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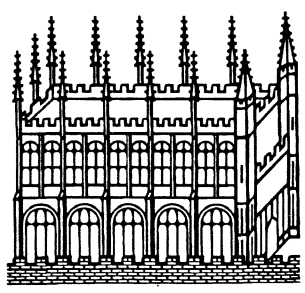

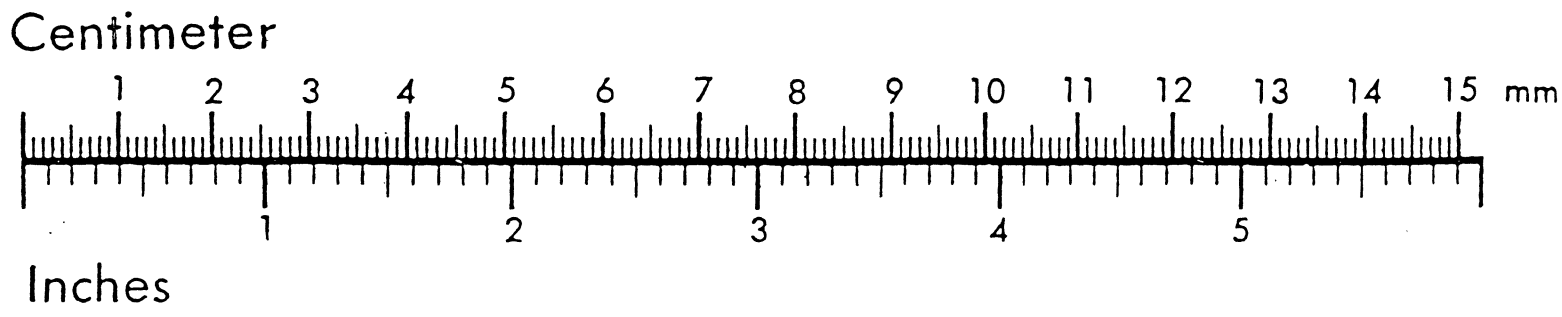

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Penelope: A Study in the Manipulation of Myth

Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Trinity Term 1997

Katie E. Gilchrist

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OXFORD UNIVERSITY
(BODLEIAN)

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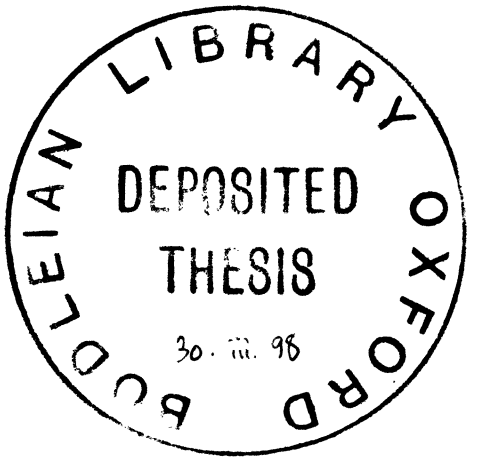

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Mythological figures play a number of roles in literature: they may, of course, appear in person as developed characters, but they may also contribute more indirectly, as part of the substratum from which rhetorical argument or literary characterisation are constructed, or as a background against which other literary strategies (for example, the rewriting of epic or the appropriation of Greek culture by the Romans) can be marked out. This thesis sets out to examine the way in which the figure of Penelope emerges from unknown origins, acquires portrayal in almost canonical form in Homer's *Odyssey*, and then takes part in the subsequent interplay of Homeric and other literary allusions throughout later Classical literature (with chapters focusing particularly on fifth-century Greek tragedy, Hellenistic poetry, and Augustan poetry). In particular, it focuses on the manner in which, despite the potential complexities of the character and the possible variants in her story, she became quintessentially a stereotypical figure. In addition to considering examples where Penelope is evoked by name, a case is also made for the thesis that allusion, or intertextual reference, could also evoke Penelope for an ancient audience. A central point of discussion is what perception of Penelope would be called to mind by intertextual reference. The importance of approaching relationships between ancient texts in intertextual terms rather terms of strict "allusion" is thus demonstrated. The formation of the simplified picture is considered in the light of folk-tale motifs, rhetorical simplification of myth, and favoured story patterns. The appendices include a summary of the myth of Penelope with all attested variants, and a comprehensive list of explicit references to her in classical literature.

"What seith Omer of goode Penalopee?
All Grece knoweth of hire chastitee."

Chaucer, *The Franklin's Tale*, 1443-4

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Section I: Introduction

Chapter 1: Prolegomena: Strategies of Reading

All reading is informed by the assumptions and implicit theories of the reader, and the general realisation that one cannot "just read the text" has been of beneficial effect in obliging all would-be critical readers to examine their own prejudices and reading strategies[1]. Ancient texts therefore need to be approached in a manner which is informed by an appreciation of what the reader brings to the text[2]: prejudices can be replaced by (or transformed into) acknowledged beliefs for which justification and supporting argumentation can be produced. The plethora of tools now available for informing the reading of ancient texts requires that a work of scholarship start, almost like a school science report, by setting out a statement of method and equipment used, for the results will depend on these. As even science is coming to realise, however, acknowledgement of equipment, method, and assumptions will not change personal observation into pure objective fact[3].

However, although it is salutary to expose the impossibility of recreating "the original" reading of a text, the ideal of constructing a picture of the ways in which a text was presented and received in its original context cannot be totally discarded, if the study is to remain one of "Classics" or "the Ancient World" rather than that of "modern reception of Classical texts". My own approach cannot but be that of a woman in the late twentieth-century, but my aim is still to investigate antiquity rather than solely twentieth-century readings of antiquity[4]. This study of Penelope aims to create a picture of how this

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[1] By "readers" I mean both actual readers and other forms of audience; similarly "reading" covers all acts of interpretation.
[2] Graff 1987 p.252, Harris 1996 pp.132-36.
[3] Cf. Harris 1996 ch.4 on the problems of trying to discuss literature in scientific terms; and much science acknowledges the unavoidable presence of the observer.
[4] Cf. Jauss 1982 ch.1.

mythological figure was seen at various points during antiquity; it may thus provide a background far a broader consideration of perceptions and conceptions of mythology throughout the period.

Penelope is still viewed even today as the "type" of the good wife. Rather than being uncritically accepted, this conception will be further examined in the light of the ancient texts to assess the degree to which it can be satisfactorily established as reflecting an aspect of ancient views. Such a figure would seem a good subject for the methods of earlier feminist literary criticism[5] - methods which uncover false assumptions and stereotypes embedded in male representations of women, and highlight the ways in which women historically have fitted themselves to those stereotypes and aimed to read and write as men[6]. As I hope to show, the assumptions which early feminist criticism addressed are both powerfully illustrated and revealed by a study of Penelope, a figure who reaches us from antiquity shaped by male authors and sensibilities.

Yet although, as we shall see, this approach may best encompass the many passing references to Penelope as paradigm (a concept whose place in ancient societies will be considered below - ch.4), where Penelope is given more than a passing reference and becomes a more fully presented figure, then more recent feminist strategies of reading - reading between the lines, in the gaps - may prove more useful tools. Although these Penelopes may still be male creations, critics such as Cixous, Jardine, and Cavarero[7] have shown us how something of the female may still slip through, how we can see more in the text than simply the male view of the female figure.

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[5] Feminist criticism may use any other form of criticism, but is always aware of the construction of gender. For an overview of possible feminist approaches, cf. Moi 1985, Humm 1994 and 1995; Doherty 1996 shows how varied these can be by considering different feminist approaches to the *Odyssey*.

[6] Cixous 1976 p.878, Fetterley 1978 pp.i-xxiv, especially sect. II, Cixous 1981 p.52, Culler 1983 pp.43-64.

[7] Cixous 1976 pp.886-8, Jardine 1985, Cavarero 1995 pp.1-4; cf. also Gold 1993, which cites further Classical-related bibliography.

Part of what can be reclaimed from even male-centred texts is the constructions which the author and audience placed on the world around them; analysis of the text can therefore show how "woman" was constructed, and some of the complications and contradictions in that construction[8]. These may reveal places in which marginalised voices can come through the text, and uneasiness about the constructions in society may be discerned. The uneasiness which may be found in a text may well reflect uneasiness with the conflict between the ideal and reality[9].

Modern criticism has also dissuaded the critical reader from seeking a definitive meaning in a text; we are reminded that each member of the audience/readership will react differently, as will different audiences in varying times and places. The case of Penelope will bring this home, as we see different interpretations of the Homeric Penelope at various points in antiquity[10]. This fluidity of interpretation can be linked to the fluid and elusive nature of woman as seen by Cixous and Irigary[11], which contrasts with attempts to pigeon-hole mythological figures as paradigms[12]: this is particularly true of Penelope, who appears as a paradigm of only one virtue, unlike Odysseus, who may be seen not only as an exemplary Stoic hero of endurance, but also the prototype of the sophist who wins by words and trickery. Paradoxically, for this couple at least, it is the man whose nature is less definable, the woman closely defined by her role in the male-centred story-line. This perhaps shows the reflection in literature of the patriarchal attempt to define and so confine the female; whether these were the terms in which ancient women saw themselves must remain unknown. One can, of course, give more "open" readings of Penelope in the *Odyssey*, and more "closed" ones of

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[8] Cf. Barthes 1957 p.11 on myth as hiding, "in the decorative display of *what-goes-without-saying*, ... ideological abuse".

[9] Cf. Barthes 1957 (p.156), "mythology harmonizes the world, not as it is, but as it wants to create itself", Culham 1986 p.15, Gutzwiller and Michelini 1991 p.71 on Antigone as "the working-out of a cultural puzzle".

[10] Cf. Jauss 1982 pp.32-9.

[11] Cixous 1986 pp.63-6 on the contruction of binary oppositions, (for example) pp.74, 83-100 (especially 87), 137, on "woman" as complex, Irigary 1980, Cixous 1976 pp.875-8, 883, 889, Kristeva 1974.

[12] Cf. Zeitlin 1996 p.11, who links the rhetorical use of paradigms particularly to the fixing of gender identity and expectations.

Odysseus[13]; however, a simplified reading will tend to be a closed reading, a fact which seems relevant for the study of mythological figures that function as paradigms.

