

Sylvia Montiglio, *From Villain to Hero: Odysseus in Ancient Thought*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2011. Pp. ix, 228. ISBN 9780472117741. \$70.00.

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Montiglio's introduction states that the purpose of this book is to study Odysseus' philosophical journey in ancient thought. The paradox is that his character is judged for separate traits by different philosophical schools. The introduction initially presents the negative reception of Odysseus by tragedy and the Athenian audience's agreement with this image. The sophists also shared in this negative evaluation and attacked Odysseus' versatility. Along with the corruption of democratic institutions, Odysseus' reputation during the Peloponnesian War worsened. Although one would expect his identification with the ideal political leader, his association with the figure of the demagogue transformed him into 'the embodiment of personal politics'. Whereas in Homer Odysseus nobly dares, in tragedy he endures hardship for profit. His immoral daring is contrasted to Hercules' endurance. Montiglio informs the reader that the time frame of her study starts with the Socratics and their view on Odysseus the philosopher and extends to the second century AD. In her last chapters she focuses on Middle Platonism, which made Odysseus the symbol of the human being fighting to save his soul. Her methodology uses a broad thematic approach discussing those traits of Odysseus that appealed to various philosophical traditions. However, not all readers might agree with the author's choice to omit the role of allegory in developing philosophical uses of the myth, even if she justifies this omission by arguing that 'the beginnings of Odysseus' idealisation as a wise man are unrelated to allegorical readings of his deeds' and that 'the allegorical treatments of Odysseus are in continuum with non-allegorical ones'. The purpose of the study is to bridge literature and philosophy and the targeted readership includes students of ancient literature, culture and philosophy (although philosophical issues are not treated in depth).

In chapter 1, Montiglio begins with Antisthenes' appreciation of Odysseus. Antisthenes follows Socrates in attacking prejudices against Odysseus, defends him against accusations of impiety in the Cyclops episode and praises his rejection of Calypso. His Odysseus is skilled at transmitting knowledge to others for their own good. Montiglio suggests that Antisthenes presents Odysseus using his versatility for the service of others and not for his personal advantage. Many of his characteristics recall Socrates' indifference to the jury's feelings, willingness to serve, and dislike for flattery. Antisthenes also uses Odysseus' emphasis on intelligence and knowledge as prerequisites of bravery in order to attack contemporary criticism which emphasised Odysseus' wicked intelligence and his pursuit of gain. Contrary to this image,

Antisthenes depicts Odysseus in Cynic terms as the reformer of the human race who does not care for appearances or mistreatment. Tragedy condemns Odysseus' daring actions because they are secretive and immoral. Antisthenes reverses this: Odysseus' daring actions are hidden not because their display would cause shame but because their purpose is the common good not personal ambition. He also restores Odysseus' Homeric endurance which had been disregarded by contemporary critics. His views on the blinding of the Cyclops and Odysseus' boast against Poseidon as the statement of a theological truth are also examined but Montiglio omits to mention how unconvincing Antisthenes' argument is. Odysseus' rejection of Calypso's offer of immortality inaugurates a strand of thought which focuses on the relation between his virtue and his deeds and recalls Heracles' choice of Virtue over Pleasure. The contrasting reputations of the two heroes are briefly discussed in the last part of the section.

In chapter 2 Montiglio refers to the Platonic Socrates being critical of Odysseus (except for *Lesser Hippias* in which Socrates argues that Odysseus' lies do not affect his moral integrity). Socrates is more critical in the *Apology* where he likens himself to Achilles. He distances himself from Odysseus' features such as trickery or his cowardly audacity. He identifies himself with Odysseus' victims and implies that his post-mortem examination of Odysseus as the wise man will reveal no wisdom at all.

In *Phaedrus* Socrates makes fun of the Sophists' efforts to ground their rhetoric in Homer. In *Phaedo* Plato undermines the effectiveness of Odysseus' inventiveness and is caught between approval of this quality for its usefulness and its rejection on moral grounds. In the myth of Er and his descent to the Underworld, Odysseus' soul chooses a human life of withdrawal from politics. Plato introduces a new Odysseus without ambitions who denies military and political life and is ready to embrace philosophy. In the *Symposium* because of his self-control Odysseus serves Plato as an illustration of the supremacy of the soul over the body. It is true that in Homer Odysseus' persistence leads to his success but in Plato there is no utilitarian goal: his self-control aims only at moral perfection. In the last section of the chapter Montiglio offers a comparative analysis of Odysseus by the Socratics' focus on Antisthenes' praise of Odyssean flexibility, Xenophon's appreciation of his resourcefulness and eloquence and Plato's purified image of Odysseus. The chapter finishes with Aristotle's disregard for Odysseus which is explained through the incompatibility of his views with the Homeric character: for Aristotle fortune and lack of suffering are necessary prerequisites for happiness and virtue. Aristotle criticises Odysseus' obsession with his personal interest, his military worthlessness and cowardliness and hence his Socratic/Platonic image as an ideal leader.

