

15

Telemachus Returns

Book Fifteen

Two journeys run side by side. In Sparta, Athene wakes Telemachus and speeds him home past the killers waiting in the strait; on Ithaca, the swineherd pours out the story of his own stolen childhood to a beggar who is really his king. Omens of the eagle and the hawk promise revenge to come, and by the book's end father and son are moving, unknowing, towards the same humble door.

NAME

SET

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BOOK FIFTEEN

Telemachus Returns

Sparta, the sea, and Eumaeus' hut. Athene speeds Telemachus home past the suitors' ambush, while the swineherd tells the beggar his own life-story – and father and son draw towards one roof.

WHAT HAPPENS

- Athene rouses Telemachus in Sparta, warns of the suitors' ambush, and tells him to sail by night and go first to Eumaeus.
- Menelaus and Helen send him off with gifts and an eagle-omen of Odysseus' revenge.
- Avoiding Nestor, he sails from Pylos, taking aboard Theoclymenus, a fugitive seer.
- At the hut, Eumaeus tells how he, a kidnapped prince, came to be Odysseus' slave.
- Telemachus lands on Ithaca, reads a hawk-omen with Theoclymenus, and sets off for the swineherd's farm.

WHO WE MEET

Telemachus

hurrying home into danger and towards his father

Eumaeus

the swineherd, whose noble origins are revealed

Theoclymenus

the exiled seer who joins the voyage

Menelaus & Helen

the last of the good hosts

WHY IT MATTERS FOR ESSAYS

Book 15 interweaves the two strands of the poem – son and father – and edges them together. Note the pattern of good hospitality (Menelaus) against the suitors' murderous plot, the two bird-omens of Odysseus' return, and Eumaeus' own tale, which deepens the themes of loyalty and lost nobility. **Unprescribed:** read for the story and its essay background, not examined in context.

Telemachus Returns

— ATHENE AT SPARTA

Pallas Athene now went to the broad vale of Lacedaemon to remind great-hearted Odysseus' noble son that it was time for him to return, and to hasten his departure. She found Telemachus and Prince Peisistratus lying in great Menelaus' portico. Nestor's son was sound
 5 asleep; but sweet sleep had deserted Telemachus, for anxiety on his father's behalf kept him wakeful all through the ambrosial night.

The bright-eyed goddess stood near him and said: 'Telemachus, it is wrong of you to linger abroad and leave your property unguarded with such a rabble in your house. They might well share out and eat
 10 up all you have, and so make your journey futile. Urge your host, Menelaus of the loud war-cry, to let you go at once, if you wish to find your noble mother still in the palace. For her father and brothers are already pressing her to marry Eurymachus, who outdoes all the rest of her Suitors in his gifts to her and keeps offering larger and
 15 larger marriage settlements. There is also the danger that she might carry off some of your own things from the house without your permission. You know what a woman's disposition is. She likes to bring riches to the house of the man who is marrying her, but never remembers or asks about the dead husband she once loved or the
 20 children she bore him. So when you reach home hand over everything to whichever woman-servant you trust most, until the gods send you a wife worthy of your rank.'

— THE AMBUSH WARNED

'And here's another matter for you to bear in mind. The ringleaders among the Suitors are **lying in ambush in the straits** between Ithaca
 25 and the rugged coast of Samos, intent on murdering you before you can reach home. Not that I think they will succeed. No; sooner than that, the earth will close over some of those Suitors who are consuming your livelihood. However, steer your ship well clear of the islands, and sail on through the night; your guardian god will send
 30 you a following breeze. Land in Ithaca at the first point you reach and send the ship and the whole ship's company round to the harbour, but before you yourself do anything else, visit the swineherd in charge of your pigs, who is loyal to you in spite of everything. Stay there for the night and send him to the city to give your wise mother,
 35 Penelope, the news that you are back from Pylos and safe.'

Her message delivered, Athene left for the heights of Olympus. Telemachus roused Nestor's son from his sweet sleep with a kick and said: 'Wake up, Peisistratus. Harness the horses to the chariot, and let's be on our way.'

