**ATILIM UNIVERSITY**
**GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**
**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE**
**ENGLISH CULTURE AND LITERATURE MASTER'S PROGRAMME**

# A FEMINIST READING OF MYTHS: MARGARET ATWOOD'S *THE PENELOPIAD* AND ALI SMITH'S *GIRL MEETS BOY*

**Master's Thesis**

**Eylem ER**

**Ankara-2024**

GCPS

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**Thesis Advisor**

**Assoc. Prof. Dr. Kuğu TEKİN**

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## ACCEPTANCE AND APPROVAL

This is to certify that this thesis titled "A Feminist Reading of Myths: Margaret Atwood's *The Penelopiad* and Ali Smith's *Girl Meets Boy*" and prepared by Eylem ER meets with the committee's approval unanimously/by a majority vote as Master's Thesis in the field of English Culture and Literature following the successful defence conducted on 11/01/2024.

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## ETHICAL STATEMENT

I accept and acknowledge that I have prepared this thesis study, prepared in line with the Thesis Writing Guidelines of Atılım University Graduate School of Social Sciences;

- within the framework of academic and ethical rules;
- presented the information, documents, evaluations, and results in a way that meets the rules of scientific ethics and morality,
- I have referenced each work from which I have benefited while preparing my thesis, and that
- I hereby present a unique study.

I hereby also understand that I shall accept any loss of rights against my behalf in cases otherwise.

Date and Signature

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Eylem ER

# ÖZ

ER, Eylem. Mitlerin Feminist Bir Okuması: Margaret Atwood'un *The Penelopiad*'ı ile Ali Smith'in *Girl Meets Boy* Romanları, Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Ankara, 2024.

Yeniden yazım, yazarlar tarafından yaygın olarak kullanılan bir tekniktir. Bu bağlamda Canongate yayınevi tanınmış yazarları, Homer'in *The Odyssey*'i ve Ovid'in *Metamorphoses*'i gibi klasik eserleri yeniden yazma ve yorumlamaya davet etmiştir. Bu seride Margaret Atwood, Odessa mitini, erkek egemen bakış açısını değiştirip, Penelope ve on iki hizmetçinin hikayesini öne çıkararak yeniden şekillendirmiştir. Benzer bir şekilde, Ali Smith, *Girl Meets Boy* adlı romanında Ovid'in *Metamorphoses* adlı eserinde geçen kız-erkek Iphis'in hikayesini yeniden işlemiştir. Atwood'un tersine, Smith halihazırda var olan toplumsal cinsiyet akışkanlığı sorununu derinlemesine yansıtmıştır. Iphis'in hikayesini modernize ederek, Smith "toplumsal cinsiyet" kavramının zamansızlığını vurgulamıştır. Her iki yazar da ataerkil toplumlarda toplumsal cinsiyetin nasıl inşa edildiği ve mitlerde kadınların nasıl bastırıldığı, ihmal edildiği ve önemsenmedikleri gibi feminist kaygılar altında mit oluşturma ve mitleri yeniden yazmanın farklı noktalarını aktarmışlardır. Bu sebeple, bu tezin amacı bu mitleri yeniden yazan yazarların parodi, altüst etme ve pastiş gibi edebi araçlardan yararlanarak yeniden şekillendirdiği eserlerini incelemek ve çözümlemektir, aynı zamanda, eserlerde sunulan ana karakterler aracılığıyla bu yeniden yazımların kadınların özgürleşmesinin, özerkliğinin ve toplumsal cinsiyet akışkanlığının önemini temsil ettiği sonucuna varmaktır, bu karakterler; Penelope ve on iki hizmetçisi; Imogen ve Anthea'dır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Margaret Atwood, Ali Smith, yeniden yazım, mitler, toplumsal cinsiyet akışkanlığı, kadın özerklik

## ABSTRACT

ER, Eylem. A Feminist Reading of Myths: Margaret Atwood's *The Penelopiad* and Ali Smith's *Girl Meets Boy* Master's Thesis, Ankara, 2024.

Rewriting is a technique which is widely used by authors. Their aims of using this technique may vary, however, the publishing house Canongate, invites to reinterpret and rewrite the myths embedded in canonical works, such as Homer's *The Odyssey* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. In this series, Margaret Atwood reshapes the myth of Odysseus by changing the male-dominant perspective and prioritising the story of Penelope and the twelve maids. Likewise, Ali Smith in her novel titled *Girl Meets Boy* reworks the story of the girl-boy Iphis who is a character in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Contrary to Atwood, Smith delves into the already existing issue of gender fluidity in Ovid's work. By modernising the story of Iphis, Smith emphasises the perennial significance of the term "gender." Both authors reflect to illustrate different points in mythmaking and rewriting the myths under feminist concerns such as how gender is constructed in patriarchal societies and how women are suppressed, neglected, and underestimated in myths. Thus, the aim of this thesis is to examine and explore the works reshaped by the authors who retell the stories by utilising literary tools such as intertextuality, parody, subversion, and pastiche, and to conclude that these rewritings represent the liberation of women and the importance of autonomy and gender fluidity through main characters presented in the works: Penelope and her twelve maids; Imogen and Anthea.



**Key Words:** Margaret Atwood, Ali Smith, rewriting, myths, gender fluidity, female autonomy

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# INTRODUCTION

This thesis presents an exploration of postmodernist feminism within the boundaries of rewriting and intertextuality through Margaret Atwood's *The Penelopiad* and Ali Smith's *Girl Meets Boy* by discussing the subversions, autonomy of the characters, storytelling, and intertextuality within postmodern literature as well as parody and pastiche used by authors to demonstrate and emphasise women's ability to achieve storytelling and activism. The first chapter's title of *The Penelopiad*, "A Low Art", hints to readers that storytelling is conveyed by Penelope thus leading the grand narrative of Homer to be deconstructed and reconstructed through a different narrative and her account of the story. The subversions made explicitly by Atwood demonstrate and emphasise the importance of the autonomy of the characters and the vulnerability of grand narratives. Along with Penelope, Atwood endows the twelve hanged maids with a chorus voice through which they depict the instances and comment on events where they are raised, treated, and judged. In Smith's work, *Girl Meets Boy*, the reworking of one of the Ovidian tales is at the centre. Smith's emphasis is on how gender is constructed and fluid through her characters: Imogen, Anthea, and Robin, also known as Iphis. Around the centre of the novel, Smith focuses on political and social activism and highlights significant issues such as unequal payment of the two sexes and the water crisis. This study uses the ideas of several theorists, including Roland Barthes, John Barth, Judith Butler, Julia Kristeva, Linda Hutcheon, Helen Cixous and Gerard Genette concerning postmodernist literature, feminist rewriting, intertextuality, and fluidity of gender.

This study consists of three main chapters. The first chapter is divided into two parts in which first, the boundaries of rewriting and intertextuality within the postmodern literature are discussed. This section uses renowned writings by John Barth to highlight the history of rewriting in literature as well as the factors that contributed to its birth. One other important matter discussed in the initial section of the opening chapter is the concept of intertextuality, a term introduced by Julia Kristeva. The problem at hand is how the act of rewriting, within the framework of intertextuality, allows different authors to reestablish the connection between the past and the present. In the subsequent section of the initial chapter, an in-depth exploration is conducted of feminist rewriting and its connection to myths and legends. Renowned

authors employ contemporary postmodern tactics to illustrate and affirm the notion that female sexuality is subjugated and muted in canonical literary works, prompting them to reimagine, modify, reinterpret, and rewrite these texts from fresh viewpoints and understandings.

The initial section of the second chapter delves into the life and accomplishments of Margaret Atwood. While she rejects the feminist term, it is widely recognised that most of her work revolves around female characters and their narratives, which explore the challenges they face within a patriarchal culture. The second section of the second chapter examines *The Penelopiad* from the perspective of postmodernist rewriting, focusing on its utilisation of tactics such as subversion and parody. By employing postmodernist techniques, Atwood accomplishes a feminist reimagining of Homer's classic literary piece, *The Odyssey*. Atwood grants a voice not only to Penelope but also to her twelve hanged maids. Atwood's critique of great tales is evident in her portrayal of subjugated women in myths, highlighting the lack of representation of female characters. By demythologising this specific myth, Atwood allows readers to engage with an alternative narrative involving Penelope and the maids who were abandoned in the palace and faced challenges from the suitors. In addition, Penelope offers commentary on the topics about which she remains silent in the original epic, and she presents perceptive alternative narratives concerning her father's deeds and Odysseus' journey back to his homeland. Atwood highlights that mythological materials are typically passed orally, resulting in variations across different locations.

The last chapter consists of two sections. The first section deals with the life and literary achievements of Ali Smith. Unlike Atwood, in one of her interviews, she states that she is a feminist. In her works, she mostly questions the perception of gender and its fluidity. In *Girl Meets Boy*, she reworks one of the stories from Ovid's *Metamorphoses,* Iphis and Ianthe. Her subtle criticism regarding social institutions, gender, and feminism are among the common features of her writing. The second section of the last chapter analyses *Girl Meets Boy* regarding the theories of Judith Butler, Gerard Genette, Helen Cixous and Julia Kristeva. Taking intertextuality as the centre, Smith employs a postmodernist tactic, pastiche to show the universality of the term gender. Apart from these, Smith also presents autonomous characters and subverts the story into a more contemporary one in which several issues regarding

environmental problems, water crisis, payment inequality between men and women, and abortion of female children are discussed. Finally, in the concluding part of the study, the similarities and differences between the selected works are presented by drawing a parallel between the characters in two stories. In addition, it should be highlighted that although both novelists approach the issue at hand in quite different ways, their voicing of female experiences and their search for justice are similar; both Atwood and Smith present a challenge to metanarratives in patriarchal societies and to capitalism exploiting people all around the world.

# CHAPTER 1: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

## 1.1 Peripheries of Rewriting and Intertextuality in Postmodern Literature

*Rose is a rose is a rose is a rose*
*Loveliness extreme*
*Extra gaiters*
*Loveliness extreme*
*Sweetest ice-cream*
*Page ages page ages page ages*

-Gertrude Stein, "Emily Sacred"

The most memorable representation of rewriting in the scope of intertextuality is akin to Stein's poem, "Emily Sacred". The particularity of rewriting as a postmodern literary technique lies under the different expectations and perspectives of the relation between the reader and the writer which has been changed over the course of time. Since it includes the prefix "re", one might consider that there have been changes in the original text indicating possible interpretations. These interpretations have the utmost importance because they enable rotation among readers and writers. To demonstrate, a reader may become the writer at a point because s/he might feel the need to add another viewpoint to the text. Having written new versions of the old texts, one can simply observe the alteration of the role of the reader. In her article titled "About Two Concepts: Postmodernism and Rewriting" Haneş states that "[n]aturally, the author-text-reader relationship is also changed: the focus shifts from the author to the readers[...]" (51). Consequently, rewriting the original texts is the mere result born from the need to alter the relation between the reader and the writer, metamorphosing the viewpoints and adding new ones which have been ignored by authors whose language, thus their perceptions, is dominated by male-oriented societies. Haneş also points out the fact that even though this literary method has been employed for an extensive duration, postmodernism assigns it fresh interpretations, leading to a significant transformation in its purpose. As a result, exploring both the reworking within the postmodern context and its effects on narrative communication aspects—authorship, textuality, and reader engagement—becomes pertinent (52). That is to say, rewriting as a literary technique has been around throughout literary history, but it was not acknowledged as a writing technique before postmodernism.

Observing the literary canon, one could easily deduce that it mostly derives its origins of the story from history and historical events. Hence, the focus on the fundamental nature of the literary text and the world it constructs become the exclusive domain of postmodern literature, an environment that supports textual approaches like rewriting, intertextuality, and satire, as they can delve into the various ways in which postmodern writing exists (Haneş, 52). In other words, since postmodernism stands for almost every literary text that is written after modernism, and occasionally some works produced during modernism, it takes interest in many techniques and rewriting becomes one of them. It is significant to point out that the relationship between the past and postmodernism has an impact on the rewriting technique. Considering that each literary movement and era has its perception of the past, Eco highlights the postmodern one: "The postmodern reply to the modern consists of recognizing that the past, since it cannot be destroyed, because its destruction leads to silence, must be revisited: but with irony, not innocently" (Eco, 1994: 67-68). Therefore, it goes without saying that rewriting is not a simple reinterpretation of some old texts, it is a revisiting with a tone of irony, which enables readers/writers to criticise it on many levels.

For a better understanding of how rewriting emerges from the need for alteration in literary works, it is essential to mention John Barth's two noteworthy essays: *The Literature of Exhaustion* and *The Literature of Replenishment*. In these essays, Barth mentions the "used-upness" of literary conventions and their works. He emphasises the simple rule of the nature of change. The change in literature, like everything else, inspires and reflects new conventions and perspectives. He points out: "[A]rt, lives in human time and history, and general changes in its modes and materials and concerns [...] are doubtless as significant as the changes in a culture's general attitudes" (200). Therefore, art and human life are considered to be inseparable. He also mentions the role of imitation and its inevitable nature considering "[...]Quixote imitating Amadis of Gaul, Cervantes pretending to be the Cid Hamete Benengeli (and Alonso Quijano pretending to be Don Quixote), or Fielding parodying Richardson" (Barth 72). Hence, these two significant essays emphasise the exhaustion of literature and its conventions, and the only way to exhilarate its modes and materials is to alter it entirely because "artistic conventions are liable to be retired, subverted, transcended, transformed, or even deployed against themselves to generate new and lively work"

(Barth 205). Consequently, with the help of postmodernism and its renewal techniques such as subversion, parody and pastiche within the scope of intertextuality, as Barth suggests, literature could be reborn out of its own past, its old traditions and its own ashes.

It is of paramount importance to point out the declaration of "The Death of the Author" by Roland Barthes to comprehend the birth of rewriting as a postmodern technique. In the opening line of his noteworthy article, Barthes quotes Balzac's *Sarrasine* and refers to a scene where the speaker describes a woman. He uses this scene to question the author and hero of the story because he emphasises the fact that this description cannot belong to either of them by saying "[w]e shall never know, for the good reason that writing is the destruction of every voice, of every point of origin" (142). However, the writer has been the core of writing for many centuries. People tend to attribute the work according to its writer, the persona created by the writer. It could be said that many critics and readers approach a piece of writing mostly by its writer and his/her accomplishments and breakthroughs. Barthes highlights it as the author remains dominant, both in the study of literature, the lives of writers documented in biographies, interviews, and magazines, and even in the minds of literary figures eager to connect their personal lives with their work through diaries and memoirs. In everyday culture, the perception of literature is overwhelmingly focused on the author—his identity, experiences, preferences, and emotions (143). Although writing is not mentioned as the exit of the writer, according to Barthes, it always causes a disconnection between the writer and the written. He later explains: "The voice loses its origin, the author enters into his own death, writing begins" (142).

Marking the death of the author, Barthes emphasises the significance of the writing itself, separated from its author, speaker or persona. However, upon this declaration, it is inevitable to ask an essential question seeking the nature of the writing. According to Barthes, Stéphane Mallarmé was likely the first to recognise and anticipate, to its fullest extent, the need to replace the individual who had traditionally been assumed to be the possessor of language with language itself. It is the language itself that communicates, not the author. Writing entails achieving a state of necessary impersonality where only the language itself functions and not the individual, moving from 'me' to a point where language alone performs (143). That is to say, traditionally, language was often associated with individual authors or speakers. However,

Mallarme recognised the importance of emphasizing language's inherent qualities and power, rather than merely considering it as a tool of personal expression. Therefore, writing associated with language is free from any recognition of the author. Consequently, in Roland Barthes' noteworthy essay, intertextuality reaches its greatest extent when the author is no longer the source of the work and instead, subjectivity is gradually disassembled and reassembled through language.

Another turning point for rewriting to be considered a literary technique in postmodern literature is the intertextuality coined by Julia Kristeva in her article titled "Word, Dialogue and Novel" (1996). She introduced the idea of intertextuality, suggesting that the text should be viewed as a dynamic space where the emphasis is on relational processes and practices rather than on static structures and products. In "Word, Dialogue, and Novel," she describes the "literary word" as a convergence of textual surfaces rather than a fixed point or meaning, resembling a dialogue among multiple writings (Alfaro 268). This clarification on the infrastructure of intertextuality led the way to the rewriting because, with the help of the understanding that every text is a different version of another text, this understanding and enlightenment affected writers to pursue and draft untold stories of the characters in mythology and legendary tales. Therefore, rewriting the same story based on mythology with a different main character became popular among writers and readers. The proclamation of the author's being dead with postmodern literature, every reader has a claim and role to tell the events from different points of view. Consequently, a very well-known publishing house called Canongate invited many contemporary novelists and short story writers to rework stories from legendary tales in a series called *The Myths Collection*.

