

it is odd and significant that whenever that spear is specified by name, three times he misses with the throw.²¹

The difficulty with *ἐλασ* in 326 is that it looks like the strike-verb, and there is no sword. There is no candidate for the strike-verb other than *ἐλασ*. Either it is a simple exception to the principles set out at the beginning of this paper, and this is an exceptional use of a spear with a sword-verb, or perhaps it is metaphorical and Achilles 'hammers' his spear into Hector's neck. The second possibility is more interesting, but the first, I think, more likely.

Homer has one more card to play, with *μελίη* in line 328, a word that specifies the great ash spear. It was guilty of three misses in the past, but has found its destined mark at last. It is the last we hear of the great Pelian spear, and the end of the fighting in the *Iliad*.

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²¹ Ibid. 17.

HORN AND IVORY, BOW AND SCAR: *ODYSSEY* 19.559–81*

Skilful critical hands have attempted to unwrap the complicated layers of *Odyssey* 17–21 in the past, because these books have been thought to demonstrate inconsistencies,¹ and Book 19 has a special place among them. One of its problematic features is the notorious dream-gates of horn and ivory, woven by Penelope into the larger context of the book, a context made dreamlike by the manner in which she discusses her life, by the processes of recognition that move the narrative forward obliquely, and by the book's nighttime setting. There has been no attempt to reconcile Penelope's description of the dream-gates with her description in the same speech of the contest of the bow,² even though Russo's³ definition of the gates as

* I would like to thank Dr Bruce King, Professor Gareth Williams, and the anonymous reviewer for their helpful suggestions.

¹ M. A. Katz, 'Homecoming and hospitality: recognition and the construction of identity in the *Odyssey*', in S. M. Oberhelman, V. Kelly, and R. J. Golsan (edd.), *Epic and Epoch: Essays on the Interpretation and History of a Genre* (Lubbock, TX, 1994), 114ff. and J. Russo, 'Interview and aftermath. Dream, fantasy, and intuition in *Odyssey* 19 and 20', *AJPh* 103 (1982), 4–18 at 4, n. 1 provide valuable distillations of these approaches.

² For a summary of attempts to explain the gates, including her own, see A. Rozokoki, 'Penelope's dream in Book 19 of the *Odyssey*', *CQ* 51 (2001), 1–6, at 5–6, and A. Amory, 'The gates of horn and ivory', *YCS* 20 (1966), 3–57, at 4ff. (i) Based on etymology: *ἐλέφας*–*ἐλεφαίρομαι* and *κέρας*–*κραίνω* (A. H. M. Kessels, *Studies on the Dream in Greek Literature* [Utrecht, 1978], 97, 121, n. 44; R. B. Rutherford, *Homer: Odyssey, Books 19 and 20* [Cambridge, 1992], 194–5; K. Pollman, 'Etymologie, Allegorese und epische Struktur. Zu den Toren der Traume bei Homer und Vergil', *Philologus* 137 [1993], 233; U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, *Die Heimkehr des Odysseus. Neue homerische Untersuchungen* [Berlin, 1927], 87; J. Hundt, *Der Traumglaube bei Homer* [Greifswald, 1935], 78–81; L. Rh. Rank, *Etymologiseering en verwante verschijnselen bij Homerus* [Assen, 1951], 105; E. L. Highbarger, *The Gates of Dreams: An Archaeological Examination of Vergil, Aeneid VI.893–99* [Baltimore, 1940]; and Russo [n. 1]). (ii) Horn is associated with Odysseus, ivory with Penelope: horn equals complete knowledge, ivory

‘almost an allegory’ and Eustathius⁴ application to them of the term *αἶνιγμα* urge further interpretation. As Katz⁵ suggests, riddle and allegory share the same aesthetic and indicate hidden meaning, and this paper argues that Penelope juxtaposes the dream-gates and the bow-contest to lead the listener to search in her words for the complex new *μῆτις* that she has discovered. By calling dreams difficult to explain and decipher (19.560: ἀμήχανοι ἀκριτόμυθοι)⁶ at the start of her description Penelope guardedly signals that her words are just such a puzzle.