LINE 24

lying in ambush in the straits The suitors have set a trap: a warship waiting in the strait between Ithaca and the island of Same, meaning to murder Telemachus at sea before he can reach home. Athene warns him to slip past by night.

40 'Telemachus,' his friend replied, 'however eager we may be to start,
we cannot possibly drive in complete darkness. It'll soon be dawn.
Wait and give the famous spearman Menelaus the chance of putting
some presents for us in the chariot and sending us off with a friendly
farewell. All his life a guest remembers the host who has treated him
45 kindly.'

— MENELAUS' FAREWELL

Soon Dawn mounted her golden throne and Menelaus of the loud
war-cry rose from sleep beside Helen of the lovely hair and made his
way towards them. When Odysseus' heroic son saw him coming he
hastily drew his shining tunic on, threw his great cloak across his
50 sturdy shoulders, and went out to Menelaus and greeted him.

'Menelaus, son of Atreus, favourite of the gods, sovereign of your
people. Please let me return to my own country; I'm longing to be
home.'

'Telemachus,' Menelaus of the war-cry replied, 'I will not keep you
55 here long if you wish to get back. I disapprove of any host who is
either too kind or not kind enough. There should be moderation in all
things, and it is equally offensive to speed a guest who would like to
stay and to detain one who is anxious to leave. Treat a man well
while he's with you, but let him go when he wishes.'

60 'However, do give me time to bring you some presents and pack
them in your chariot – they will be fine ones, as you will see for
yourself. And let me tell the women to get a meal ready in the hall;
there's plenty of food in the store. It is a glorious privilege to travel
far and wide in the world, but you must have a meal first. Perhaps you
65 would like to make a tour through Hellas and the Argive country, in
which case I would provide the chariot and horses and serve as your
guide to the various cities? Nobody will send us away empty-handed:
we can count on each of our hosts for at least one gift, a bronze
tripod or a cauldron, a pair of mules or a golden cup.'

70 'Menelaus, son of Atreus, favourite of the gods, sovereign of your
people,' the sensible Telemachus answered, 'I really am anxious to
return at once to my own home. For when I set out I left no one in
charge of my property. In the search for my godlike father I don't
want to lose my life, nor do I want to lose any valuable heirlooms
75 from my house.'

When Menelaus of the loud war-cry heard this, he at once told his
wife and the servants to prepare a meal in the hall from the plentiful
supplies in the palace. At this moment, Boethus' son Eteoneus, who
lived nearby and had just got up, arrived and was told by Menelaus to
80 light the fire and roast some meat. Eteoneus obeyed his

instructions, while Menelaus, in company with Helen and Megapenthes, went down to the aromatic storeroom. When they had reached the place where the treasures were kept, Menelaus picked out a two-handled cup and told his son Megapenthes to collect a
 85 silver mixing-bowl. Helen, meanwhile, went to the chests which contained her elaborately woven dresses, the work of her own hands, and from them, great lady that she was, she lifted out the longest and most richly decorated robe, which had lain underneath all the rest, and now glittered like a star. They then made their way through the
 90 house and found Telemachus.

— PARTING GIFTS

‘It is my earnest hope, Telemachus,’ said auburn-haired Menelaus, ‘that Zeus the Thunderer and husband of Hera will make your home-coming all that you desire. By way of presents you shall have the most beautiful and most precious of the treasures that my palace
 95 holds. I am giving you a **a mixing-bowl** of wrought metal. It is solid silver, with a rim of gold, and was made by Hephaestus himself. I had it from the King of Sidon, the Lord Phaedimus, when I stayed with him on my journey home. And now I wish it to be yours.’

The hero Menelaus then handed him the two-handled cup, while his
 100 valiant son Megapenthes brought forward the shining silver bowl he had been carrying and set it before him. Helen of the lovely cheeks stood by with the robe in her hands and said,

— HELEN’S ROBE

‘Look, dear child, I too have a gift for you here, a **a keepsake from Helen**, made by her own hands. It is for your bride to wear when the
 105 longed-for day of your wedding arrives. Till then let it be kept in your mother’s room. And now I wish you a joyful return to your own country and your fine house.

