# HOWEB ODKSEK LHE



TRANSLATED AND EDITED BY
ALBERT COOK

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#### A NORTON CRITICAL EDITION

### Homer

# THE ODYSSEY

# A VERSE TRANSLATION BACKGROUNDS CRITICISM

SECOND EDITION

Translated and Edited by

ALBERT COOK

BROWN UNIVERSITY



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## Foreword

I hope this collection will help the student to see many sides of the

Odyssey; that is its purpose.

In light of that purpose, two features of the translation itself should be emphasized: first, that it tries to render the poem not only literally, but line by line, so that almost always the expressions in a given line of Greek are those in the corresponding English line. Second, it is, I believe, wholly faithful to the formulaic character of the poem that so many commentators today have stressed. The poem is built of hundreds of repeated lines, groups of lines, and half lines. In this translation those many repetitions are faithfully and exactly retained in all cases.

In Backgrounds, various kinds of information are provided—on the language of the poem, the lands and peoples it discusses, its poetic conventions, and the kind of society it depicts. Also in Backgrounds, The Odyssey in Antiquity presents commentary from Pindar to "Eustathius." The brief selections under "Scholia" and "Eustathius" offer very small samples of the kind of comment a Byzantine bishop and various anonymous scholars in ancient and medieval times thought that the poem called for. Their quirky concerns stand in striking contrast to the passing homage paid in the Criticism section by Racine, Goethe, and Ezra Pound, and also to the deliberate and sensitive meditations on the poem by the modern commentators with which this collection concludes.

## Preface on the Translation

To hear and re-create the sound and sense of the original is always the task of the translator, whether of the impressionist or of the literalist camp. Except when the sense of the original is tied up in lost or unsurfaceable data (the jokes of Aristophanes), or when the sound is so elaborately structured as to be wholly inimitable (*The Divine Comedy*, or possibly any case of regular rhyme), there is no reason why the literalist cannot aspire to as full a re-creation as the impressionist—and therefore to a fuller one, since literalists have the advantage of confining themselves to bringing over as much of the designative sense as possible. Of course they too miss by a considerable margin; and of course any translator faces the problem of catching the flow of overtones and sequences of sense—and of sound.

For both sound and sense, the Homeric line is a unit, and this literal translation seeks as its major goal to preserve that crucial unit in its integrity while trying to catch something of Homer's flow. A line with a syllabic base (almost always in the range of twelve to seventeen syllables) is one possible option for an equivalent to the Homeric hexameter.

For sense, the heavily formulaic character of Homer recommends that one render words, lines, and phrases as nearly identically as possible. This conviction suggests that one should not opt for a variety in translating *kalos* ("fine," "beautiful," "lovely," "pretty," "fair," and so on) but choose one and stick to it most of the time. I chose "lovely." The English words "ocean" and "sea" must do duty for more than two Homeric words; and the translator is forced, if he or she would utilize both, to overlook the fact that the proper name "Ocean" in Homer designates something special. Distinguishing *Okeanos* by a slightly Anglicized proper name "Oceanos" and rendering *pontos* as "ocean" seems

<sup>1.</sup> My middle-of-the-road position on spelling Greek names results in a mixture between Latin norm for English and true Greek transliteration. In this way I have tried to combine the familiarity of the Latin usage with the Hellenic flavor of a Greekish new-spelling. Hitting between Oceanus, or merely Ocean, on the Latin side, and Okeanos on the Greek, I have produced Oceanos, a case I am less happy with than I am with Telemachos for the young man who has been known for centuries in English as Telemachus. But I believe the principle of combination (producing usually a Latin-like base and a Greek-like termination) is fairly consistent.

preferable to calling it "sea" along with *hals* and *thalassa*, or to picking a metaphoric archaism like "the deep."

For *demos*, there are implications of a geographical "region," one sufficiently more restricted than a French *pays* for us to render the word "district." Sometimes the area is primarily meant, and "land" is the closest term; and sometimes the inhabitants, the "people," are primarily indicated. In this case I have settled for "district" as a normative use, and the other three when their emphases seemed the primary ones. English convention could be ignored in some cases. If *glaukopis* probably means "bright-eyed," we can ignore the English translation of rendering it "gray-eyed." And the same with the more hallowed "wine-dark," a rendering based on a specious phenomenological inference. There is no color word in the Greek.

