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**What Happens at the *Stathmos*: Penelope's Entrance Theme and the Rebuke**

This presentation examines the four formal appearances of Penelope before the suitors in Homer's *Odyssey* in order to redefine the nature and significance of this recurring epic theme as an interpretive device. The previous studies of Forsyth and Nagler define this type scene generically, as either allurement or accompaniment. But I explore only the Odyssean form of this oral theme with the purpose of understanding Homer's characterization of Penelope and her motives. Verbal rebuke, a consistent component in these sequences, reveals how Homer uses confrontation to clarify the competition for *kurieia* between Penelope and Telemakhos and uncovers the paradoxically simultaneous public and private nature of this communication that allows for a gendered interpretation.

These four episodes portray Penelope as a woman of her own making, who maintains her own purposes against male suitors and her own son, and who intentionally challenges the public positions males in the *megaron* assume. In 1.325-364, Penelope as *kuria* challenges Phemios' right to sing his song, and Telemakhos, under the influence of the suitors, sternly sends her back to her room. Later, Penelope accuses Antinoos of conspiring against her son and receives a smooth deflection from Eurymakhos (16.409-451). In 18.158-303, she belittles her son about his treatment of the beggar so that he childishly complains that he finds the suitors too strong for him. Finally (21.1-358), Penelope claims her position as *kuria* by legitimizing the beggar's bid to string the bow only to be strongly rebuffed by Telemakhos who decisively makes way now for his father's revenge. The strong similarity of the rebuke subtheme in all instances argues for Penelope's stake in the struggle for *kurieia* as the poet's purpose and main use of the entrance theme.

The inability in the rebuke element to distinguish what is public and what is private allows the gendered components of the oral epic audience to interpret these sequences according to their own social needs. Penelope's rebuke at 18.158-303 contains very personal reflections about Telemakhos which, if they are overheard by the whole body of suitors, both humiliate him overwhelmingly and greatly strengthen Penelope's claim to *kurieia*, but the poet leaves it uncertain whether the suitors eavesdrop or not (18.243). The ambiguity he creates here allows the audience's males to understand Penelope's rebuke as safely comprehended only by Telemakhos; whereas, women in the audience listen to a different poem, one which lionizes Penelope before the suitors, her son, and her husband.