Section III: Literary Treatments of Penelope

Chapter 6: Penelope in Homer

> On the one hand, there was the need for epic poetry, given its function of cultural training, to propose a model of woman that was the symbol of all the virtues that a woman could have. On the other, there was a misogynist ideology that mistrusted women profoundly. Penelope can be read as the product of these two opposing needs; she is an image of both the "should be" and the "is" (in the eyes of men, of course) of the Homeric woman.
>
> Eva Cantarella *Pandora's Daughters* (1987), pp.29-30

Introduction

The focus on Penelope in much recent Odyssean scholarship has created a plethora of readings of Penelope, but one shared tendency in these works has been to put Penelope at the centre of the *Odyssey*, emphasising that her actions and choices are crucial to Odysseus' success[1]. Commenting on Agamemnon's praise of Penelope in the last book, Finley said "With these lines, Agamemnon comes close to making our *Odysseia* a *Penelopeia*"[2]. This phrase has been much cited by those who wish to see Penelope as central to our interpretation of the *Odyssey*. Such Penelope-centred readings are certainly interesting, and do help to even the balance against the minimising or depreciatory interpretation of Penelope which held sway for so long, apparently at least partly because of the tendency (as in ancient art and in Aristotle) to focus on the Wanderings, and hence on Odysseus and the other women with whom he interacts[3]. However, to see the *Odyssey* as an epic in praise of Penelope is clearly to go too far:

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[1] For example Katz 1992, Felson-Rubin 1994, various essays in Cohen 1995, Doherty 1996 pp.31-63 on the "Penelope-question", all giving earlier bibliography; at the APA meeting in 1993, there was a panel devoted to Homer's Penelope.

[2] Finley 1978 p.3.

[3] Cf. Woodhouse 1930; Clay 1983 pp.214-5 stresses that the Wanderings do not constitute the whole of the *Odyssey*.

Penelope's name is mentioned in most books of the *Odyssey*, it is true[4], and she is important for the story - but this epic, the *Odyssey* which has come down to us under the name of Homer, really belongs to Odysseus. Such an Odysseus-centred telling of the tale may well be unfair to Penelope, it may fail to recognise her full importance to Odysseus, but that does seem to be what the *Odyssey* is. Aristotle's summary of the poem[5] does not even mention Penelope - only her suitors; though Ovid summarises the *Odyssey* as a romance[6], he does so to serve his own purpose of defending love poetry, not to present an objective image of the epic. Penelope-centred readings of the *Odyssey* are, like all other readings, products of their time; in our (superficially) feminist age, focusing on the feminine in the epic is an understandable tactic for reading: rescuing Penelope from being condemned as inconsistent[7] or dismissed as unimportant; rescuing the *Odyssey* from its position as second to the *Iliad*, a work of lesser artistry, written for "the other sex"[8].

However, Penelope should remain a major focus of a discussion of the Odyssey, for female characters loom large in the *Odyssey* - larger than in the *Iliad*, although that is not surprising when comparing a poem of war and a poem set, for the most part, "at home", be that in Ithaca, in Pylos, or in Phaeacia[9]. (Indeed, one might think it more surprising that the female characters play as large a part as they do in the *Iliad*.) Penelope's importance among the women in the *Odyssey* is clear: she is human, and

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[4] See list of references in App.2; Penelope makes eleven appearances, but this includes four scenes in which she is told to leave.
[5] *Poetics* 1455 b 15-23.
[6] *Tr.* 2.375-6 (cf. below p.287).
[7] For example, Kirk 1962 p.366 calls her "a paradigm of wifely constancy or of feminine illogicality, uncertainty and despair".
[8] Richard Bentley, in *Remarks upon a Late Discourse of Free Thinking* (1713):"[Homer] wrote a sequel of Songs and Rhapsodies, to be sung by himself for small earnings and good cheer, at Festivals and other days of Merriment; the Ilias he made for men and the Odysseis for the other sex."
[9] Cf. Beye 1974, who collects further bibliography on the prominence of women in the *Odyssey*.

hence may be judged by human standards, and she is the one character who seems to match Odysseus in that she alone successfully tests him, instead of merely being tested.

The prominence of female characters in the *Odyssey* has been taken to mark this as a "feminist poem", or at least written by and for women[10]. However, the prominence of women need not be a sign of feminist - or feminine - sympathies; Winkler, discussing Butler's "detection" of the gender of the author of the *Odyssey*, says:

> Nowadays we can easily notice that [Butler's] assumptions, particularly about social life and the roles of men and women, are anachronistic, when applied to Homer (if not to contemporary writing as well). His list of female traits that supposedly give away the *Odyssey*-writer's sex include severity against women who have disgraced their sex, love of small religious observances, of white lies and small play-acting, of having things both ways and of money.[11]

The very traits which Butler sees as signs of female authorship could also be seen as marks of a misogynistic text; even if one does not wish to go this far, nowhere does the text appear to express any overt criticism of the traditional patriarchal assumptions about women's place in society and the home, and hence it cannot be regarded as clearly "feminist" in a modern sense[12].

Griffin's description of the female characters in the *Odyssey* as inscrutable[13] is perhaps the only one that (almost) all Homeric critics could agree with. The different interpretations of the various characters are due partly to ambiguities in the text itself. Different generations of scholars, however, have interpreted these ambiguities differently in relation to Homer's supposed compositional method. When Analytic critics saw

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[10] See Bentley n.8 above; also Graves 1955 p.201, where the character Nausicaa, "Homer's daughter" and the authoress of the *Odyssey*, says "The *Iliad* ... is devised by a man for men; this epic, the *Odyssey*, will be devised by a woman for women"; also Butler 1922 and Winkler 1990 pp.131ff. discussing Butler.

[11] Winkler 1990 pp.131-2. On the stereotype used by Butler, cf. p.4, on the problems with using "female sympathies" as proof of female authorship, p.2.

[12] On this point, see Cantarella 1987, Pedrick 1988 p.85ff., Murnaghan 1995 (discussed in part below) and readings such as that of Roisman 1987, who sees Penelope and Odysseus as being at odds, their interests in the closing books of the epic coinciding little.

[13] On the inscrutability of Helen, Penelope, and other Odyssean female characters, see Griffin 1980 pp.76-80.

Penelope acting "inconsistently" in book 18, appearing before the suitors, they saw evidence for different, earlier versions of the story. Similarly, when Athene, appearing in a dream to Telemachus, persuades him to return at once to Ithaca with the thought that Penelope might even now be about to remarry and carry off some of the goods from the house, this is taken to be evidence that this was actually being planned by Penelope in one version of the story. Any passage which does not fit straightforwardly into these scholars' view of the *Odyssey* is seen as fair game for excision or for assignment to an "earlier version not properly synthesised with our *Odyssey*". The skill of the poet in presenting the viewpoints of different characters is downplayed: all such cases are dismissed as errors. The inscrutability of the female characters becomes another stick with which to berate the poet for incompetence. For example, Fenik quotes Merkelbach distinguishing different characterisations of the queen:

> Penelope's inactivity is incomprehensible. Here in δ she is nothing but the weak, weeping woman, seeking consolation in sleep, just as poet B likes to depict her. The Penelope of poet A is entirely different. [14]

Fenik then adds:

> Penelope has fared badly in much Homeric criticism. Schwartz [(*Die Odysee*, Munich 1924)] finds four different Penelopes (distributed among poets O,K,T and B), each different, and the later editions all bad.

More recent criticism has allowed the poet to be more of a craftsman, looking for explanations of apparent inconsistencies in the poem, rather than dismissing them as flaws. Such an approach to Penelope has its advantages: it does not require constant recourse to "different versions incompletely synthesised". However, it does not avoid the problem of subjectivity: in order to make sense of Penelope, the reader has to fill in

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[14] Fenik 1974 p.164, with n.58, quoting from R. Merkelbach *Untersuchungen zur Odyssee* (Munich 1951). Cf. Page 1955 pp.120-8, Woodhouse 1930 pp.199-207 which breaks down Penelope into three aspects, the heroine of "Saga", "Romance", and "Folk-Tale".

the blanks left by the poet regarding her motivation at various points, regarding her thoughts, regarding her desires[15]. As the poet has not told us explicitly what Penelope is thinking at various crucial points - for example, when she proposes the trial of the bow - any reconstruction of her motivation at such a point must be based on what the poet says elsewhere, as interpreted by each reader.

One reason for the Analytic splitting up of Penelope is that various passages may be read as implying that she was unfaithful, or at the very least not ill-disposed towards the suitors, although in the main she is presented as the faithful wife who expresses hatred for them. But this apparent inconsistency arises partly because she is presented not only in person but also through other characters' statements about her. Even if Penelope's actions were easily interpretable, the seeds of doubt about her fidelity might still be sown by Telemachus' suspicion, by Athene's playing on this suspicion (in the dream in book 15), reinforced by her warning to Odysseus (book 13) to test his wife, and by the claims of the suitors that Penelope has been encouraging them. Above all, or rather, underlying all, is the persistent theme of comparison between the house of Odysseus and that of Agamemnon: despite Agamemnon's statement that Penelope is nothing like Clytaemnestra, the possibility remains throughout much of the narrative that Odysseus' homecoming could be like Agamemnon's[16]. The character of Penelope could even have been developed by

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[15] Felson-Rubin 1994 says "Homer invites 'psychologizing' about Penelope, especially concerning her decision to hold the contest of the bow" (p.126), although the possibility of "filling in" such details is denied as a valid approach by Foley 1995 p.97. Foley argues that despite the gaps in our information about Penelope's thoughts, the reader is given enough to "judge and make ethical sense of her decision" without making presuppositions about details not provided by the text - precisely the sort of details Felson-Rubin considers the audience are "invited" to think about.

[16] Although this is not wholly straightforward - see below on Agamemnon's view of Penelope and on Penelope and Clytaemnestra.

borrowing motifs from another story such as that of Clytaemnestra, or by creating her as the opposite of such a figure[17].

Penelope's depiction in the poem is not solely a matter of presenting a credible character: it must also be shaped by the demands of the plot. In folktale, character is essentially subservient to, and determined by, plot: "psychological" reconstruction of such matters as motivation is not part of the expected reading process - or at least only as far as is necessary to maintain basic verisimilitude. In Homer, however, we have not folktale but literature[18], which can explore the tension between character and plot. The best example is the tension created between Penelope's character as faithful wife, and the requirement of the plot (partly a folktale element) that she be on the point of remarriage. (That this motif is an integral part of the traditional story is suggested by the odd treatment of Penelope's weaving trick. This is not given as large a part in the epic as might be expected, and the discovery of Penelope's scheme does not seem to have changed the development of the action; the version of the plot given by Amphinomus in the second nekuia, in which Odysseus returns immediately after Penelope has finished the web, might seem a more obvious line to follow.) The conflicting demands of plot and characterisation have led to some of the scholar's problems in interpreting Penelope: in order for the plot to advance, Penelope must set the contest of the bow, an action which can be interpreted as showing her unfaithfulness to Odysseus[19]. By choosing to

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[17] Cf. Carpenter 1946 ch.1 p.104-5 on the development of Penelope through comparison with other figures; see also Woodhouse 1930 pp.246-7, who considers our *Odyssey* to have developed through the contrast of the houses of Agamemnon and Odysseus, starting from the parallels between Orestes and Telemachus.

[18] The relationship between myth, literature, and folktale is discussed pp.15ff.

[19] It is interesting that Homer does make Penelope take this step; modern retellings, worrying over how this fits with her characterisation, have dealt with this sometimes by making the contest an act of last resort, occasioned by the discovery of the weaving plot (for example, *Odysseus II: The Journey Through Hell*, by T. Robinson, R. Curtis and T. Haws (BBC 1987), in which the suitors' wickedness is emphasised by the heroine's desperation), or by having the contest initiated by Telemachus (in full knowledge of

tell the story as it occurs in this poem, the poet has sharpened some of these tensions: Penelope does not have to descend to entice the suitors in book 18, nor does the text have to be so opaque as to her motives in doing so[20]. It is this sort of scene which entices the audience to try to "fill out" Penelope's character and motivation. Penelope's character is a pivot for dramatic tension; even if the reader knows how the story will turn out, different possible endings can be envisaged or suggested to create such tension.

Viewpoints

As I have said, Penelope's apparent inconsistency arises partly because she is presented not only directly, but also as viewed by other characters of varying sympathies. As Felson-Rubin's able analysis shows, not all the text's comments about Penelope have authorial authority, so not all should be given the same weight when all are combined: their focalisation also varies significantly. Such an analysis also has the advantage of dealing with the text as we have it, rather than digressing into reconstruction of previous versions of the story: these may be interesting, but their results are unverifiable, and do not necessarily add much to our reading of the text we actually have. There are many potential approaches to Penelope; her character is drawn both directly in her actions and words, and in descriptions given by other characters, and indirectly, by comparison with other characters in the epic. Such comparison may be prompted by a repetition of a type scene, or other significant action, or by explicit comparison, as when Agamemnon twice contrasts Penelope and Clytaemnestra, or when Penelope herself compares her situation to Helen's. This study will start with an overview of the different pictures of Penelope

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Odysseus' return: for example, *The Odyssey* retold by G. McCaughrean (Oxford University Press 1993), in which Telemachus appears to be acting in complicity with Odysseus).

[20] Cf. Griffin 1980 ch.2 on non-explicit motives in the Homeric poems.

which are given in the poem from the differing points of view of the other characters, but starting with one element shared between the characters and narrating voice: the epithets applied to Penelope. It will then move on to consider how Penelope is shaped by comparison and contrast with other figures in the poem.

Epithets

Some epithets are shared and add little, but others are peculiar to an individual, and hence contribute more to a reader's conception of that individual. This is even more the case when they are used by several voices in the poem, both authorial and those of characters. Penelope is not as richly endowed with epithets as some Homeric characters; in fact, apart from phrases relating to her parentage or marriage, Penelope has only two real epithets, περίφρων - used fifty times of Penelope in the *Odyssey*, and otherwise only four times of Eurycleia, and once (11.345) of Arete - and ἐχέφρων - used eight times of Penelope and once of Odysseus[21]. Both refer to her intelligence. Although it may not be decisive evidence (as the surprising use of ἀμύμων for Aegisthus could suggest), the lack of examples of other "unsuitable" personal epithets does suggest that the more personal Homeric epithets on the whole reflect a traditional perception of a character[22]. The individual epithets used for Penelope thus suggest that the "original version" of the myth portrayed faithful Penelope as characteristically intelligent, and using her intelligence in her

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[21] Of Odysseus at 13.332, used by Penelope at 19.326.

[22] Though there is some debate over the meaning of ἀμύμων, and the traditional etymology from α + μωμος seems clearly wrong, its range of meanings from "beautiful/handsome" through to "good" does demand that with reference to Aegisthus the connotations lie all at one end of the scale, which is not wholly satisfactory. See Amory 1973, especially ch.4 on the etymology of ἀμύμων and pp.123-4 on Aegisthus; also Lowenstam 1993 pp.48-51. On "illogical epithets" in the Homeric poems, see Lowenstam 1993 ch.1, especially pp.38-53 on the "improper assignment of individual epithets". Lowenstam explains away all apparent examples of this phenomenon, mainly through consideration of the meaning and use of each epithet. He concludes that, although not necessarily the result of a careful search for an ideal word in each context, "each epithet that was employed was sanctioned by the poet" (p.57).

husband's interests. One could argue that Penelope has few epithets because those reflecting the "original", unfaithful version have been dropped, but it is more plausible to suppose that Penelope has few epithets because she was originally a minor character in the cycle of myth, the *Odyssey*-poet having chosen to give her a larger part in the story. I would thus see her as a prehistorically obscure good wife whose popular image became shaped by Homer, rather than as a previously well-defined bad wife utterly whitewashed by Homer.

The only other stock descriptions accorded to Penelope in the *Odyssey* are γοόωσα and ὀδυρομένη. γοόωσα is used to describe her five times, twice in the fourth book, and three times in the nineteenth, during her interview with the disguised Odysseus. There she is lamenting for the absent Odysseus, while in the earlier book, she is worried about Telemachus, whose journey to Pylos has just been revealed to her. ὀδυρομένη too is used to describe Penelope's reaction to Odysseus' absence and being reminded of her loss. Penelope's weeping is, it seems, not a negative trait, for it illustrates her devotion to her husband, and to her son, even though both seem to be doubted by Telemachus. Cantarella perceives Penelope's frequent tears as indicative of her lack of power as a woman, and of a woman's passivity[23]; however, these tears can be given a more positive evaluation. Penelope's continual weeping demonstrates the genuineness of her devotion to her lost husband, more forcefully than the doubts expressed by her son and her suitors suggest the opposite. Penelope's tears do spring from her impotence, her inability to rid herself of her suitors, but the epic opens after her own schemes have been exhausted. There is no evidence that Penelope has spent the whole of the last twenty years weeping passively; rather, the tales told by the queen herself and her suitors suggest that she has been active

[23] Cantarella 1987 p.29; cf. Helleman 1995 pp.235-6.

over the twenty years, constant in her devotion to and longing for Odysseus rather than in empty tears.

Internal Perspectives

An audience's way into the world of the poem is in part through their sympathy with the various characters. The text incorporates several different viewpoints on each character - that of the main narrator, that of the character, and those of the other characters in the poem[24]. These views will not always be identical, and hence need to be synthesised if an audience want to create a complete, psychologically satisfying conception of each character. I here deal with the perspectives on Penelope offered by the various characters approximately in the order of their first reference to Penelope; Penelope herself is kept for last.

The view of Telemachus

The first mention of Penelope by name in the *Odyssey*, as anything more than the object of Odysseus' longing, comes from her son, Telemachus, in conversation with Athene. Penelope's first appearance in person (as discussed below) stresses her devotion to Odysseus and her modest behaviour. It is therefore important to consider the picture painted by Telemachus, for he gives a very different view of his mother. Telemachus

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[24] This approach is similar though not identical to that of Felson-Rubin 1994, which analyses Penelope in terms of possible plot structures. Felson-Rubin (pp.125-7) explicitly states that she is giving a reading of and for the twentieth century; she does add, however, that as her reading is closely text-based, a similar reading could well have been possible for an "original audience". My reading aims more directly at being closer to that of an ancient audience, as it forms the background to the study of Penelope in later antiquity, which is based on ancient readings of the *Odyssey* (as well as, possibly, other texts): it aims to show that the reading suggested by the texts of later antiquity can be justified. The text is naturally our main resource in constructing any approach, and my approach too is therefore based on looking at what the text actually tells us. On the problems of reconstructing the viewpoint of an "original audience", see Sourvinou-Inwood 1995 ch.1, 1991 pp.3-23.

makes his first reference to Penelope in such a way as to cause us to wonder about her chastity and faithfulness to Odysseus[25]:

> μήτηρ μέν τ' ἐμέ φησι τοῦ ἔμμεναι, αὐτὰρ ἐγώ γε
> οὐκ οἶδ'· οὐ γάρ πώ τις ἐὸν γόνον αὐτὸς ἀνέγνω.
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> 1.215-6

This is consistent with Telemachus' attitude to his mother throughout the poem: even in book 23, he is still berating her for not being quick enough to recognise Odysseus.

Telemachus' suspicion of and hostility towards his mother is made clear. The suitors play on this in the Ithacan assembly, separating the interests of Telemachus and his mother, in contrast to the faithful servants in Ithaca, who, loyal to both Penelope and Telemachus, as well as to Odysseus, do not seem to feel a conflict of interest between mother and son (see below). Telemachus' hostility towards his mother contributes to the conception of the 'Telemachy' as an educational process dealing with Telemachus' coming of age[26]. The hostility of son towards mother is, seen in this light, a natural part of his maturation. However, the doubts which Telemachus has about his mother are passed on to the audience, particularly through the paradigm of the house of Atreus. Telemachus is told by Athene to emulate Orestes (1.298ff.), another maturing young hero, but, although this is not the aspect of the story stressed by Athene, Orestes was probably known even at this stage as the killer of his own mother[27]. This aspect of the story is not stressed in the *Odyssey* because Telemachus does not need to be exhorted to take revenge on his mother; this need not mean, however, that this aspect of the story was unknown to an original audience. When Telemachus is told to be an Orestes, this

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[25] Felson-Rubin (1994 p.81) is thus wrong to say that Telemachus does not think of Penelope as potentially unfaithful until he has met Helen.
[26] On the 'Telemachy' as "Bildungsroman" see Schol. *Od.* 1.93, 284, Porphyry on *Od.* 1.284; cf. Clarke 1963 pp.102-4 (n.16 for earlier bibliography), West 1988 p.35.
[27] See particularly 3.309-10.

must invite comparison of his mother with Clytaemnestra, who was, at the very least, known to have been unfaithful to her husband.

Telemachus first appears in the *Odyssey* casting doubt on his own parentage; as in Agamemnon's speeches, his generalisation that no one's father's identity may be known with certainty reflects the negative conception of women as all potentially unfaithful and dangerous to a man's household[28]. He also reflects some knowledge of Penelope's view of things, however, when he calls the marriage which she will not accept a στυγερὸν γάμον (1.249), although there is criticism implicit in his statement of her refusal to "make an end of it" (1.249-50). His reproach of the suitors is illuminating: although Penelope does not think of him as fully grown, he sees the suitors as destroying *his* house and eating up *his* goods:

> τοὶ δὲ φθινύθουσιν ἔδοντες
> οἶκον ἐμόν· τάχα δή με διαρραίσουσι καὶ αὐτόν.
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> *Od.* 1.250-1

His perception of the house, and hence matters concerning it, as his own is further illuminated and shown to be a mark of his maturing in his first depicted encounter with Penelope. She comes down from her room in order to tell Phemius not to sing about the return of the Achaeans from Troy. Telemachus rebukes her and claims for himself the authority to decide such matters:

> μῦθος δ' ἄνδρεσσι μελήσει
> πᾶσι, μάλιστα δ' ἐμοί· τοῦ γὰρ κράτος ἔστ' ἐνὶ οἴκῳ.
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> *Od.* 1.358-9

Thus Telemachus both counts himself among the men, and claims control of the household; he states that Odysseus is dead to back up his claim that he is now the man of

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[28] A perception common in the *Odyssey* which may be taken as evidence for its non-feminist, patriarchal leanings, probably reflecting Greek popular opinion about women, illustrated by, for example, Semonides fr. 7; for further citations, see Hutchinson 1985 *ad* 187-95.

the house (perhaps the echo of Hector's words to Andromache at *Il.* 6.642-3 reinforces this image for the audience). His assertiveness continues when he orders an assembly for the following day; the surprise of Penelope and the suitors at his actions suggest that this assertiveness is a new sort of behaviour for Telemachus (for example, 1.382).

At the assembly, Telemachus' words again show some understanding of his mother's position, for he says that she is courted οὐκ ἐθελούσῃ (2.50). This may be attributable partly to the aim of his speech at this point: he laments the loss of his father, and presents his own household as defenceless, preyed on by the rapacious suitors, with no man to defend it (ἀνήρ 2.58-9). His youth is stressed here by the way in which he loses his self-control at the end of his speech and flings down the sceptre. When Antinous puts the blame for the situation onto Penelope, Telemachus does not refute this, but rather again shows the weakness of his own position, because he says that he cannot send his mother back to her father: although he has claimed to be the man of the house, there are some actions which his father could do which he cannot, because they involve his mother. His attitude to his mother outside this public context, where he is putting across a case, is shown by his preparations for his journey to Pylos. His instructions to Eurycleia not to tell Penelope of his journey suggest that he is trying to avoid her preventing him going, or crying (2.375-6), but the fact that the information is also kept from all the other serving women except Eurycleia suggests another motive too, namely fear of betrayal to the suitors. Penelope is again grouped by Telemachus, however unjustly, with those whom he cannot trust, that is, the suitors and those loyal to them.

Telemachus' doubts about his mother ought to be laid to rest by the comments made by Nestor, Helen, and Menelaus; throughout his travels, Telemachus' likeness to his father both in looks and character is stressed, a theme which reaches its culmination

at 21.126-9, where Telemachus proves himself his father's equal in his ability to string the bow, disproving his earlier doubt about his parentage. However, the success of the dream sent by Athene shows that his fears about his mother are still very much alive; the idea that she might be preparing to remarry and carry off his belongings very rapidly prompts him to action. His hostility towards Penelope is clearly unabated in book 17 (especially 17.101-6), where he greets his mother coldly on his return, and in book 23, where he berates her for her failure to recognise Odysseus immediately. The hostility between mother and son has been seen as an accurate picture of a relationship of parent and rapidly maturing offspring, but in the context of the *Odyssey*, where the father-son relationship is rated highly, and the relationships of Penelope, Odysseus, and Telemachus compared to those of Clytaemnestra, Agamemnon, and Orestes, such hostility serves also to remind the audience of the negative paradigm of female behaviour, of the route of unfaithfulness and adultery which Penelope could take.

The view of Athene

Athene's comments on Penelope are interesting in their apparent inconsistency, though they must be interpreted in the context of the particular characters to whom they are addressed. She both assures Odysseus of Penelope's fidelity and tells him to test her, saying that this would be his way of doing things:

> ἀσπασίως γάρ κ' ἄλλος ἀνὴρ ἀλαλήμενος ἐλθὼν
> ἴετ' ἐνὶ μεγάροις ἰδέειν παῖδάς τ' ἄλοχόν τε·
> σοὶ δ' οὔ πω φίλον ἐστὶ δαήμεναι οὐδὲ πυθέσθαι,
> πρίν γ' ἔτι σῆς ἀλόχου πειρήσεαι, ἥ τέ τοι αὖτως
> ἧσται ἐνὶ μεγάροισιν, ὀϊζυραὶ δέ οἱ αἰεὶ
> φθίνουσιν νύκτες τε καὶ ἤματα δάκρυ χεούσῃ.
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> *Od.* 13.333-38

However, Athene also suggests that Penelope's actions are not above reproach: she tells Odysseus that she has been tricking the suitors by sending them all messages, making promises to each of them. Although Athene qualifies this by saying νόος δέ οἱ ἄλλα μενοινᾷ (13.381), this is not a wholly favourable picture of Penelope, and Odysseus' reaction - saying that, had the goddess not warned him, he would have met his fate on his return home, like Agamemnon - may suggest that Odysseus does not wholly trust his wife[29]. Athene's words serve to remind Odysseus of one possible example his wife could follow, that of Clytaemnestra; although the possibility that Penelope is unfaithful is explicitly denied, it has still been brought to mind. It is also Athene who warns Telemachus to return to Ithaca from Sparta in case Penelope is about to remarry (15.10-42), and Athene who prevents Penelope from recognising Odysseus at the same moment as Eurycleia; however, Athene also reassures Telemachus that he is his father's son[30], and holds Penelope as a fit mother for the hero Telemachus will be (1.222-3). Athene also suggests a more negative perception of Penelope at 15.24-6, when she tells Telemachus to entrust the gifts he has been given in Sparta to a trusted maidservant, to be looked after until his marriage; the obvious choice would seem to be Eurycleia, here again filling the role which might otherwise belong to Penelope - when Helen gives Telemachus the robe to be kept for his bride, she tells him to give it to Penelope for her to look after it for him (15.127)[31], and this is contradicted by Athene's instructions. The way in which Athene suggests the negative interpretations of Penelope's actions contrasts with the tale she tells Telemachus about Odysseus' whereabouts when

[29] Cf. Felson-Rubin 1994 p.52. Athene also warns Odysseus against the suitors, but their presence does not seem to explain fully her advice that Penelope be tested.
[30] The theme of paternity seems important in this poem; one function of the 'Telemachy' is to show that Telemachus is a worthy son of Odysseus.
[31] Cf. Felson-Rubin 1994 p.83.

disguised as Mentes. There, she glosses over Odysseus' infidelity with Calypso, by telling his son that his father is detained by "wild men" (1.198-9); thus although not averse to highlighting the possibilities for Penelope's bad behaviour, Athene does not raise the same sort of doubts in Telemachus' mind about his father's actions[32]. Athene does seem to use Penelope in her plot to help Odysseus regain his throne: she brings Penelope down before the suitors in book 18, beautifying her against her will, sends her to sleep when the massacre is taking place, and possibly inspires Penelope's weaving as a delaying tactic[33].

Athene's treatment of Penelope seems to provide the best evidence that the *Odyssey* is not at heart a feminist poem, not written to make Penelope the hero, or even a joint hero with Odysseus[34]. Although there are similarities between goddess and mortal woman (see below), Athene does not show Penelope the favour which she shows to Odysseus, who is also like her; one may compare the way in which Penelope is beautified against her will, while in books 6 and 23 her beautifying of Odysseus happens after he has chosen to bathe and dress in fresh clothing. Thus, although Athene does send Penelope the comfort of a dream to reassure her of Telemachus' safety, when Penelope asks the dream about Odysseus, she is given no real answer:

> οὐ μέν τοι κεῖνόν γε διηνεκέως ἀγορεύσω
> ζώει ὅ γ' ἢ τέθνηκε· κακὸν δ' ἀνεμώλια βάζειν.
>
> *Od.* 4.836-7

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[32] Cf. Thornton 1970 p.106.

[33] 19.138 attributes the inspiration for the deception to a δαίμων; given Athene's links to weaving and care for Odysseus, it has been suggested that this refers to her. On Penelope's own perspective, see de Jong 1987 pp.158, 239-40.

[34] Cf. Murnaghan 1995, who argues that Athene's plotting in the *Odyssey* serves to reinforce the poem's conservative position.

Though Penelope is "soothed at heart" (4.840)[35] Athene's refusal to reassure her about Odysseus could seem unnecessarily harsh, given that other reliable (though not divine) sources will reassure her (and that Athene has been happy to tell Telemachus at 1.203-5 that his father will definitely return home). Athene goads the suitors against Odysseus in order to drive him to greater fervour against them; it is possible that she keeps Penelope in suspense for a similar reason, in order to motivate the contest of the bow. However, the fact that Penelope disbelieves so many reassurances that Odysseus will return home suggests that such information from the dream would not necessarily have caused her to act differently.

This leads to the inference that Athene is merely using Penelope to forward the plot she has in mind for Odysseus and Telemachus; to have her collapse from worry over Telemachus would not help this aim. It is Athene who sets off the action of the *Odyssey*, masterminding both Odysseus' return and Telemachus' quest for news of his father (a search which brings him to manhood). Odysseus and Penelope seem to be the only characters who act independently of the roles in the plot which Athene has devised for them - and Odysseus does not diverge much from his expected role. He forces Athene to acknowledge her identity on Ithaca, but this seems to be no less than she expects of him. When Odysseus tells his own story for the four books of the *Apology*, he makes no mention of help from Athene. Penelope too takes some action outside the part assigned for her by Athene: she controls Odysseus' final return and reception into his home. Earlier, though, when she tries to step outside Athene's control, by asking the dream her own question, the dream leaves her, as Athene again asserts control of the information

[35] Although this line does not specify that it was only about Telemachus that Penelope was reassured, he had been her most immediate source of worry before the dream; the contrast with the suitors at 4.842-7, with its specific mention of Telemachus, does suggest that he was their shared object of thought.

which Penelope may have. It is also Athene who turns Penelope's mind aside at the moment of Eurycleia's cry at her recognition of Odysseus; although some earlier version of the story might have had Penelope and Odysseus plotting together, in this epic version, the women with whom Odysseus plots are rather Eurycleia and Athene herself. Athene can be described as consciously presenting herself as a better ally for Odysseus than Penelope, when she says at 13.336-40 that she never doubted Odysseus would succeed in getting home, while Penelope has given up hope[36]. Athene then goes on to prove herself a more useful partner, by working with both father and son, while Penelope feels herself torn by her duty to each - her duty to stay faithful to Odysseus, and her duty to protect Telemachus and his livelihood against the suitors, an aim possibly best served by her remarriage[37]. Athene also proves herself a better ally by her presence at the end of the poem, ending the fight with the suitors' families, after she has inspired Laertes to youthful exploits; Penelope, in contrast, does not have any direct speech after her reunion with Odysseus, and the only reference to her in the final book is in the second nekuia: her obscurity is only lifted by a reading of the events which reinforces her fidelity but ignores her cunning[38].

In the repeated pattern of Penelope's descent from her room in an attempt to intervene, and her subsequent return to her room without having accomplished anything[39], Penelope's return is several times followed by her sleeping, a sleep sent by Athene. The formula οἱ ὕπνον | ἡδὺν ἐπὶ βλεφάροισι βάλε γλαυκῶπις Ἀθήνη is

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[36] Murnaghan 1995 p.72.
[37] Murnaghan 1995 pp. 74-5; cf. Doherty 1991.
[38] See below for more on this reading of Agamemnon's words.
[39] Cf. Rutherford 1985 p.137; this type of scene occurs in books 1, 16, 17, 18, 19 (where Penelope is deceived by Odysseus, rather than failing to act) and 21 (where she sets in action the test of the bow, but is dismissed to her room before it is complete). In book 23, her descent is after a happier sleep, and to a happier scene, which finally sees her reunited with Odysseus.

used four times in the *Odyssey*[40], each time to describe Athene's sending sleep to Penelope, after one of her descents and subsequent weeping. Such sleep is a relief from weeping and worry for Penelope, but also removes her from the action, and illustrates her inability to find a solution to the situation she is in. At 18.188, another line is used to describe Athene sending Penelope to sleep; there, Penelope has not been weeping, but rather she has started to act, albeit at Athene's instigation. During her sleep, Athene beautifies her, but Penelope's reaction on waking up is to pray for death, as a similar gentle release from her longing for Odysseus. Her true feelings are thus asserted against the part which Athene wishes her to play, in a scene which seems designed as part of Athene's plan to rouse Odysseus against the suitors. The sleep which Athene sends on Penelope at various points in the epic is thus a healing sleep in some senses, but it also illustrates how Athene is directing Odysseus' return and Telemachus' maturing; when Penelope is ordered by Telemachus to retire to her room, the sleep brings respite from her sufferings, but it also enables the plot to move on without her.

The view of the Suitors

The suitors may want to marry Penelope, but this does not mean that they are generally under any illusions about her attitude to them (collectively). It is difficult to know what to make of some statements by various suitors, for if they are telling the truth about Penelope sending messages of encouragement to each of them separately, this may put some of her other actions in a different light.

The first suitor to talk about Penelope is Antinous, at the assembly (2.85-128). Answering Telemachus' accusations that the suitors are all acting wrongly in courting

[40] 1.364, 17.457, 19.604, 21.358.

Penelope and destroying the substance of Odysseus' house, he lays the blame wholly on Penelope:

> σοὶ δ' οὔ τι μνηστῆρες Ἀχαιῶν αἴτιοί εἰσιν,
> ἀλλὰ φίλη μήτηρ, ἥ τοι περὶ κέρδεα οἶδεν.
>
> *Od.* 2.87-8

Playing on the strained relations between Telemachus and his mother, Antinous separates the interests of the two; Penelope, he says, is acting in her own interests, winning κλέος for her faithfulness and ingenuity, while she is the cause of the depletion of Telemachus' patrimony (2.125-6). Antinous also accuses Penelope of leading the suitors on; in his summary of her deception of them over the weaving, he says that she started by saying Odysseus was already dead, which might be taken as legitimising their courtship of her. He also accuses her of leading them on more actively:

> πάντας μὲν ἔλπει, καὶ ὑπίσχεται ἀνδρὶ ἑκάστῳ,
> ἀγγελίας προϊεῖσα· νόος δέ οἱ ἄλλα μενοινᾷ.
>
> *Od.* 2.91-2

Telemachus does not dispute this point; rather he replies to Antinous' advice that he should send his mother back to her father's house and let her be remarried from there. He says that it is impossible for him to take this advice as he could not pay back her dowry, nor does he want to call down his mother's anger on himself. The advice is repeated by Eurymachus; again, the implication is that Penelope's interests and those of her son and his household are different, and that Telemachus or his mother can solve the problem by precipitating her remarriage. Antinous completes his narrative by comparing Penelope to earlier heroines[41]; although he says that she is cleverer than them, this does not seem to be a compliment (or is, at best, a grudging one).

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[41] Tyro, Alcmene, and Mycene; the first two bore children to gods, and it seems likely that Mycene was the mother of the eponymous hero of Mycenae by a god; their cunning was presumably in preserving their children, managing to pass them off as the children of mortal husbands: Penelope would thus be parallel to them in her manipulation of her suitors.

Antinous' narrative about Penelope's web is repeated and extended by Amphimedon's ghost in the second nekuia[42]. Antinous says only that having been caught unpicking her weaving, Penelope was forced to complete it; rather oddly, he leaves the story hanging at this point. Amphimedon completes it in what has been seen as the "original version" of the story[43]. He says that Penelope finished her weaving and at that time (τότε 24.149) Odysseus returned and plotted with Penelope, telling her to set the test of the bow to give him an opportunity to kill the suitors (24.167-9). Amphimedon's version of events differs only slightly from that given in the rest of the poem, and the only substantive difference is that he says that Odysseus ordered Penelope to set up the test of the bow, while in book 19, it is Penelope who makes the suggestion, although it is then approved by the disguised Odysseus. It is not explicit in Amphimedon's speech whether or not he thinks Penelope recognised her husband and plotted with him; he says that Odysseus and Telemachus plotted together (24.153), but says only that Odysseus told Penelope what to do:

> αὐτὰρ ὁ ἦν ἄλοχον πολυκερδείῃσιν ἄνωγε
> τόξον μνηστήρεσσι θέμεν πολιόν τε σίδηρον,
> ἡμῖν αἰνομόροισιν ἀέθλια καὶ φόνου ἀρχήν.
>
> *Od.* 24.167-9

Thus the version of events presented in Amphimedon's speech does not differ as greatly from the rest of the poem as has sometimes been suggested; although the natural inference from his words is that Penelope recognised Odysseus, this is not explicit. By attributing the idea to Odysseus, Amphimedon is underestimating Penelope; the suitors admit that she deceived them with her weaving, but here Amphimedon is not willing to allow that Penelope was working on her own initiative. Such underestimation of

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[42] Cf. Büchner 1940 pp.129-136.
[43] Cf. Heubeck 1992 p.377 with further bibliography, also Woodhouse 1930 pp.80-91, Page 1955 pp.119-129, Kirk 1962 pp.245-7.

Penelope seems common in the poem: Penelope manages to see through the dream sent her by Athene in book 4, suggesting that the goddess has underestimated her intelligence, and Telemachus does not credit her with the ability to recognise the worth of the beggar and treat him properly (20.128-43). Even Odysseus, perhaps, underestimates her carefulness, although he makes more allowance for her delay in recognising him than their son (see below).

Thus the suitors' words about Penelope reveal her intelligence and cunning; they also show her acting in ways which might suggest unfaithfulness to Odysseus. This is the negative side of the picture, the unfaithful woman feared by her son. However, Penelope's actions with regard to the suitors also show her faithfulness (see below). The portrayal of the suitors is negative, hubristic, and violent, and they seem to pay no attention to Penelope's expressions of dislike and reluctance to remarry. At the first appearance of individual suitors, Antinous and Eurymachus are characterised as vicious: Antinous has a particular desire for power in Ithaca, and Eurymachus is a soft-spoken dissembler[44]. This apparent failure to take in her words undermines their reliability as narrators for events before the beginning of the poem, although this only becomes clear in the second half of the epic. Thus, when they accuse Penelope of having led them on, by sending messages to each of them and promising to marry one of them when her weaving was finished, the audience do not know how accurate this picture is. When Athene tells the same story to Odysseus, it is in the context of an assertion of Penelope's faithfulness to Odysseus, and thus presents her actions in a positive light, showing her intelligence deployed in keeping faith with Odysseus. Although the story told by

[44] Cf. Race 1993, especially pp.83-8 on the suitors in general, p.84 on Antinous and Eurymachus.

Amphimedon to the ghost of Agamemnon is different from that told in the poem, this may be because the suitors' version of earlier events is similarly biased against Penelope.

The views of other characters in Ithaca

Penelope is mentioned by other Ithacan characters too - various servants, and Odysseus' mother in the nekuia. Once she has been allowed to drink of the blood, Anticleia questions her son before he can question her. Asking how he has come to associate with the dead, she wonders whether he is still wandering,

> οὐδέ πω ἦλθες
> εἰς Ἰθάκην, οὐδ' εἶδες ἐνὶ μεγάροισι γυναῖκα;
>
> *Od.* 11.161-2

Anticleia thus closely associates Odysseus' return to Ithaca with his return to his faithful wife, an association made also by other characters[45]. Her second speech, answering Odysseus' questions about what is happening on Ithaca, has aroused much discussion. Anticleia says, speaking about Penelope and Laertes:

> "καὶ λίην κείνη γε μένει τετληότι θυμῷ
> σοῖσιν ἐνὶ μεγάροισιν· ὀϊζυραὶ δὲ οἱ αἰεὶ
> φθίνουσιν νύκτές τε καὶ ἤματα δάκρυ χεούσῃ.
> σὸν δ' οὔ πώ τις ἔχει καλὸν γέρας, ἀλλὰ ἕκηλος
> Τηλέμαχος τεμένεα νέμεται καὶ δαῖτας ἐΐσας
> δαίνυται, ἃς ἐπέοικε δικασπόλον ἄνδρ' ἀλεγύνειν."
>
> *Od.* 11.181-6

The description of Penelope fits the Penelope who has been described in the poem up to this point; it is considered surprising, however, that Anticleia makes no reference to the suitors. One possible explanation for this is that her speech is accurately designed to fit its own narrative time, that is, at least seven years before Odysseus reaches Ithaca, while

[45] See below under Odysseus' view of Penelope.

the suitors are only there for the last three or four years of Penelope's wait[46]. Alternatively, it might be seen to reflect an even earlier point in time, namely that at which Anticleia died. However, this does not fit the picture given of Telemachus - fully adult and in control of his father's lands and privileges, which would suggest that the speech reflects the state of affairs during the period when Odysseus is with the Phaeacians - the dramatic timing of the speech as retold by Odysseus. Anticleia's speech can be understood as reflecting the position in Ithaca at the time she died, incorrectly projecting the then peaceful state of affairs into the future (chronological realism)[47]. The absence of any mention of the suitors may also be explained by the fact that Teiresias has just mentioned them (narrative economy)[48]; Anticleia aims to reassure her son of his wife's fidelity, not to highlight the problems which he will face. Anticleia's speech is thus better suited to the period just before Odysseus' return, but does not give a very accurate picture of the state of affairs in Ithaca. Anticleia's description of a faithful wife and adult son in possession of his father's privileges contrasts with the picture of Agamemnon's unfaithful wife and his son driven into exile; Agamemnon too paints a happy picture of Odysseus' return to his family on Ithaca (11.444ff.), and so both contrast the fates of the two heroes. The oddities in Anticleia's speech may thus be better understood if seen in their context in the poem, rather than taken out of that context and considered as if factual. In the context of Odysseus' tale to the Phaeacians, Anticleia's speech also serves as a reminder to Odysseus' hosts that he has a loving wife and son at home who are waiting for his return, and thus reinforces his request for a

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[46] See the accounts of Penelope's web, *Od.*2.89-90, 19.151-2, and especially 24.125ff., which suggest that the suitors had been at the palace for between three and four years.
[47] Murnaghan 1987 p.126.
[48] Cf. Fenik 1974 pp.120-6 on the way in which Circe and Teiresias give complementary accounts of Odysseus' further wanderings, particularly p.122, which notes the avoidance of repetition between the two accounts.

passage home rather than the honour of staying in Phaeacia and marrying Nausicaa. It has been suggested Odysseus is trying to evoke pity in his description of his trip to the Underworld, by raising the possibility that Penelope may be unfaithful through Agamemnon's tale of Clytaemnestra, while explicitly dissociating himself from Agamemnon's unflattering views on women, in order to keep Arete favourably disposed towards him. It is less convincing to suggest that Anticleia's description of Telemachus enjoying his privileges as ruler is part of Odysseus' attempt to persuade the Phaeacians to convey him home[49].

A living character important in forming a reader's view of Penelope is Eumaeus, the first Ithacan to tell Odysseus about events on the island in his absence. His first speeches to the disguised Odysseus reveal how much Odysseus is missed (*Od.* 14.61-71, 89ff.), and his first reference to Penelope makes two important points: she does not believe all the wanderers who come to tell her tales about Odysseus, yet she listens to anyone who claims to have news:

> "ὦ γέρον, οὔ τις κεῖνον ἀνὴρ ἀλαλήμενος ἐλθὼν
> ἀγγέλλων πείσειε γυναῖκά τε καὶ φίλον υἱόν,
> ἀλλ' ἄλλως κομιδῆς κεχρημένοι ἄνδρες ἀλῆται
> ψεύδοντ', οὐδ' ἐθέλουσιν ἀληθέα μυθήσασθαι.
> ὃς δέ κ' ἀλητεύων Ἰθάκης ἐς δῆμον ἵκηται,
> ἐλθὼν ἐς δέσποιναν ἐμὴν ἀπατήλια βάζει·
> ἡ δ' εὖ δεξαμένη φιλέει καὶ ἕκαστα μεταλλᾷ,
> καί οἱ ὀδυρομένῃ βλεφάρων ἄπο δάκρυα πίπτει,
> ἣ θέμις ἐστὶ γυναικός, ἐπὴν πόσις ἄλλοθ' ὄληται."
>
> *Od.* 14.122-30

Eumaeus considers Penelope to be acting correctly, in receiving all wanderers, and weeping at their news of her husband, even if she does not believe any of it: thus she proves herself a good wife, ever looking for more news, ever hospitable to those who bring it. Eumaeus' description of Penelope differs from that of Athene in one major

[49] Felson-Rubin 1994 pp.100-103.

respect: he does not mention the messages she has been sending to the suitors. Such an action was presumably worthy of reproach; Eumaeus may thus be read either as presenting Penelope's actions in a favourable light, or as being ignorant of some of her actions. Eumaeus' description, which aims to portray Penelope as faithful, is thus undercut by the contrast with the other accounts which the audience (but not Odysseus) have heard. Odysseus has been assured by his mother, Athene, and Eumaeus that Penelope is waiting faithfully for him; his first direct information that this might not be the case comes from Telemachus (although he has also been advised not to approach her directly by Athene and Agamemnon). However, before Telemachus arrives, Eumaeus tells the beggar the story of how he came to be Odysseus' swineherd. Born in Syria, he was sold to Laertes by Phoenicians, who had persuaded his Phoenician nurse to leave with them in secret, bringing what she could from her master's house, including the child Eumaeus. The notion that women are not to be trusted is reinforced by Eumaeus' story, which should act as a warning to Odysseus that this is one path his wife could have followed. The admonitory force of the story (and it should be remembered that tales other than myths may be told with admonitory or paradigmatic force[50]) is stronger for the audience than for Odysseus, however, because it comes shortly after Athene's warning to Telemachus that he should hurry back to Ithaca, in case Penelope is about to marry Eurymachus and carry off property from Odysseus'/Telemachus' house. In between these two passages comes a digression on Theoclymenus' family, which included Amphiaraus, whose wife was bribed to persuade him to go to Thebes and die there (*Od.* 15.244-7): a passage which again illustrates the untrustworthiness of women and the

[50] For example, Odysseus' tale to Eumaeus about a night ambush at Troy (14.462-506) is told in order to test Eumaeus' hospitality.

damage they can cause to a hero's household. Thus, although nothing is said explicitly in this book to make Odysseus doubt his wife's faithfulness to him, the other stories told all reinforce the picture of women as potentially unfaithful and destructive to the *oikos*.

Eumaeus says little else about Penelope, but his closeness to her - for example, acting as messenger between the beggar and the queen - does enhance our perception of her loyalty to Odysseus. It is because of Eumaeus' recommendation of the beggar, it seems, that Penelope is so keen to talk to him; possibly this is because Eumaeus is "not a gullible man"[51], a recommendation which may explain why Penelope trusts him, but also shows that his creditable judgement of Penelope should carry weight both with the beggar and the audience. It is notable that all the servants who are loyal to Odysseus are also loyal to Penelope; Melantho, who insults Odysseus, is also one of the servants not faithful to Penelope (18.321-5), who scolds her (19.89-95). Thus the loyalties of the servants make it clear that the interests and desires of Penelope are identified with those of Telemachus and Odysseus: it is Telemachus who tries to put his parents on opposing sides.