What may also spark the way to rewriting is the change in seeking originality in literary works. For quite a long time, originality has been a quintessential feature for literary writers and critics. It dominated many eras such as the Middle Ages, the Renaissance and the Eighteenth century onwards. The latter even emphasises writer's accomplishments according to their creativity and originality in their works. However, with the introduction of intertextuality, the acceptance of inclusiveness of every text that has been written over the course of time makes it impossible for writers and readers to pursue and seek originality in literary works. Alfaro states that "T.S. Eliot was perhaps the first to state the fact that the most individual parts of an author's work may be those in which his/her ancestors are more vigorously present" (270). In other

words, T.S. Eliot points out that even though authors assume an original particularity in their works, they fall into error since everything is connected. Every literary product they produce carries an essence of their ancestors. Consequently, Eliot's notions of quasi-intertextuality, emphasizing the simultaneous nature of all literary works and the ongoing process of readjusting their relationships, remain remarkably current (Alfaro 270). As Barthes puts it: "To try to find the 'sources', 'the influences' of a work, is to fall in with the myth of filiation" (160). Additionally, it can be traced that authors consciously or unconsciously make use of rewriting. However, many contemporary authors deliberately utilise rewriting in their works with the help of literary tools such as imitation, subversion, parody, and quotations. As stated before, rewriting and intertextuality were not time-bounded and could be traced in many eras. Nevertheless, the pivotal development that distinguishes Kristeva's introduction of intertextuality, building upon Bakhtin's theories, is the perspective that considers the external elements of the text as a network of other textual constructs. In this approach, when a text refers to "all other texts," these are perceived as intersecting with both history and reality, each one manifesting solely in a textualized manner (Alfaro 271).

One of many features of the novel as a popular genre among others is the possibility of recreating a connection between past and present. As the name suggests, when compared to other genres, it is new and dynamic. Thus, it has better and rigid connections with the present. Nonetheless, it does not suggest that the novel could not provide roots and connections to the past. Specifically, postmodernist literature and its highly functional tools help authors to recreate old ties related to other genres such as epic, legendary and fairy tales. Alfaro also states that the novel can frequently centre around the past, yet even in such instances, the present, with its inherent openness, would consistently serve as the foundation upon which the depiction of the past is organised (275). Hence, this intertwined relationship between the past and present might lead authors and readers to revise, rethink, and recreate texts from other eras and genres. Consequently, it can be seen that many texts and tales are reworked by authors to demonstrate new perspectives and tell new stories out of old ones. Their various concerns about feminist representations, gender equality, and stories behind the curtains are what create rewriting in its current function as a literary device.

Regarding the motivations of readers/writers to pursue rewriting in the scope of intertextuality, it could be stated that the anonymity of legendary tales and

mythological stories provides the benefits of doubt to create reworking of these stories. The concept of anonymity was implied in Kristeva's description of the “absorption” of social texts since the social might be viewed as the web of fictitious concepts, cliches, and commonplaces that serve as one's background in life (Alfaro 278). The absorption of old texts and the web of countless quotations as well as the oral tradition of many legendary and mythological tales provide sturdy grounds for authors. Hence, Barthes places a strong emphasis on the commonplace: "The citations which go to make up a text are anonymous, untraceable, and yet already read" (1990, 160). Barthes' concept of the "already read" goes beyond the notion that we all have common knowledge, whose sources we cannot name. Nonetheless, it could be traced that the birth of a rewriting derives from either inconsistency with original works and protesting the versions they present or the celebrations and elaborations of these stories in accordance with contemporary problems of today’s world and its current issues. To demonstrate, Margaret Atwood points out that

> Homer’s *Odyssey* is not the only version of the story. Mythic material was originally oral, and also local – a myth would be told one way in one place and quite differently in another. […] The story as told in *The Odyssey* doesn’t hold water: there are too many inconsistencies (xix).

On the one hand, having an orally conveyed mythic material and disparity of the story at hand leads to telling another version of the story and *The Penelopiad* is the reworking of the myth of Odyssey with Penelope narrating her own story behind the curtains of male-dominant society. On the other hand, Ali Smith simply celebrates the myth of Iphis. Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Book 9, is where the Iphis myth first appears. Ali Smith states: “It is one of the cheeriest metamorphoses in the whole work, one of the most happily resolved of its stories about the desire for and the ramifications of change” (163). Henceforth, there are two quite particular methods according to the purpose of the author. Is it for celebration or evaluation?

To be able to increase the degree of interpretive conciseness, intertextual reading is an indispensable process during the reworking of a text. After Kristeva, Derrida and Barthes, there have been three other significant critics who have been interested in the theory of intertextuality. First of all, Michel Riffaterre, who defines two kinds of reading, defends that intertextual reading is the sense of similar comparabilities between texts, or it could be the presumption that such comparing must be done even when there isn't an intertext available to look for comparisons (Alfaro

279). Therefore, pursuing intertextual reading whether it includes an intertext or not is the first essential step for rewriting an old text, specifically if it is a mythological one since their origins and versions differ, therefore, they are quite open to interpretation. Riffaterre also highlights that literary comprehensive reading is attainable if the reader acknowledges that the text expresses an intertextual presupposition to the point that the text can be viewed as an accumulation of presuppositions rather than just a collection of words arranged in syntagms (Alfaro 279). In his perception of centralised presuppositions in intertextual reading, Jonathan Culler shares similar concepts of intertextual theory with Riffaterre. However, in order to avoid the risk of attempting to explore intertextuality, unlike Kristeva and Barthes put forward, Culler suggests adhering to the linguistic model and concentrating instead on a text's relationship to particular antecedents, which is more in line with influence studies (Alfaro 280). What Culler asserts might be the most ideal one in terms of linguistic studies and revealing only the implicit features of language. However, it might not be practically helpful while reworking a legendary tale or a mythological one. Last, but not least, it is thought that Genette's strategy is an effort to define intertextuality more precisely. Essentially, he focuses on the literary text in its most literal sense. He claims that the term *intertextuality* is insufficient and suggests *transtextuality* instead, which he defines as everything that connects one text to another, whether explicitly stated or implicitly. Despite focusing on the specific literary work, he recognises that it can no longer be analysed in an empty setting (Alfaro 280).

Among three critics who have interests in intertextuality and its reading, Riffaterra is the one who puts forward comparability between the text and the intertext, and Genette is the one who delves into a detailed categorization of intertextuality and formulates *transtextuality.* Philippe Carrard points out that Genette ignores issues related to paratextuality—the relationship between the text and its title, preface, notes, illustration, etc.—and intertextuality, which is more precisely defined as the practice of quotation, plagiarism, and allusion. Metatextuality refers to how a text relates to its interpretations, while architextuality deals with how a text relates to a genre or class of texts. He confines the scope of his research to hypertextuality, which is any relationship—as distinct from that of the commentary—between a text B (the hypertext) and an earlier text A (the hypotext) (205). The hypertext and hypotext relation could be traced in many reworked texts, for instance, *The Penelopiad* and

*Ulysses* are the hypertext of *The Odyssey.* Another example could be *Aeneid* for *The Odyssey* again. However, the former and latter examples are the two distinct approaches of hypertext representations in postmodern literature in terms of using rewriting as a literary tool. Whereas *The Penelopiad* and *Ulysses* seem to modify the hypotext, *Aeneid* emulates it. Another example of emulation is *Girl Meets Boy* by Ali Smith. She reworks a tale in *Metamorphoses* written by Ovid. In her version of girl-boy Iphis's story, she also modifies the characters, unlike Atwood and Joyce, what she delves into is the perennial significance of the term "gender". Consequently, hypertextuality by Genette and intertextuality by Kristeva "[rest] on a fundamental dichotomy, the poles of which would be transformation and imitation" (Carrard). Indeed, both terms explore mostly shared jurisdiction of written and rewritten texts in postmodern literature, which is why, in support of Linda Hutcheon's claim that most discussions of intertextuality, no matter how formalistic they have tried to sound, ultimately consider the role of the reader, Genette even goes so far as to say that the hypertext necessarily gains in some way or another from the reader's awareness of its signifying and determining relationships with its hypotexts (Alfaro 281).

Indeed, according to Clayton and Rothstein, what critics, authors, and readers deal with intertextuality, namely hypertextuality, and its reading might derive from the notion that Hans Robert Jauss calls "the horizon of expectation". This notion is similar to intertextuality since it asserts the idea that "the reader's horizon is constructed by an inherited system of norms and conventions" (Alfaro 282). According *to A Dictionary of Media and Communication*, it is also the common "mental set" or framework that members of a specific generation in a culture use to comprehend, analyse, and assess a work of literature or art. This encompasses social knowledge (e.g., moral codes) and textual knowledge of expectations and conventions (e.g., genre and style). It is the idea that reading is historically varied, as are the meanings that result from it. The phrase is essential to Jauss's theory of reception. Henceforth, whichever rewritten text is created, it is born out of a unique reader/author and her/his understanding of social conventions and historical knowledge. To demonstrate, with the birth of postmodernism, its challenges against grand narratives provoke readers/authors to write various versions of an old text from the canon. Therefore, authors who rewrite canonical texts are the readers who have the essential "horizon of expectations" with their education, cultural and social background. Clayton and

Rothstein add “the notion of ‘repertoire of the text’, a repertoire that exists only in the reader and is activated by ‘references to earlier works, or social and historical norms, or to the whole culture from which the text has emerged” (26). As a result, unlike any other literary tool, rewriting could be considered the result of a reader’s mind and his/her attempt to defy the established set of customs and norms of society.

In conclusion, the unique characteristics of rewriting as a postmodern literary device stem from the evolving expectations and viewpoints around the relationship between readers and writers. Its connection with the past makes rewriting a fundamental literary tool to alter canonical works. However, rewriting in a postmodern sense is not only interpreting old texts. These interpretations should mostly criticise elements and features of old texts in the canon. With John Barthes’ exclamation of exhaustion in literature, it is now acknowledged that postmodernist literature would gabble with new conventions and literary tools. The boundaries of rewriting and intertextuality appear to be the ultimate attempt to exhilarate “used-upness” in literature. Of course, with the declaration of the death of the author, the distinct line between readers and writers is blurred. Thus, every reader bears a possible writer, and when writing begins, authors exit. Moreover, intertextuality, coined by Julia Kristeva provides a dynamic approach to texts. This approach asserts the idea that every text bears an essence of another assisting authors to rethink, revise, and eventually rewrite.

In terms of rewriting legendary tales and mythological stories, different viewpoints are now revealed by contemporary writers such as Jeanette Winterson, Ali Smith, Margaret Atwood, and David Grossman. Another motive for rewriting and intertextuality becoming popular is the altered notion of searching for originality in writing. Additionally, the anonymity of folk tales, legends, mythological stories, and fairy tales offers an appropriate infrastructure for writers to pursue rewriting these forms of tales. Similar, but with a little difference to Kristeva, Gerard Genette categorises intertextuality into different headings and one of them, hypertextuality elaborates on a significant aspect of intertextuality, which is the relation between a hypotext (an earlier text) and a hypertext. Last but not least, the concept called “horizon of expectation” may shed light on both canonical works and rewritten versions of them. It could be considered helpful in terms of understanding the notion of commonly accepted norms and conventions of society. Therefore, the postmodern pulse in literature acknowledges the aptitude of authors and readers conveying

consensuses and urges the need to defy societal inclination by utilizing rewriting as a tool.

### 1.2 Representations of Feminist Rewriting in Postmodern Literature

*In the pathway of the sun,*
*In the footsteps of the breeze,*
*Where 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"

The fact that people would call Odysseus "brave" might be the starting point for women writers to write about women whose points of view are deliberately obfuscated and neglected. Indeed, the poem also asserts the idea that women are left isolated in their domestic lives whereas men fight at wars "bravely" and are remembered as such. In fact, this is the reason why Helen Cixous discusses women's writing in *The Laugh of the Medusa* as follows,

> Woman must write herself: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies – for the same reasons, by the same law, with the same goal. Woman must put herself into the text – as into the world and into history – by her own movement (875).

In other words, she points out an obvious fact that by writing, women would exist as bravely as men in the world, in history as well as in literature. Whilst writing itself may assist women to claim their part in literature, Harriet M. MacMillan highlights that examining classic texts from alternative critical perspectives may present an opportunity to reevaluate some of the fundamental problems with patriarchal discourse in literature (45). Therefore, endorsing the idea of revising and recreating old texts which enforce a patriarchal discourse and convey male-dominant ideas of women's representation would cause readers and authors to question societal norms and conventions.

Although an old text may vary, it is commonly assumed that myths are the oldest versions of texts and stories usually told anonymously. However, most of these mythological stories are observed to be written by male authors such as Homer, Ovid, Hesiod, and Virgil. Thus, to exhilarate new conventions and paradigms in literature, women writers aim to change the representations of women characters in these ancient tales. The act of rewriting becomes an importunate attempt since as Sam McBean points out, reflecting on the past would always bring us full circle to myth: "It seems to be bound up in considerations of what it means to turn to the past – it seemingly always asks us to consider the relationship between past and present" (30). Henceforth, women writers writing about women and women characters in legends and myths could be an opportunity to alter the old patriarchal point of view and replenish "used-upness" conventions and approaches in canonical works. This way, the path between the past and the present; men and women; "riding the silver seas" and "brewing tea and snipping the thread" might be reinstated.

When it is accepted to recreate old texts from new perspectives, why should authors specifically rewrite myths? In her thesis, Harriet M. MacMillan answers this question that it could also be because of everything aforementioned above: it shapes our language, it has been a fundamental component of a certain kind of privileged Western education, and it features stories that are still recounted today but suggest—if not actively promote—elements of gender discrimination (46). Upon analysing women in mythological stories, it is observed that most of them are submissive, oppressed and ignored. They are treated as objects that could convey wealth and inheritance from one man to another and could give birth to children whose destinies would be again based on their gender. Since male writers and artists have passed down a significant amount of our knowledge of classical mythology, the stories they tell and the language they employ are both products of and aiding in the maintenance of patriarchal systems. To demonstrate, numerous stories are told in which Zeus, who is a mighty god of gods, attempts to rape many women. In these stories, Zeus does not stop until he achieves what he seeks. He frequently behaves in ways that go against the wishes of the women he selects. Another instance could be the transformation of Medusa's hair into snakes just because the gods believe she is guilty. Daphne and Persephone are also the victims of gods in mythical stories. The former turns into a tree just to dispose of Apollo who persistently tries to pursue her, and the latter is

kidnapped by the god of the underworld, Hades. Hence what Zajko and Leonard say supports the idea of myths' inherent nature as follows, "these myths are, after all, not only the products of an androcentric society, but they can also be seen to justify its most basic patriarchal assumptions" (3). Therefore, myths discriminate between two genders. Male-dominant societies and their use of language and literature are promoted by telling and retelling these mythical stories. Diana Purkiss asserts the idea that how "for feminists, the rewriting of myths denotes participation in the struggle to alter gender asymmetries agreed upon for centuries by myth's disseminators" (441). As such, the narratives found in classical mythology serve to uphold patriarchal civilizations through both language and components. In order for feminist writers to uncover oppressed women and their perspectives, they must recreate these mythical tales.

In postmodern literature, authors often employ literary devices like parody, pastiche, and subversion along with the notion of autonomy and gender fluidity in the process of recreating mythological texts in order to fulfil the void representing female characters, their side of the story and to explore the norms and notions of the term gender in mythological stories. In her dissertation, Leyla Adıgüzel points out the understanding and definition of parody for Gerard Genette. To put it succinctly, Genette's phrase "parody" describes the subject-level relationship or transition that occurs between a main text and a referent text when a noble and serious subject is brought as close as possible to an ordinary, real-world, and modern one (Genette 1997). In other words, parody is the alteration that enables and endorses noble texts – epic and drama genres which are considered to be "high" arts – into becoming contemporary ones in the hands of postmodernist authors. Adıgüzel adds more to the point made above,

> It is what Atwood does in the process of transformation of Homer's classical epic *The Odyssey* into an accessible modern one by destroying its nobility thus bringing it closer to the lower one complying with the conventions of contemporary literature (51).

