

# The End of the *Odyssey*

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THE REPORT of the scholiasts at *Odyssey* 23.296 has made for lively comment since at least the twelfth century. For it is here, we are told, that the best Alexandrian critics of Homer, Aristophanes and Aristarchus, considered the *Odyssey* to end. The two versions of the report are as follows: *τοῦτο τέλος τῆς Ὀδυσσεΐας φησὶν Ἀρίσταρχος καὶ Ἀριστοφάνης . . . Ἀριστοφάνης δὲ καὶ Ἀρίσταρχος πέρασ τῆς Ὀδυσσεΐας τοῦτο ποιοῦνται.*<sup>1</sup> Eustathius reproduces the information thus, with apparent prejudice in his concluding phrase: *Ἰστέον δὲ ὅτι κατὰ τὴν τῶν παλαιῶν ἱστορίαν Ἀρίσταρχος καὶ Ἀριστοφάνης, οἱ κορυφαῖοι τῶν τότε γραμματικῶν, εἰς τό, ὡς ἐρρέθη, ἀσπᾶσιοι λέκτροιο παλαιοῦ θεσμὸν ἴκοντο, περατοῦσι τὴν Ὀδύσειαν, τὰ ἐφεξῆς ἕως τέλους τοῦ βιβλίου νοθεύοντες.*<sup>2</sup> He immediately suggests an interpretation, to explain the Alexandrians and save the end of the *Odyssey*: *εἴποι ἂν οὖν τις, ὅτι Ἀρίσταρχος καὶ Ἀριστοφάνης οἱ ῥηθέντες οὐ τὸ βιβλίον τῆς Ὀδυσσεΐας, ἀλλὰ ἴσως τὰ καίρια ταύτης ἐνταῦθα συντετελέσθαι φαίν.*<sup>3</sup>

What did the ancient critics mean by *τέλος* and *πέρασ*? Whatever they meant, their reputation in antiquity<sup>4</sup> and our scattered information about their critical methods forbid us to take the judgement lightly.<sup>5</sup> Modern scholars, most recently Merkelbach, Page and Kirk, have assembled an impressive case to support that judgement; supposed peculiarities of diction and narrative structure have been held by many to substantiate the theory that originally the *Odyssey* cannot have ended as we have it.<sup>6</sup> The Unitarians have hardly been slow to

<sup>1</sup> Schol. H M Q: *τοῦτο τέλος φησὶν*; schol. M V Vind. 133: *τοῦτο πέρασ ποιοῦνται*. Cf. V. Ludwig, *Aristarchs Homer Textkritik II* (Leipzig 1885) 630.

<sup>2</sup> Eustathius, *Comm.* 1948.49.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.* 1949.1ff.

<sup>4</sup> Aristarchus earned three nicknames: *Ὀμηρικός*, *γραμματικώτατος*, and *μάντις*.

<sup>5</sup> G. M. A. Grube provides a brief summary of our knowledge in *The Greek and Roman Critics* (London 1965) 128–32. For a more extensive treatment, see R. Pfeiffer, *History of Classical Scholarship* (Oxford 1968) 105–233; he discusses the end of the *Odyssey* at 175–77, rejecting Page's view (177 n.4).

<sup>6</sup> See R. Merkelbach, *Untersuchungen zur Odyssee* (Munich 1951) 142–55 (hereafter: MERKELBACH); D. L. Page, *The Homeric Odyssey* (Oxford 1955) 101–36 (hereafter: PAGE); G. S. Kirk, *The Songs of Homer* (Cambridge 1962) 204–08, 244–52 (hereafter: KIRK).

attempt rebuttals. As long ago as 1913, Shewan, prompted by Monro's rejection of the final scenes, attempted a lengthy defense, and he has not lacked successors.<sup>7</sup>

This essay will endeavor to reexamine the main problems in terms of both evidence and method, since it appears that under both headings some clarification is needed of the types of criticism and conclusions that are legitimate. It will be convenient to arrange the following discussion in three parts: problems raised by the scholium itself, linguistic questions concerning the diction, and literary analysis of the narrative structure.

## I. The Scholium

Of *πέρας* there can be little doubt: it nearly always means physical limit or end, or final point in a figurative sense. The word *τέλος*, however, is used occasionally to denote consummation or result or purpose (Ziel), and modern commentators sympathetic to Eustathius have eagerly seized on such cases.<sup>8</sup> The most recent discussion, that of H. Erbse, focuses on *τέλος*, and instances Aristotle's usage in his discussion of the *μῦθος* in epic (*Poet.* 1459a17ff). Erbse believes that,

<sup>7</sup> See A. Shewan, "The 'Continuation' of the *Odyssey*," *CP* 8 (1913) 284–300, *CP* 9 (1914) 35–48, 160–73. More exclusively literary arguments were presented by J. Scott, "The Close of the *Odyssey*," *CJ* 12 (1917) 397–405, and S. Bassett, "The Second Necyia," *CJ* 13 (1918) 521–26, and "The Second Necyia Again," *AJP* 44 (1923) 44–52. J. B. Bury defended the lines, and tried to explain anomalies by the theory that Homer died before he was able to finish the poem; his intentions for the conclusion, however, were clear, and were in the main carried out by a rhapsode, acting as his "literary executor"; cf. "The End of the *Odyssey*," *JHS* 42 (1922) 1–15 (hereafter: BURY). More recently, W. B. Stanford adopts a Unitarian position, both in his commentary, *II* (London 1965) 404–31, and in "The Ending of the *Odyssey*: an Ethical Approach," *Hermathena* 100 (1965) 5–20. So, too, H. Erbse, who considers many of Page's objections in a detailed analysis; see *Beiträge zum Verständnis der Odyssee* (Berlin 1972) 166–244 (hereafter: ERBSE). Cf. also D. Wender, "The End of the *Odyssey*" (diss. Harvard, 1965; summary in *HSCP* 70 [1965] 274–76); S. Bertman, "Structural Symmetry at the End of the *Odyssey*," *GRBS* 9 (1968) 115–23; W. F. Hansen, *The Conference Sequence in the Odyssey* (Berkeley 1972) 56–57. Unfortunately, the dissertation of K. Fiedler, "Der Schluss der *Odyssee*" (Marburg 1957) has not been available to me.

