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A Note on Odyssey 3.216-38

Erwin F. Cook

Trinity University, ecook@trinity.edu

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NOTES AND DISCUSSIONS

A NOTE ON *ODYSSEY* 3.216–38

Nestor to Telemachus (*Od.* 3.216–38):

“τίς δ’ οἷδ’, εἰ κέ ποτέ σφι βίας ἀποτίσεται ἐλθῶν,
 ἦ ὃ γε μούνος ἐὼν, ἦ καὶ σύμπαντες Ἀχαιοί;
 εἰ γάρ σ’ ὡς ἐθέλοι φιλέειν γλαυκῶπις Ἀθήνη
 ὡς τότε Ὀδυσσεύς περικηδέτο κυδαλίμοιο
 δῆμψ ἐνὶ Τρώων, ὅθι πάσχομεν ἄλγε’ Ἀχαιοί— 220
 οὐ γάρ πω Ἴδον ὠδε θεοὺς ἀναφανδὰ φιλεῦντας
 ὡς κείψ ἀναφανδὰ παρίστατο Παλλὰς Ἀθήνη—
 εἰ σ’ οὕτως ἐθέλοι φιλέειν κῆδοιτό τε θυμῷ,
 τῷ κέν τις κείων γε καὶ ἐκλελάθοιτο γάμοιο.”
 Τὸν δ’ αὖ Τηλέμαχος πεπνυμένος ἀντίον ηῦδα· 225
 “ὦ γέρον, οὐ πω τοῦτο ἔπος τελέεσθαι δῖω·
 λίην γὰρ μέγα εἶπες· ἄγη μ’ ἔχει. οὐκ ἂν ἐμοί γε
 ἐλπομένῳ τὰ γένοιτ’, οὐδ’ εἰ θεοὶ ὡς ἐθέλοιεν.”
 Τὸν δ’ αὖτε προσέειπε θεὰ γλαυκῶπις Ἀθήνη·
 “Τηλέμαχε, ποῖόν σε ἔπος φύγεν ἕρκος ὀδόντων;
 230
 ῥεῖτα θεός γ’ ἐθέλων καὶ τηλόθεν ἄνδρα σαώσαι.
 βουλοίμην δ’ ἂν ἐγὼ γε καὶ ἄλγεα πολλὰ μογήσας
 οἴκαδέ τ’ ἐλθέμεναι καὶ νόστιμον ἦμαρ ἰδέσθαι,
 ἦ ἐλθῶν ἀπολέσθαι ἐφέστιος, ὡς Ἀγαμέμνων
 ὦλεθ’ ὑπ’ Αἰγίσθοιο δόλψ καὶ ἧς ἀλόχοιο. 235
 ἀλλ’ ἦ τοι θάνατον μὲν ὁμοῖον οὐδὲ θεοὶ περ
 καὶ φίλψ ἀνδρὶ δύνανται ἀλαλκέμεν, ὅπποτέ κεν δῆ
 μοῖτ’ ὀλοή καθέλῃσι τανηλεγέος θανάτοιο.”

The above passage continues to exercise the commentators; the problem turns on whether καὶ τηλόθεν at verse 231 is to be construed with θεός, with ἄνδρα, or with σαώσαι, and whether σαώσαι means “save” or “bring to safety.” Meter is of no use to us here, since in early Ionic hexameter poetry sense pauses occur roughly twelve percent of the time after the strong caesura, nine percent after the weak, and eleven percent after the bucolic diaeresis.¹ In 3.231 adverbial καὶ follows the strong caesura and ἄνδρα σαώσαι the diaeresis, so that on purely metrical grounds a sense pause is possible at either juncture.

Linguistic parallels from Homer are also inconclusive.² The adverb τηλόθεν properly means “from afar” and since Greek adverbs only distinguish between

1. M. L. West, *Greek Meter* (Oxford, 1982), p. 36. For a detailed review of the Iliadic material cf. also C. Higbie, *Measure and Music* (Oxford, 1990), chap. 4 and tables.

