

Across the Sea's Broad Back: Interpreting the Role of Homer's Women in Odysseus' Quest for Ithaka

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Across the Sea's Broad Back:

*Interpreting the Role of Homer's
Women in Odysseus' Quest for Ithaka*



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~ Acknowledgements ~



Pursuing a senior thesis is a challenging undertaking, but advising such an endeavor is even more demanding. It requires a great deal of energy, judicious offering of advice and most of all, patience. I think Pope put it best in Book XV when his Odysseus sets out for his palace to endure his final trials:

To-morrow for myself I must provide,
And only ask your counsel, and a guide. (p. 255)

I truly thank Professor Haskin for the forthright candor of his opinion when offering sincere, but restrained, guidance that cultivated my own creativity and allowed me to follow my inspirations. My work would not have developed so fully without you.



I owe a great debt of thanks to my friends and family for their love and support. Thank you for offering your time to read my work and help in its development.

Finally, I would like to thank Professor Christopher Conostas for not only introducing me to the works of Homer at the very beginning of Freshmen year, but for introducing me to a way of thinking that refuses to accept ideas and interpretations at face value. Homer's *Odyssey* was the very first text assigned to me the summer before entering college, and our class discussions were essential for the development of this Senior thesis.



I would also like to dedicate my work to Robert Fagles (1933-2008), whose understated yet elegant poetry first brought to life the characters of the *Odyssey* and inspired me to look beyond my own preconceived biases.

~ Table of Contents ~

Preface.....	i
A Note on Translation.....	vii
Introduction.....	1
Chapter I: Nausikaa.....	6
Chapter II: Kalypso.....	23
Chapter III: Athena.....	40
Chapter IV: Penélopê.....	56
Conclusion.....	82
Works Cited and Consulted	86

~ Preface ~

My first encounter with the *Odyssey* of Homer was through the interpretation of Robert Fagles, whose trim and graceful verse offered an accessible pathway into Odysseus' world. As a student, I had been trained to think of the Western literary tradition as thoroughly misogynistic, so I was surprised by the considerable scope of the positive female agency on Homer's work. From what I had encountered previously, women were often unfairly represented in art, religion, and literature. The female characters who did exercise a degree of influence were for the most part interpreted as malicious, evil and licentious. The Emma Bovarys, Lady Macbeths and Dalilas of our literary history all exhibit a great deal of agency but are interpreted as cruel and terrible, even sometimes depraved. If the women were not wicked, however, they could only be the opposite: pure and benevolent, but rather impotent. Regrettably, I had come to think in these narrow terms when engaging with a text. Furthermore, I had been trained to interpret the Greek mythological cycle as filled with women who selfishly, and seductively, brought down many great heroes. The very first woman, Pandora, carried evil and suffering with her in that fateful box, Helen brought down Troy with her beauty and the charms of Aphrodite, even the powerful Agamemnon is struck down when he succumbs to his wife's devious trickery. So, why would Odysseus' story be any different? I had been taught that the woman has always been a danger; her sexuality and seductive abilities blind our heroes and make them vulnerable.

It was with great surprise, then, that I came to know the women of the *Odyssey* as astounding agents of the hero's return to his home island of Ithaka. Within the larger context of the poem, they reveal stunning autonomy and prove essential to Odysseus'

survival. My education thus far had limited the categories into which I could classify women, so at first it was somewhat difficult to reconcile their positive influence with all I had learned about females in literature. Not only do they defy the interpretive stereotype of the menacing and problematic woman who functions as an impediment to the hero, they work in concert *with* Odysseus; their goals are the same: to help Odysseus in his fight to return home. They befriend him, clothe him and give him supplies, as well as challenge him intellectually and emotionally. My initial assumptions regarding the stereotypical representation of these women were evidently based on the crude idea of an undifferentiated past, which is far too simplistic.

It was not just the women who surprised me, however. The “valiant” hero is quite puzzling at times, especially when he appears to prefer weeping to taking action. In fact, it is the sobbing that saturates Homer’s poem which struck me most profoundly: the constant tears of both Odysseus and Penélopê are quite bothersome on several levels. It seems that while Odysseus gets himself into difficult situations and then weeps at the consequences, Penélopê spends her life crying in her chambers, waiting for her husband to return. For much of the poem, she appears rather pathetic and passive in her resignation to her fate. Yet, while it would have been easy for me to simply dismiss her as a weak character, I could not shake the intuition that she is indispensable, indeed vital, to Homer’s story. Even more, Odysseus declares that he would rather spend his mortal life with this apparently pathetic woman, who just weeps and waits for him to return, than exist immortally with the beautiful and powerful Kalypso. He is supposed to be the most cunning and wily of all the Greek heroes, is he not? Why is he so committed to returning to this passive, faint-hearted woman? My confusion only intensified when reading the

series of interactions leading up to this couple's final recognition. Penélopê's disbelief, even after her trusted nurse and son inform her of the true identity of the mysterious visitor, seems weak-minded and simple. How could the shrewd and wise Odysseus maintain such a strong attachment to this pathetic creature? But Odysseus himself does not hold up to the ideal, either. His penchant for dramatics and sobbing bothered me, as well. His endless weeping on the shores of Ogygia seems unproductive and pitiable; he ultimately just builds a raft and leaves, so why does he spend seven years lamenting his condition on the beach?

My struggle became an attempt to come to terms with a richness of these characters and the poem itself. I had been viewing Odysseus through a tradition that glorifies masculinity, conflating it with impermeability, and censures weakness in men. At the same time, though, I was judging Penélopê rather harshly from a contemporary, feminist perspective. The combination of these two viewpoints threw the limitations of my training into sharp relief: I had been given blinders that distorted my view of these characters. This feminist perspective turned out to be quite an uninformed one because it required women to be strong and independent, but conflated strength with a certain stoicism or emotional impenetrability. Strength of character is not defined by imperviousness to emotion, but by the grace with which one faces trials and suffering. The characters of the *Odyssey* do not conform so aptly to the narrow lens through which I was taught to view them. It is anachronistic to expect the kind of psychological insight to which we are accustomed from Homer's ancient work, but that does not mean that depth does not exist. The poet imbues his characters with a complex emotional spectrum that lends strength to their humanity, which was distorted by a misogynistic interpretation.

They possess an undeniable depth that makes them relatable and timeless, and inspired me to question the limited perspective cultivated by my education and follow my intuition that these women are crucial to Odysseus' story.

I needed to clarify the nature of the hero, particularly his relationship and cooperation with females, so I turned to his wife for answers. The realization that Penélopê's wisdom runs deeper than might initially appear opened up all the other characters for similar scrutiny. Nausikaa could be more than an impressionable adolescent and Kalypso may not just be a sex-starved goddess who delays Odysseus against his will. They do not divide cleanly into the two categories of the problematic temptress or the unadulterated accessory to the hero. In fact, there are many instances that prove they fall into both categories, and more. Furthermore, their sexuality, which has traditionally been interpreted as a sign of danger for the hero, is extremely relevant to the nature of Odysseus' interaction with them and the ways in which they ultimately help him. It slowly became clear that it is precisely their femininity that is at the root of their ability to aid the hero because it facilitates the intimate relations required for his personal and intellectual growth.

I was tapping into a depth of these characters, but I could feel that I was only scratching the surface. I cannot read Greek, but I knew that translation is an act of interpretation, so I felt at a loss having only experienced Fagles' words. Perhaps other translators would convey other facets of these characters that I had not yet encountered. I began by considering a little over a dozen translations, finally selecting a half-dozen or so to regularly consult as I was searching to develop my understanding of these women. I have had occasion to bring into the pages that follow nine translations, some more

frequently than others, to enrich my understanding of the hero and the women who help him return to Ithaka. I found that the older translators, working closely with the traditions developed through great poets like Milton and Spenser, are inclined to use densely worded phrases that are packed with meaning and imagery, whereas the newer ones tend to be much more straightforward, aiming (I am given to understand) to achieve greater literal closeness to the Greek.

Much as I had expected, when I first read the *Odyssey*, to find its female characters subjugated to men, I assumed that the older translations would subordinate women to the hero. Again, I was mistaken. I have found that Chapman's poetic expression often infuses Odysseus' interactions with a certain softness and it regularly imbues the women with subtle agency. Pope's Odysseus, by contrast, comes across as decidedly more task-oriented and less refined than Chapman's. A more pathetic air permeates his depiction of the women, although he does occasionally lend them a certain boldness of character that can be largely perceived in his descriptions of their actions. The rest of the translators - Fagles, Lattimore, and Fitzgerald among them - are less distinctive from one another in their representation of women's agency. As a more modern group, though, they do bring out particular features of the female characters, like Nausikaa's courage and Penélopê's cunning, in a much more straightforward and tangible fashion than their predecessors. They have often have given me cause to reread and reassess my interpretation of Pope or Chapman.

As we examine certain key moments of Homer's poem, different translations reveal striking disparities that endow the stories of these women with various shades of meaning. Distilled in the pages that follow are those that have proven the most exciting

to me and valuable to my study. The comparison of different translations, while opening up more views regarding the message of the poet, also enriches the meaning of these moments by showing different interpretations of their implications. These differences mainly function in two ways. First of all, by noting the variations among the translations, for instance giving three or four English words for one Greek word, we can further develop the picture originally created by the poet. In addition, the various translations bring out points of controversy that truly enrich the meaning of the text. For example, when Nausikaa meets Odysseus on the beach of Phaiákia, his approach is conflated with that of a lion. Chapman depicts the lion as worthy of our sympathy and strong despite his trials, while Pope shows the animal to be threatening and indomitable. This variation sets the tone for Odysseus' interaction with Nausikaa. Chapman brings forth Odysseus' care for the girl and her inner strength, while Pope shows the hero to be self-serving and the princess to be vulnerable. Indeed, these translators have reconceived the story several times from many different points of view, and considering several translations brings the depth and richness of the female characters to life, as well as their impact on Odysseus and on his journey home.

~ *A Note on Translation* ~

As I became increasingly absorbed into the world of Homer's *Odyssey*, I began to feel a certain frustration resulting from my inability to read Greek. I could not ascertain an unmediated sense of the poet's meaning. Nevertheless, from this limitation grew the opportunity to examine texts in my own language that developed and shaped my own cultural tradition. I have chosen to employ several different translations in my investigation of the characters of the *Odyssey*. The writing in the pages that follow moves freely through a half-dozen or so English translations that I regularly consulted in order to glimpse the depth and vibrancy of certain moments and characters in the poem. While more recent translators aim to remain closer to the original Greek, the older translators take more liberty with the text, sometimes even inventing significant elaborations.

At many points in my writing, I wish to examine specific moments of the poem, but not to compare individual interpretations or comment on particular word usage. For the sake of consistency, I have chosen to use Fitzgerald's work as my source for these citations. Not only have I found his translation to be the most accessible and beautifully written, it also maintains a nice balance between the older and more modern translations. Indeed, it is true that Fitzgerald's translation does have the disadvantage of unusual transliterations of the Greek names. This eccentricity can be particularly felt in certain names, like Kalypso or Nausikaa, which are especially reminiscent of the Greek. It serves to remind us of a certain unnaturalness inherent to translation; that the differences between the Greek and the English can be, to different degrees, covered up

through the act of translation. All of the translations I have employed in my writing are listed below, in order of publication date.

Translations of the *Odyssey* Consulted and Cited in this Thesis

- 1614-6. Chapman, George, trans. *The Odyssey*. Ed. Gary Wills. New York City, NY: Pantheon Books, Inc., 2000.
1725. Pope, Alexander, trans. *The Odyssey of Homer*. Rpt. Doylestown, PA: Wildside Press, 2003.
1879. Schomberg, G. A., trans. *The Odyssey of Homer*. London, England: William Clowes and Sons.
1922. Butler, Samuel, trans. *The Odyssey*. Rpt. New York City, NY: AMS Press, 1968.
1956. Butcher, S. H., and Andrew Lang, trans. *The Odyssey of Homer*. New York City, NY: Airmont Publishing Company, Inc.
1961. Fitzgerald, Robert, trans. *The Odyssey*. New York City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc.
1965. Lattimore, Richmond, trans. *The Odyssey of Homer*. New York City, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc.
1967. Cook, Albert, trans. *The Odyssey*. New York City, NY: W.W. Norton & Co.
1996. Fagles, Robert, trans. *The Odyssey*. New York City, NY: Penguin Books.

Whenever possible after a quotation, I provide the relevant line numbers.

Because the line numbers are not readily available in my edition of Pope or in the prose translation of Butcher and Lang, I depart from this practice and give page numbers when I cite these translations.

~ *Introduction* ~

Interpretation is an exercise of *mêtis*, and the struggle over interpretation can be seen as a contest of wits.

- Lillian Eileen Doherty

The *Odyssey*: even the name brings our focus directly to the hero and his epic return to Ithaka. Odysseus' journey is filled with challenges posed by monsters, gods, ghosts, and seers, but most of all, by women. Women attack, seduce, capture, tempt, and lie to him. In light of the popular ideas about the threat that women can pose, it comes as no surprise that females are as much a danger to Odysseus as the kings and gods who try to thwart his return home. Their impact is certainly more covert and their tactics more subtle. This often intensifies the danger they pose, a danger that is not only related to Odysseus' life, but to his ability to return home. His homecoming is crucial, both because he so deeply desires to return to Ithaka *and* because it re-establishes peace and order there. In many important ways, the women he encounters could pose a powerful threat to the restoration of justice on Ithaka.

A positive interpretation of many female figures in the *Odyssey* has become more readily established because of the modern movements that have changed the nature of literary interpretation. The social disruptions of the First and Second World Wars that led women into the workplace offered the opportunity to redefine a feminine place in society. As the feminist movement took off, many of the stereotypical models were altered and patterns changed. The women could not simply be interpreted as flat characters dynamic only in their value to Odysseus. The contemporary climate is more open to exploring the character of these women and goddesses, and noticing how their

natures affect the progression of the *Odyssey* and the character of Odysseus himself. Indeed, it is his development and change that we follow, not his female counterparts; we watch as he resolves to leave Kalypso's isle on a tiny raft, craftily obtains supplies to commence his final journey home from the godlike people on Phaiákia, and engages in a battle of wits with Athena, the goddess of wisdom, to prove to her that he is ready to return to his palace and ultimately to destroy all the opposition waiting there. From a weeping, pathetic mess on Ogýgia, he metamorphoses into a confident, wise and powerful king on Ithaka.

As a veteran returning from the legendary Trojan War, a bloody conflict lasting ten years, Odysseus certainly faces many challenging obstacles that hinder his emotional and physical journey to a place where he can reintegrate himself into society. Although during the military campaign he is still imbued with the wily cunning that so dominantly governs his actions (he did, after all, formulate the idea for the infamous Trojan horse), he is primarily a warrior. Ten years of killing to protect his own life while watching his friends die undoubtedly takes its toll. Moreover, the Greek conception of an afterlife was not a pleasant one, so the hero could take no comfort that his comrades had somehow found a better place. In fact, Achilles proclaims the suffering of Hades in Book XI when he says, "Better...to break sod as a farm hand/for some poor country man.../than lord it over all the exhausted dead" (Fitzgerald 579-81). Even after the battle beneath Troy's great walls ceases, danger continues to lurk around every corner: monsters, gods, and magical beings permeate Odysseus' travels. Although it is clear that the hero is responsible for most of these reckless encounters, it is perhaps just this behavior that proves he is not yet ready to return to domestic life. Even more importantly, there is no

guarantee that he will be safe when he is finally home on Ithaka. The poem is infused with other homecoming stories that turn out disastrously, above all that of Agamemnon, whose wife Clytemnestra kills him upon his victorious return. Nothing is certain or stable.

The women whose characters are explored in the following pages were chosen as a result of their substantial contributions to Odysseus' journey home. Each one is crucial to the ultimate goal of re-establishing justice on his island and his own position as king. The establishment of justice does not seem to be solely Odysseus' work, and through the actions of these brave women Homer makes us aware of their agency and influence over the hero's journey home. Not only do they test his resolve by offering him safety at such a precarious time in his life, their very interactions hone his skills of cunning. He cannot just be a warrior to survive any longer; it is his brain they test, not the might of his sword. Odysseus' ultimate objective is to return, but it becomes increasingly clear what a delicate and complicated process it will be to attain this goal. He must transition away from relying primarily on his military prowess and tap into his cleverness to effectively restore justice and return to domesticity. Who better to facilitate this than the sex that, in Odysseus' world, tends the hearth and guards the home?

Of course, the contributions of the women are much more substantial than simply preparing Odysseus for a life off of the battlefield. Women challenge him to rediscover his cunning, his *mêtis*, and his humanity. As he progresses towards Ithaka and the palace, he makes many stops and often places himself in the hands of some local, powerful female. He lands on Kalypso's island, Ogygia, after his entire crew is killed at sea, and he has a sexual relationship with the nymph for seven years before finally departing to

complete his journey home. Washing up on Phaiákia's shore, he finds himself face to face with Nausikaa, the young and beautiful princess he convinces to help him secure food and shelter. Not only does she lodge him in the palace, he leaves with a large escort of expert Phaiákian sailors and a great deal of treasure. After the Phaiákians deposit him on the beach of Ithaka, Athena immediately seeks to trick Odysseus, and their subsequent subtle banter paints a dynamic picture of the nature of their long-standing relationship as patroness and hero. After this trial and a quick stop to recruit support from his father, son, and remaining loyal servants, he proceeds to his home where the greatest test awaits. He disguises himself to his wife, Penélopê, who has long awaited his return, and they interact under the pretense of interpreting a dream. Even after he reveals himself, however, Penélopê delays her recognition of him until the last possible moment. Their interactions are imbued with high tension; he has been trying for ten years and twenty-three books to get home and she is taking her time acknowledging him! The subtlety of the communication this couple weaves at such a crucial time does not just test the hero's *mêtis*, but the readers' as well.

