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ATHENA'S MENTION OF ORESTES IN HOM. *OD.* 1.298–302*

This article focuses on the interrelationship between two events taking place simultaneously in Odysseus' *megaron*: Phemius' performance and the conversation between Telemachus and Athena. I argue that at Hom. *Od.* 1.298–302 Athena, in her mention of Orestes' *kleos*, refers directly to Phemius' song that Telemachus can hear from where he is sitting. This reading sheds new light on the characters' receptions of Phemius' song. Between the well-known contrasting responses of the nearest and the farthest audiences – the suitors' silence and Penelope's over-reaction – stands Athena's cognitively constructive use of it, by which the goddess attempts to establish a shared understanding with Telemachus, whose *kleos* is one of the main concerns of her visit to Ithaca.

Keywords: Homer, *Odyssey*, Athena, Telemachus, space, Odysseus' *megaron*, Phemius, *Oresteia*, *kleos*, verbal semantics, particle

At the beginning of the Homeric *Odyssey*, the scene shifts from Olympus to Ithaca with the movement of Athena who seeks to visit Telemachus. The focus of Homer's account of the goddess' visit, I contend, shifts back and forth concerning two groups: (1) Telemachus and Athena and (2) the suitors. The structure of Hom. *Od.* 1.125–323 is as follows:

A: Telemachus and Athena enter the *megaron*; Telemachus' arrangement of a suitable seating-place. (125–35)
B: Telemachus and Athena are served for lunch. (136–43)
A': The suitors enter the *megaron* and take their seats. (144–5)
B': The suitors are served for lunch. (146–9)
C': The suitors' entertainment after the meal; the introduction of Phemius' performance. (150–5)

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C: Telemachus and Athena's conversation after the meal and the goddess' departure. (156–323)

After the departure of Athena, Telemachus returns to the suitors (1.324). The meeting of Telemachus and the suitors mirrors the situation at the moment of Athena's arrival when the former is said to be sitting midst the latter (1.114). With Telemachus' movement, the scene shifts again to Phemius' performance (325–7), which is first introduced at 1.153–5, the bard having been forced to entertain the suitors (1.154).

In a recent article, Oliver Thomas has convincingly shown the interplay of sound and space in the aforementioned episode, by taking Odysseus' *megaron* as a complex 'soundscape'.[1] Most pertinent to Thomas' argument is the passage where Telemachus takes pain to prepare a due place for his intended conversation with the goddess in disguise (1.132–5). Thomas argued that 'Telemachus' arrangement creates a sonic buffer-zone, sheltering "Mentes" from the suitors' words and the suitors from his own quieter ones'.[2] Thomas further showed that at this moment 'Telemachus is already envisaging the hall as a complex "soundscape"', by which he means 'a space containing plural sources of potentially simultaneous sounds, whose effects vary according not only to the distance of each from a hearer, but also to the hearer's decisions about what noise to "tune in to"'.[3]

More precisely, in the analysis of Odysseus' *megaron* as a complex 'soundscape', three factors are at stake: (1) the sound-source, (2) the listener, and (3) spatial features. A complex soundscape that may contain multiple sound-sources results from the intersection between the listener's attention and the space presented. However, there is no strict line between sound-source and listener in the same episode; a reverse of the role is possible as the story evolves. As noted by Thomas, '[t]he narrator draws our attention to two simultaneous noises which Telemachus has deliberately tried to separate – the din of the

[1] O. Thomas, 'Phemius Suite', *JHS* 134 (2014), 89–102. The term 'soundscape' was first coined by R. Murray Schafer, *The Soundscape. Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World* (Rochester, 1994). As argued by Schafer, '[w]e can isolate an acoustic environment as a field of study just as we can study the characteristics of a given landscape' (*ibid.*, 7). However, there is an asymmetry in this analogy. As Schafer puts it, 'it is less easy to formulate an exact impression of a soundscape than of a landscape' due to the fact that '[t]here is nothing in sonography corresponding to the instantaneous impression which photography can create' (*ibid.*, 7).

[2] Thomas (n. 1), 90.

[3] *Ibid.*

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suitors' meal followed by the music of Phemius, versus his quiet and concerned conversation'.[4] Conversely, at 1.156–7, Telemachus is said to be vigilant to the suitors nearby, who, as the potential listeners, are hostile to those inquiring Odysseus' return, the very content of the conversation between Telemachus and Athena.