In chapter 3 Montiglio asserts that contrary to Plato and Xenophon who avoid eulogy of Odysseus the beggar, the Cynics identify in Odysseus' rags a denunciation of the emptiness of social conventions. The association between Odysseus and the ideal Cynic beggar is fragile and marked by a controversy between the harsher and the softer Cynics. The Stoics did not celebrate Odysseus' begging; they preferred him as model actor of life with different roles aiming to achieve a higher moral purpose. Montiglio also examines the Cynic image of Odysseus as the hidden king who expresses power through physical strength together with the Stoic hero as the master of moral perfection. Odysseus' ambivalence towards labouring exemplified the Stoic ideal of enduring hardships without seeking them. Conversely, it is true that his self-orientation pushed some Stoics to disregard him in favour of Hercules who fought for the common

good. Although the model of Odysseus as exile appealed to most Stoics who were themselves exiled, the problem was that Odysseus' purpose was to return to Ithaca. Epictetus rejects Odysseus' nostalgia and the Cynics ignore it. But as Montiglio correctly asserts the problem of Odysseus' nostalgia was not insoluble; it could be argued that he equally served both his smaller community as well as his larger one. Odysseus' inquisitiveness is the last trait discussed with substantial variation of views: Strabo and Heraclitus the allegorist approve of his encyclopaedic knowledge while Zeno, Ariston of Chios, Epictetus and Dio criticise it. Epictetus in particular subordinates Odysseus' knowledge to the pursuit of philosophical wisdom. Epictetus objects to Odysseus' intellectual curiosity because it causes risks thus diverting the searcher from his philosophical goal. The chapter closes with Seneca's objections to Odysseus' treatment by philosophers.

In chapter 4 Odysseus' Epicurean characteristics are discussed. His association with the parasite is traditional because of his love for food and drink. Montiglio focuses on how Lucian ridiculed Stoicism and Epicureanism. Philodemus' discussion suggests that Odysseus' hedonism was targeted by the opponents of Epicureanism as evidence for the shameful nature of this doctrine; however, the Epicureans did not actually admire Odysseus for his love for food. Philodemus' analysis of the ideal monarch emphasises their admiration for Odysseus as the perfect ruler. Montiglio also argues convincingly that Philodemus' characterisation of Odysseus as an effective suppressor of strife appealed to Virgil. Montiglio continues her analysis with Odysseus' moderation and leadership skills, which are linked to his teaching role in the epics. She looks at how Philodemus treats the Odysseus-Diomedes episode and how Odysseus' paradoxical association with frankness contributed to his promotion as a positive model. She argues that for Philodemus, Plutarch and Maximus of Tyre, Odysseus' solitude is converted into ethical guidance for the common good and contributes to the reformation of the human race. The last section deals with Odysseus' intelligent adaptability as praised by Cicero in a generally unflattering image. Odysseus appeals more to Maximus because he keeps his constancy of purpose while adjusting to changing circumstances. His use of deceptive disguises and his eagerness to work for the powerful earned him the label of the self-serving flatterer. This image has been celebrated in Horace's *Satires* where evidence is found for the popularity of both the Cynic-Stoic idealisation of Odysseus as a paradigm of virtue and the opposite treatment of him as a greedy manipulator of his eloquence and acting skills for the service of base interests.

Chapter 5 deals with Odysseus the philosopher. From archaic times Homer has been identified with Odysseus. Consequently, Odysseus became the target of anti-Homeric propaganda, moralised readings by novelists and even satire. However, Montiglio correctly asserts that his idealisation as a philosopher came with Plutarch. In his pedagogical essays, Plutarch succeeds in establishing Odysseus' morality and admires him for a variety of talents. After exploiting a number of episodes in the Homeric story, Plutarch aims to establish Odysseus' self-control as the ultimate heroic idea. Montiglio also examines the Platonic interpretation of several Odyssean episodes and concludes that the establishment of Odysseus as a model for contemplation starts with Plato. Cicero followed him in his analysis of the song of the Sirens and promoted an Odysseus who does not want protection from the Sirens' song (interpreted as the call of wisdom). Seneca's reading of the episode is the exact opposite: for him the ideal wise man would sail by the Sirens' voices with "mental earplugs". For the Stoics, Odysseus is the ideal

model of contemplation because he is a student of the world. He fits the person who both contemplates and acts in order to fulfil his part in the order of the world. On the contrary, Maximus sees a different model for the contemplative Odysseus: the god-searching man. Like Plato, Maximus is eager to identify Odysseus' study of the world with our soul's search for the divine. Later Platonists were also eager to read Odysseus' journey as the rescue of our soul from matter and its return to its divine dwelling. According to Plutarch, Odysseus' thirst for knowledge finally triumphs over his commitment to life in this world. Odysseus-the-soul longs to follow the song of the Sirens in order to return to his true Ithaca.

In the epilogue Montiglio briefly examines Odysseus' virtue and thirst for knowledge in the Renaissance. In the East Odysseus is admired for being a political philosopher who delights in the Sirens' company but never stays with them; in the West Odysseus' wisdom is underlined by his eagerness to reach his celestial home. In keeping with ancient representations, the Renaissance Odysseus remains a virtuous sage who manages to save himself and his companions. Petrarch does not mistrust Odysseus' intellectual curiosity but presents a mixed image in which virtue includes desire for knowledge. His emphasis on Odysseus' travels as the means to acquire knowledge foreshadows Renaissance ideals. One of them, the well-rounded person with knowledge of arts and sciences finds in Odysseus its embodiment as shown by J.

Dorat's *Mythologicum*. His allegorical interpretation of the *Odyssey* suggests that Odysseus represents the soul striving to reach its celestial home. Odysseus balances his knowledge with activity in the world and manages to escape a life in contemplation symbolised by Circe as physical science and Calypso as metaphysics. The Sirens represent the wise man's confrontation with noble intellectual temptations. His interpretation of Odysseus' fatherland recalls the Stoic identification of one's home with virtue and happiness.

All chapters of the book are related to Odysseus in ancient thought (the only exception is the short epilogue on Odysseus and Renaissance). Bibliography, notes, and glossary of ancient sources and Greek terms make this book more accessible to readers. Experts will appreciate chapters 3-5; a wider audience might be more interested in the introduction and chapters 1 and 2. Overall, the volume will initiate productive discussion to scholars studying Odysseus' philosophical journey.