

Prace Filologiczne. Literaturoznawstwo 14(17) 2024  
ISSN 2084-6045; e-ISSN 2658-2503  
Copyright © Katarzyna Pietruczuk, 2024  
Creative Commons: Uznanie autorstwa 3.0 PL (CC BY)  
<https://doi.org/10.32798/pflit.1162>

## ESTABLISHING THE SINGER'S AUTHORITY IN THE *ODYSSEY*

O kreowaniu autorytetu pieśniarza w *Odysei*

KATARZYNA PIETRUCZUK  
Uniwersytet Warszawski, Polska  
E-mail: [k.pietruczuk@uw.edu.pl](mailto:k.pietruczuk@uw.edu.pl)  
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9900-2342>

### Abstract

In this paper, I discuss two passages of Book 8 of the *Odyssey* in which Demodocus the rhapsode performs songs on the Trojan war at the Phaeacian court in the presence of Odysseus, who is instantly featured in Demodocus' songs as a character and who comments on these songs at the same time. Having scrutinized the narrative structure of these scenes, I argue that they have been designed in such a way so as to invest Odysseus, an in-story character, with control both over the intra-diegetic narratees at Alcinous' court and the extra-diegetic Homeric narratees. By praising Demodocus' song and establishing his authority as a singer inspired by the Muse, Odysseus in fact enhances his own authority prior to taking on the role of the narrator in Books 9–12, where he tells the story of his return from Troy.

**Keywords:** Homer, *Odyssey*, the Muse, the rhapsode

### Streszczenie

Artykuł poświęcony jest dwóm ustępom z ósmej księgi *Odysei*, w których aoida Demodok przedstawia na dworze Feaków pieśni o wojnie trojańskiej w obecności Odysseusza – ich bohatera, który zarazem je ocenia. Analizując strukturę narracyjną tych scen, pokazuję, że zostały skonstruowane w taki sposób, aby dać Odysseuszowi, bohaterowi fabuły, kontrolę zarówno nad publicznością Feaków w świecie przedstawionym, jak i nad publicznością Homerycką. Chwaląc pieśń Demodoka i ustanawiając jego autorytet jako pieśniarza natchnionego przez Muzę, Odysseusz buduje w istocie własny autorytet przed przejęciem roli narratora w księgach 9–12, w których opowiada historię swojego powrotu spod Troi.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Homer, *Odyseja*, muza, aoida

One important reason why the elaborate narrative structure of Homer's *Odyssey* has been drawing scholars' attention since the second half of the twentieth century<sup>1</sup> is the presence of the so-called para-narratives<sup>2</sup> incorporated in the main body of the narrative for the sake of which internal narrators are introduced. A prominent position among them is famously given to Odysseus whose account of his adventures on the way back from Troy occupies four central books of the poem (Books 9–12). Along with Odysseus, the poet introduces two figures of *aoidoi* – Phemius (in 1.153 ff.; 17.260 ff.; 22.330 ff.) and the blind Demodocus (8.43 ff., 8.254 ff., 8.471 ff.) – singers, who, as poets within the main narrative, to some extent notoriously represent the poet himself, – the latter being introduced in a scene immediately preceding Odysseus' disclosure of his identity to the Phaeacians and his own performance as a narrator. Much has been written about how the Homeric narrator negotiates his own authority by employing these figures, to whom divine inspiration is ascribed.<sup>3</sup> De Jong has observed that a specific narratological device facilitates the identification of Demodocus with the main narrator: Demodocus and the narrator's voices seemingly merge owing to indirect speech Demodocus' songs start with and “which is quickly abandoned in favour of an independent construction”.<sup>4</sup> According to Richardson, the peculiar manner in which Demodocus' songs are presented – neither in direct nor in indirect discourse – is caused by the fact that “they are of the same genre of communication as the narrator's discourse”.<sup>5</sup> My aim in the present discussion, however, is to demonstrate that the narratological structure of *Odyssey* Book 8 was planned in such a way so as to cast the blind singer inspired by the Muse in what is in fact a supporting role which is intended primarily to enhance the narrative authority of another character, namely that of Odysseus.

Within Book 8 of the *Odyssey*, Demodocus, the singer at the Phaeacian court of Alcinous, gives three performances. We meet him for the first time

<sup>1</sup> See esp. S. Richardson, *The Homeric Narrator*, Nashville 1990; I. J. F. de Jong, *A Narratological Commentary on the Odyssey*, Cambridge 2001; M. Alden, *Para-Narratives in the Odyssey: Stories in the Frame*, Oxford 2017; N. Trevino, *Inspiration and Narrative in the Homeric Odyssey*, Chicago 2019 (diss.).

<sup>2</sup> The term introduced by Alden, op. cit., for any story “set beside” the events the main narrative. See also M. Alden, *Homer Beside Himself: Para-Narratives in the Iliad*, Oxford 2000, pp. 13–47.

<sup>3</sup> E.g. J. Strauss-Clay, *The Wrath of Athena*, Princeton 1983, esp. pp. 9–25; T. Mojsik, *Poetica Homerica I: Muzy, Muza, czy Theos Tis?*, „Meander” 2001, no. 56 (3–4), pp. 159–179; G. Wheeler, *Sing, Muse...: The Introit from Homer to Apollonius*, “The Classical Quarterly” 2002, no. 52, pp. 33–49; G. M. Calhoun, *The Poet and the Muse in Homer*, “Classical Philology” 1938, no. 33, pp. 157–166; E. Minchin, *The Poet Appeals to His Muse: Homeric Invocations in the Context of Epic Performance*, “The Classical Journal” 1995, no. 91, pp. 25–33.

<sup>4</sup> I. J. F. de Jong, *A Narratological Commentary...*, p. 195.

<sup>5</sup> S. Richardson, *The Homeric Narrator*, p. 84.

at the banquet at Alcinoüs' court, the next day after Odysseus' arrival at Scheria. From the very first moment Demodocus' prominent status is emphasized by means of a double introduction he receives from Alcinoüs and from the narrator, as a rhapsode upon whom divine inspiration is bestowed:

*Od.* 8.43–45

[Alcinoüs:] καλέσασθε δὲ θεῖον ἀοιδόν,  
 Δημόδοκον· ὧ γάρ ῥα θεὸς περὶ δῶκεν ἀοιδὴν  
 τέρπειν, ὀπιηθὺς ἐπιοτρύνησιν ἀείδειν.

