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Chaos, Order, and Cunning in the *Odyssey*

by M. E. Heatherington

THE chaos caused by the Trojan War did not end when the war did. Besides Odysseus's own troubles, we have ample testimony in the *Telemachia* from Nestor (III) and Menelaos (IV),¹ and from most of the heroes in Hades (XI, XXIV), that disruption, confusion, disorder, and despair were the norm among the Achaian host for many years after the fall of Troy. The whole thrust of the *Odyssey* is toward a restoration of order to that chaotic universe, a social and moral order which all who knew Odysseus swear did obtain on Ithaka before he left, but which we never actually see holding true. Athene promises (or threatens) that the bloodshed will stop and all will be well, when she shouts at the very end of the poem: "Hold back, men of Ithaka, from the wearisome fighting, / so that most soon, and without blood, you can settle everything'" (XXIV, 531-2)—a cheering sentiment, except that Zeus has to send down a

¹ *The Odyssey of Homer*, trans. and ed. Richmond Lattimore (New York, 1965). References to this edition will cite book and line numbers in parentheses.

thunderbolt (539–40) to get the slaughter to stop. In short, the *Odyssey* begins with “the man of many ways, who was driven / far journeys” (I, 1–2), ends with the disguised Athene settling pledges (XXIV, 546–8), and in between describes a complex, serpentine, slow-convulsive creeping through different kinds of confusion toward some kind of stability. Because the stability is never realized within the poem but is strongly hinted at for afterwards, the process or the striving matters at least as much as the result.

We know the result within the first twenty-one lines and Odysseus knows before he leaves Circe’s island for his second journey past the Sirens (XI, 100–37); so, as Erich Auerbach says, “Odysseus’ destiny is clearly defined.”² The problem, then, is not so much *what*, as *how* and *when*, and among the many delights in the poem is watching Odysseus’ careful exercise of style and timing. The relative absence of gods in the *Odyssey*, as compared with the *Iliad*,³ is one indication that the disorder which must be set right is essentially a human one and therefore requires the human methods of Odysseus. His controls over the universe—which Paul Radin declares to be the dominant characteristic of sorcerers and shamans⁴—consist of his own unaided strengths, skills, and cunning. They are extraordinary capacities, coming to the fore in response to extraordinary situations which we all, inside and outside the poem, are warned of in advance. But they are not magical powers; indeed, in some cases they are mortally limited.

The obstacles Odysseus must face are undeniably formidable. To begin with, he must appease Poseidon; and, as Nestor observes, “The will of the everlasting gods is not turned suddenly” (III, 147). Then, before he can reach Ithaka, he must shake off Troy; the Great Wanderings through live monsters

² *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Thought*, trans. Willard R. Trask (Garden City, N.Y., 1957), p. 10.

³ Trans. and ed. Richmond Lattimore (Chicago, 1961). References to this edition will cite book and line numbers in parentheses.

⁴ *Primitive Religion: Its Nature and Origin* (New York, 1957), pp. 25–6, 60–1, 68.

and dead souls in IX–XII are a kind of purge of the war,⁵ as the slaughter of the suitors is another kind of purge. Once on Ithaka, Odysseus must deal not only with arrogant suitors and bad servants, but also with his own anger, pride, and sorrow. What permits him to cope with all these traumata is, principally, his brain: his ability to out-think, out-talk, and out-sneak virtually all the traps and tests he must confront. It cannot be accidental that Athene, goddess of wisdom, is one of the few gods prominent in this work, for, in a sense, the *Odyssey* is “about” brains, as the *Iliad*, also in a sense, was “about” brawn.

This is not to deny the many similarities between the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*—repeated characters, stock epithets, set pieces, carried-over themes, for example—but much more to the point here are the differences between the two works. For example, both poems are concerned with revenge, certainly a common enough theme in heroic literature, as H. M. Chadwick⁶ and others have noted; but C. M. Bowra points out that

when Odysseus kills the suitors, he would be thought entirely justified by the poet and his hearers. But when Achilles seeks revenge on Hector, his mood is different and its results are less laudable. In the first place, his fury extends to others who are quite innocent And in the second place, he is not content with killing Hector. . . . The true heroic note is sounded by Odysseus when he forbids any rejoicing over the dead suitors. . . .⁷

Disagreeing with this estimation, Cedric H. Whitman thinks that “the scene as a whole remains a massacre. . . . It is meant to be a reestablishment of right order, but an orgy of blood vengeance peers through. . . .”⁸ Whichever attitude one takes toward the justifiability of Odysseus’ behavior, it appears undeniable that

⁵ After Book XIII, the return to Ithaka, we are reminded of the war only twice: once when Odysseus assumes his warrior role again (XXI–II) and once in the return to Hades (XXIV).

