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BACK IN THE CAVE OF THE CYCLOPS

PURA NIETO HERNÁNDEZ



IT IS MANY YEARS NOW since Denys Page (1955) demonstrated how the story of the Cyclops, as presented in book 9 of the *Odyssey*, is the product of a conflation of two distinct folklore themes that are well attested over a wide geographical area: on the one hand, that of the ogre-type giant who devours human flesh and is, in the end, blinded, and, on the other hand, the “No-man” theme. In his study Page highlighted certain details in which the *Odyssey* differs from its possible sources: examples are the substitution of a wooden stake for the metal skewer as the instrument with which the hero blinds the monster, and the use of wine to put the giant to sleep.

But the business of Polyphemus and the strange company of Cyclopes has posed other problems, which are very likely due to the number and diversity of themes that the composer of the *Odyssey* has skillfully woven together in this episode, and which relate the episode to the entire epic as we have it.¹ We may note, in the first place, a topic that is all but obsessive in the poem: the exchange of hospitality gifts (*xeinia*), which is closely related in turn to the theme of food—how, when, and with whom one ought or ought not to eat—and to the respect due the gods (sacrifices, etc.). These and other themes may be subsumed under the opposition between nature and culture, which scholars have carefully studied,² often arriving at the conclusion that the Cyclopes repre-

¹Schein (1970) examines some of these.

²Cf. Kirk 1990, 170–79, and O’Sullivan 1990, among others.

sent one pole (the total absence of civilization), and the other pole—that of culture—is represented by the Phaeacians.³

Another theme, no less central to the epic and which is raised in this episode as well, is that of revenge, and, in particular, revenge for an attack against a member of one's own family, since, in blinding Polyphemus, Odysseus arouses the wrath of the Cyclops' father, Poseidon, who attempts to avenge the harm the hero has done to his son. The episode of the Cyclops also puts on display the relationship between Odysseus and his companions, along with the special qualities that characterize the hero: his "cleverness," his ability to solve problems, his ambiguous identity, his capacity to be "reborn,"⁴ etc. The way these themes are intertwined, together with the poet's ingenious adaptation of folklore motifs, makes this episode not only unforgettable even to casual readers of the *Odyssey* but important for a complete understanding of the poem.

The Cyclopes themselves, as Homer presents them in this episode, are problematic in various respects. One is the strange nature of the society (if this collection of creatures indeed forms a society) in which they live. It is described as a world that resembles the Golden Age, in which the earth yields its fruits continually and without toil, and yet the Cyclopes themselves seem wholly uncivilized: they live isolated from one another, have no assemblies, are unacquainted with justice, and, above all (as critics have particularly noted), they eat their guests.⁵ Again, their relationship with the gods is ambiguous, since they seem to live on the periphery of the divine world. Some scholars have seen a contradiction between 9.107, where we are told that the Cyclopes "trusted in the gods" and 9.274–77, which state clearly that the gods do

³Cf. Segal 1994, 202: "Odysseus' Phaeacian hosts are almost the exact opposite of the Cyclopes." Although it is not my purpose here to consider the Phaeacians, it is relevant to note that the idyllic image of the "hospitable Phaeacians" has recently been qualified; see Broeniman 1996, 6, with bibliography; also Cook 1992; Pucci 1993, 36–37.

⁴Cf. Schein 1996, 21: "each of these adventures . . . involves the danger or temptation of a literal or symbolic death that Odysseus survives in order to continue his journey homeward." The theme of the rebirth of the hero, in particular during his stay among the Phaeacians, is well analyzed in Newton 1984.

⁵Pucci (1993, 29), following Calame (1977), notes also the following contradictions: the Cyclops drinks milk rather than wine, but eats human flesh; again, the earth yields its fruits spontaneously and abundantly, but the Cyclops devotes himself to pastoral husbandry.

not matter to them.⁶ Another problem is that one of them—the only one with whom Odysseus has any contact and who is granted a name of his own (Polyphemus)—appears as the son of Poseidon. In other branches of the tradition (especially in Hesiod's *Theogony*) the Cyclopes are the sons of Heaven and Earth, or of Uranus and Gaia. That Polyphemus, and only he, it would seem, of this strange bunch is the son of Poseidon has been a source of some confusion.⁷

In this essay, I reconsider these problems and offer some solutions which, while taking account of the possible conflation of several folk-tale motifs, nevertheless may enable a more global understanding of the episode.

We may begin with the world inhabited by the Cyclopes. On the one hand, their land seems to be represented as if it were in a golden age:

Ἔνθεν δὲ προτέρω πλέομεν ἀκαχήμενοι ἦτορ.
 Κυκλώπων δ' ἔς γαῖαν ὑπερφιάλων ἀθεμίσιων
 ἰκόμεθ', οἳ ῥα θεοῖσι πεποιθότες ἀθανάτοισιν
 οὔτε φυτεύουσιν χερσὶν φυτὸν οὔτ' ἀρόωσιν,
 ἀλλὰ τὰ γ' ἄσπαρτα καὶ ἀνήροτα πάντα φύονται,
 πυροὶ καὶ κριθαὶ ἡδ' ἄμπελοι, αἳ τε φέρουσιν
 οἶνον ἐριστάφυλον, καὶ σφιν Διὸς ὄμβρος ἀέξει.
 τοῖσιν δ' οὔτ' ἀγοραὶ βουληφόροι οὔτε θέμιστες,
 ἀλλ' οἳ γ' ὑψηλῶν ὀρέων ναίουσι κάρην
 ἐν σπέσσι γλαφυροῖσι, θεμιστεύει δὲ ἕκαστος
 παίδων ἡδ' ἀλόχων, οὐδ' ἀλλήλων ἀλέγουσι.

(9.105–15)

⁶On this possible contradiction and the interpretation of line 107 see Heubeck 1989 ad *Od.* 9.106–15, and see discussion below. Mondì (1983, 24) goes so far as to say, on the basis of these lines, that the Cyclopes “enjoy a close relationship with the gods, especially Zeus.” In reality, however, the only thing claimed is that Zeus’ rain fertilizes their lands (καὶ σφιν Διὸς ὄμβρος ἀέξει, 111). As we shall see later, Polyphemus makes it quite clear that Zeus means nothing to him and counts for little in his world.

⁷Some scholars believe that only Polyphemus is the son of Poseidon; others hold that all the Cyclopes are his sons. On these contrary positions see Mondì 1983, 18 and n. 5 (with bibliography). Mondì makes clear the disconcerting differences between Homer’s Cyclopes and the creatures described by Hesiod in the *Theogony*: their genealogy, the kind of work they perform (in Hesiod they are artisans who manufacture Zeus’ thunderbolts; in the later tradition, they work at Hephaestus’ forge), and the question of the single eye, since the *Odyssey* never makes explicit reference to the fact that Polyphemus has only one (see note 26 below).

