

THE TEMPTATION OF ODYSSEUS*

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For James Hutton

The theme of this essay may not seem one that needs further exploration; a number of recent critical studies have focused on the temptation of Odysseus in Books 5-12, and scholars for whom temptation is not the central subject have assumed its effective presence. Twenty years ago Ernst Abrahamson anticipated the thematic argument of several later essays when he wrote: "The two adventures which the poet relates in his own person, Calypso and the Phaeacians, have in common that they show Odysseus held or tempted by beings of a superhuman order . . . And the temptation is not of things that are better elsewhere than at home, but of things different from anything in the world we know."¹ Abrahamson is thinking of course of "the bliss of a superhuman existence." Immortality is not the only temptation faced by Odysseus; writing of the adventure in the Cyclops' cave W. B. Stanford observes: "It becomes clear later, in the Sirens incident, when Odysseus meets a similar temptation to dangerous knowledge, that he had learned a lesson from his rash curiosity, for he takes great care to prevent any danger to his companions from hearing their deadly song."²

There is no need to multiply such references. At times the temptations have been viewed more as obstacles or tests of the hero, but whatever the descriptive language has been, the fundamental assumption

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¹ *The Adventures of Odysseus* (St. Louis 1960) 3. Chapter I, "The Adventures of Odysseus," is reprinted from *CJ* 51 (1956).

² *The Ulysses Theme* (2nd ed. repr., Ann Arbor 1968) 76. Like many others for whom temptation is not the primary theme, Stanford assumes its presence.

for many critics has been the same, namely that Odysseus experiences a series of events whose psychological significance is at least as threatening to his homeward journey as the physical obstacles they pose.³ Some writers have distinguished between conscious and unconscious experiences, and others, perhaps more cautious, have preferred to discuss the adventures in terms of "symbolic ranges of meaning."⁴ Whatever the critical focus, no one, so far as I can tell, has questioned the impact of these adventures on Odysseus' psyche, nor has much attention been given to the poet's mode of dramatizing the various temptations. These topics compose the subject of the following pages.

However difficult, one cannot ignore the problems posed by distinctions between conscious and unconscious temptations. Often the poet (or Odysseus in the *apologos*) describes what would seem a tempting stimulus, but either reports no response to it or a reaction which offers only uncertain evidence for an agent's feeling about the stimulus. Some writers assume, e.g., that because three of Odysseus' men tasted the Lotos and consequently "forgot their homecoming," their leader was also tempted to taste the Lotos. Actually, his report tells us only that he forced the scouts back on the ships and ordered the others to the ships as well, "that no one, having tasted the Lotos, might forget his homecoming" (9.102). In fact we do not even know that the scouts knew the effects of the Lotos before tasting it. If Odysseus, tired from

³ See *Essays on the Odyssey*, edited by Charles H. Taylor Jr. (Bloomington 1963), and especially Taylor's "The Obstacles to Odysseus' Return" (87-99); William S. Anderson's "Calypso and Elysium" (73-86); and George E. Dimock, Jr.'s "The Name of Odysseus" (54-72). The essays of Taylor and Dimock are also reprinted, under different titles, in *Homer's Odyssey, A Critical Handbook*, edited by Conny Nelson (Belmont 1969). Temptation also figures prominently in Charles Beye's chapter on the *Odyssey* (158-205) in his *The Iliad, the Odyssey and the Epic Tradition* (Garden City 1966). These works will hereafter be cited by the authors' names.

⁴ Taylor observes: "There is, indeed, only one occasion when he consciously wishes to yield to a temptation, even though he knows it would mean his destruction. Despite Circe's explicit warning of the mortal danger, he wishes to stop and hear the Sirens' song" (91). Beginning his summary of the adventures Taylor says: "It is remarkable, too, how many of the specific threats to Odysseus suggest symbolically the magnetic attraction of the unconscious in the human psyche" (95). The phrase quoted in my text is from Charles Segal's "The Phaeacians and the Symbolism of Odysseus' Return," *Arion* I (1962) 17-64 (hereafter cited as Segal); in the first pages of this essay Segal argues for the propriety of symbolic interpretations and considers the problem of conscious and unconscious meaning. His later essay, "Circean Temptations," *TAPA* 99 (1968) 419-28, circumspectly avoids, after the title, use of verb, noun, or adjective from the root tempt-.

his wandering, was tempted to taste the plant, there is no mention of this in his account. This is a minimal example of the problem; consider the entire experience of Odysseus among the Phaeacians, which has been interpreted as pleasant and congenial as well as threatening.⁵ Is Odysseus uneasy when he learns Poseidon is the ancestor of the Phaeacians (7.56 ff.)? Rose has argued that this passage would make Odysseus suspicious of his hosts, and he is certainly right to observe that Athena hardly gives them the most commendable lineage. Yet most recent commentators have ignored such signs of danger and have viewed the Phaeacian episode as a peaceful, even seductive, interlude. Odysseus does not reply—none is required—to the disguised Athena's instructions and information (7.48–77); he simply goes to the house and proceeds to make his supplication. Did Odysseus put two and two together and say to himself: "these people, descended from Poseidon and Eurymedon, may not be friendly; I had better be careful?" It may not be unreasonable to assume something of this sort, but since the poet says nothing of his reaction, our description of *any psychological reaction at all* must remain qualified by inherent ambiguities in the narrative technique.

Thus, lack of explicit testimony for subjective response is one problem. The other problem stems more from a casual critical method which tends to equate an attribute which leads to trouble with a "temptation." Curiosity will be our prime example. Here we are still dealing with all the difficulties inherent in any discussion of subjectivity in the epics. Yet in this case it is said the temptation proceeds from within the agent, i.e., that a particular quality of personality or character tempts the agent. The circular nature of this kind of analysis wants examination. While certain aspects of the characterization of Odysseus make him unique, it may not be unreasonable to inquire if we actually know so much more about his psyche than about that of Homer's other agents.⁶ Without denying

⁵ See Segal 22 f. for the former view; cf. the interpretation proposed by Gilbert P. Rose, "The Unfriendly Phaeacians," *TAPA* 100 (1969) 387–406.

