

THE QUEST OF WOMEN AND REVISIONIST MYTHMAKING  
IN *MUINAR* AND *THE PENELOPIAD*:  
JUST VOICES OR “JUST” VOICES?



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BY

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I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.

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## ABSTRACT

The aim of the present study is to explore the emancipatory potential of revisionist mythmaking strategies employed in two contemporary novels, Margaret Atwood's *The Penelopiad* (2005) and Latife Tekin's *Muinar* (2006), through dialogic, intertextual, and deconstructive relations. Offering a comparative account by means of a three-fold theoretical basis between the two novels, this dissertation explores women's paths to seek justice. Both novels portray rebellious women and give voice to their alternative stories. The analysis demonstrates that the retelling of mythic tales connects the past to the present and narrows the gap between absence and presence via specters. To this end, the thesis firstly examines dialogism and the way it is used to challenge the credibility of a narrator. In doing so, it draws on Bakhtin's dialogism and its feminist interpretations. The second aim is to investigate how women oppose hegemonic discourse(s) through the dynamics of intertextuality. These dynamics and strategies are predominantly discussed with the ideas of various female critics such as Ostriker, Irigaray, and Cixous. In the last analysis, the study focuses on the concept of justice via Derridean deconstruction. Both novels are accordingly analyzed with references to concepts such as *différance*, *justice l'avenir*, and *hauntology*.

*Key words: revisionist mythmaking, justice, deconstruction, dialogism, intertextuality, Derrida, comparative approach, women authors, Latife Tekin, Margaret Atwood*

## ÖZET

Bu tez çalışmasının amacı, Margaret Atwood'un *The Penelopiad* (2005) ve Latife Tekin'in *Muinar* (2006) adlı iki çağdaş romanında kullanılan revizyonist mit üretme stratejilerinin özgürleştirici potansiyelini diyalojik, metinlerarası ve yapısökümcü ilişkiler aracılığıyla keşfetmektir. Çalışmada, iki roman arasında üçlü kuramsal temel üzerinden karşılaştırmalı bir çerçeve sunarak, kadınların adalet arama yöntemleri araştırılmaktadır. Her iki roman da asi kadınları resmetmekte ve alternatif hikayelerine ses vermektedir. Analiz, mitsel masalların yeniden anlatılmasının geçmişi bugüne bağladığını ve hayaletler aracılığıyla yokluk ile mevcudiyet arasındaki boşluğu daralttığını göstermektedir. Bu amaçla, ilk analiz bölümü, diyalojiyi ve bunun bir anlatıcının güvenilirliğini sorgulamak için nasıl kullanıldığını incelemektedir. Bunu yaparken, Bakhtin'in diyalojisinden ve onun feminist yorumlamalarından yararlanır. İkinci analiz bölümünde, kadınların metinlerarası dinamikler yoluyla hegemonik söyleme nasıl karşı geldiği araştırılmaktadır. Bu dinamikler ve stratejiler, ağırlıklı olarak Ostriker, Irigaray ve Cixous gibi çeşitli kadın eleştirmenlerin fikirleri ile tartışılır. Son analiz bölümü, adalet kavramına Derrida'nın yapısökümü ile odaklanmaktadır. Her iki roman da Derrida'nın *différance justice l'avenir*, ve *hauntology* kavramlarıyla analiz edilir.

*Anahtar kelimeler: revizyonist mitleştirme, adalet, yapısöküm, diyaloji, metinlerarasılık, Derrida, karşılaştırmalı yaklaşım, kadın yazarlar, Latife Tekin, Margaret Atwood*

To all women and unprivileged individuals who are marginalized, wronged,  
or victimized by patriarchy.



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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|                                                                                                   |     |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| ABSTRACT.....                                                                                     | ii  |
| ÖZET .....                                                                                        | iii |
| ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....                                                                             | v   |
| 1. INTRODUCTION .....                                                                             | 1   |
| 1.1 Theory / Methodology.....                                                                     | 8   |
| 1.1.1. From Structuralism to Post-Structuralism: Monologism, Dialogism and<br>Heteroglossia ..... | 8   |
| 1.1.2. Intertextuality, Feminist Dialogics & Revisionist Mythmaking .....                         | 11  |
| 1.1.3. Deconstruction.....                                                                        | 18  |
| 1.1.4. A Brief Review and Outline of the Study.....                                               | 25  |
| 2. CHAPTER 1: DIALOGISM AND JUSTICE.....                                                          | 28  |
| 3. CHAPTER 2: INTERTEXTUALITY AND JUSTICE .....                                                   | 46  |
| 4. CHAPTER 3: DECONSTRUCTION AS JUSTICE .....                                                     | 65  |
| 5. CONCLUSION.....                                                                                | 91  |
| REFERENCES .....                                                                                  | 101 |

## 1. INTRODUCTION

*No justice — let us not say no law and once again we are not speaking here of laws — seems possible or thinkable without the principle of some responsibility, beyond all living present, within that which disjoins the living present, before the ghosts of those who are not yet born or who are already dead, be they victims of wars, political or other kinds of violence, nationalist, racist, colonialist, sexist, or other kinds of exterminations, victims of the oppressions of capitalist imperialism or any of the forms of totalitarianism.*

— Jacques Derrida, *Spectres of Marx*, Exordium

Literature often mirrors with a special clarity the tensions and fractures in the community in which it is produced and the way in which people negotiate their cultural practices and identities in that accidented landscape. The tension between the customs of society and an individual's life choices is particularly salient in literature. Having said that, the content and communication of a narrative is not free from hegemonies or the power structures of a culture, place or period of time. Especially mythological texts demonstrate that patriarchy has been exerting a strong restrictive effect on the life of women often because women are perceived as embodied reflections of moral values (such as honor or virtue) for the entire family, community or even state. I am interested in this complex intersection point with the greater focus on the negotiation of rebellious perspectives in women's novels and I believe that both English literature and Turkish literatures are particularly illustrative in this respect.

The main inspiration for this thesis is a question raised by the centuries of women suffering, me included, in almost every context for which literature functions like an astrodome. When patriarchy's powerful tools, mythological narratives, are closely examined, the extent to which the oppression of women is deeply rooted becomes clear. As a result of centuries-old social mechanisms and oppressive cultural

values, women's voices are silenced, freedom is immensely restricted, and rights are disentitled. Thus, to point to such suffering and create a change to achieve a just society, myths are to be deconstructed with revisionist mythmaking techniques via an intertextual glimpse and revisionist vision. The rejection of dominant traditions, the recovery of ignored stories, and the establishment of new myths are all aspects of this method, which is an important literary tool for such authors interested in social justice. I aim to examine the aspects and dynamics of this literary method to observe and analyze the transformation of the self and society.

Aside from providing a possibility of exploring and addressing the chosen issue through the narratives of ancient times, there are other reasons why mythology is chosen to focus on and play with. To start with the definition of myth,<sup>1</sup> although there is no single one, there have been efforts to specify it with different approaches: While for Bronislaw Malinowski (1984) myths are “a cultural force” transmitted through a “pragmatic charter of primitive faith and moral wisdom” (pp.101-143), for Roland Barthes (1988), they are “a type of speech” (p. 109), and for Carl Gustav Jung (1984), “original revelations of the preconscious psyche” (p. 154). Thus, it can be concluded that the myths, for which it is not possible to reach a full definition, are multi-layered. It is worth looking into the psychological, social, and cultural foundations of myths as well as the constituents upon which they are built. To identify and criticize the dynamics that give rise to these layers, to bring about change at the individual and collective levels, and to generate new values in societies, it is necessary to modify, reproduce, and rewrite myths.

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<sup>1</sup> The term “myth” is derived from the Greek word *mythos*, which means “word,” “saying,” “story,” and “fiction” (Buxton, 2021).

The importance of intertextuality is emphasized in poetry through the use of revised myths. It may be because the myths belong to the oral tradition and there is a more direct relationship between the writing in epic form and the structure of the poems. T.S. Eliot (1917, p. 15) argues that no poem or work of art has a stand-alone, isolated meaning. But if this trace were to be followed, a “male” would always emerge from the meanings produced. Hélène Cixous (1975) underlines that logocentrism is phallogentric. The Western philosophical tradition that prioritizes speech over writing is known as logocentrism (centered on the word; reason). Derrida opposes such binary logics as truth is conceived according to logocentric norms (Norris, 2014, p. 32). Cixous (1976) notes that “[n]early the entire history of writing is confounded with the history of reason, of which it is at once the effect, the support, and one of the privileged alibis. It has been one with the phallogentric tradition.” (p. 879). Phallogentricism<sup>2</sup> elevates the masculine and privileges masculine discourse over feminine discourse. As a result, there is a fallacious connection between truth and male. Adrienne Rich (1972, pp. 18-20) argues that language that produces meaning is under the oppressive male hegemony. She criticizes that literature is a male-dominated field in which the representation of women is determined and manipulated by men.

I think it has been a peculiar confusion to the girl or woman who tries to write [...] She goes to poetry or fiction looking for her way of being in the world, since she too has been putting words and images together; she is looking eagerly for guides, maps possibilities; and over and over in the “words’ masculine persuasive force” of literature she comes up against something that negates everything she is about: she meets the image of Woman in books written by men. She finds a terror and a dream, she finds a beautiful pale face,

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<sup>2</sup> This term can be examined within the framework of Lacanian psychoanalysis.

she finds La Belle Dame Sans Merci, she finds Juliet or Tess or Salome, but precisely what she does not find is that absorbed, drudging, puzzled, sometimes inspired creature, herself, who sits at a desk trying to put words together (Rich, 1971, p. 21).

Based on the quotation above, it can be claimed that when patriarchal language and mentality appear in literature, it not only prevents women from writing, but also creates a kind of identity crisis. A woman who cannot resonate her own existence in those texts becomes almost paralyzed and therefore has difficulty in writing. Luce Irigaray points to the absence of female representation in almost every Western work. She asserts that the phallogocentric order situates femininity “as relational and subordinate to the masculine within a pre-given system of ideals” (Cornell, 1999, p. 10). All this elucidation leads to the conclusion that meaning must be reproduced. Alicia Ostriker (1982) highlights the importance and inevitability of intertextuality along with the need to revisionism as follows:

Whenever a poet employs a figure or story previously accepted and defined by a culture, the poet is using myth, and the potential is always present that the use will be revisionist: that is, the figure or tale will be appropriated for altered ends, the old vessel filled with new wine, initially satisfying the thirst of the individual poet but ultimately making cultural change possible (p. 72).

Therefore, revisiting myths is not only about enriching a text; it has a huge function for the poets and authors that yearn for a fairer world. Showing the discriminatory values in the formation of myths, pointing out the dynamics that have strengthened this for centuries in society, questioning and reconstructing these values, perhaps producing new values again, and ultimately aiming to provide a cultural change can be

considered as the reasons why these writers chose the revisionist mythmaking strategy to achieve social justice.

Aside from revisionist poetry, there are various outstanding works of fiction in this field that have been studied and analyzed from many perspectives. *The Bloody Chamber* (1979) by Angela Carter, *Medea* (1996) by Christa Wolf, *Lavinia* (2008) by Ursula Le Guin and *Circe* (2018) by Madeline Miller can be given as examples of Western canonical works, as well as Anita Diamant's novel *The Red Tent* (1997), which is a re-creation of the Old Testament, and Ayla Kutlu's *The Epic of Women* (1994), which is a rewrite of the Epic of Gilgamesh from Turkish literature. As said above, there are a considerable number of literary studies handling these texts, such as within psychoanalytic and sociological frameworks. As there are no current comparative studies adequately addressing gender justice within the deconstructivist frame in the Turkish and English literary fields, my aim is to offer a comparative account in the existing scholarship.

In this study, I examine how women seek justice in two contemporary novels, *The Penelopiad* (2005) by Canadian writer Margaret Atwood and *Muinar* (2006) by Turkish writer Latife Tekin.<sup>3</sup> Margaret Atwood's novel *The Penelopiad* was published in 2005 as part of the project, which collects works by contemporary authors that re-imagine ancient myths from numerous cultures and rewrote them as a short novel series called the "Canongate Myth Series." In Homer's *The Odyssey*, Penelope,

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<sup>3</sup> Latife Tekin is a writer with a socialist and eco-feminist worldview. She was born in 1957 in Kayseri, Turkey. When she was nine years old, her family moved to the slums of İstanbul. Growing up with seven siblings in an economically low-standing family, "tongue, and her parents, who loved her with great joy, she feels that her first novel, *Sevgili Arsız Ölüm* (*Dear Shameless Death*, 1983), is an heirloom from her back-ground." (Gün, 1986: 278). *Berci Kristin Çöp Masalları* (*Berci Kristin Garbage Tales*, 1984), *Gece Dersleri* (*The Night Lessons*, 1986), *Buzdan Kılıçlar* (*The Swords of Ice*, 1989), *Aşk İşaretleri* (*The Signals of Love*, 1995), *Ormanda Ölüm Yokmuş* (*No Death in the Forest*, 2001), *Unutma Bahçesi* (*The Garden of [not] Forgetting*, 2005), *Muinar* (2006), *Manves City* (2018), *Sürüklenme* (*The Drift*, 2018) and *Zamansız* (*Timeless*, 2022) are her other novels.

depicted as the faithful, prudent, and virtuous wife of the protagonist Odysseus, can find a voice in Atwood's version. Penelope appears as the first-person narrator in nineteen chapters of the novel while in ten other chapters she gets interrupted by the twelve maids hung by Odysseus and Telemachus. With this narrative, a space is opened for women trapped in patriarchal ancient Greek culture with no representation of their own. But for every woman? Throughout the book, Penelope, who tells her own bibliographic story from Hades in modern times, is haunted by the twelve murdered maids in the Homeric epic. She tries to account for the deaths of these maids, who were subjected to even greater pressures because of their social status. Cut in by the maids throughout the book, she finally meets them near the end for Odysseus' trial, which is told from the maids' perspective. The court as an institution serves patriarchy rather than justice. In contrast to Penelope's uninspiring and non-game-changing stance on the court, the maids are more vocal, demanding and irritable to the embodiment of patriarchy. By addressing issues such as the violation of women's rights by the hegemony of masculine authority, their lack of voice, and their (mis)representation, this revisionist work illuminates the path to hearing the voices of various women in their quest for justice. The other text I chose to work on in this thesis is Latife Tekin's *Muinar*. Muinar was a daughter of a king in an unknown period. After being immortalized by the angels, she is now a ten-thousand-year-old hag, who does not have a body but a voice. During this time, she has awakened in countless women, had fluent conversations with them, and stayed with them until their deaths. The book begins with her awakening into a woman whom she calls Elime, a writer in her fifties. Muinar's purpose is to prepare Elime<sup>4</sup> for old age. This

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<sup>4</sup> Latife Tekin's choice of the name Elime for this character brings to mind Jean Jacques Rousseau's book *Emile* (or on Education) (1762): The word "Elime" is spelled backwards as "Emile." The novel explains what kind of upbringing and education Emile should receive based on his developmental stages beginning with his birth. When it comes to female characters, they stand out with their efforts to

preparation process consists of fluent conversations on many topics such as politics, history and literature. Muinar, who has a polytheistic belief, has an anarchist political stance. While expressing her thoughts on current political issues of the period in which Elime lives, she also conveys her knowledge on historical and political issues in the past. While addressing the women's issue, Muinar occasionally resorts to mythical narratives by pointing out the binary values assigned to women and men, establishes the relationship between patriarchy and religion, and points out that the balance of power has deteriorated. In addition to transfusing knowledge to the women in whom she awakens, she can read their thoughts and put forward ideas that are contrary to theirs. Along with creating confusion and telling the stories of the women she woke up in before, Muinar inspires Elime to write. This text, which Elime is able to write despite Muinar's hard-to-follow and satirical chatter, is scattered throughout Tekin's novel. Muinar, who disappeared towards the end of the book because something happened to her in Israel, enters Elime's dream for the last time, appears to her and comes out of her, which would mean Elime's death.

The reason why I chose these novels over others is that although the aforementioned authors are from different regions and have different writing styles, they share and communicate a common concern, which is to give voice to women and articulate their demand for justice by using the same literary device: revisionist mythmaking. One of the key conclusions these authors draw from representing women's literature from two different regions is that patriarchy is a universal oppression mechanism. Despite their preference for different tones and narrative

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make Emile, the man, happy. This demonstrates Rousseau's biased approach to education. He asserts that sex and binary gender roles are determinants of education, implying that women are inferior to men (Weiss, 1987). Latife Tekin flips this by giving women a voice, preparing Elime for old age, and transmitting the experiences of various women.

styles, they attempt to illuminate women's methods of seeking justice by utilizing intertextuality as a tool through mythical references. I intend to discuss the experiences of a tapestry of oppressed female characters transmitted through tale-telling and dialogism, and whether they are represented individually or collectively, as well as what this would signify. Aside from analyzing the given texts, I argue whether it is possible to achieve justice and where this situates us through a Derridean reading. It is necessary to examine the theoretical background well to analyze the selected texts better. Thus, below, one can find a bit wide but necessary range of theories, from structuralism to poststructuralism, and from monologism to dialogism. I will attempt to highlight the notion of intertextuality and feminist dialogics as well.

## **1.1 Theory / Methodology**

### **1.1.1. From Structuralism to Post-Structuralism: Monologism, Dialogism and Heteroglossia**

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, literary devices such as syntax, signs and grammar became the main focus of many authors and literary critics. It was the narrative with the hero-function that mattered where the truth was derived. Such structural tendencies dealt by formalism extend to the formal properties (mainly of words, structure, rhythm and meaning of the text as a whole). Saussure, who may not be alleged as a direct contributor to literary theory yet a pivotal name with his new approach to linguistics that would mold a momentous theoretical account for literary critics, carried this beyond and stated that language came into existence together with society. In *Course in General Linguistics*, Saussure (1960) distinguishes between the speech (*parole*) as individual and language (*langue*) as social, and he adds: "Language has an individual aspect and a social aspect. One is not conceivable without the other"

(p. 10). He considers language as a system of signs and texts to be analyzed as an outcome of a system with a distinct grammar that governs its form and meaning. He posits that the linguistic relationship between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary, and culture regulates the relationship between them. Thus, Saussure claims that the *langue* dimension of language is the only one that is amenable to a detailed analysis and that it should constitute the core of linguistics. He reduces what he calls *parole* to a relatively marginal role in his definition of language. One of the oppositions against this inquiry comes from Mikhail Bakhtin. He claims it is necessary to take the challenge of *parole* seriously: to consider language not as a project with definite borders (synchronic), but as a dynamic, variable, living process (diachronique) with uncertain borders.

Differences of opinion on the structure of language have also affected the techniques of narrative. The manner the narrative voices are manifested is of utmost importance not only because it shapes the flow of conversation among characters but also because it sets the tone and direction of communication between the author and the readers. The combination of all the components of a text can create a unity called monologism which is a single structured model performed by a single authority. Namely, the monologic work has only one center that can dictate an authoritative meaning. According to Mikhail Bakhtin, instead of monologism, what is needed is a decentralization of code and message through “unpredictable change” of characters and constant interaction of alien discourses (Morson & Emerson, 1990, p. 254). At this intersection, he introduces the concept of polyphony which creates various separate centers that are constantly in conversation with one another. While the normative practices and rules of language lead to a truth which has been dominant over decades, polyphonic works emphasize the need for ongoing dialogue to generate

meaning. It thrives best when more than one voice, one consciousness shares the same surroundings with different fields of vision; or in other words, when dialogism takes place, challenging the existing hegemony with multiple voices in social, political, cultural and historical contexts. He underlines the dialogic nature of language in a nod to Dostoyevski's novels:

Thus, at the very beginning of the novel the leading voices in the great dialogue have already begun to sound. These voices are not self-enclosed or deaf to one another. They hear each other constantly, call back and forth to each other, and are reflected in one another (especially in the microdialogues). And outside this dialogue of "conflicting truths" not a single essential act is realized, nor a single essential thought of the major characters (1984, p. 47).