The job of a scholar of antiquity is to explore what may be found in a text, not to prescribe its meaning. Yet this does not mean that it is pointless to attempt to construct an image of at least some of the meanings which an ancient audience at a particular point in time might have seen in a text - it means merely that the results of such a search will be somewhat tentative and recognised as neither definitive nor the whole picture. As our reconstructions of such meanings must rely on ancient evidence, they must be partial, particularly as far as women's readings of the texts are concerned; we have no real evidence for how women in antiquity saw Penelope - as a heroine to be emulated, or as a negative example (showing how not to act), or as both. Showalter's complaint may be fair, that "feminist critique", although a form of feminist criticism, is male-oriented[14], but it must remind us that this is almost all we have for antiquity; "gynocritics" - studies focusing on female authorship - are not a practical method for approaching the majority of ancient texts. Our constructions of ancient views and uses of Penelope will not reveal what any ancient citizen, male or female, actually thought, but they can produce a picture of how they could have used the mythological figure of Penelope to construct their conceptions of themselves - both what they were, or should be, and what they were not, or ought not to be. Examination of Penelope as the stereotype of the good wife will not tell us how many women lived up to this ideal[15], nor even whether they were really expected or desired to, but rather give us an image of what that ideal consisted in, the ideal which was put forward by the society as an approved standard for emulation[16].

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[13] A "closed" reading is one which stresses the aspects in which a text tries to define its own meaning and shut off other possible interpretations; an "open" reading is one which stresses the ways in which the text resists having a definite meaning attached to it. For further discussion see Doherty 1996 pp.9-11, Hawthorn 1994 pp.203-4, Eco 1979 pp.3-65.

[14] Showalter 1979 p.27.

[15] On the dangers of confusing image and reality, see Culham 1986, whose main interest is in the "reality".

[16] While, as Zajko 1995 points out, such stories can be told transgressively, such transgressive versions are told against an accepted social stereotype.

Study of literature both illuminates and is illuminated by consciousness of such stereotypes: an examination of what the text suggests could be taken for granted in terms of, for example, knowledge of myths or societal conventions, may reveal the writer's expectations of the audience's assumptions (as well as, possibly, something of the writer's own assumptions). Such assumptions would include notions which were common currency throughout society and ideals with which all would be familiar (even if not all of the audience identified with them). Thus examination of the assumptions which a text can make should lead to greater understanding of the stereotypes and assumptions which were held as common in the society. The existence of stereotypes need not affect how individuals in a society are seen by other individuals[17], but does reflect some larger preoccupations of the society: to say "[myth] offers a model of behaviour"[18] is almost certainly as true of ancient societies as of modern. Studies of modern stereotypes and mythical models of behaviour show how the models of behaviour proposed by the "myths" can be internalised and shape the descriptions people will give of their lives - whether they are telling a story of the past to explain the present, or describing the past in a way which shows how their actions were fitting for their position in society[19].

Such a method of extracting information from texts is influenced by some of the same conceptions of language use as have shaped the critical method known as narratology[20]. Narratology analyses narratives with a formal, structural focus, separating the action of a tale

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[17] Cf. Oakes, Haslam and Turner 1994 p.193 "stereotypes represent *group*-level realities ... not the personal characteristics of individual members [of the stereotyped group]", and Moore 1988 pp.30-38, stressing the difference between the reality and the ideas held collectively by a society.

[18] Cabezali, Cuevas and Chicote 1990 p.162.

[19] For the first, cf. Samuel and Thompson 1990 pp.5-15, especially p.8, discussing the reshaping that goes on in oral history, and Burke 1992 pp.101-3; for the second, Cabezali, Cuevas and Chicote 1990 pp.168-72, who discuss the way in which women from Madrid describe their actions during the Civil War, highlighting tasks such as washing and cooking, downplaying or omitting the fighting they were involved in, the struggles to get the food for cooking.

[20] Bibliography is provided by de Jong and Sullivan 1994 pp.282-3; the main names are Bal (especially Bal 1977) and Genette, but Prince 1987 and Chatman 1978 are useful, and Chambers 1984 has a clear summary in the introduction and start of ch. 2.

from the way in which it is described. Narratology considers who is speaking, or, when the voice of the narrator is describing events, from whose point of view these are seen (embedded focalisation)[21]. For example, the use of ἀκηδέστως in *Il.* 22.465, in the description of Achilles' treatment of Hector's body, shows that this passage is being focalised through Andromache, whose horror is thus expressed[22]. To identify the "focaliser" of a passage is thus not the same as stating the speaker; although they may be the same, they may also be different, and in that difference may lie an important clue to interpreting the choice of a particular word. As linguistic studies have shown, choice of vocabulary, pronunciation, and style of speech reflect very fleeting changes of addressee, mood of the speaker, and desired effect as well as longer-term influences such as surroundings (for example, the use of different language in school or work from that used during leisure time with friends or family) and desired impression[23]. That this may also be presumed for larger scale narratives may be shown by the narratological analysis of oral and literary texts: both can reflect the same desire to use story-telling for varying purposes: for example, to advise or to become part of a group[24]. The assumption that authors will generally write in a style which their desired audience will be able to understand (unless the aim is to be incomprehensible) is thus not controversial, nor is the assumption that if, for example, a myth is referred to briefly, then we may assume that the salient details would be generally known[25].

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[21] Cf. Genette 1972, Chatman 1978 pp.151-8, Bal 1981, Hawthorn 1994 pp.190, 213-5, de Jong 1997.
[22] Cf. de Jong 1994 pp.29-30.
[23] Coates 1987, especially pp.183-4, 197-8; for more detail see Milroy and Milroy 1978, 1985.
[24] Cf. Polanyi 1981, an analysis of a conversation which includes the telling of a story. This is also reflected in the use of stereotypes, which seem to serve a social function of group definition (cf. Oakes, Haslam and Turner 1994 pp.185-210, Hawthorn 1994 pp.277-8, Ellmann 1968 ch.3). The way in which oral histories will be retold in different ways according to the audience and the desired effect is also relevant; cf. Samuel and Thompson 1990 p.8-9 on the shaping of life stories on standard patterns, pp.10-11 on the use of narrative devices, pp.11-12 on the shaping of characters according to "cultural stereotypes". Cf. also Benjamin 1968 on storytelling.
[25] Cf. Polanyi 1981 p.112 on the cultural knowledge assumed in telling a story. Stinton 1986 presumes that neccesary knowledge will be supplied: to say that such details would be generally known is not to say that all members of the audience would know them, rather that sufficient information would be available to the majority of the audience to make the allusion comprehensible.

One source for knowledge of such details will be earlier treatments, whether literary or oral; thus such references may be seen as in some way intertextual (in a broad sense, appealing to a system of knowledge shared by some of the audience). The term "intertextuality" has been used and understood in many senses since it was coined by Kristeva in 1966[26]. Kristeva's radical sense set up a system in which every text could be seen as being in an intertextual relation with every other, and this has been broadened by taking "text" to mean not only literary text, but any sign system. Such a definition of intertextuality implies an important difference between intertextuality and allusion, for it includes the appropriation of a system of language from one context into another: for example, the use of epic language in other genres, or the use of epigraphical formulae in literature. However, when classical scholars discuss the relationship between two literary texts, "intertextuality" is often taken to mean little more than "allusion"; the only real difference is that allusion is usually felt to require intention[27]. This difference springs from the idea of "allusion" as something done by the author, whereas an intertextual relationship is set up by the reader of a text. This is why it is as comprehensible and logical in intertextual terms to talk of Eliot's influence on Shakespeare (or rather on a modern critic's reading of Shakespeare, often expressed as "Shakespeare") as Shakespeare's on Eliot (or "Eliot", Eliot as read by a modern critic): the modern critic who has read both cannot read one in ignorance of the other, and hence each may contribute to shaping that critic's reading of the other[28].

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[26] Kristeva 1967; in English, cf. Moi 1986 p.37. For other uses of the term, cf. Worton and Still 1990; for further bibliography (in classical contexts), van Erp Taalman Kip 1994 pp.153-7, Edmunds 1995 (Edmunds also has a book on the subject in preparation), Wills 1996 ch.1 (particularly n.2), Hinds forthcoming (a) and (b), a forthcoming volume of *MD* devoted to intertextuality, and the bibliography provided in de Jong and Sullivan 1994 p.284.

[27] Cf. Edmunds 1995, Fowler forthcoming; Thomas 1986 brings the author in and Lyne 1987 talks of "designed intertextuality", which almost completely blurs the distinction between allusion and intertextuality. Stinton 1986 makes the question of audience recognition more important than some, but still thinks in terms of authorial intention. The fact that "allusion" and "intertextuality" are used almost interchangeably by some critics leads to further confusion, but Kristevan intertextuality is much broader in scope.

[28] Cf. Martindale 1993 ch.1, especially pp.7-9 (other chs. show the theory at work); also p. 35 "one useful approach to certain great 'imitative' works is to see them as rereadings of the works imitated".

Another difference between allusion and intertextuality (in its original sense) is the question of the nature of the "text" which may be referred to. In studies of Latin poetry, allusion and intertextuality can overlap more easily, as the question of the existence of written texts and their nature is not disputed. For Greek poetry, however, especially early poetry such as the Homeric poems, reference is less likely to be to a fixed written text, and so allusion as understood for Latin poetry is often thought impossible. Given the problems of dating and composition, showing that the model is "one with whom the poet is demonstrably familiar"[29] becomes impossible; thus such an author-centred version is not suitable. The wider sense of "text" that was originally envisaged by Kristeva, and the looser form of a two-way relationship between texts is more applicable: if two texts exist in fluid form at the same time, they may both influence the other, and other "texts" such as grave inscriptions or the formulae of certain rituals may also have an intertextual relationship with them.

Intertextuality is never provable, being constructed by each reader individually, but there are intertextual relationships which may seem more "plausible" to a scholarly audience[30]. These will be marked[31] in some intelligible way, capable of contributing to or enriching an interpretation: if the reference seems to add nothing to the text, then readers are less likely to notice it or allow it to influence their reading. If the reading one is attempting to construct is that of an ancient reader/audience, then one may wish to construct filters of the literature and culture of that period[32], and hence questions of allusion and intertextuality will focus on contemporary and earlier texts. This is particularly the case if one is using the reading of literature (as classicists often do) as a means of learning about the collective

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[29] Thomas 1986; Conte 1986 similarly looks mainly to the author, but Conte 1994 moves further away from this. On early Greek literature and intertextuality, cf. Edmunds 1995 pp.4-12.