⁶ Of course much of this sense of intimate acquaintance with the psyche of Odysseus is a function of "Die Ich-Erzählung." See Karl Reinhardt, "Die Abenteuer der Odyssee," in *Tradition und Geist* (Göttingen 1960) 47–124 (hereafter cited as Reinhardt), esp. 58–62, and Segal 23 f. who begins his comments with "The tale to the Phaeacians is told by the man who has lived it, with its uniqueness and personal vividness in his own mind. He

that paratactic art proceeds by implication (as Anderson argues, that Menelaus is rewarded with immortality for being the husband of Helen in some sense affects our apprehension of Odysseus' refusal of immortality), it may be worthwhile to focus exclusively on what is explicit in the temptation of Odysseus. Since Homer has no word denoting temptation, we are compelled to rely on an analysis of the dramatic organization of the various relevant scenes as much as we shall rely on direct speech accepting or refusing offers such as that of Calypso.⁷

The women are generally thought to present the greatest temptations. Calypso alone is without malice; unlike Circe, who would subjugate him, Calypso simply desires a "husband." Since her motive is personal pleasure and satisfaction, to harm Odysseus or to alienate him can only frustrate her own intention. Compelled by her motives and situation she must use persuasion; although she is apparently a magical being in name and origin, unlike the Sirens she does not use magic charms to achieve her desires.⁸ So the hero is free to choose; his choice has been made before the story begins, as Athena's description indicates:

αἰεὶ δὲ μαλακοῖσι καὶ αἰμυλίοισι λόγοισι
θέλγει, ὅπως Ἰθάκης ἐπιλήσεται· αὐτὰρ Ὀδυσσεύς
ἰέμενος καὶ καπνὸν ἀποθρόσκοντα νοῆσαι
ῆς γαίης, θανέειν ἱμείρεται. (1.56–59)

She is trying to charm him so that he will forget home, not with magic,

has not only lived it in the past, but relived it inwardly and absorbed and grasped it synoptically for the future." Reinhardt is not so extravagant, but several observations on Odysseus' motivation imply a similar view. Cf. Werner Suerbaum, "Die Ich-Erzählungen des Odysseus," *Poetica* 2 (1968) 150–77.

⁷ Homer has no word for "temptation;" on Greek terms for temptation see the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids 1964–1974) VI, 23 ff.: *πειράω* and related forms mean "to attempt," "to put to a test," "to try someone," "almost always in expressions of distrust" (23), which is certainly the case in the *Odyssey*. As the TDNT article shows, temptation and testing are frequently linked in the Bible from the story of Abraham (*Genesis* 22:1–19) into the New Testament. Homer uses *πειράω* and *πειράζω* of testing, and with a personal object of suspicious or hostile intent.

⁸ For another view see Richard Harder's "Odysseus und Kalypso" in his *Kleine Schriften* (Munich 1960) 148–63. Harder dwells on what Calypso is and does, noticing too little Odysseus' response. Rainer Nickel's reply, "Der Zwang der Kalypso (Odyssee 5.151–55)," *Philologus* 116 (1972) 137–38, is mistaken in taking *ἀνάγκη* (5.154) as "das Gefühl des Widerwillens." Cf. 5.14.

but with devious and flattering speech.⁹ Here, as in many scenes, even those dramatized, much is implied which may invite speculation: that she tries to make him forget, e.g., links Ogygia with a variety of scenes (the Lotos-eaters, Circe's drugs) which modern critics associate with a threat to personal identity. But his mind is fixed on home, and if lines 58–59 imply despair, they do not suggest yielding. If Calypso has enjoyed any success beyond purely sexual gratification, the only passage in which it is even suggested, either in Book 1 or 5, appears at 5.153 ("the nymph no longer pleased him").¹⁰ In effect Homer has passed over whatever temporary seduction Calypso may have enjoyed to focus on a melancholy, homesick hero. In terms of what is *actually dramatized* in Book 5, Athena's use of the present tense is misleading, for the scene is full of the tension of failure and the hostility of a rejected lover.

Commentators elaborate on the seductive and potentially fatal charms of her island home and the obvious threat in the nymph's name. But if the seductive qualities of garden and grotto were described to illuminate the temptation of Odysseus, it is strange that the poet puts Hermes rather than Odysseus in this landscape. Like the offer of immortality, the garden is intrinsically attractive, but dramatically both have already been rejected by the hero who has given himself to grief and a daily vigil by the sea (5.150–58). By presenting Hermes' announcement of deliverance before any scene between Odysseus and Calypso, the poet anticipates the conclusion and departure, passing by an opportunity to show her wooing the hero when both were free of divine coercion (Athena's *θέλγει* [line 57] is conative, and prior to the events of Book 5).

Apart from an initial peevishness Calypso's first speech to Odysseus is matter-of-fact about preparations. She gives no reason for having suddenly changed her mind, though she may be alluding to Hermes'

⁹ Cf. Hesiod, *Erga* 373–74:

μηδὲ γυνή σε νόον πυγοστόλος ἐξαπατάτω
αἰμύλα κωτίλλουσα, τεῖν διφῶσα καλὴν·

¹⁰ Anderson finds a great deal to discuss in this clause, and by comparing Proteus' account (4.555 ff.) is able to conclude that "the interval [three years] between then and now has been spent in confirming that will of Odysseus, in hardening his purpose to make unswervingly for Ithaca" (83 f.). It might be noted that Athena's description of his situation at 5.13 ff. dwells on the want of means for departure (a crew and a ship) rather than the hindrance of Calypso's beguilements.

visit at 169–70. He mistrusts her, accuses her of a covert design (173), and refuses to accept her aid unless she will take an oath that she is not plotting against him (173–79). This caution, characteristic of the man, hardly underscores nostalgia or resolution. At this point his familiar wiliness is foremost. Her reply (182 ff.), playful in tone, recognizes his knavish self-interest; then she promptly takes the oath. Only after they have returned to the cave and enjoyed dinner does Calypso try to change Odysseus' mind, and sense and tone are more threatening than enticing (203–13; note his interpretation of her tone: *μή μοι . . . χῶεο*, 215). Go and expect your share of pain, she says, which need not have been your lot if you would only remain with me and be immortal (209). We have already heard something of this offer; talking to Hermes she said:

τὸν μὲν ἐγὼ φίλεόν τε καὶ ἔτρεφον, ἣδ' ἔφασκον
θῆσιν ἀθάνατον καὶ ἀγήρων ἥματα πάντα. (5.135–36)

She does not report Odysseus' reply there, nor does he respond directly here. But she has no sooner mentioned immortality than her pique at Odysseus' apparent preference for his wife takes hold; the last five lines (209–13) virtually challenge him to say the wrong thing and risk her anger.

Sensibly, he tries to placate her and declares his wife cannot rival the nymph. He will not be lured into provoking the goddess. Does he think, in contrasting Calypso and Penelope, of the immortality and agelessness offered to him?

ἡ μὲν γὰρ βροτός ἐστι, σὺ δ' ἀθάνατος καὶ ἀγήρων. (5.218)

The repetition of the phrase from line 136 may suggest he is consciously (or perhaps unconsciously?) weighing her offer even as he depreciates his wife's merit. Formulaic speech inevitably produces such echoes. Twice later, to Alcinoos (7.257) and to Penelope (23.336), he uses line 136, explicitly referring to her offer. Yet apart from the use of the phrase (and line) we shall look in vain for a sign that he experiences any inclination to accept it. More prominently displayed is his diplomatic talent for turning the conversation away from the personal distinction between the women to the journey homeward:

ἀλλὰ καὶ ὥς ἐθέλω καὶ ἐέλδομαι ἥματα πάντα
οἵκαδ' εἴ τ' ἐλθέμεναι καὶ νόστιμον ἡμαρ ἰδέσθαι. (5.219–20)

Whereas Calypso has used 219^b of his affection for Penelope,

σὴν ἄλοχον, τῆς αἰὲν ἐέλδαι ἥματα πάντα, (5.210)

Odysseus turns it to the more neutral and less personally objectionable desire for home. And so he concludes with an acceptance of his fate, "let come what may" (221-24).