The value of looking at various translations lies in the depth of understanding it provides: "An act of interpretation is an assertion of power, since to propose an interpretation is to stake a claim to control (however partial or temporary) of a text" (Doherty p. 4). This is precisely what we, as readers, do when reading and internalizing a text, any text. We take it in, we digest it, and the more we read, the more we discover. Texts speak to us on multiple, dynamic levels, and we respond to them in kind. Translators are thus acting as interpreters when unraveling and reweaving a text. They are not only employing their own *mêtis*, as Odysseus and Penélopê do when they discuss

the meaning of her dream, they are considering their audiences as well. Reading and comparing multiple translations of the *Odyssey* will no doubt give ample depth to the complex ideas and premises that constitute it. This thesis is by no means an exhaustive recapitulation of various translations of minutiae, nor is it an historical account of particular translators and the social influences that shaped the translators' interpretations of this poem. Moreover, it is not designed to cast a conclusive blanket over the translators, attesting to their individual writing styles or personal prejudices. It is, however, an opportunity to unrestrictedly move through the different translations and take pleasure in exercising our own *mêtis* when comparing them. I try to bring a synthesis that no one interpretation can achieve in order to round out our developing understanding of the poet's work and help us catch a glimpse of the multifaceted natures of the vibrant characters that inhabit this poem.

~ *Nausikaa* ~

In his 1956 essay regarding the name of Odysseus, G. E. Dimock links Odysseus' name to pain and suffering: "'To odysseus' (*odyssasthai* in Greek) is usually said to mean 'to be wroth against,' 'hate'..." (p. 52). Indeed, Odysseus does have a long history of causing a great deal of pain, most of which is integral to the course of Homer's *Odyssey*. He brings down Troy with his idea of the Trojan horse, his mother dies of grief because of his departure, and his wife mourns his absence every night. His existence is steeped in anguish, however, not simply because he causes pain, but because he feels it deeply himself. For some eighteen years he has been absent from home, suffering through the physical strife of war, and witnessing the loss of his comrades and crewmen. When we first find him in Book V, he is reduced to pathetic tears on the isolated shore of Kalypso's island, Ogygia. Quite soon thereafter he washes up on Phaiakia, diminished even further because he has just been assaulted by an ocean storm and does not have even the clothes or food with which he set sail. It is the experience of pain that permeates Odysseus' entire existence. But this condition is not unique to Odysseus because it is integrally linked to the mortal quest for identity, a central struggle of the human condition. Indeed, Dimock claims that "there is no human identity other than in terms of pain" (p. 63). Although he only briefly mentions Nausikaa when exploring the types of pain caused by Odysseus, there is a palpable tension permeating the hero's interaction with the princess on the shores of Phaiakia related directly to this pain. At this moment, he meets the princess Nausikaa and seeks her aid to find some relief from his suffering. In this process, like all the others with whom Odysseus interacts and on whom he works his charms, Nausikaa stands to endure some pain.

Odysseus' wretched state at the opening of Book V is a prelude to the distress that he could potentially cause Nausikaa as a result of his contact with her. More modern translators tend to focus on the exchange between the princess and the hero as a means by which he gets help from the Phaiákians: they show Nausikaa to be a wide-eyed, yet competent, admirer of Odysseus, the handsome and cunning stranger. Homer leaves room for richer characterizations of these individuals, however, and the earlier translations of George Chapman and Alexander Pope take advantage of this opportunity. They seem to intuit Odysseus' potential to cause the princess to suffer through their discourse on Phaiákia. What is even more remarkable, though, is that by juxtaposing close examinations of these two translations, we find even richer meaning in Homer's work that is not achieved by either translator alone.

When Odysseus washes up on Phaiákia, he is reduced to the utterly elemental and requires the princess' help. With his handsome features obscured by the brine, he must rely solely on his wiles for survival. He is immediately confronted with a covey of young maidens playing by the water. In order to receive the help he desperately needs, he must gain the princess' favor despite his physical appearance at this moment, which is quite unappealing if not downright terrifying. Furthermore, he is a strange, naked man encroaching on a group of young girls who do not know his motives or identity. Upon catching sight of his sea-beaten form, all but the princess fly from him in fear. Nausikaa has been emboldened by Athena, who intervenes only to encourage the princess to listen to the hero's appeal. Odysseus' fate is placed squarely in the hands of the princess. After seven years of lethargic seclusion on Kalypso's Isle, however, his powers of persuasion may not serve him as well as they once did. Unlike his other encounters with women,

like the witch goddess Khirke or sea nymph Kalypso, it is not imperative that he be delicate and sensitive. With the young princess, Nausikaa, however, he must be aware of his propensity to cause pain and successfully control it if he is to secure safe passage home.

When we meet Nausikaa she is running playfully with her friends on the beach; yet we can perceive that she is not just a child, but budding into a beautiful woman. She is just reaching a most natural time to be thinking about true love and marriage. Because of rapid, yet apt, analysis of the situation confronting him, Odysseus ascertains the most effective form of address to be a speech designed to flatter and cajole her from a respectful distance. In particular, he praises her not only for her positive attributes, but for the ways in which they will be valued by her husband; how she will be a positive attribute to him. In this way, her most obvious weakness is exploited, and this puts Nausikaa at considerable risk to get hurt. The extent to which she is vulnerable to Odysseus' wiles and even the nature of his trickery, is interpreted quite differently between Chapman and Pope. While Chapman evokes a genuinely caring Odysseus and a courageous, intelligent Nausikaa, Pope shows the hero to be brutally charming and denies the princess much personality at all. Furthermore, the imagery and language of these two translations helps to heighten this disparity and accentuate the features of these interpretations. This strongly emphasizes the disparate tones implicit in the interaction and brings out the richness of this moment.

The climax of Odysseus' discourse with Nausikaa is his powerful entreaty to her, as it requires his greatest skill and cunning. Furthermore, it is a circumstance that brings out important traits in each of their personalities. At this moment, Odysseus must take

into account Nausikaa's perception of him in order to parlay the situation into a future that will result in his return to Ithaka. His principal strategy is flattery: he praises her beauty and modesty primarily by considering her future marriage, discussing her appeal as a bride and assessing her value to her future husband. This tactic not only imbues their interaction with a certain sexual tension, it suggests that the hero himself may intend to woo her. In this way, the scene brings to the fore the institution of marriage and precisely what it can mean to the older hero and young princess. In their portrayals of Odysseus' persuasive self-control and Nausikaa's assessment of and reaction to it, Chapman cultivates the mutually beneficial characteristics of the hero and the princess while Pope focuses on Odysseus' wily shrewdness. Pope's Odysseus is self-serving and does not seem to take Nausikaa's individual nature into consideration, and Chapman's is considerably more attuned to the temperament of her character.

According to Chapman, Odysseus' supplication is tender and laudatory, almost panegyric. At this point, he is "put to his wisdom" (l. 208) and realizes that by coming too close he might "incense her maiden modestie" (l. 218). This clearly suggests that as a young woman she is, by definition, reticent. The word "incense" is quite evocative here because it endows her diffidence with a fierceness and strength. In a sense, this word refers figuratively to the incitement of ardent passion, which subtly reminds us of the underlying tensions that dictate the actions of a mature older man and a young virgin. While Nausikaa relies on her natural tendencies to guide her actions, Odysseus, who is judicious and more experienced, thinks carefully about the way he should act at this moment. As a result, he decides to "give with soft words his desires" (l. 217) in "faire and fil'd speech" (l. 219). The rules governing this particular contact are based primarily

on Nausikaa's age and on where this situates her on the marital spectrum. (Later, this becomes especially noticeable by contrast when he unabashedly throws his arms around the queen in supplication upon his arrival at the palace.) Nausikaa, unlike her mother, is virginal and socially vulnerable, so he realizes he must proceed with caution.

In order to address Nausikaa without frightening her away, Odysseus praises her future value to her potential husband. Chapman's Odysseus brings the formal institution of marriage to the forefront as a "sweet" and "good agreement" (278-9) to which Nausikaa should look forward. He states that the man who is given the opportunity to "engage/your bright necke in the yoke of mariage" (235-6) is the luckiest of all. "Yoke," here, suggests a burden being placed on her, perhaps even implying capture (OED 1b). A "yoke" is also a strong bond, however, and the word has even come to mean "pair" (OED 5a). This must be closer to the sense primarily intended by Chapman, especially given Odysseus' later proclamation about marriage when says that there is nothing better than the "firme consent/of man and wife in household government" (279-80). As presented in this moment, it clearly creates a desirable situation with defined rules and goals to be reached by the pair together. Odysseus' praise credits Nausikaa with a certain power within this union, especially when he says that she will "decke [her husbands'] house with [her] commanding merit" (237). Because of the long Western history of social subjugation of women, we tend to think of women in this ancient context as subordinate to their male counterparts, but Odysseus' speech to Nausikaa belies that idea. There is a lot at stake when using a dichotomous word like "yoke," and Chapman is attempting to re-characterize the nature of a marriage as an advantageous and productive state of existence. It appears that men and women have their spheres of influence and work

together happily within them. This is a powerful situation because, “It joyes their wishers well, their enemies wounds/But to themselves the speciall good redounds” (280-1).

Still, Odysseus is playing a very dangerous game. He is a handsome, intelligent man who later reveals himself to be a war hero and king. He could be a good match for Nausikaa, and she is clearly taken in by this prospect. The danger lies in the precariousness of the situation. Either he does not ultimately stay with her on Phaiákia and risks breaking the heart of the princess who could facilitate his voyage home, or he might recognize the wealth and comfort she can offer him at this vulnerable moment in his life and decide to remain with her. If he is seduced by her youthful beauty and the untroubled existence that characterizes Phaiákia, he will abandon his family and people on Ithaka. Similarly, if Odysseus does not stay with Nausikaa after this subtle suggestion of a relationship, he could anger her and her father, thereby jeopardizing his ability to depart for Ithaka.

Both of these are problematic because of the threat they pose to his ability to return to Ithaka, which is of vital importance if order is to be restored there. His wife and son are continuously terrorized by the suitors vying for the kingship, and his people suffer from the lack of a strong leader. Furthermore, his patron Athena has intentionally set into motion a series of events to allow him to properly and gloriously re-establish his kingship. Not only is there a great deal at stake for the social order, but also for Odysseus' identity. First of all, he is entirely identified by his life back on Ithaka. Perhaps more importantly, though, no one save the gods knows he has landed here, and settling in the idyllic land of Phaiákia would send him quietly into obscurity. Furthermore, he is characterized as a force in the human realm by deeply affecting most

of those with whom he comes into contact, so fading away in this manner would extinguish his identity.

As of this moment, it is unclear whether the hero plans to marry the princess, but the ideas of marriage itself are crucial to the development of this scene and how this moment plays out. Marriage must be desirable if Odysseus utilizes it to persuade Nausikaa to help him, but its implications to Odysseus are quite different than that which is understood by Nausikaa. His hesitance about pursuing such a lasting relationship with the princess becomes clear at this moment, as it would mean giving up his life on Ithaka. Furthermore, a union would necessitate the abandonment of Athena's plan. Nausikaa and Phaiákia do not offer him enough to persuade him to give up this hope. In order to appropriately affect Nausikaa, however, he must not overtly reveal his uncertainty: he must delicately avoid establishing any concrete indication of their future. Nausikaa is at the point in her life where she is just starting to try to establish a home and a family, so this suggestion is naturally tempting to her.

An essential issue brought forth by these passages, regardless of which translation we consult, is the tension that necessitates such tact on the part of Odysseus. Clearly, Nausikaa's first impression of the hero is that he is a frightening creature coming toward her from the sea. Furthermore, it would be remiss to ignore the social issues driving the maidens' actions when they flee and Nausikaa's requirement of Athena's help to remain. Chapman writes, "...Horrid was/His rough appearance to them" (197-8), while he also states that when Odysseus is driven toward them, he is "Urged on by want" (p. 115). This is closely related to the question that may be on the young maidens' minds, that is, what exactly does he want? The truest source of their fear remains unclear, because it could be

the result of his maleness or his terrifying appearance. There is a moment in Lattimore's translation that suggests still another reason besides these that he poses a threat. He is finally "ready to face young girls with well-ordered/hair, naked though he was" (135). This description juxtaposes maidens' civilized sophistication with Odysseus' savage appearance, which is a threat to their way of life. Indeed, his emergence on Phaiákia and the king's decision to help him return home ultimately results in Poseidon's wrath. After this, the Phaiákians disappear from the mortal world forever.

Aside from these broader cultural implications, Odysseus also interrupts their feminine world of childish play. The maidens no longer indulge in this unrestricted amusement, and there is a strong sense that in this circumstance Nausikaa separates herself from this world, at least for a moment, when she takes interest in Odysseus. This enhances the impression that she is a maturing young woman who would be intrigued by a union with such an accomplished and powerful hero. Clearly, the nature of his character is important to her, and the way in which she perceives him is embodied in Homer's portrayal of him as a lion struggling against the elements. Odysseus interrupts the maidens because he desperately needs help, but this desperation can be dangerous. His internal struggle for control at this crucial moment is illustrated by the physical and emotional state of the lion.

Chapman's description of the lion highlights the pathos of this weather-beaten creature and emphasizes the strength he must possess to continue his hunt in spite of adversity. The imagery is violent, describing him as "Embrawd/with drops of trees and weather-beaten hewd" (ll. 185-6). The word "Embrawd" strongly suggests that he is bloodstained (OED, 1a) and "hewd" that he has been struck with a sharp weapon (OED,

1a). Yet he is “bold of his strength” (l. 187) in his eyes “a burning furnace glows, all bent to prey/His belly charging him” (ll. 188-9). This clearly positions Odysseus as a wounded creature compelled to face the external forces against him. His internal strength glows through his eyes, a furnace that warms and protects him while manifesting his power. This imagery has strong supernatural undertones, emphasizing his dreadfulness. He is “all bent to prey,” completely focused on hunting, definitely dangerous.

This particular selection ends with a description of the struggle between the man and beast inside Odysseus: “he must part/Stakes with the Heards-man in his beasts’ attempt/Even where from rape their strengths are most exempt” (ll.189-95). At this point, Odysseus must rely on his primal instincts in order to survive because they best serve him to acquire what he needs. This could lead to a complete loss of control, however, to the point where he pillages “home-fields of the countrie’s breed...and force[s] forth his accesse” (ll. 194-5). Although “rape” here does not technically mean a forced sexual act, this sense of the word is suggested and serves to remind us of his current situation. He is a lost, desperate man approaching a large group of young maidens. We know that he will not attack them in this way, but they do not, and it is most likely a common fear among them. Indeed, this is the source of Nausikaa’s initial fear.

The way in which she handles this fear indicates a great deal about the princess’s personality. Despite her limited action in this scene, Nausikaa’s natural strengths and attributes come to the fore as Chapman shows her to be a resourceful girl who is able to handle this situation with poise. In fact, at this moment the princess is empowered with her own specific identity when Chapman refers to her by her first name. This is unique among the translations, which most often call her “the maiden.” Athena intervenes by

putting “a boldnesse in her brest/And in her faire lims tender fear comprest” (204-5). It seems as though Athena is forced to take control, not only to give Nausikaa courage, but also to repress her mounting fear. It is a twofold intervention by Athena that evokes the response Odysseus needs and represses Nausikaa’s natural tendencies. The word “tender”, however, mitigates the idea that Nausikaa would have fled with the others if Athena had not involved herself, because it diminishes the sense that she would have been overcome by horror. The end of this passage suggests even more about the princess’ personality, in that she is “resolv’d to know” who this man is and why he landed on her island. Unlike Odysseus, whose actions are premeditated, Nausikaa relies on her natural inclinations to direct her actions. So, although Athena helps her by giving her courage, Chapman’s rendition of the passage subtly indicates that Nausikaa is already brave and curious, and appears to be quite astute as well. Athena functions in a complementary capacity here, rather than as a driving force of Nausikaa’s momentary pause.

Pope’s Nausikaa is presented with a significantly more dangerous situation. The actions of Pope’s lion, while essentially the same, show him to be stronger and more aggressive than Chapman’s. He is “Beat by rude blasts, and wet with wintry showers,” yet he emerges “terrific from the mountain’s brow” (p. 115), rather robust in his insouciance. Furthermore, Pope’s characterization of the eyes describes them as a distinctly demonizing feature that is meant to evoke fear: “With living flames his rolling eye balls glow” (p. 115). He is not just aware of his abilities, but “with conscious strength elate,” he is exultant and proud. He moves “to seize his prey/(The steer or stag;) or.../Spring o’er the fence and dissipates the fold” (p. 115). In contrast to Chapman,

Pope does not emphasize the risk involved, but the intensity of the hunger that makes the lion brave and still powerful despite this suffering.

