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VERBAL BEHAVIOUR IN ITS SOCIAL CONTEXT: THREE QUESTION STRATEGIES IN HOMER'S *ODYSSEY*

Aristotle, in his commentary on narrative imitation (διηγματικὴν μίμησιν), commends Homer for holding the floor as narrator as little as possible (ἐλάχιστα λέγειν); rather, as Aristotle observes, Homer prefers to stand aside and, bringing on stage in his stead his actors, allows them to speak in their own voices, as it were.[1] This, as Aristotle recognizes, is sound storytelling practice. For we, as members of the audience, prefer to observe action (even in our mind's eye) rather than to hear a report of it.[2] These observations enable us to allocate 'character' to each of the actors; our understanding of character in turn assists us in tracing the causal connections that link the events of the tale. It is especially useful to us to be able to study the actors as they converse with their fellows in the storyworld, making demands on them and accommodating themselves to those about them. We can note the manner in which they engage with each other: their chosen verbal strategies, their mode of speech, and the words they use are guides to their intentions. As observers of such verbal behaviour, we are in a position to draw our own conclusions about what is happening at the interpersonal level in each encounter.[3]

Within the chain of talk which we call conversation we find a series of linked sequences of initiating moves and response moves.[4] These small-scale sequences have been the focus of some important work by the linguists Emanuel Schegloff and Harvey Sacks, who use the term 'adjacency pair' to describe what they understand to be the basic sequence within any conversation.[5] An adjacency pair comprises two speaking turns, that of the initial speaker (the so-called first pair part) and that of the respondent (the second pair part). Examples of adjacency pairs are questions and answers or invitations and replies. In everyday life responses may be verbal or non-verbal. If verbal, a response may be expressed as a question, a command, a wish,

[1] See Aristotle, *Poetics* 1459b33 and 1460a7. For a different reading of Aristotle's statement, see R. Rabel, *Plot and Point of View in the Iliad* (Ann Arbor, 1997), 7–8, who argues that the poet may be distinguished from the narrator of the poem. But for Rabel, too, the narrator is distinguished from his characters, who speak in independent voices and express their own points of view. It is this latter point that is critical to my discussion.

[2] By 'action' I refer specifically to what actors say, whether to themselves or to others. Information about physical action will also be significant to the audience. But since this is often relayed by the narrator, it does not have the immediacy of actual speech.

[3] That is, we make judgements about the interactions of actors in narrative in the same way that we evaluate social action and interaction when we participate in or observe talk in everyday life.

[4] For general discussion of interactional talk, see E. Goffman, 'Replies and responses', *Language in Society* 5 (1976), 257–313, at 308–9. For a background to issues raised in this paper, see J. Mey, *Pragmatics: An Introduction* (Oxford, 1993; repr. with corrections 1994), 1–83 and 179–315.

[5] See E. Schegloff and H. Sacks, 'Opening up closings', *Semiotica* 8 (1973), 289–327, at 295–9; H. Sacks, 'On the preferences for agreement and contiguity in sequences in conversation', in G. Button and J. R. E. Lee (edd.), *Talk and Social Organisation* (Clevedon, 1987), 54–69, at 55–6; and, more recently, Mey (n. 4), 242–56.

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or a statement. It may be expressed in appropriate, informative talk, or elliptically.[6] Most responses are intended to be satisfactory to the first speaker. In conversation we aim at being co-operative, and our responses, whatever their nature, will to some extent at least fulfil this goal.[7]

Although responses are of many forms, there is a limited range of interrogative strategies for eliciting them.[8] We distinguish questions expressed directly, that is, in interrogative form ('Who is your master?') from indirect questions ('Tell me who your master is').[9] Within the category of direct questions we distinguish open questions (the 'who', 'which', 'how', 'why', and 'when' questions, which require a piece of information to complete the thought) from closed questions, which require nothing more than confirmation or denial. Disjunctive, or alternative, questions ('Are you here for the first time or are you a friend of my father?') are a subgroup of this last category; as are those questions in which the expectations of the speaker are expressed through the use of a tag (such as 'didn't he?' or 'aren't we?' in English) or words or phrases serving a similar function in other languages.[10]

Question *forms* are fixed by prescriptions that we acquire as we learn a language. It is not as easy, however, to categorize the *functions* of questions. As we have observed from Schegloff and Sacks's discussion of adjacency pairs, when one person asks another a question, he or she does so in anticipation of a response. But the question itself has been framed within a particular social context, and with a particular interactive strategy in mind, as Esther Goody has recognized. Goody, an anthropologist, has attempted to represent the impact of social factors by plotting in ring-form a number of modes of questioning which she has observed in the interactions of the Gonja, in North Ghana. Her paper is not so much an ethnographic discussion as a sociolinguistic study; her interest is in 'how language has the power it does to shape interaction'.[11] The modes that Goody identifies run from questions simply eliciting information, through questions in which the control of the speaker is the dominant force (the question as command), through rhetorical questions (in which the

[6] Elliptical speech *assumes* certain moves in the exchange: observe, for example, the ellipse in the following 'sequence': 'Do you sell coffee?' 'One lump or two?' For further discussion, see Mey (n. 4), at 245–8. As Goffman (n. 4), 280 observes, only in the 'artful dialogue' of novels and theatre are responses consistently well-phrased replies.

[7] See H. P. Grice, 'Logic and conversation', in P. Cole and J. Morgan (edd.), *Speech Acts*, Syntax and Semantics 3 (New York, 1975), 41–58, at 48. Because of the observable variations in the expression of the second pair part, there are different accounts in discourse analysis of the question-answer sequence. See, for example, M. Coulthard and D. Brazil, 'Exchange structure', in M. Coulthard (ed.), *Advances in Spoken Discourse Analysis* (London, 1992), 50–78.

[8] That is, interrogative *forms* are limited. It is possible also, however, that in everyday speech or representations of everyday speech, other speech forms (such as statements) may serve as questions (in that they attract a 'reply'). For example, a sentence such as 'It's getting late, John' may, in certain contexts, be interpreted as a question ('Do you think we should be leaving now?'). For relevant discussion, see Mey (n. 4), 249–52, esp. at 252.

[9] This kind of question is often discounted as a question: see W. Robinson and S. Rackshaw, *A Question of Answers*, 2 vols (London, 1972), I, 3–5. But, although the form is indirect, a question is indeed being asked. On this see E. Schegloff, 'On questions and ambiguities in conversation', in J. Maxwell and J. Heritage (edd.), *Structures of Social Action: Studies in Conversation Analysis* (Cambridge, 1984), 28–52, at 31, who concludes, at 49–50, that we are able to recognize questions, even if they do not correspond to the regular formats. See also Mey (n. 4), 249–51.

[10] For a similar account of questions, again as a syntactic phenomenon, see R. Quirk, S. Greenbaum, G. Leech, and J. Svarnik, *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language* (London and New York, 1985), 806–25.

[11] E. Goody, 'Introduction', in E. Goody (ed.), *Questions and Politeness: Strategies in Social Interaction* (Cambridge, 1978), 1–16, at 2.

