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CLEDONOMANCY AND THE GRINDING SLAVE,
Od. XX, 91—121

K a a r l e H i r v o n e n

The utterance of the grinding slave woman in answer to Odysseus' prayer for an omen has aroused considerable comment.¹ Ever since BEKKER published his study in 1853, this song has been regarded as the weakest in the whole of Homer. A closer study of its philological, aesthetic and historical aspects offers a good opportunity to follow the working methods of the Homeric bard. Here are the episode and the passages linking it to the rest of the song:

ὥς ἔφατ', αὐτίκα δὲ χρυσόθρονος ἤλυθεν Ἡώς.
τῆς δ' ἄρα κλαιούσης ὅπα σύνθετο δῖος Ὀδυσσεύς·
μερμήριξε δ' ἔπειτα, δόκησε δέ οἱ κατὰ θυμὸν
ἤδη γινώσκουσα παρεστάμεναι κεφαλῆφι.
γλαῖναν μὲν συνελὼν καὶ κόεα, τοῖσιν ἐνεῦδεν, 95
ἔς μέγαρον κατέθηκεν ἐπὶ θρόνου, ἐκ δὲ βοεῖην
θῆκε θύραζε φέρων, Διὶ δ' εὖξαστο χεῖρας ἀνασχών·
“Ζεῦ πάτερ, εἴ μ' ἐθέλοντες ἐπὶ τραφερῆν τε καὶ ὕγρην
ἦγετ' ἐμὴν ἔς γαῖαν, ἐπεὶ μ' ἐκακώσατε λίην,
φήμην τίς μοι φάσθω ἐγειρομένων ἀνθρώπων 100
ἔνδοθεν, ἔκτοσθεν δὲ Διὸς τέρας ἄλλο φανήτω.”
ὥς ἔφατ' εὐχόμενος· τοῦ δ' ἔκλυε μητίετα Ζεὺς,
αὐτίκα δ' ἐβρόντησεν ἀπ' αἰγλήεντος Ὀλύμπου,
ὑπόθεν ἐκ νεφέων· γήθησε δὲ δῖος Ὀδυσσεύς.
φήμην δ' ἐξ οἴκοιο γυνὴ προέηκεν ἀλετρις 105
πλησίον, ἐνθ' ἄρα οἱ μύλαι εἶατο ποιμένι λαῶν.
τῆσιν δώδεκα πᾶσαι ἐπερρώοντο γυναῖκες
ἄλφιτα τεύχουσαι καὶ ἀλείατα, μυελὸν ἀνδρῶν·
αἱ μὲν ἄρ' ἄλλαι εὔδον, ἐπεὶ κατὰ πυρὸν ἄλεσσαν,

¹ General comments on omens in Homer are presented in H. STOCKINGER O.S.B., *Die Vorzeichen im homerischen Epos. Ihre Typik und ihre Bedeutung*. Diss. Munich, 1959, which contains a list of recent literature on the subject, and in G. E. DUCKWORTH, *Foreshadowing and Suspense in the Epics of Homer, Apollonius and Vergil*. Diss. Princeton, 1933.

ἤ δὲ μί' οὐ πω παύετ', ἀφανροτάτη δὲ τέτυκτο· 110
 ἤ ῥα μύλην στήσασα ἔπος φάτο, σῆμα ἄνακτι·
 “Ζεῦ πάτερ, ὅς τε θεοῖσι καὶ ἀνθρώποισιν ἀνάσσεις,
 ἤ μεγάλ' ἐβρόντησας ἀπ' οὐρανοῦ ἀστερόεντος,
 οὐδέ ποθι νέφος ἐστί· τέρας νύ τεω τόδε φαίνεις.
 κρηῖνον νῦν καὶ ἐμοὶ δειλῆ ἔπος, ὅτι κεν εἶπω· 115
 μνηστῆρες πύματόν τε καὶ ὕστατον ἥματι τῶδε
 ἐν μεγάροισ' Ὀδυσῆος ἐλοίατο δαῖτ' ἐρατεινήν,
 οἳ δὴ μοι καμάτω θυμαλγείῃ γούνατ' ἔλυσαν
 ἄλφιτα τευχούσῃ· νῦν ὕστατα δειπνήσειαν.”
 ὣς ἄρ' ἔφη, χαῖρεν δὲ κληιδόνη δῖος Ὀδυσσεύς 120
 Ζηνός τε βροντῆ· φάτο γὰρ τείσασθαι ἀλείτας.
 αἱ δ' ἄλλαι δμῶαὶ κατὰ δώματα κάλ' Ὀδυσῆος
 ἐγρόμεναι ἀνέκαιον ἐπ' ἐσχάρῃ ἀκάματον πῦρ.
 Τηλέμαχος δ' εὐνήθην ἀνίστατο, ἰσόθεος φῶς,
 εἶματα ἐσσάμενος, περὶ δὲ ξίφος ὄξυθ' ἐπέτ' ὤμων, 125

a. Philological observations

The passage was not doubted by the ancients. Modern scholars regard only line 104¹ as an interpolation — but a remarkably clumsy one for all that.

Contrary to the epic rule, line 92 contains a *positio debilis*, ἄρα κλαιούσης.²

The digamma effect was disregarded in composing line 112, ἀνθρώποισιν ἀνάσσεις, although it had been taken into account in ἴφι ἀνάσσεις (A 38, 452),³ which obviously served as its model.