⁶ *The Heroic Age* (London, 1912; repr. 1967), p. 353.

⁷ *Tradition and Design in the Iliad* (Oxford, 1930), p. 20.

⁸ *Homer and the Homeric Tradition* (New York, 1958), pp. 305–6.

the *Odyssey*'s version of vengeance is not the same as the *Iliad*'s.

Vengeance is part of a larger moral scheme having to do with justice and punishment of sins, and again the treatment of this morality is different in the two works. According to E. R. Dodds, "the strongest moral force which Homeric man knows is not the fear of god, but respect for public opinion,"⁹ that is, *aidos*. A violation of *aidos* often leads to *atē*, or what Bowra calls "the infatuation that leads to disaster" (p. 19), and thence to *hubris*, or "arrogance in word or deed or even thought" (Dodds, p. 31). In the case of the *Iliad*, all three—*aidos*, *atē*, and *hubris*—are violated by the hero himself, when he rejects Agamemnon's apology in Book IX. But in the *Odyssey*, the sinners are the hero's enemies, the suitors in their arrogant flaunting of hospitality and consequent offense to Zeus, *paterfamilias*, supreme host, and god of house and hearth.¹⁰

Besides these, many other differences between the Homeric poems are apparent (different locales, characters, social classes, structures,¹¹ even the phrasings of the titles), all hinting at a change in the society for which Homer composed the epics.¹² Unlike the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey* deals with resolution instead of resignation in an essentially comic pattern, not tragic—comic because Odysseus survives and his purpose prevails.

That purpose, the restoration of order, is carried through by Odysseus himself, virtually unaided by the gods. In him we find a man already formed and grown, who does not discover his identity but reveals it.¹³ Auerbach has observed that Homeric heroes "wake up every morning as if it were the first day of their lives" (p. 10)—that is, they live in a perpetual present,

⁹ *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley, 1951), p. 18.

¹⁰ See Martin P. Nilsson, *Greek Folk Religion* [formerly *Greek Popular Religion*] (Philadelphia, 1972 [1940]), pp. 70–1 and *passim*. Also see Dodds, pp. 32, 33, and Whitman, p. 290.

¹¹ On structure, see Whitman, pp. 288–90, 298, and Auerbach, pp. 1–5.

¹² There is even some question as to whether the *Odyssey* is an epic. Whitman claims it edges toward the novel (pp. 306, 308), while Northrop Frye calls it a "romance" (*Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays*, Princeton, 1957, p. 319).

¹³ This is Whitman's thesis, pp. 296–7, 299.

their characters essentially unchanging; they are not *Bildungsroman* heroes. Thus, when we first see Odysseus, he is

sitting out on the beach, crying, as before now
 he had done, breaking his heart in tears, lamentation, and sorrow,
 as weeping tears he looked out over the barren water. (V, 82-4)

But it is soon clear that he is no sentimentally suffering soul, for by the end of that same book, he has dodged a trap of a goddess (215-24), built a raft (234-62), and sailed for seventeen days to Scheria, where he skinned his hide, lost all of his clothes, and buried himself in some leaves (491). In other words, although he has begun, in Frye's words, "at a kind of nadir of the total cyclical action" (p. 318), stuck on Kalypso's island in what must be a Greek idea of nowhere, at the bottom of his private well of despair, helplessness, and alienation (literal as well as metaphysical), nevertheless, within 400 lines he has caused himself metaphorically to be reborn, stepping from the sea stark naked but clothed in all his wits and wiles.