He puts forward another prominent concept by arguing that reality is pluralistic and *heteroglossic*. Examining the roots, "glossa" means language and "heteros" means different in ancient Greek; thus, the term *heteroglossia* (originally *raznorečie*) can be translated as "the diversity of languages" (Goulimari, 2014, p.167). By subjecting this to a compositional process, Bakhtin accentuates "interlingual" (the relationship and interaction of different languages and cultures in a text) and especially "intralingual" (the clash of different dialects, manners and even perspectives) diversity of *heteroglossia* to expand the folds and realms of meaning and figure out other truths. Roland Barthes, for instance, a well-known literary critic who was substantially influenced by Bakhtin's investigation, interprets the notion as a significant tool for a text to possess "a multi-dimensional space" that a range of passages and references from diverse cultural centers merge together (1977, p. 146). As he asserts in *The Death of the Author* (1968), this brings about a less emphasized role for authors when it comes to the production and communication of the meaning; that is, the author

could only facilitate miscellaneous texts in a de-centered manner rather than monitoring a predetermined meaning and directing it to the reader. The notable modification in viewpoints may be seen to which Bakhtin draws a linkage: the active role of the reader is partially enabled by the novelistic genre. He praises the novel, which was still regarded as secondary to poetry at the time, by highlighting its multivoicedness, taking up against monological and “centripetal” forces. (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 271). Although there are other genres, including poetry (probably led by T.S. Eliot with *The Waste Land*), proving to be heteroglossic, nonetheless, the novel, according to Bakhtin (1981), has more complexities with numerous discursive strata of language and hence more room for dialogic consciousness. He suggests truth is found in conversations rather than in a group of phrases or statements. Therefore, he puts a great stress on the novel as he considers it polyphonic in nature.

### **1.1.2. Intertextuality, Feminist Dialogics & Revisionist Mythmaking**

Julia Kristeva can be considered a successor of Bakhtin as not only did she analyze Bakhtin’s works and reinterpret them with a pathbreaking demeanor, but also heavily increased his level of recognition in the West. In *Word, Dialogue and Novel*, Kristeva (1980) reformulates the notion of dialogism and suggests that every single text is inextricably linked to other texts due to the contingency and circumstantiality of meaning. She uses the term “intertextuality” to signify a literary text’s inevitable relation with and reference to others whether through various techniques such as allusions, repetitions and transformations, or similar features in the shared reservoir of literary convention. Because they are characterized by such modifying methods and shared assets of other textual structures, the concept of intertextuality implies texts to

be regarded not as self-contained systems, but as differential and historical networks, as traces and imprints of the Other. The text is regarded as a production of already existing discourses and interpreted as “a permutation of texts, an intertextuality: in the space of a given text, several utterances, taken from other texts, intersect and neutralize one another” (Kristeva, 1980, p. 36). Furthermore, meaning is cultivated in both the act of production and the mode of reception. West-Pavlov (2009) takes it into consideration “as something produced, something specific to a time and a place, and that emerges out of that context” (p. 22). In compliance with the post-structuralist framework, intertextuality looks for neither a set meaning outside the text nor, like structuralists do, a message due to be revealed in quest of a deeper meaning. Instead, it accepts that the interaction between the reader and the text, which can come about in a boundless and perpetual capacity, generates a vast course of meaning. Therefore, intertextuality presents layers of meanings rather than solid and fixed ones.

The textual understanding of Saussure can be considered authoritative since he asserts the signifier’s precedence over the signified as well as the arbitrary relationship between them. He believes that determining the signified (meaning) is both possible and desirable, and he specifically intends to provide a “semiology,” for it. Instead of providing a space for pluralistic views, structuralist views tend to fixate meaning and form a dominant form. In contrast, poststructuralist critics argue that texts do not have a fixed and final meaning that can be deduced from a canonical and authoritative interpretation (Goulimari, 2014, p. 201). While both Bakhtin and Kristeva focus on the concepts explained above, they actually take a wide approach to the subject of authority. Bakhtin’s concept of dialogism, or the idea that texts can have multiple interpretations, is a key contribution to modern textual analysis. He expands on this concept by questioning the notion of ‘authority’ in texts. Bakhtin (1981) suggests that

authoritative texts contain and reflect “authority as such, or the authoritativeness of tradition, generally accepted truths, the official line, and other such authorities” (p. 344). The authority of a text is informed by its acceptance and acknowledgement in the past. Not only does it require other texts to depend on it with absolute fidelity, but it must also assert its validity (given from the past) and effect on future readings and other discourses. In such wise, the authoritative text contains and enforces the dominant interpretation. Similarly, Kristeva (1980) links monological texts to hierarchical structures such as unity of meaning, legitimacy, truth, and power. She proposes her own understanding of authorial text, which she calls monological discourse (p. 77). It should be pointed out that such concepts as dialogism, heteroglossia, and intertextuality play a key role in dismantling and pluralizing the dogmatic character and normativity of the conventional, or authoritative textuality. As an instance, to explain the heterogeneous nature of texts, Bakhtin uses the concept of heteroglossia, which means that texts portray a diversity of social voices and thus encapsulate a wide range of contexts. Each voice offers a unique viewpoint as well as a distinct manner of perceiving the world. Consequently, he establishes an analytical foundation where textual dialogism is closely linked with social struggles by addressing the emancipatory potential of the pluralistic features. Bakhtin’s rationale leads Kristeva to come up with the theory of intertextuality, underlining the openness of texts to the infinite possibilities of interpretation and a variety of new discourses. Moreover, she corroborates this as she directly engages the multivoicedness of texts counter to authority when stating that intertextual method is “characterized by opposition to any official monologism claiming to possess a ready-made truth” (Kristeva, 1980, p. 81). Thus, it can be inferred that any homogeneity of meaning and the authoritative discourse are challenged by intertextual texts.

The theories of Bakhtin did not only inspire Kristeva, but also scholars interested in questions of agency and social transformation. Feminist critics are particularly drawn to dialogism as it allows for such polyphony and thus seeks justice in both the literary and social realms. Since such critics, like Bauer and McKinstry (1991), argue that monologic mentality eliminates distinct voices, which result in gender-specific violence, it would not be wrong to claim that Bakhtin's ideas, especially the ones with an emphasis on the importance of "multi-voiced" narratives which may result in disruption of authoritarian tone and discourse both within and outside of the text, are compatible with such feminist concerns as power relations, social and cultural inferiority and political suppression. While the phrase regimen<sup>5</sup> of patriarchy, which is self-proclaimed, is inherently authoritative and monologic, both feminism and Bakhtinian theory celebrate plurality and diversity. What is common to both theories is a concern for those who have been oppressed and marginalized by the predominant and totalitarian language hegemony. To release the bondage from stabilized meaning of the predominant, heteroglossia should come into the stage, as both would urge. Bauer and McKinstry (1991) put forward that "feminist dialogics" encourages the destabilization and deconstruction of such repressive and dominating paradigms, or canons. The patriarchal discourse could be regarded as canonical because it is bestowed by societal, cultural, or religious tradition rather than any inherent or default quality. As such discourse represents the unified meaning, the writing of women, whose Otherness conveys a dialogic and polyphonic voice, is needed to destabilize the meaning.

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<sup>5</sup> "Phrase regimen" as a concept is first and frequently used by Lyotard in *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute* (1983).

Patricia Yaeger (1991) points out the goals of “feminist dialogics” as revealing disputes with patriarchy, shedding new light on debates with one another, and raising awareness and acceptance of a “diverse feminist speech-world” (p. 244). There are significant feminist critics who reject the dominant traditions forced by patriarchy and offer the recovery of ignored stories. Although her being considered an essentialist and thus separatist feminist, which is an approach that I do not embrace, Luce Irigaray provides a striking analysis within the context of power and proposes a strategic inquiry to achieve these goals. In *The Power of The Discourse and The Subordination of The Feminine* (1985), she refers to the significance of an interpretive rehashing to challenge and disturb the given values (p. 74). Accordingly, she claims that one necessitates to return and attempts to find what represents the power of the systematicity. She suggests mimicry as a technique which tends “to try to recover the place of her exploitation by discourse without allowing herself to be simply reduced to it” (p. 76). This strategy itself, according to my understanding, is inherently intertextual and dialogic in the sense that it not only engages and even communicates with an existing authoritative and monologic method, but also reacts to and adds to it by indicating a much-needed change. As it could be achieved through feminist dialogism, questioning, and altering the existing hegemonic phrase regimen, her ideas can be considered compatible with Bakhtin’s heteroglossia and Kristeva’s intertextuality. Also, Irigaray’s criticism opens the door to a reinterpretation of texts in order for women to recover from the exploitative discourse. This revisionism comes with deconstruction of the given and dislocation of power through the main narrator’s perspective.

Cixous, another important critic whose school of thought is consistent with the goals of feminist dialogism, emphasizes the significance of women’s taking control of

authorship to reshape the literary and social fields that have been rooted in patriarchal manipulations throughout history. In her essay *The Laugh of the Medusa* (1976), she uses strong mythological images implying that women must stop listening to men's narratives. Despite her binary and essentialist tone, Cixous' aim here is to convert the conventional power dynamics with regards to establishing a more credible literary understanding which can only be achieved through (and not limited to) lifting women's voice up. She pioneers the concept of *l'écriture féminine*<sup>6</sup> in this essay, which calls attention to the (lack of the) representation of the female and female body and challenges the male-oriented mindset that otherizes women and silences their voice. Women have been excluded from any type of writing that would allow them to contribute to the creation of history and culture across the ages. Cixous is concerned with the way in which women's ability to speak is silenced, both in sexist situations and in the way, discourse is constructed. She asserts women have indeed been consistently deprived, not only in life, but also in language and literature. Patriarchy frequently employs myths as one of the most powerful means to subjugate women in the process of depriving and othering them. According to Cixous and Clements (1986), "myth transmits itself, making changes in accordance with [...] cultural evolution" (p. 6). To put it differently, myths are immensely influential in that they mirror the literary and cultural mechanisms by which humans perceive the world. They encompass the human consciousness and engage in every aspect of life. When closely examined, it can be stated that they reflect and delegate attitudes that neglect and even cancel non-male genders. Revisioning myths could be a strong point of departure for such a change towards gender justice. As Cixous suggests in *The Laugh of the Medusa* (1976), women "have only to stop listening to the Sirens (for the Sirens

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<sup>6</sup> It is important to note that *l'écriture féminine* is not only a feminine writing but also a bisexual writing, which is beyond this study.

were men) for history to change its meaning” (p. 885). Revisionist mythmaking, therefore, is a powerful tool for a collective change because myths encapsulate a culture’s deeply ingrained, and often unquestioned, standpoints and ideologies.

Each case of future retelling extends an opportunity to reinvent inbuilt norms, enriching them with the perspective of the Other. Alicia Ostriker (1982) strikes on the importance of telling a woman’s own story based on her own experience as follows:

Changed by female knowledge of female experience, so that they can no longer stand as foundations of collective male fantasy. Instead, [...] they are corrections; they are representations of what women find divine and demonic in themselves; they are retrieved images of what women have collectively and historically suffered; in some cases they are instructions for survival.” (p. 72)

She defines revisionist mythmaking as appropriating a tale for a different end to achieve a cultural change eventually. Thus, the revised myth does not only refuse to conform to the mainstream norms and the oppressive authority, but it also has the potential to compensate for the limitations of the prevailing myth. Literature review demonstrates that myths can be retold in a variety of ways such as telling the story utterly from the perspective of the female protagonist, substituting the passive (non)agency of women, or having a feminist narrator tell the story in a satirical tone, pointing out the flawed representation of women in the original texts. Some revisionist works; though, including the ones to be analyzed in this dissertation, can incorporate more than one strategy in their storymaking. Notwithstanding, the process of reinterpreting the dominant narrative has the potential to be transformative. Such an intertextual journey is a critically reflective process of reinterpreting the past, an attempt to transcend its violence as the possibility of reinterpretation implies the

emergence of a search for justice, a response to historical alterity, difference, and all marginalized and oppressed meanings. Opening it up to future interrogation entails a deconstructive approach, as Jacques Derrida urges, that could be a way of disputing the (il)legitimacy and injustices of the past, and reinventing its values informed by and inbred in Western discourse.

### **1.1.3. Deconstruction**

The recognition of a work as universally literary and its inclusion in the canon is based on the extent to which it embraces the values of the hegemonic culture and resembles the Western “great works.” Roland Barthes (1987) notes that its inclusion in the canon is determined by historical relations of dominance, which only adds to the static (and monologic) nature of the already-established order. Since Ancient Greece, there have been five constant premises of the West: “belief in the value of the past; conviction of the nobility, even superiority, of Western civilization; acceptance of the worth of economic and technological growth; faith in reason and in the kind of scientific and scholarly knowledge that can come from reason alone; and, finally, belief in the intrinsic importance, the ineffaceable worth of life on this earth.” (Nisbet, 1980, p. 317). As a result of industrial, scientific, and technological progress, their values within these premises have gained some legitimacy, which is regarded as ‘knowledge’ communicated through narratives. Consequently, the West has dominated the world and its narratives have turned into grand narratives. However, these premises have lost their credibility due to the wars, stagnation, depression, poverty, environmental pollution, and exploitation of lands, resources and peoples led by the West. Loss of faith in such premises and thus the decline of metanarratives is desirable and liberating, according to Lyotard, because it contributes to the emergence of small narratives, or context-specific discourses (Pérez, 2015, p. 13). If one accepts

and applies the definition of metanarratives, they are not necessarily shaped solely by a region or the West per se but can be said to be a by-product of the dominant practices of cultures. Therefore, patriarchy can be considered as such since it has created a foundation and legitimacy through the telling and retelling of stories, which became central to the process of meaning-making in societies.

There is a large number of literary texts that can be referred to as metanarratives since they have been created by the hegemonic forces of the patriarchal gaze. In examining some literary metanarratives, such as many Greek epics, including *The Odyssey*, it is not difficult to notice that the voice of women has been diminished, if not erased altogether. According to Linda Hutcheon (2002), postmodern literature is intensely concerned with history and seeks to write the minor and plural histories of the suppressed: “we now get the histories (in the plural) ... of the regional (and colonial) as well as the centrist, of the unsung many as well as of the sung few, and I might add, of women as well as men” (p. 66). However, questioning the hegemonic stories may create trouble because of the potentiality to be labelled as a deviant, threat, and outsider. This otherizing, alienating strategy of patriarchy requires a meticulous job to be overthrown through some feminist strategies such as polyphony and revisionism. Feminist revisionist mythmaking is better to be executed from a deconstructive vantage point to subvert the dominance of patriarchal narratives. That the role of deconstruction in such feminist methods is strikingly considerable does not point to a stance away from historicism, though. Regarding such criticisms, Spivak (2013) suggests that “Deconstruction does not say there is no subject, there is no truth, there is no history. It simply questions the privileging of identity so that someone is believed to have the truth. It is not the exposure of error. It is constantly and persistently looking into how truths are produced” (p. 27). It is also important to point

out Derrida's interrogation of how truths are produced not only in relation to history but also in philosophy: He calls for the relationship between thinking and language and exposes some crises (such as undecidability and thus *différance*) and advocates deconstruction for contemporary philosophy. He urges us to revise history and also our way of thinking and its manifestation on language. Regarding this, Agamben (1999) claims the following:

Nevertheless, it would be the worst misunderstanding of Derrida's gesture to think that it could be exhausted in a deconstructive use of philosophical terms that would simply consign them to an infinite wandering or interpretation. Although he calls into question the poetic terminological moment of thinking, Derrida does not abdicate its naming power; he still "calls" by names... For Derrida, there is certainly a philosophical terminology; but the status of this terminology has wholly changed, or more exactly, has revealed the abyss on which it always rested... he experiences the exile of terminology, its paradoxical subsistence in the isolation of all univocal reference (p. 118).

Because both revisionism and deconstruction are closely engaged in the ways through which the truths are generated, presented, and suppressed, and more importantly, because they both seek for justice, they can be considered as two theories that feed each other and should therefore be studied together.

"Justice" is the backbone of the theoretical framework of this thesis. Due to its interchangeable use with "law" in some contexts, there may be misunderstandings about this concept that need to be clarified. The differentiation between the concepts of *law* and *justice* is at the center of Derrida's *The Force of Law*. Based on Montaigne's emphasis on the laws' taking their power from possession and custom,

Derrida (1992) makes the following remark: “The justice of law, justice as law is not justice. Laws are not just *as* laws. One obeys them not because they are just but because they have authority.” (p. 12). Since their authority cannot be based on anything other than themselves, they are regarded as performative and ungrounded; thus, deconstructable, as they are structures built on transformable textual layers. Derrida compares this, on the other hand, with justice that is “beyond law” and highlights its undeconstructable essence. The possibility of deconstruction on law and its impossibility on justice places deconstruction “in the interval that separates the undeconstructibility of justice from the deconstructibility of droit (authority, legitimacy and so on)” which would lead to the conclusion that “deconstruction is justice.” (1992, p. 15). According to Derrida, justice is always “yet-to-come” because it is impossible in present, always postponed, yet at the same time it calls for immediacy. To comprehend this temporality, it would be better to make a quick detour and examine another important “thought” put forward by Derrida: *différance*. In *Margins of Philosophy*, he examines the word from many linguistic aspects. For instance, in French, there are two words that derive from the verb “differer” and have the same pronunciation: difference (differ) and différance (différance) (defer). Although they have the same pronunciation, they have different meanings. In other words, *différance* can be used to express both difference and deferral. This puts Derrida in the position of criticizing logocentrism, which is a central tenet of the deconstructivist approach, and infers that signifiers have traces of other words. Focusing on Saussurean terminologies, although Derrida agrees the arbitrary relationship between signifier and signified, according to his analysis, the former is not tied to the latter due to the slide and shift in meaning.

The sign is usually said to be put in the place of the thing itself, the present thing, “thing” here standing equally for meaning or referent. The sign represents the place of the present. When we cannot grasp or the thing, state the present, the being-present, when the present cannot be presented, we signify, we go through the detour of the sign. We take or give signs. We signal. The sign in this sense, is deferred presence. ... What I am describing here in order to define it is the classically determined structure of the sign in all the banality of its characteristics—signification as the *différance* of temporization. And this structure presupposes that the sign, which defers presence, is conceivable only on the basis of the presence that it defers and *moving toward* the deferred presence that it aims to reappropriate. According to this classical semiology, the substitution of the sign for the thing itself is both *secondary* and *provisional*: secondary due to an original and lost presence from which the sign thus derives; provisional as concerns this final and missing presence toward which the sign in this sense is a movement of mediation. (Derrida, 1982, p. 9)

The lack of the immediate presence results in aporia: Justice, just like *différance*, is “infinite” because “it is irreducible” and as such because it owes and is “owed to the other,” and such singularity “is the very movement of deconstruction”. This notion of disjointure stands out in another significant work of Derrida’s. The leitmotif in *Spectres of Marx* is Hamlet’s iconic wail “The time is out of joint: O cursed spite / That ever I was born to set it right!”<sup>7</sup> In that, to be on the path to the just, one has to confront the ghost of the past, the specter that is “non-present present” (2012, p. 5). It seems to me that there is a direct linkage to be drawn between the

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<sup>7</sup> Hamlet, Act I, Scene V.

apparition of ghosts and *différance* as the former bears a struggle to compensate for the past injustices; they are deferred and spatial just like the latter. These “untimely” specters must be reckoned with in order to stay on track for justice. Derrida regards it as a process of responsibility, in conformity to duty, rather than from duty, as Kant proposes; however, it is also not reducible to reason because of its unique character excluding “exchange, circulation, recognition, economic circularity, calculation, rules and rationality.” In other words, a sort of “madness” can be identified in it. (1992: 25). It is the responsibility that makes justice imaginable. To learn to live with ghosts, being with them between life and death, would create a change to live “more justly,” just like stated in the epigraph.

Although he does not explicitly mention a Derridean understanding of justice, Lyotard does refer to the lack of justice and the impossibility of witnessing as a “perfect crime” in his book *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute* (1998). It is not only about killing, but also “obtaining the silence of the witnesses, the deafness of the judges, and the inconsistency (insanity) of the testimony.” (p. 25). Erasing references in the pursuit of justice or stealing people’s voices, leaving them deaf; inactive by force, can cause madness in other victims. He further explains that the legitimacy of one side does not presuppose the legitimacy of the other. However, implementing a single rule of judgment to both to resolve their differend as if it were simply a legal dispute would be unfair to “(at least) one of them.” This unlitigable situation refers to the condition: the absence of “a universal rule of judgement.” (1998, p. 12). That is, since each situation harbors a singularity of position, the quest for a universality would only create injustice, especially for those who are deprived of speech and where the case is the impossibility of testimony. As a result, justice requires immediacy and unique treatment; thus, is unattainable, non-present and yet-to-come. Derrida (1992)

states that justice is “the experience that we are not able to experience” but “there is no justice without this experience” because if there is no demand for justice, then there is “no change to...a call for justice.” (p. 16). Literature should and does open up a powerful space for this kind of will. Derrida underlines the “just” nature of deconstruction, which can be applied in literary texts in a playful manner. Therefore, as Elisabeth Weber (2018, p. 199) agrees, a deconstructive approach is there to experience that impossibility, to transpose ontology into hauntology by being ready to encounter ghosts and inviting them to speak.

