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## **“BEHIND OUR LULLABIES”: FEMININE MYTHOLOGIES IN CONTEMPORARY WOMEN’S POETRY**

In the Western canon, poetry and mythology have always been connected, and poets have often looked to myths in an attempt to understand humanity. The phallogocentric patriarchy has, however, marginalised femininity, thus creating an imbalanced, androcentric cultural milieu. In the second half of the twentieth century, with the rise of feminism and the postmodern rejection of grand narratives, many women poets have sought to rectify this situation and have produced a plethora of works that address this issue. This paper explores this idea by using the mythological figure of Penelope as an example of a harmful means of constructing femininity. It also focuses on the postmodern notion of the demarginalisation of the previously voiceless through an analysis of Carol Ann Duffy’s collection *The World’s Wife*. In a broader sense, it examines how contemporary women’s poetry in English reappropriates the mythological feminine.

*Keywords:* Anglophone literature, contemporary poetry, feminism, gender, mythology

### **INTRODUCTION: POETRY, MYTHOLOGY, GENDER**

Several years before the Swinging Sixties, and at the onset of second-wave feminism, Sylvia Plath was working on the poems that would soon constitute her posthumous collection *Ariel* (1965). This iconic work boasts numerous oft-quoted poems, with one of the most memorable and anthologised ones among them being the famous “Lady Lazarus”, in which Plath describes the nightmarish miracle of her unwanted resurrection as “the theatrical comeback in broad day” which “the peanut-crunching crowd shoves in to see” (Plath, 1999: 9–10). Even though, on closer inspection, Plath’s work is rather less feminist-orientated than the usual lay interpretations would like it to be, one cannot help but notice the blatant gender flip in the poem’s title: The person who has returned from the dead is most definitely a Lady, and not Lazarus the Man from the biblical story. The instinctive rejection of

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the grand narrative of androcentric mythology seems to already be present in Plath's writings, even though postmodern theory had yet to formulate these concerns, and even as she consciously enters into a dialogue with the canonical, masculine mythologies of both "Lazarus, come from the dead", addressed decades earlier in Eliot's "Prufrock", and the (obviously male) poet prophet from Coleridge's "Kubla Khan", whose appearance causes those around him to "Beware! Beware! His flashing eyes, his floating hair!" (Coleridge, 1966: 86).<sup>1</sup> Plath's Lazarus is only a miracle to those who have come to watch her "big strip tease" without bothering to notice the grotesque horror behind it, and as a summary of, or a commentary on, the feminine perspective of many a Western mythological tale, this story is, unfortunately, only too accurate.

Using mythology has always been par for the course where poetry is concerned, which is not surprising considering their shared origin in ritual and early linguistic thought. Myths are not just a way for people to understand the universe they belong to; they are first and foremost stories that allow for imagination and creativity to transpose that universe into art, which is essential for poetic thought and emotion and thus for the development of humanity as a whole. Nevertheless, while ancient poetry often reaches for myth as a universal and universalising concept aligned with poetic expression (as is the case with Sappho's "Ode to Aphrodite", for example), it is only later, with a change of mythological focus from creation to hero myth, that this relationship is more deeply re-examined. This change points to the masculinisation of mythology, and it reflects changes in society and the emerging patriarchy, whose devastating intensity and unnaturalness are best exemplified in the patrogenesis of Athena and Dionysus, in which both wisdom and regeneration are literally birthed by the masculine principle embodied in Zeus at the exclusion of the feminine. By the time English poetry finally started catching up with its French and Italian counterparts, this masculinising damage had already long been done, and the concept that was adopted as the default mythological framework was woefully phallogocentric.

English poetry has thus routinely used themes and images from mythology—from the Renaissance poets who looked back to classical antiquity and tried to emulate the Italian humanist model, to Shakespeare's musings on Venus, Adonis and the like, to Milton's cerebral Neo-Classicism, and to the Romantics and beyond. Each of these expressions has, however, been dominated by the

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<sup>1</sup> Compare with "Lady Lazarus": "Beware / Beware. / Out of the ash / I rise with my red hair / And I eat men like air." (Plath, 1999:11)

androcentric mythologies that form the building blocks of the Western canon, thus leaving out a significant part of the storytelling process and the story itself. Consequently, even the great poetic re-imaginings of the myths of yore never actually question the central role male heroes play. Take, for instance, Byron's *Don Juan*: For all his bemoaning of the fact that the era he lives in leaves no room for heroism, Byron never even considers the possibility of completely disregarding the very concept thereof, choosing instead to mock it by taking “our ancient friend Don Juan” (Byron, 1952: 637) and placing him in situations that shed unflattering light on the undeserving Romantic age. A century later, during the great Modernist struggle between Humanity and God (both, of course, male by default), poets continued questioning both mythology and divinity but not the masculine principle behind both concepts. It would take a lot more time and concentrated efforts by women authors to finally address the maleness of the elephant in the room.

