

## THE SECOND DIVINE COUNCIL AT *ODYSSEY* 5.1–42 RECONSIDERED

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This article reconsiders the much-discussed second divine council at the beginning of Book 5 of the *Odyssey* (5.1–42). It is demonstrated that this assembly is not a case of successive narration of simultaneous actions, as many scholars have maintained, but that the second council is necessary because Zeus, in order to avoid interdivine conflicts, has not kept his promise to initiate Odysseus' repatriation as announced in the first council. It is further argued that Athene's speech to Zeus (5.7–20), with its minacious tone and its cento-like composition, serves to put pressure on Zeus and to display Athene's intellectual superiority.

*Keywords:* Homer; *Odyssey*; divine council; Zielinski's law; cento; Zeus; Athene.

The times when Homeric scholars suggested erasing lines, passages and even entire books from the *Odyssey* because they considered them to be 'inauthentic' are fortunately gone.<sup>1</sup> Today, even hardcore oralists are unitarians, and much of the debate now focuses on reconciling oralist views with neoanalytic approaches and, hence, with the assumption of intra- and intertextual relations in and between the Homeric epics — without their unity as coherent narratives being questioned.<sup>2</sup> That said, the Homeric narratives still puzzle their readers in certain instances

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<sup>1</sup> The analysis of the *Odyssey* has its roots in Friedrich August Wolf's famous *Prolegomena ad Homerum* (1795), followed by Gottfried Hermann with his study *De interpolationibus Homeri dissertatio* (1832), while the towering figure who influenced later analysts most profoundly was Adolf Kirchhoff (1879). As late as the 1940s and 1950s, Wolfgang Schadewaldt still attempted to reconstruct an 'Ur-Odyssee' by removing from the *Odyssey* all passages that he believed to be later additions, including Books 2–4, the so-called 'Telemachy' (Schadewaldt 1946 and Schadewaldt 1958:327–332). See Klingner 1964:40–46 and Page 1955:52–53,73 for an overview of the most influential analytic approaches.

<sup>2</sup> See Montanari 2012:3: 'the interplay between Neoanalysis and Oral Theory is one of the main themes of current attention, and it remains the core of the problem even when it is not declared explicitly'. The most important recent studies in these fields are those by Burgess 2006 ('neoanalysis, orality, and intertextuality'); Tsagalis 2008 ('oral palimpsest'); Tsagalis 2011 ('oral, intertextual neoanalysis'); Burgess 2012 ('intertextuality without text'); Bakker 2013 ('interformularity'). Furthermore, see also the contributions in the edited volume by Montanari, Rengakos and Tsagalis 2012 and the study by Currie 2016. On the narrative unity of the *Odyssey*, see, e.g., Eisenberger 1973; Siegmann 1987; Dimock 1989; Schmitz 1994; Latacz 1996:135–155; Loudon 1999; Lowe 2000:129–156; Marks 2008.

because of seeming inconsistencies and / or redundancies. One such notorious case is the second divine council at the beginning of Book 5 of the *Odyssey* (5.1–42), which at first sight looks like a copy of the first assembly of the gods at the beginning of the poem (1.26–95) and which, on top of that, contains a speech by Athene (5.7–20) that appears to be some sort of cento composed of bits and pieces from previous lines from the *Odyssey*. Although scholars in past decades have clearly demonstrated that the second divine council is, in fact, ‘an integral part of the whole poem and cannot be a late addition’ (Dyson 1970:1), the last word on this issue has, in my opinion, not been spoken. In this article, I attempt to demonstrate that this assembly is not a case of successive narration of simultaneous actions, as many scholars have maintained, but that it is necessary because Zeus, in order to avoid interdivine conflicts, has not kept his promise to initiate Odysseus’ repatriation as announced in the first council. I argue further that Athene’s speech to Zeus, with its minacious tone and its cento-like composition, serves to put pressure on Zeus and to display Athene’s intellectual superiority.

Let us begin with a survey of what happens at — and between — the two divine assemblies. At the beginning of the *Odyssey*,<sup>3</sup> after the proem, the primary narrator informs his narratees about the current situation: that we are in the tenth year of Odysseus’ absence from home, that he is being detained by Calypso on the isle of Ogygia, and that it is now time to eventually send him back home, but that Poseidon is still angry with Odysseus (θεοὶ δ’ ἐλέαιρον ἅπαντες / νόσφι Ποσειδάωνος, ‘all the gods took pity / except for Poseidon’, lines 19–20).<sup>4</sup> After these rough brushstrokes, which establish the milestones of the fabula, the narration zooms in on Mount Olympus, where the gods are gathered as usual — all but Poseidon, that is to say, because ‘he has left for a visit to the Aethiopians who live far away’ (ὁ μὲν Αἰθίοπας μετεκίαθε τηλόθ’ ἔοντας, line 22). What follows, then, is a dialogue between Zeus and Athene, reported in direct speech:

