

People's Democratic Republic of Algeria  
Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research

*Université 8 Mai 1945 Guelma*  
*Faculty of Letters and Languages*  
*Department of Letters and English Language*

جامعة 8 ماي 1945 / قالمة  
كلية الآداب و اللغات  
قسم الأدب و اللغة الإنجليزية



OPTION: Literature

## **Deconstructing Gender Identities through Rewriting Myths in Margaret Atwood's *The Penelopiad***

**A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of English in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of Master in Language and Culture**

**Submitted by:**

**SEREIDI Amel**

**BADRAOUI Chaima**

**Supervised by:**

**Dr. Houda HAMDI**

### **Board of Examiners**

**Chair: Ms. Soraya CHIHI**

**Supervisor: Dr. Houda HAMDI**

**Examiner: Ms. Fatima Zahra GASMI**

**University of 8 Mai 1945/Guelma**

**University of 8 Mai 1945/Guelma**

**University of 8 Mai 1945/Guelma**

## **Dedication**

### **SEREIDI Amel**

I would like to dedicate this work to my beloved mother, my father, and to my little Bissen. I dedicate this dissertation to my passion and love toward literature.

### **BADRAOUI Chaima**

This work is wholeheartedly dedicated to my family and friends. A special feeling of gratitude to my loving parents, whose words of encouragement and push for tenacity ring in my ears, and who continually provide their moral, spiritual, emotional, and financial support.

My dear father Badraoui Abdel Madjid, my role model in life, the man who supports me in everything I do, I am so thankful for your everlasting encouragement. My beloved mother Marhoum Nassima, my source of strength, without your endless love and support I would never have been able to finish this dissertation. I love you both and I appreciate everything that you have done for me. To my sweet sisters and faithful brothers who have always helped me and believed that I could do it, I am truly grateful for having you in my life.

Last but not least, I dedicate this dissertation to Djihene and Lina my best friends since my childhood who have always been by my side. To all my friends who have supported me in different ways, together we created unforgettable memories. In addition, to my teachers and everyone who ever taught me a word throughout my career I dedicate this work to you all.

## **Acknowledgements**

We would like to take the opportunity to express our deepest gratitude to Allah. Without his will, we could not have succeeded.

First and foremost, we would like to thank our advisor **Dr. HAMDI Houda** for her assistance, tolerance, encouragement and time she devoted for us. We would not have accomplished this work without her valuable comments, instructions and advice. She has always inspired us with her insights and profound knowledge. It has been really an honor to have the chance to work with her.

We would also like to thank all people who have encouraged and supported us all along this study with their sincere comments and precious experience. We also thank the board of examiners, Ms. Chihi Soraya and Ms. Gasmi Fatima Zahra for their time, efforts, and expertise.

Lastly, we would like to express our gratitude to our family who has always had faith in us.

We are deeply grateful to our parents who have always gave the ultimate love and support.

## **Abstract**

Myths have been irrefutable source in both expressing and shaping the lives of individuals and the working mechanism of societies. Many thinkers, writers and scholars have attempted to question and deconstruct these myths to uncover the ideology beneath or behind them. Margaret Atwood is among those who have not only used and decontextualized myths in their novels, but also attempted to find alternatives by subverting and deconstructing previous myths. The present study aims at exploring a contemporary literary work untitled *The Penelopiad* (2005) written by the Canadian Margaret Atwood to lay bare her attempts to rewrite male-oriented myths so as to subvert gender identities. The dissertation highlights the alternative devices used in such process. By rewriting these myths, the author not only correct the false stability of gender identities, but also paves the way for the creation of new myth which would celebrate female identity and freedom.

**Keywords:** myths, deconstructing, gender deconstruction, femininity, masculinity, *The Penelopiad*, Atwood.

## الملخص

كانت الأساطير مصدرًا لا يمكن دحضه للتعبير عن حياة الأفراد وتشكيلها وآلية عمل المجتمعات. حاول العديد من المفكرين والكتاب والعلماء التشكيك في هذه الأساطير وتفكيكها للكشف عن الأيديولوجية الكامنة وراءها. تعتبر مارجريت أتوود من بين أولئك الذين لم يستخدموا الأساطير وتخلصوا منها في رواياتهم فحسب، بل حاولوا أيضًا إيجاد بدائل لها عن طريق تخريب وتفكيك الأساطير السابقة. تهدف الدراسة الحالية إلى استكشاف عملٍ أدبيٍّ معاصر بعنوان *The Penelopiad* الصادرة سنة 2005 كتبتة الكندية مارجريت أتوود لتكشف عن محاولاتها للابتعاد عن الأساطير الذكورية لتخريب الهويات الجنسية من خلال إعادة كتابة الأساطير. تسلط الرسالة الضوء على الأجهزة البديلة المستخدمة في إعادة كتابة الهويات الجنسية. من خلال إعادة كتابة هذه الأسطورة، لم تصحح المؤلفة الاستقرار الزائف للهوية الجنسية فحسب، بل مهدت الطريق أيضًا لخلق أسطورة جديدة تحتفل بهوية المرأة وحريتها.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** أساطير، التفكيك، تفكيك الهويات الجنسية الأنوثة، الذكورة، بينيلوبياد، أتوود.

## Résumé

Les mythes ont été une source irréfutable à la fois pour exprimer et façonner la vie des individus et le mécanisme de fonctionnement des sociétés. De nombreux penseurs, écrivains et chercheurs ont tenté de remettre en question et de déconstruire ces mythes pour découvrir l'idéologie sous ou derrière eux. Margaret Atwood fait partie de ceux qui ont non seulement utilisé et décontextualisé les mythes dans leurs romans, mais qui ont également tenté de trouver des alternatives en renversant et en déconstruisant les mythes précédents. La présente étude vise à explorer une œuvre littéraire contemporaine intitulée *The Penelopiad* écrite par la Canadienne Margaret Atwood pour révéler ses tentatives de rompre avec les mythes masculins afin de subvertir les identités de genre via la réécriture des mythes. La dissertation met en évidence les dispositifs alternatifs utilisés dans la réécriture des identités de genre. En réécrivant ces mythes, l'auteur non seulement corrige la fausse stabilité des identités de genre, mais ouvre également la voie à la création de nouveaux mythes qui célébreraient l'identité et la liberté féminines.

**Les mots-clés** : les mythes, la déconstruction, la déconstruction du genre, la féminité, la masculinité, *The Penelopiad*, Atwood.

## Table of Contents

<b>Dedication.....</b>	<b>I</b>
<b>Acknowledgements.....</b>	<b>II</b>
<b>Abstract.....</b>	<b>III</b>
<b>Table of Contents.....</b>	<b>IV</b>
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Chapter I: A Theoretical Overview of Gender Identity and Mythology.....</b>	<b>4</b>
I.1. Definitions and Theories of Gender and Gender Identity.....	4
I.2. Definitions and Theories of Mythology.....	10
I.3.The Importance of Greek Myths on Western Culture and Literature.....	17
I.3.1. Culture.....	19
I.3.2. Langage.....	20
I.3.3. Literature.....	22
<b>Chapter II: Traditional Stereotypes of Femininity and Masculinity.....</b>	<b>25</b>
II.1. Fictitious Identities Enforced on Women.....	25
II.2. Toxic Masculinity and Male Privilege.....	38
<b>Chapter III: Exploring Alternative Devices in Deconstructing Gender Identities.....</b>	<b>46</b>
III.1. Multiple Femininity: Rewriting the myth of Penelope.....	46
III.2. The Power of Language in <i>The Penelopiad</i> .....	61
<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>68</b>
<b>Works Cited.....</b>	<b>70</b>

## Introduction

Mythology is defined as the study of myths, its origins and development. Myths are stories used to learn about history and people's life styles, they used to explain facts and to give reasons for the creation of the world. Thus, Myths and mythology have always been among the elements which shape the lives of individuals and societies. They are not simple, innocent stories about old gods and goddesses, but symbols which hold political, social, historical and cultural meanings and codes. Many thinkers, writers and scholars have attempted to analyze and deconstruct these myths to reveal the ideology beneath or behind them. Likewise, many others have attempted to rewrite these myths from different points of view. As the mythical patterns and believes turn out to be instrumental in encapsulating and shielding the reality of gender and they has been the most consciously and intentionally practiced agenda for centuries. Feminist thinkers and writers, too, have used myths to uncover the reasons, means, and consequences of the systematic oppression women have been suffering for ages. The present work will focus on the use of myths by contemporary female writer to reconstruct gender identities in favor of women. The study will be centered on a single literary work: Margaret Atwood' novella *The Penelopiad* (2005). The essential reason behind choosing this work lies on its uniqueness in portraying different female characters who challenge not only old and traditional standards of femininity, but also revolt against male dominance through several devices.

The idea of the work has been primarily inspired by the widespread wrong depiction of women in mythologies and the patriarchal power that accuses this tender gender of passivity. Thus, this work aims at highlighting how Atwood reconstructs gender identities in *The Penelopiad*.

In this study, Margaret Atwood's novella *The Penelopiad* will be put under scrutiny so as to discover the gender identities Greek patriarchal society had attributed to both women and men.



By means of Judith Butler's theory on gender, it also aims at exploring the different means Atwood used to reconstruct those traditional stereotypes of femininity and masculinity.

Margaret Atwood's novella *The Penelopiad* was published in 2005 as part of the first set of books in the Canongate Myth Series. It is a revisionary account of Homer's famous epic Odyssey. In this novella Atwood reconstructs her own version of Homer's Odyssey from contemporary outlook. She create different perspective to gender, mythical beliefs and perceptions about traditions, customs and characters in her novella and impregnates them with new outlook and voice.

The study is divided into three main chapters. As gender identity and myth are the key issues in the debate of the entire dissertation, the first chapter devoted to be a theoretical examination of gender identity and mythology. The first section offer a definition of gender and gender identity, its roots and development, highlighting Butler's theory on gender since it would be explain how Atwood reconstructs gender identities. Likewise, the chapter offers definitions for mythology and myths, it explain some conceptions and theories of myths. The last section will attempt to explain the importance of Greek myths on western culture and literature.

The first analytical chapter, chapter two, offers an analysis of how gender identities constructed in old Greek myths; namely Traditional Stereotypes of Femininity and Masculinity. The chapter sheds light on the false identities attributed to women as a reflection of Greek patriarchy. The first section will explore "The Fictitious Identities Enforced on Women' through explaining the concept of femininity in Greek myths according to *The Penelopiad*. The second section untitled Toxic Masculinity and Male Privilege will shed light on how Greek traditional myths glorify masculinity, what is meant by the concept of toxic masculinity, and what are the privileges that males enjoyed in Greek myths and *The Penelopiad*.

The second analytical chapter, chapter three, functions as a reaction to the previous one. This chapter aims at revealing the devices Atwood uses to subvert the gender stereotypes of femininity and masculinity. It stands as a clear contrast to the second chapter which depicts stereotypes of gender identities in traditional Greece. It is divided into two sections. The first section will explore the first device in reconstructing gender identities which is giving narrative of the story to Penelope and her Maids through Judith Butler theory. The second section will lay bare the power of language, as a second device, to voice correctly the gender identities that is constructed wrongly according to what fit male prejudices.

To conclude, the aim of the dissertation is to show Atwood's powerful female characters who revolt against gender stereotypes to redefine their identities which have long been misdefined by male mythmakers through the rewriting of *The Odyssey*. The work also is made in an attempt to raise women's consciousness, to break the old image that patriarchy build, to improve the social status of women, and to offer new sites of existence for women so as to enable them to get closer to their authentic "selves".

## **Chapter I**

### **A Theoretical Overview of Gender Identity and Mythology**

The chapter seeks to define gender identity and Myths. The first section will focus on the definition of gender identity, roots, and development. The second section will explore the meaning, distinct conceptions, and theories of myths. The last section will lay bare the importance of Greek myths on western culture and literature.

#### **I.1. Definitions and Theories of Gender and Gender Identity**

To understand the word “gender identity”, it is significant first to define the word “gender” and it is important to distinguish gender from sex. The first work directly on “gender”; *Sex and Gender and Society*, published in 1972, gives the following definition: “‘Sex’ is a word that refers to the biological differences between male and female: the visible difference in procreative function. ‘Gender’ however is a matter of culture: it refers to the social classification into ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’” (Oakley16). Essentially speaking, while sex has to do with anatomical and different organic markers to which human beings have ascribed meaning, gender defined as a cultural and social construct. Thus, the idea of gender is related to culture not sex and it is based totally on the social agreement.

The academic study of gender has a quite short history. It emerged at the end of the 1960s and its development is dated by the feminist of the second wave. In addition to the development of the criticism of gender inequalities in personal relations and social positioning, second-wave feminism started to take advantage of the methods in which disciplines and academic theories of knowledge worked to discharge the experience, pursuits, and identities of women. For instance, before the 1970s, the social sciences generally, and sociology particularly, in large part neglected gender. The ‘people’ it examines have been principally men and the subjects it targeted were elements of the social world, specifically, for men, including paid work and politics. To a greater

extent, women were unable to be seen in pre-1970s'gender-blind sociology. Rather, they presented their conventional roles as wives and moms inside families. In this period, differences between women and men were unrecognizable as troubles of sociological subject and were not considered as issues to be examined. Nevertheless, for the critiques of second-wave feminists, some of the disciplines throughout the social sciences, and the arts and humanities commenced paying growing interest to gender. As a result, differences and inequalities between women and men came to be recognizable, as issues to be inspected carefully and discuss, mainly by women sociologists. In the beginning, the examination stresses the gaps ignored by male bias. Thus, it centered on filling in the gaps in knowledge related to women. Gradually, the focus shifted to the aspects of those experiences that are important to women such as paid work homework, mommyism, and male transgression (Pilcher and Whelehan 9). To summarize, it is worthy to say that rethinking gender came into existence along with feminism movement as a revolution against the systematic oppression women suffered for long period, as well as the 'inequalities' between the two sexes.

The so-called "gender identity" is the extent to which the individuals perceive themselves as masculine or feminine. It includes the understanding of the meaning of what to be a man or a woman in society. Therefore, femininity and masculinity are rooted in the social (one's gender) rather than the biological (one's sex). Members of the society are the ones who hold the responsibility of determining what being male or female tends to mean (e.g., obedient or submissive, brave or sentimental): males will typically perceive themselves as masculine, whereas females, in general, would see themselves as feminine. Yet, it is miles feasible for one to be a woman and spot herself as masculine or men and notice himself as feminine since these are social definition (Burke, Peter, et al. 272-285). One could denote that our gender identity is

affected by our personal experience throughout the socialization process, the people with whom we relate, and our own choice.

It is crucial to differentiate gender identity, as supplied above, from different gender-associated terms. That would include gender roles, gender stereotypes, and gender attitudes. Gender roles refer to a common experience of conduct given to one's gender. For instance, gender roles may consist of women investing in the home position and males investing in the employee position (Eagly 756-75).

The idea of gender identity is distinct, as well, from gender stereotypes. Gender stereotypes define as the mutual perspectives of personality trends frequently associated with one's gender including being instrumental for men and expressive for women (Spence and Helmreich 234). Gender identity is different from gender attitude, the latter refers to the perspectives of other people or the shared positions related to one's gender including men wondering using phrases of justice and women wondering using phrases of care (Gilligan 85). Although gender roles, gender stereotypes and gender attitudes are not the same as gender identity and each concept have its meaning, but they influence one's gender identity.

Stereotypically, men in western culture are antagonistic, competitive, and instrumental; whereas women are submissive, cooperative, and expressive. The division is extremely based on underlying innate differences in traits, characteristics, and temperaments of women and men. Measures of femininity/masculinity are used to test what is considered as issues of basic gender identification, for instance, feminine males or masculine females (Terman and Miles 123). It is recognized that gender identity is not inborn. However, it is derived from social and cultural conditions.

At a minimum, there are foremost three theories that explain gender identity development: Freud's psychoanalytic theory, Kohlberg's cognitive development theory, Weitzman's learning

theories that stress direct reinforcement, and Mischel's Modeling. In all of these theories, a two-part system is involved. In the primary element, the kid involves realizing that she or he is female or male. In the second element, the kid involves understanding what is meant to be a woman or a male in terms of femininity or masculinity (Stets and Burke 4).

Based on the psychoanalytic principle, gender identification of the individual develops via identifying with the same-sex parent. This identity emerges out of the natural clash inside the oedipal phase of psychosexual improvement. By approximately age three, the kid develops a vigor sexual connection to the opposite-sex parents. At the same time, bad emotions appear for the same-sex parent and are ingrained in indignations and jealousy. At six years old, the kid fixes the psychic clash with the aid of using relinquishing wants for the opposite-sex parents and identify with the same-sex parents. Thus, boys obtain masculinity from their fathers and girls acquire femininity from their moms (Freud 133-142).