[30] Wills 1996 p.17 refers to the "discriminatory act of allusion", seeing allusive language as language which is in some way marked (cf. Wills 1996 pp.15-24, with discussion of different forms of allusive marking)

[31] "Marked" is a term borrowed from linguistics, defined by Jakobson 1957; "unmarked" is the general category, and a word which is "marked" is distinguished as being not a member of the unmarked group. Cf. Nagy 1990 pp.5-8 (also pp.30-1).

[32] Cf. Sourvinou-Inwood 1989 and 1991 ch.1 especially pp.9-14 on "perceptual filters".

perceptions and understandings constructed by an ancient society. Thus a discussion of an intertextual relation will often, in scholarly discourse, become a discussion of provable/plausible influence: intertextuality has been reduced to allusion again. However, the notion of intertextuality is not necessarily completely lost in such scholarly discussions. While allusion is most frequently seen as a matter of reference to particular lines in a work, working on intertextuality rather than allusion may also point up borrowing of language between genres, and hence reference to a work as a whole rather than just to one small section. Such reference may be linguistic, formal, or situational; the more of these that are present, the more marked the reference. In my work, I have chosen to focus on examples where the intertextuality with the *Odyssey* is most marked in order to investigate the images that the intertextual references can evoke; this study is therefore not exhaustive, particularly in considering fifth-century tragedy. The stress, however, is on the audience rather than the author: it is the audience's reading (which will vary over time, place, etc.) of the text which reflects on their cultural ideals, and that is part of what is explored in this study.

It is perhaps more radical to assume, as is done in ch.7, that an audience's knowledge of Homer would be sufficient to recognise the intertextual references in the plays discussed. It is, however, important to note that the ability to recognise a resonance of some form to the Homeric text need not entail the ability to identify the reference as to a particular part of the text[33]: language may be marked as Homeric/epic rather than marked as referring to a particular passage. If a good story can be made from the link, then the intertextual relationship will be more interesting to explore.

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[33] Consider the different ways in which tragedy and comedy can allude to earlier tragic texts and the genre more generally; cf. Halleran forthcoming (especially n.3) and Fowler forthcoming (particularly n.25). Comedy plays off the conventions of tragedy, sometimes referring to particular plays, or even particular scenes in particular plays (for example, Aristophanes' use of the *Telephus* and the *Helen* in *Thesmophoriazusae*), but sometimes uses less specific references to generic features of tragedy (for example, the use of tragic language at Arist. *Wasps* 750-9, *Clouds* 711-22, 1259-61, *Lys.* 954-7); it can also use precise lexical echoes (e.g. E. *Helen* 293 parodied at Arist. *Thesmo.* 868). Stinton 1986 uses the criterion of intelligibility to define allusion; the complexity of the relationship between tragedy and comedy suggests that we should not underestimate the capabilities of an ancient audience.

As intertextuality is a feature of the text rather than necessarily of the author's intention, it need not be a late literary sophistication of written texts, but can be present in the earliest texts, which may have intertextual relationships with religious formulae, etc., even though a particular text referred to cannot be produced. The concept of allusion tends to assume deliberate use of an earlier (written) text by the author of a later one, but this is unnecessary. This may be shown from our earliest texts. The Homeric poems, of course, are full of repeated words and phrases: this is the nature of oral poetry. Thus it might seem that we can allow no special emphasis to the context of an earlier appearance of a phrase when it recurs. This would seem to hold true for some repetitions in the *Iliad*, but there are some echoes within the poem which may have significance (and neoanalysis suggests extensive intertextuality with other contemporary poems[34]). For example, the echoes of book one in book twenty-four reflect the mirroring of themes in the two books; but there are also lines, such as that for the coming of Dawn (1.477=24.788), which are used nowhere else in this epic, and cannot be seen merely as reflections of similar themes[35]. The *Odyssey* is clearly intertextual with the *Iliad*[36]; some repetitions may be due to the formulaic nature of the poetry, but others may be more marked. For example, the echo (*Od.* 8.435-6) of the lines from the *Iliad* where Achilles gives orders for the washing of Patroclus' dead body (*Il.* 18.347-8) does not seem very marked, as the lines appear to be formulaic. At *Od.*8.73ff., however, one can see a more significant reference to the start of the *Iliad*, particularly in the phrase κλέα ἀνδρῶν[37]. The context is Demodocus' song about a quarrel between Odysseus and Achilles, a quarrel which Agamemnon mistakes as the quarrel between "the best of the Achaeans" which will signal the imminent downfall of Troy - the quarrel which is described in the *Iliad*.

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[34] Cf. Edwards 1991 pp.15-19.
[35] Cf. Macleod 1982 pp.16-35 (especially 32-5) on structure, and 43-5 on the significance of repetition in Homer.
[36] *contra* Page 1955 pp.158-9, but now almost universally accepted; cf. Rutherford 1993 p.39 n.5, Pucci 1987.
[37] Taplin 1990.

An echo of the opening lines would seem more clearly marked than an echo of lines in a less prominent position, and this allusion is intelligible, clearly adding to the passage: thus the intertextual relationship seems worth pursuing.

Intertextual relations are also to be found in other early Greek poetry (even if the question of who is alluding to whom is insoluble). For example, the famous comparison of the generations of humans and of leaves from the *Iliad* is echoed in Mimnermus and later quoted by Simonides:

> οἵη περ φύλλων γενεὴ, τοίη δὲ καὶ ἀνδρῶν·
> φύλλα τὰ μέν τ' ἄνεμος χαμάδις χέει, ἄλλα δέ θ' ὕλη
> τηλεθόωσα φύει, ἔαρος δ' ἐπιγίγνεται ὥρη·
> ὣς ἀνδρῶν γενεὴ ἡ μὲν φύει ἡ δ' ἀπολήγει.
>
> *Iliad* 6.146-9

> ἡμεῖς δ', οἷά τε φύλλα φύει πολυάνθεμος ὥρη
> ἔαρος, ὅτ' αἶψ' αὐγῆις αὔξεται ἠελίου,
> τοῖς ἴκελοι πήχυιον ἐπὶ χρόνον ἄνθεσιν ἥβης
> τερπόμεθα, πρὸς θεῶν εἰδότες οὔτε κακὸν
> οὔτ' ἀγαθόν.
>
> Mimnermus 2.1-5

> ἓν δὲ κάλλιστον Χῖος ἔειπεν ἀνήρ·
> "οἵη περ φύλλων γενεὴ, τοίη δὲ καὶ ἀνδρῶν".
>
> Simonides 19.1-2 (West²)

One might argue[38] that the Mimnermus passage is merely drawing on a common theme with the Homeric passage, and thus explain away shared words in terms of a shared poetic language and shared ideas. The passage from Simonides, however, explicitly makes reference to Homer, if indirectly, by referring to him as the "Chian man". Definite pre-fifth-century references to the Homeric texts are difficult to find, owing to the fragmentary state of the texts, and the problem of establishing whether a shared expression is a deliberate allusion, or simply part of the shared oral heritage. However, there are suggestive examples. For example, in Stesichorus' *Geryoneis* there are several parallels with Homeric phraseology;

[38] West 1995 p.206; against this, Sider 1996 pp.272-282.

indeed Page says that the "prominence of Homeric phrases" is "a principal characteristic of the style of Stesichorus"[39]. Page collects Homeric parallels for several of the fragments of the *Geryoneis*, including, at *POxy* 2617 frr.4 and 5 col.ii.14ff. (=*SLG* 15 col.ii.14ff.), reference to the simile of the flower used at *Iliad* 8.306ff. for the death of Gorgythion. If we are right to believe that the similes represent a late stage in the evolution of the Homeric language, then it is more plausible to see this as a definite reference rather than an indication of a shared oral heritage. Thus it seems possible that from the earliest period of written Greek poetry, reference could be made to Homeric poetry. The earliest passages which seem "beyond reasonable doubt" to refer to Homer are to be found in the sixth century, in Alcman (fr.77, cf. *Il* 3.39) and Alcaeus (fr.44.8 contains a reference to Achilles' wrath, and his mother as a suppliant, which implies a version of the *Iliad* very close to that we have).

In a strict Kristevan sense, intertextuality will always be a relation which holds between all texts, to and from all texts. However, as a tool for studying literature, it is often focused so that what is under consideration is the relationship of one text to many others, or between two particular texts[40]. The existence of such one-to-one relationships between texts does not mean that those texts do not have intertextual relations with any other texts, but rather that for the purpose of a particular reading, only those two texts will be considered. When considering a "many to one" relation, one may be considering the influence of many earlier texts on one later text (the chronological distinction is common in classical scholarship) - for example, the influence of Homer, Apollonius, and Ennius on the *Aeneid* (to name but a few) - or the reactions to one earlier text in many later texts - for example, the use made of the *Aeneid* by Silver Latin epic[41]. As the later texts will have intertextual relations with many more texts, it is unlikely that the full range of meaning of every earlier text can be

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[39] Page 1973 p.152.
[40] Cf. the opening pages (especially n.2) of Hershkowitz forthcoming.
[41] Cf. Kennedy 1994 p.90 on the consensus that "post-Virgilian epic is to be read as a response to the cultural authority of the *Aeneid*".

reflected in the later text; the earlier texts may also come to have symbolic meaning and hence be evoked for programmatic purposes, thus raising a further possibility for distortion of reading. For example, the representation of Callimachus in the Roman elegists (and other Latin literature) does not reflect accurately the impression of Callimachus which we may gain by reading what remains of his works. The elegists look to Callimachus as a forerunner of their genre (Prop. 3.1.1-2, 3.3 with Apollo's rebuke), and as a poet who, like them, refused to write about kings and wars (e.g. Verg. *Ecl.* 6.1-6, Ovid *Am.* 1.1.1-2)[42]. Thus they present Callimachus in a way which suits their own poetic interests, emphasising the aspects which benefit these, and reducing the complexity we find in reading the works of Callimachus themselves. In a similar fashion, Horace simplifies the complexity of Ennius' poetry, and his relation to Callimachus, in order to emphasise his own skill (for example, *Ars Poetica* 259-60, *Ep.* 1.19.1-11, 2.1.50). The use made of earlier texts by later texts may thus reveal simpler readings[43] which are none the less recognisable, suggesting that such readings are both possible and common.