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requirement for information is incidental), to questions which are asked deferentially.[12] Questions in our own Western culture may, of course, be plotted around this ring, as Goody demonstrates by placing certain Western functions (the question as riddle and the question as examination) at appropriate intervals on the diagram.[13] The merit of such a conceptualization of interrogative modes is that it recognizes that questions operate within the social sphere even as they function as tools in the search for information. Any question can operate in both dimensions: for example, a question may seek information *and* show support *or* it may operate as a challenge *or* as a mark of deference.[14] What is essential to Goody's diagrammatic representation—and what is important to my discussion—is the perception that the question mode has the capacity to reflect the social relationship of the speaker and addressee. As she observes, under some circumstances the existing relationship determines the meaning of the speech act; under others the selected conversational strategy may signal a new view of, or a change in, the relationship.[15]

There is no doubt that if we are to read in any satisfying fashion the interactions of actors in the Homeric epics, we must have an understanding at the outset of how conversation works in our own culture, so that we have, at least, some hypotheses which we may apply to exchanges in the Homeric world. The purpose of this long preface to discussion has been to bring to the fore those principles which are implicit in the interpretation of the question and answer sequence in our own world. I shall refer to these in my discussion of certain transactions in Homer's *Odyssey*, in which the exchange of talk between two actors will be the focus for my study of social strategy and verbal behaviour and a valuable source of information on actors' perceptions of their relationships with those around them. From the range of possible question–answer strategies of the types identified by Goody I have selected two for closer study: the deference-question and the control-question (both of which we recognize in the first pair part). I have selected also a question-form which we recognize as exceptional, since we encounter it in the second pair part. This is the counter-question, a form not noted by Goody. My aim is to relate the form and function of each type of transaction to its context and to demonstrate how we might analyse these as social, and linguistic, acts. It may well be that we will understand the transaction fully only if we read it in the context of a particular social relationship; on the other hand, we may understand the social relationship of the speakers by paying close attention to the verbal strategies they choose.

THE DEFERENCE-QUESTION

Goody contrasts two modes of questioning among the Gonja: the question as mode of control (as in the questions addressed by a teacher to his or her students, or by the parent as family head or disciplinarian) and the deferential question, in which mode it is possible for someone of inferior status to ask a question of a superior.[16] She

[12] See E. Goody, 'Towards a theory of questions', in Goody (n. 11), 17–43, at 27.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Or questions may operate in one dimension only: the information-question which one asks of a stranger in the street may be as socially neutral as a question can be (e.g. 'Can you tell me where the bus-station is?'). On the other hand, the rhetorical question (e.g. 'How can you do this to me?') does not seek information. It operates only in the social sphere.

[15] See Goody (n. 12) at 29. On the importance of social context and its constraints, see Mey (n. 4) at 252–6, 286–8.

[16] Goody (n. 12) at 32–5. For discussion of the control-question, see below.

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notes that among the Gonja it is wrong for a subordinate to tell his or her superior what he or she should do. Instead, he or she poses what is ostensibly an information question ('Are you going to greet So-and-So today?'). A question of this kind *implies* ignorance on the part of the speaker. This is significant, as Goody observes, because in many societies, including the Gonja, the possession of knowledge represents power. To admit ignorance is to disclaim power. By asking a question the speaker defers to the addressee's knowledge and his or her right to make decisions. This strategy allows the superior to appear to take the initiative and neither party need acknowledge that this has not actually been the case. Such questioning is institutionalized also in Western society, and is used, as it is among the Gonja, in situations where subordinates wish to propose, as tactfully as possible, a particular course of action to their superiors.

We shall consider two examples of the deference-question (and their responses) in the *Odyssey*, both of which have aroused some discussion. The first of these we hear in Eumaios' hut. At *Od*. 16.130–4 Telemachus has instructed Eumaios to go into town to tell Penelope that he has returned safely from Pylos; he explains the need for secrecy by reference to the suitors' plot against his life. Eumaios then asks a question, phrased indirectly (137–45):[17]

> ἀλλ' ἄγε μοι τόδε εἰπὲ καὶ ἀτρεκέως κατάλεξον,
> ἦ καὶ Λαέρτῃ αὐτὴν ὁδὸν ἄγγελος ἔλθω
> δυσμόρῳ, ὃς τῆος μὲν 'Οδυσσῆος μέγ' ἀχεύων
> ἔργα τ' ἐποπτεύεσκε μετὰ δμώων τ' ἐνὶ οἴκῳ
> πῖνε καὶ ἦσθ', ὅτε θυμὸς ἐνὶ στήθεσσιν ἀνώγοι·
> αὐτὰρ νῦν, ἐξ οὗ σύ γε οἴχεο νηῒ Πύλονδε,
> οὔ πώ μίν φασιν φαγέμεν καὶ πιέμεν αὔτως,
> οὐδ' ἐπὶ ἔργα ἰδεῖν, ἀλλὰ στοναχῇ τε γόῳ τε
> ἧσται ὀδυρόμενος, φθινύθει δ' ἀμφ' ὀστεόφι χρώς.

But come now, tell me this and give me an accurate answer. Shall I on the same errand go with the news to wretched Laertes, who while he so greatly grieved for Odysseus yet would look after his farm and with the thralls in his household would eat and drink, whenever the spirit was urgent within him; but now, since you went away in the ship to Pylos, they say he has not eaten in this way, nor drunk anything, nor looked to his farm, but always in lamentation and mourning sits grieving, and the flesh on his bones is wasting from him.[18]

Eumaios asks whether he should, after having seen Penelope, visit Laertes also, to pass on to him the news about Telemachus. The question itself (138–9) is followed immediately by a considerable quantity of material, in which Eumaios justifies the question he has asked. Supplementary material of this kind is a feature of the questions which we ask every day, in our own culture. Sometimes we introduce it with statements such as 'I ask this because . . .'. Such material appears to be used with some regularity in Homer, as the inclusion of this kind of information on the lips of the speaker allows the poet, without breaking into the storyworld, to explain the narrative circumstances that have given rise to the question.[19] And it draws attention to the

[17] The question is indirectly phrased, but the intention is clear, because Telemachus answers him. For discussion of the recognizability of first pair parts and adjacency sequences, see above; and see Schegloff (n. 9) at 31 and 49–50.

[18] The translations used are those of R. Lattimore, *The Odyssey of Home*r (New York, 1967).

[19] Homer appears to use this explanatory mode quite often in direct and indirect forms (in

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question, giving it greater significance in the narrative. Eumaios tells Telemachus (and the audience) that he has included his question about Laertes since he is aware that the old man has effectively lost interest in living after hearing about Telemachus' expedition to Pylos. To let him know that his grandson has returned would be both thoughtful and respectful.

The swineherd, in asking this question, appears to be seeking information about his master's intentions. But our familiarity with the use of deferential questions in our own culture suggests that he is also attempting to remind the young man of his responsibilities towards his father's father and urging him to make contact with Laertes. Clearly, although Telemachus uses the kinship term, *ἄττα* (father), when addressing Eumaios at 16.57 and 130, and Eumaios, the subordinate, addresses the young man as *φίλον τέκος* (dear child, 16.25), their intimacy has its limits.[20] Hence his deference in making a proposal to Telemachus in his capacity as head of the household.