Neither this word nor ἔπος (111, 115), however, offer definite criteria owing to the differences in their mode of use.⁴

ἐβρόντησε (103), in which the augment is a *hapax*, is a late form; it appears three times without the augment (Φ 56, μ 415 = ξ 305). ἐβρόντησας (113) appears nowhere but here; without the augment it is found in Θ 133. As they are preceded by elisions, of course, the augments may have been added later by copyists.

¹ V. BÉRARD, L'Odyssee, I (Paris, 1924), 97. K. F. AMEIS and C. HENTZE, Anhang zu Homers Odyssee, IV (Leipzig, 1900), 36, 38 states that the scholars have doubted the following lines: SCOTLAND 56–94, 98–101, 105–21, 124–46; DÜNTZER 108 f., 118 f.; NAUCK 118 f.

² E. SCHWARTZ, Die Odyssee (München, 1924), 296.

³ P. CHANTRAINE, Grammaire homérique, I (Paris, 1942), 126.

⁴ *Ibid.* 133.

The passage includes only two standard lines. One of these is the first line (91), which provides the link with what has gone before. It is found in three other passages in the *Odyssey* κ 541, μ 142, \omicron 56. The second standard line is a common way of ending a prayer (102 = *II* 249, Ω 314). With slight modifications, it appears four times in the *Odyssey* and nine times in the *Iliad*. Compared with the standard »rosy-fingered» Eos¹ of the *Odyssey*, line 91 displays a more inventive turn of phrase. It generally concludes nocturnal consultations and leads flexibly into the following day's activities. Obviously it was inspired by the passages mentioned above, describing the nightly consultations of Circe and Odysseus. The same pattern is followed on another occasion when Telemachus and his companion are planning their departure. Here Penelope laments her lot alone; she does not rise to perform her daily duties, and no one comes to see her.

Visions in dreams usually appear $\acute{\upsilon}\pi\epsilon\rho$ κεφαλήης (B 20, Ψ 68, δ 803, ζ 21), but here we find κεφαλήφι (94), encountered elsewhere only in song *K* 496 of the *Iliad* which has long been considered the most doubtful song in Homer.

The word κῶας (95) is obviously old, as it is used in the »Argonauts». For all that, it appears only once in the *Iliad* (*I* 657) and 12 times in the *Odyssey*, whereas χλαῖνα is a typical Odyssean word found 50 times in the *Odyssey* and seven times in the *Iliad*.

Untanned ox-hides seem almost to have been an obsession for the composer of song *v* (2, 96, 142). βοέη, βοείη is found nowhere else in the *Odyssey*, except in χ 364, where the messenger Medon hides himself in one during the blood bath. The source of the hide — the sacrifice of a heifer — is mentioned in ρ 181. It might be a survival of shamanism (see p. 17 n. 2).

In both *v* 98 and 112 the initial line of the prayers reflects traditional solemnity. Line 98 has a common beginning, a hapax middle part, and an end encountered only once elsewhere (h.Cer.43). It faithfully reflects Odysseus' state of mind after his trials and tribulations on land and sea. Apart from *v* 99, the verb κακῶω appears only in *A* 690 and π 212. The imperatives in lines 100 and 101 are unique. On the other hand, the expressions for a miracle, a prayer and its hearing (101 f.) have been taken from similar lines elsewhere.

In response to the invocation Zeus »thunders from gleaming Olympus» in

¹ In the *Odyssey* the morning dawns twenty times with the stock line ἤμος δ' ἠριγένεια φάνη ῥοδοδάκτυλος Ἥως (β 1, γ 104 etc). The *Iliad* has it only twice, in the initial and the closing song (*A* 477, Ω 788). In a written epic, Firdausi's *Book of Kings*, fifty dawns are described in as many ways.

v 103. Otherwise this expression appears only twice in the Iliad — upon Thetis' departure in A 532 and in a simile that seems to be of late origin (N 243 — Idomeneus' shining armour). *ὕπόθεν ἐκ* is found only in the Odyssey, when referring to a mountain top (*β* 147), a rock (*ρ* 210), a roof (*χ* 298), and here to the clouds.

Seeing that only half of the omen had as yet been given, Odysseus' rejoicing seems premature and the passage must be regarded as irrelevant poetizing, but not necessarily as an interpolation. It was prompted by the initial words of the three lines just mentioned and by the stock phrase for joy.¹ *ἐκ νεφέων* occupies the same position thrice in the Iliad, but these lines begin with different dactyls or spondees.

In lines 100 and 105, *φήμη* denotes »an omen». Elsewhere it is found only in *β* 35 and not at all in the Iliad. *ἀλετρις* is a hapax, as also is *ἄλεσσαν* (109).

v 108 is the only line in Homer in which *ἀλείατα*, (wheat meal) is mentioned in addition to *ἄλφιτα*, the barley meal commonly used in sacrifices. The epithet *μυελὸς ἀνδρῶν*, which elsewhere appears only in *β* 290, was probably used to give this novelty an archaic veneer. The age-old delicacy, bone marrow, is mentioned as food for a child and for the cannibal Cyclops in X 501 and *ι* 293.

ἀφαιροσάτη is a hapax in the Odyssey. In the Iliad the adjective appears four times.

The prayer of the grinding woman begins with the usual formula (112). The bard may have had in mind A 503 and T 270, which end in a metrically fitting form of a verb, but which he replaced by the easily remembered end, *ἀνάσσεις* of Chryses' prayer as mentioned above in connection with the digamma. It is an impressive line, but as it sounds like a later description of Zeus' supreme deity, it seems strange coming from a slave woman; women usually prayed to goddesses — particularly to Demeter and Kore.