‘With that, Helen handed the robe to Telemachus, who accepted it joyfully. The heroic Peisistratus took charge of the gifts and admired
 110 them as he stowed them in a basket in the chariot. Auburn-haired Menelaus then led the way into the house and they sat down on chairs and seats. A maid brought water in a fine golden jug and poured it out over a silver basin for them to rinse their hands. Next she drew a polished table to their side, and the faithful housekeeper
 115 brought some bread and set it by them with a choice of delicacies, helping them liberally to all she could offer. Eteoneus was there to carve and serve the meat, while the great Menelaus’ son poured out their wine. And so they helped themselves to the food spread before them.

120 When they had satisfied their hunger and thirst, Telemachus and

LINE 95

a mixing-bowl Good host to the last, **Menelaus** sends Telemachus off with a treasure: a silver mixing-bowl with a gold rim, made by **Hephaestus** and once given to Menelaus by the king of Sidon. Rich parting-gifts like this are the mark of proper *xenia*.

LINES 103–104

a keepsake from Helen Helen gives Telemachus a robe she wove herself, for his bride to wear one day – a graceful gesture from the woman whose elopement began the whole Trojan War.

Nestor's noble son yoked their horses, mounted their gaily painted chariot, and drove out by the gateway and its echoing portico. Auburn-haired Menelaus, Atreus' son, followed them out with a golden cup of mellow wine in his right hand, to enable his guests to
 125 make a drink-offering before they left. He went up to their chariot and raised the cup to them.

'Goodbye, my young friends,' he said; 'and give King Nestor, shepherd of his people, my respects. He was like a kind father to me when we were fighting at Troy.'

130 'Menelaus, favourite of Zeus,' the thoughtful Telemachus replied, 'we will certainly give him your message when we arrive. I only wish I could find Odysseus at home when I reach Ithaca, and tell him how I have met with nothing but kindness at your hands during my stay and have come away laden with precious gifts.'

— THE EAGLE AND THE GOOSE

135 As he spoke, a bird came flying from the right. It was an eagle, **carrying in its talons a great white goose**, a tame bird from the yard. Some men and women were giving chase with shrill cries, and when the eagle reached the chariot it sheered off again towards the right in front of the horses, to the delight of the whole party, whose spirits
 140 rose at the sight. Nestor's son Peisistratus was the first to speak. 'Menelaus, favourite of Zeus, ruler of the people, what do you think? Did heaven send this omen for us two or for you?'

Menelaus, dear to Ares, considered carefully how to pronounce correctly on the matter, but his long-robed wife forestalled him.

145 'Listen,' she said, 'while with the gods' inspiration I explain this omen and what I feel sure it portends. Just as this eagle came down from his native mountains and pounced on our home-fed goose, **so shall Odysseus, after many hardships** and many wanderings, reach his home and have his revenge. Or he is already there and planning
 150 trouble for the whole pack of Suitors!'

'May Zeus the Thunderer and husband of Hera,' cried thoughtful Telemachus, 'make what you say come true; then in my distant home I will worship you as a goddess.'

Then he gave the horses a touch of his whip. They set off briskly and
 155 pressed forward through the town towards the open country, and all day long the yoke rose and fell on their necks.

The sun set, and all the ways grew dark. They had reached Pherae, where they drove up to the house of Diocles, son of Ortilochus, whose father was Alpheius. There they stayed the night and were
 160 hospitably entertained. As soon as Dawn appeared, fresh and rosy-fingered, they were harnessing their horses once again and

LINE 136

carrying in its talons a great white goose A **bird-omen**. The Greeks read the future from the flight of birds, and an eagle (Zeus' bird) seizing a tame goose is a powerful sign.

LINES 147–148

so shall Odysseus, after many hardships **Helen** reads the omen: as the eagle swooped from the mountains on the household goose, so Odysseus will come home from his wanderings and take revenge on the suitors.

mounting the gaily coloured chariot. Out past the echoing portico and through the gates they drove. A flick of the whip to make the horses go, and the pair flew on with such a will that before very long
 165 they reached the high citadel of Pylos.