The choices are not always easy of course. An obscure attribution of Hermes, *Argeiphontes*, presents three choices: "slayer of Argos," "the one who appears swiftly," or the opaque expression itself, *Argeiphontes*. On the hunch that the expression would not have sounded opaque to the normal reader of Homer in antiquity, I have followed the inclination of much contemporary opinion toward the first rendering.

Or again, in simple grammar, we get theos, masculine, "god," and thea, feminine, "goddess." What do we do with theos, with or (more usually) without feminine adjective when it is applied to a goddess? The distinction between thea and theos, confined almost exclusively to Homer, is an elusive one not to be accounted for wholly by metrical convenience. Unless translators are prepared to identify thea and theos as "goddess," they are forced to strengthen the common-gender tinge of "god" and use that one word for the one word theos, masculine or feminine. "God" does sound a little odd when applied to a female immortal; theos is rare enough in the feminine to have struck an ancient reader as comparably odd.

The literalist provides the reader, or at least the student, with the comfortable assurance that for the vast designative tapestry of the original a pink thread may sometimes do duty for a red one, or a blurred one for a blurred one—but never a blue one for a red one, and never a polychrome burst for a single color of the original. Impressionists, on the other hand, for all the rationales they can muster, can never free themselves of the charge leveled by T. S. Eliot at Gilbert Murray (who translates rather more literally than most of the impressionists of recent decades): "So here are two striking phrases which we owe to Mr. Murray; it is he who has sapped our soul and shattered the cup of all life for Euripides. . . . Professor Murray has simply interposed between Euripides and ourselves a barrier more impenetrable than the Greek language."

<sup>2.</sup> Manu Leumann, Homerische Wörter (Basel, 1950) 148-52.

Any rendering builds a wall. One can only hope to build a translucent one. We always need masonry, but also bricks that are translucent to begin with.

ALBERT COOK

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# The Text of THE ODYSSEY

Tell me, Muse, about the man of many turns, who many Ways wandered when he had sacked Troy's holy citadel; He saw the cities of many men, and he knew their thought; On the ocean he suffered many pains within his heart, Striving for his life and his companions' return. But he did not save his companions, though he wanted to: They lost their own lives because of their recklessness. The fools, they devoured the cattle of Hyperion, The Sun, and he took away the day of their return. Begin the tale somewhere for us also, goddess, daughter of Zeus. 1 10 Then all the others, as many as escaped sheer destruction, Were at home, having fled both the war and the sea. Yet he alone, longing for his wife and for a return, Was held back in a hollowed cave by the queenly nymph Calypso,<sup>2</sup> The divine goddess, who was eager for him to be her husband. But when in the circling seasons the year came around, The gods spun the thread for him to return to his home, To Ithaca; and he did not escape struggle there either. Even among his dear ones. All the gods pitied him, Except Poseidon, who contended unremittingly With godlike Odysseus, till the man reached his own land. But the god had gone to the far-off Ethiopians— The Ethiopians, remotest of men, divided asunder, Some where Hyperion sets, and some where he rises. He was taking part in the sacrifice of bulls and rams, And enjoyed being present at a feast there. The others Were gathered together in the halls of Olympian Zeus. The father of men and gods began to speak among them. In his heart he was remembering excellent Aigisthos<sup>4</sup> Whom Agamemnon's son, far-famed Orestes, 5 had slain. 30 Thinking of that man, he made his speech to the immortals: "Well now, how indeed mortal men do blame the gods! They say it is from us evils come, yet they themselves By their own recklessness have pains beyond their lot. So this Aigisthos married beyond his lot the lawful

I.e., the muse of epic poetry. Zeus, the son of Cronos, was king of the gods and specifically
the god of the sky and of weather.

Daughter of Atlas.

