Gender and Internal Audiences in the Odyssey

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GENDER AND INTERNAL AUDIENCES IN THE *ODYSSEY*

The *Odyssey* portrays a number of epic performances, and thus puts before us a range of internal audiences, i.e., audiences consisting of characters in the poem itself.[1] Most of these are exclusively male, and on several of the rare occasions when females are present, their responses are discounted or said to require male confirmation. Yet Odysseus can be seen to address portions of his own "epic performance" to the queen of the Phaeacians, and in Book 23, he gives a similar account of his adventures to Penelope alone. Odysseus is thus portrayed as breaking a pattern by including women in his audience. After surveying the evidence for this portrayal, I will argue that it is part of a narrative strategy to include women in the implied audience of the poem. I will conclude by considering the implications of this inclusion for female members of the actual (external) audience.

In surveying the portrayal of internal audiences, I have focused on performances by professional bards, but have also included speeches which, like Odysseus' account of his wanderings, are explicitly compared to bardic performances, or whose content is elsewhere identified as a theme for epic song. I feel justified in including these speeches in my survey chiefly because Odysseus' own narrative, by its insertion into the epic fabric, dramatically demonstrates the potential for overlap between epic performance and tales told by "non-professionals." All speeches reported in the *Odyssey* are necessarily "epic" in *form,* i.e., in diction and versification, but only a few are recapitulations of epic themes. I have not considered most of Odysseus' false tales, for example, because while clearly displaying the techniques of epic composition, they are strictly *ad hoc* improvisations for a single interlocutor, which serve purposes other than those of ordinary epic performance. I

[1] I would like to thank David Sider, George A. Kennedy, and the anonymous referees for their comments on earlier drafts of this paper.

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have included only speeches with a close enough resemblance to epic that the comparison might easily suggest itself to the audience of the monumental *Odyssey*. Some borderline cases, in which epic material is addressed to an "audience of one," will be considered as well. Of course we cannot assume that the *Odyssey* gives an accurate or complete account of the venues and audiences for Homeric epic.[2] What it does is to portray a *norm* for epic performance, which it then makes a point of breaking.

The usual occasion of bardic performance in the *Odyssey* is a feast at the home of a king. The audience consists of aristocratic males who are the invited guests of the king. Those invited by Athena to the court of Alcinous are described as "leaders and rulers of the Phaeacians" (Φαιήκων ἡγήτορες ἠδὲ μέδοντες, 8.11, 26, 97); twelve are further identified as "distinguished kings," ἀριπρεπέες βασιλῆες, 8.390.[3] There is no indication that the wives of these men are included in the invitation, or that they participate in the banqueting at the palace.[4] The guests also include fifty-two young sailors, chosen from among ὅσοι πάρος εἰσὶν ἄριστοι, "those who [have shown themselves] best in the past" (8.36)—

[2] I would not quarrel, for example, with W. G. Thalmann's suggestion that the epics may have been performed in a variety of settings, for a variety of audiences. See *Conventions of Form and Thought in Early Greek Epic Poetry* (Baltimore and London 1984) 119.

[3] Further confirmation that the Phaeacian audience is characterized as male may be found at 8.456 (where the banqueters for whom Demodocus and Odysseus will perform in Books 8–12 are referred to as ἄνδρας . . . οἰνοποτῆρας, "the men drinking their wine") and 13.7–15 (where Alcinous twice uses forms of ἀνήρ to refer to the audience, and equates those who drink "the wine of the elders," γερούσιον οἶνον, with those who listen to the bard, 8–9).

[4] I acknowledge that this is an argument *e silentio*. There is, however, a detailed description of the protocol involved in gathering Odysseus' guest-gifts (8.387–95, 417–48), in which one would expect some mention of the wives if they took part. Arete, as mistress of the *oikos* receiving Odysseus, is the only aristocratic woman involved in this transaction, and even she acts under the direct supervision of Alcinous. See Victoria Pedrick, "The Hospitality of Noble Women in the *Odyssey*," *Helios* n.s. 15 (1988) 85–101, esp. 91. If the reading ἔνεικαν is adopted at 4.623, the wives of banqueters in Menelaus' palace are thought of as "bringing" contributions of food (the usual reading—adopted by, e.g., Allen, Stanford, and Van Leeuwen—is ἔπεμπον, "sent"); but bringing food does not entail participation in the meal. It is true that just before the banquet at which Odysseus tells his tale, he encounters Nausicaa and the two say their farewells (8.457–68); but their encounter takes place as Odysseus is on his way from the bath to the banquet (456), and the description of Nausicaa positioning herself by the pillar and initiating the exchange suggests (especially after the account of her private supper with her nurse on the preceding evening, 7.7–13) that she does not frequent the banquet hall.

also presumably of noble birth. The games in the Phaeacian *agorē,* where Demodocus sings of Ares and Aphrodite, provide the only setting for bardic performance outside a king's palace, and even here the proceedings are under Alcinous' control. Participation in the games is explicitly limited to aristocrats (8.159–64); if we are meant to imagine other groups in the audience, there is no indication of this in the text.[5] The feasting of the suitors is irregular because they are not invited guests, but there can be no doubt about the class to which they belong. As described by Telemachus to Athena, they are the *aristoi* who hold power in Ithaca and the neighboring islands (1.245–48). Eumaeus, who informs Penelope that the "beggar" tells stories like a skilled bard (17.514–21), has obviously attended enough epic performances to make him something of a connoisseur. Yet he, like the female slaves who wait at table or those who spin with Helen and Arete,[6] must have been an "overhearer" rather than a member of the regular audience.[7] While it may seem, from the examples of Helen and Arete, that the mistress of the house should be considered a member of the regular audience, I will argue below that the evidence does not support this.