However, there is a certain interpretative indeterminacy in Thomas' reading of the interrelationship between Phemius' song and the aforementioned conversation. Commenting upon 1.298–302, where the goddess mentions Orestes' *kleos*, 'renown', Thomas suggested: 'When she [Athena] asks οὐκ ἀΐεις (1.298), she may refer both to Telemachus' general lack of awareness of Orestes' fame and to the current possibility of hearing it from where he is sitting'.[5] In this article, by contrast, I argue that Athena's mention of the Orestes story (1.298–302) directly alerts Telemachus to Phemius' simultaneous performance of the Greeks' *nostoi*. After presenting the arguments in support of my reading, I will show how this interpretation changes the way we read Hom. *Od.* 1, with special reference to the characters' receptions of Phemius' performance.

In the course of their conversation, Athena's penultimate speech to Telemachus (1.252–305) is the longest and by far the most controversial one. Scholars have noted 'a marked change of tone' in this speech.[6] Beginning with a tale of Odysseus the killer, it mainly concerns the goddess' direct instructions to Telemachus, in sharp contrast to the hitherto gentle exchanges between the two characters. Scholarly opinion has been divided upon the content of Athena's direct instructions to Telemachus (1.269–97), especially in the battle between analytic and unitarian schools.[7] Only recently has the structure of the goddess' instructions been more satisfactorily clarified in terms of a 'logic tree'.[8] It is not my task here to rehearse the illuminating analysis by Douglas Olson, which has been well received by recent scholarship. Rather,

[4] *Ibid.*, 91.
[5] *Ibid.*, 98.
[6] S. Pulleyn, *Homer, Odyssey I* (Oxford, 2019), 176.
[7] See esp. K. Rüter, *Odysseeinterpretationen. Untersuchungen zum 1. Buch und zur Phaiakis* (Göttingen, 1969), 148–201; E. Siegmann, 'Die Athene-Rede im ersten Buch der *Odyssee*', *WJA* 2 (1976), 21–36.
[8] S. D. Olson, *Blood and Iron. Stories and Storytelling in Homer's Odyssey* (Leiden, 1995), 71–4, which is based on the analysis of Teiresias' prophecy in J. Peradotto, *Man in the Middle Voice. Name and Narration in the Odyssey* (Princeton, 1990), 63–75.

I argue for a more sophisticated reading of Athena's mention of the Orestes story, Hom. *Od.* 1.298–302:[9]

> ἦ οὐκ ἀΐεις οἷον κλέος ἔλλαβε δῖος Ὀρέστης
> πάντας ἐπ' ἀνθρώπους, ἐπεὶ ἔκτανε πατροφονῆα,
> Αἴγισθον δολόμητιν, ὅ οἱ πατέρα κλυτὸν ἔκτα;
> καὶ σύ, φίλος, μάλα γάρ σ' ὁρόω καλόν τε μέγαν τε,
> ἄλκιμος ἔσσ', ἵνα τίς σε καὶ ὀψιγόνων εὖ εἴπῃ.

Have you not heard of the fame glorious Orestes won in the eyes of all men by killing the man who slew his father, Aegisthus the crafty schemer, butcher of his famous father? My friend, I can see that you are a fine, strapping fellow; you must be brave too, so that future generations will praise you.

On the basis of Nestor's statement that Telemachus must have heard of Orestes' vengeance (3.193–4, 'of Atreus' son you have heard yourselves, though living far away: how he came back and how Aegisthus planned his wretched death'),[10] I take Orestes' heroic achievement to indicate a general knowledge of the internal audience in the *Odyssey*'s main narrative, which has reached them through the travelling bards.[11] By contrast, its 'correct' interpretation among men is a concern of the immortals in *Od.* 1, beginning with Zeus' criticism of it at the poem's opening. Zeus complains that people unjustly interpret Aegisthus' evil end as a further example of the gods' capricious behaviours towards men, though mortals themselves *also* commit fatal mistakes leading to their own destruction (1.32–43).[12] Given Telemachus' general awareness of Orestes' vengeance, I argue that Athena here draws her conversation partner's attention to Orestes' fame conveyed by Phemius' song in order to establish a shared understanding of the Orestes story with the son of Odysseus.

[9] The text of the *Odyssey* is quoted from P. von der Mühll, *Homeri Odyssea* (Stuttgart, 1984) unless otherwise indicated. All translations of the *Odyssey* are adopted from A. Verity, *The Odyssey* (Oxford, 2016), with my modifications.