<sup>3.</sup> Son of Cronos and brother of Zeus; god of the sea, especially hostile toward Odysseus.

Cousin of Agamemnon and lover of Clytemnestra; after Agamemnon's murder he became king of Mycenae.

Agamemnon was leader of the Greeks at Troy and was killed by Clytemnestra on his return home; Orestes killed Clytemnestra and Aigisthos to avenge his father's murder.

Wife of the son of Atreus, and killed him on his return: Knowing he would be destroyed, since we told him beforehand: We had sent sharp-eyed Hermes, the slayer of Argos, 6 To tell him not to kill the man and not to woo his wife, Or payment would come through Orestes, descendant of Atreus, 40 As soon as he came of age and longed for his own land. So Hermes told him; but, though of good mind himself, he did not Change Aigisthos' mind. And now he has paid for it all." Then the bright-eved goddess Athene<sup>7</sup> answered him: "Our father, son of Cronos, 8 highest of all rulers, 45 As for that man, he surely lies in a fitting death. May anyone else also perish who would do such deeds. But the heart within me is torn over skillful Odysseus. The hard-fated man, who long suffers griefs far from his dear ones On a flood-circled island where the navel of the sea is. 50 The island is wooded, a goddess there has her dwelling. The daughter of destruction-minded Atlas, 9 who knows The depths of the whole sea, and holds up by himself The enormous pillars that hold apart earth and heaven. His daughter has kept back the wretched and grieving man, And perpetually, with tender and wheedling speeches, She charms him to forget Ithaca. Odysseus, however. Wanting to catch sight even of smoke leaping up From his land, is longing to die. But your own heart Does not turn toward it, Olympian one. Did Odysseus 60 Not please you in broad Troy by the ships of the Argives When he made sacrifice? Why, then, are you so angry at him, Zeus?" In answer to her, cloud-gathering Zeus spoke out: "My child, what sort of word has got past the bar of your teeth? How could I at any time forget godlike Odysseus, 65 Who stands out among mortals for thought, and for the sacrifices He has given the immortal gods who possess broad heaven? But Poseidon, who holds up the earth, remains obstinately Enraged about the Cyclops whom he blinded in the eye, Godlike Polyphemos, who possesses the greatest strength 70 Of all the Cyclopes. 1 The nymph Thoosa gave him birth, The daughter of Phoreys, <sup>2</sup> ruler over the barren sea, In hollow caves, after she had lain with Poseidon. For that, to be sure, earth-shaking Poseidon has not Killed Odysseus but does make him wander far from his homeland. Well, come now, let all of us here carefully devise

<sup>6.</sup> Hermes was son of Zeus, messenger of the gods, and guide of the dead. The obscure compound Argeiphontes could also mean "appear rapidly" or "appear brightly."
7. Goddess of reason and the arts and special patron of Odysseus.

<sup>8.</sup> One of the older gods; the father of Zeus, Poseidon, Hera, Hades.

<sup>9.</sup> The supporter of the pillars of heaven.

<sup>1.</sup> A lawless race of giants met by Odysseus.

<sup>2.</sup> A lesser sea divinity.

