

THE DREAMS OF BARČIN AND PENELOPE

OLGA LEVANIUK

ABSTRACT

This paper suggests solutions for several puzzles in Penelope's dream in Book 19 of the *Odyssey* and presents an interpretation of the dream that is tested, refined, and expanded by a comparison to three versions of Barčín's dream in the Uzbek epic *Alpāmiš*. This typological comparison makes possible an evaluation of the dream that is more objective than the conventional approaches. In particular, the comparison underscores the salience and centrality of the reversal in Penelope's dream (namely the eagle's re-interpretation of the geese as the suitors and himself as Odysseus), an aspect of the dream that is often overlooked. On the basis of this comparative study, I argue further that the Homeric Penelope is not presented as someone who actually sees a dream, but rather as the teller of a dream-tale evocative of wedding songs and traditional bridal pre-wedding dreams. By telling this dream-tale Penelope not only conspires with the beggar-Odysseus in orchestrating his return but turns the moment of their conversation into a pre-return moment in a larger sense by evoking traditional narratives of weddings and returning husbands. A broader comparison of the dialogue between Penelope and Odysseus to that between Alpāmiš and Barčín in the longest attested version of the epic serves to further clarify and confirm the function of the dream in its larger context.

RICHARD MARTIN HAS OBSERVED that “what experimentation is to science, comparison should be to philology—a way to test hypotheses and produce new ones that account for more data, more

economically.”¹ This paper is an attempt at such an experiment. My hope is to alter the terms of discussion of an old Homeric conundrum by looking at comparative evidence from a poetic tradition less familiar to the Homerists: the Uzbek epic *Alpāmiš*. The parallels between the *Odyssey* and the *Alpāmiš* have long been observed, and their nature debated.² I incline to think that these similarities are partly typological and partly the result of contacts across languages and diffusion of stories in Eurasia. For the purposes of this paper, however, I treat this comparison as essentially typological since what matters for my argument is not the origins of the similarities, but ways in which similar elements function and fit within the ecology of their respective traditions.

First, a few introductory words about the *Alpāmiš*. Between roughly 1920 and 1981 the epic or, to use the Uzbek term, *dastan Alpāmiš* was recorded in writing, in full or in part, over forty times from the performances of more than thirty singers. Among these records are eight complete versions.³ The first written recordings of the *Alpāmiš* belong to the nineteenth century, though the epic itself is much older, with estimates for its time of origin ranging from before the thirteenth to the sixteenth century.⁴ The versions that will concern me here were recorded in writing in the first half of the twentieth century.⁵ These

¹ Martin 2003:119

² See Germain 1954:11–54, Lord 1991:211–244, Grossardt 2006:33–37, West 2012:538–539.

³ Mirzaev, Abdurakhimov, and Mirbadaleva 1999:27. A helpful list of written records of *Alpāmiš* performances is compiled by Mirzaev in Mirzaev, Abdurakhimov, and Mirbadaleva 1999:795–798.

⁴ Zhirmunskii 1960:15–62 compares various variants of the *Alpāmiš* and groups the Uzbek, Kazakh and Karakalpak versions into what he terms the “Kungrat version,” which, he argues, does not predate the 16th century. The argument centers on the location of Qongirat, the region (and tribe) where the action of *Alpāmiš* begins in Uzbek, Kazakh and Karakalpak versions. Zarifov 1959:8 argues for a different location of Qongirat, and correspondingly a different dating of the “Kungrat version,” prior to 1200. Both views are discussed with additional evidence by Reichl 1992:335–340. Whatever the dating of the “Kungrat version,” Reichl 1992:340 adduces clear evidence that the plot of the *Alpāmiš* must have been known to the Turkic peoples of Central Asia prior to the 11th century.

⁵ The three versions in question are: the *Alpāmiš* of Fāzil Yoldaš-og̃li (text and Russian translation in Mirzaev, Abdurakhimov, and Mirbadaleva 1999), the *Alpāmiš* of Saidmurād Panāh-og̃li (text and German translation in Reichl 2001), and the *Alpāmiš* of Berdiyoy Pirimqul-og̃li (text in Mirzaev 1969:27–28).

are oral performances and they are traditional in their formal characteristics (the shape of the verse, for example), in their diction, and in their narrative patterns. Turkic singers perform in a variety of genres, but *dastan* is a genre that is emphatically traditional. A performative event comprising *dastan* will often start with something known as *terma*, a selection of shorter songs, which might include lyrical songs of the singer's own composition, excerpts from *dastans*, and short songs of gnomic or philosophic nature. The pressure of tradition seems to be less present in these preludes to epic performances. But when it comes to the epic itself, it is strong. Reichl quotes from an interview with the singer Zhumabay-zhiraw, who claims to have learned three epics from his teacher and to narrate them always in the same way, using the very words that his predecessors sang, "the heritage they left behind," as he puts it.⁶ Needless to say, such assertions by the singer do not mean that every performance is verbatim the same.⁷ Zhumabay-zhiraw's words express the ideology of the *Alpāmiš* performances, which is deeply traditional, and what is at issue for the poet and his audience is the truth and authority, or, as Reichl puts it, the "authenticity" of the tale.⁸

As Lord demonstrated and documented in Yugoslavia, the singer's role as a conserver of tradition is not incompatible with creativity and variation. As Lord puts it: "The picture that emerges is not really one of conflict between preserver of tradition and creative artist; it is rather one of the preservation of tradition by the constant re-creation of it."⁹ The same applies to the Uzbek epic. If performances of *Alpāmiš* are highly traditional, they are also highly variable: there are multiple regional schools and, within these schools, singers have individual styles and vary their performances. Many produce their own variants

⁶ Reichl 2000:39.

⁷ See Lord 1960/2000:26–29 and Nagy 1996:40 on the fact that the expectation (and assertion) by performers and audiences of a song's complete stability usually coexists with empirically ascertainable, and often large-scale, variation.

⁸ Reichl 2000:142. See Nagy 1990:2–81 on truth and authority in Greek epic as it affects the identity of the poet.

⁹ Lord 1960/2000:30.

of inherited songs, add new episodes, or create new poems.¹⁰ The recorded versions we have are individual performances, expressions of each performer's preferences, abilities, and habits, as well as the company present, the time available, and numerous other factors. The three versions of the epic that I rely upon for this paper are records of performances by three singers belonging to different regional schools, and a comparison between them reveals both their distinctive features and, conversely, elements that appear again and again and give an indication of the foundations on which variation is based.

The basic plot of the *Alpāmiš* narrative is as follows: the hero of the epic, Alpāmiš, and his cousin Barčīn are betrothed as children, but then separated when Barčīn's father migrates with his family and people to the land of the Kalmyks. When the time comes for Barčīn to marry, Kalmyk suitors present themselves, but she wants to marry only Alpāmiš. Rebuffed, the Kalmyks threaten to force Barčīn into marriage. She sends a secret message to Alpāmiš asking him to come and meanwhile persuades the suitors to wait for a set period and then to have contests for her hand. Alpāmiš undertakes the long journey, arrives in the nick of time, is victorious in the contests, and marries Barčīn. Thus concludes the first half of the epic, which has obvious points of contact with the *Odyssey*. Even more striking similarities are present in the second part, which replays the themes of the first in the sense that Alpāmiš has to win Barčīn again, and again has to prevent her marriage to another man. After the wedding Alpāmiš and Barčīn return home, but her father does not. Eventually, after living happily with Barčīn for a while and having a son, Alpāmiš leaves on another journey to help his father-in-law, but is imprisoned and disappears for seven years. In

¹⁰ Mirzaev distinguishes three types of *baxši* ("singers") who perform Uzbek epic: "*baxši*-performers," who re-perform poems they inherited from their teachers almost without change; "*baxši*-improvisers," the largest group of Uzbek *baxši*, who can add new verses or episodes, shorten and lengthen the song depending on the audience, or change a given episode from prose to verse or vice versa; and "*baxši*-poets," who create their distinctive variants of a given epic and can create new poems (Mirzaev, Abdurakhimov, and Mirbadaleva 1999:11–12). I note that Mirzaev here uses the term "improviser" not to suggest any haphazard kind of extemporization but to denote a more rigid composition-in-performance technique, in comparison to the more fluid composition-in-performance technique of *baxši*-poets.

the meanwhile, his parents are forced into hard work, and a usurper, the hero's illegitimate half-brother, plans to marry Barčın. Alpāmiš finally returns on the day of the wedding feast and meets with his old and faithful groom Kultay, who recognizes the hero by a saint's mark on his shoulder. Dressed and disguised as Kultay, Alpāmiš comes to the wedding feast. At this point Barčın announces that only the person who can wield the mighty bow of Alpāmiš' forefathers will be her husband, and Alpāmiš, of course, succeeds at the task, still dressed as an old man. In his disguise, he exchanges songs with Barčın and finds out that she continues to be faithful. Finally, he reveals himself, kills the usurper, and the family is restored to its former glory and happiness.