— AWAY FROM PYLOS

At this point Telemachus turned to Nestor's son and said: 'Peisistratus, I want you, if you can, to do something for me. We may well claim that our fathers' friendship makes a lasting bond between us. Besides which, we are of the same age and this journey will have
 170 served to bring us even closer together. So I beg you, favourite of Zeus, **not to take me past my ship**, but to put me down there and so save me from being kept at the palace against my will by your old father's passion for hospitality. I must get home quicker than that.'

Nestor's son turned the problem over in his mind. How could he
 175 manage this successfully? After some hesitation he made up his mind. Turning his horses, he drove down to the ship on the sea-shore, and took out and stowed Menelaus' fine presents of clothing and gold in the ship's stern. He then urged Telemachus on with words that flew.

180 'Embark at once,' he said, 'and order all your men on board before I reach home and tell my aged father. For I know only too well that he is far too obstinate to let you go, but will come down here himself to fetch you – and I do not see him going back alone. He'll anyway be very angry.'

185 With these words Peisistratus left him and drove his shiny-coated horses back to the city of Pylos, where he soon reached his home. Meanwhile Telemachus spurred on his crew. 'Men,' he called to them, 'get that tackle properly stowed away, and let's embark and be off.'

— THE HOUSE OF MELAMPUS

The crew leapt to his orders, climbed on board, and took their places
 190 at the oars. Telemachus had just supervised their embarkation and was praying and sacrificing to Athene by the ship's stern when he was approached by a stranger from a distant land. This man, who had fled from Argos after killing a man, was a seer **descended from Melampus**. Melampus had at one time lived in Pylos, the land of
 195 sheep, and been known among his fellow-citizens as a wealthy man with a magnificent house. But a time came when he had to flee the country and go abroad to escape from the great King, Neleus the Magnificent. The King seized his rich estate and kept it for a whole year. All this time Melampus was a wretched prisoner in the castle of
 200 Phylacus, suffering untold miseries, for Neleus' daughter's sake, from the fit of madness into which the Avenging Furies cast him.

LINE 171

not to take me past my ship Telemachus asks to be dropped straight at his ship so as not to be carried back to old **Nestor**, whose lavish, long-winded welcome (Books 3–4) would delay him for days.

LINES 193–194

descended from Melampus Homer pauses for a genealogy. **Melampus** was a legendary seer, and his line bred a famous family of prophets – which is where the stranger about to appear, Theoclymenus, comes from.

However, he escaped alive and managed to drive the lowing cattle from Phylace to Pylos, where he had his revenge on King Neleus for the injustice done to him and secured the hand of Neleus' daughter
 205 for his brother. As for himself, he went to live abroad, in Argos, the land of thoroughbreds, where he was destined to make his home and establish his rule over a large section of the people.

There he married, built himself a splendid palace, and had two sturdy sons, Antiphates and Mantius. Antiphates became the father of the
 210 bold Oicles, and Oicles, in his turn, of that great leader Amphiaraus, a man whom aegis-bearing Zeus and Apollo loved and blessed with every mark of their favour. Even so he never trod the path of old age, but fell at Thebes, the victim of a woman's avarice, leaving two sons, Alcmaeon and Amphilocheus. His brother Mantius was the father of
 215 Polyphides and Cleitus – Cleitus, who was such a beautiful youth that Dawn of the golden throne carried him off to live with the immortals, and the great-hearted Polyphides, who was made a seer by Apollo, and after Amphiaraus' death succeeded him as the most famous prophet of his age. A quarrel with his father led him to
 220 migrate to Hyperesia, where he settled and prophesied to all.

— THEOCLYMENUS

It was his son, **Theoclymenus by name**, who now appeared and came up to Telemachus, whom he found engaged in libations and prayers by his black ship. 'Friend,' he said to him with winged words, 'since I
 225 find you sacrificing here, I beg you by your sacrifice and the god you are honouring, and again by your own life and the lives of these companions who are with you, to be open with me and tell me the truth. Who are you? Where do you come from? What is your town and who are your people?'

