A NOTE ON LUCRETIUS 6. 1277

Editors have taken two approaches to the extreme hyperbaton in *De rerum natura* 6. 1276–77: "nec iam religio divum nec numina magni / pendebantur enim: praesens dolor exsuperabat." This *enim* in ninth place in the clause—indeed, in last place—has been excused by some editors (Munro, Bailey) on the grounds of poetic license. Diels, on the other hand, punctuates after *pendebantur*, making *enim* begin the next clause.

Since neither of these awkward solutions seems satisfactory, perhaps another is to be sought. I would suggest that line 1277 should read, "pendebantur; nam praesens dolor exsuperabat." The corruption most probably arose as a result of scribal parablepsy, the copyist's eye falling to the quite similar beginning of line 1280, *perturbatus enim*. The meter of the restored line should raise no great objections, since diaeresis after an initial double spondee is by no means unknown in Lucretius.[1] We can, moreover, call upon 2. 315, "praesertim cum, quae possimus cernere, celent," to demonstrate a clause-break after such a diaeresis.

STEPHEN T. KELLY

HARVARD UNIVERSITY

1. For example, 1. 925; 2. 36, 67, 297; 3. 456; 4. 369, 539; 5. 569; 6. 859, 974, 1073. It should be noted that in more than half of these examples the principal caesura is felt to occur in the fourth foot, as it does in the emended line 6. 1277.

ODYSSEUS AND ANTICLEIA

The scene in Book 11 of the *Odyssey* depicting Odysseus' conversation with his mother's ghost in the world of the dead (152–224) has had its admirers, and justly so, I should say. But it has also been a favorite hunting ground for Analysts engaged in their endless search for incongruity, illogicality, and absurdity. If it were only Analysts who assail the passage, there would be no point in discussing it again. But a number of Unitarians have at times adopted one or another of the elements in the Analysts' case. It may be worth while, therefore, to go over the materials again to see if the Unitarians may have in this instance surrendered before it was necessary.

The most common criticism is that Anticleia describes conditions in Ithaca, not as they were when she died, but as Homer has portrayed them in the earlier books of the poem. The relevant part of her speech is the first six and a half lines. It will be well to see just what it is that she says. To make clear that I am not slanting the evidence in my favor, I use the excellent translation of Denys Page, one of the most vigorous critics of the scene (*The Homeric Odyssey* [Oxford, 1955], p. 40): "Penelope your wife remains steadfast of heart in your palace, and ever sorrowful are the nights and days that pass away upon her weeping. But nobody yet possesses the royal privilege that was yours. Telemachus rules your demesne at his ease, and feasts at equal banquets, such as the dispenser of justice[1] should rightly enjoy; for all men invite him."

There are two striking details here, one which tells for, and one which tells against, those who argue that Anticleia is describing the Ithaca of Books 1 and 2. One of the most prominent features of these books is the presence in Odysseus' palace of a large band of riotous suitors. Anticleia says not a word about them. Considerable ingenuity has been displayed in thinking up reasons for her silence. Since, however, I think she is describing the situation as it was when she died, when there were no suitors present in the palace, I can ignore this ingenuity. I should think, however, that an Anticleia describing the Ithaca of Books 1 and 2 would naturally feel that the presence of the suitors was the most important fact for her son to know.

It is Anticleia's words about Telemachus that have provided the great support for those who are convinced that Homer is in this speech

1. Homer's phrase is *dikaspolon andra*. Bornemann has suggested, ". . . der Ausdruck wird hier mehr in allgemeinem Sinn stehen (für 'Fürst') als im Hinblick auf eine rechtsprechende Tätigkeit Telemachs" (*Odyssee-Interpretationen* [Frankfurt, 1953], p. 127). This interpretation would, I suppose, make things a little easier, but it does not seem necessary.

guilty of a chronological error. Anticleia, we are told, is talking about the adult Telemachus whom we met at the beginning of the poem, not the teen-ager he must have been when Anticleia died. Even so strict a Unitarian as S. A. Bassett granted that there might be a discrepancy at this point. His explanation was that the audience had seen Telemachus as an adult earlier, and Homer sensibly preferred not to distract them with a younger Telemachus here (*The Poetry of Homer* [Berkeley, 1938], p. 134). I should expect that any listener (or reader) likely to be distracted by this sort of thing would be much more distracted by the vast difference between Anticleia's Telemachus and the Telemachus portrayed at the beginning of the poem. The Telemachus painted by Anticleia plays a role, and receives the respect, appropriate to the king's son and, presumably, heir. The adjective she applies to him *hekēlos*, "at his ease," certainly suggests, too, that this Telemachus lives in an orderly society. Her words give the impression, in short, that Telemachus is a respected person playing an active role in the affairs of his household and his community. The Telemachus shown at the beginning of the poem is at the other pole. In the current vernacular, he has opted out. He is a do-nothing youth overwhelmed by his situation and finding his solace in dreams of the wonderful change that his father's return would bring —though he has little hope that his father will really come back. There is, I think, no way to reconcile Anticleia's account with this Telemachus. Moreover, the social order in the Ithaca of Book 1 has collapsed. The palace has been taken over by a gang of murderous thugs, and the narrative of Book 2 makes it clear that the community is, to say the least, powerless against them. Anticleia is certainly not describing this kind of society when she uses the word *hekēlos* of Telemachus. As Page says, "It is hard to see how the true state of affairs, according to our *Odyssey*, could be more grossly misrepresented."