The episode that I will discuss in more detail happens in the first half of the epic, on the night before Alpāmiš arrives to rescue Barčın for the first time, from her Kalmyk suitors. During that night, Barčın, who is anxiously waiting, has a dream, which foretells the imminent arrival of Alpāmiš. The Uzbek epic is typically in a mixture of prose and verse; the prose is recited, the verse is sung to the *dombira*, and there are several metrical forms, some strophic and some not.¹¹ In all three versions the dream episode is in verse and framed by prose. As is often the case in the sung parts of the *dastan*, one verse is repeated at intervals throughout the passage as a type of a refrain, either exactly or with variation. What is selected for such repetition is similar in all three versions of the episode, and will be significant for my argument.

The longest and fullest dream comes from the fullest recorded *Alpāmiš*, that of Fāzil Yoldaš-oğli, recorded in 1928.¹² Born in 1872, the singer remained illiterate all his life.¹³ Beginning in 1922, about thirty *dastans* were recorded as performed by Fāzil Yoldaš-oğli.¹⁴

¹¹ Reichl 2000:21–36.

¹² This *Alpāmiš* consists of 13715 verses interspersed with rhymed prose (Mirzaev, Abdurakhimov, and Mirbadaleva 1999:795, variant 5).

¹³ He became the apprentice of Yoldaš Mulla Murad (Yoldaš-šair), a master from the so-called Bulungur school, famous for epic performances. The apprenticeship lasted years, and the apprentice became a part of his teacher's family. In the case of Fāzil Yoldaš-oğli, he actually married the daughter of his teacher (Pen'kovsky and Mirzaev 1982:9–10, Reichl 1992:72, Reichl 2001:22–23).

¹⁴ The 1982 Russian translation by Pen'kovsky that first attracted my attention is based on the 1939 edition of a shortened variant of Fāzil Yoldaš-oğli's *Alpāmiš* by an

In Fāzil Yoldaš-oĝli's *Alpāmiš*, with only hours remaining before the competition for her hand, Barčīn wakes up and tells a dream to her attendant Suksur-ai.¹⁵ The dream is disturbing; at first she sees a new moon surrounded by four stars, but then the earth is overshadowed by an *aždarxo*—a huge serpent or dragon-like monster.¹⁶ Barčīn addresses her forty maiden attendants with the words that become her refrain: “My servants, interpret this dream to be a good omen, not evil.” Next she sees crazed camels and forty *aždarxos*, who carry a mighty eagle; the eagle flies to her and touches her head with its wing. Then someone holds her by the arms and the *aždarxos* bite off her tongue. A tiger appears and grasps her as she tries to flee.¹⁷ Again, Barčīn repeats her refrain: “My servants, interpret this dream to be a good omen, not evil.” The dream continues: the upper ring of Barčīn's yurt falls in and her hair becomes disheveled; she attempts to bind her hair while maidens re-arrange her bed. At the end, Barčīn again, but now in longer form, asks for an interpretation. It is hard to guess the meaning of the dream, she says: “What could this dream mean, maidens? Explain. Interpret this accursed dream to be a good omen, not evil.”¹⁸

Suksur-ai immediately interprets the dream. There is no reason to be upset, she says. The new moon is the god's messenger and the four stars are the Righteous Caliphs. The crazed camels and *aždarxos* are the

Uzbek poet, Khamid Alimdzhan (Tashkent 1939). Abdurakhimov's vastly more precise and complete translation into Russian was published alongside a full scholarly edition of the Uzbek text in 1999 (Mirzaev, Abdurakhimov, and Mirbadaleva 1999).

¹⁵ *Alpāmiš* of Fāzil Yoldaš-oĝli (1928) 93 (Mirzaev, Abdurakhimov, and Mirbadaleva 1999:145/508). Here and below I follow the edition of Mirzaev, Abdurakhimov, and Mirbadaleva (1999) in referring to Fāzil Yoldaš-oĝli's *Alpāmiš*. Prose and verse passages are numbered separately (in this case, 93 refers to the prose passage introducing the dream, which follows immediately, beginning with verse 2626). The first page number (145) refers to the Uzbek text, the second (508) to its Russian translation.

¹⁶ *Alpāmiš* of Fāzil Yoldaš-oĝli (1928) 2627–2632 (Mirzaev, Abdurakhimov, and Mirbadaleva 1999:145–146/509). The word *aždarxo* seems to be a borrowing from Iranian, a derivative from the name of the three-headed Avestan dragon Aži Dahāka (e.g., Yt.14.40), though I have not been able to find a confirmation of this in the technical literature.

¹⁷ *Alpāmiš* of Fāzil Yoldaš-oĝli (1928) 2638–2645 (Mirzaev, Abdurakhimov, and Mirbadaleva 1999:146/509).

¹⁸ *Alpāmiš* of Fāzil Yoldaš-oĝli (1928) 2651–2653 (Mirzaev, Abdurakhimov, and Mirbadaleva 1999:146/509).

thirty-three thousand faithful in Medina. The forty *aždarxos* who carry an eagle in Barčín's dream are interpreted as forty spirits known as *čiltans*, who help the faithful. The eagle they carry is *Alpāmiš*, and the dream means that he will arrive tomorrow at noon. The tiger is also *Alpāmiš*, who will soon embrace her. Even the damaged yurt is a good omen: the broken upper ring means that ninety Kalmyks will perish.¹⁹ This last point of Suksur-ai's interpretation is based on the fact that attached to the central ring are ninety poles supporting the yurt and that the number of Barčín's Kalmyk's suitors is also ninety.²⁰ Barčín's disheveled hair signifies that the blood of the ninety warriors will be spilled. She should expect *Alpāmiš* tomorrow and should be full of joy, concludes Suksur-ai. Barčín rewards Suksur for this interpretation with a golden coin and rejoices along with her attendants, who at once run out into the street and look out for *Alpāmiš*.²¹

There are several details here that strikingly resemble the *Odyssey*, for example the representation of the hero-bridegroom as a bird of prey and the presence of a meaningful number (ninety poles for Barčín, twenty geese for Penelope), although these details, unsurprisingly, correlate only approximately.²² There are other versions of Barčín's dream where no birds of prey are present, and the meaningful number corresponds to the suitors in Barčín's case, but not, in my opinion, in the case of Penelope, who has a hundred and eight suitors, but only twenty geese.²³ More important for my present purposes is an aspect of this narrative that may be blindingly obvious, but which has to be emphasized all the same, since the corresponding element in the *Odyssey* can be easily overlooked: the fact that Barčín's dream seems terrible on the face of it, and that Barčín takes it as such initially. Only upon the correct interpretation does the dream turn out to be

¹⁹ *Alpāmiš* of Fāzil Yoldaš-oğli (1928) 2654–2680 (Mirzaev, Abdurakhimov, and Mirbadaleva 1999:146–147/509–510).

²⁰ Abdurakhimov in Mirzaev, Abdurakhimov, and Mirbadaleva 1999:806n92

²¹ *Alpāmiš* of Fāzil Yoldaš-oğli (1928) 2681–2701 (Mirzaev, Abdurakhimov, and Mirbadaleva 1999:147/510).

²² For more on birds of prey in the dreams of Barčín and Penelope, see below.