Fast forward several decades to the Postmodern rejection of grand narratives and the thematic reawakening of women poets, and it was only a matter of time before they started questioning their position in the mythological space. “Lady Lazarus” may have been one of the first poems by a prominent woman author (prominent in hindsight, that is) that angrily addressed the issue, but it certainly ushered in an entire legion of spiritual successors into the mainstream. A fine example would be Denise Levertov's “Song for Ishtar”, written a year or so after Plath's poem, which revisits the original matriarchal religion of ancient Mesopotamia and uses various literary and cultural symbols of femininity (the moon, the sow, the “black of desire”) to explore the world of Ishtar, the ultimate icon of feminine power and the goddess of both love and war – but, interestingly enough, not of marriage or motherhood. This ancient agricultural deity of fertility and her evolution into something immensely more complex may stand as a perfect metaphor for this entire poetic project. Jane Dowson and Alice Entwhistle (2006: 103) succinctly explain this thematic prerogative:

As anxieties about class, race, and social inequities feed into dissatisfaction with the treatment of women by society at large, this restiveness is articulated in the recourse to myth and other transforming narratives, in a reasonably broad reflection of the decentering of subjectivity. Besides emblematic figures of subversive female power, like witches, priestesses and other female performers, deities or classical characters like Penelope, Persephone and Eurydice are favourite ways of signalling the potential of the female imagination.

Contemporary poetry in particular – not surprising, given how it was only in the last few decades that women poets have started to become truly recognised

without any sort of sexist proviso – took mythology to task and produced a plethora of remarkable works that re-examine the feminine principle in folkloric thought. As an illustration of these tendencies, the next section will focus on Penelope, a character who, for many reasons, seems to exemplify these outdated modes of femininity and has consequently inspired numerous intertextual re-imaginings.

### THE HEROINE WITH A THOUSAND FACES

In the introductory chapter of Margaret Atwood's *The Penelopiad* (2005), Penelope muses on her place in the greater mythological universe. "And what did I amount to, once the official version gained ground?", she bemoans. "An edifying legend. A stick used to beat other women with." (Atwood, 2008: 11). Atwood's work is not technically a poem, although it features numerous poetic parts, sung by the twelve maids who were hanged by Odysseus upon his return for consorting with Penelope's suitors. It does, however, have a lot in common with prose poetry, or at least lyric prose (like numerous verse sections, refrains and choruses, poetic diction, or theatrical performativity), and it reads mostly like a prolonged dramatic monologue. Writing about women's poetry of the 1930s and 1940s, Dowson and Entwistle (2006: 22) state that "many women-centred poems are dramatic monologues or verse dialogues which allow for the dialectical representation of personal freedoms up against social constraints." By choosing this form – or at least, by evoking it – poets call attention to the fact that the age of myths they write about is anything but favourable for their women protagonists. This simple act of giving voice to the previously voiceless seems to be a unifying element in the poems that re-examine the mythological feminine.

Penelope, in particular, is a figure that ostensibly symbolises the female experience: The earliest iterations of the myth portray her not only as an adulteress, who gives birth to Pan after sleeping either with all of her suitors or only with the god Hermes, but also as a mere side note in Odysseus's story. Later versions cast her as the forever faithful "Angel at the Hearth", whose shroud-weaving-and-unweaving cunningness saves her husband's throne and her son's legacy. This Madonna/Whore dichotomy is only too familiar and has been a staple of both literature<sup>2</sup> and real life<sup>3</sup> for a dishearteningly long time. It is no wonder then, that

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<sup>2</sup> As an illustration, in Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891), it takes a marital separation and a prolonged stay in Brazil for Angel to understand that a woman's "purity" is not a question of either/or, and when he finally arrives at the realisation that Tess is an actual

poets often reach for Penelope as they muse upon the nature of femininity and its role within mythology. At the same time, as she becomes increasingly associated with the “Madonna” part of the equation, authors find it almost impossible to resist investigating all the stipulations that follow this particular idea. Barbara Dell’Abate-Celebi (2016: 21) summarises it nicely:

The historical tendency associates mythic and literary female characters with the feminine stereotypes of passivity, submission and subordination. Penelope as an archetypal literary woman has long served as a model of subservience and silence. However, this fixed model of femininity has begun to be denounced in the last two decades by contemporary writers directly or indirectly related to feminism and feminist theories. Penelope has become the central character of a series of rewrites aiming to provide new representations of female subjectivities that break stereotypical molds and emphasize autonomy.

