

PENELOPE'S INDIGNATION

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When Penelope is at last “convinced” that her beloved Odysseus has actually returned, she tearfully runs to him, flings her arms around his neck, and exclaims:

Μή μοι, Ὀδυσσεῦ, σκύζευ, ἐπεὶ τά περ ἄλλα μάλιστα
ἀνθρώπων πέπνυσο· θεοὶ δ' ὤπαζον οἷζύν, 210
οἱ νῶϊν ἀγάσαντο παρ' ἀλλήλοισι μένοντε
ἦβης ταρπῆναι καὶ γήραος οὐδὸν ἰκέσθαι.
αὐτὰρ μὴ νῦν τόδε μοι χῶεο μηδὲ νεμέσσα,
οὐνεκά σ' οὐ τὸ πρῶτον, ἐπεὶ ἴδον, ὥδ' ἀγάπησα. 215
αἰεὶ γάρ μοι θυμὸς ἐνὶ στήθεσσι φίλοισιν
ἐρρίγει μὴ τίς με βροτῶν ἀπάφοιτο ἔπεσιν
ἐλθῶν· πολλοὶ γὰρ κακὰ κέρδεα βουλευούουσιν.
οὐδέ κεν Ἀργεῖη Ἑλένη, Διὸς ἐκγεγαυῖα,
ἀνδρὶ παρ' ἄλλοδαπῷ ἐμίγη φιλότῃ καὶ εὐνῇ, 220
εἰ ἦδη ὃ μιν αὐτὶς ἀρήϊοι υἱὲς Ἀχαιῶν
ἀξέμεναι οἰκόνδε φίλῃν ἐς πατρίδ' ἔμελλον.
τὴν δ' ἡ τοι ῥέξαι θεὸς ὥρορεν ἔργον αἰεκές·
τὴν δ' ἄτην οὐ πρόσθεν ἔφ' ἐγκάτθετο θυμῷ
λυγρῇν, ἐξ ἧς πρῶτα καὶ ἡμέας ἵκετο πένθος. 225
νῦν δ', ἐπεὶ ἦδη σήματ' ἀριφραδέα κατέλεξας
εὐνῆς ἡμετέρης, τὴν οὐ βροτὸς ἄλλος ὁπώπει,
ἀλλ' οἶοι σύ τ' ἐγώ τε καὶ ἀμφίπολος μία μούνη,
Ἄκτορίς, ἣν μοι δῶκε πατὴρ ἔτι δεῦρο κίουση,
ἡ νῶϊν εἵρυτο θύρας πυκινοῦ θαλάμοιο,
πεῖθεις δὴ μευ θυμόν, ἀπηνέα περ μάλ' ἐόντα.”¹ (23.209–230)

This speech is important for understanding Penelope's character. A careful examination of Penelope's words reveals that she greets her husband not with unalloyed delight, but rather with mixed feelings provoked by Odysseus' earlier treatment of her.

This passage has been the subject of a good deal of scholarly contention. Many critics, troubled by apparent literary and psychological inconsistencies in lines 218–24, have followed Aristarchus in rejecting them as an interpolation. Helen's conduct, even though so forgivingly presented in those lines, is so

¹ The references are to the *Odyssey* and the translation offered in the essay is by R. Lattimore, *The Odyssey of Homer* (New York 1965) unless otherwise stated.

different from Penelope's as to make the analogy seem inappropriate,² while its content seems out of keeping with the happiness Penelope feels at Odysseus' homecoming, as Homer later describes it in the simile of the shipwrecked survivor reaching shore (233–40).³ On the other hand, other scholars argue that this comparison between the two heroines is in keeping with Homer's style: Penelope is elsewhere compared with Clytaemnestra (24.194–202 and 11.444–46), while the use of so inexact and unbecoming a comparison is not surprising in the speech of a woman under such stress as Penelope.⁴