<sup>8</sup> E.g. *Il.* 3.291; Plato, *Gorg.* 499B8, *Protag.* 354D2; *Isoc.* 4.5, 6.50; cf. E. Bethe, "Odyssee-Probleme," *Hermes* 63 (1928) 83; Shewan (*supra* n.7), *CP* 9 (1914) 161; J. Armstrong, "The Marriage Song—*Odyssey* 23," *TAPA* 89 (1958) 38; Erbse 166–77; Stanford, "Ending" (*supra* n.7) 5 (citations of Aristotelian usage in n.2). The discussion of M. H. van der Valk, in *Textual Criticism of the Odyssey* (Leiden 1949) 238–40, is balanced but unilluminating. Van der Valk argues against the rejection being Aristarchan in *Researches on the Text and Scholia of the Iliad II* (Leiden 1964) 261–62.

though Aristotle regarded the sections of the *Odyssey* after the death of the suitors as ἐπεισόδια (see 1455b16ff), he surely recognized their authenticity (since he appears to refer to *Od.* 23.310–41 at *Rhet.* III, 1417a12).<sup>9</sup> Thus Erbse supposes that the Alexandrian critics used the word in an Aristotelian sense ('consummation' rather than 'end'), and signified by their comment that the lines after 23.296 constituted episodes. Erbse further suggests that πέρασ was a grammarian's subsequent paraphrase of τέλος, which he found in his copy; he misinterpreted τέλος, and so distorted the Alexandrians' original meaning.<sup>10</sup> But it remains open to question whether Aristophanes (ca. 257–180 B.C.) and Aristarchus (ca. 217–145) judged matters by Aristotelian standards, formulated at least a century before them; and Erbse's theory involves postulating a mindless grammarian who could not distinguish between the two words. The unhappy fact, which should be admitted, is that we have no basis for deducing on what grounds the Alexandrians made their judgement;<sup>11</sup> we cannot even say if they were related to the narrative's literary merit or were based on anomalies of diction or meter.

Some further problems are entailed, however. At *Republic* 387A, Plato quotes four lines from the opening of *Odyssey* 24 (6–9). This citation, together with Aristotle's reference in the *Rhetoric* to 23.310–41, should not be basis for argument that the lines were originally Homeric, or belonged to the period of the *Odyssey*'s monumental composition; they could easily have been sung, or written, much later, e.g. in the period 700–550. An equally trifling objection to the scholium is that, if the Alexandrians' verdict be accepted, the last sentence of the poem would start with an uncorrelated οἱ μὲν ἔπειτα (23.295). A continuator, however, could easily have changed the last line to lead into his continuation. The bounds set by sense and meter could readily be surmounted in such a change; long ago, Kirchhoff suggested that the last line might originally have been οἱ δ' ἄρ' ἔπειτα.<sup>12</sup>

A more serious problem arises when we examine the scanty comments of the scholiast on the rest of the poem. It is odd that the

<sup>9</sup> Erbse 174–75.

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.* 176–77.

<sup>11</sup> Except for the scholiasts' summary on the athetesis of 24.1–204; see Stanford, *Commentary* (*supra* n.7) 409–10.

<sup>12</sup> A. Kirchhoff, *Die Homerische Odyssee und ihre Entstehung* (Berlin 1859) 124; cf. Stanford, *Commentary* 404.

scholia report Aristarchus to have athetized *Odyssey* 23.310–43 (Odysseus' long narrative of his adventures, reported in indirect discourse) and 24.1–204 (the second *nekuia*), if Aristarchus thought the text was spurious beginning at 23.297.<sup>13</sup> Page goes to some lengths to argue for an unparalleled athetesis within an athetesis.<sup>14</sup> A simpler solution is available: the inconsistency could have crept into the scholia at many places in the tradition, and is not at all improbable, given the likelihood that Aristarchus made two editions, the second of which was more independent of Aristophanes than the first.<sup>15</sup> It is possible that Aristarchus could have held differing opinions on the final lines of the *Odyssey* at different times; thus, for example, he may have athetized the two passages in question in his first *διόρθωσις*, and later decided that all 623 lines from 23.297 onward were spurious, recording his opinion in a subsequent edition. Or he may have started with a full-scale athetesis, and later restricted it to certain passages. In either case, it is easy to see how both opinions could have been "Aristarchan" for later commentators.

There remains the curious theory supported by E. Meyer, with which Wilamowitz concurred and which has lately been resurrected by Merkelbach. Meyer thought that the last line of Apollonius' *Argonautica* (4.1781)

*ἀσπασίως ἀκτὰς Παγασηίδας εἰσαπέβητε*

was an echo of *Odyssey* 23.296

*ἀσπασίοι λέκτροιο παλαιοῦ θεσμὸν ἴκοντο,*

and that Apollonius had closed his epic with an elegant reference to his great model. He must, therefore, have considered the *Odyssey* to end at the same point as the grammarians.<sup>16</sup> From a story preserved in Stobaeus, in which Demetrius of Phaleron is supposed to have admired 23.296 for its *sophrosyne*, Meyer concluded that Demetrius also thought of that verse as the final line.<sup>17</sup> E. Bethe soundly refuted the

<sup>13</sup> See Stanford, "Ending" (*supra* n.7) 17.

