

“All Strangers and Beggars are from Zeus”: Early Greek Views of Hospitality¹

PAMELA JOHNSTON

The best lens with which to view early Greek ideas of *xenia*, hospitality or “guest-friendship” are the two poems, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, attributed by the Greeks to a blind poet named Homer.² The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* outline the events surrounding a conflict between the Greeks and the Trojans, which began with a violation of *xenia*—the abduction by Paris, prince of Troy, of Helen (whether as a willing participant or not) from her husband Menelaus, king of Sparta. In the so-called “Judgment of Paris,” when Paris was called upon to judge the winner of a beauty contest between the three goddesses Athena, Aphrodite, and Hera, Paris awarded the title of the “most fair” to Aphrodite, goddess of sexual passion, who bribed Paris with the offer of the most beautiful woman in the world, Helen for his bride.³ The vow of protection taken by all suitors for her hand (the so-called “oath of Tyndareus”) was called in, and Agamemnon of Mycenae, Menelaus’ older brother, led the expedition to Troy to return Helen to her rightful husband.⁴ The ten-year conflict that resulted led to the death of many on both sides, but the *Iliad* ends before the resolution of the conflict. Other epics, now lost, bridge the gaps before, between and after the events of the *Iliad* and its sequel, the *Odyssey*, which concerns itself with the attempts of *Odysseus* to gain his *nostos*, or homecoming.⁵ As he travels home, his many encounters with others give us a useful view of how *xenia* was effected, both the expectations of same and what happen when *xenia* is ignored, corrupted or violated. The ancient Greeks viewed these poems not only as entertainment, but also as cultural mandates, so it is useful to take a look at them to understand what the dictates of *xenia* were.

Hospitality in the ancient Greek world was not a courtesy or a convention—it was an absolute necessity. In a culture where inns or even restaurants as we would think of them were scarce, *philoxenia*, the “kindness due to strangers” was a moral imperative.⁷ The Greeks envisioned that Zeus, the king of the gods, himself took upon the charge of ensuring that hosts would offer hospitality to those who turned up on their doorstep, hence his cult title of Zeus Xenios, “Zeus who ensures that the duty of hospitality is carried out.”⁸

The Greek noun ξένος (“*xenos*”) has a wide range of meanings—from “guest” to “wanderer” to “refugee” to “stranger” to the more cumbersome “guest-friend.” The fluidity of this term is difficult to convey in English, as one moves from stranger to guest, to friend. Perhaps “stranger-guest” might be best until the stranger’s identity is revealed. Most modern readers encounter the root of *xenos* mainly in the context of the word “xenophobia”—fear of the outsider. The noun *xenia* means in essence the relationship between guest and host, a reciprocal relationship with many cultural imperatives that establishes a bond between the two persons—and that bond, once established, lasted not only the course of a lifetime, but also created an inherited obligation that endured over generations.⁹

The Stranger’s Welcome: by Steve Reece is an extremely useful and detailed overview of the practice of *xenia* in Homer—he identifies thirty-eight elements that appear in the eighteen hospitality scenes he examines.¹⁰ For the purpose of this article, I will focus on the main elements that deal with the treatment of the guest:

1. Arrival of the stranger at the door
2. The stranger is welcomed, disarmed, and invited in
3. The stranger is bathed or given a chance to wash up (this sometimes occurs later in the sequence)
4. The stranger is invited to sit (and usually given the best seat at the table)
5. Entertainment, food, drink is given¹¹
6. After this, and only after all needs are taken care of, is the stranger questioned; “Who are you, whence have you come, and what is the purpose of your journey?”¹²
7. The guest is given a place to sleep

As Homer describes it, a traveler to an unknown locale would best request *xenia* from a peer—hence Odysseus, in disguise as a beggar, knocks on the door of the swineherd Eumaeus, who welcomes him in. Telemachus, the son of Odysseus and hence a prince, expects to find *xenia* uninvited and unannounced at the palace of Nestor, king of Pylos, and the house of Menelaus, king of Sparta.¹³

The relationship is sealed with gifts, either given or promised, and the offer of reciprocity when the host may visit the guest's locale.¹⁴