When Calypso angrily responds to Hermes that the gods forever enviously deny goddesses their right to enjoy the favors of mortal men, she mentions Demeter's love of Iasion:

ὦς δ' ὅπότ' Ἰασίωνι εὐπλόκαμος Δημήτηρ,
 ᾧ θυμῷ ἐΐξασα, μίγῃ φιλότῃτι καὶ εὐνῇ
 νειῶ ἔνι τριπόλῳ. (5.125-27)

However one translates 126^a ("yielding to her heart," "obeying an impulse"), this sort of language is never used of Odysseus by the poet, nor does the hero ever speak of himself as having, even momentarily, yielded to an impulse of the heart or desire.¹¹ Naturally this must not be taken to suggest he has no sexual appetites; it is rather that in depicting his hero Homer avoids language which might suggest emotional instability. So when Odysseus himself relates this episode to Alcinoos he recognizes Calypso's affection (7.256), notices the offered immortality (7.256 f.), and says she was never able to *persuade* him (7.258). More significantly, he asserts that throughout the seven years he was with her he constantly (*αἰεὶ*, 7.259) cried, implying he was never happy with her and his situation. While he would have little enough reason to describe soulful agonies of indecision, on the other hand it ought to be noticed how neutral and objective the language is. While reporting her feeling for him, he says nothing of his feeling for her. Consequently both verb and tense may be questioned in Anderson's observation that "On Calypso's Isle, the poet presents Odysseus *overcoming* temptations which define his attitude not only towards home, but, even more important, towards life itself"¹² (my italics). Her

¹¹ Excepting lines like 14.157 and 18.139 where Odysseus speaks under a different *persona*. What such lines do reveal, however, is an awareness of how circumstance (poverty or prosperity) may induce a man to act contrary to ethical norms and/or his own interest. We may note also the absence in the case of Odysseus of lines denoting an incongruity between action and volition, such as we see in *Il.* 4.43 (Zeus speaks to Hera):

καὶ γὰρ ἐγὼ σοὶ δῶκα ἑκὼν ἀέκοντί γε θυμῷ.

¹² Anderson 79.

so-called temptation finds no reciprocating lover, but instead a lonely and suspicious figure thinking only of home. Looking back on his departure a few days later Odysseus is not sure why she sent him on his way: "perhaps it was because of a message from Zeus, ἧ καὶ νόος ἐτράπετ' αὐτῇς" (7.263). If Odysseus is being candid now, can we think he found her intentions unambiguous? No, the threatening edge of her invitation was not lost on him; but the reversal in her attitude still puzzles him. As for the offer of immortality, its *prima facie* appeal is clear, but neither poet nor hero comments on its desirability. In short, the dramatic focus and character portrayal are not such as to suggest an intentional development of the temptation theme. The elements (*locus amoenus* and a lovely goddess) are there, with more (potential) enticements than Odysseus appears conscious of.

Circe is a different case: idyllic ease and benevolence are replaced by bizarre zoo and active malevolence. At least through the early, and crucial, stages of the story testing more than tempting provides the dramatic focus.¹³ Whereas Calypso makes promises and tries to seduce the hero, Circe uses drugs and would unman him through sexual relations; the one goddess is bitter and frustrated at his departure, giving him only the mandatory physical help, while the other has become a complaisant courtesan able to give knowledgeable advice to her departing lover. Hermes appears in both scenes, in the first to bring the commands of Zeus and so forestall effectively further dalliance, in the second to offer advice and an antidote to Circe's magic, thus giving Odysseus a chance for survival. This last contrast is central to the differences between the stories: on Circe's isle Odysseus has help, but not decisive help, since he must still utilize the "good drug" and, even after that success, take care not to accept her sexual advances before he has her oath. Dramatically, greater demands are made of Odysseus; aside from the *moly*, tests involving his courage, loyalty to his men, and sexual restraint are passed without divine aid. Only after his personal success and the release of his men does he permit himself a lapse into an easy life and forgetfulness of his *nostos*.

¹³ Here, as in later discussions of leader and crew, I am indebted to Karl Reinhardt for suggestive observations, though I have not always been able to accept his methods or conclusions. Cf. "Nirgends ist wie hier Odysseus der sich für die anderen in Gefahr Begebende, zum Epos wird das Märchenabenteuer diesmal dadurch, dass die Zauberprobe gleichzeitig zur Probe auf die Treue zwischen Führer und Gefährten wird" (78).

The first scouting party's enchantment leads to a test of Odysseus' loyalty to his men, a point effectively dramatized by Eurylochos' failure of nerve (10.266-73). Odysseus prepares, as any hero of the *Iliad* would, by arming, sword and bow against Circe's drugs (10.261-62). So Hermes is right on two counts to address him as one "ignorant of the country" (10.282; cf. 231 = 257). The divine messenger offers a *φάρμακον ἐσθλόν* to oppose her *φάρμακον κακόν*. Besides her drugs Odysseus must beware of the invitation to bed, even though it is born of fear:

ἡ δέ σ' ὑποδείσασα κελήσεται εὐνηθῆναι. (10.296)

If Odysseus first requires an oath of Circe, says Hermes, she cannot harm him further. This second danger, after that posed by the drug, is evidently sexual, as the last line of his warning shows:

μή σ' ἀπογυμνωθέντα κακὸν καὶ ἀνήνορα θήῃ. (10.301)

The dangers Hermes describes and the welcome Odysseus receives after the failed enchantment connect our scene with what Kittredge calls "that type of myth or *märchen* in which a *fée* or goddess entices her chosen hero to her other world abode, eager for his love, but impelled to test his worthiness before she accepts it."¹⁴ In such tales elements are often transposed or substituted: in this case his responsibility as a leader, rather than any sexual enticement, takes him to her house; secondly, he is "chosen" only in the sense that he is the fated hero, whose mind is not susceptible to enchantment (326 ff., especially 329). The first change should be noticed because by making his appearance a function of his leadership rather than any personal interest Homer has diminished the potential prominence of the temptation theme. If Odysseus can fulfill the instructions of Hermes, he will succeed. What we are not permitted to anticipate, however, is her speech at 325 ff., which flatters the great warrior and seductively suggests their sexual union will be a bond of mutual trust:

εὐνῆς ἡμετέρης ἐπιβήομεν, ὄφρα μίγνente
εὐνῇ καὶ φιλότῃτι πεποιθόμεν ἀλλήλοισιν. (10.334-35)

Like the Cyclops and the Sirens, Circe knows in advance of the coming of Odysseus. Flattered by her admiration and invitation, another hero

¹⁴ G. L. Kittredge, *A Study of Gawain and the Green Knight* (Cambridge, Mass. 1916) 78.

might well forget the dangers of her bed. But Odysseus is immune. "How" he asks "can you expect me to be well disposed?" Reminding her immediately of his pig-men and accusing her of some further plot (*δολοφρονέουσα*, 339), he follows Hermes' advice and demands the oath. In this brief reply (336-44) there is no wavering, no suggestion of passion competing with good sense, no hesitation. Once she takes the oath he accepts her invitation, and nothing more is said of seduction.