²³ *Odyssey* 19.536. See Pratt 1994 on the significance of the number, and Levaniouk 2011:231–232 on the significance of number twenty in the *Odyssey* and for an argument against equating “twenty” with “many” and hence with the suitors.

favorable. This feature makes the dream stand out among the other dreams in the *dastan*. Both Barč'in and Alpāmiš have several prophetic or mystical dreams, and on several occasions, including this one, they dream of each other simultaneously. The first such occasion is perhaps more than a dream, since the mysterious spirits or saints (*čiltans*) remove the souls of Alpāmiš and Barč'in and bring them together. Once the two protagonists awaken, however, they consider the events of the past night to have been a dream. Both wake up hopeful and full of renewed affection for each other, and neither is in need of an interpreter's help.²⁴ On the second occasion both betrothed again dream of each other, but the two dreams are dissimilar. Alpāmiš sees a messenger from Allah who assures the hero that the legendary saint Šaximardan is by his side and that he will overcome the Kalmyks. Nothing is said about Alpāmiš' awakening on this occasion, and no interpretation is mentioned.²⁵ Barč'in, by contrast, sees a terrifying and violent dream, which has to be interpreted by Suksur-ai, whose interpretation completely reverses the dreamer's initial impression. This appears to be a crucial characteristic of Barč'in's dream, especially since, in spite of many differences in detail, the reversing interpretation of this dream is present in all three versions of the epic.

The second telling of Barč'in's dream comes from the performance by Saidmurād Panāh-oğli.²⁶ Although most Uzbek *baxši* seem to be professional, he was not: he worked as a herdsman and day-laborer and it is not known how he acquired his art and who his teacher was, although he did belong to the Nurota school of singers, influenced by Kazakh and Karakalpak traditions. In 1938 a thirteen-year-old school boy from the same village as the singer recorded his *Alpāmiš*.²⁷

²⁴ *Alpāmiš* of Fāzil Yoldaš-oğli (1928) prose 87–89 and verse 2386–2477 (Mirzaev, Abdurakhimov, and Mirbadaleva 1999:138–141/501–504.)

²⁵ *Alpāmiš* of Fāzil Yoldaš-oğli (1928) prose 92–93 and verse 2595–2623 (Mirzaev, Abdurakhimov, and Mirbadaleva 1999:144–145/508).

²⁶ Text and translation into German, with commentary, in Reichl 2001. This *Alpāmiš* consists of 1755 verses, interspersed with prose.

²⁷ Mirzaev, Abdurakhimov, and Mirbadaleva 1999:796 (variant number 8), Reichl 2001:89–90.

In this version, Barčín asks her mother to interpret the dream. The episode is in strophes, with Barčín and her mother taking turns. Again, the dream is disturbing and Barčín says that she is full of pain and fear. “If only you, my beloved mother, could interpret my dream for the better!” she requests, and this becomes her refrain, repeated, with variation, in every stanza.²⁸ Barčín sees a hawk, which flies from Qongirot and tears apart many birds on the banks of the Gurgon (214–216). Her mother explains that the hawk is Alpāmiš and the bird he tears apart is the Kalmyk hero Qaradžan (218–221). The hawk alights on Barčín’s yurt, and then a wolf appears and tears her sheep apart (222–224). “Take pain and worry out of my heart!” (223) exclaims Barčín, which, of course, her mother does, saying that the gray wolf too is Barčín’s beloved, and the sheep are the Kalmyk (227–229). Barčín goes on with her dream: the hawk flies to her, and lands with his claws on her breast (230–232). When Alpāmiš returns he will come to Barčín and touch her breast, responds her mother (234–237). Barčín says that the hawk dug his claws painfully into her thigh, drawing blood (238–240). When Barčín’s beloved arrives, he will come to her and put his hand on her thigh, her mother interprets (242–244). “Right away will you see your Alpāmiš!” she concludes (245).

There are obvious similarities between this dream and the one Barčín sees in Fāzil Yoldaš-oğli’s *Alpāmiš*, just as there are obvious differences. In both versions a bird of prey appears and is initially taken as a threat by Barčín, only to be later identified with Alpāmiš. In both cases, Barčín is attacked and in pain, but, strikingly, the claws and teeth of predators are revealed to presage the embraces of her beloved. In Saidmurād Panāh-oğli’s version the attack is directed not only against Barčín herself but also against her livelihood: the wolf attacks her sheep. In Fāzil Yoldaš-oğli’s version the flocks are not mentioned and instead it is Barčín’s yurt that is destroyed. Looking ahead, the similarities with Penelope’s dream are hard to overlook: there too an eagle appears and attacks Penelope’s household by destroying her geese, just as the wolf in Barčín’s dream destroys the sheep; and just as the eagle

²⁸ *Alpāmiš* of Saidmurād Panāh-oğli (1938) 206–245, refrain at 209, 217, 225, 233, 241.

or hawk in Barčín's dream is revealed to be Alpāmiš, so the eagle of Penelope's dream is revealed to be Odysseus.

The third version of Barčín's dream comes from the epic as performed by Berdiyoy Pirimqul-oğli, known as Berdi-baxši (Berdi the Singer), whose dates of birth and death are unknown; he came from a village called Evalak in the district of Piskent. Like our other two singers, Berdi-baxši was illiterate. In 1926 the poet and scholar Abdulla Alaviy wrote down his *Alpāmiš*, which consists of 2952 verses interspersed with prose.²⁹

Here Barčín tells the dream to a servant girl, Oqsuluv. As always, the dream is worrying and Barčín asks Oqsuluv to interpret it. The dialogue is in strophes, but the speakers do not alternate. Rather, Barčín narrates her dream in four strophes and Oqsuluv responds to it, point by point, in four strophes of her own. In the dream a strong wind is blowing (strophe 1); it makes the felt covering the top of the yurt fly away (strophe 2); the wind rubs the felt of the yurt against the wooden structure (strophe 3); and it loosens the ropes around the yurt (strophe 4). Oqsuluv explains: a strong wind means that Alpāmiš is coming (strophe 1); the felt on the top of the yurt is the scarf on Barčín's head (strophe 2); the felt in the middle is Barčín's blouse (strophe 3); the yurt ropes are Barčín's belt (strophe 4).³⁰

As in the other versions of Barčín's dream, an attack (of predators there, of the wind here) is understood as contact with the hero, which seems sexual and presumably presages the marriage of the two betrothed. This seems especially clear in Berdi-baxši's version, where the loosened coverings of the yurt turn out to correspond to Barčín's clothes. Overall this version of the episode seems much less reminiscent of the *Odyssey* than the other two dreams: there is no bird of prey to turn into Barčín's bridegroom, no killing of her domestic animals. Instead, Barčín herself seems to be metonymically equated with the

²⁹ Mirzaev, Abdurakhimov, and Mirbadaleva 1999:795 (variant number 4), Reichl 2001:87–89.

³⁰ Mirzaev 1969:27–28 (the reference here is to pages; lines are not numbered in this edition). I am grateful to Prof. Karl Reichl for his help with translation.

yurt, so that undressing of the latter stands for the undressing of the former, something that has no immediate parallel in the *Odyssey*.

Its lack of surface parallels to the *Odyssey*, however, does not make Barčın's dream in Berdi-baxşı's version any less valuable for the purposes of comparison. On the contrary, it reveals all the more clearly the general structural similarities between all the dreams in question. Viewed together, the three versions of Barčın's dream illustrate both the wide span of variation within this episode and the persistence of a certain structural and narrative logic, which is all the more remarkable when viewed as part of the variation. In one of the dreams there are monsters and a tiger and an eagle, in another there is a hawk and a wolf, and in the third there are no animals or monsters whatsoever, but a violent wind instead. All the same, in all three versions there is an attack on Barčın herself or her yurt, a terrible and violent event which is then interpreted as the opposite of what it seems to be: not the destruction, but the fulfillment of Barčın's hope, the arrival of Alpāmiš. In all versions, Barčın sees a bad and violent dream and asks for a positive interpretation, her plea becoming the refrain in more than one version of the episode. The interpretation is offered and, one by one, the things that seemed terrifying turn out to be hopeful; pain turns to joy. In all cases, the dream comes true, and comes true almost immediately.³¹

With that, let me now turn to the *Odyssey* and in particular to the famous scene in which Penelope asks Odysseus to respond to her dream. The interpretation happens not in the morning, but at night, at the end of a long conversation between Odysseus disguised as a beggar and Penelope. Penelope tells her guest that it has become hard for her to postpone marriage with one of the suitors and then, all of a sudden, says:

³¹ In two of the three versions the dream comes true on the same day, but in Fāzil Yoldaş-oğlı's *Alpāmiš* there is an intervening episode during which Alpāmiš becomes friends with the Kalmyk hero Quaradzhan, converts him, and stays with him as guest for one night. Curiously, although Suksur-ai correctly predicts that Alpāmiš will arrive "tomorrow at noon" (95), the other servant girls begin to run out and look at the road immediately after the interpretation takes place (2699–2700) (Mirzaev, Abdurakhimov, and Mirbadaleva 1999:510).