Despite Eumaios' efforts to guide Telemachus to what he considers to be an appropriate course of action, Telemachus resists, in a manner which has caused some comment among scholars.[21] It is relevant also to my discussion. His response to Eumaios' question is a statement at 147 (*μιν ἐάσομεν*, we shall let him be) couched in apologetic terms (*ἄλγιον*, though it hurts the more, and *ἀχνύμενοί περ*, for all our sorrows). After Penelope has received the news, Telemachus says, Eumaios is to return to his hut as soon as possible. But Telemachus asks, finally (and apparently as an afterthought), that Eumaios include in his message to Penelope an instruction that she send a messenger to Laertes with news of his grandson. Ahl and Roisman propose that the more likely reason for the indirect transmission of news is that 'it filters out any other information Eumaios might have to impart—in particular the presence of the mysterious stranger now in Eumaios' hut'.[22] I propose that Telemachus' response (rather like his response to Penelope at *Od*. 1.346–7, a question which has an undertone of a surprisingly sharp reproof) reflects his youthful inability as yet to wield authority sympathetically and effectively. As an assertion of his independence Telemachus rejects Eumaios' well-intentioned proposal—albeit gently. And in turn he proposes a different means of his own devising for sending a message to Laertes.[23] Eumaios' thoughtful and appropriate deference-question, therefore, has, to a point, succeeded. Telemachus has made a decision about sending a message to his grandfather, as

approximately 75 per cent of all questions asked, as I assess it). See the following samples from the first half of the *Odyssey*: 1.208–12, 347–55; 3.23–4; 4.140–6, 634–7; 5.206–13; 6.60–5, 150–69; 7.24–6; 10.326; 11.461; 12.451–3. The strategy of offering reasons is a politeness strategy familiar to us in everyday talk: for discussion, see Brown and S. Levinson, *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage* (Cambridge, 1987), 128–9. The remarkably high frequency of the explanatory mode in oral epic must be a factor in establishing a compositional rhythm in those segments of discourse where questions are asked. We might identify this regularity as more than a reflection of universal language usage and rather as an oral epic technique.

[20] For discussion of the use of fictive kin terms as address terms indicating an emotional bond, see Brown and Levinson (n. 19) at 107–12, esp. 108–9.

[21] See, for example, F. Ahl and H. Roisman, *The Odyssey Re-formed* (Ithaca, 1996), 133 and 194; G. Dimock, *The Unity of the Odyssey* (Amherst, 1989), 209.

[22] Ahl and Roisman (n. 21) at 194. This is perhaps possible. But why should Telemachus, who does not yet know the identity of the beggar, be concerned at this point to prevent others from knowing what he himself does not yet know? Dimock (n. 21) at 209 has a more plausible proposal: Telemachus wants the swineherd at his side. He has, he thinks, no other supporter against the suitors. This explanation can coexist with the suggestion that I propose.

[23] It is his role as decision-maker (no matter how that decision has been reached) which earns him the epithet *πεπνύμενος* at 146.

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Eumaios had hoped. But he has not responded as the swineherd, and the audience, might have expected. Homer shows us, here as at *Od.* 1.346–7, the waywardness of youth: a young man prefers to assert himself rather than to fall in with the reasonable suggestions of those more experienced in the world than he is.[24]

At *Od.* 24.404–5 we encounter a double question which fulfils the same two functions as the question asked by Eumaios, above. In this case the speaker is Dolios, Penelope's own servant, who was given to her by her father (*Od.* 4.736), and who keeps for her an orchard (737).[25] He, on coming upon Odysseus dining with Laertes (24.383–96), greets him warmly (400–2). His words of welcome are followed immediately by a question which reveals his concern for his mistress (403–5):

> καί μοι τοῦτ' ἀγόρευσον ἐτήτυμον, ὄφρ' ἐῢ εἰδῶ,
> ἢ ἤδη σάφα οἶδε περίφρων Πηνελόπεια
> νοστήσαντά σε δεῦρ', ἦ ἄγγελον ὀτρύνωμεν.

And tell me this and tell me truly, so that I may know it. Does circumspect Penelope know all the truth of this and that you have come back, or shall we send her a messenger?

The question in this case is posed in two parts, each with a different function. The first question, 'Does Penelope know?', is a question seeking information; its answer, if a negative, would provide the basis for the second question which Dolios poses, a deference-question. Dolios *implies* that it is for Odysseus to decide on the course of action to be taken with regard to his wife.[26] Here again, as at *Od.* 16.137–45, the difference in status between a subordinate and his master is revealed in his selection of speech-mode.[27] Heubeck concludes that Dolios' question demonstrates his loyalty and devotion.[28] I agree, since the asking of the question so promptly suggests that Penelope's welfare is uppermost in Dolios' mind. I add, however, that it reflects also his position in the social hierarchy relative to that of Odysseus; and it reveals the corresponding discretion of the subordinate.

THE COUNTER-QUESTION

We have seen that the nature of the question–answer adjacency pair requires that a question receives a prompt response. If the second speaker does not comply with this expectation, there must be, as we shall discover, particular reasons for his or her decision not to co-operate. One strategy that results in the deferment of a response or the derailment of the question-answer sequence is the counter-question. Counter-questions are the questions asked when a second speaker turns the question of the first pair part back to the original speaker. S/he for some reason has chosen not to co-operate in the exchange of talk. Why might s/he behave in this way? The second

[24] Note that later in the same episode Odysseus will tell Telemachus that Laertes, his own father, is not to hear yet of his return (16.300–4). In planning the episode, therefore, the poet appears to have allowed the restricted status which applies to information about Odysseus to extend to information about his son.

[25] For Heubeck's discussion, see J. Russo, M. Fernández-Galiano, and A. Heubeck, *A Commentary on Homer's Odyssey* III (Oxford, 1992), 385. There is no doubt that the Dolios of *Od.* 4.736–7 is identical in Homer's mind with the Dolios of Book 24.

[26] I assume that the first-person plural form here refers to Dolios and his sons.

[27] Odysseus' reply, at 407, sounds more abrupt than intended: see Heubeck's comment, in Russo, Fernández-Galiano, and Heubeck (n. 25) at 404.

[28] Ibid.

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speaker may intend his counter-question either as a stalling device or as a device to block the question ('Won't you stop asking me about my identity?'). The interactional effect of the exchange is that the first speaker is made aware that the second speaker wishes him/her to review his/her question; and that s/he is resisting the obligation to respond. When the counter-question is used merely as a stalling device, the second pair part will, of course, proceed. When such a question is used to derail a question–answer sequence, the first pair part will go unanswered. It is possible that the counter-question may be issued as a challenge ('Why should you ask me that?'). In this case the first pair part goes unanswered and the speaker is required to respond to that challenge. Underlying these kinds of exchanges between speakers is an acute awareness of social ranking. The people who can respond to a question with a counter-question are those who can safely (in terms of social hierarchy) withhold a response. These people will be ranked at the same level or very close to the first speaker; it is not socially appropriate for people of much lower rank to ask such questions, since to stall or to withhold a response from a superior is generally regarded as unacceptable behaviour.