<sup>14</sup> Page 131 n.10.

<sup>15</sup> See schol. *Il.* 10.397 and Ludwig, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.1) I 16ff; compare the interpretation of Pfeiffer, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.5) 214–17.

<sup>16</sup> E. Meyer, "Apollonios von Rhodos und der Schluss der *Odyssee*," *Hermes* 29 (1894) 478–79; so too, recently, Merkelbach 144 n.1.

<sup>17</sup> Stob. *Flor.* 5.59; cf. Meyer, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.16) 479.

logic of this last conclusion in an article of 1918, and sensibly discounted the parallel with the *Argonautica* on the basis of ἀσπάσιος. He pointed out that if one were to detect echoes, *Odyssey* 23.238 might be more suitable:

ἀσπάσιοι δ' ἐπέβαν γαίης, κακότητα φυγόντες.<sup>18</sup>

Meyer's arguments thus provide no secure basis for a consensus on the question in Hellenistic times.

The strongest argument for those who would discount the Alexandrians' judgement undoubtedly rests on the influence of Aristotelian literary criticism. But, as we have seen, the theory that the grammarians meant τέλος in the sense of 'chief goal' must remain doubtful, without firm evidence that they habitually used Aristotle as a guide in literary questions;<sup>19</sup> similarly, lexicography will leave us with a *non liquet*. With such inconclusive arguments, there is not much point in supposing, for this discussion, that Aristophanes and Aristarchus meant anything other than what they seem to say: at 23.296, the *Odyssey* ends. It has been left to more modern critics to supply arguments for and against the poem's final lines, and to them we now turn.<sup>20</sup>

## II. The Language

Page compiled a list of roughly fifty anomalies in diction in these disputed lines, and his comments can be supplemented by turning to Berard's edition and the works of Stanford and Kirk.<sup>21</sup> I only summarize here the principal categories of irregularity:

<sup>18</sup> E. Bethe, "Der Schluss der *Odyssee* und Apollonios von Rhodos," *Hermes* 53 (1918) 444–446, with references to Wilamowitz.

<sup>19</sup> On Aristarchus, see Pfeiffer, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.5) 231–32.

<sup>20</sup> Stanford ("Ending" 16) has proposed a theory to explain the Alexandrians' judgement which relies on the prevalently erotic and romantic character of Alexandria in the second century B.C. He cites the increasing importance of women, due to the influence of the strong-willed queens Berenice and Arsinoe, and also refers to the hedonists in philosophy, the connubial harmony of Isis and Osiris in religious cult, and the tendency in literature (e.g. Theocritus) toward domestic themes and personal sentiment. Thus, the normally cautious Alexandrian critics may have been seduced into judging the *Odyssey* to end with Odysseus and Penelope in bed at 23.296. Stanford, however, sees here an emphasis on the sexual aspect of marriage which is quite uncharacteristic of the rest of the poem. Stanford's suggestion is not susceptible to proof; one may argue that the poet, supposing that his end were to be 23.296, withheld the sexual emphasis until just this point, to give the climax stronger effect.

<sup>21</sup> See Page 102–11; V. Berard, ed. *L'Odyssee* III (Paris 1963) 163–92; Stanford, *Commentary* 404 and *passim*; Kirk 204–08, 244–52.

- (a) FORMS: ἦην at 23.316, the contraction Ἐρμῆς at 24.1, the subjunctive ζώνονται at 24.89, μαχεούμενοι at 24.113, φιλίων as comparative at 24.268, the unparalleled infinitive διδώσειν at 24.314, irreducible crasis in προὔπεμψ' at 24.360, Ὀδυσσεύς at 24.398, περαιωθέντες at 24.437, the contraction Εὐπείθει at 24.465
- (b) USAGE: ἀδινάων at 23.326, ψολόεντι κεραυνῶ at 23.330 and 24.539, ἐπόρουσε at 23.343, ἠριγένειαν as noun at 23.347, αὐτοῦ at 24.241, ξεινήϊα as adjective at 24.273, ἐπιάλμενος at 24.320, μογέοντες at 24.388, οἶ at 24.497, πολιοί at 24.499, the exclamation θεοὶ φίλοι at 24.514
- (c) PROSODY: the scansion of ἐπιτέλλω at 23.361, unusual lengthening in ἐπέεσσιν at 24.240, synecphronesis in 24.247, rare synizesis in τεύχεα at 24.534
- (d) SYNTAX: the optative at 24.237, the idioms at 24.244 and 245
- (e) *Harax legomena* at 23.296, 321; 24.208, 229–30, 252, 261, 279, 288, 307, 394, 485, 528.

In addition, Page notes the mention of the nine Muses at 24.60, which he calls “alien to the Homeric tradition”; they are first so numbered in Hesiod, *Theogony* 50ff.<sup>22</sup>

Webster, in his figures for the distribution of ‘post-migration forms’ in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, appears to supplement the case against *Odyssey* 24. He includes forms marked by irresolvable vowel contractions, synizesis, singular -φι, and overrun *digamma*, and finds that the general average for the *Odyssey* is 13 per hundred lines (for the *Iliad*, it is 11 per 100 lines, while for Hesiod, *Erga*, 30 per 100). Individual books in both Homeric poems show about the same tolerance on either side of the average (the lowest figure for the *Iliad* is 7.9 per 100 lines for *Il.* 14, the highest 14.1 for *Il.* 24; *Od.* 18 and *Od.* 1 have 9.8 and 9.9, while *Od.* 21 and *Od.* 24 have 16.5 and 17.2). The last book of the *Odyssey* is at once the ‘latest’ on Webster’s criteria, and exhibits the furthest departure from the average.<sup>23</sup> Shipp has now provided an even longer catalogue than Page of linguistic anomalies.<sup>24</sup>

Against this impressive linguistic case, one must weigh the following considerations. First, it is necessary to emphasize that ‘late language’, by itself, is not sufficient to prove a given passage ungeniue. The term ‘late’ is altogether too imprecise. Webster’s observations,

<sup>22</sup> Page 103.