Thus too, I shall suggest, on the basis of the following chapters, writers and audiences in the fifth century and beyond looked to the *Odyssey* in their writings and readings and saw it (in that context) not always as the complex text which may be found in modern readings, but as a simpler tale of the returning husband. Whether this simplification is due to the nature of intertextuality, or of the story itself, or results from the existence of the tale in other, simpler, oral versions, and the use of Penelope as a paradigm, it is impossible to state categorically: all these factors seem plausible and interlinked. The complex intertextual nature of later texts may predispose their readers to interpret their references to earlier texts in a more simple fashion than they would when reading the actual earlier text, although some "readers" (the

[42] Cameron 1995 ch.18.
[43] Later texts may also, of course, introduce new complexities; cf. Hinds forthcoming.

audience, whether they read or heard a piece of literature) may well have seen greater complexity in their readings through knowledge of the greater complexity of the texts with which the one they were "reading" had an intertextual relationship. In the higher literary forms we may expect to find a more complicated use of intertextual references; this seems less likely in lower forms such as verse inscriptions and epitaphs, and hence it is in these forms that we are more likely to find the "popular background" against which complex higher literature was written and read.

Chapter 2: The Nature and Use of Greek Mythology

μῦθός ἐστι λόγος ψευδὴς εἰκονίζων ἀλήθειαν
Myth is a deceitful discourse which expresses the truth in images
Theon of Alexandria *Progymnasmata*
(Spengel *Rhetores graeci* II p.59 ll.21-2)

A myth is essentially a particular sort of narrative, a story which is always retold (or at least presented as such)[1]. One may attempt to distinguish myth from history, from fairy-tale or legend, or from literature; for almost every definition, however, a counter-example may be found, and the more precise the definition, the more myths which do not fit it are to be found[2]. A workable (and fairly general) definition seems to be "traditional tales relevant to society" (Bremmer[3]). Bremmer is defining myth in contrast with other traditional tales, but does admit that myths are not always traditional tales (citing, for example, the oriental tales in Hesiod's *Theogony*, and the historical component in tales of colonisation and the origins of democracy[4]). He distinguishes myths from "other genres of popular tales" by looking at the Greek use of the term μῦθος. The use of μῦθος to mean a tale told to an audience, a form of marked speech, reveals one of the important things to note about Greek myths: until a late date, we do not have canonical versions, but only particular literary or artistic depictions - although we may talk about "the myth", we have no evidence for a fixed form of a particular myth outside these literary and

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[1] Cf. Detienne 1986, Edmunds 1997 pp.415-8; Barthes 1957 pp.109-11 for a similar application to modern myths.

[2] Much has been written on the question of Greek mythology; the standard works (which attempt definitions of one sort or another) are Kirk 1970, Kirk 1974, Graf 1987 pp.9-56, Burkert 1979 (ch.1, pp.1-34), and Saïd 1993; cf. also Veyne 1988 for a different approach. Useful comments are also found in Bremmer 1987 (a collection of essays on mythological topics), especially his introductory essay "What is a Greek Myth?" pp.1-9 (references to Bremmer 1987 in this introductory section are to this essay), Edmunds 1990 (a collection of essays illustrating through concrete examples the different methodological approaches to Greek mythology), especially his "Introduction: The Practice of Greek Mythology" pp.1-20, and Buxton 1994 pp.12-17, 182-218.

[3] Bremmer 1987 p.7.

[4] Bremmer 1987 p.3.

artistic versions (although there were elements which were constant between versions which may be seen as constituting a "core"). Thus, although one may try to reconstruct the "original" version of a myth, it is hard to show that such a version was known at any point up to the collection of myths into handbooks: the idea of variants on a fixed tale is inaccurate, and we are better to think of different versions of the same tale later distilled to produce a synthesised version - or of conflicting elements separated out to refer to different figures.

Certain versions, certain retellings of a myth, could achieve special status. The Homeric poems in particular achieved this status early; Aeschylus' retelling of the *Oresteia* appears to have been very influential too[5]. However, even the special status accorded to the Homeric poems did not prevent later poets either using different versions of these myths or changing them[6]. For example, the Homeric versions of the stories of Niobe and Meleager did not become the standard versions, although the major story-lines of the Homeric poems do seem to have had greater influence[7].

Although we may see "Greek mythology" as a fixed category, and a constant in ancient Greek culture, this probably does not reflect the experience of mythology of an

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[5] It is notable that Aeschylus' version, not Homer's, is the dominant one in later tradition. Thus the importance of the Furies and the notoriety of Orestes as a matricide seem to depend on later tradition, and emphasise details which in Homer are passed over.

[6] Cf. Buxton 1994 p.16: "Greek mythical tradition was dynamic: given the right circumstances an innovation would achieve currency, only to lose it later if other versions were found more persuasive".

[7] Thus, although the tragedians focus on different details in the story of Orestes and Agamemnon (nor do all other poets follow Homer in placing Achilles and Heracles in the Underworld), at least two elements - Achilles' killing of Hector followed by Priam's ransoming of the body, and Odysseus' successful homecoming from Phaeacia straight to Ithaca (not via Thesprotis) - are seldom (if ever) queried or contradicted (although the visit of Odysseus to Thesprotis is found displaced to a second period of wandering after his successful return from the Trojan War). One may note also the contradictory strands about the fate of Heracles which are found in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* - or indeed in the *Odyssey* text alone as we have it (*Od.* 11.601-27 puts the eidolon of Heracles in Hades, but his real self (if this is meant by *autos*) on Olympus; even given the strong probability that 601-4 is interpolated, the picture here is definitely different to the bleak picture in the *Iliad*).

ancient Greek. Although there is continuity in the use of mythology from Homer to Hellenistic literature, and on into Roman literature, it seems very unlikely that the stories would have been regarded in the same way by a third-century poet, retelling them in novel and diverting ways for a literary audience, as by a poet in the oral tradition of Homer, who may have been singing the tale of a hero whose grave or cult centre was in the very town in which he was performing. One may compare Homer's genealogy of Aeneas, which, it has been argued, owes its place in the *Iliad* to the desire of the poet to please contemporary rulers of the Troad[8], and Callimachus' genealogy of Acontius and Cydippe (fr.75), which, despite providing the most obvious *aition* for the story as a whole, is distinctly understressed: it seems to be used as a digression to enhance the rather dry, dusty, historical feeling engendered by the reference to Xenomedes, and more emphasis is placed on the fact that Xenomedes is the written source for Callimachus' information, and hence on the poet's knowledge of written sources.

Myths, we may presume, did exist for the Greeks outside the literary and artistic versions which have survived for us today. Although we do not know precisely which tales were told by whom in Greek society, we do have evidence for a lively oral tradition that included the tales we now class as "Greek myths": there were rhapsodes who sang at public festivals, choruses of children and men who could take part in competitions, citharodes, who tended to perform for individuals and more private occasions than the

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[8] *Il.*20.200-58 gives the genealogy, 20.306-8 is Poseidon's prophecy that Aeneas will survive the Trojan War and that he and his descendants will rule over the Trojans. Cf. Janko 1992 p.19 on the influence of "local patriotism" and p.382ff. on Glaucus as the ancestor of Ionian families. Smith 1981 denies any influence of contemporary Aeneidai on the *Iliad* (and summarises earlier work on this topic pp.17-8). However, it seems somewhat inconsistent that he is willing to write off Hellanicus' mention of the Aeneidai as drawing on a contemporary post-Homeric local tradition (possibly influenced by the *Iliad*), while denying that a local tradition could be a possibility for Homer. The speed with which an oral tradition can change history undercuts his historically based arguments (cf. below).

big public festivals, and also normal citizens and their households, telling stories to children and adults[9]. We may plausibly posit an oral culture of storytelling which included myths as well as bogey creatures, such as the Empusa, and probably historical tales as well. This oral side to the transmission of stories makes the existence of variants unsurprising. Oral literature, including folk tales and folklore, notoriously exists in variant forms[10], even in societies where it is transmitted by verbatim memorisation (for example, in Somalia[11]); if we are talking in terms of the circulation of a story, or story-line, rather than a particular poem by an individual poet, then the scope for variation in the way the tale is retold will obviously be greater. There will, however, usually be key features of myths which have to be kept in - just as there are in folk tales, but for these there is often a greater degree of flexibility at the start. Because the main protagonists are not always identified by name, one may listen for some time before one can tell that the story will be that of Snow White, for example, rather than Cinderella[12]. Thus the different versions of a myth may well be shaped by considerations other than "local variants"; the role of the audience and purpose of telling the story should not be underestimated[13]. The frequent retelling of such stories may lead to expectations about how they will continue: too great a change will be noticed and commented on, possibly causing complaint[14].

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[9] Buxton 1994 pp.18-44 deals with all these examples of storytelling, as well as other more public performances. Although some of our evidence is late, there is enough from the fifth century and before to make it clear that all the opportunities for storytelling I have given would have been available to Greeks in the fifth century and before. Cf. Eur. *Mel. Soph.* fr.488, Plutarch *Theseus* 23.3, Philostratus *Imagines* 1.15, Plato *Rep.* 378c, *Laws* 887d.

[10] Finnegan 1977 pp.41-44, 140-1.

[11] Finnegan 1977 pp.73-5.

[12] Both of these stories start with a widowed father marrying a woman who dislikes and is jealous of his beautiful daughter by his first wife. The Russian folk tale of Baba-Yaga has a similar start, and, like Cinderella, features jealous sisters, the stepmother's daughters by her first marriage.

[13] For modern instances of this, cf. Warner 1994, 1995 (particularly pp.xviii-xix).

[14] Cf. Buxton 1994 p.45, on the Tuscan tradition of *veglia*, storytelling in winter.