A description of the servants preparing his bath and meal follows. This interlude has its dramatic point in the contrast between his personal comfort and the suspicion and discontent he feels because his men have not yet been returned to their human form:

ἐσθέμεναι δ' ἐκέλευεν· ἐμῶ δ' οὐ ἦνδανε θυμῶ,
ἀλλ' ἦμην ἀλλοφρονέων, κακὰ δ' ὄσσετο θυμός. (10.373-74)

This is as close as the narrator comes to a description of subjective feeling in this episode; although his state of mind is generally characterized as a *πένθος* (376), we can see that he does not eat because he is distracted and has a foreboding of other dangers. In short, he does not trust her, as he makes clear in his reply to her next inquiry (383-87, esp. 386).

The reunion of the entire company brings the inevitable tears as well as a transformation in the character of the supposed temptress: they need, she says, to reclaim the *θυμόν* they had when they left Ithaca. This might seem another trick, for the eating and drinking she proposes as a cure for these dispirited men stretches into a year's respite on the island (467-71).¹⁵ If she *intends* a permanent stay, nothing more is said of it, and their amicable parting evinces nothing of the bitterness in Calypso's farewell. Does this year somehow lull the hero into forgetfulness of his homeward journey? We might infer as much from his comrades' admonition:

Δαιμόνι', ἦδη νῦν μιμνήσκεο πατρίδος αἴης. (10.472)

But this is as close as Homer comes to suggesting that Odysseus has yielded, if unconsciously, to the blandishments of Circe. His formulaic response is the same line used to accept Circe's advice to eat and drink (475 = 466).

¹⁵ Segal ("The Phaeacians and Odysseus' Return") speaks of the "bodily satisfactions of Circe" and "her year-long delights" (40); the brevity of Homer's description leaves most of these delights to our imagination.

Perhaps Odysseus was tempted to stay longer; the “lost” year and the prompting by his men are treated so elliptically (468 = 477: the year’s activities and those of the last day are described with the same line) that I would hesitate to stress *μυμνήσκειο*. Those who believe that Odysseus has forgotten his *nostos* altogether may want to compare the use of that verb in other passages, e.g., 3.142 and 20.138, where there is certainly no question of “oblivion.” Circe has said he is *ἀκήλητος* (10.329), which could be another trick, though nothing in his subsequent report indicates he has been charmed against his will.

Odysseus is obviously tempted by the Sirens, and two aspects of the temptation need to be emphasized. In the first place Circe knows as much about the hero’s reaction to the song as he chooses to report when he tells of the actual events. Secondly, the physical arrangements—waxing the company’s ears; tying their commander to the mast—minimize the threat. These precautions find a correlative in the compulsion of the song in that neither admits of any resistance; in effect a kind of double *ananké* operates on the hero. Rather than use Hermes’ intervention and a magical counter, Homer prefers, through Circe’s advice, to focus on practical intelligence:

*Σειρῆνας μὲν πρῶτον ἀφίξεται, αἷ ῥά τε πάντας
ἀνθρώπους θέλγουσιν, ὅτις σφέας εἰσαφίκεται.
ὅς τις αἰδρεῖη πελάση καὶ φθόγγον ἀκούσῃ
Σειρῆνων, τῷ δ’ οὔ τι γυνή καὶ νήπια τέκνα
οἴκαδε νοστήσαντι παρίσταται οὐδὲ γάνυνται,
ἀλλὰ τε Σειρῆνες λιγυρῇ θέλγουσιν αἰοιδῇ. (12.39–44)¹⁶*

As in the case of Circe’s magic drug, the song has absolute power if one is not prepared. Ignorance is fatal. So in a sense the temptation to knowledge so many students have seen here is pitted against a kind of knowledge, i.e., the cautionary advice of Circe and the practical measures Odysseus takes.

¹⁶ *αἰδρεῖη* in 12.41 connects this episode with the same word and motif in the Circe episode (10.231 = 10.257; elsewhere only 11.272 of Epikaste). *αἰδρεῖς* only at 10.282 and *Il.* 3.219, in Antenor’s description of Odysseus’ appearance! *θέλω* in 40 and 44 is also used of Calypso and Circe; it would appear both from Circe’s warning and Odysseus’ behavior that the mere *sound* of their song is sufficient to entrance their victims: “*φθόγγον* den Schall der Stimme, der also schon abgesehen von dem Inhalt des Gesanges eine bezaubernde Wirkung übt: vgl: 185. 187. 192” (Amis-Hentze-Cauer *ad* 12.41). So G. K. Gresseth, “The Homeric Sirens,” *TAPA* 101 (1970), concludes that “they represent primarily Magic Song” (217).

Because Circe foretells everything save the content of the song, the auditor/reader is permitted to anticipate the temptation, to go through a dress rehearsal, as it were, which has the effect of reducing the tension of the actual event. The psychological potential of the tempting is further mitigated by the similar language used, first by Circe,

... αὐτὰρ αὐτὸς ἀκουέμεν αἶ κ' ἐθέλησθα, (12.49)

and then by Odysseus, after the call of the Sirens:

αὐτὰρ ἐμὸν κῆρ
ἦθελ' ἀκουέμεναι. (12.192-93)

If we are looking for indications of subjective response, this is virtually all we are given. One might feel Odysseus is programmed to respond as he does, for, as he tells the story, Circe knows as much about this temptation and his reaction as he experiences (53: 193^b-94; 54: 196).

Contrast the spontaneous revelation of thought and character when Circe tells him of Scylla and Charybdis: he asks if he cannot flee the one and fight off the other (12.113-14). Circe's tale would have frightened anyone else, but Odysseus is still the old warrior, as she realizes:

σχέτλιε, καὶ δὴ αὖ τοι πολεμήϊα ἔργα μέμηλε
καὶ πόνος· οὐδὲ θεοῖσιν ὑπείξεται ἀθανάτοισιν; (12.116-17)

His question implies exactly what she sees, that he will not accept this dilemma and the minimal necessary losses. Subsequently he "forgets" her warning, and puts on his armor to fight with Scylla (12.226 ff.); of course his effort is vain, but the incident shows how his disposition to play the warrior can still surface. In a world where guile and magic are the only viable tools Odysseus occasionally forgets his trickster origins and becomes, usually for only a moment, a hero from the plains of Troy. The Sirens play on this "egotism" unsuccessfully because his caution has put the temptation out of reach. Elsewhere this ambiguity in character appears most distinctly in the Cyclops episode. The typical hero of the *Iliad* is easily tempted "to be a man" (to prove himself publicly) even when self-assertion does not make sense. Homer uses this motif sparingly in Books 5-12, saving it for those scenes of insult and injury Odysseus must endure at home.