The Cretan stranger first interacts with Eurycleia and Penelope in Book 19. These women embody the stranger’s and Odysseus’ past and potential connection to the house, whether as *ξείνος* or *πόσις*,⁷ but both connections are threatened. Irus’ treatment of the disguised Odysseus at 18.220–5 shows that the bond of *ξείνη*, which Odysseus still recognizes (19.185–202) and Penelope still observes (19.332–5), may fail, but Odysseus’ house is most at risk from its lady, who is on the verge of accepting a new *πόσις* or *κύριος*. Penelope says at the start of the book that she cannot get away from marriage and that she cannot discover a new plan: νῦν δ’ οὔτ’ ἐκφυγέειν δύναμαι γάμον οὔτε τιν’ ἄλλην, / μῆτιν ἔθ’ εὐρίσκω (19.157–8). But in this intricate and highly rhetorical statement the listener can hear Penelope as she puzzles out the precise *μῆτις* that her situation demands. Her words signify all three of her difficulties: (i) she cannot escape her past marriage to Odysseus; (ii) she cannot escape marriage to one of the suitors; and (iii) she cannot escape a future marriage to Odysseus. In a single statement she encodes concerns for her past, present, and future.

The complicated rhetoric in which Penelope describes her problems defines the lonely crossroads at which she stands, but Penelope’s words also demonstrate complete awareness of her situation. She understands that this night could be the last in which she will approach so nearly the past reality of Odysseus’ house, and she says that in her near future τοῦ [δώματος ἢ βιότοιο] ποτε μεμνήσεσθαι οὔμαι ἔν περ δνείρω (19.581). She has not accepted life without Odysseus as a certainty, partly because her own and Eurycleia’s reminiscences with the Cretan stranger momentarily reinvigorate her connection to the past. The stranger approximates Odysseus, but the nature of this scene is ambiguous in the way that both past and future are encoded in the idea of *νόστος*; Eurycleia can reminisce about the history of Odysseus’ scar (19.395–466) and the returned Odysseus is revealed to her, but Penelope can feel only a mediated connection to Odysseus through the disguised *ξείνος*. Odysseus is distant, just as are Penelope’s past and future. As her past with Odysseus falls more and more into dream, she looks toward the future, but, although she knows that she stands at the breaking of a threatening new dawn as her present time with the suitors is ending, the details of that future are dreamlike.

imperfect. (iii) Horn is translucent, but ivory opaque so that horn signifies truth. (iv) ‘Some of the ancient scholars interpreted the difference between the ivory and horn gates on the basis of associations such as horn-cornea, ivory-tooth and the belief that one should have more faith in what one sees than in what is said’, and Rozokoki’s own opinion. (v) Ivory is ‘striking and impressive’ and hence deceptive. The first, third and fourth are mentioned by Eustathius, *Commentarii ad Homeri Odysseam*, ed. J. Weigel, 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1825–6), 2.1877.23–36.

³ Russo (n. 1), 9.

⁴ Eustathius (n. 2), 2.1877.24.

⁵ M. A. Katz, *Penelope’s Renown: Meaning and Indeterminacy in the Odyssey* (Princeton, 1991), 147.

⁶ Rozokoki (n. 2), 4 translates ἀκριτόμυθοι as ‘incoherent’. This is too extreme and destroys the irony.

⁷ See Katz (n. 5), 134–5 for the general interpretation of *ξείνη* in Book 19.

