Section II: Penelope Examined

Chapter 3: Penelope's Origins

People think that stories are shaped by people. In fact, it's the other way around.
Stories exist independently of their players. .....
Stories etch grooves deep enough for people to follow in the same way that water follows certain paths down a mountainside. And every time fresh actors tread the path of the story, the groove runs deeper.
This is called the theory of narrative causality and it means that a story, once started, *takes a shape*. .....
This is why history keeps repeating all the time.

Terry Pratchett *Witches Abroad* (Victor and Gollancz 1991)

Penelope can provide a specific example of how myth draws on folk-tale and etymology for its development, how writers emphasised or ignored particular aspects or variants of the story for their own purposes, and how these interacted to produce a "general idea" of a particular mythological character. The case of Penelope is also instructive, in that it shows how such a prevailing "general idea" may persist even when variations on the usual story contradict it: in Penelope's case, the conflict is between her status as exemplary good wife and the variations of the story which made her the mother of the god Pan, or unfaithful to Odysseus with one or all of her suitors. An oral tradition is far happier at encompassing such apparent contradictions than a literary tradition; we may well remember that throughout antiquity, although poetry might be written to be read by an elite literate audience, the greater part of the population was illiterate, and myths would be mainly heard rather than read. Even a carefully written speech or play would have, for the majority, only an aural reception. This is particularly true for Classical Greece, where the mythology was not so much part of education as part of life; as I have argued above, by the Hellenistic and Roman periods, the great Classical myths tend to be retold for their narrative interest rather than for any contemporary social relevance. It is also possible that many of these tales were no longer being told in

families and passed on orally, but were being taught as literature (above, p.17-8). The relevance of this to Penelope, and the light which she may cast on this phenomenon, will be made clear below.

The Folk-tale Penelope

The references to Penelope and versions of her story which have survived for our consideration are, almost without exception, literary. We are aware that the mythological stories which we know from literary sources were told also by other storytellers, and it does not seem unreasonable to suppose that the one may have influenced the other. However, this is difficult to demonstrate, since the evidence we may cite is mainly indirect. One sign of an oral background to the mythological stories we have is the way in which some fall into folk-tale story-patterns. Another is the tendency for certain mythological characters, including Penelope, to be simplified into exemplars of particular character traits[1]. As outlined in the "theory of narrative causality" in the epigraph to this chapter, there are certain enduring patterns which make a good story, and these include the polarisation of issues and characters into opposites - good and bad, beautiful and ugly, faithful and faithless, etc. Folk tales and fairy-stories exemplify this, which is why a character like Penelope seems likely to have had her origin in such stories, for she represents one extreme of female behaviour. Her part in the folk-tale story forces her into one role; here we may contrast Odysseus, who, although he also has a part in folk-tale stories, is more flexible, because his role in these stories - that of the

[1] Cf. above pp.30-7, particularly the case of Phaedra, where even the well-known second Euripidean version could not change her reputation.

clever hero who gets out of trouble and solves his problems by the use of his wits - gives him a positive image as intelligent, but also leaves him open to the accusation of trickery.

The folk-tale quality of the second half of the *Odyssey*[2] goes beyond the widely recognised folk-tale nature of the stories of the wanderings, as shown by the relatively close correlation between the action in these books and 'functions' 23-31 as defined by Propp in his analysis of Russian folk tales[3]:

23. Hero arrives (home or in another country) unrecognised.

    - arriving at home, the hero is expected to stay with an artisan.

24. False hero presents unfounded claims.

25. Difficult task proposed to the hero.

    - may be a test of strength.

26. Task is resolved.

27. Hero is recognised.

    - by a mark, brand, thing given to him, and also by his accomplishment of the task.

28. False hero/ Villain exposed.

29. Hero given new appearance.

    - may be by magical action of a helper, or by putting on new garments.

30. Villain is punished.

31. Hero marries and ascends to the throne.

    - this may be a resumed marriage.

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[2] Cf. Hölscher 1988, Hansen 1997.

[3] Propp 1968 pp.60-64. Propp's analysis has not been universally accepted; for criticism of Propp, see Burkert 1979 pp.5-10, with bibliography cited p.146 n.3.

Some of these functions appear more than once, and associated with different people: for example, there are several recognitions, and the motif of the task appears obliquely in Penelope's weaving, as well as in the test of the bow and the test proposed to Eurymachus by Odysseus at *Od.* 18.365-80 (the weaving parallels the examples quoted by Propp of a test of weaving shirts being set[4]). Although Propp did not intend a universal application for this formalist analysis of Russian folk tales, the same units may be found in archaic Greek epic, which suggests that some form of more universal plot element is being identified. It is possible that, as Fehling has proposed in connection with the tale of Cupid and Psyche[5], the apparent similarity of plots between archaic Greece and modern Russia is dependent not on independent traditions using the same plot elements, but on a literary heritage based partly on the importance of Homer for education over many centuries; however, although such influence might explain some details, the plot pattern of the returning husband does seem to be sufficiently widespread, and so obvious a theme for story-telling, to allow us to accept that "folk tales" - commonly told stories - on this theme did exist before the *Odyssey*.

The story of Penelope as told in the *Odyssey* appears to link two common "folk-tale" storylines: the story of the returning husband[6], and the story of the princess's wooers. The absent husband or lover is a fairly common figure in folk tales; Thompson

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[4] Propp 1968 p.61, tales 104, 267.

[5] Fehling 1977, reviewed in Dowden 1979. Although Fehling is probably right to stress the literary ancestry of the tale of Cupid and Psyche (see Kenney 1990 pp.17-19), his more radical suggestion about the illusion of an oral tradition of folk-tale seems overstated. There has almost certainly been influence on oral traditions by written texts (cf. the Coan folk tale apparently based on a tale of Erysichthon, discussed by Hollis 1970 pp.130-2, 154-7), but this does not mean that the concept of an oral folk-tale tradition, with elements shared across the globe, is completely unacceptable. The fact that an element been found good enough to retain in an oral tradition, even if its original source is literary, can tell us something about its universal appeal.

[6] See Thomson 1914 p.103, Radermacher 1915, Tolstoi 1934, Page 1955 pp.1-3, with further bibliography p.18 n.1, Holzapfel 1990; cf. Splettstösser 1898.

1955-8 gives examples from all over the world. It is notable that many of these examples portray the wife/woman as unfaithful, the husband returning unrecognised to chastise her. When the woman remains faithful, her fidelity is often linked to the motif of a quest - as, for example, in the story of Psyche, who has to fulfil various requirements before she can regain her husband[7], or the less contentious examples of "Finist the Bright Falcon" or "The Lute Player"[8]. A similar element of suffering and endurance may be found in the *Odyssey*'s telling of the story of Penelope: her suffering over the long years of her husband's absence is stressed, and her heroism is emphasised by the use of a lion simile to describe her (*Od.* 4.791-4). Odysseus' mistrust of Penelope would be well-founded if this story were to follow the more common pattern associated with the returning husband, namely that of return to an unfaithful wife, as happened to Agamemnon. It has been suggested that this was indeed the original version of the myth known to Homer, but that Penelope has been whitewashed[9], thus creating a better contrast between Agamemnon and Odysseus, Penelope and Clytaemnestra. The fact that this became the dominant version of Penelope would be particularly notable if such an innovation were Homeric[10].

The theme of the returning husband is not only widespread, but has many variables[11]. For those familiar with the story of the returning husband from Classical

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[7] The tale of Cupid and Psyche, as mentioned above, has been seen as a literary imitation of a folk tale by Fehling; whether or not this is the case, its plot elements do seem to appear in folk tale, and so must at least have been adopted as suiting that genre. The motif of testing of a wife is widespread; see Thompson 1955-8 H360-99.

[8] The girl engaged to Finist the Bright Falcon wears out three pairs of iron shoes in her wanderings in search of him; "The Lute Player" tells a story closely resembling the rescue of Richard the Lionheart by Blondel, but the role of the minstrel is taken by the king's wife, in disguise. Both come from Russia, and are retold by Andrew Lang in his *Violet Fairy Book*.

[9] Graves 1955 pp.84, 203, 1960 pp.374-5, Thomson 1914 ch.3, Peyrefitte 1949 pp.25-6.

[10] The question of the "original" character of Penelope is discussed below.

[11] Splettstösser 1898 pp.7-8 refers to Italian and Saxon folksongs, found in Nigra *Canti popolari del Piedmonte* (pp.168ff.) and G. Schaumbach/W. Müller *Niedersächsische Sagen und Märchen* (Göttingen 1855): variables include the reasons for absence and the occupation of the husband (in Nigra's collection,

mythology, Splettstösser's conclusion is perhaps surprising: that one of the most usual patterns is for the man who returns home to find his wife (happily) remarried, to reconcile himself to the marriage, and to go on his way, never letting his wife know that he returned. Stories in which the husband returns home just as his wife is about to remarry form a subset in which the bias seems to be more towards a faithful wife[12]. Stith Thompson defines the motif of the "homecoming husband" by the return of the husband just as the wife is about to remarry[13]; as shown by Splettstösser, this is too narrow a definition of the motif as a whole, but it does parallel the *Odyssey* more closely. Such stories, like the *Odyssey*, often involve divine or providential interference to bring about the desired result, though the linking of a return to a vow of sacrifice (to the devil, a giant, or other monster[14]), is not paralleled in the *Odyssey*. The woman may (as in the *Odyssey*) be put under pressure to (re)marry by her parents[15]. Similar stories may be found all over Europe, and beyond, and it seems plausible that the favoured variants at any specified place and time will reflect contemporary fears and tastes. Thus today's

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all were soldiers). Further modern parallels are cited by Peyrefitte 1949 p.234 n.1. The Italian tales tend to have a similar situation to that found in the *Odyssey* (husband returns as wife is about to remarry), but some show the wife or fiancée (re)married, and this also is the usual pattern of the German tales. Such a remarriage, however, may not be conscious adultery, but rather the result of a false announcement of the husband's death (as in William Goldman's *The Princess Bride*, Tennyson's *Enoch Arden*, where the lapse of time has been long enough for the wife to have children by her new husband, or Sophocles' *Phaedra* frr. 686-7 Radt). The continual dichotomy, faithful or unfaithful, no other options, is clearly cast in patriarchal terms: the woman is defined almost solely by her relationship with her husband (cf. pp.2-4 above).

[12] In the light of Splettstösser's statement that the wife is frequently unfaithful, it is interesting to note that of the nine examples to be found in Edmunds 1993, the only one in which the wife is willingly unfaithful is a German tale collected by the brothers Grimm.

[13] Thompson 1955-8 N681, Aarne Type 301, 400, 665. Similar tales, not classed as part of the "returning husband" theme by Thompson, may be found under K1551, 1813, 1814, 1815.1 (the return in humble disguise: see Aarne Type 935).

[14] For example, in the story of Beauty and the Beast, where Beauty is the price of (in this case) the release of her father, or various stories of pacts with the Devil, where the price is "the first living creature to greet you/ cross the bridge/ etc.", but this condition is often fulfilled by a pet rather than the expected wife or child. Cf. Frazer 1921 vol.II pp.394-404, an appendix on the "Vow of Idomeneus", which gathers parallels for this sort of rash vow.

[15] As in the Serbian song "The Twice-Bride", on which see Splettstösser 1898 pp.42-3.

popular romantic Hollywood films prefer to use as their climax the return of the hero in the nick of time (whether physically or metaphorically, in that it is only at the last minute that he realises whom he truly loves, as in *Four Weddings and a Funeral* (1994) or *When Harry Met Sally* (1989)), thus demonstrating the triumph of "true love" over all obstacles; while tales of the returning soldier leaving his remarried wife in ignorance would perhaps speak more to an audience familiar with the tradition of courtly love, the chaste "love from afar" celebrated by troubadours. The decision of the heroine of *Brief Encounter* (1945) to stay with her husband and family, despite her desire not to, does not speak so clearly to a society where divorce is more common and the status of the individual more highly regarded. Renunciation can form a climax as well as reunion, but it is more subtle and low-key.

The motif of testing suitors to find the best is more often attached to an unmarried woman, as in the cases of Helen, Atalanta, and Penelope herself. According to Pausanias, Penelope originally married Odysseus after he won a foot-race[16]. She is also said to have been his prize for suggesting a scheme to Tyndareus whereby he could marry Helen to one of her suitors without causing bloodshed. Both of these stories reflect aspects of the Homeric Odysseus: he was known as a good runner (it is he who wins the foot-race at the funeral games of Patroclus), and his cleverness is attested in both epics and elsewhere. Penelope, it may be noted, has no active role in either of these stories. This is, in many ways, typical of the heroine of such tales - her role is usually to be the prize, or a passive pawn, in a game played out by men. Such is the role played by Deianeira in the struggle between Nessus and Heracles as she describes it in the

[16] 3.12.4. According to Herodotus (6.126ff.), this method of disposing of a daughter was used by the historical tyrant Cleisthenes of Sicyon, when searching for a husband for his daughter Agariste: a case of life following the pattern of a traditional tale.

Trachiniae[17]. Given the regular association of the motif of "return in the nick of time" with a passive role for the wife, cast as "damsel in distress", the *Odyssey* is noteworthy for the way that, circumscribed as her role may be, it allows Penelope some part in the action.

The motif of testing a wife, as Odysseus seems to be doing in the *Odyssey*, is common in folk tales[18]. Rama regains his wife, Sita, only to demand that she undergo a test of chastity[19], and the story of Cephalus and Procris includes Cephalus' testing of his wife by appearing in disguise and trying to seduce her. Although girls may be tested before their marriage for virtues such as thrift and domestic skills, as well as for chastity, tests for a wife more commonly concern her chastity and obedience, as in the tale of Patient Griselda[20] and the testing of Katherine and the other wives at the end of *The Taming of the Shrew*. Reunion with a wife who has come through such testing successfully provides a suitable finale for a tale (although the way in which the wife joyfully accepts reunion after the treatment given her in, for example, the tale of Patient Griselda - her children removed apparently to death, herself stripped, divorced, and expected to prepare the feast for the new bride - is not straightforwardly acceptable now).