Therefore, the attempt to rewrite is not only distinguishing the voice of female characters but also the transformation of the epic genre into a postmodern one.

The use of parody creates a significant transformation by changing the elements of both the story and the form of the genre. In fact, the inconsistency between the parodic text and the parodied one—which is produced by parody—is what draws

mockery, not the inherent disharmony of the parody itself. Nonetheless, Adıgüzel highlights a paramount aspect of parody about its connection to irony: "It is aimed at teasing and having fun rather than being satirical during the process of parodying that is realised according to imitation relationship" (33). In the hands of most postmodernist authors, utilizing parody provides strength in terms of enabling new concepts in myths and legends. On the one hand, these mythological and legendary tales are recognised for conveying concepts and viewpoints based on a patriarchal culture and its customs, the framework for feminist rewriting is well-structured since self-reflective narrators are used, as in Margaret Atwood's *The Penelopiad*, and a variety of voices are included. On the other hand, "Purkiss warns that changing the voice of a myth can serve to strengthen its power and thus we can see how the feminist writer may find herself charged with patriarchal connection" (MacMillan 47). Consequently, in terms of rewriting the myths, there are two opposite opinions and approaches. One of them argues that rewriting is the only way to deconstruct and reconstruct what has been transmitted over the centuries related to gender equality and the other defends that rewriting the myths by using a language and culture that already belong to the patriarchal discourse of societies would only enhance the norms and conventions presented by them.

The term parody, as Linda Hutcheon points out, has a long history, and is frequently employed in postmodernist literature. So far, the term "parody" has been defined in several ways. A parodia is defined as "a parodia made up of a prefix (para), which can indicate either "against" or "beside," and a noun (ode), which means "song," according to Canadian theorist Hutcheon (32). In the aforementioned sections of intertextuality, the contributions of Gerard Genette are highlighted and here, regarding the definitions of parody, he, again, marks the term for clarification as follows, a parody is "[...]singing beside that is, singing off key; or singing in another voice- in counterpoint; or again, singing in another key- deforming, therefore, or *transposing* a melody" (10). While parody, pastiche, and burlesque are frequently used interchangeably, by Mikhail Bakthin, as well as regards them as nearly interchangeable, Linda Hutcheon and Gerard Genette discern obvious distinctions between them. To impose the utmost understanding, the definition of parody in the *Glossary of Literary Terms* clearly states that

> a parody imitates the serious manner and characteristic features of a particular literary work, the distinctive style of a particular author, or the typical stylistic and other features of a serious literary genre and deflates the original by applying the imitation to a lowly or comically inappropriate subject (Abrams 38).

Furthermore, in the history of literature that parody is employed, there are several examples; the epic style of John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667) is ridiculed in John Phillips' "The Splendid Shilling" (1705) by elaborating on its lofty formality and using it to depict a frayed poet writing in a drafty attic. In Joseph Andrews (1742), Henry Fielding satirises Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (1740–41) by substituting a robust masculine protagonist for Richardson's sexually troubled woman (Abrams 38). Apart from these examples, the serious manner of the epic genre and the characteristics such as representations of heroic men rather than women are the two significant features that most feminist writers are interested in mythical stories. To demonstrate, "Wittig's lesbian *Iliad* radically transforms what she sees as a founding text of patriarchal oppression" (Zajko, Leanord 2). Henceforth, the use of parody is an essential attempt to define new perspectives in canonical works. Its utilization not only signals the injustice that has been done to women but also demonstrates the stories untold and neglected on purpose.

The notion of the relation between the past and the present remarkably affects the literary devices, in this case, such as parody. Adıgüzel highlights significant parodic examples from history and points out that

> Relation between James Joyce's Ulysses and Homer's Odyssey; T.S. Eliot's *Waste Land* and Dante's *Inferno* may be considered to be apparent examples of the relevant topic. Presumably, the main difference is that modernism uses parody to question the main text, while postmodernism uses it to transform, rework, distort or highlight its deficiencies (39).

In other words, parody touches and mocks the unique features or admirable qualities of these canonical stories in order to utilise them against their adversary. It could even be referred to as a detour in essence. Therefore, by foregrounding their works about the same subject in the history of literature, namely the mythical stories, postmodernist and feminist authors attempt to narrate the works with new viewpoints incompatible with the epic world. Thus, the traditions of myth and epic could be deconstructed and reconstructed whilst interrogated. In this regard, Hutcheon defends that postmodern parody questions the "unacknowledged modernist assumptions about closure,

distance, artistic autonomy, and the apolitical nature of representation" (99). In addition, Zajko and Leonard draw attention to Elizabeth Cook's approach in terms of evoking the urge for feminist rewriting about Helen, who flees to another man and causes the Trojan War: "Having ideas about her [Helen] is not the same as 'seeing' her – an interesting phrase, given that it is Helen's visual identity which has become so iconic" (2). Resulting from the interrogation of modernist presumptions and the urge to retell what has been told based on the male gaze, postmodern parody contributes the most in terms of rewriting legendary and mythological stories.

A postmodern literary device that most feminist and postmodernist authors employ in their works, in addition to parody, is pastiche. The following is the definition and explanation of the term found in *A Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*:

> [a] patchwork of words, sentences or complete passages from various authors or one author. It is, therefore, a kind of imitation and, when intentional, may be a form of parody. An elaborate form of pastiche is a sustained work (say, a novel) written mostly or entirely in the style and manner of another writer. (Cuddon, 644)

Pastiche, which originated in France during the 18th century, was initially derived from the Italian word "pasticcio." Pastiche and pasticcio are defined in this sense as compositions by multiple writers or as works that incorporate stylistic elements from the works of other artists or authors. Up to the 1980s, French pastiche writing traditions and critics defined pastiche, as a genre of literature and other diverse fields of study. Eventually, the idea was explored in many contexts and languages other than English in Europe, but it still lacks a universally recognised definition.

Nevertheless, Ingeborg Hoesterey emphasises that pastiche is viewed as borrowing only the "feathers," that is, as focusing only on the surface characteristics of the model work that is being imitated. Following Mormantel's critical evaluation of pastiche, critics saw the literary pastiche emerging in France for the majority of the nineteenth century as a copy of a better model that was mainly imitated by adapting its flaws (496). Hence, these imitations, borrowing the features of a canonical work, writing while correcting the weaknesses of old texts, and patching sentences or phrases, sometimes a whole story indicate that pastiche bears numerous possibilities within it. It is used widely and is open for alterations which signify the infrastructure of what postmodernist and feminist authors need to utilise in their works. Moreover,

its definition is still in question until Proust's Pastiches et mélanges. "For Proust, according to Denis Hollier, the pastiche is not so much writing but reading – pastiche as the ideal form of creative critical activity, as Auseinandersetzung, the coming to grips of a writer with the works of revered authors" (Hoesterey 496). Proust's perception of pastiche is more applicable to feminist postmodern rewritings since they also make use of pastiche as a reading process rather than telling or retelling old texts. By applying a reading process before they rework canonical works, feminist authors enable themselves to interpret mythical stories and legends from various points of view.

Naturally, pastiche helps a lot of postmodernist writers add their commentary and interpretations to their works. It results from a shift in perspective from a pessimistic to a more optimistic one. Additionally, Hoesterey states that understanding pastiche's liberation as a critical mode requires understanding the fusion of "High" and "Low" cultural discourses, which were initially put forth by Leslie Fiedler and Ihab Hassan (498). In other words, pastiche's crucial role in postmodern literature stems from the blurring of the boundaries between high and low culture. Pastiche exists in the imitated relationship of one text to another text, formerly mentioned as hypertext and hypotext. Authors utilise this critical mode when they want to imitate the style, however, there is also a possibility that the mere part of pastiche would appear as an insertion of a story. Adıgüzel emphasises this relation: "Instead of transforming the style of the text and creating a new text, as in parody and burlesque travesty, the writer merely imitates the style. […] It is possible to see the repetitive themes in the pastiche technique in which a literary genre can also be imitated" (41). In other words, unlike parody in which authors create and recreate, pastiche demonstrates a different dimension of the relationship between the hypertext and hypotext. Additionally, "in pastiche, the author does not specifically aim to mock, entertain, or ridicule, as in parody. [It] may contain comic elements, but pastiches are not aimed at comedy unless the original work being imitated is intended to be humorous" (Adıgüzel 41). Consequently, even though parody and pastiche are both literary devices in postmodern literature and numerous authors use them to criticise, interpret or imitate, there are serious differences in the notion of parody and pastiche. Pastiche can be considered a mere imitation whereas parody aims at mocking, and ridiculing while criticizing.

In contrast to the aim of parody, the texts including pastiche are revisiting the glory of the old ones. In a way, authors use pastiche to glorify what older texts mentioned many years ago. It can be understood that in pastiches, there is a homage to classical works and their goal is to demonstrate and convey an important effect. To emphasise the differences between parody or caricature and pastiche, Gerard Genette also attempts to define the pastiche, however, his definition differs from other critics: pastiche is "an imitation in a playful mode whose primary function is pure entertainment […] (85). With this understanding of pastiche in mind, some authors choose to use pastiche for humorous effects whereas others may experience a mixed notion of pastiche such as using it for both critical and comical pursuits and they pay homage to the original text and its author. Furthermore, many critics and theorists use these two terms, parody, and pastiche, reciprocally. Adıgüzel points out that those who use these terms interchangeably when discussing the existence or imitation of another discourse in one's own speech include Marcel Proust, Mikhail Bakthin, and Umberto Eco, the Italian philosopher (42). Henceforth, although there are various approaches to the definition of pastiche, some critics and philosophers use them as the same literary devices and perceive them as the same notion. However, Genette is the one who puts forward another understanding and definition of pastiche, thus separating it from the concept of parody. Linda Hutcheon simply describes parody as a transformative literary technique while pastiche is merely based on imitating and interpreting to, sometimes, criticise, pay respect, and replenish the story in a more contemporary way.

In conclusion, the representations of women in mythical and legendary stories are problematic in terms of lacking the essential description, dialogue, and viewpoints of women characters. How are the falsified and lacking representations corrected through literary devices in postmodern literature? The answer is that most feminist and postmodernist authors employ pastiche, parody including subversion along with the notion of autonomy of these women as well as discussing and celebrating the term gender. Their starting point to correct these wrongdoings for women is mythology since it is the unity of stories that tell and explain everything in the social order. This order is mostly a patriarchal system of society, thus creating a huge void for women's representations in mythical stories. For instance, when examined, most women are victimised through male actions and desires. Furthermore, these stories are mostly

narrated in the third person and sometimes, there is a first-person narration. However, neither of these narrations is from a woman's viewpoint. In some of the stories, only the names of women are mentioned, but their voices are generally lost in perspective. Henceforth, the urge and the pulse in postmodernist literature assist feminist authors in filling the void in mythology by providing a variety of rewriting and reworking of old stories. There are numerous alterations made by authors to reinforce different points of view. Nonetheless, these alterations are not necessarily made to mock, ridicule, or harshly criticise the hypertext. By using pastiche, which is assumed different from parody whereas some authors use them interchangeably, authors may attempt to make an effect or take attention of readers to a universal matter such as gender. Consequently, within the scope of this thesis, The Penelopiad and Girl Meets Boy are to be explored with the understanding and practising of rewriting as a literary method along with the literary devices, in this case, parody and pastiche. The method and the devices are both utilised in these two novels in order to emphasise the notion of autonomy and the term gender. Even though these novels have their share of differences, their similarity is in their focus on female characters in mythological stories. Thus, autonomous female selves and the term gender with its inclination to change over time are foregrounded within the scope of this study.

## CHAPTER 2: *THE PENELOPIAD* BY MARGARET ATWOOD: A STORY FROM HADES

### 2.1 Margaret Atwood: Reflections of Feminist Rewritings

*When I was young, I believed that "nonfiction" meant "true." But you read a history written in, say, 1920 and a history of the same events written in 1995 and they're very different. There may not be one Truth - there may be several truths - but saying that is not to say that reality doesn't exist.*

Margaret Atwood

Margaret Eleanor Atwood, a prominent figure in the literary world, was born in Canada in the year 1939. She has gained recognition for her contributions as a novelist, poet, critic, academic, and social activist. She started to write at the age of six. Edgar Allan Poe held a significant place in her literary preferences during her formative years due to his uncanny and mysterious literary compositions. Margaret Atwood obtained her bachelor's degree from the University of Toronto after her resolute decision to embark on a writing vocation at the age of sixteen. Initially, she enrolled at Victoria College. Atwood's acquisition of biblical and legendary imagery skills was facilitated by her tutelage under the renowned critic Northrop Frye (Hayne and Kellett-Betsos 2006). Atwood subsequently employed these acquired skills in select literary works. At nineteen, Margaret Atwood, a young undergraduate student, made her debut as a published poet. This noteworthy achievement occurred during her tenure as a contributor to the literary journal of her institution. In conjunction with her renowned literary works such as *The Robber Bride*, *The Handmaid's Tale*, *Cat's Eye*, *Alias Grace*, and *The Blind Assassin*, Atwood garners attention for her acerbic observations on societal constructs and the existential journey towards self-discovery undertaken by her female protagonists. The author's stories are characterised by the presence of resilient female heroines who actively confront and question the prevailing power dynamics within their respective contexts. The female protagonists in her narratives confront many challenges such as assault, cancer, separation, solitude, and hopelessness, and engage in a struggle for survival (Hayne and Kellett-Betsos 2006).

Atwood, known for her literary works that often delve into the dynamic relationship between humanity and the natural world, objects to be identified as a feminist. However, she takes into consideration issues related to politics and gender. Atwood employs a variety of literary methods, including science fiction and detective

fiction, while also emphasizing irony, symbolism, and self-aware narrators throughout her fiction. Atwood has gained recognition for her distinctive and humorous style of writing in both prose and poetry, often employing vivid imagery (Turner 2009). Moreover, she always conveys a resolute standpoint on matters of inequity and affliction. Margaret Atwood is a renowned novelist recognised for her multifaceted literary approach, encompassing elements of gothic literature and feminist themes. Her works are widely esteemed for their polyphonic narrative and captivating portrayals of characters. The author's international recognition can be attributed to the widespread acclaim her vast literary repertoire has garnered across several languages and nations (Turner 2009).

*The Penelopiad* by Margaret Atwood is a constituent of the Canongate Myth Series, which is a compilation of novels released by Canongate Books, a Scottish publishing company. The series enlists contemporary writers from multiple nations to reiterate narratives from previous eras. As a component of this endeavour, several renowned authors from various regions around the globe, including Ali Smith, Jeanette Winterson, Margaret Atwood, Chinua Achebe, and A.S. Byatt, have undertaken the task of reimagining conventional mythologies originating from diverse cultural backgrounds. About the series, it is paramount to point out that

> Myths are universal and timeless stories that reflect and shape our lives – they explore our desires, our fears, and our longings, and provide narratives that remind us what it means to be human. The Myths series brings together some of the world's finest writers, each of whom has retold a myth in a contemporary and memorable way.
> (Foreword to each text in the Canongate Myths series.)

The revised edition of the epic, *The Penelopiad*, authored by Margaret Atwood, was published simultaneously by thirty-three publishers worldwide in the year 2005. Additionally, it received a nomination for the 2006 Mythopoeic Fantasy Award for Adult Literature. Several notable theatre venues, such as The Swan Theatre, The National Arts Centre in Ottawa, The Stanley Industrial Alliance Stage in Vancouver, and Buddies in Bad Times Theatre, were selected as hosts for the live stage adaptation.