Literature, a medium to present the unrepresentable, has a responsibility for a compensation, at least for a strive at it, for injustices. “Without storytelling there is no theory of ethics” posits Miller (1987, p. 3). The strong relationship between literature and ethics can be examined through (and against) the oppressive discourses, which would add politics to this relation as well. Patriarchy as a form of totalitarianism have been exposing women and other non-male genders to inequality and access to language over the centuries. Due to such systematic oppressions of violence, silencing and otherizing strategies, they have become like “ghosts.” Derrida’s “hauntology” may be adapted to this context as there is an ‘alienation’ in the absence of “point of departure” which forms one of the cornerstones for women to seek justice. To illustrate, female writers could not get published for a long time, and only with a pseudonym for quite a period. Now it is time for the ghosts to appear on the literary stage to tell how they have become the survivors of patriarchy and the witnesses of the injustices, to question the gender hierarchy and such social constructs created and monitored by patriarchal discourse, to point out how their voice, agency and representation have been subjected to *différance*, and ultimately, to demand and search for justice. In this sense, it is essential for deconstruction and feminism to

establish an alliance (Cornell, 1999, p. 115). To imagine a society in which people's gender identity is not mutilated by the stratified gender structure assigned and determined by patriarchy, and in order for an experience of justice to be possible, women should dismantle that constructed "reality", break their silence, and tell their stories. Everyone has a duty to contribute to this "possibility of the experience of justice". Drucilla Cornell (1999) justifies the need for such a commitment to responsibility as follows:

But *the l'avenir of justice* does not mean that we can escape our responsibility to engage in political and judicial battles as they are present to us now. The call of the Other is concrete. Justice is beyond calculation, but we must calculate, participate, if we are to meet the obligation to be just...We are called by other women to serve justice. We are also called by justice to be just and thus to recognize, to articulate, the injustices of this system of law and of right as it relates to women (pp. 115-116).

It seems to me that Cornell's reading of Derrida is quite communicative and "just" as she points out his idea of (the impossible) justice and connects it with the constant *différance* women have been experiencing. Thereby, she calls for deconstruction both for a sense of responsibility and for a possibility for a fairer future. Translating this into literature, women's revisionist writing is of great importance due to its eminent potential to reclaim justice as well as a hope for social transformation and recovery from the despotic exposures of patriarchy.

#### **1.1.4. A Brief Review and Outline of the Study**

To summarize, methodological framework of this thesis is rather broad. In fact, it includes the perspectives of many theorists yet quite specific in that they are all

interconnected from various aspects and function like an ensemble complementing and feeding one another. For Bakhtin, pluralism in literature intensifies a resisting quality towards monologism and totalitarianism. Julia Kristeva's theory of intertextuality, where relation to the Other (people, contexts, texts) is emphasized, is based on his theory of dialogism and heteroglossia. When it comes to postmodern intertextuality, which is engaged in canonical discourses, it thrives to resignify and delegitimize grand narratives. Created by the phrase regimen of patriarchy, they are to be appropriated by exposing the limitations of what was deemed universal by bringing women's experience from the margins to the center. Cixous, Irigaray and Ostriker highlight the striking resistance of women throughout history and suggest an overthrow of the oppressive discourse by proposing different techniques such as mimicry, stealing their language, and rewriting the existing narratives, where deconstructionist approach plays a significant role. Derrida sheds the light on the path to justice where deconstructionism, with a transformative and emancipatory quality, is portrayed as a must. Intertextual interpretations open new possibilities for justice to-come as they challenge the authoritative textual strata along with oppressive values rooted in cultures. Through intertextuality and alliance with deconstruction, revisionist mythmaking strategy has a significant potential to redeem the injustices of the past by bringing the voice of Woman, or the Other, alterity, and hope for "just" voices, both collectively and individually, into the stage.

In the light of the above, this thesis intends to analyze women's quest for justice in two contemporary novels, the Canadian writer Margaret Atwood's *The Penelopiad* (2005) and the Turkish writer Latife Tekin's *Muinar* (2006), in a comparative framework. Both novels include mythological references, either directly or indirectly, and reveal the suppressed voice of women as a result of centuries of patriarchal

oppression. By revising history and stories of other women, we witness the striving of women and nature for justice in *Muinar*. In *The Penelopiad*, on the other hand, we examine the other side of a well-known myth, *The Odyssey*, through the questioning of a credible narrator and the pursuit of justice by women using a variety of narrative discourses. As a result, both offer a deconstruction of patriarchal values through an intertextual glimpse and a revisionist perspective. Both authors not only encourage readers to consider female subjectivity through their protagonists, but also allow them to observe the paths taken by women seeking justice. Paying attention in depth, two ultimate questions reside in the mentioned works: (How) Does revisionist mythmaking help women actualize a transformative and emancipatory potential for self and society? Is it possible to achieve gender-justice? I aim to discover the inferences of these questions with regards to three correlations: Dialogism as a means to challenge the credibility of a narrator, intertextuality as a tool of modification and recovery from the hegemonic discourse, and deconstruction as a technique on the track of justice. By analyzing the mentioned books, I would like to discover how the writers give sanction to women's sphere and represent female subjectivity and the paths with which women claim justice.

## 2. CHAPTER 1: DIALOGISM AND JUSTICE

Dialogism is initially presented by Bakhtin (1984) as the double-voicedness of language. The dynamic meaning of a word is found in its transmission from view to view, person to person, context to context, as well as from one social collective to another. Thus, it has the capacity to be of the same and different meanings at the same time, which points to the ability of a word or utterance to unmask, parody, or ironize the other utterance within itself (Zengin, 2016, p. 312). Another term coined by Bakhtin, *heteroglossia*, is closely connected to and can be studied together with dialogism as it refers to the pluralistic characteristics of reality, resulting from the diverse and different perceptions of words and the world. Heteroglossic feature of texts can enlarge the range of meaning and reveal the prospect of other truths. For Bakhtin, literature's pluralist scope is to mobilize and intensify social heteroglossia, with its dialogism resisting monologism and totalitarianism<sup>8</sup>. Kristeva (1980, p.77) makes a similar connection between monological writing and hierarchical structures including unification of meaning, veracity, truth, and power. She interprets authorial texts within monological discourse. Hence, it can be stated that dialogism evinces the emancipatory potential of social struggles with its pluralistic feature.

Unlike monologism, which eliminates multi-voicedness and, according to Bauer and McKinstry (1991, p.6), results in gender-specific violence, dialogism appeals to especially feminist thinkers and writers because it opens the text to polyphony and thus construes a possibility for the articulation of the injustices that the Other has been exposed to. For that reason, it would not be wrong to claim that

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<sup>8</sup> A more detailed discussion about the plurality effect of Bakhtin's heteroglossia can be found in this thesis: Volek, M. E. (2014). *Speaking of Bakhtin : a study of the sociolinguistic discourse on Bakhtin and language*. (Doctoral dissertation, University of British Columbia).

women as the Other could seek justice through a Bakhtinian understanding of polyphonic narratives in order to destabilize authoritarian tone and discourse both within and outside the text. Cullingford (1994) states that “[D]espite his insensitivity to the nuances of gender in the analysis of voice, then, Bakhtin's historical poetics offer feminists an enabling methodology.” (p. 38). While the self-proclaimed regime of patriarchy is inherently authoritative and monological, both feminism and Bakhtinian theory celebrate polyphony and diversity. What is common to both theories is a concern for those who have been disempowered and underrepresented by the dominant and totalitarian hegemony. At this juncture, "feminist dialogism" should intercede for injustices and promote the decentralization and deconstruction of repressive power structures in order to prevent the dominant from producing a single truth and from stabilizing meaning. Accordingly, in this chapter, I will try to demonstrate how dialogism is employed as a means to challenge the credibility of a narrator by analyzing two texts comparatively: Tekin's *Muinar* and Atwood's *The Penelopiad*.

Tekin uses a dynamic, fluid, and poetic language full of images in writing *Muinar*. She creates quite a political text in a relatively aggressive tone, blaming patriarchy for attempting to destroy the world and particularly women. In an interview with Sema Aslan, Latife Tekin states: "[w]omen need to reject history because history is written by men, not women. Just like the poor, women are also without history". Tekin tells us that the language of women is a fairy tale and a song that of quiet breathing. She adds that she wrote *Muinar* within "the language of women, a language close to the language of the world, the rain and lightning group" (Terzioğlu, 2009, p. 43). The following excerpt would point to the poetic tone of the novel as well the streamy flow of thoughts and dialogues between Elime and Muinar:

“[...] Do they not stop and ask themselves, is the state the state of women?

They write about every war, they don't write about the war that withered the world, may they fall away and be reaped from the eye, they've had their eyes on the seeds in our palms...”

She started muttling unattended sentences, my voice deepened and flowed.

*Cloud empire in the sky!..*

I wanted to invite her by my side by saying that “Women were always involved in the state with their husbands, don't you know that,” my breath was taken away from me...

*Siberon, the daughter of the Sun on earth!..*

This is not the first time she snaps into this mood, she sometimes talks like she is reading an old poem engraved on a stone, that same intonation...<sup>9</sup> (pp. 46-47)

As it can be understood in the quoted passage, just as Tekin expresses, Muinar speaks with occasional mutterings and yet at times in the tone of an epic. In this poetic, rhythmic novel that is rich in imagery, it is difficult to follow the flow of thought and

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<sup>9</sup> ...Durup sormuyorlar mı kendilerine, devlet kadının devleti mi? Kitapları her savaşı yazıyor, dünyayı solduran savaşı yazmıyor, gözlerinden eksilip biçilsinler, avucumuzdaki tohumdaymış gözleri...

Sahipsiz cümleler mırıldanmaya başladı, derinleşip aktı sesim.

*Gökte bulut imparatorluğu!..*

“Kadınlar kocalarıyla her zaman devletin içindeydi, bilmiyor musun bunu,” diyerek yanıma çağırarak istedim onu, soluğum çekilip gitti benden...

*Yerde güneşin kızı Siberon!..*

İlk kez sarmıyor bu hava onu, arada bir, taş kazınmış eski bir şiiri okur gibi konuştuğu oluyor böyle, o tonlama... (s. 46-47)

to grasp whose speech particularly belongs to whom at the first instance. Mutterings and whispers are interwoven into the rhythm in attempt to create an alternative portal for women's existentialism, history, and writing. Tekin manifests her writing in a way which is no different than what Cixous explains: "I do not write, I curl up in a ball, I become an ear, I am a rhythm" (1994, in Cavarero, 2005, p. 143). With her interesting and abrupt epic tone along with non-existent curses, Muinar thrives to prove that she is ten-thousand-year-old voice, a voice that drags the stories of various women as well as the wind, the rain, and the storm. These epic spikes can actually be read in an Irigarayan<sup>10</sup> perspective: to pass through the dominant discourse and speak as a woman, first, one needs to invade that place and convert that field of subordination. Thus, it is possible to conclude that mimicry here is utilized to engage with the monologic discourse of the authoritative and to reclaim a place for the other which has been exploited for ages. In *Muinar*, deprived of her own history and instrumentalized and objectified in someone else's history, women rewrite the alternative history with a new and unique language.

Another salient characteristic of Tekin's writing would be the constant interaction and haltless dialogues of two voices. Although they may have different perspectives, they are not deaf towards each other as Bakhtin (1984) states as well. This dialogic multivoicedness is partly resulted in stream of consciousness, which critics praise, especially in Woolf's work, for enriching the psychological dimensions

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<sup>10</sup> In *The Power of The Discourse and The Subordination of The Feminine*, Irigaray draws attention to the representation of the exclusively masculine parameters (1985: 68). She underpins that women's inferiority results from inaccessibility to their own language (85). Hence, she points to the importance of interpretive rereading in questioning and disrupting the established values (74). In order to do this, she suggests going back and trying to explore what accounts for the power of the systematicity. According to Irigaray, women should represent themselves by producing truth and meaning based on their experiences to recover the exploitative place of male discourse and disrupt this discursive power dynamic mechanism (76-78). They need to articulate the demand for equality in the realm of civil rights, which can be accomplished by not allowing any delay in women's politics (81).

of the characters and portraying them in "process of ceaseless becoming" rather than a state of being (Burton, 1996, p. 40). When polyphony manifests itself in social, cultural, political, and historical contexts with a technique of stream-of-consciousness, it decentralizes previous discourses and presents contradictory truths. This reading of stream of consciousness can also be explored in Tekin's narrative. In *Muinar*, Elime occasionally watches car races on television. It turns out that Muinar is also a car race enthusiast. While watching the race, Elime falls asleep and has a dream which she claims to be Muinar's indeed. The following dialogue is illustrative in this sense:

"See, it was such a morning, I left my fairies asleep and went out. [...] I got past my guards and went to the forest to pick the oleander... I saw a snake soaring and approaching towards me. [...]"

The hag called out to me at that moment: 'It's my dream-snake, thrust out your hand! It's not real, it won't bite,' she said, 'put the oleander on your bedside, it's my dream-flower, I took its poison from its scent, if you breathe it, I will lift the secret above everything, sleep like that tonight.'

"I figured out how you died, Muinar, I am not blinking, watch the race...

[...] How many women did you drag to death then, didn't your king father put those who carried your funeral to the mountain with the sword? [...] You were the king's daughter, you became an anarchist after you died, huh?"

"[...] What the hell are you talking about... I woke up in a king's daughter, [...] her sisters pushed her from behind and threw her into the abyss...on a windy day, in tears, the king cut ten of his daughters for the one and made a pillow out of them."

“Didn't you have their mothers slaughtered for a quilt and buried them all together in the ground? Look, you were saying they had the best engine, they were disgraced, here's a loss of prestige...”

‘Is there a female racer? Do you see any...’

“You can’t say there are none, there are some in lower-level races.” (pp. 107-108)<sup>11</sup>

One of the complex tropes that Tekin uses in the novel is dreams in the shared presence of Elime and Muinar. While just watching a race, they communicate with and through dreams, reach conclusions through them, and jump into other topics. Elime realizes that she is in Muinar’s dreams but also has her owns (p. 97). Their incessant flow of conversation is full of mysticism foreshadowing Muinar’s previous experiences that refer to mythic tales. By engaging in an ongoing stream of consciousness as well as successive social discourse that are integral parts of the public sphere, Elime and Muinar head toward renegotiating social values and behaviors. Such behaviors are driven by patriarchal motives which pit sister against

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<sup>11</sup> Böyle bir sabahı işte, perilerimi uyur bırakıp çıktım. [...] Muhafızlarımı atlatıp ormana ağuş çiçeği sökmeye gittim... Üstüme doğru kalkmış bir yılan gördüm. [...]

O sırada seslendi içimden kocakarı, ‘O benim rüya yılanım, uzat elini!’ ... ‘Gerçek değil sokmaz,’ dedi, ‘ağuş çiçeğini başucuna koy, o benim rüya çiçeğim, zehrini aldım kokusundan, havasını solursan her şeyin üstündeki sırrı kaldırırım, bu gece öyle uyu.’

“Anladım nasıl öldüğünü Muinar, gözümü kırpıyorum, seyret yarışını...”

[...] Sonra sen kaç kadını ölüme sürükledin peki, cenazeni dağa taşıyanları kılıçtan geçirmedi mi kral baban? [...] Kral kızıydın, öldükten sonra anarşist oldun öyle mi?”

‘[...] Ne saçmalıyorsun sen? Bir kral kızının içinde uyanmıştım, [...] kız kardeşleri arkasından itip uçuruma yuvarladı bunu...rüzgarlı gün, gözyaşları içinde, bir kızına on kızını kesip yastık yaptı kral.’

“Yorgan niyetine annelerini de boğazlatırıp tümünü birlikte gömdürtmedin mi toprağa? Bak, en iyi motor onlarda diyordun, rezil oldular işte, al sana prestij kaybı...”

‘Bir tane kadın yarışçı var mı? Görüyor musun...’

“Hiç yok da diyemezsin, daha alt yarışlarda var.” (s. 107-108)

sister and narrate the kings who supposedly have to slay. Besides, it can be argued that the intralingual aspect of heteroglossia stands out with their conflicting interaction, of different tones, manners and perspectives. This allows for the exploration of other fields of meaning and truths, which in turn calls into question the credibility of predominant narratives.

As said before, Tekin uses many natural elements like wind, rain and sun to strengthen the narratives and language of women. She frequently mentions “light” as well, yet not in a conventional way. She compares the light of nature and the sun with a metaphor used by patriarchy, who uses religion for power. Muinar retells a wide variety of mythic stories, from monotheism to expulsion of women. In this way, she exposes the strong relationship between the spread of religion and consolidation of the phrase regimen of patriarchy. Within the story of Muinar’s mythical Land of Women,<sup>12</sup> she passes on the story of a woman named Hurranibar. In the story, Hurranibar has two sons who were abandoned by their father. One day, they engage in a heated debate about “light” which she eavesdrops:

“Ideas coming from an active mind reach people with a divine light beam, and thus the human spirit is created,” said his eldest son, “I have the greatest spirit created with that light.”

His younger son was throwing back at him... “The universe is an endless flow of existence coming from and returning to the divine being, the main symbol of this flow is light... Every age has a *qutb* [apostle, pole, pivot], I am the most perfect *qutb* of this age...”

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<sup>12</sup> Kadınlar Ülkesi

Hurranibar was about to say, “Is there a light other than the one I know, oh my sons, does the sun illuminate your face and leave my face in darkness...” Their words were for each other, they turned their heads and did not listen to her.

Hurranibar, who put her stick into the embers, making it crunchy, straightened up by saying, “You both are the weight of my belly.” She brought it within an inch of their mouths by turns. “Get down in your places, you bastards, did the light of God flow on you and not on me, was the *qutb* not me, but you, you fell to the ground between my legs and you saw the light.”<sup>13</sup> (p. 110).

As noted in the given story, it is considered appropriate for philosophical discussions to be held by men in an area that is only monitored by men. Women are not regarded as agents with the ability to propose an argument, develop a topic, or change the flow of a discussion. Once again, they are excluded by a certain discourse. In return, Hurranibar aggressively reacts against her state of exclusion. She reminds them of herself, her body’s creative power, and in her own style, she shows that their school of thought is misleading. In the continuation of this storytelling, Muinar further explains how divine light is imposed, used and spread within a particular discourse as follows:

It is better to chase the men with a brand, form a cult with their mothers, then see the light of God... Oh Siberon, the daughter of the Sun!.. What the world

<sup>13</sup> “Etkin akıldan gelen fikirler, insana ilahi bir ışık huzmesiyle ulaşır ve böylece insan ruhu yaratılır” diyormuş büyük oğlu, “o ışıkla yaratılmış en büyük ruh bende.”

Küçük oğlu atılıp karşılık veriyormuş ona... “Evren, ilahi varlıktan gelen ve ona dönen sonsuz bir varoluş akışıdır, bu akışın başlıca sembolü ışıktır... Her çağın bir kutbu vardır, bu çağın en mükemmel kutbu benim...”

“Bildiğim ışıktan başka bir ışık mı var, ey oğullarım, güneş sizin yüzünüzü aydınlatıp benim yüzümü karanlıkta mı bırakıyor...” diyecek olmuş Hurranibar, sözleri birbirineymiş oğulların, başlarını çevirip dinlememişler onu. Değneğini közün içine sokup çıtır çıtır kızdırmış ucunu Hurranibar, “İkiniz de karnımın ağırlığısınız benim,” diyerek doğrulmuş... değneğini bir onun ağzına, bir ötekinin ağzına gel ha etmiş.. “Yatın yerinize piçler, Tanrının ışığı bana değiş de size mi akıp çekildi, kutup ben değilim siz misiniz, bacaklarımın arasından toprağa düştünüz de gördünüz ışığı” (115).

has become... Did you read that doctor's article 'Woman, Our Social Class,' Elime?...

"I read it, yes," I said, "if you're feeling the inside of my head." ...

"Don't interrupt me and listen, they set up a light bench from earth to sky and they finished women off like that...if women became a class, they became a class because of the light... I have come to a difficult point now... I woke up in a young, beautiful woman in the desert... people were waiting for a single God to choose their new male prophet... Don't even ask what happened, Elime, God has cast his light on the heart and face of a man descended from the woman I woke up in... They would hooray as 'God chooses a messenger from our gender, we are the superior sex'... Men from the three continents rose up, they cast the women out of the light and drove them into the darkness... They rain stones onto the heads of women, they bury them alive in the ground... 'Girl, you'll go to bed with me', one prick plunged up each woman, 'God commands so, you were created to please me, cover your hair up, let no eye touch it'...<sup>14</sup> (pp. 113-115)

Muinar points out the association of patriarchy with the enforcement of religions as well as its relation to the subordination of women. She deconstructs the

<sup>14</sup> "Erkekleri kızmış değnekle kovalayıp analarıyla bir tarikat kuracaksın, Tanrı'nın ışığını gör o zaman... Ah, güneşin kızı Siberon!.. Ne hale geldi dünya... Sen o doktorun 'Kadın Sosyal Sınıfımız' yazısını okudun mu Elime? ..."

"Kafamın içini yokluyorsan, okudum, evet," dedim. ...

