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FEMALE ETHICS AND EPIC RIVALRY: HELEN IN THE *ILIAD* AND PENELOPE IN THE *ODYSSEY*

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Abstract: This paper shows how Penelope and the Iliadic Helen are constructed as similar, yet ethically antitypical heroines through an intertextual dialogue that manifests itself on structural, thematic, and linguistic levels. Whereas Helen is an unfaithful, sight-endowed female agent who weaves war and indiscriminate suffering, Penelope is a faithful, thoughtful wife who more passively preserves Odysseus' family and authority; each woman is key to her epic plot and ideology. I argue that their intertextuality contributes to the rivalry between the *Odyssey* and *Iliad* traditions and can be understood as a female counterpart to the competing heroisms of Odysseus and Achilles.

SINCE THE FEMINIST INTERVENTION in classical studies in the last quarter of the 20th century, Homeric scholars have taken a sustained and productive interest in Homer's female characters, and in the gender and sexual ideologies of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey.* Critics have focused especially on the figures of Helen in the *Iliad* and Penelope in the *Odyssey*, but they have almost always approached them in isolation from one another, in the contexts of their respective epics.[1] The *Odyssey*, however, invites us to consider the Iliadic Helen and Penelope together when, in Book 23, lines 213–24, Penelope defends her own circumspect reception of Odysseus with reference to Helen's disastrous elopement with Paris. Several

[1] Important studies of Helen in the *Iliad* (and beyond) include Clader 1976; Suzuki 1989; Austin 1994; Ebbott 1999; Worman 2001 and 2002; Roisman 2006; and Blondell 2008 and 2013. Key foundational scholarship on Penelope includes Marquardt 1985; Murnaghan 1986; Winkler 1990; Katz 1991; Felson 1994; Foley 1995; Zeitlin 1995; and Clayton 2004.

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scholars have productively explored the ethical opposition between Penelope and Helen as she is presented within the *Odyssey* itself,[2] but in this paper I go one step further to argue that Penelope and the Iliadic Helen are put into an *intertextual* dialogue as part of an epic rivalry between *Odyssey* and *Iliad* traditions, and as a female counterpart to the competing heroisms of Odysseus and Achilles. Through this intertextuality, the two heroines are constructed as ethical antitypes who are both key to their rival epic plots and ideologies: whereas Helen is an unfaithful, sight-endowed female agent who weaves war and indiscriminate suffering, Penelope is a faithful, thoughtful wife who more passively preserves Odysseus' family and authority.

1. EPIC RIVALRY AND INTERTEXTUALITY

As Mark Griffith has shown, early Greek poets composed in an agonistic context, vying with one another to present the best work, often before judges. They competed with respect to their mastery of various types of knowledge (*sophia*), including what Griffith calls "moral and intellectual integrity," and one of the ways a poet proved his superiority was through "correction and contradiction of rivals."[3] Within early Greek epic itself we find references to competition between poets and between epic songs for esteem from audiences. This is most explicit in *Works and Days*, where Hesiod tells Perses of how "singer also envies singer" (φθονέει καὶ ἀοιδὸς ἀοιδῷ, *Op.* 26). In the *Odyssey*, Telemachus defends to his mother Phemius' song about the "mournful homecoming (*nostos*) of the Achaeans" (1.326–7) on the basis that "people praise more the song, / which newest circulates for those listening" (τὴν γὰρ ἀοιδὴν μᾶλλον ἐπικλείουσ' ἄνθρωποι, / ἥ τις ἀκουόντεσσι νεωτάτη ἀμφιπέληται, 1.351–2).[4] Since the subject matter of Phemius' song seems to constitute a metapoetic reference to the *Odyssey* itself, the *Odyssey* here suggests its own rivalry with other song traditions and represents itself as a new epic that will earn greater praise from its listeners (at least the male ones).[5]

[2] Suzuki 1989, 60–91; Katz 1991, 7–8, 54–76, 130–4, 185–7; Mueller 2007, 355–6; Blondell 2013, 89–94.

[3] Griffith 1990, 188–9 and 193.

[4] All translations from the Greek are my own, and throughout I use the Oxford Classical Text editions of the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad*.

[5] Competition between epic songs or narratives may also be implied in two additional Homeric passages. In *Iliad* 9, the embassy encounters Achilles singing "fames of men" (κλέα ἀνδρῶν, 9.189), but then Phoinix tries to convince him to reenter battle by offering

The *Odyssey*'s chief poetic rival may be the *Iliad*. The two Homeric epics present very different and apparently competing plots, themes, characters, and moral universes, as scholars such as Walter Burkert, Gregory Nagy, Anthony Edwards, Pietro Pucci, and Richard B. Rutherford have explored.[6] On the one hand, the *Iliad* is a poem of war that emphasizes the universality of human mortality and suffering, in contrast to the immortality of gods whose interference in human affairs often seems to be driven more by their own personal attachments, vendettas, and ambitions than their commitment to justice. The *Odyssey*, on the other hand, is a poem of homecoming that offers the possibility of survival and celebrates the triumph of its hero over "bad" characters in a morally consequential world overseen by mostly just gods.[7] Aristotle first observed that the *Odyssey*'s ending is appropriate to comedy, since it offers opposite fates for its "better" and "worse" characters (*Poetics* 13, 1453a30–9), while the *Iliad* is, implicitly, more "tragic" in the death or grief of all its central characters.[8]

Nagy, Edwards, and Pucci have particularly focused on the epics' two contrasting primary male heroes, Achilles and Odysseus, as sites of Homeric rivalry. The *Odyssey* actually posits a tradition of conflict between the two men when Demodocus sings of the "quarrel" (*neikos*) of Odysseus and Achilles during Odysseus' sojourn among the Phaeacians (8.73–82).[9] Whereas Achilles is a young, swift-footed, impetuous, passionate hero of force and open warfare, with an epic fame (*kleos*) derived from martial supremacy, and ineluctably tied to his death at Troy, Odysseus is an older, wily, enduring hero of ambush and disguise, with a *kleos* dependent upon his survival and return home. As Edwards (1985, 13) explains, each hero "define[s] an entire ethical universe, an ideology able to rationalize a way of life." That is, they embody competing value

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an alternative "fames of men" (κλέα ἀνδρῶν, 9.524)—the story of Meleager. In the *Odyssey*, Helen and Menelaus recount to Telemachus competing stories about Helen's own activities at Troy (4.235–89).

[6] Nagy 1979; Edwards 1985; Pucci 1987 and 1998; Rutherford 2001; and Burkert 2009. See also the more general comments of Saïd 2011, 373–9.

[7] See, however, Allan 2006, 1–27, for the persuasive argument that both Homeric epics feature the same kind of divine justice, which is informed not only by the right and wrong of human actions, but also by Zeus' concern to maintain a delicately balanced cosmic order in which every god has his or her own rights and respect under Zeus' ultimate authority. While this may be true, the emphasis is different in each epic, creating the impression of diverse moral universes, as Allan himself admits.

[8] On the *Iliad* as a tragedy, see further Redfield 1994, chapter 2.

[9] See Nagy 1979, 21–5.

systems that represent each epic's claim to superiority. Edwards writes further, "The victory of one poet over another marks the ascendency not only of his talents as a singer and a story teller, but of an ethical conception of the world as well." More recently, scholars have argued that the *Odyssey* not only presents its own kind of hero and distinctive ethical universe, but also encompasses the Iliadic model of heroism in its final books, when Odysseus takes on an Achillean role in the slaughter of the suitors, thus laying claim to his rival's ethics in addition to his own.[10]

So far, scholars have conceived of epic rivalry in the area of ethics exclusively in terms of these male heroes, but this paper shows for the first time that female heroes are also vehicles of ethical competition between the Homeric epics and are thus key to the articulation of the two poems' respective ideologies. While Homeric epic never acknowledges an agonistic relation between Helen and Penelope as explicitly as it does that between Achilles and Odysseus in Demodocus' tale of their "quarrel," Penelope's citation of Helen in *Odyssey* 23 shows that these two heroines are also meant to be compared. My project not only extends previous analyses of Homeric epic rivalry, but also draws attention to the importance of these female characters for the construction of the distinctive epic narratives of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.

But how exactly do the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* speak to or about one another? How do they engage in an intertextual dialogue? These questions point to a methodological problem that arises from two interrelated qualities of the Homeric epics: their orality and their formulaic nature. Since the work of Milman Parry and Albert Lord, it is almost universally accepted that these epics are oral or oral-derived, but it is widely disputed when they became more or less fixed, written texts, particularly in the form that we have them now. How can an ever-evolving oral composition specifically allude to language from another malleable oral epic? Gregory Nagy (1979, 42) famously declared that Homeric allusion of this kind was impossible. The key indicator of the epics' orality is the formularity of Homeric language and narrative organization. When repeated diction is the basic building block of oral composition, is repetition between poems ever significant? When narratives are structured in conventional type-scenes, can we reasonably argue that similar episodes are meant to evoke one another?

Egbert Bakker and Bruno Currie have recently offered sophisticated defenses of allusion in oral-formulaic poetry. Instead of "intertextuality,"

[10] Bakker 2013, 150–6, and Schein 2016, 81–91.

Bakker coins the term "interformularity" to describe the significant repetition of formulas within or between early Greek epics. He argues that "interformularity" is dependent on the poet's and audience's awareness of the similarity between the two contexts where the formula appears, and that the more specific the contexts are and the rarer ("more restricted") the formula is, the more likely that the poet intends and the audience recognizes an allusive relationship between the two passages. His model relies on the understanding that particular scenes and expressions are no less memorable in oral composition and performance than in written texts.[11] Currie goes further to maintain the possibility that the Homeric epics may well have been oral-derived texts that were interacting with other fixed texts as well as with earlier oral poetry, and he infers on the basis of intratextual quotation that both Homeric poets seem to know their own poems as "texts."[12] Regardless of the degree of textuality accepted, Currie, like Bakker, sets markedness as a criterion for recognizing allusion, which he says is met when passages "share striking and distinctive non-typical elements, or typical elements that are deployed in contextually striking ways." Currie also emphasizes "meaningfulness" as a requirement for an allusion; the allusion must add something significant to our interpretation of a passage. One kind of significance that he suggests, which is relevant to my consideration of Helen and Penelope, is "the demonstration of pointed or systematic reversals of the putative source-text by the putative target-text."[13]

There have been two main theoretical models for conceiving of an intertextual relationship between the Homeric epics specifically, both of which I test in my own reading. In the first model, the *Odyssey* poet knew the *Iliad* as we have it, or a very similar version, and responded in his own epic to particular scenes or even language in the *Iliad*. This conception of the *Odyssey*'s dependence on the *Iliad* begins from the observation that the *Odyssey* does not contain any story material that appears in the *Iliad* ("Monro's Law"), which suggests that the *Odyssey* poet is specifically avoiding the *Iliad*'s territory.[14] This model requires acceptance that the *Odyssey*'s composition postdates the *Iliad*'s, which

[11] Bakker 2013, 157–69.

