

## PENELOPE'S ΕΕΔΝΑ AGAIN\*

M. Finley in a well-known and influential article,<sup>1</sup> established the theory that the bridegroom (or the potential suitors) offered gifts to the bride's father, which had their recompense in a counter-gift or dowry to the groom and the bride; these gifts must be equal in value.

W. Lacey, in another well-known article,<sup>2</sup> argued that 'there were in fact two different patterns of marriage in Homeric, as in classical times; εδνα belonged essentially to only one of these patterns; εδνα were not δῶπα, although they had many of the facets of gifts...'

In another important article with a wider perspective, seeing 'the Homeric poems as an artificial conflation of elements spanning the whole period of the composition of oral poetry', A. Snodgrass<sup>3</sup> used the dowry pattern or bride-price pattern (or indirect-dowry) to support his thesis that the two types of marriage settlement can be seen alongside one another in the epics, and that these two forms are incompatible, while in Andromache's (and Penelope's) case he sees the two contrasting practices associated with one and the same marriage.

More recently, in a long, well-documented and learned article I. Morris reviewed in detail the Finley–Snodgrass argument on marriage patterns and concluded that 'the standard form of *aristos* marriage seems to be that suggested by Lacey – gifts offered in both directions (δῶπα) to establish good relations between the bride's kin and potential suitors; bidding of gifts (εδνα) by the suitors; acceptance of the best offer by the bride's guardian, her κῦριος; and usually, the movement of the bride to take up residence with her husband in his father's home (virilocal residence) or in a new location (neolocal).'<sup>4</sup> Morris followed Lacey, as he says, and used this argument to support his general thesis, that Homeric epics represent eighth-century Greece.

*Odyssey* 1.277–8 and 2.196–7 are in a sense the crux of the problem, as is clear from the ancient commentators, since here, and only here, are εδνα used in Homer of things given by the bride's kin. Advocates of the bride-price theory have no option but to expel them as spurious. Lacey, following Finley accepted that 'these lines show that εδνα means things given at a marriage by both sides, and modern commentators merely deceive themselves by the use of irrelevant technical terms such as "bride-price" or "dowry", since there is neither in Homeric society.'<sup>5</sup> Finley summarized and puts the matter clearly: 'It is the word εδνα itself which has proved the most troublesome. Thirteen times it means the gifts from the suitor to the girl's father, and

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<sup>1</sup> M. I. Finley, 'Marriage, Sale and Gift in the Homeric World', *Revue Internationale des Droits de l'Antiquité* iii vol. 2 (1955), 167–94; repr. in *Economy and Society in Ancient Greece*, ed. B. D. Shaw and R. P. Saller (Harmondsworth, 1983), 233–45.

<sup>2</sup> W. K. Lacey, 'Homeric Εδνα and Penelope's Κῦριος', *JHS* 86 (1966), 55–68.

<sup>3</sup> A. M. Snodgrass, 'An Historical Homeric Society', *JHS* 94 (1974), 114–25.

<sup>4</sup> Ian Morris, 'The Use and Abuse of Homer', *Classical Antiquity* 5 (1986), 81–138, p. 106.

<sup>5</sup> art. cit., p. 56.

three times the word ἀνάεδνος (“without ἔδνα”) indicates a marriage without such gifts. In a reference to Penelope, which is repeated word for word a second time, ἔδνα means “dowry”, and in another passage the related verb appears in a context which permits no decision about the sense<sup>6</sup> – he refers here to *Od.* 2.52–4.

D. Page, on the other side, incorporated *Od.* 2.52–4 into his argument against a substantial measure of unity of authorship for the *Odyssey* and remarked that in an isolated lay, intended for separate recitation, nobody would notice the contradiction between the author of the beginning of the second book of the *Odyssey* and the rest of the poem, since the *Odyssey* (and indeed the *Iliad*) is aware of one custom only: *the suitor purchases the bride from her father*, while the author of this part of the *Odyssey* is familiar with the exactly opposite custom according to which *the father sells his daughter to the suitor*.<sup>7</sup> Page took it as certain that *Od.* 2.53 ἔδνωσαιτο θυγάτῃα means ‘(the father) may furnish his daughter with a dowry’, and *Od.* 2.196 (= 1.277) οἱ δὲ γάμον τεύξουσιν καὶ ἀρτυνέουσιν ἔδνα means ‘(the parents) shall make her marriage and prepare a dowry’ and that these are the only places in the Homeric poems where the dowry-custom is referred to, while in *Il.* 13.382 ἔδνωταί means ‘those who receive ἔδνα’.

