

THE ODYSSEY – Book 9 & 10

A.

THE CICONES: In book 9, Odysseus is sharing his hardship with the King Alcinous, he begins by telling him the story of when he landed in Ismarus, the home of the Cicones. Odysseus explains, how he destroyed the men folk, and shared out the women and the food that he had took from the town, between his comrades. ‘And then I said we must escape with all possible speed’ Odysseus knows the consequences of his actions and wishes to leave the island, but his crew are enjoying the wine, livestock and continue to butcher the sheep. Meanwhile the Cicones, go to raise help from the other cicones, who are ‘both more numerous and better men, trained in fighting from the chariot and on foot as well, when the occasion requires’. Before Odysseus and his men had left the Cicones had arrived. They fought, but the Cicones gained the upper hand on the Achaean ranks. Six comrades from each ship were killed, the rest including Odysseus got away alive.

THE LOFTUS-EATERS: Odysseus then explains the next place he lands, which was home to the Loftus-eaters. Odysseus and his men disembarked, to draw water and eat a quick meal. Odysseus then chose three men, to find out what humans beings lived on the island. These men soon came across the Loftus-eaters. These natives had no intention on killing these men, but instead gave them some lotus to taste. Those who ate the honeyed fruit lost any will to come back to Odysseus with any news, they wanted to stay with the Lofus-eaters and forget any thoughts of returning home. Odysseus used force to bring the men back, the men cried on the way back to the ship, and Odysseus tied them up and dragged them under the benches. Odysseus then commanded his crew to get back into the ships, to prevent them eating the loftus too, the crew obey took their places on board the ships and left the country.

THE CYCLOPS: The next place Odysseus comes across in the land of the Cyclops. Odysseus had chosen 12 best men he had in his company, he wrapped in a goatskin some mellow wine and some food which he took with him to find out what kind of men where on the island. Odysseus and his men soon came across a cave, but it’s owned was not home, so they went inside and looked around. Odysseus and his crew lit a fire, and helped themselves to the cheese, then they sat down and waited for the cave owner’s arrival. When he came back he entered the cave and put a huge rock over the entrance of the cave. Once the Cyclops had re-lit his fire, he spied the men. The Cyclops asked who they were and where they had come from. Odysseus made a plea with him, and told him who they were and why they were there. They Cyclops told Odysseus he cared nothing for Zeus and the other Gods and asked Odysseus where his ship was. Odysseus told his that his ship was wrecked and he and his men had just escaped with their live. The Cyclops didn’t care, instead picked up 2 of Odysseus’ men dashed their heads against the floor and ate them. At dawn the Cyclops once again eat another 2 men for his meal. He left the rest of the men in his cave whilst he went to the mountains with his flocks, replacing the rock over the entrance door.

Odysseus keeping in mind he needed the Cyclops to remove the rock across the door, thought up a plan to stab the Cyclops in the eye with an olive-wood that was in the cave and he informed his crew of the plan. That evening the Cyclops returned and ate another 2 men for his meal. Odysseus encouraged the Cyclops to wash his meal down with some wine, the Cyclops did so and wanted more and more of the

wine to drink. The wine had made the Cyclops lose his wits, and Odysseus told him his name was 'no-body'. The Cyclops soon fell to sleep, and the men heated the olive-wood in the fire, and all forced the wood into the Cyclops' eye. The Cyclops' eye bled and he screamed, as he pulled the stake out of his eye. Hearing his screams other Cyclops came to the cave and asked from outside what was the matter. 'Out of the cave came mighty Polyphemus' voice in reply "o my friends, it's Nobody's treachery, not violence, that is doing me death" The others replied 'if you are alone and nobody is assaulting you, you must be sick, and sickness comes from mighty Zeus', the others left. Odysseus' plan had worked. The Cyclops still moaning, groped about with his hands and pushed the rock away from the entrance, sat himself in the doorway and stretched out both hands, hoping to catch the Odysseus and his men slipping out of the cave. Odysseus had another idea, he tied his men underneath the sheep, and tied himself underneath a full grown ram, as the reached the door way the Cyclops passed his hands along the backs of the animals and didn't notice the men. Having escaped, Odysseus and his men drove the sheep and goats, right down to the ship. The men took their places aboard the ships and headed off.

AEOLIA: Aeolia is the home of Aeolus son of Hippias, who is favourite of the immortal gods, all around the island there is a wall of bronze. Aeolus and his family are always feasting on the finest delicacies. The first time Odysseus arrives in Aeolia he is welcomed, and looked after for a month. Odysseus tells Aeolus all about his army, Troy and where he is going, finally Odysseus asks Aeolus if he would now help him on his way home. Aeolus made arrangements for Odysseus' journey and presented him with a leather bag, in which he had imprisoned the boisterous energies of all the winds. He then called up a breeze to blow Odysseus' ships and crews across the sea.