From there we sailed on, our spirits now at a low ebb,
 and reached the land of the high and mighty Cyclopes,
 lawless brutes, who trust so to the everlasting gods
 they never plant with their own hands or plow the soil.
 Unsown, unplowed, the earth teems with all they need,
 wheat, barley and vines, swelled by the rains of Zeus
 to yield a big full-bodied wine from clustered grapes.
 They have no meeting place for council, no laws either,
 no, up on the mountain peaks they live in arching caverns,
 each a law to himself, ruling his wives and children,
 not a care in the world for any neighbor. (trans. R. Fagles)

Although the Cyclopes themselves are first described as ὑπερφίαλοι ἀθέμιστοι (106), in their land everything blooms spontaneously, without toil, because “they trust in the immortal gods” (θεοῖσι πεποιθότες ἀθανάτοισιν, 107); they do not plough or cultivate the land with their hands (108), and yet everything sprouts of its own accord: wheat, barley, and vines which produce wine from fat grapes which Zeus’ rain causes to grow (109–11). They have neither assemblies (ἄγοραί) nor laws (θέμιστες), live in caves on mountain tops (113–14), and each rules over his own children and spouse, with no concern for the rest. A little later we are told that neither do the Cyclopes have knowledge of navigation (125–30).⁸

This world, which to all appearances is free of conflict, pleasant, and fertile, is inhabited by characters whose nature is revealed little by little in the course of Odysseus’ encounter with one of them, Polyphemus. This Cyclops is represented as a savage monster who despises the laws of hospitality to the point that he devours guests in his own home, if indeed one can call his cave a home. There is evidently a certain tension, then, between the country and the characters who inhabit it. It is not, I believe, the result of pure chance, nor is it attributable solely to the conflation of different folktale motifs—an explanation that has

⁸They do not have ships, but they do know about human navigation, since Polyphemus later (279) asks Odysseus where he left his ship. The Golden Age is innocent of navigation; see Scodel 1982, 49 and n. 41. The Phaeacians in this sense may be located at the very end of the Golden Age: they are primarily sailors, but sail free of risk or danger. Taking Scodel’s observations as a point of departure, we may infer that it is just when the Phaeacians transport Odysseus to Ithaca that the Golden Age in fact comes to a close. This voyage is the first that puts the Phaeacians at risk; as a result of it, their city will be forever blocked off from the rest of the world.

served to resolve other problems in the text, but not this one.⁹ Why, then, has Homer combined or juxtaposed two motifs that are not only distinct but apparently contradictory?

The land of the Cyclopes has often been compared to Elysium (see Mondì 1983, 23),¹⁰ and to the Hesiodic Golden Age.¹¹ But the Golden Age, as Hesiod describes it, is itself fundamentally ambiguous:

Χρύσειον μὲν πρῶτιστα γένος μερόπων ἀνθρώπων
 ἀθάνατοι ποίησαν Ὀλύμπια δώματ' ἔχοντες.
 οἱ μὲν ἐπὶ Κρόνου ἦσαν, ὅτ' οὐρανῷ ἐμβασίλευεν·
 ὥστε θεοὶ δ' ἔζων ἀκηδέα θυμὸν ἔχοντες
 νόσφιν ἄτερ τε πόνων καὶ διζύος· οὐδέ τι δειλὸν
 γῆρας ἐπῆν, αἰεὶ δὲ πόδας καὶ χεῖρας ὅμοιοι
 τέρποντ' ἐν θαλίῃσι, κακῶν ἔκτοσθεν ἀπάντων·
 θνήσκον δ' ὥσθ' ὕπνῳ δεδμημένοι· ἐσθλὰ δὲ πάντα
 τοῖσιν ἔην· καρπὸν δ' ἔφερε ζείδωρος ἄρουρα
 αὐτομάτῃ πολλὸν τε καὶ ἄφθονον . . . (Works and Days 109–18)

The race of men that the immortals who dwell on Olympus made first of all was of gold. They were in the time of Kronos, when he was king in heaven; and they lived like gods, with carefree heart, remote from toil and misery. Wretched old age did not affect them either, but with hands and feet ever unchanged they enjoyed themselves in feasting, beyond all ills, and they died as if overcome by sleep. All good things were theirs, and the grain-giving soil bore its fruits of its own accord in unstinted plenty. (trans. West)

This account of the race specific to the Golden Age describes a world in which the earth is enormously productive without the need for labor, harmony prevails, and evil does not exist. But the text also says that the

⁹See Glenn 1971, 152, on “the graphic description of the primitive existence of the Cyclops (9.106–30), a memorable touch which is completely unparalleled in the folktales.”

¹⁰Mondì believes that the world of the Cyclopes was an idyllic locale in Greek mythology (a “pre-civilization utopia,” 1983, 25), which Zeus granted them in return for their help in the battle against the Titans—this before their story was confounded with the folktales motif of the giant. The description of their land remained as it had been, which explains the absence of laws indicated at the beginning of the episode (“a golden age needs no laws,” 24); the introduction of the figure of the ogre into this context generated the contradiction.

¹¹See Kirk (1990), who speaks of a “superculture” of the Cyclopes; and, above all, the important study by Vidal-Naquet (1996, 33–39).

god who reigned during this epoch is Cronus. Now Cronus, the Titan son of Uranus and Gaia, is marked above all by his onetime predilection for devouring his own children, the future Olympians. Thus, the god whose rule symbolizes the Golden Age simultaneously embodies the savagery of cannibalism, or, if one prefers, of anthropophagy (theophagy?), exactly like the Cyclops in our tale.¹²

We may inquire, then, whether this conjunction of a fertile and tranquil world, on the one hand, with cannibalism and the barbarous behavior of the protagonist, on the other, which we have identified in the Golden Age, has significance for the composition of the Cyclopeia as well. There is no indication in Homer that the Cyclopes were violent with one another. Moreover, when Polyphemus is blinded by Odysseus, he asks help of his fellow Cyclopes, which indirectly shows that he trusts them; they do, in fact, come at his summons.¹³ Further, although it is not specified in the passage in book 9 that Polyphemus was the dominant Cyclops or a king among them, we may deduce his supremacy from the words of Zeus at 1.70–71: ὄου κράτος ἐστὶ μέγιστον, πᾶσιν Κυκλώπεσσι,¹⁴ and it is clear in any case that, in the narrative with which we are concerned, he is the figure with overriding power. Thus in both accounts there is an idyllic description of the earth's fertility and the absence of agriculture, combined with a central character who practices cannibalism or, at all events, anthropophagy.¹⁵

¹²It is difficult to categorize the acts whether of the Cyclops or of Cronus as cannibalism, since neither in fact consumes his own kind; see below.