Speeches not by bards which incorporate epic themes are, like professional performances, almost always addressed to aristocratic males in banquet settings. These speeches include Nestor's account of

[5] It has been noted by Gregory Nagy (*The Best of the Achaeans* [Baltimore 1979] 17) and John Peradotto (*Man in the Middle Voice: Name and Narration in the Odyssey* [Princeton 1990] 111), among others, that the name of the bard Demodocus clearly means "received by the *dēmos,*" and is further glossed by the epithet λαοῖσι τετιμένος, "honored by the *laoi*" (8.472 and 13.28). Bards are also included by Eumaeus in a list of δημιοεργοί, "workers who serve the *dēmos,*" at 17.382–85. These details, plus the fact that Demodocus must be summoned to the palace of Alcinous (8.43–45), portray him as something more than a mere retainer of the king; but in the epic as we have it there are no references to or descriptions of performances outside the palace milieu.

[6] Female servants, *amphipoloi,* or "housekeepers," *tamiai,* are described as serving food before or during bardic performances at 1.136–52 and 17.259–63. A group of *amphipoloi* are preparing to keep the torches supplied with fuel while Phemius sings for the suitors at 18.304–11. Finally, as attendants of the mistress, female servants spin in the *megaron*—on a regular basis, to judge by Nausicaa's comments at 6.305—during evening hours when bards might be expected to perform.

[7] In the hut, by contrast, Eumaeus is a privileged member of Odysseus' audience, one to whom a whole story—the story of the cloak—is addressed (14.459–511). Though ostensibly one of Odysseus' false tales, this story, like those of Helen and Menelaus in Book 4, has a true epic setting. Further, the reward Odysseus seeks from Eumaeus corresponds to the reward he earned from the Phaeacians for the tale of his adventures. For the implications of Eumaeus' inclusion in the internal audience, see note 45 below.

the *nostos Achaiōn* and Helen's and Menelaus' accounts of Odysseus' feats at Troy. Menelaus' account of episodes from his own *nostos,* addressed to Telemachus in private, parallels Odysseus' epic recital in many respects,[8] and its "audience of one" is a male of noble birth. The song of the Sirens, despite its other-worldly setting, is also epic in form and content, as Pietro Pucci has shown.[9] The Sirens address themselves to sailors, and thus only to males; the sample we are given of their song, addressed to Odysseus individually, explicitly appeals to a listener who himself aspires to the *kleos* of the aristocratic warrior.

The most typical audience reactions recorded in the epic are delight (usually expressed by a form of τέρπομαι, e.g., 4.17, 8.91, 17.385), attentive silence (1.325, 11.333, etc.), praise (1.351–52, 8.487–91, 9.3–4, cf. 11.367–68), and more tangible rewards for the bard, such as the choice cut of meat offered to Demodocus by Odysseus (8.474ff.) and the elaborate gifts added to Odysseus' ξεινήϊα after his "performance" (11.336–41, 13.13–14).[10] Twice the offer of reward is followed closely by a request that the bard continue his performance, and each time a specific theme is requested: thus Odysseus asks Demodocus for the tale of the Horse (8.492–98) and Alcinous asks Odysseus to describe his meeting with the shades of his dead comrades (11.370–72). The power to reward and the power to influence the singer's choice of theme are thus related. The person most likely to exercise these powers is the host, who invited the singer in the first place; but guests are also described as influencing the performance, as when "the best of the Phaeacians" press Demodocus to continue singing (8.90–91).

The many bardic performances described in the *Odyssey* thus permit us to form a composite picture of the membership and behavior of

[8] See Barry Powell, "Narrative Pattern in the Homeric Narrative of Menelaus," *TAPA* 101 (1970) 419–31, and John Peradotto (note 5 above) 35–38. Note that Penelope has to cajole Telemachus into giving her a summary of this account, 17.101–49.

[9] "The Song of the Sirens," *Arethusa* 12 (1979) 121–32. Ann Bergren has argued for the epic affinities of Helen's tale in Book 4; see "Language and the Female in Early Greek Thought," *Arethusa* 16 (1983) 79. Cf. also my forthcoming paper, "Sirens, Muses, and Female Narrators in the *Odyssey*."

[10] Eumaeus' loan of a cloak to the "beggar," in response to his tale of Odysseus at Troy (14.459–511), may be the most transparent case of a reward that is actively "fished for" by a storyteller. Aeolus' gift to Odysseus, preceded as it is by the summary of tales told by the hero, can be seen as analogous to the special rewards he receives in Scheria. In a more special case, Phemius asks Odysseus to spare him in the expectation of *future* services—as a kind of reward before the fact (22.345–49).

the *typical* audience in the world of the poem. This audience of aristocratic males is respectful of the bard and expresses admiration for his skill, but feels entitled to influence his performance by means of rewards and requests.