One more word on the Sirens. If Homer is playing *auf die Eigenliebe*

(Ameis-Hentze-Cauer), it is a muted note. Odysseus' response, in itself, tells us far less about the man than his reaction to Circe's description of Scylla and Charybdis. Karl Reinhardt, explaining the Sirens' appeal, refers us to Odysseus' manner when Demodocus sings of Troy; the circumstances and content are different, but my point is that the poet tells us so little *explicitly* about the temptation of the Sirens *as it affects the hero* that critics are driven to other scenes for exegesis.¹⁷ The poet could have amplified Odysseus' reaction, but did not choose to. Finally, apart from magical song, the temptation here is said to appeal to his curiosity (Troy and the future: lines 188-91). As Germain has observed, a truly Greek hero, i.e., a truly curious hero, would have disembarked to learn more.¹⁸

These three episodes are generally considered the most significant for the temptation theme. Odysseus himself highlights the offers of Circe and Calypso in his preface to the adventures (9.29-33). Though they both sought him, he says, they did not persuade him, for nothing is sweeter than home and parents. His aim is to obtain homeward passage, and he may be stretching the facts just a bit in order to impress Alcinoo.¹⁹ Among the other episodes there is hardly one that has not been interpreted as a temptation by one critic or another. Several are brief and undramatic, calling for little comment, but even in the Cicones raid Homer prefigures a later scene of temptation involving Odysseus' men. And since his comrades prove more ready to succumb to things of the flesh, their demise ought to be charted.²⁰

Their refusal to flee with him after the raid is only the first instance of rebellion and distrust. Odysseus is no more in absolute command than Agamemnon. No reason is offered for their disobedience beyond the suggestion that they preferred to feast after the fight (9.43-46): "they

¹⁷ Reinhardt 60.

¹⁸ Gabriel Germain, *Genèse de l'Odysée* (Paris 1954) 390.

¹⁹ W. J. Woodhouse, *The Composition of Homer's Odyssey* (Oxford 1930), puts it strongly: "No such proposal was ever made by her [Circe], but Odysseus for his own glorification wilfully misrepresents her, by ascribing to her a desire that belonged to Kalypso alone" (50). I have tried to avoid digressions on analytical problems, but of course discrepancies of this sort offer an opportunity for finding interpolations (Ameis-Hentze-Cauer *ad* 931 bracket 9.30-32, noting the singular *ἐπειθεν* at 33), or for supplying motivations.

²⁰ Cf. Beye 199: "The travel stories . . . show Odysseus repeatedly tempted by his intellectual curiosity and the crew by their greed. The temptation of the crew runs as a counter theme, a kind of sensual curiosity, usually manifesting itself in gluttony."

did not obey me; they ate and drank." Here, as later, Homer (Odysseus) is uninterested in describing motivation; the most obvious motive would seem to be that they have no positive reason to fear retaliation, and so may do as they please. No recrimination follows the battle; his men do not repent their mutiny, nor does the leader rebuke them.

With the next landing, among the Lotos-eaters, comes the first overt statement of a theme frequent in Odysseus' tale, forgetfulness and more particularly the forgetting of the reason for their journey (*νόστου τε λαθέσθαι*, 9.97; cf. 102). The men, not their leader, are subdued by the magical plant. Not a trace of personal interest in the plant is evinced by Odysseus; he leads his scouts back by force (9.98-99). As in the confrontation with Circe, the absolute power of the drug admits no middle ground: one either eats and forgets, or escapes. So little of himself does Odysseus reveal here that it would be inaccurate to call him indifferent to the Lotos. Even the men may have eaten by chance; still, it remains a second sign of their proclivity for trouble.²¹

Two kinds of temptation have been observed in the cave of the Cyclops. First, Odysseus' imprudent insistence on staying to meet the monster is frequently attributed to a tempting curiosity. Secondly, on two occasions he is seized by an impulse to act in a manner contrary to his best interests though gratifying to his ego. Curiosity is of course an attribute, an attitude toward the world, which may make the hero more susceptible to temptations but is perhaps not best termed a temptation as such (it is the knowledge offered Christ by Satan that is expected to be tempting, not Christ's curiosity about the world). Were it not for his precautions the Sirens would apparently be able to take advantage of Odysseus' curiosity and so destroy him. The Cyclops, however, does not himself tempt or entice Odysseus into the cave, though such temptations occur commonly in related folktales.²²

²¹ Cf. Taylor 88 f.: "The lotus-eater loses all consciousness of self, of being an individual with origins of his own. For a man of Odysseus' powerful intelligence this is an easy temptation to resist, easier than those which follow. He quickly recognizes that eating the lotus is self-destructive, for he tells the Phaeacians that it was not literal death which the Lotus-eaters planned for his men, but the narcotic effects of the lotus instead. That this holds no attraction for Odysseus underscores an important dimension of his heroic character."

²² Justin Glenn, "The Polyphemus Folktale and Homer's *Kyklôpeia*," *TAPA* 102 (1971) 133-81, notes twenty-eight versions of this folktale in which "the giant entices

Since the formulaic lines with which Odysseus announces his intention to explore the island across the strait do not always lead to trouble, we should perhaps also see in them a reflection of any Greek traveler's concern for the uncertainties of a strange country:

ἐλθὼν τῶνδ' ἀνδρῶν πειρήσομαι, οἳ τινές εἰσιν,
ἦ ῥ' οἳ γ' ὕβρισταί τε καὶ ἄγριοι οὐδὲ δίκαιοι
ἦε φιλόξενοι, καὶ σφιν νόος ἐστὶ θεοῦδης. (9.174-176)

(Cf. 6.119-21 = 13.200-202.)²³ *πειράω* combines "learn about" and "test." In the cave, with his men urging him to take the cheese and run, he wants to see the owner and to see if he will give guest-gifts, which is to be a prominent theme throughout the episode.²⁴ And it is "testing" rather than "learning" that is highlighted during this adventure: he goes out to discover what kind of men they are (*πειρήσομαι*, 174) and shortly finds he is the one being tested (*πειράζων*, 9.281). His curiosity and determination to investigate lead to trouble here; on Phaeacia (6.119 ff.; *πειρήσομαι*, 126) they lead to his salvation. The difference of course is the circumstances, and while I see little evidence for Odysseus being tempted by either Nausicaa or her father's "offer" (7.311 ff.; Odysseus' reply [7.331-33] completely ignores the suggested marriage), there is certainly more to tempt him there than in the cave.