In the new and already well-established commentary on the *Odyssey*<sup>8</sup> Stephanie West (introductory essay to books 1–4, and *ad loc.*) summarizes the previous scholarship and puts clearly the problem related to the above passages of the *Odyssey*: ‘since οἱ δέ (277) can only be Penelope’s kinsmen, ἔδνα (ἔδνα) must be understood (as also at ii 196) as gifts from the bride’s family, a dowry; cf. ii 53, where ἔδνωσαιτο θυγάτῃα is most naturally interpreted as referring to the provision of a dowry.’<sup>9</sup>

The present paper<sup>10</sup> will suggest that ἔδνα is a technical term and whenever it is used it denotes only one direction, that from the suitor to the bride’s father; and therefore that Penelope’s case is not an exception or confusion of the two marriage patterns established by Finley. It must be stressed, indeed, that in analysing *Od.* 1.277–8 (= 2.196–7) Morris observed: ‘they (her parents) will contrive many fine gifts (ἔδνα) – that is, attract rich ἔδνα.’<sup>11</sup> Nor does my argument seem to be excluded from Lacey’s more general one.

Penelope’s position is indeed complicated and each passage speaking of her wedding-gifts or dowry must be seen, as Lacey has suggested,<sup>12</sup> in the light of what her marital status is, i.e. whether or not Odysseus is dead, which is always disputed; or who is her κύριος and who is κύριος of Odysseus’ house (we must remember that Telemachus comes of age during the action of the *Odyssey* and so he is or he is not his mother’s κύριος); and Penelope’s own intention in regard to marriage, which changes during the course of the poem.

But one could say that Penelope herself expresses the rule concerning her position throughout the *Odyssey*, since the prevailing situation throughout is that she has been

<sup>6</sup> art. cit., p. 182 (or 239).

<sup>7</sup> D. L. Page, *The Homeric Odyssey* (Oxford, 1955, repr. 1976), pp. 63–4 (with note 9 on pp. 76–7; Page’s italics).

<sup>8</sup> A. Heubeck, S. West, J. B. Hainsworth, *A Commentary on Homer’s Odyssey*, vol. I Books i–viii (Oxford, 1988).

<sup>9</sup> M. Schmidt in the *Lexikon des frühgriechischen Epos* accepts the same view: *Od.* 1.277 (= 2.196) is classified under *Mitgift*, dowry, given by the bride’s father (s.v. ἔδνα 2) and the verb ἔδνω, ἔδνωμαι (s.v.) in *Od.* 2.53–4 as referring to the dowry.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. I. N. Perysinakis, *Wealth and Society in Early Greek Literature* (Univ. of London, Ph.D. 1982), pp. 95ff.

<sup>11</sup> Morris, p. 109, cf. Lacey, art. cit., p. 66.

<sup>12</sup> art. cit., p. 61.

wooded by the suitors, that she resists, and that the suitors consume Odysseus' *oikos*. Addressing the suitors, when she appears to be making her decision, she says:

μνηστήρων οὐχ ἤδε δίκη τὸ πάροιθε τέτυκτο,  
οἳ τ' ἀγαθὴν τε γυναῖκα καὶ ἀφνειοῖο θυγάτρα  
μνηστεύειν ἐθέλωσι καὶ ἀλλήλοις ἐρίσωσιν·  
αὐτοὶ τοί γ' ἀπάγουσι βόας καὶ ἴφια μῆλα,  
κούρης δαῖτα φίλοισι, καὶ ἀγλαὰ δῶρα διδοῦσιν·  
ἀλλ' οὐκ ἀλλότριον βίοτον νήποιον ἐδουσιν

(18.275–80; cf. 19.528–9)

Now the lines in question are (1.275–8):

μητέρα δ', εἴ οἱ θυμὸς ἐφορμάται γαμέεσθαι,  
ἂψ ἴτω ἐς μέγαρον πατρὸς μέγα δυναμένοιο·  
οἳ δὲ γάμον τεύξουσι καὶ ἀρτυνέουσιν ἔεδνα  
πολλὰ μάλ', ὅσσα ἔοικε φίλης ἐπὶ παιδὸς ἐπεσθαι.

These lines are part of Athene-Mentes' speech, while the second time they appear – one could say in a formulaic way – in the second book of the *Odyssey* they are uttered by the suitor Eurymachus against the old man Halitherses, and no condition is expressed (195–7):

μητέρ' ἐὼν ἐς πατρὸς ἀνωγέτω ἀπονέεσθαι·  
οἳ δὲ γάμον τεύξουσι καὶ ἀρτυνέουσιν ἔεδνα κτλ.