The extra current formulation of the psychoanalytic principle of Chodorow shows that moms act an essential role in developing gender identification. Chodorow assumes that moms prefer to separate from their sons as the opposite sex. That would result in changing the focus of attention from their moms to their fathers and experiencing masculinity thereby identifying with their fathers. Simultaneously, due to the fact they are of the same sex, mothers enjoy a feel of unity and connection with their daughters. Consequently, moms would tie with their daughters through raising femininity in them (233). While Freud assumes that constructing gender identity is the responsibility of both the mother and the father, Chodorow emphasizes that only mothers play an essential role in building up the gender identity, however, both Freud and Chodorow agree on the notion that says the development of gender identity does not appears earlier.

The cognitive-developmental theory proposes that there are critical incidents that lasted for a long period, impact the development of gender identity. Rather than psychosexual, those critical

incidents are cognitive in origin. Differently from psychoanalytic and learning theories, the development of a gender identity appears earlier. When the gender identity of an infant is set up, the self-will is encouraged to show gender-congruent attitudes and actions, before the same-sex modeling takes hold. Same-sex modeling without a doubt moves the operation along (Stets and Burke 5).

Kohlberg establishes two essential levels for the development of gender identity; the first stage is obtaining a stable gender identity. The second stage is setting up gender identity constancy. The first phase starts once the infant identifies him or herself as male or female when hearing the labels “boy” or “girl” implemented to the self. By approximately age three, the kid becomes capable of using the suitable gender label to the self. At the age of four, those gender labels implemented correctly to others. Within a year or two, the kid reaches the second stage of gender constancy, where s/he recognizes that his gender cannot change even if the appearance and age change

(Kohlberg 142).

Another theory of gender identity development namely the learning theories suggest that a kid's gender identity is formed by the social environment to which the child belongs. The theory proposes that parents and tutors, whether directly via rewards and punishments, provide the kid with standards of masculinity and femininity, or indirectly via performing as role models where the child is supposed to imitate. Rewards or punishments gifted to the appearance (girls wear dresses and boys wear pants), the choice of objects, for instance, toy preferences (girls are tough to play with dolls, and boys tough to play with trucks), and behavior (girls are supposed to be dependent, while boys are supposed to be aggressive). As a result, kids learn suitable appearance and behavior through rewards and punishment (Stets and Burke 6).

The Indirect learning of an individual's gender identity establishes from modeling same-sex parents, tutors, peers, or same-sex models in the media. A kid follows a rewarded model's thoughts, feelings, or behavior since he predicts that he will gain a similar reward that the model gained

(Stets and Burke 6).

So speaking, femininity and masculinity are not inborn. However, they are based on social and cultural conditions. Thus, gender identity is the soul and spirit of the person. It is simply, how individuals perceive themselves; it is the desire to be seen and accepted in society.

As a gender theorist Judith Butler's work has notably affected feminist movement and the Literary theory, and has modify the way we think about sex, sexuality, gender and language. A considerable part of Butler's work doubts the formation of identity and subjectivity, "tracing the processes by which we become subjects when we assume the sexed/gendered/'raced' identities which are constructed for us (and to a certain extent by us) Within existing power structures"

(Butler 2).

This section will look at Butler's Theories on gender and performativity. Butler's theories on sex, race, and gender reject the assumed notion that they are biologically determined as essentialists claim who believe in the binary opposition of sex, gender and race for any certain individual defined as a set of attributes and characteristics that are needed for his/her identity and role. Rather she assumes that they are society-based. Butler suggests a set of "periodic practices based on performative theory of gender acts that disrupts the categories of the body, sex, gender, and sexuality and occasion their subversive resignification and proliferation beyond the binary frame" (Butler 31).

Sex and gender are not predetermined, instead, Judith Butler argue that identity, whether sexual-, racial-, or gender identity, is something that is performed, something we choose to



become, not something we born with. In this regard, Butler on the basis of Simone de Beauvoir's insight of *The Second Sex* that 'one is not born a woman, but, rather, becomes one' (Butler 12).

Stated another way, body and gender could not be related to each other; the body can be "female" but it is not necessary to show "feminine" characteristics the way the man/woman binary pushes. To a certain extent an individual can choose his/her gender. Butler's notion on Performativity in relation to sex and gender is especially significant for this work on women in oppressive dystopias.

It is essential to mention that Butler does not mean that gender identity is a performance, Instead she states that the performance pre-exists the performer. There is no actor; the Performance creates "the illusion of an interior and organizing gender core" (Butler 173).

In her book *Gender Trouble*, she states the following:

(...) Gender proves to be performative – that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be. In this sense, gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to preexist the deed (...) There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very "expressions" that are said to be its results (33).

Concerning identity, Butler writes that coherence is both desired and idealized. This desire produces the effect of an internal core or substance, but is produced through words, acts, and gestures on the surface of the body. When individual's identity is incoherent, it results on identity problems that can be found in Atwood, where the protagonists struggle with knowing who they are under this new performance.

## **I.2. Definitions and Theories of Myths**

To understand the word "myth", it is important first to define the word "mythology". The concept of mythology comes into existence at the beginning of the 15th Century and refers to the

exposition, investigation, and interpretation of myths. From late Latin ‘mythologia’ originating from Greek ‘mythologia’ which means legendary lore, a telling of mythical legends, a legend, story and tale. Mythology entails both investigation on myth (myth as a subject) and the gathering of a culture’s myths (Leeming 34-35).

In his book *The Power of Myth*, Joseph Campbell defines mythology as:

Mythology is not a lie, mythology is poetry, and it is metaphorical. It has been well said that mythology is the penultimate truth—penultimate because the ultimate cannot be put into words. It is beyond words. Beyond images beyond that bounding rim of the Buddhist Wheel of Becoming. Mythology pitches the mind beyond that rim, to what can be known but not told. (qtd. in *Goodreads*)

Mythology is not just a traditional imaginary story of gods, kings, and heroes. It combines both the fictional and the factual background of the incidents and different experiences humankind witnessed which in turn shaped their history. Thus, mythology is one aspect of the history of nations. It serves as a medium for people to uncover a new fascinated area of hope, bravery, and wisdom.

Plato was the first who use the word ‘mythology’ as ‘muthologia’, which indicates only storytelling. Aristotle in his turn used the term ‘muthos’ and related it to the structure and the development of the story. Mythology refers either to the combination of different myths of different people from distinct periods or to the study of myths, their emergence, and development. It serves as the medium whereby the existence and evolvment of several incidents are analyzed such as the season, animals and human being progresses (Kirk 343).

Myths refer to those tales and stories that depict the beliefs and traditions of a particular community. In *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, Abrams defines the word myth as: “[It] signifies any story or plot, whether true or invented” (75). In general, “myths” are created for noble and holy

goals. They tend to teach humankind secrets and lessons via distinct experiences men witnessed. Most myths if not all, embody wisdom and moral lessons whereby people applied as a model to follow in their troubled life (Kirk 343).

The term myth is rooted in the Greek “mythos”, and signifies a word, speech, tale, or story (Phinney, Edward, et al. 183). Myths are traditionally shaped stories about gods, kings, and heroes; its main theme is to shed light on how gods created men. They represent the relationships between gods and men, and they provide a moral code for a living. Myths stress the lives of heroes who act as the ideals of a community. Myths deal with the crucial aspects of human and superhuman existence.

From another angle, a “myth” is a story that tells about the life and past of ancient people. It discussed people, animals, and supernatural creatures. “Myths” existed before the written word; in the painting of rocks and caves where a man used to narrate whole scenes and unique experience encountered in daily life. People used to print entire scenes with details; animals, tools, and creatures, describing their adventures and way of life (*Mythology*).

People cannot live in mystery and ignorance; rather they attempt to understand things. Thus, mythical stories, including both oral and written forms, aim at bringing clear answers to those questions. However, in a world of science and technology, the old mythology has lost a bit its power and replaced by science fiction. Shermer summarizes these ideas: myths, whether in written or visual form, serve a vital role in asking unanswerable questions and providing unquestionable answers. Most of us, most of the time, have a low tolerance for ambiguity and uncertainty. We want to reduce the cognitive dissonance of not knowing by filling the gaps with answers. Traditionally, religious myths have served that role, but today - the age of science - science fiction is our mythology (91).

Jean-Pierre Vernant, who studied the relationship between the Western and Ancient Greek myth concepts, claims that the foundation of the word “myth” is *muthos* in Greek which means any sort of formulated speech including story, a dialogue, or the enunciation of a plan (204). However, the meaning of the word was modified between the eighth and fourth centuries B.C. because of several motives.

Vernant states that even though *mythos* and *logos* do not initially contrast each other, the shift from oral literature to written styles of literature was the essential motive of the shift in the meaning of *mythos*. By disconnecting oral tradition that has a sort of effective spell, and attracts its listeners from writing; the fact of the written data by both philosophers and historians were justified: “It is in and through written literature that this type of discourse becomes established; where it is concerned the *logos* is no longer speech but has come to imply demonstrative rationality and, as such, it is set in opposition, both in form and in fundamental significance, to speech of *muthos*” (Vernant 206). Thus, via this binarism, the word “myth” was redefined as the opposition of *logos*, whose meaning was shifted from “the different forms of what is said” to rational discourse (Vernant 204).

In the current era, Mythologists became anthropologists, philologists, ethnologists, and most of them are psychologists. At this stage, Mythology is no more centered only on the investigation of the ancient or other genres of literature, instead; there are, through the mentioned fields of study, ritualists, diffusionists, structuralists, Jungians, Freudians, and culturalists. Learning about the most crucial theorists and theories aids mythology's learner to uncover the appropriate approach (Leeming 1).

In one way or another, many attempts failed to provide one fixed explanation concerning the origin, function, and/or the main theme of myths. Thus, it is highly important and it is necessary to consider numerous theories of myths. Ernst Cassirer was among others like Freud, Jung,

Walter F. Otto, or Paul Ricoeur who studied methodically this concern. Ernst Cassirer, one of the most significant philosophers of the twentieth century, opines that myth has a very essential function in forming the cultural forms and in arguing that human culture is a historic and social structure. Viewing mythical symbolism as “a mode of expression” (Essay 42), Cassirer argues, “The symbolic forms are grounded in the activity of the consciousness.” (Cassirer). Instead of conceptual thought, he describes man as “an animal symbolicum” (Essay 31). Different from all animals, which can perceive matters whereby receptor or effector systems, man has the symbolic system, which he found to achieve the adoption to his environment: “This new acquisition transforms the whole of human life. As compared with the other animals man lives not merely in a broader reality; he lives, so to speak, in a new dimension of reality” (Essay 29). The symbolic forms are presented as the basis through which humans communicate and cognize themselves and/or the other.

Recognizing myth and language as inseparable is another crucial aspect of Cassirer’s theory. Cassirer argues that although language and myth subsequently deviate from each other, both have the same source: “Language and myth stand in an original and indissoluble correlation with one another, from which they both emerge but gradually as independent elements” (Language 88).

According to Cassirer “linguistic thought is ... impregnated and permeated with mythical thought” (Symbol 177). Cassirer claims that language “bears within itself, from its very beginning, another power, the power of logic” (Language 97). This is why words are reduced to signs, while the mythical symbol is fluid. Words are polysomic and auto-gorical as it stands not as the representation of something else, but for itself (Vernant 236-8).

The symbolist view followed by both Freud and Jung is not the same, they focused on whether the symbol occupies above or beneath the concept. Freud views the symbol as standing on a position below the concept, symbols represented as a sudden force that impels in dreams, slips of

the tongue, or in fantasies. Freud's notion of the human psyche helped to develop many theories including those of Jung, although his studies on myths and archetypes focused on his interpretation of dreams.

C. G. Jung's theory regarding mythology and archetypes is described as "one of the few theories which can fully answer" (153). The three important questions regarding myth: its origin, its subject matter, and its function (Segal 85). Jung argues, "[m]yths are original revelations of the preconscious psyche, involuntary statements about unconscious psychic happenings, and anything but allegories of psychological processes" (Archetypes 154).

While Freud suggests that the unconscious of the individual communicates with his consciousness via slips of the tongue, dreams, etc., Jung proposes that the process is done directly and through an intentional manner. Moreover, additionally to Freud's proclaim that there are fantasies, which have a personal character; Jung proposes that there are some fantasies of impersonal character, which cannot be explained by individual experience. Therefore, Jung announced his concept of the collective unconscious through which he strongly opines that myths are created: "The whole of mythology could be taken as a sort of projection of the collective unconscious" (Collected 8:152). It is certainly and totally to undertake the symbolist model of myths and to mention that irrespective of the historical, social, or cultural contexts of symbols and archetypes, both have common meanings.

Feminist thinkers get an advantage from Jung's theories of myths and archetypes; however, their point of view is unique from the ones of Freud and Jung. Logo-centric thinking is the fundamental reason that works at the history of their ideas. Feminist theorists employ Derridian and Lacanian theories to expose and subvert the binaries and hierarchies that have subjugated not only myths but also all literary works, and even languages of Western civilizations. Feminist

thinkers have conceptualized Derrida and Lacan's theories to produce their own called feminist archetypal theory.

The feminist archetypal theory is "an interdisciplinary re-visioning" that used Jungian studies. It commenced in the late 1970s, the works of feminist archetypal theorists have been first introduced collectively in a book namely *Feminist Archetypal Theory: Interdisciplinary Revisions of Jungian Thought*, edited by Estella Lauter and Carol Schreier Rupprecht, they were "aware as early as 1976 of the need to bring feminism to archetypal theory" (11).

Throughout history, women played a significant role in ancient mythology. On one hand, "myths" can be a kind of relief for women, providing them with power to overcome certain difficulties. On the other hand, they can weaken their strength by depicting them negatively as useless and passive; this is viewed mainly in males' writings. Thus, 'myths' can empower women and at the same time could violate or subjugate them. Female authors find themselves responsible for rewriting patriarchal myths and producing new myths reflect positive view about women.

Marina Warner explains in BBC annual series of Reich Lectures in 1993, later published as *Six Myths of Our Time*, that though in common usage myth implies falsehood and delusion, she tries to employ and deconstruct them to show:

That myths are not always delusions, that deconstructing them does not necessarily mean wiping them, but that they represent ways of making sense of universal matters, like sexual identity and family relations, and that they enjoy a more vigorous life than we perhaps acknowledge, and exert more of an inspiration and influence than we think (Warner 19).

When she talks about her approach to myth, Warner, like the feminist archetypal theorists, underlines the point where her approach is different from Freud's or Jung's:

The work amplifies and extends the Freudian interpretation of myth as a key to the inner structures of consciousness, but it differs fundamentally from both Freudian and Jungian approaches by insisting that the very meanings of stories, rituals, and images change in relation to the social structure with which they interact (Warner 20).

Warner believes that this characteristic of myth as an interactive and changing medium in shaping people's lives can be used to rewrite new myths, which can correct the negative and false qualities, attached to women and leave room for the genuine female experience:

I believe the process of understanding, clarification to which Barthes contributed so brilliantly can give rise to newly told stories, can sew and weave and knit different patterns into the social fabric, and that this is a continuous enterprise for everyone to take part in. Ancient myths of the kind I describe, dangerous mothers, warrior heroism, are perpetuated through cultural repetition, transmitted through a variety of pathways. However, this does not mean that they will never fade, to yield to another, more helpful sets of images or tales (Warner 20).

Thus, for many theorists, it is feasible to rewrite myths and create new ones when the ever-changing quality of them is considered. To voice women who have been oppressed by the male-defined myths for hundreds of years is the focus of many women writers, among them Atwood and Warner. Myths, mythical figures, and archetypes are applied in the novels of both writers to tell the "true" stories of women, for myths "like fiction" Warner states, "can tell the truth even when they're making it all up" (28).

### **I.3. The Influence of Greek Mythology on Western Culture and Literature**

The collection of legends, stories and mythical stories made by antique Greek people is referred to it as Greek mythology. The convictions related to spirituality, religion and cult actions were taken from the Greek mythology. Investigation on this mythology sheds light on



institutions, the acquired behaviours pattern regularly followed until they became almost involuntary, customs and rituals of the Antique Greek (*Greek Mythology*).

Since the earlier times, the mythical stories spread easily from time to time even between distant places. Some myths held their origins from Greece lands and others appeared thanks to intruders coming from north. These Greek myths were famous for the exact depiction of the characters like monsters, Gods and Goddesses who often had contacts with their people to protect them. The Greek gave feeling to these characters, a characteristic that is attributed to humans. This characteristic leads people to believe in myths (Daly 9).

Even though it was always argued that mythological stories are not real, but through time they affected our personal life and other domains. Thus, it is important to mention that Greek myths not only influence people's lifestyles and way of thinking, but it influence their culture, as a part of their identity, language and literature.

Culture has been given many definitions through time by scholars. The pioneer English Anthropologist Taylor in his book *Primitive Culture* (published in 1871) defines culture as "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by a man as a member of society" (16). Today's culture covers everything found in the contemporary modern society from traditions to customs and from values to beliefs ("Mythology").