His return, so he may arrive; and Poseidon will slacken His rage, for counter to all the immortals he cannot Carry on strife alone against the will of the gods." Then the bright-eved goddess Athene answered him: 80 "Our father, son of Cronos, highest of all rulers, If this course is now really dear to the blessed gods, That many-minded Odysseus return to his own home, Then let us urge on the runner Hermes, slaver of Argos. To the island of Ogygia, 3 in order that with all speed 85 He may tell the fair-braided nymph an unerring plan For the return of stout-hearted Odysseus, so he may go back. And I myself will go to Ithaca, so that I the better May urge his son on and place a strength in his mind To call the long-haired Achaians 4 into an assembly 90 And to speak out to all the suitors, who are always slaying His throngs of sheep, and his shamble-footed, crumple-horned cattle. I shall send him on to Sparta, and also to sandy Pylos, To learn of his dear father's return, if he may hear somehow, And so a noble renown among men may belong to him." When she had said this, she bound under her feet the lovely sandals, The ambrosial golden ones that bear her either over water Or over the limitless land swift as blasts of the wind. She grasped the valiant spear, pointed with sharp bronze, Ponderous, big, and stout, with which she daunts the ranks of men. 100 Of heroes at whom she is angry, the daughter of a mighty father, She went down in a rush from the summits of Olympos and stood In the district of Ithaca before Odysseus' gates At the courtyard threshold. In her fist she held the bronze spear, Likening herself to a stranger, the Taphian leader Mentes. 105 She came upon the bold suitors. They at the moment Were delighting their hearts with a diceboard before the doors, Seated on the skins of oxen they had killed themselves. Heralds attended on them, and capable servants also; Some of these were mixing wine and water in bowls. Others were cleaning off the tables with porous sponges, And setting them, and dividing up the meat in many pieces. Godlike Telemachos was by far the first to see her, For he sat among the suitors, crushed in his own heart, Seeing his noble father in his mind, if from somewhere He would come and make those suitors scatter through the halls, So that he himself might have honor and command his own goods. Thinking this over while seated with the suitors, he sighted Athene. He went straight to the gate, and he resented in his heart That the stranger stood so long at the door. Standing near her 120

The legendary island home of Calypso.

<sup>4.</sup> A collective appellation of the Greeks besieging Troy.

He took her right hand and received the bronze spear; Speaking out to her, he uttered winged words: "Greetings, stranger, you shall be welcomed among us. And when You have eaten dinner, you will tell what it is you need." When he had said that, he led on, and Pallas Athene followed. And when they had got inside of the lofty house, He stood the spear he was carrying against the long pillar Inside the well-polished spearcase, where many other Spears of stout-hearted Odysseus were also standing. He led her on and seated her in an armchair, spreading linen be-130 Lovely and skillfully wrought. A stool was under her feet. He placed a broidered seat alongside, apart from the others, The suitors, lest the stranger might be disturbed at the uproar When mingling with the insolent, and lose appetite for dinner, And so he might ask her of the father who had gone away. A handmaid poured water from a pitcher she was carrying, A lovely golden one, over into a silver basin, For washing the hands; she set up a polished table alongside. A respected housekeeper served bread she was carrying, Laying out many dishes, gracious with the provisions. 140 A carver lifted up and set out trenchers of meats Of all sorts, and set out gold goblets alongside for them. A herald served them attentively, pouring out the wine. The bold suitors came in. And then they themselves Sat down one after another in seats and in armchairs. 145 Heralds were pouring water for them over their hands. And serving maids were heaping bread up on trays. Young men were filling bowls up to the brim for drinking, They stretched forth their hands to the food that was spread out ready. But when the suitors had taken their fill of food and drink. 150 Other matters came to their minds for attention: Singing and dancing, which are the graces of a banquet. Into Phemios'6 hands a herald placed a lyre Of supreme beauty; he sang for the suitors under compulsion. Playing his instrument, he struck up a lovely song. Telemachos, however, addressed bright-eyed Athene, Holding his head close so that the others might not hear: "Dear stranger, will you resent it if I say something? These men are concerned with this, the lyre and singing, At their ease, since they devour scot-free another man's living, 160 A man whose white bones somewhere are rotting in the rain, Lying on a shore, or a wave tumbles them in the sea. If they ever see that man returning to Ithaca,

5. An epithet of Athene.

<sup>6.</sup> Son of Terpis ("Pleasure") and bard at Odysseus' palace.

