while blood ran out around the red-hot bar. 
Eyelid and lash were scorched; the pierced ball 
hissed bristling, and the roots popped.

385. smithy (smithy) n.: blacksmith's shop, where iron tools are made.

390. Cyclops belied and the rock roared round him, 
and we fell back in fear. Clawing his face 
he tugged the bloody spike out of his eye, 
then he set up a howl for Cyclopes 
who lived in caves on windy peaks nearby. 
Some heard him; and they came by divers' ways 
to clump around outside and call:

'What ails you, 
Polyphemus? Why do you cry so sore 
in the starry night? You will not let us sleep. 
Sure no man's driving off your flock? No man 
has tricked you, ruined you?'

Out of the cave 
the mad Polyphemus roared in answer: 
'Noboby, Noboby's tricked me. Noboby's ruined me!' 
To this rough shout they made a sage's reply:

'Ah well, if nobody has played you foul 
there in your lonely bed, we are no use in pain 
given by great Zeus. Let it be your father, 
Poseidon Lord, to whom you pray.'

So saying 
they tailed away. And I was filled with laughter 
to see how like a charm the name deceived them. 

Now Cyclops, wheezing as the pain came on him, 
fumbled to wrench away the great doorstone 
and squatted in the breach with arms thrown wide 
for any silly beast or man who bolted— 
hoping somehow I might be such a fool. 
But I kept thinking how to win the game: death sat there huge; how could we slip away? 
I drew on all my wits, and ran through tactics, 
reasoning as a man will for dear life, 

395. divers (diver) adj.: diverse; various.

399. Odysseus escaping the cave of Polyphemus under the belly of the ram. Detail from a krater, a vessel for holding wine (c. 510 B.C.). Bodeisches Landesmuseum, Karlsruhe, Germany.

400. until a trick came—and it pleased me well. 
The Cyclops' rams were handsome, fat, with heavy 
 fleeces, a dark violet.

404. sage (sage) adj.: wise.

405. Three abreast 
I tied them silently together, twining 
cords of willow from the ogre's bed; 
then slung a man under each middle one 
to ride there safely, shielded left and right. 
So three sheep could convey each man. I took 
the woolliest ram, the choicest of the flock; 
drew the heavy wool, with fingers twisted deep 
in sheepskin ringlets for an iron grip. 
So, breathing hard, we waited until morning. 
When Dawn spread out her fingertips of rose 
the rams began to stir, moving for pasture, 
and peals of bleating echoed round the pens 
where dams with udders full called for a milking. 
Blinded, and sick with pain from his head wound, 
the master stroked each ram, then let it pass, 
but my men riding on the pectoral fleece—
the giant's blind hands blundering never found. 
Last of them all my ram, the leader, came,

409. pectoral fleece: wool on an animal's chest.
weighted by wool and me with my meditations. The Cyclops patted him, and then he said:
‘Sweet cousin ram, why lag behind the rest in the night cave? You never linger so, but graze before them all, and go afar to crop sweet grass, and take your stately way leading along the streams, until at evening you run to be the first one in the fold.

Why, now, so far behind? Can you be grieving over your Master’s eye? That carrion rogue* and his accursed companions burnt it out when he had conquered all my wits with wine. Nobody will not get out alive, I swear.

Oh, had you brain and voice to tell where he may be now, dodging all my fury! Bashed by this hand and bashed on this rock wall his brains would strew the floor, and I should have rest from the outrage Nobody worked upon me.’

He sent us into the open, then. Close by, I dropped and rolled clear of the ram’s belly, going this way and that to unite the men. With many glances back, we rounded up his fat, stiff-legged sheep to take aboard, and drove them down to where the good ship lay.

We saw, as we came near, our fellows’ faces shining: then we saw them turn to grief tallying those who had not fled from death. I hushed them, jerking head and eyebrows up, and in a low voice told them: ‘Load this herd: move fast, and put the ship’s head toward the breakers.’ They all pitched in at loading, then embarked and struck their oars into the sea. Far out, as far offshore as shouted words would carry, I sent a few back to the adversary:

‘O Cyclops! Would you feast on my companions? Puny, am I, in a Cavemen’s hand? How do you like the beating that we gave you, you damnd cannibal? Eater of guests under your roof! Zeus and the gods have paid you!’

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The blind thing in his doubled fury broke a hilltop in his hands and heaved it after us. Ahead of our black prow it struck and sank welmed in a spuming geyser, a giant wave that washed the ship stern foremost back to shore. I got the longest boat hook out and stood fending us off, with furious nods to all to put their backs into a racing stroke—row, row or perish. So the long oars bent kicking the foam sternward, making head until we drew away, and twice as far. Now when I clapped my hands I heard the crew in low voices protesting:

‘Gadsake, Captain! Why bait the beast again? Let him alone!’