All cultures create and tell stories, and myth-making is a significant human creative activity owing to that different cultures allowed the creation of several mythologies. These mythologies gave birth to assumptions and ideologies within different societies of the globe. A concrete example is the classical Greek mythology. It developed and gave rise to different ideologies within the Greek community as well as within other societies due to its widespread and

proceeding popularity in the world. The Greek mythology went through ages and still exists in our contemporary modern world in numerous fields.

On the surface, Greek mythologies could appear like an impossible unimaginable outlandish stories composed by ancient philosophers and thinkers. However, we have to be beyond any doubt that these stories were written by top major philosophers like Socrates, Aristotle, and Homer, whose genius minds made them an immortal masterpieces that have not vanished rather they survived occupying a great position in the modern world.

Deep down, Greek myths, whether individuals know it or ignore it, have helped current thinking and played a crucial role throughout time, where mythological stories have affected people from all generations and backgrounds. They have portrayed various Greek thoughts which permitted them to have significance in the contemporary society. Subsequently, those Greek convictions and assumptions are present in different fields in the world today that the western world incorporates, from culture to language and from art to literature.

### **I.3.1. Culture**

Myths have existed for endless centuries and have shaped numerous cultures. From the ancient civilizations to contemporary western cultures. Their major purpose is to “ naturalize the culture ” thus, establishing certain attitudes and convictions with which people agree into society (Chandle 25), through the recurrence of these myths, social identities are built, consequently, cultures are constructed (Lincoln 89).

Greek mythology as an example is the blossom blooming from the ground of the old Greek culture. It has a significant influence on the entire western civilizations and cultures. Owing to its complete content and high systematization. It is considered as the most complete mythology of all times in the globe. An example from reality is that many people who have little or no knowledge of Greek mythology know that Odysseus is a courageous brave hero, Hercules is a

strong man, and Venus or Aphrodite in Greek is the goddess of love. Besides, Greek mythologies' influence on western cultures can be found in arts and popular cultures. In the field of fine art, Leonardo Da Vinci, Rembrandt, and Rubens did incredible works related to Greek mythology. In addition to paintings, for instance, Botticelli's *The Birth of Venus* and Raphael's *Triumph of Galatea*. Also, writings like Dante's *Inferno*, plus Shakespeare's and Milton's works all have a Greek mythological touch. Greek myths have also been adapted into several contemporary novels, TV shows, video games, movies, etc. Reference to Greek mythology can be found in several successful movies such as the well-known Percy Jackson series including *Wrath of The Titans*, *Clash of the Titans*, *Helen of Troy*, *Ulysses*, *Hercules*, and many others. All these examples portray and demonstrate the profound impact of the fascinating Greek mythology on western culture.

### **I.3.2. Language**

“Without a doubt, the biggest impact Ancient Greek has had on modern English is the enrichment to the lexicon that Greek has offered” says Brian Joseph

The words that came from Greek before the Renaissance were generally popular borrowings, that is, they were adopted by common people, who knew no Greek, rather than by scholars. Furthermore, such words often entered English indirectly, not only by way of Latin, but also sometimes by way of Old French, or even, in some cases, through Arabic. They therefore usually show considerable divergence in form from the Greek original. Sometimes the same Greek word was later borrowed with a different meaning and in a form more closely resembling the Greek (Ayers 159).

The English vocabulary was greatly enriched and a significant portion is either taken directly from Greek or borrowed indirectly from Greek through other languages like, Latin and French.

A related research shows that the modern English language fundamentally comes from Greek and Latin, these two are incorporated into English via Greek mythology. In the present time English lexicon, there are numerous words from Greek and Latin origins, such as butter (Greek, butyron) and dish (Greek, diskos).

The following are some of the words which Greek mythology has contributed to English:

1. Achilles' heel, a single vulnerable spot.

Achilles was the greatest of the Greek heroes who participated in the Trojan War, where he was killed.

2. Adonis, an extremely handsome young man

Adonis was a very good-looking youth, handsome that the goddess Aphrodite (Romans called her Venus) fell in love with him.

3. Mentor, a Wise counselor

Mentor, a word usually found nowadays in newspapers, it refers to football coach, comes from the name of the faithful adviser to whom Odysseus entrusted the education of his son when he sailed away to fight at Troy.

4. Odyssey, a long series of wanderings

Homer's epic poem, *The Odyssey*, tells of the wanderings of the Greek hero Odysseus in trying to return to his home at the end of the Trojan War.

The influence of Greek mythology on western culture and language is not simply limited to words. Many expressions, proverbs, clichés are derived from ancient Greek myths. For instance, "Penelope's Web". Penelope is a courageous heroine, she is the wife of Ulysses. During her husband's absence, she used to weave a shroud in the day but at night she undid the work and starts all over again in order not to get married to one of the suitors hoping for Ulysses' return.

This is the well-known “Penelope’s Web”, which is used as a proverb that stands for anything which perpetually doing but never done.

### **I.3.3. Literature**

Western literature is another angle where the Greek mythology impact is noticeable. As a significant element of culture, Greek myths have a profound influence on British and American literature. In England for example Chaucer, the Elizabethans, and John Milton were among those inspired by Greek myths.

The Greek mythology started to bloom in western literature since the starting of the Renaissance. The Renaissance was a cultural movement starting from 14th to 17th century in Italy then the rest of Europe. This movement aimed to bring back the Greek civilization (Literary Rebirth). At that time, Greek myths were used as a raw material in literature, and many authors and poets were influenced by them such as Petrarch, Boccaccio, and Dante. Next, in the 18th century, the philosophical revolution of the Enlightenment spread in Europe. Thus, Greek myths continued to be a significant source of raw material. Then, in the 19th century, the romantic poets were astonished at the Greek mythology such as, Byron and Shelly plus Yeats the British poet who produced a sonnet to precise his cherish for the epic poem by Homer. After that, when the 20th century started Greek mythology was still present taking completely a new concept with works like, *The Waste Land* by T.S. Eliot which was loaded up with a lot of myths, and *Ulysses* by James Joyce that uncovered the disappointment and frustration of the western world post-war. This work is based fully on *The Odyssey* by Homer who invented Greek gods and heroes that are deeply integrated within the western culture and western literature is filled with them. Therefore, it can be said that Greek mythology has greatly shaped western literature and it is considered as the literary foundation for the emergence of Anglo-American literature.

Female writers create a body of works by using distinct devices to defeat their silence and passivity. One of the most famous and favorable concepts they ever tackle in their writings is 'mythology'. Contemporary female Writers use 'myths' in fascinating manner where myth opens doors and desire for change. In other words, myth provide a refuge for women to explain their existence. It is used to create novels that construct women selfhood and identity, moreover it is used to liberate them.

Along with feminist scholars and critics, women writers and poets return to mythic themes, rewrite them, re-define, discuss, re-examine and shape new versions of the traditional tales. Rewriting myths is a political trial to eliminate the misrepresentation of gender identity and sexuality in fairytales, it is an attempt to change the culture by removing elements that are hostile to female identity. Rewriting allows to develop new definitions to the myths.

Under the influence of the political context, modern feminist writers, especially Canadian writers (Margaret Atwood), Asian-American (Maxine Hong Kingston), Chicana writers (Gloria Anzaldua), Native-American (Lesli Marmon Silko, Paula Gunn Allen), African-American (Toni Morison, Barbara Omolade), activate their indigenous myths as a force and a tool to transfer and to narrate their stories as opposed to man's perspective. They revitalize mythological symbols from their aboriginal culture to set a female oriented myth version as a form of resistance to male discourse.

Throughout the history of mythology, women are considered as both fascinating and threatening. With the emergence of feminist criticism, many women authors engage themselves in the project of revising patriarchal myths. Literature in general, and minor literature in specific, witnesses prolific production by female writers who challenged the stereotypical characteristics of old myths by rewriting them from a feminist perspective and creating an alternative female

model. In this sense, female writers use myth as a feminist medium to claim their existence and to establish a new vision of gender identity.

## **Chapter II**

### **Traditional Stereotypes of Femininity and Masculinity**

To fully understand how Atwood re-appropriates the *Odyssey*, it is necessary to first examine the gender dynamics presented in the dominant narrative. This chapter aims at analysing how gender identities are constructed in the traditional myth through first exploring the identities enforced on women i.e., explaining the concept of femininity in ancient Greek myths according to *The Penelopiad*. The second section untitled “Toxic Masculinity and Male Privilege” analyses how Greek traditional myths glorify masculinity, what is meant by the concept of toxic masculinity, and what are the privileges that males enjoyed in Greek myths and *The Penelopiad*.

#### **II.1. Fictitious Identities Enforced on Women**

Stereotyping is a natural element of human behaviour. It is how we classify people into specific groups, frequently consciously in order to make the world easier to understand. It is the act of attributing to a person common qualities, traits, or roles on the basis of his/her belonging to a particular group.

According to Williams, Bennett, et al. Gender stereotype is commonly defined as a set of characteristics and roles generally ascribed to men and women (qtd. in Biernat 352). It is related to the social and cultural construction of men and women as a result of their physical, biological, and psychological differences, sexual as well as social functions. Generally speaking, it is an umbrella term referring to a set of structured values about the personal traits of men and women. Values can refer to a number of elements, such as actions, physical and personality traits, roles, and beliefs about sexual orientation. Thus, its meaning is dynamic and up to change over time and across cultures and societies.

Stereotypes influence both men and women. However, they tend to have a particularly severe impact on women. As they demean them when they assign them to subordinate roles. As a



result, their qualities and traits are undervalued in society. Prejudices regarding woman's inferiority and her passive subservient roles lead to disrespect and contempt of women in all sectors of society. Women may be conditioned to absorb those negative stereotypes about themselves believing that their subservient roles fit their status (Cook and Cusack 1). This may give rise to further devaluation of women and their worth.

The society of ancient Greece nurtured and cultivated its demeaning role of women. It favoured men and women were viewed as obedient and submissive, possessing fewer rights in comparison to male citizens. Unable to vote, possess or inherit land. In society, it was regarded that the position and place of woman should be at home and that her crucial role and purpose in life should be to raise, take care of and educate children according to recognized standards and values. She was expected to stay indoors and fulfil domestic duties, like cleaning, cooking, weaving, and sewing. As Arthur argues, "Woman's job ... was to supervise the household" (88). Moreover, in family, the husband-wife relationship is not equal in terms of power (Pomeroy 22), where the social status of women is lower than that of men.

Furthermore, marriage in ancient Greek society was regarded as a "practical business arrangement" not 'a love match' (Demand 11) and woman had no direct control over it. "Her decision had no legal influence on the contract because she was given in marriage by her male relatives" (Sealy 5). Therefore, she was not allowed to decide on herself and the decision-makers are always the father figure or male relative. All of these contributed to the degradation of females and maintained the passive and subordinate view of women and their subservient role that was especially asserted and portrayed in myths like Homer's *Odyssey*, and Margaret Atwood sheds light on it in *The Penelopiad*.

Margaret Atwood's novella *The Penelopiad* was published in 2005 as part of the first set of books in *The Canongate Myth Series*. It is a revisionary account of Homer's famous epic *Odyssey*

from the perspective of Penelope now dead and in the underworld and her twelve maids. It retells the story of Penelope, who is left at home in Ithaca for twenty long years while her husband Odysseus fights in the Trojan War to get Helen back.

Behind the official myth, the novella tells the real encounters of Penelope, the way she rules the palace, her refusal to marry one of the violent suitors, and how she endured as a woman and a mother. In addition to, the twelve maids, those who have been protecting Penelope, to be innocently hanged to death by Odysseus and his son Telemachus. Thus, *The Penelopiad* is considered as an attack on society and literature, which through myths mistreat, degrade, subordinate women as having passive subservient roles. Where Atwood tries to destabilize patriarchal grounding on the exclusion and suppression of female traditions through providing various viewpoints and dimensions to gender, mythical beliefs about customs, traditions, and characters with a new outlook and voice.

The novella explores the impact of society on gender construction. Atwood demonstrates the difference between gender roles and how they are instilled in girls and boys from childhood onwards. While girls learn craft to be ready to their married life, boys learn to hunt and fight to control the kingdom. “The goal of men is to fulfil the financial success and marriage is not regarded as a major project” (Beauvoir 450). Girls, on the other hand, are educated and raised with the purpose of getting married and having children.

Homer’s *Odyssey* is considered as a predominantly male narrative. Where women are presented in a multitude of ways. In *The Odyssey*, women are forced to live in a patriarchal society that puts them in unpleasant situations, and any woman who does not conform to these ideals is villainies. They are portrayed with little to no voice or little to no control of their lives. When they are unmarried, they are legally under a direct authority of their parents, and when they are married, they are legally under the control of their husband, all while being concerned with

the domesticity of home (oikos; house and household). In the novel, women are stereotyped as being physically and mentally weaker than men, and that men should deal with outside dangers while they are expected to stay at home spinning and weaving. When Penelope gets upset about the music, Telemachus fired her and said, "... you will have to listen to it ...you should go back upstairs and do your work, spin and weave, and let the maids do theirs, speaking is for all men, and for me precisely because I am the owner of this house" (Homer11). This statement emphasizes the superiority of men over women.

As a major presence in the epic, Penelope's character exemplifies the perfect ancient Greek woman and wife. She is portrayed as an obvious example of virtue, and the honourable male characters recognize this, as illustrated in Agamemnon's ghost's declamation of her great attributes in the final book of the epic:

Agamemnon's ghost cried out. "Son of old Laertes— mastermind—what a fine, faithful wife you won! What good sense resided in your Penelope— how well Icarus' daughter remembered you, Odysseus, the man she married once! The fame of her great virtue will never die. The immortal gods will lift a song for all mankind, a glorious song in praise of self-possessed Penelope (Homer 21. 217-229).

Penelope has always been an enigmatic figure. She is considered as the paragon of female virtue. She is portrayed as the patient, suffering, and loyal, intelligent, and virtuous wife. She is a sign of loyalty and perseverance. From the beginning, Penelope represented the home, the hearth, weaving, fruitfulness all of these qualities characterized what Greeks found to be an ethically upright and "good woman". As the classical archaeologist, Cohen said, "most classical writers believed that any non-religious public activity carried out by a woman violates the silence, invisibility and moral dependence appropriate to a virtuous wife" (18).

When ideality and perfection of character are measured by a woman's loyalty, obedience, and subservience to her husband, Penelope is an archetypal wife according to the findings reached by Lefkowitz (1985) and later Lewis (2011) be it as a daughter, a wife, or a mother, Penelope is presented in all these roles.

As a daughter, Penelope's relationship with her maternal figure is very complex. Her mother Naiad (a water nymph) is characterized as cold and neglectful. She is not interested in Penelope's life, preferring to swim in fresh water:

My mother, like all Naiads, was beautiful, but chilly at heart. (...) She was elusive. When I was little I often tried to throw my arms around her, but she had a habit of sliding away. (...) she preferred swimming in the river to the care of small children, and I often slipped her mind. If my father hadn't had me thrown into the sea she might have dropped me in herself, in a fit of absentmindedness or irritation. She had a short attention span and rapidly changing emotions (Atwood 9).

Penelope's relationship with her paternal figure on the other hand is also complex because he tried to kill her when she was a baby by throwing her into the sea. After the incident, Icarus was kind to Penelope. Although she does not remember her father's betrayal, the stories of his violence against her still affect her deeply and make her unable to trust him.

When I was quite young my father ordered me to be thrown into the sea, I never knew exactly why, during my lifetime, but now I suspect he'd been told by an oracle that I would weave his shroud. Possibly he thought that if he killed me first, his shroud would never be woven and he would live forever (Atwood 9).

As a wife, Penelope is depicted as faithful, loyal, chaste, and pure. She is known for her intelligence, sincerity, and humbleness. She is a serious and industrious character that served as an archetype of femininity proper. Penelope waited for her unfaithful husband for twenty long

years. During which, she missed him so much speaking only the highest praise for him calling him my "lionhearted" husband.

Penelope was expected to be subservient to her husband by implementing his wishes and commands and she did. She respects her husband's orders and tries to obey them even after twenty years of his departure to fight the war at Troy. She is so trusted by Odysseus that he left everything was in the hand of Penelope he said, " So I cannot tell if the gods will sail me home again or I will go down out there, on the field of Troy, but all the things here must rest in your control" (Homer 18. 297-299).

Penelope not only stayed loyal and waited for her husband, but she also rejected the suitors' marriage proposals. She cleverly and in a cunning and deceitful way delayed her marriage decision through the trick of weaving to escape their wanted proposals. Penelope promises to remarry once she completes a funeral shroud for her aging father-in-law. "Here is what I did. I set up a large piece of weaving on my loom, and said it was a shroud for my father-in-law Laertes, since it would be impious of me not to provide a costly winding sheet for him in the event that he should die" (Atwood 38). By day, she publicly works on the garment but at night she undoes whatever she had accomplished. This is called "Penelope's web".