In two passages in this episode Odysseus has an impulse to act in a manner immediately gratifying but ultimately dangerous. When the Cyclops has gone to sleep the first night the hero's reaction is to plunge his sword into the chest of his enemy, thereby revenging his two comrades just eaten, the sort of reaction one might expect from an

the hero into his lair" (153). There is no reason to suppose Homer knew such a version, but the lure of Circe's song has a similar function (for his men) in that tale.

²³ Reinhardt makes a great deal of 9.173-75: "Als der Prüfende entwirft er seinen Plan (16, 304 ff.), geht er ans Werk, wie ihn Athene heisst (13, 303 ff.). Doch woher hat er einen solchen Auftrag dem Kyklopen gegenüber? In der Tat hat hier das Prüfen einen anderen Sinn: es führt zu dem ironischen Zusammenstoß der beiden Welten, der, aus der Odysseus kommt, und der, in die er sich begibt. Er prüft als Iliasheld, gewohnt, um seines Ranges, seines Ruhmes willen allenthalben höchste Ehren, reichste Gastgeschenke zu empfangen" (66 f.). Had he observed the parallels in Books 6 and 13 the irony might have seemed tempered, but for him these lines clearly introduce Odysseus as *Iliasheld*; curiosity is too mundane a motivation.

²⁴ See A. J. Podlecki, "Guest-gifts and nobodies in *Odyssey* 9," *Phoenix* 15 (1961) 125-33.

Achilles.²⁵ But a second thought stays him when he thinks of his company trying to move the rock at the entrance. The contrast between impulse and prudence is laid out in a μὲν . . . δέ antithesis (299–302). Oddly, the first, and rejected, course of action, and the one which would appear the more spontaneous, is phrased in language that suggests conscious planning (βούλευσα . . . οὐτάμεναι), while the second idea, more comprehensive and far-sighted, comes to him as ἔτερος δέ με θυμὸς ἔρκεν.²⁶ Despite the form it is fair to say he rejects a tempting, immediate satisfaction for a more deliberate revenge and escape. A second temptation is not successfully resisted. Having escaped the cave and thinking to call out a second taunt, Odysseus is checked by his men who plead the danger from another missile; but he, κεκοτηότι θυμῷ (501), calls again, this time identifying himself and so giving Polyphemus an exact name to curse when he prays to father Poseidon. It is the vaunt of a hero of the *Iliad*; he finally pronounces his ὄνομα κλυτόν (364) which the Cyclops asked for earlier. Yet in both passages the “impulse” is dissipated by the form of expression; in the first passage by the elaborate antithesis, in the second by dramatic extension.²⁷

²⁵ Glenn (see note 22), who is interested in the folktale and its variations, seems to consider 9.299–305 the only “temptation” in this version. He emphasizes that Homer’s manner, in making Odysseus *think*, is almost unique among these tales, in which the hero usually acts automatically.

This type of temptation is intimately connected with numerous occasions in the second half of the poem when Odysseus, disguised in a hostile environment, is provoked by the suitors or the servants and is tempted to respond in ways which would prematurely reveal his identity. These situations are often more vividly threatening than the adventures of the *apologos*, and the poet’s attention to Odysseus’ reaction, i.e., the difficulty with which he represses the impulse to attack his enemies immediately, is far more thoroughly delineated than in the middle books. These temptations, moreover, are bound up with a consciously expanded testing (πειράω) theme. I am preparing a paper on this subject which should appear in the near future.

²⁶ For a discussion of the order of the alternatives and its significance see Walter Arend, *Die typischen Szenen bei Homer* (Berlin 1930) 109.

²⁷ This scene, developed at some length (taunt/retaliation/rebuke/taunt/response/taunt/curse), seems to me of such studied elaboration that it is difficult to speak of Odysseus acting “compulsively;” as soon as he thinks it safe he once again acts *als Iliasheld*. Bernard Fenik, *Studies in the Odyssey* (Wiesbaden 1974), writes that “he compulsively reveals his name” (208) and “In a moment of uncontrolled fury and in the flush of success Odysseus taunts the grisly cannibal . . .” (210). κερτομίοισι (474) and ἐρεθίζεμεν (494) suggest calculated teasing and provocation; cf. *Il.* 4.5–6:

αὐτίκ' ἐπειράτω Κρονίδης ἐρεθίζεμεν Ἥρην
κερτομίοις ἐπέεσσιν, παραβλήδην ἀγορεύων.

Clearly the whole episode is more concerned with testing than with temptation. Despite analytic arguments Homer's adaptation of this folktale makes a good story appropriate to the character of his protagonist. Reinhardt has argued that the hero of the *Iliad* is poorly suited for the adventures which form the middle of the *Odyssey* and that Homer consciously initiates his old hero into the new perils via the cave of Polyphemos. When he arrives Odysseus sees himself as one of the heroes who followed Agamemnon (9.263); his vaunt as he sails away shows that he is trying to play that role, disregarding his losses in the cave. Reinhardt's arguments for the relation of this episode to that of Aeolos and the Laestrygonians will not convince everyone, and it is very much the Iliadic Odysseus who arms to face Scylla.²⁸ Perhaps a more revealing focus is that of scholars who see Odysseus as a combination of trickster and warrior hero (Wily Lad and Achilles), or, as Paula Philippson put it, "Zwischen den Bereichen der Athena und des Hermes wechselt das Wesen und so auch das Leben des Odysseus."²⁹ Curiosity is typical of the trickster figure, who is frequently represented as rather naively falling into trouble; Odysseus the self-confident leader is obviously a legacy of the *Iliad*. Whereas Philippson and most scholars assume Homer has successfully integrated the two types, I am inclined to think the two conceptions less compatible, at times even contradictory.³⁰ Within this episode the oscillation between "heroic" motifs (guest-friendship, the morality of gods and men, self-assertion in quest of fame) and typical motifs from trickster stories (curiosity at once innocent and harmful, tricks and stratagems of an earthy sort [imagine Achilles clinging to the belly of a ram!], gruesome consequences) produces a variegated tale. "Temptation" is one of those rubrics which have been used for glue, both for internal coherence and to relate it to other adventures. All the temptations apparent here, however, spring from the character of Odysseus himself, spontaneous expressions

²⁸ Reinhardt 74-76.

²⁹ Paula Philippson, "Die vorhomerische und die homerische Gestalt des Odysseus," *MH* 4 (1947) 14-27; 15. Among more recent critics Charles Beye has emphasized this element in Odysseus more than most (163-64; 183).

³⁰ We expect a literary hero to be consistent, that, as Philippson concludes, "immer ist er der Gleiche, immer verhält er sich so, wie nur er, aus seines Wesens Kern heraus, sich verhalten kann" (22). The flaw in her analysis seems to me to be that though she clearly recognizes the varied and discrepant origins of Odysseus, she also assumes from the first that the character will be unambiguous (cf. her comments on *κερδαλέος*, 11-12).

of a multifaceted personality; the cunning pragmatist suppresses an impulse to revenge his men; the heroic warrior foolishly boasts of his success.