At several points the narrative calls attention, either directly or indirectly, to the fact that a bard's intended audience includes males but not females. An indirect example may be seen in Demodocus' song of Ares and Aphrodite in Book 8. The setting is the Phaeacian games, after Odysseus has been stung into revealing his athletic prowess. All participants in the games are of course male (Athena has disguised herself as a man, ἀνδρὶ δέμας ἐϊκυῖα, to report on the length of Odysseus' discus throw, 193–94), and the content of the song suggests an all-male audience as well. In fact, the song itself includes an "internal audience" of sorts: the gods who come to gape and laugh at the lovers caught *in flagrante delicto* (8.325–27). And here it is stated that the female gods "out of modesty stayed behind, each [at her own home]" (θηλύτεραι δὲ θεαὶ μένον αἰδοῖ οἴκοι ἑκάστη, 324). Demodocus' all-male audience is described as taking pleasure in the song (367–69), as the male gods have taken pleasure in the sight of the lovers and in the admission of Hermes that he would choose to sleep with Aphrodite under even more shameful conditions (335–43). As recent scholarship has shown,[11] Odysseus has special cause for pleasure at the song, which can be seen as an implicit compliment to him: Hephaestus' triumph, through cleverness, over the more handsome and swifter Ares reflects Odysseus' defeat of the handsome but thoughtless Euryalus, and the restitution made by Ares to Hephaestus anticipates that to be made by Euryalus to Odysseus.[12] This close correspondence between the song and its setting reinforces the implied comparison between the male gods as spectators in the song and the presumably all-male audience entertained by Demodocus.

A more direct piece of evidence for the exclusion of women from internal audiences for bardic performance can be found in Book 1. Here

[11] See especially Bruce Karl Braswell, "The Song of Ares and Aphrodite: Theme and Relevance to *Odyssey* 8," *Hermes* 110 (1982) 129–37; Harry G. Edinger, "The Lay of Demodocus in Context," *Humanities Association Review* 31 (1980) 45–52; S. Douglas Olson, "*Odyssey* 8: Guile, Force, and the Subversive Poetics of Desire," *Arethusa* 22 (1989) 135–45.

[12] The fact that Odysseus proceeds to praise Demodocus later in the same book, and to reward him with a choice cut of meat, may be seen in part as an acknowledgment of the bard's implicit compliment.

Penelope, overhearing Phemius' song of the *nostos Achaiōn,* comes down from her quarters to ask him to stop. Telemachus, however, rebukes her and sends her back to her "own work" (τὰ σ' αὐτῆς ἔργα κόμιζε, 1.356). He justifies his rebuke in a variety of ways: Zeus, and not the bard, is the cause of Penelope's grief (347–48); bards are wont to sing the most recent and popular songs (351–52); Odysseus was not the only one to lose his homecoming (354–55). Yet Telemachus' final point can be seen as excluding Penelope from the audience altogether, if it is the audience's prerogative to indicate satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the performance. "Speech (μῦθος) will be the men's concern—all men's, but mine above all, for mine is the power in this household" (358–59). Telemachus is claiming the pre-eminent right of the host-king to regulate the bard's performance. In striking contrast to Alcinous, however, who plays this same role in Book 8, Telemachus disregards the unhappiness of a listener. In Book 8 Odysseus, though overcome with emotion at the songs of Demodocus, never asks the bard to stop singing; instead, he seeks to hide his tears. Yet each time Alcinous perceives his guest's grief, he interrupts the performance (8.94–99 and 533–45).[13] Telemachus, it should be noted, has potential reasons for rebuking Penelope that have nothing to do with the propriety of her comments: he resents the ambiguous position in which she has placed him by refusing to remarry, and he has just been urged by Athena to take charge of the situation. Yet whatever motives are suggested by his position, it is the conventional separation of male and female spheres that he explicitly invokes.[14] Penelope accepts the rebuke and, though she does not stop grieving, leaves the hall (362–64).

When compared with the position of the mistress of a normal *oikos,* Penelope's position is admittedly irregular. It might be argued that if her husband were present, she would be expected to join the men in the *megaron,* as Helen and Arete do in Books 4, 7, and 11. Yet there is evidence that Helen and Arete enjoy a social freedom and prominence fully as exceptional as the constraint which the suitors impose on Penel-

[13] A similar response is forthcoming from Menelaus when Peisistratus complains that he is not fond of weeping after dinner (4.190–215).

[14] George Walsh also observes that in Telemachus' perspective "song need only please its male listeners" (*The Varieties of Enchantment* [Chapel Hill & London 1984] 6). It should be noted that while the different reactions to Penelope's and Odysseus' expressions of grief mark Penelope as falling outside the bard's audience, the fact that both husband and wife—and only they—weep at the songs about Troy marks them as like *one another.* See note 40 below.

ope's movements.[15] Even if the mistress' presence is to be seen as the norm, this would not mean that she was fully integrated into the masculine activities of the banquet. In fact, Arete and Helen are both described as spinning with their attendant women while the men eat and drink. What is more, when Arete, like Penelope in Book 1, seeks to exercise the listener's right to judge a performance, she is rebuked in similar, though more muted, terms.