All day I would work away at my loom, weaving diligently, and saying melancholy things like, 'This shroud would be a fitter garment for me than for Laertes, wretched that I am, and doomed by the gods to a life that is a living death.' But at night I would undo what I had accomplished, so the shroud never got any bigger (Atwood 38).

This is a concrete evidence of Penelope the embodiment of chastity, faithfulness, and intelligence. As Beauvoir claims in regards to women's chastity, "patriarchal civilization

devoted females to chastity, it recognized the sexual freedom for male however females were restricted to marriage” (395).

As a mother, Penelope is represented as a loving mother desperately trying to deal with her stubborn, rude, and controlling son. During her husband's absence, Penelope reared and raised him to be both strong and gentle like his father, both intelligent and kind of sound mind and sound body. She taught him the responsibilities of a young prince. He then becomes more assertive. His sense of family loyalty inspired him to defend his mother from the aggression of the suitors, confront them, and uphold his father's sense of justice coming into his own male identity. When Penelope become upset he did not shy away from taking control and he started describing her duties in the house ordering her to do her own tasks and royal households which she proceeded to submit. Homer's depiction of Penelope's submission to her son emphasized the way ancient Greek women, with a positive attitude, readily accepted leaving the men in charge and control of everything.

Thus, Penelope's role in Odysseus' *oikos* or household is an evidence of her positive representation as a traditional female. She successfully served her subservient passive duty. As she never left her home or tried to expose herself to the world. She was unwilling to mingle with any of the suitors. This made her an epitome of the feminine virtues espoused by the Greeks i.e., Penelope's role epitomized the patriarchal way of life that the ancient Greeks lived. Moreover, her most intelligent act of the shroud shows that although Penelope's personality and roles were subservient, she was much more complex than that. This confirms her positive portrayal as preserving traditional values since it is done to maintain her fidelity and loyalty to Odysseus. Furthermore, the act of weaving in itself reinforces her traditional role in Odysseus' *oikos*, since weaving represents a symbol of womanly virtue, submission, and wifely passivity in ancient Greece, a skill that was transmitted from mother to daughter concerning house duties. In these

ways, Penelope's representation is emphasized by both an adherence to the general traditional rules and the literal actions that excuse it.

Helen, Penelope's cousin, on the other hand, is considered to be the most beautiful woman in the Greek world and she uses her divine beauty to her favour. “The sad fact is that people had praised her so often and lavished her with so many gifts and adjectives that it had turned her head. She thought she could do anything she wanted” (Atwood 28). Helen is described by Penelope as vain, cruel, and flirtatious. This made Penelope worried that Odysseus prefers Helen over her so she frequently compares herself to her. In *The Penelopiad*, she (Penelope) considers Helen as responsible for her long-sufferings and she continues to define herself with reference to her. “I’ve often wondered whether, if Helen hadn't been so puffed up with vanity, we might all have been spared the sufferings and sorrows she brought down on our heads by her selfishness and her deranged lust” (Atwood 28). Even after her death Helen remains a source of worry and anxiety for her. “Oh, Penelope, you can't still be jealous’, she (Helen) says. Surely we can be friends now! Why don't you come along with me to the upper world ... that's not your style? You'd better play the faithful little wife” (Atwood 60). In Penelope's story, Helen flees Menelaus with Paris, a Trojan prince. Causing Odysseus to leave Ithaca and this ruined Penelope’s life,

Helen, he said, had run away with a prince of Troy. This fellow -Paris was his name – was a younger son of King Piam and was understood to be very good-looking. It was love at first sight. For nine days of feasting- laid on by Menelaus because of this prince's high standing- Paris and Helen had moon-eyes at each other behind the back of Menelaus, who hadn't noticed a thing (Atwood 28).

Helen is depicted as the unfaithful wife that allowed her passions and desires to control her actions, which result her betraying not only her husband but also her family and Greece as a whole leading to a political ramification: war as Pomeroy states, “a noble woman's infidelity

often had political ramifications in Homeric Greece and both Helen and Penelope are prime examples of these possible political ramifications” (35-37).

Helen is presented as the sympathetic woman and sex object who, although semi-divine is only human and like all humans, makes mistakes. She is portrayed as an unideal wife and “unwomanly” due to her actions outside the defined roles. It is through her lack of sexual loyalty i.e., her leaving Menelaus for Paris that she was presented as not-a-woman. Moreover, Helen’s lack of association with motherhood and maternal responsibility is another factor that distances her from womanly traits. Her leaving a child behind in Sparta caused her to deny a part of her femininity and womanhood as well. Furthermore, it is her sensuality and active sexuality, which are generally reserved for men, that makes her stand out from the other women in ancient Greek drama and literature, making relationships that conflict with her marriage like Odysseus, transgressing traditional female roles, making her characterization unwomanly to the point of being non-female, despite being the most beautiful woman in Greece and a prize wife from Aphrodite.

Helen is also presented as “quite crafty” especially with her act of storytelling that she used too much. For instance, that scene when she wanted to tell a story while residing in the company of men in the court, but then she came to realize that it would be socially unacceptable to deliver a speech among men; therefore, she chose to mix the wine with drugs so that the men permit her to speak. This behaviour is an evidence of Helen’s rejection of the constraints imposed on her by the patriarchal society. Also, the story she tells disrupts male dominance by opposing the narrative. This is a clear hint that Helen is a dangerous female. She attracts men with her voice, divine beauty, and her drugs. Besides, she blamed and attributed her actions to the influence of Aphrodite for driving her crazy and forcing her to chase Paris in order to alleviate some of her guilt.



Helen is regarded as a gracious and helpful figure as she offered Telemachus assistance in his quest to find his father. “She slips into the krater a drug that had the power of robbing grief and anger” (Homer 4. 220-221) telling him stories of Odysseus and managing not to start any wars throughout the entire dinner conversation. This relieved Telemachus of his sorrow for the day, which allowed his visit to be productive in his quest to find Odysseus. This distinguishes her as cunning, presenting the female as clever rather than merely a commodity to be exchanged. However, this could be interpreted as her being trivial, as it is nothing in comparison to Penelope's feats, for example (Luke 23).

Moving to the hanged maids, while Penelope recognizes her privileged status as the daughter of a king and a semi-divine mother, the hanged maids are portrayed as lacking privilege, impoverished, and powerless since they are the daughters of poor women and slaves. They are considered as Penelope's most trusted servants whom she raised since childhood approaching the role of their mother, and that spent their entire lives working for Penelope and her family.

But if a pretty child was born of these couplings [between slaves], I would often keep it and rear it myself, teaching it to be a refined and pleasant servant. Perhaps I indulged some of these children too much. Eurycleia often said so. Melantho of the pretty cheeks was one of these (31).

The maids are faithful to Penelope, and they assist her while Odysseus is away. They keep an eye on the suitors occasionally falling in love with or being raped by them. Penelope describes them as “her eyes and ears» among the suitor and her helpers during the long nights of the shroud. In order to gain the suitors' trust, she orders the maids to tell horrible things about her and Odysseus. They become accomplices in her weaving scheme helping her unravelling the shroud

that she weaves for Laertes at night “We were almost like sisters” (Atwood 39) to procrastinate choosing one of the suitors.

You must pretend to be in love with these men. If they think you have taken their side, they’ll confide in you and we’ll know their plans. It’s one way of serving your master, and he’ll be very pleased with you when he comes home.’ That made them feel better. I even instructed them to say rude and disrespectful things about me and Telemachus, and about Odysseus as well, in order to further the illusion. They threw themselves into this project with a will: (...) there is indeed something delightful about being able to combine obedience and disobedience in the same act (39).

Eventually, after a risky adventurous twenty-year journey, Odysseus returns to find his home besieged by the suitors hoping to win his wife Penelope. In a scene that is extremely sad, Odysseus orders his son Telemachus to mercilessly murder all the maids who have slept with the suitors, and Telemachus hanged them.

In both Roberts' translations, Telemachus insults the maids with derogatory pejorative language before slaughtering them. In Fagles's 1996 translation; He exclaims,

No clean death for the likes of them, by god!  
Not from me—they showered abuse on my head,  
My mother’s too!  
You sluts—the suitors’ whores! (Homer, Fagles 22.487-490).

In Fitzgerald 1961 translation he states,

I would not give the clean death of a beast  
To trolls who made a mockery of my mother  
And of me too—you sluts, who lay with the suitors (Homer, Fitzgerald 22.462-464).

By naming these women whores, trolls, and sluts, Telemachus demean and degrade to the lowest possible status. Though it is true that some maids betrayed Penelope when one of them disclosed that she had been undoing her work to postpone choosing a suitor. Here, however, Telemachus accuses them of only one sin that is considered so repulsive and disgusting which is sleeping with the suitors. In Fitzgerald's translation, he emphasized the point that even a beast deserves a clean death, whereas the maids do not. Shedding light that the maids are lowered to less than human by sleeping with the suitors.

However, not all versions of translation are cruel to the maids. For instance, Emily Wilson, the first female and the most current translation of the *Odyssey* (2017) sympathizes with them using a less pejorative language saying;

I refuse to grant these girls

A clean death, since they poured down shame on me

And Mother, when they lay beside the suitors (Mason).

Similarly, that was the case of George Herbert Palmer in his 1884 translation through using “those who lay beside the suitors” when talking about the maids he states; “by no honourable death would I take away the lives of those who poured reproaches on my head and on my mother, and lay beside the suitors” (Homer, Palmer 356).

Penelope did nothing but stayed silent, she struggled to take action to stop their execution “I resolved to interpose myself when the time was right, and to tell Odysseus that the girls had been acting under my direction” (Atwood 45). Then, she justified her position saying, “Dead is dead, I told myself. I’ll say prayers and perform sacrifices for their souls. But I’ll have to do it in secret, or Odysseus will suspect me as well” (51).

Atwood in *The Penelopiad* gives voice to the voiceless maids to finally shed light on their side of the story using various genres: jumping-rope rhyme, a sea shanty, an idyll, a love song, etc.

I've chosen to give the telling of the story to Penelope and the twelve hanged maids. The maids form a chanting and singing Chorus which focuses on two questions that must pose themselves after any close reading of *The Odyssey*: what led to the hanging of the maids, and what was Penelope really up to? (Atwood 9).

In 'the Chorus line: Kiddie Mourn. A Lament by the Maids' the maids show how their poverty and low social class from birth made their childhood more dangerous. "We too were born the wrong parents. Poor parents, slave parents" (Atwood 11). Because of their status as female slaves they do not only work all day but also suffer a threat of sexual abuse and rape "... we were the dirty girls. If our owners or the sons of our owners or a visiting nobleman or the sons of a visiting nobleman wanted to sleep with us, we could not refuse" (Atwood 11). This shows how class status interacts with gender to leave slave women susceptible to gendered violence in the male-dominated society of Greece.

In the Chorus line: If I Was a Princess. A Popular Tune, the third maid begs the gods to change her life so she can be a hero's wife,

Oh gods and Oh prophets, please alter my life,

And let a young hero take me for his wife!

But no hero comes to me, early or late \_

Hard work is my destiny, death is my fate! (Atwood 21).

As the novella ends, the maids curse Odysseus that they will haunt him eternally. "It's the maids. He sees them in the distance, heading our way. They make him nervous. They make him restless. They cause him pain. They make him want to be anywhere and anyone else" (Atwood

61). Though he joins Penelope in the underworld every now and again, he continues living to drink from the water of forgetfulness and be reborn into a new life, trying to escape the maids.

The last line of the novel states, “The Maids sprout feathers, and fly away as owl” (63). In Greek mythology, the owl represents wisdom, and here it is used as a symbol of keen, silent observance. They turn into owls representing their roles throughout the novel as wise, truth-telling, moral observers who fly over the heads of everyone else. This idea of wisdom and truth also adds to their credibility as moral superiors.

## **II.2. Toxic Masculinity and Male Privilege**

While females in the ancient Greek society were expected to behave in a stereotypically “feminine manner”, males were expected to act in a virtuous behaviour i.e., to have some virtues that are regarded as masculine. Plato mentions wisdom (φρόνησις), temperance (σωφροσύνη), courage (ἀνδρεία), and justice (δικαιοσύνη) as the elements of virtue. Aristotle adds magnanimity (μεγαλοψυχία), magnificence (μεγαλοπρέπεια), liberality (ἐλευθεριότης), and gentleness (πραότης) (Asikainen 29). However, ἀνδρεία (courage) or *virtus* is considered as the most important virtue. “Both the Greek word ἀνδρεία and the Latin word *virtus* originates from the term “man” (άνήρ and *vir*, respectively) and they can be translated as “manliness” or “manly behaviour” (Asikainen 30) characterizing the ideal behaviour of a man and constructing his masculine identity. For Aristotle, this male quality belongs only to men, because they sacrifice themselves on the battlefield in war by choice for the sake of the community, and a man who displays no courage, will be classified among women. Thus, courage together with the previously mentioned virtues and other good manly characteristics such as being a good leader, helpful to the community and family...etc. constitute an ideal masculine man in ancient Greece.

It is worth mentioning that there is a huge distinction between being a male and being manly or masculine. While being a male refers to the biological sex, being manly refers to the fulfilled

gender roles. As Gleason argues, “masculinity was an achieved state, independent of anatomical sex” (qtd. in Asikainen 20). When talking about gender roles, the traditional role of men was one of power, prestige, and honour. In ancient Greece, men played a prominent role in public life. They were politically active and they participated in wars and public events. They were in charge of the government and spent a lot of time away from home. Unlike women who played a submissive role staying oikos, caring for children, and doing households. Usually, men worked as farmers or businessmen, and when at home they were treated with great respect as the head of their households. They were given the most responsibility and thus thought of as the most important people in Greece.

War and public engagement occupied a large part of man’s life. However, these were not the only aspects of man’s life as it is man’s responsibility to maintain and safeguard his private *oikos*. Thus, the relationship between the state and *oikos*, between public and private demonstrates the interdependence of a man’s duties towards his family and state, nevertheless, these duties sometimes conflict with one another causing conflict within the male.

These traditional male roles are stereotypically depicted in ancient Greek mythology just like traditional female roles. However, these two are portrayed as Asikainen argues, “Being at the opposite ends of the gender hierarchy” (23). With men representing virtues and women representing vices. Powerful, courageous, magnanimous, rational, and capable of self-control men were shown. On the other hand, women were portrayed as weak, vengeful, irrational, and lacking courage, bravery, and self-control.

Aristotle believed that women were inferior to men. For example, in his work *Politics*, he states, “as regards the sexes, the male is by nature superior and the female inferior, the male ruler and the female subject” (13). This belief that women were less than men in ancient Greece created the beginnings of toxic masculinity. This latter amplifies normal masculine behaviour to

the point of making males more offensive, aggressive, and terrified of anything that could be interpreted as feminine. This ultimately leads to anything that is feminine being looked down on and treated as inferior.

As Harris synthesizes in his relevant work “An Exploration of Traditional Masculine Norms” according to the APA guidelines for psychological practice with boys and men, toxic masculinity is defined as “the practice of adhering to traditional masculine norms that are harmful to men and those around them. These include the following values and characteristics: 1) male dominance over women, 2) intimate partner violence, 3) aggressive behaviours, 4) emotional detachment and 5) heterosexual self-presentation” (6).

Male dominance and power over women, aggressive behaviour, and emotional detachment i.e., lack of sentiment and expression of feelings together with intimate power violence are considered as the main components that make a man toxically masculine as Danube, Visio, et al. argue (qtd. in Harris 6).

Male dominance over women is one of the earliest known most widespread forms of inequality in human history. It is about the refusal of feminine principles and values that may be perceived as weak, obedient, accommodating, or soft ...etc. giving way to superiority and dominance over women, embracing all that is perceived as powerful, superior, controlling...etc. Thus, every behaviour related to femininity is considered as inscrutable and stigmatized when interacting with other men.

Toxic masculinity encompasses aggressive behaviour i.e., the use of physical force to establish dominance in order to be considered as powerful and brave, thus upholding “the masculine honour” by the end. As O'Dea et al. Argue, Men who react violently to protect and preserve their masculinity are frequently rewarded by the society (receiving praise, maintaining a favourable social status) as a result of masculine honour values (qtd. in Harris 9). For instance, if

a man uses violence to protect woman, he is frequently rewarded with a good social reputation and praise.

Emotional detachment refers to being disconnected or disengaged from other people's feelings. This includes an unwillingness to become involved in other people's emotional lives or the unwillingness to express one's emotions and feelings. In the domain of toxic masculinity and according to Cancian, “the latter is perceived as a sign of strength and it is encouraged, while expressing emotions like fear or pain is considered as a sign of weakness” (qtd. in Harris 10).