...and summon also the inspired  
 Demodokos, for to him the god gave song surpassing  
 In power to please, whenever the spirit moves him to singing.<sup>6</sup>

*Od.* 8.62–64:

κῆρυξ δ' ἐγγύθεν ἦλθεν ἄγων ἐρίηρον ἀοιδόν,  
 τὸν περὶ μούσ' ἐφίλησε, δίδου δ' ἀγαθὸν τε κακὸν τε·  
 ὀφθαλμῶν μὲν ἄμερσε, δίδου δ' ἠδείαν ἀοιδήν.

The herald came near, bringing with him the excellent singer,  
 whom the Muse had loved greatly, and gave him both good and evil.  
 She reft him of his eyes, but she gave him the sweet singing  
 art.<sup>7</sup>

Demodocus starts to perform a song which subscribes to the genre of *klea andron*, “the glorious deeds of men” (*Od.* 8.72–82):

αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ πόσιος καὶ ἐδητύος ἐξ ἔρον ἔντο,  
 Μοῦσ' ἄρ' ἀοιδὸν ἀνήκεν ἀειδέμεναι κλέα ἀνδρῶν,  
 οἴμης, τῆς τὸτ' ἄρα κλέος οὐρανὸν εὐρὺν ἴκανε,  
 νεῖκος Ὀδυσσεύος καὶ Πηλεΐδew Ἀχιλλεύος,  
 ὡς ποτε δηρίσαντο θεῶν ἐν δαίτῃ θαλεῖῃ  
 ἐκπάγλοισ' ἐπέεσσιν, ἄναξ δ' ἀνδρῶν Ἀγαμέμνων  
 χαῖρε νόω, ὃ τ' ἄριστοι Ἀχαιῶν δηριόωντο.  
 ὡς γάρ οἱ χρεῖων μύθησατο Φοῖβος Ἀπόλλων  
 Πυθοῖ ἐν ἠγαθέῃ, ὅθ' ὑπέρβη λάϊνον οὐδὸν  
 χρησόμενος. τότε γάρ ῥα κυλίνδετο πῆματος ἀρχῆ  
 Τρωσὶ τε καὶ Δαναοῖσι Διὸς μεγάλου διὰ βουλάς.

But when they had put away their desire for eating and drinking,  
 The Muse stirred the singer to sing the famous actions  
 Of men on that venture, whose fame goes up to the wide heaven,  
 The quarrel between Odysseus and Peleus' son, Achilles,

<sup>6</sup> Transl. R. Lattimore, *The Odyssey of Homer*, vol. I, New York, 1966, p. 122.

<sup>7</sup> Transl. R. Lattimore, *The Odyssey...*, pp. 122–123.

How these once contended, at the gods' generous festival,  
 With words of violence, so that the lord of men, Agamemnon,  
 Was happy in his heart that the best of Achaeans were quarrelling;  
 For so in prophesy Phoibos Apollo had spoken to him  
 In sacred Pytho, when he had stepped across the stone doorstep  
 To consult; for now the beginning of evils rolled on, descending  
 On Trojans, and on Danaans, through the designs of great Zeus.<sup>8</sup>

Odysseus sheds tears in reaction to hearing the song this, on the other hand, prompts Alcinous to stop Demodocus' performance and to propose that the banqueters proceed to the merriment of athletic competitions. What is of crucial concern for the present discussion is the fact that Demodocus' song is about Odysseus; therefore, the presence of the principal character of the *Odyssey* in this scene simultaneously plays out on two levels: as a member of the audience of Demodocus' performance and as its subject. While the Phaeacians remain unaware of Odysseus' true identity, for the audience of the *Odyssey*, his double appearance creates a forceful tension within this episode since Odysseus-the-guest-at-the-Phaeacian-court is here capable of verifying the factual accuracy of Demodocus' song in representing the actions of Odysseus-the-sung-hero.<sup>9</sup> The character's exact state of mind is not disclosed to the audience, however, Odysseus tears, though suggestive, may well be caused by the theme of the song alone.<sup>10</sup>

The second song performed by Demodocus, after the feast is resumed following the athletic games, belongs to a rather different genre, as it takes shape of an *epyllion* – a mythological story on how Hephaestus caught his wife Aphrodite and Ares exposing their affair. The way in which the three songs are narratologically structured serves to highlight the difference between the status of this second song on the one hand and on the other, both the preceding one and the one that follows – the story of the affair of Aphrodite and Ares is quoted in full,

<sup>8</sup> Transl. R. Lattimore, *The Odyssey...*, p. 123.

<sup>9</sup> In her application of cognitive theory to the model of oral performance, Elisabeth Minchin importantly introduced a distinction between “unknowing” and “knowing” recipients of the story (i.e., first-time listeners vs. those who participated in, or witnessed, the events which are the subject of a tale), which implies different levels of their assessment of the story (i.e., its purely aesthetic quality on the one hand and reliability on the other), as well as flexible behaviour towards audience on the part of a storyteller (E. Minchin, *Homer and the Resources of Memory: Some Applications of Cognitive Memory to the Iliad and the Odyssey*, Oxford 2001, p. 165 ff.). For the concept of the concern with the accuracy of details as a crucial criterion in the assessment of the epic singer's excellence, see H. Maehler, *Die Auffassung des Dichterberufs im frühen Griechentum bis zur Zeit Pindars*, Göttingen 1963.

<sup>10</sup> Odysseus' tears were regarded as the confirmation of the truthfulness of Demodocus' version by P. Pucci, *Odysseus Polutropos: Intertextual Readings in the Odyssey and the Iliad*, Ithaca and London 1987, p. 220.

whereas the two remaining songs deliver the audience of the *Odyssey* with only the shortened summaries.