The returning husband and the wife's suitors are not the only folk-tale motifs attached to Penelope. A story which seems incidental and almost pointless in Homer describes how Penelope put off her suitors for several years by saying she could not

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[17] Soph. *Trach.* 9-26, especially 22-4; cf. 507ff.
[18] See Tolstoi 1934, especially pp.266-72; bride tests in general are gathered by Thompson 1955-8 H360-399, those involving making a dress are listed at H381.1, and Aarne Type 1451; H383.2 also collects tests connected with weaving and spinning, including stories from India, Africa, and Iceland.
[19] Like Penelope, Sita in the *Ramayana* is usually portrayed as wholly faithful to her husband, but the Santal version of the story accuses her of adultery with the demon Rava and all his brothers during the time they held her captured.
[20] Chaucer *The Clerk's Tale*.

marry until she had finished weaving a shroud for her father-in-law Laertes[21], then unwove by night what she had done during the day. The discovery of this trick by the suitors should have led immediately to the issue of her remarriage being forced to a resolution, but in the story as told by Homer there appears to be a hiatus of a couple of months before the issue is brought to a conclusion by the contest of the bow[22]. When the shade of the suitor Amphimedon describes the events on Ithaca to Agamemnon in the underworld, the expected scheme seems to be adhered to more closely: the stratagem of unweaving is discovered and immediately Odysseus arrives home and Penelope plots the downfall of her suitors with him. McCartney, in a study of the motif of undoing by night work done by day, comes to the surprising conclusion that Penelope is one of only two examples of those studied where the undoer is the same as the doer; there is another example of a woman's weaving being undone in order to avoid marriage, but in that case the unraveller is the girl's father[23]. Perhaps Penelope's weaving should be linked to that in stories such as "Rumpelstiltskin", where the weaving is a test to be accomplished before marriage, or stories such as "Donkeyskin", where a special dress is demanded before marriage[24]. One example of the motif which may be copied from the tale of

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[21] Cf. West 1989 pp.116-7, 1988 pp.137-8, Barber 1991 ch.15 on the importance of funerary cloths and questions related to Penelope's weaving.

[22] For literal-minded complaints, see Page 1955 pp.120-1. Cf. Goldhill 1988 pp.1-9, who denies that the story is pointless in Homer, as it shows Penelope's resourcefulness. Although this is true, the timing of the weaving of the shroud is a notable change from the usual version of the folk tale - doubtless deliberate. Barber 1991 p.363 suggests that three years for such a piece of weaving would not be unreasonable.

[23] Tarchetius, in Plutarch *Romulus* 2.4-8; see McCartney 1953.

[24] Crooke 1898 pp.122-30 says that it is more normal for a woman to have to weave her wedding dress rather than a shroud, but does not seem to cite any concrete examples; he backs his argument up by reference to stories such as "Donkeyskin", and consideration of the ill-omen of linking marriage to weaving a shroud. Barber 1991 p.358-9 points out that a φᾶρος often serves as a woman's dress, thus deconstructing part of the opposition between wedding and funerary clothes.

Penelope occurs in the story of St. Agatha, who wove a (wedding) veil by day, but unwove it at night, in order to put off her marriage[25].

The story of Penelope's weaving seems to have impressed modern minds more than it did Homer - as mentioned above, it seems almost incidental in Homer's telling of the story, and the plot of the *Odyssey* would lose nothing if the weaving trick was not referred to[26]. This suggests that it is a traditional part of the story of Odysseus and Penelope, for its introduction otherwise seems rather pointless. If putting off her suitors by a trick is part of the "original" tale of Penelope (allowing for the fact that the "original story" may not have been wholly consistent), then it is logical to conclude that in the "original story", Penelope was faithful to Odysseus[27]. (The possible connection between Penelope's name and her weaving will be discussed below.)

A good example of how a story can be changed in later retellings, following recognisable plot patterns, is offered by the true story of a returning husband, that of Martin Guerre, a sixteenth-century Frenchman, whose story entered local legend. Having left in disgrace, abandoning his wife and child, Martin reappeared only after a man subsequently identified as Arnaud du Tilh had been living as Martin Guerre, with his wife, and as his father's heir, for several years[28]. The doubts of family and friends were overcome by the fake Martin, who had prepared himself well for his role. The

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[25] *Acta Sanctorum* Febr. i p.604 E; cf. West 1988 p.138 on *Od.* 1.93 ff. (also West 1989 p.116). The story is clearly a later addition to the legend of St. Agatha, as it does not appear in any of the versions of her life. Cornelius, a sixteenth-century Dutchman who is the source for this part of the legend, makes the comparison with Penelope explicit.

[26] This is not to say that the *Odyssey* as a work of literature would not suffer - I am making the point only that this is not an element vital to the plot.

[27] *Contra* Graves *et al.*; cf. n.9.

[28] A similar story is cited by Peyrefitte 1949 p.234 n.1, that of Colonel Chabert, which was also the subject of a film.

Odyssey seems to envisage a similar imposture as a possibility; when Penelope finally recognises the man in front of her as her husband, she says:

> αἰεὶ γάρ μοι θυμὸς ἐνὶ στήθεσσι φίλοισιν
> ἐρρίγει μή τίς με βροτῶν ἀπάφοιτο ἔπεσσιν
> ἐλθών· πολλοὶ γὰρ κακὰ κέρδεα βουλεύουσιν.
>
> *Od.* 23.215-7

Her testing of Odysseus has confirmed him as her husband, and not another man in disguise.

In her introduction to an historical account of the story of Martin Guerre, the historian Natalie Davis writes that while acting as adviser to the production of a film version of the story, she was disturbed by the simplification of the story, the interpretation of motives which was necessary to make a good film. She writes:

> These changes may have helped to give the film the powerful simplicity that had allowed the Martin Guerre story to become a legend in the first place, but they also made it difficult to explain what actually happened.[29]

In her summary of treatments of the story, Davis includes brief accounts of their notable features. Of that by F. Gavot de Pitaval, she comments:

> One of the most interesting retellings of the case of Martin Guerre, and the only one to speculate freely on the possibility that Bertrande [de Rols, Martin's wife] was the accomplice of Arnaud du Tilh: "Many people will believe that Bertrande de Rols helped deceive herself because the error pleased her." The impostor could not have shown all the tiny gestures special to the original.[30]

The doubt thus cast on the wife's fidelity is not a surprising development. Another version, by Charles Hubert, is condemned as "so romanticized as to be unrecognizable"[31]; the hero is named "Martinguerre", a count who has been away in the West Indies, and the villain is unmasked by his own father - a similar romanticization of

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[29] Davis 1983 p.viii.
[30] Davis 1983 p.130, on F. Gavot de Pitaval *Causes célèbres et intéressantes* (Paris 1734) vol.1 ch.1.
[31] Davis 1983 p.131, on Charles Hubert *Le Faux Martinguerre, ou La Famille d'Artigues, Mélodrame en Trois Actes* (Paris: Barba 1808).

the story to that undergone by the story of the *Odyssey* in modern retellings. One of the earliest surviving sources for the story, the accounts of Jean Coras, transformed the story rather differently into a morality tale, using it for his own purposes when it allowed him to make digs at Catholic superstition[32]. There is a telling parallel with the *Odyssey* both in the simplification of the characters and their motives, and in the doubt cast on the wife, abandoned by her husband to become an object of suspicion.

Pan and Penelope

The other stories found about Penelope have seemed to some so much at odds with her Homeric persona that a conflation of two or more mythological Penelopes has been suspected[33]; the early identification of divergent local Penelopes seems the best explanation. The position of Penelope as the mother of Pan has sometimes been taken to be the "original" version of Pan's birth[34], but this would contrast with the notable paucity of early references (almost all of which before the Hellenistic period survive only in mentions by scholiasts[35]). The exception is Herodotus 2.145, where it is placed, significantly, alongside stories which are better known now: Herodotus seems to take knowledge of it for granted, but he may be doing so as a ploy in the context of the argument he is constructing about Egypt and Greece. It must be assumed that rationalisations involving a second Penelope were either unknown to Herodotus (probably as being later in origin), or known to him and deliberately ignored. A single

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[32] Burke 1984, Davis 1983 chs.10, 11.
[33] Cf. Nonnus *Dionysiaca* 14.87 ff. (cf. 24.86-7), Tzetzes *ad* Lycophron *Alexandra* 772. Nonnus says that there are two Pans, one the son of Sose, the other of a nymph Penelope (14.92-3: τὸν δὲ νομαῖς ὀίων Νόμιον φίλον, ὁππότε Νύμφης | δέμνιον ἀγραύλοιο διέστιχε Πηνελοπείης). Tzetzes' statement that the two Penelopes are not the same may derive from Nonnus or from Nonnus' source for this innovation.
[34] For example, Thomson 1914 pp.46-7.
[35] Cf. Appendix 2 below, Stückelberger 1965 p.111.

Penelope is what one might expect - the stories accumulate around one figure, and then, later, when one version is dominant, attempts are made to explain away the variations (for example, the splitting of Erechtheus/Erichthonius into two characters[36]). Although one cannot be certain, it seems likely that a story which makes Odysseus the father of Pan is a later rationalisation, based on the assumption that Penelope was faithful to him[37]. Similarly, stories which make Antinous or Amphinomus the father of Pan by Penelope are probably drawing on the *Odyssey* as the source for the name, but combining this with the idea that Penelope may not have been faithful to Odysseus. These two are then the obvious candidates for her adultery - Antinous, the leader of the suitors, and Amphinomus, who, we are told, was Penelope's favourite among the suitors[38]. The version given by Douris, that Pan was fathered by all the suitors, would seem to be a rationalisation based on the name. The reference to this in the *Syrinx* of [Theocritus] suggests that a learned Hellenistic poet knew at least two versions of the fathering of Pan, but this does not tell us much about which versions were commonly known either at a contemporary date or earlier.

It is possible not only that one version of Pan's fathering on Penelope is connected with the Greek enthusiasm for etymologising, but also that the link to Penelope herself may also have etymological roots[39]. Πηνελόπη is sometimes linked not only to πηνίον, the wool to be worked in a day, but also to Πάν, the Doric form of her name being Πανελόπα. An ambitious attempt to link Πάν and πηνίον is made by a scholiast (T) to *Iliad* 23.762:

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[36] Cf. *OCD*[3] *s.v.* "Erechtheus" and "Erichthonius", Parker 1987, Kearns 1989 pp.110-115, 160-1.
[37] Another reason for doubting the antiquity of this story is the source; it is only known from the first Vatican mythographer, who was writing in the tenth century AD. If this story was current in antiquity, one would hope for an earlier attestation than this.
[38] *Od.* 16.397ff.; cf. p.312.
[39] See below for a full discussion of the etymology of Penelope's name.

πηνίον : παρὰ τὸν Πᾶνα· οὗτος γὰρ εὑρετὴς ὑφασμάτων.
οἱ δὲ · ‘ ὑφήνιον ’, τὸ ὑπὸ τοὺς μίτους ὄν.

Borgeaud disagrees:

> the fact remains that Pan means "shepherd" and has etymologically nothing to do with Penelope. The relation drawn by Greek mythology between the goat-god and the wife of Odysseus (besides revealing a certain fascinating ambiguity in her status as "model wife") remains for us a mystery that the connection of Odysseus with Arcadia, and Hermes, is insufficient to dispel. Do we here have to do with relatively late elaborations tending to make connections between Arcadia and its gods and the old Homeric poems (which do tend to neglect Arcadia) or rather with the enigmatic vestiges of a very ancient mythology?[40]

This last question sums up the problem when trying to analyse a myth from its various representations, the problem of priority of link and possible explanation. Etymology is a particularly difficult field from this point of view.

However, one can draw some tentative conclusions about the relationship between Pan and Penelope. Scholiasts suggest that Pan was first described as the child of all the suitors by Douris; this does not give us more than a probable *terminus ante quem* in the late fourth or early third century BC. However, it seems plausible that the linking of Pan and Penelope came first, and that linking the name Pan to all the suitors is a later development - though the name Pan may have been linked to "all" before this, as there are other explanations of his name involving the word πᾶν[41]. A jump immediately from linking Πάν and πᾶν to linking Πάν and πάντες μνηστῆρες seems unlikely to me; the intermediary step of linking Pan and Penelope seems necessary. As discussed above,

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[40] Borgeaud 1988 p.210 n.77. On p.54, Borgeaud says of the description of Pan as the child of Penelope and Hermes: "Penelope's connections with Arcadia are well documented, and Pan has too close a kinship with Hermes, god of Mount Kyllene, for anyone to doubt the antiquity of this version". Penelope's connections with Arcadia are documented in Wüst's *RE* article, col. 460-6.

[41] For example *HHym* 19.47, Pl. *Cratylus* 408b. Cf. Allen 1995 pp.150-1, who thinks that the link between Pan and Penelope draws on the same Indo-European tale as the *Mahabharata*'s tale of Draupadi (who is also polyandrous) as the mother of the "All-gods", the Vishvedevas. Allen also sees a parallel between Penelope's lover in the form of a goat, Hermes, and her husband's metamorphosis into a horse (Servius *ad* V. *Aen.* 2.44, Sextus Empiricus *Adv. Math.* 1.267) and Draupadi's involvement in a ritual including a goat then a horse.

it seems likely too that the naming of Odysseus or one of the suitors as the father of Pan is a development subsequent to the naming of Penelope as his mother, and subsequent to the *Odyssey* in something at least very close to its present form. This leads to the conclusion that the "original" father of Pan, when Penelope was named as the mother, was probably one of the two divine males mentioned in our sources - Apollo or Hermes. Roscher attributes the two different names to local legends, the name of each god appearing where his cult was strongest: Apollo by Mt. Lycaeon, Hermes in Mantineia[42]. The divinity of the father would also help establish Pan's divinity; most gods with human mothers have divine fathers (e.g. Heracles, Dionysus) rather than two mortal parents (see below on the possibility of Penelope's divinity). Thus for various reasons it appears likely that if Pan were Penelope's son, his father was Apollo or Hermes, rather than one of the humans who are named in other sources.

Modern scholars have tended to concentrate on Hermes as the father of Pan, because of the Arcadian connection. Hermes is also the only father for Pan by Penelope named outside the scholia before the Hellenistic period - in Herodotus (2.145), our earliest non-fragmentary source for the linking of Penelope and Pan. Those who wish to argue for the divinity of Penelope gain most support by linking her to Arcadia, and identifying Hermes as the father of Pan strengthens this link, because of Hermes' own links with Arcadia. However, one has still to explain the references to Apollo as the father of Pan. Apollo as god of poetry does seem to have links with pastoral deities in later pastoral poetry - he is important for both Theocritus and Vergil - but this is not really a satisfactory explanation. Both Apollo and Hermes do have links with Arcadia[43];

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[42] Cf. Roscher *Lexicon* s.v. Pan col.1379-80, Roscher 1894, which collect eighteen variations on the parentage of Pan, and speculate on the origins of some.

[43] Immerwahr 1891 pp.72-96 on Hermes, pp.128-139 on Apollo collects the evidence for worship of various gods in Arcadia with a brief commentary.

Hermes' connection, however, appears stronger than that of Apollo. Both gods were associated with music - as was Pan - and both also had links with herding: Hermes' first recorded feat in the *Homeric Hymn* is the theft of Apollo's cattle and the creation of the lyre from a tortoise shell and cattle-gut. Pan was particularly a country god, connected with shepherds and their music[44], so a genealogical link to either Apollo or Hermes would be explicable.