¹³It is true that the Cyclopes could be violent with others. At *Od.* 6.5 we are told that the Phaeacians used to live near the Cyclopes but were obliged to abandon their territory and move to Scheria in order to avoid attacks by the Cyclopes: ἀνδρῶν ὑπερνηγορόντων. Cf. 6.6, βίηφι δὲ φέρτεροι ἦσαν; Hesiod, *Theog.* 139, ὑπέρβιον ἦτορ ἔχοντας.

¹⁴Cf. Page (1955, 6): "there is a whole community of them, and Polyphemus is their lord and master"; contra Glenn (1971, 148), who cites Bona (1966, 72–75): "κράτος μέγιστον probably means simply that he was the strongest and mightiest of the Cyclopes, without implying that he was their king or recognized leader."

¹⁵The Cyclops has stores of milk and cheese in his cave, but there is no indication that he eats animals. The theme of vegetarianism combined with anthropophagy is investigated by Vidal–Naquet (1996, 36). Scodel (1982, 42) compares the end of the Golden Age with the postdiluvian epoch in the Bible and the way in which it presupposes the introduction of a new alimentary code in which, for the first time, flesh and wine are included (see *Gen.* 9:1–5, 9:20–21). In n. 24 she takes up vegetarianism in the Greco-Roman Golden Age; Plato (*Laws* 782c) and subsequent sources speak of it explicitly, but we may assume that it is implicit in the earlier topos of the uncoerced fertility of the earth.

To review the story of Cronus' cannibalism, we may turn to Hesiod's *Theogony*, which recounts how Rhea gave birth to her several children (Hestia, Demeter, Hera, Hades, Poseidon, and Zeus) and Cronus ate them as they emerged from her womb (*Theog.* 460), because of an oracle of Gaia and Uranus which predicted (464) that Cronus would be overthrown by one of his offspring. When she is on the point of giving birth to Zeus, the last of her children,¹⁶ Rhea consults Gaia and Uranus, her parents, who tell her the trick (μῆτιν συμφράσασθαι, 471) of hiding the infant Zeus as she gives birth and so making Cronus pay for his offenses against Uranus and his own children (471–72). Following the advice of her parents, Rhea goes to Crete, hides Zeus in a deep cave (κρύψεν . . . ἄντρον ἐν ἡλιβάτῳ, 482–83),¹⁷ and substitutes a stone which the Titan swallows instead of the child. Zeus, by means of a device that is not specified, makes his father vomit (he regurgitates first the stone, then the children in reverse order to that in which he had gulped them down), and thus rescues his siblings.¹⁸

Returning now to our passage in the *Odyssey*, it is clear that there are several resemblances between the two stories.¹⁹ The role of Odysseus in respect to Polyphemus is analogous to that of Zeus in relation to Cronus. Just as Cronus, after having consumed his five children, wished to devour the sixth (Zeus), so too the Cyclops consumes six of Odysseus' companions and threatens to eat them all, saving the hero for last (cf. *Theog.* 497, πύματον καταπίνων, and *Od.* 9.369, Οὔτιν ἐγὼ πύματον ἔδομαι μετὰ οἷς ἐτάροισι).²⁰ We may note that the motif of "the last one" recurs in the escape from the cave, Odysseus emerging last under

¹⁶In Homer, Zeus prides himself on being the oldest of the gods; on this point, the *Theogony* differs from the Homeric tradition.

¹⁷Hesiod leaves unclear where the child is born; see West 1988 ad loc.

¹⁸There are variants of the story in which Zeus previously gets his father drunk; see West 1988 ad *Theog.* 496: "In the rather different version of *Orph. fr.* 154 Zeus makes Kronos drunk on honey, ties him up and castrates him."

¹⁹In 1978 Glenn connected the two narratives in a brief paper written from a psychoanalytic perspective, in which he surveys all previous interpretations of the Cyclops passage, indicating certain precedents for his thesis. His treatment is nevertheless different from mine here. He compares the episode not so much with the story of Cronus as with the Greek myth of succession from Uranus to Cronus and then Zeus. Furthermore, he has nothing to say about the Golden Age. On the relationship between Homer and Hesiod see the excellent article by Rosen (1997, esp. 464, 488).

²⁰West (1988 ad loc.) states that this is a typical folktale motif; however, as Glenn notes (1971, 164), the motif has few parallels in folktales based on the story of Polyphemus.

the belly of the last sheep (9.444 and 9.448, ὕστατος). In the Cyclopeia, too, the monster vomits, although his regurgitation does not return the swallowed companions to life but rather casts up bits of human flesh mixed with wine. While Zeus and Odysseus both escape by a trick, each must employ physical strength as well (τέχνησι βίηφί τε, *Theog.* 496), although Odysseus needs the help of his companions and cannot blind the Cyclops on his own (see 9.331–32).²¹ In neither narrative, moreover, does the anthropophagous monster (Cronus or Polyphemus) die, but rather he continues living, although he is reduced to darkness: Polyphemus is blinded by Odysseus, while Cronus will be imprisoned with the Titans in the obscurity of Tartarus (*Theog.* 726–27), after having been blinded by Zeus' thunderbolts (*Theog.* 698–99).

Indeed, the cave of the Cyclops has often been taken as a symbol of the maternal womb, which is plausible, given that the hero has no name but is simply “Nobody” (*Outis*) while he is in the cave, and only recovers his identity when he has blinded the monster and emerged from the hollow, having been born again, as it were.²² One might think of Odysseus' devoured companions as leaving the cave, which is equivalent to the maternal womb of Rhea, and ending up in the stomach of the Cronus-like giant. The analogy requires that the companions be in some sense brothers to the hero, and we may recall that in the final lines of book 8 (just before the encounter with Polyphemus), Alcinous asks Odysseus why he has groaned aloud, inquiring whether he has lost a friend or companion, since “in no way inferior to a brother is a

²¹In the final battle against Cronus and the Titans, the two groups confront each other, but Zeus needs the help not only of his fellow Olympians but also of the Cyclopes and others. In the case of Odysseus, the poet insists more on his intelligence and trickery, but the element of force is not discounted: the hero himself brings it up in the end, when Polyphemus calls him a tiny, insignificant creature (οὐτιδανὸς πόρεν Οὔτις, 9.460), and he replies that he is not ἀνάλκις (9.475).

