The term ζῆλος, meaning ‘rivalry’ or ‘jealousy’, should be identified among the lexical innovations of Hesiodic language. While it does not appear in the Homeric poems, its existence may be assumed by the presence of two derivatives: δύσζηλος (*Od*. 7.307) and ζηλήμων (*Od*. 5.118), each of which can be found once in the *Odyssey*. This contribution aims to re-examine the Odyssean text with reference to the possible meanings of ζῆλος in order to reconstruct this term’s semantic field. The results of this research have led on the one hand to the discernment of negative emotions such as mistrust, obstinacy and irascibility, all of which can be located within the psychological ambit of jealousy, and on the other hand to the elucidation of the possible reasons that led to the absence of the term ζῆλος within the Homeric epic. As well as making the case for chronology, this contribution highlights the argument that ζῆλος could be perceived as excessively colloquial and thus allowed only in the form of its derivatives.