was barely begin-
ning; and that they relied for their preservation upon the unlettered,
materially preoccupied inhabitants of the Homeric age, a reliance which
made necessary a technique (the Homeric simile) and a philosophical sys-
tem (myth) that concretized the amorphous and made literal the abstract.
These facts are more important to the teacher than the disparities within
and between the Homeric epics.

Of the two, The Odyssey, is often more generally appealing to the mod-
ern reader, and is more often chosen for general literature courses. The
reasons for The Odyssey's greater attraction become apparent once the
two epics are set side by side. The Odyssey comes much closer to our
conception of the novel, a story with a beginning, middle, and end; its
main plot consists of Odysseus' return to Ithaca and his resumption of the
duties of a king. This plot is pervasive. Even those books dealing exclu-
sively with Telemachus act as a preparation for the coming of Odysseus,
for the king's absence serves as the yardstick by which the son is mea-
sured.

The critical center of The Iliad, on the other hand, the wrath of Achilles
and his eventual tragedy, makes up a very small part of that epic. Even
Achilles' role is a small one. He appears in the first book and is not heard of
again until the ninth; he reappears in the sixteenth, remaining until the end
of the twenty-fourth. Thus of twenty-four books, Achilles appears in only
nine. Further, a number of The Iliad's books concern the aristeia of in-
dividual heroes, the period when a single warrior dominates the battle.
Thus the fifth book tells of the exploits of Diomedes, the eleventh of
Agamemnon, the thirteenth of Idomeneus, the sixteenth of Patroclus,
the seventeenth of Automedon, and the twentieth of Achilles. Other
books seem almost completely unrelated to the rest of the epic, such as
Book Two, the catalogue of ships, and Book Ten, the Doloneia.

Providing a more interesting story line for the general reader, The
Odyssey is made up of a variety of actions and constantly shifts from
fantasy to reality. Its twenty-four books easily divide into four relatively
different types of action, the plot held together by the presence, bodily
and spiritual, of the central character, Odysseus. Books I-IV deal with
the coming of age of Telemachus; Books V-VIII shift to Odysseus’ wiles
as he struggles to escape Calypso and to persuade the Phaeacians to send
him home; Books IX-XII relate to myths that make up Odysseus' adventures in a fantasyland peopled by monsters and giants; Books XIII-XXIV deal with the king's struggle to restore himself to his rightful throne and to drive from his kingdom those who would keep it from him. A work which clearly spells out issues, The Odyssey deals with easily comprehended external events: Odysseus against the elements, the gods, giants, or human beings.

The Iliad, on the contrary, is an internal epic featuring a hero whose sulking temperament is difficult to accept. Promised more than any reasonable man could refuse, Achilles indulges himself in brooding while his friends are destroyed in battle. The Iliad is an epic whose readers sympathize with the antagonist, Hector, rather than the protagonist, Achilles; for Hector, understood in the context of his intimate relationships—as a son, a husband, and a father—is a defender of family and country, while Achilles, living alone with himself, is kept company only by his false sense of honor and pride. Less heavily imbuoed with myth than is The Odyssey, The Iliad brings the reader closer to reality, a reality intensified by the facts of a historically conditioned situation—the Trojan war. The realness of the situation, the harshness of war, its tragedy and its monotony, and the complicated relationship between man and his gods—an element absent from The Odyssey—all make The Iliad a poem which cannot be approached facilely.

But in spite of the alienating features of The Iliad, this epic represents a much more complete source for studying Homeric complexities and style. Because of the monotony of the battle scenes, The Iliad abounds in similies where the action of The Odyssey makes the use of similies unnecessary until the more static final books treating Odysseus' return to Ithaca. Homer removes us from the tedium of war in The Iliad by comparing the fighting to every conceivable aspect of his known world; he brings us in this work face to face with the everyday world of the archaic age; but in The Odyssey we are removed from its commonplaces.