The rest of the poem, then, is a progression through various stages of disguise and revelation. It is not a linear progression, however, for there are flashbacks, sidesteps, overlaps, retrogressions, and delays. Perhaps a spiral would be a better image than either line or circle to indicate Odysseus's gradual emergence from concealment, an emergence paralleled by his painful accumulation of sorrows as leader, home-owner, king, husband, and son. The slow re-definition of himself, first by recounting his immediate past and then by pretending to have many different pasts, is necessary in a poem so much concerned with the questions "Who are you? Where do you come from?" since, if he answers wrongly, the disorders he is trying to right can only get worse, not better. The sea-bound magical dangers he has passed through to get to Scheria, the semi-magical way station between Troy and Ithaka, have shown him what happens when one lets an angry sense of literal truth and an hubristic regard for one's clever self sway one from caution. What

happens is that Polyphemos calls down Poseidon's curse and one winds up stuck "in the navel of all waters" (I, 50) for seven years. That lesson learned, Odysseus suffers on Ithaka in careful silence, gritting his teeth and devising vengeful restoration. Auerbach's contention that this is a poem about domestic tranquility and stability (pp. 18–19) is only partly true, for the *Odyssey* is more concerned with their absence, and then with their restoration by a man who forcibly restrains his wrath until he can use it well, than with their observed existence.

Thus, the first part of the *Odyssey's* spiral, through the Great Wanderings and on Phaiakia, can be seen as a series of attempts by others to steal or destroy Odysseus's identity, culminating in the low point on Kalypso's island. The last half, on Ithaka, unwinds as gradual revelation by Odysseus of that identity. Nowhere does he actually lose his self (he is always "nobody" but Odysseus); in that sense he does not change; but he does learn to be more crafty about when, how, and to whom he shows himself metaphorically bare. Hemmed in always by the macrocosmic disorder following from the Trojan War and by his own insult to Poseidon, Odysseus moves against the microcosmic chaos at home by keeping a very low profile indeed. Having "gone beyond his limit as a man," in Frye's phrase (p. 319), he must be exceptionally cautious thereafter to stay within mortal limits.

In the latter half of the poem, he skirts *hubris* and *atē* by following either or both of two dominant epistemological-intellective patterns: the Skylla-Charybdis (or dilemma) exercise, or the Protean motif of disguise. These two patterns contradict one another (and thus together form the emblem of paradox that characterizes the *Odyssey*), for the dilemma divides the universe into two shapes, A or B, yes or no, either-or (both of them usually bad), while Proteus assumes all shapes at will and thus indicates that no shape is trustworthy, no decision final. Both patterns and their paradoxical combination are appropriate in a poem still resounding to the echoes of Troy, for Proteus demonstrates that the universe is tricky, amorphous, slippery; the

dilemma shows that the universe is hostile; and the two patterns combined reveal how to deal with that universe.

By contrast, the *Iliad*'s heroes generally coped with hostility by hitting it. To be sure, passages in this first work indicate a revulsion against blunt brutality: Athene grabbing Achilles by the hair to keep him from stabbing Agamemnon (I, 193–8), or the gods' repeatedly expressed loathing for Ares, or the similarity of Zeus' sentiments toward Ares with Agamemnon's towards Achilles:

(Zeus) "To me you are the most hateful of all gods who hold Olympo. Forever quarreling is dear to your heart, wars and battles." (V, 890–1; cf. V, 30–1, 761; XV, 127–8)

(Agam.) "To me you are the most hateful of all the kings whom the gods love." (I, 176)

Additionally, there are several passages of zestful gore in the *Odyssey*: the blinding of Polyphemos (XII), Odysseus bludgeoning the beggar Iros (XVIII), and of course the slaughter of the suitors (XXII). In fact, Athene herself sets a meaty tone with her assurance to Odysseus near the end of Book XIII: "I look for endless / ground to be spattered by the blood and brains of the suitors" (394–5). By and large, however, the *Iliad* is about brawn, the *Odyssey* about brains; the *Odyssey*'s hero must find other ways than killing to deal with hostility.

Although Frye is correct in noting that Odysseus's return home is "contingent upon the appeasing of divine wrath by divine wisdom" (p. 230)—Poseidon and Athene to be reconciled by Zeus—the return is also contingent upon the appeasement of divine wrath by *human* wisdom—Odysseus's. He is the only human being in the poem who uses his head as effectively as his sword; he is also the only human being who moves back and forth between the two patterns, dilemma and disguise, adopting whichever best fits the exigencies of a given situation. The two patterns are manifested in the one case by words alone, in the other by both words and action.¹⁴ Bronislaw Malinowski has

¹⁴ As Auerbach wryly notes, "Much that is terrible takes place in the Homeric poems, but it seldom takes place wordlessly" (p. 4).

pointed out a function of language which may have a bearing on Odysseus's behavior, especially as contrasted with, say, Achilles's: "In its primitive use, language functions as a link in concerted human activity, as a piece of human behavior. It is a mode of action, and not an instrument of reflection."¹⁵ In this sense, the *Iliad* seems the more "primitive" of the two works, since there is so much more reflection in the *Odyssey*, visions and moments (as in the *Nekyia*, Book XI) when past and future coalesce, so that the flash of insight both is and describes a reflective act, the act of confronting one's own mortality.