Atwood’s Penelope, in particular, challenges the systematic erasure of anything other than the “official version” of her myth – hence the name of the work, *The Penelopiad*. She is no longer satisfied with being a secondary character in her own story, and now that, being dead, she “knows everything”, she is going to give us a tell-all account of the events. Thought-provoking and interesting though this work may be, it is not really within the scope of this article to focus on it more intently, given that it is not a poem. Let us instead concentrate on two exemplary works of poetry that work along similar lines – both entitled “Penelope”, both published in 1999, and both created by British women poets, Carol Ann Duffy and Penelope Shuttle.

Carol Ann Duffy is an immensely important figure in contemporary British poetry, not least because she is the first woman to bear the title of the Poet Laureate of the United Kingdom. Of particular interest to our topic at hand is her 1999 collection *The World’s Wife*, in which various mythological and historical situations are focalised through the hitherto invisible and inaudible women of the hour. The next section of this paper will give closer scrutiny of this work, but for now, let us examine the poem by the name of “Penelope”. The titular heroine is telling us her story; however, the wait for Odysseus, so important in the Homeric account, is a mere introduction to the real narrative – Penelope’s needlework. Often seen as a

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person and not an embodiment of the feminine principle, it is woefully too late – and, ironically, she is then, as Humbert would say of Lolita, “safely solipsised” once more, this time as a martyr.

<sup>3</sup> The examples are too numerous and too depressing to mention.

symbol of both female creativity and female imprisonment in the domestic sphere, sewing, weaving, cross-stitching and the like feature prominently in many accounts of women's private lives (Jane Austen's novels come to mind, as does Tennyson's poem "The Lady of Shalott"). Duffy's Penelope creates entire life stories with her needle, both as a metaphor for the life she might have led had she been born in another time and place and as a commentary on the female condition (in Duffy, 2017: 77):

I sorted cloth and scissors, needle, thread,

thinking to amuse myself,  
but found a lifetime's industry instead.

I sewed a girl  
under a single star – cross-stitch, silver silk –  
running after childhood's bouncing ball.  
I chose between three greens for the grass;  
a smoky pink, a shadow's grey  
to show a snapdragon gargling a bee.  
I threaded walnut brown for a tree,

my thimble like an acorn  
pushing up through umber soil.  
Beneath the shade  
I wrapped a maiden in a deep embrace  
with heroism's boy  
and lost myself completely  
in a wild embroidery of love, lust, loss, lessons learnt;

The drabness of the everyday life in Ithaca is contrasted with the many-coloured world of Penelope's art (similar to how Dorothy exchanges grey Kansas for the Emerald City of Oz), which allows her to experience everything she is missing out on while she sits and waits for Odysseus to return from his adventures in warring and whoring. Childhood games and adolescent love are present in her art, even as they are absent from her life. Of particular interest is the fact that she starts her work by stitching a girl, thus making womanhood central to her creation. Duffy's Penelope loses herself in her art for the duration of Odysseus' absence, first through her stitching and then through the weaving and unweaving of Laertes' shroud. She makes certain to tell us that she did not spend her time solely waiting; her needlework is not a sad escape from reality but a triumphant expression of the self (in Duffy, 2017: 78):

I was picking out  
the smile of a woman at the centre  
of this world, self-contained, absorbed, content,  
most certainly not waiting,  
when I heard a far-too-late familiar tread outside the door.  
I licked my scarlet thread  
and aimed it surely at the middle of the needle's eye once more.

Penelope is now finally a central figure in her own story, metaphorically represented through the fact that she aims her “scarlet thread...surely at the middle of the needle's eye” thus evoking a parallel with Odysseus' famous aiming of the arrow through the middle of the axes' eyes. The sly “once more” serves to point to many invisible, daily feminine victories, which remain unsung, while a single victory by a male hero all too often becomes legendary and larger-than-life.

If Duffy's Penelope is content with subtly expressing her importance in the narrative, Shuttle's most certainly is not. Part of her 1999 collection *A Leaf out of his Book*, “Penelope” is the story of a woman absolutely aware of the fact that everything connected to the tale of Odysseus is of her own making (in Shuttle, 2012: 120):

All is made by the design of my hand.  
What I weave is where and how he travels.  
He sails on glittering tides I weave.  
The skein is his hero's skin.

