

Being like Hector in Books 9-12 of the *Odyssey*:  
An Intertextual Reassessment of Odysseus' Leadership

In the study of Homer's *Apologoi* (Books 9-12 of the *Odyssey*), scholars have adopted four different approaches: moralizing (Segal 1962), narratological (de Jong 2004), structural (Niles 1978), and character-focused (Clay 1983), the last of which traditionally highlights Odysseus' cunning and suffering (Cook 1999).

Building upon this last approach, this paper focuses on Odysseus' characterization as a leader in the *Apologoi* and argues that it is enriched by an intertextual relationship with the Iliadic characterization of the Trojan leader Hector, as presented especially in Books 6, 22 and 24 of the *Iliad*. Hector's characterization includes both a selfless and a selfish side (Haubold 2000). By exploiting Hector's selfless side, Odysseus highlights his extreme care for his companions, whereas, by exploiting Hector's selfish side, Odysseus subtly introduces and then rejects a narrative about the failure of his own leadership. My approach to intertextuality is indebted to Pucci's (1987) and Currie's conciliation of oral theory with the possibility that the *Odyssey* alludes to the *Iliad* in both its themes and quotations (2016).

In Section 1, I argue that, at the beginning of the *Apologoi*, Odysseus' leadership mirrors Hector's selflessness from the *Iliad*. In the famous 'woman simile' (Nagy 1980), as the crying Odysseus is placed in Andromache's shoes, he expresses his admiration for Hector's selfless sacrifice for his city (Od. 8.523-5). Then, at the end of Book 8, Alcinous understands his unidentified guest to be a Trojan who has lost many relatives (581-6). Finally, at the beginning of the *Apologoi* (9.47-61), as Odysseus and his companions are besieged by the Cicones, the arrival of the latter is characterized at *Od.* 9.51-2 with the same leaf simile that is used for the Achaeans

in *Il.* 2.467-8. As a result, Odysseus and his companions are portrayed as Trojans attacked by Achaeans.

In Section 2, I analyze Odysseus' visit to Circe to rescue his companions (*Od.* 10.274-405) and his return to the ship (407-28). Beck (1960) identified a number of striking parallels between the Circe episode and Priam's visit to Achilles to rescue Hector's body in Book 24 of the *Iliad*, starting from Hermes' epiphany, which occurs in both scenes. Beside identifying some further echoes of the *Iliad* in the same Odyssean scene (e.g. the recall of *Il.* 6.496 in *Od.* 10.201-2), I discuss some previously unrecognized consequences of this intertextual connection: on his journey to rescue his companions disappeared in Circe's house, Odysseus compares himself to the caring Priam who is searching for his son's body. Through this parallel, Odysseus presents his care for his companions as fatherly. Then, when Odysseus returns to his ships, he is portrayed as the selfless Hector, since his companions welcome him as their own mother and homeland (10.414-17), and then use the same words pronounced by Cassandra when she evoked Hector's return to the city (cf. *Od.* 10.419-21 and *Il.* 24.704-6).

In Section 3, I briefly analyze two key aspects of Odysseus' narrative about the failure of his leadership. Strikingly, Odysseus' regret at not having listened to his companions' advice to escape from Polyphemus' cave (*Od.* 9.228-229) contains an intertextual echo of Hector's regret at his disobedience to Polydamas' advice to leave the battlefield (*Il.* 22.103-4). During the Circe episode, Eurylochus reinforces Odysseus' identification with Hector's selfish side as he accuses the former of *atasthalia*, a vice distinctive of the latter (cf. 10.437 and *Il.* 22.104). However, Eurylochus is presented as a biased and unreliable speaker (10.251-60), which downplays the identification of Odysseus with the selfish Hector, and by contrast highlights the importance of Odysseus' association with the selfless side of the Trojan hero.

In conclusion, I explore one general way in which my reading may apply to Odysseus' characterization in the *Odyssey* as a whole. According to Nagy, the cunning of Odysseus in the *Odyssey* differentiates him from Achilles, the hero of strength of the *Iliad*. My study suggests that the Odysseus of the *Odyssey* is rather closer to the *Iliad*; as Virgil will later highlight, on his journey Odysseus becomes the suffering Hector who cares for his companions.

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