Yet other scholars try to evade the problem by interpreting Penelope's words ἐμίγη φιλότῃ καὶ εὐνή (219) in a non-sexual sense. Instead of translating them *literally*—"Helen would not have 'mixed in love'/'lain in love'"—they adopt an out-of-place, romantic locution: "Helen would not have 'fallen in love with an outlander'," and add a noble motive for her: had she known that her act would bring grief to herself and *many others*, she would have acted differently.⁵ However, Penelope's description of Helen's act is avowedly sexual, without euphemism or concealment. Penelope uses the most explicit language found in Homer for sexual intercourse (cf. 10.334–35; 15.420–21). Moreover, nothing in the passage, nor in the entire epic for that matter, supports the notion that Helen was in the least bit concerned about the effect her infidelity might have on others.⁶ Rather, Penelope declares that had Helen known she would be *brought back home* (220–21), she would not have made love to a foreigner.

Recently Marquardt has argued for yet another interpretation, claiming that the analogy in 218–24 actually points to a parallel between Paris and the suitors, and that Penelope is here asking Odysseus forgiveness in case her

² Also the αἰεὶ γάρ of 215 should be followed directly by νῦν δ' of 225. Cf. W. W. Merry, *Homer, Odyssey Books XIII–XXIV* (Oxford 1882) ad loc.

³ U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, *Homerische Untersuchungen*, Philologische Untersuchungen 7 (Berlin 1884) 83–84.

⁴ E.g., W. B. Stanford, *The Odyssey of Homer* (London 1962) ad loc. Psychological reconstruction of characters' motives and emotions that are not mentioned explicitly incurs immediate suspicion. As the essay makes clear, I do believe that a psychological approach can be useful when applied with caution. Such an approach is especially justifiable in the analysis of Penelope's behavior. Throughout the epic Penelope remains a mysterious and opaque figure whose statements are indirect but obviously carefully considered. For the importance and application of a psychological approach in analyzing characters, see J. Griffin, *Homer on Life and Death* (Oxford 1980) 50–80.

⁵ E.g., P. W. Harsh, "Penelope and Odysseus in Odyssey XIX," *AJP* 71 (1950) 6; D. J. Stewart, *The Disguised Guest* (London 1976) 100–3; see also P. Marquardt, "Penelope 'ΠΟΛΥΤΡΟΠΟΣ,'" *AJP* 106 (1985) 42.

⁶ Even though the topic of concern for others is mentioned elsewhere in the epic (11.438). F. J. Groten, Jr., "Homer's Helen," *G & R* 15 (1968) 37 and J. H. Finley, Jr., *Homer's Odyssey* (Cambridge, Mass. 1978) 23, overstate the case in claiming that Penelope here sympathizes with Helen. Penelope is not complimentary in her remark. Far from being condoned, Helen's act serves for Penelope as an instructive example of how *not* to behave.

own conduct toward the suitors looks as though it, like Helen's behavior, was motivated by *ate* and caused grief to many. Even in Helen's case, says Penelope, the folly comes from the gods. Marquardt argues that Penelope "says she was afraid that someone would 'beguile her with words' *to fall in love* (my emphasis) as has happened to Helen, since many men plan evil things." Marquardt finds in the phrase κακά κέρδεα (217) an echo of Penelope's description of the suitors who κακῶς φρονέουσιν (18.168).⁷ She further argues that the words κακά κέρδεα βουλεύουσιν refer to the hypocrisy of the suitors towards Telemachus, which parallels the behavior of Paris.