It is I who weave the web of spears.

Legend diminished me to wife  
of the house, subject to suitors  
and son: but my husband's life  
hung from the thread coaxing through my fingers.

This Penelope, like the girl on the beach in Wallace Stevens' “The Idea of Order at Key West” or C. S. Lewis' Aslan, is the sole artificer of the world that she creates. She knows that the masculine mythologies are to blame for her being reduced to a faithful wife, patient mother, or unattainable love interest, and she constantly reminds us that the narrative is actually her own. The ending of the poem, in which she states that “Over my face they pinned a web of lies. / But it was made by the design of my hand” (120), states her agency with absolute conviction, which makes us wonder if there is a kind of grand design at work she is privy to. This is especially interesting when we also consider the authorial voice that presides

over the poem: The poet's name is Penelope Shuttle, and this story is without a doubt created "by the design of her hand". She even makes sure to mention Penelope's shuttle ("I bend over my loom / and throw my shuttle, weaving / the world"), thus drawing our attention even more to her presence and letting us in on the joke, while at the same time making us consider the very concept of female authorship and the position of women in mythology – not just as characters but also as storytellers.

"WE QUEENS, WE MOTHERS, MOTHERS OF QUEENS": CAROL ANN  
DUFFY'S *THE WORLD'S WIFE*

As was shown in the previous section, some mythological characters, like Penelope, have inspired numerous authors to re-examine how the world's narrative treatment has influenced and changed their stories. Others did not have such a far-reaching literary impact, which does not mean that their presence in culture is any less telling or intriguing. The aforementioned collection by Carol Ann Duffy, *The World's Wife*, focuses on many female personages whose presence looms large over our cultural landscape. The speakers of the dramatic monologues in this collection include not only Galatea, Medusa, or Delilah, but also historical figures such as Anne Hathaway as well as cultural and pop-cultural gender flips like Queen Herod or Queen Kong. In Dowson and Entwistle's (2006: 217) words, "conflating the worlds of history, literature, myth and the contemporary reader has become something of a classic device for women, but Duffy's potent irony and parody are distinguished by 'in-your-face' vernacular and sexuality". Anthony Rowland (2001: 199, 212) calls the poems of *The World's Wife* satirical, stating that the collection "makes a critical departure from [her] earlier poetry in that men and masculinity are attacked constantly by more abrasive female narrators", and that out of all the male characters present, "only Shakespeare survives relatively unscathed".

However, focusing on the plight of the masculine in a collection that is not only dedicated to the Othering of women but also "supremely resurrects the silenced or marginalised while investigating available representation" (Dowson–Entwistle, 2006: 217), reads almost like a comical lesson in irony. Duffy's heroines are resentful of the men in their life, certainly, but that has more to do with the fact that they are literally reduced to being "the world's wife" than with anything else, even though they have more than enough fodder for resentment, as can be seen from the examples of Eurydice, Penelope or Mrs Midas, who "expose their respective partners as arrogant, selfish and foolhardy; god, hero and monarch

alike are much diminished by their wives’ scrutiny” (Dowson–Entwhistle, 2006: 235).

Duffy’s wives are not only finally ready to unleash their rightful fury at the world; they are more often than not hilarious while doing it. Thus, Frau Freud’s monologue reads like a thesaurus entry for the male sexual organ, mocking her husband’s theory of penis envy and concluding that she feels only pity for his phallus, as it is “average” and “not pretty” (Duffy, 2017: 63). Mrs Aesop is not amused by her husband’s penchant for using and enacting formulaic expressions, saying that “he could bore for Purgatory” (25). Mrs Icarus watches her husband fly too close to the sun, proving to the world that “he’s a total, absolute, Grade A pillock” (61). And Mrs Darwin accompanies her husband to the Zoo, only to tell him that “Something about that Chimpanzee over there reminds me of you” (27). Jane Dowson (2016: 137) states that

At their crudest, then, the wives simply supplant male with female power and nurture female community, enhanced by knowing looks and laughter at live readings. However, although the monologues can seem ingenious because of their entertainment value, they also confront the formulaic influences of myth by rewriting them with a complex psychology not found in the originating stories.