Demodocus' third performance is delivered at another banquet which follows the athletic contest Odysseus wins – this time the rhapsode sings at Odysseus' request. First, he presents Demodocus with a share of meat as a token of his honour and reverence towards the singer “since the Muse has taught them her own way, and since she loves all the company of singers” (*Od.* 8.479–481). Subsequently, he asks Demodocus to deliver another story of *klea andron* – the one with Odysseus being the protagonist; he supplies the singer with a fairly clear plot outline to develop in his song.

*Od.* 8.487–521

[Odysseus:]

“Δημόδοκ', ἔξοχα δὴ σε βροτῶν αἰνίζομ' ἀπάντω·  
 ἢ σέ γε μουσ' ἐδίδαξε, Διὸς πάϊς, ἢ σέ γ' Ἀπόλλων·  
 λίην γὰρ κατὰ κόσμον Ἀχαιῶν οἶτον ἀεΐδεις,  
 ὅσος ἔρξαν τ' ἔπαθόν τε καὶ ὅσος ἐμόγησαν Ἀχαιοί,  
 ὡς τέ που ἢ αὐτὸς παρεὼν ἢ ἄλλου ἀκούσας.  
 ἀλλ' ἄγε δὴ μετάβηθι καὶ ἵππου κόσμον ἄεισον  
 δουρατέου, τὸν Ἐπειὸς ἐποίησεν σὺν Ἀθήνῃ,  
 ὃν ποτ' ἐς ἀκρόπολιν δόλον ἤγαγε διὸς Ὀδυσσεὺς  
 ἀνδρῶν ἐμπλήσας, οἳ Ἴλιον ἐξαλάπαξαν.  
 αἶ κεν δὴ μοι ταῦτα κατὰ μοῖραν καταλέξῃς,  
 αὐτίκα καὶ πᾶσιν μυθήσομαι ἀνθρώποισιν,  
 ὡς ἄρα τοι πρόφρων θεὸς ὤπασε θέσπιν ἀοιδήν.”  
 ὡς φάθ', ὁ δ' ὀρμηθεὶς θεοῦ ἤρχετο, φαίνει δ' ἀοιδήν,  
 ἔνθεν ἔλων, ὡς οἱ μὲν ἔϋσέλμων ἐπὶ νηῶν  
 βάντες ἀπέπλειον, πῦρ ἐν κλισίῃσι βαλόντες,  
 Ἀργεῖοι, τοὶ δ' ἤδη ἀγακλυτὸν ἀμφ' Ὀδυσῆα  
 εἶατ' ἐνὶ Τρώων ἀγορῇ κεκαλυμμένοι ἵππων·  
 αὐτοὶ γάρ μιν Τρῶες ἐς ἀκρόπολιν ἐρύσαντο.  
 ὡς ὁ μὲν ἐστήκει, τοὶ δ' ἄκριτα πόλλ' ἀγόρευον  
 ἤμενοι ἀμφ' αὐτόν· τρίχα δέ σφισιν ἦνδανε βουλή,  
 ἢ ἐ διατηῆσαι κοῖλον δόρυ νηλεῖ χαλκῷ,  
 ἢ κατὰ πετράων βαλέειν ἐρύσαντας ἐπ' ἄκρις,  
 ἢ ἑάαν μέγ' ἄγαλμα θεῶν θελκτῆριον εἶναι,  
 τῇ περ δὴ καὶ ἔπειτα τελευτήσεσθαι ἔμελλεν·  
 αἴσα γὰρ ἦν ἀπολέσθαι, ἐπὶν πόλις ἀμφικαλύψῃ  
 δουράτεον μέγαν ἵππον, ὅθ' εἶατο πάντες ἄριστοι  
 Ἀργεῖοι Τρῶεσσι φόνον καὶ κῆρα φέροντες.  
 ἤειδεν δ' ὡς ἄστου διέπραθον υἱὲς Ἀχαιῶν  
 ἵππόθεν ἐκχύμενοι, κοῖλον λόχον ἐκπρολιπόντες.  
 ἄλλον δ' ἄλλῃ ἄειδε πόλιν κεραϊζέμεν αἰπήν,  
 αὐτὰρ Ὀδυσσῆα προτὶ δώματα Δηϊφόβοιο  
 βήμεναι, ἢ ὕτ' Ἄρηα, σὺν ἀντιθέῳ Μενελάῳ.

κειῖθι δὴ αἰνότατον πόλεμον φάτο τολμήσαντα  
 νικῆσαι καὶ ἔπειτα διὰ μεγάθυμον Ἀθήνην.  
 ταῦτ' ἄρ' αἰοιδὸς ἄειδε περικλυτός.

'Demodokos, above all mortals beside I prize you.  
 Surely the Muse, Zeus' daughter, or else Apollo has taught you,  
 For all too right following the tale you sing the Achaeans'  
 Venture, all they did and had done to them, all the sufferings,  
 Of these Achaians, as if you had been there yourself or heard it  
 From the one who was. Come to another part of the story, sing us  
 The wooden horse which Epeios made with Athene helping,  
 The stratagem Odysseus filled once with men and brought it  
 To the upper city, and it was these men who sacked Iliion.  
 If you can tell me the course of all these things as they happened,  
 I will speak of you before all mankind, and tell them  
 How freely the goddess gave you the magical gift of singing.'  
 He spoke, and the singer, stirred by the goddess, began, and showed them  
 His song, beginning from the Argives boarded their well-benched  
 ships, and sailed away, after setting fire to their shelters;  
 but already all these others who were with famous Odysseus  
 were sitting hidden in the horse, in the place where the Trojans assembled,  
 for the Trojans themselves had dragged it up to the height of the city,  
 and now it was standing there, and the Trojans seated around it,  
 talked endlessly, and three ways of thought found favor, either  
 to take the pitiless bronze to it and hack open the hollow  
 horse, or drag it to the cliffs' edge and topple it over,  
 or let it stand where it was as a dedication to blandish  
 the gods, and this last way was to be the end of it, seeing  
 that the city was destined to be destroyed when it had inside it  
 the great horse made of wood, with all the best of Argives  
 sitting within and bearing death and doom for the Trojans.  
 He sang then how the sons of Achaeans left their hollow  
 Hiding place and streamed from the horse and sacked the city,  
 And he sang how one and another fought through the steep citadel,  
 And how in particular Odysseus went, with godlike  
 Menelaos, like Ares, to find the house of Deiphobos,  
 And there, he said, he endured the grimmest fighting that ever  
 He had, but won it there too, with great-hearted Athene aiding.  
 So the famous singer sang his tale.<sup>11</sup>

