

INTRODUCTION

1 EURIPIDES

Hellenistic and Byzantine sources¹ place Euripides' birth either in 485/4, also the year of Aeschylus' first victory;² or more usually in 480/79, the year of the Greek victory at Salamis; the explicit synchronicity with other significant events in Athenian dramatic and political history enjoins caution, but neither date is inherently implausible and neither is likely to be very far wrong. We are also told that Euripides first competed in the tragic contest in 455 and won his first victory in 442/1. Biographical sources report that, late in life (probably 407), he accepted an invitation to the court of King Archelaos in Macedonia, and he died there after a relatively brief stay; modern scholarship is divided as to the credit to be given to these accounts.³ At any event, Aristophanes' *Frogs*, produced at the Lenaian festival in winter 405, suggests that Euripides' death was very recent, as was Sophocles' (406). The *Bacchae* and the *Iphigeneia at Aulis* appear to have been staged posthumously in Athens by Euripides' son.⁴

The *Frogs* also attests to Euripides' stature as a tragic poet, as does an ancient anecdote that, after news of Euripides' death, Sophocles appeared at the next ceremonial *proagōn* (presumably in 406) dressed in a dark cloak of mourning, his actors and choreuts did not wear garlands as was normal, and this scene caused the people to weep.⁵ The preserved information, which will go back eventually to the public dramatic records or *didaskaliai*, that Euripides was granted a chorus, i.e. allowed to compete in the dramatic contests, twenty-two times between 455 and his move to Macedonia, confirms his public stature. It is much harder to know what conclusions to draw from the fact that during his life he won first prize at the City Dionysia only four times (Sophocles

¹ The sources are most conveniently collected in Vol. I of Kannicht's edition of the fragments in *TrGF* and (with English translation) in Kovacs 1994: 2–141. Particularly important for later sources may have been the *On Euripides* of Philochorus (c. 340–260 BC), cf. *FGrHist* 328 F 217–22 (with Jacoby's commentary).

² So very probably the earliest independent witness, the *Marmor Parium*, Eur. T 10a.

³ For the sceptical case cf. Scullion 2003; for the importance of Macedonia to Euripides' *Nachleben* in the fourth and third centuries cf. Hanink 2008.

⁴ The evidence is a scholium to Ar. *Frogs* 67 = DID C 22 Snell; cf. below p. 46.

⁵ The *proagōn* appears to have been a ceremonial appearance of the competitors some days before the dramatic contest, at which the poets would announce the subjects of the plays to be staged at the festival, cf. Pickard-Cambridge 1968: 67–8, Csapo and Slater 1995: 109–10.

had eighteen victories), particularly as dramatists were judged not for single plays but for a group of three tragedies and a satyr-play ('tetralogies').⁶ What we can say, however, is that a great deal of evidence points to the ever-increasing popularity and influence of his dramas after his death, both in reperformances all over the Greek world and as texts to be read; as the very significant number of papyri of otherwise lost plays of Euripides attests, the fourth century and beyond was the real period of his 'victory'.⁷

According to the preserved *Lives* of the poet, Alexandrian scholars knew the titles of ninety-two plays of Euripides, texts of seventy-eight of which had survived to be included in the Library. Three of these were tragedies of debated authenticity, and the number will also have included the surviving *Rhesos*, an all but certainly fourth-century play by an unknown dramatist which had taken the place of the authentic (but lost) Euripidean *Rhesos*. Of these seventy-eight, eight were satyr-dramas, of which one, perhaps the *Sisyphos*, was of debated authenticity.⁸ Given that satyr-plays should have accounted for one-quarter of Euripides' output (perhaps some seventeen plays in total),⁹ eight is a very small number. In 438, the fourth play with which Euripides competed was *Alcestis*, which is not a satyr-play; the author of the Alexandrian *hypothesis* who described it as σατυρικώτερον 'because, unlike tragedies, it ends in joy and pleasure ... which is more appropriate to comedy' may perhaps have felt that the fact that Euripides did not include a satyr-play in his tetralogy of that year called for comment.¹⁰ Whatever the implications of this ancient judgement, it has led modern scholars regularly to seek a

⁶ Cf. further below p. 24. We use the unqualified term 'tetralogy' to refer to such groups of four plays, regardless of whether or not they dealt with parts of the same story.

