

Passages for Second CSAIR Session on Homer's *Odyssey*"

Richard Sacks, Columbia University

#1 (<Item 1): O at sea after leaving Kalypso's island: 5.300ff

I fear the goddess might have spoken the truth in all ways
when she said that on the sea and before I came to my country
I would go through hardships; now all this is being accomplished,
such clouds are these, with which Zeus is cramming the wide sky
and has staggered the sea, and stormblasts of winds from every
direction are crowding in. My sheer destruction is certain.
Three times and four times happy those Danaans were who died then
in wide Troy land, bringing favor to the sons of Atreus,
as I wish I too had died at that time and met my destiny
on the day when the greatest number of Trojans threw their
bronze-headed
weapons upon me, over the body of perished Achilleus,
and I would have had my rites and the Achaians given me glory.
Now it is by a dismal death that I must be taken.

#2 (<Item 2A): O identifies himself & begins his narration: 9.1ff

Then resourceful Odysseus spoke in turn and answered him:
'O great Alkinoös, pre-eminent among all people,
surely indeed it is a good thing to listen to a singer
such as this one before us, who is like the gods in his singing;
for I think there is no occasion accomplished that is more pleasant
than when festivity holds sway among all the populace,
and the feasters up and down the houses are sitting in order
and listening to the singer, and beside them the tables are loaded
with bread and meats, and from the mixing bowl the wine steward
draws the wine and carries it about and fills the cups. This
seems to my own mind to be the best of occasions.
But now your wish was inclined to ask me about my mournful
sufferings, so that I must mourn and grieve even more. What then
shall I recite to you first of all, what leave till later?
Many are the sorrows the gods of the sky have given me.
Now first I will tell you my name, so that all of you
may know me, and I hereafter, escaping the day without pity,
be your friend and guest, though the home where I live is far away
from you.
I am Odysseus son of Laertes, known before all men
for the study of crafty designs, and my fame goes up to the heavens.
I am at home in sunny Ithaka. There is a mountain
there that stands tall, leaf-trembling Neritos, and there are islands
settled around it, lying one very close to another.
There is Doulichion and Same, wooded Zakynthos,
but my island lies low and away, last of all on the water
toward the dark, with the rest below facing east and sunshine,
a rugged place, but a good nurse of men; for my part
I cannot think of any place sweeter on earth to look at.
For in truth Kalypso, shining among divinities, kept me
with her in her hollow caverns, desiring me for her husband,
and so likewise Aiaian Circe the guileful detained me
beside her in her halls, desiring me for her husband,
but never could she persuade the heart within me. So it is
that nothing is more sweet in the end than country and parents
ever, even when far away one lives in a fertile
place, when it is in alien country, far from his parents.
But come, I will tell you of my voyage home with its many
troubles, which Zeus inflicted on me as I came from Troy land.

#3 (<Item 2B): The opening of the Kikonian episode: 9.39ff

'From Ilion the wind took me and drove me ashore at Ismaros
by the Kikonians. I sacked their city and killed their people,
and out of their city taking their wives and many possessions
we shared them out, so none might go cheated of his proper
portion. There I was for the light foot and escaping,
and urged it, but they were greatly foolish and would not listen,
and then and there much wine was being drunk, and they slaughtered
many sheep on the beach, and lumbering horn-curved cattle.
But meanwhile the Kikonians went and summoned the other
Kikonians, who were their neighbors living in the inland country,
more numerous and better men, well skilled in fighting
men with horses, but knowing too at need the battle
on foot. They came at early morning, like flowers in season
or leaves, and the luck that came our way from Zeus was evil,
to make us unfortunate, so we must have hard pains to suffer.
Both sides stood and fought their battle there by the running
ships, and with bronze-headed spears they cast at each other,

#4 (<Item 2B): the Lotus-Eaters episode: 9.83ff.

. . . but on the tenth day we landed
in the country of the Lotus-Eaters, who live on a flowering
food, and there we set foot on the mainland, and fetched water,
and my companions soon took their supper there by the fast ships.
But after we had tasted of food and drink, then I sent
some of my companions ahead, telling them to find out
what men, eaters of bread, might live here in this country.
I chose two men, and sent a third with them, as a herald.
My men went on and presently met the Lotus-Eaters,
nor did these Lotus-Eaters have any thoughts of destroying
our companions, but they only gave them lotus to taste of.
But any of them who ate the honey-sweet fruit of lotus
was unwilling to take any message back, or to go
away, but they wanted to stay there with the lotus-eating
people, feeding on lotus, and forget the way home. I myself
took these men back weeping, by force, to where the ships were,
and put them aboard under the rowing benches and tied them
fast, then gave the order to the rest of my eager
companions to embark on the ships in haste, for fear
someone else might taste of the lotus and forget the way home...