Dowson uses Eurydice as an example. Rather than being a passive wife who serves only as a conduit for Orpheus’ pain<sup>4</sup>, Duffy’s Eurydice prefers her quiet death to being “trapped in his images, metaphors, similes, / octaves and sextets, quatrains and couplets, / elegies, limericks, villanelles, / histories, myths...” (Duffy, 2017: 68). Knowing that her husband is in love with the idea of himself as a great artist, she tells him, “*Orpheus, your poem’s a masterpiece. / I’d love to hear it again...*” (69), which causes him to turn, and her to disappear, with just enough time to wave at him. Eurydice is thus shown as a shrewd woman who knows her husband well enough to trick him into finally letting her go. This iteration of the classical character is not a symbol of love lost and art that is unable to capture it but rather a metaphor for a woman who wants her freedom and her peace. Similarly, Mrs Midas, who is not even mentioned in the classical myth, watches her husband

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<sup>4</sup> Modern pop culture would call this trope “fridging”, harking back to an episode of the *Green Lantern* comic book in which a character comes home and finds his girlfriend dead and stuffed in the fridge. In a broader sense, the trope applies to any situation in which a female character is killed or hurt in order to make the male character suffer, or in other words, the situations in which female characters are mere plot devices used to jumpstart the male characters’ stories.

change from gleeful satisfaction at his own cleverness into a horrific figure that destroys everything he touches, himself included, and sees herself as “the woman who married the fool / who wished for gold” (18). Showing that she is not just a resentful wife, Mrs Midas concludes her monologue by mentioning her anger and grief for having lost the man she loved (in Duffy, 2017: 18):

What gets me now is not the idiocy or greed  
but lack of thought for me. Pure selfishness. I sold  
the contents of the house and came down here.  
I think of him in certain lights, dawn, late afternoon,  
and once a bowl of apples stopped me dead. I miss most,  
even now, his hands, his warm hands on my skin, his touch.

*The World's Wife* is abundant with figures like these; however, as the older mythological framework has already been addressed in previous sections, it seems prudent to now turn our focus onto popular culture, as it is something that comes closest to a contemporary mythology (and which is aptly illustrated by the most prominent new deity of Neil Gaiman's *American Gods*, Media, who speaks to the protagonist Shadow through various televisual disguises). “Queen Kong” and “Elvis's Twin Sister” seem to exemplify this idea, as they tell the stories of a famous film monster and a rock star. The ridiculousness of a romance between a gigantic she-ape and a human-sized man is undercut by the genuine sentimentality of Queen Kong's devotion. After their initial affair ends, she tries to get over him but cannot, so she decides to set sail for New York and rekindle their romance. The attempt proves successful and leads to “twelve happy years”, after which the man sadly dies.

Duffy challenges our notions of femininity by emphasising the animalistic in Queen Kong: We hear about her fur and her massive size, and when the man dies, she tries to lick him awake. When she fails to resuscitate him, she turns him into a medallion of sorts and wears him round her neck, where, she believes, he sometimes “hears [her] roar.” This, of course, is an allusion to Helen Reddy's famous feminist battle cry, “I am woman, hear me roar” – Queen Kong is thus a symbol of unbridled, raw femininity, capable of great gentleness and admirable endeavour. The absurdity of the female principle being embodied in a giant ape serves as a humorous reminder of the need to question the stereotypical representation of femininity as something fragile, beautiful, or precious.

Unlike Queen Kong and her brother Elvis, “Elvis's Twin Sister” is neither literally nor figuratively larger than life. Instead, she lives as a nun in a different kind of Graceland, “a land of grace”. Though she wears “a simple habit, / darkish hues” (73), and does not walk towards Heartbreak Hotel any more, she still wears “a pair of

good and sturdy / blue suede shoes” and confesses that “The Reverend Mother / digs the way I move my hips / just like my brother.” (73). One of the poem’s epigraphs is Madonna’s famous statement that “Elvis is alive and she’s female”, and the other is a line from “Are You Lonesome Tonight?”. Taken together, along with the poem’s protagonist and title, these lines point to Elvis Presley’s real-life twin brother, who was stillborn, and whose absence haunted The King throughout his life. By turning the dead brother into a surviving sister, Duffy points out the necessity of the female principle: Elvis’s sister may not be the Queen of Rock and Roll, but her quiet and unassuming presence is a perfect yin to her brother’s robust, theatrical yang, and it thus keeps the world in balance.