⁷ In 387/6, the performance (out of competition) of an 'old drama' was added to the City Dionysia; the chance preservation of an inscription (*IG* II² 2320, Millis and Olson 2012: 61–90) shows that in three successive years (341, 340, 339) the 'old tragedy' which was chosen for reperformance was Euripidean.

⁸ Kannicht concludes that the eight satyr-plays extant in Alexandria were *Autolykos* I, *Autolykos* II, *Bousiris*, *Eurystheus*, *Cyclops*, *Sisyphos*, *Skiron*, and *Syleus*; others have held that there was only one satyric *Autolykos* (cf., e.g., Pechstein 1998: 33–40). Another of the uncertainties concerns the title *Epe(i)os*, which is preserved only on the so-called *Marmor Albanum* from Rome (T 6); Kannicht regards this either as a simple error or as the title of a satyr-play which had not reached Alexandria. Cf. further below p. 3, and for more detailed discussion cf. Kannicht 1996, Jouan and Van Looy 1998: xi–xvi, Pechstein 1998: 19–34.

⁹ Cf. below pp. 3–4.

¹⁰ Whether this sentence of the *hypothesis* goes back to Aristophanes of Byzantium is disputed among modern scholars, but there is a similar observation in the *hypothesis* to the *Orestes*: τὸ δράμα κωμικώτερον ἔχει τὴν καταστροφὴν. This parallel has led to doubt as to whether the observation about the 'satyric' nature of the *Alcestis* has

‘satyric’ flavour for that play in the role of Heracles and, in particular, the servant’s description of his drunken feasting and Heracles’ subsequent expressions of a hedonist *carpe diem* view of life (*Alcestis* 747–802); both these motifs find parallels in the behaviour of the Cyclops in *Cyclops*.¹¹ Even so, the satyrless *Alcestis* is not a satyr-drama, and there is at least no good reason to think that the pattern of Euripides’ four plays in 438 was a regular occurrence. Unless it was, however, the case that Euripides wrote far fewer satyr-dramas than was to be expected, there seem to be two possible explanations for the very low attested figure for his satyric output.

The attested numbers of satyr-plays for Aeschylus and Sophocles are also considerably smaller than expected, and here a good case can be made for believing that more of the attested titles for these dramatists were in fact satyr-plays than is recorded;¹² unlike the case with Euripides, however, there are no surviving notices which record knowledge of Aeschylean or Sophoclean plays which never reached Alexandria. The standard way of referring to a satyr-play in, say, a list of titles was to add σάτυροι or σατυρικός -ή -όν (*uel sim.*) to the title, and this addition could easily get dropped in transmission; we can in fact see this process at work in several instances. This does not, however, seem very probable for the rather different situation of Euripides’ surviving titles, and it is perhaps more likely that another explanation should be sought. The most obvious is that satyr-dramas formed the lion’s share of the fourteen or so plays which did not reach Alexandria; we know that was the case with the *Theristai*, the satyr-drama which was staged with *Medea* (according to the *hypothesis*).¹³ If so, a number of factors may have contributed. One may have been the very popularity of some of Euripides’ tragedies, now regularly reperformed as single plays without the accompanying satyr-plays, some of which perhaps gradually faded into such obscurity that texts were no longer available to be deposited in the public archives under Lycurgus and from there to be transmitted to Alexandria. Interest in satyr-play more generally seems to

anything to do with the fact that the play was performed in fourth place, cf., e.g., Fantuzzi 2014: 227.

¹¹ In Euripides’ satyric *Syleus* Heracles was sold as a slave to Syleus, a monstrous son of Poseidon, whom he killed after dining on his cattle and drinking copiously of his wine, cf. the evidence for the play in *TrGF*, Laemmle 2013: 252 n. 16. In his summary of the play (Eur. T 221b) Tzetzes associates such behaviour with the nature of satyr-drama, cf. below p. 49 n.167.