The novella comprises a total of twenty-nine chapters, whereby the narrative alternates between Penelope's perspective and the choral portrayal of the twelve maids. The language employed is straightforward. Penelope assumes the role of narrator in eighteen chapters of the narrative, with the remaining sections being recounted by the

maids. Upon examination, it becomes evident that each chapter in which the maids recount their narratives exhibits distinct stylistic variations compared to one another. Atwood employs distinct narrative styles in each of these chapters such as theatre, love song, ballad, and court trial. Adıgüzel points out that the work, which is primarily ironic and occasionally humorous, uses first-person narrative. By using parody, the postmodern transformational tool, Atwood breaks down the "lofty" subject and elevated narrative style in the traditional myth world, thereby drawing attention to the existence of multiple perspectives in her work (47). Henceforth, as Atwood puts into words her understanding of the relation between truth and reality in one of the interviews, by deconstructing and reconstructing the stories, mending the perspectives in a way, she provides stories as alternatives to *The Odyssey*. Accordingly, Mary Beard also celebrates Atwood's approach to mythical storytelling: "Atwood takes Penelope's part with tremendous verve… she explores the very nature of mythic storytelling" on the back cover of the book. As an outcome, Atwood successfully strikes a balance between the views that *The Odyssey* appears to lack, giving rise to a more feminine interpretation of the well-known Homeric epic.

### 2.2 *The Penelopiad*: A Tale of Subversion and Parody

> *I've chosen to give the telling of the story to Penelope and the twelve hanged maids. […][W]hat led to the hanging of the maids, and what was Penelope really up to? […] I've always been haunted by the hanged maids; and, in The Penelopiad, so is Penelope herself.*
>
> *The Penelopiad* – Margaret Atwood

"Now that I'm dead I know everything" (Atwood 1) are the very words when Penelope starts to tell her own story from the underworld, Hades. She starts to tell the famous story of Odysseus from the very beginning of her life. After she introduces the story, the twelve maids interrupt the narration with a chorus line titled "A Rope-Jumping Rhyme" which blames Odysseus for his misjudgement of them. In recounting her early years, Penelope reveals that she was born in Sparta to a Naiad mother and King Icarius, who attempted to drown her when she was a little. She was, fortunately, saved by a group of ducks, and they gave her the nickname "Duck." In the same chapter, she bemoans the stolidity and indifference of her Naiad mother. During their commentary on Penelope's early years, the maids concordantly compare their parents—slaves and peasants—to the royal family, highlighting the differences in their

ancestry from Penelope's. Penelope states in the chapter “My Marriage” that she has no say in selecting her spouse and talks about the competition for her hand in marriage when she was just fifteen. That day, Odysseus, who most likely cheats to win the race, marries Penelope. In the following chapter, maids reappear and offer a cynical perspective on her marriage because they are denied the opportunity to get married. Odysseus returns the bride to his home on the island of Ithaca, against the wishes of the king. They land following a tough sea voyage.

Penelope’s situation is not any better, since despite her growing love for Odysseus, she finds it difficult to get along with both her mother-in-law Anticleia and Eurycleia, Odysseus's former nurse, because she constantly sticks her nose into things. Penelope also lacks acquaintances in the Ithaca Kingdom who are similar to her in status and age. The birth of his son Telemachus and her love for Odysseus are now Penelope's only solace. A few years later, Odysseus finds out that Helen, Penelope's cousin, has left her husband Menelaus and gone to Paris, a Trojan prince. In retaliation, Menelaus and his allies intend to besiege Troy. They therefore arrive to capture Odysseus, who had earlier promised Menelaus that he would uphold Helen’s rights. Even though Odysseus tries to act insane to avoid doing his duty, he is eventually discovered. Odysseus must therefore set sail for Troy. Odysseus leaves, and a long period pass; in the interim, Telemachus matures, and Odysseus’ mother Anticleia also passes away. Penelope hears the bards’ accounts of Odysseus's wartime exploits while she tries to run his properties and subdue his obstinate son while her husband is away. Penelope is eager for her husband to return as soon as possible after learning that the Greeks have won the battle. But the bards cease reporting the bizarre tale of Odysseus’ arduous journey home. In one of their sardonic remarks on this particular passage, the maids provide a poetic synopsis of Odysseus’ purported adventures.

In the meantime, men posing as guests begin plundering Penelope of everything in her estate as the suitors ask for her hand in marriage in order to obtain her dowry. The length of time it takes Odysseus to arrive makes the suitors more impatient. In an attempt to turn down her suitors, Penelope declares that she will not decide which of them to marry until she has completed knitting a shroud for her father-in-law, Laertes. In order to gain time, she therefore covertly unravels the knitting she has done each night with the assistance of her maids. To gain their trust, she also assigns her maids to spy on the suitors, have sexual relations with them, and defame

Odysseus and his family, but one of the servants uncovers Penelope's hidden secret. Telemachus goes off in stealth to search for his father because he is becoming increasingly concerned about him. Odysseus reappears in the courtyard shortly after, thankfully returning uninjured, dressed as a beggar. Penelope sends Odysseus to Eurycleia for a bath while acting as though she has not recognised her husband. The elderly nurse pretends to be ignorant even though she can instantly identify Odysseus with his scar.

Unaware that the twelve maids are carrying out Penelope's orders, Odysseus hears them defaming him while he is staying at the palace. Penelope continues to act as if she is unaware of Odysseus' identity when she speaks to him, telling him how much she still loves and is devoted to her husband. She then asks for his opinion on the idea of holding an archery competition to choose which suitor should finally win her, understanding that Odysseus is the only person who can complete the task she set for himself. Odysseus, the beggar, wins the competition after everyone agrees on his plan. After that, he kills every suitor and imprisons Penelope in his room. Odysseus demands Eurycleia to reveal the maids who have betrayed him after he kills the suitors. Telemachus hangs the twelve maids who are spying for Penelope as soon as Eurycleia points them out. When Odysseus tells Penelope who he is, she pretends to be shocked. After many years, Odysseus manages to return home and sets out once more to atone for his murder of the suitors and the twelve maids. One of the most important parts of the book, "The Chorus Line: We're Walking Behind a Love Song" has twelve maids that haunt and follow Odysseus around. The maids analyse their own murders from an anthropological perspective in "The Chorus Line: An Anthropology Lecture" and "The Chorus Line: The Trial of Odysseus, as Videotaped by Maids," and they try to get justice in court for their unrelenting hanging after over three millennia. Towards the book's conclusion, Odysseus repeatedly leaves Penelope in order to undergo a new birth and momentarily flees the maids' attempts to haunt him. Penelope stays in the asphodel fields, and in Hades, the couple repeatedly experiences alienation.

*The Penelopiad* is a literary adaptation of Homer's epic poem, *The Odyssey*. As this chapter's title emphasises, there are subverted characters, storylines, anecdotes, and points of view inside this narrative. In the context of postmodern literature, the author employs a range of literary techniques and approaches, such as parody, first-person narrative, and the incorporation of elements from different genres. Despite

Atwood's reluctance to be categorised as a feminist writer, it is evident that this revised rendition of the epic is inherently centred on women, as is shown in her previous literary works. The narrative of the novella encompasses the viewpoints of Penelope as well as her twelve maids. Atwood demonstrates a preference for utilizing the first-person narrative technique in instances where Penelope assumes the role of narrator, while also incorporating several genres and their respective elements to present the maids' viewpoints on the stories. MacMillan highlights Atwood's inclination to employ critical methodologies that transcend mere deconstruction. Despite the evident departure from realism in Atwood's *The Penelopiad*, the author's meticulous exploration of Penelope's lived reality serves to underscore broader challenges encountered by women within patriarchal social structures (102). Therefore, considering the presence of two female voices, namely Penelope and her maids, Atwood's intention extends beyond the mere reconstruction of canonical works. Rather, she seeks to highlight the profound challenges faced by women in societies where the prevailing perspective is predominantly male-oriented.

A facet of particular significance about subversion is the narrative structure employed by Atwood, wherein the story is presented from the perspectives of two distinct narrators: Penelope and her twelve maids. Through the utilization of female narrators, Atwood effectively achieves a transformative as well as dialogical narrative approach that offers fresh and alternative viewpoints. In her article titled “Margaret Atwood: *The Penelopiad* – Rewriting in Postmodern Feminine Literature”, Ioana-Gianina Haneş highlights the issue that the author's clear objective is to challenge Homer's dominant portrayal of the patriarchy, and instead, provide a steadfast feminist perspective through restructuring, augmenting, and disregarding some aspects of the Homeric account of the myth of Odysseus. Atwood bestows upon the characters that Homer neglected the privilege of exercising their freedom of expression, while also illuminating their underlying motivations, traumas, and behaviours (11). Therefore, Homer’s preference for the omniscient point of view in his work establishes a firm foundation for feminist objectives in postmodern literature, specifically in the context of reimagining and retelling traditional narratives. The reciprocal relationship between postmodernism and feminist rewriting is evident, as observed in the literary realm where feminism effectively appropriates the comprehensive arsenal of postmodern

techniques to challenge the dominance of canonical works characterised by masculine discourses masquerading as universally applicable.

Through Penelope's narration of the story, Atwood provides readers with the opportunity to critically examine the origin of the mythological content. Penelope engages in the act of interpretation and reinterpretation throughout several narratives in the original text, in order to assert her perspective and convey her version of events. The author incorporates essential elements into the narratives in order to provide a solid foundation for the events that transpire. In her constant demonstration, Penelope offers insightful details regarding the circumstances preceding the Trojan War. Furthermore, she adeptly analyses various facets of the marriages between Helen and Menelaus, as well as her own union with Odysseus. Upon careful consideration of the events and their ultimate outcomes in the epic, it becomes evident that all her assertions exhibit a reasonable nature. After Odysseus becomes victorious in the competition to secure Penelope's hand in marriage, she proceeds to engage in logical thinking:

> But I have another idea, and here it is. Tyndareus and my father, Icarus, were both kings of Sparta. They were supposed to rule alternately, one for a year, and the other the next. But Tyndareus wanted the throne for himself alone, and indeed he later got it. It would stand out to reason that he'd […] learned that Odysseus shared the newfangled idea that the wife should go to the husband's family rather than the other way around. It would suit Tydanreus fine if I could be sent far away, me and my sons that I might bear. That way there would be fewer to come to the aid of Icarus in the event of an open conflict. (Atwood 37)

After providing a comprehensive analysis of the logical justifications behind Odysseus' triumph in winning Penelope's hand in marriage, as well as their subsequent decision to return to his ancestral land of Ithaca, it becomes evident that Penelope skilfully orchestrates the intricate dynamics at play among influential monarchs and nobles, often leveraging their interactions to her advantage. In her role as a narrator, Penelope demonstrates an awareness of the power dynamics at play among these individuals. She acknowledges her position within the patriarchal power struggle, wherein her value lies primarily in her inheritance and potential to bear offspring, particularly males. An additional noteworthy element of Penelope's narrative is her demonstration of extensive familiarity with Odysseus' character and a profound examination of his genealogical heritage. She establishes links between these two particularities. While it is well acknowledged that Odysseus possesses cunning and deceitful qualities, these acts of dishonesty are predominantly portrayed as heroic in

the original text. However, Atwood effectively explores the character of Odysseus by emphasizing his extensive genealogical lineage, providing a comprehensive grasp of his positive and negative attributes. To illustrate the lineage of both sides, Penelope states:

> [H]is grandfather was Autolycus, who claimed the god Hermes was his father. That may have been a way of saying that he was a crafty old thief, cheat, and liar, and that luck had favoured him in these kinds of activities. […]Autolycus was the father of Odysseus's mother, Anticleia, who'd married King Laertes of Ithaca and was therefore now my mother-in-law. There was a slanderous item going around about Anticleia – that she'd seduced by Sisyphus, who was the true father of Odysseus […] So, if we admit the rumour about Anticleia's infidelity, Odysseus had crafty and unscrupulous men on two of the main branches of his family tree. (Atwood 47)

The revelation of Odysseus' actual character is a notable aspect of subversion that Atwood utilises in her writing, which is worthy of admiration. The subversion present in the text serves to aid readers in understanding that due to the lack of adequate information and elaboration on Odysseus in the original text, he is portrayed as a hero despite being described as a cunning individual. Through Penelope's narrative, readers gain insight into a more authentic portrayal of Odysseus, one that encompasses his roles as a spouse and father, rather than solely focusing on his heroic triumph over the suitors and the maids who tarnished his reputation. Penelope adeptly cultivates an environment characterised by logical and informative elucidations, wherein she divulges discreet insights that may be seen as a glimpse into what goes on behind the scenes. For example, in the narrative where Odysseus expresses his desire to depart with Penelope and her dowry to Ithaca, it is mentioned that Icarus exhibits reluctance in relinquishing his hold on her, as stated below,

> You've probably heard that my father ran after our departing chariot, begging me to stay with him, and that Odysseus asked me if I was going to Ithaca with him of my own free will or did I prefer to remain with my father? It's said that in answer I pulled down my veil, being too modest to proclaim in words my desire for my husband, and that a statue was later erected of me in tribute to the virtue of Modesty. (Atwood 49)

In this context, society paradoxically incentivises the individual's hesitancy to articulate their own personal preferences. The significance of Atwood's word choice in this context lies in the predominantly negative connotation associated with the usage of the word "too" preceding the adjectives. It is worth noting that the concept of silence

as a virtue in women is subject to criticism in this context, as Penelope then discloses the truth quickly after exhibiting *modesty* (my emphasis).

> […] I pulled down my veil to hide the fact that I was laughing. You have to admit there was something humorous about a father who'd once tossed his own child into the sea capering down the road after that very child and calling, 'Stay with me!'. (Atwood 49)

In other words, Atwood employs a satirical approach in her treatment of the event and its accompanying explanations. However, she also offers a critique of the notions surrounding orally transmitted myths and tales, highlighting their potential shortcomings in terms of accurate judgement. The inclination of the omniscient point of view to predominantly support a patriarchal interpretation of actions is likewise subject to scrutiny and dismantled by a more rational alternative. The final instance of subversion utilised by the author pertains to the several iterations of narratives that individuals recount about Odysseus' voyage back to his homeland. Atwood demonstrates a conscientious approach towards the original stories by integrating them alongside the alternative interpretations. The reader's attention is directed towards the assertion that the narratives centred around Odysseus' endeavours to return to Ithaca are merely unsubstantiated rumours. Penelope underscores the notion that her family upholds loyalty and others who derive their livelihood from storytelling possess the propensity to embellish and distort narratives in order to maximise their financial gains.

> Odysseus and his men had got drunk at their first port of call and the men had mutinied, said some; no, said others, they'd eaten a magic plant that had caused them to lose their memories, and Odysseus had saved them by having them tied up and carried onto the ships. […] Needless to say, the minstrels took up these themes and embroidered them considerably. They always sang the noblest versions in my presence – the ones in which Odysseus was clever, brave and resourceful, and battling supernatural monsters, and beloved goddesses. (Atwood 84)

Suzuki highlights: "Atwood demonstrates anew the shrewdness and scepticism that are her defining features in *The Odyssey*" (269). Furthermore, the dynamic between the storytellers and Penelope primarily revolves around power dynamics. The individuals in question possess a clear understanding that they stand to receive greater rewards by providing a more detailed analysis of Odysseus' bravery and heroic qualities. Consequently, it is quite probable that they would exhibit a preference for focusing on these aspects. Penelope, renowned for her astute and composed

disposition, recognises the hierarchical structure of the circumstance and presumes that the songs sung in her absence are likely to be the most honourable ones.

By highlighting the dichotomous character of narrative construction, Atwood endeavours to illustrate the inherent versatility of mythological content and tales. Penelope and her servants offer distinct perspectives that effectively introduce modifications to a narrative that is traditionally transmitted through oral means. As previously stated, Gerard Genette's conceptualization of intertextuality, specifically hypertextuality, elucidates the correlation between a hypotext and a hypertext. This academic endeavour involves delving into the intricacies of two texts and extracting a comprehensive analysis from their content. Undoubtedly, *The Penelopiad* establishes a funny and parodic connection with *The Odyssey*, as Atwood predominantly offers an alternative perspective to the narrative presented by Homer. While *The Penelopiad* may be subject to various criticisms, it is important to acknowledge that Atwood skilfully presents a version of reality inside the framework of a mythological narrative. This narrative offers a more realistic and rational portrayal of its characters by highlighting their dualistic positive and negative attributes, distinguishing it from Homer's work. Genette employs the term "parody" to denote a relationship or transformation at the topic level between a primary text and a referential text. In essence, this involves the adaptation of a dignified and solemn subject matter to closely resemble an everyday, authentic, and modern context (Genette 1997). In the article titled "*The Penelopiad* and *Weight*. Contemporary Parodic and Burlesque Transformations of Classical Myths", Staels emphasises the engagement of Atwood in the process of reimagining Homer's revered classical epic, *The Odyssey*, in order to render it more approachable for modern audiences: "the shade of Queen Penelope overtly re-affirms some major events from the transmitted Penelope myth and mythicises unrecorded ones, thereby constructing a personal variant of the same story" (103). This is achieved by a deliberate dismantling of its inherent grandeur, so aligning it with the patterns of contemporary writing that cater to a broader readership. The Canadian writer effectively challenges the hierarchical distinction between 'high' and 'low' literary genres, liberating the epic from the confines of formal traditions associated with the higher genres. As a result, the writer brings the epic closer to the realm of ordinary human experiences. As a result, Atwood successfully diminishes some genres into a more contemporary and less esteemed form by depicting the

existence of multiple narratives inside the myth of Odysseus. This contemporary myth is not solely based on the narrative of Odysseus and his heroic exploits.