Line 113 contains the hapax verb form already mentioned. *οὐρανοῦ ἀστεροέντος* at the end of the line occurs four times in the Iliad. It also appears twice in the hymns, where it refers to Uranus. The thunder coming from 'cloudless sky' in the following line is ordinary prophecy technique, and the passage can hardly be taken as evidence that line 104 was interpolated.

The woman's wish to see the suitors destroyed (116—19) has been doubted.²

¹ F. FOCKE, *Die Odyssee* (Stuttgart, 1943), 341 nn. 3, 4: »just a high-sounding phrase; no convincing motive for interpolation.» According to STOCKINGER 137, 146, line 104 disturbs the symmetric, cohesive construction of the omen scene.

² AMEIS-HENTZE IV 38. STOCKINGER 144 ff. concerning the cursing prayer.

According to REICHERT, lines 116 f. served as a model for line δ 685. DÜNTZER believes 118 f. to be a later addition and regards *νῶν ὕστατα δειπνήσειαν* as bad rhapsodic tautology.

The tautology in the passage cannot be denied, for the meaning is adequately expressed in lines 116—17. *ὑστατα καὶ πύματα* in line 113 has already served to create the atmosphere of doom. The passage would not be credible had it not been motivated by the grinding woman's fatigue. It is possible that the bard, seeking words to put in the mouth of the slave woman, resorted to her mistress's wish uttered in exasperation, for the suitors to eat their last meal (δ 684 f.). The psychological motivation for this called for elaboration, but it weakened the drama. The idea was excellent: the forced entertainment had been painful to both parties, though for different reasons. The idea of the fatal meal is repeated at the end of the song.

ἐλοίαιτο in line 117 is a hapax; there are one or two examples in the *Odyssey* of the sort of weariness described in the following line, but the use of *θυμαλγής* in this connection is exceptional; in general the concept it qualifies is a word, rebuke or anger. 'Loosening the limbs' is a well known topos.

This passage contains a new expression for an 'omen' *χαῖρεν δὲ κληθρόνι κτλ.* (120) and the kind of omen it describes is unique in Homer. The line in which it appears has almost the same form as in the boxing scene, where Odysseus regards the gratitude and good wishes of the suitors as a good omen (σ 117).¹ In the form *κληθρόνα* (δ 317) the same word simply means 'news'.

The model for line 121, *τείσασθαι ἀλείτας* may have been vengeance on the suitors (γ 206) and on Paris (*I* 28).

In lines 122 f., describing the morning tasks of the female servants, rarely seen parts of lines have been combined and modified accordingly. This combination of line parts in the whole scene is a frequent story-telling technique and is quite normal.

The general impression gained is that the passage contains more than the usual number of late forms, rare and even unique words, and new concepts, combined with deliberate attempts at archaism to offset the neologism. The result is a quick-moving concise narrative, free of the old patterns but marred by clumsy archaisms with which the bard attempted to hide or offset his inability to express himself in the traditional style that his audiences expected

¹ Certain scholars regard parts of the boxing scene as interpolated and BÉRARD believes the whole scene to be an interpolation (σ 1—157), *op.cit.* 50. But no one except BÉRARD and BERGK holds this opinion in regard to line 117, *ibid.* 54, 69.

of him. All this is typical of late (perhaps written) composition.¹ On the other hand, it contains none of the strange grammar, anachronism and tastelessness, owing to which the rest of this song has been regarded by scholars since BEKKER as one of the poorest parts of Homer.² Only *μύλαι εἶατο* (106) has been condemned on such grounds. In fact, even the ancient grammarians considered it so strange that they coined *εἴατο* to replace *εἶατο* (cf. Heraclit. in Eustath., BEKKER 126).

Besides the absence of major defects the passage reveals a comparatively advanced technique of story telling. Thus it also deserves special study from an aesthetic point of view.

b. E s t h e t i c a s p e c t s

The Odyssey is basically a spy story, in which the 'secret agent' fights alone against superior forces of the enemy in his own headquarters.³ This being said, however, the treatment of detail differs entirely from that of a modern thriller. 'Character development' — a major feature of the contemporary novel — is only incidental here; instead, as in the later Greek tragedies with their oracles, suspense in the epics is built up by piling omen upon omen.⁴

The previous evening, Odysseus had interpreted Penelope's dream as favourable (*τ* 555 ff.). This was followed by the avian omen in *v* 241 ff. which induced the suitors to abandon their plot to murder Telemachus, and the maniacal laughter elicited by Athene (*v* 345 ff.), as interpreted by the terrible vision of the seer Theoclymenus. At his point, even the bard seems to have realised that this treatment had worn thin, for he developed a new approach: Odysseus himself requests an omen, as did Priam in *Ω* 315 ff. and Nestor in *γ* 168 ff., and he receives it simultaneously from home and afar, from on high and from the lowliest source imaginable. These two scenes the bard has linked to the plot with great skill.

¹ M. PARRY, *L'Épithète traditionnelle dans Homère* (Paris, 1928), 219.

² I. BEKKER, *Homerische Blätter* (Bonn, 1863), 123—32 U. v. WILAMOWITZ-MÖLLENDORFF, *Heimkehr des Odysseus* (Berlin, 1927), 86 ff. P. VON DER MÜHLL in *RE Suppl. VII* (Stuttgart, 1940), 750.

³ According to Telemachus, the suitors numbered as much as 108 (*π* 245 ff.) and had ten servants. W. ALLEN, JR., »The Theme of the Suitors in the Odyssey,» *TAPhA LXX* (1939), 104—24, esp. 113 f.