¹² Cf. Radt 1982: 190–4.

¹³ Kirchhoff’s suggestion that the title of a satyr-play is recorded as ‘not preserved’ in the fragmentary Aristophanean *hypothesis* of *Phoinissai* is attractive. Two other possibilities are the *Epe(i)os* (cf. above n. 8) and the *Lamia* (see Kannicht’s introduction to fr. 472m).

have waned for a variety of reasons in the course of the fourth century,¹⁴ and those aspects of Euripidean tragedy most responsible for the dramatist's fame – the plotting, the monologues and monodies for actors, the pathos – would inevitably be less prominent in satyr-drama than in tragedy.

2 THE *CYCLOPS* ON STAGE

The first performance of *Cyclops* was certainly not the first dramatisation of the events of *Odyssey* 9, and not even the first satyric dramatisation.¹⁵ Whereas we can trace in close detail Euripides' engagement with the Homeric text, we may take it as certain that *Cyclops* also alludes to, and makes use of, previous dramatisations of the Cyclops-story, which will have been more or less familiar to at least some of the audience; in this case, however, our appreciation of such inter-dramatic play is restricted by the wretchedly few fragments of such other plays that have survived, and we must rely far too often on speculation and assessments of probability.

Aristias of Phlius, whose father Pratinas was identified in antiquity as the 'first inventor' of satyr-play (*TrGF* I 4 T1), staged a satyric *Cyclops* at Athens in (roughly) the middle part of the fifth century. The one surviving fragment of interest well illustrates some of the difficulties we face in piecing together how Euripides has used the dramatic tradition. In fr. 4, the Cyclops says to Odysseus ἀπώλεσας τὸν οἶνον ἐπιχέας ὕδωρ, 'you ruined the wine by pouring in water', which strongly suggests that already in that play the ruse by which Odysseus makes the Cyclops drunk had been represented in terms of contemporary sympotic practice, a theme which is so prominent in Euripides' play (cf. further 558n.). That fragment is cited by Athenaeus, whose predilection for passages concerning dining and drinking means that it is difficult to draw large-scale conclusions from this isolated verse.

Much the same is true of the three one-verse fragments of the comic *Cyclops* of Epicharmus of Syracuse, the earliest dramatic representation of the story of which we know. Drinking and dining seem to have played an important part in that play also,¹⁶ and this may remind us of the importance of the reputation of Sicilian cuisine and cooking to Euripides' satyric presentation of the Cyclops. Fr. 72 of Epicharmus' play, φέρ' ἐγγέας ἐς τὸ σκύφος, suggests a sympotic scene very like that which we find in *Cyclops* (cf. 568n.), and it is an attractive suggestion that fr. 71, χορδαί τε ἄδύ, ναί

¹⁴ Cf. Laemmle 2014: 926–9, below pp. 34–5; by at least 341/0 only one satyr-play was performed, and outside the contest proper, at the Great Dionysia.

¹⁵ For a helpful survey of 'the Cyclops on stage' cf. Mastromarco 1998.

¹⁶ Cf. nn. on 390–1, 568.

μὰ Δία, ὥς κωλέος, ‘the sausages are delicious, by Zeus, as is the haunch’, was spoken by the Cyclops about his cannibal meals; if so, Epicharmus’ *Cyclops* anticipated both Euripides’ Polyphemos and representations by Athenian comic poets who turned the Homeric monster into something of a discerning gourmet.¹⁷ It is, however, only a guess that Polyphemos is the speaker, and the context is entirely unknown. Nevertheless, Epicharmus’ importance cannot be judged only on the scraps of his play which have survived or on the near certainty that the Syracusan poet set his play, as Euripides was to do, in the region of Mount Etna.¹⁸ However influential Epicharmus’ comedy may have been at Athens,¹⁹ the fragments as a whole display a persistent parodic engagement with the authority of Homer,²⁰ and it is not improbable (to say no more) that Epicharmus preceded (and presumably influenced) Euripides in the presentation of a version that undercut Odysseus’ self-serving Homeric narration. Drinking and dining are also the subjects of the very scanty fragments of Callias’ comic *Cyclopes* (434 BC), again preserved largely in Athenaeus;²¹ there thus seems to have been a particular and persistent mode in which comedy presented the events of *Odyssey* 9, and Euripides will have been the heir of this.