'stranger,' answered the sensible Telemachus, 'I will tell you honestly.
 230 Ithaca is my native place, and my father is Odysseus, or was Odysseus, if ever he existed. But he has long since met with some unhappy end. That is what brings me here with my ship and crew. I am trying to find out what has happened to my long-lost father.'

'Like you,' said the noble Theoclymenus, 'I have left my country. I
 235 **killed a man of my own blood**, and the plains of Argos are full of his brothers and kinsmen, who form the most powerful family in the land. It was to avoid death and dark fate at their hands that I ran away. It is my destiny to be a wanderer on the face of the earth. Please take me on board – I seek sanctuary with you – don't let them kill me – I
 240 think they are on my track.'

'I shall certainly not bar you from my good ship, if you wish to sail with us,' said the thoughtful Telemachus. 'Come along then; and in Ithaca you shall be welcome to such hospitality as we can offer.'

LINE 221

Theoclymenus by name Theoclymenus is a fugitive seer (a descendant of Melampus) who begs passage from Telemachus. As a prophet, he will later read the omens that point to Odysseus' victory.

LINES 234–235

I killed a man of my own blood A recurring custom: a man who kills a kinsman must flee into exile to escape the dead man's relatives, who are bound to avenge him. Theoclymenus is on the run for just this – as was the 'Cretan' of Odysseus' lies.

With these words he took Theoclymenus' bronze spear and laid it on
 245 the curved ship's deck. Then he stepped on board the sea-going
 vessel himself, sat down in the stern, and gave Theoclymenus a place
 beside him. The hawsers were cast off and Telemachus called to the
 crew to rig the ship. They obeyed with a will, hauled up the pine
 mast, stepped it in its hollow box, made it fast with forestays, and
 250 hoisted the white sail with plaited leather ropes. And Athene of the
 gleaming eyes sent a following wind through a clear sky to speed
 them from astern, so that their ship might most speedily complete
 her journey across the salt sea. Thus they sailed past Crouni and
 Chalcis with its lovely streams. The sun set, and all the ways grew
 255 dark. They made for Pheae, still wafted on by a wind from Zeus, and
 then sailed past the good land of Elis where the Epeians rule. After
 which Telemachus set a course for the Pointed Isles, wondering
 whether he would get through alive or be caught.

— BACK AT THE HUT

In the hut Odysseus and the honest swineherd, with the farmhands
 260 for company, were having their supper. When they had eaten and
 drunk their fill, Odysseus sounded Eumaeus out to discover whether
 he would continue his hospitality and invite him to stay at the farm,
 or send him to the city.

'Listen to me,' he said, 'Eumaeus and all of you. **I intend to leave you**
 265 in the morning and go to the town to beg, so as not to be a burden to
 you and your men. But give me advice and the company of a
 trustworthy guide to show me the way. Once there, necessity will
 force me to wander about the town on my own in the hope that
 someone will give me a cup of water and a crust of bread. I would also
 270 like to go to godlike Odysseus' palace and deliver my news to his
 wise Queen, Penelope, and mingle with those high and mighty
 Suitors you speak of. They have such an abundance of good things
 that they might well spare me a meal. I should be ready to make a
 good job of whatever work they wanted done. For I tell you – and
 275 mark my words – that by favour of Hermes the Messenger, who gives
 grace and dignity to every kind of common labour, there's not a man
 to touch me at servants' work, at laying a fire properly, at splitting
 dry logs, as a carver, a cook, a wine-steward, in short at anything that
 humble folk do by way of serving their betters.'

280 **And then you, Eumaeus the swineherd**, were most indignant and
 said, 'Oh no, my friend! What on earth put such a scheme into your
 head? You will simply be courting sudden death, if you insist on
 becoming involved with a set of men whose aggressiveness and
 violence reach as high as the iron heavens. Their servants are not at
 285 all your kind; they are young fellows with smart tunics and cloaks,
 their hair and handsome faces always gleaming with oil. That is the

LINE 264

I intend to leave you Odysseus tests his host, offering to go and beg at the palace so as not to be a burden. Eumaeus is horrified and insists he stay – one more proof of the swineherd's kindness.