⁴ In the Cypria, according to Proclus, both Helenus and Cassandra foretell coming events even before Paris sets off to abduct Helen, T. W. ALLEN, *Homeri Opera*, V (Oxford, 1951) 102 f.

The most obvious sequence to the standard line 91 would have been for Penelope to resume her housework, receive a visitor, or at least wake up. Nothing in this pattern follows until Telemachus rises (124). Instead, the latest bard has composed (or borrowed) a scene to his own liking: Penelope's dream words lead straight into the next scene (92 ff.), just as in a modern film or radio play. They awaken Odysseus and cause him to muse upon his wife. Similar transference and telepathy are encountered elsewhere in the *Odyssey*, in ρ 492, α 328, ν 387 ff., cf. δ 677, π 412 (RE Suppl. VII, 751).

Lines 88 ff. and 93 f. hint that in the concise version which the bard used as his source, husband and wife had recognized each other by the foot bath (τ 467 ff.). They may even have planned the massacre of the suitors, as insinuated by the spirit of Amphimedon (ω 167 f.) and as believed by many scholars since B. NIESE (1882, *ibid.* p. 699). The elaboration of this version and postponement of mutual recognition have led to the reiteration of such lines hinting at recognition, and to the repetition of scenes of anguish, falling into sleep and awakening similar to those in ν 1—90. It is these scenes that have given this song its reputation for poor patch work.

Had the plot been straightforward, Odysseus would have made a plan once the archery contest had been decided upon. Instead, he fretted irresolutely, and had to be comforted by Athene (ν 30—55). He could, of course, have asked the gods to confirm his plan by signs, and started removing the weapons from the megaron as a first step here, instead of at the beginning of song τ . Instead, the scene of the omens is followed by a rather footling description of Telemachus, the young nobleman, being educated in the duties of hospitality, and then going out to the marketplace with his hounds (ν 124—46).¹

Undeniably, therefore, the scene we are studying forms a part of an entity that is poor epic artistry. Taken by itself, however, it is a credible effort to strengthen the hero's confidence before the final issue, fits in with the plot and the arrangement of the palace rooms. To some extent it even makes sense to a modern psychologist. Unfortunately, this does not apply to the words of the serving woman. Instead of speaking in character, she is merely a mouthpiece of the bard, reflecting his naive bombast and obvious striving to please those of his listeners who indentify with Odysseus (ν 112—19).

Here, however, the flaws of logic are of greater interest. In principle it can

¹ FOCKE 342 f., 385 believes that the scene was taken from the *Telemachia*. Lines 124—46 are considered interpolations by SCOTLAND, and lines 126—61 by KAMMER and CZYCKIEWICZ, AMEIS-HENTZE, IV, 38.

be assumed that they would have been less numerous if the scene had been part of a larger unit, but more numerous if it had been a late, haphazard interpolation.

The bard seems entirely to have overlooked the fact that day had already dawned at the beginning of the scene, the grinding woman says that the thunder has come 'from the starry sky, yet nowhere is there any cloud' (113 f.). It contradicts his statement that the thunder had sounded from 'high above the clouds'. This has been explained away as a Homeric nod (or interpolation, but see p. 8 n. 1), but it should be noted that line 114 stresses the miraculous nature of this cloudless thunder. The most natural sequence would have been to set the scene at night, when a physically weak slave woman may have had to go on working an hour or two after the others. Of course, it would have been senseless for her to continue working until the following morning; how then could she have managed the day's tasks?¹ At all events, this lonely woman and the morning must have been in the mind of the bard, as attested by the awakening of the other slave women αἰ δ' ἄλλαι δμῳαὶ κτλ. (122 f.). Accordingly, the entire scene must have been composed as an entity. The exceptionally hard work performed at night could have been explained by the preparations for the great feast.

But the bard was striving for esthetic effect, not realistic detail. A noisy, bustling and morning-fresh motley of slave women and the shrieking of the grindstones heard far away (Ath. VI 263 b) would not have been compatible with the nocturnal and foreboding atmosphere he desired. One slave woman sufficed, and as such she became a perfect example of the «exploitation prevailing in a slave-owning society». Of course the passage was not intended to convey any social 'message', still less to inculcate class consciousness.² But the atmosphere of loneliness and abandonment is almost as poignant as the description of Elpenor breaking his neck while drunk (λ 51 ff.), though the characterization is not so masterful; Elpenor was 'the youngest of all, not over valiant in war nor sound of understanding' (≈ 552 f.). Sympathy with the poor, the weak and the unsuccessful, and the strong feeling of loneliness

¹ JA. A. LENCMAN, *Die Sklaverei in mykenischen und homerischen Griechenland*, transl. (Wiesbaden, 1966), 294, assumes that the other slave women had also been grinding at night but had finished their share before morning. In my opinion, the only object of night work was to make full use of a flour mill run on an industrial scale. Otherwise a sufficient number of hand-stones could have been acquired for grinding to be done during the daytime alone.

² On «patriarchal» slavery in Greece (τ 45, ρ 401 f.) see LENCMAN, 296 f. J. B. GITTNER, *Social Thought among the Early Greeks* (Athens, Ga, 1941), 20 f., 31. X. *Mem.* II 3,3. *Slavery in Classical Antiquity*, ed. by M. I. FINLEY (Cambridge, 1960), 18, 25, 93.

created with a few strokes is typical of this Odyssean bard, whom scholars have assigned to a different stratum. In fact, all agree that this passage is an isolated pearl in a muddy setting. It has always been considered to be the work of an earlier and better bard than the hypothetical B (Bearbeiter), who was responsible for the present complete version of the *Odyssey*.