2. For the language of the verse, cp. Semonides frag. 42 (West): ῥεῖτα θεοὶ κλέπτουσιν ἀνθρώπων νόον, and for West’s proposed emendations of the fragment in his apparatus criticus cf. R. Renehan, “The Early

"near" and "far" τηλόθεν also implies a path linking these two points. There are sixteen instances of τηλόθεν in Homeric epic. It occurs eight times with verbs of motion, ἔρχομαι (*Il.* 1.270, 5.651, *Od.* 9.273, 13.237, 19.28), ἦκω (*Il.* 5.478), ἰκάνω (*Od.* 7.25), and ἰκνέομαι (*Il.* 18.208). On three occasions from the Iliadic catalogue of ships a verb of motion is implied (*Il.* 2.849, 857, 877). Τηλόθεν is twice used εἰς as a predicate adverb, at *Odyssey* 6.312 ἵνα νόστιμον ἦμαρ ἴδῃαι / . . . εἰ καὶ μάλα τηλόθεν ἐσσί and at 7.194 ἦν πατρίδα γαῖαν ἴκηται / . . . εἰ καὶ μάλα τηλόθεν ἐστί. These last two examples can be used to support the construction θεός + τηλόθεν οὐ ἄνδρα + τηλόθεν. However, *Odyssey* 3.231 would then refer to a god or man who is "from far away," and it is difficult to see the point of claiming that even a foreign god can save a man, or that a god can even save a foreigner. The predicate construction is only plausible if we equate τηλόθεν with τηλόθι as the lexicographers have done at *Iliad* 23.359.³ As we shall presently see, however, there is no compelling reason to interpret the Iliadic verse in this manner, so that its value as a comparandum is questionable.

In each of the above passages, "far" is the subject's homeland, "near" is his current location, and the subject himself traverses the path.⁴ Somewhat different is the use of τηλόθεν with a transitive verb (*Il.* 23.359, *Od.* 3.231, 5.283). The clearest example is provided by *Odyssey* 5.283, where Poseidon catches sight of Odysseus on his raft: τὸν . . . / τηλόθεν ἐκ Σολύμων ὀρέων ἴδεν. In this case "far" designates the location of the subject, "near" that of the object, and it is the subject's vision rather than the subject himself that traverses the path. *Iliad* 23.359 can be similarly understood: σήμηνε δὲ τέρματ' Ἀχιλλεὺς / τηλόθεν ἐν λείῳ πεδίῳ, παρὰ δὲ σκοπὸν εἶσεν / ἀντίθεον Φοῖνικα. Achilles and the other Greeks thus gaze from the starting block to the turning-post in the direction indicated by his gesture. The adverb τηλόθεν reanchors the perspective at the turning-post, which is the location of the next event. On the strength of the two Homeric parallels involving τηλόθεν with transitive verbs, *Odyssey* 3.231 could be understood to mean that the gods can extend their influence over a great distance so as to save a man.

A peculiarity of σαώω makes another interpretation possible. The verb often implies motion to a place of safety along a path designated by an adverb or prepositional phrase.⁵ In Homer this is true of twenty percent of the passages in which the verb occurs (11/55). There are five cases in which such adverbial expressions specify the place of safety to which the object is brought (*Il.* 5.224, 17.453, 17.692, 19.402, *Od.* 5.453). On seven other occasions they specify the source of danger from which the object is rescued (*Il.* 5.469, 11.752, 17.452, 21.274, 22.175, *Od.* 4.753,

Greek Poets: Some Interpretations." *HSCP* 87 (1983): 8-9. I wish to thank the anonymous reader for alerting me to this parallel.

3. H. Liddell and R. Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*⁹, rev. ed. by H. Jones and R. McKenzie (Oxford, 1940), and R. Cunliffe, *A Lexicon of the Homeric Dialect* (London, 1924), both s.v. τηλόθεν. H. Frisk, *Griechisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* (Heidelberg, 1954-73), s.v. τῆλε renders τηλόθεν with "aus (ir.) der Ferne," while P. Chantraine, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque* (Paris, 1968-80), s.v. τῆλε only admits the meaning "de loin."

4. At *Il.* 18.208, ὡς δ' ὅτε καπνὸς ἰὼν ἐξ ἄστεος αἰθέρι' ἴκηται / τηλόθεν ἐκ νήσου, the subject is inanimate but the principle remains the same.

5. Σαώω is coordinated with a verb of motion at *Il.* 11.828 ἐμὲ . . . σαώσωσιν ἄγων ἐπὶ νῆα, 12.123 ἐκ πολέμου φεύγοντα σαώσασιν μετὰ νῆας, *Od.* 9.430 τῷ δ' ἐτέρω ἐκάτερθεν ἴτην σώωντες ἑταίρους, and 10.473 σαωθήναι καὶ ἰκέσθαι / οἴκον ἐξ ὑπόροφον.