Having not told the crew what was in the bag, they thought it to be riches Odysseus was planning to take home. As Odysseus became in view of his home land, he fell asleep. The crew opened the bag, releasing the winds. When Odysseus awoke he found himself back in Aeolia. On his second arrival to the island, Odysseus took 2 other men back to the palace of Aeolus. When Odysseus arrived, Aeolus was shocked to see him, and cast him out of his palace claiming he would not entertain someone that clearly the Gods detested.

THE LAESTRYGONIANS: When Odysseus reaches his next stop, in the land of Laestrygonians, he doesn't land his ship in the same place as his crew's ships. He lands his outside of the harbour. Once they had all reached shore, Odysseus chooses two men and a messenger to seek out what human-beings occupy this land. The 3 men came across a strong girl drawing water outside of the town, the daughter of Antiphates, the Laestrygonians chief. The men asked her who the ruler of the country was, she pointed to the high roof of her father's house. They soon entered Antiphates' place where they were confronted by Antiphates' wife, she called her husband, who promptly made his murderous intentions clear, pouncing on one of the men to eat him for supper, the other two men managed to escape and make their way back to the ships. Meanwhile Antiphates called for countless number of powerful Laestrygonians, who attacked Odysseus' men and ships from every side. Standing at the top of the cliffs, the Laestrygonians, throw rocks, ordinary men could barely lift and throw them, killing many men and wrecking ships. Odysseus ordered his men to board the ships and escape, fearing for their lives they obeyed. They managed to get away, Odysseus' ship was the only one to survive.

CIRCE: The next place Odysseus and the remaining men come across, is the Island of Aeaea, home of the beautiful Goddess Circe. At dawn of the third day Odysseus set out alone in search of civilisation. Odysseus climbed a rocky height, and from there could see the smoke from Circe's house. He decided to return to the ship, give his men a meal and then send out a party to explore the house. After the meal, Odysseus divided his men into two groups, his group stayed behind, and the second group went weeping reluctantly in search of the house.

The men soon reached Circe's home, where they could hear her inside singing. They decided to call the women, and at once she came out to them, and invited them to enter. The party followed her in except their leader Eurylochus who suspected a trap so stayed cautiously outside. Circe leads the other men into the hall, where she sat them and fed them a mixture of cheese, barley-meal, and yellow honey flavoured pramnian wine. Into the food she places a noxious drug, to make them lose all of their memory of their native land. After they had eaten, Circe turned them into pigs, they looked like pigs, but with men's minds, she penned them into their sties. Eurylochus ran back to the ship to inform the others of the torment his men suffered.

Odysseus asked Eurylochus to lead him back to Circe's house but he refused begging Odysseus to leave him behind. Odysseus did so, and set out for the house of Circe. On his way he met Hermes, Hermes gives Odysseus a drug to keep himself immune from Circe's black magic and informs him of what he must do to be invited to Circe's bed.

When Odysseus arrived at Circe's house, she heard him and came outside to invite him in, she gave him a chair and stool to rest his feet on, and began making him a drink, in which she dropped a drug into. Odysseus drank it without effect from the drug thanks to Hermes. Circe stuck him with her stick in an attempt to turn him into a pig. Odysseus did not turn into a pig. Circe is shocked and asks him many questions, but first as Hermes predicts she invites Odysseus to her bed. Odysseus agrees to go if Circe makes an oath that she will not perform any more mischief. Circe swears the oath and they go to bed.

After Circe noticed Odysseus is not eating, to please him she frees his men and returns them to their human selves. Odysseus and his men spend a year with Circe, sharing her food and drink. Odysseus then persuades him to return on his journey home, Circe gives Odysseus advice on his upcoming experiences, and fills his ships with goods, before Odysseus once again sets sail.

B.

From all of Odysseus' adventures in book 9 and 10, we see him as a forceful and resourceful character. 'I had to use force to bring them back to the hollow ships' Odysseus drags his men back to the ships, against their wills, but possibly for their own good and his own sake. Odysseus is resourceful because he looks around the Cyclops' cave and thinks up a plan using the resources available to him 'this was the scheme that eventually seemed best'. We also see evidence of bad leadership from Odysseus as he doesn't share what is in the contents of the bag from Aeolus with his crew, making them suspicious and forcing them to open the bag which in turn causes devastation. We also see Odysseus as a charmer to Circe, using his knowledge she is attracted to him to persuade her into letting his men free.

C.

In book 9 Homer gives us an uncivilised view of the Cyclops in his words 'a fierce, lawless people who never lift a hand to plant or plough, but just leave everything to the immortal gods. Homer throughout the story classes civilised people as 'god-fearing' through Polyphemus' speech Homer, makes it clear that Polyphemus is not civilised 'Stranger, you must be a fool, or must of come from very far a field, to order me to fear or reverence the gods. We Cyclopes care nothing for Zeus with his aegis, nor for the rest of the blessed gods, since we are much stronger than they are. I would never spare you or your men for fear of incurring Zeus, unless I felt like it'.

D.

Odysseus has to go to the underworld to consult the soul of Teiresias, the blind Theban prophet, there Teiresias will prophesy Odysseus' route, the stages of his journey and how he will reach how across the teeming seas.