"Sözümü kesme de dinle, yerden göğe ışık tezgahı kurup öyle bitirdiler kadınların işini...kadınlar, sınıf olduysa, ışık yüzünden sınıf oldu... Lafın zor yerine geldim şimdi...genç, güzel bir kadının içinde uyanmışım çölde... o tek bir Tanrı, yeni erkek elçisini seçecek diye bekliyor insanlar, sorma ne oldu Elime, Tanrı ışığını içinde uyandığım kadının soyundan bir erkeğin kalbine, yüzüne düşürüverdi...Tanrı bizim cinsimizden elçi seçiyor, biz üstün cinsis diye azıp kuduracaklar.... Üç kıtanın erkeği koşup kalktı ayağa, kadınları kızları ışık dışı edip karanlığa sürdüler kafalarında... taş yağdırıyorlar kadınların başına, diri diri gömüyorlar toprağa... Kız sen benim koynuma gireceksin, her kadının tepesinde bir ışık puştı, Tanrı öyle emrediyor, gönlümü hoş tutmak için yaratıldın, ört başını başka göz değmesin saçına... (s. 113-115)

Note: This excerpt will be referred in the following chapter as well.

earlier narratives by highlighting the brutality, let alone their unequal treatment, of religious discourse, and re-establishes their historical foundations, especially via a strong critique of sharia. Through this critical perspective coming with dialogism, Muinar helps Elime and the readers with questioning the credibility of the phrase regimen of patriarchy.

Dialogism is not as direct and constant in *The Penelopiad* as it is in *Muinar*; however, Penelope's recounting of ancient narratives from her point of view in a more skeptical and sarcastic style, as well as her constant interruption by the twelve maids, is given prominence with that subtle yet strong dialogism. First, Atwood carefully peruses the relationship between storytelling and truth and actively explores it. In the chapter titled *Introduction*, after giving background information about the ancient epic, she writes: "the story as told in *The Odyssey* doesn't hold water: there are too many inconsistencies,". She intends to unveil the gaps in the plot told (and untold) about Penelope and the maids. Thus, she accentuates the concept of storytelling from the beginning of the novel. In the first chapter, Penelope clarifies the reason why she has not spoken so far. It is understood that she wanted "happy endings in those days" so she stayed silent and yielded (p. 3). She was also afraid of defending herself as it would have made her sound guilty (p. 3). But upon all those spread-around-the-world and long-lasting gossips, she owns herself to tell her own story. In this way, she upsets the hegemonic balances poised by the dominant masculine voice of heroic epics which possess a textual mono-linearity, imposing a totalizing and repressive value on the feminine other. Second, Penelope starts the tale-telling, which she calls "low art", both to prove to people that Odysseus was "tricky and a liar" and to flash on what was once said about her (p. 2). Although she does not crystallize where she was standing on the scale of being a loyal and patient wife, and even though she may have reflected as an

“edifying legend” by Odysseus, she is uncomfortable with how she was portrayed. It is possible to grasp her irritation on the following lines:

Hadn't I been faithful? Hadn't I waited, and waited, and waited, despite the temptation – almost the compulsion – to do otherwise? And what did I amount to, once the official version gained ground? An edifying legend. A stick used to beat other women with. Why couldn't they be as considerate, as trustworthy, as all-suffering as I had been?<sup>15</sup> (p. 2)

As she admitted but kind of waved aside, she was indeed "tempted" by the courtship of the suitors. She may have wanted to be loved and accompanied upon decades of loneliness, or only wanted to satisfy her sexual desires. In part xiv, when she looks backward, she states: “I have to admit that I occasionally daydreamed about which one I would rather go to bed with, if it came to that,” which highlights the latter possibility (p. 105). Furthermore, through the end of the novel, when Helen sarcastically alludes her by saying that she “played the faithful little wifey,” Penelope does not respond to that part but keeps on commenting on other subjects (p. 188). Let it stand beside if being loyal means abstinence in intention and in mind as well, Penelope's vague confession can lead the readers to ponder on how trustworthy the portrayal Odysseus drew is.

Penelope does not only criticize Odysseus' actions and stories. She also looks down on her father's hypocrisy as he is the one who tried to kill her when she was a baby, who was not really there for her when she was growing up; yet still, whether

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<sup>15</sup> This excerpt will be referred in the following chapter as well.

genuinely or for the sake of a male tradition, he becomes agitative when Penelope is about to leave home to live in Ithaca with her husband:

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? ... There's some truth to this story. But 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!'" (p. 49)

It is possible to sense her sarcastic tone easily while reading these words. She implies that his father creates a dramatic scene which does not seem to be believable and thus absurd. The father figure here acts entirely according to patriarchal values. Family as a constitutional unit has been in favor of the hegemonic power. Marx finds the first unequal value-distribution in family. He claims that labor and property are not distributed equally in families where "the women and children are men's slave" (1973, p. 32). His theory forms a basis for Irigaray's argument about "women on the market." In her Marxist vocabulary, the women have had either the use value -the value one set by using something - or the exchange value – how much money one makes on the market. A woman is split between her use and exchange values, the latter of which our entire society desires only. As a result of this system, women have three roles in patriarchal societies: the mother (who has only use value; cannot be exchanged), the virgin (who has no use value but made up of purely exchange one; something men can trade with one another), and the prostitute (who has both use and exchange value – by men like pimps) (Irigaray, 1985). All these roles have something in common: they isolate women from their own desire and pleasure. Their agencies

are discarded and what they want is not taken into consideration. Within patriarchy, women have no existence of their own; they just reflect the men who own them. Applying such an Irigarayan understanding to *The Penelopiad*, it can be claimed that Penelope is also a woman on the market. She moves from her father's house to her husband's after they marry. However, she manages to ridicule precarious manhood<sup>16</sup> by portraying her father's absurdity and two-facedness while she leaves the house. She is the eventual agent approving the level of truth of the story, which tears down the conventional values regarding the credibility of a male perspective.

While Penelope lifts the curtain behind the unpleasant experiences and hardships, she had to face centuries ago on the one hand, the maids mock her on the other. As angry and revengeful as they are, they are the nameless victims undergone a double oppression - social oppression as slaves and gender oppression in a patriarchal society (Bottez, 2012, p. 54). They want to call Odysseus and Telemachus for their account. They also blame Penelope for their death as she did not save them. Penelope strives to validate her excuses such as being locked out or fallen asleep. However, through the sinister lines as a chorus in their poetic and dramatic style<sup>17</sup>, the maids powerfully imply that they do not buy it. They undermine Penelope by highlighting the unfortunate course of events as well as their low status:

If I was a princess, with silver and gold,

And loved by a hero, I'd never grow old ...

I fetch and I carry, I hear and obey,

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<sup>16</sup> The concept and theory of precarious manhood can be examined in the following article: Bosson, J. K., Vandello, J. A., & Caswell, T. A. (2013). Precarious manhood. *The SAGE handbook of gender and psychology*, 15-130.

<sup>17</sup> At the end of the book, Atwood states that she is inspired by the Greek drama when she writes "the Chorus of Maids." (p. 198).

It's Yes sir and No ma'am the whole bleeding day;

I smile and I nod with a tear in my eye,

I make the soft beds in which others do lie.

Oh gods and oh prophets, please alter my life,

And let a young hero take me for his wife!

But no hero comes to me, early or late –

Hard work is my destiny, death is my fate! (pp. 51-52)

Even for someone who have not read the ancient epic, their bitter weeping foreshadows what happened to them. In *The Odyssey*, after Penelope marries Odysseus, he leaves Ithaca for about twenty years for heroic purposes, he is believed to be dead. Consequently, she has a lot of suitors eager to marry her and rule Ithaca. Upon rejecting them, which is a failed mission as they are rather persistent, she starts waiving and uses it as an excuse for her mourning. She waits for Odysseus to return, which eventually happens, in disguise. Before his disguised return, Odysseus hears that there are suitors for Penelope. There lies the fact that he does not tell anyone about his homecoming because in fact, he does not trust Penelope. After coming back, he kills the suitors, and orders the best maids of Penelope, who have been defending her and helping her gain time and space from the suitors, to be hanged. It is this act that precipitates much of the setting of the play in Hades in *The Penelopiad*, where in the after world there are Penelope and the maids, with an unpleasant tension of guilt and sorrow among them. Thus, the quotation above refers to the one who kills the maids. The maids also point to the fact that noble people who gets served but not put

effort in work are the ones who lie. As a result, their words convey double criticism regarding their gender and social status.

Along with Penelope, they haunt Odysseus in *The Penelopiad*. They have no less of a rough tongue for him. They join Penelope in accusing him of being a liar. However, they sound even more aggressive as seen below:

For he was Athene's own shiny-eyed boy,

With his lies and tricks and his thieving! ...

Our lad said, 'I'm No One,' but then bragged, "'Twas I,

Odysseus, the prince of deceiving!'" (p. 93)

The twelve maids are blunt at accusation in their tone, too, given the exclamation points. They indicate that what Odysseus told is nothing to be trusted since he is the "master disguiser" and of deceit.

The only direct context that the maids and Penelope communicate with each other in *The Penelopiad* takes place after the trial, *Home Life in Hades* (xxvii). This chapter of the book as well as the following excerpt is the central premise of dialogism as a medium on the reach of justice. When Penelope sees Odysseus there, she relapses, remembers her love for him and misses to be with him. She believes why he keeps drinking the Water of Forgetfulness is because of the maids as they would not let him get away with what he did - not again. Thereby, after seeing them after the trial, she yells at them:

'Why can't you leave him alone?'[...] I have to yell because they won't let me get near them. 'Surely it's enough! He did penance, he said the prayers, he got himself purified!' 'It's not enough for us,' they call. 'What more do you want

from him?’ I ask them. By this time I’m crying. ‘Just tell me!’ But they only run away. Run isn’t quite accurate. Their legs don’t move. Their still-twitching feet don’t touch the ground. (p. 190)

This dialogic model differs from the rest of the novel in that it is not an interruption, nor is it written in a dramatic narrative or lyric style. Penelope, who sounds deeply sorry for what happened to the maids while also attempting to develop various excuses and alternative justifications for not preventing their deaths throughout the book (and may even begin this storytelling for the purpose of a kind of redemption), is enraged upon encountering them because she sees them as an impediment to her union with Odysseus and her own happiness. But neither Penelope nor the maids reach a resolution even at the end of the novel. Justice may never be attained but strictly rejecting the decisions made by the dominant discourse is the way to make justice imaginable. Derrida (1992) asserts that there is no improvement of conditions unless there is “a call for justice” (p. 16). Only by demanding it can one imagine achieving individual and social change.

Consequently, it is important to note that last two chapters of *The Penelopiad* are written from the perspective of the twelve maids, revealing that instead of Penelope, it is the maids having the last word on male heroism, denigrating and attacking it. Chapter xxviii displays the maids’ stalk and promise of haunting Odysseus forever. Also, they call him “Mr Master of Illusion! Mr Sleight of Hand, grandson of thieves and liars!” (p. 191). Even at the very end of the book, they continue to defend what they believe, to show that he is a liar, and to demand justice. In *Envoi*, their concluding stanzas along with the previous chapter emphasize his lack of credibility and dishonesty. Their final exit is quite striking:

and now we follow

you, we find you

now, we call

to you to you

too wit too woo

too wit too woo

*The Maids sprout feathers, and fly away as owls. (pp. 195-196)*

The novel ends with a metamorphic image: they transform into the symbol of knowledge and wisdom, an owl. Owls have also been linked to wisdom and wealth on account of accompanying goddesses, particularly Athena, goddess of wisdom and the arts. Athena is frequently depicted with a small owl perched on her shoulder, illuminating her blind side, allowing her to see and, as a result, speak the whole truth instead of a half of it. Taking Penelope's usage of owl into consideration when in *Chapter i* she says: "Don't follow my example, I want to scream in your ears – yes, yours! But when I try to scream, I sound like an owl," (p. 2) it is possible to associate owls not only with their referrals to wisdom, but also to their silent manifestation. Nonetheless, just as they light up the blind side of Athena (Atwood, 2010), they shed light upon the Homeric epic and its hegemonic phrase regimen. Also, Atwood's mythological narrative comes with a full circle by reminding the owl imagery at the beginning. The circular dynamics of dialogism disrupts the monologic linearity presented by Homer's *The Odyssey*.

The protagonists of Tekin's *Muinar* and Atwood's *The Penelopiad* are women in search of justice. They challenge the mythical and folk stories told by male

authority. The dialogic features of the novels create a space for multiperspectivity. Polyphony presents conflicting truths in this way, destabilizing the previously constructed meaning of the dominant discourse. Elime's constant dialogues with Muinar, as well as the maids' point of view interrupting Penelope's narration, decentralize the patriarchal regime of phrases, shake the pre-set values, and question the credibility of the previous narrators. Despite their different dialogic styles, both writers prove that the emancipatory potential of a text can only be realized through pluralism and diversity. The dialogic approach functions as a litmus test, revealing the hegemonic relationship between storytelling and truth by examining how trustworthy ancient stories and folktales are. However, these novels not only call the authority's phrase regimen and credibility into question, but they also devise intertextuality to modify the representation of women and recover from hegemonic discourse.

### 3. CHAPTER 2: INTERTEXTUALITY AND JUSTICE

Julia Kristeva's concept of intertextuality is based on Bakhtin's theory of dialogism, emphasizing the collective underpinnings of utterance and the reader's dynamic involvement. The writer's relation to others, and their engagement with specific discourse in a particular context, contribute to, or even determine, the meaning of any word or utterance. Just as intertextuality decentralizes the totalitarian approach and unity of meaning of monologic texts, postmodern literature aims to disclose the conventional social codes that were enforced by the oppressor. Postmodern intertextuality, then, examines texts, how they are produced, and how people negotiate their cultural practices and identities on that landscape, with the goal of decentralizing and delegitimizing the values of the phrase regimen conveyed in canonical texts, including myths and folktales. With an intertextual perspective, I will examine the relationship between the canonical and revisionist texts, via *Muinar* and *The Penelopiad*, in this chapter. I will attempt to investigate how the protagonists affirm, refute, and mythicize (un)recorded experiences and incidents in order to reveal how they reject or modify dominant traditions resulting in recovery from hegemonic discourse.

*Muinar* encompasses diverse mythology and folktale references anticipating women's recuperation from the male-gaze. The Legend of Sarıkız, for example, is a folk tale which tells the story of Sarıkız and her father who lived in the Ayvacık region of Çanakkale and earned their living as shepherds. According to the legend, Sarıkız lives with her father in a small village after her mother dies. The father wants to go on a pilgrimage one day. He entrusts his daughter to the imam of the village. The young men of the village are smitten by Sarıkız and race to marry her but she

turns them down. The young men who can't stand it spread rumors about her honor.<sup>18</sup> The father, returning from the pilgrimage, hears this and signs his daughter's death warrant to "cleanse his honor"<sup>19</sup>. He leaves her to die on the hill and returns to his own village because he couldn't "have the heart" to kill her with his own hands<sup>20</sup>. Years later, when the father hears that Sarıkız has attained sainthood and is wandering the mountains with her geese, he can no longer bear the longing for his daughter and returns to the hill where he first abandoned her. When he sees his daughter before him, he expresses regret for what he has done. When it is time for prayer, he urgently requests water from his daughter in order to perform ablution. Sarıkız brings her father a bucket of water. However, it is salt water, not fresh water. The father tells his daughter that he wants fresh water, and the salt water suddenly turns into fresh water. As the villagers say, the father, tears welling up in his eyes, believes his daughter is a saint. He apologizes to his daughter and then runs over to the hill across out of shame. Soon, a dark cloud descends over Mount Ida.<sup>21</sup> After the clouds have dispersed, the shepherds searching for Sarıkız and her father find them dead on two separate hills and bury them there and build a stone tomb.<sup>22</sup> As understood, dominant masculine discourse filled with patriarchal values indicate male-dominated power over women

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<sup>18</sup> In Turkish folktales, the concept of (women's) honor is associated with virginity, to which "honor-killing" is referred and resulted from. Honor killings and honor suicides, both referred to broadly as "honor crimes," are firmly grounded in patriarchal orders to entrench male authority (Cohan, 2009). "Honor killings – which are performed with the discourse of honor, customary, and pride that were conveyed to other regions and countries with the internal and the external migration commonly practiced especially in the Eastern and Southeastern regions of Turkey." (Mora, 2009).

<sup>19</sup> For further information about honor killing, see the article below:

Corbin, B. A. (2014). Between Saviors and Savages: The Effect of Turkey's Revised Penal Code on the Transformation of Honor Killings into Honor Suicides and Why Community Discourse Is Necessary for Honor Crime Eradication. *Emory Int'l L. Rev.*, 29, 277.

<sup>20</sup> When faced with a difficult situation "stain her honor," Sarıkız does not even oppugn out of shame (the word shame can be used to make intertextual references to Salman Rushdie's novel *Shame* [1983]). In a sense, due to her immotility, she is similar to some female figures in Greek mythology, such as Daphne.

<sup>21</sup> Mount Ida (the one located in western Anatolia, Turkey)

<sup>22</sup> There is not only one stable and certain story or legend about Sarıkız despite the same gist. This one is based on Ali Erdin's (1994) *Kazdağı'nın Sarıkız Efsanesi*.

that silences them. Such narratives have been constructed and spread by a value judgment that leaves women helpless and even kills them. Tekin, rewriting these folks and myths in *Muinar*, tears these narratives down.

[...] On Mount Ida, an untouched female saint... There are those who soar into the sky in white wedding dresses and walk around naked with their hair tossed. Those who go around with the whip are the scavengers, those who have a curved stick are pure shepherd girls. Sarıkız, who lives there, is one of the lewd ones of these fairies, who is also very cruel... When the day was gone and it was dark, people gathered around the tandoor by the order of the night and talked about whether Sarıkız had feet or not, and that she covered her face with jinn blond hair. She always pulls women's husbands to her den on the dark winter nights and makes love until the morning without showing her face, suffocates them at sunrise and leaves them in the mouth of the den... God forbid, the mouth of the den is not the worst one. Sarıkizes in the thermal regions attract the men to the hot lake and drown them.<sup>23</sup> (pp. 83-84)

As an example of folk tales, this narrative is skillfully and playfully modified in *Muinar*. Social codes change places in Muinar's and therefore Elime's narrative. Sarıkız is no longer an obedient, virgin, pure woman who only tries to protect the values of her father, that is, the man. In the revised text, there is not a single Sarıkız to begin with. There is a plurality and collectivism on the table. Sarıkız has evolved and

<sup>23</sup> "...Kaz Dağı'nda eli erkek eline değmemiş kadın evliya...Beyaz gelinlikle göğe süzülenleri, saçlarını savurarak çırılçıplak gezenleri var. Kırbaçla dolaşanları erkek avcısı, bir eğri sopası olanlar saf temiz çoban kızlar. Bizim orada yaşayan Sarıkız, iffetsizlerinden bu perilerin, çok da zalim ayrıca... Gün tükenip karanlığa gömülünce, gecenin buyruğuyla tandır başında toplaşılır, Sarıkız'ın ayaklarının olup olmadığı, yüzünü cin sarısı saçlarıyla örttüğü konuşulurdu. Kadınların kocalarını, hep de karakış gecelerinde inine çekip yüzünü göstermeden sabah dek sevişiyor, güneş doğacağı sırada boğup inin ağzına bırakıyor... Tanrı betlerinden korusun, inin ağzı gene iyi. Termal bölgelerdeki Sarıkız'lar, erkekleri sıcak göle çekip boğuyorlar."

multiplied, and they take their place in horror stories now. This can be a strong indication of the subversive impact of feminist mythological rewriting on patriarchal dominion. That is, Muinar's revisiting the stories that have been told for ten thousand years destroys masculine authority and challenges women's underrepresentation in the previous discourse.

The intertextual elements in *Muinar* are intensely dispersed throughout the novel and require a meticulous analysis owing to their complexity. A close reading is essential to underline the mythological and folkloric references in *Muinar* and to show how women use rewriting strategy as a sanctuary of literature in which they are articulate about the demand for justice. To start with, *Muinar* can be called heteroglossic and even hybrid given its writing style and "mosaic" content. Bakhtin (1990) defines hybridity as "a mixture of two social languages [...] within the arena of an utterance, between two different linguistic consciousnesses, separated from one another by an epoch, by social differentiation or by some other factor." (p. 358). Apart from Muinar's being a Socratic daimon, she is a ten thousand years-old coarse-mounted hag, communicating with a stream of consciousness, narrating the stories of a diverse range of women, with references to mythic and folk tales. Elime, on the other hand, is a writer who is about her fifties. She feels like an outsider to Muinar's language and tone. Muinar, whose name is derived from Arabic "muîn" meaning "helper" (Develioğlu, 2015, p. 788), presents the names of women, including her own's, that Elime has never heard of before, such as Fu, Suydan; Belinur and Güldin. She is an active and aggressive speaker whereas Elime is the one who is exposed to instant and continuous flow of information, an observer with a complaisant manner. Considering Tekin's poetic language, it can be stated that on the very textual level, this text is built as "a mosaic," with various questions, "absorption" of other texts as

well as “transforming” them (1980, p. 66; 1986, p. 37). The complexity of the content is evident in the numerous references to mythical figures and pseudo-historical events such as the Trojan War (p. 143), Porphyrios (p. 164), and the story in which Sharia may have been originated (pp. 113-115). Aside from that, the novel’s mosaic-like structure stands out, particularly in the way Elime’s metafictional composition is dispersed, as well as in the sections where Reeves’ “L’Espace Prend la Forme de mon Regard” is quoted (p. 55), Muinar reads Elime Anday’s poem “The Station” (pp. 218-219), and they discuss the difficulty of translation (p. 130). It is important to consider each of these references in the intertextual framework in order to conduct a thorough analysis.