At all events it is B, the creator of the latest stratum and compiler of the final version in its entirety, who can be blamed for the profusion of omens mentioned earlier. An ambitious streak led him to include more than was absolutely necessary. He aimed at archaic expression coloured by superstition, but was unable to conceal the emergent moral attitude and feeling for justice. He revealed a taste for speculative observation, generalizations and sensationalism. So this late rhapsodist with a thirst for miracles could well have combined a presage from home and a miraculous sign from afar.¹

Bearing in mind the late and decadent stage of the epic, it is interesting to note that Hesiod, who preceded bard B, knew that even the muses could tell lies — making for constrained epic (*Th.* 22 ff.).² In addition to an authentic belief in miracles, these »unnecessary» miracles could be thought to have been a typically primitive and an unconscious refinement at a time when poets were ceasing to believe in miracles.³

c. Notes on grinding

To create the necessary impression of credibility the poet had to invent a person who was awake at that hour. Neither Penelope nor Telemachus would do, as they were Odysseus' closest relatives and had already appeared in the dream and sneezing omen (*ρ* 530—48).⁴ The suitors spent the night in other quarters and only came to the palace during the daytime (*ν* 248). The male slaves, too, were said to sleep elsewhere (*π* 318, *ν* 162, 173 f., *ω* 205, 387 ff.). This left only the slave women, and grinding was certainly a credible reason for staying up late at night.

No mill is mentioned before the *Odyssey*. In the *Iliad* the heroes merely threw stones at each other, said to resemble millstones in size and appearance

¹ WILAMOWITZ 87, 90; SCHWARTZ 117 f., 275; FOCKE 209 f., 341 f.; MERKELBACH, *Untersuchungen zur Odyssee* (München, 1951), 104, 235; RE 678, 751.

² E. R. DODDS, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley, 1951), 81.

³ *Idem.* 14, 24 n. 90.

⁴ BÉRARD, III, 45 regards the passage as interpolated. Xenophon relates a similar sneezing omen (*An.* III 2,9).

(M 161, H 270), like those used in the war between the frogs and the mice (Batr. 213 a).¹ Mills and grinding women are found in η 104, in the palace of Alchinous, but their number was not stated. In Ithaca there were twelve women to grind both barley and wheat meal — twelve being the general standard number. The stones were evidently of the most primitive type. The upper stone was moved to and fro by a person kneeling over the stones, as illustrated in Egyptian sculpture.² Grinding appears to have been women's work; grinding stones of this kind have been found in the graves of Egyptian women.

Contrary to earlier beliefs, grinding stones and mills seem to have undergone development relatively late. The lever-mill represents the most important specifically Greek contribution, and it is known in the early sixth century B.C.³ The present scene seems to be set in a mill-room with several saddle-querns, or else stones that were moved back and forth by horizontal levers (106, 111).⁴ At all events, grinding was a back-breaking task with little to show for the effort. As such it was lowly esteemed in Greece, as elsewhere, and was left to the cheapest labour — slave women and prisoners.⁵ The work went on day and night. Sometimes the grinders were chained and had a projecting collar to prevent them from eating the meal. Thus it could be the forced labour of worst kind and could well have involved unreasonable overtime. Women grinding early in the morning are specifically mentioned twice in

¹ G. FINSLER, *Homer* (Leipzig, 1908), 278 believes *μόλακες* M 161 to be real mill stones. Being women's weapons used against besiegers, they were despised, cf. death of Abimelech, Judges 9: 53 f. Some mythical hero was perished by a millstone, Alc. fr. 1,31.

² *Reallexikon der Vorgeschichte*, VII (Berlin, 1926), pl. 122 a. L. A. MORITZ, *Grain-Mills and Flour in Classical Antiquity* (Oxford, 1958), pls. 1a, 2a.

³ MORITZ 47, 51 f., 56 f., Figs. 3, 4 and plate 3 on »advanced hopper-rubbers» from the ruins of Olynthus (destroyed 348 B.C.).

⁴ The rotary mill was probably invented somewhere in the western part of the Mediterranean basin while Rome was struggling with Carthage, *ibid.*, p. 116. The donkey-mills and rotary hand-mills found on Delos go back to the second century B.C., p. 109. The water-mill must have existed by Augustus's time, and probably half a century earlier, p. 134. The existence of a combined commercial mill and bakery is certain at Athens in the fifth century B.C., p. 35. Xenophon mentions an area in Mesopotamia where the upper mill stones were made. (*An.* I 5,5), Cf. MORITZ 10 ff. LENCMAN 162 f. interprets some words of Linear B to apply to grinding women. Mills in the Mycenaean culture, L. A. STELLA, *La civiltà micenea nei documenti contemporanei* (Roma, 1965), 127 f., 179 f., 188 f.

⁵ RE XVI, 1067 ff. Two impoverished young philosophers worked every night in a mill (Ath. 168 b). Slaves were sent to the mill for punishment, LENCMAN 294 n. 24. Using a primitive saddle stone, a Sudanese slave working from morning to night could make for eight persons for one day. *Am. Anthropol.*, LV (1953), 440. An 18th century quern was at least twelve times as productive. A modern miller can produce enough flour in 20 minutes to feed a man for a year.