²²Schein (1996, 25) includes Polyphemus in his list of the “feminine” enemies of Odysseus: “he seems to be symbolically feminized by the cave/womb in which he dwells, within which the hero is Nobody but from which he is, so to speak, reborn, conspicuously insisting on his identity as Odysseus (cf. Dimock 1963, 58–59).” I do not share this notion of the “feminization” of Polyphemus, although the resemblance between his grotto and the uterus is clear, as is the theme of the rebirth of the hero. Schein makes much of this latter idea (1996, 21): “each of these adventures, as I have said, involves the danger or temptation of a literal or symbolic death that Odysseus survives in order to continue his journey homeward.”

companion who bears circumspect thoughts” (ἐπεὶ οὐ μὲν τι κασιγνή-
τοιο χερσίων γίγνεται ὅς κεν ἑταῖρος ἐὼν πεπνυμένα εἶδῃ, 8.585–86).²³
What is more, when the monster first consumes two of the hero’s com-
panions, a brief simile compares them to puppies (ὥς τε σκύλακας,
9.289), an image that in one way assimilates them to animals, but in an-
other returns them to an infantile or newborn condition. We are told,
moreover, that Polyphemos devours them whole, bones and all (292–
93). And, of course, he eats them raw (a variant on the folktale pattern
in which the monster roasts the men)—that is, just as Cronus had done
with his children, Polyphemos consumes the men raw, entire, and, as it
were, just born.

We may also note a subtle assimilation of the monster to Odys-
seus’ father and mother in the joke about *Outis*. When Polyphemos
asks him his name, Odysseus replies that he is Οὔτις, and that this is
what his mother, father, and companions used to call him: Οὔτιν δὲ με
κιλήσκουσι μήτηρ ἡδὲ πατήρ ἡδ’ ἄλλοι πάντες ἑταῖροι, 9.366–67.
In fact, however, the only one to call Odysseus *Outis* is Polyphemos
himself.

When Odysseus arrives in the land of the Cyclopes, he finds a
primitive society of beings who are neither exactly human nor yet inhu-
man. Consequently, there is a certain difficulty even in defining the as-
sault against Odysseus and his companions as cannibalism, given that
Polyphemos, in spite of his more or less human form, is of a totally dis-
proportionate size²⁴ and belongs to a different race. From the begin-
ning, the Cyclops is described in language that makes quite clear his
difference from normal human beings: he is a monstrous man (ἄνθρω-
πώριος, 9.187), isolated (οἶος, οὐδὲ μετ’ ἄλλους, ἀπάνευθεν ἐὼν, 188–
89), monstrous again (θαῦμ’, πελώριον, 190); finally, the poet says (190–
92): “he didn’t resemble a man who eats wheat, but the peak of a high

²³It is precisely in book 9, moreover, that the companions of Odysseus show their
most circumspect side and advise the hero to leave the strange territory as soon as possi-
ble. After the escape, when Odysseus announces his name from his ship, his companions
again insist, once more without effect, that he not provoke the Cyclops any further (cf.
Od. 9.223, 9.492). Cf. Stanford 1961 ad *Od.* 9.419: “O. is unusually boastful in all this
incident.”

²⁴It is noteworthy that despite the size of the Cyclops and his cave, it is nowhere
indicated that his herds are also gigantic. On the contrary, the animals seem quite normal,
given that Odysseus must tie three of them together to carry one of his men.

mountain”²⁵ (οὐδὲ ἑώκει ἀνδρὶ γε σιτοφάγῳ, ἀλλὰ ῥίῳ ὑλήεντι ὑψηλῶν ὄρέων).

But if his exceptional size and his one eye (which is never actually specified as being single)²⁶ make him rather strange, the Cyclops is, at the same time, humanized by his mastery of language or *logos*, which differentiates him from animals.²⁷ So too, the affectionate way in which Polyphemus speaks to the sheep that carries Odysseus (not a motif in the folktales: cf. Glenn 1971, 171) brings him nearer to being human. He is not just a monster or a savage, not even a noble savage;²⁸ he is deeply disconcerting and ambiguous, like the Golden Age and like Cronus himself. Cronus too, as a Titan, belongs to a race which is not that of the Olympian gods. The result of Cronus’ attempt to prevent the succession—the brutal murder of his children—is the change to a new world order under the authority of Zeus, which ends both the reign of

²⁵Pucci (1993, 33) notes the indecision or, better, the contradiction of the text in the description of Polyphemus as ἀνὴρ (albeit πελώριος ὁ ἄγριος) on the one hand, and, on the other, the dehumanizing comparanda.

²⁶See, on this problem, Mondì 1983, 20–21; it is noteworthy that we are not clearly told that there is just one eye. In the folktale versions in which the giant has a single eye, that fact is always clearly indicated, and the entire subsequent tradition concerning Polyphemus does so as well. Mondì (31–36) simply accepts that earlier the Cyclopes did not have one eye. Although it is clear that the Hesiodic Cyclopes have but one (their name itself suggests the fact, and the point is emphasized at *Theog.* 142–45), Mondì, among others, thinks that these lines may have been interpolated; hence he prefers to believe that as a result of the conflation of the one-eyed folktale ogre with the traditional Cyclopes, the poet found himself in trouble, and, instead of proffering some kind of explanation, his solution was simply to play down the contradiction. This may be so, but I believe that the analysis below gives a better account of the problem. It seems clear that the ancients knew Cyclopes with one, two, or three eyes (see Serv. ad *Aen.* 3.636), although the image of the one-eyed Cyclops was dominant; cf. Glenn 1971, 155.

²⁷With the unique exception of Xanthus, the horse of Achilles that speaks just once and in quite exceptional circumstances (cf. *Il.* 19.408–17), animals do not speak in Homeric epic. We may recall that these are immortal horses, given to Peleus by the gods at his wedding, and that they also weep at the death of Patroclus, who had been their charioteer (*Il.* 17.437–38).