[12] Currie 2016, 12–22.

[13] Currie 2016, 33–4.

[14] Monro 1901, 325. Alternatively, as Denys Page (1955, 159) thought, the *Odyssey* is entirely ignorant of the *Iliad* tradition and by chance treats none of the same traditional mythological material.

has been argued on linguistic grounds by Richard Janko and Chiara Bozzone and on thematic grounds by Martin West.[15]

By contrast, according to the second model, expounded by Gregory Nagy and his followers, the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* traditions developed together over a long period of time on parallel, but distinctive oral tracks.[16] In this oralist model, the epics are mutually aware of each other, and create their individual narrative, ethical, and moral worlds in an ongoing agonistic dialogue. Some scholars of this school theorize that the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* engage with each other in a general way: cross-reference or allusion occurs at larger thematic and narrative levels, but probably not on the level of individual lines of text.[17] Pietro Pucci (1987), however, formulated and applied a "stronger" version of this approach, positing specific linguistic epic intertextuality based on the idea that the Homeric poets were continually revising individual passages in response to one another.[18] Currie (2016, 17) usefully calls this model "bidirectional intertextuality."

I ultimately suspect that the *Odyssey* as we have it was composed later than the *Iliad* as we have it, and that its author knew the *Iliad* intimately—even that it was possibly the work of the same poet ("Homer") at a different stage of his life and career, trying to outdo himself by presenting an alternative masterpiece. However, I also think that these two epic traditions had a long side-by-side oral history during which they knew of each other and competed with each other in some form or another. And if our versions of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* do represent the work of the same poet, there is no reason to think that he did not continue to revise his compositions in relation to one another over multiple reperformances throughout his lifetime.[19] Therefore, I am going to take a multi-level and multi-pronged approach to intertextual connections between the Homeric heroines. First, I will consider the ways that Penelope and Helen are constructed in opposition to one another at larger structural and thematic levels, as the heroines of their rival epics. Then

[15] Janko 1982 and 2012; West 2012; Bozzone 2018. For this approach, see Rutherford 2001.

[16] For this theory of the composition of the Homeric epics, see Nagy 1996.

[17] On this approach, see Edwards 1985, 6–9.

[18] See Pucci 1987, 17–30, for explanation of this methodology, and more recently Tsagalis 2008, 135–8.

[19] West 2011, 48–68, and 2017, 92–142, argues that both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were composed over the course of many years, with substantial additions and variations over time, although he does not believe that they are the work of the same poet.

I will look at intertextuality between these two women with relation to specific scenes and language, assuming that our *Odyssey* is responding to the *Iliad* tradition, and perhaps even our *Iliad*. Finally, I will explore the idea of a bidirectional relationship between the epics, contending that the *Iliad* may also be responding with specific language and in a highly significant way to the *Odyssey* or *Odyssey* tradition. Throughout I will argue for intertextuality on the methodological basis established by Bakker and Currie, in situations where marked or unusual formulaic language appears in similar narrative contexts to significant effect.

2. STRUCTURAL SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN PENELOPE AND HELEN

If Odysseus in the *Odyssey* and Achilles in the *Iliad* are in an intertextual competition as the central heroes of their epics, it would make sense that Penelope and Helen are in a complementary intertextual dialogue, since they represent the female narrative counterparts of these male heroes. Scholars have long observed the "like-mindedness" (*homophrosunē*) of Penelope and Odysseus, who are both defined by their cleverness, endurance, and capacity for self-control. Where Odysseus is the *Odyssey*'s hero, his wife Penelope is its heroine, and she—in her role as patient and faithful wife—is essential to the realization of Odysseus' safe and happy return to his home and kingship in Ithaca. She is also introduced from the *Odyssey*'s beginning as a desired goal of Odysseus, whom the narrator describes "yearning after his homecoming and wife" (νόστου κεχρημένον ἠδὲ γυναικός, 1.13). Therefore, as both actor and epic *telos*, Penelope is key to the successful resolution of the *Odyssey*'s plot and, near the end of the *Odyssey*, Agamemnon's shade claims that her excellence has brought her *kleos* (24.194–8).

In the *Iliad*, Helen likewise is positioned, albeit less directly, as Achilles' female narrative counterpart. This Iliadic pair appears in parallel and interrelated, but not intersecting tracks, unlike the converging stories of Penelope and Odysseus. Where Achilles is the hero of the *Iliad*'s main plot, which is structured around his withdrawal and return, Helen is responsible, as cause of war, for the *Iliad*'s larger Trojan war plot, on which Achilles' story and heroic *kleos* are dependent. Mihoko Suzuki, Norman Austin, Christos Tsagalis, and Ruby Blondell have catalogued the many ways that these two Iliadic characters are similar.[20] They are

[20] Suzuki 1989, 40–1; Austin 1994, 27–8; Tsagalis 2008, 122–4; Blondell 2013, 27 and 46.

both children of gods, and the best of their respective sexes in physical form and capability; Blondell (2013, 46) calls Achilles "Helen's most direct male equivalent, his supreme military prowess the masculine counterpart of her erotic power." Moreover, they both appear in the *Iliad* as death-bringing poet figures who observe the suffering that they have instigated from a distance. Helen is presented as an analogue to the *Iliad* poet when we first encounter her secluded in her *megaron*, weaving a "great web" (μέγαν ἱστὸν) that depicts Trojans and Achaeans fighting the ongoing war "for the sake of her" (ἕθεν εἵνεκ', 3.125–8); this textile signifies her agency in the creation of the epic conflict and therefore of the *Iliad* itself.[21] In turn, Achilles determines the first arc of the epic's main plot when, in Book 1, he solicits Zeus through Thetis to make the Trojans triumphant over the Greeks while he withdraws from battle. The *Iliad* thematizes his poetic generativity when he appears as an epic bard in *Iliad* 9, placidly singing the "fames of men" (κλέα ἀνδρῶν, 9.189) in his tent while the war continues in his absence.[22] Although Helen and Achilles never meet face-to-face in the *Iliad*, in the *Cypria* (according to Proclus' summary), Achilles desires to look on Helen, and Aphrodite and Thetis bring them together, which causes Achilles to keep the Greek army fighting at Troy. As Ingrid Holmberg observes, "This coupling of Helen and Achilles in Proclus may reflect the importance of their interwined narrative for the origin of the war and the recognition of Helen's and Achilles' shared function as purveyors of death and destruction."[23] Blondell (2013, 46) also notes that Helen's and Achilles' ethical compatibility is reflected in the extra-Iliadic myth of their marriage in the afterlife on the White Island.

Whereas Penelope's fidelity is the basis of her epic role and accompanying *kleos*, and is crucial to the *Odyssey*'s narrative, Helen's infidelity is what makes her the heroine of the *Iliad*. She repeatedly asserts, as we shall see, that she willingly went with Paris to Troy. Therefore, according to the *Iliad*'s own terms—and I will return to this point later—without Helen's adultery, the Trojan War, and, by extension, the epic that commemorates it, would not exist. While a creative agent, Helen is also, like Penelope,

[21] On Helen as a poet figure, see further Clader 1976, 6–9; Kennedy 1986, 5; Lynn-George 1988, 29; Taplin 1992, 97–8; Austin 1994, 28–41; Blondell 2013, 68.

[22] On Achilles in this scene, see further Frontisi-Ducroux 1986; Hainsworth 1993, 87–8; and Griffin 1995, 98.

[23] Holmberg 2014, 325. She also notes that in the beginning of the *Cypria*, "Zeus' plan for the Trojan portion of the destruction of the human race entwines Helen as the face of *eros* and Achilles as the face of *thanatos*" insofar as it entails Zeus conceiving Helen with Nemesis and marrying Thetis to Peleus (Holmberg 2014, 324).

the sought-after goal of her epic, the one "for whose sake" (ἧς εἵνεκα, *Il.* 2.161) the male heroes fight and die. Thus Helen and Penelope occupy similarly key roles as both subjects and objects in the economies of their respective epics, but their characters and actions are very much opposed.

One of the ways in which their poetic difference is clearly figured is through their *texts*—that is, their weavings. Almost every Homeric female is connected with the gender-specific act of weaving textiles, and many are actually depicted weaving; but out of all these characters, Helen's present weaving in *Iliad* 3 and Penelope's past weaving in the *Odyssey* are the most thematized. Whereas Helen's weaving presents her as a proud co-creator with the poet of the *Iliad*'s devastating Trojan War plot, Penelope's famous weaving, reported three times (*Od.* 2.93–110, 19.138–56, 24.128–46),[24] is rather different. Like Helen, she is described weaving "a great web" (μέγαν ἱστόν) in the *megaron*, but no figural image is given; her woven product is simply "fine and exceedingly large" (λεπτὸν καὶ περίμετρον). Penelope's textile seems to be deliberately blank in report—its significance lies in its purpose. She has told her suitors that they must wait for her remarriage until she completes a shroud for Laertes to avoid being criticized by other Achaean women for neglecting her father-in-law. Her weaving thus expresses, on the manifest level, her devotion to her husband's family and presents her as a woman who is concerned with other women's judgments of her and who fears becoming an object of nemesis; that is, she has a clear sense of shame.[25] The weaving's deeper purpose, however, is to maintain for as long as possible Penelope's identity as Odysseus' wife (or widow); both the suitors and Penelope herself retrospectively identify the project as a "trick" (δόλον, 2.93 and 24.128; δόλους, 19.137) to put off the suitors. It may be for this reason that the textile is repeatedly described as very large in dimension and finely-woven: such a product takes longer to complete and is thus more effective for postponing Penelope's remarriage.[26]

[24] First the suitor Antinous recounts Penelope's weaving in the Ithacan assembly (2.93–110), then Penelope tells the disguised Odysseus about it (19.138–56), and finally the shade of the suitor Amphimedon reports it to Agamemnon's shade in Hades during the final Nekuia (24.128–46). Transmitted through these multiple accounts, Penelope's weaving is always already represented as a source of *kleos*. Indeed, Antinous ends his speech by asserting that Penelope is making a great *kleos* for herself (2.125). Cf. Clayton 2004, 24.

[25] Cf. Mueller 2010, 4.

[26] This interpretation is preserved in the scholia to this passage. Σ *Od.* 2.94 (H, M, Q, S) say that the adjective "great" (μέγαν) is affixed to the textile "not for the sake of poetic adornment" (οὐ ποιητικῶς κόσμου χάριν) but "with reference to the large amount of time for the construction of the work" (πρὸς τὸ πολυχρόνιον τῆς τοῦ ἔργου κατασκευῆς). Similarly,

Penelope has not only woven for the sake of her husband and her reputation, however; she has also unwoven. This unweaving further delays her remarriage to a suitor and keeps her existing marriage intact, increasing the feasibility of Odysseus' triumphant return. It is thus an additional textual (or anti-textual) enunciation of her epic role as faithful wife. As Barbara Clayton (2004, 43–4) has argued, Penelope's weaving and unweaving resists temporal progression and is a figure for her memory of Odysseus. Therefore, Penelope's (un)weaving is an anti-narration, a paradoxically passive act that represents her immobile resistance to infidelity, to moving forward with a new marriage and a new story, and thus it depicts nothing.[27] This is in contrast to Helen's weaving, which pictures the violent warfare she has actively initiated.[28] Through these respective texts we see how Helen is a key catalyst of the *Iliad*'s narrative of social breakdown, whereas Penelope's Odyssean function is faithfully to preserve the status-quo.