- \* 1.32–43: *Zeus opens the council with a speech to the Olympians.* Zeus criticizes the humans for always blaming the gods for their bad luck, whereas in fact they are themselves responsible for it, as the example of Aegisthus shows.
- \* 1.45–62: *Response by Athene.* Athene agrees with Zeus, but quickly changes topic and starts talking about Odysseus, who is held captive by

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<sup>3</sup> To give a comprehensive reading list on the beginning of the *Odyssey* would be an infeasible, Herculean task. Therefore, I only mention the most important commentaries here (all with further references): Jones 1988:1–8; West 1988:67–87; Jones 1991:97–111; Hexter 1993:3–15; De Jong 2001:3–16; Pulleyn 2019:91–134.

<sup>4</sup> The Greek text of the *Odyssey* used in this article is that of Van Thiel 1991; translations are mine.

Calypso on the isle of Ogygia. Athene wonders why Zeus should be angry with Odysseus, even though he has always been a pious person.

- \* 1.64–79: *Response by Zeus*. Zeus explains that he bears no grudge against Odysseus, but that Poseidon still does. However, Poseidon will eventually relinquish his anger as well, so Odysseus' repatriation can now, in fact, be planned.
- \* 1.81–95: *Second response by Athene*. Athene picks up on Zeus' (tentative) promise: Hermes shall be sent to Ogygia to tell Calypso to release Odysseus, while Athene will go to Ithaca personally to tell Telemachus that he should travel to Sparta and Pylos in search of his father.

Subsequently, Athene does as announced: she calls on Telemachus in order to motivate him to search for his father (1.96–444), and thus she sets the first line of action in motion, the so-called 'Telemachy'.<sup>5</sup> Telemachus convenes an assembly on Ithaca to announce his plans (Book 2); he then travels to Pylos, where he meets Nestor, who recounts his own νόστος from Troy (Book 3); thereafter, he visits Menelaus and Helen in Sparta, where Menelaus renarrates what he has heard about Odysseus' whereabouts from Proteus (Book 4). The beginning of Book 5, then, zooms back to Mount Olympus, where the gods reconvene, and the reader witnesses another dialogue between Athene and Zeus:

- \* 5.7–20: *Speech made by Athene to Zeus*. Athene accuses Zeus of not having sent Hermes to Ogygia yet. She mentions once more Odysseus' situation on Ogygia, to which the murder conspiracy of the suitors against Telemachus is now added.
- \* 5.22–27: *Response by Zeus*. Zeus reconfirms that Odysseus' repatriation (and the retaliation against the suitors) is a done deal. Athene, in turn, shall be responsible for Telemachus' safe return.
- \* 5.29–42: *Speech made by Zeus to Hermes*. Zeus instructs Hermes to implement Odysseus' homecoming by having Hermes order Calypso to release him.

Hermes then immediately obeys Zeus' orders and flies off to Ogygia, where he finds Calypso and where the reader finally meets Odysseus as an acting character.

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<sup>5</sup> The Telemachy has been subject to intense scholarly discussion; I mention only, *exempli gratia*, the studies by Delebecque 1958; Eisenberger 1973:100–106; Van Thiel 1979; Krischer 1988; Olson 1995:65–90; Wöhrle 1999.

Many critics have discussed the second divine council in relation to ‘Zielinski’s law’ (also called the ‘law of succession’): the well-known but disputed claim, going back to a study by the Polish scholar Thaddaeus Zielinski (1901), that the Homeric narrative constantly moves forward and never returns to an earlier point in the fabula, and that consequently, actions that happen simultaneously are not depicted as simultaneous, but as sequential.<sup>6</sup> With reference to *Od.* 5.1–42, Scott Richardson, in his study of the Homeric narrator, summarizes the problem as follows (Richardson 1990:92):