21.309). If we interpret *Odyssey* 3.231 along these lines, then the motion designated by τηλόθεν constitutes the action of the main verb, so that it is not the god's influence that traverses the path but the ἀνὴρ, who is brought to safety from a foreign land identified as a source of danger.

The grammar of *Odyssey* 3.231 can only be explained in terms of its narrative context. Unfortunately, the passage in which the verse occurs is no less ambiguous than the verse itself. In 232–38 Athena clearly alludes to Odysseus, to whom the ἀνὴρ of 231 should then also refer. However, if we interpret the verse to mean that a god who is willing could bring Odysseus home, then it would seem to be "quite irrelevant to what Telemachus has just said."⁶ Thus, Aristarchus apparently held that ἄνδρα refers to Telemachus. As a consequence, he athetized 232–35 as lacking a logical connection to the preceding narrative and 236–38 as contradicting 231.⁷ Predictably Aristarchus has been followed by modern Analysts such as Bethe, who pronounced 3.195–248 "eines der kummerlichsten Stücke unserer *Odyssee*."⁸

Unitarian scholars generally connect τηλόθεν with ἄνδρα or σῶσαι and identify the ἀνὴρ as Odysseus. Merry-Riddell, for example, argue that "τηλόθεν cannot be referred to θεός," and conclude from the linguistic evidence that constructions with ἄνδρα or σῶσαι are equally defensible.⁹ The argument against θεός rests on two points: first that it is not "the manner of the Homeric gods to help without being present," and second that "whereas Telemachus' difficulty was to conceive that the gods would or could bring his father home after so long an absence, and from some unknown place, it would be no answer to him to say that a god can help without personal presence."¹⁰ By the logic of this second objection 226–28 either refer to the prospect of Odysseus' return or Athena ignores Telemachus altogether. On the other hand, if 226–28 refer to Odysseus, then Telemachus either ignores 218–24 or they refer to Odysseus' return as well.

Similar arguments are to be found in Ameis-Hentze, who construe τηλόθεν with σῶσαι and interpret 218–24 as alluding to Odysseus so as to connect them with 231: "εἴ σ' οὕτως ἐθέλοι φιλέειν indem sie den Odysseus zurückkehren liebe (216). Eben hierauf bezieht sich gleich nachher Telemachs Zweifel und dessen Zurückweisung durch Athene (231)."¹¹ Hartmut Erbse likewise assumes that 218–24 are spoken in reference to Odysseus, but translates τηλόθεν with ἄνδρα: "Ein Gott kann, wenn er nur will, auch einen in weite Fernen Verschlagenen erretten."¹² William

6. S. West, *A Commentary on Homer's Odyssey*. Vol. I: *Introduction and Books i–viii* (Oxford, 1988), ad 3.231.

7. Cf. West, *Commentary*, ad 3.231, whose interpretation of Aristarchus' athetesis is surely correct.

8. E. Bethe, *Homer Dichtung und Sage II: Odyssee, Kyklos, Zeitbestimmung* (Leipzig, 1922), p. 25. Objected to by H. Erbse, *Beiträge zum Verständnis der Odyssee*, *Untersuchungen zur antiken Literatur und Geschichte* 13 (Berlin, 1972), p. 134, n. 53. Approved by D. Page, *The Homeric Odyssey* (Oxford, 1955), p. 175, who concludes that "it is difficult, perhaps impossible, to make sense of the vulgate text from 216 onwards."

9. W. Merry and J. Riddell, eds., *Homer: The Odyssey, Books 1–12* (Oxford, 1880), ad 3.231. For τηλόθεν + ἄνδρα they cite *Od.* 6.312 and 7.193, and for τηλόθεν + σῶσαι *Od.* 21.309.

10. Merry-Riddell, *Odyssey*, ad 3.231, who follow the arguments against θεός + τηλόθεν advanced by G. Nitzsch, *Erklärende Anmerkungen zu Homer's Odyssee*, vol. 1 (Hannover, 1826), pp. 174–77.

11. K. Ameis and C. Hentze, *Homer's Odyssee 11, Gesang 1–6*. Auflage bearbeitet von Paul Cauer (Leipzig, 1920–40), ad 3.223.

12. H. Erbse, *Beiträge*, p. 137. Note that his translation is based on equating τηλόθεν with τηλόθι. For his interpretation of verses 228–38, cf. *ibid.*, p. 136: "Heimkehr des Odysseus—das wäre ein Beweis dafür, daß die Götter dem Sohn wohlwollen!"