The other important Ithacan character is Eurycleia, but she says little about Penelope. She is the servant whom Telemachus trusts to help make arrangements for his trip to Sparta and Pylos, and she is the first he greets on his return to the palace. Eurycleia, it may be noted, was originally a servant in Odysseus' family, and hence has been in the household longer than Penelope. Given Telemachus' distrust of his mother, it is perhaps not surprising that he turns to a servant who has been with his family over several generations. However, the fact that he demands an oath from her not to tell Penelope about his journey suggests that left to herself, she would tell Penelope, and

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[51] Winkler 1990 p.148; cf. Odysseus at 14.391, who says Eumaeus has a θυμὸς ... ἄπιστος.

hence that she has no doubts about her mistress; indeed, almost her first reaction upon recognising Odysseus is to tell Penelope. This impression is confirmed by Eurycleia's own words: when Telemachus accuses Penelope of not having shown the beggar proper hospitality, Eurycleia defends her (20.128-43).

Analytic criticism suggested that Penelope's recognition of Odysseus was displaced on to Eurycleia, who then played the part of the hero's accomplice amongst the women of the house, bolting the doors and keeping the maids away from the slaughter of the suitors (20.380-7). Certainly the scene in book 19 does seem to be leading up to a recognition of Odysseus by Penelope, and the fact that this does not happen is rather surprising. This need not mean, however, that here we have an incompetent splicing of two versions of the tale; rather, we can admire the way in which the poet confounds audience expectations[52]. An accomplice within the house, who will keep the women away from the slaughter of the suitors, while not strictly necessary for Odysseus' plan, is a useful adjunct to it; by not giving this role to Penelope, Homer reserves the reunion of husband and wife for a position where it will not be overshadowed by the planning and execution of Odysseus' revenge on the suitors. Thus Eurycleia's role here enables the reunion with Penelope to form a climax rather than a prelude to Odysseus' return to his palace.

Penelope is also mentioned by Dolius[53], a servant who stays with Laertes and works for him, but came to Ithaca with Penelope (*Od.* 4.735). He is on Laertes' estate when Odysseus goes there to find his father, and, on first seeing Odysseus, expresses feelings like those of Eumaeus and Philoetius - he too has missed Odysseus, and did not

[52] Cf. Austin 1975 pp.219-23.
[53] Cf. Heubeck 1992 pp.385-6 *ad* 24.222, West 1989.

expect to see him again. He then asks, however, whether Penelope knows that Odysseus has returned, or whether they ought to send a messenger to her[54]. This could be ascribed to his position as originally one of Penelope's servants, rather than Odysseus', but it also reflects the loyalty felt by all the faithful servants on Ithaca towards Penelope.

The view of Agamemnon

Agamemnon's main theme in both nekuias[55] is the faithlessness of women, as exemplified by his wife, Clytaemnestra. Twice, however, he contrasts Penelope with Clytaemnestra, setting up a comparison which will be used throughout Classical literature, a polarisation of Penelope as the Good Wife, Clytaemnestra as the Bad Wife. Agamemnon thus makes explicit a contrast clearly intended by the poet: throughout the first four books of the *Odyssey* in particular there are many references to Agamemnon, his wife and son. Agamemnon's comments on Penelope should be read in the light of his experience; although he praises Penelope, Clytaemnestra provides the model of female behaviour which he considers more general. As discussed below, Clytaemnestra provides one possible *exemplum* Penelope could follow. Thus, in the second nekuia, Agamemnon says that her actions will bring a στυγερὴ .. ἀοιδή on Clytaemnestra herself, but also (cf. 11.433-4):

χαλεπὴν δέ τε φῆμιν ὀπάσσει
θηλυτέρῃσι γυναιξί, καὶ ἥ κ' εὐεργὸς ἔῃσιν

Od. 24.201-2

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[54] 24.403-4.

[55] It will be clear from this discussion, as from others, that I am not engaging with the question of the authenticity of the ending of the *Odyssey*. This stems from a conscious decision to deal with the poem as we now have it, not in any putative earlier forms. As the text from 23.296 seems to continue the same views of Penelope as are found earlier in the poem, in this regard at least any continuation has fully absorbed the spirit of the rest of the poem, and may be seen to add to our reading of earlier passages. This need not imply, however, that the continuation is by the same poet as the rest of the poem; the very end at least seems to be at best a sketch, so we may well be best to follow the suggestion put forward by Dr. R.B. Rutherford, in an unpublished paper delivered in Oxford Jan.1996, namely that the *Odyssey* was left unfinished but with a final sketch which was partly worked up by a follower of Homer.

Penelope is one of those "good" women on whom Clytaemnestra's reputation has brought unfair comments, particularly from her son, who, encouraged to be an Orestes, sees his mother as a Clytaemnestra, a woman who wishes to forget her absent husband and marry another man.

Although he praises Penelope to her husband, Agamemnon also warns Odysseus not to return home openly, nor to tell her everything he has done:

> "τῷ νῦν μή ποτε καὶ σὺ γυναικί περ ἤπιος εἶναι·
> μηδ' οἱ μῦθον ἅπαντα πιφαυσκέμεν, ὅν κ' ἐῢ εἰδῇς,
> ἀλλὰ τὸ μὲν φάσθαι, τὸ δὲ καὶ κεκρυμμένον εἶναι.
> ἀλλ' οὐ σοί γ', 'Οδυσεῦ, φόνος ἔσσεται ἔκ γε γυναικός·
> λίην γὰρ πινυτή τε καὶ εὖ φρεσὶ μήδεα οἶδε
> κούρη 'Ικαρίοιο, περίφρων Πηνελόπεια. .....
> ἄλλο δέ τοι ἐρέω, σὺ δ' ἐνὶ φρεσὶ βάλλεο σῇσι·
> κρύβδην, μηδ' ἀναφανδά, φίλην ἐς πατρίδα γαῖαν
> νῆα κατισχέμεναι· ἐπεὶ οὐκέτι πιστὰ γυναιξίν."
>
> *Od.* 11.441-6, 454-6[56]

Thus Penelope, as a woman, is tarred with the same brush as Clytaemnestra; due to his own experience, Agamemnon will judge all women as capable of being Clytaemnestras, and hence not to be trusted at all. This is one extreme; by the end of the poem, Penelope may represent the other, but during the poem, the different views given of her suggest that this is not the inevitable outcome.

To suggest that Agamemnon in book 24 confirms the function of the *Odyssey* as providing a song of praise for Penelope[57] is to misunderstand the emphasis in Agamemnon's speech. Penelope comes first; the emphatic second position is saved for Clytaemnestra. Although Penelope is specifically excluded from Agamemnon's misogynistic generalisations in the first nekuia, in the second, the emphasis is on the

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[56] The bracketing of these last three lines even in antiquity suggests that the power of the image of "good Penelope" was such that they were deemed unacceptable; the doubt cast even on a woman whose virtue he has just praised, however, seems to suit the misogynistic Agamemnon.
[57] Finley 1978 p.3.

disrepute which Clytaemnestra has brought on all women. Thus, while the poem overall sets up Clytaemnestra as a foil for Penelope, for Agamemnon it is the other way round: Penelope's good qualities are stressed to make her a contrast with Clytaemnestra. Agamemnon, when he calls Odysseus ὄλβιος, reveals his major concern: Odysseus, the lucky man, has a good wife, while, he himself, now dead and wretched, had the worst. He, like other users of myth in the Homeric poems (and beyond), is making a comparison with a deliberate purpose; namely, to illustrate how much happier Odysseus' fate is than his: the end of the *Odyssey* emphasises the theme of Odysseus as the "Greatest Hero of them all", who has both κλέος and a long life to come, and Agamemnon's jaundiced view contributes to this. He must therefore paint Penelope as beyond reproach; however, his advice to Odysseus not to trust her too far betrays his suspicions about her (caused by a general suspicion of women, rather than any more precise knowledge of Penelope)[58]. Menelaus' reference to Penelope at 4.111-3 is similar in that it must be interpreted in context; Menelaus says that Penelope must be grieving for Odysseus, as must Laertes and Telemachus. His point here is to stress how much Odysseus, the good man he has just been praising, must be missed, rather than how devoted his family actually is. Agamemnon's comment on Amphimedon's version of the story also fails to acknowledge Penelope's own cunning: rather, she is portrayed as "remembering" Odysseus (24.195) and then acting on his instruction; this picture is thus parallel to that which Penelope herself gives in *Od.* 18, the loyal wife who follows her husband's instructions.

[58] Cf. Winkler 1990 pp.138-9; for a different view, Goldhill 1991 pp.100-1.

The view of Odysseus

The very first mention of Penelope in the poem comes in the proem, where Odysseus is described as longing for a homecoming and his wife, νόστου κεχρημένον ἠδὲ γυναικός (*Od.* 1.13). Shortly after, in Athene's description of him, the stress is on his desire to return to Ithaca; Penelope is not mentioned (1.55ff.). Odysseus' desire to return home, rather than to return to Penelope, is again stressed when Calypso releases him:

τοῖς ἄρα μύθων ἦρχε Καλυψώ, δῖα θεάων·
"Διογενὲς Λαερτιάδη, πολυμήχαν' Ὀδυσσεῦ,
οὕτω δὴ οἴκόνδε φίλην ἐς πατρίδα γαῖαν
αὐτίκα νῦν ἐθέλεις ἰέναι; σὺ δὲ χαῖρε καὶ ἔμπης.
εἴ γε μὲν εἰδείης σῇσι φρεσὶν ὅσσα τοι αἶσα
κήδε' ἀναπλῆσαι, πρὶν πατρίδα γαῖαν ἱκέσθαι,
ἐνθάδε κ' αὖθι μένων σὺν ἐμοὶ τόδε δῶμα φυλάσσοις
ἀθάνατός τ' εἴης, ἱμειρόμενός περ ἰδέσθαι
σὴν ἄλοχον, τῆς αἰὲν ἐέλδεαι ἤματα πάντα.
οὐ μέν θην κείνης γε χερείων εὔχομαι εἶναι,
οὐ δέμας οὐδὲ φυήν, ἐπεὶ οὔ πως οὐδὲ ἔοικε
θνητὰς ἀθανάτῃσι δέμας καὶ εἶδος ἐρίζειν."

Τὴν δ' ἀπαμειβόμενος προσέφη πολύμητις Ὀδυσσεύς·
"πότνα θεά, μή μοι τόδε χώεο· οἶδα καὶ αὐτὸς
πάντα μάλ', οὕνεκα σεῖο περίφρων Πηνελόπεια
εἶδος ἀκιδνοτέρη μέγεθός τ' εἰσάντα ἰδέσθαι·
ἡ μὲν γὰρ βροτός ἐστι, σὺ δ' ἀθάνατος καὶ ἀγήρως.
ἀλλὰ καὶ ὣς ἐθέλω καὶ ἐέλδομαι ἤματα πάντα
οἴκαδέ τ' ἐλθέμεναι καὶ νόστιμον ἦμαρ ἰδέσθαι."

Od. 5.202-20

Odysseus has been seen here as tactfully declining Calypso's offer, and his words about home and Penelope do need to be read in the light of their context; to avoid upsetting Calypso, Odysseus portrays his desire to return home as his reason for refusing to stay with her, rather than his preferring Penelope to the goddess. However, the stress is on the importance of home for Odysseus: there is no comparable reason why Athene omits to mention Penelope when talking to Zeus at *Od.* 1.44-62 or 5.11-15. At *Od.* 5.114-5, Hermes, talking to Calypso, says:

ἀλλ' ἔτι οἱ μοῖρ' ἐστὶ φίλους ἰδέειν καὶ ἱκέσθαι
οἶκον ἐς ὑψόροφον καὶ ἐὴν ἐς πατρίδα γαῖαν.

The word φίλους includes the other friends and family with whom Odysseus will be reunited on Ithaca, in addition to Penelope. Thus it is not just Odysseus who seems to rank returning to Ithaca as more important for him than just reunion with Penelope. Despite the wishes of some later readers (for example, Ovid[59]) to read the *Odyssey* as a romantic story, this is not the primary emphasis in the text: Odysseus wishes to return to Penelope because she is part of his home, part of what it means to return to Ithaca. The reunion with his wife is but one in a series of reunions for Odysseus, starting with the land of Ithaca itself, and ending with his father Laertes[60].

Talking to Nausicaa, Odysseus famously says:

οὐ μὲν γὰρ τοῦ γε κρεῖσσον καὶ ἄρειον,
ἢ ὅθ' ὁμοφρονέοντε νοήμασιν οἶκον ἔχητον
ἀνὴρ ἠδὲ γυνή· πόλλ' ἄλγεα δυσμενέεσσι,
χάρματα δ' εὐμενέτῃσι· μάλιστα δέ τ' ἔκλυον αὐτοί.
Od. 6.182-5

Do these words reflect his own marriage[61]? It is notable that the only person in the poem who succeeds in tricking him is Penelope, and he has more sympathy for her reasons in refusing to recognise him immediately than their son does (23.113-4). The fact that each insists on testing the other before admitting to a recognition shows their likemindedness:

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[59] *Tr.* 2.375-6.

[60] A modern reader should be careful not to put Odysseus' actions in too romantic a light: one reason why ancient writers do not seem to have worried about Penelope's ageing is that this is ignored by Homer. Penelope is still beautiful, as can be seen from the suitors' reactions to her in book 18, but this is probably not her main attraction: her attraction is also symbolic, as the wife of the ruler of Ithaca, a bride who could bring a good dowry; at 15.522 and 21.68-72 the suitors are said to be courting her with a view to obtaining Odysseus' γέρας. (Although it is not spelt out, from the suitors' attitudes it seems likely that marriage to Penelope could help legitimise rule over Ithaca, although the details are left unclear; cf. Halverson 1986, *contra* Finley 1977 pp.88-91, and Thomas 1988, who suggests that Penelope's desirability comes from what she stands for - wealth, a good family, and proof of the prowess of the man who marries her.) The *Odyssey* does not end with the reunion, in our text, but goes on to show the resolution of the conflict caused by the death of the suitors. In the first nekuia, the poet looks beyond the end of the poem to the eventual ending of Odysseus' wanderings, to his death, which will come upon him peacefully, and his people will be ὄλβιοι again with him as their ruler.

[61] Cf. Austin 1975 ch.4, particularly pp.197, 203-5, 216-7; Russo 1982.

Athene comments on Odysseus' carefulness, saying that any other man coming home after such wanderings would go straight to see his wife and children, while Odysseus will test his wife first (πειράζειν 13.330-338). Similarly, Odysseus says that Penelope is not like other women (23.166-172), echoing Telemachus' words about her hard-heartedness (23.105-10); in his answer to those words of Telemachus, however, he predicted that Penelope would test him (23.114). So just as Odysseus does not return openly home immediately on landing in Ithaca, but insists on testing his friends and family, so Penelope will not, like other women, immediately welcome back her husband with open arms, but will test him first.

Their likemindedness is also illustrated by the simile used at their reunion, which appears to start as a description of Odysseus, but ends as a description of Penelope:

> Ὣς φάτο, τῷ δ' ἔτι μᾶλλον ὑφ' ἵμερον ὧρσε γόοιο·
> κλαῖε δ' ἔχων ἄλοχον θυμαρέα, κεδνὰ ἰδυῖαν.
> ὡς δ' ὅτ' ἂν ἀσπάσιος γῆ νηχομένοισι φανήῃ,
> ὧν τε Ποσειδάων εὐεργέα νῆ' ἐνὶ πόντῳ
> ῥαίσῃ, ἐπειγομένην ἀνέμῳ καὶ κύματι πηγῷ·
> παῦροι δ' ἐξέφυγον πολιῆς ἁλὸς ἤπειρόνδε
> νηχόμενοι, πολλὴ δὲ περὶ χροΐ τέτροφεν ἅλμη,
> ἀσπάσιοι δ' ἐπέβαν γαίης, κακότητα φυγόντες·
> ὡς ἄρα τῇ ἀσπαστὸς ἔην πόσις εἰσοροώσῃ
>
> *Od.* 23.231-9

This simile reflects what Odysseus has endured in his journey back to Ithaca; it describes a man tossed up as he was on Phaeacia (compare his plight at 5.394-8). Thus, in addition to the slippage of the subject, the simile also likens Penelope and Odysseus by suggesting that their experiences are in some way parallel[62]. Similarly, when Odysseus compares Penelope to a good king at 19.108-14, he is comparing her to his former self.

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[62] Cf. Murnaghan 1986 p.103. The fact that both Penelope and Odysseus are subjects of "reverse similes" (Foley 1978), at 19.109-22 and 8.523-30 respectively, also shows something of their likemindedness: Odysseus weeps like a woman who has lost her husband, as Penelope could become, and Penelope is like a good king (whatever the term βασιλεύς entails in this context), as Odysseus once was (and hopes to be again).

Odysseus' and Penelope's likemindedness is also demonstrated in their rebukes to Melantho[63]. In rebuking her wanton maid, Penelope shows herself a "good woman"; Odysseus' rebuke to Melantho shows what he thinks about "bad women". The punishment meted out to Melantho and the unfaithful maids suggests the punishment Penelope would have suffered, had she proved unfaithful to Odysseus. Both Penelope and Odysseus also weave plots: the image is used of Odysseus by himself at 9.422, πάντας δὲ δόλους καὶ μῆτιν ὕφαινον, while Penelope says (19.137) δόλους τολυπεύω. The verb ὑφαίνω is used of Penelope several times, sometimes in reference to her plot to deceive the suitors with a piece of weaving which is both actual and metaphorical[64].

The closeness of Odysseus and Penelope is brought out at the start of book 20, after their meeting in book 19. Each goes to bed and dreams of the other; Odysseus dreams that Penelope has already recognised him (again highlighting the fact that this is not what happens in this version of the story), while Penelope dreams of Odysseus as he was before he went away. The fact that this is how Penelope imagines Odysseus gives some force to Odysseus' thought in book 23 that it is partly his clothes and dirt which are preventing Penelope from recognising him, for she is thinking of him as a younger man, in the splendour in which he went to Troy.

The "likemindedness" of Odysseus and Penelope has been taken as providing an explanation for one puzzling piece of the text, namely Odysseus' reaction to Penelope's flirtation with the suitors in book 18. When Penelope speaks to the suitors, she says that, as he left for Troy, Odysseus told her to remarry when Telemachus had grown up. She

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[63] 19.70ff. and 89ff.; Felson-Rubin 1994 pp.29-30 (cf. p.56).
[64] Similar language is also used of other characters' plotting, including Athene (for example, at 13.303, 386).

makes it clear that she would prefer Odysseus' return to her remarriage to one of the suitors (18.253-5, 272-3), but goes on to say that she will remarry, and expresses her disappointment that her suitors are not acting in the traditional fashion, bringing gifts to woo her. The poet then says:

> Ὣς φάτο, γήθησεν δὲ πολύτλας δῖος Ὀδυσσεύς,
> οὕνεκα τῶν μὲν δῶρα παρέλκετο, θέλγε δὲ θυμὸν
> μειλιχίοις ἐπέεσσι, νόος δέ οἱ ἄλλα μενοίνα.
>
> *Od.* 18.281-3

The passage has caused much debate: why should Odysseus rejoice when his wife has just admitted her intention of remarrying?[65] His pleasure in the gifts she is enticing from the suitors is understandable, but as Odysseus cannot know her thoughts, the obvious assumption for him to make would be that she has finally decided to give in and betray him by remarrying. Part of the problem is the focalisation of the last comment, "but her mind was on other things". Could this reflect Odysseus' perception of the scene? It seems that he must know that she was not really thinking of remarriage in order to rejoice at her words[66]. The significance may lie in what she <u>was</u> thinking about, but ἄλλα may be less concrete, the whole phrase meaning rather "she was thinking otherwise". The same expression is used by the suitors in describing Penelope's behaviour during the four years they have been at the palace: Penelope, Antinous says (2.91-2), sent encouraging messages to each of the suitors privately, νόος δέ οἱ ἄλλα μενοίνα. The implication here is that she secretly encouraged each suitor (to keep some

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[65] For a summary of bibliography on this point, see Katz 1992 p.89ff., especially p.90 nn.35-8, Winkler 1990 pp.146-7, Rutherford 1992 pp.29-33, Felson-Rubin 1994 pp.54-5.

[66] This is denied by Hölscher 1967 p.136, who maintains that Odysseus' joy is due to Penelope's clear aversion to a remarriage. Byre 1988 also rejects the necessity of Odysseus' recognising Penelope's state of mind, by suggesting that his joy is at seeing the suitors lulled into a false state of security - false not because of Penelope's deception, but because Odysseus has returned and they are unaware of this.

power over them, perhaps) with promises or hints of marriage, while intending to remain faithful to Odysseus as long as possible.

The phrase νόος δέ οἱ ἄλλα μενοίνα is also used of Penelope by Athene at 13.381, where the goddess is describing Penelope's ploys to keep her suitors at bay - in the same context as the phrase is used by Antinous at 2.92. De Jong suggests that while the meaning of the phrase is not the same in all three places[67] (while in the earlier books, Penelope is scheming to avoid marriage to one of her suitors, in book 18, she is "seriously proposing remarriage"[68]), the significance is constant, namely that speech and thoughts do not correspond. In her scheming, Penelope promises to remarry while not intending to, while before the suitors the contrast is between her statement that she is upset by the suitors' manner of wooing (18.274-80)[69] and her real distaste for them. The tone of her speech here is softer and sweeter than her earlier speech to the suitors at 16.417-33; that speech seems to reflect Penelope's true feelings more closely. Odysseus' joy at Penelope's speech is thus explained by the suggestion that he alone recognises "the insincerity of Penelope's sweet tone" (p.42). Since they are likeminded, it does not seem unreasonable that Odysseus should be able to recognise when his wife is being insincere. Odysseus also knows that the marriage will not take place because he has returned to prevent it; he can therefore take pleasure in his wife's obvious reluctance to remarry[70].

Whether or not Odysseus ever said the words which Penelope attributes to him at 18.259-70, the fact that he rejoices suggests that he can tell what his wife is up to. In these lines, Penelope says that Odysseus, as he was leaving for Troy, told her to remarry

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[67] De Jong 1994 p.41; pp.39-44 deal particularly with Penelope.
[68] Cf. Hölscher 1967 pp.135-6, who argues that in all three places these words mean that she "long[s] passionately for something else", rather than implying that she has a plan.
[69] By their not bringing gifts as is fitting in wooing a noble woman (ἀγαθήν .. γυναῖκα).
[70] Cf. Murnaghan 1986 p.109, who suggests that Odysseus knows that Penelope's action will turn out to be a trick played on the suitors, as he has returned.

when Telemachus had grown up. Telemachus has already shown that he now regards himself as adult, and so the time has come. If Odysseus did leave these instructions, then he sees his wife is still faithful to his commands. If these were his words, however, it is unclear why Penelope has not mentioned them before in order to put off her suitors. However, as the danger to Telemachus from the suitors seems to have increased with his growing maturity, Penelope may have been wise not to link her remaining in Odysseus' house with her duty to look after Telemachus: if it had been that simple, the idea "no Telemachus, no more delay" might have occurred to the suitors before. If Odysseus did not say these words, then he here sees his wife still ostensibly showing her obedience to his words before the suitors, but also taking thought for the interests of his son and his household (i.e., he realises that she is working on some private scheme). Penelope's concern for Telemachus comes out both in her reproaches to him for allowing the beggar to be mistreated, and in her acknowledgement that he is now adult. Thus her other thoughts may well be to do with drawing the suitors' attention off her son, whom she knows they have planned to murder, as well as replenishing his coffers. This scene may thus show Penelope moving towards the decision to remarry - a decision reached partly, at least, for Telemachus' benefit. Odysseus could rejoice in this, as it shows her devotion to his house and son; the actions Penelope is undertaking to protect Telemachus also work in Odysseus' favour, for although Telemachus may now be ready to take on the role of the master of the house, when he has a chance, at the test of the bow, he steps aside to return his rightful place to his father.

In some senses, our precise interpretation of the difficulties of this passage is not that important: whether or not Penelope is serious in proposing remarriage, whether or not she is really quoting Odysseus' words, what this scene and Odysseus' reaction to it

show is that Penelope's true allegiance is still to Odysseus, even if she is now driven to serious contemplation of remarriage[71]. The proof of this is Odysseus' rejoicing: the ὁμοφροσύνη between him and his wife is such that he can tell she is leading the suitors on, making up for their depredations on his livelihood. The reader can be sure that Penelope's actions are not what they seem on the surface, and this is acknowledged by Odysseus too.

Some of the problems with this scene are caused by the description of Athene's actions before Penelope descends. It is unusual for a Homeric god to intervene to make a character do something so utterly out of character as this alluring of the suitors seems to be for Penelope. Certainly Penelope and Athene are at odds over the question of Penelope's appearance when she goes down to the suitors: Penelope refuses Eurynome's advice to beautify herself before going down to them, but Athene sends her to sleep precisely to enable her to make Penelope more beautiful. Thus the wife Odysseus sees coming down is one whose beauty has been enhanced, but against her will. However, Penelope re-emphasises her feelings about her beauty when she is praised by Eurymachus: she says that all her beauty was lost when Odysseus went away, thus emphasising her continued devotion to Odysseus. Ignorant of her husband's presence and of the goddess's purposes, Penelope cannot adequately justify to herself or to Eurynome her sense of compulsion or desire (18.164-5) to go down to the suitors: the reason she states explicitly is to rebuke Telemachus, evidence for her continuing concern for his safety. Eurynome appears to assume that Penelope is going down, as Athene wishes, to impress the suitors, but Penelope explicitly rejects any such plan (18.178-81).

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[71] Cf. Hölscher 1967 pp.136-7, who points out how the poet's concern is "to remove from Penelope the conscious intention of exciting the Suitors", while exploiting the ambiguity of her appearance.

Perhaps Penelope is interested in the beggar (although he does not act in the scene), as has been suggested, but is not mentioned in the text; what is most notable about this scene, however, is the way in which Penelope's determination to stress her devotion to Odysseus manages to come through despite Athene's plans.

Penelope's presentation of herself

The title of this section differs from those above for the reason that, when Penelope appears in person, the narrator very rarely tells us her inner thoughts: her speeches to other characters and her actions are allowed to speak for themselves, and the emotions described by the narrator are often reflected in her actions (for example, distress at 1.363 and 4.716, joy at 23.32, 308). This is in part due to the general restraint of the Homeric narrator, but the inner thoughts of other characters, particularly Odysseus, are more often expressed in the narrative. The narrator only twice describes what Penelope was thinking about (4.789, 23.85ff.), once says that she was thinking ἄλλα (18.283; see above), and once states that Amphinomus was her favourite of the suitors (a detail which seems designed to reveal more about him than about her). The narrator intervenes to describe Penelope's thoughts and motivations only where this is necessary to prevent a misreading of her actions as suggesting she is not wholly faithful and devoted to Odysseus, as shown in book 18, when she appears before the suitors, and book 23, when her delay in recognising Odysseus needs explanation.

Penelope's own presentation of her thoughts and actions seems designed to support the view of her as Odysseus' faithful wife, as we shall see below. The narrator may be seen acting in complicity with this aim: the line describing Penelope weeping for her φίλον πόσιν is repeated several times (e.g. 1.363, 16.450, 19.603), and φίλον can be

read as focalised through Penelope. The narrator's presentation of Penelope thus coincides with her own, but neither makes it clear whether her self-presentation and inner thoughts are completely in harmony.

When Penelope makes her first actual appearance in the *Odyssey*, it is in such a way as to stress her modesty and devotion to Odysseus[72]. She descends to the hall, face veiled and accompanied by two maids, to tell Phemius to change his song, because of the grief it evokes in her. Phemius is singing of the 'Αχαιῶν νόστον ... λυγρόν (*Od.* 1.326-7) - not just tales of the returns of the other Achaeans, but, presumably, of their failure to return, or the souring of the *nostos* when they reached home (to a less than ideal reunion with their waiting wives, in some cases). Thus it is not just that Penelope is upset thinking of the fact that her husband alone has still not returned, but also that she is reminded of all the others who did not return safely, of all the fates which could have befallen him, and - perhaps - of the reasons why the gods might not want a conqueror of Troy to return. Phemius sings of Athene's causing these unsuccessful or delayed homecomings[73]; the audience know that she is now working for Odysseus' return, but Penelope has no such assurance, and so her silencing of Phemius, stopping the song that brings κλέος to (dead) heroes, may be seen as a refusal to consider the possibility that Odysseus is among that group of dead heroes whose returns are being sung. If such a passing reference can evoke the memories of what the Greeks had done to deserve a νόστον λυγρόν then one may also recall that the author of the *Odyssey* shows sympathy for the victims of the sacking of a city, in the simile describing Odysseus' weeping at

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[72] Cf. Race 1993 pp.88-9. Although Race is correct to say this first appearance sets the tone for the rest of the poem, it must be remembered that Penelope has already been mentioned, in less flattering terms, in the conversation between Athene and Telemachus.

[73] Cf. Clay 1983 pp.46-53, 186-8, although she concentrates on the anger of Athene against Odysseus in particular rather than the Greeks as a whole.

8.521-531, where the sacker of cities is compared to a woman lamenting at the fall of her city. Such pity for the victims of war, and sympathy for those, like Penelope, who were left behind, makes the perception of the *Odyssey* as more feminine than the *Iliad* understandable.

Penelope's second appearance is in book 4, when Medon brings her the news of Telemachus' trip to Pylos and the suitors' plan to ambush him on his return. She can do nothing to protect him herself, except pray to Athene (a prayer answered by the dream of her sister), but she is described with a simile of a lion. Such a simile likens Penelope to the heroes more usually described in such a way; here, the lion is at bay, as Penelope is, trapped by the suitors[74]. The image, however, suggests that Penelope is not as defenceless as the narrative seems to imply. Penelope ends this scene asleep; for once, it is not said explicitly that Athene sent her to sleep, although the goddess does take advantage of her sleeping to send her a dream.

Penelope does not appear again in person until book 16, when she descends to rebuke the suitors for their plot against Telemachus. As in the first book, her appearance is marked as modest by her veil and maids; after it, again, Athene sends her to sleep, as relief from her weeping for Odysseus. In this scene, however, it is Eurymachus who prevents her achieving anything, rather than Telemachus. This scene thus follows the pattern of her first two in showing her impotence in her own home. This is shown again in her next scene, when she appears at 17.36 to greet Telemachus on his return. Although Telemachus is not rude to her on this occasion, he again dismisses her to her own rooms, and refuses to answer her questions about the news he brings. Later in the book, after a meal, Telemachus is willing to tell her about his travels; by demanding

[74] Cf. West 1988 *ad loc.*

information before his bath and meal, Penelope seems to have been breaking the Homeric conventions for the reception of a visitor - conventions which thus can be seen to extend to a returning member of the family. Telemachus uses another lion simile in relation to Penelope, repeating Menelaus' words; here the lion is the absent Odysseus, and Penelope is therefore the doe, who will be destroyed by the lion, along with her fawns (the suitors): Telemachus is still exhibiting his customary hostility to his mother, and does not shrink from telling her that Odysseus is detained by a nymph[75]. But despite Telemachus' hostility towards her, Penelope is not shown responding in kind, although she is clearly hurt by his bluntness. Theoclymenus gives her better news with his prediction of Odysseus' return, news which Penelope greets with joy.

Penelope reappears towards the end of book 17, where she prays for the death of the suitors, and sends Eumaeus to arrange an audience for the beggar with her. Eumaeus says that his stories will charm her, and retells his story as to the whereabouts of Odysseus - that he is in Thesprotia. As Telemachus has just told Penelope a different story about Odysseus' whereabouts, it is perhaps not surprising that Penelope has no more faith in the veracity of this tale than she has had in other sailors' tales. Penelope's prayer for the suitors' death is repeated at the end of the scene, when she hopes that Telemachus' sneeze may augur fulfilment to all their desires for the end of the suitors. Thus Penelope's devotion to Odysseus, and her good sense in disregarding the tales she is told about his whereabouts, are both demonstrated here.

Penelope's next appearance is in book 18, when she comes down before the suitors (see above). Although it shows Penelope encouraging the suitors more actively

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[75] In Telemachus' mouth, the simile of the lion seems to have a more condemnatory tone towards Penelope; the detail of the simile, identifying Penelope with the doe, has more force in his mouth than in Menelaus'.

than she is shown doing at any other point in the epic, her own words in this scene serve to reinforce the picture of her devotion to Odysseus, and her distaste for remarriage. Just before she descends, she prays for a gentle death from Artemis, as a release from her grief for Odysseus, a prayer echoed at 20.61ff., after her first actual meeting with Odysseus: the poet thus again stresses her devotion to Odysseus, for she would rather die than remarry.

It is not until book 19 that Penelope and Odysseus actually meet in this poem. The delayed meeting does not include a recognition between the two; that is even longer delayed[76]. This scene reflects the concern of the *Odyssey*-poet with deceptive words and irony; the audience expect Penelope to recognise her husband, and this expectation is played with by the poet when Penelope in ordering Eurycleia to bathe the stranger, describes him as one similar in age to her master, νίψον σοῖο ἄνακτος ὁμήλικα (19.357) - there is a possible expectation of the final word being something like "feet" or "limbs"[77]. A similar verbal ambiguity was used earlier, when this interview was set up. Penelope asked Eumaeus to set up a meeting between herself and the beggar, in order that she may hear what he has to say. She said that she would give him clothes αἴ κ' αὐτὸν γνώω νημερτέα πάντ' ἐνέποντα - if she recognised him as one speaking the truth about everything. The first half of the line brings to mind the possibility of a recognition scene between Penelope and Odysseus, as does 19.357. However, that is not the version of the story as Homer chooses to tell it, although such hints may lend force to

[76] *Contra* Harsh 1950, Amory 1963, Austin 1975 pp.205-36, Winkler 1990, I do not believe that there is even a partial recognition of Odysseus by Penelope at this stage. Although such a suggestion does explain some features of the scene, and the idea that the contest of the bow is set as some form of divining test is attractive, the fact that the poet explicitly states that Penelope did not recognise Odysseus argues strongly against these suggestions; cf. Rutherford 1992 pp.34-7. For further discussion see Russo 1992 pp.5-14.
[77] Cf. Austin 1975 p.218, Russo 1992 *ad loc.*, Rutherford 1992 *ad loc.*

the argument that in some earlier version Penelope, not Eurycleia, recognised Odysseus at the washing scene and helped him carry out his revenge on the suitors[78].

When Odysseus refuses to answer Penelope's questions as to his identity, he excuses himself on the grounds of his great sorrow. Penelope's reply gives her own reasons for sorrow, emphasising the importance of Odysseus to her. Her κλέος would be great, she says (19.128), if Odysseus were to return. She then launches straight into her own version of her actions over the years the suitors have been in the palace, stressing that her tricks were a response to their desire for her to remarry, and placing her deceit of the suitors in the context of her attempt to remain faithful to Odysseus. This shows Odysseus again how faithful his wife is; by telling her version of these events to the beggar, Penelope is presumably ensuring that such a traveller will not hear only the version given by the suitors, or other malicious gossips (compare the comments of passers-by at 23.147ff.), which shows her in a worse light, deceiving her suitors for no real reason bar her desire to prove her intelligence. When Penelope weeps at the beggar's description of Odysseus when he went off to war, this does not necessarily prove that she has less self-restraint than Odysseus. Rather, as Odysseus' loss of self-restraint in book 23 comes when such restraint is no longer necessary, and serves to prove his identity, so here Penelope has no reason to restrain her tears: they are yet another proof to the beggar of her longing for Odysseus. Her intelligence is shown by her next speech: although moved to tears by the beggar's earlier picture, she does not assume that he is telling the truth, but rather tests him by asking for a description of Odysseus' clothes. He then goes on to prophesy Odysseus' return, a hope rejected by Penelope. As she is moving towards remarriage, in order to safeguard Telemachus, the

[78] Cf. Helen bathing Odysseus in her tale of her own cunning in bk. 4.

possibility of Odysseus' return is something she cannot allow herself to think real. Also, Telemachus and the beggar have given different reports as to Odysseus' whereabouts, so she has no reason to assume that either is accurate. Penelope's worry about Telemachus is reflected in her choice of simile at 19.518ff., where she compares herself to the nightingale, who laments the son she killed herself. If Penelope does not act soon, this suggests, she will see Telemachus dead at the hands of the suitors, a fate brought on him by her own actions. Thus, if remarriage is necessary for Telemachus' sake, as Penelope is at the end of her delaying tactics, she cannot allow herself to be deluded by the hope of Odysseus' return, and hence cannot put off the marriage longer.

Penelope then describes her dream about the slaughter of her geese by an eagle which identified itself as Odysseus (19.535-53). Her distress at the death of the geese has been thought to reflect her underlying desire for the suitors, or at least desire to keep them in the palace[79], although it should be noted that Penelope stresses that she wept for them in her dream before the eagle identified them with the suitors - but says nothing about any such sorrow after the identification[80]. Again, she rejects the favourable interpretation given by Odysseus in the dream and seconded by the real Odysseus before her, although she says she would be glad if it did turn out true (19.569). She moves straight on to her suggestion of a contest to choose a new husband - again, setting aside the hope of Odysseus' return in order to carry through the action designed to keep Telemachus safe. Her sorrow as she suggests this course of action again reinforces the image of her as a faithful wife; this action will, of course, provide Odysseus with the means of revenge. The beggar's support for this plan may suggest to Penelope that she

[79] Cf. Rankin 1962, Austin 1975 pp.211-35, Russo 1982 p.9, Latacz 1992.
[80] Cf. Rutherford 1992 *ad loc.*

has weighed her duties to husband and son correctly: although she seems sincere in expecting this action to bring about her remarriage, she will in this way at least get the man most like Odysseus.

Penelope's penultimate appearance is in book 21, when she sets up the contest of the bow. *Od.* 21.6 χειρὶ παχείῃ has caused some distress[81], as it is felt unsuitable for Penelope to have a "thick hand". There are several ways of explaining this phrase; it is formulaic, and used of heroes (for example, in the *Odyssey* of Odysseus at 20.299 and 22.326), and hence may glorify Penelope[82], or the force of the epithet may not have been felt as strongly by an original audience. It might reflect the fact that Penelope's hand would be well developed from her work as a weaver[83]. Or it could imply a different standard of beauty from our own (as suggested by 18.195). Of these possibilities, the first seems the most plausible, and it confirms our perception of Penelope in the *Odyssey* as heroic, an idea already introduced by the simile of a lion at 4.791-3.

Even when she has taken the decision to go through with a contest which will lead to her remarriage, Penelope still weeps for Odysseus (21.55-7). When she takes the bow to the suitors, she still veils her face and is attended by two maids; even as she proclaims the contest she still professes her desire to stay in Odysseus' house. After Penelope has argued against the suitors that the beggar should be allowed to try the bow, Telemachus once again sends her away. Penelope has been acting less passively in this book than earlier, but she is here once again removed from the action and sent to sleep by Athene. This sleep is generally seen as psychologically implausible, and reflecting the formulaic nature of the composition of the poem; but it has thematic weight, for it

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[81] For example, Woodhouse 1930 p.200 "O Homer! How could you!"; cf. Fernandez-Galliano *ad loc.*, Lowenstam 1993 ch.1.
[82] Austin 1975 p.73.
[83] Roller 1994, especially pp.18-19.

reflects the way in which Penelope is not allowed to take much of an active part in the progress of the plot. Having played her part, she is then removed and sent to sleep, so the lack of any intervention by her may seem more plausible.

Penelope's final appearance is in the long-delayed recognition scene between her and Odysseus. Her reluctance to recognise Odysseus has been seen as reflecting her habitual state of distrust[84], but also as forcing Odysseus to acknowledge her power as crucial to his homecoming. Penelope's own speech (23.205-230) seems to be the best source for understanding her reasons. Penelope herself says that she was afraid of being tricked by a man deceiving her with words. This is what Odysseus had done in their earlier meeting, but to see these words as an implicit criticism of Odysseus seems implausible[85]; the surrounding narrative suggests Penelope's joy, not indignation, at finally getting proof of Odysseus' identity. Penelope is sceptical when Eurycleia tells her that Odysseus has returned and killed all the suitors, but she leaps up to embrace her with joy when Eurycleia identifies Odysseus with the beggar Penelope had spoken to. After Eurycleia's description of the massacre of the suitors, Penelope again expresses disbelief, this time suggesting that the suitors were killed by a god in disguise. Penelope's fear of being tricked means that she must trick Odysseus herself in order to confirm his identity; the trick also demonstrates how well-suited they are, as Penelope is the only person in the epic to succeed in tricking Odysseus, causing him to lose his self-control. The scene of Penelope's outwitting Odysseus thus makes a fitting climax to the climactic scene of their reunion: even if this is not the end of the poem, it is most definitely a climactic moment. Penelope's action also allows her to demonstrate her

[84] A repeated theme, as also with Eumaeus.
[85] Roisman 1987.

fidelity, while seeming about to prove the opposite. The trick of the bed thus mirrors the contest of the bow: just as Penelope seems closest to failing in her fidelity, she is actually closest to achieving reunion with Odysseus.

Penelope and Odysseus both sit in silence at the start of their encounter, Odysseus waiting for Penelope to act, she trying to decide whether or not the man in front of her really is her husband. Her indecision is captured by the poet in the ambiguous focalisation of πόσις (23.86), for if she recognises him as her husband, then there is no need for questions. Odysseus is here dependent on Penelope's action of recognition: he cannot force her to recognise him, and the actual moment of recognition, so long delayed, is dragged out even more. After Telemachus' intervention and Odysseus' bath, it is Odysseus' own speech which provides Penelope with a decisive means of identification; the dirty clothing which was given as her earlier excuse for not recognising him is now gone, but her caution does not allow his appearance to be conclusive - Penelope, unlike the suitors, will not be taken in by appearances.

This final scene involving Penelope resolves several themes from earlier in the poem. In particular, Telemachus' hostility towards his mother is finally rebuked by the man who both knows her best and has the right to criticise her behaviour if it were truly bad - her husband. As discussed below, it also resolves the comparison of Penelope and Helen, as Penelope explains her carefulness in terms of an attempt to avoid following Helen's example. As each tells the other the tale of the last twenty years, Penelope's sufferings during Odysseus' absence are made equivalent to Odysseus' sufferings in his journey home; Odysseus states the parallel between the two explicitly[86]:

ὦ γύναι, ἤδη μὲν πολέων κεκορήμεθ' ἀέθλων

[86] Doherty 1996 pp.146-7 argues that Penelope's endurance is portrayed as inferior, but 23.233-47 does seem to make their experiences equivalent.

ἀμφοτέρω, σὺ μὲν ἐνθάδ' ἐμὸν πολυκηδέα νόστον
κλαίουσ'· αὐτὰρ ἐμὲ Ζεὺς ἄλγεσι καὶ θεοὶ ἄλλοι
ἰέμενον πεδάασκον ἐμῆς ἀπὸ πατρίδος αἴης.

Od. 23.350-3

Thus not only does this scene show the likeness of Penelope and Odysseus' thoughts, but also of their experiences, for both have endured much. The end of the book shows how things are now returning to normal on Ithaca; Penelope will remain in her chamber, presumably with her women, again kept out of the action which engages the men of the family in the last book.

Contrasts

Besides considering how Penelope is described and perceived by the various characters in the poem, one may also consider how the audience's perception of her is built up through comparisons and contrasts with other figures in the poem - most obviously with Clytaemnestra. The creation of character through contrast with (other) mythological figures is a central part of the *Odyssey*, which introduces the story of Odysseus by first referring to Aegisthus and Orestes. Such a way of looking at Penelope has the advantage of drawing together the different views of her produced by analysis of the views of different characters, as given above, into a more rounded picture, rather as a listening audience can pull together the different threads as they are presented to develop a satisfactory picture of each individual character[87].

[87] Cf. Beye 1974 p.96, who sees Penelope as "a kind of summation" of the other female characters in the epic. Beye's typological approach, which tends towards seeing Penelope as a culmination, does not reflect the position in the *Odyssey* wholly accurately; to see Penelope as shaped by our perceptions of other characters in the poem need not entail seeing her as in any way surpassing all these other women. The development of character through contrasts and implicit comparisons is more subtle than to simply set Penelope up as a paragon.

Penelope and Clytaemnestra

The house of Atreus forms an important parallel for the house of Odysseus throughout the *Odyssey*. The characterisation given of Clytaemnestra is relatively straightforward - although initially virtuous, she is suborned away from Agamemnon by Aegisthus, who has disposed of the bard whom Agamemnon had set to look after her. She then helps Aegisthus plot the murder of Agamemnon, and herself kills Cassandra. Unlike the *Oresteia* of Aeschylus, the *Odyssey* does not give any justification for her behaviour; the sacrifice of Iphigeneia is not mentioned in either of the Homeric epics. Clytaemnestra killed her husband on his return, having become unfaithful; the possibility that Penelope could follow this example is several times hinted at in the *Odyssey*, only to be rejected. In book 3, Nestor, talking to Telemachus about Agamemnon's death, says that Clytaemnestra was charmed away from Agamemnon by Aegisthus' words. Before that, he stresses, she was loyal to Agamemnon:

> ἡ δ' ἦ τοι τὸ πρὶν μὲν ἀναίνετο ἔργον ἀεικές
> δῖα Κλυταιμνήστρη· φρεσὶ γὰρ κέχρητ' ἀγαθῇσι
>
> *Od.* 3.265-6

This links Clytaemnestra more closely to Penelope, whom Anticleia describes to Odysseus, during their encounter in the Underworld, as still faithful to him[88]. The description of the faithful Penelope left behind may thus recall the picture of Clytaemnestra's original faithfulness, but the reader is soon reminded of what Clytaemnestra turned into when left alone, as Agamemnon describes his death at the hands of Aegisthus with his wife's complicity, and the death of Cassandra at his wife's own hands. Agamemnon then says in the same breath that Odysseus should be careful with his wife and that he has nothing to

[88] There are problems with Anticleia's description of Telemachus, but the description of Penelope may fit the supposed time of the conversation; cf. above p.126.

fear from her (11.441-6). This contradiction sums up the "problems" found by some critics in the characterisation of Penelope - just as Agamemnon's advice to Odysseus is equivocal, so the text presents a Penelope who unites traits belonging to both the faithful and the unfaithful wife (and yet - or perhaps and so - is still the best like-minded wife for her wily husband). The boundary between the two is not always drawn sharply in the *Odyssey*: Clytaemnestra, who was a faithful wife, turns bad, while Helen, the unfaithful wife who ran off with her lover and started a war, is seen back in her original marital home, very cosy and domestic with her weaving and her care for visitors. The impression is left that Penelope could go either way.

Penelope is never shown with Mentor, to whom Odysseus had entrusted his house and family; it seems that although he is still around, for practical purposes Penelope, like Clytaemnestra, is alone with those who wish to seduce her away from her loyalty to her husband. Athene is playing on Telemachus' fears that Penelope will succumb when she sends the dream to him in book 15 to hurry him home, prompted by fear of the loss of household wealth. This is something both Helen and Clytaemnestra did: Helen took treasures with her to Troy, which in the *Iliad* are required to be returned along with Helen, and Clytaemnestra handed over control of her husband's kingdom to her lover. Agamemnon, in the Underworld, complains that his wife did not even let him see his son before she killed him; Odysseus forestalls this possibility by meeting his son and plotting with him before returning to his own house, but an audience may remember that at least in later myth, Orestes was sent away, returning in secret to avenge his father[89], and that this is paralleled in the story of Telemachus as Homer tells it, for he goes away, and returns in

[89] Cf. *Od.* 3.307; ἀψ emphasises Orestes' coming back to Mycenae.

danger concealing his return from those who court his mother[90]; like Orestes, he is thus absent from home when his father returns to Ithaca (though the motif of the ambush is shifted from the father to the son here, for the suitors ambush Telemachus, not Odysseus). These correspondences keep open the possibility of Penelope's treachery.