Greek mythology has defied definition by the criteria often applied to other mythologies, because the fantastic and divine elements are not distinguishing features. However, one may separate Greek myths from folk tales by reference to a principle of specificity. Fairy tales or folk tales are general in time and persons: they happen "once upon a time", "in a land far away", to characters who tend to have names which are generic ("the king", "his daughter", "the princess"), interchangeable (or typical - "Jack", "little Claus"), or descriptive ("Little Red Riding-hood", "Epimetheus" - or indeed "Luke Skywalker", whose name reflects his role in a very traditional plot)[15]. Myths dealing with heroes are about particular heroes, however, even when the pattern of the myth is one which is widespread (for example, the quest of a young hero, or the attempted seduction of a young hero by the wife of his father or a father-figure): each hero has a name, and a genealogy, which usually links him to an existent family, and makes possible a chronological or geographical placing of the story (even if it is spurious). Thus one may find motifs from folk tales in myths, such as the "Potiphar's wife" and "marriage to a fairy-wife" motifs[16], but they are tied to particular heroes: for these motifs, Hippolytus and Phaedra, or Bellerophon and Stheneboia/Anteia, and Peleus and Thetis provide examples from the definitely mythological sphere. (The tale of Anchises and Aphrodite is rather different, and does not end with the return of the wife to her own people after the husband makes a mistake of some sort.) Kirk states emphatically:

> No other mythology known to us .... is marked by quite the same complexity and systematic quality as the Greek, by the same predominance of non-legendary heroes, and by a similar preponderance of folktale themes.[17]

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[15] Cf. Kirk 1970 p.39.
[16] Cf. Kirk 1970 pp.37-9.
[17] Kirk 1970 p.205-6.

Because the heroes are connected with history through complicated genealogies - with (purported) descendants in real life[18] - they are not interchangeable. The stories about them reflect aspects of history and of "the way things are" (or were) - aspects of the relationships between cities and families - as well as explaining some rituals and festivals. The stories of the heroes are also linked to the contemporary world in ancient Greece through hero cults. Not all hero cults involved worship of well-known, national mythological heroes, but some of them did[19]. The cycles of heroic myth were also linked together, creating a largely self-contained historical narrative. Folk tales, on the other hand - such as tales of the Empusa and Mormo - were not tied into such a historical framework, and had no role in framing anyone's sense of individual or social identity. One might speculate that they were regarded in a different way to myth - even in the fifth century, when the sophists began to query the veracity of myth, there was a general assumption that myth reflected history in a direct fashion; it seems likely, however, that the Empusa, Mormo, and their ilk were seen as stories to frighten children, and hence were not "believed in" by adults[20].

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[18] See Thomas 1989 pp.95-195 (especially 155-195), West 1985 pp.3-30 (particularly 7-10); 11-30 give comparative evidence on genealogical traditions in other cultures; Parker 1996 pp.137-9 perceives a shift in democratic Athens away from genealogical traditions which glorified individual families towards stories about the origins and early deeds of the Athenian people as a whole; Wiseman 1974 considers invented legendary genealogies in Rome.

[19] Cf. Farnell 1921 pp.280-342 on cults of epic heroes, pp.71-77 on heroes who are known by name at most, with no myth attached; Kearns 1989 App. 1 pp.139-207: this list includes some names known from mythology, such as Ajax and Aegeus, who definitely received cult worship, figures who are known from myth only, such as Admetus, Alcestis and Hippasus, Eurystheus, Procne, Oedipus, for whom cult may be inferred, and figures known only from their appearance as the objects of cult, such as the anonymous heroine of Aixone, the heroes of the Academia, Calamites and Callistephanus who were worshipped in the agora, and Sosineus, worshipped in Thoricus.

[20] Cf. Plato *Phaedo* 77e on Mormo, and Ar. *Frogs* 286-311 on the Empusa, where the amusement comes partly from the fact that an adult god is afraid of this childhood monster.

If we take this aspect of linking the present to the past, some form of relevance to the present, as being a key factor in distinguishing Greek heroic myth[21], it may become clearer why some characters have more flexibility in their names than others. It is notable that various characters in the tapestry of Greek heroic storytelling may appear under several names. On the whole, the major heroes such as Heracles, Theseus, Achilles, and even Bellerophon appear under only one name[22], while those characters who may appear under more than one name are more often female - for example, Anteia/Stheneboia, Cassandra/Alexandra, and the mothers of heroes such as Thessalus, a son of Heracles by Chalciope or Astyoche, and Lycaon, son of Pelasgus by Meliboia or Cyllene. This may be seen as reflecting the patriarchal system in Greece: the genealogies of heroes were important as they reflected glory onto those alive at the time who claimed to be their descendants, but it is the father's identity, not the mother's, which is important, and so this is preserved in a more rigid form. Only for those heroes who were children of the gods is the mother's identity more important (except in the rare cases where the father is the mortal parent), as it is the mortal parent who provides the link into human society, and gives the hero his place in the interrelated genealogies. Although the

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[21] Cf. the definition of myth at Buxton 1994 p.15 "of collective significance to a particular social group or groups", also p.16, distinguishing the Platonic myth of Er from the mythology of the Trojan war: "the Trojan expedition formed part of a web of interrelated tales about figures who were claimed as ancestors by families or cities in historical times and whose actions were recalled in ritual and religious iconography".

[22] I include Bellerophon/Bellerophontes because the variation between the two forms of the name is minimal. The only male figure who consistently has two names is Alexandros/Paris. This may be because one is Greek, the other barbarian (cf. Hall 1989 p.20 n.16), but even so, it is instructive to note that the two names can be used interchangeably and may both be used in one work - this is a contrast to the women, where it is usual to choose one name and stay with it for the whole of a retelling of the story. For example, Epicaste of the *Odyssey* is identified with Jocasta, but Jocasta is the name which is more usually used, and we very rarely find Epicaste used of Jocasta outside Homer (it has been assumed that the name Epicaste was used in the lost *Oidipodeia*, on the grounds that the Homeric scholia say that Jocasta is the name used by the tragedians; our only extant use of Epicaste outside Homer before the fifth century is in Epimenides). In the case of Erichthonius/Erechtheus, names which were presumably original variant forms referring to the same person are split to create two mythological characters; on this see West 1985 pp.103-6, Burkert 1966 p.24, Thomas 1989 p.184.

characters whose names are most fluid are usually women, they also include less important men - for example, siblings of the great heroes or children who are not fitted into a larger genealogical schema - which suggests that a name became fixed as a character's place in the greater genealogical trees was fixed.

Stories of the gods which do not involve heroes are less easy to fit into this definition of a myth as a "tale relevant to society", but they may still reflect elements of Greek life and social order. For example, the story of Hephaestus' fall from Olympus explains his lameness (which may be a relic of an earlier deity, a god who was lame because he was a smith); the tales of the youth of Hermes - his stealing of Apollo's cattle and bargaining away the lyre, his role as herald of the gods - explain why he was the patron god of the market place (and thieves), and of heralds. The tale of Prometheus' theft of fire is clearly aetiological, as is the story of his division of meat at sacrifices. Genealogies, particularly divine genealogies, may also be a form of *aition*. Sleep and Death are brothers because their effects on a person appear similar[23]; Eros is Aphrodite's son because of the obvious link between them. Similarly, Erigone, who plays a part in the mythology around the Anthesteria, is sometimes made Orestes' half-sister - because he too is a hero connected with the Anthesteria. The genealogical link reflects the cult or ritual link. Another influence on the development of myths is the aetiological force of names. Some myths appear to derive from the name of the character (although the name may come from the myth; the priority of name and story is often difficult to determine, as will be shown in the case of Penelope): Pentheus is a fitting name for a hero doomed to

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[23] Cf. West 1966 pp.34-7, particularly p.35 on the children of Night; West argues that Sleep and Death are both suitable to be called children of Night, but these two do seem to have a particular affiliation - for example, they act together to carry off the body of Sarpedon, *Iliad* 16.669-73. On this affiliation, see Janko 1992 *ad* 14.231, also *ad* 16.454, 16.669-73.

an untimely death; Achilles has been etymologised to mean "causing grief to the people", taken as a reference either to his early death or the effects of his withdrawal from fighting, as described in the *Iliad*. Electra's name appears also as A-lektra in Doric, and this was taken as meaning 'unmarried', assumed to refer to the fact that Clytaemnestra and Aegisthus would not let her marry - her new name thus gives her story, and an explanation for why that is not the name given in the *Iliad*, where "Laodice" appears and was later taken to be the "original" name for the same character.

Some female mythological figures do not show any fluidity in their naming, but are very strongly identified by only one name. One example is Helen - we do not read of Menelaus having a wife by another name, nor of another woman who fits details of the description of Helen in all but name. Helen, however, it should be remembered, was not only the leading lady in the tale of Troy; she was also worshipped as a goddess in Sparta[24]. The mothers of heroes such as Perseus and Heracles are named in the tradition, and consistently have the same name. This may be partly due to their relationship with the hero, which may make them objects of cult worship[25]. These women also appeared in literature as full-blown characters from early times: just as Hecuba and Andromache appear in the *Iliad*, and Helen and Penelope in the *Odyssey*, so Danae had the status of a fully-developed character in Simonides[26] and in Aeschylus' *Diktyoulkoi*. Less important figures, however, such as siblings or children, may vary in both number and name - it is descent from the hero that is important; the others will become fixed if this has a relevance to the society where the story is being retold.

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[24] Cf. Larson 1995 p.68-70, with other bibliography cited p.176 n.42

[25] Larson 1995 pp.41-3, chs. 3-4, esp. pp.89-96; Alcmene was worshipped with Heracles at Thebes, Aixone in Attica, Megara, Athens, Haliartus; Semele with Dionysus in Thebes, Prasiai and more widely; Danae with Perseus at the so-called thalamos of Danae in Argos (Paus. 2.23.7).

[26] *PMG* 543, on which see Bowra 1961 pp.336-9, Rosenmeyer 1991.