Odysseus himself works through the dilemma exercise thirteen times, while various other human beings use it ten times, and even the gods join in at the end, when Zeus and Athene decide to stop the quarrel in the last book:¹⁶

(Ath.) "Son of Kronos, our father, O lordliest of the mighty,
tell me what I ask. What does your mind have hidden within it?
Will you first inflict evil fighting upon them, and terrible

¹⁵ "The Problem of Meaning in Primitive Languages," in C. K. Ogden and I. A. Richards, *The Meaning of Meaning* (New York, 1946), p. 312.

¹⁶ *Dilemma Exercise*

Archetype: Skylla and Charybdis, XII, 234-57, 429-46

Odysseus

On the raft to Phaiakia, V, 356-64, 415-23

Landed on Phaiakia, V, 465-74

Concerning Nausikaä, VI, 141-4

In Polyphemos's cave, IX, 298-305

On Aiolos's island, X, 49-55

On Circe's island, X, 151-5

To Telemachos, XVI, 235-9

To himself, in silent anger, XVII, 235-8; XVIII, 90-4; XX, 9-13

To Eumaios, XVII, 275-9

Concerning Laertes, XXIV, 235-40

Other people

Nausikaä, VI, 255-61

Telemachos, XV, 195-201, 513-9; XVI, 73-7, 78-9

Antinoös, XVI, 383-92

Penelope, XIX, 524-9

Philoitios, XX, 217-21

Agelaos, XX, 328-36

Phemios, XXII, 333-9

strife, or will you establish friendship between the two factions?"
(XXIV, 473–6)

More commonly, however, Odysseus's reflection takes the Protean form of trickiness, deception, disguises of all sorts. There is hardly a single book wherein he, or someone close to him or paralleling him, is not playing Now-you-see-me-now-you-don't games.¹⁷ Athene is frankly delighted with his wiliness, for when they meet for the first time on Ithaka, she exclaims that they are well matched:

. . . you and I both know
sharp practice, since you are far the best of all mortal
men for counsel and stories, and I among all the divinities
am famous for wit and sharpness. . . . (XIII, 296–9)

Odysseus's deferential reply suggests something Protean about Athene: ". . . you take every shape upon you," he says (XIII, 313), and indeed she does—sixteen times, twice as birds.¹⁸ She provides him with disguises, too: that of the beggar (from XIII, 429–38 through the opening line of XXII), which he removes only once, for Telemachos in XVI; invisibility (VII and XXIII), and greater beauty (VI, VIII, and XXIII).¹⁹ Otherwise, Odysseus

¹⁷ Curiously, all this guile produces one of the poem's minor paradoxes, for three times Odysseus, the great liar, takes pains to declare solemnly his hatred of liars: XIV, 156–7; XVII, 15; XIX, 269–70.

¹⁸ Athene's disguises:

As Mentos, I, 105

As Mentor, II, 268, 401, 416; III; XXII, 205–6; XXIV, 503, 547–8

As Telemachos, II, 383

As various unnamed male figures: Judge, VII, 193–4; herdsman, XIII, 222–3

Females, unnamed: a friend of Nausikaä, V, 22; guide for Odysseus, VII, 19–20; beautiful woman, XIII, 288–9, XVI, 157–9, XX, 30–1; lampbearer, XIX, 33–4

Birds: vulture, III, 371–9; swallow, XXII, 238–40

Undisguised: to Telemachos, XV, 9–42; to everyone, XXIV, 529–35

¹⁹ Other people are sometimes disguised, too:

Circe's enchanted sailors, X, 210–43

Telemachos, XVII, 63–4

Penelope, XVIII, 192–6

Laertes, XXIV, 367–71, 520–4

is left to decide for himself about whom he wishes to show himself to and in what form.