Penelope's Arcadian connection is not as unproblematic as has been thought. Our best evidence is that of Pausanias (quoted below, p.58); more evidence has been found in Penelope's change of name (see pp.57-8). The "original" names suggested for her by various ancient scholia include Arnaia and Arnakia, both of which suggest a link to a place called Arne. However, there are several places called Arne in Greece: *RE* lists four towns, one spring or fountain, and three people. One of the towns is in Boeotia, the spring in Arcadia. Of the people, one is the eponymous heroine of the Boeotian town, the daughter of Aeolus and mother of Boeotus and Aeolus, another the nymph of the spring in Arcadia. The *RE* article on Arne cites Penelope's change of name as further evidence for linking Odysseus and the myths about him to Boeotia - the author does not press the Arcadian link[45]. Wüst, in his *RE* article on Penelope, gives three pieces of evidence linking her to Arcadia. The first is the evidence of her tomb on the road out of Mantineia, as described in Pausanias. The second is her link to Pan, who is taken to be Arcadian in origin[46]. The third item of evidence connects Penelope and Odysseus with Arcadia. Again, it is largely based on Pausanias, this time on the report of the foot-race run to win her and the statue put up by her father in Arcadia. The argumentation here, as

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[44] Cf. Roscher *Lexicon* s.v. Pan col.1382-85.
[45] *s.v.* Arne 6.
[46] Cf. *RE* Suppl. VIII s.v. Pan (Brommer), Burkert 1985 p.172, Immerwahr 1891 pp.192-206, Roscher *Lexicon* s.v. Pan col.1349-57.

so often when trying to reconstruct the early history of Greek myths, is rather circular - the Arcadian connection is said to back up Penelope's claim to be the mother of Pan, but the "fact" that she was the mother of Pan is a significant part of the evidence for an Arcadian connection.

Penelope may be linked to Boeotia through the possibility of her name coming from a Boeotian town. The theory that the Homeric poems were shaped in Boeotia has also suggested a Boeotian link for both Penelope and Odysseus[47]. Boeotian Catalogue poetry is assumed to have been a well-established genre, surviving in the Hesiodic *Theogony* and *Catalogue of women*, and possibly in the Iliadic catalogue of ships, which places the Boeotians surprisingly prominently. The similarities to the *Catalogue of women* might suggest a Boeotian source for the list of heroines in the *Nekuia*. The idea that such poetry was Boeotian in origin is supported by the fact that Odysseus' nekuia is undertaken in order to consult Teiresias, a seer connected with Thebes, and hence Boeotian[48]. Penelope's "original name" may be thought to provide a link to Boeotia, as mentioned above, but so may her more usual name: the best parallel for the Πηνελ- stem is a name from the *Iliad* (2.494), Πηνέλεως, which belongs to a Boeotian commander.

Links between Odysseus and Penelope and Boeotia seem thus to be weaker than their connections with Arcadia - and the latter, as seen above, are far from unproblematic. It is unclear what light the story of Penelope's change of name can throw on the question of her origins; it is also unclear whether determining her origins could help to explain her change of name. What is clear, however, is that Penelope's connection with Pan cannot be justified solely on the grounds of her "Arcadian

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[47] Cf. Powell 1996 pp.31-2.
[48] Thomson 1914, chs. 2, 5 suggests that Odysseus was a Boeotian hero who gained Arcadian connections after a migration of the original inhabitants of Boeotia.

connections"; however, that there was traditionally some connection between Pan and Penelope at least in local tradition is equally clear.

Penelope the goddess?

Pan's relationship with Penelope has raised the question of whether Penelope was originally a goddess. The idea that she could not be the mother of a god unless she were herself originally divine seems implausible[49], but this is not the only way in which her identity as the mother of Pan has been taken as proof of her original divine status. Some modern scholars, taking the postulated link between Penelope, Πάν and πᾶν/πάντες μνηστῆρες as the true etymology of the name, assume that this implies orgiastic rites involving Penelope[50]. She is therefore taken to be another instantiation of the "Great Mother Goddess", represented by Cybele, and with links to Demeter and Artemis of Ephesus. This explanation seems extremely improbable - the story of Pan as the son of all the suitors is, as argued above, probably a comparatively late rationalisation, while Penelope's status as a goddess would have to be posited as an early belief, which had almost completely disappeared by the time we have any evidence. Nevertheless, the notion of Penelope's original divinity persists sufficiently to require discussion[51].

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[49] Although it might be argued that Pan's divinity can be taken as proof of Penelope's alleged original status as a goddess, it does not follow that Penelope must be divine in order to have a divine son, particularly if the father were divine: Dionysus is the son of a god and a mortal woman (but so was Sarpedon, whose death caused his father much grief in the *Iliad*). Divinities who are half-mortal by birth seem generally to have divinity on the father's side rather than the mother's, for example, Aphrodite's child by Anchises, Aeneas, was mortal, as was Eos' son Memnon (and Achilles, son of Peleus and Thetis).

[50] Graves 1960 p.289 has this wild speculation; Thomson 1914 pp.48-59 sees Penelope as a counterpart to Artemis, an unmarried mother of one son, like other women associated with Artemis, such as Atalanta (indeed a mother of one son, but usually portrayed as married) and Callisto. As Artemis has been seen as an orgiastic mother goddess, as she appears at Ephesus, so could Penelope have appeared. The weakness of the argument is patent. Cf. Allen 1995 p.150-1.

[51] Cf. Larson 1995 p.79, Lyons 1996 p.5-6, both of whom talk about "faded goddesses".

Thomson argues that in the story of Penelope's "original name" we have a further indication of her original divine status. The change of name is recounted in four sources in slightly different forms:

> [Πηνελόπη] λέγεται γὰρ Ἀρναία πρότερον καλουμένη παρὰ τῶν φύντων εἰς τὴν θάλασσαν ἐκριφῆναι, εἶτα ὑπό τινων ὄρνεων πηνελόπων λεγομένων εἰς τὴν χέρσον ἐξενεχθῆναι, καὶ οὕτως ἀναληφθεῖσαν ὑπὸ τῶν γεννησάντων ὀνομασθῆναι Πηνελόπην ἀπὸ τῆς ὀρνίθων ὁμωνυμίας, καὶ τραφεῖσαν διώνυμον εἶναι τὸ λοιπόν.
>
> Scholion to Pindar *Ol.* 9.79d

> τὴν δὲ Πηνελόπην, Δίδυμος φησὶν Ἀμειράκην ἢ Ἀρνακίαν κυρίως καλεῖσθαι. Ναυπλίου δὲ ῥίψαντος αὐτὴν εἰς θάλασσαν διὰ τὴν τοῦ υἱοῦ Παλαμήδους ποινήν, ὑπὸ πηνελόπων ὀρνέων σωθεῖσαν ὧν ἡ εὐθεῖα πηνέλοψ, οὕτω μετονομασθῆναι.
>
> Eustath. *ad Od.* 1422.5ff.[52]

> Δίδυμος δὲ Ἀμειράκην φησὶ προσαγορεύεσθαι τὴν Πηνελόπην, ἢ Ἀρνακίαν. Ναυπλίου δὲ ῥίψαντος αὐτὴν εἰς θάλασσαν διὰ ποινὴν Παλαμήδους, ὑπὸ πηνελόπων αὐτὴν σωθεῖσαν οὕτως ὀνομασθῆναι.
>
> Scholia HPQ to *Od.* 4.797

> [Πηνελόπη] πρότερον Ἀρναία λεγομένη, ὕστερον δὲ Πηνελόπη κληθεῖσα, ὅτι ῥιφθεῖσα παρὰ τῶν γονέων εἰς θάλασσαν ὑπὸ πηνελόπων ὀρνέων ἐξηνέχθη εἰς τὴν γῆν καὶ ἐσώθη καὶ ὑπὸ τῶν ἰδίων πάλιν γονέων ἀναληφθεῖσα ἐτρέφετο.
>
> Tzetzes *ad* Lyc. 792

Thomson argues that the variants Ἀρναία and Ἀρνακία both point to Penelope's link to the spring called Ἄρνη[53]. The further form Ἀρνέα is also attested[54]. (The form Ἀμειράκη, however, is unexplained.) The linking of the Penelops ducks to this story is taken to point to her special relationship with wild animals, particularly ducks. Therefore, in origin, Penelope was the "Water-Fowl Goddess of Arne", a "mistress of the beasts" figure, as Artemis is sometimes said to be, and as shown in art from Mycenean

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[52] Quoting Didymus *Metamorphoses* fr.1, Schmidt.
[53] Thomson 1914 pp.44-60; cf. above p.54.
[54] Cf. *RE* s.v. Arnea; it is an alternative reading at Schol. Pind. *Ol.* 9.79d where Arnaia is restored, based on the fact both would be pronounced identically in Byzantine Greek, but Arnaia is the more regular formation.

times[55]. However, Chantraine[56] points out that one need not conclude from the link between her name and that of the bird that she was originally a bird goddess, for women's names were derived from bird names "durant toute l'histoire de grec ancien", typical examples being Μερόπη from μέροψ and Δρυόπη from δρύοψ. A woman's name of a standard type which echoed something in her story would be an understandable choice of name for the heroine of a traditional tale. One might perhaps compare the frequency of English flower names such as "Rose" or "Marigold" in fairy tales[57]: evidence from names is thus unconvincing.

Those who argue that Penelope was once a goddess locate her firmly in Arcadia as a local goddess - her links with Pan and with Hermes as the father of Pan are held to strengthen this local tie. It has to be admitted that the stories about Penelope which seem to be local to the Peloponnese sometimes give a different picture from the Pan-Hellenic Homeric version of Penelope.

The only real evidence we have that Penelope might at least have received worship in some form, is in Pausanias[58]. He mentions a statue of Αἰδῶς set up by her father, when his daughter veiled her head and turned away from her father to go with her husband, and also the tomb of Penelope in Mantineia, which is explicitly linked to a local variant of the story:

> ἐν δεξιᾷ τῆς ὁδοῦ γῆς χῶμα ὑψηλόν· Πηνελόπης δὲ εἶναι τάφον φασίν, οὐχ ὁμολογοῦντες τὰ ἐς αὐτὴν ποιήσει <τῇ> Θεσπρωτίδι ὀνομαζομένῃ. ἐν ταύτῃ μέν γέ ἐστι τῇ ποιήσει ἐπανήκοντι ἐκ Τροίας Ὀδυσσεῖ τεκεῖν τὴν Πηνελόπην Πτολιπόρθην παῖδα· Μαντινέων δὲ ὁ ἐς αὐτὴν λόγος Πηνελόπην φησὶν ὑπ' Ὀδυσσέως καταγνωσθεῖσαν ὡς ἐπισπαστοὺς

[55] Artemis is called ποτνία θηρῶν at *Iliad* 21.470; cf. Aesch. *Ag.* 141-3, Burkert 1985 p.149. On other goddesses seen in this light, see Burkert 1985 p.42 with p.362 n.48 for further bibliography, p.154 on Aphrodite.
[56] Chantraine 1968-80 s.v. Πηνελόπη.
[57] Lodge 1983 p.15 has a self-conscious debate as to what one of the characters of the novel should be called, and settles on the name Violet, the connotations of which come partly from this popularity of flower names for women.
[58] Larson 1995 p.58-9, 114; Paus. 3.20.10-11 (statue), 8.12.5-6 (tomb).

> ἐσαγάγοιτο ἐς τὸν οἶκον, καὶ ἀποπεμφθεῖσαν ὑπ' αὐτοῦ, τὸ μὲν παραυτίκα ἐς Λακεδαίμονα ἀπελθεῖν, χρόνῳ δὲ ὕστερον ἐκ τῆς Σπάρτης ἐς Μαντίνειαν μετοικῆσαι, καί οἱ τοῦ βίου τὴν τελευτὴν ἐνταῦθα συμβῆναι.
>
> Paus. 8.12.5-6

It has been assumed that this tomb formed the focus of cult worship. Another point worth raising is the possibility that, in a story such as that in Pausanias, the origins of the tales of Penelope's unfaithfulness arise from the linking of a local heroine of the same name to the better known character from epic. Heroines are frequently those who have wandered, fleeing persecution, to the land where they die - a land to which they will hopefully be well-intentioned, as it took them in[59]. Once the link between the local and epic heroines has been suggested, the impetus is there to create a story to explain the heroine's wandering.

It is conceivable that in the heroine Penelope we have a relic of a local Arcadian deity, who was identified with an epic heroine and so lost her former status. However, as Larson has shown, worship as a hero or heroine need not presuppose an earlier incarnation as a god or goddess. Larson's examination of heroine cults in Greece suggests that women most often received cult worship in connection with their husbands or sons. This would seem to reverse the argument that Penelope must have been regarded as a goddess in order to have a divine son; the proposition is now that Penelope receives cult because she is a mortal woman connected with a minor divinity. This would seem to tie in with my earlier suggestion (p.23) that female figures in Greek mythology are more flexible in identity than male figures, except when pivotal in heroic genealogies. From this it appears clear that even in the archaic period Penelope was not

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[59] Larson 1995 p.114.

regarded as a divine figure, and even in those places where she may have received cult worship, this was as mother of Pan, not as herself a goddess in origin.

The reference to Penelope's tomb on the road out of Mantineia does seem plausible evidence that she received cult of some form there; it is suggested that her bearing of Pan to Hermes is a local Mantineian tale. Plutarch's reference to a heroön of Odysseus at Lacedaimon (*Quaest. Gr.* 48) has been read as suggesting that the heroön was shared with Penelope, because Odysseus' marriage to Penelope is mentioned in connection with his receiving cult worship there. As Larson argues, this would not be unexpected; for a heroine to receive cult with her husband is not unparalleled, as happens with Menelaus and Helen, Pelops and Hippodameia, Cadmus and Harmonia - indeed the shrine for Agamemnon and Alexandra (presumably to be identified with Cassandra[60]) is a parallel involving a hero linked to Odysseus.

In contrast, Mactoux bases her argument that Penelope was originally a goddess on her links with Helen, who, it is generally agreed, was worshipped in Sparta as a vegetation goddess. Mactoux argues that the family ties between the two women (they are cousins) help justify the statement that Penelope, like Helen, was once worshipped as a vegetation goddess. Yet the idea that mythological heroes and heroines must be faded gods or goddesses seems to be based on a misinterpretation of the status of hero cult (such worship need not imply that earlier the hero or heroine was worshipped as a deity, as is shown by historical figures who were granted hero cult[61]) and on a desire to produce

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[60] As in Lycophron. The identification of Alexandra with Cassandra is said to be a later innovation (Wentzel *RE* s.v Alexandra (i)), perhaps based on something in Timaeus (Schol. ad Lyc. *Alex.* 1137, *FGrH* 566 F 55), Alexandra originally having been a local goddess. Although she may well not have been originally identified with Cassandra, it seems implausible, in the light of recent studies of heroines, to state categorically that Alexandra was originally a goddess, solely on the evidence of one shrine.