#5 (<Item 2B): The opening of the Cyclops episode: 9.105ff.

From there, grieving still at heart, we sailed on further
along, and reached the country of the lawless outrageous
Cyclopes who, putting all their trust in the immortal
gods, neither plow with their hands nor plant anything,
but all grows for them without seed planting, without cultivation,
wheat and barley and also the grapevines, which yield for them
wine of strength, and it is Zeus' rain that waters it for them.
These people have no institutions, no meetings for counsels;
rather they make their habitations in caverns hollowed
among the peaks of the high mountains, and each one is the law
for his own wives and children, and cares nothing about the others.

#6 (<Item 2B): O's initial plan on Cyclops' island: 9.152ff.

But when the young Dawn showed again with her rosy fingers,
we made a tour about the island, admiring everything
there, and the nymphs, daughters of Zeus of the aegis, started
the hill-roving goats our way for my companions to feast on.

At once we went and took from the ships curved bows and javelins with long sockets, and arranging ourselves in three divisions cast about, and the god granted us the game we longed for. Now there were twelve ships that went with me, and for each one nine goats

were portioned out, but I alone had ten for my portion. So for the whole length of the day until the sun's setting, we sat there feasting on unlimited meat and sweet wine; for the red wine had not yet given out in the ships, there was some still left, for we all had taken away a great deal in storing jars when we stormed the Kikonians' sacred citadel. We looked across at the land of the Cyclopes, and they were near by, and we saw their smoke and heard sheep and goats bleating. But when the sun went down and the sacred darkness came over, then we lay down to sleep along the break of the seashore; but when the young Dawn showed again with her rosy fingers, then I held an assembly and spoke forth before all: "The rest of you, who are my eager companions, wait here, while I, with my own ship and companions that are in it, go and find out about these people, and learn what they are, whether they are savage and violent, and without justice, or hospitable to strangers and with minds that are godly."

* * *

From the start my companions spoke to me and begged me to take some of the cheeses, come back again, and the next time to drive the lambs and kids from their pens, and get back quickly to the ship again, and go sailing off across the salt water; but I would not listen to them, it would have been better their way, not until I could see him, see if he would give me presents.

#7 (<Item 2B): O after blinding Cyclops and escaping: 9.491ff

But when we had cut through the sea to twice the previous distance, again I started to call to Cyclops, but my friends about me checked me, first one then another speaking, trying to soothe me: "Hard one, why are you trying once more to stir up this savage man, who just now threw his missile in the sea, forcing our ship to the land again, and we thought once more we were finished;

and if he had heard a voice or any one of us speaking, he would have broken all our heads and our ship's timbers with a cast of a great jagged stone, so strong is his throwing." 'So they spoke, but could not persuade the great heart in me....

* * *

'So he spoke, but I answered him again and said to him: "I only wish it were certain I could make you reft of spirit and life, and send you to the house of Hades, as it is certain that not even the Shaker of the Earth will ever heal your eye for you." 'So I spoke, but he then called to the lord Poseidon in prayer, reaching both arms up toward the starry heaven: "Hear me, Poseidon who circles the earth, dark-haired. If truly I am your son, and you acknowledge yourself as my father, grant that Odysseus, sacker of cities, son of Laertes, who makes his home in Ithaka, may never reach that home; but if it is decided that he shall see his own people, and come home to his strong-founded house and to his own country, let him come late, in bad case, with the loss of all his companions, in someone else's ship, and find troubles in his household."

#8 (<Item 2C): leaving Aeolus with the bag of winds: 10.19ff.

[Aiolos] gave me a bag made of the skin taken off a nine-year ox, stuffed full inside with the courses of all the blowing winds, for the son of Kronos had set him in charge over the winds, to hold them still or start them up at his pleasure.

He stowed it away in the hollow ship, tied fast with a silver string, so there should be no wrong breath of wind, not even a little, but set the West Wind free to blow me and carry the ships and the men aboard them on their way; but it was not so to be, for we were ruined by our own folly. 'Nevertheless we sailed on, night and day, for nine days, and on the tenth at last appeared the land of our fathers, and we could see people tending fires, we were very close to them. But then the sweet sleep came upon me, for I was worn out with always handling the sheet myself, and I would not give it to any other companion, so we could come home quicker to our own country; but my companions talked with each other and said that I was bringing silver and gold home with me, given me by great-hearted Aiolos....

#9 (<Item 2C): entering the Laistrygonian harbor: 10.87ff.