The college teacher should not allow himself to be dissuaded, therefore, from treating The Iliad in his literature classes, for while The Odyssey may be superficially more appealing to his students, the former, unfairly condemned by its association with unattractively stuffy neo-classical criticism, offers riches too often left unmined at the general undergraduate level. The problems the reader faces in reading the Homeric epics are not, at any rate, unique to either one. In both cases it is a question of accepting the works as complete in themselves, accepting them either as compilations of diverse materials or as a unique whole, according to which school of thought one adheres. The less seasoned reader, bound to be put off by an archaic language more stilted than our own, by the repetitive

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requirements of oral poetry, by the characteristics of an age thousands of years removed, by books which seem unrelated to the main themes being developed in the work as a whole, by the interference of meddling gods, and by heroes whose standards of conduct are so different from our own, would do well to put his reservations behind him and plunge headlong into the world of either epic without discrimination.

The Iliad: standard criticism

Two guides exist in paperback for The Iliad one of which comments on the epic line by line, and one of which makes comment book by book. Together they provide a significant amount of material for the instructor of a general literature course. The oldest of the two guides, E.T. Owen’s The Story of The Iliad (1946; rpt. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1966), treats narrative technique, imagery, and characterization for each of the twenty-four books in lively, and intelligent commentary. The second, recently published, is Malcolm M. Willcock’s A Companion to The Iliad (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976); based on Richmond Lattimore’s translation of The Iliad. This is the only line commentary on either epic for the general reader. In his A Commentary on Homer’s Iliad Books I-VI (London: Macmillan and Co., 1970), Willcock has extended his reading to greater detail with reference to the original Greek.

Three books of essays are available in paperback. The first, a collection edited by George Steiner and Robert Fagles, Homer: A Collection of Critical Essays (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1962), treats both this work and The Odyssey and is the only available collection of essays dealing with both epics. Unfortunately, many of the selections are no more than notes or poems on Homeric character and themes, included because they represent the work of well-known scholars or famous poets. As a scholarly effort, the book is worthwhile for its inclusion of essays by W.B. Stanford, G.E. Dimock, Jr., and Eric Auerbach on The Odyssey; and by Cedric Whitman, Albert Lord, and Rachel Bespaloff on The Iliad. The second is Charles Rowan Beye’s The Iliad, The Odyssey, and The Epic Tradition (New York: Doubleday, 1966), which in addition to providing excellent background material based on recent archaeological, linguistic, and literary research, also includes a sizeable essay on The Iliad and another on The Odyssey analyzing the major heroes and their function in each work. The final book is an anthology of essays by Rachel Bespaloff, On The Iliad, trans. by Mary McCarthy (1947; rpt. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), which includes essays on Hector, Achilles, Thetis, Helen, and Priam. Bespaloff links the Homeric epics with Biblical prophecy, a task which adds a significantly Kierkegaardian tone to her commentary and which ranks her work as a classic of its type. Mention should be made here also of two separate essays on The Iliad. The first,
a much-anthologized essay, is Simone Weil's "The Iliad or the Poem of Force" in *Essays on Western Classics*, ed. by Quentin Anderson and Joseph A. Mazzeo (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1962). Weil sees *The Iliad* as a tale of power and hate which is saved from an overpowering pessimism by men and women who can still feel normal human impulses. The second is Richmond Lattimore's "Introduction" to his translation of *The Iliad*. In this forty-five page essay, Lattimore provides a concise summary including background material on Homer's age, his style, the epic cycle, the legend of Troy, and character studies of Hector, Achilles, Agamemnon, and Aias.

*The Iliad: selected criticism since 1970*

1. Books


2. Articles


On the Rhesus murder in *Iliad* X.

On Achilles and Priam in *Iliad* XXIV.

Takes the position that *The Iliad* we know is not the one written or dictated by Homer.

Background on the character of Briseis.

On *Iliad* XVIII.

The story of Patroklos as a pattern for other heroes’ deaths.

On *Iliad* VI.

On the character Sarpedon.

Analysis of the character Hector.

On Gorgythion's death in *Iliad* VIII and on Homer's use of similies.