ἀλλ' ἄγε μοι τὸν ὄνειρον ὑπόκριναι καὶ ἄκουσον

Odyssey 19.535

But come respond to my dream and listen to it.

In the dream Penelope has twenty geese and takes pleasure in them, but an eagle comes from the mountain, kills them all, and flies off:

χῆνές μοι κατὰ οἶκον ἐείκοσι πυρὸν ἔδουσι
 ἐξ ὕδατος, καὶ τέ σφιν ἰαίνομαι εἰσορώσα·
 ἐλθὼν δ' ἐξ ὄρεος μέγας αἰετὸς ἀγκυλοχείλης
 πᾶσι κατ' αὐχένας ἤξε καὶ ἔκτανεν· οἱ δ' ἐκέχυντο
 ἀθρόοι ἐν μεγάρῳ, ὃ δ' ἐς αἰθέρα διὰν ἀέρθη.

Odyssey 19.536–540

I have twenty geese at home, they eat wheat
 out of the water, and I delight in looking at them.
 But a great eagle with a curved beak came from the
 mountain
 and broke each one's neck and killed them all. And they
 lay
 in a heap in the house, while the eagle rose up high into
 the shining ether.

Still within the dream, Penelope cries and the Achaean women gather around her. Then the eagle returns and talks to her in a human voice, interpreting the dream:

ἄψ δ' ἐλθὼν κατ' ἄρ' ἔζετ' ἐπὶ προὔχοντι μελάθρῳ,
 φωνῆ δὲ βροτέῃ κατερήτυε φώνησέν τε·
 “θάρσει, Ἰκαρίου κούρη τηλεκλειτοῖο
 οὐκ ὄναρ, ἀλλ' ὕπαρ ἐσθλόν, ὃ τοι τετελεσμένον ἔσται.
 χῆνες μὲν μνηστῆρες, ἐγὼ δέ τοι αἰετὸς ὄρνις
 ἧα πάρος, νῦν αὖτε τεὸς πόσις εἰλήλουθα
 ὃς πᾶσι μνηστῆρσιν ἀεικέα πότμον ἐφήσω.”

Odyssey 19.544–550

And the eagle came back and settled on a projecting roof-
beam,
and in a human voice consoled me and spoke to me:
“Take heart, daughter of far-famed Ikarios.
This is not a dream, but a welcome waking sight, and it
will come to fulfillment.
The geese are the suitors, and I was an eagle before,
but now I have come back and I am your husband,
and I will bring an ugly death upon all of the suitors.”

The dream has proved to be an abiding puzzle in Homeric scholarship for several reasons, two of which I focus on here. First, there is disagreement about what the geese stand for. The scholarly consensus is that the geese are the suitors and Penelope's pleasure in them is a reflection of the secret pleasure she takes, consciously or unconsciously, in the suitors' company, and the secret regret she feels at the loss of their attentions.³² A different interpretation has been proposed by Finley and developed and substantiated by Pratt, namely that the twenty geese stand, in effect, for Penelope's household, for the “state of half-orderliness,” as Finley puts it, that she has maintained. More specifically, as Pratt has argued, the twenty geese, symbols of conjugal fidelity and good guardians of the house, stand for the twenty years that Penelope herself has been such a guardian, hence the number of the geese.³³

The interpretation equating the geese with the suitors from the very beginning is problematic on several counts. Penelope expresses her affection for the suitors nowhere else, but instead rather un sentimentally wishes them all dead (*Odyssey* 17.546–547). Penelope specifically mentions twenty as the number of her geese, and this number corresponds to the often-mentioned number of years that

³² E.g., Devereux 1957:382, Rankin 1962:622, Austin 1975:229–31, Russo 1982:8–10, 1992:102, Murnaghan 1987:130, Felson-Rubin 1987:71–74, Katz 1991:146–147, Felson 1994:32, Ahl and Roisman 1996:235–236, McDonald 1997:16. On the dream as a form of divination see Amory 1963:106 and Allione 1963:90–91.

³³ Finley 1978:247, Pratt 1994. For more on Penelope and water birds, see Bader 1998 and Levaniouk 1999.

Odysseus is absent and does not remotely correspond to the number of the suitors.³⁴ Penelope's mention of Achaean women who cry along with her (19.542–543) is hard to understand on the assumption that the geese are suitors, since from the beginning of the poem public opinion seems to be in favor of Penelope's remaining faithful to Odysseus whatever the cost (2.136–137, cf. 16.75, 19.527). Further, if it is hard to imagine the other Achaean women joining Penelope in a questionable lament for the suitors, it is even harder to imagine Penelope confessing such a fantasy to anyone, let alone a male stranger or a man she at least suspects of being her husband.

If Penelope grieves over the loss of her household with all its hopes, on the other hand, then the number of the geese is perfectly fitting, the lament is equally so, and the other women may indeed be expected to join in it. This interpretation, however, has not won acceptance because, as some scholars point out, it “disregards the obvious meaning of the text”³⁵ and goes against “the interpretation provided within our dream itself.”³⁶

I do not think we should base our solution to this question on the *Alpāmiš*, but I do believe that the *Alpāmiš* can help in testing our hypotheses about it. It has actually been argued, in support of Pratt's interpretation of the dream, that the equation of geese and suitors is presented as a distinct and striking *reversal* and therefore *cannot* apply to the first part of the dream.³⁷ The shift in the symbolism of the geese is supported by the distinction drawn between ὄναρ and ὕπαρ (οὐκ ὄναρ, ἀλλ' ὕπαρ, 19.547) and by the explicit now-then contrast in the eagle's speech (πάρος, νῦν αὖτε, 19.549).

The *Alpāmiš* is helpful both for bolstering this hypothesis and, perhaps more importantly, for explaining why it is not obvious. Taking Barčīn's dream as a guiding pattern it seems that, in some sense, Penelope's dream is only the first five verses: the eagle comes, kills the geese and flies away. What Penelope says next is “and I cried and

³⁴ Levaniouk 2011:231–232.

³⁵ Katz 1991:146.

³⁶ Rozokoki 2001:2n6.

³⁷ Levaniouk 2011:231

wailed” (αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ κλαῖον καὶ ἐκώκυον, *Odyssey* 19.541). As Penelope utters these words, it is easy to think that she has now woken up and is distressed about her dream, just as Barčīn is in the *Alpāmiš*. The Achaean women gather around her as she cries, just as some female company is at Barčīn’s side when she wakes up worried about her dream. But Penelope has not woken up: the dream continues, and there is a clarification in verse 541, strengthened by the emphatic/concessive particle περ:

αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ κλαῖον καὶ ἐκώκυον ἔν περ ὄνειρῳ

Odyssey 19.541

but I cried and lamented, in the dream [or: “even though in the dream”].

Why this emphasis? Perhaps it is there because, as the narratives of Barčīn’s dream suggest, what Penelope describes now and will describe next would ordinarily happen upon awakening. Apart from this, however, the next steps are reminiscent of the *Alpāmiš* scenes. Penelope is distressed, but there is someone next to her who offers encouragement and interprets her dream positively. The unusual part is that it is not one of the women, but the eagle—even though he had disappeared into the ether just a minute ago. Now the eagle returns and sits on the roof and speaks the words that have occasioned so much discussion in Homeric scholarship: χῆνες μὲν μνηστῆρες (“the geese are the suitors,” *Odyssey* 19.548). It is because of this statement that the argument that the twenty geese stand for the twenty years—and indeed any argument that the geese are not the suitors in the first part of the dream—has been so hard to advance.