This more aggressive depiction emphasizes the tension of the potential pain and suffering that Odysseus stands to inflict on Nausikaa at this moment. In depicting the metaphorical lion in this way, Pope highlights the prospect that Nausikaa will fall victim to Odysseus' cunning because of his desperation. Pope assertively aims to emphasize the calculating nature of Odysseus' character. Rather than sensitively approaching the situation in deference to Nausikaa's innocence, Odysseus' motivation is wholly focused on winning her over. His actions are checked by "dubious thought" (p. 115), casting suspicion on his motives. He is "fearful to offend," so finally, "at awful distance he accosts the maid" (p. 115). The language here is aggressive and conniving, creating a sense of attack despite Odysseus' calculated reticence and physical space between them. Juxtaposing these concepts creates a palpable tension between the two characters that highlights Odysseus' attempt to maneuver this young maiden and manipulate the situation.

The friction created here runs deeper than simple legerdemain, though. As the speech takes on undertones suggestive of marriage, it increasingly sidesteps any actual commitment by emphasizing Nausikaa's chastity and Odysseus' personal bad fortune.

But blest o'er all, the youth with heavenly charms,
Who clasps the bright perfection in his arms!
Never, I never view'd till this blast hour
Such finish'd grace! I gaze, and I adore...
Crown the chaste wishes of thy virtuous soul...
The gods, when they supremely bless, bestow
Firm union on their favourites below...(p.115-6)

The relationship that is suggested is clear, yet Odysseus' position in it is ambiguous. He praises her chastity and virtue, so he is not suggesting any extramarital liaison. In fact, while Chapman's speech praises Nausikaa's beauty and perfection in general terms, here Odysseus goes on to exclaim, "I gaze, and I adore!" (p. 115). Although his words do suggest wedlock, he does not directly attach himself to it. He places himself among the group of her hypothetical suitors in order to gain her favor, yet makes a point of suggesting his disfavor among the gods by recounting his miserable wanderings. This situates him apart from the classification of those who may be chosen for her husband. In this way, he obscures his viability as a husband in order to maintain maneuverability and keep his options open.

Pope also depicts marriage as rather less beneficial than Chapman suggests. While Chapman describes marriage as an empowering association, one for which Nausikaa is prepared and to which she is entitled, Pope suggests that it is a divinely driven affiliation that she will have earned through her physical attributes. Pope's translation is much less empowering to Nausikaa, and even to her potential husband. In fact, his Odysseus completely dismisses the power given a married couple by Chapman, saying only that their enemy "with envy grieves, with inly-pining hate" (p. 116). This actually characterizes the adversary more than it does the couple. In fact, a solid union is attributed to the grace of the gods: they "bestow/Firm union on their favourites below" (p. 116). Pope removes most of the control from Nausikaa and places it far outside the realm of her command. Combined with the focus on her beauty as her primary attribute, Pope's translation seems to put little confidence in Nausikaa's innate abilities. The gods will bless her with marriage because she is beautiful. This also seems to be another

attempt by Odysseus at mitigating his suggestion that *he* could be that husband. The hero begins by implying that he is in awe of her in order to gain her favor, yet does not want her to take the suggestion too much to heart, so backpedals a bit and places fate in the hands of the gods. In stark contrast with Chapman's caring and thoughtful Odysseus, Pope's is rather vapidly charming.

In some ways, Pope's version is rather anticlimactic. The mounting tension caused by his mountain lion's overt aggression does not result in an unrestrained attack. In this moment, we feel his hunger and his need, as well as the sense of danger he represents. Yet this danger is not of that nature we might assume by the reference to his potential to revert to animalistic tendencies. He ultimately behaves with self-control and caution. This poses a different threat to the young princess because it endangers her emotionally. Odysseus' tactic, while physically restrained and well thought-through, is rather uninhibited in its selfishness. He is reckless with Nausikaa's feelings and presents himself fairly callously. In contrast with Chapman's Nausikaa, who appears to be well-prepared to handle a gentler, more thoughtful Odysseus, Pope's princess seems to be ill-equipped to deal with a more callous hero.

When Athena intervenes to still Nausikaa's inclination to flee, Pope places all of the power with the goddess and diminishes any sense of Nausikaa's autonomous capabilities: "All (the virgins fly) but the nymph; the nymph stood fix'd alone/By Pallas arm'd with boldness not her own" (p. 115). This passage distinguishes Nausikaa as "the nymph," implying that she is the only one among a covey of virgins. That is not to say that she is not a virgin, as the strict meaning of "nymph" is "Any of a class of semi-divine spirits, imagined as taking the form of a maiden inhabiting the sea, rivers, mountains,

woods, trees, etc” (OED 1). It can also have strong sexual undertones (OED 2a), however, thereby immediately separating her from the other maidens. Indeed, it fails to classify her in such clear terms as “virgin”, subtly obscuring the nature and extent of her purity. Furthermore, her courage is clearly stated as “not her own,” and she is not inclined to learn about Odysseus or ascertain his origins. She simply waits for him to take the initiative in the commencement of their communication.

In translating this particular passage, both Pope and Chapman settled on the particularly dynamic verb “to bend”, which emphasizes many of the issues embodied in the text. As Odysseus works his way toward the playful group of girls, Pope states that he “bends his way” toward the girls, while Chapman translates that he is “all bent to prey.” Although they do not necessarily translate the same word or phrase, the choice of this particular term by both translators emphasizes something important about the scene. In Pope’s sense, it is a physical description of the lion’s stealthy movements, changing directions so as not to be detected, while in Chapman’s it indicates that the lion’s state of mind is entirely fixated on the object of pursuit. This term is closely related to the character of Odysseus because it gets at his innate cunning and ability to “bend” his own personality and the will of others to achieve his ends

“To bend” has far-reaching implications based on the broader context of this passage as well. It highlights the undertones that drive Odysseus’ interaction with Nausikaa. He must be circumspect and delicate in his approach to seeking her aid, an issue he carefully addresses. Two senses of the word “bend” are important here. The first is related to his ability to “bend” the will of another, or influence them in a particular direction, and the other is associated with his skill at changing himself. In order to aptly

negotiate this situation with Nausikaa, he must modify *himself* to appropriately persuade *her*. The varying principles conveyed in each translation dictate the character of the remainder of their interaction. This implicit difference distinctively emerges in the way both translators interpret that which is “bent” during Odysseus’ entreaty. According to Chapman, after careful deliberation Odysseus knows that he needs to remain aloof yet gracious in order to elicit a positive reaction. In contrast, Pope focuses more on Odysseus’ strategy than Nausikaa’s personality, indicating his ability to adapt himself to various situations and people.

Furthermore, “bend” has several connotations that emphasize important issues driving the passage. First of all, it connotes a marriage bond (OED 1c) as a spiritual constraint, which is a driving force and characterizing feature of their developing rapport. While this type of bond attracts her because it promotes stability and, according to Chapman, creates an empowering situation, it also repels Odysseus because of his own bond with his wife. He must return home to reclaim his wife from the suitors in order to retake his position as king on Ithaka, which is one of his primary goals at this time. Furthermore, “to bend” commonly describes the operation of a bow (OED, 2a), a weapon with which he is closely identified. It will literally define him when he publicly reveals his identity at a key moment after his return to Ithaka. Furthermore, in Book XXI it is the weapon that he uses to take back his kingship when he brutally slaughters all of the suitors in the hall. This particular word, then, is directly linked to the completion of his supreme goal, which is the return of order on Ithaka.

The more immediate use of the word “bend”, which connotes Odysseus’ cunning and rhetoric as he deals with Nausikaa and attempts to secure her favor and help, is

crucial to the function of this passage in the work as a whole. There is a definite sense of his transition from withdrawn reclusion back into society through this interaction, and not simply because the princess agrees to help him. The employment of his cunning, skill and rhetoric appears to be therapeutic and invigorating for him. Indeed, directly after, he washes the grime from his body and appears polished and civilized once again. At this point, it is important to note that Athena's intervention on the side of the hero extends only to Nausikaa's actions. She leaves the persuasion and response entirely up to Odysseus and Nausikaa, allowing him to exercise his ability. The employment of his skill is one manifestation of his reintegration back into society after having been so long removed from it both at war and on Kalypso's island. When Nausikaa brings him to the city, he is bathed, fed, and clothed. Phaiákia is almost ultra-civilized, occupying a place above humanity but below the divine, so it is but a stop along his way toward reintroducing justice and order on Ithaka. His rhetorical persuasion of Nausikaa seems to be a practice that re-cultivates the hero and prepares him to return home.

The contrast of these two translations offers an important commentary on the original Greek work, as well as the Western tradition through which it has been interpreted. The character of Odysseus is rounded out, not just by one translation, but through many interpretations, which both reflect and develop the cultural paradigm. Odysseus plays the eponymous role of someone who causes and feels great pain, but it is Chapman's stress on his sensitivity and Pope's emphasis on his cunning that detail the nature of this role. While Pope's Odysseus is decidedly more streamlined and consistent, without Pope's translation, the depth and complexity of Chapman's hero would not be so readily recognized and the richness of Homer's work might be obscured. These two

translations work in tandem to give us a more ample idea of the issues driving not only the story, but our social structure as well.

The structure of the story and the storyteller's intuition leave room for varying understandings of concepts such as marriage and interpersonal relationships, which is clearly capitalized upon by both Chapman and Pope. When we consider the long cultural history of obscuring the potency of women as dynamic influences, it is surprising to observe Chapman's presentation of marriage as an empowering union and Nausikaa as an independent, charismatic woman. Not only does she hesitate when all of her peers fly, but Athena needs only allow her to tap into her natural courage to make her stay. This is a strong contrast to Pope, who tends to emphasize many of the misogynistic reflexes permeating our interpretive eye. Pope's Odysseus interacts with Nausikaa in a way that suggests that she embodies what we might expect from a young girl: naiveté and gullibility. In a way, this renders her just another person that Odysseus uses to reach his particular ends. This does not change the action of the plot, however, which situates Nausikaa as a crucial force maneuvering Odysseus home. She not only poses a temptation; she presents him with a situation that challenges his cunning and helps to reintegrate him into the realm of the mortals.

~ *Kalypso* ~

As we have just seen, Nausikaa contributes significantly to Odysseus' return to Ithaka despite the fact that they are strangers and their encounter brief. The princess exhibits a depth of awareness that belies her youth and gives her the tools to help the hero at his lowest point. First, she alone musters great courage to speak to the strange man, then navigates the dangerous waters of social convention to ascertain his needs and deeper, hidden desire to return to Ithaka. She even puts aside her own personal wishes and uses her filial influence to elicit the help of her father the king in granting our hero a safe return. Despite her youth and unspoken desire for Odysseus, she moves him finally from the magnificent but sequestered world of the Phaiákians back to his home in mortal realm on Ithaka.

In contrast to Nausikaa's attentive catering to the hero's needs, the sea-nymph Kalypso's contribution to his final return is unintentional, indeed, unwilling. Traditionally, Kalypso has been interpreted as a selfish and harmful temptress who keeps Odysseus on her beautiful island in an existence analogous with death, a helpless and demoralized mortal to use for her own sexual satisfaction¹. Homer suggests that the hero's stay on Ogygia, however, is crucial for his recovery from the ordeals in Troy and on the sea. It gives him a place and the time to rediscover his own desires and power, as well as to reconnect with his own humanity. The various translations seek to elucidate the nature of such a relationship between a human and a goddess, and how the developing tension between the divine and human spurs Odysseus' ultimate departure from Ogygia

¹ For further reading, see Gregory Crane's *Calypso: Backgrounds and Conventions of the Odyssey*, pp.16-21

when Kalypso offers him immortality. She finally pushes him to decide what he really wants, and he makes a staggering realization that reignites his sense of identity and prompts him to realize who he ultimately wants to be.

Before Odysseus meets Nausikaa on Phaiákia after Poseidon's wrathful storm, the hero spends three years at sea and seven on Ogýgia, the Isle of Kalypso. After the war at Troy, the hero does not sail straight to Ithaka, but makes many stops along the way. He detours to sack the island of Ismarus, to make demands of the Kyklops Polyphemos and to confront the monstrous Laestrygonians. He seems to still be in combat mode, especially when he refuses to listen to the cries of his shipmates not to rile the Kyklops: "I would not heed them in my glorying spirit" (Fitzgerald IX.546). It is his "glorying spirit" that ultimately gets the better of him, as these adventures slowly kill off his crew until he challenges Skylla and Kharibdis and loses the last of his ships. After this, he seems to give up, diving deeply into depression and weariness on Kalypso's isle.

Jonathan Shay, author of *Odysseus in America: Combat Trauma and the Trials of Homecoming*, has recently invited an alternative to the traditional interpretation of Kalypso as the source of danger to Odysseus. According to Shay, it is actually Odysseus' state of mind that poses his greatest danger because, as a war veteran, he is especially prone to becoming a "sex slave" and succumbing to the "sex-food-and-wine cure to restore his haggard spirits." This period on Ogýgia is one of perilous lethargy, from which the hero might never return. Indeed, a similar situation with Khirke "did not lose its charm in one year, and his shipmates had to get him moving. But seven years cooped up alone with a nymphomaniac?" (p. 113), this could do some real damage. Shay reports that many of his patients resorted to sex after their experiences in Vietnam, but "For

them, it did not provide long-term healing” (p. 114). Herein lies the danger of Kalypso’s character: she does not supply a solution to Odysseus’ combat trauma, only a manner by which to delay his own healing. Furthermore, these seven years as Kalypso’s consort provide Odysseus with a taste of the immortal life: he does not need to work, think or care much about his own existence in order to survive. In a very real sense, he has nothing to live for on Ogýgia and is losing sight of that which provides him purpose back on Ithaka.

Our first real encounter with the hero is delayed until Book V after Athena bemoans the hero’s forgotten state upon Ogýgia. For seven years he has dwelled with Kalypso, his existence wholly unproductive and relatively inactive, except for the pair’s nightly rendezvous, in which he does not seem to be all that interested anyway. Furthermore, back on Ithaka, the suitors have hatched a plan to kill his son Telémakhos. Athena fears for the young man’s safety and rather aggressively asserts that the gods must help him. Surprised by her irritation, Zeus reminds Athena that she planned this so the hero could return home gloriously to bring the suitors to justice. Still, he acquiesces to his favorite child’s demands and mandates that Odysseus leave Ogýgia. To expedite Odysseus’ departure, Zeus sends Hermês to relay the decree of the gods to Kalypso, of which the sea nymph is initially resentful. She angrily replies that gods are hypocritically envious when goddesses have relationships with mortal men. She ultimately sees the futility of protesting, however, and goes in search of the hero to tell him the news.

When Kalypso finds Odysseus sobbing on the beach and tells him it is time for his departure, he is wary of her motivation for allowing him to leave. Although her declaration is genuine, by offering him immortality she tries one last time to convince

him to stay. He rejects her offer, preferring to return to his family and people on Ithaka. That night, they sleep together one last time and in the morning she gives him the tools to build a raft. On the fourth day, she gives him food and wine, conjures a soft breeze, and sends him on his way. After he leaves Kalypso's island, Odysseus has only a few more stops before he finally makes it home, but it is precisely the lethargy of this moment preceding his departure that gives us insight into the power structure in his relationship with the nymph.

This sequence of events leading to Odysseus' departure exposes an important issue regarding his sojourn with Kalypso: why does Odysseus stay and weep on the Ogygia for seven years if, when he does decide to leave, it turns out to be so easy to do? According to Athena, and even Odysseus at times, Kalypso has him trapped. Kalypso, however, maintains that she simply is unable to send him on his way. She emphasizes that Odysseus' sojourn is the result of circumstance, unrelated to anyone's particular personal needs. She insists that she has neither the resources nor the manpower to help Odysseus in this situation, but she does intimate that she will guide him as honestly as she can when he does decide to leave. The unobstructed nature of his departure at this key moment would seem to belie that either goddess had much of an influence in the matter. Indeed, *Odysseus* builds his vessel using some tools provided by the nymph, but mainly relying on his own physical strength and his extensive nautical knowledge. It appears, then, that she is not hiding him to keep him with her, and he is certainly not incapable of leaving.

The lethargy of this circumstance is variously depicted by the different translations, showing the interpretive scope of this moment as a window into the nature

of Kalypso's relationship to the hero. The poet leaves enough interpretive room in his work for the translators to attempt to provide a psychological plausibility for his extended stay on Ogygia. Most of the translations maintain the ambiguity, but logically explain the sudden departure by bringing out Odysseus' boredom with the nymph *and* Kalypso's agency in allowing the hero to leave. All but one are similar to Fitzgerald, who writes that "long ago the nymph had ceased to please [Odysseus]" (161) and that Kalypso has "pondered it/and shall help [him] go" (170). In approaching the situation this way, these translators show that both Odysseus and Kalypso are ready for his departure and the nudge from Zeus merely catalyzes the change.