Ath. VI 263 b, Anth. Pal. IX 418. Odysseus' slave women, however, began their other duties in the morning (*v* 123).

Singing in time to the work was an old tradition in this as in other tasks, but it did not fit in with the atmosphere of this scene.¹

Grinding slave women are not classified as a separate group in the epic, though obviously they were lower in status than the female servants who served with the mistress and were considered fit to be her ladies-in-waiting.² Consequently, the bard takes two attitudes towards them as towards the other serving women. On the one hand, the serving women were under suspicion and it was decided to keep an eye on them (π 304, 316 f.; τ 16, 498). Their impertinence and immorality are described in σ 321 ff., τ 65 ff., and *v* 6 ff. On the other hand, they were said to have been assaulted and raped by the suitors, but this occurred in passages suspected of being interpolated (π 108 f., *v* 318 f., χ 37 f.). The character description of Melanthe is a good example of the bard's creative power. In the case of the grinding woman, however, he made no attempt at characterization. Here his aim was entirely different.

d. C l e d o n o m a n c y, a n e w f o r m o f p r o p h e c y

All the flaws and merits of the episode are due to the fact that its purpose was to present a new method of prophecy in which the bard was interested. Cledonomanancy might even have been a private obsession of this bard, just as cremation was for another of the Homeric bards. As remarked by STOCKINGER (p. 75), the passage contains an exceptional double omen (elsewhere only in τ 535 ff., *v* 345 ff.), in addition to a plea for a sign, mentioned earlier (p. 50 n. 93.). Zeus' thundering was simply an august tradition, included to lend respectability to this novel method. Like animal manifestations, natural phenomena and involuntary personal actions,³ human words are used here to express a divine message without the knowledge or will of the speaker. As the grinding woman was understood to be merely the tool of a superhuman power, temporarily in possession of her, the human word and the divine voice

¹ C. M. BOWRA, *Greek Lyric Poetry* (Oxford, 1961), 132, regards the fragment *ἄλει, μύλα, ἄλει· / καὶ γὰρ Πιπτακὸς ἄλει, / μεγάλας Μυτιλήνας βασιλεύων* as the work of Alcaeus and politically, if not erotically, equivocal. The exercise Pittacus took was grinding corn, D. L. I 81.

² LENCMAN, 286, 292. The host ground himself, likewise the mistress, Ath. 263 a—b.

³ Such as Telemachus' sneeze mentioned above (*q* 541; cf. comical performance h. Merc. 295 ff.) and the suitors' sardonic laugh (*v* 345 ff.). Sneezing was a favourable sign for the Greeks but an unfavourable one for the Romans. For parodies, see STOCKINGER 71 n. 54.

were considered fully compatible (α 282 f.), though of course the direct voice of a god bore more weight (B 41 f., Y 129 f. ξ 89). The interpretation of human words as prophecy has earlier precedents in the *Odyssey*, when Aegyptus blessed the unknown summoner to the meeting (β 33 f.), and when the suitors congratulated Odysseus on thrashing Irus (σ 112). Here, the word *κληδών* has already acquired its final meaning (σ 117), as also in the *v* 120.

So it seems that the entire modern concept of cledonomanancy — *μαντική ἀπὸ κληδόνων* (Paus. IX 11,7) — originates in the literature in these passages.¹

Here are a couple of examples that shed light on the technique and stage of development of the grinding woman's prediction. Cicero (*Div.* I 46) writes that Cecilia Metalla, whose niece was to be married, went to a temple by night to hear a prophecy. The procedure is illustrated by the cult of Hermes Agoraeus practiced in Pharai, Achaea:² having sacrificed and paid his fee, the inquirer presented his question to the statue of the deity, covered his ears with his hands and left the temple. Outside the square he let his hands fall, and the first words he heard were the god's answer (Paus. VII 22,2—3). The Romans, who shunned frenzied enthusiasm, found this form of prophecy specially to their liking. After the voices of the gods, random words spoken by strangers were the most significant omens.³

Once the human voice had become a medium of prophecy, the usual polarization set in. Persons selected and trained in a certain way were found to express the will of the gods most clearly and completely as oracles. On the other hand, the trust prophecies were considered to come from people who had

¹ L. A. BOUCHÉ-LECLERCQ, *Histoire de la divination dans l'antiquité*, I—IV (Paris, 1879—89), I, 154—57. RE XI, 584 f. Belief in oracles attained its peak between the seventh and fifth centuries B.C. H. LE BONNIEC in *Lexikon der alten Welt* p. 2142.

² BOUCHÉ, II, 399 f. RE XIV, 1279.

³ BOUCHÉ IV, 134, on the »technical terms»: *σῆμα* a general word, STOCKINGER 153, *κληδών*, *φήμη* *ibid.* 144 f., 155, BOUCHÉ I, 155, *ὄμφή*, *ῥσσα*, BOUCHÉ I, 154. Crucial days in the *Iliad* also begin with omens: A 1 ff., Y 56 ff., STOCKINGER 75.