Perhaps the most important comic version of the events of *Odyssey* 9 to appear on the Athenian stage, and certainly the one from which the most intriguing fragments survive, is the Ὀδυσσεῆς (literally, ‘Odysseuses’) of Cratinus, perhaps roughly contemporary with Callias’ *Cyclopes*.²² The fragments reveal again the comic penchant for representing the events of *Odyssey* 9 through the lens of contemporary sympotic performance, but we now have the chance to identify specific elements of the travestied Homeric model, and several of the fragments find striking analogies in *Cyclops*. In one fragment (fr. 145), τῇ νῦν πῖθι λαβὼν ἥδη, καὶ τοῦνομά μ’ εὐθύς ἐρώτα, ‘Here now, take this and drink it, and straightaway ask me my name’, we see Odysseus forcing the Cyclops to follow the Homeric script; in Homer, as in Euripides (vv. 548–9), the Cyclops, unprompted, asks Odysseus his name. As in Euripides (cf. 141–3n.), however, Maron, the Homeric priest of Apollo, is used as a metonymy for the wine itself, perhaps by the Cyclops (fr. 146). In one fragment (fr. 147) the Cyclops asks

¹⁷ Cf., e.g., Mastromarco 1998: 34.

¹⁸ Thucyd. 6.2.1 identifies the Cyclopes as early dwellers in a part of Sicily, cf. 20n.

¹⁹ For a recent suggestive account cf. Willi 2015.

²⁰ Cf., e.g., Willi 2012b. On the language of Epicharmus and its relation to Homer see also Cassio 2002, esp. 70–3.

²¹ Cf. Imperio 1998: 204–17.

²² On Cratinus’ comedy see esp. Bakola 2010: 235–46; earlier bibliography is listed in Kassel and Austin’s introductory note to the fragments in *PCG*. Kaibel 1895 has been particularly influential, but is now rather out of date.

Odysseus where he saw ‘the man, the dear son of Laertes’; like Euripides’ Silenos, Cratinus’ *Cyclops* apparently knows the opening verse of the *Odyssey* (cf. 104n.). We may speculate that this fragment derives from a scene, not like those at the end of the Homeric episode and *Cyclops*, where the now-blinded Cyclops learns Odysseus’ real name and is forced to remember the long-buried prophecy of Telemos, but rather one in which ‘No man’ claims to have seen Odysseus on his travels, just as the Homeric hero tells Eumaeus and Penelope of his alleged sightings of Odysseus. As in Euripides, the Homeric monster has also become something of a cook and gourmet (fr. 150), but what is very striking is that the Cyclops speaks some verses at least in hexameters (fr. 150, perhaps fr. 149) and with some decidedly epic phraseology (note the sarcastic ἐρίπρας ἑταίρους, fr. 150.1);²³ Cratinus’ comic form thus allowed a greater openness and flexibility than do the relatively strict scenic structures of Euripidean drama. Another fragment, οἱ δ’ ἄλυσκάζουσιν ὑπὸ ταῖς κλινίσιν, ‘and they seek to hide under the couches’ (fr. 148), suggests perhaps a messenger-speech (by Odysseus?) telling of the Cyclops’ attack on some of his comrades;²⁴ if so, then Odysseus’ speech at *Cyclops* 382–436 (cf. esp. 407–8) had at least one comic precedent, and it may be that the cave of Cratinus’ Cyclops too had many more ‘mod cons’ than did his Homeric predecessor.²⁵

Even more striking than these comic reworkings of Homeric scenes seems to have been the opening of Cratinus’ play in which Odysseus and his comrades, who probably formed the chorus,²⁶ seem to have entered the theatre in a boat, driven on to the Cyclops’ land by an approaching storm, described in suitably Homeric terms (νέφος οὐράνιον, fr. 143); whether or not the storm itself was somehow represented, or merely described, we cannot say, but this must have been a notable dramaturgical stroke. It is tempting to think that there was some kind of visual echo of the

²³ Cf. 377–8n. on φίλους ἑταίρους.