It is worth noting that Penelope initiates the narration of her own account from the realms of Asphodel, a location where all individuals, including Penelope herself, are dead. Given her current state of omniscience, recounting her narrative has become a weighty responsibility for her. Furthermore, she ensures that her concerns and opinions are disregarded and overlooked by others, which brings a sense of relief. It is crucial to emphasise that Helen Cixous' assertion regarding women's writing holds considerable importance in this context.

> [W]hy don't you write? Write! Writing is for you, you are for you. […] I know why you haven't written [b]ecause writing is at once too high, too great for you, it's reserved for the "great men" and it is "silly" (876).

Regarding this exclamation of Cixous, Penelope states,

> [I]t's my turn to do a little story-making. I owe it to myself. I've had to work myself up to it: it's a low art, tale-telling. [W]ho cares about public opinion now? […] So I'll spin a thread of my own" (Atwood 4)

Despite refusing to accept the designation of feminist writer, Atwood offers Penelope and her servants the lead role in the story. Hence, *The Penelopiad* is authored and narrated from a female perspective, offering an alternative viewpoint on the events depicted in Homer's literary work, thus leading to an understanding of feminist rewriting.

Furthermore, in the text *The Laugh of the Medusa*, Helen Cixous directs the readers' focus towards phenomena wherein women develop adversarial relationships with their fellow women. Cixous later elaborates on the issue as the biggest crime against women has been committed by men. Men have manipulated women through insidious and violent means to implant a deep-seated animosity against women. Thus, women become their own adversaries. This manipulation has resulted in the mobilization of their considerable power and strength against themselves, as they unwittingly fulfil their masculine desires. An anti-narcissism has been developed specifically for women. Narcissism is characterised by an excessive self-love that seeks validation from others based on the absence of certain qualities in women. The logic of antilove has been formulated by them (878). In the scenario of Penelope, her primary obsession as a female lies in her persistent tendency to juxtapose herself with

her cousin, Helen. This occurrence of juxtaposition arises intermittently as she interrogates the aesthetic appeal of Helen and its consequences for a multitude of individuals. “Helen was never punished, not one bit. Why not? I’d like to know. Other people got strangled by sea serpents and drowned in storms and turned into spiders and shot with arrows for much smaller crimes” (Atwood 22), therefore, Penelope occasionally engages in the pursuit of justice, as she holds the belief that Helen has not faced suitable repercussions despite being notorious for causing significant disruptions within society.

Nevertheless, the instances in which Penelope expresses her aversion for her cousin are mostly those in which Helen's beauty and charm are highly admired by others. “In return for assuring a peaceful and very profitable wedding for the radiant Helen, Odysseus would get plain-Jane Penelope” (Atwood 37). On the other hand, she focuses merely on her characteristics: “I was a kind girl – kinder than Helen” (Atwood 29) and her ability to bear a son: “Odysseus was pleased with me. Of course, he was. ‘Helen hasn’t borne a son yet,’ he said, which ought to have made me glad. And it did. But […] why was he still – and possibly always – thinking about Helen?” (Atwood 64). In some cases, even Penelope measures her own value according to Helen’s beauty and fame when she dreams about the time Odysseus returns from the journey and she imagines him saying: “You’re worth a thousand Helens” (Atwood 84). Consequently, these incidents demonstrate Helen's physical superiority over Penelope and highlight the high value placed on beauty in ancient times.

In the narrative, Penelope harbours anger towards women other than Helen of Troy. Other women significantly impact the challenges she faces in her life, however, the first woman in her life is her mother. She is presented as a Naiad and “like all Naiads, [she was] chilly at heart. She had a short attention span and rapidly changing emotions” (Atwood 11), thus having an absent-minded mother has its difficulties and consequences. During her early childhood, Penelope is required to assume responsibility for her own well-being and experiences a sense of isolation. The experience of loneliness that began in her childhood persisted throughout her adult life. Despite the apparent absence of emotional closeness between Penelope and her mother, the latter delivers a significant speech during Penelope's wedding, potentially influencing her own interactions with others in the future:

> Water does not resist. […] Water is not a solid wall, it will not stop you. But water always goes where it wants to go, and nothing in the end can stand against it. Water is patient. Dripping water wears away a stone. Remember that, my child. Remember you are half water. If you can't go through an obstacle, go around it. Water does. (Atwood 43)

The talk demonstrates a profound comprehension of Penelope's approach to addressing the challenges posed by the suitors who intrude upon her household. There is a strong probability that she exhibits prolonged behaviour akin to that of water, thereby postponing the act of marrying any of her suitors. Even though her mother lacks an intimate relationship with Penelope, by learning how to survive on her own from her childhood years, she achieves many things and both in Homer's and Atwood's work, she is attributed as a clever, patient, and witty person.

Penelope encounters two other women who bring her difficulty within the confines of Ithaca: Anticleia, the mother of Odysseus, and Eurycleia, the nurse. On the one hand, despite the disapproval of Penelope by her mother-in-law, it is Eurycleia who abstains from assigning Penelope any task pertaining to Odysseus and the management of the household. While the other persons introduced after Helen do not possess overtly antagonistic qualities, they significantly impact Penelope's existence, leading her to experience feelings of isolation, loneliness, and dependence. Her biological mother's enigmatic nature empowers her to prioritise her own welfare, while Anticleia's impact on her is very little. Additionally, Eurycleia consistently identifies flaws in Penelope's performance of her marital and maternal responsibilities. As a result, the maternal characters in Penelope's life exert a profound influence on her overall well-being. On the other hand, Eurycleia the nurse has a significant role in the act of hanging the maids. Eurycleia knows too little about the issue of the twelve maids who are undercover for Penelope. Eurycleia is ordered to show the maids who unknowingly disrespect Odysseus since they are unaware of the actual identity of Odysseus and she points at the twelve maids without any hesitation and causes their deaths. Therefore, the observations made by Cixous in her literary analysis can be identified within the dynamic between Penelope and Helen of Troy as well as Eurycleia and the twelve maids.

The primary focus of Atwood's novella is on its portrayal of Penelope's comprehensive life narrative, whereby she presents her perspective from the inception of her journey. One notable divergence within the story pertains to the protagonist's

mature years, specifically when Odysseus departs for the Trojan War. Atwood provides insightful information about how Penelope feels throughout her journey. In her article titled "Rewriting As De-Centering Of The Master Narratives In J.M. Harris' *The Gospel Of Loki*" Şule Okuroğlu Özün states that rewriting

> is to defy the original text, to give voice to the silenced by rewriting, or writing back to, the canon, and to present it in a new light to encourage the readers to question what is offered them as the universal truth. (76)

In other words, *The Penelopiad* is the text that defies *The Odyssey* and gives voice to Penelope and her maids in a new point of view that enhances the readers' perception of the universal truth presented by the canon. Furthermore, in the novella, Atwood highlights the notion of women's expendability in ancient societies. Penelope's encounter with her father, whereby he attempts to submerge her, serves as a representative instance among several illustrations of the prevailing attitudes of males towards females throughout that historical era. Admittedly, the relationship between Penelope and her father, Icarus; her husband, Odysseus; and her son, Telemachus is characterised by troublesome dynamics.

Another instance where the dispensability of women may be readily observed is the practice of executing the twelve maids by hanging. For this issue, in her article, Ioana-Gianina Haneş draws readers' attention: "[Atwood] discovers the faulty relationship between the man and the woman, i.e., the subjugation of women by men" (15). Nevertheless, the "subjugated women" are not enforced only by men. In this scenario, the maids can be seen as the pawns of Penelope and they hold importance about the vulnerability of the recently constructed, trustworthy first-person narrative of Penelope in Atwood's novella. In response to the original work that describes their unfortunate death scene: "Their feet danced for a little, but not for long" (Fitzgerald 1963, 424), the maids debunk Odysseus' fame by giving references to the same scene:

> we danced in air
>
> our bare feet twitched
> it was not fair
>
> with every goddess, queen, and bitch
> from there to here
> you scratched your itch
> we did much less
> than what you did
> you judged us bad

you had the spear
you had the word
at your command. (Atwood 5-6)

While declaring the injustice done to them, it is obvious that Atwood "thereby revises *The Odyssey* where Odysseus' men constituted "the many" in contrast to Odysseus as "the one" so that in *The Penelopiad* it is the maids who constitute "the many" of Greek epic and tragedy" (Suzuki 272). Both being the powerholder and the patriarch of the household, Odysseus is criticised through his privileged status and the voice of the maids consistently blames the double standard that ancient societies tend to have. These standards are the utmost superiority of the male sex and carrying royalty in one's lineage. "[T]he spear" and "the word" are the highly functional weapons that patriarchal societies utilise against the inferior sex: females. Consequently, the expendability of women, especially women from lower classes, is quite a common act since they do not hold significant roles, such as giving birth which enables them to be the bearers of heirs, and their bodies belong to their owners. It is seen that Odysseus' subverted stories of adultery – "scratching [his] itch" – are heroically sung among folks while the maids are hanged even when they are under the command of Queen Penelope.

The connection between Penelope and her twelve maids is among the most significant examples of faulty relationships in the book. Readers may hear Penelope expressing admiration for their beauty and existence, while she endures the pressure from suitors who relentlessly seek Penelope's hand in marriage, driven solely by their desire for Odysseus' wealth and status. She specifically chooses these twelve girls who have served Penelope for all their lives. She confides in them explaining "I had bought them or acquired them when they were small children […] they were pleasant girls, full of energy" (Atwood 113). The maids' existence merely depends on Penelope and her use of the words "bought" and "acquired" is significant because she also regards them as commodities that belong to her. Even though she mentions them tenderly, the dynamic between masters and slaves is visible in her regarding the maids. This dynamic may also symbolise a time when Penelope may "sell" or "discard" them. Eventually, at the end of the novella, she does cause their destruction by staying silent. Another instance where Penelope starts to exploit her newly gained power holder position is the time when she sends the maids among the suitors to be her "most trusted

eyes and ears in the palace" (Atwood 113), thus leading to the incidents in which most maids are seduced and raped. The fact that Penelope continues her ruse with the help of the maids and ignores the well-being of the maids demonstrates her selfish attitude towards her servants. She even encourages them to believe that "[this is] one way of serving [their] master, and [Odysseus] will be very pleased with [them] when he comes home" (Atwood 117). About Penelope's egocentric behaviours, Mihoko Suzuki states that "Penelope subverts the epithet *peripheron* ("wise") that the poet of *The Odyssey* gave her" (273) since Penelope herself states "I foolishly thought myself quite wise. In retrospect I can see that my actions were ill-considered and caused harm" (Atwood 118). Consequently, what Atwood conveys through the dysfunction of their relationship are Penelope's self-centred acts and behaviours that result in the hanging of the twelve maids.

Regarding the death penalty of the twelve maids, varying perspectives, a recurring theme in the novella, are included. Their death is a painful end for both Atwood and Penelope. In the work titled "*The Penelopiad* and Weight: Contemporary Parodic and Burlesque Transformations of Classical Myths", Hilde Staels draws attention when Atwood explicitly states in the paratextual "Introduction" that she has always been tormented by the hanged maids like Odysseus and Penelope in the main text (106). Their death could be an example of the dichotomy of victim and victimiser although Penelope is the one who seems like the victim of the society, and in a way, she is, the twelve maids are endowed with a multi-voiced perspective to demonstrate their part of the story. Accordingly, Sara Paiva Henriques discusses that Penelope might live with a certain amount of impunity, but the reader is first exposed to Penelope's own guilt through the maids' choruses (440). Therefore, Atwood achieves a double narrative points of view to make readers grasp the idea that mythological and legendary stories have their share of duality. To demonstrate, while Penelope gives an account of what she has done during the years when her husband is absent, her narrative is constantly disrupted with the chorus of the twelve maids using different techniques to tell their side of the story. In the book titled *The Cambridge Companion to Margaret Atwood*, Fiona Tolan discusses that the twelve maids assume the function of a Greek chorus, providing criticism that often taunts and contradicts Penelope's narrative voice. This undermines her account of events just when she is finally able to express it (116). Thus, the juxtaposed lives of Penelope and her maids are presented

in the novella. Through the end, regarding their death, in the trial of Odysseus, Penelope defends herself: "I was asleep Your Honour, I was often asleep" (Atwood 180). Penelope claims "[she] suspect[s] Eurycleia put something in the comforting drink she gave [her], to keep [her] out of the action and stop [her] from interfering" (Atwood 157). She later acknowledges that even if she was not asleep during "the mayhem", she would not be given the chance to interfere with Odysseus' judgement. Thus, through inaction, she accepts her guilt and ill-considered actions towards the maids.

The chapters titled "The Chorus Line: The Perils of Penelope, A Drama" and "The Chorus Line: An Anthropology Lecture" bear the most significant aspect of the dichotomy of the victim and the victimiser. The former chapter could be considered complementary to the latter one since the maids perform a play based on rumours about Penelope's infidelity. Penelope and Eurycleia are depicted as they discuss the "Slanderous Gossip" and what they should do in order for Penelope to escape Odysseus' wrath. In the act, Penelope admits her infidelity and asks the nurse's help. As a result, Penelope and Eurycleia find the solution to blame the maids who have been the witnesses of Penelope's adultery.

> Blame it on the maids!
> Those naughty little jades!
> Hang them high and don't ask why –
> Blame it on the maids! (Atwood 151)

Hilde Staels concludes that "from the maids' standpoint their mistress is a cunning liar, who committed adultery, caused them to be seduced and raped by the suitors" (106). Moreover, what Penelope herself confesses in the former chapters can be given as a justified reference to the maids' act and acquisition:

> I kept my mouth shut; or if I opened it, I sang his praises, I didn't contradict, I didn't ask awkward questions, I didn't dig deep. I wanted happy endings in those days, and happy endings are best achieved by keeping the tight door locked and going to sleep during the rampages" (Atwood 3).

Likewise, in the end, she actually sleeps during the massacre of the suitors and the hanging of the maids, thus leading her reputation to be the wise and loyal wife of Odysseus for centuries. Monica Bottez highlights: "[Penelope] has learned this strategy of patient apparent non-resistance the hard way" (48). Regarding the chapter where the twelve maids give an anthropology lecture, they have quite different theories about Penelope and her hidden identity. Concerning the contents of the lecture, Staels

points out that “they allude to the early twentieth-century myth criticism of Sir James Frazer’s ‘myth and ritual school of interpretation’ at Cambridge University” (104). They draw the attention of readers to the number of twelve and what it symbolises. They emphasise twelve months of a year and the word “month” coming from the word “moon”, thus leading “educated minds” to think of the twelve maidens of the moon goddess: Artemis whose embodiment is Penelope. Staels adds “The maids thus counter their mistress’ unreliable version of herself as someone who had never transgressed” (106). All in all, these two chapters in which readers learn the famous gossip about Penelope’s transgression and the theories about the identity of Penelope in the shape of an anthropology lesson conclude the complicated dynamic between the powerful positioned Penelope and powerless maidservants.