Yet Chapman's interpretation and elaboration places all of the power with the goddess, subordinating the autonomy of the hero to the nymph. She finds Odysseus:

...Drownd in discontent;
His eyes kept never drie he did so mourn,
And waste his deare age for his wisht returne –
Which still without the Cave he usde to do,
Because he could not please the Goddesse so...
'Unhappie man, no more discomforte take
For my constraint of thee, nor waste thine age.
I now will passing freely disengage
Thy irksome stay here...' (201-14)

We clearly see the level of his sorrow: he cries every day on the beach, as in every other translation. Yet here, this sadness is linked to *his* inability to please *her* rather than his loss of interest, as is suggested by the others. It makes the hero seem rather pathetic and completely at the mercy of the goddess. She even acknowledges that he finds his stay "irksome" and upsetting *because* of her "constraint," so she has decided to allow him to leave. Chapman is working within the literary tradition that interprets feminine sexuality as dangerous. In the more modern translations that specifically downplay

Kalypso's role in the hero's confinement, the sea nymph's concealment of Odysseus takes on a dynamic significance because it reinforces the question regarding the length of his stay and what benefit he may derive from it.

As much as Odysseus may perceive a certain advantage to remaining on Kalypso's isle, Athena's rather surprising fear regarding the hero's lassitude there shows the danger in this circumstance. Pope's Athena states that her concern stems from "The nymph's seducements, and the magic bower" (p. 95). The word "bower" in this sentence gestures toward the idealized nature of Kalypso's island by emphasizing its etherealness (OED 1b), and suggests its verb form, meaning to enclose and hide something. Her name, after all, means "she who hides." There seems to be innate danger in the closed-off nature of this island, especially because its obscurity completely removes Odysseus from the real world. Furthermore, in using the word "bower", Pope is working with a literary tradition that sometimes emphasizes the danger of an enclosure that solely offers sensual stimulation. Most spectacularly, Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, Book II, Canto XII portrays the "Bower of Bliss", a place of carnal peril. The Bower is a place of sexual temptation where Acrasia seduces knights into forgetting their heroic deeds and noble quests. Milton reshapes such a conceptualization with a sanctified bower in his epic poem *Paradise Lost*. In book IV he calls the purified location created by God for Adam and Eve's "delightful use" (l. 692), "their blissful bow'r" (l. 690). In fact, it is with "adoration pure/Which God likes best into their inmost bower/Handed [Adam and Eve] went" (ll. 738-9). In this bower, the sexual relationship is mutually and joyfully entered and depicted as beautifully pure. Granted, it is here that Satan first tempts Eve by whispering in her ear as she sleeps, laying the groundwork for the later tasting of the fruit

and ultimate expulsion from Paradise. Milton and Spenser present opposing views of sex in their respective bowers, which help expand the literary tradition within which all the translators are working. “Bower” has a double valence, and therefore has the potential to be interpreted either way, which could get at an open-ended facet of Homer’s story.

Whereas Odysseus’ relationship with Kalypso is dangerous in that it could too long delay his departure, it can be productive if it offers him some respite from his internal tortures.

Although traditional analysis is that the nymph holds him there as a sexual object against his will, perhaps it his own desire to remain on Ogygia, and there may just be a productive aspect of his stay.

So, what does the nymph offer Odysseus that leads him to languish on her island for seven years? Most of the translations express that Kalypso both “loved” and “cherished” Odysseus. Chapman, however, says that she “lov’d [and] nourish’t” (180) the hero, which is echoed in Cook’s account that she “loved him and nourished him” (135). The word “nourish”, utilized by both an early and modern translator, is intriguing in its subversion of the overt lassitude of Odysseus’ time on Ogygia. To nourish something entails providing nurturing sustenance for it to properly develop. There seems to be something related to this idleness that is productive for Odysseus. In his “Ode on Indolence”, John Keats puts forth the idea that a state of apparent inactivity has the capacity to be powerfully creative. Both the speaker of Keats’ poem and the hero of Homer’s experience a period where they exist outside of the real world; the lines of reality become blurred and they recede into themselves. But neither can completely escape as the phantoms in the Ode ultimately impact the poet and Odysseus’ desire to

return to Ithaka spurs him home. Chapman, Cook, and Keats are working within the same literary tradition, developing the meaning of universally human experiences.

Aside from the purely sensual lifestyle that she represents, Kalypso also offers Odysseus a refuge after years of war and struggle. Returning home after a long period of constant battle and death is an undoubtedly difficult transition, but Odysseus is also faced with an ailing kingdom that he must take back from the suitors who have overrun his home. The fact that the hero does not fully enter the narrative until the fifth book, and when he does so it is under such languorous circumstances, shows that this time of rest is intentional, indeed necessary. Although the time on Ogygia seems mainly unproductive and lethargic, it is actually a crucial period during which Odysseus must recuperate in both mind and body. His inactivity finally comes to a head when Kalypso announces his impending departure and offers him a choice.

Kalypso's role in this situation is indeed more complicated than that of warden or nurturer, in that her actions upon her release of Odysseus force him to re-evaluate himself and the state of his human existence. The various translators' interpretations and presentations of the pair elucidate the mismatched nature of a relationship between a goddess and a mortal. When presenting Kalypso's feelings about sending Odysseus on his way, Pope has her declare, "But never, never shall Calypso send/To toils like these her husband and her friend" (p. 99). This raises two issues. The first lies in her rhetorical connection between the divine life that Odysseus is leading now and the mortal one into which he is heading. Kalypso refuses to send him to "toil", a menial term closely associated with the human existence. It reminds us that he has been living a purely indulgent life with Kalypso, one that closely resembles that of a god. In this situation,

Odysseus has nothing to live for, nothing to work for, indeed nothing worth dying for. Part of his identity revolves around his willingness to take risks and reach goals, and the wearisome life offered by Ogýgia lacks both of these.

Kalypso's declaration to Hermês also highlights the ambiguity of her relationship with the hero because she calls Odysseus her husband, yet there has been no acknowledgement of such a joining up to this point. Is it even possible for a human to marry a goddess? She tells Hermês just before this moment that she has considered making Odysseus immortal so that he can stay with her forever. According to Pope, she "promised (vainly promised) to bestow/Immortal life exempt from age and woe" (p.99). "Vain" here operates on several levels. In one sense, it suggests that she promises this only to help herself. It also connotes that the promise is empty as it cannot come to fruition (OED, I1). In still another sense, though, it suggests that she values her immortal existence as greater than any other state of being.

Odysseus, however, explicitly appears to disagree with the assertion that immortality is superior when he expresses his agreement with the decree that it is time for him to leave. Kalypso says, "If you could see it all, before you go -/all the adversity you face at sea -/ you would stay here, and guard this house, and be immortal" (Fitzgerald *ll.* 215 – 8). It seems a matter of pride; she has given him a taste of the purely sensual existence that comes with immortality, and he is rejecting it. So, in a backhanded way, she is overtly offering to him that which she previously told Hermês she had planned to offer: godhood. Her offer is a strange one, considering that it can never come to fruition as even Zeus is bound by fate. The translators' handling of this conundrum teases out the impact of immortality on Odysseus because it highlights something that Kalypso does not

yet understand. Not only is there an inherent difficulty in joining a mortal and a goddess, but immortality is in direct conflict with Odysseus' identity. Kalypso's difficulty in understanding Odysseus' refusal is a point of disparity among the translations, which variously depict her internal struggle to highlight, not just the differences between the human and divine, but the way in which the lines have been blurred during his sojourn on her island.

Pope presents the friction between the immortal and human in his imagery. In the most visual description of their dissimilarity, Kalypso eats a 'divine, Ambrosial banquet' after setting before Odysseus all food "Such as the mortal life of man sustains" (p.101). Although they eat together at one table, two entirely separate meals must be prepared. A similar circumstance arises in *Paradise Lost* when Adam and Eve share a meal with Raphael, and Adam observes "Unsavory food perhaps/To spiritual natures" (V.401-2). Although in this situation, Raphael is able to dine with the couple, he is only feeding his "lower faculty" (410). Given that Pope has already evoked the voice of Milton with his use of the word "bower", it comes as no surprise that he does so again when elucidating the relationship between Kalypso and Odysseus, goddess and mortal. Although there are similarities between these two realms of existence, even the development of a friendly rapport, friction inevitably arises when these two realms meet.

The other translators deal most effectively with the tension between the divine and human through Kalypso's veritable interrogation of Odysseus about his rejection of immortality. When Odysseus expresses his preference for Penélopê, Pope's Kalypso directly asks him, "Am I inferior to a mortal dame?" (p.101). Fitzgerald has her demand, "Can I be less desirable than she is?/Less interesting? Less beautiful?" (221-2). This rapid

succession of questions suggests that she is anxious, even frantic, in her desire for an answer. She seems insecure in asking for Odysseus' validation of a reality she already knows to be true. In contrast, Chapman's Kalypso does not ask Odysseus for an answer, she merely states, "...it be no boast for me to say/In forme and mind I match her every way" (278-9). By attributing insecurity to the goddess, Pope and Fitzgerald not only shade her with human qualities, they suggest a certain amount of clinginess with which Odysseus would have to deal for eternity. This is a steep contrast to the woman he truly loves and who deeply loves him in return. Penélopê waits for him and loves him through an absence of almost twenty years, and he chooses to be with the one who needs his love. Kalypso does not *need* him with her, but for a brief moment, it seems as though she artificially assumes this necessity.

The question is, then, why is she so concerned with keeping Odysseus on her island with her, when ultimately she lets him leave so easily? Conceivably, the answer is less related to him than her. The gods have a long history of being fascinated with mortal life. During the Trojan War, they all took sides and intervened as necessary. They often have love affairs with humans; and at the beginning of Book V, they are all assembled to hear Athena's appeal to help Odysseus. They do not fully understand mortality and clearly want to learn more about it. When Athena tells Zeus that she wants Odysseus to leave, the King of the gods does not understand why his daughter is so anxious about it, especially because she knows the future, she designed it. There is a very real sense that their immortality obviates the need to pay attention to the temporal changes on earth, as if Athena suddenly remembers Odysseus' mortality which forces the gods to retake notice of his situation. The separation becomes clouded on Ogygia in Kalypso's attempt to tap

into Odysseus' humanity, and her pursuit of marriage could be one more effort to do this, since marriage is arguably a uniquely human custom. Yet, this curiosity cannot turn into much more than a passing fancy, as the humans have limited time to pursue their destinies and cannot get caught up in the whims of the gods.

The translators' attempt to provide psychological plausibility to Kalypso's feelings and the resulting presentations of this moment in the poem brings at least some clarity to the ambiguity of feeling between Odysseus and Kalypso when interpreting her diatribe in response to Hermês' news. Fitzgerald's Kalypso exclaims to Hermês, "You hate it when we choose to lie with men/immortal flesh by dear mortal side" (124-5). This imbues their relationship with a purely sexual tone. On the opposite end of the spectrum, Schomberg shows the gods' discontent to be because a goddess has chosen "Without disguise a mortal for her spouse" (143). Here, Kalypso openly declares that she has chosen Odysseus as a husband. Pope, too, suggests a marriage, or at least Kalypso's desire for one, in her declaration that she will not send Odysseus away. Kalypso refers to Odysseus as "her husband and her friend" (p. 99). These translators put forth two extremely different versions of the same relationship: one is a very informal, unstructured sexual affair, while the other suggests a formal joining agreed upon by both the nymph and her hero.

Butcher and Lang present a similar translation that suggests both types of relationship, having Kalypso say the gods are offended when goddesses "mate with mortal men" (p. 70). "To mate" is a complex term that embodies many, various meanings. One denotation of the action "to mate" conveys purely sexual reproduction while another suggests marriage. This word brings to light both concepts at stake in the

translation, and leaves unclear the one by which the gods are offended. The gods often take lovers and reproduce with them, so perhaps the offense is that it denies the sexual pleasure they are always seeking. Furthermore, the offense may lie in the lifelong companionship provided by a mate. The male gods do not seek this end during their conquests, whereas the poet brings up two unsuccessful instances of females attempting to do so within the first two-hundred lines or so of Book V. In fact, the opening lines reference Ios (Dawn) who, in order to marry her mortal lover, gave him immortality, but forgot eternal youth. As a result, he continues to age forever. This is not to say that goddesses never take lovers, there are definitely cases of this in the Greek mythological cycle, but they are far outdone by the gods in this activity. Although this might point out the differences in the sexual practices of males and females, it seems that it also offers poignant commentary on the gods' understanding of the nature of mortality and marriage.

The discrepancy between gods and mortals is central in Chapman's navigation of the bond between Kalypso and Odysseus. The carnal aspect of their relationship is fairly comprehensible, but it is the marriage that seems to be problematic. Chapman offers a glimpse at some possible resolution through a very strange juxtaposition of terms. He presents Kalypso's tirade at Hermês as,

...It afflicts your hearts
That any Goddess should (as you obtaine
The use of earthly Dames) enjoy the men
And most in open mariage. (157-60)

At first it seems that the gods want all the goddesses for themselves, as the female pursuit of mortal men troubles their "hearts". But the last line, "most in open mariage" presents us with a problem. It seems that the gods and goddesses both "enjoy" the mortals, but it is unique to the women to imbue the liaison with thoughts of marriage. The conceptual

permanence of such a situation appears to be the issue at hand. As with Ios and Tithonos, there is a natural disconnect between these two worlds that marriage cannot unite.

Chapman's *Kalypso* mitigates the concept of marriage by modifying it with the word "open", which appears to mean something like an informal joining, but the rules of this arrangement remain unclear. Odysseus stays until he is ready to leave. In recent usage, an "open relationship" denotes one in which those involved are not strictly committed to one another, yet this does not seem to be relevant here. Neither *Kalypso* nor Odysseus has left the island or had the opportunity to consort with or experience other partners, so defining the marriage as open appears unnecessary. It does seem, then, that the social mores of mortals are insufficient to explicate this particular "marriage", which is expressed by Chapman when he introduces it with the term "open". As opposed to its current connotation, there did not seem to be a social contract termed "open marriage" in Chapman's society. So the term seems to refer to the indefinite nature of this particular contract. If Odysseus were immortal, this marriage would go on forever, which appears to be impossible.

Bridging the human and divine through marriage is unnatural and impossible precisely because of the inherent differences in these two spheres of existence. Marriage for mortals is not an indefinite contract, as it usually calls for mutual fidelity and support "until death to us part". It is a comforting union based on the vulnerability that defines mortality. Marriage in the immortal sphere appears to be quite different: the males often, and unapologetically, take lovers. Zeus for example is famous for his liaisons, and as king of the gods, he is the model for all others to follow. Furthermore, one of the spheres of influence of his wife, Hera, is the family, yet she is unable to maintain one that would

be stable in mortal terms. Although she does often fly into jealous rages, Zeus does not amend his behavior and even cajoles her for being difficult. They know they have unlimited time with their current partners. Unlike the gods, Odysseus does not really have the time to waste on unfulfilling commitments, and after taking seven years to realize this he does whatever it takes to return home to his wife.

Kalypso's request for Odysseus' reasoning behind his decision brings the tangible tension between the human and the divine into focus and forces Odysseus to make a value judgment regarding whether or not *he* would like to be immortal. Furthermore, he must also compare his wife to the goddess and choose between them. Pope has Odysseus comment on this major difference between himself and the nymph by saying, "Against Ulysses shall thy anger rise?...Forgive the weakness of a human heart" (p.101). Odysseus is subordinating his own state of existence and the weaknesses it causes to the nymph's immortality. This appeal actually emphasizes Odysseus' strength, however, for he will face the upcoming toils and dangers to return home to his wife. There is something inherently powerful in the human condition, resulting from the desire to live and the knowledge that our time will run out at some point. From this power, Odysseus derives the strength to resist the temptation to despair. Seven years seems like more than enough time to revive his spirit, and part of the danger of Ogýgia is the possibility that Odysseus will succumb to his despondency. But the strength of Odysseus' spirit, that same spirit that drove him to brazenly face the Kyklops, is reawakened when faced with the loss of his humanity. Now his spirit has turned toward productive exploits, however, namely getting home and re-establishing justice on Ithaka. So it seems that Odysseus' recollection that he is *not* a god and his life on Ogýgia is mere fantasy inspires his

passion to return home and waste no more time with Kalypso. It is exactly this temporal limitation that makes his decision so poignant.

Indeed, Odysseus has a history of taking the proverbial hard road; it is in his nature. This is the man who wishes to fight the monster Skylla rather than avoid her and who orders his men to tie him to the mast so he can listen to the Sirens' song without being lured to his death. He is more than willing to risk the danger that Kalypso foresees to get home: Fitzgerald has him proclaim, "my tough heart can undergo [whatever is ahead]/ What hardship have I not long since endured/at sea, in battle! Let the trial come" (231-3). In fact, this pursuit of danger defines him as a character. Furthermore, he can clearly see what an eternity on Kalypso's island would be like, since after only seven years he has become extremely depressed. Perhaps as much as he desires to return home to his wife, he desires the experience and peril entailed in getting there. This kind of excitement can come only if there is potential for great loss. Odysseus also refuses Kalypso's offer of immortality, which seems to be the remedy to our greatest weakness as humans, as the avoidance of potential of death defines our most fundamental instincts.