²⁸Pucci (1993, 33) rightly questions whether the Cyclops can be understood simply as a savage. Newton (1983, 138) finds that in this passage of the *Odyssey* Polyphemus arouses our sympathy: “Admiration for Odysseus and pity for the Cyclops is also elicited by the elaborate description of Polyphemus’ blinding.” We feel sympathy for Polyphemus because his situation is in more than one respect similar to that of Odysseus when he returns home; see below, note 46.

the Titans and the Golden Age. Polyphemus likewise belongs to a race whose moment has passed. Once Odysseus abandons the Cyclopes' land, they will disappear not only from the poem but also from the world in which the hero dwells, in which there is no trace of these monstrous and deformed creatures. In this sense Odysseus, in his encounter with Polyphemus, is reenacting on a human plane the history of the divine succession.²⁹

In his voyage to the extremes of the world, it is almost as though Odysseus were simultaneously traveling into the past of the human race. He experiences a passage from the Golden Age, with its combination of unlimited fertility and hideous barbarity, to his own day and age. But this is not all. The god who has most to do with Odysseus in this episode, and with the Cyclopes as such, is Poseidon. Several scholars have described Poseidon as a god who does not quite fit the milieu of the *Odyssey*, since he seems, in contrast to Zeus' concern with the problem of justice, to represent more primitive values and to be closer to the "immoral" gods of the *Iliad*, who act out of personal anger and indignation.³⁰ Thus, Charles Segal writes (1994, 204–5):

²⁹Cf., in this context, the observations of Hansen (1997, 444–45) on the division between folktale, legend, and myth, esp. 445: "Although many narrative types are found in oral tradition only as myths or as legends or as folktales, other types are found expressed in one genre at one place or time and in another genre at another place or time. I call this phenomenon *genre variance*." On my hypothesis, the story of the Cyclops in the *Odyssey* and that of Cronus in Hesiod reflect a "genre variance" like the one described by Hansen. In Homer the story presents itself as a folktale; in Hesiod it is rather framed as a myth. Nevertheless, cf. Calame 1995 on the impossibility of differentiating between tale and myth.

³⁰See, however, Clay (1983, 213–39), who takes up the question of the "double theodicy" of the *Odyssey*: the gods do not really concern themselves with justice, and yet human beings continually demand justice of them. On this matter see also Friedrich 1987a, with bibliography. Usually, Poseidon and Helioid are considered problematic, since their primitive wrath against Odysseus seems to conform better to the divine universe of the *Iliad*. Friedrich, however, sees an even more scandalous contradiction in the figure of Zeus himself, who (although firmly on the side of justice in the rest of the poem) seems in the Apologoi to permit what one would regard as injustices and agrees to the terrible vengeance exacted by Poseidon and Helioid. On the problem of Zeus' justice see, more recently, Brown 1996: "Zeus, however, remains indifferent to Odysseus, and supports Poseidon's vendetta. . . . Odysseus has tried to claim hospitality in a land where it is irrelevant. Zeus has no obligation to support him" (23–24).

The *Odyssey* as a whole tries to bring the polycentric, polytheistic world order under the unified morality of Zeus; and in so doing it tends to suppress or displace the cosmogonic strife that lies in the background of the *Iliad*. The Odyssean Poseidon seems to move back into a pre-Olympian time of monsters, Titans, and Giants; but the poem subsumes this chronological or historical dimension of the world order into the here and now of Zeus' reign. . . . And in that perspective Poseidon appears as an archaic feature of the world, the representative of an obsolescent world order. . . . What is a diachronic process in Hesiod's *Theogony* and in the . . . *Iliad* has here become part of a contrast in the present between Zeus and Poseidon, in which the disruptive Poseidon is on the way out, as it were.

It is true that Poseidon represents, in the *Odyssey*, a world that appears antiquated, in contrast to that of Zeus. But it is perhaps worth exploring a bit further the matter of his antagonism toward Odysseus, alongside the rivalry with Zeus that Segal emphasizes. It is not because of friction with Zeus that Poseidon takes vengeance on Odysseus and delays his return home, although this is taken to be the move that makes him Zeus' opposite in the poem. Poseidon's behavior is amply justified within the terms of the epic itself. It may be that his revenge on Odysseus is, as Segal affirms (1994, 218), strictly anthropomorphic or human, but it also reenacts a fundamental theme of the *Odyssey*, namely, retaliation against those who harm others, especially on the part of kinsmen—examples would include Orestes avenging the murder of Agamemnon and Odysseus the predations of the suitors. The case of Poseidon and Polyphemus (father avenges son) inverts that of Agamemnon and Orestes (son avenges his father), as Cook (1995, 23) points out (Segal does not make the connection).

One might urge against this parallel that Orestes is avenging the *unjust* death of his father, just as Odysseus blinds the Cyclops in order to save his own life and that of his companions, whereas Poseidon's revenge is not "morally" justified, or, at least, not to the same degree as that of Orestes against Aegisthus or Odysseus against the suitors. Now, it is true that Odysseus, in blinding the Cyclops, is fighting for his life; but it is not so clear that Polyphemus, in destroying all the men who cross his path, is not doing the same. The oracle that Polyphemus himself mentions (9.507ff.), according to which he is to lose his sight at the hands of one Odysseus, might well have inspired in the monster the same reaction that the oracle pronounced by Ouranos and Gaia produced in Cronus, when he was informed that he would be overthrown by one of his children: in order not to run any risks, it is best to destroy

all potential enemies.³¹ The mention of the oracle permits us, at all events, to imagine a possible justification for Polyphemus' behavior.

But if it is true that Poseidon, in seeking to avenge his son, acts out of motives similar to those of Odysseus himself and of other characters in the poem, there nevertheless remains a connection between this god and the antiquated world of the Cyclopes. That relation is expressed poetically in casting Polyphemus as the son of Poseidon, as against the traditional genealogy or, at least, that recorded by Hesiod. We may note that gods seem to be almost completely absent from the episode of the Cyclopes. Only Zeus is mentioned, first by Odysseus when he invokes the respect that is due to Zeus as protector of guests in his first address to the Cyclops (9.262, in connection with *mētis*, οὐτω που Ζεὺς ἤθελε μητίσασθαι; 270–71, in connection with *time*, Ζεὺς δ' ἐπιτιμῶτω ἱκετάων τε ξείνων τε), and then in Polyphemus' reply, where he announces that the Cyclopes neither worry about nor fear Zeus (275, 277) and the blessed gods, since the Cyclopes are much the stronger.³² Polyphemus can only account for Odysseus' ignorance of the world in which he now finds himself on two suppositions: either he is a "fool" (νήπιος), or he comes from distant parts (273). This response poses several problems. Which gods do the Cyclopes disregard? And why are they indifferent specifically to Zeus?