One must approach Penelope's words at *Odyssey* 19.559–81⁸ with the dreamlike context of the *homilia* firmly in mind. Penelope is trying to solve her problems and to craft a future that is suited to her, which gives her words the cast of prophetic dream, but she must also separate herself from the past in order to reach any of her possible futures:

τὸν δ' αὖτε προσέειπε περίφρων Πηνελόπεια·
 “ξείν', ἢ τοι μὲν ὄνειροι ἀμήχανοι ἀκριτόμυθοι
 γίγνοντ', οὐδέ τι πάντα τελείεται ἀνθρώποισι.
 560
 δοιαί γάρ τε πύλαι ἀμενηνῶν εἰσὶν ὄνειρων·
 αἱ μὲν γὰρ κεράεσσι τετεύχεται, αἱ δ' ἐλέφαντι·
 τῶν οἱ μὲν κ' ἔλθωσι διὰ πριστοῦ ἐλέφαντος,
 οἷ ῥ' ἐλεφαίρονται, ἔπε' ἀκράαντα φέροντες·
 565
 οἱ δὲ διὰ ξεστῶν κεράων ἔλθωσι θύραζε,
 οἷ ῥ' ἔτυμα κραίνουσι, βροτῶν ὅτε κέν τις ἴδῃται.
 ἀλλ' ἐμοὶ οὐκ ἐντεῦθεν ὄιομαι αἰνὸν ὄνειρον
 ἐλθέμεν· ἢ κ' ἀσπαστὸν ἐμοὶ καὶ παιδὶ γένοιτο.
 570
 ἄλλο δέ τοι ἐρέω, σὺ δ' ἐνὶ φρεσὶ βάλλεο σῆσιν·
 ἦδε δὴ ἡὼς εἰσι δυσώνυμος, ἢ μ' Ὀδυσῆος
 οἴκου ἀποσχῆσαι· νῦν γὰρ καταθήσω ἄεθλον,
 τοὺς πελέκεας, τοὺς κείνος ἐνὶ μεγάροισιν ἐοῖσιν
 ἵστασθ' ἐξείης, δρυόχους ὥς, δώδεκα πάντας·
 575
 στὰς δ' ὁ γε πολλὸν ἀνευθε διαρρίπτασκεν οἰστόν.
 νῦν δὲ μνηστῆρεςσιν ἄελθον τοῦτον ἐφήσω·
 ὃς δέ κε ῥῆϊται' ἐντανύσῃ βιὸν ἐν παλάμῃσι
 καὶ διοιστεύσῃ πελέκεων δυοκαῖδεκα πάντων,
 τῷ κεν ἄμ' ἐσποίμην, νοσφισσαμένη τόδε δῶμα
 580
 κουρίδιον, μάλα καλόν, ἐνίπλειον βιότοιο,
 τοῦ ποτε μεμήσεσθαι ὄιομαι ἐν περ ὀνείρῳ”.

But then sage Penelope addressed him:

‘O guest, truly dreams prove hard to explain, to decipher,
 nor yet in any respect are all things accomplished for men.
 And so there are two gates of powerless dreams,
 one set is built from horns, the other from ivory.
 Of those that go through the sawn ivory,
 mark you that they bring danger with their hopeless words.
 But they that go forth through the polished horns,
 mark you that they bring about the real when any mortal see them.
 But in my eyes I do not think that my grim dream came
 from there. Truly it would please me and my son.
 But I will tell you another thing and take it to heart:
 This ill-named dawn surely is at hand, the one that will make me leave
 Odysseus’ house, for now I will set down the makings of a contest,
 the axes, the ones that man in his home
 set up in a row, like beams that prop a hull, twelve together.
 And standing far off he shot his arrow through them.
 But now I will lay this contest on the suitors,
 and, whoever with his hands strings the bow most easily
 and shoots an arrow through all twelve axes,
 I would follow in his company, having quit this home,
 my wedded home, very fine, full of the substance of life,
 which, though in a dream, I think that I will remember at times’.