Another reason for characters to become fixed in the tradition, usually under a particular name, may be the influence of literary texts. Given that the literary texts are our main source material, it can be difficult to establish where a character is a new invention, where a traditional figure, but later versions of myths which had featured in Attic tragedy - Roman versions in particular - normally show us the "accepted" form of the myth at that point in time. Where such an "accepted version" includes details which were probably introduced by a fifth-century dramatist, then we may conclude that that written version of the story has influenced the later tradition. An example of this might be Medea's killing of her children, a feature of the story which appears to be taken for granted by Roman writers, but which may well have been a Euripidean innovation[27]. However, even for the great heroes, there is no one standard version of "the myth" which is continually retold. If important details are changed or vary, however, the cause may reasonably be sought in an examination of the audience for this particular retelling.

If relevance to society may be taken as one of the defining features of Greek myth in the fifth century, this may explain some of the variations we find in particular myths. For example, we may consider the way in which Euripides rewrites the story of Ion. Hellen, the eponymous ancestor of the Greeks, was usually considered to have had three children, Dorus, Aeolus, and Xuthus. Xuthus then had two children, Achaeus and Ion. Thus the eponymous ancestor of the Greeks had the eponymous ancestors of the Aeolians and Dorians as sons, and the Ionians and Achaeans were more closely linked than the other Greek "families", because they were both descended from the same son of

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[27] Cf. Hor. *AP* 123, which seems to take the story for granted; it may have been seen as the standard version as early as 400 BC, the date of the Cleveland Medea vase, on which there are Furies which may suggest the theme of tragic revenge (cf. Taplin 1993 pp.22-3, 26, with illustration of the vase, plate 1.101). On the possibility of Euripidean invention of the myth, see Page 1939 pp.xxi-v, Knox 1977 pp.194-5, with further bibliography given in n.7.

Hellen. When Euripides wrote his tragedy, the *Ion*, however, this genealogy is changed, to give Ion a more prominent place, and he is made the son of an Athenian princess. This version of the story appears designed for Athenian taste, as it makes their ancestor the son of Apollo, and autochthonous, while relegating Dorus, the eponymous ancestor of the Dorians, to a subordinate position as the younger half-brother of Ion by a mere mortal, Xuthus[28]. Although Euripides' version of the myth did not displace the earlier version, we have no evidence that his version was considered "wrong" - it was just different, and designed for its intended audience.

The relevance which seems to be a distinguishing feature of heroic Greek myths will not be constant. Families who were great in fifth-century Athens need not have been so a century earlier or later, and need not have been of any relevance to places outside Athens even in the fifth century. When a myth stops having contemporary relevance, however, it seems likely that that will be the point at which its form will become more fixed, as it is more likely to drop out of the living tradition, and to be remembered as a good story, or through its various literary and artistic instantiations. It may keep being retold, and if it reacquires some degree of "relevance", may start to change and develop new variants again[29]. Thus Callimachus' attitude to the myth of Battus may well not have been the same as his attitude to the myths about Teiresias - for the one had personal

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[28] Alty 1982 p.10 n.55; although Euripides' version did not catch on, Alty does show how this myth contributed to the political debate in the fifth century, and how tales of Dorians and Ionians from the legendary period were still felt to have a bearing on contemporary events (cf. especially pp.3-4).

[29] Bosworth 1995 p.200-1 concludes that before Alexander's conquest of India, although Dionysus was said to have travelled in the east, he was not seen as the conqueror of India. The link between India and Dionysus thus seems to have been created because of Alexander's actions and the fact that Dionysus could be identified with local gods, thus making the new addition to the myth seem plausible and a borrowing rather than a totally new creation. As a god, Dionysus would always have "relevance" for the Greeks, but in this development of the myth, we see a previously less important feature being picked out and developed. This new version became the standard, as we can see from Ovid (*Fasti* 3.465-6) and Nonnus (*Dionysiaca* books 21-6).

importance for him, as he claimed descent from Battus, while the other has no such personal relevance[30]. Similarly, one may note the different features picked from the story of the Erechtheids by Euripides in the *Erechtheus* and Ovid at *Met.* 6.675-721. As each myth loses its contemporary relevance, it will become more fixed and literary in nature; the variants will become interesting nuggets of recherché information, rather than reflecting a living tradition. We can see this attitude to myth taking over in the Hellenistic period, and it seems fairly clear that Greek mythology was a literary and artistic construct for Roman writers[31]. Thus, although such literary users of myths may retell the stories in daring ways, and use the myths paradigmatically, the use of variants is likely to reflect a desire to display learning, rather than personal creation of a new element[32].

Thus each retelling, each instantiation of a myth is designed by a particular creator, to suit a particular audience, fixed in time and place. As myths are used as paradigms, in order to argue, for example, why a particular line of action should be pursued, each retelling of a myth as a paradigm will emphasise the parallels with the position of the person who is being exhorted to follow the example of a character in the myth. For example, in the *Odyssey*, Orestes is used by Athene as a paradigm for Telemachus to follow. She says:

> οὐδέ τί σε χρὴ
> νηπιάας ὀχέειν, ἐπεὶ οὐκέτι τηλίκος ἐσσί.
> ἦ οὐκ ἀΐεις οἷον κλέος ἔλλαβε δῖος Ὀρέστης

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[30] Cf. Williams 1978 p.65 on *Hymn* 2, see also *ep.* 35.1. Cyrene is said to have had a very strong sense of its own history generally (Fraser 1971 I p.787). See below for a fuller discussion.

[31] On Roman use of myth, particularly Greek myth as "secondary", see Bremmer and Horsfall 1987 pp.1-11; the examination of the case of Aeneas (pp.12-24) shows how Greek myth could be made more relevant and used as "primary myth".

[32] One might compare Euripides' innovation in the *Ion* (mentioned above) with Vergil's innovatory inclusion of a scene with Proteus in the Aristaeus episode of the fourth *Georgic*; Vergil is including a stock scene of the catching of Proteus (cf. the catching of Silenus *Ecl.* 6), with no discernible non-poetic motive, while Euripides is deliberately reshaping a genealogy to glorify the Athenians.

πάντας ἐπ' ἀνθρώπους, ἐπεὶ ἔκτανε πατροφονῆα
Αἴγισθον δολόμητιν, ὅ οἱ πατέρα κλυτὸν ἔκτα;

Od. 1.296-300

She does not mention that Orestes avenged his father by killing his mother: this is not a detail relevant to Telemachus' position, and is not part of what he is being exhorted to do. Similarly, in the *Iliad*, when Achilles wants Priam to eat, he uses the example of Niobe in a very unexpected way, saying that even Niobe ate in her grief, so Priam, who has lost the one son he says he had left from many (*Il.* 24.499), should eat too[33]. This is not part of the "normal" version of the myth of Niobe as we know it; it is, however, a very good example of the retelling of a myth being influenced by the intended audience. The manipulation of a myth by a character in a poem to make a point to another character in the poem shows a way of dealing with myths which is also used by poets (and other writers) as they shape their retellings of myths for their audiences.

Perhaps the best examples of myths which are reshaped to appeal to a particular audience are the aetiological myths. Although the validity of myth as history was questioned by some Greeks[34], heroic myth was generally seen as reporting real historical events. Foundation myths express something of what was felt to be the history of a colony, linking it, for example, to its mother city through a particular hero; a good example of this is Battus of Thera, the founder of Cyrene. He is historically attested, and his family became the royal dynasty, but the origins of the family are linked to myth. For example, the Battiad claim to the throne of Cyrene is strengthened in Pindar *Pyth.* 4 through the glorification of the Argonaut Euphemus, from whom the family was said to

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[33] *Il.* 24.596-620. Cf. Macleod 1982 *ad loc.* (especially 614-7), Willcock 1964. It is notable that the two main exemplary uses of myth from the *Iliad* do not use the standard versions of the myths, but have quite dramatically changed details to fit the point the speaker is trying to make. On this in the Meleager myth, and the relation to other versions, see Kakridis 1949 pp.11-42, Bremmer 1988, March 1987 pp.27-46.
[34] E.g. Thuc. 1.9.4, 1.10.3; cf. Feeney 1991 pp.44-5, Wardman 1960.

be descended. Battus' part in the foundation of Cyrene was stressed, and he was given hero cult, being buried in the market place[35]. Aetiological myths are used in a similar way to myths being used paradigmatically: because X happened in mythological times, therefore today Y should be done, or situation Z should prevail. For example, in the *Eumenides*, Athens' recent alliance with Argos is justified by Orestes, who returns to Argos after his acquittal, saying that he will be friendly towards the Athenians for ever, and will ensure that the people of Argos will not attack Athens, because the Athenians helped him regain his throne by purifying his blood-guilt[36]. Another example may be found in the works of Xenophon:

> *Because* an Athenian (Triptolemos) had first bestowed the gift of corn on the Peloponnese and initiated Herakles and the Dioskouroi into the Eleusinian mysteries, *therefore* Athens and Sparta should not be enemies.[37]

Myths could thus be used to explain alliances[38], and in a more strictly aetiological manner to explain the origins of particular rites and institutions: "why things are the way they are". An example of an aetiological myth explaining a rite is that connected with the second day of the Anthesteria at Athens, the Choes, or feast of wine-jars[39]. The myth told how Orestes, while still polluted by the murder of his mother, came to Athens during the festival. Because of his pollution, he could not be allowed to enter the temples nor share the food and drink of the people of Athens. The king of Athens avoided both inhospitability and the pollution of his temples or people by ordering all the temples to

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[35] See Pind. *Pyth.* 5.93, 124f., with scholia *ad loc.* For Pindar possibly giving backing to the Battiad claim in time of turmoil, see Braswell 1988 pp.56-7, 64, and 141-50 on Battus as the founder of Cyrene. It is interesting that in the case of Battus the original name of the person involved (Aristoteles) may have been hidden beneath a Libyan word for king, which was interpreted as Greek and had a story built up round it in explanation - the name gives rise to the idea that Battus stuttered, and this is given as his reason for going to Delphi in the first place; once there, he received the oracle to found Cyrene.
[36] Aesch. *Eum.* 763-771, especially 764; cf. Sommerstein 1989 *ad loc*, and further Bremmer 1994 p.48.
[37] Xen. *HG* 6.3.6, cited from Buxton 1994 p.194 (his italics).
[38] Cf. Hdt. 9.26-7, West 1985 p.10-11.
[39] Cf. Parke 1977 p.114.

be shut, and a wine jar to be distributed to each person[40]. Myths may also be used to explain the presence of otherwise inexplicable objects at a particular place: for example, the story that the *omphalos* at Delphi was placed there by Zeus to mark the centre of the earth, or the inclusion of the detail of Leto holding on to a palm while giving birth to Apollo, to explain the palm on Delos.