After Odysseus reassesses his life, rather than continuing his avoidance, he asserts his autonomy by deciding to leave despite Kalypso's pleas for him to stay, he is clearly much happier. Indeed, directly after, "they retired, this pair, to the inner cave/to revel and rest softly, side by side" (235-6). He is no longer her unwilling partner, but an active participant. Prior to this moment, he is unhappy but also does not want to leave. Although this moment seems lethargic and unproductive, it is actually crucial to Odysseus' reassertion of his identity and his reinstatement to power on Ithaka. He takes the time he needs to heal. But when Kalypso prompts a decision from him, when he is

forced to make a decision, he is instantly awakened from his stupor. Fitzgerald alludes to this when Kalypso is making excuses to Hermês: “Surely I cannot ‘send’ him/I have no long-oared ships” (147-8). “Sending” him requires that she be in control of the situation, almost like a queen sending her explorer on an expedition. She cannot give him the boats and men because she cannot function in this capacity if he is to fulfill his destiny. He must do this of his own accord relying on his own resourcefulness. Although she unwittingly reawakens his resolution to return home, it is her action that breaks the cycle of daily weeping and nightly submission to sexual gratification. He suddenly realizes the danger of succumbing completely to despair on Kalypso’s isle. He has taken too long to heal, and remembers his preference for the human condition precisely because he knows his life will not last forever. Athena’s interruption into his weary and languid lifestyle on Ogýgia was enough to launch his reawakening, but it is Kalypso’s protective bower and innate curiosity about the human world that allows him to remember his mortal life and how important it is to him. He then leaves Ogýgia to rediscover his identity.

~ Athena ~

When we first actually meet Odysseus, he is weeping on Ogýgia's shore, where Kalypso has offered him respite during his journey home. His seven years with her consist primarily of weeping and detached sex. This period serves to give him the time he needs to recover from the trauma of war, yet the lethargy inherent in his experience threatens to entirely consume him. Finally, Kalypso is indirectly pressed by Athena to send him on his way to Ithaka, but it is her questioning of his desire to refuse an immortal life that fully prepares him to depart. After leaving Ogýgia and surviving Poseidon's storm with Athena's help, the hero finds himself on another woman's island. He is greeted by the princess Nausikaa who helps to send him on his ultimate journey home. The very last shore upon which he lands is his own, where he finds a disguised Athena waiting for him. Yet, this meeting of the hero and his patroness does not progress altogether smoothly. She has veiled the land around them, so when he wakes from the peaceful slumber he finally allows himself on the last leg of his journey, he does not even recognize his home. In fact, he curses the Phaiákians for breaking their vow to return him to Ithaka. He is disoriented and confused when the disguised Athena approaches and commences a conversation.

This is the first time since Troy that Athena greets Odysseus face to face, and the subtleties in the various translations of this moment bring to light the hero's need to re-establish direct contact with his patron goddess. Although he senses her physical absence from his life, she guides him invisibly, even when choosing to remain distant. Athena, who guarded him at Troy, chooses to remain aloof for most of his journey to Ithaka because she senses he needs to succeed independently. Then, she initiates his departure

from Ogýgia, protects him from harm on Phaiákia, and is the first to greet him as he prepares to commence the restoration of order on Ithaka. It is she who will lead him to glory over the suitors. Her guidance and divine aid has always brought him success on the battlefield, but now it is their personal rapport that will guide him. Unlike the goddess Kalypso, Athena brings out Odysseus' wit with playful sparring that gets him into the antagonistic spirit he will need not only to take back his home but his noble kingship. After he kills the suitors, he must then be capable of shifting from hardened soldier to wise king, loving husband, and judicious father.

When Athena disguised as a shepherd approaches Odysseus, he is friendly and kindly asks for help. Athena acts as though Odysseus is a great fool for not knowing the island of Ithaka, and despite his ecstatic joy to learn that he his home, he invents a fabulous story about who he is and why he has come. The goddess delights in his astute wiliness when he does not reveal himself to a stranger, and informs him of her true identity. They then discuss each other's cunning, their most illustrious shared attribute, and their shared plans now that Odysseus is home. Then, they work together to hide his treasure and the goddess assures her hero that she will be with him when he retakes the hall by slaughtering the suitors. Finally, she uses her powers to disguise Odysseus as an old man so that he can successfully infiltrate his besieged palace. These actions are not the only preparations Odysseus needs to return to his place as king, however; their conversation at this moment helps to reveal the similarities that have forged their connection, and how this friendship has contributed to Odysseus' journey home. Although Athena's repartee with the hero on the beach is designed to ascertain Odysseus' readiness to return to his palace, their interaction is imbued with a subtext that indicates a

profound communication. Their relationship is certainly complex, which is not surprising as it develops through a combination of direct and indirect aid, as well as intentional absence over the at least two decades.

Peripheral observers provide the best place to begin our examination of Odysseus' bond with Athena because, as they are not mired in the actual relationship, their viewpoints tend to be simpler and less convoluted. In Book III, the wise king Nestor, whom Telémakhos visits at Pylos, announces that Athena clearly favors Odysseus. The terms used by the translators to describe Athena's feeling toward Odysseus range from Chapman's fairly dispassionate "esteem" (292) and Pope's "favour" (p. 57) to Fagles' "affection" (251), and Butler's "great liking" (219). Although it is commonly reported that Athena's disposition is open and obvious, these individual words set different tones. "Esteem" suggests a proud respect, especially because a god is directing it toward a mortal. Furthermore, as wisdom is Athena's particular realm of expertise, her esteem is a testament to Odysseus' cunning and astuteness. The term "favour," used by Pope, imbues the relationship with a clear hierarchy. Athena is after all a goddess showing preference to this particular mortal. Both "favour" and "esteem" are terms connoting honor and respect; they are less familiar and emotional than "love", or indeed some of the other translators' interpretations. Butler's "great liking" denotes strong personal fondness, but it seems that he is careful not to encroach on the bounds of love. Fagles' "affection" suggests a sort of familiar bond. Fagles further adds that the goddess would show her affection by "standing by" Odysseus (252) and that she would "tend [him] with all her heart" (253). This lends her feeling a distinctively ardent sense, as she clearly pays close attention to her hero and helps him because of deep-seated feeling for him.

The most frequent interpretation of Athena's general disposition is "love". In fact, in response to Telémakhos' troubles with the suitors, Nestor proclaims, "If grey-eyed Athena loved you/the way she did Odysseus in the old days...Never have I seen the gods help any man/as openly as Athena did your father" (Fitzgerald 235-8). Not only is it clear that Athena favors Odysseus, but she does so openly to the point where the feeling can be named "love". Indeed, this seems to be a popular translation of the feeling, as it is also used by Lattimore as well as Butcher and Lang. The nature of this love must be called into question, however, especially in light of complications arising from Kalypso's failed attempt at building a romantic relationship with Odysseus. There is one key difference with Athena, though, and that is the absence of a sexual relationship. Many of the relationships between gods and mortals are fleeting sexual affairs. This one has clearly endured, however, since Nestor is revealing what he observed long ago. To a god, two decades may not be a long time, but this is a significant portion of Odysseus' life.

Furthermore, unlike his relationship with Kalypso, Athena does not require anything, including physical intimacy, from Odysseus. As a result, respect and affection naturally develops between the pair. Athena's virginity is innately part of her identity. Indeed, the nature of her virginity might further explain Athena's close connection with the hero because it is not the result of demureness or rebellion. In contrast to the other two virgin goddesses, Hestia and Demeter, Athena's chastity seems to stem from a certain fulfilled quality. She embraces attributes of both the male and female gods and humans, and therefore her love makes demands on Odysseus to be her counterpart. Her realm of expertise is a combination of both masculine and feminine elements, war-craft

and weaving among them. Indeed, her birth directly from her father situates her as straddling the different genders. In contrast, Hestia never leaves the hearth and her virginity stems from a perceived purity required to tend the ideal home, and Artemis is a huntress who is fiercely protective of her virginity, utterly destroying any who pose a threat to it. Both these goddesses are traditionally defined by their virginity and they have come to represent two stereotypes: the maiden and the hyper-feminist. Athena is not so closely identified with her virginity. This seems to remove the sexual tension from her relationship with Odysseus. She is not defined by her virgin status, which situates her relationships outside the carnal realm of satisfaction and leaves room for a strong mutual respect to develop. Indeed, she tends to be more purposeful when choosing favorites and more steadfast in her friendship, bonding with her heroes on the battlefield and helping them through their struggles.

This is not to say that there is *absolutely* no sexual tension in the goddess' encounters with Odysseus. As she reveals herself to him on the beach of Ithaka, she is quite friendly, even flirtatious. She tries to get the better of him by telling him that he is on Ithaka, but he does not take her bait and keeps his excitement and identity a secret.

At this the grey-eyed goddess
Athena smiled, and gave him a caress,
her looks being changed now, so she seemed a woman...
“Whoever gets around you must be sharp
and guileful as a snake; even a god
might bow to you in ways of dissimulation.
You! You chameleon!
Bottomless bag of tricks! Here in your own country
would you not give your stratagems a rest
or stop spellbinding for an instant...” (Fitzgerald 366-77)

She is teasing him and confers on him a familiar touch. She is saying, “Don’t you ever let your guard down?!” Yet we know that she is proudest of his vigilant wariness.

The various translations shed light on Odysseus' cunning as it manifests itself further through the ensuing conversation. Both Fagles and Cook focus pointedly on the words shooting back and forth between Odysseus and Athena. According to Fagles, Odysseus responds with "winging word" (287) and according to Cook, "wingèd words" (p. 180), meaning that they are responding rapidly and cleverly to one another (OED, 4b). It is a comfortable and warm interaction, especially given her affectionate smile after Odysseus' wildly untrue tale. At this, according to Fagles, "Goddess Athena, gray eyes gleaming, broke into a smile" (325) and immediately morphed back into her true form. His use of the word "broke" suggests that it is almost as if she is trying to hold back her smile, but could not any longer. There is a real sense of jovial friendship here, as opposed to the tense manipulation characteristic of the interaction with Kalypso. Although they start out testing one another, their conversation evolves into a familiar exchange.

This familiarity brings out the similarity of conscientious shrewdness in Athena and Odysseus. The intimacy between these two is not based on a sexual attraction, but rooted in a familiar closeness because of their *homophrosyne*, their "like-mindedness". Each translator is preoccupied with bringing this out the mutuality of astuteness, and they manifest it in various ways. Two translators, Fitzgerald and Fagles, assert their shared wiliness outright, while the rest display it through the ensuing interaction. According to Fitzgerald, Athena actually says, "Two of a kind, we are/contrivers both" (379-80), while Fagles has her say, "We're both old hands/At the arts of intrigue" (335-6). The natures of their personalities are related through their cunning and strength for trickery. Fagles' translation goes on to say, "Here among mortal men/You're far the best at tactics,

spinning yarns” (337-8). The importance of this version is twofold: first, it places Odysseus as the most cunning of all men, second, it closely ties this attribute with Athena, as she is also the goddess of weaving and handicrafts. So, not only is he the best of all men, he could be on par with the goddess of wisdom herself.

Pope refines this comparison of by situating Athena and Odysseus in their separate spheres. After commenting on Odysseus’ relentless sneakiness, Pope’s Athena says, “But this to me? Who, like thyself, excel/In arts of counsel and dissembling well/To me? Whose wit exceeds the powers divine/no less than mortals are surpassed by thine” (p. 225). This definitely brings forth the commonalities between these two: in their respective realms, they are superlative in terms of cunning. Athena’s tone is also one of pride, like a mentor rather than a friend. However, she is making sure to keep him relegated to the mortal realm and ensuring that he knows that although he is wily, she is wilier. His perspicacity is crucial to his return to Ithaka’s throne, and Athena brings it out in him because she herself is unparalleled in her wisdom.

Indeed, when he finds himself on Ithaka’s shore, both Athena and Odysseus have the same goal: to keep his identity hidden, ostensibly to maintain the element of surprise in order to most effectively bring the suitors gloriously to justice. Fitzgerald writes that when Athena as the shepherd asks Odysseus who he is, he responds “With ready speech – not that he told he truth/But, just as she did, held back what he knew” (321-3). He is ready to respond, quick witted and sure of himself despite the fact that he is telling a blatant and ridiculous lie. In fact, he is “weighing within himself at every step/what he made up to serve his turn” (324-5), weaving an intricate lie in order to protect his identity. They are clearly both on the same wavelength in terms of what is best for

Odysseus in this situation. She later praises him for this, for resisting his desire to find his wife and family immediately and showing restraint in his circumspectness.

Nevertheless, it is intriguing that although she expresses great pride in the qualities he is manifesting, she feels the need to remind him that he is still a mortal, still beneath her in status.

In her book *The Wrath of Athena: Gods and Men in the Odyssey*, Jenny Strauss Clay holds that Athena's reasoning for doing this is that "Odysseus' intelligence, his *mêtis*, calls into question the fundamental hierarchy of gods and men and the boundaries separating them" (p. 209). According to Clay, Athena chooses to test the hero by disguising herself because it proves the fundamental point that Athena can trick the hero, but he cannot trick her, because she possesses the power to change her form. This point is driven home when Athena does not completely alter Odysseus' shape, but leaves a recognizable scar that tips off the old nurse Eurýkleia later on in Book XIX. This is Clay's explanation for Athena's absence until this point. Although Homer does not recount Odysseus' specific impieties, the Greek mythological cycle makes it clear that the gods are angry with the Greeks because of their irreverent behavior during the sack of Troy and subsequent journeys home. Part of Odysseus' implied impiety is his disrespectful attitude toward the gods and his belief in his own superiority and indestructibility, which manifests itself in his many side-adventures on his way to Ithaka. As a result, Athena reigns in her open care for the hero and allows him to be battered and bruised by the world in order to curb his fighting spirit and remind him of his place.

While Clay makes many excellent points and presents a logical interpretation of the events in Odysseus' life, she also makes the claim that the reason that Odysseus stops

provoking the goddess on the beach and concedes her superiority is that he needs her power to win back Ithaca, and he thereby actually outwits the goddess of wisdom. This is a bold statement and may be going a bit too far. Although it is true that the gods do tend to fall prey to undeniably human emotions, like jealousy or hatred, they are not outdone by mortals, especially in their sphere of influence. In fact, the concept of *hubris* permeates the Greek tradition as a warning not to try to exceed mortal limits. Indeed, Athena's ability to disguise herself is a physical manifestation of the very tangible divide between the human and mortal realms. She possesses an ability that Odysseus could never hope to acquire, but could possibly tap into with her permission. In contrast, her reminder to him that as a goddess she is superior serves mainly as a cautionary warning not to forget to be reverent. His arrogance leads him to blind the son of Poseidon, who then spends some nine years torturing Odysseus on the sea. It seems, then, that Athena is not particularly offended by his actions to the point where she would abandon him and then force a power struggle to prove her dominance, so there must be another reason driving her sudden disappearance.

The traditional Homeric narrative itself suggests a possible reason for Athena's notable absence, and the varying translations of this idea give us a richer understanding of how the goddess actually contributes to Odysseus' return. At the very end of Book VI, Odysseus prays to Athena, asking for acceptance among the Phaiákians, and although she hears him, she still conceals her true form from her favorite hero. In Chapman's translation, Athena holds back "for feare t'offend her Unkle" (515) and in Butler's she is downright "afraid" (330). She is acting out of fear, implying that she would help the hero if not for the anger he incites in Poseidon. According to Fagles, though, she "stood in

awe of her Father's brother" (364) and according to Pope, she is "by Neptune awed" (p. 120). "Awe" suggests a feeling of reverence, but still retains an element of fear (OED, awed¹, I.2). This concept suggests that Poseidon is, at least in some circumstances, more powerful than Athena²; that she has a respect for his power and fear for herself. By contrast, other translators give more scope and agency to Athena. Fitzgerald has that she acts "in deference to her father's brother" (348) and Lattimore says simply that, "she respected" him (329). "Deference" and "respect" indicate that she is honoring her uncle because he has earned her esteem. She knows that Poseidon is angry with Odysseus, and that Odysseus has overstepped his bounds, so she does not seek to undermine his authority by disregarding his fury. The most important aspect of this variety in interpretation of Athena's feeling toward her uncle is that it gives her varying degrees of autonomy. If he inspires fear and awe, then she is not openly revealing herself to her hero because she wants to avoid becoming a target of Poseidon's anger. But if she chooses this course of action out of a certain respect for the sea-god, then it is a choice that she actively makes as part of a sort of honor code among the immortals. This creates a hierarchy among her allegiances, placing her uncle above Odysseus, and reinforces the separation of the divine and the mortal spheres.

Regardless of her relationship to her uncle, it appears that Athena is at least partly motivated by an almost parental desire to teach Odysseus by letting him fail. Odysseus does not blind Poseidon's son as soon as he departs from Troy, but after he makes a few other somewhat self-indulgent stops. So Athena's absence began before her uncle's

² Although there are many versions of the myth, we cannot forget that Athena was said to have defeated Poseidon in the contest for Athens, which was yet to be named. Athena gave Kekrops, the legendary first king of Athens, an olive tree to supply fruit, oil, and wood, while her uncle gave a saltwater spring. The people of the city proclaimed Athena the victor and named their city after her.

wrath. Furthermore, if her feeling is related more to fear, then she is taking a great risk in helping him at all, and if it is related to deference, then this sentiment is only a façade because she is secretly helping the hero. In fact, Odysseus readily perceives an end to her absence at this moment on Phaiákia, as he later tells her when she reveals herself on Ithaka: “I never saw you after [Troy], never/knew you aboard with me, to act as shield/in grievous times – not till you gave me comfort/in the rich hinterland of the Phaiákians” (Fitzgerald XIII.407-10). Fitzgerald’s is a pretty standard translation of this moment, suggesting that the poet means to show the depth of Odysseus’ cleverness and his bond with Athena if he can sense her presence even when she successfully hides her actions from the other gods. Athena is a crucial part of Odysseus’ glory and he certainly suffers in her absence.