In Book 11, when Odysseus interrupts his narrative, it is Arete who takes the initiative in praising his tale and offering to increase his guest-gifts. Echeneus, the oldest of the Phaeacian males (11.343), is the first to reply, and while he agrees with the queen, he refers the decision to Alcinous (as he has done in the earlier scene where Odysseus appealed directly to Arete, 7.142–61). Alcinous too agrees with the queen's proposition, yet in seconding it he puts a peculiar emphasis on his own authority as a king and as a male. In so doing, he uses the same formulaic language in which Telemachus had rebuked Penelope: πομπὴ δ' ἄνδρεσσι μελήσει / πᾶσι, μάλιστα δ' ἐμοί· τοῦ γὰρ κράτος ἔστ' ἐνὶ δήμῳ ("your escort will be a concern to the men, to all, but especially to me, for mine is the power in this community," 11.352–53). As Alcinous has none of Telemachus' reasons for asserting himself, the point of this speech would seem to be that it is unusual, and not quite acceptable, for a woman to intervene as Arete has done.[16]

Both Penelope and Arete are thus reminded, in similar terms, that the usual prerogatives of the audience—to request changes of theme and to reward good performances—are not properly their own. The similarity of wording between 1.358–59 and 11.352–53 underlines a similarity of situation between the two scenes.[17] The two exceptional fe-

[15] The exceptional nature of the honor and authority enjoyed by Arete is emphasized in Athena's introduction of her at 7.66–77. Helen's status as daughter of Zeus makes her equally exceptional, and may account for her restoration to full honor as wife of Menelaus (who will enjoy a privileged afterlife thanks to his ties with her, 4.561–69). See also the discussion of Arete and Helen by Marylin Arthur, "Early Greece: The Origins of the Western Attitude toward Women," in *Women in the Ancient World: The Arethusa Papers*, ed. John Peradotto and J. P. Sullivan (Albany 1984) 16–19.

[16] Victoria Pedrick (note 4 above) offers a compositional explanation for both the timing of the women's interventions and the rebukes of their male kin. I see her arguments as compatible with, and indeed complementary to, my own.

[17] In antiquity, Telemachus' words at 1.356–59 were athetized by some critics, who considered them lifted from the speech of Hector to Andromache at *Iliad* 6.490–93; if they belonged anywhere in the *Odyssey*, it was at 21.350–53, where Telemachus claims his

male characters who find themselves in this situation have much else in common. Most notably, while others imply that they are not full-fledged members of the usual epic audience, Odysseus makes a point of including them in the audience of his own narratives. This is most obvious in the case of Penelope, who is a privileged "audience of one" in Book 23 (306–9); but it can be inferred in the case of Arete by close attention to the construction of Book 11.[18] If one compares the two halves of the Nekuia, as divided by the interruption or "intermezzo" of 333–84, it will be seen that the first half focuses on Odysseus' meetings with the shades of exceptional women, while the second half features the shades of his male comrades and of other famous males. Further, whereas in the second half Agamemnon's condemnation of Clytemnestra is generalized to serve as a warning against all women, the first half, with its "catalogue of heroines," avoids or minimizes details that might stigmatize women as a group.[19] If we consider the "intermezzo" itself, it is Arete who speaks first, praising Odysseus for his tale up to that point, while it is Alcinous who goes on to request the account of the dead heroes. These two responses, differentiated along gender lines, suggest that here—as so often elsewhere in the poem—Odysseus has suited his presentation to specific listeners whom he is concerned to please. The first half of the Nekuia seems designed, at least in part, as a tacit compliment to Arete, as Demodocus' song of Ares and Aphrodite was designed as a compliment to Odysseus himself; and as Odysseus rewarded Demodocus, Arete seeks to reward Odysseus.

It is not merely Arete's physical presence, then, that makes her a member of the audience for Odysseus' narrative: she is *addressed* by

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right to decide who shall attempt the bow. (See scholia on 1.356.) Contemporary understandings of oral-formulaic composition have made it possible to accept all four passages in which the formula occurs; cf. Thalmann (note 2 above) 159 and 231, n. 2. The similarities I detect between the contexts of 1.356–59 and 11.352–53 are thus reinforced by the recurrence of the formula, which indicates a thematic link between the passages.

[18] For a fuller elaboration of the argument summarized in the following lines, see my paper, "The Internal and Implied Audiences of *Odyssey* 11," *Arethusa* 24 (1991) 145–76.

[19] Note, e.g., the avoidance of any mention of Helen and Clytemnestra as daughters of Leda (11.298–304), and the brevity with which "bad" women like Phaedra, Procris, and Eriphyle are mentioned (321, 326–27). The full and sympathetic portrait of Anticleia (152–224), like the "catalogue of heroines" which follows, seems designed to leave a positive impression of women in their traditional roles (primarily as mothers, but also as wives).

him, albeit indirectly. In other words, she is a member, and a privileged one, of the *implied* audience of Odysseus' tale. By portraying the reactions of Echeneus and Alcinous, the *Odyssey* poet reminds his audience that the privilege Odysseus extends to Arete is not one normally accorded to women, at least in the world of this poem. Odysseus is changing the rules as they are defined by other portrayals of bardic performance in the epic. Yet because of Odysseus' exceptional status as hero of the poem, and because of the praise and success which greet his own performances, his innovation appears acceptable and even inspired.