In Book 1 Athena proposes that Hermes be sent to release Odysseus from Calypso’s island, and she then flies off to Ithaca to encourage Telemachus. Hermes is promptly forgotten until Book 5 — after the entire *Telemachia*. Because Athena initiates a long series of events that take place before we get back to Hermes’ errand, and that lend a greater urgency to his mission, it is not enough for Zeus simply to turn to Hermes and give him his assignment as though they have been immobile during these several days of activity. Another council of the gods, therefore, a shadow of the first, must be convened in Book 5 to return us to the other half of the plans made in Book 1.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> The validity and — if considered to be valid — the concrete nature of this ‘law’ has been, and still is, subject to scholarly controversy. It was partly defended, partly modified (either by way of ‘expanding’ or ‘downgrading’ it) by Delebecque 1958:63–65 *et passim*; Krischer 1971:91–129; Richardson 1990:90–95; Olson 1995:91–119; Tzagarakis 2001; Scodel 2008 (for an overview of the different strands of interpretation and further references, see especially Rengakos 1995:1–2 and Scodel 2008:107–109), whereas others have rejected it entirely and have instead argued that the Homeric narrative does in fact know, and depict, simultaneous action (see especially Patzer 1990; Rengakos 1995; Rengakos 1998; Nünlist 1998) and that Homer narrates simultaneous actions by ‘jumping’ between them (which leads to the superficial, but wrong, impression of sequentiality). For the latter technique, terms like ‘bracing technique’ (‘Klammertechnik’: Schadewaldt 1966:76–77), ‘gearing’, ‘interweaving’ (‘Verzahnung’, ‘Verwebung’: Siegmann 1987:135–143) and ‘interlace technique’ (De Jong 2001:589–590) have been suggested. Finally, see also Strauss Clay 2011:35–36, who has (rightly, in my view) stated that ‘[w]hether supporting or criticizing Zielinski’s views, discussions of Homer’s narrative temporalities tend to have a very narrow and technical focus. Caught up amid the trees, they rarely glance up at the grand forest of Homer’s temporal strategies. [...] Imaginative visualization and its verbal representation in narrative do not require chronological sequence; [...] Homer can manipulate simultaneous or sequential action with equal vividness’.

<sup>7</sup> Along similar lines, see also Zielinski 1901:444–445; Heubeck 1954:40–54; Page 1955:64–72; Krischer 1971:122–124; Erbse 1972:127; Van Thiel 1979:67–68; Hainsworth 1988:252; Jones 1988:48; Hexter 1993:69–70; Marks 2008:37–44; Myersiades 2019:62.

In other words, according to this strand of interpretation, the law of succession is the reason why the Homeric narrator cannot have Athene tell Telemachus to embark on his journey *and* have Zeus instruct Hermes to visit Calypso at the same time. Rather, these two things have to happen one after another; but, since so much has happened in between in Books 2–4 (to the extent that the reader<sup>8</sup> might have forgotten about Hermes’ impending mandate), the gods have to be assembled a second time just to make Zeus’ order to Hermes happen eventually.

Some scholars, in turn, have interpreted the second council without reference to the law of succession — but also without its explicit rejection. Irene de Jong rightly points out ‘that the first council is nowhere explicitly referred to (*e.g.*, Athena saying “let us now send Hermes as we decided some days ago”)’,<sup>9</sup> but that this is so only because ‘such explicit back-references are rare in the Homeric epics’ and that instead ‘characters are simply made to *repeat* their ideas and it is left to the narratees to detect the implicit back-reference’ (De Jong 2001:124). Moreover, Sandra Romano Martín, in her comprehensive study of divine council scenes in Greek and Roman epic, puts her emphasis on the narrative as well as cognitive function of the second assembly. According to her interpretation, the repetitions at the beginning of *Odyssey* 5 enhance the emotional involvement of the audience and refresh its awareness of the perils that await Odysseus, who is introduced as an acting character as late as Book 5 (Romano Martín 2009:56–61).<sup>10</sup> However, Romano Martín does not discuss Zielinski’s law explicitly either.

In my opinion, the main point is this: even if we consider Zielinski’s law to be valid in some instances of the Homeric narrative, the second divine council at the beginning of Book 5 of the *Odyssey* clearly does not constitute such a case. There are in essence two reasons for this: for one, the second council is neither a

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<sup>8</sup> I say ‘reader’ for the sake of convenience, but the same may apply to an audience at an oral performance.

<sup>9</sup> With one subtle, but important exception: in line 6, Calypso is introduced not by name, but as ‘the nymph’: μέλε γάρ οἱ ἔων ἐν δόμασι νύμφης (‘for she [= Athene] was worried for him [= Odysseus] being in the house of the nymph’). The omission of Calypso’s name presupposes that the narratees know to whom the narrator refers and thus it constitutes a back reference to the beginning of the *Odyssey* where Calypso has been introduced *nominatim*: ‘him [= Odysseus] alone, longing for his homecoming and for his wife, / the nymph kept back, the mistress Calypso, the divine among the goddesses’ (τὸν δ’ οἶον, νόστου κεχρημένον ἠδὲ γυναικός, / νύμφη πότνι’ ἔρυκε Καλυψώ, δῖα θεάων, 1.13–14).

<sup>10</sup> Followed by Reitz 2019:725–727.