We have eight examples of counter-questions in the *Odyssey*. Let us consider these, as we did deference-questions, for what they can tell us about social ranking, intention, and communication. I begin with a series of examples in which the speaker uses a counter-question to indicate his or her reluctance to respond (for a variety of reasons), even though he or she will, in most cases, eventually complete the second pair part to the listener's satisfaction. In many cases, the second speaker is simply stalling; in some, however, he will succeed in derailing the sequence. We find counter-questions fulfilling both these functions in the encounter between Proteus and Menelaus. Menelaus has been briefed on Proteus' nature and powers by Eidothea (*Od.* 4.363–424) and has triumphed in the great physical struggle with the Old Man of the Sea. In the talk that follows Menelaus is in a position to assert himself. At 4.462–3 Proteus, having exhausted his powers of physical change, resigns himself to being quizzed by Menelaus. He asks:

> τίς νύ τοι, Ἀτρέος υἱέ, θεῶν συμφράσσατο βουλάς,
> ὄφρα μ' ἕλοις ἀέκοντα λοχησάμενος; τέο σε χρή;

Which of the gods now, son of Atreus, has been advising you to capture me from ambush against my will. What do you want?

Menelaus does not respond with the information sought. Rather, he counters Proteus' questions with a statement and a question of his own (465):

> οἶσθα, γέρον, τί με ταῦτα παρατροπέων ἀγορεύεις;

You know, old man. Why try to put me off with your answer?

He asserts that Proteus has asked an unnecessary question and he accuses him of παρατροπέων, trying to mislead him: that is, of pretending that he does not know the answer, when, as a god, he does.[29] With these words Menelaus considers the subject

[29] For further discussions of questions such as that asked by Proteus see below, on the control-question.

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closed. He does not respond to Proteus' question, because, he feels, there is no need to do so. He has derailed the conversational exchange.

A moment later, when Menelaus has asked Proteus, at *Od.* 4.486–9, whether all the Achaians had returned safely from Troy, Proteus replies, 'Why do you ask me that?' (492, *τί με ταῦτα διείρεαι;*). His question implies that this is a tale which he would rather not tell; and his following words at 492–4 act as an evaluative résumé of what is to come. He makes it clear that this will be a tale of sorrows. We see traces here of Proteus' original reluctance to co-operate with Menelaus. On this occasion, however, he cannot withhold a response, since Menelaus has defeated him in their contest of strength and cunning. But he reminds Menelaus of his unwillingness by postponing, just for a moment, his reply.[30]

I have saved until last the most interesting example in this category of counter-question. The scene is the hall of the palace on Ithaca. It is late at night. Odysseus is sitting alone, thinking through his plan to kill the suitors (*Od.* 19.1–2). Penelope comes down from her chamber (53–4). A chair is set out for her and, after she has heard Melantho scold Odysseus/the beggar for lingering in the palace, she invites him to join her by the fire (91–5). As she says, at 99, she wishes to question him. At 105 she asks him the usual questions:

τίς πόθεν εἰς ἀνδρῶν; πόθι τοι πόλις ἠδὲ τοκῆες;

What man are you and whence? Where is your city? Your parents?

At 106 the beggar, after a lengthy preamble and a great show of deference, politely refuses to respond (115–18), claiming that to answer for himself at this moment would renew his grief.[31] Penelope appears to accept this and responds to the beggar sympathetically, with a candid account of her own trials since the departure of her husband for Troy. After this narrative, however, she returns, at 162–3, to the question she had raised earlier. And on this occasion Odysseus counters her question with one of his own (165–6):

ὦ γύναι αἰδοίη Λαερτιάδεω 'Οδυσῆος,
οὐκέτ' ἀπολλήξεις τὸν ἐμὸν γόνον ἐξερέουσα;

O respected wife of Odysseus, son of Laertes, you will not stop asking me about my origin?

He introduces his response with respect, but we might detect in the question itself (marked by *οὐ*) a certain amusement, with a touch of exasperation:[32] Odysseus is enjoying the challenge of talking with his wife. And yet it is not now in Odysseus' power, as beggar, to refuse to reply. Penelope, his host, is of superior status; he *must* respond. But note that he postpones the tale for some moments, with repetitions of

[30] Contrast Proteus' response with the reply that Odysseus gives in his conversation with Agamemnon in the Underworld. Agamemnon has asked him for information about his son, Orestes (*Od.* 11.457–61). Odysseus, however, is not merely stalling, as was Proteus; his counter-question at 11.463 (*τί με ταῦτα διείρεαι;*) here marks the derailment of the sequence and ends the conversation. He leaves open the possibility that Orestes is indeed dead, as Heubeck observes: see A. Heubeck and A. Hoekstra, *A Commentary on Homer's Odyssey* II (Oxford, 1989), 105.

[31] See Russo's comment, in Russo, Fernández-Galiano, and Heubeck (n. 25) at 79–80 (on 107–14).

[32] Through the use of *οὐ* Odysseus indicates positive expectation, suggesting that he is in a position to convey his opinion on what Penelope has just said.

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entrance talk (167, 171) and an evaluative résumé in which he announces that this will be a tale of sorrow (167–70).[33] Odysseus is, as Rutherford notes, 'as cool and fluent as ever'.[34]

This passage merits closer attention. Odysseus, in his efforts to defer the moment when he reveals himself to his wife, parries Penelope's questions. In this contest, however, he is not her social equal. He is speaking, as I have noted, from the position of an inferior, a lowly guest who has a debt of gratitude to his host. His counter-question at 165–6, therefore, is a remarkable act. It is the question of someone who has near equality of status with his addressee. It sounds to the audience like the blunt question that Odysseus (for the moment allowing his disguise to slip) might ask of a peer. Penelope recognizes this, perhaps unconsciously, to the extent that she is moved to offer the kind of hospitality one gives a guest of equal status: a bath, a comfortable bed, and a meal on the next day with the senior male in the household, her son.[35] Furthermore, she takes him into her confidence and asks his advice about her future, as one might do of a guest-friend (509–53). Murnaghan argues that he affects her with his reminiscences and predictions, and she responds by making him her friend and guest. I have argued that Penelope's intuitive response to this man is first awakened by his extraordinarily confident, Odysseus-like, manner of speaking and is sustained by the conclusions she draws on hearing his words.[36]

We have considered the counter-question as a strategy for deferment and derailment. Let us consider it now as a challenge. We shall study three examples. At *Od.* 4.793–4, Penelope, although distressed about her son's departure for Pylos, has at last been able to fall asleep. Athene, taking pity on her, has sent an image in the likeness of Penelope's sister Iphthime to reassure her (804–7):

Εὕδεις, Πηνελόπεια, φίλον τετιημένη ἦτορ;
οὐ μέν σ᾿ οὐδὲ ἐῶσι θεοὶ ῥεῖα ζώοντες
κλαίειν οὐδ᾿ ἀκάχησθαι, ἐπεί ρ᾿ ἔτι νόστιμός ἐστι
σὸς πάϊς· οὐ μὲν γάρ τι θεοῖς ἀλιτήμενός ἐστι.