The most interesting layer of complexity in Penelope's description comes from her decision to construct the gate of true dreams from the same material as Odysseus'

⁸ For a commentary on 19.559–69 see Amory (n. 2), 16ff.

bow is made. By this choice the bow comes to share not only the potential for destruction that is encoded in Penelope's particular dream but also gains the timeless relevance that generally belongs to dream. This timeless potential for destruction is let loose in the contest of the bow: Odysseus massacres the suitors after repeating, years later, the same feat, but even at the point when Odysseus begins to string the bow the same properties of power and timelessness appear on an intellectual level that is as competitive as is the actual contest. He tests the bow *πειρώμενος ἔνθα καὶ ἔνθα* to make sure that *ἱπες* or worms, a word derived from *ἵπτομαι* and signifying 'to press hard, oppress, or hurt', have not weakened its structure over time. They not only stand for the suitors, but they also provide the listener with a contrast in weakness to the strength of horn. Horn can mean 'penis' as early as Archilochus,⁹ and these worms represent a gnawing and persistent threat, having the ability at once to cause harm by their nature but also to challenge by their phallic shape the figurative virility of the horn bow. Odysseus' inspection of the weapon urges such a physical interpretation, but his concern is dispelled when he finds that the bow is pristine. No worm has penetrated it over time, just as the suitors, for however long they gnaw at Odysseus' house, can make only shallow inroads. The bow twangs tunefully when strung, reinforcing on the audible level that there is no softness in it. The similarity between the shape of the strung bow and the shape of a gate, particularly when the bow is pulled back to the point of shooting, indicates an affinity between the passage of true dream through the gate of horn and the arrow that is shot by the archer.¹⁰

Odysseus immediately signals his assent to Penelope's plan with his own veiled and complex response. There is no danger here, as Odysseus, the stranger, says:¹¹

ᾧ γύναι αἰδοίη Λαερτιάδῳ Ὀδυσῆος,
μηκέτι νῦν ἀνάβαλλε δόμοις ἐνὶ τούτῳ ἄεθλον·
πρὶν γάρ τοι πολύμητις ἐλεύσεται ἐνθάδ' Ὀδυσσεύς,
πρὶν τούτους τόδε τόξον εὖξοον ἀμφαφώνωντας
νευρήν τ' ἐντανύσαι διοιστεῦσαι τε σιδήρου.¹² 585

'Honoured lady of Laertes' son, Odysseus,
no longer now put off at home this contest.
For, I tell you, crafty Odysseus will come here
before these men taking this well-polished bow in hand
both stretch it to the string and shoot arrow through the iron.'

But the description of the dream-gates, coming directly before Penelope's announcement of the bow-contest, has led Amory¹² and Russo¹³ to consider the switch 'abrupt', and Katz¹⁴ and analysts who hold this opinion contend that Penelope's words are a repudiation of Odysseus.¹⁵ These positions, however, can be held only

⁹ See T. Bergk (ed.), *Poetae Lyrici Graeci* (Leipzig, 1882), 2.432 on fr. 171: 'Eustath. II. p. 851, 33: καὶ ἔοικεν ὁ σκορπιώδης τὴν γλώσσαν Ἀρχίλοχος ἀπαλὸν κέρας τὸ αἰδοῖον εἰπὼν, ἐντεῦθεν τὴν λέξιν πορίσασθαι.'

¹⁰ For the sexual context Amory (n. 2), 53, n. 49, cites the guarded Gabriel Germain, *Homer*, trans. R. Howard (London, 1960), 148–9: 'It is curious that Penelope's gesture of thrusting the key into the lock when she goes to the treasury for her husband's bow should be expressed with the same words, aiming straight in front of her, which, later on, applied to Ulysses when he aims at the slender target formed by the holes of the twelve axes lined up one before the other. If there is a sexual symbolism in the bowman's exploit, the bard must have been unconscious of it.'

¹¹ See A. Amory, 'The reunion of Odysseus and Penelope', in C. H. Taylor (ed.), *Essays on the Odyssey: Selected Modern Criticism* (Bloomington and London, 1969), n. 23.

¹² Amory (n. 11), 102.

¹³ Russo (n. 1), 18.

¹⁴ Katz (n. 5), 147.