It is evident that in his third song, Demodocus' response to the request of Odysseus is fully positive: the second account of his deeds prepares the ground for the revelation of his identity. Irene de Jong has observed that Odysseus' request for the third song is shaped much like typical epic proems and the threads

<sup>11</sup> Transl. R. Lattimore, *The Odyssey...*, pp. 133–134.

he mentions by way of suggestions are further developed in the proper narrative of the rhapsodic performance (once again recounted in a shortened form).<sup>12</sup> Since Odysseus responds to Demodocus' new song only by melting in tears once again, his sole reference to the potential veracity of Demodocus' narrative on the events from Troy remains the brief praise uttered at the beginning of the passage quoted above, according to which Demodocus "sings of the fate of Achaeans in perfect order [λίην κατὰ κόσμον]", as if either being a first-hand witness or reliably recounting what he had heard from one present at Troy.<sup>13</sup> In view of this scarcity of clues, the scholars' attempts at determining how Odysseus feels about the accuracy of the story narrated by Demodocus may be summarized as the taking of the three main steps:

1. An assessment of how Demodocus' version fits within the otherwise available tradition about the Trojan war.
2. A close examination of what exactly we are told about the nature of Demodocus' inspiration.
3. An inquiry into the precise meaning of the phrase κατὰ κόσμον.

It must be said, in the first place, that the resolution of any of these steps brings no decisive conclusions, yet lets us consider in some detail how these crucial issues have been approached.

\*

As to the first step, the question of whether the episode narrated in Demodocus' first song was known to a broader tradition on the Trojan war was already a *zetema* – a subject of inquiry – among the Alexandrian scholars:

<sup>12</sup> I. J. F. de Jong, *A Narratological Commentary...*, p. 215.

<sup>13</sup> A rather similar praise of a storyteller's skills, in this case the skills of Odysseus, is uttered by Alcinoüs in *Od.* 11.363–369: ὦ Ὀδυσσεῦ, τὸ μὲν οὐ τί σ' εἴσκομεν εἰσορόωντες / ἠπεροπῆά τ' ἔμεν καὶ ἐπικόποιν, οἷά τε πολλοὺς / βόσκει γαῖα μέλαινα πολυσπερέας ἀνθρώπους / ψεύδεά τ' ἀρτύνοντας, ὅθεν κέ τις οὐδὲ ἴδοιτο / σοὶ δ' ἔπι μὲν μορφῇ ἐπέων, ἐνὶ δὲ φρένες ἐσθλαί, / μῦθον δ' ὡς ὅτ' ἀοιδὸς ἐπισταμένως κατέλεξας, / πάντων Ἀργείων σέο τ' αὐτοῦ κήδεα λυγρά. ("Odysseus, as we look upon you do not imagine / that you are a deceptive thievish man, the sort that the black earth / breeds in great numbers, people who wonder widely, making up / lying stories, from which no one could learn anything. You have / a grace upon your words, and there is sound sense within them, / and expertly, as a singer would do, you have told the story / of the dismal sorrows befallen yourself and all of the Argives", transl. R. Lattimore, *The Odyssey...*, p. 177). I would like to thank an anonymous reviewer for bringing this passage to my attention. As Peradotto observed, the problem of the veracity of the embedded narrative in the Phaeacian episode is explicitly expressed in Alcinoüs' reaction to Odysseus' narrative (J. Peradotto, *Man in the Middle Voice: Name and Narration in the Odyssey*, Princeton 1990, 92–93), while his praise – μῦθον δ' ὡς τ' ἀοιδὸς ἐπισταμένως κατέλεξας, spoken by a person unable to verify Odysseus' story, *prima facie* appears to make it impossible that Alcinoüs had the veracity of Odysseus' story in mind – an ambiguity parallel to that in Odysseus' words. However, in view of Minchin's distinction between "knowing" and "unknowing" recipients of an oral performance (see n. 9 above), one cannot equate Odysseus' praise of Demodocus with Alcinoüs' praise of Odysseus.

*schol. HQV ad Od. 8.87* and *schol. BC ad Od. 8.77*, as well as Eustathius *ad Od. 1586.25–28* refer to their conjecture that the episode depicting the quarrel between Achilles and Odysseus should be placed at the end of the Trojan war, after the death of Hector, and that the point of the disagreement was whether Troy should be taken by force or through *metis* – a deceit or guile. Admittedly, this supposition squares with the third song in which Demodocus narrates how Troy was eventually captured by applying *metis*. Searching for the episodes in the preserved tradition that could supply a context for the quarrel related by Demodocus, we must note that: first, Proclus' summary of the *Cypria* (54–55) mentions a row between Agamemnon and Achilles, who was reportedly slighted by a late invitation to the feast at Tenedos (Aristotle, *Rhet.* 2.1401b, mentions an insult to Achilles as the cause of the quarrel), and second, according to the testimony of Plutarch (*Quomodo adul.* 74a), in his *Syndeipnoi* (fr. 566 Radt), Sophocles introduced Odysseus as the one taking Agamemnon's part and insulting Achilles by insinuating that he was not so much angry about missing the feast as afraid of fighting the war. If this was the episode we were looking for, it would have been the one at the beginning of the war.