I should add that "innovation" may be the wrong word here. There is evidence—chiefly in the form of visual art—that women enjoyed greater public visibility in Minoan and Mycenaean times than in the archaic age.[20] We assume that many, though not all, archaic audiences were segregated by gender.[21] Since we have no evidence for the gender composition of audiences in the Dark Age, we cannot say whether Odysseus' inclusion of women would have been seen as an innovation or as a reversion to more ancient practice, like the use of bronze weapons and chariots in the *Iliad*. All that matters for my argument is that Odysseus' initiative should be seen as falling outside the norm established by the *Odyssey* itself.

It cannot be an accident that Odysseus' only full account of his adventures outside Books 9–12 (23.306–41) is addressed to Penelope after the couple's reunion.[22] This recapitulation has been seen by many critics as otiose and therefore spurious.[23] If it is considered in light of

[20] Several of the Knossos frescoes, of which the best known is the so-called "Grandstand fresco," portray women of the court as figuring prominently in the audience for an unidentified public performance or ritual. The audience contains men as well as women, and the seating areas, though contiguous, seem to be segregated by gender.

[21] It is important to consider audiences on a genre by genre basis. While non-choral—and some choral—archaic lyric seems addressed to segregated audiences, the Delian Hymn to Apollo (146–78) suggests that the audiences at religious festivals could include women. Sappho's close acquaintance with Homeric diction also suggests that she must have attended epic performances.

[22] This recital also follows *Penelope's* account of her resistance to the suitors, 23.300–305. Though hers is summarized more briefly, the fact that she has a story of her own to exchange with that of Odysseus is itself noteworthy. The simile of the shipwrecked sailors (23.233) contributes to the impression that Penelope's sufferings during the separation have been comparable to Odysseus' *nostos*. See note 40 below.

[23] See defenses of the passage by W. G. Thalmann (note 2 above) 231–32, n. 8 and Dorothea Wender (*The Last Scenes of the Odyssey* [Leiden 1978] 15–18). Wender cites the existence of comparable summaries in the *Iliad* (1.365–92 and 17.444–56). The narrator's

Book 1, however, a kind of symmetry appears. In Book 1, Penelope feels pain at the recital of a *nostos Achaiōn* which does not include Odysseus, and from whose audience she is excluded. In Book 23, Odysseus tells *his nostos* in full to her alone.[24] The detail in which it is summarized has one clear effect: the audience is made aware that Penelope is hearing essentially the same story told to the Phaeacians in Books 9–12. Comments of the epic narrator about the couple's postponement of sleep (23.308–9 and 342–43) suggest that the tale is told at length, as it was in Scheria (cf. 11.330–31 and 373–76). There is even a direct reference linking these two recitals: for Anticleia's shade is described as urging Odysseus to take note of what he sees in Hades "so that later [he] may tell it to [his] wife" (11.224).[25] The connection between the two recitals is further strengthened by the parallel I have noted between Penelope and Arete: in each case, Odysseus can be seen as including in his audience a woman whom others have excluded, either directly or by implication, from the normal audience for such tales.

There is one potential contrast between the circumstances of these two recitals. While Arete is included in a large audience hearing Odysseus' tale in a public performance setting, Penelope hears the tale in private, as an "audience of one." As a result, the second telling emphasizes the intimate personal bond between husband and wife rather than the intrinsically public *kleos* proceeding from their achievements.[26] Yet this contrast between the performances is diminished by the fact that in Book 11 Arete is the *only* woman in Odysseus' implied audience. Her response to the tale—ξεῖνος . . . ἐμός ἐστιν, "he is my guest," 11.338—suggests that she sees her bond of *xenia* with Odysseus as a personal one.

It may be significant that the tale addressed to women by Odysseus is that of his own *nostos*. For the monumental *Odyssey* is itself an

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reason for giving a summary here rather than a complete retelling is suggested by 12.450–53: τί τοι τάδε μυθολογεύω; / ἤδη γάρ τοι χθιζὸς ἐμυθεόμην ἐνὶ οἴκῳ / σοὶ καὶ ἰφθίμῃ ἀλόχῳ· ἐχθρὸν δέ μοί ἐστιν / αὖτις ἀριζήλως εἰρημένα μυθολογεύειν. Like his hero, the narrator avoids repeating a story already well told.

[24] This comparison was arrived at independently by myself and by W. G. Thalmann (note 2 above) 162.

[25] Odysseus also tells Penelope that he saw his mother in Hades (23.325).

[26] Dorothea Wender (note 23 above) 16 observes that some details of the summary in Book 23 suggest differences of emphasis intended to please Penelope (e.g., the truncated account of Circe and the omission of Nausicaa).

extended version of this same tale. Moreover, it is widely recognized that the *Odyssey* has a reflexive dimension; in other words, that it identifies its own hero with a bard and pays special attention to the ways in which bardic skill is exhibited and rewarded.[27] By allowing Odysseus to narrate one-sixth of the poem (Books 9–12), the narrator of the monumental epic further blurs the distinction between his hero and himself; he also blurs the distinction between the internal audience of Phaeacians and the implied audience of the epic as a whole.[28] It may thus be part of the poet's intention to portray *himself* as breaking a norm in order to include women in his audience. It is even conceivable that there was a particular woman or group of women whom he sought to compliment, and from whom he sought recognition and reward.[29] Such a hypothesis must remain speculative; but it is worth considering because it focuses our attention on the issue of *implied* audience.[30] We can imagine the narrator addressing "real" women because, by calling attention to his inclusion of females in the epic's *internal* audiences, he has included them in his own implied, or hypothetical, audience.