Before considering this puzzling passage let us examine the crucial words *ἀνάεδνος* and *ἐδνωτής*. The adjective *ἀνάεδνος* is used twice in the *Iliad*. Among the gifts Agamemnon promises to Achilles he offers one of his daughters *ἀνάεδνον* (9.146, repeated 288). This indirect gift must be seen, of course, in the light of the rest of the offer, that is in the light of Agamemnon's being in the wrong towards Achilles. Trying to appease Achilles, Agamemnon offers him many important gifts, absolving him from giving *ἔεδνα*. That in book 19 Agamemnon's daughter is not mentioned is of course quite natural under camp conditions; but that very fact gives another meaning to the initial offer, since it makes it appear as an *ad hoc* invention, included in the list of the gifts as one more implicit guarantee of Agamemnon's esteem towards Achilles.

Furthermore the adjective *ἀνάεδνος* and the noun *ἐδνωτής* is used in the Othryoneus passage from the *Iliad* (13.363–82). Othryoneus has promised Priam to drive back the Achaeans from Troy, wanting as a reward to marry Cassandra *ἀνάεδνον* and Priam acquiesces. Othryoneus was obliged to offer *ἔεδνα* to Priam, but he paid off his obligation with the great deed he promised to perform; i.e. the service to Priam is so important that he agrees to give Cassandra to him without demanding *ἔεδνα*. Mocking him, Idomeneus says to the dying Othryoneus: 'We would fulfil our promise to give you the loveliest of Atreides' daughters if you helped us storm the strong-founded city of Troy... we are not bad fathers-in-law (οὔτοι τοι ἐδνωταὶ κακοὶ εἰμεν)' (13.377–82) – but now death is your bride. The Idomeneus–Othryoneus passage is a bitter irony on the poet's part, since the latter promised such an achievement with such an arrogance.

At first sight *ἐδνωτής* appears to have an equivocal meaning, i.e. one who gives or receives *ἔεδνα*. According to LSJ<sup>9</sup>, *ἐδνωτής* means: 'father who portions a bride'. M. I. Tsitsicles<sup>13</sup> interprets the verb *ἐδνόσμαι* as *ἔδνα λαβὼν ἐκδίδωμι* and the noun as 'father-in-law who receives *ἔεδνα* from the groom to offer him the bride'. *ἐδνωτής* is an agent noun and denotes that man who seeks and/or receives *ἔεδνα*, and so we may extract the implicit meaning of the active verb *ἐδνώω*: seek and receive *ἔεδνα*.

<sup>13</sup> M. I. Tsitsicles, 'Ἐδνόσμαι–ἐδνωτής', *Hellenika* 17 (1962), 24–39, pp. 33, 39.

Therefore we may be closer to the truth if we suggest that the verb is said of the bride's father and means 'advertise my daughter's wooing and propose the *ἔδνα* required from the suitors'. The middle *ἑδνόμεαι* makes the meaning clear: 'propose, demand and receive (the offered) *ἔδνα*'. The father sets up the gift-giving process by making it known that his daughter is available. I am suggesting that the middle *ἑδνόμεαι* belongs to that class of middle verbs in which 'the subject is represented as acting either *for self*, in its own interest (*sibi*) or in a dynamic sense (*of, from, or through self*), i.e. with its own means and powers (*dynamic middle*)'.<sup>14</sup> And therefore the proper grammatical meaning is 'receive' and not 'give'. The middle *ἑδνούσθαι* denotes emphatically what the active *ἑδνοῦν* means. The important part of marriage from the point of view of the suitor is to win the bride – hence the important role of her father and the giving of gifts sometimes to the bride herself.

And it is characteristic that this self-interested and dynamic sense of the middle *ἑδνούσθαι* harmonizes very well with the society described by M. Finley in his influential book *The World of Odysseus*, as expanded and modified by A. W. H. Adkins in another influential book, *Merit and Responsibility*,<sup>15</sup> and in a series of relevant papers. The *agathos* must be successful in defending the group with which he is identified (*oikos*). 'Beyond that group were the rest of mankind, competitive, hostile, or indifferent, and the gods, malicious, capricious, regarding ephemeral mankind as of little account. Neither gods nor other men accorded him rights merely as a human being: he had rights only in the context of some particular relationship, some claim to consideration which he could produce.'<sup>16</sup> He *εὔχεται εἶναι*, in every case he is asserting his existence, his values, and his claims; he must be a valued member of his society and must be remembered. His anxiety to show himself is justified by receiving as many *ἔδνα* as possible; so he increases his honour. The same anxiety is expressed in gaining honour. As Adkins observes again '*timē* spans both honour and recompense. *Timan* and *tiein* seem less to describe the adoption of an attitude than the performance of certain actions, the creation of something, sometimes at least by the transfer of material goods. *Tinein* and *apotinein* in the active voice differ from *tiein* in that their objects are not persons but things, and their range covers payment (in the sense appropriate to a society without money) and being punished; and their object may readily be *timē*. (*Apo*)*tinusthai* and (*apo*)*tinesthai* in cases at least describe the process of transferring *timē* from the point of view of the person receiving it.'<sup>17</sup>