The idea that the passage was composed in an early stage of prophecy by words, (as opposed to dreams, animals, natural phenomena or drawing lots) and thus also of the late oracle institution, is in seeming contradiction to the fact that *εὐφημηῆσαι* is to be found in *Iliad* I 171. It should be noted, however, that as far as language and thought are concerned, song *I* specifically represents the latest stratum of the *Iliad*, cf. K. HIRVONEN, *Matriarchal Survivals and Certain Trends in Homer's Female Characters* (Diss. Helsinki, 1968), 100 ff., 151. Besides, the verb here does not mean 'use words of good omen', but, on the contrary, 'avoid all unlucky words' and hence: 'keep religious silence' (L & S s.v.). Cf. the procedure of the oracle at Delphi: the enquirer was warned to 'think pure thoughts and speak well-omened words', thus he was silent so as to avoid the risk of ill omens, Plu. 2, 378 d. H. W. PARKE and D. E. W. WORMELL, *The Delphic Oracle*, I (Oxford, 1956), 33.

no understanding of the matters in question — i.e. from strangers or children.¹ This type of advanced cledonomanancy was highly acceptable to sophisticated Greeks. It is not found in the *Iliad*, and, as we have seen, only in budding form in the *Odyssey*. The culminating tragic irony — the unconscious prediction of one's own doom — is sometimes read into lines σ 115—16, in which the suitors tell Odysseus that they are going to send Irus to the tyrant king Echetus (i.e. Hades). In my own opinion, however, Odysseus was simply pleased by the wish expressed in lines σ 112—13 that his dreams would come true. As in the case of the grinding woman, the bard here again tried to explain why the suitors expressed a favourable omen to Odysseus. And here, too, a climax was sought by repeating a previous line (σ 116 = 85 and φ 308).

The composer of the passage now under study appears to have had adequate grounds, considerable skill and an urgent need to present this new manner of prophecy more clearly and thoroughly than earlier. But how did he come to invent it?

e. Possible precedents and motives

The common belief of the ancients in omens, which continued unshaken until the advent of the sophists, is expressed by Xenophon: »gods grant signs to men of all that concerns man» (*Mem.* I 1,9). He considered it quite natural to rely on augury, oracles, coincidences and sacrifices (*Mem.* I 1,3). The oldest media of prophecy seem to have been natural phenomena — the whispering of the oaks at Dodona, the behaviour of birds and other animals, the shape of the entrails of sacrificial beasts, and the utterings of shamanistic soothsayers, such as Tiresias.² Temples of prophecy, such as Pharai mentioned above, which were a part of the cult of Hermes, naturally seemed very ancient to Pausanias (fl. c.A.D. 150) even though they were no more than 700 or 800 years old and thus no older than the *Odyssey*. This manner of prophecy appears to have been new and still under development in the *Odyssey*.

The *Ilias Parva* (seventh century? — probably by Lesches, OCD) included a similar scene when Ajax and Odysseus were disputing as to who was the

¹ BOUCHÉ I, 156 f. Cf. Psalms 8: 3, Matthew 21: 6: Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings, and the Greek proverb *οἶνος καὶ παῖδες ἀληθεῖς*. AP. XII 49. STOCKINGER 106 n. 62.

² E. A. S. BUTTERWORTH, *Some Traces of the Pre-Olympian World* (Berlin, 1966), 147 f. Fresh ox-hides may have been an old tradition: Celtic shamans ate raw meat, drank blood and lespt wrapped in an ox-hide in order to have a dream omen, M. ELIADE, *Le chamanisme et les techniques archaïques de l'extase* (Paris, 1951), 344. Likewise Latinus on sheep-skins, Verg. *Aen.* VII 93 ff.

greater hero and thus worthy to inherit the slain Achilles' accoutrements. Nestor advised them to send spies to find out what the Trojans thought. The eavesdroppers overheard an argument between some girls, one of whom said that Ajax was by far the better man because he had carried Achilles' body from the battle field, while Odysseus had refused to do so (he was covering the retreat). But by Athena's contrivance another girl answered: *καί κε γυνή φέροι ἄχθος, ἐπεὶ κεν ἀνὴρ ἀναθείη*. (Ar. *Eq.* 1056).¹

This episode in the *Ilias Parva* represents a more advanced form of cledonomanancy and is thus of later origin. No longer are the gods asked for a direct solution (though this was expected of them). Instead Nestor acted as an oracle. The subject is treated dramatically in the Trojan girls' dialogue and the climax is achieved with great skill. This is cledonomanancy at its best — a credit to both Athena and the bard. By comparison, the words of the grinding woman seem primitive, pious, and naive.

Nevertheless, the scene in the *Ilias Parva* was clearly referred to when Ajax and Odysseus met in Hades: *παῖδες δὲ Τρώων δίκασαν καὶ Παλλὰς Ἀθήνη* (λ 547), though here, according to BLASS (130 f.), were discussing male Trojans, i.e., captives, and the passage is an interpolation. It was rejected by Aristarchus and, in any case, the whole Necyia is generally believed to be a late addition. Internal criticism supports the external criticism. In fact, the anecdotal form of the climax bears the impression of late origin.

Returning to the hypothesis that the poet felt he was inventing something new and excellent, the point of issue (after the exceptional facts mentioned above, — the request for, and dual nature of, the omen) is the polarization: from far away and from home, from above and from below. In contrast to Zeus was the grinding woman. Slave status was no impediment to a good omen, any more than it was to a bad one in E. *Ion* 1187 ff. Neither did sex have any effect (as opposed to the modern fisherman's superstition in Finland that fishing will be poor if the first person he meets is a woman). On the other hand the god's supreme wisdom is contrasted with the grinding woman's stupidity and idle chatter.² This leads to some interesting conclusions.

In the myths, wisdom, wiles and deceitfulness — all qualities admired by

¹ True to his habit, Aristophanes inserted his own comments: *ἀλλ' οὐκ μαχέσαιο· χέσαιο γάρ, εἰ μαχέσαιο* (1057). F. BLASS, *Die Interpolationen in der Odyssee* (Halle a.S., 1904), 130 f., holds the scholiast's mention of the captives' opinion more probable or actually the verdict of the camp meeting in the original poem.