As indicated earlier, several scholars have supposed that Polyphemus' words here are inconsistent with what is said at 9.107 concerning

³¹Oracles of this type are repeated in the *Odyssey*. Circe too knew beforehand that Odysseus would visit her on his return voyage. Likewise, the Phaeacians know an ancient oracle that predicted the destruction of their city for providing escorts to visitors. I see no reason to claim with Segal (1994, 207) that "the Phaeacians are superior to the Cyclopes Polyphemus in remembering their oracle before its fulfillment (8.555–69). Yet the knowledge does them no good (cf. 8.562f.)." In fact, we have no basis for assuming that Polyphemus did not remember the oracle; on the contrary, this would be a motive for his cannibalism. Polyphemus' error lies in not having recognized Odysseus sooner and eaten him first, instead of leaving him for last. This "mistake" is perfectly understandable, since Odysseus did not make himself known, and besides, given the character of the oracle, the Cyclops expected a single man, not a group. The Phaeacians, although they know the oracle, continue to accompany visitors; Polyphemus, for his part, prefers not to run any risks in his relations with human beings.

³²Cf. 275–78;

οὐ γὰρ Κύκλωπες Διὸς αἰγιόχου ἀλέγουσιν
οὐδὲ θεῶν μακάρων, ἐπεὶ ἡ πολὺ φέρτεροί εἰμεν.
οὐδ' ἂν ἐγὼ Διὸς ἔχθος ἀλευάμενος πεφιδόμην
οὔτε σεῦ οὔθ' ἐτάρων, εἰ μὴ θυμὸς με κελεύει.

the Cyclopes' "trust in the gods."³³ But in fact there is no contradiction: 9.107 may be read simply as a way of emphasizing nature's bounty; it is otherwise quite vague and general (thus O'Sullivan 1990). At a deeper level, this line does not necessarily express the poet's objective view of the Cyclopes but is rather the interpretation that Odysseus—who utters it to the Phaeacians as he introduces his adventures—puts on the unceasing productivity of the land, without need of toil.³⁴ Odysseus does, in fact, as Polyphemus assumes, come from afar, and he is ignorant of the principles that govern this world: he reveals as much in attributing the earth's bounty to the Cyclopes' faith in the gods.

But if these Cyclopes neither take account of Zeus nor concern themselves with the gods generally, there is at least one deity whom they do recognize: Poseidon, the father of Polyphemus, upon whom he will later call for help, in accord with the advice of the other Cyclopes. Still and all, Poseidon only appears here, late in the story, after the Cyclops has already been blinded and reduced to darkness. He is especially suited to play the role of Polyphemus' father here for several reasons. In the first place, as others have noted,³⁵ if Odysseus, as a sailor, is to encounter difficulties at sea, Poseidon is the right god to bear a grudge against him. In addition, however, he is a god who, in both the Homeric epics, seems not to have adjusted quite to the new order of Zeus. It is as though he had not entirely accepted the division of the universe among the three brothers and, above all, Zeus' absolute sovereignty.³⁶ If we are right to read the triumph of Odysseus over the creatures he meets and leaves behind in this portion of the *Odyssey* as

³³The theme of the impiety that the monster evinces toward the gods (which is also related to the theme of hospitality) is poorly attested in the folktales; it thus seems to be another original element in the *Odyssey* (see Glenn 1971, 158).

³⁴On this problem cf. the interesting remarks of Friedrich (1987a, 385–87), who invokes "Jørgensen's law"; several times in the poem Odysseus attributes to Zeus acts and deeds that the poet has assigned to another god. Both Odysseus and the poet use "Zeus" in a very general way, as equivalent to "a god," "a daimon," etc.

³⁵Cf. (among others) Mondì 1983, 28; Scodel 1982, 50.

³⁶In the *Odyssey* he seems not to be present in the divine assembly of book 1 in which Odysseus' return home is decided. That is, Zeus appears to take advantage of his absence to make the decision. So too in the *Iliad* Poseidon takes advantage of Zeus' distraction to enter into combat on the side of the Achaeans at the beginning of book 13, and angers Zeus with his protest against the construction of the Achaean wall in book 7.445ff. Poseidon's opposition to Zeus is very clear in 13.345ff., where Poseidon recalls the division of the world among the three brothers and notes that Zeus is the eldest of the

analogous to the victory of Zeus over the earlier race of Titans, and to take (moreover) Odysseus' ultimate restoration to the throne of Ithaca as comparable to Zeus' achievement of sovereignty, then in the Cyclopeia we are still at a moment when the question of sovereignty among the gods has not yet been wholly resolved.

It is noteworthy too, in this connection, that when the other Cyclopes, confused by the trick of *outis/mētis*, imagine that Polyphemus is suffering from a kind of madness as he cries out for help in the middle of the night, even though he is alone, they respond by saying that if the illness of Zeus is afflicting him, there is nothing to be done for it. The usual practice in Homer is to attribute the capacity to inflict (and cure) illness, like the divinatory art, to Apollo. Interestingly, neither is there mention of Apollo in connection with the seer Telemos Euremides (9.509). Athena, the patron deity of Odysseus, several times justifies her nonintervention in his favor during his travels, not because of a μῆνις against him, but rather because of the respect she entertains for Poseidon, her father's brother.³⁷ In the space where Odysseus now finds himself, neither Athena nor Apollo is active. Even the role of Zeus is dubious, and at best quite limited.³⁸

Once Odysseus and his men have succeeded in escaping the Cyclops, however, Odysseus sacrifices a sheep "to Zeus of the black cloud, the son of Cronus, who reigns over all" (Ζηνὶ κελαϊνεφέϊ Κρονίδῃ, ὃς πᾶσιν ἀνάσσει, 9.552), although, according to the hero's own words (553–54), the god did not accept it. The formula employed to invoke Zeus here never occurs in the *Iliad*, and in the *Odyssey* is found only in one other passage (13.25), which describes the last sacrifice at which

three. Again in 14.345ff., Sleep informs Poseidon that Zeus is asleep, and he takes the opportunity to act in support of the Achaeans, albeit very briefly. In 15.185ff. he replies irately to the message from Zeus that Iris brings; in this speech, he insists again that his *timē* is equal (so he says) to that of his brother Zeus. Despite this he ends up respecting the will of Zeus and his decisions, even if he does not like to. See, e.g., 8.208–10 (Poseidon tells Hera that he will not fight with Zeus, since he exceeds them all). And at 24.26ff., when the gods agree to the return of Hector's body, the decision does not sit well with Hera, Athena, or Poseidon. The poet explains why Hera and Athena are not agreeable (the Judgment of Paris) but says nothing about Poseidon; cf. Davies 1981.

³⁷Cf. Dimock 1963, *pace* Clay 1983, 45. The poet of the *Odyssey* gives us Athena's justification in 6.328–30. Subsequently, the goddess herself repeats it to Odysseus (13.341–43). Apollo does the same in the *Iliad* when he refuses to fight with his uncle in the "Battle of the Gods" (21.461ff.).

³⁸On the role of Zeus in the Apologoi in general see Friedrich 1987a.