This brief analysis certainly does not comprehend all the problems and subtleties of an extraordinary episode. It may be felt that my hypothesis of "two characters," which is not in itself novel, implies that failed artistic effort has resulted in what we term temptation. But it is the nature of Homeric technique (paratactic, looking at one item or situation at a time, juxtaposing rather than integrating reactions in gesture and speech) as well as the diverse origins of his hero that account for apparently contradictory attitudes and behavior. Odysseus is a transitional man, composite of warrior hero on the one hand and more primitive and elemental trickster figure on the other, moving toward an altogether more sophisticated type of protagonist for whom self-consciousness is the most significant attribute.

In the fiasco following their departure from Aeolos' island Odysseus yields momentarily to the despair Athena alluded to in Book 1.³¹ This is not a disposition Homer develops, though the necessity of "endurance" (showing "character" we might say) is recurrent. Suicide is not contemplated elsewhere in the epics. Here he is hardly awake before, grasping the situation and knowing how close to home they were, he thinks for a moment of throwing himself into the sea. He gives, in a very terse description of this psychological plunge, no reason for the decision to endure. We have only to compare the description of his efforts to attain Scheria from the time Poseidon's storm first assaults the raft (5.291 ff.) to see how such a scene might be amplified; more specifically, if we compare his speech at 5.299-312, a characteristic heroic outlook appears there which suggests resignation rather than despondency: the wish to die at Troy (5.308) is naturally coupled with the recollection of a day of great fame for himself

³¹ 1.57-58; 10.49 ff.; perhaps one may also see a glimmer of despair at 10.192 f., though Ameis-Hentze-Cauer think he has a plan and is only withholding it, and Dimock sees a pun in *μῆτις* (62). Most critics writing about temptation are looking for a triumphant Odysseus; consequently these passages get little play in their pages (see, however, Taylor's comments [89]). In light of the common assumption that Odysseus is tempted "to surrender his individual identity" (Taylor 89), tempted "to oblivion" (Dimock [68] of the temptation of the cattle of the Sun), or tempted to something like a "death-wish" (Anderson [85] "without pressing the psychological term"), one might expect Homer to have given more information on Odysseus' melancholy.

(5.309 f.), which in turn gives him a reason for enduring present misfortune, so that the wish to be dead is contradicted by its content, i.e., his past fame and hope for future report demand patience and survival.

I referred to the first temptation in the cave as an "impulse" to kill the Cyclops, yet anyone who looks at the passage will observe how structured it is, and so perhaps object to "impulse." Homer regularly transposes instinctive or impulsive thoughts into intellectual terms and precise divisions, thereby denying them something of their potential immediacy. Rather than say "I was about to throw myself overboard but . . ." the poet prefers a verb of thinking and a disjunctive construction:

αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ γε
ἐργόμενος κατὰ θυμὸν ἀμύμονα μερμήριξα
ἥε πεσὼν ἐκ νηὸς ἀποφθίμην ἐνὶ πόντῳ,
ἢ ἄκέων τλαίην καὶ ἔτι ζωοῖσι μετείην. (10.49-52)

Not only does the construction itself transform the impulse into a considered division, but the fact that this syntax is used several times, and is apparently traditional, further augments the distance between immediate feeling and its formulation and expression.³² Or, to describe this stylistic mode in slightly different terms, one might say that the "impulse" makes its appearance in a schematized form which implies that modes of feeling and thought only come to consciousness in pairs or sets. Odysseus is tempted to give up, but the scene is not dramatized, and we must infer his reason for considering suicide, even if his frustration seems obvious enough. Though the incident highlights again the mutual distrust of crew and leader, this theme, too, remains more latent than might be expected. In fact it is a little surprising to find Odysseus sharing responsibility for the accident when he returns to the court of Aeolos (10.68). The transition to the Laestrygonian adventure is rapid, leaving little time for questions.

This is an enigmatic episode and has been the object of critical ingenuity. How can we explain Odysseus' decision not to anchor with the other ships? Why, in a perfect harbor, does he take what would apparently be the least satisfactory, i.e., the outermost, position?

³² On the form of these statements see Arend (see note 27) 110 ff. and Christian Voigt, *Überlegung und Entscheidung* (Berlin 1934) 80-81.

"Odysseus' ship alone survives because he refuses to be tempted by the smooth waters of the protected harbor."³³ What sort of sailor is not "tempted" by a good berth after a long voyage? At least Taylor is thoroughly symbolic in his reading, which may be as satisfying as "His common sense saves him."³⁴ The problem, of course, is that the narrator gives no motivation for not anchoring among the other ships in harbor explicitly described as protected, calm, and spacious. Even if we can understand the text to mean that Odysseus anchored at the end of the line, and so was more removed than the others from the best situation but not actually outside the harbor, still we must wonder why he, the admiral, has a position evidently less secure, whether he took such a position by chance or design, and if by design, for what reason. Lines 125 ff. seem to indicate that Odysseus' ship is not within the harbor, though in danger; perhaps, being at the extreme of the line, he is out of range in the first instance but still must make a run for the open sea (131) to avoid the artillery of the giants. Whatever the facts of anchorage are, they are not clear, but they are given far more attention than the motivation of Odysseus. If he has failed them as a leader, no one on his own ship ever complains; if he had an intuition of trouble, as in the cave of the Cyclops, he tells neither the reader nor his men. To connect this episode intimately with the preceding disasters, as Reinhardt has, may explain some elements, but we shall search in vain for explicit connections. Not only are we offered nothing to justify assertions of temptation here, but if we look forward to Thrinacia, where the distrust between crew and commander reaches its climax, and where, furthermore, the temptation of the crew is developed in a dramatically plausible manner, we must be sceptical of claims that the Laestrygonian landing was designed to deepen the psychological portrait of crew or leader. The Thrinacian episode shows just such interest, however, as the artist pursues the deterioration of morals and morale. So far as temptation is concerned, this is the most elaborately drawn episode in the poem; not Odysseus but his crew is the subject, or at least that is the impression the hero gives as he recounts their ultimate test.

When Odysseus hears the lowing of the cattle, he remembers the

³³ Taylor 92.

³⁴ Beye 200.

warning of Teiresias and Circe (12.265 ff.). And when he tells the crew of the danger—only a vague “most terrible harm” at this point—they rebel; Eurylochos’ speech indicates their weakness, both physical (279–81) and psychological (284–90). But initially the rebellion is not serious, for at the time there is no obstacle to departure the next morning. In this weakened and rebellious group Odysseus senses the trouble ahead (295) and replies that though they force him (297) they must nonetheless swear not to kill any cattle or sheep on the island. This is a nice dramatic touch: by naming the danger he virtually offers the cattle to them before the need arises; yet he is concerned enough for them to take the precaution of the oath. Thus he anticipates their weakness and inability to stay away from the cattle, and even in the almost casual reference to the supplies Circe provided we may see an implicit foreboding that somehow food and hunger will be the issue. Here, with their ready oath (303), scene one concludes.