Penelope, are you sleeping so sorrowful in the inward heart? But the gods who live at their ease do not suffer you to weep and to be troubled, since your son will have his homecoming even yet, since he has done no wrong in the gods' sight.

Iphthime's question, at 804, implies that she is surprised to find Penelope asleep, despite her sorrows.[37] This is the kind of teasing question which we notice in the encounters of gods and mortals; it is a question to which a reply is unnecessary, as far

[33] Odysseus' reply, indeed, serves as a further stalling device in his conversation with his wife. Although he responds, he preserves his disguise. For the terminology of story-structure in the Homeric context, see E. Minchin, 'Ring-patterns and ring-composition: some observations on the framing of stories in Homer', *Helios* 22 (1995), 23–35.

[34] See R. Rutherford, *Homer: Odyssey XIX and XX* (Cambridge, 1992), 156.

[35] The beggar's verbal behaviour is, in Nagy's terms, a *sē̂ma* (a sign), by which she can recognize someone *like* Odysseus (but not Odysseus himself): see G. Nagy, 'Sê̄ma and nóēsis: some illustrations', *Arethusa* 16 (1983), 35–55.

[36] Cf. S. Murnaghan, *Disguise and Recognition in the Odyssey* (Princeton, 1987), 110, who notes that open recognition between the two is precluded (because Odysseus will not tell Penelope who he is and she will not believe that Odysseus will ever return). For a contrasting view, see D. Stewart, *The Disguised Guest: Rank, Role, and Identity in the Odyssey* (Lewisburg, 1976), 100–45, at 112, who argues that Penelope has recognized Odysseus at this point.

[37] Cf. *Il.* 2.23; 23.69.

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as the god is concerned, since the gods know all.[38] But, for the most part, mortals are not aware that they are in the presence of a god. They will therefore respond appropriately.[39] It is remarkable that Penelope does not feel obliged to respond to the question—nor to the reassurances that Iphthime offers. Instead, she quizzes the messenger, as she might quiz a sister, asking a counter-question (810–11):

τίπτε, κασιγνήτη, δεῦρ' ἤλυθες; οὔ τι πάρος γε
πωλέαι, ἐπεὶ μάλα πολλὸν ἀπόπροθι δώματα ναίεις·

Why have you come here, sister, now, when you were not used to come before, since the home where you live is far away from us, . . .

And at 812–13 she throws the question back to Iphthime:

καί με κέλεαι παύσασθαι ὀϊζύος ἠδ' ὀδυνάων
πολλέων, . . .

and now you tell me to give over from the grieving and sorrows that are many upon me, . . .

In a segment of explanatory talk she proceeds to spell out her twin anxieties: the long absence of her husband and the sudden departure of her son, along with the news of the plot against his life. Penelope tells her dream-messenger that there is good reason for her sorrow. She is not ready yet to be reassured. What is the motive for this mild—but firm—challenge? Is Penelope's initial question an indication that she suspects the authenticity of the dream-image? Or is it simply the kind of question which is to be read as a rebuke by a sister who, as Penelope makes clear, does not appear to understand the causes of her grief? Homer chooses not to reveal Penelope's motives. This opacity, indeed, appears to be an essential element in her characterization.[40] Nevertheless, her long reply to the dream-messenger conveys to the audience, without the apparent intervention of the poet, her current state of mind. Its narratological function, at least, is clear. The challenge that Penelope has issued, is, however, blandly ignored by Iphthime, who, at 825–7, reiterates in stronger terms her words of reassurance.

A stronger challenge is expressed in Odysseus' counter-question to Melantho at *Od.* 19.71–3. The attendant has just scolded the beggar for lingering indoors, in the palace, when (she implies) his proper place is outside. She asks, at 66–7:

ξεῖν', ἔτι καὶ νῦν ἐνθάδ' ἀνιήσεις διὰ νύκτα
δινεύων κατὰ οἶκον, ὀπιπεύσεις δὲ γυναῖκας;

[38] For similar questions, see *Od.* 1.206, 225–6. The god asks the question not as one who seeks information but in order to encourage his or her addressee to formulate an answer. For further discussion, see below, on control-questions.

[39] Cf. Telemachus replies to Mentes, at *Od.* 1.214–20, 231–51.

[40] See N. Felson-Rubin, *Regarding Penelope: From Character to Poetics* (Princeton, 1994), who makes this point throughout (see, for example, 17, 25, 29, and 128). It is true that Homer gives us 'no more clues to the inner life of his characters than an observer would have' (B. Hainsworth, *The Iliad: A Commentary* III [Cambridge, 1993], at 92). But he usually allows us to draw conclusions about motivation from his characters' speech and actions. In the case of Penelope the poet exercises tantalizing restraint.

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Stranger, do you mean to stay here all night and bother us by poking all over the house and spying upon the women?

She has intended this as a rhetorical question, one which implied a command: don't hang around here; you're just a nuisance. But the beggar—with a touch of impudence—accepts the question as a genuine question and responds. His vocative, *δαιμονίη* (What has got into you, woman?)[41] precedes a counter-question in which he asks her reasons for wishing to be rid of him (71–3):

> *δαιμονίη, τί μοι ὧδ' ἐπέχεις κεκοτηότι θυμῷ;*
> *ἦ ὅτι δὴ ῥυπόω, κακὰ δὲ χροῒ εἵματα εἷμαι,*
> *πτωχεύω δ' ἀνὰ δῆμον;*

I wonder, why do you hold such an angry grudge against me? Is it because I am dirty, and wear foul clothing upon me, and go about as a public beggar?

He points out that his present condition belies his former state as a prosperous man who once administered a large household and who treated beggars well.[42] He concludes with a threat (81–8), to which Melantho does not respond; for at this point Penelope intervenes. The social realities underlying this exchange are important: in his beggar's garments, as a beggar, it would have been appropriate for Odysseus to pay heed to the housekeeper's words and obey them without question.[43] But in the palace on Ithaca he is ever aware, despite his rags, of his true identity, as master of the household. The more assertive strategy of the counter-question shapes his reply. Therefore, he challenges Melantho.

The final example of this second set of counter-questions occurs in the interaction between Odysseus and Circe. With Hermes' assistance he has been able to render the goddess' magic ineffective (*Od.* 10.316–19). He has secured a promise that he will not be treated as were his companions who were turned into pigs (337–45). On this condition he has shared her bed. He is then bathed and dressed and a meal is set before him. But Odysseus is unable to eat (373–4). Circe does not seem to be able to understand his lack of appetite. She appears at this moment to be genuinely concerned.[44] Her questions appear to be a sincere enquiry (378–81):

> *Τίφθ' οὕτως, 'Οδυσεῦ, κατ' ἄρ ἕζεαι ἶσος ἀναύδῳ,*
> *θυμὸν ἔδων, βρώμης δ' οὐχ ἅπτεαι οὐδὲ ποτῆτος;*
> *ἦ τινά που δόλον ἄλλον ὀΐεαι· οὐδέ τί σε χρὴ*
> *δειδίμεν· ἤδη γάρ τοι ἀπώμοσα καρτερὸν ὅρκον.*

[41] Rutherford (n. 34) at 141.