I think we would violate nothing in the diction or the narrative of the *Odyssey* by taking the eagle’s statement as a reversing interpretation of Penelope’s dream, something that would preclude equating the geese with the suitors from the beginning. In Fāzil Yoldaš-oġli’s *Alpāmiš*, Barčīn dreams of the destruction of her yurt and is distressed, but later Suksur-ai explains that the poles of the yurt correspond to the suitors and Barčīn’s fear turns to joy. It would be odd to suggest (and, to

my knowledge, no one does so) that Barčín is secretly in love with the Kalmyks on account of her grief over the yurt since at the time when she experiences the grief she does not yet know that the poles stand for her suitors.

The same, I submit, goes for Penelope. The eagle does for her *mutatis mutandis* exactly what Suksur-ai does for Barčín, when he says “take heart” (θάρασει, *Odyssey* 19.546) and turns a bad omen into a good one, just as Suksur-ai says “Do not grieve” and explains why the apparently bad dream is in fact good.³⁸ For Barčín, the number of the poles is meaningless and irrelevant prior to Suksur-ai’s interpretation; for Penelope, on the contrary, the number is meaningful until the eagle’s interpretation, which renders it no longer relevant.

Accepting the interpretation of Penelope’s dream suggested by Finley and Pratt deepens the parallel with Barčín’s dream. If the geese symbolize the twenty years of Penelope’s guardianship and, more generally, her household, which she has kept intact for Odysseus, then they are indeed reminiscent of Barčín’s yurt, her protected territory, intact and off-limits to Kalmyk suitors just as Barčín herself is. In each woman’s dream, her treasure (yurt, flocks, bed, geese) is destroyed before the arrival of the husband or suitor for whom this treasure was kept intact, and the destruction is the source of pain and grief. Once the dream is interpreted, however, the destruction turns out to stand for the very event the bride-to-be has been waiting for—the arrival of the hero—and the terrifying attacker turns out to be none other than the hero himself.

The complexity of the Odyssean episode is caused in large part by the fact that in *Odyssey* the interpretation is offered within the dream itself and, moreover, by the eagle himself. Once the eagle assures Penelope that the geese are the suitors, one might expect him to say next “and the eagle is Odysseus,” but of course, we are still within the dream and the eagle is sitting, as eagle, before Penelope. What results is a strange statement:

³⁸ Fāzil Yoldaš-oglı’s *Alpāmiš* (1928) 2654 (Mirzaev, Abdurakhimov, and Mirbadaleva 1999:146/509.

χῆνες μὲν μνηστῆρες, ἐγὼ δὲ τοι αἰετὸς ὄρνις
ἦα πάρος, νῦν αὖτε τεδὸς πόσις εἰλήλουθα,
ὄς πᾶσι μνηστῆρσιν ἀεικέα πότμον ἐφήσω

Odyssey 19.548–550

The geese are the suitors, and I used to be an eagle before [says the eagle, even though he is still an eagle as he speaks] but now I am your husband and I am here, and I will bring ugly destruction upon the suitors.

The comparison with Barčín’s dream underscores the structural peculiarities of the dream Penelope tells to Odysseus. In effect, Penelope claims to see not just the dream, but the whole narrative episode: the bad dream, her own reaction, and the hopeful reversing interpretation. It is not impossible that at the time when *Odyssey* took shape in Greece there were songs where women on the eve of their beloved’s arrival had dreams, and that these songs followed a pattern reminiscent of what we find in the *Alpāmiš*. Penelope’s dream in the *Odyssey* certainly does follow this pattern, and the particular variation it adds to it stands out all the more sharply against the background of the pattern itself. In a remarkable twist of the expected pattern, the reversing interpretation is offered by a character within the dream (the eagle) who is identified with the hero whose arrival the dream presages, and who is simultaneously the audience for the telling of the dream. The surprising and counter-factual words coming from the eagle are the very words that the beggar-Odysseus³⁹ could truthfully utter: it is as if the eagle speaks for him.

What is the reason for such mind-bending complexity? Why does the eagle of Penelope’s dream come back to play her friend? The comparison of Penelope’s dream with Barčín’s makes these questions

³⁹ This utterance contains several verbal markers that underline its polyvalence, see Bonifazi 2012:249. In particular, Bonifazi argues that at *Odyssey* 19.549 αὖτε, a discourse marker that indicates “emotional discontinuity,” conveys both the surprise (“counter-expectancy”) of the eagle’s counter-factual statement and his “emphatic identification” with Odysseus who sits at this moment before Penelope.

more acute. There can be little doubt that the real Odysseus, sitting at this moment across from Penelope, could have played the role of the interpreter. When Helen in Book 15 sees an eagle carrying a goose she needs no help in interpreting this sight as an omen of Odysseus' return and the suitors' destruction. If Penelope performed for her guest just the first four verses, ending with the eagle disappearing into the ether, would Odysseus not be able to provide an interpretation? He is not given the chance: the eagle utters the only true interpretation and the disguised Odysseus is left to repeat it:

τὴν δ' ἀπαμειβόμενος προσέφη πολύμητις Ὀδυσσεύς·
 “ὦ γύναι, οὐ πως ἔστιν ὑποκρίνασθαι ὄνειρον
 ἄλλη ἀποκλίναντ', ἐπεὶ ἦ ῥά τοι αὐτὸς Ὀδυσσεύς
 πέφραδ' ὅπως τελέει μνηστῆρσι δὲ φαίνεται ὄλεθρος
 πᾶσι μάλ', οὐδέ κέ τις θάνατον καὶ κῆρας ἀλύξει.”

Odyssey 19.554–558

Responding to her much-devising Odysseus spoke:
 “Lady, there is no way to respond to the dream
 by turning it another way, since Odysseus himself
 told you how it will come to fulfillment. Doom is apparent
 for the suitors,
 all of them, and not one of them will escape death and
 destruction.”

This confirmed and repeated interpretation underscores the difference between what happens inside the dream and what is going on between Odysseus and Penelope as they sit and talk by the fire. As I will argue presently, the same interpretation plays a different role in two narratives: within the dream, Penelope is distressed and in need of encouragement, but out of the dream, in the macro-narrative of the *Odyssey*, she is not puzzled by any vision and needs no interpretation. Before coming to this point, however, it is necessary to consider the larger context in which Penelope tells her dream, since the strangeness of Penelope's dream has to do in part with how the dream fits into her conversation with Odysseus.

The question of the larger context, in its turn, brings me to the second scholarly debate regarding the dream, namely, what it has to do with that which immediately follows—Penelope’s decision to hold the bow contest for her hand on the very next day. Why does she make this decision at this point? Of the multiple proposed solutions to this question I will mention only two that are of immediate relevance. One possibility, in my opinion the likeliest, is that Penelope knows, or at least supposes, that the beggar is Odysseus and that is why she decides to have the contest. The prevalent opinion of recent scholarship, on the contrary, is that Penelope does not know who her guest is. Many scholars have argued that Penelope’s decision is opaque and her behavior ambivalent and contradictory, and meant to be so.⁴⁰ Some see Penelope’s decision as rational, but taken in ignorance of the beggar’s identity because her situation is such that she simply cannot wait any longer. The fact that she takes this decision in Odysseus’ presence is, on that view, a coincidence and a source of narrative irony.⁴¹ Another popular opinion is that Penelope has a premonition about the beggar and makes her decision unconsciously or intuitively.⁴² The Freudian bend of some arguments for her intuitive recognition has been rejected by later scholarship, but not so the notion that Penelope’s decision is irrational and driven by unknown supernatural forces: through some mysterious and divine mechanism of the cosmos Penelope has a prophetic feeling that the time for the bow contest has come.⁴³

The only (as far as I know) extensive comparison of Penelope’s dream to that of Barčín in recent scholarship is in fact used to bolster the latter solution. Grossardt turns to the evidence of the *Alpāmiš* to argue that “irrational” and supernatural phenomena are a traditional part of return poetry, and that Penelope’s prophetic intuition expressed in her dream should be recognized as one of them.⁴⁴ In the Uzbek epic, Barčín and *Alpāmiš* are mysteriously attuned to each other

⁴⁰ Murnaghan 1986 and 1987, Felson-Rubin 1987, Katz 1991, Felson 1994.