Penelope and Helen

Although, as said above, the importance of the house of Atreus as a paradigm for the house of Odysseus in the *Odyssey* has long been acknowledged, attention has tended to focus on one side of the family, that of Agamemnon, neglecting the relationship with the other half of the family, that of Menelaus. This is particularly true for the woman of the family; the parallels between Menelaus' adventures and Odysseus' are well known, but, although the fact that Helen bears the same relation to Penelope as Clytaemnestra is accepted, it is rare to find as much made of the connection as of that with Clytaemnestra. There have been exceptions - Katz' reading, for example[91] - but still Clytaemnestra is seen as the important paradigm set against Penelope.

However, at *Od.* 23.218-24, Penelope herself compares herself to Helen, in a passage which has caused some problems. The passage was athetised by ancient editors, and some modern scholars would like to follow their example (Wilamowitz, Schwartz, Schadewaldt et al.[92]). It seems preferable, however, to keep this reference in; Helen is a parallel to Penelope throughout the poem, as argued below, and the reference emphasises this point. Penelope uses the comparison to justify and explain herself[93], recalling the

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[90] For sons returning from journeys hostile to the mother in favour of the father, compare Orestes, Hyllus in the *Trachiniae* of Sophocles, and Alcmaeon.
[91] Katz 1992 especially pp.183-7.
[92] Bibliography is collected by Heubeck 1992 pp. 336-7 *ad loc*; cf. also Stanford 1959 *ad loc.*, Roisman 1987, Katz 1992 pp.183-5, Felson-Rubin 1994 pp.39-40, Zeitlin 1995 pp.143-6.
[93] Cf. Heubeck 1992 p.337.

differences between the two of them both to Odysseus' mind and to the audience's. Allowing the explanation that Penelope recognises the importance of Helen as a possible paradigm for her own behaviour does not seem an over-subtle reading of the poem; this is an expected use of mythology, and Penelope is aware of the possibility of criticism. She says that she does not want to be criticised by the people for not providing Laertes with a shroud, so she is clearly aware of the possibility of malicious gossip. If the gamble of the contest of the bow had not paid off, then Penelope would have been unfaithful, won by another man[94]. Thus in excusing Helen she also exculpates herself. Heubeck also says acutely that "Penelope's analysis of the actions of Helen is calculated to draw the listener's (Odysseus') attention to a comparison with her own behaviour", although the contrast between Helen and Penelope need not be as marked as he thinks. The defence of Penelope's reference to Helen depends on the conception of Penelope's character as a whole; in order to see its relevance, one must accept that Helen acts out one line of behaviour that Penelope could take, and that the contrast between the two runs throughout the poem.

The paradigm set up by Clytaemnestra is that of the wife who waits for her husband at home, but plots against his return. This is more obviously relevant to Penelope than the paradigm set up by Helen, that of the wife who deserts her husband, and whom he must retrieve. However, the wife beset by suitors, who must be won back from another man[95], is closer to the Helen paradigm. Both Helen and Penelope are said to have been sought by many suitors when they first married, and, indeed, according to Apollodorus, Odysseus received Penelope as a reward for finding a way in which Tyndareus could choose a

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[94] Austin 1975 p.230.
[95] Cf. Lavinia, as discussed below, pp.291-8.

husband for Helen without causing war; Odysseus was thus among the original suitors of Helen. Tales of Penelope's own marriage also suggest that she, like Helen, had many suitors[96]. It has been suggested that the contest of the bow conforms to the folk-tale motif of the suitor who has to win the lady; the fact that Odysseus is already married to Penelope is outside the normal scope of the motif, which thus becomes the husband winning back his wife. The contest may thus be compared to the duel of Paris and Menelaus in the *Iliad*, which should lead to the award of Helen to the victor, in the usual folk-tale form of the motif. As Eumaeus complains (14.68-9), many men died for Helen, and this is what will happen to those who courted Penelope[97]. At 22.227, Athene chastises Odysseus for not fighting the suitors with enough vigour, saying that he was more enthusiastic when he fought with the Greeks over Helen before Troy. This contributes to the parallel of the fight between Odysseus and the suitors over Penelope and that between the Greeks and Trojans over Helen; in both cases the property which the woman could bring to a marriage is also at stake in the fighting. Odysseus implies that the wasting of his substance by the suitors is at least as important a factor in his revenge on the suitors as their courting of Penelope, and in the *Iliad* the return of the goods Paris took along with Helen seems at times almost as important as the return of Helen (Paris seems to think that return of the goods alone could be an acceptable compromise at *Il.* 7.361ff.). Both Helen and Penelope are prizes to be fought over; neither of them, it seems, has much say in the matter. The situation of both is somewhat ambiguous, however; one could argue that Helen went to Troy with Paris of her own will (even if deluded by Aphrodite)[98], and one could read some passages of the *Odyssey* as implying that Penelope is not wholly averse to her suitors (for example, the

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[96] Apollodorus and Pausanias both contain the tale of her being won in a foot-race, like Atalanta, and the daughters of Danaus; cf. Frazer 1921 i p.143 n.3, Edwards 1987 p.60 n.13.
[97] Cf. Achilles Tatius 1.8.6, *AP* 9.166
[98] Cf. Taplin 1992 pp.97-103, Kakridis 1971 25ff.

dream of the geese)[99]. The attitude of each is somewhat difficult to determine precisely, for although each represents herself as being devoted purely to her husband, the reports of them given by others may lead to a different interpretation.

Helen is also comparable to Penelope in her inscrutability. The scholarly arguments that have raged over the attitude of Helen to Menelaus in the *Odyssey* and over Penelope's opinion of the suitors are parallel[100]. The difference is, in part, that readers have been more inclined to believe Penelope's representation of herself as the faithful wife (although this may well be due to her traditional assignment to that role), whereas Helen has always been considered unfaithful. If we believe that the earlier tradition was as Graves posits[101] - that Penelope, like Aegiale, the wife of Diomedes, was originally another Greek wife who fell foul of Aphrodite's anger against the Greeks and so was unfaithful to her husband - then we may be more open to unsettling correspondences between Penelope and Helen. This line does not, however, seem worth pursuing; there are disturbing parallels between Helen and Penelope, and these are present whether or not there was a version of the myth in which Penelope was unfaithful.

The prefiguration of Penelope's reception of Odysseus in the account of Helen's reception of him in Troy is well known. This makes the abortion of the recognition by Penelope into one by Eurycleia more clearly a play on the expectations of the poem's audience. As Helen is said to have acted under the influence of a god when she imitated the wives of the men in the Wooden Horse (4.274-5, 289), so Penelope is prevented by Athene from recognising Odysseus at this point (19.479). Menelaus' attribution of Helen's action to a god is tactful, given the content of the story he has just told; Penelope's lack of

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[99] See above.
[100] Cf. Austin 1975 pp.188-91, Suzuki 1989 pp.67-73, Winkler 1990 pp.140-2.
[101] Graves 1955 pp.84, 203; cf. above p.43 n.9.

recognition is similarly excused, but the fact that it is the poet who makes the explanation, and not a character in the poem, seems noteworthy and aimed to protect the view of Penelope as intelligent. If one believes that the poet was here refashioning a version of the story in which Penelope conspired with Odysseus to kill the suitors, then it is indeed the poet who is causing Penelope not to notice what is going on. This may well be thought to require too close a reading of the text; an oral poet, even if dictating a text, is going to be less aware of such subtleties than readers with a text who can easily flip back to earlier passages. However, the poet(s) of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* does seem to have been able to use references across thousands of lines (for example, Diomedes' words to Agamemnon at *Iliad* 9.34 refer back explicitly to Agamemnon's words to him at 4.370), and large-scale structures are discernible in the poems. It seems that the digression about the history of Odysseus' scar can be seen as a delaying technique, at the end of which the expected outcome does not materialise; the poet has kept his audience waiting for the recognition by Penelope which does not occur, and if this is an innovation, then the digression, the delaying, and the fact the poet blandly tells us that Penelope did not notice because Athene "turned her mind away" make the innovation more striking[102]. Whatever the precise interpretation may be, in both cases the apparently unexpected action is explained by reference to a god (which is not unusual), and in both cases Athene is credited with leading the woman away, whether mentally (Penelope) or physically (Helen), thus protecting Odysseus and the other Greeks in the Trojan Horse.

The stories told about Helen in book 4 reflect both the Penelope-type paradigm of the good and faithful wife and the Clytaemnestra-type paradigm of the unfaithful and

[102] The idea that Penelope did not recognise Odysseus because she really did not want to still has some currency, for example, Roisman 1987, which seems to rely on the discredited view that the gods should be read as reflecting a character's desires.

treacherous wife. Helen's own story about herself casts her in the Penelope role, but going one better in hospitality in that she herself washes the beggar, while Menelaus' story casts her in the Clytaemnestra role, but again going one better (or worse) in that not only does she act treacherously against her husband, but also almost brings destruction on the whole Greek plan and all the chieftains in the Wooden Horse. It has been claimed that "her behaviour does not suggest deliberate treachery"[103], but even accepting her actions as capricious folly, they are still those of a treacherous wife. Thus the tales told to Telemachus hold up two images of Helen, representing the two paths which Penelope could have followed.

The contrast between the Helen of Helen's story about Troy, and the Helen of Menelaus' story, may be paralleled by the contrast between various people's stories and conceptions of Penelope. Menelaus' story about a destructive, unfaithful Helen is paralleled by Amphimedon's story about Penelope's deception of the suitors, told in book 24. Both involve deception, acting either as another man's wife or as if about to become another man's wife, and apparent unfaithfulness to the husband. Winkler suggests that Penelope mirrors Helen's action in her secret messages to each suitor, thus playing the role of "your bride" to each man, as Helen imitates the wife of each man inside the Horse in Menelaus' story[104]. Helen's own story, putting her in the role of Menelaus' true wife, working for him, then parallels Penelope's role of playing the good wife by day, as she weaves Laertes' shroud: the parallel here shows that the role of "good wife" is not straightforward, for Penelope is being the best wife to Odysseus when she unravels her weaving, the opposite of the constructive work usually associated with a good wife. This

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[103] West 1988 pp.210-1.
[104] Winkler 1990 p.141.

parallel points up a difference between Helen and Penelope; Helen is attempting (it seems) to deceive her husband and his allies, whereas Penelope is practising her deception on her husband's rivals and enemies. Penelope also is proved faithful at the end, whereas it is never clear what Helen's real attitude is. The ambiguity perceived in Penelope is mainly due to the ways in which she and her actions recall other characters and their actions.

Penelope and Helen are both shown doing the woman's job *par excellence* in the *Odyssey* and *Iliad*, namely weaving[105]. Helen weaves the story of Troy (*Iliad* 3.126-8), Penelope weaves a shroud. Both also weave metaphorically in the *Odyssey* - Helen in the stories told of her cunning in Troy, Penelope in the plots she weaves to put off the suitors[106]. Both can show themselves as excellent housewives and as cunning plotters with the same imagery. In the normal fairy-tale version of the story, one would expect the faithful wife to be weaving a marriage robe for herself (compare the story of Rumpelstiltskin), putting off the marriage until it is finished. This motif turns up, in a way, in Telemachus' trip to Sparta, where Helen gives him a robe for his bride to wear on their wedding day. The altering of such motifs is standard in the *Odyssey*[107], but that does not remove the point of such twists; Penelope is given more dignity than the Märchen-type figure, as is fitting for epic[108], and this removal of the wedding-dress motif from Penelope and the shifting of her weaving to a shroud for her father-in-law helps separate the queen from any implication that she is preparing for another marriage, and emphasises her position as part of Odysseus' family.

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[105] Cf. West 1988 *ad* 1.356-8, which collects parallels of women's weaving from both *Iliad* and *Odyssey*; Helleman 1995 p.238 n.29 gives further bibliography.

[106] δόλους τολυπεύω 19.137; cf. Marquardt 1993. Penelope is not otherwise said to "weave plots", but this seems to have been a common enough image that the description of her weaving the shroud for Laertes would have evoked the idea of weaving a plot.

[107] The contest with the Phaeacians is like a marriage contest, but the woman Odysseus actually wins a contest for is Penelope, and in book 21 she says that he is not in the competition for her hand.

[108] Hölscher 1967, developed in Hölscher 1978.

In book 23 Penelope proves to her husband and son that she has rejected the modes of behaviour set up by the unfaithful Helen who went to Troy and the treacherous Clytaemnestra who waited at home[109]. The poem can be read as keeping the two possibilities open[110], and Penelope's final vindication ironically comes through a ruse that implies she has conformed to the Helen paradigm and been unfaithful (the immovability of the bed standing for the faithfulness of the marriage is a symbolism which is well-known[111]). The fact that Penelope then refers to Helen herself is said to show that she is excusing the fact that she nearly became a Helen, in that if Odysseus had not turned up for the contest of the bow, she would have been married to another man while he was still alive. However much a reader may think Penelope has a subconscious recognition of Odysseus, or feels that he will arrive in time, her prayer to Artemis to die before she is married to someone else shows that she is by no means sure that it will all work out happily in the end.

Penelope and Nausicaa

The stories of both Penelope and Nausicaa use the folk-tale motif of the princess who is to be married off to the man who excels in a contest[112]. In Penelope's case this is the contest of the bow, and in Nausicaa's case it is Odysseus' defeat of the Phaeacians in throwing the discus (although this is not explicitly a marriage contest, the motif of the contest is definitely present, as shown by Alcinous' earlier offer of Nausicaa's hand, and

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[109] Cf. Katz 1992 pp.155-91

[110] Winkler 1990 pp.157-61, linking this to the male perspective found in the poem.

[111] For the link between the (im)mobility of the bed and faithfulness, cf. the story of Ares and Aphrodite, Zeitlin 1995.

[112] Cf. Helen (Hesiod fr.200-4 Merkelbach and West), the daughters of Antaeus (Pindar *Pythian* 9.111-18) and n.96 p.158 above; cf. also Rutherford 1992 on *Od.* 19.572-81.

Euryalus' apparent perception of Odysseus as a threat[113]). The folk-tale story of the princess discernible behind these contests is never worked out straightforwardly and at length, however, for nothing comes of Odysseus' encounter with Nausicaa (much to the regret of some commentators[114]), and in the case of Penelope he is winning back his own wife. Nausicaa, the text says, tries to hide from her father her real reasons for going to do the washing out of shyness, but he sees through her. When Penelope tries to conceal her motives, however, it is harder to explain what is really in her mind (for example, when she descends to see the suitors in book 18). This difficulty is only partly because no explanation is given; in book 8 the poet does not fully explain Alcinous' motivation for starting the games nor for later denying the Phaeacians' excellence at them, but it still seems clear enough[115]. In the case of Penelope's appearance before the suitors there are the complexities of divine and human motivation, and the separation of the two is harder than in the case of Nausicaa. Both Nausicaa and Penelope are aware of the possibility of inciting scandalous rumours and take steps to prevent this - Penelope is also aware of her reputation in the wider world[116]; both may thus be called prudent. Penelope, however, merits epithets relating to her intelligence more than Nausicaa does, for although both scheme, Penelope's machinations are more complex. Penelope, like Eumaeus made sceptical by years of attempted deceit, is less ready to take people at face value, as may be seen by contrasting their respective reactions to the stranger.

Nausicaa is, in a manner of speaking, courted by Odysseus; his treatment of her by the shore is respectful but aimed at winning her over, and hence is also flattering[117]. Both

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[113] Cf. Lattimore 1969.
[114] For example, Woodhouse 1930 p.64
[115] In both cases, Alcinous is smoothing over a possibly awkward moment for his guest.
[116] 2.101-2, 19.325-34, 23.149-51; for Nausicaa, 6.273-85.
[117] Van Nortwick 1979 pp.270, 272.

Penelope and Nausicaa are thinking about marriage, and, it can be argued, both are attracted to the stranger[118] - whom both of them initially deal with alone. Their emotional confusion is also analogous[119]; Van Nortwick sees the main correspondence in the gradual awakening or reawakening of the two women to sexual interest in men, which in Nausicaa's case is due to her reaching adolescence, and in Penelope to a preoccupation with marriage "as a social (and political) necessity", but the links are wider than this. Both Nausicaa and Penelope are manoeuvred into their first encounters with Odysseus by Athene, who plays with the feelings of both women in the sphere of marriage: Nausicaa is sent down to do the washing because she is soon to be married, while Penelope is sent before the suitors in order to allure them and entice them into giving her courtship gifts.

The parallels between Nausicaa and Penelope relate more to situation than to personality, but both share the confidence and courage which Homer expects of royalty. Nausicaa shows her courage when confronted by Odysseus, whereas Penelope shows it in her dealings with the suitors. The parallels between the two figures and their situations also draw attention to the differences. Nausicaa is far more easily read than Penelope; she tries to deceive her father without success, while Penelope remains inscrutable even to her son, and indeed to her husband, it appears, in the scene of their reunion. It has been suggested that Homer invented the episode on Phaeacia, which, if true, would make its thematic parallels with the rest of the epic more important[120]. The two main female characters there have clear parallels with Penelope, and so cast light on how one is supposed to perceive her. The self-control and composure of the Phaeacian women - Nausicaa when confronted by Odysseus, and Arete in not asking anything of the stranger

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[118] Cf. Rutherford 1992 p.33.
[119] Van Nortwick 1979 p.272.
[120] On general parallels between Phaeacia and Ithaca, see Rutherford 1985 pp.140-44.

until long after his arrival and reception - lead an audience to see more going on underneath Penelope's calm exterior in some situations than they might otherwise.

Although Nausicaa is comparable to Penelope in some ways, she is not the only figure in Phaeacia with whom Penelope should be compared. Nausicaa, daughter of the ruling couple, is also a parallel on Phaeacia for Telemachus in Ithaca; both are youngsters seen on the verge of adulthood, and Nausicaa helps Odysseus in Phaeacia as Telemachus will do on Ithaca[121]. If Nausicaa is seen as comparable to Telemachus, then the next comparison to be suggested is that between Arete and Penelope.

Penelope and Arete

It is Arete who is the main parallel for Penelope in Phaeacia, each a queen who receives the beggar/suppliant. Or that at least is what one expects. The reception of Odysseus by Arete is built up in our expectations by Nausicaa's and Athene's words, impressing on Odysseus that he should approach Arete rather than Alcinous. It has long been a source of criticism that after this build-up, Arete does not reply to his supplication for over seventy lines. The initial reply to the supplication is not given by Arete, or even by Alcinous, but left to the aged Echeneus. The reception of Odysseus on Phaeacia is parallel to his reception on Ithaca[122]; in both one may see the poet delaying the encounter between the beggar and the queen, and when the queen does speak, she wants to know the beggar's identity. Arete gradually increases her degree of approval of the beggar; halfway through his tales, she says the Phaeacians should give him more guest-gifts, ξένια, and this may be paralleled in the increasing degree of closeness Penelope feels for the beggar, and

[121] Cf. Austin 1975 pp.201-2.
[122] Cf. Fenik 1974 pt.1, Garvie 1994 p.25, also *ad* 6.274, 6.310-15, Doherty 1996 pp.77-84.

the way in which the gifts she says she will give him increase along with her growing intimacy. Arete's suspicions of Odysseus are based on the fact that he turns up wearing clothes she recognises (7.234ff.), and clothes play a notable part in Odysseus' adventures on Ithaca: Penelope offers him clothes as a reward for his good news, Eumaeus gives him his cloak in a testing scene which proves Eumaeus' loyalty and goodness, and Odysseus suggests in book 23 that it is because of his ragged clothes that Penelope does not recognise him[123]. The encounters with Arete and Penelope also both occur in the same setting[124], by the hearth. Both Penelope and Arete demonstrate the typical pattern of reception of a guest by a Homeric noble woman (in books 1 and 7); both also appear strangely powerless at their first appearance[125]: Arete, after the build-up given to her, does not speak for some time, while Penelope appears downstairs only to be sent back to her own quarters almost immediately by Telemachus. Pedrick suggests that Arete's silence may be explained in terms of the typical scene composition, according to which a woman would not be present when the guest first arrives[126], but typical structure can be varied. The absence of the woman from discussion is also seen as a standard feature of such scenes. The final element in the scene, on the first day of a guest's arrival, is for the noble woman to retire to bed beside her husband, as Arete does at 7.347 and Nestor's wife at 3.402-3. Here Penelope's action is notably different: she retires to her chamber alone, to weep for her husband. Thus the illustrations of the "normal" end of a day in the scenes in Sparta, Pylos and Phaeacia contrast with the abnormal situation in Ithaca, stressing Penelope's isolation.

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[123] Cf. Block 1985.
[124] Garvie 1994 *ad* 6.305-7; cf. Segal 1967 pp.339-40, which draws parallels between the recognition scene with Penelope in *Od.* 23 and the reception by Arete in *Od.* 7.
[125] Pedrick 1988 p.86-91; p.88 on Penelope's first appearance.
[126] Pedrick 1988 p.87; for a summary of Pedrick's construction of the typical scene of reception of a guest, see p.97 n.3.

Penelope and the goddesses

As well as comparing Penelope with other mortal women, the *Odyssey* also encourages us to compare her with immortals. Calypso explicitly compares herself to Penelope in book 5, saying that Penelope cannot be as beautiful as her, for Penelope is mortal. There are also the inscrutable Circe and Athene, with whom Penelope is implicitly compared. Athene says that she and Odysseus both know κέρδεα (13.296-7), and Penelope is also said to know κέρδεα (2.117-8), so it would not be unreasonable to expect some likenesses between Penelope and the goddess. In book 13, Athene stresses the likenesses between herself and Odysseus, particularly their shared μῆτις. This trait is one also shared by Penelope, although Athene does not acknowledge this. Murnaghan sees parallels between the scene between Odysseus and Athene in 13 and that between Odysseus and Penelope in 23: both, she suggests, deal with the same themes, those of μῆτις and ὁμοφροσύνη; she argues that the relationship between Odysseus and Athene eclipses all others in the poem, even that between Odysseus and Penelope[127]. Athene, however, has the advantage over Penelope of being able to work with both father and son together, rather than feeling torn by her differing loyalty to each. Thus Athene, the goddess, is removed from the dilemmas which exist for the mortal Penelope.

When Athene sends a dream of her sister to comfort Penelope after she has heard about Telemachus' trip (book 4), Penelope sees through the vision in a way which others in the poem do not. Even Odysseus does not recognise Athene when she greets him on Ithaca disguised as a shepherd boy, although he does when she holds the lamp for Telemachus and helps him to clear away the armour; Telemachus and Nestor at Pylos recognise her only because she flies away. Circe and Calypso are both temptations for Odysseus to

[127] Murnaghan 1995 p.72; cf. Doherty 1991.

overcome, and one could say that Penelope too presents temptation - the temptation of revealing himself early, in book 19, and before the war, the temptation to provoke him into trying to stay behind, according to the *Cypria*.

But the differences between Penelope and the goddesses are perhaps more important, and most important is the fact that she is mortal while they are divine. Even though she is a woman to be fought over, Telemachus removes her from the hall before the real fighting, Athene turns her mind away, or sends her to sleep at crucial moments, and she is always full of doubts about the future, unaware of the plans of divinities despite playing a part in them. For Athene, she seems to be another pawn to be moved in accordance with the greater plan, but the strong personality under this comes out when Penelope expresses surprise at the dream of her sister, and asks for information which she is not allowed, proving she has a mind of her own.

Circe and Penelope are also alike, in that they are weavers: when Odysseus' men first come across her, Circe is weaving, and they are unsure whether she is mortal or divine (10.222-3, 226-8). Calypso too is a weaver; both she and Circe are first found in the poem at their looms, singing as they weave[128]. Circe and Calypso are part of a trio of temptations for Odysseus, the third member being Nausicaa[129] (although this is not the order in which our text presents them). Three times, Odysseus is tempted to stay with another woman on his way home, and three times he refuses. The three temptations get harder: Circe makes no attempt to detain Odysseus, while Calypso offers the lure of immortality. Yet immortality without renown is not what Odysseus desires, and hence Nausicaa offers the toughest temptation, for she is human. Calypso, talking to Hermes, has reminded the

[128] Calypso at 5.61-2, Circe at 10.221-2; cf. Heubeck 1989 *ad* 10.221-3.
[129] Cf. Garvie 1994 *ad* 7.259-61.

audience of the problems for mortals who become the lovers of goddesses; thus, although Circe and Calypso both share some traits with Penelope, their immortality and divinity separate them from mortals. Circe is particularly enigmatic; even at the end of their year together, Odysseus cannot predict her reaction to his request to be sent home.

At 17.37 and 19.54, Penelope is described as looking like Artemis or Aphrodite. A comparison with Aphrodite is also implicit in the tale of Aphrodite's adultery with Ares. Hephaestus, like Odysseus, made a bed which could serve as a test of chastity - Hephaestus' will catch adulterers, while Odysseus' remains as immovable as his wife is faithful to him. The mortals whose example Penelope could follow, Clytaemnestra and Helen, both get away with their adultery at least initially: the divine couple remind the audience that things do not always go the wife's way, especially if the husband is cunning. Thus yet another pattern which Penelope could follow is suggested: she could be unfaithful to her husband, but he could return and catch her, and send her back to her father[130]. Not in vain does Odysseus share with Hephaestus the epithet πολύφρων (8.297, 327[131]); Odysseus, like the god, is a craftsman, who shaped of his marriage bed a trick to prove the stability and fidelity of the marriage. This parallel is strengthened by the comparison of Odysseus to the product of a craftsman taught by Hephaestus at 23.160, just before the description of his making of the bed, an image which recalls Hephaestus and his cunningly wrought bed in the earlier tale[132].

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[130] As some later sources said he did, for example Apollodorus *Epit.* 7.38-9: see appendix for a summary of myths about Penelope.

[131] At *Il.* 21.355, Hephaestus is also called πολυμήτις, Odysseus' common epithet, used only of him in the two Homeric epics, and once each of Hermes and Athene in the Homeric Hymns.

[132] 23.157-62 is repeated from 6.230-5, but in the context of Odysseus' description of his own craftsmanship acquires new resonances; cf. Zeitlin 1995, especially pp.131ff. on Hephaestus sand Odysseus.

Penelope πολύτροπος

From the first book to the last, as each character contributes (on the whole) a consistent yet distinctive perspective to the overall picture (Telemachus constant in hostility, Eurycleia in loyalty, for example), the *Odyssey*'s presentation of Penelope emerges as persistently two-fold. The audience is assured of her fidelity by Penelope herself, by figures such as Athene (when it suits her purposes), Agamemnon, Eumaeus, Eurycleia, and Anticleia, and by occasional interjections of the narrating voice (particularly in book 23: e.g. 23.32, 86-7, 205f., 239f.). Yet the question of whether she is truly loyal and faithful to Odysseus constantly resurfaces (in, for example, the words of Athene and the suitors) as a counterpoint to these continual assurances.

Homer portrays Penelope as intelligent and cunning, a fit wife for Odysseus; the downplaying of the role of Clytaemnestra in plotting Agamemnon's death means that the negative aspects of Penelope's intelligence, the fear that she might turn it against her husband, are not emphasised. She is described with a lion simile usually reserved for male heroes (4.791-4) and likened to a good king (a male figure); indeed she may be read as acting on political as well as personal considerations. Like her husband, she has an eye to protecting the wealth of her household, as well as its members. The dignified picture given of the sorrowful queen fits epic rather than folktale:

> In short, she is not the cunning Penelope of the folktale, but the sensible, mourning Penelope of the epic.[133]

The folk-tale motifs of the bride contest and waiting wife are still visible, but not central to the characterisation of the queen; in this way Homer can make the faithful wife of folktale more ambiguous, leaving it unclear as to whether Penelope is going to fulfil the role of

[133] Hölscher 1967 p.137.

faithful wife or treacherous wife (intentionally or not). This ambiguity is produced especially by the persistent parallel/contrast with Clytaemnestra, by the more "difficult" comparison with Helen, and by the creation of tension within Penelope's role as faithful wife, cast on the one hand in terms of conventional expectation (requiring her quiet devotion to her husband) and on the other in terms of the practical necessity of the situation (requiring her to exercise her ingenuity and cunning).

Penelope's own actions, and her descriptions of her actions and emotions, present a powerful picture of her as Odysseus' devoted wife. Although she is aware that the contest of the bow could have led to marriage with another man, all the doubts cast on her behaviour are voiced by others. In principle, some complexity could arise from the poet's playing on earlier versions of the myth, but it seems more likely that the tradition had always presented Penelope as the (faithful) wife of Odysseus, rather than that Homer has deliberately changed a version in which she was unfaithful[134]. Penelope's restraint when she finally confronts the man claiming to be Odysseus reflects the restraint which Athene attributes to him in book 13, and thus shows how well-matched they are. If the *Odyssey* were told from Penelope's point of view, it seems unlikely that there would be any doubts cast on her fidelity; the view of various modern scholars, that Penelope is aware that she has the power in book 23 to deny Odysseus a true *nostos*, and that her hesitation in identifying him is due to her reluctance to give up the independence she has had in his absence, seems to misinterpret Homer's Penelope. She is wily, but all her wiles are directed towards the end of ensuring that she remains married to Odysseus, and also ensuring the safety of her son. When she feels she has to make a move towards

[134] Cf. above pp.111-3.

remarriage, the criterion used to decide on a new husband guarantees that such a man will be as like Odysseus as possible.

The way in which doubts are cast on Penelope's fidelity only makes the resolution, in which that fidelity is affirmed and praised, more emphatic. Other options have been offered, only to be eventually dismissed. The narrative resolution effectively closes off the avenues of suspicion: Penelope has been vindicated and proved Odysseus' faithful wife. Questions may remain - for example, about her apparently uncharacteristic behaviour in book 18[135] - and by focusing on these, and on the unfulfilled possibilities, more open readings of the *Odyssey* could be constructed. But "reading with the grain", at least as far as Penelope is concerned, the poem presents itself as an essentially closed text[136], the resolution of her story providing a closure which pushes aside any remaining ambiguities of character: Penelope's thoughts and motives may remain unclear from the rather external picture which the text gives of her, but her actions have proved her worth, and it is by these, and in the light of the story's culmination, that she is judged.

There is another sense in which the poem reaches a kind of closure, in its reaffirmation of the status quo in male-female relations. Homer's Penelope, however complex a woman she may appear, is shaped by the patriarchal expectations of the society in which she is shown and in which she was created: unlike her son, she cannot take her husband's place in the assembly to bring the suitors to order, nor can she journey abroad to seek news of her husband. Even the unfaithful maids (such as Melantho) flout her authority when she is not actually present (for example, at 20.6-8). She fits herself into this pattern, dropping out of the narrative when her husband has returned, and voicing no

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[135] But cf. above: this scene need not be read as undermining Penelope's fidelity.
[136] Cf. above p.4 n.13, Doherty 1996 pp.9-11.

complaint about his dalliances with immortals. Although Penelope does act on her own initiative in books 19 and 23, such occasions when she is in control are rare, as other characters assert their control over her choices. In particular, Athene asserts her power over Penelope, causing her both to be passive (asleep or unaware of events) and active against her own inclinations (appearing before the suitors). Telemachus had exerted his power over her when he dismissed her in book 1; her parents also try to control her and force her to remarry. Even Eurycleia tries to exercise control over Penelope at the start of book 23. Penelope's direction of the contest of the bow is displaced by Telemachus and Odysseus, and after she has been in control of the reunion in 23, she is silenced, her recounting of her experiences to Odysseus confined to four lines of indirect speech (in contrast to Odysseus' thirty-eight) - she does not speak again in the poem.

It is thus oddly fitting that the *Odyssey*'s last word on Penelope should be the barbed praises of the misogynist Agamemnon, mentioned at the very beginning of this chapter. Agamemnon's words do not provide an adequate basis for a complete reading of the *Odyssey* (as eulogy of Penelope) or of Penelope herself in the epic. Nevertheless, as the subsequent chapters will illustrate, it is not generally the total, complex, intelligent, ambiguous, Homeric Penelope who stands as the background to later literature[137]. Rather, it is Agamemnon's simultaneous praise of Penelope as simplified paragon, and denigration of all women with Clytaemnestra, which sets the tone for subsequent treatments, in which Penelope's virtue may be both lauded and questioned.

[137] Cf. pp.2-4, 12.

Chapter 7: Penelope in Greek Tragedy

ἥτις μόνη τέτληκας
ὑπὲρ ἀνδρὸς ἀντειπεῖν, ὃς ἡμᾶς πολλὰ κακὰ δέδρακεν
ἐπίτηδες εὑρίσκων λόγους, ὅπου γυνὴ πονηρὰ
ἐγένετο, Μελανίππας ποιῶν Φαίδρας τε· Πηνελόπην δὲ
οὐπώποτ' ἐποίησ' ὅτι γυνὴ σώφρων ἔδοξεν εἶναι.

Aristophanes *Thesmophoriazousai* 544-8

Plays Featuring Penelope

It is an unfortunate fact that all the plays which may have featured Penelope as a character have been lost. This means that developed depictions of Penelope from the fifth century are no longer available for consideration. As these will have formed part of the background for the briefer references, however, it is worth considering what can be reconstructed.

It is in the nature of lost plays that we are picking our way fairly blindly in trying to say anything about them, especially in the area of character portrayal, for even where we have a large number of fragments and a plot summary, the fragments will usually have been preserved for a linguistic point of interest, and the plot summary will usually record only the main events, not the details about how a particular play invited the audience to see them. In particular, textual references and the use of other mythological figures to shape a narrative are features we cannot hope to recover. With regard to the plays in which Penelope may have featured, we are very badly off; we know only the name (and one word) of Aeschylus' *Penelope*, and there has been debate over whether this was a tragedy or satyr play. The position with regard to the Sophoclean plays is better, but not by much. Here at least we have some fragments and reported plot summaries, though their accuracy is dubious, as they may well reflect not the story as Sophocles told it, but as it was generally known at the time the summary was written

down. According to Aristophanes (quoted above), Penelope never appeared on stage in a Euripidean play.

It now seems generally agreed that Aeschylus wrote an Odysseus tetralogy, but the content is disputed: one theory takes *Psychagogoi* as the first, followed by *Penelope*, then *Ostologoi*, and finally the satyr play *Circe*, but this is undermined by the belief, now fairly common, that *Ostologoi* was a satyr play[1]. *Psychagogoi* was clearly set in the Underworld, as the remaining fragments show, and is generally assumed to have been based on *Od.* 11, as it involved an interview between Teiresias and Odysseus. What other matters were dealt with in this play remains unclear. *Ostologoi* then dealt with the aftermath of Odysseus' revenge on the suitors, the reconciliation between their families and Odysseus. It is possible that Penelope appeared in this play, but unlikely; it is, however, more than likely that she was referred to. Our existing fragments do not mention her, but it is probable that she was mentioned in any summary of the abuses of Odysseus' property committed by the suitors. It appears likely from fr.179 Radt[2] that some such abuses were represented in the play. The *Penelope* probably treated the return of Odysseus, but could have dealt with events after or before instead or as well as this episode. It is possible but unlikely that it dealt with an episode in the life of Penelope before she reached Ithaca - for example, her marriage to Odysseus. One fragment (fr. 187 Radt) survives from this, in which Odysseus proclaims himself a Cretan (as he does in his lying tales in the *Odyssey*). From this, it is presumed that this play follows the plot of the *Odyssey*, books 18 to 22 or thereabouts, and describes Odysseus' reunion with

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[1] For a summary of views on this tetralogy see Radt *TGrF* III pp.113-4, p.291 on *Ostologoi.*

[2] Fr. 179: <ΟΔ.> Εὐρύμαχος, †οὐκ ἄλλος† οὐδὲν ἧσσον <_>
ὕβριζ' ὑβρισμοὺς οὐκ ἐναισίους ἐμοί·
The fragment then proceeds to describe Eurymachus throwing things at Odysseus' head at a feast of some form.

Penelope and his revenge on the suitors. Given that our scholia on the *Odyssey* do not mention this play, we may assume that (if it did deal with this part of the story of Penelope) it did not innovate greatly, and probably kept the recognition by Penelope until after the death of the suitors[3]. Given the title of the play, the central action would most probably have been Penelope's decision to hold the contest of the bow, and the holding of this contest, with the slaying of the suitors reported to her in a messenger speech. Penelope as an isolated figure, waiting for her husband in ignorance, deciding to bring her waiting to an end, seems a suitable focus for a tragedy; we may want to compare her with the Sophoclean Deianeira, who opens her play in ignorance of her husband's fate and decides to act to bring him back to her in a way which causes disaster, as the contest of the bow could have done for Penelope and Odysseus. It is also possible that Penelope could have appeared in Aeschylus' *Palamedes*, as it is thought that in this play Aeschylus dealt with the recruitment of Odysseus to the Greek army for the Trojan war, and that the play was set on Ithaca.

We have more information on the Sophoclean plays, but this does not extend to knowledge of characterisation. It is unclear precisely which parts of the myth Sophocles treated in which play, and, indeed, how many plays we are dealing with. The earliest in the mythic cycle of interest in connection with Penelope is the *Odysseus Mainomenos*, which tells of the recruitment of Odysseus for the Trojan war[4]. As Sutton says, "the fragments are meagre and do not serve to show how Sophocles dealt with this tale"[5]; we do not know which version of the story was used. Penelope may or may not have appeared; given the threat to Telemachus, an appearance by her, or at the very least

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[3] Although the scholia are so thin by this point in the *Odyssey* that their failure to mention a difference may not carry much weight.
[4] A summary of this part of the myth is included in App. 1.
[5] Sutton 1984 p.94 (see also Lloyd-Jones 1996, which has brief notes).

substantial reference to her, seems quite likely. The next are the plays about Nauplius. Sutton suggests that these could have dealt with the revenge of Nauplius on the house of Odysseus in throwing Penelope into the sea and causing Anticleia to kill herself, but it seems that if either dealt with Nauplius in the home of a Greek leader, then Idomeneus is a far better candidate than Odysseus[6]. The story of Penelope being thrown into the sea seems to be an old part of the legend, for it is fitted in in different ways by different writers, but it is unlikely that Sophocles dramatised it (it is difficult to see how a tragedy including this incident could be constructed).

We then have three plays connected with the end of the *Odyssey* and/or Odysseus' death: *Euryalus*, *Niptra*, and *Odysseus Acanthoplex*. For the first, there is only the title, in Eustathius' commentary on the *Odyssey*, and a summary given by Parthenius. The third chapter of Parthenius' ἐρωτικά παθήματα is titled "Περὶ Εὐίππης. ἱστορεῖ Σοφοκλῆς Εὐρυάλῳ", but there is some doubt as to how closely it follows the version of the story told by Sophocles, because Parthenius says that Odysseus himself killed his son Euryalus[7], but Eustathius says that in Sophocles Euryalus was killed by Telemachus[8]. Both versions may be reconciled by the assumption that Telemachus actually killed Euryalus, but that Odysseus was the instigator[9]. Eustathius tells us nothing of Penelope's role in the play, but Parthenius suggests that she may have had a sizeable role, if we can depend on the summary at all. Parthenius says:

> τοῦ δὲ Ὀδυσσέως κατὰ τύχην τότε μὴ παρόντος, Πηνελόπη καταμαθοῦσα ταῦτα καὶ ἄλλως δὲ προπεπυσμένη τὸν τῆς Εὐίππης ἔρωτα, πείθει τὸν Ὀδυσσέα παραγενόμενον, πρὶν ἢ γνῶναί τι τούτων ὡς ἔχει, κατακτεῖναι τὸν Εὐρύαλον ὡς ἐπιβουλεύοντα αὐτῷ.

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[6] The evidence for possible story lines for the two plays about Nauplius is gathered in Radt *TGrF* IV pp. 353-361, Pearson 1917 pp.80-82, Sutton 1984 pp.80-84.
[7] Ὀδυσσεὺς μὲν διὰ τὸ μὴ ἐγκρατὴς φῦναι μηδὲ ἄλλως ἐπεικὴς αὐτόχειρ τοῦ παιδὸς ἐγένετο.
[8] The arguments over which source is closer to Sophocles are summarised by Radt *TGrF* IV p.194.
[9] Cf. Sutton 1984 p.46.

This suggests that Penelope could have been a major player on stage in the scheming which the summary mentions. It suggests a Penelope in the classic wicked stepmother role, as played by Medea in Athens, or Creusa in the *Ion*, when she thinks that Ion is Xuthus' child. This would appear to show Penelope in a more problematic light than her status as paradigmatic chaste wife would normally suggest. We do not, however, have enough evidence for more than speculation as to how Penelope was portrayed, or to what extent other mythological characters, other wicked stepmothers, may have contributed to the portrayal. It is a great pity that we know no more about Sophocles' treatment of her in this play, for it is the only drama we have in which she is likely to have broken out of her exemplary role in any major fashion. What follows is thus inevitably speculative.

Combining the information we have from Eustathius and Parthenius, we may reconstruct certain elements of the play with a fair degree of certainty. The *Euryalus* showed the arrival of Odysseus' illegitimate son in Ithaca, having come in search of his father, and subsequent action involved his death at the hands of his father or brother. This play must be set on Ithaca, at some point after the end of the *Odyssey*. Odysseus as an old man is therefore a possibility, and Telemachus as a mature adult, the natural age for a ruler. If Odysseus were portrayed as an old man, the death of his son Euryalus at the hands of the more active ruler (or would-be ruler) Telemachus would be plausible, in terms of a rivalry for power (as between the brothers in Eur. *Phoenissae* and Aesch. *Septem*). A conflict between Euryalus and Telemachus would not seem to involve any *peripeteia*; a conflict between Euryalus and Odysseus, or Odysseus and Telemachus, would seem to hold greater tragic potential. An old Odysseus could well be involved in scheming, causing one son to slay the other, but I am inclined to think that the time factor would not have been seen as overly important, and hence that we ought to consider

Odysseus as not being long returned from the last of his set of wanderings, the journey predicted by Teiresias.

It has been argued that Sophocles' *Niptra* and *Odysseus Acanthoplex* are in fact the same play[10]. The main basis for this theory seems to be that Pacuvius' *Niptra*, as described by Cicero[11], clearly encompasses the actions, as far as we can reconstruct them, of both the Sophoclean plays. The title *Niptra* suggests a play which covers the events towards the end of the *Odyssey*, and there are several fragments of the Pacuvian play which would fit with this. Other fragments (fr. 282-91 Warmington) clearly draw on the *Odysseus Acanthoplex*, and Cicero refers to Sophocles' play, but without naming it. Radt's rejection of this thesis has been followed by Sutton[12], on the grounds that this would give an implausible amount of material to be crammed into a good play in terms of fifth-century drama (although Pacuvius could have covered more in his play[13]). It seems most plausible to consider these as separate plays[14]; if the *Odysseus Acanthoplex* is to be linked to another play, the *Euryalus* seems a more likely choice, given that Parthenius in his summary of the plot of the *Euryalus* ends with the words (following immediately on from those quoted above):

> καὶ οὐ μετὰ πολὺν χρόνον ἢ τόδε ἀπειργάσθαι πρὸς τῆς αὐτὸς αὑτοῦ γενεᾶς τρωθεὶς ἀκάνθῃ θαλασσίας τρυγόνος ἐτελεύτησεν.

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[10] Suggested by Brunck, and accepted by "omnes fere viri docti"; cf. *TGrF* IV pp.373-4 on the *Niptra*, 374ff. on *Odysseus Acanthoplex*.

[11] *Tusculan Disputations* 2.21.48 and 5.16.48; the first describes actions belonging to the *Odysseus Acanthoplex* part of the play, the later refers to the foot-washing scene, although there may be some confusion here, as Cicero calls the nurse Anticlea, the name of Odysseus' mother in the *Odyssey*, rather than Eurycleia.

[12] Sutton 1984 pp.88ff.

[13] The Roman dramatists' practice of *contaminatio* is known, for example from Ter. *Adelphoe*, on which see Duckworth 1952 pp.202ff.

[14] Cf. Lloyd-Jones 1996 pp.236-7

These words need not, however, apply to the Sophoclean play[15]. The separation in time between Odysseus' return and his death which this would seem to posit makes the inclusion of his death in a *Niptra* less likely. For Telegonus to be old enough to be sent in search of his father, a gap of some time must be assumed between the two actions, but this is not a conclusive reason for assuming the plays were separate. The most plausible situation seems to be that Pacuvius combined material from two Sophoclean plays into one[16]. The Sophoclean plays would then have the *Niptra* probably encompassing the whole of the action at the end of the *Odyssey*, i.e. the washing scene, the slaying of the suitors, and the reunion with Penelope, though maybe not Laertes. As for the *Odysseus Acanthoplex*, the surviving fragments refer to an oracle, which presumably predicted that Odysseus would be killed by his son. As he does not recognise Telegonus when he is wounded by him, he concludes that the oracle was false, but then a recognition occurs before his death, a technique characteristic of tragedy. Again, we have no evidence as to how Penelope was treated in these plays, but given her standard appearance in art of this period, sitting with her head on her hand, often in front of a loom, we may hypothesise that this reflects her appearance in plays based on the end of the *Odyssey*[17]. This suggests a sorrowing Penelope, a Penelope waiting for news of her husband, much as we see in the *Odyssey*. We have no reason to suspect that the treatments of Penelope in any of these plays diverged from the stereotype of the waiting wife, although we may assume that there was more to the tragic Penelope than this. As in the case of Phaedra, we may reasonably expect a paradigmatic mythological figure to be treated in a more interesting way when the focus of a drama than when used purely as a foil for a character in a

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[15] Wilamowitz 1884 p.190ff.
[16] For an intelligent summary of our evidence about these two plays, see Sutton 1984 pp.88-94.
[17] Although linking art and literature in this way is problematic; cf. pp.75-7 abovve.

drama. Penelope's appearance in the *Niptra* seems likely, but the case is less clear for the *Odysseus Acanthoplex*, although she is a plausible person for Odysseus to tell about the oracle he has received, as Oedipus tells Jocasta about his oracle in the *OT* (a play which also resembles the *Odysseus Acanthoplex* in that both tell the tale of a man who tries to cheat an oracle).

As will be discussed below, Deianeira in the *Trachiniai* has been seen as based on the Penelope of the *Niptra*, rather than just the Penelope of the *Odyssey*. If that were the case, the fact that Deianeira and Heracles never meet would be still more striking if this implied a contrast with the happy reunion of Odysseus and Penelope. The death of Heracles at the end of the *Trachiniai* need not be seen as supporting the thesis that the *Niptra* and *Odysseus Acanthoplex* are the same play, however closely we see these plays as being in parallel, for the death of Odysseus at the hands of a new character in the drama is not at all parallel to Heracles' death at the hands of his wife, even though both deaths may be seen as springing from the hero's earlier misdeeds. The contrast between the reunion of Odysseus and Penelope and the eternal separation of Heracles and Deianeira would make an effective dramatic point, but we cannot use this speculative comparison to tell us much more about the *Niptra*, especially as both plays probably drew heavily on the end of the *Odyssey*.