An examination of the *Odyssey*'s content and genre increases the plausibility of women's inclusion in its implied audience. A comparison between *Iliad* and *Odyssey* reveals that, however closely related in diction, composition, and ethos, the two epics display enormous differences of theme and plot structure. Especially if considered in light of later literature, they appear as the antecedents of quite different genres. And the genre which the *Odyssey* most clearly anticipates is the romance. Like the Hellenistic romances, it focuses on a central couple, who are kept apart for most of the plot by involuntary "wanderings." Their bond is tested by a variety of sexual temptations and assaults before they are reunited at the denouement. Though little is known about the audience for the Greek romances, it is reasonable to assume that it included women. There is evidence that an expanded number of Greek-speaking women had access to a literary education during the

[27] See especially James Redfield, "The Making of the Odyssey," in *Parnassus Revisited,* ed. Anthony Yu (Chicago 1973); W. G. Thalmann (note 2 above) 170–83.

[28] For a fuller version of this argument, see Doherty (note 18 above).

[29] A possible analogy from a later and better documented era is the implicit compliment to Arsinoe II in Theocritus 15. See Frederick Griffiths, "Home Before Lunch: The Emancipated Woman in Theocritus," in *Reflections of Women in Antiquity,* ed. Helene Foley (New York, Paris and London 1981).

[30] For the concept of the implied audience, see especially Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore and London 1978) 34–35.

Hellenistic and Roman periods.[31] Recent research has also identified in the texts of some romances indications that women are included in their implied audiences.[32] Some of the medieval European romances were addressed to, and even "commissioned" by, female patrons; Chrétien de Troyes' dedication of a romance to Marie de Champagne is a prominent example.[33] In more modern times, the romance plot has resurfaced in genres intended for an audience that likewise includes women—and that, in some cases, is composed exclusively of them (the audience of mass-market romances, for example). Contemporary critics of the various romance sub-genres have revealed the extent to which the romance plot "speaks to" women's fantasies and fears in a patriarchal context.[34] While it is clear that the *Odyssey* is addressed to males, and indeed primarily to them, its portrayal of females as listeners anticipates some features of the romance tradition.

The *Odyssey* narrator never addresses his implied audience directly. Yet by his portrayal of bardic performances, he implies a good deal about the relationship between poet and audience. In particular, he portrays that relationship as mutually beneficial: the singer entertains, and may compliment, his listeners, while the listeners offer the singer both praise and tangible rewards. In the context of live performance, an external audience would not need much imagination to extrapolate from the fictional situation and see its own response modeled for it. By dra-

[31] See, e.g., Sarah Pomeroy, "*Technikai kai Mousikai*: The Education of Women in the Fourth Century and in the Hellenistic Period," *AJAH* 2 (1977) 51–68; "Women in Roman Egypt," in Foley (note 29 above).

[32] Cf., e.g., Brigitte Egger, "Chariton and His Female Readers," paper presented at the annual meeting of the APA, December 1990.

[33] In his prologue to *Le Chevalier à la charrette*, Chrétien credits Marie with the choice of both "matière" (the adulterous love of Lancelot and Guenièvre) and "sens" (the favorable light in which this love is seen).

[34] See especially Tania Modleski, *Loving with a Vengeance* (Hamden, CT 1982) and Janice Radway, *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature* (Chapel Hill & London 1984). Brigitte Egger (note 32 above) does well to warn against collapsing the many distinctions to be drawn between works from such disparate historical and social contexts. Yet her own work testifies to the fruitfulness of certain focused comparisons. I would argue that the basic romance plot has intrinsic appeal for women in a broad range of patriarchal contexts, because while reaffirming the norm of an exclusive tie between husband and wife, it focuses on obstacles to that tie. Expectations as to the nature of both tie and obstacles will differ greatly from one age to another—hence the extraordinary range of the romance genre.

matizing its inclusion of women in its audience, the *Odyssey* likewise models *their* response: like Arete, they should be pleased, and consider their status enhanced by this inclusion. But it remains for us to ask: *cui bono*? The gesture of inclusion, especially when contrasted with the exclusionary norm voiced by Telemachus and Alcinous, seems to extend the sphere of female experience and activity. The modeling of a desired response, however, would seem to re-impose limits to that sphere. Do these two narrative gestures—the inclusion of female auditors and the modeling of their response—offset one another? Or does one prevail over the other? Is the ultimate effect to expand or to narrow the range of female activity predicated by the poem?