3. THE *ODYSSEY* SETS PENELOPE AGAINST HELEN IN THE *ILIAD*

The *Odyssey* first signals agonistic awareness of the Iliadic Helen, and thus prepares its audience for later comparison of Penelope and the Iliadic heroine, by introducing Helen in Book 4 as an Odyssean character who both evokes and differentiates herself from her Iliadic *Doppelgänger.*

Σ *Od.* 2.95 (H, M, S) assert that she makes it "fine and exceedingly large" (λεπτὸν καὶ περίμετρον) "in order that [only] with difficulty may she achieve progress on the work" (ἵνα δυστήρητον ἔχῃ τοῦ ἔργου προκοπήν).

[27] On Penelope's immobility, see Zeitlin 1995. Andromache's weaving in *Iliad* 22.440–8, is also significantly tied up with the integrity of her marriage. She drops her shuttle, ceasing her weaving when she hears the wails that indicate Hector's death. In her subsequent lament, she declares that she will burn the woven garments that Hector will never wear—as a living or dead man—since his corpse will be eaten by worms and dogs (22.509–14). The cessation and promised destruction of Andromache's weaving corresponds to the end of her marriage with Hector, just as the completion of Penelope's weaving means the fulfillment of her obligations toward her marital family and marks the time when she must remarry.

[28] Within the *Iliad* itself, Helen's weaving is surely meant to be compared and contrasted with Andromache's; both are described as "double-folded, purple" (δίπλακα πορφυρέην). Whereas Helen's weaving has a significant narrative representation of the Trojan War, and Penelope's weaving is, as I argue, significantly blank, Andromache's weaving features a pattern of "intricate flowers" (θρόνα ποικίλ'), a natural and peaceful design that is incompatible with the violent image of her husband's mutilation on the Trojan battlefield—that is, the extension of Helen's design.

Helen's initial short speech in the *Odyssey* clearly alludes to her Iliadic identity in her concluding words: she identifies Telemachus on the basis of how he looked as a child "when for the sake of me, dog-faced (ἐμεῖο κυνώπιδος εἵνεκ'), the Achaeans came down to Troy, stirring up bold war" (4.145–6). Not only does she end here with mention of the Trojan War, the subject of the *Iliad*, but she also asserts that it was fought "for the sake of" her, echoing the memorable description of the scene on the Iliadic Helen's textile of Trojans and Achaeans suffering in battle "for the sake of her" (ἕθεν εἵνεκ', *Il.* 3.128, cf. *Il.* 2.161, 6.356). Moreover, here the Odyssean Helen calls herself "dog-faced" (κυνώπιδος), which is a rare and striking adjective that the Iliadic Helen also uses in the genitive case to describe herself in line 180 at the end of *her* first speech in *Iliad* 3, to which, as I will argue, the *Odyssey* alludes several times.[29] This term of self-abuse, which indicates the asocial behavior of uncontrolled, indiscriminate (sexual) appetite, links together the two Helens and constructs them both as remorseful subjects cognizant of their transgression.[30]

Subsequently, both Helen and Menelaus tell stories to Telemachus about Helen's and Odysseus' activities at Troy (4.235–89), and even though these particular episodes do not appear in the *Iliad*, they reference Helen's sojourn at Troy and remind the audience of her appearances in the Trojan War epic *par excellence*, the *Iliad*. At the same time, these "new" stories about Helen's secret reception of Odysseus and her attempted exposure of the Greek warriors in the Trojan Horse establish the *Odyssey* as a competing source for the Trojan War story. They portray a somewhat different Helen from the *Iliad*, one who is actively duplicitous and yet ultimately innocuous (to the Greeks) insofar as she helps Odysseus and is unsuccessful in revealing the hidden warriors. As Mihoko Suzuki argues, "by representing Helen as at once evil and inconsequential, [the *Odyssey* poet] thereby subverts the authority of the *Iliad*."[31]

[29] "Dog-faced" appears only three other times in Homeric epic, where it is used by male characters to disparage females who have done them wrong. Hephaestus employs it in *Iliad* 18.396 with reference to his mother Hera, who had thrown him off Olympus, and also in Demodocus' song in *Odyssey* 8.319, with reference to his wife Aphrodite, who had cheated on him with Ares. In the final instance (*Od.* 11.424), Agamemnon's shade calls his wife Clytemnestra "dog-faced" (κυνῶπις) when describing how she had colluded with her lover Aegisthus to murder him on his return home. The *Odyssey* poet likely introduces this adjective there in order to link Clytemnestra with the adulterous goddess Aphrodite as well as the Iliadic and Odyssean Helens, who all function as foils to Penelope (cf. n. 52 below).

[30] Graver 1995 and Franco 2014.

[31] Suzuki 1989, 67.

The *Odyssey*'s intertextual competition with the *Iliad* in this section is made more likely by another apparent allusion to the significant first words of the Iliadic Helen in the speech of the Odyssean Helen. In *Iliad* 3, after Priam calls on Helen to identify the Greek heroes fighting below the walls of Troy in the "Teichoskopia," Helen begins her reply—the first time that we hear her voice—with a statement of reverence towards Priam and of remorse for her presence at Troy (3.172–6):

> αἰδοῖός τέ μοί ἐσσι, φίλε ἑκυρέ, δεινός τε·
> ὡς ὄφελεν θάνατός μοι ἀδεῖν κακὸς ὁππότε δεῦρο
> υἱέϊ σῷ ἑπόμην, θάλαμον γνωτούς τε λιποῦσα
> παῖδά τε τηλυγέτην καὶ ὁμηλικίην ἐρατεινήν.
> ἀλλὰ τά γ' οὐκ ἐγένοντο· τὸ καὶ κλαίουσα τέτηκα.
>
> To me you are venerable, dear father-in-law, and a source of awe.
> Would that evil death had pleased me, when here
> I followed your son, having left my marriage chamber and relatives
> and late-born daughter and lovely group of friends.
> But these things were not to be; also weeping for this I have melted.

In *Odyssey* 4, Helen describes a similar regret that she had come to Troy. After recounting how Odysseus slaughtered many Trojans during the espionage mission that she facilitated, she comments (4.259–64):

> ἔνθ' ἄλλαι Τρῳαὶ λίγ' ἐκώκυον· αὐτὰρ ἐμὸν κῆρ
> χαῖρ', ἐπεὶ ἤδη μοι κραδίη τέτραπτο νέεσθαι
> ἄψ οἶκόνδ', ἄτην δὲ μετέστενον, ἣν Ἀφροδίτη
> δῶχ', ὅτε μ' ἤγαγε κεῖσε φίλης ἀπὸ πατρίδος αἴης,
> παῖδά τ' ἐμὴν νοσφισσαμένην θάλαμόν τε πόσιν τε
> οὔ τευ δευόμενον, οὔτ' ἄρ φρένας οὔτε τι εἶδος.
>
> Then the other Trojan women keened piercingly, but my heart
> rejoiced, since already my heart had turned to sail
> back home, and I was lamenting in retrospect the delusion, which
> Aphrodite
> bestowed, when she led me there from my dear fatherland,
> having abandoned my daughter and marriage chamber and husband,
> who was not lacking in anything, neither with respect to wits nor form.

Like the Iliadic Helen, the Odyssean Helen recounts bewailing her advent to Troy and describes how she had forsaken her "daughter" (παῖδα) and "marriage chamber" (θάλαμον). These two accusative singular nouns appear together in the same sentence in the Homeric epics only in these echoing passages, which are spoken by the same character with the same

meaning in the same syntactical arrangement (although the verb of abandoning is different in each context). Either this phrase is part of Helen's traditional epic diction and is utilized independently by each epic, or else these passages are in an intertextual relationship. In the latter case, the primary or anterior passage would seem to be the Iliadic one, insofar as it is more marked as Helen's first utterance in the epic.

If we posit that the *Odyssey* is alluding to the *Iliad*, then the Odyssean Helen here is made to "quote" the Iliadic Helen, but with important differences. The Iliadic Helen asserts her own agency and responsibility in coming to Troy, claiming that she "followed" (ἑπόμην) Paris. The Odyssean Helen, however, deflects responsibility from herself to the goddess Aphrodite, whom she describes "leading" (ἤγαγε) her from Sparta and afflicting her with "delusion" (ἄτην). She presents herself as a pawn of a goddess who clouded her mind, and thus moves towards absolving herself of agency. Admittedly, Aphrodite's involvement in Helen's liaison with Paris is a feature of the *Iliad*: at the end of Book 3 Aphrodite compels Helen with threats to reconsummate her union with Paris. Yet the Iliadic Helen never shifts blame to Aphrodite and indeed the heroine is never afflicted with delusion—she recognizes Aphrodite's interference and consciously chooses to follow her command (a point to which I will return), while the Odyssean Helen presents herself as much more passive.[32]

In addition, the Iliadic and Odyssean Helens treat the issue of their marriages rather differently. The Iliadic Helen, who is still residing with Paris in Troy, explicitly mentions her new husband, but not the old one, and she speaks with respect and affection to her new father-in-law, Priam. The Odyssean Helen, however, avoids acknowledging Paris while instead directly referencing the husband she left behind and praising him as faultless. Not only does this flatter Menelaus, who is listening, and frame Helen as truly repentant and "redomesticated" in her reattachment to her original husband,[33] but it also suggests that there was no impetus for her to abandon him if not for the goddess' external intervention. Whereas

[32] In the *Iliad*, although delusion (*atē*) is never attributed to Helen, a divine role in her actions is repeatedly suggested. Helen says that "Zeus set an evil destiny" (ἐπὶ Ζεὺς θῆκε κακὸν μόρον) upon her and Paris (6.357), even while also declaring her own agency and responsibility. Priam completely absolves Helen, telling her, "to me you are not in any way responsible, the gods are responsible" (οὔ τί μοι αἰτίη ἐσσί, θεοί νύ μοι αἴτιοί εἰσίν, 3.164). For discussion of these various causations, see Lesky 2001, 194–5. One textual tradition of the *Iliad* cites the *atē* (ἄτης) of Paris in 3.100 and 6.356, although other manuscripts read ἀρχῆς in these verses.

[33] Blondell 2013, 74. Cf. Worman 2002, 59, who sees Helen's compliment of Menelaus as a skillful rhetorical tactic designed to "gratify her audience."