⁴¹ Foley 1995, Heitman 2005.

⁴² E.g. Amory 1963 and Austin 1975 argue for an unconscious recognition, Russo 1982 for an intuitive response to the beggar’s presence.

⁴³ Grossardt 2006.

⁴⁴ Grossardt 2006.

and aided by saints and spirits. In the *Odyssey* too husband and wife are also almost physically attuned to each other and so it seems possible that Penelope would sense Odysseus' return without knowing it, which, in this case, is what compels her to stage the bow contest. The argument is that, given the many parallels between the *Odyssey* and the *Alpāmiš*, and given the fact that Barčīn sees a prophetic dream right before Alpāmiš arrives, Penelope's dream is also best understood as her prophetic anticipation of Odysseus' arrival.

I agree in general that supernatural phenomena are indeed present in both epics, but such a general comparison sheds little light on the mechanics of a particular scene in the *Odyssey*. In the case of *Odyssey* 19, I disagree with the suggestion that Penelope's dream is best understood as a prophetic and intuitive anticipation of Odysseus' return, and that the evidence of the *Alpāmiš* supports this view.⁴⁵ In fact, I submit that such a dream would not constitute a good parallel to Barčīn's. In the *Alpāmiš*, the episode is more complex: it is not the case that Barčīn simply sees a prophetic dream and through it comes to sense the approach of her beloved. On the contrary, Barčīn sees a terrible dream and is at first unhappy about it. Only upon interpretation does she accept it as a prophecy of Alpāmiš' arrival. I submit that in the *Odyssey* as well, Penelope's telling of the dream does indeed turn into a prophecy, but only because of the way it is told and interpreted. Moreover, rather than confirm the reality of a supernatural dream, I think that the *Alpāmiš* strengthens the old (if hardly popular) hypotheses that Penelope's dream is not presented as a real dream at all.⁴⁶

Previously, *Alpāmiš* has been brought to bear on the interpretation of Penelope's dream to some extent, but what was absent from earlier analysis is the consideration of more than one version of the Uzbek epic. While Grossardt based his conclusions on the *Alpāmiš* of Saidmurād Panāh-oḡli as translated by Reichl, I, in my previous work,

⁴⁵ This is not to say that Penelope's telling of the dream does not constitute prophetic speech. On Penelope's telling of the dream as prophecy see Nagy 2002:141–142 and Levaniouk 2011:240–243.

⁴⁶ On the dream as Penelope's creation see Büchner 1940:149n1, Harsh 1950:16, Winkler 1990:154, Newton 1998:144–145.

relied on Fāzil Yoldaş-ođli's epic as translated by Pen'kovsky.⁴⁷ Such comparisons based on a single *comparandum* are certainly valuable, but considering the same episode in three different performances is enlightening in a different way. The living fluidity of the Uzbek epic allows an observer to distinguish between what is more persistent and what is more transitory and discern a pattern that is not apparent from looking at a single example. The pattern that becomes visible through such a comparison is itself a multiform: it is varied in each poem and in the *Odyssey* it takes a shape that is both particularly suited to its context and particularly revealing.

To return to the context, in my opinion the *Odyssey* gives us little reason to think that Penelope sees any dream about geese whatsoever. There are only two dreams in Homer that are narrated entirely by a character without being confirmed by the poetic voice. One of them is doubtless a lie, is presented as such, and has spawned no scholarly controversy. It happens in Book 14, where the disguised Odysseus tells Eumaeus how he once, at Troy, nearly perished from cold but finally acquired a cloak with Odysseus' help (*Odyssey* 14.459–506). Within this tale, Odysseus devises a stratagem to assist his freezing friend: he claims, not coincidentally, to have seen a prophetic dream which informed him that someone should run for reinforcements (14.495–498). Thoas volunteers to run and, not to be hindered, abandons his cloak, which is then used by the narrator (14.499–502). The dream in the cloak narrative is represented as Odysseus' clever device for achieving his ends and has nothing to do with anyone's nighttime visions: if there were no need for a cloak, there would have been no dream.

The second such unconfirmed dream is Penelope's dream in *Odyssey* 19. Like the other fabricated dream in Homer, it is a tale prompted by the needs of the moment and depends on what has happened so far in the conversation. Winkler states simply that "Penelope is here inventing a dream as a way of further safe communication with this

⁴⁷ Grossardt 2006, Reichl 2001; Levaniouk 2011:235–236, Pen'kovsky 1982.

fascinating stranger.”⁴⁸ One could, of course, imagine that Penelope saw this dream at some unknown point in the past and has kept quiet about it, but nothing in the *Odyssey* warrants such an assumption. And when did she see it? If we are guided by the *Alpāmiš*, then one of the salient features of Barčín’s dream is its timing, directly prior to *Alpāmiš*’ arrival. From this point of view Penelope’s *narrative* of the dream takes place during the very night when she should be *seeing* it.

My suggestion is that in the *Odyssey* instead of seeing the dream, Penelope performs for Odysseus a song about a dream, a dream tale, and her performance represents a variation on a particular traditional theme, something not unlike the episode with Barčín’s dream in the *Alpāmiš*. Within her own song, Penelope is like Barčín: she is distressed by a dream about the destruction of her treasured household and comforted by its reversing interpretation. Within the *Odyssey*, Penelope is not like Barčín. She is, instead, a singer of tales, who knows how to perform such songs and can adjust the tale to the circumstance of its performance. On this occasion, she creates a striking variation on a traditional pattern to serve the needs of the moment. Penelope performs Barčín. She does so with a mastery of the tradition, and with ulterior motives.

Why does Penelope not allow her guest to interpret the dream himself? Partly, I think, because, unlike Barčín, she not asking for advice, nor is she asking what might happen next. Instead, she is telling her guest what should happen. In the very conversation that leads up to the dream, the beggar-Odysseus swears that Odysseus will return on the next day, and so the eagle says openly what Odysseus himself, in his disguise as a beggar, has said in veiled form (*Odyssey* 19.303–307). Penelope’s dream is prophetic not because it is a real dream but rather because she utters a prophecy in the form of a dream-tale. In other words, she makes her dream-tale into a prophecy by virtue of

⁴⁸ Winkler 1990:154. The dream is seen as Penelope’s creation also by Büchner 1940:149n1, Harsh 1950:16 See also Clayton 2004:45–46 on the dream as a self-referential text “centered on self-interpretation and generation of meaning,” which, however, can generate meaning endlessly, thus ultimately eluding interpretation.

performing it as such.⁴⁹ Based on the understanding she has reached with and about her guest, Penelope creates a prophetic dream of the kind she would be likely to see if she were in a song where her husband comes back on the next day. By doing so she in effect makes the next day into the day of her husband's return. The dream narrative becomes functionally a real oracular vision and Odysseus asserts, in response, that it can receive no interpretation different from that of the eagle.

But the vision that prompts all this is not a dream, and there might be a hint at this fact in Penelope's own words. Yet another peculiarity of Penelope's performance is verse 19.547, in which the eagle says:

οὐκ ὄναρ, ἀλλ' ὕπαρ ἐσθλόν, ὃ τοι τετελεσμένον ἔσται.

This is not a dream but welcome waking sight, and it will come to fulfillment.

Penelope makes the eagle say that her vision is not an ὄναρ ('dream'), but a ὕπαρ ('waking sight'), paradoxically adding "one which will be fulfilled." The use of ὕπαρ in combination with τετελεσμένον ἔσται is highly unusual. A more typical usage is illustrated by the formulaic verse:

ᾧδε γὰρ ἐξερέω, καὶ μὴν τετελεσμένον ἔσται.