Jenny Strauss-Clay, who has undertaken the task to track all possible references to the quarrel that is under discussion, points to two episodes of the *Iliad* when Achilles and Odysseus are shown to be at variance: *Il.* 19.155 ff. The first is the one where Achilles and Odysseus disagree on whether the troops should have a meal before going to the battle, and the second – when, in Book 9, the embassy, Odysseus is a part of, has been sent to Achilles in order to persuade him to resume the fight – the task Odysseus fails to accomplish.<sup>14</sup> While these episodes potentially fit what Demodocus reportedly sang of in his first song, no trace whatsoever of the oracle this song mentions exists in the extant tradition. Hence, Strauss-Clay proposes that Demodocus' first song is at deliberate variance with the opening of the *Iliad* as we know it so as to playfully suggest that the poet of the *Iliad* focused, in fact, on the “wrong quarrel” – i.e. not the one which was actually decisive for the sack of Troy – and misrepresented Agamemnon and Achilles as “the best of Achaeans”.<sup>15</sup> Maureen Alden points out verbal allusions to the proem of the *Iliad* in this particular passage of the *Odyssey*.<sup>16</sup> Gregory Nagy, in turn, argues that despite going beyond the scope of the opening in *Iliad* I, the first song of Demodocus includes elements that may be considered Iliadic in the sense that clear traces of them are to be found in our *Iliad* – for, in his view, the two great poems had been accumulating allusions to one another while they were still in the process of evolving, before they eventually

<sup>14</sup> J. Strauss-Clay, *op. cit.*, pp. 103–104.

<sup>15</sup> J. Strauss-Clay, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

<sup>16</sup> M. Alden, *Para-Narratives in the Odyssey...*, pp. 209–210.



took the shape familiar to us.<sup>17</sup> Karol Zieliński opines that what the summary of the first song of Demodocus displays is not so much allusiveness to a specific episode of a particular epic poem but rather the realization of a general scheme of the epic proem, referring to the convention of the epic genre in general.<sup>18</sup> Margalit Finkelberg emphasizes the song's autoschediastic character; she argues that Homer's agenda in introducing a new subject rather than employing one of the familiar episodes involving Odysseus at Troy was to anticipate the song about the end of the Trojan war by referring to its beginnings.<sup>19</sup> Finally, Frederic Ahl and Hanna Roisman observe how, by presenting the quarrel between Achilles and Odysseus, Demodocus' song may be seen to betray metapoetic "prophetic insight" in "portend[ing] [...] the rivalry of the two great epic poems on the Trojan war: the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*".<sup>20</sup>

\*

When it comes to the second step, with regard to the singer's inspiration, Zieliński observes a striking detail concerning the world of the *Odyssey*: the singers who appear in the poem – Phemius and Demodocus – are completely self-sufficient and bound to the places in which they are portrayed; we hear nothing either about travelling rhapsodes or learning songs from other representatives of this profession, which was the common reality of transmitting poetry in the archaic era.<sup>21</sup> In 22.347 Phemius, also singing about Achaeans' return from Troy, calls himself αὐτοδίδακτος, "self-taught",<sup>22</sup> and what we are told about the quarrel

<sup>17</sup> G. Nagy, *The Best of Achaeans: Concepts of the Hero in Archaic Greek Poetry*, Cambridge, MA 1979, p. 65; he maintained this view in the revised version of this study published in 1999. In *Homeric Questions*, Austin 1996, p. 146, Nagy problematizes the possible interdependences between the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* in the following way by taking as the starting point larger cycles rather than single poems: "when we are dealing with the traditional poetry of the Homeric (and Hesiodic) compositions, it is not justifiable to claim that a passage in any text can refer to another passage in another text. [...] I will confine myself, then, to examining whether a poem that is composed in a given tradition may refer to other traditions of composition. Thus, for example, our *Odyssey* may theoretically refer to traditional themes that are central to the stories of the *Cypria* – or even to stories of the *Iliad*, for that matter. But even in that case, such traditional themes would have varied from composition to composition".

<sup>18</sup> K. Zieliński, *Iliada i jej tradycja epicka. Studium z zakresu greckiej tradycji oralnej*, Wrocław 2014, pp. 100–101.

<sup>19</sup> M. Finkelberg, *The First Song of Demodocus*, "Mnemosyne" 1987, no. 40, pp. 129–130; cf. W. Marg, *Das erste Lied des Demodokos*, in: *Navicula Chiloniensis: Studia philologica Felici Jacoby oblata*, Leiden 1956, pp. 16–29.

<sup>20</sup> F. Ahl, H. M. Roisman, *The Odyssey Re-Formed*, Ithaca, London 1996, p. 75.

<sup>21</sup> K. Zieliński, *Skąd Demodok znał historię Odysa – problematyka prawdy i fikcji w eposie oralnym*, "Quaestiones Oralitatis" 2015, no. I 1, p. 37.

<sup>22</sup> See J. Assaël, *Phémios autodidaktos*, "Revue de Philologie, de Littérature et d'Histoire Anciennes" 2001, no. 75, pp. 7–21.

between Achilles and Odysseus sung by Demodocus is that “its fame had then reached broad heaven” which, within the world of the poem, suffices to explain, together with the Muse’s inspiration, how Demodocus, though confined to the isolation of Scheria, may have known this story. Considering the nature of divine inspiration, one ought to distinguish between a momentary god-sent stimulus and the permanent disposition for composing songs.

As it happens, it is not general inspiration, but rather precise information that the Homeric narrator requests for in the iconic invocation of the Muses in the Catalogue of Ships (*Il.* 2.484–487):

Ἔσπετε νῦν μοι Μοῦσαι Ὀλύμπια δώματ’ ἔχουσαι·  
 ὑμεῖς γὰρ θεαὶ ἐστε πάρεστέ τε ἴστε τε πάντα,  
 ἡμεῖς δὲ κλέος οἶον ἀκούομεν οὐδέ τι ἴδμεν·  
 οἳ τινες ἠγεμόνες Δαναῶν καὶ κοίρανοι ἦσαν.

Tell me now, you Muses, who have your homes on Olympus. For you, who are goddesses, are there, and you know all things, and we have heard only the rumour of it and know nothing.<sup>23</sup>

In *Il.* 11.219–221, the narrator asks the Muse to provide him with concrete information about Agamemnon’s opponents at the battlefield:

Ἔσπετε νῦν μοι Μοῦσαι Ὀλύμπια δώματ’ ἔχουσαι  
 ὅς τις δὴ πρῶτος Ἀγαμέμνονος ἀντίον ἦλθεν  
 ἢ αὐτῶν Τρώων ἠὲ κλειπῶν ἐπικούρων.