Stanford, who translates 231 without mentioning the difficulties involved, reproduces some of its ambiguity: "σάωσαι: potential optative 1 aor. σάωω. 'Easily could a god, if willing, save a man even from far away', cp. 6, 312; 7, 194."¹³ The passages that he cites, however, are those used by Merry-Riddell to support taking τηλόθεν as a predicate adverb. Stephanie West notes that 231 has a proverbial ring and distinguishes between two interpretations: "(1) a god, if he will, can easily bring a man home even from a distant land; (2) a god, if he will, can even at a distance save a man."¹⁴ West concludes that "it may be wrong to ask which the poet really meant."¹⁵ On the other hand, West interprets 218–24 to mean that with Athena's support Telemachus could punish the suitors, and argues that Telemachus simply ignores these verses in 226–28: "Telemachus' reply picks up Nestor's reference to the possibility of Odysseus' return (not his concluding words)."¹⁶

West's interpretation of 226–28, like that of 218–24 by Merry-Riddell, Ameis-Hentze, and Erbse, and Aristarchus' athetesis of 232–38, are different solutions to a problem of logical continuity. If the ἀνὴρ of 231 refers to Telemachus, then as Aristarchus saw the verse follows naturally on 227–28, but 232–38 either lack a logical connection or are factually inconsistent with it. If, on the other hand, Odysseus is meant, then 232–38 follow naturally on 231, but it requires some ingenuity to find a connection between 231 and the preceding verses. Thus, Merry-Riddell, Ameis-Hentze, and Erbse treat Nestor's entire speech as a meditation on the prospect of Odysseus' return, while West argues that in 226–28 Telemachus responds to the explicit mention of his return in 216–17.

The solutions thus far proposed are unsatisfactory, although each is in some measure correct. In what follows I hope to show 1) that 218–24 are spoken in reference to Telemachus; 2) that Telemachus rejects not only the import of 218–24 but the premise of Nestor's entire speech; 3) that σάωσαι implies motion along a path specified by τηλόθεν; 4) that ἄνδρα refers to Odysseus; and 5) that 232–38 develop a line of thought introduced in 231. To this end it will be necessary to expand the contextual analysis to include a remark by Nestor that precipitates the entire discussion. In the preceding verses Nestor mentions that Agamemnon was killed by Aegisthus on his return from Troy, but that he was avenged by his son (3.193–98). He concludes his speech by encouraging Telemachus to emulate Orestes (3.199–200):

καὶ σὺ, φίλος, μάλα γὰρ σ' ὀρώω καλὸν τε μέγαν τε,
ἄλκιμος ἔσσι', ἵνα τίς σε καὶ ὀνηγόνων εὖ εἴπῃ.

Telemachus heard this story only two days before from Athena-Mentes, who concludes with these same lines of encouragement (1.301–2). There the point of the statement is clearly that Telemachus should prepare himself to adopt the role of avenger if his father proves to be dead. West, who represents a long tradition of

13. W. Stanford, ed., *The Odyssey of Homer*² (London, 1958), ad 3.231. Stanford's translation resembles that offered by D. Monroe, *A Grammar of the Homeric Dialect*² (Oxford, 1891), p. 272: "we rarely allow that a god can save even from afar."

14. West, *Commentary*, ad 3.231.

15. *Ibid.* Although I disagree with her ultimate conclusions, I believe that West rightly disregards the objections of Nitzsch and Merry-Riddell against τηλόθεν + θεός. In the context of a cosmology that typically associates divine influence with physical proximity, *Od.* 3.231 can be seen as a kind of boast: "the gods," says Athena, "are so powerful that they can protect their favorites even from a great distance."

16. West, *Commentary*, ad 3.226 ff.

Analytic scholarship on the passage in Book 3, finds that “the compliment of 199 is clumsy in this context, and it is hard to avoid seeing in Nestor’s advice a reference to the suitors, and thus an inept anticipation of 211 ff. . . . If 199–200 are removed, there seems to me nothing wrong with the end of this speech. . . .” Erbse denies that the suitors are meant on the grounds that Telemachus has yet to mention them and argues instead that Nestor merely offers Orestes as a role model.¹⁷

Yet in 211 Nestor indicates that he has already heard about the suitors (3.211–13):

ὦ φίλ', ἐπεὶ δὴ ταῦτά μ' ἀνέμνησας καὶ εἶπες,
 φασὶ μνηστῆρας σῆς μητέρος εἵνεκα πολλοὺς
 ἐν μεγάροις ἀέκητι σέθεν κακὰ μηχανάσθαι.