Chapman’s translation reads differently from the rest, imbuing Odysseus’ words with more perceptive insight. The first four lines are quite similar to Fitzgerald, but the final three show a depth of understanding the others do not display:

Our Ships all boarded, and when God had blowne
Our Fleete in sunder, I could never see
The seede of Jove, nor once distinguish thee
Boording my Ship to take one woe from me –
But onely in my proper spirit involv’d,
Err’d here and there quite slaine, til heaven dissolv’d
Me and my ill (477-83)

It seems as though Odysseus is acknowledging that he has been erring quite frequently, making poor choices, and was fairly beaten down because of it. His errors were the direct result of his selfishness of spirit that spurred him to take on more adventures and ultimately destroy his crew. Indeed, this is the very nature of Athena’s intervention: she

is implementing a sort of “tough love”, allowing the hero to fail in order to give him room to improve himself.

Athena’s physical absence in Odysseus’ life until this moment is a special point of interest because it speaks to her tangible contribution to the hero’s return. While Athena can aid him in battle and help him survive natural disasters as well, his transformation from toughened soldier to just king is one he must make on his own. Just as Kalypso cannot give him a vessel to depart, Athena cannot intervene to curb his fighting spirit. Indeed, it is Athena who has laid out his future, as Zeus openly states when she asks him for help getting the hero of Kalypso’s isle. She allows the hero to experience the world without her direct intervention, allows him to learn his limitations and indulge his unproductive tendencies, in order to bring him back to life. Athena seems to have succeeded in that particular endeavor. He is completely broken down by the time he gets to Kalypso’s isle and exhibits his ability to curb his spirit in the conscientious way that he addresses Nausikaa. Now, she must prepare him for his reinstatement as King, which will ultimately be made possible through his reunion with his wife.

Pope’s translation gives us the most accessible illustration of Athena’s preparation of the hero for his reintegration into his wife’s world. As we will see, it is not an easy transition, especially since Penélopê has suffered alone for twenty years and must surmount her own distress to accept her husband. While Clay explains Athena’s tactic of disguising herself to test the hero as her way of proving to him her superiority, it is not apparent that Athena needs to actively assert herself like this. Given the closeness of their relationship, it seems that she is presenting the opportunity to test his abilities of perception and subtle communication. For example, there is a strong sense in Pope’s

translation that Odysseus knows that the shepherd boy is Athena. Pope brings this possibility clearly to the fore when he opens Odysseus' greeting to her by calling on her as another member of the "human race" (p. 224). Because this is usually translated as "friend", the outright identification of this person with the human race suggests a sense of sarcasm. He then goes on to say, "With Joy to thee, as to some god I bend/To thee my treasures and myself commend" (p. 224). Under the guise of extreme happiness to see another human being, Odysseus openly suggests that this shepherd is a god.

Furthermore, this is not the first time that Athena has appeared to Odysseus in disguise that he still intuitively recognizes her. For example, there is no evidence that Athena ever reveals herself to the hero when she leads him through Phaiákia as a young girl, yet Odysseus tells her that he knew she was guiding him. The depth of their *homophrosyne* and friendship allows him to recognize her on some innate level no matter how she disguises herself, and she always understands him.

Fagles' depiction of Athena shows her intrinsic comprehension the hero's nature, despite his appearances. Even though immediately prior to this moment Odysseus was irrationally cursing the Phaiakians for abandoning him with too much treasure, the goddess indicates that she is his patroness because he is "so winning, so worldly-wise, so self-possessed" (377-8). Although the hero is prone to mood swings and dramatic proclamations of emotion, Athena intuitively knows his true nature. If he were actually as volatile as he sometimes appears, he would not be reputed for his wiles or discretion, and he certainly would not have made it through his life's trials intact. She knows that he has the capacity for great discretion and acumen, although he lost control at times during

the war and his sea voyage home. She knows that she must draw these attributes once again to the surface if his homecoming is going to be successful.

Pope further suggests Odysseus' awareness of the shepherd's true identity, while emphasizing his cunning. When Athena reveals herself, Odysseus says, "He who discerns thee must be truly wise" (p. 226), and only a few lines later, Athena replies, "How prone to doubt, how cautious are the wise!" (p. 226). She is openly pronouncing that Odysseus has exactly that quality that would allow him to "discern" her, while also lauding him for his vigilance and discretion. Furthermore, Pope has her scold him with feigned indignation at his downright dishonesty, saying "But this to me?...Who taught thee arts?" (p. 225). The smile that precedes this speech, as well as the exaggerated nature of her feelings, indicate that this is good-natured teasing. She knows what he is trying to do because she taught him how to do it. Indeed, both Athena and Odysseus are misrepresenting themselves to each other, and this similarity allows for a subtle, unspoken communication to develop between them.

By disguising herself and playing this deliberate game with Odysseus, the goddess brings out his natural tendencies of circumspection, cunning, and wisdom, both in his ability to see others' trickery and in refining his own. Fagles contextualizes the importance of this game when he has Athena say to Odysseus that upon his return, "*you* must put your wife to the proof yourself!" (382). This is an unusual declaration: most of the translations simply state that the hero should not go directly to his wife, but carefully plan his return. Fagles' Athena is instructing him to test her, as he tested Athena, and as the goddess tested him. Athena is going to use her immortal abilities to disguise Odysseus, but he must still be able to communicate with Penélopê. This may be a real

challenge. She is after all a queen, and he will seem a peasant wanderer. Indeed, Fagles' version in particular creates the impression that a certain emotional development must occur if Odysseus is going to be able to successfully return to his place as Ithaka's king. This would more clearly explain why she shrouds him in mist. The same way that in Pope's version Kalypso's "bower" functions to protect and nurture him, in Fagles' the fog keeps him undetectable until Athena is sure that he is prepared to return to his kingdom.

Athena's relationship to Odysseus is not the usual sexual affair that occurs between the gods and humans, but one of deep understanding and caring. The pair has a great deal in common, and as a result, they communicate effectively even as, or especially when, they attempt to trick and deceive one another. Unlike Kalypso, Athena is able to see the hero as an attractive male and relate to him as a brilliant and wily strategist, but she does not let it cross any kind of sexual boundary. In fact, there is a clear line between them, as they do not embrace or even touch throughout the entire poem. Furthermore, Athena never tries to adjust herself to be compatible with him. She takes the forms of old and young men and very young girls, never someone who could conceivably replace his wife. Although this may suggest that she is trying to keep him in his place, it seems that she understands that which Kalypso did not: a sexual relationship is, for the purpose restoring justice on Ithaka, fruitless and much less productive than the one she has cultivated.

Odysseus is as delighted by their witty sparring as Athena is; but more than this, he relies on her, drawing on her divine power for strength. Even in her absence, Athena gives him the tools he needs to survive and grow: she lets him fail so he can learn his

strength, then helps him refine his power to become a masterful and astute hero. His greatest challenge, though, will come after the suitors are dead when he must face his ailing city and his estranged wife. These precarious situations require more than a strong fighter, but a strong man. So, Athena lays the groundwork for Kalypso's contribution of rest and reprieve, then spurs the hero's departure before he succumbs completely to despair. Not only this, but she also allows for Nausikaa's reawakening of his wits and guides him through Phaiákia to find safe passage home. Finally, when he returns home at last, she greets him to set the stage for his reunion with Penélopê, who is central to Odysseus' quest to re-establish justice on Ithaka.

~ *Penélopé* ~

Several female characters prepare Odysseus to reinstate justice on Ithaka by facilitating his transition from hardened soldier to wise king. Nausikaa teaches him to value cunning over force, Kalyspo reminds him of the importance of his humanity, and Athena helps him to harness this power to take back his kingdom. Once he is back on Ithaka, however, he must utilize his abilities of cunning and strength to win his palace from the suitors who have overrun his house. Although these men present the most obvious challenge - they are bawdy, intimidating and aggressively mistreating his home and his family - they are not Odysseus' greatest obstacle to his return home. His wife Penélopé still waits for him, but twenty years have passed since he went away and returning to her poses a significant problem. Twenty years of sorrow at the absence of her husband, fearing for his life and that of her son, as well as fending off the opportunistic men invading her home takes its toll on her ability to openly receive her husband once again. She has been forced to become skeptical and suspicious, and has probably closed off her heart to protect herself. For Odysseus to prove himself the king to his subjects requires strength and intelligence, but to prove himself the husband to his wife requires patience, subtlety and trust in her love and acumen.

Odysseus' challenges are clearly set before him; Penélopé's are more subtle and emotional. While Odysseus has taken his time dealing with the trials of war and his homecoming, Penélopé cannot start to heal because she does not know whether her husband is alive or dead. Although Odysseus gives her some time to process his potential homecoming by dressing as a beggar and delaying his coup until the proper moment, she still has significantly less time than her husband. She is wary of openly and fully

accepting this stranger to be her husband, although intuitively she senses his presence. Throughout the interaction of this couple, from when he comes to her as the Kretan beggar until he openly reveals himself as Odysseus, she tests him. The actual moment when she finally recognizes him is left ambiguous, though; the poem is interested in delaying and exploring the reunion of these two cunning characters. By comparing the varying translations, Penélopê's intuitions and feelings regarding the beggar come to light. Despite the poignant delay in open recognition, the similarities and cooperation exhibited by this pair cannot be ignored, which only heightens the subtlety of their communication. Furthermore, we see that not only is she working through her own emotions at such a precarious time, she is actually orchestrating Odysseus' return to power in Ithaka and driving their ultimate reunion on her own terms.

When Odysseus returns to Ithaka, he disguises himself as a beggar to infiltrate his own home, which has been overrun by suitors attempting to marry Queen Penélopê. In Odysseus' absence, they have taken over his great hall, used most of his supplies, and terrorized Penélopê and Télémakhos with their vulgarity. Penélopê has managed to delay her remarriage with a series of tricks, but at this moment it seems that she will soon be forced to make a decision. Ithaka has no defined ruler, her house is falling into disarray, there are rumors of Odysseus' death, and Télémakhos has come of age to rule. Even her parents are urging her to remarry and move away from Ithaka, which would leave her son in great danger and conclusively terminate any hope of Odysseus' return. At precisely this moment of tension, Odysseus does return, but not in any recognizable form. Athena even adds an extra measure of protection by using her immortal abilities to disguise the king as a Kretan vagabond. As the beggar, he professes to have encountered Odysseus,

even to having made friends with him. When the nurse Eurykleia informs Penélopê of this information, the queen extends her hospitality. She offers the beggar a bath, and as the nurse washes his feet, she recognizes Odysseus' scar and frantically attempts to notify Penélopê. Odysseus violently seizes her throat, claiming that the release of this knowledge endangers his life, so Eurýkleia vows her loyalty and silence. When he is finally cleaned and fed, Penélopê questions him about his travels and even asks him to interpret the meaning of a dream, only then offering him a place to sleep.

This episode is curious for many reasons, mainly because Penélopê brings a complete and lowly stranger into her personal space. Although she does entertain many guests hoping that they will have news of her husband, her invitation of this beggar into her personal apartments is strikingly unusual. Even the strangeness of the circumstances under which she summons him invites further examination. As the suitors are feasting, Odysseus as the beggar enters the hall. While most of the suitors either ignore him or give him some morsel of food, Antinous, the most aggressive of the lot, hits Odysseus with a stool. Although Penélopê is shut in her chambers, she hears “the blow, and knew who gave it” (Fitzgerald, XVII.649). It is clear by this point that Penélopê knows the suitors well enough to discern what had happened and who would be wicked enough to strike an innocent. It seems unlikely, however, that she would necessarily know that someone new entered the hall or understand the nature of the argument. What is interesting is that “with guile” Odysseus goads Antinous into attacking him by provoking anger that “made Antinous’ heart beat hard” (594-600). The loud commotion that follows their dispute attracts Penélopê’s attention. After verbally identifying the aggressor to her servants, the queen takes pity and sends for the beggar, “so I can greet

and question him./Abroad in the great world, he may have heard/rumors about Odysseus – may have known him!” (668-70). Indeed, Eumaios the swineherd confirms, “He claims an old tie with Odysseus” (684), but she guesses this without any particular knowledge of the man she is summoning. On the one hand, this could denote her desperation, but it also suggests that she is more sensitive to the nature of this situation than she might appear. Although she keeps herself all but cloistered in her chambers, she knows her adversaries and their habits. Furthermore, for some unrevealed reason, this beggar is different from any of the others that had entered the hall, at least to Penélopê. She gives him special attention and directly links him with her husband through the subtleties of her communication.

The moment in Book XXIII when Penélopê openly recognizes Odysseus sheds light on her strange behavior leading up to it. The day after the meeting in her chambers, Odysseus is given the opportunity to take back his throne through a contest developed by the queen. She announces that she will marry whichever suitor can string and accurately use Odysseus’ bow, a feat that only he has been known to accomplish. Although Odysseus strings his bow and then turns it on the suitors to kill every last one of them, Penélopê resists flying into his arms in happy relief. Even more peculiar, despite the confident proclamations by her trusted nurse and by their son Telémakhos of the true identity of the beggar, Penélopê remains cold and distant. Telémakhos is deeply distraught by this and angrily questions how she can be so unfeeling toward his father. Odysseus silences his son, however, understanding his wife’s need for caution. Odysseus’ perceptions of her behavior vary among the translations, and this of course influences our interpretation of her motivation. Most differences revolve around her need

to prove his identity to herself. Fitzgerald's Odysseus tells his son to "let your mother test me at her leisure" (129) and Chapman's says, "Take/Your Mother from the prease, that she may make/Her owne proofes of me" (171-3). These translators emphasize the *homophrosyne* of Odysseus and his wife, and suggest that he expects nothing less than this caution from the woman he married. Pope's Odysseus actually names the admirable quality exhibited by his wife when telling his son to respect her astuteness and "indulge the cautions of the wise" (p. 366). Their mutual wisdom is a trait that binds this couple. These interpretive variations work in tandem to shed light on the degree of Penélopê's wisdom and caution while also expressing the depth of Odysseus' understanding of his wife's need for such attributes.

In any event, the moment when Penélopê exhibits caution in the face of the plain revelation that her husband has returned epitomizes a *homophrosyne*, or like-mindedness, that has been variously exhibited in earlier scenes when the pair are together. As divulged in Pope's translation, Penélopê is wise and careful, like Odysseus. Still other translations play up her desire to question and test her husband and his understanding of that process. After twenty years away from home, suffering at Troy and on the open sea, it would be only natural for him to desire the comfort of her touch. Yet, Odysseus understands that this period of testing is required. The significance of his emotional connection with his wife is intensified by his rejection of immortality with the goddess Kalypso and a peaceful union with the young and beautiful Nausikaa. Odysseus' patient understanding plainly shows just how deeply their bond runs. Furthermore, the activity of testing itself is a commonality between the pair. As Odysseus moves closer to his ultimate reintegration back into society by taking his place as king on Ithaka, he has been

less and less straightforward with the women he encounters. Kalypso experiences Odysseus in his most fundamental state, still stunned and traumatized from his ordeal at Troy. Then, the hero moves on to Nausikaa, to whom Odysseus presents only the version of himself that would benefit him the most. Then, when landing on Ithaka, Odysseus hides his true identity from Athena as she engages him in a battle of wits intended to jump start and hone his innate abilities of cunning needed to properly reintegrate himself back into Ithakan society. Upon his return, he appears to his wife in the divinely crafted disguise of a beggar. Finally, after securing his place in his palace, it is his turn to be tested to be reintegrated back into Penélopê's life.

Penélopê, like Odysseus on Kalypso's isle, is emotionally detached if not altogether shut off when Odysseus returns to Ithaka. She has endured twenty years without her husband, whom she married and lost so young. Moreover, she has had to raise her son alone among a group of ruffians whose very presence threatens their lives. Because of these hardships, she weeps nightly and finds only partial respite in sleep. When pressed, she professes that she "armed [herself]/long ago against the frauds of men/imposters who might come" (Fitzgerald XXIII.241-3). Indeed, without news of Odysseus' death, Penélopê is better able to delay the task of replacing the master until Telémakhos is old enough to rightfully take over. Imposters and other deceitful men pose a more clandestine danger than the rough and openly aggressive suitors. When Penélopê does see Odysseus, she deliberates on the correct manner of her response: "Had she better keep her distance/and question him, her husband? Should she run/to him, take his hands, kiss him now?" (106-8). This is very similar to Odysseus' thought processes when he first encounters Nausikaa: should he "embrace this beauty's knees in

supplication?/or stand apart, and, using honeyed speech/inquire the way to town, and beg some clothing?” (153-6). Penélopê ultimately decides, as does Odysseus with the young princess, to remain aloof and seats herself against the far wall. Like her husband, she chooses the most emotionally reserved, thoughtful course of action to ensure that she is proceeding correctly. He, in turn, understands her actions and is not offended by them.