He chooses to move slowly, keeping his identity secret on Ithaka from all but Telemachos and Eurykleia, whom he immediately swears to secrecy (XIX), so that he has given himself time to reassume (or perhaps re-earn) several critical roles before, in the killing of the suitors, he takes on the role of hero again. Stalling for time, and simultaneously doing penance for his offenses to the gods, Odysseus becomes even craftier than he was before the descent to Hades. For instance, he begins to tell lies, something he has only done once before Book XIII and his arrival on Ithaka; that once was to Polyphemos in Book IX, and considering the trouble he got into when he told the truth there, maybe he ought to have stuck with lies. But after Book XIII come four of the five major lies and all but two of the minor ones; there are lies in nearly every book after XIII, to nearly everybody with whom he comes into significant contact.²⁰ On the whole, especially in the major lies, he does a masterly job of mixing in fact with fiction. Notice especially in the stories he tells Eumaios (XIV) and Penelope (XIX) how plausibly he parallels his created adventures with his real ones: the Egyptians in the Eumaios story, for example (XIV, 259–84), correspond to the Kikonians in Book IX; the storm off Crete (XIV, 301–9) corresponds to the one off Thrinakia; Thesprotia (XIV, 315) resembles Scheria; the king's "own dear son" (XIV,

²⁰ *Lies by Odysseus*

Major

- To Athene, XIII, 256–86
- To Eumaios, XIV, 191–359
- To the suitors, XVII, 419–44
- To Penelope, XIX, 165–202
- To Laertes, XXIV, 302–8

Minor

- To Polyphemos, IX, 281–6, 364–7
- To Eumaios, XIV, 462–506
- To Penelope, XVI, 328–32; XIX, 271–307, 336–48
- To Amphinomos, XVIII, 138–40
- To Laertes, XXIV, 265–79

317) is an analogue to Nausikaä, and so on. In his yarn to Penelope, the technique is slightly different but equally effective: he mixes in chunks of pure truth about Odysseus's wanderings—notably XIX, 271–82—only neglecting to tell her that he is Odysseus.

It is not yet time to do so, although Penelope may well know his identity already.²¹ One reason he must move so slowly is that he needs time to re-create in private his public roles as father, king, hero, husband, and son (cf. Whitman, p. 305). Homer twice tells us another reason: the longer Odysseus stays in disguise, the more will he see and suffer the insolence of the suitors, the greater will be his grief and rage, and the more ferocious will be his apocalyptic housecleaning (see XVII, 346–8; XX, 284–6). It may be that there is yet another reason for the delay, namely, that Odysseus—who is the object of Poseidon's hatred as well as the agent of Zeus—must do penance and be schooled in proper mortal humility before he is turned loose to the slaughter, for without such humility to sanction his actions, the killing becomes pure mad-dog frenzy, a horrendous blood-bath, an utterly unjustified violation of *aidos* worse than the suitors' own sins.

Curiously, Odysseus's silence increases proportionately with the violence against him, as if he were determined to bear his misfortunes in stoic, manly rectitude—or to give the villains enough rope to hang themselves before he springs the trapdoor. Whereas in Book XVI he grumbles to Eumaios volubly about what he would do if he were younger (101–11), silently he suffers the jostling of Melanthio the goatherd (XVII, 233–8), the taunting of Iros the beggar (XVIII, 90–4), Eurymachos's hurling of the footstool (XVIII, 396–8), Melanthio's taunting (XX, 183–4), and Ktesippos's throwing of the basket (XX, 299–302). He does snarl at the uppity maidservant, Melantho (XVIII, 337–40; XIX, 70–88), but she is only a woman and

²¹ P. W. Harsh, "Penelope and Odysseus in *Odyssey* XIX," *American Journal of Philology*, LXXI (1950), 1–21, argues convincingly that she does.

cannot do him much harm. For the most part, he speaks softly or not at all to his enemies on Ithaka.

The result is that Book XX, just before the revelation of identity gets underway in Book XXI with the trial of the bow, is permeated with grim silences from father and son (Telemachos following his father's lead, XX, 384–6) which contrast hair-raisingly with the omens that Zeus sends down, the thunder and wailing (XX, 102–19), and with the terrible hysteria of the suitors:

Now they laughed with jaws that were no longer their own.

The meat they ate was a mess of blood, and their eyes were bursting full of tears, and their laughter sounded like lamentation. (XX, 347–9)

Theoklymenos the seer puts the edge on the lamentation with his prophecy—"I see the evil / coming upon you, and not one of the suitors avoiding / this will escape" (XX, 367–9; cf. 351–7), at which the suitors, insensate, "laughed happily" (XX, 358). The scene ends with Penelope brooding in the hallway, Telemachos and Odysseus watching each other with blood in their eyes, and the suitors giggling like mad ravens over their carrion. Appalling in its stillness, this scene prepares the way for the humiliating confusion of the bow scene in Book XXI and the blood-bath in Book XXII.