These components of faulty relations hold significant relevance as they provide insights into Penelope's desire for independence and her authority over the household, including the management of servants, slaves, and livestock in the presentation of her later years. To be able to get the gist of autonomy, it is described that it refers to the capacity to independently determine one's own course of action, free from external influence or directives (Dryden). Atwood provides insightful information about how Penelope feels throughout her journey, specifically when Odysseus leaves for the war. Penelope bears the responsibility of governing the kingdom in addition to shouldering the burdens of raising her rebellious son Telemachus and attending to her husband's old father, Laertes. Although her motivations are based on making her husband proud when he returns, Penelope seems to enjoy the role of a powerholder: “As I gained expertise, I came to enjoy the conversations about such uncouth and dirty matters. It was a source of pride to me when my swineherd would come to me for advice” (Atwood 88), and she even acquires fame as a “smart bargainer” (Atwood 88) when she trades for supplies. On the one hand, later she acknowledges that being the powerholder comes with a prize, a prize of even more loneliness than ever. She complains, “What wise counsellors did I have? Who could I depend on, really, except myself? Many nights I cried myself to sleep or prayed to the gods to bring me either my beloved husband or a speedy death” (Atwood 88). On the other hand, as Buket Akgün emphasises: Penelope values “her newly found authority so much that after Odysseus arrives […] she wishes for yet another war, which would make men sail away and leave her once again in charge” (38). Consequently, concerning the concept

of autonomy, Penelope currently occupies a position of authority and control during the absence of her husband. She is required to make judgments based on her own qualifications and she has been responsible for managing the household for a significant period. Despite facing challenges from her husband, son, the suitors and others, she displays unwavering consistency and resolute determination in resolving the issues at hand.

Regarding the depiction of Penelope, Atwood emphasises the authenticity inherent in the story and its characters. The portrayal of Penelope in the original text is that of a highly virtuous figure whose unwavering loyalty is held in the highest regard. Upon this issue, what Alicia Ostriker says outstands: "Thanks to myth, we believe that woman must be either 'angel' or 'monster'" (71). Although Penelope is suppressed, silenced, and oppressed by males throughout her whole life, in the original text, her patience and witty character are appreciated, and she is depicted as an angel. She is always remembered "as a virtuous woman who contemplates at the weaving loom to gain time against the suitors and visualises her youth and Odysseus in her memories" (Adıgüzel 51). Thus, she is the symbol of chastity, fidelity, and patience. In *The Penelopiad*, readers witness the hardship that Penelope goes through and those absentee years of Odysseus as well as her thoughts and plans about the conditions. Ioana-Gianina Haneş points out the fact that Penelope must exhibit faithfulness under the threat of a death sentence when Odysseus leaves for the war, she is warned: "[Odysseus) would have to chop me into little pieces with his sword or hang me from the roof beam" (Atwood 74). Warnings of death sentence in case of adultery are commonly utilised by males in patriarchal societies since they desire to last their superiority over women. Therefore, Haneş discusses that "Penelope's faithfulness in the name of her love for Odysseus is nothing but a myth" (15). Admittedly, Penelope later confesses her feelings and thoughts about the suitors and their occupation in her house: "I can't pretend that I didn't enjoy a certain amount of this. […] We all like to hear songs in our praise, even if we don't believe them" (Atwood 104). Thus, readers may get the gist of what really happens during the visits of suitors from Penelope's perspective. Atwood achieves a more realistic portrayal of Penelope even if this story originates from mythology. Added to Penelope's realistic characterisation, Atwood provides her thoughts about the suitors. Unlike the version that Homer presents, Penelope admits: "I occasionally daydreamed about which one I would rather go to

bed with if it came to that" (Atwood 105). Haneş concludes that the primary factor contributing to her decision to abstain from sexual activity is her apprehension towards her husband and societal expectations, hence indicating her lack of indifference towards the suitors. In contrast, Penelope acknowledges that she is agitated (15).

Considering that the narration is alternated between Penelope and the twelve hanged maids, it is of paramount importance to point at what they state and recount in the novella. Merging the voice of the maids, Atwood creates a chorus effect which also indicates a postmodern approach to the original text. Enhancing their voice through many genres such as ballads, lyrics, anthology lessons and idyll is significant to grasp their severe conditions as they are born, raised, and treated in the house of Odysseus by both their owners and guests. The merged voice of the chorus line of maids is quite clear: "We were the dirty girls. If our owners or the sons of our owners or a visiting nobleman or the sons of a visiting nobleman wanted to sleep with us, we could not refuse" (Atwood 13), their direct way of stating their conditions draws readers' attention as they have no right to refuse the orders from their masters and the masters' guests. When examined closely, the chorus line of maids aligns with what Penelope recounts from the underworld most times. For instance, Penelope mentions the birth of her son, Telemachus and the next chapter is about the maids confessing the fact that Telemachus is doomed to be their executor and mourning for their lost childhood. They exclaim:

> Our lives were twisted in his life; we also were children
> When he was a child,
> We were his pets and his toythings, mock sisters, his tiny companions […]
> We did not know as we played with him there in the sand […]
> That he was foredoomed to swell to our cold-eyed teenaged killer (Atwood 68).

Their alignment with what Penelope utters attracts readers' attention to the different approaches and lifestyles that royal families and servants pursued in ancient times. In the chapter titled "The Chorus Line: The Trial of Odysseus, as Videotaped by the Maids", they haunt Odysseus because of the injustice done to them when they are hanged for a false reason. Although they try to earn justice, even if they are dead, in the court held for Odysseus who has been charged with murdering the suitors,

> Judge denies the accusations in the name of the famous Odyssean myth that he considers superior to the murder of the twelve women. […] In the patriarchal vision, the maids were guilty because they "were raped without permission" –

> Odysseus' permission obviously –, as their master also owned their bodies. (Haneş 19)

Their search for justice does not end here with the rejection of Judge and they invoke the Furies. Their devotion to find justice is highlighted by Atwood and it is pointed out that even three thousand years have passed since their death, the bias against the female gender and favouring royal people do not seem to change. Nevertheless, MacMillan highlights a significant fact about the merging voice of the hanged maids: "The choral voice of the maids, conversely, acts as a counterpoint, showing that where communities are formed, questions may be asked, and textual justice may be sought" (102). Consequently, Atwood's subverted portrayal of Penelope with the alignment of the twelve maids recounting their lives and deaths, seeking justice even after a long period has passed, demonstrates a postmodern approach to the original myth favouring female points of view and enhancing their stories and experiences.

# CHAPTER 3: ALI SMITH'S *GIRL MEETS BOY:* AWAKENING GENDER FLUIDITY

## 3.1 Ali Smith: Reflective Interpretation of the Term "Gender"

*My nature is feminist. How could you not be a feminist and be alive? The world is full of brilliant, interesting women.*

Ali Smith

Ali Smith, a highly esteemed and innovative novelist in the realm of today's literature, has consistently maintained a prominent position in British fiction via the publication of five novels and four collections of short stories during her career as a writer. Ali Smith was born in the year 1962 in Inverness, a modest Scottish town. Raised by parents of the working class, Smith's upbringing took place in a council house because of prevailing financial challenges. She was awarded the prestigious Bobby Aitken Poetry Prize by her institution in recognition of her exceptional accomplishments in the field of English language and literature during her tenure at the institution of Aberdeen from 1980 to 1985. During her doctoral studies in American and Irish modernism at Newnham College, Cambridge, from 1985 to 1990, Smith engaged in the composition of theatrical works. She pursued a position as a lecturer specializing in Scottish, English, and American literature at Strathclyde University for two years, concluding in 1992. Smith later re-engaged with her academic pursuits at Cambridge University, focusing her studies on the genre of short stories (Begley 2017).

Ali Smith exemplifies the ideal qualities of a short story writer, including meticulous planning, a keen ability to condense details, the talent to use individual experiences to convey universal truths, and the skill to hint at a broader world beyond the story. These attributes are evident in her three significant collections of short stories: *Free Love and Other Stories* (1995), *Other Stories and Other Stories* (1999), and *The First Person and Other Stories* (2008) (Thursfield 2013). The utilization of experimentation is a prominent characteristic that pervades the literary works of the Scottish author. Smith's artistic focus centres on the thematic exploration of repressive practices related to gender and sexual discrimination, as well as the concepts of time and myth. Additionally, she has a remarkable ability to address cultural and universal challenges confronting humankind, like the migration crisis and human rights, through

her innovative style. Regarding her understanding and combining these cultural and universal issues, she gives reference to art and her perception of it:

> I don't know anything about art. I know nothing, except my own responses. So, when someone writes to you, out of the blue, and says would you write an essay on Giorgione, it's to me the best excuse ever to go online and buy every single Giorgione book you can find and spend two months just with those books. And everything changes when you do that, it's exciting. (Wooding 143)

Smith's literary works demonstrate a futuristic approach, and postmodern perspective, which distinguishes her from her contemporaries and positions her as an innovative writer. The distinctive style sets her works apart from her prior literary endeavours (Thursfield 2013).

Self-reflexive and allusive narrative and overly ambiguous language use are among other common traits by the author that are evident throughout her works. In an interview, related to her use of language, she is asked:

> FW: How do you approach the tension between the need to establish, or attempt to establish, a kind of concrete piece of work, with an awareness that language is so tricksy and difficult?
>
> AS: […] All you do is write until you think you've got it right. If I was to think of a question like that, how to reconcile those tensions, then I wouldn't be able to write anything. We just end up working towards equivalence, towards a meeting of understanding, between one thing and another, between more than one thing, to all the things that make more than one thing. […] It's much more instinctual than that (Wooding 145).

Thus, her understanding of the nature of language stems from instincts rather than techniques. In addition, it is observed that in the works of Ali Smith, it is common to start with a sequence of epigraphs. This particular work commences by incorporating five epigraphs that delve into the themes of myth, distinction, and gender. These epigraphs are attributed to esteemed figures such as E. M. Forster, Joseph Roth, Katy Acker, and Judith Butler. Another prevalent characteristic found in Smith's writings is the inclusion of humour. Even during the most sombre instances within her literary compositions, the author adeptly and astutely employs wordplay to generate a sense of humour. Lastly, Smith's exceptional storytelling ability is evident as she walks along the route, weaving yarns that are funny, irreverent, sensitive, philosophical, shocking, and delightful (Thursfield 2013).

### 3.2 *Girl Meets Boy*: A Universal Story of Gender

*I have a theory, now – that the whole of the Renaissance was peopled with girls dressed as boys so they could make art.*

Ali Smith

The novel *Girl Meets Boy* by Ali Smith, which was published in 2007, is a contemporary retelling of the story of Iphis from the ninth book of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. This work was released as part of the Canongate Story Series initiative. In her novel, Smith explores various themes including ecology, sociology, gender, and capitalism, which are pertinent to contemporary society. The influence of Ovid is also evident in her work. The story explores the divergent choices and challenges faced by the two sisters, highlighting their contrasting ways and views towards life. Additionally, it delves into the younger sister's lesbian relationship with Robin. Within this context, Smith presents a narrative centred around three female protagonists: Imogen, the older sister, who exhibits assertiveness in her social and professional endeavours while adhering to traditional values in her personal life; Anthea, the younger sister, who displays a more daring and rebellious nature, challenging authority; and Robin, a character who influences Anthea's decisions regarding her sexual orientation and social standing.

The novel consists of five chapters, each titled as "I," "You," "Us," "Them," and "All Together Now." It is narrated through the opposite first-person perspectives of the two sisters. In the first chapter of the novel, Anthea recounts the formative years of their childhood with their grandparents. Based on her account, the sisters were raised with captivating narratives shared by their entertaining grandparents. In the initial chapter entitled "I," Anthea provides hints and insights pertaining to her identity. Anthea suggests her inclination towards rebellion and individuality, prompting the reader to discern her weariness and discontent. She lives under the influence of her older sister Imogen, who epitomises the idealised adherence to societal conventions.

After the grandparents leave for a boat world tour, the author presents Anthea and Imogen as two grown-up young girls who work in the launching department of Pure, a water bottling company. As Imogen (Midge) diligently exerts herself to achieve professional success and demonstrate creativity within the organization, Anthea suddenly realises Robin’s protest which she performs through graffities. Later, Anthea has romantic feelings towards Robin, a youthful female, who is affectionately referred to as "Iphis." Hence, the primary narrative unfolds, centring around the lesbian

relationship between Robin and Anthea, drawing inspiration from Ovid's tale. Anthea's emotional attachment towards Robin remains unaffected despite her initial misconception of Robin's gender, upon realizing that Robin is, in fact, a woman. The chapter titled “I” ends with her description of Robin: “he was the most beautiful boy I had ever seen, but he looked really like a girl. She was the most beautiful boy I had ever seen in my life” (Smith 45).

The story goes on with the narration of the elder sister who just learns about the lesbian relationship of Anthea and Robin. Imogen is deeply concerned about the opinions of her neighbours and friends regarding Anthea's homosexuality, and she finds it difficult to come to terms with this circumstance. The young woman, in an attempt to comprehend if she shares similarities with her sister, questions the underlying cause. Imogen occasionally attributes Anthea's disgraceful status to her parents and declares her intention to dress and socialise like individuals who conform to societal norms. Shortly after uncovering a hidden circumstance within her workplace, Imogen experiences a profound transformation. Imogen is invited to Base Camp to do promotional activities for a new water brand in her firm. However, she experienced abuse from her supervisor, Keith. Furthermore, she is being given a career advancement in exchange for maintaining her silence regarding the unjust profits obtained by the Water Company through exploitation. Imogen, who is subjected to this distressing scenario, develops empathy towards her sister Anthea and experiences a profound epiphanic moment as a result.

The closing chapter of the novel "All Together Now" depicts a gay marriage ceremony, when individuals who would not often gather in ordinary circumstances unite with immense pleasure. Robin and Anthea complete their joyously celebrated union by embarking on a honeymoon in Crete, graciously accepting the invitation of a recently married couple they encountered during their wedding. However, it quickly becomes evident that this is a manifestation of Anthea's imagination.

The intertextuality of *Girl Meets Boy* is one of the most eminent aspects. This attracts the attention of readers because intertextuality provides a comprehensive approach to its rewritten structure. Further, Smith states that books are perpetually interpreted about the preceding books, as they are primarily influenced by books rather than authors. They are a culmination of all the novels that preceded them. Exceptional literary works have the ability to adapt; they transform alongside one’s

transformations, rejuvenating themselves when we revisit them during various stages of our lives. It is impossible to experience the same narrative more than once (31). Therefore, intertextuality is an inevitable experience for texts, and in this case, it appears in many shapes. In the novel, it is established that it is a celebrated rewriting of one of Ovid's stories: Iphis and Ianthe.

In this accomplished rewriting, Ali Smith gives references to humanity's perceptions and experiences of the natural world in which humans lead their lives within the boundaries of rewriting and intertextuality. Unlike Margaret Atwood, Smith sets the time and place in twenty-first-century Inverness. Her contemporary version of the story is centred on two sisters: Imogen and Anthea. Harriet M. MacMillan comments about the younger sister's name: "[it is] both a riff on Ianthe and an anagram of Athena, goddess of wisdom and war" (184) and Anthea falls in love with Robin whose name is "a play perhaps on Robin Puck Goodfellow" (184). Basing the story on both the relationship between two sisters, Imogen's being a more conservative one, and Anthea and Robin's lesbian love, Smith achieves not only an interpretation of an old myth but also highlights contemporary conflicts. One of the conflicts experienced in the novel is the water crisis throughout the world. Imogen's workplace is ironically called "Pure" and sells bottled water. The conflict arises when Iphisol, Robin's nickname, protests by writing "DON'T BE STUPID. WATER IS A HUMAN RIGHT. SELLING IT IN ANY WAY IS MORALLY WRONG" (Smith 43) under the insignia of Pure company. Robin's character is thus introduced with a protest that she performs against the company. Her being an activist is a notion that Smith playfully conveys since Robin represents the main character in Ovid's tale. Her rejection of capitalism with its needs and methods is just one of the criticisms that Smith suggests in her work.

The narration of the book alternates between the two sisters. The first chapter titled "I" is narrated by Anthea, and she mentions the memories related to their grandparents who are lost at sea. The grandfather is an important figure in telling stories and occasionally changing them according to his interpretation. The grandfather's "unreliable, yet compelling account of both his own personal and the political history of women's suffrage" (MacMillan 184) is conveyed: "Let me tell you when I was a little girl" (Smith 1). The grandfather possesses knowledge of a distinct historical account centred around women's history. He imparts this knowledge to Anthea and Midge, discussing topics such as the efforts to include women in clubs for

golf, the 'Mud March' organised by the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, and the tale of Burning Lily, an activist who engaged in arson. Their grandfather's historicism implies the vulnerability of narratives and their construction through time. At one point, Midge (Imogen) comments on his age and concludes that he cannot be that old. In return, grandfather responds: "You're going to have to learn the kind of hope that makes things history. Otherwise, there'll be no good hope for your own grand truths and no good truths for your own grandchildren" (Smith 16). Therefore, through the character of grandfather, Smith draws attention to history and its narrative. The access and interpretation of history are emphasised within the concept of "good hope" and "good truths".