In addition to these plays by the great tragedians, we know that Philocles wrote a tragedy and Theopompus a comedy with the name *Penelope*, but little survives except the names. There was also a play, by an unknown author, the *Odysseus Pseudangelos*, mentioned by Aristotle in the *Poetics*[18]. This reference is rather garbled and unclear, but

[18] *Poetics* 1455a 13: ἔστιν δέ τις καὶ συνθετὴ ἐκ παραλογισμοῦ τοῦ θεάτρου, οἷον ἐν τῷ Ὀδυσσεῖ τῷ ψευδαγγέλῳ· τὸ μὲν γὰρ τὸ τόξον ἐντείνειν, ἄλλον δὲ μηδένα, πεποιημένον ὑπὸ τοῦ ποιητοῦ καὶ ὑπόθεσις, καὶ εἴ γε τὸ τόξον ἔφη γνώσεσθαι ὃ οὐχ ἑωράκει.

it does seem to be concerned with the return of Odysseus and his revenge on the suitors, although the fact that he is said not to have seen the bow before shows that if this is the case, this play is further from the Homeric version than the Sophoclean plays. It is, however, generally assumed that this play dramatised the end of the *Odyssey*, given that it combines Odysseus as a false messenger and a recognition by means of a bow. We can therefore assume that Penelope probably figured in the play, but can say no more than this with any degree of certainty. Merkelbach boldly (but quite plausibly) suggests an amendment to the text[19], keeping in the contest of the bow, but replacing the word "bow" in the clause saying that Odysseus had never seen it with the word λέκτρον, τόξον having been wrongly copied from the previous clause. Odysseus would not have seen the bed, Merkelbach suggests, because Penelope could not bring out their marital bed, as it was built round a living olive tree. This suggestion would keep the double test, as we have in the *Odyssey*, and would go some way to getting round the textual problems in the Aristotelian passage.

Aristotle is also our source for a reference to a play called *Odysseus Traumatias*[20]. Although it is possible that this is identical with the *Odysseus Acanthoplex*, it has also been identified with Chaeremon's *Odysseus*[21]. The plot is certainly close to that of Sophocles' play, and of the *Telegony*, for Aristotle cites it as a play in which a dreadful deed is done by one person against another in ignorance of their relationship; the relationship and wounding are both said to happen in the play in this

[19] Merkelbach 1969.
[20] *Poetics* 1453 b 34.
[21] Collard 1970, p.27 on the *Odysseus*. The Suda attributes a *Traumatias* to Chaeremon, but this is due to a "severe dislocation" in the text of Athenaeus; despite this, Collard still holds that Aristotle is here referring to a play by Chaeremon.

case. Whether or not this play is to be identified with the *Odysseus Acanthoplex*, we can say no more on its portrayal of Penelope, for nothing beyond the name survives.

Thus there is no reason for us to believe that Penelope was ever presented as unfaithful in fifth-century drama, as no mention is made of any plays which treat her thus in the scholia which cite references for treatments of Penelope as unfaithful[22]; rather, the plays featuring Penelope seem to have looked back to the plots of Homer and the epic cycle. This need not mean that there was no doubt shed on her chastity, as in the *Odyssey*, but this would probably have been focalised by other characters in the drama. The references we possess from the fifth century linking Penelope with Pan do not explicitly refer to her as faithless or unchaste (though we know nothing about the relative dating in the fifth century between her marriage and Pan's birth). The nearest we have to a more morally dubious Penelope seems to be the *Euryalus*, but we know too little about this play to be able to build on this.

Passing References

It is ironic that although Euripides is notoriously castigated for never putting Penelope on stage as a character, the two passing references to her which are to be found in surviving tragedy come from his work. Neither mentions her by name, but in both we see that Penelope's reputation for goodness, chastity, and fidelity was already established:

> σὺ δ', ἡνίκ' ἄν σε Λαρτίου χρήζῃ τόκος
> ἄγειν, ἕπεσθαι· σώφρονος δ' ἔσῃ λάτρις
> γυναικός, ὥς φασ' οἱ μολόντες Ἴλιον.
>
> *Tr.* 421-3

> ὁρᾷς, Ὀδυσσέως ἄλοχον οὐ κατέκτανε
> Τηλέμαχος· οὐ γὰρ ἐπεγάμει πόσει πόσιν,

[22] Cf. above pp.50-3, and Appendix 2.

μένει δ' ἐν οἴκοις ὑγιὲς εὐνατήριον.

Or. 588-90

Both references come in the words of those using Penelope to back up their case in an argument: Talthybius in the *Troades* is consoling Hecabe for her fate as a slave, arguing that Penelope is σώφρων[23], and hence will be a good mistress; Orestes is trying to justify his murder of his mother to his grandfather, by putting the blame onto his mother's adulterous behaviour. The rhetorical point that is being made in each case determines the simple presentation of Penelope's character: Talthybius would be working against his aim of cheering Hecabe if he mentioned a less admirable side to Penelope, and Orestes is using the parallel between the houses of Agamemnon and Odysseus as Agamemnon did in the *Odyssey*, praising Penelope in order to denigrate Clytaemnestra. Any possible complications are not brought up, as the rhetoric of his argument requires that Penelope's reputation be considered spotless: that is why Telemachus did not kill her. In this context, the depersonalised phrase used by Orestes, ὑγιὲς εὐνατήριον, is noteworthy: Penelope, chaste wife, is not referred to herself, but rather the bedchamber that symbolised the marriage (peculiarly in the case of Penelope and Odysseus).

Outside tragedy, but still in the fifth century, Penelope also makes a brief appearance in Herodotus' *Histories*. While talking about Egypt, Herodotus identifies various Greek and Egyptian gods. These include deified Greek heroes, such as Heracles, and gods born to mortal women, such as Dionysus, son of Semele, and the god Pan. Herodotus gives Pan's parentage as being from Penelope, the wife of Odysseus, and Hermes. He dates Pan's birth slightly after the Trojan war, and hence after the date of

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[23] Although the adjective σώφρων is not used of Penelope in the *Odyssey*, she comes to be seen as an exemplar of σωφροσύνη; cf. North 1979 pp.47-54, especially p.48 on 'The Sophrôn Heroine' and the names of mythical women especially linked to σωφροσύνη. In the *Odyssey*, the term ἐχέφρων is a particular attribute of Penelope; this is closer in meaning to σώφρων than Penelope's other main epithet, περίφρων, which also draws on the same root.

Penelope's marriage to Odysseus, although it is not clear whether he places it after the death of Odysseus, during his wanderings, or at some other point. In the same book, he also describes a Helen who stayed in Egypt throughout the Trojan War. Herodotus is thus giving us, as apparently generally accepted and wholly unexceptional, a version of Greek mythology which reverses the characters of two of the most clearly defined personalities from the Trojan War cycle - although Herodotus' bland introduction of this "fact" may in fact be concealing its novelty. It is unclear how prevalent the story of Penelope as mother of Pan was, but it makes no other appearance in surviving fifth-century literature: this suggests either that it was not commonly known or that it had little effect on the common conception of Penelope, as Euripides' version of an innocent Helen did little to rescue her character. The "usual story " seems to have been the one which fixed the generalised conception of the character; versions which deliberately diverged from this simplified version seem to have had little impact on it.

It is perhaps not surprising that Penelope does not appear more frequently on the dramatic stage: good and faithful wives are rarely the stuff of tragedy, which focuses more on women who transgress the norms of society (and thereby bring about the tragedy)[24]. That does not mean, however that a discussion of the fragments of plays featuring her and of the passing references covers all that can be said about the presence of Penelope in fifth-century tragedy. More can be learnt about the generalised view of Penelope by considering her function when she is evoked through reference (verbal echoes, plot parallels, etc.) to other works in which she was depicted more fully. The

[24] Cf. the words of North 1979 p.50: "The very qualities that render women unfit to be stereotypes of sophrosyne - violence, self-will, unchastity, argumentativeness, insistence on their rights - equip them for tragedy". On "bad women" in tragedy see Gould 1980, Foley 1981, Just 1989 ch.9, particularly pp.197, 215-6.

importance of Homer to the tragedians meant that allusion to the Homeric poems was common; these poems were also texts with which an audience could be expected to be familiar, so their use to create meaning in a play should be considered eminently plausible.

Penelope's Implicit Presence in Tragedy

In order to see how the intertextual presence of Homer can reflect on fifth-century perceptions of Penelope, and how this would affect the 'reading' of a drama by a fifth-century audience, it is necessary first to consider some of the characteristic techniques of tragedy, and the ways in which one play may refer to another play or other text.

Plot and Character in Greek Tragedy

Firstly, the importance of plot-patterns should not be underestimated; Aristotle *Poetics* 1450a 23-5, ἔτι ἄνευ μὲν πράξεως οὐκ ἂν γένοιτο τραγῳδία, ἄνευ δὲ ἠθῶν γένοιτ' ἄν may be a rhetorical exaggeration, but shows the importance of the plot[25]. There is room for dispute as to how well the plots were known, but it does seem likely that in the fifth century, the outlines of the myths would be known to an audience, and hence the depiction of character depended greatly on how the characters came to perform their inevitable parts in the drama[26]. In dramas based on myth, there is a certain amount

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[25] On the whole area of plot and character in Aristotle, see Halliwell 1986 ch.5, especially pp.149-164, with further bibliography; also Mossman 1995 pp.138-41.

[26] For evidence relating to this point see Pickard-Cambridge 1968 pp.275-6, Csapo/Slater 1995 pp.286-306 on the audience in general. The former is unduly sceptical about the knowledge of the bulk of people, following Aristotle; Antiphanes is better evidence for the fifth century. However, if knowledge was restricted, this might contribute to the common conception of the myths in terms of paradigms, as the most basic knowledge of a myth consists in the bare outline of the action of the plot. As the section below shows, the basic outlines of the plot were the most important feature for the perception of some mythological characters - the best known ones, those who come to be treated as exemplary in some way.

of freedom in the action, but there are some key elements of each myth that can neither be excluded nor changed; motivations, however, and the manner in which necessary actions are approached and executed are open to reshaping. Thus, Orestes must always kill his mother (though Electra's role is more fluid) and each Orestes will reveal his particular characterisation as he shows how he reaches the decision to kill his mother and acts on it. Of course, the key elements may seem remarkably flexible to us, brought up on "canonical" versions of the myths, but, nevertheless, there are immutable parts to the stories. The contrast in motivations and manner of execution may be observed by comparing different plays dealing with the same story. Each playwright has the same starting point and ending point, but the contents of the plays differ greatly[27]. Through the fifth century, as more plays were written, the playwrights had to be more inventive in order to avoid repeating familiar material, and hence greater complexity and stranger variations in the myths result.

The Phaedra Plays: flexibility v. rigidity in the treatment of an archetypal figure.

Phaedra, like Penelope, is a figure who becomes a paradigm, but of infidelity. The plays about Phaedra are interesting for the tension they reveal between the immutability of the myth and the flexibility with which the characters are portrayed. Hippolytus could be painted a great deal more sympathetically than Euripides chose to do in the second *Hippolytus*, and Phaedra apparently changed greatly between his two plays about her[28]. The second Phaedra tries to be virtuous but is doomed by the story she is in. As Euripides creates a Phaedra who goes against the normal conception of her

[27] Cf. Winnington-Ingram 1969.
[28] Cf. Barrett 1964 pp.10-30, Halleran 1995 pp.24-37, and now Gibert 1997, questioning the assumption that the surviving play is the second.

character, the main figure with whom she is compared is her earlier self, her own paradigm as the bad woman who betrayed her husband and his son. The second Phaedra is shown as fighting against her infatuation with Hippolytus and trying to suppress it, but she fails due to the power of Aphrodite and the deceit of her nurse. There are also allusions to the other infamous woman of her family, Pasiphae, her mother, making the family link a source of her destructive passion. (This link is exploited far more by Seneca in his *Phaedra*[29].) Euripides' Phaedra is a character for whom we can feel sympathy because she is a victim of the gods' malice. Aphrodite in Euripides' play does not destroy Phaedra because of her own sins or because of those of her family, although these are always in the background, but rather as a means of destroying Hippolytus. (The way in which Phaedra is manipulated may be compared to Aphrodite's treatment of Helen in *Iliad* 3, where again the goddess is using a mortal woman through desire to reward a mortal man for his attitude towards her.)

Yet, however much sympathy we are invited to feel for Phaedra in the second *Hippolytus*, Phaedra remained a paradigmatically unchaste woman, as we may see from the references to her in Aristophanes (*Thesmo.* 547, 550) and Euboulus (fr. 115 Kassel-Austin). Despite Euripides' second play about her, both she and he were always judged by the first play because that is the play which fits Phaedra's character as determined by her role in the plot which surrounds her, as a bad woman, an unchaste woman[30]. Thus one may say that Phaedra is a character dominated by the power of the plot: the general perception which remains of her in the tradition depends on the plot in which she is

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[29] The importance of fate and the inescapable influence of heredity in Seneca's plays are part of the reason they are called Stoic drama by some critics. References in the *Phaedra* include 112ff., 124, 127, 688ff., 698ff. Compare also Coffey/Mayer 1990 *ad loc.*, Boyle 1987 *ad loc.*, and also p.27 (cf. Winnington-Ingram 1958 pp.175-6 on this theme in Euripides' play).

[30] Cf. Sommerstein 1996 *ad* 1081 on the rewriting of one of Euripides' "good women" as a characteristically Euripidean "bad woman".

involved, and ignores the ambiguities raised by particular retellings of the story. In this respect, she is similar to Penelope, who must be a good wife, because she waited for Odysseus; the fact that Homer does not give such a straightforward picture is irrelevant to the generalised conception of the character. Conversely, Phaedra must be a shameless hussy, because she tried to seduce her stepson, and accused him of rape when he rejected her (whether in person or not), thus causing his death. Euripides' more sympathetic portrayal of Phaedra cannot change the bones of the story, or, therefore, the generally accepted view of Phaedra.

Dramatic Structure and Character Types

Beyond plot-patterns, the formal aspects of tragedy had a marked effect on characterisation. Despite the constraints placed upon them by the myths they used, the Athenian dramatists had great freedom in how they dealt with these myths, as the various versions of the story about Hippolytus and Phaedra show[31]. The plays do, however, fall into structural groups; one may see these basic structures as due to the folk-tale and mythological background to the stories of tragedy, or to the nature of drama more generally. Thus there are plays, or sometimes scenes, which fall into categories such as suppliant drama, return and revenge drama, recognition scenes, and plays of return, or *nostos* plays[32]. If a drama seems to belong to one of these categories - for example, identifying itself as a suppliant drama by opening with a scene of a victim sitting at an altar - then certain expectations are raised as to how the drama will proceed. In a suppliant drama, the expectation is that a saviour will appear at some point to rescue the

[31] See also the plays about Philoctetes (as discussed by Dio Chrysostom *Orations* 52), and those about Electra/Orestes.

[32] Basic introductory studies in this area include Lattimore 1964 and Strohm 1957; on *nostos* plays in particular, see below.

suppliant in the nick of time. Before this happens, we expect the suppliant's pursuer(s) to appear and threaten the suppliant, and possibly try to trick the suppliant away from the altar[33].

It is not only the dramas themselves and the scenes within them that fall into "types"; the characters who are portrayed in them are also often "types". This is partly a function of the types of drama; a play which appears to fall into a particular structural group raises our expectations as to how the plot will develop, but also as to what sort of characters will be portrayed, for the stock plot elements require particular character types[34]. Thus a play which appears to be a suppliant drama leads us to expect a villain pursuing the suppliant, and a saviour to protect him/her. The playwright may play off these expectations to produce the reversal of fortune which Aristotle considered an indispensable part of drama, as Euripides does in the *Heracles*, for example, where Heracles arrives in the nick of time to save his family, but then himself becomes the villain of the piece and attacks them. In his turn, he has to be rescued by Theseus and the parallelism is underlined when the image of the boat is repeated, first of all attached to Heracles' children coming along behind him, and then to Heracles himself, as he is led off by Theseus[35]. Other "types" found in tragedy include the willing sacrificial victim, usually a young girl, such as Polyxena and Iphigeneia[36], the tyrannical ruler, such as Lycus in the *Heracles* or Creon in the *Oedipus at Colonus*, as well as the usually

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[33] On type scenes and characters, and the connection between them, see Heath 1987 pp.145-150.
[34] Cf. Heath 1987 p.145-148 on the types expected in a suppliant plot, and Vickers 1973 pp.452-489 on "orthodox" and "unorthodox" suppliant plays.
[35] 1424 echoing 631; cf. Bond 1981 *ad loc.*
[36] On the sacrifice of young girls, see Schmitt 1921 pp.84-103, particularly pp.99-100 on Polyxena, Lattimore 1964 pp.47-9, O'Connor-Visser 1987 especially pp.1-18, 197-9, Kearns 1989 ch.3, in particular pp.55-60, Rabinowitz 1993.

unnamed messengers[37], and the elderly devoted servant - for example, the paedagogos in Sophocles' *Electra*, the nurse in the *Choephoroi*. The use of stylised masks, with conventional colouring and features for different types of people, could also contribute to the perception of characters on stage as more or less developed versions of "type" figures[38]. There are also characters who assume typical roles: thus, in surviving plays, we always see Theseus in the role of saviour, as in the *Oedipus at Colonus*, and in Euripides' *Heracles* and *Supplices*. Plays such as the *Aegeus* of Sophocles and that of Euripides might well have shown Theseus in a different light, for in these plays he would be a major character in a different "type" part: that of the son returning unrecognised to face the hostility of a (step-)parent. One of the main aims of characterisation for Aristotle is the creation of "appropriateness"[39], which he expands as meaning that characters must act in a way appropriate to their age and sex, and (for most tragic characters) to their heroic status. This suggests an accepted norm of behaviour for the various "types" one may see on the tragic stage.

Perhaps our best proof for the fact that the tragedians themselves were aware of these character types and dramatic structures is the way in which they are exploited[40], particularly in Euripides, when the expected pattern of events does not occur. Thus in the *Ion* we have already had all the conventional elements of a recognition scene but without a recognition occurring between Creusa and Ion before she tries to kill him. As it seems that all the means of recognition have already been used and passed over, there

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[37] Messenger speeches have been thought of as consistently objective, describing for the audience action off stage with little comment; that this is not so is shown by de Jong 1991, ch.2, particularly pp.65ff. If a messenger speech is false, as in Sophocles' *Electra*, this is usually signalled.

[38] On masks see Pickard-Cambridge 1968 pp.190-5 which mentions the degree of standardisation which seems to be present in mask making from early on; Halliwell 1993.

[39] τὸ ἁρμόττον, *Poetics* 1454a 22-4; cf. Halliwell 1986 p.159.

[40] Cf. Goldhill 1986 ch.10.

seems no possibility of a recognition and reunion or prevention of intra-familial murder[41]. All through the play, Euripides has been playing with the conventions of the recognition scene: we have had a false recognition, as Xuthus "recognises" Ion as his own son, and we have had an abortive recognition scene between Ion and Creusa, when all the details needed for the recognition are given, but the final step is not taken[42]. The way in which Euripides thus arouses expectations only to dash them suggests that he was conscious of the conventions, and is deliberately playing with his audience. The *Helen* is similar in that it appears to begin as a suppliant drama, but the suppliant, Helen, acts very oddly when she leaves her sanctuary, and we begin to wonder how much of her danger is real, and what is really going on here. The contrasts between the scenario suggested by the dramatic structure and that suggested by the words and actions of the characters on stage echoes the theme of reality versus appearance that runs through the play.

The existence of character and plot "types" in tragedy may be linked to the mythical background on which tragedy draws. Mythical narrative does tend to fall into simple structural units, and the same sort of story-pattern is often repeated. The tendency for myth and mythological figures to become exemplary and to function paradigmatically is linked to this. The more exemplary the character of a mythological figure, the more likely it is that that figure will be read in the light of the folk-tale element of Greek myth. The same is true of the more schematic story-lines, such as that of the *Odyssey*, which uses a story-pattern found the world over[43].

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[41] See Burnett 1971 pp.101-29.
[42] One may compare the central scene of the *IT*.
[43] On the story-pattern of the *Odyssey*, see above pp.40-9, Edmunds 1993 Appendix 2 "The Homecoming Husband" (pp.81-6), and Thompson 1955-58 N681 "husband arrives home as wife is about to marry another", with references to related motifs (for example, N741 "Unexpected meeting of husband and wife").

Another factor to be considered in the matter of typology in Greek tragedy is the religious and social background of tragedy and its manner of performance. Those who see tragedy as springing from ritual might argue that the "type" characters come from the schematic origins of characterisation in the ritual drama[44], where there might have been a stereotypical scenario of god against hubristic sinner. Given our uncertainty about the origin of drama, such thoughts must be speculative, but drama which grew out of one actor and a chorus does seem likely to have had a limited number of set scenarios which could be dealt with on stage, given the limitations of the resources.

The linkage of mythological characters and character types has been looked at briefly above, and is one of the areas which this chapter aims to explore. It is, however, difficult to draw a line between the particular mythological character and the type which they are taken to represent[45]. It is possible to create a character through reference to the generalised types (e.g. "tyrant") rather than specific mythological persons. If there is verbal allusion to earlier textual versions of the figure, an audience will be more likely to perceive a reference to a specific mythological figure, rather than a general type. We are at a disadvantage looking for these allusions, given the number of texts which we have lost, but the appearance of a figure in more than one work may lead to reference to several instantiations to evoke the more generalised perception of that figure. If there were allusion to just one text, then a reader might look to that textual version of the character in particular; if, however, there is a broader intertextual relationship with several previous versions, all will contribute to the characterisation, creating a certain instability. Against this, the dynamic of intertextuality towards simplification of the

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[44] For recent approaches to this topic, see Easterling 1988 and Seaford 1994 pp.139ff., 323ff., 354-5, 386-7.

[45] Cf. pp.76-7 above.

earlier text will draw in the simpler, more generalised conception of the character as a firmer point of reference[46].

In addition to textual reference, the intertextual relationship may be created by similarity of plot pattern or staging: an obvious example of this is the parallel between the *Agamemnon* and *Choephoroi*, where the appearance of Orestes after the murder with his victims (one male, one female) recalls and reverses Clytaemnestra's appearance as murderess with her two victims. How well an ancient audience would remember a previously performed play is here an issue: textual allusion, particularly when backed up by plot parallels, similar staging, etc. may well evoke memories of an earlier play, but it is unlikely that all the audience would have a detailed recollection - the simplified picture, modified by other versions of the story they have heard, and a memory of the plot, seems more likely to be called to mind for the majority. Stinton has argued (in discussing allusion) that the tendency in Greek drama is to spell out the references which are more important for comprehension of the drama in greater detail and less allusively[47]. This may be seen as a rather pragmatic (and perhaps circular) approach; if the references are clear then there must be an important point to be made, and an important point will be made clearly[48]. The clearer a reference is, the more likely it is that a higher proportion of the audience would have picked up on it. When considering the reaction of an ancient audience, it is often difficult to know how great an acquaintance with other texts may be

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[46] This is another form of the simplification of earlier texts which may be found in "many to one" intertextual relationships: because each text develops the character differently, the matrix of references is more likely to evoke those characteristics shared by most versions, which are most likely to be those demanded by the plot. Cf. pp.12-14 above.

[47] Stinton 1986.

[48] Such a pragmatic approach, however, may be the best with which to approach a nebulous area such as intertextual relationships, where the connection must be made by a reader, with the result that perception of such links must always be subjective. Some may be shared by more readers than others, but the effect each has on a reading of a text - whether this adds much or little - might be the best pragmatic consideration to take into account when thinking about which possible links are the most worth pursuing.

assumed. In the case of Homer, however, this is less of a problem: even if the other plays involving Penelope survived, the bulk of an ancient audience would be more likely to be able to perceive references to the Homeric text[49]. As discussed above, however, the ability to recognise allusion to the Homeric text would not necessarily be linked to a precise memory of the text, but might rather mean an ability to recollect a simplified version of the story. The Homeric text thus provides a less contentious example of how the intertextual relationship can be used to create character: given how heavily the post-Homeric depictions of Penelope seem to rely on the story as told by Homer, Penelope is a good example with which to explore how such textual reference might be "read" by an ancient audience.

Nostos plays

The theme of comparison between the houses of Agamemnon and Odysseus runs throughout the *Odyssey*. The positions of their respective sons as helpers of their fathers' causes are seen as parallel; their wives provide a complete contrast to each other at the end of the epic, as expressed by Agamemnon's ghost[50]. Above all, the actual returns are contrasted: Agamemnon's public, glorious, laden with spoils of war, received by a household which is openly welcoming but hides treachery inside; Odysseus' secret, in shameful conditions, as a beggar, received by a household which is in reality longing for him but which is taken over by those who abuse the returning hero.

A short digression on the importance of *nostos* for Greek literature would seem useful at this point. One of the cyclical epics which filled in the story of the Trojan War

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[49] Cf. above p.9, with n.33.
[50] *Od.* 24.194-202, cf. 11.445-6, etc.

between the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* was the *Nostoi*, or *Returns*, which described the fates of the major Greek heroes after the fall of Troy. The *Odyssey* gives us the stories of the return journeys of Menelaus, Agamemnon, Odysseus, and Nestor, as well as their fates when they got back; an important feature of the *Nostoi* was the fact that various Greek heroes had unsuccessful return journeys, either failing to reach home, or finding all there was not well. This was generally described as being due to the anger of the gods (particularly Athene) at the behaviour of the Greeks at the sack of Troy. The rape of Cassandra, the killing of Priam, and other outrages caused by *hubris* brought disaster on the Greeks; the *Odyssey* is somewhat unusual in concentrating on the heroes who got home safely (eventually). *Nostos* was also important for Greek tragedy, as there are numerous plays in which the return of the hero is central to the action - for example, Aeschylus' *Persai*, Sophocles' *Trachiniai*, Euripides' *Heracles* and *Andromache*. The *Odyssey* was probably the more important predecessor of the *nostos* plays, rather than the epic *Nostoi*; this judgement is based on the topics dealt with by the tragedians, rather than a particular style or approach to telling stories of *nostos*[51], and the comparative brevity of the *Nostoi* (five rather than twenty-four books) suggests that its potential as a model was less. The *Odyssey* covers the major returns from Troy - Agamemnon, Menelaus, Odysseus - and offers a variety of versions of the plot of the hero's return.

The *nostos* play is centred on the return of the hero: we expect the return to be the trigger for the action of the play, as in the *Agamemnon* and the *Trachiniai*. A *nostos* play arouses the expectation of a departure from the "proper" pattern of a return. A return should be a joyful occasion, the victor should return laden with spoils, to be fêted by his people. If, however, this was the case in the stories told on the tragic stage, there would

[51] Taplin 1977 p.124.

be no plot, no tragedy. We do not need to cite examples of "proper *nostoi*" in order to say that those in the tragedies and epic are in some way perverted[52]. The ghost of Agamemnon realises that he could not expect a warm welcome from Clytaemnestra, but he says:

> ... ἦ τοι ἔφην γε
> ἀσπάσιος παίδεσσιν ἰδὲ δμώεσσιν ἐμοῖσιν
> οἶκαδ' ἐλεύσεσθαι·
>
> *Od.* 11.430-2

At *Od.* 11.100, Teiresias prophesies to Odysseus concerning his return journey; the punishment for interfering with the cattle of the Sun and for wounding the Cyclops will be that he returns home after a long delay, alone and in a sorry state, in another's ship, and will find proud men courting his wife, having taken over his house. From this it is clear what is supposed to make up a "proper" *nostos*, a norm against which literature develops.

The importance of the *Odyssey* for Greek tragedy is often taken to be that it provides the model for recognition scenes[53], but, while this is an important influence, it is not the only one. Just as the *Odyssey* provides a variety of forms of recognition scene (the recognition by a scar with Eurycleia, the long drawn-out recognition with Laertes, the recognition of clothes in *Od.* 6 and 19, the recognition with trickery of the trickster with Penelope, and, in book 19, an expected recognition foiled and diverted onto another character), so it provides a variety of paradigms or prototypes of *nostos*, the warrior's return. Odysseus makes his longed-for return to a faithful wife; Agamemnon's return is

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[52] One might also compare the treatment of supplication in the *Iliad*, which is rejected in battle in the main narrative, although from earlier in the war we hear of supplications which were accepted; one may similarly contrast the gods of literature and "real life" (cf. Parker 1997; Parker 1985 pp.298-306 illustrates a similar phenomenon in respect of oracles).

[53] See, for example, Matthiessen 1964 pp.93-107, and 107-8 on the *Nostoi*, which is again seen as a source for prototypes of recognition scenes rather than the *nostos* theme. For the *Odyssey* as the inspiration for recognition scenes, see Richardson 1983, Cave 1988 *passim*, but especially pp.10-24, and Aristotle *Poetics* 1454b19-1455a21.

a hateful prospect to his unfaithful wife; Menelaus returns with his unfaithful wife, who reappears in the *Odyssey* playing the role of the good wife, at peace with society and household.

The *Oresteia*

Given the importance of the model of the family of Agamemnon in the *Odyssey*, an obvious starting point for a search for Odysseus' wife as a model is in the plays dealing with Agamemnon's wife, whose most famous appearance is in the highly influential *Oresteia* trilogy of Aeschylus. The importance of these plays for later tragedies is clear[54], and, as the whole trilogy exploits the contrast drawn in the *Odyssey* between Penelope and Clytaemnestra, reference to these plays may provide a guide as to where to look for characters who may be compared with Penelope through her cousin Clytaemnestra. The linking of visual and verbal imagery in these plays - for example, in the use of net imagery to describe Clytaemnestra's means of killing Agamemnon - may have helped to make these images more memorable, and hence help explain the popularity of allusion to these plays. Repeated production of Aeschylus' plays[55] will also have helped give their language a marked resonance which an audience could pick up. Consideration of the *Oresteia* is thus important both for the way in which Aeschylus uses the Homeric text and for the role of these plays in later texts[56].

Clytaemnestra in the *Agamemnon* is a powerful, intelligent woman, who plots to remove her husband and replace him with a weaker man. She is portrayed as a woman

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[54] Garner 1990 especially pp.100-40, 165-176 and 199-202 for a list of *Oresteia* passages and where they are alluded to. Garner finds many allusions to the *Oresteia*, particularly in the *Trachiniai*, *Heracles*, and other plays about the house of Atreus.
[55] Cf. *Vita* 12.
[56] Cf. Goldhill 1984 pp.183-195

who acts like a man, in contrast to an effeminate Aegisthus; her behaviour is considered unnatural and dangerous, and his weakness contemptible[57]. Clytaemnestra is dangerous to Agamemnon because she (like Penelope) plots to have the husband she wants; Penelope, however, is somewhat at the mercy of her suitors, whereas Aeschylus' Clytaemnestra is in control of hers. The role of Penelope as a paradigm, a contrast to Clytaemnestra, emerges most clearly through Clytaemnestra's own words, particularly in her speech of welcome to Agamemnon (see p.203 below).

One reason for reading such a comparison in the *Agamemnon* is the extensive reference to the Homeric poems in this play[58]. The events of the Trojan war are always in the background, and the Homeric poems are specifically alluded to (for example, the image of Menelaus and Agamemnon as vultures at *Ag.* 48ff. alludes to *Il.* 16.428ff.). The reference to the loss of Menelaus, 674ff., looks forward to the satyr play, *Proteus*, based on Menelaus' tale in *Od.* 4, and Agamemnon's reference to Odysseus at 842-4 must recall his wanderings in the *Odyssey*. The *Odyssey* is our first source for the story of Agamemnon and Clytaemnestra, used explicitly as a comparison with Odysseus and Penelope, so it should not be surprising to find the comparison working the other way round here.

The *Agamemnon* is a straightforward example of a *nostos* play, as the action all centres round the return of the absent king, and this event triggers the action of the play. The *nostos* of Agamemnon, in Aeschylus as in Homer, is a perverted *nostos*: an event which should be joyful is filled with darker tones and foreboding. The *Agamemnon* starts with a speech from a guard, loyal to his master, who worries about how the house

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[57] Cf. Conacher 1987 pp.206-12, Zeitlin 1978, Winnington-Ingram 1949.
[58] For verbal echoes, see Sideras 1971 pp.204-9, 220-32, and via index for echoes of particular Homeric passages.

is being run in the master's absence. This figure can be identified with the guard posted by Aegisthus at *Od.* 4.524-8, but here he has been posted by Clytaemnestra, and his loyalty seems to be to Agamemnon[59]; his worries also recall those of Eumaeus in conversation with Odysseus in *Od.* 14. Argos is a discontented land, complaining about a wasteful war (for example, *Ag.* 456ff.), and the chorus are clearly uneasy about Agamemnon's actions at the start of the war. Similarly, in Ithaca there are murmurings against the absent Odysseus; the suitors' families attack Odysseus in the final section of the poem, rousing up those whose sons went to Troy with him but did not return, but even in the second book the Ithacans are accused of encouraging the suitors and do not act to prove this accusation false[60].

At the end of the *Agamemnon*, conflict is averted, but a full settlement is postponed until the end of the trilogy. Conflict between ruler and people also ends the *Odyssey*, which concludes, like the whole *Oresteia* trilogy, with the imposition of a divinely sanctioned moral order and new agreement between ruler and people[61]. The uneasiness at the end of the *Agamemnon* is brought out through the contrast with the end of the *Odyssey*: here there is no divine sanction for the uneasy (and temporary) truce, and the stage is dominated not by the rightful king but by his unfaithful wife, who is the dominant peacemaker, and the usurper with his threats of violence. The Argive elders present no real opposition to Clytaemnestra and Aegisthus, unlike the families of the suitors, but resolution must await a more powerful avenger for Agamemnon. The comparison of *Odyssey* and *Agamemnon* thus emphasises the dark side of the play

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[59] Cf. Fraenkel 1950 v. II p.6.

[60] 2.70ff. (Telemachus), 146-76 (Halistherses), 224-41 (Mentor): these speeches (and that of Aegyptius) make it clear that some Ithacans are not happy with the dominance of the suitors, but none can or will act against them.

[61] Cf. Heubeck 1992 pp.405-6 who wishes to read the end of the *Odyssey* as showing a new political settlement; West 1988 argues for a less political reading pp.59f., 132.

(focusing more on the effect of these actions on the city rather than the individual[62]), and the need for a continuation to find resolution.

When Agamemnon eventually appears on stage, and Clytaemnestra greets him, she does not address him directly, but rather addresses the chorus. The speech appears to be an attempt to win the chorus over to her side[63]; whether or not the chorus know of, or suspect, her affair with Aegisthus (and hence must be prevented from telling Agamemnon), they have already shown hostility towards Clytaemnestra[64]. In Agamemnon's speech, 841ff., he expresses his fears about Odysseus' safe return from Troy, words which echo the worries expressed about Menelaus at 671ff. This mention of Odysseus invokes a comparison of the fates of Agamemnon and Odysseus, as described and compared in the *Odyssey*, and can thus call the *Odyssey* to the forefront of the audience's mind early in this scene. This prepares the way for Clytaemnestra's speech (855ff.), which defends her governance of Agamemnon's house and substance in his absence in a similar fashion to Penelope's speech to the disguised Odysseus at *Od.* 19.509-553[65]; her listening to travellers' tales (864ff.) recalls Penelope's willingness to listen to and reward any who bring her news of Odysseus, as described by Eumaeus at *Od.* 14.121-30. Although specific Homeric echoes are uncommon in this passage, the evocation of the *Odyssey* by Agamemnon's speech supports Fraenkel's suggestion that at 899 Clytaemnestra is recalling the simile used of Penelope and Odysseus' reunion at *Od.* 23.233ff., as well as the general topos of the welcomeness of the sight of land to the

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[62] Cf. Goldhill 1986 pp.147-54.
[63] Cf. Denniston/Page 1957 p.144.
[64] E.g. 485-7, 546ff., 615-6.
[65] Cf. Goldhill 1984 pp.74-5 on the two choices (δίχα θυμὸς ὀρώρεται *Od.* 19.524) embodied by Penelope and Clytaemnestra.

sailor[66]. Such a reading of Clytaemnestra's image is supported by the echo of *Od.* 16.17-19:

> ὡς δὲ πατὴρ ὃν παῖδα φίλα φρονέων ἀγαπάζῃ
> ἐλθόντ' ἐξ ἀπίης γαίης δεκάτῳ ἐνιαυτῷ,
> μοῦνον τηλύγετον, τῷ ἔπ' ἄλγεα πολλὰ μογήσῃ

in 898, μονογενὲς τέκνον πατρί (κάλλιστον ἦμαρ also may recall the Homeric γλυκερὸν φάος, *Od.* 16.23 and 17.41). Such an echo of the reunion scene of the *Odyssey* adds greatly to the interpretation of this passage, for the evocation is of that part of the poem where Penelope has finally proved her loyalty to her husband, which is exactly what Clytaemnestra is here trying to do. We may thus say that Clytaemnestra is trying to depict herself as a Penelope, a faithful wife; there are, however, other overtones in this echo, for the simile comes at the point when Penelope has just outwitted her husband, proving herself to be like him. Clytaemnestra is also tricking her husband, yet not to prove her fidelity, but to commit the ultimate infidelity in killing him. These overtones depend on a good knowledge of the story as told by our *Odyssey*, not just of the story of Odysseus as it could be told by anyone, so the intertextual relationship may be seen working at two levels: firstly, evocation of the intelligent Homeric Penelope, and, secondly, (a level open to any in the audience who compared Clytaemnestra and Penelope) evocation of the simplified, exemplary Penelope[67], in terms of whom Clytaemnestra is portraying herself. The way in which Clytaemnestra plays with the persona of the good wife both in this play and in the rest of the trilogy is emphasised by

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[66] Cf. Fraenkel 1950 *ad loc*, Cairns 1972 pp.21-6.

[67] As shown on p.66-7 we have no reason to doubt that such a paradigmatic figure would be used in fifth-century discourse; Aristophanes' use of Penelope in the *Thesmo.* confirms that she was used in this way in the later fifth century, for example in Euripides' kinsman's reply to the woman at 549-50, μίαν γὰρ οὐκ ἂν εἴποις τῶν νῦν γυναικῶν Πηνελόπην, Φαίδρας δ' ἁπαξαπάσας.

the similarity of her words at 861-2 and at *Cho.* 920: Clytaemnestra's strength is demonstrated in her playing with the role of good wife as exemplified by Penelope.

When Aegisthus finally enters at 1577, he appears to be trying to play Odysseus to Clytaemnestra's Penelope. He presents himself as a returning hero, avenging the wrongs suffered by his father in accordance with the commands of (1606, 1611). He omits the wrongs of his father, however, in his presentation of the past - a story which Cassandra has already told; the clear omissions in this rewriting of earlier events reveal the gaps between Aegisthus and the Odysseus-figure he tries to make of himself. Not only would the audience know that his father was not simply sinned against (see 1193), undermining Aegisthus' claims to Δίκη, but the plot to dispose of Agamemnon has not been carried out by a resourceful hero through his own ingenuity, but rather by his resourceful female accomplice: his Penelope has rid herself of her unwelcome suitor Agamemnon. The dominance of Clytaemnestra continues to the end of the play, as she proves herself no shrinking good wife, but rather the dominant figure in Argos. Cassandra's simile of the cowardly lion at 1224-5, recalling Menelaus' comparison of Penelope's suitors to fawns in the lion's lair (*Od.* 4.333-40) shows Aegisthus' true Odyssean counterparts, as Clytaemnestra herself reveals through intertextuality with Homer that it is Agamemnon who is playing the role of Odysseus: at 1559 her words describing his reunion with the sacrificed Iphigeneia, περὶ χεῖρε βαλοῦσα recall the meeting of Odysseus with his mother, where he fails to embrace her shade περὶ χεῖρε βαλόντε (*Od.* 11.211). Thus despite Clytaemnestra and Aegisthus' attempts to appropriate Homeric roles, the same comparisons and contrast remain as in the *Odyssey*: Agamemnon the returning hero, Aegisthus the unattractive suitor, Clytaemnestra is unfaithful opposite of Homer's faithful Penelope.

The *Choephoroi*, while sticking more closely to the Homeric version of the legend in making Orestes the main character in the revenge, is generally held to include less allusion to the Homeric poems than the first of the trilogy. However, the comparison with Penelope continues. Though in her assumption of masculine power Clytaemnestra refuses to conform to the standards set for women, she goes through the motions of being a good wife and mother, and so both imitates and undermines the tradition represented by Penelope. Her protestation (920) that it is hard for a woman to stay at home alone[68] is a "feminine" excuse, but fails to convince when set against both her own "masculine" strength in earlier parts of the trilogy, and Penelope's "feminine" strength in remaining faithful. Clytaemnestra plays the traditional woman's role with her offer of a bath - and echoes Penelope's offer of a bath to the disguised Odysseus - but flouts convention by coming to the door herself to welcome the disguised Orestes at 668ff. Her apparent grief at the report of Orestes' death (691-9) is revealed as role-playing by the nurse at 737-43. Cilissa, nurse to the returning hero as Eurycleia was to Odysseus, is unusually hostile to her mistress: a contrast to Eurycleia's constant loyalty to Penelope. Thus Clytaemnestra continues both to play the role of a good woman and to confound it.

Aeschylus differs from Sophocles and Euripides in giving such a small part to Electra. This must be at least partly due to the fact that the *Choephoroi* reflects the broader focus of the whole trilogy, and its interest in male-female relations, centred on the man-woman Clytaemnestra. The Sophoclean and Euripidean plays do show an interest in familial conflict, in the mother-daughter relationship and the effect of her

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[68] Cf. Golden 1966 p.85, which says "Clytemnestra's weak reply ... is that it is hard for a woman to be without a man, a reply which, even when taken in its least odious sense, does little credit to her and places her as the polar opposite of a tradition best represented in Greek literature by Penelope".

mother's actions on Electra; but gender conflict is more central in the Aeschylean play. Electra, the faithful sister, is marginalised (or not developed) to allow the mother-son conflict central stage. She remains a background to the perversion of the masculine Clytaemnestra: Electra, like Athene in the final play of the trilogy, appears to be "for the male in all things", in that she rejects her mother totally, but still conforms to the bounds set on her life by a male-dominated society, when she disappears from the play at her brother's command to go inside and resume the woman's normal place. She has waited faithfully for the returning hero, and on his return disappears into the silence which was deemed suitable for women, as Penelope does at the end of the *Odyssey*.

The *Trachiniai*

It has long been recognised that Deianeira, traditionally Medea-like in her use of poison, and Clytaemnestra-like in her destruction of her husband, has in Sophocles' *Trachiniai* been made a more sympathetic figure, indeed even a woman who can be compared to the ideal of a good wife:

> Endowed with the soul of a Penelope, she executes, unwittingly, the deed of a Clytemnestra or a Medea.[69]

Sophocles' depiction of a gentle Deianeira seems to go against earlier versions of the story: although her name was interpreted as meaning "destroyer of a husband", it also

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[69] Segal 1977 p.156. Segal 1977 deals with the characterisation of Deianeira in terms of her differentiation from Heracles. The contrast between the traditional and Sophoclean Deianeiras is dealt with by Jebb 1892 pp.xxxiff., and Webster 1936, who focuses on the links between Deianeira and Clytaemnestra; Reinhardt 1979 p.34, p.241 n.2 links her also to Medea, considering 582-3 to be a reference to Medea. See also Bowra 1944 especially p.124 on the contrast between Clytaemnestra and Deianeira, Easterling 1968 p.63, Erradonea 1927, who argues that Deianeira deliberately tried to poison Heracles, Kapsomenos 1963 ch.2 on the links between Euripides and *Tr.*, ch.3 on its relationship with the *Oresteia*.

means "man-destroyer", a name fit for an Amazon. Apollodorus describes Deianeira as man-like in her pursuits[70]:

> αὕτη δ' ἡνιόχει καὶ τὰ κατὰ πόλεμον ἤσκει
>
> Apollod. *Bibl.* 1.8.1

However, this is not how Sophocles' Deianeira is characterised: she is fought over by Heracles, Nessus, and Achelous; she is not a fighter herself. Her life is centred on her husband and family; for example, when she talks about the troubles brought her by her marriage, she does not stress the problems she herself may have faced living in Trachis, but rather her worries about her husband:

> λέχος γὰρ Ἡρακλεῖ κριτὸν
> ξυστᾶσ' ἀεί τιν' ἐκ φόβου φόβον τρέφω,
> κείνου προκηραίνουσα· νὺξ γὰρ εἰσάγει
> καὶ νὺξ ἀπωθεῖ διαδεδεγμένη πόνον.
>
> *Trach.* 27-30

So, unlike the "bad women" usually seen on stage, who violate the accepted codes of behaviour, Deianeira is acting like a good wife, indeed in the manner of the sort of wife which a contemporary Athenian wished to have[71]. (It is this closeness to "real life" that has led some commentators to view Deianeira as 'Euripidean'[72].) Sophocles portrays Deianeira as acting in ignorance, unaware of the danger in the Centaur's blood, perceiving it only as a charm to win her husband back to her. When she discovers her error, she kills herself, in a way which has been taken to reinforce her sexual link with Heracles, and which definitely stresses her position as a good wife[73].

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[70] Cf. Schol. on Ap. Rhod. 1.1212, and the treatment of various versions of the myth by Jebb 1892 p.xxxi-iii, March 1987, ch.3 pp.47-79, esp. 66-71 on the Sophoclean Deianeira.

[71] Just 1989 pp.114-8 on the problems of using tragedy as a source for the domestic life of real women; see also Gould 1980. Richter 1971 points out the fact that prose texts have their own agenda and reasons for emphasising the subjection of women.

[72] E.g. Reinhardt 1979 p.34.

[73] Winnington-Ingram 1980 p.81 n.28 mentions the suggestion of Devereux (*Tragédie et poésie grecques* (Paris 1975) ch. 5) that there is a sexual element in Deianeira's use of Heracles' sword to commit suicide; March 1987 p.71 sees the use of the sword rather as a reference to a possible earlier version of the myth in which Heracles himself killed Deianeira after she had poisoned him. Although this is a dubious point,

Yet Deianeira is also the murderess of her husband, however unwittingly. The resulting parallel with Clytaemnestra was developed by Sophocles through allusion to Aeschylus' famous depiction of Clytaemnestra in the *Oresteia*: not only are the *Agamemnon* and *Trachiniai* alike in being *nostos* plays (and so both look back to the *Odyssey*), but there are other parallels as well. Heracles, in an evocation of the *Agamemnon* which must presage disaster, is returning home in pomp, having razed a city to the ground over a girl, and he is bringing a king's daughter back as his concubine. Like Cassandra, Iole does not speak when she is brought on stage, although she is questioned by the queen. Heracles appears on stage at the end of the play still wearing the robe from his wife that brought his doom, as Agamemnon's body is shown on stage in the *Agamemnon*, still wrapped in the robe in which he was killed. The nurse in the *Trachiniai* plays the role of confidant which is split between Eurycleia and Eurynome in the *Odyssey*.