But this interpretation is questionable on several grounds. First, there is little in this speech or elsewhere in the *Odyssey* to suggest that what Penelope fears is being lured into falling in love with a stranger, or that she even considers herself susceptible to such a weakness. Rather, Penelope is explicitly concerned with the possibility of an impostor whom she would not be able to detect, and whom she would mistakenly make the master of Odysseus' *oikos*. Indeed the verb ἀπάφοιτο (216), which Penelope chooses to describe what she feared, includes not only deceit through words (ἔπεσσιν), but also deceit through a change in shape and identity. In Book 11.217, where Odysseus, unable to embrace the spirit of his dead mother, asks whether Persephone has sent him a phantom instead of a person, his mother replies that her intangibility is not the result of Persephone's beguiling him (ἀπαφίσκει), but of the transformation that all mortals undergo when they die and only their spirit remains. Secondly, the trial of the bed is clearly designed to detect an impersonator, not to try an importuning lover. And finally, the γάρ in verse 215 strongly suggests that verses 215–17 explain Penelope's failure to greet Odysseus, since she asks forgiveness. The verses, then, are a part of her argument, not independent of it. Nor does the phrase κακά κέρδεα βουλεύουσιν connect Paris with the suitors, for nothing in the text indicates that Paris used hypocrisy, simulation or guile to seduce Helen, or that she was unwilling.

Penelope's speech of welcome is a carefully constructed whole. She begins with the theme of the gods' jealousy at the happiness of the young married couple (210–12); asks Odysseus' forgiveness for her somewhat delayed welcome, and in line 215, explains that it was fear of an impostor that made her so cautious and reserved. In the analogy to Helen, Penelope returns, in typical ring composition, to the theme of a divine grudge (222–24); and she ends the speech by acknowledging that she is satisfied with the proof Odysseus has given her of his identity.

The comparison to Helen fits tightly into this passage, in meaning as well as structure. The critics who find the analogy inappropriate, and thus

⁷ Marquardt (above, note 5) 42–43, 46–47. The premise that Penelope was afraid she might fall in love with a stranger, as Helen did with Paris, has already been suggested by A. Amory, *Essays on the Odyssey*, ed. Ch. H. Taylor, Jr. (Bloomington 1963) 120.

would either delete or distort it, often argue in terms of what Penelope *should* have thought about her husband's return, rather than what she actually says, and assume that since Penelope must be unequivocally happy at her husband's return, her words must express her unequivocal joy. But if we free ourselves of these preconceptions, we should be able to see Penelope's reference to Helen for what it is. The analogy allows Penelope to say that she avoided having sexual relations with another man because she knew that Odysseus would return and she would be forced to confront him, just as Helen would not have lain with Paris had she known that the Achaeans would bring her home. Helen's experience taught Penelope that if she married another man in her husband's absence, the act would not be without consequences: in Helen's case, the Trojan expedition and her return; in Penelope's, having to face the returned Odysseus and the invalidity of her new marriage. Furthermore, the contrast with Helen's famed infidelity emphasizes Penelope's own chastity and also serves as a response to Odysseus' earlier accusation that his marriage bed had been used by someone else (23.203–5): Penelope has not shared her bed with anyone else.

The truly striking quality in Penelope's speech is not the comparison with Helen, but the distant tone of the whole speech, to which the comparison only contributes. Penelope does not explain why she did not recognize or acknowledge her husband earlier. Nor do her words contain any overt affection. While she kisses and embraces Odysseus, she had done as much to Eurycleia, when the maid told her that the stranger whom Penelope had met the day before was her husband (23.32–36). Penelope says nothing about her years of longing for him. Nor does she confess here her real reason for not remarrying: that she continued to remember and long for Odysseus.⁸

Penelope's cool and formal welcome after Odysseus' nineteen-year absence is understandable. It reflects her hurt and annoyance that Odysseus had kept his identity hidden from her, his wife, just as he had from the suitors and other members of his household whom he suspected, while everyone else in his immediate circle of friends must have known who he was. Earlier events in Book 23 prepare for Penelope's indignant reserve. When Eurycleia informs Penelope that her husband has returned and killed the suitors, she lets her mistress know that Telemachus had been cognizant of the beggar's true identity all along and cooperated with his father in keeping the secret (26–31). At this point, Penelope leaps out of her bed, embraces Eurycleia and cries (32–34). Her joy is an instinctive, sincere reaction to the good news that her husband is finally home. But the seed of chagrin has been sown. For it must have been rather insulting that Odysseus chose to confide in his son rather than his wife, especially since the son suspects his mother's fidelity.⁹ She then

⁸ E.g., 1.340–46; 19.134–36; 13.379; 23.54.