[61] For example Brasidas, accorded hero cult at Thuc. 5.11.1, or the dead at Marathon and Plataea (Thuc. 3.58.4, *IG* ii^2 1006.26, 69), and Hieron of Syracuse (Diodorus 9.66.4).

a history of Greek religion relying too much on analogies between hero cults and the cult of saints in mediaeval Christianity[62].

All our discussion of this topic must be based largely on speculation, and it does not seem to be a very important or fruitful area for discussion, particularly if we are interested in literary and artistic representations of Penelope. For example, all Mactoux's arguments have to rely on analogy; she herself admits that we have no evidence for worship of Penelope as a goddess. It seems fairly clear that none of the representations of Penelope which we still have rely on knowledge of her original divine status to be understood. Chasing ideas of her divinity is surely a red herring if our prime concern is to examine what our existing sources actually have to say about her.

The Etymology of 'Penelope'

Etymologising was a favourite Greek practice from very early on. Homer includes etymologising word plays, some well known - such as the *noms parlants* Καλυψώ, Οὖτις/Μήτις in *Od.* 9, and perhaps 'Αντίνοος, or the word plays on 'Οδυσσεύς (*Od.* 1.55, 62, and, best known, 19.407-9) - others less so (for example, *Iliad* 6.403 on 'Αστυάναξ). Etymologising is also found in Hesiod (repeated Δία ... διὰ at *Works and Days* 2ff.) and other early poetry, as well as in fifth-century tragedy[63]. Because of this, it is particularly difficult to work out if a character has a particular name because of the stories about him/her, or if the stories developed because of the name (or neither). For example, the etymologising of Electra's name as being originally A-lektra,

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[62] Cf. Kearns 1989 pp.134-5.

[63] Lendle 1957 pp.117-21 has a list of etymologies in "archaic poetry" and Aeschylus, which includes Homer and Hesiod. See also Pfeiffer 1968 p.4, Rank 1951 p.66.

unmarried, dates from the sixth century[64], and is linked to the development of the story of Agamemnon's family.

Early writers who etymologised Penelope's name looked particularly at the link to πηνέλοπες, Πάν, πενέσθαι, and πήνιον; they are more interested in explanations based on the myths and in the sound of the words than on philological explorations. For example, in the Scholia we find:

> ἐν δὲ ἐπιμερισμῷ τοῦ, μῆνιν ἄειδε θεά, Πηνελόπην αὐτήν φησι λελέχθαι, παρὰ τὸ πένεσθαι τὸ λῶπος.
>
> Schol. *ad Od.* 4.797[65]

Modern scholars, however, have been particularly interested in the relationship between the different forms of Penelope's name - Πηνελόπη, Πηνελόπεια, Πανελόπα[66] - and the etymological roots of all the elements. They have generally dismissed any etymological link between Pan and Penelope, considering it a late folk etymology. Back in 1915, Shewan wrote:

> It looks as if the mythologists should pause, in regard to the Pan-Penelope connection, till the philologists reconsider the names of the heroine and the god.[67]

The philologists, however, still seem to be as divided as ever over the etymologies of these two names, so although one can use modern philological analyses to back up a hypothesis about the origin of the linking of the two, it looks unlikely that this line of argument will produce anything definite for some time to come. However, one can put forward some tentative suggestions.

If the weaving trick is part of the "original story", this could point towards a link between Penelope's name and words for weaving, given the tendency for folk tales to

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[64] Xanthus *PMG* 700, which assumes knowledge of the name Electra (see above p.23).
[65] The *Epimerismoi* were lists of Homeric words which were parsed and, particularly in the case of names, etymologised; cf. Dyck 1983 *ad* 194C (Athene), 200A (Pallas), 138 (Odysseus).
[66] For example, Chantraine 1968-80 s.v. Πηνελόπεια.
[67] Shewan 1915 p.40.

name the characters for their part in the story. Whallon says "Penelope may have gained her name from her manufacture of cloth; more probably her name suggested the suitable métier"[68]; if this latter suggestion is right, one might conclude that Penelope was originally a "faithful wife", and the means of her putting off her suitors was chosen because of her name. However, it is quite possible that name and story evolved together, as Penelope was a suitable name to give the heroine of such a story; whichever came first, the conclusions that Penelope was originally depicted as a faithful wife, and that the story of her weaving and her name both appear early in her history, may still stand. For this reason, it seems logical to prefer derivations of her name from words connected with weaving rather than other sources. The ancient etymologies linking Penelope to words connected with weaving have been reasserted by some modern scholars; Kretschmer's derivation of Penelope from πήνη + ὀλόπτω is still upheld by some[69]. Penelope's role as the weaver - i.e. her part in the story - may well derive from her name:

> the tale of Odysseus' return would have been very different if his wife had not been known as Penelope.[70]

Whallon sees the plan of putting off the suitors by weaving as Athene's, carried out by Penelope, and suggested to the poet (or a predecessor) by Penelope's name.

References are also made to Penelope's name being derived from the bird πηνέλοψ because of her being saved from drowning by the birds[71]. Both Chantraine and Frisk[72] firmly link Penelope's name to that of the bird. Pisani goes further, identifying the πηνέλοπες ducks with *Anas casarca*, called *cakravaka* in Sanskrit, renowned in

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[68] Whallon 1960 p.58.
[69] Kretschmer 1945, referred to by Frisk 1970 and by Von Kamptz 1982 p.70, who finds it convincing.
[70] Whallon 1960 p.57.
[71] schol. Pind. *Ol.* 9.79d, etc.
[72] Frisk 1970 s.v. Penelope; the full arguments for this derivation are given by Solmsen 1908 (cf. Von Kamptz 1982 p.139).

Indian poetry for its fidelity to its mate[73]; but this is far from conclusive evidence. The story that she was named after the bird which rescued her should be seen, I think, as evolving from the desire to explain the name: it is not really plausible to see the story as preceding the name, particularly given the variations in the placing of the incident in Penelope's life. Such a story to explain a change of name might well, as in the case of Electra, suggest that there was a desire to rationalise two different versions of a myth about Penelope which gave her different names. If this was the case, however, it is striking how completely Homer's picture of Penelope as the faithful wife of Odysseus came to dominate, so that we never find a reference to any other name for his wife, or, indeed, to any other story which might suggest a need to explain Penelope's change of name.

As stated above, the question of whether name or tale came first cannot be resolved. We would be closer to a resolution if it were possible to decide the true etymology, for if the name comes from weaving, it would be plausible to think that the story came first, whereas if it comes from the bird, it seems more plausible that the name suggested the plot of the weaving. There is no mention in the *Odyssey* of Penelope being named after the bird, whereas her weaving is present: this might suggest that Homer linked her name to weaving, but even this cannot resolve whether name or tale came first. If we can discard the idea that Penelope was originally a water-fowl goddess, a step which is far less bold than accepting it, then either she has a name based on that of a bird, a standard way of producing a female name in Greek, or her name evolved from words to

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[73] Pisani 1946. The etymological link between Greek and Sanskrit forms being debatable, it does not seem wholly convincing to link that tale of Penelope's fidelity to tales about these birds told some way off in both space and time (although it is interesting that ducks apparently signify fidelity also on Chinese dishes and textiles, Barber 1991 p.377). A stronger etymological link is needed to give this argument plausibility, particularly as there seems to be no evidence for a link between πηνέλοπες and fidelity in Greek literature.

do with the woman's task of weaving. Both of these names imply a rather generic character, which might suggest that Penelope's place in myth - probably as Odysseus' wife - comes first and the elaborations of her story later. It is possible that Penelope, whatever her original character, was given a name derived from that of a bird, but when the story of her faithfulness to Odysseus developed, and a ruse by which she might put off her suitors was sought, her name, re-etymologised, suggested the story which should be used.

Chapter 4: Penelope as Exemplum

Penelope, like other mythological figures, may be used as an example to exhort or warn, or to make a point. Such uses may or may not directly narrate the version of the myth which the writer expects us to remember, but it is usually clear from the context if it is not made explicit in the text itself. When it is left implicit, this in itself is interesting, as it (presumably) implies that the version of the myth which is referred to is well known enough for the audience to need no reminder. It is possible that Penelope's role as a paradigm is due to the "folk-tale" nature of the main myth about her; such stories tend to feature generic characters, whose names often reflect their part in the story (for example, Beauty in "Beauty and the Beast", or Snow White; both of these names express the beauty and chastity of the two characters which is their most important feature). As discussed above (pp.26-7), myth is manipulated for exemplary purposes in some of the earliest Greek literature we have; it is, however, worth asking whether Penelope in particular served as an *exemplum* in the same way from her earliest appearances.

Penelope as *exemplum pudicitiae*

When Penelope is found as an *exemplum* or paradigm, it is almost invariably in the role of *exemplum pudicitiae* - the ideal of the chaste wife, the faithful wife who waits at home for her husband. She is listed among those "quae castissimae sunt" in Hyginus *fab.* 256, and this reflects earlier usage in, for example, the Latin love elegists. But how far back can this usage be traced? Already in the *Odyssey*, Agamemnon draws a contrast

between Penelope and Clytaemnestra, as exemplary good and bad wives; it thus seems that the possiblity of seeing Penelope in this light was open from her first literary appearances. In early examples, it is not clear whether Penelope is cited particularly as a faithful wife, or just as a good woman - the earliest definite citation of her in such a context is in Aristophanes' *Thesmo.*, where the context is good and bad women generally, but it should be noted that their sexuality is a major dividing feature, with the faithful Penelope set against the lascivious Phaedra and Melanippe[74]. It is also notable that when Julian praises Eusebia for surpassing Penelope, it is in this area of sexual fidelity; Eusebia is superior to Penelope because no suitors dared to approach her when she was widowed, while Penelope had all too many suitors[75]. In Greek texts, Penelope is particularly associated with the virtue of σωφροσύνη, which, as well as having overtones of sexual fidelity, also encompasses concepts of wisdom and more general ideas of good behaviour[76].

Such a position naturally brings an opposing reaction[77], and, indeed, we do find literature which tries to knock Penelope off her pedestal: the paradoxical quality of the examples, however, serves only to strengthen the image of Penelope as faithful, as they rely on this image for their effect. For example, Achilles Tatius rejoices in the paradox

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[74] Melanippe may seem an odd choice here, and it is not entirely clear why she, rather than a more obviously bad woman, such as Stheneboia, should be listed by Aristophanes here; cf. Sommerstein 1996 *ad Frogs* 1081 on Aristophanes' blackening of a Euripidean "good woman". Given the context, the suggestion that it is linked to her bearing of children out of wedlock seems most plausible; either because she simply had children while unmarried, or because she denied that they were prodigies when they were found in the cowshed, and had to admit that they were her children, borne to Poseidon, and thus she may (in comic terms) be held responsible for making men less willing to accept the explanation of prodigies for exposed children. Alternatively, as in Aristotle, she may be condemned for being too clever, but I do not see that this fits with the women's argument that Euripides' plays cause men to distrust women more, unless cleverness makes their deception of men easier. If the point is linked to her bearing children out of wedlock, or to a god, then the mention of Penelope may suggest a lack of common knowledge in contemporary Athens of the myths making her the mother of Pan.

[75] Julian *Eulogy of Eusebia* 110c; cf. North 1979 pp.47-54.

[76] Cf. North 1979 pp.47-54, Vérilhac 1985 pp.102-5.

[77] Cf. Lyons 1996 p.141-2 on the tendency for the denial of an element in a myth to cause it to appear in another version.

of naming Penelope as one of the great criminal women, along with Helen and Clytaemnestra, because so many men died on her account[78] - on which grounds, she is a worse sinner than Clytaemnestra! Such references to Penelope can only enhance the perception of her as a standard example of a good woman, for, if she were not so known, there would be no paradox and piquancy in proving her to be one of the worst. Ovid too plays with the paradox of Penelope as unchaste in *Amores* 1.8, the Dipsas poem, where he says:

> *Penelope iuuenum uires temptabat in arcu;*
> *qui latus argueret corneus arcus erat.*
>
> *Am.* 1.8.47-8

The paradox is in the new twist given to the old story - the test of the bow is usually Penelope's last effort to put off her remarriage (although it is to be the way of choosing a new husband, there is the possibility that Telemachus will string the bow, or that no-one will succeed in the test, which would leave things as they were before, we must presume); here it remains the means of choosing her new husband, but is given the slant that it is Penelope's way of testing their sexual prowess before making her choice. This manipulation of the character of Penelope plays on the elegists' more usual use of her as an *exemplum pudicitiae*[79].

The story in Pausanias of Penelope's favouring her husband over her father (3.20.10-11) can be seen as a reinforcement of her image as a good wife. Just as Heracles is said to have shown his superhuman strength as a child, strangling snakes in his cradle, so Penelope as a young woman is here shown displaying the virtue for which

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[78] Ach. Tat. 1.8.6; cf. Pl. *Alc.* I 112b, where Penelope's suitors are seen as parallel to those who fell at Troy, but without the derogatory depiction of Penelope, and [Heraclitus] *Pap. Genev. Inv.* 271 ll.29-33, where it seems that both Penelope and Helen are being criticised, as in Achilles Tatius.

[79] See ch.9 below. For a full list of references to Penelope as the *exemplum pudicitiae* see references labelled **P** in the complete list (Appendix 2).

she was best known: devotion to her husband. One might also compare the way in which stories of abduction cluster round Helen, or the way in which Penelope herself is said to have been sought by many men as a wife both in her youth (Paus. 3.12.24) and when she was thought to be a widow. This does not necessarily mean that such stories are "late": rather, it shows how mythological figures were linked to particular characteristics from an early date.

Perhaps the clearest indication that Penelope was commonly and consistently seen as an exemplary good wife comes from the use of her name in grave epitaphs, where mention of her is found from the second century BC onwards, in a context where one would not expect sophisticated literary knowledge to be required. Our earliest example is from Cleonae:

> Ἰκαρίου μὲν παῖδα πολυζήλωτον Ὅμηρος
> ἤινησ' ἐν δέλτοις ἔξοχα Πηνελόπην·
> σὴν δ' ἀρετὴν καὶ κῦδος ὑπέρτατον οὔτις ἐπαρκῶς
> ἰσχύει λιγυρῶν ᾆσαι ἀπὸ στομάτων.[80]

Earlier than this, Penelope appears in a similar role in a literary epigram written by Leonidas of Tarentum about three Cretan sisters:

> ἃ δ' ἅμα τὰν λεπτῶν εὐάτριον ἐργάτιν ἱστῶν
> κερκίδα, τὰν λεχέων Πανελόπας φύλακα
> δῶρον Ἀθαναίᾳ Πανίτιδι τῷδ' ἐνὶ ναῷ
> θῆκαν, Ἀθαναίας παυσάμεναι καμάτων.[81]

Later, the idea of excelling the heroine becomes more pronounced: *IG* V.1.598, the epitaph of Aurelia Oppia, who is called "νέαν Πηνελόπειαν καὶ Λαοδαμίαν", and V.1.607, the epitaph of Claudia Neikippia, "νέας Πηνελόπης"; the phrase "a new Penelope" is also found in V.1.540, "another Penelope" in V.1.599. All these epitaphs come from Laconia, and are dated to the second or third century AD. Comparison with

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[80] Peek 1735 = Kaibel 471 = *IG* IV.491.
[81] *AP* 6.289 = Leonidas 42, Gow-Page 1965 ll.2223-30 (2227-30 quoted).