So I will say it, and it will come to fulfillment.⁵⁰

What precedes the expressions τετελεσμένον ἔσται and τετελεσμένον εἶη is usually a "word" or a "thought" (e.g. ἔπος at *Odyssey* 15.536, 17.163, and 19.309, μῦθον at *Iliad* 1.388, ἧ̄ περ δὴ φρονέω at *Iliad* 9.310), a promise or prediction that has not come to fulfillment yet, but, the speaker asserts, will do so in the future. This expression is not in fact

⁴⁹ A parallel case is the beggar-Odysseus' sworn prediction that "Odysseus will come within this very *lukabas*" at *Odyssey* 19.303-307. This prediction echoes that of Theoclymenos in *Odyssey* 17 and matches it exactly in parts (cf. *Odyssey* 17.155-156 and 19.303-304). Penelope responds with identical words to both predictions (17.163-165=19.309-311), and so in effect the beggar-Odysseus utters a prophecy just as Theoclymenos does, even though Theoclymenos presumably derives his insight from a supernatural source, while Odysseus, of course, simply knows what he predicts.

⁵⁰ E.g. *Odyssey* 16.440 = 19.487 = *Iliad* 23.410, cf. variations at *Iliad* 2.257, 8.286, 8.401, 8.454, 23.673, *Odyssey* 2.187 = 17.229 = 18.82, 21.337, etc.

used of dreams in Homer, but the possibility of such use is suggested by Penelope's own words at 19.560–561:

ξεῖν', ἧ τοι μὲν ὄνειροι ἀμήχανοι ἀκριτόμουθοι
γίγνοντ', οὐδέ τι πάντα τελείεται ἀνθρώποισι.

Stranger, dreams are difficult to deal with and hard to
interpret,
and not everything comes to fulfillment for humans.

The use of τετελεσμένον ἔσται with ὕπαρ, on the other hand, is paradoxical, because ordinarily things that can be described as ὕπαρ have come to fulfillment already. In *Odyssey* 20, for example, when Penelope sees a dream so vivid she momentarily mistakes it for reality, she says that she had taken it to be ὕπαρ already, while it was still only a dream: οὐκ ἐφάμην ὄναρ ἔμμεναι, ἀλλ' ὕπαρ ἤδη (*Odyssey* 20.90). The use of ἤδη 'already' in this phrase underscores the differences between ὄναρ and ὕπαρ precisely with regard to their accomplishment: in contrast to ὄναρ, ὕπαρ has already come to fulfillment and can be seen by plain sight. A parallel usage is to be found in Pindar *Olympian* 13, where Bellerophon dreams that Athena brings him a bridle to subdue Pegasos, and this dream becomes reality. Athena really comes (ἐξ ὄνειρου δ' αὐτίκα | ἦν ὕπαρ, "and from being a dream it was waking sight at once," *Olympian* 13.66–67) and upon awakening Bellerophon really finds the bridle by his side.

The most likely etymology of ὕπαρ is suggested by Frisk, who saw in this word an ancient r/n derivative from the root of ὕπνος 'sleep', which was later supplanted by ὄναρ in the sense 'dream'.⁵¹ It is possible, therefore, that 'dream' was indeed the early meaning of ὕπαρ, but little trace of this meaning is detectable in actual usage, where the opposition with ὄναρ consigns ὕπαρ firmly to the realm of wakefulness. Just

⁵¹ Frisk 1966:361–365, Chantraine 1999 s.v. ὕπαρ. An alternative suggestion is that ὕπαρ is a playful creation based on the preposition ὑπό, formed as a contrasting term to ὄναρ, which, on this theory, was perceived in "popular etymology" to contain ὄν, the Aeolic form of the preposition ἀνά (Leumann 1950:126, 136). It seems unlikely, however, that ὄναρ would have been popularly etymologized as containing the preposition without the opposition with ὕπαρ being there to prompt this inference in the first place.

as this noun is frozen and restricted morphologically, being indeclinable, so it seems restricted contextually, appearing almost exclusively in opposition to *ὄναρ* or to *ὑπνος*, often in an adverbial sense. In later usage, *ὑπαρ* is mostly adverbial and means “awake” or “in actuality,” as in the expression *οὔτε ὄναρ οὔτε ὑπαρ* “neither asleep nor awake,” i.e. “not at all” (Plat. *Phlb.* 36e) or in Plato’s *ὑπαρ ἐγρηγορώς* “wide awake” (*Leg.* 800a). Although it is often assumed that in the *Odyssey* this word designates a true prophetic dream as opposed to a deceptive one, this assumption is not born out by the evidence and is inconsistent with the usage of this word in *Odyssey* 20 and Pindar.⁵² Further, such an assumption would mask the strangeness of what happens in Book 19: the eagle returns to re-interpret himself as Odysseus in Penelope’s performance while Odysseus sits before his wife, in plain sight though also in disguise. In this context, *ὑπαρ*, I suggest, applies directly to the vision Penelope tells and the eagle interprets and indirectly to what she does in fact see, the beggar in front of her. What is counter-factual within the dream tale is factual within the conversation between Penelope and the disguised Odysseus. The polyvalence of the eagle’s words is achieved in part by a sophisticated dislocation of traditional discourse patterns, a dislocation that results in a remarkable density of meaning.

The dream in *Odyssey* 19 is a striking performance, arguably the culmination of the dialogue between Penelope and Odysseus, and it bears many marks of its role in this dialogue. For all these distinctive features, however, Penelope also adheres remarkably well to the pattern evident in the *Alpāmiš*. Just like Barčín, Penelope in the dream experiences a violent attack, is distressed, and is presented with a drastically contrasting interpretation of the events, in which the worst news becomes the best. The crucial difference is that in the *Odyssey* Penelope herself is the creator of both the dream and its interpretation, and to give the interpreter’s role to the eagle is her poetic choice. In the course of the dialogue, the beggar-Odysseus has given Penelope veiled signs of his identity and has promised that Odysseus will kill the

⁵² Chantraine 1999 s.v. *ὑπαρ* refers to “la fameuse distinction entre les songes véridiques et les songes trompeurs.” Russo deduces from *Odyssey* 19 that *ὑπαρ* is “a vision of what will come true” (1992:114 s.v. *Odyssey* 20.90).

suitors. The eagle in Penelope's dream utters the same claims directly, and Penelope asks the beggar for his reaction, as if asking for a confirmation of the eagle's, and her own, interpretation of the signs. The confirmation is given when the beggar-Odysseus famously says:

ἦ ῥά τοι αὐτὸς Ὀδυσσεὺς
πέφραδ' ὅπως τελέει μνηστῆρσι δὲ φαίνεται ὄλεθρος

Odyssey 19.556–557

Odysseus himself
told how it will come to fulfillment: destruction is
apparent for the suitors.⁵³

This statement is yet another exercise in ambivalence, including the ambivalence of the pronoun αὐτός, which Bonifazi analyzes as marking the “coincidence between ‘Odysseus’ foretelling the *mnēstērophonia* and the speaking ‘I’ doing the same.”⁵⁴ Penelope made the eagle in her dream reach out to the beggar-Odysseus and identify with him, and now the beggar makes his return move by merging himself, Odysseus, and the eagle in his expression “αὐτὸς Ὀδυσσεύς.” He then goes on to reiterate and expand the eagle's prophecy about the death for the suitors.⁵⁵

The comparison of Barčín's dream to Penelope's is telling in spite of the fact that the poetic diction of the two epics is very different, as are the two scenes, and it is telling especially because the fluidity of the *Alpāmiš* reveals what is not apparent from the single version

⁵³ On this point see Winkler 1990:153. For a fuller discussion see also Levaniouk 2011:240–246.

⁵⁴ Bonifazi 2012:168.

⁵⁵ A further layer of polyvalence comes from the fact that the beggar-Odysseus has already predicted Odysseus' imminent return earlier in the dialogue (*Odyssey* 19.303–307). When the beggar says “αὐτὸς Ὀδυσσεύς” he may be merging the eagle (who spoke as Odysseus in Penelope's dream), himself in the moment of speech (as he confirms the eagle-Odysseus' prediction), and himself at an earlier moment, when he predicted that Odysseus would come “within this very *lukabas*, at the waning of one moon and waxing of another” (*Odyssey* 19.306–307). I am grateful to David Elmer for his suggestion regarding this additional layer of meaning.

of Penelope's dream we have in the *Odyssey*. Barčin's dream is a good comparison for Penelope's not only because the two epics are similar, but also because of what it suggests about the genre and occasion of Penelope's dream tale, its ecological niche. The genre in question, the story of a bride's prophetic dream, occupies a specific place in the ecosystem of traditional song, where it is a neighbor both to wedding songs and to divination, just as it also occupies a specific place in the ecology of epic. In the *Alpāmiš*, it is a feminine scene that immediately precedes the arrival of the hero and looks ahead to the wedding; it is a dramatic episode that mirrors the macro-narrative of the epic, in which hope is all but lost yet all is saved in the nick of time.