Helen lamenting her actions appears in the *Iliad* as a powerful, conscious agent whose loyalties remain uncertain, the *Odyssey* refashions that same Helen into a less powerful, less clear-sighted, and less subversive character, who has been blindly manipulated by a goddess despite her love for Menelaus.[34]

To understand the rationale behind the *Odyssey*'s revision of the Iliadic Helen we must now turn to Penelope's famous invocation of Helen in Book 23, which follows the moment when Penelope finally accepts Odysseus' identity and embraces him, after testing him with the trick of their immovable bed.[35] In this passage, Penelope defends her slowness to acknowledge Odysseus' identity by bringing up Helen as a negative example (23.213–24):

> αὐτὰρ μὴ νῦν μοι τόδε χώεο μηδὲ νεμέσσα,
> οὕνεκά σ' οὐ τὸ πρῶτον, ἐπεὶ ἴδον, ὧδ' ἀγάπησα.
> αἰεὶ γάρ μοι θυμὸς ἐνὶ στήθεσσι φίλοισιν
> ἐρρίγει μή τίς με βροτῶν ἀπάφοιτο ἔπεσσιν
> ἐλθών· πολλοὶ γὰρ κακὰ κέρδεα βουλεύουσιν.
> οὐδέ κεν Ἀργείη Ἑλένη, Διὸς ἐκγεγαυῖα,
> ἀνδρὶ παρ' ἀλλοδαπῷ ἐμίγη φιλότητι καὶ εὐνῇ,
> εἰ ἤδη ὅ μιν αὖτις ἀρήϊοι υἷες Ἀχαιῶν
> ἀξέμεναι οἰκόνδε φίλην ἐς πατρίδ' ἔμελλον.
> τὴν δ' ἦ τοι ῥέξαι θεὸς ὤρορεν ἔργον ἀεικές·

[34]The Odyssean Helen's weaving also connects her with the Iliadic Helen, even as it symbolizes her revised, peripheral role in the *Odyssey*. As a parting guest-gift, she gives Telemachus a "memorial of Helen's hands," a woven dress (*peplos*) for his future bride (15.125–8). In contrast to Penelope's weaving of a shroud for her father-in-law, Helen's weaving is for a handsome young man who is not related to her family, except through guest-friendship—Telemachus appears here almost as a Paris-figure vis-à-vis Helen. Thus the *Odyssey* reminds us of Helen's adulterous character, yet this behavior is not deadly to men, as it was in the *Iliad*, or particularly significant for the *Odyssey*'s plot. Helen is deliberately marginal to the *Odyssey*'s story, but here she does fulfill the minor function, through her characteristic extramarital flirtation, of symbolically completing Telemachus' voyage of maturation. That is, Helen, the paradigmatic female sexual object and subject, makes Telemachus a man by associating with him. It is no coincidence that Helen is the one to mention Telemachus' future marriage and to facilitate it with a wedding gown for his bride. Cf. Blondell 2013, 77–8.

[35]The authenticity of Penelope's mention of Helen in Book 23 has been suspected by many, starting with the Hellenistic critic Aristarchus, on the basis of its supposed illogicality or inappropriateness (for bibliography, see Fredricksmeyer 1997, 487 n. 1), but I hope to show that it is the narrative capstone of a larger intertextual dialogue between Penelope in the *Odyssey* and Helen in the *Iliad*.

τὴν δ' ἄτην οὐ πρόσθεν ἐῷ ἐγκάτθετο θυμῷ
λυγρήν, ἐξ ἧς πρῶτα καὶ ἡμέας ἵκετο πένθος.

But now don't be angry at me or criticize me for this,
that I did not first welcome you so when I saw you.
For always my heart in my own breast
had shuddered lest some mortal deceive me with words,
having come; for many plot evil gains.
Not even would Argive Helen, born from Zeus,
have mixed in sex and bed with a foreign man,
if she had known that again the warlike sons of the Achaeans
were going to lead her back home to her dear fatherland.
Surely a god inspired her to commit this shameful deed;
and not previously did she keep delusion in her heart,
grievous, from which suffering first came to us also.

In this speech, Penelope articulates her dread of being deceived like Helen, and her account of Helen seems to make an intratextual allusion to the Odyssean Helen's self-narrative in Book 4.[36] Penelope describes a similar Helen whom a god afflicted with "delusion" (ἄτην), and who would not have had sex with a foreign man (and thus abandoned her home and caused the Trojan War) were she free of delusion and cognizant of the consequences of her actions. In addition, Penelope's words echo while inverting formulaic language from Helen's speech in Book 4: Helen says that Aphrodite "led me there from my dear fatherland" (μ' ἤγαγε κεῖσε φίλης ἀπὸ πατρίδος αἴης), while Penelope reflects on the Achaeans' intention "to lead her back home to her dear fatherland" (ἀξέμεναι οἶκόνδε φίλην ἐς πατρίδ'). The *Odyssey* poet and Penelope here complete the reconstruction of the Iliadic Helen from a consciously deliberate adulteress to a weak woman led to and fro by others, who falls through lack of perspicacity into disastrous sexual license.[37] Penelope employs the language of delusion not to excuse Helen,[38] but in order to emphasize and celebrate by contrast her own caution and restraint. While acknowledging that Penelope *could* have acted like Helen, the *Odyssey* poet highlights how she has instead exercised shrewd self-control in a similar situation, when an apparent stranger solicited her intimacy in her marital home.

[36] Katz 1991, 185–6, also observes this correspondence.

[37] *Contra* Holmberg 2014, 334, who writes, "the most remarkable aspect of Penelope's narrative commentary is the unfamiliar degree of subjectivity or active desire that she ascribes to Helen."

[38] Fredricksmeyer 1997, 489–91.

Language in this passage that potentially alludes to the *Iliad* further strengthens the case that the *Odyssey* means here to pit Penelope against the Iliadic Helen, as well as against her Odyssean proxy, through whose character the poet diminishes the Iliadic heroine's lucidity and agency. Before naming Helen, Penelope suggests that she feared a seducer similar to Paris, saying that her heart "had shuddered" (ἐρρίγει) lest some man come and deceive her with his speech. Penelope here employs a verb of shuddering (ῥιγέω) that predominantly appears in the *Iliad* (17 times); it is used in the *Odyssey* only two other times, in passages closely linked to one another.[39] Moreover, in the *Iliad*, this very verb is associated in one instance with Paris. Before his duel with Paris, Menelaus prays to Zeus that he will defeat Paris "so that also some man of later generations may shudder (ἐρρίγῃσι) to do evil to a host who offers hospitality" (3.353–4). Penelope shudders at the idea of being deceived by a Paris-like stranger, while Menelaus prays that future guests will shudder to act like Paris.[40]

This linguistic root of shuddering is also significantly associated with the Iliadic Helen. During his lament over Patroclus in *Iliad* 19, Achilles reflects on his own continuing separation from his father in Phthia, saying, "but I in a foreign land on account of shudder-inducing Helen fight with the Trojans" (ὁ δ' ἀλλοδαπῷ ἐνὶ δήμῳ / εἵνεκα ῥιγεδανῆς Ἑλένης Τρωσὶν πολεμίζω, 19.324–5). This is the one time in the *Iliad* that Achilles mentions Helen, and he calls her "shudder-inducing" (ῥιγεδανῆς), which is an epithet that Helen receives only here in all of Homeric epic.[41] In addition, the adjective "foreign" in the dative singular (ἀλλοδαπῷ) appears only three times in Homeric epic: one appearance is in this speech of Achilles, and another is in Penelope's account in *Odyssey* 23 of how Helen "mixed in sex and bed with a foreign man" (ἀνδρὶ παρ' ἀλλοδαπῷ ἐμίγη φιλότητι καὶ εὐνῇ).[42] Finally, Penelope's description here of Helen's sexual

[39] Calypso "shudders" at Hermes' order that she release Odysseus (*Od.* 5.116) and Odysseus "shudders" in response to Calypso's statement that he can build a raft and sail away (*Od.* 5.171). Perhaps significantly, Odysseus here, like Penelope, shudders from fear of deception; he immediately accuses Calypso of plotting "something else."

[40] These passages are also tied together by the fact that they have a hypothetical aspect: Penelope shudders at the possibility of deception while Menelaus imagines shuddering in a purpose clause. In every other appearance, shuddering is a response to something concrete, something seen or spoken.

[41] Helen's final words in the *Iliad* are an acknowledgment of her capacity to cause shuddering, although she uses a different verb: at the end of her lament over Hector, she asserts that, with the exception of the Trojan prince, "all have bristled at me" (πάντες δέ με πεφρίκασιν, 24.775).

[42] The third instance is spoken by Odysseus to the Phaeacians on his decision not to challenge Alcinous' son in an athletic contest: "Indeed that man is senseless and worthless,

activity (ἐμίγη φιλότητι καὶ εὐνῇ) not only pejoratively draws attention to her promiscuity through its explicitness,[43] but is also a rare formula that appears only four times, twice in the *Odyssey* and twice in the *Iliad*: one of the Iliadic instances is when Paris describes how he first "mixed in sex and bed" (ἐμίγην φιλότητι καὶ εὐνῇ) with Helen after their elopement from Sparta (*Il.* 3.445). Taken together, these multiple examples of shared diction between Penelope's speech about Helen and the *Iliad*'s treatment of Paris and Helen suggest that the *Odyssey* poet is putting Penelope in dialogue with the Iliadic Helen and celebrating Penelope as an ethically superior heroine who vigilantly avoids any potential foreign seduction.

Now I would like to consider a few examples of how Penelope in the *Odyssey* seems to echo Helen's portrayal in specific scenes from the *Iliad*, but with critical differences in circumstance and mode that construct an ethical disparity between these two heroines. First is the scene from Book 3 of the *Iliad*, when Helen converses with Priam during the Teichoskopia, to which, as I have argued, the Odyssean Helen's speeches in Book 4 also allude. The goddess Iris initiates this encounter, inspiring "sweet desire" (γλυκὺν ἵμερον) in Helen's heart for her "former husband and city and parents" (ἀνδρός τε προτέρου καὶ ἄστεος ἠδὲ τοκήων, 3.139–40), after which Helen goes, "shedding a soft tear" (3.142), to the walls of Troy and meets Priam. There, recalling her abandonment of Sparta, Helen describes how "weeping, I have melted" (κλαίουσα τέτηκα, 3.176)—this is the only time that the verb τήκω appears in the *Iliad*.[44] Then, in response to Priam's query, she identifies Agamemnon on the battlefield and indicates her sense of the distant unreality of her former life, wondering if he was ever truly her brother-in-law (δαὴρ αὖτ' ἐμὸς ἔσκε κυνώπιδος, εἴ ποτ' ἔην γε, 3.180). The rare line-ending formula that she deploys appears only three other times in Homeric epic, one of which is during Penelope's audience with the disguised Odysseus in *Odyssey* 19. There Penelope speaks about Odysseus' superlative qualities and wonders whether he ever existed (εἴ ποτ' ἔην γε, 19.315), using the same words as Helen.[45]

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whoever offers the strife of contests to a host (ξεινοδόκῳ) in a foreign land (δήμῳ ἐν ἀλλοδαπῷ); he cuts off all things of his own" (*Od.* 8.211). Odysseus here comments on the proper behavior of a guest to a host, a key theme of the *Odyssey*, but also of the *Iliad*, which is based on Paris' violation of guest-friendship. Odysseus' speech thematically recalls Menelaus' prayer in *Il.* 3.353–4 that Zeus punish Paris so that no one else should act as he did.