The link between Clytaemnestra and Deianeira is most clearly brought out by the use of textual allusion. Like Clytaemnestra, Deianeira kills her husband with a robe, which is described both as a net woven by the Erinyes and as a fetter: *Trachiniai* 1051-2 Ἐρινύων ὑφαντὸν ἀμφίβληστρον (spoken by Heracles) echoes two passages from the *Agamemnon*, 1382 ἄπειρον ἀμφίβληστρον and 1580 ὑφαντοῖς ἐν πέπλοις Ἐρινύων; and ἀμφίβληστρον is also used of the robe in which Agamemnon was killed at *Choephoroi* 492; πέδῃ at *Tr.* 1057 echoes *Cho.* 493 πέδαις. The scene between Hyllus

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given the speed with which such poisons are usually portrayed as acting (cf. *Medea* 1160ff), March is, I think, right to see the stress placed on Deianeira's lone state at her death, and the stress on her innocence. The fact that Deianeira dies in Heracles' θάλαμος reinforces the idea we have from the rest of the play of her devotion to her marriage; as various scholars have stated, Deianeira stays in the house, the house is her sphere, as it is for Penelope, but not for some other tragic heroines, such as Antigone and Medea. Cf. Davies 1991a p.217 on 930-1, with bibliography. On the connotations of Deianeira's choice of place and manner of death see Loraux 1987 pp.23-4 with 74-5 n.42 on death in the θάλαμος, 54-6 on her use of a sword.

and Deianeira, when Hyllus returns to report the effects of her gift on Heracles, recalls the scene between Clytaemnestra and Orestes in the *Choephoroi*, which centres on the issue of her killing her husband/his father: exactly the link made by Hyllus in his first speech. Heracles calls his wife δεινῆς 'Εχίδνης θρέμμα (1099), picking up on his son's description of the effects of the poisoned robe as being that of a snake bite, ἐχθρᾶς ἐχίδνης ἰὸς ὡς (771); the image of the Echidna is borrowed from the *Choephoroi* 249, where Orestes describes his father's death as being in the coils of a δεινῆς ἐχίδνης. Thus both Heracles and Hyllus see Deianeira as a Clytaemnestra, and show this by their choice of Oresteian language. The chorus too echo the *Agamemnon*, and even Deianeira herself does at 538, calling Iole λωβητὸν ἐμπόλημα τῆς ἐμῆς φρενός, rhythmically echoing Clytaemnestra's description of Cassandra as παροψώνημα τῆς ἐμῆς χλιδῆς (*Ag.* 447): the irony of this unconscious echo is clear, given Deianeira's attempts in this play not to play the role of a Clytaemnestra. Only in one respect are Clytaemnestra and Deianeira clearly contrasted: they share the motive of sexual jealousy (and show this in the lines quoted above), for both their husbands are returning with concubines[74], but Deianeira denies any hatred of Iole, and acts not to punish her husband for this offence, but to save her marriage. The parallels between the two women are further brought out by parallels in staging: both question the woman brought in as part of the husband's booty, and both fail to receive an answer. But whereas Deianeira expresses sympathy for this woman taken as a prize by her husband, Clytaemnestra shows little sympathy for Cassandra. Thus the parallels between the two plays are both dramatic and linguistic.

[74] This element is played down in the *Oresteia* through the portrayal of Clytaemnestra as rather masculine, but it does appear, for example in her speeches to the chorus after the murders of Agamemnon and Cassandra; see the scene starting at 1372, and 1431-47 in particular.

But what is the effect of these parallels? Can it only be the Aeschylean Clytaemnestra who is evoked? Aeschylus gives his Clytaemnestra some excuse for her killing of Agamemnon, in the slaughter of Iphigenia and the bringing of Cassandra to the house. The masculine qualities of this Clytaemnestra may recall earlier depictions of Deianeira, or at least the picture of her suggested by her name, "Man-Destroyer". Is the complex image of the Aeschylean Clytaemnestra (with all her justification for her deeds) the most helpful in understanding the characterisation of Deianeira? The comparison of Deianeira and Clytaemnestra is surely more powerful if the audience thought not only of the Aeschylean Clytaemnestra, but also in terms of the simplified, paradigmatic figure of Clytaemnestra, the bad wife who perverts her husband's *nostos*, as she may be recalled from the *Oresteia* as a whole (Clytaemnestra being treated more harshly in the later plays of the trilogy) and as her place in the well-known story would naturally require. The evocation of this simplified figure through the Aeschylean text points to the natural tendency for intertextuality to simplify earlier texts in order to produce a stable base from which to depart.

Structural parallels can also be drawn with the *Odyssey*. Odysseus, whose return home was accomplished successfully, although he brought booty back with him, left the king's daughter, Nausicaa, behind; the women whom later tradition allots him at the fall of Troy are lost with his ships and men, so they present no threat to his return. In other cyclic epics (the *Telegony*, for example), Odysseus has intrigues with mortal women, as well as Circe and Calypso in the *Odyssey* itself, but he never brings these women back to Ithaca. The familial tension which develops at Trachis reflects a common theme in tragedy, and one which also appears in epic, particularly the *Odyssey*, in the stories of

Agamemnon and the relationship between Penelope and Telemachus[75]. Telemachus is inclined to see his mother as a Helen figure, an unfaithful wife who might run off with the goods of the house, and Athene's comments on this point do not help; neither does her comparison of Telemachus with Orestes. Like Telemachus and Orestes, Hyllus is caught between his parents; like them, he turns against his mother for her treatment of his father (in the *Odyssey*, Telemachus is at least partially hostile towards his mother throughout, and when she does not recognise Odysseus immediately on her descent to the hall he calls her (23.97) δύσμητερ). Deianeira starts the play with an advantage over Penelope in that her son departs in search of his father with her full knowledge and approval. Yet when Hyllus sees the effect of his mother's gift to Heracles, he immediately assumes the worst of her, that she did it deliberately. The failure of Heracles and Deianeira to meet on stage emphasises their lack of ὁμοφροσύνη; for all Deianeira's attempts to be a good wife, she fails in this characteristic stressed by Odysseus (*Od.* 6.182-5) and central to his relationship with Penelope. Thus the resonances of the stories of the houses of Agamemnon and Odysseus add to an audience's understanding and expectations of the scene in Trachis.

The view suggested above, that Sophocles is using specific textual reference to draw on general mythological parallels, would also explain some of Sophocles' textual allusion to Homer. Although some are to relevant passages of the Homeric text, such as the coinage θυμοφθορῶ (142) after the Homeric ἄχος θυμοφθόρον (*Od.* 4.716, of Penelope's reaction to the news that Telemachus has gone to Pylos), others seem to be evocations of epic in general rather than allusions aimed at particular passages; for

[75] In the *Iliad*, familial tension may be seen between Priam and his sons at 24.237-64 and throughout Troy over the issue of the return of Helen, for example at 3.156-61.

example, the description of Hyllus when he first arrives on stage is as ἀρτίπους (58), which occurs at *Od.* 8.310 (of Ares going to Aphrodite) and *Il.* 9.505 (of Ate)[76]: neither passage seems specifically relevant here, but if the echo can simply call Homer to mind, we might remember Homer's Telemachus, departing in search of his father (of his own accord, not trusting his mother). In contrast, at the start of this play, mother and son are in harmony (a state of affairs which will not last). Deianeira herself does seem at the start of the play, and at 175-7, 905-9, to echo the emotions expressed by Penelope in her speech at *Od.* 19.509-53, in which she tells the story of the nightingale (who killed in error, like Deianeira) and her dream of the slaughter of her geese. Other Homeric parallels include 130-1, Ἄρκτου στροφάδες κέλευθοι, which recall *Od.* 5.273-5 (as well as *Il.* 18):

> Ἄρκτον θ', ἣν καὶ ἅμαξαν ἐπίκλησιν καλέουσιν,
> ἥ τ' αὐτοῦ στρέφεται καί τ' Ὠρίωνα δοκεύει
> οἴη δ' ἀμμορός ἐστι λοετρῶν Ὠκεανοῖο.

The mention of Iphitus may well recall that in *Od.* 21: Odysseus received from him the bow which is to be the means of his reunion with his wife; by contrast, Heracles kills him while fighting over Iole, his wife being left abandoned.

Although there seem to be more clear textual references to the *Iliad* than to the *Odyssey*, some may be a more general use of epic diction[77]. However, there are good reasons for thinking that this may not just be "epicising" for its own sake, but in the context of the similarity of plot between this play and the *Odyssey* may look specifically

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[76] It is also used at Pl. *Laws* 795d, where the context of Geryon and Briarieus seems to mark it as epic; Hdt. 3.130.3 suggests marking as medical, but that again seems less intelligible in the *Trach.* context.

[77] Cf. Jebb 1892, Kamerbeek 1959, Easterling 1982, all of whom give different parallels, but still show a preponderance of references to the *Iliad*; this may, however, merely be symptomatic of a tendency for commentators to take parallels from the *Iliad* rather than the *Odyssey* when the word or phrase is frequently attested. Other examples of epic parallels to be found in the *Trachiniai* include the epic forms ἀμφίγυοι and κατέβαν (504), εὐῶπις (523, cf. *Od.* 6.113), πεπείρανται (581, cf. *Od.* 12.37), and ἀλλήκτοις (985).

to that epic. The link between Penelope and Deianeira which can be perceived in her writing as a "good wife" must, in effect, relate to earlier portrayals of Penelope: in terms of surviving texts, this means either to the Penelope of the *Odyssey*, or to that of Sophocles' own *Niptra*. There is also the possibility of a debt to other early portrayals of Penelope, but as we know nothing about Aeschylus' play of that name, this is an area where we can do nothing but speculate in the dark[78]. Given that these earlier plays almost certainly drew on the *Odyssey*, and certainly were intertextual with it, any allusion to them will strengthen the conclusion that the epic diction, in the context of this plot, suggests primarily the *Odyssey*.

Deianeira can thus be seen in mythical terms as "caught between the paradigms of Clytaemnestra and Penelope". Like Phaedra, she is constrained by the plot in which she is caught up; the conflict between her role in the story and her characterisation in this version is reflected by the tension between the two paradigms she simultaneously embodies. Garner shows how the pattern of allusions in the *Trachiniai* builds on this dichotomy[79], moving from drawing mainly on the *Odyssey* to drawing mainly on the *Agamemnon*, as the tragedy moves forward, and Deianeira, unwittingly, moves from being a faithful Penelope to being a man-slaying Clytaemnestra. Although her motives remain those of a faithful wife, the results of Deianeira's actions draw her into the role of a Clytaemnestra, and the intertextual references stress this. There is allusion to particular texts, but the reference now zooms in on, now distances the particular textual creation,

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[78] Wilamowitz 1917 specifies the Sophoclean *Niptra* (discussed above), and links this back to the epic; Mactoux 1975 p.51 prefers to look directly to Homer; the Aeschylean *Penelope* is not specifically mentioned, but it seems most likely that this is due to the paucity of our evidence, rather than any reason for it not to have been alluded to.

[79] Garner 1990 pp.100-110 and 210-11 for a list of allusions in the *Trachiniai*. The main Odyssean allusions Garner lists from early in the play are at 130-1 (*Od.* 5.273-5), 144-7 (*Od.* 5.478ff) and 581 (*Od.* 12.37); there are several allusions to the *Agamemnon* in 624-687 (*Ag.* 94-6, 224, 604-14) and to the *Choephoroi* at 716-771 (*Cho.* 248-9, 586, 600-1, 908ff).

moving from the sharp focus of such a textual figure to the less specific, more blurred, more simplified image of the figure evoked, be it Penelope or Clytaemnestra. This simplified figure may be seen as a product of the tradition of mythological characters as moral exemplars, or as created by ancient readings of Homer, or as an instance of intertextuality (and the audience's power of memory) evoking simplified readings of an earlier text[80]. Such a reading might also be partly a product of story-telling at home or the practice of reciting certain portions of the poems more frequently than others.

A parallel for the evocation of a generalised character through a particular textual allusion is to be found in modern Greek poetry: Seferis describes a meeting with Helen:

> *She whom we hunted so many years by the banks of the Scamander.*
> *She was there, at the desert's lip; I touched her; she spoke to me:*
> *"It isn't true, it isn't true," she cried.*
> *"I didn't board the blue-bowed ship.*
> *I never went to valiant Troy."*
>
> G. Seferis, *Helen*[81]

An epigraph, three quotations from Euripides' *Helen*, identifies the text to which this poem is primarily alluding (though the poet's awareness also of Stesichorus' *Palinode* seems probable: see n.82 below), but in order to understand the poem, the reader must also be conscious of other versions of the story of Helen, as it ends mentioning the waste of life "all for a Helen". This less specific paralleling of character is similar to other broader forms of intertextual relation such as parallels of plot: parallel plots can typically be referred to a story in general, rather than to a particular version, and an intertextual link to a well-known story pattern could be present in the text even without any textual allusion to a specific version of the story. Through the *Odyssey* and the *Agamemnon*, the

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[80] Cf. pp.12-14 above, also the "Concluding Questions" posed by J. Clauss "*Domestici Hostes*: The Nausicaa in Medea, The Catiline in Hannibal" (forthcoming in *MD* intertextuality volume) on a possible link between allusion and role in a text.

[81] Quoted from the English translation by Keeley and Sherrard (*Four Greek Poets* (Penguin, Harmondsworth 1966) p.70).

audience of the *Trachiniai* may recall not only the particular characters of those texts, but also the generalised conceptions of the mythological figures they embody: Deianeira is thus caught not merely between two texts, but between two paradigms - the exemplary good and bad wives of classical antiquity.

The *Helen*

Euripides' *Helen* starts with a departure from the Homeric version of the myth of Helen, using rather that most famously known from Stesichorus' *Palinode*[82]: namely, that Helen herself did not go to Troy, but that an *eidolon* of her was sent by the gods instead, thus removing guilt for the fighting before Troy from Helen and giving it to the gods. For a play that starts by marking its separation from Homeric epic, however, the *Helen* is very full of Homeric allusions, and, of course, Homeric characters. Most of the Homeric parallels are to the *Odyssey*, a fact which is unsurprising given the subject matter; Helen appears in the *Odyssey* as apparently happily back in Sparta with Menelaus, a suitable background to a drama which shows their reunion in the light of Helen's innocence. The Homeric references, however, seem to function mainly as evocations of Homer's Odysseus and Penelope, rather than his Menelaus and Helen (although they do not all come from scenes featuring Odysseus and Penelope); the now innocent Helen is shown as faithful through reminders of her famously faithful cousin.

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[82] There appear to have been two palinodes, but it is not in doubt that one of them dealt with the story of the *eidolon* of Helen; for more on this subject, see Dale 1967 pp.xvii-xxiv, Austin 1994 ch.4 (with ch.5 on Herodotus). The fragments and testimonia are collected by Davies 1991b pp.177-180, and the authorities supporting the existence of two palinodes are cited on p. 180, but Davies does not add anything on more recent scholarship on this point. The best summary of the contents of the two palinodes is Bowra 1963, which argues that the first dealt with the story that she did not go to Troy, the second with a different part of the myth. Bowra considers the Stesichoran version to have been quite close to the story we get in Euripides of how Helen came to be in Egypt. Herodotus was obviously familiar with the story, but presents a rationalised account which does not mention the *eidolon*.

Steiger's conclusion, that Euripides was parodying the *Odyssey*, does not seem appropriate if one considers the word "parody" to convey pejorative overtones of mockery[83]; rather, this play develops the contrast made between Helen and Penelope in the *Odyssey*, in order to help create this new, σωφρονεστάτη (1684) Helen.

The *Iliad* is more echoed than the *Odyssey* in later poetry, particularly in tragedy: this is not surprising, given its tragic content, including both Hector's tragedy[84], and that of Achilles[85]. But Euripides' tendency towards Odyssean rather than Iliadic themes and style in his dramas has been noted[86], and this is particularly true of the later "romance plays", melodramas with happy endings, unbelievable reverses of fortune, and often unusual, sometimes bizarre, mythical themes[87]. Indeed this Odyssean interest in domestic rather than heroic life was one of the traits of Euripides' dramas picked up by Aristophanes[88]. The romantic end to the *Odyssey*, its humble characters, and its unusual hero are all features reflected in Euripidean drama.

Seeing the *Odyssey* as playing comedy to the *Iliad* as tragedy suits the overall tone of the *Helen*. The *Helen* shares with the *Odyssey* the sense of describing events that form a sequel - the Trojan war is always in the background, but as in the *Odyssey*, the

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[83] Steiger 1908; Eisner 1980 accuses Steiger (p.31) of missing "over two-thirds of the parallels and most of the point" . Eisner lists some more parallels between the two works and gives a perceptive description of what Euripides is doing in this play, pointing out (p.35) that he picks up on a parallel between the two couples which is already present in the epic; this, of course, is what Aeschylus had done also in his *Oresteia*. The parallels cited include 844ff. with *Od.*3.109, 500ff. with *Od.* 9.19ff., 1676ff. with *Od.* 4.569, 414ff. with *Od.* 10.145, 275f., 766-771 with *Od.* 23.310-40. See also Foley 1993, especially p.153 nn.10, 11, Austin 1994 ch.6, especially pp.146-8, 156-60, 199. On a broader conception of "parody", cf. *OCD*[3] *s.v.* "Parody, Latin" with further bibliography.

[84] See Farron 1978.

[85] On the *Iliad* as tragedy, see Aristotle *Poetics* 1448b38ff., 1451a22-30, 1459a29-34, Longinus *De Sub.* 9; cf. Rutherford 1982 (n.3 cites further ancient references) and Redfield 1975 ch.2, particularly pp.82-98, also pp.106-7, 153-5, Mossman 1995 p.20 n.5, and, against the view that Homer and tragedy are linked, Seaford 1994 pp.275-80, and Seaford 1989 especially p.88 n.4, which lists earlier bibliography in favour of a link between Homer and tragedy.

[86] Michelini 1987 p.65 with bibliography n.64, p.86 and elsewhere on particular plays.

[87] Cf. Dunn 1996 ch. 9 on the *Helen* and "Romance", particularly pp.133-5, 153-7.

[88] Cf. Ar. *Frogs* 948-50, 959-60, *Ach.* 412-34.

glories won at Troy are no help to the hero trying to get home. His treasure is lost (the *eidolon* returned to the skies) and to claim his rightful name and heroic status would be dangerous. This is an Odyssean world where trickery and deception serve better than the open action favoured in the *Iliad*.

As in the *Odyssey*, the slaughter at the end of the *Helen* forms a recapitulation of the events at Troy: the Odyssean Penelope is a new Helen for whom men are slain, and in the *Helen*, the fighting in Troy has been in vain so has to be repeated over the real Helen. As in the case of Penelope, the slaughter is directed at a suitor who is inferior to the heroine's rightful husband (1595ff.). It is also the result of co-operation between the clever wife and her ragged husband - for Penelope colludes with Odysseus, even if unwittingly, and provides the means for the destruction of her suitors. The king in rags may be a Euripidean stereotype, but in such an Odyssean context cannot but recall the disguised Odysseus. Menelaus' rags are, he alleges, the result of divine persecution, paralleling Odysseus' persecution by Poseidon. Menelaus' vague allegation that the gods will not let him return home (403) is later backed up by Theonoe (878ff.); the lack of reference to a specific god, however, does not add to Menelaus' heroic status[89].

In the *Odyssey*, the parallel between Penelope and Helen is one of the more unsettling elements in the portrayal of Penelope. Penelope's complexity is more like that of Helen, the wife who had to be won back, than Clytaemnestra's more straightforward treachery: Helen appears to be back in the home in her proper place, but still acts in ways which strike jarring notes. In the *Helen*, the comparison is evoked, but reversed: Helen is likened to Penelope, most importantly in chastity and wifely fidelity, thus making her

[89] Eisner 1980 p.33 also points out that both heroes will finally reach home after a goddess has intervened for them in the assembly of the gods - Athene for Odysseus, Hera for Menelaus.

seem less worthy of suspicion; and Helen in this play, like Penelope in the epic, is a little more complicated than the simple schema of good and faithful wife might suggest. Like Penelope, she plots to escape from her suitor, and, again like Penelope, her chastity is suspected by those who come to her, owing to the behaviour of the *eidolon*. Helen has no Telemachus to suspect her fidelity, but the first Greek she encounters, Teucer, takes this role, judging this Helen by the actions of the phantom as Telemachus, in *Od.* 15, judges his mother on the report of Athene. The image which besets the Odyssean Penelope in the same way as the *eidolon* does Helen is principally that of Clytaemnestra, but also that of Helen: the actions of both throw suspicion onto Penelope. In the *Helen*, the implied comparison with Penelope serves to lessen suspicion of the heroine.

The links to the *Odyssey* of the recognition scene beween Helen and Menelaus seem to be more thematic than verbal[90]. Helen is like both Nausicaa and Penelope, but the Penelope image dominates as husband and wife converse. The points of connection have been catalogued[91], but one clear difference is that in the play the recognition occurs before the intrigue and plan for escape, while in the epic the recognition is delayed until after the suitors have been dealt with. One effect is the de-heroisation of Menelaus, but this is obviously not the only result. The sequence conforms to the more usual plot pattern, which the *Odyssey*-poet appears to have deliberately disrupted. This order, however, allows for Menelaus and Helen to plot together; without another "in-house" helper, the role taken by Eurycleia and Telemachus in the *Odyssey*, Helen is the only figure with whom the plot can really be made.

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[90] Eisner 1980 p.32-3.

[91] Eisner 1980, including the suspicious hero arriving in rags, requiring a bath before the restoration to his wife, the wife hearing a prophecy of her husband's appearance just before this happens, and after the reunion hearing a summary of his wanderings from her husband; both end with the intervention of a *deus ex machina* - Athene or the Dioskouroi.

One suggested reason for Euripides' use of this unusual version of the Helen myth is its contemporary prominence due to the recent publication of Herodotus' *Histories*, which mentions the story that Helen was left in Egypt[92]. Herodotus says that Proteus kept Helen back in Egypt when she and Paris landed there on their way to Troy, because he was appalled by the immorality of their action[93]. Whether Euripides was picking up on a story which Herodotus had made current, or was looking back to Stesichorus (who may well also have influenced Herodotus)[94], this play rehabilitates a morally dubious character by reference to one who, although traditionally good, was having that status undermined, an interesting inversion of characters[95]. This inversion of characters also looks to the Homeric Penelope as she appears in that text, as well as to the idealised Penelope: the Homeric Penelope is, like Helen in this play, a figure whose chastity and fidelity can be suspected, but who is shown to have been faithful all along by the end. Helen thus traverses the same path through suspicion and doubt that the Homeric Penelope does, but her status as a good wife is enhanced both by reference to the Homeric Penelope, who had been tested and proved her worth, and by evocation of the idealised Penelope, with whom Helen may now be favourably compared.

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[92] E.g. Eisner 1980 p.36, drawing on Fornara 1971 which deals with the *Helen* on pp.30-1. Fornara considers that at the time Euripides wrote the play, the story of the *eidolon* was "fresh in mind" in Athens due to Herodotus' rationalisation of the story from Stesichorus.

[93] Hdt. 2.114.3-115.1.

[94] This is a rather problematic assumption, as the date of publication for Herodotus is still a matter of debate; see Gould 1989 p.14-15, 137 n. 17 and 152 for bibliography, and now Hornblower 1996 pp.25-8. Fornara 1981 gives a fair assessment of the state of play with references to earlier bibliography. Herodotus' work was recited before publication, and this might increase the currency of such a novel story. Kannicht 1969 vol. 1 p.48 denies any link between Herodotus and the *Helen*; the two have been linked, however, from at least the date of the hypothesis (commentary by Kannicht in vol. 2, p.8).

[95] Gorgias' *Helen* and Euripides' own *Tro.* also show the appeal of defending the indefensible; the appeal of blackening the ideal is similar. One might provide a deconstructive reading of this contrast: as Helen is shown in a more favourable light by comparing her to Penelope, this also brings in the possibility of a less admirable version of Penelope, who would need to be enhanced by being likened to this newly whitewashed Helen.

The *Odyssey* is, of course, not the only text with which the *Helen* is playing. As it was produced at the same festival as Euripides' *Andromeda*, and hence on the same day, it seems possible that the comic aspects of the *Helen* may be partly a reaction to this play. Such aspects include the fact that Helen seems to be acting out a suppliant drama unnecessarily, the dialogue between Menelaus and the old woman, and Menelaus' failure as a saviour (it is Helen who successfully plots their escape). These may have been contrasted with the more real plight of Andromeda, her effective saviour Perseus, and the dangerous plot against him after he has rescued her. This comic rewriting of heroic drama is a mood that well suits a play which draws so heavily on the *Odyssey*[96].

Other Plays

As well as having a paradigmatic and contrastive function in straightforward *nostos* plays, Penelope can play a similar role in other plays where the image of the faithful wife is to be evoked. In the *Alcestis*, however, Alcestis is herself a paradigm of wifely devotion, and becomes a representative of σωφροσύνη[97], and hence the image of Penelope does not need to be evoked for us to see her in this light, as it does in the *Trachiniai*, where it helps to mark out the differences between Sophocles' Deianeira and the traditional character. Alcestis, who dies for a man, is likened rather to a male hero, Patroclus[98], who also died in place of a man he loved well. Alcestis is thus ennobled by the pattern of allusion in this play[99]. The other plays in which we may look for Penelope are thus most likely to involve women of dubious repute, who need to be associated with

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[96] On the change of mood between the two epics, see Rutherford 1993 pp.37-54, particularly pp.50-54 on passages of the *Odyssey* which may be seen as parodying the *Iliad*.
[97] See North 1979.
[98] On this, see Garner 1990 pp.64-78.
[99] Consider also the allusion comparing Admetus to Laodamia at 348ff. (with Dale 1954 *ad loc.*).

Penelope to allow them to be seen in the right light, or bad women, for whom Penelope provides a contrast. Thus the lost *Procris* of Sophocles would be an interesting hunting ground, as this treated a wife who is almost seduced by her husband in disguise, despite a long period of holding out; like Odysseus, Cephalus returns and talks to his wife in disguise, woos and wins her, as Odysseus does in the contest of the bow. Like Odysseus too, he later falls under suspicion of infidelity himself, although, unlike Odysseus, he is not guilty. Odysseus ends up causing the death of one illegitimate son in the *Euryalus*, and being killed by another in the *Odysseus Acanthoplex*, while Cephalus' suspected infidelity led to the death of his wife. It is not clear which part of the story was dramatised by Sophocles, but there is certainly potential for evocation of Penelope and the *Odyssey* there[100]. One might also portray a "good" Phaedra in terms of Penelope. We do not know enough about either Sophocles' *Phaedra* or the first *Hippolytus* of Euripides, the *Hippolytus Calyptomenos*, to say whether or not they contained much allusion to the *Odyssey*, but there does not appear to be much, if indeed any, in the surviving play. One explanation for this would seem to be that the character of Phaedra, as defined by the tradition, is strong enough for it to be more effective to explore and create a new Phaedra by playing her off against her former self/selves rather than introducing another character for contrast. Similarly, in the *IA*, characters such as Clytaemnestra are portrayed with a view to their future selves (in mythological terms; past in terms of literature)[101]: we see them growing into the figures we know they will be, and the interest comes from the contrast of the figure on stage and his/her previous incarnations (as happens with Medea in Apollonius; see ch.8).

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[100] Cf. Lloyd-Jones 1996 p.269, who considers the later part of the story the most likely content of the play.
[101] Cf. Luschnig 1988, especially p.26.

Another group of plays in which Penelope may be looked for forms a sort of sub-group of *nostos* plays, namely those where a child returns, often in disguise or unknown due to exposure as a baby. Penelope herself, it appears, featured in two such plays, Sophocles' *Euryalus* and *Odysseus Acanthoplex*[102], and there are many plays of this sort, for example, all those connected with Aegeus' recognition of Theseus (plays by Sophocles and Euripides), and Priam and Hecabe's of Paris (again, plays by Euripides and Sophocles), as well as the surviving *Ion* (Sophocles' *Creusa* may have dealt with the same material), and the three plays about Electra, Clytaemnestra, and Orestes. The potential for Odyssean influence is clear, due to the link between the houses of Agamemnon and Odysseus made in the *Odyssey*, and the fact that these plays deal with the return of the hero: when Orestes is the returning hero, however, the Penelopean role of waiting, faithful woman is displaced onto his sister, Electra. Finally, one may also consider other plays where Clytaemnestra appears, especially those dealing with the early part of her story, before the death of Iphigeneia (*I.A.*, *Telephus*), which is usually seen as the point at which her relationship with Agamemnon started to deteriorate. Such plays may draw both on the comparison of Clytaemnestra and Penelope in the *Odyssey* and on the use of Penelope as the exemplary good wife, to whom a happily married Clytaemnestra may be likened, or the traditional, murderous Clytaemnestra (or her Aeschylean instantiation) unfavourably compared. Or the interplay may be between Penelope and another figure, as in the case of Euripides' *Helen*.

[102] See above on the problems of the contents of these two plays.

The Absent Penelope

We have thus seen that, where there is epic reminiscence combined with similarity of plot pattern, it seems reasonable to look for an intertextual relationship with the Homeric poems, which may call up both the specific Homeric version of the character and a more vague, general conception. But where the reminiscences are of epic in general, rather than looking specifically to one or other epic, why should one rather than the other be evoked (or rather than one of the other poems of the epic cycle)? Plot pattern will also play a part in this, and so will other forms of intertextuality. For example, the *Andromache* deals with a faithful woman - a concubine rather than a wife, but her actions show her as a truer and more faithful wife than Hermione, who may officially be called Neoptolemus' wife. As Andromache is a good "wife" in a play which deals with Homeric characters and uses Homeric vocabulary, one might think that the play would look to Penelope in the construction of her character. However, in the context of Iliadic characters (such as Andromache), and children of Iliadic characters (Neoptolemus and Hermione), the epic reminiscences look more to the *Iliad* than to the *Odyssey*[103]. This Andromache looks not to Penelope but rather to her earlier self, and to Theano, who in the *Iliad* nursed her husband's illegitimate child as Andromache here says a good wife should[104]. Similarly, the characterisation of Neoptolemus looks back to the Iliadic Achilles and Hector, rather than to any character in the *Odyssey* (for example, *Andr.* 1140-1 looking to *Il.* 21.943-6). Although the *Andromache* is a *nostos* play, the similarities of plot between it and the *Odyssey* are not strong enough to evoke primarily this epic rather than the *Iliad* when there is general epic reminiscence. The fact that such

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[103] Cf. Page 1936 pp.220-1 (who identifies the main Homeric echoes in Andromache's lament as twice to the *Iliad*, once to the *Odyssey*), Stevens 1971 via index *s.v.* Homeric Echoes, Garner 1990 pp.132-4, and Lloyd 1994 via index *s.v.* Homer.
[104] *Il.* 5.70ff.

additional features are usually present to mark a fruitful intertextual reference should also serve to make a reader more wary when they are not present. An example of an unfruitful reference might be at *Medea* 410-11, where Garner would like to see an allusion to Penelope[105]. This line seems rather to be an example of ἀδύνατα, following the theme of the problems faced by women, a topic dealt with by Medea herself; if an Odyssean reference is operating, Circe, a witch like Medea, would seem to be a more obvious comparand than Penelope. Either plot, or verbal allusion, or both, may mark an intertextual relationship; names too play a part. The more of these features which characterise the relationship of two texts, the more marked that relationship will be, and probably the more fruitful.

Conclusion

The evidence thus suggests a picture of Penelope in the fifth-century theatre as a figure who could function as an *exemplum* of wifely chastity and patience, a figure who came from Homeric epic and so could naturally be evoked when the story pattern of that epic was used. She could serve as a contrast to the bad women seen more often on stage, and like them could also be given a more paradoxical treatment (as probably happened in the *Euryalus*, where a paradigmatic figure seems to have appeared as a different "type"); this undermining of the paradigm may be compared to Deianeira, the man-destroyer, in Sophocles' play, where she is a faithful and loyal wife, and to Clytaemnestra in Euripides' *Electra* and *IA*, where she is given a strangely sympathetic portrayal. This shows the strength of the simplified pictures of figures such as Penelope, Clytaemnestra,

[105] Garner 1990 pp.92-5 unconvincingly sees two main parallels between the *Medea* and the *Odyssey*: *Medea* 689 (Medea weeping before Aegeus) recalling *Od.* 19.204 (Penelope weeping in the presence of Odysseus) and 410-11 recalling *Od.* 10.351, both about rivers flowing backwards.

and Phaedra, for the rhetorically powerful, paradigmatic figure retains its position in the mythological 'langue' despite the challenges presented by its reversal in some dramas, the mythological 'paroles', and the alternative versions of the myth which could be in circulation. The reversals show the importance of the stereotypes, for they rely on knowledge of those stereotypes for their effect. Penelope was thus usually seen as paradigmatically chaste and good, and it is in this role that she can act as a foil in other tragedies. Later poets made more use of contradictory variants to the myths, but in general, this did not undercut the power of the paradigmatic figures, as long as their paradigms were ones relevant to the society, and comedy suggests that this is the manner in which certain figures came down into the fourth century and beyond.

The three plays considered in detail in this chapter illustrate the main ways in which allusion to Penelope can be used to shape another figure. Clytaemnestra tries to show herself as a faithful Penelope, evoking the Homeric ideal in order to allay suspicion: she looks to the contrast already drawn by her husband in Homer, but insinuates that he has put her on the wrong side of the divide. Deianeira similarly sees herself as a Penelope, but not in order to deceive: she does conform to the ideal, but circumstance turns her into a Clytaemnestra, a husband-killer. In this play, the idealised figure of Penelope is more important than the Homeric Penelope in particular, as it is in comparison with the ideal that Deianeira is characterised. Helen is, paradoxically, a positive re-enactment of Penelope's role as faithful wife, scheming on her husband's behalf, in a parallel created more by similarities of plot and an Odyssean theme than specific textual allusion to the *Odyssey*. While Menelaus is made less heroic through the comparison with Odysseus, his wife displays all the intelligence which the Homeric Penelope is only allowed to hint at. Thus she looks both to Penelope the idealised figure

and the Homeric Penelope. The theme of Penelope's intelligence, which makes her a match for her husband, is reflected in these later figures: Clytaemnestra's intelligence makes her dangerous, but Helen's enables her to plot her escape with her husband. Although Deianeira tries to use her cunning to bring her husband safely back to her, she actually uses it to kill him: the stories reflect an ambivalence about the intelligence of the wife who waits at home.

Both the Penelope of the Homeric text and the idealised conception may thus be evoked through textual allusion to Homer - although where the more generalised figure is important, this may well have been combined with more specific reference to other textual Penelopes. To perceive the use made by each text of the general conception of Penelope requires less specific knowledge (or memory) than to perceive reference to a specific textual Penelope (Homeric or otherwise), and thus could be shared by a wider proportion of the audience. Such less specific intertextuality probably also relied on an audience's general knowledge of myths and their story patterns, and so did not need to rely wholly on textual allusion. The presence of the textual Homeric Penelope cannot be excluded when the Homeric text is referred to, but this rather indeterminate state of affairs is what should be expected from intertextual relationships: a reader may focus on one text to the exclusion of others that are evoked, but the more that are evoked, the less one detailed picture can dominate over others. The accumulation of reference can lead to greater instability in the text, as so many different figures may be brought into a reading. Yet the simplifying nature of intertextuality means that this instability is usually accompanied by a more fixed, simple perception of the character, which gives a more stable point from which each new depiction may depart.

Chapter 8: Penelope in Hellenistic Poetry

Homer and the Hellenistic Poets: Some General Considerations

In looking at literary uses and rewriting of mythology, one can hardly avoid considering the Alexandrian poets; their taste for the recherché is well known. This is illustrated by the fact that several obscure references to Penelope as the mother of Pan survive, but only one retelling of Odysseus' return (that of Lycophron). Both the *Syrinx* of [Theocritus] and the *Bomos* of Dosiadas seem to revel in the piquancy of obscure allusion to Odysseus' wife, a woman famed for her chastity and fidelity, as the mother of Pan by a father possibly unknown or unknowable. The *Syrinx* is particularly riddling on this point, calling Pan both κλωποπάτωρ and ἀπάτωρ. According to the scholiast, these refer to two possible supposed parentages - Hermes the thief, and the suitors[1]. The references to Penelope in Lycophron (*Alexandra* 771-3, 792)[2] are disparaging, centering on the depredations of the suitors on Odysseus' property. Although Penelope is not accused of outright adultery, Lycophron's Cassandra seems to be referring to her appearance before the suitors in *Od.* 18 when he describes her as ἡ δὲ βασσάρα σεμνῶς κασωρεύουσα (771-2). If the story of Penelope as the mother of Pan was known at this time, it is interesting that the reference to it is not clearer; the lines on Penelope are comprehensible without reference to any such story, seeming to hint rather at tales of infidelity with the suitors, or, in particular, her appearance before them in *Od.* 18. These literary conceits contrast with the stereotypic characterisation whose continuing

[1] The implication of ἀπάτωρ is that the father is unknown; the scholiast's explanation, that this was because it was all the suitors (and hence the real father could be any one of them), need not be the only way of reading this line: both words could refer to an illegitimate child, and ἀπάτωρ is used of other deities with unusual births.

[2] Dated (insecurely) to c.197/6 BC; cf. *OCD*[3] *s.v.* Lycophron (2b).

popularity is evident from contemporary epitaphs[3]. However, given the Alexandrian taste for the use of allusion[4], particularly to Homer, one would still expect to find implicit literary references to the Homeric Penelope, and hence to Penelope the good wife.

The Hellenistic authors, asserting their Greek identity and continuity with the canon of Classical writers[5], as well as writing about earlier literature, used their knowledge of it to rejuvenate the writing of poetry. In doing so, they blended different genres, used words and metres from one genre for another, and, in particular, reused the highly influential Homer in non-epic contexts[6]. The poets of the Callimachean aesthetic seem to have avoided epic, although we know that epic was still being written. But despite the story of their quarrel, supposedly over the epic *Argonautica*, Apollonius and Callimachus do seem to be part of the same aesthetic movement[7]. Their poetry uses the Homeric text in similar ways - exploiting variant readings[8], and sometimes explaining an unusual use of a Homeric word with a gloss[9] - and thus both poets display their learning

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[3] E.g. *IG* IV.491 from Cleonae; cf. pp.69-70 above.

[4] Central studies on Alexandrian *arte allusiva* include Giangrande 1967 and 1970, Livrea 1972 and 1980.

[5] Cf. Parsons 1993 pp.158-70 on the Alexandrian Greeks as an expatriate community desiring to identify with their past.

[6] On the mixing of genres, see Kroll 1924, Rossi 1971, especially pp.83-4 on Callimachus, 84-5 on Theocritus; on Callimachus and epic, see Ziegler 1966, Lloyd-Jones 1984 pp.236-8, Newman 1974. Clauss 1994 p.2 n.2 has bibliography on the *Argonautica* as a "Callimachean epic"; contesting the traditional position, see Cameron 1995 ch.10, with pp.147-54 on the mixing of genres.

[7] Much general material on the relationship of Callimachus and Apollonius is to be found in Hutchinson 1988 pp.85-96 and Pfeiffer 1953 ii pp.xliff; see also Lefkowitz 1980 and Bundy 1972. The consensus now is that there was no quarrel, and that Apollonius may be seen as part of the same movement as Callimachus. The shift in thinking may be seen by comparing Hutchinson and Hunter's work (for example, 1989, 1993) with that of Fraser (1971) and Ziegler (1966), who place Apollonius on the traditional, anti-Callimachean side of the divide over epic (see also above on Callimachus and epic).

[8] For example Call. fr.67 Pf. l.13 Ἀριήδης comes from a Zenodotean variant, Ἀριήδη for Ἀριάδνη at *Il.* 18.592, and fr. 47.6 (Hollis) of the *Hecale* uses καιτάεντος, again based on a Zenodotean variant, καιτάεσσαν for κητώεσσαν at *Od.* 4.1. Cf. Hollis 1990 p.191-2 (his fr. 47 is Pf. 639, 329 and 629, and *SH* 286) and Rengakos 1994.

[9] *Arg.* 1.538 uses ὁμαρτῇ, which appears at several points in Homer, e.g. *Il.* 18.571, always with ἁμαρτῇ as a variant; *Arg.* 4.1629-30 uses αὔλιος, a variant for οὔλιος at *Il.* 11.62, and adds a gloss, explaining the relevance of the variant. Cf. Hopkinson 1988 p.195 *ad loc.*; he records similar references by Apollonius to contemporary scholarship at *Arg.* 3.744ff and 4.1645.

and, possibly, contribute to contemporary scholarly debates[10]. Both rewrite epic: the Apollonian epic portrays a hero who is both like and unlike earlier epic heroes, while the Callimachean epyllion takes an epic subject, Theseus and the Marathonian Bull, but concentrates not on the hero but on the old woman Hecale.

The *Argonautica* was certainly regarded as an epic in the ancient world, even if an unsatisfactory one[11], and hence looks back to Homeric epic. But in creating a Hellenistic and Callimachean epic, Apollonius reworked Homeric epic in a non-Homeric way. The frequent verbal and structural reminiscences serve more to mark the *Argonautica*'s differences from Homer than to make it genuinely 'Homeric': the appropriation of epic language and reference to Homeric scenes may be used to make the reader re-evaluate Homer[12]. This is done partly by the blending of epic and tragic: a heroine best-known from fifth-century tragedy recast in epic metre and language. (It is noteworthy that each book of the *Argonautica* is roughly the length of a tragedy, rather than of a Homeric book as they now exist, and that there are four books, as in an Attic tetralogy of three tragedies and a satyr play[13] (and as in the second edition of the *Aetia*). Given the subject matter, this adoption of the proportions of tragedy seems apt.) However, explicit references to actions outside the scope of his poem, particularly to the future, are very restricted in comparison with the web of predictions found in the

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[10] On Apollonius' use of Homeric language, see Erbse 1953, Garson 1972, Hunter 1989 pp.36-37, 38-42.
[11] One *Life* says that Apollonius gained the surname Rhodius because he went to Rhodes, having left Alexandria after the *Argonautica* was badly received; however, this does not provide much evidence for ancient reception of the poem. We may conclude from Vergil's extensive use of the *Argonautica* in the *Aeneid* that the status of Apollonius' poem was fairly high at that period; by the time our scholia were compiled, the *Argonautica* seems to have been regarded as the standard treatment of the Argonaut myth. DeForest 1994 argues that Apollonius' poem is a failed Callimachean epic, and recognised as such by its author. Though interesting, this is not convincing. For the *Argonautica* as "anti-epic" see Pavlock 1990 pp.20-1, Lawall 1966.
[12] Cf. Shumaker 1969 p.140.
[13] Apollonius might thus be seen as having produced an Aristotelian epic, conforming to the length laid down in the *Poetics*. Cf. Beye 1993 p.192, refering to *Poetics* 1459 b 21-2; Lucas 1968 *ad loc.* states that this prescription fits the *Argonautica*.

Homeric epics[14]. This serves partly to emphasise the contrast between the happy ending suggested by the poem and the tragic aftermath which we and readers of the time (having encountered Medea in Euripides) would know to be ahead[15]. This contrast is typical of the manner in which the Apollonian epic draws attention to its differences from its models, as well as the similarities. The Euripidean Medea is always in the background in Apollonius' epic, but the fact that this is such an obvious background must not be allowed to obscure the presence of other texts in this poem. Indeed, it is sometimes through such references that the events of the later history of Medea and Jason are brought to mind.

One problem in assessing the influence of Homer on Apollonius is the theory that the *Odyssey* itself is based on an earlier Argonautic epic[16]; Odysseus' travels do have much in common with what we know about early versions of this myth. However, although the story of the Argonauts was presumably well known, given its appearances on vases and reference to the Ἀργὼ πασιμέλουσα at *Od.* 12.70, our earliest literary sources are incomplete[17], which hampers any consideration of links between these early versions and the *Odyssey*. Our most complete version of the Argonautic myth is that of Apollonius, who seems to have been modelling his work after Homer. We may thus fall

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[14] For example, Teiresias' prophecy of Odysseus' future wanderings and the references to the death of Achilles and fall of Troy in the *Iliad*. On this topic, see Duckworth 1933 particularly pp.28-36; other bibliography includes Schadewaldt 1938 p.156 n.4, Richardson 1980 pp.267-70, with p.269 n.10 giving a list of references to events outside the *Iliad*, Griffin 1980 p.163, esp. n.139 on Achilles' foreknowledge, Macleod 1982 *ad* 24.84-6, Heubeck 1989 *ad* 11.121-37 on Teiresias' prediction to Odysseus.

[15] The popularity of the *Medea* may be assumed from its survival as one of the select non-alphabetic surviving plays of Euripides, and from its appearances on Athenian and South Italian vases (see Taplin 1993 pp.22-3 on the Cleveland and Policoro Medeas).

[16] Meuli 1921; on this topic, see also Page 1955 p.2 and 1973 pp.38-9, 47-8 (on the Laestrygonians) and 86-91 (on the Sirens), Dufner 1988 ch. 1, pp. 7-55, Dräger 1993 pp.357-60. For an ancient awareness of this possibility, see Strabo 1.2.38 (45).

[17] See Fraser 1971 vol i pp.626-8, Braswell 1988 pp.6-23 (on all treatments of the Argonaut myth prior to Pindar), Huxley 1969 pp.60-81 (on the early epics, including those of Eumelus and Epimenides) and Hunter 1989 pp.12-21. Gantz 1993 pp.340-73 gives various sources, but is not very good at distinguishing later versions or innovations; Schefold/Jung 1989 pp. 15-47 deals with the Argonauts and the aftermath of their voyage, giving illustrations from the sixth century on. See also *LIMC s.v.* Argonautai, Iason.

into a vicious circle if we try to assess how far Apollonius has modelled his version on Homer while using him also to assess how much the Homeric *Odyssey* is modelled on an earlier Argonautic epic. We have no evidence that any such earlier oral epic was known in Alexandria when Apollonius was writing, nor even in Athens during the fifth century. If the Alexandrians were aware of any link between two early epics, it was probably only in the most general terms, i.e. that both journeys could be described as following the same route in places, and encountering the same places and peoples. Links between the *Odyssey* and the *Argonautica*, are, it seems, sufficiently explained as such, without the need to postulate any detailed awareness of a pre-Homeric epic *Argonautica* on the part of Apollonius[18].

The *Argonautica* shows great awareness of its epigonal status[19]. It is very clearly post-Homeric in literary terms, but in mythological terms it is self-consciously set a generation earlier than the Homeric narrative. For example, from the varying lists of heroes who took part in the journey, only those who are not heroes of the Trojan war, and are clearly of an earlier generation, are included. Thus Meleager, a figure of the past in the *Iliad*, is included, as is Heracles, whose son Tlepolemus fought at Troy, as did the sons of Telamon and Peleus. Nestor, an elder at Troy, does not appear, as he did in some lists, but his eldest brother, Periclymenus, does. The relative dating of the two epics in mythological terms is emphasised by the appearance of the baby Achilles (1.557-8), a hero brought down to human dimensions as he appears in the arms of Cheiron's wife, a

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[18] For a detailed discussion of links between an earlier *Argonautica* and the *Odyssey* see Dufner 1988 pp.7-55. Any such discussion must be based largely on conjecture, and we may safely assume that Apollonius was, at most, minimally aware of links between the two stories; hence attempts to use Apollonius to reconstruct any earlier epic are pursued in vain. It is notable that Apollonius' poem does not make the same links as are proposed for the modelling of the *Odyssey* on an Argonautic epic; for example, Apollonius' Medea does not look primarily to Circe, who might be modelled on an earlier Medea, although they share the epithets δολόεσσα and πολυφάρμακος.

[19] Cf. Goldhill 1991 ch. 5, especially pp.284-6.

figure otherwise little known in mythology[20]. In the fourth book, although Alcinous and Arete are portrayed as already married, Medea's prayer:

> σοὶ δ' ὀπάσειαν
> ἀθάνατοι βίοτόν τε τελεσφόρον ἀγλαίην τε
> καὶ παῖδας καὶ κῦδος ἀπορθήτοιο πόληος
>
> *Arg.* 4.1026-8[21]

must recall the best known of their children, Nausicaa, who is entreated in similar terms by Odysseus at *Od.* 6.180-1; in addition this prayer contains a possible reference to the ultimate fate of Phaeacia[22]. Thus the *Argonautica* presents itself, in the post-Homeric era, as a pre-Homeric epic. The references to Homer both give Apollonius' work epic authority and reinforce the idea that the erotic themes with which Apollonius works have their roots in Homer, particularly in the *Odyssey*[23]. This is one way in which the *Argonautica* modernises epic, by blending ancient epic language and form with an un-Homeric erotic aspect[24]. The erotic may even be seen to subvert the earlier epic, replacing the old-style hero with an erotic hero, who can win not only with words, like Odysseus, but also with beauty. Such a hero is more a development of Odysseus (who was also beautified by Athene) than of Achilles: Odysseus of the winning words, known for his dalliances on the way home. But Jason is also contrasted with Odysseus: he is ἀμήχανος, and finds himself in impossible situations with no way out, unlike the πολυμήχανος Odysseus, who always manages to escape.

