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Such caveats notwithstanding, Ready has done us a great service by evaluating Homeric skill and technique within the context of a vast array of modern oral parallels. His many quotations from other epics and from scholars on those epics will enrich and expand our own vocabulary when discussing Homer artistry. Particularly important is Ready's emphasis on the value of shared elements in oral performance and in the construction of similes.

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The *Odyssey*, despite its straightforward syntax and pellucid clarity, is not an easy poem to translate. The further one dares to venture from the literal meaning of the Greek, the greater the risk of incurring the criticism which Bentley famously leveled at Pope's *Iliad*: "It is a pretty poem, Mr. Pope; but you must not call it Homer." A schoolroom crib such as one might find in Bohn's Library may offer a scrupulously accurate translation of Homer—it will also turn off a contemporary reader faster than you can say "helmet-shaking Hector." Robert Fagles recognized this fundamental dilemma when he explained his own method for translating the *Odyssey*: "the more literal approach would seem to be too little English, and the more literary seems too little Greek." And so it is that each translator of Homer confronts the same task: to abandon tedious literality, while capturing in English the rhythm, music, and charming verbal texture of the original Greek. In her *Odyssey*, Wilson succeeds admirably with a version that is lean, clear, direct, and marked by a distinctively forward-moving narrative energy.

Wilson's lengthy and fully comprehensive Introduction is superbly written. It is a useful primer for new readers as well as a welcome feast for professional scholars. She guides the reader through a careful summary of the poem's formal qualities, composition, authorship and reception. She delves into the *Odyssey's* geographical,

social, and historical setting, exploring at length important topics under subheadings such as “Friends, Strangers, Guests,” “Gods,” “Goddesses, Wives, Princesses and Slave Girls,” “Becoming a Man,” “Slaves,” “The Choice of Odysseus,” “Hated Odysseus,” “Endings,” and “Reception.” Throughout her Introduction, Wilson offers a wealth of interpretive insights that are as sound as they are provocative. There are four full-sized maps, zooming from a cosmic view of the Homeric universe to a close up of the Peloponnese, each usefully tailored to the poem’s content. The text also contains twenty-six pages of notes (including a brief summary of each book of the poem) and a pronouncing glossary listing major and minor characters.

An eleven-page Translator’s Note is essential reading for those wishing to understand Wilson’s *modus operandi*. With a thoughtful grasp of the many problems that confront the translator of Homer, she carefully explains her choice of iambic pentameter, her employment of a variety of speech registers, and why she consistently sought “simplicity of diction” (85) over “grand, ornate, rhetorically elevated English” (83). She is sympathetic to the expectations of contemporary readers and firmly grasps the overriding principle that a translation of a long epic poem can only be successful by maintaining a fundamental *readability*.

Rendering Homeric hexameters (ranging from twelve to seventeen syllables) line for line into English pentameters is an unusual choice, one that demands a fairly aggressive reformulation of the Greek text. To achieve such rigorous economy, Wilson employs a variety of devices. She trims epithets (e.g., “golden” for “golden-sandaled”) or drops them altogether. She eliminates pleonastic phrases, a hallmark of Homer’s style. She replaces a four-syllable name such as “Pontonoos” with a two syllable “steward.” Beyond these strategies, Wilson skillfully transforms Homer’s expansively polysyllabic phraseology into chiseled lines that are marked by simple, plain, and often monosyllabic diction of astonishing clarity.

Wilson’s resourcefulness as a translator appears in her deft handling of Homer’s formulaic epithets. She skillfully exploits, in her own words, “the opportunity offered by the repetitions to explore the multiple different connotations of each epithet” (84). Thus, εὐπλόκαμος is “cornrows” (Demeter, 5.125), “pigtailed” (Athena, 7.41), or “bright-haired” (Dawn, 9.75). A common epithet of Odysseus, πολυμήχανος, is variously “clever,” “master of any challenge,” “adept survivor,” “master of every circumstance,” or, in the words of Achilles as he greets him in Hades, “you fox!”

The same approach is at work in her treatment of full line formulas. For example, ἦμος δ’ ἠριγένεια φάνη ῥοδοδάκτυλος Ἥως (“when early-born, rosy-fingered dawn appeared”) — a line that occurs twenty times in the *Odyssey* — is rendered differently each time it occurs. This is a remarkable testament to Wilson’s attention

to context and ability to see Homer's formulaic conventions as a translator's gifts rather than obstacles. A small sampling reveals much creative variety: "When Dawn appeared, her fingers bright with flowers" (4.431), "Early the Dawn appeared, pink fingers blooming" (9.307), and "When early Dawn, / the newborn child with rosy hands, appeared" (19.428).

A striking feature of this translation is Wilson's decision to highlight the prevalence of slavery in the poem—very much a part of Homeric social organization, though consistently underemphasized or ignored by other translators. (Indeed, so common is slavery in the poem that the swineherd Eumaeus, a slave, purchases his own slave, Mesaulius, when Odysseus is away at Troy.) Wilson frequently (though not always consistently) translates ἀμφίπολος ("handmaiden"), ταμίη ("housekeeper"), ὑφορβός ("swineherd"), and κῆρυξ ("herald") as "slave." One doesn't ordinarily think of Circe as a slave owner, yet the four women attending her, whom Homer calls both ἀμφίπολοι (10.348) and δρήστειραι, "laborers, workers" (10.349) are "four slaves, her housegirls" (10.349). They are also "nymphs" (10.350), a common translation well supported by the context, though the word does not appear in the Greek.

No translation will satisfy all readers; some may perhaps revive Bentley's censure of Pope and assert that Wilson has taken one too many liberties with Homer. To be sure, this translation is radically unlike Caroline Alexander's recent *Iliad*, which hews far more closely to Homer's actual words. Yet to make such a claim would be to misunderstand entirely what Wilson set out to do in the first place. To be a successful translator, one must first be a successful reader, and Wilson establishes beyond a doubt that she is indeed an acutely sensitive reader of Homer. Her *Odyssey* differs in significant ways from all other versions that are currently in publication. It may also become the standard against which future translations of the poem will be measured.

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