[10] Similarly, R. Scodel, *Listening to Homer. Tradition, Narrative, and Audience* (Ann Arbor, 2002), 76–7: 'Both Athena-Mentes and Nestor tell Telemachus that he must have heard about Orestes' killing of Aegisthus (1.298–99, 3.193–94), because the paradigm is all the more effective that way. By taking vengeance, Orestes has won fame that has reached even faraway Ithaca.' On Nestor as narrator of the *Oresteia*, cf. M. Alden, *Para-Narratives in the Odyssey* (Oxford, 2017), 82–5.

[11] This interpretation can be further backed up by E. J. Bakker, 'Bruits odysséens: le κλέος épique et la poétique d'Homère', *CÉA* 35 (1999), 17–26, who argued that the *Odyssey* is interested in the spatial spread of the *kleos* of men.

[12] See most recently J. Grethlein, *Die Odyssee. Homer und die Kunst des Erzählens* (München, 2017), 228–9.

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Two points are at stake. First, that Phemius' song and the conversation between Telemachus and Athena are taking place simultaneously calls for the further investigation of its particular narrative significance.[13] For, to the audience familiar with the epic's convention, this is a remarkable exception to the so-called 'Zielinski's law'.[14] Keeping in mind how the song reaches Penelope's chamber upstairs (1.328–31), Athena and Telemachus' perception of Phemius' performance, who are much nearer to the bard, is highly compelling. In fact, after Phemius' performance is introduced, Telemachus begins his speech to Athena by saying, Hom. *Od.* 1.158–60:

> ξεῖνε φίλ', ἦ καί μοι νεμεσήσεαι ὅττι κεν εἴπω;
> τούτοισιν μὲν ταῦτα μέλει, κίθαρις καὶ ἀοιδή,
> ῥεῖ', ἐπεὶ ἀλλότριον βίοτον νήποινον ἔδουσιν.

Dear guest, I hope you will not be indignant with what I say? This is all that these men care about, the lyre and the song – easy pleasures, for they pay nothing to consume another man's livelihood.

Second, the theme of the song, as the narrator tells us, is the return of the Greeks, Hom. *Od.* 1.325–7:

> τοῖσι δ' ἀοιδὸς ἄειδε περικλυτός, οἱ δὲ σιωπῇ
> εἵατ' ἀκούοντες· ὁ δ' Ἀχαιῶν νόστον ἄειδε
> λυγρόν, ὃν ἐκ Τροίης ἐπετείλατο Παλλὰς Ἀθήνη.

The renowned singer was singing to them, and they sat and listened in silence as he sang of the Achaeans' return home, a bitter ordeal, sent them by Pallas Athena after they left Troy.

[13] Cf. Thomas (n. 1), 91: 'There is therefore a strong narratological prompt to consider a question normally approached through content alone: how are the latter stages of Athena's discussion with Telemachus to be related to Phemius' simultaneous *Nostoi*?'. Cf. also E. Krummen, '"Jenen sang seine Lieder der ruhmvolle Sänger…": Moderne Erzähltheorie und die Funktion der Sängerszenen in der *Odyssee*', *A&A* 54 (2008), 15–18.

[14] However, 'Zielinski's law', which claims that Homer does not narrate simultaneous actions, has been challenged on more than one occasion. See esp. G. Seek, 'Homerisches Erzählen und das Problem der Gleichzeitigkeit', *Hermes* 126 (1988), 131–44; H. Patzer, 'Gleichzeitige Ereignisse im homerischen Epos', in H. Eisenberger (ed.), *ERMENHEUMATA. Festschrift für Hadwig Hörner zum sechnigsten Geburtstag* (Heidelberg, 1990), 153–72; A. Rengakos, 'Zeit und Gleichzeitigkeit in den homerischen Epen', *A&A* 41 (1995), 1–33; R. Nünlist, 'Der Homersiche Erzähler und das sogenannte Sukzessionsgesetz', *MH* 55 (1998), 1–8; O. Tsagarakis, 'On Simultaneous Actions in Homer', in M. Païsi-Apostolopoulou (ed.), *Eranos. Proceedings of the 9th International Symposium on the Odyssey* (Ithaca, 2001), 355–66; R. Scodel, 'Zielinski's Law Reconsidered', *TAPA* 138 (2008), 107–25.