[43] Holmberg 2014, 334.

[44] Noted by Tsagalis 2008, 121–2.

[45] On this shared diction, see also Wohl 1993, 43, and Martin 2003, 124–5, who identifies this formulaic phrase as a feature of lament-speech. This phrase also appears two other times in Homeric epic, in the twenty-fourth books of both the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. Priam uses the phrase in reference to his dead son Hector (*Il.* 24.425), while Laertes speaks the

Indeed, the *Odyssey*'s depiction of Penelope in Book 19 seems to recall Helen in this scene from *Iliad* 3 by repeating not only this marked formula, but also by taking up and amplifying her distinctive language of melting. In an expression of desire for her lost husband, and using a compound of τήκω, Penelope tells her guest, "Longing for Odysseus, I melt in my heart" (Ὀδυσῆ ποθέουσα φίλον κατατήκομαι ἦτορ, 19.136). A little later the *Odyssey* poet actually *shows* Penelope melting as she cries in response to the beggar's description of his past encounter with Odysseus, and the poet dwells on her emotion and elaborates it with a powerful nature simile of melting snow (19.204–8). This passage features the verb τήκω three times and its compound κατατήκω another two times. After further conversation, the disguised Odysseus also uses this melting vocabulary when he implores Penelope, "do not in any way melt (τῆκε) your heart, lamenting your husband" (19.263–4). Almost all the appearances of τήκω in the *Odyssey* occur in this sequence.[46]

In these Iliadic and Odyssean scenes, both Helen and Penelope express yearning for their absent husbands, have melted or are melting in their weeping for their loss, and express their conception of the past's unreality, yet the contexts of their feelings are very different. Helen has brought this suffering and change upon herself through her willing adultery with Paris, as she asserts to Priam (3.174); while in a foreign city, she weeps in hindsight for the husband and life that she deliberately left behind. Penelope, on the other hand, cries (more profusely and unrelentingly) in her own marital home, longing for a husband whom she has lost despite her fidelity, and by no fault or agency of her own—if a woman is to be blamed, it is in fact Helen.

The nature of each heroine's desire further differentiates the two women. Penelope's desire is termed *pothē*, which Homer uses to describe longing for someone who is absent, and it is dependent upon memory

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same words in reference to his son Odysseus, whom he believes to be dead (*Od*. 24.289). This pair of appearances also suggests the *Odyssey*'s intertextual relationship with the *Iliad*, insofar as the *Odyssey* here creates irony by having the aged father Laertes echo the words of his Iliadic paternal counterpart Priam, although Laertes (in ignorance) is actually speaking about Odysseus to the living man himself, while Priam refers to the son whom he saw killed with his own eyes. The *Odyssey* poet's deliberate use of εἴ ποτ' ἔην γε is made even more likely by the fact that both Penelope and Laertes employ the formula in reference to Odysseus.

[46] τήκω appears two additional times in *Od.* 5.396 and 8.522, both with reference to Odysseus, while κατατήκω appears only here (three times) in *Odyssey* 19. On the use of these verbs, see also Rutherford 1992, 166.

of the lost loved one.[47] Penelope's memory is much-thematized in the *Odyssey* as a key aspect of her fidelity to Odysseus and her *kleos*, as Melissa Mueller (2007) has shown. In fact, her mindfulness of Odysseus and her *pothē* and tears for him are mentioned together during her first appearance in the *Odyssey* (1.336–44). Penelope's desire and weeping for her husband, then, are faithfully consistent throughout the poem, and reportedly have been so for Odysseus' entire time away. Helen's desire for Menelaus is, by contrast, termed *himeros*, which Homer uses similarly to the word *eros*, to describe a sudden urge brought on by someone or something outside of oneself.[48] As opposed to Penelope's sustained and autonomous *pothē* in the *Odyssey*, Helen's *himeros* is a new development in the *Iliad*, caused by the goddess Iris (3.139–40).

Moreover, Helen dwells on her former life in Sparta only when she is actually viewing the Atreidai from the walls of Troy, in contrast to Penelope's constant remembrance of Odysseus, which does not rely on the sight of him. For this reason, their shared diction (εἴ ποτ' ἔην γε) takes on slightly different meanings: Helen wonders whether the Agamemnon she sees was ever really her brother-in-law, while Penelope, dependent on memory, wonders whether the Odysseus she imagines ever existed at all. (The irony, of course, is that Penelope is actually looking at Odysseus but does not recognize him.) David Elmer (2005, 23–5) has brought attention to the epigrammatic quality of Helen's identification of Agamemnon in this passage, and has suggested that Helen's words represent a kind of caption for the image of the battle that she has just been weaving. While I am not convinced that her words are meant to be understood in direct connection to her tapestry, they clearly reflect her vision of the Trojan battlefield. As Elmer argues, Helen's epigrammatic utterance here uses demonstrative language similar to the Catalogue of Ships, which is enabled by the visual knowledge of the Muse, who has seen everything first-hand;[49] like the Muse, Helen speaks directly and authoritatively from sight. Helen's desire thus has nothing to do with memory—her memory, or lack thereof, is never mentioned in the *Iliad* and her forgetfulness of her husband and his claim on her is the very reason behind her presence in Troy.[50] The *Odyssey*, in fact, expounds on

[47] On the meaning of *pothē* in Homeric epic, see Weiss 1998; Austin 2015; and the *Lexikon des frühgriechischen Epos* (*LfgrE*).

[48] On the meaning of *himeros* in Homeric epic, see Latacz 1966, 176–91; Müller 1980; Weiss 1998; and the *LfgrE*.

[49] Elmer 2005, 22–3, and especially 26–8.

[50] See also Sappho, fr. 16.7–11, and Mueller 2007, 352–6.

exactly this quality of Helen, presenting her in Book 4 as the distributor of a drug that causes forgetfulness of all evils (4.220–32). Therefore, the *Odyssey* in Book 19 seems to encourage its audience through allusion to *Iliad* 3 to contrast an unmindful, unfaithful Iliadic Helen struck suddenly with a fresh desire for Menelaus with its own heroine Penelope, who is characterized by her enduring memory, constant desire for Odysseus, and passionate grief, which underlie her static fidelity.

In these same scenes from *Iliad* 3 and *Odyssey* 19, both Helen and Penelope mention "following" men in new marriages and thereby leaving behind their old lives, and this parallelism and linguistic reverberation suggest further that the *Odyssey* invites the audience to reflect on and interpret both the likeness and significant difference of the two heroines.[51] As noted previously, Helen tells Priam, "I followed (ἑπόμην) your son, having left (λιποῦσα) my marriage chamber and relatives and late-born daughter and lovely group of friends" (*Il.* 3.178–80). In the *Odyssey*, Penelope similarly deliberates whether she "should follow" (ἕπωμαι) a suitor to his home in a remarriage (19.524–9), and ultimately twice declares her intention to "follow" (ἑσποίμην) whoever wins the contest of the bow, "having abandoned" (νοσφισσαμένη) Odysseus' palace, her marital home (19.577–81 = 21.75–9):

> ὅς δέ κε ῥηΐτατ' ἐντανύσῃ βιὸν ἐν παλάμῃσι
> καὶ διοϊστεύσῃ πελέκεων δυοκαίδεκα πάντων,
> τῷ κεν ἅμ' ἑσποίμην, νοσφισσαμένη τόδε δῶμα
> κουρίδιον, μάλα καλόν, ἐνίπλειον βιότοιο,
> τοῦ ποτε μεμνήσεσθαι ὀΐομαι ἔν περ ὀνείρῳ.
>
> And whoever most easily strings the bow in his palms,
> and shoots through all twelve axes,
> with him I would follow, having abandoned this house
> of my marriage, very beautiful, full of life's things,
> which I think later I will remember even in a dream.

The *Odyssey* poet seems to prepare and encourage the epic's audience to consider Penelope's choice in the context of Helen's through the speech of the Odyssean Helen in Book 4, when she says that she was led away by Aphrodite, "having abandoned my daughter and marriage chamber and husband" (παῖδά τ' ἐμὴν νοσφισσαμένην θάλαμόν τε πόσιν τε, 4.263). There the Odyssean Helen not only echoes the Iliadic Helen's mention

[51] Cf. Nagler 1974, 88–9 on this formulaic diction and its implication in these scenes.

of her "daughter" and "marriage chamber," but also uses the same verb, "to abandon" (νοσφίζομαι), that Penelope later employs to describe her possible departure from Odysseus' house.[52] The Odyssean Helen thus provides a link between the Iliadic Helen and Penelope in these scenes, as she does also in Penelope's speech in Book 23.

Despite the similarities in the statements of the Iliadic Helen and Penelope, the temporal and circumstantial differences in their utterances highlight their ethical dissimilarity. Helen, on the one hand, reflects in the imperfect tense on a choice already made, and made freely while she was married to another man whose living existence was never in doubt—she references an act of marital infidelity. In contrast, Penelope plans for a *future* marriage in the apparently sincere belief that her former husband is dead, using verbs in the subjunctive and optative that suggest the unrealness, almost the unthinkability, of this remarriage for her. Moreover, she moves towards remarriage under great pressure: she has already described how she has exhausted her strategems to hold off the suitors, how her parents urge her to marry, and how her son Telemachus is concerned about losing his inheritance due to the suitors' presence (19.157–61). Only under duress, then, does Penelope decide to do what Helen did seemingly without compulsion. Penelope's new marriage is clearly unpleasant

[52]The *Odyssey* also employs the verb νοσφίζομαι to help connect a third prominent heroine with both Helen and Penelope: Clytemnestra. In the *Nekuia* of Book 11, Agamemnon's shade recounts to Odysseus how he was murdered in his palace by Aegisthus, together with his wife Clytemnestra, on his return home (11.409–30). He describes how, as he lay dying and stretched out his arms, Clytemnestra "abandoned" (νοσφίσατ') him and did not close his eyes or mouth (11.424–6). Here the poet implicitly compares Clytemnestra with Helen as an adulterous, "bad" woman. Although Clytemnestra never actually left her marital home, but rather invited her new lover into that home in her husband's absence, her betrayal is assimilated to Helen's and represented as an abandonment through this common verb. In this sentence, Agamemnon's shade also characterizes Clytemnestra with the same adjective of "dog-faced" (κυνῶπις) that Helen uses to describe herself in both Homeric epics (*Il.* 3.189 and *Od.* 4.145). Odysseus makes explicit these two heroines' transgressive likeness in his subsequent observation that Zeus tormented the offspring of Atreus "through the female plottings" (γυναικείας διὰ βουλὰς) of both Helen and Clytemnestra (11.436–9). Therefore, Penelope's choice of whether to leave behind Odysseus' palace and pursue a new marriage is meant to be compared and contrasted not only with Helen's adultery, but also with Clytemnestra's murderous betrayal. In fact, after recounting Clytemnestra's treachery, Agamemnon's shade brings up Penelope and warns Odysseus to be careful on his return home, even as he testifies to Penelope's mental capacity—"for she is very prudent and well-equipped with schemes in her mind" (λίην γὰρ πινυτή τε καὶ εὖ φρεσὶ μήδεα οἶδε)—and asserts she will not kill her husband, unlike his own wife (11.441–56). On the narrative relationship between Clytemnestra and Penelope in the *Odyssey*, see further Katz 1991, 48–63.

to her: she calls the day of remarriage "accursed" (δυσώνυμος, 19.571), and wistfully reflects on the loveliness of her marital home. She appears to take this unwanted step for her son's benefit rather than for herself;[53] Helen, on the other hand, cites no additional motive for her behavior.