⁹ For a discussion of the tension between Penelope and Telemachus evident throughout the

asks: ὅπως δὴ μνηστῆρσιν ἀναιδέσι χεῖρας ἐφῆκε/μοῦνος ἑών, οἱ δ' αἰὲν ἀολλέες ἔνδον ἔμιμνον (37–38). It has probably occurred to Penelope that in overcoming the large number of suitors who were always gathered in the hall, Odysseus may have had considerable help—otherwise his success would seem impossible—and her question tries to lure Eurycleia into telling her who else was privy to Odysseus' identity. Eurycleia is only able to tell Penelope that she found Odysseus triumphing over the bodies of the slain suitors, but does not know how he achieved his victory. At this point, Penelope, irritated, answers her with a reproach: "Dear nurse, do not yet laugh aloud in triumph" (23.59). Since there was no laugh, sneer or boast in Eurycleia's words, Penelope seems to rebuke her because she wants a different answer: who, besides Telemachus, helped Odysseus.

Penelope wants to know the whole truth, and to what extent she was excluded from privileged information as to the beggar's identity. She might also guess that Eurycleia had already recognized the beggar as Odysseus even earlier during the footbath from his telltale scar, and thus she too was privy to the secret. To test this guess, Penelope continues to voice disbelief that the stranger is Odysseus (23.62–64), so that Eurycleia admits that she also knew the stranger's true identity all along but was forbidden to reveal his secret to Penelope; it would be natural for Penelope to feel resentment. After Eurycleia's confession, Penelope finally agrees to go meet Odysseus. When she sees him, her heart ponders whether she should stand aloof and question him, continuing to pretend that she does not know who he is, or whether she should follow the prompting of her heart and go up to him and clasp and kiss his head and hands (23.85–87). Undecided, she does neither, but simply sits across from him in silence. At last, as we learn from her response to Telemachus' rebuke, she decides to take the formal course of questioning (23.107–10), the formal means of recognition.¹⁰ But she does not ask him any questions. It is Odysseus who provides the sign for a formal recognition when he asks the maid to prepare his couch for the night (23.171–72). Penelope's continued silence may reflect her resentment at Odysseus' lack of eagerness to reveal himself; after all, by delaying the formal recognition, she delays his assumption of his position of master of his *oikos*.

In her address to her husband, Penelope suppresses her affection for him. Yet the poet reveals her true feelings in his description of her physical reactions, first to Eurycleia's news that the stranger is her husband (23.32–34) and, second, to Odysseus' description of their bed (23.205–8). In both cases,

Odyssey, see, for example, J. W. Mackail, "Penelope in the Odyssey," *Occasional Publications of the Classical Association* 5 (1916) 9, 12–13, 16. See also 16.73–77; 19.158–61, 532–34.

¹⁰ Penelope's words οἷος ἔησθα in 175 suggest that she may actually know who he is at this point, cf. H. Hyman, *The Odyssey of Homer* (London 1882) ad loc., Merry (above, note 2) ad loc.; Amory (above note 7) 119. Figuring out "what manner of man was Odysseus" is a decisive element in the recognition, see 4.250, 19.219. Contra: Stanford (above, note 4).

her inner self responds: she is glad at Eurycleia's revelation and her heart and knees are loosened for Odysseus; she leaps towards Eurycleia and runs to Odysseus; she sheds tears and embraces first Eurycleia, then Odysseus. There is a marked contrast between her physical reaction to the presence of her husband and her verbal reaction.