‘copy’ nor a direct continuation or a formal reconvention of the first council,<sup>11</sup> but a separate gathering; for another, the dispatching of Hermes is not to be imagined as happening simultaneously with the Telemachy, but indeed as a subsequent event. The first point is evidenced most conspicuously by the fact that Book 5 begins on a new day (Ἡὼς δ’ ἐκ λεγέων παρ’ ἀγαυοῦ Τιθωνοῖο / ὄρνυθ’, ἴν’ ἀθανάτοισι φῶος φέροι ἠδὲ βροτοῖσιν, ‘Eos arose from her bedstead next to admirable Tithonus / in order to bring light to the immortals as well as to the mortals’, lines 1–2). Furthermore, we are to think of divine assemblies as (more or less daily) ‘business as usual’ among the Olympian deities. At the beginning of the *Odyssey*, Athene proposes the repatriation of Odysseus at the moment when Poseidon ‘has left for a visit to the Ethiopians who live far away’ (ὁ μὲν Αἰθίοπας μετεκίαθε τηλόθ’ ἐόντας, 1.22), but it is not stated that she has summoned the gods to this end; hence, we can conclude that she has simply been waiting for the right moment to speak her mind at one of the several gatherings. Consequently, the second divine council should be regarded as just one other such occasion when the gods reconvene and the issue of Odysseus’ repatriation is raised again, taking place after Telemachus’ journey (*i.e.*, a few days or weeks later).<sup>12</sup>

The second point — that Hermes is sent to Calypso *after* the Telemachy — needs to be discussed in relation to Athene’s speech at 5.7–20:

Ζεῦ πάτερ ἠδ’ ἄλλοι μάκαρες θεοὶ αἰὲν ἐόντες·  
 μὴ τις ἔτι πρόφρων ἀγανὸς καὶ ἥπιος ἔστω  
 σκηπτούχος βασιλεύς, μηδὲ φρεσὶν αἴσιμα εἰδῶς,  
 ἀλλ’ αἰεὶ χαλεπὸς τ’ εἶη καὶ αἴσυλα ῥέζοι·  
 ὡς οὐ τις μέμνηται Ὀδυσσεύος θείοιο  
 λαῶν οἷσιν ἀνασσε, πατήρ δ’ ὡς ἥπιος ἦεν.  
 ἀλλ’ ὁ μὲν ἐν νήσῳ κεῖται κρατέρ’ ἄλγεα πάσχων  
 νύμφης ἐν μεγάροισι Καλυψοῦς, ἣ μιν ἀνάγκη  
 ἴσχει· ὁ δ’ οὐ δύναται ἦν πατρίδα γαῖαν ἰκέσθαι·  
 οὐ γάρ οἱ πάρα νῆες ἐπήρητοι καὶ ἐταῖροι,  
 οἳ κέν μιν πέμποιεν ἐπ’ εὐρέα νῶτα θαλάσσης.  
 νῦν αὖ παῖδ’ ἀγαπητὸν ἀποκτείνει μεμάασιν  
 οἴκαδε νισόμενον· ὁ δ’ ἔβη μετὰ πατρὸς ἀκουὴν  
 ἐς Πύλον ἠγαθήην ἠδ’ ἐς Λακεδαίμονα δῖαν.

<sup>11</sup> De Jong 2001:123–124 is right in stating that the ‘second council (i) presupposes and (ii) continues the first one’, but this does not mean that the second council is a direct continuation of the first one.

<sup>12</sup> The question of the duration of Telemachus’ journey is a thorny matter (see, *e.g.*, Zielinski 1901:444–445; Delebecque 1958:11–17; Hellwig 1964:42–44; Van Thiel 1979:67; Olson 1995:91–115; De Jong 2001:588), but it is not directly relevant to our argument.

Father Zeus and all you other blessed, ever-being gods!  
 No one shall any longer be eager [to be] mild and gentle —  
 no staff-holding king — nor may he know in his mind what is befitting,  
 but may he always be malignant and bring about unseemly things:  
 as no one remembers the godlike Odysseus  
 from the people whom he used to rule over, and gentle like a father he was.  
 But he lies on an island, suffering heavy pains,  
 in the halls of the nymph Calypso, who keeps him back by force;  
 and he cannot reach his fatherland.  
 For he has no ships with oars and companions  
 who could accompany him on the wide backs of the sea.  
 Now, in turn, they are eager to kill his beloved [son]  
 when he will be coming home; he went for news about his father  
 to the holy [city of] Pylos and the divine [land of] Lacedaemon.