In order to better understand why the custom of *xenia* was so vital to the ancient Greeks, we must imagine an insular (in both meanings of the word) world in which citizenship is limited to those who were free-born within the confines of the polis—the Greek city-state that was the defining political entity of the Ancient Greeks—and full enfranchisement only to adult free-born males. A world in which travel is cumbersome, slow, and dangerous.¹⁵ Pirates at sea, and brigands and wayfarers on land, added to the risk that any journey entailed.¹⁶ Although recognizing the common bonds that united all Greeks—in the memorable phrasing of Herodotus, the mid-fifth-century B.C.E. historian of the Persian Wars, to *hellenikon*, “Greekness,” consisted of four main characteristics: shared language, shared religion, shared culture, and shared ancestry—each polis was its own political entity, consisting of the urban area, the *astu*, and its surrounding farmlands (the *chora*) that provided the agricultural necessities which allowed the polis to maintain some measure of self-sufficiency. In fact, when a polis grew to the point where self-sufficiency was not possible, it relieved the pressure of over-population by sending out a colony. The inhabitants of the ancient Greek poleis were chauvinistic, excessively insular and patriotic, to a fault. One traveled outside the polis only through necessity—for trade, a military expedition, a political embassy, a trip to Delphi to consult the oracle, a trip to the great Panhellenic centers to watch or compete in the festivities, a voluntary or involuntary exile due to ritual pollution after the taking of a life, whether intentional or not.¹⁷ The number of women travelers would have been even fewer. The true “sight-seeing” traveler, like the fifth-century historian Herodotus, was a rarity. From a simply practical point of view, to venture outside the polis was to throw oneself on the kindness of strangers.

Although it survives only in the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid, the Augustan-age poet, the cautionary tale of Baucis and Philemon is useful to illustrate the importance to the Greeks of *xenia*. Zeus and Hermes (or as the Romans would know them, Jupiter and Mercury) are traveling through a town. All of the well-heeled mansion-dwellers refuse to offer the travelers hospitality. Baucis and Philemon, two elderly poor hut-dwellers, welcome the strangers, giving them what humble food they have, and offer them their own rude bed. Touched by their generosity, the gods invite them to ask what boon they would wish. They

ask nothing more than to share the hour of their death so that neither would experience the sadness of outliving the other. In recompense, the gods install them as priest and priestess of their temple, and upon their death turned the couple into two trees, an oak and a linden tree, whose limbs were forever entwined with the other. The homes of those other inhabitants who denied them *xenia* sank into a swamp where their owners perished. This tale of *theoxenia* (hospitality to the gods) underlines a primary concern behind *xenia* itself: one should always offer hospitality to strangers on the possibility that the prospective guest might be a god in disguise.¹⁸

In the *Odyssey*, the importance of *xenia* is emphasized from the very start of the poem. In Book 1, the suitors who are aggressively wooing Penelope, the wife (and for all they know, the widow) of Odysseus, have taken up residence in Odysseus' house. For the past three years, they have been eating his food, drinking his wine and pressuring Penelope to choose one of them as a husband; they have clearly overstayed their welcome and Telemachus, the son of Odysseus and Penelope, who is now of an age to start asserting himself, has clearly had enough of the interlopers. If the maxim that "guests and fish tend to stink after three days" is true, there is a stench to high heaven about this house. The gods themselves have taken an interest in the events, and Athena arrives at the house to spur Telemachus into action. When Athena in disguise arrives at the doorstep, Telemachus reacts with a model example of *xenia*:

[Telemachus] was the first to see Athena there.
 He disapproved of leaving strangers stranded,
 so he went straight to meet her at the gate,
 and shook her hand, and took her spear of bronze,
 and let his words fly out to her.
 "Good evening,
 stranger, and welcome. Be our guest, come share
 our dinner, and then tell us what you need."
 He led her in, and Pallas followed him.
 Inside the high-roofed hall, he set her spear
 beside a pillar in a polished stand,
 in which Odysseus kept stores of weapons.
 And then he led her to a chair and spread

a smooth embroidered cloth across the seat,
 and pulled a footstool up to it. He sat
 beside her on a chair of inlaid wood,
 a distance from the suitors, so their shouting
 would not upset the stranger during dinner;
 also to ask about his absent father.
 A girl brought washing water in a jug
 of gold, and poured it on their hands and into
 a silver bowl, and set a table by them.
 A deferential slave brought bread and laid
 a wide array of food, a generous spread.
 The carver set beside them plates of meat
 of every kind, and gave them golden cups.
 The cup boy kept on topping up the wine.
 The suitors sauntered in and sat on chairs,
 observing proper order, and the slaves
 poured water on their hands. The house girls brought
 baskets of bread and heaped it up beside them,
 and house boys filled their wine-bowls up with drink.
 They reached to take the good things set before them.
 Once they were satisfied with food and drink,
 the suitors turned their minds to other things—
 singing and dancing, glories of the feast.
 A slave brought out a well-tuned lyre and gave it
 to Phemius, the man the suitors forced
 to sing for them. He struck the chords to start
 his lovely song.