Penelope's speech of welcome contains ample hints of her annoyance. First, she asks Odysseus not to be angry at her for not having properly greeted him earlier: οὐνεκά σ' οὐ τὸ πρῶτον, ἐπεὶ ἶδον, ὥδ' ἀγάπησα (23.214). The statement could be read in two ways: ὥδε may be construed as an extension of ἐπεὶ ἶδον, as suggested by Stanford (*ad loc.*), that is to say "right from the moment when I saw you."; or as "in the way," in which case Penelope is apologizing for not having hugged and kissed her husband "in the way I am doing now."¹¹ In the latter case ὥδε, construed with ἀγάπησα, refers to the conventional greeting offered to a person whom one has not seen for a long time, or to a person who is returning from a dangerous journey (cf. 16.15–18; 17.31–35). The line thus contains a hint of indignation, since in all other cases embraces and kisses have followed self-revelation by Odysseus. Telemachus and Odysseus embrace after Odysseus reveals his identity (16.213–14). Eumaeus and Philoetius (21.223–24), and other faithful slaves (22.495–501) kiss and embrace him (Eurycleia is forbidden to welcome him after she recognized him). Penelope was unable to give this conventional welcome (ὥδ' ἀγάπησα) immediately upon seeing him, because Odysseus did not reveal his identity to her as he did to the others. When Penelope points out to Odysseus that she deviated from convention, she implies that the reason lay with Odysseus himself: she would have greeted him if he had revealed his identity to her. Moreover, by mentioning her cautious welcome of her husband, Penelope indicates how careful she was in greeting other strangers whose identity was in doubt, and she vividly shows the care she took to maintain her chastity. The motif of chastity culminates in her reference to Helen, who was accepted back by her husband despite her infidelity, while Penelope, faithful for so long, suffered the insult of her husband's distrust.

If the use of the adverb ὥδε refers to the moment of her seeing Odysseus ("do not be angry at me for this, nor full of indignation because I did not greet you *right from the moment* when I saw you the first time," my translation), Penelope's remark contains yet another rebuke as well. The emphasis on ἐπεὶ ἶδον indicates that Penelope has in mind recognition by appearance or even voice, and highlights the ambiguity of τὸ πρῶτον. Τὸ πρῶτον could refer to either the present encounter, when both Telemachus and Odysseus scold her for withholding welcome (23.97–103; 166–72), or to the first one in Book 19.¹²

¹¹ Cf. Merry (above, note 2) *ad loc.*

¹² We know that such a recognition was possible since Eurycleia almost recognizes him from his voice and appearance before noticing the scar (19.389–90; cf. 19.89 where we are told that Penelope heard him before she saw him).

The immediate context is not decisive enough to clarify the ambiguity. In any case, Penelope has no more solid evidence of Odysseus' identity in their second encounter than she had in their first. In both encounters, the light is dim and Odysseus is sitting in front of her wearing beggar's clothes. We are not told of any change in his appearance or voice which would make a recognition more likely until after his bath (23.155–62).¹³ An admission that she had recognized him earlier with an explanation for her delayed welcome, or a statement that she had not, thus did not offer him a proper welcome, would be natural and expected under the circumstances. Yet Penelope says that she did not welcome Odysseus because she feared an impostor, leaving him to wonder to what extent she remembers him at all, in spite of her former ambiguous slip of the tongue in saying οἷος ἔησθα (23.175). By claiming that she feared an impostor, Penelope throws the ball back into Odysseus' court, suggesting it was his responsibility to make sure she would be able to identify him by removing his disguise, whether or not she might be able to tell who he was from the shape of his body. Moreover, the reproach is again given emphasis by the mention of Helen. She is the only one who recognized Odysseus posed as a beggar in Troy by his shape (τοῖον ἔόντα, 4.250). The association may suggest that she recognized her husband, but that fact does not free him of responsibility for revealing himself to her. Penelope's statement is, as always, indirect and subtle, but telling: her conduct is careful and measured, pointedly analogous to the way in which Odysseus has treated her.