Penelope was clearly high and unqualified praise, presumably due to her reputation as a good and chaste wife[82]. Penelope's link with weaving and spinning, as shown in the epigram above (she is also shown in art with a spindle[83]) would also add to this image, for a good wife among both the Greeks and the Romans would be a good weaver, acting for the good of the house by being self-sufficient as regards cloth. (Even her request for gifts from the suitors, if seen as aiming to restore the wealth of the house, could contribute to this picture). The virtues of a good wife and daughter are those traditionally associated with Penelope, and these women's gravestones thus present her as a personification of what a woman was expected to do[84].

Penelope Philosophised

As Odysseus became a great Stoic hero, who endured many things in the name of virtue (and wisdom), so his wife, the goal of his journey, became an allegory for wisdom or philosophy itself, the end of the Stoic's search. Penelope was a good candidate to represent wisdom, for her own wisdom is attested by her epithets, and receives explicit praise from the suitors in *Od.* 2.88, 115-8. In developing this, the philosophers picked up primarily on two details of the story in the *Odyssey* - Penelope's scheme of weaving by day and unweaving by night, in order to delay her remarriage, and the fact that her suitors were satisfied with her serving maids, especially Melantho, on whom she had lavished such care, when they could not have Penelope. These two details were taken as metaphors for aspects of the philosophical life.

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[82] See Lattimore 1962 p.286, 293.
[83] There are only two examples of Penelope with a spindle, but more of her with a loom.
[84] Vérilhac 1985 pp.90-108, particularly 108 on Penelope personifying the virtues expected of women.

Plato, in the *Phaedo*, uses Penelope's weaving as an exemplary vain task, a contrast to true philosophy:

> ἀλλ᾽ οὕτω λογίσαιτ᾽ ἂν ψυχὴ ἀνδρὸς φιλοσόφου, καὶ οὐκ ἄν οἰηθείη τὴν μὲν φιλοσοφίαν χρῆναι ἑαυτὴν λύειν, λυούσης δὲ ἐκείνης, αὐτὴν παραδιδόναι ταῖς ἡδοναῖς καὶ λύπαις ἑαυτὴν πάλιν αὖ ἐγκαταδεῖν καὶ ἀνήνυτον ἔργον πράττειν Πηνελόπης τινὰ ἐναντίως ἱστὸν μεταχειριζομένην, ἀλλὰ ... ἀεὶ ἐν τούτῳ οὖσα, τὸ ἀληθὲς καὶ τὸ θεῖον καὶ τὸ ἀδόξαστον θεωμένη καὶ ὑπ᾽ ἐκείνου τρεφομένη.
>
> *Phaedo* 84 a-b

Unlike Penelope, who unwove by night what she had created during the day, philosophy has to break down during the day what has been rebuilt during the night by physical pleasures and pains[85]. The image of Penelope's weaving as the vain task of Philosophy itself, a task constantly needing to be redone, is found in later writers, such as Lucian, where Philosophy says:

> ἀλλὰ τό τῆς Πηνελόπης ἐκεῖνο πάσχω· ὁπόσον γὰρ δὴ ἐγὼ ἐξυφήνω, τοῦτο ἐν ἀκαρεῖ αὖθις ἀναλύεται
>
> *Fugitivi* 21

This is rather different to the conception allegorised from Penelope's weaving by the Neoplatonists of progressing in philosophy by unravelling and working backwards[86], which is typically Socratic/Platonic (for example, as found at *Republic* 533-4, *Phaedo* 91ff.[87]). The word ἀνάλυσις, which was used by the Greeks to describe philosophical enquiry, is found (in the form of the cognate verb) in Homer, describing Penelope's action in unravelling her weaving[88]; Eustathius calls the servant who reveals her at work the philosophic method, ἀναλυτικὴ συλλογιστικὴ μέθοδος[89], while Penelope is philosophy itself, proceeding by means of working backwards from premises to

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[85] Cf. Rowe 1993 p.199 *ad loc.*, Loriaux 1969 pp.186-7 *ad loc.*
[86] Mactoux 1975 p.169.
[87] Cf. Robinson 1953 chh. 7-10.
[88] *Od.* 2.109: ἀλλύουσαν ... ἱστόν.
[89] Eustath. 1437 26ff. Cf. Buffière 1956 p.390.

conclusions. Penelope is said to be recognisable as Philosophy because of the way she weaves and unpicks her web "like a logician making and destroying syllogisms"[90]:

> ὁ καὶ Πλειάδας τε Ὑάδας τε θεωρῶν καὶ σθένος Ὠρίωνος κατὰ τὸν ποιητὴν καὶ τὰ ἑξῆς. ποθεῖ δὲ ὅμως μάλιστα καὶ τὴν μεθοδικὴν καὶ κανονικὴν φιλοσοφίαν. ἀφ' ἧς ὡς οἷά τινος πατρίδος ὁρμώμενος, εἰς ταῦτα ἦλθε καὶ εἰς ἐκείνην ἐπανακάμπτειν γλίχεται ἧς χωρὶς οὐκ ἔστι φιλοσοφεῖν. ὅτι δὲ τοιαύτη τις ἡ Πηνελόπη, δῆλον ἔσται ὅτε τὸν ἱστὸν θεωρήσομεν τὸν ὑπ' αὐτῆς ὑφαινόμενόν τε καὶ αὖθις ἀναλυόμενον, καὶ ταῦτα μὲν τοιαῦτα.
>
> Eustath. 1390.3ff.

> [τὸν ἱστὸν τῆς Πηνελόπης] εἴτε ὡς ἐν ὑποθέσει, εἴτε καὶ καθ' ἱστορίαν ἀληθῆ. ἡ μέντοι ἀλληγορία κατὰ ἀστειοτέραν ἀναγωγὴν, φιλοσοφίαν μὲν καὶ πάλιν τὴν Πηνελόπην νοεῖ. ἱστὸν δὲ ὑπ' αὐτῆς ὑφαινόμενον, τὴν φιλόσοφον τῶν προτάσεων ἐπισύνθεσιν. ἐξ ὧν αἱ συλλογιστικαὶ ὑφαινόμεναι γίνονται συμπλοκαί. ἀνάλυσιν δὲ ὑπ' ἀνάγκης γινομένην τοῦ τοιούτου ἱστοῦ ὑπονοεῖ, τὴν οὕτω παρὰ τοῖς φιλοσόφοις λεγομένην τῶν ἐξ ἀνάγκης πλεκομένων συλλογισμῶν ἀνάλυσιν.
>
> Eustath. 1437.33ff.

Eustathius also allegorises Penelope as wisdom/philosophy, the goal of the wise man's journey from body to soul, as Odysseus leaves Calypso:

> Ἑρμοῦ μέντοι ὡς ἐν τοῖς μετὰ ταῦτα αἰνίζεται ὁ ποιητὴς μεσιτεύοντος ὅ ἐστι λόγου, γέγονε τῆς κατὰ τὴν φιλοσοφίαν ποθουμένης πατρίδος, ἤγουν τοῦ νοητοῦ κόσμου. ὅς ἐστι κατὰ τοὺς Πλατωνικοὺς, ψυχῶν πατρὶς ἀληθής. ὁμοίως, γέγονε καὶ τῆς Πηνελόπης φιλοσοφίας, λυθεὶς καὶ ἀπαλλαγεὶς τῆς τοιαύτης Καλύψους.
>
> Eustath. 1389.46ff.

Such allegorisation of Odysseus and Penelope as philosopher and wisdom may also be seen in Porphyry's *Cave of the Nymphs* and the commentary on this by Numenius. The allegory of Penelope's weaving was developed, suggesting that it symbolised the skilful arguments by which Penelope put off her suitors, a "web of dialectic"[91]. Neoplatonic allegories linked this to the picture of Penelope as "intellectual beauty", or wisdom[92].

The idea of the suitors representing those satisfied with less, with merely the servants of Penelope/wisdom, is more widespread, and variously attributed (by an

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[90] Allen 1970 p.93.
[91] Stanford 1959 *ad* 2.94.
[92] Clarke 1981 p.83.

anonymous writer on Porphyry to Aristotle's *Apophthegmata*, by Plutarch to Bion, by Stobaeus to Ariston of Chios, by Diogenes Laertius to Aristippus, and by the Gnomologicum Vaticanum to Gorgias[93]), which suggests that it was well known, but of unknown origin. The language used to present this image in the various sources is varied, although the contrast between the true philosopher and the student of the ἐγκύκλιος παίδεια seems fairly constant. Those who do not study philosophy are accused of being content with the maids rather than the mistress: as so often with the use of Greek myth, the image is introduced with a rhetorical purpose.

These cases of allegorical or exemplary use of Homer are tied definitely to the story as told by Homer - there are no textual references, but both pick up on relatively unimportant but identifiably Homeric details (particularly in the case of the suitors). This suggests that both rely on a fair knowledge of Homer - not unreasonable to expect if they originated during the fifth to third century BC. They do seem to be part of a larger pattern of philosophical reinterpretation or allegorisation of Homer[94], which was to continue through the mediaeval period and Renaissance; one of the last allegorisations of Penelope, in the seventeenth century, described her as the Church, Odysseus her husband

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[93] Cf. Stückelberger 1965 p.61, Kindstrand 1976 pp.186-7.

Φησὶν Ἀριστοτέλης ἐν ἀποφθέγματι ὅτι ὅσοι ταῖς ἄλλαις τέχναις καὶ ἐπιστήμαις σχολάζοντες τῆς φιλοσοφίας ἀμελοῦσιν, ἐοίκασι τοῖς μνηστῆρσι τῆς Πηνελόπης, οἵτινες αὐτῇ συγγενέσθαι μὴ δυνάμενοι ἠγάπων κἂν ταῖς θεραπαίναις αὐτῆς συγγενέσθαι.

Aristotle *Apoph.* fr.26 Bussemaker

Ἀρίστων ὁ Χῖος τοὺς περὶ τὰ ἐγκύκλια μαθήματα πονουμένους, ἀμελοῦντας δὲ φιλοσοφίας. ἔλεγεν ὁμοίους εἶναι τοῖς μνηστῆρσι τῆς Πηνελόπης, οἳ ἀποτυγχάνοντες ἐκείνης περὶ τὰς θεραπαίνας ἐγίγνοντο.

Ariston in Stobaeus *Ecl.* 3.4

τοὺς τῶν ἐγκυκλίων παιδευμάτων μετασχόντας, φιλοσοφίας δὲ ἀπολειφθέντας, ὁμοίους ἔλεγεν εἶναι τοῖς τῆς Πηνελόπης μνηστῆρσι· καὶ γὰρ ἐκείνους Μελανθὼ μὲν καὶ Πολυδώραν καὶ τὰς ἄλλας θεραπαίνας ἔχειν, πάντα δὲ μᾶλλον ἢ αὐτὴν τὴν δέσποιναν δύνασθαι γῆμαι.

Aristippus fr.23

ὁ ῥήτωρ ἔλεγε τοὺς φιλοσοφίας μὲν ἀμελοῦντας, περὶ δὲ τὰ ἐγκύκλια μαθήματα γινομένους ὁμοίους εἶναι τοῖς μνηστῆρσιν οἳ Πηνελόπην θέλοντες ταῖς θεραπαίναις αὐτῆς ἐμίγνυντο.

Gorgias fr.29 DK. See also Bion in Plutarch *de lib. educ.* 7d.

[94] This larger pattern is discussed in Buffière 1956 pp.45-65, Feeney 1992 pp.10-11, 20-40, Richardson 1975, Lamberton 1986 *passim*, but especially pp.10-22, 31-43. Lamberton is particularly strong on the background to such allegorisation.

as Christ (bound to the mast of his ship as Christ was bound on the Cross), and her suitors as heretics[95]. Here we may see a combination of Penelope as wisdom, which is sought by the wise man, and as paradigm of fidelity.

The power and dominance of the image of the faithful wife waiting for her husband persists into depictions of Penelope in more modern art and literature. Even where she is portrayed differently, this seems to be a reaction against her image as a paradigm of patient chastity; other myths about her are largely forgotten.

[95] By Jacques Hughes, cf. Allen 1970 p.102, p.90 on Odysseus as Christ.

Chapter 5: Penelope in Classical Art

The aim of this chapter is to focus on what Classical depictions can tell us about views of Penelope throughout the Classical period, and to seek thus to illuminate the study of Penelope in literature. An examination of representations of Penelope reveals the scenes particularly favoured by visual artists; it is not unreasonable to suppose that this may also reflect something of the generalised conception of Penelope, by showing the scenes most felt to be important for presenting her. The material itself is collected in *LIMC* vol.7; most of the representations of Penelope are also found in Touchefeu-Meynier 1968, where many receive a longer discussion[96]. The order of exposition is firstly by content of the scene depicted. Within each section, the order is broadly chronological, but also divided by medium, partly due to the difficulties of precise dating of ancient art. First to be considered are depictions of Penelope in the so-called "Penelope pose"; the discussion then moves on to representations of Penelope in other postures, mostly with the suitors or Odysseus.