Muinar’s reference to the Trojan War can be regarded as a salient representation of postmodern intertextuality, in that it is written in an epic-like style that incorporates oral tradition and delegitimizes the masculine discourse.

“...I woke up in a girl like a lion, what a pleasure! Anatolian kings put a prize on her head, they donated caves full of treasure to those who would bring her alive. If they caught her, they would put a crown on her and make her a queen, they all fell in love and got smitten with her before they even saw her face, there was not a single city left she had not destroyed, they thought they could tame her with the crown... Anyway, there is also defeat in the war, we were captured by the Greeks, they packed us up and put us on the ships, [...] the ships lay on their side just a finger before the sun went down, we rebelled and killed all the Greek men, a horse neighing in the open sea, you’ll say one of the girls gave a signal, but no, it remained a secret, we threw them into the sea, the dead bodies on the surface, [...] it took three or four days to reach the land, think about our anger, we couldn’t think of leaving the two men alive and

sitting at the helm, we set our feet on the shore, our horses await us, [...] we couldn't solve the mystery whether it was their neighing that we heard, you can't take a word from the horse's mouth..."<sup>24</sup> (pp. 142-143)

With the Greek sea, Anatolian kings and a horse symbol, this text has a clear reference to Trojan War, one of the most dramatic events in Greek mythology which is presumed to have taken place in 12<sup>th</sup> century BC. It is one of the most well-known wars in literature, featuring prominently in Homer's *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*, as well as Ovid and Virgil's poems. Those who fought in these epics were brave kings and male warriors like Helen's husband Menelaus and his brother Agamemnon, or the king of Mycenae, who had "an army of tens of thousands," and Odysseus, or the king of Ithaca, on one side, King Priam of Troy, Hector (his son), Aeneas and many others on the other. Yet the war in this rewritten text, on the contrary, consists of bold and strong female warriors.<sup>25</sup> The girl that Muinar woke up in is such a daredevil that she is the target of assassins. Thus, it can be concluded that Muinar employs intertextuality to challenge the canonical texts written by the male-gaze. Also, the traditionally assigned female qualities are called into question by representing a reverse portrayal.

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<sup>24</sup> "...aslan gibi bir kızın içinde uyanmışım, keyfime diyecek yok, Anadolu kralları ödül koymuş başına, diri getirene mağara dolusu hazine bağışlıyorlar, yakalasalar taç giydirip kraliçe yapacaklar, yüzünü görmeden hepsi aşık olup vurulmuş ona, yıkmadığı şehir kalmamış, taçla uslandırırız diye düşünüyorlar... Neyse, savaşta yenilmek de var, esir düştük Yunanlara, dertop edip gemilere bindirdiler bizi,...güneşin suya batmasına bir parmak kala yan yattı gemiler, ayaklanıp öldürdük Yunan erkeklerin hepsini, açık denizde bir at kişnemesi koptu, kızlardan biri işaret verdi diyeceksin, hayır, sır olarak kaldı, attık bunları denize, yüzüyor ölüleri, [...] üç dört gün aldı karaya ulaşmamız, düşün öfkemizi, iki erkeği canlı bırakıp dümenin başına oturtmak aklımıza gelmiyor, bastık ayağımızı kıyıya, atlarımız bekliyor bizi,...onların kişnemesi miydi duyduğumuz, çözededik esrarını, atın ağzından laf alamazsın..."(s. 142-143)

<sup>25</sup> Despite not a strong one, there is a possibility that the girl Muinar woke up in was Pentheilea who is mentioned in Aethiopsis. She was a brave queen of the Amazons with which army she tried to protect Troy and fight against the Greeks.

The mention of Porphyrios brings up another instance of intertextual traits in *Muinar*. In a dialogue with Elime while watching a race, Muinar states that there is no pure woman or man in the world, that she herself is a “female-male cocktail<sup>26</sup>,” only that “female taste does predominate” (p. 162). Upon that statement Elime responds that “the woman should release the man in her and acknowledge him, and the man should set the woman in him free, peace that cannot be achieved otherwise...” (p. 163). Muinar rejects this and dates this binary conflict back in the “embryo period.”<sup>27</sup> Then, a successful male driver racing there catches their eye. Muinar says he is a descendant of Porphyrios.<sup>28</sup> When Elime wonders who he is, Muinar replies that he is a “famous motor racer”, that “big Byzantium gave him a standing ovation” (p. 164). It turns out that Muinar had great admiration and perhaps love for Porphyrios. In this dialogue full of stream of consciousness and subject changes, it can be initially thought that this racer is fictional. Questioning why “Byzantine” all of a sudden appears in this context can help establish its historical connection. Chariot racing was the most popular sport in Byzantium (Schrodt, 1981, p. 41). The Greek form, in which the owner, not the charioteer, was rewarded, had been in fashion during the early years of the empire. However, the Roman circus was adapted and became popular at the Hippodrome of Constantinople in the fifth century. After establishing itself as the most popular sport of all classes, chariot racing became ritualized as part of the ceremonies surrounding the imperial court, and it maintained its dominance until the twelfth century. Each race consisted of four quadriga representing the four colors: red,

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<sup>26</sup> Muinar can be read as a Woolfesque character as this phrase may foreshadow Virginia Woolf’s Orlando in *Orlando*, who lives for centuries, too, and changes sex. This can also point out that Muinar, as a thousands of years old being, may have followed the developments of feminism and witnessed different feminist movements over the course of many years.

<sup>27</sup> This is one of the essentialist comments that can be found in the novel, for which theory I do not advocate.

<sup>28</sup> Porphyrios and Porphyrius are used interchangeably in resources.

white, blue and green. The Byzantine emperor and writer Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus wrote about the details of races and rituals in *the Book of Ceremonies* (Guilland, 1948). However, according to my understanding, the Porphyrius mentioned in *Muinar* refers to the charioteer, instead of the emperor.

“To others when they have retired, but to Porphyrius alone while still racing, did the Emperor give this honour. For often he drove his own horses to victory and then took in hand the team of his adversary, and was again crowned. Hence arose a keen rivalry on the part of the Greens, hence a shout of applause for him, O King, who will give you both to Blues and to Greens.” (*The Greek Anthology, Epigram 340*)

Porphyrios was the victorious racer in Byzantium. From the epigrams in the *Greek Anthology*, it is understood that he was born in Libya but brought up in Constantinople, he began racing at a very young age with the Blue. Then, he competed in other factions (colors), too, and as reported in the epigrams, he was the first charioteer to have his statues built in the Hippodrome. Seven monuments were erected in the Hippodrome in order to immortalize his name. Even though five of these seven sculpture bases are missing today, two of them can be found in Istanbul Archeology Museum. By giving a reference to Byzantine period and the greatest racer of the time, *Muinar* also takes a historical stance. Her allusions to different eras along with her mention of gender fluidity reveal that she is telling a human story by observing the continuity of the cycle, an uninterrupted chain. In a sense, *Muinar* is a presence of straddles time, a transtemporal being. At the same time, she twists it around as she wishes in her dialogues and narrative style. She interrupts her own women's tale by mentioning Porphyrios' success as a man. Hence, it could be argued

that intertextuality can alter and enrich the context while at the same time providing new meaning to the text through the use of other texts and structural interventions.

It would be pertinent to revisit the quotation arising from the discussion of light,<sup>14</sup> which was covered in the *Dialogism* chapter to indicate that intertextuality is applied to politicize traditional prophetic narratives by making references to religious texts and discourses. Muinar wakes up in woman in the desert and witnesses how supposedly religious the rules restricting women are coded.

They would hooray as ‘God chooses a messenger from our gender, we are the superior sex’ ... Men from the three continents rose up, they cast the women out of the light and drove them into the darkness... They rain stones onto the heads of women, they bury them alive in the ground... ‘Girl, you’ll go to bed with me’, one prick plunged up each woman, ‘God commands so, you were created to please me, cover your hair up, let no eye touch it’ ... (pp. 113-115)

She not only establishes the relationship between the monotheistic god’s reflecting his light on men, choosing a messenger among them, and the suppression of women, but also criticizes divine religions by connecting the past to the present. Muinar may even particularly take Islamic rules as a target since stoning is mentioned in all of them but “covering hair up” differs it from Christianity and Judaism<sup>29</sup>. Moreover, by adding that “women need female prophets, this is what the Bacihurannis said, they said there is only one thing to be taken from a man, and that is light”<sup>30</sup> (p. 116), she inverts the patriarchal discourse and feminizes it (Gündoğan, 2009, p. 123). Another intertextual

<sup>29</sup> Also, covering hair is not only Semitic religions. In much earlier times, it was used to mark married women. Thus, Muinar’s stance is not only against religions but also, and more strongly, against patriarchal enforcements.

<sup>30</sup> Kadın peygamberler lazım kadınlara, Bacihuranniler’in söylediği buydu, erkeğin elinden alınacak tek şey var o da ışık diyorlardı.

criticism of oppressive and violent conditions faced by women can be found in which Muinar points out Yerevan's public radio in the 1960s. She mentions a female singer, and the Kurdish song she sings along with its lyrics: "*Ez gune me... Tî ihtiyar u dini, ezgedeme...*"<sup>31</sup> (p. 127), which seems to be devoted to kid brides as it is translated as "*Poor me... You are both old and crazy, I am just a child...*" She brings Radio Yerevan (and the dengbej) to Elime after making interesting comments about the Kurdish issue and a nuclear power plant in Armenia (p. 126). After doing some research on this radio, I have come to the conclusion that it can be considered a turning point in the preservation and transmission of Kurdish cultural heritage: in 1955, Radio Yerevan made its first broadcast. Their language was censored in the lands where they lived, in Turkey. With their scarce resources and means of communication, people turned on their radios and listened to the news, stories and music thanks to this station. Nevertheless, Radio Yerevan<sup>32</sup> became the language not only of Kurds but also of Kurdish women who could not speak. With this political allusion, Muinar informs us about deep pain and riotous suffering of Kurdish women, which is a reminder that patriarchy is not just an ordeal suffered by a single place or group, but a universally totalizing chain of oppressive values and sanctions.

Intertextuality manifests itself clearly in the textual layers, playfully deconstructing the conventional structure of the novel and also enriching the mosaic-like fabric of the content. The most striking example is the text within the text. Elime creates a fiction that is scattered throughout the novel thanks to the incessant conversations and inspirations that Muinar provides. Elime's story, like those of

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<sup>31</sup> Yazıktır bana, sen hem ihtiyar hem delisin, ben çocuğum...

<sup>32</sup> See the following article to examine the place and importance of Kurdish music in terms of cultural survival: Blum, S., & Hassanpour, A. (1996). 'The morning of freedom rose up': Kurdish popular song and the exigencies of cultural survival. *Popular Music*, 15(3), 325-343.

Muinar's, has mythic overtones. There are three sisters, Erunna - the goddess of love, Hattiban, the cursed city, the temple prostitute who learns to write, and Zihurba - who teaches her. Zihurba raises people to close these temples of prostitution and leads this mission. According to Parla (2009, p.120), this is a story that draws from Muinar's revelations, and it descends like a revelation as well, piece by piece, throughout the book. Despite many similarities, she notes that Muinar differs from Zihurba in that she is a collective consciousness rather than an active leader (p. 121). Other than Elime's metafiction, Muinar designs and enriches her narration with direct references and quotations from Reeves', famous Canadian astrophysicist's, book and Melih Cevdet Anday's poem. Quoting astrophysicist Reeves' book "L'Espace", most notably her last sentence, "For the Western woodcutter, the forest is first and foremost a business," opens the door to both colonial and eco-criticism. Lastly, when they talk about going on a journey, having a nostalgic longing for the feeling of being on the road and getting lost, Muinar recites the poem "The Station" to Elime. All in all, it can be posited that Tekin develops a new technique by mixing different literary genres in the novel, as evidenced by the bold and italicized metafictional story of Elime, the prose quotation of Reeves, and the poetry of Anday.

Similarly, Atwood combines different literary genres in *The Penelopiad*. She infuses her writing with "narrative, poetic and dramatic styles" which may notate the focus of intertextual approach on the process of composition (Jung, 2004, p. 41). As meaning is cultivated in both "the act of production and the mode of reception", that such an approach allows for the reader's role in producing the meaning of a text, can leads the readers and critics to have many different readings of Atwood's strategic and complex narrative style (Zengin, 2016, p. 302). This is also supported by Penelope's metafictional narrating. Penelope starts telling her story by asserting: "Now that I am

dead, I know everything.” (p. 1). Miner (2006) considers Penelope as a metafictional storyteller since she “comment[s] on stories within stories, from her position of hindsight in Hades.” (p.20). That is why, it can be said that the metafictional position of the protagonist adds into the complexity of Atwood’s text.

Atwood employs diverse narrative techniques that would indicate the manifold functions of prose and verse. While Penelope tells her story in prose, the maids mostly speak in verse as one voice. This may highlight the association of prose with an individual mindset and reflection of unique inner world whereas verse with a collective voice through a stance closer to the epic, folktales, and myths. A hierarchical relationship between the two perspectives and agent groups could be indicated by such a distinction. As Jung (2004, p. 57) puts forward, the maids' absence from Penelope's story suggests that their social status as slaves once again prevents them from speaking up. As a result, unlike Penelope, they must unite and speak as one. In spite of this challenge; however, the maids succeed in reminding the reader of their death by alluding to the Homeric line “[t]heir feet danced for a little, but not for long” (Fitzgerald, 1963, p. 424), which depicts their murder. In *The Penelopiad*, the first words of the maids are “we are the maids / the ones you killed / the ones you failed / we danced in air / our bare feet twitched / it was not fair.” (p. 5). According to Suzuki (2007), they “lament[...] the injustice of their violent fate” in this way (p. 271). Therefore, despite the lack of individual or distinct voices, the twelve maids call Odysseus to account for their murder by commenting on his actions via intertextual relations.

It can also be read as a script play because of its performative dimension. While Penelope's narrative prose reads like a dramatic monologue, the chapter titles for the maids, which begin with 'The Chorus Line,' indicate a play's quality. (Howells,

2006). As an example for musical allusions, the heading 'The Chorus Line: If I Was A Princess, A Popular Tune' (viii) can be taken into consideration. Despite their lack of agency, the maids accommodate to express themselves and get their point across. Through lyrical verses, songs, and transmutations, they make their voices heard. In addition to the chapter titles, other paratextual elements such as introductory notes as well as stage directions add weight to the voices. For instance, their metamorphic image at the end with the stage direction "[t]he [m]aids sprout feathers, and fly away as owls," can draw two conclusions: they reach another knowledge domain and occupy all-knowing male-gaze of *The Odyssey* as well as Penelope's alternative truth-telling. Also, the variety of narrative styles calls into question both Odysseus' and Penelope's credibility. In the face of so many competing narratives, how does fact and fiction disjoin? As Howell posits (2006, p. 16) it may depend on the critical thinking and judgement of the reader to assess the blurred lines between genres, between text and performance, and between truth and lies. Evidently, intertextuality furnishes layers of meaning as opposed to solid and fixed ones.

The most important clue foreshadowing that *The Penelopiad* is a retelling of *The Odyssey* is both the title of the novel and the introduction. Drawing from the titles of Greek epics, such as *The Iliad*,<sup>33</sup> the title "The Penelopiad" implies a female epic. However, Atwood dismantles such an indication of epic not only through presenting Penelope's point of view from her perspective in prose, but also with the maids' hackling from their perspective in univocal poems, ballads, and burlesque dramas. Besides, despite not being limited to the following, epic genre is identified with its warlike subjects, which brings along the celebration of heroic actions performed by the protagonist with superhuman features (Moisés, 1999). On the contrary, *The*

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<sup>33</sup> The suffix suggests the meaning of the poem or the story of X [name of the protagonist].

*Penelopiad* is neither focused on a war nor is a celebratory of the protagonists' actions. Atwood brings Penelope's life to the attention of the reader unlike the Homeric epic in which Penelope's background story or agency did not matter. In *The Odyssey*, Penelope is portrayed as someone's daughter, wife or mother as well as being wise, loyal, and cautious. It should be noted that, however, in Atwood's text, she gains dimension. Penelope talks about her childhood, her relationships with others such as her parents and Helen, her marriage and childbirth, her long waiting for her husband, her terror when she hears about the slaughter, and her reunion with Odysseus. Besides, Penelope expresses her current thoughts in the other realm and reflect on the events occurred centuries ago. She tells, and maybe even makes, her own story in the first-person narrative from Hades. Such revisionist visions might be read as Atwood's subversion of the genre. She does that, also, with the intentional exploration of the potential of intertextual writing strategies, which can be proved through the examination of the Introduction chapter. Atwood conveys the gist of the Homeric epic along with the reason why she chooses to retell the story:

But 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. I have drawn on material other than *The Odyssey*, especially for the details of Penelope's parentage, her early life and marriage, and the scandalous rumors circulating about her.

I've chosen to give the telling of the story to Penelope and to the twelve hanged maids. The maids form a chanting and singing Chorus which focuses on two questions that must pose themselves after any close reading of *The Odyssey*: what led to the hanging of the maids, and what was Penelope really up to? The story as told in *The Odyssey* doesn't hold water: there are too many

inconsistencies. I've always been haunted by the hanged maids; and, in *The Penelopiad*, so is Penelope herself. (*Introduction*)

The quotation above demonstrates that *The Penelopiad* encompasses overt and intentional intertextuality. The intention behind it seems to demystify Odysseus and delegitimize his storytelling as it “doesn’t hold the water”. Such deliberation manifests itself within Penelope’s wording as well when she sarcastically criticizes Odysseus’ credibility and posits “it’s my turn to do a little story-making” (p. 3). If mythmaking is considered as shaping the previously constructed discourses by solidifying its position in societies and enforcing its values, then revisionist mythmaking helps challenge such ingrained doctrines. Although there is no universally accepted definition of mythology,<sup>34</sup> scholars agree on its collective significance. Thus myth, according to Ostriker (1982, p. 72), has a dual importance for women. Prevailing in the public space, it is shaped by religious, literary, and educational discourses. However, it also has a personal significance in that it inspires people to create. Women can create a sanctuary-like literary field for themselves by rediscovering the mythological realm and stealing patriarchal discourse, where they can recourse their experience and represent “what [they] find divine and demonic in themselves.” (Beyer, 2000, p. 279). Penelope, who was previously depicted as a patient, loyal and wise wife of Odysseus, puts a question mark on her idealized delineation by re-originating her own story while confronting her own demons, which, according to my understanding, are not the maids’ themselves but her unclear motivations behind not preventing their death. That is perhaps why she is haunted by them, as given in the *Introduction* chapter.

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<sup>34</sup> To find diverse opinions and definitions about what a myth is, one can consult the following reference: Gentile, J. S. (2011). Prologue: Defining myth: An introduction to the special issue on storytelling and myth. *Storytelling, Self, Society*, 7(2), 85-90.