Telemachus leaned in
 close to Athena, so they would not hear, and said,
 "...But come now, tell me this and tell the truth.
 Who are you? From what city, and what parents?
 What kind of ship did you here arrive on?
 What sailors brought you here, and by what route?
 You surely did not travel here on foot!"¹⁹

In this incident, Telemachus offers all the steps of hospitality, including an offer for the stranger to stay and rest, and a guest-gift, “a valuable one, very fine, that will be to you as a treasure from me, such as dear guest-friends give to guest-friends.”²⁰ Athena refuses both of these in her haste to depart, but does agree to accept the gift when next she visits.

The second paradigm of *xenia* to consider occurs after Telemachus, spurred by Athena, travels to find out information as to his father’s whereabouts. As he reaches the Greek mainland, he and Athena/Mentes find the inhabitants of Pylos getting ready to perform a sacrifice on the beach. The strangers are immediately offered hospitality by Nestor, the king of Pylos and his sons. Here again we see *xenia* as it should be:

They reached the center of town, where Nestor
Was sitting with his sons and his companions,
Putting the meat on spits and roasting it
For dinner. When they saw the strangers coming,
They all stood up with open arms to greet them,
Inviting them to join them. Nestor’s son,
Pisistratus, shook hands and sat them down,
Spreading soft fleeces on the sand beside
His father and his brother, Thrasymedes.
He served them giblets and he poured some wine
Into a golden cup, and raised a toast
to Pallas, child of Zeus the Aegis-lord...

And then they cooked the outer parts of meat,
And helped themselves to pieces, sharing round
The glorious feast, till they could eat no more.
Then first Geronian Nestor, horse-lord, spoke.
“Now that our guests are satisfied with food,
time now to talk to them and ask them questions.
Strangers, who are you? Where did you sail from?
Are you on business, or just scouting round
like pirates on the sea, who risk their lives
to ravage foreign homes?”²¹

As befits the dictates of *xenia*, the strangers are welcomed, seated, and feasted. Only then are they questioned. Later Telemachus is given a place to sleep in the palace.

The final example of ideal *xenia* is too extensive to quote directly, so I will summarize.²² After Odysseus is released from Calypso's island, where he has been stranded for the last seven years, he washes up on the shore of the island of the Phaeacians. More dead than alive, he is found by Nausicaä, the daughter of King Alcinous, who (evidently much impressed) offers the naked and bedraggled castaway food and clothing and agrees to guide him to the palace.²³ He follows her to the court of the king, aided by Athena, who conceals him in a mist because evidently the Phaeacians are somewhat leery of strangers.²⁴ Athene instructs him to supplicate himself before the Queen, Arete, whereupon the mist would vanish. What follows is an excellent example of good *xenia*: after the initial shock of his unexpected appearance, he is seated in the king's son's own chair, given a chance to wash, provided food and drink, and thus begins two days of feasting and entertainment. For those wary of travelers, this is exceptional *xenia*. Upon Odysseus' departure, he will receive rich gifts as well as a ship to transport him home.²⁵

The violations of *xenia* in the *Odyssey* are equally instructive, as I have noted. The most egregious of these is the Cyclops Polyphemus' treatment of Odysseus and his men. Upon arriving at the land of the Cyclopes, Odysseus poses the question of whether they are "savage and violent, without justice, or hospitable to strangers and with minds who are godly"²⁶ However, Odysseus himself violates the rules of *xenia* by entering the Cyclops' cave without invitation, and he and his men help themselves to the cheese and other bounty. When Polyphemus finally arrives, he commits a series of violations of *xenia*, the first of which is immediately asking Odysseus and his men who they are and where they are coming from. As everyone familiar with the episode knows, the most egregious violation of *xenia*, however, is that instead of having Odysseus and his men over for *dinner*, he has Odysseus' men for dinner. And unlike the polite insistence of other hosts to keep a guest longer than he originally thought to stay, he rolls a huge rock over the entrance of the cave to prevent his "guests" from escaping.²⁷ His offer of a guest-gift is equally egregious: he offers to eat Odysseus last of all.