What is important for our case is that *τίνυσθαι* and *τίνεσθαι* are middle verbs denoting that the subject is acting for self, in its own interest, and from or through self, with its own means and powers. For this reason, after promising more gifts to Odysseus Alcinoos says to the counselling elders that 'we will make a collection among the people and *τισόμεθα*' (*Od.* 13.14). The world described by Finley and Adkins is competitive and it is characteristic that the competitive verbs (such as *μαχέσασθαι*, *ἀγωνίσασθαι*) are found in the middle voice; the verb *ἑδνόμεαι* belongs to the same class. The meaning of these verbs is more clearly understood if we only consider in the realm of the subject another person competing with or resisting the subject. The important moment in the marriage process from the point of view of

<sup>14</sup> A. N. Jannaris, *An Historical Greek Grammar* (London 1897, repr. Georg Olms, Hildesheim, 1968), §1470. Cf. H. W. Smyth–G. M. Messing, *Greek Grammar* (Cambridge, Mass., 1974), §§1713, 1721–2, 1728, 1731.

<sup>15</sup> M. I. Finley, *The World of Odysseus*<sup>2</sup> (London, 1977); A. W. H. Adkins, *Merit and Responsibility, A Study in Greek Values* (Oxford, 1960, repr. 1975).

<sup>16</sup> A. W. H. Adkins, 'Εὔχομαι, εὐχολή, and εὐχος in Homer', *CQ* 19 (1969), 20–33, p. 32.

<sup>17</sup> "Honour" and "Punishment" in the Homeric Poems', *BICS* 7 (1960), 23–32, p. 28.

the father is the result, the receiving of many gifts; nonetheless, the time when he *ἔδνεται*, i.e. he advertises his daughter's marriage, is the time his anxiety begins, the time he *εὐχεται* or *τίννεται*.

*οἱ δὲ* of *Od.* 1.277, if we turn back to the passage in question, must, indeed, refer grammatically to Penelope's kin. According to LSJ<sup>9</sup> *γάμον τεύξουσι* means 'make, prepare, cause a marriage'; while it is characteristic that the verb *ἀρτυνέουσι* (*ἔεδνα*) has the same root with the noun *ἀρετή* / *ἀραρίσκω*: arrange, fit what is proper or due to the situation. And therefore the whole line may mean: 'her father will pronounce his will to marry off his daughter and so he will declare the proper/due *ἔεδνα*', according to his status and *timē* (cf. *μέγα δυναμένοιο*, 276). Icarius would advertise his daughter's marriage and would receive *ἔεδνα*; the successful suitor would be the one who would honour Icarius and Penelope more by giving more gifts. There is no reason for Icarius to give Penelope without *ἔεδνα*, much less to give a dowry to the successful suitor. In the suitor-Icarius relationship the more important figure is no doubt the latter – notice the expression and the alliteration in *μέγαρον πατρός μέγα δυναμένοιο* (1.276).

The preposition *ἐπὶ* (*παιδός*) (1.278, 2.197) possibly means 'the end of motion' (i.e. purpose) before Penelope leaves her paternal house (LSJ<sup>9</sup> *ἐπὶ* A.i.3.b); *φίλης* would be more justified if used for the period Penelope is at her father's house; and *παιδός*, though a little odd as applied to the middle-aged widow Penelope, must be taken as if she had never left her paternal house.

In fact Athene, like Penelope, points out the valid marriage practice which the suitors have violated (1.275–8). But Penelope's condition is a literary one, and her attitude towards marriage every time must be seen in its proper context, i.e. in relation to the plot and the stage it has reached, whether her statement is strategic or sincere; and it goes parallel to the end (in an Aristotelian sense) of the *Odyssey*. The aim of Athene's suggestion on Penelope's marriage is to motivate the plot, as it is part of her initial plan for Odysseus' *nostos*; Penelope's marital status is one of the matters to be settled in the course of the plot. But the principle on which Penelope's supposed second husband might be chosen is always the suitor's wealth and *aretē*: of the Achaeans she will marry *ὅς τις ἄριστος μῆναι ἐνὶ μεγάροισιν ἀνὴρ καὶ πλείστα πόρῃσιν* (*Od.* 16.76–7, 19.528–9, 20.335).<sup>18</sup>