Similar wishes to die further link together the Iliadic Helen and Penelope, even while emphasizing their ethical opposition. Just before Helen recounts her following of Paris in *Iliad* 3, she voices a death wish, which she repeats and elaborates upon in Book 6 with reference to a stormwind carrying her away (6.345–8):

> ὥς μ' ὄφελ' ἤματι τῷ ὅτε με πρῶτον τέκε μήτηρ
> οἴχεσθαι προφέρουσα κακὴ ἀνέμοιο θύελλα
> εἰς ὄρος ἢ εἰς κῦμα πολυφλοίσβοιο θαλάσσης,
> ἔνθα με κῦμ' ἀπόερσε πάρος τάδε ἔργα γενέσθαι.
>
> Would that on the day when first my mother bore me,
> an evil stormwind had come, bearing me forth
> to a mountain or wave of the far-sounding sea,
> where a wave had washed me away before these deeds came to be.

This is the only passage in the *Iliad* describing a stormwind absconding with someone, and, as such, it is marked within the epic. In the *Odyssey*, Penelope also prays for death twice, once in Book 18, line 202, in a passage to which I will return, and then in Book 20, where she, like Helen, hopes to be carried away by stormwinds (20.61–5):

> Ἄρτεμι, πότνα θεά, θύγατερ Διός, αἴθε μοι ἤδη
> ἰὸν ἐνὶ στήθεσσι βαλοῦσ' ἐκ θυμὸν ἕλοιο
> αὐτίκα νῦν, ἢ ἔπειτά μ' ἀναρπάξασα θύελλα
> οἴχοιτο προφέρουσα κατ' ἠερόεντα κέλευθα,
> ἐν προχοῇς δὲ βάλοι ἀψορρόου Ὠκεανοῖο.
>
> Artemis, revered goddess, daughter of Zeus, if only now
> you would take my life by shooting an arrow in my breast,
> now, at once; or soon may a stormwind snatch me up
> and come, bearing me forth through the air's pathways,
> and cast me in the streams of encircling Ocean!

These echoing passages, which share formulaic language, both refer to avoiding remarriage through a watery demise. Helen, however, retrospectively wishes that she had died before she eloped with Paris, while

[53] See Lesser 2017, 104–5, for exploration of this point and further bibliography.

Penelope prays to Artemis for death so that she can escape a *future* marriage to a suitor. Therefore, Helen's death wishes are rather disingenuous hypotheticals, since nothing can change the fact of her infidelity, whereas Penelope's death wishes invoke a real future that would preserve the integrity of her marriage to Odysseus. Helen speaks in regretful hindsight at no cost to herself, whereas Penelope's words showcase her foresight and articulate her desire to die rather than enter into a new marriage, in an ultimate, self-sacrificing expression of her fidelity.

As part of her second death wish, Penelope prays further to replicate the fate of the mythical daughters of Pandareus, whom, as she says, the stormwinds or Harpies snatched away and made servants of the Erinyes in the Underworld before they could be married (20.66–78). As I have argued elsewhere (Lesser 2017, 104–12), Penelope's invocation of this mythological *exemplum* elaborates her internal resistance to remarriage even as it confirms her despair of reuniting with a living Odysseus. In this extended passage in Book 20, the *Odyssey* may be referencing and expanding upon Helen's memorable retrospective wish in *Iliad* 6 that she had been carried away by stormwinds in order to show by contrast Penelope's true commitment to Odysseus despite her disbelief in his return.

The *Odyssey* poet emphasizes Penelope's characteristic skepticism concerning the advent of Odysseus in a probable final intertext with the Teichoskopia episode in *Iliad* 3. At the beginning of the Teichoskopia (3.161–3), Priam calls on Helen "so that you may see your former husband and intimates" (ὄφρα ἴδῃ πρότερόν τε πόσιν πηούς τε φίλους τε), addressing her as "dear child" (φίλον τέκος). In *Odyssey* 23.5–7, Eurycleia likewise addresses Penelope as "dear child" (φίλον τέκος), and summons her "so that you may see with your eyes what you have hoped for every day" (ὄφρα ἴδηαι / ὀφθαλμοῖσι τεοῖσι τά τ' ἔλδεαι ἤματα πάντα), that is, her husband, Odysseus himself, who has just killed the suitors. The similarity of language together with the fact that in both instances the heroines are called to view their (original) husbands suggests that the *Odyssey* passage is in dialogue with the *Iliad* one. Whereas the Iliadic Helen can behold Menelaus from afar at will, Penelope has been denied the opportunity to see Odysseus for twenty years and she does not know that she has just seen him and spoken with him in person. This dramatic Odyssean moment offers the possibility of Penelope and Odysseus' long-awaited recognition and reunion. But while Helen immediately accedes to Priam's request and looks at the Greeks, Penelope refuses at first to believe Eurycleia's statement that Odysseus is in the palace, and asserts that the old woman is mad (23.11–19). Eventually, Penelope is persuaded to come and see for herself, but even then she maintains her characteristic guardedness.

Whereas the Iliadic Helen is an impulsive heroine of sight, Penelope is a cautious and cerebral heroine of thought, and she must test Odysseus' own memory of their bed before she will acknowledge his identity and give herself back to him.[54] This intertext with the *Iliad* thus heightens narrative suspense and spotlights Penelope's exceptional wariness and self-discipline.

Penelope's caution is thematized through her dominant and signature epithet, "circumspect" (περίφρων), which appears in both nominative and dative a full 50 times; seven times she also receives the similar epithet "sensible" (ἐχέφρων). Penelope's intellectual fortitude is, of course, exactly the attribute that she defends and celebrates in her speech to Odysseus in *Odyssey* 23, where she contrasts herself with the Iliadic Helen. Therefore, while Penelope's shrewdness also manifests itself in her ability to think up delaying schemes, such as the trick of her weaving, most of all "circumspect" seems to refer to her soundness of mind, her resistance to delusion, such as the delusion which she says afflicted Helen, as well as to her capacity for memory of the absent Odysseus, both of which are the crucial bases of her fidelity.[55]

I would now like to consider a final pair of famous scenes from the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* that suggest the *Odyssey*'s intertextual competition with the *Iliad* through the presentation of Penelope as a more ethically exemplary female hero than Helen. Near the end of *Iliad* 3, in a scene I touched on previously in my discussion of the Odyssean Helen, Aphrodite comes to Helen on the walls of Troy and convinces her with threats, despite Helen's objections, to join Paris in his bedroom. Paris is immediately seized by desire (*eros* and *himeros*) and suggests that they have sex, and Helen again "follows" (εἵπετ') him to bed, reconsummating their adulterous union (*Il.* 3.383–447). The *Odyssey* features a somewhat similar episode in Book 18, where Athena puts it in Penelope's head to appear before the suitors, and, despite her stated hatred of the suitors, she does so, arousing their desire (*eros*) and ultimately receiving their courtship gifts (*Od.* 18.158–303). In both epics, Helen and Penelope, under a goddess' compulsion and despite their disinclination, show themselves to men who are not their original husbands and cause an erotic response. Neil Forsyth (1979) has identified these episodes as examples of what he calls the "allurement type-scene." They may both represent adaptations—

[54] See further Worman 2002, 102–5, on Helen in the *Iliad* as viewer and viewed.
[55] On this epithet and its connection with fidelity, cf. Zeitlin 1995, 151 n. 57.

in parallel ways—of what Bruno Currie (2016, 145–60) has argued was originally, in the Greek epic tradition, a narrative motif of Aphrodite's seduction of a mortal man.[56]

Despite the similarities of these sequences, the different interactions between the woman and goddess in each case highlight the fundamental character differences of Helen and Penelope. Far from being unaware of Aphrodite's presence, Helen in *Iliad* 3 immediately recognizes her through her disguise (once again, she is a heroine defined by her sight) and addresses her with harsh words. Aphrodite, in turn, warns Helen not to disobey her lest she become Helen's enemy and cause her to be hated by Trojans and Greeks alike, and Helen submits to Aphrodite. Helen clearly has a choice here, even if it is an unpleasant one, and she actively chooses to go to Paris. She appears to be a conscious agent struggling against and finally succumbing to the transgressive desire for Paris that Aphrodite both enforces and represents.[57]

Unlike Helen, Penelope has no idea of Athena's involvement when Athena inspires her to appear to the suitors, "so that she might open especially the suitors' hearts and become honored more by her husband and son than she was before" (18.160–62). Nevertheless, Penelope does not simply accept her sudden and unexplained impulse, as in standard "double determination."[58] Rather, she laughs "aimlessly" (ἀχρεῖον) and comments on the strangeness of her whim given her dislike of the suitors (18.164–5). Then she reinterprets this whim as a desire to rebuke Telemachus for associating with the haughty suitors (18.166–8). Subsequently, she resists her nurse Eurynome's suggestions to beautify herself for her entrance. Athena must actually put her to sleep and effect a supernatural transformation to make her especially appealing.

[56] Currie 2016, 152, suggests that the Penelope episode in *Odyssey* 18 adapts this Aphrodite motif and signifies this dependent relationship through the detail that Athena beautifies Penelope with the oil that Aphrodite uses to anoint herself (18.192–4). Currie, however, does not identify the Helen episode from the end of *Iliad* 3 as another adaptation of that motif, despite the fact that Aphrodite coordinates Helen's "seduction" of Paris and that Helen accuses Aphrodite herself of desiring Paris. Moreover, Paris' erotic response clearly anticipates Zeus' erotic reaction to Hera's deceptive seduction in *Iliad* 14, which Currie does treat as an important reception of the Aphrodite motif.