Penelope manages to demand correction and seek for redemption with the references to *The Odyssey*, which is made possible through intertextual relationship with the epic. She especially calls Agamemnon and Odysseus for their misrepresentation. In *The Odyssey*, when Odysseus visits Hades, (the ghost of) Agamemnon states that he was murdered by his wife and her lover, yet then compares her with Penelope, for the latter of which he praises upon hearing how Penelope runs Ithaca in the absence of Odysseus and how virtuous her manners are: “She’s much too steady, her feelings run too deep, Icarius’ daughter Penelope, that wise woman.” (*Book 11*: 500-505). It is understood that Greek patriarchal male gaze positions Penelope and women in general to a place where they stand out only with their forbearance and obedience. In *The Penelopiad*, Penelope responds to such comments as in the following quotation:

Hadn’t I been faithful? Hadn’t I waited, and waited, and waited, despite the temptation – almost the compulsion – to do otherwise? And what did I amount to, once the official version gained ground? An edifying legend. A stick used to beat other women with. Why couldn’t they be as considerate, as trustworthy, as all-suffering as I had been? (p. 2)

Considering Agamemnon’s death and his comments about her, the quotation above can be interpreted as Penelope implying that she had to behave that way not because she really wanted but because she was forced to survive in that patriarchal community. Her tone reveals that she does not think it is fair for women to be compared and imputed as such. At the end of the same chapter, she states: “But I’ve always been of a determined nature. Patient, they used to call me. I like to see a thing through to the end,” with a sarcastic tone, which can also be found in her comparison with Helen:

As for me... well, people told me I was beautiful, they had to tell me that because I was a princess, and shortly after that a queen, but the truth was that although I was not deformed or ugly, I was nothing special to look at. I was smart, though: considering the times, very smart. That seems to be what I was known for: being smart. That, and my weaving, and my devotion to my husband, and my discretion. (p. 21)

Through this retelling strategy and the use of irony, Penelope takes a stance against the patriarchal phrase regimen. Moreover, she also criticizes why she is not trusted by Agamemnon, Eurycleia and Odysseus, despite her supposedly intelligent and loyal portrayal. Agamemnon, for example, warns Odysseus in *The Odyssey* as following:

[...] So even your own wife – never indulge her too far.

Never reveal the whole truth, whatever you may know

Just tell her a part of it, be sure to hide the rest (*Book 11*: 500-505).

Agamemnon might be misogynist or only projecting his disappointment, anger and frustration rooted in and resulting from his murder by his own wife. For whatever reason, these comments sound rather manipulative and against Penelope. Additionally, given that Odysseus hides his arrival and himself from Penelope in alliance with Eurycleia, Penelope feels the need to defend herself:

At this point I feel I must address the various items of slanderous gossip that have been going the rounds for the past two or three thousand years. These stories are completely untrue. Many have said that there's no smoke without fire, but that is a fatuous argument. We've all heard rumours that later proved to be entirely groundless, and so it is with these rumours about me.

The charges concern my sexual conduct. It is alleged, for instance, that I slept with Amphinomus, the politest of the suitors. The songs say I found his conversation agreeable, or more agreeable than that of the others, and this is true; but it's a long jump from there into bed. (p. 143)

Penelope denies the accusations made by Agamemnon's ghost. At the same time, she looks askance at the veiled accusation of Odysseus' disguised return. She does not accept the underlying reason behind his not revealing his identity in collaboration with Eurycleia when he returns to Ithaca. Accordingly, in patriarchal societies, men hold a dominant position from which they exclude women. Herein Penelope emphasizes the exclusivist nature of such a vertically structured society.

Lastly, apart from her attempts to recover from the hegemonic discourse and correct her representation, Penelope also tries to redeem herself for her past inaction. She has a guilty conscience when it comes to the death of her precious maids. It is not clear if she was paralyzed or silenced, or even used the luxury to remain silence, upon their death in the Homeric epic. In the rewritten version, however, she tries to justify her excuses, such as being locked out or falling asleep (p. 157). Throughout the book, she generates excuses and additional rationales for not preventing their deaths. Yet her credibility is challenged by the maids' perspective and accusations as well as her own confessions. For instance, the fact that she admits having fantasized about with which suitors she would go to bed evinces that she is not the ideal wife as told in *The Odyssey* and thus humanized in *The Penelopiad*. As Gilbert and Gubar (2020) expounds, such retelling mode would be resulted in the intend of "assaulting and revising, deconstructing and reconstructing... images inherited from male literature" (p. 75). Although Penelope lifts the veil on Odysseus' lies and lies, she is yet another storyteller. In that, she is not completely credible especially with regards to the twelve

maids. Therefore, revisionist mythmaking through intertextuality offers a project aimed at plundering "the sanctuaries of existing language" (Ostriker, 1982, p. 71) by diverse groups that are less privileged, with the contribution of hybridization<sup>35</sup> which opens to the text to be read at least double. Having said that, Atwood's retelling is cyclic, and her heroines are not heroic. In that, they do not offer any resolution for the unfortunate events. They expose the questions yet do not chase specific answers or try to prove those to the reader. The answers may vary depending on the readers' choice of what to believe, which is in line with the aims of postmodern intertextuality.

To sum up, in both novels, intertextuality is resorted to save women's space from hegemonic discourse. *Muinar* presents several revised and modified folk tales. In addition, it conveys the stories of many rebellious women positioned in patriarchal relations in a language full of nonhegemonic and mythic references. Tekin's sociological and political references to historical events greatly contributes to the mosaic texture of *Muinar*. What is more, different textual layers are widely included in this novel. Just like Tekin, Atwood gives voice to women from different positions and experiences, along with various writing styles in *The Penelopiad*. Through the intertextual relationship with *The Odyssey*, it becomes possible for women to build their own representations and modify their stories based on their own experiences. As an open framework with a wide web of textual references tracing each other as well as various historical, political and cultural networks, intertextuality presents multiple layers of meanings in which women's voice and demand of justice can be heard.

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<sup>35</sup> Bakhtin explains this term as "a mixture of two social languages within the limits of a single utterance, an encounter, within the arena of an utterance, between two different linguistic consciousnesses, separated from one another by an epoch, by social differentiation or by some other factor." (1990: 358)

#### 4. CHAPTER 3: DECONSTRUCTION AS JUSTICE

Derrida avoids giving a formal or dictionary definition of deconstruction; however, throughout his career he does define it by presenting various aspects of it that are consistent and complementary. The first definition appears in his interview *Positions* (1971), the second in *The Force of Law* (1992), and third in *Et Cetera* (2000). First, Derrida explains deconstruction by approaching language as a metaphysical concept and examining the debate over spoken language versus written language, the first of which has been considered as the superior. Yet he questions the given values, perhaps since Plato's *Phaedrus*, dismantles them, and points to the fact that both share "formal characteristics or [...] forms that must be repeatable" (Lawlor, 2014, p. 124). He also underlines *différance* along with the undecidability and singularity of words. Second, deconstruction can be examined within the folds of aporias. Singularity of cases as well as incalculability and immediacy of justice lead to the conclusion that justice is always-to-come (2014, p. 126). Last, deconstruction is a vantage point of a singular division; a singularity of and impossibility in the presence. Thus, it "aims to show that presence is never simple [...] and static" (2014, p. 126).

It should be noted that deconstruction is not the same as destruction; it is the investigation of how something was built. In other words, it is a way of reading books as texts with the goal of questioning undisputedly accepted assumptions about human beings such as their color, gender, sexual orientation, or financial status, as well as reacting to and against the way they are produced (Salmon, 2020). Through deconstruction, it is possible to differentiate law and justice in a much clearer way as it is situated between the undeconstructibility of justice and the deconstructibility of moral authority, leading to the conclusion that "deconstruction is justice." (1992, p. 15). In this chapter, in line with how it is presented and handled mainly in the works

of Derrida and other critics, I will attempt to analyze how deconstruction is employed by women in the search for - and as - justice by closely reading Tekin's *Muinar* and Atwood's *The Penelopiad* within a comparative manner.

*Muinar* tells the stories of women who refuse to submit, makes Elime politicized, and prompts her to write. *Muinar*, a hag waking up in Elime, tells her mythical stories about women like Azize, Faliha, Belinur, Gülcebil, Güldin Gaşka, Güzide Kılıç, and Perizar Ülkü, who are often passive and muted at the beginning due to the male-dominated authority, but then rebel. The language of the Other, the ones that are alienated and silenced finds their voices in this novel. Their voices are heard individually and collectively at the same time because of the way their stories are told by *Muinar*. There is no textual hierarchy, either: voices of Elime and *Muinar* are intertwined and stand side by side. Magical realism plays an essential role in this sense. Supernatural occurrences do not surprise the narrator(s) or the characters in magical realism. According to Walter, the reader does not question extraordinary events in magical realist texts, and thus the real and magical fields in such texts follow a very compatible path (Bowers, 2004, p. 25). The hierarchy between the texts in *Muinar* is avoided through dialogism and magical realism, through which people and events in an ordinary world blend with supernatural occurrences without any explanation or interruption by the author or the protagonists. It therefore differs from the fantastic by presenting the supernatural simultaneously and in harmony with reality. It can be argued that magical realism is used in *Muinar* not only as a means to avert textual hierarchy, but also to overthrow traditional (masculine) reality by politicizing and problematizing it while retelling classical texts, ancient motifs, fairy tales, and folk tales. The stories of disobedient women having been told for over a century haunt Elime through *Muinar*. Elime, who seeks justice in a variety of political

contexts, begins to write as a result of the ongoing conversations with Muinar. This deconstructive text, full of mythological references, initiates the search for the rights of the other within the framework of gender-justice.

Muinar can hardly be definable as a spirit or a specter but becomes an agent of hauntology. She is a non-bodily (non)presence waking up in several women for ages. Elime states Muinar uses Elime's voice. At the end of the novel, she seems to appear as a sense of body. I use the words "seem" and "sense" because Elime may not be utterly conscious when she sees her. In fact, at the beginning of the part which tells the reader how she sees Muinar, she says that she has been dreaming. Besides, she adds, later on, that she sees a floating body and a momentary face. All in all, Muinar does not have her own body or voice, but she still exists. Even her existence is undecidable. It is partly because of magical realism but can be read as hauntology. According to Derrida, what is undecidable is not solely the vacillation between two contradictory meanings such as that of the spirit and the specter. Conventionally, while the former is considered to be an invisible phenomenon that does not appear, the latter is believed to appear without a body. Derrida, on the other hand, deconstructs this type of opposition between a spirit and a specter by putting emphasis on the fluidity of the idea of visibility.

For there is no ghost, there is never any becoming-specter of the spirit without at least an appearance of flesh, in a space of invisible visibility, like the disappearing of an apparition. For there to be ghost, there must be a return to the body, but to a body that is more abstract than ever. The spectrogenic process corresponds therefore to a paradoxical incorporation. Once ideas or thoughts (Gedanke) are detached from their substratum, one engenders some ghost by giving them a body. Not by returning to the living body from which ideas and

thoughts have been torn loose, but by incarnating the latter in another artifactual body, a prosthetic body, a ghost of spirit, one might say a ghost of the ghost... (Derrida, 2012, pp. 157-158)

Muinar can be considered as a guiding spirit then - like a Socratic daimon.<sup>36</sup> Here, it is necessary to digress in order to explain the term. Agamben examines the etymological roots of the verb *daioimai*, which means “to lacerate and divide” (1999, p. 118). He comes to the conclusion that daimon means the one who splits and fissures; thus, those who want to make a fair judgement need to divide themselves first (199, p. 118). While examining this concept, Arendt holds knowledge as a prerequisite for justice, and “unexamined notion of knowledge” as a prerequisite for knowledge (1971, p. 429). Muinar exists in the text just like that pure notion: Functioning like the conscious, which Arendt differentiates from consciousness, Muinar's aim is to make Elime question diverse historical and political occasions, to enter into a dialogue with her by presenting a more divine knowledge, to guide her, to try to put her in search of justice by telling her about injustices. The beginning of the book, actually, foreshadows all of these. *Muinar* begins with a feeling, or a vision experienced by a woman called "Elime". She describes this feeling as "a smoky-blue shadow coming off her chest." (p. 13). Muinar starts talking to her aggressively right away. She sounds vituperative, frequently cursing politicians or patriarchal figures. She also always speaks in a condescending and patronizing tone. Her restiveness can be read through within the aporetic call for immediacy in terms of justice, as Derrida would suggest. Her impatient apparition at the very beginning, her harsh tone and flowing dialogues serve to hold patriarchy to account, which is covered throughout the book in

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<sup>36</sup> Kenny (2003) explains that according to Plato (stated in *Timaeus*, 90a & *Republic*, 496c), Socrates' notion of daimonion or daimon is humans' voice of consciousness to guide them to the better.

a fine-tuned technique. Elime becomes dazzled and feels surreal oftentimes whenever she hears Muinar's voice. She portrays this as someone who is faceless yet using her face, and voiceless yet using her voice (p. 17). She learns that her name is Muinar. Muinar defines herself as an old hag whose homeland is unrevealed and she states that there is a crone like her sleeping in every woman but whether she would wake up is conditional and also a matter of luck (p. 18). She does not appear in flesh, in a bodily form; however, she is somehow attached to Elime's mind and voice. This undecidability leads Elime to suspect that she might be going crazy at first. Later, she becomes adjusted to such formlessness, and this shared nest, which turns out to be not just between them, but for a more collective authorship.<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, the realization of hauntology may be indicated at the very end of the novel via the Muinar's appearance in Elime's dream (p. 242). Yet when she appears, Elime dies – or when Elime dies, Muinar seems to appear. This lends color to Derrida's "justice-to-come". Spectral justice is always to come either from the past or the future as justice is non-present (2012, *Exordium*, p. 10). In *Muinar*, we hear a crone who is ten thousand years old through Elime. Similarly, Muinar tells us the stories of several women. She awakes among countless women with truly extraordinary names such as Belinur, Faliha, Azize, Perüzar, Güzide and Zihurba (Parla, 2009, p. 120). They are all dead and now echoing the injustices of past – injustices against women (and nature<sup>38</sup>). Departed women calling for justice can also be read in Atwood's *The Penelopiad*. However, in this novel, none of the characters demanding justice have a body. As Atwood puts it, they "no longer have a body" and they are "beyond that kind of suffering." (p. 24). It can be concluded that having a body would lead to the

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<sup>37</sup> What I mean here is that of women's collective pursuit of justice along with each of their individuality and uniqueness.

<sup>38</sup> This novel can be read as an ecofeminist novel, which is beyond this study for the sake of unity and content integrity. I intend to focus on ecofeminism for my future studies.

possibility of suffering. When it comes to the twelve maids, through the end of the book, it is revealed that they do not have a conventional spirit-body. They are portrayed much differently than Penelope or any other soul in Hades since “their legs don’t move. Their still-twitching feet don’t touch the ground.” (p. 190). It would not be wrong to point to a possibility of the following conclusion: The maids are beyond suffering; thus, they do not have a complete bodily-shaped spirit (just like the rest, as implied). They are literally the ghosts and the embodiment of the witches<sup>39</sup> (like *the Angry Ones*). Thus, the body issue in *The Penelopiad* is not in the same line with *Muinar* in relation to hauntology. Furthermore, even though they share a similarity in terms of the collective echo of injustices of the past, there is no concern for the individuality of the twelve maids:

we had no voice

we had no name

we had no choice

we had one face

one face the same (p. 195)

Penelope does not expose or is not exposed to a body incarnation or apparition. However, it does not lead to a conclusion that she does not haunt or is not haunted. The tone of haunting and the immediacy of justice has an especial clarity when paying attention to the frequency of the vocality of the twelve maids. As Bottez (2012) suggests, they are subjected to two forms of oppression: social tyranny as slaves and gender marginalization in a patriarchal society (p. 54). The more the novel reaches to

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<sup>39</sup> It is no coincidence that the witch, as a symbol, is frequently used in certain feminist contexts.

the end, the more often we hear them haunting both the Greek patriarchy, embodied and reflected via Odysseus and Telemachus, and Penelope, who used to stand on a higher social class. Atwood does not only connect presence with absence (through the body issue) but also the present with the past.<sup>40</sup> Such a deconstructive approach can be discussed within the framework of hauntology just as Colin Davis (2005) posits:

Hauntology supplants its near-homonym ontology, replacing the priority of being and presence with the figure of the ghost as that which is neither present nor absent, neither dead nor alive. Attending to the ghost is an ethical injunction insofar as it occupies the place of the Levinasian Other: a wholly irrecoverable intrusion in our world, which is not comprehensible within our available intellectual frameworks, but whose otherness we are responsible for preserving. Hauntology is thus related to, and represents a new aspect of, the ethical turn of deconstruction... (p. 373)

These contrasts strategically turn on volume to the voice of the other from the realm of the dead, adding dimension to the characters' search for justice. Another significant opposition read in *The Penelopiad* is remembrance versus forgetting. In the afterlife, if somebody wants to kind of reincarnate, go to Earth and experience life again, she/he must drink Waters of Forgetfulness, to be able to erase the memory and start from scratch until death. Penelope rejects this, though. She does not want to risk another unfortunate life-experience. She says: "My past life was fraught with many difficulties, but who's to say the next one wouldn't be worse?" (p. 188). This approach also implies the fact that she has experienced a lot that she did not really enjoy back then but that these experiences gave her strength and she does not want to

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<sup>40</sup> These oppositions are mentioned as powerful interrelations of Derridian hauntology on the following research: Darias-Beautell, E. (2012). Introduction: Why Penelopes? How unruly? Which ghosts? Narratives of English Canada. Unruly Penelopes and the ghosts: Narratives of English Canada, 1-18.

leave this behind now. She gains a great advantage while conveying her demand for justice by accounting her memories that communicates her otherness. Furthermore, Penelope's rejection of making use of Water of Forgetfulness can be read in Benjaminian terms. Memory helps deconstruct the past by pursuing and haunting it. Memory possesses an extraordinary capacity to evolve the past, repositioning and reactivating previous narratives from their initial manifestation (Wilding, 1996, p. 119). In spite of not being explicitly stated, Penelope's will to remember the past and past ordeals may be linked to both redemption and a messianic purpose. In the ninth of *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, Benjamin suggests that we pause and take some time looking back to "awaken the dead." (1969, p. 257). In this way, he establishes a strong relationship between history and remembrance by assigning a redemptive function to such a reflection. Wilding establishes this relation by stating that "...remembrance is said to be messianic by virtue of its orientation towards the redemptive moments which structure historical time. It holds the future open by paradoxically looking to the past, to as-yet-unrealised possibilities." (1996, p. 25). The reason why Penelope would keep remembering may be an embracement of redemption, especially on the account of the murdered maids given that she is tormented by them throughout the book with their vigorous interruptions and in court. Wilding's connection to Benjamin's redemptive criticism corresponds to an understanding of messianic justice resulting from the temporality (difference) between remembering and passing time (1996, p. 146). The temporal structure of redemption is at the core of Benjamin's messianism which has both religious and secular connotations. Focusing on the latter, Derrida alludes to Benjamin repeatedly when he explains what he means by "justice-to-come." (1992). It can thus be stated that

messianism and justice may be formulated similarly<sup>41</sup> as they are “a-venir” as justice is promised in the wake of injustice through remembrance.

Lastly, although there are points where *Muinar* and *The Penelopiad* differ in spectral dynamics as seen above, there is a *différance* in the two texts that can be analyzed on the common denominator. Derrida (2012) states that “the difference between specter and spirit ... is a difference. The specter is not only the carnal apparition of the spirit, its phenomenal body, its fallen and guilty body, it is also the impatient and nostalgic waiting for a redemption, namely, once again, for a spirit.” (pp. 191-192). In *Muinar*, Elime waits for Muinar to come back and talk to her, especially through the end, nostalgically. This part is written just before the book ends – with Elime’s death, as if her redemption brings the spirit, Muinar; or the first spectral apparition of Muinar actually releases Elime. As Derrida asserts, “*the phainesthai [to seem, to appear]* itself (before its determination as phenomenon or phantasm, thus as phantom) is the very possibility of the specter, it brings death, it gives death, it works at mourning.” (p. 190). Muinar’s apparition, even in a dream, brings and gives death (to Elime, after telling the stories of many women, their fight against patriarchy and their death), and just before Elime dies, it brings mourning as she longs for Muinar. Similarly, in *The Penelopiad*, Penelope as a “fallen and guilty” spirit is haunted by the twelve maids asking for account. Her salvation not only comes along with her own justice seeking through her storytelling but also with her confrontation. Nonetheless, Penelope mourns for the maids as well. She feels really bad when she learns they have died (pp. 159-160). Although she has mixed feelings upon seeing Odysseus in the trial, she inures to the benefit of the maids by saying she was fond of them who “were like the daughters [she] never had” and stating that they

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<sup>41</sup> This is deduced based only on Derrida’s *Spectres of Marx*.

were indeed raped. Thus, Derrida's "*difference*"<sup>42</sup> may even be more eminent in *The Penelopiad*.

The trial in *The Penelopiad*, which section titled as *The Chorus Line: The Trial of Odysseus, as Videotaped by the Maids*<sup>43</sup>, evokes the idea of the difficulty of witnessing. Told from the Maids' point of view, the chapter opens with the defense of Odysseus by his attorney. The part when the twelve maids demand justice on account of their murder is striking. The defense attorney claims that Odysseus had the constitutional right to kill them as they were his slaves (p. 178). The judge interrogates them further about what they did to deserve to be hanged (p. 178). In response, the defense attorney accuses the finest and "most beddable" ones of having sex with the Suitors (p. 179). The judge reads *The Odyssey* to consult because it is the primary source on this subject – thus, he believes it to be "the main authority" (p. 179). The judge refers to a passage in which it is stated that the maids, who were completely unprotected, were raped and asks both the lawyer and Penelope to witness. They both state that they were not there. Penelope also adds she "tended to believe them." (p. 181). This case draws attention to the limits of testimony as well as the postponement – or difference - of justice. In Lyotardian terms, this can be read as a "wrong" because first of all, the damaged is a victim and is lower in the authoritarian hierarchy (1988, p. 5). How, in the 'absence' of power and evidence due to temporal shift, will she prove the harm to authority?