Athena is one of the main characters in Phemius' song, a motif which anticipates Odysseus' presence at Demodocus' performance in the Phaeacian palace. The connection between the Achaeans' return and Orestes' vengeance mentioned in Athena's advice is also of note. Thomas, among others, has pointed out that '[t]he Cyclic *Nostoi* culminated in Orestes' vengeance on Aegisthus, and this episode is of great significance in the tradition projected by the *Odyssey* itself'.[15] This thematic overlap between song and conversation mirrors, and further strengthens, the narrative significance of their simultaneous occurrence. Critics since antiquity have wrestled with the exact content of Phemius' song, asking whether and to what extent the destruction of Odysseus is involved, either from the perspective of the suitors or that of Penelope.[16] In contrast to these approaches, I would like to single out the possibility of the bard's engagement with the Orestes story, the parallel story that serves as a foil to Odysseus' return through the whole poem.[17]

Two additional arguments lend further support to the reading suggested above. The first is the semantics of the verb ἀΐω. In Homer, the present indicative form of ἀΐω – a secondary present to the imperfect form ἄϊον – is only attested in the phrase οὐκ ἀΐεις (Hom. *Il.* 10.160; 15.130, 248; Hom. *Od.* 1.298; 18.11). According to LfgrE s.v. ἄϊον, ἀΐω, the phrase οὐκ ἀΐεις is always connected 'mit folgendem Relativsatz, gesagt zu einem, der offenbar ein (vergangenes) Ereignis wohl wahrgenommen hat, aber nicht in seiner Bedeutung für die gegenwärtige Situation richtig „erfaßt"; die Sinneswahrnehmung tritt ganz zurück'.[18] The expression occurs only twice in the *Odyssey*.

[15] Thomas (n. 1), 97.

[16] See the discussion by Thomas (n. 1), 94–5, with quotations from the scholia. Cf. J. Svenbro, *La Parole et le marbre* (Lund, 1976), 18–21; G. Danek, *Epos und Zitat* (Wien, 2001), 59; R. Scodel (n. 10), 82–5. On ancient discussion of Phemius' position in choosing the theme of his song, see Thomas (n. 1), 96.

[17] On the *Oresteia* in the *Odyssey*, see E. F. d'Arms and K. K. Hulley, 'The Oresteia-Story in the *Odyssey*', *TAPA* 77 (1946), 207–13; H. Hommel, 'Aigisthos und die Freier', *Studium Generale* 8 (1955), 237–45; U. Hölscher, 'Die Atridensage in der *Odyssee*', in H. Singer and B. von Wiese (eds.), *Festschrift für Richard Alewyn* (Köln and Graz, 1967); S. D. Olson, 'The Stories of Agamemnon in Homer's *Odyssey*', *TAPA* 120 (1990), 57–71; M. Katz, *Penelope's Renown. Meaning and Indeterminacy in the Odyssey* (Princeton, 1991); I. J. F. de Jong, *A Narratological Commentary on the Odyssey* (Cambridge, 2001), 12–14; J. Marks, *Zeus in the Odyssey* (Washington, DC, 2008), 17–35; Alden (n. 10), 77–100.

[18] 'with the following relative clause said to a person who obviously perceived a (past) event, but has not truly "comprehended" its meaning for the present situation. Sensory perception recedes entirely into the background.' On the historical linguistic analysis of the verb, see W. Schulze,

Beside the example at 1.298, the beggar Irus violently reproaches Odysseus, who is disguised as a beggar, Hom. *Od.* 18.10–13:

> εἶκε, γέρον, προθύρου, μὴ δὴ τάχα καὶ ποδὸς ἕλκῃ.
> οὐκ ἀΐεις, ὅτι δή μοι ἐπιλλίζουσιν ἅπαντες,
> ἑλκέμεναι δὲ κέλονται; ἐγὼ δ᾽ αἰσχύνομαι ἔμπης.
> ἀλλ᾽ ἄνα, μὴ τάχα νῶϊν ἔρις καὶ χερσὶ γένηται.

Get away from that doorway, old man, before someone drags you off by the feet! Can you not notice that they are all giving me the wink to lug you away – even though I am ashamed to do it. So get to your feet, or our quarrel may quickly end in blows.