It is just this caution that colors Penélopê’s reception of Odysseus when his identity is openly announced to her in Book XXIII. This reception is translated in various ways, collectively giving us a richer sense of the possible range of her emotional fluctuation. As she stares at him, she vacillates between accepting his professed identity and rejecting it. The most straightforward representation of her perception is that of Lattimore, who writes that “her heart was wondering/Sometimes she would look at him, with her eyes full upon him/ and again would fail to know him in the foul clothing he wore” (93-95). Penélopê seems to be searching for some hint of her husband in this stranger, her heart wishing to find him here, but her head reminding her of the danger that could be lurking under his worn-out, exhausted exterior. Indeed, she is distracted by his haggard appearance, which only adds to her confusion. Much the way his sea-beaten appearance mars the impression he makes upon Nausikaa, his bloodstained beggar’s garb prevents Penélopê’s open recognition of her husband to some extent. This idea is expanded by Fitzgerald, who translates, “as she gazed/she found him – yes, clearly – like her husband/but sometimes blood and rags were all she saw” (108-10). Here, it seems as though she is distracted not only by the outward shell of his appearance, but by the other changes that have occurred over the years. Not only is he battle worn and weary, he has aged significantly over the twenty years away from home. Perhaps even more

significantly, the remnants of his violent murder of all the young suitors also function as an external reminder of the significant changes bloody battle has made to this man.

These changes are confusing and conceal the man the queen has loved and missed for twenty years. Perhaps it even points to the transformation of the man she once knew into a hardened warrior, an identity he must overcome to properly return home to Ithaca and his wife.

Pope presents an even more emotional picture, and one that completely ignores the confusing influence of Odysseus' filthy and battle-worn appearance: "O'er all the man her eyes roll in vain/now hopes, now fears, now knows, then doubts again" (p. 365). Here, Penélopê is searching his face, and her emotions are frenzied. She desperately wants this man to be her husband, but conscientious as ever, she is unwilling to commit herself to that idea until she is entirely certain. Whereas in the other two translations her caution is much more closely tied with an intellectual understanding of the appropriate actions, in Pope's the emphasis falls on the emotional turmoil she is experiencing. Elements of all three translations highlight the strong discipline it must take for her to control herself despite the implications of his identity.

The complexity of the ambiguous interaction between this estranged pair hinges on the extent to which Penélopê recognizes her husband throughout their exchanges. While she openly requires Odysseus to prove himself through intimate knowledge of the details of their bed, there are subtle hints that she at least suspects his true identity well in advance of it being openly revealed. For example, her invitation to this particular stranger is unique in that no evidence is offered to suggest that this is a common occurrence. Furthermore, she admits that the invitation is the result of her desire for

information about her husband from this man, but it is unclear why she should believe that he would have this knowledge. Outwardly, it appears that she is protecting herself from betrayal and disappointment, but there are subtle clues that indicate she is more aware than she lets on. After Telémakhos' reproach in Book XXIII regarding her stoic coldness in the presence of her long-lost husband, Penélopê explains that there are elements of this relationship that her son could not possibly understand. Although this statement refers most obviously to her test of Odysseus' knowledge of the secrets of their bedchamber, there appears to be sub-textual communication.

Most of the translators depict subtle variations in Penélopê's turmoil when faced with her husband in the great hall. These revolve mainly around the extent to which she is testing him. Fitzgerald's Penélopê says to her son that she and Odysseus "shall know each other/better than you or anyone. There are/secret signs we know, we two" (123-5). Rather than depicting Penélopê as the only one with reservations, this translation reveals that Odysseus needs this delay as well; a hasty reunion will not necessarily reinstate a solid union. Realistically, if Penélopê had immediately and openly accepted this man, Odysseus could question her wisdom as well as her loyalty. This would mean she would have welcomed into her heart anyone who resembled the man who left twenty years ago and could string the bow. The pair needs time together, away from the eyes of the world, to reunite completely as a married couple.

Some translators choose to focus on the emotional evolution that must occur for the ultimate reunion of Odysseus and Penélopê. Chapman writes, "there are/Tokens betwixt us of more fitness farre/To give me argument he is my Lord" (164-6). At this moment, *Penélopê* is deciding whether or not this man is her husband, and Odysseus does

not have as much emotional work to do in order to initiate a proper reunion because his journey home facilitated his own personal transformation. Chapman's Penélopê appears less certain at this moment of his identity than Fitzgerald's because of the final clause, which indicates that Odysseus is still required to convince his wife of his identity. According to Fitzgerald, it is possible that these signals have already been perceived and she is relatively sure that this man is indeed her husband. Lattimore's translation is quite similar to these except that he adds on the end, "but [the signs] are secret from others" (110). Not only does this emphasize that no one, not even Telémakhos, can understand the depth of understanding running between the married pair. It suggests that even the reader cannot know for certain. Indeed, this testing is a natural part of Penélopê's process of letting go of the emotional walls that she was forced to construct during years of duress.

Indeed, this interaction comes to a head in Penélopê's most apparent test of her husband which assesses his knowledge of their private bed. When they were first married, Odysseus carved a bed out of a living olive tree, which is essentially a structural part of their bedchamber. When Penélopê and Odysseus are alone in the hall after he slaughters all the suitors, she suggests that Eurykleia move their bed out of the bridal chamber so he may sleep on it. Odysseus responds with horror because the possibility of uprooting this bed, a symbol of their steadfast intimate connection, means that more profound changes had occurred in his absence than he realized. It is at this moment that Penélopê finally openly acknowledges him as her husband.

Leading up to this recognition, Penélopê expresses her fears by comparing the man before her with the man she saw board the ship bound for Troy. The various

translations depict several possibilities for understanding the depth of Penélopê's comprehension at this moment. According to Lattimore, Penélopê appears to have decided that the man before her is *not* her husband, and therefore she makes accommodations for him to sleep elsewhere. When he questions her aloofness, she responds, "I am not being proud, nor indifferent/nor puzzled beyond need, but I know very well what you looked like/when you went in the ship" (174-6). The blunt dismissal encapsulated in this translation suggests that she may not be expressing her actual sentiments. Because Lattimore closely juxtaposes Penélopê's statement of uncertainty so closely with her administering of the test, it appears that her words may not accurately express her emotions. First, Penélopê essentially denies the depth of their bond by refusing to trust Odysseus, and then she suggests that the supposedly unfaltering foundation of their bond had been changed. It seems that Lattimore has translated her statement not as an honest presentation of her feelings, but as part of the test.

Fagles and Fitzgerald translate Penélopê's examination in more evenhanded manner, with Penélopê conceding the resemblance of this man to Odysseus, but not entirely committing to a recognition. Lattimore's translation has Penélopê telling the stranger he does not look the way he appeared when he departed for Troy. The phraseology here suggests that she senses this man is her husband. Fagles and Fitzgerald do not give the beggar so much credit. According to them, Penélopê is suggestive while still maintaining a cautious distance. Fagles writes, "**You** look – how well I know – the way **he** looked" (195), and Fitzgerald translates, "I know so well how **you** – how **he** – appeared/boarding the ship to Troy"³ (199-200). She is almost acting as though she slipped in her speech, switching from describing the stranger in front of her to describing

³ The bold print is mine, designed to bring out the change in pronoun Penélopê uses.

her husband as he departed for Troy. She is intentionally linking the man of her past, whom she saw off on his quest to Troy, with the man before her who claims to be her husband. These two translations insinuate that she may know this man's identity, or at the very least that she recognizes a similarity between this man and her husband. She senses a familiarity, which may be the source of her fear, but also implies that this moment is primarily a test.

Similarly, Chapman depicts Penélopê as being uncertain of the true identity of the man before her, saying "the outward likeness holds no full desert/For me to trust" (266-7). She openly states her hesitation, and then proceeds directly to test Odysseus on his knowledge of their secret bedchamber. Chapman gets at a level of uncertainty not so clearly addressed by the later translations: Penélopê is unsure if Odysseus' feelings for her have changed over the past twenty years. The ardor of Odysseus' reaction to her lack of trust in him, in addition to his possession of the secret knowledge, shows Penélopê not only that her husband has returned, but that he is still as committed to her as he once was. This may suggest, then, that her reservations are not entirely related to the discernment of his identity, but to the nature of his residual feeling toward his wife.

Pope's Penélopê much more openly states that she detects many characteristics of her husband in this man, and the language even intimates that she is in the process of voicing her recognition, not beginning her test. He writes,

E'en now [my heart] melts! For sure I see
Once more Ulysses my beloved in thee!
Fix'd in my soul, as when he sailed to Troy,
His image dwells: then haste the bed of joy,
Haste, from the bridal bower the bed (p. 367)

As she is proclaiming her love for Odysseus, she is acknowledging his presence in the stranger before her eyes. Her call for the bridal bed seems to be a jubilant cry of her desire to return there with her husband, to the safety and stability that it provides. This test is less about ascertaining his feelings, as it was with Chapman, than it is about provoking the correct response. If this is not her husband, he could be caught up in the excitement and agree with her order of a swift repositioning of the bed. It is a completely different tactic than the other translations present. Furthermore, she intimates that his image is “fix’d in [her] soul”; they are intimately joined and she completely understands him as he is a part of her very being. The use of the word “bower” in the last line further intimates their connection. It is in her “bridal bower” that she takes refuge from the suitors and, through honeyed sleep, her despair. This is the same word used by Pope to describe the importance of Kalypso’s isle to Odysseus: he could hide from the world to recover. So, too, does Penélopê use her privacy to heal her wounds. Yet, this characterization is incomplete, because Penélopê’s “bower” is not one of purely sensual stimulation. In fact, it is completely devoid of sexual activity while Odysseus is away. Penélopê, in contrast with her husband, does not take another lover, and she is endlessly praised for this. If we ignore that the social rules governing sexual liaisons of men and women are quite different, we notice that Penélopê does not succumb to the lure of intimacy the way her husband does. Although it would be far safer and much less difficult for her to take a new husband, she does not bury her problems in a quickly devised solution that would have long-term implications. Indeed, she professes profound sadness at the thought of leaving Odysseus’ house and remarrying before Telemachus had come of age to rule would have denied him his birthright. Unlike her husband,

Penélopê is not often shortsighted, which is the very foundation of her wisdom. It seems, then, that Pope is conjuring Milton's use of the word "bower" to describe the purity of lovemaking between Adam and Eve in *Paradise Lost*, thereby describing the sanctity of this relationship between Odysseus and Penélopê. The carefulness that encapsulates Penélopê's cunning combined with this notion of the purity of her relationship with Odysseus also speaks to the importance of the careful and extremely subtle investigation required for Penélopê to transition back into married life. This sub-textual test is deftly depicted in a private interaction of this couple who communicate through clever words and insinuations.

Before a euphoric Penélopê flies into the arms of her husband, before she administers her famous test of the great rooted bed, indeed, before Odysseus triumphantly strings his bow and massacres the suitors in the great hall, he and his wife, though estranged, share intimate thoughts on a dream. Upon first observing this encounter, a depth of communication can be perceived, but it is not until *after* we see their ultimate recognition that this scene takes on the full scope of its meaning. As we have already observed, Penélopê's invitation to this stranger to enter her private bedchamber is rather astonishing. But even more surprisingly, when Penélopê has this beggar in her chambers, she wishes to relay to him a dream in order for him to help her interpret it:

...From a water's edge
twenty fat geese have come to feed on grain
beside my house. And I delight to see them.
But now a mountain eagle with great wings
and crooked beak storms in to break their necks
and strew their bodies here. Away he soars
into the bright sky; and I cry aloud –
all this in dream – I wail and round me gather
softly braided Akhaian women mourning
because the eagle killed my geese.

Then down
out of the sky he drops to a cornice beam
with mortal voice telling me not to weep
'Be glad,' says he, 'renowned Ikários' daughter:
here is no dream but something real as day,
something about to happen. All those geese
were suitors, and the bird was I. See now,
I am no eagle but your lord come back
to bring inglorious death upon them all!
As he said this, my honeyed slumber left me.
Peering through half-shut eyes, I saw the geese
in hall, still feeding at the self-same trough. (Fitzgerald, XIX.621-42)

The most glaringly disturbing facet of this dream is that Penélopê seems to genuinely love the geese that symbolize the suitors who are completely ruining her life.

Furthermore, she fears the eagle that represents her husband and despises his murderous actions, the very same actions that the man to whom she is saying this is planning to bring into fruition. The meaning of this dream seems fairly self-evident, and the beggar's interpretation of it cannot realistically be other than the one he gives. So, given the possibility that she does suspect this man to be her husband, why would she relate her dream in this particular way?

One possible reason is that she is testing the accuracy of her suspicions. She may be looking for a reaction, trying to flush out the true feelings of the mysterious stranger. There is some suggestion that this story is fabricated, especially in light of the perfectly correlated circumstances to her real life. Furthermore, a few moments prior to her recapitulation, Odysseus tells Penélopê that he has met her husband and knows that the hero is returning home, a possibility she immediately and undeniably rejects. She appears to be systematically testing his resolve. Odysseus' reaction, however, or rather lack thereof, belies this idea. He remains calm, and patiently asks, "how can you choose

to read the dream/differently? Has not Odysseus himself/shown you what is to come? Death to the suitors” (645-7).

Recent interpretations of this moment give us a different way to think about the meaning of the dream. In his critical work *Taking Her Seriously: Penelope and the Plot of Homer's Odyssey*, Richard Heitman interprets the twenty geese as representative of the twenty years Penélopê has spent alone in Odysseus' house. He proposes that their death signifies an end to her time on Ithaka and that Penélopê is distraught over the prospect of leaving with another husband (p. 74). His interpretation brings up Penélopê's desire to remain in Odysseus' house. This belies her statement at the end of her discussion with Odysseus about her dream that it is time for her to take a husband. This will become more important as we examine her motivations and goals in describing this dream. For now, though, it is important to examine Heitman's assertion that Penélopê's own presentation of the ambiguity of dreams later on in Book XIX invites such a revisionist interpretation (pp. 79-80). Penélopê's reluctance to accept the explanation offered both by the eagle and again by the Kretan gives the translators considerable scope to variously unravel the complex and subtle interaction presented by the poet.

The suggestion that she is deeply aware of the beggar's true identity is also brought out in Pope's description of the nature of their conversation. First of all, that this pair of apparent strangers is sitting in comfortable silence in the queen's personal chambers clearly underscores an unspoken trust, however unconscious. Furthermore, Pope has Penélopê say that she wishes to “suspend the restful hour with sweet discourse” (p. 321), which is exactly how she speaks to her husband after she finally acknowledges him. While the night falls and others “to their rest repair”, Penélopê and Odysseus “in

discourse...lay” (p. 371). It seems part of the intrinsic nature of this couple to prefer talking and interaction to any other activity. This similarity in address indicates that she may not just be speaking of this moment at night, but of the reunion that is finally within reach. Furthermore, her desire to stay awake at this moment is contrary to the torture of wakefulness she previously describes as “ne’er brighten’d with a beam of joy!” (p. 321). Although sleep is filled with woes as well, it seems that she is finding sanctuary within this conversation with the beggar. Their sweet discourse brings her some kind of satisfaction that she has found nowhere else, in sleep or wakefulness. From the moment she hears of the beggar’s presence, she has shown an unprecedented interest and trust in him that strongly suggests a deeper relationship.

Lattimore’s translation of this moment suggests a more intentional strategy on Penélopê’s part. His opening of her account situates her squarely as the driving force behind their interaction by saying, “Circumspect Penelope then began their talking” (508). Not only is she leading the subtle dance they perform, but Odysseus has taken a step back, highlighting the undercurrent of understanding between this woman and her husband that *she* must direct their communication. The wording used here is quite similar to an episode directly before this one, when the pair first converses upon his entrance to her apartments: “their discourse was begun by circumspect Penelope” (103). This interaction, while important to the development of the saga, is much more interesting in retrospect, after reading of the pair’s subtle communication about the dream and her test of his knowledge of the bed. At first it seems as though they may be two strangers attempting to establish an acquaintanceship: he acknowledges her renown and she relates her sadness. But if we read the episode as if Penélopê, as Pope suggests, has

at least a suspicion of the stranger's identity, we sense that she is attempting to communicate her loyalty and possibly test her theory of his identity.

Indeed, Penélopê's perception of the beggar's identity can be traced back to the moment when they are first in the same room. When this scene opens, a servant named Melantho, whom one of the suitors has taken for a lover, is scolding the beggar for lurking around the house. Odysseus responds that she should be careful of her insolence because Odysseus may return. Penélopê is near enough to hear this interaction and she scolds Melantho saying, "do you think me...blind to your conquest? It will cost your life" (Fitzgerald 111-2). Indeed, after he murders the suitors, Odysseus kills all the servants who were not loyal to his household in his absence. So, within moments of being in his presence, Penélopê seems to sense it may be him. Immediately, the queen has a comfortable seat prepared for the beggar and they begin their discourse. Aside from general conversation about the state of her home and his journeys, their conversation contains a strong undercurrent of emphasis on their like-mindedness, mainly their cleverness. She tells a story, veiled in the cloak of lamentation, of how by day she tricks the suitors and buys herself time by weaving a funeral shroud for Odysseus' father, "but every night by torchlight [she] unwove it" (176). Then, rather abruptly, she switches and asks the beggar about his ancestry, which "the great master of invention" (194) promptly concocts. She seems to be playing a game with him, setting up her masterful invention and then challenging him to create his own. This is quite similar to the game he plays with Athena, but there is a sense that it is not so playful here. Although not quite a test, Penélopê is delicately and cunningly laying the groundwork for the future recognition.