[42] Odysseus, although in disguise, tells the truth about himself in the hearing of his wife. As Russo, in Russo, Fernández-Galiano, and Heubeck (n. 25) at 79, observes, the audience enjoys the irony of this scene (*we* know what Melantho and Penelope do not know), which effectively illustrates Odysseus' propensity for risk-taking at critical moments.

[43] Melantho should have been disconcerted initially by Odysseus' bold response to her question, if only because it was so inappropriate on the lips of a beggar. Nevertheless, his brief autobiography might bring her to accept his counter-question.

[44] On this point, see Heubeck's comment, in Heubeck and Hoekstra (n. 30) at 64. As he observes, Circe must know the facts. Why, in that case, does she ask the question? I propose that she does so because, as a goddess, she cannot understand the bonds of loyalty that exist between mortals.

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Why, Odysseus, do you sit so, like a man who has lost his voice, eating your heart out, but touch neither food nor drink. Is it that you suspect me of treachery? But you have nothing to fear, since I have already sworn my strong oath to you.

Odysseus responds with a counter-question, echoing her words to him. He is in a position to do so, in the light of his earlier victory over Circe's magic. Although not the equal of the goddess, he has shown that he is a force to be reckoned with.[45] Odysseus poses what in other circumstances might have been a statement ('no man in his right mind would have . . .') as a rhetorical question (383–5):

ὦ Κίρκη, τίς γάρ κεν ἀνήρ, ὃς ἐναίσιμος εἴη,
πρὶν τλαίη πάσσασθαι ἐδητύος ἠδὲ ποτῆτος,
πρὶν λύσασθ' ἑτάρους καὶ ἐν ὀφθαλμοῖσιν ἰδέσθαι;

O Circe, how could any man right in his mind ever endure to taste of the food and drink that are set before him, until with his eyes he saw his companions set free?

The question, however, forces Circe, as questions do, to confront the issue and to consider the problem. Her response to the challenge is prompt. Without a word she frees his companions and restores them to human form.[46]

THE CONTROL-QUESTION

The control-question is used among the Gonja to test, to challenge, to control, and, above all, to assign responsibility for something said or done.[47] According to the social mores of the Gonja, questions of this type may be asked only by those higher in the social hierarchy than the addressee; the speakers in most cases already know the answer to the question they are about to ask. But they nevertheless ask the question and *require* an answer. The person addressed is thus at a disadvantage, since s/he is being asked questions to which, in many cases, s/he would rather not respond, as s/he is aware that a 'right' answer must be produced. Goody observes such questions in the hearing of court cases, where elders and chiefs question both plaintiff and defendant; in the classroom, where teachers quiz their students; and in the home, where parents test or evaluate their children. These situations are familiar to us also, in Western society. In each of the cases cited, the person who poses the questions—the representative of the law, the teacher, or the parent—is in the dominant position; the addressee is, therefore, obliged to act defensively.[48] Goody

[45] At 321–4 Odysseus proved stronger than Circe. Note also Circe's own assessment of him (326–9) and her reference to the prophecy which she had heard on several occasions, that he would come (330–2).

[46] For a fourth example of the question as a challenge, observe the by-play between Zeus and Athene in *Od.* 24.472–86. Athene, at 473–6, has asked what is to happen next, now that the slaughter of the suitors has become public knowledge and a band of people has gathered to attack Odysseus and his followers. Zeus responds, at 478–86, with a question which allows him to defer his answer (478) and a mock-challenge (479–80), which turns Athene's question back to her. In this latter question he playfully allows it to appear for a moment that he bows to Athene's judgement. But Zeus is teasing Athene. He tells her in his subsequent talk how the hostilities should be resolved: in oaths of faith and friendship (481–6). That is, in plotting the next steps, he immediately reclaims from Athene all the power that he appeared to have granted her.

[47] Goody (n. 12) at 31.

[48] Goody (n. 12) at 42 points to the example of Socrates, as represented in Plato's early dialogues. His method is 'a model of ostensibly pure information questioning which is in fact

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observes, too, that in such situations there is a corresponding inhibition of, or even prohibition of, questions in the reverse direction, from status subordinates to superiors.[49] That is, it is unlikely that the addressee will be of sufficient status to respond with a counter-question.[50] Control-questions, however, may also be asked in a less adversarial context. Parents use questions of this kind to encourage children to engage in talk, by recounting the experiences of their day.[51] Although the child is unaware that the question is used for purposes other than the search for information (and therefore may not feel himself or herself to be at a disadvantage), the intention behind the question is manipulative, as is the intention behind the kind of control-question used in the classroom or the lawcourt.[52]

What do we find in Homer? We find control-questions of the kinds which I have identified. The speaker's agenda is either to confirm information and to evaluate it or to make the addressee perform and to evaluate that performance. He or she may be more or less adversarial, or more or less sympathetic, in his or her dealings with the addressee. Nevertheless, the questions which s/he asks are control-questions; and the exercise itself is an exercise in power.

At *Od.* 1.169–77 Athene, as Mentes, has been asked by Telemachus, his host, to identify herself (his question is a question seeking information). She does so (179–205), but concludes her reply with a question of her own. She asks Telemachus, in reassuring tones (*τόσος πάϊς*, big as you are), whether he is the son of Odysseus (206–7):

ἀλλ' ἄγε μοι τόδε εἰπὲ καὶ ἀτρεκέως κατάλεξον,
εἰ δὴ ἐξ αὐτοῖο τόσος πάϊς εἰς 'Οδυσῆος.

But come now tell me this and give me an accurate answer. Are you, big as you are, the child of Odysseus?

Clearly, as a goddess, she has no need for the information he will give at 214–20, just as she has no need for the information he will give to her further questions at 224–9:

ἀλλ' ἄγε μοι τόδε εἰπὲ καὶ ἀτρεκέως κατάλεξον,
τίς δαίς, τίς δαὶ ὅμιλος ὅδ' ἔπλετο; τίπτε δέ σε χρεώ;
εἰλαπίνη ἠὲ γάμος;

control-oriented' (42). We can sympathize with the discomfort of his addressees under his questioning; and we can understand that his method may have aroused considerable hostility. N. Fairclough, *Language and Power* (London and New York, 1989), 43–7 offers a close study of discourse in 'unequal encounters' (44). His selected example is an encounter between a doctor and a group of medical students, in which the doctor has the right to give orders and ask questions, whereas students have only the obligation to comply and answer (46). The students are 'put on the spot', and the doctors evaluate their responses (45). Fairclough notes that the conventions of the discourse-type generate the constraints on the students. On the other hand, the doctor is in a position to choose the discourse-type.

[49] Goody (n. 12) at 32.

[50] Cf. Menelaus' counter-question to Proteus' question, discussed above.

[51] The parent often already knows what the child will say; but it is the exercise of articulating an answer which is important. Goody (n. 12) at 33–4 regards this kind of question as a pseudo-deference question, masking a control question. I have elected to recognize these questions for what they are: control-questions.