²⁴ There is perhaps here a memory of *Od.* 9.457 (the Cyclops to his ram) εἰπεῖν ὅππῃ κείνος ἔμὸν μένος ἡλασκάξει.

²⁵ Cf., e.g., Mastromarco 1998: 38–40. ἄλυσκάζειν is another item from the Homeric lexicon.

²⁶ The fact that in *Cyclops* Odysseus and his men enter immediately after the parodos reinforces our sense that the satyrs are here ‘out of place’, in a story to which they do not belong and for which there was an obvious alternative chorus. In Homer, Odysseus took 12 crew members with him (*Od.* 9.195), and if he entered at *Cycl.* 96 with roughly that number, this too would suggest how they have been displaced from their choral role, regardless of whether the satyr-chorus consisted of 12 or 15 choreuts, cf. below pp. 28–9. Cratinus’ chorus presumably numbered 24, as was apparently normal for Old Comedy.

ship-cart which was such a noteworthy feature of Dionysiac ritual.²⁷ The representation (however minimalist) of a Homeric storm must have been a remarkable experiment in turning even the most apparently intractable elements of Homeric narrative into drama, and it was one which was to have a rich *Nachleben* in ancient theatre (cf., e.g., Plautus, *Rudens*). In Homer, Odysseus and his men are not driven by a storm to take shelter on the Cyclops' island; rather, they beach smoothly on nearby 'Goat Island' without even noticing that they are approaching land (9.146–50). In *Cyclops* Odysseus claims that he and his men were driven to the Cyclops' island by storm-winds (ἀνέμων θυελλαι 109, cf. n. ad loc.), and although he there clearly evokes the Homeric 'bag of winds', there is perhaps also a memory of the motif of Cratinus' comedy.

No doubt other plays too made use of scenes and motifs drawn from *Odyssey* 9 and its dramatic progeny. If we only had a play-title and brief plot-summary, we would, for example, never guess that Aristophanes' *Wasps* contains a relatively extended reworking of the escape of Odysseus and his men from the cave.²⁸ Philocleon, desperate to escape from the house despite the watchful eye of his son Bdelycleon, hides under a donkey which he claims should be sold, and the scene in which he enters the stage (vv. 179–96) replays the escape of Odysseus and his men, 'No-man' joke and all, in farcical mode; thus, for example, Bdelycleon's concerned query to the donkey, 'Dear donkey, why are you weeping? Is it because you will be sold today ...?' (vv. 179–81), picks up the Cyclops' famous address to his ram at *Od.* 9.447–60, κριε πέπτον κτλ. Of perhaps greater interest with regard to *Cyclops* is the play with the language of food in vv. 193–5 ('a belly-cut of well-aged juryman'); Philocleon presents his son as not merely a cannibal Cyclops, but also (perhaps) as one with a refined interest in the quality and nature of his meals.²⁹ It is tempting to think that we catch here an echo of what seems to have been, well before the production of *Wasps*, the standard presentation of the events of *Odyssey* 9: the Cyclops as cook and gourmet, an image which was to play an important role in *Cyclops*.

The story of the Cyclops was not the only one of Odysseus' adventures which was dramatised in all three dramatic forms, Sicilian comedy, Athenian satyr-play and comedy; the hero's encounter with Circe seems to have been another such episode.³⁰ The story of the Cyclops did, however,

²⁷ Wilamowitz 1920: 15 assumes that Dionysos' ship was actually used (as perhaps it was) for the entrance and exit of the chorus.

²⁸ To the standard commentaries add Davies 1990; for further parallels with *Wasps* cf. 492–3n.

²⁹ Cf. Biles and Olson 2015 n. on vv. 193–5.