An interlude follows (landing, dining, report of the storm: 305–18). Scene two begins with yet another exhortation not to eat the herds (320–21). Earlier he recalled Circe’s warning that the island of the Sun was terribly dangerous (273–75); secondly he connected the danger with killing the herds there (299–301); now he draws the explicit connection between the cattle and the god (321–23). Restraint (*ἀπεχόμεθα*, 321; *ἀπέχοντο*, 328) has become the key virtue. This last line (328) works like a pivot in the story, succinctly describing their efforts to resist eating the cattle as well as their desire for food:

τόφρα βοῶν ἀπέχοντο λιλαιόμενοι βιότοιο. (12.328)

Now they are forced to hunt and fish, for famine is upon them (330–32), and at this moment Odysseus relates how he went away to pray, hoping one of the gods would show him a way to escape the island. This extraordinary private prayer is all the more curious for the motive suggested by 335:

ἀλλ’ ὅτε δὴ διὰ νήσου ἰὼν ἦλυξα ἐταίρους, (12.335)

“but when going across the island I fled (escaped: *ἦλυξα*, cf. 12.140 and Ameis-Hentze-Cauer *ad* 335) my comrades.” Why does he want to separate himself from them? Perhaps because of their mutual distrust, as Ameis-Hentze-Cauer suggest, but again we are left to conjecture.

In any case he falls asleep (the gift of the gods and answer to his prayer [338]!) and as a result of the separation has no part in either their *kaké boulé* (339) nor the pollution which follows from the slaughter of the cattle.

Eurylochos plays the tempter (340 ff.), voicing the sentiments of all the men. They are fully aware of the dangers—hence the vow of a temple (346)—but it is better to face the wrath of the gods and die at sea (348–50) than to waste away from starvation (342 and 351). The choice, the alternatives present, the fear of divine wrath pitted against immediate hunger, the conscious decision to take a risk in order to appease their hunger, all this is articulated precisely and clearly. They are simultaneously tempted to eat and to violate the sacred herd of the god; having resisted as long as supplies and character permit, they succumb to their fate. There is no better example of a dramatic treatment of temptation in the *Odyssey*.

It may be objected that I have emphasized too much the role of the crew, that Odysseus, too, is tempted, but being made of iron, as Eurylochos says, he resists. Possibly. But Odysseus in reporting this story never says he was hungry, or that he joined his men in fishing and scavenging the countryside. He remains, literally, removed from their struggle, their decision, their punishment. His strength is contrasted with their fatigue, and the drama of temptation finds them centerstage.

If these arguments are persuasive, a mild paradox has appeared, for it seems that his comrades have been, all along, far more susceptible to temptation than their commander.³⁵ Even so, it must be remembered that they have no inclination to wait for the Cyclops' return, and it is the crew that stirs Odysseus from his rest in Circe's bed. My impression is that the poet was more interested in the relations between captain and crew than in the temptation of either. Throughout the *apologos* and the Calypso narrative Odysseus appears relatively im-

³⁵ Many scholars have noticed contrasts between Odysseus and crew, but those writing on temptation have been inclined to dismiss the crew as a weak set of sensual gluttons, an attitude which caused this elaborately dramatized episode to receive less attention than it ought. Fenik's pages (see note 28) are devoted to an evaluation of their moral culpability and the comparisons made between crew and suitors; his analysis, though unconcerned with temptation, is well worth reading for its judicious restraint and survey of scholarly opinion (209 ff.). He stresses the external (divine) compulsion affecting Odysseus and his men: "the gods *force* them to remain on the island" and the sleep of Odysseus is "*sent upon him by the gods*" (213; his italics).

pervious to temptations posed by other agents, and only occasionally susceptible to tempting impulses originating in his own psyche. Calypso, who is usually given the greatest credit as a temptress, seems to me to move him least of all. His response to Circe's sensuality comes after the crisis and is not represented as a dangerous yielding. Typical of Homer's reluctance to let the temptation theme have its head is the binding of the hero before the Sirens. So very little psychic stress is explicitly described; how forceful—shall we say how "transitive"?—these temptations are will depend upon the auditor's imaginative response to the juxtaposition of agent and stimulus.

If we group Calypso, Circe, the Sirens, and the Lotos (?) in a class of temptations in which the external stimulus is most prominent, but subjective response minimal, then we can group that disparate group including curiosity, despair, and vainglory into a second class in which some internal stimulus prompts the hero to an action incongruent with his best interests. But the latter group would more properly be termed attributes or qualities of character, permanent or transitory, than temptations. Curiosity and vainglory are not moral flaws for the Greeks; on the contrary, one might argue these attributes are too common to give us insight into Odysseus' character. No intellectual, but a lost sailor and a frustrated warrior, Odysseus must inquire for the way home. In fairy land a few mistakes are inevitable. Despair is too little emphasized in Homer's text to count it more than a momentary affliction of the weary warrior. Looking to the first group, in which the external stimulus is more striking than Odysseus' response, we might notice that in a sense all temptations, if they are strictly named, must play with the psyche at least a little, i.e., leave it, if only for a moment, uncertain and divided in its purposes. If we cannot find Odysseus wavering, truly affected by an image of himself as an immortalized hero or pondering a future of total sensuality, then we must conclude he is not consciously tempted by the offers. Odysseus manages to enjoy the sexuality of Calypso and Circe without inclining toward permanent seduction. Though he has praise enough for eating and drinking, drunkenness and gluttony never get him into trouble. For through the swirl of sensual delights encountered, and occasionally accepted, Odysseus never once consciously considers any alternative to his homeward quest. He may be compelled to wait, or he may forget for a

while his ultimate goal, but finally the image we have of him in Hades, observing the portrait gallery of fair ladies, gives an accurate estimation of his involvement.

Temptation, in fact, has too many psychic connotations to be usefully employed in many of these scenes. The charms of Calypso's garden are evidently real, as we see from Hermes' appreciation, but they are not there *for Odysseus*, at least so far as any explicit statement is concerned. This is Homeric parataxis on the scenic level, presenting descriptions of intrinsic attractiveness without any subjective color or comment which might show their power over the hero's spirit. So the Lotos can heal the wounds of time and strife, and has made some scouts its victims, but if Odysseus is tempted to give up and forget the labor of the homeward journey, we must make that inference for him; he says nothing of it. Revelations of personal feeling are rare throughout, and the despair in the midst of the Aeolus failure is all the more striking for this reason. Pleasures and hardships evoke only a minimal response, and this often formulaic (the ritual lament after each fresh loss of men). Juxtaposition of hero and situation without detailed integration does not mean that Homer intended to seal his hero off from the environment, only that his style minimizes interaction. In most episodes Odysseus' men fall prey readily and thoughtlessly to the snares he avoids or ignores. With the exception of the Sirens' call, they are always the victims, in most cases because of their own weaknesses. Their attrition is necessary to the story, and in so far as the tales are concerned with effective temptations, the men are collectively the protagonist, and the enduring Odysseus is their foil.