¹⁵ See Katz (n. 5), 94–5 for the analysts' opinions.

under two dubious assumptions: (i) that the description of the dream-gates and the bow-contest are two disparate elements that signal Penelope's hopelessness rather than parts of a complex of *σήματα* that work in conjunction to resolve Penelope's difficulties; and (ii) that Penelope rejects her dream and Odysseus out of hand when she establishes the bow-contest, because the contest is the first step towards marriage to one of the suitors. Penelope may be 'pessimistic',¹⁶ but Odysseus agrees to her plan and shows the same concern. He wonders at the chances of the plan's success at 20.28–30: ὥς ἄρ' ὃ γ' ἔνθα καὶ ἔνθα ἐλίσσετο μερμηρίζων, / ὅπως δὴ μνηστήρσιν ἀναιδέσι χεῖρας ἐφήσει / μῦνος ἐὼν πολέσι ('So he tossed and turned as he pondered in his mind / how he will put his hands to the shameless suitors / one against many'), but he does not hear in Penelope's words a rejection of himself. Instead his eager assent to Penelope's plan and his own concern about the plan's chances of success show all the more that Penelope's emotions are not signs of infidelity.¹⁷ The complexities of her situation, which push her gaze ever more toward the future and away from her past with Odysseus, provoke complex emotions in Penelope, just as they provoke complex rhetoric, and her feelings should not be judged absolutely as faithful or unfaithful.

But Penelope only displays utter despair when she describes the gate of false dreams, because that gate encodes a path that would doom her to marry one of the suitors. One of Eustathius' explanations provides help in understanding this part of Penelope's puzzle:¹⁸

τινὲς δὲ συμβολικώτερον ἄλλως ἐκδεξάμενοι τὸν λόγον κερατίνην μὲν πύλην τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς ἀπέδωκαν κατὰ τὴν ἐκ μέρους συνεκδοχὴν, ὃ ἐστὶ σύλληψιν· ἐπεὶ κερατοειδὴς ὁ πρῶτος χιτῶν τοῦ ὀφθαλμοῦ· ἐλεφαντίνην δὲ τὸ στόμα διὰ τοὺς ἐλεφαντόχρωτάς φασιν ὀδόντας, ἵνα λέγῃ συμβολικῶς ἡ σοφὴ Πηνελόπη πιστότερα τῶν ἀπλῶς οὕτω λεγομένων εἶναι τὰ ἐξ ἀποτελέσματος ὀρώμενα. διὸ καὶ τοῖς περὶ Ὀδυσσεύως ὀνειροκριτικῶς λεγομένοις πιστεύειν δηλαδὴ, ὅτε ἂν ἴδοι αὐτά.

Some who have understood the speech differently—as more symbolic—have interpreted the gate of horn as the eyes by synecdoche, that is by 'taking together'; for the outermost layer of the eye is like horn. But they assert that the mouth, because the teeth are ivory-coloured, is the gate of ivory, so that wise Penelope says symbolically that things that are seen to turn out are more trustworthy than things that are simply said to be so. For this reason [she says that] she believes clearly in the things that are being said about Odysseus in interpreting her dream at the time when she sees them.

Just as Penelope constructs the gate of true dreams from the same material as the bow, Penelope uses the material of the tusk that caused Odysseus' scar to fashion the gate of false dreams; ἐλέφας, the material of the false gate, can be referred to as ὀδοὺς ἐλέφαντος at least by the time of Herodotus 3.97.13, and elephant and boar are joined as animals with tusks: χαυλίδοντα δέ ἐστι τὰ ὑποφαίνοντα ἔξω τοὺς ὀδόντας, οἷον ὅς ἐλέφας ἀσπάλαξ καὶ εἴ τι ἄλλο.¹⁹ Odysseus rejects the use of the scar, which is referred to as λευκὸς ὀδοὺς, as a way to reveal himself to Penelope, because she tells

¹⁶ Rozokoki (n. 2), 4 and Amory (n. 11), 105.