LINE 280

And then you, Eumaeus the swineherd Homer once more turns to speak to **Eumaeus** directly – 'and then you, Eumaeus...' – the warm second-person address he saves for a favoured few.

kind that wait on them – at polished tables, groaning under their load of bread and meat and wine. No, stay with me, where nobody finds you a nuisance. I certainly don't, nor do any of my men here. And
 290 when Odysseus' son arrives, he'll fit you out in a cloak and tunic and send you on wherever you would like to go.'

'Eumaeus,' replied the patient, good Odysseus, 'may Father Zeus look on you as kindly as I do for putting an end to the pain and misery of wandering. Surely to be a vagrant is the worst possible fate, yet men
 295 will bear such miseries because of their wretched stomachs. However, since you press me to stay and wait for the prince's arrival, tell me about godlike Odysseus' mother, and his father, whom he left on the threshold of old age when he went abroad. Are they still in the land of the living? Or are they dead by now and in the Halls of
 300 Hades?'

— EUMAEUS' STORY

'My friend,' said the master swineherd, 'I will tell you all. Laertes is still alive, but every day he prays to Zeus that death may visit his house and release the spirit from his flesh. For he grieves
 305 inconsolably for his lost son and for that wise and gentle lady, his wife, whose death was the heaviest blow he has suffered, and left him an old man before his time. As for her, it was pining for her glorious son that brought her to the grave – a tragic death. I hope no one whom I love or who has been kind to me here in Ithaca meets such an end. As long as the unhappy lady was still alive, I always liked to
 310 ask after her and hear the news, for it was she who brought me up, together with her daughter, the lovely Ctimene, her youngest child. Yes, we were brought up together and her mother treated me almost as her daughter's equal.

'But when we two young things had reached our youthful prime, that
 315 happy time, they married her off to someone in Same – and what a price he paid them! As for me, her mother fitted me out in a fine cloak and tunic, with a new pair of sandals for my feet, and sent me off to work on the farm. But she always kept a tender place for me in her heart. Ah, I have long missed kindness such as hers! The blessed
 320 gods have prospered the work which is my livelihood and brings me in enough to eat and drink and allows me to give to the deserving. But from my mistress the wise Penelope there's never a gentle word to be had, nor a kind deed either, ever since the house fell on evil days with the coming of these vicious men. Yet servants do miss it
 325 dreadfully when they can't talk face to face with their mistress, and find out all the news, and have some food and a drink, and take back a little something to the farm as well. That is the sort of thing that always warms a servant's heart.'

‘You surprise me,’ said Odysseus. ‘You must have been quite a little
 330 fellow, Eumaeus, when you were exiled all that way from your parents
 and your home! Won’t you tell me what happened? Was it sacked, the
 city of broad streets where your mother and father lived; or did some
 band of raiders capture you as you tended your sheep and cattle
 alone and bring you by ship to the palace here and get a good price
 335 from your master?’

‘My friend,’ replied that prince among swineherds, ‘you have asked
 for my story. Very well, listen quietly and enjoy the tale as you sit
 there and drink your wine. These nights are very long. They give one
 time to listen and be entertained as well as time to sleep. Nor is
 340 there any need for you to go early to bed. Too much sleep is a bad
 thing. But any of the others, if the spirit moves them, can go and
 sleep. For at the first sign of Dawn they must have breakfast and go
 out with our master’s pigs. Meanwhile let us two have the
 satisfaction of sharing our unhappy memories over our food and
 345 wine here in the hut. For a man who has been through bitter
 experiences and travelled far enjoys even his sufferings after a time.

‘You were asking me about my story. Let me tell you. There is **an**
island called Syrie – you may have heard the name – out beyond
 Ortygie, where the Sun turns in his course. It’s not so very thickly
 350 populated, though the rich land is excellent for cattle and sheep and
 yields fine crops of grapes and grain. Famine is unknown there and
 no dreadful diseases plague the people, but as the men and women of
 each generation grow old in their homes, Apollo of the Silver Bow or
 Artemis comes and strikes them with kindly arrows and ends their
 355 life. There are two cities there, each owning half the island. My
 father, Ctesius son of Ormenus, a man like a god, was king of both.