³⁰ Aeschylus, Deinolochus (Epicharmus' son, pupil or rival, according to various testimonia), and the fourth-century comic poets Anaxilas and Ephippus, all

also enjoy another, semi-dramatic existence in the world of lyric poetry and performance at the end of the fifth century and the beginning of the fourth.³¹ Timotheus of Miletus, perhaps the greatest exponent of the so-called ‘New Music’, composed (and presumably performed) a ‘Cyclops’ nome (*PMG* 780–3), which seems to have involved not just narrative, but also impersonated direct speech (*PMG* 781); Timotheus’ nome may have been roughly contemporary with Euripides’ *Cyclops*. The only surviving fragment of any length suggests that here again sympotic themes were prominent:

ἔγχευε δ’ ἐν μὲν δέπας κίσσινον μελαίνας
 σταγόνος ἀμβρότας ἀφρῶι βρυάζον,
 εἴκοσιν δὲ μέτρ’ ἐνέχευ’, ἀνέμισγε
 δ’ αἶμα Βακχίου νεορρύτοισιν
 δακρύοισι Νυμφᾶν

Timotheus, *PMG* 780

He poured in a single ivy-wood cup brimming with the foam of dark, ambrosial drops, and also poured twenty measures over it, and mixed the blood of the Bacchic one with the newly shed tears of the Nymphs.

Whether this is a description of Odysseus mixing wine for the Cyclops or of Maron’s habitual practice,³² it stays quite close to the Homeric text, here transposed to the ‘dithyrambic’ idiom of contemporary lyric,³³ and perhaps suggests an audience (or at least part of one) who do know the detail of *Odyssey* 9 well.

Of great interest also in the context of *Cyclops* is *Cyclops or Galateia* of Philoxenus of Cythera, although this composition certainly postdated *Cyclops*; this dithyramb, the narrative of which was set, like *Cyclops*, on Sicily, became particularly famous for its presentation of the Cyclops’ love for the nymph Galateia.³⁴ To judge from a quasi-parody in Aristophanes’

wrote *Circe* dramas. It is instructive about our difficulties in this area that the one fragment of Ephippus’ play (fr. 11), preserved in Athenaeus, concerns the ratio of water to be mixed with the wine; it is easy enough to guess that Circe is here entertaining Odysseus, but the fragment would be perfectly at home in a *Cyclops* comedy.

³¹ For what follows cf. particularly Power 2013.

³² Cf. Hordern: 2002: 110; κίσσινον would seem to point to the Cyclops (cf. 390–1n.), but that is not a completely decisive indication.

³³ Cf. Hunter 1983: 19–20, LeVen 2014: 160–78, esp. 176–8.

³⁴ On Philoxenus’ dithyramb cf. 475n., 503–10n., Hunter 1999: 216–17, Power 2013: 250–6, LeVen 2014: 233–42.

Wealth 290–301, in one part of the dithyramb Philoxenus represented the Cyclops holding a modern kithara and imitating the sound of its strings by the exclamation θρεττανελο. The parody in *Wealth* suggests a ‘bucolic’ song, as the Cyclops serenaded his flocks; there is no good reason to think of any influence from the parodos of *Cyclops* in either Philoxenus or Aristophanes,³⁵ but these songs might, conversely, point us towards some of the lyric tradition which actually lies behind the Euripidean parodos. It is very likely that Philoxenus’ dithyramb was an important influence on fourth-century comedies by Antiphanes, Nicochares and Alexis concerned with the love of the Cyclops for Galateia.

3 THE *ODYSSEY* AND THE *CYCLOPS*

Odysseus’ narration of his encounter with the Cyclops near the beginning of the *apologoi* was in antiquity one of the most familiar episodes of the *Odyssey* and it has remained to this day one of the episodes, perhaps indeed *the* episode, which defines the epic and its hero ‘of much μῆτις’. It was, however, also one of Odysseus’ tales which, along with, for example, the *nekuia* of Book 11, earned Odysseus a reputation as an archetypal liar and boaster, an ἀλαζών.³⁶ In *On the Sublime* Longinus characterises parts of the *Odyssey* (and particularly Odysseus’ narrative to the Phaeacians) as μυθώδη καὶ ἄπιστα, ‘full of *muthos* and unbelievable’ (*Subl.* 9.13), and *Cyclops* itself bears witness to this tradition when Odysseus describes the events in the cave almost identically as οὐ πιστά, μύθοις εἰκότ’ οὐδ’ ἔργοις βροτῶν (v. 376, cf. nn. ad loc.).³⁷ Homer himself seems to anticipate this negative reception for the *apologoi* when he has Alcinous declare to Odysseus that the Phaeacians do *not* consider him a liar and a deceiver, because of the manner of his telling:

