

Athena's Disguises in the *Odyssey*: Language, Patterns, and Purposes

Athena is the central divine force in the *Odyssey*, and she appears numerous times in the narrative to assist Odysseus and his family. When she comes in disguise, there are certain patterns in the particular language used to describe her appearances, her recognition by mortals, and her departures. These patterns can reveal connections between different disguised appearances of Athena, and the absence or alteration of their elements can provide insights into the reasons for Athena's disguises, her precise roles in the narrative, and her connections with Odysseus and his family.

Previous scholarship focuses on the significance of Athena's recognition by specific mortals (Karanika 2001; Petridou 2016; Schulz 2018), paying particular attention to the revelation of her identity to Odysseus in Book 13 (Clay 1983; Turkeltaub 2003). This paper will analyze all of Athena's appearances in disguise as a human in the *Odyssey*, concentrating on the language used in her arrivals, recognitions, and departures. In the *Odyssey*, Athena appears in human disguises fourteen times: as Mentos at 1.105, as Mentor at 2.268, as Telemachus at 2.383, as Mentor at 2.401, as the daughter of Dymas at 6.22, as a young girl at 7.20, as a herald at 8.8, as a Phaeacian man at 8.194, as a shepherd boy at 13.222, as a woman at 13.288, 16.157, and 20.31, as Mentor at 22.206, and as Mentor at 24.503 (Seward 1991).

Overall, the commonalities in the language used for Athena's varied appearances link instances of similar disguises or those used multiple times (such as Mentor) (Clay 1974, 129). These similarities also help speak against claims of multiple authorship of the *Odyssey* or the later addition of certain books. Clear linguistic and narrative differences can be distinguished in her three appearances as a woman, which may indicate a particular significance to this disguise

as Athena's manifestation of her identity (Turkeltaub 2003, 253-55, 299). There is also a break with the usual pattern of divine disguise in Athena's lack of an explicit departure from Phaeacia in Book 8, which may suggest her continued presence near Odysseus. The main theme emphasized by her appearances is her particular closeness with Odysseus and his family and their exceptionality in comparison to the other mortals in the work.

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