Content-wise, Athene merely repeats her request that Zeus finally send Odysseus home, a request already brought forward in her first speech at the beginning of the *Odyssey* (1.45–62).<sup>13</sup> The tone, however, has become more reproachful here, as lines 8–12 demonstrate. Athene’s wish that all βασιλῆες may henceforth be malignant since no one remembers and cares about Odysseus is a concealed threat. In fact, she argues that Zeus ought to be a role model for all βασιλῆες, but because he is not, the worldly rulers can as well dispose of their benignity and henceforth be malign.<sup>14</sup> This, in turn, means that Athene is going to hold Zeus responsible if he does not take action as he had tentatively promised previously (1.76–77).<sup>15</sup> Such a threat only makes sense if Athene is impatiently repeating her request; her tone is not the tone of a favourite daughter who asks her father a favour, but the tone of someone who has been disappointed and now puts her foot down.<sup>16</sup> Seen from this angle, the phrase πατήρ δ’ ὡς ἡπιος ἦεν (‘and gentle like a father he was’, line 12)

<sup>13</sup> A detailed and subtle comparison of the two speeches is offered by Lohmann 1998:13–22.

<sup>14</sup> Along those lines, see also Hexter 1993:70: ‘Athena seems to imply that if Zeus wishes kings to act with justice, he should act justly and restore a just king to power’.

<sup>15</sup> Strictly speaking, Zeus did not promise Odysseus’ repatriation at the first council, but only said that corresponding plans should be discussed (*Il.* 1.76–77): ἀλλ’ ἄγεθ’ ἡμεῖς οἶδε περιφραζόμεθα πάντες / νόστον, ὅπως ἔλθῃσι (‘But come on! Let us all together contrive / his return, that he may go [home]!’).

<sup>16</sup> That Zeus does respond to menaces by other deities becomes evident at *Od.* 12.376–388, where Helios threatens to cease from shining unless Zeus retaliates the slaughter of Helios’ cattle by Odysseus’ comrades; a minacious request that is granted by Zeus immediately. See Marks 2008:162 and Zekas 2017 on this passage.

may not only refer to Odysseus, but also, *ex negativo*, to Zeus; Athene appears to be saying that Zeus is no longer the ‘gentle father’ he used to be.

At the end of her speech (lines 18–20), then, Athene refers explicitly to the main events from the Telemachy, namely, the murder conspiracy of the suitors plotted against Telemachus as well as Telemachus’ trips to Pylos and Sparta. This demonstrates unequivocally that the dispatching of Hermes and the release of Odysseus are to be thought of as occurring after the Telemachy;<sup>17</sup> and the fact that Athene does not even deem it necessary to enunciate who Telemachus’ persecutors are — she merely states that ‘they are eager to kill him’ (ἀποκτεῖναι μεμάασιν, line 18) — indicates that she expects both her innerfictional and her extrafictional audience to understand the reference without further ado.

All aspects considered, there can be no doubt that the repetition of Athene’s wish is not an artificial repetition motivated by Zielinski’s law, but that it is the result of the sheer fact that Zeus has not honoured his pledge. Several scholars have noticed this before,<sup>18</sup> but only one has, as far as I can see, provided a sufficient explanation as to why Zeus has not acted according to his promise. Michael Dyson, in an excellent article from 1970, notes that:

Zeus wants to aid Athena and at the same time to avoid friction with Poseidon. Hence he ‘forgets’ to send Hermes at once, and only does so when reproached by Athena, acting as if the notion were his own to save his dignity and still anticipating a quarrel with Poseidon by insisting that Odysseus must at least suffer before he reaches home (Dyson 1970:11).

Oddly, Dyson’s point has not been picked up by later scholars<sup>19</sup> although it deserves not only attention, but also further expansion. That Zeus would want to avoid a conflict with his powerful brother Poseidon becomes obvious in his response to Athene at *Od.* 1.64–79, in which he refers to — and explains —

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<sup>17</sup> As already pointed out by Olson 1995:91: ‘Athena’s specific reference to events in Books i–iv (v.18–20) shows that Odysseus’ escape from Ogygia must somehow be subsequent to Telemachus’ trip abroad’.

<sup>18</sup> See, *e.g.*, Rengakos 1998:63: ‘Neuere Interpretationen haben Klarheit darüber geschaffen, daß erst in ε durch den höchsten Gott beschlossen wird, Hermes zu Kalypso zu entsenden, um ihr die Heimkehr des Odysseus zu verkünden, während in α dieser Vorschlag Athenes weder beraten noch beschlossen noch verwirklicht wird, sondern einfach “im Raume stehen” bleibt’. See also Hellwig 1964:14–15, n.20; Rüter 1969:96–97; Dyson 1970; Patzer 1990:161–164; further references are given by Rengakos (*ibid.*), n.47.