To answer this question we need to consider the characterization of the two females whom Odysseus deliberately includes in his audience.[35] Both are portrayed as unusually intelligent, and as wielding unusual power over males. Athena tells Odysseus that Arete resolves disputes "even for men" (καὶ ἀνδράσι, 7.74); both she and Nausicaa affirm that it is Arete whose favor Odysseus must win in order to guarantee his *nostos*. The suitors and Telemachus likewise perceive Penelope as controlling the situation in Ithaca. Both Arete and Penelope demonstrate their cleverness by testing Odysseus before declaring themselves his allies: Arete questions him about the clothing he is wearing, which she recognizes as coming from her household, and Penelope questions the "beggar" about the clothing worn by Odysseus on his way to Troy (19.216–18); later, of course, she tricks him into revealing the secret of their bed. In addition to exceptional intelligence and potential power over men, the figures of Arete and Penelope are characterized by marital fidelity, which the narrative presents as a source of great happiness to both. Odysseus' parting words to Arete (13.59–62) wish her joy of her household, her children, her people, and her husband. Like the hero's earlier words to Nausicaa (6.180–85), this speech seems designed to echo his own hopes for a happy homecoming and a reunion with Penelope. In Book 23, the famous simile of the shipwrecked sailors reaching land is introduced as if from Odysseus' point

[35] Circe might also be considered as an "audience of one" for Odysseus' adventures, in that she hears the account of the underworld journey (12.33–35). The fact that she is portrayed as a goddess makes her a special case, however. (Given her divine status, the parallels between her role and Penelope's are striking: each hears Odysseus' adventures from him in private, after proving herself his loyal helper.)

of view, but veers around at its conclusion to emphasize Penelope's: as land is welcome to the sailors, so her husband is a welcome sight to her (23.231–40). The emphasis in each passage is on the *woman's* satisfaction in her marriage—another nuance suggesting that the implied audience includes women.[36]

It can in fact be argued that Arete is a kind of "double" of Penelope, taking a role in the Phaeacian episode that corresponds to Penelope's role in the last third of the poem.[37] Both characters are portrayed as exercising some control over Odysseus' fate; aware of this, he exerts much ingenuity in courting their favor. In each case he succeeds in doing so. But there is an asymmetry between the two episodes, which involves the timing of Odysseus' tale of his adventures. When he tells his tale to Arete, he is not yet sure of her good will; by pausing after his account of the famous women in the underworld, he gives her a chance to acknowledge his implicit compliment, and she does so by declaring herself his ally. Penelope, by contrast, hears Odysseus' tale only after their reunion—in other words, after she has demonstrated her complete fidelity. Her inclusion in the audience is, as it were, her reward for that fidelity. The sense of a reward is enhanced by the contrast between her inclusion here and her previous exclusion from the audience for Phemius' song of the *nostoi*. The asymmetry with the Phaeacian episode also suggests a certain narrative logic: in the first case the hero solicits a woman's aid by his gesture of inclusion; in the second case he uses the gesture as a reward. Since the reunion with Penelope is a major object of the plot, the *reprise* of Odysseus' adventures in Book 23 carries special weight. By her cooperation, the heroine has made the happy ending possible; now she is portrayed as sharing in its enjoyment.

The fact that in each case one particular woman is addressed by Odysseus serves to further delimit the implied female audience of the epic. The *Odyssey* addresses males not only as individuals but also as allies and comrades of other males. It addresses females, by contrast,

[36] Samuel Butler was the first, to my knowledge, to remark on the fact that Arete's satisfaction with Alcinous, and not Alcinous' with Arete, is emphasized by Odysseus at 13.59–62. As is well known, he explained the emphasis by positing a female author. See Butler, *The Authoress of the Odyssey* (2nd ed. 1922; repr. Chicago 1967) 108.

[37] See especially Mabel Lang, "Homer and Oral Techniques," *Hesperia* 38 (1969) 159–68; D. Gary Miller, *Improvisation, Typology, Culture, and 'the New Orthodoxy'* (Lanham, MD 1982) 61–66.

as individual allies of individual males, and not as allies or associates of other females.[38]

It remains to consider the relationship between the implied female audience I have posited and actual female audiences of the poem. An implied audience is a critical construct; no actual persons belong to it. But great numbers of actual women, historically, have belonged to the audience of the *Odyssey*. Women of different eras have undoubtedly read the poem differently under the influence of their historical circumstances and of shifts in the prevailing gender ideology. Yet I believe that the text of the poem, with its attention to internal audiences, models a certain kind of female response. In his portrayal of Arete and Penelope, the narrator implicitly characterizes his ideal female listener as intelligent, chaste (i.e., faithful to a husband), and allied with the hero of the poem.[39] This constellation of traits simultaneously flatters the female listener—by implying that she too is intelligent—and elicits her assent to a model of female behavior. Because Odysseus' outstanding trait is his intelligence, there is a further suggestion of equality, or at least of commensurability, between male and female achievement.[40] Within a patriarchal frame of reference, this can be read as an extraordinary enhancement of female dignity. If we step outside the patriarchal frame, however, we will note that crucial differences remain between the kinds of activity permitted to males and females. The initiator of action is the male; the role of the female is to support the male and facilitate his action. There is also a double standard of sexual behavior, according to which Odysseus is considered "faithful" to Penelope despite two liaisons on the way home, yet she—and her female slaves, who would also

[38]The one exception to this is Anticleia's loyalty to Penelope, suggested by 11.181–84 and 223–24. The "catalogue of heroines," n.b., praises its litany of women for their ties to males (fathers, divine lovers, husbands, sons). Even relations between noble women and their female servants are strained in this poem. Cf. Victoria Pedrick, "Eurycleia and Eurynome as Penelope's Confidantes," (unpublished paper, 1991).