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[20] On the choice of heroes see Levin 1971 pp.30-36; on the introduction of Achilles, see Levin 1971 p.32.
[21] Text throughout from Vian/Delage (Budé 1976-81)
[22] This passage also recalls Odysseus' words to Arete (*Od.* 7.148-50); see Campbell 1981 p.80, Hunter 1993 p.40.
[23] Cf. Pavlock 1990 pp. 21-3, pp.24-39 on the cloak, which she sees as an erotic equivalent to Achilles' shield, Hunter 1993 p.46 (Hunter cites Calypso and Nausicaa from the *Odyssey*, Achilles and Patroclus from the *Iliad*, to which one may add Briseis and Chryseis).
[24] Cf. Pavlock 1990 pp.21-4; the erotic treatment given to Homeric material in tragedy (e.g. Aeschylus' Achilles and Patroclus) is also comparable.

The *Argonautica* utilises Homeric vocabulary, sometimes straightforwardly, but sometimes in a more complicated fashion, either using Homeric words in later senses, or substituting synonyms for part of a standard Homeric phrase[25]. As this is a literary, not an oral epic, it strives for variety and to avoid formulaic repetition, in marked contrast with the repetitive Homeric style[26]. The opening of the epic may be read as based on the opening of the *Iliad*[27], but there are also similarities to the opening of the *Odyssey* (enlarged on below): the *Odyssey* serves as the main structural model[28]. This is in large part due to the similarity in subject matter (the long journey, quest for the hand of the princess, the educational aspect which appears particularly in the cases of Telemachus and Jason). Reminiscence may be small scale, on the level of single words, or larger scale, the evocation of whole scenes or even books of Homer.

Female figures in the earlier books: Alcimede and Hypsipyle

The figures of Alcimede and Hypsipyle demonstrate the complexity of reference we can expect from characters in this epic. Alcimede appears only briefly, but still manages to combine reminiscences of three Homeric characters; Hypsipyle, in a longer episode, has a more complex Homeric ancestry, which shapes her in ways which foreshadow the shaping of Medea. The idea of blending different characters or scenes from earlier poetry has been emphasised less in criticism of Greek poetry than of Latin, where this technique is recognised in Vergil's poetry (which possibly takes it from

[25] See Carspecken 1952, Garson 1972.
[26] Cf. Hunter 1989 p.39 on *Arg.* 3.27-9 and 86-9.
[27] Shumaker 1969 p.34; see also below.
[28] On the differences between structural and verbal imitation, see Knauer's work on Vergil, e.g. Knauer 1964, especially pp.66-7.

Apollonian texts), but it has its roots in earlier Greek literature[29]. Evocation of Penelope will be in the context of such networks of intertextual reference.

The first Odyssean reference to involve Penelope comes early in the Argonautica. Alcimede appears at *Arg.* 1.261, lamenting for her son, whom everyone considers doomed on the expedition to Colchis. Jason calms his mother and the other women, then Apollonius describes the parting of Alcimede and Jason with an interesting simile:

> μήτηρ δ' ὡς τὰ πρῶτ' ἐπεχεύατο πήχεε παιδί,
> ὡς ἔχετο κλαίουσ' ἀδινώτερον, ἠύτε κούρη
> οἰόθεν ἀσπασίως πολιὴν τροφὸν ἀμφιπεσοῦσα
> μύρεται, ᾗ οὔκ εἰσιν ἔτ' ἄλλοι κηδεμονῆες,
> ἀλλ' ὑπὸ μητρυιῇ βίοτον βαρὺν ἠγηλάζει·
> καί ἑ νέον πολέεσσιν ὀνείδεσιν ἐστυφέλιξε,
> τῇ δέ τ' ὀδυρομένῃ δέδεται κέαρ ἔνδοθεν ἄτῃ,
> οὐδ' ἔχει ἐκφλύξαι τόσσον γόον, ὅσσον ὀρεχθεῖ·
> ὡς ἀδινὸν κλαίεσκεν ἑὸν παῖδ' ἀγκὰς ἔχουσα
> Ἀλκιμέδη, καὶ τοῖον ἔπος φάτο κηδοσύνῃσιν.
>
> *Arg.* 1.268-277

The mention of the nurse in this simile recalls the first of the Homeric characters who contribute to the figure of Alcimede, namely Eurycleia. It is Eurycleia who laments over Telemachus as he departs, for he keeps his departure secret from his mother. This passage also recalls Homeric similes concerning family relationships (particularly those of the *Odyssey*), which frequently reverse the sex of the characters being described[30]. Two other Homeric figures contribute to the characterisation of Alcimede: Penelope, mother of the young departing hero, and Anticleia, the mother left behind pining for her son. The reference to Penelope is reflected both by the familial relationship and by the

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[29] Newman 1974 and 1986 p.36 (cf. pp.81 n.23, 85, 86-7 on Apollonius and Callimachus) discusses the idea of combination of models with regard to the *Hecale*; the phenomenon is also discussed by Knight 1990 pp.13-23. Knight refers to Cairns 1989 on one text "looking through" a second to a third, but prefers to think of "combining" of models, rather than "looking through". When considering Apollonius, this observation has particular strength, for although characters such as Penelope, Helen, Clytaemnestra, and Nausicaa are all implicitly or explicitly contrasted, not every combination of characters or scenes made by Apollonius has such an obvious Homeric root; in this way, one may distinguish between the combination of different scenes, and "looking through" one scene to an earlier one on which it is modelled, drawing in elements of both. Such "combining", as shown above for fifth-century tragedy, predates Apollonius' writings.

[30] Cf. Foley 1978.

general relation to the start of the *Odyssey*. It is also produced linguistically: Alcimede's lament for Jason recalls the language used by Penelope in *Od.* 4.722-41, when she finally learns of Telemachus' departure[31]. *Arg.* 1.286 also reflects the language used by Anticleia to Odysseus at *Od.* 11.202-3[32]. This creates a three way comparison, i.e.:

Penelope : Telemachus :: Alcimede : Jason :: Anticleia : Odysseus[33]

This set of parallels shows also how Jason combines aspects of Odysseus and Telemachus. Jason is generally seen as having to find new answers to problems for which the traditional epic stereotypes of heroes prove insufficient[34]. Thus at the start of the epic, we are invited to see Jason as like Telemachus in that he is a young hero, setting out on a journey to prove himself[35]. As the story moves on, however, the references to Telemachus fall out of the picture, and Odysseus becomes the more important model, as the Argo sails past places also described in the *Odyssey*. As the intertexts shift so that we see Jason in terms of Odysseus, so the role played by the figure of Penelope is recreated, shifting from Jason's mother to the woman who will be Jason's wife. These intertexts help characterise the figures for us in brief appearances, but also set up a larger structure for the poem: this tale is both an ephebic adventure and an odyssey to strange places, but with a hero characterised partly through contrasts with these earlier figures. Thus this first reference to Penelope looks back to her Odyssean persona in particular, and considers her as a mother rather than as a wife.

As the encounters of Odysseus with various female figures, human and divine, lead up to and foreshadow his reunion with Penelope, so Jason's dealings with Medea are

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[31] For example, *Od.* 4.734 ἐνὶ μεγάοισιν ἔλειπεν and *Arg.* 1.283 λελείψομαι ἐν μεγάροισι.
[32] For example, the use of πόθος.
[33] Shumaker 1969 pp.41-2.
[34] See Clauss 1994.
[35] For the departure of Jason echoing that of Telemachus, see Shumaker 1969 pp.34-6, 52-3, Dufner 1988 pp.262-3.

prefigured by earlier adventures, including the episode on Lemnos. Hypsipyle, like Medea, echoes the Homeric Nausicaa; both will ultimately be abandoned by Jason as Nausicaa was by Odysseus[36]. This fate is also shared by Ariadne, the *exemplum* given to Medea by Jason of a princess who helped a stranger (although this fact is concealed by Jason)[37]:

> δή ποτε καὶ Θησῆα κακῶν ὑπελύσατ' ἀέθλων
> παρθενικὴ Μινωὶς ἐυφρονέουσ' Ἀριάδνη,
> ἥν ῥά τε Πασιφάη κούρη τέκεν Ἠελίοιο·
> ἀλλ' ἡ μὲν καὶ νηός, ἐπεὶ χόλον εὔνασε Μίνως,
> σὺν τῷ ἐφεζομένη πάτρην λίπε· τὴν δὲ καὶ αὐτοὶ
> ἀθάνατοι φίλαντο, μέσῳ δέ οἱ αἰθέρι τέκμαρ
> ἀστερόεις στέφανος, τόν τε κλείουσ' Ἀριάδνης,
> πάννυχος οὐρανίοις ἐνελίσσεται εἰδώλοισιν.
> ὣς καὶ σοὶ θεόθεν χάρις ἔσσεται, εἴ κε σαώσεις
> τόσσον ἀριστήων ἀνδρῶν στόλον. ἦ γὰρ ἔοικας
> ἐκ μορφῆς ἀγανῇσιν ἐπητείῃσι κεκάσθαι.
>
> *Arg.* 3.997-1007[38]

The example of Ariadne is crucial for the *Argonautica*, for it fits Medea's case more closely than is made clear to her; she, like Ariadne, will be abandoned after she has helped rescue the hero, and, as in the usual version of the story of Ariadne, Medea will help the hero and go with him against the will of her father. Both girls, both grand-daughters of Helios, help in the destruction of their brother; both heroes will confront the destruction of family on their return, Jason of Pelias, Theseus of Aegeus, who commits suicide at the thought of his son's death. Ariadne is an interesting *exemplum* for Jason to have chosen here, for although she is Hypsipyle's grandmother, Theseus' trip to Crete is usually said to occur after his journey to Athens and his recognition by his father - a recognition which Medea tries to prevent. The text is clearly playing with mythological

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[36] Cf. Hunter 1993 pp.47-8.

[37] Pavlock 1990 pp.19-68 takes Nausicaa, Medea, and Ariadne as paradigmatic of the "type" of the abandoned woman, as found from Homer onwards.

[38] Cf. 3.1074-6, 1096-1101; when Medea uses the story, the irony increases, for she is ignorant of the "truth" of the story.

time here, for Jason tells the story as a contemporary lover could, as happening in the past, ποτέ, rhetorically recasting the *exemplum* to fit his argument.

Jason also mirrors Odysseus at other points. As Calypso detains Odysseus until Hermes intervenes to set him free, so the Lemnian women hold the Argonauts back from their quest until Heracles comes and rouses them on to action[39]. He receives the offer of a throne from Hypsipyle/Alcinous, linked to marriage to the princess, and is tempted to stay in Lemnos/Ogygia, but will instead continue on his journey so that he may eventually reach home - but a home where the hero (having offended a god) will not be able to remain[40]. Hypsipyle, however, also prefigures Medea (as the Odyssean Penelope is prefigured), and, like her, recalls Nausicaa[41]. Her plea to Jason to remember her (*Arg.* 1.896-8) is modelled on Nausicaa's words at *Od.* 8.461-2; Medea too recalls Nausicaa's words when she asks to be remembered at 3.1069-71.

Medea: the end of the quest

Medea, the princess at the end of Jason's quest, plays the role filled in the *Iliad* by Helen (the goal of the quest), in the *Odyssey* by Penelope (indirect goal of the quest and instrumental in its fulfilment). A complex intertextual (and intertextually complex) character, this Medea looks back to her own earlier instantiations (particularly in the works of Euripides and Pindar), to the Homeric Nausicaa, Circe, Helen, Penelope (and

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[39] Cf. Hunter 1993 pp.46-7, 34 (the "unheroic lust" which is perceived in Odysseus' relations with Calypso and Circe may be seen as reflecting the reaction of the Apollonian Heracles to the Argonauts' sojourn in Lemnos), Knight 1990 p.20, p.90 n.6, 1995 pp.221-2, 163 n.106. Verbal parallels (see Campbell 1981) which support the structural connection between Lemnos and Calypso include the use of the word αἰμύλιος, which occurs only at *Od.* 1.56, in Athene's description of Calypso, and the use of πῆμα κακόν by Odysseus and Hypsipyle (*Od.* 5.179, *Arg.* 1.809).

[40] Post-Homeric epics made Odysseus go to Thesprotia and marry the princess, as Jason would do in Corinth; both heroes thus set in train the actions leading to their downfall: Odysseus, to be killed by his illegitimate son, Jason setting the scene for the Euripidean tragedy.

[41] Cf. Hunter 1993 pp.47-8.

Clytaemnestra), and to the tragic Helen and Clytaemnestra (and Penelope)[42] - and to the comparisons made between these figures in earlier literature. Hunter comments:

> Just as the central scenes of [Medea's] suffering - the arrow-shot, the dream, the sleeplessness, the ride to the temple - are modelled on Homeric scenes, so too the choice she faces, imposed upon her by the forces of shame and desire, is expressed by a polarity between a "Penelope model" and a "Helen model". .... "Being Penelope" or "being Helen" is not a simple, or even a possible, choice: Medea's position inevitably involves elements of both.[43]

This appeals to the generalised paradigmatic use of these characters (found in both antiquity and modern scholarship), who are known not only from texts as rounded characters, but also as paradigms[44].

The clear pattern of references to the wanderings of Odysseus in the first two books of the *Argonautica* makes more plausible the continuation of this pattern through reference to the second half of the *Odyssey* in the second half of the *Argonautica*[45]. Wider dual correspondences between the Apollonian and Homeric texts at the end of *Arg.* 2 and the start of 3 parallel the links between Medea and Nausicaa/Penelope[46]. The approach to Aeetes' palace recalls both *Od.* 13-14 (structurally), and *Od.* 7 (in verbal detail): the pattern of deliberation, disguise (god-given), approach to a dwelling, and

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[42] On Nausicaa, see Hunter 1989 *ad* 616-32, 795-7, 869ff. (cf. 838-43), 1152-4, DeForest 1994 pp.112-3, Campbell 1994 *ad* 3.4-5, 444-5; on Circe, Knight 1990 p.100, 104-7, 110, Hunter 1987 *ad* 3.1108, Campbell 1994 *ad* 3.27, 89, 309-13, Knight 1995 pp.27, 176-7, 181-3; on Helen, Hunter 1987, 1989 p.29 with n.126, 1993 pp.55-68, Knight 1995 p.27; on Clytaemnestra, Beye 1982 pp.157-61; on Penelope, Dufner 1988 pp.269-71, 426 n.24, Shumaker 1969 pp.108-25, Beye 1982 pp.158-60, Campbell 1994 *ad* 3.259, 444-5, 453f., 454.

[43] Hunter 1989 p.29; cf. Dufner 1988 pp.269.

[44] One may compare the two views of Ajax - as an influence on Medea in Euripides' play (Knox 1977) he is used as a textual creation, but he also exists as a paradigm of brawn and stubbornness. Compare the tendency of orally-transmitted stories to reduplicate traits by using two motifs: for example characterising Judas as both incestuous and murderous, to make him seem sufficiently evil for the part tradition had him play; this story is dealt with by Edmunds 1985, especially pp.26-36 on the reduplication of motifs.

[45] Shumaker says both have a divine council early on (which is a slight exaggeration of the conversation between Poseidon and Zeus in *Od.* 13, but one can see the parallel) and then a dialogue - in the *Odyssey* between Odysseus and Athene, in the *Argonautica* between Aphrodite and Eros; these scenes are not, however, parallel in content. This episode also alludes to Thetis' visit to Hephaestus in *Iliad* 18 (on this see Lennox 1980).

[46] Cf. Shumaker 1969 pp.77-94.

description of the dwelling occurs in both *Od.* 13.296-14.20 and *Arg.* 3.167-248[47], but in the Argonautic passage, the mist which disguises and protects Jason is more reminiscent of the mist which surrounds Odysseus as he approaches Alcinous' palace in *Od.* 7 than of the change of appearance Athene works in 13, and the description of Aeetes' palace is more closely modelled verbally on that of Alcinous' palace than on that of Eumaeus' hut. These references help to structure the poem, by recalling the mid-point of the *Odyssey*, the beginning of the story of Odysseus' recovery of his land and wife, near the mid-point of the *Argonautica*, where Jason turns from travel to gaining a princess and then to returning to his own land safely[48].

Reference to both the Ithacan and Phaeacian episodes of the *Odyssey* enable Medea to combine characteristics of Penelope and Nausicaa. This combination may be partially responsible for the discontinuity in the characterisation of Medea which has been perceived by various scholars[49]. She is both a virgin princess and a powerful witch: that Nausicaa and Circe contribute to these aspects is clear. Although Nausicaa has thoughts of marriage, she is not torn as Penelope is between family and (potential) husband, for her father explicitly approves of Odysseus, and hence she cannot be a model for Medea's indecision. It is Penelope's indecision, between fidelity to her husband and obedience to the wishes of her family, that is echoed in the Apollonian Medea.

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[47] In the *Odyssey* these component parts occur at 13.296-396, 397-440 and 14.1-70 respectively, and in the *Argonautica* lines 3.167-193, 210-12 and 213-248 respectively.

[48] *Odyssey* 13.93-124 paralleling *Arg.* 2.1260-84; similarly, the beginning and end of the *Argonautica* echo the beginning and end of the *Odyssey*: *Arg.* 1.1-233 paralleling *Il* 1.1-2.779, with the parallel shifting, so that *Arg.* 1.18-579 parallels *Od.* 2.382-434; on the end, see below. The resemblance to the start of the *Odyssey* is looser than that to the start of the *Iliad*, but is reinforced by the general structure of setting off of the young hero on a journey, and by verbal reminiscence. *Arg.* 1.563 recalls *Od.* 2.424-5 and 15.289-90, and *Arg.* 1.564 recalls *Od.* 2.425 and 15.290, through the use of technical terms used only of Telemachus' activity in the *Odyssey*. See also Hunter 1993 p.119.

[49] Summarised by Phinney 1967, pp.327-333, see also Foley 1989. This split may also be seen as being between the Homeric aspect of Nausicaa and the tragic aspect of Euripides' Medea (also seen as inconsistent) which both contribute to Apollonius' portrait of Medea; Foley and Phinney consider her realistically inconsistent.

Penelope, although already Odysseus' wife, is won again, as Medea is won by Jason. Medea wants to marry Jason, contrary to her father's wishes; Penelope's father wants her to remarry, while she wishes to remain married to Odysseus[50]. This internal conflict is the main point of contact between Medea and Penelope.

The simile with which Apollonius illustrates Medea's turmoil recalls Penelope's position[51]:

> ὡς δ' ὅτε τις νύμφη θαλερὸν πόσιν ἐν θαλάμοισι
> μύρεται, ᾧ μιν ὄπασσαν ἀδελφεοὶ ἠὲ τοκῆες,
> οὐδέ τί πω πάσαις ἐπιμίσγεται ἀμφιπόλοισιν
> αἰδοῖ ἐπιφροσύνῃ τε, μυχῷ δ' ἀχέουσα θαάσσει·
> τὸν δέ τις ὤλεσε μοῖρα, πάρος ταρπήμεναι ἄμφω
> δήνεσιν ἀλλήλων· ἡ δ' ἔνδοθι δαιομένη περ
> σῖγα μάλα κλαίει χῆρον λέχος εἰσορόωσα,
> μή μιν κερτομέουσαι ἐπιστοβέωσι γυναῖκες.
>
> *Arg.* 3.656-663

Although Penelope had longer with her husband than the bride of the simile, both suffer from similar unsatisfied longing for a man they believe to be dead. The differences between Penelope's situation and that of the bride in the simile may be considered mainly those demanded by Medea's circumstances at this point in time. Medea must not talk to her handmaids, and the man she cries over is, like the groom of the simile, a young man. The main similarities between Penelope's situation and that of the bride of the simile are, according to Shumaker, the weeping for the husband (*Od.* 1.362-3, 16.450, 19.208-9; *Arg.* 3.657, 662), the pressure from family, the fear of public opinion (*Od.* 19.527), and belief in the death of the husband. Although this list is not wholly convincing, the situation, particularly the consideration given to αἰδώς and the weeping (an action often considered characteristic of the Odyssean Penelope) clearly are paralleled in the *Odyssey*.

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[50] *Od.* 19.158.
[51] Cf. also Cleite *Arg.* 1.974-9, 1063-6.

This simile, like the figure of Medea, in its various aspects evokes different figures from earlier literature and earlier in this poem. It evokes some aspects of Penelope's situation, but the correspondence in the simile itself is only strong enough to mark a specific connection to Penelope when seen in the broader context of references and resonances. Medea shares with Penelope the state of indecision which has been seen as central to her Homeric characterisation. Both also contemplate death as a way out of their dilemma (*Od.* 20.61ff., *Arg.* 3.806-9). *Arg.* 3.804-5 is compared to *Od.* 21.55-6 by Hunter[52], a parallel which would back up the resemblance of the suicide wishes; at *Od.* 18.201ff., Penelope, like Medea thinks wishfully of death by Artemis' arrows (a woman's death). Despite their distress, however, both women fulfill with their promised actions. At dawn, Medea dresses in order carry out her plan to help Jason, in a scene which can be linked to two Homeric epic scenes and one from a *Homeric Hymn*: Hera's preparations to seduce Zeus in *Iliad* 14, the gift to Penelope of a robe from Antinous in *Od.* 18, and Aphrodite's preparations in the *HHymn* 5 to seduce Anchises. The description of Medea's robe echoes the description of that given by Antinous (*Od.* 18.292-4, *Arg.* 3.832-3, 838), and both women are beautified before this. Here, however, Medea, in deliberately setting out to attract her suitor, is acting more like a Helen, and, like Helen, will bring ruin on her family for the sake of her lover (she thus affects the action more decisively than Helen can during either Homeric epic). However, Medea is modest enough to go veiled and accompanied by her maids, as Penelope always is when she appears before the suitors.

Jason's and Medea's testing of each other (e.g. *Arg.* 3.1146-7) is paralleled in the testing of both friends and strangers which is characteristic of Odysseus and which is

[52] Hunter 1989 *ad loc.*

practised also by Penelope in her meeting with the disguised Odysseus and the recognition scene[53]. Penelope's action in proposing the contest of the bow, action which leads to the resolution of the *Odyssey*, "is mirrored by Medea's determination to help Jason, which provides for the resolution of the action at Colchis"[54]. The scene of Jason and Medea's meeting recalls several scenes in the *Odyssey* involving Odysseus and Penelope. At 3.924ff., Jason is beautified for Medea as Odysseus is not only for Nausicaa, but also for the recognition scene with Penelope, when Athene intervenes during his bath. When Medea looks at him, after his dissembling speech about Ariadne, she is described in language reminiscent of Penelope during her interview with the disguised Odysseus (1020-1, *Od.* 19.205-8): the verb τήκομαι is used of both women, and is linked to a simile of melting in nature. Earlier, Jason's first speech includes the words ἦα πάρος, words used by the eagle which symbolises Odysseus to Penelope in her dream (*Od.* 19.978). It therefore seems clear that, alongside other models, the Homeric Penelope helps to shape and characterise Medea. In the fourth book of the poem, the linking of Jason and Medea to Odysseus and Penelope is at least partly displaced by a parallel with Aegisthus and Clytaemnestra[55]: Dufner ascribes this allusion chiefly to tragedy, but it also picks up on the paralleling of Penelope and Clytaemnestra in the *Odyssey*.

One reason for linking the *Argonautica* and *Odyssey* structurally is the possibility of a reference to the τέλος of the Alexandrian *Odyssey* in the last line of the later epic[56].

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[53] The importance of the verb πειράομαι in the second half of the *Odyssey* is well known (see Rutherford 1992 *ad* 19.215), and of 25 occurrences in the *Argonautica*, 13 are in the third book. For the importance of the theme in this book, see Hunter 1989 *ad* 3.8-10 πείραζε, and consider particularly 3.693 (Medea to Chalciope, pushing her sister into asking her to help the Argonauts) φῇ ῥα κασιγνήτης πειρωμένη, and 1146-7 (Medea and Jason) ὣς τώ γ' ἀλλήλων ἀγανοῖς ἐπὶ τόσσον ἔπεσσι | πείρηθεν.

[54] Dufner 1988 pp.270-1, with reference to Shumaker 1969 pp.119-20.

[55] Dufner 1988 pp.184-8.

[56] This proposition is found in Rossi 1968 and Livrea 1973 *ad loc.*, and dismissed as "not merely fragile but baseless" by Campbell 1983b.

Arg. 4.1781 starts ἀσπασίως, as does *Od.* 23.296. Dufner plausibly concludes that the final line of the *Argonautica* evokes not the line which may have been considered the end of the *Odyssey* by some Alexandrian scholars, but rather the whole scene which may be seen as providing the τέλος of the Homeric poem. Ἀσπασίως also occurs earlier in the same scene, at 23.238, and that line seems closer than the later one to the Argonautic line. As Dufner says, the issue of how we are to interpret τέλος/πέρας in the scholiasts is relevant if we think that Apollonius is alluding to *Od.* 23.296 in *Arg.* 4.1781, and hence to a view which made that line the end of the *Odyssey*; in this context, it is worth noting that in Vian's list of alternative lines to which Apollonius may be alluding, there is definitely a cluster around the reunion scene in *Od.* 23[57]. Dufner finds a link between the use of ἀσπασίως/ἀσπάστος and νόστος in both Homer and Apollonius[58], and sees the earlier clusters of these words as looking forward to the reunion scene. This is why she considers the allusion here to be to the scene rather than the individual line; if this is posed in terms of an intertextual relationship between the two scenes, rather than in terms of a deliberate allusion, then it is hard to resist. Hunter takes the allusion to be to *Od.* 23.238, which comes in the simile expressing the joy of Penelope in her reunion with Odysseus[59]. Hunter considers the lines which follow to be of particular importance, for in them Odysseus says that further trials await them:

> "ὦ γύναι, οὐ γάρ πω πάντων ἐπὶ πείρατ' ἀέθλων
> ἤλθομεν, ἀλλ' ἔτ' ὄπισθεν ἀμέτρητος πόνος ἔσται,
> πολλὸς καὶ χαλεπός, τὸν ἐμὲ χρὴ πάντα τελέσσαι."
>
> *Od.* 23.248-50

[57] Vian 1981 p.68, Dufner 1988 p.211.
[58] Dufner 1988 p.212 cites *Arg.* 4.996, 2.728, 4.1391 as arrivals in strange lands, and 4.67 as a sort of *nostos* for Medea and *Od.* 5.290-318, 23.233-40 and 13.33-5 as having both ἀσπασίως and ἀσπάστος and 4.523, 19.569, 23.60 and 13.333 as linked to the joy of reunion after a return.
[59] Hunter 1993 pp.119-20.

Apollonius ends with an invocation to the heroes, in which he says that he has reached the "famous end", κλυτὰ πείρατα, of their struggles. Hunter sees in the allusion to the *Odyssey* a suggestion that the troubles and struggles of the Argonauts are by no means over. Even if there is no implied textual criticism in the reference to the penultimate rather than last book of the *Odyssey*, in the context of an epic which contains a love-story, the earlier point is perhaps the more satisfactory τέλος to which to allude: the existing end of the *Odyssey*, whether genuine or not, is fairly odd and unsatisfactory from various angles. *Od.* 23.296 is, of course, followed by the summary of Odysseus' adventures and Teiresias' prophecy, which looks forward to further trials for Odysseus. It also marks the "happy ending" which Odysseus and Penelope may have but Medea and Jason cannot (marked also by the comparison of the untidy Homeric ending with the "satisfactory" end to the *Argonautica*).

The possibility that *Arg.* 4.1781 refers to *Od.* 23.296, and that this has relevance to Hellenistic Homeric criticism, may be enhanced by *SH* 947 (fr.2 from *P.Oxy* 2883), a fragment of Rhianus(?), which appears to allude to the same line in the final line of a poem[60]. As this appears to be from a "historical" epic, the attraction of referring to the scene of the reunion of Odysseus and Penelope, rather than to the τέλος of the *Odyssey*, does not seem to be applicable; this need not, however, prevent us from considering the latter as an aspect of the Apollonian text. If the possibility of a reference to *Od.* 23.296 in *Arg.* 4.1781 is denied, then an alternative explanation for *SH* 947 must also be provided - for this does appear to have a similar structure to both the Odyssean and Argonautic lines.

[60] Lloyd-Jones and Parsons on *SH* 947 discuss this fragment; the final line, ἀσπασίη δὲ Λάκωσιν ἐπήλυθε νυκτὸς ὁμίχλη, is marked with a coronis, which indicates the end of a book.

In this study, I have concentrated on the use made of the Odyssean Penelope; had we more fifth-century tragedy surviving, we might find that Penelope entered the text in other ways too (and, indeed, would expect this, as the intertextual reference cannot be limited to only one text, but will bring as baggage other versions of the character). I have shown how the Apollonian epic uses the figure of Penelope and other aspects of the *Odyssey* as structural devices in its recreation of the epic genre, referring to the figure of Penelope through the text of the *Odyssey*, and *vice versa*. One may see (particularly in *Arg.* 3) a choice of paths between "being Penelope" and "being Helen" for Medea. This division appeals to the concept of these two figures as paradigms of possible modes of female behaviour. The figure of Penelope to whom Apollonius links Medea involves both the complex Penelope of the *Odyssey* and the more general conception of the paradigmatic Penelope. The important feature of Penelope which links her to Medea is one not generally considered crucial to her story, namely her emotional distress, but they also share a similar situation of secret devotion to and wish to help their husband (to be). It is an important factor in the myth of Penelope that she is on the point of being forced to remarry at the point of Odysseus' return; however, the important feature of her emotional state is not the distress she shows in the *Odyssey*, but her reluctance to marry again. The distress is emphasised by the references to the textual Odyssean Penelope; the structural similarities point up more the general similarity in position and mythical function for Medea and Penelope. Through the link with Penelope, Medea is made more sympathetic than her reputation as a murderess would lead us to expect.

Chapter 9: Penelope in Augustan Poetry

Penelope's patient Fidelity
Was once a Prouerbe, now a Prodigy.
Robert Hayman ("Penelope's Patience" in *Quodlibets*, London 1628)

In moving from Greek to Latin literature, it seems worth considering in general terms whether the emphasis placed on Penelope after her transfer to Rome is different from that found in Greece. Roman women were allowed a wider role in society than Greek, and one might expect to find this reflected in the depiction of the "Good Wife"[1]. The main epithets given to Penelope or those with whom she is associated are *pia*, *casta*, and *pudica*. Although the semantic reach of these words covers more than sexual morality[2], the emphasis is still on fidelity and chastity as important virtues in a woman. The fact that the *exemplum* is used similarly in Greece and Rome, primarily to exhort or extol fidelity to a husband, shows the similarities in their ideologies about women; the Greek Penelope needs no modification to harmonise with the ideal of the the self-sufficient, obedient Roman wife promoted under Augustus, regardless of the reality of women's life in Rome. Literary depictions of Penelope (in a literature drawing heavily on Greek models[3]) thus continue to be developed against this background image of what a good wife should be: devoted to her husband's interests, monogamous[4], fertile, hard-working in the house, a good housekeeper and a worker in wool[5]. The importance of sexual chastity may be seen in the extension of

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[1] This freedom, however, still fell within firm moral and ideological constraints, as shown by Sallust's comments on Sempronia (*Cat.* 25); cf. Rawson 1986 pp.8-15, Rawson 1992 pp.14-16, Fantham *et al.* 1994 ch.10.

[2] Wistrand 1976 pp.36-7.

[3] Cf. Mayer 1995, Griffin 1985 ch.1, especially pp.1-6.

[4] An example of ideal and reality being in stark contrast: cf. Treggiari 1991 pp.213-8, chs. 8, 13, Fischler 1994 pp.115-8, "the ideal conflicted with the historical reality of daily life. Yet, as in other societies, the disjunction between image and reality is not significant or problematic." (p.117).

[5] Cf. Treggiari 1991 ch.7, 8 and *Laudationes 'Turiae'* (*CIL* 6.1527) and *Murdiae* (*CIL* 6.10230) on the virtues of wives, also the notorious *domum servavit, lanum fecit* (*CIL* 6.15346, epitaph on Claudia, Gracchan period). We may note that women's looks are rarely described while their virtues are listed more frequently. On this subject, see Lattimore 1962, particularly pp.290-8. Lattimore notes that the ideal

terms such as *pudor* and *castitas* beyond the sexual to cover other moral qualities expected of a dutiful wife. Affection between spouses is attested on gravestones, even put in romantic terms, but love poetry tends to focus on unmarried couples, indeed couples who, it seems, could not marry, and love was not always seen as a necessary part of marriage[6]. The assimilation of these ideals by Roman women may be illustrated by Cornelia in Prop. 4.11, where the ideal of Roman womanhood is shown to have been appropriated by a woman (though the writer is a man)[7].

The Roman man's doubts about woman may be seen in Ovid's use of Penelope in the *Ars*, 3.15, as he tries to argue that women can be faithful lovers as well as men: the rhetoric shows that he is arguing against the prevailing view, and casts doubts, if not on Penelope's fidelity, then on her credibility as a realistic example. Similarly, in *Am.* 3.4.23, the suggestion is that women are naturally unfaithful: although Ovid evokes Penelope as a woman who was kept chaste by her own *ingenium*, the poem is addressed to a *vir* who is setting a guard on a woman in whom, it seems, Ovid is interested, so his focus (as a poet and a lover) is rather on women's unfaithfulness than their fidelity. Again, the main thrust of the poem here treats Penelope as *exemplum pudicitiae*, though this passing mention may also evoke other versions of the story. Even for such a good wife as 'Turia' no mention is made of her beauty, but rather the *cultus modici*, *pudicitia*, and skill at *lanificium*[8].

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was of "a woman as housewife, devoted to her family"; although the language of love elegy may be used, key words are more often linked to *pietas*, *castitas*, obedience, frugality, simplicity, and skill at working wool.

[6] Cf. Treggiari 1991 pp.299-309 on those who could not marry; on love in marriage, pp.260-1, and *OCD*[3] *s.v.* "Heterosexuality".

[7] Cf. Wyke 1987 p.157.

[8] Cf. Wistrand 1976, Horsfall 1983 on this epitaph and the ideology behind it.

References to Penelope in this period are often in erotic contexts, including elegy, and thus focus on Penelope as a lover: for example, *Ars* 2.355, *Penelopen absens sollers torquebat Ulixes*[9]. This makes explicit some of the possible anxieties in the view of Penelope as a good wife: she must be cunning to maintain her fidelity, yet that characteristic makes her (in Homer) an uncertain ally for Odysseus. Similarly, when she is portrayed as a lover, the association with the unfaithful *puellae* of elegy makes her more likely to be read as fickle. As Penelope is brought into Latin poetry, her associations from contexts which makes her less than faithful to Odysseus cannot be totally excluded, but there are texts in which this is clearly not the primary focus of the reference: for example, Propertius 2.9.3, 3.13.24, Ovid *Ars* 1.477. This last shows how the ideal is evoked in such a way that its opposite may also be drawn to mind:

Penelopen ipsam, persta modo, tempore vincas

Here, Penelope is "a difficult proposition", but even she may be won over: even the best of women may be persuaded to be your lover (if you follow Ovid's guidance). This passing reference appeals to Penelope as a figure known for her resistance to suitors, but also places her as an elegiac *puella*, a recasting which we shall find elsewhere in Augustan poetry. This picture of faithful Penelope, *Penelopen difficilem procis* (Horace *Odes* 3.10.11), will be the starting point for this chapter, with a consideration of elegiac texts in which it is developed in different ways; I will then proceed to a broader range of contexts in which the possibility of infidelity is brought more to the fore; and finally one rather different treatment (Vergil's epic) in which the erotic aspect is downplayed, against the prevailing fashion. Throughout, my focus will be on the recontextualisation of Penelope, and

[9] Possibly a reference to the *Heroides* in particular, as Penelope is listed with Phyllis and Laodamia; *torqueo* is used in erotic contexts elsewhere in Latin elegy, for example, Tib. 1.4.81, Ov. *Am.* 2.5.33, *Ars* 2.124.

particularly her recasting as a lover, thus exploring Penelope's role in the complex interplay of texts, genres, and perspectives to be found in Augustan poetry.

Abandoned wife and faithful lover

Aelia Galla and Arethusa, new Penelopes

The poems in which Penelope stands in the background, where her importance is only hinted at and she is not explicitly named, are perhaps the most interesting for what they suggest about underlying assumptions about her character. This is because where more is left implicit, we can see better what the reader could be expected to know without having it spelt out in detail. Propertius 3.12 relies mainly on the stereotype of Penelope as chaste wife, used here to describe another wife, Aelia Galla, who is said to outdo Penelope. Line 23 states explicitly that it is only in the matter of his wife that Postumus is an *alter Ulixes*; of course, this very denial that Postumus' experiences will mirror Odysseus' raises in the reader's mind exactly that possibility, of other possible parallels between their experiences, including a *peregrinus amor* (*Her.* 1.76). Although Propertius is generally said to make more interesting use of myth than the other love elegists, the use to which Penelope is put in 3.12 is typical of love elegy: Penelope appears only as the *exemplum pudicitiae*, and other possible interpretations of her myth are not explored. One could read a suggestion into *uincit Penelopes ... fidem* that Penelope's fidelity was not above question, but that seems contrary to the main thrust of the *exemplum* as used in this poem. As in grave epitaphs, the idea of surpassing Penelope seems to be used as a high compliment to the woman, rather than implying any deficiency in Penelope. The use of Penelope as a comparand for Aelia Galla in 3.12 is, however, interesting in the context of love elegy, for it involves treating a wife as a lover, in contrast to the women who more usually feature -

"girl-friends" not wives, with a tendency to infidelity (the poet playing the "other man" to the unnamed official *vir*). In describing this faithful wife, Propertius has referred to another faithful wife, but one more often used ironically in love elegy as a reproach or encouragment to the elegiac *puella*.

It has been suggested that Propertius' summary of Odysseus' wanderings in 3.12 is deliberately different in detail of order and content to the story in the *Odyssey* in order to assist "in asserting the superiority of an elegiac way of life (at home with Galla) to an epic, Homeric way of life (at war)"[10], deliberately differentiating this *Odyssey* from Homer's. In this light, one may see Propertius' poetry reworking epic in a polemical fashion, arguing for the elegiac way of life and poetry (the slim, Callimachean Muse, as in 1.6). The polemic might be carried over into the comparison of the two wives, Penelope and Aelia Galla: Galla, the elegiac figure, will outdo Penelope, the epic character, on her own ground, that is, in the area of chastity. Of course, championing the elegiac lifestyle might in itself be thought of as polemical; the life of the elegist, the life of *otium*, was not that expected of a good Roman citizen. Turning away from epic, a Callimachean trait, was a turning away from the genre which was more highly regarded, and which promoted those values praised most highly in Augustan society. Suitably, this poem deals with individuals: the consequences of war are seen in terms one might expect from an elegist - the feelings of the woman left behind, of the lover, rather than the views of the bereaved which are sometimes allowed to enter epic discourse. For 3.12, the *Odyssey* rather than the *Iliad* represents epic because it allows the parallel and comparison between the two wives; however, while Propertius allowed his "elegiac *Odyssey*" to carry Odysseus over a different route from that

[10] Benediktson 1985 pp.18-20 (quotation from p.20).

in the epic, his Penelope is the simplified version of the epic figure so well known by this period.

Propertius 4.3 - the letter of a wife to her husband who is absent on campaign - links the elegiac *Odysseys* of Propertius 3.12 and the first of the *Heroides*. Although the names in 4.3 are Greek, this poem seems to be putting into the mouth of a Roman wife the sentiments expressed by the poet himself in 3.12. Thus while 3.12 shows the exploitation of Homer's Penelope for polemical reasons, in 4.3, one might say, a Penelope-figure is allowed to utter the complaints she does not give in epic (foreshadowing her finding of a voice in the *Heroides*). Although the Homeric Penelope expresses regret for the wasted years, and other Homeric women, such as Andromache, are allowed to speak on the wastefulness of war, the need for the Trojan War is not questioned; war is accepted as a fact of life[11]. Like the Penelope of the *Heroides*, Arethusa wants to know about the battlefields, and links her intervention with her husband's safety:

> *armaque cum tulero portae uotiua Capenae*
> *subscribam SALVO GRATA PVELLA VIRO.*
>
> 4.3.71-2[12]

Although she is not as explicit as Ovid's Penelope, the idea of her influencing his safe return is there in the intertwining of the words of the dedication, and in the fact that this couplet follows immediately on a couplet enjoining Lycotas to fidelity. In this last book of Propertian poetry, which turns more to Augustan themes, we thus see the loving extra-marital relationship, which the Propertius of the earlier books desired for himself, transformed into a marriage in which the woman has appropriated the voice of the elegiac

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[11] It is interesting that the complaints about the hardships of war which are to be found in the Homeric poems come from Odysseus. For example, at *Il.* 2.292ff. he mentions the hardship of warriors being parted from their wives at Troy, and at *Od.* 14.459ff., in his role as a beggar, he reminisces about the cold and discomfort of a night-time ambush.

[12] Burman's *SALVA* for *GRATA* pleasingly links the safety of the couple, and seems a plausible emendation.

poet as well as the term *puella* to depict herself as a loving Penelope - a faithful lover and a faithful wife.

Penelope as herself

The Penelope of the *Heroides* is the most fully worked-out depiction of Penelope as wife and lover, and may be seen as a development of the "wife as lover" depicted by Propertius, since in making the first letter of the collection one from a faithful wife to a husband who went off to war, Ovid recalls Propertius 4.3, which was probably the source of the idea of elegiac love letters[13]. The first letter is thus the one closest in form to the main literary parallel, and it also presents a case which in the reader's mind would probably be seen as one of the simplest; given Penelope's position as an *exemplum pudicitiae*, a letter expressing her devotion to her husband is true to character. The opening lines:

> *hanc tua Penelope lento tibi mittit, Ulixe-*
> *nil mihi rescribas tu tamen; ipse ueni!*

echo the Propertian:

> *haec Arethusa suo mittit mandata Lycotae,*
> *cum totiens absis, si potes esse meus*

particularly in the use of *haec/hanc ... mittit*, and the positioning of the names of both addressee and sender in the first line. Lines 20-25 of the Propertian poem are also to be compared to *Heroides* 1.75ff. Such explicit references tie the Ovidian poem closely to its literary predecessor, reinforcing the image of Penelope as both faithful wife and elegiac lover.

[13] It is possible (though unlikely) that the influence is the other way; cf. Jacobson 1974 pp.312ff. on the relative dates.

The *Heroides* are among Ovid's earlier works, possibly his earliest surviving in something close to the original form (since we only have the second edition of the *Amores*). Given that the arrangement of poems in a book was felt by the ancient poets to be of great importance, and the first and last poems were counted as particularly important[14], it is noteworthy that the first poem here is a letter from Penelope to Ulysses. Penelope is the only one of the heroines in the *Heroides* whose story has a truly happy ending: several of the heroines - Dido, Deianeira, and Sappho, for example - will eventually commit suicide; Hypsipyle and Ariadne will never regain the man to whom they write, although both will have consolation of a sort, one from her children, the other from Dionysus; Hermione will be married to Orestes only after he has murdered Neoptolemus[15]; Medea will murder her children. The only possible exception seems to be Hypermnestra, whose letter is the last, if we follow all the manuscripts in omitting the fifteenth letter (that of Sappho), and if the double letters are agreed to be a later addition to the collection (whether or not they are by Ovid[16]). Later mythographers report that Hypermnestra stood trial for her disobedience to her father and saving of Lynceus and was acquitted; she is reported to have married Lynceus after this[17]. It seems likely that Ovid would have had access to a version of the

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[14] Cf. Mütschler 1974 pp.132ff., Rudd 1976, Dettmer 1983 ch.1.

[15] *Schol.* Pindar, *Nem.*7, 62 a and b says that "practically all poets" say that Pyrrhus was killed in a brawl with the Delphians; Orestes' involvement in his death is, however, in Euripides, and even if Ovid was not thinking of this, Hermione cannot be united with her lover until her husband has been murdered. For a summary of various versions of how Neoptolemus met his death, see Most 1985, especially ch. 3.2.2.2, pp.163-4; for the disagreement on how this story was treated by Pindar in *Paean* 6 and *Nemean* 7, see Most 1985 *loc. cit.* and Lloyd-Jones 1973. It is clear that in Pindar Apollo was involved in the death, either actively or through the act of his priest, Machaireus; the link between Orestes and Apollo would suggest the god's involvement in other versions of the story too.

[16] From *Amores* 3.18 it seems clear that there was originally a letter from Sappho; the question is really whether the letter we possess was that written by Ovid. On the question of the authenticity of the letter of Sappho which we possess, see Rosati 1996, Knox 1995 pp.12-14, with pp.6-12 on the problems of authenticity in the *Heroides* in general, pp.34-7 on the history of the text; on the problems of the double epistles, see Kenney 1996 pp.20-26 (all with references to earlier scholarship).

[17] It is not clear what the full story of Hypermnestra and Lynceus was supposed to have been, but she is reported as the mother of Abas by him, so it appears that her marriage to him after her release from being imprisoned by her father was generally assumed to have taken place. The main sources for the events after her imprisonment are ps-Apollodorus 2.1.4ff., Hyginus *fabula* 170, and scattered references in Pausanias,

story with such a happy ending. One may thus note that both stories with (possible) happy endings are about women who are faithful to their husbands (on favouring husband over father, one recalls again the story of Penelope's departure with Ulysses, despite her father's reluctance[18]).

The placing of Penelope's letter as the first in the book may be explained in various ways[19]. It could reflect a desire to please the emperor with its example of married love, or it could represent an oblique tribute to the poet's wife; however, the most important factor in its placing must surely be the link it provides with Homer. By starting with a Homeric character, Ovid is giving his *Heroides* as much literary credibility as he can, showing that this new form of poetry could claim to have a relationship of some form with the oldest and most highly regarded form of literature. (If we accept the Sappho letter, then we may also see a movement from the oldest Greek mythology - or rather the oldest literary subject - to a historical character, and from epic to lyric, moving through tragedy between the two). Penelope or Helen would be the obvious choices for Homeric women to open the book, but Helen's story lends itself less neatly to the single letter format than Penelope's[20], and Penelope has the advantage of being known best from Homer rather than later sources - Helen's story is more complicated, even in Homer, and later sources give more varied versions of her story than they do for Penelope. The other letter based mainly on Homer is the third, that of Briseis to Achilles. In this letter, Ovid has given words to a character who remains mute throughout the *Iliad* apart from one speech, her lament over Patroclus. She

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including 2.16.1. Fränkel 1945, p.190 n.2 says "the details of the story which Ovid had in mind are obscure, and there is room for the possibility of a complication the shadow of which darkened the picture in a similar fashion as in the Briseis epistle".

[18] Paus. 3.20.11-12; cf. pp.68-9.

[19] Cf. Barchiesi 1992 pp.51-2.

[20] Helen does, of course, make an appearance later in the *Heroides* as we have them, exchanging letters with Paris.

would not be a suitable character for the first letter, perhaps, because she has so little story attached to her, and is only a minor character in the tale of Troy. The position given to Penelope's letter is also interesting given the poet's later interest in Penelope and Ulysses as paradigms for his wife and himself during the time of his relegation[21]. The placing of the letter of a faithful wife in first position may perhaps seem rather odd given the philandering persona Ovid adopts in the *Amores* and *Ars Amatoria*, but his interest in the woman's point of view surfaced earlier in *AA* III.

Evidence that Ovid himself intended this poem to start the collection may be found in his later writings, *Tristia* 1.6, addressed to his wife.

> *prima locum sanctas heroidas inter haberes,*
> *prima bonis animi conspicerere tui.*
>
> 1.6.23-4

If Ovid had been Homer, his wife (so much above Penelope in honour) would have had Penelope's first place among the heroines (that is, the Heroides). In starting the *Heroides* with Penelope, then, Ovid boldly invites comparison between his own poetry and that of the oldest and most revered poet of antiquity, and more particularly invites comparison of his own depiction of women with that of Homer.