Why is it, then, that many learned and, sometimes, sensible men, Analysts and Unitarians alike, are convinced that Anticleia is describing the conditions as they were when Odysseus returned and not those of the time when she died? Her description of Telemachus' activities, we are told, fits only an adult man, and at the time of Anticleia's death he must have been only thirteen or fourteen years old. It would be absurd to maintain that this interpretation of Anticleia's words is implausible. Indeed, I should think everyone would agree that, if there were no reasons for interpreting them otherwise, this would be the natural meaning of her words. But is this the only possible interpretation? Can these words be brought into harmony with the absence of the suitors so that in both parts of Anticleia's description we are dealing with the Ithaca that existed at the time of her death?

Let it be said at once that our ignorance of one vital fact makes it impossible to prove this. We do not know, and there is no reason to imagine that we shall ever know, at what age the son and heir of an absent king would begin to take an active part in the affairs of the palace and of the community. (Nor, of course, do we know what Homer may have imagined about this.) But I submit that it is unreasonable to assume without any evidence whatever that a boy of thirteen or fourteen in Telemachus' situation *could not* play the kind of role that Anticleia's words imply. We should grant the possibility that such a boy might well exercise some supervision over the slaves who, like Eumaeus and Philoetius, were in immediate charge of the king's flocks and herds, clearly the main constituent of Odysseus' wealth. Moreover, it is certainly possible that such a boy might be treated with courtesy and respect by the important men in Ithaca. Homer has given us only one fact about the governmental activities in Ithaca during Odysseus' absence: during twenty years, the assembly has not met. And it would be foolish to imagine that Homer had in his mind any picture of how Ithaca had carried on public business when the king was away. To ask questions about this is like asking about the number of Lady Macbeth's children. But for all that, we may, I believe, interpret Anticleia's words as suggesting that Homer was aware that some sort of official functions must have

been necessary during these years and suggesting further that at the time of Anticleia's death Telemachus had reached an age when he might courteously be invited to participate in them.[2] In short, it is not, I think, impossible that Anticleia's remarks fit the Telemachus she knew and, to say the least, it is not certain that Homer, either deliberately or carelessly, is describing here the older Telemachus he portrayed earlier in the poem.

I conclude with one general consideration. Unless we are prepared to accept the idea that this part of the poem was composed by someone who was almost supernaturally incompetent, or by someone who did not compose this scene for our *Odyssey*, it should seem remarkably odd that Anticleia would in two successive sentences describe, as though they were contemporary, conditions in Ithaca which are separated by seven years.

Denys Page, who writes disdainfully of "Unitarians [who] consult their calendars," and who would surely find the above remarks merely another example of "the special pleading of the advocate whose case is lost," has raised another interesting objection to this scene. The last question about affairs in Ithaca that Odysseus asks his mother is, "Tell me about my wife. Is she still with our boy and keeping everything safe, or has the best of the Greeks married her by now?" Only sixty lines earlier Odysseus had been told by Tiresias that when he arrives home he will find his house full of insolent men, suitors of his wife. Page asks, "What sort of poet proceeds at once to make Odysseus ask his mother" if Penelope has married again? It is legitimate, I think, to ask a somewhat different question: How is the poet to deal with Penelope in Odysseus' series of questions? Obviously, he cannot have Odysseus ask about his mother, his father, and his son, and leave Penelope out altogether. I suppose the completely logical poet whom Analysts so greatly admire might have Odysseus say something like, "I need not, of course, ask you about Penelope, because I have just had a report on her from Tiresias." The poet who composed this scene chose to have Odysseus ask his mother about Penelope just as he asks about the other members of the family. Illogical this may be, but I suspect few, if any, ordinary readers notice anything strange about it. Indeed, I suspect that for the ordinary modern reader and for the ancient audience Odysseus' question about Penelope seems perfectly natural.

Some critics have also found Anticleia's description of the sad state of Laertes' life anachronistic. He would not, we are told, be leading so wretched an existence while Anticleia was still alive. The only answer to this, I should say, is that, for all we know, Laertes may have sunk to this squalid state while his wife was still living. Here, as elsewhere, critics of the scene simply assume something we do not know.

Although the question of inaccurate chronology is not involved, I cannot leave this scene without a short comment on Anticleia's last words: "Keep all these things in your mind, so that later you may tell them to your wife." For Page, this "is a conclusion of almost comical vapidity."[3] It is a waste of time to quarrel with someone else's sense of humor. I shall merely say that for me these last words form a perfect conclusion to one of the *Odyssey*'s finest minor episodes. An important feature of Homer's brief account of Anticleia is her interest in her son's wife. (Indeed, we may well think that she is more interested in Penelope than Odysseus himself is during almost all the years of his long absence.) In her first speech, Anticleia asks, "Haven't you been to Ithaca yet, and haven't you seen your wife?" It is altogether appropriate that she should end her last speech on the same note.

FREDERICK M. COMBELLACK

UNIVERSITY OF OREGON

2. Cf. Merry and Riddell, *Homer's Odyssey: Books I–XII*[2] (Oxford, 1886), on line 184: ". . . if we must press the fact that at this period Telemachus could not have been more than fourteen years old, it will be possible to say that he already takes part in the feasts, which it is the privilege of a king, as dispenser of justice, to enjoy. He is admitted to some of the royal honours."

3. It may be noted that the mildly critical comment which Page attributes to "the Oxford editors" was wisely eliminated by them in the second edition.