[39]Other female characters in the poem who combine the traits of intelligence and loyalty and/or temporary helpfulness to the hero are Athena, Circe, Ino, Nausicaa, and Eurycleia. It is true that some females who oppose Odysseus are also portrayed as intelligent, notably Helen and the Sirens (and Circe before she is defeated by the *moly*). But the great majority of intelligent female characters assist the hero.

[40]The "reverse similes," comparing Odysseus to female figures and Penelope to male ones, also contribute to this effect. See Helene Foley, "'Reverse Similes' and Sex Roles in the *Odyssey*," in Peradotto and Sullivan (note 15 above).

be fair sexual game for Odysseus according to the cultural norm—must remain completely celibate in his absence.[41]

I do not mean to argue that the *Odyssey* poet is consciously manipulating the female audience of the poem. If there was a conscious intent at all, it was probably to earn the good will of women listeners by including the figures of Arete and Penelope in Odysseus' audience. Yet for women in the poem's *actual* audience, the portrayal of these figures has the effect of eliciting identification with certain models of female propriety, and of emphasizing women's ties with men rather than with other women.

S. Douglas Olson has argued that one episode, at least, of the *Odyssey* works to subvert the sexual norms it otherwise seems to maintain. The song of Ares and Aphrodite, Olson suggests, has much in common with the plot of the *Odyssey* as a whole: "In each story, the hero returns from a journey to a distant land to find sexual disorder in his house. Despite serious disabilities, he emerges triumphant over his rival(s), by pitting his cleverness against their physical superiority."[42] These similarities to the plot of the *Odyssey* as a whole make it possible to see the song of Ares and Aphrodite as "a self-conscious and self-reflective poetic moment," in which "both the Phaeacians and the gods . . . stand in to some extent for the actual Homeric audience" (*ibid.*, p. 142). Though the overt message of the episode is that adultery is punished, Olson argues that the poet undercuts this message by portraying the gods as laughing at Hermes' admission that he would sleep with Aphrodite under even more shameful conditions. Given the parallels cited above between the song and the epic as a whole, the gods' laughter (and the responsive laughter of Odysseus and the Phaeacians at 8.367–69) can be seen as "subversive" because it undermines the stringent sexual code affirmed by the plot of the monumental *Odyssey*. At this point, however, we need to recall that females are implicitly excluded from the audience of Demodocus' song, which takes place at the games, and that the goddesses are likewise absent from the divine audience that laughs at Hermes, because they have refused, out of modesty, to witness the scene of adultery. If, then, the episode subverts

[41] The norm that made female slaves sexually available to their owners is taken for granted in the *Odyssey*; it is alluded to at 4.10–12 (Megapenthes is Menelaus' son by a slave woman) and 1.428–33 (Laertes never slept with Eurycleia, avoiding his wife's anger).

[42] Olson (note 11 above) 138. Some of these points were anticipated by Rick M. Newton, "Odysseus and Hephaestus in the Odyssey," *CJ* 83 (1987) 12–20.

the epic's impossibly high standards of sexual conduct, it does so from a male perspective.[43] As a result, the subversion is not suggested to the female audience, and does not extend to the double sexual standard.

It is important to distinguish between internal, implied, and actual audiences. But it is equally necessary to consider the relationships among them. The internal audience is made up of fictional characters moving in a world defined by the text of the *Odyssey*. The implied audience, though more elusive, is equally fictional, a construct based on the text—especially on its many signs of reflexivity.[44] But the reflexive gestures which evoke an implied audience also invite members of the actual audience to position themselves in specific ways. In the case of women listeners—and for many centuries now, women readers—the invitation is to identify with Arete and Penelope, the ideal women listeners to whom Odysseus addresses his story. It needs to be acknowledged that this identification is double-edged. While enhancing the self-worth of chaste aristocratic women,[45] and implying an equality of intelligence between them and their male partners, a woman's identification with Arete and Penelope also reinforces the patriarchal norms for female behavior to which these characters adhere.

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[43] Olson even suggests that at the end of the song, instead of admiring Hephaestus, "we find ourselves ogling his wife at her toilet (8.364–66)" (note 11 above) 143. If this is the intended effect, it would again suggest that the implied audience is male.

[44] See page 171 above and note 27.

[45] An issue I have not touched on here but which deserves fuller treatment is the way in which class contributes to the gender dynamics I have been discussing. Briefly, the poem appeals to the class solidarity among female and male aristocrats and thus obscures the similarities between aristocratic and slave women. Female readers are not invited to identify with the slave women, or even to consider the implications of their fate for Penelope had she consorted with any of the suitors. Though slave women thus seem to be excluded from the implied audience, I have noted that Eumaeus—a male of slave status, though of noble birth—hears an account of one of Odysseus' Trojan adventures (the tale of the cloak) from Odysseus himself. Moreover, the false tale of his wanderings which Odysseus tells to Eumaeus, and which Eumaeus compares to a skilled bard's performance (17.514–21), is clearly intended to *entertain* Eumaeus, and even suggests a commensurability—however temporary—between Odysseus' misfortunes and those of his slave. This gesture of inclusion may work like the inclusion of Arete and Penelope in Odysseus' audience, i.e., to flatter previously unrecognized members of the epic audience and simultaneously to reinforce their sense of the social roles they may properly play.