Myths used as *exempla* are also reshaped to suit an audience and serve a particular purpose. The fact that the history of Alexander was distorted both during and after his lifetime does not make him later a less successful *exemplum*. The different types for which Alexander could serve as an example include "the victim of ... passions", "the cruel tyrant", "the world-conqueror", "the emulator of ideal Homeric kingship"[41]. Such one-sided views of Alexander depended on the emphasising of certain episodes, and, probably, the creation of new ones - or at least the exaggeration or adaptation of truth to a point where historical accuracy is completely lost[42]. The differing ways in which Alexander could be regarded depended partly on the audience for whom each author was writing, and positive views of him seem to have their roots in either Ptolemaic rewriting of the story or in the comparison of Roman emperors to Alexander, and hence the desire to make him a fit example for them to follow[43].

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[40] The earliest definite reference to this story is Eur. *IT* 947-60; cf. Sommerstein 1989 pp.3-4, n.8. This story may be an example of a myth being invented to explain the ritual, Sommerstein thinks, having evolved after the story of Orestes' purification in Athens. For further examples, see Bremmer 1994 pp.61-4, Versnel 1990.

[41] Bosworth 1980 p.13.

[42] For example, the burning of Persepolis, which is described as both deliberate revenge and as the consequence of general assent to the drunken whim of the courtesan Thais. On this topic, see Bosworth 1980 pp. 331-2, Bosworth 1988a p.93 (with much bibliography, n.197). The debate between Parmenion and Alexander in Arrian, although strictly speaking unhistorical, probably reflects a contemporary discussion over what the fate of Persepolis should be.

[43] On Alexander reinterpreted for Roman sensibilities, see Morford 1967 ch.2 (Alexander in Lucan), Bosworth 1988b pp.94-5, 129-132 (on Arrian 5.26.1-2, attributing to Alexander a Roman view of the eastern ocean); ch.6 looks at Tacitus' view of Alexander as well as Arrian's, and pp.61-5 examines Arrian's use of Ptolemy as a source, and the historicity of this account.

Thus it seems clear that when looking at a figure from Greek myth, one must be careful to examine each portrayal in the light of its intended audience, its author, and its genre, before concluding that it gives "the" version of the story or a "local variant". The naive reading of a myth with an authentic core version and variants dependent on this will not do, unless we have some special reason for assuming that there was a "core version" from which some authors deliberately departed. After further consideration of one of the main uses of myth in the ancient world - as paradigm - I will move on to examine Penelope in the light of these insights.

The Exemplary Use of Myth

The ancient use of references to myths to make a rhetorical point has already been mentioned, and the practice continues into the modern period: for example, Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice* calls Portia (disguised as Antonio's lawyer) "a Daniel come to judgement", a comment which reflects both the way in which she appears to be using the words of the original agreement, apparently condemning Antonio with his own words, and, possibly, the fact that she appears to be upholding the Jew's case[44]. It is easy to see a development from saying, for example, that anyone crafty is like Odysseus, to calling them "an Odysseus", leaving unspoken the implication that this is because of their craftiness[45]. We may presume that this was what was meant by Caligula's nickname for

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[44] IV.i.233, cf. Gratiano at IV.i.349; in the case of Susanna, Daniel convicted the elders of false witness through their own words, and was a young man when he did this, as Portia appears to be.

[45] Cf. Bishop 1985 pp.8-9, 12-21 on the use of mythical allusion in Latin literature. A good summary of examples of comparing people to mythological and historical figures, mainly in Latin literature, is found in Griffin 1985 pp.189-193, and Öhler 1925 collects Greek examples from epic, lyric, and fifth-century drama; see also Canter 1933, which collects both Greek and Latin examples. On mediaeval literature, cf. Curtius 1953 pp.59-62, 118, 362-4.

Livia, *Ulixem stolatam*[46], as reported by Suetonius: the force of *stolatam* is to stress her sex and the respectability which should go with her position. One may also consider the epithets given to Clodia during the trial of Caelius: Caelius called her *quadrantaria Clytemnestra*, a four-penny Clytaemnestra[47], and Cicero *Palatinam Medeam*, a Palatine Medea[48]. The use of mythological characters as exemplars of particular traits was also found in Greece; for example, Alcibiades in the *Symposium* draws comparisons between contemporary figures and characters from the *Iliad*, while denying that any such parallel could be found for Socrates:

> πολλὰ μὲν οὖν ἄν τις καὶ ἄλλα ἔχοι Σωκράτη ἐπαινέσαι καὶ θαυμάσια· ἀλλὰ τῶν μὲν ἄλλων ἐπιτηδευμάτων τάχ' ἄν τις καὶ περὶ ἄλλου τοιαῦτα εἴποι, τὸ δὲ μηδενὶ ἀνθρώπων ὅμοιον εἶναι, μήτε τῶν παλαιῶν μήτε τῶν νῦν ὄντων, τοῦτο ἄξιον παντὸς θαύματος. οἷος γὰρ Ἀχιλλεὺς ἐγένετο, ἀπεικάσειεν ἄν τις καὶ Βρασίδαν καὶ ἄλλους, καὶ οἷος αὖ Περικλῆς, καὶ Νέστορα καὶ Ἀντήνορα (εἰσὶ δὲ καὶ ἕτεροι) καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους κατὰ ταὔτ' ἄν τις ἀπεικάζοι.
>
> Pl. *Symp.* 221c

The characterisation of Brasidas and Pericles in this way - as the bold fighter and the careful counsellor - shows the familiarity of this use of myths; Socrates is an anomaly, because he cannot easily be compared to a mythical character.

Such treatment is not, however, limited to mythological characters; the continuum from myth into history is illustrated by the way in which historical figures are treated similarly to mythological ones when it comes to serving as *exempla* - as shown above, where Alcibiades moves readily from a contemporary parallel to others drawn from myth. Thus Wiseman can talk about the "common moral aim" of epic and history, as well as

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[46] Suet. *Calig.* 23.2; cf. Bishop 1985 p.19 for a discussion of the force of this reference.
[47] Caelius fr.26 Malcovati = Quint. 8.6.53; 'Clytaemnestra' is particularly apt given the insinuation that she had murdered her husband.
[48] *Pro Caelio* 18; "Medea" points to use of poison, as well as general murderous qualities. For more details on the trading of mythological insults in this trial, see Austin 1960 p.vii and *ad loc*, Bishop 1985 p.14-16.

tragedy, and say that they shared the same subject matter, κλέα ἀνδρῶν "whether at Thebes, or Troy, or Salamis"[49]. Longinus calls Herodotus Ὁμηρικώτατος[50], and it is clear that although he did make a distinction between the events of the Trojan War as legend and the Persian Wars as historical, vouched for by first- or second-hand eye-witness accounts, the distinction between legend and history is not drawn precisely, nor according to modern standards of historical truth[51]. This practice of treating both historical and mythological stories in the same way, as a source for *exempla*, is one reason for Detienne's refusal to admit myth as a category the Greeks themselves thought in[52]; however, it is the practice and use made of the stories which is important, rather than their content, and the importance is that these are tales which are told orally. Therefore, as historical stories were told with the same rhetorical aims as mythological tales, it seems reasonable to suppose that they could be classed together, and that historical characters could come to be used in the same exemplary way as mythological figures[53] (one might compare the parade of Roman heroes in *Aen.* 6 which treats legendary/mythological and historical figures in the same way)[54]. The best example of this is probably Alexander: when Pompey surnamed

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[49] Wiseman 1979 pp.143-53, quotations from pp.144-5; the statement of a shared "moral aim" for tragedy and history derives from F. Walbank "History and Tragedy" *Historia* 9 (1960) pp.216-34 (= *Selected Papers* (Cambridge University Press 1985) pp.224-41)

[50] *On the Sublime* 13.3.

[51] Cf. Simonides *POxy* 3965, which compares the Trojan and Persian Wars, moving between them without any hint of a movement from myth to history (cf. West 1993). The shift from history to mythology seems to be partly a matter of separation from the present: the Marathonian dead were not heroised by their own generation, although they did receive a lower level of cult. In the second century BC, however, they were accorded full hero cult, which suggests that they were then felt to be sufficiently separate in time to be treated in the same way as mythological heroes. Cf. Parker 1996 pp.136-7, Paus. 1.32.4, *IG* II^2 1006.69.

[52] Detienne 1986.

[53] The usefulness of figures to serve as *exempla* is another form of "relevance to society"; the use of such names as a shorthand for evoking desirable or undesirable traits shows the position of these figures as Durkheimian "collective representations" (e.g. Durkheim 1895 pp.l-li, 1912 p.52; cf. Thompson 1982 pp.60-63, 126-136, Burke 1992 pp.91ff.; Evans-Pritchard 1965 pp.53-64 gives a good overview of Durkheim's view of religion as a social construct which may be applied to other such constructs); cf. Barthes 1957 pp.109-56, particularly p.109 on myth as "social usage".

[54] Cf. Litchfield 1914 pp.1-6 for a list of figures used as moral exemplars in Roman literature; both mythological and historical figures appear.

himself "Magnus" he was alluding to Alexander's title, and Antony also saw himself as a new Alexander; like Alexander, he assimilated himself to Dionysus[55]. The lack of earlier examples is due partly to the problems inherent in trying to distinguish mythological and historical figures; historical figures become mythologised, and it is as such that they are treated like other mythological figures[56]. In both Roman and Greek history, but particularly Roman, there is also a tendency to allot certain characteristics to certain families, due to the reputation of an early bearer of the name for displaying that characteristic[57]. Thus Brutus, descendant of the killer of the last king of Rome, Tarquin, is set up against Caesar, who is portrayed as wanting to be king (historical figures reflecting historical figures who have been mythologised); the Decii (who, it can be argued, are both historical and mythic) are known for being self-sacrificing; and the younger Cato in Sallust is made to talk like, and with the moral authority of, Cato the Censor[58]. A similarity in name may also be the basis for a link, even though there need not be a true genealogical connection. The similarity Iulius/Iulus was used to link the Julian family to Aeneas, through his son Iulus, so that Venus could be seen as the ancestor of the Julians and Augustus as a relative of Aeneas. A similar link was made between Pyrrhus of Epirus and Pyrrhus the son of Achilles (also known as Neoptolemus)[59].