There as we entered the glorious harbor, which a sky-towering cliff encloses on either side, with no break anywhere, and two projecting promontories facing each other run out toward the mouth, and there is a narrow entrance, there all the rest of them had their oar-swept ships in the inward part, they were tied up close together inside the hollow harbor, for there was never a swell of surf inside it, neither great nor small, but there was a pale calm on it. I myself, however, kept my black ship on the outside....

#10 (<Item 2C): after a year with Circe: 10.467ff.

There for all our days until a year was completed we sat there feasting on unlimited meat and sweet wine. But when it was the end of a year, and the months wasted away, and these seasons changed, and the long days were accomplished, then my eager companions called me aside and said to me: "What ails you now? It is time to think about our own country, if truly it is ordained that you shall survive and come back to your strong-founded house and to the land of your fathers."

#11 (<Item 2D): O with his mother in underworld: 11.170ff

But come now, tell me this, and give me an accurate answer. What doom of death that lays men low has been your undoing? Was it a long sickness, or did Artemis of the arrows come upon you with her painless shafts, and destroy you? And tell me of my father and son whom I left behind. Is my inheritance still with them, or does some other man hold them now, and thinks I will come no more? Tell me about the wife I married, what she wants, what she is thinking, and whether she stays fast by my son, and guards everything, or if she has married the best man among the Achaians." 'So I spoke, and my queenly mother answered me quickly: "All too much with enduring heart she does wait for you there in your own palace, and always with her the wretched nights and the days also waste her away with weeping. No one yet holds your fine inheritance, but in freedom Telemachos administers your allotted lands, and apportions the equal feasts, work that befits a man with authority to judge, for all call him in. Your father remains, on the estate where he is, and does not go to the city. There is no bed there nor is there bed clothing nor blankets nor shining coverlets, but in the winter time he sleeps in the house, where the thralls do, in the dirt next to the fire, and with foul clothing upon him; but when the summer comes and the blossoming time of harvest, everywhere he has places to sleep on the ground, on fallen leaves in piles along the rising ground of his orchard, and there he lies, grieving, and the sorrow grows big within him

as he longs for your homecoming, and harsh old age is on him.
And so it was with me also and that was the reason I perished,
nor in my palace did the lady of arrows, well-aiming,
come upon me with her painless shafts, and destroy me,
nor was I visited by sickness, which beyond other
things takes the life out of the body with hateful weakness,
but, shining Odysseus, it was my longing for you, your cleverness
and your gentle ways, that took the sweet spirit of life from me."

#12 (<Item 2D): O to Alkinoös during "intermission": 11.355ff

'O great Alkinoös, pre-eminent among all people,
if you urged me to stay here even for the length of a year,
and still sped my conveyance home and gave me glorious
presents, that would be what I wished, there would be much
advantage
in coming back with a fuller hand to my own dear country...

#13 (<Item 2D): O with Achilles in underworld: 11.488ff

"O shining Odysseus, never try to console me for dying.
I would rather follow the plow as thrall to another
man, one with no land allotted him and not much to live on,
than be a king over all the perished dead. But come now,
tell me anything you have heard of my proud son, whether
or not he went along to war to fight as a champion;
and tell me anything you have heard about stately Peleus,
whether he still keeps his position among the Myrmidon
hordes, or whether in Hellas and Phthia they have diminished
his state, because old age constrains his hands and feet, and I
am no longer there under the light of the sun to help him."

* * *

'So he spoke, and I again said to him in answer:
"I have no report to give you of stately Peleus,
but as for your beloved son Neoptolemos, I will
tell you, since you ask me to do it, all the true story;

* * *

And when we Achaians fought in the Trojan plain, he never
would hang back ... but run far out in front, giving way to no man
for fury, and many were those he killed in the terrible fighting.
I could not tell over the number of all nor name all
the people he killed as he fought for the Argives...

* * *

... Again, when we who were best of the Argives entered
the horse that Epeios made, and all the command was given...

* * *

... he kept feeling for his sword hilt
and spear weighted with bronze, full of evil thoughts for the Trojans.
But after we had sacked the sheer citadel of Priam,
with his fair share and a princely prize of his own, he boarded
his ship, unscathed....

* * *

'So I spoke, and the soul of the swift-footed scion of Aiakos
stalked away in long strides across the meadow of asphodel,
happy for what I had said of his son, and how he was famous.

#14 (<Item 2D): O with Aias in underworld: 11.541ff

'Now the rest of the souls of the perished dead stood near me
grieving, and each one spoke to me and told of his sorrows.
Only the soul of Telamonian Aias stood off
at a distance from me, angry still over that decision
I won against him, when beside the ships we disputed
our cases for the arms of Achilleus....