² *μυλακρίζ* 'cockroach' was a nickname for the maid who ground the family corn, Poll VII 180.

the ancients — were female inventions (Gaea, Hes. *Th.* 469 ff., Metis 886 ff.). This attitude can still be found in the *Odyssey*, in which Helen, Penelope and Arete were nothing less than *maîtresses de salon*.

But in all probability, the epics no more reflected the real contemporary outlook than the mediaeval troubadour and court poetry mirrored the misogyny of the priesthood and the bourgeoisie. The common attitude at the time the bard was singing his songs could well have been similar to that of Hesiod and Semonides of Amorgos.

Proverbs are generally stable and widespread mirrors of attitude. Though the Greeks seem to have had no specific proverbs on grinding women, they had several belittling the intelligence of women in general:¹ *Γυναικὸς φρένες* (D. IV, 3). *Ἄνδρῶν μὲν τὸ ποιεῖν, γυναικῶν δὲ τὸ λαλεῖν*. (Eustath.) *Γυναικὶ μὴ πίστευε, μηδ' ἂν ἀποθάνῃ* (D. IV, 4). And such were grinding women. They had a female's intelligence — or lack of it. They gossiped and, above all, they were unreliable. This attitude seems to have become more firmly established in the Orient than in Greece. An Accadian proverb states: »Where servants are there is quarrel, where cosmeticians are there is slander» (ANET 425 f.). An Egyptian text, the Admonitions of Ipu-Wer, complains thus: »Why really, do all maid-servants make free with their tongues» (ANET 442). And the vizier Ptah-Hotep taught his son: »Take counsel with the ignorant as well as the wise . . . Good speech is more hidden than the emerald, but it may be found with maidservants at the grindstones» (ANET 412).

Grinding women, whose work was extremely monotonous, appear to have been proverbial for their gossiping. It should be noted, however, that 'good speech' to the Egyptian or African means rhetoric ability, not, as in the Greek-Western view, *le bon mot*,² which is an isolated flash of wisdom on life. The quoter, of course, understands and interprets such expressions in his own way. It has now become established that improved communications with Egypt had a strong influence on the *Odyssey*. Thus it is quite possible that the bard was influenced by a saying such as that last quoted, even though he made no effort here to point out the paradox of Odysseus' receiving the god's reply from such a prototype of stupidity.

¹ *Paroemigraphi Graeci*, I—II, Ed. by E. L. v. LEUTSCH (Göttingen, 1839—51), s. vv.

² H. GRAPOW, *Wie die alten Ägypter sich anredeten, wie sie sich grüssten und wie sich miteinander sprachen*. 2nd ed. (Berlin, 1960), p. 202, and personal communication of Mr. ROSTISLAV HOLTHOER, M.A.

f. S u m m a r y

It seems clear from the above that *v* 91—121 are not interpolated. Even the most doubted line (104) could well have been an example of the normal technique of composition with all its illogical features. The atmosphere calls for night work, whereas its connection with the plot presupposes the morning. The inconsistency is explained by the generally accepted view that the compiler took this meritworthy passage from one of his predecessors. On the other hand, I feel that the passage under study has been generally overrated. Possibly, the novelty of *cledomancy* and the combination of the two signs induced the bard to revise and add lines that weaken the characterization of the grinding woman, as compared to that of Elpenor and Melantho, for example. On the other hand, it clearly excels in quality both the preceding and the following passages.

Both the grinding and the slavery give the impression that what the bard had in mind was some kind of milling plant of his own time, where work was also done at night.¹ In attempting to apply it to the Mycenaean era, he created a contradiction between the working habits of ancient slave women and the strict industrial slavery of the later period.

The abundance and variety of omens can be attributed primarily to the bard who gave the epic its final touches. He was either giving way to his own preferences or making a deliberate concession to the increasing superstition of the period, as in the case of the Cyclic Epics. The dual nature of the omen and the fully developed *cledomancy* devoid of any intellectual climax or tragic irony point to a new phase in the development and popularization of prophe-sying, and possibly also of the oracle institution.

The best explanation for all these features is probably that given by SCHWARTZ and VON DER MÜHLL concerning a »B bard» or rhapsodist, who lived in Athens after 600 B.C. or even as late as the time of Pisistratus, and who composed song *v* while compiling the *Odyssey* in its present form. The episode of the grinding slave woman, however, was taken from the *Odyssey* of an earlier, better bard who possessed a more personal touch — though VON DER

¹ In the light of evidence presented above and based on MORITZ, lever-mills, 'hopper-rubbers' of the Olynthian type, and mills and bakeries big enough for palaces may have been in existence by 600—550 B.C. According to earlier opinions pushing mills of this kind originated in Asia Minor and Syria as early as the end of the second millennium, i.e., in the Mycenaean era described in the songs. *Reallexikon VIII*, 324. R. J. FORBES, »Chemical, Culinary, and Cosmetic Arts,» *A History of Technology*, I (Oxford, 1954), 274.

MÜHLL believes that the B bard added omens himself, leaving only the initial lines of the A bard untouched. Judging from the cledonomanicy, the episode was composed before the *Ilias Parva*, whereas the B bard was also acquainted quite late epic poetry, which he used as a model. On the other hand, not even the scholars who claim to distinguish not just two, but three or more strata in the *Odyssey*, regard this beautiful, strange and even significant passage as belonging to the very oldest stratum.