Verses 199–200 can thus be seen as an attempt to draw Telemachus out on a matter that Nestor suspects is the cause of his journey, but that he has thus far neglected to mention.

Be that as it may, Telemachus indicates to Nestor that he knows the story and understands its relevance (*Od.* 3.205–9):

αἱ γὰρ ἐμοὶ τοσσῆνδε θεοὶ δύναμιν περιθεῖεν,
 τίσασθαι μνηστῆρας ὑπερβασίης ἀλεγεινῆς,
 οἳ τέ μοι ὑβρίζοντες ἀτάσθαλα μηχανώονται.
 ἀλλ' οὐ μοι τοιοῦτον ἐπέκλωσαν θεοὶ ὄλβον,
 πατρί τ' ἐμῷ καὶ ἐμοί· νῦν δὲ χρῆ τετλάμεν ἔμψης.

Telemachus expresses the wish that the gods give him the strength to punish the suitors of Penelope just as Orestes had punished Clytemnestra’s suitor Aegisthus. He concludes with the dispirited remark that the gods have not fated such happiness either for himself or for his father: he will not repay the suitors because the gods have denied him the strength, Odysseus will not because they have denied his return. To this Nestor responds with 210–24. Verse 216, τίς δ' οἶδ', εἴ κέ ποτέ σφι βίας ἀποτίσεται ἐλθών, is directed at the implicit claim of 208–9 that Odysseus will not return to punish the suitors. In 219–22 Nestor offers the reassurance that whatever may have happened in the meantime Odysseus was the favorite of Athena at Troy. His words show that it is still reasonable to hope for Odysseus’ return, but they also bear directly on the question whether Athena, whose favoritism is regularly passed down from father to son, might be expected to support Telemachus as well.¹⁸

Ameis-Hentze interpret the wish contained in 218–24 to mean: if only Athena loved you as she loved your father at Troy, then she would bring Odysseus home to punish the suitors. Yet Athena showed her love for Odysseus by standing by him in a time of war. Surely the logic of the analogy implies that if Athena loved Telemachus as she had his father—that is openly with the goddess at his side—then Telemachus could rival his father’s exploits at Troy by defeating the suitors himself. Thus, in verses 218–24 Nestor repeats his earlier encouragement at 199–200, and he does so by echoing Telemachus’ own wish that the gods enable him to punish the suitors. Ameis-Hentze’s tortured reading of these verses is based solely on an attempt to reconcile them with 231 and makes the bulk of Nestor’s speech a

17. Erbse, *Beiträge*, p. 135.

18. Cf. M. P. Nilsson, *The Minoan-Mycenaean Origin of Greek Mythology*² (Lund, 1950), pp. 490–500; cf. also idem, *Geschichte der griechische Religion*² (Munich, 1961), pp. 345–47.

reply to a one-word reference to Odysseus at 209. Instead, by our interpretation Nestor responds in chiasmic order to each of the issues raised by Telemachus: his desire to oppose the suitors, his characterization of the gods as indifferent or malevolent, and his conviction that Odysseus is dead.

Nestor's response comprises two alternative scenarios: 216 leaves open the possibility that Odysseus is alive and will return to punish the suitors, while 218–24 are based on the assumption that he is dead.¹⁹ Thus, in 223–24 εἴ σ' οὕτως ἐθέλοι φιλέειν κῆδοιτό τε θυμῷ / τῷ κέν τις κείνων γε καὶ ἐκλεάθοιτο γάμοιο, Nestor envisions Athena offering Telemachus her support as he takes on the role of avenger himself. Whereupon Telemachus exclaims (3.226–28):

ὦ γέρον, οὐ πῶ τοῦτο ἔπος τελέεσθαι δῖω·
λίην γὰρ μέγα εἶπες· ἄγη μ' ἔχει. οὐκ ἂν ἐμοί γε
ἐλπομένῳ τὰ γένοιτ', οὐδ' εἰ θεοὶ ὧς ἐθέλοισιν.