<sup>23</sup> T. B. L. Webster, “Early and Late in Homeric Diction,” *Eranos* 54 (1956) 34–48. See my comments below for the relevance of his criteria.

<sup>24</sup> G. P. Shipp, *Studies in the Language of Homer*<sup>3</sup> (Cambridge 1972) 358–64.

for example, while valuable for the investigation of *relatively* late strata of diction, must be interpreted using the time scale of Mycenaean—pre-migration—post-migration (the last approximately post-900 B.C.). This span is obviously *early* with respect to the later stages of the oral tradition, which most assume to have culminated in Homer, or in the ‘monumental composition’ of the epics. If the epics underwent such monumental composition only at a relatively late stage of the tradition (eighth century), Webster’s figures cannot bear directly on our problem. A phenomenon such as neglect of *digamma*, for example, is likely to have occurred before oral composition came to an end, though perhaps so shortly before that point that few newly created expressions became formulaically fixed.<sup>25</sup> Hoekstra has also assigned quantitative metathesis to this point in the time scale, though it is “probably among the most recent linguistic features of Homeric language.”<sup>26</sup> If the formulaic diction in the later stages of the tradition simultaneously underwent a process of decomposition and also incorporated new, modern elements, it will not be sufficient, as Kirk has pointed out, to focus on a passage’s ‘untraditional’ or unparalleled elements in order to prove it spurious.<sup>27</sup> As Hoekstra has warned: “There is not the slightest indication . . . that (increasing Ionicisation and modernisation) set in only after the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* had reached their final form.”<sup>28</sup> Kirk has urged that our criterion for identifying interpolation should be the ‘anti-traditional’, rather than the untraditional, in the poems’ diction; if we can determine that fixed elements of the tradition have been misunderstood, or if we can show the presence of organic Atticisms, we can legitimately conclude that a passage is the product of significantly late interpolation.<sup>29</sup>

From this it follows that many anomalies noticed by Page and others may be no more than reflections of the changes in the oral tradition in its later stages. In particular, *hapax legomena*, which have

<sup>25</sup> See A. Hoekstra, *Homeric Modifications of Formulaic Prototypes* (Amsterdam/London 1964) 70.

<sup>26</sup> *ibid.* 31–41, 70.

<sup>27</sup> See Kirk 201–03 in connection with similes, and also “Objective Dating Criteria in Homer,” *MusHelv* 17 (1960) 189–205.

<sup>28</sup> Hoekstra, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.25) 28.

<sup>29</sup> See Kirk, “Objective Dating Criteria in Homer” (*supra* n.27) and, for discussion and examples of organic Atticisms, *Songs of Homer* 193.

frequently been used, together with 'late' or untraditional language, to impugn the genuineness of similes,<sup>30</sup> prove little, since in similes and in certain types of narrative the requirements of context should lead us to expect such oddities. About one-third of the irregularities in the *Odyssey* listed at the beginning of this section fall squarely into this category. Erbse has recently examined in detail Page's major linguistic objections and can find no parallel or analogue in epic diction for only four of them: *ἀδινάων* at 23.326 (which appears anti-traditional), *πόστον* at 24.288 (*hapax*), the contracted genitive *Ὀδυσεῦς* at 24.398, and the contracted dative in the unstressed half of a dactyl *Εὐπείθει* at 24.465.<sup>31</sup> The more skeptical critic will still be disturbed by the optative at 24.237, the idiom with *ἔχω* at 24.245 (not before the fifth century), and the usage of *ἐπόρουσε* at 23.343, which appears anti-traditional (though compare the odd usage at *Il.* 5.793). Even allowing for several other oddities (*μογέοντες* meaning 'fatigued' instead of 'working hard' at 24.388, and the striking use of *ἐπιάλμενος* at 24.320, which may, however, not be anti-traditional so much as the purposeful suggestion of a martial context at an intensely emotional moment), the list of irregular expressions hardly amounts to overwhelming evidence in favor of condemning 623 lines.

With regard to both our problem and the more general question of criteria for the relative dating of passages in Homer, it may be of some interest to conclude this section by referring to a recent investigation of K. A. Garbrah, whose results tend to a salutary skepticism.<sup>32</sup> Garbrah selected for analysis three groups of passages from the *Odyssey*, of unequal length, which by a consensus of scholars represent three different strata of composition: 'old', 'intermediate' and 'late' language. The passages were: 5.44–6.331, 9.1–11.225, 11.385–565, and 12 to represent the old portions; 3.1–4.619 to represent intermediate composition; 11.226–384, 566–640, and 23.297–24.548 to represent the late sections. Garbrah then applied four linguistic tests to the passages: the frequency of irresolvable contraction, the proportion of neglected to

<sup>30</sup> *Contra* Shipp, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.24) 221, 215, see P. Chantraine in *RevPhil* 29 (1955) 73; Kirk 200–08; and my article "Similes in the *Iliad*," *Hermes* (forthcoming). Regarding the *Odyssey*, the *hapax legomena* were already discounted by Shewan, *CP* 8 (1913) 284.