Indignation and criticism underlie Penelope's next statement as well: "For always my heart in my breast feared lest some man would come and deceive me (by his shape) with words; for many scheme κακὰ κέρδεα" (216–17). On the face of it, Penelope is merely explaining why she did not offer Odysseus a proper welcome when she first saw him. But Odysseus had actually attempted what she feared; he assumed the shape of another and used words (ἀπάφοιτο ἔπεσιν) to convince his wife of his identity. In his attempt to disguise himself, Odysseus is like the many who schemed κακὰ κέρδεα.¹⁴ In this context, the purpose of his impersonation is irrelevant. The very conduct

¹³ The slaughter of the suitors cannot prove his identity beyond suspicion (23.63).

¹⁴ If we could assume without depending on an argument *ex silentio* (as is argued by Harsh [above, note 5] 8–9) that Penelope has already recognized Odysseus in his beggar's disguise, and that Odysseus was aware of her early recognition, her words κακὰ κέρδεα acquire an even more sarcastic tone. Odysseus' attempt to beguile her is then plainly criticised as the use of κακὰ κέρδεα. For Penelope's more or less conscious recognition of Odysseus in the course of Bk. 19, see e.g., C. Whitman, *Homer and the Heroic Tradition* (Cambridge, Mass. 1958) 303; R. Fitzgerald, *Homer, The Odyssey* (New York 1961) 497–503; Amory (above, note 7) 103–8, 117–18, 120; W. B. Stanford, *The Ulysses Theme* (Oxford 1954) 55, 253 n. 25; N. Austin, *Archery at the Dark of the Moon* (Berkeley 1975) 231–35, 279 n. 29. I am aware that my interpretation can furnish an explanation for Penelope's hesitation to accept Odysseus in Book 23, a problem not yet satisfactorily solved by the proponents of the thesis of an early recognition. See Amory (above, note 7) 102–4.

for which Penelope asks forgiveness was prompted by the person whose pardon she asks.

An investigation of the use of the word κέρδεα in the epic will show how careful Penelope was in her choice of words, and will reveal a more biting significance in her remark. The base κερδ- has a double semantic field. In general it means "skill" or "skillful acts" i.e., acts that are the proper response to a problematic situation, or "trickery" or "tricks," and "gain," "advantage," or "greed." There is only one occurrence of κέρδεα meaning "profits" or "gain" in the *Odyssey* (8.164).¹⁵ In all its other uses, κέρδεα means "skill," "skillful acts," or "tricks" (with no pejorative overtone). In both of its semantic fields κέρδεα acquires a positive or negative sense according to the context.¹⁶ When it means "skill" or "craft," the word points to either a natural or acquired competence and to the acts derived from it (cf. *Iliad* 23.322, 709). The word κέρδεα is polysemous, and the nature of the "skill" has to be inferred from the context. In the *Odyssey*, κέρδεα are restricted to the members of Odysseus' family and their friends: Odysseus, Penelope, Telemachus, Athene and Eumaeus (κερδαλέος 15.451). It is always a *desirable* feature: Athene prides herself on being above the other gods in her μητις and κέρδεα (13.299). She says that both she and Odysseus are marked for knowing κέρδεα (13.297, cf. 13.255; 24.167). Antinoos mentions Penelope's κέρδεα, "craft" as a gift, the counterpart of her φρένες ἐσθλαί (2.88, 118). Penelope's "craft" is her resourcefulness in finding a way to postpone her remarriage. It manifests itself in such acts as sending self-contradicting messages to all the suitors (2.91), and her renowned δόλος of weaving (2.94-105). After Odysseus arrives at his palace as a beggar and is mistreated and forced into wrestling Irus, Penelope appears before the suitors and scolds Telemachus: "Telemachus, your φρένες and νοῦμα are not steadfast as before; when you were but a child you used to wield better κέρδεα" (18.215-16). Telemachus later displays κέρδεα in the proper treatment he accords to the *xenos* Odysseus at the start of a new day of feasting (20.257-61), when he assures him of a good place and a fair portion of food and counters the suitors' vilification.¹⁷ In his conversation with Penelope, Odysseus, as beggar, praises the hero Odysseus (whom he allegedly met) as a man who, in his knowledge of κέρδεα πολλά, "many skills," is beyond all mortals (19.285).