The relationship between art and literature in the Classical world is a complex one: much to the disappointment of those who would wish to use vase evidence to reconstruct lost literary masterpieces, we cannot simply regard the images to be found on vases or in statues as illustrations of literary works. This is evident from the problems

[96] My focus being on literature through art, rather than art itself, I do not expect to extend the work of these sources in respect of the artistic material, except to state my own preferences concerning some of the more debatable identifications.

faced by those who try to match art and text[97]. Artistic evidence may provide as much evidence for variation in a myth as written sources; our problem is knowing how to interpret the evidence we have. Given that a scene on a vase can only show one moment in time, and yet may try to encompass the whole of a story, there may be elements from different points in the story shown in a picture. For example, depictions of Odysseus' encounter with the Cyclops are found showing the moment of blinding, but at the same time, Odysseus is offering a cup of wine to Polyphemus[98], despite the fact that this, strictly speaking, had happened some time before the blinding; sometimes the Cyclops is also holding human limbs, referring to his earlier eating of some of the companions. Other figures added around the main ones may cause confusion, as they can be purely decorative. The fact that names are not always given on vases or other depictions of myths means that identification may rely on the use of traditional attributes. It is normal for figures in Greek art to develop their own iconography, enabling them to be recognised when no names are given, and enabling a viewer to identify the scene depicted through knowledge of the mythological story behind it. For example, Athene is often distinguished by her aegis, while Heracles is usually shown with his lion-skin and club; the presence of an identifiable Heracles would, for example, distinguish between scenes showing his battle with the Amazons and that of Theseus, or Achilles' combat against Penthesileia at Troy, or a generic Amazonomachy. One problem with such identifications is the question of how specific some "identifying traits" are: the aegis is not shared by Athene with another female figure, but the depiction of Theseus as an

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[97] Cf. Shapiro 1994, particularly pp.4-7 and later chapters on specific myths (a good example is that of the reunion of Electra and Orestes, pp.130-4, where artistic depictions are often thought to be influenced by the *Oresteia*, but they typically show Electra seated at her father's grave, a detail not taken from any known text); see also Carpenter 1991 via index for particular myths.

[98] For example, on a Laconian cup attributed to the Rider Painter (Paris, Cabinet des Médailles 190): Shapiro 1994 p.53.

ephebe makes it difficult, in the absence of names, to tell when a figure represents Theseus and when a more generalised, unidentified ephebe, particularly if the scene is also of a rather generic nature - for example, hunting or erotic pursuit[99]. It has been suggested that there is not a simple division between figures which may be identified as 'Theseus' and those to be identified as 'an ephebe': even when a figure represents a generic ephebe, "when read through fifth-century Athenian eyes it would also refer to, and acquire its value through, the mythological paradigm of Theseus" [100]. Likewise, a picture of Theseus said things also about ephebes in general in fifth-century Athens, where Theseus was represented as the ephebe *par excellence*. Similarly, with a figure like Penelope, who was particularly identified with certain traits (ch.4) the question of a figure's "being Penelope" rather than "being a σώφρων woman" is perhaps not a question of "either/or", but "both/and": even if the figure is not strictly to be identified with Penelope, the shared posture may still evoke Penelope and all that she stands for.

The "Penelope pose"

When considering depictions of Penelope in artistic media, the most striking fact is the consistency of the pictures. Almost all pictures of Penelope seem to relate either to her waiting for Odysseus - a seated figure, head on hand, with veiled head - or to scenes portrayed in the last few books of the *Odyssey*. The pose of a seated female figure, legs crossed, head on hand, is so typical that it is called the "Penelope type" when considering

[99] Cf. Beard 1991 p.21, discussing examples which can represent both a mythological figure and a figure from the "real world". Goldhill/Osborne 1993 are very concerned about this problem, and criticise Carpenter 1991 for being too dogmatic on the issue of identification.
[100] Sourvinou-Inwood 1987, especially pp.135-6 (quotation from p.135), 1990 pp.397-8.

examples of this pose found in statuary[101] (the type is also found in other media; cf. *LIMC* 2e); it is also known as "mourning Penelope" or "anxious waiting". This posture seems to have been associated both with Penelope, and with other females who are in some respect in mourning. Electra is shown in this pose at Agamemnon's tomb (cf. below), and there are other examples of it to be found in depictions of unnamed figures[102].

Melian and Other Reliefs (*LIMC* 20, 21, 33 a-f (Melian), 3, 4, 19, 30, 42)

The Melian reliefs showing Penelope date from 480-450 BC; the majority show a recognition scene between Penelope and Odysseus. In this scene, Penelope sits in her usual dejected pose, legs crossed, head on hand turned somewhat towards the viewer, while Odysseus, one hand outstretched, leans towards her. Penelope sits in the same attitude in a slightly later terracotta relief (*LIMC* 3), which, although it shows Penelope alone, might come from a larger piece. A series of Roman reliefs (*LIMC* 18 b-e) show Penelope again in the same position, but now in composition with Eurycleia and two maids. The Melian reliefs show distinct similarities to other reliefs showing the reunion of Electra and Orestes, which may slightly predate the Odyssean examples. Early in the sequence, they are very alike, with Electra seated at Agamemnon's tomb in the same dejected pose as Penelope, while Orestes stretched out his hand towards her. As the century progresses, however, Electra's mourning becomes more active, and her position at the foot of the tomb is taken by Orestes, who sits in a more pensive position. This is shown by a Melian relief (Jacobsthal 94=*LIMC* Elektra I 25) and in other media. This

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[101] The same type is found on vases and in other media too; Jacobsthal 1931 p.192ff. collects examples from the Pentecontaetia, some of which are definite portrayals of Penelope, while others are definitely portraying someone different.

[102] Jacobsthal 1931 on the "Penelope-Motiv", pp.192ff., Ohly 1957 pp.439-40, Richter 1955 p.49.

similarity in artistic portrayal has a counterpart in literature (see below p.206). In the case of Penelope, too, a shift of some form can be seen, but later: *LIMC* 34 and 35 a-c, engraved gemstones from the second or third century BC, show Odysseus seated with Penelope behind; 35a and b do seem to show Odysseus seated in a similar position to that normally used for Penelope. These are dated as third to second century BC; a "mourning" Odysseus is found earlier, however, for example on the cheek-piece of a bronze helmet (*LIMC* Odysseus 22; cf. 9, 10, 11). Although this pose is conventionally now associated with Odysseus on Calypso's island, it recalls Penelope and may be influenced by her typical pose[103]; certainly the examples of Odysseus in this pose postdate those of Penelope.

Fifth-century painting (*LIMC* 1, 31)

Although no paintings of Penelope from the fifth century survive, we do have references to two pictures in later writers. Pliny, in *NH* 35.63, mentions a painting by Zeuxis of Penelope as a symbol of virtue: *[Zeuxis] fecit et Penelopen, in qua pinxisse mores videtur*. Zeuxis worked in the late fifth and early fourth centuries; this picture has been dated to the end of the fifth, and we may presume that she was probably depicted in the usual mourning pose, possibly with a loom in the background, to emphasise her virtues as a wife. Polygnotus painted the aftermath of the slaughter of the suitors, according to Pausanias[104], in the temple of Athene Areia in Plataeae. Pausanias' description does not include any mention of Penelope, but it is likely that she was depicted: perhaps in an upper register, being woken by Eurycleia, or as an onlooker in a

[103] Cf. Buitron-Oliver/Cohen 1995 p.46.
[104] Paus. 9.4.2.

pose resembling the mourning pose, as on the oil lamps *LIMC* 27a, b. The presence of Penelope on the heroön at Gölbasi-Trysa (see below), which may well have been inspired by Polygnotus, is our best evidence for the possible presence of Penelope in this painting.

Statuary (*LIMC* 2, 17)

There are several statues (two complete, one torso and three heads) which are identified as representations of Penelope from their pose, which is that typical of the mourning Penelope: a seated female figure, with a veil over her head, her legs crossed and one arm, leaning on her knee, supporting her bowed head. This is the same pose as is seen on the Melian reliefs and on the Chiusi skyphos (see below). The identification with Penelope is on the strength of the pose alone, but it still seems persuasive, as this is such a typical pose for Penelope. The questions associated with the statues of Penelope are more concerned with relating Greek originals and later copies.

Most of the statues of Penelope appear to be Roman copies of Greek originals of c.460 BC. The exception is the Persepolis Penelope, now in Tehran Museum, which appears to be a Greek original. The complication is that this cannot be the original for the Roman copies. There are various differences, but these are not considered major enough to suggest that the later copies are done from memory rather than from an actual statue. Nevertheless, since Persepolis was burnt in 330 BC, the Persepolis Penelope must have been buried at that date, and it was not rediscovered until the modern excavation of the city; it is therefore impossible for copies of the first century BC to have been made from it. It thus seems likely that there was more than one statue of Penelope made in the fifth century, and that the Roman copies were imitating another similar but not absolutely identical Penelope. There has been much debate on the exact dating of the

original(s) and their place of manufacture; it has been suggested that there were Penelopes set up all through the Athenian empire, representing the state of these places before they were rescued from Persian rule by Athens[105]. It has also been suggested that the Persepolis Penelope was made by a Greek sculptor working for the Persians, as a commission, presumably based on similar statues he had seen made by other Greek sculptors[106]. The similarities between the Persepolis Penelope and the Roman copies of a similar statue are close enough to force us to assume that the Persepolis Penelope was created by someone who was not copying directly another Greek original, but who knew a similar statue very well (or that the original from which the Roman copies come was made by someone who knew well the Persepolis statue before the sack of the city). This is because, although the drapery of the statues are not close enough to suggest direct copying, it is close enough to suggest something more than just recreation from a vague memory of the style of clothing[107].

Another lost statue, *LIMC* 17, is described by Strabo[108], and was in the Artemision at Ephesus, sculpted by Thrason, a sculptor of unknown date (probably Hellenistic). Only Penelope and Eurycleia are named as being part of the group, but Hiller suggests that there may also have been other figures present[109]. It seems likely that this depicted Penelope in her usual mourning pose, perhaps approached by Eurycleia as in the Melian reliefs.

In addition to the statues named as Penelope, it has also been suggested that the so-called "Barberini suppliant" represents Penelope. This statue has been taken to

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[105] Gauer 1990: this would be a striking political use of myth, but there seems to be little evidence for it.
[106] Fleischer 1983.
[107] There is a large bibliography on these statues; in addition to works cited above, Ridgway 1970 pp.101-105, Ohly 1957, and Richter 1955 are particularly useful.
[108] 14.1.23.
[109] Hiller 1972.

represent many heroines, and it is implausible that Penelope is a correct identification[110]: the figure was possibly holding one sandal, and only wears one, which can be related to no known myth about or depiction of Penelope. It is perhaps a rather circular argument, to identify representations of Penelope from the typical poses, and then to say that Penelope is only found in these poses, but it is noticeable that Penelope otherwise appears in very few contexts which are not based on the last few books of the *Odyssey*, and her reunion with Odysseus.

Rings and gems (*LIMC* 5-10, 34, 35a-c)

The existence of a number of rings which show Penelope seated alone or Odysseus and Penelope together supports Penelope's status as a paradigm of the good wife. It is generally assumed that these rings and gems served as symbols of fidelity; one (*LIMC* 6) has an inscription suggesting it was a love token. The inscription is now only partly legible; the remaining letters are ΦΙΛ...ΚΑ..., which have been interpreted both as a woman's name and as an inscription including some form of φιλέω, to love[111]. The identification of the figure as Penelope on one ring suggests that the others may also represent Penelope specifically; if they were given as tokens of love, the connotations of Penelope the faithful wife would be very fitting, but, assuming the pose is associated with women (such as Penelope and Electra) who wait as well as mourn, the idea of a waiting woman might also be suitable, even if not definitively identified with Penelope[112]. The similarity to the named depiction of Penelope, however, does suggest a

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[110] See Ridgway 1981 pp.112-4, Boardman 1985 no.221, bibliography p.247; Danae seems the most likely of the other suggestions.

[111] Boardman 1970 p.296, on ring 664; he gives the inscription as φιλω καω, giving the first word as "I love", in keeping with the idea that such a ring could be a love-token.

[112] Although, as stated above, questions of exact identification can be problematic and irrelevant in ancient art.

specific referent. The later rings show Odysseus in the mourning pose, with Penelope behind him, on one occasion identified by her spindle. The shift of the mourning pose from Penelope to Odysseus may be paralleled by the shift of the pose from Electra to Orestes in the Melian reliefs.

Fifth- and Fourth-century vases (*LIMC* 16, 22, 23)

Like the rings, vases would be a private, not public, depiction of the myth. The most famous vase from the fifth century which shows Penelope is a red-figure skyphos from Chiusi, the name vase of the Penelope painter (*LIMC* 16), dated to 440-435 BC. This vase shows two related scenes: on one side Penelope sits, head on hand, before her loom, with Telemachus standing by; on the other, Odysseus is recognised by Eurycleia. In the latter it differs from the *Odyssey* by adding Eumaeus to the scene, and by calling the old woman Antiphata rather than Eurycleia. It has been suggested that this has been done under the influence of a tragedy, but it could equally well be a name made up by the vase painter (perhaps half confusing her with Anticlea[113]) or taken from some other variant version.

LIMC 22 and 23, fourth-century vases, show Penelope standing behind the foot-washing scene, as she does in a Melian relief (*LIMC* 20) and a fourth-century Thessalian votive relief (*LIMC* 19). The shift to making Penelope a standing rather than seated figure appears to have become more popular over time; her standing posture (also called "troubled reflection"), is present in other scenes in Etruscan art. The Etruscan version shows Penelope standing up, feet crossed at the ankle; this standing posture appears again in frescoes from Pompeii. It seems likely that the standing posture passed into

[113] Cf. p.180 n. 11 below for Cicero's use of this name for the nurse.

Roman art from Hellenistic, where it is found on grave *stelai*, and marks the *pudicitia* of the deceased[114]. The linking of this pose to images of the "good wife" is reinforced by these grave *stelai*, which include other "markers" such as the basket of wool (even for a woman who can have done little weaving herself).

Roman representations in relief (*LIMC* 13-15,18a-e, 40)

These depictions of Penelope all date from the first century BC or AD. It is notable that they do not include of the foot-washing scene which seemed popular in Greece (and will appear in later Roman representations, including one from Pompeii). The Campana reliefs collected under *LIMC* 18 show Penelope seated in her mourning pose, relatively unusual in Italian representations. She is seated, legs crossed, right hand raised to her head, facing towards our left, while an old woman (Eurycleia?) advances towards her from behind. In front of her two maids have survived in some examples. This scene might have been the inspiration for a statue group involving the Vatican Penelope statue and an old woman[115]. Although it appears, from the differing styles of the two statues, that such a grouping would not have been the original setting for the statues, it is possible that these reliefs might have inspired (or been inspired by) the later grouping of these Greek statues.

Penelope is also shown on an oil-lamp, two gems, and a ring from this period. The earliest, *LIMC* 14, shows a seated woman, holding a skein of wool, with a loom in front of her. Although she is not in the "Penelope pose", it is still considered likely that this represents Penelope; the overlap here between Penelope and a generic "good wife" is

[114] Cf. Zanker 1993 pp.222-7.
[115] Cf. Hiller 1972.

clear. *LIMC* 15 gives us an example of a Roman ring with a Greek style engraving of a woman seated in the typical Penelope pose. The later date of this ring may be significant; it postdates the Campana reliefs, which also show Penelope in this pose. *LIMC* 13, the oil-lamp, shows Penelope again in almost typical mourning pose, seated on a diphros, with her right hand raised to her chin rather than her forehead. *LIMC* 40, however, is quite different: it shows a seated Odysseus, in what appears to be the mourning pose, with Penelope(?) behind him, touching his shoulder. It is possible that this may be intended to show Odysseus with Calypso, as pictures of Odysseus in this pose are often taken to be of him moping on the shore of Ogygia, as we first meet him in the *Odyssey*. As such pictures, however, typically consist of Odysseus alone, Penelope is generally considered a more likely identification for the female figure on this gem.