Tell me now, you Muses who have your homes on Olympus, who was the first to come forth and stand against Agamemnon of the very Trojans, or their renown companions in battle.<sup>24</sup>

In *Il.* 14.508–510, the Homeric narrator again seeks to learn from the Muse details about how a battle unfolded:

Ἔσπετε νῦν μοι, Μοῦσαι Ὀλύμπια δώματ’ ἔχουσαι,  
 ὅς τις δὴ πρῶτος βροτόεντ’ ἀνδράγρι’ Ἀχαιῶν  
 ἦρατ’, ἐπεὶ ῥ’ ἔκλινε μάχην κλυτὸς ἐννοσίγαιος.

Tell me now, you Muses who have your homes on Olympus, who was the first of the Achaians to win the bloody despoilment of men, when the glorious shaker of the earth bent the way of the battle?<sup>25</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Transl. R. Lattimore, *The Iliad of Homer*, Chicago, London 1951, p. 89.

<sup>24</sup> Transl. R. Lattimore, *The Iliad...*, p. 240.

<sup>25</sup> Transl. R. Lattimore, *The Iliad...*, p. 307.

The poet of the *Odyssey* does not seem to deviate from this pattern in the opening of this poem (*Od.* 1.1–10):

Ἄνδρα μοι ἔννεπε, Μοῦσα, πολύτροπον, ὃς μάλα πολλὰ  
 πλάγχθη, ἐπεὶ Τροίης ἱερὸν πτολίεθρον ἔπερσεν·  
 [...]   
 τῶν ἀμόθεν γε, θεά, θύγατερ Διός, εἰπὲ καὶ ἡμῖν.

Tell me, Muse, of the man of many ways, who was driven far journeys, after he had sacked Troy's sacred citadel. [...] From some point here, goddess, daughter of Zeus, speak, and begin our story.<sup>26</sup>

The audience of *Odyssey* Book 8 are no doubt well-acquainted with this pattern and therefore can be expected to assume that what Demodocus owes the Muse is the course of events as narrated by him.<sup>27</sup> Elisabeth Minchin, in her application of cognitive theory to the model of oral performance, characterized the position of the Muse as the narrator's "knowing recipient", one that can verify the version presented by the storyteller and therefore, the storyteller turns to her in seeking for the confirmation of the reliability of his tale.<sup>28</sup>

The compensation Demodocus gets from the Muse is in return for the loss of sight. Since this sense is considered by the Greeks to be the source of the most secure knowledge, which is illustrated by the well-known fact that the Greek verbs εἶδον, 'to see', and οἶδα, 'to know', are both formed on the same Indo-European stem \**ueid-*, there is a functional symmetry between losing it and the poet's ability to provide factual information about events (which would otherwise be accessible through seeing) – one that is not played out when the concept of more vague and abstract divine inspiration is assumed. Yet, if the Homeric narrator sows the expectation among the audience that Odysseus, through praising Demodocus' inspiration by the Muse in *Od.* 8.487–488, gives a stamp of approval to his version of the story,<sup>29</sup> does it necessarily mean that the narrator attests to its factual accuracy? Odysseus' own interest in what events

<sup>26</sup> Transl. R. Lattimore, *The Odyssey of Homer*, New York 1966, p. 27

<sup>27</sup> That the deepest sense of divine inspiration is in revealing concrete knowledge rather than furnishing the poet with a general inclination for composing poetry has already been observed by W. W. Minton, *Invocation and Catalogue in Hesiod and Homer*, "TAPhA" 1962, no. 93, p. 190, and N. K. Chadwick, *Poetry and Prophecy*, Cambridge 1942, 41; see also J. Franek, *Invocations of the Muse in Homer and Hesiod: a Cognitive Approach*, "Antichthon" 2008, no. 52, pp. 1–22.

<sup>28</sup> E. Minchin, *Homer and the Resources of Memory...*, p. 167.

<sup>29</sup> Similarly L. H. Pratt, *Lying and Poetry from Homer to Pindar: Falsehood and Deception in Archaic Greek Poetics*, Ann Arbor 1993, p. 13: "Since Odysseus was present as a witness to the events described by Demodocus, and Demodocus presumably was not, it can be inferred that Odysseus is impressed by how accurately Demodocus has managed to record the events of the war without being present himself".

Demodocus presents, manifests itself clearly in his following request for a song about the Trojan horse (*Od.* 8.492–495) and casts doubt as to it. Pratt observes that divine inspiration can legitimize poet's providing a version of events that is incongruent with the existing tradition.<sup>30</sup> Odysseus seems to pick up on this license when he ascribes the origin of Demodocus' song to divine inspiration and subsequently requests a song that suits his own agenda.

\*

As for the third step, the phrase *κατὰ κόσμον*, i.e. “in good order”, can imply both aesthetic judgement and factual verification. Besides the passage under discussion, it appears in the *Odyssey* four times. In 3.138, Agamemnon and Menelaus call an assembly of the Achaeans at dusk, i.e. “not in the way they should do it” (*οὐ κατὰ κόσμον, ἐς ἥλιον καταδύντα*). In 8.179, this refers to Odysseus reproaching Euryalus for speaking out of turn (Euryalus claims that Odysseus does not have a look of an athlete). In 14.363, Eumaeus reproaches the unrecognized Odysseus for having allegedly said *οὐ κατὰ κόσμον*, i.e. “falsely”, that Odysseus went to Dodona to consult the oracle on the manner of his planned return home as Eumaeus is convinced that Odysseus died at sea. In 20.181, Melanthius tries to chase Odysseus away as he appears in disguise of a beggar, and to whom he says “to beg in no seemly way”. We see, then, that *κατὰ κόσμον* in the *Odyssey* acquires the meaning ‘as befits’, ‘as it should be’, ‘properly’, only once, however, constituting a statement of truthfulness.

What must be noticed in our scene is the fact that whatever meaning of this phrase we decide Odysseus had in mind and however it was understood by Demodocus, for the Phaeacians, its connotation with aesthetic judgement is unavoidable due to their unawareness of the identity of the disguised Odysseus, hence also of his ability to judge Demodocus' song in terms of its accuracy.