On Achilles' language in *Iliad* IX.

On the composition of *Iliad* IX.

On *Iliad* II.

On the use of the Homeric formula in *Iliad* XXII.

On Zeus' punishment of Hera in *Iliad* XV.
   On the stories told by Patroclus and Antilochus.

   On Homer’s character drawing in Iliad XXIII.

   On the meaning of divine activity in The Iliad.

   On Iliad XVIII.

The Odyssey: standard criticism

More paperback material seems to exist on The Odyssey than on The Iliad, but to date there are no book-by-book or line-by-line guides for this work. Besides the Steiner and Fagles collection, there are three other anthologies on The Odyssey. The first, Albert Cook’s The Odyssey (New York: W.W. Norton, 1974), is in the Norton Critical Series. This work includes a new verse translation by Cook and fifteen critical essays from Goethe to the present. C. H. Taylor’s Essays on the Odyssey; Selected Modern Criticism (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1963) is by far the most representative collection, with essays by Guthrie, Stanford, George Lord, Dimmock, Anderson, Taylor, and Anne Amory.

No longer in print, Homer’s Odyssey; A Critical Handbook, ed. by Conny Nelson (Belmont, California: Wadsworth, 1969) covers a wide spectrum of opinions and contains some of the most perceptive essays written on The Odyssey. To facilitate the reader’s use of the collection, the editor divides the work into five sections (Homer’s characters, Homer’s universe, The Odyssey; epic style and epic form, The Odyssey; theme and structure, The Odyssey; three contemporary interpretations); included are lists of further readings and translations, and a pronunciation guide.

Howard W. Clarke’s The Art of The Odyssey (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1967) remains one of the most complete literary introductions to that work. It touches on the major areas of the epic—the Telemachina, the Adventures, and the Return; its language is clear, and its commentary is among the most insightful in any of the books on Homer. In addition, the author includes several appendices in which he accomplishes much the same purpose as this survey.

Unlike The Iliad, The Odyssey has not been dealt with in a book-by-book guide; the following brief guide recommends the most readable commentary on each specific book or section of this epic:
A BIBLIOGRAPHICAL GUIDE

Book I

For a close analysis of the major themes introduced in Book I for later development in *The Odyssey*, the best source is Clarke’s *The Art of the Odyssey*.

Books I-IV

Most essays on the first book also treat the following three books of *The Odyssey*, the Telemachia, as a unit. Charles Rowan Beye’s work deals with the themes developed in this unit while Clarke’s work and Agatha Thorton’s *People and Themes in Homer’s Odyssey* (London: Methuen and Co., 1970) treat the Telemachia as educative—the preparation of Telemachus to perform as his father’s son. Also of general interest is N. Austin’s “Telemachos polymechanos” [California Studies in Classical Antiquity, 11 (1969), 45-63], which traces the character of Telemachus from a young boy to a mature man.

Book IV

William S. Anderson’s “Calypso and Elysium” in the Taylor anthology is one of the most readable essays on Book IV. He discusses Homer’s presentation of Menelaus and Helen after their return from Troy and stresses the comparisons between this event and Book V. He argues that these two books were purposely juxtaposed to clarify Odysseus’ desire to return to a normal life in Ithaca. Beye’s chapter on *The Odyssey* in his *The Iliad, The Odyssey, and The Epic Tradition* explores the Odyssean character through a discussion of the Proteus episode.

Book V

W. J. Woodhouse in *The Composition of Homer’s Odyssey* (Oxford: University Press, 1930) offers his explanation for Odysseus’ long delay on Kalyposo’s island—to give Telemachus an opportunity to grow to manhood and thus aid Odysseus in the restoration of his kingdom. Though dated, this book provides interesting discussions in a light and amusing style on virtually all the episodes of *The Odyssey*. Beye’s chapter on *The Odyssey* explains Odysseus’ striving after consciousness, a theme he sees as dominant. Consciousness is again dealt with by George E. Dimock in “The Name of Odysseus,” which appears in the Taylor anthology; here the Kalypso adventure is linked to other Odyssean adventures as part of a pattern of nonentity vs. entity.