Frescoes (*LIMC* 12, 36-39)

These five first-century AD frescoes, found at Pompeii or Stabiae (12, 39), can all be tied to the Odyssean text except *LIMC* 12, which is more usually identified as Artemis/Diana. This fresco shows a young woman holding a bow - this is the only hint that it could be Penelope. Given the paucity of depictions of Penelope with a bow, it seems unlikely that this alone would be sufficient to characterise this figure as Penelope, and we are probably thus justified in considering it a depiction of Diana or another female huntress[116]. When Penelope is shown alone, it seems more common to show her with a spindle if any accoutrements are to be added.

LIMC 36 shows Penelope in her typical Italian standing pose, described as "troubled reflection": standing with her left arm held across her waist, supporting her

[116] One may compare Boardman 1970 ring 533, which shows Artemis in this pose with a bow.

right arm, which is bent at the elbow to allow her hand to go up to her face[117]. This pose first appears in Etruscan art, and becomes the standard pose for Penelope in Italian art, possibly under the influence of Hellenistic depictions. Odysseus is here shown seated but making the same gesture as Penelope. The scene is clearly the recognition after the slaughter of the suitors. The importance of Eurycleia in perceptions of the end of the *Odyssey* is made clear in *LIMC* 37, where the five extra figures of 36 are reduced to make a tighter composition showing only Penelope, Odysseus, and Eurycleia. *LIMC* 38 again features just these three: although this fresco is now lost, it too seems to have shown Penelope in her standing "troubled reflection" pose; the elegant mirroring of gestures between Odysseus and Penelope does not seem to have been done as carefully in these later pictures as in the first. Such mirroring is particularly suitable for a depiction of the reunion of Penelope and Odysseus, for in *Od.* 23 their speeches to each other have a similar mirroring, both starting δαιμόνιε/η.

LIMC 39, a fresco from Stabiae, is less precisely dated than the Pompeian examples, and less precisely identified. It shows a seated woman and a man facing her. The man carries a bow, and it has been suggested that this identifies him as Odysseus. The oriental costumes, however, suggest that interpreting this couple as Anchises and Aphrodite or Paris and Oenone may be preferable[118].

Penelope in the mourning pose is, as mentioned above, sometimes shown in conjunction with the recognition of Odysseus by Eurycleia, probably reflecting the story as told in the *Odyssey*. Two oil-lamps (*LIMC* 27a, b), although dated to the second half

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[117] Hill Richardson 1982 p.31with nn.32, 33; I use her translations of Neumann's terms.
[118] See Mactoux 1975 p.147.

of the third century and end of the fifth century, show the same scene, that of the washing of Odysseus' feet by Eurycleia. In the background, there is a female figure who watches the action; this could be Penelope, but may be just a servant. There are two more representations of this foot-washing scene in which Penelope may appear, both in silver. *LIMC* 28 is a silver vase dated to the end of the fourth or start of the fifth century AD. There are three female onlookers; they could all be maids, but only one carries a spindle, so they could be Penelope with her two attendants[119]. *LIMC* 26 is a work known only through an epigram written about it by Euboulus[120]; it is assumed to be a contemporary piece of Byzantine work. Penelope and Telemachus are described as watching the washing of Odysseus' feet by Eurycleia; this probably means that a scene much like that of the Melian reliefs was depicted. The scene clearly had an enduring popularity; although Havelock[121] states that in the context of Odyssean illustrations as a whole this scene is not popular, when considering depiction of Penelope, it is striking how often and over how long a period this scene occurs.

The similarity of the "Penelope pose" to a mourning pose suggests that for the fifth-century artists, the most striking feature about Penelope was her waiting for Odysseus - her status as a faithful mourner, to whom joy will come[122]. The characterisation of Penelope by this pose parallels the popularity in tragedy of the motif of the woman waiting at home[123]. Just as Heracles is characterised by reference to

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[119] Penelope with a spindle is not common, but is shown in *LIMC* 34; other depictions include a bow or a loom to aid identification.
[120] *AP* 9.816.
[121] Havelock 1995 p.196.
[122] Roller 1995 suggests that Penelope's posture on the Chiusi skyphos (*LIMC* 16) reflects her weariness from weaving; however, the fact that this posture is used for other female figures, shown with neither loom nor spindle, suggests that mourning rather than weariness is implied by the pose.
[123] See below pp.196-9.

stories which show off his physical prowess, so Penelope is characterised, in art as in literature, as the wife who waited faithfully for her husband. The images which do not show Penelope in this characteristic pose are most often representations of scenes from the *Odyssey* (or from the tale of the return of Odysseus, if one prefers to remove a definite literary reference). Even when portrayed standing, Penelope often retains her characteristic pose of one hand to her face, although when she is in standing posture, it appears to be a more pensive pose than the depression or distress suggested by the seated pose of the head resting on the hand. Buitron-Oliver and Cohen suggest that the "Penelope pose" may not simply represent mourning and hence fidelity, but may involve a conscious contrast with bridal scenes, especially those involving Helen and Paris. They therefore suggest that it may represent "anguished thought and, more specifically, sexual decision making". However, the bridal scenes with which they would like to contrast Penelope are from the latter half of the fifth century, while portrayals of Penelope in mourning pose predate this. It thus seems probable that the "Penelope pose" is a development of the mourning pose found in sixth-century art, though it has a pensive element. In the Melian reliefs, as on the later Chiusi skyphos, the mourning, pensive figure of Penelope appears too wrapped up in her own thoughts to notice Eurycleia's recognition of her husband, as in book 19 of the *Odyssey*. In unnamed examples of a female figure in this pose, however, we are left with the problem of whether to identify such a figure definitively as Penelope, or as a generalised mourning (or waiting) woman. As this posture becomes more associated with Penelope, this question is not as critical for later depictions, but is relevant particularly for fifth-century rings, where a small image does not leave space for other identifying features (for example a loom, spindle, or even bow) to be added. As with the shift in gravestone inscriptions from giving the

virtues expected of the dead woman to comparing her with Penelope, the difficulty of identification reflects a continuum from specific to generic representations.

It is perhaps surprising that Penelope is only rarely shown with a loom or spindle, given the inclusion of this story in the *Odyssey*. Hausmann's summary, that Penelope is no longer the cunning wife but a symbol of marital fidelity and devotion[124], is backed up by the persistent characterisation of Penelope through the pose of mourning which is most often used for her. When it is not, there will be another link to the *Odyssey* to show who is being represented, such as a recognisable representation of a scene from the *Odyssey*, most often the foot-washing or the reunion of Odysseus and Penelope, or a bow, loom, or spindle may be included in the picture to remind one of how Penelope remained faithful to Odysseus, or of the means of their eventual reunion (i.e. the contest of the bow).

Given Penelope's status as an exemplary chaste and faithful heroine, it would be interesting to contrast her iconography with that of a personification of, for example, σωφροσύνη or a similar virtue. However, such a personification does not seem to have been depicted in Classical art[125], and, although mentioned in Theognis (1.1138), does not appear to have had much currency in Greek literature prior to the Roman period. Penelope's typical pose seems to be shared only with mourning figures, thus suggesting that this aspect rather than her σωφροσύνη is particularly evoked by her typical pose.

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[124] Hausmann 1994 p.295.

[125] Although it will be dealt with in the Supplement to *LIMC*. Aidos has two definite representations listed in *LIMC*, one Greek and one Roman, and a third is suggested, the statue mentioned by Pausanias as being put up by Icarius on the road from Sparta, which might have used the "Penelope pose".

Other Scenes Suggesting Penelope as "Good Wife"

LIMC 42 is a bobbin (used as a spindle-weight), which may show Penelope. One end shows a female figure bent over a small loom; like Penelope in her usual pose, she appears lost in her work. In front of her is a kalathos. Although the only thing giving a link to Penelope is the connection with weaving, the fact that the identification has been posited[126] highlights the close correspondence between the perception of Penelope and the image of the good wife.

LIMC does not mention a possible representation of Penelope on a "*tabula Odysseaca*"[127]. Plaques or panels with Iliadic pictures in low relief have survived, as have two Odyssean *tabulae*. One of these, the Tomasetti *tabula*, might have shown Penelope; unfortunately, the part showing scenes from *Odyssey* 1-2 and 20-24 is now missing. There is mention also of another Odyssean *tabula* by Sarti; if it represented each book with one picture it seems likely that the reunion with Penelope should feature for book 23 (Penelope might also feature in the illustrations for 18 and 19, but for 19 the recognition by Eurycleia seems most likely). Such panels would have been a feature in some Pompeian houses; given the existence of pictures of the recognition scene in frescoes, it seems possible that it might have been shown on a plaque too.

After the first century AD depictions of Penelope seem to become rare. *LIMC* 25, an Alexandrian fresco of the third to fourth centuries AD, may have shown Penelope watching the washing of Odysseus' feet. Odysseus is shown as a beggar; the woman watching him might be a servant, but the pose of hand to chin, recalling the "Penelope pose", does suggest Penelope. *LIMC* 41 is a Syrian mosaic of the third quarter of the

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[126] Six 1922.
[127] See Mactoux 1975 p.149, Weitzmann 1941.

fourth century AD. It shows a scene set dramatically after the death of the suitors: in the centre, Penelope and Odysseus embrace, and Penelope (as so rarely) is given a cheerful expression, while around them, dance six maidservants.

Penelope and the Suitors (*LIMC* section E)

Apart from the famous Chiusi skyphos, the other surviving fifth-century vase which depicts Penelope is a column crater dated to c.460 BC, again done in red-figure (*LIMC* Mnesteres II 1). This vase is unusual in depictions of Penelope in that it shows her with the suitors approaching to offer gifts. The depiction of this scene need not cast doubt on Penelope's reputation for fidelity, since to those who know their Homer well it would recall book 18, where Odysseus rejoices in her cunning.

A representation of the slaughter of the suitors in which Penelope is present is found on the fourth-century heroön at Gölbasi-Trysa (*LIMC* 30). The depiction of this scene is perhaps a little surprising, but it may be serving as a paradigm for rightful revenge exacted by a wronged warrior/hero for his enemies' incursions on his territory[128]. It is interesting in that it shows Penelope as present at the slaughter: this possibly shows the influence of a Polygnotan painting[129]. The presence of both Penelope and Odysseus in this scene (along with Telemachus and Ithacan servants) might point towards a version in which they conspired together to kill the suitors. Alternatively, the juxtaposition might be thought to highlight the reason for the massacre of the suitors, namely their pursuit of the hero's wife. Penelope is shown in a posture resembling that used for Nausicaa on fifth-century vases, one associated with thought. It thus has

[128] Suggested to me by Prof. R. Smith.
[129] Cf. Touchfeu-Meynier 1968 p.258.

something in common with her own typical fifth-century posture, although she is standing (as also on the Melian relief *LIMC* 20).

The surviving Etruscan representations of Penelope date from the fourth century (*LIMC* 11) to the second century BC. They include one vase, one gem, and various mirrors and urns (presumably funerary). Five of these urns (Odysseus/Uthuze 140-144) show Penelope, Odysseus, and the suitors at a banquet. The presence of Penelope is less surprising in an Etruscan production, as it appears to have been usual for their women to go to banquets with the men, so we need not assume from these pictures that there was an Italian tradition of a faithless Penelope. The first of these shows Odysseus in the guise of a beggar, seated on the left of the picture, with the suitors in the centre, feasting, and Penelope on the right, seated on a throne and being shown an open jewel box by a servant. This scene is the prelude to the murder of the suitors; it might be modelled quite closely on *Odyssey* 18, where Athene inspires Penelope to appear before the suitors and the unrecognised Odysseus[130]. A very similar scene is shown on a relief bowl from Volos, *LIMC* Mnesteres 2. The other urns show a slightly different version of the scene; in the first there are extra figures, including a Fury which is not present on the other urns. *LIMC* 141-4 still have Odysseus in beggar's costume, pushed back into a corner, with the suitors again in the centre, feasting, and Penelope offered a box. Both are standing. On all of these urns Penelope's expression is grave.

There is also a late fresco, *LIMC* 43, which was once thought to show Penelope and her suitors, but is now more generally thought to represent Circe with Odysseus' men. It dates from the first half of the third century AD, and comes from a hypogeum in the Viale Manzoni in Rome. It consists of two registers, the upper showing buildings,

[130] Cf. van der Meer 1978 p.111.

perhaps suggesting a city, with a single female figure at a fountain, and a group of domestic animals. The lower register shows, on the left, three nude men, then an upright loom centrally, while, on the right a man is seated, dressed as a beggar, extending his hand towards a woman who has turned away from the loom to give him her attention. If this scene is designed to show an allegory for the soul on its way towards heaven, then it could symbolise the temptations of Circe or the success of the soul in its search for wisdom, allegorically represented as Penelope[131]. I incline towards the identification of the characters as Penelope, Odysseus, and three suitors, on the grounds of Odysseus' beggarly costume. Both Circe and Penelope may be shown with a loom, but in the allegorical interpretation, Penelope's weaving becomes a metaphor for the philosophic method, which might be hinted at here[132]. Although this identification may be disputed, it seems no less dubious than several others, and would produce an interpretation of the picture fitting its original situation.

Hints of other Versions

Penelope in Etruscan art (if the identification is correct) tends to stand rather than sit. Our surviving vase is by the Settecamini painter, and dates from early to middle fourth century BC. On it, Penelope has a cheerful expression, and raises her hand to Odysseus, who faces her across a dog usually identified as Argos. There are some problems with this identification; it has been objected that Argos and Penelope do not appear together in the *Odyssey*, and that this picture cannot reflect the Homeric version of the story. This, however, is not an insuperable problem, as discussed below.

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[131] Cf. Gorgias fr.29; the same image is attributed to Aristotle, Bion, Ariston, and Aristippus, and is discussed above pp.72-3.
[132] Cf. Buffière 1956 p.390, and discussion above pp.70-3.

From slightly later, there survives a graffito from Praeneste which shows an armed Odysseus speaking to a seated woman (*LIMC* Uthuze 127). The woman is touching his leg with one hand and holds a spindle with the other. Given Odysseus' military dress, in comparison with his usual beggarly attire for scenes on Ithaca, it seems possible that this may in fact show the scene between Helen and Odysseus in Troy (or a version of it or another of his missions inside Troy).

