

Book 13, “One More Strange Island”

Adapted and excerpted from Ralph Hexter, *A Guild to The Odyssey: A Commentary of the English Translation of Robert Fitzgerald*. New York: Vintage/Random, 1993.

17-18 Alkínoös promises the Phaiákians that they will be repaid for the gifts they are to contribute to Odysseus. “In Homeric society, gift giving was strictly regulated; it was an honor for the 12 kings to give gifts, and it was an honor of sorts for lesser people to give gifts to the kings.”

51-2 Odysseus is properly and sincerely pious: it is only because of the blessings of the gods that humans can enjoy the gifts they receive and the goods they possess.

54-55 Odysseus has heard Teirêsius say that his hall is overrun by strangers (XI. 129+), but Odysseus hopes that it will not be that bad. His wife and son are there, all he loves best, and they are in trouble.

97-9- Sleep. There is something magical about this sleep, but it is never explicitly explained. This magical sleep allows the poet to get Odysseus home without his recognizing the island until Athena lets him.

147-8 Athena has brought Odysseus safely ashore in Book 5, motivated Nausikaa to do laundry and then to help him in Book 6, guided him to the palace in Book 7 and helped him throw the discus in Book 8.

153-98 The Heavenly Council scene. Zeus is diplomatic. The gods are concerned about status and honors, but they also have emotions. In this period, the gods were respected more if they demanded privileges and showed anger. Poseidon’s arguments are respected.

188-91 The ship is destroyed and the Phaiákian lands ringed with mountains, as Alkínoös had heard prophesied. The seagoing people will be landlocked...if Poseidon insists. Evidently Zeus prevails, but the Phaiákians aren’t sure when they see the ship sink. In any case, their extreme *xenia* is stopped, a loss for everyone.

240-44

It is ironic that Odysseus doesn’t realize where he is when he awakens on Ithaka. Also, Athena seems to enjoy tricking him, as she is “the cleverest of immortals” as he is “the cleverest of humans.”

253-4 Odysseus ironically asks here in Ithaka what he asked of foreign lands. “Rough savages and outlaws, are they, or/ godfearing people, friendly to castaways?” Hexter comments that “As events currently stand, it is justified. The suitors are hardly ‘god-fearing,’ and some of them will prove to be in no way hospitable ...when he arrives in his own hall disguised...”.

261-75 Athena helps Odysseus preserve his treasure. He will need it if he wants to remain a great king. Ironically, he blames the Phaiákians, whom Poseidon punished for their kindness.

300-17 Athena enjoys teasing cunning Odysseus, and she doesn't mention Ithaka until line 315. This is a first, in that she did not help him so openly until he got to Ithaka. He is still cautious—she says she is a goddess (398+), but Kirke was a goddess; he needs more assurances and proof.

327-65 The first of the four Kretan narratives. Odysseus tells fictive accounts of who he is to Athena here and always emphasizes what a tough contender he is. In this tale, he mentions Idomeneus, the grandson of Minos who was king of Krete when he went to the Trojan war, fighting well for the Greeks. Over the next few books, Odysseus relates this fiction to Eumaios (14.229-417); The suitors (17.552-82); Penelope (19.195-362); and partly to his father Laertes (24.270-345). He changes some as he goes along, but Athena is on his side and he seems credible.

327 Kretans were known in Greece as liars. “The Greek word *krêtizô*, “speak like a Kretan,” could be used to mean “lie.”

482-84 Odysseus refers explicitly to the example of Agamémnon and Klytáimnéstra, a concern.

Book 14 Hospitality in the Forest: “I have roamed about the world so long” (14.138-46).

14.193-204 Eumaios the swineherd tells the “stranger” who is really Odysseus, how Penelope, Laertes, Telemakhos and he wish for Odysseus's return. He confides his worries about Telemakhos now that he has gone to Pylos. Eumaios' loyalty to the family is revealed in this as in many other speeches. Odysseus trusts Eumaios, whom he knew well before going to Troy.

- 14.262+ Odysseus pretends he is a Kretan, home from wars, to Eumaios. This story ends up sounding like Odysseus's men's sacking of the Kikones. Odysseus makes himself sound like a coward (321+) who sought asylum and spent 7 years with the Egyptians.
- 14. 332+ Odysseus speaks of a Phoinikian who lured him from Egypt but intended to sell him as a slave, until shipwrecked.
- 14.361+ Odysseus says he held onto the mast with the aid of Zeus, surviving in a gale for 9 days.
- 14.367+ Odysseus, still spinning a tale, says he was cast up in Thesprotia, where a prince discovered him, brought him home, and clothed him.
- 14.372+ Odysseus alleges that there, in the king's house, he heard news of Odysseus, saw treasure Odysseus had given the king, and heard that the king was giving Odysseus passage home.
- 14. 388+ Alleging that he was given passage with Thesprotians for Doulikhion, Odysseus says he was a victim of the crew that plotted to sell him into slavery. He says he escaped with the gods' help.
- 14.448+ Odysseus offers to prove to unbelieving Eumaios that he is telling the truth, but Eumaios won't fall for it. Someone has already tried that kind of tale.
- 14.601 Eumaios give Odysseus his “heavy blanket cloak” even though he calls the tale “a fine story.”
- 14. 620 Odysseus admires how Eumaios stays up to guard the swine while the others sleep. They are, after all, Odysseus' sheep.