West solves the problem of continuity by making these verses apply to 216–17 rather than 218–24. This is more elegant than the solution proposed by Ameis-Hentze, yet several factors weigh against it. First is the absence of any kind of marker to indicate that Telemachus aims his reply at a specific pair of verses in the middle of Nestor's speech. West's explanation is, moreover, designed to resolve a problem that is not yet apparent, so that it is based on interpretative strategies more natural to a reading as opposed to a listening public.²⁰ Nestor's "concluding words," as West puts it, also comprise fully half of his speech and require Telemachus to consider opposing the suitors himself. Are we to imagine that Telemachus simply ignores an issue that has been urged on him repeatedly and touches him so closely? Finally, the language of λίην γὰρ μέγα εἶπες· ἄγη μ' ἔχει more easily refers to Telemachus' incredulity at the prospect of killing over a hundred men in their prime rather than the prospect of Odysseus' return under wholly uncertain circumstances.²¹ As it happens, the phrase occurs only twice in Homer and this is clearly its meaning in the second passage. When Odysseus suggests that he and Telemachus might be able to punish the suitors alone, Telemachus replies once more with:

ὦ πάτερ, ἦ τοι σεῖο μέγα κλέος αἰὲν ἄκουον
· · · · ·
ἀλλὰ λίην μέγα εἶπες· ἄγη μ' ἔχει· οὐδέ κεν εἴη
ἄνδρε δύω πολλοῖσι καὶ ἰφθίμοισι μάχεσθαι.
[16.241–44]²²

19. Nestor's silence on this issue can be seen as an indication of his tact.

20. I choose my words carefully here. Although the debate on the orality of Homer continues unabated there can be no question that the Homeric epics were composed for a listening public. I say this notwithstanding the recent arguments of R. Bellamy, "Bellerophon's Tablet," *CJ* 84 (1989): 290–307, on which cf. the responses by G. Goebel, D. Miller, and R. Bellamy, *CJ* 85 (1990): 170–83. This is not to deny the genuine obscurity of the passage before us; a listening public could hardly have sorted out except in the most general way the sequence of thought. Note, however, that by my interpretation Telemachus' response to Nestor also operates on a "general" level (see below).

21. This objection also applies to the interpretation of Ameis-Hentze and Erbse.

22. These are the only two occurrences of λίην μέγα εἶπες in Homer. The word ἄγη occurs three times in Homer, always in the phrase ἄγη μ' ἔχει and occupies the same metrical slot. In its third occurrence, *Il.* 21.221, Scamander uses the phrase to express his awe at the number of men killed by Achilles in his revenge on Hector.

It is here that the problem of logical continuity becomes acute, for what is the sense of Athena's reply: *ρεῖτα θεός γ' ἐθέλων καὶ τηλόθεν ἄνδρα σαώσαι*? A solution to this difficulty can be based on the fact that Nestor's speech has a single overriding message: there are still grounds for hope that Telemachus may yet be rid of the suitors. Telemachus thus responds to and rejects the import of the entire speech with the collective expression: *οὐ πῶ τοῦτο ἔπος τελέεσθαι οἴω* (226).²³ The phrase *λίην γὰρ μέγα εἶπες· ἄγη μ' ἔχει* (227) likewise applies to the notion that anyone could rid the house of the suitors, be it Telemachus or even Odysseus himself. Our interpretation is further encouraged by the construction of 227–28, in which the demonstrative plural *τά* can refer to both of the scenarios offered by Nestor:

*λίην γὰρ μέγα εἶπες· ἄγη μ' ἔχει. οὐκ ἂν ἐμοί γε
ἐλπομένῃ τά γένοιτ', οὐδ' εἰ θεοὶ ὦς ἐθέλοιεν.*

Telemachus declares: "these things won't happen, not if I should wish it, nor even if the gods should wish it; Odysseus will not return to kill the suitors and I could not possibly kill them myself."

By denying that his father could return to kill the suitors "even if the gods should wish it" (228), Telemachus echoes his earlier claim that Odysseus is dead (209). Athena's reprimand at 231, *ρεῖτα θεός γ' ἐθέλων καὶ τηλόθεν ἄνδρα σαώσαι*, echoes the language of 228, *οὐδ' εἰ θεοὶ ὦς ἐθέλοιεν*, in order to refute Telemachus' denial with a manifesto on the scope of divine power. In so doing Athena selects the first of the scenarios offered by Nestor for ridding the house of the suitors, namely the return of Odysseus, although like Telemachus' denial her refutation applies to both: Odysseus will return, and yes she does love Telemachus as she loved his father at Troy. In fact, she is even now standing at his side! On the other hand, if *ἄνδρα* alludes to Odysseus, then *σαώσαι* implies motion along the path specified by *τηλόθεν*, since at this moment Odysseus needs to be brought safely home rather than saved from present danger in a far-off land.