* * *

So I spoke to him now in words of conciliation:

"Aias, son of stately Telamon, could you then never
even in death forget your anger against me, because of
that cursed armor? The gods made it to pain the Achaians,

* * *

Come nearer, my lord, so you can hear what I say and listen
to my story; suppress your anger and lordly spirit."
'So I spoke. He gave no answer, but went off after
the other souls of the perished dead men, into the darkness.
There, despite his anger, he might have spoken, or I might
have spoken to him, but the heart in my inward breast wanted
still to see the souls of the other perished dead men.

#15 (<Item 3): Zeus kowtowing to Poseidon in book 13: 13.140

'What a thing to have said, Earthshaker of the wide strength.
The gods do not hold you in dishonor. It would be a hard thing
if we were to put any slight on the eldest and best among us.

#16 (<Item 3): Athene to O when 1st back on Ithaka: 13.291ff

It would be a sharp one, and a stealthy one, who would ever get
past you
in any contriving; even if it were a god against you.
You wretch, so devious, never weary of tricks, then you would not
even in your own country give over your ways of deceiving
and your thievish tales. They are near to you in your very nature.
But come, let us talk no more of this, for 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....

#17 (<Item 4): O's 2nd lie to Penelope in book 19: 19.261ff

'O respected wife of Odysseus, son of Laertes,
no longer waste your beautiful skin nor eat your heart out
in lamentation for your husband. Yet I do not blame you.
For any woman mourns when she loses her wedded husband,
with whom she has lain in love and borne children, even a lesser
man than Odysseus. They say that he was like the immortals.
But now give over your lamentation, and mark what I tell you,
for I say to you without deception, without concealment,
that I have heard of the present homecoming of Odysseus.
He is near, in the rich land of the men of Thesprotia,
and alive, and bringing many treasures back to his household.
He collects this about the district. His eager companions
were lost to him, with his hollow ship, on the wine-blue water
as he left the island of Thrinakia, for Zeus and Helios
hated him, since his companions killed the cattle of Helios.
So they all perished in the wash of the great sea; only
Odysseus, riding the keel, was cast ashore by the sea swell
on the land of the Phaiakians, who are near the immortals;
and they honored him in their hearts as if he had been a divinity,
and gave him much, and they themselves were willing to carry him
home without harm. So Odysseus would have been home a long
time

before this, but in his mind he thought it more profitable
to go about and visit much country, collecting possessions.
For Odysseus knew profitable ways beyond all other
men who are mortal, no other man could rival him at it.
So Pheidon, king of the Thesprotians, told me the story;
and he swore to me in my presence, as he poured out a libation
in his house, that the ship was drawn down to the sea, and the crew
were ready
to carry Odysseus back again to his own dear country....

#18 (<Item 4): the simile Penelope tells O in book 19: 19.512ff

. . . The divinity gave me grief beyond measure.
The day times I indulge in lamentation, mourning
as I look to my own tasks and those of my maids in the palace.
But after the night comes and sleep has taken all others,
I lie on my bed, and the sharp anxieties swarming
thick and fast on my beating heart torment my sorrowing
self. As when Pandareos' daughter, the greenwood nightingale,
perching in the deep of the forest foliage sings out
her lovely song, when springtime has just begun; she, varying
the manifold strains of her voice, pours out the melody, mourning
Itylos, son of the Lord Zethos, her own beloved
child, whom she once killed with the bronze when the madness
 was on her;
so my mind is divided and starts one way, then another.
Shall I stay here by my son and keep all in order,
my property, my serving maids, and my great high-roofed house,
keep faith with my husband's bed and regard the voice of the
 people,
or go away at last with the best of all those Achaians
who court me here in the palace, with endless gifts to win me?

#19 (<Item 4): the dream Penelope tells O in book 19: 19.535ff

But come, listen to a dream of mine and interpret it for me.
I have twenty geese here about the house, and they feed on
grains of wheat from the water trough. I love to watch them.
But a great eagle with crooked beak came down from the
 mountain,
and broke the necks of them all and killed them. So the whole
 twenty
lay dead about the house, but he soared high in the bright air.
Then I began to weep—that was in my dream—and cried out
aloud, and around me gathered the fair-haired Achaian women
as I cried out sorrowing for my geese killed by the eagle.
But he came back again and perched on the jut of the gabled
roof. He now had a human voice and spoke aloud to me:
"Do not fear, O daughter of far-famed Ikarios.
This is no dream, but a blessing real as day. You will see it
done. The geese are the suitors, and I, the eagle, have been
a bird of portent, but now I am your own husband, come home,
and I shall inflict shameless destruction on all the suitors."
So he spoke; and then the honey-sweet sleep released me,
and I looked about and saw the geese in my palace, feeding
on their grains of wheat from the water trough, just as they had
 been.'