<sup>31</sup> Erbse 177–229; cf. Shewan in *CP* 8 (1913) 284–300.

<sup>32</sup> See K. A. Garbrah, "A Linguistic Analysis of Selected Portions of the Homeric *Odyssey*," *Glotta* 47 (1969) 144–70. My thanks to Professor J. Peradotto for bringing this article to my attention.

observed *digamma*, the proportion of sure cases of *-ov* to cases of *-oio* in the genitive singular, and the proportion of short to long forms in the dative plural of *-o-* and *-α-* stems. Two of these criteria (contraction and *digamma*) failed to produce significant differences among the selected passages. The test of short datives showed an increase in the 'late' passages, but the 'old' passages also had a higher proportion of these forms than the 'intermediate' sections. Only in the genitive of *-o-* stems did the late sections show a marked difference from the others.<sup>33</sup> With reference to the end of the *Odyssey*, we should remember that such an analysis is only a quantitative measure of certain, specific phenomena; it cannot take account of isolated peculiarities, such as Page and others have noted. But it may serve as a useful indication of the difficulty, in the current state of our knowledge, of attempting to locate epic diction in any specific phase of a long tradition.

### III. The Narrative Structure

As with the linguistic evidence, it is important to weigh carefully the structural arguments against the authenticity of the end of the *Odyssey*. We shall start with a consideration of Book 24, which clearly falls into three sections: the second *nekuia* (24.1–204), the visit to Laertes (205–411), and the attempt of their relatives to avenge the suitors (412–548).

A. THE SECOND *Nekuia* (24.1–204). A relatively strong objection to this passage is that of Page (following Monro and the scholia to 24.1), who complains that the ghosts of the suitors enter Hades without its being said that they have been buried.<sup>34</sup> Yet, as Stanford points out, the shades are not said to have crossed the river into Hades at the beginning of *Odyssey* 24 (contrast the explicit mention of the river by the shade of Patroclus at *Il.* 23.72–73).<sup>35</sup> There is thus no flat contradiction with Homeric practice or belief. A little later in the second *nekuia*, Page compares 24.15, where the suitors, led by Hermes,<sup>36</sup> are said to come upon the shades of Achilles, Patroclus, Antilochus and Ajax, with 24.99, where it is mentioned that Hermes "leading the souls of the suitors laid low by Odysseus drew near" Agamemnon and

<sup>33</sup> For a summary table of results and conclusions, see Garbrah 167–68.

<sup>34</sup> Page 118; cf. *Il.* 23.71ff.

<sup>35</sup> See Stanford, *Commentary* 410, and Shewan, *CP* 9 (1914) 167–69.

<sup>36</sup> On Hermes' function here as *ψυχοπομπός*, see Shewan, *CP* 9 (1914) 163–67.

Achilles, just after these two finished their conversation (24-97). On the basis of this minor inconsistency, Page maintains that the entire conversation has been “transferred wholesale hither from some other source,” and that the poet has betrayed himself through the “faulty join.”<sup>37</sup> But it need hardly be said that such language as we have in 24.98-100 is not foreign to oral composition; one might as well call the digression on Odysseus’ scar a wholesale insertion from another source because the text seems to say that Eurycleia recognizes it twice.<sup>38</sup>

Page is also wrong to affirm that Amphimedon’s claim of collusion between Odysseus and Penelope in the test of the bow and the subsequent slaughter (24.167ff) *proves* that there was a conflation of two traditions, one involving a recognition before the *mnesterophonía*, the other a recognition afterwards.<sup>39</sup> The *Odyssey* as we have it, of course, focuses on the post-revenge recognition. But Amphimedon’s speech does not involve a contradiction of our version of the poem. Due to Odysseus’ careful planning and some help from Athena, the revenge is effected in Book 22 with clockwork efficiency; how can Amphimedon know that it was not accomplished through prior collusion between husband and wife? After all, Odysseus deals the first fatal shot with his own bow. To the mind of a suitor, lately dead almost before he knew what hit him, collusion would appear the most rational explanation. Page and Kirk are surely right, however, in their general proposition that two traditions are involved in the *Odyssey*, one pre- and one post-revenge. Amphimedon’s remarks on the weaving trick (24.129-50) do not correspond with the two previous accounts of the device (2.93-110, 19.130-61). And no one has yet solved the illogicalities surrounding the test of the bow in Books 18-21. Penelope has more reason at this time than ever before to believe that her husband will return, and yet she proceeds to arrange a contest that will lead directly to marriage with the victorious suitor.<sup>40</sup> Undoubtedly there has been some remodeling of an earlier version. Yet we cannot say

<sup>37</sup> Page 119.

<sup>38</sup> *Od.* 19.392-93, 467-68. For a scene with parallel structure, cf. *Od.* 4.3 (εἶπον) with 24.15 (εἶπον) and 4.20-22 with 24.98-100. See B. C. Fenik, *Studies in the Odyssey* (Wiesbaden 1974) 78-80.

<sup>39</sup> Page 122; cf. Kirk 245.