Book V-VI

Agatha Thorton in her study notes that the Kalypso and the Phaeacian adventures are the only adventures described by Homer himself rather than by Odysseus in flashbacks; she attempts to prove that these are the only original myths in *The Odyssey*. George Lord’s essay “The Odyssey
and the Western World” in the Taylor anthology, reprinted in the Nelson anthology as “The Epic of Moral Regeneration,” examines Odysseus’ loss of identity—as revealed first in his adventures with Kalypso and later in the events of Books IX-XII—as basic to understanding The Odyssey.

**Books VI-VIII**

In “The Phaeacians and the Symbolism of Odysseus’ Return” [Arion, 1 (Winter, 1962), 17-64], Charles Paul Segal sees Phaeacia as a halfway world between the fantasy realm of adventure and the real world of Ithaca; it serves as the ideal halfway point in Odysseus’ return to reality from his ten years of fantastic wanderings. G.P. Rose’s “The Unfriendly Phaeacians” [Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association, 100 (1969), 387-406] interprets these people as unfriendly and suspicious of strangers; they are won over to Odysseus only by his physical and mental strength.

**Books IX-XII**

Segal’s “The Phaeacians and the Symbolism of Odysseus’ Return” extends to the next four books—perhaps the most popular books of The Odyssey—contrasting the private inner world of the soul and the subjective aspect of external experience. Edwin Dolin’s essay “Odysseus in Phaeacia” in the Norton anthology compares the Cyclops episode to that of the Phaeacians through the withholding of the hero’s name in Phaeacia and the revealing of it to the Cyclops. Denys Page in his Folktales in Homer’s Odyssey (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973) devotes his entire work to a discussion of the tales that occupy these four books, stressing Homer’s ability to infuse existing folktales with life and realism and to make them his own; he finds Homer comparable to Shakespeare in his personalization of borrowed materials.

While Page goes on to discuss Homer’s use of flashback in Books IX-XII, W.B. Stanford in “Personal Relationships,” reprinted in the Taylor anthology from Stanford’s book The Ulysses Theme (Oxford: Blackwell, 1963), treats the development in this section of a major theme of The Odyssey—loneliness. Woodhouse, meanwhile, in his Composition of Homer’s Odyssey explores the structure and symmetry of the adventures of these books, finding that all the adventures can be grouped into three main categories of three adventures each, a tactic followed by Clarke, who calls his categories “irresponsibility,” “sex,” and “violence.” Three other articles worthy of mention deal solely with Odysseus and Polyphemus in Book IX. These are C.J. Brown’s “Odysseus and Polyphemus” [Comparative Literature, 18 (1966), 193-202], A.J. Podlecki’s “Guest-gifts and Nobokes” [Phoenix, 15, (1961), 125-133], and E.M. Bradley’s “The Hybris of Odysseus” [Soundings, 51 (1968), 33-44].
Book XI

Two noteworthy discussions exist for this book. Clarke in his *The Art of The Odyssey* divides it into six sections which show how Homer ties Odysseus' past to his future. Denys Page in his *The Homeric Odyssey* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955), to the contrary, takes the separatist position, viewing the Nekyia as an independent work linked to *The Odyssey* only at a later date.

Books XIII-XIX

C.R. Trahman's "Odysseus' Lies" [*Phoenix*, 6 (Summer, 1952), 31-43] explicates these seven books through the four lies Odysseus tells (to Athena, Emmaeus, the Suitors, Penelope); he takes a unitarian view of the epic.

Books XIX-XX

In another fine *explication de texte*, the late Anne Amory in "The Reunion of Odysseus and Penelope," anthologized in the Taylor collection, argues convincingly that Penelope recognizes her husband from the very first and that they plot the suitors' ruin together. In another essay, "The Gates of Horn and Ivory" [*Yale Classical Studies*, 20 (1966), 3-57], Amory analyzes the imagery of Book XIX. A.W. Harsh in "Penelope and Odysseus" [*American Journal of Philology*, 71 (1950)] attempts to explain Penelope's motivation in setting up the bow contest of this much-discussed book.