The verb *ἔεδνόομαι* occurs in Telemachus' speech to the assembly in *Od.* 2.52ff., where complaining of the suitors he says that they shrink from going to the house of Penelope's father Icarius and seeking her *ὥς κ' αὐτὸς ἔεδνώσαιτο θυγάτρα*. Finley admitted the 'virtual unanimity' of all commentators and translators that this refers to *ἔεδνα* passing from the groom to the bride's kin; that her father 'may himself set the bride-price for his daughter', although from the context he regards as equally possible the meaning 'he may himself dower his daughter'. The above analysis has shown, I hope, that Icarius would declare his daughter's wooing – which in fact has already taken place in Odysseus' palace – and would receive offers. The assertion that he would bestow her on the suitor he wished *καὶ οἱ κεχαρισμένος ἔλθοι* (54) makes clearer the admitted meaning of the passage: whoever will offer more gifts.

To sum up, *ἔεδνα* in all the passages discussed is a technical term and denotes the gifts given by the suitors to Penelope's kin, and therefore in all cases in Homer as well as in the *Catalogue of Women* of Hesiod *ἔεδνα* refers always to the suitors and, as it is said, he is the successful one *ὅς ἂν πλείστα πόροι*. *Od.* 1.277–8 (= 2.196–7) could

<sup>18</sup> Cf. also 15. 16–18, 20.326ff., 341–4, 6.158–9 (on Nausicaa); 2.87ff., 113ff., 132ff., 13.375ff.; 18.285ff. and on suitors in general 1.245–51, 16.122–8, 19.130–5; etc. Cf. *A Commentary on Homer's Odyssey*, pp. 58–9.

mean: 'Icarius will pronounce his will to marry off his daughter, and so he will declare and receive the due *ἔδνα*, according to his *timē* and the society's ideals and practices (*ἔοικε*).' *ἔδνα* means always wedding-gifts given to the bride's father by the groom; they are not associated with two contrasting marriage practices, nor are 'things given at a marriage by both sides'. Furthermore, Penelope's case in the *Odyssey* does not invalidate in general the marriage patterns described by Finley, but is absolved from any confusion or inconsistency. Nor does it make the Homeric epics an amalgam of different marriage-customs and practices of different periods, as Snodgrass argued. And one is inclined to agree with Morris, who concludes that there is no strong argument to refute the thesis that Homeric society is drawn from the real society of the eighth century in which the poet and his audiences lived.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> An additional note may be given regarding the adjective *πολύδωρος*, used of Andromache (*Il.* 6.394, 22.472) and Penelope (*Od.* 24.294), since it has been used to support the existence of two contrasting marriage practices in the same case. For Finley *ἄλοχος πολύδωρος* is the 'wife who brought many gifts', to her husband even though he won her 'having given numerous gifts of wooing (*hedna*)'; he treats the adj. as an antonym of *ἀλφεσίβοια* (art. cit., p. 185 and note 41 (= p. 240 in the repr.)). Snodgrass is rather 'inclined to believe that we have here an instance of the commonly-attested combination of dowry and indirect dowry, than that this passage alone should be proof of the exchange of gifts on the same marriage-occasion' (art. cit., p. 117; cf. Morris, art. cit., p. 110). First, one must notice that in the adjective we have *δῶρα*, not *ἔδνα*. Second, gifts from the bride's side to the groom are not excluded, according to the main function of gift-giving; they should be seen as evidence that the bride's father thinks highly both of himself and of his prospective son-in-law, and shows his good-will and quality by the abundance of these additional gifts. Third, the meaning of the adjective seems to depend on the speaker's focus, and I think it refers mainly to the bride herself. It seems to me that in these cases we have the passive possessive meaning of the word: wife who has been granted many qualifications, of many gifts, much-gifted, bountiful, i.e. gifts here are used in a metaphorical sense. We must have in this case a significant 'speaking name' like *Πολυπάμων*, *Πολύκτωρ*, or *Πολύδωρος*, son of Priam (*Il.* 21.91, 20.410), and *Πολυδώρα*, Peleus' beautiful daughter, for whom Boros gave many *ἔδνα* (*Il.* 16.175ff.); the denominative meaning of *πολύδωρος* is still strong in modern Greek. One might add that in the case of *πολύδωρος* we have the condition described for *Πανδώρα* (with all its ambiguity) 'All-endowed': because each of the gods gave her a gift (Hes. *Op.* 81–2).