<sup>40</sup> See Page 120-21, 123-24 and Kirk 246-47. For the theory that Homer has subtly indicated a pre-revenge recognition in Book 19, see R. Fitzgerald, “Postscript” to his translation (Garden City 1961).

when the remodeling took place; and the structural anomalies involved, with the exception of Amphimedon's account of the web, do not occur in *Odyssey* 24.<sup>41</sup>

The final objection to be considered here is that the second *nekuia* contains unprecedented geographical details: e.g. the White Rock, the gates of the Sun and the land of Dreams (24.11ff).<sup>42</sup> These details are simply unparalleled in the poems, but do not comprise a strong, positive argument for the rejection of the passage. It may be pure coincidence that Elpenor has not mentioned such details; it is also well to remember, in connection with Book 11, that Odysseus is not explicitly presented as traveling through Hades, but is made rather to dig a trench at its threshold, where the ghosts may come to him. Once again, the untraditional, or the unparalleled, must not be equated with the spurious.<sup>43</sup>

B. THE LAERTES SCENE (24.205–411). Eustathius was particularly shocked that this recognition of father and son had been atheized.<sup>44</sup> The lying tale with which Odysseus tests his father has repelled some, including Page, who calls the scene an "aimless and heartless guessing-game."<sup>45</sup> In this event, modern bards have not improved in kindness on ancient interpolators: Lord maintains that in the South-Slavic epic presentations of the hero's recognition by one of his parents, omission of a lengthy deception would be unthinkable.<sup>46</sup> For the episode in the *Odyssey*, I venture to put forward the following rationale, with which I think the action can be understood and appreciated. Odysseus has earlier been maneuvered by Athena into a comically excessive lying tale at 13.256ff; possibly his test of his father is supposed to be regarded as a contrasting, harsh excess. But what Odysseus does not count on is the overpowering emotion displayed by Laertes at the thought of his son dead (24.315–17). All the others in the household,

<sup>41</sup> Page (128) ascribes both 18.158–304 and 19.335ff to the tradition of pre-revenge recognition.

<sup>42</sup> Page 117–18.

<sup>43</sup> On the geography of Hades see Shewan, *CP* 9 (1914) 169–71. On the symbolism of some of the elements in 24.1–14, see the recent comment of G. Nagy, "Phaethon, Sappho's Phaon, and the White Rock of Leukas," *HSCP* 77 (1973) 137–77.

<sup>44</sup> *Comm.* 1948.59.

<sup>45</sup> Page 112.

<sup>46</sup> A. B. Lord, *The Singer of Tales* (Cambridge [Mass.] 1960) 178. For a discussion of the Laertes scene which centers on the similarities and differences between this recognition and other related scenes in the *Odyssey*, see Fenik, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.38) 47–53.

though most hope that Odysseus may still be alive, have become resigned to the probability that he is dead. At this point, one supposes, Odysseus realizes that he has gone too far, to no purpose; his previous tales were motivated, of course, by the necessity of caution. But there has been no need of caution here; his identity no longer needs to be concealed from his enemies. The great age and sullied dignity of his father overwhelm him, and thus we have the strange and powerful language, usually employed in martial contexts, to describe his own emotion at 24.318–19.<sup>47</sup>

As in Books 19 and 23, Odysseus is recognized conclusively through a special sign, here as thematically important as the scar or the marriage-bed. The orchards given him by Laertes may certainly be held to symbolize his inheritance, his *κτῆματα*, which have been a major theme in the whole story of the return.<sup>48</sup> And there can be no doubt that the previous references to Laertes in the *Odyssey* should lead an audience to expect some account of his meeting with Odysseus.<sup>49</sup> It is of course possible that we possess only a later version of this meeting, but this cannot be established through criticism of our version's lying tale or actual recognition.<sup>50</sup>

C. THE FINAL BATTLE (24.412–548). This section consists of three short episodes: the council in Ithaca, the council on Olympus, and the final struggle and reconciliation. Here, the main problem is connected not with the details of the narrative but with its structure, particularly at 24.472, where there is a swift change of scene from Ithaca to

<sup>47</sup> Page (106) regards the language as anti-traditional. The foregoing analysis of the Laertes scene entails the supposition that Odysseus has miscalculated, and seriously; if it is objected that this is not in character for such a resourceful, self-possessed hero, the answer must be that Homer has portrayed Odysseus as making several dangerous mistakes in the course of the poem (e.g. in the Cyclops episode). See the comment of Fenik, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.38) 44–45.

<sup>48</sup> See Stanford, "Ending" 7–8, 13; the scholiasts are squeamish here, but for the importance of possessions in Homeric society and values, see A. W. H. Adkins, *Merit and Responsibility* (Oxford 1960) 32–36.

<sup>49</sup> This is emphasized by Bury (6) and by Stanford, "Ending" 9–11. Major references to Laertes: *Od.* 1.188–93, 430–33; 2.99–102; 4.110–11, 735–40; 11.187ff; 15.347ff; 16.137–45; 22.184–86.

<sup>50</sup> The problem of Dolius' identity (is the servant at 24.222 the same man as the Dolius at 4.735, 17.212, and 18.322?) seems incapable of resolution; it is as likely that we are dealing with one person as with two or three. In any case, there is no good argument for condemning his presence in the last book: see Stanford, *Commentary* 420. For another case of a father with good and bad children, note Aegyptius at *Od.* 2.17–22. Cf. Fenik, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.38) 192.

Olympus.<sup>51</sup> Yet two scenes in the *Iliad* suggest that we are, to some extent, dealing both with typical material and a typical arrangement of the narrative.

First, Heubeck has pointed out the broad parallels between *Odyssey* 24.472–88 and the council at the beginning of *Iliad* 4.<sup>52</sup> The *Odyssey* scene is devoted to the planning of oaths and the coming of peace; the *Iliad* scene plots the breaking of oaths and the resumption of war (compare *Od.* 24.482ff with *Il.* 4.68ff). More specifically, one may compare the journey of Athena in both poems (*Od.* 24.487–88=*Il.* 4.73–74) and her disguise (cf. *Od.* 24.503 with *Il.* 4.86ff). In the *Odyssey*, Athena tells Laertes to pray to her for success in his spear-cast (24.517–19); in the *Iliad*, she instructs Pandarus to pray to Apollo when he launches his arrow (4.100–03). The alternatives posed by Athena to Zeus at *Odyssey* 24.475–76 are reminiscent of the Trojans' exclamation about Zeus at *Iliad* 4.82–84.