Intimate partner violence, however, is one of the most common forms of violence against women. It describes physical violence, sexual violence or psychological harm done by a man over woman in order to toxically protect his own manhood as Rivera and Scholar state, “In order to preserve one's own masculinity, feelings are frequently suppressed, leading to a controlling behaviour toward one's female partner” (qtd. in Harris 8) adhering to toxic masculinity.

Toxic masculinity has its own roots in ancient Greece and it is highly depicted in Greek mythology namely Homer's *Odyssey*, and Margaret Atwood sheds light on it in *The Penelopiad*. This latter is portrayed in both Telemachus and the suitors' behaviours.

As it is mentioned before Telemachus is portrayed as self-possessed, cool-headed, angst, and rude to his mother, as he seeks to emphasize his maturity. Invigorated after Athena “left his spirit filled with nerve and courage” (Homer1.369). He adopts a harsh tone with his mother giving her orders, “Go to your quarters, he commands, /tend to your tasks/ the distaff and the loom, and keep the women/working hard as well. As in issuing orders, / men will see to that, but I most of all. / I hold the reins of the power in this house” (Homer1.410-414).

To further illustrate when Phemios was singing about the return of the heroes from Troy, Penelope asks him to choose another song, since hearing about Troy causes her much sorrow. Telemachus makes the following reply to his mother Penelope, “go to your room and occupy



yourself with your own affairs, weaving, and spinning and tell your maids to get busy. Poetry is the concern of men, particularly of me since I hold authority in the house” (Homer1.356-359). So, Telemachus does not only give orders to his mother, he also assigns her a traditional gender role and announces himself the head of the house. A similar situation is when Penelope has arranged a contest with Odysseus' bow in order to test the suitors, Telemachus prevents her from being present at and watching the contest by again telling her “you should take care of your weaving and spinning since weaponry is the concern of men only” (Homer21. 350-353).

Furthermore, Telemachus when he physically separates himself from Penelope by embarking on his journey, emphasizing his right for decision-making without her approval, not even her knowledge. And when he came back, he did not even greet her but give her order as always, “Bath now, put on some fresh clothes, / go up to your own room with your servants” (Homer 17.47-49). Penelope, while astonished, accepts without question which indicates that there was absolute respect for the sharply defined and clear-distinguished roles. Thus, in Homer's *Odyssey* being a man means exercising control over everything; over speech, decision-making, emotion, or even mothers and especially control over others and Telemachus gains such control.

Moving to the suitors, they are presented as deceitful, dishonest, rude, and disrespectful to Penelope mainly because she lacks male power. They proclaim to be in love with her and believe she is lovely and charming. However, behind her back, the suitors discuss how she is aged and unattractive Penelope is, and that their main goal is her large dowry. Because it is obvious that whatever the charm of Penelope, the main purpose in marrying her is to gain control over the kingdom of Ithaca and her treasure. “We wanted the treasure trove, naturally, he said” (Atwood 35). Although Penelope herself does not have the right to give royal power as the wife of the former king she would provide the legitimacy to the man who marries her. Antinous, the most insolent and impious suitor, the one who conceived violent schemes against Odysseus and

Telemachus confirms that when he states, “Telemachus will never be king in Ithaca although kingship is his patrimony” (Homer 1. 386-387). Telemachus also complains many times that the suitors want to marry his mother and to obtain his father’s status (1. 386-387).

As it is mentioned before, in order to procrastinate choosing one of the suitors, Penelope used the shroud trick and the twelve maids helped to spy on the suitors for her and sometimes being violently raped by them. Thus, the maids are not only raped but they are then punished for their rapes with murder. This is clear evidence of toxic masculinity.

As it is highlighted before, women in ancient Greece were not believed to be equals to men, they were not allowed to do most things outside the house. “They were considered lesser people and treated as possessions of men” (Holmberg 21). Back then, several philosophers argued that the virtues of men and women are different. The man’s virtue is to rule and the woman's virtue is to obey. In other words, females had a lower status than males, having fewer rights in comparison to male citizens. Unable to choose their husband and the decision-making is either by the father figure or male relative and once married, unable to own a property and this latter is totally controlled by the husband. The husband had complete control over the property while alive and when he passes away the control passes to their children (Lacey 138-139). Also, unable to vote or inherit land neither from husbands nor from fathers but they can from a brother if he dies, wives did not inherit from husbands, nor daughters from fathers, but sisters could gain an inheritance from brothers (Pomeroy 20).

It was considered that a woman's place is at home confined indoors and her goal in life is the rearing of the children and carrying out households duties sewing, cooking, and cleaning. While all social relationships out of the doors are conducted by man. Thus, females in ancient Greece were mistreated, controlled, and degraded. They had little freedom and double standards when it

came to marriage, sexuality, employment, and social aspects of their lives. However, males had more privileges and enjoyed a lot of liberties and rights.

In Greece, as a male-dominant society, men were all-powerful, dominating, and glorified. They had numerous rights namely; the right to vote, hold public office and own property. They were free to entertain, socialize, and they were encouraged to venture out, take part in political events and happenings, and they ran the assemblies and councils. Another point that is worth mentioning is that it was quite acceptable for men to commit adultery i.e., men could legally have extra-marital sex with slaves and prostitutes, as they are not required to stay faithful to their wives. However, a woman was to remain chaste and faithful. For some strange reasons, men were permitted to be womanizers, while their wives stayed home. This is clearly demonstrated in the *Odyssey* by Odysseus.

Odysseus is portrayed as possessing the characteristics of a Homeric leader: power, courage, nobility, bravery, a thirst for glory, and faith in his own authority. Moreover, his sharp intelligence is his main quality. Odysseus is considered as a hybrid of the self-made, self-assured, and an epitome of his culture's values principles, and beliefs. However, since there was no law preventing him from having extra-marital sex, he was not capable of controlling his impulses thus sleeping with Circe, a beautiful witch that she falls in love with him, also enjoying his luxurious life with Calypso, the beautiful goddess that holds him captive for seven years in an exotic land. All of that while expecting Penelope to fend all of the suitors, not be adulterous or seductive, and stay loyal. Indeed, she did and when Odysseus returned to Ithaca after his long journey in disguise, Penelope melted into his arms without pausing to consider what he did in his absence. "Then he told me how much he'd missed me, and how he'd been filled with longing for me even when enfolded in the white arms of goddesses, and I told him how very many tears I'd shed while waiting twenty years for his return, and how tediously faithful I'd been" (Atwood 56).

Here it is doubtful that Odysseus would have stayed with Penelope if he had found her to be unfaithful and adulterous when he was gone. This portrays the unequal morals of Greek society regarding gender.

Furthermore, this apparent double standard is also noticed in the case of maids, as Odysseus has enjoyed his relationships with many female admirers during his journey betraying his faithful wife. His unfaithfulness has no repercussions, whereas these unmarried maids are killed. This is a clear evidence of the psychological pressures of gender that women suffered from in ancient Greece.

The gender dynamics in the traditional Greek myths are depicted in a multitude of ways. This chapter sheds light on the construction of gender identity through first exploring the identities enforced on women. Then, analysing how Greek traditional myths glorify masculinity and the privileges that males enjoyed in Greek myths and *The Penelopiad*.

## Chapter III

### Exploring Alternative Devices in Deconstructing Gender Identities

This chapter aims at revealing the devices Margaret Atwood uses to subvert the gender stereotypes of femininity and masculinity. It stands as a clear contrast to the second chapter which depicts stereotypes of gender identities in traditional Greece. It is divided into two sections. The first section will explore the first device in reconstructing gender identities which is giving the narrative of the story to Penelope and her Maids. The second section will explain the role of language, as a second device, to voice correctly the gender identity that is constructed wrongly according to what fits male prejudices. It is relevant to use Judith Butler's theory on gender identity, performance and performativity when speaking of the Tale. When speaking of performativity, we will make use of Judith Butler's work on gender performance, especially her book *Gender Trouble*.

#### III.1. Multiple Femininity: Rewriting Penelope Myth

Margaret Atwood's *The Penelopiad* is a feminist literary work although many critics do not explicitly consider it as a feminist novel. However, since the feminist movement is defined as a social and political movement whose goal is to make societies equal for the genders, *The Penelopiad* and Atwood's other writings are aligned with the feminist movement. As it falls into this category, *The Penelopiad* shows how *The Odyssey* is a male-focused text has been shaped primarily without any consideration of gender. Atwood's contemporary outlook of "tale-telling" highlights gender and class issues which go unchallenged in *The Odyssey*: the physical and sexual exploitation of servant girls" (Fives Ways 13).

Atwood's powerful representation of Penelope's myth creates a world of fantasy and imagination through the rewriting of the myth as a feminine model against gender stereotypes, her female heroines model presents a new version of the tender gender in which Penelope

contradict the female obedience and passivity as portrayed in *The Odyssey*. With her strong will, she succeeds in reversing the passive image enforced on women. Atwood deconstructs gender identity associated with the male narrative of Homer's *The Odyssey* through giving voice to the female characters in her novella, "I've chosen to give the telling of the story to Penelope and the twelve hanged maids" (Atwood 1), presenting them free from the stereotypical fetters of femininity discussed in the previous chapter.

Penelope insists to tell her version of the story, yet she does not know from where to begin, as there is no one, simple, original beginning:

Where shall I begin? There are only two choices: at the beginning or not at the beginning.

The real beginning would be the beginning of the world, after which one thing has led to another; but since there are differences of opinion about that, I'll begin with my own birth (4).

When Penelope states that, she would have to start at the beginning of the world, she is implying that, since her story is part of a larger history of her gender, she cannot divorce herself from it. Being an alternative version of the great myth of *The Odyssey*, *The Penelopiad* gives Penelope, the wife of Odysseus, the daughter of the King Icarus of Sparta, the cousin of Helen of Troy, and the mother of Telemachus, the chance to narrate the different version of the official account of *The Odyssey*. A story based on what remains on the other side of the coin when all gender identities markers are subtracted, in an attempt to subvert and voice the true gender identities constructed in the traditional myth.

Through criticizing Homer's *Odyssey* as "not the only version of the story. Mythic material was originally oral and also local, a myth would be told one way in one place and quite differently in another" (1), Atwood highlights many stealthy details, endowing it altogether different perspectives which were either prejudiced or missed in Homer narration.

These constructed identities can be deconstructed and subverted following Judith Butler's arguments. Butler states that it is through the reiterative performances of people from generations that the binary categories of masculinity and femininity have permeated in our culture and society as theoretical norms and standards. The very reiterative and performative nature of the Law that encourages the construction of such biased norms also enables the disruption and opposition of that Law. Butler argues that by undermining the norms which are dominating and subordinating it becomes thinkable to subvert and destabilize "the false stabilities of normative gender" (Butler 135). Applying this performative account of gender construction in *The Penelopiad* we find that gender identities are discursively constructed in the traditional myths, "ancient customs" (Atwood 27), and practices which create stereotypes of masculine and feminine gender that can be deconstructed.

Penelope's claim "The story is told in *The Odyssey* doesn't hold water: there are too many inconsistencies" (Atwood 1), is a clear confirmation that the account of Homer's *The Odyssey* about Odysseus, her husband, who made a fool of her and "Got away with everything" (Atwood 2) as a great warrior and the witty, talented, inventive hero is distinct from Atwood's account of him as "wily Odysseus", a "persuasive liar" and a "disguise artist", and the account of Penelope in *The Odyssey* as faithful, constant, intelligent wife is different from Atwood's account of her in *The Penelopiad* as a self-conscious, self-sufficient, manipulative, productive and aspirational woman and it could be taken, without suspicion, as a clear attempt to reverse the gender identities through undermining the myth of Odysseus. In contrast to the idea of Penelope as an all-suffering, reliable, understanding wife, she is fully aware of her husband's true image: "I knew he was tricky and a liar, I just didn't think he would play his tricks and try out his lies on me" (Atwood 2). Thus, women could be tricky and liars like men.

Penelope states: “Why couldn't they be as considerate, as trustworthy, and as all-suffering as I had been?” (Atwood 2), “Don't follow my example, I want to scream in your ears – yes, yours! But when I try to scream, I sound like an owl” (Atwood 2). She warns today's women not to follow her path, to not turn a blind eye as she did. The reason why Penelope did not ask questions about Odysseus's ‘unscrupulousness’ is because she “wanted happy endings in those days”: “And happy endings are best achieved by keeping the right doors locked and going to sleep during the rampages” (Atwood 2).

Atwood highlights how myths are oppressive and limited, they control people's behaviors and expose them to certain roles. It is worthy to talk about how they turned Penelope into a story she did not like to hear, a story that does not suit her real identity and reality:

I realized how many people were laughing at me behind my back – how they were jeering, making jokes about me, jokes both clean and dirty; how they were turning me into a story, or into several stories, though not the kind of stories I'd prefer to hear about myself (Atwood 2).

The official account of the events is used as a tool to shape and fit other women into roles they do not fit and mainly this is the core reason why Atwood's Penelope intends to write her vision:

Hadn't I been faithful? Hadn't I waited, and waited, and waited, despite the temptation almost the compulsion- to do otherwise? And what did I amount to, once the official version gained ground? An edifying legend. A stick used to beat other women with (Atwood 2).

Penelope's trial to warn today's women from the underworld is a clear effort to unravel the oppressing and limiting qualities of myth, which imprisoned female characters and enforced them with fictitious identities.

In her revision of the official myth, Atwood challenged the patriarchal standard of femininity.



This is presented in the fifth chapter of her novella entitled 'Asphodel'. Penelope the well-known and the 'not deformed or ugly' remarks how males get attracted to her cousin Helen because of her beauty. Penelope became an insecure woman as evidenced by the discussion of her plainness, she compares her good traits to Helen's looks and comes out feeling bad about herself. She continues to hate Helen personally for this, rather than blaming the social system that makes Penelope feel worthless because she is not the prettiest, and that ranks female qualities entirely based on how attractive they are to men.

The standard of femininity linked to Helen of Troy undermines as Penelope confirms that this would not occupy her attention, she states: "I had other things in my life to occupy my attention. Which brings me to the subject of my marriage" (Atwood 6). It is highly clear as well in a conversation with her husband when she told him about her "drowning and being rescued by ducks" (Atwood 10), who in turn reply: "Don't worry. I would never throw such a precious girl into the ocean" (Atwood 10). Odysseus' reaction towards Penelope's cleverness would imply that not all men get attracted only to women's beauty. Atwood doesn't absolve Helen for her sin of exploiting men using the bait of her eternal feminine image. This rejects another stereotype of women as oppressed and subjugated, underpinning the assertion that women can be as strong and oppressive as men.

As a central narrator in *The Penelopiad*, Penelope begins to outline the cultural traditions surrounding her marriage. Penelope unravels the process of marriage as a means of exchanging money and status. Odysseus gets married to Penelope after the race which he won through cheating. On the wedding day, Penelope describes the transactional nature of Ancient Greek marriage and how it degrades women to the point where they are seen as less than human. Meanwhile, sex stories worry Penelope, as they only depict female pain, not pleasure.

Chapter seven untitled “The Scar” suggests how Penelope and Odysseus exposed the myth of defloration by their performances as bride and groom. Penelope is warned by her maids of the painful process of defloration where she would be “torn apart as the earth is by the plow and how painful and humiliating that would be” (Atwood 8). Kate Millet describes the long-held myth associated with the defloration of the bride as:

All patriarchies have held virginity and defloration in elaborate rites and interdictions ... Fear of defloration appear to originate in a fear of the alien sexuality of the female. Although any suffering endured in defloration must be on the part of the female (and most societies cause her- bodily and mentally- to suffer anguish), the social interest institutionalized in patriarchal ritual and custom, is exclusively on the side of male’s property interest, prestige or hazard (148).

Penelope unravels the terrible picture of defloration where it was believed “that the bride had been stolen and the consummation of the marriage was supposed to be a sanctioned rape.... a conquest, trampling of foe, a mock killing” (Atwood 14). She undermines and demythologizes the myth as “play-acting” and “fiction” by stating the words of Odysseus who tells Penelope, “forget everything you've been told, he whispered, 'I'm not going to hurt you, or not very much. But it would help us both if you pretend. I've been told you are a clever girl. Do you think we can manage a few screams?’”(Atwood 14). Penelope performs her femininity “in ways that were suitable for the wedding night” (Atwood 14). To please him she even behaves in a "winsome and flirtatious manner” (Atwood 14).

After marriage, Odysseus threatens Penelope that if she is found “sleeping with some other man...he would be very cross indeed, and he would have to chop me into pieces with his sword or hang me from the roof beam” (Atwood 22). while he is on his way back home after the Trojan war, is portrayed as having a sex affair with goddesses and whores and his heroism is praised and

celebrated, leave apart the question and criticism of his marital infidelity. Whereas women are meant to be understanding and Faithfull wives, Atwood reversed this image claiming the only reason for her sexual abstinence is that she fears her husband and the society, so she is not indifferent to the presence of the suitors. On the contrary, she is deeply roused: “I occasionally daydreamed about which one I would rather go to bed with if it came to that” (Atwood 25). But the suitors are not attracted to this “old cow”, all they want is Odysseus’s social position and the riches of his kingdom, so Penelope is just the tool they needed to obtain them.