Smith introduces the concept of gender fluidity through her portrayal of the grandparents and the contrasting characteristics of the grandchildren. She examines the term gender and the grandchildren's responses to the grandfather's exclamation:

> So, did I never tell you about the time they put me in jail for a week when I was a girl? Our grandfather says. What for? I say. For saying you were a girl when you weren't one, Midge says (Smith 6).

Anthea is primarily interested in actions that could cause her grandfather to go to jail, but Imogen strongly believes that her grandfather is engaging in deception by identifying as feminine despite being male. Thus, the construction of female and male sex is completed in the consciousness of little Imogen, however, it does not indicate that the same pattern is accepted by Anthea, who seems more interested in stories rather than notions based on gender. MacMillan highlights that the girls acknowledge their grandfather's gender as male, nevertheless, the reader observes that by rejecting a singular and unchanging identity, he gains a unique understanding of historical events that he could not have experienced firsthand. Conversely, the girls' inclination to assign a gender to him indicates a childlike longing for straightforwardness and distinct boundaries (185). Consequently, the liminal space between the two genders provides a unique power to embrace a particular narrative within the concept of women's suffrage and equality in this context.

Although the intertexts vary within the novel, in one of the chapters early in the novel, the grandfather continues to change the narratives according to his perception. The duality in gender he presents powers the narration in which many grand narratives are deconstructed and reconstructed. As an example, he changes the

words of Rudyard Kipling's poem titled "If": "And – which is more – you'll be a woman, my daughter NO NO NO GRANDAD IT DOESN'T RYHME" (Smith 20). In this poem, the poet imparts guidance to his "son" regarding the appropriate approach to navigate through many situations that would arise in the future. Nonetheless, MacMillan points out that this alteration highlights the use of rewriting as a tactic on multiple levels: addressing the potential opposition that rewriting may encounter, as demonstrated by Midge's vocal expressions of discomfort. It also demonstrates how relinquishing rigid gender identities can result in the emancipation of narratives (187).

As mentioned in the theory chapter, intertextuality is broadened by Gerard Genette's term: transtextuality. Within transtextuality, he categorises different headings to observe the particularities of texts. One of his categories, namely hypertext, is quite close to the definition of intertextuality coined by Kristeva. What makes his assertions on intertextuality more precise is his notion of paratextuality. Paratextuality is defined as everything written in a book including epigraphs, editor's preface, introduction, afterwords, cover page, title, quotations, and acknowledgements. While these aspects may not be integral to the central storyline, they have a vital role in shaping the reader's interaction with the text. Paratexts are placed at the peripheries of the primary text, acting as an intermediary between the work and its audience. If examined closely, within the boundaries of the book, there are numerous paratextual references in *Girl Meets Boy*. One of the paratextual elements is the first five epigraphs from acclaimed authors such as E.M. Forster, Joseph Roth, Kathy Acker, Judith Butler, and John Lyly. The content of the epigraphs are myth, history, and gender. For instance, the grandfather's alterations of quotation could be related to Kathy Acker's statement: "[…] The need for narrative and the simultaneous need to escape the prison-house of the story – to misquote." Therefore, Smith establishes a method for readjusting or redistributing representations (MacMillan 187).

Furthermore, the criticism about the term gender and how it is constructed through societal expectations and how it is based on patriarchal societies and its needs are conveyed throughout the novel. Accordingly, in "One Is Not Born a Woman" Monique Wittig points out that cultural markings influence how our social systems perceive indistinct physical traits (3). Regarding Iphis, Ovid informs us that the clothing in question belonged to the female individual and the name Iphis is open to

interpretation. Her beauty is both masculine and feminine. Additionally, one of the epigraphs set before the story starts is from Joseph Roth stating that: “It is the mark of a narrow world that it mistrusts the undefined”. Therefore, with this particular quotation from Roth, Smith enables readers to foresee the events that would lead to facing the “undefined”. In her thesis, Holly Anne Ranger highlights that both Smith and Ovid emphasise the cultural, social, and physical indicators that shape sex and gender, and examine the repercussions for individuals who do not conform to these inflexible culturally defined classifications (7). Consequently, the story from *Metamorphoses* is the intertext in *Girl Meets Boy*, yet social and cultural criticism are constructed within the rewriting of Iphis’ story in the hands of Ali Smith.

The original story of Iphis appears in the ninth book of *Metamorphoses* and before this story, others depict many incidents in which gender is discussed in different atmospheres. Upon the consideration of gender and its confusion from time to time, Richlin highlights:

> we see male rapists who dress as women, even a male raped because he is dressed as a woman, and these events turn out well; when a female acts male, the result is the unmanning of all men, and the narrative makes it clear that this is a bad thing (166).

Even the consideration of the female sex pretending to be male could cause problems within the society, and this is the reason Iphis should experience the metamorphoses that she needs because, in the original story, Iphis implores:

> Mares do not burn with love for mares, or heifers for heifers: the ram inflames the ewe: its hind follows the stag. And among all animals, not one female is attacked by lust for a female. I wish I were not one (Ovid 476).

Ovid conveys the idea that same-sex attractions may occur; however, these attractions are not natural for him. Ranger states when readers encounter the story of Iphis five Books later, readers are aware of the persistent and menacing ambiguity of gender. Consequently, one should comprehend the necessity for Iphis' biological sex to transform in order to achieve a positive resolution to her story.

In contrast to the original story of Iphis and Ianthe, in Smith’s work, Anthea and Robin reach their happy ending without any biological metamorphoses. Ironically, Imogen is the one who transforms and develops throughout the book in terms of understanding the same-sex relationship of her sister. Comprehending the term gender is necessary to be able to grasp the particularities of the characters and what may be

the reasons which change them. In one of the epigraphs of the book, Smith quotes Butler: "Gender ought not to be construed as a stable identity… rather, gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time". The gender representation of the characters in the novel differs from each other. The girl's grandfather's ambiguous use of male and female sex while narrating a story demonstrates how gender is constructed through grand narratives. Moreover, it suggests that the rejection of such a structure is quite liberating for both the characters and the audience (MacMillan 187). Another character that Smith presents with gender ambiguity is Robin. Starting from her unisex name, her physical appearance and beauty are emphasised as androgynous. Anthea comments on Robin's "undefined" gender:

> The grey area was a whole other spectrum of colours new to the eye. She had the swagger of a girl. She blushed like a boy. She had a girl's toughness. She had a boy's gentleness. She was as meaty as a girl. She was as graceful as a boy. She was as brave and handsome and rough as a girl. She was as pretty and delicate and dainty as a boy. She turned boys' heads like a girl. She turned girls' heads like a boy. She made love like a boy. She made love like a girl. She was so boyish it was girlish, so girlish it was boyish. (Smith 84)

Smith challenges the metanarrative of gender attributions to binary oppositions by employing adjectives that are associated with the female sex when describing the male sex, as well as by employing male sex-linked adjectives when describing the female sex. Thus, the unique description of Robin by Anthea leads back to what Butler asserts in the epigraph that gender identity is constituted in time. Furthermore, Judith Butler's other argument in *Gender Troubles* is "perhaps this construct called "sex" is as culturally constructed as gender; indeed, perhaps it was always already gender, with the consequence that the distinction between sex and gender turns out to be no distinction at all" (10). Consequently, the contemporary representation of Robin by Smith is established according to norms of how gender is fluid and constructed in time.

Storytelling is a significant aspect of history and myth to understand how people perceive their surroundings, events, accidents, natural disasters, and the world. In the Canongate Myths Series, every book starts with the same introduction: "Myths are universal and timeless stories that reflect and shape our lives – they explore our desires, our fears, our longings and provide narratives that remind us what it means to be human", shedding light of the function of these perennial stories. Thus, mythical stories tend to relieve people from their anxious waiting in case of the loss of beloved ones. In *Girl Meets Boy*, Smith also acknowledges this aspect within the monologue

of Anthea thinking about their last voyage: “Was the seabed dark? Was it cold? Did any light get down there from the sun? They’d been kidnapped by sirens, ensnared by Scylla and Charybdis” (Smith 23). Consequently, Anthea tries to use myth to explain a portion of her history that she is unable to know, which once again demonstrates the capacity of myth to accommodate uncertainty and to provide a narrative way of organising what is unknown (MacMillan 191).

An additional noteworthy instance of storytelling appears when Robin and Anthea engage in a discussion about the myth of Iphis in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. The initial rendition remains faithful to the original by presenting it without any additional remarks, allowing the reader to become familiar with the source material. Robin recounts the story of Iphis, who was brought up as a male by her mother according to the divine instruction of the goddess Isis. This was in defiance of her husband's decision to have their child killed if it turned out to be a girl, as they were unable to support a girl. As Iphis matures, she develops romantic feelings for Ianthe, and their parents promptly consent to their marriage. Iphis subsequently experiences a sense of hopelessness, believing that she would be unable to fulfil her bride's desires adequately. As the wedding day draws near, she expresses her grievances vehemently to the entire Cretan pantheon. Later, the mother beseeches the deity Isis for assistance, resulting in a miraculous transformation of Iphis into a male.

Nonetheless, the second rendition is significantly more extensive as it describes the actual manner in which the story was narrated. Anthea consistently interrupts her lover, interjecting with comments, seeking clarifications, and responding to various events in the story, while Robin supplements additional details from the original source that were omitted in the initial concise version. These dialogical additions serve to substitute the narrative with a framework encompassing geography, history, culture, and society. Additionally, they draw comparisons to the present day, as Robin clarifies that selective abortion persists in certain regions and that a twelve-year-old girl experiencing romantic feelings towards another girl remains a distressing ordeal. Lastly, she emphasises to her audience that the narrative was written by a male. According to Ranger, Robin’s comments serve a dual purpose, operating at a meta-fictional level while also relating to her own interpretation of the story (25). As rewriting old myths serves many purposes, namely, to criticise or celebrate them, Smith equally achieves both in Robin’s remark about Ovid and his writing: “Ovid’s

very fluid, as writers go, much more than most. He knows, more than most, that the imagination doesn't have a gender. He's really good. He honours all sorts of love. He honours all sorts of story" (97). Regarding his way of using metamorphosis to actualise patriarchal societies' norms and concepts of gender and sex, Smith does not hold back, Robin comments:

> But with this story, well, he can't help being the Roman he is, he can't help fixating on what it is that girls don't have under their togas, and it's him who can't imagine what girls would ever do without one (97).

About lesbian relationships, although it is accepted that Ovid's works include such relationships, he also conforms to societal norms and emphasises its impossibility within the original story. Smith, on the other hand, reworks the myth and turns it into a novel wherein her versions of characters celebrate their homosexual love. In *Mythologies*, according to Roland Barth, myth is a type of semiotic system that transforms an existing sign into a signifier of a higher order. Myth can be considered a metalanguage as it serves as a second language used to discuss the first language. At the level of first-order language, which refers to the language itself, words function as signifiers that convey a narrative (109-127). In her book, Sarah Bisson comments: "At the level of first-order language […] how a girl was changed into a boy thanks to the intervention of gods […] at the level of second-order language [it signifies] female homosexuality does not exist (289). Consequently, successive storytelling in *Girl Meets Boy* asserts the idea of the reality of homosexual relations and criticises the fact that in the original myth, it is seen as an impossibility.

As one of the main characters, Imogen experiences a metamorphosis in which her mind and body alter by questioning. Starting from her little sister's lesbian relationship with Robin, she expresses anxiety towards what other people might think of her sister and herself. Smith conveys Imogen's flow of thought inside parentheses which also reminds readers of the technique called "stream of consciousness":

> (Oh my God my sister is A GAY.) […] (It is our mother's fault for splitting up with our father.) (But if that's true then I might also be a gay.) (Well obviously that's not true then, that's not true at all.) (I am definitely, definitely not a gay.) (I definitely like men.) (Smith 49).

Her way of thinking these ideas rushing into her mind is an important moment since her realisation and reaction to this relationship is the very first step of her metamorphosis. The action of speaking up is another issue that Imogen experiences in one of the scenes where a meeting is held with Keith and the creatives, Imogen speaks:

“Water is about well-being, Midge said. About being well. Nobody heard her. It’s all about well-being, an unfamiliar Creative said on the other side of the room. I like that, Keith said. Very good point, Norm” (Smith 39). Regarding the voice of women, Cixous asserts as follows:

> Every woman has known the torment of getting up to speak. Her heart racing, at times entirely lost for words, ground and language slipping away - that’s how daring a feat, how great a transgression it is for women to speak - just open her mouth - in public. A double distress, for even if she transgresses, her words fall almost always upon the deaf male ear, which hears in language only the which speaks in the masculine. (880-1)

In other words, Imogen’s anxiety towards the creative team which consists of all men except Imogen and Anthea is a crucial moment to complete her transformation through the end of the novel. Bisson highlights that this assertion of the voice of women combines the suppression of women's voices with the control over their bodies that Cixous reveals and criticises (290). Consequently, Imogen holds a significant place in the novel since it concerns the voice of women, and her fear of homosexuality is tested, thus developing her personality, her decisions, and her thoughts in terms of her perception of love and women later in the novel. Furthermore, Imogen’s transformation into a more confident and self-aware woman starts again in a meeting with Keith, the boss. He orders her to go to London and introduces her new job, now that she is given a promotion, she is the: “… only girl this high in management” Keith states proudly” (Smith 124). After Keith egoistically mentions the fact that their company blocks the way for Indian people to reach fresh water, he wants her to reply to them with an aggressive tone. Keith also adds that within the limits of law, their company is right in its cause. This is the scene where Imogen finally finds her long-lost voice against him:

> Then the law should be changed, I hear myself say. It’s a wrong law. And there’s a lot I can do about it. What I can do is, I can, uh, I can say as loudly as I possibly can, everywhere that I can, that it shouldn’t be happening like this, until as many people hear as it takes to make it not happen. I hear my own voice get louder and louder. (Smith 125)

Increasing her tone with Keith while expressing her own ideas on the issue with Indian people and making sure that this time Keith clearly “hears” what she has to say, Imogen discovers a new self: “What is it I feel? I feel completely sane!” (127 Smith), thus, this new state of sanity symbolises her relief of patriarchal pressure in her workplace. Bisson adds that the process of Imogen’s metamorphosis causes her

narrative voice to gradually discard its brackets. Consequently, she begins to express herself in writing, confidently reclaiming her formerly suppressed and limited voice. She takes back control of her identity (298-301). Upon her realisation of her transformed identity, her relationships with Paul and her sister improve. Even Anthea is astonished to observe Imogen's metamorphosed self-actualisation. Imogen's reaction is quite unique when she sees Anthea and Robin's protest by spraying the buildings with compelling facts such as inequality of women's pay, abortion of female sexed children, and women's position in higher management. Upon seeing the graphitises, she exclaims:

> Dear God, I say. I know, Paul says. So many girls, I say in case Paul isn't understanding me. Yes, Paul says. Sixty million. I say. How? How can that happen in this day and age? How do we not know about that? We do now, he says. Pretty much the whole of Inverness knows about it now, if they want to. And more. Much more. (Smith 133)

Therefore, it could be stated that her worldview has undergone a full transformation, altering her vision of the world and its events.