[52] Concurrent with the parent's interest in the events of the day is his or her desire to evaluate the child's socialization and his or her 'progress' in making conversation.

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But come now, tell me this and give me an accurate answer. What feast is this, what gathering? How does it concern you? A festival, or a wedding?

What is the point of these questions? Firstly, of course, Athene has assumed the character of Mentes. Her questions regarding Telemachus' identity and the guests in the house are necessary to her disguise. There are, however, other factors at work. We, as the audience, note an undertone of playfulness, which we observe in almost all questions that any god addresses to a mortal about his or her identity, recent experiences, or state of mind.[53] We detect this because we are aware that the speaker is a god, and we know (cf. *Od.* 1.88–92) that she already knows Telemachus' situation. The question on Athene's lips, therefore, is a control-question. When she asks her question, even though she is disguised as Mentes, she offers Telemachus the opportunity to talk and to give an account of himself. At this moment we are reminded of the discourse-style of teachers or parents in our own society. Telemachus, who does not know what we know, treats the question as a genuine request for information from an older man and a friend of his father. Since he is addressed by a senior *in loco parentis*, he cannot avoid responding.[54] So he replies appropriately, if with some embarrassment. And, like a teacher, Athene evaluates what he says; she assesses his grasp of the situation in which he finds himself, his state of mind, and his manner towards her. She is impressed by what she observes of Telemachus, immature and inexperienced as he is. On the basis of her assessment she will offer the young man her advice and assistance.

We observe this teasing tone unambiguously at *Od.* 4.371–2, where Eidothea, daughter of Proteus, addresses Menelaus, who with his men has been delayed for twenty days at Pharos, off Egypt, by a lack of wind. His supplies are running low. His men have gone to try to catch fish. He is wandering alone, in his distress. Her words are both playful and challenging:

νήπιός εἰς, ὦ ξεῖνε, λίην τόσον ἠδὲ χαλίφρων,
ἦε ἑκὼν μεθιεῖς καὶ τέρπεαι ἄλγεα πάσχων;

Are you so simple then, O stranger, and flimsy-minded, or are you willingly giving up, and enjoying your hardships?

Eidothea has not assumed a disguise. She is not trying to deceive Menelaus, who, in fact, recognizes her as a goddess (376). She accuses Menelaus, provocatively, of either incompetence or of succumbing too readily to ill-fortune. She can adopt this rallying tone as she speaks with a man of mature years and considerable experience of life; we see similar instances of this mode in exchanges between gods and mortals elsewhere in the *Odyssey* (20.33–5) as well as in the *Iliad*.[55] Even when the god is in disguise, the rallying tone is observable (cf. *Od.* 4.804–5, 'Iphthime' to Penelope; 10.281–4, Hermes to Odysseus).[56]

[53] Telemachus, however, is treated more gently than men who are older and more experienced. Cf. Eidothea's words to Menelaus (*Od.* 4.371–2, and see below); or Athene's to Odysseus (*Od.* 20.33–5).

[54] Homer confirms this relationship with the words he puts on Telemachus' lips at 308: *ὥς τε πατὴρ ᾧ παιδί*, what any father would say to his son.

[55] See, for example, *Il.* 5.800–13; 15.244–5. Note West's comment on the goddess's 'insulting sarcasm': A. Heubeck and S. West, *A Commentary on Homer's Odyssey* I (Oxford, 1988), 217.

[56] For further comment, see B. Louden, *The Odyssey: Structure, Narration, and Meaning* (Baltimore, 1999), 5.

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At *Od.* 7.237–9 Arete asks Odysseus a series of questions:

Ξεῖνε, τὸ μέν σε πρῶτον ἐγὼν εἰρήσομαι αὐτή·
τίς πόθεν εἰς ἀνδρῶν; τίς τοι τάδε εἵματ᾽ ἔδωκεν;
οὐ δὴ φῄς ἐπὶ πόντον ἀλώμενος ἐνθάδ᾽ ἱκέσθαι;

Stranger and friend, I myself first have a question to ask you. What man are you, and whence? And who was it gave you this clothing? Did you not say that you came here ranging over the water?

Among the usual questions a host might ask of his guest, concerning his identity and his origin, is the extraordinary question, 'Who was it who gave you this clothing?' Arete has a right to ask her guest about his identity, since the ceremonies which welcome him to the household have now taken place. Her further question, however, through which she indicates that she recognizes his garments, is intended to be unsettling. Arete at this point would not know the answer to this question in all its detail, but it is clear that she guesses what has happened, for the garments that Odysseus is now wearing were produced in her own household. Her question, therefore, is a control-question: she knows enough to force a reply, along prescribed lines.[57] Odysseus himself cannot gauge how much she knows. This is the source of her power over him at this moment.

There are four further occasions in the *Odyssey* in which control-questions are asked. All are posed by Odysseus, who happens to be, at the time of asking, disguised as a beggar. This is extraordinary, since we expect, from our knowledge of our own world, that a person who asks a control-question will be of dominant status and that his or her addressee will respond to that status. In the cases under discussion, Odysseus' disguise masks his intentions. And yet, by suggesting to his addressees (Eumaios and Telemachus) that he was once a man of substance, a man of the world, Odysseus establishes a plausible context for his choice of verbal strategy.[58] Since he appears to be someone who has seen better days, his probing questions are judged to be not only relevant but appropriate. In each case the addressee believes that the questions the beggar asks represent a genuine enquiry. At no time does either man suspect that the question, posed so innocently, is, in fact, a test of loyalty and capacity for action.[59] Without explicit comment the storyteller shares with his audience his amusement at the complex situation that he has constructed, in which the person who asks the questions is apparently a beggar seeking information, when in reality he is the wily Odysseus, the master of the house, asking specific questions for his own undisclosed ends. What holds our attention in these four scenes is the way that Odysseus is able to project himself as an individual to such an extent that even in beggar's rags he can ask such questions and receive such satisfactory replies. Thus, at *Od.* 14.115–16, Odysseus asks Eumaios about his master who bought him:

[57] Odysseus' reply, therefore, will be accurate enough, although marked by certain evasions (the omission of his name, of specific detail concerning his relationship with Calypso, and the obscuring of Nausicaa's role in bringing him to her parents' house). For similar discussion, see Ahl and Roisman (n. 21) at 60–2.

[58] He tells Eumaios that he has been a man of some wealth and experience: see his lying tale at *Od.* 14.192–359, esp. at 199–202; he indicates vaguely to Telemachus that he is a man of higher status than he might appear, at *Od.* 16.91–111.

[59] Odysseus' questions to each are similar in tone to the sympathetic questions Athene asks of Telemachus. Indeed, the situation in each case is the same. The addressee is younger than Odysseus, and less experienced in the ways of the world.

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ὦ φίλε, τίς γάρ σε πρίατο κτεάτεσσιν ἑοῖσιν,
ὧδε μάλ' ἀφνειὸς καὶ καρτερὸς ὡς ἀγορεύεις;

Dear friend, who is the man who bought you with his possessions and is so rich and powerful as you tell me?