[57] Reckford 1964, 16–18; Worman 2001, 25–6; Blondell 2010, 21–6, and 2013, 69–72; *contra* Roisman 2006, 15–20, who argues that Helen submits to Aphrodite against her will.

[58] In the four other Homeric appearances of the formula "put in the mind" (ἐπὶ φρεσὶ θῆκε), which is used repeatedly to describe how a god inspires mortal intention, the mortal does not remark upon or question the god-sent impulse (*Il.* 1.55; 5.427; *Od.* 15.234; 21.1). In her reaction, Penelope departs from this norm.

In contrast to Helen in her confrontation with Aphrodite, Penelope seems to be an unconscious pawn of Athena, as Sheila Murnaghan and others have contended.[59] Athena has made Penelope show herself to the suitors in order to serve her own purposes and those of Odysseus.[60] There is no evidence, moreover, that Penelope harbors an authentic desire to seduce the suitors; in fact, she voices her first death wish and expresses her longing (*pothē*) for Odysseus just before she descends from her chambers (18.201–5). When Penelope actually enters the hall, her modesty and chastity are emphasized, as Michael Nagler (1974, 83–4) has shown, by the appearance of the formulaic "attendance motif": she is accompanied by two maids and also draws a veil over her face (18.206–11). Helen, on the other hand, conspicuously leaves her maids to other tasks as she enters the bedchamber to confront Paris (3.421–3).

This points to the conclusion that when Penelope seems most like Helen, when there is a suggestion that she is flirting with the suitors, she is actually shown to be very different from her Iliadic counterpart. Where Helen is active, Penelope is passive, where Helen is physically unfaithful to Menelaus, Penelope is psychically faithful to Odysseus. The *Odyssey*'s presentation of Penelope here, and in the other passages that I have considered, can be interpreted as a rebuff to an *Iliad* tradition that depends on transgressive female agency in the person of Helen, and celebrates this heroine through its song. Penelope, in her passivity and mindful loyalty to her husband, is a heroine much more palatable to the patriarchy. The *Odyssey* thus offers her as a preferable type of female hero, who functions as a key sustaining element of its patriarchal and androcentric ideology.[61] In this way, Penelope contributes importantly to the *Odyssey*'s implicit claim that it is a superior epic, particularly in the area of ethics.

4. THE *ILIAD* SHAPES HELEN IN COMPETITION WITH PENELOPE IN THE *ODYSSEY*

Now I would like to flip my intepretive lens and consider whether Helen in the *Iliad* could, in some respects, be shaped in response to the Odys-

[59] Murnaghan 1995, 70–1. Cf. Emlyn-Jones 1984, 10–12; Holmberg 1995, 115–17; Hölscher 1996; Lesser 2017, 115–16.

[60] As I argue elsewhere (Lesser 2017, 115–16), Athena here constructs Penelope as a Pandora-figure designed to consume the suitors' wealth and entrap them in the palace for Odysseus' revenge.

[61] For this ideology, see Wohl 1993; Holmberg 1995; and Doherty 1995.

sean Penelope in "bidirectional intertextuality." Whereas Helen herself appears in the *Odyssey*, Penelope is not in the *Iliad*, nor does the epic ever reference her directly. However, there is a moment in Helen's final lament over Hector's body that suggests the *Iliad*'s awareness of the *Odyssey*, and the *Iliad* poet's figuring of Helen in response to both Penelope and Odysseus. In her lament, Helen proclaims, "for already now for me this is the twentieth year from the time when I went from there and came away from my fatherland" (ἤδη γὰρ νῦν μοι τόδ' ἐεικοστὸν ἔτος ἐστὶν / ἐξ οὗ κεῖθεν ἔβην καὶ ἐμῆς ἀπελήλυθα πάτρης, *Il.* 24.765–6). This is a somewhat strange assertion, since it requires Helen to have been at Troy for at least ten years before the Trojan War even started. This chronology more suitably belongs to Odysseus in the *Odyssey*, who has been away for twenty years: the ten years of the war and the ten years of his homecoming. In fact, in the *Odyssey*, Odysseus himself, in his beggar-disguise as the Cretan traveler "Aithon," speaks a nearly identical formulaic two lines when he fictionally recounts to Penelope the time when Odysseus took leave of his putative hospitality in Crete: "for already for him it is the twentieth year, from the time when he went from there and came away from my fatherland" (ἤδη γάρ οἱ ἐεικοστὸν ἔτος ἐστὶν / ἐξ οὗ κεῖθεν ἔβη καὶ ἐμῆς ἀπελήλυθε πάτρης, *Od.* 19.222–3). This exact formula, with its mention of a twenty-year time span, only appears in these two places in Homeric epic, although in Book 24 of the *Odyssey*, in a passage closely related to the Book 19 instance, Odysseus—again with his identity concealed in a lying story—employs a temporally modified version of this formula when he tells Laertes about another purported past encounter with Odysseus: "but for Odysseus this is already the *fifth* year, from the time when he went from there and came away from my fatherland" (αὐτὰρ Ὀδυσσῆϊ τόδε δὴ πέμπτον ἔτος ἐστίν, / ἐξ οὗ κεῖθεν ἔβη καὶ ἐμῆς ἀπελήλυθε πάτρης, 24.309–10).[62]

How are we to interpret the twenty-year stay at Troy claimed by Helen, and what, if anything, is the relationship between the passages in *Iliad* 24 and *Odyssey* 19? Starting with ancient commentators, scholars have tried to rationalize Helen's time-reckoning as an acknowledgment of the years it took in the Cyclic tradition (represented by the *Cypria*) for the Achaeans to marshall an army and arrive at Troy after the misguided first expedition that ended up instead in Mysia at the palace of King Telephus.[63] Karl Reinhardt, however, objected that such an involved,

[62] See Tsagalis 2008, 142–3, on how this instance of false chronology prepares for the subsequent revelation of Odysseus' true identity, which is accompanied by the true, twenty-year chronology in *Od.* 24.321–2.

[63] See the review of this approach in Richardson 1993, 358.

computational reference would distract from the emotional power of Helen's statement, which she uses concessively to preface her praise of Hector as exceptionally kind: although she was at Troy for twenty years, Hector never said a cruel word to her (24.767). Reinhardt instead argues that twenty is used loosely in Helen's speech and Homeric diction more generally—including in the Odyssean reckoning of Odysseus' absence—as a round number to signify a large quantity, and this explanation has been accepted by C. W. Macleod and Nicholas Richardson in their commentaries on *Iliad* 24.[64]

While Reinhardt recognizes that the twenty-year chronology functions more naturally in the *Odyssey* 19 context, he denies that Helen's speech in the *Iliad* is dependent on the Odyssean passage. He makes a spirited defense of the Iliadic verses' priority on the basis of the affective poignancy of Helen's contemplation of her long absence from "my fatherland." He considers these same lines less emotionally powerful and personally relevant in the *Odyssey* context, where "Aithon" deploys them to explain the difficulty of remembering Odysseus' clothing because of the length of time since Odysseus left "my fatherland" of Crete. Yet Reinhardt's argument with regard to the *Odyssey* passage fails to take into account the fact that it is Odysseus himself—albeit in disguise—who speaks these verses about Odysseus leaving his homeland. Odysseus' in-person acknowledgment to Penelope of the twenty years that have passed since his own departure conveys a powerful pathos that is augmented by the dramatic irony of this scene during which the audience, but not Penelope, knows that "he" and "my" both refer to the same person. In this Odyssean passage, then, these formulaic lines seem to me to be particularly appropriate and profound.

More recently, Christos Tsagalis (2008, 143–9) has argued that *Iliad* 24.765–6 claims an Odyssean chronology in a gesture of epic competition. He understands the *Iliad* here to be trying to match a key feature of its rival Panhellenic epic tradition by suggesting that Helen has been away for as many years as the hero of the *Odyssey*. He recognizes an allusive relationship between the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* passages based not only on the repeated language, but also on the similarity of context: Helen makes her statement in lamentation for Hector's loss, while the disguised Odysseus speaks in response to Penelope, who has just finished an episode of lamentation for Odysseus (where the "melting" simile occurs), which was

[64] Reinhardt 1961, 485–90; Macleod 1982, 154–5; Richardson 1993, 358. See also Currie 2016, 243–4, on the complexities and contradictions of epic chronology.

brought on by his Cretan tale. Tsagalis further contends that the Iliadic Helen, by introducing the twenty-year chronology, "constructs a fictive internal narrative in a manner resembling the way Odysseus-the-beggar invents his own fictive self" in order to evoke during her lament internal and external audience sympathy like that commanded by the weeping Penelope. If we accept Tsagalis' analysis, the *Iliad* thus claims for Helen in Book 24 the subjectivities of both Odysseus and Penelope in *Odyssey* 19.

I would add that Helen in *Iliad* 24, while recalling Penelope, is also differentiated from her. Whereas Penelope is a passive figure, lamenting a loss that she could not control and emotionally manipulated by her guest, Helen laments a death that she herself has (indirectly) caused through the departure from her homeland that she describes. In fact, she prefaces her words about the "twentieth year" with a third wish that she had died before Paris led her to Troy (24.764), in a recognition of her complicit role in Hector's demise. Therefore, in this final speech, she once again presents herself as an active and responsible adulterous subject, and, through her apparent citation of Odysseus' words, the *Iliad* associates her particularly with the mobile (and adulterous) Odysseus, the empowered central hero of the *Odyssey*.

I suggest that epic rivalry with Penelope and the *Odyssey* tradition may help to explain more broadly the complex and fascinating character of Helen in the *Iliad*. It has been an enduring scholarly problem as to why the *Iliad* offers two different versions of Helen's departure from Sparta to Troy: first, male characters present Helen as a rape victim, abducted by force, but then Helen herself asserts that she "followed" Paris willingly as an adulteress.[65] In fact, the *Iliad* could have presented Helen exclusively as a victim of rape and its plot would have been unaffected—the Trojan War would still be waged over Helen. The *Odyssey*, on the other hand, requires Penelope's scheming and patient fidelity for the successful conclusion to its epic plot. The *Iliad*, then, in order to have a heroine of equal or greater importance than Penelope, needs a Helen whose decisions matter, who possesses an interesting interiority, that is, an unfaithful Helen.[66]

Therefore, the *Iliad* creates Helen as a compelling subject who thematizes her adulterous agency with repeated references to her own

[65] On the multiple versions of Helen's "abduction" or "elopement" in the *Iliad*, see Kakridis 1971, 25–31; Reckford 1964; Reichel 2002; Blondell 2010.