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<sup>42</sup> On a side note, For Derrida, "difference" also represents a kind of temporality that arises from the fact that "justice", which has to be realized urgently by default, is not realized in the present moment and is postponed. Justice cannot be achieved unless actualized forthwith; however, that never happens immediately because a promise functions towards the future in the framework of performative speech. Justice is always "a-venir," then. Just as law and justice diverge at many points, they also differ at this juncture. Law may only take account of the differed justice. But in the case of "The Trial" section of *The Penelopiad*, the law failed in this task as well.

<sup>43</sup> This scene is a replica of the third play of Aeschylus' tragedy *Oresteia*, which stands out as the first courtroom drama of the Western literature.

This is what a wrong [tort] would be: a damage [dommage] accompanied by the loss of the means to prove the damage. This is the case if the victim is deprived of life, or of all his or her liberties, or of the freedom to make his or her ideas or opinions public, or simply of the right to testify to the damage, or even more simply if the testifying phrase is itself deprived of authority (Nos. 24-27). In all of these cases, to the privation constituted by the damage there is added the impossibility of bringing it to the knowledge of others, and in particular to the knowledge of a tribunal. (Lyotard, 1988, p. 5)

The loss of life, authority, and witnessing make the victim deprived of testimony and thus of the possibility of restitution and/or justice. In this deprivation, it is debatable how fair the decision of the court would be. Derrida (2005) calls the official process of bearing witness into question for it is not necessarily equated with proving; yet more importantly, due to the fragility and betrayal of sworn statements and promises to the law that can be at stake at any time (p. 75). On the other hand, when it comes to the integrity of trial and credibility of testimony, Lyotard (1988) raises his concerns regarding language and experience:

You are informed that human beings endowed with language were placed in a situation such that none of them is now able to tell about it. Most of them disappeared then. And the survivors rarely speak about it. When they do speak about it, their testimony bears only upon a minute part of this situation. How can you know that the situation itself existed? That it is not the fruit of your informant's imagination? Either the situation did not exist as such. Or else it did exist, in which case your informant's testimony is false, either because he or she should have disappeared, or else because he or she should remain silent. Or else because, if he or she does speak, he or she can bear witness only to the

particular experience he had, it remaining to be established whether this experience was a component of the situation in question. (p. 3)

As can be understood, Lyotard also draws attention to the difficulty of testifying. Survivors are either silent or can only convey a portion of the event that occurred in the past as far as they remember. Thus, how reliable is the testimony they provide under the stated circumstances? He establishes the relationship between this incapacity of language and experience within such conditions. Although there is no such thing as "survivors" in *The Penelopiad*, there are victims and potential witnesses. Penelope's "absence"—not directly witnessing the rape—makes it almost inevitable that the ghost maids are unable to prove their point to the judge. Moreover, that Penelope describes them as her daughters and she "tend(s) to believe them," does not really create a change in the course of the court:

Judge: But you did not punish them, and they continued to work as your maids?

Penelope: I knew them well, Your Honour. I was fond of them. I'd brought some of them up, you could say. They were like the daughters I never had. (Starts to weep.) I felt so sorry for them! But most maids got raped, sooner or later; a deplorable but common feature of palace life. It wasn't the fact of their being raped that told against them, in the mind of Odysseus. It's that they were raped without permission.

Judge (chuckles): Excuse me, Madam, but isn't that what rape is? Without permission?

Attorney for the Defence: Without permission of their master, Your Honour.

Judge: Oh. I see. But their master wasn't present. So, in effect, these maids were forced to sleep with the Suitors because if they'd resisted they would have been raped anyway, and much more unpleasantly?

Attorney for the Defence: I don't see what bearing that has on the case.

Judge: Neither did your client, evidently. (Chuckles.) However, your client's times were not our times. Standards of behaviour were different then. It would be unfortunate if this regrettable but minor incident were allowed to stand as a blot on an otherwise exceedingly distinguished career. Also I do not wish to be guilty of an anachronism. Therefore I must dismiss the case. (p. 182)<sup>44</sup>

As a result of their low status on the social hierarchy as slaves, the maids would inescapably be subjected to gendered violence. Furthermore, the judge's decision of dismissal is partially based on the higher status of Odysseus as he does not want to tarnish this "hero" with a "distinguished career." (p. 182). Thus, judicial process within the foundations of law once again fails due to its association with the external force which can easily be affected by the encroachment of the authority's will and power. Furthermore, while the judge is afraid of committing anachronism, he falls into the same old trap of patriarchy since the maids are not acknowledged to be right, just like back then. Justice never comes – but the law either? Derrida (1992) extends deconstruction as a pursuit on questioning and problematizing "the foundations of law, morality and politics." (p. 8). In accordance with this exposition, it can be drawn forth that Atwood impugns the operation of law by pointing out its postponement for centuries and finally its cancellation with groundless accusations and excuses. Owing to the emancipatory function of deconstruction, she highlights law's failure to create a

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<sup>44</sup> This excerpt will be once again used in another chapter of this dissertation where I intend to analyze the relation of intertextuality and justice.

critical dialogue in which it weaves between past and future. Derrida's trenchant argument about justice beyond law can bear a torch reading *The Penelopiad's* trial scene (xxvi). Derrida, in *The Force of Law* (1992), notes the undecidable characteristics of each case (p. 24). It is impossible to reach a decision by evaluating unique cases according to already-established codes in law because singularity is incalculable (Derrida, 1992, p. 25). In *The Penelopiad*, the judge affixes one to another (p. 178), resorts to *The Odyssey* to interpret the charge (p. 179), and when he is unable to reach a conclusion, he dismisses the case (p. 182). Here, Atwood underlines that law is not justice. Following the problematic process of evaluation, the court fails to provide a just decision. Besides, the judge's reference to the Homeric lines to access information brings along as a subtext that he attributes great authority to patriarchal discourse. He acknowledges the hegemony of the canonical work, *The Odyssey*, rather than paying regard to the victims' statement about their rape. This leads us to another dimension of impossibility of testimony that can be examined through a Derridean understanding. Due to the "self-evident" quality of the hegemonic discourse, how something is accepted or testified is only decided by the rules and dynamics of the hegemonic discourse (Derrida, 2012, p. 65). Thus, the testimony becomes questionable.

In *Muinar*, on the other hand, the women in whom Muinar wakes up die before they could ask for the account of injustices or create a big change in the dominant system. Since they are not survivors, they do not even have a chance to transmit what they witness or are exposed to. That is where Muinar steps up. The impossibility of testimony is embodied by the spirit of a crone (on the surface-level and a Socratic daimon on a deeper level) conveying the stories of many women who have been

wronged, subjected to violence, suffered, and murdered. By this way, she seeks their rights over the generations.

To further comprehend the impossibility of testimony in *Muinar*, it would be better to look at more specific examples. The part where religious enlightenment is problematized (pp. 110-116) can be studied within the framework of the deconstructivist relationship between hegemonic discourse and testimony. Derrida (2012, p. 65) asserts that what is testified through and within permission of the authoritative has a self-approving quality in it. Therefore, the validity of that testimony would be dubious. Muinar criticizes monotheism in the book because she claims that each god chooses one person and only gives them the light (p. 113). She describes the birth of monotheism in a desert by stating that she awoke in a woman who is related to a man God cast his light (p. 114). Men "cast women and girls out of light and into darkness" on three continents because God's messenger was male (p. 115).

Now men will say to women: 'God commands it, you were created to please my heart, cover your head so that no other eyes touch your hair, [...] Women were taken captured... we are both prisoners of war, but also their mothers, sisters, wives; women started to migrate towards themselves, they speak in the language of delirium, they made themselves chores-eyed...' (pp. 115-116).

In *Muinar*, religion is employed as a power-tool by patriarchal hegemony. Women, instrumentalized and dominated, are defined by the goals and needs of men in this system. In addition to that, they were forced to stay indoors and do housework. As a result, their souls dried up and mutated and they speak in "delirium." With regards to

the impossibility of witnessing, while reflecting on<sup>45</sup> Paul Celan's poem *Ashglory* (1971), Derrida (2005) points to the importance of writing: "The poem speaks, even if none of its references is intelligible, none apart from the Other, the one to whom the poem addresses itself and to whom it speaks in saying that it speaks to it. Even if it does not reach the Other, at least it calls to it. Address takes place." (p. 33). In the presence of tyranny, inequality; and in the absence of witnessing, literature calls justice. It gives room and voice to the victim and the other, drawing forth, even dominating "justice-to-come." Additionally, the significance of women's writing needs to be highlighted here. Cixous (1976) spotlights the emancipatory function of *l'écriture féminine*:

It is by writing, from and toward women, and by taking up the challenge of speech which has been governed by the phallus, that women will confirm women in a place other than that which is reserved in and by the symbolic, that is, in a place other than silence. Women should break out of the snare of silence. They shouldn't be conned into accepting a domain which is the margin or the harem. (p. 881)

According to Cixous, women's writing (and their writing about themselves) is a pivotal tool to compensate the silence of the oppressed<sup>46</sup>. To break free from

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<sup>45</sup> Derrida reflects and comments on the poem *Ashglory*, but not analyzes it for the reasons he explained in *Sovereignities in Question*.

<sup>46</sup> Together with women's writing, these novels can also be studied within the framework of trauma stories. Feminist critique of trauma theory reveals that women have a huge history of trauma as they are otherized and silenced by hierarchical patriarchal discourse. See the following reference for a more detailed analysis: Allport, T. (2009). *Women writing trauma: An analysis of psychological trauma in Ingeborg Bachmann's Das Buch Franza, Christa Wolf's Cassandra, Patricia Grace's Cousins, and Ngahuia Te Awakotuku's Ruahine-Mythic Women*. (Doctoral dissertation, The University of Auckland). Women's writing is of utmost importance to witness the trauma, at least to some extent, and to alleviate and heal such a collective trauma. In addition, hauntology may also relate to trauma as both are shifted due to temporality yet mean to appear, find a voice and speak up. In this sense, both novels can be read through trauma theory as well. Especially in *Muinar*, impossibility of testimony is connected to trauma. Muinar is presented as a daimon, a spirit that represents the lost Hestia, or the lost maternal ancestors (these terms can be read in Irigaray's *Je, Tu, Nous: Toward A Culture of Difference* [1993]). She becomes the voice of women and their traumatic experiences. As a ten-thousand-year-old hag, she may

“delirium,” Muinar catalyses Elime by setting her into motion because she is constantly exposed to conversations in a manner of stream-of-consciousness; she travels to places where Muinar leads her and reflects her inspiration by writing throughout the book. When testimony is impossible, literature should be there on the path to justice, to “negotiate the relation between the calculable and the incalculable” (Derrida, 1992, p. 28). What is more, Hutcheon (2002) states that postmodern literature aspires to write “the minor and plural histories of the suppressed.” (p. 66). Muinar, by spreading a collective memory, yet by focusing on individuals, carries such a mission. She does not only convey women’s stories but also leads Elime to author her own. Jale Parla (2009, p. 121) notes that Elime is able to write both thanks to and despite Muinar: Hearing many women’s stories from a ten-thousand-year-old crone inspires Elime to write her own story; and although she is exposed to such ancient stories in an epic tone, she manages to make up a fresh and unique text.

*I stood up through my open window with the feeling that oak leaves were walking on me, and I saw one of the fresh branches of the tree reaching towards my paper, reading my words... I was sure of this with the shudder that came out of my eyes, my thought was stuck in the trunk of the tree, with a jolt that bounced off the foundation of my house, it quickly pulled back the branch that caught my gaze from the tip of its leaf.*

*With that rustling, the pen fell out of my hand, it was just a matter of rushing to close the window, and turning the light off, I got buried in my bed with fear, a*

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be tracking the missing genealogy of female history. *The Penelopiad* can also be analyzed via traumatic studies. The chapter titled as *The Chorus Line: The Trial of Odysseus, as Videotaped by the Maids* is particularly illustrative in a sense that reveals the relationship between the difficulty of witnessing and trauma. Through the following reference, the relationship between testimony and trauma can be established, which can lead a more detailed analysis along with another perspective of reading of the aforementioned chapter. Caruth, C. (2002). The Claims of the Dead: History, Haunted Property, and the Law. *Critical Inquiry*, 28(2), 419–441.

*deep undulous voice arouse, my name was called three times, then three more, three more... with the intertwined voices of all the people I've known and loved.*

*The dead are calling me with the voice of the living, the living are calling the dead by my name... They would take me to the sound hole at midnight.*<sup>47</sup> (p. 63)

A text within the main text, both horizontal; that is, standing side by side without a hierarchy, overflowing and dazzling, is parsed and spread throughout the book with a bold and italic font style. The act of writing also stands out in Elime's text within a mystic framework. Writing comes with attraction yet with eeriness (Parla, 2009, p. 13). There is a double struggle for Elime for she can write despite Muinar's grumbles and reflect a type of a sacred challenge of women's writing in her creation. It is also reflected in the concept of testimony as she sounds almost as if she is haunted by the dead, as if she has difficulty in writing about them. However, my previous Derridean reading on *The Penelopiad* with regards to the relationship between hegemony and testimony cannot be drawn here. Tekin has already written this novel in such a deconstructive approach, given the intertwined and fluid voices of Muinar and Elime as well as drizzling Elime's text along with the book, that there is no horizontal or hegemonic relationship between the voices. For the latter, Gayle Greene (1991) has an important remark on self-conscious fiction:

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<sup>47</sup> "Açık pencereden içeri, üstüme meşe yaprakları yürüyormuş gibi bir duyguyla doğrulup ağacın taze dallarından birinin kâğıdına doğru uzanmakta olduğunu gördüm, cümlelerimi okuyordu...Gözlerimden fişkıran ürpertiyle bir anda emin oldum bundan, düşüncem ağacın gövdesine saplandı, evimin temelini zıplatan bir sarsıntıyla yaprağının ucundan bakışıma yakalanan dalını hızla geri çekti. O hışırtıyla kalem düştü elimden, atılıp pencereyi kapamamla, ışığı söndürmem bir oldu, korkuyla gömüldüm yatağıma, derinden dalga dalga bir ses yükseldi, adım söylendi üç kez, sonra üç kez daha, üç kez daha...Tanıyıp sevdiğim bütün insanların birbirinin içine akmış sesiyle. Ölenler, yaşayanların sesiyle beni çağırıyor, yaşayanlar benim adımla ölenlere sesleniyor...Gece yarısı alıp beni ses boşluğuna götüreceklerdi." (s. 63)

Note: This excerpt is written italic because it is distinctly and purposefully italic in the source text as well.

Though metafiction—fiction that includes within itself commentary on its own narrative conventions—is more often associated with postmodern (i.e., male) writers than with feminist fiction, it is a powerful tool of feminist critique, for to draw attention to the structures of fiction is also to draw attention to the conventionality of the codes that govern human behavior, to reveal how such codes have been constructed and how they can therefore be changed. Whether these novelists make their protagonists readers who speculate about how literature has shaped them or writers who seek new forms in their fiction, they use metafiction to challenge the cultural and literary tradition they inherit. (pp. 1-2)

Here, Greene underlines the deconstructive function of metafiction within the context of women's writing. While Elime's text alone plays a major role in breaking down hierarchical dynamics, its intersperse throughout the book adds into its postmodern and deconstructive quality. Muinar and Elime's mystic and mythic conversations about numerous women who are either serious victims of or fighting against patriarchy, disrupt the dominant discourse of the hegemonic phrase regimen. Furthermore, Muinar seeks to destabilize patriarchal phrase regimen through politicization, particularly in the field of feminism. Through the lens of magical realism, she retells classical texts. However, she also employs an epic language, almost like a revelation. Parla (2009, p. 121) states that, fragmented and interspersed with black italics, Elime's story deconstructs the attempt of Muinar's epic of women; thus, a potential epic narrative which may have traces of patriarchal language is taken aback. As a result, self-evidence emerging from such dynamics can be of no question.

In contrast to *Muinar*, in *The Penelopiad*, oral storytelling as a creative process is emphasized rather than the act of writing, since it is a rewriting of the time when

writing was not so common, the time of Odysseus, Helen, Ithaca. Although Penelope touches on the importance of words especially at the beginning of the novel,<sup>48</sup> there is no metafiction or stress on women's writing directly found in it. Here, storytelling is highlighted and repeatedly mentioned. One instance would be found in the first part: "Now that all the others have run out of air, it's my turn to do a little story-making. I owe it to myself." (p. 3). By claiming her turn and communicating her own experience, Penelope does not do less different than what feminists like Irigaray and Cixous call women to do. The position of women under the control of patriarchy is detected by Irigaray in *Speculum of The Other Woman* (1985) as in the following paragraph:

Woman has no gaze, no discourse for her specific specularization that would allow her to identify with herself (as same)-to return into the self-or break free of the natural specular process that now holds her-to get out of the self. Hence, woman does not take an active part in the development of history, for she is never anything but the still undifferentiated opaqueness of sensible matter, the store (of) substance for the sublation of self, or being as what is, or what he is (or was), here and now. There is a doubling of a present of utterance in which present is already no more, has already passed into the universal, when woman appears in that quasi-subjectivity that is supposedly hers. (p. 224)

In the Greek epic, Penelope did not have her own words, even about her own experiences. She was merely a reflection of Odysseus' story, let alone a participant in the evolution of history. But she finds her voice to represent her own self with her

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<sup>48</sup> "Down here everyone arrives with a sack, like the sacks used to keep the winds in, but each of these sacks is full of words – words you've spoken, words you've heard, words that have been said about you. Some sacks are very small, others large; my own is of a reasonable size, though a lot of the words in it concern my eminent husband. What a fool he made of me, some say. It was a specialty of his: making fools" (i).

own production of truth by revising the history through *The Penelopiad*. Irigaray (1985, p. 85) underlines that women's inferiority resulted from inaccessibility to their own language, which is one of Atwood's concerns, too, as she states, "Life of a sort can be bestowed by writing." (2003, p. 154). She revives and reincarnates Penelope (in spite from beyond the grave) and lets her speak: "...though a lot of the words in it concern my eminent husband. What a fool he made of me, some say. It was a specialty of his: making fools." (p. 2). Now that Penelope has access to language, thanks to women's writing and mythological rewriting, she finds a chance to dislocate his reliability by criticizing his own truth-making with lies and manipulative storytelling. When it comes to the maids, who have undergone double oppression (social oppression as slaves and gender oppression in a patriarchal society as Bottez (2012, p. 54) suggests, they also have something to say in this framework. They express themselves in a more aggressive way:

For he was Athene's own shiny-eyed boy,

With his lies and tricks and his thieving! ...

Our lad said, 'I'm No One,' but then bragged, 'Twas I,

Odysseus, the prince of deceiving!'" (p. 93)

As one can see here, they join Penelope in dislocating his discursive power, yet they are accusing him by shouting, with the exclamation points. Then it could be deduced that the more oppressed and silenced one is, the more urgent and aggressive the account for justice can be. Just like Penelope, they indicate that what Odysseus told is nothing to be trusted. In Part xxi, they access the language by warning the auditors that "there is another story" where the truth, which is found rarely, would be revealed by them (p. 147). Also, through the very end of the book, it is possible to correlate

what Irigaray suggests in *The Power of The Discourse and The Subordination of The Feminine* (1985) about the power-relation with the access of language and discourse with the maids' words:

we took the blame

it was not fair

but now we're here

we're all here too

the same as you (p. 195)

In their way of seeking justice, the maids complain about the absence of their subjectivity as individuals and lack of voice. While they complain, however, they foreshadow that they would call for justice and impeach because their inferiority due to inaccessibility of language ends.

Feminism is concerned with the phenomenological and ethical imbalance of the Other (or against them) in order to delegitimize patriarchal discourse. It seeks to show that such *différance* which has been shaped by patriarchal dominance and gender hierarchy for centuries, is a social construct that requires justice and deconstruction. Rewriting myths is a prominent strategy for putting deconstruction into effect. Brought out with both Derrida's and feminist thinkers' contributions, the alliance between feminism and deconstruction is paramount to individual and social justice and worthy of further investigation.