¹⁵ See the discussion by M. Dickie, "Phaeacian Athletes," *Papers of the Liverpool Latin Seminar* 4 (1983) esp. 247-52; 269-70. For the exclusiveness of the meaning of κέρδος as "gain" etc. in Greek, as opposed to the basic meaning "skill" common to cognate Indo-European words, see C. Watkins, "Aspects of Indo-European Poetics," in *The Indo-Europeans in the Fourth and Third Millennia*, ed. E. C. Polomé (Ann Arbor 1982) 107-8.

¹⁶ See further Stanford (above, note 20) 249 n. 21.

¹⁷ Κέρδεα does not indicate any sign of craftiness (in the sense of dissimulation) in Telemachus' goal in seating Odysseus where he did. The word κέρδεα in this passage indicates only the means by which any plan or scheme can be fulfilled. See, however, Merry (above, note 2) and Stanford (above, note 4) ad loc.

Κέρδεα, the ability to perform skillful or crafty acts, are valuable and desirable in the *Odyssey*, marking only the royal family and their closest friends. The word is not common, nor is it used with the adjective κακά anywhere else in the Homeric epic. Penelope could have used one of the more common phrases to signify “devising evil,” as she does elsewhere in employing ἀτάσθαλα or κακά with forms of μηχανᾶσθαι, or κακά, κακῶς with φρονεῖν.¹⁸ Both verbs are also used to suggest evil scheming by undefined persons: πολλοί (4.822; 16.9; 17.596), θνητὸς ἀνὴρ (16.196). Furthermore, only twice in the poem is the word κέρδεα used with an attribute, first with πολλά in the self-praising tale Odysseus tells Penelope, and then with κακά in his wife’s greeting. It was also Odysseus’ πολυκερδείησι that Eurycleia suggested to Penelope was the motive behind his insistence that his identity be kept secret from his wife (23.77). The attribution of a pejorative adjective to a normally positive term should certainly draw our attention, as should the fact that a word used exclusively to characterize individual members of Odysseus’ family is now suddenly associated with other, undefined persons (τις, πολλοί). A third oddity is the use of the verb βουλεύειν with κέρδεα. In the Homeric epics, the noun is usually the object of the verbs ἰδεῖν or νομᾶν (*Od.* 2.88; 13.255; 296–97; 19.285–86), which imply that the possessor of κέρδεα also has the knowledge to apply this quality properly to the situation at hand. The noun κέρδεα is also associated with φρένες and νόος and their respective verbs to imply an intellectual process of understanding a situation (as a result of which the proper κέρδεα will be applied, e.g., *Il.* 23.320 and 322; 415; *Od.* 2.117–18; 18.215–16; 23.140), but not with βουλή or βουλεύειν, which refer to advice, decisions or schemes based on preference rather than an intellectual process.¹⁹ Does Penelope mean to hint something by these three divergences from the customary use of κέρδεα?

Penelope’s, or Homer’s, choice of the word κέρδεα in 23.217 may primarily imply that the undefined τις or πολλοί actually could refer to Odysseus: he is such a person. Second, by qualifying κέρδεα with κακά, Penelope seems to be undercutting Odysseus’ boast of his κέρδεα πολλά (19.285), as well as Eurycleia’s attribution of πολυκερδείησι to him. She also plays on the customary positive meaning of the noun κέρδεα itself, suggesting that the κέρδεα Odysseus employed in hiding his identity from her, even though successful, were in fact κακά since they were employed against her, and were explicitly intended as such (βουλεύουσι).²⁰ Through this remarkable statement, which

¹⁸ 3.207, 213; 16.93; 17.588 (Penelope); 18.143; 20.170 (Penelope), 370; 18.168 (Penelope), 232; 20.5.