<sup>19</sup> See, *e.g.*, Olson 1995:91: ‘Zeus now waits close to a week to send Hermes to Kalypso, despite having agreed to do so much earlier [...], and no-one has ever offered a convincing explanation of why he would be so negligent’.

Poseidon's wrath and vindictiveness at great length (lines 68–74).<sup>20</sup> In addition, not only Poseidon, but also Calypso is, for different reasons, going to be very unhappy if Zeus grants Athene's wish and has Odysseus sent home. Although Calypso is not one of the Twelve Olympians — she is introduced as a nymph in *Od.* 5.6 — she does have the power and the authority to make Odysseus immortal, as clearly evidenced by her corresponding offer to him at *Od.* 5.201–224.<sup>21</sup> This too is a potential threat to Zeus and his authority; therefore, letting the matter rest by not executing Odysseus' repatriation is, for the time being, the path of least resistance for him. A hint to Zeus' fear of conflict is provided by his order to Hermes that Odysseus may go home 'under the guidance of neither gods nor mortal humans' (οὔτε θεῶν πομπῆ οὔτε θνητῶν ἀνθρώπων, *Od.* 5.32). This statement may indeed be perceived as 'an odd sentiment, given that the gods are planning Odysseus' return', as a commentator notes (Jones 1988:48), but it makes perfect sense in light of Zeus' attempt at avoiding an interdivine conflict.<sup>22</sup>

In a wider context, we may also think of the well-known situation in Book 16 of the *Iliad*, where Hera discourages Zeus from rescuing his mortal son Sarpedon because the other deities would then want to save their favourite mortals too (*Il.* 16.431–449).<sup>23</sup> This famous passage provides an insightful parallel insofar as it demonstrates Zeus' responsibility to maintain peace and order among the gods; viewed from this perspective, Zeus' delay is not only to be attributed to his personal reluctance to cause friction among his peers, but it is also a consequence resulting from his responsibility (although he must know, of course, that procrastination will not solve the problem in the long term).

But let us turn to Athene's speech at *Od.* 5.7–20 once more. Athene's speech is not only striking because of its minacious tone, but also because of its compositional technique, which can be described as a cento (this term being used in a purely technical, non-judgemental sense here). Except for line 13, the speech consists entirely of lines that are adopted from other character speeches in *Odyssey* Books 2 and 4: lines 8–12 correspond to *Od.* 2.230–234, spoken by Mentor in the assembly on Ithaca where he encourages the Ithacians to put an end to the parasitism of Penelope's suitors; lines 14–17 are identical to *Od.* 4.557–560, spoken by Proteus to Menelaus, reporting on Odysseus' involuntary sojourn on the

<sup>20</sup> On the wrath of Poseidon in the *Odyssey*, see, e.g., Fenik 1974:208–230 and Murgatroyd 2015.

<sup>21</sup> Nymphs are 'lesser' divinities, whose immortality is sometimes contested; see *Hom. Hym. Aphr.* 259–261, with the commentary by Olson 2012:262–264. On nymphs in general, see, e.g., Zusanek 1998 and Larson 2001. On Calypso in the *Odyssey*, see, e.g., Harder 1960; Alden 1985; Crane 1988; Zusanek 1996; Lohmann 1998:3–42.

<sup>22</sup> See also Winterbottom 1989:38–39 on this line.

<sup>23</sup> On this scene, see the commentary by Brügger 2018:203–217, with further references.

isle of Ogygia; and lines 18–20 are taken from *Od.* 4.700–702, spoken by Medon, who informs Penelope of the plans of the suitors to kill Telemachus.

That old-school analysts would regard such a cento as hard and fast evidence for their analytic theory will not surprise anyone.<sup>24</sup> However, unitarian (or, to be more precise: non-analytic, or post-analytic) scholars have also condemned Athene's speech harshly. Its severest critic was arguably Denys Page, who accused it of not being properly formulaic and thus called it 'not a free composition naturally designed for this place and purpose', 'an abuse of the poet's licence' and 'an abnormally artificial patchwork' (Page 1955:70–71). Page's criticism was followed by many others, *inter alia* by Geoffrey S Kirk, who openly resorted to an analytic approach by claiming that 'the repeated divine assembly has been added by someone other than the main composer' (Kirk 1962:233), and — as late as 1988 — by two commentators: Peter Jones speaks of 'extremely feeble rehashes' (Jones 1988:48), and John B Hainsworth maintains that 'in style the speech of Athena is uniquely unoriginal' (Hainsworth 1988:251).<sup>25</sup>