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[55] Cf. above p. 29 on Alexander, Griffin 1985 p.189, with nn.17, 18.

[56] For example, Croesus was treated as a historical figure by Herodotus, but in Bacchylides' third epinician he appears as the mythical paradigm of a good man rescued by the gods (cf. Gould 1989 pp.34-5). One may compare the stories which collected around Judas Iscariot and Pope Gregory, as discussed by Edmunds 1985. These historical figures gather folk tales of the "Oedipus-type" around them (pp.17-22) and are thoroughly mythologised by mediaeval tradition; as with other such tales, motifs have a tendency to double (pp.26-36) - thus the child who will commit incest is himself the product of incest, or is exposed at birth, or mutilated (or any combination), thus emphasising his birth as "bad" in some way.

[57] Cf. Wiseman 1979 pp.25, 122-5 on family characteristics; Litchfield 1914 pp.26-7, 36-44 on Brutus and the perceptions of the younger Brutus, pp.45-8 on the Decii.

[58] Cf. Griffin 1985 pp.190-1; on Cato in Sallust, see *Catilinae Coniuratio* 52-5, Earl 1961 pp.100-101.

[59] Cf. Vergil *Aen.* 6.839 for an example of this linking.

The movement towards treating mythological characters as exemplars of one or two particular traits, rather than as full and complicated personalities, probably has more than one cause. Canter suggested that the rise of formal rhetoric was a particular influence in fifth-century Athens. However, the paradigmatic use of myths appears in literature as early as Homer[60], and such usage has its own rhetorical requirement that the figures be painted in simple terms. In considering the conceptual origins of the practice, one might start from Lévi-Strauss's idea of totems as "good things to think with"[61], a concept easily extended to cover myths. Such a concept of myths as functional narratives begins to push myths in the direction of exemplarity. This exemplarity naturally arises in the context of rhetorical use of myth: complicated stories would confuse the parallels between the mythological figure and the person being compared with them. Thus a simplified view of the mythological figures develops out of, or alongside, the one-dimensional references which are all that is required for their rhetorical use. One might also compare more generally the tendency for minor characters in literature to be represented as stereotypes - simple characters whose essence can be grasped rapidly, because we are aware of that type of person without needing all the details spelt out[62]. This is well known in modern literature (for example, the faithful family retainer, the dutiful second-in-command), but was particularly characteristic of the stylised medium of Greek tragedy (see ch.7). Such stereotyping is not, however, by any means limited to post-Homeric literature: one need only consider the figures of the faithful servants Eumaeus and (particularly) Philoetius in the *Odyssey*, and some of the

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[60] Cf. pp.26-7 above.

[61] *bonnes à penser*; cf. Leach 1970 p.34, 40-44.

[62] This may be linked to the way in which characters are generally perceived; it has been argued that our perception of character in both literature and life starts from a typological base, classifying people by particular traits. On this point, see Hochmann 1985, especially p.46, Harvey 1965, Chatman 1978 chs.4-5.

lesser heroes, such as Idomeneus, in the *Iliad*. We see Idomeneus fighting, but his actions do not go beyond those of the stereotype of the hero: he is capable of killing his enemies.

This focusing of mythological characters to such two-dimensional portrayals may be influenced by their representations in art, particularly Greek art up to the fifth century. Vase paintings tend to distinguish particular characters by particular attributes. For example, Heracles is usually shown with his club and lion-skin. Such an image reinforces the idea of Heracles as strong, but also as wild. His strength is often implied also by his portrayal as an adult male, a man with a full beard, rather than a beardless youth. Such iconographical attributes may also have a generalised significance, as with the postures of mourning, which regularly include raising the hand to the head. This posture may imply grief even when there is not explicit reference to the cause in the image (see below p.78).

Domestic storytelling may have been another factor in the simplification of the mythological narratives, and the reduction of even the major mythological characters to exemplars of character traits. Storytelling even now tends to divide the world into the good and the bad, seeing people and motives in terms of black and white, rather than shades of grey. It seems plausible to suppose that tales were told at home from the earliest periods of Greek society, and that these tales could include mythological ones - tales known now only from their literary versions, but which formed part of the stock of oral tales in early Greece; although all our sources are literary, we may well have examples of reference to myth close to this sort of use in both tragedy and comedy: the nurse in Euripides' *Hippolytus* uses myths to persuade Phaedra[63], and the *agon* in the *Clouds* of Aristophanes shows myths

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[63] E. *Hipp.*450ff. Barrett 1964 *ad loc.* (p.241) takes the nurse's reference to written versions of myths to suggest that such stories were not as widely known as one might suppose, and cites Aristotle *Poetics* 1451 b 25ff. to support this contention, a passage which suggests that the mythological stories were not so well known in the fourth century. However, the reference to written versions of the stories may well not prove that such tales were not in oral circulation; the nurse may be appealing to the authority of written versions

being used by both sides as a normal part of argument[64]. It also seems plausible to suggest that such retellings at home, where the key events of a story once heard would form the basis for the tale, could help to push mythological figures into exemplary roles. For example, when Euripides tells the tale of Phaedra, we can sympathise with a human victim of the gods, a woman deserted by her husband, even a woman with an excuse for falling in love with her stepson. If, however, we look only at the crucial plot elements of the story, a different picture may be found (exemplified by the story in *Genesis* of Potiphar's wife, with the difference that her revenge is not fatal to Joseph): stepmother tries to seduce her stepson, and when he, being a pure and chaste youth, repulses her, she takes revenge and causes his death, through the unwitting agency of his father. The bereaved father, innocent victim of a woman's wiles; the attractive youth, another innocent victim; the wicked woman: all are figures to be found in tales throughout the world. Portrayed in these terms, Phaedra may be seen as the paradigm of the wicked stepmother, of the lascivious woman, of what a woman should not be - a figure for whom we should have no sympathy. The story can be told in such a way as to lessen Phaedra's guilt; however, that guilt cannot be wholly removed without changing the story - she must still fall in love with Hippolytus and cause his death. Given this as the basis for the story, telling it in black and white terms paints Phaedra black and Hippolytus white. This argument from the "strength of the story-line" will be a particularly important factor in the cases of stories with plot elements easily assimilated to common story-patterns[65] - such as the wicked stepmother (how often do

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to uphold her case - i.e. to show such things can happen in written texts, which makes them a good example to follow, as well as in the tales your nurse could tell you.

[64] Ar. *Clouds* 1050-70.

[65] Cf. examples gathered by Prince 1987 under "Plot Typology (2) Plots of Character"; on Phaedra, see pp. 188-90 below.

fairy tales talk of kind stepmothers?[66]) or the ephebic adventures of a youth growing to manhood (although the adventures may change, the basis of the journey, youth to manhood, remains constant). The variety and consistency of such adventures may be seen by comparing the tales of Heracles as a youth with those of Theseus, Telemachus, and Jason: all go on a journey, but the details are different, and reshaped in different tellings, influenced by other tales. Throughout the sixth and fifth centuries, the development of the myths surrounding Theseus show an assimilation to and then separation from Heracles[67]; Theseus is assimilated to Heracles to make him a hero of the first class, and his labours are expanded to make half a dodecathlon, but in Athens Theseus becomes a humane and civilising force, and hence is differentiated from Heracles who has a nature which is both partly bestial and partly divine[68]. Theseus' labours on the road from Troezen to Athens are modelled on Heracles' labours, and Telemachus in the *Odyssey* is encouraged to be like Orestes, an avenger of his father.

When a mythological character known from earlier tales appears on stage (be it a real or metaphorical stage) initial perceptions are naturally coloured by earlier representations of the character: for example, when a Homeric hero such as Agamemnon appeared on the fifth-century stage, the audience's preconceptions would have been drawn mainly from his Iliadic and Odyssean representations[69]. Each new representation adds

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[66] Even in antiquity the wicked stepmother became proverbial; for example, see Hesiod *Op.* 823-5, Eur. *Alc.* 305-10, Catullus 64.402, Vergil *Ecl.* 3.33, *Geo.* 2.128, 3.283, and Watson 1994, especially pp.1-19.
[67] On this long recognised connection, see Mills 1992 *passim*, but especially ch.2 pp.45-102, and Calame 1990 pp.72, 77-8, 404; for bibliography on the development of the Theseus myth, see Boardman 1982 p.1 n.2. Boardman deals with the relationship of Heracles and Theseus pp.2-5, and on p.12 calls the development of the labours of Theseus a "conscious imitation" of Heracles' labours.
[68] Cf. Silk 1985 on Heracles' dual nature as man and god.
[69] Cf. Goldhill 1990 pp.109-110.

more to the perception of the character, and each new representation will be intertextual with all previous versions. The exemplary use of myths, as discussed above, tends to push mythological figures and stories into simple categories: a tale for every occasion, to illustrate any point one might want to make. This is exemplified by the use of the story of Agamemnon's return and Orestes' vengeance in the *Odyssey*. Agamemnon is to be pitied, his son acted rightly in avenging him: everything is (relatively) straightforward. When the story is told in its own right, though, as happens for the tale of Agamemnon and Orestes in the *Oresteia*, the two-dimensional figures of the exemplary version of the story (which might be classed as "type" characters[70]) become more rounded characters, and the whole situation becomes more complicated. In the *Oresteia*, for example, Clytaemnestra is given some justification for her murder of Agamemnon: his murder of Iphigeneia and his introduction of Cassandra to their house. That is not to say that Clytaemnestra is right to kill him, but her action may be seen as in some sense justified: there is no simple right and wrong. The figure of Penelope shows how a mythological character can enter literature in two ways: in simplified form as an *exemplum*, and more rounded when allowed to appear as a developed character.

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[70] S.v. "type" in Prince 1987; his definition of "flat" and "rounded" characters also describes my use of these terms.