These violations aside, it is clear that the custom of *xenia* in the Ancient Greek world was well defined and offered clear examples of what to emulate and what to avoid. And while no one would presume to insist that the notion of radical hospitality existed solely in ancient Greece, we have seen recent challenges to the idea of welcoming the stranger in our midst. Fortunately, those challenges have been met with modern-day examples of *xenia*, one of the most heartening of which for me has been the proliferation of signs in my own neighborhood that read, in three different languages,

“No matter where you are from, we’re glad you are our neighbor.”

To offer a last perspective from a different culture, the following “Rune of Hospitality” has long hung in the hallway of our house. It, like the ancient Greek idea of *xenia*, and the invocation on the Statue of Liberty, represents the best of what humanity has to offer those who are strangers in our midst:

I saw a stranger yestreen;
I put food in the eating place,
drink in the drinking place,
music in the listening place,
and in the name of the Triune
he blessed myself and my house,
my cattle and my dear ones,
and the lark said in her song
often, often, often,
goes the Christ in the stranger’s guise,
often, often, often
goes the Christ in the stranger’s guise.²⁸

NOTES

- ¹ All translations unless otherwise indicated are my own. Thanks to Dr. W. Marshall Johnston for his helpful critique of versions of this article. The Greek word ξενία or *xenia* is often translated as “hospitality” or with the cumbersome phrase “guest-friendship,” although it should be viewed as a reciprocal idea with obligations on both sides—perhaps better to think of it as “the guest-host relationship.” In Homer, forms with ξειν- instead of ξεν- are used.
- ² Most modern scholars use the term “Homer” in quotes: it is highly unlikely that a single poet gave these two poems their ultimate shape, and the subject of the authorship—and even the dating—of these poems is a vexed question, but for the purposes of this essay it is convenient to speak of a “Homer.” For a clear and concise summary of the problems associated with the

- question of Homeric authorship, see “Who was Homer?” in Emily Wilson’s introduction to her translation of the *Odyssey* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2017), 5-14.
- 3 The story of the Judgment of Paris is outlined in the lost work known as the *Cypria*, part of the so-called “Epic Cycle” of stories about the Trojan War. The episode is only alluded to in the *Iliad* itself.
 - 4 For the story of the courtship of Helen, see Apollodorus, *Library* 3.10.8-9 and Hesiod, Frag. 68.
 - 5 *Nostos* is the Greek word from where we derive our English word “nostalgia”: the ache one feels at the thought of one’s home faraway. Fragments and summaries of these epics (text and translation) are most conveniently found in the Loeb Library edition *Hesiod, Homeric Hymns, Epic Cycle, Homerica*, trans. H. G. Evelyn-White, (London: William Heinemann, 1914).
 - 6 In the *Iliad*, being a poem primarily concerned with war, *xenia* has nowhere near a prominent role as in the *Odyssey*.
 - 7 For the importance of *xenia* as a social institution, see M. I. Finley, *The World of Odysseus*, 2nd ed. (New York: Penguin, 1979) 101ff and Agathe Thornton, *People and Themes in Homer’s Odyssey* (New York: Routledge), 37-39.
 - 8 Zeus Xenios is invoked several times in the *Odyssey*—most notably by Odysseus when he encounters the Cyclops (*Od.* 9.270-271, see below), and Nausicaa (6.207-208) and Eumaeus (14.57-58), who both observe that “all strangers and beggars are from Zeus.” For the abduction of Helen as a violation against Zeus Xenios, see *Il.* 13.622-627. It is interesting to note that this connection still carries on to this day: there are hotels and restaurants named “Xenios Zeus” in the Greek cities of Athens, Karpathos, Nea Iraklitsa, Nikiti, Ouranopolis, Rhodes, Xanthi, among others, and hotels named “Theoxenia” in Fira Town, Messolonghi, Mykonos Ouranopolis, and Santorini. Ironically, a sweep of undocumented immigrants in Greece launched in August of 2012 was given the unfortunate name “Operation Xenios Zeus”—a complete contradiction of the ancient Greek code of hospitality—which resulted in tens of thousands of undocumented migrants being stopped, searched, and detained before the policy was cancelled in 2015 (See <https://www.hrw.org/news/2013/06/12/greece-abusive-crackdown-migrants> and <http://www.ekathimerini.com/166923/article/ekathimerini/news/greece-to-ditch-xenios-zeus-operations-governments-immigration-chief-says>, retrieved on August 10, 2018). This reminds us of Finley’s observation of the “difficult path between... the reality of a society in which the stranger was still a problem and a threat, and the newer morality, according to which he was somewhat covered by the aegis of Zeus” (Finley 101).
 - 9 One of the best-known examples occurs in Book 6 of the *Iliad*—the Greek Diomedes and the Lycian Glaucus meet on the battlefield. Diomedes asks for assurance that he is not venturing to fight against a god, and after hearing Glaucus’ lineage, he realizes that they are hereditary guest-friends. They agree not to fight, and exchange armor in recognition of their connection, although Diomedes comes out demonstrably better in the exchange, receiving golden armor in exchange for his bronze armor. The exchange has spawned a large bibliography—see (among others) William M. Calder III, “Gold for bronze: *Iliad* 6.232-236” in *Studies Presented to Sterling Dow on his Eightieth Birthday*, ed. Alan L. Boegehold, (Durham, N.C. 1984) 31-35 and Walter Donlan, “The Unequal Exchange between Glaucus and Diomedes in Light of the Homeric Gift-Economy,” *Phoenix* 43 (1989) 1-15.
 - 10 Steve Reece, *The Stranger’s Welcome: Oral Theory and the Aesthetics of the Homeric Hospitality Scene* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993. See also Thornton, chapter 3.
 - 11 For a hilariously hyperbolic look at the excessive hospitality “endured” by the Athenian ambassadors to the Persian king, see Aristophanes’ *Acharnians* 65ff. Among other torments, the