As noted in the standard dictionaries, ἀΐω does not necessarily refer to an auditory perception (cf. LSJ ἀΐω (A) 1). While the example quoted above (18.10–13) points to a visual perception, οὐκ ἀΐεις at 1.298 could simply refer to the addressee's general awareness of Orestes' fame.[19] However, according to LfgrE, ἄϊον/ἀΐω in the Homeric epics is more frequently used of a direct auditory perception. Moreover, if Cassius Longinus' authority for 1.352 (fr. 42 I.1.7 Patillon-Brisson CUF) as adopted in von der Mühll's Teubner edition is accepted (ἥ τις **ἀϊόντεσσι** νεωτάτη ἀμφιπέληται, 'that is the latest to reach the ears of its audience'),[20] we even have an attestation of ἀΐω in Telemachus' defence of Phemius' performance, which is clearly linked to the audience's direct perception of the newest song.[21]

Equally illuminating is Athena's sharp warning to Ares, Hom. *Il.*15.128–34:[22]

> μαινόμενε, φρένας ἠλέ, διέφθορας· ἦ νύ τοι αὖτως
> οὔατ᾽ ἀκουέμεν ἐστί, νόος δ᾽ ἀπόλωλε καὶ αἰδώς.
> **οὐκ ἀΐεις** ἅ τέ φησι θεὰ λευκώλενος Ἥρη,
> ἣ δὴ νῦν πὰρ Ζηνὸς Ὀλυμπίου εἰλήλουθεν;
> ἦ ἐθέλεις αὐτὸς μὲν ἀναπλήσας κακὰ πολλὰ

'Zwei verkannte aoriste', *ZVS* 29 (1888), 249–55; P. Chantraine, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque. Histoire des mots* (Paris, 2009), 40.

[19] Cf. Scodel (n. 10), 76–7; Thomas (n. 1), 98.

[20] Cf. W. Schulze, *Quaestiones epicae* (Gühtersloh, 1892), 357.

[21] Penelope's request to stop Phemius' song is replied to by Telemachus at Hom. *Od.* 1.345–59, who turns up as 'another "interpreter" of song' (S. Halliwell, *Between Ecstasy and Truth. Interpretations of Greek Poetics from Homer to Longinus* [Oxford, 2011], 3). Cf. Scodel (n. 10), 53–4; de Jong (n. 17), 37–8.

[22] The text of the *Iliad* is quoted from T. W. Allen, *Ilias* (Oxford, 1931). All translations of the *Iliad* are adopted from A. T. Murray and W. F. Wyatt, *Iliad* (Cambridge, MA, 1999).

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ἄψ ἴμεν Οὔλυμπόνδε καὶ ἀχνύμενός περ ἀνάγκῃ,
αὐτὰρ τοῖς ἄλλοισι κακὸν μέγα πᾶσι φυτεῦσαι;

You madman, deranged in mind, you are doomed! Surely it is for nothing that you have ears for hearing, and your understanding and shame are gone from you. Do you not hear what the goddess, white-armed Hera, says, who has just now come from Olympian Zeus? Are you minded yourself to fill up the measure of manifold woes, and so be forced to return to Olympus – though in great distress – and for all the rest sow the seeds of great evil?

Prior to this scene, Hera, who comes from Zeus, 'vents her frustration by urging obedience on the gods in such a way as to stir up revolt'.[23] Ares is provoked by Hera's words, while Athena warns him not to overact, despite his grief over the death of his son Ascalaphus. Athena's use of the expression οὐκ ἀΐεις at Hom. *Il.* 15.130 unmistakably refers to Hera's provocative speech at Hom. *Il.* 15.104–12. This interpretation is further backed up by the goddess' contrast of Ares' having ears to hear and his not possessing mind and shame (Hom. *Il.* 15.128–9). In contrast, the other Iliadic examples of οὐκ ἀΐεις (Hom. *Il.* 10.160; 15.248) are used of the interlocuter's general knowledge (Nestor points to Diomedes' awareness of the Trojans' threat to the Achaean ships, Hom. *Il.* 10.160–1; Hector is referring to Apollo's knowledge of his defeat by Ajax, Hom. *Il.* 15.248–50). Thus, from a linguistic perspective, it is plausible that Athena, when addressing Telemachus with οὐκ ἀΐεις, alludes to the double meaning of the phrase: the interlocuter's general knowledge, as well as his auditory perception, of the song's content.