[66] The apparent necessity of still presenting Helen as a rape victim as well as an adulteress seems to me to represent a poetic reflex against granting any female character unmitigated (transgressive) agency.

infidelity and its deadly consequences in utterances of self-blame. Recently, feminist scholars have recognized how Helen's self-blame not only emphasizes this agency and thus her narrative importance, but also endows her with a sense of shame and morality that recuperates her character and makes her even more worthy, attractive, and sympathetic—at least to men.[67] In her remorse for her actions and self-castigation, Helen rivals Penelope not only as a significant heroine but also as a moral subject.[68] She is more acceptable and sympathetic to the epic's audience than she would have been as an unrepentant adulteress, and more interesting and empowered than if she were a rape victim.

Helen's regret is highlighted when she declares in *Iliad* 3 how she has melted in her weeping for her former life in Sparta, and this passage may in fact represent a moment when the *Iliad* constructs Helen in the model of Penelope in order to induce sympathy for her. The motif of weeping for a lost husband seems to belong properly to Penelope, who believes her husband to be dead, not to Helen, who purposefully left behind a living husband. Richard Martin has remarked upon the strangeness of Helen's use of lament speech in this extended Iliadic passage, which includes her nostalgic musings over her former brother-in-law: "Although Agamemnon is very much alive and in view, Helen's diction treats her own past, and its figures, as the dead object."[69] The *Iliad* poet may here have taken Penelope's proprietary motif and applied it to his own heroine to further enhance her character, in a kind of Homeric intertextuality known as "motif transference," which forms the basis of Neoanalytic scholarship. In this approach, scholars determine the dependence of one epic tradition on another by identifying a shared, marked motif that better fits one character and context and which therefore seems to have been transferred from that original location

[67] Worman 2001, 28–9; Roisman 2006 *passim*, especially 11–15 and 18–20; Blondell 2010, 10–14, and 2013, 63–7.

[68] Helen's stated concern to Aphrodite that the Trojan women will blame her for sleeping with Paris (*Il.* 3.411–12) may be an intertextual adaptation of Penelope's concern that she will be an object of the Achaean women's *nemesis* if she does not weave a shroud to fulfill her obligation towards her father-in-law Laertes (*Od.* 2.101).

[69] Martin 2003, 125. In this article, Martin argues that all of Helen's discourse in both the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* has a close affinity to lament speech, but he does not suggest that Helen is modeled on Penelope in any way. Rather, he identifies Helen herself as the "metonym" for lament, and in turn identifies lament as "the foundational speech-act . . . behind *all* poetry of commemoration," i.e. as the basis of heroic epic itself, which positions Helen as a "female Muse" (Martin 2003, 128).

to the other work.[70] In Helen's assertion that she "has melted" (τέτηκα, 3.176), the *Iliad* may also have appropriated vocabulary that "belongs" to the *Odyssey* and is particularly associated with Penelope—as previously mentioned, this is the sole time it appears in the *Iliad*. Moreover, Penelope's melting is thematized in that same passage in *Odyssey* 19 to which Helen's lament in *Iliad* 24 may allude. Motif transference could also explain Helen's retrospective death wishes; praying for death makes better temporal and ethical sense in the case of Penelope, as we have seen. In addition, the motif of a stormwind carrying someone away appears seven times in the *Odyssey*,[71] but only once in the *Iliad*, as part of Helen's second death wish.

These possible instances of motif transference make Helen more like Penelope in terms of moral subjectivity, while still allowing for Helen—as an adulteress who maintains her seductive force—to be a rather more powerful and independent actor than Penelope, who has limited agency and is controlled by other Odyssean characters, such as Athena. Helen's Odyssean self-fashioning in Book 24 of the *Iliad* emphasizes how she is a character of greater freedom and agency than her epic rival Penelope, who is defined by her long-suffering, static fidelity. On the other hand, Penelope's account of Helen's adultery in Book 23 of the *Odyssey* seems to be a poetic assertion that Penelope is a much more thoughtful and self-controlled heroine than her Iliadic rival. In addition, the *Odyssey*'s innovation of attributing god-sent delusion to Helen in Penelope's speech as well as in the Odyssean Helen's own words is a narrative tactic meant to mitigate Helen's agency,[72] even while it does not absolve her of blame for the war. Both the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, then, seem to make agonistic intertextual gestures in the final scenes featuring their respective heroines, Helen and Penelope.

[70] On "motif transference," see further Burgess 2012. Neoanalysts traditionally study the transfer of motifs from (putative pre-Homeric) Cyclic poetry to Homeric epic, not from one Homeric epic to another. They have been motivated by a desire to ascertain the sources of Homeric epic, rather than by an interest in interpreting the narrative purpose of Homeric citation of another tradition. Yet I believe that a text's appropriation of a motif from a familiar song tradition or text can be used to make meaning in the same way as a repetition of a marked, restricted formula.

[71] *Od.* 4.515–16; 4.727; 5.419–20; 6.171; 10.48–55; 20.63–78; 23.316–17. Cf. stormwind blowing up sea-storms that afflict or might afflict Odysseus and/or his companions (*Od.* 5.317; 7.275; 12.68; 12.288; 12.409).

[72] I thank Sheila Murnaghan for this insight.

5. FEMALE ETHICS AND EPIC DIFFERENCE

Beyond the epics' rival claims of the ethical superiority of their heroines, what can these two very different women help us to understand about the competition of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*? How do Helen and Penelope relate more broadly to the disparate interests and ideologies of the two Homeric poems? First, it is clear that Penelope's character contributes to the *Odyssey*'s celebration of mental power, as she matches the intellectual acuity of her male narrative counterpart, Odysseus. On the other hand, Helen's capacity to see—in addition to the disarming effect of her being seen (cf. 3.156–8)—adds to the *Iliad*'s glorification of physical capability, represented most obviously by her narrative counterpart, the beautiful and "swift-footed" warrior Achilles.

Like Achilles, Helen is associated with movement, and indeed each heroine's degree of mobility represents a general female pattern in her respective epic, a pattern that is directly related to the epic's subject and themes. Helen is a typical Iliadic woman in her mobility, if not in her agency. Every mortal female in the *Iliad* either is or will be displaced from her proper (usually marital) home, from Chryseis, Briseis, and the many unnamed slave women in the Greek camp, to the Trojan women, such as Andromache, whose future enslavement is repeatedly forecasted. This actual and potential female mobility, the uncontained and uncontainable quality of women in the *Iliad*, is the basis of this epic's story of war and conflict—both between Greeks and Trojans and within the Greek army. For, in this poem, men fight and die over possession of women, and therefore female mobility is key to the *Iliad*'s themes of anger, grief, and mortality.

Penelope is likewise representative of all Odyssean females in her immobility, which is connected to that epic's alternative story of survival and homecoming. In the *Odyssey*, female characters may be "good" or "evil," helpful or harmful to Odysseus and his men, but they are all immobile and thus contained. The females whom Odysseus encounters on his voyage are all confined to specific locations (often islands), from Scylla, Charybdis, and the Sirens, to Circe, Calypso, and Nausicaa, and he can ultimately sail away from them, leaving behind any threat that they might represent to his life or *nostos*. Men's survival is thus associated not only with female immobility, but also with male mobility, and Odysseus, as the ultimately mobile character, retains the possibility of escape from death and suffering. Significantly, the mobile Iliadic Helen is immobilized in the *Odyssey*, recontained in Sparta, merely a stop on Telemachus' voyage to maturity. Similarly, the unfaithful Clytemnestra is

both marginalized and contained in Argos—she is fatal for Agamemnon and his retinue who have returned from Troy, but, in her immobility, she threatens no one else. Penelope, waiting faithfully in Ithaca, provides a goal and a happy (if impermanent) conclusion for Odysseus' journey and the epic's plot. She is associated with death only for those "bad" male characters, the suitors, who give up their own mobility and remain in her house, infringing on her and Odysseus' proprietary territory.

In addition to her immobility, Penelope's fidelity, her highly moral character, is crucial to the *Odyssey*'s vision of a world in which justice prevails, with "good" behavior rewarded and "evil" punished. Both Penelope and Odysseus earn their joyful reunion through mutual patience and self-discipline, Penelope in her faithfulness and Odysseus in his obedient piety. Their survival and reunification are predicated on their proper conduct. On the other hand, infidelity and impiety have fatal consequences: Clytemnestra is killed by her son Orestes and the philandering slave women are killed by Telemachus, while Odysseus' reckless companions and the rapacious suitors all meet their deaths. In the *Odyssey*, morality matters, and Penelope's fidelity underpins this ideology.[73]

In contrast, Helen's infidelity is appropriate to an epic where morality is much less important. In the *Iliad*'s world-view, everyone, regardless of their behavior, can expect to receive some portion from Zeus' urn of evils, as Achilles tells Priam (24.525–33). And everyone, even Achilles, is subject to the human scourge of mortality; the worthy do not escape death. There is a "geometrical rigour" to the killing and being killed on the epic's battlefield.[74] The only recompense is heroic *kleos*. In this scheme, fidelity is not rewarded: Andromache, Hector's faithful wife and Helen's moral and ethical opposite within the *Iliad*,[75] still suffers the pain of her husband's death and foresees her son's and her own degradation. In turn, in a world defined by indiscriminate death and suffering, infidelity is less significant, and therefore less liable to opprobium. Helen can be unfaithful, and yet still be admired and sought after by male characters; in fact, as the cause of war, she plays a vital role in the realization of the *Iliad*'s heroic economy of fame through death-in-battle, and for this reason the epic largely celebrates, rather than disparages her.

Helen's infidelity is the catalyst for the destruction that constitutes the *Iliad*'s plot and its view of the human condition. Therefore, Helen's

[73] See Lesky 2001, 201, on the "'higher morality' of the Odyssey."

[74] Weil 2005, 195.

[75] On the opposition between Helen and Andromache in the *Iliad*, see Owen 1946, 64–5; Lohmann 1988, 57–9; Louden 2006, 55, 60–63.

adulterous agency is a key factor in constructing the *Iliad* as a "tragic" epic. In actively transgressing social convention, she undoes social bonds, bringing pain and death. On the other hand, Penelope's faithful inaction maintains the social status quo,[76] enabling the *Odyssey*'s "comedic" ending. A moral conclusion—a happy ending—is generally conservative, in that it confirms prevailing values and reaffirms the preexisting social order, rather than exposing its faults and dramatizing its dissolution, as in tragedy. In his discussion of comedy, Eric Weitz (2009, 12) observes how "a text may seem to bristle with socially disruptive thoughts and actions before suddenly coming to rest in a socially sanctioned balance." The *Odyssey* does exactly this with the character of Penelope, particularly as she is constructed through intertexts with the Iliadic Helen. In her likeness to Helen, Penelope represents the social threat of female agency and infidelity, but she is ultimately shown to be different—a woman who, through her inert and passive fidelity, upholds the Ithacan social structure, with Odysseus at its top. Finally, then, with respect to theme, plot, morality, and genre, the ethical differences of Helen and Penelope, manifested through Homeric intertextual rivalry, serve to help articulate the competing ideologies of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.[77]

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[76] Cf. Wöhrle 2002, 237, on how conjugal fidelity is fundamental to ensuring the social order, at the core of which is marriage.

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