σοὶ δ’ ἔπι μὲν μορφὴ ἐπέων, ἐνὶ δὲ φρένες ἐσθλαί,
 μῦθον δ’ ὥς ὅτ’ ἀοιδὸς ἐπισταμένως κατέλεξας

Homer, *Odyssey* 11.367–8

There is a shapeliness in your words and excellent sense, and you tell your story (*muthos*) with understanding, like a bard

³⁵ Cf., however, 475n. for a possible borrowing by Philoxenus from *Cyclops*.

³⁶ Cf. Montiglio 2011: 125. The ‘facts’ of the cannibalism and subsequent blinding of the Cyclops were, however, usually exempted from this criticism, as they are validated in the poem by the narrator and the gods.

³⁷ At *Tristia* 1.5. 49–50 Ovid, echoing *Od.* 1.4, claims that his sufferings will not be believed: *multaque credibili tulimus maiora ratamque, / quamuis acciderint, non habitura fidem*.

For Alcinous, the way in which Odysseus tells his story guarantees the truth of the extraordinary adventures he relates. Here, however, was the very nub of the matter for the post-Homeric tradition: in Homer, Odysseus' tale is indeed just that, a tale told in the first person (all other potential witnesses are either dead or uncontactable), and it is Odysseus alone upon whom we must rely for much of the detail of 'what actually happened'. Euripides' *Cyclops* both bears witness to, and was very likely formative for, an exegetical tradition which persistently wondered whether Odysseus was telling the truth and how things might 'really' have happened, if we had reports which did not emanate from the hero himself. Most of our evidence for that tradition comes from much later in antiquity and the Byzantine period – the Greek literature of the Roman empire, the scholia on Homer and the Homeric commentaries of Eustathius – but Euripides' satyr-drama is itself in part a wry commentary on the events of *Odyssey* 9, and one whose spirit finds some of its closest parallels in that later tradition.

Despite Odysseus' apparent admission that in not following the advice of his comrades simply to rob the Cyclops' cave and retreat to the boat he had made a bad mistake (*Od.* 9.224–9), both ancient and modern audiences have found it easy enough to identify aspects of Odysseus' narration in *Odyssey* 9 which seem designed to cast Odysseus in a good light and/or at least stretch credulity. Odysseus reports, for example, that when his comrades drew lots as to which of them would assist with the blinding, the four were chosen by lot 'whom I myself would have wanted to choose' and that he himself joined them as a fifth (vv. 331–5).³⁸ The scene clearly led to discussion in antiquity. The scholium on v. 331 reports criticism that it was inappropriate to entrust such a matter to the chances of the lot, a criticism apparently answered (the text of the scholium is lacunose) by the observation that no one would in fact willingly undertake such a task. Someone who did, however, do just that was Odysseus. The scholium on v. 335 draws our attention to how Odysseus puts himself 'in harm's way' 'without thinking (αὐτομάτως) and without hesitation'; here, then, some ancient readers did not fail to see the real 'hero' of this tale. In *Cyclops*, by contrast, the satyrs make much of the question as to which of them will handle the fiery torch together with Odysseus (vv. 483–6, 630–45); here there is no talk of the lot – it is just assumed that Odysseus will give the command. In the end, of course, no satyr comes anywhere near the 'serious action', but it is at least worth asking whether Euripides' employment

³⁸ Plato seems to have fun with this scene at *Rep.* 10.620c3–d2: Odysseus in the Underworld is allotted the very last choice of soul, finds that of a humble ἀπράγμων, and says that this is what he would have chosen, even if the lot had given him first choice.