Second, a careful analysis of the particle ἦ at Hom. *Od.* 1.298, the very interrogative particle that occurs twice in the passage quoted above (Hom. *Il.* 15.128; 132), might reinforce my reading of Hom. *Od.* 1.298–302 from a pragmatic perspective. The occurrence of οὐκ ἀΐεις at Hom. *Od.* 1.298 differs from all other Homeric attestations of the same phrase, in that only here the phrase is preceded by an interrogative particle ἦ.

Ruth Scodel has argued for a cognitive approach to the particle ἦ in Homer.[24] Most importantly for the thesis of this article, Scodel convincingly showed that the interrogative particle ἦ used in Homeric

[23] R. Janko, *The Iliad. A Commentary, Volume IV: Books 13–16* (Cambridge, 1994), 236.

[24] R. Scodel, 'ἦ and Theory of Mind in the *Iliad*', in M. Meier-Brügger (ed.), *Homer, gedeutet durch ein großes Lexikon* (Berlin, 2012), 319–34. Cf. J. D. Denniston, *The Greek Particles* (Oxford 1978) 279–88; C. J. Ruijgh, *Autour de* τε *épique: études sur la syntaxe grecque* (Amsterdam, 1971), 194–5; R. M. Frazer, 'Corrective ἤτοι in Homer and Hesiod', *Mnemosyne* 34 (1981), 265–71.

character speech 'typically attempts to establish a shared understanding between speaker and interlocutor in a situation where the basis for such shared understanding already exits, but a shared interpretation needs to be established'.[25] Her analysis of the formulas ἦ οὐ μέμνῃ (Hom. *Il.* 15.18; 20.188; 21.396; Hom. *Od.* 24.115) and ἦ οὐ γιγνώσκεις (Hom. *Il.* 8.140) is closely related to the interpretation of the passage at Hom. *Od.* 1.298–302. While the former 'implies that the interlocutor does and should remember a relevant episode in the past', the latter is employed by the speaker to appeal to the addressee to act according to their shared knowledge.[26] The two expressions provide close parallels to ἦ οὐκ ἀΐεις. First, all three expressions consist of an interrogative particle ἦ, a negation οὐ/οὐκ, and a cognitive verb in the second person singular μέμνῃ/γιγνώσκεις/ἀΐεις. Second, they are all taken up further by a relative sentence that is the main concern of the speaker.

Thus, I propose a reading of Hom. *Od.* 1.298–302 that is similar to Scodel's illuminating analysis of the Homeric attestations of ἦ οὐ μέμνῃ and ἦ οὐ γιγνώσκεις. As noted by Nestor (3.193–4), Telemachus must have heard of Orestes' fame. This serves as the basis of the shared understanding that Athena aims to establish between herself and Telemachus; the goddess refers to the actual content of Phemius' song as part of her closing advice to the young hero. The potential relevance of Orestes' fame for Telemachus' behaviour in the current situation needs to be comprehended by the son of Odysseus. In other words, the acoustic foreground, Athena's conversation with Telemachus, and the acoustic background of Phemius' song converge to illuminate the example of Orestes as a model for Telemachus.[27]

How does my reading of Hom. *Od.* 1.298–302, if accepted, change the way we read the whole episode? I argue that it significantly contributes to our understanding of the characters' receptions of Phemius' performance. To be sure, Phemius' song is the most predominant sound-source in Hom. *Od.* 1, while the most impressive

[25] Scodel (n. 24), 330.

[26] Commenting upon Hom. *Il.* 8.139–40 (Τυδείδη, ἄγε δὴ αὖτε φόβονδ' ἔχε μώνυχας ἵππους. / ἦ οὐ γινώσκεις ὅ τοι ἐκ Διὸς οὐχ ἕπετ' ἀλκή), Scodel (n. 24), 330, argues: 'Nestor, of course, knows that Diomedes can recognize Zeus' hostility – thunderbolts have fallen directly in front of his chariot – but he needs to overcome Diomedes' resistance to retracing.'