For us – the audience – who know more about the identity of Odysseus than the Phaeacians, it is tempting to assume that *λίην κατὰ κόσμον* carries a deeper significance than the Phaeacians are able to attach to it as an indication of truthfulness. However, we are left with this temptation unfulfilled since the narrator does not supply us with any hints to confirm this path of interpretation. Focalization, employed elsewhere in the Homeric poems to give the audience an insight into the characters' thoughts through the principal narrator's discourse, is absent from the scene where its presence would help the most.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>30</sup> L. H. Pratt, op. cit., p. 17.

<sup>31</sup> On embedded focalization in Homer, see I. J. F. de Jong, *Narrators and Focalizers: Presentation of the Story in the Iliad*, Amsterdam 1987; I. J. F. de Jong, *Between Word and Deed: Hidden Thoughts in the Odyssey*, in: I. J. F. de Jong, J. P. Sullivan (eds.), *Modern Critical Theory and Classical Literature*, Mnemosyne suppl. 130, Leiden, New York 1994, pp. 27–50.

In view of the lack of firm ground for interpretation, the scholars who have addressed this issue have been taking different stances. In Adkins' view, the poet's concern in *Odyssey* Book 8 is with the accuracy of Demodocus' report rather than artistic exceptionality,<sup>32</sup> and according to Pietro Pucci,<sup>33</sup> Odysseus' tears were taken as confirmation of the reliability of Demodocus' account. De Jong argued that the criterion for Odysseus' assessment of Demodocus' song was not factual accuracy, but rather *enargeia* – the pictorial vividness of the account.<sup>34</sup>

Ahl and Roisman proposed a different reading of this scene for which the starting point is the assumption that Demodocus, as a result of the choice of the topic of his first song, betrays the knowledge of Odysseus' true identity.<sup>35</sup> In their view, it is Demodocus who has full control over how the situation at the feast unfolds; when Odysseus requests the song on the sack of Troy, Demodocus does not properly fulfil the request since in the *précis* of his song Odysseus' role in capturing Troy is diminished, boiled down to the mention of Odysseus heading, together with Menelaus, to Deiphobus' house in order to retrieve Helen – and this diminution becomes the cause for Odysseus' tears and sorrow in response to this performance.<sup>36</sup> Despite the suggestion that Demodocus figured out Odysseus' identity is unverifiable, I am convinced that it is Odysseus who becomes the central narrative focus. First, a crucial question that remains unanswered in Ahl and Roisman's reading is what reason Demodocus might have had to belittle Odysseus' role in the story. Second, since Odysseus is about to reveal himself as a participant of the events narrated in Demodocus' song, he will shortly be able to claim the authority to assess the accuracy of Demodocus' narrative before the Phaeacians, thus nullifying the bard's purported efforts to diminish his role. Third, Odysseus' tears shed while listening to the third song can easily be explained as his deliberate attempt to draw Alcinous' attention to himself and to prepare the ground for his self-disclosure. Finally, the summary of Demodocus' song as offered by the Homeric narrator should not be read on its own, but together with Odysseus' request for the song which directly precedes it, taking into account the way in which the Homeric narrator unfolds the narrative for the poem's audience: since he provides only a shortened account of the song, and not the whole of it, from the point of view of both the principal narrator and the audience, there is no need to repeat what had just been said by Odysseus. In this way, I argue, it is Odysseus who becomes a figure

<sup>32</sup> A. W. H. Adkins, *Truth, ΚΟΣΜΟΣ, and APETH in Homer*, "Classical Quarterly" 1972, no. 66, pp. 16–17.

<sup>33</sup> P. L. Pucci, op. cit., p. 220.

<sup>34</sup> I. J. F. de Jong, *A Narratological Commentary...*, pp. 214–215.

<sup>35</sup> F. Ahl, H. M. Roisman, op. cit., pp. 74, 81.

<sup>36</sup> F. Ahl, H. M. Roisman, op. cit., pp. 84–85.

invested with ultimate knowledge in this episode and to whom the construction of the narrative shifts the main weight of authority.

Odysseus' praise of Demodocus does not end with uttering the verdict on his singing *κατὰ κόσμον*: he adds that Demodocus "sings of the fate of the Achaeans [...] as if perhaps he had himself been present, or had heard the tale from another." When reading these words, one should keep in mind what follows them in the subsequent part of Book 8: Odysseus – taking part in the narrated events himself – requests a song on how he managed to capture Troy thanks to the deception of the wooden horse and Demodocus fulfils this request so that his song is inspired by Odysseus. Moreover, after Demodocus finishes his third song, Odysseus reveals his identity so as to subsequently become the narrator himself throughout the next four books; in other words, the control over the narrative is seized by a singer inspired by a participant of the events narrated in the song and then in his turn by the latter figure himself.

In the words of praise uttered by Odysseus, the Muse or Apollo can inspire a singer to sing a story *as if* he were a participant of the events presented in the song or the one who had heard about these events from an actual participant. This effectively elevates the latter – the active participant in the events – to obtain the top position when reliability is concerned. What Odysseus achieves through the praise of Demodocus' song, then, as well as through asserting his divine inspiration, and therefore contributing to the bard's authority, is a well-prepared ground for his own presentation of the narrative on the Trojan war and strengthening his own authority as well.

Clifford Broeniman has observed that Odysseus himself is well aware that the first part of his suggestion is plainly impossible, while the second one – that Demodocus must have learned about the Trojan war from its participant – is also improbable in the light of how Scheria is characterized in the *Odyssey* as an isolated island.<sup>37</sup> According to Broeniman, "even if the phrase *κατὰ κόσμον* means 'accurately', i.e., 'exactly as it happened' (the truth), in comparison to an honest praise of the singer, Odysseus' praise seems excessive, artificial, and more directed to ingratiate himself".<sup>38</sup> Indeed, very soon, Odysseus' praise of Demodocus' song turns out to be rather patronizing when the actual participant of the war takes the floor and narrates his story himself; what Demodocus sings about are events "whose fame reached heaven", i.e. events that are known to everyone, and which anyone could recount. Shortly, this account will come to be overshadowed by Odysseus narrating events known to no one but himself, an actual participant.

<sup>37</sup> C. Broeniman, *Demodocus, Odysseus, and the Trojan War in Odyssey 8*, "Classical World" 1996, no. 90, p. 11.