— THE PHOENICIAN PLOT

‘One day the island was visited by **a party of Phoenicians** – famous
 sailors, but greedy rogues – with a whole cargo of trinkets in their
 black ship. Now there happened to be a woman of their race in my
 360 father’s house, a tall, handsome woman, and clever too with her
 hands. But the cunning Phoenicians soon turned her head. One of
 them began it by making approaches to her when she was washing
 clothes, and seducing her by the ship’s hull – and there’s nothing like
 love to lead a woman astray, even a virtuous one. He asked her who
 365 she was and where she came from. She replied by pointing out to
 him the high roof of my father’s house, and said: “I come from Sidon,
 where they deal in bronze. I am the daughter of Arybas, a very rich
 man. But some Taphian pirates carried me off as I was coming in
 from the country, brought me here to this man’s house and sold me.
 370 He gave a good price for me, too!”

LINES 347–348

an island called Syrie Eumaeus tells his own story: he was born a prince on the far-off island of **Syrie**, son of its king.

LINE 357

a party of Phoenicians The **Phoenician** traders, again cast as ‘greedy rogues’: helped by a treacherous Phoenician slave-woman in the household, they steal the child Eumaeus away and sell him – to Laertes, Odysseus’ own father.

“And how would you like,” said her seducer, “to come home again with us and to see the high roof of your own house, and your parents in it? For I tell you they are still alive and are known to be well-to-do.”

375 “I would jump at the chance,” said the woman, “if you sailors would swear to bring me safe and sound to my home.”

“They swore to do what she asked, and solemnly took their oaths. But the woman went on, “Keep your mouths shut, and don’t let any of your party say a word to me if you meet me in the street or at the well. Someone might go to the house and tell the old man, who would
380 lock me up if his suspicions were roused, and do his best to kill you all. No; keep the idea to yourselves, and collect your homeward cargo as fast as you can. When all the stores are on board the ship, quickly send word to me up at the house. I will bring away some gold with me – all I can lay my hands on. And there’s something else I would gladly
385 give you in payment for my passage. I am nurse there in the house to my noble master’s child – a clever little chap, who trots along at my side when we go out. I’m quite ready to bring him on board with me, and he’d fetch you a fortune in any foreign port where you sold him.” With this the woman left them and returned to our fine palace.

390 “The traders stayed with us for a whole year, during which they had acquired by barter a vast store of goods. When the hollow ship was full and ready to sail, they sent up a messenger to pass the word to the woman. The cunning rascal came to my father’s house with a golden necklace strung with amber beads. While my mother and the
395 women-servants in the house were handling the necklace and agreeing a price and all eyes were fixed upon it, he quickly nodded to my nurse, and, after this signal, slipped away to the ship. The woman took me by the hand and led me out through the door, and there in the entrance-hall she noticed the wine-cups and tables that had
400 been used for a banquet given to my father’s counsellors. The guests themselves had gone out to attend a public debate in the meeting-place. So she quickly hid three goblets in her bosom and carried them off, and in my childish innocence I followed her. ‘The sun set, and all the ways grew dark. We ran down to the great harbour where
405 the fast Phoenician ship was lying. They put us on board at once, climbed in themselves and made for the open sea, with a following wind sent by Zeus. For six days and nights we sailed steadily on, but when Zeus brought the seventh day Artemis the Archeress struck the woman and she crashed headlong into the hold **like a gannet diving into the sea**. They threw her corpse overboard as carrion for
410 the seals and fishes, and I was left alone in my misery. In due course the winds and currents drove us to Ithaca, where Laertes parted with some of his wealth to buy me. That is how I first came to set eyes on this land.’

LINES 409–410

like a gannet diving into the sea A grim **simile**: struck dead by Artemis, the treacherous nurse drops into the ship’s hold ‘like a gannet diving into the sea’, and the traders pitch her body overboard.