[27] The convergence of the acoustic foreground and the acoustic background is also noticeable in Odysseus' conversation with Eumaeus in front of the hero's palace, in which there is the sound of the lyre inside (Hom. *Od.* 17.269–71), and in the wedding song that accompanies the reunion of Odysseus and Penelope, by which the passers-by outside are said to be deceived into believing that a true marriage is taking place between Penelope and one of the suitors (Hom. *Od.* 23.148–52).

listener of it is the heroine of the epic. In Hom. *Od.* 1, the interplay of sound and space culminates in the first appearance of Penelope, who can no longer bear to hear Phemius' song, Hom. *Od.* 1.328–31:

> τοῦ δ' ὑπερῳϊόθεν φρεσὶ σύνθετο θέσπιν ἀοιδὴν
> κούρη Ἰκαρίοιο, περίφρων Πηνελόπεια·
> κλίμακα δ' ὑψηλὴν κατεβήσετο οἷο δόμοιο,
> οὐκ οἴη, ἅμα τῇ γε καὶ ἀμφίπολοι δύ' ἕποντο.

In her upstairs room the daughter of Icarius, circumspect Penelope, heard and understood his divinely inspired song, and came down the tall staircase from her part of the house, not on her own, but attended by two women servants.

The passage quoted above brings out the way that Phemius' song travels through the house so much that it reaches the heroine's chamber upstairs. This scene dramatically showcases the complexity of the soundscape centring around Odysseus' *megaron*.

In discussing the poetics brought out by Homer's account of Phemius' performance in Hom. *Od.* 1, Stephen Halliwell pointed out that '[t]he ironic circumstance that the song is being performed at the very point where Athena is working to bring about the return of Odysseus and his triumph over the suitors is layered with significance in regard to the various audiences present within the scene'.[28] By 'the various audiences present within the scene', Halliwell means: (1) the suitors who 'are the primary audience in the sense that they force Phemius to sing for them'; (2) Telemachus who 'is only in a position to become fully aware of Phemius' song when his private conversation has finished'; (3) 'and most poignantly, there is Penelope, who hears the song from her chamber upstairs and is moved to such a pitch of distress that she descends into the hall and, in a flood of tears, interrupts the song'.[29]

No one would deny the well-established contrast between the suitors' silence (Hom. *Od.* 1.325–7) and Penelope's over-engagement with Phemius' song (Hom. *Od.* 1.328–31). However, if my interpretation of Hom. *Od.* 1.298–302 is correct that Athena, in her mention of Orestes' *kleos*, refers directly to Phemius' song that Telemachus can hear from where he is sitting, we could draw a more sophisticated picture of the three audience groups' receptions of Phemius' song. Spatial

[28] Halliwell (n. 21), 2.
[29] *Ibid.*.

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distance and emotional engagement are in reverse order. Between the well-known contrasting responses of the nearest and the farthest audiences – the suitors' silence and Penelope's over-reaction – stands Athena's cognitively constructive use of it, by which the goddess attempts to establish a shared understanding with Telemachus.

In Hom. *Od.* 1, the *nostos* of Odysseus is initiated by Athena, who is the weaver of the Odyssean plot.[30] In seizing on Zeus's mention of Aegisthus' ruthless deeds, Athena juxtaposes 'his [Aegisthus'] well-merited punishment and Odysseus' largely undeserved sufferings' (cf. 1.45–8).[31] In pointing to Orestes' fame sung by Phemius in the acoustic background, Athena foregrounds the example of Orestes as a model for Telemachus, whose *kleos* is one of the main concerns of the goddess' visit to Ithaca (cf. 1.95).[32]

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[30] See esp. S. Murnaghan, 'The Plan of Athena', in B. Cohen (ed.), *The Distaff Side. Representing the Female in Homer's Odyssey* (New York and Oxford, 1995), 61–80.

[31] A. Heubeck, S. R. West, and J. B. Hainsworth, *A Commentary on Homer's Odyssey*, I (Oxford, 1988), 77. See now R. Xian, 'Blameless Aegisthus Revisited', *Mnemosyne* 74 (2021), 181–99.

[32] Cf. Olson (n. 8), 30–1. On the significance of Athena's visit to Ithaca at *Od.* 1 to Telemachus' κλέος, see esp. N. Austin, 'Telemachos Polymechanos', *CSCA* 2 (1969) 45–63; P. V. Jones, 'The ΚΛΕΟΣ of Telemachus: *Odyssey* 1.95', *AJP* 109 (1988) 496–506; T. Wright, 'Telemachus' Recognition of Odysseus', *GRBS* 58 (2018), 1–18. The question of Telemachus' heroism in the *Odyssey* has been discussed afresh by A. Gottesman, 'The Authority of Telemachus', *ClAnt* 33 (2014), 31–60, with a detailed bibliography.