Penelope is instructed by maid Eurycleia to guard her honor and virtue to the plea of suitors and maintain her fidelity towards Odysseus. She tries to “harden” Penelope’s “heart against the suitors and their ardent pleas” so that she remains, “faithful to the very last gasp” (23). She recited “folk sayings designed to stiffen” her in her “dedication” towards her husband (Atwood 24). Thus, woman is expected to give her husband “her person, virginity and a rigorous fidelity being required” (Atwood 25). Whereas, no such devotion is made on the part of a man. In Atwood's narrative, Homer's exalted version of Odysseus' heroism is belittled “through popular rumor and gossip to the level of tall tales”.

Odysseus is described to be an active and “excellent raconteur” and Penelope as a passive listener, which “he valued most” in her as it’s “an underrated talent in women” (Atwood 10) In *The Odyssey*, Penelope is depicted as the unaware wife of her husband's cunningness and being suspicious of the veracity of his stories, she still listens to his stories with great interest and appreciates him as well to sustain the myth of his masculinity. Penelope is shown to be young, dependent, and immature in comparison to Odysseus of whom she held “a great opinion” admiring him, having “highest confidence in him” (Atwood 56), whereas Odysseus being independent, mature displays the “manner[s]” “of an older person to a child”(Atwood 57). Atwood came to subvert this traditional gender-based image, stupidity, and passivity for females,

cleverness, and activity for males, she explains that Penelope was well aware of “his slipperiness, his wiliness, and his foxiness”... “His unscrupulousness”, but, “turned a blind eye... kept” her “mouth shut, or if opened it sang his praises ... didn’t contradict, didn’t ask awkward questions, didn’t dig deep” (Atwood 3). She accepts all this because “To love her husband and to be happy is a duty she owes to herself and society; she readily persuades herself that she feels a great love for her husband”... “Very often the wife persists in her pretense of love through morality, hypocrisy, pride or timidity” (Beauvoir 481).

After Odysseus’ absence for ten years, the household goes through a lot of changes thanks to Penelope’s diplomatic and management skills. Odysseus’ mother being dead, Eurycleia too old, Telemachus too young, and the father-in-law scared away by Penelope’s weaving a shroud for him, as a consequent, she acts like the queen of the palace, a task for which she was woefully unprepared she states that “in no way had I been prepared for such a task during my early life at Sparta. I was a Princess after all work was what other people did” (Atwood 23), tramples another myth of women being incapable of manly tasks. Penelope transcends her immanence and the gendered space that surrounds her, taking over what has been, “usually considered a man’s business” (Atwood 23).

Penelope's subversion of the feminine identity, undermining the commonly held perception of women being unfit for men's job becomes possible in Butler's words “by rejecting the false stabilities of normative gender and explore the gender discontinuities ... in which gender does not necessarily follow from sex, and desire” (Alsop, Rachel, et al. 105). Thus, the idea that claims that gender identities emerge as unstable and flexible that can be appropriated by the people of either sex is confirmed through Penelope intention to do what consider male business.

Penelope's mother's lack of interest in palace affairs makes Penelope's role more difficult since she was not able to learn from her. Atwood highlights the importance of women mentoring

and teaching skills to other women especially in fields normally dominated by men, while she subverts the false identity of not being capable of men tasks by stating Penelope goals to build up Odysseus's estate she says: 'I had such a clear picture in my mind-Odysseus returning and me-with womanly modesty-revealing to him how well I had done at what was usually considered a man's business" (23) and mention Penelope success in developing her abilities in managing palace affairs makes her views her self-sufficiency with pride, and independent which it is evident from her tone: "It was a source of pride to me when swineherd would come to me for advice" (23). These details, again, reinforce the idea that this epic is a scene where female traditions are erased.

Atwood suggests an alternative version of Odysseus's journey to reconstruct gender identity through the rumors that vary from the tale of Odysseus the hero and "what a fine warrior he was, how clever, how handsome" (24). But he is a burnt-out veteran unable to face his life at home.

In her narration, Penelope described the coming of the suitors whose lack of respect shows their intention to feast off of Odysseus's estate until she chooses one of them as her new husband. Since Penelope seems, at least for the suitors, to lack male power they thought that they would gain what they want but it was not the case. Atwood's Penelope succeeded in fighting the suitors along with Odysseus's absence through a trick of weaving the shroud. Penelope not only dexterously runs Odysseus's state but also cunningly manipulates the ploy of shroud weaving befooling the suitors, who assemble in Ithaca to usurp her throne by marrying her. These events suggest that women could be manipulative as men.

The myth of Penelope's faithfulness hyped in Homer's *Odyssey* too is deconstructed and demythologized. It is argued by Beauvoir about women's chastity that "Patriarchal civilization dedicated woman to chastity, it recognized more or less openly the right of the male to sexual freedom while the woman was restricted to marriage" (395). Greer's arguments too can be added

here that “the chastity which warrior barons clapped around their wives when they went to war was the outward emblem of the fruitlessness of the struggle, the attempt to provide a barricade for a belly” (247). While Homer’s description of Penelope maintains the myth of her chastity and faithfulness, Atwood’s version of the story reveals the truth of her faithfulness and fidelity by stating Penelope’s response to the plea and speeches of the suitors, “about my [her] ravishing beauty and my[her] excellence and wisdom”. Penelope confesses, “I can’t pretend that I didn’t enjoy a certain amount of this. Everyone does; we all like to hear songs in our praise, even if we don’t believe them” (Atwood 25). She further remarks, “Which of us can resist the temptation of being thought indispensable” (Atwood 30). She admits her emotions, “I occasionally dreamed about which one I would rather go to bed with if it came to that” (Atwood 32).

Penelope also questions the patriarchal hierarchy which recognizes “more or less the right of male to sexual freedom”( Beauvoir 395) and confines women to gendered spaces of feminine virtue, chastity, and faithfulness, restricting them to the status of inferior and passive other. Thus Penelope “both questions the social structure of dominant order and remained dangerously complicit with them” (Dlapkauskaitė 143). She comments over Odysseus' character: “While he was pleasuring every nymph and beauty did he think I would do nothing but my duty? While every girl and goddess he was praising did he assume I would dry up like raisin?” (Atwood 42).

The social and cultural construction of gender following patriarchal expectations and ideologies endows men with superior and dominant positions where nothing forbids them “to act as masters, to take inferior creatures” (Beauvoir 396). Whereas for the woman there are strict guidelines and laws to guard their virtue and honor “she should defend her virtue, her honor; if she yields, if she falls she is scorned; whereas any blame visited upon her conqueror is mixed with admiration” (Beauvoir 395). Penelope is believed to be, “a risk until... safely married,

because who knew what upstart fortune hunter might try to seduce me [her] or seize me and run away with me” (Atwood 30).

Finally, after reuniting with Odysseus after twenty long years Penelope states, “The two of us by our own admission- were proficient and shameless liars of long-standing. It's a wonder either one of us believed a word the other said. But we did. Or so we told each other” (Atwood 64). The truth of their gender identities is revealed in performativity where both Odysseus and Penelope conceal their identities disguising them under constructed and performative masculinity and femininity according to the traditional myths and cultural expectations. Whereas Odysseus, “conceal[s] his identity and his intentions”, by concocting “fraudulent life histories”, telling her, “the nobler versions, with the monsters and goddesses, rather the more sordid ones with the innkeepers and whores” (50). Penelope tells, “how tediously faithful I'd been” (Atwood 50).

The hundreds of suitors, presuming Odysseus's death due to his failure to return from Trojan War on time, assembled in Ithaca to marry Penelope. They not only exploited and “gobbled up” and use the edibles and animals but also “raped” and “seduced” several of the maids (Atwood 19). They “helped themselves to the maids in the same way they helped themselves to the sheep and pigs and goats and cows” (Atwood 22). They are described as, “vultures when they spot a dead cow; one drops, then another, until finally, every vulture for miles around is tearing up the carcass” (Atwood 26).

*The Penelopiad* focuses on Penelope's point of view and it gives as well a voice to her twelve hanged maids, “I've always been haunted by the hanged maids” (Atwood 1). In the second chapter untitled “The Chorus Line: A Rope-Jumping Rhyme”, Atwood introduces The Twelve Maids, who serve as a Greek chorus, a traditional element of Ancient Greek drama, contradicting and commenting on Penelope's version of the story. The maids sang oral poetics in contrast to

Penelope's prose, "transform[ing] The Penelopiad into a polyphonic narrative where their dissident voices counter the authenticity of Penelope's confession" (Howells 12).

While Penelope suffers because of the psychological pressures of her gender, Atwood shows how, in comparison, the Twelve Maids have it much worse. They suffer even more than Penelope does in the male-dominated society of Greece because their class status interacts with their gender.

In *The Odyssey* the Twelve Hanged Maids are portrayed as disloyal and shameful, sleeping with some of Penelope's suitors, yet in *The Penelopiad* they reconstructed the portrayal to describe themselves as victims of rape at the hands of these same Suitors. They claim that they "wanted to be happy" (Atwood 6), as anyone even if they belong to a low class. Thus, the Maids blame and criticized their lowly status, because it made them unprotected from rape and other discrimination, stating that they were discarded because they were "born to the wrong parents" (Atwood 6).

While Penelope pretended sisterhood towards her Maids, the maids take another action; they accused her of their death since she did not reveal to Odysseus that they were helping her all along. Penelope attempts to exonerate herself in her narrative, that there was little she could have done to help at the time. Suggesting another version of the truth, the Maids' chorus condemns Penelope for her lack of action.

The twelve maids address the male whose lack of interest is seen in "The Chorus Line: The Anthropology Lecture" The Maids attempt to give both meanings to their position in life and death. First, they reconstruct their identity to no longer be slaves: "We were not simply maids. We were not mere slaves and drudges" (Atwood 43) but to be "twelve moon-maidens, companions of Artemis" (Atwood 43). Artemis is the daughter of Zeus who is King of the Gods and is known as the huntress and virgin (Sourvinou-Inwood 64). The Maids claim to be linked to



Artemis is an attempt to raise their statuses to spiritually pure and untainted positions: “what an honor to the Goddess! – and renewing our virginity, as Artemis renewed hers by bathing in a spring dyed with the blood of Actaeon?” (Atwood 43).

Next, they try to make their death a heroic sacrifice by asking “why should Iphigenia be credited with selflessness and devotion, more than we?” (Atwood 43). In myth Iphigenia is closely related to the goddess Artemis. She was the daughter of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra and “Artemis demanded her [Iphigenia’s] sacrifice as the price for sending a fair wind to the Greeks waiting at Aulis to sail for Troy” (Sourvinou-Inwood 77). There are many different traditions of Iphigenia’s fate, such as Artemis sparing her and being “replaced by a bear” (Sourvinou-Inwood 78), but Atwood picks the version where Iphigenia was sacrificed. The Maids thus struggle to recreate their stories and change their status through comparing themselves to people in myth or legend who have a relationship to the ancient Greek gods and whose fates were altered by them. By claiming such a connection, the Maids hope that their voices will have some authority in the afterlife and that their deaths, therefore, had divine meaning.

The male audience keeps questioning their story, consequently, the Maid's struggle continues. One could implicitly sense the questioning through the Maids’ replies to the men: “You, Sir, in the back?”, “What’s that, Sir?”, and “No, Sir” (Atwood 43). At the end of this scene, the Maids give up trying to renew their story because males do not see them as “real girls, real flesh and blood” but instead views them as a “pure symbol. [They were] no more real than money” (Atwood 43). Money, object, was the term used to describe maids, and their murder is just a symbol to be retold for entertainment and the money that comes from it.

In *The Odyssey*, Telemachus and his father decided of hanging the maids for being disloyal as males and masters. The Chorus Line: The Trial of Odysseus, as Videotaped by the Maids

suggests a reconstruction of the roles: “you've forgotten about us! What about our case? You can't let him off! He hanged us in cold blood! Twelve of us! Twelve young girls! For nothing!” (Atwood 47). The Maids accuse Odysseus of their slaughtering in an attempt to judge him instead of being judged to gain the justice that they hope for: “we demand justice! We demand retribution! We invoke the law of blood guilt!” (Atwood 48). It is worthy to mention how the maids, as Penelope did, undermine the myth of Odysseus ‘the Great warrior’ and ‘Shrewd Odysseus’ to turn to be “Mr Nobody! Mr Nameless! Mr Master of Illusion! Mr Sleight of Hand, grandson of thieves and liars!” (Atwood 52).

Maids’ voices do not matter to the audience they are addressing, as a result, they are able to be heard. Atwood makes the Maids invoke the voice of Rumor, which complicates their storytelling and creates multiple versions of truth for the readers and audience whom the Maids address. In “The Chorus Line: The Perils of Penelope, A Drama,” the readers see how the Maids become the goddess Rumor. The Maids act like the goddess Rumor—as a messenger—when they recount “another story. Or several, as befits the goddess Rumor” (Atwood 38). They take on her voice because they show the audience “a peek behind the curtain” (Atwood 38). Rumor is “symbolically represented as intruding into things private and public” (Keith 301) and the Maids in Atwood’s depiction were also viewed this way.

The readers are being told the truth of the Maids’ unjust deaths, not by the Maids themselves, but in the characters that disposed of them: Eurycleia and Penelope. They express Penelope’s driving need to keep her reputation intact as “boo-hooing”, and they show the readers that Penelope’s is not a trustworthy voice. Eurycleia tells Penelope that the Maids “must be silenced, or the beans they’ll spill” they were killed because they were in a position to tell a truth about Penelope, who might have been sleeping with the suitors, and to create a scandal for her.

In death the Maids attempt to tell the audience by performing the truth in the Chorus lines and, as in Vergil's Aeneid, “the strength of a rumor [grows]... Rumour herself grows in force, so the wagging tongues, prying eyes, and pricked-up ears grow in number” (Dyer 31). They attempt to take control of their voice; however, at the same time they remain voiceless because it is not the voice of the Maids that tells their story, but the goddess Rumor’s voice. The goddess Rumor takes over their identity and the Maids become lost in their act.

At first sight, it looks that the Maids gained freedom when they fly away but after a second interpretation, one could figure out that they remain voiceless. At the beginning of the book, Penelope explains the many times she has tried to tell her story in the past although it would always come out as a “scream” that would make her “sound like an owl” (Atwood 2). While Penelope is finally successful in telling her story, the Maids remain voiceless as they turn into owls since they can no longer communicate at all.

In *The Penelopiad*, the reason why the Maids remain voiceless is that their function is to be voiceless, focusing on their abusers and their murder. In doing so they become dehumanized to a point where they become monstrous than owls and as a result, they continue to be voiceless. The “Envoi” confirms that the Maids are becoming animals. It begins with them saying they “had no voice [they] had no name” (Atwood 53). The Maids admit that they had no identity or voice to speak within life and in death.

Atwood creates the Maids to further Penelope's story, to reveal her agency to the audience, and to show what Penelope thought of the Maids' murders. The Maids succeed because the readers learn what led to their hanging and what Penelope was doing throughout the story. However, Atwood makes the Maids forever trapped: they have stuck retelling and reliving their abuse and their death. Throughout the novel, they are represented as stuck at the moment of their death or in their earlier abuse: "their [the Maids] still-twitching feet [that] don't touch the

ground” (Atwood 66), or when they appear in the Court Room with the ropes wrapped around their neck. Even in the afterlife where the dead are not supposed to have bodies, the Maids are stuck within their murder and thus still embodied. It is explored that whereas gender and class exploitation not only leads to sexual abuse of maids but also results in their innocent hanging by those in power.

Atwood’s work stresses that her protagonists follow a transformation that lets them correct their gender identity through retelling their version of the story. The Maids in Atwood’s novella are changed from the Maids in *The Odyssey*. In *The Odyssey*, they existed for Odysseus to kill as a way to restore social balance within the household. Atwood liberates them from that role by giving them multiple scenes to uncover the wrong-doings that happened to them and for them to tell readers the “real” events that surround Penelope, as result reconstructing their gender identity.

As there are different versions of the same story, there are multiple perspectives of femininity. The retelling of the *Odyssey* by Margaret Atwood, with Penelope in the central stage position and her twelve hanged maids, allows for a chance to reads between the lines to understand what happened at home during Odysseus' departure. Not only does Atwood focus on deconstructing identities, but she highlights the outcome of different story-telling perspectives. This provides as with various and multiple masculinities and femininities performed not only by different men and women in the same circumstances but by the same men and women under different circumstances.