These two examples showcase two very different images of femininity – the monstrous feminine that is nevertheless capable of gentleness and love, and the unobtrusive feminine that still possesses the passion (and fashion!) worthy of rock and roll fame. Together with the other poems from the collection, this idea serves to show that what constitutes femaleness and femininity cannot be reduced to a convenient stereotype, and it should instead always challenge our preconceived notions, as they are nothing more than empty constructs established by androcentric mythology and culture. Duffy’s work opens up a possibility of different, decentred readings of these well-known tales, and “her commitment to giving a (ventriloquized) voice to the underprivileged” (Rowland, 2001: 199) helps draw our attention to this silent struggle.

### CONCLUSION: THE SISTERHOOD OF THE TRAVELLING MYTHS

In Neil Gaiman’s *American Gods*, there are chapters entitled “Coming to America” that describe how various deities of the Old World’s pantheons ended up in the New World: They were brought over by women telling their stories. This points to the fact that, in contrast to what the misogynist “his-story” would like us to believe, women were the primary storytellers and myth-bearers, a role that stemmed logically from their function as priestesses of the original, matriarchal religions. With the masculinisation of mythology brought on by patriarchal regimes, this idea was stifled, and femaleness and femininity were ousted from the centre and forced to remain on the margins of mythology, having been reduced to mere side players. It would take many centuries of struggle for women to regain the right to address this usurpation and to re-examine the role of the feminine in Western mythology.

Contemporary women authors, and poets in particular, seek to reappropriate mythology and reassert women’s central role in it. Since one of the crucial tenets of mythology is the principle of metamorphosis, Helen Cixous links women’s

propensity towards participation in the natural fluidity of mythical narratives with the feminine “gift of changeability”, which in turn offers women poets “a creative, unpredictable, and self-empowering route out of the confines of poetic tradition as well as the paradigmatic expectations of cultural history” (Dowson–Entwhistle, 2006: 232–234). By deconstructing mythology, women poets reconstruct poetic expression and cultural landscape.

This article offers only a tiny glimpse into this fascinating subject, but the works by the poets mentioned – Sylvia Plath, Denise Levertov, Penelope Shuttle and Carol Ann Duffy – hopefully illustrate the common features of this type of poetry. The previously silenced female characters are finally given a voice and a platform to make that voice heard, and their stories make us re-examine our ideas of femininity, mythology, and poetry itself. As Duffy’s *Queen Herod* says (in Duffy, 2017: 15-16):

We do our best,  
we Queens, we mothers,  
mothers of Queens.

We wade through blood  
for our sleeping girls.  
We have daggers for eyes.

Behind our lullabies,  
the hooves of terrible horses  
thunder and drum.

Bojana Vujin

„IZA USPAVANKI”: FEMININE MITOLOGIJE U SAVREMENOJ ŽENSKOJ POEZIJI

*Rezime*

U kanonskoj misli zapadne civilizacije, poezija i mitologija su tesno povezane, što nije neobično, s obzirom na to da i jedan i drugi koncept vode poreklo iz rituala i ranih promišljanja o jeziku. Poezija je stoga često posezala za mitom u pokušaju da razume samu ideju čovečanstva. Prvobitne religije i mitologije odražavaju matrijarhalni sistem društva, no, nakon uvođenja patrijarhata, falogocentrizam namerno marginalizuje sve što je feminino, čime se narušava ravnoteža i uspostavlja androcentrična kultura. Anglofono pesništvo često preispituje mitološke obrasce, no, tek polovinom dvadesetog veka počinje da dovodi u pitanje centralnu ulogu maskulinog u njima. Razvoj postmodernističke teorije koja odbacuje metanarative, te jačanje feminističke misli, omogućavaju savremenim pesnikinjama da sagledaju mit iz ženske perspektive i odbace ideju da feminino treba da igra

sporednu ulogu u njemu. Pesnikinje ranog postmodernizma, poput Silvije Plat i Deniz Levertov, pišu nove verzije maskulinih mitova, ili se pak vraćaju u doba matrijarhalnih religija. Pesnikinje koje stvaraju krajem dvadesetog i početkom dvadeset prvog veka, kao što su Penelopi Šatl i Kerol En Dafi, nastavljaju tradiciju preispitivanja feminine mitologije, pre svega kroz intertekstualne dramske monologe ispričane iz ugla čuvenih mitskih junakinja, bilo tradicionalnih, kakva je Penelopa, ili onih koje vode poreklo iz popularne kulture, kao što su ženske verzije King Konga ili Elvisovog brata blizanca. Analizom njihovih pesama, u radu se istražuje način na koji savremena anglofona poezija preispituje ulogu roda u tradicionalnoj mitologiji i kulturi.

*Cljučne reči:* anglofona književnost, feminizam, mitologija, rod, savremena poezija

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