Odysseus is present before his return home: it is the one Alcinous performs in taking leave of Odysseus. In neither case is the sacrifice very effective, since, after the first, Odysseus continues to be persecuted by Poseidon, and, after the second, Poseidon destroys the Phaeacian ship that bears him, once again fulfilling an ancient prophecy. The Phaeacians are to be blockaded by the rock into which the ship is transformed, forever cut off from the rest of the world.³⁹ The phrase invoking Zeus as son of Cronus is thus strategically placed at the entrance to and departure from this antiquated, strange world of the Apologoi, as though Odysseus had opened up a passageway to a universe that ought not to be visited and, upon his leaving it, the gates had closed shut forever.⁴⁰

There are still further ties between Polyphemos and Poseidon. For one thing, Poseidon is traditionally the father of various monsters; it is apt that Polyphemos' mother is the nymph Thoosa, daughter of Phorcis, the Old Man of the Sea (1.71ff.). Moreover, the Cyclopes are known in the later tradition as builders of walls: for example, those of Argos, Tiryns, and Mycenae. In the *Odyssey* passage, Polyphemos exhibits this same trait in the wall he has built around his cave (9.185).⁴¹ Although

³⁹The verb used is ἀμφικαλύπτω, 13.152, 13.158: Poseidon had used καλύπτω in the *Iliad* in speaking of the destruction of the Achaean wall (see 7.462). On the similarity between the two passages see Scodel 1982, 48; Usener 1990, 69ff.

⁴⁰Cf. Mondì 1983, 27: "when Odysseus first sets foot on the Cyclopes' shore, he is plunged straight off into a world where the laws of human intercourse, as he knows them, do not pertain. And it is only after much suffering, wandering, and loss that he reaches the supreme humanity of the Phaeacians, preparatory to his return to his own world." The Phaeacians too end up hidden, or "blinded," after their encounter with Odysseus. Note too the similarity between the rock that Polyphemos places as the door to his den and the ship of the Phaeacians that is turned to stone: both are doors that confine the world of the Apologoi. One more point associating the two passages: when Polyphemos realizes that he has fulfilled the ancient oracle, he utters a remark (9.507) that is identical to Alcinous' exclamation when he perceives that he has fulfilled the prophecy concerning Poseidon's punishment of his people (13.172); cf. Podlecki 1967, 18.

⁴¹The verb δέμω, rare in Homer, is used in the description of the wall that forms the enclosure round the cave. In the *Iliad* it occurs in 9.349, 7.337, 7.436, 13.683, and 14.32, all passages referring to the Achaean wall; 21.446, where Poseidon relates how he constructed the Trojan wall; and 6.245 (of the fifty stone rooms that Priam's sons occupy in his palace). In the *Odyssey* it occurs in 1.246, 6.9 (the wall built by Nausithous round Scheria), 14.6, 8 (enclosing the pen of Eumaeus), 9.185 (the sheepfold of the Cyclops), and 23.192 (the stone bedroom built by Odysseus himself). On Poseidon's association with city walls, and especially those of Troy, see Scully 1990, 51–52.

Poseidon's principal dominion is the sea, he too has a well-deserved reputation as a builder of walls, both within and outside the Homeric tradition. It is he, either alone or with Apollo, who constructed the Trojan wall (cf. *Il.* 21.435–36; Apollo and Poseidon, 7.452–53ff.), and in Hesiod it is Poseidon who fixes the gates in the wall enclosing Cronus and the Titans (*Theog.* 732–33). There is, I think, a connection between Poseidon's function as builder of walls and his control of the sea: the sea may be imagined as contained, as though by walls, by the land that surrounds it. Odysseus is enclosed within the sea just as much as he is in the cave of the Cyclops. His purpose throughout his voyage is to find a *poros*, a pass or exit from the marine world in which he is trapped.

Still on the theme of walls and passes, we may observe how Poseidon seems, in the *Iliad*, to be all but obsessed with the wall of the Achaeans: he wishes to destroy it⁴² lest it eclipse the fame of Troy's wall, which he constructed and of which he is very proud (one supposes that this wall made the city impregnable; cf. *Il.* 21.447, ἐν ἄρρηκτος πόλις εἶη). The *Odyssey* relates how Odysseus was able to breach those walls with a wooden horse, penetrating into the city by passing through the circle of its battlements.⁴³ When he confronts Polyphemus, Odysseus will accomplish something similar: here, too, he penetrates a circle with an instrument made of wood—the stake that he plunges into the round eye of the Cyclops, in order to blind him. On both occasions, the hero is confined (in the horse or the cave), and his identity is concealed.⁴⁴ The theme of the wooden horse and Troy's capture recurs several times in the *Odyssey* and is continually evoked by Odysseus' epithet πολίπορθος, which in the *Iliad* is applied to other heroes but in the *Odyssey* is reserved for him alone.⁴⁵ This is precisely the epithet that the hero chooses when he introduces himself to the Cyclops for the

⁴²The destruction of the Achaean wall, which is related in an odd “flash forward” passage (12.3–35), is examined in detail by Scodel (1982).

⁴³On the connection between the Trojan War and the Golden Age cf. Scodel 1982, 48: “The myth of destruction makes the Trojan War the end of the Golden Age.”

⁴⁴Cf. Dimock (1989, 111), who considers obvious the parallel between the capture of Troy by means of the wooden horse and the act of blinding the Cyclops.

⁴⁵The Trojan Horse is mentioned in 4.272 (Menelaus to Telemachus), 8.492, 8.503, 8.512, 8.515 (the song of Demodocus), and 11.523, 11.531 (Odysseus to Achilles in Hades). The epithet πολίπορθος is not very common; even in the *Odyssey*, it is only employed in 8.3, 14.447, 16.442, 18.356, 22.283, and 24.119. In the two passages in book 9 in which it occurs (504 and 530), the metrical variant πολίπορθιος is used.

third time, under his true name, after Polyphemos has been blinded and Odysseus and his men are safely on their ship: “Odysseus πολυπόροθιος, son of Laertes, who has his home in Ithaca” (9.504–5). Finally, it is not, perhaps, an accident that the hero will perform the same kind of feat back on Ithaca, in the famous contest of the bow, in which his arrow will pass through a series of circles within axes lined up in a row (21.421–23).⁴⁶ But let us return to the parallel between Odysseus and Zeus in our passage, since there are some further points to discuss.