‘That tidal wave he made on the first throw all but beached us.’

‘All but stove us in!’

He’ll smash our timbers and our heads together!’

I would not heed them in my glorying spirit, but let my anger flare and yelled:

‘Cyclops, if ever mortal man inquire how you were put to shame and blinded, tell him Odysseus, raider of cities, took your eye: Laertes’ son, whose home’s on Ithaca!’

At this he gave a mighty sob and rumbled:

‘Now comes the weird* upon me, spoken of old. A wizard, grand and wondrous, lived here—Telemus,* a son of Eurymus;’ great length of days he had in wizardry among the Cyclopes, and these things he foretold for time to come: my great eye lost, and at Odysseus’ hands. Always I had in mind some giant, armed in giant force, would come against me here.

But this, but you—small, pitiful, and twitty—
you put me down with wine, you blinded me. Come back, Odysseus, and I’ll treat you well, praying the god of earthquake to befriend you—his son I am, for he by his arrow
520 fathered me, and, if he will, he may heal me of this black wound—he and no other of all the happy gods or mortal men.'

Few words I shouted in reply to him:

'If I could take your life I would and take your time away, and hurl you down to hell! The god of earthquake could not heal you there!'

At this he stretched his hands out in his darkness toward the sky of stars, and prayed Poseidon:

'O hear me, lord, blue girdler of the islands,
530 if I am thine indeed, and thou art father:
grant that Odysseus, raider of cities, never see his home: Laertes' son, I mean,
who kept his hall on Ithaca. Should destiny intend that he shall see his roof again among his family in his fatherland,
far be that day, and dark the years between.
Let him lose all companions, and return under strange sail to bitter days at home!'..."

(from Book 9)

Here we will imagine that Homer stops reciting for the night. The blind poet might take a glass of wine before turning in. The listeners would go off to various corners of the local nobleman's house. They might discuss highlights of the poet's tale among themselves and look forward to the next evening's installment.

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**A CLOSER LOOK**

**Welcome: A Religious Duty**

Today's visitors to Greece are often struck by the generous hospitality of its people. An ancient tradition lies behind the traveler's welcome in Greece—and it is a tradition that was fundamentally religious before it became a part of social custom. Zeus, the king of the gods, demanded that strangers be treated graciously. Homer had a religious duty to welcome strangers, and guests had a responsibility to respect hosts. The close interconnections and mutual respect in this host-guest relationship are reflected in the fact that the word xenos (genus') in ancient Greek can mean both "host" and "guest.

The relationship is often symbolized in the Odyssey by the presentation of gifts. Alcinous, the king of the Phaeacians, for example, gives Odysseus a magically swift ship in which to sail home.

What happens when the host-guest relationship is abused or otherwise breaks down? In Homer's epic songs about the Trojan War, the Iliad and the Odyssey, the customs of hospitality are violated at least three times. The first occasion caused the war itself: Paris, prince of Troy, ran off with the beautiful Helen from Sparta while he was the guest of Helen's husband, Menelaus. For the Greeks this insult to xenia (hospitality) was at least as serious as Helen's unfaithfulness, and it meant that Zeus would, in the end, allow the Greeks to triumph in the long war.

The second example of violated hospitality has its humorous and ironic side. In the Odyssey the Cyclops is monstrous not only because of his huge size and brutal appearance. He is set apart from civilized beings precisely because of his barbaric outlook on xenia. When Odysseus begs the Cyclops for hospitality and warns that Zeus will avenge an injured guest, the Cyclops replies that he and his kind "care not a whistle for...Zeus" (line 263). With dark humor the Cyclops uses the word xenos (Greek for "guest gift" or "noble gift") when he tells Odysseus that he will have the privilege of being eaten last (lines 362-363). The poetic justice of the Cyclops's blinding would not be lost on Homer's Greek audience.

The final example of a breach in the law of hospitality underlies the entire plot structure of the Odyssey: Back in Ithaca, year after year the suitors abuse the hospitality of Odysseus—an absent "host"—and threaten to take away his wife. The bloody vengeance that Odysseus wreaks on these suitors should be understood in the context of their outrageous violation of religious law. The suitors have turned hospitality into a crude mockery. Perhaps it is not accidental that Odysseus invokes the host-guest relationship just before the battle, when he quietly gives his son, Telemachus, the signal to fight (lines 1208-1209): "Telemachus, the stranger [xenos] you welcomed in your hall has not disgraced you."