Singers of tales can quote a genre in its usual niche or dislocate it, but no genre can exist outside of its ecology, and dislocation depends on that. In the *Odyssey*, almost everything is dislocated: no real wedding is approaching; there is, in my opinion, no real dream; female supporting figures are absent; and the hero has already arrived. But when Penelope tells the disguised Odysseus her dream, she structures and positions her performance in such a way that it still fits into an ecological niche corresponding to that of Barčin's dream. The occasion is the eve of the bow contest, a prophecy is uttered and will be fulfilled, the eagle stands for the bridegroom, the reversal is vivid, and on the next day the hero will return "in the nick of time" to string his bow, even if the nick of time is, in this case, engineered by his own wife. The dream performance in the *Odyssey* does more than fit into a particular context: it brings its ecology with it so that its very presence underscores what kind of moment this is in the story.

Penelope's dream has some points of resemblance with the wedding songs of modern Greece. One such point is the presence of the eagle, since in Modern Greek songs the eagle often stands both for the warrior and for the bridegroom.⁵⁶ In a similar way, Odysseus is both the warrior and Penelope's "true" bridegroom in contrast to the suitors. If Penelope employs the poetics of the weddings songs to create her

⁵⁶ Levaniouk 2011:234 with references to Athanassakis 1994:124.

dream-tale, then *Alpāmiš* again provides a typological parallel.⁵⁷ Like Odysseus, *Alpāmiš* appears as an aggressive bird of prey, an eagle (in Fāzil Yoldaš-oğli's poem) or as a hawk (in that of Saidmurād Panāh-oğli) in Barčīn's dream, and this is evocative of the descriptions of love-making in some versions of the epic, descriptions which are themselves likely to employ the diction of wedding songs. In the Kazakh version of the epic by Maikot Sandybaev and Sultankul Akkožaeu, when he first makes love to Barčīn *Alpamys* is like falcon who catches a hare:⁵⁸

Like a falcon who snatched a hare
He pulled her to the bed.⁵⁹

The love-making of *Alpamys*' parents, which leads to the hero's conception, is described in a similar way in another Kazakh version of the epic, by Abdraim Bajtursunov:

Like a golden eagle
Approaches a red Altay fox,
extending his claws and throwing his head back,
Like a white gyrfalcon flies down,
Like a hawk grapples a duck,
So they two intertwined.⁶⁰

Returning to the Uzbek epic, at one occasion in Fāzil Yoldaš-oğli's version of the *Alpāmiš* the hero describes himself to his future friend Karajan as a falcon who failed to catch a duck and who now searches for her:

⁵⁷ I am very grateful to the anonymous referee of this paper for encouraging me to mention the similarities between Penelope's dream and wedding songs, for emphasizing the usefulness of the *Alpāmiš* as a typological parallel in this regard, and especially for alerting me to relevant examples from the Kazakh *Alpamys* poems, which I cite below.

⁵⁸ Sultankul Akkožaeu was Maikot Sandybaev's student and learned a distinct version of the epic from his teacher as the latter traveled and performed at the end of the nineteenth century. Akkožaeu's *Alpamys* was recorded in writing in 1948 when the singer was eighty years old. The manuscript was discovered during fieldwork in 1953 (Auezov and Smirnova 1961:459). In speaking about the Kazakh poems I adopt what seems to be the most widespread spelling of the Kazakh variant of the hero's name.

⁵⁹ Auezov and Smirnova 1961:37/237.

⁶⁰ Auezov and Smirnova 1961:117/326. This was written down in 1957, by the singer himself (Auezov and Smirnova 1961:499).

Learn that I am a nobleman from the Qongirot tribe.
 I failed to take a duck from Lake Kok-kamyš.
 A falcon is looking for that duck, that falcon is I.⁶¹

Commenting on this passage the editors say: “In this monologue the speech of *Alpāmiš* is full of riddling expressions that use the traditional similes (symbolism) of the folk wedding songs; the bride is the duck (or the female camel), for whom the groom (falcon, male camel) looks.”⁶² If figuring the bridegroom as a bird of prey is part of the traditional symbolism of Uzbek wedding songs, then Uzbek singers evoke such songs in Barčin’s dream. Homeric Penelope in making of her dream-tale does the same within her own tradition.

Finally, looking beyond both Greece and Central Asia, I should add that the bride’s dream is also attested as an element of traditional weddings in some parts of Russia.⁶³ The parallels here are less close than those between the *Odyssey* and the *Alpāmiš*, but what is noteworthy about the Russian evidence is the status of the dream: it is a part of the ritual, told by the bride at a set moment in the wedding, and its content is traditional. The dream is invariably terrifying and sad.⁶⁴ In one instance, the mother of the bride wakes her up on the morning of the wedding day and the bride responds by lamenting: “I saw a dream this night, I saw a dream without joy, without joy and without cheer.”⁶⁵ What follows is the bride’s telling of the traditional dream, which exists in multiple variants. In one of them, a raven alights on the bride’s head and dishevels her hair, a detail reminiscent of Barčin’s

⁶¹ Mirzaev, Abdurakhimova, and Mirbadaleva 1999:149/512.

⁶² Mirzaev, Abdurakhimova, and Mirbadaleva 1999:806. The similarities in detail should not be pressed too far, though *Alpāmiš*’ “that falcon is I” is very similar to the eagle’s ἐγὼ δέ τοι αἰετὸς ὄρνις (“I am the eagle, I tell you” *Odyssey* 19.548). The latter phrase, of course, seems strange uttered by the eagle, and the following enjambment with clarification (ἦα πάρος, νῦν αὐτε τεὸς πόσις εἰλήλουθα “I was before, but now I am your husband, I came back,” *Odyssey* 19.549) may indicate the bending of the traditional pattern. I am grateful to the anonymous referee of this paper for this suggestion.

⁶³ For a fuller discussion, see Levaniouk 2012:\$59, §§95–100.

⁶⁴ Some examples are: Koskina 1997:235 no.42, 236 no.43; Lobanov, Korepova, and Nekrylova 1998:111; Potanina, Leonova, and Fetisova 2002:241 no.222; Kolpakova 1973:112 no.215.

⁶⁵ Shapovalova and Lavrentieva 1985:204 no. 949.

dream in the *Alpāmiš*.⁶⁶ Here again, it is hard to determine the nature of similarities: contact and diffusion connect Russia both to Greece and to Central Asia, and in the case of Greece there is also the possibility of common inheritance. But setting this question aside, even when viewed in a purely typological light, the comparison points to the likely traditional patterns that are evoked in the *Odyssey*. Penelope's dream-tale is designedly evocative of wedding songs and relies on a tradition of the bride's pre-wedding dream, a tradition which is well attested in the *Alpāmiš*, but which we can only speculate about when it comes to Ancient Greece.⁶⁷

Separated from the *Odyssey* by large distances in space and time, the *Alpāmiš* nevertheless sheds light in equal measure on the oral and traditional composition technique of the Homeric epic and on the reception techniques that might be expected from its audiences. The insights of *Alpāmiš* come not only from its similarity to the *Odyssey*, but from the fact that its fluidity was to a certain extent recorded, making possible the comparison of multiple performances and compelling us to see both the *Odyssey* as a whole and its constituent elements, such as Penelope's dream, as multiforms of an epic tradition.

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⁶⁶ Koskina 1997:236, no.43.

⁶⁷ It should be mentioned, however, that another variation on this theme is present in the *Odyssey* itself: Nausikaa's dream before she meets Odysseus (*Odyssey* 6.1–70), which ushers in an episode full of wedding connotations, during which the marriage between Odysseus and Nausikaa is contemplated though not brought about. On the theme of wedding in Nausikaa episode see Austin 1991. For further discussion with references see Levaniouk 2011:271.

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