

Why homer matters

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On recommending Homer's works to friends I am often met with dismissive looks and half hearted assurances that they will read it at some point. The epics are daunting and difficult, this I will not deny; however, I think that these ancient poems contain words of wisdom that are still very much relevant today. Within the accounts of war and suffering, Homer discuss timeless topics: the role of destiny in ones life, of cruelty, humanity, its frailty and the pains of existence. For me, the Odyssey is not a poem of then and there, but here and now.

The Odyssey depicts the struggles and triumphs of a man, Odysseus, on his return to his homeland, Ithaca. On a simple level, it is a grand narrative, that would put any modern-day thriller to shame-particularly Spectre which I found thoroughly disappointing. However, on a more personal level, every aspect of it is an intricate metaphor. Odysseus is not sailing on any old Ocean, but is rather battling the storms of temptation, fear and desire which wash through the lives of all men. The gods are not distant, imaginary creators, but elements within us: their carelessness, their flaky and transient interests, their indifference, their casual selfishness, their deceit, their earth-shaking footfalls.

The more I read of the Odyssey, the more I thank Homer for providing more with guidebook to life, a sort of scripture. Odysseus, the protagonist, the crafty man, 'the man of twists and turns', is by no means perfect, he is human, he is flawed, he is relatable role-model. On ones journey you will come across many hurdles and temptations: Odysseus is trapped on an island, forced to make 'cold love' for over a decade with the goddess Calypso, he is nearly drawn into the evil temptation of the beautiful Circe,

yet he continues to sail on in hope of fulfilling his dream, his potential, to reach his home. Odysseus is faced with great hardship, yet he does not buckle. When pushed, he bends, but he bends back, and that adaptable strength, was to me, an aspiring model, a trait I think to be crucial in succeeding in anything.

The ability to bounce back from a fall will always be crucial ingredient for success.