¹⁹ Cf. K. von Fritz, “νόος and νοεῖν in the Homeric poems,” *CP* 38 (1943) 86–88; “νοῦς, νοεῖν and their derivatives in Pre-Socratic Philosophy I,” *CP* 40 (1945) 223; B. Snell, *Der Weg zum Denken und zur Wahrheit, Studien zur frühgriechischen Sprache* (Göttingen 1978) 41ff). Βουλεύειν is a denominative verb from βουλή, a *nomen actionis* derived from βούλομαι.

²⁰ Cf. Helen’s use of the noun κερδοσύνη in 4.251.

seems innocent enough, Penelope reveals her genuine displeasure with the way Odysseus treated her.

The analogy she draws between her own experience and Helen's, which implies that there was no motive for her fidelity to Odysseus beyond her knowledge that he would someday come back and make her remarriage useless, is simply another cutting statement that expresses her anger. By pointing out that she, unlike Helen, had thought of the possibility of facing her husband again and striven to remain faithful, Penelope also alludes to her own notorious κέρδεα displayed throughout the epic, the means and methods she used to remain in Odysseus' house. This implication is strongly supported by the word κέρδεα, which is not common in the epic, and by the theme of marital fidelity inherent in the analogy. Penelope suggests to Odysseus that her ability to cope with a problematic situation, her display of κέρδεα during his absence in order to avoid remarriage, was no less successful than the κέρδεα he exhibited himself.²¹ Her suspicious treatment of the beggar Odysseus is a further manifestation of her κέρδεα; in her decision about whether or not to remarry she was dependent on news carried by wanderers, and many lied to her (cf. 14.121–32). Thus, even before the poet's reference to Penelope as ἄλοχον θυμαρέα, the wife suiting Odysseus' heart (23.232), we are given an example of the similarity of intellect between the husband and wife.²²

The transition from Penelope's remark on κέρδεα to her allusion to Helen is not smooth or logical. One should keep in mind, however, that Penelope, known for her subtlety and indirectness,²³ seeks a way to tell Odysseus her true feelings in front of other members of the household (23.171).²⁴ The poet has contrived a way for her to reveal her hurt pride, but in such a way that it will not be easily detected.

²¹ I owe thanks to Susan C. Shelmerdine who suggested this idea to me.

²² The "like-mindedness" of Penelope and Odysseus has been discussed repeatedly, but the above example has not been considered; see for example, Harsh (above, note 5) 4; Amory (above, note 7) 107–8; H. P. Foley, "'Reverse Similes' and Sex Roles in the *Odyssey*," *Arethusa* 11 (1987) 7–26. Another example might be seen in 23.95, when Penelope thinks to herself that Odysseus' clothes are dirty, but says nothing about it. It is Odysseus who expresses *her* thought in 23.115–16.

²³ Cf. the 'directness' in conversation and approach of Calypso (5.118–44; 203–13) whom Odysseus left for Penelope, in spite of the goddess's beauty and offer of immortality.

²⁴ A further underlying message can be deduced here. Whereas the more immediate comparison is between Penelope and Helen, at a second level a comparison between Helen and Odysseus can be noted. In referring to a return to one's native land, Penelope implicitly asks Odysseus whether he has done anything that he would not have done had he known that he was to return to his native land. Her reference to the love between Helen and the foreigner Paris (219) could raise the issue of whether Odysseus had foreign lovers. In such a case, the reference to divine causation (222–23) would indicate her forgiveness and understanding *post factum*; on the level of conversation between the poet and the audience, it could allude to Circe and Calypso. I wish to thank Arthur S. V. Madigan for suggesting this point.

I discussed the first draft of this paper with my colleagues at the Center for Hellenic Studies. I owe my thanks to all of them for their remarks as well as to Professors Zeph Stewart and Frederick M. Ahl, who kindly read and commented on one of the drafts.