Derrida's deconstruction and the feminist rewriting method challenge the given values of the authority, and the binary logic of the thinking and concluding process. In this way, fixed hierarchical identities, such as masculine/feminine, are questioned. Just

as Hutcheon (2002) claims, postmodern literature's relationship with history seeks to give more space to the oppressed, the silenced, and the minority: “we now get the histories (in the plural) of the losers as well as the winners, of the regional (and colonial) as well as the centrist, of the unsung many as well as of the sung few, and I might add, of women as well as men” (p. 66). Yet through a deconstructive point of view, it can be argued that it is also about destroying binary oppositions, and the desire to explore the dimension and reality outside of binary roles. *The Penelopiad* is structured around the retrospective narratives of Penelope and the maids, in which, from the afterlife, they reflect on their past experiences and exposures. Considering both the social structure and cultural values of ancient Greece, it is clear how important the fixed hierarchy is in society:

After a time I became more accustomed to my new home, although I had little authority within it, what with Eurycleia and my mother-in-law running all domestic matters and making all household decisions. Odysseus was in control of the kingdom, naturally, with his father, Laertes, sticking his oar in from time to time, either to dispute his son's decisions or to back them up. In other words, there was the standard family push-and-pull over whose word was to carry the most weight. All were agreed on one thing: it was not mine. (p. 71)

The excerpt above reflects the adjusting difficulties that Penelope experiences when she gets married. She is marginalized and has to accept that she has no agency in such a hierarchy. Along with being a woman, an outsider and a wife, Penelope is a smack in the hierarchy as the new bride. It is like a foreshadow of her future troubles, especially after Odysseus leaves. When he leaves for years for adventure, he becomes a hero, according to *The Odyssey*. The epic focuses so much on Odysseus' prowess that it ignores who ruled the country for 20 years in his absence. On the other hand, in

*The Penelopiad*, the conduct of Ithaca has been clarified: After her mother-in-law dies, and the father-in-law and Eurycleia age, Ithaca's fate rests alone with Penelope. She states that she "was running the vast estates of Odysseus all by [her]self. In no way had [she] been prepared for such a task, during [her] early life at Sparta." (p. 85). As a woman who is inexperienced in the management of the country, with no experience in the work as a former princess, she successfully fulfils this difficult task. Although no one really appreciates that, she overcomes managerial hardships by herself. Overcoming this managerial responsibility, which is traditionally associated with men or the elderly, indicates that as a woman, previously alienated and now left much more alone, she indeed disturbs the fixed and binary gender roles.

Rebellious and alternative women are depicted in *Muinar* as resisting against masculine authority. First and foremost, the quarrelsome and sarcastic conversations of Muinar and Elime destabilize masculine authority. Through the communication of collective knowledge, suffering and rage, the female author appears as an agent. Their constant, flowing dialogues in stream of consciousness provide references to a number of myths and folk stories. The Legend of Sarıkız and its revised version in *Muinar* proves that the depiction of women by the male-gaze is constructed with a monologic mentality and it needs to be changed. Tekin transfixes Sarıkız's representation by bringing up her supposedly dark and "cruel" side. She is not an angelic, virgin, saint-like woman figure; instead, she is a ghost-like *femme-fatale*, seducing men without growing any bonds with them. Further, instead of breaking men's heart, Sarıkız, evolved and multiplied, break their heads. This re-mythification deconstructs the conventional roles and image of women. Another point which emphasizes the subjectivity of women in resistance is that Muinar wakes up only in unyielding women and spread their stories. Faliha, for instance, lived until her 90s, fearing death.

She was a literary person who studied on abroad. Like Elime, she also was a writer. Once, she fell in love with her aunt's husband. "Why haven't my flesh gone bad? I guess it's because I lost my virginity to the death." she used to say and laugh. Three days before her death, she went shopping to buy a wedding dress (p. 78). She is also the one who taught most of those swear words to Muinar. Belinur, on the other hand, was fearless of death and joyful all the time. She was honest, beautiful and brave. She was polyamorous: she used to be in love and involved with more than one man at the same time (pp. 209-210). With the unconventional stance against love, with light and warm-hearted temperament towards life, she represents liberation in many senses. Due to the comprehensive portrayals of several extraordinary and resistant women such as Belinur and Azize, the traditional feminine image assigned by the patriarchy is defied and dismantled. Muinar states the most important reason why we hear the story of such women as follows: "I do not wake up in woman going in a cage and chirping at men"<sup>49</sup> (p. 197). Elime calls out the evil and the unfairness they were exposed to. She listens to the stories of those recusant and uncompliant women seeking justice, and writes for the same purpose.

Deconstruction has a significant role in challenging authorities by providing a space where the voices of Others that have been silenced and marginalized can be heard. Latife Tekin writes *Muinar* with a deconstructive approach, which is distinguishable in the shuttering of textual hierarchy through intermingling of voices, the use of magical realism, and the creation and spread of metafiction all along the book parse by parse. It goes hand in hand with the text's retelling of mythological references in different political and cultural contexts. Muinar, bringing spectral justice almost as a Socratic daimon, triggers Elime with the stories and experiences of other

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<sup>49</sup> "Kafese girip erkeğe cıvıldaayan kadınların içinde uyanmıyorum."

women. By this way the impossibility of testimony along with the importance of women's writing which can function as witnessing is demonstrated. Various rebellious women contribute to the articulation of the demand and urgency of justice through Muinar's countless dialogues with Elime. Since "deconstruction is justice" and although it cannot be achieved, calling for it means to be on its path (Derrida, 1992, p. 15). Similarly, In *The Penelopiad*, there is no resolution for the injustices Penelope and the twelve maids had to face. Atwood's mythological rewriting of *The Odyssey* rejects the Homeric truth via Penelope's 'turn to do a little storymaking' and interruption of the maids (p. 3). In spite of the *différance* and *differend*, which can especially be read in the trial scene, she connects past and present as well as absence and presence through women's storytelling and seeking justice from beyond the grave. Impossibility of testimony is also underlined in this novel as law, let alone justice, brings a resolution or compensation for the maids. Discovering and revealing the problems in truth-making processes and its repressive effects on the less privileged ones, deconstruction elicits the differentiation between the concepts of law and justice.

## 5. CONCLUSION

*But isn't this fear convenient for them? Wouldn't the worst be, isn't the worst, in truth, that women aren't castrated, that they have only to stop listening to the Sirens (for the Sirens were men) for history to change its meaning? You only have to look at the Medusa straight on to see her. And she's not deadly. She's beautiful and she's laughing.*

— Hélène Cixous, *The Laugh of the Medusa*

Margaret Atwood's *The Penelopiad* (2005) and Latife Tekin's *Muinar* (2006) are both contemporary novels that employ a revisionist mythmaking strategy to challenge the dominant patriarchal voice that shapes myths. Both texts provide a refuge for women in literature by highlighting myths and folktales as hegemonic discourse and deconstructing their phrase regimen using dialogism and intertextuality. As Cixous (1976) puts forward "[i]n woman, personal history blends together with the history of all women" (pp. 252-253), they bring women onto the stage as individual and collective Others, which results in breaking the authoritative codes of hegemony whose moral message includes female obedience. Alicia Ostriker (1982) defines revisionist mythmaking as such:

The figure or tale will be appropriated for altered ends, the old vessel filled with new wine, initially satisfying the thirst of the individual poet but ultimately making cultural change possible... Like the gods and goddesses of classical mythology, all such material has a double power... Myth belongs to "high" culture and is handed "down" through the ages by...authority. (p. 72)

She suggests the change of the old stories by female knowledge and experience as intending to disrupt the collective male gaze in literature and culture. She calls this change "correction" as "they are retrieved images of what women have collectively

and historically suffered.” While *Muinar* offers this correction by modifying various mythic and folk stories in which women have been misrepresented and silenced, *The Penelopiad* does as such by mainly focusing on the retelling of one ancient narrative: *The Odyssey*.

A text, according to Bakhtin, is a representation of various discourses, ranging from everyday communication to social, historical, and literary discourses, as well as jargon, dialects, and all other uses of the same language. Its composition is heteroglossic. Barthes recognizes the limits of structuralism, analyzes the text from a cultural point of view, and reformulates language as a phenomenon bound to social institutions and codes. Based on her own reading of Bakhtinian dialogism, Kristeva coins the term *intertextuality*, which subverts traditional notions about the origin of meaning are destroyed regardless of its location in the sign or the signifier. Derrida (1982, p. 9) acknowledges the arbitrary relationship between signifier and signified but claims that the former has traces of other words that results in slide and shift in meaning because the sign refers to a presence that is non-present. The meaning is always deterred by moving to the other in movement. Thus, it would be impossible to point to one meaning or one truth. By utilizing revisionist mythmaking method in alliance with deconstruction, *Muinar* and *The Penelopiad* confront other truths along with the experience of the marginalized and suppressed.

Intertextual strategies are used differently by Bakhtin, Kristeva, and Derrida. While Bakhtin and Kristeva present an analytic model of texts that helps characterize dialogism, posing a polyphonic texture, and differentiate it from monologism as the authoritative structure, Derrida offers a reinterpreted and deconstructable approach to the authoritative texts that have been accepted without being disputed (Vargova, 2007). Mythological narratives and folk tales are primarily the result of oral tradition

and thus collectively authored texts. With their monolithic and hegemonic structure that imposes a single point of view and a certain truth, such texts reveal an oppressive mechanism as well as male dominance and privilege. That is why, they can be referred to as grand narratives, created by the phrase regimen of patriarchy with monophonic and imperious features, are to be appropriated by exposing the limitations of what was deemed universal by bringing women's experience from the margins to the center. Herein revisionist mythmaking comes into the stage as a ground-breaking strategy to subvert the patriarchal ideology by bringing "others" into the stage of agency. Through intertextuality and alliance with deconstruction, revisionist mythmaking strategy brings out a significant potential to redeem the injustices of the past by bringing the voice of the Woman or the Other, alterity, and the hope of "just" voices. Atwood and Tekin overtly engage these methods and approaches in canonical discourse, especially collectively authored texts such as myths and folk tales. In this way, they unravel the problems with gender-injustice, and bring out the emancipatory potential of women's writing as well as deconstruction.

Meanings and utterances are perceived and communicated differently by different social groups and individuals in different contexts. Consequently, it would be impossible to acknowledge or mention only one reality. Dialogism and heteroglossia both point to a pluralism that contains other truths. This results in a resistance to the totalitarianism of the monological mentality. The patriarchal authority of monologic texts is addressed in feminist approaches to Bakhtin. They aim to destabilize the meaning decided and assigned by the hegemony by addressing the problematic dynamics of the dominant discourse's mechanism of meaning-making. As a result, they use dialogism to cast doubt on the patriarchal narrator's credibility.

Both literary texts examined in this thesis serve the purposes which have been mentioned earlier, by activating more than one voice, one consciousness, perspective, and truth. Tekin's *Muinar* demonstrates this using a female protagonist in the form of a Socratic daimon: Muinar. Her ongoing conversations with Elime cover a wide range of topics, including history, literature, and politics. She also tells Elime the stories of many sophisticated and rebellious women. All this information frequently challenges Elime's perspective and prompts her to get creative and write a literary fictional text. Muinar's collective knowledge, with an emphasis on individual female experiences as well as Elime's encounters with different perspectives inspire this metafiction. In Atwood's *The Penelopiad*, dialogism is more prominent on two textual levels. First, Penelope actively intervenes in *The Odyssey* by reflecting on ancient events from her own point of view and challenging Odysseus' credibility through her own storytelling. She exposes Odysseus' contradictory statements and unsubstantiated claims, especially the ones about her own. Second, the twelve maids interrupt Penelope's narrative in Hades as she retells her own story as well as modifying the events that took place centuries ago in ancient Greece. The maids question not only Odysseus' but also Penelope's honesty, since the former (along with Telemachus) is directly responsible for their deaths, and the latter remains silent or does not attempt to prevent it. As a result, there is more than one layer of onion to peel as far as the dialogic character of the novel is concerned. Evidently, the female protagonists in both novels put the male-gaze into question and challenge the credibility of the patriarchal narrator.

According to Bakhtin, the progressive and integrative function of literature is to empower and elevate the heteroglossia of social groups, with its dialogism defying monologism and totalitarianism (Goulimari, 2014, p. 174). His concept of dialogism

anticipates intertextuality and the active participation of the reader. The meaning of each word can change depending on the reader's relationship to the uniquely perceived world, leading to a multiplication of utterances and the formation of different chains of meaning and connections. Along with dialogism, the chosen novels encompass intertextuality in attempt to retell myths by reflecting women's experiences. Finding a sanctuary area in which they can correct and modify the old narratives, women can decentralize the unity of meaning in patriarchal phrase regimen. Myths, which are thought to reflect the daily life and roles of ancient women, can be positioned in a very important place in this respect. That's why, the mythological rewriting technique reinterprets the quiescent women in myths and turns them into active subjects by deconstructing the assigned roles and shedding light on their ulterior features. To achieve recovery from their (lack of or) misrepresentation, Tekin applies this strategy in *Muinar*, featuring both a variety of female portrayals and altered folk tales. As a voice that emerges in the mind, *Muinar* talks about the interesting women she has awakened from time to time during this period, and how they fought patriarchy in their own ways for as long as they lived. While emphasizing the individuality and unique experiences of women such as Belinur, Faliha and Azize, she also conveys their stories to Elime as a collective consciousness. In addition, this ten-thousand-year-old crone, who is knowledgeable in many fields, passes on many mythical and folk stories with some variations and modifications. While the intertextual references of these altered narratives show that they do not give much space, voice, or agency to women, women occupy a large place in *Muinar*'s retold narratives; such that they now represent themselves, fight in wars, fall in love, become femme fatales. As for *The Penelopiad*, Atwood presents a Penelope about whom one cannot tell if she really is loyal along the line other than the one Odysseus represents

her as an obedient, patient, faithful wife in *The Odyssey*. She admits that she enjoyed watching suitors pursuing her and sometimes thought about sleeping with them. Also, Penelope has a sour consciousness now as she did not prevent the maids from being murdered. She creates alternative explanations and excuses for her inaction; thus, in a way, she seeks for a kind of redemption by retelling this story. The maids, in unity, ask for account of their death from the responsible ones. They intervene in Penelope's narratives in different textual forms such as lyrics and plays. They not only challenge her representation as a faithful wife in the Homeric epic, but also lashes Penelope as she framed them up by conniving with Eurycleia.

Deconstructive approach, a significant means of showing women's quest for justice, is employed in both novels. In *Muinar*, it is patent in the spectrality of Muinar, the interweaving of the protagonists' voices, the non-hierarchy of the spoken-like text along with the scattering of Elime's metafiction throughout the novel, the constant change of themes with various mythic references, and ultimately, the transmission of the women's individual experiences that amount to a collective pain. The voices are interwoven, just as ideas and dialogues along with the metafiction, which is dispersed throughout the text, deconstructing the prosaic novel structure. When it comes to language, it is closer to spoken language held forth via punctuations with an emphasis on commas and poetic tone through the allusions of natural phenomena. However, it is still "inside text" with many free plays by means of magical reality and stream of consciousness shared between Elime and her Socratic daimon Muinar. Also, due to the constant topic change with different references including mythological, folkloric, and historical ones, as well as the experiences of women Muinar woke up in, the meaning is constantly deferred and unstabilized. What is more, the vagueness in Muinar's existence, a voice in Elime's mind as well as several other women's, a voice

without a body which, though, appears to appear at the end of the novel, creates an undecidability. This can be considered as a consistent image with the idea of *justice l'avenir*, as she is the embodiment of spectral justice that is yet to come. She is non-present just like justice; however, her lingering in women's mind along with the creative potential she brings to Elime is the way to justice. A more literal meaning leading the way to justice would be exposed through Muinar's relaying information about the authentic and rebellious women who suffered from patriarchy and tried to survive male dominion. She functions like a collective author who strives best to witness for the dead, for the painful experience and resilience of the dead. Besides, she retells the birth of monotheist religions and associates them with patriarchy. By demonstrating the oppressive power play of the hegemony, she delegitimizes its self-approving thus paradoxical phrase regimen. She also establishes a direct relationship with the male authority and silencing women, highlighting the difficulty of testimony under such circumstances. Thus, the importance of *l'écriture féminine* is underlined once more as it is a medium to break women free from "delirium." As well as giving women a sanctuary place in this novel, by re-mythifying some mythic and folk stories, Tekin successfully deconstructs the patriarchal values and let women articulate their demand for justice. In a similar way, Atwood utilizes deconstruction by challenging the axioms functioning in favor of men that are enforced by and through patriarchal values and phrase regimen. By retelling *The Odyssey* from Penelope's perspective along with the maids' interruptions, with an emphasis on the problems with the law and impossibility of testimony, she exposes the brutality of patriarchal dominion. The characters reveal the true colors of the Homeric narrative by reflecting on their past experiences in the modern age beyond the grave. Penelope reveals the harm that patriarchal family structures can cause, as well as her father's hypocrisy.

Her main retelling narrative, however, revolves around Odysseus' inconsistencies. Uncomfortable with her representation in *The Odyssey* and the attitudes taken towards her, Penelope retells them from her own perspective, turning the unquestioned truths told by male-gaze upside down. She generates new alternatives not only on the discourse of Odysseus, but also on the murder of twelve maids. In that, she attempts to salve her conscience by positioning herself in a desperate and helpless state. She does not drink the Water of Forgetfulness as she may be aware of the redemptive function of remembrance. When it comes to the maids, who point Penelope as also responsible for their death and want Odysseus to be tried, get no response. Neither is Penelope free from patriarchal speech or can she testify for them, nor does the judge make decisions to ensure justice. Here Atwood employs deconstruction by problematizing the institutions of law. She gives space to voiceless women that are exposed to social and gender oppression and demonstrates that women declare their pursuit of justice when they have access to language.

There are some implications to ponder for future studies regarding the novels I studied. Although they both aim to unsettle patriarchy on the path to gender-justice, it should be kept in mind that gender is not a binary concept and should be more inclusive. Thus, literary and political landscapes should embrace and highlight intersectional feminism. Especially *Muinar* has some binary traces of logic. "Have you ever wondered whether the world is male or female? If everything in the universe is alive, this planet must have a gender... The moon is male! It dances attendance on the Earth...the Earth is married to the Sun, but the moon is its lover..."<sup>50</sup> yearns Muinar (p. 111). She assigns conventional gender roles to celestial bodies. Thus, this

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<sup>50</sup> "Dünya erkek mi, kadın mı diye düşünüp kafa yorduğun oldu mu? Evrendeki her şey canlıysa cinsiyeti olmalı bu gezegenin... Ay erkek! Pervane dünyanın etrafında...dünya güneş evli, ay sevgilisi..."

novel can be analyzed within a queer critical framework for future studies. To deconstruct the binary roles and offer criticism accordingly would largely contribute to gender studies. Another limitation that I would like to mention is regarding *The Penelopiad*, that it has the potential to create another canon. If the text is not read as authentic, autonomous speech by formerly oppressed individuals but as a commodity of a popular contemporary writer, then it has the potential to breed the power dynamics of the privileged representing a subaltern (Rosen, 2013, p. 160). The last point that is worthy of critique would be about Bakhtinian dialogism when read and evaluated out of feminist framework. It is argued in this study that mythological rewriting can be used to turn the scale for women to establish their subjectivity, and that it can be studied using a Bakhtinian approach. That is, when dialogism replaces monologism and monophony is overthrown by polyphony, women can find a space to represent themselves, convey their own stories and articulate their own demands against patriarchal authority. As a result, it can pave the way for their subjectivity to emerge. However, there are two important implications to consider: First, plurality may not result in the formation of female subjectivity. Subjectivity and pluralism do not necessarily work toward the same end. They may take different paths and employ different strategies. Likewise, the two may not give rise to one another. Second, Bakhtin does not acknowledge the absence of women's voices in his works. He criticizes monologism but does not address the issue of male-dominated monologues. It can be deduced that he does not consider the diversity of language in relation to gender difference (Booth, 1986, p.166; Halasek, 1992, p.66). However, even though Bakhtin does not directly address the issue of gender inequality, and the feminist approach may seem like a separate entity when read in isolation from Bakhtin, they

share a strong political and critical point of view: they both strive for an ethics of otherness and are thus on the path to justice.

Considering the initial questions, posed at the beginning of the present study, it can be stated that revisionist mythmaking provides women with a potential emancipation through the self-conscious process of recovering from the male-gaze and presenting a more accurate representation of their own. This potential may also apply to the social and cultural level as women access language, they point to the problems and injustice created by the hegemony. They challenge and alter patriarchal discourse with multiple attempts in literature and in other fields, which can fuel a collective change. Nevertheless, to achieve a collective change, not only women but every individual should face their ghosts. They need to be haunted to haunt. Emancipation necessitates hearing the specters' messages and demands. Justice is deferred and spatial, thus will never be achieved due to the temporality. However, to imagine justice is to be on its path, which requires a sense of responsibility, results from communicating with ghosts. This gives an insight for the second question I asked, that whether it is possible to achieve gender-justice or not: Since justice requires immediacy and women have already suffered and been exposed to multiple types of violence for ages, a true justice is unachievable; yet attaining a fairer world for future generation is only possible through women's quest on the way to justice.

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