Yet the parallels here are less striking than in the scene between Athena and Zeus at *Iliad* 22.166–87, suggested by Theiler for comparison with our passage.<sup>53</sup> Note that both scenes on Olympus occur just as battle is about to be joined on earth (*Il.* 22.186–87=*Od.* 24.487–88); in the *Iliad*, there are three short speeches, in the *Odyssey* two, with Zeus each time yielding to Athena. The transitions leading to these scenes are slightly different. In the *Iliad*, there is a line and a half of summary, describing Achilles' pursuit of Hector around the walls (22.165–66). Then we have (166–67):

θεοὶ δ' ἐς πάντες ὄρωντο·  
τοῖσι δὲ μύθων ἦρχε πατήρ ἀνδρῶν τε θεῶν τε·

In the *Odyssey*, the heavenly council follows a summary comment on Eupheithes' leadership of the relatives (24.469) and the poet's prediction of his fate (470–71). Then comes the single line (472):

αὐτὰρ Ἀθηναίη Ζῆνα Κρονίωνα προσήδα·

It may still be thought that the transition in the *Odyssey* is slightly more abrupt; one may note, however, that the switch in the *Iliad* is signaled in the middle of a verse, and also that we are specifically told

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Page 112–13. Erbse defends the scene (241ff), citing the transitions at *Il.* 16.430–32, 18.355–56, 22.165–67 (cf. also *Il.* 8.198–200); for the use of *αὐτὰρ*, Erbse compares *Il.* 20.75, 21.520, 22.7, 23.1, *Od.* 6.2.

<sup>52</sup> A. Heubeck, *Der Odyssee-Dichter und die Ilias* (Erlangen 1954) 44.

<sup>53</sup> W. Theiler, "Vermutungen zur *Odyssee*," *MusHelv* 7 (1950) 109.

on neither occasion that the new scene is on Olympus: the mention of *θεοί* in the *Iliad* (22.166) and the naming of the gods in the *Odyssey* (24.472) are sufficient indications.

Such a one-line transition as at 24.472, then, is not a strong objection to genuineness. Possibly, in fact, the speed is intentional, and the singer wants to suggest through the structure of the last 125 lines of the poem that events are rushing to a climax. The battle itself, foreshadowed in Odysseus' concern about the consequences of the slaughter at 23.117–22 and 130–40,<sup>54</sup> provides the occasion for a grand finale, not only in terms of the plot, but also in terms of the father-son motif so pervasive in the *Odyssey* (cf. Laertes' exclamation at 514–15).<sup>55</sup> Page's objections to the battle, centering around the killing of some of the relatives,<sup>56</sup> seem to ignore the long partnership of Athena and the family of Odysseus. Though Zeus has willed an end to bloodshed, it is hardly out of character for Athena to circumvent him temporarily, and to cheer on Laertes, inspiring him with strength (516–20). It is similarly in character for Odysseus, who has recognized Athena's protection in the battle (504), to continue to fight after her cry to stop (537–38); one may compare his precipitate arming to fight Scylla, where he also ignored instructions (cf. 12.112–20, 226–30). It is understandable, then, that Zeus' thunderbolt, signaling the end of the battle, lands at the feet of Athena (539–40). She must delay no longer to carry out his plan; the final verses (546–48) show that she accomplishes it.

So far, we have dealt in this section with the structural questions posed by *Odyssey* 24, since aside from Odysseus' narration to Penelope at 23.310–43, where the long indirect narrative is unusual,<sup>57</sup> Book 23 presents no anomalies. It remains to consider two more speculative

<sup>54</sup> See Heubeck, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.52) 40. He also notes interesting parallels between the council of the relatives (24.412–71) and the council in *Od.* 2 (*op.cit.* 39): 2.9=24.421; 2.24=24.425; cf. 2.15 with 24.422 and 2.16–23 with 24.423ff. Halitherses appears in both meetings (2.157=24.451; 2.160ff=24.453ff; cf. 2.158ff with 24.452). At 24.456 he refers to his earlier speech (2.161). The people's reaction in both cases involves *οἰκτος*, for Telemachus at 2.81ff, for Eupheithes at 24.438.

<sup>55</sup> It is interesting to note the emphasis on this theme in the similes of the *Odyssey*; father (mother) similes comprise 10% of all the similes in the poem: cf. 1.308, 2.47 and 234, 5.12 and 394, 8.523, 10.410, 14.175, 15.152, 16.17 and 216, 17.111, 126 (=4.335) and 397, 20.14.