In the first place, there is the theme of *mētis*. Book 9 of the *Odyssey* begins in the following manner: Τὸν δ' ἀπαμειβόμενος προσέφη πολύμητις Ὀδυσσεύς (9.1). Some scholars have signalled the importance of this line for understanding the meaning of the entire book it introduces.⁴⁷ In what concerns us, the use of this (and not another) epithet of Odysseus seems relevant, since, although Odysseus' *mētis* is active throughout the poem, it is especially conspicuous in the encounter with the Cyclops, where Odysseus becomes not only Outis, but Metis as well.

This identification is expressed in the well-known play on names in this episode. On the one hand, Outis, or “Nobody,” evokes the disguises of Odysseus, his versatility in adopting identities, and simultaneously reminds us that Odysseus, while in the cave of the Cyclops, has no identity. He had introduced himself to Polyphemos, in the beginning, simply as one more among the *laoi* of Agamemnon. In this sense, when

⁴⁶Note that again the hero's identity is concealed; he gains control over his enemies after the competition of the bow (“passing through the circle”); he is in darkness (the lamps are extinguished); and his victory brings about his enemies' destruction. Austin (1972, 14) associates these passages because in all of them Odysseus is hidden and reduced to a “Nobody”: inside the Trojan Horse, in his encounter with the Cyclops, in Scheria, and in Ithaca (disguised as a beggar). Newton (1983) offers a slightly different view of these matters: taking as his point of departure the important study by Glenn (1971), Newton finds a series of connections between the passage on the Cyclops and Odysseus' arrival home. Newton, with Glenn, believes that the poet has endowed the Cyclops with traits that are not traditional in the tale in order to arouse our sympathy for him. We experience this sympathy because there is, in fact, a basic similarity between Odysseus and the monster: when Odysseus returns home he, like Polyphemos, encounters there strangers who have violated the norms of hospitality and are in the process of consuming his goods. The poet evokes this analogy with a series of textual echoes between the Cyclops passage and *Od.* 17.195–465.

⁴⁷Cf. Pucci 1987, 21 n. 10: “The relation between the beginning of a book and its content remains a problem to be studied.” Pucci adduces as examples the first lines of books 5 and 6 of the *Odyssey*.

he announces to the Cyclops that he is Nobody, he is not quite lying; he may be someone, but he is not, or not yet, entirely Odysseus.⁴⁸ Indeed, the question of his identity runs throughout the *Odyssey*. He is the generic ἀνής: in the proem to the epic, the poet postpones the mention of his name for twenty-one lines, and this is a practice that all the characters who are close to Odysseus will imitate.⁴⁹ The hero perpetually hides himself—in the Cyclops' cave, behind the disguise as Nobody, under the sheep as he leaves the cave, as well as in the multiple identities he assumes throughout the poem; he too tends to defer the mention of his name.⁵⁰

The wordplay on *mētis* begins with the response of the Cyclopes to Polyphemus' summons for help:

ἤ μή τίς σευ μῆλα βροτῶν ἀέκοντος ἐλαύνει;
ἤ μή τίς σ' αὐτὸν πτείνει δόλω ἢ ἐ βίηφιν; (9.405–6)

It is continued at 410, where the Cyclopes say that if Nobody (μή τίς) is doing violence to him, and he is alone, then they cannot help him, and completed in line 414, where Odysseus laughs aloud and announces his own *mētis*: ὥς ὄνομ' ἐξαπάτησεν ἐμὸν καὶ μῆτις ἀνύμων. But if Odysseus, in this episode, is not only Outis, but also *mētis*, Zeus too, after overthrowing his father, converts himself wholly into *mētis* upon swallowing the goddess, and thus guarantees his permanent status as chief among the gods.

The identification between Odysseus and Zeus in this episode is so intimate that when Odysseus has at last escaped from the Cyclops,

⁴⁸Neither is he yet *polymētis*, but he will have to become so in order to survive (cf. Tracy 1990, 61). For Friedrich (1987b), in the Cyclopeia Odysseus' *mētis* is still in conflict with his heroism. Only at the end of his adventures will the hero succeed in reconciling and integrating these two qualities. See also Brown 1996, 28–29.

⁴⁹See Austin 1972: Penelope, Telemachus, Eumaeus, and others repress his name and embark upon long periphrases in order not to name him; even the gods conform to this practice: cf. Calypso to Hermes.

⁵⁰Odysseus adopts multiple identities, and he lies about his true character repeatedly in the poem. These “lies” help save the hero's life; cf. Walcot (1977), who offers an anthropological explanation to justify the “lies”: in traditional societies, small children are trained to lie so as to put them on guard and enable them to fend for themselves in life. Lies are, then, a means of survival. From this perspective, Walcot affirms, one may account even for that “lie” of Odysseus which is the most difficult for us to countenance: the one he tells his father, Laertes, in book 24, by which time he is safe and runs no further risk.

he reveals to Polyphemus that it was not he, Odysseus, who punished him, but rather Zeus and the other gods (. . . τῷ σε Ζεὺς τίσατο καὶ θεοὶ ἄλλοι, 9.479).⁵¹

In lines 507–21, Polyphemus, who now knows the true name of his assailant, rehearses the old oracle that had predicted the loss of his eye at the hands of Odysseus, and expresses, at the end (519–21), his hope that his father, Poseidon, will cure him. Odysseus, in his final address in this episode, replies to Polyphemus (523–25): “Would that I could also deprive you of your life and send you to Hades: then not even he who shakes the earth would heal your eye!” In this phrase, the name of Hades is introduced alongside that of Poseidon. Over the course of the episode, we have observed that, at first, Zeus alone was mentioned; then Poseidon was introduced; finally, at the end of the adventure, Hades appears. These gods, the three sons of Cronus who have divided the universe under the sovereignty, to be sure, of Zeus, are the only ones named. And this seems to me to support the thesis that I have been defending. The Cyclopeia locates us in an antique world, in which we re-live, along with Odysseus, the overthrow of Cronus, the beginning of Zeus’ sovereignty, and the division of the universe among the three brothers. In the course of the poem Odysseus will experience each of these realms: not only Poseidon’s sea, but also the subterranean domain of Hades, and finally, his own homeland of Ithaca, over which Zeus is sovereign.⁵²

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⁵¹The vengeance of Odysseus upon the Cyclops, the blinding of his eye and his reduction to darkness (just as Zeus does to Cronus and the Titans when he casts them forever into deepest Tartarus), signals, at the same time, Odysseus’ return to life and *kleos*. By blinding the Cyclops and opening up an exit from his den, he recovers his name and is thus “reborn.”

⁵²Previous versions of this essay were presented at the Classics Departments of Brown University and the Universidade de São Paulo (Brazil). I thank the audiences at both occasions for their helpful comments and suggestions. My gratitude goes also to the anonymous referee of *AJP*, and to David Konstan, who improved my English.

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