Through this gentle enquiry (note his reassuring form of address, ὦ φίλε, dear friend) Odysseus puts the swineherd into a position where he must reveal his feelings about Odysseus. A short time later in the narrative, when Telemachus returns to Ithaca, the beggar, at 16.95–8, asks him about his relationship with the suitors and his relationship with the community:

εἰπέ μοι ἠὲ ἑκὼν ὑποδάμνασαι, ἦ σέ γε λαοὶ
ἐχθαίρουσ' ἀνὰ δῆμον, ἐπισπόμενοι θεοῦ ὀμφῇ
ἦ τι κασιγνήτοις ἐπιμέμφεαι, οἷσί περ ἀνὴρ
μαρναμένοισι πέποιθε, καὶ εἰ μέγα νεῖκος ὄρηται.

Tell me, are you willingly oppressed by them? Do the people hate you throughout this place, swayed by some impulse given from the gods? Do you find your brothers wanting? A man trusts help from these in the fighting when a great quarrel arises.

His question is initially framed as the sympathetic question of someone who is simply a disinterested observer of life. Note his use of the phrase σέθεν τοιούτου ἐόντος (when you are such a one as you are, 94), which conveys his sympathy and understanding. This, however, is a question designed to sound out Telemachus and to evaluate his worth. The young man responds, giving an honest and realistic assessment of his position. The frankness of his reply is persuasive. As a consequence, this will be the moment when Athene steps in and reveals Odysseus to his son (155–89). And it will be the beginning of their joint action against the suitors.

A third and fourth control-question, at *Od.* 15.346–50 and 381–8, again address information that Odysseus already knows. The beggar, in conversation with Eumaios (15.346–50), asks about Odysseus' mother and father:

νῦν δ' ἐπεὶ ἰσχανάᾳς μεῖναί τέ με κεῖνον ἄνωγας,
εἴπ' ἄγε μοι περὶ μητρὸς 'Οδυσσῆος θείοιο
πατρός θ', ὃν κατέλειπεν ἰὼν ἐπὶ γήραος οὐδῷ,
ἤ που ἔτι ζώουσιν ὑπ' αὐγὰς ἠελίοιο,
ἦ ἤδη τεθνᾶσι καὶ εἰν Ἀΐδαο δόμοισι.

But now, since you keep such a man as I am, and bid me stay here, come then, tell me about the mother of godlike Odysseus, and his father, whom when he went he left on the doorsill of old age. Are they still alive in the beams of the sunlight, or are they dead now and gone to the house of Hades?

Odysseus here suggests that he is asking questions as a way of passing time (346). But it is difficult to believe that such an idle motive drives Odysseus' enquiries. The hero already knows of his mother's death and his father's retirement to his farm. His conversation with his mother in the Underworld gave him this information, as well as news of his wife and his son (11.181–203). Furthermore, Eumaios has already unwittingly given numerous proofs of his loyalty to his master; it could hardly be that Odysseus feels the need to test him further. The question, therefore, is not an

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information-question; nor can it be designed to evaluate Eumaios' worth.[60] We could make the same claims in connection with Odysseus' enquiry about Eumaios' childhood experiences and his arrival in the household of Laertes at 381–8.[61] Odysseus was living at home when this happened. He knows Eumaios' tale. And, as I have noted above, there is no further need for him to investigate his loyalty. I suggest that these two questions are included to reflect Odysseus' temperament, or, more accurately, to *realize* it. For these are questions which the hero asks simply for the pleasure of the exercise. He delights in the game of deceit and manipulation that he is playing; he wants to prolong it for one or two further rounds. This is a power-game, in which Eumaios is the unwitting victim. Here we see that same Odysseus who will later in the epic resist his first impulse to embrace his father and announce his return, instead deceiving him with false claims (*Od*. 24.244–79) and a false identity (303–14). It is only his father's extreme reaction to Odysseus' reports that forces him to act with compassion and make himself known to the unhappy old man. The questions that Odysseus asks Eumaios at *Od*. 15.346–50 and 381–8, therefore, are included to show us Odysseus as an individual who is prepared to assert himself and exercise his powers whenever the opportunity arises.[62] It is not that he needs to ask these questions to advance his cause on Ithaca; he needs to ask them because he cannot resist the opportunity which arises. Deceit, opportunism, and risk-taking are natural impulses in our hero.

CONCLUSIONS

Drawing on sociolinguistic studies of the nature of adjacency pairs such as question and answer, and working with an authoritative account of the use of questions in a West African society, I have identified three types of question in our own culture (two of which are discussed by Goody in her account of Gonja talk) that reflect the ways in which the forms of talk at our disposal reflect or realize the social relationships between ourselves and others. In a subtle fashion each of these forms acknowledges the significance of the power-relations between any two individuals.[63] Deference-questions have the appearance of information-questions. People lower in the social hierarchy will ask such questions because they are reluctant to be seen to be making proposals to their superiors. Control-questions, on the other hand, are a strategy reserved for those higher in status. Their questions also appear to be information-questions. But they are used to define the basis on which the speaker wishes to interact with his or her addressee.[64] Finally, we return to the counter-question. This is a form which is, remarkably, used as a response, rather than as an information-seeking question. Only speakers of near-similar status can issue such challenges and with impunity defer or withhold a response. This small selection of question-types,

[60] Hoekstra observes that these questions might have been omitted: see Heubeck and Hoekstra (n. 30) at 254. He notes, however, that the natural curiosity of the Greeks might explain why Odysseus asks them. I am not persuaded that inquisitiveness, or the pretence of it, motivates these questions in truth. Homer has chosen to keep our attention (for the most part) on Odysseus and his manipulation of the swineherd in the prolonged intimacy of this conversation. His motives in posing these questions, therefore, must be specifically Odyssean.

[61] Note again the sympathy with which he addresses Eumaios, at 381–2.

[62] Cf. one of Odysseus' tales about himself: in the Cyclops-tale he insisted on baiting the Cyclops even at the risk of his own and his crew's lives (*Od*. 9.491–542).

[63] These forms preserve the stability of such relationships—or, perhaps more accurately—they enable us to avoid appearing to challenge them.

[64] For this formulation, see Goody (n. 12) at 37.

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therefore, illustrates for us the important links between verbal and social interaction; it illuminates the ways in which our knowledge of the world and of social relationships within that world shapes our talk and our interpretation of the talk of others. We know, intuitively, who can say what to whom and how we may express what we want to communicate to our conversational partners.

It is interesting, too, that we can observe the same principles at work in Homer. My discussion of questions of the three selected types in a variety of contexts in the *Odyssey* has enabled us to explore the relation of verbal strategies and social interaction in the Homeric texts. It also, I believe, indicates to us that Homer's re-creation of speech in the epics is modelled on (indeed, it echoes, in a certain stylized fashion)[65] everyday talk, recognizing social relationship as a crucial determiner in the selection of discourse strategies appropriate to each context.

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[65] I have not discussed in this paper the rhythm and regularity of Homeric question elements. These important compositional issues will be considered separately.

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