Books XXI-XXIV

The recurring imagery of these books is explored by Clarke in his *The Art of The Odyssey*. Particular attention is paid to the olive tree from which Odysseus' marriage bed was built, the recurring animal imagery used to describe the suitors and Odysseus, and the imagery of light (Odysseus, Athena, Telemachus) and darkness (the suitors). Once more the dissentor, D.L. Page in *The Homeric Odyssey* claims the original *Odyssey* ends in Book XXIII, 296, and that the continuation through Book XXIV represents a later addition of four episodes (Odysseus telling his adventures to Penelope; the suitors in Hades, Odysseus and Laertes, Odysseus against the suitors' kinsman). Balancing Page, S. Bertman in "Structural symmetry at the end of The Odyssey" [*Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies*, 9 (1968), 115-123] argues that the end of Book XXIII and all of XXIV constitute an important part of *The Odyssey*.

The Odyssey: selected criticism since 1970

1. Books


2. Articles


On the theme of impersonation in The Odyssey.


The Odyssey as a folktale.


The concept of the first punishment of wrongdoing.


On Odyssey V.


Analysis of Telemachus’ response in Odyssey I.


Significance of the animals mentioned in The Odyssey.


On Odyssey IX.


On Odyssey IX.


On Odyssey IX.


On the myth of the Sirens in Odyssey XII.
On *Odyssey* VI.

A discussion of arrival and departure scenes in *The Odyssey*.

On *Odyssey* XXIII-XXIV.

Similies as a unifying technique in a diffuse poem.

A structural analysis of the theme of death and rebirth of the hero in *Odyssey* III and IV.

On Menelaus in *Odyssey* IV.

A comparative study between Homer’s epic and Archilochus’ lyrics.

On *Odyssey* IX.

On Telemachus’ visit to Sparta in *Odyssey* IV.

On *Odyssey* I.

On Telemachus’ speech in *Odyssey* II.

On Odysseus’ false name in *Odyssey* IX.

On Homer’s apocalyptic vision in *The Odyssey*. 
Analysis of Odyssey IX.

On Odyssey VI.

Williams, H. “Viewing the stubble. A note on The Odyssey.” Classical Journal, 68 (1972), 75-78.
On Odyssey XIV.

III. General Background Material

Although a number of sources exist to which the reader can turn for background information, only a few have exercised a wide influence. One of the most reliable and useful of those that do is A Companion to Homer, ed. by Alan J.B. Wace and Frank H. Stubbings (London: Macmillan and Co., 1962), a teacher's most important single source for background material on Homer and his epics. The work includes chapters on all aspects of Homeric scholarship—fluence, authorship, language, meter, geography, history, religion, food, dress, arms, etc.—although its essays tend to be dryly scholarly and sometimes overly erudite. M.I. Finley has produced in his The World of Odysseus (1954; rpt. New York: Viking Press, 1965) a background study of early Greek society which examines such topics as the class structure of Homer's world, the sources of its wealth, morals, and values, and the relation of household to community. While Finley's work lays the groundwork for understanding Homer's physical universe, George Thomson's Studies in Ancient Greek Society (1949; rpt. New York: Citadel Press, 1965) interprets that universe from the Marxist point of view, concluding in Part V that Homer's epics emerged spontaneously from the daily lives, chants, and songs of the laboring class.


Finally, of the books on the oral tradition—which together with works on the world and early thought define the scholarly context of the Homeric epics—that have exerted an influence on Homeric criticism, one would have to select G.S. Kirk's Homer and the Epic (Cambridge: at the University Press, 1965), a shortened version of Kirk's The Songs of Homer; Albert B. Lord's The Singer of Tales (New York: Atheneum, 1965); and
Rhys Carpenter’s *Folk Tale, Fiction and Saga in the Homeric Epics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962). Kirk’s work provides background material on the oral epic, examining Homer’s language and his epic formulas and containing a sizeable essay on each epic. The bulk of the material in Lord’s work deals with Homer’s oral formulas, which Lord compares to modern Yugoslavian oral epics to establish a related oral tradition. The work is most helpful in understanding the nature of oral style and language and its application to *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*. Carpenter’s work includes a chapter of particular interest in which the author argues that both *The Odyssey* and the old English epic Beowulf are based in part on the folk tale of the Bearson.