Perhaps the *Odyssey* can be seen as a sort of reverse Genesis, in that the hero must use knowledge to regain his Eden—knowledge tempered with humility, human knowledge, not the seductive stuff offered him by the Sirens:

". . . we know everything that the Argives and Trojans did and suffered in wide Troy through the gods' despite.

Over all the generous earth we know everything that happens."

(XII, 189–91)

Nor is Odysseus's the divine knowledge of Proteus which Menelaos misuses when he asks for too little (IV, 471–570), nor even the eerie foresight belonging to seers like Theoklymenos and Teiresias, for Odysseus is neither shaman nor seer; according to Mircea Eliade, ". . . the descents to Hades documented in

Greek tradition . . . have no shamanic structure whatever. . . ,”²² although such descents as Odysseus’s in search of Teiresias might be said to share in “an archetype of ‘gaining existential consciousness,’ present . . . in the experience of . . . all the other visionaries of the ancient world” (Eliade, p. 394).

It is precisely because Odysseus is mortal, not even subject to the prophetic dreams that haunt Penelope (IV, XIX, XX), that he must tread so cautiously on his journey seeking knowledge. Hermes Psychopompos, or soul guide, has helped Odysseus with Circe but does not help him to Hades; Athene is noticeably absent from all the Great Wanderings; so he must face the dead alone, accompanied only by Circe’s instructions, as he must face the suitors alone, accompanied only by Athene’s advice. In Hades, he learns about the shades’ past and his own future, the dead being a traditional source of such knowledge (Frye, p. 321), but this knowledge by itself does not permit him to escape from Kalypso and return to her opposite, Penelope. All his knowledge allows him is the will power and patience to check his own impulses in the service of a divine cause, i.e., the demolition of the suitors, the appeasement of Zeus Herkeios, and the restoration of microcosmic order.

In violating Zeus’s laws twice over, once by abusing Penelope’s hospitality and again by refusing to extend hospitality to a suppliant, the suitors have called down both mortal and divine retribution for their defilement of the special relationship noted by Hayden White, who has written that it was characteristic of Greek writers to conceive of humanity, the condition of humanness, “as designating a special kind of *relationship* that might exist between men.”²³ Nilsson has pointed out that for the Greeks, “the battle for justice was fought on the social rather than on the religious plane” (p. 109). Odysseus has been in training for the last nine books, since the *Nekyia*, to become the

²² *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*, trans. Willard R. Trask (Pantheon, 1964), pp. 392–3; cf. pp. 376–8, 388.

²³ “The Forms of Wildness: Archaeology of an Idea,” in *The Wild Man Within*, ed. Edward Dudley and Maximilian E. Novak (Pittsburgh, 1972), p. 23.

proper agent of social retribution and restoration of proper human relationships. Although Odysseus already had all the physical prowess he needed, he appears—despite his reputation as *polytropos*, man of many ways—to have been swayed more by anger and pride than by his wits, up through Book XI. So he has had to re-earn divine sanction, first through an enforced retreat to Ogygia, where none of his skills does him any good, and then by an enforced disguise which permits him only limited use of those skills until the time is at hand to join brawn and brains together again in the war against the suitors—a war whose successful outcome for the hero is assured as much by his clever strategy in shutting the doors and removing the armor as by his phenomenal physical prowess.

The slaughter of the suitors, then, becomes a microcosmic re-enactment of the Trojan War itself. The two wars began with a violation of *aidos*, public opinion; grew to include *atē*, infatuation, and *hubris*, flagrantly offensive pride; and were brought to a close, at least in the Homeric version, by a single man's explosive *aristeia*. But their post-bellum resolutions sharply diverge, for the *Iliad*'s war only engendered more chaos whereas, if the gods' wishes carry any weight, the *Odyssey*'s slaughter will re-establish order and peace. We can only assume that Athene's will is enforced, because we never actually see complete harmony restored. Instead, what we have seen are the attempts to bring order about: personal or internal order in the man, who must recapture and then cunningly display his sense of timing and style; familial order between fathers and sons, husband and wife; socio-cultural order between king and subjects, and that moral or macrocosmic order obtaining—however tenuously—between gods and men. The lack of certitude about Odysseus's future may suggest that the universe is more puzzling than it was for the *Iliad*'s heroes—that the attempt to create order out of a shifting, contradictory, Protean universe may be all any of us can ever see.

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