<sup>38</sup> C. Broeniman, *op. cit.*, p. 10, n. 27.

The principal narratological motivation for introducing the episodes of Demodocus' performance is arguably to create a narrative scheme in which the principal character obtains the central position of authority as the knowledgeable judge of what is true and false in both Demodocus' and his own narratives. For the narratees, the Homeric narrative creates an ambiguity, teasing them to embrace a certain interpretation, without, however, providing sufficiently reliable clues which would enable them to discard other possibilities. Despite the fact that, as Pratt has shown,<sup>39</sup> the Greek poet of the archaic age is well acquainted with the concept of poetic fiction, in the scene of *Odyssey* Book 8 under discussion, the tension caused by the unresolved ambiguity of Odysseus' words rests on the concept of truth understood in terms of the accuracy of "here is how it was". Odysseus' authority stems from the fact that "he was there", except that "there" means, in this context, purely fictional events, and what is more, events that are, as such, non-existent, for as we have already seen, even finding a literary point of reference for these is extremely difficult. In this way, by establishing the authority of Odysseus, the Homeric narrative ultimately establishes authority for itself.

## References

- Adkins, A. W. H., Truth, *KOΣMOΣ*, and *APETH* in Homer, "Classical Quarterly" 1972, no. 66, pp. 5–18.
- Ahl, F., Roisman, H. M., *The Odyssey Re-Formed*, Ithaca, London 1996.
- Alden, M., *Homer Beside Himself: Para-Narratives in the Iliad*, Oxford 2000.
- Alden, M., *Para-Narratives in the Odyssey: Stories in the Frame*, Oxford 2017.
- Assaël, J., *Phémios autodidaktos*, "Revue de Philologie, de Littérature et d'Histoire Anciennes" 2001, no. 75, pp. 7–21.
- Broeniman, C., *Demodocus, Odysseus, and the Trojan War in Odyssey 8*, "Classical World" 1996, no. 90, pp. 3–13.
- Calhoun, G. M., *The Poet and the Muse in Homer*, "Classical Philology" 1938, no. 33, pp. 157–166.
- Chadwick, N. K., *Poetry and Prophecy*, Cambridge 1942.
- de Jong, I. J. F., *Narrators and Focalizers: Presentation of the Story in the Iliad*, Amsterdam 1987.
- de Jong, I. J. F., *Between Word and Deed: Hidden Thoughts in the Odyssey*, in: I. J. F. de Jong, J. P. Sullivan (eds.), *Modern Critical Theory and Classical Literature*, Mnemosyne suppl. 130, Leiden, New York 1994, pp. 27–50.
- de Jong, I. J. F., *A Narratological Commentary on the Odyssey*, Cambridge 2001.
- Finkelberg, M., *The First Song of Demodocus*, "Mnemosyne" 1987, no. 40, pp. 129–130.

<sup>39</sup> L. H. Pratt, op. cit..

- Franek, J., *Invocations of the Muse in Homer and Hesiod: a Cognitive Approach*, "Antichthon" 2008, no. 52, pp. 1–22.
- Lattimore, R. (transl.), *The Iliad of Homer*, Chicago, London 1951.
- Lattimore, R. (transl.), *The Odyssey of Homer*, vol. I, New York, 1966.
- Maehler, H., *Die Auffassung des Dichterberufs im frühen Griechentum bis zur Zeit Pindars*, Göttingen 1963.
- Marg, W., *Das erste Lied des Demodokos*, in: *Navicula Chiloniensis: Studia philologica Felici Jacoby oblata*, Leiden 1956.
- Minchin, E., *The Poet Appeals to His Muse: Homeric Invocations in the Context of Epic Performance*, "The Classical Journal" 1995, no. 91, pp. 25–33.
- Minchin, E., *Homer and the Resources of Memory: Some Applications of Cognitive Memory to the Iliad and the Odyssey*, Oxford 2001.
- Minton, W. W., *Invocation and Catalogue in Hesiod and Homer*, "TAPhA" 1962, no. 93, pp. 188–212.
- Mojsik, T., *Poetica Homerica I: Muzy, Muza, czy Theos Tis?*, "Meander" 2001, no. 56 (3–4), pp. 159–179.
- Nagy, G., *The Best of Achaeans: Concepts of the Hero in Archaic Greek Poetry*, Cambridge, MA 1979; 1999<sup>2</sup>.
- Nagy, G., *Homeric Questions*, Austin 1996.
- Peradotto, J., *Man in the Middle Voice: Name and Narration in the Odyssey*, Princeton 1990.
- Pratt, L. H., *Lying and Poetry from Homer to Pindar: Falsehood and Deception in Archaic Greek Poetics*, Ann Arbor 1993.
- Pucci, P., *Odysseus Polutropos: Intertextual Readings in the Odyssey and the Iliad*, Ithaca and London 1987.
- Richardson, S., *The Homeric Narrator*, Nashville 1990.
- Strauss-Clay, J., *The Wrath of Athena*, Princeton 1983.
- Trevino, N., *Inspiration and Narrative in the Homeric Odyssey*, Chicago 2019 (diss.).
- Wheeler, G., *Sing, Muse...: The Introit from Homer to Apollonius*, "The Classical Quarterly" 2002, no. 52, pp. 33–49.
- Zieliński, K., *Skąd Demodok znał historię Odysa – problematyka prawdy i fikcji w eposie oralnym*, "Quaestiones Oralitatis" 2015, no. I 1, pp. 33–49.
- Zieliński, K., *Iliada i jej tradycja epicka. Studium z zakresu greckiej tradycji oralnej*, Wrocław 2014.

**KATARZYNA PIETRUCZUK** – dr, Uniwersytet Warszawski. Adiunkt w Zakładzie Literatur i Języków Klasycznych Instytutu Filologii Klasycznej. W 2019 r. wydała w serii „Quaderni di Seminari di Cultura Greca” monografię pt. *Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides between Athens and Alexandria: A Textual History* (Edizioni Quasar, Roma), obecnie przygotowuje monografię poświęconą rzymskiej recepcji hellenistycznego konceptu biblioteki totalnej. Interesuje się dramatem greckim, starożytnymi początkami filologii i historią antycznych bibliotek.