The pair is unbelievably restrained at this moment, especially because there is no mystery for Odysseus: he *knows* this is his wife. So how does he hold back so unflinchingly?

The most palpable manner of tackling this question is by linking it to the circumstance of the house. It lays in ruin and although Odysseus has the help of a few loyal Ithakans and his son, he is far outnumbered by the suitors. In revealing himself, he eliminates the strategic element of surprise, especially because the maidservants of Penélopê's chambers have proven their disloyalty. It is conceivable, however, that he, the master of innovation, could devise way of revealing himself to Penélopê without letting anyone else know. Then again, perhaps he does this, trusting in his wife's ability to perceive her husband. Penélopê's commentary on their secret signs supports this as an explanation. Although these "signs" are glaringly linked to her test of his knowledge of their bed, they also suggest a subtler recognition that cannot be voiced at this particular moment. There is unspoken, almost imperceptible, communication occurring that no one else could possibly comprehend. She has a pattern of creating situations where Odysseus may reveal himself, through his cleverness and secret knowledge, yet she returns no open affection. Her communication of secret signs is far more restrained, which is why it is important that she drives their interactions. She is, in some way, proving, not only that this man is her husband, but that the two can still work in tandem as a couple after twenty years of separation.

In order to maintain this ambiguity but perpetuate the progress of their re-establishment, Penélopê ends the dream discourse, which could very easily have concluded with the beggar's assertion that Odysseus will return, by reasserting her doubt. She describes two gates through which dreams may issue: one of horn, producing images

that may come to fruition, the other of ivory which shows only fantasies and illusions. She says, "I doubt it came from horn, my fearful dream" (Fitzgerald 658). Not only does this reopen the possibility for multiple interpretations of the dream; it reminds us that at this point in the poem Odysseus' return to power is not absolute. Although readers may know the ending, Penélopê does not, and she has a great deal to lose if Odysseus is killed in their endeavor. She seems to be reining him in, curbing the fighting spirit he has so much difficulty subduing for himself, and reminding him that he has not won yet. This may explain the sudden shift in her final statements of Book XIX away from the lofty analysis of dreams to the gritty dilemma before her, and her completely unforeseen decision to test the suitors and leave with one of them. Penélopê confides, "But one more thing I wish to tell you: listen/carefully" (Fitzgerald, XIX.660). She has an intense need for this beggar to know her secret plans to challenge the suitors to string Odysseus' bow and shoot an arrow through twelve axes, a feat only accomplishable by Odysseus himself. This is an interesting situation, because the test she fashions to find her second husband is based on the unique skills and abilities of her first husband. Is she really trying to replace him, or does she have other plans? Furthermore, what prompts this sudden decision and why does she reveal these plans to a complete stranger?

Fitzgerald includes many textual clues which suggest that Penélopê knows the identity of this stranger and that her words are a deliberate attempt to communicate her plans to her husband. Indeed, she assertively commands him to "listen carefully". She cautiously and underhandedly expresses to her disguised husband her deep desire for his victory and her faith in his ability, beginning by expressing her own longing to remain in his house: "It is a black day, this that comes/Odysseus' house and I are to be parted"

(661-2). This statement appears to show her hopelessness at the impending separation when she selects a new husband, but the subsequent statement subtly implies an underlying meaning. She says, "I shall decree a contest for the day" (663), which, before she elaborates, seems to connote a celebration, but of what? The overt reading is that she must hold a contest to find the most suitable husband who will then have the task of taking her from her beloved home, but perhaps she is trying to communicate another idea. Perhaps the blackness of the day relates to the inevitable death that will ensue from the contest. Whether the suitors die at Odysseus' hand or they overcome him with their numbers, this day will hold finality only accomplished through death.

Additionally, the assuredness with which Penélopê senses the beggar's identity comes across in her subtle attempts to elicit a reaction from him, even if he does not show it. When describing her ultimate removal from the house, Penélopê says, "[I will] look my last/on this my first love's beautiful brimming house./But I'll remember, though I dream it only" (671-3). She is deliberately returning to the overt conversation that assumes Odysseus has not come back, and asserting that it is time for her to move on. She admits she cannot forget her happy life, but these memories will fade to the realm of her dreams. Odysseus is, after all, only her first love, and the man who wins the contest also wins her heart. Because she has not, indeed cannot, openly acknowledge that she knows the beggar is her husband, she is able to bounce between the two possible scenarios regarding his return. Given the strength of their unspoken communication thus far, it is reasonable to believe that Odysseus knows she is aware of his presence, but these words will still sting. He responds to her goading by assuring her that her husband will

return, commanding, “let there be no postponement of the trial” (176). He knows what is at stake and he is ready to fight for his home and his wife.

Lattimore’s Penélopê is more straightforward with Odysseus about her deepest desires to stay and her intense sadness over her husband’s absence. Yet she also suggests that desperate hope could be swaying her judgment. She gives fewer clues that she is *certain* this man is her husband, and more that she *believes* he is. She says, “This dawn will be a day of evil name, which will take me/away from the house of Odysseus; for now I will set up a contest” (571-2). She makes it obvious that she does not want to leave and that the next day will be “evil” precisely *because* she is forced to set up this contest to select a new husband who will take her away from this house. Her sadness stems from her loss of the happiness and wealth that surrounds her in Odysseus’ home, and she says that, “even in my dreams I shall never forget it” (581). This is far different from Fitzgerald’s allocation of the memory to the realm of the dreams. Lattimore is reminding us that Penélopê sometimes expresses sleep as her only escape from the sadness of Odysseus’ absence, but if taken from her home she will not even find respite there. Her desperation and suffering come across quite clearly to her husband, who responds sympathetically, “O respected wife of Odysseus...do not put off this contest in your house any longer” (583-4). In other words, allow me to reclaim my throne and end your sadness.

Fagles thus translates more straightforwardness into their sub-textual conversation, lending a stronger emphasis to Penélopê’s assuredness of the true identity of her husband. Her transition from talking about the nature of dreams to disclosing her plans is pointed and direct: “One more thing I’ll tell you – weigh it well” (640). Her

directive to him is not just to listen to her, but to understand the depth and implications of what she is saying. Her unexpected shift away from the discussion about dreams suggests that she has just come up with this idea, and she needs Odysseus to know her intentions if he is to return as master of these halls. Furthermore, she presents the outcome if he does not understand her meaning: she will always be tortured, “always remember [this house], that I know.../even in my dreams” (654-5). His response is much less formal than the others, saying “Oh my queen”, which is appropriate because as the beggar he is her subject, but this is far more personal. Penélopê is Odysseus’ queen, to whom he struggled to return and for whom he refused eternal life. His address of her in this manner seems far more indicative of his passion breaking through the restraint he must show. Furthermore, he urges her not to, “put off this test in the halls a moment” (658), as he is eager to reclaim his home and end her sorrows.

Chapman’s translation of this moment further enriches Penélopê’s emotional reasons for facilitating her husband’s victory. Despite the fact that she has waited for twenty years for her husband to return, one of the consequences of her departure to another man’s house is the loss of the good reputation she has acquired by her steadfastness: “That Day that lights me from Ulysses’ Court/Shall both my infamy and curse consort” (782-3). Indeed, at the end of this speech she laments the loss of “feast and riches” (792), whereas in the other translations she is shown to be depressed and miserable at the loss of the happiness she felt in the home of Odysseus. Chapman’s Penélopê is more stoic and practical than the weeping, sometimes insecure wives depicted in other translations. She understands and deals with the reality of her life, rather than the overwhelming emotional response that could erupt into desperation. After

relating her concern over the loss of her good reputation, she says, “I therefore purpose to propose them now/In strong Contention” (784-5). In a way she is saying that in order to avoid the damage her character will suffer because of her departure, she will create this competition to pit the suitors against one another. At this moment it becomes clear that Chapman’s Penélopê, like those of the other translations, is giving her husband a message. Not only is she creating a challenge that Odysseus can win, but one that weakens the suitors, at least for a moment, because they will be competing against one another instead of acting in tandem. Furthermore, the surprise that will be created by the beggar’s ability to string the bow and his ultimate unveiling as Odysseus returned would create enough confusion to give Odysseus a strong strategic advantage.

Pope, however, seems to diminish the scope of Penélopê’s power at this moment in their dialogue. His translation has her express a belief that her fate is in the hands of the gods: “Heaven shall determine in a gameful strife” (p. 323). This version of her thoughts presents the contest not as a device to bring Odysseus back to the throne, but one that allows the gods to present their favorite to her. Furthermore, Penélopê’s depiction of her life when she leaves the home of Odysseus is a bleak one, and she will mourn the change forever: “The pleasure past supplies a copious theme/For many a dreary thought, and many a doleful dream!” (p. 323). Clearly, she does not want to be “torn from these walls”, and she will always remember her happiness here in her dreams. It is a sad picture, in which Penélopê appears to have no choice or autonomy, and must accept the grim future ahead of her.

The power that Penélopê does wield, however, appears in a different manner in Pope’s translation. After the beggar states conclusively that the dream portends

Odysseus' solid victory, Penélopê reproaches him: "hard is the task and rare" (p. 322) to understand these figures of our imagination. This statement hearkens back to the language of Raphael as he relates the war in heaven to Adam in Book V of Milton's *Paradise Lost*. When explaining that great difficulty lies in attempting to translate heavenly issues into the mortal realm, Raphael says, "Sad task and hard, for how shall I relate/To human sense th'invisible exploits/Of warring spirits" (ll.564-6). Raphael is asking a question that permeates Penélopê's thinking: how can we try to understand that which escapes our mortal senses and exists only in the world of the incorporeal? Pope and the other translators struggle with a similar issue: not simply the conveyance of Homer's words, but of his meaning, and of the meaning behind Penélopê's words to Odysseus during this crucial time of subtle communication. Furthermore, by writing Penélopê's words in the same manner that Milton writes Raphael's, Pope is placing Penélopê in the more knowledgeable position. While Odysseus reads the dream quite linearly, Penélopê's wisdom indicates that there is more at stake than simply his murder of the suitors as geese. She reminds him that they do not *know* their destinies for certain, and they cannot rely solely on this dream for such assuredness. In this subtle hierarchical positioning, Pope lends Penélopê a great deal of power, both through her wisdom and the weight behind her subsequent action of creating the competition. She knows that the pair cannot rely on the dream as a guarantee of success in Odysseus' reinstatement into his home, so she formulates the suitors' challenge in a way that gives her husband a strong advantage.

Different translations depict Odysseus as reacting in the same way after Penélopê presents the challenge. According to Chapman, he tells her not to delay her

announcement of the challenge, “For your Lord/Will to his Court and Kingdome be restor’d/Before they thred those steeles or draw his bow” (796-8). Although the various translations present the urgency of his words differently, the beggar expresses assuredness that Penélopê’s lord, Odysseus, will be along tomorrow to retake his kingdom. To this, Penélopê replies, “O Guest...would you/Thus sit and please me with your speech, mine eares/Would never let mine eye-lids close their Spheares” (799-801). These very last words whispered in the depth of the night alone in her chambers clearly intimate the closeness of these two “strangers”. They also demonstrate the restraint required to maintain distance until the time comes for their proper reunion.

This restraint and intimacy are crucial to Odysseus’ success over the suitors. He is far outnumbered by them and the element of surprise is required for him to prevail. Penélopê clearly facilitates his victory by placing his most powerful weapon in his hands in the hall with *all* of the suitors while still maintaining the façade that Odysseus is missing. That this is accomplished not only points to Penélopê’s cunning and shrewdness, but her ability to rule the kingdom alongside her husband. Much like Kalypso’s inability to actively send Odysseus from her island, Penélopê cannot take back the kingdom for him, that is for him and him alone. Yet the hero would not have found success if not for the greatest challenge before him, the reunion with his wife. Her testing and restraint as her husband returns to the palace mold their interaction, so their reunion and his reinstatement as king can be equally and productively successful.

~ Conclusion ~

Despite the apparently monolithic Western history of subjugating women, several female characters in Homer's *Odyssey* exhibit tremendous agency in their facilitation of the hero's journey home. Not only does Homer reveal their formidable influence through their contribution to his plot, English translators have elaborated and explored their power over the past four centuries. The translators' language adds nuance and subtlety that breaks open the very source of their agency and its effect on Odysseus and his journey home. The natural progression of his encounters with women helps to establish their significance in reaching this end. As a warrior who has lost many friends and his entire crew, brought death to countless other heroes, missed his son's development into an adult, and been separated from his wife for twenty years, Odysseus is tremendously scarred both emotionally and mentally. Our introduction to the hero is delayed until the fifth book, which is just around the time that Athena's open attention is once more turned on him and his struggle. It is clear that the hero is not yet ready to be perceived by an outside eye until this particular moment. He has a long and arduous path ahead of him, not only because of the wine-dark sea filled with monsters and malevolent deities spread before him, but because of the emotional transition he must make as well. He must relearn how to exist within a community, how to be a father, a husband and a king. The encounters discussed within these pages punctuate and facilitate this transformative experience, and reveal the integral role that four women play in Odysseus' journey.

The two immortal figures play off of one another to highlight the humanity exhibited by Odysseus' internal struggle to return home. Kalypso is intrigued by mortality, leading her to construct a relationship with the hero and attempt to nurture him

as he heals from the trauma of the Trojan War. It is precisely her misunderstanding of mortal love and marriage, however, that gives us a glimpse at the deeper emotions driving Odysseus home to Penélopê. His resistance to Kalypso's proposal is the first step in his reawakening from the absolute emotional hibernation of Ogýgia. He has to re-evaluate what precisely is important to him and remember the true passions that drive him. Although immortality with this goddess would offer a great deal to the hero, it would also alter his identity forever. His story is one of intense humanity, passion and love, and choosing immortality with Kalypso on Ogýgia would have completely stunted its development. Kalypso's captivation with the human condition reminds Odysseus of his own mortal identity and awakens him from his stupor to reclaim it.

The goddess Athena also ignites Odysseus' intellect to facilitate his successful return to Ithaka. She too is intrigued by the human world; yet unlike Kalypso's, Athena's interest in the mortal realm remains distant. She maintains a separation when interacting with the hero, rarely touching him and certainly not sleeping with him. She does take a very active role in the hero's life and journey, however, as she accompanies him during most important events and intervenes at key moments in a way that is congruent with Odysseus' ultimate goal to return to Ithaka. Like Kalypso, there is underlying depth to Athena's character that becomes more pronounced through her interaction with Odysseus. As a facilitator, her interference works with the hero's own desires, but in their interpersonal relationship, she can be antagonistic. This friction forces Odysseus to match wits with the goddess of wisdom herself and truly reveals his intellectual abilities. She is clearly proud of her beloved hero and therefore presents him with tremendous challenges to facilitate his growth.

The mortal women also serve in special ways to facilitate Odysseus' journey home. They interact with the hero on many, subtle levels to help him reach Ithaka and reclaim his home. Although Nausikaa is young, it is in her innocence that she displays many of the same laudable capabilities of the hero's wife, Penélopê. She commands his respect early despite her appearance as a young, acquiescent female, and he recognizes the need for caution and reverence when addressing her. Her audacity not only facilitates a conversation with the hero, it also creates a challenging situation for him as his wisdom and cunning are put to the test. Furthermore, she is wise enough to understand the implications of their interaction, namely the sexual tension that underlies their conversation, but she never openly mentions it. Although she does exhibit signs of attraction to the hero and the issue of marriage is present, she is not desperate or willful. She understands subtle communication and realizes that this is just not her time, simply whispering a goodbye as he leaves, asking him to remember her. His true place is back on Ithaka, not on Phaiákia with her, and she uses her resources to initiate his final return home. In this regard, she is similar to Penélopê: she can read him and understand his needs and intentions, even if they are not openly obvious. She, like Penélopê, truly matches wits with the hero despite her youth and femininity.

Penélopê acts both as Odysseus' final challenge *and* as his most effective facilitator. Like her husband, she displays a stunning capability to quickly assess a situation and cleverly address it. This comes out through the deftness of her handling of the suitors and of the beggar before her. Although she intuits the true identity of the beggar, which leads her to hand him the weapon with which he will return as king, she requires more testing before she allows him to openly return to his life. Penélopê is not a

weak-willed woman who displays only a diluted version of her husband's great cleverness; she is, rather, more than an equal match for him. She contributes powerfully and tangibly to his return, but does not let her personal turmoil during his twenty-year absence weaken her sense of correct timing in the grand scheme of his homecoming. Like the women before her, Penélopê not only understands the hero, but espouses the same goals and with great strength, she facilitates the completion of these objectives.

As we have seen, these women are multidimensional and exhibit a great deal of agency in their contribution to Odysseus' return to Ithaka. These discoveries came through the comparison of various translations because each translation is an interpretation of one text. The job of a translator is not only to transcribe a text into a new language, he must also take into account the audience with whom it is engaging. So, each translation is a mixture of the translator's interpretation of Homer's work and the way he chooses to communicate it to readers. By comparing the different translations we can see a much richer development of Homer's characters. Not only this, but we find that the women, far from functioning as either a passive accessory or the dangerous impediment, exhibit astounding agency in Odysseus' return to Ithaka. It is through comparison of the varying interpretations of these translators that we can see the astonishing scope of these women's autonomy and catch a glimpse of the beautifully rich characterizations of these women.

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