Discussion of the Ovidian Penelope has focused on the variant forms of her story[22], but there is in fact little allusion to them; this text presents the paradigm chaste wife writing an elegiac letter in the language of love elegy[23], and so turns her into a deserted lover. In this, Penelope's letter sets the tone for the rest of the collection; the theme of *querela* is a

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[21] See below.
[22] E.g. Jacobson 1974 pp.245-50.
[23] Cf. Anderson 1973 pp.64-6; for elegiac language, Pichon 1902. Penelope uses words such as *desertus*, *puella*, *queror*, *frigidus*, *rustica*, and words related to *timor* of her own position and *lentus* of her husband, portraying him as the reluctant lover of elegy.

notable feature of the collection as a whole[24] and this is picked up not only in the general tone of Penelope's letter, but also explicitly in 7-8:

> *non ego deserto iacuissem frigida lecto*
> *non quererer tardos ire relicta dies*

The heroines write their letters mainly to absent (or in Dido's case, soon to be absent) lovers, and it is common for a heroine to describe herself as *deserta*[25]. Thus, as one would expect, the tone for the collection as a whole is set early in the first poem[26]. The first line characterises Ulysses as the reluctant lover of love elegy, by calling him *lentus*[27]. Penelope's complaints recall those of Cynthia in Propertius 1.3. Cynthia complains that Propertius has spent *mea nox* (1.3.37) somewhere else, while she span. She also says:

> *interdum leuiter mecum deserta querebar*
> *externo longas saepe in amore moras.*
>
> Prop. 1.3.43-4

Penelope expresses this fear at 1.76, and exhibits the elegiac vocabulary found throughout Penelope's letter:

> *haec ego dum stulte metuo, quae vestra libido est,*
> *esse peregrino captus amore potes*
>
> *Her.* 1.75-6

The use of elegiac vocabulary, and the echoes of the notoriously unfaithful Cynthia (particularly 5-10 recalling Prop. 1.3.39-44), may undercut Penelope's protestations of faithfulness, although, as Propertius 4.3 seems to show, such elegiac language can be used sincerely[28].

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[24] Cf. Baca 1971, Conte 1994, and below p.279 on the etymology of "elegy".
[25] Other examples of *deserere* to describe the situation of heroines in the *Heroides* may be found at 2.46, 3.110, 5.32, 5.75, 12.161.
[26] Parallels for the first poem of a collection being used to set the tone for the whole are common. Cf. Fraenkel 1957 p.230 on *Odes* 1.1, Butler/Barber 1933 on Propertius 1.1, Mayer 1994 pp.110-1 on Hor. *Ep.* 1.1, Heyworth 1993 pp.92-3 with n.36 on the *Epodes*.
[27] Cf. Prop. 1.6.12, 1.15.4, Tib. 3.17.6, with Pichon 1902 p.186.
[28] Cf. Barchiesi 1992 pp.24-5, who says that Penelope sees herself as a Cynthia.

The first of the *Heroides* also fills in a gap in the *Odyssey*; in book 23 when the couple are finally reunited, they tell each other of their doings in the previous twenty years of separation. Odysseus, although his tales have already been told in full at the court of Alcinous, has his story retold in indirect speech. Penelope, although we have heard little of how she coped, must be satisfied with less, a reference to πολλά. This may be read as hinting at the epic Penelope could tell, for πολλά is an epic marker (consider its appearances at the start of the *Iliad* (1.7), and *Odyssey* (1.3)); Ovid gives her a voice, and a chance to say the words Homer denies her[29]. As in his treatment of the *Aeneid* at the end of the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid does not try to rewrite scenes already written, but summarises them, giving more space to other scenes, depending on the audience's knowledge of the earlier poetry to fill in the bits he does not cover. Thus in the *Met.*, where Vergil had introduced a Greek left behind by Odysseus, Ovid adds another new character, Macareus, whose tales cover new ground, the wanderings of Odysseus' men from their point of view[30]. Similarly, a full reading of the first of the *Heroides* depends on a knowledge of the Homeric text to pick up some of the subtleties of characterisation. Penelope's description of the events on Ithaca shows a different picture from that which may be perceived in the epic; here Penelope portrays herself as far more active, emphasising how much she is doing to try to find her husband, and how alone and without support she is, completely omitting an account of her stratagems to keep the suitors at bay, and any mention of their success so far. Both these aspects of her self-portrayal exaggerate the normal perception of the situation on Ithaca. Ovid's Penelope, in a manner worthy of the wily epic Odysseus, manipulates the facts in an attempt to encourage her husband to return. Given this

[29] Cf. Joyce's *Ulysses*, which ends with a monologue by his Penelope figure, Molly Bloom, in a section called "Penelope"; see also pp.2-3 above.
[30] *Met.* 14.158ff.; cf. Bömer 1986 especially pp.65-7, Galinsky 1975 pp.219-37.

manipulative side to Ovid's Penelope, more akin to the Penelope of *Odyssey* 18 and 23 than the weeping grass-widow of the opening books, we may wonder exactly what is going on here: are the differences between Ovid and Homer deliberate slips or accidental, as has been suggested, and what is the significance of Penelope's inaccuracies when she describes events at Troy and on Ithaca?

The deviations from the Homeric story are plausibly explained in terms of the characterisation of, and focalisation of the poem by, Penelope; Penelope, like the elegiac poets, is interested in her own feelings, and reinterprets Ulysses' actions in terms that suit her rhetorical standpoint. She stresses not the danger that Ulysses was in during the Trojan War, but rather her own fears for him, and this emphasis is confirmed by her deviations from the account of the war we have in the *Iliad*. An example of this is Penelope's retelling of the story of the "Doloneia":

> *ausus es - o nimium nimiumque oblite tuorum! -*
> *Thracia nocturno tangere castra dolo*
> *totque simul mactare uiros, adiutus ab uno!*
>
> *Her.* 1.41-3

In the *Iliad*, it is Diomedes who slaughters Rhesus' men, while Ulysses gets the horses. Penelope appears to have reversed the situation, by giving Ulysses the main part in the action and making Diomedes his sole helper; she also tells us of the worry this caused her. The story of Troy is told as it affects her, and events at home are retold in accordance with effect she wants to give. Thus when she is telling of her anxiety over what Ulysses went through at Troy, she says that Telemachus was sent to Nestor, implying that it was she who sent him, trying to find out what had become of her husband - a direct contradiction of the *Odyssey*, in which she does not find out about Telemachus' departure for several days, as he deliberately orders Eurycleia not to tell his mother of his journey. When she is painting

a pathetic picture of her situation on Ithaca, however, something of the tension which we see in the *Odyssey* between her and Telemachus is revealed when she says he went to Pylos *inuitis omnibus* (1.100).

Penelope also sounds like one of the elegists when she says (1.84), *Penelope coniunx semper Ulixis ero*, but then goes on to remind her husband that she is still attractive to other men, and that her father wants her to remarry. She is stressing her predicament as a means to hurry him home. She argues her case skilfully, as we would expect of an Ovidian heroine. Her rhetoric is, however, not overly intrusive, indeed it is less so than in some of Ovid's love poetry presented in his own voice. The emphasis on her own feelings is characteristic of the self-interest of love elegy. Ovid may thus be seen as having married the subjective love elegy which developed in Rome with the Hellenistic retellings of mythological love stories, introducing or emphasising a love element in previously non-erotic or only incidentally erotic myths (such as that of Apollo and Admetus[31]). Such retellings of myths are thought to have been a major influence on Latin love elegy, although very little of this now survives in such a form that any conclusions about it may be drawn.[32]

The poem presents various ironies - surely deliberate - for the reader who remembers Homer. The first concerns its dramatic timing in relation to the *Odyssey* narrative. The title of an illustration to a mediaeval manuscript of the *Heroides* shows how this letter could be seen as merely another in the series which Penelope here claims to write

[31] The eroticised version of this story appears to have originated in Rhianus (fr.10 Powell), and appears also in Callimachus (*Hymn* 2.47ff); cf. Smith 1913 on Tib. 2.3.11ff.

[32] Much has been written on the origins of Latin love elegy; as a starting point, cf. Cairns 1979, ch.9, Day 1938, discussed by Cairns. A new, possibly very important text, is POxy liv. 3723, discussed by Parsons 1988, 65ff.; it may well give a list of erotic myths linked to a personal affair, but the date of the poem on this papyrus is at present unclear. See now Butrica 1996.

to give to every passing sailor, a view supported by the fact that Sabinus wrote a reply from Ulysses to Penelope[33]:

> *quisquis ad haec uertit peregrinam litora puppim,*
> *ille mihi de te multa rogatus abit,*
> *quamque tibi reddat, si te modo uiderit usquam,*
> *traditur huic digitis charta notata meis.*
>
> 1.59-62

This would fit the picture Eumaeus paints of Penelope in the *Odyssey* when talking to the disguised Odysseus (*Od.* 14.121ff.)[34]. However, the mention of Telemachus' trip to Pylos should alert us to the importance of the timing of this letter - the trip to Pylos sends us back to the *Odyssey*, to a particular point in time, for, up to that point, Telemachus has been too young to do anything about discovering his father's whereabouts[35]. It has been suggested that the letter is supposed to be written after Telemachus' return and report of his findings to his mother, that is, following the *Odyssey*, after Ulysses' arrival in Ithaca[36]. Not only does this timing seem to fit the details given in the letter better than the others, but also it seems to provide a typically Ovidian touch of irony - Penelope is writing this letter to an absent husband who is no longer absent, her plea in line 2, *ipse ueni!*, will be answered, indeed has, in a sense, already been answered. Such irony is, of course, also typical of the *Odyssey*, where we are very conscious of how close Odysseus comes to revealing himself to Penelope even as she seems to conclude that she must marry again. There is a further irony: this precise description of the timing of the writing of the letter may lead to the

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[33] "Penelope Writing her Fifth Letter", illustration to Ovide *Les épitres élégiaques* MS. Fr. 873, f. 27v. (French 1496) in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris. (Prop. 1.8.23ff. shows an elegist acting in this way.) On Sabinus' reply, see *Am.* 2.18, *Ex Pont.* 4.16.13-14.

[34] Cf. Knox 1995 *ad Her.* 1.59-62.

[35] Hence Showerman 1914 p.520 (index to the *Heroides* s.v. Penelope) is clearly wrong to state that the letter is written shortly after the fall of Troy (Palmer 1898 does not express an opinion on the timing of the letter).

[36] Jacobson 1974 pp.255, 265-8.

conclusion that the sailor to whom it is to be given is none other than Ulysses himself[37].

Another irony may be found in 77-8:

forsitan et narres, quam sit tibi rustica coniunx,
quae tantum lanas non sinat esse rudes

This comes after expression of her fear that Ulysses is *peregrino captus amore*. This is, of course what happened to Ulysses, but the *amor* he is held by is not his for some foreigner, but rather that of the foreigner, Calypso, for him. Thus Penelope's fear is true, but not as she envisages it, for Ulysses still wants to return to her. Again, her fear that he is talking of her as *rustica* to his foreign love is true in a way, but not as she envisages it. In *Odyssey* 5, Odysseus told Calypso that she was much more beautiful than his wife, but that he still wanted to return to Penelope. One of the connotations which *rustica* may have is that of "plainness", but it is this homely familiarity and humanity which is the main reason Ulysses gives for wanting to return to Penelope. Again, the reference to Penelope's working in wool (a task we also see Calypso performing in *Od.* 5) recalls for us the ruse of the web; Penelope imagines her husband criticising her for the trick which has helped to keep her faithful to him. We may also see a degree of irony in her statement that she will always be Ulysses' wife, when she is soon to propose the contest of the bow, which she thinks will lead to another outcome. This is a major difference between Ovid's Penelope and Homer's; in Homer Penelope is often sunk in despair, preferring not to act because she

[37] On the dramatic timing of the writing of the epistle, see Kennedy 1984 (and Henderson 1986, a reply); cf. Barchiesi 1992 pp.15-6, Knox 1995 p.87. Kennedy thinks that the dramatic timing of the poem is between Penelope's first hearing of the beggar who has arrived in Ithaca, and their conversation, so she does not know who it is she is planning to use as messenger for the epistle. For the ironies of this situation, one may compare the scene in Euripides' *Iph. Taur.* where Iphigeneia tries to persuade first Orestes himself and then Pylades to deliver her letter to Orestes, and then describes in detail the contents of the letter. Tragedy was an important influence on some of the *Heroides* (for example that from Medea), so there may well be tragic influence working here. It is also notable that the *Heroides* are very carefully set in time - some, such as those of Ariadne or Deianeira, unrealistically so - with the result that Ovid's placing of this epistle very carefully at a crucial point in the story, rather than at some vague point during the twenty years of Odysseus' absence, should not surprise us.

would bring about the end of her life as Odysseus' wife, whereas in the *Heroides* our overriding impression is of a wife who is afraid of the fate that may have befallen her husband, but who is active in trying to keep his memory and interests alive. It seems that this is the impression Penelope wishes to give, rather than necessarily an accurate picture of her state of mind, which, as is natural in a letter to which no reply can be expected, is rather self-absorbed.

Ovid's Penelope displays a believable state of mind for a wife who has been deserted for twenty years. She worries that her husband will not come back, and that when he does, he will find her an *anus* (116). In the elegists, *anus* is rarely found, but one of its appearances is in connection with Penelope:

> *visura et quamvis numquam speraret Ulixem,*
> *illum exspectando facta remansit anus.*
>
> Propertius 2.9.7-8

Thus the first of the *Heroides* again picks up on an image found in Propertius. *Senex* may be used to describe someone too old or unsuitable for love, and a similar association is here being made with *anus*. This word may be developing *Od.* 23.210-12, where Penelope laments the years together which she and Odysseus have lost. Penelope is an elegiac lover, using terms such as *desertus* and *uiduus* to describe her state. She sees Paris's crime in sexual terms, calling him *adulter*. But she avoids mentioning Helen, the unfaithful wife; the only other women she mentions are Eurycleia, the *puellae* marvelling at the scene of the war (29), and the other women who have received their husbands back from the war - none by name, and none to suggest that the abandoned wife might not be faithful, until she has expressed a fear that Ulysses might have a new love. It is only after she has (truthfully) said that Ulysses might be detained by love of/for another that she raises the possibility of

her own remarriage, and then this is raised in terms of something other people want her to do, not as something she herself desires.

In writing *Heroides* 1, Ovid has elegiacised an epic character, bringing out the erotic possibilities in Penelope. Propertius seems similarly to have been interested in rewriting Homer, for we have poems which have been termed an "elegiac *Iliad*" (2.8) and an "elegiac *Odyssey*" (3.12, discussed above)[38]. However, whereas Propertius elegiacised Homeric characters such as Briseis, Andromache, and Helen in brief references, in the *Heroides* Ovid has gone so far as to create whole poems based on Penelope and Briseis (and Helen). Wyke[39] compares the elegiac treatment of Lucretia in the *Fasti* with Livy's version thus:

> When, however, Lucretia later enters the discourse of Ovid's *Fasti* and becomes an elegiac woman (2.741-60) her conduct as she awaits her husband's return is described in more detail and she takes on some features which parallel and recall those of the Propertian Arethusa ... Thus on entry into an elegiac genre, the woman's perspective is enlarged and in her loneliness at home warfare becomes not a glorious but a sorrowful thing.

It is easy to see some of the "elegiac" traits here attributed to Lucretia in the Penelope of the *Heroides*; the laments of Penelope in the *Odyssey* give something of the same point of view. The simile at *Od.* 8.521-31, where Odysseus is compared to a woman weeping at the sack of her city, shows the same interest in the "female" view of war, the inglorious side and the suffering of those left behind; this also appears in the *Iliad* in Andromache's lament over the probable fate of herself and her son after Hector's death. This element is more developed in elegy, however. The lamentation found in the *Heroides*, the theme of *querela*, recalls the etymology which derived "elegy" from ἒ ἒ λέγειν, and the linking of

[38] See Dalzell 1980, Hutchinson 1984 p.106 (Homeric influence in Propertius' second book), Benediktson 1985, Conte 1994 pp.347-8.
[39] Wyke 1987 pp.159-60.

its original function to lamentations[40]. Thus this is one way in which the epic Penelope is made more elegiac: she is given more lamentation; similarly, Briseis in both Ovid's and Propertius' works is said to weep over her parting from Achilles[41]. Elegy is smaller scale poetry than epic[42]: by writing about women from epic poetry, later poets were able both to write on epic themes and to avoid them, or, rather, to treat them in a different way, from a different perspective, and, in the process, giving the woman's voice a larger part.

Thus, the elegiac portrayal of Penelope combines the traditional elegiac distaste for war with the women's view of the non-heroic side of war as expressed in epic. Yet the elegiac Penelope is more active than her epic predecessor; she says that she has sent people to enquire about Ulysses, while the Homeric Penelope seems far more apathetic. There need not, however, be a contradiction in the two portrayals. Ovid gives us Penelope's viewpoint; the manipulation of the facts which may here be attributed to her are appropriate to the cunning Penelope we see outwitting Odysseus in *Odyssey* 23. If one follows the line that Penelope has heard about Ulysses' dalliance with Calypso from Telemachus, and hence that her ironic comment at *Her.* 1.77-8 is made in this knowledge, then one may wonder, given the dramatic timing of the poem, whether Penelope has not recognised her husband, and so also knows that she will be giving the letter into his hands[43]. The irony remains, even if Penelope is to be read as unaware of it (as the other Heroines are often ignorant of the "truth" of their situations): the reader can delight in knowing more than the

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[40] On the derivation of *elegia*, see also Nisbet/Hubbard 1970 on *Od.* 1.33.2, p. 371.

[41] *Heroides* 3, Prop. 2.20.1. Benediktson 1985 p.23 seems right in asserting that Briseis' tears do not have their origins in a Hellenistic poem; Briseis is acting like an elegiac heroine, and thus in a manner to suit the metre in which she is appearing.

[42] On the question of differences between epic and elegy, and the ways on which Augustan poetry plays with such distinctions, see Hinds 1987 chs.5-6. Hinds rightly stresses the generic differences while highlighting the way in which such constraints are not always adhered to by poets.

[43] See discussion of this point above; for the suggestion that Penelope in Homer had recognised Odysseus during her interview with the beggar see Seneca *Ep.* 88.8, Harsh 1950.

actors in the text. Thus it is clear that it is the Homeric text against which this poem should primarily be read, rather than other versions of the story of Penelope; if the reader does not look to the epic Penelope, then much may be lost. The *Heroides* combine elegy with epic and tragedy; for this text to set itself particularly against the epic text is thus not unexpected.

Ovid's wife, an abandoned Penelope

In his exile poetry[44], Ovid portrays himself as Ulysses[45], harassed this time not merely by Neptune, but the greater god Jupiter/Augustus, sent by his anger to the ends of the world. Ovid, however, frequently considers his position to be worse than Ulysses', the theme of *Ex Ponto* 4.10[46]:

> *exemplum est animi nimium patientis Vlixes,*
> *iactatus dubio per duo lustra mari:*
>
> *Ex Pont.* 4.10.9-10

Given Ovid as Ulysses, who is his Penelope? In the first book of the *Tristia*, Ovid's wife is explicitly linked to Penelope (see also p.255 above):

> *tu si Maeonium uatem sortita fuisses,*
> *Penelopes esset fama secunda tuae.*
>
> *Tr.* 1.6.21-2

This appears to be recalling the contention of Hermesianax[47], that Homer was in love with Penelope, and suggests a view of the *Odyssey* as providing an encomium of Penelope, a view which seems to be based on Agamemnon's words at *Od.* 24.194-8 (cf. pp.131-3

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[44] As well as modern works cited below, on the subject of the exile poetry, see Dickinson 1973, Luck 1967-77, Nagle 1980, Evans 1983, Williams 1994.
[45] Rahn 1958 p.116 calls it a "*Leitmotiv*" of the exile poetry.
[46] A poem aptly addressed to Pedo Albinovanus, a friend of Ovid's who wrote an epic poem about Germanicus, comparing him with Odysseus in his travels on the sea. For bibliography on Albinovanus, see Blänsdorf 1995 p.290.
[47] Fr. 7.27ff. in Powell 1925.

above). Ovid in this poem reminds us of a theme in his earlier poetry which seems to have been important to him, the ability of the poet to confer immortality[48]. These lines can be read as aimed at Augustus, reminding him that the poet has the power of conferring immortality, implying that this is something the emperor cannot do: Penelope has fame from Homer, and Ovid will bring the same to his wife, his new Penelope.

The importance of the myth of Odysseus is heightened by the links between the *Tristia* and *Heroides*[49]. The *Tristia* identify themselves with the genre of the amatory elegiac epistle through evocation of the early echo in the *Heroides* of Propertius' elegiac love letter (Prop. 4.3.3-4 echoed by *Her.* 3.3, which is in turn echoed by *Tr.* 1.1.13-14). Ovid, like the heroines he had earlier written about, writes elegies to complain about his position stranded far from his city and his beloved; the love interest remains in poems such as *Tr.*1.6. There is a circularity in the appropriation by Ovid of the elegiac letter:

> Note that in respect of its *dramatis personae* the elegiac epistle has here come full circle: in the *Heroides* Ovid transforms Propertius' tale of contemporary Roman married love into a series of tales of antique mythological love; now in the *Tristia* he reapplies the motifs of the mythological *Heroides* to *another* contemporary Roman married love, viz. his own.[50]

The analogy of parents and children for poets and their poems[51] is used to stress again the importance of the myth of Odysseus. At *Tr.*1.1.114, the poet likens the *Ars* to the involuntary patricides, Oedipus and Telegonus:

> *hi qui, quod nemo nescit, amare docent,*
> *hos tu uel fugias uel, si satis oris habebis,*
> *Oedipodas facito Telegonosque uoces!*
>
> *Tr.* 1.1.112-4

[48] Kenney 1965 pp.40-1; cf. Hinds 1985 pp.27-8.
[49] Hinds 1985 pp.14-16, Conte 1994 p.358.
[50] Hinds 1985 p.15.
[51] Cf. Hinds 1985 p.17-8.

Telegonus' father was, of course, Odysseus; Ovid's poems are like these notorious patricides in that, albeit not deliberately, these books have been his downfall, causing him to anger Augustus and be relegated (the *Ars* being the *carmen* which he blames for Augustus' anger, the half of the charges against him about which he is willing to speak). Given this, the fact that Ovid, the injured father, links his wife with Penelope is not surprising. If Homer had written about her, rather than himself, he says, Penelope would have to yield to her: this is picked up in the lines following, where Ovid refers to his *Heroides* and puts his wife among them, alongside Penelope, whose place she could have usurped[52]. Ovid also makes significant use of Penelope as the faithful wife left behind, for example, at *Tr.* 5.5.51-2. The faithfulness of his wife in Rome is much stressed by Ovid in his exile poetry, perhaps to reassure himself. The movement of *Tr.* 1.6 is interesting on this point, as it starts with beloved women of mythology and history, culminating with Penelope, and then immediately mentions Livia: the juxtaposition of Livia and Penelope is a compliment to the emperor's wife, particularly as Penelope was not only a famous faithful wife, but also wife of a wise ruler.

The poet as waiting Penelope

It is not only Ovid's wife, however, who is in some way parallel in the *Tristia* to the heroines of the earlier epistles; the poet himself is also a Penelope figure, waiting for ships and asking the typical Homeric questions of all who arrive[53]:

> *rarus ab Italia tantum mare nauita transit,*
> *litora rarus in haec portubus orba uenit.*
> *siue tamen Graeca scierit, siue ille Latina*
> *uoce loqui .....*
> *quisquis is est, memori rumorem uoce referre*

[52] See further p.255 above.
[53] Cf. Prop. 1.8.21-6 for an elegist in this role.

et fieri famae parsque gradusque potest.

Tr. 3.12.37-40, 43-4

Like Penelope, Ovid is eager for any news, and will make welcome anyone who can supply such news. This trait is found both in the Homeric Penelope and in her elegiac counterpart in the *Heroides*; unlike the passages where Ovid sees his wife as a Penelope, where it is the stereotypical figure who is particularly evoked, in those where he depicts himself as a Penelope, Ovid looks more to the particular textual creation of his own earlier work, and through that to Homer's Penelope (cf. *Her.* 1.59-62 for comparison with *Tr.* 3.12). The deserted heroines of his earlier poetry are good models for the exile poetry to recall, with their laments and links to his other elegiac poetry[54]. The cross-gender identification is paralleled elsewhere in elegy: for example, Propertius 4.8 (discussed below), where the poet is an unfaithful Penelope, Cynthia an avenging Odysseus.

Penelope as (potentially) unfaithful

The satiric Penelope

The fifth satire of Horace's second book represents a sequence of exchanges between Ulysses and Teiresias in the Underworld: that is, part of their conversation in *Odyssey* 11. The Ulysses of the satire reveals his main preoccupation in the second line of the poem - how to regain the wealth he has lost through the depredations of the suitors (how he knows that this will have happened, given that in the *Odyssey* it is in the future, and not definite at that, could cause problems for a literal-minded commentator). Teiresias' eventual answer is to recommend legacy-hunting, a practice which was rife in

[54] Cf. Henderson 1986 p.24 "Ovid may think he's playing the literary game of 'false concealment' in impersonating Penelope in Bad Faith, starting from the Faithful Wife and the shortest letter. Not such fun when the author is de-centred to Odessa? In the 'Post-Exile Poetry' Ovid is still Penelope, the writer of constant letters".

contemporary Rome. His description of what Ulysses should do is couched in such terms as to be an indictment of the practice for the reader.

Why the choice of Ulysses as the character on whom to hang this treatment of legacy-hunting? Ulysses does figure frequently in earlier satiric writing. Lucilius' seventeenth book included a poem about Ulysses' return to Ithaca; Varro wrote a piece called *Sesculixes*, probably a Menippean satire. It has been suggested that Menippus himself wrote some form of nekuia, on the basis of the treatment of him in Lucian[55], where there are several dialogues which involve Menippus in the Underworld. The dialogue form of this satire may thus reflect a Menippean form; it seems clear at least that the idea of a consultation in the Underworld is not out of place in satire[56].

Yet although the flattery and hypocrisy recommended to Ulysses at 70ff. suggest the Roman stereotype of the sycophantic Greek[57], the use of Ulysses in this poem is one of the few touches which prevent its being wholly Roman - the practice of legacy-hunting is Roman, most of the names and stories referred to are Roman, Ulysses returns home to his Lar (14). The reference to fishponds, *cetaria*, at 44 hints at things Greek, by referring to a contemporary Roman practice with a word derived from Greek; in general, however, the *mores* referred to are Roman. The satire has several targets, including both Ulysses the hero and legacy-hunting[58]. The man who in the epic said he would be content to see the smoke rising from Ithaca now says:

et genus et uirtus nisi cum re uilior alga est

Sat. 2.5.8

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[55] On this point, see Hall 1981 ch. 2 especially pp.76, 128-131 and Helm 1906 *passim*, but especially pp.17-62.
[56] On literary *Nekuias*, cf. Nisbet/Hubbard 1970 on Horace *Odes* 2.13, pp.203-4, where they say "Less serious authors repeatedly satirized the theme [of the *nekuia*], thus showing its popularity".
[57] Cf. Juvenal 3 with Courtney 1980 *ad loc.*, Petrochilos 1974 pp.40, 43-5, 48-53, Rawson 1985, pp.3ff especially 13-14, pp.54ff.
[58] *Contra* Stanford 1963 p.266 n.12, who thinks it is just legacy-hunting being satirised here.

The Homeric hero's love of gain has become his main characteristic, to the amusement of Teiresias. The emphasis on Ulysses' acquisitiveness was one of several ways in which the Homeric character became, in post-Homeric portrayals, more of a villain, less of a hero[59]. In this poem, the cunning which Odysseus shows in Homer becomes craftiness (51ff.), his dissembling pure hypocrisy (101ff.). This fits with the generic downgrading of epic characters into the lowly genre of satire suggested by 91 *Dauus sis comicus.*

Penelope gets the same sort of treatment in her brief appearance in the poem. Her chastity is ascribed to the suitors' being more interested in their stomachs than in her[60]. When there is a legacy in prospect, Teiresias says, using a crude image, once she has acquired the taste for it, Ulysses will not be able to keep her away from legacy-hunting:

> *sic tibi Penelope frugi est, quae si semel uno*
> *de sene gustarit tecum partita lucellum,*
> *ut canis a corio numquam absterrebitur uncto.*
>
> *Sat.* 2.5.81-3

Such crudity may be paralleled in both the *Satires* and *Epodes*, for example at *Epode* 10.23-4, *Sat.*1.5.56ff. Penelope, like other mythological figures, is both idealised and mocked, with particular emphasis on her sexuality[61]. Although the Horatian poem is primarily satirising the corruption in Roman society, he also brings Penelope "down to

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[59] For the less heroic post-Homeric portrayal of Odysseus, cf. in Greek the *Cypria* (where Odysseus is responsible for Palamedes' death), Pindar *Nemean* 7 and 8 (the earliest extant attack on Odysseus' cunning and eloquence), Sophocles' *Philoctetes* (where Odysseus is contrasted with the nobler Neoptolemus, as wanting to use guile to obtain Philoctetes' bow; Odysseus is also responsible for Philoctetes' abandonment), Euripides' *Hecabe* (Odysseus shows his skill at oratory when he argues that his debt to Hecabe does not necessitate his intervention on behalf of Polyxena), and Dio Chrysostom *Discourse* 52 which compares the plays about Philoctetes by Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, with Odysseus becoming more and more devious; in Latin, Ov. *Met.*13.5-122 (Ajax's speech), Vergil *Aeneid* bk.2; compare also the depiction of Ulysses in Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* and see Stanford 1963 ch. 6-12. Ovid's own depiction of Ulysses in the *Met.* contrasts the skilled rhetorician with the brute strength of Ajax, who manages to recall many slurs on Ulysses' character (cf. Stanford 1963 pp.138-42).

[60] We may note that the passage in *Od.* 18 when Penelope appears before the suitors to entice them into giving her gifts is the only place in Homer where ἔρως is used of sexual desire rather than desire for food and drink.

[61] Cf. Mactoux 1975 ch.9

earth" by his suggestion that even she - the paradigm of the Good Wife - could be corrupted by the practices and *mores* of contemporary Rome. Although the use of Ulysses links the perceived moral deficiencies of the Greeks to the decline of Roman moral standards, this satire piles criticism on the moral degeneracy to be found in contemporary Rome[62]. The use of a Greek figure may point to criticism of the importation of eastern practices, including those which came from Greece[63] - all a contrast to the other Augustan descriptions of the idealised Golden Age[64]. The knocking of Penelope off her pedestal must, however, be ascribed at least partly to the genre: the satire on Penelope is a different sort of humanising of Penelope from that we see in the *Heroides*. This possibility of corruption is not wholly satiric, however; it accords with Ovid's remark about women: *casta est quam nemo rogauit*[65]. Even the most famous faithful wife of all is still a woman, with the faults that was considered to entail[66].

The contemporary references in Horace's poem suggest two possible approaches to the interpretation of the Homeric characters in the satire. The first, already alluded to, is the idea of Homeric characters "brought up to date": the suggestion may thus be made that if Penelope and Ulysses were living in contemporary Rome, they would be just as bad as everybody else; even Penelope's famous chastity would not survive in the now corrupt Rome - a graphic emphasis for the main focus of the satire. The second is that which sets

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[62] On this topic see Ov. *Met.* 1.149ff., Prop. 2.32.49ff., Juvenal 6.1-26, 45-49, 286-345 with Duff 1970 and Petrochilos 1974 pp.35-87, Griffin 1985 ch.1, Courtney 1980 on Juvenal 6, Rawson 1992, and Braund 1992, especially pp.74-5.

[63] Disparagement of Easterners may also be found in Greece, of course; for example, one may consider the depictions of Trojans on fifth-century vases in Phrygian clothing, and the links made between the Trojan War and the more recent Persian wars; in the *Aeneid* Aeneas is criticised by both Turnus and Iarbas for being an effeminate Phrygian.

[64] For this theme in Classical antiquity and other cultures, see Lovejoy/Boas 1935, especially ch.2, pp.23-92 on the Golden Age, West 1978 pp.172-7 (collects parallels particularly from the Mediterranean and the Near East).

[65] Ovid, *Am.* 1.8.43, quoted with reference to *Sat.* 2.5 by Rudd 1966 p.231.

[66] Cf., for example, Livy 34.2.2; *OCD*[3] *s.v.* "Sexuality" p.1399 "texts stereotype women as promiscuous".

us asking whether Horace's picture might not represent a more "realistic" reading of the Homeric characters than the idealised versions more often envisaged in poetry. This is emphasised by reminders of Homeric scenes, especially the scene in book 18 when Penelope persuades the suitors to give her gifts. Teiresias' jibe about the attraction legacy-hunting would hold for Penelope may plausibly be seen as a development of implications of this Homeric scenario. The scene caused problems for various interpreters of Homer, who saw it as presenting a Penelope inconsistent with that seen in the rest of the poem. Thus Horace's satire may be seen, particularly in the case of Penelope, as undermining the simplified picture of a character drawn from earlier poetry, and reminding the reader of the complexities of the characters in Homer. In contrast with, for example, his rather two-dimensional appearance in *Ep.* 1.2, Ulysses also here retains a more complex characterisation closer to that in Homer, rather than being a straightforward moral exemplar (be it positive or negative). Cupidity for gifts is a trait belonging to both Penelope and Ulysses, an example of their ὁμοφροσύνη, in this poem as in Homer; both suffer the same exaggeration of the trait in the move from epic to satire.

In Romanising Odysseus while allowing him to keep the attributes and associations which he had in Greek versions of the story, Horace is following a standard Roman approach to Greek mythological figures. We may compare the manner in which the Greek gods are assimilated to their Roman counterparts; although the Roman names are usually used, the gods in Roman literature generally seem to be Romanised Greek gods rather than Hellenised Roman ones. Greek mythology thus gets tied into Roman culture; in the *Metamorphoses*, for example, we find a movement from Greek to Roman, myth to history,

old to new[67]. This Romanisation can also be seen at work in the portrait of Penelope; the language used to describe her recalls grave epitaphs such as the *Laudatio Turiae*, laying the same stress on her *pudicitia* and good care of the goods of the house (*Sat* 2.5.77). The values stressed are those of a good Roman matron, not those usually associated with the heroines of myth (beauty, fidelity and her cunning in keeping the suitors at bay)[68]. Penelope is thoroughly Romanised in this poem, in a fashion which draws in both her exemplary aspect and the complexities raised by the Homeric text (and, perhaps, by other texts now lost).

The bawd's appropriation of Penelope

Ovid's *Amores* 1.8 is probably modelled on Propertius 4.5, and both use Penelope as an icon of chastity[69], but again they focus on her interest in men. In the Propertian poem, the bawd's power is so great that she could even compel Penelope to marry again and forget her husband (cf. *Ars* 1.477), while in the Ovidian poem, the bawd portrays Penelope as using her wiles not to put off the suitors altogether, but rather to test their manhood. Although Ovid's poem is generally simpler than its probable model, the reference to Penelope is nevertheless used rather differently.

The Propertian passage is straightforward in its use of the myth of Penelope. The statement that Acanthis could win over Penelope is merely expressive of her great power, and so may be compared to Ovid's use of Penelope in the *Ars Amatoria*[70], where again she

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[67] This movement, particularly the Roman element which enters mainly in the final books, is foreshadowed in the first book, where the epic Greek-style council of the gods is compared to the senate, and Olympus to the Palatine; one of the first metamorphoses, that of Daphne, mentions her eventual home beside the temple of Apollo on the Palatine.

[68] Cf. pp.246-7 above.

[69] It is remotely possible that the poem in the first edition of Ovid's *Amores* was the model for Propertius; for a comparison of the two poems, see Courtney 1969.

[70] 1.477 in particular, also 2.355, 3.15

is used as a supreme example of chastity, one whom only an extraordinarily powerful figure could compel to take a lover. Her appearance in *Am.* 1.8, however, is more interesting. Ovid puts the reference to Penelope in the bawd's mouth, rather than in the narrator's as a comment on the bawd. He thus uses her to rewrite the usual interpretation of Penelope, in the same way as Horace does in Teiresias' response to Ulysses at *Satires* 2.5.75ff:

> The poet's primary reason for introducing this exemplum is to make the reader smile at his dethroning of Penelope from her traditionally elevated place in the mythological tradition.[71]

This is true, and the shock of the unorthodox reading of Penelope would be great, but it is not going too far to say that the poem challenges the reader to try to disprove this new version by looking at Homer - and that this new interpretation can be seen, in the spirit of the fifth-century Greeks[72], as consistent with the "facts". Penelope's actions in the *Odyssey* are ambiguous, and she does test the suitors (however, the evocation of this ambiguity in this context is an addition to the basic use made of the myth). The Ovidian text may thus be seen to go back to the earliest literary Penelope in order to find material for dethroning the exemplary figure. This reading of Penelope may look to other versions of the myth, but the knowledge it is most clearly playing off is that of the exemplary Penelope and the plot of the *Odyssey*.

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[71] Whitaker 1983 p.148.

[72] For the rationalising tendencies of the fifth century, see, for example, Gorgias *Helen*, *Palamedes*, Herodotus 1.1-4, Thucydides 1.3-11; for rationalisings of the myths from Homer from the earliest interpreters onwards, see Buffière 1956. Rationalising and deflating, although not the same thing, could be combined, as shown by Hecataeus' rationalisation and deflation of Heracles' labour with Cerberus to his killing of a large snake (*FGrH* 1 fr.27)

Propertius, an unfaithful Penelope

In his fourth book, Propertius produces an elegiac *Iliad* and *Odyssey* pair, 4.7 and 4.8[73], both featuring Cynthia; the appearance of Cynthia in 4.8 is particularly striking, as it follows not only the ending of the relationship in 3.24, but even Cynthia's death in 4.7[74]. Each is based (mainly) on a book near the end of the epic in question, and each reworks the epic story by giving it more erotic content. The erotic element in 4.7, drawing on the end of the *Iliad*, seems to recall the later versions of the myth of Achilles, in which he and Patroclus were lovers[75]. Thus in 4.7, the ghost of Patroclus becomes the ghost of Cynthia, who returns to rebuke her erstwhile lover for his forgetfulness.

Even more noteworthy is the treatment of the *Odyssey* in 4.8; following on from a Propertian Achilles in 4.7, we might here expect to see the poet as Odysseus, returned to his faithful Cynthia (for how else has the ghost just described herself?). Here, however, the hero is Cynthia, though returning not from heroic exploits or harsh toils but from a day out with a lover (as Odysseus in the *Odyssey* returns from infidelity with Circe and Calypso), and it is Propertius who is presented as waiting Penelope (though one who has invited his "suitors" to share the revelry at his house). Thus the Propertian poems take over epic scenes and make them less heroic, more erotic, less creditable to the characters, even though, as in 4.8, an epic tone may be maintained for the purposes of contrast and comedy. From this point of view, it would be useful to know more about representations of Penelope

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[73] Evans 1971, cf. also Currie 1973, Hubbard 1974 pp.154-6, Papanghelis 1987 pp.196-7, McKeown 1979.

[74] 4.8 is not presented as a historical view of the relationship; *hac nocte* is as vivid as the descriptions in the earlier books.

[75] Zenodotus and Aristarchus athetised *Iliad* 16.97-100 on the grounds that it suggested that the friendship of Achilles and Patroclus had an erotic element to it; the earliest example of Achilles and Patroclus as lovers which we have seems to be from Aeschylus, cited at Athenaeus 13.601A and Pl. *Symposium* 180a (cf. Dover 1978 pp.196ff.). The Hellenistic poets had a fondness for stories of heroic homosexual love (cf. Heracles and Hylas in Theocritus 13 for an erotic and Apollonius *Arg.* 1.1207ff. for a non-erotic version, and the catalogue poem Ἐρώτες ἢ Κάλοι by Phanocles, discussed by Hopkinson 1988, pp.177-8), so the Roman poets may also have known about this version of the story from Hellenistic sources.

and Ulysses in comedy; there *may* be a juxtaposition of an epic-sounding Penelope with a comic-sounding Ulysses in Cratinus' play *Odysseuses*[76].

The analogy between the returning Ulysses and the returning Cynthia is interesting for the gender change, as is the transferral of Penelope's role to the poet; these may find a parallel in the *Aethiopica* of Heliodorus, where it is the heroine who is the Ulysses figure, returning to her homeland, and the part of faithful lover belongs to her eventual husband[77]. The role-reversal in Propertius 4.8 not only affects the hero and heroine; the male Lygdamus is substituted for the unfaithful maids of Homer, and two female prostitutes for the suitors. This reversal suits well the blending of epic and comic, or mimic[78], elements. The idea of role-reversal is also important as part of the conception of elegy as an unmanly form of poetry, in which women could be given more of a voice; here we can see "Penelope" taking erotic advantage of freedom, again both contrasting with and casting doubt on the usual perception of her character. Similarly, Ovid's exile poetry shows a male poet adopting the role of deserted heroine from his own earlier poetry. This reversal of roles in the movement from model to allusive poem may be seen already in Catullus. For example, Catullus 70 adapts an epigram by Callimachus which originally dealt with a young man promising to marry a woman; Catullus has reversed this, making Lesbia the one who makes the promise, himself the lover left to lament the breaking of it (another inversion occurs in the last stanza of Catullus 11). In the same way, the complex parallels

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[76] Though this is unlikely: the fragment is Ath. 2.68c, fr.147 of Cratinus (Kassel/Austin *Poetae Comici Graeci*). Kassel/Austin allot the lines to the Cyclops and Odysseus, as did Kock (Cratinus fr.136); Edmonds, however, (Cratinus fr.149) allots them to Penelope and Odysseus, giving a stronger force to ἄνδρα. The contrast in tone between the two speakers may be compared to Odysseus' attempts to be an epic/heroic figure in contrast to the satyrs in Euripides' *Cyclops*; cf. Seaford 1984 pp.50-9.

[77] The Heliodoran role-reversal lacks satiric effect, but another novel, Petronius' *Satyricon*, also links epic (especially the *Odyssey*) with comic and mimic elements for its picaresque form of satire (cf. Cameron 1970).

[78] Mimic elements are argued for by McKeown 1979; see especially p.75 n.20 on the possibility of there having been an Odyssean mime.

between Propertius and Cynthia and Odysseus and Penelope in 4.8 are prefigured by the complex paralleling of Catullus and Lesbia with Protesilaus and Laodamia in Catullus 68[79].

In 4.8 there is a contrast between the evocation of Penelope as the archetypal chaste wife and the lowering of the tone from epic to elegy/comedy. The contrast between the faithfulness of Penelope, who waited twenty years, and Cynthia, who could not remain faithful for a single night, was made by Propertius in an earlier poem:

> *Penelope poterat bis denos salua per annos*
> *uiuere, tam multis femina digna procis* ....
> *at tu non una potuisti nocte uacare,*
> *impia, non unum sola manere diem!*
>
> 2.9.3-4, 19-20

In 4.8, the contrast is between the faithful Penelope and both the lover who stays at home, and the one who goes out to be unfaithful; Propertius plays the Penelope role in that he is the lover left at home to be tempted by suitors, while Cynthia, elsewhere compared to Penelope, is the wanderer, but also the one who stresses her fidelity. This contrasts with the picture Propertius presents elsewhere of the unfaithful Cynthia, and with the image presented in the poet's own voice at the start of this poem. As in 1.3, there is here also a contrast between the conjugal ὁμοφροσύνη of the Homeric couple and the passing relationship between the poet and his *puella*, both of whom are unfaithful. Both protagonists also have something of Odysseus about them, if we think of Odysseus as the one who both went away and was unfaithful - here the return is that of Cynthia, but the unfaithfulness that of the poet (although Cynthia, like Odysseus, has also been unfaithful in her absence; as with Odysseus, no reproaches are made). Like Odysseus, Propertius is here

[79] Lesbia enters the house for their meeting like a Laodamia as a bride, but it is Catullus whose passion matches that of Laodamia; Lesbia is the one who will fail her lover as the dead Protesilaus failed to return to Laodamia (cf. Macleod 1974 pp.82-88). On Catullan self-identification with female figures, see Wiseman 1985 pp.121-2, 146, 162, 178.

unfaithful with two women, although there is an element of unwillingness: like Odysseus with Calypso, he cannot tear his thoughts away from his more legitimate partner:

> *cantabant surdo, nudabant pectora caeco*
> *Lanuuii ad portas, ei mihi, solus eram.*
>
> 4.8.47-8[80]

The use made of the myth in the background does not, however, invite the same sort of thought as Horace *Satires* 2.5, because the text does not aim to make the reader question the veracity of the idealised picture needed for the contrast; rather the "point" of the poem is the contrast itself. Thus the question of exactly how chaste Penelope was is not the main focus of the allusion in this poem, although the two women with Propertius do remind us of the multitude of suitors who courted Penelope. In this, 4.8 is similar to 4.5, and again different from the Ovidian treatment of the myth, which, like Horace, sometimes raises questions about the validity of the general conception of Penelope as the archetypal chaste wife.

This last example moves away from explicit reference to Penelope to a textually evoked Penelope; further examples of this show a similar play between the ideal of Penelope as good and faithful wife and the possibility that she was unfaithful. Nevertheless, her image as faithful wife (and not just lover) seems to predominate in the elegiac genre as a foil to the unfaithful *puella*.

Delia, fondly imagined as Penelope

In Tibullus 1.3, the poet, left behind sick in "Phaeacia" by Messalla and his *cohors*, imagines his own death but in the end his safe return to a faithful Delia[81]. He pictures a

[80] The conjecture *totus eram* (Kuypers) makes the point even more clearly.

lovers' Underworld, but sees himself saved from death by Delia's prayers and devotion to Isis. There is disagreement amongst scholars as to how far there is reference to the *Odyssey* in this poem, some feeling that the analogy is too subtle to be worth considering[82]. However, there are sufficient markers in the poem for the link to be made: for a start, the mention of Phaeacia in the opening lines is surely a strong indication of Odyssean associations[83]. As in Propertius 1.3, the poet's mistress is described as sitting at home weaving, a motif which may be associated with Penelope (though also with other heroines such as Lucretia[84]). It may be a problem to distinguish reference specifically to Penelope from more general reference to a vaguer unnamed ideal of "a Good Wife", but in this poem, the Odyssean references will lead at least some readers to think in terms more of Penelope than of the unnamed ideal. The argument for seeing 1.3 as a "Tibullan Odyssey" is based on the appearance of other features in the poem which may be linked to the *Odyssey*: the mention at the start of the poem of Phaeacia, the picturing of the Underworld, including several figures who appear in the Homeric nekuia (Tantalus and Tityos; the lovers who appear first might also be compared to the Homeric Catalogue of Heroines), the hero's return to his waiting wife (or beloved), the unlucky start to the journey[85], the woman's occupation in his absence.