415 'Eumaeus,' said Odysseus, the favourite of Zeus, 'the story of all your miseries has touched me deeply. But Zeus certainly sent you some good luck too, to set off against the bad, since after all these misadventures you came to the house of a kind master, who has obviously been careful to see that you have plenty to eat and drink; 420 so that the life you live is a good one, whereas I have tramped through cities all over the world before arriving here.'

In this way they talked together, then went to sleep – but not for long, just a little while, for soon Dawn appeared, seated on her beautiful throne.

— TELEMACHUS LANDS

425 Now Telemachus had reached the coast of Ithaca, and his men were striking sail. Down came the mast, and they rowed the ship into the harbour, where they dropped anchor and made the hawsers fast. Then they jumped out on to the beach, prepared a meal, and mixed the sparkling wine. When they had finished eating and drinking, the 430 sensible Telemachus gave them their instructions. 'Take the ship round to the city,' he said, 'while I pay a visit to the farms and the herdsman. This evening, when I've looked round my estate, I will come down to the city. And tomorrow morning I propose to reward you for coming on the voyage with a sumptuous feast of meat with 435 sweet wine.'

'And where am I to go, dear child?' asked his godlike passenger, Theoclymenus.

'Which of your chieftains' homes shall I make for in this rugged land of yours? Or shall I go straight to your mother's and your own house?'

440 'In other circumstances,' answered the prudent Telemachus, 'I would invite you to go to our house, where there is no lack of hospitality. But that wouldn't be much help to you as things are, because you won't have me at your side and my mother wouldn't see you. She seldom shows herself to her Suitors in the hall, but keeps away from 445 them and works at the loom in her room upstairs. However, there is a man you could go to, and I'll give you his name – Eurymachus, the distinguished son of a wise father, Polybus, who at the moment is my countrymen's idol. He is certainly the leading man there, as well as the keenest bidder for my mother's hand and for my father's rights. 450 But as to that, Olympian Zeus in his heaven is the only one who knows whether or not he will bring the day of doom on them before it comes to weddings!'

— THE HAWK AND THE DOVE

As he spoke a bird flew by on his right. It was a hawk, *Apollo's winged herald*, holding a dove in its talons, from which it plucked out

LINES 430–431

Take the ship round to the city The two threads of the poem converge: Telemachus sends his ship on to the town and heads, without knowing it, for the very hut where his disguised father is staying. Their reunion is now only a book away.

LINES 453–454

Apollo's winged herald A second **bird-omen**: a hawk (Apollo's messenger) tearing a dove. **Theoclymenus** reads it at once – no family is more kingly than Odysseus', and his line will hold power in Ithaca.

455 feathers that fluttered down to earth half-way between the ship and
Telemachus himself. Theoclymenus beckoned him away from his
men, seized his hand, and said: 'Telemachus, it was by a god's will
that this bird flew past on your right. Directly I set eyes on it I knew
it for a bird of omen. In all Ithaca there is no more royal house than
460 yours. Yours is the power for all time.'

'My friend,' said thoughtful Telemachus, 'may what you say prove true!
If it does, you will soon receive from me such friendship and
generosity that anyone who meets you will call you a fortunate man.'
Then he turned to his loyal friend Peiraeus and said: 'Peiraeus, son of
465 Clytius, of all who joined me on this journey to Pylos you have always
been the most ready to fall in with my wishes. Will you now take
charge of this guest of ours and treat him with every kindness and
attention in your own house till I come back?'

'Yes,' the great spearman Peiraeus replied. 'Even if you stay here a
470 long time, Telemachus, I will look after him. He shall not lack
hospitality.'

Peiraeus then went on board the ship and ordered the rest to embark
and cast off the hawsers. They quickly got in and took their seats by
the oars. Meanwhile Telemachus fastened his elegant sandals on his
475 feet and picked up his powerful bronze-pointed spear from the ship's
deck. The men untied the cables, thrust her off, and rowed for the
city, as ordered by Telemachus, the dear son of godlike Odysseus.
But Telemachus set out on foot and walked at a good pace till he
reached the yard where his large droves of pigs were kept and where
480 the swineherd slept among them, loyal heart, faithful servant of his
masters.