ambassadors were “forced to drink sweet wine at full strength out of gold and crystal drinking cups” (73-75) and served “whole oxen [roasted] in ovens” (85-86).

- ¹² See *Od.* 1.123-4 and 169-174 (Telemachus and Athena), 3.67-74 (Nestor and Telemachus), 4.60-62 (Menelaus and Telemachus) 14.185-190 (Eumaeus and Odysseus). Odysseus, on the other hand, does not answer the question of who he is until he has been at the Phaeacian court two full days—even though he is asked by Queen Arete after the first evening’s banquet, he initially evades the question. Until the evening of the second day, he is referred to repeatedly simply as ὁ ξείνῃς, “O Stranger-guest.” We are told (*Il.* 6.174-177) that it is only after nine days of hospitality and feasting that Xanthus, the king of Lycia, asks his guest Bellerophon who he is and about the message he is carrying to Xanthus from his brother-in-law Proetus—the whole point of his journey. On the other hand, the Cyclops violates this most basic element of *xenia* by immediately asking his guests for this information (*Od.* 9.252-255).
- ¹³ There is, in fact, a strong sense of pride that goes along with having the wherewithal to entertain a guest as is fitting. This is best expressed by Nestor as he urges Telemachus not to return to his ship for the night, but to stay with him in his halls: “Zeus forbids it! And all the other gods who live forever! You cannot leave my house for your swift ship as if I were a poor and ragged man with so few beds and blankets in his home that neither he nor guests can sleep in comfort. I have soft quilts and blankets in abundance. The darling son of great Odysseus must not sleep on the ship’s deck, while I live! Not while my sons remain here in my house, ready to welcome anyone who visits.” (*Od.* 3.346-355, as translated by Wilson 2017).
- ¹⁴ Examples of hospitality gifts: a silver bowl and robe given to Telemachus by his host Menelaus, clothing, gold, tripods and cauldrons given to the departing Odysseus by King Alcinoos and nobles of the Phaeacians (*Od.* 13.10-13), reciprocal gifts from the host Oeneus (a “warrior’s belt shining with scarlet”) and his guest Bellerophon (a “double cup of gold”), *Il.* 219-220. For examples of the perversion of this custom, see the promise by Polyphemus to give Odysseus a guest-gift if he identified himself (*Od.* 9.355-356) already problematic since it is not intended to be a payment for information), and then revealing that his “gift” is a promise to eat Odysseus last of all (9.369-370), and the suitor Ctesippus, who mocks the disguised Odysseus and then hurls the hoof of an ox at him as a “guest-gift” for the beggar to give to some female slave. He is rightly rebuked by Telemachus, who tells Ctesippus that if he had struck the beggar, Telemachus himself would have killed him with his sword (*Od.* 20.292-308).
- ¹⁵ For a good overview of travel in the Classical Greek period, see Lionel Casson, *Travel in the Ancient World* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), ch. 4.
- ¹⁶ On bandits and brigands, see A. S. Bradford, in the *Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Greece and Rome*, vol. 1, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2010) s.v. “Banditry and Brigandage, Greek.” Greek mythology was filled with fantastical dangers to the traveler, from robbers and murderers like Sinis (a.k.a “the Pine-bender,” who tied his victim to two pine trees tied to the ground and then released the trees, ripping the unfortunate traveler apart); Sciron (who forced travelers to kneel and wash his feet near a cliff, and then would kick them off the cliff to a waiting ravenous giant turtle below); Cercyon (“the Wrestler,” who forced passers-by to wrestle to their deaths); Procrustes (who made all guests fit his bed, either by stretching them by means of heavy weights or lopping off limbs if they were too tall); to monsters like the Sphinx (who killed all travelers who failed to correctly answer her riddle); the Sirens (who lured sailors to their deaths with their song); and Scylla (the sea-monster) and Charybdis (the whirlpool), who provided sailors passing through their straits with a dangerous choice. And lest we forget, the classic example of ancient “road-rage,” Oedipus, who killed a traveler who failed to yield to him on