¹⁷ See Katz (n. 5), 111 for the position *contra* P. W. Harsh, 'Penelope and Odysseus in *Odyssey* XIX', *AJPh* 71 (1950), 1–21.

¹⁸ Eustathius (n. 2), 2.1877.34–6. This is also the explanation proffered by Servius, *Comm. in Verg. Aen.* vi.893: *physiologia vero hoc habet: per portam corneam oculi significantur, qui et cornei sunt coloris et duriores ceteris membris . . . per eburneam vero portam os significatur a dentibus.*

¹⁹ S. P. Lambros, *Supplementum Aristotelicum: Excerptorum Constantini De Natura Animalium Libri Duo Aristophanis Historiae Animalium Epitome Subiunctis Aeliani Timothei Aliorumque Eclogis I* (Berlin, 1885), 1.9.2.

Odysseus in her description that the scar encodes only hopeless action: οἷ ῥ' ἐλεφαίρονται, ἔπ' ἀκράαντα φέροντες (19.565). He does not use the scar to reveal himself to her even after the bow-contest when it would seem to be a handy mark of his identity, and when Eurycleia mentions the mark to Penelope she treats it 'with extreme skepticism'.²⁰ While the boar's tusk does symbolize power because it threatened Odysseus and the scar has the power to identify him,²¹ it is not unique in the way that Odysseus is uniquely capable of stringing and using the bow. The power of the boar's tusk on only one occasion inflicted a single wound that Odysseus was able to survive, and the boar did not bring his power to bear inside the house in the same way as in times past Odysseus at home displayed his special ability with the bow. When Odysseus repeats the steps of the bow-contest and destroys the many suitors inside his home, such an action will coalesce with and violently fulfill Penelope's dream, thereby proving that her dream has travelled through the true gate of horn. The scar, however, encodes only limited and empty vulnerability.

From this mix of signs Eurycleia accepts the scar, because as a servant she has known Odysseus since his childhood, just as do Eumaeus and the oxherd,²² but Odysseus does not think that the scar is sufficient for Laertes, nor does he reveal himself by means of the scar to Telemachus, for Telemachus' youth makes it irrelevant. In the case of Laertes, Odysseus supplements the scar with the story of the trees that were a gift to him from his father, and Penelope's final test also depends on a tree. A true solution to the problems of Laertes and Penelope is not in essence a simple revelation of identity, because the depth of their relationships to Odysseus demands signs of greater complexity. The living fruit-trees that Laertes gave to Odysseus in his youth—the text does not indicate their condition in Book 23—compare to and contrast with the tree that Odysseus made into one of the posts of his and Penelope's bed. Both sorts of tree are domestic, but the emphasis of the living trees is on their fruit, which is analogous to Odysseus' relationship to Laertes. When Odysseus built his bed he was establishing his family, which, beginning with the first fruit of that bed, became the tree's new foliage, growing larger with Telemachus and the rest of the οἶκος and encoding the potential for eternal growth.

In the *Odyssey* Penelope influences the outcome of her life by manipulating and testing Odysseus with unique complexity, and a large part of her κλέος²³ comes from the skill with which she encodes in the description of the dream-gates and the bow-contest the true and false paths by which Odysseus may be able—or unable—not only to return home but also to become equal to the true and timeless idea of Odysseus that she has never forsaken.

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²⁰ Harsh (n. 17), 3.

²¹ Behind the idea of false dream such as Agamemnon's οὐλος ὄνειρος may lurk the scar (οὐλή).

²² For recognition by Dolios and his sons see Katz (n. 1), 69.

²³ Concerns for honour are manifest also in the grief that she feels for the loss of the geese in her dream (Russo [n. 1], 9) and in the tears that she sheds over the bow in Book 21. Her concern for honour is seen clearly when she wins gifts from the suitors in Book 18, and this honour from the suitors is an extension of the honour that is won from ξενίη (see Katz [n. 5], 121).