### **III.2.The Power of Language in *The Penelopiad***

Language has been one of the most controversial and vital issues among feminist thinkers as well as other critics, it is the only means by which any kind of emotion, data, or thought can be constructed, expressed, conveyed, and preserved. However, most feminist critics maintain that language is another medium that tyrannizes women and silences them, preventing their gender

identity from being voiced instead of enabling them to be expressed.

The novel of Margaret Atwood highlights the importance of finding an alternative to the phallogentric language that prevents the gender identity from being voiced accurately. Outlining an identity that has been broken became a necessity, for this purpose Margaret Atwood offers an alternative language as another device to voice correctly the gender identity that is constructed wrongly according to what fit male prejudices.

*The Penelopiad* strong aim lies in its proficiency to fight and defeat such prejudices through word and the rewriting of such a male-focused narrative. It is significant to mention that the female characters; Penelope and her twelve hanged maids who used to be silent and marginalized in Homer's official account of *The Odyssey* become recognizable agents in *The Penelopiad*.

Language, as Knellwolf argues, “enforces gender difference...projecting men into the position of linguistic agency and authority and women into the position of objects who cannot go beyond expressing their failure to gain autonomous subjectivity” (201). Thus, in *The Penelopiad*, Atwood reconstructed the language, consequently, the positions of subjectivity and objectivity had been changed. Mihaela Miroiu argues: “in order to become a subject, women must start from their own experiences as centers of knowledge” (140).

In this regard, Atwood gives subject position to Penelope and to her twelve maids, who are a small detail in Homer's *The Odyssey*, “to intervene in Penelope's first-person narration in various literary genres from idylls, ballads, rhymes, and songs fulfilling the function of the Classical Greek chorus” (Yurttaş 2006). Traveling from generation to generation and producing a poetic style with a blend of forms and periods, old and modern, *The Penelopiad* reexamines Homer's epic story *The Odyssey* through a variety of genres: narrative, a classic Greek chorus, various types of poetry and song, and modern settings including a court trial and an anthropology lecture.

Atwood successfully combines the reproduction of Greek drama with a ‘record of a

videotape' of a twentieth-century trial of Odysseus. This structure of the novel constructed of multiple genres from idylls to lectures as if the narrative is in search of a form, and suggests that gender difference and oppression are implied in the genre. These two narrating devices, that is giving subject positions to silent agents are, as Curtie suggests, "women writers employment of these narrative techniques, as in *The Penelopiad*, 'brings together gender, genre, and language in such a way that results in a shift in conceptualizing subjectivity in relation to gender'" (53).

The title of the novel itself indicates a subversion of the original myth. *The Penelopiad* draws attention to one of Atwood's essential devices to challenge the expected male perspective of the Greek epic. Many men, Odysseus included, fought for Helen's hand. In the end, Odysseus had to settle for Penelope, who "was at best only second prize" (Atwood 9). Atwood suggests how the choice of words made her narrator consider herself inferior and envy, Penelope states: "Helen the lovely, Helen the septic bitch, the root cause of all my misfortunes" (Atwood 10).

Discourses such as "like a package of meat" (Atwood 10), "I would be torn apart as the earth is by the plough" (Atwood 11), "Helen hasn't borne a son yet,' he said, which ought to have made me glad" (Atwood 16), "[...] he would have to chop me into little pieces with his sword or hang me from the roof beam" (Atwood 18) identify the strong language she uses in talking about the inferior position attributed to women, that is, seen not as a human rather as a productive tool for treasures and children whose husband become the master of her body.

The following discourses articulated by the maids: the "dirty girls" of the house, Telemachus "toys and pets", Penelope's "sources of information", the sex toys of the suitors who "helped themselves to the maids in the same way they helped themselves to the sheep and pigs and goats and cows" (Atwood 27–28). "If our owners or the sons of our owners or a visiting nobleman or the sons of a visiting nobleman wanted to sleep with us, we could not refuse" (Atwood 5) reinforce, celebrate and suggest one fixed definition for what the word 'woman' tend in Greek

patriarchal society and even modern communities especially for those who belong to lower class; they were seen as no more than tools for sex affairs.

In the three-page chapter of *The Penelopiad*, “Slanderous Gossip”, Atwood has Penelope speak in some distinctly “metaliterary terms”. Each refutation is begun by a “literary reference”: “The songs say ...” (37). “The more outrageous versions”, “such a monstrous tale”, “some songs aren’t worth the breath expended on them”, “various commentators have cited” (37). — All suggesting an underlying the implicit meaning of Penelope's defense that she is engaged, not only in defending the truth of her story but also in revising the text of the *Odyssey* to the correct gender identity.

Men’s complete disregard of women, mainly, because of her sex and status in the phallogocentric society turns into a silent latters and aesthetic objects as what happened to Penelope and her hanged maids: “mute bodies to be gazed at, fantasized about, probed, used and abused, fabricated as commodities, exploited as saleable goods or expendable national resources” (Howells 56).

One could figure out that the marginalization of women and prevention of gender identity from being voiced correctly is perpetuated in literature through mythology. In this regard, it is necessary to reconfigure it through irony and parody as the feminist movement suggests. This is the discourse of *The Penelopiad*, in which the targets of the irony are the myths.

The authenticity of Penelope and the maids’ version is improved by the oral nature of the feminist/postmodern discourse built as a dialogue with the reader to whom the narrators speak directly and whom they invite to reflect upon the facts. The language is typical of postmodern literature, shifting the substance of the discourse toward the materiality of everyday life and making the transition from the classical style of the epic obvious.

Penelope speaks to the female readers on this discursive tone and explains to them that her

confessions contradict the official version of the myth, compromising its exemplary nature: Don't follow my example, I want to scream in your ears – yes, yours! (Atwood 3). “Now that all the others have run out of air” (Atwood 3), Penelope decides to “spin a thread of my own” (Atwood 3). She and her maids reject and doubt Homer's story and recreate it again from a woman's point of view. Moreover, they contradict and question the former story: Penelope knows that the beggar who came to their court is Odysseus that he has been unfaithful to her many times, and that Euryclea has seen his scar while he bathed. Even the famous interpretation of the dream with the geese is discredited, because they do not symbolize the suitors about to be killed by the eagle, but the maids who are unjustly punished by Odysseus. “Now you've heard the plain truths”, Penelope warns us, but Atwood questions even the authenticity of her version when the chorus accuses her of deceptiveness and complicity to murder: to remain a famous “model wife” (Atwood 35) fearing the possible confessions of “the cheeky young wigglers” (Atwood 43). Penelope did not hurry to defend them, but pretended to be fast asleep. The various versions of the truth suggest that there is no absolute truth, only subjective, fragmentary perceptions of reality. This is one of the postmodernist principles that Atwood promotes to discredit the dated, obstructive canonical text.

The text is not a correct reflection of gender identity. It is no longer holds as one ultimate truth, but a set of subjective truths and perspectives interpreted and judged distinctly. The narrators' voices presented in a way that no version can be considered as the actual truth, yet they have one shared perspective: Odysseus has been unfaithful and is no longer a hero. For Penelope, Odysseus are obviously “tricky and a liar” who has told her “the nobler versions, with the monsters and the goddesses, rather than the more sordid ones with the innkeepers and whores” (Atwood 39). Even some singers who come to the court in Ithaca bring news about Odysseus and his lovers, not about Sirens, the cave full of bats, or the Land of the Dead. The chorus sings



sarcastically about the adventurer who “bedded the goddess so fine” (Atwood 33), left Calypso after “seven long years thereof kissing and woo” (Atwood 23), and “Then he told his adventures and laid to his store/A hundred disasters and sufferings galore” (Atwood 33). Homer does not hide the erotic side of Odysseus's adventures but gives them the mythical aura of a hero subjected to the whimsical, vengeful gods who make him walk a tortuous path. Atwood casts a shadow on his heroism in these versions that call him a hypocrite, tricky adulterer, and liar. The climax of the Parodic vision is the staging of the trial of Odysseus, an opportunity for the writer to declare the idea of patriarchy in modern society and its obtuse mentality.

The hero is absolved of the crime of killing the suitors because, according to the attorney for the defense, “our generally esteemed client Odysseus was merely acting in self-defense (Atwood 40). As for the hanging of the maids, the Judge denies the accusations in the name of the famous Odyssean myth that he considers superior to the murder of the twelve women: “It would be unfortunate if this regrettable but minor incident were allowed to stand as a blot on an otherwise exceedingly distinguished career” (Atwood 42).

From a patriarchal outlook, the maids were guilty because they “were raped without permission” – Odysseus’s permission, obviously –, as their master also owned their bodies. Naturally, the “minor incident” is the result of the Judge’s discriminating perception of gender differences. Therefore, the maids are forced to invoke the Angry Ones – it is not a coincidence that they are female goddesses –, since they are the only ones who can do justice and haunt Odysseus for his crime.

Odysseus will be haunted in “songs and in plays, in tomes and theses, in marginal notes and in appendices!” (Atwood 42) which suggests that the Odyssean myth will be rewritten over time. Besides its ludic, even ridiculous aspect, the mixture of contemporary “law-specific” elements with mythological ones is meant to connect the ancient with the modern based on the myth, once

again suggesting the negative consequences that mythological thinking perpetuates within the society.

In this novel, the deconstruction of the myth under the influence of feminist thinking is meant to draw attention to defeating the traditional gender stereotypes and to the ‘superficiality’ of the contemporary society that promotes the “retrograde” thinking of the Homeric patriarchy. For Atwood, myth is a danger and the removal of mystery is the only way to exclude its impact on mentality.

Atwood abandons the idea of “happy endings” (Atwood 3) as Penelope does when she decides to spin her yarn. Life is too complex and complicated for literature to make up stories based on myths that are known to impose the universal truth, happy endings, and final solutions to the plots. The critical rewriting of the Odyssean myth from the feminist perspective means as it have already shown, questioning the myths and the patriarchal mentalities at their foundations, and impose a subjective narrative bearing the individual truth:

The rewritings of the model text given to «public use» establish a different kind of legitimacy by discrediting the official, deceiving discourse that serves the policy of the state conservation system and by asserting the individual, subjective, fragmentary truth (Boditean 101–115).

*The Penelopiad* reconfigures the woman’s status in the couple and the relationship with the patriarchal society by reinterpreting the myth of the Odyssean couple and conjugal happiness. As re-framer of myth, Atwood offer us two distinct roots: taking back the myth and repurposing it as a story about true definition of gender identity, or tearing down the myth to expose the troublesome assumptions that lie at its core.

## Conclusion

Mythology is an integral part of the nation's history, values and beliefs. This sacred narrative unravels various hidden secrets about people's lifestyles. Myths aim at allowing the individual to uncover the mysterious of an imaginary world where everything is feasible.

The power of mythology lies on its capacity to act as an inspiration and violation for women. Gender identities are misrepresented in most males' writings. Some myths act as a spiritual escape and an immense support for females through portraying them as iron women, other myths serve as barrier and disheartenment for women's strength through portraying them as passive, submissive or manipulative creature whose bodies are a property for their husbands or masters. While men are depicted as independent and powerful.

Margaret Atwood is one of the most prominent figures and contemporary female writers who reject the passive and negative identity attributed to women in male's work. These female writers revised patriarchal myths and reproduced a new positive vision about women and a correct definition for the so-called gender identity, they construct a remarkable identity for females, voice their existence and provide them with extra functions. Through the rewriting of old myths, female authors rebel against such wrong presentation of gender identity which create false stereotypes images connected to woman; they employ their writings as brilliant weapon to defeat gender stereotypes.

Atwood's *The Penelopiad* succeeded in shedding light on how *The Odyssey* is a male-focused text has been shaped without any consideration of gender. Through the revealing of the narrative of the silent and imprisoned females characters in Homer's epic, Atwood condemns Greek patriarchal society and through the technique of rewriting, the narrators breaks their silence, identifying themselves with correct gender identity.

Unlike Grace in *Alias Grace*, and Iris Chase Griffin in *The Blind Assassin*, where the female

narrators disappeared by the end of their stories and only their voices remain, in *The Penelopiad* “this pattern is reversed”, as Atwood gives the narrative to Penelope and twelve maids who negotiate from the underworld. Penelope and twelve maids narrate the different version of Homer’s *Odyssey* unraveling different perspectives and truths could be uncover before since patriarchal society doesn’t allow women to express her views and attain freedom.

Atwood created a female heroine models to contradict obedient and dependent woman. Her essential role is to inspire females through portraying them as independent, capable of many tasks, and have the courage to fight against male prejudice. The legend of Penelope is an extraordinary creation and a significant reward provided by Atwood to her female audience. Through presenting such alternative version of *The Odyssey*, the writer reveals women’s capability to adopt more than one specific role.

Atwood’s *The Penelopiad* is full of multiplicity of truth and perspectives of femininity. The narrator’s encounters various obstacles including their inability to speak their genuine identity, the narrator manage to speak loudly and correct the oppressive gender identity attributed to them through using the language as a weapon to defend their aim.

The study focuses on the effect of the rewriting in empowering the narrators to tell their own version of the story. The study has shown how Margaret Atwood reconstructing gender identities through the rewriting method through the application of two devices: giving voice to the Penelope and her maids; and providing an alternative language to the phallogocentric one.

As a feminist Canadian author, Atwood is viewed as a fighter of gender stereotypes and as a protector of women’s right to be independent. She apparently succeeds in making her voice heard by all reader. Through the power of voice and words, she avenges misogynist men, defeat and reconstruct gender identity.

## Works Cited

### I. Primary Sources

Atwood, Margaret. *The Penelopiad*. London, Canongate, 2018.

Homer. *The Odyssey*. Transl. George Herbert Palmer, Houghton, Mifflin and Company. Cambridge, 1891.

---. *The Odyssey*. Transl. Robert Fagles, Penguin Books. New York, 1996.

---. *The Odyssey*. Transl. Robert Fitzgerald, Doubleday & Company, Inc. New York, 1961.

### II. Secondary Sources

Agatucci, Cora. "Culture, Religion, & Myth: Interdisciplinary Approaches." *Cocc.edu*, 2010, [web.cocc.edu/cagatucci/classes/hum211/CoursePack/culture.htm](http://web.cocc.edu/cagatucci/classes/hum211/CoursePack/culture.htm).

Alsop, Rachel, et al. *Theorizing Gender*. Cambridge, Polity Press; Oxford, 2009.

"Ancient Greek Men, Ancient Athenian Men's Jobs, Lifestyle." *Ancient Greece Facts.com*, [ancientgreecefacts.com/ancient-greek-men/](http://ancientgreecefacts.com/ancient-greek-men/). Accessed 23 July 2021.

Aristotle. *Politics*. Indianapolis, Indiana, Hackett Publishing Company, Inc, 2017.

Asikainen, Susanna. *Masculinities in the Ancient Greco-Roman World*. *Brill.com*, Brill, 29 Dec. 2018, Accessed 22 July 2021.

Ayers, Donald M, and Thomas D Worthen. *English Words from Latin and Greek Elements*. Tucson, Ariz., Univ. Of Arizona Press, [19]97, 1986.

Beam, Michael. "Telemachus' Transition to Manhood." *The Phallogentric*, 12 Feb. 2015, [thephallogentric.wordpress.com/2015/02/12/telemachus-transition-to-manhood/](http://thephallogentric.wordpress.com/2015/02/12/telemachus-transition-to-manhood/) Accessed 25 July 2021.

Beardsley, Jenn. "Penelope, Helen, and the Ancient Greek Spectrum of Femininity: Observations Of Womanhood in the Homeric Epics." *Inquiries Journal*, vol. 13, no. 02, 2021, [inquiriesjournal.com/articles/1882/penelope-helen-and-the-ancient-greek-spectrum-of](http://inquiriesjournal.com/articles/1882/penelope-helen-and-the-ancient-greek-spectrum-of)

Femininity-observations-of-womanhood-in-the-homeric-epics.

Bhat, Prerana. "Greek Mythology and Its Lasting Influence on Modern Civilization." *Indian Folk*,

10 Apr. 2020, indianfolk.com/greek-mythology-lasting-influence-modern-civilization/.

Biernat, Monica. "Gender Stereotypes and the Relationship between Masculinity and Femininity: A Developmental Analysis." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, vol. 61, no. 3, 1991, pp. 351–365, 10.1037/0022-3514.61.3.351. Accessed 10 July 2021.

Boditean, Florica, Mituri antice I ideology actual: Christa Wolf (Cassandra) Margaret Atwood (Penelopiad) (Old Myths and Current Ideologies: Christa Wolf (Casandra) and Margaret Atwood (The Penelopiad), "In the Mirrors of Democracy: European Literature and Society Ethics", International Scientific Conference Chiinu, CEP USM, 2015.

Burke, P J, et al. *Gender Identity, Self-Esteem, and Physical and Sexual Abuse in Dating Relationships (from Violence in Dating Relationships, P 72-93, 1989, Maureen a Pirog-Good and Jan E Stets, Eds. -- See NCJ-118347)*. United States, 1989.

Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. London, Routledge, 1990.

Cassirer, Ernst. *An Essay on Man: An Introduction to a Philosophy of Human Culture*. New Heaven and London: Yale, 1992 (1944). Print.

Chami, Abdelghani. *The Influence of the Greek Mythology over the Modern Western Society*. Master's diss. The University of Tlemcen, 2014.

Chodorow, Nancy J. *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender; with a New Preface*. Berkeley, Calif. Univ. Of California Press, 2002.

Churchill, Katherine. "The Penelopiad." *LitCharts*. LitCharts LLC, 18 Jun 2017. Web. 6 July 2021.

- Cohen, Yolande. *Women and Counter-Power*. Montreal, Black Rose Books, 1989.
- Cotterell, Arthur. *Classical Mythology: The Ancient Myths and Legends of Greece and Rome*. London, England? Select Editions, 2002
- Curti, L. (1998). *Female Stories Female Bodies: Narrative, Identity, and Representation*. London: Macmillan Press Ltd.
- Cusack, Simone. *Gender Stereotyping - Transnational Legal Perspectives*. University Of Pennsylvania Pre, 2011.
- David, Adams Leeming. *Introduction to Mythology: the Voyage of the Hero*, 3rd ed., (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).
- De Beauvoir, Simone. *The Second Sex*. , Vintage Classics, 1949.
- Demand, Nancy H. *Birth, Death, and Motherhood in Classical Greece*. Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004.
- Ďlapkauskaitė, Rūta. “Postmodern Voices from Beyond: Negotiating with the Dead in Margaret Atwood’s the Penelopiad.” *Literatūra*, vol. 49, no. 5, 1 Jan. 2007, pp. 138–146, 10.15388/litera.2007.5.7944. Accessed 14 June. 2021. Polity Press, 2002.
- Douglas, Harper. “Mythology”, Online Etymology, [etymonline.com/index.php?term=mythology](http://etymonline.com/index.php?term=mythology). Accessed May31, 2021.
- Doyle, Bernard. “Mythology”. 17 Apr. 1997.n.p.Web. 2 June. 2021.
- Dragomir, Otilia, and Miroiu Mihaela. (ed.), *Lexicon feminist (A Feminist Lexicon)*, Iasi, Polirom, 2002.
- Dyer, Robert Rutherford. “Vergil's Fama: A New Interpretation of 'Aeneid' 4.173ff.” *Greece & Rome*, vol. 36, no. 1, pp. 28–32. 1989.
- Eagly, Alice Hendrison. *Sex Differences in Social Behavior: A Social-Role Interpretation*.

Hillsdale, N.J., Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1987.

Ernst Cassirer. *An Essay on Man: An Introduction to a Philosophy of Human Culture*. New Haven, Yale University Press, 1962.

Ernst Cassirer, and Donald Phillip Verene. *Symbol, Myth and Culture: Essays and Lectures of Ernst Cassirer, 1935-1945*. New Haven; London, Yale University Press, 1979.

Ernst Cassirer, and Susanne K Langer. *Language and Myth*. New York, Dover Publications Inc., [200, 1946.

Freud, Sigmund. "Some Psychological Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction between the Sexes." *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 8: 133-142.1927.

Gilligan, Carol. *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*. Cambridge, Mass., London, England, 1998.

Greer, Germaine. *The Female Eunuch*. New York: Farrar, 1971. Print.

Gurney, Kryn. "(PDF) Helen and Penelope and Women in Ancient Thought." *ResearchGate*, Mar. 2017, [researchgate.net/publication/317614649\\_Helen\\_and\\_Penelope\\_and\\_women\\_in\\_Ancient\\_Thought](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/317614649_Helen_and_Penelope_and_women_in_Ancient_Thought). Accessed 18 July 2021.

Harris, Benjamin. *Toxic Masculinity: An Exploration of Traditional Masculine Norms in Relation To Mental Health Outcomes and Help-Seeking Behaviors in College-Aged Males*. 2021.

Henriques, Sara. *Giving Penelope a Voice*. Húmus, 2015.

"History: Women in Ancient Greece." *Pace.edu*, 2019, [webpage.pace.edu/nreagin/F2004WS267/AnnaCho/finalHISTORY.html](http://webpage.pace.edu/nreagin/F2004WS267/AnnaCho/finalHISTORY.html). Accessed 8 July 2021.

Holmberg, Ingrid E. "Euripides' Helen: Most Noble and Most Chaste." *The American Journal of Philology*, vol. 116, no. 1, 1995, p. 19, 10.2307/295501. Accessed 2 Dec. 2019.



Howells, Coral Ann. "Five ways of looking at The Penelopiad." *Sydney Studies* 32(2006):5-19.

Howells, Coral Ann, Margaret Atwood, Houndmills; Basingstoke; London, 1996.

"Impact of Greek Mythology on Western Culture / Impact-of-Greek-Mythology-On-Western-Culture.pdf / PDF4PRO." *PDF4PRO*, 29 Sept. 2018,  
[pdf4pro.com/view/impact-of-greek-mythology-on-western-culture-3261de.html](http://pdf4pro.com/view/impact-of-greek-mythology-on-western-culture-3261de.html)  
<[goodreads.com/quotes/415324](http://goodreads.com/quotes/415324)>.n.p. n.d. 2 June. 2021.

Jean-Pierre Vernant. *Myth and Society in Ancient Greece*. New York, Zone Books, 1990.

Joseph, Brian. "Why Greek Is One of the World's Major Languages." *Journal of Greek Linguistics*, vol. 9, no. 1, 2009, pp. 187–194.

Keith, Arthur L. "Vergil's Allegory of Fama." *The Classical Journal*, vol. 16, no. 5, 1921, pp. 298–301.

Kirk, G.S. *Myth: It's Meaning and Function in Ancient Other Cultures*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971.

Kohlberg, Lawrence. "A cognitive-developmental Analysis of Children's Sex-Role Concepts and Attitudes." In Eleanor E. Maccoby (Ed.), *The Development of Sex Differences*. Stanford: Stanford University Press. 1966.

Kokkini, Dimitra. *Euripidean Men Revisited Four Case Studies*. Aug. 2010.

Lauter, Estella. *Feminist Archetypal Theory: Interdisciplinary Re-Visions of Jungian Thought*. Knoxville, The University Of Tennessee Press, 1985.

Lauter, Estella. "Visual Images by Women: A Test Case for the Theory of Archetypes." *Feminist Archetypal Theory: Interdisciplinary Re-Visions of Jungian Thought*. Eds. Estella Lauter and Carol Schreier Rupprecht. Knoxville: Tennessee, 1985. 46-92. Print.

Leeming, David Adam. *Introduction to Mythology: the Voyage of the Hero*, 3rd ed., (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

Mason, Wyatt. "The First Woman to Translate the 'Odyssey' Into English." *The New York Times Magazine*, 02Nov.2017. [nytimes.com/2017/11/02/magazine/the-first-woman-to-translate-The-odyssey-into-english.html](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/02/magazine/the-first-woman-to-translate-the-odyssey-into-english.html)

Mischel, Walter. "A Social-Learning View of Sex Differences in Behavior." Pp. 56-81 in Eleanor E. Maccoby (Ed.), *The Development of Sex Differences*. Stanford: Stanford University Press. 1966.

Millett, Kate. *Sexual Politics*. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 2000. Print.

Morris, Holland. "Describe Penelope's Relationship with Her Father and Her Relationship with Her Mother from the Novella the Penelopiad by Margaret Atwood. - ENotes.com." *ENotes*, 3 Apr. 2020, [enotes.com/homework-help/describe-penelope-s-relationship-with-her-father-2221107](https://www.enotes.com/homework-help/describe-penelope-s-relationship-with-her-father-2221107). Accessed 8 July 2021

"Mythology", Dictionary.com Unabridged, accessed May 31, 2021. [dictionary.reference.com/browse/Mythology](https://www.dictionary.reference.com/browse/Mythology).

Nunes, Ruan. "(PDF) Looking into Margaret Atwood's 'the Penelopiad': Appropriation, Parody and Class Issues." *ResearchGate*, Jan. 2014, [researchgate.net/publication/337114117\\_Looking\\_into\\_Margaret\\_Atwood%27s\\_%27The\\_Penelopiad%27\\_Appropriation\\_parody\\_and\\_class\\_issues](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/337114117_Looking_into_Margaret_Atwood%27s_%27The_Penelopiad%27_Appropriation_parody_and_class_issues). Accessed 18 July 2021.

Oakley, Ann. *Sex, Gender and Society*. London, Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2016.

"Odyssey: Hanging of the Maids." *Translation Station*, 4 Apr. 2018, [translationstation2018.wordpress.com/2018/04/04/odyssey-hanging-of-the-maids/](https://translationstation2018.wordpress.com/2018/04/04/odyssey-hanging-of-the-maids/). Accessed 20 July 2021.

Pan, Jie. "Research on the Influence of Greek Mythology on Anglo - American Language and Literature." *Proceedings of the 2017 3rd International Conference on Economics, Social*

- Science, Arts, Education and Management Engineering (ESSAEME 2017)*, vol. 119, 2017, [10.2991/essaeme-17.2017.297](https://doi.org/10.2991/essaeme-17.2017.297). Accessed May 17, 2021.
- Perrera, Sylvia Brinton. "The Descent of Inanna: Myth and Therapy." *Feminist Archetypal Theory: Interdisciplinary Re-Visions of Jungian Thought*. Eds. Lauter, Estella, and Carol Schreier Rupprecht. Knoxville: Tennessee, 1985. 137-86. Print.
- Petris, Chaidie. "Gender Roles in Homeric Epic." *Medium*, 29 Aug. 2020, [medium.com/lessons-from-history/gender-roles-in-homeric-epic-166ccc5e57d9](https://medium.com/lessons-from-history/gender-roles-in-homeric-epic-166ccc5e57d9). Accessed 9 July 2021.
- Phinney, Edward, et al. "Classical Mythology." *The Classical World*, vol. 66, no. 3, 1972, p. 183, [10.2307/4347801](https://doi.org/10.2307/4347801).
- Pilcher, Jane, and Imelda Whelehan. *Fifty Key Concepts in Gender Studies*. London, Sage Publications, 2004.
- Pomeroy, Sarah B. *Goddesses, Whores, Wives and Slaves: Women in Classical Antiquity*. London, Hale, 1975.
- Post, Stephanie. *Epic Women a Comparative Study of Appropriations of Homeric Helen and Penelope in English Modern Literature*. 2015,
- Pratt, Annis. *Archetypal Patterns in Women's Fiction*. Bloomington: Indiana, 1981. Print.
- Rajabov, Bakhrom, et al. "Research on the Value of Greek and Roman Mythology to English Language and Literature." *Frontiers in Educational Research*, vol. 3, no. 5, 2020, pp. 108–110 [Francispress.com/uploads/papers/StaA4VQQ9qsSYIDkQvx4eQBDdS75NtlFeKyTLipl.pdf](https://www.francispress.com/uploads/papers/StaA4VQQ9qsSYIDkQvx4eQBDdS75NtlFeKyTLipl.pdf), [10.25236/FER.2020.030522](https://doi.org/10.25236/FER.2020.030522). Accessed May 12, 2021.
- Roman, Luke, and Monica Roman. *Encyclopedia of Greek and Roman Mythology*. New York, Facts on File, 2010.

Rubarth, Scott. "Competing Constructions of Masculinity in Ancient Greece." *ATHENS*

*JOURNAL of HUMANITIES & ARTS*, vol. 1, no. 1, 31 Dec. 2013, pp. 21–32,

[atiner.gr/journals/humanities/2014-1-1-2-RUBARTH.pdf](http://atiner.gr/journals/humanities/2014-1-1-2-RUBARTH.pdf), 10.30958/ajha.1-1-2

Rupprecht, Carol Schreier. "The Common Language of Women's Dreams: Colloquy of Mind and

Body." *Feminist Archetypal Theory: Interdisciplinary Re-Visions of Jungian Thought*.

Eds. Lauter, Estella, and Carol Schreier Rupprecht. Knoxville: Tennessee, 1985. 187-

219. Print.

Segal, Robert A. *Theorizing about Myth*. Amherst, University Of Massachusetts Press, 1999.

Segal, Robert A. "Mythology: The Voyage of the Hero. David Adams Leeming." *The Journal of Religion*, vol. 63, no. 1, Jan. 1983, pp. 99–101, Accessed 3 Dec. 2020.

Segura, Sofía Nogués. "Myths and the Perception of Gender in Culture and Society." *Sofía Nogués*,

17 July 2013, [sofianogues.wordpress.com/2013/07/17/myths-and-the-perception-of-gender-in-culture-and-society/](http://sofianogues.wordpress.com/2013/07/17/myths-and-the-perception-of-gender-in-culture-and-society/).

Sealy, Raphael. *History of the Greek City States, 700-338 B. C.* University of California Press, 1976.

Shermer, Michael. Citatium. [citatium.org/author/Michael\\_Shermer](http://citatium.org/author/Michael_Shermer). June 1, 2021.

Sourvinou-Inwood, Christiane. "Artemis." *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*. Oxford University Press, 2005.

Sourvinou-Inwood, Christiane. "Iphigenia." *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*. Oxford University Press, 2005. 5 May 2011.

Spence, Janet T, and Robert L Helmreich. *Masculinity [And] Femininity: Their Psychological Dimensions, Correlates, [And] Antecedents*. Austin, Tex., University Of Texas Press,

1979.

Staels, Hilde. "The Penelope and weight: Contemporary Parodic and Burlesque Transformations of Classical Myths." *College Literature* 36.4(2009): n.pag. PROJECT MUSE. Web. 5 May 2011. Print.

<http://www.freepatentsonline.com//article/College/Literature/211454297.html>

Stirk, Peter M R. *A History of European Integration since 1914*. London, Continuum, 2001.

Studies, ANGLISTICUM Journal of the Association for Anglo-American. "Deconstructing Gender and Myth in Margaret Atwood's 'the Penelopiad.'" *ANGLISTICUM*

*JOURNAL (IJLLIS)*, vol. 2, no. 3, June 2013,

[academia.edu/3845788/Deconstructing\\_Gender\\_and\\_Myth\\_in\\_Margaret\\_Atwood\\_s\\_The\\_Penelopiad\\_](http://academia.edu/3845788/Deconstructing_Gender_and_Myth_in_Margaret_Atwood_s_The_Penelopiad_).

Terman, Lewis M, et al. *Sex and Personality: Studies in Masculinity and Femininity*. New York, Russell & Russell, 1968.

"The Influences of Greek and Roman Mythology on Western Language and Literature | Free Content Web." *Www.freecontentweb.com*, 2011, [freecontentweb.com/content/influences-greek-and-roman-mythology-western-language-and-literature](http://freecontentweb.com/content/influences-greek-and-roman-mythology-western-language-and-literature). Accessed May 8, 2021.

"The Odyssey: An Overview." *No Sweat Shakespeare*, 24 Feb. 2018, [nosweatshakespeare.com/literature/most-influential-fiction/the-odyssey/](http://nosweatshakespeare.com/literature/most-influential-fiction/the-odyssey/).

Tylor, Edward B. *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Art, and Custom*. London, 1871.

Vann, Darah. "Helen of Troy: Unwomanly in Her Sexuality." *Classical Inquiries*, 3 May 2016, [classical-inquiries.chs.harvard.edu/helen-of-troy-unwomanly-in-her-sexuality/](http://classical-inquiries.chs.harvard.edu/helen-of-troy-unwomanly-in-her-sexuality/). Accessed 15 July 2021.

- Wagner, Ursula. "Feminism and Archetypal Theory Estella Lauter and Carol Schreier Rupprecht, Eds. Feminist Archetypal Theory. Knoxville, Univ. Of Tennessee Press, 1985." *The San Francisco Jung Institute Library Journal*, vol. 6, no. 3, Mar. 1986, pp. 21–32. Accessed 13 Aug. 2020.
- Walter Kirkpatrick Lacey. *The Family in Classical Greece*. Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1989.
- Warner, Marina. *Six Myths of Our Time: Little Angels, Little Monsters, Beautiful Beasts, and More*. New York, Vintage Books, 1995.
- Weitzmann, Lenore J. *Sex Role Socialization: A Focus on Women*. Palo Alto, Calif, Mayfield Publishing Co, 1979.
- Wikipedia Contributors. "Greek Mythology in Western Art and Literature." *Wikipedia*, WIKIPEDIA? Foundation, 18 Mar. 2017, [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greek\\_mythology\\_in\\_western\\_art\\_and\\_literature](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greek_mythology_in_western_art_and_literature).
- Yurttaş, Hatice. "Reading the Penelopiad through Irigary: Rewriting Female Subjectivity." *Journal Of Faculty of Letters Cilt*, v. 34, no. 1, 2018, p. 206. Accessed 7 September 2021.