<sup>56</sup> Page 113–14; he finds the thunderbolt disturbing.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. Shipp, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.24) 359. But see J. Notopoulos, "Continuity and Interconnection in Homeric Oral Composition," *TAPA* 82 (1951) 93–95, for the argument that Odysseus' summary and the second *nekuia* constitute examples of a typically Homeric narrative technique of "retrospection."

questions. The first is the extent to which the events in Book 24, particularly in the second *nekuia*, form a thematically harmonious conclusion to the whole poem, and perhaps also to the narration of the *Iliad*. Heubeck has remarked on the general parallels in structure between the two poems. The development of both epics runs from revenge to reconciliation; they both begin with councils/assemblies; *Iliad* 2 and *Odyssey* 2 present assemblies of the people at the start of a new day; in the last third of the poems, the decisive battles occur in Book 22, but there is no end there: the *lytra* and *spondai* must come in Book 24.<sup>58</sup> The second *nekuia*, in particular, seems to round out the Homeric picture of Achilles, and explicitly to emphasize his *kleos*.<sup>59</sup> In this episode, we see Agamemnon and Achilles, the two great adversaries of the *Iliad*, for the last time. Achilles rues his premature death, while Agamemnon contrasts his own fatal homecoming with the funeral honors paid Achilles at Troy. One need not refer to the *Iliad* here, of course. The conversation thoroughly accords with the thematic structure of the *Odyssey*: Odysseus' homecoming has often been contrasted with Agamemnon's.<sup>60</sup> And the nostalgic tone of Achilles and Agamemnon is also in agreement with the 'Trojan theme' of mixed bitterness and pleasure that runs throughout the *Odyssey*, e.g. in the long narratives of Nestor and Menelaus in Books 3 and 4, or in the songs of Phemius and Demodocus.<sup>61</sup> These literary considerations can justifiably play a rôle in favor, if not of authenticity, at least of composition by someone who knew the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* remarkably well and had a sensitive appreciation of each epic's themes.

The second problem regarding Book 24 concerns its source, if it be judged an interpolation. It will be recalled that twice before in the poem, at 11.119ff and 23.264ff, the poet has given an elaborate account of Odysseus' future death. In fact when Odysseus repeats Teiresias' description in Book 23, it is singled out for a special narrative apart from the account of his adventures, which are told at 310ff.

<sup>58</sup> See Heubeck, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.52) 37ff; cf. J. Scott, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.7) 403-04.

<sup>59</sup> This has been well pointed out by Bassett, *AJP* 44 (1923) 49-51.

<sup>60</sup> See *Od.* 1.32-43, 298-300; 3.194ff, 303ff; 4.524ff; 11.385ff; 13.383-85. Bury strangely criticizes the conversation as irrelevant (2). But Bassett (*supra* n.7) presented in two articles a strong literary case for the details of the contrast between Agamemnon and Odysseus as thematically integral to the *Odyssey*. On the general importance of this theme in the poem, see F. Klingner, *Studien zur griechischen und römischen Literatur* (Zurich/Stuttgart 1964) 75-79, and U. Hölscher, "Die Atridensage in der *Odyssee*," in *Festschrift Alewyn* (Cologne 1967) 1-16.

<sup>61</sup> See 1.325-37 and the moving scene at the Phaeacian court in 8.477-534.

Merkelbach, reviving a suggestion of E. Schwartz, has argued that the later interpolator to whom we owe the end of the *Odyssey* used as a main source the *Telegony*, the final poem of the Epic Cycle, traditionally ascribed to Eugammon of Cyrene and composed in the first half of the sixth century.<sup>62</sup> The later poet, designated B by Merkelbach, fashioned 23.310–43, the second *nekuia*, and other sections from this source; he probably found the Laertes episode in a short lay devoted to the recognition.<sup>63</sup> Proclus' summary makes it clear that the *Telegony* related in two books the "death from the sea" which was prophesied for Odysseus. The hero travels to Thesprotia, where he has an illegitimate child, Polyipoetes, by a woman named Callidice. The poem also presents another illegitimate son by Circe named Telegonus; the latter kills Odysseus when he returns to Ithaca, and marries Penelope, while Telemachus ends by marrying Circe. If in fact *Odyssey* 24 was fashioned from this poem or was composed as an introduction to it,<sup>64</sup> a date in the early sixth century would make it far too late to be included in the monumental composition of the *Odyssey*, and we should surely be right in judging the end of the poem a substantially later continuation. There is no way to prove the *Telegony* theory, however, and I think there are two strong arguments against it: (a) the oppressive atmosphere of illegitimacy and incest which must have pervaded the *Telegony* could not be more foreign to the *Odyssey*, and (b) the repetition of the "death from the sea" prophecy, an important link in the theory, is not part of the end of the *Odyssey*, but rather occurs before 23.296.

In conclusion, it will be apparent that I am not convinced that either linguistic or structural considerations demand our rejection of *Odyssey* 23.297–24.548. As with almost all other lines in both epics, there is no authoritative case for proving these lines genuine. But one can only conclude, where there is room for doubt (and such is certainly created by the Alexandrians' note), that the critic who favors rejection assumes the burden of proof. The various arguments advanced in this cause are of disparate quality and weight; as we have seen, certain elements of the linguistic case and details of the narrative (principally

<sup>62</sup> Merkelbach 144ff, with references to E. Schwartz, *Die Odyssee* (Munich 1924) 148ff; cf. A. Hartmann, *Untersuchungen über die Sagen vom Tode des Odysseus* (Munich 1917) 44ff, and G. L. Huxley, *Greek Epic Poetry from Eumelos to Panyassis* (Cambridge [Mass.] 1969) 168–73.

<sup>63</sup> Merkelbach 153. Page in the main endorses this suggestion (129), though with some reservations (136).

<sup>64</sup> Cf. Berard, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.21) 192.

in the second *nekuia*) constitute the most telling objections.<sup>65</sup> But many arguments, upon closer analysis, are of little or no consequence. The cumulative effect of warranted objections to the end of the *Odyssey* falls far short of demonstrating that rejection is necessary. Whatever the historical truth about when the lines were actually composed, we may well pause again to admire them as literature. For us they may as well be Homer's since they contain, in addition to their blemishes, virtues as well.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Cf. pp. 160 and 161 *supra*.

<sup>66</sup> I am happy to thank Professors B. C. Fenik and G. S. Kirk for suggestions and encouragement.