If we accept that the Etruscan depictions of the reunion of Odysseus and Penelope accurately reflect the versions of the story which they knew, then we must assume, with Hill Richardson, that the Etruscans knew several versions of the reunion, and that these were not all the same as that given in Homer[133]. The bronze reliefs on the backs of mirrors (*LIMC* Odysseus/Uthuze 130-139, Jucker 1988 pl.7, 8) suggest a happy reunion with the dog, Argos, also included, although here Odysseus is, as in Homer, shown in a beggar's costume, and Penelope's expression of "troubled reflection" suggests a Homeric recognition by words. On the red-figure stamnos by the Settecamini Painter, we see a well-dressed traveller greeted by a cheerful woman and dog; the identification with Odysseus, Penelope, and Argos is suggested partly by the presence of an Odyssean scene on the other side of the vase, a representation of the encounter with Circe, and partly by the existence of a dog in other Italian pictures relating to the end of the *Odyssey*. Although this identification has been challenged, on the grounds that it is not Homeric, this does not seem grounds enough to dismiss it entirely, for complete fidelity to the epic text is not a feature of Classical art at any stage, and (as mentioned above) the conflation of different scenes is commonplace. In Etruscan art particularly, we must ask whether

[133] Hill Richardson 1982 pp.33-4.

the non-Homeric versions of the story reflect variants known to the Etruscans, or whether they illustrate innovation on the part of the artist, or a confusion between two stories.

The latest Etruscan representations of Penelope are those which might suggest another version of the recognition scene, two cinerary urns from Perugia of the first or second century BC, made of travertine (*LIMC* Odysseus/Uthuze 128-9). The first shows Odysseus, garbed as a beggar, facing a seated woman. Between them a maid is holding a mirror for the woman, and the woman is stretching out her hand towards the man. On the second, Odysseus, again in the guise of a beggar, looks back over his shoulder at a half-naked woman who is being dressed by servants. One of them holds up a mirror, in which the woman will be able to see Odysseus. It is possible that this does reflect a different version of the return of Odysseus; given the later date, however, one should not assume too much - although there has been time for the Etruscan artists to become familiar with the text or to create their own version of the story, there has also been time for Odysseus and Penelope to assume a general role as happy couple, which such a toilette scene might suggest. Odysseus' beggar-costume would then be a reminder of his identity, and a hint that this scene happens around the time of their reunion.[134]

It has also been suggested that Penelope is to be identified with an unnamed female figure holding a bird (duck- or goose-like) on vases[135]. The reason for this suggestion is the etymological link between Penelope and πηνέλοψ ducks. However, the link between Penelope and these birds is not conclusively shown to be an original part of

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[134] Obviously, this speculation depends on how closely the Etruscan artists would stick to a Greek text, an issue which is much debated; cf. Brendel 1978 pp.360 (discussion of a mirror which shows Aphrodite/Turan beseeching a reluctant Helen/Elinai to give herself to Paris/Alcsentre), 368-70 (a depiction of Helen and heroes of the Trojan war in Hades). These treatments of myth imply a more sophisticated approach to Greek myths among the Etruscan than earlier spotting of "errors" has done, as they suggest an understanding of the thought behind some of the literary scenes.

[135] Cf. Touchfeu-Meynier 1968 pp.221-2, Mactoux 1975 p.85.

Penelope's story or for the etymology of her name[136], and without any other reason to identify these figures as Penelope, such an identification seems unconvincing.

Other Depictions of Penelope

Another notable fact about artistic representations of Penelope is that we do not have any definite (or even probable) depictions which are dated before the fifth century BC. There is one vase not included as a possibility by *LIMC* which, it has been suggested, shows Penelope. This is a black-figure column crater, *CVA* France 19 pl.166 no.7 (Camp. 11260), described as "divinités en char", dated to c.540 BC; Béquignon[137] suggested that it showed Penelope, arguing that it represented the scene described in Pausanias, where Penelope, asked to choose between her husband and father, pulled her veil over her face and stayed with her husband. For this reason, Pausanias says, her father raised a statue to Αἰδῶς at that place. Béquignon argues that the figure on the left here is unusual in being fully veiled, not caught in the act of lifting the veil, not with any shape picked out under the veil. For this reason, he says, it recalls the statue of Αἰδῶς erected by Icarius. However, this argument seems far from convincing. Langlotz has pictures of two vases[138] which seem to me to include a veiled figure like that in *CVA* 19 pl.166 no. 7, thus weakening Béquignon's argument that such a figure is unique. Also, given that this is a story known only from a late source, we may be dubious as to whether it would be well known enough at the date of the production of the vase for the scene to be recognised without any further identifying marks. It seems likely that the presence of

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[136] See above pp.62-5.
[137] Béquignon 1960.
[138] Langlotz 1931 pl.90 nos. 312 (=*ABV* 324, 35) and 315, which is particularly close; again the pair in the chariot have been identified as a pair of gods. One may compare also the veiled figure standing behind the chariot in Langlotz pl.96 no.305 (=*ABV* 310, 101).

Icarius would help establish the identity of this scene; his absence is odd, if this picture really shows Penelope's choice between her husband and father. Although the links between Odysseus and Athene and Hermes are clear from Homer, their presence alone does not seem sufficient to establish the identity of the other characters in the scene. This doubt may be supported by the absence of the scene from any other surviving Classical art, and it thus seems safe to assume that this vase does not in fact show Penelope. Other similarly dubious possible representations are to be found in Touchefeu-Meynier 1968 (for example, Touchefeu-Meynier no. 497, Mississippi 1973.3.104, more probably to be identified (with *CVA* USA[6]) as showing Paris and Helen); establishing a plausible identification of any of these with Penelope seems unlikely.

However, if Penelope is not represented before the fifth century, she is not alone. Our earliest surviving examples of artistic representations of Penelope, Nausicaa, the maidservants, and the shades of women Odysseus sees in the Underworld, in various media, all date from c. 470/460-440 BC; several may be linked to lost paintings by Polygnotus[139]. Buitron-Oliver and Cohen see several themes linking these depictions of mortal women from the *Odyssey* in the fifth century: "marriage and generation", "the role of women's work in civilised life", and the view of women as "preservers of the household", a role well filled by Penelope, deriving the choice of mortal women from a "new-found interest in the human psyche". While possible, this does not seem to tell the whole story: the appearance of these subjects might also reflect the use of Odyssean characters on stage, in tragedies, in which mortal figures rather than strange and wonderful immortals appear as major characters.

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[139] Buitron-Oliver/Cohen 1995, p.38 with p.53 n.55 on Polygnotus.

In conclusion, one may say that there is great consistency in portrayals of Penelope across all artistic media from the fifth century BC to the fifth century AD. The influence of the *Odyssey* is paramount; favoured scenes showing Penelope include her reunion with Odysseus and her presence at the scene of the foot-washing and recognition by Eurycleia. The typical pose for Penelope, with her head on her hand, shows her with her mind "turned away" from the action around her, as described in the *Odyssey*. Both her seated and standing postures may be interpreted as defensive: seated, her legs are always crossed, and standing, her feet may be crossed, and she holds one arm across her body. Such closed gestures may be symbolic of her protection of herself and her chastity from the approaches of her suitors. Amphimedon's speech to the shade of Agamemnon in the last book of the *Odyssey* suggests that there may have been a version of the story in which Penelope recognised Odysseus before the slaughter of the suitors, and helped to carry out his plan. If this was the case, it is notable that the Odyssean version of the story has such dominance in the artistic sources. The dominance of this version of the story, of course, and the popularity of this scene, might reflect not only the popularity and authority of Homer, but also the influence of dramatic versions of the story. Such a scene would definitely have appeared in Sophocles' *Niptra*, and might also have been included in Aeschylus' *Penelope*. Pacuvius' translation of the *Niptra* (and possible conflation with the *Odysseus Acanthoplex*[140]) suggest that this story had an enduring popularity, which may help explain the number of artistic representations of this scene. If the scenes of Penelope unaware of the recognition by Eurycleia are influenced by

[140] For a discussion of the contents of all these plays, and others involving Penelope, see the section on fragmentary plays below pp.175-84.

dramatic performances as well as the Homeric narrative, then they may suggest to us that the dramatic versions of the story stayed close to Homer on this point at least.

The Etruscan pictures of Penelope are notable for their focus on the recognition of Odysseus and Penelope rather than on the foot-washing scene; Penelope appears only once in her typical sorrowing pose in Etruscan art, and that is on an early fourth-century scarab. Penelope's alternative pose, that of "troubled reflection", seems to come to the fore in Etruscan art, and then appears in Roman art, possibly reflecting a Hellenistic use of this pose[141]. This pose first appears in surviving art in representations of Penelope on Melian reliefs, but also may have appeared in lost works of art, perhaps one of the paintings (which could thus provide a model for the Pompeian frescoes). It seems quite possible that it is a development of the "mourning Penelope" pose, as it keeps the hand raised to the face, but the position of the arms has changed with the change from sitting to standing. It may be noted that even when shown standing, Penelope's legs are sometimes still shown crossed - as in her seated position - but at the ankle, as is necessary for a convincing standing posture. The pose is probably the most important factor in the identification of Penelope; she may be shown with a spindle or a loom, but the pose of hand to head is a more common marker of her identity. This emblematic image encapsulates Penelope's place in Classical thought as the exemplary faithful wife, who waited, though despondent, for her husband's return.

[141] Mythological image types tend to pass into Roman art directly from Hellenistic repertoire, rather than via Etruria, due partly to the high status of Greek art and culture by the first century AD, and due to the large quantity of Greek art which was looted and brought to Rome.

Conclusion to Section II

The usual conception of Penelope, now as in antiquity, is of the good wife who waited for her husband. The story of her infidelity and bearing Pan seems to have had remarkably little effect on this general conception of Penelope, and literary representations of her show a remarkable consistency. The same is true of artistic representations; it is not until very late that we have much beyond the usual scenes of Penelope sitting mourning, oblivious to what is going on around her, or Penelope standing considering the beggar before her in the moments before recognition. The artistic consistency of representation may be seen as reflecting the consistency of the "usual conception" of Penelope, but how is this later consistency to be explained? Two factors seem likely. One is the tendency for the stories popular in a society to reflect the ideals or fears of that society[142]; Penelope becomes the ideal of what a faithful wife should be[143]. The second is that the story-pattern around Penelope is one often found in folk tales. The tale of the wanderer's return appears here in one of its several guises, that of the homecoming husband. Once that plot-line has commenced, there are two paths the plot may follow, both equally satisfying: that of the faithful wife who has waited and who is rewarded by the safe return of her husband, or that of the unfaithful wife who will (eventually) be punished. These two paths are represented by Penelope and Clytaemnestra; the difference between the two is heightened in the *Odyssey* through the contrast between the returns of Agamemnon and Odysseus as well as between the

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[142] Cf. Burke 1992 pp.91-6, and above p.5; this may also be linked to the tendency for such stories to have some form of existence in a simplified, black and white form, leaving it to more developed versions to expose the problems and contradictions which may be inherent.

[143] The fact that (female) stereotypes are so often negative (cf. Ellmann 1968 ch.3) need not mean that positive stereotypes cannot exist; cf. Hawthorn 1994 *s.v.* "Stereotype", "Ideology", and "Interpellation"; cf. pp.2-4 above.

attitudes of their wives. In the *Odyssey* the choice of Clytaemnestra as a parallel heightens the contrast between the two wives, for Clytaemnestra does not merely betray, but murders Agamemnon. Both tales also contain the very common element of the humbling of the arrogant: Agamemnon, the proud king, is brought low, while the beggar Odysseus overcomes the arrogant suitors to win back his rightful place. The dynamic of the story-line in the plot of the *Odyssey* (i.e. the story reduced to its most basic terms) is such that when we get to Ithaca (when Odysseus returns in secret to find his house full of suitors), the retelling is drawn onto the well-trodden track of the version of the "return of the wanderer" in which his return is successful, in which he destroys the suitors and finds his wife faithful. The happy outcome is his reward for all the wanderings; the contrast between his sufferings and their happy conclusion would not be as strong if he also had to punish his wife.

The idea that Penelope is characterised as she is in Homer specifically in order to make her the opposite of Clytaemnestra is an interesting one. It is suggested by Carpenter, who says:

> we may rightly challenge Penelope's claim to be much more than a mythologically available character. Her stratagem of weaving and unraveling an ever-unfinished web in order to put off her marriage to any of the suitors is a motif typical of *Märchen*, perhaps suggested by some *Märchen* prototype ... Save that she mourns for her absent lord and resists the pressure to rewed, she has no active part in the plot and displays few interesting qualities.[144]

Carpenter goes on to conclude that Penelope was evolved "in deliberate antithesis to the infamous Klytaimestra", suggesting that the parallels between Agamemnon and Odysseus, Orestes and Telemachus form the root of this contrast. Although there is much in Carpenter's analysis with which to disagree[145] (Penelope's part in the plot is

[144] Carpenter 1946 pp.165-6.
[145] One might start with the main thesis of Carpenter 1946, namely that Odysseus is the "bearson".

underestimated, in particular), the idea that Penelope evolved as the opposite of Clytaemnestra is not wholly implausible. Whatever Penelope's original character, the Homeric picture of the faithful wife swamped all other versions: what is notable about Penelope, in contrast to say, Helen, is how infrequently we come across any tales which show a different side from the usual picture. Might this suggest that there were very few tales about her before Homer, that she is in effect a Homeric creation? The story of the wanderer returned does not require the figure of a wife or lover, but her presence is a natural element. If a contrast is then to be drawn between the successful and unsuccessful returning wanderers, the contrast between the faithful and unfaithful wife at home is an obvious component. To make Odysseus the opposite of Agamemnon, it is thus clear that his wife ought to be faithful, the opposite of Clytaemnestra. The picture in the *Odyssey* is not wholly straightforward[146], but the underlying story-pattern which lies behind it is more so. The complexities in Homer do not need to be ascribed to alternative versions of Penelope not fully drawn together - rather we can see them as an addition by a skilful poet. The identification of Penelope as the mother of Pan may then be ascribed, as it was by Nonnus, to a confusion between two Penelopes, or we may see it as a local legend from Mantineia - or, perhaps more plausibly, as an element in the story of Penelope which was never fully integrated with her Homeric portrayal, but which is of equal (or greater) antiquity.

The contradictions which we see, and which the more rationalistic later Greeks saw, between the picture of Penelope as a faithful wife and her position as the mother of Pan may not have been so apparent to their original audience. The story of the *Odyssey* requires the folk-tale faithful wife; so long as this is not a total contradiction of a

[146] See ch.6 on Penelope in the *Odyssey*.

powerful tradition of Penelope as unfaithful[147], this would probably not cause any worries, even if Penelope was known as the mother of Pan. It is this tradition, in its powerful simplicity, rather than the more complicated one suggested by the link between Penelope and Pan, which remained in people's minds, and formed the background against which more developed literary depictions could stand in relief.

[147] The sort of image required by Graves' suggestions on the origin of the *Odyssey*.