

**From *The Odyssey to Itaca per sempre to Ithaca Forever***

**A. Comparing Malerba to Homer**

“Most sad mother with a callous heart, why aren’t you embracing my father who has returned to his homeland after so many years, and who, at grave risk to himself, has freed our house from the plague of the Suitors? What is troubling your soul? Why won’t you speak? Have you nothing to say to your husband? (Malerba, pg. 110)

“Mother, cruel heartless mother!  
Why are you doing this, rejecting father?  
Why do you not go over, sit beside him,  
and talk to him? No woman in the world  
would be so obstinate. To keep your distance  
from him after he has come back after twenty  
long years of suffering! Your heart is always  
harder than rock!”  
(*Odyssey* 23:97-104, translated by Emily Wilson)

"μη̄τερ ἐμή, δύσμητερ, ἀπηγέα θυμὸν ἔχουσα,  
τίφθ' οὕτω πατρὸς νοσφίζεαι, οὐδὲ παρ' αὐτὸν  
ἐζομένη μύθοισιν ἀνείρεαι οὐδὲ μεταλλάς;  
οὐ μέν κ' ἄλλη γ' ὧδε γυνὴ τετληότι θυμῷ  
ἀνδρὸς ἀφεσταίῃ, ὅς οἱ κακὰ πολλὰ μογήσας 100  
ἔλθοι ἐεικοστῷ ἔτει ἐς πατρίδα γαῖαν:  
σοὶ δ' αἰεὶ κραδίῃ στερεωτέρῃ ἐστὶ λίθιοι."  
*Odyssey* 23: 96-102

**B. Comparing Malerba’s Italian to Heise’s English Translation**

Malerba:

**Insomma Ulisse** non solo racconta **le cose** che gli succedono, ma fa succedere **le cose** per poterle raccontare. Sono certa che io stessa sarò oggetto dei suoi racconti, anche se la mia **ostinazione** sarà per molto tempo una memoria difficile. La sua vita è una grande fabbrica di simulazioni, di menzogne, di segreti, di enigma. (pg. 132)

Heise’s translation:

**Let’s face it, Odysseus** doesn’t just tell **stories** about what happens to him, he also makes things happen in order to tell **stories** about them. I’m sure that I myself will be the subject of his stories, even if my **stubbornness** will be a bitter memory for a long time. His life is a great factory of fictions, of lies, of secrets, of enigmas. (pg. 116)

Literal translation:

Literal translation:

**In short, Ulysses** not only tells the **things** that happen to him, but makes **things** happen in order to tell them. I am sure that I myself will be the subject of his stories, even if my **obstinacy** will be a difficult memory for a long time. His life is a huge factory of fictions, lies, secrets, enigmas.

**C. Some Discussion Questions for Using Malerba’s *Itaca per sempre* in the Undergraduate Classroom**

1. Compare the portrayals of Malerba’s Ulysses, Penelope and Telemachus to the Homeric characters.
2. Compare Penelope’s first encounter with the beggar. Which version do you think is more realistic, Homer’s or Malerba’s? Why?
3. Discuss the effects a twenty-year separation can have on a marriage? Which version is more realistic, Homer’s or Malerba’s?

Cont. on next page.

4. Compare Athena's clothing of Odysseus in *Odyssey* 23 to Malerba's Ulysses in his old tunic and cloak. Which version do the students find more satisfying psychologically? Why does Malerba prefer a humorous hero with a middle-aged bulge to Homer's godlike Odysseus?
5. Tension between truth and lies, reality and fiction, is a theme resonating not only in Malerba's novel but also in the present time. Find several examples of this tension in the text and discuss them in terms of "fake news" and conflicting reports of the truth.
6. Malerba's Ulysses says that "Memory deceives and history is a liar, because men want to remember and listen to fairy tales not to brutal, stupid reality" (pg. 6). Do you think this is true? Why or why not?
7. Compare Malerba's Penelope to Margaret Atwood's in the *Penelopiad*. Which portrayal of Penelope is more appealing?
8. Why do you think Malerba avoids divine intervention in his novel? Do you think this enhances or detracts from his story? Why or why not?
9. Why does Malerba's Laertes accept the identity of his son even though Ulysses does not remember accurately the number of fruit trees they had planted? Is this acceptance realistic? Why or why not?
10. Will Malerba's Ulysses stay on Ithaca forever or will he depart on another final voyage?
11. Is Odysseus or Ulysses a better choice for Malerba's hero in English translation? Why?
12. At the beginning of the novel, Malerba's Telemachus accepts the beggar as his father but by the end of the novel, Telemachus has begun to doubt his identity. Why does Telemachus' opinion change?
13. Compare Homer's portrayal of Telemachus to Malerba's version.
14. Describe Penelope's attitude towards reports of her husband's infidelities in the *Odyssey*, in *Itaca per sempre*, and in the *Penelopiad*?
15. How would each of these heroes fair in a trial on the charge of marital infidelity: Homer's Odysseus, Malerba's Ulysses and Atwood's Odysseus.
16. Find passages in Malerba's novel which follow closely or deviate from the text of Homer's *Odyssey*.

#### D. Bibliography

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