As aforementioned in the theory chapter, materials for rewriting are often drawn heavily on mythical narratives and legendary accounts, as these sources provide a rich array of themes and motifs for authors to build upon. Moreover, these stories often touch upon societal standards and address the needs of the community. Ranger mentions "*Metamorphoses* is the perfect re-writable text as the poem itself questions the notion of authority and stability; it is open to and survives through intertextuality and re-imagining" (52). It is known that Anthea and Robin are the modern versions of Ianthe and Iphis in the novel, and Robin tells the original story to Anthea. While they share their own ideas about the story and interpret it, Robin admits: "I'm imposing far too modern a reading on it" (Smith 91). In the scope of intertextuality, Smith playfully creates and recreates Ovid's tale of Iphis and Ianthe through her characters, their dialogues and experiences so that this story is a demonstration of a tale that everybody could create within their perception of love and life. Therefore, as Roland Barthes states in his remarkable article the author's role as the source of the work is no longer valid, and the subjectivity of the text is dismantled and reconstituted through language as time passes. It is obvious that Smith "is aware of intertextuality and views stories that we have received through an intermediary" (Ranger 2). It is important to recall the notion of intertextuality proposed by Kristeva that intertextuality refers to how texts

establish connections with one another within past or present time. The reinterpretation of the story wherein Robin explains the excuses of Iphis' father for not wanting to have a girl, is significant:

> A girl's no use to me. So that's that. I'm so sorry to have to say this, I wish it wasn't so, and I don't want to do this, but it's the way of the world. The way of the world, [Anthea] said. Great. Thank God we're modern. Still the way of the world in lots of places all over the world, Robin said, red ink for a girl, blue for a boy, on the bottom of doctors' certificates, letting parents know, in the places, it's not legal to allow people just to abort girls, what to abort and what to keep. (Smith 91-2).

Hence, intertextuality transforms into a critique of ongoing global instances where individuals selectively terminate pregnancies of female children to ensure the perpetuation of their family name. These abortions are a direct consequence of patriarchal societies and their customs about maintaining the male bloodline to preserve the family name. By bringing historical societal issues into the present, Smith uses intertextuality to demonstrate that these issues still exist in our "modern" world.

Regarding myths and history, it is acknowledged that myth is not a stable concept and mythical stories can be altered. The act of modifying can give rise to fresh interpretations in postmodern literature with the help of its techniques such as parody and pastiche. Even though there are various approaches to the definition of it, Genette imposes that it is an imitative form of another text. However, "pastiche does not imitate a text […] because it is impossible to imitate a text, one can only imitate a style, that is to say, a genre" (82-3). It is also important to highlight that Hug Holman regards pastiche as "literary patchworks". Taking into consideration these two definitions, it could be argued that *Girl Meets Boy* is both an intertext and pastiche of the story in *Metamorphoses* by the Latin author, Ovid. Smith's work maintains the main characters from the original, but it is evident that Smith enhances both the characters and the tale. While the main focus of the story is Anthea and Robin's lesbian relationship, Smith also explores deeper issues such as ecological concerns, sociological challenges, gender pay inequity, and global water crises. Smith's inclusion of two notable sisters in the story is a valuable addition, as their change occurs inside the narrative, similar to Iphis' transition into a boy. MacMillan asserts the fact that myth is not a static concept; rather, it is something that can be modified, and this modification process has the power to create new conceptions of gender and sexuality. Smith challenges the

limitations of the original story to provide room for modern depictions of womanhood and, additionally, for current political perspectives (193).

Furthermore, as "literary patches" from other works of various genres, Smith gives reference to William Shakespeare, Dylan Thomas, James Joyce and Rudyard Kipling by quoting their works, after she makes certain alterations. One of the poems that she makes use of is titled "The force that through the green fuse drives the flower" by Thomas. The speaker of the poem employs diverse metaphors to elucidate the interconnectedness of all creation, emphasising that it is governed by a singular propelling force. This force possesses the capacity to both annihilate and reconstruct life. It is no coincidence that in the chapter titled "Us", Anthea mentions this poem and this force when she feels more connected to life now that she is united with Robin. She feels the "fuse" of love and more alive. Another "patchwork" from literature within the scope of intertextuality and pastiche is the one where Anthea exclaims: "Ness I said Ness I will Ness" (Smith 151). MacMillan comments on the scene: "It is a play on Molly Bloom's climactic annunciation in Ulysses (1922): Yes I said yes I will Yes (Joyce 732), Smith is thus evoking previous literary engagements with myth" (193). This altered scene is cleverly placed in the last chapter titled "All Together Now" because Anthea and Robin get married with the river Ness witnessing their love. Both the wordplay and reference made to *Ulysses* are symbolic in terms of criticising the norm of marriage being a burden for women most times. MacMillan highlights that in James Joyce's work, Molly Bloom's affirmative response has been interpreted as a sign of subordination. However, Smith later emphasises the importance of the commitment of two people together in marriage by using the plural subject: "[…] we said yes. We said we did. We said we would" (151). Consequently, the literary intertexts taken from other authors and poets have a complementary function in terms of proving that every text is related to every text. Thus, it is demonstrated that intertextuality is an inevitable phenomenon within any writing.

When it comes to gender and its traces in literary works, its construction and its consequences in patriarchal societies are emphasised. These societies tend to oppress women to become subordinated, silenced, and invisible. Hence, the representation of autonomy of these women is one of the main issues that feminist writers point out in their rewritten, reworked, and reinterpreted works. In *Girl Meets Boy*, Smith's main characters are all women from different gender representations.

These women characters are also demonstrated as autonomous characters. Nonetheless, Imogen and Anthea's highlighted transformations during their work experience at Pure Company enhance their autonomous sides which provide them to deconstruct and reconstruct the things that they do not desire in their lives. To start with, their father grants them their grandparents' house, so they are not dependent on a landlord/landlady. Being the elder sister, Imogen works at Pure and makes "thirty-five thousand a year before tax, [she] can't believe [she's] earning that much money" (Smith 52). Imogen also helps her sister to get hired by the same company: "[Anthea] is so naïve, she has no idea what an unusually good salary level she was started at" (Smith 59). As seen above, Imogen highly values her income and even is surprised by the amount of it. Having been concerned about the neighbours and their probable reactions to the relationship between Anthea and Robin, she even relieves herself with the help of her immense income regarding her autonomy as well: "Well, that's alright. If I have to move house, I have enough money to" (Smith 57). Furthermore, in addition to the autonomous lives of these two sisters, Smith expands her ideas regarding the bias of people when they consider women's pay, Imogen thinks: "[…] very good money for my age, and for me being a girl, our dad says, which is a bit sexist of him because gender is nothing to do with whether you are good at a job or not" (Smith 57). Therefore, there are two layers of discussion here. First, Smith highlights that women are a big part of the workforce, and they are responsible for the same kinds of tasks as men while working. The second underlying emphasis is on the issue that being a woman equals less pay than men. So, "for Imogen", because she is a girl in a world of boys, this income is "very good money". Regarding the issues of women's unequal payments, Smith also employs "message boys/girls" to draw the attention of readers', Anthea and Robin spray the buildings with the facts of this issue: "IN NO COUNTRY IN THE WORLD RIGHT NOW ARE WOMEN'S WAGES EQUAL TO MEN'S WAGES. THIS MUST CHANGE" (Smith 134). Now that women equally share the same working conditions with men, and sometimes their responsibilities are even more than men's, it is asserted that both female and male workers should be paid equally.

Furthermore, regarding both sisters' metamorphosis, it could be stated that they both free themselves from the burden of being women in a patriarchal society. Regarding Imogen, her freedom is demonstrated through her "rebellion" against Keith when she decides to speak up for the Indian people and their right to access clean

water. For Anthea, her becoming more autonomous occurs when she meets and falls in love with Robin. With Robin, Anthea is now free from any pressure from society and finds her true self. Her prioritising of self refers to the capacity to independently determine her own decisions without being influenced by society. Through the end of the novel, Imogen realises how words affect little children while they pray. Smith criticises another metanarrative and its consequences on individuals: "(Please make me correct size, the correct shape)" (Smith 141). Imogen's hidden anorexia may stem from society's expectation of women being slim and its relation to beauty standards. She continues: "(The right kind of daughter, the right kind of sister)" (Smith 141). Imposing responsibilities of being a mother, daughter and sister also affects women when they are young since these responsibilities limit their choices in life. Earlier in the novel, before Imogen has her epiphany, during her flow of thoughts regarding the reasons that led Anthea to become homosexual, she also emphasises the role of a "traditional" mother appointed by patriarchal needs: "I will never leave my children […] I will have them young, not when I am old, like the selfish generation. […] I would rather give up everything including any stupid political principle than leave children […] Look how it ends" (Smith 53). In other words, Imogen's subconscious is directed by the norms of patriarchal society. Women in patriarchal societies are desired among the walls of a home caring for their children. Breadwinner positions are all held by men, thus leading women to be in their domesticated lives with minimum contact with the outside world. Consequently, through the characterisation of Imogen and Anthea, Smith demonstrates how young women are affected by society's norms and dogmas. However, Smith revives Ovid's ancient characters as two sisters whom the writer transforms into contemporary autonomous women. The author employs subversion and pastiche to liberate her fictional characters from the burden of bearing womanly duties against the long-established notion of gender-based discrimination.

## CONCLUSION

This thesis explores the peripheries of intertextuality and rewriting in the scope of postmodernist literature through Margaret Atwood's *The Penelopiad* and Ali Smith's *Girl Meets Boy* by using feminist and gender theories as well as explaining the literary tools used in these works such as parody, pastiche, and subversion. In both fictions, the authors present characters from mythology, one from *The Odyssey*, and another from *Metamorphoses*. Penelope who is quite known for her patience and fidelity is one of the main characters in Atwood's work. Also, the twelve hanged maids are endowed with a chorus voice through which, for the first time, they comment on events from their points of view. Furthermore, Smith introduces two sisters: Imogen and Anthea. Another crucial character is Robin who is also known as Iphis. Although Robin and Anthea's lesbian relationship is at the centre of the novel, Smith also demonstrates several metamorphoses that her characters go through. Through these female mythical characters from canonical works, Atwood and Smith have been able to challenge metanarratives in which female perspectives are absent. The stories in this study are rewritten and reworked versions of the mythical tales. Rewriting and intertextuality in postmodernist literature provide solid grounds for feminist writers to base their stories so that they could retell their own contemporary versions from the different viewpoints of silenced characters.

What is remarkable about the works selected for this study is that they are written in different manners and techniques although they are invited to write in the same series; Canongate Myth Series. This publishing house has invited many authors to retell various stories from mythology and legendary tales. So far, eighteen books have been published within the Myths Series. Through these tales, the aim is to achieve a second telling in which readers are informed more about other characters. Therefore, in Atwood and Smith's works, it can be observed that female narration of the stories is favoured since Atwood makes the twelve maids and Penelope recount the events after her husband leaves for the war, and Smith utilises Iphis' transformation and based her story on a lesbian relationship as well as attracting attention towards global issues.

One of the similarities between these two authors is their prioritising of female characters and their views as well as their transformations. In *The Penelopiad*, Atwood not only grants the voice to Penelope, but to the twelve maids to express themselves,

even interrupting the flow of Penelope's tale. The form of their chorus line differs in each chapter, they function to disrupt Penelope and express themselves in many genres such as ballads, lyrics and even in the shape of a lecture. Every time they speak, they reveal the treatment of their owners, suitors, visiting noblemen and even sons of visiting noblemen. Their stories might be considered complementary to the narration of Penelope since there is an alignment between the stories. Thus, readers have been granted the chance to evaluate how loyal people and their servants have led distinct lives under the same roof. Another issue that is emphasised throughout the novella is the relationship between the victim and the victimiser. Concerning this issue, first, Penelope retells the whole story but this time, she starts with her birth, her marriage and the birth of her son, Telemachus. Through these stories which are not told in the myth of Odysseus, readers are informed that she faces serious problems caused by patriarchal figures such as her father, husband, and son, and later from the suitors as well. By providing alternatives to the ones in *The Odyssey* regarding Penelope's silence, and Odysseus' brave journey back home, Atwood conveys the idea that myths are prone to change. Thus, the criticism of patriarchal figures is evident. Additionally, with Odysseus gone, Penelope discovers a new way of life: autonomy over her household and life. This new state of being autonomous comes with the cost of challenges posed by others and being lonely. Regarding the issue of victims and their victimisers, the twelve maids are presented, who have been supporters of Penelope from the very start of her endeavours against the suitors. In return for their support, Penelope stays silent and does not defend them when they are judged by Odysseus. By staying silent, she leads them to be executed. Therefore, at the end of the novella, Penelope becomes the victimiser of the maids.

Prioritising female perspectives is also evident in *Girl Meets Boy*. Smith's protagonists are all women with different genders and alters the story of Iphis and Ianthe into a modern lesbian relationship of Robin and Anthea. Their relationship stands for the perennial significance of the term gender and its fluidity. Through these female characters, Smith criticises several problems related to the unfair gender-based payment, global issues, water crises and abortions of female children. Imogen's struggle symbolises what Helen Cixous asserts in her work, speaking up to men. After she finds her voice to defend her opinions, she becomes a more mature women. Furthermore, the particular characterisation of Robin who is an educated, self-aware

and activist person, is a reshaping of Iphis from the original story where she is concerned about her sex. Robin's confident and determined personality affects Anthea in finding her true gender. Their activist name is called "message boys/girls" denying any certain label of any sex. Through the messages of these activists, all Inverness is informed about dire situations happening all over the world. Similar to Atwood, Smith also demonstrates her characters bearing autonomous features. Imogen and Anthea live together in their deceased grandparents' house. Imogen makes a great deal of money annually and helps her sister to be hired as well. Their autonomous features are of great importance in terms of their metamorphosis. Thus, Smith reworks the tale and reshapes all her characters into more contemporary ones while she establishes a notion of the universally acknowledged term "gender".

Although both authors favour female perspectives in their works, there are a few differences between the selected works as shown in this study. One of the main differences is their approach to original stories. While Atwood makes Penelope recount the years from her perspective, she alters the viewpoint, but the hypotext is still apparent throughout the novella. Atwood also experiments with the setting, with place and time since Penelope starts to tell her tale after three thousand years from Hades where only the dead dwell. Her choice of time and place is unreal; however, her portrayal of Penelope who has been shown as the opposite of a silent, obedient, and loyal wife is much more realistic. The approach of the author to the epic might be regarded as reevaluating myths and their tendency to change. Hence, by providing an alternative narrator, Atwood challenges metanarratives that are constructed to consolidate hierarchies in patriarchal societies. In addition, Atwood utilises parody which adds humour to the story; another challenge posed by Atwood is the deconstruction of "high art" into a "low" one.

Nevertheless, what seems to differentiate Smith's work from Atwood's is her celebration of Ovid's story while maintaining a certain criticism of his attitudes towards women and sexuality. By contemporising the story of Iphis and Ianthe, she recreates the main characters as Robin and Anthea. Based on their lesbian relationship, the events revolve around them. Unlike Atwood, Smith sets the time and place in twenty-first-century Inverness, Scotland which makes the story more relatable to the present day. By imposing life-like characters, Smith also touches upon many global problems related to sociology, ecology, and politics. Her use of intertextuality and

pastiche makes the story unique since it blends mythology and history. Even though Smith reshapes the story in order to celebrate the universality of gender and its ever-existing fluidity, she also criticises Ovid's works being "too Roman" which indicates that in those times, Ovid wrote according to paradigms of his particular society and its order.

In conclusion, both *The Penelopiad* and *Girl Meets Boy* have their share of myth and history within their structure. While Atwood rewrites the myth of Odysseus from Penelope and the twelve maids' perspectives, Smith reworks and utilises the myth of girl-boy Iphis. What seems to be the most similar feature of these two rewritings is their women characters and their highlighted stories with their experience of life. On the one hand, in terms of speaking up, Penelope and Imogen share the same destiny where they both have stayed silent for some time and then they find their voices against men and metanarratives. Thus, Penelope starts to recount her own versions of events and Imogen resists the idea of being a commodity for "Pure company". On the other hand, while the twelve maids challenge powerholders and share their experiences regarding their abuse, and invoke angry Furies to reclaim justice, similarly, message boys/girls, namely Robin and Anthea, challenge capitalism and its ways to change human rights into human needs as Keith also selfishly states: "Water is a human need. And that means we can market it. We can sell a need. It's our human *right* to" (Smith 124). Their pursuit of justice is reflected in their activism which is the act of spraying buildings with huge letters revealing compelling information regarding serious problems happening all over the world. Consequently, on the one hand, both works have common features regarding their female characters and their journey to find their voices and justice. On the other hand, while Atwood rewrites an alternative story to the original myth by criticising metanarratives that neglect female representations, Smith simply reworks the myth and celebrates the fact that gender fluidity is a universal concept which exists even in the ancient tales of Ovid.

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