the road to Thebes, who later turns out to be his birth-father, Laius. Sources for all these can conveniently be found at <http://www.theoi.com>.

- ¹⁷ Although not to travel *at all* was considered idiosyncratic. The Athenian philosopher Socrates was famous for his tendency to stay within the confines of Athens—see for example, Plato, *Phaedrus* 230D, where Socrates' friend Phaedrus notes that, “So you do not go abroad outside of the astu to foreign parts, nor do you seem to me to go out beyond the city walls at all.” See also *Crito* 52B for a similar critique.
- ¹⁸ Ovid *Met.* 8.621-723. Cf. the *philoxenia* of Abraham and Sarah to the mysterious guests in Genesis 18.1-8, and the destruction of the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah for their violations of *xenia* in Genesis 19.1-13. The other suitors reproach Antinous for abusing the beggar-in-disguise Odysseus, in the event he could be a god in disguise (*Od.* 17.481-486). As the well-known passage in Hebrews 13:2 reminds us, we should be hospitable to strangers, “for in doing so some have offered *xenia* to angels without knowing it” (διὰ ταύτης γὰρ ἔλαθόν τινες ξενίσαντες ἀγγέλους.)
- ¹⁹ *Od.* 1.118-157, and 169-173, as translated by Wilson 2017. Note that the questions asked by Telemachus are virtually identical to those Eumaeus later asks of the disguised Odysseus at 14.187ff.
- ²⁰ *Od.* 1.311-313.
- ²¹ *Od.* 3.30-42 and 69-74, as translated by Wilson 2017.
- ²² The episode takes up the entirety of Books 6-12 and part of Book 13.
- ²³ *Od.* 6.191-194, 206ff.
- ²⁴ *Od.* 7.32-33.
- ²⁵ Unfortunately the Phaeacians would pay a price for their hospitality. Poseidon in his anger turns their ship upon its return to stone in the view of everyone, and the king recalls a prophecy that predicted this as well as that Poseidon would cover their city with a huge mountain. (13.125-187). It is somewhat chilling to note the utter lack of concern shown by Zeus regarding the fate of the Phaeacians. When Poseidon complains that he has been thwarted in his plans for revenge on Odysseus by their actions and reveals his desire to sink the ship on the high sea, Zeus in essence not only tells him, “Do whatever you like to them” (13.145), but proposes an even more terrifying punishment: to turn the ship to stone right in front of them. (At least Zeus asks Poseidon not to hide their city under a mountain.) The Phaeacians immediately attempt to propitiate Poseidon with a sacrifice of twelve bulls. Whether this attempt was successful or not, Homer does not reveal, and the ultimate fate of the Phaeacians remains tantalizingly unknown. (See S. Bassett, “The Fate of the Phaeacians,” *Classical Philology* 28 (1933), 305-307, for possible explanations.)
- ²⁶ *Od.* 9.175-176, translation R. Lattimore, *The Odyssey of Homer* (New York: Harper Collins, 1975).
- ²⁷ Nestor, Menelaus, Circe and Calypso are all mentioned as problematic in this regard.
- ²⁸ The origin of this rune is unknown; sources state “as recovered from the Gaelic by Rev. Kenneth MacLeod.”