Two works which serve the double function of providing background material and literary criticism on the Homeric epics are Cedric H. Whitman’s *Homer and the Heroic Tradition* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958) and T.B.L. Webster’s *From Mycenae to Homer* (1958; rpt. New York: W.W. Norton, 1964). Whitman’s book attempts to integrate archaeology, linguistics, history, anthropology, oral literature, and literary criticism as they relate to Homer and offers an analysis of *The Iliad* through its imagery. The most important aspect of this work, however, remains its thought-provoking chapters on geometric art and its application to the epics. Webster’s book tries to use our new knowledge of Michael Ventris’ decipherment of Linear B in 1952 to describe Greek art and poetry in the periods preceding and including that of Homer.

*Selected criticism since 1970*

1. Books


2. Articles

Austin, N. “The one and the many in the Homeric cosmos.” *Arion*, 1 (1973), 219-274.

An examination of complexes of words for time and space.


Oral poetry as the transmitter of older civilizations.

Combellack, Frederick M. “Homer the innovator.” *Classical Philology*, 71 (January 1976), 44-55.


The formulae related introductions to speeches in Homer's epics.


On the Homeric metric formula.


On the four types of peace in the Homeric epic.


The problems raised in treating Homer as an oral poet.


A discussion of the scenes that best reveal Homer's art.


A discussion of Homeric prayers.


A survey of beliefs in the Homeric world.


Homeric society as one which condemns excess and deficiency.
Homer understood through close textural analysis.

On the adjective and the apostrophe in the Homeric epics.


On Homeric formulas retained without modification from earlier traditions.


Homer’s imagination revealed through his use of similies and epithets.

On translations of *The Odyssey*. 
PENELOPE'S DESPAIR
YANNIS RITSOS

Not that she didn’t recognize him in the fireside light;
nor was it
the beggar’s rags, the disguise; no: transparent signs—
the scarred knee, the stalwartness, the artfulness in the eye.

Startled,
leaning her back against the wall, she sought some justification,
a short reprieve from conceding
and being betrayed. Were twenty years wasted then, for him?
Twenty years of dreams and anticipation, for this wretch,
this blood-soaked ashen-whiskers? She sank mute onto a chair,
slowly she gazed at the slaughtered suitors on the floor,
as if seeing
her own muffled aspirations. And she uttered, “Welcome,”
heeding her own strange and distant voice. In the corner
her loom
veiled the ceiling in trelliswork shadows; and those birds
woven
against green foliage in striking red yarn, suddenly
on this homecoming night, turned black and gray,
hovering in the unbroken sky of her final perseverance.

Translated from the modern Greek
by Kostas Myrsiades
THE RESPONSE OF TELEMACHUS
(With apologies to Tennyson)
SANFORD PINSKER

Complexity was never your strong suit.
A crafty warrior. A cunning sailor.
But no match for the role of father.
Now you are back; mother crying upstairs
And a duffle bag for yet another voyage
Haunting the outer hall like an oracle.
When the wireless brought news from Troy
We threw festive crepe over the balconies
Until all Ithaca rained with welcome.
Agamemnon had a victory parade
And life around Greece went on
With tragic predictability.
But Ulysses remained a name.
While you roamed the sea I ruled the land
And between father and son who can say
Which of us did the harder work?
Now Ithaca is a place of law and order:
Lotus leaves have been banned
And the Sirens driven from our shores.
No doubt being a Hero is easier.
Still, think of me when the waves batter
You into some unfriendly town.
I will always wire you funds.*

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