It is traditionally held that Tibullus makes less display of *doctrina* in his poetry than Propertius or Ovid, both in his use of mythology and in his references to other poetry. It is

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[81] On this poem, see Eisenberger 1960 pp.188-297, Hanslik 1970, Bright 1971, 1978 pp.16-37, Ball 1975, 1983 pp.50-65, Wimmel 1978 pp.178-81, Cairns 1979 pp.44-60, as well as commentaries.
[82] *Pro* Bright 1971, also in Bright 1978 *loc. cit.*, cf. Ball 1983 pp.62-5; *contra* Galinsky 1981.
[83] For the identification of Phaeacia with Corcyra, where Tibullus is generally thought to have been left ill, see Hellanicus *FGrH* 4 fr.77, Thucydides 1.25.2, Callimachus *Aetia* fr.12 Pfeiffer 1953 with commentary and scholia *ad loc.*; see also Howie 1989.
[84] On coming home to find the beloved spinning, cf. Ter. *Heaut.* 275ff., Prop. 3.6.15ff., Ov. *Met.* 4.214ff., Lucretia at Livy 1.57.7ff., Ov. *Fasti* 2.725ff.
[85] Odysseus' reluctant departure is followed by the sacrifice of Iphigeneia; on the return journey, the Greeks are dogged by the anger of the gods.

possible, however, to show that Tibullus' *doctrina* is just as great as that of the other elegiac poets, even if it is less frequently displayed[86]. For example, in 1.3.32 Tibullus is usually thought to have used *Pharia* to mean "Egyptian", by metonymy[87]. The epithet gains more point, however, if we recognise that Pharos was a cult centre of Isis, and so means more than just "Egyptian" in the context of Delia's prayers to Isis. Given the unobtrusive way in which such display of *doctrina* appears in Tibullus, it seems possible that we should consider the *Odyssey* to be standing behind 1.3, at least at the beginning and end. Ring-composition is an important form of structure in Tibullus' work, and the beginning of 1.3 is recalled as the poem moves on. Life in the Golden Age is contrasted with the reality which has landed Tibullus, as it had landed Ulysses, in Phaeacia - a "Golden Age" land for Odysseus but a place of suffering for Tibullus. This is reinforced by verbal echoes, such as *uias*, *undas*, and *ignotis terris* in 36, 37, and 39, in the same *sedes* as they had in 14, 1, and 3 respectively (a Hellenistic trait showing Tibullus' *doctrina*[88]). *Mors* reappears at 65 in the section on Elysium; this word has not been used since the start of the poem (1.3.4, 5) where it is stressed by repetition, and the dark picture of the underworld for sinners recalls the stress on the darkness of death at the beginning (Phaeacia may also be seen as linked to death[89]). The picture of Delia recalls that of the ideal Roman matron, as well as Penelope in the *Odyssey*. The Odyssean reminiscence is enhanced, however, by the mention of the *sedula ... anus*, a Eurycleia figure, and the picture of Delia

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[86] Lee 1982, referring to Cairns 1979 pp.54-7, describes 1.3.77 as a "typical example of Tibullus's unobtrusive *doctrina*", in contrast to the display of learning "usually" put on by Ovid and Propertius; cf. Bulloch 1973.

[87] Cf., for example, Lee 1982 on this line, Cairns 1979 pp.64-5.

[88] Cf. Whitaker 1983 p.68.

[89] This link appears to be based partly on a modern etymology (Φαίηκες < φαιός), and partly on the liminal position of the Phaeacians in the poem, between the fantasy world of Odysseus' wanderings and the reality of Ithaca; it is through his sojourn in Phaeacia that Odysseus re-enters the world of human beings, of civilisation, and comes back to life for his family and people on Ithaca who have presumed him dead. At *Od.* 13.80, Odysseus' sleep on board the Phaeacian vessel is described as θανάτῳ ἄγχιστα ἐοικώς. Cf. Hainsworth 1988 p.289, Garvie 1994 p.21 for further bibliography.

and her maids working at night. The final couplet seems to contain a reminiscence of Homer's "rosy-fingered Dawn". The most marked Odyssean echo is in 89-92. Here we see the reunion of the couple, in a scene which echoes *Od.* 23.205ff. But Delia, unlike Penelope, does not need a long colloquy to establish the identity of the new arrival, nor does she need to test him: thus she surpasses Penelope. In 89-90

> *tunc ueniam subito nec quisquam nuntiet ante*
> *sed uidear caelo missus adesse tibi*

there may be a reminiscence of Penelope's excuse for having to test Odysseus, namely that she feared being deceived by a god.

As in Propertius 4.5 and 4.8, Penelope's relevance to interpretation of this poem depends on her fulfilling the role of chaste wife. The addition of the weaving picks up her other main literary trait, although the poem makes little use of the overtones of deception which this image may evoke. However, we should bear in mind that in other poems Delia is accused by the poet of deceiving him. The picture of Delia weaving evokes both the unreal picture of her as the poet's matronly wife, and the further (unreal?) image of her as Penelope using her weaving to keep off unwelcome suitors. The poet does not admit in this poem that she could deceive him, although he does implore her to be faithful; but when she next appears in this book, the poet is bemoaning the fact that some other man is enjoying her, and in the following poem we learn that Tibullus is not her husband, for she has another *vir*, and that she is cheating both of them[90]. In this light, Tibullus' plea to Delia to remain faithful and be a Penelope becomes more poignant, and the reference to the myth of the Danaids might be taken as a warning to Delia of the fate of those who offend against Love (as in Hor. *Odes* 3.11). The reality of Delia's lack of fidelity jars against the idealised

[90] 1.5.17-18 and 1.6.5ff.

picture generated by the sick poet, as in Propertius 1.3 poetic fantasy and reality may be said to jar (see below), and this makes us realise how unreal the picture of Delia as a faithful Penelope was. This poem may be read, deconstructively, as casting doubt on the chastity of Penelope, for acknowledgement of Delia's faithlessness may also evoke the doubts cast upon Penelope in the *Odyssey* and her more dubious reputation in some other versions of her story, collapsing the contrast between the two women; we thus move from Delia as faithful Penelope, through the contrast between them, to Penelope as a faithless Delia.

Cynthia as patient, suffering Penelope

If Tibullus 1.3 is working to an overtly Odyssean agenda, the same is found more covertly in Propertius 1.3: as well as the same positioning in each poet's first book, both poems deal with the return of the poets to their respective *puellae*, both of whom are implicitly compared to Penelope. Tibullus imagines his ideal reception from Delia; this contrasts with that Propertius actually receives from Cynthia. This link may help support a reading of Prop. 1.3 as involving the *Odyssey*; the substance of the link has been seen as hard to pin down:

> Perhaps there is a hint of Homer also in the closing lines of i.3, where a weary Cynthia falling asleep over her loom seems a close relative of the troubled Penelope of *Odyssey* iv.787ff. [91]

> For a brief moment in l.41 ... she reminds us of a chaste Penelope or Lucretia. But it is the image of Ariadne which opened the elegy, that dominates its close. [92]

[91] Dalzell 1980 p.33, who argues that at the end of the poem Cynthia is again "elevated to the status of myth".
[92] Whitaker 1983 p.93.

Cynthia is deliberately painting herself as a chaste Roman matron or a faithful Penelope in her words to Propertius: a reader may see her complaints as unfair, and contrast this self-presentation with the less flattering picture of the "realistic" Cynthia of the rest of the book[93]. Again, the question may be asked how far she is comparing herself to Penelope in particular, and how much to some vaguer picture of a good wife. Her lamentation over the night which she thinks the poet should have spent with her is similar in tone to the lament over the wasted years Ovid gives to Penelope in *Heroides* 1. The words *deserta querebar* (43) are very much in keeping with the themes of elegy used in the *Heroides*; indeed, this lament may probably be counted as an important influence on the *Heroides*. The tone of gentle reproach which Propertius gives Cynthia is far more in keeping with the epic Penelope than the more active character of Ovid's portrayal. This poem could be seen as giving Penelope the voice she lacks in epic, expressing a natural reaction to her husband's long absence (it may also be seen as giving a voice to the woman's view in a relationship, which even love elegy does not often explore). If the possibility of a parallel with Penelope is admitted here, then Cynthia's complaints about Propertius acquire a greater ironic force; like Odysseus, Propertius comes home secretly, in that he is not announced beforehand and comes upon Cynthia unawares - Odysseus had in fact spent time with other women (albeit divine), which is what Cynthia accuses Propertius of having done. The complaint she makes, however, is one made not by the epic Penelope, but by the elegiac Penelope of the *Heroides*, in the ironic couplet 77-8. Both Cynthia and Penelope also have disturbing dreams - Cynthia, Propertius fears, is dreaming about involuntary infidelity (1.3.26-30); Penelope's dream in which she weeps over the slaughter of her geese (*Od.* 19.535-553) is sometimes taken as suggesting that she actually enjoys having her suitors in the palace.

[93] Lyne 1970.

These further parallels between the situation and language of Cynthia and Penelope do suggest that Penelope in particular may be in the background here.

Cynthia is elsewhere (like Delia) accused of infidelity; how does her evocation of Penelope read against this background? It highlights the irony of Cynthia's presentation of herself as a good wife, for even the wife to whom she compares herself may have her virtue undermined, and Cynthia herself is neither wife nor, as Propertius presents her, traditionally "good". Yet for the reader who thinks only of Penelope as a good wife, the irony is still present: the ideal and its opposite are so tightly bound together that to evoke one will, by contrast or intertextual reference, evoke the other.

Penelope as encouragement to fidelity

Penelope appears as the paradigm of chastity in some of the more elegiac of Horace's *Odes*. After the opening cycle of the six Roman Odes in Horace's third book of *Odes*, there is a change of tone, and love becomes a major theme of the next section of the book (whether we take this as running from 3.7 to 3.12 or to 3.15[94]). For example, 3.7 starts this group with the portrayal of a faithful couple, a couple who resist the temptations offered to lure them away from each other; 3.9 is a dialogue between two ex-lovers, now attached to other people, who consider reestablishing their relationship. In 3.10, Horace addresses Lyce (whose name may perhaps be linked to λύκος, and so reflect her nature), trying to win her away from her *saevus uir* (line 2). The reference to Penelope as *difficilem*

[94] Mütschler 1974 considers the second six Odes of the third book to be a sort of new introduction, with 3.8 and 3.9 being parallel to 3.29 and 3.28 respectively, thus making 3.7 the new introductory poem. In favour of extending the group, cf. Santirocco 1986 pp.125-31, Porter 1987 pp.39-49, 171-83. Nisbet 1995 pp.423-4 expresses scepticism about finding significance in the ordering of the *Odes*. However, when the poems are read in context, the juxtapositions and ordering may add something to our readings of the separate odes. Some odes may have been written with others in mind; others may acquire further depths not originally thought of through juxtaposition with similar or contrasting poems. (Cf. Hutchinson 1984 pp.99-100.)

procis is, in this context, a disparagement; the poet does not want Lyce to be a Penelope, so although the phrase is an accurate summary of the common picture of Penelope (the exemplary faithful wife), the previous reference to *ingratam Veneri ... superbiam* does not encourage us to see this as a desirable trait. Thus Penelope, normally used as an encouragement to virtue, is here portrayed disparagingly in order to persuade a girl to the opposite. Similarly, 3.11 is a prayer which appears to be on Lyce's behalf, but which is aimed at winning her over, away from her apparent distaste for love (10-12) [95]. Like the previous poem, then, 3.11 shows the poet in the pose of the philandering Don Juan, far from the voice he uses in 3.7 to encourage the fidelity of Asterie.

The question of Odyssean reference in *Ode* 3.7 is more controversial. It may be read as evoking the *Odyssey*, creating parallels between Gyges and Ulysses, Asterie and Penelope[96], the reminiscences forming part of the rhetorical strategy of the poem: Asterie is implicitly compared to Penelope in order to encourage her to be a faithful Penelope. However, Cairns denies a link to the *Odyssey*, preferring to look to a possible amatory treatment of the Odyssey-story by Anacreon[97], and picking on details in an attempt to deny the allusion[98]: Penelope's many suitors are paralleled by one suitor for Asterie, and Odysseus' several *hospitae* are paralleled by Gyges' one (but a similar reduction occurs in Prop. 4.8), and, most importantly, Asterie is not a middle-aged woman like Penelope who has a grown-up son. To view Penelope as old and unattractive is, however, to go against the usual view of her in antiquity. Although we know she waited for Odysseus for twenty years, no-one in the *Odyssey* is surprised that the suitors desire her, her worries in the

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[95] Cf. Cairns 1975.
[96] Harrison 1988.
[97] Cairns 1995 pp.97-9; this sits rather oddly with his own approach to Vergil (Cairns 1989, for example ch. 7).
[98] Cf. pp.7-9 above on the difference between specific allusion and a more general intertextual relationship.

Heroides that she will be found an *anus* are presumably dispelled by Odysseus' return, and she is an erotic *exemplum* in Latin poetry, particularly love elegy, where it would not make sense to evoke a figure who was seen as "over the hill".

Cairns also says that "in view .. of the common-place nature of such story-types, limiting the mythico-literary influence upon *Odes* 3.7 to the *Odyssey* seems unnecessarily reductionist"[99]; the same might be said of linking the Horatian poem particularly to Anacreon. This view would have more force if the linking of Asterie and Gyges to Penelope and Odysseus *had* to be limited to one myth or one work of literature, but this is not the case. The intertextual relationships between literary texts cannot be pinned down in this way: if there is allusion to Anacreon rewriting Homer, this invites remembrance of the Homeric text itself as well. For such well-known figures, evocation of one text involving them will also bring other texts and general knowledge into play, including the exemplary function which the rhetorical strategy of the poem appears to require. Although there are other myths which use the motif of the wife's seduction in the husband's absence, the *Odyssey* story is the best known case in which the wife repels her suitors. Cairns' parallels for women who repulsed suitors, Hermione and Oenone, are based on their own versions of their stories, as given in the *Heroides*; this detail of repulsing suitors is not a necessary element in the tales. The name Enipeus, the suitor mentioned in 3.7, recalls another story of deception of a woman, Tyro, told in the *Odyssey*. This reinforces the supposition that this pattern - abandoned woman courted by a new suitor - would tend to evoke the version of this plot-pattern in the *Odyssey*, i.e., the story of Penelope and Odysseus.

The evocation of this pattern is not disputed by Cairns, so perhaps the question should, as in the case of Tibullus 1.3 and Propertius 1.3, be seen in terms of an attempt to

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[99] Cairns 1995 p.98.

determine how marked is the reference to the specific case of Penelope and Odysseus, and how far a more general picture of women being seduced in their husband's absence takes precedence. Reference to an erotic version of the *Odyssey* story by Anacreon would be one way of answering this question: one would expect this to be comparable to the Propertian elegiac treatment of Homer[100], which might thus be not a specifically elegiac trait, but rather more generally "non-epic". Unfortunately, we do not have Anacreon's text, and must find more indirect approaches to the "non-epic" Odyssey.

Earlier lyric parallels for a "non-epic" treatment of Homeric characters may be found in Sappho: fr.16 portrays Helen as a light-hearted lover, a contrast with her Homeric character, and fr.44 describes the wedding of Andromache and Hector, showing epic characters in a scene prior to the epic, in a non-epic manner, despite epic colouring to the passage[101]. Both fragments focus on lovers from epic; similarly Alcaeus fr.42 deals with Thetis as an *exemplum* of a good bride, and he seems to have written a short poem about Thetis and the wrath of Achilles (fr.44). The romanticised view of the *Odyssey* may also be found in Ovid, *Tristia* 2.375-6:

> *aut quid Odyssea est, nisi femina propter amorem,*
> *dum uir abest, multis una petita procis?*

In the preceding lines, the *Iliad* is given a similar romantic summary; further parallels for the romantic view of Homer's poems may be found in the first and third *Heroides*, as well as in love elegy. This romantic view of Homer may be contrasted with earlier accounts, such as that given of the *Odyssey* by Aristotle at *Poetics* 17.1455b16-23. He summarises it as the story of a man who returns home after suffering under Poseidon's anger, and then

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[100] Dalzell 1980; p.31 he says that Propertius prefers a "romanticised Homer".
[101] See Bowra 1961 pp.227-31, Rissman 1983 ch.4, and Schrenk 1994. On epic and lyric see also Bowra 1961 pp.77-9, 87, 101-6, Bowie 1981 (at a metrical and verbal level), Davis 1991 ch.1, Putnam 1995.

has to rid his home of his wife's suitors. In fact, he refers to them merely as suitors; Penelope makes no appearance in the summary. The romanticised view of the *Odyssey* is particularly suitable for the erotic focus given to the myth in the Augustan age; this may point to an earlier source, but may also look more generally to the eroticisation of myths in Alexandria, a tendency continued in Rome. Whether or not he is referring to Anacreon, Horace himself refers easily to an amatory reading of the Odyssey story[102]:

> *hic in reducta ualle Caniculae*
> *uitabis aestus et fide Teia*
> *dices laborantis in uno*
> *Penelopen uitreamque Circen.*
>
> *Odes* 1.17.17-20

Thus, our lack of the specific poem by Anacreon is not disastrous: its existence would help show the Odyssean link in 3.7, but it is not necessary to have such a predecessor for an amatory reading of the Homeric poem, as such readings are paralleled elsewhere.

However, as we do not have the poem, the intertextual relationship for us must rely on the overall situation of the characters, the reference to Enipeus, and the possibility that *Icari* suggests the name of Penelope's father (although Cairns' scepticism at this point seems reasonable). A further link to Penelope and Odysseus may be found in the fact that Asterie is probably at risk of being seduced by Enipeus: we may remember that the use of myths in antiquity is often persuasive, designed to give the person addressed an exemplum to follow, and Penelope, who held out against her suitors, looks like the exemplum which Asterie needs. The final line of the ode instructs Asterie *difficilis mane*; in 3.10, Penelope is referred to as *difficilem procis*. If the odes are read in order, the repetition of *difficilis* might well recall the earlier poem and cause a reader to rethink its Odyssean links. Interestingly, this poem may also be read as a covert recommendation of Enipeus to Asterie

[102] Cf. Harrison 1988 pp.190-2.

(he is described in such flattering terms)[103] - again paralleling 3.10, where the mention of Penelope is an *exemplum ex contrario*. Thus the recognition of the Odyssean links in this poem, as in Tibullus 1.3, lead first to the use of that reminiscence to encourage the girl to play the Penelope-role, but then also look towards her potential infidelity.

The background of the ideal of the chaste Penelope is necessary for the reversals and undercuttings found in these poems. The juxtaposition of the ideal with an unfaithful woman, the re-reading of Odyssean scenes, can deconstruct the idealised Penelope; the contrast between her and Cynthia or Delia can collapse into a new, parallel picture of infidelity. It is the ideal which the Cynthia of Propertius 1.3 and narrator of Tibullus 1.3 want to evoke (as in Horace *Odes* 3.10), and these poems may be read at that level; however, the possibilities of other readings of Penelope, and hence of the poems, cannot be excluded.

Chaste Penelope

Penelopen difficilem procis may recall Penelope's faithfulness to one man alone, but it also marks her as chaste, and possibly not interested even in that one man, a de-sexualised character. It may also evoke images of Penelope as unfaithful with the suitors, by conjuring up the idea of her playing hard-to-get: where the simple picture of a faithful, uneroticised Penelope is present, its reverse can always be inferred as a possibility (reading against the grain, by which the denial of a trait must evoke its opposite in a marked/unmarked pair). The erotic aspect to Penelope may, however, be downplayed, as seems to happen in the *Aeneid*.

[103] The possibility of such a double game was suggested to me by Dr. S.J. Heyworth.

The new epic Penelope

To cover fully the relationship between Homer and Vergil, even between the *Odyssey* and the *Aeneid*, would be a task of great size and complexity even in the compilation of the material, let alone in the matter of analysis[104]. The treatment here will, as a consequence, be deliberately partial, giving a taste of how one may use one figure to explore the relationship between Homer and Vergil, rather than aiming to be comprehensive in any sense[105]. To discuss all of Vergil's sources would be near impossible, but it must be borne in mind that when a character is said to be modelled on another from earlier poetry, this is not to exclude the influence of other earlier characters in shaping the character under examination: this study will foreground Penelope over all other such influences. This sort of complexity is, of course, not only found in Vergil, but the scale of the *Aeneid* means that the scope for complicated characters drawing on many earlier figures is greatly increased[106]. One very important factor in the relationship between Homer and Vergil is the influence of Apollonius, who mediates between the two: Vergil may refer directly to Homer, or to Apollonius and the passage of Homer to which Apollonius is looking simultaneously. For example, both Vergil and Apollonius imitate the Homeric simile comparing Nausicaa to Artemis (*Od.* 6.101ff.; *Arg.* 3.876-86; *Aen.*

[104] See Knauer 1964.
[105] This discussion has been influenced particularly by the following works: Pöschl 1962, Otis 1969, Lyne 1987, and Cairns 1989.
[106] See Griffin 1985 ch.9 on the creation of character. Multiple intertextuality is clear in the *Aeneid*, for example, in the song of Iopas at the end of book 1, whose models include Demodocus and Phemius in the *Odyssey*, Orpheus in the *Argonautica*.

l.497-506[107]). But to acknowledge the importance of these earlier Greek epic writers for Vergil is not to deny the influence of other writers and other genres[108].

It is received wisdom that the *Aeneid* falls into two halves, each one corresponding to one of the Homeric epics - the first half basically Odyssean, the second Iliadic[109]. The structure of the *Aeneid*, however, may also be seen as reflecting the structure of the *Odyssey* - the first half including a section of narrative detailing the hero's wanderings up to that point, told in the first person, the second the story of the hero's struggle to (re)gain his kingdom, once he has arrived at the goal of his wanderings. The same opposition is found in both *Aeneid* and *Odyssey* between land in the second half and sea in the first. The struggles of the hero in the first half are to survive his journey over the sea, in the second to possess the land he has reached. The struggle is not only over the kingdom, but also over the woman who will marry the victor. Lavinia is, like Helen, a prize of war, but this is a characteristic also shared by Penelope, who is the prize for the domestic battle in the *Odyssey*. Like Penelope too, Lavinia has one parent at least who favours her marriage to 'the wrong man'. The *Odyssey* can thus be seen as the main structural model for the *Aeneid*, enabling Aeneas' arrival in Latium to be viewed as a homecoming[110]. In this context, the strangeness of the ending of the *Aeneid* becomes even more marked than it would otherwise be. Both *Iliad* and *Odyssey* end with reconciliation between the warring factions - Priam and Achilles, Odysseus and the families of the suitors[111]: the *Aeneid* ends,

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[107] See Clausen 1987 pp.19-25.

[108] For example, see Hunter 1993, ch.7 on Vergil and Apollonius, Cairns 1989 ch. 7 on the possibility of reading Lavinia as a lyric *parthenos*, Wigodsky 1972 on Vergil's relationships with earlier Latin poets; tragedy is another important influence, both directly and through Apollonius.

[109] Although the *Iliad* does appear in the first half and *Odyssey* in the second; cf. Quint 1993 pp.7-10 amd ch.2 (with criticism by Fowler 1997 pp.8-10), Barchiesi 1984 ch.4 (especially pp.91-5).

[110] Cf. Cairns 1989, especially ch.8.

[111] Even if we do not accept the final book and a half of the *Odyssey* as genuine, by 23.296 we have reconciliation in the private sphere. Even if Vergil was aware of scholarly disputes over where the *Odyssey* ended, as Schlunk 1974 suggests, we may assume that he knew the complete text in the same form as we have it, and it seems never to have been seriously suggested that it ended before 23.296.

as it were, at the twenty-second book of each of the Homeric epics, avoiding the reconciliation scenes. The ambiguity of the ending of the *Argonautica* may well be an important influence on the *Aeneid*, where there is no pretence of a complete closure of the story (leaving an opening for the rest of Roman history)[112]. Likewise, the homecoming of Odysseus is also crowned by his reunion with Penelope; the situation between Aeneas and Lavinia provides a distinct contrast. They never converse in the epic, and indeed Lavinia appears little. Unlike Penelope, she in no way tries to control the situation around her. In this, she is acting as the true Roman *filia familias*, completely under her father's control: a further contrast with Penelope, who can be read as being outside masculine control for most of the *Odyssey*[113]. Penelope, in refusing to remarry, is going against her parents' wishes: such rebellion seems unsuitable for Lavinia, who is to become the "mother of the Roman people"[114], and whose behaviour must therefore be that of a Roman royal *virgo* rather than that of an epic heroine (and the suppression of any erotic passion she might feel, or might express in elegy, in favour of dutiful submission to father and husband combines the generic restraint with a Roman ideal).

Nausicaa, a modest and virginal royal daughter, protected by her parents, is clearly a major Homeric model for Lavinia, but she is not the only one[115]. Lavinia, like other characters in the *Aeneid*, takes on the role of several different figures from the Homeric poems. It has been said that "dual typology is characteristic of Vergil"[116] with reference to Lavinia's Iliadic role as a second Helen alongside her Odyssean role as a second

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[112] Cf. comments on closure in history and histories, Dewald 1997 p.63, and Hardie 1997 p.139-42 (particularly p.141 with n.13); Hardie 1997 pp.142-151 on the closure of the *Aeneid*.
[113] Katz 1991 pp.29-40; as discussed above, however, the text does heavily circumscribe Penelope's freedom from male control.
[114] Cairns 1989 p.153.
[115] E.g. Knauer 1964 pp.340, 343, Lavinia as a Penelope, and a Helen.
[116] Gransden 1976 p.13 n.1; "dual" rather understates the case.

Penelope[117]. In the Iliadic context, there is a tension between Turnus' view of the parallels between the Italian war and the Trojan War, and the poet's view of these parallels. Turnus thinks of Aeneas as a second Paris and himself as the wronged Menelaus and the mighty warrior Achilles; the poet, however, portrays Turnus as a combination of the wife-stealing Paris and as Hector, doomed defender of his people, while presenting Aeneas as the wronged "husband" and the mighty warrior[118]. The difference between Turnus' understanding of the situation and the real face of events (as described by the poet) is a tragic irony leading to Turnus' death. In the Odyssean context, the picture is clearer: Aeneas is the returning avenger Odysseus, come to (re)claim his wife and kingdom, while Turnus is a conglomeration of the suitors, but is linked especially to the most prominent, Antinous and Eurymachus. He is one of many suitors for Lavinia's hand, and is described as the best of them, and, like Antinous, handsome[119]:

> *multi illam magno e Latio totaque petebant*
> *Ausonia; petit ante alios pulcherrimus omnis*
> *Turnus, auis atauisque potens, quem regia coniunx*
> *adiungi generum miro properabat amore.*
>
> 7.54-7

Like Eurymachus, the second most prominent of Penelope's suitors, Turnus is supported in his suit by a parent of the woman he wants[120]; as with Penelope, there is a certain amount of doubt as to what Lavinia herself wants. Telemachus thinks that his mother may well really want to remarry; it is Penelope herself who tells us that this is not her desire, while other characters (even Telemachus in book 1 and Athene in 15) cast doubt on her fidelity.

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[117] An added complexity is the view that Penelope plays the Helen-role in the *Odyssey*, the woman over whom men fight and for whom they die. For an ancient statement of this point of view, cf. Achilles Tatius 1.8.6.

[118] Cf. Anderson 1957.

[119] See *Od.* 17.381, 454, 21.277, with Cairns 1989 p.211 n.105, Knauer 1964 pp.213-4.

[120] Cf. also Knauer 1964 pp.322-4, 334, Cairns 1989 p.212 on parallels between the deaths of Turnus and Eurymachus.

Lavinia makes no statement as to her preference, but the blush in book 12 has been read as suggesting that she is in fact in love with Turnus[121]. Like Eurymachus, facing his enemy at the end, Turnus renounces his claim to the hero's wife and kingdom, but does not save his own life. Lavinia thus plays the same role as Penelope, and this is a role shared with Helen partly because Penelope shares that role with Helen.

Lavinia contrasts with both Helen and Penelope in that throughout the poem her voice is not heard. Helen, both in Troy and in Sparta, is enigmatic, and Penelope is not straightforward, but both help to create the aura of enigma which surrounds them through their own words. Other women in Vergil speak, so it is not that women do not feature in Vergil's epic as active characters; Dido is proof of that. But Penelope's dubious status in the *Odyssey* does not transfer itself to Lavinia (though marriage to the heroine in each case seems to be linked to legitimising rule in the country, in some way or other). One might see in this an explanation, in part, for Lavinia's silence. She does not have the excuse of lack of a κύριος to explain any attempt to take control of her life, and like Penelope loses her voice when she has a proper guardian. Homer's Penelope is thus neatly put back in her "proper place", one might say, a dutiful daughter, fulfilling the Roman ideal, who will not argue with or disobey her father over the matter of her marriage; this is particularly important for Lavinia as her father's sole heir[122]. We may here note again Pausanias' story of Penelope's choice of husband over father[123]. Vergil's Penelope figure does not have to make such a choice, and, although her mother favours Turnus, she is not under pressure from her father to marry the "wrong man". Thus Vergil makes her position less complex than Penelope's, enabling her to be a dutiful daughter to her father and still follow the

[121] Lyne 1983, 1987 pp.114-122; for a contrary view, see Cairns 1989 p.153 n.10.
[122] Stressed at 7.50ff. Cf. Nisbet/Hubbard 1991 on *Odes* 2.14.14 on the importance of the heir.
[123] 3.20.10-11; cf. App. 1.

commands of fate and what is right. Even though Lavinia's position is complicated by the split between her parents, while Penelope's parents, insofar as we are told what they think, seem to be unanimous, the only hint that Lavinia has an opinion herself is her famous blush (12.65-9) at the mention of her mother's preferred suitor: her actions express a submission to the will of her father and the gods, and such silence might be deemed suitable for the progenetrix of the Roman race.

A more complex characterisation with parallels to Penelope is seen in the episode concerning Dido, a queen who has to balance personal preference against the best interest of her kingdom. Dido is the ruling monarch, and when Aeneas arrives her kingdom is flourishing, like that described by the disguised Odysseus when talking to Penelope. At *Od.* 19.109-114 Odysseus likens Penelope to a good king: Dido actually is a ruling monarch[124] - when Aeneas arrives her kingdom is flourishing and she can thus be regarded as an actualisation of the "good ruler", although she is female. Like Penelope, Dido "marries" the stranger who appears at her court; unlike Penelope, and unlike Lavinia, for Dido this is against the decrees of fate, and instead of heralding the happy ending, it brings on her tragedy, as happens to Apollonius' Medea. The other parallel to the redeption of Aeneas by Dido is that of Odysseus at the Phaeacian court, where he appeals to Arete for assistance. Like Arete, and unlike Penelope, Dido is seen to exercise effective power; though like Penelope, and unlike Arete, she is effectively alone.

Powerful women in the *Aeneid* tend to come to grief, and female characters in general are not portrayed favourably[125]. Thus, Dido, linked to powerful women in Homer

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[124] Note e.g. *iura dabat* 1.507, Venus' words at 1.338-70. Cairns 1989 pp.39-42 analyses Dido as a "good ruler" before Aeneas arrives; after this, however, he argues that she is corrupted, and starts to act in a manner unsuitable for the leader of a community (pp.42-57).

[125] Indeed most female characters appear as victims, "opposed to the progress of history" (*OCD*[3] *s.v.* "Virgil" p.1606, col.2).

such as Arete, as well as Penelope and Nausicaa, comes to tragedy through being a queen, because (partly) of the conflicting demands of private and public life, her own desires and her duty to her people. Creusa, the loyal wife, is disposed of; in Troy, Aeneas pays more attention to his father than to Creusa's fate. Amata kills herself, frustrated in her plans for her daughter. Juturna has to abandon her brother, and herself turn to lamentation, for she cannot save him. Camilla is brought down by her *femineus amor* and desire for the fancy garments of the priest Chloreus (*Aen.* 11.768ff.). Even Juno has to subordinate her aims to those of Jupiter. Finally there is Lavinia, who never speaks, who serves as the excuse for war and to legitimise Aeneas' claim to rule in Latium; for Anchises in the underworld, she is the foremother of the ruling house of Alba Longa. The contrast with Penelope brings out this silencing of a female character more strongly, as does the contrast with Nausicaa, who meets a naked stranger on the beach and talks to him, even talks of marriage; Lavinia does not speak at all to Aeneas, even though he is a bridegroom who is approved by her father.

The women of the city are not portrayed favourably: they take to the hills in Bacchic revels, joining in Amata's desire to frustrate the destined outcome with respect to Lavinia's marriage[126]. The words used by Vergil of Amata's action in leading the Bacchic revels express apparent disapproval:

> *quin etiam in siluas simulato numine Bacchi*
> *maius adorta nefas maioremque orsa furorem*
> *euolat et natam frondosis montibus abdit*
>
> 12.385-7

After the Bacchanalian scandal of 186 BC[127], Bacchic worship seems to have been regarded with particular suspicion in Rome: the fact that women and men both worshipped together may have contributed to this, but Bacchic worship was seen as suspicious in

[126] Cf. Feeney 1991 pp.163-8 on the relation of Amata's desires and Allecto.
[127] For full details and references, see North 1979.

Greece far earlier on the grounds that it took the women out of their houses, away from their proper place. Linking Amata, who comes to an unhappy end, to such a group, casts her in a yet more negative light.

Speculation about the reasons for the suppression of the female voice and female power in the *Aeneid* may lead to interesting openings: a link might be seen to the role of Cleopatra, a figure with whom Dido is often associated, in the Civil War. One way in which Vergil Romanised Greek myth was by linking the mythological figures to historical Roman figures: Aeneas is linked to Augustus and Romulus, the first the new saviour of Rome, the second her founder; Dido is linked to Cleopatra, the queen who had recently threatened the Roman state paralleled by the queen who threatens the foundation of the people who will become the Romans. Following this approach, the Latin royal family would most obviously be linked to the imperial family in Rome[128]. Such a reading shows the possibility of political appropriation of mythology and epic[129]: the *Aeneid* may be read as a nationalistic poem and a glorification of Rome (despite its darker aspects). The contracting and controlling of the role of Vergil's Penelope-figure, read politically, could suggest a negative view of the role of women, such as Livia and Fulvia, in politics: the influence which such women could exert was certainly not always seen positively[130]. The quiet and dutiful Lavinia, her father's heir, exemplifies at least partially how a Roman royal daughter ought to behave, in strong contrast to the later history of Augustus' own daughter (and heir) Julia. Of course, the picture is greatly complicated by the constraints of genre which partly govern women's presentation in literature, not only in the archaizing context

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[128] Such a link may well be evoked by the description of the royal house in Latium as *tectum augustum*, 7.170.

[129] On Augustus' appropriation of Greek myth and art, see Zanker 1988, with particular reference to the *Aeneid* at pp.193f., 201-215.

[130] Cf. Fischler 1994, Lefkowitz 1983 pp.58-62.

of epic, but even in elegy with a contemporary setting[131]. These considerations, however, cannot suppress the striking contrast between the silent Lavinia and her Homeric models; even though Penelope is silenced on several occasions, she is allowed more speech and more power than her analogue in Vergil's poem. Similarly, Penelope is allowed to use her own wiles to keep off her suitors, while Lavinia, disquietingly, does not act on her own account, despite (possibly) being in love with Turnus. Lavinia may also be contrasted with the more outspoken women of elegy, where, as shown above, new Penelopes have been allowed to express things their epic predecessor could not.

Conclusion

An illuminating way in which to summarise the Augustan views of Penelope is to consider how the Homeric woman is given a voice, or how her voice is changed. In book 23 of the *Odyssey*, after their reunion, Odysseus and Penelope tell each other their tales of the previous twenty years. Although Odysseus has already narrated four books of his travels, his wanderings are told again at some length, in indirect speech. Penelope gets four lines (23.302-5). The first of the *Heroides* seeks to fill the gaps; however, it concentrates on aspects not covered by Homer's Penelope, and so the Ovidian Penelope omits mention of the weaving trick, which Homer's Penelope has recounted in *Od.* 19. In the same way, in Propertius' portrayal of Cynthia in 1.3 and 4.8 we may see a proxy for Penelope being given the words she could have said in the *Odyssey*, but did not. Cynthia in 1.3 contrasts with the Penelope figure whose role she claims, because Penelope did not revile her husband for his delay in returning in the Homeric poem - but if she had, we can imagine

[131] The genre of epic, drawing on Homer, would seem to place more constraints on women's behaviour than normal life in Rome actually required, cf. Balsdon 1962, Fantham *et al.* 1994 chs. 7-11; on Livia see Purcell 1986. The literary genres which had Greek roots would tend towards a more controlled, Greek perception of what the woman's role ought to be; cf. n.4 above.

her using words such as Cynthia's here (and, indeed, Cynthia's complaints are echoed by the elegiac Penelope of the *Heroides*). The letter of Arethusa to Lycotas too could be transferred to Penelope as a gentle reproach for the years of desertion. Linked to Penelope both by situation and via Propertius' earlier use of the mythical parallel in 3.12, Arethusa may easily be seen as speaking with Penelope's voice, uttering sentiments which an elegiac *puella* may, but an epic heroine may not express. Still more authoritative and demanding of submission from her man is the Cynthia of book four - to the extent that, in 4.8, she has taken on the role of Ulysses, leaving Propertius to play the abandoned Penelope (but this Penelope is the author, the origin of the main point of view expressed in the poem). In none of these, however, is the intelligence of Homer's Penelope really allowed to feature.

Augustan poets writing in other genres may be seen as reacting against the epic suppression of the woman's voice; elegy in particular becomes a place in which the woman's point of view is more at home. These poets give the mythological heroines a voice, allowing them to express things not dealt with in epic, including erotic passion - a contrast with the passive fidelity demanded of the epic heroine. Although Homer does allow descriptions of the horror of war, we do not get much in the way of complaints at the hardships. This appears in elegy, particularly in the form of women's complaints at the absence of men at war, something not voiced by the epic Penelope, but which these newer Penelopes feel free to express. In the epic, she laments the wasted years, but no more.

The presence of Penelope in Augustan poetry is thus not limited to those places where her name is mentioned. As well as explicit appearances and references to her as an *exemplum pudicitiae*, poets react to earlier tellings of the story, mainly that of Homer, in a variety of different ways. These shed interesting light both on Augustan views of Homer and on the use to which myths which are seen in generally simplistic terms may be put.

The figure of Penelope most often appears in Augustan poetry as static, trapped in the literary role of a paradigm of chastity and faithfulness[132]. This is only natural where she is mentioned in passing, and the focus is not on her; it is the more developed interpretations of Penelope offered by the various poets which can add variety and complexity to the figure of Penelope. The brief references may merely use the stereotype, a figure reduced to one or two major characteristics, or may react against it. The turning of a character into an *exemplum* of some characteristic leads to a general perception that there is only one possible conception of the character, but as later writers react against this orthodoxy the number of conceptions multiply. Despite the different views of Penelope offered by the various poems from this period, however, each new depiction seems to look more to the *exemplum* and the Homeric text (or at least the Homeric plot) than to the other developed depictions of Penelope with their own complexities. The simple picture of Penelope thus dominates the literature even as it is rewritten: Penelope may escape briefly from her strait-jacket, but is soon reconfined, and each new depiction tends to begin again from the original starting point, rather than building on the new and complex Penelopes.

[132] The static quality which Penelope may be seen as having in Augustan literature is pointed up explicitly by Penelope in the *Heroides*, 1.49-50:

> ... *maneo, qualis Troia durante manebam,*
> *uirque mihi dempto fine carendus abest*

(Suggested to me by E. Spentzou).

Conclusion

The end of the Augustan age was not, by any means, the end of references to Penelope in Classical art and literature, but there are (as far as we can tell) no further developed literary depictions. The different ways in which she is treated have all in effect been tried out by the end of the Augustan age: as exemplary good wife, as a developed character with her own agenda, and as paradoxically unfaithful and lascivious. With few exceptions, the complexity of developed treatments seems to be more a product of redefining her against her own stereotype than of reacting to earlier complex versions. The exceptions are the first *Heroides*, and Horace's *Satire* 2.5, both of which look to the Homeric text as well as to the paradigmatic figure. There is surely a Homeric background, too, to Penelope's typical portrayal in art as not attending to what is going on around her (for her mind is on other things); but in literature she weaves and unweaves, and she waits, occupations which, while based on the same conception of her character, are not so directly dependent on Homer's portrait.

After Ovid, Penelope continues to feature both in literature and on tombstones as the paradigm of the good and faithful wife[1], and the desire of later classical authors to play with this image does produce some memorable passages. For example, Martial in his epigram 11.62 uses Penelope, along with other famous good wives such as Cornelia, wife of Gracchus, and Julia, wife of Pompey, to illustrate his argument that a good wife should masturbate her husband (and so his should him): here Penelope is again seen as an exceedingly good wife, for she masturbated Ulysses even when he was asleep. It is notable that as time goes on, authors do not merely say that a woman is a Penelope (as in

[1] Cf. references labelled **P** in App. 2.

Martial *Ep.* 11.7), but that the woman they are praising surpasses Penelope (as Julian does talking of Eusebia's mother *Eulogia Eusebiae* 110c; she, as a widow, was so respectable that no suitor dared approach her, while Penelope had many). There is also a delight in undermining this image; most references to variant versions of her story survive from this period: for example, the scholiasts referring to Penelope as the mother of Pan, and citing other stories of her unfaithfulness[2]. *Priapea* 68, like Ovid *Am.* 1.8, has Penelope using the bow to test her suitors, as proof that none was as virile as her husband; Priapus takes a very earthy view of Penelope's wisdom: "*omnis | mens erat in cunno, Penelopea, tuo*" (lines 27-8). Lucian delights in the paradox of an Odysseus who wishes he had stayed with Calypso (*VH* 2.29)[3], and in the encounter between Hermes and his unknown son Pan, born to such a respectable mother (*Dialogi Deorum* 22). (His depictions of Penelope as chaste seem more linked to pictorial art than to literature.)

It was in the post-Augustan period that Penelope was adopted by the Neoplatonic philosophers as an image of Philosophy (see ch.4 above); this may have provided some of the impetus for the increased interest in the image of Penelope weaving and unweaving her web, an image surprisingly uncommon in antiquity considering its more central role in modern perceptions and depictions of Penelope. This image was also taken up by a handful of authors other than the philosophers. For Libanius and Theophylactus[4], the weaving of Penelope seems to represent merely a difficult task, involving the idea of untangling what has already been done. In Aristaenetus[5], the idea

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[2] Cf. pp.329-32 below.
[3] Discontented with his life in the Elysian Fields, Odysseus secretly asks Lucian to deliver a letter to Calypso.
[4] Libanius *Ep.*746 to Celsus, Theophylactus Simocatta *Ep.* 61.
[5] *Ep.* 1.28.

of weaving and then again unweaving is given an erotic twist, as it is applied to a lover who first encourages and enflames Nicostratus, but then turns cold and refuses him.

Throughout antiquity, there is thus a tendency for the simple picture of Penelope to be continually re-affirmed. She was probably a faithful wife in the original tale, but it is Homer's representation of Penelope which is the most important for later art and literature. Penelope's role as a paradigm is intriguing: she manages to keep this exemplary role despite the persistence of stories which have contradicted it. Several factors may contribute to this apparent conservatism. Possibly, the other myths about her had become known only to a literary elite, or the power of the story as told by Homer was such that, even if these stories were generally known, it was that story-line which provided the definitive version of Penelope. It is also in the interests of those who "play off" the simple Penelope that this simple picture be well known: without it their paradoxical treatments of Penelope would lose their novelty and impact. A similar dynamic can be seen in operation for "bad women" such as Clytaemnestra, Phaedra[6], or Medea, who may paradoxically be portrayed sympathetically (for example, Clytaemnestra in the *IA*, Medea in the *Argonautica*), and may also be seen in the appeal of proving Helen innocent. Again, in the *Phoenissae*, Euripides reverses the traditional characterisations of Eteocles and Polyneices; in order for this reversal to be most effective, the traditional characterisation must be known, thus providing a stable base from which the text can depart. Such paradoxical literary 'parole' does not, on the whole, affect the underlying mythological 'langue', though, in time, the cumulative effect of departure from the norm, in myth as in language, may be to introduce lasting

[6] Cf. pp.188-90 above.

change (as seen, for example, in the development of Theseus from Athenian hero in fifth-century Athenian drama, to a seducer who abandons the girl in Latin elegy).

In both literature and life, perception of character frequently starts from simplified stereotypes, judgements based on clothing, use of language, and gender, as well as on a simplified perception of behaviour. Stereotypes such as the dizzy blonde, the greedy and unscrupulous lawyer, the absent-minded professor, or the boring and philistine chemistry student, persist regardless of how many individual counter-examples one actually meets. A similar drive towards simplification and the desire to make a good story can be seen both in the literature of antiquity and in the media (and much popular literature) of today.

Although Penelope may remain the chaste and faithful wife throughout antiquity, that does not mean that there was no change in the use of myth throughout this period. As a greater body of literary versions of the myths built up, and as the families and institutions requiring a mythological background changed, certain stories and figures became more static and fixed as literary and artistic artefacts, a source for material for poetry, rhetoric, or other storytelling, rather than a living and constantly changing body of myth. The exemplary function of a figure would require that their story be, to a substantial degree, fixed, so that the very mention of the name would consistently evoke the particular scenario in question. As shown above, this seems to have happened to Penelope very early on.

The study of Penelope can also illuminate the importance of dealing with relationships between texts in intertextual terms, rather than focusing solely on pinning down exact allusions. Because the intertextual approach allows for verbal allusion to evoke not only the complex text alluded to but also a simplified memory of it, and other

versions of the characters in it, it shows how generalised or paradigmatic cultural figures can be brought into literature without mention of their names. It also relieves an interpreter from the necessity of pinning down allusion to a particular text: for example, whether Deianeira in the *Trachiniai* looks back to the Homeric Penelope or that of the Sophoclean *Niptra* (pp.178-82 above), whether Horace is looking back to Homer or Anacreon in *Odes* 3.7 (pp.285-8 above).

Thus by studying even the single figure of Penelope, we can learn something of ancient readings of Homer: in general, fifth-century writers tend to regard Penelope in terms of her role in the Odyssey-story, while Hellenistic and Augustan writers are more interested in the detail of the Homeric text itself[7]. This change in approach to reading Homer may have been a product of increasing literacy and availability of texts; it may also reflect the changing nature of the audience for the poetry we have: while fifth-century tragedy was performed for the whole citizen body, much later poetry seems to have been aimed at a more restricted audience. Homer was also read as a source of moral teaching[8], and this may have contributed to the reduction of characters to moral exemplars.

Without looking at other figures in more detail, it is not possible to generalise about a "mythological mentality" at any period of antiquity, but the case of Penelope may provide some pointers. The most notable feature of Penelope is how little most of the developed treatments seem to add to the tradition: the figure is developed and made more complex, but the next developed treatment will often go back to Homer or to the paradigmatic Penelope as the basis of the new version. This continual expansion and

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[7] Although the comments of Chaucer in *The Franklin's Tale* suggest that a simplified conception of Homer was passed on to mediaeval literature through the Latin reception of the text.
[8] Cf. Pl. *Hippias Min.*, Xenophanes DK 21 B 10, Heraclitus DK 22 B 57, Hdt. 2.53.

contraction of the character is a feature which would be useful in looking at other mythological figures, such as Ajax or Medea. Each time Penelope is opened up, subsequent writers do not develop the openings, but rather return each time to the closed, simple version of her character as their starting point: the simplicity is always the background against which larger-scale treatments are developed. This could arise from to the simplicity of her story (she is not traditionally heroic; she simply waits faithfully and endures) and to the way in which she embodies an ideal which did not change over such a long time in antiquity, and, indeed continued into the modern period[9]. Not until the twentieth century do we find real interest in Penelope for herself, as a woman in her own right, rather than merely a wife[10]. The relative stability of the image of Penelope, the good wife, illustrates the fact that, even though the social reality of women's life changed over the centuries, the ideal remained static; thus the image that Penelope had come to represent remained relevant and available for writers to reproduce and manipulate.

[9] Modern developed treatments of Penelope include Joyce's *Ulysses* (on which see L.E. Doherty "Joyce's Penelope and Homer's: Feminist Reconsiderations" *CML* 10 pp.343-9), Monteverdi's *Il Ritorno di Ulisse*, Nicholas Rowe's *Ulysses*; cf. D. Grigar "Penelopeia: The Making of Penelope in Homer's Story and Beyond" (unpublished Ph.D thesis, University of Texas).

[10] See, for example, Dorothy Parker's "Penelope" (see p.307), Molly Bloom in *Ulysses*.

In the pathway of the sun,
  In the footsteps of the breeze,
When the world and sky are one,
  He shall ride the silver seas,
    He shall cut the glittering wave.
I shall sit at home, and rock;
Rise to heed a neighbour's knock;
Brew my tea, and snip my thread;
Bleach the linen for my bed.
    They will call him brave.

Dorothy Parker, '*Penelope*'