Once 231 is seen as referring to the first of Nestor's scenarios, then 232–33 follow naturally upon it. In 216–17 Nestor imagines Odysseus as returning home to punish the suitors. In 231 Athena affirms that it is in the power of the gods to guarantee Odysseus' return. She then favorably compares the fate of a man who returns safely after suffering hardships to that of Agamemnon. Verses 232–33 repeat the return-scenario contained in 231 to provide a composite description of Odysseus, who will reach home in safety (231 and 232), by the will of the gods (231), after suffering hardships (232). For the comparison to work we must also assume that the character who returns after suffering manages to avoid the fate of Agamemnon. This is of course what happens to Odysseus and precisely because Athena *κείνη ἀναφανδὰ παριστήσῃ* as she had at Troy (222). The fate of Agamemnon in 234–35 thus continues the description of Odysseus by way of contrast: Odysseus will return and avenge himself on the suitors of his wife, *σφι βίας ἀποτίσεται ἐλθὼν* (216), unlike Agamemnon who returned and was killed by his wife and her suitor, *ἐλθὼν ἀπολέσθαι ἐφέστιος* (234). The strength of the analogy may explain the

23. For a semantics of *ἔπος* in Homer, cf. R. Martin, *The Language of Heroes: Speech and Performance in the Iliad* (Ithaca, 1989), esp. pp. 12–14. His definition of *ἔπος* as "an utterance . . . focusing on message, as perceived by the addressee" (p. 12), is of some relevance in this connection.

somewhat inappropriate use of ἐφέστιος in 234, since as West remarks Agamemnon was killed in the home of Aegisthus.²⁴

Of course Telemachus cannot know that Odysseus will return, and as we have seen he implies that his father is dead with οὐκ ἂν ἐμοί γε / ἐλπομένῳ τὰ γένοιτ', οὐδ' εἰ θεοὶ ὦς ἐθέλοιεν (227–28). Athena thus admits for the sake of argument that Telemachus would be right if the fates have ordained his father's death, for θάνατον . . . οὐδὲ θεοὶ περ / καὶ φίλῳ ἀνδρὶ δύνανται ἀλαλκόμεν (236–37). Telemachus demonstrates his awareness that Odysseus is meant: κείνῳ δ' οὐκέτι νόστος ἐτήτυμος, ἀλλὰ οἱ ἤδη / φράσσαντ' ἀθάνατοι θάνατον (241–42). Athena's departure from Pylus in the manner of a bird provides graphic confirmation of Nestor's wish that the goddess love Telemachus as she had his father at Troy and adds the assurance that she will stand by him ἀναφανδὰ (371–72). Her very confirmation moreover serves as a kind of imperative, since the conditions have been met under which Telemachus might himself expect to oppose the suitors. A reflective Telemachus could also find in Athena's reprimand at 231–35 the further assurance that his long-suffering father will return from a distant land, after suffering many hardships, but will avoid the fate of Agamemnon.²⁵

ERWIN COOK

University of Texas at Austin

24. West, *Commentary*, ad 3.234.

25. I wish to thank M. Edwards and A. Riggsby for their insightful comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

ODYSSEY 19.535–50: ON THE INTERPRETATION OF DREAMS AND SIGNS IN HOMER

In the nineteenth book of the *Odyssey*, Penelope speaks of her troubling dilemma to the disguised Odysseus: should she continue to wait for her husband or should she marry one of the suitors? Telemachus' coming of age is making it increasingly difficult for her to postpone a second marriage, and yet she feels shame before the bed of her husband and the talk of the people. After dwelling on her dilemma in some detail, Penelope shifts direction, asking the beggar to listen to a dream and to interpret it (*Od.* 19.535–50):

ἀλλ' ἄγε μοι τὸν ὄνειρον ὑπόκριναὶ καὶ ἄκουσον.
 χῆνές μοι κατὰ οἶκον εἰκοσι πυρὸν ἔδουσιν
 ἐξ ὕδατος, καὶ τέ σφιν λαίνομαι εἰσορόωσα·
 ἐλθὼν δ' ἐξ ὄρεος μέγας αἰετὸς ἀγκυλοχειλίης