However, the exact opposite is, in fact, the case: Athene's speech is uniquely original in style, and its compositional technique ties up perfectly with her overall minacious tone noted before. As early as 1972, Harmut Erbse provided a sensitive and stringent interpretation of Athene's cento: he has lucidly demonstrated that all three citations are taken from contexts that view Odysseus' (and Telemachus') situation in a gloomy light and that particularly the last reference at *Od.* 5.18–20, which harks back to Medon's speech informing Penelope about the murder conspiracy of the suitors against Telemachus, puts Zeus under pressure that he should now act.<sup>26</sup> Athene's quotations may thus superficially

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<sup>24</sup> See, e.g., Kirchhoff 1879:196: 'Wer diese Art der Vermittlung billigen, oder glauben mag, daß solch stümperhafte Unbeholfenheit mit wirklich dichterischer Begabung sich habe verbinden können, scheidet für mich aus dem Kreise der Urtheilsfähigen und verdient nicht eine ernstgemeinte Widerlegung'.

<sup>25</sup> See Apthorp 1977:1–3 for further discussion of more critical voices; also Lohmann 1998:13, n.7.

<sup>26</sup> See Erbse 1972:128–130, especially at 129: 'Überblickt man alle drei Abschnitte der Athenerede, dann kann man zwei Dinge beobachten. Die Sache des Odysseus erscheint auf den drei genannten Schauplätzen unseres Epos in den düstersten Farben: Gleichgültigkeit bei den ehemaligen Genossen daheim, unfreiwillige Haft des Helden in den Banden der Kalypso, drückende Unsicherheit über den Verlauf von Telemachs Rückfahrt! Aber die Rede endet nicht in einer Klage oder in einem Ausbruch der Verzweiflung; denn der dritte Punkt (und das ist unsere zweite Feststellung) ist geeignet, dem gesamten Unheil ein Ende zu machen: Die neue Lage, der Anschlag auf Telemachs Leben, setzt Zeus unter Druck'. De Jong's observation that '[t]he *verbatim* repetition indicates that Athena is giving the gods an updated description of Odysseus' plight, including the latest developments on Ithaca' (De Jong 2001:125), is surely correct, but it

appear as random bits and pieces from previous lines from the *Odyssey*, but in fact they are highly meaningful repetitions. And, as stated in the introduction to this article, the assumption of intra- and intertextual relations in and between the Homeric epics is no longer an issue these days even for oralists because it does not — as recent scholarship has shown — stand in conflict with the oral nature of the Homeric epics.<sup>27</sup>

Furthermore, line 13 — the only line in Athene’s speech that is not ‘copy-pasted’ from other character speeches in Books 2 and 4 — is, as Michael Apthorp puts it, ‘part of a complex formulaic family’ in the Homeric epics (Apthorp 1977:3): it is almost identical with *Il.* 2.721 (ἀλλ’ ὁ μὲν ἐν νήσῳ κείτω κρατέρ’ ἄλγεα πάσχων, ‘but he was lying on an island, suffering heavy pains’) and cognate with two other Homeric lines.<sup>28</sup> *Il.* 2.721 constitutes the opening line of an external prolepsis referring to Philoctetes, who had been abandoned by his shipmates on the isle of Lemnos because of a stinking wound inflicted by a venomous snake (*Il.* 2.721–725). Thus, although the use of this line does not conform with the rest of the compositional technique employed in Athene’s cento, it nevertheless fits well with Athene’s threatening and pressurizing message: by equating Odysseus with Philoctetes, Athene refers to the story of a hero whose maltreatment had drastic consequences for the Achaeans who eventually had to retrieve Philoctetes in order to be able to capture Troy.<sup>29</sup>

Finally, a word on the noun θῶκος at *Od.* 5.3: οἱ δὲ θεοὶ θῶκόνδε καθίζανον, ἐν δ’ ἄρα τοῖσι / Ζεὺς ὑψιβρεμέτης, οὗ τε κράτος ἐστὶ μέγιστον (‘and the gods sat down to their assembly, amongst whom / Zeus the high-thunderer, whose power is the greatest [of all]’, lines 3–4). This relatively rare Homeric noun is typically used to denote the sitting-place used at council-gatherings, and can also metonymically denote an assembly (*i.e.*, by a shift from the sitting-place to the activity carried out there).<sup>30</sup> It is used twice in short sequence at the beginning of Book 2 with reference to the assembly on Ithaca convoked by Telemachus: ἔζετο

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does not capture the full range of associations evoked by Athene’s cento. See further also Eisenberger 1973:105–106 and Alden 1985:102.

<sup>27</sup> See my note 2 above.

<sup>28</sup> *Od.* 5.395 (πατρός, ὃς ἐν νούσῳ κείται κρατέρ’ ἄλγεα πάσχων) and 17.142 (φῆ μιν ὁ γ’ ἐν νήσῳ ἰδέειν κρατέρ’ ἄλγε’ ἔχοντα). In addition, Apthorp 1977:3–6 also considers *Od.* 4.556 (τὸν δ’ ἴδον ἐν νήσῳ θαλερὸν κατὰ δάκρυ χέοντα) part of the ‘family’, but this connection seems questionable to me.