They will all pray to be nimbler on their feet	
Rather than to be richer in clothing and in gold.	165
As it is, an evil fate has killed him, surely; there is	
No comfort for us even if some one of the men on earth	
Says he will come. The day of his return is lost.	
But come now, tell me this, and explain truthfully:	
What men are you from? Where are your city and parents?	170
On what sort of ship did you come? How did the sailors	
Bring you to Ithaca? What men did they claim to be?	
For I do not think you could have got here at all on foot.	
Tell me this exactly, so that I may well know	
Whether you come on a first visit or are a friend	175
Of my father's, since many other men come to our home,	17.7
And since he was himself well acquainted among men."	
Then the bright-eyed goddess Athene addressed him:	
"All right, then, I will tell you this quite truthfully.	
I declare I am Mentes, son of skillful Anchialos,	180
And I rule over the Taphians, who are fond of rowing.	100
Just now I have come this way by ship, with companions,	
Sailing on the wine-faced sea to men of alien tongue,	
To Temese for bronze, and I carry glittering iron.	
My vessel stands here by the fields far off from the city,	185
In the harbor of Reithron, below wooded Neion.	10)
We declare we are guest friends of one another through our fathers	
Originally; if you will, go and ask Laertes, <sup>7</sup>	
The old warrior, who they say no longer comes	
To the city, but suffers griefs off by himself on his field,	190
With an old servant woman, who serves him food and drink	190
Whenever a weariness overcomes his limbs	
As he creeps along the knoll of the vine-bearing garden.	
But I have come now because they said the man really was in the	
district,	
Your father. But him have the gods hindered on his journey.	195
The godly Odysseus has not yet died on the earth,	170
But he is still alive somewhere, held back on the broad ocean	
On a flood-circled island, and troublesome men hold him,	
Savages, who somehow keep him back against his will.	
Well, I will now tell you a prophecy, how the immortals	200
Cast it in my heart, and how I think it will end,	200
Though I am not a prophet, and have no clear skill with birds. <sup>8</sup>	
Not much longer now, surely, will he be away	
From his dear fatherland; not even if iron bands hold him.	
He will devise how to return, since he has many resources.	205
But come now, tell me this, and explain it truthfully,	20)
but come now, ten me uno, and explain it traumany,	

<sup>7.</sup> Father of Odysseus and former king of Ithaca.8. An augur would make divinations based on the behavior of birds, as in book 2, lines 146–60, and elsewhere.

If, big as you are, you are really the son of Odysseus himself. You resemble him strangely in your head and your fine eyes, Since we had contact quite often with one another Before he embarked for Troy, where the other noblest Men of the Argives were headed in their hollow ships. Since then I have not seen Odysseus, nor has he seen me." Then the sound-minded Telemachos answered her: "All right, stranger, I shall speak quite truthfully." My mother calls me the son of the man. But I myself Do not know. No one has ever been certain of his father. Ah, would that I were the fortunate son of some man Whom old age came upon with all his possessions! As it is, he has been the most ill-fated of mortal men, The man they say I was born of, since you ask me this." And then the bright-eyed goddess Athene addressed him: "The gods have not set it down that your race hereafter Be nameless, since Penelope bore such a man as you. But come, tell me this, and explain it truthfully, What feast, what gathering is this? What is your need here? A banquet or a marriage? The guests have brought no share to it. How overweening they seem to be, how presumptuous To be feasting in the hall! A man with any sense Who came on these shameful things would be angry to see them." Then the sound-minded Telemachos answered her: 230 "Stranger, since you ask me this and inquire about it, This house was once supposed to be wealthy and blameless, So long as that very man was still here in the district. Now the gods have wished otherwise and decreed misfortune; They have made that person vanish more completely than all Men. No, I would not grieve this way if he had died, If with his companions he had gone under in the land of the Trojans, Or in the arms of his friends, after he had wound up the war. Then all the Achaians would have made him a funeral mound, And he would have won great glory for his son, too, hereafter; 240 As it is, the storm winds have snatched him off without glory. He is gone, vanished and unperceived, and has left me Pains and laments. Yet I no longer moan and grieve for that man Only, since the gods have fashioned other evil cares for me. All of the noblemen who rule over the islands, 245 Dulichion and Samê and also wooded Zakynthos, And all those who are masters in craggy Ithaca, Are paying court to my mother and wearing down my home. She neither refuses the hateful marriage nor can she Make an end of it. But they are wasting my home away 250 As they devour it. Soon they will tear me to pieces myself." Pallas Athene was greatly disturbed and spoke out to him: "Ah well, you do need Odysseus who is gone away