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πᾶσι κατ' αὐχένας ἦξε καὶ ἔκτανεν· οἱ δὲ κέχυντο
 ἄρθροι ἐν μεγάροις, ὃ δ' ἐξ αἰθέρα διαν ἀέρθη. 540
 αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ κλαῖον καὶ ἐκώκυον ἔν περ ὄνειρφ.
 ἀμφὶ δ' ἔμ' ἠγερέθοντο εὐπλοκαμίδες Ἀχαιοί,
 οἴκτρ' ὄλοφυρομένην ὃ μοι αἰετὸς ἔκτανε χῆνας.
 ἄψ δ' ἔλθων κατ' ἄρ' ἕζετ' ἐπὶ προὔχοντι μελάρῳ,
 φωνῇ δὲ βροτῆ κατερήτυε φώνησέν τε· 545
 "θάρσει, Ἰκαρίου κούρη τηλεκλειτοῖο·
 οὐκ ὄναρ, ἀλλ' ὕπαρ ἐσθλόν, ὃ τοι τετελεσμένον ἔσται.
 χῆνες μὲν μνηστῆρες, ἐγὼ δέ τοι αἰετὸς ὄρνις
 ἦα πάρος, νῦν αὖτε τεὸς πόσις εἰλήλουθα,
 ὃς πᾶσι μνηστῆρσιν ἀεικέα πότμον ἐφήσω."

Odysseus responds unhesitatingly. He states that it is impossible to interpret the dream by bending (it) aside in some other direction (ἄλλη ἀποκλίναντ').¹ Odysseus himself has told her how it will be and the suitors will all be destroyed. The dream offers the key to its own interpretation, an interpretation that subsequent events reveal to be the correct one. Indeed, given how explicitly the dream enunciates its own message, Penelope's request that the beggar interpret it seems overly cautious.

Despite Odysseus' confident words, there is one element of the dream that has seemed to scholars to require explanation: Penelope's extravagant response to the slaughter of her geese in the dream at lines 541–43.² She weeps (κλαῖον) and wails (ἐκώκυον), mourning pitifully (οἴκτρ' ὄλοφυρομένην); the sympathetic action of the Achaian women in gathering around her likewise calls attention to her grief. What is the significance of this element of the dream? Why does the poet include it?³

Attempts to put a Freudian interpretation on the dream whereby Penelope's tears signal a repressed regard for the suitors have rightly been criticized by scholars working on dreams in antiquity.⁴ Several scholars have pointed out that the modern notion of dreams as a repository of unconscious desires that are encoded symboli-

1. ἀποκλίναντ' might be taken intransitively "bending aside (oneself)," i.e., "avoiding, dodging," (A. H. M. Kessels, *Studies on the Dream in Greek Literature* [Utrecht, 1978], p. 122, n. 44), or transitively with the dream as the understood object, i.e., "twisting or distorting the meaning of the dream" (R. B. Rutherford, ed., *Homer: Odyssey, Books XIX and XX* [Cambridge and New York, 1992], pp. 195–96). In any case, the phrase must indicate some kind of evasion or distortion of meaning.

2. M. A. Katz, *Penelope's Renown: Meaning and Indeterminacy in the Odyssey* (Princeton, 1991), p. 146, offers a helpful summary of different positions held by scholars on the dream and related bibliography. For discussion of Penelope's tears specifically, see also E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1951), p. 123, n. 21; Rutherford, *Odyssey XIX and XX*, pp. 194–95.

3. Or "why does Penelope include it?", if, with Winkler and others, we wish to read the dream as a fiction concocted by Penelope to communicate covertly with the beggar. (J. J. Winkler, "Penelope's Cunning and Homer's," in *Constraints of Desire: The Anthropology of Sex and Gender in Ancient Greece* [New York and London, 1990], p. 153.) My reading does not exclude our imagining that Penelope has invented the dream.

4. For arguments for the Freudian interpretation, see bibliography cited in Kessels, *Studies on the Dream*, pp. 118–19, n. 27; also J. Russo, "Interview and Aftermath: Dream, Fantasy, and Intuition in *Odyssey* 19 and 20," *AJP* 103 (1982): 4–18 and idem, *A Commentary on Homer's Odyssey*, vol. 3 (Oxford, 1992), p. 102. For criticisms, see Kessels, esp. pp. 93–95, and Rutherford, *Odyssey XIX and XX*, pp. 194–95. Other recent interpreters (e.g., N. Felson-Rubin, "Penelope's Perspective: Character From Plot," in *Homer: Beyond Oral Poetry. Recent Trends in Homeric Interpretation*, ed. J. M. Bremer, I. J. F. de Jong, and J. Kalff [Amsterdam, 1987], pp. 72–74, and Katz, *Penelope's Renown*, pp. 146–47) read Penelope's sorrow as affection for the suitors without invoking the notion of repression. But this line of interpretation implicitly depends on Freudian assumptions, for Penelope never acknowledges affection for the suitors and openly wishes for their death (*Od.* 17.545–47). And the *obvious* surface meaning of the text is that she mourns for her geese.