<sup>29</sup> *Il.* 2.721–725 is an unusual case insofar as there are only two cases of external prolepses in the mouth of the primary narrator in the *Iliad* (this one and *Il.* 12.3–35), as De Jong 2004:88 remarks. On Philoctetes in the Iliadic *Catalogue of the ships*, see in detail Visser 1997:682–690. On the archaic Greek sources on Philoctetes, whose story is not part of the fabula of the Homeric epics but of the *Epic Cycle*, see Gantz 1993:635–639.

<sup>30</sup> See *Lfgre* s.v. θῶκος, θόωκος.

δ' ἐν πατρὸς θώκῳ ('and he [= Telemachus] sat down in his father's seat', line 14) and οὔτε ποθ' ἡμετέρῃ ἀγορῇ γένηται οὔτε θῶκος / ἐξ οὗ Ὀδυσσεὺς δῖος ἔβη ('never has there been either a gathering of ours or an assembly / since the divine Odysseus has left', lines 26–27, spoken by Telemachus). The re-use of the noun θῶκος at *Od.* 5.3 establishes a link to the assembly on Ithaca, by way of which two goals are achieved: first, Athene's centō is introduced on a subtle, but recognizable note, and it is thus clearly suggested that the compositional technique of Athene's speech has a programmatic significance. Secondly, the second divine council is given a somewhat more official appearance: although the gods do convene on a regular basis (as argued above), this gathering is, for obvious reasons, of special importance to the further course of action, and by applying the noun θῶκος to it, the primary narrator equates it with the assembly on Ithaca, which was of similar narrative importance. In other words, the Telemachy began with a θῶκος, and the return of Odysseus — the *Odyssey* proper, as it were — also begins with a θῶκος.

Narratologically, Athene's centō can be deemed a *paralepsis*: a case when a secondary narrator has more knowledge than he / she actually can possess because of his / her limitations as an innerfictional character (as opposed to the omniscience of a primary narrator).<sup>31</sup> Athene quotes from speeches by other characters about which she as a secondary narrator cannot actually have any knowledge.<sup>32</sup> Thus, with regard to the narratees, attention is drawn to Athene's role in the *Odyssey*: that of the initiator of the action and the helper of Odysseus with corresponding superior knowledge. At the same time, Athene not only puts pressure on Zeus by drawing his attention to the problems with which Odysseus and Telemachus are confronted, but she also makes it clear to him that she knows what has been going on. In other words, Athene's *paralepsis* constitutes a means of displaying intellectual superiority. This, in connection with the minacious tone of her speech, forms the basis upon which she eventually is able to achieve her goals. Zeus realizes that there is no way out when he rhetorically asks Athene: 'Haven't you — you personally — already contrived this scheme, / that indeed Odysseus is going to make them pay when he comes [home]?' (οὐ γὰρ δὴ τοῦτον μὲν ἐβούλευσας νόον αὐτή, / ὡς ἦτοι κείνους Ὀδυσσεὺς ἀποτίσεται ἐλθὼν; lines 23–24) — and when he then, without delay, orders Hermes to visit Calypso and to tell her to release Odysseus (lines 29–42).

Zeus' response to Athene's threats are the words of a father who eventually yields to the will of his favourite daughter, spoken with a little sigh, along the lines

<sup>31</sup> On *paralepsis* as a narratological concept, see Genette 1980:207–211. See also De Jong 2014:60.

<sup>32</sup> Athene's knowledge cannot be attributed to general divine omniscience because the Greek gods are not by default omniscient (see Bär 2020:20–21).

of: ‘well, you’ve always had your own head, and as far as I know you, you’ve already made preparations for what you want to achieve anyway, haven’t you? So, have it your way!’<sup>33</sup> Seen from this angle, the narratorial remark about Zeus in line 4, ‘whose power is the greatest [of all]’ (οὗ τε κράτος ἐστὶ μέγιστον), appears fairly ironic. And indeed, ultimately this seems to be the principal function of the second divine council: to initiate Odysseus’ repatriation and thus to begin the *Odyssey* proper, and, along with that, to unequivocally establish Athene’s intellectual superiority, which trumps that of Zeus, and her leading role in the further course of action.

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<sup>33</sup> A different (but, in my opinion, too complicated) explanation is offered by De Jong 2001:126: ‘Zeus’s knowledge can be explained either as divine omniscience or — more likely — as an instance of transference: the narrator provides him with knowledge which the narratees already have [...]’.

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